GRESFORD NSW



Name: Gresford School of Arts (1890 – 1928) (The Original)

Address: Church Street Gresford NSW 2311

The Town:

Gresford is located in the Hunter Valley approximately eighty-five kilometres drive from Newcastle, the major city of the region. It is principally a farming community comprising dairy, beef cattle, and vineyards and supporting industries. The Lindeman family was prominent in the establishment of significant vineyards and wine production and was clearly one of the prominent supporters of the original School of Arts. The wine industry, except for two boutique establishments, has been gone for many years and the vineyards now operate as grazing areas and general farming. The population of the village at the 2016 census was 307.

The village of Gresford was settled in the early 1800s comprising a number of land grants ranging in size up to 2000 acres. Sited between the Paterson and Allyn rivers where they come quite close to each other, it takes its name from the town of Gresford in North Wales. This was the former home of two of the earliest settlers, Charles Boydell and George Townshend, who sailed to Australia on the same vessel and were among those who took up land grants in 1829. The indigenous people of the region are the Gringai.

Establishment:

The Maitland Mercury and Hunter River General Advertiser (MM) of Tuesday 2 July 1889 reported on a meeting held in the old Schoolhouse in Gresford on the evening of Saturday 29 June. The meeting was for the purpose of raising funds for the erection of a School of Arts for the local community. Mr AK Holden took the chair and a sum of £10 was collected. The attendance was recorded as 'small', apparently because so few people knew the meeting was to be held. It was therefore decided to arrange a second meeting that duly took place on Saturday 6 July. This was also reported as 'scantily attended'. It seemed an inauspicious beginning.

[FROM OUR OWN CORRESPONDENTS.]

GRESFORD.

SCHOOL OF ARTS.—An adjourned meeting re School of Arts was held in M1. Kellehear's room, on Saturday evening, the 24th instant, of the acting committee and others, at which the following business was transacted :- It was proposed that, subject to their acceptance of the position, Messrs. Jos. Cooper (Trevallyn), Jno. Glennie (Orindinna), and Robt. Logan (Torryburn) be elected trustees. Mr. G. Gray proposed, and Mr. E. Doyle seconded, that Mr. E. Kellehear be elected treasurer. Carried .-Mr. W. J. Parker proposed, and Mr. G. Gray seconded, that Mr. G. Glennie be elected secretary. Carried.-Mr. Creagh proposed, and Mr. E. Doyle seconded, that the building committee consist of Messrs. F. W. Ebbeck, W. Cowley, C. Drinkwater, G. Grey, and E. Kellehear, three to form a quorum. -It was arranged that an allotment of 1 acre of land be obtained on which to erect a building. Subscription lists were submitted to the committee, and it was ascertained that about £70 was available so far, which with an equal amount from Government would make £140. It is estimated that from £200 to £250 will be required, and it was resolved to proceed with the canvassing, and that an adjourned meeting be held on September 7th, when, it is pretty certain, sufficient funds will be available to justify the committee in commencing the building, and that this much-needed institution will be an accomplished fact, and prove a great benefit and source of instruction and amusement to the inhabitants of the district.

Nevertheless, those interested in establishing a School of Arts persisted and there was a further report, published on 3 September, of a meeting held on 24 August at Mr Kellehear's room, This meeting proposed that "subject to their acceptance of the position, the following be elected as Trustees: Messrs Jos. Cooper (Trevallyn) Jno. Glennie (Orindinna) and Robt. Logan (Torryburn)."

The meeting also elected officers for the School of Arts Committee, and a building committee. An allotment of land and potential costs of the building (about £200 -£250) were discussed. Available funds were about £70, which would increase to £140 with the subsidy from the government. Further funds were to be canvassed and it was expected that the Committee would be in a position to justify commencing the building. further meeting was planned for 7 September.

▲ Report of the meeting of Saturday 24 August 1889 - Maitland Mercury and Hunter River General Advertiser Tuesday 3 September 1889 p.6 The building committee met on Saturday 28 September 1889 and it was decided to advertise for tenders to erect the building.

TENDERS are invited for the ERECTION of
a SCHOOL OF ARTS (brick) at GRESFORD. Plans and Specifications to be seen at the
residence of Mr. E. Kellehear, Gresford.
Tenders, endorsed "Tender for School of Arts,"
to be lodged with the Secretary not later than
SATURDAY, 26th October.
The lowest or any tender not necessarily accepted.
GEO. GLENNIE,
7107
Hon. Sec.

■The advertisement calling for tenders appeared in the Maitland Mercury Saturday 5 October 1889 p.3

The site for the complex was donated by Mrs Eliza Lindeman, a significant contribution to the establishment of the institution.

The following is from an Abstract of The Title of The Gresford School of Arts to land situated at Gresford.

"13th March 1890 BY INDENTURE of this date between ELIZA HARRIETT LINDEMAN thereinafter described of the one part and JOSEPH COOPER, ROBERT LOGAN and JOHN GLENNIE thereinafter designated Trustees of the other part.

RECITING SEIZEN IN FEE OF Eliza Harriett Lindeman AND RECITING that Eliza Harriett Lindeman for her great love of her late Husband and from a desire to perpetuate a Memorial of his goodwill and active benevolence towards the inhabitants of Gresford had resolved to dedicate the said land and hereditaments in perpetuity to such purposed as thereinafter specified.

IT WAS WITNESSED that for effectuating the said desire and in pursuance etc. and in consideration etc. SHE the said Eliza Harriett Lindeman did thereby freely give and grant UNTO the Trustees and their heirs ALL THAT piece or parcel of land described in the Schedule thereto TOGETHER etc., HABENDUM UNTO AND TO THE USE OF THE SAID Trustees and their heirs as joint tenants upon and for the trusts and purposes and with and subject to the powers and provisions thereinafter declared and contained concerning the same.

COVENANTS by the said Eliza Harriett Lindeman

FOR good right to grant

FREE from encumbrances

FOR quiet enjoyment

FOR further assurance

AND IT was thereby agreed and declared as follows:-

- 1. The said Trustees and their Successors should stand seized of the said premises upon trust to have built within a good and substantial building to be used for a School of Arts for the general object of promoting the religious moral social and intellectual welfare and the rational recreation of the inhabitants of and visitors to Gresford and their friends in such manner as the Trustees for the time being should from time to time direct.
- 2. The management of the property for the purpose of carrying out the general objects trusts and powers aforesaid should be vested in the said Trustees.
- 3. The Trustees should have the absolute management of an entire control over the trust premises and might make such rules and regulations from time to time respecting the purposeetc."



The Building:

The building itself was completed and handed over to the Trustees on 6 September 1890. It remained for the internal fittings to be added. A meeting of subscribers was called to elect a committee of management for the next six months and it was decided to call tenders for completing the inside fittings as soon as possible. The building would then be open to people of "all creeds and countries."

TENDERS will be received up to SATURDAY, the 27th instant, at 3.30 p.m., for the SUP-PLYING of 20 SEATS (8 with backs, and 12 without), 2 DOZEN CHAIRS (Washington Black), 2 TABLES (one large, one small), and 2 BOOK PRESSES, for the School of Arts at Gresford.

Time when work to be completed must be stated in Tender.

The lowest or any Tender not necessarily accepted.

Plans, &c., may be seen at Mr. H. Fry's, Centennial House, West Maitland, or with the Secretary at Gresford.

W. J. PARKER,

Advertisement for tenders for internal fittings.Maitland Mercury

Tuesday 23 September 1890 p.1

GRESFORD.

Gresford, 20th Sept., 1890.

Hon. Secretary

6652

SCHOOL OF ARTS.—This building is now finished, and was delivered over to the Trustees on 6th Sept., and on Saturday last, 20th inst., a meeting of subscribers was convened for the election of office-bearers and committee of management for the ensuing six months. There was a fair attendance, and the following were unanimously elected:-President, Mr. John Glennie; Vice-president, Mr. A. Lindeman; Treasurer, Mr. E. Kellehear; Secretary, Mr. W. J. Parker. On coming to the election of a committee, after discussion it was decided that as the institution will be open to all creeds and countries, each section of the community should, as far as possible, be represented, and the inhabitants being rather scattered a large number should be named so as always to ensure a quorum at the general meetings. Eventually the following were elected, with power to add to their number, viz.: Messrs. Jos. Cooper, Jas. Boydell, A. K. Holden, A. Park, G. B. Creagh, G. Grey, E. J. S. Doyle, W. Reynolds, W. Tucker, H. H. Brown, R. Logan, A. P. Cooper, Rev. J. Roach, John Beattie, sen., E. W. Doyle, R. Boydell, J. Kelly, W. White, G. Fry, C. Arthur, H. Perram, F. W. Ebbeck, C. Drinkwater, W. Cowley, and Rev. G. Moore. It was then resolved that tenders for inside fittings should be called for and procured as speedily as possible. When these are obtained the building will be open and available for all purposes connected with such an institution, and it is to be hoped will be the source of much amusement and instruction to building is a credit to inhabitants. The the neighbourhood, but a mistake by an "Occasional Correspondent" in one of your late issues, who seems to be of rather gushing proclivities, must be contradicted. It will not contain anything like "600 or 700 people," but is sufficiently large for the present requirements of the district, and will seat about 180.

Because the building was to be open to all who wished to take advantage of its offerings, it was decided that the Committee should represent as many districts as possible and a large number of members was elected. This would also ensure a quorum at general meetings.

■Report of the handover to the Trustees and the election of a Committee for the next six months.
Maitland Mercury
Saturday 27 September 1890 p.3

It was said that the building was "a credit to the neighbourhood" and sufficiently large for present requirements. It seated about 180 persons, though it had been reported, mistakenly, that it would hold 600 or 700!



According to correspondence to the Editor, published in the *Maitland Mercury* on Tuesday 7 October 1890, the architect of the School of Arts was Mr RB Creagh of Sydney. The contractors for erecting the building were Burg Bros of Morpeth, who were complimented by the architect on the fine job they had done. Mr Henery of Morpeth was responsible for the brick, stone and cement work, which he carried out under the supervision of the contractors. Messrs Fry Bros of Maitland were awarded the contract for the internal fittings. (*MM* 18 October 1890 p.6)

The Opening:

The building was formally opened on 21 November 1890.

It was expected that the opening ceremony would be performed by Mr Carruthers MLA, Minister responsible for Schools of Arts, but regrettably, he was delayed. Instead, the building was opened by the President of the Committee, Mr Glennie (snr). The following quote from the *Maitland Mercury and Hunter River General Advertiser* (29 November 1890 page 3) comes from their report of the opening:

Mr Glennie (snr) is the President... "We hope to own soon a good library and to arrange for a supply of the most popular magazines and newspapers of the day and so for this advantage alone I would urge our young men to join us, and by means of these opportunities, improve their minds with the literature of our day.

In the way of instruction we hope to have lectures on interesting subjects and possibly to establish a debating society. Not neglecting amusements, we shall have concerts, dramatic and other healthy entertainments."

In his opening speech, he acknowledged how indebted the Institute was to three prominent families of Messrs Lindeman, Logan and Cooper. "The ground upon which the building stands, together with its surroundings, an acre in extent, was most generously given by Mrs Lindeman, whilst but for the liberality of Mr Cooper, of Trevallyn, and Mr Robert Logan, of Torryburn, it is possible that we should have had to do without a School of Arts. Nor must I forget to mention the committee, who together with Messrs. Parker and Kellehear, our Secretary and Treasurer, have so successfully crowned their labours in the result we see tonight. Lastly but in no wise to be undervalued, are the services of Mr E J S Doyle, who has been most indefatigable in working for the success of the Institution."

These formalities were followed by a successful concert and as well...

"Finally at eleven o'clock, dancing was commenced and the popularity of this part of the programme was attested by the crowded state of the floor... and it was quite five o'clock in the morning ere the last of the dancers left and even then regrets were expressed that so pleasant an evening should have ended so soon."

The building was described as "built of brick in the style of architecture so much in vogue in America just now and so combines simplicity and effectiveness. A weatherboard supper room was constructed at a later date, as were two tennis courts. The supper room complex also included a billiard table and a library."





Interior of the brick section of original School of Arts in 2017 now St Anne's Parish Hall

(Photograph J Wotton)

Social History:

At the time of the opening late in 1890, the debt on the building was £140 and the aim of the Committee was to discharge this debt as soon as possible. The Annual Report in the following year, 1891, showed that the Library had opened at the beginning of that year, games such as chess and draughts were provided, and a most successful entertainment with a concert and a dramatic performance marked the anniversary of the opening. Use of the hall had indicated the need for a piano, which was being loaned, as required, by a generous supporter. A piano was duly purchased for £47 but this increased the debt to the bank. In 1893, the report noted a membership of 36 of whom four were ladies. It was resolved that while there was scope for improvements to be made, the debt should be reduced first.

As well as buying new titles for the Library, books were borrowed from the Free Public Library in Sydney, which despatched boxes of books for local circulation. These were returned after a suitable period and further boxes were dispatched, allowing small institutions to provide a changing supply of books at minimal cost. The Gresford School of Arts continued this arrangement for some time.

The building was the centre of community activity for the village and those who lived nearby, with concerts and dances and entertainments organised by the Committee, as well as others.

A grand Bazaar organised in 1893 to raise funds for one of the churches included an auction of poultry, pigs and corn as well as the usual stalls selling cakes, sweets, handicrafts and all manner of goods. Amongst the most unusual offerings was the opportunity to experience the effect of a 'galvanic battery' for the cost of 3d. [threepence] a shock!

In 1895, it was reported that a Debating Society was formed A range of topics was debated, all of great interest at the time. These included *Free Trade vs Protectionism*; *That all bachelors should be taxed*; *Whether or not workers have been advantaged by the use of machinery*, etc. Topics were debated with real conviction, sometimes with correspondence to the local newspaper continuing the argument. A Literary Society was also formed and their meetings included musical items as well as readings and recitations and were well supported. Ambulance lectures were arranged with two sessions: one for men and one for the ladies. The Annual Report in 1898 noted however, that there were just 17 members of the institution, including one lady; nevertheless, finances were in "a prosperous state".

The war in South Africa saw the School of Arts as the venue for farewells to those leaving to join the Bushmen's Contingent in 1900. One, Percy Grey, fell victim to enteric fever and failed to return but the others were welcomed home again at a function in the School of Arts.

Important progress was reported in 1909:

LOSTOCK

.....The small and insignificant School of Arts building at West Gresford has been remodelled into a good brick hall with a floor space of 60 x 25 feet, exclusive of stage, which is fitted with all necessary conveniences. Behind this are situated two nice dressing rooms, equipped with fireplaces and modern appliances.... The bookshelves show a substantial number of books and the hall is furnished with a beautiful piano. The people of Gresford are to be congratulated on having such an institution and special thanks are due to Mr James Hancock, who generously stepped into the breach and advanced the cost of the new building which amounted to £172. (Maitland Daily Mercury (MDM) Tuesday 6 April p.6)

Also in 1909, a newly installed acetylene gas lighting plant was used for the first time with "the effect being voted as A1". The occasion was the first Military Ball held in the School of Arts, reported as probably the most successful function ever held in the historic building. Numbers of those attending appeared in fancy dress. This was the first of a succession of the Military Balls which became a feature of the annual calendar for several years. (Maitland Weekly Mercury (MWM) 10 July 1909 p.6) Further significant improvements followed in 1911:

Messrs Jones Bros have completed a spacious supper room with billiard room attached for the School of Arts Committee. The necessary funds for the erection of the building were generously loaned to the committee, free of interest, by Mrs JJ Hancock and Miss EJ Grey. Mr G Grey has provided the billiard table. (MWM Saturday 4 February 1911 p.7)



By 1916 the Annual Report showed that the debt on the building had been cleared and this would allow attention to be given to much needed repairs – fencing, lighting and painting. But inevitably the outbreak of the First World War changed the emphasis of activities for the institution. The sum of £1000 had been already raised for patriotic purposes with further functions planned to add to this total. Patriotic meetings, together with fund raising for the Red Cross and for providing comforts for the troops, became a focus. Farewells to men of the district leaving for the front became part of the regular functions held in the hall.

The annual meeting of the Gresford School off Arts was very well attended, old mombers regarding it as the best ever hold. Mv. F. G. Halsted presided. The secretary (Mr. G. Grey) read a most interesting report for the year just ended. The membership had increased considerably, showing a pleasing public interest in the institution. Many improvements had been carried out, the stage raised and deepened, a landsome proseculum created, senting accommodation increased, and an electric lighting system introdued. Travelling companies were loud in their praises of the up-to-date hall. The thanks of the committee were specially due to Mr. C. E. Martin and Mr. and Mrs. Halsted for organising and working up the concert last year, which had been a splendid financial success; and to Mr. C. O. Hancock for his gratuitous services in connection with the running of the electric plant. The library sub-commitee had the new hisrary going successfully, and was helped by Mossrs. V. Casey, D. Everett and N. Hancock, who noted as homerary librarian. About £25 had been spent on the library. During the year the committee had spent about £400, of which £200 had been lent free of interest. £20 had been lent free of interest. £20 was the bank credit, so that £94 represented the liability of the institution. This was regarded as highly satisfactory. The election of efficers for 1921-22 resulted as follows:

—President, Mr. F. G. Halsted: vice-president, Mr. F. G. Hall, T. A. White, Rev. C. Stretch. A. Albert, A. R. Bridger; hon, secretary, Mr. Geo. Grey; treasurer, Mr. O. E. Martin; committee, Messrs. J. Jones, F. Barling, S. Smith, C. C. Hancock, G. Lamble, S. A. Brooker, H. Jones, F. Grew, C. Arthur H. Randall; auditors, Messrs. H. Hall and C. K. Heiden; library sub-committee, Messrs. Hallsted urged punctuality at all meetings, and welcomed the new members, who suitable seabonded. GRESFORD. The annual meeting of the Gresford School of Arts was very well attended. Thesday cach month. Mr. Halstod urged punctuality at all meetings, and wolcomed the new members, who suitably responded.

The end of the war brought celebrations for the peace and as the soldiers returned, 'Welcome Home' functions for those who had been away for so long. Life began to return to the ordinary social occasions and fund raising for other causes – nurses, the Maitland hospital, the churches – as well as the continuing upkeep of the School of Arts itself. The local branch of the Returned Soldiers and Sailors Imperial League of Australia (RS&SILA) was formed at a gathering in the School of Arts in September 1920.

Improvements were planned for the hall of the School of Arts, including extensions to the stage, the addition of a proscenium arch, extra seating and most important of all, installation of electric lighting. Generous funding support was provided by Messrs G Grey, Randall, J Hancock and Mrs J Hancock, who each lent £50 interest free for 5 years.

The Annual Report in 1921 showed that all work planned had been completed and even with expenditure on other amenities, such as the Library, the institution was in a very good position financially. The debt was fully paid the following year, with a small credit balance remaining, and 200 books were added to the Library, which had become a great success.

■ Report of the 1921 Annual Meeting Maitland Daily Mercury Wednesday 20 July 1921 p.2



Mr George Grey was honoured for his service to the institution in 1924, when he also turned 70 years old. At this date he was Secretary to the Committee, an office he had held for a number of years. He had been a member of the Committee since the establishment of the School of Arts in 1889. He served for 35 years, filling at one time or another every office and contributing greatly to its success. He was made a Life Member of the School of Arts in 1913.

The tribute to Mr Grey took the form of a social evening for the members of the institution and a portrait photograph, handsomely framed and suitably inscribed, was hung in the hall to mark his long and very valuable service. (Mr Grey died in November 1926 as the result of an accident where he was gored by a cow. His loss was keenly felt by the whole community).

Late in 1926, the affairs of the institution took a new turn. At a regular meeting of the Committee in November, correspondence received included a letter from the Rector of St Anne's Church of England, the Reverend Mr A R Holmes. He put forward a radical proposal. The Church had need for a parish hall and Mr Holmes was suggesting that they might purchase the School of Arts building. It was agreed that this proposition be carefully considered. (MDM Saturday 6 November 1926 p.9)

A special meeting of subscribers was called where the discussion referred to the growth of East Gresford and its rising importance by comparison with the older area of Gresford. This led to the view that the School of Arts was in danger of becoming a 'white elephant' and it was thought to be in the interests of both parties that some suitable arrangement be made. A sub-committee was appointed to consider the matter.

The outcome was a recommendation to sell the building. The main hall, land, lavatories and the front fence and gates were to be offered to the Church for £819. The School of Arts was to retain the other buildings, together with the furnishings, piano and electric plant. (MDM Monday 20 December p.6) It was also agreed that in the event of the present site being disposed of, two blocks in East Gresford under offer by Messrs Jones Bros, be purchased for £150 and a similar building be erected thereon. Arrangements would be made for the School of Arts to continue to function pending the construction of a new building.

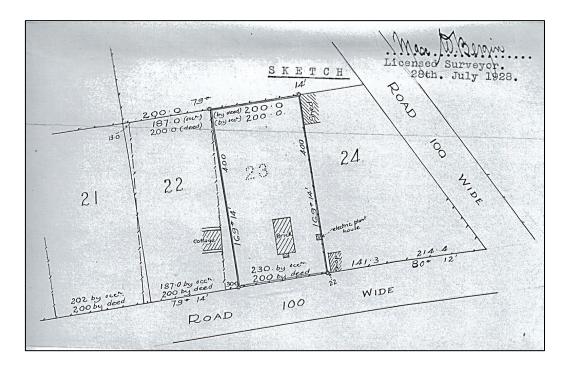
The report of the 1927 Annual Meeting showed that the Minister for Education had given the required approval for the sale, the necessary arrangements were proceeding, and plans and specifications for a new building were being prepared. (MWM Saturday 13 August 1927 p.6)

The land was surveyed in July 1928 and in part read;

"In relation to the said Lot 23 of D.P. 7055 I have to report that my survey disclosed a large discrepancy in the frontage thereof as shewn on sketch hereunder; also, that the fences on the North-Western, North-Eastern, and South-Eastern boundaries are approximately in their correct positions and that the brick building erected upon the said Lot 23 of D.P 7055 stands wholly with the boundaries thereof."

Max Wulfing Bergin Licensed Surveyor 28 July 1928

The signed sketch which accompanies this report shows the substance of its findings.



Surveyor's Sketch of School of Arts Site, Gresford. July 1928

On the 19 November 1928 a deed was signed ...

"BETWEEN ARTHUR HOLDEN LINDEMAN of Gresford in the state of New South Wales, Grazier GEORGE HENRY CREW of Gresford in the said state, Farmer, and DENIS SMITH of Gresford in the said State, Saddler of the one part and THE TRUSTEES OF CHURCH PROPERTY FOR THE DIOCESE OF NEWCASTLE in the said State a Corporate body of the other part WHEREAS by indenture made on the thirteenth day of March in the year one thousand eight hundred and ninety and registered Number 579 Book 458 and for the consideration therein mentioned the estate in fee simple in the land hereinafter described was conveyed by Eliza Harriett Lindeman unto Joseph Cooper, Robert Logan and John Glennie as Trustees upon trust for the erection and control thereon of a School of Arts for the purposes in the said Indenture declared AND WHEREAS after their deaths the office of each of the said Trustees was in accordance with the provisions of the Trustees of School of Arts Enabling Act 1902 declared vacant and in pursuance of the said Act the said Arthur Holden Lindeman, George Henry Crew and Denis Smith were duly elected to fill the said referred to vacancies the consent thereto of the Minister for Public Instruction as required by such Act being declared by notice in the Government Gazette Number 8 of the twentieth day of January in the year one thousand nine hundred and Twenty eight AND WHEREAS authority for the sale of the said land for the consideration hereinafter mentioned has been obtained in pursuance of the provisions of the said Act by a resolution passed and confirmed at meetings held after due advertisements of notice of same and – also by the consideration of the Minister of Public Instruction which was notified by a letter from the Department of Education dated the eleventh day of July in the year one thousand nine hundred and twenty seven, and which consideration is or is to be endorsed here NOW THIS DEED WITNESSETH that in consideration of the sum of SEVEN HUNDRED AND FIFTY POUNDS (£750/-/-) paid by the said The Trustees of Church Property for the Diocese of Newcastle to the said Arthur Holden Lindeman, George Henry Crew and Denis Smith and the said Arthur Holden Lindeman, George Henry Crew and Denis Smith as beneficial owners.....etc."

The increase in population and development of the East Gresford Township resulted in the decision to dispose of the existing property on Church Street Gresford. The supper room was relocated to the current site at 42 Park Street East Gresford and opened in December 1928. It operated as the School of Arts until a new building was erected in 1930.

Currently (2018):

The brick building and Church Street site were purchased on 19 December 1928 by the Anglican Church (then the Church of England) for use as the Parish Hall for the nearby Gresford Parish Church of St Anne. It is still used for this purpose.

East Gresford School of Arts

The continuing story of the School of Arts, relocated to **East Gresford** and with a new building constructed in that location, is continued in a separate account in this series.

Acknowledgements:

Margot Capp and Family - Lindeman Family history

Kel Merriman - Secretary Gresford School of Arts s.355 Committee

Anglican Diocese of Newcastle - Archival material held by The University of Newcastle

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A History in Three Rivers. Dungog Shire Heritage Study. Thematic History [p.128] Michael Williams August 2014. NSW Heritage Council

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ADFAS Newcastle

December 2018