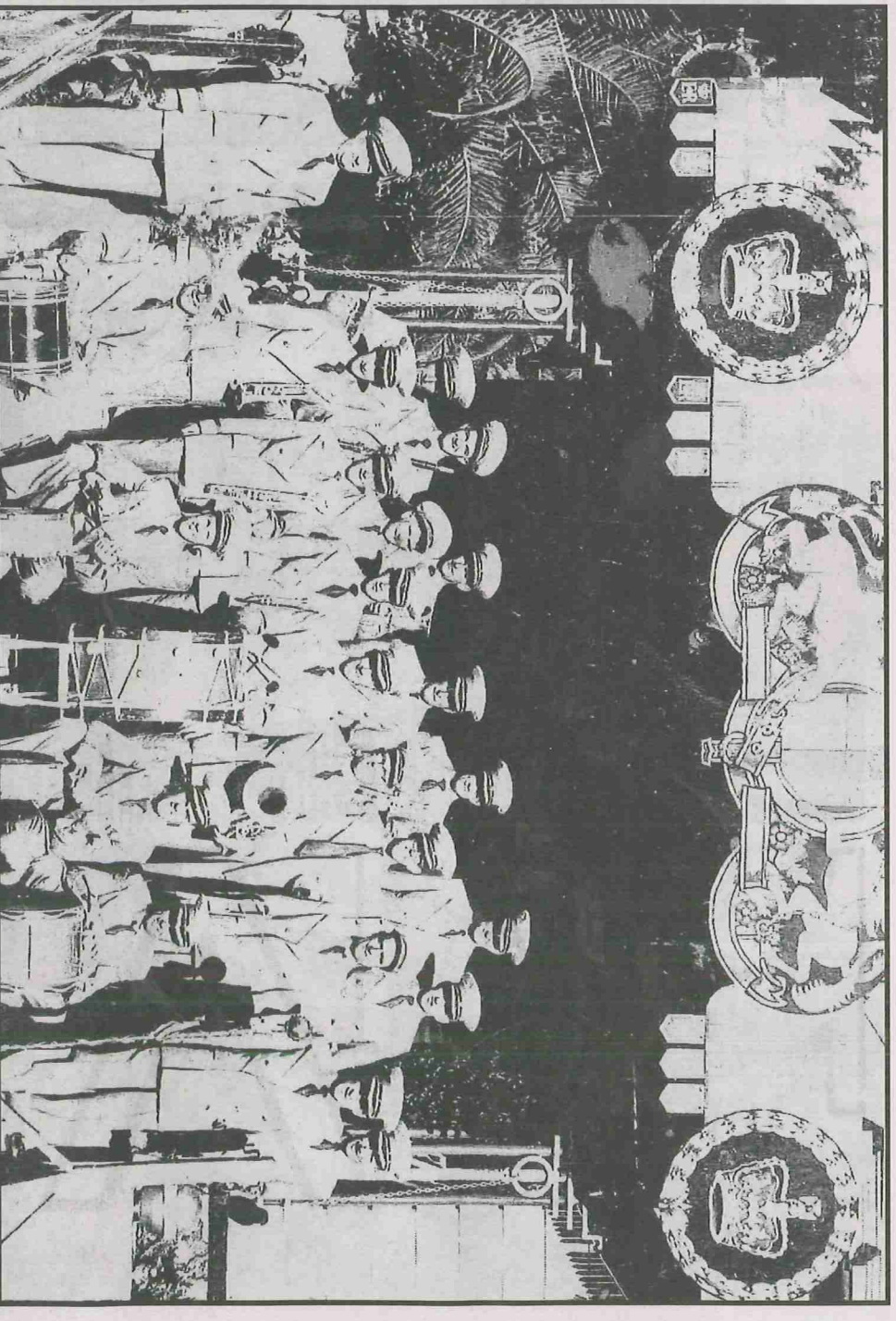


Royal



A band on the official royal dais erected near the Wagga City Council Chambers for the royal visit in 1954 (CSURFA Collection – RW1574/209/690).

Freightmen

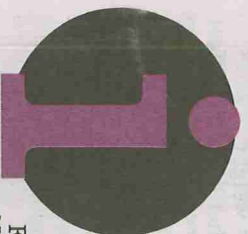
The Archives' Wayne Doubleday looks back at how Wagga prepared for its biggest day ever – the Queen's visit in 1954 – in this the first of a series of articles.

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 enquiries. For those people unable to visit the archives in person, staff can provide a research service for straight-forward enquiries 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.



at the archives
Wayne Doubleday



It is doubtful that as much preparation has gone into any day in Wagga's history as that which went into preparing for the royal visit of Queen Elizabeth II and the Duke of Edinburgh to Wagga on February 13, 1954.

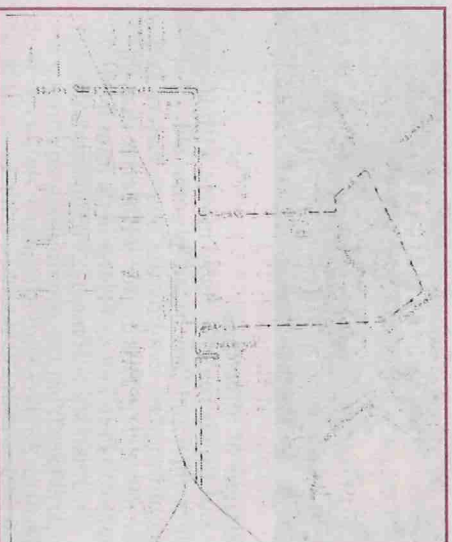
Needless to say, an event of this nature and importance, and one which was predicted to attract more than 100,000 visitors from across the Riverina to the city for the day, obviously required a great deal of planning.

Serious organisation began to build momentum in August 1953, when a meeting was called by council and shire representatives to discuss preparations.

Committees were formed to facilitate progress including the Wagga Wagga Royal Visit Executive Committee and the Wagga Wagga Decorations Sub-Committee, both of which reported to city council. The latter committee was charged with allocating positions for the local councils, shires and municipalities that wished to erect decorations along the route the royal party would travel.

Naturally, an enormous crowd of this nature would require an enlarged police presence. Over 300 police officers (some brought in from other parts of the state for the day) were on duty as well as Army and RAAF personnel to look after the expected large crowds lining the route.

The Daily Advertiser reported members of the CIB Consorting Squad from Sydney had been working with Wagga detectives to target and question known criminals and "undesirables". Some of whom were told to leave the city for the



Map of the Royal progress route through Wagga – Riverina Royal Visit brochure (CSU Library Wagga – WS 390/A1/2/pamphlet).

day of the royal visit. All arriving planes and trains were being monitored by police to identify potential problem characters.

In order to alleviate a potential traffic nightmare on the day of the visit, a large number of extra trains were running to Wagga. Authorities encouraged people coming to Wagga for the day to use the trains, as fewer cars in the city would lead to less congestion. Extra trains ran from Albury, Oaklands, Holbrook, Corowa, Rand, Tumbarumba, Hay, Jerilderie, Roto, Griffith, Leeton, Narrandera, Boorowa, Tumut, Wyalong, Barrollan, Temora and even Parkes.

Such was the magnitude of the occasion that the city council petitioned for a local public holiday to be declared – despite the fact the visit on February 13, 1954, actually fell on a Saturday. The initiative was eventually approved for the following areas: City of Wagga, Mitchell Shire, Kyamba Shire, Coolamon Shire, Tumbarumba Shire, Holbrook Shire, Gundagai Shire, Lockhart Shire, Culcairn Shire and Boorowa Shire.

The groundswell of support and outpouring of loyalty for the royal family at the time was evident through the local businesses, particularly those situated in the streets through which the royal procession would pass.

The Daily Advertiser reported that every store and business without exception in Baylis, Fitzmaurice and Gurwood streets was adorned with displays and decorations celebrating the Queen and the royal family.

Wagga appeared keen to undertake projects that would record for posterity not only the actual event of the Queen's visit, but also the overall significance of the visit.

In November 1953, Kyamba Shire Council initiated steps to rename a section of the Forrest Hill to Gregadoo Road "Elizabeth Avenue" in honour of the royal visit.

Likewise, only four days before the royal visit, the Wagga Wagga High School student choir (which comprised 150 members) performed the commemorative song *Elizabeth of England*, which had been written especially for the royal visit to Australia. The performance was recorded by the BBC for playback on English radio and by 2WG for broadcast in the days leading up to the visit.

With all the planning and organisation taking place prior to the big day, it was inevitable that rumours would circulate around the city.

Just two days before the visit, *The Daily Advertiser* printed a story clarifying the fact the Queen's motor procession would indeed be travelling at only eight miles per hours through the streets of Wagga – the same speed that the cars had travelled through parts of Sydney – enabling onlookers to get a better view of the Queen and the Duke.

The rumour that had swept through the city was that the speed would be a much quicker, and completely unacceptable, 17 miles an hour.

References: *The Daily Advertiser*, February 9 to 13, 1954; Kyamba Shire Council File No: 1656 – Royal Visit to Wagga 1954 (CSURFA Collection – RW97/60); *Riverina Royal Visit brochure* (CSU Library Wagga – WS 390/A1/2/pamphlet).