

Armidale and District Historical Society Inc.

'Dumaresq Chambers', Corner Faulkner St and Cinders Lane, Armidale
PO Box 692, Armidale, NSW, 2350

Website: adhs.org.au email: contact@adhs.org.au

President.....Judy Grieve 6775 1205 Newsletter Editors *Judy Grieve 6775 1205
Secretary..... Robyn Curry 6772 4700 Mick Reed
TreasurerJohn Burrell Ruth Thomas 6772 5001

Newsletter for September 2019

At the next monthly meeting of the Society on:

Tuesday, 17th September, 7.30pm at 'Dumaresq Chambers',

the guest speaker will be **Bill Crocker**. Bill taught in small schools before taking up studies in oral communication, which he taught at the Armidale Teachers' College. In his retirement has been an active volunteer in a number of organisations. As a guide on the Armidale Heritage Bus he endears himself to his passengers, his teaching skills providing his audience with entertaining and informative commentary. The title of his presentation is

Working on the Railroad: Memories of a Young Teacher

Annual General Meeting: The Annual General Meeting held on Tuesday 20th August was well attended and the elections were carried out by William Oates, Society Patron. Changes to the Executive were the formal appointment of **John Burrell as Treasurer**, and we welcome **Caroline Chapman and Sue Tanner as new Committee members**.

Saumarez Homestead: September has heralded the re-commencement of guided tours of the house after the winter break.

Cancellation of St Peters Open Garden Weekend: The traditional of open gardens on the first weekend of November has been broken, with the drought taking a huge toll on trees and gardens exacerbated by the necessity for water restrictions in Armidale.

Annual Excursion: The excursion will be held on Saturday, **23rd November 2019** and will be to the gold mining villages of **Hillgrove and Metz**. Much visual history of these sites, (particularly of Metz) is rapidly disappearing but there are still those who remember some of the built environment and are willing to share their knowledge. More details in the October newsletter, but keep the date free for an interesting day's outing.

Speakers for Meetings in 2020: If you would wish to make suggestions for speakers for meetings in the forthcoming year or have any other suggestions for the committee to consider, please make your ideas known.

A Trip Down Memory Lane: Topics for September meetings each decade –

1969: Professor R.B. Ward – Two kinds of Australian Patriotism.

1979: Excursion to Ben Lomond and the site of Bagot's Windmill

Mrs J. Oppenheimer – Who Wanted the Wastelands? Or Who Could Afford Them?

First spring walk in Central Park, Armidale, conducted by Lionel Gilbert.

1989: Ian Johnstone – Arthur Cooper (This meeting was held at The Armidale School)

1999: Dr John Ferry – Local History and Armidale

2009: David Robins, Jenny Sayer, Graeme Fordham – Scouting in Armidale

Snippets of History: Following a Local Government Week visit to Malpas Dam, conducted by Luke Finnegan, Armidale Water Supply manager, it seemed important to share the information provided and the history behind the construction of the magnificent Malpas Dam nestled in the deep valley east of Guyra.

In the early days of Armidale settlement, water for households and stock was obtained from streams (such as Dumaresq Creek and Black Creek), wells, bores, springs, individual storage of runoff into tanks, drums and dams – and from regular rainfall. This is still the case on properties not connected to an urban water supply system.

By 1898 when **Dumaresq dam** was completed to supply town with water and Armidale's population was 4,000, only half the average rainfall was received and figures then indicated that rainfall in the New England had been steadily diminishing. The drought in 1919 created the need to augment the supply and by 1928, with the population now around 6,000, **Puddledock dam** and pipeline was completed. The filtration plant was in use by 1943. Each time when the discussion of augmentation arose and as early as the 1926-29 drought, damming the **Gara river** at Malpas was suggested. Arguments against it were based on cost and an alternative of damming of the **Styx river**.

The **Malpas Run** was taken up in the mid 1800s by John Smith, the name Malpas being associated with towns in Cheshire and Wales. Over the years parcels of the Run were resumed for recreation, camping and catchment, and Armidale's population continued to grow. With a third dam needed, in 1954, **Gara Dam** was the chosen option which would supply a population of 12,000. Improvements to all dams continued and booster pumps were set up on Puddledock and Dumaresq mains and the North Hill pumping station and reservoir came into service in 1964. In 1961 drought resulted (9 votes to 1) in the decision undertake the **Malpas Project** as a two stage plan which would initially store 12.2 billion litres and supply a population of 30,000. If Stage 2 was built, the capacity could be doubled and provide for a population of 60,000. In 1965, again under drought conditions, Council resolved to proceed. Funding was granted, construction and design was undertaken by the Department of Public Works and Stage 1 of the dam was completed in 1968. It has a huge catchment for the 1.8 square kilometres of water storage and the 35km pipeline uses gravity to deliver water to the Armidale filtration plant. It has served the roughly 26,000 population of Armidale well since that time. The level drastically fell to 38% in the 1981 drought and in the present drought it fell to 46% prior to the very recent addition of the Guyra pipeline. Once the level was below 51%, compulsory controlled environment flow release was ceased and currently the level is dropping by half a percent weekly and likely to increase to 1% in summer.

The anticipated one year of supply remaining in the dam if general and plentiful rain does not occur in the catchment, has resulted in the need to conserve as much water as possible and restrictions to be imposed. Such restrictions serve to increase awareness of our water usage and our water wastage. Which should lead to recognition that, despite the incredible creative abilities of humans, man cannot make water. Every living thing is dependant on the existing water in our environment and until rain provides sufficient to be stored, this is an ever diminishing resource.

In a survey of the many wells that have existed in the city, the majority were filled in for safety reasons when house water became readily available from the mains supply.