

Armidale and District Historical Society Inc.

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Newsletter for October 2021

The next Society meeting will be on **Tuesday 19th October at 5.30pm at the Imperial Hotel** (as Covid 19 restrictions require 4 metres per person, vaccination proof is necessary and masks). The speaker will be **Peter Hoare** who will present **The Story of St Mary's in West Armidale**. West of Jessie Street, Armidale developed as a separate 'suburb', with its own local Council representation. Peter will describe how West Armidale developed with its own character, community and self-sufficiency with industries, pubs, school and church.

Vale: The Society bids a sad farewell to two members who have recently passed away. **Richard Belfield**, an 'ideas-man' who was always larger than life and who saw the value of his grandfather's long-held weather records to current climate change research. **Peter Barratt AM**, grew up in Armidale and recently returned after a career in which, as a senior public servant, he was instrumental in the making of many policy decisions based on his intellect and concern for Australian Society.

Annual General Meeting 21/9/2021: Attendance 27. Elections: President, J. Grieve. Vice President, G. Wilson. Secretary, S. Tanner. Treasurer/Public Officer, J. Burrell. Mailing Sec, A. Wilkinson. Membership Sec, P. Curry. Journal Committee, A. Hardaker (Editor), J. Grieve, G. Wilson. Committee: C. Chapman, R. Curry P. Hoare, T. Waters, A. Wilkinson. Newsletter, J. Grieve R. Thomas. Thanks to Kathy King and we wish her well in Bendigo.

November Calendar: On **Tuesday, 16th of November** we will have a 5.30 meeting with **Terry Brockhoff** as speaker. A November newsletter will give further details of both the meeting and the annual bus excursion which will be to **Walcha on Saturday, 13th November**.

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

1961: Mrs L.T. Daley – Early Settlers in the Richmond River District

1971: I.F. Vacchini, B. Mitchell, W. Driscoll – Symposium on the New History Syllabus

1981: James Belshaw – The Hon. David Henry Drummond as Minister for Education

1991: Graham Wilson – How to trace the History of Your House

2001: John.S. Ryan – History of Wright College UNE 1956-1996 and the participation of the Wright Family in its Life

2011: Film – 'Little Boy Lost'

Snippets of History: In 2021 the 125th anniversary of the opening of St Mary's Anglican Church West Armidale has been commemorated by the Church and community. The Armidale and District Historical Society has mounted a display in Dumaresq Chambers and at the October meeting Peter Hoare will discuss the place of St Mary's in the history of the West End of Armidale from 1896 to 1926.

For 125 years the Anglican Church of St Mary has stood at the centre of West Armidale. It is a branch church of St Peter's Anglican Cathedral in Armidale and historically is one of only two churches situated in West Armidale. Services have been held continuously since 1896 and the church has only been closed for a short time during the COVID 19 pandemic in 2020-2021. St Mary's was built to serve the rapidly growing suburb of West Armidale. During the preceding decade the district saw the building of the railway, with its station and goods yard; the foundation of local buildings and factories, the hospital and several stores to serve the district. Although West Armidale was predominantly an industrial with workmen's cottages, a number of larger homes were located in its vicinity. These included the residence of the Anglican Bishop of Armidale and 'Booloominbah', home of FR and Sarah White. Several educational centres were opened: the West Armidale Infants' School in 1890, New England Girls School in 1895 and St John's Theological College in 1898.

In 1889 William Harris & George Allingham donated land in Rusden Street for a branch church of St Peter's Cathedral. In 1895 The Anglican bishop of Grafton and Armidale, A.V. Green, decided to build a mission church on this land and the small rectangular church was designed by the newly appointed Diocesan architect W H Lee. Funds were raised for its construction with donations from NEGS students and FR White. The foundation stone was laid on 25 March 1896 by Mrs Sarah White and blessed by Bishop Green. Erected by local builder, G.F. Nott the Church was opened by the Bishop in the presence of 100 parishioners on 26 July 1896. He emphasised that the Church was to provide a place of worship for the residents of the West End who found it difficult to walk to St Peter's Cathedral. It was also to provide a place of Christian education. The Sunday school was founded that day and continued until 1999. Among the early Sunday school teachers were students of the New England Girls School, and after 1899 students from St John's Theological College regularly conducted services. In 1907 Kathleen Cooper began a 60-year long career as Sunday School Superintendent. By 1910 extensions were made to the nave and during World War I a Sunday School Hall was built. Services of Penitence and Intercession were held during the Great War. In 1919 a set of Sanctuary furniture was dedicated in memory of parishioners who 'fell in the Great War'.

In 1932 a wooden porch and vestry were added and in 1956, new entrance gates in memory of Lt. Noel Ferris and a tennis court. In 1957, a free standing bell-tower was erected in the grounds. 1996 centenary gifts included the Rose Garden and a set of Sanctuary rail kneelers. In 2001 a semi-circular apse was added to the Sanctuary with a circular stained glass window displaying a crown and alpha & omega symbols. Between 2017-2021 wall hangings and contemporary altar table frontals were crafted by textile artist Jan Clark. In 2010 the church gained a new brick vestry and in this anniversary year of the opening, the wooden cross on the roof has been replaced and gifts of the congregation have included a new purple altar table frontal.