

HERITAGE PLACE

NAME OF PLACE: BALMORAL SHOWGROUNDS AND OVAL

ADDRESS/LOCATION OF PLACE: Harrow-Balmoral Road BALMORAL

STUDY NUMBER: 180

HERITAGE OVERLAY NUMBER:

PRECINCT: Balmoral

LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA: Southern Grampians Shire

SECTION: 22

ACCESS DESCRIPTION:

CFA ; VicRoads ; located off the Harrow-Balmoral Road,

SIGNIFICANCE RATING: Local



Showgrounds and Oval, Harrow-Balmoral, Balmoral

Image Date: 30/11/02

EXTENT OF LISTING:

To the extent of: 1. All the structures, fences and other works and all of the reserve.

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PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION:

The Balmoral showground is a large 26 acre reserve which is located on the south side of the Balmoral - Harrow road, approximately 1 kilometer from the centre of the township. The reserve has been clear felled to create a large open space. The reserve is marked by a simple post and wire fence. The reserve contains several structures which are representative of its dual usage's. A large oval is located in the centre of the reserve, fenced by curved metal piping fence. The oval is used for animal exhibitions and competitions at Show time, and otherwise is used as the venue for playing football and cricket by the town's teams. There are several wooden benches for spectators located around the oval. A clubrooms for the football and cricket clubs exists overlooking the oval. Four tennis courts and a basket ball court have been erected, these are used for local basketball and netball competitions. A range of typical showground buildings dating from the 1960s have been constructed, including a ticket booth, offices, a publican's booth, pavilions and poultry sheds. These are complimented by the arrival of the usual itinerant amusement rides, games and food stalls.

The structures date from the 1960s are typical of their type being light weight framed structures, mostly clad in corrugated iron. Some are specific in their forms such as the grandstand and poultry sheds.

HISTORY:

The Hamilton Pastoral & Agricultural Association was formed in 1858 to provide a pastoral exhibition for the district. It was considered by many that Hamilton, as the regional centre, should be the focus of all such activities. The Apsley Pastoral and Agricultural Association show was first held on August 6th 1862. It was one of the first to depart from the concept of a centralised show. This idea was supported by squatters in the Balmoral district and they began planning a moveable display with a show held in Harrow, Balmoral or Horsham (Rogers, 40).

The Upper Glenelg and Wimmera pastoral Association was formed to support this moveable display and show, with Mr. Charles Officer as President and Mr. Samuel Clapham, as Secretary. The first show of the circuit was held in Balmoral on August 8th 1864. The location was "... particularly cheerful and dry being on top of the pretty knoll between the hotel and the Presbyterian manse" (The Spectator, in Rogers, 41). The venue is likely to have been the present site of the Balmoral Consolidated School.

The primary focus of the show was sheep as the district was deemed unsuitable for cattle breeding. Horses however, were an important ancillary to pastoralism and everyday life. Very generous prizes of up to ten guineas were awarded for the best stud rams and ewes, and for the best carriage horse, draught horse, hack and thoroughbred. Jack Rogers (41) notes "There were three hundred sheep displayed in one hundred uncovered pens and between sixty and seventy horses judged in the improvised arena." The representation of rams at the first show made the judges task difficult as imported European studs were present, including those from the Spanish merino stud of 'Nigretti' and the French merino stud of 'Rambouillet' (ibid.).

Holding the show was as much a social event as an exchange of knowledge and experience. When the population of Balmoral was less than one hundred people, the Spectator commented that "despite the badness of the roads in every direction around the township, upwards of 200 people were on the ground. Amongst those present were gentlemen from Casterton, Coleraine, Hexham, Harrow, Hamilton, and even from Warracknabeal and Ballarat." (Jenkins, in Rogers, 41).

The Spectator noted that a publican's booth had been erected, and "...to the credit of the Balmoralites, be it stated that it was patronised by few other than loafers and blackfellows. The cowardly and unmanly attempt on the part of more than one white fellow to have a fight with the poor drunken aborigines was not more distasteful to them than the other of their colour who were urging them on" (Jenkins, in Rogers, 92). It seems that the Balmoral mounted police stopped the assault of the indigenous population by "taking the blackfellows off to the lock up" (ibid.).

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But the camaraderie continued with the same mixing of classes. The show officially ended at 4.00pm at which time those who had purchased tickets adjourned to the National School room nearby to partake in a lavish dinner. Toasts were proposed and speeches made. The crowd then dispersed either to squatters' homesteads or the nearby Squatter's Arms Hotel. The next morning was as busy with the collection of prizes and the departure of the crowd. The show was held annually shifting from town to town until 1867 when the Wimmera section withdrew and the Upper Glenelg Pastoral Society was formed.

In August 1887 the first Balmoral Pastoral and Agricultural show was held. The President was Mr. T. Robertson, the Secretary Mr. Hayman, and the Assistant Secretary Mr. Peter McKecknic. The Society had been granted six and a half acres of Crown land within the township, the site of the present Consolidated School, close to where it had began (Rogers, 27). Work started on its development, and the whole area was enclosed by a split picket fence with barbed wire above. Along the Coleraine Road side a continuous row of sheep pens was built, trees and stumps were removed, and a secretary's office, publican's booth and other small buildings were constructed.

The produce classes were held under tarpaulin shelters at the rear of James Cuzen's store in Glendinning Street. The field events were held in Lang's paddock, at the junction of the Coleraine Road and Cemetery Lane, south of Balmoral (Rogers, 43). In 1891 at a meeting at the Western Hotel it was decided to expand the show into an annual two-day event. Further improvements were made to the temporary structures. Wherever the show was held, the first was probably the model for the rest for years to come.

After World War Two, with the move to consolidate primary schools in the district, a new and larger site was required for the Balmoral Primary School. The showgrounds was chosen, being close to the existing school and large enough to accommodate the small buildings moved in from surrounding settlements.

A new reserve of about 26 acres was allocated within the boundaries of the original township but west of the railway reserve on the Harrow-Balmoral Road. "In 1961 work started to cut most of the 22 feet of cross-fall on the Pastoral and Agricultural Show arena in order that a public recreation reserve might be established. This was done through working bees and considerable assistance was given from the officers and equipment of the Wannon Shire. Arena fencing, toilet facilities, four tennis courts and a basket ball court have been erected. This overcame the problem of the isolation of previous sites" (McGaffin, 60). A similar range of typical buildings was constructed including a ticket booth, offices, a publican's booth, pavilions and poultry sheds. These are complimented by the arrival of the usual itinerant amusement rides, games and food stalls. The show continues in its traditional form today.

THEMATIC CONTEXT:

Theme 3: Developing local, regional and national economies

3.5 Developing primary production

3.5.2 Breeding animals

3.5.3 Developing agricultural industries

Theme 5: Working

5.8 Working on the land

Theme 8: Developing Australia's cultural life

8.5 Forming associations

8.14 Living in country and rural settlements

CONDITION:

The buildings are in good condition.

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INTEGRITY:

high degree of integrity

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE:

What is significant?

The Balmoral Showground is situated approximately on a 26 acre reserve within the boundaries of the original township. The site is approximately one kilometer north west from the centre of the township on the Harrow-Balmoral Road. Within the reserve there are a number of structures which relate specifically to the annual Pastoral and Agricultural Society show. These include a large oval showing ring in the centre of the site, a sheep/pig display shed, a poultry shed, cattle/horse stalls, a kiosk, luncheon hall, display hall, office and various other small buildings. There are also buildings for the local football club located on the site, and a large shed which has been built for agricultural research.

How is it significant?

The Balmoral showground is of historical and social significance to the township of Balmoral and the Southern Grampians Shire.

Why is it significant?

The Balmoral Showground is of historical significance for its important early role in the development of a local Agricultural and Pastoral Society, reflecting the interests of the surrounding pastoral community. The showground is of further significance as a physical representation of the importance of pastoralism to the area, particularly in the nineteenth and twentieth century. They are also significant for their social associations with the community, as Pastoral and Agricultural Shows have always been a very important social focus for country people. The Balmoral Show has had a long standing association and recognition throughout the Shire since the 1870s as an important local institution, where local people were able to gain recognition for their produce and skills, where new products were exhibited, and as an important local event on the social calendar. The showgrounds provide an important community meeting place, serving as the venue or clubrooms for a variety of community groups and the local people. The success and popularity of the Balmoral Show demonstrates the continuing strong pastoral and agricultural focus of the local community, and the importance placed on this.

COMPARISON:

032 Coleraine Showgrounds, Glenelg Highway, Coleraine

ASSESSED BY: tfh

ASSESSMENT DATE:

27-Jan-02

EXISTING LISTINGS:

HERITAGE STUDY RECOMMENDATIONS:

Include in VHR **Include in RNE** **Include in Local Planning Scheme**

No Recommendations for Inclusions

REFERENCES:

Author	Title	Year	Page
Department of Lands and Survey	The Township of Balmoral & Suburban Allotments in the County of Dundas	1860	
Department of Lands and Survey	Township of Balmoral, Parish of Balmoral, County of Dundas	1958	
Jack Rogers	Balmoral	n.d	41-2
Lyell Harris with the Balmoral Historical Society	Welcome Back to Balmoral	1975	15
Office of Lands and Survey	Suburban Lands, Parish of Balmoral	1866	