

Albury & District Historical Society Inc

March 2025

No 664

Wiradjuri Country, PO Box 822 ALBURY 2640

<https://alburyhistory.org.au/>

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Next Meeting

Wednesday, March 12, 2025

7.30 pm, Commercial Club, Albury

Topic: Films, Faith and Fast Cars:

Patrick Hartigan, ("John O'Brien")

Speaker: Jeff Brownrigg

ALBURY LIBRARYMUSEUM

Our Stories:

Bhutanese Refugees

Until March 23



Mount Pleasant Cottage Wirlinga

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Courting in the Colonies

PRESIDENT'S NOTES FOR MARCH

Our Society is off to a busy start to 2025. We have conducted two bus tours of WW1 sites in Albury following a script superbly written by our very own doyen, Doug Hunter. We have scheduled one more tour for the general public on April 12 following which the event will be performed exclusively for our members at our meeting in June.

We will host a Central Albury City Walk on March 7 and deliver a Trove workshop on Friday March 14. The following day, Saturday March 15 we will be at the Wodonga Show with our stall of publications and timeline banners to spread the word of our mission to preserve our local history.

The Society's next publication, "Mud, Blood and Tears" by Howard Jones, will be launched on Saturday April 5 at the Albury LibraryMuseum.

It was a pleasure to listen to Tom Doolan recount some local history at our February meeting. The history of Wirlinga drew a strong attendance from members and visitors and I thank Tom for a very interesting presentation.

On Saturday February 22 Jenny and I visited Capt Roger Turner RN who is now retired and living at Freeburgh. Captain Turner led an expedition to locate the wreck of the *Montevideo Maru* which was torpedoed by the Americans as it was transporting about 1000 Australian prisoners-of-war to Japan. All of the Australians were killed and the wreck is accordingly an official war grave. This is a story typically covered in documentary form by the ABC and the BBC, and in April we will have the honour of hearing the story directly from Captain Turner. We will be advertising the meeting to give the families of those who lost their lives an opportunity to attend as our visitors.

The Name Wirlinga

The Wirlinga area was originally inhabited by Wiradjuri people and the word Wirlinga is thought to come from their Aboriginal word meaning – “A place of many birds” or “the place of the warbling song” reflecting the area’s natural environment and indigenous peoples’ connection to the area.

It would have been a great place to live with the river, birds, swampy areas and an abundance of wildlife to provide food and water for their existence. It was probably an idealist existence which was soon to be disrupted by the first settlers.

Wirlinga the suburb began in the late 1800s with the first of mention of the name being by NSW postal service in 1895. A list of names was sent to Mrs Heath (the Post Mistress) who chose the name “Wirlinga.”

Early Settlers

Prior to the Hume Dam being constructed from 1919-1936 (extended 1956) the area we now know as Wirlinga ran along the NSW side of the Murray River where Hume and Hovell slogged through in 1824. Historically Wirlinga was part of the Mungabareena Run which was formed by Charles Ebdon and by 1837 was under the ownership of Elizabeth Mitchell. After changing hands several times, it was sold to the Heywood family, ancestors of current owners the Webb Family. The name “Hawksview” was registered in 1859.

1850 and 1860s

Wirlinga has a notable history of German immigration, particularly during the 1850s. Life was tough in Germany and many of the German immigrants arrived seeking a better life, escaping political unrest, religious persecutions, and economic hardship in their homeland. They brought with them agricultural skills and traditions. The German community in Wirlinga contributed to the development of farming, particularly in dairy and grape production, which became the mainstay of the economy.

An article by Howard Jones (A&DHS Bulletin March 1989 No 270) tells us that German speaking people played an important part in the settlement of the Border District. Albury’s first Germans were the wine-makers John Frauenfelder, Sebastian Schubach and Henry Rau, who arrived with their families in 1851. Relatives of these families soon joined them from Germany. By 1857, many other German families had arrived in the region, among them the Knobles and Merkels. Nola Merkel believes that their land was purchased from Bertie Knoble who had a house further up the road and a dairy shed which can still be seen today.

The Merkel Family

Despite many challenges, the German heritage in Wirlinga and the surrounding areas has persisted. Nola and Sue Merkel run a Friesian dairy farm between Knobles Road and Thurgoona Drive and adjacent to 4COD. Nola is in her mid-nineties, and it was a treat to hear her stories about the old times in Wirlinga. Sue who manages the farm is the fifth generation of Merkel to operate the dairy. Their ancestors, Conrad and Alice Merkel came to the area from Germany mid the 1800s. Nola and Gordon took over management of the farm in the 1940s. Nola tells of the hardships faced over the early years including the struggles to keep dairy cows fed and watered, especially in years of drought. The roads were rough, gravelly and very difficult to navigate on horse and cart.

The Kerr Brothers

Keith and Ken ran a mixed farm on Kerr Road. The bachelors were great old fellows, and I used to help them cart hay in the late 1970s when on holiday from university. A *Border Morning Mail* article relating how they tirelessly tried to save the farm from the 1990 bushfire that ravaged the region reads like a sad movie. They were cousins of the Merkels and much-loved members of the Wirlinga community. The jinker in the photo was from their farm, used to cart hay bales. It now has inflatable tyres and is towed by tractor. I purchased it at their clearing sale in 1997.

The first Wirlinga Post Office

The post office operated from Heaths “Mount Pleasant” home in about 1895. This building was originally “the Mt Pleasant Hotel” and was a stagecoach stop in the early days of Wirlinga. The cottage which was part of this house is still standing and has been restored by Geoff and Deb Breen. Interestingly, the name Wirlinga was chosen by Mrs Heath from a list compiled in Sydney. After Mrs Heath’s death the post office was transferred to a weatherboard home close by owned by the Gehrigs, another of the good German immigrants to the region.



Tom Doran's Wirlinga Store

The famous store on the Riverina Highway, now a private residence, was built by Larry Gehrig for his daughter to open a business. Tom Doran took over after World War II and operated it until he died in 1975.

Legend has it that the store had the best ice-cream in the district and Albury residents would make the trip out the Riverina Highway on the weekend just to buy a treat. The store often featured in the Ken Maynard cartoons.

Percy Williams' Wirlinga Wrecking Yard

A busy trading centre and notable landmark in Wirlinga. Legend has it that Percy would toss "double or nothing" for a car part or stop an engine by putting his finger on a spark plug.

Hawksview Park

Another landmark property of Wirlinga, nowadays known as "The Ponderosa" on Kerr Road was formerly known as "Hawksview Park." It was built in the early 1900s and purchased in 1948 by WT and HT Doig, Scottish farmers from Osbourne NSW. WT died in 1949 and Hannah Maude his wife lived there till 1962. Col and Edie Bottrell helped run the farm until early 1963 when it was sold.

Hawksview Bridge



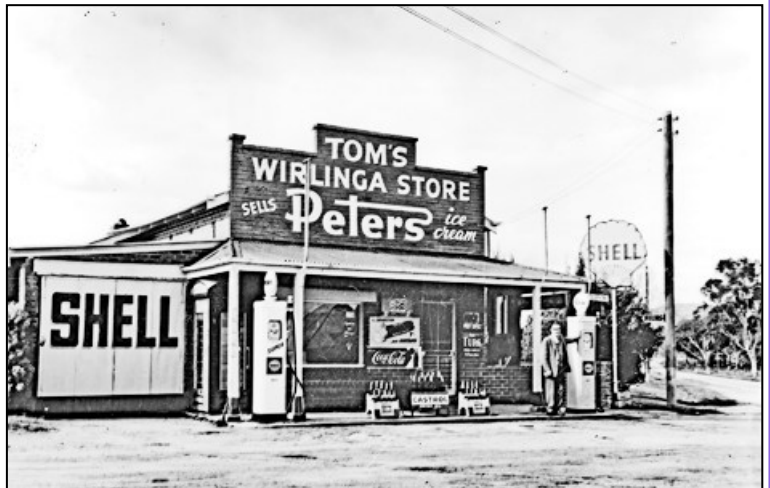
Historically the Murray River posed a barrier for residents and farmers who lived on the Victorian side of the river because the main markets and trade centres were in Albury and Wodonga. Before the Hawksview Bridge was built, farmers and travellers from the Upper Murray had to cross the river at times when the Murray River was low, mostly in the summer months. The bridge, which was located on the northern fringe of Wirlinga, was designed by Harry Gilliat and opened in 1895. It was deconstructed before being drowned when Hume Reservoir was created.

The 1895 construction gave the farmers access for their produce to the nearby markets of Albury and Wodonga and by railway via Wodonga to Melbourne and Sydney. The road from the bridge met the River Road at Bowna and weaved its way along the NSW side through the historic Hawksview Station to Knoble's Road.

Mandalay Estate

Nowadays the houses that reside on Hawksview and Knoble's Roads are referred to as belonging to Wirlinga Village. In the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s it was known as Mandalay Estate. This wedge-shaped area of land enclosed by the roads was originally owned by Norm Frauenfelder, who planned to divide it into approximately 40 two-acre blocks. It was proposed to supply water to these blocks via a private pumping station on the Weir. This occurred in the late 1960s to early 1970s and was the birth of the Mandalay Water Scheme. An initial private water scheme was established to service the needs of four early landholders, Peter Borella, Tom Savage (who had a world-renowned Camellia Garden), John Mars and Dr Webber. This system was both inefficient and labour-some. After several more blocks were sold by Norm Frauenfelder, the Mandalay Water Scheme was established in 1973 and the private scheme was abandoned. Not long after this the Albury Wodonga Development Corporation purchased the remaining land from Mr Frauenfelder, and further subdivision was prevented.

In 1989, the Mandalay Water Scheme became an incorporated association, the Mandalay Water Scheme Incorporated (SINC), with 19 signatories. When a property is sold, the applicable shares and associated land rights pass to the purchaser. Between 1989 and 1995 SINC negotiated the purchase of additional parcels of land from the Albury Wodonga Development Corporation. This land is now referred to as the "Common."



Tom Doran outside his store, 1963

Early Days of Pumping

When Sid and Sue Lukins arrived in 1983, the diesel pump in operation was an ancient Lister, crank-operated single cylinder beast.

Sid says that “Starting it was always a battle, with a broken thumb always a risk from the powerful recoil from the crank. There was a collective sigh of relief when, after a few years, we installed a brand new Yanmar pump complete with starter motor. Maintaining our water supply through the drought periods has always been a challenge although it is safe to say that we have never been without water even when the lake level dropped to around 6% on more than one occasion. This gave us an opportunity to lay an extensive length of subterranean pipe which extended the reach of the system to around the Point and almost to the original river course.”

For many years a local fuel supplier delivered diesel to a series of 44-gallon drums located adjacent to the pump house. When this option was discontinued, we were faced with the task of refuelling the drums ourselves.

Thanks to Society members Claire and Tom Doolan for the entertaining address to our February meeting and for preparing this brief account of the development of Wirlinga.

LOLA WIGG SALON

Greg Ryan

Midway through 2024, Simon Burgess learnt the Lola Wigg Salon was researching the salon’s history in preparation to celebrate 80 years of business in Albury – plans were postponed due to Covid restrictions. Simon did a little research and discovered the salon had in fact operated longer than what was first thought. Documentation held by the current owners, stated that the business was registration in January 1942, however Simon discovered an advertisement for Lola Wigg in 1938.

The first advertisement found on Trove for the Lola Wigg Salon appears in the *Border Morning Mail* of February 25, 1938: “Deep, Natural-looking Waves and Ringlet Ends! For your next permanent wave appointment ring Albury 277. Prices range from 15/6 to 30/ for full head; ends from 10/6. Lola Wigg, Beauty Salon, Mate’s Lounge.”

It is most likely in 1935 that Lola Wigg Salon was established. In June 1946, Lola appeared in court charged with not keeping adequate time and wages sheets. In court it was stated that she “had been the proprietress of a hairdressing and beauty salon for 10 years.” When Miss Jean Schulz returned to the salon in 1947, a reference was made: “we have been famous for 12 years.” Then when Lola sold the business in 1949 (see below) she thanked her customers of “the past 14 years.” However, there are no adverts in the *BMM* of 1935 for Lola Wigg Salon. Did she start the business in 1935 but did not advertise or did she start a little later?

So who was Lola Wigg?

Lola Mary Gayford Wigg was born at Corowa on April 20, 1911, the only daughter of John Gayford (Jack) Wigg and Edith Annie Donnelly.

Her father held the license of the Jindera Hotel becoming owner/licensee of the Brocklesby Hotel from 1908. He sold the lease before obtaining the license of the White Horse at Bowna in 1914. His Brocklesby Hotel license was returned to him in 1916 after he guaranteed “that a first class two-storey brick hotel would be built within 12 months.” The two-storey hotel never eventuated.

In 1935 Jack transferred the Brocklesby Hotel license to Rudolph Rutzou and moved to Wagga, opening a butcher’s shop – his father, also John Gayford Wigg, had been a Wodonga butcher for many years in the late nineteenth century.

Lola attended St Joseph’s Convent of Mercy in Albury. The *Albury Banner* recorded results of her music examinations: “St Joseph’s High School, Convent of Mercy, Distribution of Medals and Certificates ... Pianoforte, Grade V: Lola Wigg 82, Constance Shortal 79.” (Dec 22, 1922). Two years later: “The results of the practical examinations recently conducted by the State Conservatorium on behalf of the Australian Music Examination Board ... Convent of Mercy, Albury, Grade 4 Pass, Constance Shortal; Rose Packer, Mary Sutherland, Lola Wigg.” (Dec 19, 1924).



A signed portrait of Lola supplied by Society member Peter Quick. His mother was a friend of Lola and the portrait hung in the Quick family home.

The *Banner* also reports Lola winning several golf tournaments in Brocklesby. One such report In September 1931 records that: “Miss Lola Wigg won the Brocklesby Golf Club associates’ trophy, with Miss K McCormack runner-up.”

After several years in Mate’s Lounge, on November 30, 1940, in an advertisement in the *Border Morning Mail* “Miss Lola Wigg announces that Monday, December 2 is the Opening Date for her new Hairdressing Salon in the new T and G Building. It is the most modern and best equipped salon in the district.”



An early Lola Wigg sign from the T&G Building

The *Border Morning Mail* social pages refer to Lola employing young ladies in her business. From 1938 to 1953 the names include Misses Mary Mulfahey, Shirley Hallam, Elizabeth Wootten, Beth Elrington, Nonie Nowland, Helen Spurr, Margaret Ferguson, June Foster, Jean Schulz, Dorothy Mildren, Margaret Keogh, Dorothy Hume, Valerie Vonthien, Dorothy Murray, Joan Keogh, P Falkiner, Lorraine Holdenson and Mary Blakely.

On August 13, 1943, the *Border Morning Mail* reported “The marriage was celebrated last evening at St Patrick’s Church, Albury, at 8.30 o’clock between Lola Mary Gayford, only daughter of Mr and Mrs J G Wigg, Kincaid St Wagga, and Lachlan Richard, only son of Mr and Mrs R Edgar, Cobar.”

In 1950 an advertisement appeared in the *Cootamundra Herald* “Urgently required, Fully Qualified Ladies’ Hairdresser, good conditions, salary. Apply Lola Edgar Salon, Temora. Phone, 143.”

Electoral rolls record that she lived in Wagga from at least 1954. An advertisement appeared in the *Wagga Daily Advertiser* in July 1954 “Modern Hairdressing Salon. Mrs L Edgar, late of Temora and the Lola Wigg Salon, Albury, wishes to announce that she is opening a Modern Ladies’ Hairdressing Salon in D’Hudson House, 165a Baylis Street on Monday, July 19.”

Lola Mary Gayford Elgar died in Wagga on August 10, 1997. She was the mother of Susan, born 1946 and grandmother of four. She is buried in the Wagga cemetery.

Meanwhile, Lola Wigg Salon survives in Albury until the present day. In March 1949 the *BMM* reported: “Mrs Edgar of the Lola Wigg Salon, wishes to thank clients for their pleasant co-operation over the past 14 years, and to notify them that the Business has been transferred to Miss Jean Schulz, who has managed the salon over the past 12 [should be 2] years, and clients are assured of the same careful attention. The salon will continue to be called the Lola Wigg Salon.”

In October 1951, Doris Watkin advertised that: “Doris Watkin Thurgoona Street is pleased to announce that she has taken over the Lola Wigg Salon T and G Buildings, from next Monday, October 29. Telephone 277.”

Mrs Watkin retired from business in 1972 after 38 years. The *BMM* reported that Doris “operated a salon in Thurgoona St for 13 years and in the T and G building for 25 years ... she is happy her successor, Mrs Carole Chisnall, is a former apprentice of her long-time friend, Raie Langley. Mrs Chisnall and Mrs Doreen Wynne, of the Vicki Salon at the Albury Village, take over the Lola Wigg Salon today.”

Carole Chisnall continued the successful running of Lola Wigg until 1995, when her sister Vicki and niece Bree took over in partnership. In 1998 Carole’s niece Bree Brown (Wilcox) became the sole trader after the partnership with her mother ended. In 2006 after operating the business for another eight years solo, Bree took on a business partner, Billie Jo McCarthy who had completed her hairdressing apprenticeship under Bree at Lola Wigg. This has been a very successful partnership spanning over 19 years together. More recently, with growth of the business, Bree and Billie made the move further down AMP Lane into the Volt Lane complex to cater for a larger work team and client base. The move doubled the size of the salon and the business continues to thrive.



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RESTORATION OF THE FAMOUS BOOK BY NICOLAUS COPERNICUS

Greg Ryan

I was privileged in 2004 to have the opportunity to turn the pages of *On the Revolutions of the Heavenly Spheres*, the book written by Renaissance mathematician and astronomer Nicolaus Copernicus, published in 1566. It had been the personal copy of Galileo Galilei. I was in Florence visiting The Museum of the History of Science (renamed in 2010 *Museo Galileo*) and by lying on the floor, I succeeded in seeing light through Galileo's telescope, about one metre long and housed in a glass display cabinet. It was the very telescope through which Galileo was the first to discover the moons of Jupiter, the rings of Saturn, that the Sun rotates on its axis, that the moon has mountains & craters and much more.

A museum employee spotted me and asked what I was doing. When I explained that I was a visiting Physics teacher from Australia, she invited me down to the basement to view the treasured book by Copernicus in their collection. Galileo's personal hand written notes filled the margins of some pages. Donning white gloves, I was given permission to turn a few pages. I had a great tale to tell my students when I was back at work.



The leather covered eye-piece of Galileo's telescope

Follow the link to read the account of restoration of the University of Sydney's copy of the book:
[Uncovering Copernicus](#)

STATE LIBRARY OF VICTORIA BLOGS

Another interesting blog from SLV. In the 1830s, men outnumbered women 3:1 in Australia. The male population boomed again after the discovery of gold, when men outnumbered women 20:1 in some rural areas. How did men find a partner? Follow the link [Courting in the Colonies](#).



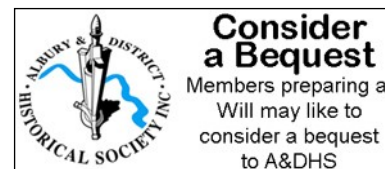
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Meetings: Second Wednesday of the month (except January) at 7.30 pm usually at the Commercial Club Albury.

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

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