

## **COUNCIL AND COMMUNITY BUILDINGS**

At various times after the World War council took action to establish a community centre. Council appointed a committee in November 1949 'to investigate the possibility and means of establishing a community centre'.<sup>1</sup> The centenary committee considered the concept of a Senior Citizen's Centre and a Community Centre in March 1963 as a centenary year project. The discussion arose from a recommendation of a council committee to consider the requisition of the Olympic Hall in Jessie Street as a Senior Citizen's Centre.

### **Autumn Lodge Retirement Village.**

Part of the land on which the village stands today was gazetted on 23 April 1895 as an area of two acres as a site for a Benevolent Asylum. It was in 1887 that the Armidale Ladies Relief Society was formed and an application was made by Mrs Moses, president of the society for a grant of land. In 1896 the area was increased to ten acres and a Benevolent Home was opened on the land. The memorial stone was laid by Mrs F.J. White on 10 September 1896. Later a second brick cottage was erected and in the late 1930s the Homes for the Unemployed Trust acquired more land to build six cottages fronting Donnelly Street.

In 1952 the Mayor Ald. Thomas Monckton convened a public meeting to form a committee to care for the aged people of Armidale and the district. He was elected chairman and the committee set out to build a suitable dwelling to house aged persons. Following meetings, fundraising and support from the Commonwealth Government, a hostel called 'Willowdene' was officially opened on 3 November 1956. The hostel was placed under the care of the Armidale homes for the Aged. In March 1966, Ald. R.H. Milson became a member of the management committee and in 1973 the Mayor, Ald. D.A. Hewitt convened another public meeting. The meeting formed a further committee to plan an extension of accommodation. Later the two committees were combined in 1975 as the Autumn Lodge War Memorial Home.

By 1988 the village comprised thirty five self-contained units, a modern hostel of thirty six motel type units was incorporated and completely self-funded. Council supported the committee in obtaining government funding for expansion of the village and it was located on Crown Land of which council was trustee. In 1995 the management committee was made trustee to manage the village.<sup>2</sup>

### **Art Gallery and New England Art Museum.**

The Minister for Education advised D.H. Drummond M.L.A. in October 1944 that Armidale will be included in a travelling art exhibition. At that stage council did not own an art gallery and the exhibition, sponsored by the National Art Gallery and Department of Education, was held in the council's museum in March 1945. In April 1952 the National Arts Gallery of N.S.W. presented a travelling art exhibition in Armidale Town Hall. The State Arts Sub-committee of the Commonwealth Jubilee Celebrations also staged an exhibition of arts and crafts. Three years later, council announced its intention in February 1955 to

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<sup>1</sup> *Armidale Express*, 9 November 1949, p.4.

<sup>2</sup> C.C. Bradley, *Armidale and District Historical Society Journal*, No. 40, April 1997, pp.135-138.

sponsor an exhibition from the National Gallery provided the Arts Council would manage it.

1963 proved to be a significant year for the development of art in Armidale. The works by the newly formed Armidale Art Society were displayed in the library in August. At the time the library also housed the city's art collection which commenced early in 1963 with the donation of the winning painting in the Festival Art competition. Once the tourist bureau building was constructed in Armidale and opened in August 1965, the building also became the art gallery. Council then took action to form a committee that month to control the gallery and its contents.

The Art Society, the Arts Council and the Pottery Club were asked to join the committee and appoint two delegates each. Council representatives included aldermen E.M. Wilson and S.M. Pike as well as the chief librarian E. Isaacs. The city art collection was to remain in the war memorial library unless it was needed in the gallery when no other exhibitions were available.<sup>3</sup> In February 1966 the art gallery committee was given freedom by the City Council to purchase works of art without direction with an allocation of \$200. An additional \$150 was made available for the mounting of exhibitions. That December council allocated \$1000 for running costs, the acquisition of art works and minor improvements. The Armidale Art Society presented to the city's collection of works of art its first piece of sculpture in November 1968. The piece entitled 'Space Node' was the work of the Armidale Art Society member, Dr Maurice Marsh of the University of New England.

In January 1968 the gallery committee recommended a proposal for additional storage and hanging space and in February council announced tenders will be called for extensions to the art gallery. A further call was made in December 1971 for a permanent centre for the city collection as the present gallery space was too small. The Armidale branch of the D.L.P. called on the State Government to build an art gallery on the campus of the Armidale Teacher's College in February 1972. By March the art gallery committee recommended that the town planner be asked to draw up a gallery to house 200 paintings with office and work rooms. Council rejected the proposal to provide a new art gallery but was prepared to reconsider the proposal 'when and at such times as plans for the civic centre are being considered'.<sup>4</sup> At that stage the art gallery could hold some twenty paintings. By November 1973 the gallery, now situated at the top of the fire station was being remodelled.

The official opening of the Armidale City Council Art Gallery took place on Saturday 23 March 1974 by Mayor Ald. Doug Hewitt. In his speech he referred to the work of Victor Crittenden and the various committees to establish the collection. A total of \$3500 was spent on the former fire station to make it into a gallery. In 1974 the city's permanent art collection was housed in the Armidale City Art Gallery.

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<sup>3</sup> *Armidale Express*, 13 August 1965, p.

<sup>4</sup> *Armidale Express*, 24 March 1972, p.15.

The Gallery received another twenty paintings, drawings, original prints and photographs from Chandler Coventry, director of the Coventry Gallery in Paddington in January 1976. At that stage the gallery had 112 art works and by December the collection comprised 146 works representing contemporary Australian artists and included paintings, sculptures, drawings, prints, pottery and wall hangings. It was acquired by gift from Art Society prize exhibitions, artists and individual donors. Armidale City Council also made an annual allocation of funds for acquisitions and the gallery attracted grants from State and Federal Government art agencies.

Apart from the above collection held by council a significant collection was held by the Armidale Teacher's College. In December 1933, Howard Hinton informed council that he 'made it a condition of his benefaction to the Armidale Teachers' College that if ever the college closes his pictures are to revert to Council'.<sup>5</sup> Following the death of Hinton on 23 January 1948, council passed a special resolution on Monday 2 February 1948 recording its appreciation of the work done by Hinton in donating artwork to Armidale.

It was in 1947 that council applied for an Act to cover the Hinton bequest in but nothing happened. The *Armidale Express*, 10 March 1948 claimed the City of Armidale owned the collection of paintings housed at the college. The issue was again raised at council in November 1949 and a further approach was made to Mr Drummond because 'the bequest' was 'vested in the City of Armidale' and 'hung in the Teacher's College'.<sup>6</sup> The principal of the college, C.B. Newling wrote to Drummond and several Armidale residents including Mayor L.W. Dawson and Town Clerk F.W. Milner. The town clerk replied:

I desire to state quite plainly the fact, that Council agrees and approves the fact, that the Collection belongs to the Armidale Teacher's College, and must never be removed, dispersed or even lent whole or in part, and this has been so stated in the Minutes.<sup>7</sup>

In June 1976 the Armidale College of Advanced Education (C.A.E.), formerly the Armidale Teacher's College announced its intention to set up a steering committee to raise money for a regional art gallery in Armidale. Despite opposition from several aldermen, council nominated Aldermen Pidgeon and Kelly as council representatives on the steering committee. The Mayor Ald. P. Poggioli and the chairman of the Council of the C.A.E., P.L. Johnstone announced a proposal to develop a regional art gallery in August. That month, D. Evans, vice-chairman of the art gallery committee congratulated council 'for their foresight and interest in taking the decision to initiate a public meeting in order to launch a public appeal for a Regional Art Gallery in Armidale'<sup>8</sup> At the opening of the Armidale Arts Festival in October, the principal of the Sydney

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<sup>5</sup> *Armidale Express*, 22 December 1933, p.4.

<sup>6</sup> *Armidale Express*, 9 November 1949, p.8.

<sup>7</sup> E.S. Elphick 'Howard Hinton and his Bequest', in L. Gilbert, *An Armidale Album*, New England Art Museum, Armidale, p.288.

<sup>8</sup> Letter to the Town Clerk, R.A. Browne, 16 August 1976. Armidale City Council, Art Council and Art Gallery, Old File 24 May 1976 to 13 October 1977, No 429, 23 E.

College of the Arts said 'the city of Armidale is the logical place for a regional Art Gallery'.<sup>9</sup>

That November an application was made for a grant of £20 000 to extend the gallery on the first floor of the renovated building at the western end of the council chambers.

The Friends of the Gallery and Armidale Art Gallery Society had amalgamated by September 1978 to support the aims of the City Gallery. A proposal for rationalisation of the present committee structure was adopted by July 1980. The committee included representatives from the: Armidale College of Advanced Education (Howard Horton sub-committee); New England Regional Art Museum Association; present Art Gallery committee; craft activities and Armidale Arts Festival; Council and an honorary member from a donor to Armidale's public collections.

The building fund appeal for the New England Regional Art Museum was launched by the Premier of N.S.W., the Hon. N.K. Wran in June 1979. The government promised a dollar for dollar subsidy up to a maximum of \$450,000. The Visual Arts Board of Australia sponsored the exhibition 'Focus on the Hinton Collection' to promote the collection and the Art Museum.

Ms Judith McKay retired from the position of senior curator at the gallery on 16 February 1981. Ms Helen Tyzack commenced duties as Director of Armidale's Art Collections on 29 September. That year there were seven different exhibitions and a travelling exhibition 'Interiors Travelling Exhibition' from the Art Gallery of N.S.W. attracted 2000 visitors to the town hall. Following two years of major promotion, the collection 'Focus on the Hinton Collection' returned to Armidale in June.

Local government bodies in New England gave donations and became corporate members; private sector donations included national companies, foundations, businesses and individuals. By 1982, the building fund had attracted over a million dollars. The New England Art Museum (N.E.R.A.M.) was established in 1983. Council is trustee of the unique Howard Hinton Collection housed in the museum.

The ongoing costs are met with assistance from the Armidale City Council, State and Federal Government and regional councils. Council increased its financial support to the Art Museum with a contribution of \$48 000 in 1985; \$52 000 in 1986; \$55 000 in 1987 and \$55 000 in 1988. In 1989 council planned to assist NERAM in the re-organisation of its administrative functions.

### **Frail Aged and Disabled Day Care Centre.**

'Kent House' was purchased by Council at a cost of \$174 000 in December 1988 and approval was given by the Department of Local Government to proceed with the project at a total cost of \$230 000 including renovation and equipping of the premises for the Centre to be operative in July 1989.

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<sup>9</sup> *Armidale Express*, 4 October 1976, p.1.

The building was named after Ellen Mary Kent Hughes who was born on 29 August 1893 and died 1979. She was the eldest of the ten children of Dr Wilfred Kent Hughes and her mother, Tina, died in her early forties of tuberculosis after giving birth to seven children. While still a student Ellen married a French doctor who committed suicide shortly after the marriage.

Ellen was a resident at the Brisbane General Hospital during the 1919 influenza epidemic and her first practice as a General Practitioner was in Mitchell. There she met and married Garde Wilson, a stock and station agent. After a period in Kingaroy, Nell and Garde moved to Armidale in 1928. Initially they lived in a house in Barney Street near the Ursuline Convent where she practised as a general practitioner and in 1932 the family moved to 141 Faulkner Street in 1932.

Dr Kent Hughes had a strong commitment to the Armidale community especially the Aboriginal people. She was mainly responsible for the present housing estate in East Armidale.

In 1968 she was awarded the MBE for her community service. From 1938 to 1968, she was an alderman on the Armidale City Council and she was deputy mayor from 1963 to 1964. In 1975 at the age of 85, she was granted the Freedom of the City.

Her services to the Anglican Church were honoured by the creation of the Dr Kent Hughes Memorial Fund to help girls' schools in Papua New Guinea. Dr Kent Hughes was an efficient, energetic woman who successfully combined a career and a marriage and brought up five children.

Kent House is named after Dr. Kent-Hughes as it was her family home and it was here she conducted her medical practice for many years apart from a short time in the Minto.

Kent House was opened by the Minister for Local Government, the Hon David Hay on 21 July 1991. Today Kent House is a community centre for the Aged and People with Disabilities jointly funded by the Commonwealth and State Governments under the HACC Program, Armidale City Council and local contributions. Hughes House was opened in 1992. It was constructed as a new office block and meeting room at the rear of Kent House. It houses many of the H.A.C.C. services in Armidale.

### **Galloway Children Centre.**

This day care centre for children opened in February 1985 with council support in conjunction with the Department of Youth and Community Affairs. In 1985 it was managed by a committee of management with council representation which functioned as a Section 530A committee. Council provided staff for the centre in 1986 but relinquished control of the Galloway Centre on 1 January 1988. That year, council assisted with the maintenance and repair of the building at a cost of \$2000 as a condition of the lease from the Housing Commission.