

Armidale and District Historical Society Inc.

'Dumaresq Chambers', Corner Faulkner St and Cinders Lane, Armidale
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Newsletter for February 2024

The February meeting will be held at **5.30pm on Tuesday, 20 February.**

The **meeting** will be held at the **ROYAL HOTEL** in a room on the right of the bar.

The Imperial Hotel is closed for renovations until further notice, hence the change of venue.

Meals will be available at the Royal Hotel after the meeting and it is best to put in your order prior to the meeting to assist the staff and to avoid waiting time.

The speaker will be **Jesse Dick**, providing the fascinating history of the house at **148 O'Dell Street**, which he purchased some years ago in a derelict state and has renovated with care and respect for its circa 120 years of age. Maybe a drive past the house prior to Jesse's talk will add to the appreciation of his story of the restoration.

Dumaresq Chambers: After the break over the Christmas/New Year period, the volunteers have returned and the doors are open from 10am to 4pm each weekday. The library continues to be expanded and Peter Hoare is keen to gather assistance in the New England convicts research (to date, over 600 convict names who had an association with the district.)

Family History Group: A preliminary notice for those interested in attending the Armidale Family History Group **Seminar on Saturday 13th April** (cost \$45) featuring the excellent speakers Martyn Killion and Heather Garnsey (former Executive members of the Society of Australian Genealogists). The seminar will be held at NOVA, the former library building at 122 Faulkner Street. Further details Dianne (02) 67714681.

At Dumaresq Chambers we hold a few copies of the Family History Group's *Armidale Cemetery Register* to sell on their behalf (\$60).

Journal 66: Is in the final stages of production, but after many unforeseen delays, will be available as soon as possible, despite efforts to have it ready for the forthcoming meeting.

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

1964 – 1994: No February meetings

2004: Graham Wilson, The Coachmakers of Armidale from 1840s to the 1920s

2014: William Oates and Graham Wilson OAM - Photographs from the University of New England Heritage Centre Collection

Snippets of History: A visit to West End Public School *Armidale Express* 4 /9/1891

The school was conducted by Miss Wardrop, under the Kindergarten system. In the senior department a large number of little ones were seated at desks, busily employed in weaving paper patterns, forming architectural models with blocks and cubes of wood, varied designs with coloured squares, girls learning the elements of needlework by picking out tracery on cards etc. All the little ones were models of neatness so far as attire was concerned and their bright smiling faces plainly evinced that, while the discipline was good, it was also of such a healthy character that the best of sympathetic feeling prevailed between teachers and taught. By direction of their teacher the children built various designs from cubes of wood in a very short space of time. These designs were performed on little tables ruled with mathematical precision, thus giving early knowledge of size and space that should prove of great advantage in early life. Most intelligent answers were given in response to queries by Miss Wardrop respecting parts of the wooden cubes combining knowledge of space, size and number. The fourth class built some pretty architectural designs and some school songs were sung in capital time and tune by such little people, while a small boy gave a recitation in a creditable manner. The next visit was paid to the Baby School where a large number of tiny mortals were seated, the same happy and contented expression pervading their countenances as in the senior department. Here the little ones sang some pleasing songs and answered the questions of Miss Wardrop in a wonderfully intelligent manner and by the aid of balls of worsted were taught many useful lessons in form and colour and the actions of juveniles as they sang songs illustrated by movements of hands and heads were accurate. Here, as in the other department, it was evident that pronunciation and accentuation were sedulously attended to and the aspirates so often accredited to a certain statesman were but 'muttered in heaven' or only whispered in another place that need not be mentioned. The school rooms were light, airy and well ventilated, rather too well-ventilated during a New England winter, but the hygienic properties of the building are all that can be desired under the circumstances. As we have all along advocated and taken some part in the establishment of the West End School, we congratulate the inhabitants of that quarter of the town upon the result witnessed, as we do also on the appointment of such an evidently highly efficient and painstaking teacher as Miss Wardrop. We left with such pleasing impressions of our first visit that we hope some future time to be able to attend the establishment again.

West Armidale,(now Drummond) School opened as an Infants School in a two-roomed brick building in 1890. By 1925, as the population of West Armidale increased, the push for it to become a primary school began. The weather shed was converted to a classroom. It was not until 1931 that Primary School status was achieved at which time a three roomed building was re-cycled from the old 1899 Ben Venue School from Donald Road to assist in accommodating classes. In 1961 zoning was introduced and by 1966 an entire new school had been built. The old Ben Venue school was purchased and removed to become the Armidale Playhouse in Beardy Street (its third incarnation) and has recently undergone a complete refurbishment. Another building was transported to St John's Hostel, adjoining NEGS to accommodate Armidale High School boys. St John's was built as a Church of England Theological College in 1898 but vacated when the College moved to Morpeth in 1926 after the Armidale High School opened. The Boys Hostel closed in 1972. And the main brick Horbury Hunt building was purchased by NEGS but there is no evidence of the other associated accommodation buildings today. (Jean Cooper & Graham Wilson, *A Rather Special Place. A History of Armidale West and Drummond Memorial Public School*).