

HERITAGE PLACE

NAME OF PLACE: TEMPERANCE & MASONIC HALL (FORMER)

ADDRESS/LOCATION OF PLACE: 77 Watton Street PENSURST

STUDY NUMBER: 269

HERITAGE OVERLAY NUMBER:

PRECINCT: Penshurst

LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA: Southern Grampians Shire

ALLOTMENT: 3 **SECTION:** 7 **PARISH:** PARISH OF YALIMBA

ACCESS DESCRIPTION:

CFA 475J D11; VicRoads 233 P11; located on the south side of Watton Street about 40m west of the intersection with French Street and facing northwards.

SIGNIFICANCE RATING: State



Former Temperance Hall, 77 Watton Street, Penshurst seen from the north-west

Image Date:

EXTENT OF LISTING:

To the extent of: 1. All the building including the interiors and all of the land.

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PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION:

The hall is a single storey symmetrical stone building. It takes the form of an elementary basilica, although with a side entrance, which is reinforced by the high side windows. Its form, scale and Classical style are typical for such public buildings, and can be compared with the contemporary Penshurst Courthouse. The gabled roof is perpendicular to the street, incorporates three ventilators and is clad with corrugated iron. The fascia boards are decorated with a simple ogee scalloped edge. The walls are constructed in local rock-face bluestone with contrasting quoins in pink rock-face sandstone or quartzite from the Grampians, a rare and distinctive combination. The façade includes a pair of large semicircular arched windows, apparently fixed, the combined sills of which are at half the height of the walls. The side elevations each include two small arched windows also at a high level. Some of these have been bricked-in. The hall has been extended towards the rear with a timber framed and corrugated iron clad wing of similar scale and form to the original wing. This includes a red brick chimney on the east side. Another more recent extension on the west side appears to cover the original entrance.

HISTORY:

The land on which the former Temperance Hall stands, allotment 3 of section 7 of the Township of Penshurst, was purchased from the Crown by N. Cameron on 4th August 1871 although the allotments around it were purchased much earlier in 1850s. The delay has not been explained. The land set aside for the Coleraine Temperance Hall was also reserved from sale until 1871. The rate book of 1875 states that the land was owned and occupied by Thomas Aitken, tanner and the next major owner is the estate of Alexander Black when the trustees were Robert Aitken, tanner and James George Chesswas, storekeeper. The latter was the son-in-law of Alexander Black. This arrangement lasted well into the twentieth century and into the period when the building was used as a Masonic Hall.

The building appears to have been built as a Temperance Hall in 1872, soon after the land was purchased and when the trustees were rated for the first time, in which case it is a relatively early example and a rare survivor (SMR Ratebook 1871, No. 461). No architect or builder has yet been associated with its design or construction although the quality of its architecture strongly suggests some professional input and it is likely that one of the several local architects was involved. The only other surviving Temperance Hall identified in the Study area is at Coleraine which was built about 1890. The trustees of the Glenthompson Temperance Hall were also rated for the first time in 1871 (SMR Ratebook 1871, No. 117).

The Penshurst Temperance Hall may be one of the oldest surviving in the state. There were very early examples in Melbourne and Geelong, now demolished. A Temperance Hall was opened in Warrnambool in November, 1860, also now demolished (Tonkin, 1973, 34). Tenders were called "for the erection of a Mechanics Institute and Temperance Hall at Terang" by T H Charrett in March 1863 (Tonkin, 1973, 46).

The Temperance Movement advocated abstinence from alcohol. It was supported by the Woman's Christian Temperance Union of Victoria and linked with various friendly societies, such as the Rechabites, the Order of the Sons of Temperance Friendly Society and the Independent Order of Good Templars (Garden, 1984, 241-7). More generally it was associated with 'Protestant Wowserism', specifically Methodism and, to a lesser extent, Presbyterianism. The Evangelistic, Temperance, Economic, Educational and Model Farm Society had been established by the mid-1850s in Melbourne for the benefit of soldiers, seamen, policemen, immigrants, the uneducated & the unemployed. The Movement won a significant victory with the passing of the 1885 Licensing Act which reduced opening hours and the use of barmaids except when members of the licensee's family. But the most important part of the Act was a local option provision which enabled residents to vote whether they wanted to reduce the number of hotels in each district by the application of a per capita ratio of hotels. In 1888, as reported in the Hamilton Spectator, 05/04/1888, 135 out of 193 voters in the Penshurst Riding of the Shire voted to retain the seven hotels in Penshurst. The Temperance Movement reached its political zenith when James Munro, one of its leaders, became Premier of the colony about that time. The

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Movement is also reflected in the construction of 'coffee palaces' as alternatives to hotels and even the conversion of hotels into coffee palaces, the most remarkable being the Windsor Hotel, Melbourne changing to the Grand Coffee Palace.

For a short time the building was used as a State School. The building became the Penshurst Masonic Hall in 1914 and this use continued until 1987. Freemasonry has existed in Victoria since 1839, as a charitable and social organisation when the Australia Felix Lodge was established in Melbourne. It is not known exactly when the Penshurst Lodge was founded but it is likely to have been well before 1914. In 1889 the United Grand Lodge of Victoria brought together Lodges that formerly worked under the separate constitutions of the Grand Lodges of England, Scotland and Ireland. Freemasonry is still the largest community service organisation of its kind in the State.

THEMATIC CONTEXT:

Theme 4: Building settlements, towns and cities

Theme 8: Developing Australia's Cultural Life

8.5 Forming associations

8.5.1 Preserving traditions and group memories

8.5.2 Helping other people

8.5.3 Associating for mutual aid

CONDITION:

The building is in good condition. It has not been inspected internally.

INTEGRITY:

High degree of integrity externally. [Not inspected internally.]

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE:

What is significant?

The former Temperance and Masonic Hall at 77 Watton Street, Penshurst is a substantial single storey building in the Classical style, which takes the form of a simple basilica. The well executed structure incorporates fine bluestone masonry with sandstone from the Grampians, and decorative timbers. The hall was built in 1872, at a time when the Temperance movement in Victoria was gaining momentum. The trustees included important local figures such as Thomas Aitken and his son Robert, both tanners, and George Chesswas, storekeeper, representing the Protestant Establishment in the district. The power of the Temperance lobby is reflected in the attempt to close some of the seven hotels in Penshurst, a move that was overwhelmingly defeated at a local referendum in 1888. The hall was taken over by the Penshurst Masonic Lodge in 1914, apparently with little change in its local connections, which use continued until 1987. No architect or builder has yet been associated with the building. The choice of style and form for the building draws on important associations and demonstrates particular values, not only for the Temperance Movement but also for its easy conversion to a Masonic Hall. The building was extended in the mid twentieth century to provide better facilities. It retains a very high degree of integrity and is in good condition.

How is it significant?

The former Temperance and Masonic Hall, 77 Watton Street Penshurst is of historical and architectural significance to the State of Victoria.

Why is it significant?

The former Temperance and Masonic Hall, 77 Watton Street Penshurst is of historical significance as an early and rare surviving demonstration of the Temperance Movement and subsequently for its long-term use as a Masonic Hall. It has further historical significance for its association with several of the town's civic leaders,

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including the Aitken, Black and Chesswas families. Historically, the hall served as a important venue for community events, and as an expression of shared community interests for over 100 years.

The former Temperance and Masonic Hall is of architectural significance as one of the earliest and most substantial public buildings surviving in Penshurst. Its architectural significance is enhanced by its finely executed stonework, incorporating the use of contrasting materials, and by its simple, elegant decorative timbers. The use of the Classical style is typical for this kind of hall, reflecting the conservative values of the Temperance Movement. The Masonic values, while different and much older, were not incompatible, and the conversion of the building was therefore easily achieved.

COMPARISON:

086 Temperance Hall (Former), 58 Whyte Street, Coleraine

104 Masonic Hall (Former), 35-37 Winter Street, Coleraine

385 Masonic Hall (Former), Parker Street, Dunkeld

347 Courthouse (Former), 33 Martin Street, Penshurst

ASSESSED BY: tfh

ASSESSMENT DATE:

06-May-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
	Temperance in Australia	1889	
Don Garden	Victoria - A History	1984	241-7, 297, 322-3, 336-8
P. T. Thornton	A century of union: The United Grand Lodge of Victoria	1989	
Ray Tonkin	Tender and Other Notices in the Warrnambool Examiner	1973	34, 46
W J Ingram	The first hundred years of the lodge of Australia Felix No. 1 United Grand Lodge of Victoria	1940	
Woman's Christian Temperance Union of Victoria	Annual records and methods of work done by the Woman's Christian Temperance Union of Victoria.	1887-	