

Armidale and District Historical Society Inc.

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Newsletter for September 2026

This is an early newsletter delivery for the next meeting of the Society, which will be on **Tuesday, 15th September, 5.30 at the Royal Hotel.**

The speaker will be Dr John Atchison OAM

John will provide updates on his previously presented work on pastoral holdings and boundaries and, as promised, part two of the Australian Agricultural (AA) Company and its influence on the development of New South Wales, with emphasis on the development of the coal industry and its ramifications.

Key to the City of Armidale: On Tuesday 11th August, 101- year -old Ron Vickress received Armidale Regional Council's highest honour, the Keys to the City, at a ceremony held in the Town Hall. Ron, now aged 101, served in the Royal Australian Navy for the duration of World War II, enlisting when 17 years old. In civilian life he has dedicated himself to education and teaching, at Guyra School, as lecturer at the Armidale Teachers' College and in cultural pursuits as an author, playwright, poet, and was active in local theatre whilst being a friend to all.

The Key to the City is the highest award which can be given by a Municipal Council. The Armidale Regional Council, formed in 2016, through the amalgamation of Armidale Dumaresq Council and Guyra Shire Council and has also honoured Antony Deakin with the Key to the City in 2023.

The symbolic presentation of the keys represents a form of freedom and is one of the oldest surviving municipal awards, it's origin is in 1257 when the City of London Corporation first bestowed the Keys to the City. The recipient became a 'freeman' or 'burgess' and gained full civil rights in their community - the right to own property, trade and run a business, freed from the feudal system of serfdom.

The first known Armidale awards are noted on a black timber Honour Board with five names under the heading *Nomine Sine Perpetuo* – 'May their name be remembered'. Howard Hinton's name heads the list and he had also been awarded a silver key symbolising the 'Freedom of the (Teachers') College' in October 1933. Two of the other names on this board are recorded posthumously.

Freedom of the City of Armidale Awards.

This may not be a complete list and has been compiled principally from Graham Wilson's 'Our History, our Stories' on the Council website, which provides records to 1988. Please advise of any recipients not recorded.

Armidale City Council (Nomine Sine Perpetuo)

1937 **Howard Hinton, (1867-1948)**, benefactor of artworks

1937 **Francis J. White, (1854-1934)**, pastoralist, benefactor.

1949 **James A. Glass, (1853-1933)**, Alderman, Mayor (1912), services to the Hospital.

1949 **Mary F. White (1882-1948)**, services to Red Cross, CWA, benefactor

1949 **Ella V. Hickson, (1879-1955)**, Matron ANEH 1908-12, Red Cross, CWA

Armidale City Council (Freedom of Entry to the City)

1954 **Rt Rev John S. Moyes (1884-1972)**, Bishop of Armidale 35 years

1963 **Sir John Northcott, (1890-1966)**, Army Officer, Governor of NSW (1946-57)

1964 **Hon. David H. Drummond, (1890-1965)**, farmer, politician, Min. of Education

1966 **(Dr) Roy Leslie Blake, (1897-1973)**, editor *Chronicle & AE*, Manager 2AD

1966 **Sir Robert B. Madgwick OBE, (1905-79)**, education, first Warden & VC of UNE

1971 **Most Rev James D. Freeman, (1907-91)**, Archbishop, Freeman House, Armidale

1972 **Hon. Davis Hughes, (1910-2003)**, Mayor 1954-56, politician, Min. Public Works

1975 **Dr Ellen Kent Hughes MBE, (1893-1979)**, doctor, councillor, community work

1978 **Kenneth Jones BEM (1906-1984)**, alderman 22 years, businessman, community

1986 **12/16 Hunter River Lancers**, Formed May 1948. Appreciation for their support

1988 **Rev Henry J. Kennedy, (1915-2003)**, Bishop of Armidale, community work

Armidale Dumaresq Council

2001 **Lionel Gilbert OAM, (1924-2025)**, botanist, teacher, lecturer, author, historian

2002 **Alwyn Jones, (1914-2005)**, beautification of Armidale with street tree plantings

Armidale Regional Council

2023 **Antony Deakin**, Mayor (1987), architect, designed many Armidale buildings

2026 **Ron Vickress**, RAN WWII, teacher, author, playwright, poet, local theatre

The First Mayor was George Allingham, elected to the first Municipal Council 1863. George arrived in Armidale in 1841, aged 12, from County Fermanagh. The family consisted of Edward, his wife Elizabeth and their eight children. Edward set up a steam flour mill (where the ex-Services Club stands) and a nearby Union Store (a typical General Store, selling everything one could possibly want!) with George assisting in these businesses. George married Margaret Coventry at her family home at Oban in 1853 and around 1861, he set up his own business as an auctioneer. He dabbled in other ventures, including a butchery in partnership with George Markham and became involved in numerous community organisations. He only had one term of being Mayor and was succeeded by the more colourful figure of Thomas John Fitzgerald in 1865. George died in 1898, aged 70 and Margaret in 1891.