

# *Armidale and District Historical Society Inc.*

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## **Newsletter for October 2023**

The October meeting of the Society will be held at the Imperial Hotel on **Tuesday, 17<sup>th</sup> October** commencing at 5.30pm. The speaker, William Oates, will give a talk, **'Lost Buildings Captured'**

Which will be accompanied by photographs which have preserved their images.  
Ordering dinners on arrival at the meeting will assist the kitchen staff.

**The Heritage Centre:** The number of people at the re-opening event on 28<sup>th</sup> October was an indication of the delight that the centre would again be open to the public. The new Vice Chancellor Christopher Moran, who cut the ribbon at the doorway, noted the importance of sharing between UNE and the community. The Centre will open Mon to Thurs 9.30 to 1.30, with staff members Julie McCarthy and Melissa Gibbs in attendance to assist or organise research material if provided with advance requests.

**Meat Tasting:** A big thank you to all who participated in the event, which gave 60 participants the opportunity to provide their opinion on samples of cooked beef, assist in the Meat and Livestock project and earn \$1200 for the Society.

**November Excursion:** On Saturday, 18<sup>th</sup> November we have arranged an 'Armidale Horbury Hunt buildings' bus excursion leaving 8.30am from the Visitor Information Centre and lunch at the Grand Hotel (self pay). Cost for bus and morning tea \$25. Book at Dumaresq Chambers, e-mail [contact@adhs.org.au](mailto:contact@adhs.org.au) or phone Judy Grieve 0431223701 or 67751205.

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

**1963** – Mr A.R. Crane: Witchcraft and History

**1973** - Mr J. Hanna: Reminiscences of Armidale

**1993** - Mr Chris Buckley: The History and Future of the UNE Archives

**2003** – Dianne Roberts: Minimbah Primary School, East Armidale

**2013** - Barbara Albury: Scenes from *Armidale Our Town*

### **Snippets of History: Boobooks building at 176 Beardy Street**

The art deco building of 2023 at 176 Beardy Street has had major changes in tenants and in its outward appearance since it opened as the stately two-storied **City Bank** on 30<sup>th</sup> January 1891. The Armidale branch of City Bank (incorporated in 1863) opened in Falconer (Faulkner) Street in October 1884 between the **Bank of New South Wales** on the Beardy Street corner and the original **Lands Office** on the eastern side of Falconer Street opposite the Court House. In December 1884 the *Express* reported that City Bank had purchased land from **Patrick Wade** with a 56foot frontage to Beardy Street, adjoining **Wade's Tattersalls Hotel**. The cost of the land and construction of the fine new City Bank building with a classical Victorian façade was 968,000 pounds.

In late 1917 **City Bank merged with the Australian Bank of Commerce (ABC Bank)** to trade as the **Commercial Bank of Australia** in the former **Government Savings Bank** in the old Telegraph Office beside the Post Office. The Government Savings Bank function was taken over by the **Commonwealth Bank** and following the City Bank merger, the Commonwealth Bank acquired 176 Beardy Street.

In 1934 the Commonwealth Bank vacated 176 Beardy Street and its tenants in order to completely change the façade from classical Victorian to Art Deco design. Alterations were approved to the value of 3350 pounds and by December 1935 were reported to be almost complete with **E. H. Fletcher**, the contractor. The drastic alteration was described as 'modernistic in design and severely plain, almost to the point of austerity' and that 'the re-modelled premises of the Commonwealth Bank add considerably to the architectural beauty of the city.'

Next door, **Tattersalls Hotel** followed suit and in 1938 underwent extensive remodelling to discard its Victorian character with its classic iron-lace adorned verandahs in favour of the present geometrical Art Deco façade.

In the early 1990s, when the **Commonwealth Bank was privatised**, the Armidale branch moved into modest premises in **Dangar Street on the corner of Cinders Lane**. The Beardy Street building was sold for \$1.22 million and re-sold in 2000 for \$1.35 million. It was leased by **Harrison's Gift and Jewellery** shop and in 2013 by **Boobooks (Sally Rowe and John Rooney)**. In 2018, 176 Beardy Street was listed for sale by the Sydney owners, but did not sell and **Yvonne Langenberg and Debra O'Brien** took over the lease of the highly successful Boobooks bookshop business in 2019. Now run by Yvonne, it has become a congenial meeting place for the browsing community, discussion groups, book launches, provides comfortable furnishings, cakes and coffee and outdoor pavement facilities for social groups and has become an asset to our Mall, catering to all age groups.