

Not without a touch of sadness we chronicle the impending demise of the last vestige of one of Dandenong's earliest institutions - the Dandenong Mechanics' Institute Library.

Started in 1863, the Dandenong Mechanics' Institute was the first public meeting place Dandenong's early residents had. It was erected on the site of the present Town Hall; at first a modest timber building, which was later enlarged and improved by the addition of a brick front in 1882. When the present Town Hall was first mooted, the prize site occupied by the Mechanics' in the centre of the town, was sought for its erection. Opposition had to be overcome, and it was only after long negotiations that a satisfactory formula was reached for the demolition of the Institute. Its activities were to be transferred to the upstairs portion of the Town Hall under a special arrangement that holds good until today. (The room this Society now occupies is part of the old Mechanics' Institute). Thus was the way cleared for the erection of our present Town Hall in 1890.

Besides proving a venue for early meetings - including those of the District Roads Board and the Shire Council - as well as entertainments, the Institute later boasted a library and billiard room among the amenities it provided for its members. Today the library - lately located on the ground floor - is the sole surviving remnant of this 111-year-old institution, and it is expected to close its doors about the end of July, when Dandenong's new Regional Free Library in Stuart Street will be taking over its functions. Down through the years the library has been a very popular service. For many of those years it was presided over by that very gracious lady, Miss Grace McAfee, who was something of an institution herself.

And so the Institute, Dandenong's oldest surviving institution, silently bows out without any fanfare or fuss - another victim of the progress that has transformed Dandenong from the little wattle and daub hamlet of the Institute's birth-year, into the bustling city of today. It is to be hoped that the minute books and other early records will be handed over to the Society for preservation, for into their pages must surely be written another slice of our early history.

PROPOSED NEW PUBLIC BUILDINGS FOR DANDENONG.

It is an old saying that great events sometimes spring from small beginnings, and the truthfulness of the proverb is likely to be verified in Dandenong at no distant date. Some months ago a misunderstanding arose between the Mechanics' Institute committee and the Shire Council through the latter body granting the use of the Secretary's room to the gas company, the committee being of opinion that by this means they were deprived of a certain amount of the revenue, as otherwise the gas company would probably have hired another room in the Institute for the transaction of their business. A good deal of correspondence passed between the two bodies, and eventually a deputation from the committee waited on the Council to know by what right they had sub-let the room; the Council replied that they had not sub-let the room but merely given the gas company permission to hold their meetings there until the completion of their own offices. Matters were still in this unsettled state when a suggestion came

Historical Society
2014 9:34
Institute
Institute.doc

The South Bourke and Mornington Journal.

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 21, 1887.

Local Intelligence.

To CORRESPONDENTS.—Several communications are held over for want of space. A conference of delegates from the Dandenong Council and the Mechanics' Institute committee was held on Friday to consider the suggestion of the Council that that body take over the buildings of the Institute and the liabilities. The matter was briefly discussed and a resolution was passed expressing an opinion that all the public offices should be established together, after which a committee consisting of Col. Hutton and Messrs. J. Eys, H. Powis and M. Macpherson, was appointed to draw up a scheme and pre-

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Local Intelligence.

The committee of the Dandenong Mechanics' Institute met on Wednesday evening to inspect the plans of the proposed new public buildings. After careful inspection and consideration a resolution was passed approving of the plans with one or two minor alterations, and they were ordered to be returned to the Council with a notification to that effect.

Committee and the Mechanics Institute Committee
inally get together.

ratepayers, however, who objected to the proposed expenditure, demanded that a poll be taken, and this was done on Monday last. On the previous Friday evening a public meeting, convened by the Shire Council, was held in the township to afford ratepayers an opportunity of discussing the matter *pro and con*. Fully 150 persons were present, most of whom were either property owners or ratepayers. A resolution was proposed and seconded that it was not desirable at the present time to float the loan for the purpose named. An amendment was moved and seconded that it was desirable to show of hands being taken from fifty to sixty voted for the motion and only three or four for the amendment. But this is only another proof that the voice of a public meeting is not always expressive of general public opinion, as the supporters of the proposed new building scored a decisive victory at the poll, defeating their opponents by 470 to 177. But it should be explained that only those opposed to the loan were entitled to vote, which undoubtedly gave the other side an advantage, as the votes not recorded counted in favor of the loan. Many per-

From Secretary Department Lands and Survey, in reply stating that the reservation of 2 roods 27 perches of land in the town of Dandenong, as a site for Court House, Shire Hall and other public buildings, was duly notified in the Government Gazette of 17th ult., and the reservation of the area specified as a site for a Mechanics Institute has been revoked. — Received.

DANDENONG PUBLIC BUILDINGS.

THEIR ORIGIN.

an ancient axiom says that "great things spring from small beginnings;" we find this verified almost daily, and never go far for an example. Let us take for instance that magnificent mass of buildings in Lonsdale street that are already erecting such enormous proportions, and when completed and fully fitted and furnished, will cost little short of £100,000; who could bring himself to believe that that gigantic structure, representing such an immense sum of money, has its rise and greatness to a sum so comparatively infinitesimal as five shillings? Every suggestion seems ludicrous; and when the history of the undertaking is traced to its inception it will be found that the assertion is not a wild one after all. In brief, it may be mentioned that about two years ago, when the Dandenong Building Company was first formed, it came to the knowledge of the Mechanic's Institute Committee that the shire secretary had invited the company to hold a meeting in order to purchase a portion of

OPPOSITION TO THE LOAN FAILS . . .

Dandenong District Historical Society

From: Dandenong & District Historical Society [dandhist@internode.on.net]
Sent: Wednesday, 3 September 2014 9:34 AM
To: 'Chris Keys'
Subject: RE: Dandenong Mechanic's Institute
Attachments: DANDENONG Mechanics Institute.docx; IMG_2172.jpg

Pam

I have added the dates etc that you requested and attached is the revised document.
The first image is of the wooden building dated 1863, then a brick extension was added in front of the wooden building in 1882
The town hall was opened on 3 September 1890.
The town hall facade is still in place of the Drum Theatre and I enclose an image.

Chris Keys
Dandenong Historical Society

From: Chris Keys [mailto:chris.keys@dingley.net]
Sent: Monday, 1 September 2014 2:40 PM
To: 'DDHS'
Subject: FW: Dandenong Mechanic's Institute

We need to look into this today Jenny

Chris Keys

0418340754
Chris.keys@dingley.net
11 Dryandra Cres
Keysborough 3173

From: pam baragwanath [mailto:pgbarag@alphalink.com.au]
Sent: Thursday, 28 August 2014 4:49 PM
To: 'Chris Keys'
Subject: RE: Dandenong Mechanic's Institute

Dear Chris,
very efficiently done, thank you.

All that needs adding is the address - is Lonsdale Street correct. Is there a number?
- and the building succession numbers: (could possibly be three, if you agree, can you please give me the date that the Town Hall was built)
3.: 1863, 1882,?

I would like to reuse those 3 images that are in the present book: I would have got them from Dandenong and District Historical Society, if that's OK? Strictly speaking there are only two buildings, but the 2nd brick fronted one is so different.

thanks agin, Pam.

From: Chris Keys [mailto:chris.keys@dingley.net]
Sent: Thursday, 28 August 2014 10:27 AM

pgbarag@alphalink.com.au

Subject: Dandenong Mechanic's Institute

Pam

We have reviewed your work on the Dandenong Mechanic's Institute. And attached a revised entry. While most of the content in the current entry holds true today, we have added some further facts which may be of interest.

Please contact me if you have any concerns.

Wish you well.

We would like to purchase a copy of the new edition.

Chris Keys

President

Dandenong & District Historical Society

Chris.keys@dingley.net

0418340754

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