

PARISH PROFILE

DENMAN

Town and Area:

Denman is one of New South Wales best-kept secrets, nestled in the heartland of the Upper Hunter's vineyards, horse studs and olive groves with the magnificent Wollemi National Park to the South West and the Goulburn National Park to the West.

Situated on the Golden Highway and part of the Greater Blue Mountains Drive, near the banks of the Hunter River, Denman is a welcoming community presenting the true charm of yesteryear.

Denman is a growing town that features many opportunities for visitors and potential residents, with a relaxing country experience, fine food, outstanding wines, friendly people, excellent shopping and spectacular scenery.

Denman has become popular with day trippers to experience the wineries and fine food the district has to offer.

Lieutenant William Ogilvie was the first European settler in 1825. The first settlement was known as Merton which was located on the opposite side of the Hunter River to the present-day Denman and was gazetted in 1853 and was named after Lord Denman, who later became Governor General of Australia.

By the 1900's Ogilvie Street was bustling with small business houses servicing the town and outlying areas. The charm and history of Ogilvie Street remain today.

There is a diversity of rural pursuits in the area due to the rich alluvial Hunter River flats. Vineyards, horse studs and beef cattle are the major rural industries in Denman.

In the past, Denman was recognised as a significant dairy district, however the agricultural pursuits have diversified and now Denman has an expanded array of rural enterprises. The emergence of the coal mining industry has had a significant impact on the landscape, but at the same time provided constant employment.

There are seven schools in the area, ranging from small one teacher country schools to the large Muswellbrook High school, St Joseph's Aberdeen and Scone Grammar. Information about these schools and the numerous leisure activities which can be enjoyed in the area can be found at <http://www.visitdenman.com.au/community/>

Links to Local Government Information on the Demographic Information About the Region

Muswellbrook Shire Council

Information about the Shire can be obtained at both of the following websites:

<https://www.muswellbrook.nsw.gov.au>

[https://www.facebook.com › muswellbrookshirecouncil](https://www.facebook.com/muswellbrookshirecouncil)

Muswellbrook Shire is a local government area in the Upper Hunter region of New South Wales, Australia. The Shire is situated adjacent to the New England Highway and the Hunter railway line. The current Mayor of the Muswellbrook Shire Council is Cr. Martin Rush.

Area: 3,405 km²

State Electorate: Upper Hunter

The Parish:

The parish comprises the central Church of St Matthias and three centres, these being St Martins, Martindale, St Marks, Wybong and St Matthews, Mt Dangar. There are also regular services held at the Merton Village (Retirement Village), Merton Court (Nursing Home) and Denman Multi Purpose Service, MPS also known as the Hospital. The Nursing Home and Denman MPS services are currently taken by licensed lay people who administer Reserved Sacrament. The Parish Church of St Matthias has a weekly Eucharist, while each centre and Merton Village have a pattern of monthly worship, this being after the main service at St Matthias.

A fourth centre, St Luke's, Widden, is now used occasionally as a 'festival church'. All centres are well maintained by the local community in that area and are viewed as integral parts of those communities. At Merton Village, the Rotary hall, situated at the centre of the village is used.

The Parish has a number of ministry teams which function with lay leaders. These are: Caring Community and Family ministries; Daily Worship and Prayer; and Growing in Faith. These teams provide a 'Bright Buds Playtime' for pre-schoolers and their carers, regular Bible Study groups, and home visits.

In addition there is St Matthias choir, Guilds from the various centres and the Mothers Union.

Probably the major outreach activity of the Parish is the Dove and Raven op shop, which has premises on the main street and is open every day except Sundays. It is staffed by a large group of volunteers and is seen as an integral part of the community and has wide community support. Like all op shops, the Dove and Raven works on various levels, in that it provides low cost clothes and goods to the Denman community, while also providing a place of mutual support for the volunteers and a place of caring support and outreach to those who either wish to buy or just to find a friendly face and willing ear.

The rectory is situated immediately adjacent to St Matthias church. It is a spacious 4 bedroom home built in 1977, with a separate study which has its own entrance. The home is air-conditioned and also has a wood burning fire.

There is a modern, purpose-built Parish Hall immediately opposite the church. The hall has a large, well equipped office and a separate meeting room. The main hall has modern catering facilities in the attached kitchen. The hall is regularly used by the community for a wide range of activities from dance groups to play groups and to cater for all manner of local events.

General characteristics

The parish of Denman for many decades has been a Eucharist-centred congregation. The Parish Eucharist on Sunday mornings (traditionally at 8.30 am) and the celebrations on feast and holy days continue to be the central gathering point for the people of God. The reverent approach to Holy

Week and Christmas are the fulcrum of the Church's year in the parish. During the last 15 years, many areas of ministry have flourished in various guises and others have developed. Amongst those which need to be highlighted are the following:

- There is a strong history of pastoral care in the parish and a dedicated team of carers undertake this role for parishioners, and those in nursing homes and hospitals.
- The ministry of warm, country hospitality is alive and continues amongst the dedicated small band of members of the St Matthias' Guild, who cater for parish functions, as well as a large number of funerals annually. They are supported by the Parish and the wider community.
- The ministry of the Dove and Raven Op Shop is vital to the public ministry of the Parish. As well, the income derived from this source has become increasingly important to overall parish finances.
- In the last fifteen years, the parish has explored diverse mechanisms to minister to families and young children. It was recognised some years ago that the traditional model of a Sunday School was no longer viable. At the moment there is a weekly play group but this is necessarily limited to very young children and their carers. While a youth fellowship was once in operation this has also ceased to operate largely due to the limited number of willing leaders.
- The music ministry in the parish has been strong for many decades. St Matthias' Church is fortunate to have a beautiful, historic pipe organ and piano as well as two active, capable and willing organists. In addition to organ music to enhance services of worship, St Matthias' has had a choir for many years. Like the Guild, there have been no new younger members for several years.
- The parish is conscious of the commitment of the Diocese to appropriate redress for historic abuse as identified in case study 42 of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Abuse, and the need for the parish to play its part in the reorganisation of resources to fund the redress. This is a vulnerability common to all parishes in the Diocese.
- The parish is fully aware of a pattern of contracting income from committed or regular giving by parishioners. The fundraising efforts of the various Guilds have become more important in recent years, as has revenue from the commercial hire of the hall. Management of the hall for commercial purposes, in conformity with all Diocesan regulations that pertain to such use, is quite demanding and there may be benefit in having this process handled by a professional agent, rather than a parishioner, but the likelihood of being able to afford such luxury seems remote. The Parish faces the continuing risk of a need to call on existing reserves to meet annual expenditure.
- While overall the Parish is not faced with unreasonably high demands for maintenance of infrastructure, the rectory does have a structural problem associated with subsidence which presents a risk to the finances of the Parish in the medium term.
- As mentioned above, the centres are well maintained by their local communities.

Summary:

The Parish represents an historic, stable, faithful worshipping community in an idyllic rural setting. At the moment, the drought is impacting the wider community but rather than focussing on the negatives, this represents an opportunity to provide meaningful, practical ministry to those most affected. This is something in which the Parish has a good track record. With positive and dynamic leadership, the opportunity exists for the Church to be a revitalised force for demonstrating the real-life importance of

the Christian Gospel. This is truly the nature of ministry. It is not until people recognise their own needs that they will be willing to turn back to God, and this is just such a time.