



KILLARNEY QLD



Name: Killarney School of Arts

Address: Willow Street North, Killarney. Queensland 4373

The Town/District

Killarney is a small town in the South Downs region of the Darling Downs in South Eastern Queensland, about 180 kilometres south-west of Brisbane. It is located on the Condamine River 35 kilometres south-east of Warwick, and just 8 kilometres from the Queensland-New South Wales border. The Warwick to Killarney road enters from the west into Ivy Street. The first major road is Willow Street, which runs north-south through the township. It passes over a deep gully through which Gravel Creek flows and 400m further on, the road crosses the Condamine River. It is at this stage it becomes apparent that Killarney is really like two townships, North Killarney and South Killarney, separated by the Condamine River. (See a map of Killarney in “References” to assist in following the evolution of the School of Arts.)

Killarney is close to the Macpherson Ranges where the Main Range National Park and the Queen Mary Falls are located. These have been tourist attractions since the railway line from Warwick to Killarney became available to passengers in 1885 with people drawn by the majestic scenery. This, and the rich agricultural land for which the region is known, sustain Killarney and make it an attractive town for residents and visitors alike.



When, in 1827, the explorer, Allan Cunningham¹ reached the area travelling north from the Hunter Valley he was trying to find new grazing land for the colony's burgeoning wool industry. He found a region with rich volcanic soil, good pasture and abundant forests: everything the aspiring settler would wish to have. Such a rich pastoral region would require easy access to ports and major towns to market its produce. He saw what he thought could be a gap (now called Spicer's Gap) in the apparently impenetrable Great Dividing Range and this would perhaps enable access to the penal colony of Moreton Bay. Cunningham returned to the Hunter region and in 1828, he travelled north again, this time to Moreton Bay (now Brisbane) searching for a gap in the range by travelling inland along the Logan River towards the Macpherson Ranges. After some searching he located the 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, Hall² (p. 3) reports that the 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 deep in parts. The heavily forested landscape of the carboniferous era evolved to be lightly wooded grasslands, with densely timbered regions surviving only in the eastern part of Australia in areas of high rainfall³, including the Macpherson Ranges.

Cunningham saw only glimpses of the indigenous population² (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 Garaomna⁴ people who spoke a common language, Wakka. The settlers lived in harmony with what was referred to at the time as the "Blucher" tribe.

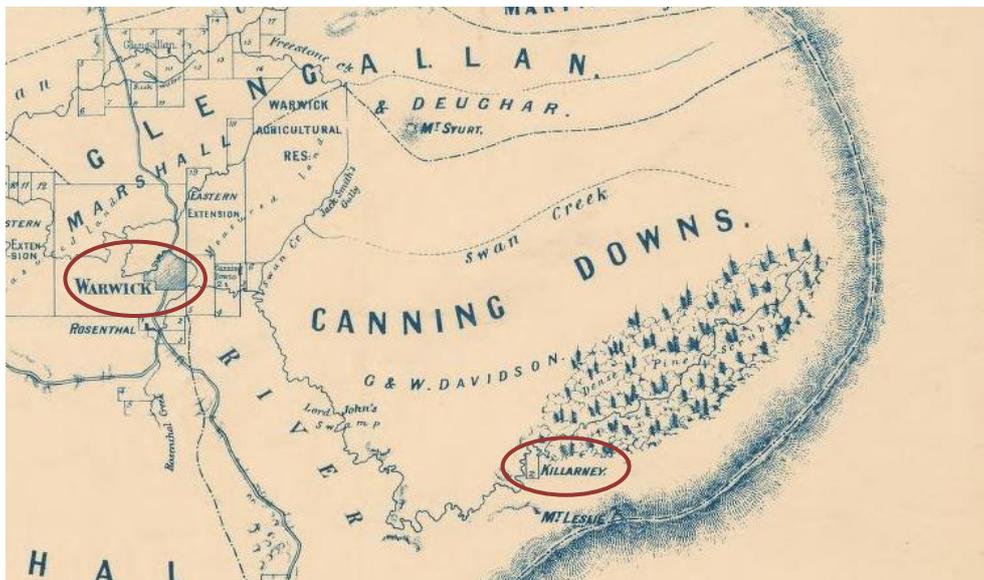
The first settlers to stake a claim for to this rich farming land were the Leslie Brothers who arrived in 1840. The pastoral estate which they established they named Canning Downs⁵. In 1847 the Governor of New South Wales asked Patrick Leslie to select a part of the property to divide into smaller allotments 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 Downs⁵ 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 house were established by Leslie on a knoll where Alan Cunningham had camped in 1827. Later this became the site for a settlement² (p. 27) called Upper Swan Creek, which evolved to become the township of Yangan sited at about the centre of the Canning Downs Estate. Killarney was at the southern edge of Canning Downs. A circle of about 20 km radius drawn on a map of the estate would just encompass what is now the township of Killarney. 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 map (1864). All these small townships were later to construct Schools of Arts.⁷



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. Hall² (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.

The land was cleared for farming from the early 1850s onwards and the timber harvested was mostly cedar. In 1855 Thomas Hall's father established a water powered sawmill² (p. 85) not far from Killarney station. It was 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. Milk and other dairy products were transported to Warwick by horse and cart. Timber and freestone (sandstone) were transported by bullock drays; buildings created from these materials are to be found in Warwick, Toowoomba and Brisbane.² (p. 63).



Squatting map 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.

This map of the Canning Downs estate, which predates the Crown Land Alienation Act of 1868⁷, shows only two towns, Warwick and Killarney. Killarney was a logging and sawmilling encampment until the Killarney Inn⁹ was established to provide accommodation and grog for the workers. Around this nucleus dwellings and businesses grew, and in 1874 a school was established on the south bank of the Condamine River. The area was surveyed in 1880 to subdivide a large freehold block north of the Condamine River into two portions. The first survey plan south of the river was produced in 1884 and a further plan for the portion north of the river was made in 1885 to provide for the orderly development of the township(s) of Killarney¹⁰.

A reporter from the *Warwick Argus (WA)* wrote these words about (South) Killarney in 1889:¹¹



I like to stroll its streets, drop into its business places, and talk quietly to its owners, and listen to their wants and aspirations.....I believe South Killarney has plenty of go in it. It already possesses two churches, a Protestant Hall, a pretty little School of Arts, and its National School is being enlarged. Its two butchers' shops provide the inhabitants with the primest of beef, and it is well-conducted and well stocked.... [it] would do credit to the principal street in any country town in the colony. It also boasts a saddler's shop, fruit shop, shooting gallery, and the Killarney Hotel.....Its most pressing need is a continuance of the railway across the river. Its next is a post and telegraph office, its postal business having become too great to be satisfactorily carried on at a busy store, while every telegram has to be taken over to the Killarney railway station.....

(Warwick Argus 5 Jan 1889 p. 2)



This was a community that was “going places”. The railway station and its handling yards were north of Ivy Street in North Killarney. Before the completion of the Warwick-Killarney line in 1885¹² Killarney's development had been limited by its accessibility to markets. As well, a new industry was now created, with visitors coming on the train to see the beautiful countryside surrounding the Queen Mary Falls. There can be no doubt that the coming of the railway did much to give Killarney prosperity.

Queen Mary Falls, Killarney

The falls are located in the Main Range National Park and descend 40 metres from the McPherson Range near the Queensland/New South Wales border.

Establishing the School of Arts

What stimulated the enthusiasm to build a School of Arts is not clear. The only School of Arts in the region was in Warwick¹³ (established 1865; 100 members, 190 books, £1 per annum). When the Warwick-Killarney railroad was completed in 1885 it gave people in the nearby townships easy access to the biggest city in the region. The School of Arts movement was in a stage of rapid growth in Australia at that time so perhaps the residents of an upwardly mobile town, such as Killarney, might have considered that having a School of Arts would add prestige to their own township.

The *Warwick Examiner and Times* reported in March 1887¹⁴

...the debating class met in the Protestant Hall last Friday. It was decided to open a School of Arts. Three gentlemen volunteered to go security for the sum of £60 to build

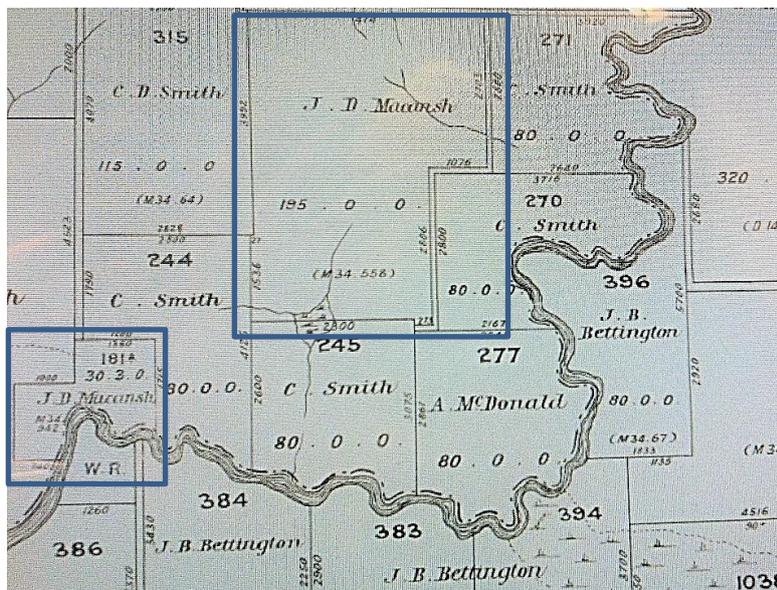


a room and a library. Officers of the class were elected to similar positions in the School of Arts. President Rev. Mr McDowell informed the meeting that he had written to Mr Macansh but had not yet received a reply. There being a difference of opinion as to the best location the meeting was adjourned for a week to enable all interested to attend.

This later meeting was well attended and after some discussion, decided unanimously that the building should be erected on the south side. A building committee was appointed to draw up plans and make all necessary arrangements, and report to the next general meeting.¹⁵

It might be asked: who was Macansh and what was the relationship between Macansh and the Rev. Mr McDowell? The Hon. John Donald Macansh¹⁶ owned properties in Deepwater NSW and purchased the Canning Downs estate in 1875 shortly after the passing of the Land Alienation Act of 1868⁷. Killarney station was an outstation of the Canning Downs estate and so Macansh owned land in the Killarney district. A cadastral map¹⁷ (2 chains/inch = 44yards/inch = 1584:1) of the district drawn in 1887 shows that he owned two parcels of land, both of which were located within the boundaries of Killarney township.

The Rev. Mr Joseph McDowell¹⁸ was appointed in 1887 to be Keeper of the Killarney Charge. On 29 February 1887 Mr Charles McIntosh¹⁸, who owned sawmills, met with others of like mind and resolved that £200 be spent to erect a church. Regular services were at that time being held in the Protestant Hall in Cedar Street, South Killarney. The Presbyterian Church was constructed on a site near to the Willow Street bridge (which spans the Condamine River) where an acre of land was donated by the Hon. JD Macansh¹⁶. Macansh was a generous benefactor to the community and Rev. McDowell had turned to him for assistance in providing land for the School of Arts.



Cadastral map of Killarney (1:1584)

(1887)

A cadastral map shows the boundaries between properties and shows only sketchy representations of topographic features.

Macansh land is outlined.

It seems that no letter was immediately forthcoming from Macansh. It was not until a meeting a year later¹⁹ that it was unanimously decided to erect a School of Arts here. It was further reported¹⁹ that there had been a meeting resolving details of the future School of Arts.



By May 1888 it was reported that the School of Arts committee *were unlucky in choosing the site, being in the centre of a waterway, it will be necessary to have a boat or a raised path to get to the building in wet weather, but that that difficulty will no doubt be overcome.*²⁰ This site north of the Condamine River has the deep gully (Gravel Creek) passing through it but it was close to the Railway Station so it was where it might have been expected that the business district would develop. (The report seems to have completely overlooked the proposal to build on Macansh land, close to the river).

The early buildings in the township were built south of the Condamine, hence the reference in the 1889 newspaper article¹⁰ in the *Warwick Argus* to the township of South Killarney. Along its principal street (Acacia Street) were to be found the police station, Hoffman's Inn, the morgue, Spreadborough's butcher shop, several stores, a bakery, the Anglican Church, the National School, tea rooms, and near the Willow Street bridge which crossed the river, the Presbyterian Church was constructed. One of the stores acted as the Post Office.

KILLARNEY.

[FROM A CORRESPONDENT.]

At a meeting of the committee held on the 1st inst. it was unanimously decided to erect a **School of Arts** here. At the opening of the meeting the Rev. Joseph M'Dowell handed in his resignation as president. During the meeting the committee adjourned, and inspected the land offered by the Hon. J. D. Macansh as a site for a **School of Arts**, which was found to be a suitable one. It was further agreed to erect a building 30ft. long, by 15ft. wide, and that no time be lost in the execution of the work. Four trustees were appointed, in whose trust the deeds are to be vested. They were as follows:—Messrs. T. Lamb, J.P., John Carey, H. S. Watts, and T. S. Backhouse. These gentlemen were also appointed as a building committee. With reference to the Rev. Joseph M'Dowell's resignation as president, it was decided that the matter should be postponed till next meeting. A vote of thanks brought the proceedings to a close.

North of the Condamine, settlement was sparse before 1885. There were sawmills (now steam powered) some private housing and some residential accommodation. The coming of the railway in 1885 radically changed this. The railway station was built north of Ivy Street, 800 metres from the Condamine. A township grew up with the railway station as a hub: it boasted a hotel, boarding houses, two blacksmith shops, two sawmills, stock holding paddocks, and a bank.

No documentation which identifies the exact location for the first School of Arts building has been found but it was reported²¹ in 1889 that the building was sited in South Killarney. It seems the decision was made to forego the Gravel Creek location for a more suitable site provided by Mr Macansh who had five acres beside the Presbyterian Church.¹⁸

◀ *Warwick Argus*¹⁹ 3 March 1888 p. 2

The building was to be 30 feet long and 15 feet wide, providing two rooms: a reading room and a meeting room. Other details are scant. Implied in the specifications was that it be built in timber and that the construction would conform to local building norms. Trustees¹⁹ were appointed: Messrs T Lamb JP, John Carey, HB Watts and TH Backhouse.



The enigmatic remark on the resignation of the Rev J McDowell, mentioned in the newspaper report, has no explanation and states only that the matter should be postponed to the next meeting.¹⁹ Perhaps he had a disagreement with the rest of the committee about their choice of site? Then, the *Warwick Argus*²² reported:

*Warwick Argus*²² 31 July 1888 p.2 ►

We have our **School of Arts** just erected which is a very pretty little building, and is a credit to the committee for their zeal for pushing the affair forward. I hear they intend to open it shortly with a concert, when I trust some of the Warwick talent will assist us to make it success.

The opening by the Rev. Mr McDowell (identified as 'Presbyterian minister') on 8 August 1888 was also reported in the *Argus*.²³ He commented that he was glad to see so many at the event, going on to state that he could assure them *that they were commencing with a very good library indeed*. The School of Arts was used as a library, the location for meetings such as union meetings, goodbyes and farewells, and church functions.

Mr. McDowell, at the conclusion, thanked all present for their attendance, and after three hearty cheers had been given for the performers, they adjourned to the Protestant Hall for a dance. The **School of Arts** was crowded all the evening with a most appreciative audience, and the dance afterwards, which was kept up to a late hour, proved a very great success. During the early part of the evening Mr. Wilkins gave a reading, which elicited roars of laughter.

*Warwick Argus*²³ 11 August 1888 p.2 ▲

Nevertheless, in 1892 there was evidence that the enterprise, born in a spirit of great enthusiasm and optimism, was faltering²⁴ and there was a public meeting to determine the future of the School of Arts. This was presided over by Mr B.M. Craies. The resolution proposed by Rev. RI Wallace was *that this public meeting held in the School of Arts, Killarney, hand over to the trustees their interest in the land on which the School of Arts now stands*. The Rev. Wallace, who succeeded the Rev J McDowell as the Keeper of the Killarney Charge, was a newcomer to the district and for the benefit of himself and others present he related the background²⁵ to the establishment of the institution:

...the present trustees of the School of Arts called a public meeting and at that meeting it was decided that a School of Arts should be established, and that a building for that purpose should be erected. In order to carry this out it was resolved that the land should be asked for, but the Government having none available, Mr. J. D. Macansh kindly granted a suitable allotment for that purpose. Four gentlemen then came forward and gave their names to the Queensland National Bank in order that sufficient funds could be raised to erect and furnish the building and stock the library, and by these gentlemen the School of Arts was kept open for some time with good results until a disinterestedness sprung up, which apparently paralyzed the whole thing. It was then resolved to carry on the library by removing the books to the State school..... The bank is now pressing them to pay off their overdraft.....In order to pay off their overdraft they will have to pay out £26 per man.

*Warwick Examiner and Times*²⁵ 22 June 1892 p.3

It is important to note that Mr JD Macansh is acknowledged as the donor of the land on which the School of Arts was built.



Commenting on the move of the Library to the care of the State school, Mr. Craies said that 50 volumes had been added to the books being transferred. He hoped that *eventually the membership would be strong enough financially to take over the School of Arts again from the trustees*. Seemingly the Killarney School of Arts had finished as an institution less than five years after it had been proposed.

The Building (1) 1888 – 1914

This photograph of the first School of Arts building was taken in 1909.²⁶



The “pretty little School of Arts” at South Killarney.

A simple weather-board structure, it has a veranda with plain railings, and un-ornamented doors and windows. The only ornamentation is at the top of the supports for the roof of the veranda.

Photo: *The Week*

The building clearly represents the specifications for the original building: 30 feet long, 15 feet wide, providing two rooms. As well, its method of construction is very similar to other halls in the Canning Downs region built at more or less the same time. It bears no resemblance to the current building, shown at the beginning of this report, and it is clear that the location is markedly different.

From the photograph, it can be seen that the topography of the land does not accord with the description that the site *was in the centre of a waterway*¹⁹. But it is consistent with the statement that *.....the committee adjourned and inspected the land offered by Mr JD Macansh....which was found to be a suitable one.*¹⁹ Macansh owned a block of land in South Killarney in the vicinity of the Willow Street bridge. He gifted one acre of this land to the Presbyterian Church.¹⁸ When the Hon. JD Macansh died in 1896 his six sons and five daughters agreed to carry on the business through a family trust, legalized by a private bill of 1910. Macansh Estate Ltd was still registered as late as 1957. Sale of the residual land could not have taken place until the estate had been granted probate (1910).

The evidence is that the School of Arts building in the 1909 photograph above was erected on Macansh land in South Killarney.



Meanwhile, North Killarney continued to grow and in 1900 there was a movement to build a large public hall there, to include a School of Arts, which was thought to be of potential benefit in that area.²⁷ But in South Killarney, a building referred to as the School of Arts already existed, the trustees existed, and the books existed (albeit housed in the State school). Although it no longer provided the amenities of a School of Arts, it played host to a wide range of community functions: the Killarney Progress Association, the Agricultural Society and the Farmers' Union met there routinely; ladies organizing their contributions to a grand fund-raising bazaar met regularly; and the various sports clubs in the town (Cricket Club, Rifle Club, Race Club, Sports Club) held their committee meetings there. Rental from community use continued to pay the mortgage on the building and books were being added to the library. In 1908, a silver loving cup²⁸ presented by the people of Killarney in Ireland to the citizens of Killarney in Queensland, was housed in a glass case in the School of Arts. Life continued as before.

Until 1913, that is, when there seemed to be renewed enthusiasm²⁹ for the institution: a new caretaker had been appointed and proved to be most satisfactory, with billiards takings increasing very significantly; it was suggested tht the Choral Society stage a concert, sharing the profits equally with the School of Arts; it was proposed to run a Flower Show to raise funds and a Committee was formed to organise this; Mr A McIntosh offered a donation to the extent of three months' rent; and Mr Kable gave money to purchase books. Most importantly, the meeting discussed the possibility of purchasing the building or having it enlarged and made more comfortable.

The Building (2) 1914 - 1915

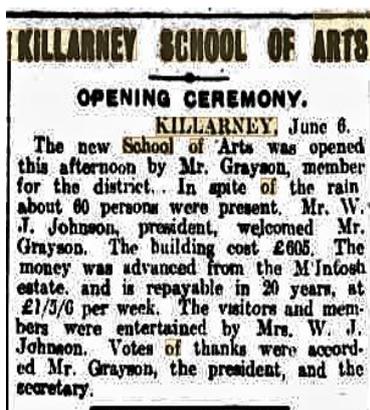
The next proposal followed quickly and was more radical. The Progress Association met with local Shire Councillors in the School of Arts³⁰ to discuss issues relating to necessary improvements in the town.

► *Warwick Examiner and Times* 20 October 1913 p.5

KILLARNEY SCHOOL OF ARTS.

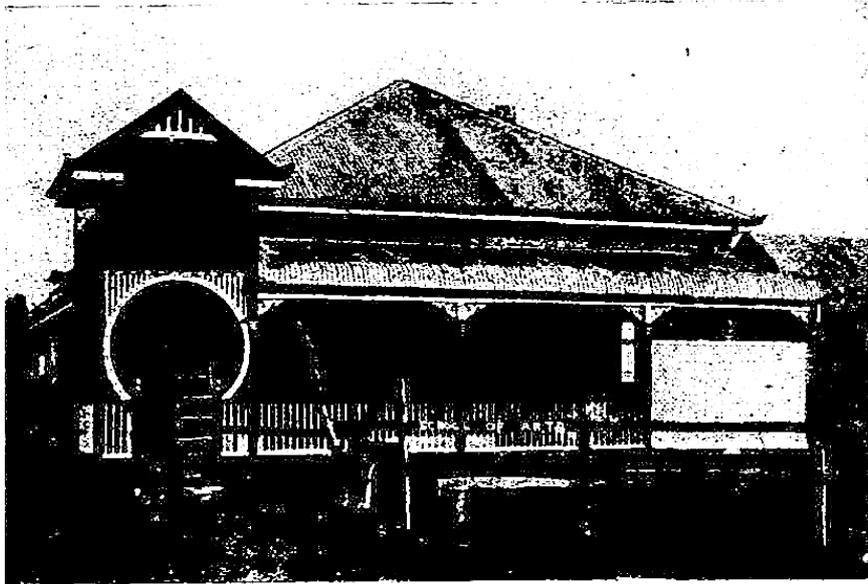
The committee of the Killarney School of Arts have decided to build a new institution in a more central position. Tenders were called, and the following were submitted:—M. Wilson (Warwick), £538; S. Fagg (Killarney), £557; E. H. Day (Killarney), £650. It is reported that the McIntosh family have kindly offered to advance £500 at 6 per cent., repayable in twenty years.

Among other significant matters, it flagged that the Committee of the School of Arts proposed to erect a new building over the gully near the Post Office. This was the site intially proposed for the institution but rejected as being unsuitable. They wrote to the Glengallen Shire Council announcing *the intention of the Committee to erect new premises³¹ in Willow Street*. The letter continued with a request to the Council to widen the bridge to the full width of the street. It was later announced that³² *the new institution would be built in a more central position* because the business district and the centre of population had moved northwards towards the railway station.



Work proceeded expeditiously and in June 1914 the new School of Arts was opened³³ at a cost of £605. The McIntosh Estate contributed very substantially to the existence of this new building. The McIntosh family home was sited in Ailanthus Street not far from the site of the new School of Arts.

◀ *Warwick Examiner and Times*³³ 9 June 1914 p. 8



THE NEW SCHOOL OF ARTS, KILLARNEY.

Photo: J. W. J.

Photo: *The Week* 19 June 1914 p.24

The new School of Arts located astride Gravel Creek in Willow Street June 1914

The new building³⁵ comprised five rooms: reading, library, meeting, recreation and billiards rooms. Three of these were “warmed artificially” during the cold months. New furniture was added, a deal of which was donated by friends of the institution. Importantly, it was located next to the Post Office, opposite three banks, and the Post Office Hotel.

Everything proceeded with business as usual, lending books, being a centre of community activity. Then disaster struck: in November 1915 a fire³⁶ engulfed the central business district. It destroyed many of the buildings at the northern end of Willow Street, including the Post Office Hotel...and the School of Arts.

The Building (3) 1916 –

After the fire, the Committee³⁷ debated whether to re-build the School of Arts because public support seemed less than expected, but it was decided to proceed. A new site was also contemplated and an approach made to Mr WJ Grayson, to secure a good location. But nothing came of that and the building was to be erected on the same site in Willow Street, on Gravel Creek³⁷.

The destroyed School of Arts was a comparatively new building and was remarkable in that it was erected on high piles, enabling the building to span a gully. It contained a circulating library of some 800 volumes, the nucleus of a good reference library, a reading room, and a billiard room with one table. It was also the principal meeting place for social institutions on the north side of Killarney. The building and contents represented an outlay of about £800 and the institution is responsible for a bank draft of over £500. The financial situation as a result of the fire, is, therefore, a serious one. Incidentally it should be mentioned that the silver cup presented by the people of Killarney Ireland to the people of Killarney in Queensland, and which was invested with deep sentimental value, was destroyed when the School of Arts vanished in flames³⁶. (Warwick Examiner and Times 27 Nov 1915 p. 3)

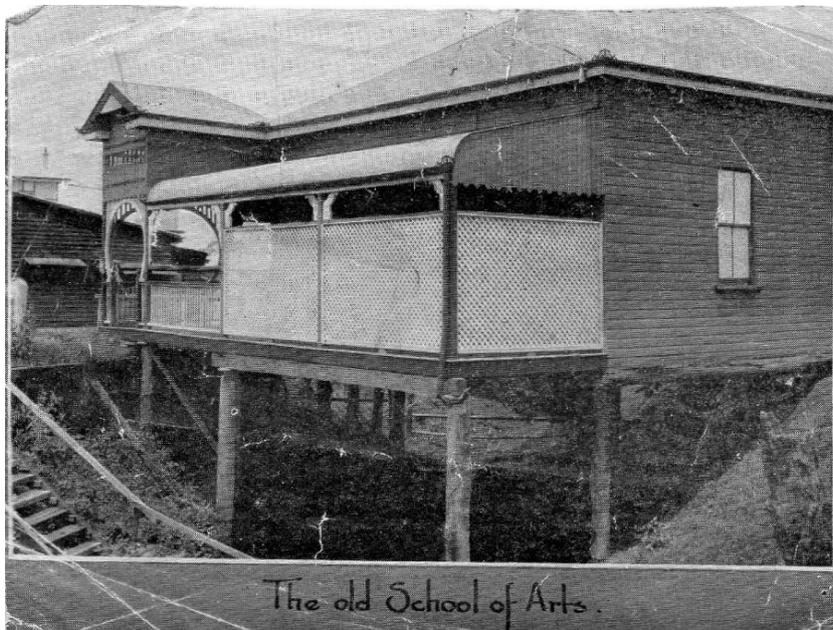


All the administrative documents belonging to the School of Arts, its library books and its furnishings were lost. It appears, however, that the chimney of the building had survived - but not for long! A report of a severe storm³⁸ that lashed the district just a month later (December 1915) states that the chimney, intended to be incorporated in the re-built School of Arts, was destroyed in that storm.

Following these disasters, support³⁸ for the institution included the offer of a small office to house a Library and welcome donations of books from the Warwick School of Arts³⁹ as well as from individual citizens, some of whom also offered money to buy books for the Library.

Tenders to replace the building were called as a matter of urgency with the same builder, Mr W Wilson, awarded the contract³⁷ to re-build the School of Arts at a cost of £525. Within a few months, all the buildings⁴⁰ destroyed by the fire, including the School of Arts, were re-built.

A photograph identified as “The Old School of Arts” is shown below. It is possible that this is the 1916 version, re-built after the fire in 1915. It was built by the same contractor who had charge of the original building and presumably the brief was to re-create the building destroyed. There are some very small differences between this and the 1914 newspaper photograph above: the School of Arts sign running in front of the veranda is missing; the lattice enclosure is more extensive; decoration of the gable over the entrance portico appears slightly different; and adjacent buildings seem to be more distant, a precaution⁴¹ by some of those re-building after the fire so that the danger of a fire spreading was reduced. Importantly, the stumps seems to be identical to those still supporting the building. The date of this photograph is unknown, but it could be after the 1916 rebuild.



The School of Arts - rebuilt after the 1916 fire (?)

The stumps enabling the building to be supported above the water course can be seen. The steps down are for pedestrians to cross the gully in dry weather. Otherwise boats were needed.

Photo: Killarney Branch QCWA
(no date)

The decorative features of the early 20th century have now largely disappeared but there is nevertheless a strong correlation between the appearance of this building and the present-day (2018) building owned now by the QCWA. The general features, the dimensions of the two structures, and indeed even the stumps which support the building appear to have remained the same, although cosmetic changes have been made both to suit the needs of the QCWA and to update the building.



The QCWA building as it exists now (2018).

The basic structure and even the supporting stumps seem to be the same as existed in the circa 1916 building.

Note the railing for the bridge (bottom left corner) which now spans the gully allowing traffic to travel along Willow Street.

The entrance portico with its gable has been dismantled.

Externally, the gabled entry structure has been removed and replaced by a roof which is a continuation of the gabled roof which has replaced the bull-nosed roof of the old verandah. The sash windows have been replaced by modern windows. Pressed metal paneling has been used to enclose the verandah.

There are more changes along the right-hand (north side) of the building although some of the old sash windows with their window awnings have been retained. The brick chimney is probably part of the building re-built 1916, serving the fireplaces which heated it. Along the left-hand (south) side of the building, the floor of the entry can be seen, and, on its left, the precipitous fall of the land to the bottom of the gully. As well, on this side is a covered verandah. A barred door restricts access to doorways into the main building and access to the rear of the premises.



Views along the north and south sides of the building as seen from the road

The rear of the building, unlike the front, sits at level ground. The original sash windows with their original awnings have been retained. A modern toilet block replaces what would have been an outdoor privy.



There have been significant changes to the interior layout of the building.

Originally a visitor would have entered from the verandah into a long narrow room which probably housed the bookshelves with their library books, thence into a square room which was the reading/meeting room, and further, into another square room which would have been the billiard room. This room had an external door providing both a separate entrance from the street and access to the privy, an arrangement allowing for public use of the facility and making it also an important source of revenue. All of the ceilings and walls are still clad with tongue and grooved timber planks, and some of the original Edwardian/Federation ornamentation still exists.

From the doorway it can be seen that the wall between the two square rooms has been removed to form a large single room. Formerly, it would have run from the apex of the fireplace enclosure to the opposite wall. There are two fireplaces: each of the two rooms had an open fire. The fireplace surrounds, probably crafted from local cedar, are what might be expected for a building of this period. There is no formal stage, just an extended low dais. From the dais the view down the room shows that there are two doors leading from the long room into what is now the kitchen.



▲ View of meeting room from the door of the long room.

Note the two fireplaces: one in full view, the other in side view.

A chimney is still visible above the roofline of the building but the fireplaces seem to be no longer used.

Wall - mounted strip heaters now provide warmth as necessary.

The section of wall (where the fireplaces are located) formerly extended across the space, dividing it into two rooms.



▲ View from the low 'stage' looking towards the doors leading to the long room (kitchen).



▲ The long room, now the kitchen

The long room is now a substantial kitchen. The teaching of homecrafts such as cooking, health and hygiene, and dressmaking was necessary because formerly there were often no formal education programs for these important life skills. This helps, as well, when cooking classes are conducted. The CWA is also usually in the forefront of any local catastrophe or major event to bring sustenance and hot tea to those involved. Having access to a large kitchen is essential.



The enclosed area of the front verandah provides the waiting room and examination room for the Child Welfare Agency of the Queensland Department of Health. Pregnant women from the Killarney District, their children and their babies, have attended these rooms since 1931, now almost a century ago.



**Waiting room for
the Clinic.**

The door to the
examination room is
on the left.

The examination room lies through the doorway. The furnishings are spartan. Bring your own cushions! The covered bench at the bottom right conceals a secret. It is in fact a box to store wood, and, in a variation of the instruction to “bring a plate”, ladies of the CWA who attended a meeting were encouraged to “bring a piece of wood” for the fires to heat the rooms.

The perennial question concerns the susceptibility of the building to water damage because it has been constructed across a waterway. There is no record of flood water entering the building, although one CWA member said it had come close on occasion. A matter raised often with the Council was the pooling of water in the watercourse and the resulting foul smells emanating from stagnant water.⁴² The Glengallan District Council wrote to the committee about this issue on a number of occasions⁴³ later making some effort on its part to overcome the problem.

On 22nd November 1968 Killarney was hit by a “tornado” (actually a very severe storm) which flattened many of the important buildings in the town, especially those in Kirk Hill (South Killarney) and along Willow Street. Mercifully, the School of Arts building survived, with only minor roof damage. Even then, the building was not subjected to any flooding from the creek.

Social History: How the building was used

In the period from 1888 to 1915, besides its function as a library, the School of Arts building wherever it has been located has played host to agricultural societies, school picnics, departures of local identities, and union meetings as well as a range of social activities and entertainments. For example, in 1890 carriers met to form a union *to protest against the wheel tax, licence fees.....*⁴⁴

The only minute books now extant date back to May 1919²³. They record at that date a general meeting held to discuss the poor financial state of the institution. Dr. Harlin chaired the meeting and was in favour of the School of Arts closing down.²³ *The majority favoured the institution continuing and finding some way of making it pay its way. New officers were elected with A.E. Ellwood as President.*



The principal assets of the School of Arts were a room for meetings, a room serving as a library, and a billiard room and table. The institution also organised card (euchre) nights, dances, concerts, an annual Flower Show, and it provided a venue for Returned Services League meetings.

In 1924 the Killarney Branch of the Queensland Country Womens' Association (QCWA) was formed and became a regular user of the School of Arts. Through them an office of the Child Welfare Section of the Queensland Department of Health took up space in the building in 1931. The Queensland Government paid the rent, and the QCWA was responsible for the cleaning.

The fire which engulfed the School of Arts in 1915 meant that the social activities it had provided were severely restricted. Everything was lost: not only the building but also the furnishings, books, and the minute books and records of the School of Arts committee. The sense of community was lost to an extent that it was recorded at the Annual General Meeting in 1917 that *considering the lack of support from the residents towards the institution the balance (sheet) was satisfactory.*⁴⁵ Until 1924 it raised revenue as a hall for hire with the billiards room providing a source of regular income.

In the period from 1924 to 1952 the CWA was the major user of the facilities and the School of Arts continued to function. Changes were made to the make-up of the School of Arts committee to reflect the mutually beneficial arrangement existing between the two organizations. The 9th Annual Report of the Killarney branch of the CWA records that *when the School of Arts committee was re-formed, the president of the CWA was appointed as a vice-president of the School of Arts.*⁴⁶

The first mention of the membership of CWA representatives on the School of Arts committee was in 1935.⁴⁷ Mrs Ackinson (CWA President) and Miss F McIntosh were recorded as being present. They were the first women to be members of the School of Arts Committee. As recorded on the roll of CWA presidents Mrs Ackinson was President to the Killarney branch from 1929 to 1945 and served as Vice-President of the School of Arts committee for all of this time.

Minutes of meeting of School of Arts Committee held in the School of Arts on Wednesday 17th July 1935

Present:- Messrs. Cornish (Chairman)
Kando, Walker, Mr Entick
& Mrs Ackinson & Miss F. McIntosh

The minutes of the previous

Extract from SoA Minute Book recording the presence of CWA members - 17 July 1935:
Present ... Mrs Ackinson and Miss F McIntosh [CWA]

1924	Mrs. A. EVANS
25	M. VOWLES
29	D. ACKINSON
46	M. RENTON
51	B. WALLACE
53	M. ROSS
54	D. ACKINSON
55	G. WALLACE
56	A. KIRBY
56	B. WALLACE
59	A. KIRBY
62	B. ACKINSON
65	R. WARREN
66	B. ACKINSON
68	M. SMITH

Section of the roll for past presidents of the Killarney Branch of the QCWA
D Ackinson: 1924 -1945



Killarney School- of Arts Building for Q.C.W.A.

KILLARNEY: At a meeting of the Killarney School of Arts committee it was decided that the School of Arts building and land be handed over as a donation to the Killarney branch of the Queensland Country Women's Association.

Mr. D. H. White, chairman of the committee, announced this at a meeting of subscribers and interested persons which included Mrs. R. G. Wallace, president of the Killarney branch of the Q.C.W.A.

The building, which is conveniently situated in the main shopping centre of the township, houses a public library, the Warwick Baby Clinic rooms, C.W.A. rest room and two meeting rooms complete with open brick fireplace.

Two of the four trustees of the School of Arts are deceased. The two living trustees are Messrs. W. B. Backhouse (Killarney) and E. A. Eilwood (Warwick), and it was stated last night that they had given their approval to the handing over of the building.

Originally the School of Arts committee was given the land as a building site by the late A. McIntosh of Killarney. The committee will now go out of existence. Present funds will be spent on improvements to the building.

Conditions under the agreement are that the Killarney branch Q.C.W.A. keeps the library going and also keeps the meeting rooms open to the public.

The CWA was founded in Australia to give women in country locations the chance for fundraising for important causes relating to country women, to support local communities, and of course, to socialize. CWA branches were the beating heart of their community, ever ready to do what had to be done to better the lot of the community. The *Warwick Daily News* in 2009 reported on the 85th anniversary of the Killarney Branch of the QCWA in the School of Arts building⁴⁸.

Because the CWA has women's welfare as a prime focus, its presence in the hall encouraged the Child Welfare section of the Queensland Department of Health to run regular clinics addressing all matters relating to pregnancy, maternity, post-natal care, and children's health and this was supported by the CWA. This service continues to operate.

The QCWA was a tenant of, and collaborator with, the School of Arts Committee until December 1952²⁴ when it was decided to transfer ownership of the building from the School of Arts to the Killarney Branch of the QCWA. They continue to occupy the building to this day.

◀ Transfer of ownership of School of Arts building and land
Warwick Daily News 24 December 1952 p.2

Meanwhile the hall continued to function as a venue for community activities. A notable event occurred at the commencement of WW2 when a meeting was held in support of the Australian Comforts Fund⁴⁹ (ACF) and the Committee decided that the building should be made available free of charge for all activities of the ACF. Mrs Ackinson was present at subsequent meetings moving or seconding motions. She was President of the CWA for 16 years continuously as well as a Vice President of the School of Arts Committee. Later she served another term, a total of 18 years as President.

The trustees of the School of Arts handed over ownership of the building to the CWA who operate it according to their charter, as a key institution in the Killarney community²⁴.

Library/Maintenance

The first School of Arts building had only two rooms: a meeting/reading room and a library. In 1888 it was said to be *commencing with a very good library indeed*.¹⁶ The library had 180 books and 37 subscribers. Between 1888 and 1892 the number of books rose to 307 while the number of subscribers remained static at 38, despite the membership subscription falling from £1 to 10s. The purchase of books was subsidized by the Queensland Government¹⁷.

In 1892 the trustees sought to close down the School of Arts and the books were transferred to the care of the State School. The number of books transferred back to the re-formed School of Arts in 1913 is not known. The fire which burnt down the main street of Killarney late in 1915



destroyed all of the stock of library books together with the library records and the early minute books of the School of Arts committee.

Seemingly the story ends here.

However, during a recent visit to what is the now QCWA building there was identified amongst other items a metal trunk, very similar to one seen some years earlier in Goulburn NSW, where research was undertaken for the very first account in this ADFAS School of Arts Project⁷.



Steel trunk containing books and other items, including the Killarney School of Arts Minute Books (1919 -1952)

As in Goulburn, the trunk in Killarney yielded treasures: it contained minute books and other artefacts revealing the story of the building, how it had been managed and the vagaries of its use over many years. Amongst a range of items were the minutes of the Killarney School of Arts committee dating from 1919, after it had been re-built in 1916 following the disastrous fire of 1915. An extract from the first meeting is shown below.²³ The President was Mr Grayson. Dr Harlin was the Chairman of the earlier meeting which sought to close down the School of Arts.

▼ Extract from Minute Books of the School of Arts (19 May 1919)

The President suggested that country members should pay full fees, but after some discussion it was decided that the charge of 10/- be adhered to. It was also decided that for the convenience of country members, the Secretary would open the library on Monday afternoons from 3 to 5 P.M.

Dr. Harlin offered to take the Scientific American at half rates, and the Sydney Mail on the same terms.



No record of the books held in the library or other related information such as statistics of borrowing were found. But the Committee Minutes include interesting snippets such as: *Complaints were made of non-members using the reading room... these persons just looked over the sporting news, smoked cigarettes, and ate peanuts...*⁵⁰. The state of the billiard room was a constant cause for discussion often interspersed with discussions about the library⁵¹*the matter of running the Institution was discussed and it was moved by Mr Ward to temporarily close the billiard and reading room to temporarily discontinue the use of carbide.....moved that a hanging lamp be procured for the library account amounting to £1/10/0.*

The minutes show that the committee was actively seeking to engage in the exchange of books with other societies,⁵² as well as purchasing books and having standing orders for books and periodicals from booksellers such as Angus and Robertson and Gordon and Gotch.⁵³ The 1923 AGM of the nearby Tannymorel School of Arts records that *the book committee exchanged 39 books with the Killarney School of Arts*⁵⁴. In 1942 a motion was passed *that the institution be affiliated with the QSAA (Queensland School of Arts Association)*⁵⁵ which had a scheme for loaning books to member institutions.

In 1953 the School of Arts formally gifted the building to the CWA on condition⁵⁶ that it maintained the lending library. Membership cost a guinea (£1/1/0) which entitled the member to access 40 books over six months. Children's books were free.

Warwick Daily News 26 February 1953 p.5 ►

Excerpts from the QCWA Killarney Branch's archives with respect to the lending library and its usage follow⁵⁶.

In 1953 books were being purchased and the CWA honorary librarian was allowed free reading from the library indicating that the library was being reopened at that time. Their records of opening times, types of subscriptions etc show that *the library was very busy.*

GIFT OF BUILDING
The branch has recently been offered, and has just accepted as a gift, the large rambling School of Arts building in Willow Street, Killarney.
 It will also take over the contents of the building, including a library. A special committee has been formed to control the newly-acquired building, and a permanent librarian may be appointed. The committee comprises the president (Mrs. R. G. Wallace), W. H. Ackinson, W. H. Stokes, H. E. Fagg, H. G. Smith, D. Ross, T. Gray, C. McArthur and D. White.

As early as 1960 it was reported that *the library is not progressing as we would like and we are seriously considering closing this part of our branch activity.* This is not an uncommon occurrence. The 1960s were a time of great social change, especially in terms of the growth of media, with radio, television and competing library resources, not to mention distractions such as Rock-and-Roll, square dancing, comics, all of which provided entertainment to the young, in particular.

But in 1962 a member offered *to do the library at times suitable* to her and in 1965 a member's husband and his daughter offered to "do the library" but only one day a week. Members were asked to join and make the librarian's job worthwhile. But this only delayed the inevitable and



on 18th July 1966 an advertisement appeared: *Books to be sold – good books 2/- others 1/-*. One lady purchased £8 worth of books.

In November 1966 *all remaining books were exchanged for an electric refrigerator in a deal with a past librarian.*

The QCWA controlled all the operations of the hall. They used it for meetings, teaching a range of home-making skills, and so on. In late 2017 they held two well attended Cooking Workshops⁵⁷. They also provided a venue for community events.

The history of the School of Arts at Killarney ended when the School of Arts Committee gifted the building to the QCWA in 1952. At that date, the history of the building becomes the history of the Killarney Branch of the QCWA. The QCWA Committee is committed to documenting their history as a written record.

Currently (2018)

The 2018 program organised by the CWA includes:

- Regular monthly handicrafts days will be continued.
- Because of the discontinuation of plastic bags at the local Foodworks store the Branch is initiating a Neighbourhood Bags Project --a program much like the Boomerang Bag project⁵⁸.
- In a joint project with Queensland Health and the QCWA, Country Kitchens⁵⁹, a series of community workshops will be undertaken to be focussed on promoting the inclusion of more fruit and vegetables in household diets.
- The International Day will be held mid-year, including representation from local schools.
- There will be a Melbourne Cup function and a Floral Art Workshop

Renovations to the building and its environment will include replacing the fence at the back and sides of the property. It will continue to provide a venue for community events and participate actively in the life of the Killarney community in good times and especially in times when and wherever help is needed.

The Killarney QCWA Branch moves confidently into the future carrying on training and community involvement in accord with their aims, so often the aims of the School of Arts movement of the past.... but with a woman's touch.



Acknowledgments

- Killarney QCWA - I am most grateful to **Jeanette Braithwaite** for arranging for me to visit the QCWA Hall in Killarney and meet with two long-serving QCWA Killarney members, **Lorna Grayson** and current President, **Daph Pullen**. They assisted me greatly in accessing information about the past uses of the Hall and its library.
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- Warwick and District Historical Society: **Nola Mikkelsen, Mary Mannings, Bernie Stephens**.
- **Rebecca Mutton, Dan McCosker** Queensland Department of Natural Resources, Mines and Energy for maps and information on land holdings.

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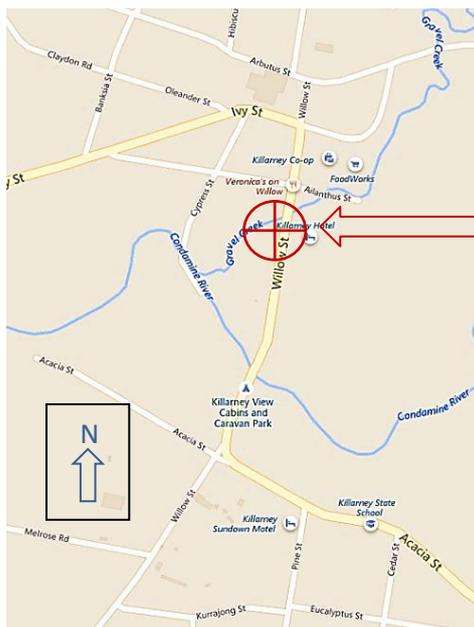
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Site of former School of Arts (now QCWA)

Town map of modern Killarney

The School of Arts building re-built on the same site after the 1916 fire, was on the western side of Willow Street where it crosses Gravel Creek.

Since its formation, the Killarney Branch of the QCWA has operated in the building, which it now owns. It was gifted from the School of Arts in 1953.



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Photographs (2018): Dudley Creagh

Archival Photos: *The Week* 15 January 1909 p.24

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QCWA Killarney Branch records: *The Old School of Arts*

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