

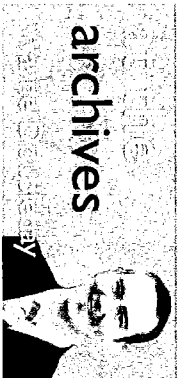
What you should know

▣ The CSU Regional Archives is open Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm. Located in the Blakemore Building at the 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 enquiries. For those people unable to visit the archives in person, staff can provide a research service for straightforward enquiries for a fee of \$55 per hour, including copying and postage.

▣ For further information, phone 6925 3666, email archive@csu.edu.au or visit the website at www.csu.edu.au/research/archives for a full listing of holdings and more detailed information.

Lake Albert — from the start



round 1868 the area that had originally been called Swampy Plain became known as Lake Albert.

The long droughts that occurred in 1838-1840 and 1850-1851 had previously made this area a good place for the Wagga brick makers to get rushes on which to stack their unburnt bricks.

Due to the persistent nature of a number of local people who considered it desirable to have a recreational area for aquatic sports in the Wagga district, it was proposed that Lake Albert be developed into an artificial lake of between 150 to 200 acres in size.

A public meeting held in the Town Hall on June 4, 1886 discussed planning a way in which a diversion from Crooked Creek and Stringybark Creek could be created in order to supply a permanent quantity of water.

The vision at this meeting was for Lake Albert to become a tourist attraction, such as Lake Burrumbeet at Ballarat and the inland lakes in Gippsland Victoria.

It took almost two decades for this vision to start to become a reality.

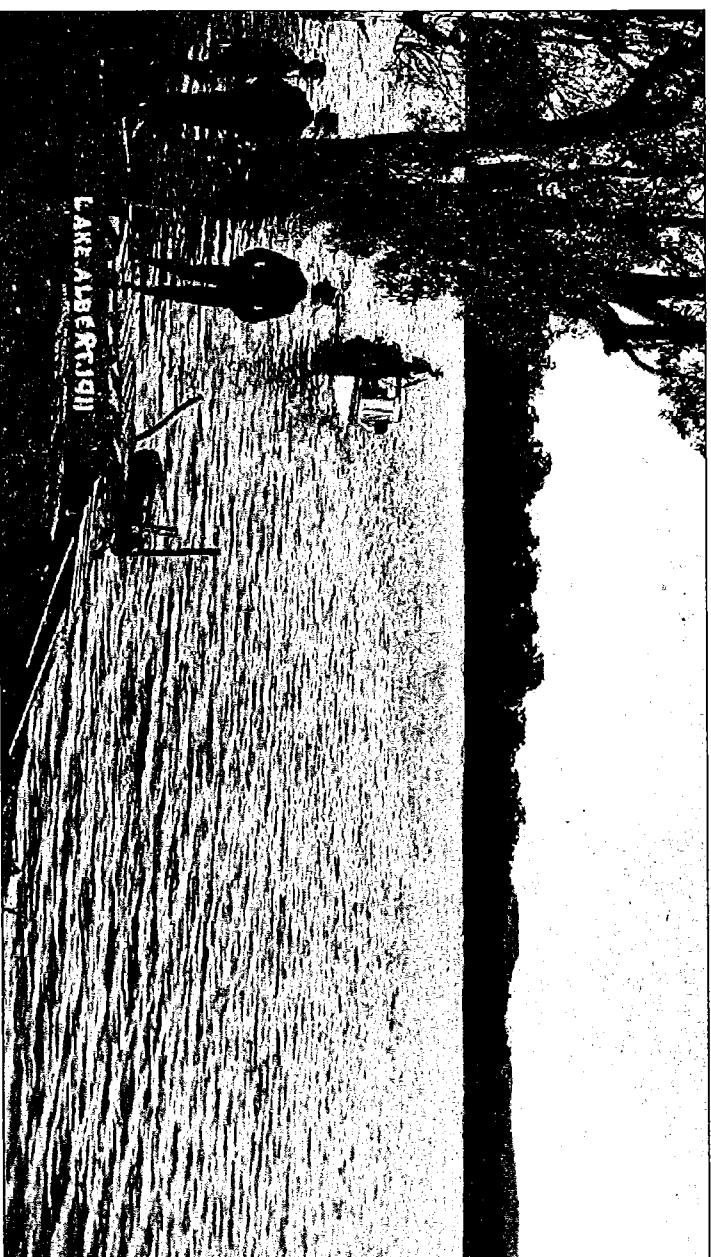
In 1888 the Premier of NSW, Sir Henry Parkes, visited Wagga and after a visit to Lake Albert School, he was taken the short distance to Crooked Creek to inform him of the desire that floodwaters, which ran into the Murrumbidgee River, could be diverted into the lake.

The argument put forward was that not only would regattas and other aquatic recreational events be able to be held, but travelling stock would also have necessary water for all seasons.

Almost 15 years later, there was a further series of public meetings (1898-1900), with the purpose of getting the Lake Albert project started. At a meeting held in August 1898 the Lake Albert Improvement League was formed and immediately started lobbying for the construction of a weir, the diversion of a creek on the southern side into the lake and the partial diversion of Crooked Creek into the lake.

In August 1900, tenders were called for cutting a channel from Crooked Creek and for creating a dam across Stringybark Creek.

The contractor, Mr Rowston, made every effort to work quickly and to ensure this between 15 and 20 men were employed for the job. This work was sanctioned by the Minister for Public Works and



Lake Albert in 1911 (picture: Sherry Morris) Below: Lake Albert circa 1960 (CSU Regional Archives – Tom Lennon collection (RW1574))



the work was expected to take about three months to complete.

The Minister for Public Works advised locals in December 1902 that an additional Lake Albert Water Scheme would be carried out to further the earlier work completed.

The cost was not to exceed £475 and local men, horses and carts were to be used.

In August 1905, for the first time in several years, Lake Albert was full of water. It had suffered long and continued droughts, turning the area back into a swamp and even a grazing ground for cattle.

The plentiful rains of 1905 filled the lake to a higher level than had been experienced since 1894, making it desirable for the breeding of wild duck and other game.

More than 2000 fish of various species were transferred to Lake

Albert during the summers of 1906 and 1907.

These fish were obtained from large ponds near the Murrumbidgee River and in January 1907 it was reported that the fish that had been transferred were thriving and fish numbers were so plentiful that they could be caught using a bucket.

During the following years all nature of aquatic sports were undertaken on Lake Albert.

Sailing, canoeing, swimming, fishing and water skiing all became immensely popular.

As well as sporting clubs, a number of service clubs utilised the idyllic setting for raising funds for charity.

During the 1950s power boat racing became incredibly popular and attracted large crowds. Every decade while Lake Albert

has been in use, meteorological anomalies have produced periods of drought and flood.

These uncontrollable weather conditions have greatly affected the condition of the lake be it through lack of water, or too much water damaging banks or other structures.

Lake Albert has provided constant enjoyment to residents and visitors to Wagga for more than 100 years, and *The Daily Advertiser* has recorded how each generation has had a genuine interest in keeping Lake Albert a great recreational area for families to enjoy.

References:
The Gormly Index (CSU Regional Archives); *The Daily Advertiser* (June 3, 1886; April 7, 1888; August 4, 1898; August 30, 1900; December 30, 1902; August 3, 1905; January 31, 1907)