

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

e-mail: contact@adhs.org.au

President Judith Grieve 6775 1205

Newsletter Editors *Judith Grieve

Secretary Robyn Curry 6772 4700

Ruth Thomas

Treasurer John Burrell 0438187848

Newsletter for October 2020

The Society has still to have an **Annual General Meeting** and October is our final meeting for the year. Covid 19 has called for new arrangements for a meeting on

Tuesday, 20th October, 7pm at the Dangarsleigh Hall

This will be an Annual General Meeting at the Dangarsleigh Hall at 7pm. At this meeting elections for President, Secretary, Treasurer, Committee, Patrons, Public Officer, Newsletter and Journal Committee need to be undertaken. Please consider nominating yourself or others to assist in the running of the Society.

Following the elections entertainment in the form of excerpts from Barbara Albury's excellent play,

'Armidale - Our Town'.

Dangarsleigh Hall, 8.4kms on the right hand side of Dangarsleigh Road is large enough to have 45 people gather to comply with current Covid 19 regulations. Attendances at our last three AGMs have been 31, 35 and 41, so it seems unlikely that attendance would exceed 45. A 'Covid Marshall' is required to monitor social distancing, signing in, hand sanitation and to request that people remain seated.

November Excursion: The excursion this year on **Saturday, 21st November will be to Black Mountain.** Unless there is a change in Covid 19 regulations, this will be a self-drive excursion. There will be details provided in a November newsletter.

Journal 63: Is close to publication and should be available at the October Dangarsleigh Hall meeting and thereafter at Dumaresq Chambers which is open each weekday from 10am to 4pm.

A Trip Down Memory Lane: Topic for October meetings each decade.

1960: E Dunlop - The History of Hillgrove. Dr R. Stanton - The Geology of Hillgrove. Mr Burford - Mining Methods at Hillgrove.

1970: Dr Miriam Dixon - **J.T. Lang and the Labour Movement 1929-1933**

1980: Mr R. Waugh - Dorrigo and District

1990: J. Ferry - The Kellys Plains Community

2000: G. Wilson: The Savage Story

2010: Judith Grieve and Cast - Council Capers

Snippets of History: Could Armidale ever see such 'togetherness' today?

Armidale Express 12/2/1901 **AN IMPOSING DEMONSTRATION**

The greatest and most imposing demonstration ever seen in Armidale was that on Wednesday, when the Inauguration of the Australian Commonwealth was locally celebrated. The city had been most elaborately decorated for the occasion by the decoration committee of the citizens executive and all along the line of route fixed upon for the procession was presented a most engaging spectacle of various devices, flags and streamers - the greatest decorative display ever seen here - right from the railway station to the end of Beardy Street at the racecourse. Over one hundred flagpoles were erected at intervals along the line of route and from these, which were placed opposite each other, hung overhead streamers, making the whole route present a very artistic appearance. Over 200 large flags and 500 yards of streamers were used in the decoration of the streets through which the procession passed.

The Showground was also nicely decorated with bunting and over 1200 fairy lamps were artistically placed upon the pavilion for illuminating the place for the continental which was held in those grounds at night.

At the Railway Station there was a very nice arch, bearing the words, in large letters, ARMIDALE WELCOMES HER FRIENDS. Down the city were other devices, hanging at intervals across the main thoroughfare bearing the words, 'ONE FLAG', 'ONE PEOPLE', 'ONE KING', 'ONE DESTINY' and 'NEW ENGLAND REJOICES IN THE COMMONWEALTH'.

Shortly after 10 o'clock, the City Band, assembled at the Courthouse, struck up a lively melody and proceeded on their mission to the station.

At the station everything was indicative of a great day. Trains brought heavy loads of passengers and military from Tamworth and towns *en route*, Glen Innes and other northern centres, whilst many others drove and rode from Hillgrove and the bustle and animation were what might be termed remarkable so far north of the metropolis. The band took up its position in front of the station, next the men of J. Co, 4th Infantry Regiment and Reservists, under Captain G.F. Braund and Lieutenants Weaver and Wright; men of F. Co. Tamworth under Lieutenant Joseph; the Armidale School Cadets under Captain Hartley and the Public School Cadets under Captain Dennis. The presence of a fine body of mounted and foot police added considerably to the grandeur of the spectacle.

The procession included members of Parliament (C.G. Wilson and W. Sawers), the Caledonian Society with a very nice design on a lorry emblematic of Old Scotland and conveying inside numerous boys in Scotch costume; members of the Farmers and Settlers Association; Holiday Association; 'handy boys' of the navy with a gun manufactured by Mr F.W. Roberts; the New England Irish National Association, footballers, cricketers, Foresters, members of the G.U. Oddfellows, Fire Brigade, Council representatives, M.U. Oddfellows, P. and A Society, Civil service, A.H.C. Guild, Temperance Society, school children, and the public. A display by the Fire Brigade, under Captain Webb featured the ladies brigade of ten girls in dark blue uniforms with red facings, financed by an anonymous donor.

Activities at the showground and racecourse included races, dancing and vocal competitions, a fire rescue was performed, the Boers and the British staged a sham fight, children danced a Maypole and fireworks completed the occasion.

DANGARSLEIGH HALL

The story of the Dangarsleigh Hall begins in Hillgrove in 1897.

Hillgrove grew from 1877 when antimony was discovered at Bakers Creek, West Hillgrove (Metz) and prospectors Daly, Elliott and Bracken found a reef on the east side of the gorge the following year. The settlement blossomed after the accidental find of gold by George Smith, manager of the Garibaldi mine and from the mid eighties, Hillgrove became a major goldfield. Fundraising for a Catholic Church in the community resulted in the opening of St Michael's on an acre of ground in the township in November 1889. Then followed construction of a small convent in which, on the arrival of three sisters of St Josephs in 1891, a school was immediately opened, serving seventy children. Pupil numbers grew to 210 by 1893, exceeding the capacity of the classrooms in the convent and church. A new building was needed.

Four acres of land was purchased beside the church and the foundation stone for a school building was laid by Bishop Torreggiani on 11th April 1897. William Henderson Lee was employed as architect and the builder was William Morris from Hillgrove. It was to be a combined school/hall building with a stage at one end and a porch/hat room at the other. Four windows each side had ventilating windows above to 'remove the foul air', two fireplaces warmed the extremely high (25 ft) ceiled building, one fireplace in the body of the hall and one on the stage/classroom. The interior was painted pale blue with a dark dado below. The cost without furnishings was 450 pounds.

On 21st August 1897 a ball was held to celebrate the opening of the school and oh! what a night it was reported to have been. McMahon's Hillgrove band was seated in a temporary gallery to allow dancing couples full use of the new tallow wood floor. Supper was served in a lean-to outside with two sittings each for sixty people. The crowd came from Hillgrove, Wollomombi, Metz, Armidale and Guy Fawkes and dancing went until daylight. Next evening a dance was held for the young folk.

The nuns then took over teaching the Catholic children, while the State school (now the Hillgrove Museum) had a substantial attendance under the tutelage of Mr Tonkin. The St Joseph's pupils took public examinations in typewriting, music, bookkeeping and many graduated with the Qualifying Certificate. Meetings, socials, school prize-giving, concerts and fundraising activities were held in the Hall. Hillgrove also had a School of Arts/Mechanics Institute seating 395 people with a library and billiards room. This was replaced in 1954 by the present Hillgrove hall.

However, from a booming town of 3,000, the fortunes of Hillgrove took a downturn with World War One and the decline of the mining boom of the 1890s. By 1920 many miners and their families had left, businesses and services closed and buildings were being dismantled. The Convent closed, the nuns left and in 1922, builder G. Collins purchased and dismantled the school, numbering each board to facilitate re-erection.

The Dangarsleigh community had its origin from the second (1909) subdivision of Henry Dangar's original 'Gostwyck Station' south of Saumarez Creek with 73 blocks

of 40 - 360 acres for sale. Families taking up these small holdings soon required a school (1911), a church (St Paul's Church of England 1913), a school residence and, in 1921, Alfred Haroldston Perrott built a magnificent War Memorial.

When the opportunity to purchase a hall arose, the Dangarsleigh Hall Committee was formed, Mr Andrew Cochrane donated one acre of land on the northern end of his property 'Nilbrook' which adjoined the church and school. The Hillgrove Convent School of St Joseph was purchased for 739 pounds, transported by drays to this new site. The community reconstructed the building using the numbered boards, replacing the fireplace in the main hall with double doors. Some of the families associated with the early Hall Committee were Milen, Elliott, Rowlings, Edwards, Hughes, Wild, McIntyre, Thorpe, Kennedy, Gentle, Harvey, McGuire, Parsons, and Walsh. On completion in 1922, regular fundraising events were held with dances, euchre nights, school activities, sports days, concerts, meetings, parties and community events and the hall and school and church was hub of the community.

The Dangarsleigh school Palmerston Honour Roll was transferred to the Hall when the school closed in 1957 and poignantly the last entry is in 1956. The advent of a school bus service had provided a means of transport to and from the city schools and depleted attendance locally. The school building was removed south to Enmore where, as Melrose School, it burnt down one night in 1991, but the school residence remains as a private home. The church remains and was sold to become the headquarters for the Dangarsleigh Kellys Plains CWA. Along with the Hall and War Memorial these structures remain to represent Dangarsleigh.

In 1980 the Hall was deemed not to comply with licencing requirements and a robust new committee set to work to undertake the new fire and safety requirements, upgrades and fundraising events, enabling the Hall to retain its licence. In 1995 the Hall was painted gold under a Dumaresq Shire Greenlinks programme and Peter and Eunice Elliott donated the cost of internal painting. A further grant from the Premier's department provided an external re-paint in 2007.

By 1996 the cost of Insurance was not covered by income and the decision was made to transfer Trusteeship to the Dumaresq Shire Council. This involved finding the closest relatives to the original Trustees, **William James Gentle** of 'Red Ridge', Dangars Falls Road who died in 1948 aged 73, **Alfred Haroldston Perrott** of 'Chevy Chase' Dangarsleigh Road who died in 1934 aged 71 and **Albert Wellington Grills Schaefer** of 'Copnor', Black Mountain who died In 1972 aged 79. Soon after the detective work was accomplished, Trusteeship passed from the Shire to Armidale Dumaresq Council (2000) and then to Armidale Regional Council after amalgamation with Guyra in 2016.

At 123 years of age the Hall still enjoys hosting parties, weddings, reunions and will be a fitting venue for the 2020 Historical Society AGM (but with chairs, not the incredibly uncomfortable classroom benches).