

Armidale and District Historical Society Inc.

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Newsletter for September 2023

The next meeting of the society will be on **Tuesday, 19th September, 5.30pm at the Imperial Hotel. Wayne Zikan**, Regional Fire Brigade Inspector, will give a talk on

The Armidale Fire Brigade

Wayne has recently published a book, *A Call to Fire*, chronologically based on reports of fires in Armidale since 1891. Some copies will be available (\$35) at the meeting. Wayne was Commander of the Armidale Fire Station for ten years and is now a Regional Commander.

If you are having a meal at the Imperial, the chef would be grateful for as many orders as possible to be made prior to our meeting to allow more preparation time for the kitchen staff.

The UNE Heritage Centre: Following the appointment of Julie McCarthy as Collections Advisor at the Centre, there will be an official re-opening on Thursday, 28th September, but the Centre doors will be open to the public from Monday to Thursday, 9.30am to 1.30pm commencing Monday 11th September. Thirty minute appointments can be made with Melissa Gibbs to discuss available research material by phoning (02)67736555 or e-mailing heritage@une.edu.au. This is a much anticipated new start, providing access to the collections held at the centre again and we welcome the enthusiastic and approachable staff who now manage the Centre.

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

1963: Mr A. Wilkes – The Native Institution in New South Wales 1814-1833

1973: No Meeting

1983: Dr B.A. Mitchell – The Building of 'Boooloominba' and 'Trevanna'

1993: John Farrell – An Ornament to the Rising City of Armidale - History of the Building and Additioins to Armidale's First Cathedral

2003: Caroline Chapman – The Story of the Railway Hotel, Rusden Street

2013: Graham Wilson OAM – The 150 Years of Kellys Plains School

Snippets of History: The stores at the corner of Beardy and Dangar. In *An Armidale Album*, Lionel Gilbert tells the history of the two western corners of Beardy and Dangar Streets from 1844 when **John Mather**, as an agent for **Major Archibald Clunes Innes** of Port Macquarie had the '**Armidale Stores**' on the NW corner. In 1846 he advertised a variety of goods (obtained for cash or other produce) and the shop was also the Post Office. Mather purchased blocks on both western corners and in 1850 took **James Gilchrist** as partner to establish **Mather and Gilchrist's**. When Mather died in 1852, trustees purchased the two corner blocks which in 1857 were bought by **John Moore**, an employee at the Mather and Gilchrist store. In 1872 Moore sold the northern corner store to **John Richardson** who replaced it with a two-storey building bearing the date 1844 commemorating Mather's opening. However in July 1879, Moore opened his own general store J. Moore and Co. '**Armidale New Store**' on the southern corner, directly opposite Richardson's.

John Richardson died in 1888 and his son **Russell** bought the brothers' share of the business and commenced construction of the grand 'Emporium' building which opened in 1904 (1842 on the façade indicates the date of John Richardson's first business in Brisbane). On the southern corner after 30 years trading, Moore's 'New Store', was purchased by **Frederick Braund**. A new resident in 1889, Frederick had been a regular visitor to Armidale as a representative for W. and A. McCarthur Ltd., drapers of Sydney. He died in 1900 and his family continued to run the business, with the eldest son, **George Frederick**, returning from Sydney. George, described as a 'charming personality', also 'vegetarian, theosophist, teetotaler and invincible', was involved in boxing, gymnastics, fencing and other sports. He held numerous civic roles and was an officer in the Armidale 4th infantry regiment, rising to Commander in 1914 and an enthusiast who successfully ran for Parliament in 1913. He was the first MP to enlist in 1914. As Commander of the 2nd battalion, he successfully took and held a strategic site at Gallipoli but in May 1915 failed to respond to a sentry challenge when returning to camp and was shot and killed.

In May 1932 a disastrous fire engulfed Braund's store and associated sheds which claimed the lives of two firemen working to prevent the fire spreading to the ammunition stores at the rear of the building. Reconstruction of the building commenced in late June and Braund's continued to trade until, in November 1940 they went into liquidation. Richardson's lost no time and purchased the store (AE 1/1/1941) for it to become their spacious furniture department.

Russell's son **Cliff** took over the Richardson's business in 1918 after serving as a Major and being awarded the Military cross for his role in the Gallipoli campaign. Cliff's son **John** doubled the size of the building in the 1970s to accommodate G.J. Coles New World Supermarket. The 'David Jones of the North' was eminently successful under the directors which included **John** and his brother **Beau** (Robert), whose son, **Robert (Rob)**, in his article in *New England Lives* III describes events leading up to the sale of the business to a Geelong group of discount retailers. After 111 years, the 'mighty J. Richardson and Co. Ltd. ceasing trading on 29 February 1992'. The hardware division was sold separately (Richardson's Hardware and Agriculture Pty Ltd.). Fifth generation associated with Richardson's store, Rob stayed on for three years during which time the furniture department on the South corner was sold and the Capitol Theatre purchased (1985). He left to join Barry and Jenny Hooper in Jury's men's clothing business. Richardson's building still stands proudly on the northern corner, with the interior an arcade of small shops. The southern corner has been transformed into a number of shops, with numerous changes of businesses and currently **OPTUS** on the corner. But the 1904 façade on Beardy and Dangar streets still indicates the extent of the former Braunds store.