

ALBURY & DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC

President's Annual Report 2025/26

At A&DHS we have concluded another year full of exciting events and an informative and entertaining speaker programme. For our success I must pay tribute to our very capable and active committee. Their willingness to go to extra lengths to bring to our members an interesting and vibrant programme makes me very proud to be part of this Society. Their constant outreach to community organisations through speaking engagements and in other ways keeps our Society relevant in the life of the city.

Let us recall the speakers who presented to us this year:

- In July our speaker co-ordinator, Jenny Romero spoke about the development of public education in the early days of the Colony of New South Wales and linked it to the establishment of the Albury Public School. On the eve of its 175th anniversary, Jenny told us that the school was just the 4th public school in NSW, which speaks to the calibre of people who first settled here.
- In August we heard from several of our own members who teamed up for an interesting night. Alan Wilson presented 'The People who lived on the Hill' about life in West Albury. Chris McQuellin showed us an old photo of the Hovell Tree and the questions that it raised. In a final contribution prior to his passing Ron Haberfield prepared a talk about the five generations of the Haberfield family who attended Albury Public School. Greg Ryan spoke of the de-consecration of St Francis De Sales Catholic Church at Bowna. Narda Reid and her sister, Marion prepared a history of Albury Girl Guides to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the Girl Guides in Albury. Fr Peter Macleod-Miller concluded our series by speaking about a book by Geoffrey Blainey entitled 'The Causes of War,' published in the author's 95th year.
- Our September meeting heard from author Andrew Johnston who spoke about his book documenting the rail tragedy which resulted in the wartime loss of 24 soldiers and a civilian at a Wodonga Rail crossing.
- In October Natalie Ward spoke about her artwork connecting our city to the village of Noreuil in France.
- A very enjoyable night was had in November when we had our annual dinner. Greg Ryan had prepared some entertainment for us in the form of two quiz shows. The reaction from members who attended was so positive that the same format will be repeated at our dinner in November this year.
- The whole of our December meeting was given over to members for 'Show & Tell.' The evening was oversubscribed so we did not hear all stories offered by members. Those members who did share stories about items on show were Alan Wilson, Cheryl Ryan, Howard Jones, Jenny Romero and John Hawking.
- Honorary Life Member of the Society, Dr Bruce Pennay spoke in February about his book, 'Investigating Dispossession.' It is a detailed study of the affect of colonisation on the indigenous population. The topic will be a compulsory subject in Australian schools from next year. Paul Grover explained how the text would be used in the compulsory curriculum.
- In March, Mitchell Judd spoke about how the Hume Highway evolved from a muddy track to the dual freeway it is today.

- Janette Grigg spoke in April about the heroic local women who served overseas in medical and nursing roles to care for our soldiers fighting in Europe and the Middle East in WWI.
- Dr Peter Crowley visited from Melbourne in May to provide a definitive account of the work of surveyor Thomas Scott Townsend. Through meticulous research Dr Crowley highlighted the tremendous amount of critically important survey work completed by Townsend as the new colony expanded. That survey work included the laying out of the first town plan at the Crossing Place for a town to be known as Albury.
- Another very well attended meeting in June heard Robyn King (née Frauenfelder) and Kathy Gardner (née Rau), assisted by Jenny Romero, deliver a wonderful presentation about the three pioneering German families Frauenfelder, Rau and Schubach who settled here 175 years ago and established a wine industry. Descendants of those pioneers still play a strong role in the civic affairs of Albury to this day.

For many years Greg Ryan has acted as Bulletin editor and continues to deliver an informative Bulletin of high quality which continues to be popular with our members, especially those who live away from Albury.

In July 2025 we were in attendance when the Mayor Cr Kevin Mack officially opened the new exhibition space at the Albury LibraryMuseum. Howard Jones and Jenny Romero delivered presentations at the open day which followed. In August we took our stall to Albury Public School to participate in 175th anniversary celebrations. In the evening we attended a cocktail party at the LibraryMuseum to mark the occasion.

In September Jenny spoke to Probus about our Society and the work we do to preserve our history and heritage. Also in September, for History Week, Greg Ryan gave a Trove workshop and the following day he guided a Central City Walk. We braved the rain in October to guide fifty stoic attendees to the resting place of 12 pioneers at the Albury Pioneer Cemetery. On 8 November I spoke at the re-dedication of Albury's WWII Memorial Bowl as did the Member for Albury, Justin Clancy and the Mayor Cr Kevin Mack.

We presented our stall at the community markets in QEII Square in December to finish a busy 2025.

We were very excited to be visited from the United States by Beatrice Brickell in February 2026. Ms Brickell was welcomed by the Mayor at a casual and very enjoyable lunch at the home of Tom and Claire Doolan overlooking Lake Hume. She was then escorted by Greg and Cheryl Ryan to the sites which were significant features of the time her famous ancestors lived here.

Also in February Jenny Romero gave a talk to the Australian Seniors Group. To acknowledge the Australian Seniors Festival in March, Greg gave a Trove workshop and another Central City Walk aided by Emily Cogdell.

In April Jenny, Doug Hunter and I presented to Probus Murray a forty minute version of 'Recovering the Past' the work of Doug Hunter about Albury support for our soldiers during WWI. Greg Ryan gave a talk to Albury Rotary on the Brickell/ Kidd history. In June Greg Ryan spoke to The Anglican Retirement Home about the life of Ellen Waugh.

One of the strongest contributions we make in preserving our history is through our digital footprint. Greg Ryan has for the last few years steadily built our internet profile and I am sure that you will be interested to hear some of the vital statistics:

A&DHS Website: 18,000 visits in the last 12 months, an average of 346 visits per week.

A&DHS YouTube Channel: 42 videos of local history content have had 4500 views, almost 90 views per week.

A&DHS Facebook Page: Now has over 9000 followers with 550,000 views for the year, over 10,000 per week.

The success of our Website, YouTube Channel and Facebook page is due to the diligent and consistent attention of Greg Ryan and I thank him for that and congratulate Greg on the quality of his work.

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, Elders Real Estate (through Manny Gonzales) and Rotary Clubs of Albury, Albury North and Albury Hume, Martins Travel, Stewart Gould Real Estate and Zauner Constructions.

The passing of former Treasurer and active member Ron Haberfield and the passing of respected committee member Steve Judd were sad events suffered by our Society this year. They each leave a legacy and their contributions to our Society will not be forgotten.

Many members contribute to the smooth working of the Society. During the last 12 months they include:

Richard Lee as Bulletin distributor and volunteer at Albury LibraryMuseum. Chris McQuellin with scanning and Helen Livsey with cataloguing objects, photographs and documents at the ALM. 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 again pay tribute to your committee who work consistently and collegially to make our Society so successful at what it does. I have already mentioned the work of our Vice-President Greg Ryan, our speaker co-ordinator Jenny Romero and also the late Steve Judd.

Society Secretary Helen Livsey deals with a variety of correspondence and enquiries from the public and other Historical Societies. As Research Officer Helen also assists community members who are seeking answers to their own family history.

Treasurer Simon Burgess attends to our administration finances and guides our financial security. Simon also ensures our compliance with the regulatory framework which relates to us as a community not for profit Incorporated Association and is active in seeking funding for our very successful Trove project.

Yelly Evenhuis has ably and accurately fulfilled the role of minute secretary and greeter at our monthly meetings. Peter Harper takes on numerous tasks and is now assisting to establish an online bookshop for the Society. Peter also speaks to local community

groups and conducts research, the latest of which concerns the Hume Weir racing track which will be the subject of a presentation later in the year.

Robyn Hawking has helped at our stalls at the Wodonga Show and the QEII Square and has done a mountain of research into the life of our first doctor, Dr John Crichton from his birth in Scotland to his life in the colony and his untimely death in Albury. This will also be the subject of a presentation to members.

Howard Jones, an Honorary Life Member of the Society, has been a valuable member in his most recent stint on the committee. Howard's incomparable knowledge as the author of more than fifty books about Albury history is widely respected. Howard is not seeking re-election and I thank him for this and every other contribution he has made to our Society.

And finally, thanks to all members especially the large number who regularly attend our monthly meetings. Your attendance serves as a display of gratitude to the committee for the work they do to make our meetings interesting and enjoyable.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Geoff Romero', with a stylized, flowing script.

Geoff Romero