

# ALBURY & DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC

## President's Annual Report 2024/25

The past twelve months have been very busy for our Society as we witnessed three highly significant historical anniversaries.

The 90<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the landing of the Uiver, the bicentenary of the arrival of Hume and Hovell and the centenary of the Albury War Memorial were all observed. In addition, we have been active in helping the memorial committee at the Albury Public School which celebrates its 175<sup>th</sup> anniversary next month.

Our speaker program, expertly co-ordinated by Jenny Romero, continued to make our monthly meetings interesting and well attended. This has led to quite a few new members joining our Society.

Let us reflect on our speaker program:

- In July we heard from Dr Malcolm and Wendy Moore about their work in Nepal. Dr Moore worked at a 700 bed teaching hospital training young local doctors and Wendy Moore helped a humanitarian group helping women rebuild their lives after relationship breakdown. We also heard of their subsequent involvement with the Bhutanese refugees who settled in Albury after being displaced from their homelands.
- In August Society member, Honor Auchinleck spoke about our lack of preparedness, as a nation, to deal with and support the immediate families of those who died in combat in the early stages of the war. We were told of the country's response to that need and the rise of humanitarianism following the war.
- In September we heard from Yvette Nesire-McNeil who spoke of the Keamy sisters who left the mountains of Lebanon, as the Ottoman Empire was losing its power, and settled in Albury in about 1910. Yvette clearly demonstrated to us how valuable family history can be, especially to the descendants of those early pioneers.
- In October Fr Peter MacLeod-Miller generously invited us to Adamshurst and gave an entertaining address about the history of the mansion which he now calls home. We were given a chance to inspect the eclectic collection on display including a section in the library set aside for objects related to Albury history.
- Our November meeting focused on the Hume and Hovell bicentenary. Panel members Bruce Pennay, Peter Harper and Kat Kitsch gave brief presentations followed by questions from the audience.
- In December our special guest was Captain Deborah Lawrie who spoke about her career which led to her becoming Australia's first female pilot at a major commercial airline, in her case Ansett Airlines.
- Society member, Tom Doolan led us off in 2025 with a nostalgic and entertaining look at the development of Wurlinga. Tom recounted stories of local identities who have contributed to the development of Wurlinga to make it the attractive place it is today.

- In March Jeff Brownrigg recited the poetry of John O'Brien and told tales of his life as Albury Catholic priest Fr Patrick Hartigan and he referred to other colourful Australian characters.
- In April Captain Roger Turner RN took us underwater to find the wreck of the Montevideo Maru in an unforgettable presentation detailing the advances in technology which made the mission such a success.
- In May we had two presentations. Superintendent Paul Smith described the tragic events in 1963 which cost a police Sergeant his life. We also heard from Andrew Johnston about an equally tragic loss of life in 1943 when a bus carrying soldiers to a dance in Albury collided with a locomotive on a level crossing in Wodonga.
- June saw us enjoy the fruits of many hours of work by Doug Hunter. An evening at the theatre was enjoyed as some of our members did their best to re-enact the characters in Albury who helped support our soldiers on the frontline during World War I.

Apart from our monthly meetings we actively participate in community events to pursue our mission of keeping the history of our wonderful city alive.

Our secretary, Helen Livsey, answers numerous requests for information from the public on a myriad of topics. Greg Ryan curates a first class digital platform which attracts a large number of 'hits' from the public. Simon Burgess ensures that our financial affairs and compliance are professionally taken care of as well as being involved in all of our activities.

With the active participation of all committee members we also undertake numerous other projects, such as:

At the NAIDOC event in July we set up our stall alongside our friends from the Albury LibraryMuseum.

In September a Central Albury Heritage walk for participants in the Write Around the Murray writer's festival.

In October, a guided tour for vision impaired residents of the city to recognise International White Cane Day. Also in October we took our stall to the Uiver Open Day to commemorate the 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the landing and gave an interview to ABC Goulburn Murray live from the venue. Later in October we received the news that our nomination for a Heritage award for Sir Macpherson Robertson had been successful. This was the first such award to an Australian. Sir Macpherson's grandson, Phil Robertson, lives in Albury and of course, Sir Macpherson sponsored the London to Melbourne Air Race which led to the emergency landing of the Uiver at the Albury Racecourse.

In November we had a stall at the Albury Show selling our publications and talking to local families about their connection with Albury. Also in November we attended the unveiling of the new landscaping works at the Hovell Tree. This improvement to the landscaping came about after consistent lobbying by the Society which was led by Greg Ryan.

During November we also gave radio and television interviews and spoke at various

ceremonies to mark the Hume and Hovell bicentenary.

In January we led a guided bus tour of sites in Albury relevant to WWI and read the excellent scripts written by Doug Hunter. There were two further bus tours in the following months, all fully booked.

We nominated Peter Harper for the award of “Active Citizen of the Year” in the AlburyCity Honours List. In February we were proud and delighted to receive the news that Peter’s work in creating the H&H Explorers’ Bike Ride had been justly rewarded. Peter was crowned “Active Citizen of the Year” in a ceremony at the Albury Entertainment Centre followed by a cocktail party where the Society received praise from the Mayor and councillors for our constructive involvement in the affairs of the City and the recording of its history.

In March, during Heritage Month, we took another group on a Central Albury walk and delivered a Trove workshop at the ALM. Also in March we attended with our stall at the Wodonga Show.

In April we launched Howard Jones excellent publication, “Mud, Blood and Tears” at the ALM. Member for Albury, Justin Clancy officiated.

On ANZAC day we gave a brief address at a ceremony at the Albury war memorial which was held at 7.30pm, the exact time of the original dedication ceremony in 1925.

In May we conducted another guided tour of the City centre for the vision impaired, this time to celebrate International Guide Dogs Day. In June we attended as guest speaker at the Probus Club of Albury.

Thank you again to our generous corporate sponsors: the Commercial Club (venue for our monthly meetings); Albury LibraryMuseum (venue for committee meetings); Coxtech (website maintenance); Kwik Kopy (supply of our printing needs); FoxDigital (for digital printing including Society banners) and financial support from sponsors Lester & Son Funeral Directors, Baker Motors, Hume Bank, Armstrongs Financial Advisers, Zauner Construction, Martin’s Travel Group, Elders Real Estate (through Manny Gonzales) and Rotary Clubs of Albury, Albury North and Albury Hume.

Many of our members contribute to the smooth working of the Society. They include:

Richard Lee as Bulletin distributor and volunteer at the ALM and the Thurgoona facility. Chris McQuellin and Helen Livsey help at the ALM with scanning and cataloguing objects, photographs and documents. Claire Doolan and Narda Reid represent us on the Archive Acquisitions and De-accessions committee. Simon Barlow generously prints the paper copy of the Bulletin for those members who need one.

Finally I want to pay tribute to your hard-working committee who work together to make our Society so successful at what it does. Also thanks to the large number of our members who attend our monthly meetings thereby making our gatherings so enjoyable for all of us.



Geoff Romero