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**THE GROWTH AND DECLINE OF HILLGROVE: A
HISTORY OF A NORTHERN NEW SOUTH WALES MINING
TOWN FROM 1880 TO 1920.**

A Research Essay presented to
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by
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All of the photographs are held in the Photographic Collection in the New England Historical Resources Centre, C.B. Newling Centre, University of New England.

DECLARATION

I certify that the substance of this research essay has not already been submitted for any degree and is not being submitted for any other degree.

I certify that any help received in preparing this research essay, and all sources used, have been acknowledged in this research essay.

FOREWORD.

The purpose of this research essay is to examine the history of Hillgrove township from the early 1880's to 1920. This period marked the rise and decline of the Hillgrove mining field. Some mining continued after 1920, spasmodic though it was, and continues today. Despite some optimistic reports of new discoveries, the town has never returned to the peak development which took place in the period covered.

Much has been written about the type of mining that occurred at Hillgrove and some archaeological studies have been made of the mines and working areas. Little research has been conducted however on the type of township created by the residents of Hillgrove. This study is based on extensive photographic records and newspaper reports published at the time. They depict the type of township and the quality of life which the residents created.

The number of public meetings conducted and the resultant demands for public services clearly reflected the resident's optimism that the town would become permanent. These hopes were reinforced by newspaper reports, promises by politicians and government reports on mining at Hillgrove. Certainly, families were initially attracted to the town and females made up a significant proportion of the population. Their presence obviously influenced the development of Hillgrove as a cultured town.

Businesses developed in Hillgrove as a result of relative proximity to established towns such as Armidale, Kempsey and Grafton. It is possible that the mining boom at Hillgrove helped protect Armidale from the catastrophic effects of the depression during the 1890's and this poses an interesting topic for future research. As mining declined in the early part of this century, some businesses and professional people moved to Armidale and travelled frequently to Hillgrove to offer their various services. As buildings were demolished in the town, they were purchased and moved to Armidale and the surrounding district.

Hillgrove township was a cultured one and developed an extensive number of organisations, built several churches, offered a diversity of sports and gained schools to meet the educational needs of the children and adults. Mining at Hillgrove required capital, skilled miners and extensive

service industries. Consequently technical education was vital in meeting the needs of the mining industry.

Despite the constant suspension of labour applied for by the mining companies in the courts, few industrial disputes occurred during the period of mining examined. Company records have not survived to reveal who worked for the number of Hilgrove mining companies and whether the same men were re-employed once the mining recommenced. Mining managers dominated executive positions in community organisations and undoubtedly influenced community life in the town.

Hilgrove offered much to the residents despite the periods of depression brought about by the inevitable fluctuations in mining output and prices for minerals. Residents sought and obtained government services for their town and developed a number of community support organisations to ensure a reasonable quality of life. Tragically, many of these services were lost to the town in the period examined as mining declined, businesses closed their doors and residents moved. The last service was finally lost to the community when the Public School closed its doors in May 1974.

CHAPTER 1

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF HILLGROVE

Hillgrove, a major gold field from the mid 1880's to the early part of this century is situated on a granite and slate plateau 960 metres above sea-level, twenty four kilometres east of Armidale. Three deep gorges, some 450 to 550 metres deep, surround the town. The Baker's, Swamp and Sandy Creeks have deeply eroded into the plateau and flow in a southerly direction. These Creeks meet the Wollomombi and Gara Rivers in the gorge country south of the township of Hillgrove; together they become a part of the headwaters of the Macleay River.

The first public meeting in Hillgrove was held in the Centennial Hall, on the evening of Saturday 14 April 1888. The meeting was called for miners 'to present a petition (signed by two hundred miners) embodying the wants of the district to the Minister for Mines.'¹ The miners also called for the name of Hillgrove to be given to the town. Prior to this date, the town 'was known as Eleanora Township, after the antimony mine that for nearly a decade after 1876 was the sole reason for its existence'.² The name Hillgrove was obviously taken from the station of Richard Hargraves which was situated to the north of the township and originally established by Sir Maurice O'Connell in the late 1830's.

Prior to the discovery of gold at the Big Reef by George Smith in 1887, some unimportant alluvial deposits had been reported at the Baker's Creek in 1857.³ Twenty years later, Thomas and the Havershed brothers discovered antimony just south of an area later called the Hopetoun reefs on the Metz or West Hillgrove side of Baker's Creek gorge. According to a 1900 Report by E. C. Andrews:⁴

A parcel of 4 tons 17 cwt. was obtained... carted to Grafton, and thence despatched to England; £17 15s was paid for the assignment. Negotiations were then entered into by this party with Hudson and Co, of Sydney for the purpose of erecting antimony smelting works.

¹ **Armidale Express**, 17 April 1888, p. 4.

² Neale, R.S., Ramsey, G., Fisher, S. and Henning G.R., *Life and Death in Hillgrove, 1870-1914*, **U.N.E. News**, June 1981, p. 6.

³ **Armidale Express**, 13 June 1857, p. 2 and 27 June 1857, p. 2.

⁴ Andrews, E.C., *Mineral Resources No. 8, Report on the Hillgrove Goldfield*, Geological Survey Department, Sydney 1900, p. 7.

Other antimony miners included the Campbell Brothers who mined the Campbell's spur 'lying a little north and west of Bakers Creek battery'.⁵ Moore, Speare and McBean, who initially worked with tributors, followed.

In 1878 a reef containing antimony was discovered by Daly, Elliott and Brackin on the Hillgrove side of the Baker's Creek gorge. Prior to this date, most of the discoveries had been made on the Metz side of the gorge. The initial discovery of antimony led to the erection of smelting works and the creation of companies involving an early Armidale syndicate. However the major goldfield developed in 1887 'with the discovery of the Little, Big, Middle and Baalgammon lodes'.⁶

The nature of the gorge country and the type of mining meant that large capital was required and such capital could only be provided by companies. Consequently, a number of companies were formed as shares were offered to the public and interstate and overseas capital was attracted from Victoria, South Australia and London. Throughout the 1890's, companies were formed and amalgamations took place as gold values fluctuated. The principal companies up to 1900 were:⁷ **The Baker's Creek Company; Sunlight and West Sunlight Companies; Hillgrove United** (formed from an amalgamation of the **Cosmopolitan and Carrington**) and, **Hillgrove Proprietary** (formed from an amalgamation of the **Golden Gate Company** with **Cooney Proprietary Mines** and **The Hillgrove Mining Property Pty. Ltd**).

The nature of mining that took place in mines such as **Baker's Creek, The Eleanora, The Hillgrove Proprietary, The Garibaldi, The Cosmopolitan, Lady Carrington, The Sunlight and West Sunlight** (on the western side of the gorge), gives an insight into the type of people attracted to the town of Hillgrove. The fields suffered extraction difficulties which had to be overcome by the construction of batteries, furnaces and the chemical treatment of ore. The nature and depth of the gorge required the construction of tramways with a drop of some 450 metres and the establishment of batteries at the bottom of the gorge.

⁵ *ibid.*

⁶ Mainwaring, R., *Tramways Down The Gorge: the story of Hillgrove, 1887-1921*, **Light Railway Research Society of Australia**, No 94, Vol xxiv, October 1986, p. 3.

⁷ Mainwaring, R., *op. cit.* p. 4.

In the 1900 report, E.C. Andrews⁸ noted the commercial significance of the hill slopes to the mining industry at Hillgrove. He saw the significance in two ways:

- (a) As a source of expense.- In the need of costly tramways to expedite conveyance of material... where beasts of burden would be almost useless; in the discounting in value of minor mineral deposits situate... owing to cost of haulage and element of danger involved in coping with the numerous landslips which occur, particularly in the antimony area of the Swamp Creek.
- (b) As a source of gain.- As a set-off to the loss entailed in travelling and hauling on the steep sidelings may be mentioned the power obtained by water conserved in dams situate on the table land, and conveyed down the slopes in pipes; and the facility with which some of the reefs may be won by tunnelling into the hill from the gully sides.

Apart from the capital required which was almost entirely drawn initially from South Australia and England, the mines required highly skilled miners and mine managers. The skills of these miners and engineers in overcoming immense difficulties were illustrated in the development of Hillgrove together with the amenities provided for the townspeople. Despite the problems encountered in such mining, many people felt that their future lay in the development of Hillgrove as a permanent town and this helps to explain the quality of life developed by the people.

The Permanency of the Town

Early descriptions of the town were given by the special correspondent, for the **Armidale Express** in Hillgrove. On 14 October 1887 the correspondent reported, 'We are getting on well in canvas town... we have a store and bakers shop, also a boarding house'.⁹

A number of members of parliament, including the Hons. James Inglis, Francis Abigail and M.L.A.'s Dowel and Cook, accompanied by several leading residents of Armidale, attended the first public meeting held in Hillgrove. The residents of the township totalled five hundred and over three hundred miners attended to present a petition on improvements to the town and

⁸ Andrews, E.C., op. cit., p. 13.

⁹ **Armidale Express**, 14 October 1887, p. 3.

necessary alterations to the Mining Act. Local improvements requested included:

enlarged school accommodation, daily postal accommodation, money order office, telegraph communication, reduction to 5s for miner's rights, greater facilities for taking up mineral lands and... disputes decided on the ground by the warden.¹⁰

Both Ministers promised to support the requests and Mr Inglis promised the school improvements immediately. Mr Francis Abigail, the Minister for Mines, promised to consider a road down to the Falls at the Baker's Creek gorge and a reduction in the cost of miner's rights. Following the meeting chaired by Mr Scouler, Manager of the **Eleanora Mine**, an amazing incident occurred. Most of the visitors and some miners descended the gorge into the Eleanora Tunnel up to 1000 feet to witness a rock drill driven by compressed air, at work. That afternoon, the party had already visited the Eleanora Mine to witness the crushing machinery and twenty five stampers at work. Accordingly it came as no surprise, that the Minister for Mines was given three cheers in the mine and the party eventually scrambled up the gorge at nearly midnight. 'However all arrived safely at the hotel and after the necessary refreshments, a few songs, and some yarns, everyone was glad to retire'.¹¹

The optimistic future for the Hillgrove goldfield constantly dominated many of the newspaper reports. The newspaper reporter who accompanied the ministerial party commented that:

The party returned to Armidale on Sunday morning highly pleased with what they had seen... Hillgrove had a great future and... its mineral wealth when properly developed would be second to no gold mine ever discovered in Australia both for richness and permanency.¹²

Following his return to Armidale, Francis Abigail informed an Armidale meeting on the Monday evening that plans were to be undertaken for a mining township at Hillgrove. He promised that a surveyor would be appointed to survey the mines and it was made clear that leases would be granted stringently. Within two months, the Government took action to

¹⁰ op. cit. 17 April 1888, p. 4.

¹¹ *ibid.*

¹² *ibid.*

reserve about 500 acres to be exempted from occupation under Miner's Rights or Business Licenses. By creating such a large reserve, two questions arose for the people in Hillgrove: first, the ownership of settled land and second, the ownership and utilisation of buildings already erected on town allotments.

One of the earliest concerns of the townspeople was the expressed need to gain freehold title to the land and thus orderly occupation of land. Despite the promises of the politicians, the residents of Hillgrove saw the need to develop an action group to press the claims of the mining township. To this end, a Progress Committee was formed and this organisation conducted a public meeting at the Centennial Hall in Hillgrove on Saturday 2 March 1889. One of the objects of the meeting was to 'take into consideration the best means of dealing with the allotments'.¹³ A petition was read and signed by one hundred occupiers of allotments, asking the Minister for Lands to revoke the proclamation of the 8 June 1888. They felt that the problems of the town allotments would be overcome if the occupied portions of the surveyed town were placed under the 46th section of the Crown Lands Act of 1884. By this stage, over £10,000 had been spent on buildings within the town and the townspeople feared that their improved allotments could be lost if the land went to public auction. As a result, a committee of local men was formed including Messrs. Lewis, Nix and Ross to carry out the work and a decision was made to present the petition by a deputation from the Hillgrove residents.

Two weeks later, the special correspondent based in Hillgrove expressed concern that,

nothing definite has yet been heard with regard to the proclamation being struck off. Buildings large and small are continually going up. Further complications must necessarily arise if this matter is not settled.¹⁴

On Wednesday 10 April 1889, Messrs Oliver and Lewis travelled as a deputation to Sydney to represent the Progress Committee and the townspeople of Hillgrove. They met the Minister for Lands 'for the purpose of calling attention to the wants of the township' including 'building sites for public auction' and also drew the attention of the Premier to the need for

¹³ op. cit., 5 March 1889, p. 4.

¹⁴ op. cit., 19 March 1889, p. 4.

'construction of a cottage hospital'. The Minister for Mines promised attention to the water supply for Hillgrove and Mr O'Connor, the Post-master General, 'courteously promised that immediate attention would be given to the representation of the deputation'¹⁵ concerning increased accommodation for post and telegraphic facilities.

Problems arose within Hillgrove because of the dramatic increase in population from 500 residents in April 1888 to about 1,600 in March 1889.¹⁶ The influx of miners and their families to such a relatively isolated town meant that urgently needed accommodation and businesses were required. The newspaper report of 16 April 1889 captured the development:

Hillgrove is still increasing in its population. Business of all kinds seems to be improving. Licenses have been granted to Mr J. Gearin, formerly of Broken Hill and Mr Keough for hotels, and, by the plans, they will be substantial brick buildings. Mr Gearin, I hear, is to commence his immediately. Nothing has yet been definitely settled with regard to the allotments of the town.¹⁷

The government of the day attempted to overcome the problem of an unplanned town by proclaiming Hillgrove as a village containing an area of 230 acres in the Government Gazette of 23 May 1889. Many felt that the situation concerning the allotments of the town was still unsolved and on the evening of 28 June 1889 a large representative meeting of influential townspeople attended a Progress Committee meeting at Wade's Hotel. Mr George Westcott, manager of the City Bank, occupied the chair and stated :

It showed a proper spirit of pushing matters of this kind forward which were of great importance to the welfare of the town and its inhabitants. The Progress Committee had a very strong moral power, if not a legal one.¹⁸

At this meeting, details were given of gains during the past six months. To this date, a court of petty sessions was established; tenders had been accepted for a court house, lock-up and police quarters; increased school accommodation had been promised as well as a new and commodious post office. Mr Westcott, also involved in the Hospital Committee, announced that '...a cottage hospital will shortly be erected. The necessary ground has been

¹⁵ op. cit., 16 April 1889, p. 8.

¹⁶ op. cit., 5 March 1889, p. 4.

¹⁷ op. cit., 16 April 1889, p. 4.

¹⁸ op. cit., 2 July 1889, p. 2.

selected and restored...'¹⁹ The meeting was also informed that the proclamation of 8 June 1888 would shortly be revoked and pegging within the town allowed.

The special correspondent in the **Armidale Express** constantly wrote of progress within the town made obvious by building development and increases in population. The great sense of optimism and excitement of a mining boom, was clearly reflected in the mining reports and in the newspapers. Many journalists of the day felt that Hillgrove would become a permanent goldfield. 'Hillgrove will undoubtedly have a very great future... why should it not eventually become as important a place as Broken Hill?'²⁰ Certainly the miners and townspeople felt that the future of Hillgrove was assured and this helps to explain the public meetings and the petitions for town improvements. The journalist of the **Illustrated Sydney News** echoed the potential of Hillgrove. 'The extent of the field is amazing, and the number of claims opened up justify the opinion that Hillgrove is to be a permanent field.'²¹ To add support to the article, the journalist quoted the report by a government inspector Dr Slee who had recently visited the field:

Although the Baker's Creek mine is not paying such dividends as formerly... the general prospect of the mine is not discouraging... Taking the Hillgrove goldfield as a whole, its permanency may be considered as secured.²²

An amazing event occurred in Hillgrove on Thursday 22 August 1889 when residents came to believe that the proclamation of the 8 June 1888 would be cancelled. The chairman of the Progress Committee Mr Wescott, 'received a telegram from the Undersecretary for Lands, stating that the land would be thrown open at midnight'.²³ That night, the whole of Hillgrove was pegged out, an event which the **Armidale Express** correspondent described in an exaggerated manner by reference to disputes over such places as the Post Office block, the Wesleyan Church, cordial factory and Wades' Hotel pigsty. For two days up to the following Saturday at 4 p.m., 187 blocks were registered with the two Court of Petty Session's officers; the Hillgrove representative, Mr Matthews and the visiting Mr Sheehan from Armidale. However, the arrival of the **Government Gazette** on the Saturday evening

¹⁹ *ibid.*

²⁰ *op. cit.*, 12 March 1889, p. 4.

²¹ **Illustrated Sydney News**, 26 November 1889, p. 18.

²² *op. cit.*, p. 19.

²³ **Armidale Express**, 30 August 1889, p. 7.

revealed that 'out of a total of 313 surveyed blocks, only 162 had been thrown open and out of the 33 sections which comprise the village, 12 had been reserved in toto'.²⁴

The matter of contention was the fact that despite 350 homes having been constructed in Hillgrove, only 162 blocks had been thrown open. This fact angered the crowd but, Mr Wescott convinced the miners to forward a petition to the Minister requesting a reconsideration of land ownership within the town. No time was lost because the petition was ready for Monday's mail with over 400 bona fide resident's signatures.

Early in September, the Department of Mines in Sydney responded to this action by sending Mr Hogarth, a surveyor, to subdivide each section of the town. This readjustment of blocks had not occurred previously because there existed a larger developed area than had been allowed by the Act. Despite the claim that the surveying would only lead to further pegging-out incidents as occurred in August, such action by the government did resolve the problems within Hillgrove. Apart from some disputes over mining claims which were settled in the Warden's court, the town continued its development and in 1890 could be described as a town in which,

There are two banks, a branch of the City and a branch of the Joint Stock: four hotels, good commodious structures... two hotels are in course of structure; six large general stores, several boarding-houses, shops for butchers, bakers, and chemists, also an oyster saloon.

There is a newspaper office... the **Hillgrove Guardian** is true to its name...²⁵

Without a municipal government, the town of Hillgrove was faced with the problem of who would undertake public works and improvements to the town. Certainly in the early development of Hillgrove, there was no demonstration by the mining companies that they were prepared to undertake such responsibilities.

What little authority there was was either divided among various government agencies such as the mine warden's court and the

²⁴ *ibid.*

²⁵ **Description of Hillgrove**, c.1890. Untitled newscuttings in Mitchell Library, Newspaper Cuttings, Volume 45. New England Historical Resources Centre, C.B. Newling Centre, University of New England.

police, with only limited legal powers to act in these matters or vested in Progress Committees with only moral power.²⁶

²⁶ Neale R.S. et al. op. cit., p. 106.

CHAPTER 2

DEVELOPMENT OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT

It was evident from the developments within mining in the area that many residents felt Hillgrove would become a permanent town. The public meetings and the formation of the Progress Committee were signs of optimism and indicated that the townspeople would press vigorously for a range of public services to be provided by government departments.

The extent of official recognition of the town was indicated by the visit of the Premier, Sir Henry Parkes and local member of parliament, Mr James Inglis in March 1890. The official party together with two press representatives, travelled in Patrick Ryan's chartered four horse trap, escorted by two mounted troopers. Near Hillgrove station, the party was welcomed by a group from Hillgrove headed by bank-manager Mr G. Wescott.

As the group entered Hillgrove,

the Hillgrove Town Band... saluted the Premier and Mr Inglis with a burst of martial music... The principal buildings were decorated with flags, and strings of bunting of varying hues were hung across the street.¹

Premier Parkes was greeted by three cheers and the school children sang the national anthem as he entered the Centennial Hall. On behalf of the Hillgrove citizens, Mr Wescott read a welcome of address in which he expressed confidence in the ability of the Premier 'to bring to a successful issue the most important national movement of the present time- the federation of the Australian colonies'.² In reply, Sir Henry Parkes thanked the audience for their complimentary address and said that he had come to New England and Hillgrove in particular in order to gain a personal knowledge and understanding of the district. Miners were spreading elements of civilisation and,

In time the township would grow into an incorporated town, with mayor and aldermen, and with lighted streets and paved footpath; and they would be astonished with what rapidity those ends would be brought about... there was no class of men more to be admired

¹ **Armidale Chronicle**, 12 March 1890, Reproduced in Tonkin, Henry, **Papers c1859-1937**, Mitchell Library FM 4/7446, Folio 15.

² *ibid.*

than they who... opened up new localities; and thus conferred a benefit on their fellow-men.³

After an interjection, the Premier promised a repeal of the Mining Laws to make them more suitable to the mining industry and then briefly referred to Federation. The meeting concluded with a reply to the address by Miss Jenny Mills who spoke on behalf of the Hillgrove school-children. Following lunch at Mr. Frank Wades' **Miners' Arms Hotel**, the Premier officially opened the Cottage Hospital. 'The building was not quite finished, but presented enough to show what its appearance would be when the contract had concluded'.⁴ The Premier praised the building and gave advice to the Hospital Committee on 'its future management in regard to drainage and sanitary arrangements'.⁵ The Premier also visited the Public School which the **Armidale Chronicle** journalist described as an 'excellently managed institution' and Sir Henry planted a tree within the school grounds 'to perpetuate the record of his visit to Hillgrove'.⁶ That evening, the Premier was entertained in the decorated Centennial Hall crowded with Hillgrove residents.

According to the 1891 census, the population of Hillgrove was 2,090. Such a population saw a dramatic and sudden growth in urban development although the town existed throughout the 1890's without the assistance of a municipal government. Through a series of public meetings held in Hillgrove, it became obvious that the townspeople expected improvements to be carried out. As indicated in the previous chapter, water was critical to the mines and the town but the mining companies were not prepared to carry out public works within the town. However by September 1889, it was reported that the **Cosmopolitan Mine** was developing a water scheme and that 'the water-works at the springs are being pushed ahead in a vigorous and business-like manner, and will, when completed, be one of the finest water-conserving schemes around Hillgrove'.⁷

In May 1889, the correspondent for the **Armidale Express** urged the Progress Committee to take immediate action on the sanitary conditions of the town because of the possible disastrous consequences.

3 *ibid.*

4 *op. cit.*, Folio 16.

5 *ibid.*

6 *ibid.*

7 **Armidale Express**, 17 September 1889, p. 4.

Steps should immediately be taken to prevent diseases of all kinds... The Hillgrove Progress Committee should look at once into this matter, and have a thorough examination of all cesspits and other nuisances now existing.⁸

The 1890's saw the Progress Committee confronted with many problems associated with a rapidly developing town. Without a municipal government, Hillgrove faced the desperate need of undertaking public works and improvements to the town. The scope of problems confronting the Committee was apparent in the agenda of their meetings. At a meeting held on Thursday 8 July 1891, the Progress Committee discussed several matters 'including the crossing of a reserve held by Mr Hargraves, site for a slaughter yard, the removal of rocks from the vicinity of the Post Office, and enclosing of the cemetery'.⁹ During a subsequent meeting held on Wednesday 9 March 1892 at Gellately's Hall, business transacted included 'a road around the Falls, (and a) road to Rockvale'.¹⁰ It was also decided to invite members of the Amalgamated Miners' Association to meet with the Committee 'to discuss mining laws (and) suspension of labour'.¹¹

There was an obvious need to reform a Progress Committee in 1895, following its period of lapse. The correspondent in the **Armidale Chronicle** felt that, 'the residents of Hillgrove are at last awaking to the fact that their interests have been neglected'.¹² Action was required 'to bring much needed reforms under the notice of the proper authorities'.¹³

On 16 March 1896, the Premier of New South Wales, Mr Reid, visited Hillgrove and the chairman of the Progress Committee, Mr Morgan, presented an address to the visitor at Sulling's **Commercial Hotel**. Mr Morgan paid tribute to the ability of the Premier who was endeavouring 'to bring the country into a flourishing condition after the past years of financial troubles'.¹⁴ The Premier replied:

8 op. cit., 7 May 1889, p. 4.

9 op. cit., 14 July 1891, p. 4.

10 op. cit., 15 March 1892, p. 5.

11 *ibid.*

12 **Armidale Chronicle**, 21 September 1895, p. 4.

13 *ibid.*

14 **Hillgrove Guardian and New England Mining Gazette**, 19 March 1896, Reproduced in Tonkin, Henry, **Papers c1859-1937**, Mitchell Library FM 4/7446, Folio 35.

There was one thing the present Government was determined about, and that was to look after the mining interests: those who by their hard work, their patience, and their energy were producing wealth in the country should have every encouragement. A mistake had been made in giving too much attention to the city... That would be altered now...¹⁵

After the luncheon, he visited the Public School, the Hospital, the **Eleanora Mining Works** to inspect the battery and the **Baker's Creek Mine**. Following entertainment by the McMahon band, the Premier and his party were accompanied by fifty townspeople for the evening meal at **Wades' Miners' Arms Hotel**. At 8 o'clock, Mr Reid spoke to a packed School of Arts hall about the policies of his new government and the achievements of the past 18 months.

A further period of lapse saw a large public meeting initiated by Mr W.R. Mathew in Sim's hall on Monday 24 January 1898 to reform a Progress Committee. Mr Mathew was elected chairman and stated the attendance of so many present,

showed that the people were alive to the necessity of getting an energetic and capable Progress Committee together and at work... The last committee had done excellent work, another was now wanted to take its place.¹⁶

A critical issue confronting the people of Hillgrove in 1898 was the claim that the valuations of town allotments were too high as they did not reflect current market values. As a result, the Progress Committee appointed W.L. Smith, W. Morgan and A.V. Gray to meet 'the Land Board at their next sitting with a view to getting the valuation of town allotments reduced'.¹⁷ While the land board of B.A. Moses and J. Bliss was sympathetic to the cause of the deputation, they explained that they had no power to fix the value of town allotments but they would endeavour to help lower the rates.¹⁸

The **Hillgrove Guardian** reported that the 'town allotments are about as low now in value as they ever can be'¹⁹ and appealed to townspeople to take the necessary action if they desired their properties to become free-

15 *ibid.*

16 **Hillgrove Guardian and New England Mining Gazette**, 29 January 1898, p. 4.

17 *op. cit.*, 16 July 1898, p. 4.

18 *ibid.*

19 *op. cit.*, 16 July 1898, p. 4.

hold. Consequently, many people applied to the Hillgrove court during the following months and paid the £2 required.

The question of the town incorporation was raised by J.F. O'Connor at a meeting of the Progress Committee in August 1898. He said that 'he was comparatively a new townsman and did not understand why the place had remained unincorporated so long'.²⁰ Discussion ensued and a decision was made to seek incorporation; 'the mine managers present promising all the help in their power to that end'.²¹ A special meeting was called for Thursday 25 August 'for the purpose of forwarding the Incorporation movement'.²² Those present, considered a map of Hillgrove and the need for a petition. By the end of the following month, a petition dated 29 September 1898 and containing two hundred and twenty five names in favour of incorporation was presented to the Chief Secretary. Alterations were made to the boundaries of the proposed incorporated town and it was gazetted in January 1899.

By March 1899, some uncertainty and confusion arose in Hillgrove over this decision. A member of the Progress Committee proposed a motion that a public meeting be called 'to test the feelings of the inhabitants with regard to the incorporation of Hillgrove'.²³ The motion was lost but the suggestion was made that the opponents should call a public meeting to discuss the issue. Opposition by some residents towards incorporation, resulted in a counter petition of two hundred and twenty nine signatories, dated 29 March 1889. It was presented to the Chief Secretary in Sydney. The continued uncertainty of the residents of Hillgrove was indicated by the fact that some residents signed both petitions. This action saw the Minister request an inquiry and a report submitted.

The editor of the **Hillgrove Guardian** felt strongly that the town should be incorporated;

Hillgrove is taking this important step of getting incorporated, under peculiarly advantageous circumstances. The whole length of the main street is already formed and metalled, and in beautiful order. We have a water supply such as many towns... would be glad of... We have the town lighted by electricity...²⁴

²⁰ op. cit., 20 August 1898, p. 3.

²¹ ibid.

²² op. cit., 27 August 1898, p. 3.

²³ op. cit., 11 March 1899, p. 4.

²⁴ op. cit., 1 April 1899, p. 2.

On the other hand, the editor wrote that a number of problems had still to be solved: the need to wipe out typhoid fever; organise a sanitary system; stop the erosion on side streets; clear footpaths; align streets; plant trees; repair buildings and ensure their uniformity. It was anticipated that the formation of a local council would lead to such improvements. Mr H. Shaw, editor of the **Armidale Chronicle**, spoke against incorporation from the balcony of the **Tattersall's Hotel** in Hillgrove. He claimed that the **Hillgrove Guardian** had presented only one side of incorporation.²⁵

A great deal of bitterness spread amongst the members of the Progress Committee. This was particularly evidenced by the personal dispute between Thomas Morris and John Francis O'Connor. The Progress Committee had previously delegated the responsibility of incorporation to that of a citizen's committee but the Progress Committee decided to organise a debate and ballot on the issue. This action brought a letter of protest from the citizen's committee, signed by the secretary, Dr Hardcastle who claimed that responsibility for incorporation rested with them and not the Progress Committee. Two hundred and twenty five people had already voted in favour of incorporation and everything had been done constitutionally; an inquiry should settle any dispute. The letter was tabled and discussed at the meeting of the Progress Committee on Wednesday evening 19 April 1899. Consequently, the decision was taken 'that the whole of the Progress Committee resign'.²⁶

The **Hillgrove Guardian** carried frequent reports of the groups supporting incorporation as well as those against. According to the editor, 'the bulk of the objectors to incorporation are the migratory miners and tradesmen who have but a nominal stake and still less interest in the progress of the town...'²⁷ An ardent supporter of incorporation, the editor felt that 'the recently organised opposition... was merely a spirit of conservatism'.²⁸

The issue divided the town. On the evening of Tuesday 25 April 1899, a meeting in favour of incorporation was held at Sulling's **Commercial Hotel**. A resolution was passed, 'That this meeting pledge itself to take no part in the ballot to be held on Wednesday, 26th. inst.'²⁹ A committee in

²⁵ op. cit., 8 April 1899, p. 3.

²⁶ op. cit., 22 April 1899, p. 3.

²⁷ op. cit., 22 April 1899, p. 2.

²⁸ op. cit., 22 July 1899, p. 2.

²⁹ op. cit., 29 April 1899, p. 3.

favour of incorporation was nominated, consisting of: S. Snow and Sons, Robert Sharp, W.J. Hill, S. Ray, F. Willmott, W. Morgan, Samuel Sullings, E.K. Brown, Coleman Savage, W.R. Mathew, H. Massey, Cooper Hardcastle, George Quinnell, W.L. Smith, S. Williams and A.V. Gray.

On the following Wednesday, the poll on the delicate issue of incorporation was taken between the hours of 10.30 a.m. and 7 p.m. with the result declared at 8.30 p.m. At a public meeting that evening, the poll was declared by the returning officer W.R. Mathew: two hundred and thirty three voted against incorporation and thirty-three voted for with one informal vote recorded. One citizen R. Stephens, 'took exception to a distinction being made in the leading article of last Saturday's 'Guardian' between those who are for and those who are against incorporation'.³⁰ Yet another committee was formed to represent the anti-incorporation case, consisting of: Messrs. J.T. Readford, R. Stephens, A.J. Hardwicke, C.J. Mallam, W.R.J. Sims, Alex Murray, J. Baker, W. Boundy, Thos. Morris, W. Oliver and Robert W. Morrow.

The issue had forced the resignation of the Progress Committee and the public meeting received nominations for a new one. There were so many nominations that a ballot was announced for the following Wednesday. An obvious attempt was made to influence the new progress Committee with the decision to hand over the surplus of funds from the anti-incorporation group.

As a result of these developments in Hillgrove, a court of enquiry under the Municipalities Act was undertaken before Mr W.F. Parker P.M. at Hillgrove on Thursday 20 July 1899, to examine the petitions for and against incorporation.

Mr Readford, solicitor, appeared for those who had signed the counter petitions, and was supported by their representatives - Messrs Jas Robinson, Thos. Butler, and Sydney Smith. For those in favour of the incorporation of the town- Dr Hardcastle, with Messrs. A.V. Gray, J.P. and J.F. O'Connor appeared.³¹

At the conclusion of the inquiry, a letter was received by Mr W. Morgan signed by Crichton Walker (Principal Under-Secretary) from the Chief Secretary's Office in Sydney, dated 31 July 1899. It stated:

³⁰ *ibid.*

³¹ *op. cit.*, 22 July 1899, p. 3.

The official inquiry recently held by the Police Magistrate at Armidale in connection with the petitions for and against incorporation of Hillgrove having shown that the former petition has the greater of signatures affixed to it, I am directed by the Chief Secretary to inform you that it has, accordingly been decided to proceed with the incorporation.³²

The **Hillgrove Guardian** welcomed incorporation by reporting it would ensure 'a more dignified administration of its own affairs than the primitive irresponsible ways of a Progress Committee'.³³ Despite the support for the municipal elections, the newspaper was concerned that the Government failed to give the '14 days notice of the day of nomination by advertising in some newspaper circulating in or near such Municipality'.³⁴ The first advertisement announced that the election would take place on Wednesday 13 December but this was amended to Wednesday 27 December at noon in Taylor's Hall, Hillgrove. William Morgan, storekeeper, was appointed the first returning officer for the municipality of Hillgrove.

Nineteen candidates stood for election and 'the following nine gentlemen were elected in the order named- Messrs D. Dixon, W. Mathew, J. Burns, R. Stevens, R. Sharp. S. Smith, A.J. Fuller, J.F. O'Connor and Dr. Hardcastle'.³⁵ The editor of the **Hillgrove Guardian** wrote:

We are in the hands mostly of untried men as far as their present dignified position is, but each and everyone in some way has done good service for the advancement of the town... In the first mayor of Hillgrove we have a man in every way fitted for the position... a deep thinking worker... and we feel sure will, give the whole benefit of his capabilities to the services of the best interests of the thriving town...³⁶

The Municipal Council took prompt action to improve the conditions of the town. At a special meeting on Friday 12 January 1900, a deputation was arranged to meet with the Minister for Mines, Mr Fegan, on the occasion of his visit to Hillgrove during the following week. The Council also called tenders for the position of assessor of the Borough of Hillgrove and for the removal and disposal of nightsoil. The nightsoil problem persisted and action

³² op. cit., 12 August 1899, p. 4.

³³ op. cit., 2 December 1899, p. 2.

³⁴ *ibid.*

³⁵ **Armidale Express**, 12 January 1900, p. 3.

³⁶ **Hillgrove Guardian and New England Mining Gazette**, 13 January 1900, p. 2.

was constantly sought because of the obvious implications for the control of disease and its effect on the health of Hillgrove people. Furthermore the regulations of the Government Works Department stated that the Municipal Council was responsible for,

repairing, maintenance, and cleansing of footpaths, kerbing and guttering, and draining... and that the responsibility of the department was restricted to the upkeep of the central roadway to a width sufficient to provide for through traffic.³⁷

At this stage, no Council Chambers were available so the Council met fortnightly on Wednesday evenings at Miss Brown's school in Stella Street. In April 1900, the Municipal Council 'decided to rent the premises in front of Mrs Taylor's Hall as an office for the Town Clerk and meeting place for the council'.³⁸ In September of the same year, Council applied to the Department of Lands for the 'allotments 10 and 20 of Section 22 facing Smith Street opposite Mr Becke's residence'³⁹ as a site for its Chambers. In February 1902, it was announced that 'the Council have removed to their new chambers, and after the town clerk is finished with the structure, it will be fairly comfortable'.⁴⁰ The opening of the Chambers took place in March. The building was situated at the corner of Smith and Bradley streets at the rear of the Police Station in Scouler Street and the site was set aside for municipal purposes on 10 May 1902.

In 1904, finances for the council were low but the following work was carried out for the council by the work's committee,

Formed and kerbed Brackin st., from Scouler to Hargrave street. Formed lane between Smith and Brackin street, from Brereton st. to Scouler st., formed lane between Hargrave to Scouler streets, from Brackin st. to High st. Formed table and repaired footpaths from Ryan's Hotel to culvert in Brackin st., formed and kerbed and put in three stone causeways in Brereton st. from Smith st. to R.C. Church. Put asphalt gutter in lane from Post Office to Brereton st. and rose centre of lane. Took out stone gutters in Brereton st. from William's Hotel to gully and put down new asphalt in drains. Top dressed verandahs opposite William's Hotel, Morgan's store and Smart's shop. We have had 100 yds of road metal broken for maintenance.⁴¹

³⁷ op. cit, October 24 1903, p. 2

³⁸ op. cit, 28 April 1900, p. 3.

³⁹ op. cit, 22 September 1900, p. 3.

⁴⁰ op. cit, 22 February 1902, p. 2.

⁴¹ op. cit, 28 January 1905, p. 2.

In spite of incorporation, the Council was confronted with decline rather than expected growth. It became responsible for the payment of construction of the water supply completed in 1892 and 'under the amending Act of 1905, the rate of interest...(was) fixed at 4 per cent per annum'.⁴² The cost of the original debt to Hillgrove was £4,000 and the amount payable annually was £170. This debt was to cause major concern to Council and community members as they faced the inevitable decline of mining; the town's main source of revenue.

Despite a public outcry by the Hillgrove community, the cost of the water scheme was forced onto the Municipal Council by the Government of the day in 1906. The correspondent in the **Armidale Express** claimed it 'was then a rather worn-out scheme'⁴³ and consequently cost the Council considerable time and expense in repairing the system. In 1912 the Government was still receiving £170 10s. 9d. per annum interest, but it was reported 'steps are being taken to have the amount reduced, and the Mayor (Alderman Morgan) and the local member Mr. E. Lonsdale, are doing their utmost to get a considerable concession'.⁴⁴

In 1907, Robert Sharp was elected Mayor with a Mayoral allowance of £10 and there were nine aldermen. Office bearers were: Robert William Morrow (Council Clerk, Treasurer, Engineer and Valuer for Assessments with David M. Quinlan) and Sanitary Inspector, Abraham G. Page. The City Bank acted as banker for the Council. Five hundred electors were enrolled out of an approximate population of two thousand. There were five hundred and twenty six buildings with no street lighting although electricity was available at 1/- per lamp. As at 5 February 1907 the Assets and Liabilities of the Municipality were: outstanding rates and accounts due £242; cash in hand £113; waterworks £4,000; lands and buildings £99; working plant and stores £155; total assets £4,609. The liabilities included outstanding debts of £4,014. Receipts and Expenditure were: general rate £283; sanitary charge £356; a government grant of £289; total £928. Expenditure works and services included: general £329; other £391; salaries and office expenses £186; miscellaneous £87; Total £993. Annual Rental, Capital

⁴² Trivett, J.B., **Official Year Book of New South Wales 1907-8**, Sydney, 1909, p. 547.

⁴³ **Armidale Express**, 26 March 1912, p. 4.

⁴⁴ *ibid.*

Value and rates were: average rental of improved land £10,680, capital value of all rateable property £35,000; unimproved capital value £31,100. The total amount of rates levied were £1,012.⁴⁵

Disturbed by the trends in applications of mining companies for suspension of labour, the Council made 'an emphatic objection to any further suspension being granted on the Sunlight property, as there has been no work done on same for a number of years...'⁴⁶ Despite support from a resident's petition and a personal application by miner Thomas Snow, the suspension was granted. Although the Mining Warden commented, 'I will grant the suspension for four months, and hope to see something done this time'.⁴⁷

Concerned at the state of the road between Hillgrove and Armidale, the Council appealed to Dumaresq Shire to take necessary action in December 1911. Three months later, Alderman O'Connor in his retiring Mayoral speech stated 'he was sorry he had not been able to get the reduction on the waterworks through before retiring but felt satisfied his successor would succeed in doing so'.⁴⁸

In February 1913, Alderman William Morgan was re-elected to the position of Mayor. In his acceptance speech, he thanked the Aldermen for their support in the previous year and 'trusted, with their hearty assistance, to show better results during the coming year'.⁴⁹ Despite the optimism of the Mayor, the advent of the Great War drastically affected mining in the town. In September 1914 it was reported,

The depressed condition of Hillgrove of late years has been greatly accentuated since the commencement of the war... Generally speaking... there is practically no work going on in the mines at all. The population of the mining centre is now about 1100, where in the balmy days of the field it exceeded as much as 3600.⁵⁰

45 Clarke, W.W. (Ed), **The Official Municipal Council Year Book and Shires Directory of New South Wales for 1907**, Sydney, 1907, pp. 122, 222-223, 232-233, 250-251.

46 **Armidale Chronicle**, 9 September 1911, p. 7.

47 op. cit., 11 November 1911, p. 3.

48 op. cit., 14 February 1912, p. 3.

49 **Armidale Chronicle**, 22 February 1913, p. 7.

50 op. cit., 18 September 1914, p. 10.

The report by the Inspector of Public Accounts, J.C. Gray dated 9 September 1916 demonstrated the magnitude of the problems confronting the Hillgrove Council. He wrote,

of the original debt of £4,000, the sum of £3,905/2/11 remains. In addition, interest amounting to £665/9/0 has accrued, and is still unpaid. No payment in reduction of the principal and interest has been made since the year 1911.⁵¹

The report also revealed that a water rate of 2/- in the pound on the unimproved value of properties had been struck for 1916. This meant rates to the value of £266/17/- had been levied but the Inspector felt 'owing to the difficulty in locating the owners of unoccupied premises, 25% of the rates will not be collected. The arrears of rates for the year 1915, and previous years amount to £226/3/11'.⁵² Because the Council was not reducing the liability on the water supply account owed to the Government, he suggested that the Government should retain the £35 rates paid on the court house, police station and public school properties. He proposed that this amount could become a part payment on the Council instalments.

The newspaper reports consistently referred to the great sense of optimism whenever a mine re-opened. In April 1917, it appeared that a syndicate would reopen a major mine, the **Eleanora** in Hillgrove. The correspondent claimed,

the probability has given great heart to the Hillgrove people generally, and the exodus of timber and iron in the shape of dismantled cottages etc., will apparently cease. The value of property, in fact, already shows a rise.⁵³

In July 1917, the retiring Mayor G.H. Jones in his speech to Council stated that 'as far as municipal affairs were concerned, he had nothing to worry about, as the work was carried out most satisfactorily by the staff'.⁵⁴ However, at the regular meeting of the Council held on Monday 16 July, correspondence was received from the Undersecretary requesting information about action to be taken by Council to recover outstanding rates. It was also

51 Report by J.C. Gray, Inspector of Public Accounts, Inspection Branch, Department of Audit Sydney, 9 September 1916, No. 311, **Hillgrove School of Arts 1914-1916**, A.O. 20/13134.

52 *ibid.*

53 **Armidale Express**, 13 April 1917, p. 10.

54 **Armidale Chronicle**, 21 July 1917, p. 3.

announced that the finance committee was to report to the next meeting on the advisability of closing the Council.

Closure of the Council was not forthcoming but events in late 1917 reinforced the inevitability of decline of the township. In November, the **Eleanora Mine** clearance sale was advertised and in reply to a letter to the Council from the Under-Secretary for Finance and Trade concerning interest and instalments, Council members 'resolved that the Treasury be informed that the position of the town and plant generally is such that the council cannot see its way to give promise of any payment'.⁵⁵

A number of ratepayers and occupiers within the Municipality of Hillgrove presented a petition to Council in August 1920 which read:

We the undersigned... hereby respectfully request the Mayor and Aldermen... to make application to the Minister for Local Government to dissolve the present council, and merge the municipality into the area of the Dumaresq Shire, as an urban area, as we consider the time is ripe for such alteration.⁵⁶

The Mayor, Alderman G.H. Jones did not support the request but Alderman Souter, seconded by Alderman Gilliland moved 'that the council make application to dissolve and merge'.⁵⁷ The motion was closely defeated by five votes to four: Alderman Jones was supported by Messrs Morgan, Williams, T. Snow and L. Snow while Alderman Souter was supported by Messrs Gilliland, Martin and Murray.

In June 1922 the **Armidale Chronicle** reported a new 'interest in municipal affairs'.⁵⁸ For the first time in ten years, a contested election would take place since five nominations consisting of, 'Messrs. Wm. Morgan, R. Sharp. W. Flood, James Skinner, and R. Champion... have been received for three vacancies...'.⁵⁹ Despite the interest in municipal affairs, a detailed report from a local government inspector was tabled to the Council in July 1922. A number of Aldermen and ex-Aldermen were ineligible for nomination for various reasons including: indebtedness for rates; not taking the oath of allegiance; purchasing old plant from the Council and trading with

55 op. cit., 15 December 1917, p. 2.

56 op. cit., 14 August 1920, p. 3.

57 *ibid.*

58 op. cit., 17 June 1922, p. 4.

59 *ibid.*

the Council under other names. 'The report advised two aldermen, in their own interests, to resign from the council.'⁶⁰

The extent of the financial turmoil of the Hillgrove Municipal Council was revealed by an examination of Council papers undertaken by R.S. Neale and associates, whose study discovered that Hillgrove in 1922:

was indebted to the extent of £3,905/2/11 on its capital account and for £1,347/6/3 interest- a total debt for the water supply system of £5,252/9/2. In the same year the council spent £640/14/10 on current account (an over-spending of £15/18/8), £180 of this was spent on the sanitary service and £283 on the water supply, including £115 as interest on the outstanding debt.⁶¹

Early in 1923,

the Under-Secretary of the Department of Local Government requested the Council to reconsider the question of the amalgamation of the Municipality with the Dumaresq Shire. Previously, the Council had objected owing to the debt on the Hillgrove Water Supply. Since that time, however, an Act of Parliament had been passed, completely wiping that debt off.⁶²

H. Lonsdale, the clerk of the Dumaresq Shire, subsequently wrote to the Mayor of Hillgrove to seek his views on the proposed amalgamation. From the correspondence in the **Armidale Chronicle**, it was obvious that there was some ill feeling in Hillgrove. Hillgrove Aldermen W. Flood and James Skinner arranged a public meeting on Saturday 10 February 1923 in the Hillgrove School of Arts Hall to discuss the amalgamation issue. Councillor Moffatt, President of Dumaresq Shire Council, was appointed to the chair and he informed people attending that he had come to the meeting to gain information. He commented 'the water works was a difficulty, and the shire would not touch it while there was a debt upon it'.⁶³

Alderman W. Morgan of Hillgrove was bitterly attacked by Aldermen Skinner and Flood about the provision of water. As a result of the bitterness, Councillor Browning of Dumaresq Shire proposed a successful motion that the

⁶⁰ op. cit., 26 July 1922, p. 7.

⁶¹ Neale, R.S., Ramsay, G., Fisher, S. and Henning, G.R. 'Life and Death in Hillgrove 1870 to 1914', **U.N.E. News**, June 1981, p. 8.

⁶² **Armidale Chronicle**, 6 January 1923, p. 3

⁶³ op. cit., 14 February 1923, p. 3.

Shire 'oppose the amalgamation'.⁶⁴ Regardless of these problems, it was inevitable that the amalgamation would take place. Thus at the meeting of the Hillgrove council held on Friday 10 August 1923, 'it was decided at the request of the Local Government to appoint the Mayor to meet the Dumaresq Shire of that body absorbing the Council into the Shire'.⁶⁵

The Hillgrove Municipal Council's final meeting on 29 November 1923 was chaired by Mayor Robert Sharp. 'The principal business was to receive a communication from the Local Government Department and the merging of the council into the Dumaresq Shire'.⁶⁶ In his final report, Alderman Sharp outlined 'a very satisfactory financial position of the council which had met all its obligations and was handing over a credit balance to the Shire'.⁶⁷

The merger of the Municipality of Hillgrove into the Dumaresq Shire took place from 1 January 1924 and the Shire acquired all rights, assets, responsibilities and liabilities of the former Council. The newspaper correspondent lamented, 'it is very sad to see what was once a prosperous mining centre so devoid of population that it is even debarred the status of a municipality'.⁶⁸

64 op. cit., 3 March 1923, p. 2.

65 op. cit., 11 August 1923, p. 4.

66 op. cit., 5 January 1924, p. 4.

67 *ibid.*

68 op. cit., 2 January 1924, p. 8.

CHAPTER 3

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT AND POPULATION.

In October 1887 the Hillgrove correspondent in the **Armidale Express** described the town as a 'canvas town' and wrote 'we have a store and baker's shop, and a boarding house...'¹ Four months later, the town's rapid growth caused the correspondent to report in February 1888, 'six months ago there was only one mine at the Falls, but now we have three stores, two butcher's shops, crushing machines and a street half a mile long'.² At the end of the following month, a correspondent who described himself as a practical miner, portrayed Hillgrove in the following manner.

The township of Hillgrove has improved considerably during the past three months... Mr. Frank Wade has erected a commodious hotel... Mr. Keys has erected a commodious hall... There is also the Post Office, kept by the jovial Mr Fant, two general stores, two butcher shops, hair dressing saloon etc. In conclusion I have no hesitation in predicting a brilliant future for the mining and business men interested in the district of Hillgrove.³

The correspondent in the **Armidale Express** claimed in October 1888, that the success of the **Baker's Creek Mine** at Hillgrove was largely to be thanked for the real estate improvements in Armidale. Improvements which meant 'a number of houses and cottages in Armidale have changed hands lately, at satisfactory prices, and we are pleased to hear that there is a better competition for town allotments'.⁴ This was to be repeated as mining investors such as George Smith, William Miller and Barnett Aaron Moses invested in businesses in Armidale.

The establishment of a City Bank branch at Hillgrove in premises purchased from William Bentham Neales, mining agent of Adelaide in May 1888, was a critical element in the economic development of Hillgrove. The site of the bank was allotment 2 of section 1 in Brackin Street. Thomas

¹ **Armidale Express**, 14 October 1887, p. 3.

² op. cit., 10 February 1888, p. 3. The main street became identified as Brackin Street on Lands Office maps once the town was surveyed by Henry Hogarth in September 1889. Prior to this date, the name was often spelt as Bracken in newspaper articles.

³ **Armidale Express**, 30 March 1888, p. 4.

⁴ op. cit., 26 October 1888, p. 4.

Rafferty, son of the Hillgrove policeman, acted as manager of the Bank until November 1888 when George Herbert Westcott arrived in Hillgrove to take control. A highly respected businessman, Westcott took an active role in the Progress Committee as well as the hospital. As the **Illustrated Sydney News** reported, 'to Mr Westcott's efforts may be traced the establishment of a cottage hospital'.⁵ Banking facilities were vital to the mines, the businesses and to the public in general since the nearest banking facilities were at Armidale. The **Armidale Express** correspondent felt that 'the establishment of a bank at Hillgrove Mines is a good sign that the field is progressing, and should afford another argument in favour of the immediate establishment of telegraphic communications...'⁶ Hillgrove lost a valued community person when Mr Westcott and his family were transferred in July 1892.

On Thursday 27 December 1894, tragedy struck the City Bank of Sydney when the premises were destroyed in the fire which also destroyed the adjoining Centennial Hall. The bank was eager to replace the building quickly and in March 1895 J. Rutledge Louat, architect of Armidale called tenders for 'additions and... alterations to (the) Banking Premises'.⁷

A new branch of the Australian Joint Stock Bank was opened at Hillgrove in May and Mr J.A. Martin, 'formerly the accountant at the A.J.S. Bank in Armidale,'⁸ became the manager. The reporters of the **Hillgrove Guardian** inspected the plans for the new building in course of construction in Brackin Street and commented:

The Bank room is 22 by 16 well fitted up, and immediately behind it is the Manager's room 12 by 9.5... The remainder of the building consists of 5 large rooms intended for the use of the Manager and his family. In the North side of the house there will be a splendid verandah. Messrs. Harper Bros are the contractors. Their local Manager Mr Moffatt, informs us that the building will be completed in about 3 weeks. The plans are designed by Mr Orr, Clerk of Works of Armidale.⁹

⁵ **Illustrated Sydney News**, 26 November 1889, p. 19.

⁶ **Armidale Express**, 4 May 1888, p. 4.

⁷ op. cit., 12 March 1895, p. 8.

⁸ op. cit., 14 May 1889, p. 4.

⁹ **Hillgrove Guardian and New England Mining Gazette**, 1 June 1889, p. 2.

The depression of the 1890's lead to the closing of the A.J.S. Bank branches throughout the state and once the Hillgrove branch closed, the City Bank took over the building and carried out additions. The correspondent at Hillgrove wrote, 'when the additions are completed, the building will be a fairly large one for a country town'.¹⁰

The development of mining was greatly strengthened when a public meeting at the Centennial Hall in March 1889 decided to form a Mining Exchange. Mr Neales occupied the chair and a committee was appointed to draw up the rules.¹¹ A follow-up meeting was held in April by those people interested in the exchange and the decision was made to call it the Baker's Creek Stock Exchange.¹² The first meeting of the Stock Exchange was held at 10 o'clock on Monday 29 April in the Centennial Hall and other meetings were held daily at that time. The establishment of the exchange led to a move amongst Armidale businessmen to also establish one in Armidale.

At the same time, Hillgrove ventured to establish a local newspaper prompting the correspondent in the **Armidale Express**, to surmise that the paper would be called 'the BAKERS CREEK MINING JOURNAL'.¹³ However this plan was not without conflict as Frank Townshend of Newcastle issued the following statement on 27 May 1889:

Sirs- Many of your Hillgrove readers having promised to support the HILLGROVE GAZETTE will doubtless wonder what has become of the projected weekly paper. My motto 'The Public Interest' was nipped in the bud by another contestant, who promised a bi-weekly newspaper... as the picking was not worth fighting over, I consider it expedient to retire, and thus leave my better-favoured opponent an open field.¹⁴

Saturday 1 June 1889 heralded the first edition of the **Hillgrove Guardian and New England Mining Gazette**. Formerly the **Vegetable Creek Times** at Emmaville, 'the whole of the Times plant was brought as a going concern by Mr E.K. Brown of Bathurst, and transferred to Hillgrove'.¹⁵

¹⁰ **Armidale Express**, 10 May 1895, p. 5.

¹¹ op. cit., 19 March 1889, p. 4.

¹² op. cit., 23 April 1889 p. 2.

¹³ op. cit., 28 May 1889, p. 8.

¹⁴ op. cit., 31 May 1889, p. 4.

¹⁵ op. cit., 17 November 1954, p. 10.

The issue of the paper clearly signified the economic development and progress of the town.

Builders and builder suppliers were firmly established. William Godfrey was established as a brickmaker and timber was supplied by John Faint's 'New Saw Mills'. The Hillgrove Timber Yard, Harper Bros 'Steam Saw Mills' was managed by R. Moffatt. William Morris offered his services as a Builder, Contractor and Cabinet Maker. W.D. McNamara conducted a Plumber, Galvanised Ironworker and Tinsmith business. Similarly John Hamer had established an Engineer and General Blacksmith business opposite the Australian Joint Stock Bank in Bracken Street and another blacksmith, Ernest Hughes also carried on his business in Bracken Street.

General stores offered a variety of goods. S. Matthew, a general storekeeper alongside the City Bank, advertised 'Drapery, Clothing, Boots and Shoes, Fancy Goods, Stationery, Crockery and Glassware'. Similarly, George Quinnell advertised himself as a 'Universal Provider' with Drapery and Mining Requisites. Kum War also described as a 'General Storekeeper', opened a branch of Tin War and Company, merchants of Sydney. Stephenson Moore advertised himself in the same way. D.G. Watson was not only a blacksmith and wheelwright but also conducted a 'Produce and General Store' in Bracken Street. The diversity of services offered by general stores was clearly demonstrated by the opening of 'The Beehive Stores' by E.J. Swyny, formerly of Vegetable Creek, in the central part of the town.

The building is 50ft long, and 24ft wide, and is well fitted up inside with shelves and counters... on the one side they can satisfy their wants in the grocery, ironmongery, and stationery line, or turn to the other, and find quantities of drapery, and lots of boots to select from. There will be a verandah 24 by 8ft put up in front of the building, the verandah will be lit up at night with three large lamps, but the lamp of lamps will be inside, it possesses the lighting power of 300 candles...¹⁶

Other early businesses were more specific in their work. Allan Mackay established the Hillgrove Butchery in Bracken street and W.A. Williams conducted the 'Baker's Creek Butchering Establishment' near Fant's **Post Office Hotel**. The optimism of the mining development was reflected

¹⁶ Hillgrove Guardian and New England Mining Gazette, 12 June 1899, p. 2.

in the title of the shop, 'The Golden Age Bakery' conducted by H. Bewley in Bracken Street. George Nix served as a 'Bookseller, Stationer and News Agent'. James Williams conducted the 'Hillgrove Produce Store' and similarly the Brown Brothers conducted a 'Produce Store' and 'Livery Stables' behind the **Hillgrove Guardian's** office. A saddler, Hugh McCandless, was situated in Bracken street. Joseph Kirchener was a 'Watch and Clock Maker' while Robert Ross was a 'Signwriter and Decorator'. Near the Post Office, Arthur Johnson was established as a 'Hairdresser and Tobacconist' and Thomas McKay, a barber and hairdresser advertised his business as the 'Sydney Shaving Saloon'.

The demands for clothing were satisfied by W.R. Matthews who sold 'Boots and Shoes' in Bracken street; A. Flanders, a 'Merchant Tailor and Outfitter' opposite E.J. Swyny's store and E.L. Phillips a 'Practical Tailor', who was next to the **Hillgrove Guardian's** office. A member of an Armidale business family, W.J. Hunt, opened a 'Branch Tailoring Establishment' in Hillgrove by 1889. John A. Hunt, who had arrived in Armidale by the end of 1856, later established the London Store in Armidale and advertised himself as a 'Tailor, Draper and General Outfitter'.

Medical needs were met by a chemist, E. Purchase, situated in the Medical Hall in Bracken street and two doctors; Dr Critchett Gorrick, situated in his Bracken street residence and Dr James McNish. Culinary needs were satisfied by Judge and Judge in their 'Refreshment Rooms' alongside the **Hillgrove Guardian's** office as well as Duffs who conducted a 'Restaurant and Coffee Palace'.

Accommodation requirements were met by John J. Handebo in the 'Hillgrove Boarding House' situated in Bracken Street. Similarly, proprietor H. Corpse offered a boarding house 'next to Fant's Hotel, near the Eleanora Mine'. A number of hotels met drinking and accommodation needs: John Crough of the **Hillgrove Hotel**; P.J. Fant of the **Post Office Hotel**; Frank B. Wade of **The Miners' Arms Hotel** and W.L. Smith planned to open a **Temperance Hotel**. Edward McCrohon, with the establishment of a 'Private Billiard Room' near Fant's Hotel offered recreation to residents and visitors.

The development of banking, mining and the formation of a mining exchange created a demand for professional services. Mr G. Vernon Collins

'Solicitor, Proctor and Attorney' opened a temporary office alongside the A.J.S. Bank in Bracken Street and a Mr Nicholson also advertised his services as a solicitor. Three professional business-houses were quick to establish their services: Evans and Bromfield (Mining and General Commission Agents); L.Bonner and Co (Sharebrokers); Rakow and Fischer (Mining Agents and Sharebrokers).

J.J. Wilkinson had established the Hillgrove Aerated Water and Cordial Manufactory by June 1889 on allotment 6 of section 11 in Bracken Street. The **Hillgrove Guardian** stated 'Mr Wilkinson's aerating machine is one of the latest improved by Haywerd Tyler and Co., he has also a patent bottler...'¹⁷ Later he became 'proprietor of the Westralia Hotel, Kamballie'¹⁸ in Western Australia and the business was purchased by Mr Sims, who in turn sold it to the successful business-man James Maddocks in 1899. Maddocks was initially a hairdresser and tobacconist in Hillgrove and this business was taken over by Val. Irwin. Following his death, at the age of 40 years in July 1902, his wife continued the cordial business for a short period of time. W.H. Logan purchased the business in October 1904 and altered the name to the Hillgrove Aerated Water Cordial Factory. In December 1917, the **Armidale Chronicle** announced to 'the Public of Hillgrove, Wollomombi, Metz, Rockvale and District in general'¹⁹ that A.W. Brindell of Brackin Street, Hillgrove had purchased the business from W.H. Logan. Logan subsequently moved to Armidale to continue his cordial factory enterprise.

By September 1889, the special correspondent at Hillgrove outlined the improvements in Hillgrove.

Building operations are being carried on briskly each day seeing new buildings started. Some idea of the state of the building trade may be gathered from the fact that the last fortnightly pay sheet of one of our firms, Messrs. Harper Bros., amounted to considerably over £300.²⁰

The continued development of the town was reflected in the announcement that Collins and O'Connell,

¹⁷ op. cit., 1 June 1889, p. 2.

¹⁸ op. cit., 22 December 1900, p. 2.

¹⁹ **Armidale Chronicle**, 8 December 1917, p. 2.

²⁰ **Armidale Express**, 17 September 1889, p. 4.

have just taken possession of their new premises in Brackenstreet, and purpose opening this week in drapery, general clothing and upholstering departments. Mr. J. Crough has almost completed the really handsome alteration to the front of his hotel, and our street will vie with the greater number of older towns in the colony yet.²¹

A second newspaper was established in Hillgrove and the announcement of the new publication, the **New England Democrat**, was made in the **Armidale Express** edition of 31 July 1894. Additional details were provided two weeks later; 'the promoters of the new weekly have received their first consignment of goods, etc., and intend to have their first issue out, if possible, by next Saturday week.'²² By 4 September, the paper had made its second appearance and the **Armidale Express** noted 'a literary battle is taking place between it and the Hillgrove **GUARDIAN**...'²³ The **New England Democrat** reconstructed under new management in January 1895 but the battle was obviously won by the more established paper because no reference was made to the **Democrat** in the located editions of the **Hillgrove Guardian** after 3 July 1897.

The population of over 2,000 people in September 1894 required an 'immense quantity of goods coming into the town'.²⁴ This trade was stimulated by a fortnightly wage of 'about £3000'²⁵ for the different mines. Thus businesses were drawn to the town and a number of Armidale business houses established branches in Hillgrove. In December 1896, Mallam and Co., chemists, booksellers and stationers opened a branch under the management of Charles Mallam. In August 1897, Mr L.H. Mathias, watchmaker and jeweller of Armidale, established a branch alongside Mr Curtis' clothing store. Uncertain of the future of the town, he left but returned in June 1898 to recommence business in 'premises adjoining P.J. McGrath's'.²⁶ Eighteen months later, he decided to leave Hillgrove in January 1900.

²¹ op. cit., 11 May 1894, p. 4.

²² op. cit., 10 August 1894, p. 4.

²³ op. cit., 4 September 1894, p. 5.

²⁴ **Armidale Chronicle**, 15 September 1894, p. 7.

²⁵ *ibid.*

²⁶ **Hillgrove Guardian and New England Gazette**, 11 June 1898, p. 2.

Meanwhile, a major Armidale business J. Richardson and Company, established a branch store on allotment 2 of section 20, but in September 1897 took action to close the business there. The company organised a public auction to sell 'the whole of the balance of their stock in connection with the branch store they are now closing at Hillgrove'.²⁷ Despite their departure, the company maintained their business interest in the town because the **Armidale Chronicle** announced in July 1904, the 'store of Messrs Highfield and Co. was totally demolished (by fire) the premises, which were owned by Messrs J. Richardson and Co... were insured'.²⁸ The company continued to maintain its interest in Hillgrove until it sold the property to Philip James Snape of Armidale in September 1913.

The Armidale Curtis family opened stores in Armidale, Hillgrove, Uralla and Guyra. William Curtis doubled his premises for the Christmas trade of 1898 and his brother, Albert 'took over the Drapery Establishment so successfully carried out... for some time in Hillgrove...'²⁹ Two years later W. Curtis purchased a property near the Post Office, in Brackin Street. The reporter commented 'this gentleman's confidence in the future of Hillgrove, thus practically shown, is endorsed by our leading townspeople'.³⁰

The year 1898 represented significant business confidence in Hillgrove. The Ray Brothers,

successors to the old established firm of H. Magill and Co in Hillgrove, have completed their additions and improvements to their business premises... The main store has been fitted afresh and will be stocked with new goods, this being the result of the encouraging support the firm has already met within Hillgrove...³¹

The Christmas Eve 1898 edition of the **Hillgrove Guardian** reflected the business confidence in Hillgrove. Mr J.W. Frost was 'making some great improvements to his shop' to go up alongside the £1000 post office. Messrs Yat War and Co enlarged their store and now presented 'quite a roomy and well fitted appearance'.³² Similarly, Mr W. Morgan of the Red

²⁷ op. cit., 11 September 1897, p. 2.

²⁸ **Armidale Chronicle**, 23 July 1904, p. 4.

²⁹ **Hillgrove Guardian and New England Gazette**, 10 June 1899, p. 2.

³⁰ op. cit., 7 December 1901, p. 2.

³¹ op. cit., 21 May 1898, p. 2.

³² op. cit., 24 December 1898, p. 3.

Flag store had 'completed the alterations to his store' and intended 'to have a full share of the business that is going'³³. Hotelier, Sam Williams not only spent over £600 in improving his hotel but then commenced the erection of two shops by contractor Robert Morrow alongside the hotel.

The early part of the twentieth century did not offer confidence to the business community because of the downturn in mining and the resultant unemployment. Accordingly, a number of the businessmen decided to move their businesses to Armidale. Coleman Savage, described as the 'Tailor of the North', had established a fine drapery shop in Brackin Street but decided to move in October 1900. He frequently travelled to Sydney to purchase new materials and widened his business interests by obtaining gate rights at sporting functions. He became involved in a number of community organisations including the Progress Committee, the Hospital, the Court White Star and was an Alderman in the first Municipal Council.

By the departure of Mr Coleman Savage, Hillgrove is losing a good townsman. Not quite lost, however, nor yet gone before, we hope; but he was afraid of going behind whilst the improvement that is expected tarries. Mr Savage goes to Armidale to start business, but will pay regular visits to Hillgrove.³⁴

In February 1901, the reporter in the *Hillgrove Guardian* was hopeful that 'the erection of the new brick Post Office' and 'the additions to the Principal Teacher's residence at the local Public School'³⁵ displayed the government's confidence in the future of Hillgrove. By February of the following year, there was an obvious upturn in Hillgrove business and the newspaper reported 'sales seem to be the order of the day in town. Nearly all the stores are in full swing'.³⁶ Optimism diminished as unemployment constantly faced many miners in the town. The following newspaper report depicts the plight of these miners only one month after the business boom:

The present outlook for Hillgrove is anything but bright, and in consequence of the slump in mining, many families are in straitened circumstances. On Monday a further calamity occurred, when a number of the Eleanora hands were paid off,

33 *ibid.*

34 *op. cit.*, 6 October 1900, p. 2.

35 *op. cit.*, 23 February 1901, p. 2.

36 *op. cit.*, 22 February 1902, p. 2.

but this we believe is only temporarily. True, a number of married men have been put on roadwork...³⁷

Only one week later, it was revealed 'at the present time, Hillgrove from a business point of view is almost dead... the outlook is serious'.³⁸ A number of businessmen and professionals coped with these events by moving to Armidale and in April 1902, the town lost a further leading businessman. The correspondent commented,

That Hillgrove is in a bad state just now, goes without saying. On Monday morning Mr. J.J. Escott, our leading fruiter, took his departure for the Cathedral City (Armidale), in which town he has purchased a baking business, and also intends to open a splendid fruit arcade...³⁹

Until August 1902, Charles J. Mallam managed a chemist shop in Brackin Street, Hillgrove as part of Mallam and Co. which also conducted a shop in Beardy Street, Armidale. A member of the Hospital Committee, he resigned from that organisation when he left Hillgrove.

In the early 1900's, Armidale professionals such as dentists Mr W.R. Groth and Mr J.M. Wilson travelled regularly to Hillgrove to provide dental services in Dr Hardcastle's premises. In December 1905, dentist Mr W.J. Miller, opened a surgery in premises opposite the Post Office and also provided this surgery for the use of Armidale dentist J. Wilson. Similarly, Messrs Himmeloch Bros., jewellers of Armidale conducted business visits to Hillgrove in 1905.

In July 1902, the **Hillgrove Guardian** newspaper changed hands and the new proprietors, Godfrey Wigg and John Dignam, expressed renewed optimism for the journal. In their editorial, they wrote we,

recognise the strength of the district, although depressed by the unprecedented drought still unfortunately prevailing in our midst, and the importance of the town of Hillgrove, and it will be... (our) constant endeavour to forward the interests of the town and district by all legitimate means.⁴⁰

37 op. cit., 8 March 1902, p. 4.

38 op. cit., 15 March 1902, p. 2.

39 op. cit., 19 April 1902, p. 2.

40 op. cit., 19 July 1902, p. 2.

The newspaper carried frequent reports from other mining areas, particularly in Western Australia. Obviously miners were prepared to leave the established mines of Hillgrove in search of employment but warnings were often given of conditions elsewhere. In November 1902, a former resident of Hillgrove, Mr D. Tracey wrote to the residents of Hillgrove:

to advise intending emigrants to Western Australia to pause awhile before leaving Hillgrove for the Golden West. Hundreds of miners are out of employment all over that State, but those from here who do get work and are steady get as high as 15s per shift for machine drill work, 13s 8d for hammer and drill work, others, not skilled workers, get from 11s 4d per shift downwards.⁴¹

Two years later it was reported, 'house property is rapidly rising in value in the town. Businessmen from other centres are looking about for suitable premises'.⁴² In July 1904, Frank Scarf announced his purchase of an assigned estate and his intention to 'open a general store next week in premises in Brackin-street next to William's Hotel'.⁴³ While some businesses were commencing others were failing. On Monday 5 September 1904, a meeting was held in the Hillgrove Co-operative Butchering Company premises to consider the voluntary winding up of the company.⁴⁴

Two years later, further improvements in Hillgrove were evident due to mining finds and higher prices for minerals and,

tradespeople declare that at no period within the last 10 years has money been as plentiful as now... within the last twelve months many business premises were idle, but except for two small shops, which, are now under lease awaiting tenants possession there are no business places available.⁴⁵

In April 1907 and the correspondent again detailed development in the town.

Several new buildings are in course of erection in the town, including private and business places... Mr. W. Morgan, is having a two-storey store built by Contractor Stewart, and Mr.

41 **Armidale Chronicle**, 19 November 1902, p. 5.

42 **Armidale Express**, 14 October 1904, p. 4.

43 **Hillgrove Guardian and New England Gazette**, 9 July 1904, p. 2.

44 *op. cit.*, 3 September 1904, p. 3.

45 **Armidale Argus**, 28 April 1906, p. 1.

W. Willmott is also putting up a new store, Mr. M. Hern (Armidale) being the contractor... The Commercial Hotel has been thoroughly renovated and painted.⁴⁶

The last located edition of the **Hillgrove Guardian**, Saturday 23 May 1908 illustrates the business extent of the town. A number of butcher's shops had survived. W.L. Smith conducted 'The People's Butcher in Bracken Street'; A.W. Brindell was the proprietor of the 'Wholesale and Retail Butchery'; Smythe Brothers of Brereton Street, managed the 'Central Butchering Establishment'; Dick James had effected a lease of the 'Baker's Creek Butchering Establishment' from Alex McGillvray.

M. Robert's was a 'Fruiterer and Confectioner' who advertised 'Choice Fruit Always on Hand'; D. Frew conducted the 'Children's Shop- Best and Cheapest Shop, Fruiterer, Confectioner, Tobacconist, Soft Drinks, Postage Stamps, Up-to-date Stationery'.

Bakers included M. Champion, 'Grocer and Baker' of Brackin Street who advertised 'Best bread 3 1/2d. per Loaf and Cart Runs to Metz daily'; A.H. Helyar conducted the 'Model Bakery'; William M. Smart the 'Caledonian Bakery' Brackin Street, and M.W. Witherdin 'Baker and Confectioner' announced that he had purchased the bakery business from Mr W.L. Smith.

Clothing needs were met by a number of businesses. C. James operated 'The People's Tailor', Brackin Street, next door to Lowe Bros. who in turn advertised 'New Winter Goods Arrived Direct From Factory' and also acted as an agent for Angus and Coote of Sydney; W. Bulmer Phillips and Co. 'The People's Store, Hillgrove, Best Clothing and Boot Store'; J. T. McNamara 'Cash Draper and Bootman' offered 'Winter Goods Now Open in all Departments, at Special Low Prices'. W. Morgan and Co. announced 'New Goods from Glasgow; F. G. Scarf's 'Bargain Emporium' was conducting a 'Great Clearance (sic) SALE' while A.T. Curtis conducted a sale in 'Boots or Shoes, Clothing, Hats or Mercery, etc. etc.

A traveller from Himmeloch Bros. 'Working Watchmakers, Jewellers, Precious Stone Cutters' of the Imperial Buildings, Beardy Street,

⁴⁶ **Armidale Chronicle**, 24 April 1907, p. 5.

Armidale visited Hillgrove monthly while H. Hogarth, Solicitor and Land Agent of Armidale, was prepared to visit Hillgrove by appointment.

Pharmaceutical services were offered by 'Cameron's New Hillgrove Pharmacy' which also accommodated A.J. Hardwicke, surgeon dentist. H.E.R. Pascoe 'The Great Exponent of Painless American Dentistry' of Hoffnung's Chambers, Sydney announced his visit to Hillgrove for consultation at the Commercial Hotel from 22 to 28 May.

Page Bros. advertised 'Smoko!... the Leading Brands at Bedrock Prices' at a 'Tobacconists, Hairdressers and Billiards' at Hillgrove and Armidale.

L.E. Dawson operated as a 'General Blacksmith and Wheelwright having purchased the BLACKSMITH BUSINESS lately conducted by A.L. Schlenert'. R. Sharp 'Engineer, General Blacksmith and Wheelwright' also acted as an 'Agent for Bennett and Barkell's "B. & B." Bicycles and Bicycle Parts'. W.A. Kidd, cycle builder, 'wanted 500 miners to buy my bicycles' while Robert W. Morrow of Brackin Street, was the undertaker.

In July 1908 the proprietors of the **Hillgrove Guardian**, Wigg and Dignam, sold their business to a Mr Luhrz of Forbes but the closure and sale of the **Hillgrove Guardian** in February 1909, signalled the end of a business era in Hillgrove. The **Armidale Chronicle** reported that 'the whole of the plant was loaded up this morning, en route for Armidale, for the purpose of being despatched by train to distant places'.⁴⁷ Two months later, a newspaper referred to the 'depressed condition of the town...'⁴⁸ and in July 1909, an announcement was made concerning the closure of the Hillgrove Technical College.

A number of businessmen decided to move from the town and in September 1910 it was regretted.

Hillgrove is to lose one of its most popular townsmen, Mr A.T. Curtis; who has decided to throw in his lot with the Guyra folk. Mr Curtis intends opening up a mercery business.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ op. cit., 3 February 1909, p. 4.

⁴⁸ op. cit., 14 April 1909, p. 3.

⁴⁹ op. cit., 24 September 1910, p. 6.

In April 1905 Thomas Haren 'disposed of' his 'bakery and confectionery business'⁵⁰ which he had established some eleven years earlier. Following a period overseas, he returned to Hillgrove to re-establish his bakery business but in September 1912 gave notice of his 'intention to apply... at Armidale, for a conditional publican's license for premises situated at the corner of Beardy and Marsh-streets, (Armidale) to be known as "The Great Northern Hotel".⁵¹ In June 1913 the highly successful businessman Haren, an Alderman on the Council and his family, were entertained at the **Sydney Hotel** by 'the R.C. Church... prior to their departure to take up their residence in Armidale.'⁵² Harry Witherdin who conducted a bakery alongside the Prisk Brothers' butchery, purchased Haren's bakery. Mr Haren had already invested in Armidale by purchasing a block at the corner of Beardy and Marsh Streets 'at a highly satisfactory price'⁵³ in January 1906. Later that year Armidale architect, W.H. Lee called tenders for the erection of a 'two-storey building'⁵⁴ on that block on behalf of Haren. W.M. Smart, who had conducted a bakery business in the town for eleven years 'purchased the bakery business of Mr. Alex Sutherland, of Armidale'⁵⁵ and left Hillgrove in April 1913 leaving his son to conduct the Hillgrove business.

The Sand's Directory of 1914⁵⁶ listed the following businesses, thus giving an account of the extent of services still offered to the town and its surrounding district:

Auctioneer	Robert Morrow.
Auctioneer and News-agent	Morgan Stephens.
Baker	H. Witherdin, T. Haren, R. Smart.
Blacksmith	R. Dawson.
Builder	Robert Morrow.
Butcher	A.W. Brindell, Dick James (Baker's Creek) and R. James, W. Prisk, Smythe Bros.
Chemist	A.J. Hardwicke.
Coach Proprietor	Patrick Ryan.
Cordial Manufacturer	W.H. Logan.

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- 50 Hillgrove Guardian and New England Gazette, 1 April 1905, p. 2.
 51 Armidale Express, 13 September 1912, p. 4.
 52 Armidale Chronicle, 28 June 1913, p. 3.
 53 Armidale Express, 9 January 1906, p. 5.
 54 op. cit., 31 August 1906, p. 5.
 55 op. cit., 22 April 1913, p. 8.
 56 Sands, J., Sydney Suburban and Country Commercial Directory, Sydney, 1914.

Cycle Agent	W. Davison.
Dentist	H. Done.
Draper	Mrs Spicer.
Draper and Clothier	A.T. Curtis.
Engineer	R. Sharp.
Fruiterer	W. Boundy, Mrs Shaw, Miss E. Watson.
Furniture Shop	Alex. Murray (Sen.)
General Store	John Baker, Mrs Cooper, Lowe Bros, W. Morgan and Co., Frank Scarfe, Yen Show.
Grocer and Baker	Mary Champion.
Hairdresser	S. Arndell, J. Petherick.
Oyster Saloon	Comino and Panaretto.

The war years from 1914 to 1918 marked the demise of many of the Hillgrove businesses. Apart from the loss of men to war service, mining was greatly affected by the war. Many of the Hillgrove mining companies had been coping with high costs of fuel and transport, electrical supplies which often failed and fluctuating mineral returns in the years leading up to the advent of the war. The business interests of the town were never to recover from World War One.

The correspondent in the **Armidale Express** described Hillgrove shortly after the start of the war.

The depressed condition of Hillgrove of late years has been greatly accentuated since the commencement of the war... Generally speaking... there is practically no work going on in the mines at all. The population of the mining centre is now about 1100, where in the balmy days of the field it exceeded as much as 3600. ⁵⁷

As businesses were closed and miners left the town, it was reported 'quite a number of buildings have been removed from the town of late'.⁵⁸ The extent of demolition was revealed by the Hillgrove Anglican Minister, the Reverend Auchinleck-Ross in June 1916 when he wrote an article entitled: 'The Glory that was Hillgroves'.

We have very little of importance to report. Our township is becoming smaller and smaller; the main street is becoming like the side streets. And the only real backbone of the place is antimony and scheelite, both of which, owing to the war

⁵⁷ **Armidale Express**, 18 September 1914, p. 10.

⁵⁸ **Armidale Chronicle**, 6 May 1916, p. 10.

demands, have risen in value... but these take some looking for...⁵⁹

Despite the obvious decline of Hillgrove, this did not prevent a major war contribution. The community's major contribution to the war effort was praised during a private visit by the Governor-General of New South Wales, Sir Ronald Munro-Ferguson, on Tuesday 8 August 1916. He visited the **Baker's Creek Mine** tram shed, rode the tramway down the gorge and visited the **Eleanora Mine** battery to witness a crushing. At the **Commercial Hotel**,

He also made reference to the Honor List, which hung on the wall of the hotel, and contained about 86 names. He seemed surprised that such a number could be accounted for in such a place... His excellency also made reference to the splendid work which was being conducted by the ladies in supplying comforts to the troops...⁶⁰

The mining of scheelite and other tungsten ores for the war effort offered some hope to the miners but the price obtained for the ores presented real problems. During the war, the Federal Government acted to prevent the export of ores and also determined the price. Miners felt that action was required and those interested in the scheelite mining industry attended a meeting in the Forester's Hall on Sunday 3 September 1916 when they sent the following telegram to Prime Minister Hughes:

The absolute disparity in prices pertaining within the Empire for Tungsten ores has resulted in a largely attended meeting of scheelite miners... when it was resolved that in the event of the authorities continuing to regulate the price... the Commonwealth Ministry be respectfully asked to increase same, particularly in view of the abnormally higher Imperial prices ruling in Canada, and which is even higher in neutral markets.⁶¹

The Sand's Directory⁶² of 1917 listed the following surviving businesses:

59 **Armidale Express**, 13 June 1916, p. 4.

60 **Armidale Chronicle**, 12 August 1916, p. 3.

61 op. cit., 9 September 1916, p. 10.

62 Sands, J., **Sydney Suburban and Country Commercial Directory**, Sydney, 1917.

Baker	H. Witherdin.
Builder	Robert Morrow.
Butcher	A.W. Brindell, R. James (Baker's Creek), Prisk Bros.
Chemist	A.J. Hardwicke.
Cordial Manufacturer	W.H. Logan.
Cycle Agent	W. Davidson, William Kidd.
Draper	Mrs Spicer.
Engineer	R. Sharp.
Fruiterer	Mrs Shaw.
Furniture Shop	Alex. Murray (Sen.)
General Store	Lowe Bros., W. Morgan and Co., Frank Scarf, Yin Show.
Grocer and Baker	Mary Champion.
Hairdresser	J. Petherick.
Motor Garage	Ryan Bros.
Oyster Saloon	Comino and Panaretto.
Picture Show Proprietors	Prisk and James.
Printer, Book-seller and News-agent	Morgan Stephens.

This year was a significant one for Hillgrove. The Cottage Hospital closed its doors; the symbol of the mining community, the **Eleanora Mine** was closed, its equipment sold off and the Styx river hydro-electric scheme was also terminated. The sale of buildings for demolition to Armidale interests offered one solution to Hillgrove business people faced with further decline. In November 1917, it was announced that 'the shops of Mr A. Murray are now being pulled down, which will make a very big gap in the main street'.⁶³

Demolition of the buildings both private and business continued. Hotels closed their doors, two rooms from the Public School were removed to Armidale and the buildings of the Convent and its school were closed and sold off. In January 1921, Scarf Bros. advertised for the removal of buildings including 'Store and Bulk Store... Large Hall; 6 roomed cottage other bargains'.⁶⁴ The hopeless decline of the town was abundantly clear at a meeting held by the Municipal Council in August 1921. 'The Health Department forwarded a report and referred to the number of dilapidated buildings requiring urgent attention under the Public Health Act'.⁶⁵

⁶³ **Armidale Chronicle**, 24 November 1917, p. 10.

⁶⁴ op. cit., 5 January 1921, p. 5.

⁶⁵ op. cit., 27 August 1921, p. 3.

Attention was drawn to building defects, the amount of garbage in the town and the uncleanness of businesses particularly butcher's shop. Aware of the financial state of the Hillgrove residents, the Alderman felt that 'people could not be asked to make the suggested alterations to their buildings' but 'would carry out the recommendations reasonably within its power'.⁶⁶

Population

A measure of a town's urban growth and development can be determined by the various population counts undertaken at an official level by the government census returns of 1891, 1901 and 1911. At the beginning of each year, the police also counted the population in their areas. At other times, newspaper journalists were prepared to estimate the population. While it was clear that married couples were attracted to the mining town, the nature of mining meant that there would have been a highly mobile workforce of single miners at Hillgrove. Labour suspensions were often awarded to companies for several months at a time. This resulted in many miners having to leave their families in Hillgrove and seek alternative employment in other mining area.

The census returns of 1891,1901 and 1911 showed that the population of Hillgrove was:

Year	Male	Female	Total
1891	1,219	871	2,090
1901	1,146	1,128	2,274
1911	796	785	1,581

Following an examination of these returns and the crude birth rates of the years of highest birth rates; 1897, 1899 and 1907, R.S. Neale, G. Ramsay, G.Fisher and G.R. Henning suggest that:

When an allowance is made for omissions in census taking, variations in birth rates and errors in calculations, we may well agree with contemporary opinion that the population of Hillgrove was close to 3,000 by 1890 and probably rising to well over that figure by 1897 and 1907.⁶⁷

⁶⁶ *ibid.*

⁶⁷ Neale, R.S., Ramsay, G., Fisher G. and Henning, G.R., 'Life and Death in Hillgrove 1870-1914', *U.N.E. News*, June 1981, p. 6.

The annual returns of the Hillgrove police reported in the local newspapers, showed the following populations (including Chinese) for the town of Hillgrove and its surrounding district.⁶⁸ There is some discrepancy between the calculations and those of the above authors because of the mobility of mining workforces.

Year	Male	Female	Total
1889 (e)			about 1,400
1894 (e)			over 2,000
1897 (p)			2,626
1898 (p)			2,670
1899 (p)			3,390
1900 (p)	1,987	1,609	3,596
1902 (p)			2,611
1903 (p)	1,311	1,213	2,524
1904 (p)	1,286	1,202	2,488
1905 (p)			2,100
1914 (e)			about 1,100
1919 (e)			about 400

e estimate in the newspaper account.

p police census.

A distinctive quality of the town from its earliest days was the high percentage of females amongst its population. Males were prepared to bring their families to Hillgrove and in February 1888, a correspondent commented 'we will soon want a school down the Falls for the rising generation which is increasing'.⁶⁹ It was obviously felt that the town was to become a permanent one on the tablelands. The percentage of females also helps to explain why the town became a cultured one, and many public meetings were held to seek the provision of services by government authorities.

⁶⁸ 1889 *Armidale Express*, 19 March 1889, p. 4; 1894 *Armidale Chronicle*, 15 September 1894, p. 7; 1897 *Armidale Chronicle*, 3 February 1897, p. 2; 1898 *Hillgrove Guardian and New England Mining Gazette*, 5 February 1898, p. 4; 1899 op. cit., 11 February 1899, p. 2; 1900 op. cit., 3 February 1900, p. 4; 1902 op. cit., 1 February 1902, p. 2; 1903 op. cit., 31 January 1903, p. 2; 1904 op. cit., 30 January 1904, p. 2; 1905 op. cit., 28 January 1905, p. 2; 1914 op. cit., 18 September 1914, p. 10; 1919 *Armidale Chronicle*, 11 June 1919, p. 4.

⁶⁹ *Armidale Express*, 28 February 1888, p. 4.

An examination of the electors enrolled at the Hillgrove polling-place for the 1903 and 1917 state electoral roll indicates that in 1903 there were 863 electors and in 1917, 580 electors.

	1903	1917
Domestic Duty	46.0%	45.0%
Miners	26.5%	27.5%
Professional Occupations	4.0%	5.0%
Labourers/ Carriers	9.5%	9.0%
Storekeepers	5.5%	5.0%
Farmers/ Graziers	3.0%	3.0%
Skilled Occupations related to mining	3.0%	5.0%
Tradesmen	2.5%	0.5%

The demand for tradesmen in 1903 was a direct result of the urgent need for homes and various business houses in Hillgrove. As mining changed and new minerals were discovered at the field, skilled occupations related to mining increased. Accordingly, the electoral rolls and census returns demonstrated the decline in the population. In September 1914, there was a population of approximately 1,100 and only five years later, approximately 400. The maximum population of 3,500 at the turn of the century, was never again reached.

CHAPTER 4

WATER AND ELECTRICITY

A critical issue facing the Progress Committee and the mining companies was the question of water for Hillgrove. The batteries of the company mines required vast quantities of water and during periods of drought, the mines were temporarily closed and mine labour suspended. This meant an immediate loss of income to the miners and their families. Water was vital because of the competition between the needs of the mining companies and the townspeople. The deputation of Messrs Oliver and Lewis, representing the Progress Committee in Hillgrove, met the Minister for Mines in Sydney on Wednesday 10 April 1889 'on the subject of the water supply of Hillgrove'.¹ The Minister promised that the matter would be addressed.

It was clear that the mining companies were not prepared to carry out public works within the town. However by September 1889, it was reported that the **Cosmopolitan Mine** was developing a water scheme and that 'the water-works at the springs are being pushed ahead in a vigorous and business-like manner, and will, when completed, be one of the finest water-conserving schemes around Hillgrove'.²

There would be no easy solution to the water because Hillgrove was landlocked, with three gorges surrounding the town and the pastoral property owned by Richard Hargraves to the north. In March 1889 a deputation of townspeople met with Richard Hargraves 'with regard to allowing the townsfolk the use of some clean water on his property a short distance from the town'.³ This landowner obviously was not totally sympathetic to the needs of the town for fresh water. Later it was reported, 'owing to the state of the road leading to the present water reserve the carriers were obliged to get their supplies from Mr Hargraves, who was charging a shilling per cask'.⁴

¹ **Armidale Express**, 16 April 1889, p. 8.

² op. cit., 17 September 1889, p. 2.

³ op. cit., 26 March 1889, p. 4.

⁴ op. cit., 11 October 1889, p. 7.

The Public Works Department was authorised by the Country Towns Water-Supply and Sewerage Act of 1880 to construct waterworks in country towns after applications by local authorities. Early in November 1889, Mr H.G. McKinney, a noted authority in the colony, visited Hillgrove to report on a water supply for the town. Mr Inglis, the local member, also contacted the Minister for Mines in December 1889 urging him to take prompt action regarding a water supply for Hillgrove. Despite Mr McKinney's report and the appeal by Mr Inglis, the work had not been completed by October 1890 because the loan vote was not available for payment of compensation for land. Within two months, a tender was called by Water Conservation, Department of Mines, and advertised in the Government Gazette of 23 December 1890; 'for the construction of Earth Dam with Puddle Wall, Excavation of By-Wash Fencing etc for Domestic Water Supply of Hillgrove...'⁵ In the following May, the Department called a tender for the construction of a reservoir and the laying of service mains for the Hillgrove Water Supply.

The dam was completed by Saturday 5 December 1891 and the water reserve was located about a mile to the east of Hillgrove on the Swamp Creek. Land was resumed from the pastoralist, Richard Hargraves, and the **Eleanora Gold Mining Company**. The dam was planned to hold about two and a half million gallons over an area of sixteen acres; the work was completed by Messrs. Barrie and Spouner. A fifteen horse-power pumping plant, 'supplied and erected by Messrs Tullock and Co. of Pyrmont',⁶ directed the water to a reservoir and from here the water was 'distributed through the town by means of 4 inch service pipes... (to) seven fire plugs and five stand pipes'.⁷

According to the Hillgrove correspondent of the **Armidale Express**⁸ it was the first unincorporated town to have a water supply granted. While the final responsibility for the water supply was held by the Department of Mines and Agriculture in Sydney, a local Water Trust of Messrs Martin, Wescott, W.H. Hill, Thomas Keys, and W. Willmot was formed to organise distribution of the water.

⁵ **N.S.W. Government Gazette**, No. 6, Sydney, 1890, p. 9796.

⁶ **Armidale Express**, 11 December 1891, p. 7.

⁷ *ibid.*

⁸ *ibid.*

Angered by the resumption for the Hillgrove water supply, Richard Hargraves brought a civil case to the value of £9,798 against the Minister for Public Works. Hargraves claimed compensation based on the value of the land, the loss of a water supply for his stock and the loss of minerals on the land.⁹ As a result of a three day court case at Armidale, the jury,

returned the following verdict- £25 per acre for the 4 acres: £15 per acre for the 84 1/2 acres; £100 for severance, and no compensation for the dam, making the amount in all to £1467/10s.¹⁰

The matter of an adequate water supply for the town and the mines persisted throughout the life of the mining town. In order to overcome the problem, mine managers Messrs W.J. Hill, Robert Sharp and H.M. Porter met as a deputation with the Progress Committee on Wednesday evening, 17 August 1898 reporting that:

Mr Griffiths, Chairman of the Eleanora Company, was now in Sydney trying to get the Water Conservation Department to do something... Mr Arnott, the local officer in charge of the works, stated that the present main was insufficient to supply the town and the mines as well.¹¹

The Committee agreed with the deputation on the urgent need for a six inch main and worked on a case to present to the Department. Later the editor of the **Hillgrove Guardian** stated,

we have been agitating for a water supply for our mines, which we are told we can have for a moderate rate of interest on the cost which is estimated to be £1,500; for about £60 a year we can insure against ever being hung up for water.¹²

Authorities ignored plans for further action and it was only heavy rainfall that could save the town from desperate problems. The severity of these problems was indicated in this report following heavy rain.

Had the weather not broken... the Baker's Creek Mine could not have resumed work... 175 men would have been idle for over a fortnight, involving a dead loss of wages amounting to nearly £900 without counting what might have happened at the

⁹ **Armidale Express**, 14 October 1892, p. 5.

¹⁰ op. cit., 18 October 1892, p. 4.

¹¹ op. cit., 20 August 1898, p. 3.

¹² **Hillgrove Guardian and New England Mining Gazette**, 22 October 1898, p. 3.

Eleanora, the Sunlight, the Consols and the Proprietary. In place of this, through the opportune, the £900 wages was earned and during the interval mentioned, the Baker's Creek mine alone produced over £2,000 worth of gold imperisherable.¹³

Apart from the critical water problem, there was also the question of power for the town and mines. Immense quantities of timber were required at Hillgrove for frameworks within the mines, for steam engines and for smelting the ore. As the local supply of wood diminished, it had to be transported greater distances and the result was an increase in costs. Low quality ore, inadequate water supplies and expensive power led to a number of mines ceasing operation.

As a result, a syndicate was formed early in 1892 to take water rights in various places. Heeding legal advice, this syndicate became The Hillgrove and Armidale Water Power Electric Company, Limited. Charles Frederick Moore Michelmore applied to the Government of New South Wales 'for a Special lease of the Guyra River at a point on the (Guyra) known as "The Great Falls" for Permission to divert the water... for the purpose of generating Electric Power'.¹⁴ A major object of the company was to carry out an agreement between Michelmore (Agent of 135 King Street, Sydney) and Edward William Foxall, (Accountant of 61 Elizabeth Street, Sydney) in which Michelmore agreed to sell to

E.W. Foxall, on behalf of the Company, all his right, title and interest in and to a certain lease of the Guyra River, situated in the County of Sandon... for the purpose of obtaining machinery, sites and water power...¹⁵

The company was registered at 135 King Street, Sydney and of the 55 shareholders in the company in December 1893, only one Hillgrove miner, R. Scott, held shares- no Armidale investors held shares.¹⁶ This company planned to obtain power from machinery placed at the foot of the Great Falls on the Guyra River. Although called the Guyra River in the documents of the day, the river was the Gara River, a small tributary of the the Macleay River. George F.B. Hancock, Robert Amos, James F. Frew, John W. Keller and

¹³ op. cit., 22 April 1899, p. 3.

¹⁴ Hillgrove and Armidale Water Power Electric Company Limited, Memorandum of Agreement between C.F.M. Michelmore and E.W. Foxall. **Packets of Dissolved or Deregistered Companies, Companies Office, Dated 28 July 1892, File 1275, A.O. 3/5714.**

¹⁵ *ibid.*

¹⁶ op. cit., Dated 30 December 1893, File 1275, A.O. 3/5714.

James Thomas Hackett, directors of the company, presented a petition to the Legislative Assembly and members were called to give evidence to the Select Committee of the Legislative Assembly in October 1892. Another company, the Hillgrove Water and Electric Power Company presented a counter-petition in opposition to the Guyra River company. This company planned to obtain water rights from the Baker's Creek which was situated much closer to the Hillgrove township.

The initial situation was made even more complex by a petition, signed by 320 residents of Hillgrove, which was presented to the Legislative Assembly on 22 November 1892. It stated in part:

That by the passing of the Bill of the Hillgrove -Armidale Water- Power Electric Company (Limited), now before your Honourable House, the means will be afforded of developing the great mining industry of this district, and will also largely aid in advancing the general interests and welfare of the said district of Hillgrove.¹⁷

Following evidence from both companies, the Enabling Bill passed through Parliament on 10 March 1893 and one provision of this Bill was that the work should be completed within eighteen months. The company now referred to as the Crompton Electric Company, was undertaking work in Hillgrove by August 1894 and it was reported, 'posts are being erected all along the main street, and corries are suspended already as far as practicable'.¹⁸ The period of completion time expired on Monday 10 September 1894; the day that the electricity was turned on. A colourful description of the occasion was provided by the special reporter for the **Armidale Chronicle**:

One after another the lamps at Sullings (Hotel) and in Magill and Hill's Store gleam out, throwing long fingers of light over every part of the vicinity, and Bracken Street rises out of the darkness into the full grandeur of a light as bright as day. The faces of the people in the crowd as far as they can be seen... The lighting of Hillgrove by electricity is an accomplished fact...¹⁹

Renditions from the Hillgrove choral union were followed by a banquet at Sullings' **Commercial Hotel**. Henceforth hydro-electric workings on

¹⁷ **Votes and Proceedings of the N.S.W. legislative Assembly 1892-1893**, Sydney, 1893, p. 359.

¹⁸ **Armidale Express**, 21 August 1894, p. 4.

¹⁹ **Armidale Chronicle**, 15 September 1894, p. 2.

the Gara River, under the supervision of electrical engineer Professor Richard Threfall of the University of Sydney, provided electricity for the town. Workings included the construction of a dam on the river to control the water, and fluming to carry water from the dam to the generator site situated at the bottom of the Gara Falls.

Despite great optimism expressed at the celebrations, problems quickly emerged. The newly constructed dam on the Gara River was small and the 1895 rainfall in the area was not large. Threfall referred to company financial problems in his correspondence²⁰ and although he took control of the company as mortgagee in May 1895, the company was liquidated voluntarily in June and Edward W. Foxall was appointed as liquidator.²¹ In October 1895, the managing director of the Crompton Electric Supply Company visited Hillgrove, giving rise to this report,

a new company has been formed to take over the Electric works and it is believed that the mines will now be able to make use of the electric motive power which has been recently used only for lighting purposes'.²²

The correspondent in the **Hillgrove Guardian** believed that there were three explanations for the failure of the previous hydro-electric scheme: 'first, the inadequate conservation of water; second, the flimsy character of the fluming....and lastly, the incompleteness of the protection of the machinery of the power works...'²³ Gojack believes that the above three factors do not fully explain why the hydro-electric scheme failed in 1895. Apart from these other factors, 'Hillgrove's economic viability had been undermined by the end of the antimony boom'.²⁴

The supply of electricity to the township and mines was irregular. By 1896, the Eleanora Mine had established a dynamo operated by electric

²⁰ Threfall, R., **Letterbook 1894-1897**, University of Sydney Archives quoted in Gojak, D., 'Gara River: An Early Hydro-Electric Scheme in Northern New South Wales', **The Australian Journal of Historical Archaeology**, Vol. 6, 1988, p. 4.

²¹ Hillgrove and Armidale Water Power Electric Company Limited, Liquidation Notification- Winding Up and Appointment of Liquidators. **Packets of Dissolved and Deregistered Companies**, Companies Office, Dated 10 and 27 June 1895, File 1275, A.O. 3/5714.

²² **Armidale Chronicle**, 12 October 1895, p. 4.

²³ **Hillgrove Guardian and New England Mining Gazette**, 28 October 1899, p. 2.

²⁴ Gojak, D., op. cit., p. 9.

power generated by the Gara works. Although it initially proved to be satisfactory, it 'failed owing to the insufficient storage of water at the source of power hence recourse'²⁵ had to be made to the steam plant. In April 1897, the electric company endeavoured to overcome the problem of water supply to drive the dynamos and 'decided to bring one of the alternators from the Gara works, erect same on the township, and generate electricity by steam power, sufficient to supply all surface requirements'.²⁶

The enormity of the water problem confronting the Hillgrove mines was highlighted by the Inspector of Mines' report dated 29 June 1897.

Baker's Creek had ceased flowing and the reservoirs attached to the various mines were almost empty... were it not for the supply in the reservoir constructed for the use of the residents of the township the principal mines would have been compelled to shut down...²⁷

The lack of water also stopped operation of the electrical generating plant at Gara River 'with consequent loss and inconvenience to those mines depending upon it for power and surface lighting...'²⁸

In February 1898, the **Hillgrove Guardian** referred to the new company as the New England Electric Light and Power company but there were obviously economic difficulties because,

portion of the plant... was seized for a debt of £8 due to Messrs Whalan and Morris, tributors of the Garibaldi G.M. Co's property, they having hired the use of the engine... for the purpose of driving the dynamo which generates the electric light for the town.²⁹

Mr Beveridge of Sydney, who was the chief accountant of the official assignee to the company controlled by Mr Giblin, arrived to settle financial

²⁵ Inspector Henry Hooke reporting on the Mines at Hillgrove, Sydney, 30 December 1896. **Chief Inspector of Mines and Diamond Branch, Mines and Agriculture, N.S.W., No. 31, M.R. 3309.**

²⁶ **Armidale Express**, 20 April 1897, p. 3.

²⁷ Inspector Henry Hooke reporting on the Mines at Hillgrove, Sydney 29 June 1897. **Chief Inspector of Mines and Diamond Branch, Mines and Agriculture, N.S.W., No. 2082, M.R. 3309.**

²⁸ *ibid.*

²⁹ **Hillgrove Guardian and New England Mining Gazette**, 26 February 1898, p. 2.

matters and appointed Mr Michelmores to head the bankrupt electrical company. The assignee became responsible,

for all costs of working the plant and keeping the light supplied until such time as the estate... (was) legally wound up and the plant handed over to whoever may become the purchaser.³⁰

Eight months later the consulting engineer, Mr J.R. Bainton could report, 'With the Gara scheme, properly carried out, there was a great future for electricity in Hillgrove; the electrical part of the Gara scheme was perfect'.³¹

In January 1899 the **Hillgrove Guardian** expressed hope for the company.

Mr D.K. Inglis who is one of the principal if not the chief creditor in the company now in liquidation... was surprised to find such a magnificent plant with such possibilities for its being put to profitable purposes. Mr Inglis... left Hillgrove fully determined to make an effort to put things right on a sound, satisfactory footing.³²

A new sense of optimism emerged with the removal of legal difficulties and arrangements made for obtaining estimates 'for the construction of new fluming... from the Blue Hole in the Gara River to the head of the falls above the machine site'.³³ It was time to select a site for a dam, discard the wooden fluming and 'the decision taken to conduct the water required for driving the "Pelton" wheels, the whole distance from the dam to the machinery in iron pipes...'³⁴ Lighting would be provided by steam power until completion of the works.

Somewhat surprisingly, the new works were 'constructed under the immediate supervision of Mr Frank Cotton, MP for Newtown, Camperdown'.³⁵ Mr Cotton, who had no engineering training, was a member of the Legislative Assembly Select committee which had investigated the Hillgrove and Armidale Water-Power Electric Bill. Other personalities

30 *ibid.*

31 *op. cit.*, 3 September 1898, p. 2.

32 *op. cit.*, 28 January 1899, p. 2.

33 *op. cit.*, 1 July 1899, p. 2.

34 *op. cit.*, 15 July 1899, p. 3.

35 *op. cit.*, 28 October 1899 p. 2.

involved were: Mr Cadogan, described as 'an experienced practical man'³⁶; businessman Mr D.K. Inglis and his partner Mr Robson and electrical engineer Mr C.F. Krantzche.

In November 1899, the company now known as the Sandon County Electric Light and Power Company, announced that they had secured 'two of Siemens Brothers latest improved lighting arrestors for the power works and have sent to America for a supply of West's arrestors for the power lines'.³⁷ The company was also prepared to provide telephones for every mine using power or light. In the same month, the company sponsored an Athletic Sports at the company's grounds, Gara Falls, on the Prince of Wales birthday, Thursday 9 November.

The company completed about 1,000 feet of trestling with some of it some 88 feet high. By December 1899 it was reported, the formation of about 3,000 feet of the line is nearly completed... The Falls Work is approaching completion, and has been a pretty rough undertaking'.³⁸ Two months later, the Minister for Mines visited the Gara electric works and by then, the power-house had been 'practically rebuilt and covered with a new steel roof. All excavations for the fluming are now completed, work which has involved a considerable amount of care and skill'.³⁹ The reporter on the **Hillgrove Guardian** wrote, 'we feel sure that all the district wishes the company the success it deserves, for neither pains nor cost have been spared to make the works perfect...'⁴⁰ Thus, the lighting of Hillgrove resumed on Wednesday 28 March 1900 after a long intermission.

The company announced the following costs for private homes and shops within,

reasonable distance of our main lines- 1 or 2 lights from 25/- each, more than 2 lights as per arrangements; this will include switches, sockets, rosettes, fuses, shades, cords, wires etc, including labour...⁴¹

36 *ibid.*

37 *op. cit.*, 18 November 1899, p. 2.

38 *op. cit.*, 2 December 1889, p. 2.

39 *op. cit.*, 3 February 1900, p. 2.

40 *op. cit.*, 3 March 1900, p. 2.

41 *op. cit.*, 21 July 1900, p. 1.

In order to improve the supply and storage of water, new concrete foundations were completed early in September 1900 and the re-constructed portion of the weir was now '4ft 6 in high right across'.⁴² Mr Jackson, an electrician for Crompton and Company, was in charge of the light and power machinery and a Sydney based manager, Mr E.J. Erskine regularly visited the works.

The company again changed ownership when the International Railway Corporation Limited of England took over the works on Saturday 27 October 1900. The Gara dam was further reconstructed 'under supervision of Mr A.L. Cadogan, who is now permanently appointed by the new company as their works manager'.⁴³ However even as the work was completed, further problems arose as more water was required so that the **Sunlight Battery** at Metz and the **Baker's Creek Company** could use electricity in their mining operations.

It was not until January 1901 that the **Sunlight Gold Mining Company** signed the company's first power contract. 'Mr. Erskine, the manager of the London International Railway, was present at the initiation...'⁴⁴ when the battery started with electric power. The correspondent in the **Hillgrove Guardian**, was confident that 'a new era in mining, has started, with the new year and century in Hillgrove'.⁴⁵ The optimism of the report was shortlived. By the end of the month, the battery was running by steam power 'in consequence of the long continued dry weather and no sign of rain'.⁴⁶

The shortage of water in the Gara river constantly influenced the supply of electricity. The **Hillgrove Guardian** edition of 23 February 1901 announced that 'the electric light came back last night, and was heartily welcomed. It will not be long, however unless we have more rain...'⁴⁷ Similarly in March 1902 the announcement was made,

42 op. cit., 8 September 1900 p. 2.

43 op. cit., 27 October 1900, p. 2.

44 op. cit., 12 January 1901, p. 2.

45 ibid.

46 op. cit., 26 January 1901, p. 2.

47 op. cit., 23 February 1901, p. 3.

until we are favoured with a fall of rain there is very little chance of there being any electric light. The town has been in darkness during the week... The Gara dam is almost dry'.⁴⁸

Trouble persisted with the company and the International Railway Corporation Ltd dispensed with the services of Mr T.C. Inglis in an attempt to reduce expenses. It announced that,

the Corporation has had a lot of unforeseen circumstances in its venture... but, meantime returns do not justify anything beyond what is absolutely necessary in the shape of keeping up a local staff.⁴⁹

Clearly there were difficulties but the Company continued with improvements involving 'construction of a proposed solid work' to the dam and the erection of a new steel pipeline 'from the top of the Falls to the powerhouse'.⁵⁰ The new steel pipe was completed in November 1901. In an attempt to publicise the new achievements of Crompton and Company, the visiting English cricket team was entertained at a banquet on December 1901 at the works.

Crompton and Company attempted to improve the electrical works. In July 1902, the managers of the Company stated 'a cable has been received from London', and 'that new capital would probably shortly be raised to complete the proposed new works'.⁵¹ Still the supply of electricity caused major concern and in October 1903, the manager of the works Mr Cadogan interviewed the business people of Hillgrove to determine if they would 'use the light, should it again be put on'.⁵² The report in the **Hillgrove Guardian** continued:

a gang of men is at present at work on the works at Gara, putting them in order. At present there is sufficient water conserved to enable the company to light the town for six months.⁵³

48 op. cit., 1 March 1902, p. 2.

49 op. cit., 18 May 1901, p. 2.

50 op. cit., 28 September 1901, p. 2.

51 op. cit., 19 July 1902, p. 2.

52 op. cit., 24 October 1903, p. 2.

53 *ibid.*

'Mr Pinto was leasing the Gara River plant for £1 per week to selected customers in 1907'.⁵⁴ In March 1908, the Gara electric works received a set-back when a slip of earth 'above the power house... caused considerable damage, and it is with difficulty that the dynamos are kept going for the purpose of lighting Hillgrove'.⁵⁵

The critical problems confronting the mining companies were the high cost of fuel and transport difficulties. In wet weather, timber could not be obtained because of the distance and the nature of the tracks in the gorge country. Because of extensions in mining operations, the **New Hillgrove Proprietary Mines Ltd.** investigated a number of schemes to overcome the power crisis. The plentiful supply of water in the Styx river to the east of Hillgrove, brought about the decision to establish an electrical scheme there.

The engineering difficulties, however were enormous. The fluming had to be carried around almost inaccessible cliffs. To land the machinery on the power house site necessitated lowering every portion on a large steel cable over cliffs dropping almost sheer down for 600 ft.⁵⁶

Mr E.A.Thomas completed the preliminary surveys and levels in October 1906 and the transmission line was cleared by December of that year. The company let the contract and it was claimed that 'the scheme will effect a very considerable saving in the annual cost of the power required for working the two mines...'.⁵⁷

The scheme involved the construction of extensive timber trestling for the fluming, dams and some tunnelling in the deep gorge country to the east of Hillgrove. 'One of the most interesting portions of the work was the lowering of the 98 tons of machinery and material to the power-house site'.⁵⁸ At the power station, a turbine was installed 'instead of a Pelton, owing to the better governing possibilities of the former'.⁵⁹ In November

54 Mainwaring, R., 'Tramways Down the Gorge: the story of Hillgrove, 1887-1921'. **Light Railway Research Journal of Australia**, No. 94, Vol XXIV, October 1986, p. 6.

55 **Armidale Express**, 6 March 1908, p. 4.

56 **Electrical Record**, 6 May 1908, p. 480.

57 **Hillgrove Guardian and New England Mining Gazette**, 1 December 1906, p. 3.

58 **Electrical Record**, 13 May 1908, p. 510.

59 *op. cit.*, 20 May 1908, p. 537.

1907, the electric cables from the Styx were 'connected with the new mill' and it was 'expected to have the connections at the River station made within a week'.⁶⁰ Electricity was finally produced from the plant early in December 1907 but the works was subject to flood damage. In August 1908 the Styx river rose twelve feet and 'slight damage was done to the fluming of the H.P. Company's electric plant, through the debris'.⁶¹

Four years later, a new and larger pipe-line was installed to convey water to the turbine and consequently the efficiency and output of the power-generating plant was increased. In May 'an electrically-driven air-compressor' was 'being erected at the mines to supply power for rock drills etc...'.⁶² It was hoped that with this new power vast quantities of lower grade ore in the **Eleanora Mine** could now be treated at a profit. Efforts were in vain and sadly the **Eleanora** closed in January 1915 and about one hundred employees were dismissed.

Early in November 1917 the plant and equipment of the **Eleanora Mines** was offered for sale. Apart from an extensive range of machinery, tools, engines, boilers, pumping-plant, tramway systems and piping, the company offered for sale the '250 H.P. HYDRO ELECTRIC GENERATING STATION at the Styx River, together with the 52 1/2 MILES HIGH TENSION CABLE, Oil-cooled transformers, Motors, Switchboards and all Electrical accessories'.⁶³ The clearance sale was highly successful and the hydro-electric plant was sold to a Victorian buyer for £3,000. The correspondent of the **Armidale Express** conveyed his disappointment;

at this figure the plant must be considered very cheap, and it is to be regretted that more definite action was not taken by local people to acquire this valuable plant with a view of lighting Armidale with electricity.⁶⁴

Despite the loss of the Styx hydro-electric scheme, supply of electricity continued spasmodically for Hillgrove. The development of the Gara plant was revealed in an annual report given to the **Baker's Creek Mining Company** in Adelaide early in 1913. A manager of the company

⁶⁰ **Armidale Chronicle**, 13 November 1907, p. 5.

⁶¹ op. cit., 12 August 1908, p. 5.

⁶² op. cit., 8 May 1912, p. 7.

⁶³ op. cit., 31 October 1917, p. 5.

⁶⁴ **Armidale Express**, 27 November 1917, p. 8.

reported on a visit to the hydro electric installation and the plan to provide all mines of Hillgrove with electrical power. He stated:

The scheme was a good one but the construction of the dam was faulty; it gave way repeatedly, and the whole plant was ultimately sold for a few hundred pounds. The cash required now for the purchase of the rights and what remains of the plant, the cost of building a good dam, and maintenance, involves too much capital... for present purposes it will be cheaper to instal a gas plant. ⁶⁵

The adequate supply of electricity was a constant worry both to the company and the consumers. Only some houses purchased single lights and not all businesses used this source of power. The School of Arts Hall installed its own acetylene gas-plant in March 1910. Similarly the Council installed acetylene gas in its Chambers in October 1914 but in November 1913 the inside of the Star Picture Show Hall was lit by electricity. However, owing to the depressed condition of mining and the decline of Hillgrove, the supplier of electricity had to look at relatively close towns such as Armidale and Uralla for a market in order to make the enterprise commercially viable.

In 1890 the Armidale City Council had taken control of the Armidale Gasworks and lighting and heating needs of the city were satisfied by this means. During the Great War, interest in electricity developed and in August 1916 J. Pinto of Metz, offered to supply bulk electricity to the Armidale Council. Despite the offer, the water and lighting committee of the Council would not 'recommend that the proposal be entertained'.⁶⁶ This decision brought an angry response from a newspaper correspondent, Micawber:

Armidale should be in the proud and inevitable position of being the cheapest and most brilliantly-illuminated city in the Commonwealth of Australia, also the most up-to-date in its water power electricity. Does it not seem absurd that with the natural facilities afforded by the streams... in the vicinity of Gara, Hillgrove and Wollomombi, that the town near it, (Hillgrove excepted) clings to the costly gas and primitive kerosene lamps with their attendant risks.⁶⁷

In the following year, the correspondent in the **Armidale Express** reported that the Mayor of Armidale was impressed by Mr Pinto's new offer to supply electricity. 'Mr. Pinto is certain a never ending supply of

⁶⁵ **Armidale Chronicle**, 26 February 1913, p. 8.

⁶⁶ op. cit., 26 August 1916, p. 2.

⁶⁷ op. cit., 9 September 1916, p. 4.

electricity could be furnished for both Armidale and Uralla, and at a very moderate cost'.⁶⁸ Six months later, a Mr Hope sought permission to meet the Council on behalf of 'the gentlemen who have acquired the rights of the Hillgrove and Armidale Water Power Electric Co. Ltd.'⁶⁹ with a proposal to light the streets of Armidale. Extensive negotiations took place between the Municipal Council and the syndicate throughout October but the Aldermen felt a strong commitment to the present use of gas. Accordingly, Mr Hope submitted 'a definite offer to the council... in respect of purchasing the gas works'.⁷⁰ Regardless of the offer, the Council decided against electric power in January 1918.

In August 1919, Pinto met with Armidale Municipal Council to demonstrate 'that he was in a position to offer a supply of current to Armidale'.⁷¹ At the meeting, he informed the Council that 'he had sufficient material in first class order which was purchased at pre-war prices...'⁷² The Council still refused to accept Pinto's offer.

In May 1920 a consulting engineer Mr Franki visited the area to investigate the possibility of electricity for Armidale. He was accompanied by the Mayor William Curtis, and Aldermen Lamb, Purkiss and Mills in his investigation of the Gara as a 'possible water supply'.⁷³ Then followed, an inspection of the electric plant at the Gara Falls. In the same month, a local businessman Mr Sullivan, met with the Armidale Council and proposed a scheme. In his discussions, he commented:

For the past 16 years electric light had... been supplied to Hillgrove by a hydro-electric plant in the neighbourhood and even by the old plant there were 320,000 gallons in eight hours and produce about 60 h.p.⁷⁴

Chief Electrical Engineer in the Public Works, and an expert in hydro-electricity Mr Corin, visited Armidale in December 1920 to 'investigate the possibilities of the Gara Fall'.⁷⁵ The Mayor Alderman Corin,

68 **Armidale Express**, 31 August 1917, p. 10.

69 *op. cit.*, 12 October 1917, p. 3.

70 *op. cit.*, 2 November 1917, p. 4.

71 *op. cit.*, 15 August 1919, p. 3.

72 *ibid.*

73 **Armidale Chronicle**, 12 May 1920, p. 4.

74 **Armidale Express**, 11 May 1920, p. 4.

75 **Armidale Chronicle**, 4 December 1920, p. 4.

Aldermen Purkiss and Lamb accompanied Mr Curtin in the inspection of Mr Pinto's power house and the old dam near the top of the falls. The **Armidale Chronicle** commented:

He should be able to give the council some very useful information bearing upon the possibilities of generating hydro-electricity for Armidale... Mr Corin mentions... that one of the great draw-backs of hydro-electricity without enormous consumption of current was the capital cost.⁷⁶

Even the detailed investigations and the previous offers by J. Pinto, were not enough to persuade the Council to accept hydro-electric power. Finally the Armidale City Council established an agreement with the City of Armidale Electric Supply Company in 1921, and power was switched on at a ceremony on Saturday 12 August 1922. Understandably, the creation of an Armidale supply of electricity signalled the death knell of Hillgrove electricity from the Gara works because a viable market was now closed.

⁷⁶ op. cit., 8 December 1920, p. 4.

CHAPTER 5

HOSPITAL AND MEDICAL SERVICES

The distance from Armidale and the rapidly increasing population due to the arrival of married men and their families signified the essential need of medical services to ensure the well-being of the Hillgrove residents. At the same time, there were great concerns about the provision of a clean water supply and appropriate sanitation. It was hoped that the formation of the Manchester Unity Independent Order of Oddfellows Lodge in June 1888 would 'be some inducement to a medical man to settle there as the service of a professional will often be required there in cases of sickness or illness...'¹

Controversy marked the beginnings of the Hillgrove Cottage Hospital. Both the **Armidale Express** and the **Hillgrove Guardian** reported meetings of hospital subscribers in July 1889 involving the problems of wet weather, adjournments and concerns about the possible alteration of an advertisement. Mr Scouler, manager of the **Eleanora Mine**, chaired a meeting of hospital subscribers, on the evening of Saturday 13 July 1889 at the **Miners' Arms Hotel** for the purpose of electing a committee and office bearers. Very few miners were present and the special correspondent in the **Armidale Express** attributed the poor attendance to the subscription of £1 required to qualify for voting. The advertisement in the **Hillgrove Guardian** declared:

A public meeting of subscribers to the above proposed institution will be held at Wade's Dining Room... for the purpose of electing Trustees, Committee, Treasurers and other officers. Qualification to vote £1. G.H. Westcott, Sec...²

Overcoming its initial disappointment, the Hospital Committee 'secured a small cottage in the centre of the town as a temporary hospital...'³ A competition for the hospital's design was undertaken but despite the submission of entries from Hillgrove, Uralla and Armidale, 'none were deemed suitable... (and) it was decided to leave the matter open till Tuesday, 15th inst., and also to raise the premium to six guineas...'⁴ Finally the committee met on Tuesday 22 October 1889 at the **Miners' Arms Hotel** to

¹ **Armidale Express**, 8 June 1888, p. 4.

² op. cit., 16 July 1889, p. 4.

³ op. cit., 3 September 1889, p. 4.

⁴ op. cit., 8 October 1889, p. 2.

inspect the various designs submitted by Messrs J.L. White, E. Jackson, E. Robinson and A. Dean for the proposed building. The submission of Hillgrove builder, E. Jackson was selected; the reason being that the,

design shows a very neat little cottage with rustic front, and provided with accommodation for twelve ordinary and about four private patients. The building... will contain two fine wards, a board room, a well lit surgery, and a suite of rooms for the matron, besides all necessary lavatories...⁵

Jackson and Morrow were successful in gaining tender rights for the erection of the hospital at the price of £485 10s.⁶ The rapid increase in population and the on-going problem of an inadequate water supply ensured that health problems quickly emerged in the mining town. A warning was given in May 1889 that 'the time has arrived for special consideration to the sanitary conditions of the place. Steps should immediately be taken to prevent diseases of all kinds'.⁷ Four months later in September 1889, the special correspondent at Hillgrove again warned,

we are getting an unusual amount of sickness, there being reported several cases of diphtheria and fever. In fact our various medical gentlemen appear to have a very busy time of it.⁸

The large number of cases caused great concern and 'Dr Gorrick, Government Medical Officer, reported the outbreak (of diphtheria and typhoid) to the local Progress Committee'.⁹ The Progress Committee in turn formed a sub-committee consisting of Gorrick, Westcott and Plumstead to investigate the general sanitation of the town. It was proposed to take water 'from the water reserve, about a mile higher up the stream'¹⁰ because of the threat of contamination from the present water spot. Following inspections of the abattoirs, the decision was made to close the premises and notices to that effect were served on the butcher shops. The Public School was closed and the police officers made a 'thorough tour of inspection of the whole of the town'.¹¹

⁵ op. cit., 22 October 1889, p. 4.

⁶ op. cit., 1 November 1889, p. 4.

⁷ op. cit., 7 May 1889, p. 4.

⁸ op. cit., 17 September 1889, p. 4.

⁹ op. cit., 24 September 1889, p. 8.

¹⁰ *ibid.*

¹¹ *ibid.*

Manager of the City Bank, George H. Westcott, played a major role in the establishment of the Cottage Hospital in Hillgrove and as a result of his dedicated services, the Hospital Committee made him a life governor of the institution in November 1889.

A Medical Association was formed in Hillgrove in 1890 offering members free medical advice, a free bed in the hospital when necessary and also assistance to the hospital. A doctor was also elected to the 'medical staff (of the hospital), so that members can have their choice'.¹² The provision of a doctor in the town was critical to the welfare of the members of the various Friendly Societies and agreements were signed by both parties.

Two years later, the Hospital Committee 'decided to call for tenders for fencing in the hospital grounds, and that the institution be brought under the Hospital Act X1, Victoria, No 59 and the Hospital Elections Act of 1890'.¹³ At the next meeting of the Hospital Committee, the tender of Mr Senior for £106/12/- was accepted for fencing within the grounds. A meeting of the hospital subscribers also elected Thomas Keys, H.E. Bewley, and W.J. Hill as trustees to the institution.¹⁴ Evidence of community support for the hospital was obvious on a Saturday at the end of March 1891 when a working bee was held for the purpose of clearing the grounds.

Within three years, further improvements were carried out when the Hospital Committee invited tenders for the erection of a fever ward. Mr A.J. Oliver's tender 'was accepted for the additions to the local hospital at a sum of £250'.¹⁵ The fever wing was opened by Lady Jersey in February 1893 during a visit by Lady and Excellency Lord Jersey to Hillgrove.

By August 1892, it was apparent that the hospital had flourished because the committee 'had £500 on fixed deposit and... £364 to the credit of the general account'.¹⁶ The Cottage Hospital depended on community fundraising for financial support and a number of social activities were reported in the **Hillgrove Guardian**. One such major social and financial event for the town was the annual Hospital Sunday, and later Saturday celebration,

¹² **Hillgrove Guardian and New England Mining Gazette**, 24 January 1899, p. 4.

¹³ **Armidale Express**, 3 February 1891, p. 5.

¹⁴ op. cit., 13 February 1891, p. 8.

¹⁵ op. cit., 28 June 1892, p. 5.

¹⁶ op. cit., 2 August 1892, p. 5.

161 in 1892 to 225 in 1893. He outlined the finances raised by functions such as the Hospital Sunday Demonstration and the inaugural Hillgrove Show Society conducted by Thomas Keys. However, the costs during the year were exceptionally heavy because white ants were found destroying the walls of No. 1 and 2 hospital wards and rebuilding entailed £100.

Early in 1893, the Hospital Committee obtained the services of Dr H.M. Massey and reported,

since the appointment of that gentleman the work of the institution has run without the slightest hitch, patients and attendants vigorously speaking of the skill and attention of their medical officer in the highest manner.²⁰

Additional hospital staff included matron, Mrs Hutton and wardsman, Mr Hutton. Dr Robert Broom of Cudal, medical officer to the Hillgrove Friendly Societies Medical Union, including the Loyal Welcome Brother Lodge and The Purple Border Lodge Protestant Alliance, was appointed by the committee in December 1893 to the position of honorary surgeon at the hospital. His was a short stay however. The 'proposed departure of this amiable gentleman and efficient medico from our midst' was announced in August 1894 and during the time there he had 'made many friends'.²¹

Throughout the 1890's, typhoid fever was prevalent in Hillgrove. Early in 1894, the Hillgrove correspondent felt that, because of the immense gorge and the natural fall from every house in Hillgrove, 'there is nothing to prevent a thorough sanitary system, and until this matter is taken up in a practical way Hillgrove will continue to suffer from typhoid...'²² Again in April 1895, the newspaper reported; 'Fever has made its appearance again... some of the people of Hillgrove have very crude notions of sanitary laws... what a boon an Inspector of Nuisances should be'.²³

Concerned at the state of the town, Dr Harry M. Massey (the government health officer) and Dr Cooper Hardcastle organised a petition to the Colonial Secretary in June 1898.

²⁰ *ibid.*

²¹ August 1894, p. 4.

²² *op. cit.*, 20 February 1894, p. 5.

²³ *op. cit.*, 26 April 1895, p. 4.

Sir, we the undersigned residents of Hillgrove respectfully beg to bring under your notice a matter of most dangerous import to the people of Hillgrove... Bracken, the main street, being situated on the crown of a ridge the debris and filth from the principal tenements is carried into Brereton Street... there stagnating and creating along its sides a veritable fever bed... The nuisance therefore remains a standing menace to the health of the people. The cost of its removal would be very small, and considering the town contains a population of about three thousand inhabitants and its revenue-producing status, may we not humbly beg you to cause enquiry to be made with a view to remedying the evil and your petitioners in duty bound will ever pray.²⁴

Typhoid reappeared early in 1899 but it was not until July that the authorities could announce, 'the Hillgrove Hospital is now clear of typhoid fever, the first time for 7 months'.²⁵

Early in 1902, the Cottage Hospital unfortunately lost the services of long-serving Matron Hutton and her wardsman husband. A Mr and Mrs Isdahl were then recruited, but their contract was soon terminated when the Hospital Committee 'decided it was advisable for the welfare of the hospital, to dispense with their services'.²⁶ The Treasurer was taken to court because of a technical error with their dismissal and the lawsuit of £272 16s was awarded against the hospital. The problems were further compounded in May, when the hospital also lost the services of a long-term medical officer Dr Massey who left for Tasmania. Dr Cooper Hardcastle was elected medical officer to the hospital 'subject to certain arrangements'.²⁷ At the same time, nurse Lewis arrived to take up position of matron at the hospital.

The year was marked by financial difficulties and in August the Hospital Committee created a sub-committee to meet with 'Dr Hardcastle and the secretary relative to the reduction of salaries'.²⁸ Four months later, the Committee reprimanded Dr Hardcastle over the purchase of goods for the hospital. At the December meeting, 'the President (W. Morgan) read the rule setting forth the duties of the medical officer, which he said gave no power to order goods'.²⁹

²⁴ Hillgrove Guardian and New England Mining Gazette, 25 June 1898, p. 3.

²⁵ op. cit., 8 July 1899, p. 2.

²⁶ op. cit., 24 January 1903, p. 2.

²⁷ op. cit., 17 May 1902, p. 3.

²⁸ op. cit., 9 August 1902, p. 3.

²⁹ op. cit., 6 December 1902, p. 3.

In February 1903, a special Hospital Board meeting was called to consider applications for the position of medical officer. Applications were received from Doctors W.I.J. Newton, R.A. McLeod and Cooper Hardcastle. During the discussion, committee member Mr Stephens pointed out the problems of maintaining a medical service in Hillgrove and commented that '£150 from the Hospital and the private practice of the town was not sufficient to keep a doctor'.³⁰

Dr McLeod was appointed medical officer, arriving in Hillgrove at the end of February to confront immediate problems concerning Dr Hardcastle's right to admit his patients to the hospital. In an attempt to overcome the problem, the Hospital Committee offered the position of honorary medical officer to Dr Hardcastle, only to be refused. Obviously the newly arrived Dr McLeod was not prepared to become involved in the controversy and in March 1903 wrote to the Hospital Committee from Sydney.

I beg to state that I will not be able to return to Hillgrove owing to private reasons... I am confident that there is not enough work for two men in Hillgrove; indeed, not a good living for one. The limit of 10 miles you place on your medical officer prohibits any good private practice, as nearly everyone in Hillgrove itself belongs to some lodge or association...³¹

The Hospital Committee was also confronted by the need to raise adequate funds. These fund-raising activities included the Hospital Annual Ball and Juvenile Ball organised by the ladies' committee. The December 1902 Hospital Garden Fete was held on a Wednesday afternoon and much entertainment was provided for the children of the town. Entertainment included: races for children; exhibitions by school children; dumb bell exercises and wand drill; physical drill for boys; various stalls (tea, fruit, sweets, ice-cream, fancy and squash) ping pong booth, pea-guessing competition; pony rides and a number of raffles.

The fete continued into the night with the appearance of Madame Fortuna, an eminent palmist, and music provided at an 8 o'clock promenade concert by the Hillgrove town band; Wesleyan choir; individual performances and the Salvation Army band. Eight hundred people attended the fete during the afternoon and evening, and it was reported:

³⁰ op. cit., 21 February 1903, p. 2.

³¹ op. cit., 21 March 1903, p. 3.

The function, which considering the depression, cannot be characterised other than a unique success, and one of the most enjoyable al fresco outings that has been our privilege to participate in, was brought to a close at about half past ten.³²

In August 1902, the Financial sub-committee of the Hospital Committee announced, 'the finances are in a very precarious state... (and) unless prompt action is at once taken the Hospital will have to face a discrepancy of about £150 upon this year's transaction'.³³ Two years later the **Hillgrove Guardian** reported in its editorial:

During the past two or three years the Hillgrove Hospital has been steadily going down, and, if the present state of things continues it will be closed within a year. We appeal to the townspeople to unite and prevent such a calamity.³⁴

The people of Metz, (formerly West Hillgrove), called a public meeting at which fifty persons of the small township attended, and made plans to hold a social in McNamara's Hall on 21 October. The committee of the hospital, with the cooperation of the various societies and ladies, also planned a grand Garden Fete on 16 November in the recreation ground.

In January 1905, 'a public meeting convened by the Mayor (Mr MacGeorge) at the request of the Hospital Committee was held in the School of Arts Hall... to devise the best means of raising money for the upkeep of that Institution'.³⁵ The fifty citizens who attended represented a number of organisations from the town. The Secretary of the hospital, Arthur F. Swinson, stated that the yearly running costs of the hospital was £600. During discussion, Hardie Jones queried the need of four staff to care for forty seven patients who had been admitted during 1904. He also questioned the need for a paid Secretary and suggested the ladies could be asked to collect subscriptions rather than enlist a collector on a percentage basis.

In reply, 'The Mayor said that the matter of curtailment of expenditure had nothing to do with that meeting... They had to deal with the question of a regular income'.³⁶ Mr J. Richardson believed that a miner

32 op. cit., 13 December 1902, p. 3.

33 op. cit., 9 August 1902, p. 3.

34 op. cit., 1 October 1904, p. 2.

35 op. cit., 28 January 1905, p. 2.

36 *ibid.*

would not refuse to pay '3d or 4d in the £ out of his wages towards the hospital'.³⁷ This raised the question of compulsory subscriptions which would affect the government subsidy. Furthermore, it was felt that the town and country people should also be asked to bear the costs by collection.

Miners from three companies also met in separate meetings on Sunday 29 January 1905. It was revealed at the annual meeting of the Hospital Committee held in January 1906, that the miners promised to commit payments towards the hospital on each pay-day. This system of voluntary contributions proved highly successful and,

From the employees of the Bakers Creek G.M. Co, we have received the sum of £48/12/7; from the New Hillgrove Proprietary Employees £14/12/6; from the employees of Cyanide Co (Hillgrove) £8/19/6...³⁸

A group of businessmen met on the Monday evening following the above public meeting to arrange monthly collections for the hospital. They recommended that a paid collector be appointed under the supervision of the Hospital Committee.

Raising of hospital funds was not restricted to the efforts of the adults of Hillgrove. The children of the Public School inaugurated a bazaar in aid of the hospital fund on Wednesday evening, 13 September 1905. The Principal, Mr Tonkin, in a moving speech, referred to the loyalty of the children to the institution, and said that their devotion and self-denial was an object lesson to the older people of the community. The undertaking was intended more particularly as an object lesson for the children, to teach them in even a minor way their responsibilities as coming citizens. The President of the hospital, Morgan Stephens accompanied by the Treasurer Mr A.F. Swinson, thanked Mr and Mrs Tonkin and the girls in particular, for their efforts. At the bazaar, the girls conducted a diverse number of stalls including fancy, fruit, fish-pond, refreshments, flower, post office and electric battery. The newspaper account reported a profit of £13.³⁹

The Hillgrove community suffered a dramatic loss when Dr Cooper Hardcastle and his wife left the town in June 1905. Medical skills aside, Dr

³⁷ *ibid.*

³⁸ *op. cit.*, 20 January 1906, p. 2.

³⁹ *op. cit.*, 16 September 1905, p. 5.

Hardcastle was deeply respected in Hillgrove and had played significant roles in local government, all aspects of education and served as office-bearer in many community organisations. In March 1900, a telephone wire had 'been laid from the mines down the falls'⁴⁰ to his residence to seek assistance in case of accidents at the mine. Fortunately he was quickly replaced by Dr Costello from Balranald who received very good press as 'he has already gained the favourable opinion of the people, and we have no doubt will endeavour to emulate'⁴¹ the worthy citizen Dr Hardcastle. Regrettably, early in January 1908, the people of Hillgrove bade farewell to their young Dr John Costello at the **Sydney Hotel**. Within five weeks, the community received tragic news from Moree that the Doctor died from typhoid fever on the evening of Friday 7 February.

Dr Parramore arrived in Hillgrove but he in turn 'sold his practice to Dr. Bell of Sydney'⁴² and left in September 1908. Dr Bell was then appointed as medical officer to the local hospital.

In November 1909, a minstrel concert in aid of the hospital was held in lieu of the annual garden fete. The **Armidale Chronicle's** correspondent reported that 'the concert was one of the best held in Hillgrove during the last 14 years, and the net results from same have only once been eclipsed'.⁴³ The correspondent went on to describe Hillgrove as a music-loving town, and the program clearly reflected the musical and dramatic talent of the time. Some of the items presented included:

First part of the Program:

'Any Old Place would be Paradise'.....	Mr Geo. Jones.
'If Those Tongues could only Speak'.....	comic Mr H. Witherdin.
Irish Jig	Miss V. Porter.
'Whisper and Kiss Me Good Night'.....	Miss Madrick and Company.

Second part of the Program:

Overture pianist.....	Mrs J. Delaney.
'The Ballad of Splendid Silence'.....	Recitation by Miss O. Barber.
Instrumental duet- euphonium and tenor saxhorn ...	Messrs. S. Arndell and J. Oliver.

⁴⁰ **Armidale Chronicle**, 14 March 1900, p. 2.

⁴¹ **Hillgrove Guardian and New England Mining Gazette**, 10 June 1905, p. 3.

⁴² **Armidale Chronicle**, 30 September 1908, p. 4.

⁴³ op. cit., 13 November 1909, p. 5.

A dispute arose between the Hospital Committee and Dr Rickard-Bell late in 1909, and a special meeting was held in February 1910 to discuss the appointment of a medical officer. During the meeting, a sub-committee met with Dr Bell and reported:

that the medical officer said that he would let by-gones be by-gones and quash any trouble that was threatened, if appointed, but he would not accept a less salary than previously.⁴⁴

Despite the promise, it was moved that Dr Bell be not appointed from the end of the month and that advice be sought from the Chief Medical Officer in Sydney. Dr G.H. King the Chief Medical Officer supported the stand taken by Dr Bell; the committee reversed its decision and appointed him at the previous salary. Although Dr Bell accepted the offer until the end of the year, he left Hillgrove in the following month for a practice in St. Mary's.⁴⁵ Dr Field-Martell replaced Dr Bell in June, and quickly established a Health Class for Ladies and an Ambulance Class for Men in the town. He was welcomed on behalf of the Hospital Committee by the Vice-President, Mr W.L. Smith at the June committee meeting.

But the problem of appropriate payment constantly confronted the Committee. In October 1911 respected committee member Treasurer, William Morgan proposed a notice of motion:

That the Medical Officer be given three months notice from date of intention of the committee of management to reduce the salary from the present rate of £150 per annum to the rate of £100 per annum.⁴⁶

In February 1912, Morgan moved his motion and 'said that the town was in a depressed state, and he thought that the medical officer would be very well paid... at £100 per annum'.⁴⁷ The resolution was passed on Chairman Smith's casting vote. A few days later a special meeting was called to consider the appointment of a medical officer and a Dr Pittman was selected over Dr Martell. The committee expressed concern when it was revealed, 'Dr Martell had ignored the committee, as he was notified previously that he must

44 op. cit., 19 February 1910. p. 3.

45 op. cit., 7 May 1910, p. 3.

46 op. cit., 11 October 1911, p. 5.

47 op. cit., 10 February 1912, p. 6.

not leave the institution without supplying a locum tenens'.⁴⁸ The Hillgrove Friendly Societies could not come to an agreement either with the Northern British Medical Association concerning the provision of medical services.

Dr Pittman resigned from the position of medical officer to the hospital in June 1912. The Doctor had lost the position of medical officer to the Friendly Societies some three months earlier, and in his notice of resignation to the hospital, claimed 'under existing circumstances it was not possible to carry on a successful practice'.⁴⁹ The **Armidale Chronicle** announced Dr Pittman's departure in the following month and commented 'during his short stay he became very popular'.⁵⁰ Dr Thompson, arrived in June, and was appointed to the hospital by the committee and also had his application for medical officer to the Friendly Societies accepted. Five months later, Dr Thompson resigned from both positions due to the heavy work load.⁵¹

As the mining in the area fluctuated and the financial state of the businesses, miners and townspeople varied from year to year, so too the financial state of the hospital was affected. 1912 was not a prosperous one for Hillgrove and consequently it was noted in the annual report 'the hospital has not fared so well financially as in the previous years'.⁵² At the same time, the report indicated the extent and diversity of community support in Hillgrove and surrounding district.

The institution is greatly indebted to the school- children of Hillgrove and Metz, our good friends at Ebor and Wollomombi, Hillgrove Town Band, Mrs. F.J. White (of Saumarez), Mrs. Wright and Sons (Wongwibinda), the employees of Baker's Creek and Eleanora Mines, various lodges and friendly societies in and around Hillgrove, the organisers of public sports and entertainments, Hospital Saturday collectors, and many other supporters too numerous to particularise'.⁵³

A new medical officer, Dr F. Leonard Keith took up duties in Hillgrove on 4 January 1913. In an attempt to improve services, the committee had

48 op. cit., 14 February 1912, p. 3.

49 op. cit., 19 June 1912, p. 3.

50 op. cit., 6 July 1912, p. 3.

51 op. cit., 23 November 1912, p. 3.

52 **Armidale Express**, 24 January 1913, p. 10.

53 *ibid.*

the hospital's private phone, installed in July 1911, connected to the Doctor's residence in May 1913.⁵⁴

The Government Inspector's report of 16 June 1913 stated that the 'Hospital has at present fixed Deposits amounting to £400 in the City Bank of Hillgrove, but it will shortly be drawn upon to meet the requirements of the Hospital.'⁵⁵ The Inspector also reported regular banking and a satisfactory examination with Mr M. Stephens, as Secretary, to be paid a salary of £100.

Notwithstanding these positive aspects, difficulties still persisted in the hospital. In November, both the matron and the medical officer were questioned by the committee about the treatment of a patient named Kilday. The incident led to Dr Keith's resignation although the committee ruled, there is 'no objection to Dr Keith attending any patients he may place in the institution after his term expires'.⁵⁶ Later that month, both matron Sullivan and nurse Williams resigned at a special meeting of the committee. 'A sub-committee was appointed to wait on the medical officer, re his re-appointment to the institution'.⁵⁷ Dr Keith was only prepared to accept duties if rule 41 was placed in his contract agreement; that is, 'the medical officer shall superintendent and control all subordinate officers and servants to the hospital'.⁵⁸

At the same time, difficulty was being experienced in reaching an agreement between the Friendly Societies and the British Medical Association. The Hillgrove branch of the Manchester Unity Lodge rejected the initial agreement emanating from the B.M.A. in November 1913 and adopted a modified one proposed by the Friendly Societies Association. The agreement was 'submitted to the local medical officer for consideration...'⁵⁹

At the 24th annual meeting of the hospital held in January 1914, President Mr A.T. Teague, superintendent of the **Eleanora Mine**, indicated, 'that they were not in too good a position financially, and every effort must be

⁵⁴ **Armidale Chronicle**, 10 May 1913, p. 3.

⁵⁵ Report by Inspector A. Creagh on the Hillgrove Hospital, the Auditor General Branch, Sydney, Dated 16 June 1913, No. 97. New England Historical Resources Centre, C.B. Newling Centre, University of New England.

⁵⁶ **Armidale Chronicle**, 8 November 1913, p. 3.

⁵⁷ op. cit., 6 December 1913, p. 4.

⁵⁸ op. cit., p. 10.

⁵⁹ op. cit., 3 December 1913, p. 6.

put forth to raise funds for the hospital.⁶⁰ The Mayor called a public meeting in the Council Chambers in April to discuss the raising of funds for the hospital. The position was compounded in the same month when the hospital lost the services of Dr Keith who left to become medical officer to Thargominda Hospital in Queensland. Keith was in turn replaced by Dr McInerney in the following month.

Not only medical officers were lost to the hospital. In February, Morgan Stephens resigned as Secretary after five years of service. Mr Teague was farewelled from Hillgrove in June 1914 after twelve years of residence and the matron resigned in July in controversial circumstances to be replaced by Miss K. Mooney, a former matron from Tingha.

In October 1914, a special meeting of the committee was called to deal 'with the financial situation'⁶¹ and to apply for a special grant to subsidise payment of the doctor. The finances were relieved to some extent when a subsidy of £103 2s 6d was received from the government early in November. Despite the work of the committee, there was still the problem of the lack of public support which was evident at the annual meeting held in January 1915. 'The attendance was very small which was by no means encouraging to the committee which had so successfully attended to the management of the institution during the past twelve months'.⁶²

The matron resigned in October 1915 to accept a position at Quirindi Hospital and Dr McInerney left in the following month 'to take a practice at Tingha'.⁶³ Constantly faced with financial difficulties, the committee contacted 'the minister requesting a grant of £200'⁶⁴ in November. One week later, members met with delegates from the Friendly Societies to raise funds at a Boxing Day sports and to announce a special grant of £100 which 'had been obtained for the hospital'.⁶⁵

Again only a small number attended the annual meeting held in January 1916, 'clear evidence of the disinterested nature of the Hillgrove

⁶⁰ **Armidale Express**, 23 January 1914, p. 10.

⁶¹ **Armidale Chronicle**, 17 October 1914, p. 5.

⁶² *op. cit.*, 23 January 1915, p. 5.

⁶³ *op. cit.*, 27 November 1915, p. 4.

⁶⁴ *op. cit.*, 13 November 1915, p. 10.

⁶⁵ *op. cit.*, 20 November 1915, p. 10.

public, as far as the institution is concerned'.⁶⁶ As stated in the annual report, 'the year just closed has been the most anxious and trying one in the history of the local hospital...'⁶⁷ Of major concern was the decline in subscriptions, but the financial position had been improved by the subsidy received, various donations and funds from concerts, social and the sports day. Of urgency, was the need to appoint a medical officer and matron.

The year 1916 seemed to offer some hope for the future of the hospital as the expenditure of £450 for the previous was the lowest for several years. Dr Michael J. Ryan, medical officer with his wife, matron Ryan of the hospital, commenced duty on 1 March 1916. They lived at the hospital and patients spoke highly of care and attention from the staff. The medical needs of the town were further set-back when longtime serving chemist A.J. Hardwicke announced his departure for Dorrigo in November 1916 'where he has purchased a business'.⁶⁸ During times of medical crisis when a Doctor was not present, Mr Hardwicke offered medical advice and remedies.

The annual meeting held in January 1917, revealed 'a loss on the year's transactions of £43/12/5'⁶⁹ because a number of patients did not meet their financial commitments to the hospital. To overcome this shortage of funds, an art union was organised and a race meeting was planned for 26 January 1917. These fund raising activities were not enough and the committee called a special meeting on 25 February where members 'arrived at the conclusion that the community in its present state would be unable to adequately carry on'.⁷⁰ At the meeting, it was decided to close the hospital, to give the staff one month's notice and terminate all engagements on 31 March.

The final hospital meeting was held on Tuesday 3 April 1917 and members of the committee present were: G.H. Jones (Vice- president), G. Thorton, A.M. Hayes, A. McCrohon, W. Mann and W.M. Sharp (Secretary). In the medical report Dr Ryan and his wife expressed, 'their appreciation of the courtesy... received at all times from the committee and their regret that the state of the town was such that it was necessary to close the institution'.⁷¹ The committee declared that the doctor and his wife could occupy the building

⁶⁶ op. cit., 22 January 1916, p. 3.

⁶⁷ *ibid.*

⁶⁸ op. cit., 4 November 1916, p. 10.

⁶⁹ op. cit., 20 January 1917, p. 3.

⁷⁰ op. cit., 7 March 1917, p. 6.

⁷¹ op. cit., 7 April 1917, p. 10.

for an indefinite period. The financial report showed a credit balance of £70 and the two fund raising activities organised in the attempt to save the institution revealed credits of £27 4s for the art union and £11 8s 3d from the hospital race meeting. Three months later, the **Armidale Chronicle** reported that 'Dr Michael J. Ryan... left on Sunday last to take up practice at Collarenabri(sic) Hospital.⁷²

The Department of Audit's Inspector reported on November 1917 that,

the Hospital has been recently closed and the last receipt of moneys... is dated 4th July 1917. There is a cash balance of £53/18/1 which has been transferred to a Trust account in the local branch of the Government Savings Bank.⁷³

The buildings, furniture, medical instruments and stock of drugs was insured for £1,200 and the complete inventory was placed before the Chief Secretary in Sydney. Although a caretaker was resident, the Inspector recommended early departmental attention to prevent 'natural deterioration and loss consequent on disuse, and want of occupancy...'⁷⁴

A branch of the Bush Nursing Association was formed as a result of the efforts of the Public School Principal, Alexander Souter. Nurse Foster commenced duties with the Association and the annual meeting revealed that:

The Committee had secured from the Chief Secretary's Departments with the approval and consent of the local trustees, a permissive occupancy of the Cottage Hospital and all its equipment as a nurses' quarters.⁷⁵

This decision ensured that the Hardie Jones family could occupy the hospital and the branch paid nurse Foster's board to the Jones family. During the year, the nurse paid '354 official visits, and had 320 consultations. The total number of patients treated was 130, including five obstetric cases'.⁷⁶ The maximum membership was 136 during the first quarter while forty nine others failed to pay their quarterly subscriptions. However, the total income amounted to £150 3s 4d which included a grant of £30 from the

⁷² op. cit., 7 July 1917, p. 6.

⁷³ Report on the Hillgrove Hospital Accounts, the Inspection Branch, Department of Audit, Sydney, Dated 9 November 1917, No. 4355. New England Historical Resources Centre, C.B. Newling Centre, University of New England.

⁷⁴ *ibid.*

⁷⁵ **Armidale Chronicle**, 1 February 1919, p. 7.

⁷⁶ *ibid.*

Central Council. Thus the committee could report that 'on the whole, the Branch is in a flourishing condition...'⁷⁷

In 1919, as with many other communities in the country, Hillgrove was struck by an influenza epidemic. During the epidemic, the Loyal Welcome Brothers' Lodge 'paid out £197 19s 8d in Hillgrove (£3000 per week in the state)'.⁷⁸

The final demise of the hospital occurred in 1922. In May of that year, the Bush Nursing Association forwarded to the Armidale hospital a 'quantity of drugs, etc. which have been in use by the branch'⁷⁹ and in June, the Government ended Hillgrove's medical era when it decided 'to give the Hillgrove Hospital and its contents to the Armidale and New England District Hospital'.⁸⁰

77 *ibid.*

78 *op. cit.*, 20 September 1919, p. 4.

79 *op. cit.*, 6 May 1922, p. 7.

80 *op. cit.*, 7 June 1922, p. 3.

CHAPTER 6

THE CHURCHES

At a time when Hillgrove was developing as a town in the 1880's, Armidale was well established as a religious centre. The early religious needs of the Hillgrove community were thus met by visiting clergymen from Armidale. Eventually Wesleyan, Catholic, Church of England, Salvation Army and Presbyterian churches were built as a result of fund-raising by community members.

Wesleyan Church

The first Wesleyan services at Hillgrove were conducted during the time of the Reverend J.E. Carruthers of Armidale. These services commenced in 1887 and,

The place was put on the circuit plan in September, 1887, and a monthly week night service in a private house was arranged for. Very shortly a public hall was rented. A few Armidale people were out there, and Mr George Nix interested himself in our work and services.¹

The first church opened for worship at Hillgrove was the Wesleyan Church, described as a 'fine roomy edifice'² on Sunday 10 March 1889 by the Reverend Mr W. Glasson who travelled to the mines for the occasion. 'The opening was celebrated by a public tea and concert'³ on the previous Tuesday evening and 150 people attended. Entertainment on the evening was organised by a committee consisting of Mesdames Tonkin, Wattus, Crouch, Hughes and Lambert. Captain Henry Cock, (manager of the **Baker's Creek North Gold Mining Company**), chaired the concert. Entertainment was provided by the Armidale choir and the Hillgrove choir, managed by Henry Tonkin, the Public School Principal. The total cost of construction and furnishing of the church building was £127 16s. After subscriptions and collections from the Sunday service and concert, the balance owing on the building was £61 9s 8d.

¹ 'Methodism in New South Wales. Hillgrove- A Mining Outpost'; 29 November 1909, Reproduced in Tonkin, Henry, **Papers c1859-1937**, Mitchell Library, Sydney FM 4/7446, Folio No. 108.

² **Armidale Express**, 5 March 1889, p. 4.

³ op. cit., 19 March 1889, p. 4.

The allotment of land for the church was at the corner of Hargrave and Isabella Streets. Henry Cock, Henry Tonkin, and Mr Moffatt, builder of the church, played significant roles in its establishment. The original trustees were Anthony and Henry Cock, William Dunstan, William Hamilton, William Matthew, Richard Moffatt, William Robson, Thomas Sisson, Samuel Snow, Henry Tonkin, and James Triscott. At the time of opening, 'the pulpit was frequently occupied by two local preachers, then residing at Hillgrove, viz., the Messrs. James Roberts and William Wilson'.⁴

By May 1899, the Wesleyan Church was enlarged a further nineteen feet by Armidale builder, Edmund Lonsdale, so that the extensions were 'in harmony with the original building... the inner measurement of the building now is 49ft. x 22ft'.⁵ At the tea meeting held to celebrate the enlargement, the substantial congregation was told by Treasurer, Mr Tonkin, that the additions cost £78 and the celebrations £15. Thus the indebtedness on the building, apart from the parsonage, was £22. Several donations were received from those present and Mr Tonkin also announced that electric light would be installed in the church at a cost of £3/15s.

Reflecting the patriotism in Hillgrove during the time of the Boer War, the Wesleyans organised entertainment in their church early in January 1901, 'with music and recitation competitions... for the benefit of the Commonwealth Century Fund'.⁶ Later a Wesleyan tea meeting was held in the School of Arts Hall on 25 September 1901, 'in celebration of the extinction of the debt on the well appointed local Church belonging to the Wesleyan Methodist Union'.⁷

One of the founders of the church, Captain Cock, together with his wife, were farewelled at a function held in the Hillgrove Wesleyan church on Friday 10 September 1897. The home of Captain Cock was then purchased to provide a residence for the minister; funds were assisted by a loan from a Mr Henderson from the Arding community and in October 1904, the Treasurer Mr Tonkin reported:

4 'Methodism in New South Wales. Hillgrove- A Mining Outpost'; 29 November 1909, Reproduced in Tonkin, Henry, **Papers c1859-1937**, Mitchell Library, Sydney, FM 4/7446, Folio No. 108.

5 *ibid.*

6 **Hillgrove Guardian and New England Mining Gazette**, 12 January 1901, p. 2.

7 *op. cit.*, 7 September 1901, p. 2.

the debts on the church property were steadily diminishing... In connection with the debt on the parsonage, £40 had been paid off Mr. Henderson's loan during the year, and £5 off the Methodist loan fund. There was now a debt of £97 18/2 on the parsonage, to pay £72 10s of which they had 14 years, the balance, £25 8/2 was owing to Mr. Henderson which they hoped to wipe out by the next chrysanthemum show.⁸

Hillgrove eventually lost its ordained minister's position to Uralla, which had become an independent circuit. In April 1905, the Reverend J.S. Thomas was transferred to Uralla after a three year stay. In order to gain funds, the Hillgrove community eventually sold its parsonage and 'part of the money received from (this) sale... was spent in erecting a church vestry, and new stables, feed room and coach house'.⁹ The parsonage was sold 'privately' in April 1907 to Hillgrove chemist 'Mr. A.J. Hardwicke, for the sum of £206'.¹⁰ The balance of the funds was placed in a parsonage fund. These improvements were carried out at a cost of £163 during the period of the Reverend J.C. Hill's service in Armidale. In 1909 it was claimed, 'the church property, with these additions, and also a very fine acetylene gas plant, the gift of Mrs Robert Sharp, is equal to any other church property in the town'.¹¹

Typical of the Methodist movement, the church formed choral groups, a Sunday School and a temperance group, the Band of Good Hope, for the children. In May 1902, it was reported the 'Band of Good Hope has been resurrected at the local Methodist Church after being idle for some time'.¹²

Roman Catholic Church

Initially the Catholic priests conducted their services in the Centennial Hall at Hillgrove. Evidence of the religious harmony demonstrated in the town was an incident in November 1888 when the Catholic Priest found

⁸ op. cit., 22 October 1904, p. 2.

⁹ 'Methodism in New South Wales. Hillgrove- A Mining Outpost'; 29 November 1909, Reproduced in Tonkin, Henry, **Papers c1859-1937**, Mitchell Library, Sydney, FM 4/7446, Folio No. 108.

¹⁰ **Armidale Express**, 16 April 1907, p. 4.

¹¹ 'Methodism in New South Wales. Hillgrove- A Mining Outpost'; 29 November 1909, Reproduced in Tonkin, Henry, **Papers c1859-1937**, Mitchell Library, Sydney, FM 4/7446, Folio No. 108.

¹² **Hillgrove Guardian and New England Mining Gazette**, 24 May 1902, p. 2.

'that the Salvationists had already secured the building'.¹³ Mr Godfrey of the Salvation Army informed the priest that they 'would on this occasion waive their right to the hall. Accordingly the Catholic Services were held... and several of the Salvationists attended'.¹⁴

Property owner and investor Mr Brereton, after whom Brereton Street in Hillgrove was named, presented the Catholic Church in 1889 with an acre of land outside the eastern boundary of the township for the building of a church. As a result of the work of the very Rev. Dean O'Connor, with the co-operation of the Bishop, 'funds were quickly raised for the building, which stands on a very picturesque and rising ground, near the edge of a deep ravine'.¹⁵ Tenders for construction of the church were called, and by 27 August 1889, it was reported 'a tender for (the) building has been accepted, and as the site chosen is remarkably suitable we trust to shortly see the building as an accomplished fact'.¹⁶

The contractor for the chapel, Mr W. Morris, a Hillgrove builder, completed the building in just over two months. On Friday 8 November 1889, the Catholics celebrated the completion of the church by a tea meeting and dance. On the following Sunday, 'the building, which was densely packed, was consecrated by Bishop Torregiani who delivered a very impressive address on the occasion'.¹⁷

1891 was an important year for Armidale Bishop Torregiani and the Armidale Diocese. In January, he accompanied the Sisters of the Sacred Heart to their new convent in Inverell, and also helped establish the Sisters of St Joseph at Tingha, a small mining town situated close by Inverell. Tenders were then called in March 1891 for the construction of a small convent at Hillgrove for the Sisters of St Joseph. The newspaper correspondent commented, 'we understand that liberal support has already been promised towards the erection of the building... the plans of which are very tastefully arranged'.¹⁸ The Sisters quickly set about to provide catholic education in Hillgrove and a concert in aid of the convent school was organised in December 1891.

¹³ **Armidale Express**, 9 November 1888, p. 4.

¹⁴ *ibid.*

¹⁵ *op. cit.*, 26 May 1891, p. 8.

¹⁶ *op. cit.*, 27 August 1889, p. 4.

¹⁷ *op. cit.*, 15 November 1889, p. 4.

¹⁸ *op. cit.*, 20 March 1891, p. 4.

The church established a committee to raise funds for its building. This committee held a social in the Centennial Hall, and the 'Very Rev. Dean O'Connor (from Armidale) was present adding the lustre of his natural geniality to the enjoyment of the party'.¹⁹ The first Catholic Ball was held at the Centennial Hall in April 1894. 'There were about 50 couples present, and to the enlivening strains of the Hillgrove brass band, under the able conductorship of Mr H. McMahon, made it indeed a pleasure for the gyrating couples...'²⁰

On Wednesday 18 August 1897 the new Convent School, built by Mr W. Morris and designed by Armidale architect William Henderson Lee at a cost of £360, was opened. The school facilities were substantial, with the use of local timber and materials which were paid for by local subscription. The **Hillgrove Guardian** described the new building in detail:

The floor space of the hall itself is 69ft. by 27 ft... from floor to ceiling the height is 20 ft. and the walls are 14 ft. The building is well lit and ventilated; four large windows on each side, all with fanlights;... the bottom of the building is bell cased all round... A spacious porch with double entrance at the west end of the building further adds to its comfort, convenience and appearance.²¹

The stage, thirty three feet by twelve feet was to serve as the classroom and further finance was required to furnish the school and complete out-buildings. The occasion was marked by a ball and music provided by the McMahon band, so that dancing continued throughout the night. It was anticipated that the functions in the hall would help raise funds for the school.

Bishop Dean O'Connor from Armidale was concerned that local members of the church should take over the debt on the church property in Hillgrove. On Sunday 9 April 1899 in a meeting with the church committee, the Dean suggested that a bazaar and art union should be held to liquidate the debt on the school. On the following Sunday, the committee discussed a letter from the Bishop concerning this debt. Finally, in May the Bishop expressed his willingness to nominate as first guarantor, provided that all members of the committee also sign as guarantors. It was then moved at this meeting 'that

¹⁹ op. cit, 1 July 1892, p. 4.

²⁰ op. cit, 20 April 1894, p. 4.

²¹ **Hillgrove Guardian and New England Mining Gazette**, 21 August 1897, p. 3.

the church committee take over the debt on the church property, to relieve Dean O'Connor of the responsibility, and that the account be opened in the Hillgrove branch of the City Bank'.²²

At a general meeting held in the church on 28 April 1901, 'it was unanimously decided to open a subscription list to liquidate the debt on the school property.'²³ An amount of £12/6s- was collected and promised from those present. Two years later, efforts were still being made to liquidate the debt on the schoolroom. A highly successful bazaar was organised in March 1903 and the Rev. Father Walsh 'announced... the church debt (was reduced) from £138/2/3 to £59/3/3'.²⁴

The acceptance of the Sisters of St Joseph by the Hillgrove community, was demonstrated by the report of the highly successful Catholic social in the **Hillgrove Guardian**. The social was held in the convent school-room on the previous Monday evening in aid of the Sisters. The report stated:

The Sisters of St. Joseph, by their acts of charity and many kind offices have earned the respect and appreciation of the residents of Hillgrove; hence, when a social in their aid was announced a great gathering was the result. A noticeable and eminently commendable feature of the gathering was the fact that all denominations were liberally represented- a fact which is greatly to the credit of the townspeople, and at the same time shows the universal popularity of the Sisters.²⁵

The extent of the catholic population in the district was indicated by the highly successful mission week conducted by Father Leonard in October 1904. The Right Reverend Dr O'Connor presided at the final service on the Sunday evening at which nearly five hundred attended. The Bishop of Armidale,

congratulated the men, who had attended in such large numbers... He heartily thanked Revs. Father Leonard and LLOYD (the parish priest, who had assisted throughout), also the Sisters and the choir, who had all combined to make the Mission such a gratifying success.²⁶

²² **Hillgrove Catholic Church 1899-1904**. University of New England Archives, Dixson Library, No. V 2058.

²³ op. cit.

²⁴ **Hillgrove Guardian and New England Mining Gazette**, 11 April 1903, p. 2.

²⁵ op. cit., 24 October 1903, p. 2.

²⁶ op. cit., 15 October 1904, p. 3.

The Sisters of St Joseph continued to provide education in the town and newspaper reports illustrated the significance and contribution of the Order. At the end of each year, the convent provided a school concert and one such concert was held on the evening of Wednesday 2 November 1918 in the School of Arts Hall. 'The programme submitted was highly appreciated by the large attendance'.²⁷

Inevitably the convent closed and in June 1922 tenders were called for the sale of: '1. R.C. Convent of Hillgrove, consisting of 9 Rooms, W.B. and lined. One very large dormitory. 2. R.C. School, W.B. and lined. A very large building'.²⁸ A tender submitted by Mr G. Collins was accepted for the removal of the convent hall to Dangarsleigh in July 1922²⁹ while the church eventually fell into disrepair and finally collapsed.

Salvation Army

Although the Salvation Army initially had no church to conduct services, they quickly established themselves in the rapidly developing town. The correspondent of the **Armidale Express** reported that the 'Salvation Army were hard at work in the Centennial Hall on a Saturday evening in March 1889'.³⁰ Two years later the Hillgrove contingent played a significant part in celebrations held for the Anniversary Day in Armidale on 26 January 1891. Contingents from Armidale, Hillgrove, Uralla and Glen Innes marched in the afternoon and then attended an open air meeting. Sergeant Major Lawlor of the Hillgrove Corps was one of the officers who addressed the gathering at the open air stand.

By early July 1891, the Salvation Army had built its barracks in Brackin Street in the area known as Salvation Hill opposite the recreation ground. The **Armidale Express** announced, 'On Tuesday next a Salvation Army demonstration, in connection with the new Barracks at Hillgrove, will take place on July 7, when the famous Guard's Band, No 1, will be in attendance'.³¹

²⁷ **Armidale Chronicle**, 9 November 1918, p. 3.

²⁸ **Armidale Express**, 16 June 1922, p. 5.

²⁹ **Armidale Chronicle**, 21 June 1922, p. 3.

³⁰ **Armidale Express**, 19 March 1889, p. 4.

³¹ op. cit., 3 July 1891, p. 8.

The Salvation Army was ready at all times to seize the opportunity for a captive audience. An opportune occasion arose at a political meeting on the evening of Saturday 11 July 1891 in the Centennial Hall at Hillgrove. Politicians Messrs Meallin and Wilson attempted to thank the electors,

who had voted for them, but the night was a wild one, and there was no chance of a political meeting, so the candidates considerably handed over the Hall to the Salvation Army for a night's meeting.³²

The public display of open-air preaching and band music caused dismay in nearby towns of Armidale and Uralla. Early in 1887 some Armidale residents expressed outrage towards the Salvation Army in public meetings. The contemporary newspaper reports of Hillgrove do not indicate that these townspeople shared the same degree of concern, although some feeling was expressed; 'the Salvation Army caused a great sensation here on Tuesday evening by parading the streets and giving an open air performance, followed by an in-floor meeting'.³³

Tragedy struck the organisation on Sunday 17 June 1894 when the private residence of Captain and Mrs Stead was totally destroyed by fire. The **Armidale Express** wrote that 'a big blaze was seen at the back of the Salvation Army barracks'.³⁴

The Salvation Army was aware of the medical as well as the spiritual needs of the community. In January 1898 Mr W.H. Hutton presented a magic lantern entertainment in the army barracks. 'The object of the entertainment was to get sufficient funds to entitle the Salvation Army to one free bed in the hospital for the ensuing year'.³⁵ Combined with assistance from the Oddfellows and the Foresters, the proceeds were £11, 'just 20s over the required amount'.³⁶

The Army, along with a number of other organisations, constantly worked for the hospital fund-raising effort. In February 1901, they

32 op. cit., 17 July 1891, p. 4.

33 op. cit., 22 December 1893, p. 4.

34 op. cit., 26 June 1894, p. 5.

35 **Hillgrove Guardian and New England Mining Gazette**, 22 January 1898, p. 2.

36 *ibid.*

organised a special Sunday meeting for the hospital in the recreation ground, followed by 'a Lantern Service at the Barracks in the evening'.³⁷ Later that month they shared fundraising with the Protestant Alliance Purple Border Lodge; 'the £10 to be devoted to securing a bed in the Hospital the benefit of which will be shared by the two societies'.³⁸

The Salvation Army was interested in the promotion of a wide range of cultural and aesthetic activities including: frequent magic lantern entertainments; lectures; musical blizzards; the Biorama Company travelling under the auspices of the Salvation Army; splendid lantern and cinematographic entertainment by the Salvation Army Bioscope Company; the Austral Guards' band; Major Hoares' acetylene lantern exhibition and picnics.

Apart from entertainment and activities organised by the Salvation Army, the Salvation Baracks was often lent to other religious groups including the Wesleyan and Church of England churches for fund-raising, magic lantern shows and tea-meetings. Such co-operation demonstrated the religious tolerance within the community. The Salvation Army Band also took part in various marches and celebrations in the township.

Although the Barracks was moved to Armidale in August 1917, the Army still contributed to the Hillgrove war effort. A group known as the Sunbeam Choristers performed at the Salvation Hall at Armidale then travelled to Hillgrove to perform on the evening of Thursday 1 November 1917 to raise funds for the Salvation Army's war and rescue funds. At the time, Lieutenant Douglas was the Salvation Officer at Hillgrove.

Presbyterian Church

In 1891, the following gentlemen were 'elected and appointed as Trustees for the (Presbyterian) Church Land and Cemetery at Hillgrove: Matthew Morgan, storekeeper, William Taylor, mining manager and George Nix, news agent'.³⁹ Prior to the construction of a Presbyterian church, church members organised fund-raising for this project. On Friday 13 May 1892, the first activity occurred when a bazaar and sale of fancy goods was

³⁷ op. cit., 9 February 1901, p. 2.

³⁸ op. cit., 16 February 1901, p. 1.

³⁹ **New South Wales Government Gazette**, Volume 3, Sydney, 1891, p. 4503.

opened by the Reverend P. McQueen in the Centennial Hall. In his address, 'the Rev. gentleman spoke in very high terms of the valuable assistance rendered by the Presbyterians of Hillgrove, more especially by Mr and Mrs W. Morgan'.⁴⁰ This bazaar was followed by a concert and dance for young people on the following Monday evening. At the conclusion of the concert, the Reverend Dr. Thomas Johnstone of Armidale stated that 'a promising fund has been established, ere-long it is expected a suitable church will be erected'.⁴¹

Funds were raised for the church by such activities as the function held in May 1895 when 'a tea meeting and concert... (was held) in aid of the Presbyterian Church Building fund'.⁴² The church was completed by Hillgrove builder, Robert Morrow, and formally opened by the Rev. Dr. Johnstone of Armidale on Sunday 4 October 1896. The correspondent writing in *The Armidale Chronicle* of 10 October 1896 described the church as a 'building which is of a substantial and comfortable character'. In November 1898, further improvements were planned when tenders were called for the erection of a picket fence around the Presbyterian Church.⁴³

Despite a relatively small population in Hillgrove, the Presbyterian congregation won the respect of the community. The correspondent in the *Hillgrove Guardian* in August 1897 bears witness to this: they are 'ever ready with their help for other denominations, (and) are making an effort to wipe out a debt of about £300 on the church and the organ therein'.⁴⁴

The Presbyterians set out to establish education for children in Sunday Schools and to develop musical talent in the community. In December 1897 the Presbyterian Sunday School celebrated their 'first anniversary soiree'.⁴⁵ Further evidence of the town's religious harmony was witnessed when the Salvation Army made their barracks available for the function. Similarly a church choir was formed and it was conducted by highly skilled musicians.

Due to its declining population, Hillgrove was combined with the nearby district Kilcoy. In October 1908, the Presbyterians of Hillgrove and

⁴⁰ *Armidale Express*, 20 May 1892, p. 5.

⁴¹ *ibid.*

⁴² *op. cit.*, 24 May 1895, p. 4.

⁴³ *Hillgrove Guardian and New England Mining Gazette*, 29 October 1898, p. 3.

⁴⁴ *op. cit.*, 14 August 1897, p. 2.

⁴⁵ *op. cit.*, 18 December 1897, p. 2.

its surrounding district witnessed 'the induction of the first settled minister-Rev. G.A. Hill M.A.- into the newly-erected charge of Hillgrove-Kilcoy'⁴⁶ in the Manchester Unity Hall at Hillgrove. Today, the small wooden structure still stands within the town.

Church of England

Initial moves to establish the Church of England in Hillgrove took place in June 1889 during a meeting to secure a clergyman. Two businessmen, John Moore and John Bliss travelled from Armidale to attend the meeting, 'and after some discussion it was resolved to seek the services of a clergyman who would attend at the Mines once a fortnight or oftener, if possible'.⁴⁷ Two years later, at a meeting of the Church of England parishioners held in September, it was decided 'to build a church at once'.⁴⁸ John Bliss forwarded five guineas towards the building fund of the church in October 1891. A large number of church-goers attended the meeting in the following year to receive tenders for building the church; the tender of Martin and Dean being accepted, complete with painting for £138 6s 6d. 'It was announced that the money now in hand amounted to £123 10d'.⁴⁹

Early in July 1892, the members of the church and the Church Building Committee met in the residence of Reverend Pearce 'for the purpose of taking over the building from the contractors and paying for same'.⁵⁰ Situated at the corner of Stella and Isabella Streets, the new Church of England was opened on Sunday 4 September 1892, with morning and afternoon services conducted by the Rev. F. Witherby. A tea meeting and entertainment followed on the Monday afternoon, and 'at the conclusion of the entertainment Mr J.T. French, architect, of Armidale, who very kindly prepared the plans and specifications free of charge, was heartily thanked'.⁵¹ The Church of St George opened with a debt of £38 1s 3d.

In May 1895, the members of the church took steps to erect a vicarage, and in that month organised a bazaar to raise funds. Two years

⁴⁶ **Armidale Express**, 23 October 1908, p. 4.

⁴⁷ *op. cit.*, 14 June 1889, p. 4.

⁴⁸ *op. cit.*, 22 September 1891, p. 5.

⁴⁹ *op. cit.*, 5 April 1892 p. 5.

⁵⁰ *op. cit.*, 5 July 1892, p. 5.

⁵¹ *op. cit.*, 9 September 1892, p. 5.

later, a sub-committee presented a report to a special meeting of the Parochial Council. It was revealed that,

the purchase of six acres of land will be completed at once and steps taken... (in) providing a vicarage to cost between £200 and £33, towards which £60 is in hand. It was resolved to at once open subscription lists to get in a further £100...⁵²

Early tenders were invited for the erection of the building in July 1897, but a delay obviously occurred because the clerk of works, John Francis O'Connor, called new tenders from carpenters to complete the vicarage in March 1898. William Henderson Lee, the official architect for the Anglican Diocese of Armidale and Grafton, prepared the plans, and the contract price for £233 from Robert Morrow, was accepted. During the church's annual meeting in May 1898, the secretary Mr Simpson announced 'the vicarage was now completed and the best efforts of the council would now be required to clear off the debt involved'.⁵³ As a result of 'progress with the vicarage', the Diocesan Council 'declared Hillgrove and surrounding district a parish, thus adding to the importance of church life'.⁵⁴

The vicar, Reverend Lionel Nye expressed his concern at the 1899 annual meeting:

Something had must be done towards reducing the debt on the Vicarage. The amount raised for that purpose during the past year only amounted to £28 5s 5d, this vicarage debt... concerns the whole of the parish.⁵⁵

The first vicar of Hillgrove, the Reverend Charles Phillip Lionel Nye left for his new parish on the Tweed River in August 1900. His successor, the Rev. E.J. Dodd from the South Clarence was unmarried, and the Trustees 'decided to let the premises (the vicarage) for a term'.⁵⁶ In their advertisement, the Trustees described the vicarage as 'unquestionably the best dwelling in Hillgrove'.⁵⁷

⁵² op. cit., 25 May 1897, p. 4.

⁵³ **Hillgrove Guardian and New England Mining Gazette**, 7 May 1898, p. 3.

⁵⁴ *ibid.*

⁵⁵ op. cit., 29 April 1899, p. 3.

⁵⁶ op. cit., 25 August 1900, p. 2.

⁵⁷ op. cit., 4 September 1900, p. 3.

St George's Church of England organised annual picnics for the Sunday School children. A short service was held at the church then children marched to the recreation ground. In May 1911 there was 'an abundance of choice viands' for the many children and,

the members and friends of the Parochial Guild again kindly provided afternoon tea in another part of the ground for visitors and parents, of whom quite a number were present after dinner. The sports... were superintended by Mr Albert Curtis, and the Rev. J. Auchinleck-Ross, with the teachers, Messrs Gardiner and Teague...⁵⁸

The reporter in the **Armidale Chronicle** described the function as one of the most successful events of its kind, despite the long depression in Hillgrove.

St John's Theological College Glee Club travelled from Armidale to give a concert on the evening of Wednesday 13 May 1914, at 8 p.m. in the School of Arts Hall in aid of the St George Church. The group travelled in two of Armidale businessman Mr Keifer's motor cars, visited the mines in the afternoon and had tea at Mrs Sulling's **Commercial Hotel** at 6 p.m. The twenty performers included the Warden Reverend A.H. Garnsey, sixteen students and three ladies; including soprano Miss Rutledge, mezzo-soprano Miss Hern, and accompanist Miss Calder. Despite the quality of the performance by the Armidale group and Hillgrove performers, 'the attendance was only fair'.⁵⁹

The War Effort of the Churches

At the commencement of the Great War, the patriotism of the town was reflected in the war work of each church, despite a decline in population. Significant Anzac Day services were always held in the Anglican, Presbyterian, Roman Catholic and Methodist churches. The churches continued their religious and pastoral work in the community during the period of the war, although the Salvation Army Barracks was removed to Armidale in August 1917.

⁵⁸ **Armidale Chronicle**, 20 May 1911, p. 6.

⁵⁹ **Armidale Express**, 22 May 1914, p. 10.

The Hillgrove-Kilcoy Presbyterian Church organised Scottish Patriotic Fairs, and one such celebration took place in October 1915. At that fair, competitions took place, an art gallery was held and stalls were organised to represent all the allied countries taking part in the war. The fierce patriotism was evident in the newspaper report of the fair, which stated, 'an opportunity will be largely available to "Bomb the Kaiser's Korus" while they sing "We want hate, and we won't wait"'.⁶⁰ In August 1917, the ladies of the Hillgrove church, 'formed themselves into a War Work League for the purpose of making and sending comforts to the men of the Presbyterian Church... who are on active service'.⁶¹

On Sunday 5 August 1917, a special war commemoration service was held in the Methodist Church. The service was conducted by Mr George Gray and it was reported:

the service was most inspiring, the hymns, reading, and other anthems, together with prayers, seemed to bring the congregation to a very subdued frame of mind, as they faced the realities of life and God's law.⁶²

Despite the war, the Church of England still organised its annual celebration spring flower show, industrial exhibition, and sale of works and gifts in the School of Arts. In November 1915, the Mayor of Hillgrove, Alderman George Hardie Jones explained the 'object of the effort, (was) to assist the finances of the Hillgrove portion of the Church in these hard times... in spite of the constant exodus of the people'.⁶³ Two years later, the newspaper described a very successful flower show, exhibition, and sale of works. However the account also referred to the parishioners, 'who now are only a few'.⁶⁴

While it would be extremely difficult to compare the war effort of one group against another, there can be no doubt about the enormous contribution of the Anglican Auchinleck-Ross family of Hillgrove. The Rev. J. Auchinleck-Ross became Staff Chaplain of the Northern Military District in 1914 and he was totally committed to the war-effort. Each day, the bell would toll once at

⁶⁰ **Armidale Chronicle**, 16 October 1915, p. 10.

⁶¹ *op. cit.*, 1 September 1917, p. 10.

⁶² *op. cit.*, 11 August 1917, p. 10.

⁶³ *op. cit.*, 24 November 1915, p. 10.

⁶⁴ *op. cit.*, 5 December 1917, p. 7.

12 o'clock as a constant reminder of the war. Religion was inter-related to the war-effort. This was demonstrated in the description of the special Anzac Day service held in April 1916 at the church,

with the ceremonial unveiling and dedication of the beautiful memorial brass tablet in memory of the late Sergeant William Marshall Morgan... (killed in the Dardanelles). He was the first parishioner to lay down his life in this war'.⁶⁵

Such commitment was also evident in the service which took place on Sunday 5 August 1917.

The altar was beautifully decked with flowers: the Union Jack and Australian flags employed to drape the pulpit, a Union Jack being also festooned over the memorial-brass in memory of the first New England soldier to fall.⁶⁶

The daughters of Reverend Auchinleck-Ross reflected his commitment by organising a knitting class at Hillgrove. By August 1915 it was reported, 'quite a large band of workers now meet weekly at the Vicarage for the purpose of knitting socks for soldiers'.⁶⁷ During the year ended 30 September 1917, the members of the knitting class produced:

599 articles for distribution to our soldiers, viz. 541 pairs of socks, 19 scarves, 21 Balaclavas, 18 washers, which have been sent to the following: The local branch of the Red Cross, The War Chest, 33rd. Battalion Comforts' Fund, and the French-Australian League of Help.⁶⁸

The significant contribution of the vicarage knitting class to the war effort can be determined from the correspondence⁶⁹ of Miss Magdalene Auchinleck-Ross, acknowledging the following donations:

Year	Acknowledged by	Pairs of Socks
1915	Comforts Fund, Armidale	100
1916	33rd. Battalion Comforts Fund	102
1916	Anzac Day Gift, Gallipoli Soldiers	69
1916	War Chest (Supply Chest), Sydney	80

⁶⁵ op. cit., 22 April 1916, p. 10.

⁶⁶ op. cit., 11 August 1917, p. 10.

⁶⁷ op. cit., 28 August 1915, p. 5.

⁶⁸ op. cit., 6 October 1917, p. 10.

⁶⁹ Records compiled by Dr. Lionel Gilbert, former Director of the New England Historical Resources Centre, C.B. Newling Centre, University of New England.

1917	French-Australian League of Help	50
1917	War Chest Comforts Fund, Sydney	100
1918	War Chest Special Appeal	103
1918	Local Red Cross Society	30
	Total:	634

At the farewell to Rev. J. Auchinleck-Ross held in the Oddfellows' Hall in Hillgrove on Friday 10 May 1919, Miss Auchinleck-Ross detailed the winding up of the knitting class. On behalf of her sister Magdalene, she stated,

we feel that it has served its day and purpose... I am dividing the balance of the money between the local Red Cross Society and the Girls' Patriotic League. The spinning wheel, kindly given to the Class by Mrs Mulligan, I intend to hand over to the Red Cross Society.⁷⁰

Following the war effort, and the effects on the town of declining business and population, the churches took varied action concerning their individual futures. During the war, the Salvation Army Barracks had been moved to Armidale in August 1917. In May 1919, the Anglican Cathedral Council in Armidale announced a 'proposal to take over the Hillgrove district, and to attach it to the Armidale Parish'.⁷¹ In the following month, the Parish raised £280 for a car to be used by the Archdeacon and the announcement was made; 'Hillgrove will very soon be taken over' and 'the car will be presently required'.⁷² The Hillgrove members of the Methodist Church were asked to meet with five Armidale delegates from the Commission of the Quarterly Meeting at the church in March 1920; 'to consider the best means of dealing with the prevalent conditions as affecting the work of the Hillgrove Methodist Church'.⁷³ Eventually it was decided to move the church to Guyra.

In time all churches were removed from Hillgrove, apart from the Presbyterian Church which still stands. The Convent School building became the Dangarsleigh Community Hall near Armidale; the Catholic Church building fell into disrepair while the Anglican St George Church was removed to East Armidale to a site at the corner of Mann and Canambe Streets, later to be burnt down by a vandal.

⁷⁰ **Armidale Chronicle**, 17 May 1919, p. 10.

⁷¹ **Armidale Express**, 9 May 1919, p. 4.

⁷² *op. cit.*, 20 June 1919, p. 4.

⁷³ **Armidale Chronicle**, 20 March 1920, p. 4.

CHAPTER 7

THE HOTELS

George Smith's discovery of the Big Reef at the foot of the Baker's Creek Gorge in March 1887 brought a dramatic increase in Hillgrove's population. Subsequently there arose an urgent need for accommodation in boarding houses and hotels. By the middle of October 1887, a boarding house conducted by Mr Bowers was available. Within two weeks, it was full and he was 'putting additions to the dwelling in order to afford more accommodation to his patrons'.¹ The newspaper correspondent also expressed other needs:

a drop of good Jamaica rum would now put a little life in us- not the raw Queensland article, but a spirit that could cause a man to sleep without seeing blue devils and snakes'.²

Of significance in Hillgrove was the number of hotels eventually built; six in all, with one **Temperance Hotel**; and two hotels in West Hillgrove, later named Metz. These buildings provided urgently needed accommodation for miners and the many travellers and investors who visited the town. In July 1884, Hugh McKellar, formerly the publican of the **Criterion Hotel** in Beardy Street, Armidale, announced that he had obtained a licence for the **Post Office Hotel** and stated 'others will now find First-class accommodation there'.³ McKellar also conducted a general store in premises alongside the hotel. Prior to this successful application for the publican's licence, two applications had been made by Hugh McKellar. At the meeting of the Licensing Court held in Armidale on 16 April 1884,

Mr Kearney (an Armidale solicitor) for the applicant asked to withdraw the application, as population had not settled at the mines at the rate that was anticipated, and the circumstances were consequently little different now to what they were when a previous application was refused. The bench permitted the withdrawal of the application.⁴

Hugh McKellar left Hillgrove to return to business as licensee of the **Criterion Hotel** in Armidale, and Patrick John Fant became the licensee of the **Post Office Hotel** on 9 July 1886. Fant was also Postmaster in

1 **Armidale Express**, 28 October 1887, p. 3.

2 *op. cit.*, 14 October 1887, p. 3.

3 *op. cit.*, 11 July 1884, p. 5.

4 *op. cit.*, 18 April 1884, p. 2.

Hillgrove but in June 1888 a dispute arose between himself and the Postal Department; as a result, he tendered his resignation. The Postal Inspector visited Hillgrove and reported,

Mr F.B Wade Hotel proprietor and an old mail contractor offers to undertake the duties and provide accommodation in a convenient building near his hotel until some person is appointed. As it is, many people prefer their letters and papers being left at "Wade's Hotel" rather than go through the Post Office.⁵

Fant was reinstated despite the fact that his wife wanted the Post Office to be removed as it interfered 'with the public house business'.⁶ In October 1889, Fant decided to retire from business and instructed Charles Wilson, auctioneers of Armidale, to auction the premises on Monday 4 November 1889. The **Armidale Express** announced:

The Well-known and Old-Established Business and Premises, known as the "Post Office Hotel", containing 21 Rooms, together with the Allotment of 3/4 acre on which the premises are built, held under a business license, and which may be converted into a freehold at any time.

The Property, Furniture, and Effects will be sold in one line, or the property separately... ⁷

The auction was unsuccessful so the hotel was offered for private sale. Unfortunately Fant, aged forty, died after a short illness in November 1889 after taking ill on a trip to Tamworth. He contracted enteric fever and was brought back to Armidale but 'although the services of Dr. Mallam were secured...(he) never rallied'.⁸ Following the death of her husband, Margaret Fant became the licensee. The **Armidale Chronicle** announced the death of Mrs Fant in February 1899.⁹

In January 1891, Henry William Trim, a member of the Trim family in Armidale, applied to the Local Land Board to purchase a block of land, allotment 4 of section 31, which contained a ten room house and stable to the

⁵ **Hillgrove Post Office History**, Researched and written by the N.S.W. Historical Officer, Australia Post, Undated, p. 4.

⁶ op. cit., p. 5.

⁷ **Armidale Express**, 18 October 1889, p. 5.

⁸ op. cit., 26 November 1889, p. 4.

⁹ **Armidale Chronicle**, 8 February 1899, p. 3.

value of £75.¹⁰ He became the licensee of the **Post Office Hotel** in July of the same year. Trim was formerly licensee of the: **Star Hotel**, (later known as the **West End**), at the corner of Beardy and Butler streets, Armidale, from 1882 to 1886; the **Steam Engine Hotel** (later known as the **Grand**), at the corner of Ohio and Rusden streets, from 1886 to 1888, and the **Great Northern Hotel** (later known as the **Crown**) at the corner of Rusden and Jessie streets, Armidale. Castlemaine Brewery and Wood Bros. Company of Newcastle purchased allotments 2 and 4 of section 4 from John Middleton and Henry Trim in 1891. In August, James L. White an architect of Armidale, invited tenders 'for additions and repairs to the Post Office Hotel'¹¹ for the above company and they offered the hotel for auction in March 1892. At the time of sale, the advertisement described the hotel in the following way:

The POST OFFICE HOTEL, Hillgrove, together with allotments 2 and 4 of Section 31... The Hotel has just been re-built, and is therefore in first-class order and repair. Contains 10 Bedrooms, 4 Parlours, Bar, Dining-room, Kitchen, Stables and Shed, underground Tank, 2 large Iron Tanks, and every convenience. The title is freehold, and the whole including Ground, Buildings, and Furniture will be Sold as a going concern...¹²

Edward Keough, the publican who established the **Tattersall's Hotel** in Hillgrove in 1889, purchased the hotel in September 1892 by mortgage from the Newcastle brewery company. He was granted a hotel licence in July 1892 and changed the name from the **Post Office** to the **Eleanora Hotel** because of its proximity to the Eleanora Mine at the southern end of Brackin Street. The licence was later transferred to Ernest Henry Walter Robinson in February 1895. The hotel was later taken over by Edward C. McNamara in 1897 but the hotel-keeper was declared bankrupt in March 1901. In court he 'attributed his insolvency to losses in trade, falling off in business, and sickness of himself and family'.¹³

William Richard James Sims and his wife purchased the hotel in December 1901 but in October 1906 they chose to leave the hotel industry and advertised the **Eleanora Hotel** for sale with half an acre of free-hold

¹⁰ **Register of Applications to purchase land on Gold Fields in Virtue of Improvements- Local Land Board**, Archives, Dixson Library, University of New England, No. 33/5136.

¹¹ **Armidale Express**, 14 August 1891, p. 8.

¹² op. cit., 26 February 1892, p. 8.

¹³ **Hillgrove Guardian and New England Mining Gazette**, 4 May 1901, p. 2.

land as a going concern. It was reported, 'the Eleanora Hotel... has recently been renovated, and has quite an attractive external appearance. Mr and Mrs Sims have worked up a really good business'.¹⁴ Despite these reports of an intended sale, the Sims family continued to conduct the hotel until their departure from Hillgrove in May 1913. Martha Murgatroyd, a widow from Metz, took over the licence in November 1913.

The second hotel in Hillgrove, the **Miners' Arms** in Brackin Street, was opened by Francis Brennan Wade; formerly landlord of the **Victoria Hotel**, (later known as the **Langham**) in Beardy Street, Armidale. The **Armidale Express** commented,

We wish Mr Wade every success in his new venture, although he will be much missed in Armidale, as he has always taken much interest in sporting and other matters calculated to benefit the town and district.¹⁵

The hotel was opened on 10 February 1888 with 'a great ball... on the same night as the Centennial Hall...' and the reporter in the **Armidale Express** continued, 'there will be plenty of "fizz" and soda, and, what is more there will be plenty of room'.¹⁶ On 4 September 1888, Wade applied to the Local Land Board to purchase allotment 10 of section 3 which contained the hotel valued at £900.¹⁷ He quickly emerged as a community person and in January 1889, sponsored a sports carnival at Hillgrove.

Despite its reported roominess, Wade had to alter his hotel in the following year. Such additions were obviously caused by the demand for extra accommodation and by June 1889 he had 'made some good and necessary alterations to his hotel'.¹⁸ At the same time, Wade applied to the Licensing Court in Armidale 'for permission to change the sign of his hotel from the "Miner's Arms" to "The Bakers Creek Hotel"' but this application was refused.¹⁹ By July, the correspondent reported that 'the new premises of Mr. Frank Wade's are just about completed, and will prove a very great convenience to the public. Mr. Wade deserves credit for his enterprising

14 op. cit., 11 October 1906, p. 2.

15 **Armidale Express**, 29 November 1887, p. 4.

16 op. cit., 10 February 1888, p. 3.

17 **Register of Applications to purchase land on Gold Fields in Virtue of Improvements- Local Land Board**, Archives, Dixson Library, University of New England, No. 33/5134.

18 **Armidale Express**, 25 June 1889, p. 4.

19 *ibid.*

energy'.²⁰ Three days later, the correspondent reported 'Mr Frank Wade, the genial host of the Miner's Arms, has added a fine dining room to his hotel premises'.²¹ In July 1897, R.J. Sims secured the hotel and Wade moved to the **Australian Hotel** at the corner of Marsh and Barney Streets, Armidale, where he took over the licence on 5 July 1897. Sadly a long period of illness culminated in the death of Francis Wade on Saturday 15 November 1902. News of his death was received in Hillgrove with great sorrow and the correspondent in the **Armidale Chronicle** commented:

The deceased gentleman was well and favourably known in Hillgrove, and his many and kindly deeds will long be remembered. The writer knew him for 30 years, and will always, with others, cherish the kindest thoughts of poor old Frank Wade.²²

Meanwhile in 1899, the **Miners' Arms** hotel had a new proprietress, Mrs Nellie Sophia Taylor, who 'effected very great improvements both inside and outside the hotel...'²³ In December 1900, James Wayte secured the hotel 'centrally situated between the Post Office and Borough Council chambers'²⁴ and he announced in an advertisement 'that he intends to make it the Miners Home'.²⁵ Wayte eventually moved to Armidale in July 1904 to become the licensee of the **Victoria Hotel**, and later managed the **Club Hotel** in Marsh Street from 1907 to his death in 1915.

'One of the oldest miners on the Hillgrove Field'²⁶ Patrick Dennis Ryan, became proprietor of the **Miners' Arms** in July 1904. In 1888 he had established a three times weekly coach service between Armidale and Hillgrove and later developed a mail service to Hillgrove. The **Hillgrove Guardian** described Ryan as,

an old and valued employee of the Bakers Creek G.M. Co... Mr Ryan intends to keep good liquors, and pay every attention to the wants and comforts of his patrons. The genial host of the Miner's Arms, being an ardent "sport", intends to carry out quoit

20 **Armidale Express**, 9 July 1889, p. 4.

21 op. cit., 12 July 1889, p. 4.

22 **Armidale Chronicle**, 19 November 1902, p. 4.

23 **Hillgrove Guardian and New England Mining Gazette**, 1 April 1899, p. 2.

24 op. cit., 29 December 1900, p. 2.

25 op. cit., 30 March 1901, p. 3.

26 op. cit., 2 July 1904, p. 3.

matches, wrestling contests, and other manly sport from time to time'.²⁷

The hotel was again offered for sale in April 1906 by Mrs Sarah Jane Wade, widow of Frank Brennan Wade who had obviously managed the freehold of the property till that date. The advertisement indicated the type of commodious hotel, typical of those constructed in Hillgrove:

One Half Acre of Freehold Land situated in Brackin Street... containing 16 Bedrooms, 6 Parlours, 2 Large Dining Rooms, Billiard Room, 2 Kitchens, Bath Room, Wash House, New 4 Stall Stable, Coach and Buggy Houses, Large Hall.²⁸

The property was not sold and Patrick Denis Ryan was still listed as licensee of the hotel in 1907 and Sarah Jane Wade returned as licensee from the **Australian Hotel**, at the corner of Marsh and Barney Streets in Armidale, in the following year. She died in July 1908 and Mary McNamara became the licensee. In June 1909 a successful application was made to the Licensing Court by J.T. McNamara, the executor of the estate, to allow Thomas J. O'Brien to carry the licence on. He managed the hotel until 1916.

On 22 October 1888, John Crough was granted a conditional licence for a hotel. He acted quickly to have a hotel completed and the **Armidale Express** announced in December 1888, 'not far above Wades, is a commodious building in course of erection for Mr Crough.'²⁹ In January of the following year, John Crough became the licensee of the premises to be known as the **Hillgrove Hotel** in Brackin Street, opposite the Post Office. A new licensee, Maria Wakeham, transferred from the Armidale **Star Hotel** in September 1891 and managed the hotel until October 1893, when the licence was transferred to William Jesse Judge. However, the hotel was taken over by John Crough (Junior) in December 1893 and in April of the following year he made additions to the front of the building 'to make a very imposing feature in our main street.'³⁰ In August 1894, he transferred to the **Tattersalls Hotel** established in February 1892 at West Hillgrove, to replace John Crough (Senior), who in turn became the licensee of the **Hillgrove Hotel**. Many improvements were made to the building including a 'handsome front' addition to extend the building to the footpath alignment,

27 *ibid.*

28 *op. cit.*, 31 March 1906, p. 3.

29 **Armidale Express**, 14 December 1888, p. 7.

30 *op. cit.*, 10 April 1894, p. 4.

'while various alterations in the interior' gave 'the place a really metropolitan appearance'.³¹ William Sims secured the hotel in 1896 and William Judge took it over again in June 1898, when the hotel was described 'as completely renovated' with 'everything in first-class order.'³² The **Hillgrove Guardian** described William Judge,

as a manager has been most successful and from his genial manner, good business habits, and readiness to join in any movement likely to make the town progress or promote the welfare of its inhabitants; he should be a successful host at the "Hillgrove" where he invites and awaits the patronage of all his old friends and as many new ones as like to come along.³³

Two years later, the **Hillgrove Hotel** was connected to the central billiard room; a room which was fitted out with electric lights in March 1899 and placed in charge of the popular marker Mr Edward McCrohon. McCrohon had originally established a billiard room, shop and dwelling valued at £450, in September 1889 in Hillgrove on allotment 1 of section 31³⁴ near the **Post Office Hotel**. The proprietor Judge, also arranged for all the latest possible sporting news to be posted at the hotel.

In March 1902, John Crough returned to Hillgrove to take over the hotel. For the previous four years he had been the proprietor of the **Tattersalls Hotel** at Metz. From publican records held in the Archives at Dixson Library, University of New England, it appeared that there was to be an exchange of licences between the publican, William J. Judge of the **Hillgrove Hotel** and John Crough of the **Tattersalls Hotel** at Metz. Despite this proposed arrangement, Michael Crough, the son of John (Snr.), became the new publican of the **Tattersalls Hotel** at Metz and Judge disappeared from the hotel industry in Hillgrove because of his bankruptcy in August 1902.³⁵ The 'town is losing a genuine man; he was one of the foremost in all charitable and other movements, and it is hard luck that he did not

31 **Armidale Chronicle**, 15 September 1894, p. 7.

32 **Hillgrove Guardian and New England Mining Gazette**, 18 June 1898, p. 2.

33 *ibid.*

34 **Register of Applications to purchase land on Gold Fields in Virtue of Improvements- Local Land Board**, Archives, Dixson Library, University of New England, No. 33/5135.

35 William Judge of Metz, late of Hillgrove. **Bankruptcy Index**, 1888-1928. Reel No. 39, No. 15158, A.O. 2/9792.

prosper as he deserved'³⁶ lamented the **Hillgrove Guardian** at the loss of William Judge.

The lease of the hotel expired in February 1904 and the Australian Joint Stock Bank, mortgagee of the building, exercised its power of sale to Emily Millicent Crough, wife of John Crough (Jnr.)³⁷ Twelve months later, the property was transferred to John Crough. In September 1906, he was granted permission by the Licensing Court to carry out additions and alterations to the Hillgrove Hotel. This hotel was later renamed the **Post Office Hotel**, presumably because it was situated opposite Hillgrove's Post Office. It reappeared in the Government Gazette in January 1910 under the licensee, John Crough. He held the licence until the destruction of the building by fire on the evening of Saturday 9 August 1913. The wooden building of some twenty rooms was quickly engulfed when 'the primitive fire-fighting appliances at Hillgrove proved entirely inadequate'³⁸ as did the poor water supply. Apart from the hotel building, the fire also destroyed the hotel billiard-rooms and two small shops. In the same month, Crough successfully applied to the Licensing Court for 'permission to carry on his hotel license in temporary premises, near the Post Office'.³⁹ He conducted his business in these temporary premises until January 1914, when a further successful application was made to the Licensing Court for a transfer of the licence to his premises at Metz. The police made no objections to the application and 'a billiard license was also granted'.⁴⁰

The town of Hillgrove developed rapidly in 1889 and in April, the **Armidale Express** reported:

Hillgrove is still increasing in its population. Business of all kinds seems to be improving. Licenses have been granted to Mr J. Gearin, formerly of Broken Hill and Mr Keough for hotels, and, by the plans, they will be substantial brick buildings.⁴¹

³⁶ **Hillgrove Guardian and New England Mining Gazette**, 29 March 1902, p. 2.

³⁷ Land Titles Office, Sydney, Volume 1017, Folio 174.

³⁸ **Armidale Express**, 12 August 1913, p. 4.

³⁹ **Armidale Chronicle**, 23 August 1913, p. 3.

⁴⁰ op. cit., 17 January 1914, p. 8. In newspapers reports and official correspondence of the time, license was spelt in this way instead of the present form, licence.

⁴¹ **Armidale Express**, 16 April 1889, p. 4.

By March 1889, visitors who arrived to inspect the mining operations still found it difficult to obtain accommodation. But the Hillgrove newspaper correspondent in the **Armidale Express** reflected the optimism of the time concerning the future of the town. 'Hillgrove will undoubtedly have a very great future- it being only in its infancy at present. Why should it not eventually become as important a place as Broken Hill?'⁴²

A month later, an application was made by Edward Keough for a conditional licence for a hotel in Hillgrove. Keough was licensee of the **Victoria Hotel** in Beardy street, Armidale from February to the end of September 1888. In October he commenced running a daily van between Armidale and Hillgrove; the booking office was Mr Wood's **Victoria Hotel**.⁴³ On 30 November 1888, Keough applied to the Local Land Board at Armidale for the purchase of allotment No 10 of section 20, which contained a 'three roomed house, Galvanized Iron, partly brick with boards (valued at) £60'.⁴⁴

Another month passed and the **Armidale Express** carried an advertisement⁴⁵ for tenders for erection of the **Tattersalls Hotel**, a two storey building, at Hillgrove. Within five months, the special correspondent from Hillgrove, after making an inspection, was able to 'congratulate the proprietor upon his nicely furnished and remarkably compact building, while the Messrs Harper Bros, contractors, also deserve great praise'.⁴⁶ Following construction of the hotel, the conditional licence granted to the proprietor on Tuesday 9 July was confirmed in the Licensing Court in October 1889. In November, the licence was transferred to James Robinson and celebrations were held for the opening of the **Tattersalls Hotel** on Friday 1 November 1889. 'After ample justice had been done to the liberal display of viands, Mr Wescott (the chairman) proposed the health of the host...'⁴⁷ The hotel was described as a fine new house and the company of guests dispersed at about 11 p.m. after a most enjoyable evening.

42 op. cit., 12 March 1889, p. 2.

43 op. cit., 5 October 1888, p. 5.

44 **Register of Applications to purchase land on Gold Fields in Virtue of Improvements- Local Land Board**, Archives, Dixon Library, University of New England, No. 33/5134.

45 **Armidale Express**, 21 May 1889 p. 5.

46 op. cit., 22 October 1889 p. 4.

47 op. cit., 5 November 1889, p. 4.

On 5 November 1889, Robinson applied to the Local Land Board to purchase the land on which the hotel stood. In the application the land was listed as allotment 1 of section 4, and its value including the hotel with its eighteen rooms and outhouses, was £1,100.⁴⁸ Approval was granted and the recommended sale date was 3 June 1890. He conducted the hotel until his death in July 1903 when the **Hillgrove Guardian** commented that he was 'attracted to Hillgrove some fourteen years ago' and,

Mr Robinson was a speculative man, and did a good lot of it in mining on this field with varying success, but, in general he had been a successful business man, and it is believed leaves considerable wealth.⁴⁹

His son, Ernest H.W. Robinson, formerly licensee of the **Eleanora Hotel** in Hillgrove from 1895 to 1896, conducted the hotel until it was transferred to W. Toomey in 1917.

The **Hillgrove Guardian** of 1 June 1889 announced by advertisement that W.L. Smith 'is erecting a Commodious Building which he intends to open as a temperance hotel shortly.'⁵⁰ Despite this advertisement, William L. Smith attempted to open a hotel in July 1889 but was refused permission by the Licensing Court in Armidale.⁵¹ **Wise's New South Wales Post Directory** indicated that M. Witherdin was proprietor of the **Temperance Hotel** in 1904. The presence of such a hotel indicates a possible Cornish element within the mining population of Hillgrove. Certainly the temperance movement became established in the town with the formation of the Independent Order of Rechabites.

The Hillgrove hotels were obviously meeting the needs of the miners because the **Armidale Express** announced in July 1889 'the first court of Petty Sessions was held here on Tuesday last, and the list of drunks, languages and disorderlies was very large indeed'.⁵²

48 **Register of Applications to purchase land on Gold Fields In Virtue of Improvements- Local Land Board**, Archives, Dixson Library, University of New England, No. 33/5135.

49 **Hillgrove Guardian and New England Mining Gazette**, 1 August 1903, p. 3.

50 op. cit., 1 June 1889, p. 4.

51 **Armidale Express**, 12 July 1889, p. 4.

52 op. cit., 9 July 1889, p. 4.

James Gearin, formerly of **Gearin's Hotel** in Broken Hill was originally granted a licence by the court to construct a brick building in April 1889. Three months later, permission was later given for the construction of a timber building in July. He immediately set about to commence construction of the the hotel and in the following week it was announced,

the tenders for Mr. Gearin's Hotel are now out, and, by the look of the plans, the building will undoubtedly be an ornament to the town. In addition to the 33 rooms shown in the plans, there will be an underground saloon bar and two billiard rooms. Mr. Gearin is an old publican, and by his genial manner should secure a large amount of patronage when his house is completed.⁵³

By the middle of August, the foundations were underway for the building and early in December, the Hillgrove correspondent reported that 'the contractors for Mr Gearin's Hotel (Messrs Harper Bros) handed the building over to that gentleman (Mr Gearin) completely finished last week...'⁵⁴ In the newspaper report, the building was described as compact and commodious with well lighted rooms and good taste shown in the furnishings. A remarkable feature of the hotel was the provision of an underground bar.

It was fitting that on Thursday 19 December 1889, the opening of the **Adelaide Hotel** by James Gearin was celebrated by a grand dinner. 'No trouble had been spared in decorating... the large dining room which presented a really handsome appearance.'⁵⁵ Mr Wescott, manager of the City Bank, occupied the chair and proposed the health of the host. In his speech, Mr Wescott praised the foreman Mr George Rouse of Messrs Harper Bros, builders of Armidale, who tactfully overcame earlier difficulties between the builders and the proprietor. Thus the building was finished much earlier than the specified time. The name **Adelaide** reflected the business investment interests from the state of South Australia in the mines of Hillgrove. Despite the splendid opening, the name did not reappear in the N.S.W. Publican Licenses because James Gearin was declared a bankrupt in November 1890.⁵⁶

53 op. cit., 16 July 1889, p. 4.

54 op. cit., 10 December 1889, p. 4.

55 op. cit., 24 December 1889, p. 4.

56 James Gearin of Hillgrove, **Bankruptcy Index, 1888-1928**, Reel No. 39, No. 3081, A.O. 2/8858.

Records show that on 31 July 1891, Michael Drea Spruhan applied to purchase allotment 1 of section 11.⁵⁷ It was this block of land which contained the hotel constructed by Gearin. He obtained the licence for the building now called the **Sydney Hotel** and Samuel Williams, formerly of Emmaville, established himself in business as proprietor of the hotel in February 1892. In September 1897, the noted Armidale builder, George Frederick Nott won the contract to extend the hotel, with William Henderson Lee of Armidale, as the architect. 'The improvements consist of six new rooms, a spacious hall, verandah room and back verandah... the main entrance to the hotel will be through the new premises. The contract price is £325.'⁵⁸

In the following year, £600 was spent in improving the hotel and Samuel Williams extended his 'enterprise by erecting a couple of shops alongside'⁵⁹ his hotel. Hillgrove builder, Robert Morrow, undertook the work and by the end of December 1898 the work was 'making good progress'.⁶⁰ Williams mortgaged the hotel to Tooheys Ltd in February 1905,⁶¹ and twelve months later attempted to sell his property in Hillgrove and surrounding district by private sale. The advertisement in the **Hillgrove Guardian** indicated the extent of that property which included 'the SYDNEY HOTEL PROPERTY, and all his other LANDED PROPERTY and BUILDING thereon in Hillgrove, also the GROSVENOR HOTEL and LANDED PROPERTY attached, at Guy Fawkes'.⁶² The **Grosvenor Hotel** was taken over by John Hackett, formerly of the **Anchor Hotel** at Wollomombi while the **Sydney Hotel** remained within the family. When Samuel Williams died on 11 December 1909 after a long illness, the licence was transferred to his wife Mary. The correspondent in the **Armidale Chronicle** demonstrated the respect with which the man was held:

Quite a gloom passed over the town on Saturday afternoon, as a result of the death of Mr. Sam Williams, of the Sydney Hotel. The end was not unexpected, as Mr Williams had been ill for some time. Deceased was a very popular resident, being a liberal supporter of all charities and sport clubs, and was ever ready to

57 **Register of Applications to purchase land on Gold Fields In Virtue of Improvements- Local Land Board**, Archives, Dixson Library, University of New England, No. 33/5136.

58 **Hillgrove Guardian and New England Mining Gazette**, 11 September 1897, p. 5.

59 op. cit., 24 December 1898, p. 2.

60 ibid.

61 Land Titles Office, Sydney, Volume 1059, Folio 149.

62 **Hillgrove Guardian and New England Mining Gazette**, 24 February 1906, p. 2.

help individuals in case of trouble or distress. He was a keen business man, and had conducted the Sydney Hotel for the last 18 years. He was a native of County Clare Ireland, and came to this country a very young man. The late Mr Williams was 61 years of age, and leaves a widow, six daughters and one son, to mourn their loss. The family have the sincerest sympathy of the whole district, and many expressions of condolence were conveyed by letters and telegrams from various parts of the state. The funeral took place on Saturday afternoon and was one of the largest seen in Hillgrove for some time. The hearse was followed by two mourning coaches, after which followed about 200 pedestrians, and 30 vehicles. The scene at the graveside was a very affecting one. The remains were placed in the same grave as those of the deceased son Jack. The Rev. Father Foley officiated, in a very impressive manner. Mr Robert Morrow had charge of the funeral arrangements.

A large number of friends from Armidale were present at the funeral.⁶³

The latter part of 1889 was also marked by the construction of yet another hotel in Hillgrove. In June 1889, Samuel Sullings, formerly licensee of the **Commercial Hotel** at Tingha, had announced his intention to 'apply for a Certificate authorising the issue of a Conditional Publican's License... for a house to be situated at Hillgrove, containing 30 rooms, exclusive of those required for the use of the family'.⁶⁴ He was granted a licence for the construction of a hotel in July 1889 and tenders were called in September 1889. In December, the special correspondent of the **Armidale Express** reported that Samuel Sulling's 'new Hotel (**The Commercial Hotel**) is also making a splendid show, under the hands of Mr Morris, and will present quite an imposing appearance when finished'.⁶⁵ Sullings became the licensee of the hotel on 14 April of the following year.

While such development was taking place at Hillgrove, a similar situation had arisen in the mining area to the west of the Baker's Creek gorge. This area was originally known as Sunlight, then West Hillgrove and later Metz. On 4 September 1888, four applications were made to the Licensing Court for 'conditional publicans' licenses on the Armidale side of the Hillgrove Falls'.⁶⁶ The applicants were Mr W.M. Stevenson, Mr C. Fitzgerald, Mr A.J. Hack and Mr J. Waterfall; both Hack's and Waterfall's applications were supported by petitions. The Magistrate was only prepared to accept one licence and 'decided in favour of the wooden building to be erected by Mr. J.

⁶³ **Armidale Chronicle**, 15 December 1909, p. 3.

⁶⁴ **Armidale Express**, 21 June 1889, p. 4.

⁶⁵ op. cit., 10 December 1889, p. 4.

⁶⁶ op. cit., 7 September 1888, p. 3.

Waterfall, as it would afford larger accommodation to the public⁶⁷ although he did prefer brick. The magistrate also remarked that he had instructed Mr Hogarth to survey the streets in West Hillgrove so that the people would know where to build their houses.

In March 1889, the correspondent in the **Armidale Express** reported,

Mr. Marthny has shown us the plans of a very fine building which he intends to erect on the Western side of Hillgrove Mines for a public House. The house will contain eighteen rooms.⁶⁸

October saw the **Armidale Express** report, 'the population of Hillgrove West, or what is known as the Gara side of the Falls, is steadily on the increase, and now numbers, between 150 and 200 persons'.⁶⁹ In the same month, Mr McDonald, an Armidale solicitor, appeared for Mr Kearney in the Armidale Licensing Court, 'on behalf of John O'Neill (sic) for confirmation of a conditional publican's license at Hillgrove Mines'.⁷⁰ The court was told that John Waterfall was the original applicant but John O'Neil purchased the land on which the completed hotel building was built. Because all conditions had been complied with, the licence was granted by the court and the hotel became the **Gara**. O'Neil established a coach service from Hillgrove West to meet the Hillgrove Coaches at the **Cooney Creek Hotel**. He conducted the hotel from 1889 but the decline of mining in the area saw its last licence granted on 8 October 1902. Later, John O'Neil conducted a country home for travellers called "The Georges" at the head of the Macleay River on the Kempsey Road, and operated the Hillgrove-Kempsey Motor Service by July 1913.

In October 1891, John Crough, landholder of Hillgrove, announced that he would apply for a conditional publican's licence in the Armidale Licensing Court 'for a House and Premises situated at Hillgrove West... containing nine rooms, exclusive of those required for the use of the family'.⁷¹ Benjamin Day of West Hillgrove, also applied for a conditional licence at the same time as Crough. Still in October, Crough called tenders for

67 *ibid.*

68 *op. cit.*, 15 March 1889, p. 3.

69 *op. cit.*, 22 October 1889, p. 3.

70 *op. cit.*, 11 October 1889, p. 7.

71 *op. cit.*, 6 October 1891, p. 5.

the construction of a two-storey building at West Hillgrove and when the building was nearly completed, he applied for the conditional licence which was granted in February 1892. The **Armidale Express** described the building, situated at the corner of Moore and Phillip streets, as a 'Fine Hotel':

Some encouraging remarks fell from the Bench and Sergt. Rafferty respecting the new Tattersall's Hotel at West Hillgrove, built by Messrs. Harpers Bros. and licensed by Mr. John Crough. Since then we have had the pleasure of inspecting the plans, which is a two storey building, erected after the most approved principles. The front elevation shows a well designed and substantial structure, and the ground plan discloses a number of spacious, well lit, and well ventilated bedrooms. There is also a finely designed billiard-room, 26 by 20 feet, while broad verandahs extend round the building. There is also a spacious hall leading to apartments that would do credit to a much older settlement. The bar is well designed, and occupies a space of 17 by 16 feet. All arrangements are made for the rooms occupied by the domestics of the establishment, which are well situated and ventilated. Without a cellar, such a hotel would be worthless, but the cellars of this Tattersall's Hotel are so well and cunningly designed that even in a sirocco, wine would preserve its coolness. The bath-rooms, pantries etc are all in keeping with the fine hotel, while capital stables, fitted with rattling feed boxes, forage and stablemen's rooms, combined with outhouses, constructed upon the most approved principles, leave nothing to be desired. We cordially wish Mr. Crough that success with his new venture that we feel sure he will merit.⁷²

In 1899 the following hotels existed in Hillgrove and Metz:

- Commercial Hotel**, Samuel Sullings.
- Eleanora Hotel**, Edward C. McNamara.
- Gara Hotel**, John O'Neil (Metz).
- Hillgrove Hotel**, William J. Judge.
- Miners' Arms Hotel**, Nellie S. Taylor.
- Sydney Hotel**, Sydney Williams.
- Tattersalls Hotel**, Ernest Robinson.
- Tattersalls Hotel**, John Crough (Metz).

The decline of Metz or West Hillgrove as a mining area meant that the **Gara and Tattersalls Hotels** eventually lost their licences. In September 1907, Michael Crough and John O'Neil applied to the Licensing Court for a renewal of their licenses. The police showed that there had been no increase in population at Metz and consequently, the applications were formally refused by the bench. Crough's **Tattersalls Hotel** reappeared in Metz in

⁷² op. cit., 23 February 1892, p. 4.

January 1914 when Crough was allowed to transfer the licence from the Hillgrove **Post Office Hotel**, destroyed by fire in the previous August.

In May 1914, the **Eleanora Hotel** changed hands when Mr Cherry of Hobart, Tasmania, bought the hotel from Mr Green and it again changed ownership in July 1915 when Bert Hawkins took over the hotel. On the Christmas Night of 1916, the hotel was totally destroyed by fire. Amazingly, 'a considerable amount of the furniture was saved and the building was insured'.⁷³

Thomas O'Brien disposed of the **Miners' Arms Hotel** in September 1914 to Mr Moran of Uralla. The **Armidale Chronicle** stated, 'Mr O'Brien has always taken a keen interest in public matters and we trust that Mr Moran will meet with such success as to enable him to do likewise'.⁷⁴ In 1916, Alexander Moore took over the hotel but surrendered the publican's licence on 13 March 1919.

Following a long period of illness, Samuel Sullings aged 83 years, proprietor of the **Commercial Hotel** died and was buried in Hillgrove on 1 March 1919. Two months later, Mrs Sullings and her family were entertained at a large function in Hillgrove prior to their departure to Parramatta. The reporter commented 'Mrs Sullings has been associated with the Commercial Hotel for upwards of 30 years, and is well known throughout the State for the creditable manner in which the business was conducted'.⁷⁵ The licence was transferred to John Thomas Herbert Sullings, executor for the estate, on 7 April 1919.

Possession of the **Commercial Hotel** was taken by Harold John West on 13 April 1919 but during the severe influenza epidemic of that year, West died in Hillgrove on 27 June. The licence was transferred to his widow Mrs Elizabeth Hannah West, who was left with three small children. However, the licence was surrendered on 13 April 1920 and the hotel closed on the following day. In June 1920, the **Armidale Chronicle** announced,

The fine building known as the Commercial Hotel is now a thing of the past. All the buildings have been removed to Armidale.

⁷³ **Armidale Chronicle**, 8 January 1916, p. 6.

⁷⁴ op. cit., 30 September 1914, p. 4.

⁷⁵ op. cit., 3 May 1919, p. 3.

Yesterday, as a final clean-up, the building blocks and old waste material were sold by auction for firewood.⁷⁶

J.L.G. Johnstone, solicitor of Armidale purchased the building from A.W. Simpson, mortgagee of the Sulling's estate. 'James Johnston, a builder and contractor at Hillgrove demolished the building'.⁷⁷ The material was used to construct homes in Marsh Street, Armidale just south of the intersection at Donnelly street and at Johnstone's family home at 139 Barney street. Part of the bar became the front counter at A.W. Simpson and Company premises in Faulkner street.

In 1921 the Inspector for Armidale Licensing District, reported that improvements were required by the Board of Health's officer to the licenced premises of the **Sydney and Tattersall's Hotels**. Mary Williams of the **Sydney Hotel** informed Sergeant Pye that the licence would 'be cancelled at an early date'.⁷⁸ She surrendered her licence on 16 April 1922 and then abandoned the premises. A farewell was given to the William's family in Hillgrove.⁷⁹ Following demolition of the building in May, it was removed to Armidale. In the application for compensation to the Licenses Reduction Board dated 5 August 1922, the particulars of values and rents showed unimproved capital value of land £50; value of improvements £850 consisting of a wooden building of 12 bedrooms, 6 parlours, bar, dining room, kitchen, bathroom and outhouses. As a licenced premises, it was valued at £1,250.⁸⁰

Mrs Williams was licensee of the **New England Hotel**, in Beardy street, Armidale in July 1922. In the following year, she took 'over the license of the **Hotel Grand** (in West Armidale) from Mrs Callinan'.⁸¹

The **Tattersalls Hotel** was transferred from Ernest H.W. Robinson to John Toomey on 25 September 1917. He informed Sergeant Pye he was 'not the owner and up to the present he has been unable to get the landlord to put the repairs and improvements under way'.⁸² Under the threat of legal

76 op. cit., 26 June 1920, p. 4.

77 op. cit., 8 December 1923, p. 6.

78 Letter to Superintendent of Police, 13 December 1921, **Terminated Publican's Licences Files**, A.O. 14/2553.

79 **Armidale Chronicle**, 29 April 1922, p. 2.

80 Application for Compensation, 5 August 1922, **Terminated Publican's Licences Files**, A.O. 14/2553.

81 **Armidale Chronicle**, 25 August 1923, p4.

82 Letter to Superintendent of Police, 13 December 1921, **Terminated Publican's Licences**, A.O. 14/2553.

action, the owner of the hotel informed the Police Department that the licence would 'not be renewed in which case it is intended to demolish the building'.⁸³ He surrendered his licence for the hotel on 29 October 1922. Following its closure, the correspondent in the **Armidale Chronicle** highlighted the town's sorry decline:

the old town of Hillgrove is now "dry"... Old residents sadly ruminate on the time when on a Saturday night- especially "pay day"- the Hillgrove Band turned out, and one could hardly get along Brackin Street.⁸⁴

The **Armidale Chronicle** then announced the demise of the hotel industry in Hillgrove when the last remaining hotel was advertised for sale in March 1923. Described as a 'Two Storey Weather-board hotel of 28 large rooms, pine lined... Stables and Tanks, Good Building Material, Iron Roof £385'.⁸⁵ It was dismantled in May 1923 following its purchase 'by an Armidale resident' and it was announced 'the material will be used in the erection of cottages'.⁸⁶

The final collapse of the hotel industry in Metz came with the death of John Crough of **Tattersalls Hotel**. In September 1927, Crough had applied to the Licenses Reduction Board for a determination of compensation in the event of the hotel's closure. However, his death on 12 February 1928 ensured 'the licensed premises were closed on 28th February'.⁸⁷ The **Armidale Express** noted in his obituary,

Old residents of Hillgrove, Metz and Armidale will learn with regret of the passing away of Mr John Crough at the Armidale Hospital on Sunday last. Some weeks ago Mr Crough had a paralytic stroke, and was removed to the hospital, where everything was done to relieve him but he died as stated. Deceased had been in business in Metz of late years, and was highly respected.

The late Mr Crough, who was 66 years of age, was predeceased by his wife by some 18 months.

⁸³ Letter to the Inspector General of Police, Sydney from Acting Superintendent A. Lewis, 15 December 1921, **Terminated Publican's Licences Files**, A.O. 14/2553.

⁸⁴ **Armidale Chronicle**, 4 November 1922, p. 4.

⁸⁵ op. cit., 10 March 1923, p. 4.

⁸⁶ op. cit., 30 May 1923, p. 4.

⁸⁷ Letter to the Secretary of the Licenses Reduction Board, Court House, Armidale, 20 March 1928, **Terminated Publican's License Files**, A.O. 14/2554.

The funeral took place yesterday (Monday) afternoon in the Catholic cemetery. Rev. Dr. Coleman officiating. Mr T. Crowley had charge of the arrangements.⁸⁸

The estate was valued at £3224 and the eldest son of the deceased, John Crough railway official of Armidale, became executor. John Crough had attempted to carry out improvements to the Hotel in November 1923, because a mortgage of £1150 had been registered to John McIntyre, grazier of Armidale, on the property. The McIntyre family was obviously prepared to invest in hotel property because a Mr McIntyre was also reported as owner of the Ebor hotel in July 1910.⁸⁹

The size and importance of a gold-mining town could be determined by the number and size of the hotels constructed there. Several of the hotels, although of timber construction, were two-storey substantial buildings. There was also a close relationship between the hotels of Hillgrove and West Hillgrove, later called Metz, particularly because of the transfer of licences in the Crough family. Similarly, licensees transferred between several Hillgrove and Armidale hotels and the demolition of the various hotels in Hillgrove meant the construction of a number of homes in Armidale.

NAMES OF THE HOTELS, DATE OF OPENING AND PUBLICANS

HILLGROVE

Post Office Hotel, 1884- Hugh McKellar. It became the **Eleanora Hotel** in 1892- Edward Keough.

Miners Arms Hotel, 1888- Francis Brennan Wade.

Hillgrove Hotel, 1889- John Crough (Senior). It became the **Post Office Hotel** in 1910- John Crough (Junior).

Tattersalls Hotel, 1889- Edward Keough.

Temperance Hotel, 1889- William L. Smith.

Adelaide Hotel, 1889- James Gearin. It became the **Sydney Hotel** in 1891- Michael Drea Spruhan.

Commercial Hotel, 1889- Samuel Sullings.

METZ

Gara Hotel, 1889- John O'Neil.

Tattersall's Hotel, 1892- John Crough (Junior).

⁸⁸ **Armidale Express**, 14 February 1928, p. 4.

⁸⁹ **Armidale Chronicle**, 9 July 1910, p. 3.

CHAPTER 8

TRANSPORT, COMMUNICATION AND POSTAL SERVICES

The establishment of an adequate transport and communication system was essential to the growth and development of the mines at Hillgrove. Minerals, people and goods needed to be moved quickly and efficiently, as did messages and documents. Gold discoveries ensured an influx of speculators, miners and their families, and the close proximity to Armidale, as well as the establishment of the railway there in 1883, meant that most transport systems would emanate from Armidale. The development of coastal shipping also established important links with Kempsey and Grafton. Initially transport needs were met by coach services, horse and bullock waggons, and later motor car services.

Coach Services

In June 1884 Gream and Nash, who conducted a livery stable opposite the new hospital in Beardy Street, Armidale, established a regular waggonette service to the Hillgrove mines. It was reported in the **Armidale Express** of the time that 'with so many of our townspeople interested in the progress of the mines, the coach should prove a paying speculation'.¹ In October 1887, the population of Hillgrove was increasing dramatically and the Hillgrove correspondent commented, 'Great credit is due to Mr L. Gream, of the Plough Inn (of Armidale), for the prompt manner in which he conveys people out to the falls'.² Coaches were running daily from Armidale to Hillgrove by April 1888.

James Donnelly, who conducted a livery stables alongside Moore's Mill in Beardy Street, Armidale, commenced a coach service to Hillgrove in June 1888.³ It departed at 2 p.m. from the **Victoria Hotel**, Beardy Street, Armidale on the Tuesday, and returned to Armidale on the following Wednesday morning. The coach also departed on the Friday morning and returned on the Saturday. Edward Keough commenced running a daily van between Armidale and Hillgrove mines in October 1888. The booking office

¹ **Armidale Express**, 27 June 1884, p. 4.

² op. cit., 28 October 1887, p. 3.

³ op. cit., 1 June 1888, p. 5.

was Mr Gravilee A. Wood's **Victoria Hotel** in Beardy Street, Armidale.⁴ Keough was the former licensee of the **Armidale Hotel**, and in April 1889 he applied for the conditional licence for a hotel in Hillgrove.

Also in 1888, Patrick Ryan operated a thrice weekly coach service between Armidale and Hillgrove, and another early coach-line was that established by Ryan and Smith when they ran 'daily packed coaches' in May 1889.⁵ At that time they purchased 'the mail and plant of Mr P. McIntosh', and the correspondent in the **Armidale Express** congratulated their business effort. 'These people deserve a great deal of credit for the manner in which they manage their coach arrangements, and the splendid condition of their horses'.⁶ By 1897, Ryan operated the mail coach to Hillgrove, and in October 1900 he was 'granted two coach licenses; one for a coach to carry five passengers, and one to carry ten passengers'.⁷ Early in 1901 he introduced an extra coach between Armidale and Hillgrove, and later established Ryan's Motor Garage at Armidale which underwent a change of name and ownership from 1 January 1926.⁸

It was reported that 'traffic to the Hillgrove Mines still continues upon the increase, and the coaches to and from the mines appear to be liberally patronised'⁹ by June 1889. Because of this increased traffic, the Armidale Police Court granted William Fergusson a coach licence 'for a buggy to ply between Armidale and Hillgrove, to carry 3 passengers'.¹⁰

Members of the Crough family, who established hotels in West Hillgrove and Hillgrove, conducted a Royal Mail line of coaches from Armidale to Hillgrove, and in January 1891 reduced fares because of increased public patronage. The single fare each way was 5s, and return 7s 6d. The mail coach left Armidale for Hillgrove at 1 p.m. daily and returned on the following day at 8 a.m. A second coach left Armidale at 2 p.m. and returned from Hillgrove at 7 p.m. Due to his busy hotel interests, John Crough, on 18 September 1891, disposed of the business to Albert Arndell, described 'as an old resident

4 op. cit., 5 October 1888, p. 5.

5 op. cit., 7 May 1889, p. 4.

6 *ibid.*

7 **Hillgrove Guardian and New England Mining Gazette**, 6 October 1900, p. 2.

8 **Armidale Express**, 1 January 1926, p. 6.

9 op. cit., 7 June 1889, p. 8.

10 op. cit., 21 June 1889, p. 7.

and whip of this district, (and) will doubtless keep up the prestige of this line of vehicles'.¹¹ Twelve months later, Mr Arndell was seriously injured when he fell from his coach. To assist the coach-man, the Hillgrove Bohemian Amateur Dramatic Club travelled to Armidale to present Byron's four act play 'The Lancashire Lass'. The Armidale correspondent spoke 'of the commendable manner in which the amateurs of the mining township, have come forward to assist in the cause of charity' and this 'should ensure them a bumper house and a hearty reception'.¹² Sadly, only a small audience attended the performance.

John O'Neil, of the **Gara Hotel** established in 1889, conducted a coach service from Hillgrove West at 6 a.m. daily to meet the Hillgrove coach for Armidale at the **Cooney Creek Hotel**, and then returned after the arrival of the Armidale coach at 10.30 a.m. Arrangements could also be made to meet the afternoon coaches at Cooney Creek, an important staging post because of the need to change horses there and the presence of the hotel for refreshment.

With the increase in population and subsequent growth of Hillgrove, coaches, bullock and horse wagons continued to travel between Armidale, Hillgrove, Grafton and Kempsey. In January 1901, the mail contractor, Thomas J. Freeman, 'was granted a coach licence for a double-seated buggy to run between Kempsey and Hillgrove and carry four outside passengers'.¹³ In 1901 Johnston's Royal Mail operated a line of coaches daily from Hillgrove to Armidale; the trips were run in the evening and took three hours. In August 1902, D. McKay ran a Royal Mail Coach from Hillgrove to Kempsey; a trip that took two days. In October 1902 a coach license was granted to Rees Thomas of Hillgrove, and J. Squires of Metz; F.G. Johnson 'was granted a license for a one-horse coach to ply between Metz and Armidale'¹⁴ in October 1904. Similarly, in January 1905, Mr P. Haren applied for and was granted a stage coach license between Hillgrove and Armidale. The four-horse mail coach left from the Post Office Hillgrove ran daily, with fares of 5s single and 8s return.¹⁵

¹¹ op. cit., 18 September 1891, p. 5.

¹² op. cit., 6 September 1892, p. 5.

¹³ **Hillgrove Guardian and New England Mining Gazette**, 19 January 1901, p. 2.

¹⁴ op. cit., 1 October 1904, p. 2.

¹⁵ op. cit., 15 January 1905 p. 3.

Once the first motor vehicles arrived in Armidale by 1908, it was not long before the various garages established regular service car trips to Hillgrove. In September 1911, the Ryan Brothers introduced 'a passenger motor for the Hillgrove- Armidale trade' with a 'seating capacity for 10' and the newspaper correspondent commented that it 'should easily cope with heavy work on the roads of the district'.¹⁶ The Ryans also commenced a daily Motor Car Service between Armidale and Hillgrove, with a single fare 7s and return fare 12s 6d in February 1913.¹⁷ Three years later, the Ryans were using Cadillac and Fiat cars on the motor service from Armidale to Ebor via Hillgrove and Wollomombi. The service was run on Wednesdays and Saturdays with return services on the Friday and Monday. Passenger cars ran every day to Hillgrove.¹⁸

Not all transport was motorised in 1911. Maughan and Williams of Grafton completed a new mail-coach for Mr G. Collins, contractor for the Hillgrove-Grafton mails, in August. It was claimed, 'passengers will now have a comfortable conveyance to travel in. The coach which is licensed to carry eight passengers, is set on six solid springs, and has roller-bearing axles'.¹⁹

John O'Neil of Hillgrove operated 'an up to date Brazier capable of accommodating 7 or 8 passengers'²⁰ in 1913, with the Hillgrove-Kempsey motor service. Similarly, Armidale garage owner J. Le Petit operated a 30 horse-power Cadillac on an Armidale Kempsey Motor Service run which called at Hillgrove. The booking office was Samuel Williams' hotel at Hillgrove. Two years later, Alexander D. Cameron and C.A. Bruce of Armidale operated the Hillgrove Motor Service, with two 25 horse-power motor vehicles, an Overland and Studebaker. Prices were 6s 6d single and 12s return but during the war free rides were offered to servicemen.²¹ Ezra Purkiss, proprietor of the Armidale Motor Garage in Marsh Street, Armidale, ran a service to Hillgrove twice daily in 1917. He conducted the services to Hillgrove with 8 cylinder Cadillacs which left Armidale at 8.30 a.m., followed by the mail service at 11.30 a.m.²²

¹⁶ **Armidale Chronicle**, 9 September 1911, p. 4.

¹⁷ *op. cit.*, 19 February 1913, p. 2.

¹⁸ *op. cit.*, 25 October 1916, p. 2.

¹⁹ *op. cit.*, 12 August 1911, p. 6.

²⁰ *op. cit.*, 19 February 1913, p. 3.

²¹ *op. cit.*, 21 August 1915, p.

²² *op. cit.*, 11 January 1919, p. 5.

Service cars travelled from Hillgrove down the 'Big Hill' to Kempsey, and a number of country homes offered accommodation and meals along the route. In January 1924, the establishment known as 'The Georges,' and previously managed by the late John O'Neil, formerly of the **Gara Hotel** at Metz, was taken over by Les Dew. It was located at the head of the Macleay River and within three miles of the 'Big Hill,' offering 'First class country accommodation'²³ to mail and passenger cars.

Roads to Armidale and the Coast

The miners and businessmen of Hillgrove soon saw the need to develop an adequate transport system to West Hillgrove, Armidale and the river ports of Grafton and Kempsey. The arrival of the railway in Armidale in 1883 ensured strong business ties with Hillgrove. Prior to this date, ore had been moved by bullock waggon to the river ports and Tamworth.

Many town residents realised that progress would only be achieved as a result of concerted action by the Progress Committee. The Committee was responsible for town improvements and better road links with the coast as well as West Hillgrove (later Metz) and Armidale. By August 1889, the Progress Committee had completed three of its initial undertakings- 'the initiation of a cottage hospital, the cancellation of Reserve 64, and the extension of the Towns Police Act to Hillgrove'.²⁴ Thus the decision was taken by the Committee to devote all its attention and effort to obtain a shorter road to Armidale, around the head of the Baker's Creek Falls; a road which would reduce the trip to Armidale, and also shorten the trip to Hillgrove West from twenty miles to eleven.

Early in 1891, the Committee took action to have a bridge constructed over the Baker's Creek, and on Thursday 19 February at a meeting of the committee, 'a resolution was passed, urging upon the government the necessity for a bridge being erected 90 chains below Mr Hargraves' crossing at Baker's Creek'.²⁵ Within a month, a letter was received from the local member of Parliament, Mr H. Copeland, concerning the proposed bridge over the creek. Despite the promises and the fact that money was allocated in the

²³ op. cit., 5 January 1924, p. 7.

²⁴ **Armidale Express**, 3 September 1889, p. 4.

²⁵ op. cit., 24 February 1891, p. 4.

1891 estimates by the Government, no work was undertaken. Following the drowning of a Mrs Pastoors and her child at the creek in May 1892, and further representation by Mr Copeland, the Department of Public Works took action to call tenders. Five tenders were received for the erection of a timber bridge over Baker's Creek and the lowest received was from builder M. Kay.

Land was resumed from Richard Hargraves' property early in 1893, for the road from Hillgrove to Armidale by crossing the Baker's Creek, and 'with a branch road towards West Hillgrove, parish of Metz, county of Sandon'.²⁶ By April 1894, it was reported that the new bridge over the shorter route to Armidale would be completed within one month. However the road leading to the new bridge was not even formed at this stage, and in May 1902 the correspondent in the local newspaper criticised the dangerous state of the road to Armidale at the Baker's Creek deviation.²⁷ Accidents were a frequent occurrence because of the uneven approaches to the bridge.

Another major route to Hillgrove was the road from Kempsey up the 'Big Hill' and across the Styx river. Armidale businesses were prepared to trial the trip to Kempsey, because the introduction of differential railway freights on the northern line caused an outcry by businessmen and the Council. Such rates meant that it was cheaper to send goods to Sydney from Tenterfield than Armidale, despite the extra distance. At a public meeting held in Armidale in the old Town Hall late in July 1891, the Mayor of Armidale, William Drew stated:

that the meeting was called to protest against the differential railway rates and to enter into negotiations with the people of Kempsey and those on route, so as to start a line of drays to Kempsey, on the Macleay River, to Armidale.²⁸

The Mayor 'remarked that he was sure Hillgrove people would co-operate with the movement'.²⁹ Such support was indeed forth-coming because in the following month, a meeting of Hillgrove businessmen was held at Wades' Hotel to form a committee to agitate for a road from Armidale to Kempsey. By December of that year, the **Armidale Express** reported, 'Messrs. Dell and Cook, who lately made a trial trip with their teams to

²⁶ op. cit., 24 January 1893, p. 4.

²⁷ **Hillgrove Guardian and New England Mining Gazette**, 3 May 1902, p. 2.

²⁸ **Armidale Express**, 4 August 1891, p. 7.

²⁹ *ibid.*

Kempsey, with loading from here, returned to town last Saturday, with loading for storekeepers in Armidale'.³⁰ Five months later, the **Armidale Express** reported:

Mr Geo. Quinnell continues to patronise the Kempsey route for getting some of his goods from Sydney a few days ago a 20 bullock team, driven by George Workman, arrived in Hillgrove from Kempsey with over five tons of merchandise in first class order.³¹

Quinnell was determined to develop trade between Hillgrove and Kempsey. In December 1893, the **McLeay Chronicle** commented, 'Messrs Henry started with five tons of loading for Mr. Quinnell, Hillgrove, last Monday week from Greenhills. They intend to see if a quick trip could be made'³² of two weeks.

The residents of the Upper Macleay organised a petition to obtain a bridge over the George's Creek and a cutting to help travel on the 'Big Hill'. The correspondent in the **Macleay Argus** felt that the petitioners should emphasise the trade with New England. and if the road up the 'Big Hill' from Kempsey through the Styx were in good order:

a big trade might be opened between the Macleay and Hillgrove. The last Burrawong brought 10 tons of store goods for the mining centre, which is to be teamed up by Davis's. It is cheaper to convey goods to Hillgrove via the Macleay than by rail via Armidale, hence the hope of a big business in this direction.³³

Concern was expressed by waggoners in July 1897 about the dreadful state of the road from the 'Big Hill' to the Styx River bridge. Unfortunately, there was no Hillgrove Progress Committee at the time, but the correspondent appealed to government authorities:

Perhaps our energetic District Engineer will see if anything can be done, as the traffic is very considerable between here and Kempsey and a great number of people are dependent on it being kept open.³⁴

³⁰ op. cit., 8 December 1891, p. 5.

³¹ op. cit., 13 May 1892, p. 4.

³² **Macleay Chronicle**, quoted in the **Armidale Express**, 22 December 1893, p. 5.

³³ **Macleay Argus**, 24 April 1895, p. 4.

³⁴ **Hillgrove Guardian and New England Mining Gazette**, 17 July 1897, p. 2.

In 1898, tenders were called by the Department of Public Works at Armidale for a timber beam bridge over the Chandler River, approaches to the Styx River bridge and the road from the Chandler bridge to the foot of the Jeogla mountains. One year later, tenders were called for the approach to the Chandler's bridge.

In June 1899, the **Hillgrove Guardian** drew attention to the conditions of a number of roads in the vicinity of Hillgrove. Carriers who brought goods from the railway to Hillgrove lamented 'the dangerous state of the road on the hill coming down to the bridge over Baker's Creek on the Armidale Road.'³⁵ Wood carters and others complained of the Grafton road between the White Hill and the Four Mile Creek. Another almost impossible road was the Kempsey road from Jeogla Station to the 'Big Hill'.

By December 1899, every creek along the New England road was bridged and the **McLeay Chronicle** remarked, 'this should enable the business people of Hillgrove to get their goods via the McLeay at a considerable reduction in freight charges as compared with railway via Armidale'.³⁶ Further improvements were announced when tenders were called in February 1900 for timber beam bridges over Cameron's and Welsh's Creeks on the road to Kempsey.

The condition of the surrounding district roads also concerned Hillgrove residents. In September 1900, Dr Cooper Hardcastle and William L. Smith travelled as a deputation from Hillgrove to meet the Minister for Works, Mr O'Sullivan, in Armidale. They raised several matters with the Minister and he 'gave a distinct promise that the road from the Grafton main road to Rockvale (a small mining community near Hillgrove) should be made, and that a site would be granted for the Council Chambers'.³⁷ Despite the promise of a made road to Rockvale, it was in December 1902, 'in an untrafficable condition in some places' and the comment was made it 'has never been properly cleared'.³⁸ The newspaper called on residents to bring the state of the road to the attention of the Roads Department. Similarly, the

³⁵ op. cit., 10 June 1899, p. 6.

³⁶ **Macleay Chronicle**, quoted in the **Hillgrove Guardian and New England Mining Gazette**, 30 December 1899, p. 2.

³⁷ **Hillgrove Guardian and New England Mining Gazette**, 15 September 1900, p. 2.

³⁸ op. cit., 6 December 1902, p. 2.

Hillgrove Council during its lifetime, fought the same battle with the Dumaresq Shire Council to maintain the road leading to Armidale.

Rail Services

Many residents of Hillgrove felt that their transport needs would be solved by the provision of a railway service. The correspondent in the **Armidale Express** reflected this hope by writing, 'there is some talk of asking the powers to be, to grant a railway to Hillgrove, via Grafton and Glen Innes'.³⁹ Despite the optimism, it was not until September 1891, that local parliamentary members Copeland and Lonsdale lead a deputation to the Minister for Public Works in Sydney to seek a trial survey for railway lines from Walcha Road crossing station to Walcha, and from Armidale to Hillgrove. 'Mr Young said he would, as soon as possible, send a Public Works examiner to report on the railway proposals, and, if the report was favourable, he would have trial surveys made'.⁴⁰ It was not until April 1908 that a governmental enquiry was held in Armidale to consider the extension of the railway to Walcha.

Armidale residents proposed to the State Government the need for a railway line from Armidale to Coffs Harbour. Because it would pass within a few miles from Hillgrove, Armidale businessman and President of the Chamber of Commerce, Captain George F. Braund wrote to the Hillgrove Mayor, Robert Sharp, on 9 and 28 August 1902 seeking his support. The Public Works Committee met in Armidale on 16 August 1902 to conduct an enquiry on the proposed line of railway to the coast. The Committee then visited Hillgrove, Wollomombi and Guy Fawkes. The **Armidale Chronicle** correspondent claimed, 'the Hillgrove people held aloof during the visit of the Public Works Committee... and neglected to render any support to Armidale in its advocacy of the route'.⁴¹ The Hillgrove Mayor, did not reply to Braund's earlier correspondence, so a further letter from Braund was published in the **Hillgrove Guardian**,⁴² seeking support from the people of Hillgrove. This letter prompted the Mayor of Hillgrove to call a public meeting to discuss the proposed railway route. Some residents including W.L. Smith, S. Ray and Mr Vindon favoured the Guyra route to the north of

³⁹ **Armidale Express**, 23 November 1888, p. 4.

⁴⁰ op. cit., 22 September 1891, p. 5.

⁴¹ **Armidale Chronicle**, 23 August 1902, p. 4.

⁴² **Hillgrove Guardian and New England Mining Gazette**, 13 September 1902, p. 3.

Armidale. After the meeting, the Mayor announced 'he would communicate with the Armidale Chamber of Commerce, stating... a majority had decided in favour of the Armidale route'.⁴³

As a result of the proposals, Dr Thomas Kennedy of the Railway Construction Department completed a report on the proposed line, signed 15 September 1902.⁴⁴ He recommended a route one and a quarter miles south of the Armidale railway station, which crossed Commissioner's Water, Burying Ground Creek and Cooney Creek two and half miles to the north of Armidale. The 'approximate cost of the line (was) about £8500 per mile'.⁴⁵

Despite such reports, the Armidale route to Coffs Harbour was never constructed and although the Guyra route was later commenced, it was never completed.

The Post Office

In 1884, forty two residents of Hillgrove, Hillgrove Falls and two from Armidale signed a petition to the Postmaster-General seeking the establishment of a post office at Hillgrove Falls. The petitioners included engineers, carpenters, a blacksmith, miners, labourers, a bank manager and mining managers. They wrote:

That many of your Petitioners reside at Hillgrove Falls and are employed there working certain Antimony lodes and quartz reefs and that other Petitioners are either interested in said mines or have business relations connected therewith.

That your Petitioners are much inconvenienced by reason of the absence of means for carriage of letters, which corespondence your Petitioners know to have steadily increased and to be likely to be further added to now that the mines are being vigorously worked...⁴⁶

At the time, mail was delivered to the area by horseback on the route from Armidale to Wollomombi, South Grafton and Grafton. Mail was delivered to Hillgrove Station on the Grafton Road, the nearest point to Hillgrove township. Hugh McKellar 'offered to carry the mails between Hillgrove

⁴³ op. cit., 20 September 1902, p. 2-3.

⁴⁴ op. cit., 27 September 1902, p. 3.

⁴⁵ ibid.

⁴⁶ **Petition to The Honorable Postmaster General**, Australia Post Archives, B54/ 1953.

Station and the new post office for £25 p.a.⁴⁷ Accordingly, the offer was accepted and the post office at Hillgrove 'was opened in charge of Hugh McKellar, storekeeper, on 1st. June 1884'.⁴⁸ In the following month McKellar announced that he had obtained a licence for the **Post Office Hotel**. The general store was conducted in premises alongside the hotel. Patrick John Fant took over as Postmaster at Hillgrove on 15 June 1886, and became licensee of the **Post Office Hotel** in July. In the following year, Hillgrove Post Office was included in the Armidale- Grafton mail contract.

Because of the commercial importance of Hillgrove, 'Mr H.B. Solomons, of the broker firm of Solomons and Elliott wrote to the Hon. J. Inglis asking him to advocate telegraphic communication with the Hillgrove mines'.⁴⁹ The request was repeated at the public meeting held in the Centennial Hall at Hillgrove in April 1888, called to present a petition to the Minister for Mines. The residents 'considered themselves entitled to postal and telegraphic communication with the outside world, also to a money order office'.⁵⁰

The manager of the **Eleanora Gold Mine** 'complained in 1888 that contractor O'Neill was carrying the mails by horseback to Hillgrove (his contract then included Hillgrove Post Office twice weekly), instead of by two-wheeled coach as specified in his contract'.⁵¹ In an attempt to improve services to Hillgrove, the Department accepted, the offer of a coach proprietor, W. Mansfield, 'to carry the mails daily, direct from Armidale by coach for £52 p.a.'⁵² in June 1888. Upset by this action and the obvious lack of consultation, Postmaster Fant resigned and wrote to the Postmaster-General's Department:

I am fairly knocked into a heap by this new style of doing business in the Department at head quarters- First they send a daily mail to Hillgrove and never asked me if I was prepared to do it, and my business wont allow me to do so- please tell me what to do.⁵³

47 **Hillgrove Post Office History**, Researched and written by the N.S.W. Historical Officer, Australia Post, Undated, p. 2.

48 *ibid.*

49 **Armidale Express**, 30 March 1888, p. 4.

50 *op. cit.*, 20 April 1888, p. 3.

51 **Hillgrove Post Office History**, Researched and written by the N.S.W. Historical Officer, Australia Post, Undated, p. 3.

52 *op. cit.*, p. 4.

53 *ibid.*

Aware of the public feeling in Hillgrove for improved government services, a postal inspector visited Hillgrove and found that the proprietor of the **Miners' Arms Hotel**, Francis Wade offered:

to undertake the duties and provide the accommodation in a convenient building near his hotel until some person is appointed. As it is, many prefer their letter and papers being left at "Wade's Hotel" rather than go through the Post Office.⁵⁴

Wade was offered the temporary position of Postmaster but declined, and 'consequently Fant demanded and was granted £1 per week to continue as postmaster whilst arrangements were made to open an official office'.⁵⁵ At the time, the Hillgrove Progress Committee expressed their concern to the Department that the business of a Post Office was being conducted in a hotel. Following the demands by the Hillgrove community in 1888, a Postal Inspector 'recommended that allotment 4 of section 3 in Bracken street should be obtained through the Department of Lands'⁵⁶ for a future building.

In October 1888, the Post and Telegraph Master arrived in Hillgrove and a temporary telegraph office was opened on 25 October, under the charge of William S. Bain. 'The money order system and Savings Bank facilities were established at the post office on 3rd December, 1888'.⁵⁷ The temporary quarters for the Post Office concerned the special correspondent in the **Armidale Express** who wrote, 'I must call attention to the very poor post and telegraphic communication. Mr. Bain... will not find the galvanized "shanty", all that can be desired during a cold winter'.⁵⁸

After three years service, Bain received a new appointment and he was farewelled by a large gathering at Wade's **Miners' Arms Hotel** on Saturday 21 November 1891. In his speech, chairman Mr G.H. Westcott, manager of the City Bank, announced:

it gave him great pleasure to present Mr Bain with a bag of sovereigns as a small mark of the esteem and respect in which he was held by all those with whom he had come into contact.⁵⁹

54 op. cit., p. 5.

55 ibid.

56 op. cit., p. 7.

57 ibid.

58 **Armidale Express**, 26 March 1889, p. 4.

59 op. cit., 24 November 1891, p. 6.

Despite the rapid growth and development of business and banking in the town, improved postal facilities and accommodation did not eventuate for some time. In March 1892 mail services were operated by: Patrick Ryan from Armidale to Hillgrove, via Cooney Creek by two horse coaches; Hillgrove to Kempsey via Geogla by John B. Fitzgerald, and Hillgrove to Grafton by John Brabham.⁶⁰

The two newspapers, the **Hillgrove Guardian** and **Macleay Chronicle**, continually appealed for improved mail communications between Armidale, Hillgrove and the coastal towns. The **Chronicle** advocated an overland mail to the coast and the **Hillgrove Guardian** supported the stand in August 1899.

It certainly is time that a move is made in that direction, for apart from the immediate advantage it would be to the Kempsey people to get their mails earlier and with some regularity... if an overland service was instituted between here and the coast there would spring up a good traffic all along the line of route.⁶¹

Two months later, the **Guardian** was supported by the **Chronicle** in the request for 'a weekly vehicular mail service between Hillgrove and Kempsey'.⁶² In the last week of November 1899, a public meeting was held at Kempsey 'when a resolution was passed urging the Postal Department to establish a mail service by coach three times a week with Armidale, which means, of course, via Hillgrove'.⁶³

Initially the Department provided a temporary postal building, but in March 1889 the **Armidale Express** mounted a campaign to improve services in the town.

The time has now arrived for greater accommodation in the way of a post and telegraph office, the present one being too small and inadequate. Land has been reserved for the purpose, why not make use of it?⁶⁴

⁶⁰ op. cit., 4 March 1892, p. 3.

⁶¹ **Hillgrove Guardian and New England Mining Gazette**, 19 August 1899, p. 2.

⁶² op. cit., 4 November 1899, p. 2.

⁶³ op. cit., 2 December 1899, p. 2.

⁶⁴ **Armidale Express**, 19 March 1889, p. 4.

Three days later, the editor of the **Express** commended the stand taken by Superintendent Garvin, Superintendent of Police in the Northern District, to improve law and order, by requesting a lock-up and police barracks. The paper also commented:

We should also strongly advocate the enlargement of the present post and telegraph offices at the Mines, which are quite inadequate to the growing importance of the place and an inconvenience to the officials in charge.⁶⁵

In October 1889, the Secretary of the Progress Committee Mr Ross, requested members,

to urge on the Government the absolute necessity for a new Post and Telegraph Office, as the present building was not only inadequate for the purpose, but also totally blocked up an important thoroughfare, viz. Stapleton street.⁶⁶

Also in October, Mr Ross reported that he had received a letter from Mr Inglis 'stating that the Colonial Secretary is engaged in having plans prepared for the new Post Office'.⁶⁷ Originally, 'the Department of Works produced plans for a building to cost over £700, but these were replaced by plans for a small building "of about 4 rooms and kitchen"'.⁶⁸ It was not until April 1891, that the General Post Office in Sydney called tenders for the erection of a weatherboard cottage to serve as a Post and Telegraph office, to be situated on allotment 4 of section 3. The tender of Hillgrove builders Moffatt and Company, was accepted for the erection of the cottage at a cost of £375. This building, completed in August 1891, served throughout the 1890's and was little altered apart from the erection of a kitchen in 1895.

The Progress Committee continued to press the Government for a new Post and Telegraph Office for the town in October 1898. The Department proposed to alter the temporary Post Office building by spending £479 on a new public lobby with alterations to the kitchen, wash-house and bathroom but such a plan did not meet with the approval of the Hillgrove Progress Committee. Following a meeting:

65 op. cit., 22 March 1889, p. 4.

66 op. cit., 11 October 1889, p. 7.

67 op. cit., 22 October 1889, p. 4

68 **Hillgrove Post Office History**, Researched and written by the N.S.W. Historical Officer, Australia Post, Undated, p. 9.

it was resolved to write to the Postmaster- General pointing out the necessity for a new Post and Telegraph office altogether... the Secretary was instructed to write also in the same strain to the Public Works Department.⁶⁹

John Francis O'Connor, representing the Progress Committee accompanied local member, Mr C.G. Wilson M.P., on a deputation to the Postmaster-General later that month. O'Connor reported to the Committee that the Departmental Head stated, 'I think you are right in your representation; for after all, there is nothing in patching up old buildings'.⁷⁰ Postal Inspector Young did not share the reported view of his Postmaster-General or that of the Progress Committee. The October 1898 report, brought an angry response from the Committee, who wrote about the 'impertinent implications in Mr. Young's report on the Hillgrove Post and Telegraph office, saying that increased accommodation was not needed'.⁷¹

The correspondent of the **Hillgrove Guardian** supported the stand taken by the Progress Committee. The postal authorities were urged to abandon,

the idea of patching up the old Post Office; the damned appearance of which... gives the impression of some odoriferous old unmentionables unfit for human occupation and likely to cost more to make respectable than an entirely new outfit.⁷²

The amount of business transacted by the Post Office was evident in the annual report dated 31 December 1899. The success of the business helped convince the authorities that a new building was justified. 'The total amount of money that passed through the Hillgrove office was £23,670 11s. 1d. as compared with £21,542 17s. 4d'⁷³ in the previous year, 1898.

Eventually, it was decided to build a new one storey brick building on the site of the old Post Office 'in the centre of the allotment, with spaces for entrance on each side'.⁷⁴ The local reporter hoped that the new brick building would be 'more worthy of the importance and permanence of the field

⁶⁹ **Hillgrove Guardian and New England Mining Gazette**, 15 October 1898, p. 3.

⁷⁰ op. cit., 29 October 1898, p. 2.

⁷¹ op. cit., 12 November 1898, p. 3.

⁷² op. cit., 29 October 1898, p. 2.

⁷³ op. cit., 3 February 1900, p. 4.

⁷⁴ op. cit, 22 September 1900, p. 4.

now doubly assured'.⁷⁵ Similarly, the correspondent from the **Armidale Chronicle** was in no doubt concerning the need for a new Post and Telegraph Office.

The accommodation for the public was nil, and the amount of business done in the old barn-like building was very heavy. Constant complaints were being continually made about the insufficient accommodation afforded to the public, and that afforded to the officer in charge for his residence was simply scandalous.⁷⁶

Somewhat surprisingly, the Sydney contractor for the new Post and Telegraph Office was unaware that 'there was a building already on the site... nor was he aware that he had to remove the same'.⁷⁷ He returned to Sydney in November 1900 to see if he could get some compensation for removing the existing structure. Consequently, a three months delay occurred and the land could not be occupied until 16 January 1901. The old Post Office building was finally sold at auction for £68 10s to Robert Sharp, who arranged for its removal.⁷⁸ Business was conducted in the original Post Office building in 1888, a small galvanized iron shed, situated alongside the **Miners' Arms Hotel** while construction of the new building took place. In April 1901, it was noted 'the new Post and Telegraph office is now nearing completion... it is a very compact and comfortable building quite large enough for all requirements'.⁷⁹

The reporter of the **Hillgrove Guardian** believed that 'the (new Post Office) building... certainly gives an air of stability to the town... we hope that this is only the beginning of a better class of buildings in the town'.⁸⁰ The building, designed by architect Mr S. Herbert, combined the Post Office and private residence and was completed by the contractor Mr W.R. Ibbotson, a Sydney builder, from Woollahra. The original contract price was £1,359 but the final cost rose to £1,500 due to the extra filling required, brought about by the 'inequalities of the site and other extras unforeseen'.⁸¹

75 *ibid.*

76 **Armidale Chronicle**, 28 April 1900, p. 2.

77 *op. cit.*, 3 November 1900, p. 4.

78 **Hillgrove Guardian and New England Mining Gazette**, 12 January 1901, p. 2.

79 *op. cit.*, 27 April 1901, p. 2.

80 *op. cit.*, 27 July 1901, p. 3.

81 *ibid.*

The new building was opened at a public function on Saturday 10 August 1901, followed by a meeting of prominent townsmen in the **Commercial Hotel**. The role of the Crompton Company, supplier of electricity to the town, was acknowledged because it provided 'the beautiful and elaborate fittings with which the Post Office had been supplied'.⁸²

By the time of the opening, Mr Ramsey, the acting Postmaster, had set about establishing a telephone exchange and 'it is believed that a telephone was installed in November 1890'.⁸³ Fifteen names were required and thirteen had been guaranteed for a 9 a.m. to 8 p.m. service; twenty five names secured an all night service. At the time, it was stated that 'the terms are £8 for business places and £5 for private services for which the government find everything, erect and maintain all that is necessary'.⁸⁴ An exchange was installed, but in 1910 it was still open only from 9 a.m. to 8 p.m. and there were only four subscribers:

- 8 Macgeorge, S.H.;
- 1 Marshall, Dr. H.H.F.;
- 6 Morgan & Co., Storekeepers
- 2 Williams, Mrs. S., Sydney Hotel.⁸⁵

In February 1902, the Municipal Council drew the attention of the Deputy Postmaster-General to the dreadful state of the Post and Telegraph Office. Tenders were called for repairs to the building and awarded to Mr R. Moffatt for the sum of £57.⁸⁶

Meanwhile, the mail was still delivered twice a week between Hillgrove and Grafton by pack-horse, and in July 1902 a petition was circulated with Council support 'urging the Postal Department to establish a tri-weekly mail service between Hillgrove and Grafton'.⁸⁷ The petitioners

82 op. cit., 17 August 1901, p. 4.

83 **Hillgrove Post Office History**, Researched and written by the N.S.W. Historical Officer, Australia Post, Undated, p. 9.

84 **Hillgrove Guardian and New England Mining Gazette**, 3 August 1901, p. 2.

85 **Commonwealth of Australia, New South Wales Country Telephone Exchanges, List of Subscribers**, Sydney, W.A. Gullick, Government Printer, 1910. New England Historical Resources Centre, C.B. Newling Centre, University of New England.

86 **Hillgrove Guardian and New England Mining Gazette**, 29 March 1902, p. 2.

87 op. cit., 19 July 1902, p. 2.

sought an increased mail service and the provision of a four-horse coach, so that passengers could be carried as well as the mail. An appeal was also made to Guy Fawkes residents to support the petition.

Tenders were again called for additions and alterations to the Post Office on 18 March 1905, and in April it was announced a trunk telephone line would be established, 'available to the public, between Hillgrove and Armidale, with a telephone bureau at Hillgrove.'⁸⁸ The decline of the town made a significant impact on the Telephone Exchange. In April 1917 Government authorities stated 'revenue derived from the business transacted at Hillgrove between 6 and 8 p.m. amounts to approximately £2 3s 3d per annum only, whilst the cost of providing the service... is approximately £6 12s per annum'.⁸⁹ The residents were instructed to pay the difference by meeting the cost of the service before 1 July or risk losing the service altogether.

From 1 January 1924, the direct mail service to Hillgrove and Metz was terminated by the Federal Government which announced 'the delivery of mail to these places will now be taken up by the Kempsey and Tyringham mail cars'.⁹⁰

The status of the Post Office was reduced to a non-official Post Office on 1 June 1925, and the premises were sold by the Department in 1949. Accordingly, the premises were moved 'to the premises of the postmistress, Mrs D. Morgan on 1 June 1950'.⁹¹ Postal business was subsequently conducted from private homes until the Office finally closed in 1979.

⁸⁸ op. cit., 1 April 1905, p. 2.

⁸⁹ **Armidale Chronicle**, 14 April 1917, p. 2.

⁹⁰ op. cit., 2 January 1924, p. 4.

⁹¹ **Hillgrove Post Office History**, Researched and written by the N.S.W. Historical Officer, Australia Post, Undated, p. 11.

CHAPTER 9

LAW AND ORDER AND THE FIRE BRIGADE

It was essential to a rapidly growing mining community that appropriate services be provided to maintain law and order and to protect the physical fabric of newly constructed timber buildings. Law and order would be provided by government services but Fire Brigade services could only initially be provided by volunteers.

Courts and Police

At the public meeting held to petition the Minister for Mines on the needs of a mining town in April 1888, a number of demands were made that clearly reflected the feeling of the residents that Hillgrove would become a permanent town. One demand was that the Warden's Court should be removed from Armidale to Hillgrove to settle mining claims and disputes. It was also obvious that there was a need for the Licensing Court to investigate licences for transport, hotels and auctioneers because of the dramatic increase in population and business development, as well as the need to represent law and order. A Warden's Court was established by proclamation in March 1888.¹

A police constable was then appointed to Hillgrove, and in May 1888 George Read the Acting Inspector of Police, wrote to The Principal Under-Secretary concerning a police reserve. He requested the Department of Public Instruction be contacted 'to ascertain if there would be any objection to a portion of their reserve... that is, two acres of the total area of eight acres, being set aside for the erection of a station, which will probably be required before long'.²

Following the request to the Department of Public Instruction, Armidale Inspector J.D. Bradley replied to the Chief Inspector stating:

there can be no objection whatever... Ample acreage for school purposes will remain after the excision of the portion applied

¹ **New South Government Gazette**, No. 4, Sydney, 1888, p. 7433.

² Letter to the Principal Under-Secretary from George Read, Acting Inspector General of Police. Sydney 18 May 1888. **Hillgrove School Files 1885-1894**. A.O. 5/16272.3.

for, and the proximity of the Police Buildings will be advantageous to the district.³

In March 1889, the special correspondent at Hillgrove expressed further concern at the lack of police accommodation and lock-up, commenting 'the town is left unprotected while the prisoner is taken to Armidale to be tried.'⁴ The correspondent also called for the establishment of a Court of Petty Sessions. The Editor of the **Armidale Express** supported the action taken by residents in approaching Superintendent Garvin, Superintendent of Police, in the Northern District. The population of the town was now approaching fourteen hundred and the editor wrote, 'in the interests of law and order, a lock-up and police barracks are now urgent necessities'.⁵ The repeated requests eventually brought Police Departmental officers to the town and the correspondent hoped 'something will shortly be done as we are not without our percentage of those requiring police surveillance'.⁶

The appeal for extra police and the provision of a lock-up continued. A petition was prepared by the townspeople and sent to the Government in April 1889.⁷ Two months later, it was announced 'that more police protection is being provided in the way of an additional constable', but also expressed concern that there were 'no signs of a lock-up at present'.⁸ Only three days later a further report was given. 'We understand that Mr. Superintendent Garvin... has recommended that as little delay as possible should occur before'⁹ a lock-up and court house are provided in the town. As a result of the town's agitation for Government services, the police strength was increased to one senior constable and one constable in June 1889. The first Court of Petty Sessions was held on Tuesday 2 July, and 'the list of drunks, languages and disorderlies was very great indeed'.¹⁰ By this stage tenders had been called for a lock-up and police quarters.

The Progress Committee approached the authorities urging the extension of the Towns' Police Act to Hillgrove and early in August, James

³ Report to the Chief Inspector from J.D. Bradley. Armidale 18 June 1888. **Hillgrove School Files 1885-1894**. A.O. 5/16272.3.

⁴ **Armidale Express**, 19 March 1889, p. 4.

⁵ op. cit., 22 March 1889, p. 4.

⁶ op. cit., 26 March 1889, p. 4.

⁷ op. cit., 30 April 1889, p. 4.

⁸ op. cit., 4 June 1889, p. 4.

⁹ op. cit., 7 June 1889, p. 8.

¹⁰ op. cit., 9 July 1889, p. 4.

Inglis M.P. forwarded a letter from Edmund Fosbery, Inspector-General of Police. The Inspector informed the Committee,

that probably the Act, will shortly be extended there. I have instructed the police to do all that lies in their power to abate nuisances and preserve proper sanitation in the township.¹¹

On 12 August 1889, the Towns' Police Act was extended to Hillgrove. This act was critical to the health and well-being of the residents because the police could now take action to rid the town of health nuisances and attempt to ensure that proper sanitation was preserved.

On 18 October 1889, Superintendent Garvin visited Hillgrove to inspect the new police station and 'expressed himself as being highly satisfied with the workmanlike manners in which the contractors, Messrs Harper Bros. (of Armidale), had carried out the undertaking'.¹² The police barracks and lock-up were finally erected at a cost of £535.

Despite the fact that the Court House building was proclaimed in 1889, tenders were not called until 1891. It was obvious that the Government was not prepared to rush into a final decision about the Court House. Although the successful tender was sent in on 10 November 1891, it was not until November 1892 that the tender of W.M. Hern at £1,250 was accepted. The delay for the building of the Court House can be explained by the pressure that the Government of the day was under to provide buildings and services. In the period of the 1880's,

the rate of court house building was hectic... There were several influences which led to this burst of building activity: the population was growing fast, the economy was buoyant, there was considerable political activity and, with it, a widespread belief 'in progress'. In addition, large sums of money became freely available for a lavish program of public works, the wisdom and benefits of which were unquestioned.¹³

Hillgrove was in competition for the provision of Government services with many similar communities scattered throughout the state. The establishment of a Court House was an obvious sign of permanency and progress to a country town and by July 1892, action had been taken to select

¹¹ op. cit., 6 August 1889, p. 4.

¹² op. cit., 22 October 1889, p. 4.

¹³ Bridges, Peter, **Historic Court Houses of New South Wales**, Sydney, 1986, p. 67-68.

a site. Mr W.L. Vernon, Government Architect, visited the northern part of the state to inspect the public buildings of Narrabri, Glen Innes, Inverell, Tenterfield and Armidale. During the tour, he 'also went to Hillgrove for the purpose of inspecting the proposed site of the new Court House, which is to be erected there at an early date.'¹⁴

The new Court House opened in Hillgrove in October 1893. Prior to the commencement of business that day, Armidale solicitor Mr T.J. Kearney congratulated 'the public of Hillgrove on the opening of the new court house, in their being in possession of such a splendid edifice'.¹⁵ He also extended congratulations to Mr E.A. Davies, Clerk of Petty Sessions and Magistrates H.G. Wakeford and W. Morgan. In reply, Senior Magistrate Wakeford thanked Mr Kearney and 'trusted that the new court house would not be used too much- at any rate only as the growth of the city might justify it'.¹⁶

The residents of Hillgrove developed deep respect for a number of their long serving policemen. In October 1897, the announcement was made that Sergeant Edwards who had been in Hillgrove for over eight years, was to change places with Sergeant Biffin of Walcha.¹⁷ A public meeting was called to arrange a suitable testimonial to Sergeant Edwards and an unsuccessful petition was forwarded to Police Superintendent Thomas Garvin, asking him to reconsider the move of this officer. A farewell function was held at the School of Arts Hall on Tuesday 2 November attended by a 'large and representative' gathering. A number of tributes were paid to Sergeant Edwards but in presenting the gift, Justice of Peace, Mr J. Jolly said:

In addition to my commission to express on behalf of the people of Hillgrove their highest regard and esteem for you, and their sorrow for your departure from amongst them, Sergeant Edwards, I have to present to you, on behalf of those who have subscribed towards it, this purse of 50 sovereigns...¹⁸

Similar tributes were expressed in March 1908 when another long-serving policeman at Hillgrove, Constable Bradbury, left the service to lease the **Grosvenor Hotel**, Guy Fawkes.

¹⁴ **Armidale Express**, 19 July 1892, p. 5.

¹⁵ *op. cit.*, 31 October 1893, p. 4.

¹⁶ *ibid.*

¹⁷ **Hillgrove Guardian and New England Mining Gazette**, 23 October 1897, p. 2.

¹⁸ *op. cit.*, 6 November 1897, p. 3.

In June 1900 the Sandon County Electric Light and Power Works connected electric light to the Post Office and Police Station at Hillgrove. Police accommodation was upgraded when the former Post Office was moved from Brackin Street onto the Police Reserve facing Scouler and Smith Streets, early in December 1901. The building was to serve 'as quarters for the single men, and barracks generally'.¹⁹

By October 1900, the station was staffed by Senior Constable Cook and Constables Jones and Corby. Townspeople saw an urgent need for Superintendent Garvin to appoint 'an extra officer... at Hillgrove, a mounted man for preference'.²⁰ The need had arisen because of the amount of crime and disturbances in the town. Many unionists in the town also felt the police should take action to reduce the amount of Sunday working taking place at the mines.

In November 1902 the **Hillgrove Guardian** reported that the Court House,

sadly needs a coat of paint. We learn on very good authority that the building has never been attended to in this respect... From exposure to wind and weather the wood in the walls of the building is rapidly decaying...²¹

Court and police services continued to be provided despite the decline of the mines and township, but records have not revealed when the Court House closed or when the building was removed. Apparently the public of Armidale and Hillgrove were unaware of the intended closure of the Police Station at Hillgrove until a mining warden's advertisement appeared in the local press in October 1936. It stated 'on account of the closing of the police station (and Warden Clerk's office) at Hillgrove, all applications, relating to the Hillgrove Mining division, will, as from 29/10/1936, be received by the Warden's Clerk, Armidale'.²²

Such an announcement by advertisement brought an angry reaction from the editor of the **Armidale Express**, because of the lack of consultation and the lack of an official public announcement from the Chief

¹⁹ **Armidale Chronicle**, 1 December 1900, p. 5.

²⁰ *op. cit.*, 31 October 1900, p. 4.

²¹ **Hillgrove Guardian and New England Mining Gazette**, 22 November 1902, p. 3.

²² **Armidale Express**, 18 November 1936, p. 4.

Secretary Mr Chaffey. It was hoped 'Dumaresq Shire Council and other bodies charged with conserving the interests of country people will enter an emphatic protest'.²³ Despite the concern, the Hillgrove Police Station did close on 29 October 1936.

Fire Brigade

In January 1894 G. Latimer, Secretary of the Progress Committee, initiated the formation of a volunteer Fire Brigade in Hillgrove. As the correspondent of the period noted, 'Hillgrove has never been unlucky enough to need a brigade yet... with the excellent water power available we would be improvident indeed were we to neglect this important duty...'²⁴ However in June, the private residence of Captain Stead, at the back of the Salvation Army barracks was destroyed. Then in December 1894, a disastrous fire occurred in the main street when the City Bank premises and the Centennial Hall were destroyed. At the enquiry, 'evidence was given by Mr Thomas Keys, owner of the Centennial Hall...'²⁵ The correspondent in the **Armidale Chronicle** hoped,

one effect of the fire will be to rouse the public and the insurance companies from the lethargy into which they had fallen... We have the men and the water, and all that is needed is the necessary appliances, not merely to save property but perhaps life.²⁶

Despite the plea, no action was forthcoming and it was not until March 1898 that definite steps were taken by the Progress Committee to form a Fire Brigade or Salvage Corps. The Committee decided to invite a number of townsmen 'to the next meeting'.²⁷ As a result, 'Messrs T.P. Ray, S.A. Ray, S. Sullings, Sharp, Drew, W.J. Hill, Vance, Widdy, McDougall, Dell and Quinnell joined the committee in discussing the advisability of forming a Salvage Corps in Hillgrove',²⁸ and a motion was passed to form a Corps.

²³ *ibid.*

²⁴ **Armidale Express**, 26 January 1894, p. 4.

²⁵ *op. cit.*, 4 January 1895, p. 4.

²⁶ **Armidale Chronicle**, 29 December 1894, p. 4.

²⁷ **Hillgrove Guardian and New England Mining Gazette**, 5 March 1898, p. 3.

²⁸ *op. cit.*, 19 March 1898, p. 2.

A public meeting was held at Sims' Hall on Wednesday 23 March 1898 to receive the 'Report of the committee appointed to draw up rules...'²⁹ for the Salvage Corps. Following the meeting, the Secretary of the Progress Committee, Mr A.V. Gray called for nominations for membership of the Salvage Corps.

The Corps did not prove to be a strong group. In April 1899 a meeting was cancelled, when 'the Secretary and two others only put in an appearance'.³⁰ The **Hillgrove Guardian** felt that the probable reason was the fact that 'the Corps has no status'.³¹ Before the incorporation of a town, no legal status could be given to a Fire Brigade, and application had to be made to the Chief Secretary for the Fire Brigades Act to apply to Hillgrove. In May 1900, Alderman Robert Sharp attempted to revive the issue at a meeting of the Municipal Council.

Now it was different, so steps could be taken to put to practical use the appliances on hand. It was resolved that steps should be taken to bring the Fire Brigades Act into operation in the Borough of Hillgrove; Alderman Dickson, Sharp, Hardcastle and Savage to be a committee to report.³²

By the regulations of the Fire Brigades Act of 1884, the Governor could extend 'by proclamation, the principles of an administrative board and fire chief to any country municipality'.³³ The Chief-Secretary contacted the Municipal Council to nominate a local officer as Superintendent and Alderman Robert Sharp was chosen in June 1900.³⁴

With the formation of the Fire Brigade, arrangements were made for Mr A.V. Gray, secretary of the Salvage Corps to address the Council. Gray told the next meeting of the Council,

that there was a reel, hose, hydrants and other things, including £2 12s in the bank, which he would like to hand over in order

²⁹ op. cit., 26 March 1898, p. 2.

³⁰ **Hillgrove Guardian and New England Mining Gazette**, 8 April 1899, p. 2.

³¹ *ibid.*

³² op. cit., 26 May 1900, p. 3.

³³ Larcombe, F.A., **The Stabilization of Local Government in New South Wales 1858-1906. A History of local Government in New South Wales, Volume 2.** Sydney, 1976, p. 113.

³⁴ **Hillgrove Guardian and New England Mining Gazette**, 23 June 1900, p. 3.

that everything be under proper care. The council thanked Mr Gray and decided to take everything over.³⁵

Forty nine men attended the public meeting called by the Mayor, in the Council Chambers in August 1901. All became members of the Hillgrove Volunteer Fire Brigade and passed the resolution 'that the Borough Council of Hillgrove be the Trustees invested with control over the property of the Hillgrove Fire Brigade, the Mayor to be the representative'.³⁶ With its establishment, the Brigade became entitled to a subsidy from the Government. Businessman Mr Maddox offered shelter for the fire apparatus, the Directors of the **Eleanora Mine** promised support and the following office-bearers were elected:

Superintendent R. Sharp (Captain); Mr. Sid McNamara (Lieutenant); Mr. R. Morrow (Treasurer); Mr. Thos Morris (Hose Officer); Mr. J. Wade (Apparatus); Mr. F. Crutchett (Engine Officer); Mr. Thos Chandler (Drill Instructor). Dr. Cooper Hardcastle was appointed Honorary Medical Officer.³⁷

The Fire Brigade Act established fire brigade districts under the control of an inspector 'whose duty was to attend and give instructions to the firemen of the various brigades within their districts'.³⁸ Each brigade was to be formed of twelve members who would receive a month's paid training in the City under the control of the Central Board.

The first drill of the Fire Brigade under the control of the drill master Thomas Chandler, a teacher from the Public School, was attended by twenty members on Thursday 12 September 1901 in the Town Hall. Support for the Brigade was given by the Public Works Department who provided free water for wet practice and the Armidale Fire Brigade lent a hydrant.

At the Eight Hour Day march of October 1901, 'the miners and the Oddfellows turned out in good force with their handsome banners and the new Fire Brigade also made a very fair show'.³⁹ By November 1901, it was reported the Brigade was proficient because of the enthusiasm of the members and the capability of Sharp as head. The Brigade comprised sixty members and thirty workers but the reporter warned, 'it is difficult to get the same

35 op. cit., 1 September 1900, p. 3.

36 op. cit., 31 August 1901, p. 3.

37 ibid.

38 op. cit., 7 September 1901, p. 2.

39 op. cit., 12 October 1901, p. 4.

crews often together as they work on different shifts, so it is desirable for every member to attend as many practices as possible'.⁴⁰

The Chief Secretary's Office asked the Council 'to appoint a local townsman to represent the Government on the Fire Brigade Board: Mr E.A. Thompson was nominated for the position'.⁴¹ 'Most municipalities were probably never anxious to participate in the function of fire prevention';⁴² but this was certainly not the case in Hillgrove. The fact that Alderman Sharp, manager of the **Eleanora Gold Mining Company**, was appointed Superintendent of the Fire Brigade and later Mayor of the town, ensured municipal support for the organisation.

A significant fire occurred in Brackin Street, on the evening of Monday 4 November 1901 when the new brick Post Office was threatened. Although the Ray Bros store building was saved, the 'front of the premises (were) damaged'.⁴³ The barber Smith, saved all of his furniture but lost his entire stock as did businessman J.J. Handebo. According to the correspondent in the **Hillgrove Guardian**, 'Too much praise cannot be extended to our young Fire Brigade for the manner for which they gave allegiance to their leader'.⁴⁴

A further public meeting was called by the Mayor for Monday 11 November 1901, when it was hoped 'that the business people will attend the meeting and put all the enthusiasm in their possession into the proceedings'.⁴⁵ The meeting of business people and householders was held in the Council Chambers to discuss the further needs of the volunteer Fire Brigade. Superintendent Sharp reported that a centrally situated station was essential and submitted the following list of needs:

Central station 20 by 14, 12 ft walls, floored and built of galvanised iron; 6 salvage hooks and handles, 6 axes, 1 grappling hook, 200 ft rope, 4 spring trace chains, 24 leather buckets, 1 ladder 22ft, 1 extension to reach 50ft, 300ft canvas hose, 4 pair gun metal couplings...⁴⁶

40 op. cit., 2 November 1901, p. 3.

41 op. cit., 9 November 1901, p. 3.

42 Larcombe, F.A., **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, 1978, p. 331.

43 **Hillgrove Guardian and New England Mining Gazette**, 9 November 1901, p. 4.

44 *ibid.*

45 op. cit., p. 2.

46 op. cit., 16 November 1901, p. 4.

A sub-committee was formed to place the Brigade on 'a sound financial basis' and W.A. Stark became Secretary with E.K. Brown Treasurer. S. Ray and R. Sharp were instructed to secure a central site for a fire station. The Fire Brigade commenced to meet on the first Tuesday of the month, and at a meeting held in December 1901 action was taken 'to have a hose and reel practice every Monday evening...'⁴⁷

Funds for the Brigade were raised by popular dance socials and in February 1902, Edmund Lonsdale, the local Member of Parliament, announced a grant of £50 for the Fire Brigade. This grant from the government meant that action could now be taken to build a station for the Brigade. A special meeting of the Brigade was held on Wednesday evening 19 February 1902, to consider and endorse 'the action of the sub-committee for purchasing a block of land on the Eleanora Coy. for the purpose of building a fire-station there'.⁴⁸ J. Wade prepared the plan and three months later it was announced: 'The work of erecting the fire brigade station is progressing. When the building is finished, it will be a great improvement to that part of the town'.⁴⁹

Another serious fire took place in May 1902, when premises occupied by a Mr McPherson and a Mrs Oliver were damaged. The buildings were owned by Mr and Mrs Sims, hotelkeepers of Hillgrove, and were insured for £100 each with the insurance company, Norwich Union Fire Insurance Company. Townspeople operated the reel but it was claimed 'none of the members of the brigade proper'⁵⁰ attended the fire.

At the same time the announcement was made,

early next week the new fire station will be opened with all the ceremony that the occasion deserves. The building will cost over £40, and when completed, will be a credit to the fire brigade. The event is to be celebrated by a social, to which all members are to be invited...⁵¹

At the Magisterial enquiry held on Thursday 15 May at Hillgrove to investigate the cause of the fire, the coroner declared an open verdict.

47 op. cit., 7 December 1901, p. 2.

48 op. cit., 23 February 1902, p. 2.

49 op. cit., 3 May 1902, p. 2.

50 op. cit., 10 May 1902, p. 2.

51 *ibid.*

Despite the claim that members of the Brigade did not attend the fire, the jury 'added a rider complimenting the... firemen on the work performed'.⁵²

The provision of a Fire Brigade and fire station ensured the confidence of some Insurance Companies in the town. In July 1902, 'a local agent' informed the **Hillgrove Guardian** 'that he has just put through a £500 policy in connection with a business place in town'.⁵³

In January 1903, the Municipal Council took action 'to take over the Fire Brigade property on behalf of the townspeople'.⁵⁴ Four months later, Mr Lonsdale M.P. announced that 'a sum of £40 had been allotted to the Hillgrove Fire Brigade... for special grants in aid of suburban and country Fire Brigades'.⁵⁵ Despite these positive moves of support for the Brigade the local correspondent asked in January of the following year; 'What has become of our Town Fire Brigade, and why has there been no practice for such a length of time?'⁵⁶ In 1905, the Brigade had thirty seven members and attended three fires.⁵⁷

The Fire Brigades Act of 1909 divided the state into eight areas, each in charge of a divisional officer in an attempt to standardize equipment and procedure. The Council was not in favour of such a move and discussed 'withdrawal of Council from the Fire Board's control'⁵⁸ in November 1910. Consequently, Hillgrove withdrew from the fire district and 'of the seventy-seven fire districts operating in 1910, fifty-eight were in debt'.⁵⁹

In June 1911 a big blaze occurred when Bulmer Phillips' property, formerly George Quinnell's large general store in Brackin Street, was destroyed by fire. Captain Robert Sharp, with a willing band of workers and a plentiful supply of water, saved the adjoining Mr Smart's residence and

52 op. cit., 17 May 1902, p. 3.

53 op. cit., 26 July 1902, p. 2.

54 op. cit., 17 January 1903, p. 2.

55 op. cit., 23 May 1903, p. 3.

56 op. cit., 30 January 1904, p. 2.

57 **The Official Year Book of New South Wales, 1905-1906.** Sydney, 1907, p. 573.

58 **Armidale Chronicle**, 19 November 1910, p. 3.

59 'Metropolitan Fire Brigades, report of Late President; PP, 1911-1912, Vol. 4, pp. 545f' quoted in Larcombe, F.A., **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, 1978, p. 335.

bakery, and Mr Boundy's residence. 'Had the fire reached these buildings, it would have been impossible to save Robinsons or Crouchs Hotel'.⁶⁰

The Municipal Council decided in August 1911, to ask Robert Sharp, Captain of the Fire Brigade, 'to sign with other trustees' granting control of the brigade to the Council.⁶¹ It was also decided to ask the Fire Commissioners 'to return money which they received from the trustees of the old Fire Brigade'.⁶² In the following month, the Board of Fire Commissioners asked the Council 'for 9s to close the account'.⁶³

'The Fire Brigade handed over their responsibilities to the Council, with a cheque for £72 8s 1d which was to be placed to the credit of the general account'⁶⁴ in March 1912. The Council accepted responsibility to 'keep the reel and accoutrements in good order, and see that everything is in readiness in case of fire at any time'.⁶⁵ Such an action was taken by the Council in an attempt to reduce costs. The management of the water supply for the townspeople and its use in the case of fire was an ongoing problem to the Council. Despite community opposition, the Council had been forced to take responsibility for the water-works in 1906 by the State Government. Described as a 'rather worn-out scheme... It has taken the Council considerable time and expense repairing'.⁶⁶ Consequently the Council was forced to levy a high water rate to cover the cost of repairs and the interest on the scheme owing to the Government. In March 1912, the Mayor Alderman Morgan approached the local member Edmund Lonsdale in an attempt to obtain concessions, but the Council was forced to accept the costs of the scheme throughout its lifetime.

The Fire Brigade continued until the early 1920's, although the constant loss of miners to the town by the closure of mines or the suspension of labour would have meant little stability amongst its membership. Hillgrove was never devastated by a major destructive fire but a number of timber homes were lost or damaged particularly if they were a long way from

60 **Armidale Chronicle**, 7 June 1911, p. 4.

61 *op. cit.*, 26 August 1911, p. 6.

62 *ibid.*

63 *op. cit.*, 9 September 1911, p. 7.

64 **Armidale Express**, 26 March 1912, p. 4.

65 **Armidale Chronicle**, 27 March 1912, p. 2.

66 **Armidale Express**, 26 March 1912, p. 4.

the water hydrants. Some large buildings were also destroyed including the Centennial Hall, the **Eleanora and Post Office Hotels** and School of Arts.

At a meeting of the Municipal Council in August 1921, the announcement was made that 'the fire station is to be sold by public tender'.⁶⁷ Long time member and supporter of the Brigade Alderman Robert Sharp announced he would overhaul the fire-hose and its fittings and put them in order.

⁶⁷ **Armidale Chronicle**, 27 August 1921, p. 3.

CHAPTER 10

THE SCHOOL OF ARTS AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION

The concept of the institution developed in many communities known as the School of Arts, Mechanics or Literary Institutes was based on the British model of education for the working man. The idea 'came from a class formed in 1800 by George Birbeck in Glasgow, Scotland, for journeymen mechanics; the first institute in the full sense of the term was organised also, by Birbeck, in London in 1824'.¹ 'In New England, the first School of Arts was established in Armidale in July 1859'² and other towns in the north, including Hillgrove, followed suit.

A preliminary meeting, attended by about twelve people was held in November 1888 at the Centennial Hall in Hillgrove to form a Library and Mechanics Institute. 'Mr. McLean was voted to the chair... and the committee consisted of... Messrs Lewis, Tonkin, Wescott, Wade, Snape, R. Moffat, Keys, J. Moffat, Nix and S. Matthews'.³ In 1889 the Progress Association Committee of Hillgrove purchased land for the School of Arts described as a 'magnificent site in a central position in Brereton Street'.⁴ The Committee then applied to Henry Copeland M.L.A. for a School of Arts because the movement was entitled to a grant from the Government for the money raised by subscription. He supported their application to the Hon. J.H. Carruthers, Minister of Public Instruction in February 1890, and described the town as a 'very important mining centre with a population of several thousands'.⁵

On Friday evening 10 July 1891, a large meeting was held at Wade's Miners' Arms Hotel in Hillgrove: 'Mr Westcott was elected President, Mr Clapin Treasurer and Mr H. Tonkin Secretary. A number of Trustees and Committee men were also elected, and 34 members enrolled'.⁶ By July, the committee had collected a sum of £175 and applied for the government

¹ **The Australian Encyclopaedia**, Volume vi, Sydney, 1965, p. 17.

² Raszweski, C. 'The Armidale School of Arts, or Mechanics' Institute', in **Armidale and District Historical Society Journal**, No. 31, April 1988, p. 1.

³ **Armidale Express**, 30 November 1888, p. 4.

⁴ op. cit., 17 September 1889, p. 4.

⁵ Letter from H. Copeland, M.L.A., Parliament House, Sydney, to the Hon. J.H. Carruthers, Minister for Public Instruction, Dated 15 February 1890, No. 7876, **Hillgrove School of Arts File 1888-1892**, A.O. 20/13064.

⁶ **Armidale Express**, 14 July 1891, p. 4.

subsidy of a pound for a pound. The cost of a building was £275 and they believed they could open a School of Arts immediately if the government subsidy was granted. In August 1891, a building was 'purchased and converted into a Mechanics Institute' and also 'stocked with a fine selection of books'.⁷ The correspondent in the **Armidale Express** announced 'that the formal opening of the School of Arts passed very successfully and... besides liberal subscriptions received, others were fast coming in'.⁸ Land was dedicated on 25 October 1892 as a site and on 9 December, the following trustees were nominated by the Under Secretary to the Department of Lands: Michael McNamara, George Quinnell, Edwin Knight Brown, John Walpole Keller and Thomas Keys.

Eventually a building was constructed at a cost of £765 with a government subsidy of £372/11/1. By 1895, the building had a porch, stage, escape doors and steps. Other features included: a reading room 12ft. by 24ft. with accommodation for twenty four readers; a debating room 12ft. by 24ft. with accommodation for thirty six persons and a lecture hall 30ft. by 60ft. with skillion 12ft. by 30ft. attached with accommodation for four to five hundred persons.

District Inspector of Schools, J.D. Bradley reported in October 1896 that:

The Reading Room is exceptionally well provided with papers and periodicals and is very popular, but the library is in not so satisfactory a condition. It is intended however to add materially to the stock of books as soon as possible and to attend to the renovation of such as have become dilapidated by use.⁹

The harshness of the Hillgrove winters coupled with the growth of the town, brought an obvious need for improvements to the School of Arts Hall. At the sacred Christmas concert held in December 1897, Mr McNaught spoke on behalf of the School of Arts mutual improvement society expressing hope that the organisation would 'get all the patronage, such an institution deserved but also there would be some improvement to the barn of a hall'.¹⁰

⁷ op. cit., 14 August 1891, p. 5.

⁸ op. cit., 18 August 1891, p. 5.

⁹ Report on the School of Arts Committee by District Inspector, J.D. Bradley, Armidale, Department of Public Instruction, Dated 12 October 1896, No. 61658, **Hillgrove School of Arts File 1896-1897**, A.O. 20/13070.

¹⁰ **Hillgrove Guardian and New England Mining Gazette**, 31 December 1897, p. 4.

In 1898 an unusual event occurred when representatives of the Hillgrove and Metz Schools of Arts competed in a chess competition. This event demonstrated the use of new technology available to the miners when five games of chess were played by telephone on the evening of Friday 25 March; three matches were won by Metz and two by Hillgrove.

At the annual meeting held on 19 July 1899, the committee congratulated 'the subscribers upon the flourishing condition of the Institution, which is now free from debt, with assets valued at £800'.¹¹ In September, tenders were called for 'additions to the... School of Arts, labour "only"'.¹² There was an attempt to broaden the education of Hillgrove people in July 1899 by inviting Mr A.W. Jose, university extension lecturer of Sydney to present lectures on Africa. 'The Rev. Lionel Nye, Vicar of Hillgrove, introduced Mr Jose'¹³ for his first lecture on the colonisation of Africa. Two weeks later, Mr Jose presented his second lecture on 'The British in East and Western Africa'¹⁴ but on each occasion, the lectures only attracted 'moderate' and 'limited' audiences.

Two years later, President Henry Tonkin, the Public School Principal, reported at the eleventh annual meeting held in 1901, that the subscribers now enrolled totalled eighty. Despite the increase, he felt that a larger part of the community could avail themselves of the benefits of membership. 'The affairs of the institution which five years ago was in a state of collapse, were now in a fairly creditable condition'.¹⁵ However, the annual report also referred to the general state of depression felt in the town. Dr Hardcastle told the meeting that three years ago he had offered to conduct a class in chemistry but the general committee had not taken up his offer. He now felt that if he could get ten names he could form a class. Therefore, it was moved 'that it be a suggestion to the new committee to take steps to establish technical classes in conjunction with Armidale'.¹⁶ In August 1901, the committee appealed to 'intending students to hand in their names. All information in connection with

11 op. cit., 22 July 1899, p. 3.

12 op. cit., 9 September 1899, p. 2.

13 op. cit., 29 July 1899, p. 3.

14 op. cit., 12 August 1899, p. 2.

15 op. cit., 27 July 1901, p. 3.

16 *ibid.*

the proposed classes may be obtained from the librarian at the School of Arts'.¹⁷

In September 1902, the committee assisted President Dr Hardcastle to prepare a lecture-room and laboratory for his chemistry class underneath the stage of the hall. The **Hillgrove Guardian** announced,

on Thursday night, Dr Hardcastle gave his opening lecture in connection with the recently established chemistry class. There was a satisfactory attendance including a few ladies, and marked interest was shown in the proceedings. The Mayor presided...¹⁸

The classes in chemistry proved highly successful with some of the students finding employment as assayers in the Hillgrove mines. In the same year, Dr Hardcastle conducted ambulance and first aid classes in the School of Arts building.

At the annual meeting held in 1901, it was suggested that a billiard room might improve the financial state. But it was not until 1904 that a billiard table was purchased, a special room constructed, (24 by 20 feet, with lined timber walls and iron roof) and rules drawn up for the management and conduct of the billiard room. These rules stated:

That a list of financial members... be posted...; that no boys under the age of 18 be allowed to play without permission... that notice be placed over money box appealing to the honour of members to pay...; that the tariff be- billiards, 50 up 6d, 100 1/-, 75 (4- handed) 1/-; "snooker" 6d, pyramids 6d; time limit 50 half- hour, 100 one hour, providing any members are waiting to play; that no practice be allowed, nor smoking over the table.¹⁹

A number of community members including Dr Hardcastle and Henry Tonkin, felt that technical education should be provided in Hillgrove. Certainly the nature of mining in the gorge country and the type of ore found in the mines required a highly skilled work-force with engineering and chemical skills. So in January 1905, the treasurer reported to the Hon. S.J. Kearney M.L.A. that the Hillgrove School of Arts had 'lately built and paid for a Technical School Building in connection with the institution at a cost of

¹⁷ op. cit., 17 August 1901, p. 2.

¹⁸ op. cit., 18 October 1902, p. 2.

¹⁹ op. cit., 1 October 1904, p. 2.

£50²⁰ and because of its indebtedness to the extent of £25, he asked for the prompt payment of the subsidy.

Four months later the Department of Technical Education wrote to the Municipal Council and the School of Arts to seek support for new premises. Mayor Sharp quickly organised a meeting but 'only four persons attended. However it was agreed that efforts be made to establish classes in engineering, agriculture, chemistry, and geology and mineralogy'.²¹ This meeting decided to remove the laboratory from under the School of Arts building.

On Thursday 18 May 1905, a meeting of the committee for the extension of technical classes in accordance with the circular received from Mr Knibbs (Superintendent of Technical Education), was held at the Hillgrove School of Arts. Committee members in attendance were: Messrs Wright (chairman), Tonkin, Blackwell, Evans, Newberry, Mason, Curtis, Crutchett, Teague, Parsons (honorary secretary) and Dr Hardcastle. Dr Hardcastle 'moved that plans be prepared for a building of wood and iron'²² and a building committee consisting of Wright, Evans, Mason, Dr Hardcastle were asked to submit rough plans for the next meeting. The committee saw a need for courses in assaying, chemistry, engineering, theoretical and practical mining, shorthand and dressmaking.

The editor of the **Hillgrove Guardian** strongly supported the need for technical education in Hillgrove:

The importance of assisting our young people to obtain a technical training is evidently being practically recognised by our educational authorities, and not a whit too soon, for undoubtedly one of the chief factors in the prosperity of both America and Germany is the splendid systems of technical instruction in vogue in these countries.²³

The departure of Dr Hardcastle on Wednesday 7 June 1905 for Bathurst saw the loss of a fine doctor and local citizen. Two hundred people

20 Letter from the Honorary Treasurer to S.J. Kearney, M.L.A., Armidale, Dated 4 January 1905, No. 01112, **Hillgrove School of Arts File 1904-1905**, A.O. 20/13094.

21 **Hillgrove Guardian and New England Mining Gazette**, 6 May 1905, p. 2.

22 op. cit., 20 May 1905, p. 2.

23 *ibid.*

attended the presentation evening, held on Monday 27 March, at the School of Arts hall. Mayor Sharp made a presentation to Dr and Mrs Hardcastle on behalf of the people of Hillgrove, and in particular, Wollomombi. Speeches made by the Mayor, Mr Carney (President of the Miners' Association) and Mr Tonkin paid a tribute to the achievements of the man during his ten years in Hillgrove. 'The Mayor said they had met once more to bid good-bye to a sterling fellow townsman, one who had taken a very active interest in everything pertaining to the advancement of the welfare of the town'.²⁴ The committee procured a large photograph of Dr Hardcastle from Messrs Lowe Bros studio, Brackin Street, Hillgrove and 'hung it in the Debating-room, in recognition of his valued services to the Institute, especially while he was President'.²⁵

The sixteenth annual report of the committee in July 1906 noted that the Technical School was well established with Mr Harold J. Wright (teacher in charge). Equipment was supplied by the Department of Public Instruction and forty six students were enrolled. 'The Class Rooms were built and furnished at a cost of £61/18/6 of which £27/5/6 was subscribed by the Public'.²⁶ Instruction was given in the following subjects: engine running and mechanical drawing by Mr N. Mason; applied electrical engineering by Mr H. Wright and theoretical and practical chemistry and assaying by Mr V. Newberry. An emphasis was placed on practical work in the community and various classrooms and laboratories were fitted out with electric light by the students with a view to installing bell and telephone systems. Mr Wright continued his report that:

These students have also renewed the bell system at the Commercial Hotel, erected a long telephone line... The students of the engine running class, who now number 20... are permitted to practice engine driving and to assist in the repair and erection work going on in the Proprietary and Eleanora Mines. The Certificates gained by them will be largely taken into account by the Government examiners. Students of Chemistry and Assaying, are now working under the most favourable conditions in the well designed Chemical Laboratory which has been fitted up with all the necessary apparatus for qualitative and quantitative work.²⁷

24 Hillgrove Guardian and New England Mining Gazette, 1 April 1905, p. 2.

25 op. cit., 10 June 1905, p. 2.

26 Annual Report of the School of Arts Committee, Department of Public Instruction, Dated 18 July 1906, No. 55242, Hillgrove School of Arts File 1906-1907, A.O. 20/13100.

27 ibid.

The committee attempted to provide for female education by forming a dressmaking class in September of the previous year, but eventually the class was terminated due to insufficient enrolments. Many parents obviously did not support the need for female education, and would not permit their daughters to leave the home unchaperoned to attend classes. This attitude was not restricted only to mining communities such as Hillgrove because the question of the value of education to females was a complex one.

The 1906 subscribers to the School of Arts numbered ninety; slightly fewer than the one hundred and one of the previous year. However, the library borrowings did increase by some 1,150 to a total of 4,500. The billiard room provided revenue of £54/15/8 and improvements included: the purchase of a new piano for £72/15/- and the erection of a piano platform; furnishings, including the purchase of five forms and a dozen chairs as well as the alteration and improvement of foot and stage lights. Funds of £20/10/- for the piano were obtained from a concert and two quadrille parties.

The highlight of 1907 was the inspection visit by the Director of Technical Education, Mr J.W. Turner. He arrived in Hillgrove on Wednesday 20 March and met lecturers of the Technical School and representatives of the School of Arts committee. During the day he visited the School of Arts, the Public School, the **Proprietary Mine**, the **Baker's Creek Mine** and the **Freehold** property to visit the antimony furnaces. In the evening, he was entertained at dinner by several leading townsmen at Sulling's **Commercial Hotel**. Following a number of toasts, he referred in reply to the efforts of Dr Hardcastle, Mr H. Tonkin and the technical school instructors, Messrs H. Wright, Newberry, Mason and Teague. He proposed to establish cookery classes in connection with the Hillgrove and Armidale Public Schools. With their establishment, he would recommend that a class be formed outside the school as well as a dressmaking class. Furthermore,

He hoped to get them a building for technical education purposes on another ground, but he knew the Hillgrove people would never forget what the committee of the School of Arts had done for them in this direction... He did not think any part of the State afforded better opportunities for making expert tradesmen than Hillgrove.²⁸

²⁸ 'Visit of Mr Turner', 23 March 1907, Reproduced in Tonkin, Henry, **Papers**, c 1859-1937, Mitchell Library FM 4/7446, Folio 120.

In the September 1907 edition of the **Armidale Express** it was announced that a letter had been received by Mr S.J. Kearney M.L.A., from Mr Peter Board, Under Secretary, of the Department of Public Instruction. An amount of £3000 was 'included in the draft estimates (Public works fund 1907-1908) and a portion of this sum has been made available by the recent Supply Bill'.²⁹ That year, the Technical College passed out of the hands of the School of Arts committee although there were 'several meetings of joint committees of the School of Arts and Teachers of the College for the purpose of furthering and increasing interest in the movement.'³⁰ Despite this, the committee felt that it would not be out of place to include within their annual report some details of progress made as recorded by Harold J. Wright:

The work of extending the Technical Education movement during the year has been most successful, and the College in Hillgrove is acknowledged to be among the most up-to-date, and educationally sound Institutions in the State. The attendances have been increased nearly 100 per cent. There being about 100 Students on the roll. Through the untiring efforts of Mr H.J. Wright, the Teacher in Charge, and his Colleagues, a piece of land has been set apart, and a promise made by Mr J.W. Turner Director of Technical Education, that a new college shall be erected by the Department after the passing of the estimates this year.³¹

The major contribution of Harold Wright to technical education in Hillgrove cannot be underestimated. In November 1907 it was announced that 'to enable students to qualify for the position of motor drivers or wire men, Mr. Wright intends continuing right through the vacation'.³² At the same time, 'Miss Kirby of the Sydney Technical College, visited Hillgrove for the purpose of making arrangements for holding cookery classes'.³³

The expansion of the college included a class in physiology conducted by Dr Costello, who replaced Dr Hardcastle early in the year. Lecturers had also been found for new classes in carpentry, blacksmithing, mining, mine surveying, metallurgy, geology, mineralogy, cooking and dressmaking, and it was hoped to commence them in the new term if sufficient students were

29 **Armidale Express**, 3 September 1907, p. 5.

30 Annual Report of the School of Arts Committee, Department of Public Instruction, Dated 13 November 1907, No. 70617, **Hillgrove School of Arts File 1906-1907**, A.O. 20/13100.

31 *ibid.*

32 **Armidale Chronicle**, 6 November 1907, p. 5.

33 *ibid.*

enrolled. Mr Wright then appealed for people to assist lecturers by recruiting students if technical education was to be expanded in Hillgrove.

The debt on the piano was paid off during the year mainly as a result of public entertainment including a performance of 'Trial by Jury.' A number of improvements were also carried out within the hall: the stage electric lighting was re-arranged; the stage dressing-rooms were made fixtures; the drop-scenes were repaired and fixed on rollers, and the purchase of new chairs meant that the seating included eighty chairs and thirty forms. However the annual report expressed the need for 'much improvement in the body of the hall, which has a very shabby and depressing appearance, and it is suggested that when funds will allow, painting and ceiling be effected'.³⁴

In February 1908 the report indicated that the plans for the new Technical College were being prepared 'and that tenders will shortly be called for the work. It is estimated that the building alone, without the necessary furniture or apparatus, will cost about £1500'.³⁵ These plans were forwarded to the Department of Technical Education for approval, but within two months the Technical College suffered a severe set-back when Harold Wright, headmaster of the college, left for Melbourne. He was farewelled at a function at Mrs Wade's **Miners' Arms Hotel** on the evening of Saturday 10 April. The extent of the success of the technical school was indicated in the following results: 'The result of the examination for competency as electric motor drivers... out of 22 applicants who sat for the State, nine passed, seven of the number being from Hillgrove'.³⁶

By 1909, the regular reports in **The Armidale Chronicle** referred to the depressed state of the town, and in March it was revealed 'for some time the monthly expenditure has exceeded the monthly revenue'.³⁷ The School of Arts reduced 'the charge for hire of the hall for local socials... (and) for local concerts and entertainments... (to) encourage more local use of the hall'.³⁸ In May, a deputation from the committee met with the Municipal Council 'for the purpose of asking for a reduction in rates, owing to the depressed times

³⁴ Annual Report of the School of Arts Committee, Department of Public Instruction, Dated 13 November 1907, No. 70617, **Hillgrove School of Arts File 1906-1907**, A.O. 20/13100.

³⁵ **Armidale Express**, 25 February 1908, p. 4.

³⁶ **Armidale Chronicle**, 20 May 1908, p. 5.

³⁷ op. cit., 13 March 1909, p. 3.

³⁸ op. cit., 14 April 1909, p. 3.

and the poor support they were getting...'³⁹ After much discussion, the aldermen reduced the water and general rates by one shilling each. The annual report for that year clearly demonstrated the decline; the billiard room receipts were £20/1/6 as against £52/3/- for the previous year, and the hall receipts were £27 as compared with £116. 'In order to reduce expenses, the electric light had been cut off from all except the hall since December, and a return to kerosene for the other rooms'.⁴⁰ However, the report also indicated that the Technical School closed in the previous December despite the fact that the students had all passed well under Mr Galloway's tuition. The report continued:

An effort was made to continue the classes, but without avail owing to the depressed state of the town. The authorities requested that the apparatus be returned to headquarters, with the understanding that same would be returned, if circumstances warranted, later on.⁴¹

The circumstances did not change and the material from the technical school was never returned to Hillgrove.

Electricity was first introduced to the Hall at the annual concert of the Public School held in December 1904, but the hydro-electric scheme at Gara had great difficulty in supplying adequate and constant electricity to the homes, businesses and public buildings in Hillgrove. Consequently the committee discussed 'the lighting of the hall, billiard, library and reading rooms with acetylene gas'⁴² in February 1910. The gas plant was 'installed at a cost of £44'⁴³ in the following month. Two years later, further improvements were carried out in the Hall when 'the gallery in the hall was taken down, and elevated seats erected in its place'.⁴⁴ At the same time, the committee expressed optimism because 'owing to the brighter outlook of the mining industry, we have reason to expect an increased membership this year'.⁴⁵

The Smythe brothers introduced picture shows to Hillgrove in 1910 and used the School of Arts Hall regularly as a venue in the following years.

39 op. cit., 15 May 1909, p. 4.

40 op. cit., 13 February 1909, p. 4.

41 op. cit., 31 July 1909, p. 3.

42 op. cit., 12 February 1910, p. 3.

43 op. cit., 12 March 1910, p. 3.

44 op. cit., 3 August 1912, p. 7.

45 *ibid.*

In 1914 Smythe leased the Hall for the sum of £130. Hall receipts increased to £116-5-0 as against £99-0-0 for the previous year.⁴⁶ Membership was now fifty seven and the committee under the President H. Curtis and Honorary Treasurer, W.M. Morgan, (later killed in the Dardenelles in 1915) took the opportunity in the annual report to point out that Hillgrove has a 'comfortable, well-lit, and cheerful Institute'⁴⁷ with a well stocked reading room and library and an up-to date billiard room. However, disappointment was expressed that 'when the low rate of subscription is taken into consideration that the rising generation is not more ready to partake of these advantages'.⁴⁸

Hillgrove continued its decline in 1915. The twenty fourth annual report dated 21 July 1915, referred to the 'depression consequent upon the war'.⁴⁹ Peter Board, Under-Secretary of the Department of Public Instruction questioned the honorary Treasurer of the institution on why the value of the site was not shown as an asset. In reply, the Treasurer, R. Brackin, stated:

The land in question is a Govt. Grant, and cost the Institute nothing and, as at the present time, there are numbers of vacant building lots in the town which are absolutely unsaleable, my committee considers it inadvisable to include the land as an asset of monetary value.⁵⁰

Tragedy struck the School of Arts in May 1916. Fire broke out and despite the efforts of the fire brigade in saving the detached billiard room, the reading room and the library were totally destroyed. 'There were 3,000 books in the library... (however) the buildings were insured in the City Mutual Insurance office for £170'.⁵¹

⁴⁶ Annual Report of the School of Arts Committee, Department of Public Instruction, Dated 19 November 1914, No. 94763, **Hillgrove School of Arts File 1914-1916**, A.O. 20/13134.

⁴⁷ *ibid.*

⁴⁸ *ibid.*

⁴⁹ Annual Report of the School of Arts Committee, Department of Public Instruction, Dated 29 September 1915, No. 80460, **Hillgrove School of Arts File 1914-1916**, A.O. 20/13134.

⁵⁰ Memorandum from P. Board, Under Secretary, Department of Public Instruction concerning Maintenance Subsidy on Account of the Hillgrove Literary Institute, Dated 18 October 1915, **Hillgrove School of Arts File 1914-1916**, A.O. 20/13134.

⁵¹ **Armidale Express**, 2 June 1916, p. 3.

Immediately the committee called a meeting of subscribers to decide whether to rebuild or to continue use of the technical rooms. A decision was made to 'secure a cottage in town, and have same rebuilt for a library and reading-room, and failing to purchase an old building, that rooms be erected at a cost not exceeding £85'.⁵² Eventually, the technical rooms were removed and rebuilt by Robert Sharp as a new library and reading-room; the committee also purchased replacement books for those lost in the fire. Despite the set-back, the School of Arts invested '£100 in the Government Savings Bank'⁵³ that year.

A skating rink was operating in the Hall in July 1917 and the billiard room was re-opened by Mr W. Boundy. 'Messrs Woods and Champion opened a skating rink in the School of Arts Hall last Monday night. The proceeds went towards France's Day Fund'.⁵⁴ Three years later, an agreement was reached between the committee and Mr Faint and Brindell to conduct skating in the Hall. However, by September 1920, these men asked for a reduction in the rent 'as it was their intention to use the hall only once a week... the charge (was) fixed at 12/6 for Saturday only, Faint and Brindell to provide their own lights'.⁵⁵

The Armidale School Inspector, F.W. Mannell visited the Hillgrove School of Arts on 18 October 1921, and in his report 'recommended that (the) subsidy be paid at the usual rate for the past financial year'.⁵⁶ He highlighted the fact that there was no debt on the building which still contained a combined library and reading room, billiard room and hall. However, the membership was now only twenty seven and he pointed out 'owing to the collapse of the mining industry at Hillgrove, the future of the institution is very uncertain'.⁵⁷ In December the committee attempted to restore interest in the institution, and 'Mr Boundy's application to re-open the billiard-room was granted, and on the same conditions as previously'.⁵⁸

52 **Armidale Chronicle**, 10 June 1916, p. 10.

53 *op. cit.*, 12 August 1916, p. 3.

54 *op. cit.*, 21 July 1917, p. 3.

55 *op. cit.*, 11 September 1920, p. 10.

56 Annual Report of the School of Arts Committee, Department of Public Instruction, Dated 2 November 1921, No. 84030, **Hillgrove School of Arts File 1919-1921**, A.O. 20/13155.

57 *ibid.*

58 **Armidale Chronicle**, 18 December 1921, p. 4.

Early in 1925, 'a motion to sell the School of Arts and purchase the Masonic Hall was defeated at a meeting of the committee... The President, Mr Blattman, occupied the chair'.⁵⁹ In May, trustee Mr Morgan asked local member Lieutenant Colonel Bruxner to seek the School Inspector's intervention in the affairs of the School of Arts. Apparently the committee members had resigned owing 'to the action of the treasurer'.⁶⁰ Following Inspector Hicks' visit to Hillgrove he reported,

I visited Mr Morgan at Hillgrove yesterday. Most of the old committee have consented to continue in office, and new members likely to make the institution a success have been associated with them. It is unlikely that any further action will be needed.⁶¹

Later, in July of that year, the annual meeting's balance sheet showed 'receipts £72 8s 9d. expenditure £19 11s 5d. and a credit balance of £322 17s 4...'.⁶² Over eighty books were added to the library and the report stated 'prospects for the coming year appear brighter than last term, and the finances are considerably better, so it is up to the subscribers to make the Institute a really live one'.⁶³

The School of Arts played a vital role in the provision of adult education for the males and to some extent, the females of Hillgrove. It was supported by the working men of the town and leading citizens of the committee introduced technical education to meet the needs of a highly skilled workforce in the company mines. The School of Arts Hall also provided a venue for various meetings and entertainments held in the town for a significant period of time.

⁵⁹ op. cit., 4 February 1925, p. 4.

⁶⁰ Letter from J. Morgan (Trustee) to Lieutenant Colonel Bruxner M.L.A., Dated May 1925, **Hillgrove School of Arts File 1924-1925**, A.O. 20/13171.

⁶¹ Letter from Inspector A.W. Hicks, Department of Education, Armidale, Dated 25 June 1925, **Hillgrove School of Arts File 1924-1925**, A.O. 20/13171.

⁶² **Armidale Chronicle**, 29 July 1925, p. 4.

⁶³ *ibid.*

CHAPTER 11

ORGANISATIONS

As with many other mining communities of the nineteenth century, a number of organisations were soon established in Hillgrove. Such organisations were created to protect the rights and working conditions of miners; to plan important occasions including the Eight Hour Day celebrations; to assist the needy; to organise medical services and various social and sporting activities for the townspeople. At times of crises during the Boer War and World War One, a host of organisations was formed to promote patriotism and provide assistance to those soldiers who served overseas as well as their families.

Miners' Association

In March 1889, a public meeting was held at the Centennial Hall in Hillgrove for 'the purpose of forming a miners association in conjunction with an accident fund'.¹ Later that year, the Miners' Association organised a public meeting to discuss the indiscriminate granting of suspension of labour. Secretary of the Association Mr Hetherington, moved that:

in order to more effectually and efficiently develop the resources of the Hillgrove gold-field and surrounding district the Government should more strictly enforce the fulfilment of the labour conditions as required by the Mining Act in leasehold workings.²

A speaker Mr J.J. Wilkinson outlined statistics regarding the situation:

From the establishment at the end of November, 1888, of a Mining Registrar's Office at Hillgrove up till October, 1889, just 11 months, 77 applications for suspension of labour had been heard by the Warden, 69 of them being granted once, 4 of them twice, and one three times. The total area covered by the suspension amounted to 449 acres, which should have employed 210 miners, at, say £2 8s per week...³

Speakers believed the suspension of labour was evil and saw that a tremendous amount of damage was being inflicted upon the town through the

¹ **Armidale Express**, 26 March 1889, p. 4.

² *op. cit.*, 5 November 1889, p. 4.

³ *ibid.*

loss of wages. The meeting agreed to forward the motions to local Members of Parliament so that they could inform the Minister for Mines of working conditions at Hillgrove.

In 1892, it was deemed necessary to meet with 'Members of the Progress Committee to discuss mining laws, suspension of labour...'⁴ Despite such meetings, disputes over suspension of labour continued throughout the life of the Hillgrove mines. The editor of the **Hillgrove Guardian** frequently attacked these suspensions as seen in July 1897 when he wrote:

If the same amount of money had been spent in conserving water at the head of the Baker's Creek falls as was spent in making the dam on Swamp Creek... the stock excuse for labour suspension 'want of water'- would have been wiped out.⁵

In April 1899 the Association was described as 'a flourishing institution',⁶ but two months later the Association, together with the Hillgrove township, was shocked to learn that one of the most respected men in the community was killed in a mining accident. Mr W.H. Martin, the underground manager of the **Eleanora Mine**, on Tuesday 21 June 1899 fell 'down the winze from No 5 level, a depth of 70 feet...'⁷ Despite the efforts of Dr Massey, he never regained consciousness and died some twelve hours later. At the time of his death, he was the popular president of the Miners' Association. A measure of the man's respect highlighted in the details of the funeral procession recorded in the **Hillgrove Guardian**.

The members of the Hillgrove Miners' Association... turned out in mourning regalia, 100 strong; the Oddfellows, out of respect to his sons, attended the funeral, walking with other miners without regalia to the number of 150; whilst the members of Masonic Lodge 'Hillgrove' took a prominent part in the services in full mourning regalia, Brother Martin having been a visiting member of the lodge and about to be affiliated to it.⁸

Preliminary parts of the burial service were conducted at the hospital by the Reverends L. Nye and J.S. Harding before moving to the Hillgrove cemetery. At 4 p.m., McMahon's Band led the procession which included the miners, Masons, Oddfellows, townspeople, the hearse, three mourning

⁴ op. cit., 15 March 1892, p. 5.

⁵ **Hillgrove Guardian and New England Mining Gazette**, 24 July 1897, p. 2.

⁶ op. cit., 29 April 1899, p. 4.

⁷ op. cit., 24 June 1899, p. 4.

⁸ *ibid.*

coaches, thirty two carriages, and several horsemen; the procession stretching from Sulling's **Commercial Hotel** to the northern end of the recreation ground.

The Miners' Association kept keenly aware of industrial developments on other mining fields, with Hillgrove miners giving support to the workers involved in the Lucknow mining dispute at Lithgow. The **Hillgrove Guardian** carried detailed reports of the strike and in August 1897, labour leaders McDonald and Edden, visited Hillgrove. As a result of the visit, the 'Miners Association sent £20 to Lucknow and' it was reported 'a further sum of £8 (was) in hand'.⁹

Apart from the action of the Miners' Association, a local community committee demonstrated a sense of independence as it collected from miners, business people and residents of the town. This committee also 'forwarded to Lucknow three £20 instalments (£60) and £12 1s 3d (was) in hand towards a further sum, to be forwarded next week'.¹⁰

Extra police arrived in Hillgrove at the time of the meetings because government authorities obviously feared possible industrial trouble. Despite the many suspensions of labour applied for by the various mining companies and the feeling of resentment that arose amongst miners, strikes did not occur on the field. But the miners were always interested in developments elsewhere. It was fitting that a Mr Cairnes of Lithgow, addressed a large gathering of miners in the School of Arts on Monday 13 November 1911 seeking support for strikers. 'A motion was carried that the men pay 1/- per week levy towards the support of the Lithgow men until a settlement is arrived at'.¹¹

The nature of the relationship between the Association and the mine managers was evident at the meeting of the sub-committee which organised the Eight Hour Day sports carnival held in October 1899. The mine managers presented a trophy and in response to a toast by John Chadd, president of the sports committee, Robert Sharp, representing the mine managers, said 'they were pleased with the way that things had turned out, (and) they hoped that the Miners Association would flourish... he... would now

⁹ op. cit., 21 August 1897, p. 2.

¹⁰ op. cit., 4 September 1897, p. 2.

¹¹ **Armidale Chronicle**, 18 November 1911, p. 3.

join the Hillgrove branch'.¹² Not surprisingly, the announcement was greeted by applause and Mr Thompson, President of the Miners' Association replied,

he was pleased to see the managers in touch with the men... (Such attitudes) drove off ill feeling, gave a proper impression of unity of interests and showed a disposition to lead and not drive.¹³

These demonstrations of unity explained why it was not until November 1901 that the first strike occurred at the **Baker's Creek Mine**. One demand was for increased payment and at a meeting held on Monday 4 November, Messrs Wayte and W.R. Highfield, offered to pay an additional allowance to the miners on behalf of the townspeople. The correspondent in the **Hillgrove Guardian** thought that the strike should never have eventuated. While he acknowledged the lack of sufficient pay for truckers and shovellers and the possibility of other grievances, he believed

when the Manager met them so fairly they should have yielded and thus saved the alienation of public sympathy, and the estrangement of their fellow workers, and the displeasure of the local managers.¹⁴

Early in 1900 the Association changed its name to the Hillgrove and New England Miners and Workers' Association. Two members of the Association travelled to Sydney with their banner to 'take part in the celebrations of the Commonwealth held in Sydney'¹⁵ on 1 January 1901 in response to a request from Charles G. Wilson M.L.A.

In order to assist needy members of the Miners' Association and their families, money was raised by subscriptions of individual members, art unions and its annual demonstration on Eight Hour Day described as 'the gala day par excellence in Hillgrove... so well organised and carried out annually in the first week of October...'¹⁶ On Monday 3 October 1904, all businesses in Hillgrove closed and 1,000 people assembled at the recreation ground to celebrate the event. The **Hillgrove Guardian** described the event in detail:

¹² **Hillgrove Guardian and New England Mining Gazette**, 21 October 1899, p. 4.

¹³ *ibid.*

¹⁴ *op. cit.*, 9 November 1901. p. 4.

¹⁵ **Armidale Chronicle**, 19 December 1901, p. 3.

¹⁶ **Hillgrove Guardian and New England Mining Gazette**, 8 October 1904, p. 2.

At 10 o'clock the various Friendly Societies of the town assembled opposite the Eleanora Hotel to take part in the procession... Town Band (under the able leadership of Mr Alex McWatters, Miners and Workers' Association (with banner), A.O. Foresters, 'Court White Star' (banner), Juvenile Foresters (banner), Protestant Alliance 'Purple Border Lodge', Oddfellows, M.U. 'Loyal Welcome Brothers Lodge (banner) and Junior Oddfellows. Mr W. Tobin, who bestrode a prancing steed, acted as marshall, and lead the procession, which was close on a quarter of a mile in length, and had quite a picturesque appearance in marching up Brackin-street, with the music playing, and the beautiful banners of the several societies floating in the breeze. The street was lined with spectators.¹⁷

At the recreation ground, Hardie Jones (President of the Miners' Association) asked Mayor Robert Sharp to formally open the sports. His speech brought lusty cheers for 'The Day We Celebrate', the 'Miners' Association' and 'The Mayor'. The celebrations featured the town band playing from the band rotunda, a publican's booth conducted by John Crough of the **Hillgrove Hotel**, fruit stalls, and a sport's program which consisted mainly of bicycle races.

The Miners' Association, in planning for the 1904 Eight Hour day demonstration, described the year as a sound financial one and the suggestion was made that 'they procure a bed in the hospital for the association'.¹⁸ Until then, the Manchester Unity Independent Order of Oddfellows was the only society which had a bed in the Hospital.

In November 1902, the Association boasted a membership of seventy nine members but at the half-yearly meeting the members received the news, 'the past half year has not been so prosperous, the expenditure having exceed the income by £20 3/8'.¹⁹ Twelve months later, membership had increased to 118 financial members but the committee reported 'we have been going behind for the past twelve months'.²⁰ By October 1904, the Association was in a strong financial position with a 'credit balance of £98 13/2. Besides this there... (was) £166 17/- in the City Bank and £98 11/- in the Savings Bank'.²¹

17 *ibid.*

18 *op. cit.*, 22 October 1904, p. 3.

19 *op. cit.*, 1 November 1902, p. 2.

20 *op. cit.*, 31 October 1903, p. 2.

21 *op. cit.*, 5 November 1904, p. 2.

Prior to 1908, the members of the Miners and Workers' Association and the Amalgamated Miners' Association (A.M.A) voted to amalgamate. However by March 1908, it was reported,

friction has occurred, and a fresh ballot was taken, with the result that by a large majority it was decided that the M. and W. Association should go on its own and register as early as possible under the Friendly Societies' Act'.²²

The Miners and Workers' Association applied for such registration in July 1908 and became 'registered by the Registrar of Friendly Societies' in August.²³ After this date the organisation was often referred to as the Miners and Workers' Accident Benefit Society.

The Amalgamated Miners' Association was re-formed in August 1912 when an organiser Mr T.W. Gible arrived in Hillgrove 'for the purpose of forming a local branch... Mr. G. Wearmouth was appointed President, Mr. Geo. Brackin Vice-president and Mr. G. Parker Secretary'.²⁴ In the following year a special meeting was held in April in the Oddfellows' Hall with ninety miners in attendance. It was claimed 'Hillgrove now has a strong Union with calm and solid men at the helm'.²⁵

The seriousness of the problems arising from the decline of mining returns and the resultant loss of miners to the community was evident in the case before the Warden's Court at Hillgrove in September 1914. The **Eleanora Mines Limited** applied for six months suspension of labor at the mine. In evidence the Mines Superintendent said, 'during the past two years the company had spent £55,000 on the mine, and the receipts for gold etc, only totalled £9,000...'.²⁶ At this stage the mine employed 120 men. Although Alex Porter, representing the Miners' Association opposed the application, the Warden granted suspension for three months.

Medical Association

Medical needs of the town were met by the formation of a Medical Association in 1890 and the building of a Cottage Hospital. By 1893, a medical board had been formed and a decision made to recruit a doctor 'for the

²² **Armidale Chronicle**, 11 March 1908, p4.

²³ op. cit., 19 August 1908, p. 5.

²⁴ op. cit., 10 August 1912, p. 3.

²⁵ op. cit., 16 April 1913, p. 3.

²⁶ op. cit., 5 September 1914, p. 4.

position of medical officer to the various Friendly Societies, the hospital and Medical Association...'²⁷ As a result of these actions, the Medical Association could offer members by January 1898, 'free medical advice, physic, and a bed in the hospital' (when necessary) from which, no reasonable case is debarred...'²⁸ The Association also offered liberal support to the hospital.

In the early 1890's the Association was threatened by collapse due to reducing membership and the consequent lack of support. As the various Friendly Societies were formed, many residents felt that their medical needs would be met by these organisations. At a farewell function for longtime serving Secretary Mr Hutton in February 1902, details were given of the difficulties and Hutton's important role in rebuilding the Association.

The membership had fallen so low that the Medical Officer was for letting the whole thing slide, but owing to Mr. Hutton's efforts the Association was increased, in a short time, from 30 to 150 members, and ever since the Hillgrove Medical Association has flourished.²⁹

Two weeks later during the annual meeting, the influence of the mining depression was again referred to and its influence on the work of the association. Receipts for 1901 showed 'a shortage of £116 4s compared to the previous twelve months'³⁰ because of the exodus of people from the town and the general depression.

A Temperance Lodge

A visiting lecturer from the Grand Lodge of the Order of Good Templars, Mr Crabb, visited the north to conduct a temperance mission in November 1888. After his visit to Hillgrove, 'a Temperance Lodge... with a roll of 28 members'³¹ was established. Within a month, the Good Templars conducted a social and 'a large attendance made matters very spirited... Songs, recitations, and addresses, made the evening pass most pleasantly'.³² The community support for this organisation explains the reasons for the establishment of the Independent Order of Rechabites.

²⁷ **Armidale Express**, 13 January 1893, p. 5.

²⁸ **Hillgrove Guardian and New England Mining Gazette**, 22 January 1898, p. 4.

²⁹ op. cit., 8 February 1902, p. 3.

³⁰ op. cit., 15 February 1902, p. 4.

³¹ **Armidale Express**, 16 November 1888, p. 4.

³² op. cit., 14 December 1888, p. 8.

The Independent Order of Rechabites

Prior to the provision of welfare by State and Federal Government organisations, a significant feature of Australian society was the development of Friendly Societies. 'By the 1860's the societies were a major presence in every Australian town'.³³ The development of such organisations in Hillgrove was indicated by the numbers who marched in the procession in May 1894 to celebrate the first anniversary of the formation of The Independent Order of Rechabites. The torchlight procession through the streets of Hillgrove was led by the fife and drum band, followed by over fifty members of the Rechabites, the Ancient Order of Foresters and Manchester Unity Independent Order of Oddfellows (Loyal Welcome Brothers Lodge).³⁴

The Independent Order was formed 'in 1835 in Salford, and by 1842 they had opened a branch in Australia'.³⁵ The organisation was based on total abstinence from alcohol by members and their families and was formed in Hillgrove in 1893. They celebrated their fourth anniversary in Hillgrove 'by holding a social in the School of Arts Hall on Friday 10th September 1897'.³⁶

The Ancient Order of Foresters Court (White Star).

The New England District Ancient Order of Foresters held its first half-yearly meeting at Hillgrove on Wednesday 14 March 1893. At the meeting, the district secretary Bro. George Prince outlined the development of the Order during the past year. He referred to the increase in membership,

In March '93 Court New England 67, City of Walcha 28, Court White Star (Hillgrove) 67. In March '94 Court New England 98, City of Walcha 30, Court White Star (Hillgrove) 84... and (the) total amount of funds (was) £250 9s. 10 1/2d.³⁷

The Ancient Order of Foresters Court (White Star) 'unfurled their banner'³⁸ in a procession at Hillgrove in September 1894. Initially the

³³ Green, D. and Cromwell, L., **Mutual Aid or Welfare State. Australia's Friendly Societies.**, 1984, George Allen and Unwin, Sydney, p. xiii.

³⁴ **Armidale Express**, 29 May 1894, p. 5.

³⁵ Green, D. and Cromwell, L., *op. cit.*, p. 6.

³⁶ **Hillgrove Guardian and New England Mining Gazette**, 7 August 1897, p. 3.

³⁷ **Armidale Express**, 16 March 1894, p. 4.

³⁸ *op. cit.*, 21 September 1894, p. 4.

Foresters applied for and were granted by the land board a 'special lease of one rood of Recreation Reserve section 32, town of Hillgrove, at the west end of same... rental of £2 per annum'.³⁹ This section was bounded by Isabella, Brereton and Stella Streets. At this stage, it was announced that the Lodge had been in existence for ten years and now had one hundred and twenty members. The Court set about constructing a hall and lodge room by calling tenders for a building to cost £100. However early in January 1901, the Land Board reversed its decision to grant the land; this action 'upset the plans of the Foresters to provide independent quarters for themselves, as they... (were) not in a position to buy land and build as well'.⁴⁰ The Municipal Council opposed the initial application because it wanted the land for recreation purposes. The organisation later gained its own room and the announcement was made in 1904, 'the A.O.F. (White Star) have purchased from Mr T. Haren, those premises in Brackin Street, which they have used for years as a lodge room'.⁴¹ The organisation raised funds by conducting race days at the Hillgrove race course and presenting trophies and prize money.

On Tuesday 13 February 1900, a number of boys met 'at the Court White Star Quarters (in) Taylor's Hall, for the purpose of taking initial steps towards forming a Junior Court of Foresters in Hillgrove'.⁴² At 16, members could join the senior court 'free of cost or further ceremony'. At the meeting, office bearers were elected and fees set:

Lads from 7 to 10 years old pay 1/- to join and 2d. per week...
10 to 13 years- 2s. to join and 3d. per week... 13 to 16 years-
2s. 6d. to join, and 4d. per week.⁴³

Manchester Unity Independent Order of Oddfellows (Loyal Welcome Brothers Lodge)

Another significant Friendly Society was the Manchester Unity Independent Order of Oddfellows (Loyal Welcome Brothers Lodge). In April 1888, the **Armidale Express** announced 'we are pleased to learn that the Oddfellows intend opening a Lodge at Hillgrove Mines which promises to be

³⁹ **Hillgrove Guardian and New England Mining Gazette**, 3 November 1900, p. 3.

⁴⁰ *op. cit.*, 12 January 1901, p. 3.

⁴¹ **Armidale Express**, 18 October 1904, p. 4.

⁴² **Hillgrove Guardian and New England Mining Gazette**, 17 February 1900, p. 2.

⁴³ *ibid.*

well attended'.⁴⁴ Criteria for membership relied on being a respectable citizen with good health and the Lodge 'opened on 14 June 1888 with P.G. Bro. S. Matthews as N.G. and P.P.G.M. Bro. John Plunkett as V.G.'⁴⁵ with a membership of 26. Brother G. Nix was assisted by other members in establishing the Lodge and were 'successful in securing the names of a large number of eligible candidates'⁴⁶ who were initiated on the day of the opening.

On Tuesday 2 January 1894, the annual district committee meeting of delegates from the Tamworth district was held at Hillgrove. In his speech, The Provincial Grand Master- Bro. Raymond Walsh spoke of the influence of the depression on membership and funds but also spoke optimistically of the future. He gave details of the financial state of the organisation including the funeral fund and the widow and orphan's fund. That evening, at a function held at Mrs F.B. Wade's **Miners' Arms Hotel**,

a complimentary dinner was tendered by the Loyal Welcome Brother Lodge, and about eighty members of this order sat down. The chair was occupied by the N.G. of the lodge, Bro. M.O'Neill, the vice-chair by P.G. Bro. Morgan Stephens.⁴⁷

Prov. Grand Master Brother Morgan Stephens outlined the history of the organisation at the Lodges' annual social on Monday 4 July 1898. The Lodge now had one hundred and seventy two members with a credit balance of £361 17s.

In February 1900 P.P.G.M. Bro. Morgan Stephens initiated steps in Hillgrove to ascertain 'the desirability or otherwise of establishing female lodges in New South Wales'.⁴⁸ The majority of the Hillgrove males voted against the idea but the correspondent in the **Hillgrove Guardian** suggested, 'the ladies of Hillgrove may not be surprised to hear that the contest was a very close one'.⁴⁹ Despite this loss, Morgan Stephens became a significant figure in the Manchester Unity Lodge movement and helped establish a number of Lodges in the northern part of the state. Elected to the Board of the Directors, it was recorded in 1912 'he has been a continuous

44 **Armidale Express**, 24 April 1888, p. 4.

45 **Hillgrove Guardian and New England Mining Gazette**, 9 July 1898, p. 3.

46 **Armidale Express**, 8 June 1888, p. 4.

47 op. cit., 5 January 1894, p. 4.

48 **Hillgrove Guardian and New England Mining Gazette**, 10 February 1900, p. 2.

49 op. cit., 3 March 1900, p. 2.

member of the.. Board for the past 11 years. Rather a unique and gratifying record for any individual member of the order in city or country'.⁵⁰

The Lodge held regular meetings and their socials included a grand annual ball held at the School of Arts Hall. The Lodge also conducted a literacy and debating club which met fortnightly and early in October 1902, the topic 'Woman Suffrage' was debated. 'Bro. A.G. Morgan opened the debate by affirming that Woman Suffrage was desirable... Bro. Burns in reply made a favorable impression on his hearers... on a vote, the motion was lost'.⁵¹ Somewhat surprisingly, permission was given for members to invite lady friends to the next meeting! A Juvenile Lodge of Oddfellows was also formed and in 1904 it had forty seven boys as members.

A small hall was purchased by the Oddfellows in June 1900 'to place upon their recently acquired property in Stella street'.⁵² The correspondent in the **Hillgrove Guardian** hoped that they would add 'to the size of their present building for their own comfort, and the convenience of their patrons, as the Hall will be used for their socials and friendly gatherings'.⁵³ Three months later, it was revealed that 'the total cost of the building, painted and lined, fenced in, and supplied with out-office was £85'.⁵⁴ In November 1906, the Oddfellows Hall was enlarged by the contractor Mr Stuart to become 'a commodious hall... one large enough for their own functions'.⁵⁵

The Lodge had 'a credit balance of over £1,000' in July 1905 whilst it was reported 'the membership shows a steady increase'.⁵⁶ The Oddfellows conducted an athletic club which organised annual sports days. In December 1907 the club hosted a sports day on the racecourse consisting of foot races, 'cycling... (and) horse racing'.⁵⁷ On the evening of Wednesday 17 June 1908, the Manchester Unity held a 'private social' for the '20th Anniversary of the opening of the Lodge'.⁵⁸ It now had two hundred and fifty six members and a total capital of over £2,040. The significance of the Oddfellow's contribution to the welfare of its membership was revealed at this function.

50 **Armidale Express**, 26 March 1912, p. 2.

51 **Hillgrove Guardian and New England Mining Gazette**, 4 October 1902, p. 2.

52 *op. cit.*, 2 June 1900, p. 3

53 *ibid.*

54 *op. cit.*, 8 September 1900, p. 2.

55 *op. cit.*, 27 October 1906, p. 2.

56 *op. cit.*, 8 July 1905, p. 3.

57 *op. cit.*, 24 December 1904, p. 3.

58 **Armidale Express**, 23 June 1908, p. 4.

'During the 20 years past, upwards of £2700 had been paid away in sick pay and £3300 for medical benefits...'⁵⁹

Six years later in June 1914, the Lodge claimed 230 members at the time of the twenty sixth anniversary of their foundation. However, the organisation lost their hall in October 1921 when the members of the Oddfellow's Lodge accepted 'an offer for their Hall and piano' and it was announced 'the building will be removed to Armidale'.⁶⁰

Purple Border Lodge Protestant Alliance Society

Yet another Friendly Society was the Purple Border Lodge Protestant Alliance Society. This alliance 'originated in Ballarat during the dispute over control of religious education in Victorian government schools'⁶¹ during the 1860's. In contrast to the other societies which declared allegiance to international brotherhood, this organisation was based on religious affiliation. In December 1893, the society elected Dr Broom as their medical officer for the next six months and they celebrated 'their second anniversary in the Centennial hall'⁶² in July 1894.

The Alliance combined with the Loyal Orange Lodge to conduct a church parade at the Wesleyan Church in July 1900 prior to their annual social. In July 1901 Bro. A.J. Fuller explained at the annual social, that the purpose of the Protestant Alliance 'was to demonstrate a true feeling of gratitude for the achievement of religious liberty and to express unfading loyalty to good King William'.⁶³ The Society 'celebrated their 20th Anniversary in Hillgrove by holding a Social in the School of Arts Hall in September 1911'.⁶⁴

Masonic Lodge Hillgrove, No 192, U.G.L of N.S.W

The Masonic Lodge Hillgrove, No 192, U.G.L of N.S.W. was established at Hillgrove in the 1880's and the Masonic Hall described 'as a handsome building', was completed early in December 1889. The special correspondent in the **Armidale Express** wrote 'the Masonic Hall... reflects great credit,

⁵⁹ **Armidale Chronicle**, 20 June 1908, p. 5.

⁶⁰ **Armidale Express**, 1 November 1921, p. 1.

⁶¹ Green, D. and Cromwell, L., op. cit., p. 8.

⁶² **Armidale Express**, 10 July 1894, p. 4.

⁶³ **Hillgrove Guardian and New England Mining Express**, 13 July 1901, p. 2.

⁶⁴ **Armidale Chronicle**, 9 September 1911, p. 7.

both upon the architect Mr E. Jackson, and the builders (Messrs Morrow and Jackson)'.⁶⁵ Money for construction of the hall was raised by the offer of shares in the Masonic Hall Company. The building was valued at £210 in October 1889 and was located on allotment number 15 of section 21. In March 1891, an announcement was made to shareholders that 'the building was not only free from debt but a dividend could be paid, thanks to the able and careful management of the late Mr S. Matthews'.⁶⁶ In December 1893, the Lodge called tenders for alterations and additions to the Hall.

The strength of the Lodge was apparent in the report of the annual masonic ceremony and banquet held on Monday 1 May 1893, to install the Worshipful Master for 1893-1894, School Principal Brother Henry Tonkin and invest the various officers. Thirty two members attended the afternoon ceremony for the installation of office-bearers and that evening,

Shortly after 7 p.m. the members of Lodge 'Hillgrove' and their visitors assembled again in the Masonic Hall where a magnificent banquet prepared by Mesdames Tonkin and Morgan was beautifully laid out on tables the full length of the building; it is needless to say that the provisions were on a most liberal scale and the liquids supplied by Bro. J. Robinson of the best only and in quantity unlimited.⁶⁷

An examination of the office-bearers of this organisation demonstrates its influence on life in the town of Hillgrove. In 1893, the treasurer was storekeeper William Morgan; Secretary, H. Jones; and other committee members included hotel proprietors, James Robinson (**Tattersall's Hotel**) and John Wade (**Miners' Arms Hotel**); businessman George Quinnell; engineer John Arnott and Hugh McMahon, bandsmaster of the Hillgrove band which later became the Australasian champions. Later office-members in the 1890's included: businessman R. Moffatt; hotel licensee Samuel Sullings (**Commercial Hotel**); Henry Tonkin, Headmaster of the Public School and medical practitioner Dr D. Massey. Other office-bearers for the year 1903-1904 included: Thomas Arnott, engineer of the water-works; F.J. Crutchett; Alick McWatters, baker and bandmaster; Peter Jones, manager of the **Sunlight Gold Mining Company** and John M. Facer, manager of **Hillgrove Station**.

⁶⁵ **Armidale Express**, 10 December 1889, p. 4.

⁶⁶ op. cit., 17 March 1891, p. 6.

⁶⁷ **Hillgrove Guardian and New England Mining Gazette**, 6 May 1893. 'Masonic Ceremony and Banquet' reproduced in Tonkin, Henry **Papers c1859-1937**, Mitchell Library, Sydney, FM 4/7446, Folio No. 22.

A vivid description of the Masonic Hall was provided in March 1901 at the time of the installation of Brother John Cook.

There is a comfortable large meeting-room, painted blue, coved roof, illuminated with stars, tessellated floor... The dais at the east end, with the Master's chair in the centre, and on each side is seating room for the Pastmaster; emblems of the order on all sides... There is a piano, an organ and a fine large stove, and on this occasion the whole building was lit up for the first time with acetylene gas...⁶⁸

Ladies' Benevolent Society

Most organisations in Hillgrove were overseen and controlled by men but the Ladies' Benevolent Society was formed in 1895 and developed an important charitable role in the town. The Society received governmental subsidy and was therefore required by law to provide an annual report. Funds were also raised by garden fetes, socials, concerts and Grand Continentals. Hillgrove businesses donated quantities of used and damaged clothing and various organisations such as the Town Band, Bicycle Club, Dramatic Society and the Wollomombi and Jeogla Race Club also provided funds.

In 1899, the Society made '620 orders for provisions representing a cost of £72 10s 6d, as against 333 orders last year representing £53 10s 5d'.⁶⁹ In the following year, members of the society reported 'funds... are in rather a low state at present. Any contributions in money or kind would be very acceptable'.⁷⁰ Three years later, the **Hillgrove Guardian**⁷¹ reported that during the previous year up to May 1902, there was an issue of 800 orders to a value of £80 5s 11; ten pairs of blankets; a quantity of left over clothing donated by Mesdames Sulling, Massey, Smith, Sharp and Carey. Twenty families received assistance during this period as a result of the mining depression in the town.

The Society continued its work with the families affected by misfortune. In April 1909 an appeal was made for assistance: 'owing to the depressed state of the town, and the funds... being so low, it is hoped that those able will assist the society as much as possible'.⁷² During the year prior to

⁶⁸ **Hillgrove Guardian and New England Mining Gazette**, 9 March 1901, p. 3.

⁶⁹ op. cit., 2 December 1899, p. 2.

⁷⁰ op. cit., 8 January 1898, p. 3.

⁷¹ op. cit., 3 May 1902, p. 2.

⁷² **Armidale Chronicle**, 17 April 1909, p. 3.

this appeal, nine families had been supplied with '80 grocery orders, 53 meat orders, and 189 loaves of bread, also blankets and firewood; total amount spent, £139 19s'.⁷³

The Light of Hillgrove Lodge

This Lodge was another organisation formed by the Ladies of Hillgrove and they held their first social in the School of Arts Hall in February 1906. The success of the function again demonstrated 'the apparent absence of sectarian feeling in Hillgrove' with 'all sections of the community being freely represented in the audience'.⁷⁴

Political Labour League

An examination of public meetings in the town reveals a political awareness amongst the miners and townspeople. The importance of Hillgrove was reflected in the frequent visits of prominent politicians from all parties. A branch of the Political Labour League was formed as a result of a meeting held at Wade's Hall in September 1891. 'Mr E.A. Thompson was appointed President, Mr. W. Wilson Vice-President, Mr D. Corr Treasurer, and Mr R. Scott Secretary'.⁷⁵ By June 1905, four Political Labour Leagues in the Federal electorate had been formed in Armidale, Uralla, Glen Innes and Hillgrove.⁷⁶ The League met fortnightly on Sundays, conducted socials, formed a debating society and invited leading men to speak on the cause of labour.

The Irish National League

On the evening of Thursday 26 September 1889, thirty five members were enrolled at the meeting at Mr Crough's Hotel to form a branch of the Irish National League. The League was supported in Hillgrove and in March 1905 'a large number of Hillgrovians proceeded... to take part in the Irish National celebrations'.⁷⁷

⁷³ *ibid.*

⁷⁴ *Hillgrove Guardian and New England Mining Gazette*, 10 February 1906, p. 3.

⁷⁵ *Armidale Express*, 22 September 1891, p. 5.

⁷⁶ *Hillgrove Guardian and New England Mining Gazette*, 10 June 1905, p. 2.

⁷⁷ *op. cit.*, 18 March 1905, p. 2.

Southern Cross Dramatic Club

A remarkable organisation was the Southern Cross Dramatic Club which was formed not only to entertain but to raise money for charities and for those unfortunate individuals and families in need. In May 1900, they arranged an entertainment at Metz to 'raise funds for the benefit of F.G.H. Johnson and his large family, now in sore straits through the long illness and permanent disablement of the head of the family'.⁷⁸ Similarly in July, they gave a benefit and raised £21 6s in the Hillgrove School of Arts for Mrs W.H. Martin who lost her husband in a tragic accident. In the following month, they gave an entertainment 'for their own aid'. The reporter commented, 'they have now for years been giving their valuable services in aid of others for which properties had to be provided, independent of incidental expenses connected with each entertainment...'.⁷⁹ Their efforts were not restricted to the Hillgrove area because in October 1900 they 'gave an entertainment in Armidale in aid of a memorial band stand to be erected in one of the Armidale parks'.⁸⁰

The nature of the organisations and the variety of entertainment provided by groups within the town, was illustrated in the report of the *Hillgrove Guardian* in September 1899.

Monday- Eight Hours' Day Sports, a Public Holiday and the Oddfellows Anniversary Ball at night. Tuesday- 4 p.m. monthly meeting of Hospital Committee; 7.30 p.m. Management Committee of the Hillgrove Medical Association; 8 p.m. monthly meeting of Trustees of Common. Wednesday evening- meeting of the Hillgrove Miners' Association, and on Thursday evening, Public meeting.⁸¹

Patriotic Societies

Hillgrove society displayed a strong sense of patriotism during the time of the Boer War and World War One to the extent that a Patriotic League was formed during the Boer War. Chairman George Quinnell, a local businessman, stated at a meeting in 1900, that 'Hillgrove... had done well, second to no other place of its size... and Hillgrove could feel proud of its share of support to the British Empire at a critical period...'.⁸² On the other

⁷⁸ op. cit., 12 May 1900, p. 2.

⁷⁹ op. cit., 11 August 1900, p. 2.

⁸⁰ op. cit., 20 October 1900, p. 2.

⁸¹ op. cit., 30 September 1899, p. 2.

⁸² op. cit., 5 June 1900, p. 3.

hand, he also expressed disappointment that the initial group of twelve men who were sent were rejected although they had passed local tests.

As a result of fund-raising, the league forwarded £150 to the patriotic fund in Sydney in aid of the families of men who may fall victims in the war. The Secretary of the League, Dr Cooper Hardcastle, gave the following details of the amounts raised for the balance sheet of £193 12s 5d:

Subscription lists £112 13s. 2d; proceeds Metz entertainment £7 1s.; Hillgrove demonstration, £19 15s 9d.; Eltons Benefit, £15 10s; Sunday Church Parade, £23 0s 3d; Patriotic Social, £17 16s. 6d; Sale of Badges, £1 15s; collection at Mr Todds lecture, £1 16.⁸³

Hillgrove men did eventually serve and the town took great pride in welcoming the soldiers on their return. Walter Asquith, the first Hillgrove man wounded, was welcomed by a large procession led by the McMahon band, the Australasian band champions, school children and various community organisations. A photograph⁸⁴ taken by the visiting Leichardt photographer, Joseph Check on the day of the procession, featured a distinctive banner with the wording:

Why Are The Flags of Britain
Like The Stars of Heaven?
Because No Power on Earth
Can Pull Them Down.

In July 1900 news was received in Hillgrove of the death of Trooper W.G. Taylor and a memorial service conducted according to the rites of the Church of England was held in the School of Arts on Sunday evening 29 July at 7 p.m. A memorial shilling fund was formed in honour of Taylor and a public meeting was organised to be 'held in Wayte's Hall on Wednesday evening...(12 December 1900) for the purpose of deciding what is to be done with the money collected'.⁸⁵

The decision was made to place a 'broken column on a rough granite and cement line'⁸⁶ in the recreation ground as a memorial to Taylor once the

⁸³ *ibid.*

⁸⁴ This photograph is on display in the Hillgrove Pioneer Museum.

⁸⁵ **Hillgrove Guardian and New England Mining Gazette**, 8 December 1900, p. 2.

⁸⁶ *op. cit.*, 15 December 1900, p. 2.

required money was raised. In June 1901, Hillgrove received news of a second death; Trooper A.J. Allingham who 'died of enteric fever'.⁸⁷ Hillgrove citizens agreed to install a memorial to these two soldiers. In 1903 Council was approached to approve a memorial lamp to be placed in Brackin Street at the intersection of Brereton Street,⁸⁸ but the Council rejected the move.

An approach was made to the Postmaster General's Department for permission to place a memorial dedicated to the two soldiers who fell in South Africa on the front wall of the new brick Post Office in Brackin street. In August 1903, the secretary of the Department wrote to the memorial committee and 'regretted that the application must be declined, as the Post office is not considered to be a suitable place for memorial tablets of any kind...'⁸⁹ Following further submissions, approval was finally granted for a tablet to be erected 'by Mr. McPhee, monumental mason of Armidale... from a design by Mr. Herbert of the Colonial Architect's Department.'⁹⁰ This tablet was erected in November 1903 and became an important feature of memorial celebrations in Hillgrove.

A furore developed in 1908 when it became apparent that the Council was not prepared to organise an Empire Day celebration. However, the march which eventually took place on 25 May 1908 demonstrated the community spirit prevailing in Hillgrove. The procession was lead by Constable Dobie, followed by the town band, public school cadets, members of the local rifle club, public and convent school children, all of whom marched to the tablet placed in honour of the South African soldiers; the school 'cadets fired three volleys, after which the band played "God save the King"'.⁹¹ Mr E.A. Paterson, chairman of the Empire Day celebrations stated, 'as a mining community, this place was second to none in loyalty to the King and Empire'.⁹² The former Post Office is now a private residence but happily the memorial tablet remains.

On Christmas Eve 1901, 'public spirit received another special impetus of khaki-fever, and Corporal Allingham and Trooper Hands (were

87 op. cit., 8 June 1901, p. 2.

88 op. cit., 20 June 1903, p. 3.

89 op. cit., 8 August 1903, p. 2.

90 op. cit., 7 November 1903, p. 2.

91 **Armidale Chronicle**, 30 May 1908, p. 3.

92 *ibid.*

given) a rousing welcome...⁹³ The Oddfellows arranged the procession and welcome home at which Mayor Sharp, manager of the **Eleanora Mine**, accompanied by Edmund Lonsdale M.L.A., both spoke from the balcony of the **Commercial Hotel**. During the evening, Mayor Sharp presented an illuminated address to Corporal Allingham, and Brother Morgan Stephens welcomed the men on behalf of the Lodge.

As with many country towns, the community of Hillgrove, despite a declining population, formed many organisations to assist the war effort during World War One; organisations which included the Red Cross, War Chest Day, War Work League, France's Day, Girls' Patriotic League, Soldiers' Comforts and the Vicarage Knitting Class.

The France's Day Fund in 1917 received support from a skating rink held in the School of Arts Hall organised by Messrs. Wood and Champion. Also the Young Girls' Patriotic League held a dance in the Oddfellows Hall and the door takings raised £3 15s. Raffles conducted during the day and evening function raised another £25 13s 3d.

Ald. Jones thanked all who had rendered assistance in making the day so successful. The approximate amount from all sources will total £130, which included £25 0s 1d raised by the Red Cross, and £30 8s collected by Miss O'Neil, at Wollomombi and Wongwibinda.⁹⁴

The Vicarage Knitting Class conducted by the Church of England raised funds at market days in order to purchase supplies of wool. In July 1917, the class completed fifty pairs of socks as an offering for France's Day and 'enclosed in each pair of socks was a cheery little note written in French... Eighteen pairs of socks were also forwarded to the Northern Battalion Comforts Fund Depot'.⁹⁵

The Red Cross Society presented departing soldiers with gifts, organised the collection of food and gift items and raised funds through street-stalls and donations. The Society also conducted functions to welcome returning soldiers throughout 1919. One such function was held on Wednesday 8 June to welcome home 'Sergeant J.A. Gardiner, Pte. Alan

⁹³ **Hillgrove Guardian and New England Mining Gazette**, 28 December 1901, p. 3.

⁹⁴ **Armidale Chronicle**, 21 July 1917, p. 3.

⁹⁵ op. cit., 28 July 1917, p. 10.

Gardiner, Pte. Leo Snow, and Pte. Adamson⁹⁶ and September 1919 saw another homecoming organised for Sergeant Morrow and Private Lambert.⁹⁷ In October, the Society also conducted a function for Corporal Allingham and Private D. Hardie and that evening the 'Girls Patriotic League entertained the soldiers at a social in the Oddfellows' Hall'.⁹⁸

On Monday 15 January 1917, a public meeting took place in the School of Arts to form a recruiting committee. The Mayor, Mr. G.H. Jones occupied the chair and Lieut. Whiteford of the New England Electorate spoke of the objects of the 'Win the War' League: 'first, the obtaining of recruits; and, secondly to endeavour to raise money for the War Loan'.⁹⁹ A committee was established and:

The following officers were appointed: chairman, Mr Massey-green, M.H.R; vice-chairman, Mr G.H. Jones (Mayor) and M.H. O'Connor; secretary, Mr G.A. Jones; executive of seven, Messrs Wm. Morgan, Morgan Stephens, A.R. Hardie, M.H. O'Connor, W. Smart, T. Snow, and F. Hartnoll.¹⁰⁰

The children from the public school also held a gift day in August 1917 'with the object of collecting Christmas cheer for the boys at the front... The children also contributed 200 items of clothing for the French orphans.'¹⁰¹

On 6 November 1918, a meeting went ahead at the Council Chambers to form a committee to organise a day in connection with the War Chest. The Mayor, Alderman Martin presided, and the meeting moved to 'make a house to house collection, and also a series of raffles'¹⁰² with a social organised by the Red Cross, to held on the evening of Wednesday 27 November.

Hillgrove also boasted a returned soldier's presentation committee to welcome returning soldiers to the town. In November 1918, committee members were Mayor J.C. Martin (president), R.W. Morrow (secretary), G. Smart, F. Morgan, H.J. West, T. Snow, Geo. A. Jones, A. Scarf and B. Snow¹⁰³. A public meeting held in the Foresters Hall in November 1918, applied for

96 op. cit., 11 June 1919, p. 8.

97 op. cit., 20 September 1919, p. 4.

98 op. cit., 11 October 1919, p. 9.

99 op. cit., 20 January 1917, p. 3.

100 ibid.

101 op. cit., 11 August 1917, p. 10.

102 op. cit., 9 November 1918, p. 3.

103 op. cit., 30 November 1918, p. 8.

permission to conduct a race meeting at the Hillgrove track to raise finance for the presentation committee. Medals were procured by the committee and presented at various socials to welcome returning soldiers.

CHAPTER 12

ENTERTAINMENT

One of the distinctive features of mining towns was the emphasis placed on the pursuit of cultural activities and Hillgrove was no exception. The size of the town soon attracted a variety of travelling entertainment groups, and the townspeople quickly identified local talents. This led to the formation of several groups including town bands, dramatic groups and choral societies. Church groups presented a variety of entertainment to raise funds for building projects; sporting groups presented annual picnic days, race meetings and carnivals; funds for disabled miners and their disadvantaged families were raised by various charitable organisations; sporting clubs and Friendly Societies presented dances and balls. Hotels became a central feature of entertainment when formal dinners were held in their dining rooms and halls.

Hillgrove Halls

Hillgrove was served by a number of halls which were built by the School of Arts, Masonic Lodge, Protestant Alliance, Manchester Unity, Gymnasium Club and the Barracks built by the Salvation Army. One of the most significant was the Centennial Hall. A large 'commodious hall'- thirty by forty feet, was constructed by Hillgrove miner Thomas Keys, and 'dedicated to the centenary of the colony'¹ hence the name, Centennial Hall. The opening took place on 10 February 1888; the same night as Mr Francis Wade's fine new **Miners' Arms Hotel**. This hall was destroyed by a spectacular fire late in December 1894 and later rebuilt.²

Spring Show Society

The Hillgrove Spring Show Society held its inaugural show in the Centennial Hall on Friday and Saturday 9 and 10 December 1893, and proceeds were donated to the local hospital. Contests were planned for exhibits in flowers, fruit, vegetables as well as contests in 'rock boring, drill sharpening, and horse shoeing...'³ Six days after the show, the **Armidale**

¹ **Armidale Express**, 30 March 1888, p. 4.

² **Armidale Chronicle**, 29 December 1894, p. 2.

³ **Armidale Express**, 1 December 1893, p. 8.

Express presented an extensive report. The committee consisted of George Smith, Robert Ross and Thomas Keys, Senior. A highlight of the show was a fountain made locally by Mr F. Carr, which demonstrated the use of water power. Local and Uralla people supported the show to the extent that takings were about £100, and a number of interesting exhibitions were presented. George Smith, the discoverer of gold at Hillgrove, displayed the digger's pick with which he had discovered the gold reef, and a gold and antimony collection worth £250. This collection was supplemented by a Mr Porter's collection of minerals, and an exhibition of diamonds, sapphires, rubies, emeralds and garnets by a Sydney firm, Messrs Murfin and Sons. In describing the Smith collection, a correspondent stated 'we remarked in our last issue that it would "do credit to the best museum in the world"'.⁴ The Porter collection, according to the reporter, was 'pronounced to be one of the best ever exhibited in Australia and a very large proportion of the gems are the production of the New England we live in'.⁵

On the Saturday afternoon of the show, Uralla cricketers played against the local Hillgrove team and were later entertained at the **Commercial Hotel** along with the judges and stewards of the show. At the function,

Mr George Smith in proposing the judges, spoke in high terms of the magnificent manner in which the Uralla people had responded to the call for assistance to Hillgrove; at the same time, although he had been disappointed in Armidale, Mr T. Lambert (the only representative from there) made up for the absence of those who had failed to attend by his energetic presence during the two days.⁶

Throughout the history of the town, constant reference was made to the lack of support of Armidale people to events held in the town. A sense of rivalry persisted between the two towns.

Forms of Entertainment

The variety of entertainment, particularly on week-ends, is demonstrated by the activities which took place on Saturday 10 February

4 **Hillgrove Guardian and New England Mining Gazette**, 16 December, 1893, reproduced in Tonkin, Henry, **Papers c1859-1937**, Mitchell Library Sydney, FM 4/7446, Folio No. 29.

5 *ibid.*

6 **Armidale Express** 15 December 1893, p. 3.

1894. One hundred visitors came by coach and buggy, and the Hillgrove Jockey Club presented a meeting of five races with prizemoney and trophies presented to the value of £113.

During the day Ashton's circus arrived in town, and this with a phonograph company and sundry games of chance, made Saturday night very lively. The stores were closed from 1 till 6 o'clock, giving their attendants an opportunity of visiting the races, and on Monday they are to be closed at 12 a.m. for the day.⁷

The extent of community involvement in meetings and the variety of entertainment was highlighted in the first week of October 1899. The **Hillgrove Guardian** stated:

Next week will be a pretty one locally for meetings, pleasure etc. Monday- Eight Hours' Day Sports, a Public Holiday and the Oddfellows Anniversary Ball at night. Tuesday- 4 p.m. monthly meeting of Hospital Committee; 7.30 p.m. Management Committee of the Hillgrove Medical Association; 8 p.m. monthly meeting of Trustees of Common. Wednesday evening- meeting of the Hillgrove Miners' Association, and on Thursday evening, Public meeting.⁸

Once the town was established, both International and Australian entertainers regularly visited Hillgrove. The 'first company worthy of mention' was the visit of Cowan's Dramatic Company to Hillgrove when the troupe performed two plays "Current Cash" and "True till Death."⁹ Other attractions included circuses such as Ashton's, Wirth's, Maro Brothers' and Perry's. The Crook, Forbes and Lyle Dramatic Company appeared in August 1891; the Lynch Family of Bellringers, and John Lemmone and Company ('a world-famed flautist') appeared on a number of occasions. The Princes Opera Company described as 'a talented company' appeared in June 1892. Mademoiselle Celinski, the noted Australian pianist, made her first appearance in Hillgrove on the evening of 22 July 1899.

In October 1899 the well known Bohemian lecturer arrived in Hillgrove,

bringing with him this time... the celebrated Texas Jack, whose marvellous shooting and feats of horsemanship are unparalleled. They carried their own theatre which is comfortably seated and

⁷ op. cit., 13 February 1894, p. 4.

⁸ **Hillgrove Guardian and New England Mining Gazette**, 30 September 1899, p. 2.

⁹ **Armidale Express**, 12 March 1889, p. 4.

brilliantly lighted. They have a staff of 30 artistes and can give an entirely new programme each time for nine nights.¹⁰

Newspaper advertisements and reports emphasised the quality and variety of entertainment available to the residents. In the week ending 20 October 1901, the following groups appeared: Mr E.H. Stevenson, 'The celebrated English Society Entertainer, Lecturer etc' presented 'his London Company assisted by the ROYAL BIOSCOPE'; an Armidale Amateur group presented **Our Boys Our Boys**, in aid of the Hillgrove Benevolent Society; Miss Ethel Grey, direct from India and China, made her first appearance to present her English Dramatic Company.

In March 1906, the Richards' Entertainers on their sixth annual tour, visited Hillgrove. The Company comprised Mr. A.T. Richards (London's Leading Bio Expert and operator), Will Wynand (comedian), Fred. Norris (American Roller Skater Comedian), Brander Balfour (Australia's best baritone), Miss Nance Heinewood (Pianiste) and Bert Love. In the week beginning 8 December 1906, John Uren with his Electric Picture Plant, presented 'up to date pictures from American markets'; Cook's Pictures and the famous Musical All Blacks also presented coloured cinematography while McRae's Buckjumpers and Rough-riders appeared on the Monday and Tuesday.

Travelling photographer Joseph Check, from Leichardt, visited Hillgrove in 1894, 1900, 1905 and 1908. In March 1905 he established a studio in George Quinnell's shop in Brackin Street, and presented an exhibition of lantern views, cinematograph pictures, polyphone records, and the Passion Play of Obergammeggau in the School of Arts Hall. He returned in 1908 to present the Passion Play and a Theatrescope. In April he continued on to Uralla, where 'the pictures shown were good and well appreciated'.¹¹

The Choral Union

Hillgrove formed a Choral Union in June 1894 'with Mr. Waters as conductor, Mr. H. Tonkin as president, and Mr. Edwards as secretary'.¹² Twenty members joined at the first meeting. One month later, the Choral Union, of which there were now seventy members, 'lost the services of their

¹⁰ **Hillgrove Guardian and New England Mining Gazette**, 7 October 1899, p. 2.

¹¹ **Armidale Express**, 21 April 1908, p. 4.

¹² op. cit., 5 June 1894, p. 5.

excellent conductor Mr Waters' and Henry Tonkin was 'appointed conductor in his place'.¹³ A Grand Inaugural Concert was held on Monday 20 August 1894 in the Gymnasium Hall. A chorus of fifty voices attended and presented 'Glees, Quartettes, Trios, Duets, and Solos',¹⁴ accompanied by pianist Miss Hughes and conductor Henry Tonkin. In the following month, the correspondent in the **Armidale Chronicle** remarked, 'the Choral Union is audibly improving on each appearance'.¹⁵

A trait of mining towns was that much of the planned entertainment was for the purpose of providing assistance to organisations or to individual people in distress. On the evening of Friday 4 October 1889, the Hillgrove Bijou Dramatic Company made their debut in the new Centennial Hall, in aid of Herbert White who lost his hand in an explosion. 'The curtain rose on the usual circle of burnt cork and ivories, and the same old time-honoured jokes... with the same old results- "roars of happiness"...'¹⁶ In the following month, the variety club also raised funds for the local hospital at another function.

Late in November 1891, the local Bohemian Amateur Dramatic company performed the Byron drama 'The Lancashire Lass' in aid of Arthur Townsend. A net total of £40 was raised at the function.¹⁷

Tragedy pursued the miner, Herbert White. In May 1905, a social was held in the School of Arts Hall to 'provide funds to enable Mr Herbert White, who recently had his eye blown out, to proceed to Sydney and have a glass eye fitted'.¹⁸ Eighty couples attended the function which was organised by a committee with Mr E. Corpse (Treasurer) and Mr J. Brackin (Secretary). Committee members also canvassed the town.

Roller Skating

Once an appropriate hall was available in the town, roller skating became a popular pastime. In August 1889, the new Centennial Hall was,

¹³ op. cit., 3 July 1894 p. 4.

¹⁴ op. cit., 28 August 1894, p. 5.

¹⁵ **Armidale Chronicle**, 15 September 1894, p. 7.

¹⁶ **Armidale Express**, 8 October 1889, p. 8.

¹⁷ op. cit., 4 December 1891, p. 7.

¹⁸ **Hillgrove Guardian and New England Mining Gazette**, 20 May 1905, p. 2.

opened with great eclat by a Grand Skating Carnival. Several ladies and gentlemen from Armidale were present, and among the fancy costumes, Masheress, Magpie, Esmerelda and Incroyable were very conspicuous while among the male characters, Clowns and Niggers, Swells and Mashers etc, etc combined to form a very brilliant assemblage.¹⁹

On the evening of Thursday 26 September 1889, a Skating Carnival and Fancy Dress Ball was held in the Centennial Hall. 'There was a very good attendance and the floor was in capital condition, both for skating and dancing'.²⁰

In 1909 roller skating became popular once again in Hillgrove and large numbers attended the rink in the School of Arts Hall. Skating continued to be conducted in the hall up to and during World War One.

Films

February 1910 saw the Hillgrove Electric Theatrescope company presenting films in the School of Arts Hall. In September, entrepreneurs the Smythe Brothers, introduced a new form of entertainment to the people of Hillgrove. They brought their electric picture show to the town by a 'motor-car purchased for the purpose of touring the northern district...'²¹ The Smythe Bros. also presented films in Armidale and Inverell, and continued to show pictures to crowded houses in Hillgrove, often supporting fundraising by Hillgrove residents. In July 1911, they 'gave a picture entertainment in the School of Arts Hall... in aid of the St George Church Funds'.²² Similarly, in December 1912 they presented a picture show with 'proceeds to be donated to the funds of Hospital Saturday'.²³ The Smythe Bros continued to hire the School of Arts Hall to screen their pictures.

Other companies periodically presented films in the town. On Monday evening 10 July 1911, the 'Bells picture company gave a picture show in aid of the hospital'.²⁴ In October 1913, Rob James and W. Prisk converted a

¹⁹ **Armidale Express**, 20 August 1889, p. 4.

²⁰ op. cit., 1 October 1889, p. 4.

²¹ **Armidale Chronicle**, 24 September 1910, p. 6.

²² op. cit., 29 July 1911, p. 7.

²³ op. cit., 25 December 1912, p. 11.

²⁴ op. cit., 15 July 1911, p. 3.

store formerly owned by W. Willmot into a picture show hall to be called 'The Star Hall'. The **Armidale Chronicle** commented, 'a De Dion Petrol set is to hand, and an Ernemann bioscope machine.'²⁵ On Saturday 1 November 1913, R. James and W. Prisk opened the hall which was 'licensed to hold 498 people'.²⁶ Within three years, the demise of this building was announced. 'The large building on the corner of Brackin and Brereton Streets, known as the Star Hall is being pulled down and carted to Uralla.'²⁷

Hillgrove Bands

A town band was quickly formed and the special correspondent from Hillgrove wrote that on the evening of Saturday 16 March 1889, 'the local band paraded the streets, and gave some very good music. They may be congratulated on the perfection they have reached'.²⁸

Hillgrove became noted for its bands. The Hillgrove Fife and Drum Band, under the conductorship of Public School Principal, Henry Tonkin, was formed in February 1894. In the following month, 'the trustees... received a parcel of 29 instruments... including fifes, flutes, picolos, kettledrums, triangle and a brass drum...'²⁹ The band made its first appearance in public on the evening of 26 May 1894, when it lead the torchlight procession to celebrate the first anniversary of the formation of the Independent Order of Rechabites.³⁰

In December 1893, bandmaster Hugh McMahon lead the Hillgrove Brass Band at the second annual celebration of Hospital Sunday. Four months later, he conducted this band at the first Catholic Ball held in Hillgrove in April 1894. On Sunday 6 May 1894, McMahon's Band gave a 'series of selections on the Recreation Ground', which were highly appreciated because 'our local Recreation Ground is used for little else but football or cricket on Sundays'.³¹ But in August 1894, steps were taken to canvass 'support for a new brass band, which, it is rumoured Mr. A. Lovell is to conduct'.³² There

25 op. cit., 4 October 1913, p. 6.

26 op. cit., 8 November 1913, p. 3.

27 op. cit., 6 May 1916, p. 10.

28 **Armidale Express**, 19 March 1889, p. 4.

29 op. cit., 6 March 1894, p. 4.

30 op. cit., 29 May 1894, p. 5.

31 op. cit., 11 May 1894, p. 4.

32 op. cit., 21 August 1894, p. 4.

was an obvious feeling in town that the quality of the band would be improved by recruiting Lovell and inviting the Armidale Town Band to Hillgrove to display their musical talents. At the time, the brass band was known as McMahons' and on the evening of Saturday 25 August, 'this little band of 13 performers gave a programme that was highly appreciated'³³ in the main street opposite Stephens.

In September 1894, the Armidale Brass Band under the conductorship of Andrew Lovell, formerly bandmaster from Glen Innes, travelled to Hillgrove to present a program in the Gymnasium Hall. Thirty members 'signified their willingness to join'³⁴ a new band and bandmaster Lovell was recruited to conduct the band. The Hillgrove correspondent in the **Armidale Express** expressed the hope, 'I trust that the new Hillgrove band, under the conductorship of Mr Lovell, will be able to give as good an account of themselves'.³⁵

The two bands featured at musical functions within Hillgrove and presented socials, vocal and instrumental evenings in the School of Arts Hall, as well as music in the main street on Saturday nights and concerts in the recreation ground. Both bands, led by McMahon and Lovell, prepared for the Tamworth Concert to be held in October 1897. The correspondent in the **Hillgrove Guardian** appealed to local people to support the concert to be presented by the Town Band on Monday 10 October, to assist 'in defraying its expenses in connection with the trip. A capital programme has been prepared, so we hope to see a bumper house such as the McMahon Band had, so as to show strict impartiality.'³⁶

At the Tamworth band contest, McMahon's Brass Band was placed first and the Town Band third. McMahon's Band now enjoyed the reputation as 'the premier of the North'.³⁷ The Town Band also performed creditably especially since the conductor Andrew Lovell, lived at Armidale, and the distance required for him to travel meant he could only conduct practices once a week. The **Town and Country Journal** of November 1897 published a

33 *ibid.*

34 **Armidale Chronicle**, 15 September 1894, p. 7.

35 **Armidale Express**, 21 September 1894 p. 4.

36 **Hillgrove Guardian and New England Mining Gazette**, 9 October 1897, p. 2.

37 *op. cit.*, 16 October 1897, p. 3.

photograph of the McMahon Band by Angus McNeil,³⁸ a Kempsey photographer.

Again both bands took part in the celebrations for the Hospital Sunday held in December 1897. The McMahon's Brass Band marched in the procession with eighteen members, while the Town Band marched with twenty-two members. The Hillgrove Town Band played at the Foresters' Athletic Club third annual sports, and was described as 'a great attraction' because the members were by no means sparing with their music...³⁹

In the following year, the McMahon Brass Band came to dominate band music presented in Hillgrove. They presented a quadrille in the School of Arts Hall; a concert at the Swamp Creek Falls; a concert at the recreation ground 'in aid of the Dudley Colliery Disaster Fund'⁴⁰; played at the Hillgrove band picnic and raised money in May to compete at the Tamworth band competition.

On Sunday 11 September 1898, the members of the McMahon Band 'appeared for the first time in uniform... they count appearances as nothing compared to what they have made up their minds to do.'⁴¹ Certainly their commitment lead to great successes in future competitions. The band left for Launceston on Monday 19 December. After tea at the **New England Hotel**, owned by John Sullings, formerly of Hillgrove, the team departed by mail train for Tamworth where they gave a concert on the Tuesday evening. The Band 'secured second place in the Intercontinental contest at Launceston'.⁴²

On the evening of Thursday 19 January 1899, a 'Welcome Home' entertainment was given to the successful McMahon Band, in the School of Arts Hall. The band gave a preliminary entertainment in the open air followed by entertainment in the School of Arts. The Hillgrove Town Band joined in the second half of the program and Henry Tonkin, the Principal of the Public School, addressed the audience:

It would be a hard matter to adequately express the esteem and admiration in which the conductor, Mr Hugh McMahon, is held by all Hillgrove; his ability, his perseverance, his eagerness to excel in high-class music such as is seldom attempted outside

38 op. cit., 27 November 1897, p. 2.

39 op. cit., 31 December 1897, p. 4.

40 op. cit., 23 April 1898, p. 2.

41 op. cit., 17 September 1898, p. 4.

42 op. cit., 31 December 1898, p. 3.

great cities were admired... the band... had helped to improve the tastes and tendencies of the people and to make life worth living in Hillgrove...⁴³

Dr Massey also presented a gold medal to Hugh McMahon and the twenty seven bandsmen. The correspondent described the occasion as:

one of the most successful and altogether enjoyable occasions ever celebrated in Hillgrove, the unanimous expression of feeling associated with which was, long life and success to the McMahon Band in Hillgrove.⁴⁴

July 1899, and the McMahon Brass Band was 'in steady practice for the forthcoming contests at Tamworth and Bathurst; the former being now arranged to take place (early in November)...'⁴⁵ The band left on Sunday 5 November 1899 to participate in the Bathurst competition. Accompanied by President Dr Harry Massey, 'the departure was marked with a demonstration and excitement in no small degree of comparison with that of our troops for Transvaal from Sydney only two days earlier...'⁴⁶

The victorious McMahon Band returned to Hillgrove as Australasian Champions and received an enthusiastic reception by the Hillgrove residents. The town was decorated with bunting and thronged with people to welcome the band home. The editor of the **Hillgrove Guardian** commented proudly,

we enter into the effort with no small degree of pride, not only on account of the enthusiasm of the people of Hillgrove, but also of the occasion from which it was the result'.⁴⁷

Its outstanding success led to photographs of the band being featured in the **Sydney Mail** and the **Town and Country Journal**. The **Daily Telegraph** agreed, 'the Hillgrove bandsmen deserve warm congratulations on their championship victory- the more so because it is evident that they gained it by musical excellence'.⁴⁸

43 op. cit., 21 January 1899, p. 2.

44 ibid.

45 op. cit., 22 July 1899, p. 2.

46 op. cit., 11 November 1899, p. 2.

47 op. cit., 18 November 1899, p. 2.

48 **Daily Telegraph**, quoted in the **Hillgrove Guardian** and **New England Mining Gazette**, 18 November 1899, p. 2.

The McMahon Band suffered its initial set-back when the first trombone player, John McMahon, left for Western Australia in January 1900.⁴⁹ A further set-back occurred when conductor Hugh McMahon and other members of the McMahon family, including Edward, Harry, Will and Alick, left the town early in March 1900. Their departure saw the collapse of the McMahon Band, and at a Masonic function to farewell member Hugh McMahon, he stated:

He was sorry to leave Hillgrove but must do so, he hoped to better himself; it was a great blow to him to see the band break up, but want of work had caused members to leave... he had received a good offer from Western Australia, and had accepted it.⁵⁰

Residents attempted to revive the spirit of band music by reforming the old town band in February 1900,

under the title of the Hillgrove Model Band. Mr A. Lovell was appointed Bandmaster and the following officers were elected- President Dr Hardcastle, Vice-Presidents W.J. Judge, Geo. Quinnell and S. Williams; Secretary C.H. James... It was decided that the band should give 52 open air programmes during the year.⁵¹

Hillgrove supported the band financially at each of its open air demonstrations and it made regular appearances at concerts, socials and fund-raising functions. However, by August 1900 it became obvious that the band was in financial difficulties. At a Band Social held in August, the newspaper correspondent expressed disappointment with 'the patronage being far short of what might have been expected'.⁵² The Mayor Alderman Dickson, formerly Secretary of the McMahon Brass Band, spoke in support of the band but Mr W.G. Drew was blunt in describing it as 'a financial wreck.'

It was still struggling financially in December 1900 and public meetings were held to revive the Town Band. At a meeting chaired by Dr Hardcastle on Wednesday 12 December 1900, the committee decided 'that the best method of putting the Band on a sound financial footing was to make the terms of membership easy and spread the responsibility as widely as

⁴⁹ Hillgrove Guardian and New England Mining Gazette, 20 January 1900, p. 2.

⁵⁰ op. cit., 10 March 1900, p. 4.

⁵¹ op. cit., 24 February 1900, p. 2.

⁵² op. cit., 1 September 1900, p. 3.

possible'.⁵³ As a result, nearly fifty members joined with the promise of paying 1/- fortnightly. However, the major problem was the continued apathy of the committee.

Sadly, the band lost its talented conductor Andrew Lovell who returned to lead the Armidale band. Armidale, in turn, later lost Lovell to the Burwood band in April 1902.⁵⁴ At the half-yearly meeting in February 1901, it was revealed that the debt had been cleared and there were twenty six regular subscribers. A number of townspeople stood for election, and the following office-bearers were elected: Dr Massey (President); Messrs J.S. Vance and S. Sullings (Vice-presidents); W.G. Brydon (Secretary); James Butler (Treasurer). The committee consisted of band representatives J. Welby, H. James, Richard James and town representatives Dr Hardcastle, George Quinnell and D.W. Dickson.

Despite the loss of Lovell, the band cleared all its debts and chose James Butler as the new conductor, at the same time warning 'members must pull together and roll up for open air performances'.⁵⁵ Butler struggled to keep the band together, but the only band surviving in the town by March 1902 was that of the Salvation Army. Alexander McWaters then set about forming 'a new band on his own account',⁵⁶ and on the following Saturday evening, the newspaper reported that the band played several selections outside the **Commercial Hotel**. 'Considering the short time the Band has been organised, the performers acquitted themselves admirably, and there is every reason to believe that Alex will bring out a second McMahan's band'.⁵⁷

The band lapsed once again, and in an attempt to reform it, Mayor Robert Sharp called a public meeting in the School of Arts on Friday 8 August 1902. This meeting met with little support and the correspondent in the **Hillgrove Guardian** regretted the 'apparent apathy' of the townspeople'. However, the instruments were still in Hillgrove and an appeal was made: 'Surely our local musicians are not going to let Hillgrove, which not so long ago possessed the champion band, drop out of the musical world altogether'.⁵⁸

⁵³ op. cit., 15 December 1900, p. 3.

⁵⁴ op. cit., 19 April 1902, p. 2.

⁵⁵ op. cit., 27 April 1901, p. 2.

⁵⁶ op. cit., 19 April 1902, p. 2.

⁵⁷ op. cit., 26 April 1902, p. 2.

⁵⁸ op. cit., 16 August 1902, p. 2.

But at the meeting, the only surviving trustee George Smith, resigned and a motion was carried,

requesting the council to become trustees of the instruments. The council accepted the position, and the whole of the instruments (valued at £150)... had been collected and stored in the council chambers.⁵⁹

Despite this set-back, the Mayor again raised the matter at another public meeting called to discuss support for the Mount Kembla Disaster Fund. This time, support was received and a committee of very talented townspeople was elected, comprising : Mayor Ald Sharp (President); Dr Hardcastle (Vice-President); Mr Swinson (Treasurer); Mr Morgan Stephens (Secretary); Town Representatives- Messrs. MacGeorge, Blackwell, Highfield, Reverend Mr Madden, and Bandsmen's Representatives, Alick McWatters and Harry James. This committee acted quickly to draft rules for the management of the band and left the matter of the bandmaster's selection in the hands of the bandsmen.⁶⁰

The **Hillgrove Guardian** was impressed by the actions of the new committee and gave a clue as to why the previous band collapsed so quickly.

We have to congratulate the Band Committee upon the practical business-like manner in which they have gone about re-forming the band... Evidently in the past some laxity existed, especially as regards the instruments which are in a somewhat dilapidated condition...⁶¹

The re-formed band made its first public appearance at the Mount Kembla Fund Concert held on Friday 5 September. The bandsmen elected James Butler as Bandmaster and this appointment was ratified by the band committee.⁶² At this meeting of the committee, the Bandmaster was authorised to have nine instruments repaired, and charges were set for the band. However, the new Bandmaster resigned early in October and left Hillgrove. In November, it was reported that he was 'taking part in the Ballarat Band Competition, he having, for the time being, joined Mr H. McMahon's Westralian band'.⁶³

59 op. cit., 23 August 1902, p. 2

60 op. cit., 30 August 1902, p. 2.

61 *ibid.*

62 op. cit., 6 September 1902, p. 2.

63 op. cit., 1 November 1902, p. 2.

Alexander McWatters, a former member of the McMahon Band was elected as Bandmaster. Instruments were distributed at the end of October and now the band was 'in a fairly sound financial position'.⁶⁴ The band received a real boost when Hugh McMahon returned to Hillgrove on a visit following his successes at Ballarat and Bathurst. He attended a concert in Hillgrove on Thursday 20 November 1902, and it was hoped that he would 'augment the band funds, and at the same time give the people of Hillgrove an opportunity to hear their old friend Mr McMahon, the champion cornetist of Australia, play'.⁶⁵

Six months later, it was reported 'the local Town Band is steadily improving, both as regards its financial position and as a dispenser of music'.⁶⁶ By August 1904, the Town Band was reported as a 'flourishing concern' because of the 'energy and perseverance of the bandmaster, Mr. A. McWatters'.⁶⁷ Despite the optimism, McWatters announced his intention to resign at a special meeting held in Ryan's hotel on Sunday 19 March 1905. The band had promised to perform with Joseph Check, a visiting photographer, but he was forced to cancel the exhibition because only two regular players and a small number of pupils appeared to play. McWatters was angered by the reluctance of some members to attend practice. Despite the turmoil, the band continued and in September 1905, a concert was held in the School of Arts Hall to liquidate 'the liabilities owing...'.⁶⁸ The debt was wiped out and the correspondent noted 'a marked improvement being plainly perceptible upon their last public appearance'.⁶⁹

The Town Band made 'rapid strides in efficiency', and on the evening of 1 December 1906, played in Brackin Street to collect funds 'for the purpose of assisting the combination to take part in the forthcoming Band competition at Inverell'.⁷⁰ The Armidale Town Band, which won the Inter-State Band contest in April 1908, visited Hillgrove in June 'to help augment funds for the local band'.⁷¹ 'About 800 people assembled to hear the champions'⁷² in

64 *ibid.*

65 *op. cit.*, 22 November 1902, p. 3.

66 *op. cit.*, 30 May 1903, p. 2.

67 *op. cit.*, 27 August 1904, p. 2.

68 *op. cit.*, 16 September 1905, p. 3.

69 *ibid.*

70 *op. cit.*, 1 December 1906, p. 1.

71 **Armidale Chronicle**, 13 June 1908, p. 5.

72 *op. cit.*, 18 June 1908, p. 5.

the local park. The band was encouraged to present a sacred concert in the School of Arts Hall that night, and raised £18 5s for the Hillgrove Band.

Twelve months later, the Bandmaster ceased attending practices, 'owing to the half-hearted way in which the bands-men attended practices and playing out'.⁷³ Once these difficulties were overcome, the band continued, and a large number of people attended when the band 'rendered a very nice programme of music on the recreation ground'⁷⁴ on a Sunday afternoon in January 1910. Despite the wishes of the residents that the band should continue, it was obvious that the band was destined to struggle. At the annual meeting of subscribers held in February 1910, 'there was a fair attendance of citizens, but the bandsmen, with the exception of a few, were conspicuous by their absence'. Concerned by these developments, the correspondent asked 'Why is this thus?'.⁷⁵

In August 1911, it was reported 'members are taking more interest in the Band than they have for some time'.⁷⁶ Two months later, they led the Eight Hour Day procession as a prelude to the annual sport's carnival but in December 1912, a special meeting was called because former members of the band had returned to Hillgrove and they wanted to reorganise the band.

It was decided to form a semi-private Band for the time being, and if the members find they can get going strong again, then a public meeting will be called to reform the Town Band. Mr. T. Black was appointed Bandmaster and secretary proterm'.⁷⁷

The Municipal Council agreed to lend the instruments, and in August 1913 it was recorded 'the local band is putting in a lot of practice with the view of future engagements, and a keen interest is being taken by the players, between 16 and 20 attending'.⁷⁸ In November 1914, the 'Town Band gave their services free, and played in front of the Hall'⁷⁹ at the hospital concert. Former conductor of the band, James Butler, conducted the orchestra at the concert.

⁷³ op. cit., 26 June 1909, p. 3.

⁷⁴ op. cit., 26 January 1910, p. 3.

⁷⁵ op. cit., 12 February 1910, p. 3.

⁷⁶ op. cit., 12 August 1911, p. 6.

⁷⁷ op. cit., 14 December 1912, p. 3.

⁷⁸ op. cit., 23 August 1913, p. 3.

⁷⁹ op. cit., 14 November 1914, p. 6.

The Town Band performed at the Hillgrove Australia Day celebrations held on 30 July 1915. Later that year, the band 'mustered 20 players' to render 'an excellent programme at the hospital'. The correspondent continued, 'we might mention that the Band... is solely maintained by the players' and 'this is the first occasion that the Band has given a programme on Sunday for over 12 months'.⁸⁰

Three years later, the demise of the band became obvious during the celebrations which occurred when news of the signing of the Armistice reached Hillgrove. The bells of the fire-shed, the Public School and the Convent were rung and as the people thronged in the street, 'bells and tins of all descriptions were brought into play, supplemented by the only available instrument of the Hillgrove Town Band- the brass drum'.⁸¹

⁸⁰ op. cit., 16 October 1915, p. 10.

⁸¹ op. cit., 19 November 1918, p. 9.

CHAPTER 13

SPORT

The relative isolation of the town, and the nature and conditions of work within the mines, were significant factors in explaining why the men took part in such a wide range of individual and organised sports. The miners had time on their hands because they did not have to travel large distances to their workplace. Initially sport was organised on an individual basis, without the need of formally constituted clubs. However, once clubs were established in Hillgrove, Armidale and surrounding district provided venues and a wide range of sporting clubs for team competitions.

Community and sporting members set about obtaining a recreation ground within the township. In 1887, members of the Eleanora Cricket Club applied for an area of ten acres at Hillgrove to be dedicated for a public recreation and cricket ground. This land was notified on 9 February 1889, and the following temporary trustees were appointed: George Westcott, George Quinnell, John James Bonnar, Samuel Mathews, Richard Moffatt, William Woods and George Nix.¹ The recreation ground, section 12 in Brackin Street, was finally dedicated on 9 March 1894, and a band rotunda, some buildings, sports track and oval were eventually constructed. The Hillgrove Municipal Council took control over the recreation ground in June 1900.

The rotunda and other buildings were used extensively throughout the hey-day of Hillgrove. In April 1917, the Council Building Inspector expressed concern about the state of the buildings on the recreation ground. 'After discussion, it was resolved that the buildings be pulled down'.² The band rotunda survived until 1925, when 'A.G. Page offered thirty shillings for the material on the band rotunda... exclusive of the iron bars'³ at a meeting of the Dumaresq Shire Council held in February. The Council decided to reject the offer and call tenders for the material.

¹ **The New South Wales Government Gazette**, Volume 3, Sydney, 1889, p. 5444.

² **Armidale Chronicle**, 7 April 1917, p. 10.

³ *op. cit.*, 14 February 1925, p. 3.

Cricket

Cricket teams were quickly formed in Hillgrove, and as early as October 1887, the Hillgrove correspondent issued a challenge to the cricketers of Armidale when he wrote in the **Armidale Express**:

The Eleanora Cricket Club is in a healthy condition... A letter has been sent to our members to have this ground reserved for the purposes of recreation. If the famous Armidale Clubs do not look out, the cricketers out here will put 'them through' comfortably.⁴

The club had novel ways of raising funds. In November 1889, local amateurs gave a variety entertainment on a Saturday night,

in aid of the funds of the local cricket club, and, notwithstanding the many counter attractions which prevailed, succeeded in drawing a remarkably good house... the cricket club will benefit to the extent of about £15...⁵

Discoverer of the extensive gold bearing **Big Reef** in June 1887, George Smith, offered the Smith Challenge Cup for competition between Hillgrove, Armidale, Uralla and other district teams. In 1893, two teams from Hillgrove, the Hillgrove Half-holiday Association and Hillgrove competed against teams from Armidale including Albion, Armidale and West End in the cup series.

As mining production fluctuated and labour was often suspended, many miners left the town in search of work. Consequently, the various sporting teams and clubs declined. An additional problem confronting the formation of the cricket club each year, was the fact that cricketers lost a shift in the mines by playing on a Saturday afternoon. In September 1899, the cricket club was re-formed during a public meeting at the **Sydney Hotel**; 'the object of the meeting being to to resuscitate, a local interest in the game...'⁶ Three years later, the cricket club was again in a strong position with Dr Hardcastle as President. The Secretary reported to the meeting held in September 1902, that 'there are now 16 fully paid up playing members and besides 21 others have given in their names as intending members.'⁷

4 **Armidale Express**, 28 October 1887, p. 3.

5 op. cit., 15 November 1889, p. 4.

6 **Hillgrove Guardian and New England Mining Gazette**, 9 September 1899, p. 3.

7 op. cit., 4 October 1902, p. 2.

Following a lull of some time, cricket was re-established in the town with the formation of several clubs in 1910. On Monday 7 November, a meeting was held at the **Miners' Arms Hotel** to form a miners' club. The clubs moved quickly to commence a competition and on the following Saturday, a match was arranged between an **Eleanora** mining and Combined Hotel Boarder's team.⁸ The ensuing years saw the fortunes of the clubs fluctuate but in October 1920 the announcement was made, 'a meeting has been convened for the purpose of forming a cricket club. This class of sport has been a back number in Hillgrove for a considerable time.'⁹

Athletics

Professional running was also popular, and athletes competed for substantial prize-money. Following a meeting at Mr Fant's **Post Office Hotel** in February 1888, an athletic club was formed 'and thirty-eight members joined, planking down their half sovereigns like men...'¹⁰ Office-bearers appointed were Mr W. Woods (Secretary) and Mr James Miller (Treasurer). The club wasted no time in staging its first meeting, and Mr W.J. Trim, a well known businessman of Armidale, agreed to be judge at the meeting to be held on Easter Monday of that year. The Hillgrove correspondent believed that 'among those fancied as the winner of the pedestrian handicap are Taylor, Keys, Cummings, Arndell and Chad.'¹¹

The club also held major sports meetings on Boxing Day and an Anniversary Day held at the end of January. The first Boxing Day meeting took place in 1889 when 2,000 people attended. On that day, the following races were held: Hillgrove Handicap (130 yards), Miners' Handicap (120 yards), Hack Race, and Handicap (140 yards). In the majority of races, the entrance fee was 2s. 6d., and the first prizes varied from £15 and a silver cup to £5, £3 and £2. Other events included an event for boys under 14, throwing the cricket ball; hop, step and jump and a wrestling match with the style, catch-as-catch can. The meeting was marked by close finishes and a number of disputes, and despite the quality of the 1/4 mile handicap won by Conlan, 'the attention of the public was somewhat diverted from this event by

⁸ **Armidale Chronicle**, 12 November 1910, p. 3.

⁹ op. cit., 2 October 1920, p.

¹⁰ **Armidale Express**, 10 February 1888, p. 3.

¹¹ op. cit., 30 March 1888, p. 4.

others of a more exciting nature that were taking place in other parts of the field.¹²

On Saturday 1 August 1891, athlete Tom Jordan defeated P. Hawkins in a footrace. The backers of Jordan felt confident in their athlete, and issued a challenge for £25 on the following Monday. However, their confidence was shortlived when the challenge was accepted and the deposit covered by a stranger named Matheson who defeated Jordan 'without a effort'.¹³ Not to be outdone, a footrace of 130 yards for £25 was arranged one month later between Jordan, and Fred Keys a local athlete.

Boxing contests or fisticuffs, and wrestling matches (particularly cornish style), were popular forms of entertainment, and participants competed for substantial prize money and gate money. On the evening of Saturday 12 September 1891, a 'glove fight was held between Alex. White and Abe Snow, for £25 aside and gate money'¹⁴ in the Centennial Hall.

Following the introduction of electricity to Hillgrove, the first electric light sports evening was held on Saturday 8 April 1899. This meeting was held 'at the Eleanora end of town and everything passed successfully. The track is a splendid one and was in first class order'.¹⁵

Hillgrove Jockey Club

Initial attempts to form a Hillgrove Jockey Club in December 1889 failed, as no suitable land was available. Undaunted by this lack of success, horse races for 'bona fide hacks' were held at the athletic sports carnival on Boxing Day 1889. Two years later, the **Armidale Express** announced in December 1891 that a club called the Hillgrove Jockey Club had been formed at Hillgrove township.¹⁶ The club 'decided to hold the first race meeting on 18 April 1892'.¹⁷ The race track was located near the vicinity of the Hillgrove cemetery, on the northern side of the town.

¹² op. cit., 31 December 1889, p. 8.

¹³ op. cit., 4 August 1891, p. 2.

¹⁴ op. cit., 18 September 1891, p. 5.

¹⁵ **Hillgrove Guardian and New England Mining Gazette**, 15 April 1899, p. 3.

¹⁶ **Armidale Express**, 11 December 1891, p. 4.

¹⁷ op. cit., 2 February 1892, p. 5.

Regular race meetings were arranged throughout the 1890's, and in 1898 the club 'secured the use of Mr John McBean's starting machine for the Queen's birthday meeting'. The correspondent claimed it to be 'a tremendous attraction, for it certainly is worth seeing at work'.¹⁸

Following its demise, steps were taken to reform the club at a public meeting held on Wednesday 11 January 1905 at Sullings' **Commercial Hotel**. The names of twenty intending members were listed and the following office bearers elected: President, George Smith, Vice-presidents, Messrs Samuel Sullings and Samuel Williams, Treasurer, Robert Morrow and Secretary, Mr G. Foster.¹⁹ In April 1905, improvements were carried out to the course, which included an extension to the 'fence in (the) straight' and repairs to the 'saddling paddock enclosure'.²⁰ It was not until Boxing Day of that year that the reformed club held its inaugural meeting, attended by over 1,000 people. That evening the Foresters conducted a social as a 'grand finale'. It was claimed some people from the cathedral city of Armidale tried to spoil the racing occasion, but,

the committee gave all to understand that no hanky-panky tricks would be tolerated, and we must say the conduct of both owners and jockeys was highly creditable to them... This is the way to purify the sport of kings...²¹

In the following year, the **Hillgrove Guardian** reported, 'the annual Boxing Day race meeting this year was undoubtedly the most successful that has been held by the club since its inception'.²² The success of this function was due to the work of the Secretary John Sullivan, who organised nominations from Hillgrove and the surrounding district, including Armidale, Guyra, Guy Fawkes, Bundarra and Jeogla. Patrons were entertained by the town band lead by Alec McWatters; a publican's booth run by John Crough of the **Hillgrove Hotel**; a catering stall organised by Mrs O. Fisher; a fruit stall conducted by Comino and Panaretto, and a shooting gallery organised by Mr A. Boundy. However, the committee believed,

¹⁸ **Hillgrove Guardian and New England Mining Gazette**, 23 April 1898, p. 2.

¹⁹ op. cit., 14 January 1905, p. 3.

²⁰ op. cit., 22 April 1905, p. 2.

²¹ op. cit., 30 December 1905 p. 2.

²² op. cit., 29 December 1906, p. 2.

the only outside show was that of performing animals (a 'monkey and dog' show), which we think it would just as well to keep off the course in future, as such shows are scarcely the proper adjuncts of a race meeting.²³

During the evening, settling up took place at the **Tattersall's Hotel**. President Dr Costello, formerly of Balranald, occupied the chair and several toasts were proposed to the winners of the program, the losers, the President of the club, the officials and the press.

In October 1909, the Undersecretary for Lands expressed concern about the need for improvements at the racecourse even though trustees had raised funds for improvements by the sale of agistment rights. Despite the improvements carried out, the Eight-Hour Day Sports Committee could not obtain permission to hold races on the local track in October 1911. Twelve months later, it was reported 'an application to have the racecourse grant cancelled, and made available as a homestead lease'²⁴ had been made. A meeting was held early in April 1913, yet again 'to reform a race club in Hillgrove, and have the course put in order'.²⁵ Thomas O'Brien, licensee of the **Miners' Arms Hotel** was elected secretary of this movement.

The fencing and buildings at the racecourse fell into further dilapidated condition because of vandalism and the unlawful removal of material. But in April 1917 it was reported:

After a lapse of many years, there has been a revival in horse-racing... A committee had been formed who decided to put the course in the condition necessary for registration. The first step was to construct a fence around portion of the track for a distance of 3 furlongs. This was completed at a cost of £17...²⁶

Later that year, a public meeting asked the club 'to hold a race-meeting on Boxing Day... (and) 'to apply through the Mayor to the State War Council to raise funds for Our Day'.²⁷ However, the Secretary of the club Mr J. Brackin explained that the course had to be registered before the day's racing could be held.

23 *ibid.*

24 **Armidale Chronicle**, 28 September 1912, p. 3.

25 *op. cit.*, 5 April 1913, p. 3.

26 *op. cit.*, 14 April 1917, p. 12.

27 **Armidale Chronicle**, 5 December 1917, p. 7.

At a large public meeting in the Foresters Hall in November 1918, an application was made to the Minister for permission to hold a race meeting on Boxing Day to raise funds in aid of the Returned Soldiers' Presentation Fund. Provided permission was granted, trophies would be offered to the value of £30 with money to be collected at the gate. All present were asked to help put the track in order. At the meeting,

The following executive was formed: Mr J.C. Martin, president; Mr C.A. Lynch, hon. treasurer; Mr J. Brackin, hon. secretary; general committee: Messrs. A. McCrohon, G. Brackin, J. Toomey, B. Snow, F. Morgan, Thos. Snow, J. Usher, R.W. Morrow, A. Brindell, and H.J. West.²⁸

A day's horse racing took place at the Hillgrove racecourse on Easter Monday, 21 April 1919 and permission was constantly sought from the appropriate Minister for such meetings to be held. These meetings were held frequently throughout the 1920s, the 1930s and later decades; well after the town had declined.

Civilian Rifle Club

Throughout country areas, many volunteer military units were established in the nineteenth century and these formed the basis for the establishment of civilian rifle clubs. The Hillgrove club was formed in June 1896 following a meeting at Wade's Miners' Arms Hotel; Dr Hardcastle became President and Mr Selby, Secretary.²⁹ In August 1897, members of the club competed for a silver tankard (President's trophy) and the Michelson gold medal. 'J. Billings won the tankard and J.W. Kellar the medal'.³⁰ Two months later, the members decided to send a team of six to compete at the annual rifle match in Sydney and to become,

affiliated with the National Rifle Association of New South Wales, which gives the privilege of competing for the silver medal and other prizes, competitors also travel by rail to and from matches free.³¹

²⁸ op. cit., 30 November 1918, p. 8.

²⁹ op. cit., 6 June 1896, p. 4.

³⁰ **Hillgrove Guardian and New England Mining Gazette**, 28 August 1897, p. 2.

³¹ op. cit., 24 July 1897, p. 4.

The club travelled widely to participate in both local and national competitions, and was represented in 1898 by eight members in the National Rifle Association competition held in Randwick. In November of that year, the club opened its quarterly shooting contest 'by holding a Grand Military Social in the School of Arts Hall on Wednesday, November 9, 1898'.³²

The popularity of the sport was highlighted in a report of the competition held on Monday 5 June 1904, the Prince of Wales' birthday, to celebrate the opening of the new rifle range at Hillgrove. 'The Baker's Creek and Proprietary matches were won by Messrs R. Lonsdale and F. Crutchett respectively'.³³ The newspaper report demonstrated the extent that local and national merchants supported the match, by listing the large number of trophies and the winning competitors. 'The trophies presented (many of which were very valuable) being so numerous that each shooter got something- Capt. Morgan deserves particular credit for his success in securing same'.³⁴

Junior members were also catered for by the opening of a miniature rifle range on the Eleanora sands in October 1906. It was claimed the club was the first to introduce such a range, and was 'largely patronized by the schoolboys under the supervision of Mr. N.D. Power and Mr. Tonkin. For the convenience of young shots, a second range was opened... in the basement of the School of Arts'.³⁵

In the Boxing Day rifle shooting match held at the Armidale range in 1906, Hillgrove competitors performed exceptionally well. 'R. Lonsdale won the Merchants' aggregates and the Hillgrove A team the teams match'.³⁶ Because shooting was so popular throughout the district, the club continued to flourish. Hillgrove club held a meeting on Easter Monday 1914 and invitations were extended to Armidale and Wollomombi, with prizemoney allocated for individual and team competition.³⁷ It was also 'resolved to hold the quarterly shoot at 500 and 600 yards for prizes donated by the club and three trophies donated by Mr W. Morgan'.³⁸ As with the jockey club, the

³² op. cit., 15 October 1898, p. 3.

³³ op. cit., 10 June 1905, p. 2.

³⁴ ibid.

³⁵ **Armidale Express**, 9 October 1906, p. 4.

³⁶ op. cit., 28 December 1906, p. 4.

³⁷ op. cit., 7 April 1914, p. 4.

³⁸ op. cit., 15 May 1914, p. 10.

rifle club continued to exist because of the significant interest in shooting held by members of the town and surrounding rural district.

Football Clubs

A Rugby Union football club was formed at Hillgrove in May 1892. By April of the following year, a New England branch union had been formed and both Hillgrove and West Hillgrove joined. Hillgrove was known in the competition as East Hillgrove, to distinguish it from West Hillgrove, or later Metz. The club sent Secretary Mr J. Tynan, and Mr Groopy to attend the general meeting of delegates at the **St. Kilda Hotel** in Armidale on the evening of Wednesday 14 April 1893. The registered club colours for East Hillgrove became navy blue and gold hoops, with white knicker-bockers, and West Hillgrove, blue with a white sash.

In April 1893, the following office-bearers were elected to represent the club:

Patron, Mr W. Hill; president, Dr Freyer; vice-presidents, Dr Massey and Messrs G. Quinnell and J. Robinson; committee, Messrs Thos Hill, W. Morgan, E.A. Davis, T. Wearmouth, and Jos. Saunders; treasurer, Mr D.H. Lawrence; secretary, Mr J. Tynan.³⁹

Before joining the New England Rugby Union, the East and West clubs played the game under Association rules but upon joining the Union, the clubs became 'anxious to gain a knowledge of the Rugby rules...'⁴⁰ Both clubs competed in the New England inauguration carnival of the Union held at Armidale on Wednesday 17 May 1893. 'The representatives of the mining township had the advantage (to all appearances) of their opponents in weight';⁴¹ and Hillgrove acquitted itself well by defeating Armidale six points to three.

Football became well established amongst Hillgrove sporting clubs, and influential people such as Dr Cooper Hardcastle served as President. In a farewell function held in April 1905, prior to his departure from Hillgrove, Dr Hardcastle noted that,

³⁹ op. cit., 11 April 1893, p. 4.

⁴⁰ op. cit., 12 May 1893, p. 4.

⁴¹ op. cit., 19 May 1893, p. 4.

football developed the best features of young men- feelings of good fellowship as well as their muscles. The men who consistently followed out football would be found to be the most genuine set of men in town- not smoozers, but men who took their own part...⁴²

Until 1905, Rugby Union dominated football in Hillgrove when a number of players then turned to Rugby League. These players being among the first in the area to play the game. In the 1907 New England Rugby Union competition, there were still two Hillgrove teams competing in the senior competition; the All Blacks and Federals. Other teams in the competition included Armidale teams, Carlton and West End. Hillgrove and Metz also participated in the junior competition of eight teams.

The strength of the league club and its support depended on the movement of employees to and from Hillgrove but at the annual meeting of the club held in March 1914, the Chairman, Mr R. Dawson, 'complimented the club on the success attained last season...'⁴³ Five years later, a correspondent described the defeat of Hillgrove (known as the All-Blacks) at the hands of South Armidale. He wrote:

Owing to the war, football between Hillgrove and Armidale has been off for some seasons... They had in several previous seasons established their superiority, especially on their own ground, and it is many years since the wearers of the black had their colours lowered in home matches. It is doubtful if any country club in the state could "live" with the mining representatives for eighty minutes in bygone years on that asphalt recreation ground without being well trounced.⁴⁴

Coursing Club

A public meeting to form a Hillgrove Coursing Club was convened on Tuesday evening 9 May 1899 at the **Eleanora Hotel**. A course was eventually secured 'in one of the Hillgrove Station paddocks lent for that purpose by Mr Tubbs, and all that is wanted is a supply of hares'.⁴⁵ Action was taken 'to register dogs as required by the National Coursing Association of New South Wales'.⁴⁶ Office-bearers of the club were: Mr A.H. Probert

⁴² **Hillgrove Guardian and New England Mining Gazette**, 15 April 1905, p. 2.

⁴³ **Armidale Express**, 3 April 1914, p. 10.

⁴⁴ **Armidale Chronicle**, 4 June 1919, p. 7.

⁴⁵ **Hillgrove Guardian and New England Mining Gazette**, 15 July 1899, p. 3.

⁴⁶ *ibid.*

(President), Mr A.H. Probert, Junior (Treasurer) and Mr. A.R. Hardie (Secretary). The first meeting was planned for 1 August 1899.

Tennis

The popularity of tennis spread quickly in the districts surrounding Armidale and a number of clubs were formed by the 1880's. The sport was also popular in the mining community, and Hillgrove teams competed against teams representing the Armidale Tennis Association.

Initially the men established a Tennis Club and in September 1899 suggested that the associates set about 'to form a club of lady players'.⁴⁷ A meeting of the club in the following month elected the following office bearers: Mrs Massey (President), Mrs C.J. Mallam (Vice-president) and a committee including Mrs Vance, Mrs MacGeorge, Miss Knight Brown, Miss Barber, and Miss G. McNaught.⁴⁸

Bicycle Club

Cycling in Hillgrove received local and national publicity from the achievements of W. Davidson, who competed in Sydney and 'won the Winter Stakes of £15, half-mile, in the competition record time for Australasia'.⁴⁹ Davidson returned to Hillgrove and conducted a cycle agency in the town and inevitably, a bicycle club had been formed by August 1897.

Early in September 1897, the Hillgrove Bicycle Club conducted a 25 mile race on a Wednesday afternoon, between Club Captain Bennett and George Zenovitch, as well as several minor events. In July 1903, steps were taken 'by local cyclists to form a branch of the league of wheelmen...'⁵⁰ The sports committee of the Miners' Association added support to the new club by applying to the Council works committee for permission to allow the 'day-man to cart cinders for the Bicycle Track being formed on the Recreation Ground...'⁵¹

⁴⁷ op. cit., 30 September 1899, p. 2.

⁴⁸ op. cit., 7 October 1899, p. 2.

⁴⁹ **Armidale Express**, 25 August 1896, p. 5.

⁵⁰ **Hillgrove Guardian and New England Mining Gazette**, 18 July 1903, p. 2.

⁵¹ op. cit., 15 August 1903, p. 2.

At a meeting held on Sunday 3 December 1905, it was decided to hold races under electric light on the holiday Anniversary Day, 29 January. Prize money of £15 was allocated for competition, exclusive of trophies. 'The President (Mr R. Sharp), Messrs Irwin and Wigg (vice-presidents), G. Forster (treas) and Morrow (sec), were appointed a committee to get out programmes and attend to all preliminaries'.⁵² It was also decided to ask the Municipal Council to give the club control of the track to improve safety, due to the number of learners using the track during training.

On Wednesday 22 December 1905, Mr J.T. Pinto promoted the 'first of a series of Electric Light Bicycle meetings'⁵³ on the recreation ground. Described as a 'fairly successful' meeting, the correspondent suggested 'to the promoter the desirability of increasing the lighting power on the grounds and of reducing the admission fee to 6d.'⁵⁴

Members of the club obviously shared the same concern because a meeting was called 'to consider the advisability of holding the club's races on the afternoon of the 29 inst. instead of under the electric light'.⁵⁵ The meeting agreed to hold the meeting in the afternoon and set the admission price at one shilling for adults and six pence for children.

Chaired by businessman President Val Irwin, details were given at the meeting held on Monday evening 16 July 1906, of money raised by two quadrilles for the club. Discussion took place concerning the best means for putting the bike track at the recreation ground in order.

On the suggestion of Mr Helyar it was decided to forego any further work on the track until such time as the club had sufficient funds in hand to call tenders and have it properly banked.⁵⁶

Three months later, the club had greatly improved the track at the ground, as a result of 'the gratuitous assistance rendered by the club secretary, Mr. H. Haydon.'⁵⁷ Consequently, the proud announcement was

⁵² op. cit., 9 December 1905, p. 2.

⁵³ op. cit., 23 December 1905, p. 2.

⁵⁴ *ibid.*

⁵⁵ op. cit., 13 January 1906, p. 2.

⁵⁶ op. cit., 21 July 1906, p. 2.

⁵⁷ op. cit., 27 October 1906, p. 2

made; 'Hillgrove now has the best cycling track in New England and should be able to get up some good meetings'.⁵⁸

On New Years Day 1907, the club conducted the following programme: 'Opening Handicap £10; Wheel races £30; Invitation Scratch Race; and minor events also a footrace £5'.⁵⁹ Similarly, in 1910 the club, under the President W.L. Smith, conducted races at the Easter Monday Carnival. The club was 'granted use of the recreation ground at the usual fee of £2, for repairs to the track'.⁶⁰

The Hillgrove Gymnasium

A Hillgrove Gymnasium Club was formed and this led to the opening of a gymnasium in June 1893. The building was designed by Mr A.W. Goyder and built by Mr Moffatt, a local contractor. It was substantial: seventy two feet long, thirty feet wide, and the walls were thirty one feet high, with galvanised iron walls and roof, and rusticated kauri timber at the front. A large supper room and kitchen completed the structure. The opening was preceeded by an afternoon football match.

After Mrs. G. Smith had formally declared the building opened for the use of the Hillgrove Gymnasium Club, and Mr. Smith had addressed the meeting, several members of the Armidale Gymnasium Club, viz., Messrs. Braund, Vyner, and Asser, gave some clever exhibitions with dumbbells, wands, &, which were well received.⁶¹

The evening concluded with a dance that continued until 2.30 a.m. The work of the club would have been complimented by the gymnasium provided at the Public School for both boys and girls.

Golf

A most unusual occurrence was the formation of a golf club in Hillgrove because such sporting clubs were not typical of mining towns. The relative proximity to Armidale could be one explanation because the Armidale

58 *ibid.*

59 *Armidale Chronicle*, 16 October 1907, p. 4.

60 *op. cit.*, 26 March 1910, p. 5.

61 *Armidale Express*, 27 June 1893, p. 5.

Golf Club was formally constituted in 1899, and there was constant interaction between the sportsmen and businessmen of the two towns.

In July 1906, moves were made by the highly respected Dr Costello and Messrs Patterson and Curtis, to form a club. The newspaper commented, 'Golf is an enjoyable and popular game, and should "catch" on here'.⁶² Despite the enthusiasm, it was not until February 1909, that links were constructed and in August 1910 a meeting took place in Mr Thos Snow's office to form a club.⁶³ Those present included; Messrs Hayes (Chair), Teague, Curtis, Snow, Blackwell, Longbottom and Browne. Mr Thos Snow was elected President and Mr C.A. Browne took the combined position of Secretary and Treasurer. The meeting decided to affiliate with the N.S.W. Amateur Golf Association, and to adopt the constitution which stated that a management council would comprise a President, Secretary, Treasurer and three committee-men. An annual subscription for gentlemen was £1 1s, and for ladies 10s 6d, payable in two amounts, half-yearly. The council controlled membership and visiting rights, and all candidates for membership were to be proposed and seconded at a meeting of the council. With approval of the council, members could introduce a friend or friends (from outside the Hillgrove district) to the privileges of the club for a period of one month.⁶⁴

The course was situated east of the township near a suburb known as 'The Springs' stretching towards the gorge.⁶⁵ The President's trophy was held early in November of that year, and 'Mr A.T. Teague was the winner with 18 holes for 87... There were eight competitors'.⁶⁶

⁶² **Hillgrove Guardian and New England Mining Gazette**, 28 July 1906, p. 2.

⁶³ **Armidale Chronicle**, 13 August 1910, p. 3.

⁶⁴ The Hillgrove Golf Club...Rules, The New England Historical Resources Centre, C.B. Newling Centre, University of New England.

⁶⁵ **Draw Back the Curtains of the Years**, Reminiscences of Miss M. Auchinleck-Ross, Undated. The New England Historical Centre, C.B. Newling Centre, University of New England.

⁶⁶ **Armidale Chronicle**, 12 November 1910, p. 3.

CHAPTER 14

THE PUBLIC SCHOOL

The Public Instruction Act of 1880 passed by Sir Henry Parkes' Government set the framework for education in New South Wales. By this Act, the state assumed complete responsibility for primary education and accepted some responsibility for secondary education. The Act promised to provide 'the best primary education to all children without sectarian or class distinction'.¹ As a community, Hillgrove residents were determined to take advantage of the provision of Public Education for their children. A number of public meetings and petitions demonstrated this determination to gain government services.

Four Hillgrove residents, J.D. Scouler, Mining Manager and Engineer; John Stephenson, Amalgamator and Engine Driver; Joseph Lynch and Edward Clark, Miners, signed an application, dated 16 February 1885, for the establishment of a Provisional School.² At the time, a Provisional School could be established with a minimum of twelve students. The supporting petition was signed by eleven parents on behalf of thirteen boys and sixteen girls; seventeen Church of England and twelve Roman Catholic children. The nearest state school was at Chandler, some fifteen miles to the east of the town. 'After 1882, there were provisions for the Department to provide all or part of the cost of buildings'³, but in order to ensure a school the Hillgrove parents offered 'a floored house 28 feet long, 14 feet wide with slab sides- (a building) valued at £50'.⁴

The Armidale Inspector of Schools, John Dallison Bradley was asked to investigate the circumstances of the petition. He decided 'there are sufficient children in the neighbourhood to support a Provisional school; and should the yield from the Reefs prove as good as there is reason to believe it will be, a

¹ Burnswoods, J. and Fletcher, J., **Sydney and the Bush. A Pictorial History of Education In New South Wales.** Sydney, 1983, p. 98.

² Application for the Establishment of a Provisional School at Hillgrove. Hillgrove 16 February 1885. **Hillgrove School File 1885-1894, A.O. 5/16272.3**

³ Fletcher, J. and Burnswoods, J., **Government Schools of New South Wales 1848-1983,** Sydney, 1983 (second edition), p. 17.

⁴ Application for the Establishment of a Provisional School at Hillgrove, Hillgrove 16 February 1885. **Hillgrove School File 1885-1894, A.O. 5/16272.3.**

Public school will, ere long, be established'.⁵ Bradley did not believe that the building referred to in the application was central or suitable but selected a site and arranged with two competent persons namely, Messrs J.V. Scouler and John Campbell to organise the erection of the necessary buildings.

The Chief Inspector in Sydney recommended a grant of £60 be 'made on condition that, buildings and furniture'⁶ are provided according to the regulations for Provisional Schools. The Hillgrove Provisional School commenced in July 1885 and became a Public School at the commencement of the 1888 school year. Susie Harnett applied for travelling expenses in August 1885 to take up teaching duties at the school. Her application outlined the necessary travel arrangements required to reach Hillgrove at the time: steamer from Sydney to Newcastle, rail to Armidale and coach to Hillgrove.

During a visit to Hillgrove in May 1888, the Secretary for Mines was handed a petition concerning the needs of the town. Part of that petition stated, 'the present (school) building is totally inadequate for the requirements of the township. A much larger building is needed for the school and also quarters for the teacher'.⁷ This extract concerning the school was forwarded to the Under Secretary, Department of Public Instruction, who was asked to address any communication to the Hillgrove Mine Manager, J.D. Scouler. Aware of the need for the provision of government services in the rapidly growing town, the Department took prompt action to call tenders and Armidale contractors, Harper Bros' tender for £290 was accepted on 14 June 1888.

The school-house was completed by Saturday 15 September. Since 'the old school-building has to be incorporated with the residence now in progress', Inspector Bradley took over the new building 'from the contractors and authorized the teacher to occupy the new premises in order that school work might not be stopped'.⁸ At that stage, the teacher's residence was almost ready for roofing and part of the surrounding fence had been erected.

5 Memorandum to Chief Inspector from J.D. Bradley, Wollomombi 20 March 1885. Hillgrove: Report upon Application for the Establishment of a Provisional School. **Hillgrove School File 1885-1894**, A.O. 5/16272.3.

6 *ibid.*

7 Extract from petition for erection of new building, Hillgrove 14 April 1888. **Hillgrove School File 1885-1894**, A.O. 5/16272.3.

8 Memorandum to Chief Inspector. Hillgrove: Report on buildings in progress and recommending payment on account of work done from J.D. Bradley,

In November 1888, Principal Henry Tonkin reported there were 'one hundred children on the roll' but 'I have only ten forms, which are insufficient, both for comfort and getting fair work from the children'.⁹ The stand taken by Tonkin was supported by the correspondent in the **Armidale Express** who commented 'our new school is scarcely large enough at present as far as accommodation is concerned, and there is a deficiency in furniture, notably seats.'¹⁰ Tonkin also urged the appointment of a Pupil Teacher because 'there are sixty children in the First Class, and I find it very difficult to keep them employed, as they ought to be'.¹¹ It was expected that the school residence would shortly be completed, although the fencing would not be completed for some time.

In May of the following year, Inspector Bradley requested urgent action on proposed additions, because the 'building recently erected has proved altogether inadequate (and) the enrolment of pupils is now about 150'.¹² The present school building only accommodated about sixty pupils so overcrowding had reached a critical stage.

To save time, Bradley forwarded the two tenders received with his report: J.F. O'Connor for £166 and Harper Bros. for £250. He recommended that O'Connor's tender be rejected because of the non-payment of the deposit and he also expressed concern about the realistic nature of the quote. He recommended that an architect investigate the costing of the tenders. After examination, the Architect for Public Schools, considered that the 'Harper Brothers' offer is a very reasonable one, and that O'Connor could not possibly do the work at his price without serious loss'.¹³ Consequently the tender of Harper Bros. was accepted.

District Inspector, Armidale 17 September 1888. **Hillgrove School File 1885-1894**, A.O. 5/16272.3.

⁹ Memorandum To J.D. Bradley, District Inspector, Armidale from Henry Tonkin, Hillgrove 7 November 1888. **Hillgrove School File 1885-1894**, A.O. 5/16272.3.

¹⁰ **Armidale Express**, 9 November 1888, p. 8.

¹¹ Memorandum To J.D. Bradley, District Inspector, Armidale from Henry Tonkin, Hillgrove 7 November 1888. **Hillgrove School File 1885-1894**, A.O. 5/16272.3.

¹² Memorandum to Chief Inspector. Hillgrove: Forwarding Plans, Specifications and Tenders for proposed additions and improvements, Armidale 28 May 1889. **Hillgrove School File 1885-1894**, A.O. 5/16272.3.

¹³ Report to The Under-Secretary, 7 June 1889. **Hillgrove School File 1885-1894**, A.O. 5/16272.3.

The threat of disease to the township was a constant concern to medical authorities in Hillgrove. Dr H.P. Crichtett Gorrick, Government Medical Officer in the town, sent a detailed telegram to the Medical Adviser to the Government, Sydney on 17 September 1889. He expressed concern about the cess-pit systems under construction at the school and the contaminated water supply in the town. He advised the replacement of the cess-pit system by earth-closets after a case of typhoid had been detected. He found 'the water supply is contaminated by refuse from slaughter also dead carcasses'.¹⁴

Two days later, School Principal Tonkin investigated the circumstances and found that there were 'three cases of Typhoid, all adults'.¹⁵ Hillgrove Doctors Gibbons and Stevenson informed Mr Tonkin there was no epidemic, but because of the scare in the community, the School Principal reported 'nearly three-fourths of the school have not attended school'.¹⁶ Consequently, he closed the school on 19 September according to departmental instructions and used disinfectant to clean the school-room and outbuildings. The school was not reopened until 5 October. The constant fear of epidemics was of major concern to many communities at the time and Hillgrove was no exception. Four years later in October 1893, an epidemic of measles broke out in the town and 'Miss McCann, assistant teacher, and one hundred and twelve children' contracted the disease.¹⁷

Despite the report from Dr Crichtett Gorrick, Bradley was not prepared to recommend a change of septic system because of the expense involved and the impracticality of the suggestion. Bradley believed the outbreak of disease in Hillgrove was:

the result mainly of the impure water-supply- the bulk of the residents being dependent on a creek into which drain the impurities from two slaughter houses. The school (water) supply is obtained from galvanized iron tanks fed from a clean roof, and is perfectly pure and wholesome. In no way can the

¹⁴ Telegram from Hillgrove to the Medical Adviser to the Government, Sydney. H.P. Crichtett Gorrick M.D. Govt. Medical Officer. **Hillgrove School File 1885-1894**, A.O. 5/16272.3.

¹⁵ Letter from Henry Tonkin to the Minister of Public Instruction, Regarding Outbreak of Typhoid Fever and Diptheria at Hillgrove, Hillgrove 19 September 1889. **Hillgrove School File 1885-1894**, A.O. 5/16272.3.

¹⁶ *ibid.*

¹⁷ Letter from Henry Tonkin to J.D. Bradley. Outbreak of Measles among Pupils, Hillgrove 13 October 1893. **Hillgrove School File 1885-1894**, A.O. 5/16272.3.

school appointments be held responsible for disease at Hillgrove...¹⁸

The school authorities in Sydney supported the stand taken by Bradley and were not prepared to alter the school sanitation system. In October 1889, he reported the 'full and satisfactory completion'¹⁹ of the additions and improvements by Harper Bros and recommended payment of £250.

In December 1889, the enrolment at the school totalled 250. With the start of the new school year enrolments increased, and in May 1890 Inspector Bradley again expressed concern about the accommodation situation at the school. Enrolments had now reached 300, with an average attendance of 230. The present building only accommodated between 140 to 150, and one of the classes occupied 'the weather-shed- an open unfloored structure, altogether unsuited for teaching purposes'.²⁰ Bradley recommended the urgent construction of additional accommodation for ninety or 100 pupils in a separate room.

Sir Henry Parkes, Premier of New South Wales, visited the Hillgrove School on 12 March 1890 and 'performed the interesting ceremony of planting a tree in the school ground, to perpetuate the record of his visit to Hillgrove'.²¹ Unfortunately the tree died, but action was later taken by a committee to replace the tree with a flagstaff in the school grounds. The ceremony was held in May 1901 and Mrs Tonkin was asked 'to unfurl the flag on this momentous day, owing to the past valuable services rendered to the Public school by Mr and Mrs Tonkin'.²²

¹⁸ Letter to the Chief Inspector from J.D. Bradley, District Inspector, Armidale 20 September 1889. **Hillgrove School File 1885-1894**, A.O. 5/16272.3.

¹⁹ Memorandum to Chief Inspector from J.D. Bradley, District Inspector. Hillgrove: Reporting completion of Additions by Messrs Harper Bros. and recommending payment, Wollomombi 24 October 1889. **Hillgrove School File 1885-1894**, A.O. 5/16272.3.

²⁰ Memorandum from District Inspector, J.D. Bradley to the Chief Inspector, Department of Public Instruction, Wollomombi 3 May 1890. **Hillgrove School File 1885-1894**, A.O. 5/16272.3.

²¹ 'Sir Henry Parkes at Hillgrove', **Armidale Chronicle**, 12 March 1890 Reproduced in Tonkin, Henry, **Papers**, c1895-1937, Mitchell Library Sydney, FM 4/7446, Folio 16.

²² **Hillgrove Guardian and New England Mining Gazette**, 18 May 1901, p. 4.

Aware of the need to provide a pleasant environment in the school grounds, Tonkin applied to the Department for a grant in September 1890. He applied,

on the basis of £1 for £1 expended... on the Public School Gardens at Hillgrove, to enable us to purchase manure, gardening tools, shrubs, and some of the better class of flowering plants'.²³

In his letter, he stated he had spent about eight pounds in manure, seeds and tools since establishing the gardens in February 1889. He also had a quarter of an acre of the residence allotment under cultivation apart from the school grounds. In July 1889 he received a grant of fifty trees from the Sydney Botanical Gardens, of which forty were now in a healthy condition and more than a 1,000 plants of *Acacia Decurrens* and *Acacia Pyenantha* were in the Wattle Nursery almost ready to be transplanted. He proposed to hold a,

Flower Show and Exhibition of School Work... to raise funds for the purchase of prizes for the school gardeners, a bookcase and additional books for the School Library, and a more suitable case for the Museum.²⁴

Bradley took 'much pleasure in recommending a grant of £8' because of Tonkin's devotion to 'the improvement of his school and surrounds'.²⁵ The Sydney Departmental Officers would not accept Bradley's recommendation and approved 'payment of an amount equal to that represented by the receipts submitted (less 11/6 expended in 1889) and decided 'that the grant can be paid only from subscriptions raised this year'²⁶ for endowment purposes. The final payment approved was £4. 10. 6.

The quality of the work undertaken by Tonkin was highlighted in the Report by the Minister of Public Instruction in 1890.

A case where the teacher deserves "honorable mention" for making his school remarkably attractive and useful, the Hillgrove Public School, is fully described by District Inspector

²³ Letter from Tonkin to the Chief Inspector. Application for a grant in aid of school gardens, Hillgrove 29 September 1890. **Hillgrove School File 1885-1894**, A.O. 5/16272.3.

²⁴ *ibid.*

²⁵ Comment on letter from Tonkin to the Chief Inspector. Application for a grant in aid of school gardens, 8 October 1890. **Hillgrove School File 1885-1894**, A.O. 5/16272.3.

²⁶ Comment on letter from Tonkin to the Chief Inspector. Application for a grant in aid of school gardens, 18 October 1890. **Hillgrove School File 1885-1894**, A.O. 5/16272.3.

Bradley. Mr. Bradley's report is well worthy of perusal. Several instances of highly meritorious work by teachers in improving school-grounds have come under my own observation- notably South Goulburn, Blayney, and Elsmore, though none approaches Hillgrove in all-round excellence.²⁷

In 1891, Tonkin was asked to explain why a Savings Bank had not been commenced in the school. In his reply to the Under-Secretary of the Department of Public Instruction, he stated Inspector Bradley had advised him to defer the establishment of the Bank because I had 'as much as I could very well manage to do'.²⁸ In his letter of reply, he outlined the achievements of the school: the establishment of a garden covering nearly 3/4 acre; the planting of fifty trees without public assistance; the creation of a circulating library of 250 volumes; the establishment of a museum with £30 worth of minerals; five hives of bees; the distribution of thousands of wattle, strawberry and flowering plants to residents and the local hospital. Finally, he announced he was now in a position to establish a Savings Bank. The application was approved and the Departmental officer in Sydney asked for the teacher to be assured 'that his energetic and useful efforts... are noted with approval'.²⁹

Support for the school was evident in the editorial from the **Hillgrove Guardian**, in September 1891 concerning court cases involving school attendance. Twenty defendants were each fined 10s 9d and the Editor commented:

Taken altogether it was a sorry exhibition and one that we hope will never again be repeated in Hillgrove; here we have a fine free state school, healthily situated, with a headmaster and staff of teachers second to none...³⁰

The Editor had 'no sympathy with the sufferers' because he felt the law was liberal and there was no excuse for parents' neglect in not observing the necessary attendance requirements.

²⁷ Report of the Minister of Public Instruction, 1890, New England Historical Resources Centre, C.B. Newling Centre, University of New England, p. 113.

²⁸ Letter to The Under-Secretary, Department of Public Instruction from Henry Tonkin, Hillgrove 18 June 1891. **Hillgrove School File 1885-1894**, A.O. 5/16272.3.

²⁹ Comment on letter to the Under-Secretary, Department of Public Instruction from Henry Tonkin, 23 June 1891. **Hillgrove School File 1885-1894**, A.O. 5/16272.3.

³⁰ **Hillgrove Guardian and New England Mining Gazette**, 5 September 1891 quoted in Tonkin, Henry, **Papers, c1895-1937**, Mitchell Library FM 4/7446, Folio 18.

In December 1892, Tonkin applied to the Department for a further grant in aid of the garden's funds. During the year the pupils had dug:

an area of three-quarters of an acre, mixed manure and rich soil with the garden soil, which is very poor; planted three hundred and thirty trees and shrubs, constructed a chain and a half of stone drains and planted four chains of privet and one chain of hawthorn hedging.³¹

Choice roses, flowering plants, and grass seeds had also been purchased and funds were being raised to complete an additional Museum and Herbarium which measured eight feet by seven feet. In August 1893 the school grounds were extended even further, when an area of five and a half acres was reserved from sale for Public School purposes.

Tonkin applied in March 1894 for additional teaching assistance because his room was 'detached from the other rooms' and he was 'not at liberty to attend to the other classes'. His supporting statement indicated the average attendance was:

now 212.6 and the distribution of the staff and enrolment in each class was:

	No.	Teacher
4th. Class	16	Mr. Tonkin Prin.
3rd. Class	74	
2nd. Class	97	Miss McKenzie Asst.
1st. Class	122	Miss McCann Asst. and Miss Mills P.T. ³²

School Principal Tonkin took an active role in many community organisations and believed that the community should make use of the facilities provided by the school. Eighteen residents of Hillgrove, including Henry Tonkin petitioned the Minister of Public Instruction in July 1895 'to permit the members of the Hillgrove Choral Union to meet for practice in one of the Public School rooms, there being no other suitable room'.³³ Inspector

³¹ Letter to the Chief Inspector, Department of Public Instruction from Henry Tonkin, Hillgrove 22 December 1892. **Hillgrove School File 1885-1894, A.O. 5/16272.3.**

³² Letter to the District Inspector, J.D. Bradley from Henry Tonkin, Hillgrove 28 March 1894. **Hillgrove School File 1885-1894, A.O. 5/16272.3.**

³³ Petition to the Minister of Public Instruction, Hillgrove July 1895. **Hillgrove School File 1895-1919, A.O. 5/16273.**

Bradley gave his support, by noting the 'objects of the Society are praiseworthy'³⁴ and recommended the use of one room provided the committee became responsible for any damage and the Department held the right to withdraw permission at any time. Another Departmental official commented 'I do not concur, the rule of the Department is not to grant the use of Public Schools for such purposes'.³⁵ Not to be deterred, Bradley reminded the Department that 'permission was granted to the Armidale Philharmonic Society to use a school room for weekly practice'. He felt the circumstances were identical and that 'the present applicants will feel that an invidious distinction has been made if this request be refused'.³⁶ Despite the plea for reconsideration, permission was refused.

In September 1896, Bradley announced that plans and specifications were being prepared for the construction of a brick building to accommodate the additional enrolments. The report continued:

This will make the third time the Hillgrove Public School has been added to... A portion of the old building will be retained as an infant department, and the additions have not been proceeded with before they were absolutely necessary.³⁷

The tender was awarded to W. Hern for £919 for the construction of the new school buildings in December 1896.

Apart from the construction of such buildings, the Department of Public Instruction also set about increasing the amount of school land. They made a number of approaches to the Department of Lands to have 'the permanent dedication of part of temporary school reserve at Hillgrove as an addition to the Public School Site'.³⁸ Similarly there were repeated applications:

by residents to have the school reserve fenced in. These were presented by Mr Inglis, M.P. twice, Mr Lonsdale M.P. twice and Mr Copeland M.P. but the Minister consistently declined to grant

³⁴ Comment on petition to the Minister of Public Instruction, Sydney 20 July 1895. **Hillgrove School File 1895-1919**, A.O. 5/16273.

³⁵ Comment on petition to the Minister of Public Instruction, Sydney 29 July 1895. **Hillgrove School File 1895-1919**, A.O. 5/16273.

³⁶ Comment on petition to the Minister of Public Instruction, Sydney 2 August 1895. **Hillgrove School File 1895-1919**, A.O. 5/16273.

³⁷ **Armidale Express**, 4 September 1896, p. 4.

³⁸ Memorandum, Question of adding part of School Reserve to school site, 10 May 1897. **Hillgrove School File 1895-1919**, A.O. 5/16273.

these requests while the land is only temporarily... vested in this Department for school purposes'.³⁹

As a result of further representations in May 1897, the Secretary for Lands 'approved of an area of 1 1/2 acres adjoining the South boundary of the present site, being dedicated as an addition thereto'.⁴⁰

Thirty teachers and members of the School Board met at the Armidale Superior Public School in January 1897 to form a Public Schools' Athletic Association. Inspector Bradley became President while Mr Steinbeck of Metz School and Mr Tonkin of Hillgrove became committee members. In May 1897, teachers took further steps to form a Public Schools' Football Association and initially 'Armidale, Saumarez, Hillgrove, Metz and Kelly's Plains' decided to join'.⁴¹

Tonkin applied for permission in the same month 'to use one of the old Schoolrooms, on the completion of the new building, as a Gymnasium and Lantern Lecture Room'.⁴² He informed the Department that he had already obtained gymnastic apparatus including horizontal and parallel bars, trapezes, rings, Indian clubs, dumb bells to the value of £12, as well as an optical lantern and slides at a personal cost of £30. His intention was to use the room in the day time to illustrate geography, chemistry and object lessons. Provided that the building was only used by scholars with no charges imposed, permission was granted.

This building was used until January 1904 when Tonkin requested permission 'to erect a gymnasium on the school play-ground'.⁴³ He had been offered a hardwood building fifty by twenty five feet and fourteen high which was formerly used as a steam sawmill shed. Two managers of the principal mines also promised to provide carpenters to take down and re-erect the building.

³⁹ *ibid.*

⁴⁰ Letter from W. Houston, Under Secretary for Lands to the Department of Public Instruction, 16 July 1897. **Hillgrove School File 1895-1919, A.O. 5/16273.**

⁴¹ **Armidale Express**, 18 May 1897, p. 5.

⁴² Letter from Henry Tonkin to J.D. Bradley, District Inspector of Schools, Hillgrove 13 May 1897. **Hillgrove School File 1895-1919, A.O. 5/16273.**

⁴³ Letter from Henry Tonkin to the Under-Secretary, Department of Public Instruction, Sydney, Hillgrove 19 January 1904. **Hillgrove School File 1895-1919, A.O. 5/16273.**

Although the school already had a gymnasium, it was rather small and Inspector Bradley recommended that Tonkin's application be granted. The building was to be purchased with locally raised funds and the whole work was 'to be carried out without cost to the Department.'⁴⁴ In 1938, the Parents and Citizen's Association applied to sell the gymnasium to raise funds for the school. Initially the application was declined because the Department of Education believed the building to be their property. Tonkin intervened on the Association's behalf and J.G.McKenzie, the acting Chief Inspector wrote:

Your letter was of great value in establishing the right of the Parents and Citizen's Association to the proceeds of sale of the building and I must thank you for your courtesy in the matter and comment on the efficiency of the records system'.⁴⁵

In September 1897 the new Public School buildings completed by Armidale contractor W. Hern were opened. The building was of brick

78ft x 24ft with a classroom 25ft x 24ft divided off in the interior by a plate glass partition, thus securing the scholars from distractions whilst engaged in their general work and giving the Principal and his officers a complete view of what is going on.⁴⁶

Other facilities included a museum, boys and girls lavatories, a hat and cloak room, and Principal's office. The Infants now occupied the main building and their old rooms were converted into a recreation room and gymnasium.

The Museum became an important part of the school and its curriculum. By November 1896, it contained 'nearly 1000 specimens of minerals, vegetable products, colonial timbers...'⁴⁷ Seven years later, a **Town and Country Journal** correspondent visited the school and commented, 'The Museum contains a valuable collection of specimens of

44 *ibid.*

45 Tonkin, Henry, **Papers**, c1895-1937, Mitchell Library Sydney FM 4/7446, Folio 76.

46 **Hillgrove Guardian and New England Mining Gazette**, 21 August 1897, p. 3.

47 Letter to the Chief Inspector from Henry Tonkin, Hillgrove 9 November 1896. **Hillgrove School File 1895-1919**, A.O. 5/16273.

minerals, fossils, vegetable products, manufacturers etc., which are used to illustrate lessons'.⁴⁸

Physical drill was an essential part of the school curriculum. About 400 spectators attended the Annual Sports' Meeting of the Armidale Public School's Athletic Association at the Armidale showground in October 1899. Hillgrove Public School competed in its purple and gold colours against other schools from Guyra, Tamworth and Armidale districts. The **Armidale Express** wrote, 'the drill competitions created keen rivalry. Hillgrove defeated Armidale by 15 points, their aggregate being 488 out of a possible of 500'.⁴⁹ In the period from 1899 to 1903, the school held the physical drill shield of the Armidale district.⁵⁰ By September 1898, three and a half acres of the school grounds had been fenced by palings and separated into two playgrounds. A cricket pitch and a giant's stride were built in the boy's playground and a tennis court was constructed for the girls.

The Hillgrove School formed a swimming club and in March 1899 the first aquatic sports were held in the Garibaldi Dam when it was noted, 'although the club was only recently started great proficiency was shown by the swimmers'.⁵¹ Mr Tonkin also introduced life saving to the school, and in 1908 George H. Williams, Secretary of the Royal Life Saving Society of New South Wales, visited the northern part of the state including Hillgrove school. During his visit, he interviewed Robert Sharp the Mayor, and Mr Tonkin. The newspaper correspondent who reported the visit commented:

The Royal Life Saving Society's drills have been taught for some years, but the want of a suitable bathing place has retarded the work. The Mayor promised to arrange for the residents being granted the use of the Eleanora Gold Mining Company's dam. ⁵²

Despite improvements to the school buildings, the question of adequate housing for Mr Tonkin and his family had not been resolved. In December 1894, the tender of George Buckley, for £88 had been accepted for

48 **Town and Country Journal**, 10 June 1903, reproduced in Tonkin, Henry, **Papers**, c1895-1937, Mitchell Library Sydney, FM 4/7446, Folio 6.

49 **Armidale Express**, 17 October 1899, p. 4.

50 **Town and Country Journal**, 10 June 1903, reproduced in Tonkin, Henry, **Papers**, c1895-1937, Mitchell Library Sydney, FM 4/7446, Folio 6.

51 **Armidale Express**, 4 April 1899. p. 4.

52 Tonkin, Henry, **Papers** c1895-1897, Mitchell Library Sydney, FM 4/7446, Folio 103.

improvements by the construction of a kitchen⁵³ at the school residence. This work was completed in May 1895. On 4 October 1898, Tonkin applied for the enlargement of the school residence, which was 'insufficient for the needs of... (my) family'.⁵⁴ The present wooden residence contained four rooms with a detached kitchen, and had one small bedroom to accommodate Tonkin's son and daughter, as well as a pupil teacher and a servant. Bradley again supported the application but described the residence as being of 'an inferior description'.⁵⁵ The reference to 'inferior' meant that the Departmental authorities in Sydney considered demolition of the residence. In his reply to this consideration, Bradley stated 'it is in good condition throughout, having but recently been renovated, and it is "inferior" only as regards the extent of the accommodation it affords!'⁵⁶ He pointed out that the building occupied the only site available and it would be extremely difficult to locate accommodation in Hillgrove for the teacher and his family. Finally he suggested the addition of two good rooms and a bathroom, and added that a new weather-shed for the school should be provided as the present one was unserviceable.

The Hillgrove Progress Committee gave its support to the application for the much needed additions to the teacher's residence, as did the local member of Parliament, who contacted the Minister for Education on the subject. The Department finally approved the additions recommended by the District Inspector in his report of 12 October 1898.

Twelve months later, the Progress Committee again recommended action to gain additions and alterations to the residence of the school Principal. In December 1899, the Secretary of the Progress Committee, Mr D.W. Dickson, was informed that permission had been given for the addition of two rooms and a bath room to the teacher's residence. Later, departmental officers asked the architect to examine the proposed work and he:

amended it in several places in order to reduce the cost- as some of the work appears a little extravagant:-

⁵³ op. cit., 18 December 1894, p. 4.

⁵⁴ Letter to the District Inspector, J.D. Bradley from Henry Tonkin, Hillgrove 4 October 1898. **Hillgrove School File 1895-1919**, A.O. 5/16273.

⁵⁵ Comment on letter to the District Inspector, J.D. Bradley from Henry Tonkin. **Hillgrove School File 1895-1919**, A.O. 5/16273.

⁵⁶ Memorandum to Chief Inspector from J.D. Bradley. Proposed additions to residence, Hillgrove 15 November 1898. **Hillgrove School File 1895-1919**, A.O. 5/16273.

- (1) The matter of the Retaining wall might be left to some future time.
- (2) The enclosing of the verandah of Residence hardly appears necessary.
- (3) It is not clear, why the present old shed should be removed and re-erected for the Teacher's use, and a new shed erected in its place.⁵⁷

Tenders for additions to the Teacher's residence, erection of the weather-shed and general repairs to the school were called by the Department of Public Instruction in July 1900. The tender was awarded to Hillgrove builder W. Morris, but early in January 1901 slow progress was being made because it was difficult to obtain carpenters. Prior to the calling of the above tenders, Inglis and Robinson, proprietors of the Sandon County Electric Light and Power Works, supplier of electricity to the town, wrote to the Hon. J. Perry M.L.A., Minister for Education, offering to place 'electric light in the Public School and Teacher's residence',⁵⁸ but the offer was declined.

Early in the 1900's, reforms were undertaken to ensure that New Education ideas were introduced into the New South Wales school curriculum. An important aspect of this movement was to make education more practical and the New Syllabus replaced drawing with art. Thus, Art class rooms were provided in some schools and in May 1904, a ceremony was held to open an Art Room at Hillgrove. Dr Hardcastle performed the duty and:

in a brief and lucid speech explained the object of the Art Room... one hour and a half per week was to be devoted to study in the Art Room, modelling, brush-work, and free arm drawing being the subjects dealt with.⁵⁹

Six petitioners applied to the Minister of Public Instruction for the establishment of an Evening Public School at Hillgrove in November 1905. Nineteen males, ranging in age from 15 to 30 indicated their intention to attend the school. Armidale Senior Inspector W.G. Thomas supported their application, since many of the intending students were labourers 'attending Technical classes in connection with assaying etc, and are finding their

⁵⁷ Letter from Architect to Mr Clerk of Works, 7 March 1900. **Hillgrove School File 1895-1919**, A.O. 5/16273.

⁵⁸ Letter to the Hon. J. Perry M.L.A. Minister for Education, Sydney 1 June 1900. **Hillgrove School File 1895-1919**, A.O. 5/16273.

⁵⁹ **Hillgrove Guardian and New England Mining Gazette**, 14 May 1904, p. 2.

weakness in Arithmetic a bar to their progress'.⁶⁰ Assistant Teacher Mr G. Chapman offered his services as a teacher to the class, to be conducted in the local Public School 'which is in every way suitable, and fully equipped'.⁶¹ Although approved and established at the school, the night school did not survive for long in the town. In September, an appeal was made to residents to support this service because it was felt:

a night school is almost a necessity to give intending technical students, who have not had advantages in earlier years, some preparation for these classes. We understand that if this night school closes the Department will be slow to sanction the opening of another at any future time. The people of Hillgrove have another fortnight to decide whether this institution... will be allowed to lapse.⁶²

Despite the appeal, and the fact that an average of only ten pupils was required, the night school was allowed to lapse; a not uncommon feature of many similar communities of the time.

Twelve months earlier, Gerald Shaw the former Principal of Rutherglen High School and Mathematics Master at Launceston Scotch College, announced his intention to open a private school with day and evening classes after the Christmas holiday; 'where Men and Boys can receive a Sound Commercial Education at Moderate Fees. Subjects include BOOK KEEPING and SHORTHAND'.⁶³ He offered private tuition and also announced that a new building would be constructed for the school. This project did not eventuate and it appears that Shaw only offered classes for a short time.

The respect for the teaching of Mr Tonkin was evident in the **Armidale Argus** report on the exhibition of handcrafts by the Public Schools of the Armidale district held in December 1905.

Mr. Tonkin... is an enthusiast in his profession... There is something in this teacher's methods that must call for special comment. He is in love with his work and the pride of his attainments is justifiable. Mr. Tonkin... has for the pupils a reading room, an art gallery, a lantern show, astronomical

60 Summary Report on Application for the establishment of an Evening Public School, 26 November 1905. **Hillgrove School File 1895-1919, A.O. 5/16273.**

61 *ibid.*

62 **Hillgrove Guardian and New England Mining Gazette**, 15 September 1906, p. 2.

63 *op. cit.*, 30 September 1905, p. 3.

apparatus, geological researches and many other excellent encouragements to the pursuit of rich knowledge.⁶⁴

Early in January 1910, it was announced that Henry Tonkin was to be transferred to Cronulla. A public meeting was convened by the Mayor, Robert Sharp, to decide the best means of recognising the public services of Mr Tonkin and his wife. It was decided to organise a social so that an illuminated address could be presented to Mr Tonkin and residents could meet the replacement teacher, Mr Harvey of Ballina. A valedictory social was also held by the Methodists for the Tonkin family. Two hundred residents attended the public social, and in acknowledging the contribution that Mr Tonkin had made to the Hillgrove community, the Mayor said:

Mr Tonkin had done more for Hillgrove than any other man that ever came to it. He had been instrumental in getting a technical school in Hillgrove, and had been one of the principal workers in the School of Arts... Mr. Tonkin had... worked the school up from a small one to the position it held at the present time, and he could say that at the present the Hillgrove School was recognised as one of the best outside the Sydney district. It was fully equipped with all requisites, and the public were proud of it.⁶⁵

In April 1911, Dr Martell, Government Medical Officer sent a telegram to the Acting School Inspector, James Massey at Armidale. It stated: 'Several cases diptheria would strongly urge closing public school at once till after easter'.⁶⁶ Massey was absent at Elderbury when the telegram was sent, but following contact with the teacher at Hillgrove, Massey claimed by letter that 'there is not sufficient need for the immediate closing of the school'.⁶⁷ On 10 April 1911, a Dr W. Harradine sent further telegrams to Massey and to H. McClelland, Inspector of Schools, Sydney, from Hillgrove. Telegrams which stated: 'Three cases diptheria eight suspicious every precaution being taken'.⁶⁸ Massey changed his mind and also strongly urged the closing of the school. Consequently the school was closed from 11 April 1911 until after Easter.

⁶⁴ **Armidale Argus**, 2 December 1905 reproduced in Tonkin, Henry, **Papers, c1895-1937**, Mitchell Library Sydney, FM 4/7446, Folio 96.

⁶⁵ **Armidale Chronicle**, 22 January 1910, p. 3.

⁶⁶ Telegram to Acting School Inspector James Massey, Hillgrove 3 April 1911. **Hillgrove School File 1895-1919**, A.O. 5/16273.

⁶⁷ Letter from James Massey to Chief Inspector, Armidale 10 April 1911. **Hillgrove School File 1895-1919**, A.O. 5/16273.

⁶⁸ Telegrams to James Massey and H. McClelland, Inspector of Schools, Sydney, Hillgrove 10 April 1911. **Hillgrove School File 1895-1919**, A.O. 5/16273.

The school children were strongly encouraged to participate in the community life of Hillgrove. This was demonstrated by their contribution to the raising of funds for local organisations, particularly the Hospital. Their role was particularly acknowledged in the Hospital's annual report of 1912. Despite the financial state of the town, the institution was 'greatly indebted to the school-children of Hillgrove and Metz...'⁶⁹ as well as to a number of other institutions in the town and district.

As the town declined, business people, miners and their families moved in search of work to other mining areas, and to surrounding towns. It was inevitable that the school would be affected. Enrolments at the school declined, but the school children still continued their contribution to the community efforts during the war. In April 1916, the children provided an entertainment in the School of Arts Hall in Hillgrove and 'the proceeds, which totalled over £6, were devoted to the Armidale Camp Comforts Fund'.⁷⁰

The Mayor of Hillgrove called a public meeting in March 1917 to discuss the plight of the school and the present state of the town. Parents representing about twelve children attended and the Anglican minister the Rev. Auchinleck-Ross moved:

That in view of the highly satisfactory management of the school for years past, and taking into consideration the fact that the population of Hillgrove has declined enormously of late, this meeting would respectfully suggest to the Minister that, the matter of forming a Parents and Citizens Association be left in abeyance until after the war.⁷¹

In February 1918, Principal Alexander James Souter applied for an additional assistant- preferably a male, for the school. At the time the school was staffed by Souter, one female classified assistant and one female junior assistant with less than a year's service. In reply, District Inspector McDowall asked Souter to supply details of the classes taught and their enrolment. The following information was forwarded in reply:

⁶⁹ **Armidale Express**, 24 January 1913, p. 10.

⁷⁰ **Armidale Chronicle**, 29 April 1916, p. 10.

⁷¹ op. cit., 7 March 1917, p. 6.

Class	Enrolment	Teacher
Via	19	A.J. Souter (84)
Vib	33	
V	32	
IV	13	Miss A. Wearmouth (37)
III	16	
II	8	
I	52	Miss V. Bruce (52)

At this date the enrolment was 171 and the average weekly attendance was 145.3.⁷²

The Department was prepared to appoint an additional female assistant after Easter and informed Souter, 'owing to the shortage of male teachers on account of enlistments for the war, a male assistant is entirely out of the question'.⁷³

Inspector J. McDowall of Armidale expressed concern at the calling of tenders for repairs and improvements to the wooden classrooms at Hillgrove in February 1918. Because the average attendance was only 160 and the attendance was decreasing, he felt the students could now be 'accommodated in the brick rooms'.⁷⁴ He also recommended that improvements and repairs to the wooden buildings be omitted from the specifications. Despite McDowall's concern that money on improvements would be spent, no tenders were received.

Two months later McDowall visited the school, and reported that 'improvements... would enhance the school, but most of them are not nearly as urgent as other matters in this district'.⁷⁵ During the last four or five years the attendance had decreased and the Inspector felt that the wooden building was no longer necessary. He admitted that the building required painting but recommended that general repairs to the school be deferred for the present: a recommendation that was accepted by the Department.

It was now obvious that the population in the town was rapidly declining and the Department considered the sale of some of its school

⁷² Report on enrolment and classes, Hillgrove 4 March 1918. Hillgrove School File 1895-1919, A.O. 5/16273.

⁷³ Comment on Application for Additional Assistant, Sydney 12 March 1918. Hillgrove School File 1895-1919, A.O. 5/16273.

⁷⁴ Letter from Inspector J. McDowall, Armidale 13 February 1918. Hillgrove School File 1895-1919, A.O. 5/16273.

⁷⁵ Comment on letter from Inspector J. McDowall, 9 April 1918. Hillgrove School File 1895-1919, A.O. 5/16273.

buildings. Armidale resident A.W. Woollett wrote to the Under Secretary in December 1919 asking 'would you kindly advise me the approximate date tenders will be called (re sale of Hillgrove School building) as I have plans ready for building, and if I am unsuccessful in purchasing the school, I want to order timber etc and build a new place...'⁷⁶ At the time, no decision had been made about tender dates but the rooms were removed from the school in May 1920. The removal meant 'a loss of 2 (32' x 18') plus 2 (25' x 26 1/4') a total area of 2452 square feet'.⁷⁷

The physical decline of the town was added to by the ongoing conflict amongst personalities in the town. A dispute arose between Headmaster Souter and townspeople Moses H. O'Connor and Robert Sharp in February 1920. Prior to this date, Souter had become Secretary of the Bush Nursing Association and the Friendly Society Lodge, as well as Mayor of Hillgrove. A position formerly held by long-time resident and Mining Manager, Robert Sharp. O'Connor complained to the Department of Public Instruction that a Public Servant should not hold the positions of paid Secretary to organisations.

Late in March 1920, Alexander Souter wrote to Inspector J. McDowall explaining his actions in the town. He became Secretary to the Oddfellows Lodge in June 1919 in an attempt to 'place their books and accounts on a solvent footing'.⁷⁸ He founded the Bush Nursing Association in 1918 because the hospital had closed in the previous year, and the town had no doctor. It did however, boast a 'well equipped hospital, trained nurse and well stocked dispensary'.⁷⁹ Souter became Secretary and Manager once the Association was formed.

Inspector McDowall visited Hillgrove to investigate fully the situation and found that there appeared to be two factions at work in the town. It was reported to him that Mr Sharp 'ran the town'. At the same time, he found that the dispute seemed to have some connection with the question of board for two

⁷⁶ Letter from A.W. Woollett to the Under-Secretary, Armidale 1 December 1919. **Hillgrove School File 1895-1919**, A.O. 5/16273.

⁷⁷ Letter from A.J. Souter Re Assessed Floor Space at Hillgrove for purposes of Cleaning, Hillgrove 20 May 1920. **Hillgrove School File 1919-1939**, A.O. 5/16274.1.

⁷⁸ Letter from A.J. Souter to J. McDowall, Inspector of Schools Armidale, Hillgrove 29 March 1920. **Hillgrove School File 1919-1939**, A.O. 5/16274.1.

⁷⁹ *ibid.*

female assistants at the nurses' quarters in the Hospital. He became aware of conflicting reports given by Mr Souter concerning the availability of accommodation. He wrote:

The whole matter of accommodation is a mixed one...(and) Mr Souter's part is dubious... Mr Souter does good work in his school but it is unfortunate that he should be involved in legal proceedings at both Deepwater and Hillgrove.⁸⁰

In the following month, the Chief Inspector J. Dawson informed Souter that the Public Service Board approved of his occupying the positions of Secretary of the Bush Nursing Association and the Oddfellows Lodge. Souter was reminded however that he should have obtained the Board's sanction before accepting such paid positions.⁸¹

The future of the Public School was demonstrated by the report from the Armidale District Inspector F.W. Mannell in October 1921.

The population of Hillgrove is decreasing, but there are nearly 100 enrolled at the P.S., and the local Convent School is, the principal informs me, to be closed at the end of the year, and this will help prolong the life of the public school as a two-teacher school for probably another year.⁸²

The school continued its existence but in June 1930 Inspector Cantello described Hillgrove as 'a fading township'.⁸³ At the time the enrolment was fifty two with one teacher, and seven years later an amount of £254 was approved for urgent action to be carried out on the dilapidated buildings of the school. Described as a Model School in Departmental records during the time of Henry Tonkin, it continued to provide public education for Hillgrove children until 1974 when it closed its doors for the last time. Today, the last surviving building serves as a rural museum.

⁸⁰ Report about conditions at Hillgrove by J.M. McDowall, 18 April 1920. **Hillgrove School File 1919-1939**, A.O. 5/16274.1.

⁸¹ Letter from J. Dawson, Chief Inspector, 10 May 1920. **Hillgrove School File 1919-1939**, A.O. 5/16274.1.

⁸² Letter from Armidale District Inspector, F.W. Mannell, Dorrigo 22 October 1921. **Hillgrove School File 1919-1939**, A.O. 5/16274.1.

⁸³ Memorandum from Armidale District Inspector, G.A. Cantello, Armidale 26 June 1930. **Hillgrove School File 1919-1939**, A.O. 5/16274.1.

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