

## FREESTONE QLD



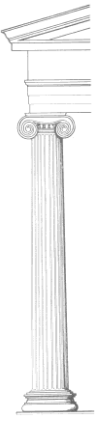
**Name: Freestone School of Arts (1900 – 1924);  
Freestone Memorial Hall and School of Arts (1924 – 1954)  
Freestone Memorial Hall (1954 - )**

**Address: 1244 Freestone Road, Freestone, Queensland 4370**

### **The Town/District**

Freestone is a locality in the Darling Downs Region of South Eastern Queensland. Its population (2016 census) numbered 217. Freestone lies about 150 kilometres south-west of Brisbane and 14 kilometres north of Warwick, the area's major town. The Hall is now the most visible reminder of what was a thriving township in the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century.

The region was identified first in 1827 when the explorer, Allan Cunningham<sup>1</sup>, travelled north from the Hunter Valley searching for new grazing land. He reached an area he named the Darling Downs and found a land with rich volcanic soil, good pasture and abundant forests. Such a rich pastoral region would need easy access to ports and major towns to distribute its produce. Cunningham saw what he thought could be a gap (now called Spicer's Gap) in the apparently impenetrable Great Dividing Range and he believed this would perhaps provide access to the coast. Returning north again in 1828 Cunningham travelled to Moreton Bay (now Brisbane) to search for a gap in the range by travelling inland from the coast along the Logan River. After a number of unsuccessful attempts, in 1829 he eventually located the gap, now known as Cunningham's Gap, which allowed access from the coastal settlements to the Darling Downs region<sup>2</sup>.



In his history of the settlement of the Darling Downs, Hall<sup>2</sup> reports (p. 3) that this 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. Long term erosion of the volcanic peaks by wind and rain produced a rich soil layer which is 200 feet deep in parts. With the passage of time the heavily forested landscape which existed in the carboniferous era evolved to be lightly wooded grasslands. The densely timbered regions were found only in the eastern part of Australia in areas of high rainfall<sup>3</sup>, including the Macpherson Ranges.

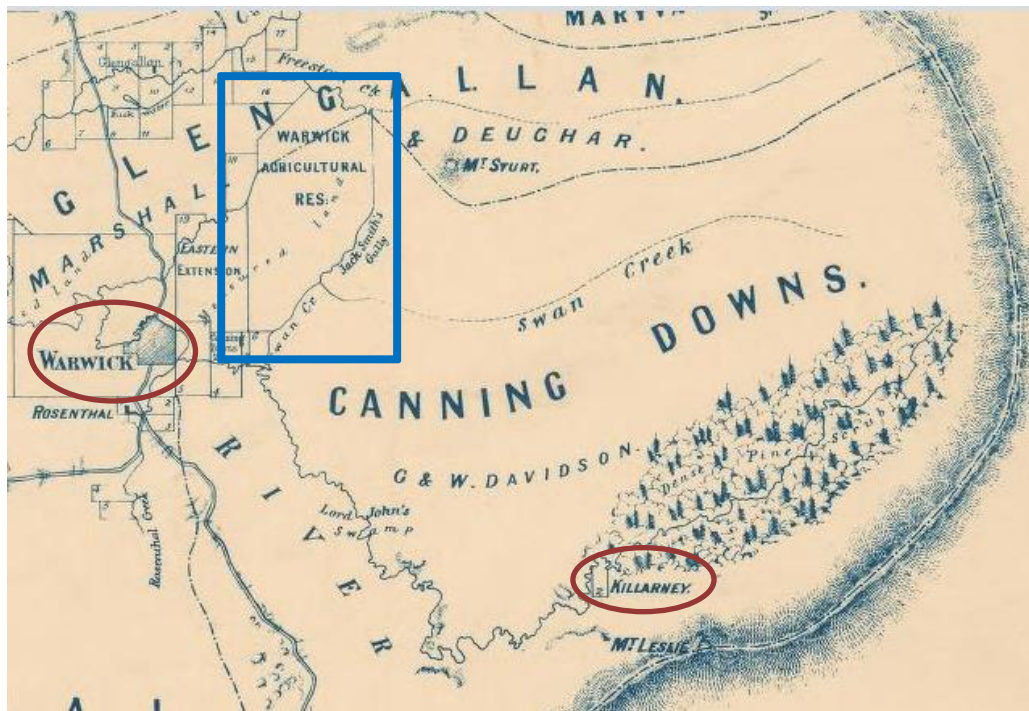
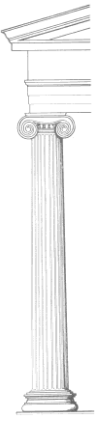
In his explorations of the region, Cunningham saw only glimpses of the indigenous population<sup>2</sup> (p. 13). The local tribes were the Kienjan, Cathabul, Jageia, and Garaomna<sup>4</sup> people who spoke a common language, Wakka. The settlers lived in harmony with what was referred to at the time 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 Downs<sup>5</sup>. 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 eventually to be called 'Warwick'. Land sales were held in 1850, with the first allotment bought by Leslie.

Canning Downs 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 where the stock yards and the house were established by Leslie on a knoll where Alan Cunningham had camped in 1827. Later this became the site for a settlement<sup>2</sup> (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 map 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 all built later. Each constructed its own Schools of Arts<sup>6</sup>.

Hall<sup>2</sup> (p. 80) reports *that the Queensland Lands Department ...provided 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 made<sup>7</sup> 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. Settlers coming to the Freestone area prior to 1855 would have had to cut down the trees and prepare it for building purposes all by hand. In 1855 a water powered sawmill<sup>2</sup> (p. 85) was established not far from Killarney station by Thomas Hall's father to provide timber for the construction of the settlers' houses, barns, and other outbuildings. After 1880 steam-powered saw mills in Killarney were to make the building of houses and barns easier for the settlers who came from many places: other parts of New South Wales, England, Scotland, Ireland, and Scandinavia. Because the land was rich, the dairy industry flourished too. 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 still to be found in Warwick, Toowoomba and Brisbane<sup>2</sup> (p. 63).



**Squatting map (1864 Freestone is located.) of Canning Downs showing the proposed line of pre-emptive purchases, townships, reserves and roads<sup>8</sup>. Freestone is located within the Warwick Agricultural Reserve.**

When the State of Queensland was created in 1859 the Canning Downs region came under the jurisdiction of the Queensland Government and with this came the decision to break up the larger pastoral holdings within the State. As a result of that decision Warwick Agricultural Reserve, which was part of the Canning Downs Estate, was offered for sale<sup>8</sup>. The map of the estate (above), which predates the Land Alienation Act of 1868<sup>7</sup>, shows only two towns, Warwick and Killarney.

The Agricultural Reserve was defined in the Queensland Government Gazette 1861 (p. 167):

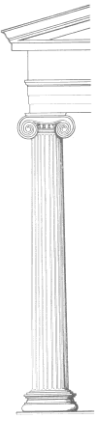
*Containing 11 000 acres. Commencing at the north-east corner of G F Leslie's pre-purchase of 164 acres on Canning Downs, and bounded thence on the west by a line bearing north to Campbell's Gully upwards to a point quarter of a mile easterly from the well at the Well Station, thence by a line bearing north one mile, thence by a line bearing north-east to Freestone Creek, upwards to the fence of Deuchar's paddock, thence by the fence of that paddock easterly and south-easterly to a point bearing north from the head of J. Smith's Gully, on the east by a line bearing south to the head of J. Smith's Gully, thence by Swan Creek downwards to a point bearing east from the north-east corner of G F Leslie's 164 acres to the point of commencement.*

*Given by my Hand, and the Seal of the Colony at Government House, Brisbane, this thirteenth day of March, in the year of Our Lord, One thousand eight hundred and sixty-one, and in the twenty-fourth year of Her Majesty's Reign.*

(L.S.) G F Bowen

By His Excellency's Command,

R G W Herbert.



The first farmer to take up land in the area was Henry Smith who had arrived with his family at Moreton Bay Colony (Brisbane) in 1858<sup>9</sup>. From there they moved to Warwick and thence to Freestone in 1862. Other settlers rapidly joined them, and by 1868 settlers from England, Ireland, the Scandinavian countries, and Germany had arrived.



◀ A settler's hut in the Freestone region 1862.

Life was not easy for the early settlers: they were clearing the land and using the felled trees to construct slab huts, fighting the elements and working the land with horse drawn implements or by hand.

But there was a strong community spirit<sup>9</sup>. Many

stories are told of one family helping another in times of difficulty. Christmas meals were sent to those less fortunate, while other families already settled here were opening their homes to the new comers.

The hamlet grew steadily, and a Methodist Church was built on private land at Freestone Creek<sup>10</sup> in 1865 at a cost of £64 (of which £50 was promised). It was a modest wooden structure 25' x 15' (excluding the small porch). St Luke's Anglican Church<sup>11</sup> followed in 1883, built for £175 on land donated by the Palmer family and funded in part by the English Society for promoting Christian Knowledge. It was deconsecrated in 2018. The Roman Catholic Church, St Laurence O'Toole, was built in 1905 and is now a private residence.

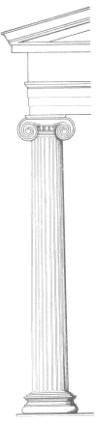


**Freestone Methodist Church (built 1865)**

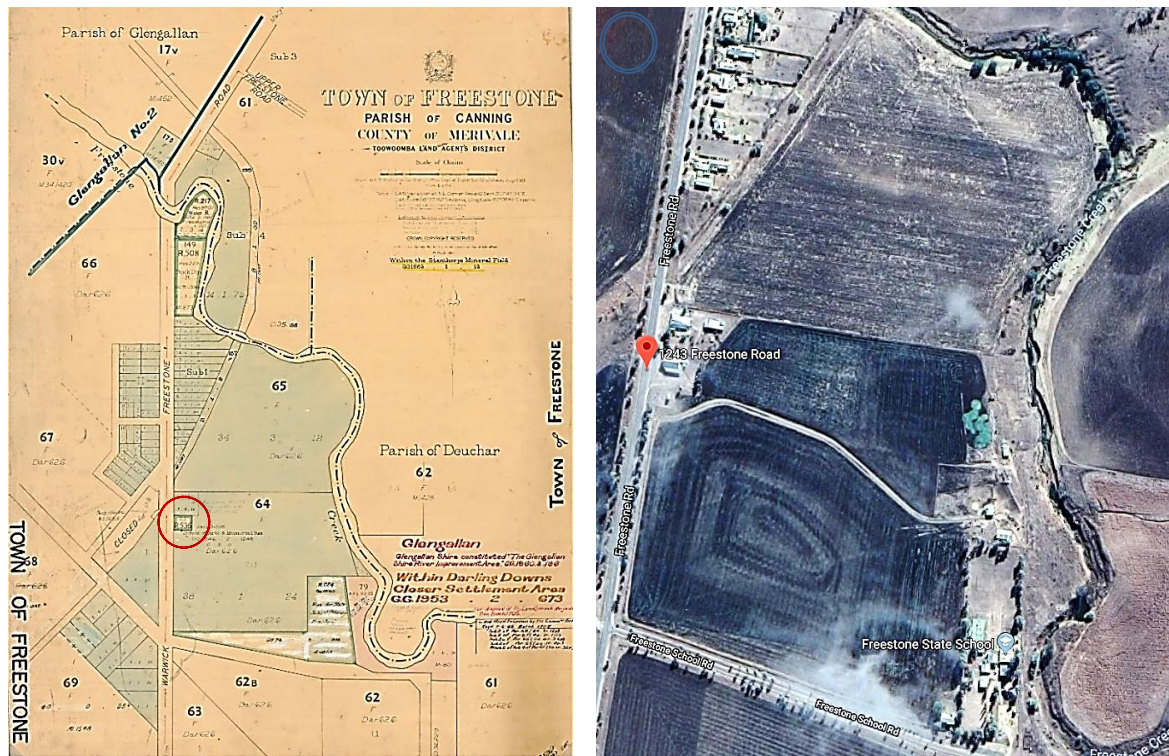


**St Luke's Anglican Church (1863-2018)**

Freestone Creek State School<sup>12</sup> opened on 1 August 1870. In 1876 it was renamed Freestone Creek Lower State School, and renamed again in 1940 as Freestone State School. In 1874 a second school was built in Upper Freestone, and was known as Freestone Creek Upper.



By the turn of the century the township at Upper Freestone had two churches, a cemetery, a store, butcher's shops, and a blacksmith's shop. It was the larger of the two settlements.



Left: Cadastral map<sup>13</sup> of Freestone produced in 1960 (cadastral maps show the boundaries of properties)

Right: Satellite image<sup>14</sup> showing existing buildings (Google<sup>®</sup>) 2018

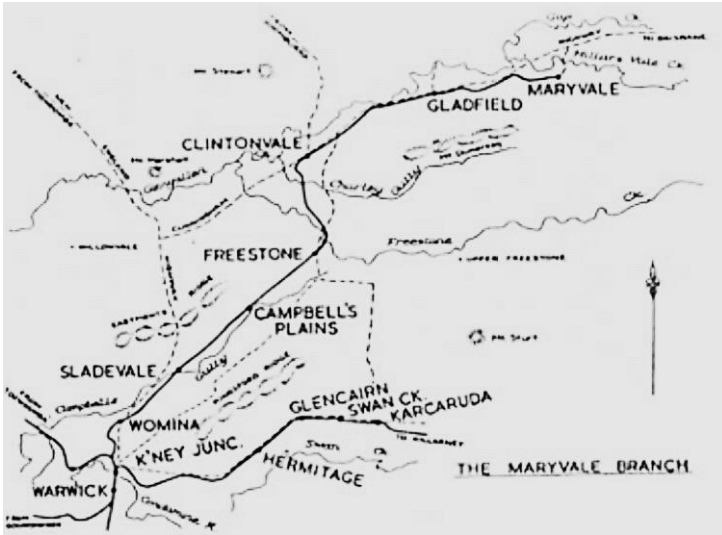
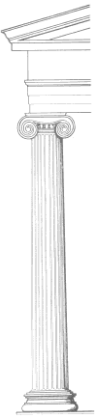
The site of the School of Arts is shown in block 64 as a square surrounded by a circle. The position of the School of Arts is marked in the satellite image<sup>14</sup> as a red dot.

The cadastral map<sup>13</sup> records the subdivisions of the township. Careful examination shows many regular shaped suburban plots existed (1/4 acre typically). There are 64 plots within the town boundary subdivision, suggesting a population for the town of around 300.

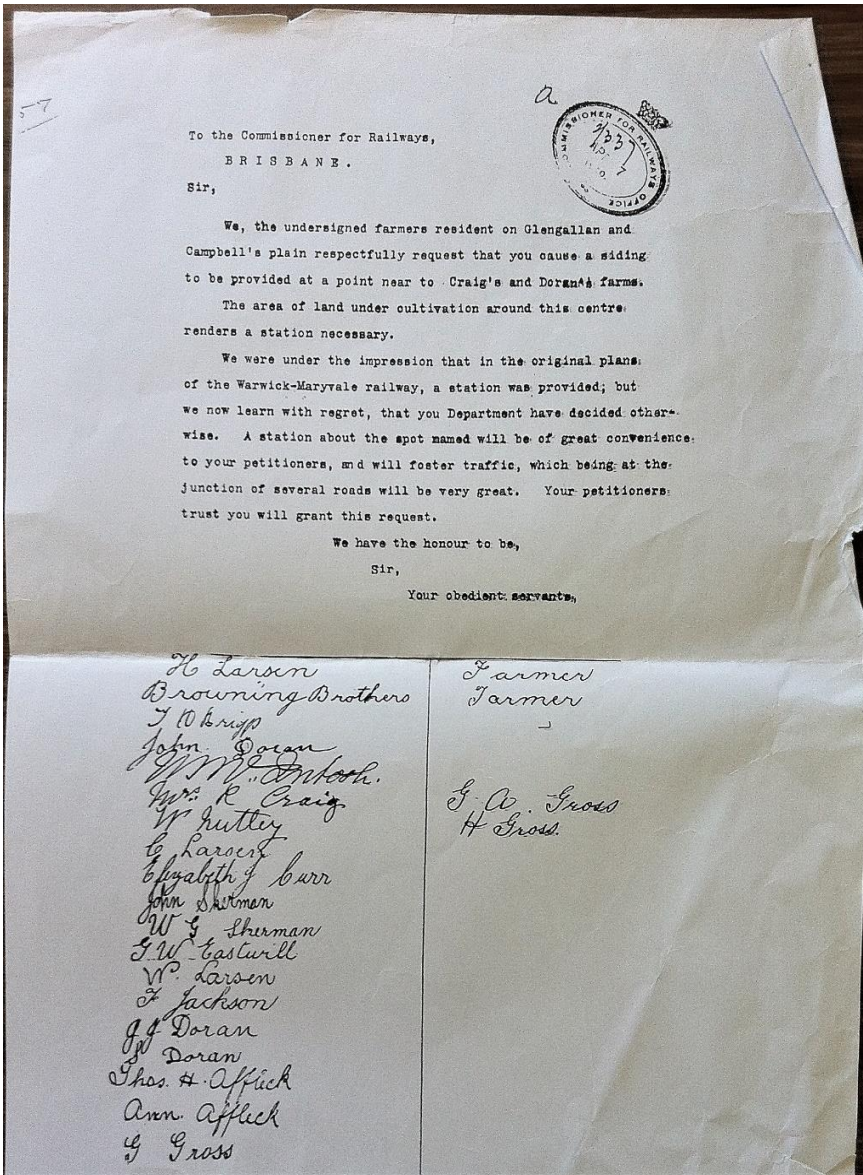
Two factors seem to have been important to landholders in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, and appear to have driven the development of townships. One is the location of the Post Office, the other, the existence of, and proximity to, a railway station. Once these were settled other facilities such as schools and service industries (bakers, blacksmiths, hotels, and the like), developed.

A Receiving Office<sup>9</sup> was established at Lower Freestone Creek, 8 km from Warwick, in 1863. This became a Post Office in 1875.

The railway line came much later. Surveying of the line between Warwick and Maryvale<sup>15</sup> commenced in 1880 but the first sod was not turned until 1910. The line was supposed to be the 'Via Recta' (the direct route) between Brisbane and Sydney through Ipswich and Killarney Junction (Warwick) but the plan was not implemented. A map of the Warwick-Maryvale railway line is shown below<sup>9</sup>.



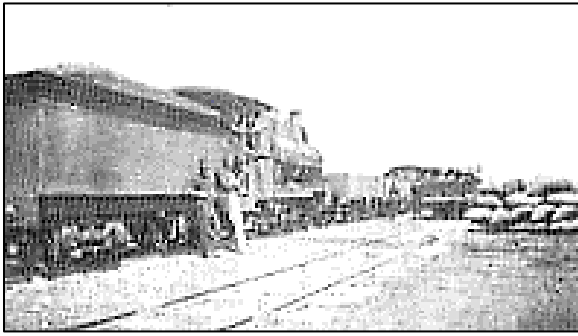
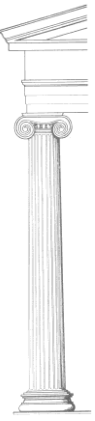
◀ Map of the Warwick-Maryvale Railway line<sup>9</sup>.



◀◀  
**Petition<sup>16</sup>**  
**to the Queensland**  
**Commissioner of**  
**Railways to suggest**  
**the location of a**  
**siding at Freestone.**  
  
 Undated  
 but before 1900.

Farmers lobbied the Commissioner for Railways to plead their case to have the sidings close to their properties.

The petition<sup>16</sup> was found amongst assorted papers of the Committee of Freestone School of Arts and Memorial Hall. Twenty-one local farmers signed the petition.



◀ Loading a train with bags of wheat (ca 1920).<sup>9</sup>

With the railway came a shift of businesses from Upper Freestone to Lower Freestone. Inevitably the Post Office shifted from Upper Freestone in 1915. And in 1900 the Freestone School of Arts was built.

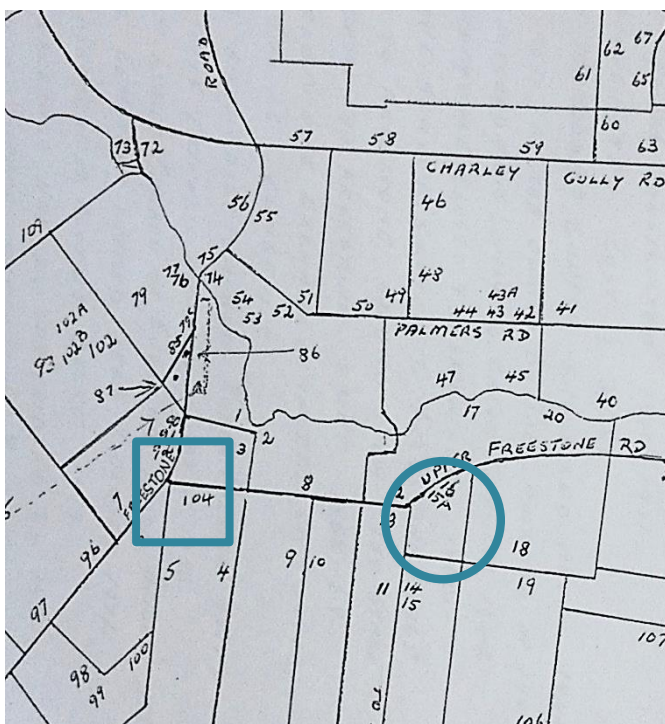
## Freestone School of Arts

(later Freestone Memorial Hall and School of Arts)

### Establishment

No public records of the detailed processes which led to its establishment seem to exist. Warwick, the largest town in the region, had built a School of Arts in 1865 and visitors from the outlying hamlets would no doubt have been aware of what the School of Arts offered, especially because travel to Warwick had been facilitated by the construction of the Warwick to Killarney railway line (completed 1876)<sup>15</sup>. As well, farmers from the area would have delivered their produce to Yangan where a School of Arts had been established in 1898. They would have been aware of how this institution was used by the Yangan residents<sup>6</sup>.

Perhaps the decision to build a School of Arts was taken after a large number of private conversations had taken place and pledges of funding and labour had been made. The site of the building was adjacent to Freestone Creek Road and Jack Smith's Gully Road on land now owned by Norman Gillespie<sup>9</sup>. It is shown as block 15A in a freehand surveyor's map in the papers of the Freestone Memorial Hall<sup>16</sup>



◀ Freehand surveyor's map of Freestone as it was in 1900. It has an accompanying list of property owners<sup>16</sup>.

The location of the original plot is shown by a circle. The location of the current School of Arts is shown as a square.



## The Building

The contract for the construction of the School of Arts building was awarded to Mr J Woolcock<sup>9</sup>. It was a plain wooden structure, rectangular in shape, with a gable roof. The total cost of the land, building, fences, and interior furnishing was £150. Its dimensions were approximately 15 x 30 feet. No photographs of the building at this site seem to exist, but from a photograph taken as it was being moved to a new site on Freestone Road (see later) it appears to be a simple structure with two windows on the side and two doorways at the front.

The formal opening of the School of Arts in March 1901 was reported in the *Warwick Argus*<sup>17</sup> : .....*The committee and residents of the district had made great preparations for the event. Invitations had been made to the Mayor of Warwick and other dignitaries from the district. ...but the Clerk of the Weather proved unsympathetic and the rain set in early reducing the black soil roads to such a condition that all hope of carrying out the function in its entirety had to be abandoned.* Some dignitaries managed to negotiate the roads before the rain set in but there were torrents of rain at the time of the opening (3 o'clock). Many tried to attend but were defeated by the terrible weather. Charles Lewis acted as Chairman for the meeting and about sixty hardy souls were present. Apologies were read by the Secretary, Mr Harwood. He continued on, reading a statement of accounts for the land, buildings, furnishings and fences. In all the total cost was £150 with the building practically free of debt. Mr Hardaker, the member for Warwick in the Queensland State Parliament, made the formal opening speech. He said that ... *he hoped that the movement for establishing a School of Arts which initiated in Yangan and now followed at Freestone would spread throughout the country centres.* He stressed the importance of libraries and reading rooms in providing opportunities for young people to continue their studies. After the votes of thanks had been given *the attendees partook of the festive board provided by the ladies.*

By the annual meeting in November, affairs were most satisfactory: the debt on the building had been paid and furnishing had begun with further improvements proposed. The library was in operation, thanks to donations of books, and there were 111 members, though it was not expected to sustain this number. It was the aim of the Committee to lay a foundation for the future prosperity on a firm and safe base<sup>18</sup>.

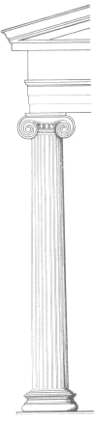
### Freestone School of Arts.

The annual meeting of subscribers to the above was held last Friday evening. The treasurer's statement of accounts showed that the revenue for the past year amounted to £99 5s 7d, while the expenditure was £125 8s 1d, including the cost of erecting a caretaker's cottage, £84 8s 6d. The capital account stated that the total of assets over liabilities amounted to £243 10s 4d, which is an increase of £86 13s 8d on last year. The financial position of the institution is, therefore, regarded as highly satisfactory. The following were elected officers for the ensuing year:—President, Mr. P. Ryan; vice-presidents, Hon. A. Morgan and Messrs. T. M. Donovan, S. J. Harwood, and W. McIntosh; secretary and treasurer, Mr. F. Hall; committee, Messrs. Rogers, C. Larsen, H. Larsen, B. C. Kirkegaard, Rippingale, Reynolds, J. Ryan, J. Palmer, P. Hagenbach, and Hallman.

At the AGM in 1903<sup>19</sup> Mr P Ryan was elected as President, the School of Arts continued to thrive and it was reported that *the finances are highly satisfactory...£243 assets over liabilities...* In this same year a caretaker's cottage was built adjacent to the School of Arts building<sup>9</sup> at a cost of £80. This caused a change in the financial position but at the AGM in the subsequent year<sup>20</sup> the President, Mr H Larsen, reported that the School of Arts had £40 in hand, and no overdraft.

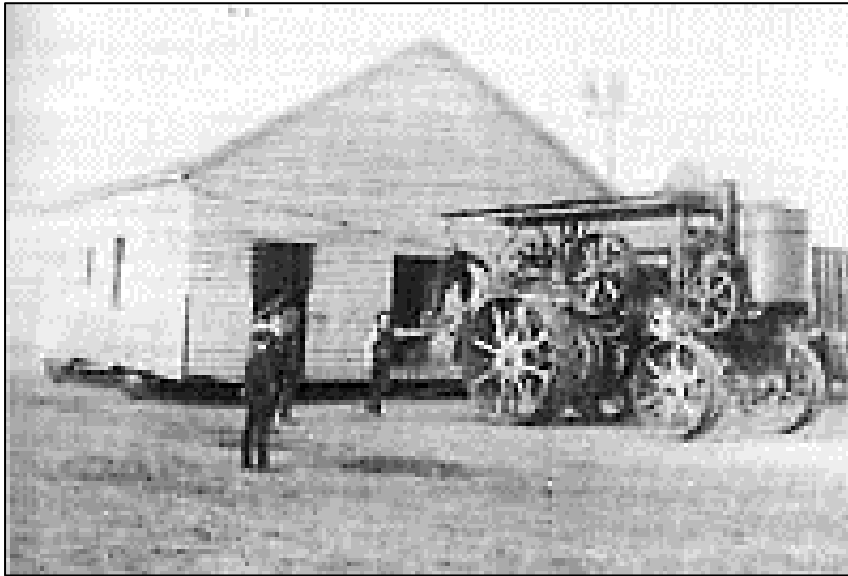
◀ Report *Warwick Examiner and Times (WET)* 14 Oct 1903 p.2





The growth of the township and the arrival of the railway in 1911 made it desirable to relocate the School of Arts with its caretaker's buildings so that it could be close to the railway station on Freestone Road. Land to accommodate the move was purchased from Mr J Ryan<sup>9</sup> for £25.

This decision to relocate the School of Arts was deferred until after World War 1, taking place finally in late 1921. The Hall Committee records do not indicate the method used in the process of removal: only that the contract for the removal<sup>9</sup> was awarded to Mr B Wilson for a price of £95. How the relocation was effected is open to some debate. Some thought that a bullock team was used, and that a steam traction engine was used to manoeuvre the two sections into position. Others believed that the traction engine came to aid the bullock team when it was bogged in mud in School Lane. I leave it to the reader to imagine that scene.



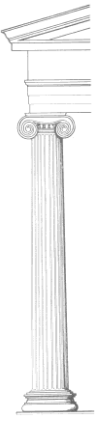
Yet another line of thought is that the traction engine provided the only motive power necessary. The engine is understood to have belonged to Ernie Cox<sup>9</sup>. This photograph, (left) the only piece of solid evidence, does not provide an answer to the puzzle.

◀ Moving the School of Arts Hall

The relocated hall was declared open by Mr P McMahon on 2 September 1922. The celebration took the form of a concert followed by a dance, with a number of local artists displaying their talents.

The new Hall was now in proximity to the railway station and the Lower Freestone State School. To give the Hall more ability to expand ....*2 roods at Freestone has been proclaimed for reserve purposes*<sup>21</sup>. This enabled the Hall to be extended ....*due to growing demand by the public*<sup>22</sup>.

A number of the Schools of Arts in the Canning Downs<sup>6</sup> region had caretakers who devoted a significant part of their lives to maintaining the properties and their contents. Freestone appears to be unique in that provided a caretaker's cottage. For many years Mr and Mrs Lancaster were the caretakers, receiving accommodation and a small wage for their services<sup>9</sup>. Mr Lancaster did other jobs around the district, having at one stage, a mail run. The last caretaker was Mrs M Shelley who left when the caretaker's cottage was sold to Mr RJ Aspinall for £100, which he paid into the War Memorial Hall account<sup>16</sup>.



The School of Arts was host to a number of activities: it provided a library service, and many dances, balls, cabarets, reunions and other events were held. During World War 1 and World War 2 patriotic events were held to raise funds for the troops serving overseas. It hosted meetings and events organized by the Freestone Branch of the Queensland Country Women's Association (QCWA). The CWA<sup>23</sup> was founded in 1922 and had great significance in the development of country communities. Freestone had a very active QCWA committee for many decades.

After WW1 Freestone developed rapidly<sup>9</sup>. Lower Freestone now had Churches, a railway station, a post office (situated in a store next to the School of Arts), school, butchers, saddlers, blacksmiths, sporting facilities and a grain shed. Upper Freestone also had a store, butcher shop, post office and a school. The Cemetery remained located at Upper Freestone.

The Great Depression was to slow this growth<sup>9</sup>. And World War 2 had an even more significant effect.

## FREESTONE

**Hall Committee:** A meeting of the local Hall Committee was held on Tuesday night. Mr J. Shelley occupied the chair, a fair number of members being present. The chief discussions centred around improvements to the hall, and as to whether the name of the hall could be changed to Freestone Memorial Hall in memory of the fallen soldiers. A doubt exists as to whether this can be done as it is now known as the School of Arts. Inquiries are being made.

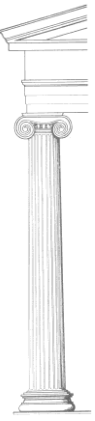
It was also decided to buy new cups. Discussions on how to raise funds for improvements will take place at the next meeting.

The end of WW2 saw the resilience of the community come to the fore and, as had happened after WW1, the community pressed on with implementing plans for developing the Hall. In 1946 a public meeting<sup>9</sup> was held to consider making the School of Arts a Memorial to all those who served and those who gave their lives in the service of their country. It was proposed that the Hall be remodeled and its name be changed to the Freestone School of Arts and Memorial Hall. Donations were made in the form of bags of wheat (or the value thereof) to the Hall funds.<sup>24</sup> Fund raising proceeded, including a dance held in support of the improvements which were deemed necessary.

◀ Warwick Daily News Thursday 28 March 1946 p.4

It was reported<sup>25</sup> that .....a large number of people attended the dance in aid of the Freestone War Memorial Hall Fund, and as a result the fund will benefit by just over £24.....Leonard's Orchestra supplied the music. Streamers, confetti, balloon and lucky spot waltzes made the evening very gay. (And later that evening)...At a meeting of the hall committee the plans of the improved hall were tabled and No1 plan was chosen.....The fund has a credit of £360.

Planning and raising the requisite funding took some time, but eventually work was ready to commence. It was reported<sup>26</sup> that a meeting of the Freestone Memorial Hall Committee was held to finalise memorial hall details.....The committee has now let a contract to Mr. J. Carmody for the building and Mr. Kohler for the painting. The hall will serve the district as a community centre for many years to come.



The new Freestone Memorial Hall was opened by Mr O O Madsen MLA on Saturday 5 September 1953<sup>27</sup>. Donations to the Hall funding raised more than £200.

# New Freestone Memorial Hall Opened

**FREESTONE:** The new memorial hall at Freestone was packed to capacity for the opening ceremony and ball on Saturday night, visitors being present from all surrounding districts, as well as Warwick.

The hall was beautifully decorated, and the new lighting plant proved a huge success. Mr. T. Phelan was M.C.

During the evening, Mr. W. P. Shelley, chairman of the memorial hall committee, introduced the various speakers. He first of all welcomed the large crowd, and then thanked the committee of the Freestone school for their generosity in withdrawing their booking of the hall to allow the opening to take place that night, the original night having been wet.

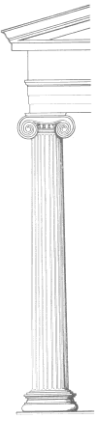
He said the committee had worked hard for several years to make a fitting memorial for the men who had fought in two world wars, and especially for those who gave their lives for their country.

As an aside: you will note that this opening date had been delayed for a week (see text at left) because of wet weather. Cancellation of special events was a not infrequent occurrence in the region. Mentions of the effect of weather on important events are also to be found in accounts of other Schools of Arts in the Canning Downs Region<sup>6</sup>. The very thing that makes the region so fertile, the volcanic black-soil, turns, when it rains, into a gluey, sticky morass capable of bogging the best of modern four-wheel drive vehicles. Imagine what it would do to your family sulky...and you, in your best Sunday attire.

In 1959 the Freestone Branch of the QCWA and the Hall Committee held a fete to raise funds for further improvements<sup>9</sup>. The walls and the ceiling of the Hall were lined and the Honour Board was renovated.

Lighting had been with carbide (acetylene) lights prior to 1968 but finally, mains electricity was connected to the hall in that year. Septic tanks were installed in the late 1970s and over the years a succession of stoves, refrigerators and the like have been purchased, used, and replaced as required.

▲ Extract: *Warwick Daily News* Thu 10 Sep 1953 p.5

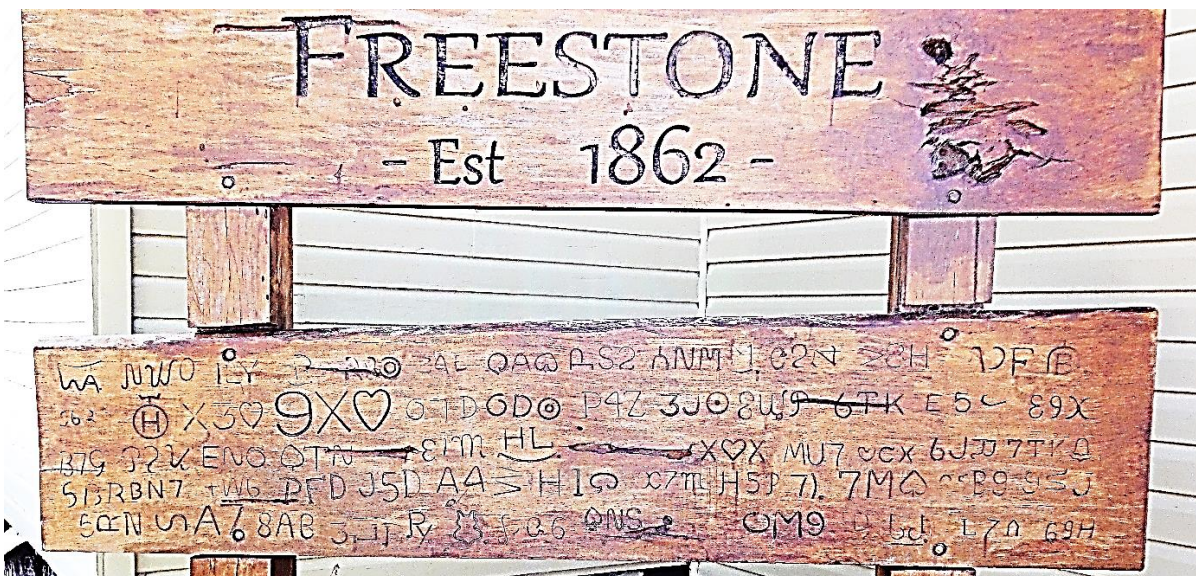


The building has had a number of other additions and improvements. In 1988 new flooring was laid and a bar area was built in a rear corner of the Hall<sup>16</sup>. When viewed from Freestone Road it now looks somewhat different from the building which was moved many years earlier by a steam tractor. The axis of the building runs approximately East-West. The entire front of the building has been modified and brought forward, a structure has been added to southern side where the entrance to the Hall is now located.



▲ Freestone Memorial Hall from Freestone Road (2018)

At the entrance to the building (to the right in shadow in the above photograph) is a sign which commemorates the history of stock raising in the Freestone District. The bottom rail shows the brands, used to identify the stock belonging to local landholders, which here have been burnt into the wood using their unique branding irons.



▲ The bottom rail has the stock brand marks for the property owners in the District



A view of the southern side of the building shows that a ramp has been added for disabled access. It also shows the commodious extension, now the supper room and kitchen, added to this side of the hall.



▲ Freestone Memorial Hall - south elevation

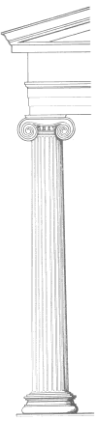
Turning from the building to the south-east one sees part of the strikingly beautiful country in which Freestone is situated. Prominent is the remnant if a small extinct volcano, Mount Sturt. The land which slopes down towards Lower Freestone Creek is broken up by highly fertile black-soil paddocks sloping down to the creek, and towards the Lower Freestone Public School.



▲ View to the South-East from the Hall

No trace is visible of the railway siding and associated bypass and shunting yard<sup>9</sup> which existed on this site. The line closed in 1960<sup>15</sup>.

At the rear of the Hall are the toilet facilities, modernized by installation of a septic system in the 1970s. A recent \$10,000 grant from the South Downs Regional Council<sup>16</sup> will allow further upgrading of these facilities to enable disabled access, for which a ramp is already provided.



Bottled gas is used in the kitchen which is at the rear end of the supper room extension. The kitchen window looks out at the splendid view shown in previous photograph.



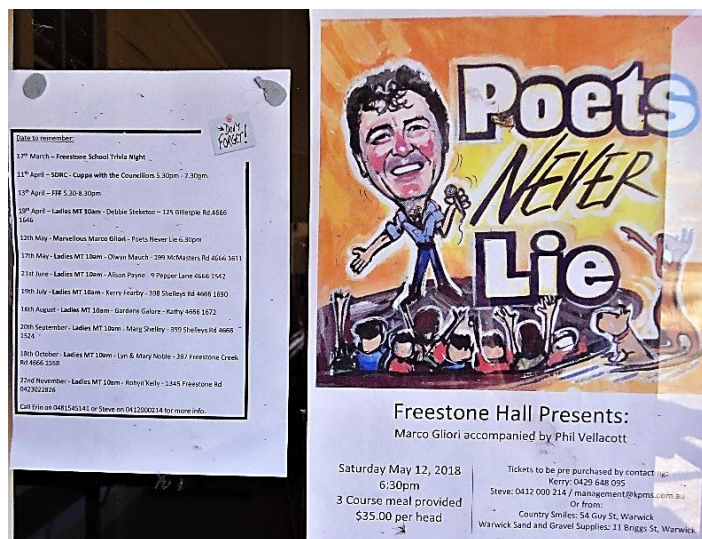
▲ Rear of the Hall

The Australian flag is flown from the flagpole (at left) on important days, such as ANZAC day. Small rosemary bushes, the traditional plant for remembrance, are planted at its base.

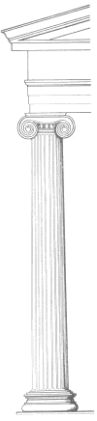
The Hall is accessed either by steps or by the ramp. The section of the building with a skillion roof is an addition, as can be seen in the various photographs. From the style, it is possibly part of the 1959 extensions. The small porch has, to the right of the entrance, a ticket box window to which advertisements of forthcoming events are fixed. It is a busy calendar: there are 13 dates for activities such as that in the poster (below left), socials, and lectures run by the Ladies Committee between May and December 2018.



▲ Ticket window at the entrance to the Hall.



▲ Upcoming events are advertised



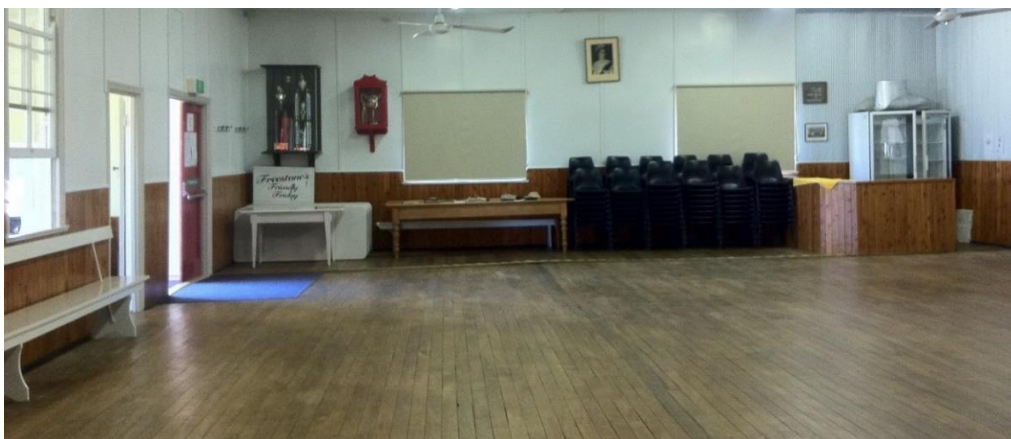
On entering the Hall the stage is to the right. Note that both the walls and the ceiling have been lined. Similar buildings in country towns are sometimes unlined, and some remain unpainted. At the left of the stage is the Honour Board. The first door on the right of the stage leads to a small anteroom which then leads to the toilets. The door on the right leads to the kitchen and supper room.



▲ **The Hall interior facing the stage**

Features are, L to R: Honour Board, stage, small anteroom, door leading to the supper room.

Looking down the Hall from the stage (below) shows a serving area for drinks installed in 1988 (far right corner in this photo). The floor of the Hall seems in very good condition and one suspects, is very good for ballroom dancing. Two windows in the front wall look out to the Freestone-to-Warwick road. On this particular day members of the committee had set up a table (under window at front left) where they had arranged material pertaining to the history of the building.



▲ **View down the Hall from the stage**

Here, at left, and in the photo of the supper room (below) can be seen old-style benches and stools still used to provide seating at functions. As well, as is now almost universal in such venues, there is a stock of lightweight stacking chairs, set out or stored as required, according to the needs of the occasion.



The supper room and kitchen are accessed by a door to the right of the stage. Over time the facilities have evolved and improved, changing with the needs of the Hall's patrons. The *Freestone Friendly Friday* gatherings are a convivial social event at which games and occasionally lawn bowls are played.

The Hall is a community centre for the Freestone District, a spacious and well-appointed venue for meetings, concerts, dances, balls, cabarets, sporting events and reunions. Organizations from neighbouring districts and Warwick are regular users of the Hall for social events.



▲ The supper room and kitchen as seen from the ticket window

The extension and at left, an external wall and sash window of the original building, are clearly shown.

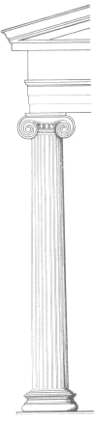
### The Honour Board

The most significant single feature in the Hall is the Honour Board<sup>28,29</sup>. It was donated by Councillor Palmer. There was a large crowd from all over the district in attendance for the unveiling by the Vice-President of the Western District RSL at a ceremony in August 1954.



The board includes mounted photographs of those from the Freestone District who served their country in WW1 and WW2. With the large upper photograph are the names of 34 servicemen from all services who enlisted from the Freestone District. The lower framed work commemorates the Great War. Photographs of servicemen surround the principal memorials.





The WW1 Memorial is the Roll of Honour in the Canning Downs Region. It was designed and painted by Mr. Charles Astley, a local teacher and painter. At the centre of the painting is a photograph of the first casualty from Freestone, Walter E Smale 2<sup>nd</sup> Light Horse Regiment 3<sup>rd</sup> Reinforcements, who was killed at Quinn's Post, Gallipoli on 7 August 1915. He was not yet 20 years old. He is now identified as of aboriginal descent, one of those who enlisted in the AIF.\*

(Ref: State Library of Queensland (SLQ))

The names of 27 other soldiers from the region are listed around the central photograph.

► **Memorial painting by Warwick artist Charles Astley.**  
The central photo is of Pte Walter E Smale, killed in 1915 at Gallipoli. (Image: SLQ)

The *Warwick Examiner and Times*<sup>30</sup> said of this Honour Roll ...it exhibited special skill and taste in providing a worthy example of [Astley's] art.

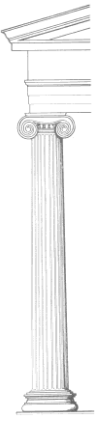


A memorial of a different kind hangs on the opposite wall. It is a quilt entitled 'Farm Life' created by the wife of a farmer in remembrance of her husband who took his own life whilst in a state of deep depression.

There have since been sessions held in the Hall to discuss issues relating to mental health in rural communities. It is fitting to remember those who are driven by circumstances to take their own lives. Farming is very high on the list of stressful occupations.

◀ **Quilt (2010) Artist unknown**

\*This information has been revealed as a result of research undertaken as part of the commemoration of the Centenary of Anzac into the participation of soldiers of aboriginal heritage enlisted in the AIF in WW 1.



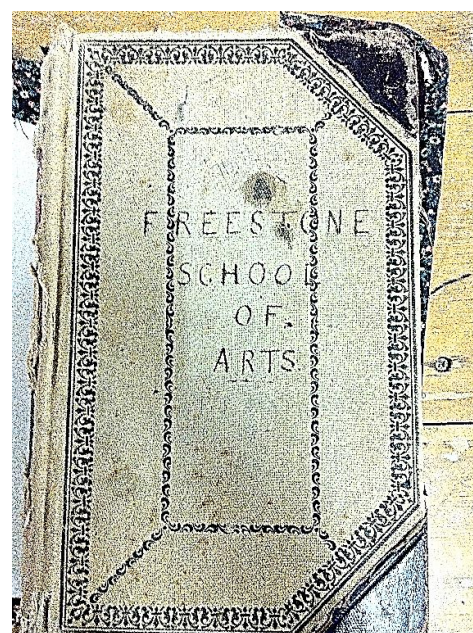
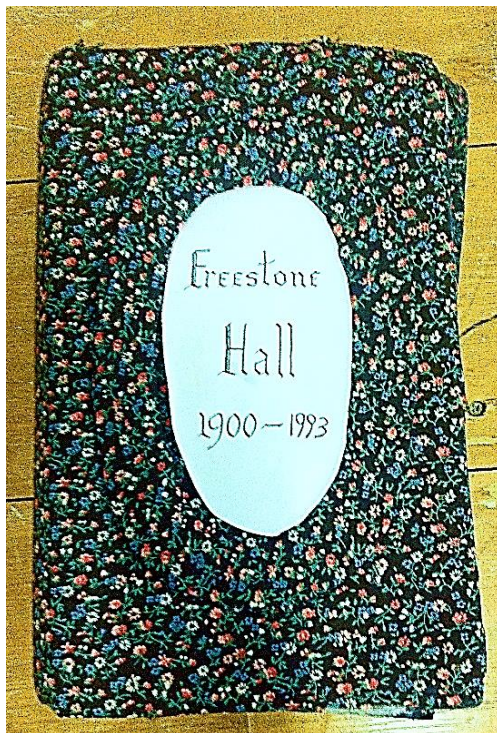
There are other items of interest on the walls. They include photographs of local Rugby League teams, sporting trophies, and the like. One item deserves special mention: a plaque displaying the brands used by local farmers. These also exist as actual 'brands' burnt into the wood of the sign erected at the external entrance to the Hall. (see p.12 above)



▲ Each engraved plate represents the brand mark used by farmers to identify their stock.

## Uses of the building

Little written or photographic material concerning the early years of the Freestone School of Arts seems to exist. What is known comes largely from newspaper reports. The Hall Committee made available such material as they hold for the preparation of this small history, including the account book, dating from 1903, which provided interesting information.

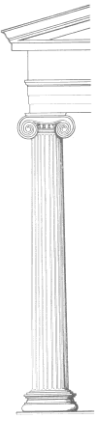


▲ Cover and opening page of the account book for the Freestone School of Arts 1900 to 1993.



Through this it is possible to trace the activities of the Hall from its creation in 1900, to the period at which it was renamed and became the Freestone School of Arts and Memorial Hall (1929), to its further renaming as the Freestone Memorial Hall (1954), its operation for the rest of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, and for the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. For example: the ledger page (below) shows the School of Arts subscription payments for the year 1900.

1900	Brought forward	49	8	0			100
Oct 13	Dr. C. Hansen			10	0		1 10
"	"	1	1	0			100
"	"			10	0		100
"	"			10	0		26
"	"			2	6		100
"	"			10	0		50
"	20			5	0		50
"	22			5	0		26
"	"			2	6		100
"	"			10	0		100
"	25			10	0		100
"	"			10	0		100
"	"			10	0		100
"	"			10	0		100
"	"			10	0		100
"	"			10	0		100
"	"			10	0		100
"	"	1	0	0			1 00
"	"			2	6		26
"	"			2	6		26
"	"			10	0		100
"	"			5	0		50
Nov: 17	Mrs Affleck	1	0	0			1 00
"	"	1	0	0			1 00
"	"			5	0		50
"	"			5	6		56
"	"	1	0	0			1 00
"	"			4	0		40
"	"			5	0		50
"	"	1	0	0			1 00
"	"			10	0		100
	(Carried forward)	43	13	6			63 13 6
				0	0	0	



6	Particulars	Brought Forward	Amount
19	Freestone Tennis Dance	63	1-5-0
	(Mrs. M. Kelly)		
	Upper Freestone School Dance	64	1-5-0
	(Mrs. J. Wright)		
	Clinton Vale School Annual	65	1-5-0
	(Mrs. M. Kelly)		
	Lower Freestone School Dance	66	1-5-0
	(Mrs. M. Kelly)		
	Freestone School Annual Dance	67	1-5-0
	(Mrs. P. Carrigan)		
	Shadwell Schools Annual Dance	68	1-5-0
	(Mrs. P. Carrigan)		
	Church of England Dance	69	1-5-0
	(Mrs. M. Kelly)		
	Send off to P. Ryan	70	1-5-0
	(Mrs. M. Kelly)		
	Rent of Cups	71	8-0-0
	Rent of Cups, Forms etc	72	11-0-0
	Social to Mrs. E. B. Kelly	73	1-5-0
	(Mrs. M. Kelly)		
	Freestone Cricket Dance	74	1-5-0
	(Mrs. M. Kelly)		
	Upper Freestone Cricket Dance	75	1-5-0
	(Mrs. M. Kelly)		
	Send off to Mrs. Connolly	76	1-5-0
	(Mrs. M. Kelly)		
	Welcome Home to Dist. Servicemen	77	15-0-0
	(Mrs. M. Kelly)		
	Presentation Evening to Wand Head	78	1-5-0
	(Mrs. M. Kelly)		
	St. Patrick's Celebration Dance	79	1-5-0
	(Mrs. M. Kelly)		
9th	Freestone Tennis Club Dance	80	2-10-0
	(Mrs. M. Kelly)		
	Social evening to R. M. M. M. M. M.	81	1-5-0
	(Mrs. M. Kelly)		
	Upper Freestone Tennis Dance	82	1-5-0
	(Mrs. M. Kelly)		
	Social evening to Mrs. M. M. M.	83	1-5-0
	(Mrs. M. Kelly)		
	C. W. A. Dance	84	1-5-0
	(Mrs. M. Kelly)		
	Clinton Vale Tennis Dance	85	1-5-0
	(Mrs. M. Kelly)		
	Gift evening to Mrs. E. B. Kelly	86	1-5-0
	(Mrs. M. Kelly)		
	Ambulance Benefit Dance	87	1-5-0
	(Mrs. M. Kelly)		
	Warwick City Band Dance	88	1-5-0
	(Mrs. M. Kelly)		
	Rent of Cups (R. March)	89	1-0-0

Almost 50 years later the ‘School of Arts’ had ceased to exist: the decision to drop the name “School of Arts” from the building description was made in 1946<sup>24</sup>. There is no mention in the ledger of subscriptions relating to the School of Arts after the mid-1940s. What happened to the books which would have been held in the School of Arts library is not known: the minute books have been lost.

◀ Ledger page for 1946 showing typical sources of funding for the Hall.

The charge for the hire of the Hall for dances, send-offs, socials, and presentations was £1-5-0. In addition, the hire of crockery and furnishings added to the revenue stream.

Later, 2001, a change in the pattern is apparent. The sources of funding for major works have moved from the proceeds of fetes, street stalls, dances, and the like, to donations from corporations, local government, and charitable institutions. This marks the recognition that the Hall performs a valuable function in the life of the community.

DATE	INCOME	RECEIPT NO.	AMOUNT	BANK INTEREST	MEMORIAL DONATIONS	MEMBERSHIP FEES	HALL HIRE	RAFFLES	FREESTONE BONUS	QCHA	FUNDING
14/1/01	JUPITERS CASINO	19	2100 00								
	FREESTONE P+C	20	30 00								
28/9/01	INTEREST NAB		100 00	- 20							
2/10/01	SHARE OF WARWICK	21	400 00								
21/11/01	M+S RYAN	22	50 00				50 00				400 00
21/11/01	FREESTONE P+C	22	30 00								
21/11/01	J+D COY	23	50 00				50 00				
4/12/01	FREESTONE QCHA	24	100 00								
31/12/01	INTEREST NAB	25	0 02	- 02							100 00
13/1/02	ALAN CHRISTENSEN	26	75 00				75 00				
6/2/02	FREESTONE STATE SCHOOL	27	100 00		100 00						
1/3/02	FREESTONE INDOOR BOWLS	28	296 00								
31/3/02	INTEREST NAB	29	0 01	- 01							296 00
1/4/02	FREESTONE QCHA	30	75 00								
	B FRAPPEN	31	50 00				50 00				
8/4/02	J+D COY	32	30 00				30 00				
23/6/02	INTEREST NAB	33	0 01	- 01							
			3986 24	24			255 00		235 00	296 00	1000 00 / 3100 00

▲ Ledger page for the Financial Year 2001-2002

Local entries of ca \$100 are dwarfed by a grant provided by Jupiter’s Casino. Note also the entries re the QCHA and the Parents and Friends Associations from local schools.



In the Financial Year 2008-2009 large donations were related to the commemoration of the 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Freestone. Significant grants were made by the Queensland Treasury Department (\$43,159); Blue Print of the Bush Grant, 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary (\$14,106); Volunteers Grant (Tables) (\$32,000); Southern Downs Regional Council (\$500). Income from individuals and P&C committees brought in \$2,653. There is no detailed record of expenditure but given the evidence of the amenities available, all these funds have been directed to the improvement and maintenance of the Hall facilities.

## Uses of the building

The Hall began its existence as a School of Arts in 1900 but rapidly became an important focus for community activities of all kinds. After 1924 it became a Memorial Hall, and this added a commemorative function to its use as a community centre. By the end of WW2 the School of Arts as such had ceased to exist and its function became that of providing a venue for community use – meetings, concerts, dances, balls, cabarets, sporting events and reunions. Organizations from neighbouring districts and Warwick have used the Hall for their social functions. The *Freestone Friendly Friday* events have been a regular and popular source of entertainment for the local community. They also send a message about the nature of the community and how the Hall provides a focus for those who live there.

**Malone Family Reunion**  
&  
**Freestone 150 Years Celebration**

"My name and surname and where I dwell  
is Edward Malone, White Swan Hotel."

Freestone Anniversary - Saturday 5th May from 10.30 until late at the Freestone Hall  
Malone Reunion - Sunday 6th May from 10.30 at the Swan Creek Hall, Swan Creek

Saturday	Sunday
Freestone Celebration at the Freestone Hall Miniature Train Display	Malone Family Reunion at the Swan Creek Hall
10.30 Morning Tea available 11.00 Tour to include Jim & Annie Malone's old farm at Freestone. Depart from the Freestone Hall. 12.30 Lunch at the Freestone Hall 3.00 Malone Family Warwick Cemetery Tour. Meet at the Cemetery entrance Wentworth St. 5.30 Barbeque Licenced Dinner Dance & Entertainment at the Freestone Hall \$15.00	10.30 Morning Tea at the Swan Creek Hall Tours throughout the day to inspect the White Swan Inn. Gold coin donation. 12.30 Lunch and cutting of the Commemorative Cake to celebrate 150 years since Edward Malone left Ireland for Swan Creek. Visual presentations, entertainment, family group photos.

Bring your family memorabilia, mounted and labelled to display for both days.  
There will be a branding post at the Freestone Anniversary. Tom has the Malone branding irons from Freestone.

Perhaps the most significant event in recent times was the 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Freestone in 2012.<sup>31</sup> One of the important celebrations was a reunion of the Malone Family. The celebrations were held in Freestone and nearby Swan Creek.

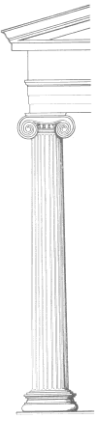
### ◀ Advertisement for the Malone Family Reunion and the Freestone 150 Years Celebration.

Edward Malone<sup>32</sup> was proprietor of the White Swan Inn which began trading in 1880 in Swan Creek. The Malone family had been prominent in the farming for some years before this.

Although they are separated by barely 11 km both the Freestone Hall and Swan Creek<sup>6</sup> were built by their communities to function as Schools of Arts.

## Currently (2018)

In 2018 a wide variety of events has taken place: dances, Marco Gilori evening, multiple Friendly Fridays, 'Freezestone' breakfast, craft mornings, two Friday night art classes, Cuppa with the Southern Downs Regional Councillors, Anzac Day and Remembrance Day events, and Christmas Day Celebrations.



The Hall has also been used for a variety of other purposes: by a caravanning group, for School Trivia Night, Rotary wiz night, Tae Kwan Do grading, regular Sunday school group meetings, community information functions, as well as for family gatherings, engagement parties and a wedding.

This is all evidence that the Memorial Hall is the vibrant hub for the activities of an involved local community.

The future of the building is linked to its role of service to the community. Indeed this is demonstrated by the fact that they have recently received grants for refurbishment and upgrading of their facilities: \$10,000 from the Southern District Regional Council to complete and upgrade toilet facilities for the disabled; donations from residents paid the insurance premiums associated with the operation of the building; and \$180,000 from the Queensland Gaming Authority, which may be used for repair and maintenance (replacing floor coverings, heaters, fans, repairing dry rot in the front wall, upgrading the stage area).

These grants were made because these agencies were satisfied that there was a need for the Hall by the community and that this need is being served well by the Hall Committee.

The Freestone Region was settled by people who were noted for their strong community spirit. Their School of Arts was built with the same sense of community. On current indications, the future of the Freestone Memorial Hall appears to lie in good hands.

Join them on their Facebook page. (<https://www.facebook.com/Freestone-Hall-1429624837319340>).

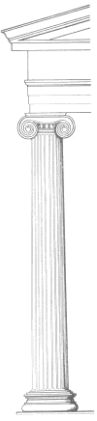


**Ready for the regular Ladies Morning Tea gathering at Freestone Memorial Hall.**

Caption reads...

**'Ladies come on down'**

Photo:  
Freestone Memorial Hall Facebook page



## Acknowledgements

I am most grateful to the President, John Payne, and members of the Freestone Memorial Hall Committee for making their records available to me for use in this history. **Steve Kelly**, in particular, has been very helpful in this regard. I am grateful, as well, to **Ann Coy** (Swan Creek) whose wide knowledge of the people and places of the Canning Downs region, has facilitated making contacts with people and institutions in the region.

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**Photographs:** Dudley Creagh

**Archival Photos:** Voicom <http://voicom.com.au/freestone>  
State Library of Queensland -  
<http://blogs.slq.qld.gov.au/ww1/2017/03/13/freestone-memorial-hall-honour-roll/>

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**August 2018**