

# *Armidale and District Historical Society Inc.*

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## **Newsletter for June 2025**

The next monthly meeting of the Society will be held at the **Royal Hotel at 5.30pm on Tuesday 17<sup>th</sup> June**. The speaker will be **David Betts** and the topic

**David Henry Drummond – The early years, 1890-1910**

We are aware of the great debt Armidale owes to the Honourable David Drummond, (1890-1965) as the member for Northern Tablelands and of New England and as Minister for Education. However, his early life was not an easy one and perhaps provided him with the impetus and determination as a politician to make a significant difference to the opportunities available in post war life.

Don't forget to order dinner prior to the meeting if you will be staying for a meal.

**Rotary Book Fair:** Once again this highly successful activity has resulted in 'finds' for our library and broadened our reading base. It is a massive undertaking for our local Rotarians and of great benefit to the readers of the community and creates funds for Rotary to distribute.

**150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of St Peters Anglican Cathedral:** The latest exhibition at Dumaresq Chambers features the history of St Peters and the Bishops who have shaped the local Anglican history over this time. On Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> June on site at the heritage-listed, Horbury Hunt designed, beautiful blue-brick, an open invitation for lunch commenced the initial celebration of the sesquicentenary.

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

1965: No Meeting (School Holidays)

1975: Guest Night At the Memorial Library - **Dean Peter Newall** – 19th Century

Sailing Ships. **Miss Enid Isaacs and Mrs Judith Morsley** – Innocent Austral Verse.

**Mr W. Pearson** – Australian Ballad Songs

1985: **Dr Alan Atkinson** – The Creation of Armidale

1995: **Graham Wilson** – The Physical Development of Armidale

2005: **Caroline Chapman** – Practical Compassion: The Armidale Parish of the Catholic Church and the Aborigines

2015: **Alan Wilkinson** – George Faint: Free Settler, Farmer, Freemason, Family Man

**Snippets of History:** A eulogy at a funeral is a tribute to the life of the person concerned, but rarely in a published form. Published death and funeral notices provide name, birth and death dates and hopefully immediate family names, but they not obituaries – not the story of a life as a permanent written record which nowadays seems to be restricted to the high achievers. The Society copies the obituaries which have appeared in the local papers over the years and they play an important role in understanding the lifestyle of the time. Some are short and basic others, such as that of the **Dumaresq Pioneer Robert Ferris** provide a valuable and lasting record of a life well lived (published in the *Armidale Express* 10/8/1938).

With the death of **Mr Robert Ferris** on Monday, was broken a link with the early days of settlement at Dumaresq and Saumarez Ponds. Mr Ferris had lived in the district for 76 years.

Born in County Fermanagh, North Ireland 82 years ago, the late Mr Ferris was 6 years old when he came to Australia with his parents and his 4-year-old brother James, who is the sole surviving member of the original family. The voyage was made in the old windjammer *Eastern Empire* which commenced its six-month voyage on August 15<sup>th</sup> 1862. It carried a large complement of immigrants and several of the families, apart from the **Ferrises** made their homes in New England. Shipmates included the **Allingham** family from whom came the first mayor of Armidale and the original **Muldoons** and **McGuire**s of this district. The Ferris family immediately made its way north from Sydney, but had to wait at Singleton until a relative, the late **Mr John Cochrane** was able to take down a tilted dray to transport the immigrants to their new home. Deceased's father selected 40 acres at Dumaresq which he called '**Farmdale**'. He had to pay 5 shillings per acre and to make it freehold, the payment of an extra fifteen shillings per acre was required. The Dumaresq and Saumarez Ponds areas then resembled small townships with many selectors on their small holdings. Gradually 'Farmdale' was increased and when deceased married he was given 120 acres of the property and set out to farm it. He told his sons that he had exactly 1/6 in cash when he started out married life and his first horses to work the property were secured from the late **Mr Williams of Boorolong** who trusted the young man for a year until he could make payment. He succeeded by careful and judicious management, gradually buying up properties in the Dumaresq, Aberfoyle, Glen Innes and Wollun districts, aggregating over 10,000 acres and was able to give each of his sons a start on their own property. He worked on 'Farmdale' for 40 years, then retired to '**Rosewood**', Bundarra Road where he resided until his death.

In his 76 years in the area he saw the railway arrive and earned 8/- per day for work with his horse and a dobbie pulling out dirt from cuttings near Dumaresq. New England changed from a wheat centre to a premier wool growing district and he recalled being in queues of drays for hay to be cut into chaff. He was a keen judge of draught horses.

A prominent churchman, for many years he was churchwarden at St Nicholas Church, Saumarez Ponds. Married twice, he had 10 sons and 4 daughters. His widow survived him and his sons and daughters and two sisters are listed and where they resided.