

SALE YARDS.

Because of the nature of agriculture in Armidale and district, stock sales were initially conducted at various private yards. There was always dangers to the public as herds of stock were driven through public thoroughfares. Eventually municipalities such as Armidale established municipal yards although 'prior to 1906, the granting of powers to municipalities to establish saleyards was made by special private acts'.¹

In August 1873 an Armidale resident Samuel G. Wilkinson appealed to council to provide a public sale yard. At the time stock were being sold in the pound yards. He claimed the yards were 'in a rapid state of decay' and the absence of a convenient sale yard was 'a serious drawback to the commercial advancement of Armidale and the surrounding district'.² Mr Brereton, an Armidale investor and publican was given permission to erect saleyards in the town hall paddock in May 1874 but at the expiry of his twelve months lease, council determined that the yards were not to be removed and no compensation would be given. The saleyards were still there in December 1920.

In July 1878 the town clerk was instructed to write to the Hon. J.T. Farrell, Minister for Lands regarding the granting of land within the borough for the erection of cattle yards. A committee was formed to select a suitable site for public saleyards in January 1879. The committee recommended section 50 at the corner of Ohio and Mann Streets in July and the town clerk was instructed to apply for two acres. Government surveyor A.B. Greaves recommended the south eastern corner of Section 98 as a suitable site and his recommendation was unanimously adopted. The *NSW Government Gazette*, 30 July 1880 announced 'the vesting in trust of the land dedicated as a site for the Cattle and Sheep Sale Yards Armidale, in the Borough Council of that town'. The Department of Lands granted allotments 8, 9, 10 and 11 of section 98 as the site in October.

Mr Proctor MLA was asked by council in June 1882 to seek cattle and sheep yards at the Armidale railway. Council was advised in July by the Railway Department that the plans for the sheep yards were being prepared. Ald. Bliss also gave notice of a motion concerning the erection of corporation saleyards and in August council voted £150 for their erection.

Council offered a £5 bonus in May 1883 for the best plans and specifications of saleyards to cost about £300. The town clerk was also instructed to collect fees from anyone selling stock in the old saleyards adjoining the town hall. A committee was set up in July to consider plans for the saleyards and in August recommended that Mr Osborne's plans be accepted and that he be paid the £5

¹ F.A. Larcombe, *The Stabilization of Local Government in New South Wales 1858-1906. A History of Local Government in New South Wales: Volume 2*, Sydney, Sydney University, p.211.

² *Armidale Express*, 16 August 1873, p.6.

bonus. Tenders were called for erection of the saleyards and Thomas Nixon's tender was accepted in September. He was given four months to complete them.

In November 1884 the mayor reported to council that the cattle saleyards were complete and recommended that by-laws should be framed so that revenue could be collected. 'Ald. A.W. Simpson informed the Council' in November 'that they could not frame by-laws to deal with the yards before getting a special Act of Parliament passed'.³

Apart from the municipal sale yards, the Court House hotel at the corner of Faulkner and Dangar Streets operated yards by April 1884. In September publican Mr Wade of Tattersalls Hotel was granted permission to use the saleyards for the sale of horses and mares for the sum of £5 until 1 January 1886 when they were not required for other purposes. In May 1904 the Albion Hotel in Marsh Street advertised free saleyards.

In July 1887 a letter was received from the Department of Lands asking for deeds of the market reserve and cattle saleyards to be returned in order to have those places brought under the Public Parks Act. The council clerk was instructed to return the deeds. Two years later a further letter was received from the Department of Lands in September 1889 asking for a cancellation of the deeds of grant of the market reserve and site of the saleyards in order to have them brought under the Public Parks Act. It was carried unanimously that the mayor do so and fix the Corporation seal. In October the Department of Lands informed council that 'council still held the right of using the land for the purposes named'⁴.

Ald. Wilson moved in February 1891 that 'the necessary steps be taken to have a bill passed through Parliament enabling the council to erect proper sale yards, & with power to borrow sufficient money to do so'.⁵ Next month council took action to apply to the government to have the remainder of section 98 declared for sheep and cattleyards because an application had been made to close Chapel Street. Engineer French was instructed to take charge of the saleyards and collect fees. The Secretary of Lands informed council that the department could not provide sites for saleyards. At the council meeting on 8 June 1891, the town clerk was asked to write a reply saying 'Council had only asked to extend the present area, not to grant a new one'. But in the following month, council received news that its application for an extension of the yards had been rejected.

A petition, signed by eleven firms of auctioneers was received by council in November 1892 seeking the establishment of stock and sale yards for Armidale. Consequently Ald. Lonsdale was appointed that month to meet the Minister for Lands to investigate a site of land near the railway station.

³ *Armidale Express*, 28 November 1884, p.6.

⁴ *Armidale Express*, 1 November 1889, p.4.

⁵ *Armidale Express*, 27 February 1891, p.3.

A dispute arose over saleyard fees in May 1893 and it was found council had no power to collect fees on stock sold unless a Special Act was passed. Consequently council determined fees had to be paid before sale and if no stock was sold 5s was to be charged for use of the yards.

Mrs Wade of the Tattersall's Hotel erected six stockyards, a receiving yard and a crush for sheep and cattle in June 1896. The yards were approached from Rusden street and the *Armidale Express*, 28 June 1896 commented: 'in the absence of proper municipal sale yards Mrs Wade has supplied a want which will doubtless be highly appreciated by the stock dealers of the surrounding district'.

The secretary of the Municipal Association informed council in August 1900 of a Bill to enable council to establish sale yards. Stock and station agent, W.J. Hawke forwarded the resolutions of a public meeting held recently advocating the erection of saleyards and council formed a sub committee to investigate. In August 1901 Ald. Solomons was granted permission to withdraw a resolution asking parliament to pass a special Sale Yards Act for the borough. He understood 'the new Government Bill would answer the purpose just as well'.⁶

A letter from the Under Secretary was received by council in April 1902 concerning the granting of allotments for cattle saleyards. Council decided to apply to the Minister for Lands for a special lease and ask the member of the district to interview the minister in an attempt to obtain a grant of land. The general purpose committee was asked in October to consider erection of municipal saleyards without delay.

In June 1903 Ald. Hawke moved that reserved land was now available for the saleyards and council 'should now take steps to raise £650 by debentures'⁷ for their construction. Council took action in July 1903 to apply for special lease of allotments 1 to 7 and 11 to 14 of section 61 for the erection of municipal saleyards. At the same time, the mayor reported to council that he and Ald. Hawke had inspected the reserved area near the railway trucking yards and found it was too small. The district surveyor recommended council should apply for a special lease of the unsold portion of Crown Land adjoining the reserve.

The special saleyards committee recommended in September 1903 that council proceed with the erection of city saleyards as soon as the special lease applied for was granted. Instruction were given to have the Enabling Bill passed through Parliament to establish and control saleyards. The mayor informed council that a special lease for the municipal saleyards had been dealt with and approved by the Armidale Lands Board on 16 February 1904 and special lease of land approved by Board: £5 per annum for 28 years. The special lease for land adjoining the trucking yards was gazetted in April and granted in May.

⁶ *Armidale Express*, 16 August 1901, p. 3.

⁷ *Armidale Express*, 26 June 1903, p.2.

The saleyards committee presented to council a detailed report on an application to borrow £700; a special lease for five and a half acres and the establishment of a sinking fund. The committee prepared and tabled a special Bill in August 1904 to be submitted to Parliament authorising erection and maintenance of sale yards and giving council the power to borrow money for erection. In reply the Crown solicitor informed council the Municipal Bill gave no power to council to borrow for the construction of sale yards. Council received a letter from S.J. Kearney MLA in October enclosing a clipping from Hansard concerning saleyards for country municipalities. That December council paid the rent due for the special lease to the crown.

In June 1905 Ald. Watson referred to the delay in obtaining the Enabling Act for the saleyards. The council clerk 'was instructed to confer with the member for the district, and urge that no further time be lost in getting the Bill through Parliament'.⁸ That month, council received notice to appear at the Land Board Court to show cause why conditions had not been fulfilled concerning the special lease for saleyards. The mayor was instructed to represent council and show letter from Mr Kearney concerning the passing of the Sale Yards Bill. The Land Board Court granted a 12 months extension to council to fulfil the special lease for saleyards in July. Ald. J.S. Kearney asked council in October to prepare a petition and for the mayor to sign and affix the corporate seal.

At the council meeting on 24 April 1906, Ald. Hawke reported that an extension of time for carrying out improvements on council's special lease for saleyards had almost expired. Council accepted the general purpose committee's report on the advisability of removing the old corporation yards and re-erecting them on a new site. In May, a deputation from Kearney and Braund asked council's consent to close the unaligned College Street and relinquish land upon which the saleyards stood, in favour of the P. and A. Society for the purpose of enlarging the showgrounds. Council granted the request with council to retain all the material from the yards but removal of the saleyards was to be deferred until after the passing of the Saleyards Bill.

In September 1906 council took action to call tenders for the removal and re-erection of the old saleyards near the showground. A committee consisting of Aldermen Jones, Watson, Fitzgerald and Hawke was asked to prepare plans for erection of the yard. That month, the tender of M. Moscatt for £6 was accepted for the work. In reply to a question by Ald. Hawke in November concerning progress of the Saleyards Bill, the mayor replied that Mr Kearney had assured him passage of the Bill before the present session closed.

The by-laws committee was instructed to draw up by-laws regulating saleyards in January 1907. That month council adopted the Orange cattle saleyard by-laws with some alterations and additions to be forwarded to the Attorney General for

⁸ *Armidale Express*, 16 June 1905, p.3.

approval and publication in the *Government Gazette*. Council also requested the Governor for power in February to establish Cattle Saleyards under Section 109 (10) and 110 of the 1906 Local Government Act. In April council again decided to ask the Governor to confer on them power to build and establish saleyards. The Parliament Bill was dropped and the matter lapsed because of the new Local Government Act 1906.

In April 1908 alderman moved that plans and specifications for a municipal saleyard be prepared with an estimate of costs, statement of expenditure and estimate of revenue. A special committee comprising the mayor, Aldermen Claverie, Fitzgerald, Hawke and Watson was appointed. In the following month, Ald. Kearney, submitted rough plans for their construction and council approved the preparation of proper specifications.

As required by legislation, a special meeting to consider the construction of saleyards and the borrowing of money was advertised and held on 7 July 1908. Ald. Hawke moved that £700 be borrowed for a term of ten years for the construction of the saleyards and buildings. It was estimated the annual revenue for the sale of sheep, rams, cattle, horses and camping fees was £130 18s 4d whilst the annual expenditure was £130 for interest, caretaker's salary, rent on annual lease and the sinking fund. Council took action to apply to the Governor for approval to borrow £700 for a term of ten years.

Surveyor J.S. Chard presented an account for plans and specifications one week later. By this stage Ald. Hawke had agreed to pay only for the land survey and the account was to stand over. In August 1908 the Lands Department approved of an extension of time to complete the fencing and clearing in connection with the special lease 4003 set apart for the saleyards. In reply to a question in September from an alderman about the delay, the mayor stated he believed the delay was with the Public Works Department.

J.A. Rossbach, assistant engineer of the Public Works Department held an inquiry in the council chambers in October 1908 into council's application to borrow £700 for the municipal saleyards. Evidence was given by Armidale builder G.F. Nott; Aldermen C.G. Wilson (mayor), Hawke and Forster; T. Jones (town clerk); graziers T.P. Chisholm and John Brazier (Aberfoyle) and cattle salesman E. Hawke. Information given included 'the advisability of the scheme, the probable cost of the yards'⁹ and the probable revenue. Rossbach also inspected the proposed site and the existing yards.

The letter from the Under Secretary, Department of Public Works enclosing a copy of the officer's report was tabled at the council meeting held on 10 November 1908. The officer reported in favour of the proposal and Ald. Hawke moved that a poll of ratepayers be taken on 30 November in accordance with the provisions of the Act. The *Armidale Express* supported the establishment of the

⁹ *Armidale Express*, 6 October 1908, p.4.

saleyards and urged ratepayers to support the move and the correspondent commented: 'we advocated their erection over 20 years ago, when the late Mr George Allingham so strenuously supported the scheme'¹⁰. The *Armidale Express*, 1 December 1908 announced the results of the poll involving 109 residents. The results were: 70 residents in favour of construction; 35 against with 4 informal. Eighty three votes were polled in favour of a loan rate being levied on unimproved capital value with 12 informal.

In January 1909 a letter was received from the Department of Public Works with the Governor's authority to borrow £700 for the erection of cattle saleyards. Two tenders for erection of the yards were received: W. Sims £725, S. Baker £2 4s per rod. Because both were over the estimates, fresh tenders were to be called with separate costs for labour and materials. That month the saleyards committee accepted A. Ewen's tender for the supply of timber and approved the use of day labour. G. Collin's tender for the erection of cattle sale yards for £240 2s was accepted in February.¹¹

The newly completed saleyards were opened on Thursday 14 October 1909. The Mayor Ald. W.J. Hawke planned an official luncheon at the nearby International Hotel and invited mayors of surrounding towns and shires. The correspondent in the *Armidale Express*, felt 'the want of suitable saleyards accommodation has been long felt in Armidale, and it is to be trusted that the efforts of the Municipal Council will be duly awarded, and that the agents will make the fullest use of them possible'.¹²

Hawke and Company applied to council for water troughs in March 1911 and the tender of 'Dalton Bros for 42 feet of galvanised iron cattle troughing on iron stands ... at £8 5s'¹³ was accepted. Five years later, a motion to spend at least £300 on the extension and alteration of the saleyards was referred to the finance committee in April 1916 but rejected in the following month. Early in 1917, Ald. Hawke applied unsuccessfully for £500 for the saleyards. In May he again proposed the advisability of 'improving the cattle and sheep sale yards at a probable cost of £200'¹⁴. To support his claim he showed that capital expenditure and revenue was £1132 9d 7d and receipts was £306 8s 9d. Council supported the motion provided that the money was recovered from fees.

In January 1918 concern was expressed by aldermen over stock accommodation at the yards. Later action was taken to undertake work but only one tender for the additions at the saleyards was received in August. Fresh tenders were called and

¹⁰ *Armidale Express*, 13 November 1908, p.4.

¹¹ *Armidale Express*, 26 February 1909, p.3.

¹² *Armidale Express*, 12 October 1909, p.4.

¹³ *Armidale Express*, 17 March 1911, p.4.

¹⁴ *Armidale Express*, 11 May 1917, p.3

in October the tender of J.J. Morgan at £59 16s was accepted. Timber from the yards was sold in December.

In February 1925 much discussion was devoted at a council meeting to conditions at the yards following a report from G. McDonald, the saleyards caretaker and various aldermen. The general purposes committee was finally 'instructed to submit a comprehensive report on the matter of the erection of an office, establishing phone connection, and the provision of conveniences'.¹⁵ That month the town clerk tabled a special report on the saleyards: revenue totalled £1713 10s 5d and the expenditure including additions, £943 14s 2d. As the yards had originally cost £671 11s 9d the yards had now paid for themselves and shown a profit of £98 4s 6d.¹⁶ During 1926 improvements for the convenience of buyers and sellers were 'constructed at the cattle saleyards, at a cost of £250'.¹⁷ In January 1930 landowner A.H. Perrott requested council construct an office at the yards.

Following a request from Walter J. Hawke and Company in April 1931, council gravelled the lanes in the cattle yards to prevent the trucks becoming bogged. By September a Mr S. Jackson had recently acquired three blocks of land on the southern side of the yards, namely nos 8, 9 and 10 and fenced the paddock. Following an approach by A.H. McArthur and Company auctioneers expressing concern about the lack of access from the southern side, the mayor commented: 'he had approached Mr Jackson and asked him to put a price on the property'.¹⁸ Council intimated that they would consider the purchase at a price of £79.

Council's twenty eight year lease of the saleyards expired on 31 December 1931 and the Minister for Lands was asked to dedicate allotments 1 to 7 and 11 to 14, section 61 'for cattle saleyard purposes, and to place such area under the control of Council'.¹⁹ Council had recently purchased the adjoining allotments 8 to 10. In reply the Lands Department informed council that practice did not permit the purchase of such land but suggested 'an application be lodged for a special lease over the area'.²⁰

The Lands Department was not prepared to dedicate Crown Lands for cattle saleyards and in March 1932 announced 'when a Council desired to reestablish saleyards on Crown lands, it was required to lodge a special lease application'.²¹ In April the general purposes committee recommended that council continue to

¹⁵ *Armidale Chronicle*, 4 February 1925, p.8.

¹⁶ *Armidale Chronicle*, 18 February 1925, p.3.

¹⁷ *Armidale Chronicle*, 22 January 1927, p.5.

¹⁸ *Armidale Express*, 9 September 1931, p.8.

¹⁹ *Armidale Express*, 23 December 1931, p.3.

²⁰ *Armidale Express*, 24 February 1932, p.3.

²¹ *Armidale Express*, 23 March 1932, p.3.

hold the saleyards land under special lease conditions as formerly. Council was informed by the Department of Lands in November 1933 that the law prevented the purchase of the site but each allotment had to be offered at auction.

Walter J. Hawke drew council's attention to the lack of accommodation and state of repairs of the municipal yards. 'They desired that some of the yards be subdivided and that an acre and a half adjoining the yards be secured and divided into as many yards as funds would permit'.²² Council fenced in the purchased land and also applied to the Crown to purchase the saleyards comprised in a special lease. Various allotments comprising cattle saleyards were sold at auction on 15 August 1934. The saleyards were purchased from the Crown at £180 and the 'sale was purely a formality to conform to the provisions of the Act'.²³ In his annual report, Mayor M.H. O'Connor expressed the need in November 1934 for the new council to appoint a permanent caretaker in 1935 to reduce damage to the saleyards.

A number of stock and station agents expressed concern to council in December 1934 about the urgent need for improvements to the selling ring and box with an overhead covering together with seats for the accommodation of buyers. Throughout 1935, necessary alterations and repairs were carried out and 'an auctioneers brick stand was erected at a cost of £40'.²⁴ H.W. Maguire was appointed caretaker.

Walter Hawke and Company asked for the installation of a three way drafting race and other sheep pens at the yards in January 1936 but council was not prepared to provide the work. In March 1938 A.H. McArthur and Company criticised conditions at the saleyards and drew attention to the broken post and rails, dangerous platform and general condition of the yards. The secretary of the Armidale Pastures Protection (P.P.) Board drew attention in February 1940 to the need for a suitable place for clerical work and the provision of a small yard for setting aside diseased suspect cattle.

In July 1944 the mayor referred to the possible remodelling of the saleyards and favoured preparation of a plan. Enquiries were made of other councils and their saleyards. In August Wagga Municipal Council forwarded plans of its saleyards and invited council to send an officer to inspect the yards in operation. A large petition from West Armidale and Dumaresq Shire residents urging the removal of the saleyards to the Martin's Gully reserve was presented to council in September. Council deferred the removal of the saleyards until after the war but requested a report on a three way race and other minor improvements. Action was taken in November to construct a three way race estimated to cost £50 and by February

²² *Armidale Express*, 29 November 1933, p.3.

²³ *Armidale Express*, 15 August 1934, p.4.

²⁴ *Armidale Express*, 18 December 1935, p.9.

1945 the race was completed. Council took action in May 'to confer with agents and breeders and others interested in the erection of new saleyards at Armidale'.²⁵

The Armidale Timbers Pty. Ltd. approached council to erect a veneer and plywood factory for which a licence was granted by the Forestry Commission. A draft agreement was prepared for the land adjoining the saleyards.²⁶

The building, health and general purposes committee recommended council not to sell, rent or alter the saleyards in July 1945 and the acting engineer was 'directed to prepare a plan for cattle yards for erection on the northern side of the existing yards'.²⁷ During 1945, £396 was spent on the yards but income was only £125.

In November 1946 the Armidale Chamber of Commerce sought a meeting with the council on the question of improvements to the saleyards. That month, council took action to prepare specifications and call tenders for improvements at the yards. By March 1947 a considerable amount of repairs had been made to the saleyards with subdivision of the sheep pens and alterations to cattle yards. The West Armidale Parents and Citizen's Association contacted the City Council, Dumaresq Shire and the P.P. Board to prevent stock travelling to and from Golgotha and Niagara Streets in March 1947. Council placed new notice boards on the correct route.

The P.P. Board asked council in April 1948 to effect repairs to the saleyards. In November the West Armidale Progress Association asked council to remove the saleyards and stocking trucking yards a further distance from the city in its town planning scheme.

Income for 1949 for the saleyards was £454 16s 5d and expenditure £292 8s 8d but a member of the Armidale Agriculture Bureau stated at a meeting in March 1950 'the state of Armidale saleyards is a disgrace'.²⁸ In reply to a question concerning the state of the saleyards in January 1951, the Deputy Mayor K. Jones said there would be no repairs because the finance committee was considering their sale. But in February the committee recommended no sale should take place. Further criticisms of conditions at the yards were expressed by a council committee in March 1952 and council took action to call a public meeting of representatives of auctioners, graziers, the shire and other interested bodies. In April the meeting recommended to council a proposal to rebuild the sheep saleyards on the present site. Following the presentation of a detailed report from Ald. J. Kiefer, council took action to arrange a further meeting of representatives.

²⁵ *Armidale Express*, 16 May 1945, p.8.

²⁶ *Armidale Express*, 16 April 1947, p.13.

²⁷ *Armidale Express*, 11 July 1945, p.8.

²⁸ *Armidale Express*, 6 March 1950, p.6.

In September 1952 the P.P. Board offered to provide a saleyards site on the Martin's Gully reserve. That December council called tenders for construction of the yards on the present site and on a site outside the municipality.

Council took action in January 1953 to construct a movable ramp for the saleyards. In March council adopted a report by Ald. J. Kiefer concerning the construction of saleyards at Martin's Gully Reserve. The P.P. Board had agreed to an additional four acres for holding yards. A meeting of representatives of selling agents, P.P. Board, Dumaresq Shire and the City Council met in May 1953 at the reserve, selected a site and agreed on types of yards to be erected. A 100 name petition was presented to council in August for the removal of the saleyards to a site outside the city boundaries. A meeting was arranged to discuss the saleyards and proposed new sheep yards estimated to cost £2200.

Council was informed in September 1953 by the district surveyor that council would need to apply for acquisition of land by special lease or special purchase for saleyards purposes. The land would have to be withdrawn from the control of the P.P.B. by the Minister for Agriculture. Council decided to apply for a special lease.

Dumaresq Shire Council authorised grading of the new sheep saleyards site in December 1953. That month, council called tenders in December for the construction of saleyards, sheep yards and loading ramps. By March 1954, work on the new sheep saleyards at Martin's Gully Reserve fronting the Bundarra Road was well advanced but there was no proposal to dispose of the old sheepyards as yet. They were more than twice the size of the present yards in West Armidale and could accommodate more than 12 000 sheep. The work costing £2500 included the provision of two drafting races, two large holding yards, fat pens and other yards. The yards just under three acres were completed in June and council accepted the Department of Land's offer for a lease of the site, part of portion 481 at £5 per annum for 28 years.

Golsborough Mort and Company requested an extension of the Armidale sheepyards in June 1956. In July, council agreed to consider the proposal in the 1957 loan works program and also decided to ask agents if they will provide timber free of charge.

The 1957 estimates for the income from the saleyards was £1400 with an expenditure of £378.

In August 1960 council announced that tenders are to be called for improvements to the sheep sale yards approved earlier in the year when £500 was allocated in the estimates. 'The improvements included provision of a double loading ramp, subdivision of the pens on the southern side and additional pens.'²⁹ Council rejected the one tender received and asked the city health surveyor to estimate the

²⁹ *Armidale Express*, 3 August 1960, p.16.

cost of building pens and the division of existing pens with portable steel yards in October.

Further criticisms arose in 1961 and in April council took action to provide three more loading ramps following representations from the associated agents. A special report tabled in June 1961 demonstrated the profitable nature of the yards. The profits for the previous three years were: 1958 £457; 1959 £1137 and 1960 £1906. The associated agents suggested that council 'should hand over the saleyards to the shire since this was a matter in which Shire Councillors had greater practical knowledge.'³⁰ In August negotiations between the associated agents, Grazier's Association, A.P.P.U and the City Council concerning new stock saleyards were broken off. Consequently the three organizations asked Dumaresq Shire to consider establishing new saleyards in the shire to serve the Armidale district.

In December 1961 council reached an agreement with Dumaresq Shire for the shire to take over control of the saleyards from 1 January 1963 and to remove them from the municipal area. However the shire failed to reach an agreement with the agents, the railway and other stock organizations concerning a new site. In April 1962 the shire abandoned its proposal to build and operate new sheep and cattle saleyards at an estimated cost of £30 000.

The tender of R. Smith for £300 10s for supply of timber for new sheep saleyards was accepted by council in December 1963. Council announced its intention in February 1964 to borrow £12 000 for new cattleyards adjacent to the sheep saleyards on the Bundarra Road. A loan of £3000 was received in May for the construction of new cattle saleyards alongside the sheep yards on Bundarra Road. Council announced its intention to sell the cattleyards site in Mann Street, close to the railway station goods yard, once the new yards were completed. Council had previously agreed to sell the site to a ply mill. That December it was expected that the new saleyards being erected by contract and costing a total of £16 500 would be completed in about a month. The former cattle saleyard site in Niagara Street was put up for auction as industrial land on 9 October 1965 because new saleyards were built on the Bundarra Road.

The £17 000 new cattle saleyards were opened in March 1965 and in March 1966 council investigated the provision of further water troughs for cattle.

Associated agents in Armidale asked council to carry out additional works at the saleyards and the city engineer K.O. Gentle, estimated the works would cost a minimum of £12 000 in June 1967. Council accepted a two year loan offer of \$600 in July from the Sub-Normal Children's Welfare Association in Armidale to carry out repairs to the kiosk at the saleyards. Criticism arose in July over conditions at the saleyards and aldermen inspected the yards that month. An R.S.P.C.A. inspector, Mr J.S. Webster of Newcastle 'described the Armidale

³⁰ *Armidale Express*, 7 June 1961, p.5.

Saleyards as the worst he had seen in Northern New South Wales.³¹ Aware that some problems arose because of the accumulation of manure, council rejected the criticisms. However after a further visit by Webster on 9 September he noted an improvement at the yards.

In June 1968 the chairman of the Armidale branch of the Grazier's Association said 'the condition of the saleyards was atrocious and the "gravel" in the sale ring was "guaranteed to lame any beast"'.³² Two days later the *Armidale Express*, 26 June 1968 published a special minute from the Mayor Ald. Piddington which outlined the history of improvements at the sale yards. Consequently council asked the agents to explain their criticisms of the yards and in August council agreed to appoint a joint saleyards management committee consisting of two representatives of the associated agents, one of the Grazier's Association, one of the U.F.W.A. along with two representatives of council. In December the New England Stock Auction Committee prepared and presented a detailed report to 'eliminate undesirable practices in livestock sales'³³.

In August 1968 council announced its intention to seek additional land for car parking at the corner of the grounds of the New England Girl's school.

In May 1969 an attempt to shift the saleyards to Kelly's Plains was defeated in council. That November council again expressed its opposition to a proposal to establish a saleyards and trucking yards at Kelly's plains under the administration of a County Council.

By October 1969 there was a debt of about £15 000; 'the portion outstanding of the money borrowed to build the yards about 12 years ago'.³⁴ The Armidale branch of the Grazier's Association also felt that expenditure on capital improvements was not warranted if it was necessary to develop a new site.

The Railways Department, the P.P. Board, the saleyards committee and Dumaresq Shire met on 12 August 1970 to discuss plans for new saleyards. By December council was not prepared to support a possible move of the yards to Kelly's Plains. However the rural recession meant that any attempt to move the yards would be delayed for some years and once agitation for such a move died down, council decided in June 1971 to proceed with further planned works. Council budgeted \$11 620 for improvements in 1971 and by June improvements included: the installation of electricity; the division of the sheep pens; ramp improvements; parking; maintenance and the acquisition of land to improve travel to and from the trucking yards. Tenders were shortly to be called for the

³¹ *Armidale Express*, 23 July 1967, p.1.

³² *Armidale Express*, 24 June 1968, p.1.

³³ *Armidale Express*, 20 December 1968, p.23.

³⁴ *Armidale Express*, 17 October 1969, p.23.

installation of catwalks and the division of the cattle pens to provide more space but an application for a government grant was unsuccessful.

The Armidale branch of the Grazier's Association announced its intention in December 1975 to investigate the relocation of the city's saleyards. It was felt that the yards were badly situated because of the distance from the railhead and it was situated close to a residential zone. The association claimed in February 1976 that the saleyards are in the wrong place. Despite the criticism, council was not prepared to relocate them 'especially in view of heavy financial commitments the council faced'.³⁵ That August a meeting was held between the Armidale and Uralla Grazier's Association, P.P. Board, Dumaresq and Uralla Shire Council and district branches of the UFWA to consider relocation of the saleyards. The meeting agreed in principle to relocate them. The cost would be about \$500 000 and a committee was formed to investigate the proposal.

At the end of 1981 the saleyard committee had developed a plan for the development of facilities for the next decade.

By 1988 the complex generated an income of £150 000 for council and was self funded by agents, fees and charges. That year, a computerised cattle weighing scheme was introduced at a cost of \$12 000 (or \$24 000) and the remaining wooden sheep pens were replaced at a cost of \$62 000 (or \$63 000). In the previous three years the following numbers of stock were handled at the yards:

	1986	1987	1988
Cattle	57,733	56,522	54,824
Sheep	162,393	190,658	213,971

Abattoirs.

'The Local Government Act, 1919, gave councils more definite powers to establish abattoirs, except within the Cumberland County ...'.³⁶

George H. McWatters of the Armidale Meat Supply Company erected a privately owned abattoir on the Bundarra Road, about a mile west of the Armidale railway station. By June 1932 the building and yards, under construction by Armidale builder George F. Nott, was nearing completion and the abattoir was opened by Mayor Watson in July.

In April 1934 the editor of the *Armidale Express* called for the provision of a municipal abattoir at Armidale. He commented:

³⁵ *Armidale Express*, 20 February 1976, p.7.

³⁶ 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, Sydney University Press, 1978, p. 275.

The killing pertaining in Armidale ... is far from satisfactory, and it is time this vitally important question of assuring the people a satisfactory meat supply, was given the consideration it demands.³⁷

Following Ald. Monckton's question of the provision of an abattoir, the matter was referred to the general purposes committee in August 1937. Health surveyor Les Brown recommended the establishment of a municipal abattoir in his 1938 annual report and he submitted a detailed report in January 1939. Estimates of the proposal involved the purchase of the property at present operated by J.F. Bruce and Son (£4025); expenditure (£1257) and expected revenue (£1455). Council formed an abattoirs committee and in March 1939 asked Brown to furnish a report as to the best site for purchase. Two weeks later a Board of Health officer visited Armidale to inspect the abattoir site and the site was approved in June 1939.

A deputation of six members of the Armidale branch of the Master Butchers Association and W.E. Laurence, assistant secretary of the Meat and Allied Trades Federation of Australia met council in April 1939. The representatives expressed strong opposition to the proposed establishment of the abattoirs. In July council received a petition signed by Armidale master butchers against the establishment of city abattoirs because of the claim it would lead to increased meat prices. Council abandoned the proposal following the report of a special committee who estimated the 'cost of purchase of land, erection of buildings and purchase of plant would involve an expenditure of approximately £12000'.³⁸ Council was not prepared to borrow further money and informed the Board of Health of their decision.

Mayor Dawson proposed in February 1943 'an examination of the possibilities of the establishment of municipal abattoirs, freezing works and a by-products plant'.³⁹ The Armidale Agriculture Bureau offered in March 1943 to establish abattoirs freezing works and a dehydration plant under co-operative principles. In June 1943 the New England Co-operative Industries Ltd. presented a detailed submission to council to establish an abattoirs and dehydration works. In October a company representative requested council call a conference but he was advised 'the time is not opportune owing to the restrictions on meat'.⁴⁰

The Chamber of Commerce asked council for its policy on abattoirs in November 1944. The chamber was informed council supported municipal abattoirs and 'the project was included in post-war plans'.⁴¹ The council works committee directed the acting engineer in October 1945 to obtain all information to enable council to

³⁷ *Armidale Express*, 30 April 1934, p.4.

³⁸ *Armidale Express*, 2 August 1939, p.4.

³⁹ *Armidale Express*, 24 February 1943, p.3.

⁴⁰ *Armidale Express*, 3 November 1943, p.11.

⁴¹ *Armidale Express*, 29 November 1944, p.8.

complete its loan application and proceed with the construction of abattoirs in October 1945.

An enquiry was made from the architect, J.H. Cunningham who designed the Tamworth abattoirs and council directed the engineer and health inspector 'to report on the question of site, and especially as to drainage, water and rail facilities and future expansion'.⁴² Two weeks later Cunningham informed council he was not prepared to forward a copy of the plan but would forward a sketch plan. An approach was also to be made to the Newcastle Council for a sketch of their abattoirs. The general manager of the Newcastle Abattoirs forwarded information in May and offered to visit Armidale to assist in the project. At the invitation of council, he addressed a meeting of alderman and butchers in September. During his stay, he visited slaughter houses and inspected suggested sites for the proposed abattoirs.

Council moved in April 1955 to investigate the prospects of having state abattoirs established at Armidale and the application to the Minister of Agriculture and Food Production by the council was supported by Jim Cahill MLA. In reply, the Minister informed council the government was not committed to the concept of state abattoirs apart from Homebush. The government was also committed to the construction of works at Goulburn, Wagga, Dubbo and Gunnedah but was prepared to consider Armidale when the time came for the expansion of 'the Government's programmes of sponsoring the construction of country killing works'.⁴³

In November 1956, Dumaresq Shire proposed the possibility of establishing abattoirs in Armidale on a county council basis. An inter-departmental committee from the Department of Agriculture and Local Government was appointed in April 1958 to consider conditions of stock slaughter in the N.S.W. country districts and the setting up of central killing establishments. A special meeting of the New England District Council was held at the Council Chambers at Glen Innes on 16 September 1958. About 40 delegates attended representing councils, stock and station agencies, stock organisations, grazier's associations, chambers of commerce, dairy societies and the pasture protection board. The meeting resolved to ask the Minister for Agriculture to establish an abattoir to serve the New England with the Minister to select the site.

The committee visited Armidale on 26 May 1959 but the final report ruled against the establishment of an abattoir at Armidale because of the uncertainty of the water supply. Publication of the report led to the creation of five county districts to develop country killing for city and export markets the New England abattoir created in 1960 at Guyra.

⁴² *Armidale Express*, 6 March 1946, p.13.

⁴³ Letter from the Minister for Agriculture and Food Production, 16 May 1955; Armidale City Council Files, 404, 23 B, A 14 Abattoirs 1955-1963.

Council attended a conference organised by the New England County Council to discuss county council run abattoirs on 21 June 1960. The local government authorities accepted the umpire's decision on the Guyra site but recommended that Armidale City and Dumaresq Shires should meet with the minister to discuss further the Armidale site. A conference held between the Dumaresq Shire and Armidale City Councils on 18 July questioned the advisability of establishing an abattoir at Guyra 'in view of the misconception taken by the Inter-Department Committee at the time of its visit to Armidale'.⁴⁴ The councils decided against proceeding with any major scheme because of the part-time operation of large abattoirs elsewhere and considered their mutual problems could be resolved by the expansion of a small abattoir controlled by A. Jackson of Armidale. A further conference was held in August and although concerned about reasons for the establishment of an abattoir at Guyra, aldermen 'had no intention of trying to take the regional abattoirs away from Guyra'.⁴⁵

In October president of the Dumaresq Shire Council Councillor Don Cameron convened a meeting with the shire, Armidale City Council and the butchering industry.

The New England (Abattoir) County District was proclaimed in the *Government Gazette*, 28 October 1960. It comprised the City of Armidale; Municipality of Glen Innes and the Shires of Dumaresq, Guyra, Severn, Uralla and Walcha. The inaugural meeting of the County Council was held on 14 December 1960 at Guyra. In May 1961 the Premier, Mr Heffron said that the state government would assume the financial liabilities incurred by county councils in establishing country abattoirs. Builders took over the site in January 1962 and a plaque commemorating the construction of the abattoirs was unveiled on 5 May 1962 by Sir Michael Bruxner.

⁴⁴ Armidale City Council Files, 404, 23 B, A 14 Abattoirs 1955-1963.

⁴⁵ *Armidale Express*, 31 August 1960, p.3.