



Era ends: Wal Turner, Andrew Connell and Roy Bassett survey the Dandenong stockyard for the last time.

Remembering a country lifestyle

ROY Bassett and Wal Turner remember the days when stockmen drove their cattle down Dandenong's main street.

The stockmen were on their way to the stock and produce markets, both then located on Clow St.

Mr Bassett and Mr Turner said the sale of an animal for double figures would make headlines in the local papers.

"The market report was an integral part of the local newspaper," Mr Bassett said.

It's a long time since Lonsdale St was a dirt road or the sale of a horse or cow made front page, but these two old-timers remember such scenes as if it were yesterday.

"My first link to the market was to help my father drove cattle there

It was a time when a cattle sale made the newspaper's front page and the stock market was the centre of the Dandenong community before it lost its rural feel. LICARDO PRINCE reports on the end of an era.

from Mulgrave as a boy," said Mr Turner, a Dandenong resident since 1927.

For both men, it has been an uninterrupted involvement, working as auctioneers and stock agents.

They remember the way the community used to revolve around the market.

But things have changed and this was driven home starkly when the last animal was sold at the stock market in December.

The Dandenong stock market has

been replaced by a new centre in Pakenham. After more than a century, Dandenong seems to have grown too far from the rural heartland that uses such a facility.

Despite this the market remained one of the busiest in the country until its closure. Last year it boasted the third highest throughput of cattle nationally.

The stock market's move from Clow St to Cheltenham Rd in 1958 was probably the beginning of its move to the community's periphery.

But it remained an important part of local life for some years yet.

"Farmers used to sell their cattle and then hand over their money to their wives who'd then do the grocery shopping at the produce market," Mr Bassett said.

People like Mr Bassett and Mr Turner are links to a time when Dandenong was a country town rather than the urban centre it is now.

They talk about the characters that helped give the stockyard its special atmosphere. Men who, on horseback and using dogs, drove their livestock into town from the surrounding farms.

There were sales agents like T J Carroll, in whose honor the clock at the Clow St market site was built.

Greater Dandenong Cr Sharon Harris, a lifelong Dandenong resident, remembers visiting the market as a child with her parents and siblings.

"It was always a big day out when we came to the market. We always enjoyed looking at the animals that were being sold," she said.

The markets, both stock and produce Cr Harris said, always loomed large in the lives of Dandenong residents.

"It was for business as well as social reasons. People used to catch up with each other on market days."

Now it's only use is for learner drivers, who use the carpark as a practice course.

The land is council-owned but its future is unclear.