

# *Armidale and District Historical Society Inc.*

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## **Newsletter for February 2023**

**A New Year ahead for the Society, with all it has to offer. May it treat us all well.**

The first Meeting for 2023 will be at the **Imperial Hotel, 5.30pm on Tuesday, 21<sup>st</sup> February**. Guest speaker **Christine Perrott** will give a talk based on the **History of PLC Armidale**. Christine, who attended PLC, recently published *We Survived, Collected Memories of School Days at PLC Armidale 1936-1964*, a compilation of recollections from girls who boarded at PLC. Their stories provide an interesting and extraordinary contrast to twenty-first century boarding school life. Dinner is available for those wishing to stay after the meeting.

**Updates:** The **Heritage Centre** is likely to be open to the public 'in the near future'. Restoration and painting of the **Museum of Education** Kentucky Street school buildings has at last commenced. **Sarah Reddington** has been appointed to the **Folk Museum**. The **Family History Group** has resumed meetings and their Kentucky Street Centre is open for research on Mondays and Wednesdays.

**Dumaresq Chambers:** Volunteers are back, keeping the doors open 10am-4pm Monday to Friday. The two new exhibitions are '**Who Was Minnie Webb?**' featuring Armidale's intrepid 'lady firefighter' and her team and '**The Music Makers**', displaying musical instruments of older times and conjuring music memories through sheet music, records and the means by which music has been shared. A good stop-off place for anyone who is in town.

**Journal 65:** the Journal (2021) is available to all 2021 members, copies can be picked up at Dumaresq Chambers and will be at the meeting, along with a selection of books for sale.

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

**1963 –2001:** No February meetings. The Society was based at the Teachers' College/Armidale College of Advanced Education from 1960 –1995 and did not meet in school holidays. ADHS President Bruce Cady announced that meetings would be held at Kent House from 1996 and President Ian Johnstone introduced February meetings in 2002. Meetings from 2018 were held in our 'home', 'Dumaresq Chambers' and numbers increased. Covid 'social distancing' became necessary and in 2021 the 'Imperial Hotel' became the meeting venue and attendance at meetings continues to increase.

**2003:** Matthew Jordan – Bastard Hybrids: The Foundation and Development of the Faculties of Agricultural Economics and Rural Science at UNE 1954 -1975

**2013:** Jillian Oppenheimer OAM – The White Family ('Boolloominbah')

**Snippets of History:** Edited excerpts from an article in the *Armidale Express* 5/12/1860.

By a 'Special Correspondent' ...'Advancing from Tilbuster, frequent openings (in the bush), with nests of stumps, barked trees and piles of refuse left by the splitter indicate the vicinity of a town (Armidale). A wide undulating plain appears and in the centre a tortuous stream sparkles and dances in the sunlight as it rolls onwards towards the Macleay...Long lines of fences stretch across the flat or climb the ridges and the monotony of verdure is broken by square blocks of newly ploughed land or patches of cultivation. Here and there a cluster of brown roofs may be seen through the dense foliage of an orchard or isolated white-walled homesteads with flowering shrubs and crowding nearer to each other as they approach the town. The bridge is crossed and we have exchanged the solitude of the forest for the bustle, cheerfulness and life of a thriving town.

Youth and energy is stamped on everything. Little mobs of houses are jostling each other for corners, but generally scattered along the line of road, far apart, with utter disregard of all architectural rules. One man is satisfied with a slab hut, his neighbour aspires to a weatherboard cottage, while a third will be satisfied with nothing less than a brick edifice with French lights a brass knocker and a white paling fence. There is a collection of barn-looking buildings erected at various times as they were required and used collectively as a store by one who commenced business under a sheet of bark. Busy people are passing to and fro, carts laden with wheat are clustered round the mills, and there is a digger's tilted cart drawn up outside a store. You would know a digger's turnout anywhere, it has such a gypsyish look.

At the door of the principal inn stands a family drag with its freight of women and children, drawn by prancing steeds and here another conveyance has arrived, battered and weather beaten, the horses jaded and leg-weary and the shafts bound with strips of rawhide, that never-failing resource of the bushman in his difficulties.

Armidale dates from 1839 and may be said to have been founded by Commissioner Macdonald, who commenced building a large house on Starr's Hill, which he was not destined to complete. The town advanced but slowly until the opening of the Rocky River goldfields when it rapidly rose to a position of considerable importance which its agricultural lands ought to enable it to retain. The townspeople have been happy in the selection of sites for public buildings, which include some very neat brick edifices amongst which may be named the new courthouse, nearly completed, the gaol or lock-up, a hospital, a Church of England, a Presbyterian place of worship and a Roman Catholic chapel. There are two extensive flour mills and a branch of the Joint Stock Bank. Neither has education been neglected and although there is no National School, there are two establishments under the Denominational Board, one under the control of the Church of England and the other under that of the Roman Catholic clergyman. There is also a highly respected private academy and a school of arts well-furnished with the periodicals of the day. Commercial interests are represented by about ten stores, there are a number of public houses and no dearth of either ministers of religion, members of the medical and legal profession. With an ably conducted newspaper and two lawyers to keep things alive it is not to be wondered at that political strife sometimes runs hot. The population is estimated at between 900 and 1000 and there are few places I have been where the Sabbath is more religiously observed.'