

# Albury & District Historical Society Inc

April 2025

No 665

Wiradjuri Country, PO Box 822 ALBURY 2640

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

For Your Reference A&DHS account details are:

BSB 640 000 Acc No 111097776

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



Father Patrick Hartigan at the wheel of the Renault that he is said to have purchased in 1911 from Albury vigneron Georges Frere.

## Next Meeting

Wednesday, April 09, 2025

7.30 pm, Commercial Club, Albury

**Topic:** The Montevideo Maru

**Speaker:** Capt Roger Turner

**ALBURY LIBRARYMUSEUM**  
**Reception This Way**  
**Photographic exhibition**  
**developed by NAA**  
**Until June 1**

Page 2 Fr Patrick Hartigan

Page 4 Diggers' Graves

Page 6 Dr Jeffrey Keatinge

## PRESIDENT'S NOTES FOR APRIL

A rollicking presentation by Jeff Brownrigg was enjoyed by members and guests at our March meeting. Jeff recited the poetry of John O'Brien, sang and told stories of former Albury priest, Father Hartigan as well as other colourful Australians with a connection to Albury. We thought we had a guest speaker but gained a vaudeville performer! We left Jeff Brownrigg to research whether he is a descendant of Albury's second police magistrate, Marcus Brownrigg and his son, also Marcus Brownrigg who was appointed rector of St Matthews Church in 1863.

We will be interested to learn the outcome of Jeff's family research.

April will be a memorable and busy month. Our meeting on April 9 will be addressed by Captain Roger Turner RN who, two years ago, led an expedition to find the *Montevideo Maru* which is now a designated war grave.

We will continue with our bus tour of relevant WW1 locations in Albury and the characters here who gave much needed support to our soldiers fighting in Europe. The tour will take place on Saturday April 12 at 9am. Tickets should be booked through the Albury LibraryMuseum website.

Anzac Day will see us celebrating the centenary of the unveiling of the Albury War Memorial. In addition to the usual dawn service and the mid-morning service there will be a re-enactment of the original opening ceremony at 7.30pm Anzac Day on Monument Hill. On behalf of A&DHS I have been asked to make a brief speech about the circumstances leading up to the commencement of construction. Other speakers will talk about the construction itself.

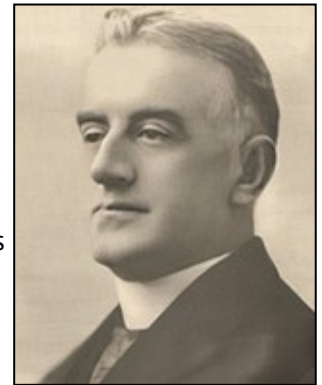
Almost every month we welcome new members. This month it is Pam Lockley and Ian Anderson that we welcome to our Society.

This article is a precis of a longer article written by Dr Brownrigg and published on the National Film and Sound Archives Owls website. To read the longer article, visit the website at [NFSA Owls](https://www.nfsa.gov.au/owls).

'John O'Brien' was born Patrick Joseph Hartigan in O'Connell Town in 1878, just around the corner from the Yass Convent, now Lovat Chapel, but once St Augustine's Church, where he was baptised. Elements of Irish and Irish-inspired local culture had, by that time, been 'drip fed' (and sometimes heartily injected) into Australian life. There were, of course, both Catholic and Protestant elements present, and from time-to-time sectarian differences erupted into physical violence.

From the earliest days following the European invasion, Irish music, words, attitudes and customs are evident, evolving beside other cultural influences that helped to shape Australia's national European character. John O'Brien's verse sits, perhaps, at the pinnacle of the bell curve of Irish-Australian balladry growing out of the Catholic community he served and of which he was an important part.

Hartigan/O'Brien came from a reasonably comfortable middle class Catholic family. His parents married at St Mary's Cathedral in Sydney in 1871, with the record of their marriage stating that Hartigan was a resident of Yass, where he was a carrier.



Father Patrick Hartigan



Patrick junior was born on October 13, 1878. After schooling in Yass, he trained for the priesthood, then spent most of his early ministry in NSW country towns: Albury, Berrigan and, for 27 years, Narrandera. His first appointment was as a curate in St Patrick's parish Albury where he remained for seven years. From Albury he was made Inspector of Schools for the Diocese of Goulburn in 1910, residing in Thurgoona.

After a couple of decades of composition and the emergence of an enthusiastic readership, publisher George Robertson encouraged Hartigan to gather his verses into a single volume.

Hartigan, an unashamed raconteur and, perhaps, embroiderer of tales, told a story that a milk vendor he knew, named 'O'Brien' often sold 'watered-down' milk. The priest took the name because he thought of himself as a person blemished by his tendency, as 'O'Brien', to be worldly and satirical.

*Around the Boree Log and Other Verse* appeared in November 1921. It was wildly successful, selling well in Australia, and Ireland, where it is still in print, and the USA. By the end of 1925 it had sold more than 18,000 copies in Australia. People 'of a certain age' will, perhaps, remember learning by heart or hearing recitations of 'We'll all be rooned, said Hanrahan,' 'The Old Bush School,' 'The Little Irish Mother' and 'Tangmalangaloo.'

It is hard to imagine that a film made in 2025, one hundred years on from when the screen version of *Around the Boree Log* was conceived, and built around several popular poems such as these, with no particular linking narrative beyond the sectarian celebration of Irish Catholicism, would find much of an audience today.

The film of *Around the Boree Log* was made from individual poems with intertitles utilising O'Brien's words. Each one formed an independent episode and all of them were strung together on that single theme: Catholic life in the Australian bush.

Hartigan garnered inspiration for his narratives first and foremost from his living congregations. He spoke their language. He knew their ways. He knew what they liked to hear. And he appealed to a long-standing but still current, deeply sectarian sense of themselves. That does not mean that he was a table-thumping rabble-rouser blinkered by his faith. There is satire and quite a lot of gentle self-parody in his work. These last qualities, we might say 'capabilities,' flowed from his avid reading of the published, Kiplingesque bush balladry of Henry Lawson and Andrew Barton Paterson from the 1890s and the first decade of the 20th century. Much of their work was published by the *Bulletin*. After WW1 he clearly absorbed the demotic, urban reveries of C J Dennis, another Irish-descended popular poet, who was catapulted into prominence by the Great War.

Hartigan read these men in periodicals such as the *Bulletin*. He soon prided himself on becoming one of its contributors, even though it was broadly anti-clerical. *Bulletin* balladists wrote accessible, energetic, often well-



crafted verse, much of which was underscored by a sense of the centrality of ‘the bush’ in Australia’s vision of itself.

The result of the fusion is a quality evident at the core of ‘The Little Irish Mother.’

The poem was just as well-known as ‘Hanrahan’ in its time. It was probably taught as frequently in the mid-20th century, especially in Catholic schools. It offers a sort of insight into ‘the human condition’ that John O’Brien often brings to his ‘rattling good’ yarns; stories of incidents observed in his daily round.

There’s a Little Irish Mother sleeping softly now at last  
Where the tangled grass is creeping all around;  
And the shades of unsung heroes troop about her from the past  
While the moonlight scatters diamonds on the mound.  
And a good Australian’s toiling in the world of busy men  
Where the strife and sordid grinding cramp and kill;  
But his eyes are sometimes misted, and his heart grows brave again –  
She’s the Little Irish Mother to him still.

However, I suspect that many do not know that Hartigan was, in Australian parlance, ‘pretty flash.’ He was not just a conventional and rather narrow and crusty cleric. Instead, he expressed this worldly side, fulsomely, in several ways. He valued the literary connections and engaged with creative people who sought him out and boosted his artistic profile. In just over a decade from about 1910, he became well-known nationally as a highly successful, published poet. He was even the subject of caricatures and cartoons in his beloved *Bulletin*. And he was also photographed with other literary celebrities, including Frank Clune and Miles Franklin.



Caricature [The Bulletin]

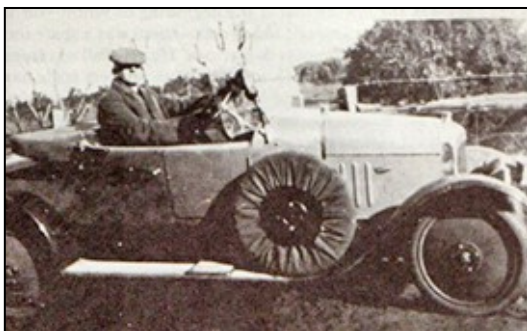
He was not ever, it seems, short of cash. Early in his career, in 1911, he had purchased a second-hand Renault (see photo on page 1). This appears to have quickly evolved into a love for open touring cars and, over time, he seems to have developed a steadily increasing appetite for speed.

Cars are an important clue to Hartigan/O’Brien, the ‘worldly poet’s’ character as well as a reflection of his steadily increasing personal wealth. These racy vehicles were not just an implement. They were an adjunct to priestly duty and a means of simply ‘getting about.’

Consider, then, the following annotated, chronological list of vehicles he owned, between, about 1910 and the early 1940s.

1911 – A twin cylinder Renault followed hot on the heels of what, as far as I can tell, was a pre-WW1 Triumph motorbike. It was in the Renault that he travelled over steep terrain to administer Last Rites to the man from Snowy River (1912). Knowing Paterson’s poem almost certainly added to the occasion and the man from Snowy River, Jack Riley, unexpectedly recovered and survived for four more years.

When *St Mel’s* was published it included other vehicular poems, notably, ‘Twin Cylinder,’ ‘The One-Ton Truck’ and ‘Ten-Twelve Shebang.’ The latter is closely linked to O’Brien’s affection for his first car, the Renault:



Hartigan in his Citroen sports-tourer

She never had no side doors, and she never had no screen,  
Such things were not invented when they built that old machine;  
The paint is none too clever, and her lines is none too flash,  
She’s ugly as a bag of mice with that four-cornered dash;  
Her back seat’s like a pulpit, and her hood’s no masterpiece,  
She’s knock-kneed in the hind wheels and her diff is leakin’ grease;  
And every dead-beat motor yarn, as fur as I can see,  
Is trotted out by some durned goat, and tacked on her and me.

**1921** – Hartigan changed to a Citroen sports-tourer. I have found one photograph from the time that includes him at the wheel.

**1925** – He brought back from Europe an Alvis Super-Sports when he returned from a trip to Rome, England and Ireland. About 18,000 copies of his first book had sold by then. Royalties would have been considerable and likely to have been collected by the poet and not his employer.

I have also found no evidence of the colour of any car he owned, except for the Alvis Super-Sports which was certainly silver polished aluminium panels with painted mudguards/running boards, probably red.

1928 – Hartigan bought a Buick Roadster, changing his automotive allegiance from Europe to the USA.

1929 – The Buick lasted only one year before it was replaced with a Packard.

1934 – Saw the first of three, eight-cylinder Hudson ‘roadsters.’

1936 – He acquires the new model Hudson.

1940 – Hartigan upgrades to the latest Hudson. This was probably the last car he purchased

Over time, Hartigan’s passion for speed and sportiness increased. These traits represent an important key to a major part of his character. Today we would probably say that he was a ‘larrikin’ or, in even more colloquial parlance, a ‘rev-head.’ But it is a ‘larrikin’ element which is also evident in his humour and his wit.

The *Bulletin*’s cartoon of Hartigan with the long cigarette holder and published towards the end of his life (see page 3), seems to suggest that this periodical saw him that way. Hartigan, as John O’Brien, clearly enjoyed the celebrity that came from the publication of *Around the Boree Log* in 1921 and in the *Bulletin* within a literary circle that included writers such as those already mentioned, Miles Franklin and Frank Clune.

Hartigan took from his daily round many elements from the lives of his parishioners that he wove into his poems and which went on to find their way into the film. A true story (Hartigan said) gave rise to his ‘Tangmalangaloo’ and the tale found its way into the film. It was related to Hartigan by his mentor the Bishop of Goulburn, John Gallagher, the bishop of the poem. Most of Hartigan’s tropes and mannerisms are present in ‘Tangmalangaloo.’

When Hartigan saw the film version of *Around the Boree Log*, according to his nephew and biographer, Father Frank Mecham, Hartigan ‘was not overly impressed [by the film] and confessed to being sorry to have given permission for an effort “done on a shoe-string budget.”’ But he had no need to worry that the film might somehow cheapen or diminish his words. His reputation and his following had already been firmly established.



Above right: examples of the cars that Hartigan owned.

Top to bottom: 1925 Alvis Super-Sports; 1928 Buick Roadster; 1929 Packard Roadster; 1934 Hudson Roadster.

## ALBURY’S EXAMPLES TO EMPIRES

This article appeared in the ‘Border Morning Mail’ of November 13, 1934.

### Caring for Their Soldiers’ Graves – World Visitors Applaud Loyalty – Story To Be Told Throughout Dominions.

How the lonely death of a Digger at the side of road near Albury early last year, and a chance remark at his graveside, so stirred the consciences of the people of Albury, that within a year every soldier’s grave in the Albury Cemetery was ensured of reverent care, is the touching story which is to be circulated throughout the Empire.

This was decided today by representatives of Great Britain and all the Dominions who are meeting at Anzac House for the Seventh Biennial Conference of the British Empire Service League.

When the delegates had heard the story told by Mr E R Robb, president of the NSW branch of the Returned Soldiers’ League, they warmly applauded, and Major-General Sir Fabian Ware, vice-chairman of the Imperial War Graves Commission, who had been addressing the conference on war graves work, made a special request that the report be sent to London headquarters.

“I think it is a perfectly wonderful work,” he said. “Nowhere has greater tenderness been shown, I ask you to send this report to the secretary of the Imperial War Graves Commission, and to Empire Service headquarters, mentioning you are doing so at my special request. I wish it to be read to the representatives of all Dominion Governments and to be distributed in the Dominions.”

Conference carried a resolution that this would be done.



### Rotten End for a Digger

Mr Robb, reporting on the work done at Albury, said: "On February 4 last year a digger died by the roadside near Albury, and he was buried by the league. Members of the Albury sub-branch, attended the funeral, and one remarked, "What a rotten end for a digger." At the next monthly meeting of the sub-branch, a sub-committee of three was appointed to take the following action:—

1. To compile a roll showing the particulars, date of death, and section and number of the grave of every returned soldier buried in the Albury cemetery.
2. To organise a scheme for placing headstones on all neglected and unattended graves of returned men in the cemetery.
3. To carry out this scheme by Anzac Day, 1934.

"The sub-committee formed comprised a member of the Anglican, Roman Catholic and Presbyterian denominations. Its first work was to obtain names of all returned men buried in the local cemetery. Hospital records, Cemetery Trust records and undertakers' records were searched without success. The 'Border Morning Mail' was then approached, and the proprietors generously granted our application to search their back files from 1915 to 1933 without charge. As the usual fee for searching back numbers is 1/, we actually saved at that price £306, as we searched 6120 papers and were able to find the funeral notices of 44 diggers. In addition to this list the names of eight other diggers, who had been brought to Albury cemetery from outlying districts, were obtained from other sources.

### Money in Three Weeks

"With the assistance of the sexton, each grave was located, and examined and notes were made of its condition. It was found that 27 were unattended and neglected.

"From the Repatriation Department records, regimental particulars of each deceased digger were obtained, and a roll drawn up. Having completed all investigations, the sub-committee was then given complete power to proceed with the rest of the scheme. A committee of three was formed to raise funds, £150 being the objective of the appeal.

"So well was the appeal organised, that within three weeks it was closed, with £200 in hand. It was then decided that a headstone, alone would not be sufficient, and kerbing around each grave was decided upon. A monumental mason donated the headstones from a surplus he held after a contract for the Repatriation Department had expired, and the total cost of each grave was only £7/12/6. Remaining funds were retained for maintenance.



The Service at Albury Pioneer Cemetery, Anzac Day 1934



Click on the link or use the QR code:

Visit [A&DHS website](#)

Visit our [YouTube Channel](#)



Click on the link below to visit our [Facebook page](#)



“As planned, all graves were completed by Anzac Day, when a service was held in the cemetery. The Mayor presided, and in the solemn ceremony which took place, the president of the Albury sub-branch, Albury Town Band, combined choir, and a firing party from the 40th Battery participated. Each digger’s grave was covered with the Australian flag or Union Jack, according to his enlistment, and the flags were removed by Boy Scouts on the last note of the ‘Last Post,’ to be replaced by wreaths of rosemary on the first note of the ‘Reveille.’”

### Perpetual Care

Mr Robb added that all the expenses of organisation were covered by a special donation from a returned soldier. “Since that report was made,” he added, “the Albury people have gone further. Girls and boys in the town have been selected to perform a little ceremony before each of the graves. Each child has made a vow to care continually for a grave which has been placed in its charge, so long as the child lives in the district. This little phase of the work is being extended to all sub-branches of our organisation.”

### A PIONEERING ALBURY DOCTOR – a snippet spotted on Trove

Dr Keatinge, late of Collins street, Melbourne, begs to acquaint the settlers of the Upper Hume and Murray District, that at the request of a number of friends, he has removed to the township of Albury, where he purposes practising his profession.

Albury, Hume River, June 8th 1847.

*Port Phillip Patriot and Morning Advertiser, Monday 19 June 1847*

Jeffrey Keatinge was born in 1808, County Limerick, Ireland. He worked as an apothecary from 1833. Declared insolvent in 1840, he sailed to Australia as ship’s surgeon on board the ‘Argyle.’

When he died in Albury on February 11, 1876, the *Albury Banner* noted that he “was held in high estimation by all classes of the community on account of his urbane and courteous disposition and kindness of heart.”

Dr Keatinge is still remembered in Albury – a commemorative window for Dr Keatinge is installed in St Patrick’s Church Albury and Lavington has a Keatinge street.

## A&DHS Corporate Sponsors

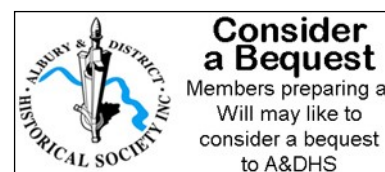
Albury & District Historical Society receives generous support from the following sponsors.

Please click on the logo to visit their respective websites.



**Disclaimer:** The Albury & District Historical Society Inc, and/or its members, through this newsletter, endeavours to provide accurate and reliable information, but does not warrant or make any representation regarding the accuracy or reliability of information contained within this newsletter.

To the maximum extent permitted by applicable law, the Society and/or its members shall not be liable for any damages of any kind relating to the use of this information, including without limitation, direct, indirect, special, compensatory or consequential damages, loss of profits or damage to property, even if the Society and/or its members have been advised of the possibility of such damages.



**Patron:** Greg Aplin

**Honorary Life Members:**

Howard Jones, June Shanahan,

Helen Livsey, Bruce Pennay

**President:** Geoff Romero

**Vice-President:** Greg Ryan

**Secretary:** Helen Livsey

alburyhistory@bigpond.com

02 6021 3671

**Treasurer:** Simon Burgess

**Minute Secretary:** Yelly Evenhuis

**Publicity Officer:** Helen Livsey

**Public Officer:** Helen Livsey

**Committee:** Jenny Romero, Robyn Hawking, Peter Harper, Howard Jones.

**Bulletin Editor:** Greg Ryan

gmjryan@bigpond.com

**Publications & Stock Officer:** Volunteer needed

**Bulletin dispatch (by post):** Richard Lee

**Meeting Greeter:** Yelly Evenhuis

**Web Editor:** Greg Ryan

**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.