



MOUNT COLLIERY QLD



Name: Mount Colliery School of Arts

Address: 7 Bakers Road Mount Colliery Queensland 4370

The Town/District

Mount Colliery is a locality in the Canning Downs region of South East Queensland. It is 30 km south-east of Warwick, the principal town in the region, and 6 km north-east of the nearest township, Tannymorel. Because the nearby Macpherson Ranges were heavily forested with timber (principally Australian cedar) the early settlers came principally for timber felling and sawmilling. Coal was discovered in the 1880s. The land around Tannymorel is very fertile—good farming land. Settlers therefore came for a number of reasons: to fell the timber, farm the land, and mine for coal. The population is 111¹.

Allan Cunningham² reached the area in 1827 travelling north from the Hunter Valley searching for new grazing land to service the colony's burgeoning wool industry. In the Canning Downs he found a region with rich volcanic soil, good pasture and abundant forests: everything the aspiring settler would wish for. Such a rich pastoral region would require easy access to ports and major towns to be really productive. He saw what he thought could be a gap (now called



Spicer's Gap) in the apparently impenetrable Great Dividing Range. This, he thought, would perhaps enable access to the penal colony of Moreton Bay which lay 76 miles (122 km) away. Cunningham returned to the Hunter region and, in 1828, travelled north to Moreton Bay (now Brisbane) to search for a gap in the range by travelling inland along the Logan River towards the Macpherson Ranges. After some searching he located a gap now known as Cunningham's Gap in 1829. This leads to the Darling Downs region of South Eastern Queensland.

In his history of the settlement of the Darling Downs, Hall³ (p. 3) reports that the Darling Downs region rests on a bed of carboniferous rock covered by the results of two distinct volcanic eruptions which inundated the land with volcanic mud and basalt. Over time, erosion of the volcanic peaks by wind and rain produced a rich soil layer which is 200 feet (66m) deep in parts. The heavily forested landscape which existed in the carboniferous era evolved to become lightly wooded grasslands. Densely timbered regions survived only in the eastern part of Australia in areas of high rainfall⁴, including the Macpherson Ranges.

Cunningham saw just glimpses of the indigenous population³ (p.13) and recorded in his diary: *We remained encamped for about a week, in which one solitary aborigine (a man of ordinary stature) was seen, and, when camped on the Condamine: Three natives were seen in the adjoining forest ground on the opposite bank, firing the dried herbage of these woods.* The local indigenous tribes were the Kienjan, Cathabul, Jageia, and Garaomna⁵ people who spoke a common language, Wakka Wakka. The settlers lived in harmony with what was referred to at the time as the "Blucher" tribe.

The explorers were searching for good farming land-- which Cunningham found in abundance. What he missed, and which farmers found later at Farm Creek and at other locations on the Darling Downs, was coal. The local aborigines knew about this strange black substance. It was very noticeable in one local swimming hole in particular and the local indigenous people swam there because they believed that the water had healing properties³ (p. 95).

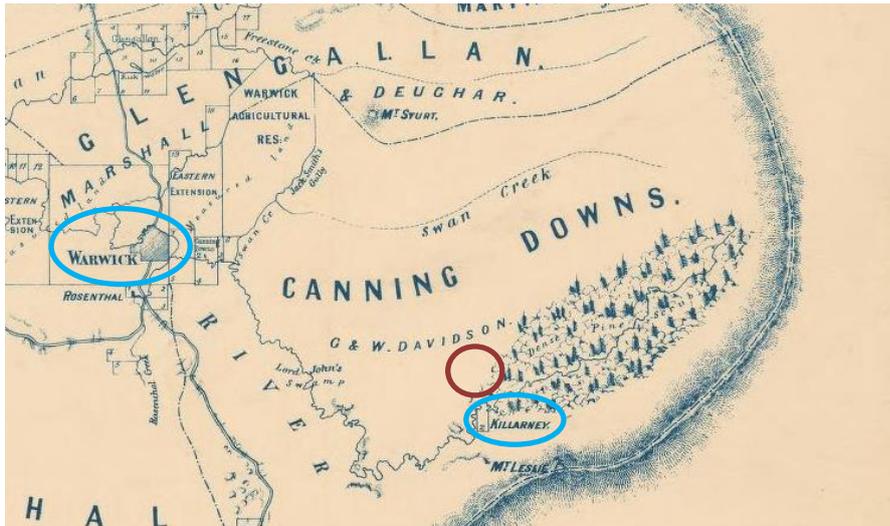
The first settlers to stake a claim for this rich farming land were the Leslie Brothers who arrived in 1840. The pastoral estate which they established they named Canning Downs. In 1847 the Governor of New South Wales asked Patrick Leslie to select a part of the property to divide into smaller allotments for a township, which was to be called 'Cannington', but the name 'Warwick' was eventually chosen for the township. Land sales were held in 1850, and the first allotment was bought by Leslie.

Canning Downs³ was a very large pastoral estate with a number of outstations. One of these was "Heifer" which was located on a rise overlooking the Swan Creek valley. The stock yards and a house were established by Leslie on a knoll where Alan Cunningham had camped in 1827. Later this became the site for a settlement³ (p. 27) called Upper Swan Creek, which evolved to become the township of Yangan sited at about the centre of the Canning Downs Estate. A circle of 20 km radius drawn on a map⁶ of the estate would just encompass the township of Killarney and the town of Warwick. It would include as well the hamlets of Swan Creek, Tannymorel, Mt Colliery, and Freestone which were built later than the date of



production of the map⁶ (which is dated 1864). These townships were later to construct Schools of Arts⁷.

In 1859 the State of Queensland was created and the Canning Downs region came under the jurisdiction of the Queensland Government. With this came the decision to break up the larger pastoral holdings within the State. Hall³ (p. 80) reports *that the Queensland Lands Departmentprovided a large area of agricultural land in 1863, comprising part of the holdings of Canning Downs, Glengallan, Swan Creek and Campbell's Gully* for subdivision and sale. In 1868 a further decision was made⁸ to provide freehold blocks of up to 10,000 acres to encourage closer settlement.



◀Squatting map⁸ of the Darling Downs 1864 showing the proposed line of pre-emptive purchases, townships, reserves and roads⁶. Killarney, at the southern boundary of the estate, is highlighted. The red circle indicates the region around Mount Colliery.

The land was cleared for farming from the early 1850s onwards. The timber harvested was mostly cedar. A water-powered sawmill³ (p.85) established in 1855 not far from Killarney station, was built by Thomas Hall's father to provide timber for the construction of the settlers' houses, barns, and other outbuildings. The settlers came from many places: other parts of New South Wales, England, Scotland, Ireland, and Scandinavia. Because the land was rich, the dairy industry also flourished on small holdings. The map of the Canning Downs estate (shown above), which predates the Crown Land Alienation Act of 1868⁸, shows only two towns, Warwick and Killarney.

The first settlement around Farm Creek grew up in proximity to the dense cedar forests of the Macpherson Ranges. The Darling Downs squatters, Patrick Leslie and Ernest Dalrymple, gave this hamlet the name "Tannymorel", although it was still referred to as Farm Creek well into the 20th Century. A school was opened in 1877.

The principal commercial activity at the time was timber getting. The timber was felled on the slopes and the trimmed logs were slid down to bullock wagons at the foot of the slope. From there the wagons were taken to the saw mill at Farm Creek and converted into lumber for distribution to the surrounding townships. Mount Colliery came into existence because a coal seam was found in the upper Farm Creek valley in 1883 though during the 1880s it was mined in only small quantities⁹. Mining had started in a low-key way when it was very much a pick-and-shovel, and wheelbarrow and dray endeavour with only five men involved in the operation.¹⁰ The miners lived in tents and drew their stores from nearby Tannymorel.



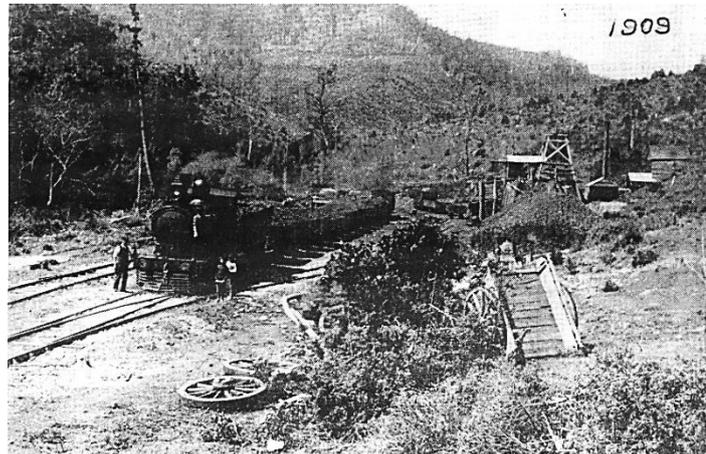
The commercial viability of the mine was established when the Warwick-Killarney railway line was completed in 1885¹¹.

THE FARM CREEK COAL MINE.—It is doubtless a matter of common local knowledge that there is a coal-pit at Farm Creek, but the extent of the operations at the mine may not be generally known. The pit is owned by Messrs. Roach and Lanigan, who have been in possession since March last. Five men are employed; three work in the pit, one is engaged on top, while the fifth is kept carting to the Tannymorel railway station. There is a fair demand for the coal. The Railway Department uses it for the coaling of the Killarney train and special trade at Wallangarra; it is in use at the Farmers' Mill, the Warwick waterworks, and the Warwick gasworks. The monthly output is 1,000 tons. The seam varies from 18 inches to 2ft. 2in. The report of the Inspector of Collieries states that the pit is well worked, and that the fullest provision is made for the safety of the miners.

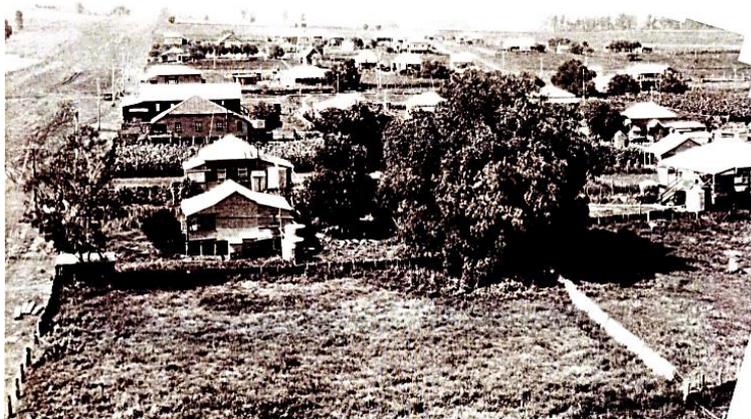
Tannymorel and Mount Colliery are inseparable in the sense that Tannymorel was the commercial hub with general stores, a blacksmith, a butchery, and it also provided general services for the district. The Tannymorel Coal Mining Company established the Mount Colliery mine 6 km up a neighbouring valley¹⁰ in 1897. Initially the coal was taken to the railway by horse-drawn drays. Later in 1908 the Glengallan Shire Council built a tram line between the mine and the town¹¹. The tramway was taken over by Queensland Rail in 1909¹¹.

▲ Early operations at Mount Colliery Mine
Warwick Argus 16 November 1897 p.2

Coal was supplied to several dairy factories in Killarney and, further along the railway line in Warwick, to the gas works and the Warwick hospital. Wheat and other crops were grown in the district, and both crops and coal were transported to Warwick by railway, which had been opened in 1885.



▲ First train to use the Mount Colliery tramway
Photo: Warwick and District Historical Society



Until the middle of the first decade Mount Colliery was mostly a tented mining camp. Then the mining company built 10 houses for the mine workers in 1910, and around them a small community developed.

◀ Mount Colliery around 1920
Photo: Warwick and District Historical Society

Even so, the settlement still relied on Tannymorel which, by 1930, had a school,¹² two double storey hotels, a School of Arts¹³ and Anglican¹⁴ and Catholic¹⁵ churches, a bakery, a butchery, a tailor, engineering works, a sawmill, and a blacksmith.¹⁶



MT. COLLIERY ACCIDENT.

DEATH OF TIMOTHY F. MITCHELL.

After a clear run for 27 years the coal mine at Mt. Colliery was the scene of a sad accident on Monday morning last, resulting in the death of Timothy F. Mitchell, a married man and the father of two children.

The accident occurred in a new mine which is being opened out by a few men selected for the purpose. Work started at the usual time on Monday morning and proceeded till about 11 o'clock, when, without warning, a slip occurred in the roof, precipitating several tons of pipeclay on the spot where Mitchell was at work. His comrade (Graham Lloyd) immediately gave the alarm, and willing hands were at work at once breaking up the fallen mass, but they could not save their unfortunate mate, who was killed instantly, being terribly crushed about the chest.

The local ambulance litter was requisitioned and the first sorrowful procession in the history of the mine wended its way through the settlement to that hitherto happy home, thus telling again the story of the dangers which men face in the coal mining industry.

In 1922 a mine accident occurred at Mount Colliery. It was the first accident at the mine in the 27 years of its operation. Given the mining methods used at that time and the lack of mechanization this was a remarkable achievement. Mining accidents had been common occurrences elsewhere: an accepted part of the life-experience of a coal miner.

An extract from the newspaper report of this accident is shown¹⁷. The rest of the report describes the funerary arrangements, the taking of the body to Warwick and thence to Brisbane, showing the depth of community spirit which existed at the time. Almost identical reports are to be found in the Brisbane papers.

- ◀ Extract from a newspaper report of the death of Timothy F. Mitchell in the mine accident at Mount Colliery¹⁷.
Warwick Daily News 3 March 1922 p.6

- ▼ Satellite image showing the settlement of Mount Colliery as it is today. The location of the School of Arts is marked by a circle.

The Great Depression of the 1930s had a significant effect. The financial uncertainty, a decline in prices for crops, a fall in the price of coal, and a catastrophic fire which destroyed three shops in 1940¹⁸ caused the demise of the township of Tannymorel. Its population is now 191¹.

The Warwick-Killarney railway line closed in 1964 because Queensland Rail began to use diesel locomotives. This reduced the market for high quality steaming coal and led to the closure of Mt Colliery in 1967¹¹. The fortunes of Mount Colliery are inevitably intertwined with those of Tannymorel. Now, the number of dwellings at Mount Colliery is fewer than 25.





Establishing the School of Arts

The School of Arts movement¹⁹ spread rapidly through the English-speaking world in the mid-nineteenth century. The movement, sometimes thought to have grown from the changes brought by ‘The Enlightenment’, was initiated by George Birkbeck²⁰ at the turn of the 19th century. Birkbeck commenced a public lecture series on arts, science, and technical subjects in 1800 largely in response to a perceived need for ‘mechanics’ to be educated about the nature their work. These Saturday evening events proved to be very popular and led to the establishment of the first School of Arts in Edinburgh in 1821, followed by the formation in 1823 of the first Mechanics’ Institute in Glasgow. They continued after Birkbeck’s departure to London ultimately leading to a spread of such institutions in Britain and beyond, especially in the English-speaking world.

There was a real passion amongst ordinary people to know about science and to achieve further intellectual improvement. Public lectures became a common means of social discourse in the United Kingdom, and more and more institutions were created during the 19th century. Meanwhile, the industrial revolution was changing both the nature of work and the skills and knowledge required of manual workers, known in those days as mechanics or artisans. Underpinning this movement were the ideas that industry and society would benefit from an artisan class, educated scientifically as well as more generally, and that a new breed of inventors would arise from this class. One advocate explained the rationale for these institutes of learning thus²¹:

The steam engine is the discovery of one who laboured as a mechanic; and we urge, give men of this class science – do not leave them to the crumbs which fall from the rich man's store....

The first of these institutions in Australia, the Van Diemen’s Land Mechanics’ Institute, was established in Hobart in 1827. The movement spread rapidly. At the turn of the 19th Century there were approximately 2000 in Australia²².

The first such institution in the Canning Downs region, the Warwick School of Arts, was established in 1865²². When the Warwick-Killarney railway line was built, those in the small local settlements could travel readily to this major regional centre allowing them to see the benefits of having a School of Arts in their own district. Killarney followed Warwick in building a School of Arts (1887), with Yangan (1897), Freestone (1901), Tannymorel (1907) and Swan Creek (1907)⁷ each erecting their own buildings.

By 1910 all of these were more substantial townships. Each had direct access to a railway line, two or three churches, a school, two hotels, two or more general stores, a butcher, a bakery, a school, a doctor, a midwife, anda School of Arts. The population of the townships might have been only 200 or so, with a further 100 or more local farmers who came to town for its facilities.

By contrast, Mount Colliery, in 1918 the last in this region to be established, had only about 25 established dwellings. But it did have an Anglican Church.



◀ St. Augustine's Anglican Church²³
(Anglican website)

Not much information is available about the Church, apart from its location, 17 Roach Road, Mount Colliery, but it seems to have had an active congregation. From around 1920 until at least the 1960s it held regular fund-raising functions in the Mount Colliery Hall, and its Women's Guild held monthly meetings there as well. From the style of the building it would seem to date from the early 1900s. It would appear to have been the local standard simple rectangular building with a gabled roof, with later additions of a front and side veranda together with a side extension. It is now a private dwelling.

You might ask: how is it, then, that such a community which may have had 25 or so dwellings (not counting tents belonging to mine workers) came to have a School of Arts?

Institutions with the same aspirations and belonging philosophically to the same movement are identified by many names²²: Athenaeum, Literary Institute, Mechanics' Institute, Agricultural Institutes, and.....Miners' Institute.

Mount Colliery was a coal mining settlement. Perhaps the movement to build a School of Arts at Mount Colliery was facilitated by the Tannymorel Coal Mining Company. Or it might have been supported by the prominent graziers of the district. Perhaps it was simply the desire and the will of those who lived in the mining community to have a place of recreation where they lived.

The Building

No newspaper reports, or any other information about the deliberations which led the establishment of the School of Arts at Mount Colliery were located. The first indication that a School of Arts had been built is a description of the opening ceremony.²⁴ And what a splendid affair it was! Opened by Mr F Grayson MLA, politicians and prominent graziers were guests....and the official opening was followed by a splendid banquet at which fully 200 people sat down to table.²⁴ Mr Grayson *complimented the residents of the township and district upon their enterprise in erecting such a splendid building.* As ever with functions like this, the banquet was provided by the ladies of the township.....*the tables fairly groaned under the weight of the good things provided*²⁴. The ladies....how would any public event have occurred without the vigorous assistance of the ladies?



MOUNT COLLIERY

NEW SCHOOL OF ARTS OPENED.

Monday was a red-letter day in the annals of Mount Colliery, when a fine new School of Arts building was opened by Mr. F. Grayson, M.L.A. Mr. John Clark (president of the School of Arts) presided and introduced the visitors, who included Messrs. J. A. Moir (who contested the Cunningham seat in the Labor interest at the recent election), M. E. Milward, John O'Mara, John Green, and other prominent farmers in the district. A feature of the proceedings was the splendid banquet provided by the ladies of the township and its surrounding district, to which fully 200 persons sat down at the conclusion of the opening ceremony. The tables fairly groaned under the weight of the good things provided, and this part of the function reflected great credit upon the ladies concerned. In his speech delivered at the opening ceremony, Mr. Grayson complimented the residents of the township and district upon their enterprise and public spirit in erecting such a splendid building in their midst for such a deserving purpose as a School of Arts, and said that it spoke volumes for the generosity of the residents. He advised those who were not subscribers to enrol and become members of the institution in order to make it the success it deserved to be. He also suggested the formation of a mutual improvement or debating society so as to interest the young men of the district.

◀ Extract from a newspaper report of the opening ceremony of the Mount Colliery School of Arts
Warwick Examiner and Times 8 May 1918 p.1

The *Brisbane Courier* also took note of this event.²⁵ It had not previously reported on any of the other opening ceremonies of Schools of Arts in the Canning Downs area.

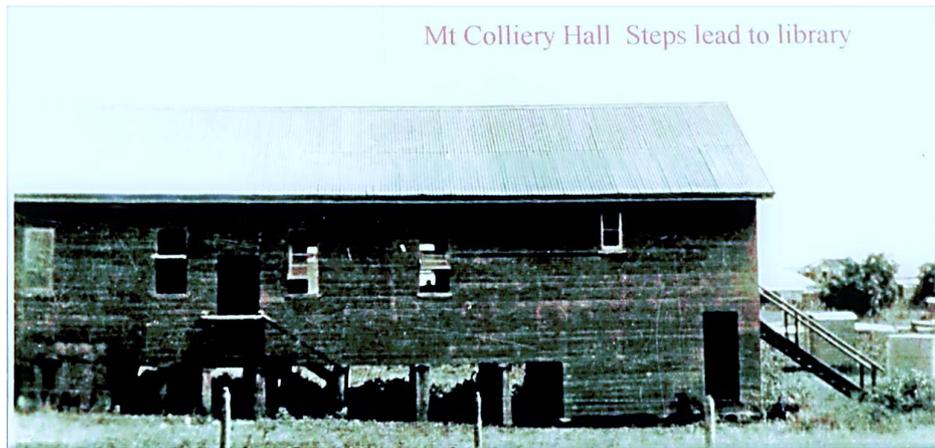
WARWICK AND DISTRICT.

WARWICK, May 7.

A new School of Arts was opened at Mt. Colliery on Monday by Mr. F. Grayson, M.L.A., who complimented the residents on their enterprise in having erected such a fine building. At the banquet which was subsequently held Mr. Grayson, in responding to the toast of Parliament, proposed by Mr. Campbell, president of the Mt. Colliery W.P.O., expressed the hope that the Government would refrain from passing class legislation, but would place enactments on the Statute Book that would develop the vast resources of Queensland. Referring to the Mt. Colliery Coal Mine, he said it was freely rumoured during the last few months that the Government intended to nationalise the coal industry. If that came about, he knew of no better proposition than the Mt. Colliery Mine, the coal from which was equal to the best steaming coal in the State, as the railway experts admitted.

▲ Extract from a report on the opening ceremony
Brisbane Courier 7 May 1918 p.3

The opening ceremony did not pass without political comment from some of the speakers. Nationalisation of the coal industry was a controversial issue of the time



Mount Colliery School of Arts

Photo n.d. (1920s?): Warwick and District Historical Society

The building was a simple rectangular wooden structure with a gable and corrugated iron roof. The chamfer board cladding is unpainted, as was often the case for buildings in Queensland in this period. Because of the slope of the land there was space for rooms under the stage, although this area was not originally enclosed. It seems that it was later closed in and used as the library. The steps at the back led to the stage. The interior floor space of the 1918 building was about 50 feet x 25 feet (estimated from the satellite image of the current building, allowing for the later extensions).

Early in the 1920s two rooms were added to the front of the hall²⁶: the building in the archival photograph above was extended forward to the left, from near the window adjacent to the entrance door and steps which, as shown, were then on this side. Included was the addition of a fourth window for this new space. Careful examination of the old photograph shows the join in the timber which identifies the extension.

In this extension: One room was used as a projection room for silent films and the other was a small goods shop. Films were shown each Saturday night.At that time the hall was known as "The Mt. Colliery School of Arts" with trustees and an energetic committee.²⁶



Mount Colliery School of Arts (QCWA Hall) 2018 - north elevation



A number of differences between the older building and its current version are apparent. The stairs at the north side, probably used earlier as the entrance, have been removed and relocated to the other side of the building, though the former entrance door remains. An addition to the building provides a small verandah and an entry porch at the front (Bakers Road) and an enclosed area, also at the front, houses the kitchen. The building has been painted and re-stumped. From the opposite side (below) it can be seen that location of the entry to the now QCWA Hall has been changed. A disabled persons' ramp has been added to the left-hand side of the front entry to replace the steps which formerly existed.



Mount Colliery School of Arts (QCWA Hall) as it is today (2018) - south elevation

The kitchen is the addition at front right, with a single window

Septic toilets built in 1980 are separate from the building, out of view, to the left of the building. The small upper window at the left of the building is where the stage is located, and the window underneath relates to *the portion under the stage [which] was also built in and used as a library and a supper room.*²⁶ A view of the kitchen area with glimpses of the hall itself is shown below left. The verandah is shown, below right.



The kitchen area



The verandah



Inside is a tongue-and-groove ceiling but the walls have not been lined. Both the walls and the ceiling have been stained. It appears that the original sash windows have been replaced by more modern windows, perhaps in the 1940s.²⁷



The tongue-and-groove ceiling has been stained. The walls have not been lined but they have been stained.

How the building has been used

The Mount Colliery School of Arts was opened on 8 May 1918. Meetings were subsequently held about the use of the building. For example: *to discuss arrangements for sports.....ladies will run a luncheon booth and a tea tent. The rights for a publican's booth is to be sold by tender*²⁷ and later *to discuss the scale of charges for the use of the hall for concerts, dances, paintings, etc.*²⁸

The committee certainly had an eye on the commercial as well as the community aspects of the School of Arts, a quite proper perspective since so many of these institutions struggled financially because they often overstretched their resources. In its first year of operation the Hall was to host performances of the Tannymorel Choral Society, sports days, and political meetings.²⁹

The building at Mt Colliery was larger than the others close by and therefore more suitable for bigger gatherings. For this reason, many of the grander occasions such as concerts, dances, and meetings with a large attendance were organized for the Mt Colliery School of Arts. Since the small settlements were close together (just a few kilometres apart) it was a simple solution and no doubt a profitable one for the Mt Colliery Committee.

In the second decade of the 20th century, amongst the most significant meetings was the one organized as the response of the local community to a major catastrophe: this was the Mount Mulligan disaster in North Queensland in September 1921 when 75 miners were killed by a gas explosion.³⁰ Each of the Mt Colliery miners³¹ agreed to donate a day's pay to the appeal to support the families affected by the disaster. Further support was provided when the Committee³² provided free use of the School of Arts, and the lighting as well, for meetings and fund raising activities. Such a tragedy affected all mining communities and the response was one of solidarity with their fellow miners in a time of a tragedy.



There were political meetings³³ where the ALP State Organiser Mr Collings spoke at length against the IWW (Industrial Workers of the World) and the Communists, and there were meetings of the Tannymorel branch of the ALP. Picture shows (cinema) were also introduced and became very popular. Apart from these, use devolved around school fetes, euchre tournaments, church meetings and functions, dances (often involving groups from Tannymorel), and galas. The Mount Colliery Brass Band performed at functions at the hall, in Tannymorel, and further afield. The Tannymorel Choral Society also used the hall regularly, including for performances.

One significant event was the 3rd Birthday meeting of the Tannymorel, Mt. Colliery and Loch Lomond Branch of the QCWA. As well, the regional branch based in Killarney held a meeting at Mount Colliery.³⁴

- Appreciation notice concerning the CWA³⁴
The Queenslander (Brisbane) 12 September 1929 p.52

Southern Division.

TANNYMOREL.—That the Tannymorel, Mt. Colliery, and Loch Lomond residents appreciate the work of the C.W.A. in their midst was evinced in no uncertain manner when the branch celebrated its third birthday last month by a sale of gifts. Despite the fact that many homes are visited by sickness, there were received and sold during the afternoon gifts to the value of £27. The main feature in the hall was the beautiful birthday cake, presented by the members,

In the 1930s the School of Arts was used for indoor sports, such as badminton and table tennis; social evenings (often run by the Church of England) involving playing Euchre, sometimes followed by a dance; monthly meetings of the Church of England Women's Guild; and the occasional mine meeting, at which fifty or so miners might be in attendance. A number of meetings were held on the subject of the provision of mains electricity, with the first of these³⁵ held in 1936.

A.C.F.—A meeting was held in the Mt. Colliery School of Arts. Mrs. B. Roach presided. Others present were Mesdames J. Gordon, E. Goggins, W. Brown, W. Fischer, R. Joyce, sen., M. Roach, and Mrs. J. Jeffrey (secretary). The meeting was opened with the A.C.F. prayer. Correspondence included a letter of thanks for canteen order from Private J. Hague, and a letter from Mr. R. Joyce, sen., on behalf of the V.D.C., thanking the A.C.F. for knitted socks for the V.D.C. members. The treasurer's report showed a satisfactory balance of £41 15/1. The balance sheet of the dance was read and showed a profit of £9/9/11. All accounts for expenses on dance were passed for payment. A donation of tea from Mrs. Alf. Bradford and Mrs. Munton was received. This tea was left from the afternoon which was held to entertain the sick soldiers. It was decided to hold the meetings at night for the summer months.

Soldiers Entertained.—On Sunday afternoon about 30 convalescent soldiers, two sisters and a V.A.D. were entertained at the residence of Mrs. B. Roach, Mt. Colliery, by the residents of Mt. Colliery and Tannymorel. Singing and dancing were enjoyed. Music was supplied by Mrs. L. Kehoe and Mrs. T. Mogridge. Many soldiers took the opportunity of visiting the opal mine. Afternoon tea was served and the visitors returned to the hospital after an enjoyable afternoon.

Then came World War 2. The familiar pattern of dances, bazaars, social and euchre evenings, school events, and sports tournaments (indoor and football) continued. But more important meetings were associated with the activities of the Australian Comforts Fund (ACF). This organization raised funds to provide parcels for troops serving overseas, which were packed with useful items as well as welcome treats. They also entertained troops convalescent in local hospitals.

- ◀ Report of a meeting of the Australian Comforts Fund held at the School of Arts³⁶
 Extract from *Warwick Daily News* 31 October 1942 p.6

Another meeting,³⁷ which discussed the sending of 'comforts' parcels to the troops, recorded that they were very disappointed that *they would not be able to send any more parcels directly to the local boys overseas*. They were required to send all contents of parcels to headquarters for dispatch, rather than send parcels from the soldier's home town.



The Library

Mount Colliery, opened in 1918, was the last of the Schools of Arts to be erected in the region of the Canning Downs Estate. It is perhaps appropriate therefore to examine one of the important features common to all, with the possibility of drawing some conclusions.

Every School of Arts had a library: the cultivation of reading and education by members of the community were important components of the philosophy of these institutions. By the 1950s the library role of the various Schools of Arts in the Canning Downs District became of less importance. As well as the general improvement in the level of education of the population, a variety of other ways of receiving information (newspapers, and radio broadcasts) was widely available; and better roads and cars meant socialization beyond the local area was possible.

Most importantly, it was in this era of the 1950s that libraries became a responsibility of government, with the respective State Governments passing legislation to set up a public library service funded and maintained by the State. The library, so long a major benefit of membership of a School of Arts, was now a service freely available to all.

In the district the first School of Arts library was in Warwick.²² It was founded in 1865 and by the turn of the 19th Century it had 3472 books.

In the area of what had been the Canning Downs Estate, Killarney⁷ was the next township to build a School of Arts⁷ (1888) but it did not prosper in the location where it was built (South Killarney). The trustees transferred the library books to the care of the Killarney Public School in 1894, and there they remained until a new building was built at the northern end of Willow Street in Killarney in 1914. But little more than a year after the library was re-established, a fire in the business district in late 1915 destroyed the building with loss of all the books. The first move after the fire was to re-establish the library, using a small room and donations of books, and money as well to purchase more. The building was rebuilt in 1916, continuing in operation until 1954 when the ownership of the building was transferred to the QCWA. The QCWA managed the lending library service until 1966 when the service was discontinued. Some of the books were then sold by tender. The remaining books were exchanged by barter with a former librarian for an electric refrigerator.

The next School of Arts was in Yangan⁷ (1898). When the first Yangan building was sold to the Masonic Lodge in 1912 so that a new building could be built close to the railway station, the library had a substantial collection of books (1200). There were 2576 books in the library in 1939. The library functioned well until 1954, yet continued until it eventually closed in 2012 because of a lack of public interest, with its remaining books being transferred to the Warwick Regional Library.

Freestone School of Arts⁷ was built initially near Lower Freestone Creek Road in 1901 but was relocated to its present site in 1921. A caretaker's cottage was co-located with it. Caring for the library was part of the caretaker's remit. The building was renamed a School of Arts and Memorial Hall in 1922, and the name was changed again to Freestone Memorial Hall in 1954. Regrettably no details of the library and its contents were uncovered in this research.



Swan Creek⁷ School of Arts was built in 1908. It was extended/modified several times in the subsequent fifty years. Records of the library holdings are scant, but residents recall its being in operation in the 1950s. Surprisingly, a set of encyclopaedias (the *New Popular Encyclopaedia, 11 Volumes, 1911*) was discovered in 2018 still in a storeroom which had been the library room. They formed part of the original library purchase for the new institution. Most of the other books remaining had become too damaged to be used.

Tannymorel School of Arts⁷ was built in 1907. Mention of its library was made in 1910 but not much is recorded until 1935 when some book exchanges with other Schools of Arts were made. In 1945 the 'Younger Set' took on responsibility for the repair of the books and the supervision of the library. In 1956 the contents of the Mount Colliery School of Arts Library was transferred to Tannymorel. No record was found relating what happened to the contents of the Tannymorel building when it was sold privately in 1993.

That Mount Colliery had a library can be seen on the old photograph of the building captioned *Mount Colliery Hall Steps lead to library*. But it is not until 1940 that anything about the library is reported in the newspapers: *the librarians reported that they have completed repairing the books.*³⁶ And at the following meeting *that the books from Brisbane Lending Library had arrived last week and he had been in communication with the Warwick School of Arts with regard to an exchange of books.*³⁷

been held to raise funds, also that books from the Brisbane Lending Library had arrived last week. He had also been in communication with the Warwick School of Arts with regard to an exchange of books. It was decided to have the windows and steps attended to as soon as possible. Ar-

◀ Report by the librarian on current issues³⁷.
Extract from *Warwick Daily News* 6 April 1940 p.2

A change of direction

Mechanization of the mine in the post-World War 2 period caused a decrease in the number of members of the School of Arts with the consequence that the committee could no longer continue managing the hall. The QCWA (Queensland Country Women's Association) took over the responsibility for management of the Hall and its library. The library books were presented to the Tannymorel War Memorial School of Arts. *In 1956 the sum of £20/5/6 was paid by the branch for the transfer of the deeds.* A new floor was then put down and the outside of the building was repainted.²⁶

Present and future use of the building

Since the QCWA took control of the building in 1956 it has operated as a hall for hire, performing the community functions it had always performed: dances, parties, school events, and so on. As well, in this era, it is the venue for fitness classes, and even massage sessions. There are regular events scheduled, including craft markets which are well attended.

Given the community spirit which exists in the district the Mount Colliery QCWA Hall must be expected to continue doing good service for the community for many years to come.



▲ ▼ Photographs from Mount Colliery QCWA's facebook page³⁸ (2018).





Interior view of the Mt Colliery Hall ►



The Mt Colliery QCWA³⁸ operates a facebook page where its many activities can be viewed.

<https://www.facebook.com/MtCollieryCWA> & <https://www.facebook.com/MtCollieryCWA/posts>)

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