

Albury & District Historical Society Inc

October 2025

No 671

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

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Next Meeting

Wednesday, October 08, 2025

7.30 pm, Commercial Club, Albury

Topic: Noreuil France and Albury

Speaker: Nat Ward

ALBURY LIBRARYMUSEUM
Macquarie Textiles
In Albury
October 11 – Feb 08

Page 2 Trove update
Page 3 CBD photograph
Page 4 Robbins & Porter
Page 5 Arts in Albury
Albury Botanic Gardens
Page 6 A&DHS Website
SLV Blogs



Compare this 'Now' photo of a section of Albury's CBD with the 'Then' photo on page 3.

PRESIDENT'S NOTES FOR OCTOBER

A very informative and helpful workshop on the use of Trove was presented to members at our September meeting. Thank you to Greg Ryan for his expertly controlled presentation. The workshop will help members take full advantage of the investment our Society has made in digitising our local newspapers up to 1954 and making them available on Trove.

Natalie Ward has confirmed her readiness to speak on her paintings, connecting the village of Noreuil in France to our own much loved riverfront park here in Albury. The presentation will include slides of her artwork and a very interesting background story. At my request Natalie has agreed to bring along three of her original paintings which will be displayed for your enjoyment.

As an added item of interest Natalie will tell members about the tentative plans for her artworks to travel back to France in time for ANZAC Day 2026. If all goes to plan Natalie's art will be exhibited at the Sir John Monash Centre at Villers-Bretonneux.

If you have not had a look at [Richard Lee's Timeline](#) on our website then I recommend that you have a look. Richard has been working on it for several years and it now has more than 70 pages in chronological order tracing the evolution of our city.

This month we welcome new members Bryce Gregory and Terry Hickman. We also welcome new corporate sponsors, Stewart Gould Real Estate.

Thank you to all members who have paid their subs for 2025/26. A reminder to members who have not yet paid, your subscription is now overdue. You can pay by cheque to Albury & District Historical Society, PO Box 822 Albury, or direct deposit to BSB: 640 000 Account: 111097776, singles \$30, family \$35, an extra \$12 for a posted Bulletin.

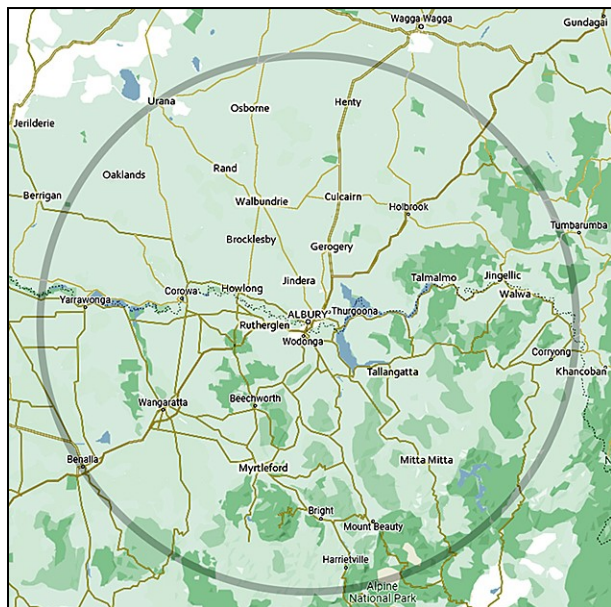


2025/26 Subs Overdue

A workshop at our September meeting focused on the use of Trove for researching history topics.

Our project, commenced in 2018 to expand our local coverage on Trove, is nearing completion. Our aim was to have at least one Albury newspaper digitised and available on Trove from Albury's first newspaper, the *Border Post* of October 1856 through to the *Border Morning Mail* of December 31, 1954.

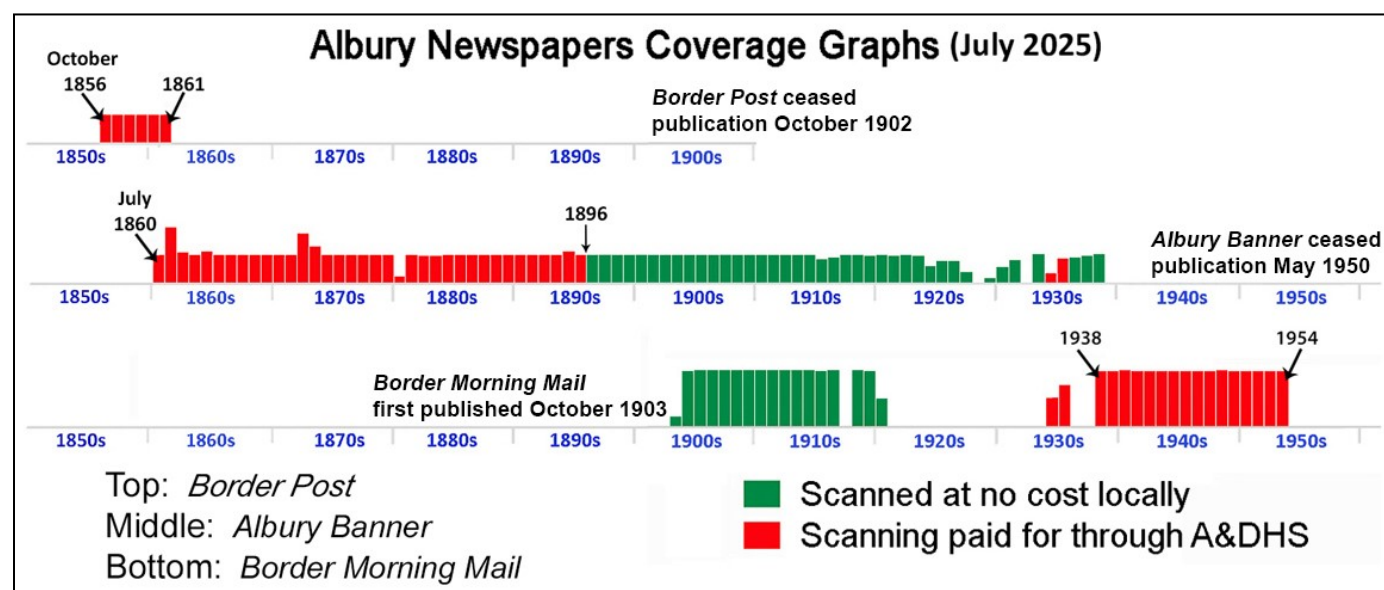
Trove was launched in December 2009 by the National Library of Australia (NLA). It has since become a treasure trove of a wide range of resources – images, maps, audio & video recordings, newspapers and more.



Initially digitising was at no cost locally, it was government funded – digitised Albury newspapers covered only 1896-1938, whereas other regional centres received better coverage. Perhaps that was because Albury newspapers had a broad coverage across two states and state libraries preferred to fund newspapers whose readers were primarily within their state. The masthead of the *Border Morning Mail* boasted for many years "Circulating extensively from Benalla to Wagga, and in the rich Upper Murray District." The map indicates the radius of coverage.

The graph below summarises how our project has progressed. Green indicates local newspapers that were digitised using government funds. Red indicates digitising using funds sourced through the efforts of A&DHS and in particular Society life member Bruce Pennay. Gaps can be seen in coverage which we will be filling if possible.

Refer also to our Bulletin 651 of December 2023, page 6.



	Paid	Cost	Pages	Cost per page
Round 1	2019-20	\$86,782	37,568	\$2.31
Round 2	2020-21	\$25,757	13,380	\$1.93
Round 3	2021-22	\$16,848	12,034	\$1.40
Round 4	2022-23	\$16,245	10,549	\$1.54
Round 5	2023-24	\$7,441	4,832	\$1.54
Round 6	2023-24	\$8,532	5,540	\$1.54
Round 7	2024-25	\$9,522	6,183	\$1.54
Round 8	2025-26	\$3,333	2,381	\$1.40
TOTALS		\$ 174,460	92,937	Avg \$1.88

Unless a generous benefactor comes along, at this stage we are not planning to digitise beyond 1954. Copyright law changed that year and digitising became more expensive.

Contributors include the NSW State Government, the Public Records Office of Victoria, AlburyCity, Wodonga City, our own Society, Wodonga Historical Society, Royal Australian Historical Society, local Rotary clubs, Inland Rail, the Commercial Club and others. Our own members have contributed over \$16,000.

If you wish to donate to the project, details are at our [Donations Page](#).

ALBURY CBD PHOTOGRAPH

Recently Sandra Endrez from Albury LibraryMuseum sourced a photo from the NSW State Archives depicting central Dean Street in the late 19th century.

From left to right, the east wing of the Albury Courthouse, the Crown Land Office, the Albury Municipal Office and partly visible is the Mechanics' Institute.

The Courthouse, classified by the National Trust and designed by colonial architect Alexander Dawson, was completed in 1860 by Albury builder Thomas Allen using local grey granite for the Palladian style facade. Judge Callaghan heard the first case there on September 3, 1860.

The first mention of the Crown Land Office was in the *Albury Banner* in June 1879, a reference to "the state of the footpath opposite the new land offices in Dean-street." The following month W J Jones advertised "Tenders wanted for plastering, also for painting, New Land Office."

A&DHS Bulletin 292 (April 1991) points out that in 1887 the Land Office moved to Wagga. Thomas Alexander Browne (aka Rolf Boldrewood) was Chairman of the Albury Land Board from 1885 to 1887 before becoming Albury's Police Magistrate. The Government Savings Bank of NSW used the former Land Office building from 1901 until 1932. The Bank failed and Commonwealth Savings Bank moved in, remaining for many years, later selling to Farmers & Graziers. The City Council had offices there in the 1960s and later converted it for community use as Burrows House, honouring local flour miller Percy Burrows, a foundation member of A&DHS. The building later became a Tourist Bureau and is now part of Murray Art Museum Albury (MAMA).

In 1858, Albury's first Telegraph Office was a room in the Rose Hotel in Kiewa St. It moved to the Post Office in 1861 then to the low profile building on the right of this photo in April 1868. In September 1882, Albury Council and the NSW colonial government agreed to swap the existing telegraph building for the vacant Dean/Olive Street corner. The Albury Borough Council met for the first time in the re-decorated and re-vamped old Telegraph Office on December 8, 1886. This building remained as Council Chambers until 1907. In September 1907 the old Council Chambers were demolished to make way for Albury's new Town Hall.

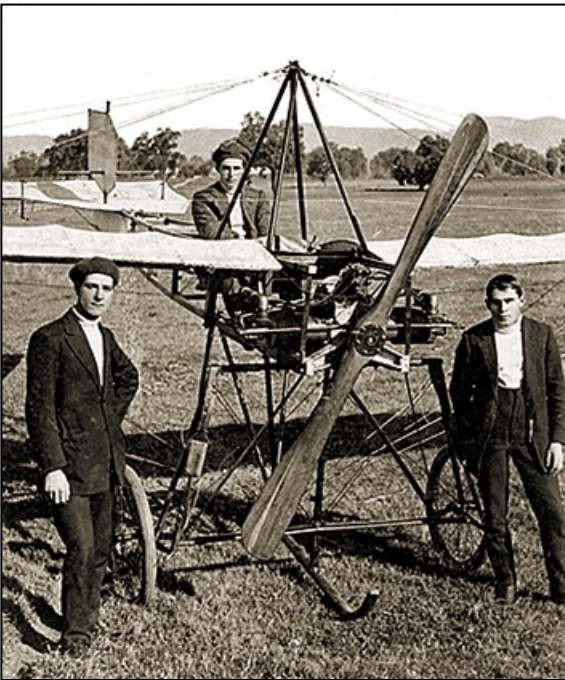
The original Mechanics' Institute building opened in May 1863. A larger building opened in March 1893. Many concerts were held in the theatre, including performances by Dame Nellie Melba in February 1908 and September 1909. In 1904 twenty year old Walter Malcolm McEachern sang here with fifteen year old Albury contralto Ella Caspers; both Ella and Malcolm were destined for international recognition and fame.

The *Albury Banner* reported on September 12, 1860 that Thomas Allen of Dean St appeared in court on Saturday of the week that his courthouse opened, charged with "using obscene language in a public place." The offending language was reported in the AB as "You low-lived b__r, if you come outside I'll kill you," addressed at Cornelius Trader, Inspector of Government Buildings. Allen was upset that he had not been paid in full for construction of the courthouse. He was found guilty, fined £4 7s 6d, and 12s 6d costs.



The west side of the Land Office survives intact. However the lower floor of the south side is now obscured by the MAMA shop – see 'Now' photo page 1. Just visible is signage "Crown Land ..."

Whatever happened to Azor Robbins and Alexander Porter, creators of the monoplane that flew briefly at Bungowannah in 1913?



From Left: Azor Robbins, Vivian Porter, Alexander Porter

Little of their fate was known to Albury historians when in 2013 society members Michael Browne and friends built a splendid replica monoplane that hangs in the Albury LibraryMuseum.

Thanks to newly-discovered genealogical sources (mainly at Ancestry.com and Familysearch.org) we can record that Azor Robbins lived in the United States and was an extraordinary inventor for the road transport industry almost until his death.

Some months after the famous Bungowannah flights, Robbins, his wife Grace and their baby daughter Marjorie returned to Melbourne. He worked there until migrating to the US through Seattle in 1918, followed in 1919 by his wife and daughter. They settled in New York City and later Brunswick, New Jersey. Twin sons Robert and Alexander were born in 1921. Robbins was naturalised as a US citizen in 1924.

Robbins worked tirelessly on inventions to improve Mack trucks produced by the International Motor Company (later Mack Corporation). Between 1923 and 1931 he invented several devices to improve drive systems, the company registering the patents worldwide.

Robbins himself personally patented other devices such as for humidity control and lubrication. His final of 36 inventions came in 1960 when he was 75 years old. Officially he was recorded as a motor mechanic, engineer or draftsman. In 1950 he was said to be working on defence-related instruments. Late in life he retired to Florida and died there in 1963, aged 78. There is no record of any involvement with aviation in the US.

Alexander William Porter, his wife and two children also returned to Melbourne. In September 1914 Porter enlisted in the AIF's Divisional Supply Column. He embarked on the *Golden Eagle* for Southampton in December 1914 and was serving in France by mid-1915, gaining promotion to mechanic-sergeant. In November 1916 he was selected for training in the Royal Flying Corps in England. He left the Australian Army when commissioned a second lieutenant in the RFC in March 1917.

After only three months the RFC discharged him due to his developing tuberculosis. He was invalided home, arriving in July 1918 but was too sick to seek work. Nevertheless, he applied for a soldier settlement block in the Mallee hoping to grow wheat and raise sheep. He was granted a block at Nullawil, Wycheproof, in 1919, the same year a daughter was born. His health worsened and he spent two months in an Army sanatorium in the summer of 1920-21. He died at Nullawil on September 28, 1923. The Army decided his "death was attributable to and aggravated by war service." His wife and children survived on Army pensions and education grants for the children. See also article in Bulletin 523, May 2012.



Left: Robbins and Porter with their monoplane at Bungowannah.
Right: the replica monoplane hanging in the Albury LibraryMuseum.

HISTORY OF ARTS IN ALBURY

Annie Falcke and Sally Denshire have produced a timeline introducing the rich history of arts and cultural activities of the region that led to the Murray Art Museum Albury (MAMA) as it is today.

The timeline begins with the establishment of the Albury Art Prize in 1947 through to the opening of MAMA on October 2, 2015.

To access the timeline, click [here](#).

Sally has also curated *(P)recollection*, an exhibition that considers collection building as part of the civic development of Albury. Entry is free and the exhibition lasts until November 30. For details, click [here](#).



ALBURY BOTANIC GARDENS

Re-landscaping and planting of the northern end of the Botanic Gardens is progressing with the space opening up for use in a few weeks.

Stuart Gordon's team of landscapers have been busy over the last few weeks and Gardens' staff have begun replanting. Already in the ground are the trees which will provide an avenue and canopy to replace the much loved avenue of elms.

Ginkgo trees, commonly referred to as the 'Maidenhair Tree' because of the shape of its leaves, have been nurtured by council staff for some years preparing them for the avenue. Ginkgo is a deciduous tree, the last remaining species of a primitive family of plants so ancient that it is commonly known as a "living fossil." A relatively slow-growing tree, it will be many years before the trees reach maturity. Being long lived, the trees should survive for many generations of Albury residents and visitors.

There are two ancient proverbs that come to mind, the first from Greece, the second from China:

"A society grows great when old men plant trees in whose shade they shall never sit."

"One generation plants trees, another gets the shade."



Progress at the Botanic Gardens looking east on Thursday, September 18, 2025. Note the Ginkgo trees, two to three metres tall.



Click on the link or use the QR code:

Visit [A&DHS website](#)

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



A&DHS WEBSITE

If you have not had a look at our website for a while, then perhaps now is a good time. The site includes:

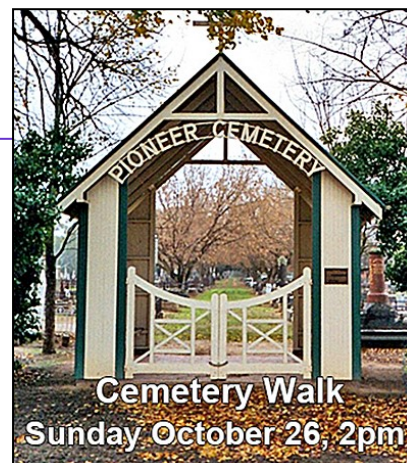
- Our Bulletins are available back to the very first in 1960 – go to [Bulletins/Newsletters](#).
- Hundreds of photos of Albury, past and present – go to [Photo Galleries](#).
- Articles and stories relating to local history and heritage – go to [Topics](#) and to [Articles](#).
- Albury involvement in overseas conflicts – go to [Albury Goes to War](#).
- The arrival in the district of the first Europeans – go to [The Hume & Hovell Expedition](#).
- Construction of the Hume Dam – go to [Hume Dam](#).
- A timeline compiled by Richard Lee, starting with pre European settlement through to 2025, 70+ pages of events and facts that have helped to shape Albury. Download [Albury Timeline](#).
- And lots more

The site is searchable. If you have a topic to research, click on the magnifier, enter your search term or terms and the search engine will search through the hundreds of documents on the site looking for your research topic.

SLV BLOGS

More blogs from the State Library of Victoria that will interest members:

- 'Pruning the misinformation from your family tree.' Click [here](#).
- 'Finding Florrie' – female publicans in the 19th and 20th centuries. Click [here](#).
- 'An historic Antarctic landing.' Click [here](#).
- A short chronicle of the sorrows of George Edwards: poet, playwright, prisoner. Click [here](#).



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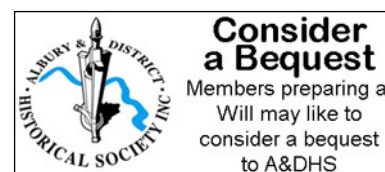
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Bulletin dispatch (by post): Richard Lee

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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: \$200

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

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