



This is Part 5 of Deans Marsh Community Stories covering the 1960s 1970s and 1980s. In these decades the community runs a Miss Deans Marsh competition and one of the contestants ends up in the Miss Australia pageant, The Martians baseball team begins, the Hall committee buys more land – and then sells it, the Deans Marsh Community Cottage is created and Deans Marsh experiences the Ash Wednesday bush fires.

### 1960s

1960 A Gymkhana held in Deans Marsh and the Hall and Park Committee shared the profits of £198 – each got £99.15.3.<sup>2</sup>

**42. Miss Deans Marsh:** Throughout the 1960s and 70s as part of the annual Sports Day/Gymkhana Miss Deans Marsh competitions were held. The 1963 winner Melva Armistead went on to compete in the Miss Australia contest. From the 1970s Miss Deans Marsh ran competitions in the lead up to Sports Day for both young women, and for the younger girls.

**43. 1961 June Pony Club.**<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> © State Library of Victoria: Scurfield, Gordon. 1924-1996 photographer, photographer. (1983). *Bushfire damage after the Ash Wednesday fires, Great Ocean Road, Victoria*. Photo 2 House destroyed Deans Marsh –Lorne Road

<sup>2</sup> Hall Minutes June 1 1961 It is not clear from the Minutes exactly when the Annual Sports day morphed into the Gymkhana but they seem to have been run together for some years in the 1970 and early 1980s? see Park Minutes August 9 1960.

1961 Badminton being played in the Hall, as it was in the mid 1950s.<sup>4</sup>

1963 Function to be organised for Miss Melva Armistead who is a Miss Australia entrant.<sup>5</sup>

1963 Park Minutes of July 16 1963 discuss the dimensions of the new Afternoon Tea Rooms [cricket club room], which were either rebuilt entirely or renovated at this time.

1963 At the Park Committee AGM on May 9<sup>th</sup> Mr Leslie McKay stood down as Park Treasurer after 31 years.

1964 Balls and Dances were held regularly in this period; these often raised up to £50, and after deducting expenses for music and catering, made profits of up to £20 a time for Hall funds. However the Hall Minutes note a sign to be put up 'NO Stamping Allowed'.<sup>6</sup>

44. 1965 **Hall used for Chest X-rays**, organised by the Victorian government, were scheduled for community members.<sup>7</sup>

1966 DMPA still lobbying – now the state government – for assistance with a town water project.<sup>8</sup>

45. 1966 **The Deans Marsh Baseball Club – The Martians**

The Colac Baseball League began in 1964, and baseball came to Deans Marsh in 1966, when Murroon schoolteacher Hugh Morris helped some enthusiasts to form the Martians team. Jim Chappell led the first team which included Steve and Richard McKenna, Geoff Millard, Graeme Brien, John Woollard, Wayne Pritchard, Roy Chappell, Rod Morris, Brian Watts and Hugh and Andrew Stewart....<sup>9</sup>

1966 August. **A decision was taken to Hall and Park committees to merge**<sup>10</sup>.

1966 At its November 11 meeting the Committee noted the retirement of Hugh McKay after 45 years of service to the park.

46. 1966 Hall Minutes November 22 list dates for **Film showings throughout 1967** from **State Film Centre**: February 9 May 4 and August 17.<sup>11</sup>

Park Minutes December 13 A vote to merge the Hall and Park Committees into a single Committee of Management was carried unanimously.

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<sup>3</sup> Hall Minutes June 1 1961

<sup>4</sup> Hall Minutes April 24 1961

<sup>5</sup> Hall Minutes May 7 1963

<sup>6</sup> Hall Minutes July 7 1964

<sup>7</sup> Hall Minutes June 2 1965

<sup>8</sup> DMPA Minutes February 28

<sup>9</sup> **The Croaker** vol. 7 no. 6 p.2 'The Martians - Baseball legends' article by Denis Jenkins

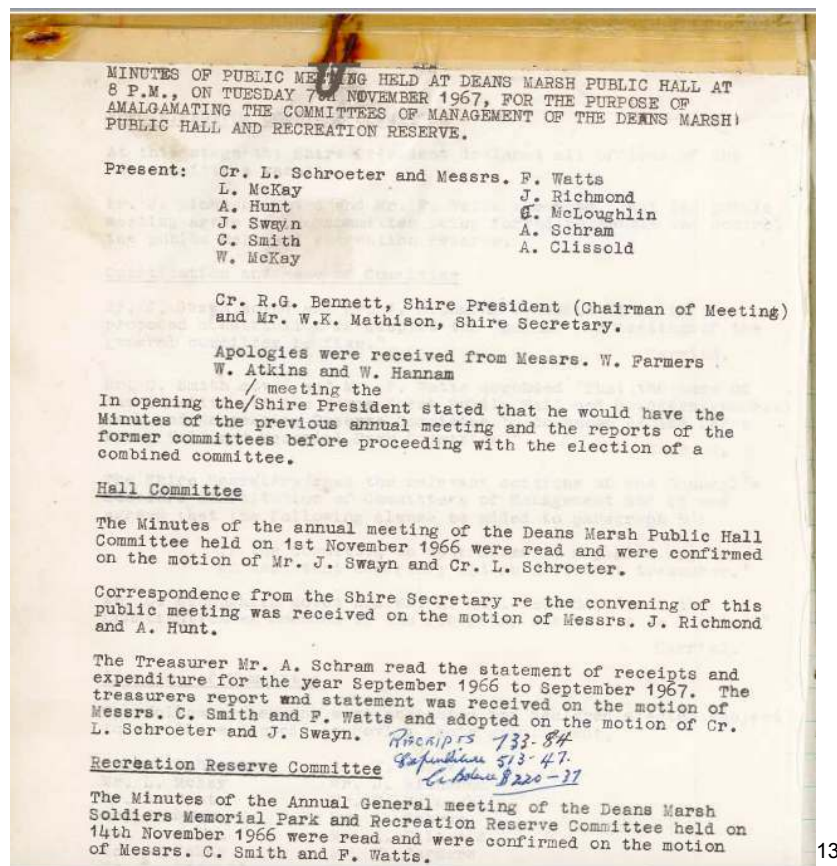
<sup>10</sup> Hall Committee Minutes Pink Minute book shell series 4222 meeting on 2.8.66

<sup>11</sup> Letter from SFC to W. McKay 1966 in community archives

1967 DMPA Minutes July 21 and September 25 note its initiative of a 'community reticulated water system for township and farmland' has resulted in a petition of local residents was being circulated. The signatures collected – how many not stated – was forwarded to the Winchelsea Shire Council

**1967 Public meeting 7.11.67 endorsed the merger of Hall and Park committees.**

At the meeting it was moved by J Richmond and seconded by F Watts that the public meeting agree to 'one committee being formed to manage and control the public hall and recreation reserve the Deans Marsh Soldiers Memorial park and Recreation Reserve Committee. Agreed.'<sup>12</sup>



**47. 1968 Mothers Day club held a series of Children's Concerts.<sup>14</sup>**

1968 Deans Marsh Baseball Club The Martians, 'Never Undeafated' after two years, the Martians broke through with some modest success in 1968 – enough to make the finals and finish third in a five team league.<sup>15</sup>

1968 the Deans Marsh Progress Association gave \$150 to the now-combined Hall and Park Committee.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Hall Minutes October 3 1967

<sup>13</sup> Screen shot of the Minutes of that meeting to merge the Hall and Park Committees November 7 1967.

<sup>14</sup> Mrs P McKenzie was the secretary

<sup>15</sup> **The Croaker** vol. 7 no. 6 p.2 'The Martians - Baseball legends' article by Denis Jenkins.

<sup>16</sup> The community holds the complete minutes of the DMPA contained in a small brown suitcase. Park Committee Green Minute book meeting 7.5.68



1969 December 2 Park Minutes note a Minute of Appreciation to Mr A Hunt upon his retirement to Geelong.

48. 1969 March 21-22 Back to Deans Marsh attended by at least 570 people by Guest Book / Visitors Book.

**Enjoyable Back-to-Deans-Marsh ball**

THE ARTISTRY of Mrs. Ernie Hampshire, Mr. and Mrs. Lindsay Schroeter, and Mr. Bill Schroeter, of Winchelsea, added much to the atmosphere of the Back to Deans Marsh ball last Friday night.

They had decorated the stage with banks of silvered ferns, highlighted by red rosettes. These formed an effective background to the large bowls of Michaelmas daisy, dahlias and gladioli, gathered from the garden of Mrs. Jack Clissold.

Popular MC at Deans Marsh dances, Mr. Daryl Dorman, saw that patrons enjoyed themselves. He called a variety of dances to suit all tastes and ages, as a wide time-span was represented by those who had come to enjoy the "Back-to" celebrations.

There were numerous candidates for the "Star of the Evening" contest. The committee had been fortunate in obtaining the services of Mrs. Peter Mercer, Mrs. Allan Reid and Mrs. H. A. Rhodes, as judges for the evening.

The "Star of the Evening" was Miss Brenda Howard, of Deans Marsh, and Mrs. Lindsay Schroeter was awarded the "Matron" title.

Brenda's gown of pink crepe was cut on slender lines, with slight fullness given to the skirt by the gathered waistline. Matching pink ruffles trimmed the neckline and the skirt.

The double row of ruffled trim from the neckline to the waist, was centred with a row of

Trophies were presented to Brenda and Mrs. Schroeter.

Annette Hunt presented floral sprays to the judges. A student at Colac High School, Annette was a fitting choice to present the flowers, as she represented the fourth generation of the Hunt family, to perform public duties in Deans Marsh.

Annette's frock was patterned like peppermint candy. She wore a large pink bow in her hair.

Young and old enjoyed the dancing and meeting of old friends. Committee members had a busy time serving a tasty supper, to which Miss Margaret Lester had given much thought as catering secretary.

Winners of a lucky spot dance were Miss Gay McLachlan and Mr. Roy Chappell.

Many beautiful frocks were seen at the ball.

**Dancers**

Among dancers were Miss Rosemary Watts, orchid pink chiffon gown, sunray pleated skirt, lace bodice; Mrs. L. Dorman, turquoise brocade frock; Mrs. R. Pritchard, old-gold and cream brocade gown with saffron trim; Mrs. J. Richmond, daffodil brocade, full skirted, pearl-drop trim; Miss Maureen Berry, orchid pink crepe gown with wide sequin belt and neckline trim; Mrs. S. Armistead, pink chiffon gown, floating panels below bustline, Mrs. Max Robbins, white silk-shantung frock, lace applique on skirt; Mrs. Al-lardyce, soft yellow full-skirted gown with long sleeves; Miss Sandra Pettman, long sleeved black and white striped frock, with black organza redingote skirt; Miss Denise Howard, full white skirt, turquoise bodice with white lace trim.

Miss Cheryl Hunt, deep pink chiffon frock, fullness extending from pin-tucked bodice; Mrs. C. White, pink crepe gown; Mrs. J. Clissold, old-gold brocade frock; Mrs. E. Freshwater, pale blue brocade gown; Mrs. R. Barling, of Lakes Entrance, black velvet skirt, fringed gold lurex top; Mrs. Alan Hunt, leaf green after-five frock, scooped neckline.

Miss Janine Hunt, black noire skirt, white organza blouse with scrolled collar, wide black belt; Mrs. Mark Walter, pale blue chiffon gown, with opalescent sequin trim; Mrs. J. Swayn, full-skirted pale blue frock, neckline wreathed with pink rosebuds; Mrs. Dennis Chappell, coffee

28-3-69

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1969 The Deans Marsh Cricket Club joined the Colac & District competition in 1969, winning a premiership in the first year. It fielded two teams through most of the seventies but had to wait until 1987 for their next premiership.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>17</sup> screenshot of Minutes book in which press clippings – unsourced – are pasted

<sup>18</sup> *The Croaker* Vol.8 No1 p.2

## 1970s

1970s Gymkhana events included Best groomed/Dressed Horse and Rider. Walk Trot and Gallop one lap around the oval with maybe 15 horses competing; Handball competition [as was played every week on Channel Seven's *World of Sport*], and a parade was held with Floats like the Moomba parade in Melbourne. Floats included the Red Cross, the Fire Brigade, the Miss Deans Marsh contestants and kids with their decorated bicycles

49. 1970 **Scouts [from Birregurra] and Cubs meetings held in old Presbyterian church, on land across Pennyroyal Valley Road and next to the Deans Marsh Primary School, which Park Committee bought in 2.6.1970.**<sup>19</sup> A Grant to assist in the purchase was sought from the Victorian government<sup>20</sup> - but it is not known if any grant received. The land was sold in 1975 to a private owner for \$7000.<sup>21</sup>

1970 Baseball team the operated in Deans Marsh until the 1980s when the Deans Marsh Martians team moved to a base in Geelong and competed in a league there. The Martians folded in 1997.<sup>22</sup>

1970 Manchester Unity Independent Of Odd Fellows Lodge Annual Ball to be held on August 22 1970.<sup>23</sup>

1971 February 22 meeting of the DMPA noted that it had tried and failed to get a local government Riding [ward] to include the whole district of Deans Marsh Bambra Boonah [and Pennyroyal?].<sup>24</sup> The meeting also noted there was a lack of library service in Deans Marsh.<sup>25</sup>

1972 Deans Marsh Progress Association ceased operation in February 1972, as it was considered its work was done as 'all main roads were sealed.' Frank Watts was the long serving and final President of the DMPA goes into remission.<sup>26</sup>

1970s Netball 1960s and 1970s 'The Deans Marsh team played in the Colac league and had to draw the court outline on the gravel every time we played, and we wore our own homemade red tartan dresses when other teams were in skirts and tops! The first time we had get advice on court team positions form our opponents but we went on to win the Premiership in the second year!'<sup>27</sup>

1971-2 At the Hall Committee meeting of August 3 1971 it was proposed that a caravan park and camping ground be established in the Park with

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<sup>19</sup> Green Minute Book at meeting 2.6.70 and Park Letter Book.

<sup>20</sup> November 3 Hall Minutes

<sup>21</sup> Red Minute book from 1970-1984. See also Park Minutes June 2 1970

<sup>22</sup> *The Croaker* vol. 7 no. 6 p.2 'The Martians - Baseball legends' article by Denis Jenkins

<sup>23</sup> Hall Minutes June 2 1970

<sup>24</sup> Still trying in 2022!

<sup>25</sup> At least that one is solved – thanks Geelong and George!

<sup>26</sup> See DMPA Minute book in brown case in Deans Marsh community archives

<sup>27</sup> Fran Permezel Interview May 30 2020

suggested charges of \$5 per caravan. This rate was agreed to Hall meeting of December 5 1972

1973-6 Deans Marsh Baseball Club The Martians: *'after struggling to keep a team on the field, the club went into recess in 1971 and 1972, but re-emerged in 1973, and played in Colac and/or Geelong competitions until the end of 1996. The Martians were runners-up in the five-team Colac League in both 1973 and 1974. From 1973 to 1996, the records show that 177 players wore the club's green and black colours in a total of 994 matches in the club's firsts, seconds, thirds and even fourths teams. The club also had a junior team from 1973 to 1975, which then morphed into the seconds and beyond from 1976 onwards.'*<sup>28</sup>

50. 1970s **Cake Decorating classes** run by CWA members

51. **Yoga classes**

1976 Deans Marsh Baseball Club *'When the CBL joined the Geelong B Grade in 1975 to make an eight-team competition, the Martians won the first combined premiership with a dramatic last inning surge to take the grand final by a score of 16-15. Runners-up again in 1976 with a tense 1-2 extra inning grand final defeat, the Deans Marsh Firsts team went on to play in the finals 19 times in the 20 years from 1973 to 1992 in competitions ranging from eight to fourteen teams. Six grand final appearances provided the scanty reward of just the one premiership.'*<sup>29</sup>

1979. Marjorie Lawrence, probably Deans Marsh's most famous person – at least in the wider world – died in the USA on January 13 1979. Shortly thereafter the Deans Marsh Hall and Park Committee arranged for a new photograph of Marjorie to be purchased, framed and hung in the Hall. An Afternoon Tea to celebrate the hanging of the new portrait was planned at the August 7<sup>th</sup> committee meeting. The next year the Committee proposed building a Marjorie Lawrence Memorial Cabin on the grounds but nothing appears to have eventuated.<sup>30</sup>

1979 Mrs. Lindsay Stewart and Mrs. J. Swayn were members of the Hall Committee.<sup>31</sup>

## 1980s

1981 Deans Marsh Baseball: *'From 1981, the Deans Marsh Martians club played its home games on the GBA ground on Belmont Common in Geelong. This venue provided a better surface to play on and was more accessible to the growing number of players based in Geelong or Melbourne.*

*Overall, the club played in 38 finals series in various grades, and won six premierships. As well as the firsts' 1975 win, the seconds won C Grade in 1977 and 1984, D Grade in 1992, and C Grade again in 1993. The fourths won E Grade in their only season in 1993.*

<sup>28</sup> *The Croaker* vol.6 no.7 p.2 Denis Jenkins article

<sup>29</sup> *The Croaker* vol.6 no.7 p.2 Denis Jenkins article

<sup>30</sup> NB: Programme for this event in loose papers in a plastic envelope in Community Archives. Minutes July 1 1980.

<sup>31</sup> Minutes November 2 1979. Woohoo! Lady members – the start of a bit of a trend

*With dwindling resources after 1996, the club endeavoured to keep going as a merged entity with the Barrabool club, but the combined club barely survived one season.'*<sup>32</sup>

**52. 1983 February 16 Ash Wednesday Bush fires in the Otways** are believed to have started in Deans Marsh, and the Oval was used as a central assembly point for fire fighters. The Hall was also used as the central point for community support including the preparation and distribution of meals for more than a week after the fire.

Within twelve hours, more than 180 fires fanned by winds of up to 110 km/h (68 mph) caused widespread destruction across the states of [Victoria](#) and South Australia.<sup>41</sup> Years of severe [drought](#) and extreme weather combined to create one of Australia's worst fire days in a century. The fires became the deadliest [bushfire](#) in Australian history until the [Black Saturday bushfires](#) in 2009.

In Victoria, 47 people died, including one on the road between Deans Marsh and Lorne.<sup>33</sup>

Frank Watts notes that fire in Deans Marsh was initially a small blaze, which only developed its intensity after the wind changed later in the day. He notes that the Hall was central to community fire relief and that the Red Cross served meals 24 hours a day in shifts for two weeks. He also recounts how former locals like Elizabeth McKay who was then living in Fitzroy Crossing WA organised fundraising relief for Deans Marsh.<sup>34</sup>

**53. 1983** Even after the community devastation of Ash Wednesday in the district the Hall Committee's work continued; its April 5th Minutes noting that **'the Fire Relief Committee** not be charged for use of the Hall.'

Frank Watts was president.

**54. 1983 an Arts and Crafts Market** held in the Hall.<sup>35</sup>

1983 September 6<sup>th</sup> Hall Minutes noted that its campaign to get election polling again held at the Hall had been successful.

**55. 1984 November** Hall Committee Minutes note that the **Deans Marsh Community Cottage** had organised **bingo nights** would start as soon as the permit was obtained from government.<sup>36</sup>

1984 and ongoing: **The Deans Marsh Community Cottage** developed from a 'small' idea when community members - young women mostly - wanted to create a play group for their young children, which operated in the Bambra Hall. Over the years, this group evolved and for ten or eleven years from

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<sup>32</sup> *The Croaker* vol.6 no.7 p.2 Denis Jenkins article

<sup>33</sup> For the detailed local story see Millard *The Deans Marsh Story* 1986 pp. 94ff and also [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ash\\_Wednesday\\_bushfires](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ash_Wednesday_bushfires)

<sup>34</sup> Frank Watts video interview 2007 14 minutes in

<sup>35</sup> Hall Minutes 5.7.83 only three months after the fires.

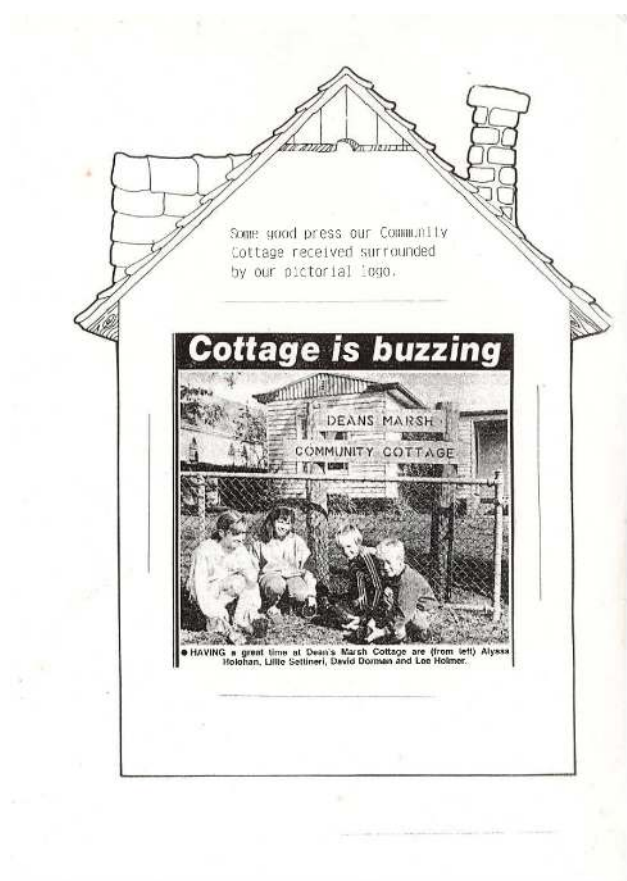
<sup>36</sup> Hall Minutes 6.11.84



1986 operated out of the former headmaster's house on the Deans Marsh Primary School property.<sup>37</sup>

As Wendy Robinson Koss remembers:

We got the [old headmaster's] house in an agreement with the School for \$1 a year, and it evolved from other locals helped us form our committee – there may have been Winch Community House, so there was some [state] government push out at the time, and we were perhaps inspired by them but the Deans Marsh Cottage was our idea in a way too and we drove its evolution. There was a range of people as coordinators – mostly local people and some from the wider region – and instructors such as Joyce Weir who reupholstered all the chairs for us but she wouldn't come a teach a course for us! Same with Lorna on the Lorne road – she was a magnificent spinner and she let us watch but would not come to teach! ...Everyone pitched in and did all the decoration and maintenance work plus Joyce Weir helped out as above. It was all very community-driven and operated.<sup>38</sup>



<sup>37</sup> See Cottage archives folders e.g. 1999 draft letter to SCSC signed by Karen Rayner

<sup>38</sup> Interview Wendy Robinson Koss January 9 2020

<sup>39</sup> undated press clipping see Deans Marsh Community Cottage archives



This movement continued to evolve, with assistance from state and local governments, into a fully fledged Community Cottage offering childcare and a wide range of social gatherings and educational classes including demonstrations from felt-making to fibreglass construction, health information, yoga classes, seed propagation and much more.<sup>40</sup>

The Deans Marsh Community Cottage was created very largely by local women and has grown to be a powerful, driving force for active community development in the district. It has been materially supported by a range of Victorian government departments and Surf Coast Shire officers and programmes over the years but has been directed always by community members. Community Cottage established classes and courses everything from cheese making to chainsaw useage.<sup>41</sup>

1984 Gymkhana held on Oct 30.

1985 June 25 a new kitchen was installed in the Hall and was funded by grant from Red Cross for \$8500 after the extensive community work coordinated by the local Red Cross members in providing food in the aftermath of the Ash Wednesday bush fires.<sup>42</sup>

1985 Hall Minutes June 4<sup>th</sup> note that 'the hall is not being much used.' Committee member Mrs. J Swayn suggests a centenary celebration beheld for the Hall, which would occur in 1987. It seems the Committee were content to have a celebration dinner for the opening of the new kitchen on June 25 1985. Profit made \$220.<sup>43</sup>

1985 November 5 Park and Hall committee to take over the organisation of the Sports Day and Gymkhana; originally the Sports Days had been run by the Caledonian Foresters committee from at least 1890, and maybe before.

1985 November 23 Cabaret in Hall to celebrate the opening of the new kitchen held 8.30pm to 1.30am Five piece orchestra, catered supper cost \$20 a double BYO.<sup>44</sup> The same minutes also note that the Hall committee is willing to take over the running of the Annual Sports Day and Gymkhana if the Sports and Athletics club agrees. This was agreed to as noted in the Hall Minutes of November 5 1985.

1985 At the Hall AGM on November 5, while noting a current balance of more than \$2400, it is acknowledged that the Gymkhana and Sports Day Committee contributes greatly to the Hall and Park Committee, which on its own is barely making a profit.<sup>45</sup>

1986 Deans Marsh Community Cottage Childcare evolved from its original occasional care to more formal weekly childcare provision. The Cottage is

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<sup>40</sup> see Cottage Archives Community Cottage 1999 programme.

<sup>41</sup> Much more detail of Cottage programmes and events needs to be included in this Timeline.

<sup>42</sup> Hall Minutes September 4 1984

<sup>43</sup> Hall Minutes August 6 1985

<sup>44</sup> Hall Minutes October 1 1985

<sup>45</sup> Hall Minutes November 5 1985

now also offering and auspicing a range of classes, events and arts projects including Arts mosaics group, which over the years designed and completed the mosaics on the toilet block walls and, after the renovation of the Footy Shed [see 2003 and 2007 below], the shower inside the Footy shed under the supervision of Veronica Phillips.

56. 1986 March 22 On Gymkhana Day, Ron Millard's ***The History of Deans Marsh* book was launched**. Mr Millard asked that commission from the sale of his book be donated 50% to Deans Marsh Fire Brigade and 50% to Hall and Park Committee.<sup>46</sup>

57. 1986 Hall Minutes of August 5 note that a **Bicentennial Grant had been received to enable the construction of the BBQ area in the park**.

1986 The Deans Marsh Cricket Club's Andrew Stewart scored two centuries and two fifties during the 86/87 season as well as taking 33 wickets. This consistency made him the C&DCA Cricketer of the Year.<sup>47</sup>

1987 March 21 Deans Marsh Sports Day and Gymkhana.<sup>48</sup>

58. 1988 **Local History Group** Sandra Dempsey ran informal Historical meetings at the Cottage with Erwin Babington and Ian Schram – Sandra reports that the meetings occurred regularly for a couple of years from 1988 on in the Cottage.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Hall Minutes February 2. 1986.

<sup>47</sup> ***The Croaker*** vol.8 no.1 p.2

<sup>48</sup> Hall Minutes October 7 1986

<sup>49</sup> Sandra Dempsey personal conversation July 2020