

The Cricket Ground

Donnelly's Creek Recreation Ground 1880's to 1900's

During the 1880s to 1900s, Donnelly's Creek fielded cricket and football teams to compete for prestige among the neighbouring towns. When there were no inter-village cricket matches, local games between the various mine employees would often be arranged. A recreation ground was cleared here, and soon became well known as one of the finest in the ranges.

In 1894 there was a danger that this ground would be used for residence sites by workers of the nearby mine of Watson's Reward, and hence a petition was organised.

That for many years past the public sports, picnics, and athletic games of the residents here have been held on a piece of ground situate about 1 ¼ miles from Store Point on the north bank of Donnelly's Creek between Horse Shoe Bend and Florence Point, and containing approximately 2 acres known locally as 'The Cricket Ground'.

But recent circumstances render it highly profitable, that this ground will be pegged off for residence areas, in which case there would be no place on the creek for public sports or amusements of the residents.

We therefore respectfully request that you will be pleased to have the aforesaid piece of ground proclaimed as a Reserve for Public Amusement and Recreation.

Signed, 30 residents.



Cricket match at Walhalla featuring Dick Merington with bat.

Apart from a few athletic types, the Donnelly's Team lacked quality performers and had difficulty in getting bat to ball. However, they did have one fine player; George Harland. His destructive bowling during the 1880s to 1890s was the fear of all opposing sides.

The Donnelly's Creek moment of glory finally came in 1908 after a 5 match cricket series against Aberfeldy for the 'Ashes'. The Donnelly's men began the series in commanding style to win the first two matches but then travelled to Aberfeldy to be successively 'crushed' in the next two. The scene was then set for the final showdown at this ground. Aberfeldy claimed to have a weaker side than usual with the absence of four key players. This appeared to be a poor excuse as their combined total score in the last two matches was 20 runs, and not one of them took a wicket or a catch. The Aberfeldy side still included such greats as Reilly, Svenson and Merington (who had dismissed the great Warwick Armstrong, Australian Test Captain in a special match at Walhalla). The Donnelly's Team of unknowns were eventual victors over the Aberfeldy greats, thrashing them 107 runs to 63. **The 'Ashes' were theirs!**