



Deans Marsh School 1870

The Settlement of Deans Marsh

The establishment of the Deans Marsh community dates back to the European settlement of Eastern Australia. In addition to the settlement of convicts, free settlers, many of whom were graziers poured into Victoria (then New South Wales) in the 1820's.

One of the original settlers (who must really be called squatters), William Roadknight came across the Deans Marsh area during the search for missing explorers Hesse and Gellibrand in 1837. He returned to establish a new pastoral run at Yan Yan Gurt (aboriginal for everflowing water) in 1838. Traditional belief held by many, is that a shepherd named Charles Dean grazed sheep on all the marshland beyond the boundaries of Yan Yan Gurt, even as far as Pennyroyal, and so the area became known as Deans Marsh.

The New South Wales government was unable to address the illegal occupation of land by the squatters after the British Government ordered the squatters be given long leases and the opportunity to purchase their runs during the period of their leases.

In 1851, Victoria became an independent state and gold was discovered in Central Victoria. In the late 1850's, the Victorian Government was faced with the problem of what to do with the many unsuccessful diggers returning from the gold fields. It was decided that they were to be settled on the land and many of the squatters' pastoral runs were divided and sold. In 1861, Yan Yan Gurt was divided into lots ranging from 50 to 200 acres and the area given the name Bambra, Aboriginal for mushroom.

The land around the Deans Marsh creek and Retreat Creek was sold, and a report dated 1865 states there were 40 houses within a radius of 2 miles of Mackey's corner at that time. During the following years, allotments were sold in Bambra, Boonah and Pennyroyal, and even as far back as Benwerrin, thus increasing the population further and developing other small centres.

Extracted from Ron Millard's book, The Deans Marsh Story.