

Armidale and District Historical Society Inc.

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Newsletter for June 2024

The next meeting will be held at the **Royal Hotel** at 5.30pm (place orders for dinner prior to the meeting) on **Tuesday, 18th June**, when **Graham Wilson** will give a talk entitled –

The Chinese in Armidale 1880s to 1930s

Although much has been written about the Chinese at the Rocky River Goldfields, little research has been undertaken about the Chinese in Armidale. Graham's talk will cover various references in the Armidale newspapers referring to their places of living, their role in market gardens along Dumaresq Creek, the continued visits as doctors and herbalists and the number of businesses that were once found in Armidale.

Congratulations: To **Marina Makepeace** on receiving an Armidale Regional Council Volunteer Award. Also to **Bronwyn Clarke** who will sadly need to leave us to take up a Sovereign Hill Scholarship at Ballarat University, where she will be immersed in studying the world of dress and activities of the 1850s.

Historical Relics Competition: Application forms for submission of information about interesting items for the competition have been distributed widely in the town and are available at Dumaresq Chambers. We look forward to you sharing your stories about items which capture past activities in our history.

Exhibitions at Dumaresq Chambers: Armidale Bootmakers form the basis for the new display. Boot making was Armidale's first major industry when, in the 1890s **Barnett Moses** had a tannery and a bootmaking factory, with around 100 employees, including girls who undertook the machine sewing. Footwear retrieved from an excavation in a Barney Street backyard provides a thought-provoking centrepiece. Interestingly a **cordwainer** was a shoemaker and a **cobbler** the shoe repairer. Variety of style and large-scale commercial production resulted in shoe shops rather than bootmakers in the early 1900s. and in 2022 Armidale lost its last boot repairer. The exhibition depicting **Early Pastoral Boundaries and the Great Northern Road** has generated considerable interest and remains on display.

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

1964: Dr R.B. Walker – Pioneering days in Armidale and District

1974: Associate Professor A.T. Yarwood – Programme of National Trust Films

1984: Bruce Cady – Ebor and Guy Fawkes

1994: Jean Newall – History of St John's Theological College Armidale 1898-1924

2004: Judith Lamb – History of Amateur Theatre - Armidale Amateurs to Playhouse Inc.

2014: Mick Reed – A London Pathologist in Armidale – The Life of Dr Charles Hebbert

Snippets of History: Last month's *Newsletter* provided information of the Great Northern Road and its entry point into Armidale at the junction of Kentucky with Miller (Niagara) street. Rod Ferris and his rediscovery of an article in *Main Roads* vol IV, no 6 has now added to historical understanding.

The construction of Kentucky Street was commenced by the Main Roads Board in February 1931 and was completed with tar sealing in February 1932. The new road, in cooperation with Armidale City Council and the local Horticultural Society was planted with 225 Lombardy poplars. The trees were spaced "12 metres apart on either side of the road, those in one row being staggered with respect to those on the opposite side of the road". These, in turn, provided a pleasing backdrop to the Armidale High School building constructed a decade earlier.

At the same time, Armidale Council "reshaped and gravelled and tar-surfaced" Dangar, Barney and Marsh streets so as to provide "a continuous dustless surface on the Highway through the city". As we all also know this ensured subsequently a regular ear-deafening backdrop for the Smith House common room until the Armidale By-pass changed life for the better in the 1990s.

As motorised vehicle traffic increased in the 1920s travellers became increasingly frustrated by level crossing delays and then by turns at Butler, Rusden and Marsh Streets on their way to Glen Innes. "Sooner than suffer delays by waiting for the (Butler Street level crossing) gates to open, many drivers preferred to use an unformed stock route along the railway and cross at the overhead bridge" built, as we know from last month, in 1913 between Jessie and Dangar. Kentucky Street, between the (GNR-New England Highway) entry point and the overhead bridge was unformed in spite of being shown as a street on various city maps up to 1921.

Contributed by John Atchison

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Donation of James Tysoe's Walking Stick (Shillelagh).

Recently we received a donation of James Tysoe's Irish blackthorn walking stick with a club handle, the latter identifying it as a shillelagh, which could be used as a weapon. In 1848 James, Lucy (nee Howe) and their young family arrived in Australia from Bedfordshire to work for Henry Dangar at 'Gostwyck'. They later moved to Armidale where James was identified as a carpenter and publican and in 1863 he was elected as one of the Aldermen of the first Municipal Council of Armidale. He provided land for the first Baptist Church (cnr Allingham and Brown sts, later a small corner store and home) and the Manchester Unity Independent Order of Oddfellows Hall in Marsh Street (now the St Kilda bottleshop).

At various times James owned the Freemasons, Crown, Club and St Kilda Hotels (all in Marsh Street). In 1865 he bought lots 5,6 and 7 on the NW corner of Marsh and Mann streets from Daniel Baker (a butcher and later grazier), vacant land on which James built a substantial north-facing house in 1868. His family indicate that the house was then called Ormond(e) House but it is now known as 'Comeytrowe' (a SW suburb of Taunton in Somerset UK). The Society holds a photograph of James as an elderly man, with his family, seated in front of 'Comeytrowe' holding his blackthorn club-handled walking stick. The walking stick has been mounted on the wall at Dumaresq Chambers.

