



The Shamrock Hotel was built in the late '80s by Mr Honon, occupying the a primal corner position at 77-79 Cumming Avenue in the main street of Birchip where it served as a hotel for seventy years before being re-purposed as a community building for the residents of Birchip and surrounds.

During the early years it changed hands several times with Mr Blencowe, Mr Nonmus and Mrs McCullough owing it pre 1918.

In the original publication of "The Progress of Birchip" printed in 1910 it was reported that the Mr A Nonmus had taken over the management of the large business and its reputation had been well upheld and even added to. The proprietor being a keen observant and courteous business man, he made many minor improvements for the comfort of patrons, with the natural result a steady and gradual increase in business and greater popularity.

The tables in both the number 1 and 2 dining room reflected the greatest credit on Mrs Nonmus who ably superintends the domestic portion of the hotel, and the bedrooms are fine, airy and comfortable finished ones. The sitting rooms are commodious and comfortable to a degree; while an excellent game of billiards can be relied upon in the well-appointed billiard salon attached to the hotel.

In 1918 on April 7th Mrs O'Malley and Mis Cossens leased the property and operated as a partnership. These two ladies came from Warrnambool where Mrs O'Malley and owned the Victoria Hotel. Two years later they purchase the freehold of the property. In 1922 Miss Cossens married Mr Frank O'Donnell who was an auctioneer in the town. Mrs O'Malley and Mrs O'Donnell carried on the partnership until 1935 when Mrs O'Donnell purchased the business and became the sole licensee, which she carried on for 51 years with her daughter Miss Betty O'Donnell.

In 1961 a new front was added to the building when some of the original ornaments including the two harps where removed. After their removal the harps were proudly displayed in Mr Trevor O'Donnells garden in Sherwood Street.

Many civic receptions were held at the Shamrock Hotel over the years and many local weddings. Lord and Lady Somers, Lord and Lady Dugan, Sire Henry Bolte and Sir George Goudie all dined at the Shamrock Hotel as guests of the Shire Council.

An article in the Herald Sun on Monday June 30th 1969 titled "Time, Gentlemen, Please..." states that more than 400 people travelled up to 100 miles on Saturday night for a fine old shindig as Birchip Oldest hotel closed its door. And, when the joking and the yarning ended with the singing of Auld Lang Syne at 10pm, even a few of the hardened drinkers had tears in their eyes.

The Shamrock building remained unused and was eventually considered derelict and became marked for demolition until 1997 when the Birchip Community took on the 'Shamrock Restoration Project'.

The Shamrock restoration discussions began when the Birchip Telecentre (later to become the Birchip Business and Learning Centre) and the BCG were operating out of the old fire shed at 21 Sherwood Street. The BCG was growing substantially, and the BB&LC were also extending their service provision and getting more actively involved in neighbourhood house activities. The two groups decided to pursue options for additional office space and one option was to purchase the Shamrock in the main street as a community centre for the BB&LC so that the BCG could have exclusive use of 21 Sherwood Street.

On 7th July, 1997 a public meeting was held to discuss the future of the Shamrock and whether it should be demolished or whether it could be saved. The community members who attended believed it was worth saving and moved to form a committee to pursue it further with the management of the Birchip Telecentre appointed to administer this committee.

Subsequently a Heritage Architect was employed to inspect the premises and prepare a Scope of Works. Mr Ian Coleman declared the building was structurally sound and worth saving and the committee started to apply for grants to bring this project to fruition.

Mr Coleman was of the opinion that the Shamrock was still a very sound building and had a lot of heritage value. The cellar would need to have a sump pump installed with a float switch to prevent flooding that was occurring and the walls and floors would need to be repaired. The majority of the bar was in good condition and it was retained in the restoration. Mr Coleman declared that the accommodation wing and the far back room were too far gone to restore. He added that at a later stage it would not be a problem to pull the roof section down and rebrick the Apex Roof.

In November 1997 \$50,000 was received from a State Partnerships for Growth Grant by the Birchip Telecentre (Birchip Business and Learning Centre) and \$50,000 matching funds and in-kind by local community members, service clubs and a \$10,000 grant from the Buloke Shire.

The building was purchased in the name of the Buloke Shire as this was a requirement of the Grant funding and on 24th March 1998 the project commenced with a working bee attended by 50 people. In May 1998 the building work commenced by builder Ted Stannard.

On 31st August 1999 Stage 2 was announced. A further \$30,000 was received from the State's Partnerships for Growth fund and a matching \$30,000 was contributed from BB&LC and community contributions. In March 2001 \$19,000 was received from ACFE to renovate the computer room and in June 2005 a further \$10,000 from ACFE was received by the BB&LC to upgrade the plumbing and install a toilet. In 2006 \$20,000 was received from the DVC Modernising neighbourhood houses grants to further upgrade the facilities and in 2010 additional grants were obtained from FRRR & CWA to upgrade the youth room with contributions from the Birchip Youth Group and the Birchip Business and Learning Centre.

The materials from the accommodation wing were used to repair damage in the main areas and many of the original features were returned to the project team including doors, a stain glass window and a stag print sold in the original auction. The pink tiles which had been rendered and painted white over the years were chipped off by dedicated community members to reveal the original brickwork and a close replica of the facade and the elaborate parapet were added to the exterior in the restoration, although they have been damaged over the years. The dining room was tied together with metal straps and the bricks at the West end were repointed.



The refurbished building was opened on Wednesday 19th May 1999 by the Honourable Tom Reynolds M.P., Minister for Rural Development and the building has remained a prominent feature of Cumming Avenue and an asset for the community to enjoy under the management of the Birchip Business and Learning Centre Committee of management.

The building is currently home to the Birchip Neighbourhood House, Birchip Youth Group and the Birchip office of the Buloke Times; it has a computer training room, office, youth room in the old dining room, a bar area used for meetings and functions and a room the Birchip Friends of East Wimmera Health Service utilise to operate Seek n See, the towns Opportunity Shop.

