

## **ARMIDALE BUILDINGS AND SUB-DIVISIONS.**

### **Suburbs.**

Armidale was initially surveyed by surveyor John James Galloway in 1848 and modified into the grid pattern as it is at present. The amended plan was made available for display from 21 March 1849 at the office of the Surveyor General in Sydney and the Armidale Post Office. From that time various names were used by residents for the different suburbs of Armidale but it was not until the 1960s that names were formally adopted.

At the invitation of council, a survey party from the Department of Lands arrived in Armidale in December 1962 'to carry out a precise survey of the city as a preliminary step to the proclamation of the town area under the Survey Co-ordination Act, 1949'.<sup>1</sup> To that stage a major part of Sydney had been surveyed but the country towns only completed included Dubbo, Bathurst and Dungog.

City engineer K.O. Gentle presented a plan for the division of Armidale into six areas and the old city area was presented to council in August 1967. The published map included two suburbs in North Armidale; two in West Armidale; one in South Armidale and one in East Armidale. The railway formed a natural barrier boundary between numbers three, four, five and six. 'In drawing up the areas, Mr Gentle has attempted to maintain a community of interest in each'.<sup>2</sup> In October council announced the five names selected: Ben Venue; Bellevue; Brickfield; Macdonald and Soudan Heights. Three weeks later, the sixth name Forster was selected.

The names were given to the Geographical Names Board in 1968 but it was not until November 1974 that the Board gave the names to the various suburbs. At the time the names were still subject to objections from residents or organisation.

### **Bellevue.**

In October 1967, Ald. J. Young reported 'the person who actually developed the residential area of Bellevue decided to give it that name'.<sup>3</sup>

### **Ben Venue.**

The NSW Government Gazette announced a notification by the Department of Public Instruction for a Public School at Ben Venue (North Armidale) on 4 October 1899. The *Armidale Argus*, 14 October 1899 announced that the District Inspector, J.D. Bradley had been instructed to take the necessary action for the erection of a school. It was Bradley who recommended on 29 August to the Department of Public Instruction that the school be established at Ben Venue (North Armidale) but no explanation was given for selection of the name. The

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<sup>1</sup> *Armidale Express*, 5 December 1962, p.15.

<sup>2</sup> *Armidale Express*, 16 August 1967, p.1.

<sup>3</sup> *Armidale Express*, 1 November 1967, p.3.

*Armidale Chronicle*, 8 June 1921 stated that the inspector referred to the area leading up to Ben Venue as Billy Goat Hill.

Because of the general interest in place names, the *Armidale Express*, 27 October 1967 published information on the derivation of the name. The article stated that Ben Venue is the name of a mountain in Scotland, in the trossachs, a tourist district that embraces Loch Lomond. Alan Treloar, a linguistics lecturer in Classics at the University of New England College commented a rough phonetic equivalent of the Gaelic name for the mountain 'would be "Ben Veton vonath" and the "Ben Venue" is a corruption of influences by the French "Bienvenu" (welcome)'.

### **Brickfield**

In this area bricks were manufactured by first Richard Childs from the 1850s and later William Palmer after 1876. The brick company was then further developed by the builder George Frederick Nott who purchased the business in 1901.

### **Forster**

The name was selected to commemorate the name of Thomas Richard Forster of Abington who donated Booloominbah to the University of Sydney. It was this gift of the property and land which made possible the foundation of the University College in 1938 and later the University of New England.

### **Macdonald.**

George James Macdonald, born probably in 1803 was appointed by Governor Sir George Gipps to be a Commissioner of Crown Lands in November 1837. He was gazetted as Commissioner for the New England District in May 1839 and established a camp at Armidale by September.

### **Soudan Heights.**

This name came from the house constructed by the Scholes family in the 1880s. In May 1900 residents of South Armidale petitioned council asking for portion of the town to be called 'Reservoir Hill'.

### **East and West Armidale.**

The names East End or East Armidale and West End or West Armidale were frequently used. The two parks became known as East End Park (later Macdonald Park) and West End Park (later Lambert Park). Similarly names for North and South Armidale were used. The development of each of these areas were reinforced by the creation of the various progress associations: West Armidale; East Armidale; North Armidale and South Armidale.

### **Eastwood.**

Ald. Makin thought that the name of Darktown 'should be changed to Eastwood, as the present designation was not a pleasant one'<sup>4</sup> in January 1902. A request

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<sup>4</sup> *Armidale Express*, 31 January 1902, p.3.

from C.J. Perrott to change the name to Townsend was received at the same time. Three weeks later the proposal by Perrott 'was referred to a committee of the aldermen representing the East Ward'.<sup>5</sup> Action to change the name was not taken but in March 1903 Ald. Jones moved that the area east of Gostwyck Road and south of Hillgrove Road, be renamed Eastwood. The motion lapsed but in April Jones moved successfully that the area be changed to Eastwood.

Residents of East Armidale formed the East Armidale Progress Association in 1913. The association expressed concern about the police paddock of some twenty seven acres and an adjoining sixteen acres which they felt was detrimental to Eastwood. In September 1913 the association 'moved to have Mosman Street opened up and the portion between Mosman and Mann Street subdivided for building sites'.<sup>6</sup>

### **Aboriginal Housing.**

The Department of Works and Local Government urged councils in March 1941 'to take suitable action to obviate distressing conditions which exist in just such camps as that at Armidale'.<sup>7</sup> Little was done to improve the situation but in January 1950 council asked Dumaresq Shire to supply 'sanitary conveniences for these people camped at East Armidale'.<sup>8</sup> A year later, the secretary of the Aborigines' Welfare Board expressed concern in February 1951 to council about living conditions for Aborigines in Armidale. At the same time, Davis Hughes, M.L.A. made personal representations to the Chief Secretary, Clive Evatt concerning these living conditions.

Following a meeting between the Mayor Ald. W.P. Ryan, an officer of the Aborigine Welfare Board and the police, council discussed the issue of Aboriginal housing on reserves. The *Armidale Express*, 11 July 1956 reported:

Armidale City Council believe that the problem of the aborigines who live on the outskirts of the city without being able to fit into ordinary Australian way of life could be solved if more room was made for them in the reserves at Caroon, Burnt Bridge and Moree.

The attitudes expressed in council led to an angry retort from an Armidale priest Father Francis I. Kelly. He believed that council wished to move the Aboriginal people without their consent. In reply to the criticism, Ald. Ellen M. Kent Hughes defended council's attitude and said that the proposal only referred to 'undisciplined wanderers and the helpless, hopeless ones who do not work steadily'. She felt that if homes were provided then rent should be charged to

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<sup>5</sup> *Armidale Express*, 14 March 1902, p.2.

<sup>6</sup> *Armidale Express*, 16 September 1913, p.4.

<sup>7</sup> *Armidale Express*, 26 March 1941, p.4.

<sup>8</sup> *Armidale Express*, 1 February 1950, p.12.

encourage 'coloured people ... to work steadily, and get some self-respect'.<sup>9</sup> The Catholic Church was prepared to take further practical action to provide housing.

A house built for an Aboriginal family in East Armidale from material used from the Catholic Church at Hillgrove was opened in January 1957. A private conference between the City Council, the police, Aborigine Welfare Board and Association for the Assimilation of Aborigines was held in November to discuss 'problems created by the 80-90 Aborigines who are living at the old garbage dump at East Armidale'.<sup>10</sup> A policy was worked out with council to convert the dump into a community with community organisations to provide services for a limited population.

Council approved an application by the Association for the Assimilation of Aborigines in December 1957 to build a house in Chapel Street 'provided the Association altered the capital cost of the building from £1,600 to £2,940'<sup>11</sup> to include the cost of voluntary labour. A petition of about 300 signatures from Armidale residents was forwarded to council in January 1958 protesting about permission being granted for construction of a home for an Aboriginal family in East Armidale. The petitioners claimed such a home would 'lessen the value of adjoining property; interfere with the amenities of the locality; endanger public health of the neighbourhood'.<sup>12</sup> The petition was rejected and the house built by the Association for the Assimilation of Aborigines and the Armidale Apex Club in Chapel Street, East Armidale was officially opened by the Hon. C.A. Kelly, Chief Secretary on 20 November 1958.

Council took steps in January 1958 to improve living conditions at the dump by restoring a tap supply under the control of the city engineer. Once council had determined the legal power to spend money on Aboriginal welfare, council was to investigate a plan 'to provide showers, sanitary conveniences, laundry block, recreation hut, study hut for children, possibly in association with local community organisations'.<sup>13</sup> Following the visit of Dr. M.H. Saxby, Superintendent of Aboriginal Welfare, council received a report in March that there was the possibility of money being provided for cottages for aborigines on a specific aborigines reserve. That November the Aborigines Welfare Board announced plans to erect homes at the dump and reported action is being taken to have the area known as 'The Dump' gazetted. The area was declared a reserve on 21 November 1958. In October 1960 the Welfare Board reported it 'had never wanted to recognise the Dump as a Reserve'<sup>14</sup> but local pressure and the shortage of the land had forced the board into this position.

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<sup>9</sup> *Armidale Express*, 13 July 1956, p.7.

<sup>10</sup> *Armidale Express*, 20 November 1957, p.8.

<sup>11</sup> *Armidale Express*, 27 December 1957, p.3.

<sup>12</sup> *Armidale Express*, 22 January 1958, p.6.

<sup>13</sup> *Armidale Express*, 22 January 1958, p.3.

<sup>14</sup> *Armidale Express*, 14 October 1960, p.1.

In February 1959 council announced it would clear the dump once a bulldozer became available. The Aborigines' Welfare Board advised the Dumaresq Shire in October that it proposed to build two houses on the reserve for Aborigines on the Long Swamp Road. A conference called by the Dumaresq Shire President, Councillor Don Cameron was held in November and identified 'the immediate needs of the aborigines at the Dump are water, health and sanitary services'.<sup>15</sup> Prior to 1 January 1961, housing at the dump was the responsibility of the Welfare Board and Dumaresq Shire but the provision of water and sanitary services was the responsibility of the City Council.

An outbreak of gastro-enteritis at the dump in October 1960 hospitalised eleven babies and killed four more. That month, council immediately commenced the installation of an emergency sanitary service and Davis Hughes urged parliament to take immediate action concerning conditions in the shanty town. A week later, the Chief Secretary Mr Kelly announced that £25 000 would be made available for the provision of housing and sewerage at the reserve. At the same time, council announced its plans to move the garbage depot away from the Aboriginal reserve. Council also urged the appointment of a welfare officer and 'agreed on a policy of "no more humpies" at the Reserve'<sup>16</sup>.

On 1 January 1961 the reserve came under the boundary extension scheme but it was not until May that work began on the construction of fourteen homes by the Aborigine Welfare Board. Tenants for the homes were named in August. By November the Board met the cost of the provision of sewerage whilst water and garbage service costs were met by the Government Real Estate Office and the Board. That month, the homes were completed at a cost of £34 000 including sewerage and council cleared away many of the humpies.

The Aborigine Welfare Board accepted the estimate of £1500 from council in May 1962 to construct adequate roads and to grade the centre. Council agreed to the request by the Board in September to fill in the hole dug in the reserve for burying remnants of the old humpies once plant was available.

With the announcement in May 1966 that five more houses were to be built by the board, council decided to meet with the organization to determine the location of the houses. Council recommended that the five houses should be placed in the one area in June and that month, the Parliamentary Committee inquiring into Aboriginal welfare visited Armidale. Evidence was given by a number of individuals including D.G. Yates, District Aborigine welfare officer and Dr Kent Hughes. In her evidence she stated 'half the children in the Armidale hospital came from the aborigines who numbered about 300'.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> *Armidale Express*, 2 December 1959, p.13.

<sup>16</sup> *Armidale Express*, 26 October 1960, p.13.

<sup>17</sup> *Armidale Express*, 8 June 1966, p.10.

The Welfare Board announced that it was negotiating for the purchase of two homes in Armidale in December 1966; one in Chapel Street owned by the Association for Aborigines and the other in Rusden Street. By August 1968 some \$90 000 had been spent on the renovation of fourteen homes and on roads and sewerage provided through the Board. Twelve months later, tenders were called for the construction of two new housing commission cottages for Aboriginal families.

### **Buildings.**

Construction of the railway meant a stimulus to local industry and the need for housing for construction workers and later railway employees. The *Armidale Express*, 15 September 1882 reported:

During the past few years the town of Armidale has increased in size and importance at a very rapid rate, for conformation of which statement it is only necessary to count the number of buildings that have been recently erected.

In 1881, one year before the arrival of the railway, the number of brick, stone and timber dwellings was 319 but this number had increased to 669 by 1891.<sup>18</sup>

The construction of St Marys Cathedral in 1912 stimulated the Armidale building industry. The contractor George Nott announced extensions to his Rusden Street Timber and Joinery works and the Armidale Brick and Pottery Works in January 1913. Reporting the planned business extensions, the *Armidale Chronicle*, 22 January 1913 commented:

if evidence of the future expansion of Armidale is wanted, it can readily be found in the confidence which local business men repose in the future of the city, as shown by the expenditure which they are incurring in plant and buildings to cope with present and future growth.

A critical aspect of the development of Armidale was the construction undertaken by the various denominations and government departments. In the period 1920 to 1922 the various denominations had spent £31 000 in enlarging various buildings and the government had spent £20 000 in erecting the new Armidale High School. The new orphanage was also completed in November 1922 by the Roman Catholic Church at a cost of £20 000. Statistics for the period 1923 to 1925 were published in the *Armidale Chronicle*, 25 November 1925: new buildings: dwellings 112 (value £79 490); other buildings 20 (value £26 900). Additions and alterations: dwellings 270 (value £11 454) and other buildings (value £24 500)

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<sup>18</sup> L.S. Gilbert, *An Armidale Album*, New England Regional Museum, Armidale, 1982.

The extent of the development for the 1920s was revealed in the *Armidale Express*, 2 September 1929.

Year	New Buildings	Value £	Alterations and Additions	Value £
1921	16	13,150	40	3,740
1922	28	27,545	62	6,125
1923	32	27,915	101	4,968
1924	41	29,620	120	10,441
1925	52	44,285	140	21,715
1926	62	33,584	117	15,617
1927	57	44,820	148	22,716
1928	64	64,755	80	20,660
1929 (to 31 August)	72	165,125	86	38,954

  

	U.C.V. £	I.C.V. £	A.A.V. £	Total Rates £
1921	210,194	843,264	63,293	7,363
1925	243,532	1,151,925	76,105	8,077
1929	289,352	1,561,000	91,100	16,270

The impact of the depression can be demonstrated in the comparison between the 1929 and 1930 building figures. In 1929, ninety four new dwellings were approved at a cost of £81 620; three shops at £1615 and 110 additions and alterations at a cost of £19 739. An additional £120 000 was spent on the estimated cost of construction of the Teacher's College and renovations and additions to 'Girrahween' for the college students at the Stephen Smith Hostel. One year later, 'the total value of new buildings was £19,450 ... and the cost of alterations ... £12,393'.<sup>19</sup>

The report published in the *Armidale Express*, 1 January 1932 revealed that in 1931 there were six dwellings built at a cost of £3506 but no new shops. The total expenditure on alterations to dwellings, shops and outhouses was £6,500. The year 1933 included: eight residences £6950; one shop £200; ambulance station £1900; museum £1200 and twenty seven additions and alterations £2078-£12 323.<sup>20</sup>

By July 1934 there was a building trade revival. In the first six months, ten new cottages were erected for a total cost of almost £8000 and repairs and alterations had been completed on fifty premises. The Imperial Hotel was renovated (£4000)

<sup>19</sup> *Armidale Express*, 14 January 1931, p.6.

<sup>20</sup> *Armidale Express*, 22 December 1933, p.4.

and plans were underway for the New Bishopscourt and the Florence Green Memorial Chapel at New England Girl's School.<sup>21</sup>

In 1928 there was an estimated cost of £85 415 declared for the construction of new buildings: three new brick buildings and fifty six weatherboard buildings. However for 1935 estimated costs included £32 187 for twenty nine new buildings at a cost of £17 900. The *Armidale Express*, 19 December 1935 reported this year was the highest 'since the depression commenced, and builders have been kept busy throughout the year'.

1938 indicated a year of progress and business expansion. No less than £63 423 was expended on buildings with £42 369 spent on new buildings, alterations or additions. Significant developments included the Catholic Recreation Hall (£12 500); Royal Hotel remodelling (£5686); Bank of New South Wales (£11 500) and St. Ursula's College additions (£7954).

Armidale did not experience a building boom in 1939. The total value of plans approved was £30 804 although this figure did not include the new Science block at the New England University College and alterations to various schools. Forty one dwellings were built but only three of brick.<sup>22</sup>

World War Two effected the construction of buildings in the city. In 1940, fourteen dwellings were completed at a cost of £9673 and other buildings were £12 459; a gross total of £22 132. The year 1941 was a disastrous year for the construction of buildings; thirteen dwellings were constructed costing £10 000 whilst other works was £8163. The N.E.S. regulations which prohibited the construction of buildings above a cost of £25 meant that only twelve sub-division plans were submitted in 1942. In 1945 four dwellings were approved at a cost of £4236 and thirty five others at a cost of £2730.

The cessation of hostilities led to an increased demand for buildings although the controls on building construction continued. During 1946 council approved plans for fifty one dwellings at a cost of £51 953 including nineteen brick dwellings. Ninety seven other buildings were involved at a cost of £3270 including two sawmills; a skin store and steam laundry. At that stage, legislation limited alterations to premises to cost £150 and new business premises to cost £500 without special permission from the government. By May 1947, twenty five houses had been approved but none had been completed because of a shortage of roofing, joinery and plumbing materials.

The Minister for Building Materials appealed to local government bodies to investigate the possibility of undertaking home construction schemes. He promised council 'would be given top priority on materials' if they 'co-operated in

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<sup>21</sup> *Armidale Express*, 25 July 1934, p.4.

<sup>22</sup> *Armidale Express*, 3 January 1940, p.4.



the project'.<sup>23</sup> At that stage, permits from the department were required for the construction of: brick homes of more than 1250 square feet; for a timber framed home of more than 1200 square feet and for maintenance, renovation or painting work costing more than £75.

The shortage of building materials continued well after the war. In 1948, council approved sixty two plans but only forty eight were completed whilst in 1949, seventy three plans were approved with fifty four houses completed. The census showed that there were 1677 private dwellings in Armidale.<sup>24</sup> The first housing ballot for four housing commission homes was held in Armidale in September 1948.<sup>25</sup> The first public auction of houses and allotments were held in Armidale on Friday 30 September 1949 following the lifting of land sales control by the government. In December 1948 the Housing Commission of NSW announced its intention to build houses on the corner of Beardy and Niagara Streets.

By February 1950 the housing shortage in Armidale was still acute. Since January 1948, 104 house had been completed but the *Armidale Express*, 22 February 1950 reported the city council's building inspector, Les Brown: 'The situation is pretty grim at present'.

Over the next two years, the following occurred:

Buildings	1951	1952
	£	£
Dwellings	74 765 (40)	67 725 (37)
Additions	14 623	9 346
Others	2 195	22 233

The *Armidale Express*, 21 January 1953 reported that there was an amount £99 304 spent on new buildings, alterations and repairs. This was an increase of £17 721 on the previous year. In 1955 council approved applications to erect sixty nine dwellings at a total cost of £186 682 and to November 1956 forty seven dwellings at a cost of £143 698. The 1955 figures included a sum of £25 000 for a proposed Memorial Hall at The Armidale School (T.A.S.) and £8 000 for a new service station.

In his 1961 annual report the health surveyor Ray E. Esdaile stated buildings including alterations and additions valued at £402 024 were erected in Armidale; an increase of £30 771 on the previous year. Despite credit restrictions and a general reduction in building, the overall figure increase was due to the expansion of the municipal boundaries. In 1963 111 dwellings were approved valued at

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<sup>23</sup> *Armidale Express*, 25 June 1947, p.8.

<sup>24</sup> *Armidale Express*, 6 February 1948, p.8.

<sup>25</sup> *Armidale Express*, 24 September 1948, p.8.

£487 000 and 205 alterations and additions were £196 000. The total value of £801 000 included the cost of the Presbyterian Ladies College.

The amount of £667 000 approved for 1964 included 109 dwellings and flats valued at £420 000; 191 alterations and additions at £169 000 and twelve commercial and other buildings valued at £79 000.<sup>26</sup> The health surveyor, Don Crawford informed council in January 1967 that private investors constructed buildings to the value of \$ 2 223 564 in 1966. Figures were unavailable for construction at the university but five buildings there had cost about \$1 500 000 by November. One year later, Crawford revealed to council 'there were approval for 128 dwellings and flats, sixteen commercial buildings and 146 additions and alterations'.<sup>27</sup> The value approved was nearly 50% than in the previous year.

Building applications brought the total value of approvals in 1970 to \$4.6 million. The major approval was Austin College at the University of New England valued at \$1.2 million and in 1971 council approved more than \$3 million worth of buildings in Armidale. The demand for homes and offices in Armidale during 1973 was reflected in the 'record number of building applications- nearly 25 p.c. up on last year'.<sup>28</sup> The total value reached \$4.5 million. Despite a marked decline within the building industry in 1975, many people took action to renovate or extend their homes. There were: eighty applications for dwellings (\$2 197 716); fourteen applications for flats (\$837 260); 190 application for alterations and extensions (\$1 069 815) and fifty one applications for commercial buildings (\$3 050 475)

Armidale's first proposal for a group housing scheme was rejected by council in December 1976. Council was in favour of the proposal but council's town planner felt 'it had completely missed the concept of group housing'.<sup>29</sup>

In 1981 sixty six dwellings were approved and the total value of dwellings, flats, additions and alterations, institutional, educational and commercial buildings was \$10 131 77.<sup>30</sup> The 1985 annual report showed that in 1984 there were 338 building applications valued at \$13.2 million and in 1985, 367 applications valued at \$14.5 million. The economic development in 1985 was more related to land subdivision and figures over a five year period showed: 1980 eighteen applications and forty nine allotments; 1984 forty two applications and 235 allotments and 1985 forty eight applications and 633 allotments.

### **Building Ordinances.**

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<sup>26</sup> *Armidale Express*, 4 December 1964, p.5.

<sup>27</sup> *Armidale Express*, 10 January 1968, p.6.

<sup>28</sup> *Armidale Express*, 5 December 1973, p.3.

<sup>29</sup> *Armidale Express*, 8 December 1976, p.5.

<sup>30</sup> Armidale City Council, Annual Report of the Senior Officers, 1981.

Prior to the 1906 Local Government Act, there was little governmental control over housing. By this act councils were 'empowered to regulate the erection of buildings- their height, design, structure, materials and the like, as well as the subdivision of building land, to secure ways of access and appropriate lots'.<sup>31</sup>

Last century, some aldermen were concerned about buildings and in January 1889 an alderman asked whether the Building Act could be extended to Armidale. Again in May 1896 the borough inspector reported to council on the number of verandah posts in Beardy Street that were rotten and unsafe. He thought it his duty to report the situation but 'he was not aware of any power given to him to deal with the matter'.<sup>32</sup> Two weeks later, Ald. McRohan asked what did residents gain by giving notice of their intention to erect buildings and paying a fee to council. 'After the Mayor had searched the by-laws he answered "Nothing"'.<sup>33</sup> Local businessman W.C. Higinbotham was taken to court by the borough inspector in October for not paying his fee of 5s and informing council of his intention to erect a building. The bench ordered him to pay according to the by-laws but said: 'they did not consider the Council had any moral right to charge the fee unless they gave something in return for it'.<sup>34</sup>

Council informed the Public Works Department in August 1908 that it did not wish ordinances relating to the erection of buildings extended to Armidale. 'The Mayor said as these ordinances did not give the council power to demolish unsightly and useless buildings, they were not of much use to Armidale'.<sup>35</sup> By 1910 many councils throughout the state had adopted building regulations under the Local Government Act 1906. In October the general purposes committee submitted a detailed list of new building regulations to council. Several of the regulations were rejected but most were approved including: the rejection of bark for roofs; no more humpies were to be constructed; all buildings apart from businesses were to be 13 feet back from the front line and allotments were to be 40 feet wide and 100 feet deep.

The special regulations that were to apply to Beardy street were published in the *Armidale Express*, 25 October 1910:

no weatherboard shop ... or other building shall be built between Marsh and Jessie streets, and all shops, or shops and dwellings, or

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<sup>31</sup> P.A. Larcombe, *The Advancement of Local Government in New South Wales 1906 to the Present. A History of Local Government in New South Wales: Vol. 3*, Sydney University Press, Local Government Association and Shires Association of New South Wales, Brisbane, 1978, p. 346.

<sup>32</sup> *Armidale Express*, 29 May 1896, p.4.

<sup>33</sup> *Armidale Express*, 12 June 1896, p.5.

<sup>34</sup> *Armidale Express*, 16 October 1896, p.4.

<sup>35</sup> *Armidale Express*, 18 August 1908, p.2.

other buildings built in that area, shall be brick, stone, cement or concrete.

On 29 March 1926 council adopted a resolution that buildings fronting both sides of Beardy Street between Jessie and Marsh Streets 'were to be built of brick, stone, cement or similar material'.<sup>36</sup> Council was informed in November 1941 by the Department of Local Government and Housing that it would now be necessary to have the approval of the State Governor before the proclamation of brick areas. The brick area had been extended to include Barney Street by November 1955. By May 1966 the brick area extended to an area bounded by Barney, Marsh and Jessie Streets and a line north of Moore Street. Council adopted a report by the health surveyor D.M. Crawford on the advisability of extending the area in May 1966.

The Local Government Department intimated in September 1917 that the powers to regulate the erection of buildings had been granted to council. The *Armidale Express*, 30 October 1917 advertised that ordinance No 70A was now applied to the municipality. The ordinance gave council 'greater powers of control over the erection of buildings'.

The town clerk, F. Milner informed builders and persons intending to build in March 1921 that plans must be submitted in duplicate and plans must be received at least one week prior to council meetings. Council also had plans for modern bungalows suitable for erection in this area. This could account for the number of Californian Bungalows built in Armidale during the 1920s and 1930s.

In March 1925 aldermen were divided on the issue of the positioning of buildings because sometimes builders changed plans and positions as building progressed. Two year later a further division arose amongst aldermen in May 1927 as the issue arose of whether the building committee or council approved plans for dwellings.

Council announced in March 1938 its intention to insist that building construction is not to commence before submitting plans to council otherwise offenders would be prosecuted.

In January 1940 council decided that horses or cattle could not be kept within 100 feet of any building inhabited or used for the preparation or the storage of food. No more than two dogs over 9 months old could be kept within 50 feet of such dwellings. Council determined in May 1943 that in the case of domestic dwellings poultry must be kept 25 feet from any dwelling and 100 feet from premises where food is manufactured, prepared, sold or stored.

Council was informed in June 1942 that control of buildings had been transferred from the Treasury to the Department of War Organisation of Industry which was

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<sup>36</sup> *Armidale Express*, 25 September 1940, p.8.

now responsible for all buildings and demolition of buildings. The regulations did not apply to work costing under £25.

A Commonwealth Housing commission was formed in April 1943 and the *Sydney Morning Herald* stated:

Its task was to prepare housing plans, based upon four objectives, the overtaking of housing arrears, the provision of adequate housing, ensuring that inexpensive dwellings were available to persons of limited means and the replacement of slums and sub-standard dwellings.<sup>37</sup>

The attempt by the Commonwealth Government to solve the post-war housing problem led to a visit by two members of the Housing Commission to Armidale in July 1943. They held a sitting in the council chambers and evidence was given by the town clerk, F.W. Milner; J.L.G. Johnstone, on behalf of the New England Mutual and Building Investment Society and G.S. Hutchinson, secretary of the Armidale Co-operative and Investment Building Society first formed in January 1939. 'Generally the evidence pointed against political interference with the housing problem that had arisen mainly owing to war-time building restrictions'.<sup>38</sup>

The town clerk F.W. Milner informed council in June 1945 of a clause in the Local Government Amendment Act that gave councils the power to demand the demolition of buildings considered unsafe and unhygienic. The health inspector was instructed to examine buildings in the municipality. In August council decided to exercise its new powers on J.H. Pleace, owner of a burnt out shop building on Part 1 Section 1 Beardy Street and gave him one month to demolish the building. Prior to that date, council was prepared to order the demolition of buildings considered unsafe as in the case of the former Daniel O'Connell Inn in April 1937. However this was the exception rather than the rule.

The Local Government (Amendment Act) 1945 gave council the power to make money advances for the rebuilding of dwellings.

The Minister for Building Materials appealed to Local Government bodies to investigate the possibility of undertaking home construction schemes. He promised council 'would be given top priority on materials' if they 'co-operated in the project'.<sup>39</sup> At that stage, permits from the Department were required for: the construction of brick homes of more than 1250 square feet; for a timber framed

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<sup>37</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 6 and 8 April 1943 quoted in F.A. Larcombe, *The Advancement of Local Government in New South Wales 1906 to the Present. A History of Local Government in New South Wales: Volume 3*, Sydney University Press, Local Government Association and Shires Association of New South Wales, Brisbane, 1978, p. 351.

<sup>38</sup> *Armidale Express*, 23 July 1943, p.15.

<sup>39</sup> *Armidale Express*, 25 June 1947, p.8.

home of more than 1200 square feet and for maintenance, renovation or painting work costing more than £75.

The Department of Public Health advised council in June 1949 'it has full powers to deal with the subdivision of low-lying ground and has the power to require the land to be adequately drained before granting permission to build'.<sup>40</sup> This power was available from the 1919 Act.

Prior to August 1951, it was only necessary to notify the health and building inspector but 'permission for building works worth more than £5,000 must now be obtained from Dept. of Labour, Industry and Social Welfare'.<sup>41</sup>

### **Size of building blocks and land subdivision.**

In March 1921 council determined all applications to build facing lanes must provide for such buildings to be at least 25 feet back from the alignment. Following Ald. Johnstone's appeal to lay down a minimum area for sub-divisions, the public was informed that as a general rule, sub-divisions are more likely to be favorably considered if the allotments 'are at least 44 ft. frontage by 132 ft. deep'.<sup>42</sup>

In July 1928 council was reluctant to allow houses to be erected on lane frontages because 'it would eventually be called upon to extend the gas and water mains, and other services to these places, and also maintain the lanes'.<sup>43</sup> Council then determined in December 1929 that as from 1930 all buildings facing lanes were to be kept back at least 25 feet 'thus making it possible in future years for the lanes to be 40 feet wide, and houses back 15 feet'.<sup>44</sup>

Council determined that building blocks should not be smaller than a 44 feet frontage by 132 feet deep in June 1935. In April 1937 council announced that plans for subdivisions 'shall show at least 44 feet street frontage and an area of not less than 4000 square feet'.<sup>45</sup> The maximum area stipulated by the ordinance was far less than that asked for previously by council. Ald. McBean stated there was no need for so much ground as fewer people kept horses or cows in the backyard of their blocks. Council approved an application by E. Youman to subdivide his block in the Johnstone subdivision in Donnelly Street into three blocks measuring 44 feet frontage by 106 feet deep.

Council further developed its policy on building and widening in lanes in July 1948. It adopted a policy to permit building in lanes but owners had to provide

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<sup>40</sup> *Armidale Express*, 8 June 1949, p.12.

<sup>41</sup> *Armidale Express*, 22 August 1951, p.6.

<sup>42</sup> *Armidale Chronicle*, 16 March 1921, p.4.

<sup>43</sup> *Armidale Chronicle*, 4 July 1928, p.6.

<sup>44</sup> *Armidale Express*, 18 December 1929, p.4.

<sup>45</sup> *Armidale Express*, 28 April 1937, p.8.

land for road widening purposes. The Chamber of Commerce appointed F.G. Wilson, A.W. Fittler and G.S. Hutchinson in April 1949<sup>46</sup> to report on lanes which could be widened to provide access to building sites behind existing homes. An important development occurred in July 1950 when council accepted recommendations from the town planning committee. In all new subdivisions, the minimum frontage would be 50 feet and 6600 square feet as the minimum area for residential lots.

In May 1955 council adopted the policy that 'in all cases of subdivision of land facing lanes, Council advise the applicants of its policy to resume for road-widening purposes at the Valuer-General's valuation'.<sup>47</sup>

A motion on land subdivision was presented by Ald. C.F. Allmann concerning costs to be met by subdividers in August 1960. Following debate and concern expressed by aldermen about their expertise to debate such a complex issue, he withdrew the motion. However he reserved the right to make 'a further submission'.<sup>48</sup> Proposed conditions for land subdivision were placed before council by the city engineer, P.G. Agnew in February 1961 but aldermen wanted reports from other officers on the same subject. A motion 'designed to give Council power to require subdividers of land for housing estates to provide water, sewerage and roads as a condition of the subdivision approval'<sup>49</sup> came before council in October 1962.

The issue of battle axe blocks was raised during debate in council in February 1965.

Before October 1974, council's policy required a 5% contribution rate by developers but this was changed to 10% for public garden and recreation space contribution. Council considered the possibility of reducing the charges in March and April 1976 but the move was rejected in May. That July council reduced the contribution rate by 50%; future contributions were to be now \$360 per allotment and \$90 per flat.

### **Construction of flats.**

In May 1954 the Vice Chancellor of the University appealed to council to 'take up with the Housing Commission a proposal to erect two blocks of flats in Armidale to cope with the expected increase in the University staff'.<sup>50</sup> Ald. W.P. Ryan moved that council meet with the university to discuss the matter. In May 1954

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<sup>46</sup> *Armidale Express*, 4 April, 1949, p.4.

<sup>47</sup> *Armidale Express*, 4 May 1955, p.12.

<sup>48</sup> *Armidale Express*, 31 August 1960, p.2.

<sup>49</sup> *Armidale Express*, 3 October 1962, p.4.

<sup>50</sup> *Armidale Express*, 7 May 1954, p. 14.

council took action 'to permit the erection of multiple flats within the municipal area'.<sup>51</sup> This time there was no outcry from residents.

The growth of education in the 1960s led to an increased demand for housing and controversy emerged as the council considered multi-unit flats in South and North Armidale. A storm erupted in September 1963 when council approved a six unit building. Then Professor J.H. Shaw, who led a seminar on Town Planning at the University of New England, criticised the development of spot zoning for flats. He said 'Council should set aside special zones for flats to avoid the scattered and indiscriminate flat building that Armidale had now to a degree'.<sup>52</sup>

Prior to his resignation from council in April 1964, town planner and city engineer Agnew said 'in a special report on the Interim Town Plan presented to' council 'that control of flats was desirable'.<sup>53</sup> Controversy again arose in April when council approved in principle a thirteen unit block in Mann Street between Dangar and Jessie Streets. A week later council was 'asked to approve three new flat buildings in North and South Armidale containing 39 flats'.<sup>54</sup> City engineer Agnew resigned from Armidale in April 1964 but said on his departure, 'the zoning of areas where people could be assured that flats would not be built was a town planning principle which was adopted fairly widely'.<sup>55</sup> At this stage such a planning principle was not part of Armidale's town plan. On Monday 2 May council deferred a decision on the Mann Street flats for two weeks. Whilst council approved in principle the above flats, some aldermen felt that council should now adopt a policy on the construction of flats.

The controversial Mann Street flats proposal was approved and council then considered further proposals for flats. Developers and investors were now presenting applications before the adoption of rigid controls of flat development in Armidale. The first step in control of flat building was taken by council on Monday 1 June, 1964 when council adopted a policy of building standards for the construction of future flats.

A thirteen unit flat proposal in Mann Street led to a long debate in March 1965 and concern was expressed about parking. In May council approved B class flats in a A class area in Beardy and Donnelly Streets and thus reversed the decision of its development committee not to allow the buildings. The State Planning authority recommended to council in November 1969 that it consider restricting the areas allowing flats in the Town Plan.

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<sup>51</sup> *Armidale Express*, 4 June 1954, p.8.

<sup>52</sup> *Armidale Express*, 2 October 1963, p.5.

<sup>53</sup> *Armidale Express*, 25 March 1964, p.

<sup>54</sup> *Armidale Express*, 4 May 1964, p.1.

<sup>55</sup> *Armidale Express*, 1 May 1964, p.2.



The deputy mayor Ald. D.A. Hewitt and Ald. S.M. Pike claimed in November 1966 'that development applications which did not comply with Council standards were likely to be approved if the developer made an application to the Council instead of to the appropriate committee, and asked for a prompt decision'.<sup>56</sup> The issue arose during a debate about a block of five flats in Marsh Street, near the Barney Street intersection. Despite the report by the city health surveyor D. Crawford that the application did not comply with building requirements, the flats were approved.

The annual report of the Mayor Ald Failes in December 1969 revealed that 'the development committee had adopted a new code of flat development'.<sup>57</sup>

Despite thirteen objections, council approved duplex flats in Johnson Avenue in May 1971. Residents and the Ben Venue Progress Association objected because the area already had a high density of flats. The *Armidale Express*, 28 May 1971 outlined the concerns of the Ben Venue Association and reported members of the association say 'there is a gross unevenness of flat development in Armidale'.

More than 150 residents in the Ben Venue area petitioned council in February 1972 to refuse development consent for duplex flats in Simpson Avenue. A month later 161 Ben Venue residents again petitioned council concerning a proposal for duplex flat units in Curtis Street. Despite protests, the number of flat units approved for construction by council was 101 in 1972, 'almost 60 per cent more than last year'.<sup>58</sup>

In October 1976 the Mayor Ald. Poggioli expressed concern about the proliferation of flats in certain parts of the city. 'He thought the time might be appropriate to develop a policy in relation to intensive flat development'.<sup>59</sup>

In 1986 council adopted the new legislation abolishing the long established schedule of the Local Government and Regulation of Flats Act. A new requirement for all building applications over \$10 000 was required with 0.5% to be paid before the plans were approved.

### **Building Societies.**

In November 1943 action was taken by council 'to collaborate with building societies under Section 518A of the Local Government Act' and acquire land which, after the war, could be sold to home builders seeking a Building Society loan'.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> *Armidale Express*, 4 November 1966, p.15.

<sup>57</sup> *Armidale Express*, 12 December 1969, p.3.

<sup>58</sup> *Armidale Express*, 27 December 1972, p.13.

<sup>59</sup> *Armidale Express*, 27 October 1976, p.1.

<sup>60</sup> *Armidale Express*, 17 November 1943, p.4.

### **Community Housing.**

Mayor Ald. Monckton called a public meeting in October 1952 to investigate the establishment of a community settlement for aged people and a committee was formed. A possible site was an area in Donnelly Street opposite the old hospital and the 'area ... was held in trust by the Armidale Relief Society'.<sup>61</sup>

The Armidale War Memorial Homes for the Aged was opened in 1956 with one building with private and double rooms. By March 1968 it consisted of a long weatherboard house consisting of two long wings and a central section.

### **Housing and Reserves.**

M.L.A.'s Bruxner, A. McClelland and D.H. Drummond acted on behalf of council to have the Armidale Gaol converted to a Technical College and the 'surplus land thrown open as building allotments'.<sup>62</sup> The Department of Justice conducted a full inquiry into the matter and informed council 'it had been decided not to dispose of either the land or the building at present'.<sup>63</sup> In July 1927, Ald. Curtis moved representations be made to the Justice Department to have the gaol demolished and the ground thrown up for subdivision. A. McClelland, M.L.A. forwarded a reply received from the Minister for Justice concerning the gaol site to council in August. Council still felt that an early decision should be made on demolition of the building.

Trustees of the racecourse were informed 'council would like to have a conference on a proposal to revoke the dedication of the land as a racecourse and its use for town planned building sites'.<sup>64</sup> The building, health and general purposes committee recommended the acquisition of the 84 acres racecourse for conversion into a model suburb in July 1946 but the motion was defeated.

### **Housing Commission.**

The Department of Local Government asked council in November 1945 for completion of a census of unoccupied and part occupied houses 'with a view to alleviating the housing situation'.<sup>65</sup> Council completed the survey but some aldermen expressed suspicion of the motives of the Department.

Because of the housing situation after the war, council took action in May 1946 to invite the Housing Commission to Armidale to erect a number of houses in the municipality. Whilst supportive of the action, the *Armidale Express*, 29 May 1946 commented 'but we hope that it will not lead to acceptance of a socialised building industry'. Peter Funder, Chief Planning Officer of the Commission visited Armidale in August to inspect building sites and meet representatives of

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<sup>61</sup> *Armidale Express*, 22 October 1952, p.8.

<sup>62</sup> *Armidale Chronicle*, 22 July 1925, p.3.

<sup>63</sup> *Armidale Chronicle*, 2 September 1925, p.3.

<sup>64</sup> *Armidale Express*, 14 November 1945, p.8.

<sup>65</sup> *Armidale Express*, 14 November 1945, p.8.

council and the Chamber of Commerce. Council took action to give maximum co-operation to the Commission.

The commission advised council in June 1947 resumption of land for construction of houses at Armidale had not yet been finalised. Council received details in February 1948 of the Tenancy Advisory Committee to be established in towns where homes were being constructed. That month council appointed the Mayor Ald D.D.H. Fayle as council representative on the committee to deal with the allocation of the homes. Two housing commission homes were under construction by March.

In April 1948 the commission asked council to suggest sites for the construction of more homes. 'The commission advised that it preferred to acquire groups of several lots in one ownership rather than deal with individually owned blocks'.<sup>66</sup> In October the commission informed council of its intention to erect "C" class residential housing at the north-eastern corner of Beardy and Niagara Streets. Council requested plans of the flats and in December 1948 the commission announced its intention to build houses on the corner of Beardy and Niagara Streets.

In June 1949 news was received that an additional ten houses would be built by the Housing Commission. This meant that a total of twenty five homes had been allotted to the city under the government's housing scheme. By December 1949 the commission had built ten homes and another ten were under construction. In January 1950 council was informed that the division 'was considering making an offer for the purchase of lands in the Estate of Montgomery Jones fronting Chapel, Mann and Canambe streets'.<sup>67</sup>

Nine dwellings were completed in 1950 at a cost of £18 000 and in April 1951, the Housing Commission announced a proposal 'to acquire land bounded by Barney, Canambe, Brown and Chapel Streets as building sites'.<sup>68</sup> The commission announced in September 1952 plans to build ten more homes at Armidale in the next 12 months as part of a special building programme to promote rural development. The Minister for Housing, Clive Evatt also advised the commission is to build nine more houses at Armidale. By January 1953, forty six homes had been completed in Armidale.<sup>69</sup>

A member of the Housing Commission, Mrs P. Burke and P. Funda, Chief Planner for the commission and J.E. Cahill M.L.A. visited Armidale in August 1953 to carry out a survey concerning multiple flats. Housing officers again visited Armidale in September and contracts were announced for construction of

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<sup>66</sup> *Armidale Express*, 28 April 1948, p.8.

<sup>67</sup> *Armidale Express*, 1 February 1950, p.12.

<sup>68</sup> *Armidale Express*, 25 April 1951, p.8.

<sup>69</sup> *Armidale Express*, 30 January 1953, p.13.

eighteen new cottages. Sites were also inspected for the erection of a block of nine flats.

Following a protest from two local residents in January 1954, council requested the commission to use tiled roofs on houses north of Kentucky Street on the approaches to the city. Mr Drummond made personal representations on behalf of council to the Minister for Housing, Clive Evatt. That May, council 'authorised a sub-committee headed by Ald K. Jones, to call a meeting with Armidale builders with a view to facilitating the construction of Housing Commission Homes in Armidale'.<sup>70</sup> At that stage there was a demand for homes in Armidale; the commission had land and material available but progress was dependent on contractors willing to do the jobs.

The Minister for Housing, Mr Landa announced in August 1958 'he would have 10 Housing Commission homes built in Armidale to test local demand'.<sup>71</sup>

By October 1961 112 Housing Commission homes had been built in Armidale and four two bedroom buildings were under construction. That month, the Minister for Housing Mr Landa advised Davis Hughes MLA that a total of forty six applications for homes in Armidale were registered with the commission.

Tenders for the construction of six more buildings were called in April 1964. During 1966, the commission had built about twenty five cottages and in December the Minister for Public Works, Davis Hughes announced twenty nine more homes will be constructed in 1967. In March 1969 the government called tenders for the construction of seven commission cottages in Fayle street.

By February 1970 the Housing Commission had built 254 houses in Armidale since World War Two excluding houses sold. That year seventy one new dwellings were approved at a cost of £128 135 including nine Housing Commission dwellings costing £18 000.

### **Community Centre.**

The council appointed a committee in November 1949 to investigate the possibility and means of establishing a community centre. The concept of a community centre was discussed by the Local Government Centenary Committee in December 1962.

### **War Services Homes Commission.**

In September 1921 the Acting-Deputy Commissioner for War Service Homes called for information to determine if war service homes should be built or properties purchased to provide for returned soldiers in Armidale. Council supplied the information requested.

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<sup>70</sup> *Armidale Express*, 2 June 1954, p.12.

<sup>71</sup> *Armidale Express*, 22 August 1958, p.6.

Council advised the War Service Homes Commission in December 1948 of its intention to provide services to section 145, between Chapel and Canambe Streets and then 'negotiate with the Commission whereby they can purchase the lands for War Service Homes'.<sup>72</sup> President of the Armidale sub-branch of the Returned Servicemen's League, Mr D.D.H. Fayle announced in January 1949, 'it is likely that the war Service Homes Commission will erect 17 homes in Armidale in the near future'.<sup>73</sup>

In January 1950 council was informed that the division 'was considering making an offer for the purchase of lands in the Estate of Montgomery Jones fronting Chapel, Mann and Canambe streets'.<sup>74</sup> Council approved the subdivision of land at East Armidale as sites for War Service Homes in February. Concerned that the plans for the subdivision had not been seen by July, the commission was informed by council that it would approve the plan and accept dedication of the proposed road once plans were inspected. The division announced its intention in June 1953 to build ten homes in the Jones Estate in Mann Street, Armidale provided there was 'sufficient evidence of their need by ex-servicemen'.<sup>75</sup>

### **Works Depot.**

Initially council used the town hall paddock for the storage of building materials. In August 1913, council announced plans for construction of a store room and shed in the town hall yard for the storage of stores and materials at an estimated cost of £105. The shed was to be constructed by funds from the water supply fund.

In July 1956 council announced that a new depot for the engineering department in Marsh Street alongside Stephen's bridge was almost complete with installations. The depot proved it was not large enough to serve the needs of council and in November 1962 the city engineer recommended to council that a new five acre works depot be established. At that stage the Marsh Street depot was not large enough to serve the needs of the council. In November 1964 council announced its intention to purchase almost six acres of land at the western end of Rusden Street for a depot. By October 1965 council had purchased land in Mann Street, West Armidale for a new depot site. That month, the works committee decided 'the City Council should consider setting aside money next year for the removal of the work's depot from Marsh Street, beside Dumaresq Creek'.<sup>76</sup>

The city engineer K.O. Gentle advised the works committee in February 1966 that council's new depot site should be used as soon as possible. It was suggested

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<sup>72</sup> *Armidale Express*, 8 December 1948, p.12.

<sup>73</sup> *Armidale Express*, 14 January 1949, p.8.

<sup>74</sup> *Armidale Express*, 1 February 1950, p.12.

<sup>75</sup> *Armidale Express*, 8 June 1953, p.6.

<sup>76</sup> *Armidale Express*, 25 October 1965, p.5.

that work could be partly financed from the proceeds of the former saleyards site and from the 1967-1968 program. Council announced in November land at the corner of Mann and Niagara Streets would be sold to raise money for the depot being built at the western end of Mann Street adjacent to the Main Roads Department. Part of the land in Niagara Street was the former cattle yards site. That December the building, health and general purposes committee recommended that the depot be shifted as soon as possible so the caravan park could be extended and improved.

A new store building and workshop were constructed in 1968 at a cost of £25 000 by P. Knudson. An amenities building was built to provide up-to-date amenities for the outdoor staff at cost of £6000. A further £19 000 was expended in fencing, construction and sealing of internal roadways and providing shelter sheds for Council's vehicles.<sup>77</sup> The works depot was moved in March 1969.

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<sup>77</sup> Armidale City Council, Entry for the A.R. Bluett Memorial Award 1968.