

# THE GREENHILLS HALL

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**Written and researched by Dawn Bennetts.**

## **My memories.**

After attending the Greenhills Hall on several occasions over the last few years for regular meetings of the Greensborough Historical Society, I mentioned to other members that I had also attended this hall in my much younger days for other activities. I was then encouraged to record my memories and also to research the history of the hall. Having lived & grown up my entire life in Greenhill Road, this idea certainly proved an interesting task to me.

Whilst there is a document available at the Greensborough Historical Society, titled “Greenhills Panorama” – compiled by Malcolm Blair, Agnes O’Donnell, and Adrienne Thompson in 1959 – which gives a very detailed history of the Greenhills area, my article will focus on just the Greenhills Hall - my memories associated with it, and the way the hall has been used by the community over the years.

I remember walking from my home at 74 Greenhill Road, along Carnon Street to the back area of Yandell Reserve, then following the rough, dirt track through the 'scrub' to the hall for Sunday School.



A former neighbour and very close friend of mine, Marcia Jervis (who lived in Mine Street, Greenhills), taught the younger children at the Sunday school. Where my group were in the large section of the hall, the little ones were in a smaller room off to the side – that smaller room would have been facing Old Eltham Road (St Helena Road now).

Marcia has been kind enough to provide a reflection of her memories of the hall and how it was used as a Sunday school. Her account is as follows:

24.10.2015

**My parents, Ted and Lorrie Jervis, along with my siblings Roslyn and Neil moved to Mine Street Greenhills in the early 1950's. We attended Briar Hills public school.**

**I recall the Memorial hall being built in the late 1950's, we used to stop and have a look at the progress on the way home from school. It was rectangular with a couple of small rooms inside.**

**The hall was used by the Methodist church on Sundays for church and Sunday school classes. These were held in one of the small rooms. I became a Sunday school teacher, did this for a couple of years.**

**There was a kindergarten built close to the hall in later years.**

**I hope the information is helpful,**

**Marcia Trew [Jervis]**

I also remember attending a few plays at night, which were performed by the Diamond Valley Repertory Group. One of the group – Les James – went on to acting parts in films & Television shows like 'Homicide', 'Division 4' & 'Matlock Police' during the 1960's through to the 1990's.

Another attendance at the hall for me was when a neighbour from Greenhill Road, Joyce Simpson (who was a leader of the Girl Guides pack), invited me to attend a fancy dress evening with the Girl Guides on one occasion. It was a fun night!

### **The Need For A Hall.**

"It was in August 1945, that Greenhills residents decided to form the Greenhills and North Greensborough Progress Association". (Greenhill's Panorama page 2-3)

"Although the population of the area was still small, the members of the Association, by means of constant letter writing to members of Parliament, the needs of Greenhills residents were soon widely known". (Greenhill's Panorama page 2-3)

"In the Association's early history, meetings were held on street corners." (Greenhills Panorama page 7)

“There was no public building in the district, no place for youth groups etc” and there was “an urgent need to provide kindergarten facilities.” (Greenhills Panorama page 7)

A central site was already available on land belonging to the Heidelberg City Council in the Andrew Yandell Reserve.(Greenhills Panorama page 8)

The women’s Group (which began in 1955), “began to raise money towards the project” (*of building the Hall*). By August 1955, £100 had been raised. A fete in November 1955 in Sondermeyer’s paddock raised £200. Early in 1956, a direct appeal was made for funds to build a Hall. After only one year £388 was in hand. (Greenhills Panorama page 8)

“A Hall Building Committee had been formed and a plan was drawn up by a resident designer.” Peter Darling was the architect of the original Hall. “The main hall is 48’ x 25’ with large areas of glass as required to fill its pre-school function. A large kitchen and a storage room for the kindergarten equipment were included in the plan, making a total of 1800 square feet.” (Greenhills Panorama page 9)

In August 1956, the planning stage was over and materials were being ordered for a start in September.” (Greenhills Panorama page 9)

In 8 months the Hall was complete to lock-up stage and was useable, though primitive.(Greenhills panorama page 9)

### **Use of the Greenhills Hall**

The Hall has been well used by the community since its completion in 1957.

Some of the early activities were:

#### Table Tennis –

Games began around 1957, with both social & competitive play being offered. Regular games were held on Wednesday evenings. Three tables were provided, with room for a fourth. (Greenhills Panorama page 21)

#### Kindergarten –

Greenhills Pre-school operated in the Hall from June 1958, (Greenhills Panorama page 14) and Yandell kindergarten as it is known now, still operates in the Hall today.



#### Guides and Scouts –

By 1959, Brownie and Cub Scout Packs used the Greenhills Hall, followed by Guides and Scouts, until a separate building was constructed for them, also situated in Yandell Reserve.

#### Sunday School –

A Sunday School was established in the Hall in July 1958. The initial enrolment was nearly 50. By 1959, enrolment had almost doubled.

Church Services were held weekly in the Hall in 1959.(Greenhills Panorama page 21)

#### Repertory Group –

The Diamond Valley Repertory Group formed around 1965 – (Community News Edition 5/76, 10 June 1976, page 12) and began performing at the Greenhills Hall in 1967, (Community News Edition 1/76, 9 February 1976, page 12), producing at least 3 plays a year. Early productions such as Neil Simons 'Barefoot in the Park', attracted very small audiences which disappointed the hard work efforts of the group. However, it did not deter their enthusiasm. (Community News Edition 5/70, 25 June 1970)

The production "J. B" – the winning play of 1959 – was an "overwhelming success" for the group.(Community News Edition 7/78, August 1978 page 8)

In 1979, the female members of the group decided to branch out to areas formerly 'hogged' by the men – lighting, sound, set-building etc – as well as playing the cleaning women in the first play for 1979 – "The Golden Legion of Cleaning Women."(Community News Edition 11/78, December 1978 page 13)

#### Meetings and Dances –

The hall has been used for meetings by many groups including the Progress Association and Council meetings which have involved the local community. According to the Community News Edition 3/78, April 1978 page 11, "a Blue-Grass Band was booked for a dance to be held on Friday 21<sup>st</sup> April, 1978". Money raised was for the Yandell Kindergarten.

#### Changes -

Over the years, there have been many changes made to the hall and a great deal of maintenance done.

In 1970, "additional seating and stage lighting was provided" for the Greenhills Hall.(Community News Edition 2/70. 23 March 1970. Presidents report, AGM 1969/70.)

In 1973, the hall was to be sound proofed and the toilets connected to sewerage.(Community News Edition 8/73, 29 September 1973, page 7.)

The Progress Association wanted the Shire of Diamond Valley to extend the Supper Room and progressively change, in stages, from a wooden building to a brick building.(Community News Edition 11/73, December 1973, page 16,17,18.)

The kindergarten and Repertory Group needed more floor area.(Community News Edition 6/74, 1<sup>st</sup> October 1974, page 10.)

Plans were drawn up in 1974 for a complete new building (Community News Edition 6/74, 1<sup>st</sup> October 1974, page 12.), by architects Horne & Kahsnitz, however, discussion continued for some years – "The modifications to the Greenhills Hall are to be discussed in Council next week."(Community News Edition 2/76, 4 March 1976, page 25.)

.....and still continuing in 1977 – "still wondering when the extensions to the hall will begin."(Community News Edition 3/77, 4 April 1977, page 18.)

After the demise of the Ashril Theatre in Main Street Greensborough, the idea of screening films in the Greenhills Hall was looked in to. Blackout curtains and a projection room were to be added late in 1976. The Progress Association put on the film "40 Carats" as a trial in December 1975, and the audience's favourable reaction encouraged them to try again. (Community News Edition 1/76, 9 February 1976, page 21.)

Finally, in June 1977, decisions were made.

### **June 1977 -**

Council has accepted a tender for the extensions. Yandell Kindergarten was to move to temporary premises whilst work was being done. (Community News Edition 5/77. 8 June 1977, page 15.)

### **July 1977 –**

Greenhills Hall is being extended and remodelled to provide better facilities for an existing kindergarten and Repertory group.(Community News Edition 6/77, 4 July 1977, page 1.)

### **August 1977 –**

The Yandell Pre-school was operating from the Greenhills Scout Hall (which was also situated by this time in Yandell Reserve, next to the Hall.) This re-location was to be for 3-4 months whilst modifications were being carried out in the Greenhills Hall.(Community News Edition 7/77, 18 August 1977, page 15.)

### **March 1978 –**

## **OFFICIAL OPENING – Saturday 4<sup>th</sup> March, 8pm onwards.**

(Community News Edition 1/78, 1 February 1978, page 11.)

“Shire President Pauline Toner cut the imaginary ribbon and declared the revamped Greenhills / Yandell Hall open.”

*“It was amusing to hear Diamond Valley repertory President Alma Kent, describe the good old, bad old days B. A. (before alteration) when, during a production, someone backstage wanted to go to the loo. They would have to creep down from stage level to the kitchen, tip toe across to the back door, out to the reserve to brave the flora and fauna in the dark, round the front to another set of steps when finally they might reach their destination without being spotted by the audience. Alma really expressed the feelings of all of us when she thanked the people responsible for the extensions which have made our hall a much more comfortable and convenient place to gather.”*

(Community News Edition 3/78, April 1978, page 11.)

### **August 1978 –**

The council was preparing plans for a veranda to give useable area during wet weather for the Greenhills Pre School.(Community News Edition 7/78, August 1978, page 12.)

**1983 -**

As a result of a meeting of the community, mainly women, to determine community needs - the Greenhills Neighbourhood Centre (GHNC) commenced at the hall in 1983, – by this time known as Yandell Hall - and the GHNC still operates from the hall today.

The Greenhills Neighbourhood Centre was established to provide Playgroup for pre-school children and their parents, social activities and opportunities for women at home to enhance their skills, personal development and occasional childcare – which were all seen as community needs.



A drop-in centre and office area were established at the rear of the hall.

The Childcare operates from the former ‘Supper Room’ of the Hall, where improvements and renovations to that area allowed it to become a registered Class 2 Childcare centre in 1991.(GHNC article – 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary by Coordinator Christine Burrows)



## **2016 -**

Currently, the GHNC is a non-profit Community House run by a voluntary Committee of Management. The House provides access to advice, information, childcare facilities, a meeting place or an opportunity to attend a course or workshop in a friendly and relaxed environment.(GHNC website)

- ❖ GHNC includes a Type 2 Registered Children’s Service. (Occasional Care).
- ❖ Many varied courses are offered and are held 6 days a week.

Some of the courses and activities offered are:

- ❖ Pilates; Yoga; Belly Dancing; Tai-Chi; Painting; Exercise classes; Dance classes and Greensborough Historical Society meetings.

As a result of the idea and dedicated efforts of the early members in the Greenhills community, many of us have been lucky enough to benefit from this facility, and hopefully the building will continue to provide pleasure/services for generations to come.

By Dawn Bennetts

