

Armidale and District Historical Society Inc.

'Dumaresq Chambers', Corner Faulkner St and Cinders Lane, Armidale

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Newsletter for July 2022

The next meeting of the Society will be held at the **Imperial Hotel** on
Tuesday 19th July at 5.30pm

The speakers will be **Jane Lally and Graham Wilson OAM** who will present
An Evening with the McNutts

Although the name McNutt may not be familiar, their careers deserve to be remembered and Jane, a librarian, has recorded the life and works of Mollie McNutt (1885-1919). Mollie and husband Andrew commenced teaching as pupil teachers at Hillgrove Public School. In her short life Mollie won prizes for poetry and prose and published the book 'Songs of the Bushland' reflecting her love of Australian birds and countryside which was shared by her husband.

Vale Professor John Sprott Ryan: J.S. Ryan was a memorable man and an eminent scholar. After 93 years, having led a life devoted to learning and teaching, he has left behind many memories, many publications, friends, many learned dissertations and a resurgence of interest in folklore. John was involved with the early days of the Armidale and District Historical Society, was Editor of the Journal from 1966 to 1978, provided talks and many articles for the Journal and was awarded Life Membership to the Society. His wife has extended an invitation to ADHS members to attend a Memorial Service, 11am on Friday 15th July in Lecture Room A3, in the UNE Arts Building. Our sincere sympathy is extended to Susan and their two sons.

Dangarsleigh Hall: Erected in 1897 as Hillgrove St Joseph's Catholic School, re-erected at Dangarsleigh in 1922 as a School of Arts and remains as a Community Hall. This calls for a double celebration which will be held at the Hall on Saturday, 20th August, commencing 11am, displaying the history, in photographs, memorabilia activities and stories, games, high tea and unveiling a noticeboard. Dress 1897-2022!

A Trip Down Memory Lane: Talks at July meetings each decade.

1962: Mr F. Willcock – Convictism in Australian History

1972: Mr John O'Hara – Sportsmen and Wowsers, circa 1880-1914

1982: Mr Arnold Goode – Tunnel, Dredge and Drought: the Rocky River 1860-1900

1992: Yvonne Stoeger – Personal reminiscences of a migrant in the late 1950s

2002: Dr Pam Watson – Archaeological Excavations at Armidale Coles East End Site

2012: Wendy Baker and Nick Hanson – Our Cathedral – A Hundred Years

Snippets of History: THE DANGARSLEIGH HALL

The Dangarsleigh area had its origin from the second (1909) subdivision of Henry Dangars's original 'Gostwyck' Station south of Saumarez Creek when 73 blocks of 40-360 acres (16-145ha) were put up for sale. Families taking up these small holdings soon required a school and school residence (1911) and a church (St Paul's Church of England 1913). In 1921 Alfred Haroldston Perrott built a magnificent War Memorial on the corner of his property 'Chevy Chase' near the school and church complex.

At the end of World War One, the once-thriving mining town of Hillgrove was being largely sold up, as postwar, the population dwindled, compounded by the influenza epidemic and the downturn in mining returns. The three Josephite nuns were recalled and the Catholic church, convent and convent school were closed.

The Dangarsleigh Hall Committee was formed when the opportunity to purchase the convent school was recognised. Mr Andrew Cochrane donated one acre of land on the northern end of his property 'Nilbrook' which adjoined the Dangarsleigh church. The Hillgrove Convent School, dismantled, with each board numbered was sold to the Dangarsleigh committee for 739 pounds, then transported to its new site by bullock dray for re-erection by the Dangarsleigh community. In the reconstruction, the large central fireplace was replaced by double doors. Some of the families associated with the early Hall Committee were Edwards, Elliott, Gentle, Harvey, Hughes, Kennedy, McGuire, McIntyre, Milen, Parsons, Rowlings, Thorpe, Walsh and Wild. On completion in 1922, regular functions were held with dances, euchre nights, school activities, sports days, concerts, fund raisers, meetings, parties, shower teas, community events and the hall, school and church became the hub of the community. The school closed in 1957 and poignantly, on the school Palmerston Honour Roll which was transferred to the hall, the last entry is 1956. The advent of a school bus service provided a means of transport to and from Armidale schools and had depleted the attendance. The school building was removed south to Enmore where, as Melrose School, it burnt down in 1991. The school residence remains as a private home and the church building was sold to the CWA to become headquarters for the Kellys Plains Dangarsleigh Branch. On the southern side of the hall, the Dangarsleigh Rural Fire Service shed has more recently been built.

Activities became less frequent and by 1980 the hall did not comply with licencing requirements and a robust new committee set to work to undertake the new fire and safety requirements and upgrades to comply with licensing. In 1995 the hall was painted gold under a Shire Greenlinks programme and the Elliot family provided an internal re-paint. External painting in 2007 was funded by a Premier's Department grant and in 2011 a Local Government Infrastructure Programme allowed for a kitchen and toilet block, septic system, upgrade of wiring, a new roof and a ramp.

By 1996 insurance costs could not be met from hall income and Trusteeship was transferred to the Dumaresq Shire Council. The (long deceased) original trustees were found - William James Gentle, 'Red Ridge', Alfred Perrott, 'Chevy Chase' and Albert Wellington Grills, 'Copnor' Black Mountain. Trusteeship passed to Armidale Dumaresq Council (2000), and then Armidale Regional Council (2016).

