

December 2024

No 662

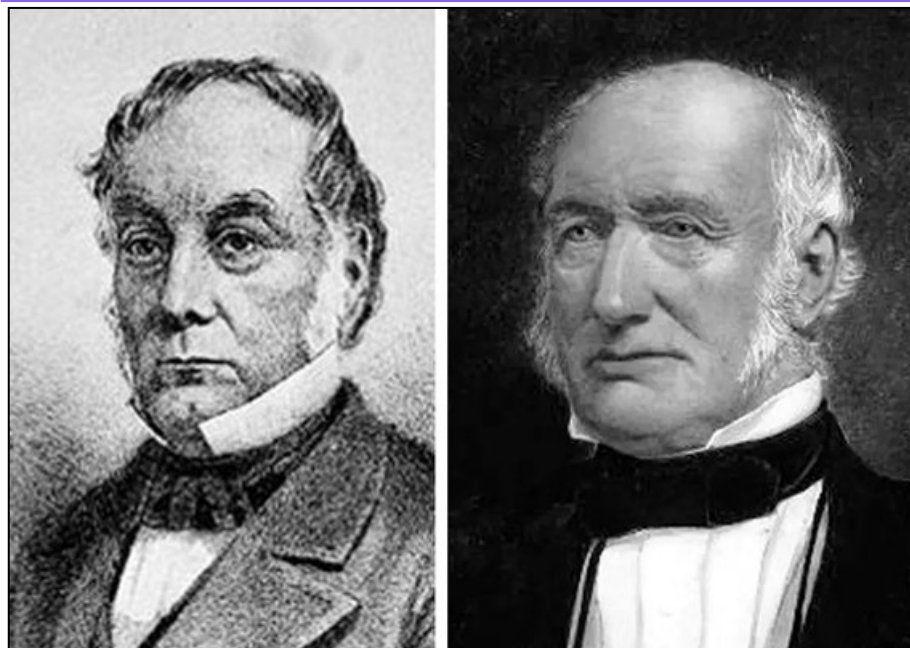
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BSB 640 000 Acc No 111097776

Registered by Australia Post PP 225170/0019 ISSN 2207-1237



Hamilton Hume and William Hovell.

Next Meeting

Wednesday, December 11, 2024
6.30pm for 7pm Commercial Club
Christmas Dinner

Speaker: Deborah Lawrie AM,
first Australian female pilot to fly
for a major commercial airline.

ALBURY LIBRARYMUSEUM
Recovering the Past, the
lasting impact of WWI
Dec 21 to Feb 23, 2025

Page 2 Remembering Hume
and Hovell

Page 5 Bicentenary activities

Page 6 Exhibitions

PRESIDENT'S NOTES FOR DECEMBER

Our year is drawing to a close and it has been a very busy one for our Society.

Recently we attended the Uiver Open Day to celebrate the 90th anniversary of the emergency landing at Albury Racecourse. It was a wonderful day with the highlight being the attendance of the Ambassador from the Netherlands who launched the translation of "To Australia in Three Days" by Dirk Parmentier.

The following weekend saw our attendance at the Albury Show immediately followed by the Hume and Hovell week of activities. Our November meeting at the Commercial Club was very well attended with almost 100 in attendance. Many probing questions were put to our panel and the Q&A session was expertly handled by Greg Aplin.

Peter Harper hosted a very good session on Thursday morning which was attended by 40 of our city's keenest cyclists. Peter has been invited to repeat this session for a wider audience at a later date at Albury LibraryMuseum. Bruce Pennay presented a session later that day to outline a resource being prepared for schools studying the impacts of colonisation.

On Saturday AlburyCity arranged a public event to reveal the new signage and landscaping at the Hovell Tree. At this event we met Karen Schmidt a descendant of William Hovell who had travelled from Perth to follow in the footsteps of her famous 4xgreat grandfather. Karen spoke at the event and told us of her pride in being connected to our city through the achievements of her ancestor. Mayor, Kevin Mack invited Karen to join him to cut the ribbon to reveal the landscaping and signage. On the Monday after the event Karen was taken to the summit of Table Top Mountain to enjoy the view which would have greeted William Hovell and Hamilton Hume when they climbed it to survey what lay ahead. Karen was a delightful person and we were very happy to show her our city.

In 2025 we will be reinstating the popular "Show and Tell" segment giving members a chance to show off items of interest. The segment did not suit our new dinner format in December so it will reappear next year.

Finally, a big welcome to new members David Hotstone, Steve Robbins and Jenelle Morgan.

The following is a preview for members of a longer version that will be published in RAHS Magazine 'History' in December 2024 and should be cited from there rather than from here.

We might expect a comparison of commemorations 100 years apart to prompt reflection on the mindsets of the times and raise questions about fashions in commemorative activities. We might expect memory to be re-worked on commemorative occasions. Especially as bicentenaries, unlike centenaries, do not occur just beyond lived experience. Bicentenaries invite sharper questions about the contemporary relevance of anniversary moments.¹

In November 1924, Aubrey Halloran, President of the Royal Australian Historical Society, spoke at the unveiling of an obelisk newly erected to commemorate the overland expedition undertaken by Hamilton Hume and William Hovell in 1824. The obelisk marked the spot where the party crossed the Murray River as they moved southward.



Images:
RAHS,
John
Pennay

Halloran's speech was well received. The sentiments he expressed were like those he and others made unveiling nearly fifty other memorials dotted along the expedition route through New South Wales and Victoria. The sentiments were embedded in what John Hirst described as the pioneer legend mode of Australian History: they focused on the achievements of individuals rather than on the social, legal or economic settings that framed those achievements; they prized individual above government enterprise.²

History is never written in a vacuum. The remembering prompted by the commemorative occasion in 1924 was present-centred. Many local patriots seized the opportunity to proclaim pride in their place, be it large or small. With memorial cairns, obelisks or signs they marked on-the-ground how the journey of Hume and Hovell touched their place. They hailed their community's founding moment. They celebrated their place's subsequent progress and its modern-day prosperity, for these were the optimistic interwar years when there was widespread growth in the numbers of wool/wheat farms north of the Murray and dairy farms to the south, creating a scatter of small settlements. Local patriots were giving three cheers for the way white settlement unfolded, as indicated in the folded end-map insert in Arthur Andrews' book, *First Settlement of the Upper Murray*, in 1921.³

In 1924 Albury was the largest of the centres along the route, growing because the rural district it served was growing – and its influence was being extended, with motor car transport. Moreover, the obelisk was close by the construction works of the Hume Weir, an ambitious project to progress further the cultivation of land in an Australia set on its economic destiny as a primary producer.

Halloran praised those who had invited him to the ceremony. This memorial obelisk would perpetuate public memory, educating children and the children's children. He exhorted locals to continue to investigate the local past which was intertwined with the national past in ways that added to the idea of nation and to the idea of the district.

Halloran's praise was welcomed by local government and by the Chamber of Commerce. which calculated the monetary value of tourist visits. They boasted Albury had the recreational facilities to sustain a week-long programme of events. It was 'one of the best tourist resorts in the state' and indeed, 'the city of tomorrow.' A 146-page souvenir publication, and well-pictured local newspaper supplement showed Albury's commemorations attracted many visitors, including the Prime Minister, Stanley Bruce. Albury congratulated

itself with a plaque on the Town Hall remembering the remembering of the expedition in 1924.⁴

Halloran concluded with a prediction that there would be a similar gathering in 2024 when hearts would again be stirred by memory of intrepid explorers, 'overcoming Nature in all its savagery' as they 'ventured into unknown lands' in 'the spirit of the Empire and the British people.' 'Theirs was the pioneer spirit that won this land. And made history for this district and for Australia.'⁵

Halloran would probably have been pleased to see the flurry of various activities taking place along the route in 2024 at places like Goulburn and Yass, and to see the re-inscribing of the route with re-worked 1924 plaques or new signage at Oxley, Whorouly, Moyhu, Swanpool (near Benalla), Kilmore and Upper Plenty (near Mount Disappointment) and Albury.⁶ He would probably have applauded the new Explorers Bike Ride which extended the Hume and Hovell Walking Track, initiated in the wake of the 1988 celebration of a nation.⁷ He may have puzzled but understood why attention in Albury had drifted from the out-of-town obelisk to the Hovell Tree, conveniently located for tourists and residents on the new Albury Riverside Walkway.

Halloran could not have been expected to anticipate the recent quickening of popular history interest in colonisation at the national, regional and local levels. In 2023 Rachel Perkins spurred new interest in the frontier/homeland wars at the Australian War Memorial.⁸ David Marr spurred family historians to look again at their family trees.⁹ The *SMH* offered an apology for the ways it reported the Myall Creek massacre in 1838.¹⁰ Local historians have begun to face the challenge posed by Mark McKenna to retain pride in the achievements of their community pioneers but also to acknowledge that their town was founded on the violent theft of Aboriginal land.¹¹

Such changes in approach are evident in the Albury region where we have recently heard anew stories of the Jobbins Massacre at Dora Dora, building on and adding to blogs about the Dederang mound and retellings of the Faithfull Massacre at Benalla.¹² We have heard the Wiradjuri people gathering to share contact stories about conflict and initial engagement in the Bathurst and Narrandera Wiradjuri wars.¹³

In the wake of the failed national referendum and the increased emphasis on reconciliation at a local level, Albury LibraryMuseum has anticipated community readiness for another narrative when thinking about the creation of Albury as a town. It launched the exhibition called 'Mob' in October. The exhibition shares First Nations Peoples' stories with the local community. Importantly, the exhibition is not just about First Nations People, but for and by First Nations People:

This is a reminder for Mob ... you are the children of leaders, of warriors who resisted the violent invasion for their land. You are the living proof that they were successful in saving their culture and their people. Stand proud and stand strong after all the earth of the land and the blood of warriors flows through your veins.

There is a story panel 'Hume and Hovell: The arrival of the colonisers' which finds significance in their 1824 expedition as an intrusion leading to dispossession. Another panel, 'Frontier Wars: Grief, Anger and Resilience,' refers to frontier/homeland conflict. It alludes to the mounted police barracks established at the Murray River Crossing to protect travellers along the road between Yass and Port Phillip, and consequently facilitating dispossession. A third panel, 'Community and Activism' outlines the insistence with which First Nations groups worked to win better support services following the Aboriginal Family Resettlement Scheme initiated in 1974.

Elements of the exhibition will continue in an internet record of the event.¹⁴ They will also find a place in the museum's larger permanent exhibition, 'Crossing Place: the story of Albury.' This longer life is welcome, especially by schools.

In September 2024, New South Wales Education Standards Authority endorsed a proposed Australian curriculum requirement for students in mid-secondary school years from 2027 on to undertake a mandatory study of Aboriginal Peoples' Experiences of Colonisation.¹⁵

Albury & District Historical Society, with funding support from AlburyCity, is helping local schools with a public and school digital education resource facilitating investigations into the local interactions between First Nations peoples and colonists in the early years. The inquiries it prompts and guides deal with frontier/homeland violence and with negotiating co-existence along the road to, from and at the official Murray River Crossing Place in its early days. In accord with the curriculum, the stories schools explore are to be informed by those who are living proof of how Aboriginal people have saved their people and their culture.

At the same time, AlburyCity's heritage review committee is pondering the inclusion of the site of the mounted police barracks on the local heritage register.¹⁶ Yalmambirra, a Wiradjuri elder, and I argue that the police hut site demonstrates how Albury was founded/created, not only with blazed trees in 1824 but also with a piece of a paper, a notice in an 1839 Government Gazette proclaiming the new town of Albury as part of a

protected Murray River crossing. It was a garrison town supporting a mounted police station, and servicing and protecting travellers moving flocks and herds into lands southward onto grasslands they could claim to own.¹⁷

Such a heritage listing would 'fix' the remembering of contact history with a public memory place. That is, a place where Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal families can share sorrowful memories of dispossession, dispersal, and the hurt of erasure from local colonial past. They might also have pride in resistance, and joy in resilience and survival.

Local patriots can boast that just as Sydney has a Kurnell and a Sydney Cove, Albury has an explorers' encounter place at the Hovell Tree and a contact zone at the official Crossing Place, protected by a police hut. Within that contact zone people geographically and historically separated, encountered each other and began to find ways to live together and separately.¹⁸

Like Halloran, I dare predictions. Unsurprisingly, I predict, first, that teachers will still be asking 'how do we know' and 'so what' questions and, second, that local as well as national historians will still be trying to nudge public memory.

Third, I also foresee greater focus on the river. Such interest might be prompted by its health. It might also arise from wonder about the ingenuity of the people who worked the river and its waterways for thousands of years. It might give notice to changes in the height of the river. In 1824, the river was too full to cross easily. In the dry of 1838 it was easy to cross. The drought was so bad that Governor Gipps initiated a colony-wide day of fasting, humiliation and prayer. Rev John Dunmore Lang called on members of his congregation in Sydney to beat their breast. He cited Jeremiah to suggest the drought was a punishment for the 'blood-sickness' involved in the indiscriminate murder of First Nations Peoples.¹⁹

I am not predicting breast-beating, but hopefully greater and more sympathetic understanding of the challenges facing the colonised, and how they dealt with those challenges. Future commemorations, like those in 2024, will hail the story of the Hume and Hovell expedition as an introduction to locally nuanced stories of how Australia has been and is peopled.



New storyboards installed at the Hovell Tree in November 2024 acknowledge the tree is in Wiradjuri Country [Photo: Greg Ryan]

1. An abbreviated version of this article was presented to the November meeting of A&DHS marking the bicentenary. I thank those attending the meeting for their comments.
2. J Hirst (1978) 'The Pioneer legend' *Historical Studies*, 18 (21).
3. A Andrews (1921) *First Settlement of the Upper Murray*.
4. *Albury Banner*, 14 November 1924. The plaque on the Albury Town Hall (now MAMA) declares the centenary demonstrations 'were successfully carried out.'
5. A Halloran (1924) 'Unveiling of the Monument at Hume Weir,' *JRAHS*, XI, (2). Thanks to Donna Newtown for the references.
6. Hume & Hovell expedition: <https://alburyhistory.org.au/the-hume-hovell-expedition/>
7. Explorers Bike Ride 2024 <https://www.hhrider.net>
8. R Perkins (2022) 'The Australian Wars', SBS/NITV.
9. D Marr (2023) *Killing for Country*, Black Inc Books.
10. *SMH* 8 June 2023.
11. Mark McKenna (2002) *Looking for Blackfella's Point*, UNSW Press.
12. Sheridan Jobbins, *A&DHS Bulletin*, September 2023; Jacqui Durrant, (2019) 'Sweet Damper on the Little River' - <https://jacquidurrant.com/tag/sweet-damper/>; Hamish McPherson (2023) 'Original Rights', Benalla.
13. Martial law at Bathurst: <https://www.csu.edu.au/yindjamarra-nguluway/dhuluny/home>; Stan Grant story telling at Narrandera: <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2015/oct/12/at-poisoned-waterhole-creek-i-tell-my-son-about-the-slaughter-of-our-people>.
14. <https://www.alburycity.nsw.gov.au/leisure/museum-and-libraries/exhibitions/past>.
15. NSW Education Standards Authority, 2024: <https://curriculum.nsw.edu.au/learning-areas/hsie/history-7-10-2024/overview>.
16. <https://haveyoursay.alburycity.nsw.gov.au/heritage-review>.
17. Bruce Pennay, 'Digitisation, Collaboration with Creatives and Reconciliation,' *History*, Number 158.
18. Mary-Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*, Routledge 1992, pp 6-7.
19. *The Colonist*, 29 December 1838, p4.



Hume & Hovell Expedition Bicentenary, 2024



Clockwise from top left: part of the audience at the Q&A session November 13; Bruce Pennay addresses the audience as Kat Kitch and Peter Harper look on; Karen Schmidt 4xgreat granddaughter of William Hovell, Geoff Romero, Greg Ryan, Mayor Kevin Mack and Wiradjuri man Darren Wighton at the opening of the Hovell Tree restoration on November 16; part of the audience at the opening; the Hovell Tree receives a big hug from Karen Schmidt and Kevin Mack; Karen Schmidt and Kevin Mack cut the ribbon.



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TWO EXHIBITIONS FINISHING SOON

MOB is a celebration of the local Aboriginal culture and history, using cultural objects found within the museum collection. Discover stories that have been recorded and the history that has unfolded within the local Albury area – stories of hope, grief and stories of an ancient living and breathing culture and community.

At Albury LibraryMuseum until December 15, 2024.



Noreuil

Local artist Nat Ward explores the connection between Noreuil Park Albury and the village of Noreuil in France. This new series of paintings draws upon field studies along the river bank at Noreuil Park, alongside paintings inspired by research conducted in historical archives and travel to Noreuil village, France.

At MAMA until January 19, 2025.



Noreuil, Albury



Noreuil, France

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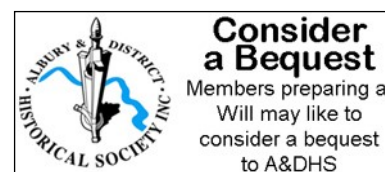
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Meetings: Second Wednesday of the month (except January) at 7.30 pm usually at the Commercial Club Albury.

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

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Single: \$30 Family: \$35

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