

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 is 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>

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.

Area: 3,405 km²

State Electorate: Upper Hunter

The Parish:

The Parish comprises four churches:

- the central Church of St Matthias, Denman,
- two centres in which monthly worship is held, St Marks, Wybong and St Matthews, Mt Dangar; and
- a Festival Churches, St Martins, Martindale.
- St Luke's Widden Valley is a former church of the Parish and is still consecrated. From time to time the owners of St Luke's (the Widden Stud) may request worship (eg weddings, Christmas carols)

There are also regular services held at

- Merton Village (Retirement Village),
- Merton Court (Nursing Home), and
- Denman Multi Purpose Service, MPS (at the Hospital).

The Nursing Home and Denman MPS services are currently taken by licensed lay people who administer Reserved Sacrament.

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 regular Bible Study groups and home visits.

In addition there is a small choir at St Matthias' Church.

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, 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, providing 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 is a faithful community. They currently have a celebration of the Eucharist on 1st, 3rd and 5th weeks of the month at both St Matthias' and either St Matthew's or St Mark's. On the alternate weeks there is a service of Morning Prayer held in St Matthias'. This is led by licenced lay readers.

The traditional Holy Week, Easter, and Christmas services are important times of worship in the Parish.

Many areas of ministry flourish in the parish, including:

- A strong and dedicated ministry of Pastoral Care. The Pastoral Care team are very faithful in this ministry.
- The ministry of warm, country hospitality.
- 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.
- Over the years the parish has explored diverse ministries to families and children. There are currently none of these ministries active, but the Parish is keen to see thriving ministry to young people.
- 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 a small choir.
- As mentioned above, the centres are well maintained by their local communities.

Risks

- 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. Commercial hire of the hall has also become an important source of revenue. This has been impacted by COVID-19. Local fundraising activities has likewise been impacted by COVID-19. Currently the parish can afford about 0.6FTE for ministry.
- 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.

Summary:

The Parish represents an historic, stable, faithful worshipping community in an idyllic rural setting.

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.