

NEWSLETTER

Annual General Meeting

(Highlights of the meeting held 12 February 2015)

Incoming Committee

President	Roger Morris
Vice Pres	Winsome Allen
Secretary	Phil Reed *
C'ttee	Kathleen Bearsby Max Johnson Denise Mitford

* Also, Treasurer

President's Report

Included comment:

- Crown Lands Management Review
 - The Department has not published the outcome of the review
 - Has not advised when it may be available
- The Lower Portland School may be demolished
 - The School transferred the property to the State
 - The State later transferred the property to the local council
- Thanked the Sydney Mechanics' School of Arts
 - For their ongoing support
 - For their grant that made the SMSA website possible
- Noted a seminar was in the planning stages



Denise Mitford (L) and Kathleen Bearsby

Secretary's Report

Included comment:

- Revision of by laws may feature at the next AGM
- The Bank account was moved to Westpac
- Website development neared completion
- Thanked the website committee for their support
- Noted the 2015 Committee would review how we might attract younger people to AMISA
- WWI War Memorial Project
 - This will launch on the AMISA website



Carole O'Brien, Max Johnson, Heather Sedman, Ron Robinson, Robert Parkinson (left to right)

- Grants
 - The Website will hold a page for 'resources' This will include

information about Grants

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Treasurer's Report

The Treasurer reported the bank balance increased during the year



Bruce Turner (L), Robert Parkinson

General Business

- Clifton School of Arts celebrated its 103rd anniversary during 2014
- Heritage Listings
 - Noted, where such listing existed changes will not be allowed

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Appreciation

The AMISA Committee presented two Certifications of Appreciation during the meeting

They were to:

- Sydney Mechanics' School of Arts
- Melanie Ryan

Sydney Mechanics' School of Arts in appreciation of their grant for the AMISA web site



Phil Reed (L),
Grahame Marks (SMSA),
Roger Morris

Melanie Ryan in appreciation for her work in developing the AMISA web site



Melanie Ryan (L), Roger Morris,
Phil Reed, Denise Mitford
Robert Parkinson

AMISA Website

- Melanie Ryan previewed the website to attendees at the AGM
- It is available 'on line'
- Put this address in your web browser:
 - <http://amisa.org.au>
- You can add information about your school (including photographs) via the website

Grants: Community War Memorial Fund

Detail of a new grant will show on our website soon. It relates to locations which hold a war memorial

Here is a link to the NSW Government website:

<http://veterans.nsw.gov.au/community-war-memorials-fund/>

Applications close 25/04/2015

- *Let us know if you are aware of a potential source of a grant*
- *We invite articles from our readers*

Tamworth's Mechanics' Institute

Many of the older readers of this article will recall the importance that school children felt about May 24th. The interest was generated by the fact that on that day 'Cracker Night' was celebrated and there was a half-day holiday. The fact that the day was also Queen Victoria's Birth was generally forgotten.

But May 24th, 2016 will be an important day for Tamworth's Mechanics' Institute because on that day, it will be 150 years old. It was opened on that significant birthday in 1866.

At the moment the Institute is vacant and being used by its owner, the Tamworth

Regional Council, as a storage location.



(The original Mechanics' Institute)

The current building consists of a main hall, an additional room with an octagonal ceiling, an office-type room, small lecture room and kitchen, plus toilets. The room with the special ceiling was added in the early 1900s as a reading room and location for hanging pictures and paintings.

The most recent use of the building from 1994 until July 2014 has been as the museum and archive for the Australian Country Music Foundation (Tamworth is recognised as Australia's Country Music Capital).

There was strong community support in the 1860s for an Institute to be built and there was strong support by the community, with special interest from the Jewish families. The Institute served the community with some lectures and varied activities and also had a library which was an important source for all the community, not just the 'mechanics'.

The library's importance was shown by the fact that the additional room was added. There were problems maintaining an active program

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of lectures and this type of activity was not very popular.

The really valuable contribution to the town had been the building of the Institute with its large hall. This hall became a very popular location for important events in the town from balls to charity events or fetes or musical performances. The addition of tables for pool and billiards was also an important addition to the facilities. After the Institute function had ceased, there were many important events. One of the Institute's most famous events was a demonstration game of billiards by Walter Lindrum (How many other MIs record that as one of their great events?)

The fact that the hall was there became the Institute's major contribution to the town.

In recent research to discover if the Institute was 'useful' during the two Great Wars, it has been revealed that during World War I the building was used as a 'recruiting centre' for men to volunteer to serve in the armed services. In World War II, it offered assistance to servicemen as a "Comforts Fund' Centre. There were many Air Force personnel in

Tamworth because of its airport.

The Library service was maintained by the group running the Institute (that came to be called the School of Arts) until the Library was 'taken over' by the local government authority. Linked to the Library in the Institute building was the beginnings of what has become the Tamworth Regional (Art) Gallery (the room with the octagonal ceiling was used to show the paintings). That established a tradition in the city. The Library and Gallery moved to a new site, in the Guy Kable Building and more recently occupy two buildings situated together in Peel Street, they are side by side.

The 'educational' role of the building was carried on. The University of New England (UNE) established an Adult Education Centre to serve the North-western Region. That service ran from the late 1960s to the late 1980s. The UNE Adult Education Service provided programs all over the north-west of NSW from languages and gardening to the environment and history with a special emphasis on agriculture.

By the late 1980s, after UNE had closed its Tamworth Centre, the building was in need of repairs. Heritage Funds were gained by the Tamworth Council and the building was restored and modernised.



(The restored and modernised building)

The new building became the home for the museum and archive of the Australian Country Music Foundation (ACMF) in 1994. The ACMF moved in July 2014 to a new premises. The future of the old Mechanics' Institute has not been finalised.

It is anticipated that there will be plans made to recognise its important 150th Birthday on May 24th 2016.

The Author:

Dr Barrie Brennan worked for UNE at the Tamworth Adult Education Centre and is a Board Member of the ACMF that occupied the building from 1994 until 2015

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Vale Dr. Elisabeth Richardson

B Comm., Dip E [Melbourne], B Ed [Monash], M Dist. Ed [Deakin], PhD [UTS], Dip Ed Tech [Toorak TC], AASA

[Born Melbourne, June 29, 1931, died Sydney March 9, 2015.]

Formerly Secretary of AMISA

Over her long professional career, Dr. Elisabeth Richardson performed many roles: Academic, accountant, editor, publisher, researcher, teacher, and university administrator

The role that she loved best was researcher. Her Ph. D thesis on the part played by philanthropy in the foundation of technical education in Victoria is an outstanding example of her work - painstakingly researched and elegantly written.

Her research on Schools of Arts and Mechanics' Institutes was similarly outstanding. The AMISA project for which she was the Principal Researcher set out to answer a number of important questions.

Just how many Schools of Arts are there extant in New South Wales today? More significantly ... What is the status of those remaining Schools? What have been their stories? Are they still operating as independent Schools of Arts serving their localities? Are they still providing a community service but under some other auspice? Have they somehow passed into private ownerships/use? If they no longer exist, where were they and why did they cease to function.

Though work on this project is still continuing, that which has been already accomplished is largely the result of her tireless efforts, both personally and as the inspired leader of a small band of hard working volunteers.

But Elisabeth also had a life outside of "work". She was the widow of Graham Oliver Tibbitts, the mother of Frank, Hugh and Charles and grandmother of Jessica and Bill.

Always physically active, she was an enthusiastic bush walker and a devotee of aqua exercise. She was a long-time volunteer with Meals on Wheels. Elisabeth was a committed Sunday school teacher and the Organist for a number of Sydney Churches.

To all who knew her, she was a lively companion, a respected colleague and a loyal friend. Her many friends in the schools of arts and mechanics' institute movement will sorely miss her.

Farewell dear friend.

