

This is Part 3 of Deans Marsh Community Stories and covers the 1920s and 1930s. Among many other activities, we moved our Hall – on a dray and with the help of a new-fangled tractor apparently – no photos that I can find - which is a shame.

1920s

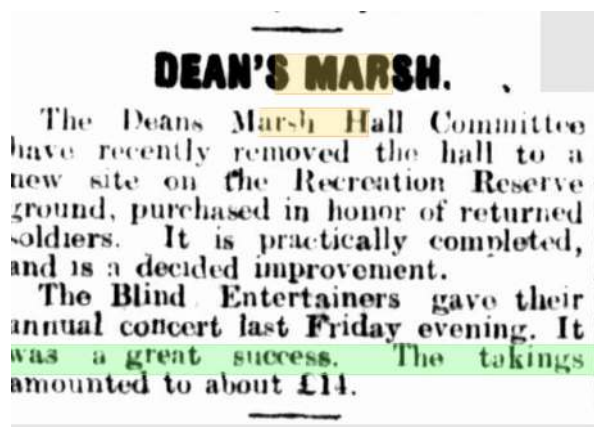
The Hall and Oval: the community takes ownership – slowly

Between the 1900s and 1920s the Deans Marsh community, acting through the Trustees of the Hall all of whom were or had been community members, and its Committee members who were also locals, purchased the 20 acres at what is now the Memorial Park site from Mr Edgar Mountjoy.¹ That sale process seems to have begun or at least been agreed to in principle well before 1912, but full payment was not made until 1920. As we have seen, this land was used by the community as a sports ground from at least the 1880s, well before the purchase process even began.

Local landowners and community members Messrs Mountjoy and McKay² displayed a great generosity and patience in their dealings with these sales to the community. While the Trustees – also community members – did make every effort to raise the moneys to fund these purchases more speedily and even took out overdrafts in their own names from various local banks in order to do so, they were also required to raise money to run events, and maintain the hall and oval at the same time.

The Deans Marsh community owes a debt to the Mountjoy family and to the McKay family. Their generosity and patience has left Deans Marsh with a great community asset, which the community managed itself until the 1950s when the land was passed to the then Winchelsea Shire after community consultation and public meetings to endorse this decision.³

1921-2 The Deans Marsh Hall on the move:



¹ see Part One above

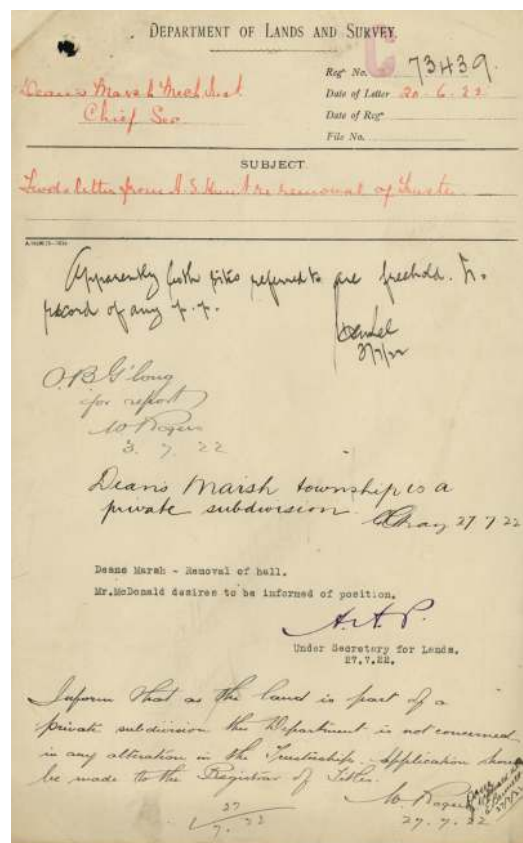
² see details 1939 below

³ see item 33 in Part 5 of this Timeline

⁴ *Geelong Advertiser* (Vic. : 1859 - 1929), Thursday 16 February 1922, page 8

Sometime between October 10 1921 and January 8 1922 the Deans Marsh Hall was moved amid community controversy. Ron Millard tells us that one of the reasons for moving the hall was to avoid the combination of community functions at the hall merging with those at the pub then just across the Winchelsea road.⁵ Payment of £40 for alterations and repairs and for haulage by a Mr McCoy, using a tractor⁶ hired from Geelong was authorised first in January by the Hall Committee, and then again in mid 1922.⁷ The Committee obtained an overdraft of £50 with the Committee members acting as guarantors of the loan. In 1922 £50 was equivalent to \$4141 today.⁸

The delay in making payment to Mr McCoy may be explained by the fact that William Lawrence, father of Marjorie, was strongly opposed to the moving of the Hall and threatened to take the other Trustees to court over the matter, and to seek to have the hall moved back to its original position. The Committee sought government advice – after the event - as to their rights and responsibilities, given the majority of them, and much of the community approved of the move. The government responded only that ‘Deans Marsh is a private subdivision’ with the implication that the government had no role in mediating the dispute.



⁵ Millard R *The Deans Marsh Story* 1986 p. 22

⁶ Ron Millard video interview 2007

⁷ MI Minutes January 8 1922. Interestingly this authorization came **after** the Hall had been moved.

⁸ Hall Minutes January 8 1922.

⁹ Correspondence between Committee and State government Department of Land and Survey June July 1922 see PROV documents file in community archive digital version. A copy of the file is held in the community archive.

The reasons behind William Lawrence's opposition to the move and apparent threat to demand the Hall's return to its original position are not known. Correspondence with the state government indicates that Mr Lawrence was by then living in Winchelsea. It could be imagine that, if he was still a landlord of Lawrence Cottage, it would have been his tenants who were most disturbed by any rowdiness from the Hall and pub combined, especially after 6 o'clock closing was introduced across Victoria in 1916, and that therefore he would have supported the moving of the Hall, rather than opposing it.¹⁰ It is also clear from the Hall Minutes as far back as 1912 that it was always the intention of the Hall committee to move the Hall to the Recreation Reserve.

In any event the Deans Marsh Hotel lost its licence as of 1922 and closed in 1924.¹¹

1921 March 11 The purchase of land for the Deans Marsh Park from Mr Mountjoy had begun formally according to the Park Committee Minutes. The agreed price was £140, being 7 acres at £20 pounds per acre in 1912. A deposit of £20 was paid, leaving £120 to pay. This formal sale in 1921 is more than forty years after the community had begun to use this land as the town's recreation reserve. The Minutes also show that the purchase was not finalised until 12.12.1922 when Park Committee got an overdraft to pay Mr Mountjoy – which then took the Committee years to pay back to bank. By 1926 there was still £3 pound overdraft.

1921 The Hall Minutes of June 3 show that from June 1921 the Committee were fund-raising – they called it 'seeking subscriptions' from the Deans Marsh community and existing associations such as the football and cricket clubs to fund the moving of the Hall from its site opposite the hotel in the Winchelsea Road to the land in the process of being purchased from Mr Mountjoy. At the same meeting the Hall committee noted an offer by the Deans Marsh Primary School to plant a row of trees as a memorial close to the new site for the hall, and as well, a working bee was planned for June 15th to fence the grounds.

1922 After the Hall was moved, the Mechanics Institute Library still continued to operate at the new location.¹² Also at this meeting in 1922 it was agreed that the outstanding £100 owed to Mr Mountjoy would be offered to him so that the Title of the land could be changed to reflect ownership by the community Trustees. The Mechanics Institute Constitution appears in the Minutes of August 28 1922

¹⁰ Early closing of hotels or the Six O'Clock Swill was introduced in Victoria in 1916 see https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Six_o%27clock_swill although it may not have operated in country areas where licensing laws differed for 'alleged' travellers. See also <https://www.parliament.vic.gov.au/publications/research-papers/download/36-research-papers/13740-2016-2-liquorlaws-hn>

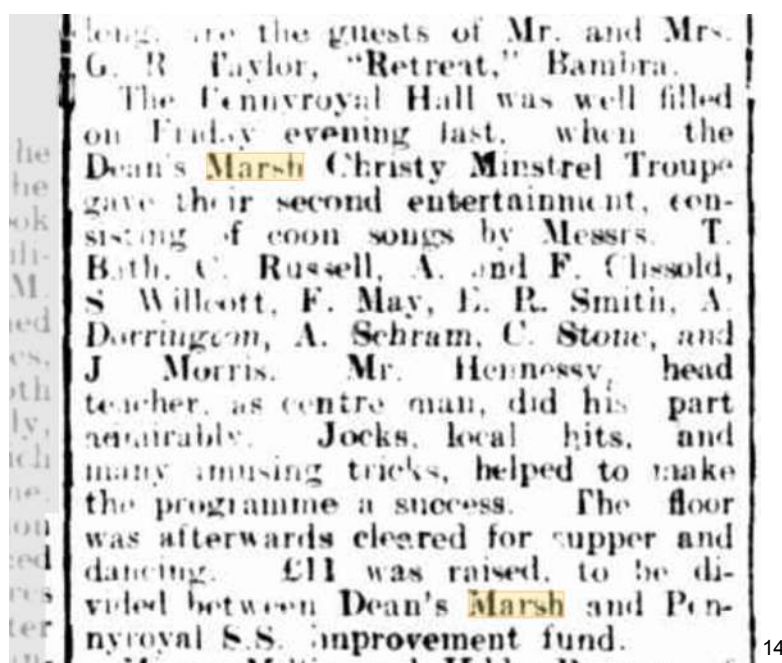
¹¹ Millard R *Tales of Old Deans Marsh* p.11

¹² Hall Minutes 24.8.22

1922 Also that year after much discussion within the Reserve Committee and in the community, the grounds were named 'Deans Marsh Soldiers Memorial Park and Recreation Ground' [DMSMPRG]. At its meeting of October 14 that year the Hall Committee voted to send a representative to meetings of the Deans Marsh Soldiers Memorial Park and Recreation Ground management committee, as they had been requested to do by the DMSMPRG committee at their meeting of October 10.

1922 The Deans Marsh Cricket Club laid its first earth wicket at the current site was constructed in 1922.¹³

1922 There was joint Pennyroyal Hall Deans Marsh Hall fund-raising concert held at the Pennyroyal Hall



£11 was raised and split between the two hall committees. As the clipping shows, Deans Marsh boasted a Minstrels troop at that time which sang 'coon songs'. Ah, how times have changed.

1923 A reference to a 'survey of section of land sold to Hall committee' provides as so often no specific details of cost, location or even acreage, but there is mention of an overdraft of £120.¹⁵ At that price, this seems to relate to the survey of the land being slowly purchased from Mr Mountjoy – the site of the existing Reserve and now Hall.

1923 Park Minutes August 14 refer to a barbed wire boundary fence between the Hall grounds and Reserve grounds. At the meeting of the Hall Committee of November 11 1922 the secretary was requested to write formally to the

¹³ *The Croaker* Vol 8. No1 page 2

¹⁴ *Geelong Advertiser* September 16 1922 p,1

¹⁵ Park Minutes green book 27.2.23.

Recreation Ground Committee urging them to take the necessary steps to allocate the Hall Committee certain ground for hall use as quickly as possible.

1923 Minstrel concert in aid of Hall funds made £8.1.9.¹⁶

1924-5 Hall renovations tender by Messrs Hunt and Clissold – Mr Hunt resigned from Committee probably to prevent any perception of conflict of interest but this is not explicitly said.¹⁷ The newly- renovated Hall reopened on November 24 1925. An overdraft of £145 to pay for the renovations including the creation of a 9-foot stage was obtained.

1925 Deans Marsh Football Club is playing as part of the Polwarth Football Association – the team was part of the Association throughout the 1920s and 1930s until the Association turned into a League in 1940.

1929 Deans Marsh Football Club Premiers 1929

DEANS MARSH FOOTBALL CLUB — PREMIERS 1929



Standing : S. Smith, H. Stewart, Eric Clissold, R. Connor, G. Hunt,
V. Clissold, R. Smith, S. Barr, L. Lambell, L. Clissold, W. Clissold
T. Bath, J. Clissold, J. Smith.

Seated : G. McKay (Sec.), S. Schram, H. Clissold, M. Smith, Ed Clissold
(Vice-Capt.), L. Farrell (President), C. Schram, C. Smith, G. Smith,
R. Munro.

Front : A. Clissold, Don Lambell, J. Swayn.

Inset : A. Lawrence (Capt.)

Absent : J. Gardner, R. Webb.

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¹⁶ Actual date unknown but before 1.5.23 Hall Committee meeting, at which the amount of funds raised was recorded. After 1928 no further Minutes of the Park Committee are available, until 1930 when records continue in the same green exercise book.

¹⁷ Hall Minutes 7.5.24.

¹⁸ newspaper photo source unknown advice welcome

19. 1929 **Athletics and Sports Club** AGM held at the Hall on December 14 – apparently the most affluent of the Deans Marsh clubs and societies, the ASC had savings of £75 on fixed deposit, a balance of £40.13.1 in the State Savings Bank and £4.0.10 in cash. At this meeting it was decided to change the programme of events for the next Sports Day fixture to include cycling events including a road race from Birregurra to Deans Marsh to be held on March 8TH 1930.¹⁹

1930s

1930s DISCOVERY AND MINING OF COAL at Bambra.²⁰

1930 The Pavillion, also called the Afternoon tearooms, was commissioned by the Athletics Sports Club and built on the site of or next to the current Cricket Club rooms by Trigg of Geelong for £130,²¹ and the Publican's Booth to be built on 30.3.30. During the Sports Day and Gymkhanas, both ends of footy shed, which was apparently also built in this period, open up as hatch counters, were used one as the lolly shop, and the other for event for registrations.²²

The Booth or Publicans Booth opened 3pm on sports festival gymkhana days only. The Booth was an old wooden building with a tin roof about 3-4 metres square with one side facing the oval that folded down and a sink was placed in the bench that was formed. The booth stood at the edge of the oval where the gate to allow ambulance access is now.²³ The business of running it each Sports day was put out to tender and at least occasionally a publican from Lorne got the job.²⁴

At the Athletics and Sports club meeting of April 10 1930, the ASC decided that the new Pavillion which it had commissioned and built, was to be handed over to the management of the DMSMPRG committee, on the understanding that the Athletics Clubs would have ongoing access to it. After this handing over, the ASC seems to have fallen into a period of inactivity during the Depression years.

¹⁹ These funds were largely then spent on the next year's function with accounts of more than £76 being paid out at the meeting on April 10 1930, after the Sports Day.

²⁰ See SCSC historical study **Farm Forest and Surf** by David Rowe and Carlotta Kellaway [2009] online p.45 downloaded from <https://www.surfcoast.vic.gov.au/Property/Planning-and-Building/Planning/Planning-FAQs/Development-plans-reference-and-incorporated-docs#Otherdocs> Like Winchelsea and Wensleydale Railway Stations, Deans Marsh had associations with the Shire's coal industry. In 1895 coal was taken from Benwerrin, nine kilometres south-east of Deans Marsh. The Great Western Mining Co., formed two years later, conveyed coal from the mines to Deans Marsh Railway Station by horse-drawn wagons. To improve transportation of coal, the Deans Marsh Tramway Company was formed. However, it went into liquidation in 1899, leaving the new owner, the Great Western Colliery Co. to construct the tramway. It was completed in 1903.

²¹ The researcher pleads confusion here: was the Pavillion what is now called the Footy Shed? Was it different to the Afternoon Tea rooms built on the current Cricket Club site Help please! Minutes are as usual clear as mud!

²² Minutes of the Athletics and Sports Club committee meeting 28.3.30 and interview Fran Permezel May 30 2020.

²³ Fran Permezel Interview May 30 2020

²⁴ Sandra Dempsey Interview August 13 2019

1930 The Hall Committee Minutes of 6.12.30 note that the Committee was 'trying to sell old hall site' and had been since 1928.

1932 Hall Minutes tell us there was a 'serious need to reduce Hall overdraft, so funding raising efforts included Queen Carnival and Ugly Man competition plus Mr Coombes' Minstrel Troop.'²⁵

1932 Park Minutes note at its meeting of April 21 that the Park or Reserve Committee had a formal constitution which read in part that 'no pigs or goats' were allowed – although sheep and cows did graze the land and their owners were charged a fee even though it saved mowing it²⁶ The Constitution also noted there was to be 'no offences against decency'.

20. 1932 **For at least some of the 1930s decade Deans Marsh hosted not one but two football teams which played in different leagues** – both teams played in the Polwarth League centred on Winchelsea and later the Bellarine and Geelong areas. In the 1950s the Deans Marsh Imperials moved to play in a Colac-based league. Both teams were based at the Memorial Oval and shared the Pavillion. Arrangements were made to ensure both teams could play their home games in Deans Marsh, and that no clashes of fixtures occurred. The Polwarth Football League began in 1922 and remained in operation until 1970.²⁷

While the DMFC was known as the Blood and Bandages, this name was not a commonly used 'brand' name, as names such as the Sydney [or South Melbourne!] Swans are today. In fact there are no references to the 'Blood and Bandages' in local media before 1920; any later references are still to be checked when libraries reopen. The other team was known as the Deans Marsh Imperials, which was a common name used by the second teams in many towns across Victoria. Colac too had a team called the Imperials at one stage.²⁸

1932 September 6 Hall Minutes list the Caretakers duties and record payment of £4.10 per annum plus 2/6 each time the washing up is done after a function.²⁹

21. 1936 The first mention of **Country Women's Association [CWA]**. In February 1936 a public meeting was held at which it was agreed that a sports fixture would be held on March 14 that year with a full programme to be organised and advertised, and with the CWA agreeing to cater for the event. Cycling and wood chop were among the events. There was also a dance in the evening of the 14th with the Bambra Orchestra hired to provide music.

²⁵ Hall Minutes 14.3.32

²⁶ Park Minutes September 4 1937

²⁷ Shirley Leak interview 15.8.2019 and Winchelsea Historical Society Polwarth League archives compiled and maintained by Shirley Leak

²⁸ Interview with Colin Hutchinson AFL historian 6.8.19

²⁹ The Hall committee hired and paid a non-resident caretaker[s] up until at least the 1970s.

1936 16 April Another Public meeting about need for the stable management of Hall was held and a subscription [regular donation] list created.

1936 April 16 Hall Minutes note that 'books disposed of'— and with that the original Mechanics Institute library was now closed.

1936 May 4 Hall Minutes note £49 still owed but recent donations of £12 received. The Minutes also note that the Birregurra Dramatic Company is to perform a show at the hall on June 9 followed by a dance.

1936 Hall Minutes note the Sept 1 'sale of old Hall site to a Mr Wyld'.

1937 Annual Sports Day will include an event called the Collins Street Chop³⁰. This year the Sports Day was held on April 3.³¹

Receipts	Expenditure
Sports fees 14 10 6	Prize money 25 1 0
Afternoon tea 6 6 9	Pasting 2 10 0
	Paper plates 8 6
	Washing up 6 -
Tea, drinks 18 10 8	Sweets etc and 2 16 -
Refund bottles 15 0	Soft drinks (sweet) 5 19 0
Gate 15 - -	Tax tickets on
9 - -	gate (300) 1 5 0
Dance 11 4 1	Tax tickets (dance) 15 10
Donations	Orchestra 1 0 0
Mr C Dunce 12 6	Plurimo Premium 1 9 2
W. Bush 10 0	Adv & Colac Herald 6 0
W ^{rs} Mansell 10 0	" Colac Reformer 6 0
W ^{rs} Hannam 6 0	A. P. Hunt & Co 12 7
J. Armstrong & Co 10 0	Ice Cream 1 19 7
Booths L. Brady 30 0	Cartage logs 12 6
Prize returned 2 6	Printing - List 60 12 6
Case apples 4 0	Ice Cream servers 5 0
Pears 1 0	Hire of Hall 12/6 12 6
Refund Hall 1 2 6	4 meetings 2/6 ea 10 0
	Petrol 4 0
	Refund - mill 6 6
	Postage etc 5 6
Receipts 82 5 6	Expenses 49 3 2

³⁰ Hall Minutes February 2. More researcher assistance required: What was the Collins Street Chop? Was it perhaps an easy wood chop event designed for what were called Collins Street farmers? i.e. those who owned agricultural land but used it more as a tax deduction than a productive enterprise?? i.e. city softies?? Answers please!!

³¹ ASC Minutes Feb 15 1937.

22. 1937 **ANZAC DAY** services: no charge was made to use the Hall – this was unusual. Because the Trustees were completely responsible for maintaining and operating the hall and grounds, finances were always a serious and ongoing concern for the committee. Therefore almost everyone and all associations and groups, no matter how important or charitable in character, were charged for use of the facilities: the money was vital to the survival of the venues. Up until very recently, for example, the Deans Marsh fire brigade were charged for their use of the hall.³²

1937 Hall Committee Minutes of December 1 note that the overdraft had been reduced to £14. This achievement came after relentless efforts by the Hall committee to raise funds to pay back the money as well as maintain the hall.

1937 The Deans Marsh Cricket Club's earth pitch was replaced in 1937 by a malthoid covered concrete pitch.³³

1938 Hall Minutes note 'Old Hall blocks one to be sold and one leased 6.9.38 6.12.38 'Mills' block sold £38. The Minutes of the period are opaque as to who bought what land, when, and for how much. Indeed surviving records do not make it at all clear on whose land the Hall was first built and whether that land had been donated to the community, or bought.³⁴ However that happened, it appears that that original land had become the Committee's responsibility, as the Committee members were the ones trying to sort out the subsequent sale of the land once the Hall moved in 1921-2.

1938 The CWA was active in Deans Marsh and remained very active through the 1940s 1950s and 1960s especially its Younger Set component of socially active young women.

DEANS MARSH. — A member gave an interesting talk on her trip to King Island. Mrs Keith Campbell described the reception given the Duke and Duchess of Gloucester during their visit to Melbourne. A member received a posy and congratulations on her son being awarded the D.F.C. A special market stall and afternoon tea realised £2/16/7 for Charity fund, and a demonstration on the making of bread flowers was given. Competitions for best made basket, something for afternoon tea made without sugar, and best dam in sock. A donation was given the C.W-A. Scholarship fund.³⁵

23. 19. 1939 Hall Minutes note that rent will be refunded to **Limbless Soldiers Association**.³⁶

24. 1939 The same Hall Minutes note that **Blind Institute** rented Hall for functions but was not charged.

³² Hall Minutes April 30

³³ *The Croaker* Vol.8 no 1 page 2

³⁴ Ron Millard in a video interview in 2007 suggests the original site of the Hall was donated by John Bell, who owned the hotel at that time. The original site of the hall was across the road from the hotel, so perhaps Mr. Bell owned land on both sides of the Winchelsea road? [researcher assistance needed –again]

³⁵ Weekly Times April 25 1945 p.15

³⁶ August 3 1939

25. 1939 **Crystal Talkies Fortnightly shows** in hall for several months.³⁷

26. 1939 **Curtain Embroidery Groups** run by Deans Marsh CWA. Original Curtain made starting in 1939 but work on it lapsed during WW2 then resumed in 1946 and was completed in 1949. It is interesting to note that while in other towns such curtains were made by a small group of women working on one design, in Deans Marsh each person created their own particular Deans Marsh vision on a sugar bag and these were later sewn together by Mrs. Walter Clissold. The curtain was first used in Hall November 10 1950 and hung until 1992.
<https://collections.museumvictoria.com.au/items/250818>



1939 Park Committee Minutes April 15: One acre of land at the western end of the Recreation Reserve was purchased from Mr McKay in 1939. He then paid rent to the Committee to graze his sheep! Full payment of £20 for the purchase was not made to Mr McKay until 1941. The Park Committee paid £10 as a deposit and took out an overdraft for the remaining £10. The price was paid in full by 1941 and land title then transferred to the Park Trustees.

1939 The Hall Minute Books were sent to Clarke and Eva solicitors as part of an investigation to discover where the land titles and land transfers were held, and to find and contact former Mechanics Institute and Hall trustees. This

³⁷ Hall Minutes 3.10, 3.11 and 5.12.39

was necessary in order to clarify to the ownership and sale of the various blocks of land on which the Hall had stood over time.³⁸

1939 Grader bought second hand by Hall Committee to be hired out and used at the grounds.³⁹

³⁸ Hall Minutes [3.12.40] the title to be sold [vol. 1993 folio 398462] [11.12.42] eventually sold to Arthur Samuel Hunt for £15 [10.7.43]. Enquiries made in relation to relevant documents with the successor firm of solicitors ClarkeBarwood in Colac were unsuccessful. <https://clarkebarwood.com.au> .

³⁹ Hall Minutes November 9 1939