

ORBOST HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC.

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NEWSLETTER

MARCH, 2006

BRODRIBB HALL

This information is based on an interview that May Leatch conducted with Mr Ben Webb, a local resident, on 18th September, 2005, at the Brodribb Hall, near the corner of Sandy Flat and Tabbara Roads. Mr Webb, aged 74 years, has lived almost all his life within sight of the hall. He came to Brodribb when he was three years of age and has lived there ever since.

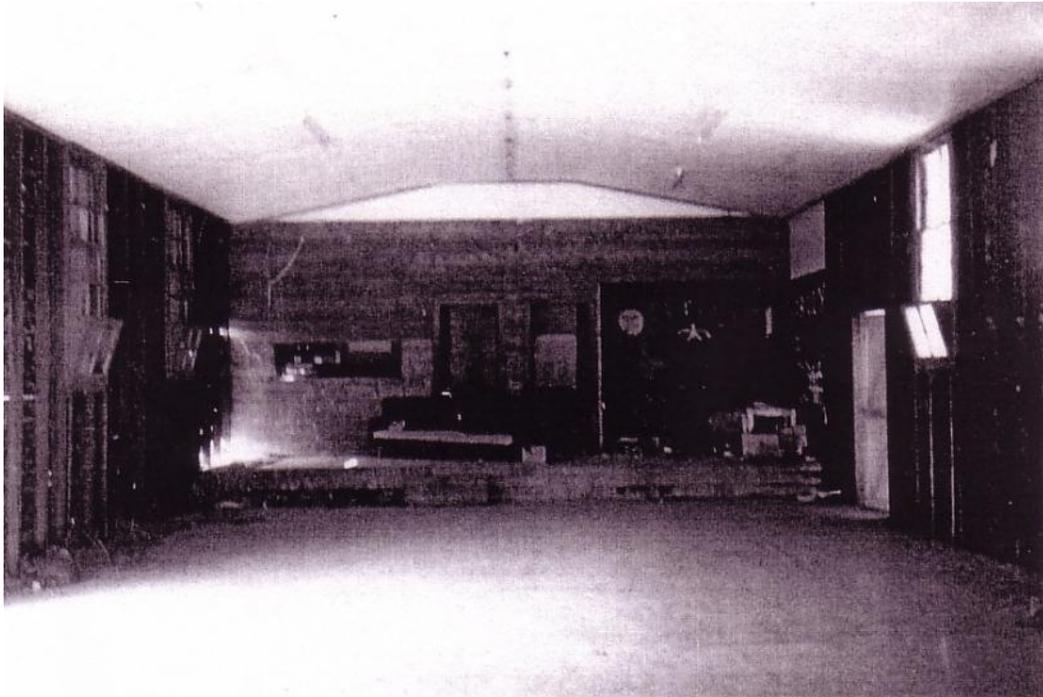
The Brodribb Hall was built in 1928 and is soon to be demolished. It is in a very dilapidated state and has been advertised for removal. Mr Webb is the oldest resident of the area and has had a lifetime involvement with the hall and tennis courts.



The Hall was officially opened early in 1929 as the sign on the outside of the building indicates. It was built as a community facility so the locals had somewhere to go. There were other halls at Newmerella and Marlo and dances used to alternate between these halls and this one at Brodribb. They used to have dances at all of these halls once a month and every third month there would be two dances at Brodribb in the month. [ie. There was a dance once a week at one of these three halls]. Of these halls Newmerella is smaller, but Marlo is about the same size as Brodribb. In later years, for a short time, they played some of badminton and table tennis at the Brodribb Hall, but not a lot.

Times have changed and so has the local community. In the 1930s there were more people living in the area. Mr Webb's father and uncles and Tom Ritchie all lived there, but they're all gone now. The Hall was used a lot then and now it isn't. Those days are gone. It would cost a fortune now to do it up, and bring it up to regulation standards with modern toilets, etc. There's just not that sort of money around these days. The community has changed and even if it was done up it would not get the use it did in past times. They don't dance like that any more. They used to have the piano up on the stage, a fellow with the sax, and drums, and all the old music.

There were seats right around the hall, except in the Doorways. They were well-built seats with backs on them. Apex took over the building a number of years ago and were going to do it up, but nothing happened and they removed the seats.



Originally, the Hall didn't have any ceiling. It was like that for many years, and just before my father died [1966], they put in the battens and the plaster ceiling. The plaster is now gone. The walls have never been lined. Originally, neither the walls nor the ceiling were lined. The roof structure was strongly built. Much more timber being used than in buildings constructed today.

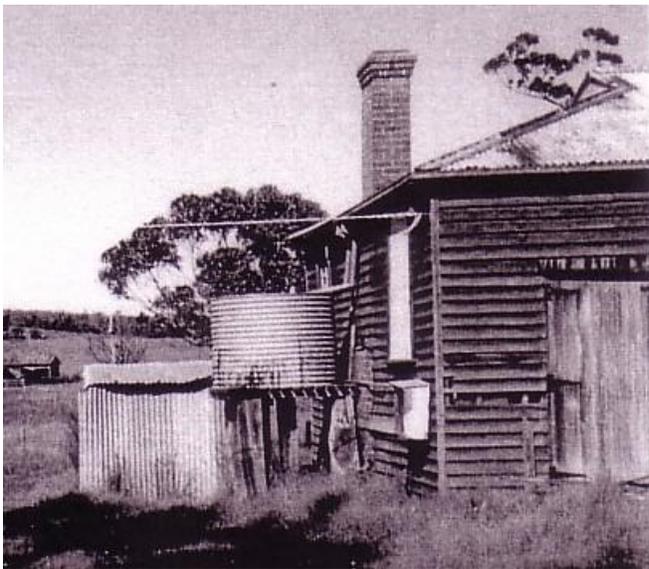
The floor was very good and is still good except for a few holes in it now. It was an exceptional dance floor. To prepare it for dances they used to put a mixture of sawdust and kerosene onto the floor and then used a drag about 6 to 8 feet in length to spread and polish the floor before sweeping it off. In the early days, they'd just scrape candle wax onto the floor with a knife which would penetrate the surface as you danced on it. The drag had a long rope on it and consisted of a piece of 6 ins. by 6 ins. lumber with a piece of carpet wrapped around it. This produced a very fast floor. The kids used to enjoy dragging it around the floor.

There were a lot of good dancers in those days, not like now when they just jig around. The Valetta, Modern Waltz, Foxtrot, Charmaine, Barn Dance and Parma Waltz were the names of some of the dances. All the girls would sit on one side of the Hall and the boys on the other. When the dance music started, you would tee a dance up with a girl, go over and get her and away you went. The floor was very fast and you would swoop around the dance floor.

The Hall was lit from gas cylinder's outside. They used to pump the lamps up. Then they had batteries charged in at the Orbest butter factory and brought them out to the Hall. Later on Tilly lights, the ones you used to pump up, were used. Then for a time they had a shed out the back (it's gone now) which housed a motor and generator and batteries to provide power for lighting before the SEC power was connected. This little shed was at the back of the hall, behind the kitchen area.

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There are two rooms behind the stage with doors leading from the stage. The one on the right was used as a cloak room for women's coats and things, and the one on the left was the supper room. There was a brick chimney with a double sided fireplace which heated both rooms. It was an open fireplace. They used to make the coffee in four gallon kerosene tins over the fire, with milk, it was beautiful coffee. The chimney had a rail with hooks on it across the fireplace to support the tins until they boiled. The families took it in turns to bring the milk. The ladies would bring the supper with them but maybe make the sandwiches at the Hall. The women did all the cooking; they never bought anything in those days. The Brodribb ladies were known for putting on a good supper.



The Hall was used for other functions such as parties with tables all round, set up like a cabaret. It was used for voting and there are a few people who have been married here too. They used to decorate the hall with gum leaves nailed up around the walls. It came up really well. Church was sometimes held here and Sunday school as well. Christmas events were held every year. There was always a Christmas tree. Never missed.

The main entrance to the Hall was through the small foyer outside, at the opposite end of the building to the stage. The doorperson stood at the door and collected the money as the patrons came in. There used to be a little ticket box outside near the corner of the building.

It's gone now, but it wasn't used much. There was a hole in the wall with a slide, and you'd lift the slide up. There was someone inside with the tickets on a shelf. It was never used in Mr Webb's time as he only remembers paying at the doorway.

On cold winter nights it was quite good. There were always lots of bodies in there and with the fire going you didn't feel the cold. We were young then.

Alcohol was not permitted at the hall. If they had beer it would be planted in the blackberries or up the road somewhere. You weren't supposed to drink in those days. It was purely cups of tea and coffee here at the Hall. Later on, when we had a cabaret we had to have a licence.

It's sad to see the hall at the end of its life. It was a well-built hall and it's solid underneath. It's never been re-blocked as far as I know. The timber possibly came from around here. There used to be a mill just across the road where that house is [son Dennis Webb's house] and there were two or three mills down further. There's a lot of timber in the building. The studs are much closer together than in today's buildings.

The toilets were located on the eastern side of the Hall. There were separate gents and ladies and it was into the tin of course. There was bush close up to the hall and the toilets were built more or less into the bush. There was a lot of bush around in those days with only a little bit cleared. A road used to come behind the hall.

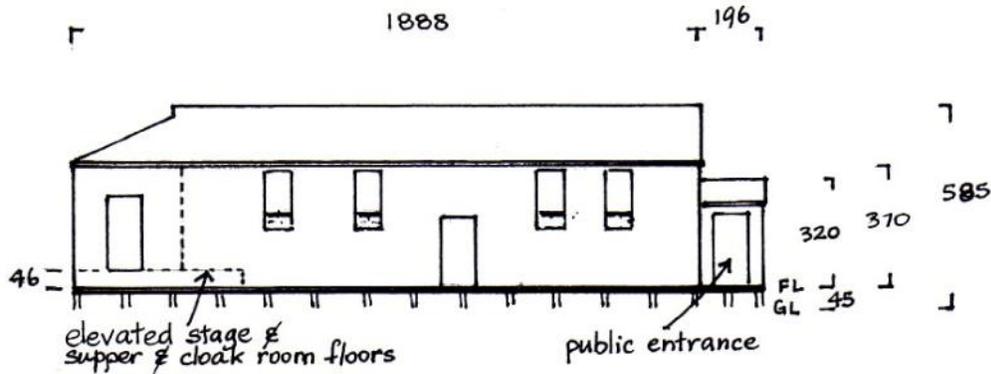
Mr Webb does not think that the hall has ever been painted on the outside, certainly not in his time. It might have had something put on it when it was first built and maybe painted around the windows.

The three tennis courts were built in about the 1960s with local voluntary labour. For the first 12 months, it was a gravel surface and then the courts were sealed. We built two courts first, then another one. The courts were lit. Mr and Mrs Webb had four children, and other families here had children too. It was good for a lot of years, but now the courts have been let go. Tennis was played every Saturday, and we played pennant tennis. The locals built the tennis shed. Unfortunately there is nobody out here to play now.

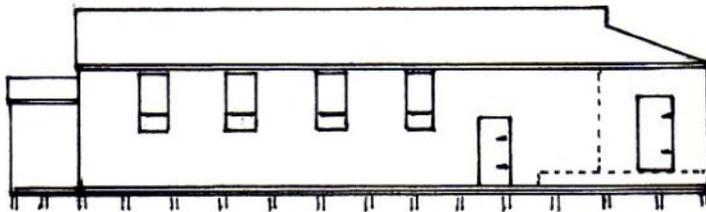
Remains of Tennis Courts



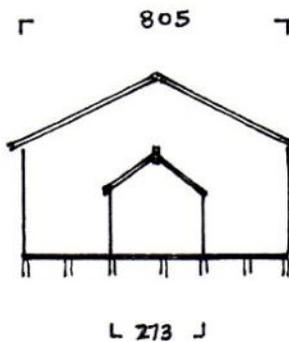
BRODRIBB HALL , 1928



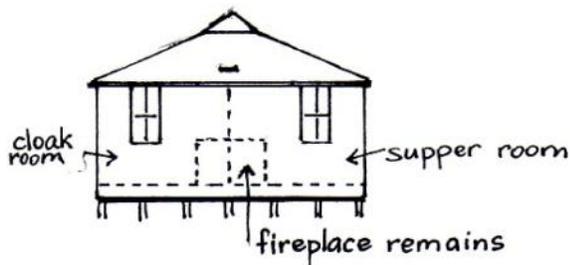
WEST VIEW



EAST VIEW



SOUTH VIEW



NORTH VIEW

EXTERNAL CLADDING : unpainted weatherboards

STUMPS : wood ; 45cm above ground .

ROOF : Lysaght ORB galvanized tinned

INTERNAL WALLS : unlined

CEILING : originally unlined (info. Ben Webb), plaster in later years

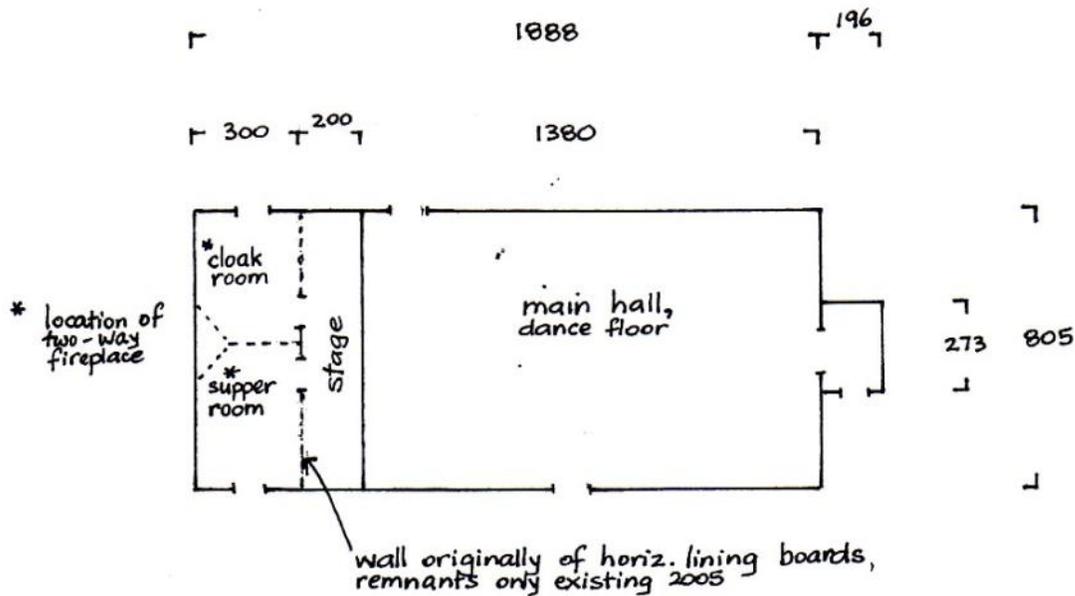
All measurements given in cms.

SCALE : 1 : 200

MEASURED & DRAWN : M. Leatch , Oct. 2005

BRODRIBB HALL , 1928

PLAN showing doorways



* informant: Ben Webb

"Snowy River Mail", November 2, 2005

Brodrigg ^{SRM.}
Community ^{2/11/05}
Incorporated
offers the old
**BRODRIBB
HALL
FOR SALE**

Derelect condition
Approximately 8m x 19m
76 years old
A variety of
local hardwoods

Purchaser must take
liability during demoli-
tion and clearing of site.
Highest offer in writing
accepted. Further details,
contact Dennis Webb -

Phone
(03) 5154 2132

Post Script:

The Brodrigg Hall has been purchased by Brian and Mary McDonald for demolition. The materials and sections of the building will be utilised on their property at Cabbage Tree.

Acknowledgement:

Sincere thanks to May Leatch for providing the material for this Newsletter.

All measurements given in cms.

SCALE: 1:200

MEASURED & DRAWN: M. Leatch, Oct. 2005