

HERITAGE PLACE

NAME OF PLACE: PUBLIC HALL & MECHANICS INSTITUTE
PUBLIC HALL & MECHANICS INSTITUTE

ADDRESS/LOCATION OF PLACE: off Strathkellar-Tarrington Road STRATHKELLAR

STUDY NUMBER: 416 **HERITAGE OVERLAY NUMBER:**

PRECINCT: outside

LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA: Southern Grampians Shire

ALLOTMENT: part 4 **SECTION:** IV **PARISH:** PARISH OF WARRAYURE

ACCESS DESCRIPTION:

CFA 432 E 29; VicRoads 73 C5; located at the end of a lane off the Strathkellar Road immediately north of the railway line and beside the former State School.

SIGNIFICANCE RATING: Local



Public Hall & Mechanics Institute, off Strathkellar Road, Strathkellar

Image Date: 22/03/03

EXTENT OF LISTING:

To the extent of: 1. All the building known as the Strathkellar Public Hall and Mechanics Institute and all of the land.

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PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION:

The hall building is a standard design for a its function and is typical of its period for the scale, form, planning, details and materials. The structure is framed in timber and clad in weatherboards. The windows in the east and west elevations are large . There are highlight windows in the south elevation. There is a small simple timber porch. The proprietary ventilators in the roof are the same as on the adjacent public hall.

HISTORY:

The squatter, John Moffat purchased allotment 4 of section 4 of the Parish of Warrayure comprising about 154 acres. The Hamilton to Dunkeld Road passed through the north-west corner of the allotment. He owned the Grange (or Upper Grange) run and, more famously, Chatsworth House (or Hopkins Hill). He had been manager of the Grange when it was owned by Captain Lonsdale and acquired the lease with William McKellar in 1854 (B&K, 116, 216). The name of the run was changed to Strathkellar under the ownership of Thomas McKellar MLC. His son John leased the run for a while. From 1884 to the early 1890s the run was leased by William McKellar who was very active in Shire affairs and between 1878 and 1893 was five times President (Garden, 142). Thomas McKellar died in 1900 and in 1905 his executors decided to sell Strathkellar. There was a very strong feeling in Hamilton in favour of Closer Settlement and this seemed an ideal opportunity. "In June a Hamilton Closer Settlement Association was formed, with Mayor John Fenton as President and T F O'Neill as Secretary. ... Members of the [Government's Land Purchase] Board agreed to visit Hamilton , and there was much congratulation when the Board acquired Strathkellar at auction in September" (Garden, 160).

Strathkellar, Croxton and Warrayure are not listed as postal towns in the 1865 Bailliere's Gazetteer. Croxton is mentioned in the 1879 Gazetteer as having a population of only 150. It seems certain that the Strathkellar Public Hall, Mechanics Institute and the adjacent State School No 3536 and teacher's residence were built not so much as a result of the earlier subdivision of the Strathkellar, Croxton and Warrayure runs for selection but the increase in population following closer settlement at the turn of the century. This is reinforced by the style and detailing of the various buildings and the plantings in their gardens. There were many schools built about this time and the Strathkellar school is typical. However, it is relatively late for the construction of a mechanics institute.

The Mechanics Institute movement had emerged in Scotland at the end of the eighteenth century. It quickly spread to London and the developing industrial cities of England in the first half of the nineteenth century. The movement succeeded best in Australia and that success was especially strong in colonial Victoria. This was due to a combination of social, economic and political factors, although the discussion of politics and religion was usually banned by an institute's regulations. Over a thousand institutes, some with associated free libraries and lecture halls, were built in the city and country. The first to be built was the Melbourne Athenaeum in 1848. The majority of examples were built in the 1860s and 1870s, and the last examples in the more remote parts of Victoria were built up to the outbreak of World War One and possibly later. Although dominated by the middle class, the movement could cross class and religious divisions, often uniting a town in its aspiration so that the construction of a mechanics institute represented not just a practical civic achievement but a real expression of shared cultural values.

THEMATIC CONTEXT:

3. Developing local, regional and national economies
3.21 Entertaining for profit

6. Educating
6.1 Forming associations, libraries, and institutes for self-education

8. Developing Australia's cultural life
8.5 Forming associations

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8.5.3 Associating for mutual aid
8.5.4 Pursuing common leisure interests
8.14 Living in the country and rural settlements

CONDITION:

Good condition

INTEGRITY:

High degree of integrity

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE:

What is significant?

The Strathkellar Public Hall located off the Strathkellar-Tarrington Road began as the local Mechanic's Institute after 1905 when the district was subdivided for closer settlement. No architect or builder has yet been linked with the design. Mechanics Institutes were an important reflection of the prosperity, culture and aspirations of a town. They were also important as social centres. The building is weatherboard with a corrugated iron roof, typical in form, materials and style for the period. There is a stage area at its the northern end and a skillion annex on the eastern side. The building remains substantially intact to its 1905 design and in fair condition.

How is it significant?

The Strathkellar Public Hall and former Mechanics Institute is of historical, social and cultural significance to the Southern Grampians Shire.

Why is it significant?

The Strathkellar Public Hall and former Mechanics Institute Hall is of historical significance as the principal public meeting place of the small community for 100 years and now as one of its few remnants. Culturally, the hall is significant to Strathkellar because, in the early 20th centuries it reflected the town's aspirations and was associated with the self-improvement of its citizens through reading, lectures and concerts. Socially, the hall provided a focus for community activities such as dances, shows and film nights. These traditional roles continued until relatively recently. The hall's significance is supported by the neighbouring former State School No 3536 and teacher's residence.

COMPARISON:

316 Mirranatwa Public Hall & State School, Mirranatwa School Road, Mirranatwa
062 Nareen Hall Complex, Nareen Road, Nareen
321 Public Hall, Victoria Valley Road, Victoria Valley

ASSESSED BY: TFH & AEN **ASSESSMENT DATE:** 18-Feb-03

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
	Mechanics' Institutes The Way Forward, Conference organised by the Kilmore Mechanics' Institute	1998	66
	Rediscovering Mechanics' Institutes, Australian Mechanics'Institute Conference 2000	2000	128
Clancy, Frances	The Libraries of the Mechanics' Institutes of Victoria	2000	

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Connell, R. W & Irving, T. H	Class Structure in Australian History, Documents, Narrative and Argument	1980	123, 127, 174- 5, 183-4
R. V Billis & A. S Kenyon	Pastoral Pioncers of Port Phillip	1974	104, 116, 216,