

## *Armidale and District Historical Society Inc.*

'Dumaresq Chambers', Corner Faulkner St and Cinders Lane, Armidale

PO Box 692, Armidale, NSW, 2350

website: adhs.org.au

e-mail: contact@adhs.org.au

President: Judith Grieve 6775 1205, 0431223701

Newsletter Editors

Secretary: Julie Harm 0414885324

\* Judith Grieve

Treasurer: John Burrell 0438187848

### **Newsletter February 2026**

A new year dawns for the Society with plans for the new talks, new projects and hopes for less extremes of weather and worldly behaviour.

Our first meeting for 2026 will be at **5.30pm on Tuesday, 17<sup>th</sup> February** at the **Royal Hotel** (cnr Marsh and Beardy Sts.). Dinner orders should be placed prior to the meeting. All are welcome. The guest speaker will be:

**Wayne Hoppe** of the Armidale Family History Group providing:  
**An Update on the Old Armidale Burial Ground.**

ADHS Journal 48 (2002) records an excellent presentation by the late Marjorie Hague, outlining her research on Armidale's first (1840s - 1860s) burial ground and subsequent research by Wayne has been into the lives of those known to have been buried there. Wayne has meticulously recorded the burials in the current cemetery, published by the Armidale Family History Group as *A Record of Our Ancestors Who Lay at Rest in the Armidale NSW Cemetery 1862-2022* and we will be privileged to hear information of the lives of those buried prior to the opening of the 'new' cemetery.

**Dumaresq Chambers:** We received a donation from the Armidale Branch of the CWA and are most grateful as this has allowed us to add to the bookshelf space, and house larger books and folders.

**Armidale Autumn Festival:** ADHS has agreed to have a display in line with this year's theme of '**Lost Skills**' on Saturday, 21 March in Civic Park. We need people willing to help in the organisation of a display and to assist in 'manning' it on the Saturday. Volunteers at Dumaresq Chambers will welcome your ideas and availability or contact Judith on 0431223701.

**Banjo Paterson:** After serving as a Special Correspondent in the Boer War, Banjo undertook a lecturing tour in 1901 to tell of his experiences. The Armidale Town Hall was packed to hear him on Friday 29<sup>th</sup> March 1901. On Sunday, 29<sup>th</sup> March 2026, touring actor Greg North will celebrate the 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary of that occasion with a show, *The Life and Rhymes of Banjo Paterson*, at the Town Hall, sponsored by NERAM.

**Snippets of History:** **Thomas Lamb** was **Armidale's first Town Clerk**, appointed in 1864, to the highly responsible position of managing the affairs of a developing settlement for the first Municipal Council (at 50 pounds p.a.). In addition to his Council duties, he was in demand from town groups and was secretary of new organisations, including the Building Society, Pastoral, Agricultural and Horticultural Association and as and the newly formed New England Flour Company Ltd, responsible for securing shareholders. He married Gertrude Louise Harris in Sydney and owned the freehold of 24 acres with a well- maintained residence and farm on what is now Roseneath Lane. But, by 1865, this was advertised as a mortgage auction. His cousin, travelling to Armidale to purchase the property, was held up when the steamer on which he was travelling from Sydney was in a collision (AE 14/10/1865). The property was sold to the only bidder for 250 pounds and soon re-sold in Sydney. Thomas and his growing family appear to have remained as tenants. In our ADHS records is a poignant letter from Thomas to his mother in England, dated 10/2/1870.

**Dear Mother and Sister**, I have at last taken courage to write to you although I have nothing but bad news, very bad news to tell you but I don't see why I should trouble you with my misfortunes as I cannot see how you can assist now. In the first place, Uncle Dick (Richard Lamb, a jeweller in Sydney) gave me the first knockdown, the same as he ruined Uncle George; when he gave up business he forced upon me a lot of jewellery to the amount of 1000 pounds and thinking I could get rid of it as the Diggins were going ahead near Armidale at the time. I gave him a mortgage on my farm to show him I would like to act honestly to him. The Diggins failed. I returned him about 700 pounds worth of the jewellery which he sold by auction for next to nothing and charged the deficiency to me. He then charged me principal interest and compound interest to the amount of 2000 pounds, seized upon the farm and sold it. Just about that time I was taken ill with Rheumatic Fever and lost the use of my legs for months and from which I will never be myself again. After that, as a finish, Gertrude was taken ill with her last confinement and could only attend to the baby for about a fortnight. The doctors in Armidale could do her no good so she had to go to Sydney where she had the advice of the best 2 or 3 doctors and where she remained 7 months and is at the present time in a very weak state. We are now with 7 children, poorer than I was when I first landed in this Colony with three pence in my pocket. I have sent you the likenesses of all but the baby Fanny, they are not very good, but the best we can do in this out of the way place.....

He continues with possible plans for his mother to sell a family property in the UK to relieve his desperate financial position.

While Gertrude was away, his solace was to drown the sorrows, and he neglected his children and his work, the Council was forced to sack him (AE 15/5/1869). A Councillor visited him at '**Roseneath**' found the children suffering from measles and Thomas under a pile of sacks in a state of oblivion. Later Thomas unsuccessfully re-applied for the Town Clerk position and he appears to have lived (and worked?) on a farm at Kelly's Plains. Thomas (1828-1888) and Gertrude (1834-1903) are buried in Armidale Cemetery.