

# *Armidale and District Historical Society Inc.*

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## **Newsletter for May 2022**

The next meeting of the Society, at **5.30 on Tuesday, 17<sup>th</sup> May at the Imperial Hotel**, will feature a presentation from **Mr James Roncon, General Manager of the Armidale Regional Council**. Mr Roncon has worked in a number of regional centres, most recently in Broken Hill. He has taken the Armidale Regional Council position at a difficult time when many local Councils, including Armidale Region Council, are in various stages of change, transition and financial stress. We look forward to hearing of his aims and ideals for the future of this region.

**Membership:** A membership renewal form for 2022/23 is included with this newsletter together with the various means of payment which include payment at Dumaresq Chambers and to the Treasurer at the meeting on 17<sup>th</sup> May.

**Dumaresq Chambers Report:** The Hardman and Horbury Hunt displays are attracting a number of visitors which included 25 members of Probus who came to morning tea and enjoyed talks by John Atchison and Lyndon Hardman regarding the Society and the exhibits.

**The 'Wells Project':** Grateful thanks to Rosemary Johnson for initiating and carrying out over an extended period, the extensive study of wells and bores in Armidale and environs. The baton has been passed to Wendy Baker, who will welcome any and all information re wells and can be contacted at 147 Jessie Street, Ph 0419014605 or on [wenrob@southernphone.com.au](mailto:wenrob@southernphone.com.au)

**Performance of 'Roger and Julie' at the Armidale Playhouse:** ADHS members Alan Wilkinson and Julie Harm star in a local adaptation of Romeo and Juliet in nursing homes. ADHS has a block booking for 7.30pm on Friday 27<sup>th</sup> May. To book, contact Judith 67751205, 0431223705 or register at Dumaresq Chambers. Payment (\$20) at the Playhouse on the night.

**Book Launch:** ADHS members and friends are invited to the launch of Former UNE Professor of Archaeology Graham Connah's *The Archaeology and Architecture of Farm Buildings at Saumarez Homestead*. Launch to be at Boobooks, Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> May at 2pm (after the Markets).

**Trip Down Memory Lane:** Talks at the May meetings each decade.

**1962:** Mr L.A.J. Gilbert – Port Macquarie and its Museum

**1972:** No meeting

**1982:** Queen Victoria Birthday Dinner

**1992:** Jillian Oppenheimer – Thunderbolt's Mary Ann – An Aboriginal Bushranger

**2002:** Judith Grieve – The History of Kelly's Plains

**2012:** Dr Peter Fielding – The Transit of Venus

**Snippets of History:** Have you ever noticed the decorative gables on **'Strathlea', 137 Mann St**? Worked into the pattern is GFN, the initials of **George Frederick Nott**, who built **'Strathlea'** as his family home. George's skills as a builder and brickmaker have provided Armidale and other centres with a lasting heritage of outstanding, beautiful, mainly blue-brick buildings. In Armidale these include **'Strathlea'**, no longer a family home, but extended to create a nursing home and following sale to the Masonic Aged Care facility, became available for low-cost student and general boarding accommodation.

Many existing family homes can boast of being built by George Nott – cottages such as **79 Jeffery St**, fine homes such as **'Tintagel', 194 Dangar St**, built for his brother **Charles Nott**, and **'Kilbucho', 161 Dangar St**; **'Birida', at 108 Brown St**, was built as a town house for retired pastoralist **George Baker** in 1907, purchased by the **Presbyterian Church** and served as a school boarding facility until the 1960s when it was converted into four apartments. The massive **St Patrick's Orphanage** has been similarly repurposed for luxury apartments. Demolishers had great difficulty destroying the sturdy brick **Girls' Demonstration School building** in 1964. Large imposing buildings which are part of Armidale's rich built heritage include **St Joseph and St Mary's Cathedral**, brickwork at **St Ursula's, De la Salle, NEGS and TAS**, and the beautiful original **1889 Australian Joint Stock Bank** which now lies empty, awaiting a new owner or tenant at **200 Beardy St**. George's last major work was the erection of the **St Peter's Cathedral tower**.

This man to whom Armidale is so deeply indebted for its built environment, was also most generous in providing support to individuals and to Armidale projects and was actively involved in most organisations, including the Anglican Church, Armidale Jockey Club, Bowling Club, Ambulance, the City Band, Hospital, PA&H Association, Baby Health Centre, Literary Institute, Rotary and the Memorial Sportsground.

George, the eldest son of William Randolph Nott and Mary Ann (Northey), was born in 1865 at Breeza Plains near Murrurundi and spent his early years in Inverell. With building his career interest, he first worked was in the construction of culverts on the Armidale/Glen Innes railway line. After employment in Sydney, he returned to Armidale and set up as a building contractor after successfully securing subcontracts for bricklaying at TAS and the Joint Stock Bank. It has been applied to George that, 'Necessity is always the first stimulus to industry' and the efficient service of Nott's Timberworks, Pottery, Brickmakers and Builders Suppliers responded to that necessity, growing with the city.

George married Clara Gosper in Glen Innes in 1888 and they had a family of nine children, After Clara died in 1916 aged 47, George married Eva Lamb in 1919 in Uralla and they had two daughters. George died aged 74 in June 1940 after six months illness and in his obituary, it was noted that *Practically every city and district organisation and all sections of the community were represented in the funeral cortege, a striking testimonial to the esteem and affection in which the late Mr Nott was held. The pall bearers represented the Armidale and New England Jockey Club, P. A. &H. Association, Armidale Hospital, Literary Institute and Armidale Ambulance (AE 17 June 1940).* The business in Armidale was carried on by George's brother until 1947 when the land and buildings on the corner of Rusden and Allingham streets (including 'The Old Barn') were put to auction as three separate blocks. The Nott baton of the building industry in Armidale was handed over to others.