

# *Armidale and District Historical Society Inc.*

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## **Newsletter for June 2023**

The next meeting of the Society will be at the Imperial Hotel, 5.30pm Tuesday 20<sup>th</sup> June. The speaker will be **Dr Thomas Fudge**, professor of Medieval History at UNE who has delved into the diaries of a former dean of St Peters' Cathedral in Armidale, Evan Wetherall (1912 – 1989). Wetherall recorded diverse entries including clocks, dogs, student and religious life, realising that 'later on, people will wonder' ... 'and historians of the future will not be able to see the picture at all'. From Wetherall's perspective, Thomas Fudge's talk is:

### **Reflections on Life in Armidale- a view from the Deanery 1961-1970**

All are welcome and dinner at the Imperial is available after the meeting.

**Membership Subscriptions 2023/2024:** Membership renewal forms have been e-mailed and are available at Dumaresq Chambers and the Treasurer will have extra forms and the receipt book at June meeting. The AGM will be on 18<sup>th</sup> July.

Our Sympathy is extended to ADHS member Jill Spillsbury following the death of her husband, well known property agent and auctioneer **Frank Spillsbury**.

**Heritage Centre:** A huge step in the right direction is news of the recent appointment of a director for the UNE Archives and Heritage Centre. The Centre currently remains closed to the public for health and safety reasons, but we look forward to having the facility open and its treasure trove of information again available for research when the Health and Safety requirements of the building have been dealt with.

**Dumaresq Chambers:** The library has benefitted from the Rotary Book Fair with a number of sought after books and articles and photographs continue to be donated for which we are grateful. Two new displays are being assembled, featuring blacksmiths and the second on convicts with particular emphasis on John Trim who was an influential Armidale citizen.

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

**1963: : M.M. Moore** – The White Australia Policy- in the 1<sup>st</sup> Commonwealth Government

**1973: Dr G.H. Royle** – The wreck of the *Isabella* in 1813

**1983: Dr L. Gilbert et al.** - A Celebration of the Great Northern Railway Reaching Armidale, 1 February 1883

**1993: P. Raymont** – School Readers – Memories from an earlier time

**2003: John Hamel** – Memories of Armidale's CBD 1940s and 1950s

**2013: Prof J.S. Ryan** - Dr Robert Bowden Madgwick

**Snippets of History:** In the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the local **blacksmith** was vital to the community which was totally dependent on horses and horse-drawn equipment for all aspects of transport and agriculture – otherwise it was ‘shank’s pony’ (walking). Many stations employed their own blacksmiths and had well equipped smithies. Smaller holdings had a blacksmith shop integral to the farm sheds. In town, blacksmiths undertook shoeing, and employed farriers, undertook repair and construction of agricultural implements, coach and wheelwright work and their businesses later often morphed into engineering works and motor garages. Newspaper advertising was mainly confined to opening and closing of businesses, changing hands and requiring apprentices. As word of mouth was probably sufficient, many blacksmiths may not be known to history via newspapers but an early advertisement for an Armidale blacksmith is in a 1848 *Maitland Mercury* with a **Mr Thomas Jaw** (or Jew) requesting a blacksmith to proceed to Armidale to work for him.

**W.M.S Benton** was an Armidale blacksmith in 1861 when a blacksmith’s wages were eight shillings and sixpence to twelve shillings for 9 hours work. **J.&W. Low** set up a blacksmith’s shop behind the single- storey New England Hotel in June 1863 and by September **Benton** was selling up his business. In 1864 **John Jones** opened his smithy in Dumaresq St (near the McCarthy Building). He also owned the buildings next door and leased them for the first Armidale Hospital from 1853-1858 after which he established it as the ‘Farrier’s Arms’ hotel.

Blacksmiths recorded in 1869 were **Charles Hewitt** (also a cabinet maker) who operated opposite **Low Brothers** in Rusden Street and later that year James Low moved to premises ‘adjoining **Fredericks coach Factory** opposite the School of Arts’. **Gallagher** was operating in Beardy Street in 1871 and in 1883 his address was the corner of Rusden and Dangar Streets. In 1873 **William Duke** opened as a general blacksmith shop’ next door to wheelwright, Mr Collins’. His charges were five shillings and sixpence to shoe a full set of shoes and six shillings if the job was pre-booked. In June 1874 **Duke** gave his address as Falconer Street, next to **Mr Hodkiss’s** (likely to be the **Court House Hotel**). By November 1874 **H.L. Jackson’s** blacksmith shop was adjoining the **Court House Hotel** and in 1885, then working from Dangar Street, his hours were 7-8, 9-1, 2-6 on weekdays and he closed at 4pm Saturdays.

**Jeremiah Giles**, whose father was a storekeeper at the Rocky diggings and part owner of the **Sir William Denison Hotel** was selling an allotment in Marsh Street with a blacksmith and wheelwright shop in 1883. He commenced business in Marsh Street opposite the **Oddfellows Hall** in 1887, opened new premises on the corner of Marsh and Rusden in 1891. He built a cottage in Rusden Street in 1893 and thereafter his address was 215 Rusden St (beside the Ambulance station, but now replaced by the building including ‘The Indian Affair’ restaurant. **Jerry Giles** became a legend in that by 1943 he was the oldest working blacksmith at 87 years of age. He was first employed opposite Tattersalls Hotel by a blacksmith named **Harlow**, then **Jackson**, an American negro opposite **Ken Jones’** (Dangar St) before setting up on his own. Prices in 1916 were similar to those quoted in the 1800s!

Many other blacksmiths came and went, such as **Moore and son**, **Beasley**, **Dewhurst**, **Warneke**, **Mapletoft**, and in 1951 **S.J. Naylor** advertisements were for welding and blacksmithing in his Beardy Street premises.

