

Armidale and District Historical Society Inc.

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Newsletter for April 2024

The next meeting of the society will be on **Tuesday, 16th April 5.30pm at the Royal Hotel**, when the speaker will be **Dr Margaret Small** who will present a talk entitled

The World War II Land Settlement Scheme

Margaret's considerable research on land settlement in the New England includes the history of Government Soldier Settlement Schemes, together with their implementation, successes and shortcomings and families who were involved.

Please order meals prior to the meeting to allow dinners to be served at 7pm.

Meat tasting: The Society can benefit to the tune of \$1200 by providing 60 people to sample small pieces of freshly cooked lamb at a tasting to be held on **Friday 19th April at UNE**. Groups of twenty (different!) people will be required at 2,3 and 4pm. Please put your name down if you can make it at one of these times, for an interesting and enjoyable experience and one that can benefit research and the Society. Add your name to the list at Dumaresq Chambers or contact Judy Grieve 6775 1205, 0431223701 or judycobben@gmail.com.

Dumaresq Chambers: Further donations of books continue to be welcomed and we would be most grateful for donations of the Armidale High School '**Acorn**' magazine. To have a full set of these would be invaluable. An exhibition is being prepared to display the work on early land settlement as researched by the ADHS group and presented at the last meeting. This will replace Sue Tanner's 'A Woman's Work is Never Done' and we will retain the New England Gardens and Homesteads display for a little longer,

Family History Seminar : Armidale Family History Group Annual Seminar on Saturday 13th April at NOVA, will feature two outstanding family historians as speakers, Heather Garnsey and Martin Killion. For further information contact Di Hoppe 6771 4581 or e-mail to afhgarm@gmail.com

Book Launch: *Darkness, The Conversion of Anglican Armidale 1960-2019* by Thomas Fudge to be launched at 'Ooralala', UNE campus on Tuesday 9th April 4.30pm.

Armidale Times Monthly News: The April edition of this publication will be the last until after the Council elections in September.

Anzac Day 25th April: Services will be held in Central Park, University of New England, Dangarsleigh, and Hillgrove to commemorate the 109th year since landing at Gallipoli in the First World War.

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

1964: Excursion to Walcha – Pioneer Village and Ohio Boys' Home

1974: Dr L.A. Gilbert – A Grave Look at History

1984: Mrs Anne Philp – The Whites and 'Saumarez' Homestead

1994: Lionel Gilbert – Old Lines for a New year – Australian epitaphs

2004: Mark Stevens – Local Servicemen who Served at Tobruk and El Alamein

2014: Grant Harris – The Sandilands Studio Military Collection

Snippets of history: Edward Baker Esq (1812 -1902)

The need for education of children during the early days of the settlement of Armidale was met by small private schools and church schools and the **Reverend Henry Tingcombe** opened an Anglican School in 1847 with **Thomas Middleton** the schoolmaster. In the 1850s each church had met this need, with **Mr J Harrington** teaching in the Catholic school, **Edward Baker** the Church of England schoolmaster (70-90 pupils paying one shilling per week)) and **Mr W. Ewins** teaching the Presbyterian children. Two leading businessmen of Armidale, **William Allingham** and **Joseph Scholes** indicated that they had received a 'sound, practical' education from **Edward Baker** who was the Anglican schoolmaster for eight years. (R.B. Walker, *Old New England*, John Ferry, *Colonial Armidale*, AE 18/2/1865). An Education Board report on the Anglican school in 1856 described the master as 'intelligent and zealous, but requires training'.

Born in Wiltshire in 1812, Edward was the third oldest son of twelve children of the Reverend Francis and Mrs Elizabeth Baker. He enrolled in medicine but did not complete his studies in England before he arrived in Australia and then New England (which he described as 'a howling plain') in 1840. As a cousin of the Marsh family of Salisbury Court, he initially worked for them at their Salisbury, Boorolong and Maryland properties. In his obituary and confirmed by letters from grateful patients, he is said to have assisted Armidale doctors in surgical procedures and thus gained the nickname 'Doctor' Baker. He was active on the Hospital Board and in matters of the Church where he was a lay reader. At one time he was banned from being a 'lay visitor' to the hospital with his over-zealous religious approach to patients. In 1853 he married Mary Purvis, sister of Sarah, the wife of businessman John Moore. The first of the Baker's seven children was born in Armidale in 1855. In the same year, Edward took over the position of schoolmaster from Thomas Middleton, the schoolhouse being a brick building on the south-east corner of Rusden and Faulkner streets. It is recorded in the 1859 Report on Denominational Schools that he had taught privately for three years. In 1855 Edward purchased the vacant lot 7, Section 9 in Faulkner Street for 8 pounds 18 shillings where he built their family home. In 1857 he advertised for *an elderly woman without incumbrance or a girl under 15 as a servant for a small family where a cook was kept* (with the condition that *the applicant must be Church of England*).

He had come into an inheritance and became involved in purchasing a number of town and sub-urban blocks of land and became an active participant in numerous town committees, including the P.A. and H Society, Cricket Club and Hospital Board. In his public dealings he was a stickler for detail and an aggressive opponent, being strongly conservative and representing the politics of 'Orangemen, Tories and squatters'. He accepted the short-term position of District Registrar 1857-1860. The fate of small denominational schools had been in question for a number of years and by 1860 after Baker had handed over the schoolmaster's position to Mr Boardman, the National School (subsequently Armidale Public School) opened its doors for 'free, secular and compulsory education' in 1861. The Anglican Church School closed in 1870.

In 1860 Edward Baker advertised his Faulkner Street (now 136) home for rent as a 'desirable family residence', and it was taken up by Frank Newton to be not only his residence but the Printing Office for the *Armidale Telegraph* a new newspaper which was supported by the well-to-do businessmen of the town in opposition to the *Armidale Express*. The newspaper flourished at first and Newton purchased the property from Baker in 1866, taking out a mortgage with the Armidale Building Society, but by 1871, with payments outstanding, it was sold (ABS executing the Right of Sale) to the chairman of the Building Society, District Commissioner of Lands, Sydney Blythe.

Baker owned a number of sub-urban blocks on Erskine Street and moved to a 'snug residence' on his block 'The Willows' adjoining Kennedy Street to farm his acres on the northeast of Armidale where he ran stock, grew vegetables, crops and experimented with growing mulberries and silkworms with some success. Here he lived a quiet life of a gentleman farmer until his death in 1902. He was described as a 'fine old English gentleman' with 'very decided views' on many subjects and meetings were often 'not the most harmonious gatherings, but the old gentleman thought that he was doing his duty to have everything thoroughly ventilated', but he was also 'one of the most cultured and brainy men New England ever possessed'.