

STROUD NSW



Photograph – MidCoast Council

Name: Stroud School of Arts

Address: Cowper Street, Stroud, NSW 2425.

The Town:

Stroud is a small picturesque town located in the Hunter Valley of New South Wales. It is approximately 80 kilometres north of Newcastle and 216 kilometres north of Sydney via the Pacific Motorway and Bucketts Way. The location marks one of the areas to be settled early in the expansion beyond Sydney of the new British colony of New South Wales. A vast tract of land in the region was made available to a group of British investors named the “Australian Agricultural Company” with its headquarters then in London. Stroud was later developed as a centre of the Company operations and it remains historically important in terms of Australia’s early history of white settlement.

The original inhabitants of the country around Stroud were the Worimi people. Worimi country originally extended from Port Stephens in the south to Forster in the north and Gloucester in the west. The Worimi is made up of several nurras (nurras were local groups within tribes). In 1816 the cedar getters arrived in the area which caused a dispersal of the tribe resulting in the Biripi and Worimi intermingling and camping in much the same territory. The Worimi and Biripi tribes both spoke dialects of the Kattang Language.¹

When the Australian Agricultural Company established its local headquarters at Carrington in 1826, the Aborigines migrated toward the settlement and began to learn the settler’s ways and language, being employed in many tasks in exchange for food. However, this migration

reduced the number of Aborigines following a traditional life-style, especially around the lakes.²

Under National Trust classification the township of Stroud is Heritage listed. Stroud was a planned town and the earliest buildings were convict built: Quambi House, the Anglican Rectory (rebuilt largely after a fire), the second Court House built on the same site as the first one completed in 1876, and St Johns Anglican church. Unfortunately the School of Arts does not fit into a strict heritage title as the front of the building was rebuilt.

Robert Dawson, the first manager of the Australian Agricultural Company, named Stroud after the English town of Stroud in Gloucestershire, England. He was to name many towns in the Gloucester Valley after towns in England because *“they reminded him of home”*.

Some History:

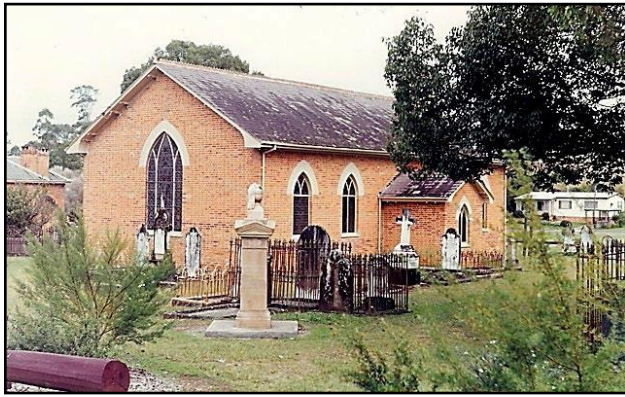
If it had not been for the Australian Agricultural Company (AA Company) there would be no Stroud or Gloucester as we know them today so a little history of the Company must be included in any story to do with Stroud.



The AA Company was founded by an act of British Parliament in June 1824, and granted 1,000,000 acres (405,000 hectares or more than 4,000 square kilometres) of Crown land which it located between Port Stephens and the Manning River. The capital for the company was £1,000,000 divided into 10,000 shares of £100 each. The object of the company was to obtain 1,000,000 acres of land to form a company based on agriculture: to raise wool, grow vines (for wine), olives, flax and more.

In December 1825 the first Manager, Robert Dawson, arrived in Sydney with servants and stock. He rented a farm at Parramatta for his stock whilst he set about selecting land under the grants system working at the time. He very quickly settled on Port Stephens and by May the next year a settlement of sorts was formed there. By October the Company had over 1,000 head of cattle and 2,000 sheep.³

A complete township had been laid out at Stroud by the end of 1829 and in the 1830s the village of Stroud became the headquarters of the AA Company. It was a very English-looking town with a fence around the perimeter and a gate across both the north and south roads out of town. Although the original gates have long since disappeared there is a replica gate on the northern entrance to the town. Only a handful of old buildings and sites remain as testimony to the company's influence: several brick houses, Stroud House, St John's Anglican Church, Quambi, once a school but now a museum, and eight underground wheat silos on Silo Hill. As an example of one of the historic buildings, below is a mini-history of St Johns. Most of the earlier buildings also have a fascinating history.



St Johns Anglican Church – Stroud 2017



⁴Sir William Edward Parry

The magnificent St Johns Church was built with convict labour in 1833 by Sir Edward Parry, famed Arctic explorer and, from 1829, first Commissioner for the AA Company. The Company granted 50 guineas towards the construction of the church with the residual cost provided by Sir Edward Parry. The corner stone was laid by Sir Edward on 29th April 1833 but the building remained un-consecrated for eighteen years until May 1851, as the site was not yet conveyed to the ecclesiastical authorities. The bricks were made from local clay deposits, and the doors, floor, altar, pulpits, pews, balustrades and stairs were all made from local cedar. They are still in original condition and the church remains today as it was in 1833. St Johns is one of the oldest and most original buildings in Australia and has been in continual use since the first service in the church on Sunday 22nd December 1833 conducted by the Reverend Mr Price.

The depression in New South Wales in the early 1840s hit the Stroud area hard. Stock couldn't be sold and they were killed for their hides and tallow, being boiled down at Stroud. When the Company received the deed of grant for their land in 1847 they immediately prepared it for sale.

Things looked far from promising for the Company's Port Stephens holdings by 1855 but in 1856 the superintendent of the AA Company gave his impressions of Stroud stating that all the buildings, with the exception of Stroud House, were in good repair. In February 1856 the Directors decided that the sheep should be removed from Port Stephens Estate and, further, that the Company's Establishment at Stroud should be disbanded. Towns were surveyed and land sold. Sheep proved a disaster and by October 1857 the Company did not possess a single sheep. In April 1857 the Company discharged all tradesmen in Stroud.⁵



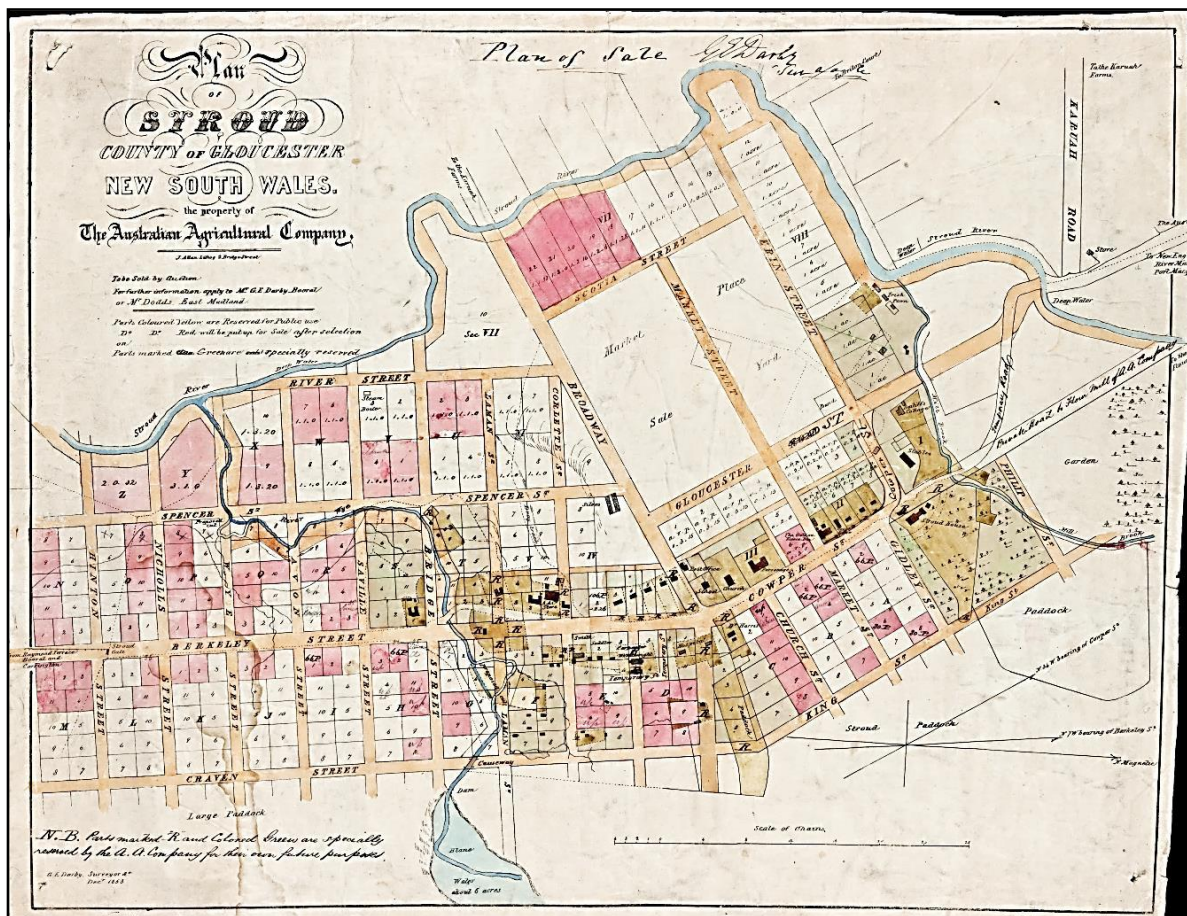
Arthur Hodgson (later Sir Arthur). 1818 – 1902

Squatter, Politician and Squire.

General Superintendent, AA Company 1856 – 1861.

Persuaded by Patrick Leslie, he settled on the new land of the Darling Downs in Queensland in the 1840s. The land was rich but many problems beset Hodgson and he returned south in the 1850s retaining his property, Eton Vale on the Darling Downs, which was eventually very successful. He returned to England where he settled again in 1870, though he returned several times to Australia

(*Australian Dictionary of Biography* – D B Waterson)



This plan of Stroud was drawn by George Eld Darby, the AA Co Surveyor from 1852 to 1857. Darby Street in Newcastle was named in recognition of his work for the Company.

The map is annotated:

- upper left (below the map description):
*To be Sold by Auction,
 For further information apply Mr G E Darby, Booral
 Or Mr Dodds, East Maitland.*
- [Key];
*Parts Coloured Yellow for Public use
 D° D° Red will be put up for sale
 Parts marked Green are specially reserved.*
- lower left corner

NB Parts marked "R" and Coloured Green are specially reserved by the AA Company for their own future purposes.

G E Darby. Surveyor &c Decr 1853

Darby's plan was used and adapted for many years even long after he ceased to work for the AA Company. As one can see from this plan the AA Company kept a firm hold on Stroud even after 1856.

The School of Arts

Establishment:

The residents of Stroud obviously had a need for an organization such as a School of Arts and moves were started in 1858 to remedy the situation. The *Empire* of Tuesday 5 January 1858 mentions the meeting of the Temperance Society held in a “*framework of a shed belonging to the AA Co, covered with tarpaulin.*”

The *Columbian* of 3 May 1858 reports on a meeting held in the Court House on 25th April

“...to take measures for establishing a Mutual Improvement Society or School of Arts in connection with the Stroud library. Substantial funds were collected at the meeting and a committee formed to move the establishment forward. Rev S Simm, with his usual eloquence, spoke upon the service such institutions rendered to the cause of knowledge, education and religion”.

The Port Stephens correspondent to the *Sydney Morning Herald* wrote on Thursday 1 July 1858:

The inaugural lecture of the newly formed Mechanics’ Institute was delivered at the new school house with an attendance of some 200 people. The schoolhouse was built by the AA Co and the residents of Stroud were greatly indebted to the Company. Not only did they donate the land but gave a princely sum for the building and other assistance.

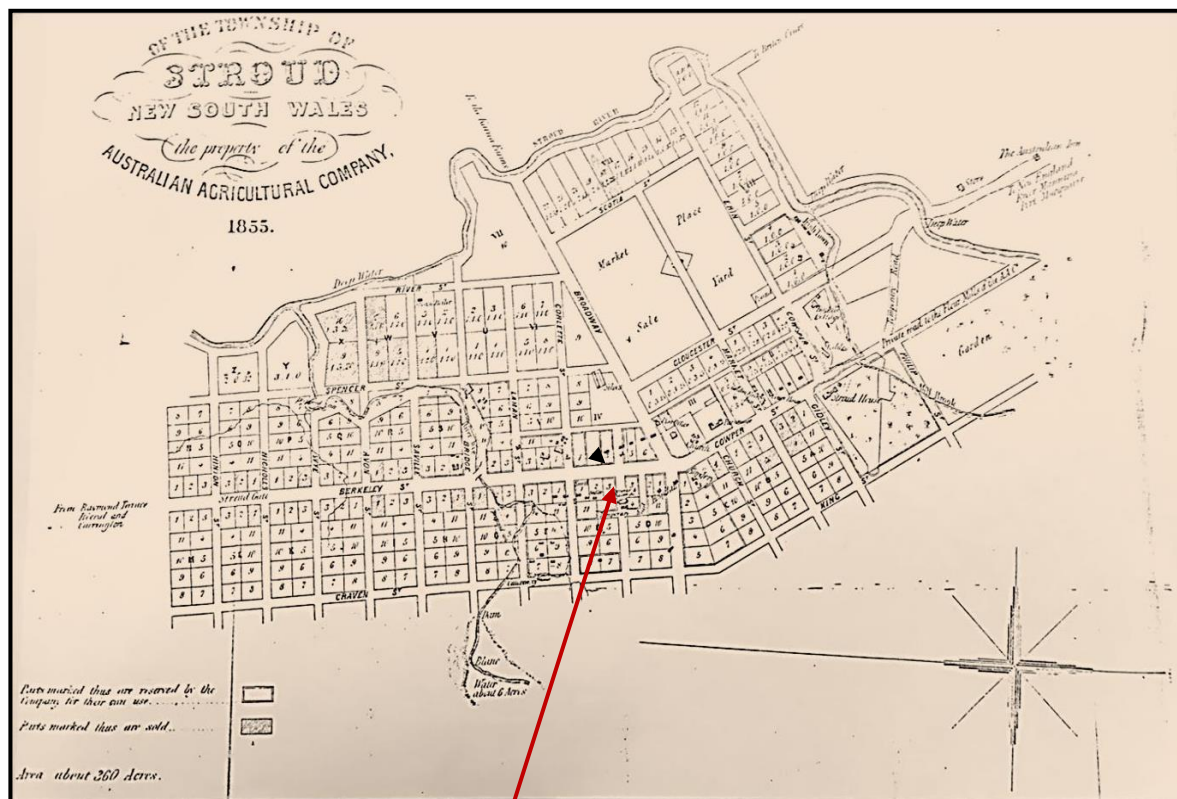
Mr C H Green delivered the inaugural lecture, the subject being Geology and Fossils; he made full use of the magic lantern owned by the Institute. The lecture program in the early period offered topics such as Phrenology, Electro-Biology, Galvinism, China and her People, the Physiology of Man; and later, The Indians of North America, Arctic Voyages of Franklin and Parry, A Trip to Paris, The Life of Nelson, and Scenes from the American War, among others. In 1858 the AA Company advertised all their houses in Stroud for sale. The Company had discovered coal north of Stroud in 1855 and pits were established in 1858 but despite the quality of the coal, the costs to extract it were prohibitive. It was not until 1995, more than a century later, that Stratford Coal became a truly viable company.

The Building:

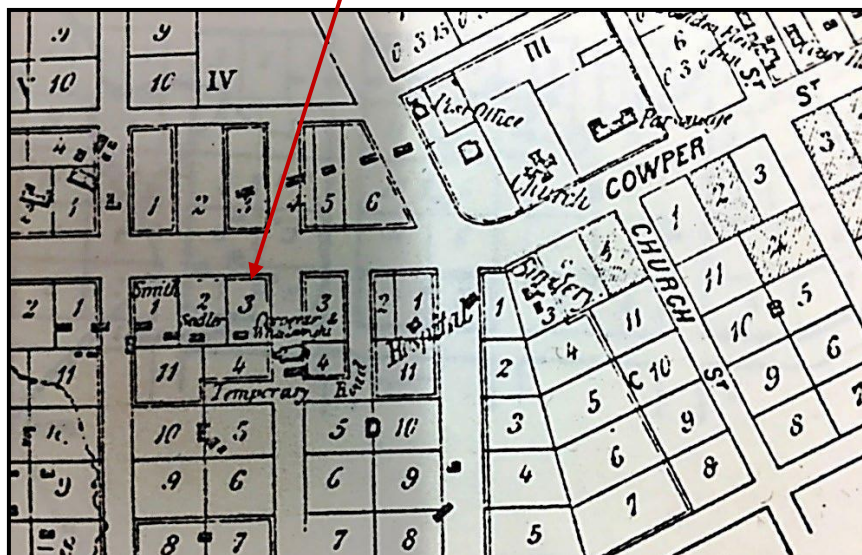
The School had been the only facility large enough to hold meetings or lectures; even the election for the Church Synod was held at the School House as late as December 1858.

Arthur Hodgson, General Superintendent of the Company, was instrumental in the decision for the School of Arts to be set up independently. He was also President of the Stroud Mutual Improvement Society and at a meeting on 25 January 1859, he made the offer of an allotment of land with a building on it “*in every way suitable for a School of Arts for the perpetual benefit of Stroud*”. Added to this was a donation of £50 to aid in any alteration which the building might require. (*Sydney Morning Herald* Tues 25 Jan 1859 p.5)

Action soon followed and it was announced that the School of Arts (now almost finished) was to be opened on June 15th, with a tea party given by the ladies of Stroud.⁶



Town map: University of Newcastle



Plan: Stroud Historical Society.

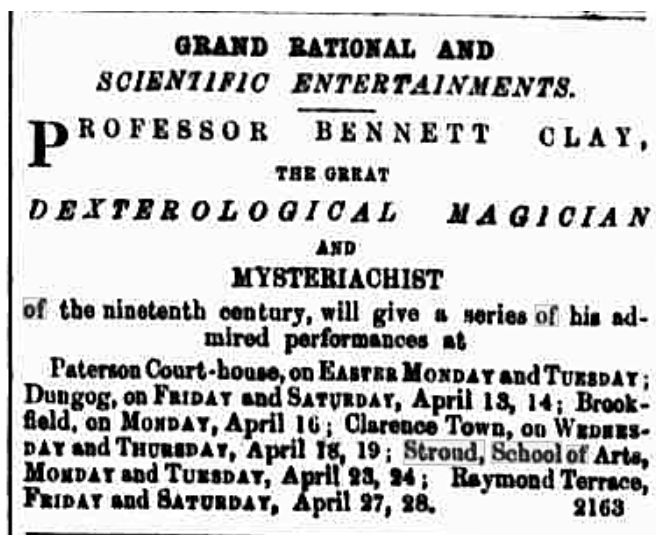
The map of the town and plan detail above show the location in Berkeley Street of the former workshop donated by the AA Company to the citizens of Stroud for use as a School of Arts.

It is identified as '3 Carpenter & Wheelwright'.

The Maitland Mercury of Saturday 18 June 1859 gives a wonderful description of the festivities associated with the opening of the building - in part below:

The large hall of the new building was profusely decorated. About 250 people attended and did justice to a magnificent tea. After tea was finished folk strolled around the grounds attached to the building while the tables were cleared and the hall set up for the large magnifying lantern, which belonged to the society, and exhibited beautiful views and some comic ones for the benefit of the juveniles. Everyone was thanked in particular the AA Co who provided the land and the shell of the present handsome building which was previously a workshop.

It did not take long before the School of Arts was being used for education and entertainment. Lectures were a regular feature given by eminent people and often very lengthy. The Rev Samuel Simm gave a lecture on Natural History which lasted three hours; it was reported he also made good use of the Magic Lantern. (Simms was the AA Company Chaplain). Two hour lectures were not uncommon.



An interesting advertisement
Appeared in *The Maitland Mercury* of Tuesday 3 April 1860

In July 1860 a reporter despaired about the lack of lecturers but finished his article with:

"A very pretty ornamental fence being placed around the building, the design of which reflects great credit to the sub-committee and a causeway is to be built over the low ground in front"

This watercourse was to cause major problems in years to come.

There might have been a lack of lecturers but the residents of Stroud and District were nonetheless well entertained with Madame Stevenson, for one, giving dramatic and musical entertainment for three consecutive nights in September 1860 when she was most enthusiastically received.⁸

By 1861 the old Company had broken up their establishment at Stroud. Nevertheless, the School of Arts continued to function: the Annual Meeting in March 1864 reported that there were 700 volumes in the Library with 655 loans issued over the year and the Reading Room was well stocked. Concerts and entertainments were a regular feature and an Annual Soiree arranged by the Committee became an important feature of life in Stroud.

In 1866 Rachel Henning wrote to her sister, Ettie, in England:

"Next day we rode to Stroud, the capital of these parts, but what would be a small village in England. There is an excellent inn there, and a mail road goes from Raymond Terrace to Stroud"

Rachel was to settle on the Myall River for some years, with her husband Deighton Taylor. She mentions the AA Company and the selling of their land. The Taylors purchased 150 acres from the Company in 1867.

To maintain the original building was a constant financial battle, Government subsidies helped to some extent, the amount in early days being £1 for every two members. During the 1870s and 1880s the building was weather boarded and painted, re-shingled, louvres placed on the windows, lighting added, and a piano purchased, together with much more to bring the building into "good and serviceable order". Except for the Government Subsidies, all these monies had to be raised in the community, no easy task for the members of the committee.

A New Building:

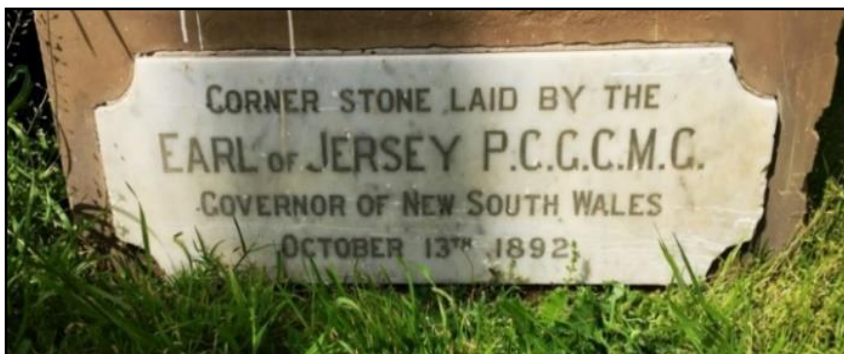
In early 1890 the condition of the School of Arts building was commented on and the committee was considering a new building as it was "*fast going into decay*"; but no definite action was taken until January the following year. The committee received a rough estimate for the construction of a new hall as the present one was now "*...absolutely falling down. Although the building that the School of Arts had been using since 1859 had served the community well it was proving inadequate and the Committee moved to build a more substantial hall*".⁹

At the Annual Meeting held on 27 January, 1892 the falling off of numbers of members was noted and the committee regretted that there was no advancement in the building of the new hall, even though plans and specifications were drawn up during the previous twelve months. The present building was reported to be in a dilapidated and dangerous condition.

A few months later, in May, a contractor had at last started work on the new building. Things were starting to move for the new School of Arts and the public were urged to gather at Laman Bridge on Thursday 13 October and proceed to Alderly, there to await the arrival of His Excellency the Governor and the Countess of Jersey and escort them into Stroud, quite some distance further.

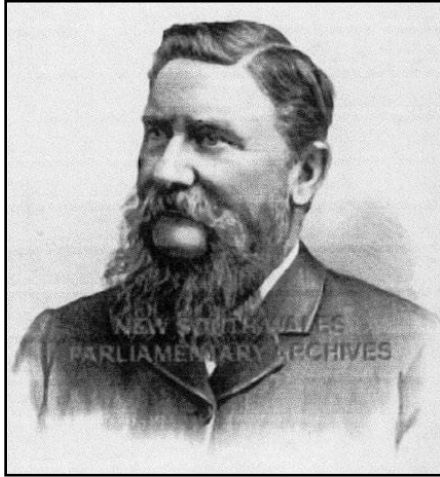


*Earl of Jersey*¹⁰



The Maitland Mercury of 15 October 1892 reported that the corner stone of the new School of Arts was laid by the Governor

in the presence of a large crowd. A Bazaar was held at the Temperance Hall where Lady Jersey did the honours and opened the event. Luncheon was held in the old School of Arts and a Grand Ball ended the day's activities. The Earl and Countess did not remain for the ball, they travelled to Booral Wharf thence to *Tahlee* to stay with the Hon R H D White.



Hon. R H D White
NSW Parliamentary Archives

Work progressed steadily on the new building and on a magnificent afternoon on May 24 1893 at 3 o'clock, a large crowd filled the new School of Arts building to celebrate its opening by Hon R H D White. He spoke of the history of Schools of Arts in the colony and their usefulness in the general education of the people. He then went on to assure the people in attendance that the panic was now over and that the reconstructed banks would have a larger capital and be on a firmer footing than ever and much more along the same lines. His speech contained very little about the School of Arts except to wish the people and committee well. A concert and ball took place at night.¹¹



Photograph – Dr Ken Stone

The old building, which many years ago had been converted from a workshop into a School of Arts, served the community well for over thirty- six years with a library, reading room and hall. In the Thirty-Sixth Annual Report of 1894, the first meeting held in the new building, it was mentioned that many improvements had been added to the original plan for the new structure and these had necessarily increased the cost, even so the debt remained comparatively low.¹² The Balance Sheet for the meeting showed the cost of the new School of Arts:

| | |
|---|----------|
| Burg Bros, as per contract, with extras | £836.4.0 |
| Plans &c | 8.8.0 |
| Architect's expenses | 23.4.0 |

Unfortunately the original plans for the building have not been located.

The Burg Brothers of Maitland, contractors for the building, also built the original School of Arts at Gresford.

The Botanical Gardens donated several trees and shrubs which were planted around the building, much improving its general appearance. 1894 saw the sale of the earlier hall in its somewhat dilapidated condition to Mr J B Dark for £12.0.0 with Mr Dark also buying “property” for £2.15.0. Two years later the Committee was happy to report the School of Arts was free of debt.

There was much excitement among the menfolk of Stroud and District when a billiard table was purchased for the School of Arts in November 1900. The table was purchased from Messrs Heiron & Smith who also installed it. The table was a first class one with excellent appointments and proved a wonderful acquisition to the institution for the outlay of £27.18.6. Heiron & Smith established their billiard table manufacturers in Sydney in 1883. For a small town such as Stroud to acquire a table from the best manufacturer available must have been cause for much celebration.

Unfortunately just six years after the opening the School of Arts was starting to look dilapidated owing, in the main, to the alteration to the plans from a single storey building to double storey. The water course that ran down the eastern side of Cowper Street on which the building was erected was referred to as a “mudhole”. That combined with the weight of the front of the building and, no doubt, the weight of the billiard table on the second floor caused cracks to appear in the walls. By 1901 repairs had to be done and Mr E Webber placed four iron bars across the width of the building and the cracks were cemented up as reported in the *Dungog Chronicle* of 22 October 1901.

The Correspondent for the *Dungog Chronicle* wrote rather forcibly about the condition of the School of Arts in their edition of 18 April 1905:

When wandering pensively along Cowper Street, we chanced to look up at the School of Arts, when Oh! What a wreck! Cracks here, cracks there, and rents everywhere in the walls. Fearing it might collapse, and bury us in the ruins, we hastened away; and seeing one of the officials, we ventured to hint that there were safer places in the world than within the shadows of the building – the top of Vesuvius, for instance.

A few months later on 27 October he again voiced his opinion of the School of Arts.

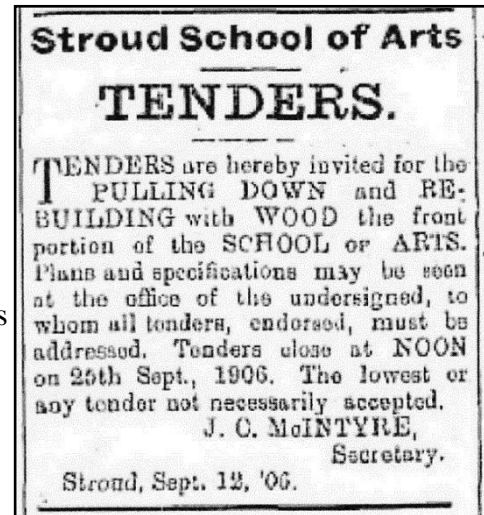
The School of Arts’ walls still show their rents and people are wondering when the committee will get those unsightly gaps filled. The public should not forget that the committee are running a day’s sport and ball on 13 November to raise funds for repairs. A successful day should be the result of the effort as the residents hitherto very proud of their building, should remember that each and everyone is interested in it though it is built in a mudhole.

By June the following year action was finally being taken to solve the problem of the front of the building. The foundation was originally only laid for one floor, and the addition of the second storey caused subsidence resulting in the facade cracking badly. The Premier, Sir Joseph Carruthers, when visiting Stroud about that time, agreed to a special grant of £200 to help defray the costs associated with the work.

In September, just thirteen years after the grand opening of the new School of Arts, the decision was finally made to pull down the front portion of the building. Safety became imperilled and to rebuild the front portions, including the reading rooms, library and billiard room, would be at an estimated cost of £200. Advertisements for Tenders appeared in many local papers.

Dungog Chronicle ►

Friday 14 September, 1906



Photograph - *Stroud Historical Society*

This photograph of Stroud School of Arts shows the new front portion together with the ornamental fence, which was rebuilt after construction and served the building well into the 1920s. Many of the fittings inside the School of Arts and the windows and doors from the demolition were used in the new building. The local residents were not all that happy about the front façade of their beautiful building having to be replaced with wood, and although the reports do not say, it can be assumed that rebuilding with brick would only cause the same problems in the future.

School of Arts – The work of renovating the School of Arts in Stroud is progressing satisfactorily. The front part of the building has been pulled down and is being rebuilt according to the new plan, which provides for the billiard room being placed on the ground floor instead of upstairs as formerly.¹³

The School of Arts has been made additionally attractive, and has added to the building a new library, reading room, etc. The billiard room has been re-arranged, and improvements of a distinct advantage made at the rear of the stage, while the appointments of scenery have been conveniently adjusted. The front of the building has also been embellished, and the building has quite an attractive appearance, so much in fact that those few willing workers directly in touch with the institution have reason to be proud. Dungog Chronicle 19 March 1907.

A good description of the outside renovations appeared in the *Dungog Chronicle* 24 September 1909.

The School of Arts is somewhat cunningly guised under mottled painting, which gives one at a distance the idea it is solid stone. But it isn't – it's wood, and it's attractive looking too, and of some extent. Further it is a much frequented building, with a good sized hall, stage and retiring room, a library, reading room and billiard room, where the gentle stranger takes on, per chance, a tournament winner unwittingly. This institute is a power in the town, and it rejoices in the possession of quite a number of enthusiastic members of committee.

On 23 August 1907 an auction of several blocks of land by Messrs Carlton & Abbott for the vendor, the AA Company, was to have significance for the School of Arts. Lot 12 was purchased by Mr J A Mc Kenzie for £7. 5s, and he immediately donated the block to the Trustees of the School of Arts.¹⁴ Mr McKenzie was, at the time, the Patron of the School of Arts and a very active member. Lot 12 is the block of land at the rear of the School of Arts that runs through to Mallon Street and is listed on the MidCoast Council plans as Lot 5 -DP1098616.¹⁵ It has remained undeveloped and is now owned by the MidCoast Council, as is the School of Arts.

Social History:

In the years up to the First World War the School of Arts functioned exceedingly well. Each year showed progress and there were additions and repairs done to the building including installation of acetylene gas lights and the addition of a card room cum ladies cloak room.

During both World Wars the School of Arts was used as a venue for farewells to men from the area who were going overseas and for welcome home functions. These occasions were always well attended as the community was justifiably proud of its young men. The War Memorial in the showground attests to the number of men from the area who enlisted in both wars and marks, sadly, the men who did not return. During the First World War the Stroud Girls Patriotic League were mainly responsible for the functions.

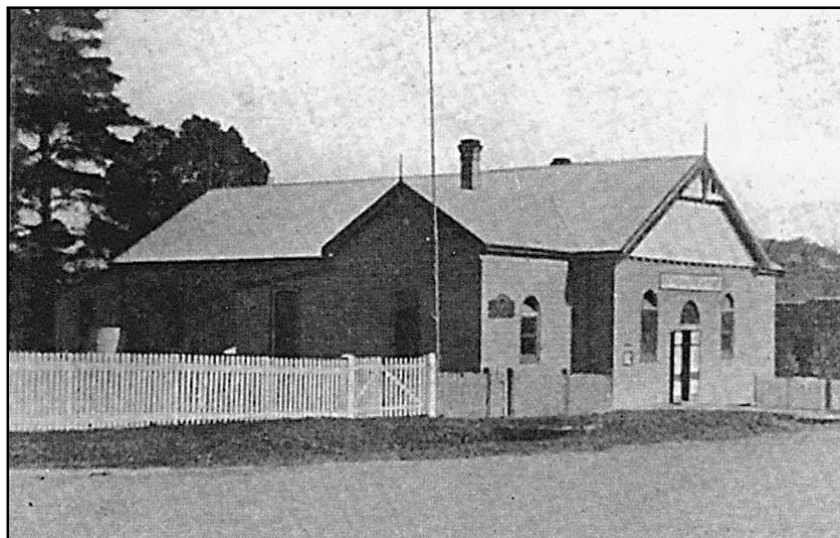


Photograph – Stroud Historical Society

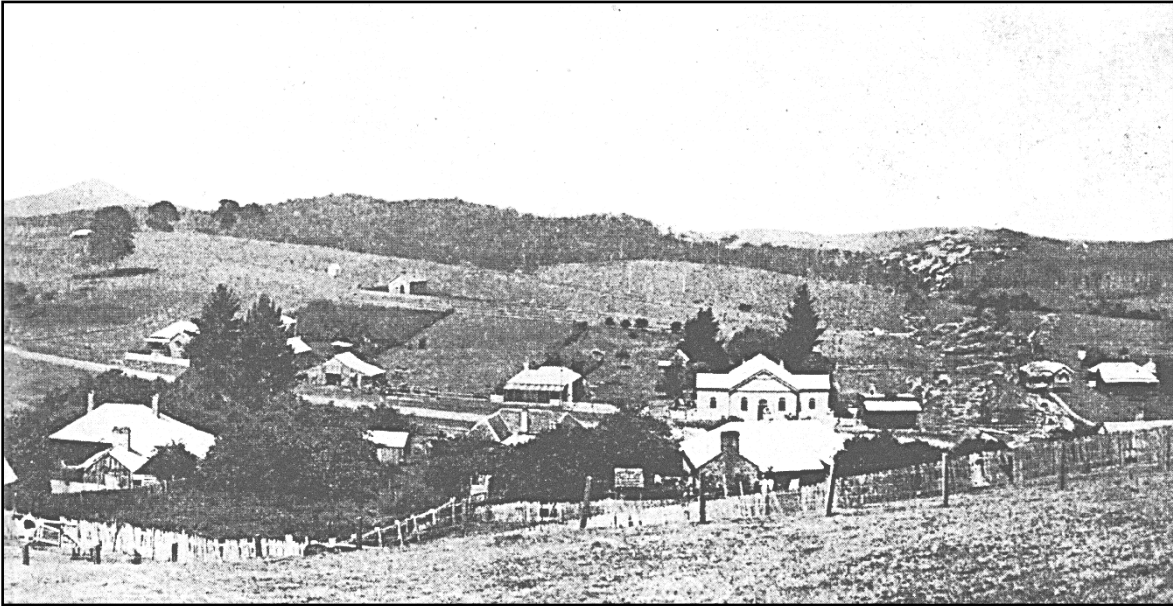
The Stroud School of Arts served the community well in times of natural disasters such as floods as well as more frightening events as in 1919 when it was equipped as an Isolation Hospital during the influenza epidemic of that year.

On the outbreak occurring in Stroud, arrangements were immediately made for taking over the Stroud School of Arts building, which has been equipped as an emergency hospital.¹⁶

The Shire gave a grant of money to both Stroud and Bulladelah to assist with equipment. It has been estimated by historians that, during the 1919 epidemic, 6244 people died in New South Wales alone.



This photograph, taken in 1926, shows the ornamental picket fence still in evidence.



The impressive white building is the School of Arts, photograph taken from Silo Hill.

Photographs above: *Stroud Historical Society Souvenir of Stroud 1824 to 1926*

Travelling movies used the School of Arts to show their films as it was the only building large enough to house the patrons. Lawrence Penn and his son Lyle ran travelling picture shows “Penn’s Touring Talkies”. Lyle wrote about their time on the road and the film *The Picture Show Man* was based on his memoirs. Scarlett’s was another Travelling Picture Show that visited Stroud.



Scarlett’s Travelling Picture Show

Photograph - *Stroud Community Hub a Lions Club Project*

When the travelling picture shows stopped coming to Stroud Les Bourke started screening movies sometime in the 1930s. He had become friendly with the travelling picture show men and as he lived next door he had spent many hours in the projection room. Children sat on long stools at the front and the padded seating for adults were in sets attached to wooden runners. They had to be pulled out on Saturday afternoon as possibly there had been a dance or other function the night before.

In May 1933 Mr Engel, of Tea Gardens, installed a Supertone Talkie Apparatus in the hall - a much superior system to anything previously heard in Stroud. It was agreed by the School of Arts Committee that talkies would be shown on an average of three Saturday nights each month.¹⁷

A special meeting was called on Wednesday 24 October 1934 to obtain approval to mortgage¹⁸ the School of Arts so that much needed extensions could be carried out. Just over a week later the resolution was confirmed at a second meeting.¹⁹

The mortgage was obviously approved by the lending authority as tenders were called for brick extensions to the hall and a new weatherboard supper room.²⁰

The School of Arts²¹ with new brick extensions and weatherboard supper room, was officially re-opened 25 October 1935 by C E Bennett MLA. The hall was lengthened by 12 feet and the whole of the supper room was reconstructed giving more than twice the space as well as being more convenient. The opening was followed by a Grand Ball the next night.

Because of the cost of building the extensions the Committee was compelled to increase the hall rental fees. A bank overdraft was taken out to cover the costs of £888 that had been spent on the alterations to the buildings, together with £81.10.8 on new fixtures and furnishings. The loan approved was for £800.²²

The photographs following, taken by the author in September 2018, clearly show the 1935 brick extension with the wooden supper room at the rear of the building. The change in brickwork for the extensions is clearly visible although the aim to colour-match is evident.





The School of Arts was the main venue for wedding receptions for generations of residents as it had a “superior” kitchen and an excellent dance floor.

◀ This photograph, taken in September 1937, is of Doreen and Edwin Brady about to enter Stroud School of Arts for their wedding breakfast after their marriage at St Johns Church.

◀ The original step is from 1892, now worn in the middle from generations of use. The step is still in evidence but now, unfortunately, covered in cement to fill in the hollow.

Concerns were expressed by the Committee in 1937 about the falling off of membership and the apathy of residents towards the institution:

*If this movement continues the value of the institution to the community will be lost and it will soon become just a public hall instead of an educational institution.*²³

Fortunately things improved and membership increased. The debt incurred by the alterations in 1935 was cleared by February 1944.²⁴

At the meeting of the School of Arts committee the following arrangements were made for the leasing of the hall on Saturday nights for 1938. January, February and March there would be nine nights for pictures, three for other entertainments. From the beginning of April every alternate Saturday night will be reserved for pictures and the other Saturday night for other functions. Bookings for week nights will remain as in the past. The committee intended to adhere rigidly to this arrangement.²⁵

The hall continued to be used for Bazaars, community concerts, and dances during World War 2 with possibly the most important functions being the farewell of soldiers going to the Front. Welcome home functions were a cause for much celebration. Debutante Balls were always a very popular and well attended event. The sale of the billiard table in 1952 would have been a sad day for the few residents who still used it.²⁶ Side gates were sold as well. It could not be ascertained if these sales were to boost the coffers or merely disposing of unnecessary items.

As the School of Arts aged, more and more maintenance had to be carried out to preserve the building. It was a constant struggle for the committee to raise funds for painting, concreting footpaths and updating facilities to more modern standards. It is only through the support of volunteer groups such as the Lions Club (see story below) and of individuals who give of so much of their time that the Stroud School of Arts is still a viable going concern.

Currently (2019)

Up until 1976 the operation of the Controlling Committee had not changed since 1859.²⁷

In line with changes in the boundaries and control of Shire Councils, it is now controlled by the Mid Coast Council, previously Great Lakes Council.

The Pre School operates at the rear of the building and among the many activities at the hall is a junior gymnastic group.



Interior of the Stroud School of Arts – 2017 Photograph: MidCoast Council website.

In 2017 The Lions Clubs of Stroud and Dungog applied for and received a grant for \$28,000 from Lions Clubs International Foundation. With an added \$12,000 from Great Lakes Council the Stroud School of Arts Hall was able to have major internal improvements thus upgrading the venue's capability for community events.

The funds provided for installation of air conditioning and ceiling fans throughout the hall, kitchen, dining area and Playgroup Room along with the upgrading of the hall's kitchen to meet mandatory standards. The kitchen was fitted with new sinks and cupboards and new appliances were installed - including a large fridge-freezer and dishwasher.

Federal Member for the seat of Lyne, Dr David Gillespie, officially opened the upgrade to the Stroud School of Arts in April 2018. The upgrade improved the facility to meet the demands of the various uses the School of Arts has taken on over the years, both for local events and in times of natural disaster, such as the floods, where it has been an important focal point for coordination of activities and a key meeting point.



Lions Club members, Council and community members photographed at the opening of the upgraded facilities, the latest work undertaken at the Stroud School of Arts.²⁸

With its historic convict built buildings, Silo Hill, Bed and Breakfast establishments and excellent cafes, Stroud is now a favourite tourist stopover for those visiting the Barrington Tops and Gloucester, another early AA Company town.



Stroud Church, ca. 1854 by Conrad Martens.

Painting: State Library of NSW

sl.nsw.gov.au.45683

Although perhaps not clear in this reproduction, the Carpenter & Wheelwright workshop that was destined to become the first Stroud School of Arts is at the far left.

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Archival Photographs, Maps and Plans: Stroud Historical Society

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