

Armidale and District Historical Society Inc.

‘Dumaresq Chambers’, Corner Faulkner St and Cinders Lane, Armidale
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Newsletter for August 2019

The next meeting of the Society will be on **Tuesday, 20th August, 7.30 pm** at ‘Dumaresq Chambers’. The speaker will be **Martin Gibbs**, Professor of Australian Archaeology, Faculty of Humanities, Arts, Social Sciences at UNE, whose interests include research projects on aspects of historical and maritime archaeology. His talk is titled

Seeing Beneath the Soil: is there a buried Armidale?

and is based on describing UNE’s newly acquired geophysical survey instruments, how they work and where to survey.

The August meeting is the AGM, followed by the general meeting. The AGM will be conducted by patron William Oates, all positions will be declared vacant. Please consider taking an active role in the Society. We welcome volunteers and have an added plea on page 3 of this newsletter.

Vale Marge Hague: Marge was a valued member of the Historical Society and Armidale Family History. As one of the small group who worked over eight years cataloguing thousands of photographs at the Heritage Centre, she left an incredibly valuable legacy. Family History indicates that a publication of the burials in the original Faulkner Street Cemetery will be dedicated to her diligent and painstaking research to identify these burials. We will miss her.

September RAHS Conference, Tamworth: Tamworth Historical Society is hosting the 2019 Conference ‘Illuminating the Past’ on 14-15 September at West Tamworth Leagues Club. Booking forms on line or at Dumaresq Chambers.

A Trip Down Memory Lane: Topics for meetings each decade -

1969,79: No Meetings

1989: Julie Moss – Rawden to Walcha, The Hardaker Family in Armidale and New England

1999: Donald Ellsmore: Andrew Wells, Interior Decorator of ‘Booluminbah’

2009: Jennifer Johnstone: History of *The Cottage* (1885) at 200 Markham Street

Snippets of History: The name **Dame Nellie Melba** lives on in Australian history. Occasionally we hear a scratchy rendition of her magnificent mezzo soprano voice reproduced from primitive recording mechanisms of the late 1800s/early 1900s and hear of her numerous 'farewell' concerts. However, there seemed to be only a minor newspaper reaction to the famous diva's visit to Armidale in June 1909, with the Armidale Town Hall packed, and others unable to gain admission (*SMH* 24/6/1909). We have copies of the *Armidale Express* and *Armidale Chronicle* advertisements for the occasion, but it was the *Sydney Morning Herald* which saw fit to report the event as follows: *MELBA AT ARMIDALE: Armidale, Wednesday. Madame Melba arrived in Armidale yesterday morning and was welcomed at the railway station by the Mayor (Alderman Hawke) on behalf of the citizens, after which two little daughters of the Mayor presented Melba with bouquets. As the great singer left the carriage, she was greeted with cheers.* (She was then driven to her hotel by Dr Harris in his motor car.) *Last night, in the Town Hall there was the largest gathering ever assembled in the hall (700), while outside, hundreds were unable to gain admission (for ten shillings and sixpence). Melba received a great ovation and each item on the programme was encored. The concert party left by train this morning for the north.* This visit was part of a grand 'sentimental' regional tour of Australia which had commenced in March. She travelled 16,000 kilometres visiting and singing in numerous (at that time remote) towns which included Murwillumbah, Lismore, Casino, Grafton, Orange, Bathurst, Dubbo, Cootamundra, Narrandera, Wagga, Albury, Corowa, Maitland, Tamworth, Armidale and Glen Innes, before heading for Queensland and the other states. Ill-health prevented her from completing the circuit via Tasmania. The entourage travelled in a special train with the performers (4), the manager, a maid, a valet and two baby grand pianos. Melba's autograph could be purchased for 2/6.

The stage name 'Melba' was coined from Melbourne, where she was born in 1861 named Helen Porter Mitchell. She was the eldest of seven surviving children and attended PLC in Melbourne. Her voice earned her the lead operatic soprano at Covent Garden and she travelled widely, performing 25 operatic roles, but often returned to Melbourne to visit her family. Marriage to Charles Armstrong in 1882 ended in separation after a year and divorce in 1900, her son George growing up in Texas USA with his father. Her charity work in London during World War One was recognised with the award of Dame Commander of the British Empire. She died in St Vincent's Hospital Sydney in 1931, aged 69. Her house in Melbourne is a Melba Museum and her image is perpetuated on the \$100 note and her name in Peach Melba, Melba Sauce, Melba Toast and Melba Garniture (which is apparently cheese, truffles and mushrooms stuffed into tomatoes in a rich white sauce).

A Note from Dumaresq Chambers, August 2019

Dear Members,

We are still looking for any resources you are able to provide to the Dumaresq Chambers Resource Centre.

We need books.

We will accept books on Local History and Australian History in general.

Don't worry about trying to find particular books. **We don't know what we want till we get it!**

(If you are only wanting to provide a long term loan this can be arranged).

Does anyone go to one or more of the Local Charity Shops –

Salvation Army, Lifeline, St Vincent de Paul &c?

Would you be willing to look through the second hand books and buy a couple of History books now and again?

We know that members have contributed articles to various other organisations of which they are members.

Would you be willing to give a copy or provide a copy for photocopying to build up Dumaresq Chambers resources?

We need **maps**, old parish maps, topographical maps and sketch maps and plans, especially of subdivisions &c.

We need photos.

Would someone who spends a reasonable time at the Heritage Centre like to get together a collection of photos of Armidale for Exhibitions and electronic display?

Positions we need to fill.

Someone to deal with research enquiries.

A Publicity person (or persons).

Thankyou

Thanks to everyone who has been contributing names to the Named Houses of Armidale project. This is becoming an excellent community project.

Thanks to everyone who has been contributing to Armidilians of Note.

This list is big and getting bigger. Who knew so many Armidale people contributed to various things!

Thanks to everyone who is contributing to the Wells in Armidale List.

We still need people to be in Dumaresq Chambers to **talk** to visitors and **look up things** in resource materials.

If you have a pet project you would like help with, come in and talk about it.

We might be able to get together some small work groups.