

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
Secretary Sue Tanner 0439240348
Treasurer John Burrell 0438187848

Newsletter Editors *Judith Grieve
Ruth Thomas

Newsletter for February 2022

With a fresh start for 2022, we re-commence monthly meetings but, as we still need to keep our guard up against Covid 19 infection, will hold our meeting at the **Imperial Hotel on Tuesday, 15 February at 5.30pm**, where there is space for social distancing and the opportunity to stay on for a meal and socialise. Appropriately, our speaker **Graham Wilson OAM will talk on**

The History of the Imperial Hotel

Please feel free to include visitors who may be interested in attending.

Dumaresq Chambers : Having been closed during January as a precautionary measure against a possible post-Christmas/New Year rise in Covid, the Chambers reopened on Monday 31 January, with sign/QR Code entry and masks to be worn. Volunteers keep the Chambers open from 10am to 4pm daily Monday to Friday and welcome visitors and enquiries. Sue Tanner has put together an excellent exhibition of photographs of Horbury Hunt buildings in the meeting room and a display of Armidale Pipe Band memorabilia in the front room will be of great general interest and complement Darrel Fisher's *The Evolution of the Armidale Pipe Band* published in ADHS Journal 56.

Heritage Centre: The Centre is open 9 to 5 weekdays, but by appointment only, as there are restrictions on numbers in the building. To make an appointment email heritage@une.edu.au or ring Jo Willey (02)6771645.

Applications for Grants: Of the three grant applications for which the Society applied, one was successful. This is a Federal Government Grant under the 2021 Volunteer Grants Programme of \$4,000 for office equipment. The unsuccessful applications were those submitted for publishing the Journal and a Federal Stronger Communities Programme which was for larger projects.

Heritage Walk Booklet: The Armidale Visitor Information Centre provides a Heritage Walk pamphlet, put together some years ago by the Historical Society and updated as necessary. Plans are in place for the Society to increase the information, add photographs and publish a booklet which the Society can sell. Any members interested in working on this project would be appreciated and can contact Judith Grieve or any of the volunteers at Dumaresq Chambers.

Snippets of History: **William Canning** was one of the early licensees of Armidale's single-storied **Court House Hotel** on the corner of Beardy and Faulkner Street (erected 1869, destroyed by fire 1889). He followed **George Brereton** and **Edward Hodgkiss**, taking over the hotel in 1880. **William** at the age of 9, arrived in Australia in 1841 with his parents **John** (35) and **Maria** (38) and sister **Sarah** (11). John worked as a shepherd for the Everett family at '**Biddeston**' in Ludgershall, Wiltshire and the **Everett brothers** had registered a run in Australia at '**Ollera**' between the present settlements of Guyra and Wandsworth. At the request of the Everetts, the Canning family came to work for them in Australia. **George Everett** met them in Sydney to escort them to the isolated property where they would be employed, John at the Head Station to be in charge of the sheep and Maria to undertake domestic duties for the Everett brothers in their small shack.

Their fifteen-day trek to the New England was not without incident, Maria losing a basket of precious clothing while crossing the Hunter River and John suffering severe concussion after falling 15 feet from a tree on the Liverpool Plains. Imagine how young '**Billy**' **Canning** reacted to this incredible journey, the new land and the totally unfamiliar life where Maria would be the only white woman and his playmates would be young Aboriginal boys. He was soon given responsibilities of farm and stock work despite his mother's fears for his safety in this unfamiliar home. In 1846 his father died and his sister, **Sarah Canning** married **Daniel Hutton**, a recently arrived Bounty immigrant from Hampshire employed to work at '**Ollera**'.

In 1848 Maria re-married and Billy, now around sixteen next appears in 1857 at 'Moredun' near Wandsworth where Sarah and Daniel were living. He married **Jane Mitchell** in 1861. In 1873, when the **Wandsworth Half Way House Hotel** changed hands, it was noted that *James Low would succeed Mr William Cannings, who retires with the credit of having, for many years, kept one of the best conducted houses in New England.* William continued to live at Wandsworth, as butcher and fellmonger (skin buyer) until in 1875 when he and Jane and their five children (seven surviving children by 1882), moved to Armidale to take over the running of the **Court House Hotel**. He remained as 'Mine Host' until 1880 when the hotel was sold by the owner, George Quinlan. William was closely involved in the racing fraternity and his eldest daughter married **John Bryan Fitzgerald**, who took over the Court House Hotel from 1885 to 1887.

Following a fire in February 1889, which commenced in the Beardy Street premises of the **Singer Sewing Machine Company** adjoining the **Court House Hotel**, the hotel and three shops were destroyed. **William Miller**, who, with his brother **James** had been successful investors in the Hillgrove Bakers Creek mines, purchased the burnt sites and developed them, building a skating rink, five shops and a new hotel, the **Imperial**. **James Miller** was prominent in the racing and trotting world and had purchased the **Tamworth Royal Hotel** in Peel Street but died in 1884 and the rundown hotel lost its licence in 1887. William Miller, as Executor, offered his friend William Canning the task of revitalising the 'Royal' for the Estate of James Miller. Re-licensing was achieved by 1892 and the Canning family moved to Newcastle to take over the Terminus Hotel. After William died in 1894, Jane ran the hotel until 1903. She died in 1910.