

ADAMINABY NSW



Name: Adaminaby School of Arts and Memorial Hall

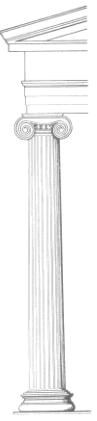
Address: Denison Street, Adaminaby, 2629

The Town:

Adaminaby is situated in the Snowy River Shire, about 160 kilometres south-west of Canberra and, at an elevation of 1,017 metres above sea level, is one of the highest towns in Australia. Prior to the arrival of European settlers in the 1830s, for thousands of years the Snowy Mountains region was an important meeting place for the Aborigines of the Adaminaby and surrounding districts who gathered in the summer in their many hundreds to feast on Bogong moths. The practice survived until around 1865. Adaminaby is an aboriginal word meaning 'I lie here'.

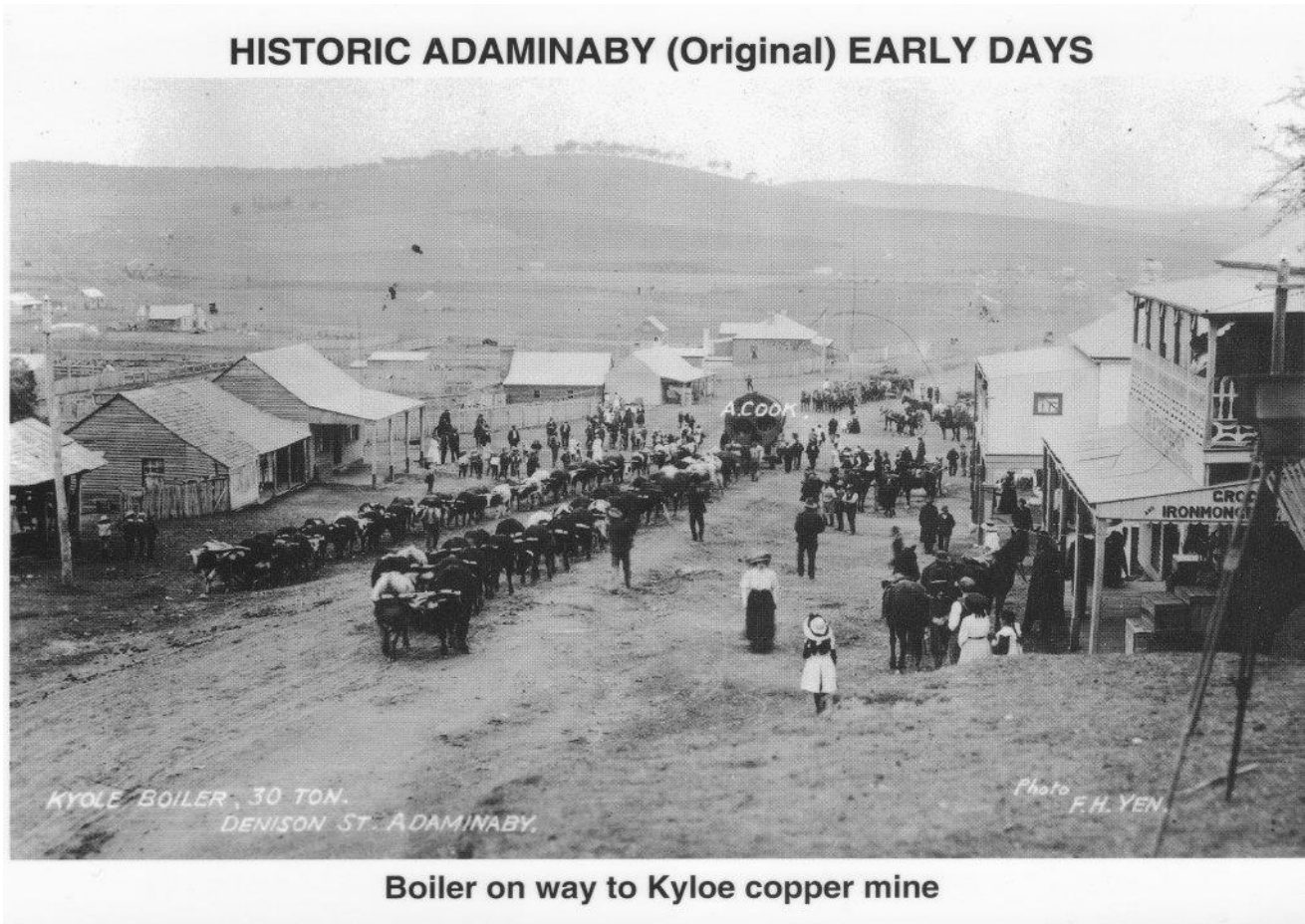
The goldrush at nearby Kiandra in 1860 brought 10,000 miners to the area and, as a result, Adaminaby (sometimes referred to as Seymour, the name of the Parish) developed as an agricultural centre with sheep and cattle as the settlement's economic mainstays. By the turn of the century with a brickworks, two butter factories, several dairies and a coppermine at nearby Kyloe, Adaminaby rivaled Cooma in size and was described in an article written for the *Town and Country Journal* in 1904 as having 'splendid plains of magnificent crops of oats, wheat and rye. Cattle and sheep fat, dairy farms prospering all round and animal life in abundance'.

The town continued to grow and prosper and when, in 1949, Prime Minister Ben Chifley announced the construction of the Snowy Mountains Hydro-Electric Scheme.....



“people were stunned by the news that their fertile flat ground with its lush, green pastoral country situated between the Eucumbene and Murrumbidgee Rivers, and divided into so many farms that not only bred the best sheep and cattle but also employed so many people from the town, was to become the basin for the huge Adaminaby Dam.”

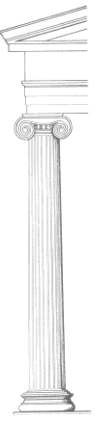
(The Drowning of Old Adaminaby: Anita Stewart and Kathleen Cossettini)



Boiler on way to Kyloe copper mine

It would be nearly eight years of watching the giant earth-filled retaining wall built and mountain waters creep up the valley before the people of Adaminaby, numbering some 700, would be relocated to a site on higher ground about six miles away. Over a hundred buildings, including the School of Arts hall, were transported and re-erected in the ‘new’ Adaminaby.

A number of homes unaffected by the rise in water remained in situ and today are part of the tourist village now called Old Adaminaby after an attempt to change its name to ‘Coloowye’ failed. (*Map of Lake Eucumbene and Environs* published by *Sydney Morning Herald*, Dec 1960). The cemetery also remained above water on a peninsula linked by land to the new site, and as reported in an article in the *Australian Women’s Weekly* of 14 March 1956, enabled ‘those who die in the future to join those who died in the past’. Charlie McKeahnie, a young Adaminaby stockman thought to have been the inspiration for A.J. (Banjo) Patterson’s epic ballad, ‘The Man from Snowy River’ is buried there.



Known as the *Trout Fishing Capital of Australia*, the present township is located on the Snowy Mountains Highway and is a service point for Mt Selwyn Snowfields and the northern skifields. With a population according to the 2011 Census of 226 people, Adaminaby is a popular tourist base for bush-walkers, horse riders and cross-country skiers. It is home to the recently restored 10 metre-high 'Big Trout' created by local artist, Hungarian born Andy Lomnici. Another attraction is the Snowy Scheme Museum that was opened in October 2011 and features an extensive collection of memorabilia highlighting the achievements of the engineers, workers and machinery that built the hydro-electric scheme.

Establishment: 1902 – 1911:

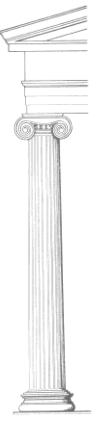
Anita Stewart came across the very first minute book of the School of Arts committee when she was cleaning up Leo Stewart's shop in readiness for sale. Minutes written by James McManus were hard to decipher but provided the following information that Anita recorded in an unpublished article held by the Stewarts Gallery Adaminaby. The notes give some clues about the original School of Arts building.

During a visit to the Monaro in 1902 by parliamentarian G. H. Reid, (*former Premier of NSW and future Prime Minister of Australia*) a special meeting was convened by residents of Adaminaby at the Rose Hotel to discuss the establishment of a School of Arts institute. The Minutes did not record the names of all present but included Dr Cassidy who was appointed secretary, nominated by Mr Broadhead.

Public Trustees for the proposed School of Arts institute under the auspices of the Lands Department were duly appointed. The project appears to have been enthusiastically supported by the Adaminaby community and a committee was established. Amongst those present at the first committee meeting were Messrs O'Neill, Broadhead, West, Bell, Rossiter, Allan, Lette, Cassidy, Freebody, Carter, Waddell, Blaxall, Bell, Witts, Donaldson, Bates, Turner and McManus. Mr J. McManus was unanimously voted President and a list of subscribers was drawn up. The committee was empowered to raise funds, draw up plans, approve tenders and undertake the day to day running of a future building.

A Ball held in the Templar's Hall was the first of the fund-raising events, quickly followed by a wide variety of activities which included sports days, dances, ping pong tournaments and games days (with pillow fights, old age pensioners, bottle of whiskey, sack and sulky races and pole vaulting).

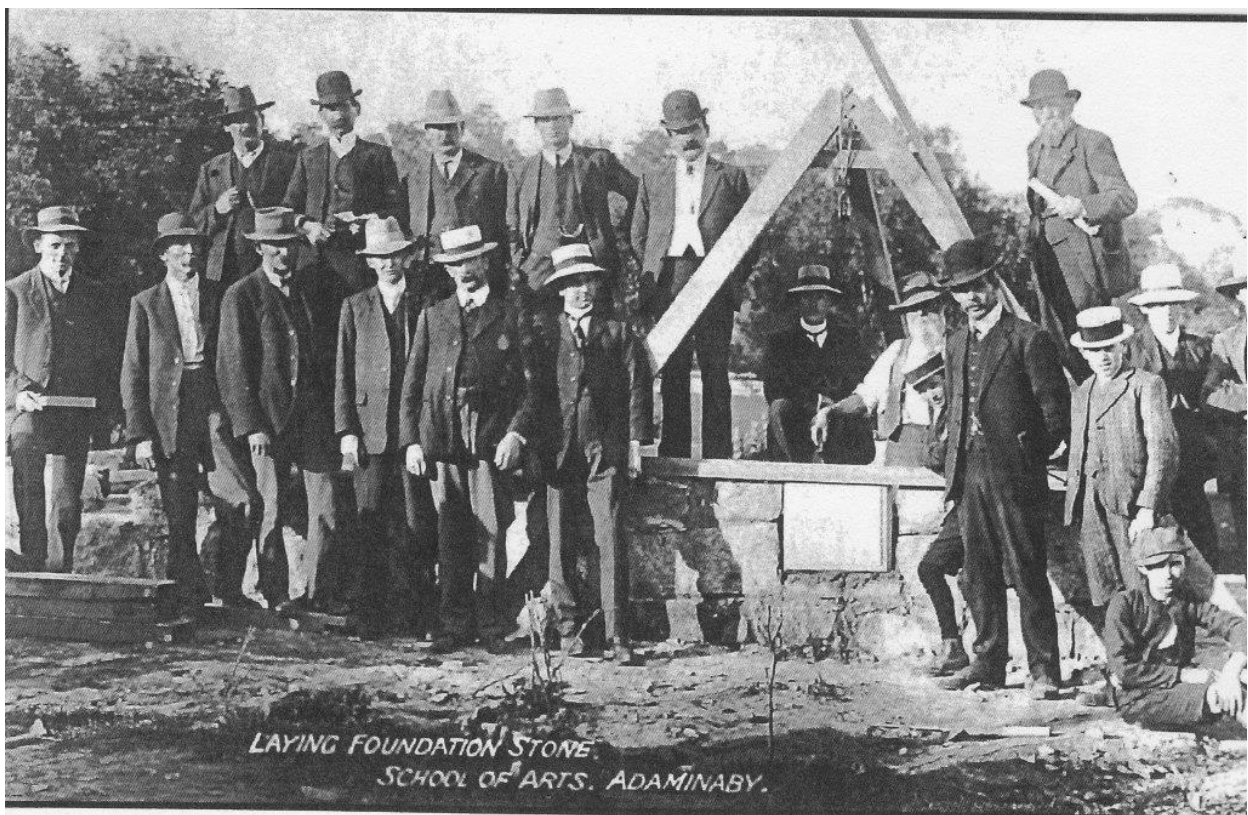
Fund-raising continued in earnest for the next two years and the committee must have raised enough to consider building a hall. Minutes of a meeting held on 21 January 1904 presided over by Mr J. Waddell recorded that plans for the building of the School of Arts in wood were submitted by Mr Witts. Plans and an estimate for a brick building were also submitted but the committee decided on a wooden building.



Jan Leckström, who as Chair of the Lake Eucumbene Chamber of Commerce was involved in the refurbishment of the School of Arts Hall in 2007, has provided the following information gleaned from Committee Minute Books about the second and permanent School of Arts building on Denison Street in the old (original) Adaminaby.

The original Board of Trustees moved slowly but eventually was granted some land and a building was acquired. This temporary arrangement, which took several years to achieve, was deemed unsuitable by the townsfolk who agitated for a building that would better suit their own very specific local requirements. Subsequently, at the Annual General Meeting of 25 July 1908, the trustees organized the election of a Hall Committee, to which Jan's grandfather Samuel Martin was nominated and duly elected. The Board of Trustees operated in tandem with this Committee.

On 28 January 1911, Dr Ramsden, a local dignitary who had long been associated with the Hall Committee, laid the Foundation Stone of the new School of Arts building. The stone was laid with a rosewood mallet and a £50 note was placed inside the stone.



ADAMINABY (Original) - Laying the Foundation for Adaminaby School of Arts, Saturday January 28 1911, at 4pm. Photo Brayshaw Collection.



From the minutes of a Special General Meeting of the Members of Adaminaby School of Arts held on July 14, 1911:

*Moved by Mr Sterrett sec by Mr Stewart that this meeting of Members of the School of Arts at Adaminaby specially convened for the purpose hereby affirms that it is desirable subject to the provision of the Trustees of Schools of Arts Enabling Act 1902 to Mortgage the land having a frontage of 66 feet to Denison Street Adaminaby comprised in certificate of title dated 19/5/10 registered Volume 2132 Folio 66 for the purpose of Borrowing a sum not exceeding £450 for the purpose of Repayment of Debentures Building, Lighting, & Furnishing on account of the School of Arts and authorise the Trustees to take all necessary steps for effecting such Mortgage.
Carried Unanimously.*

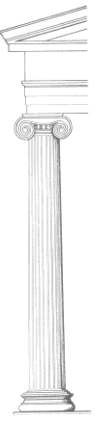
The strain on the Committee of endless fundraising, liaising with government departments to set up the School of Arts and acquiring books for the lending library is evident from the Minutes. The Chairmen, however, appear very competent in running meetings with committee members who, at times, had very strong opinions. Meetings were formally conducted with many motions being put, amended, rescinded, voted on and finally adopted after complex debates. Every step of the development process was recorded from advertising for tenders in the major NSW papers, the type of local timbers to be used in each part of the building, how furnishings would be acquired, the dimensions and type of fabric for the stage curtain, and importantly, to the placement of the men's and ladies' outhouses which were not to be too close to the building. The investigative work about the acquisition of major items was painstaking and delegated to numerous internal sub-committees, each of which was expected to report back to the main Committee within a very short timeframe.

Despite the many challenges, from the laying of the Foundation Stone the School of Arts building took just eight months to complete and the Committee held its first meeting in the new Hall on 18 August 1911.

Jan Leckström: from the Minute Books

The Building in 'Old' Adaminaby:

Articles in the press of the day record numerous and various fundraising functions and attest to how keen the townspeople were to support a new building for the School of Arts. *The Freeman's Journal* (Sydney 1850-1932) of 21 October 1909 reported that the ladies of the town had organised 'A ball in aid of the Adaminaby School of Arts building fund ... and although it poured both afternoon and night, it was the most enjoyable dance of the season'. Similarly, a Bazaar that ran for three days in the West Hall in October 1910 and raised £141.17.0 and a Fancy Dress Ball the next year featured in *The Manaro Mercury*.



The Minutes of the meeting of December 1910 record an amount of £139.19.5 in the saving account and at the May 1910 meeting, the committee was informed that Messrs G. Mackay, J. Freebody and R.H. Rossiter had been approved by the Minister for Lands to be Trustees of the Deeds of Land.

‘At the 25 July meeting, it was voted that Mr Donaldson be given notice to vacate the School of Arts premises by 5th September. At the same meeting it was moved that the plans be returned to Mr Mawson with the request to prepare specifications therefrom and return same by Monday August 8th – only the two front rooms and stage to be lined.’

Tenders for the building were received from Mr Mawson and Mr Ibbotson, the latter being the successful tenderer.

Anita Stewart's notes

The only reference to the fabric of the building in Anita Stewart's notes is that the original outside timber was to be ‘Mountain Ash at front rusticated Hardwood’. This was changed at a meeting on 10 January, 1911 to ‘Spruce Check and Chamfered Boards to be used on the building instead of Mountain Ash Weatherboards’. Floor 4 x 1 boards of Mountain Ash, lining of 6 x ½ Tongue and Grove Pine.



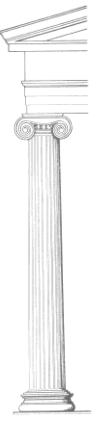
Frontage

School of Arts
building

Old Adaminaby

The Manaro Mercury, and Cooma and Bombala Advertiser of 8 September 1911 in an article about the opening of the School of Arts hall detailed elements of the building.

‘The building, with extras, will cost £788.17.6d, exclusive of furniture, etc, and is lighted with acetylene gas. A reading room, 24 ft by 26 ft, a billiard room, 24 ft by 26 ft, spacious hall 60 ft by 30 ft, stage 26ft by 14 ft 6 in, and two ante rooms. The stage is artistically fitted with the necessary appointments, including a drop curtain. The supper room situated in the basement is 50 ft by 30 ft with staircase down either side of the stage. There is already installed a billiard table, a new Broadwood piano, and other furnishings’.

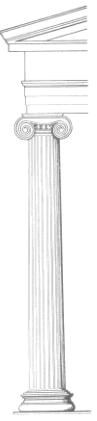


The official Opening Ceremony of the School of Arts building took place on 1 September 1911 'under very pleasant circumstances. The committee had everything in readiness for the occasion' and a 'newly formed brass band played several items' as streams of people wended their way to the institution. Mr J.T. Delaney, representing the Shire Council, and supported by Mr T. Clugston, Mr J.E. Freebody, Rev. J.F.C. Ashworth, Rev. Stewart, Mr A. McKeahnie and the Trustees, 'opened the ceremony by unlocking the front door' before making 'a neat and appropriate speech' in which he declared 'the institution officially opened, amid great applause'.



'Following the opening, the grand ball, under the management of the committee, was held and it may be stated that it was one of the most brilliant functions ever held in the Manaro district'. With over 500 guests and the 'large hall taxed to capacity', the dance floor must have had quite an initiation. Mentioned by Nobel Prize winning author Patrick White in his first novel, *'Happy Valley'*, published in 1939, the auditorium floor incorporated a locally milled mountain ash sprung dance floor. The novel, which drew on White's experiences in 1930-31 as an eighteen-year-old jackaroo at Bolaro Station near Adaminaby, described the dance floor reverberating over his head as he sat in the supper room beneath.

A year later in 1912 the institute had 100 members and, apart from some 'unpleasant matters dealing with the contractor of the building', it was felt the new School of Arts building was serving the community well. A report in the *Manaro Mercury* of 26 July on the Annual General Meeting of the School of Arts details the problems the committee were still facing securing a permanent licence from the Chief Secretary delayed 'until alterations were made to the supper room and stage by erecting fire proof ceilings'. The committee's financial challenges are also set out in the article.



The Building in 'New' Adaminaby:

Moved to its new location in 1958, the fabric of the re-erected building remained essentially the same as the original hall but with the two storeys placed in an 'L' shape forming a single storey building. Much of its original charm was retained with spacious rooms, a magnificent timber floor, generous stage and a quaint ticket trap-door.



Inside



Ticket Box

Outside

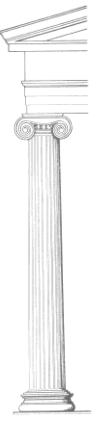
Because of size, the building was moved in several sections. The auditorium floor which incorporates a lovely locally milled sprung timber dance floor was cut in half and rejoined with pine planks which are still clearly visible today.

When relocated the two historic billiard tables because of their size and weight were moved into the billiard room before the outside wall was fitted. Sadly no one knows what happened to the original foundation stone and nothing has ever been heard of the £50 note that had been 'placed in the stone' on 28 January 1911. In its new location the Hall became a single-storey structure, with the supper room now being to one side of the auditorium. One of its walls that originally had backed onto the side of the hill was given a 1950s cream brick façade and now forms one of the front walls facing the road. A new kitchen was attached to the other side of the supper room which was probably an old Snowy Hydro hut cut in half and joined together lengthwise. The kitchen features a large historic cast iron wood stove that was donated at the time of the move by a hotel in the old town.

Jan Leckström writing about relocation of the School of Arts building in the new Adaminaby.

The dance floor:





Commemoration:

Leigh Stewart is owner of Stewarts Gallery in Adaminaby and has an extensive collection of historic photos and newspaper clippings of the original township. He is grandson to one of the founding members of the School of Arts hall, Mr T. Stewart. Leigh Stewart remembers the Honour Rolls for both World Wars being located underneath and attached to the side of the verandah near the entrance to the Hall in its original location. He said they were always visible to the public.

When the building was moved to the new site, the Honour Rolls had to wait for a new home.

At the time of the move the RSL Sub-Branch was allocated its own building opposite the Hall. In 1976 the marble honour rolls were moved to a purpose built stand on the lawn in front of the Hall. At the same time because of increasing costs and decreasing membership, the Sub Branch had to relinquish its property and the hall area of the School of Arts building became the central point for the Adaminaby Anzac Day and Remembrance Day ceremonies. Since then the building has been known as the Adaminaby School of Arts and Memorial Hall and the RSL Sub Branch holds its meetings in the meeting room.

Bill Fogarty, Secretary/Treasurer of the Adaminaby Sub-Branch of the RSL



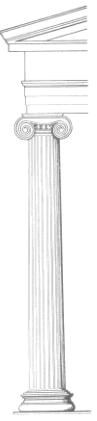
Below:

Honour Rolls for the
Adaminaby District

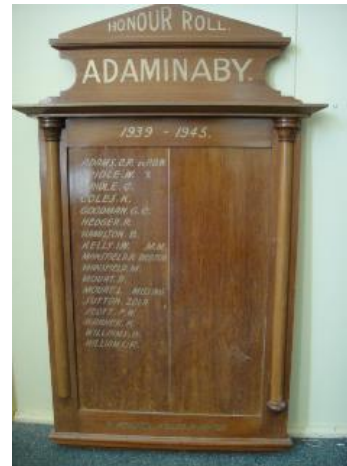
Located now in the area in
front of the School of Arts
and Memorial Hall.

Left: Detail of the 1939-
1945 Honour Roll





"In 2012 the Honour Rolls of WW1 and WW2 from the deconsecrated Adaminaby Uniting Church were placed in the Hall." Bill Fogarty



Stage Curtain:

Unveiled by the Governor of New South Wales at a ceremony on Monday 19 May 2004, a feature of the Adaminaby School of Arts and Memorial Hall is its unique handcrafted stage curtain. The curtain was designed by local artists and embroiderers and took two and a half years to complete. It was a collaborative community project and was worked by 85 men and women along with 31 school children. Their ages ranged from 5 to 85 years and volunteers represented 12 different countries reflecting the diversity of people who came to the snowfields to work on the Snowy Mountain scheme and stayed to make Adaminaby their home. Incorporating every type of craft to get the desired effect, the curtain depicts both the old and new Adaminaby townships.



Image: www.visitadaminaby.com.au

Uses:

For over a hundred years, the School of Arts and Memorial Hall has provided a venue for a great many events including balls, lectures, meetings, bazaars, craft shows, plays, concerts, films and currently is available for weddings, private functions, art shows, performances and meetings.



Over the decades, the 'Local and General News' column in the *Manaro Mercury* regularly listed activities held at the School of Arts:

- *October 1907*: Mr Clouston will be publicly welcomed at a conversazione in the School of Arts where he will deliver one of his popular lecturettes.
- *March 1910*: Rev. Robert Hammond delivered an address on the subject of Mission Work.
- *April 1954*: A meeting held on 18 April raised £403 for Spastics for the building of a central hostel being built in French's Forest.

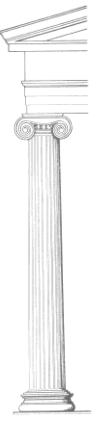


Untitled photo of a meeting in the hall,
possibly at the end of WWII

The *Albury Banner and Wodonga Express* on 13 December 1912 reported a political address by a Mr Carroll that resulted in several members 'coerced into joining the Labor League now joining the Liberal Party'. He continued with comments about another activity:

'A successful picture entertainment was given at the School of Arts last Wednesday. I noticed four of the police were present, and as these august guardians of the public morals did not interfere, I take it that everything went off in proper form. By the bye, would it not be an improvement if our sagacious rulers appointed a few ecclesiastical gentlemen or schoolmasters to be present on like occasions?'

As early as 1915, the School of Arts Committee was awarding yearly scholarships to Adaminaby, Gourodee, Kyaloe and Hollymount Schools.



Billiards was a popular pastime for many members and mentioned often at Committee Meetings.

Prior to the building of the Hall acquiring a billiard table was of top priority. On 8 November 1909, the motion was proposed by Mr Bolton, seconded by Mr Martin 'that the Billiard Table be purchased on Terms to be arranged with Mr Schaefer'. The Billiard Room was a hub of activity, providing a diversion and great entertainment for the members. Its proper operation was of paramount importance to the Hall Committee of 1911 and at its meeting of 2 October a motion was moved by Dr Lavery, seconded by Mr Stewart and carried 'that the control of the billiard room be vested in the School of Arts Committee and that a Billiard Club be formed, and the privileges of the Table be open to all members of the School of Arts without further subscription.' In 1922, a second table was purchased.

Jan Leckström's notes from the Minutes



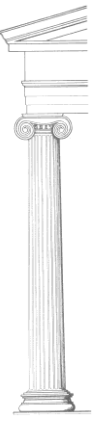
The commentator 'Rustic' in his article in the *Manaro Mercury*, and *Cooma and Bombala Advertiser* on Friday, 10 February 1922 noted:

The Local School of Arts recently purchased a second billiard table, but either from want of funds or energy, same still remains a dismantled wreck.

Noisy and unruly behavior by some of the members, particularly amongst the billiards and card players, is recorded on a number of occasions in minutes of meetings over the decades. Leigh Stewart remembers that in 1945 when he got his first job at the Adaminaby Telephone Exchange, prior to starting work at 10pm, he'd spend time playing billiards and snooker. His shift finished at 8.00 am. He remembers as time went on, 'things were not so well managed and the behavior of a few of the members was an issue of concern for some community members'.

The Library and Reading Room formed an integral part of the School of Arts activities. By July 1916, the Library had over 1000 volumes and kept an up-to-date supply of newspapers and periodicals. Minutes in 1917 record that 'the Librarians were kept busy, a large range of books were kept and nearly every meeting saw expenditure for new books'.

However, six years later, 'Rustic' in the *Manaro Mercury* and *Cooma and Bombala Advertiser* on Friday 10 February 1922 commented that:



'The Library of this institution is very much out of date and members would have been better served if this had been reorganized and stocked with new books with the money lying idle in the unused billiard table.'

Minutes from the meeting of 11 April, 1947 record discussions about buying books for the Library and when it ceased to operate in the mid-1970s, the Reading Room had 'cabinets and cases that held a very large array of books'. The books, a large table, and the original shelves were removed from the building and it is not known what became of them.

Anita Stewart's notes.

Over the years, the School of Arts building was used by a variety of organisations for meetings, including the Hospital Committee in the 1918, and the Railway Institute in 1920 when planning the extension of railway lines from Cooma to Adaminaby.

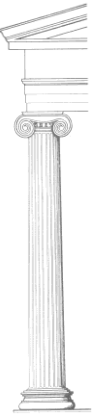
Anita Stewart's notes from minutes of School of Art meetings cover a period of 65 years, from the first meeting in 1902 to 3 March 1967. They sketch the highs and occasional lows of the institution and paint a picture of an energetic and motivated community who generally were supportive of their School of Arts institute.

Currently:

Since November 2006, the Adaminaby School of Arts Hall Management Committee has managed the day-to-day operation of the hall. The Committee, appointed by the local Council from nominations received from the community, is responsible for the regular use of the hall, one-off hiring, maintenance and minor redevelopment. Members provide a community link to assist Council staff in consulting with the community about management plans and future development. The Hall is located on Crown Land and is managed by the local Council which in turn delegates authority to the local Committee under power in section 355 of the NSW Local Government Act.

"All of the Minute books starting in 1902 have survived as have the Treasurer's Ledger from 1 July 1976. On 17 April 1975 a special meeting was held in the Hall when the Trustees of the Department of Lands requested the Snowy River Shire Council take over the management of the School of Arts and Memorial Hall. The reasons given were that the cost of running such a large public building plus its infrastructure costs were too onerous for a town that by that time had only a few hundred citizens. Since that date there's always been a group of concerned local citizens who have overseen the Hall's management and kept an eye on its state of repair. In 1988 a grant was received from the Bi-Centenary Fund to renovate the building and in the late 1990s the building was heritage listed as an item of community interest. At this time, it was again in need of repair and another grant was obtained from the Centenary of Federation Funds and further refurbishment work was carried out."

Jan Leckström, one of the seven members of the Management Committee



References:

Wikipedia

The Drowning of Old Adaminaby : compiled by Anita Stewart and Kathleen Cossettini
[Khancoban NSW] 2000

Anita Stewart's unpublished notes about the School of Arts.

www.VisitNSW.com

www.visitadaminaby.com.au

NLA Trove - digitized newspapers: *Manaro Mercury and Cooma and Bombala Advertiser*;
Albury Banner and Wodonga Express;

Acknowledgements:

Jan Leckström, Lake Eucumbene Chamber of Commerce (Inc.); former Councillor, Snowy River Shire

Bill Fogarty, Adaminaby RSL Sub-Branch

Leigh Stewart, Stewarts Gallery Adaminaby

Jill Madew, OAM, Founding Member, Snowy Scheme Museum



Bill Fogarty and Jan Leckström

Photographs:

Historic photos courtesy of Stewarts Gallery Adaminaby

Marlena Jeffery

Research:

Marlena Jeffery, Member ADFAS Canberra

ADFAS Canberra

July 2014