

HERITAGE PLACE

NAME OF PLACE: MECHANICS INSTITUTE (FORMER)

ADDRESS/LOCATION OF PLACE: Stirling Street Martin Street DUNKELD

STUDY NUMBER: 423

HERITAGE OVERLAY NUMBER:

PRECINCT: Dunkeld

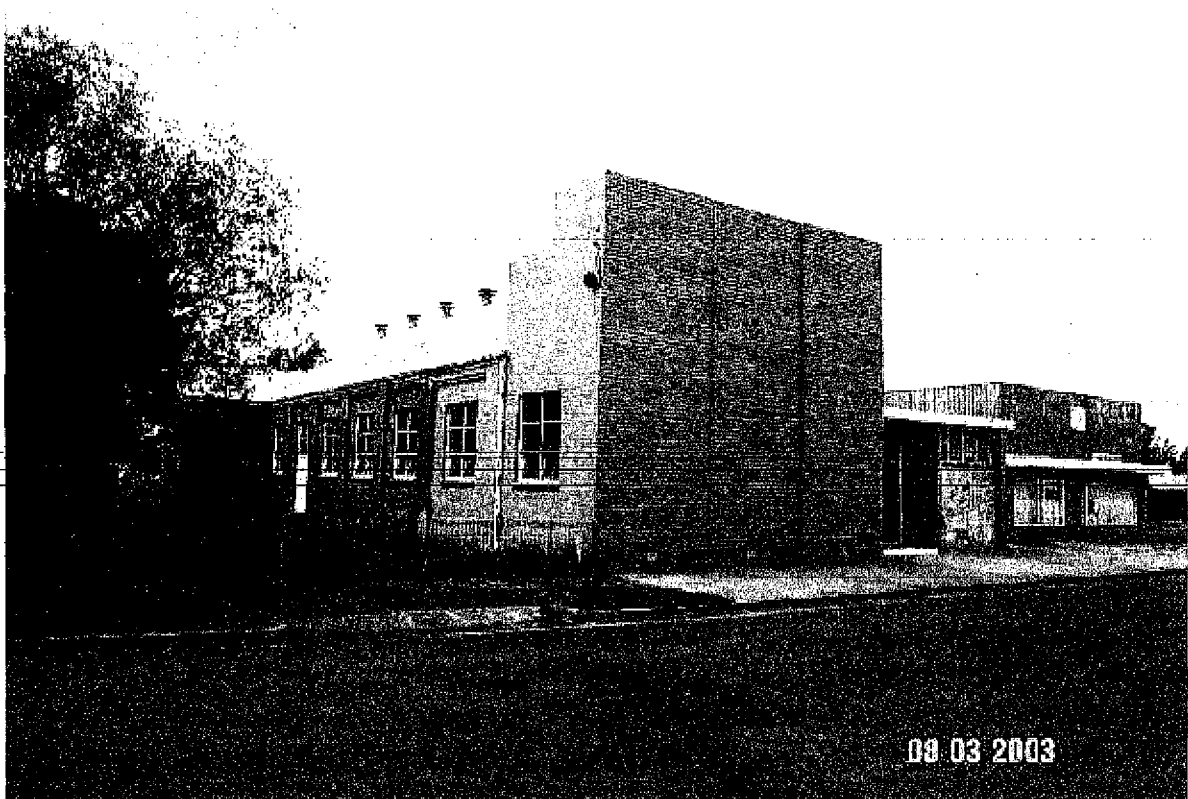
LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA: Southern Grampians Shire

ALLOTMENT: 10 **SECTION:** 9

ACCESS DESCRIPTION:

CFA 433J 13; VicRoads 229 S4; located in the north-east corner of Stirling Street and Martin Streets, two blocks south of the Glenelg Highway.

SIGNIFICANCE RATING: Local



Former Dunkeld Mechanic's Institute, Stirling and Martin Streets, Dunkeld

Image Date: 08/03/03

EXTENT OF LISTING:

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

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PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION:

The former Dunkeld Mechanic's Institute has been constructed in two sections. The earlier 1892 section is a T-shaped red brick hall with bluestone footings. It comprises a large hall with the rear wing accommodating an elevated stage and adjacent rooms to either side. Many of the original windows were replaced in the 1963 renovation or bricked up. The new section was built in 1963 and includes a cream facade with side windows and a new entrance. This is in a loosely International style. The new section may have been designed by Taggeter Walter, who was responsible for the new facade on the Glenthompson Library and Hall

HISTORY:

G G Crouch purchased allotment 10 of section 9 of the Township of Dunkeld in August 1855 comprising quarter of an acre. "The foundation stone for the hall was laid by Harold Armytage on 27th September 1892 and the library was a valued centre for reading the daily papers as well as borrowing books" (Clabburn, 26). Armytage was the son of the pioneer squatter, Charles Henry Armytage and the occupant of Mount Sturgeon from 1885 (Smith, Vol 2, 533). The hall was extended and renovated in 1963 and is now used by the Returned Services League and as a Public Library.

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

8.5.3 Associating for mutual aid

8.5.4 Pursuing common leisure interests

8.14 Living in the country and rural settlements

CONDITION:

The building is in good condition internally and externally

INTEGRITY:

Low degree of intactness for its nineteenth century fabric but a high degree of intactness for its later twentieth century development.

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE:

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What is significant?

The former Mechanic's Institute is located in the north-east corner of Sterling Street and Martin Streets, two blocks south of the Glenelg Highway in the township of Dunkeld. The building was constructed in two phases. The earlier 1892 section comprises a main hall and rear wing with elevated stage and side dressing rooms. The newer 1963 section is a cream brick facade with a side entrance and side windows. Most of the windows in the older section were replaced or bricked up in the 1963 renovation. No architect or builder has been associated with the design, however, it is possible that the 1963 renovations were designed by Taggeter Walter, who was responsible for the renovation and remodelling of the Glenthompson Hall and Library in the 1950s. The former Mechanic's Insatiate is in fair condition, and retains a high degree of integrity to the mid 1960s.

How is it significant?

The former Mechanics Institute is of historical and social significance to the township of Dunkeld and the Southern Grampians Shire.

Why is it significant?

The former Mechanic's Institute is of historical significance as a prominent and well-used public building in a street that previously was an important commercial thoroughfare and thus is a reminder of an earlier, more prosperous era of the town's history. The hall has additional historical significance for its association with Harold Armytage, a patron of the Mechanics Institute and prominent early pastoralist.

The former Mechanic's Institute is of social significance to Dunkeld because, in the early 20th century it reflected the town's status 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, book borrowing and film nights. These roles continue and the hall is still used for a range of activities.

COMPARISON:

003 Mechanics Institute, cnr Winter and Pilleau Sts Coleraine
186 Mechanics Institute, Hamilton-Port Fairy Rd, Byaduk
305 Library and War Memorial Hall, McLennan St, Glenthompson
283 Penshurst Memorial Hall, Martin Street, Penshurst

ASSESSED BY: tfh

ASSESSMENT DATE:

06-Mar-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
Clabburn, Elise, et al.	Dunkeld and District: A Short History	1989	26
Clancy, Frances	The Libraries of the Mechanics' Institutes of Victoria	2000	
Connell, R. W & Irving, T. H	Class Structure in Australian History, Documents, Narrative and Argument	1980	123, 127, 174- 5, 183-4

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James Smith

Cyclopaedia of Victoria, Vol. 2

1904 533