

# Life and times of the stock yards

**D**ANDENONG has always been a market town, but sadly it will shed part of its history when the stockyards close in October. Many turbulent battles have been fought in council over its location — and in the past century it has occupied four different sites.

There are different accounts of when it started, but the official opening is generally acknowledged as 1866. The idea of establishing a market was conceived in 1863 at one of the first meetings of the Dandenong Improvement Association. The association ran into problems choosing a site, however.

There were only 30 ratepayers and they were divided over whether it should be established on a site in Walker Street (now the site of the town hall and post office) or on a triangular site on the corner of Lonsdale and McCrae streets.

The local Member of Parliament, Mr O'Grady, called a vote early in 1864 and the ratepayers were split 15-15. The rates paid by each voter were then

## MARKET TOWN

by ALICE ARCHER

**Celebrating the history of the Dandenong stock market.**

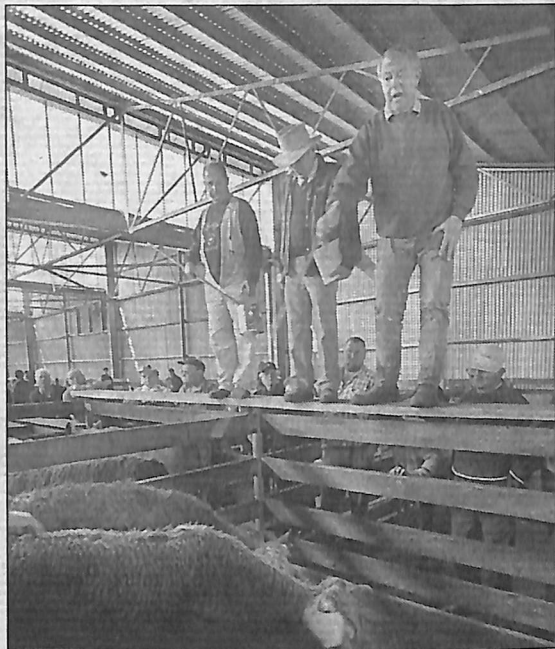


counted and the Lonsdale/McCrae side who paid the most won.

However, there are indications that a market was operating even before this. The stockyards has come a long way since the early days when it was a very primitive affair on land between Lonsdale and Robinson streets. Dandenong stockyards is now the biggest cattle market in Victoria. It has expanded from one day to three days a week and has given Dandenong a character of its own.

In his book *Early Reminiscences of Dandenong* GFR (writer G.F. Roulston) confirms that the first market was "primitive".

Mr Thomas Rosling, who took over Yarraman Park in the early 1850s, conceived the idea that auction sales of stock should be held in Dandenong and erected yards on a block about midway between Lonsdale



**GOING, GOING:** auctioneer John Garry seals another sale.

and Robinson streets. It was merely a corner subdivided by three-rail fences, but it served well enough until better accommodation was provided on the corner of Lonsdale and McCrae streets.

These yards from time to time were added to and improved until they too were outgrown by the increased yardings and another shift was made over to the Clow Street side. Commenting on the constant market politics, GFR wrote: "Has a peace aura ever settled upon the brow of our market?" and answered with a "decided 'no'".

"It was not long after Thos (Thomas) Rosling held his first sale that trouble began. A market

committee, composed of townsmen, had been appointed to look after affairs.

"They held their first meeting at the Bridge Hotel on August 12, 1864. The first building consisted of a shed 50 x 20 feet, enclosed with a three-rail fence."

The market was leased to Mr Rosling and Mr Hucksion for two years at a rental of one pound a year subject to a list of improvements being made: The building of a yard capable of holding 100 sheep, four sheep pens to hold 100 sheep, four yards for pigs and the erection of a toll board.

Business must have been booming because in 1868 the rent went up to £20 and £70 in 1869.

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