



DEEPWATER NSW



Name: Deepwater School of Arts

Address/Location: 72 Tenterfield Street, Deepwater NSW 2371

The Town: Deepwater is a parish and village 40 kilometres north of Glen Innes on the Northern Tablelands of New South Wales. The village was proclaimed on 20 March 1885 and the village boundaries were formally notified in NSW government records on 25 November 1893. The village has a population of 323, with 489 people in the area.

Deepwater is located 650 kilometres north west of Sydney on the New England Highway, the main inland route between Sydney, and Brisbane, the Queensland State capital. It was a station on the Main Northern Railway Line (now closed). The village is on the northern bank of the Deepwater River, a tributary of the Mole River.

Deepwater Station was occupied in 1839 for the Windeyer brothers and by 1848 it covered 60,000 acres. Descendants of this district pioneer family still own the property.

In the past dairying, tin mining and timber were industries that contributed to the economy and prosperity of the district, supporting its growth and development. Now, the district is an agricultural area with the main pursuits being wool, fat lamb and beef cattle production. There is also a small but thriving rural based industrial area.



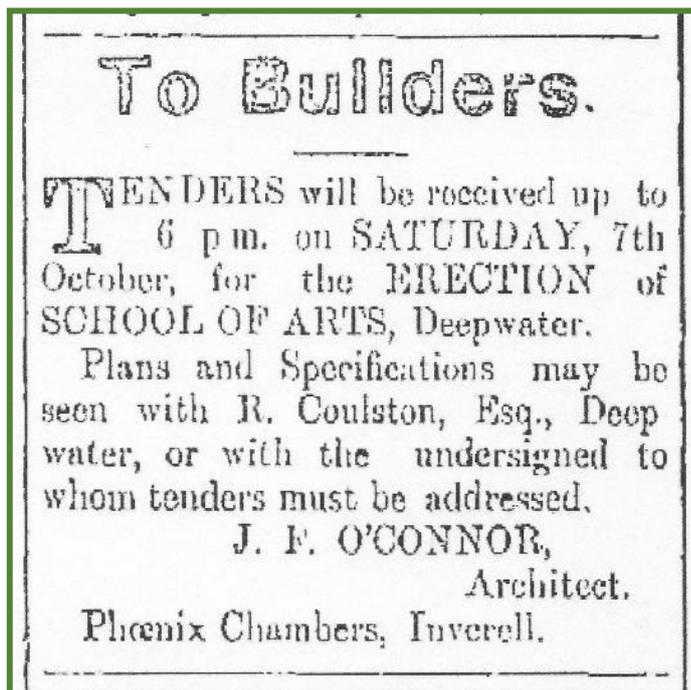
Establishment: The School of Arts was built in 1890 from plans designed by JF O'Connor of Inverell. Mr Sydney G Smith, a Glen Innes businessman, donated £20 in 1890.

It is only four months since the movement was first mooted and now Deepwater possesses a commodious, well built hall and reading room; 100 strong Austrian chairs, table and a piano to furnish it, and the most interesting feature is that it is free of debt, thus being a standing monument to the liberality of the Deepwater public.

The first Annual General Meeting was held in the hall and 30 subscribers were present. A Medical Fund and Progress Committee were established at the same time.

As early as 1910 there were meetings to try and organize the building of a new School of Arts with a resolution at the Annual General Meeting in that year that the Minister for Lands (in the NSW Government) be asked for a grant of half an acre to erect a new hall; it was remarked that *the present one is not centrally positioned.*

The following year, 1911, saw important progress. At the Annual General Meeting on 17 February it was reported that.....*The present building having outlived its usefulness, plans are being prepared for a new hall to cost about £1000.* A grant of a half acre block on the corner of Tenterfield and Dundee Streets in Deepwater was notified on 8 March for the purposes of building a Mechanics' Institute (though the building was never called this).



In September, an advertisement appeared inviting tenders for erection of a new School of Arts at Deepwater.

Within a month, on 20 October, the tender of Mr J Adams of Glen Innes was accepted for the erection of the new building at a cost of £820/10/-

Extract from advertising in *The Tenterfield Courier and District Advocate*
Friday 22 September 1911 p.7

The cost was a constant issue. The Deepwater Jockey Club had made a donation to the School of Arts Building fund in February, as soon as the project was announced. At the beginning of December 1911, it was reported that four of the Deepwater storekeepers decided to discontinue the practice of giving their customers Christmas boxes and in lieu, give a substantial donation to the local School of Arts *which badly needs a lift.*

Fund raising efforts continued to be directed to paying for the building: in May 1912 a report refers to *an entertainment for the School of Arts building fund* and in July another to *a donation to the new School of Arts building fund* from a local shopkeeper.



In May of 1914, the School of Arts *derives the sum of £200 from a bazaar and sports held recently in the town.*

The cutting of government subsidies for Schools of Arts no doubt aggravated the problem of debt. In November 1914, a question was asked of the Minister for Public Instruction in the NSW Parliament:

Will he expedite the payment of government subsidies to schools of arts and will he reconsider his decision with respect to payment of half rates only, more particularly with respect to those country institutions which are involved.

The response by the Minister indicated that while payment might be expedited, all the institutions would still have their subsidy reduced by half because of the reduction in funds available for their support.

It was not until March 1922 that reports show that a Queen of the Day contest at Deepwater netted £600 for the School of Arts, wiping out the debt and leaving the committee £200 to carry on with.

Miss Nellie Robertson of [nearby] Bolivia on Friday night was crowned “Queen of Deepwater”. The coronation was radiant and brilliant and was performed with all dignity in the presence of the largest social gathering that Deepwater has known. The function, together with the ball that followed, will stand as a glorious culmination to a series of phenomenally successful efforts which combined in one effort to wipe off the long standing debt of £417 on the School of Arts grounds and buildings. There were over 200 couples at the ball.

The Building: *The committee have wisely sought convenience and utility rather than ornamentation in the building. Its dimensions are 60 feet x 24 feet of which the reading room is 10 x 24, the stage 10 x 24 and the hall 39 x 24. The whole is lined inside and well finished off.*

It is believed that an extension to the existing building was carried out in 1933 called the George V addition. This addition, consisting of a wing added to the northern side, included a kitchen, dining area and meeting room. Two walls were added so that the reading room was split into a library and reading room to provide more privacy while also providing an entry corridor into the hall.

Alterations were also made in 1976, built and paid for by the local Apex Group.

Improvements to the kitchen were carried out in 1985. There were further alterations made in 1990 with a grant from the NSW Department of Lands. The local SES (State Emergency Services) and Fire Brigade provided the labour for this work.

Uses: The School of Arts is still used extensively by the community. The Deepwater Public School has its annual Speech Night there. The reading room is used as the local library as well as for local committee meetings and workshops.

The Deepwater Players hold bi-annual plays in the hall over a two week period.

Many local charities cater for the event and all share in the money raised after any necessary hall repairs are carried out. The local progress association maintains the hall.



The Anzac Day march ends at the front of the School of Arts where the Honour Rolls for World War One and World War Two are hung; the Anzac Day service and morning tea are held in the hall.

Social History: The School of Arts was used as a temporary hospital in the influenza outbreak in 1919. A subsequent charge of £3 levied by the committee was never paid by the Glen Innes Council who were incensed by this decision, considering it inappropriate under the circumstances.

A group library was set up there in 1937 with other nearby communities Tent Hill, Torrington, and Emmaville. Newspaper articles state that it was used for meetings of the Farmers & Settlers Association and the Local Butter Factory. Balls (1922, 1931 & 1937) and Billiards Competitions (from 1904) were held in the hall while tennis matches (1910) were held against other Schools of Arts. A wool festival was held in the School of Arts from 1950 to the 1980s.

Currently: The School of Arts remains the hub of the local community with most community groups using it as their base.

Acknowledgements:

Ev Chappell, Glen Innes and District Historical Society.

Graham Wilson, Heritage Adviser to Glen Innes Council.

Deepwater School of Arts Progress Society.

Peter & Lynne Green, Deepwater residents.

References:

Glen Innes Examiner

Sydney Morning Herald

NLA Trove: *The Tenterfield Intercolonial Courier and Fairfield and Wallangarra Advocate; Richmond River and Casino/Kyogle Advertiser.*

Wikipedia

War Memorials in the Glen Innes Severn Shire Council compiled by Graham Wilson.

NSW Government Land and Property Information www.lpi.nsw.gov.au Historical Land Records Viewer (HLRV): Town maps of the *Village of Deepwater*.



Nan Robertson with her sister Jen Lanz

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Photos: Nan Robertson.