

Part 2 Deans Marsh Community Stories

Here is Part 2 of our story: the township of Deans Marsh grows, its people play their part in the creation of Australia, run some most impressive Sports Days and, in the new century, win our first football Premiership .

1890s

5. Deans Marsh Sports Days

Amusements.

**DEAN'S MARSH
ATHLETIC CLUB.
SPORTS!**

To be held in Mr C. Mountjoy's
paddock at Dean's Marsh.

FRIDAY, MAY 23, 1890.

COMMITTEE

Messrs E. Wyld M. Quin
C. Smith G. Doherty
D. McDonald W. Mills
W. Fyfe.

Judges, Messrs Wyld and C Smith.
Starter Mr M Quinn.
Handicapper. Mr J. J. Trait.

PROGRAMME.

- 1 MAIDEN PLATE.—100 yards. First prize £1. Second 10s. Nomination 2s 6d.
- 2 DEAN'S MARSH HANDICAP. 150 yards. First prize £7. Second £2 Third £1. Nomination 4s. Acceptance 3s 6d.
- 3 BOY'S RACE.—Under 15 years. 100 yards. First prize 15s. Second 5s Post entry 1s.
- 4 HANDICAP HURDLE RACE.—150 yards. First prize £3 10s. Second £1. Third 10s. Nomination 3s, acceptance 2s.
- 5 OLD BUFFERS RACE.—100 yards. First prize bag of flour. Second bottle whiskey. Nomination 1s 6d. Post entry.
- 6 HANDICAP FLAT RACE.—140 yards. First prize £3 10s. Second £1. Third 10s. Nomination 3s, acceptance 2s.
- 7 HIGH JUMP HANDICAP.—First prize £2. Second £1. Nomination 2s acceptance 1s.
- 8 DISTRICT HANDICAP.—130 yards. First prize £2 with trophy added, the gift of Messrs Isaac Bros. Second prize, double reined bridle, the gift of A McCallum Esq., for runners within a radius of 15 miles of Dean's Marsh. Nomination 2s 6d, acceptance 2s. To be handicapped by committee.
- 9 LOG CHOPPING CONTEST.—First prize £2. Second £1. Logs 18 inches in diameter. Nomination 3s.
- 10 WALKING MATCH HANDICAP.—2 miles. First prize £2. Second £1. Nomination 3s.
- 11 SACK RACE.—75 yards. First prize 15s. Second 5s. Post entry 1s.
- 12 RUNNING LONG JUMP.—First prize £1 10s. Second 10s. Post entry 2s.

Nominations for events 2, 4, 6, 7, 8, 10, must be in the hands of the Secretary by Thursday May 8th.

Handicaps will appear in "Birregurra Star" on the 14th May. "Colac Reformer" and "Geelong Advertiser" 15th May, when Nominations for events 1, 9, 12, will close.

Nominations and acceptances must be paid at the time, either in cash or postal notes. Otherwise no notice will be taken of them.

Competitors must send in their performances for last two years, and declare their colors at time of entry.

Any competitor entering under a false name will not be allowed to compete, and is liable to disqualification.

Any competitor passing over his mark before the report of the pistol will be put back one yard and second offence another yard and for the third offence will be disqualified.

All protests must be lodged in the hands of the Secretary within half an hour of event, same to be forfeited if same protest should prove frivolous.

A GRAND BALL

Will be held in the evening in the Mechanics Hall.

G. DOHERTY,
Hon. Secretary.

Run by the Deans Marsh Athletics Club², Deans Marsh Sports Days were held most years in March but occasionally October: Sports Day activities in

¹ Birregurra Star April 2 1890

the early years included a road running race from Birregurra, horse events including trotting and a gymkhana, cycling, cricket and football matches. Over the years the wood/log chop, Guess the Sheep's Weight, the Spinning Wheel and many other events were held on Sports Days: perhaps some of these could be revived at future Festivals. These events were held on what was to become the Deans Marsh Memorial Park but which in 1890 belonged to Mr Caleb Mountjoy.

6. **Amateur Dramatics** from Birregurra Players performances held at Deans Marsh Hall

The Birregurra Amateur Dramatic Club intend giving a performance at Deans Marsh on Monday evening next. A good programme will, we believe, be submitted, as the performers have been rehearsing for some time past. A dramatic performance being a rarity at Deans Marsh the local people will no doubt roll up in force.

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7. **1898 Coal:** the launch of the coalmine 1898 at Benwerrin – with celebrations afterwards at the Hall:

A GREAT COAL SEAM.
THE DEANS MARSH DISCOVERY.
INAUGURATION OF AN IMPORTANT INDUSTRY.

It has long been felt that coal in payable quantities existed in the Otway Forest, but the adverse reports of the Government geologists prevented the carrying on of prospecting operations to any great extent. When the diamond drill was about to be taken from Apollo Bay we persistently urged that it should be retained, as the forest had not been properly tested, but the official reports were dead against it and prospecting operations as far as the Government were concerned were sealed apparently for all time. That the forest was never properly tested and that the experts were hopelessly at sea in regard to it recent developments have proved beyond a shadow of doubt. A seam of coal has been laid bare near Deans Marsh which experts declare has no equal in the colony, and it was discovered in a very simple manner by Mr W. H. Box, of Bamba. Whilst looking

² The Deans Marsh Athletics Club existed well into the 20th century. A Minute book from 1929 to 1956 survived and is number 8 in the Community Archives. This club seems also have been called the Caledonian and the Foresters Athletics Club in the period before 1929. There was also a Caledonian Society operating in Colac in this period.

³ Fri 20 Apr 1894 - The **Colac Herald** (Vic. : 1875 - 1918) page 2 - NOTES AND EVENTS

From the same article:

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The visitors returned to Deans Marsh, where they were entertained by the directors at a banquet in the Public Hall, while a brass band from Melbourne discoursed sweet music. Mr Geo. Talmage, of Colac, was entrusted with the catering, and he provided a magnificent spread, the highest eulogiums being passed on it by the visitors from the metropolis and elsewhere.

8. The Hall was used for political meeting and as a **Polling Place**, but before the hall was built, voting took place at the Deans Marsh State School:

GOVERNMENT ADVERTISEMENT.



ELECTION NOTICE.

South Grenville.

BY Virtue of a Writ under the Seal of the Colony of Victoria, and signature of His Excellency Sir George Fergusson Bowen, Knight Grand Cross of the most Distinguished Order of Saint Michael and Saint George, Governor and Commander-in-chief in and over the Colony of Victoria and its Dependencies, and Vice-Admiral of the same, &c., &c., dated the thirtieth day of April, and received by me on the first day of May, I hereby give notice that I shall, on the fifth day of May instant, at Noon, at the place of Nomination, the Court House, Colac, in the said Electoral District, proceed to the Election of One Member to serve in the Legislative Assembly for the said District.

In the event of the said Election being contested, the Poll will be taken on the eleventh day of May instant, in the several Divisions of the said District:—

At Colac, Ondit, and Birregurra, for the Colac Division.

At Inverleigh and Cressy, for the Inverleigh Division.

At Winchelsea West, Wensleydale, and Dean's Marsh State School, for the Winchelsea West Division.

The Polling will commence at the hour of Eight o'clock a.m., and close at Five o'clock p.m.

The writ is to be returned by me on Tuesday the fifteenth day of May instant.

And I further give notice that I have appointed John William Coulston of Ondit, to be my substitute, and he will be at the Court House Colac, as the place where nomination papers and payments will be received, daily between the hours of ten o'clock a.m. and four o'clock p.m. up to six o'clock p.m. on the fourth day of May instant. Dated at Ondit this the first day of May 1877.

E. COULSTON,
Returning Officer.

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⁴ Colac Herald Friday 8 April 1898, page 3

⁵ 1877 May 2 newspaper source unknown

Once built, the Hall was used for political campaigning events as well as actual voting during the colonial period, for the Federation referenda [1898 and 1900], and after Federation for federal and state election days.

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FEDERAL REFERENDUM.

The returns in connection with the federal poll throughout Victoria were not quite complete yesterday. The totals were—
For, 152,641; against, 9,364. Following are details of the polling:—

POLLING BOOTH.	Yms.	No.
Barramunga (Beac division)	28	5
Barramunga (Otway division)	8	2
Barwon Downs	39	3
Beac	68	6
Beech Forest	14	1
Airey's Inlet	12	0
Birregurra	113	6
Colac	498	50
Cororooke	70	35
Cressy	12	0
Deans Marsh	59	15
Forrest	37	9
Gellibrand River	25	4
Gerangamete	5	9
Irrewarra	38	5
Irrewillipe	56	4
Krambruk	59	1
Lorne	46	2
Murroon	18	4
Princoetown	17	2
Stene's Creek	10	0
Warrion	60	5
Warricoort	44	4
Wendalvale	11	12
	22	4

behind the current window

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1899 Foresters Athletic Sports Club Annual Day at Deans Marsh

'The rendezvous, was Mr. Caleb Mountjoy's paddock, situate at a convenient distance from the station. Considering that Friday was not a holiday there was a very fair gathering of people, and the result will be a financial success, which is due mainly to the energy infused into the meeting by Mr. Burns. The ground is all right for foot-running or horseracing, but it is rather rough for bicycle riding yet, as those who competed in the novice race found out.'

⁶ *Colac Herald* August 1 1899 p.3

⁷ *Colac Herald* (Vic : 1875 - 1918), Tuesday 28 February 1899, p. 3

1900s

1900 marked the start of a long process whereby the community – the Trustees of the Mechanics Institute Library - organised the [very slow] purchase loan of Mountjoy land, where sports days, football and cricket had by then been held for more than 20 years.⁸

9. 1901-3 **Magic Lantern shows** in the Hall.⁹

10. 1901 and thereafter **Dances, Balls, euchre parties and quoits matches.**¹⁰

1902 June 10 meeting of the MI Committee decided to spend £5 on new books for the library.¹¹

1903 Hall acted as a Polling Place in the elections before Federation and up until the 1930s. Polling later took place at the State School but returned to the Hall in the 1980s and remains there today.

nce.
The polling booths for the Federal elections to-day, as far as this district is concerned, will be as follows:—Colac, police court; Barramunga, state school; Beech Forest, Mr M'Pherson's house; Birregurra Mechanic's Institute; Beac, state school; Dororoake, state school; Cressy, state school; Deans Marsh, Mechanic's Institute; Eurack, state school; Forrest, Mulhare's house; Gellibrand River, public hall; GeraGamete, state school; Irrewarra, Mr Dalton's house; Irrewillipe, state school; Lorne, Mechanic's Institute; Murroon state school; Nalangil, public hall; Pomoroneit, state school; Port Campbell Mechanic's Institute; Princetown, state school; Warncoort, state school; Warrion state school; Weeapronah, public hall; Winchelsea, east of Barwon, library; Winchelsea, west of Barwon, shire hall.¹²

1903 Mechanics Institute Minutes notes the rates for hire of the hall 15/- Balls: all night with no use of piano; £1 with piano, concerts 10/- . £5 was spent on buying new books for the library.¹³

⁸ MI Minutes 1901 ongoing

⁹ MI Minutes August 20 1903 <https://museums victoria.com.au/audio/history-culture-collections-2017-lecture-series/the-astronomical-lantern-slide-and-the-visual-communication-of-popular-science/>

¹⁰ Hall Minutes 1901 on going. SEE PDFs no.6 <https://australiancardgames.com.au/euchre/> ; <http://ropequoits.blogspot.com/2015/04/how-to-play-rope-quoits.html>

¹¹ MI Minutes June 10 1902

¹² Dec 16 1903 - The **Colac Herald** (Vic. : 1875 - 1918) Page 3 - FEDERAL NOTES

¹³ MI Minutes August 20 1903

11.1904 MI Minutes March 14 note that the **Deans Marsh Minstrels and Dramatic Society** will hire the Hall one night a week for two months for entertainment. Half the proceeds will go to the Hall.¹⁴

1904 MI Minutes April 11 note that the offer of the land adjoining the Hall for £13 be accepted. By the meeting of June 18 however the price has risen to £16. Mr Mountjoy, the Chair of the Committee was tasked with arranging payment for the block.

12. 1904 **Farmers Association** used the Hall regularly.¹⁵

1905 Hall Committee bought land next door to Hall from Mr Box for £16 [later called Plummer's, and sold to Mr Hunt]. The Hall overdraft was £15.¹⁶ It is interesting to note that a new piano bought later that year cost twice the price of the land: £30 overdraft extended.¹⁷ Trustees appointed for this land Messrs Robert Smith, Charles Smith, Thomas Spowart, William Lawrence George Atkins and N. Mills.

1907 Farmers Association meetings held regularly at the Hall.¹⁸

13. The September 1907 MI Minutes note that at **Piano lessons** given by Miss Walton, she was to be charged 1/6 per pupil.

1908 the Deans Marsh Football Club notified the MI that a fancy dress match will be played and a collection taken up for Hall funds.¹⁹

¹⁴ <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/10314618908595819?journalCode=rahs20> **Minstrel show and vaudeville house: The Australian popular stage, 1838–1914*** Richard Waterhouse Pages 366-385 | Published online: 30 Sep 2008

¹⁵ MI Minutes August 27. SEE PDFS NO.6

¹⁶ MI Minutes 6.2.1905

¹⁷ MI Minutes February 6

¹⁸ MI Minutes August 27 1904 and Hall Minutes 22.6. 07

¹⁹ MI Minutes AGM Minutes August 25.

1910s

Deans Marsh Football Club Premiers 1911

DEANS MARSH FOOTBALL CLUB — PREMIERS 1911



Back row : Steve Smith, _____ George McKay, Bill Howard,
Dick Howard, Tom Powell, George Schram, Billy Mansell, Robert Smith.
Seated : Jim Clissold, Jack Smith, Walter Clissold, Syd Mountjoy,
Paddy Mansell, Bill Clark, Oscar Mountjoy, _____.
Front : Ted Lawrence.

14. 1912. December 7. **Moves towards buying the recreation grounds:**
Both a separate notebook recording the public meetings on this matter²⁰ and the earliest Park Committee Minutes now available show that at a public meeting in the MI hall on December 7, it was moved and agreed that:

- **land for the Recreation Reserve be purchased for not more than £20 per acre;**
- **that a committee be formed to organise the purchase;**
- **that the government be approached for financial assistance; and**
- **that once the land is purchased the Hall be moved to a site on those grounds.**²¹

Although it took more than ten years for the money to be raised and the Hall to be moved, no evidence has yet been found to show that any government came to the aid of the Deans Marsh community in providing the funding needed. Instead the Hall and Park committees raised funds in the community

²⁰ Item 11 in the community archives

²¹ Deans Marsh Park Minutes December 7 1912

and took overdrafts at local banks in order to – eventually – pay the Mountjoy family for the original Recreation Reserve site.

15. 1912 **Salvation Army** function

16. 1913 **Red Cross Deans Marsh** branch formed.²²

17. 1913 **Manchester Unity International Order of Odd Fellows Lodge Deans Marsh**. First mentioned in the Hall Minutes of 23.2.1913. The Lodge was still going into the 1970s. In 1914 the members sought permission from the hall committee to have rifle shooting at the hall but were refused.²³ The Lodge seems to have remained active until 1973, when Leslie McKay was listed as the last person to be registered as a Trustee of the Lodge with the Victorian government. There is no further government correspondence; this may mean Lodge ceased to operate or that the government regulations about notify of Trustees changed.²⁴

18. 1914 **Formal Farewell functions** were organised by the Hall Committee for **local soldiers** going overseas to serve and, later from 1917 onwards, for those returning from service.²⁵

²² *History of the Deans Marsh Red Cross* 2013 see pdfs No. 6

²³ Hall Minutes 15.8.1914.

²⁴ See pdf documents from the PROV held by community

²⁵ Hall Minutes June 13 1914 and Hall Minutes 14.4.1917 see pdfs No. 6