

Albury & District Historical Society Inc

August 2023

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Murndal Homestead – see ‘Life in a Box,’ page 2

Next Meeting

Wednesday, August 9, 2023

7.30 pm, Commercial Club

Topic: Sydney to Albury by Road

Speaker: Greg Ryan

ALBURY LIBRARYMUSEUM

“Working Women, Public Leaders”

Lavington Library
Until October 14

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PRESIDENT’S NOTES FOR AUGUST

Following another successful AGM I believe we are assured of an interesting year ahead. Thank you to our Patron Greg Aplin for taking the chair once again to effect a smooth transition in the election of the executive and our committee. Thanks also to those who put their names forward to serve on the committee and the various sub-committees on which we are represented under the auspices of AlburyCity.

At our July meeting Jill Aplin gave an interesting talk about the life of John Winter-Cooke who left his “life in a box” in Albury many years ago. Jill has since told me that a friend of her mother was a tutor at Geelong Grammar and was appointed the personal tutor to Prince Charles (as he then was) when he attended the school in 1966.

It is pleasing to see more people coming forward to join the Society. Particularly encouraging is the fact that many of our newer members belong to a younger age group. This bodes well for a dynamic future for our society now in its 64th year. Greg Ryan deserves a special mention for developing our digital footprint to a high standard. This alone will make us attractive to younger generations. You may recall that, in a recent survey, the millennial generation were second only to the baby boomers for their appreciation of the value of preserving our heritage. We are a progressive historical society and I look forward to the year ahead!

Membership subs are due and remain unchanged. Single members \$30, family members \$35. Members requiring a posted Bulletin will now need to pay an extra \$12. Cheques to PO Box 822, or Bank Transfer to BSB 640 000, Account 111097776.

2023/24 Subs Due

My story is about a box which contained all the most precious possessions of a young man who had tried to make a fresh start. It is the story of how a lady with an interest in old families was able to reunite these treasures with their owner after a separation of more than 30 years. It happened in Albury and concerned Albury's Soden's Hotel and the historic stables that, last century, housed so many famous racehorses in transit from Sydney to Melbourne and back again.

In early May 2007 I took a family letter to the small Real Estate office where I worked each Friday. My boss, Paul Colquhoun, had expressed an interest in seeing this very old letter, written in the 1850s, as the writer had 'crossed' it – he had written across the writing on the pages to make maximum use of the paper.

While showing Paul this letter, the office handyman, Dennis Millward, entered the room. On seeing the letter, Dennis asked if I was able to read old letters. When I said I could, he left and returned with a large envelope containing a selection of small letters in envelopes and some very old photographs. I was intrigued because I could see immediately that some of these letters were even older than my family letters and they were all addressed to members of a family called Cooke. Dennis said I could borrow them for a few days.

My weekend was spent poring over the letters and photographs, trying to decipher the writing and to fathom who these people may have been and how Dennis came to have these valuable treasures. Dennis told me that long ago he had owned several poker machines which he had placed in some of the Albury pubs. In Soden's Hotel he befriended a young man called John Winter-Cooke, who had fallen on hard times and was working as a chef and barman in the hotel, where he lived in one of the rooms.

One day John said he needed money and asked Dennis if he was interested in buying some antique furniture. John took him to the old stables behind the hotel and in one of these there were some very lovely chairs, tables, and a beautiful grandfather clock. John said he could not bear to part with the clock and if he ended up in the gutter one day, he wanted this clock to be beside him, but he asked if Dennis would be prepared to give him \$300 for the rest of the furniture. Dennis gave him cash.



John Winter-Cooke

Not long after this John asked Dennis if he would do him the favour of looking after the grandfather clock and a box of family papers while he went away to rehabilitate himself, as he had for some time been battling a problem with alcohol. Dennis was happy to do this for him.

Many months later John returned to Albury and asked Dennis if he would be prepared to give him \$200 for the grandfather clock. Dennis knew that the clock was worth a lot more and that John did not really want to part with it, but he gave him the \$200 he requested. Then John asked if he could leave the papers with Dennis for a little while longer as he was going away again and had nowhere else to leave them. Dennis obliged, but there had been no word from John since that day, over 25 years before, and they had been kept safely all those years in Dennis's spare room cupboard.

I asked Dennis if he had anything else of John's that I could see and he said he had other letters and photograph albums and birth and marriage certificates. He was delighted to find someone who was so interested in them and let me take them all.



An antique pair of child's leather shoes with metal reinforcements on the soles, like horseshoes.

Again, I spent the weekend poring over the letters and papers, learning a great deal about this man and his family. Apart from letters there were two photograph albums. One contained family photographs, obviously from the early 1900s, and the other contained photographs of horses, breeding stallions and information about Arabian horses from an estate called Murndal. John Winter-Cooke's passport was there, as were several postcards from all over Europe and Asia which John had written to his mother. There were poems and war medals and photographs of John as a schoolboy at Geelong Grammar and photos of his parents on their wedding day. There was also an original letter from Matthew Flinders to his wife written from Mauritius, known then as the Isle de France, while he was imprisoned there in 1805.

I decided to search on the internet and typed in the name Cecil Pybus Cooke, as the date on the back of the photograph of this distinguished man showed that he was probably the grandfather or even the great grandfather of John Winter-Cooke. To my delight the name produced a large amount of information about the

family, including a detailed family tree, which enabled me to discover the names of John's closest relatives in Australia. The Winter-Cooke family has donated a large amount of information about their pioneering forebears to the State Library of Victoria. These are now in the public domain and are accessible to anyone interested in the pioneering history of Victoria.

As soon as I knew that John had a large and established family in Australia, I felt that the papers should be given to them, and Dennis agreed. I decided to write to Mr Sam Winter-Cooke, who was John's first cousin. I addressed the letter to the Murndal Estate near Hamilton in Victoria. I told him how I came to have the letters and papers and asked if he was interested in them.

Mr Winter-Cooke phoned me as soon as he received the letter and told me how amazed and delighted they all had been to hear news of John after such a long silence. I asked if I might be allowed to return the items personally because I now had a very keen interest in the family and longed to meet them and see the Murndal Estate. I was warmly invited and my husband, Greg, my daughter Kathryn and I travelled from Albury to deliver the family treasures.

Dennis had stored all the albums and photographs in a large cardboard box, but we found a more suitable wooden box to present to the family and were very excited to see their reaction.

The Murndal Estate is about twenty minutes drive from Hamilton. We turned into the long Murndal driveway meandering through lovely soft green undulating country with the fattest cattle and wooliest sheep we have seen in a long time. Suddenly at a turn in the road we saw the homestead – a huge grand double storied mansion. It is a strange mixture as the original homestead had been built in bluestone with lots of other bits added by successive generations, overlooking the Wannon River.

Sam Winter-Cooke, surrounded by leaping barking dogs, greeted us as we pulled up behind the house. He took us to the formal dining room where we would be having lunch with his wife Catherine and his cousin Janet. They wanted to be able to spread everything onto the large dining room table.

We sat down to a lovely meal and chatted and laughed around the table. After the meal, we cleared the table so that there would be ample space for all the items from the wooden box. The four of them were so excited and really wanted to make a special moment of it all, asking me to tell them again the story of how I had received all these family treasures and brought them 'home'.

When I started to bring out the items they were all thrilled. Catherine is an active member of the Hamilton Historic Society, and she takes school groups around her property so she is very knowledgeable about the family and she quickly recognised the handwriting on many of the letters and envelopes and identified the people in the photographs.

Janet was delighted as one of the old photograph albums had pictures she had never seen before of her father and his sisters when they were young. There was also a letter written by her father to his parents when he was at boarding school, at the age of nine.

Catherine and Janet handled everything as though it was made of glass, relishing every moment; gasping in amazement as each new letter, or great grandfather's wedding certificate, or Uncle Winter (John's father's) war medals from the First World War all emerged from the box.

A month after this visit, in early August 2007, I received a phone call from Sam Winter-Cooke. He told me that they had found John Winter-Cooke, living safe and well in Western Australia! It was wonderful news. Janet had tracked John down via the Electoral Commission. She wrote him a short note telling him that the family was keen to find out how and where he was, having recently come into possession of family treasures. She did not go into any detail about the papers but simply sent off the note with contact addresses of her brother and Sam Winter-Cooke and her own home address and phone number.

John phoned her as soon as he received the letter and then he phoned Sam. Sam told me later that it was as though the cork had been drawn out of a bottle and everything was pouring out. John wanted to talk and talk and ask questions about all the family and all the family places he had known and loved as a child. Sam told him the story about how it was that John's personal family treasures had been returned to Murndal. He gave John my phone number in case he felt like making contact with me.

Now that communication had been restored and John's address was known, Sam Winter-Cooke decided that it would be better if John had his family papers rather than holding them at Murndal. He carefully packed them



The Dining-Room

up and sent them to him.

In early September I received another phone call. The man's voice said, "Is that Jill Aplin?" When I said it was, he said, "You don't know me, but you probably know my name – I am John Winter-Cooke." I gasped and replied by saying that I felt I *did* know him and was so thrilled to be actually talking to him. He was a very cheerful and funny man who made me laugh with his colourful expressions and descriptions. We talked easily and happily for a long time. He told me how he had been 'rescued' by the Salvation Army in Darwin. He had moved to Perth where he had met his wife Lyn in 1991. Now they were settled and happy in Geraldton and he was 66 years old.

I apologized for unashamedly reading his personal letters. He laughed when I told him I had read and enjoyed his bush poem in the style of Banjo Patterson, and I asked him about the wonderful exotic places he had visited in his youth having seen all the stamps in his passport. He told me tales of adventures as a cabin boy on a Norwegian ship and his travels through Iran, Afghanistan and Pakistan on his way home overland from the UK.

At the end of our conversation he thanked me for going to the trouble of returning his family papers to the family estate at Murndal and said it was as though he had been given his life back and now could show his wife photos of all the people he had talked about over the years. I told him that Dennis still had his grandfather clock and did he want it back? He laughed and said that he lived near the beach and had everything he could wish for – what would he do with a grandfather clock?

In November 2007 just two months after I last spoke to Sam Winter-Cooke, he was diagnosed with a brain tumour. He died in early 2008. He had always felt that the finding of John's papers and my role in returning them was 'meant to be'. He had made several comments about this as though it was all orchestrated by God or 'fate' and that the timing was significant. He was so thrilled by it as he and John had been such good friends when they were young.

Strangely enough Dennis Millward died only a few months later so maybe it was all meant to be.

APPEAL FOR FUNDS TO EXTEND LOCAL NEWSPAPERS ON TROVE INTO 1953 AND 1954

Since 2017 Albury & District Historical Society has, with Wodonga Historical Society, won funding support to digitise pages of the *Albury Banner* from 1860 to 1940 and the *Border Mail* from 1938 to 1952 on Trove from the NSW Create Cultural Fund, the Public Record Office of Victoria, Albury City Council, Albury LibraryMuseum and a variety of agencies including Inland Rail, the Commercial Club of Albury and Charles Sturt University. Both societies have also used their own funds and money they have attracted from the generous individual donors.

1954 marks the digital cliff when it becomes difficult and more expensive to digitise issues. In 2017 we set a goal of completing a long-term project to ensure that there is at least one local newspaper on Trove for as many years as possible. To do that we need financial assistance from members and friends.

Members and friends of the Society are asked to consider making a donation, no matter how small, to the Society's Trove fund via the Treasurer Simon Burgess. You can make a bank deposit to our Grants/Donations account at Hume Bank: Account Name: A&DHS Grants; BSB: 640 000; Account number: 111198785

How many people use local newspapers on Trove?

Trove is available online free-of-charge. We are pleased to report that the local newspapers digitised so far have been used many, many times.

Trove reports on number of views

	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
<i>Albury Banner</i>	137,159	135,373	194,508	148,872	145,630

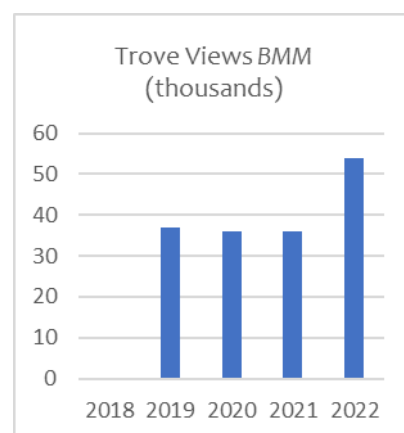
Who uses local newspapers on Trove?

Our project expands Trove's regional newspaper holdings primarily to increase the capacity for community participation in history-making at a variety of levels. Some people use Trove simply to compose a Facebook page; some to do family history, local history or to research a broad issue; some use it as novelists, playwrights or journalists.

The long-term digitization project has won a positive public profile for both Albury & Wodonga societies.

Why 1953-54?

- ♦ BMM readers living in a rural district looked for and were supplied with news about agricultural and pastoral developments particularly related to wheat,



Demand since we began digitising BMMs of post-1938, Trove counts. In 2018 there were no BMMs digitised for years post-1938.

wool, beef and dairy production at the beginning of the long boom, when the nation and Albury (as a major wool selling venue) progressed on the sheep's back.

- ◆ *BMM* gives immediate community insights into the economic, social and cultural changes that accompanied the influx of a huge number of non-British refugees and migrants via Bonegilla. So, for example, *BMM* reported debates about the 'absorption' or assimilation of, first, Displaced Persons, then, assisted Dutch, Greek and Italian migrants and the needs of the newly arrived, especially migrant children. Editors insisted on parading ways that the regional community remained fundamentally British.
- ◆ *BMM* provides evidence that can be investigated and analysed related to regional community manifestations of social divides based for example on gender, race/ethnicity, and /or wealth. *BMM* provides regional perspectives on contemporary political debates, for example, about the impact of the economic recession on housing and the impact of communism.
- ◆ Trove readers of the *BMM* in 1953 will find a 30-page supplement commemorating the newspaper's 50 years of operation. That supplement explains how the newspaper changed over time and the ways in which it thought it was meeting the needs of its readers.
- ◆ 1954 was a census year. The findings of the census add substance to what appear to be key characteristics of the border region evident in analysis of the newspaper content. There had been a huge increase in the number of overseas born. There were comparatively high proportions of Catholics, Lutherans and young people. There was a large number of transport workers, and construction employees at Hume Dam which was being expanded. Married and unmarried women were increasingly finding paid employment.

What is Trove: A reminder?

In announcing Commonwealth government funding for Trove in April the Minister, Hon Tony Burke, explained its importance to a wide range of people.

With over 14 billion digitised artefacts and stories from Australia's cultural, community and research institutions, Trove makes our nation's history accessible to all Australians, wherever they live.

Trove's collection of 26 million newspaper pages makes it indispensable to academics, researchers and historical societies as well as to ordinary Australians keen to understand the history of their families or their communities.



Society Patron Greg Aplin with Greg Ryan, Bruce Pennay and *Border Mail* editor Xavier Mardling in 2018.



Uta Wiltshire of Wodonga Historical Society with an old *Albury Banner*.

Minister for the Arts, Tony Burke, said this Government was very aware of the significance of Trove and the importance of safeguarding its future.

"Trove is, in many ways, Australia's digital memory," Minister Burke said. "It records and retains some of our most important stories, moments, challenges, controversies and successes in one accessible location. "Whether you're using it to look up a bit of family history, or for academic research – Trove is an incredibly important part of our national cultural institutions."

Why *BMM*: A reminder?

The Mott family proprietors of *BMM*, were technological innovators introducing, ahead of other regional newspapers, a new efficient press in 1948 that more than doubled the pages in each issue, but also embedded photographs so that readers could see local news.

The *Border Morning Mail* had a wide circulation of about 15,000 copies available before breakfast within 75km around Albury.

- ◆ It was designed to be a one-paper read, outselling metropolitan rivals (Beavan JRAHS, 1994).
- ◆ It was "one of the leading regional daily newspapers in New South Wales" (Kirkpatrick 2000, pp 250-252.)
- ◆ It has influenced the setting of political and social issue agendas.
- ◆ It has addressed a distinct border 'print community' and helped create the idea of a border regional identity (Benedict Anderson 1983).

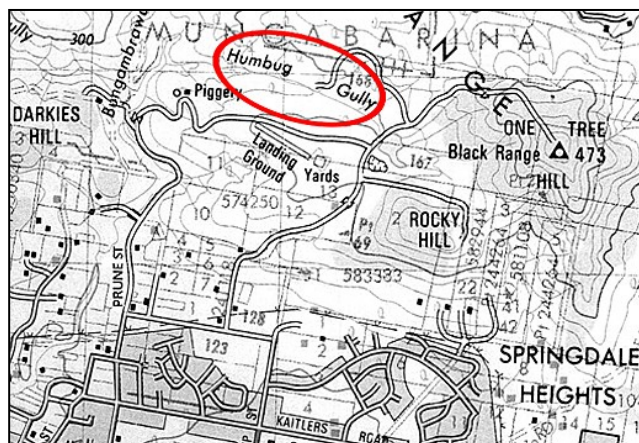
Narda Reid has suggested that members select a local park/playground named for a person and research the reason behind its name. Then prepare a short presentation (about 10 minutes), including one or more photos to share with members at a future meeting. The first of these was prepared by Greg Ryan.

The Albury-Wodonga Development Corporation and Albury City Council selected the name Norris Park in 1991 after protests about the intended name, Southridge. A placenames advisory committee had complained that Southridge had no local significance and urged the authorities to find a more suitable name. As a result, the planners picked the name from a trigonometry station called Norris Hill. The hill is clearly marked on early maps, north-east of Albury's Glenmorus Cemetery at the western end of Union Road.

James Norris arrived in Sydney on board the *Royal Saxon* in June 1844, aged 31, a Bounty Immigrant from Rhode, Somerset. With James was his wife Charlotte, aged 32, and children Mary Anne 11, Arthur 6, Elizabeth 3 and Eliza an infant.

Not long after, the family was in the Albury district. The birth of three more daughters were registered in Albury, Hannah in 1847, Louisa 1849 and Sarah 1851.

Historian Dr Arthur Andrews wrote: "Sometime during this year [1852], Albury had its own gold fever, when the 'Norris's Creek,' or 'Black Range Diggings' were first opened by Richard Heaver and James Dennison."



James Norris probably mined for gold on the Black Range. He had settled on a bush block north east of the present Prune street, calling his bush home 'Humbug Gully.' The block is about 3 km from today's Norris Park.

Mentions of James Norris in newspapers include an 1868 court appearance, charged with occupying Crown Lands on the goldfields reserve without a license, de-pasturing 500 to 700 sheep without a permit. He was fined £3. The following year he was charged with using unregistered brands, again fined £3 with costs.

James, aged 63, died at Black Range on 3 August 1872. His wife, Charlotte, died on 12 January 1885.

An advertisement in the Albury Banner 10 May 1873 "Under instructions from Mr Norris, Mr North will offer for sale by public auction 520 sheep at Humbug Gully, Black Range." The Mr Norris referred to was Arthur Norris, James and Charlotte's only son. He later moved to Grenfell NSW where he died in 1898.

SALVATIONIST'S MEMORIES OF HARD STRUGGLE

A 'Border Morning Mail' article from February 1945. See also Howard Jones' book 'Blood and Fire, Rotten Eggs and Gaol' available for sale at Albury LibraryMuseum.

Beginnings of the Salvation Army Corps in Albury when its open air meetings and marches used to attract a barrage of dead cats and rotten fruit, are recalled by Mrs Mary Evelyn Miles, of Englehardt st, widow of the late Mr W Miles, who has been a Salvation soldier for 60 years.

Born in Echuca 80 years ago, one of the Burgess family of 13, Mrs Miles first saw Albury as a child of three. The family came up the Murray by the paddle wheel steamer *Cumberoona*, which was sunk in the river later on. Mrs Miles has lived here ever since. Only four of the family are still living. A sister and two brothers live at Lavington.

Mrs Miles was a girl of 18 when Salvation Army officers came from Melbourne to start a corps in Albury. She tells the story of her conversion simply: "I went to listen out of curiosity. I heard the message, and one evening I said to the officer, 'I feel I want to give myself to God.' Today I believe as strongly as ever in worshipping God alone."

Mrs Miles has many a story to tell of venturesome Salvation Army work in the days when the organisation was scorned and persecuted. It took a stout-hearted girl to don the uniform, which in those days comprised navy skirt, bright red blouse, and wide-brimmed bonnet.



The Salvationists had not only to contend with mockery and molestation; the officers were actually arrested and imprisoned more than once, Mrs Miles said. At other places imprisonment of up to three months was suffered. "Many dead cat and all sorts of things I have had flung at me," said Mrs Miles yesterday, smilingly comparing the status of the Salvation Army in the community then and now. "They formed a 'skeleton' army, which used to march beside the adherents, jeering at us and beating kerosene tins," went on Mrs Miles. "When we went over to Wodonga they threatened to throw us over the bridges into the water. But we went on marching and proclaiming the gospel message. After a while some of those in the 'skeleton army' joined us."

Early meeting place of the corps was an old ballroom in Townsend street. When persecution was at its height the little band used to meet in a tumble-down shack at Black Range (Lavington). Later the meeting place was where Norman and Heath's skin store is now [corner of Kiewa & Stanley streets], beside the present, army hall.

Sulky trips of 100 miles, collecting or visiting the sick and suffering, was all in the day's work for Mrs Miles as a young woman. She recalls with a chuckle how the sight of her uniform put a whole dairy herd to flight on one occasion. The red blouse, she added, was not an advantage when bulls were encountered.

For three years she was book-keeper for the corps, in days when each 5/- was hailed thankfully as a godsend. Devoting all their efforts to army work, the pioneer officers at Albury carried on sometimes in the face of starvation, Mrs Miles said. Mrs Miles' proudest memories are of rescues from degradation and despair. An inspiring case was that of a man on the point of suicide, discovered at Wodonga by Mrs Miles and some army compatriots. Chiding him for his threats of throwing himself in the river, they brought him to Albury and cared for him. Later they had the satisfaction of seeing him for three years as editor of the "War Cry" in Melbourne.

Public attitude to the Salvation Army changed radically after the 1914-18 war, Mrs Miles said. Knowing what the army had done for the fighting forces people were no longer loath to contribute to appeals. 'Self-denial' appeals were accurately titled in Mrs Miles' case.

Washing for townspeople was one way she raised money for them. Versifying was an inherited ability with Mrs Miles. Many a verse of hers has been published in the "War Cry" and set to music for a hymn. Her sense of humour at other times prompted her to pen amusing doggerel.



The Salvation Army Barracks in Kiewa street, north of Stanley street. This photo was possibly taken at the opening of the barracks on Tuesday 12 March, 1889, reported in the *Albury Banner*.



Visit our website for photos of old Albury, history articles, past Bulletins and much more. Go to:
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<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCDzIPypinJegksrO-l2ssVg>



A VOICE TO PARLIAMENT: RESOURCES FOR INFORMED DEBATE

The Royal Australian Historical Society provided the following article concerning the 'Voice' Referendum

The RAHS is committed to implementing its 2023-2024 Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP). Part of this commitment includes exploring our sphere of influence and encouraging other organisations to consider their reconciliation journey.

Reconciliation Australia, which endorsed the Society's Reflect RAP, has several useful resources and links related to the upcoming referendum on the Voice to Parliament. [Read more.](#)

The RAHS supports respectful debates on this important referendum. We also recognise that how our members decide to vote should be a matter of informed choice. Therefore, along with the Royal Historical Society of Victoria, we recommend reading the following paper produced by the Australian National University: ['Responding to the Common Concerns about an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice' \(2023\).](#)

MUSICAL REUNION



The NSW Conservatorium hosted a remarkable concert at Sydney Town Hall in 1925. Albury Mayor Alf Waugh presided as Albury-born artists sang classical items. They included sopranos Vera Helson, Leah Davis and Emma Chambers, basses Ambrose Bourke and Frank McEachern (brother of the famous Malcolm), contralto Thelma Houston and three other male soloists Charles Smythe, Bert Harvey and Harold Taskis. The pianists accompanying them were Will Caspers (Ella Caspers' brother) and J Knight-Barnett, son of a former Albury doctor. *Sydney Morning Herald, October 6, 1925*

The owner of 618 Schubach St, near the Borella Rd corner, would like photos of the house and the Norfolk pine at the front. If any are available please advise the Society at alburyhistory@bigpond.com or phone Helen Livsey 02-6021 3671.



A&DHS Corporate Sponsors

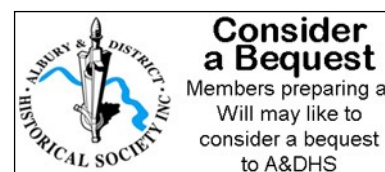
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Meetings: Second Wednesday of the month
(except January) at 7.30 pm usually at the
Commercial Club Albury.

The Committee meets on the third Wednesday of the month at 3 pm at the Albury LibraryMuseum.

ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION

Single: \$30 Family: \$35

Corporate: \$100

Note: There is a \$12 surcharge for mailed Bulletins.

Research undertaken, \$25 first hour. Enquiries in writing with \$25.