



IN the early days, when Dandenong was just a country town, market day was the big event of the week with families arriving from all over the district in horses and buggies.



THE Dandenong Livestock Market is more sophisticated these days with the animals transported by truck rather than on foot or by rail.

# Time to take stock

THE State Government's decision to build the new Monash University campus at Berwick is a bitter blow to Dandenong Council.

Had Dandenong been given the nod, the multi-million dollar complex would have been developed in Cheltenham Rd, on the site now occupied by the Dandenong Livestock Market.

Council is trying to reverse the decision, but regardless of the outcome, the future of the saleyards, an institution in the Dandenong district, will have to be re-examined.

With the "cattle market not so good", council may now consider alternative sites, said Cr Wal Turner, chairman of the market committee.

In fact, Water Board land in Hammond Rd had already been "lined up", but there were a lot of "ifs".

While everyone acknowledges the saleyards are at "too valuable a spot", a major stumbling block would be relocation costs, which could be up to \$18 million, far more than the land is worth, according to Cr Turner.

Of Dandenong's three markets, the produce market in Cleeland St is council's major revenue earner, generating about \$2½ million dollars a year.

The saleyards bring in about \$800,000-\$1 million a year and the monthly craft market about \$25,000.

As well as being the second largest

By DENISE GADD

saleyards in Victoria (Wodonga is the largest), the Dandenong Livestock Market is the only Victorian outlet for weekly horse and poultry sales.

Before the Dandy Bacon Factory closed down some years ago, the market was one of the busiest pig-selling yards in Victoria. Annual sales have now dropped to 3250.

Annual sheep sales have also dropped from 100,000 in the mid 1980s to 38,500 last year.

Likewise, sales of grown cattle dropped 15 per cent in 1991 to only 162,500.

About 2500 horses were sold last year with 60 per cent — "past their prime" — going to the knackery.

Peter Edwards, council's superintendent of markets, acknowledged the 16ha saleyards site was prime real estate.

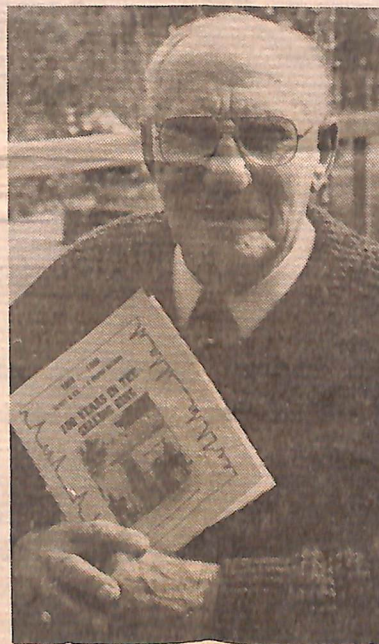
Its proximity to neighboring industrial and retail developments would determine its future, he said.

"When the Very Fast Train project was alive, there was talk of putting a marshalling yard and transfer point there, but it fell in a heap when the project was dropped," said Mr Edwards.

He had also heard "talk" of the site being included in an overall redevelopment of the existing railway station.

Whatever the site's future, council had an "ongoing commitment" to the saleyards industry, he said.

Dandenong's first cattle market opened in a paddock behind the Albion Hotel, a popular watering



AUCTIONEERING was a wonderful life and Darrell Harvey would love to be in the thick of it again. Picture: IAN McPHERSON

hole with the district's dairy farmers.

Primitive compared to today's saleyards, it traded in an ad hoc fashion for about 10 years until 1866, when the official Dandenong Market was opened to the public. The Shire of Dandenong took over the reins in 1873.

In 1923, the saleyards were moved to the site now occupied by the produce market. The same year, Berwick resident Darrell Harvey

joined stock and station agents, Alex Scott & Co as a junior, earning the princely sum of two pounds 10 shillings a week.

After starting off in the office, Mr Harvey rose through the ranks to become the firm's head auctioneer. After half a century in the trade, he could sell anything from "chooks to the kitchen sink".

Describing market life as "pretty wild", Mr Harvey said auctioneering was an art form.

"A lot of people think auctioneers talk out of the side of their mouths, but there's a lot more to it than that," he said.

"You toss the words around for a while and develop your own style. I never ran out of breath, so I could always sell for long periods.

"I found the worst thing you could do was have a drink while you were selling. If I did, my voice would go. Better to have a few beers afterwards."

Over the years, Mr Harvey "got to know the stock" like the back of his hand. He could judge the weight of a bullock almost to the last pound, just by looking at it.

Born in Parkville, Mr Harvey moved with his family to Dandenong when he was six years old.

His father, also an auctioneer, travelled all over Victoria, so it was only natural that his son "knock around with him" during school holidays. Watching his father at work "sold" the young Darrell Harvey on the business.

"It was a hard life and sometimes you had to sell every day of the week. We were tough as old boots when I think about it," he said.

When the saleyards were situated in Cleeland St, they were "tiny" compared to today's operation in Cheltenham Rd. (The livestock market was moved to its present site in 1958.)

In the early days drovers brought the stock to market by road.

"This was a big dairying district and most of the cattle came from the Keysborough area," said Mr Harvey.

"THE men who owned them would bring them very quietly along Cheltenham Rd, which was then called Brighton Rd.

"It would take them a good while to come up. They were pretty good and they'd have to cross through railway gates and up the streets to come to the market.

"It was bad luck if anyone left their gates open because they'd end up with cattle in their gardens.

"We were often in trouble at the office with complaints from residents who'd had a drover on a horse come charging through their gardens."

Now retired, Mr Harvey, who "won't see 80 again", lives the quiet life in Berwick with his wife, Helen.

Recalling those days when Dandenong was just a country town and market day was the big event of the week, Mr Harvey said he'd love to be auctioneering again.

"It was a wonderful experience and hard to get away from," he said.

"I used to go back for a while after I retired, but everyone was always busy, and I didn't feel part of it any more."