

## **TOURISM.**

In December 1890 aldermen discussed a proposal from a Glebe resident for cheap excursion rates on tourist trains to New England as were available on the southern and western lines. Council applied in May 1893 for tourist railway rates to operate to the New England district.

In October 1904 the mayor proposed a notice of motion: 'That steps be taken to properly place before the residents of Queensland and others living in warm climates contiguous to New England the advantages possessed by Armidale as a sanatorium'.<sup>1</sup> A public meeting convened by the mayor was held on Monday 10 October to discuss the tourist proposal and citizen's committee was formed consisting of: S.J. Kearney M.L.A., J. Newbery, Stanley Wilson, H. Mallam and a Mr Wickerson. It was decided to ask council to contribute and circularise wealthy people for subscriptions. Further meetings were held and the group took the name, the Tourist and Summer Resort Committee. In November J.H. Waugh, secretary asked council to support the committee. Council decided to take steps to have Armidale re-instated as a Railway Tourist District and form a deputation to wait on the Railway Commissioners when they were next in Armidale to advocate the claim.

In March 1905 council vote £10 towards the cost of advertising Armidale as a tourist resort and supporting the committee. At that stage the committee was negotiating with the *Sydney Mail* for a five page supplement on Armidale and district. Ald. Higinbotham received a communication from the Railway Commissioners in July advising that there was some prospect of Armidale being reinstated as a Tourist District. Late in July Armidale aldermen met with W. Gray, J.H. Waugh, secretary of the advertising group to discuss the tourist attractions offered by Armidale.

Council approved of the Government Tourist Bureau's suggestion to promote tourism in November 1922. An enquiry office was instituted at the council chambers; a notice board was established and information provided for visitors.

In March 1927 council recommended 'to the New England Tourist Association the advisability of erecting signboards indicating ... the natural and picturesque advantages'.<sup>2</sup> A conference of the New England Tourist Association was held in the Armidale Council Chambers on Friday 1 April 1927. Representatives of Dumaresq, Guyra and Nymbodia Shires, Armidale City and Uralla Councils attended. Armidale's Ald. Morgan Stephens was appointed chairman and the town clerk, F.W. Milner, honorary secretary.

In 1929 the Department of Railways was paying £10 annually for photographs of Armidale and district to be displayed in carriages. Assistance of £10 was

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<sup>1</sup> Council minutes, 4 October 1904.

<sup>2</sup> *Armidale Express*, 30 March 1927, p.3.

provided to the Rod Fishermen's Association by council in 1930 to assist with a publication because the association 'are doing very valuable work advertising work for Armidale and district'.<sup>3</sup>

The Armidale branch of the Travel Promotion and Development Association came into being on Wednesday 19 February 1930. Mayor Ald Watson presided at the meeting held in the council chambers. In an address to delegates, the former Federal Treasurer and a leader of the Australian Country Party, Dr Earle Page 'emphasised the remarkable scenic attractions of the district, and outlined a comprehensive scheme to attract, not only visitors, but also investors and settlers'.<sup>4</sup>

A remarkable two day camping trip was undertaken by D.H. Drummond, Minister for Education and R.S. Vincent, Minister for Mines and Forests in June 1935. Accompanied by P.A. Wright, his son, guides, press representatives and a photographer the purpose was to investigate the New England National Park from the tourist angle. The *Armidale Express*, 1 July 1935 praised the cabinet ministers and appealed for Armidale interests to attend the tourist conference to be held at Newcastle on 19 and 29 July.

The first tourist conference was opened by the Hon. D.H. Drummond and addressed by the acting Prime Minister, Dr Earle Page. Very supportive of tourism, a detailed report appeared in the *Armidale Express*, 22 July 1935 with the comment: 'although the City Council shelved responsibility for participation in the conference onto the Armidale Chamber of Commerce, we hope that when the call comes again that it will respond'. Following upon the tourism conference, the president and secretary of the Provisional Council for Tourist Development visited Armidale in August to address a meeting of residents. Representatives of the Armidale City Council, Dumaresq Shire, Chamber of Commerce, Rod Fisherman's Association and Camera Club attended. The meeting endorsed the scheme presented at the Newcastle conference and decided to form a provisional committee. These proposals were to be presented to a public meeting.

With promise of council support, Mayor O'Connor presided over a gathering of citizens on Tuesday 27 August at the Tattersall's Hotel. The Armidale and District Tourist Development League was formed and invitations were extended to numerous bodies in Armidale and district to appoint one representative to the executive committee. At the later meeting held in September, the mayor was elected president.

The Armidale Tourist Development Association asked the Armidale City Council in November 1935 to call a regional conference in Armidale. At the time council was much preoccupied with sensitive negotiations about the purchase of the Electricity Company. In August 1936 council resolved to co-operate in a

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<sup>3</sup> *Armidale Express*, 20 November 1929, p.7.

<sup>4</sup> *Armidale Express*, 21 February 1930, p.3.

suggestion by the Tourist Development Association of N.S.W. to establish zone committees for the development of the tourist industry. Ald. Monckton was selected to represent council at a conference to be held at Tamworth in September. The town clerk F.W. Milner and Monckton attended the conference where a constitution was drafted.

Although the Point Lookout Road was in the Dumaresq Shire, council agreed in 1936 to the annual costs of maintenance once it was constructed because of its importance to the district's tourism. The maintenance costs were to be met by: National Park Trust 50% with the Dumaresq Shire and Armidale City Council to contribute 25% each.

The editor of the *Armidale Express*, 25 January 1937 appealed to council to join the proposed authority to develop tourist traffic in the area from Tamworth to Tenterfield. 'There is no district in the area which stands to gain so much from the successful inauguration of the Tourist Development Association as Armidale'. In February the terms of the agreement as promulated by the Tamworth Municipal Council were approved by council but the move failed because of the northern shire's reluctance to join the scheme.

J.B. Sullivan outlined a plan to 'launch a widespread campaign to advertise the beauty spots and important industries of New England'<sup>5</sup> to members of council and a number of representative citizens in July 1937. After hearing his plan, Mayor Ald. M.H. O'Connor undertook to call a special public meeting at a later date. An Armidale Tourist and Town Improvement Association was formed at a well attended meeting held in the council chambers in July. Membership was to consist of New England district citizens and the objects of the Association were:

- (a) To induce tourists to visit the district and work in the interests of the city;
- (b) to create local or Australian markets for wool, wheat and fruit;
- (c) to advertise Armidale as an educational centre;
- (d) to advertise our trout streams, waterfalls and beauty spots.<sup>6</sup>

Council agreed to link the municipality with the N.S.W. Tourist Development Association in September. Mr Drummond also lent his support to the movement and advised council that he would bring under the notice of the Chief Secretary the Council's desire to have the Tourist Bureau re-organised.

In February 1939 the Armidale Chamber of Commerce decided 'to approach the (Armidale) celebrations committee asking that a portion of the balance remaining from the celebrations be devoted to Armidale's tourist bureau'.<sup>7</sup> Council recommended to the New England Co-ordination Committee that a scheme be

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<sup>5</sup> *Armidale Express*, 19 July 1937, p.4.

<sup>6</sup> *Armidale Express*, 28 July 1937, p.4.

<sup>7</sup> *Armidale Express*, 27 February 1939, p.4.

evolved for advertising the scenic beauty of the area and for attracting tourists in June. At the same time, the Chamber of Commerce informed council that it intended to establish a Tourist Bureau in Beardy Street. Two months later, the Chamber of Commerce suggested to council that the bureau should be moved from the council chambers to W.T. Anderson's premises in Beardy Street. The chamber then sought the co-operation of council and the shire in calling a public meeting 'to place the Armidale Tourist Bureau on a sound businesslike basis'.<sup>8</sup> Aldermen Dawson and Hutchison attended as council representatives the tourist conference convened by the chamber in October. The meeting agreed that the front portion of D.W. Oliver's shop be the central office for a year with sub-depots to be established throughout the city. In November council granted £25 to the Bureau for advertising and tourist purposes.

There was little tourist development during the war and in March 1945 the Armidale Chamber of Commerce tourist bureau sought permission from council to erect a sign near the court house and also sought a donation from council. Council informed the chamber the Justice Department owned the land and had to be approached concerning the sign. Council agreed to pay a yearly subsidy of £10 10s to a tourist bureau and the chamber decided in October 1945 to re-establish a bureau. To assist in the financing of the bureau the chamber decided to prepare a tourist booklet and 'to ask the City and Shire Councils for subsidies of £25'.<sup>9</sup> Initially the Dumaresq Shire was not prepared to make a grant but following a Chamber of Commerce deputation, the shire 'decided to make a grant of £25 towards the preparation of a brochure by the Armidale Tourist Bureau and to assist the Bureau in every possible way'<sup>10</sup> in April 1946. Council provided £25 as requested but in November 1949 it was revealed that no further contributions had been made. Consequently Ald. D.W. Cameron appealed to council to take 'a more vigorous policy for publicising the district's tourist attractions'.<sup>11</sup>

At the Local Government Conference held at Grafton in October 1947, the Tourist Minister, Mr Finnan spoke of the creation of tourist areas throughout the State. Based on this speech, one of the conference delegates Ald. K. Jones successfully recommended Council 'apply to have Armidale and district declared a tourist area'.<sup>12</sup> The chairman of the Armidale Chamber of Commerce tourist committee revealed in November 'Armidale is the first town in N.S.W., outside Sydney and Newcastle, to which a full Government Tourist Bureau is being supplied'.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> *Armidale Express*, 14 August 1939, p.4.

<sup>9</sup> *Armidale Express*, 9 November 1945, p.13.

<sup>10</sup> *Armidale Express*, 12 April 1946, p.6.

<sup>11</sup> *Armidale Express*, 9 November 1949, p.8.

<sup>12</sup> *Armidale Express*, 29 October 1947, p.3.

<sup>13</sup> *Armidale Express*, 5 November 1947, p.8.

The tourist bureau informed the Armidale Chamber of Commerce in February 1950 '1949 had been the bureau's busiest year'.<sup>14</sup> That October Mayor Ald. L.E. Dawson informed council more should be done to promote tourism because it 'was worth "anything up to £400 per week"'.<sup>15</sup> Three years later, Mayor W.P. Ryan appealed to council in his 1953 annual report to set aside an annual amount for tourist publicity each year.

A public meeting at the council chambers in May 1959 was attended by 40 persons representing the tourist industry, city, shire and county councils, the Chamber of Commerce, clubs and societies. A formal motion to form an Armidale Tourist Bureau was proposed and an interim committee was formed with Mayor Ald. P.G. Love elected chairman and the Town Clerk, R.A. Browne elected secretary. At a further meeting held on June 17 all the attractions of the district were tabled. Sub-committees were formed to survey tourist attractions, accommodation and sporting activities and it was decided to ask council to provide a central information office.

Following a request from the Armidale Tourist Bureau, council decided in March 1960 to ask for government grants to develop tourist attractions of the city and district. A combined Gas Centre and Tourist Bureau was opened by council in April in a store in Beardy Street, owned by J. Richardson and Company. Council estimated operating costs of the centre would be £1200 each year. That month the first special trainload of tourists arrived for a weekend visit to Armidale and district. The mayor extended a formal welcome to the 119 visitors and buses took them on tours of Armidale, the New England Snowies, the Doughboys, sheep stations and orchards. A number of citizens including students acted as voluntary guides. A further special train tour organised by the Armidale Tourist Bureau and the N.S.W. Railways arrived on a three day tour of the New England district in January 1961.

The annual meeting of the Armidale Tourist Bureau Committee in May 1962 showed that the Armidale City Council contributed £100 to its income whilst Dumaresq Shire contributed £5. Main items of expenditure included 'the share of the premises occupied as an Information Bureau with the Gas undertaking, and advertising'.<sup>16</sup> By October, the Armidale tourist committee was attempting to raise funds for the establishment of an Armidale tourist centre. The Chamber of Commerce promised support and members of the committee considered part of the museum as a possible centre. The University of New England was also approached to construct a district map to show the gorge country. Ellis Thorpe of the Geography Department was authorised to construct the map at a cost of £125 in June 1963. Representatives of the Armidale I.B.C., the Art Society, the Tourist

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<sup>14</sup> *Armidale Express*, 6 February 1950, p.6.

<sup>15</sup> *Armidale Express*, 11 October 1950, p.3.

<sup>16</sup> *Armidale Express*, 21 May 1962, p.4.

Bureau Committee and Mr Thorpe met in July to decide on a site for the map in Central Park.

In May 1963 the Armidale Tourist Bureau sought approval for the use of land between the Folk Museum and the War Memorial Library as the site for a tourist and information centre. 'The Bureau also asked if land on the north west corner of Beardy and Faulkner Streets, near the Court House, could be made available as a site for the erection of a tourist map'.<sup>17</sup> Council approved the siting of the tourist map in the south-east corner of Central Park and the building of a Tourist Information Centre in Armidale provided the building was independent of the folk museum.

Council approved in principle the establishment of a tourist zone to be presented at a meeting at Uralla on Wednesday 12 June 1963. A conference was held in Glen Innes on 2 October 1963 of local government bodies to form the association, the New England Regional Tourist Zone. Armidale was made the association's headquarters and an inaugural meeting was held Armidale on Saturday 9 November. This meeting 'adopted a constitution, and agreed that shires and municipalities from Tenterfield, Glen Innes, Tenterfield, Glen Innes, Inverell, Ashford, Bingara, Guyra, Armidale, Uralla and Walcha should be eligible to join'<sup>18</sup>.

The objects of the association were to encourage the development of tourist facilities in the area and to publicise attractions. At the meeting, plans of a tourist bureau designed by a Sydney firm of architects for the vacant land between the Folk Museum and the Memorial Library were shown. The association was entitled to a £500 State Government subsidy provided £1000 was raised from local government bodies. Based on population, Armidale was to be asked to contribute £222 to the association.

In May 1964 the New England Regional Tourist Zone asked all shires in the area to collaborate with their nearest municipal councils to collect district tourist information. It was determined that this information would 'be sent to the Zone's central office at Armidale for distribution to tourists'<sup>19</sup>. At the zone meeting held at Glen Innes, it was announced that the central office was to be established in a new £3000 building at Armidale. The building was to be 'erected by the Armidale City Council, and in return, the Tourist Zone will pay an annual rental of £350'.<sup>20</sup> At that stage, it was intended to place the building in Faulkner Street between the Folk Museum and the War Memorial Library. At the annual meeting held in February 1965, delegates voted £2212 for promotion including the provision of signs, a tourist booklet and advertising.

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<sup>17</sup> *Armidale Express*, 22 May 1963, p.3.

<sup>18</sup> *Armidale Express*, 11 November 1963, p.6.

<sup>19</sup> *Armidale Express*, 27 May 1964, p.2.

<sup>20</sup> **Armidale Express**, 27 May 1964, p. 13.

The intention to prepare plans and specifications for a two-storey building for the tourist council was announced in August 1964. A loan was to be sought for the building to be constructed between the museum and the library. Plans for a £5000 tourist bureau and art gallery to be built in Rusden Street beside the fire station were approved by council in February 1965. The building was to be paid for by a loan raised by council and the New England Regional Tourist Zone was to occupy the building and contribute to loan repayments in the form of rent. Council decided to build on their land west of the fire station in Rusden Street on the grounds that the new site was more advantageous. Two tenders received for the work forced 'the council to seek tenders for individual trade works'<sup>21</sup> in an attempt to complete the building for the original estimate. The New England's tourist bureau in Rusden Street, Armidale was opened on 21 August by the Minister for Public Works, Davis Hughes. Twelve New England municipal and shire councils including the City Council and all members of the New England Regional Tourist Zone contributed to the cost of the £5500 building. Apart from the tourist information, the building also provided an art gallery for exhibitions by Armidale art groups. At the time of its opening in August 1965, the land was on Crown land next to the fire station originally resumed by the Minister for Public Works for an Area Education Office.

The top section of a 34 million year old petrified tree, found 12 miles north-east of Armidale in April 1966, was placed in the Rusden Street Tourist Bureau in July 1967. One third of the tree was on a large stone base whilst small sections were sold to tourists.

The tourist maps in Central Park were handed over to council on Saturday 7 May 1966. The countoured maps of New England and the Armidale map were made by members of the Geography Department at the university and painted by member of the Armidale Art Society. The building was built by the Armidale Jaycees and the lighting provide free by the New England Electricity County Council.

In December 1966 council set aside \$2949 for tourism. The amount was available for running expenses of the tourist bureau and for the contribution of \$436 to the New England Regional Tourist Zone. By February 1967, the City Council with a population of 14 990 contributed £567 to the Tourist Zone Association out of a total of £2500 from member councils and shires. In October council requested the association consider vacating council's tourist bureau in Rusden Street. Council wanted the building to house an industrial development officer who was to also act as the council's tourist officer.

Because of low attendances at the tourist bureau committee meetings by November 1970, council took action to reconstitute the bureau. Council imposed a tourist levy rate in December 1971 to raise approximately \$3500: 'the amount

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<sup>21</sup> *Armidale Express*, 7 April 1965, p.5.

the Armidale Tourist Committee regards as the annual minimum with which it can adequately promote the city and district and improve facilities'.<sup>22</sup>

Council announced the possibility of becoming a twin city with Masterton, North Island New Zealand in March 1976. This arrangement was confirmed in June.

The tourist sub-committee proposed that the New England Tablelands's Tourist Association and the North-West Tourist Association be amalgamated. In July 1976 council asked that the chairman of the District Development Committee, Mr Ray Chappell and the vice-chairman of the tourist sub-committee Mr Jeff Young meet council and discuss the proposal.

Mrs M. Keynes resigned as tourist officer in April 1983 and the operation of the office was conducted by the tourist receptionist Mr M Hazell with administration support from the general office. That year, the New England County Tourist Authority was disbanded and the *Annual Report for Senior Officers 1983* announced that council was to take over the full responsibility for tourist activities in the city. The Premier of N.S.W., Mr N. Wran announced the formation of the New England Tourist Development Authority in March 1985 following a state election promise. He said 'it was imperative that the development of tourism in the New England area was administered by the new Authority in line with policies and objectives of the recently established Tourism Commission of New South Wales'.<sup>23</sup> At the same time, he promised the Armidale City tourist committee would continue to receive annual subsidies to help in the operation of its tourist information centre.

The establishment of a 24 hour coach/bus terminal was one improvement sought by the Armidale and District Tourist and Development Corporation in February 1985. The lack of bus terminal was also raised in 1978. The city's new Visitors Centre and Coach Station costing \$208 000 and located near the New England Highway next to extensive parklands, parking areas and Pizza Hut was officially opened by the Minister for Tourism, the Hon Garry West in April 1988. Construction of the centre was financed by a joint financial arrangement with Pizza Hut from proceeds of the sale of adjoining land. The centre was equipped with executive office for the tourist officer, a large area for tourist displays and sale of merchandise, toilets and seating for coach travellers. By 1989 250 interstate and intra-state buses used the facilities each week.

By 1988 council was a member of the New England Regional Tourist Authority and contributed \$12 000 to the marketing of the New England area. Publications produced by council, included *A City For All Seasons*, a free tourist guide financed from advertising subscriptions and *Beautiful Armidale* available for sale.

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<sup>22</sup> *Armidale Express*, 22 December 1971, p.6.

<sup>23</sup> *Armidale Express*, 27 March 1985, p.5.