



Merrijig Public Hall

Inc. # A0044750H ABN 38089428861

1 Alpha St. Merrijig VIC 3723

To the Mansfield Shire Councillors,

The Merrijig ANZAC Service has been a highly anticipated and attended event, by many in our district and beyond, for many years now.

Moving forward, we anticipate this event continuing to grow and hold its true meaning for a long time yet.

The Merrijig War Memorial's location on Mt. Buller Road, adjacent to Buttercup Road, is a highly visible location in our township, with regular visits made by both local residents and visitors, throughout the year.

The Merrijig Public Hall committee would like to propose that the gravel track that runs to the southeast of the Memorial be named Waler Lane in recognition of the Waler Horse breed that was predominantly used during World War I, by light horsemen in the Middle East.

Merrijig resident and member of the Merrijig Public Hall committee, Kerrie Purcell undertook some research into the history of the Waler breed.

During the early 1900's horses were bred for military service at 'Corn Hill'. They were the equivalent to Waler horses in NSW. They were destined to be Indian Army remounts. (The owner must have had some military connection; Greg Purcell (husband of Kerrie) thinks he was Major. At one stage there would have been 400 mares on the property (Corn Hill). The manager of the property, a good friend of Will Purcell (Pop Purcell), gave Pop the pick of the mares. All horses bred by Pop were from that lineage.



The “Waler” name comes from their breeding origins in NSW. They were originally known as “New South Walers”. The name was given in the mid 1840’s.

The Waler was not a distinct breed, but a hardy type of horse developed from a mix of different breeds including Thoroughbred, Arabian, African Cape Horse, Timor Pony, as well as British draught breeds like the Clydesdale & Shire.

The first horses were shipped to India in 1816. During the first Anglo-Boer War, 37,245 horses were shipped to South Africa between 1899-1901. In 1904 10,000 were shipped to Japan, and 25,000 a year later. This conflict was fought against Russia.

During WW1 – In 1914 121,324 Waler horses were sent overseas. Only one ‘token’ horse was to return to Australia.

As you will be aware, the Merrijig ANZAC Memorial Service has a significant focus on horses, prior to our service beginning. Honouring these horses by naming the gravel track seems fitting.

We hope that you will consider this request, and we look forward to hearing from you soon.

Kind regards,

Caroline Hodges (on behalf of the Merrijig Public Hall committee)
Secretary, Merrijig Public Hall

DATE: 29/07/2025

