

■ The CSU Regional Archives is currently extending its opening hours to include the first Saturday of the month. This initiative has been put in place to cater for those researchers who are unable to visit the Archives on weekdays during normal business hours. The next Saturday opening will be on September 7, 2013, from 10am to 3pm.

what you need to know

■ The CSU Regional Archives are open Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm. Located in the Blakemore Building on South Campus of the university, access can be gained via College Avenue or Hely Avenue. Members of the public are welcome to visit the search room, where professional archival staff can assist with inquiries. For those people unable to visit the archives in person, staff can provide a research service for straight-forward inquiries for a fee of \$55 per hour including copying and postage. For further information, phone 02 6925 3666, email archive@csu.edu.au, or visit our website at www.csu.edu.au/research/archives for a full listing of holdings and more detailed information.



Above: Baylis Street in 1965 as vehicles negotiate a gravel roadway around road-building equipment (from the Tom Lennon Collection, RW1574/112). **Right:** Fitzmaurice Street in 1890 – unsealed, but with a formed footpath (from the Wagga Wagga and District Historical Society Collection, RW5/354).

Changing faces of Wagga's main drag



In 1999, a major reconstruction of Wagga's Baylis Street was completed.

Four lanes of traffic were reduced to two, footpaths were widened and tiled, gardens and street sculptures appeared.

It was a dramatic facelift for a main street which had always been more utilitarian than aesthetically pleasing, but the changes did not meet universal public approval.

There were complaints about the restriction of only two lanes of traffic as well as cracked and slippery footpath pavers, but others praised the facelift.

A letter to *The Daily Advertiser* noted: "It's great to see the street opened up to the people, instead of having four lanes of traffic dividing one side of the central business district from the other," while another believed the upgrade would "tie the whole main street together and give it the much needed facelift it deserves."

1960s Changes

It was certainly not the first time the main street had undergone an upgrade as the main street gradually changed from the early dusty thoroughfare which marked the start of the city's growth; and whether by coincidence or planning, upgrades sometimes were linked with other changes to the main street's appearance.

Over the summer of 1965-66, Baylis and Fitzmaurice streets were re-surfaced, the level of the street was raised and the footpaths

upgraded.

The work precipitated moves by Wagga City Council to remove the kerbside petrol pumps which had dotted the footpaths the length of the street for 40 years.

In 1955 Council had decided the petrol pumps and similar equipment were to go from the footpaths within ten years but a number of motor dealers still needed to be prodded to take this action when the deadline loomed in 1965.

Parking Protests

Almost 20 years earlier, in 1946, main street work was planned to lower the camber of the road in Baylis Street and improve kerbing and guttering, with Fitzmaurice Street to see the removal of the central camber and access improved from the road to the footpath.

Again this reconstruction work became entangled in another main street change – the move from angle parking to parallel parking.

The length of the main street had featured front to kerb angle parking for many years but, in November 1946, council decided to introduce parallel parking, drawing protests and deputations.

People referred to problems with high gutters, the possibility of drivers hitting verandah posts while trying to parallel park and women unable to park close to stores.

Their pleas fell on deaf ears and the change to parallel parking went ahead in mid-1947.

Some critics continued to oppose the change and the Wagga branch of the Farmers and Settlers Association in November 1949 called for a six-month trial on angle parking.

Council was unmoved, with a press report stating, "It was agreed by the council that after two years and four months' experience and having regard to the safety and convenience of motorists, cyclists and pedestrian, the present parallel parking was preferable to angle parking."

As a footnote, one side in two blocks of Baylis Street became angle parking once again in the 1999 reconstruction.

An exhibition

While the roadway of Fitzmaurice and Baylis streets has undergone significant changes, so too have the buildings and their uses.

These changes are the focus of a major exhibition currently being prepared in a joint project by the Charles Sturt University Regional Archives and the Museum of the Riverina, Wagga.

We'd love to hear people's stories of the main street changes. Perhaps someone might know when Fitzmaurice and/or Baylis Street first went from dirt roads to a more permanent surface material? And were there complaints?

Compiled by Nancy Blacklow

References: The Wagga Wagga City Council Collection, [CSURA RW2608/30, RW2608/45]; The Daily Advertiser 19 November 1949, 3 November 1965, 22 October 1998, 12 November 1998, 25 November 1998, 11 January 1999, 18 January 1999, 9 February 1999; The Tom Lennon Collection, [CSURA RW1574]; The Wagga Wagga and District Historical Society Collection [CSURA RW5].

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