

00 *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 Sue Tanner 0439240348

Ruth Thomas

Treasurer John Burrell 0438187848

Newsletter for June 2022

The next meeting of the Society will be held at the Imperial Hotel at

5.30 on Tuesday, 21st June.

The speaker will be **Graham Wilson OAM** who has been collecting images and information to present a talk on '**Armidale's Changing Landscape**'. We mourn the loss of some of the grand buildings of the city and the transformation and adaptation of buildings which were far more architecturally attractive. The new style of practical and bland buildings is creeping into the business streetscapes, while the heritage features of many private homes are being protected and respected. Graham will discuss the diverse factors that have led to the loss of buildings, public and private or the changes that have taken place.

Dumaresq Chambers: We continue to have visitors and have volunteers undertaking ongoing projects and plenty of opportunity for willing workers to assist in the organisation of records or use the facilities for their own research. We welcomed a group from Probus for morning tea and an introduction to the Chambers, the Historical Society and the exhibitions.

Hillgrove Christmas in July: This will be celebrated with a baked dinner, live music and dancing commencing at 5pm on July 23rd at the Hillgrove Hall. See eventbrite.com/hillgroves-christmas-in-july for more information.

UNE Heritage Centre: The closure of the Heritage Centre for up to six months is causing severe problems in obtaining information needed for research projects, family history, photographs and answering queries and providing/having access to information. The ADHS sub-committee, chaired by Jim Belshaw is endeavouring to negotiate to understand the underlying reasons for the closure and receive assurance that access to the records will be restored as soon as possible.

Trip Down Memory Lane: Topics for talks given in June each decade.

1962 Mr F. Willcock – The Origins of Political Parties in Western Australia

1972 Professor Russell Ward – A Frenchman's Impressions of Australia 100 years ago.

1982 Mrs Cherry Robertson – Reminiscences of the University of New England 1956-1976

1992 Jean Stewart – The Brisbane Career of John Richardson

2002 Rev. Dr Bernard Flood – Armidale Catholic Primary Schools until the late 1880s

2012 John de Veau – A Journey in the Path of a Squatter

Snippets of History: The south western **corner of Rusden and Jessie Streets** has been home to a variety of businesses over the years and is currently the site of the successful '**Goldfish Bowl**'. **de Paul**.

Going back to 1875, the **Commercial Hotel** was in the position now housing **St Vincent de Paul**. To the east of the hotel was **Charlie Wong Jack**, general store holder and Chinese herbalist and on the corner was **George Keifer's** butcher shop. The **Commercial Hotel** was burnt under suspicious circumstances in 1896 and auctioned for demolition in 1897 and was much later likely to have been the site for a tenpin bowling rink and then **Supa Moto** motor bikes before it became Vinnies. Charlie Jack's was later **Ted Butler's** rural supplies and nurse and today **David Carey's** garage. On the corner, by 1933 **James Bruce** had a butcher shop and after the arrival of the entrepreneur **Ted Spensley** in 1946, he set up a cannery. At the site. The cannery was short-lived and lasted to the mid-fifties. **Mostyn Moody** operated a chainsaw and small motor repair shop and later **Joe O'Brien** took over the premises for his veterinary practice. Short term businesses followed until the 'Goldfish Bowl' was established.

The cannery was opened in 1946 as the **Interstate Fruit Foods** company, with Ted Spensley the Director and manager. The ambitious project aimed to can apples, pineapples, tomatoes, peanuts, cherries, beef, honey and incorporate a biscuit factory. The success seemed ensured when it was reported that after three months of operation, 100,000 pounds (45 tonnes) of products had been canned. Progress came to a halt in 1947 when a storeroom fire caused damage and it was reported in the *Armidale Express* 15 October 1947 that firemen had worked to quell the fire to the 'popping of cans'. In early 1950 Spensley proposed to set up a brewery in the canning factory and announced that an English firm was prepared to buy an interest in the business and that peas and sweet corn would be additions to their canned products. An export licence was now needed. His next proposal was to set up a poultry dressing plant. However the company went into liquidation in 1951. In a court case when **Matron McMaugh** from Uralla aimed to recover the 900 pounds for worthless shares that Spensley had sold to her, the judge described him as an 'incurable optimist'. Spensley was elected to **Armidale City Council** in 1954 and in May of that year, fire destroyed the flat, office and storeroom of the factory.

In the early hours of the morning of 20th May 1954 Spensley was awakened by De la Salle College student **Jimmy Doughan** of 132 Jessie Street who was throwing stones at the roof and windows of the blazing building. The *Armidale Express* 21/5/1954 reported that Spensley had snatched up an overcoat and made his escape from the flat through a rear window by smashing a louvre and gaining access to the yard of **Mr and Mrs H Forbes** in Rusden Street. The roof collapsed and machinery, office equipment and all Alderman Spensley's clothes and household effects and 700 pounds of factory equipment were destroyed. **Mrs Spensley** and their two daughters were in Newcastle at the time. It was thought that faulty wiring or a kerosene heater had been the cause of the fire.