



ADFAS Mudjee Inc

ABN 38 303 378 600

Newsletter

No. 9 September 2015

Dear ADFAS Mudjee Members and Friends

What a wonderful selection of lectures we have had during 2015. The committee has enjoyed hearing your feedback and enthusiasm after each lecture. Please continue to share your enjoyment with us.

We are always looking for new members as some members move away and others get older. Word of mouth is the most effective way of encouraging new members. Please spread the word among your friends and acquaintances. Bring them as guests and encourage them to become members.

It is with great regret that we learnt of the death of our Patron, Lady Marjorie Pagan, in June. Lady Pagan was a founding member of ADFAS in Australia alongside Patricia Robertson. She worked tirelessly to promote ADFAS to make it the success it is today. She was made patron in 2004. It gives me pleasure to advise you our current President, Patricia Robertson, has agreed to be nominated as Patron. Julian Bickersteth, one of our Vice-Presidents, has been nominated as President. Julian is an eminent conservator. He and his team of conservators were instrumental in restoring the Mural at the Bridge Inn in Rylstone in 2012 for the Rylstone Historical Society.

Our congratulations to John Broadley, who has been accepted onto the Australian Lecturers Register of ADFAS. John is well known to you. He is the immediate Past Chairman of ADFAS

Mudjee. He gave us his lecture in April this year on "The Empress Josephine", which was well received by you all. John was nominated by ADFAS Mudjee. John has nine different lecture topics and is available to speak to any ADFAS Society as well as to any other organisation who would like to have a guest speaker.

The 2016 Programme has been set and is full of interesting topics once again. Here are the dates and topics for you to put them in your diary:

February 26 – Paul Harris: "*Artists go to War: The Story of Britain's Frontline Artists*"

April 1 – Michael Turner: "*50 Objects 50 Stories: Extraordinary Curiosities in the Nicholson Museum*"

May 6 – Tim Stimson: "*Gustav Klimt*"

June 3 – Charlotte Nattey: "*Dirt, Dust and Discovery – Australian Goldfields Jewellery*"

July 1 – Kevin Karney: "*Telling the Time through the Ages*"

August 12 – Sue Rollin: "*Ruins and Romance: Early Women Travelers in the Middle East*"

September 2 – Martin Heard: "*Let them eat Cake! The Cultural and Artistic World of Marie Antoinette – France's Ill-fated Queen*"

October 7 – Keir Davidson: "*Lancelot Brown and Humphrey Repton: English Landscape Design in Changing Times 1738 – 1816*"

Peter Windeyer, Chairman

ADFAS Mudjee in the Community

ADFAS Mudjee is keen to be involved in supporting arts-based activities in the local community. The national Association of ADFAS has a number of projects

- Church recording: listing of the contents of churches
- Schools of Arts/Mechanics Institutes: history of the building and institution
- Young Arts
- Opera Australia Schools program
- Volunteering: developing artistic skills in others by ADFAS members
- Historic Houses and Gardens guiding

Each ADFAS Society develops its own community projects. ADFAS Mudgee has funded a variety of arts-related projects in the past few years, and in 2015 gave financial assistance to two events which encouraged children's participation in the arts in our district:

- Gulgong Arts Council for children's art prizes in the Primary School section of its annual art show
- Art for Youth project at Dunedoo. As Dunedoo Central School does not have an art teacher, a special 'arts participation day' was held for students from kindergarten to Year 5. ADFAS Mudgee committee member Ro Francis also donated a book prize for the day. ADFAS Mudgee Secretary Penny Mowat attended during the day and presented prizes. She was most impressed with the children's output for the day which was considered to be a great success.



Students' clay work at the Dunedoo day



ADFAS Mudgee Open winner

Mendooran Mechanics Institute

The most recent community arts project undertaken by ADFAS Mudgee is a study of the Mendooran Mechanics Institute. Mendooran, a small town on the Castlereagh River north-west of Dunedoo, has an impressive Mechanics Institute, designed in the interwar Californian mission style typical of Australia's Art Deco period. While the front facade is ornate, the remainder of the exterior is austere. The front facade and the proscenium arch of the hall interior have undergone restoration in the past few years.

The hall, still very much in use today for a variety of community activities, was built in 1935 at the end of the Great Depression with locally-raised funds to replace an outmoded timber building of 1902. The building was also used as a picture theatre, and features a mezzanine projection area above the lobby.

Mechanics Institute halls such as this were important community buildings used for meetings, dances, balls, elections, theatrical and



Dunedoo Central School 'special arts participation day'

musical performances, lectures, and also housed libraries. In the days prior to compulsory education, Schools of Arts/Mechanics Institutes /Literary Institutes/Athenaeums fulfilled an important educational role.



Exterior of Mendooran Mechanics Institute Hall



Grand proscenium arch of the Mendooran Mechanics' Institute Hall in Art Deco style

Studies of 36 buildings across Australia have been placed on the ADFAS website for general access. Please look at the Mudgee and Mendooran Mechanics Institute studies via the following link:

http://www.adfas.org.au/other_schools_nsw.php

The Nicholson Museum

Chairman Peter Windeyer, committee colleague Gai Lydiard and I attended the ADFAS Council

meeting in Sydney recently and had the opportunity to visit the fabulous Nicholson Museum as an evening excursion for the attendees. If you haven't ever visited this museum in the grounds of Sydney University I can certainly recommend it. The Nicholson Museum contains the largest collection of Greek and Roman antiquities in the southern hemisphere, and the core of the collection, donated by Sir Charles Nicholson, has been on site since 1860. The museum is located on the southern side of the main quadrangle whose ornate sandstone buildings were designed by prominent architect Edmund Blacket.

The museum is open Monday to Saturday, and admission is free. Senior curator of the museum is Michael Turner who will be presenting a lecture to ADFAS Mudgee on the Nicholson collection in 2016. Ensure you don't miss this lecture, as Michael is very entertaining.

Sir Charles Nicholson

The founder of the museum, Sir Charles Nicholson, was also one of the prime movers and shakers for the establishment of Sydney University. He was somewhat of a colossus in colonial New South Wales, making an enormous contribution in many spheres in his 30 years in the colony.

His background, however, was shrouded in mystery and he was even evasive about his origins with his own wife and children. When the truth was only discovered recently, his reticence is now understood. He was born in 1808 in Yorkshire, the illegitimate son of Barbara Ascough, while the father has not been identified. He was baptized under the name of Isaac Ascough, and later adopted the name of Charles Nicholson. His mother died when he was five and he went into the care of his aunt, Mary Clink, née Ascough, and of his uncle William Ascough, a ship's captain. He graduated in medicine from Edinburgh University in 1833, and set off as a ship's surgeon for New South Wales where his uncle had landed interests and had prospered. And what is fascinating is that this man, who inherited considerable wealth had connections with Mudgee's earliest days.

Charles Nicholson's uncle, William Ascough, made numerous voyages out to New South Wales in command of convict transports. In 1823, William had married Susannah Blachford, sister of Anna Blachford, the second wife of William Cox, the builder of the first road over the Blue Mountains and prominent Hawkesbury settler. In 1824 William Ascough was authorized to take up 1,200 acres at Munna, adjacent to the Cudgegong, which he had cleared and grazed. William Cox's son, George Cox, a pioneer settler of the Mudgee district, supervised Ascough's grant during his frequent absences from the colony. The grant, Portion 55 in the Parish of Munna in the County of Wellington, was not registered until 1833 and he sold it the following year. William Ascough drowned in 1836 while going from Sydney to the Hawkesbury and as he had no children, nephew Charles inherited the bulk of his considerable estate.

Charles practised as a physician for some time in the colony and gained a reputation for his medical skills, but he soon became more interested in business and pastoral and property interests. At various times he owned Lindsay at Darling Point and Tarmons at Potts Point. He sold Tarmons to the Sisters of Charity who established St Vincent's Hospital there before moving to the current site in Darlinghurst.



Charles Nicholson in his robes as Chancellor of Sydney University

In 1843 he was elected a member of the New South Wales Legislative Council and went on to become Speaker of that body. He was knighted

in 1856, created the first colonial baronet in 1859, and was also appointed Chancellor of Sydney University.

Greatly interested in history, the classics and education he was one of the most cultivated men in the colony. He began collecting in the mid 1840s and from 1855 until 1858 he visited England and Egypt and acquired numerous objects which are now in the Nicholson Museum. He left for England in 1862, but never returned to Australia, despite retaining strong links for the remainder of his long life.

In 1865 he married the artistic Sarah Keightley, by whom he had three sons: Charles (2nd Baronet) was a church architect who married the aunt of actor Laurence Olivier; Archibald, a stained glass artist; Sir Sydney, a noted church musician and composer, founder of the Royal School of Church Music, buried in Westminster Abbey where he had been organist.

The 3rd Baronet, son of the 2nd Baronet, died in 1986 and left no issue, so the title has died out. The family's enduring legacy is the wonderful collection of artifacts which have formed a collection now for more than 150 years.



Exhibits in the Nicholson Museum

Suggestions for newsletter items are welcome

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