

**Locality:** STRATFORD  
**Place address:** 17 HOBSON STREET  
**Citation date** 2016  
**Place type (when built):** Mechanics Institute and Free Library  
**Recommended heritage protection:** Local government level  
Local Planning Scheme: Yes  
Vic Heritage Register: No  
Heritage Inventory (Archaeological): No

**Place name:** Mechanics Institute and Boer Memorial Plaque



**Architectural Style:** Federation Free Classical  
**Designer / Architect:** Edgar J. Henderson  
**Construction Date:** 1890

## Statement of Significance

This statement of significance is based on the history, description and comparative analysis in this citation. The Criteria A-H is the Heritage Council Criteria for assessing cultural heritage significance (HERCON). Level of Significance, Local, State, National, is in accordance with the level of Government legislation.

### *What is significant?*

The Stratford Mechanics Institute at 17 Hobson Street, Stratford, is significant. The original form, materials and detailing, externally and internally as constructed in 1890 are significant. The Boer Memorial plaque inside the hall is significant.

Later alterations and additions to the building are not significant, including the glass additions to the front porch, and the modern additions to the north and west elevations, opened in 2004.

### *How is it significant?*

The Stratford Mechanics Institute and Boer Memorial Plaque are locally significant for its historical, social and aesthetic values to the Shire of Wellington.

### *Why is it significant?*

The Stratford Mechanics Institute and Boer Memorial Plaque **is historically significant at a local level** as it illustrates the importance of Stratford as the established town centre of the surrounding farming district and as the main town and seat of Government of the Avon Shire from 1865 to 1873, and again from 1875 to 1994. The Stratford mechanics institute and free library opened in 1890 and is significant as it represents the importance of the mechanics institute movement, and the importance of education in the developing town of Stratford. The institute is important as it has served as a venue for educational lectures, and as a meeting place and housed a free public library. It also served as a venue for public meetings, wedding celebrations, farewells, annual events, celebrations, concerts and welcome homes to local soldiers. The Stratford Mechanics Institute retains soldiers memorials including a unique brass Boer Memorial plaque. The Mechanics Institute is also significant for its association with architect Edgar J. Henderson. (Criteria A & H)

The Stratford Mechanics Institute **is socially significant at a local level** for its continual use as a mechanics institute, and later as a public hall, serving the local and wider community since its opening in 1890. The hall continues to serve as a location for community events, meetings, concerts and celebrations, commonly referred to today as 'the mechanics'. (Criterion G)

The Stratford Mechanics Institute **is aesthetically significant at a local level for its external and internal architectural qualities and landmark qualities in the streetscape**. The hall, constructed of original face-brick with a steeply pitched roof (clad in red modern deck metal which is not significant), is a very fine example of a building constructed in the Federation Free Classical style in the shire. Its decorative roof elements include the metal gablette ventilators, and on the gable end facing the street are the timber finial, flying gable end and horizontal vents. The decorative wall elements on the bold symmetrical Classical facade include the basalt Foundation Stone, the original tuck pointed face-brick and ornamental rendered dressings. A tall parapet bears the name 'Mechanics Institute and Free Library' sculptured in relief, with a balustraded parapet to each side. A central projecting entrance porch has a large rendered parapet (the front wall of the porch, between the original tuck-pointed brick pilasters has been rebuilt with similar but not the same, characteristics to the original design, in 2004). The front two corners of the porch have retained their original rendered 'capitals', which are repeated on the corners of the facade. The side elevations have simple engaged buttresses between the windows, which have decorative unpainted rendered sills above a projecting brick apron. Timber ledged doors remain on the east elevation. The interior of the hall retains original timber details including the stage, proscenium with an oak and laurel wreath, timber lined coved

ceiling, cast iron round ceiling rose vents, hammerbeams supported on consoles, timber dado, original doors and handles and aedicules to the entrances either side of the stage. (Criterion E)

The Boer War Memorial plaque is aesthetically significant for the design, materials and craftsmanship. (Criterion E)

## Statutory Recommendations

This place is recommended for inclusion in the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay of the Wellington Shire Planning Scheme to the extent as shown on the map.

<b>External Paint Controls</b>	Yes
<b>Internal Alteration Controls</b>	Yes, original fabric of entry hall, hall and stage and Boer memorial plaque
<b>Tree Controls</b>	No
<b>Outbuildings or fences which are not exempt under Clause 43.01-3</b>	No
<b>Prohibited Uses May Be Permitted</b>	No
<b>Incorporated Plan</b>	No
<b>Aboriginal Heritage Place</b>	Not assessed

## Map of recommended boundary for Heritage Overlay



### KEY

- Recommended for Heritage Overlay
- Title boundary

**Mechanics Institute and memorial**  
**17 Hobson St, Stratford**

Project: Wellington Shire Stage 2 Heritage Study  
Client: Wellington Shire Council  
Author: Heritage Intelligence Pty Ltd  
Date: 12/2/16

## History

### Locality history

Stratford is located on the east bank of the Avon River. The earliest known Europeans in the area included Angus McMillan and his party, who crossed the Avon River in 1840 and named it after a Scottish River. Following McMillan was Polish explorer Paul Strzelecki and his party, who followed a similar route but headed for Western Port. Strzelecki wrote a very positive report of the Stratford region. Squatters soon settled in the area, the lands serving as pasture for sheep and cattle. In 1842, William O. Raymond established the Stratford Pastoral Run, as well as a run at Strathfieldsaye (Fletcher & Kennett 2005:75). While it is suggested that the run was named after Shakespeare's Stratford-on-Avon (Victorian Places), it is more probable that it was named after the 'Straight Ford' across the Avon River at that point (as opposed to the Long Ford across the river at Weirs Crossing, that was used for a time when the Straight Ford was impassable) (SDHS). By 1844 there were 15,000 cattle in the region, and by 1845 there were 78,399 sheep (Fletcher & Kennett 2005:75; Context 2005:11).

A small settlement developed at the place where the stock route forded the Avon River, which would become Stratford. Raymond opened the Shakespeare Hotel c1847 and other businesses opened, including a blacksmiths, before the town was surveyed in 1854. The first bridge over the Avon River was built, a general store opened, and a tannery and flourmill were established (Fletcher & Kennett 2005:76). During this period, Gippsland cattle were driven south through Stratford to Port Albert for transport to Melbourne and Tasmania (Victorian Places). A Presbyterian church was built in 1857 which also served as the government school. A Catholic school opened with the construction of the first Catholic Church in 1864, before an Anglican Church was built in 1868. In the 1860s the pastoral runs were opened for selection and Stratford became the centre of the farming district. The town further grew with the discovery of gold in the Great Dividing Range, particularly at Crooked River in Grant, when supplies for the goldfields were brought through the town (Fletcher & Kennett 2005:76). In 1864, the Avon District Road Board was formed, and proclaimed a Shire in 1865, with Stratford as the administrative centre (Context 2005:38-9).

By the 1870s, Maffra and district had prospered and councilors exerted pressure to move the seat of government to Maffra. This was achieved briefly from 1873 to 1874, but in 1875 Maffra formed its own shire. Stratford became the main town in the Avon Shire and remained the centre of local government (Context 2005:38-9, 41). In 1884-85 a post office, courthouse and shire offices complex was built. The 1880s also saw the construction of a mechanics' institute and library (1890), and the first timber churches were replaced with brick buildings. The railway line from Melbourne reached Stratford in 1888 (Fletcher & Kennett 2005:76). By 1903, Stratford also had the Swan and Stratford Hotels and the Shakespeare Temperance Hotel, State School No. 596 and four churches (*Australian handbook* 1903). The town saw steady population growth until the beginning of World War I, maintaining a population in the 800s between 1911 and the 1960s (Victorian Places).

After World War I a soldiers' settlement was established on estates in the Avon Shire, however, many of the farms proved unviable and the settlement scheme was not a success. During World War II the district benefited from good wool prices, and a flax mill was opened west of Stratford. The district prospered in the 1950s with a reduced rabbit population and increased primary produce prices (Victorian Places). The Avon River was a narrow river with a wide flood plain and the river flooded rapidly and frequently, with severe floods in the 1930s, 1971 and 1990, which caused extensive damage. Measures to combat erosion were undertaken in the 1940s and the River Improvement Trust was formed in 1951 (Fletcher & Kennett 2005:76). A bridge that could withstand the floods was opened in 1965 (Victorian Places).

Stratford experienced a building boom from the 1970s, following land subdivision which resulted in residential development and an increase in population (Fletcher & Kennett 2005:76). In 1994, Wellington Shire was created by the amalgamation of the former Shires of Alberton, Avon and

Maffra, the former City of Sale, most of the former Shire of Rosedale, as well as an area near Dargo which was formerly part of Bairnsdale Shire (Context 2005:39). Stratford was no longer an administrative seat, but retained its importance as a central town for the surrounding farm district (Fletcher & Kennett 2005:76). The town has seen a steady population increase in the 2000s (Victorian Places).

## Thematic context

This place is associated with the following themes from the *Wellington Shire Thematic History* (2005):

### 8. Governing and administering:

- 8.5 Mechanics Institutes
- 8.7 War and Defence

### 9. Developing cultural institutions and way of life:

- 9.2. Memorials

#### *Mechanics Institutes*

The following is based on information taken from the *Wellington Shire Thematic Environmental History* (Context 2005:42-3):

The mechanics institute movement originated from a series of lectures delivered by Dr Birkbeck in Glasgow to tradesmen, artisans and factory workers – or ‘mechanics’ as people who worked with machines were known – and it aimed to educate and spread industrial and technical knowledge. The movement became widespread in Victoria in the wake of the gold rushes. Land was reserved for mechanics institutes and residents in developing towns considered that building a mechanics institute was an early priority. Committees were formed in the new communities to build a mechanics institute that would serve as a meeting place, house a library and be a venue for lectures for the purposes of education. The institutes also became venues for public meetings, wedding celebrations, farewells and welcome homes to local soldiers. Deb balls were annual events, as were community Christmas celebrations and concerts. Often the mechanics institute housed war memorials to commemorate locals who served in World War I or II.

Many mechanics institutes survive in the shire. One of the earliest mechanics institute buildings in the shire is the Rosedale mechanics institute, a brick structure that opened in 1874 and extended in 1885. The Briagolong mechanics institute also opened in 1874 and since extended. At Newry, the original mechanics institute and a newer hall stand side by side. The Stratford mechanics institute is still popularly called ‘the mechanics’, and continues to function as the town’s hall. The Glenmaggie mechanics institute was moved to higher ground and survived the town’s drowning when the Glenmaggie Weir was built. It is an important reminder of the little town that once served its farming community. When their mechanics institutes were burnt at Binginwarri and Gormandale, the residents rallied and built new ones. At Maffra, the mechanics institute building has been incorporated into the town’s library. The Sale mechanics institute, a two storey building dating from 1891, has had a long association with education, first accommodating the Sale School of Mines, Art and Technology, and later becoming part of the Sale Technical School, and is now amalgamated with Sale High School to form the Sale College.

#### *Memorials*

The following is based on information taken from the *Wellington Shire Thematic Environmental History* (Context 2005:45-6):

Memorials are erected throughout the Shire in honour of pioneers and district explorers, significant events and people, and those who served in world wars and other conflicts. The soldiers’ memorials that are spread throughout the Shire show the impact that the two world wars, and subsequent conflicts, had on so many communities and families within the Shire. It must be remembered that

while commonly referred to today as 'war memorials', these memorials were originally erected in honour of, and to commemorate, the soldiers and those who made the ultimate sacrifice for their country. The memorials were often funded by the community and erected with great community pride, in honour of the locals who died or served and returned. Memorials in the shire took the form of halls, churches, obelisks and cenotaphs and avenues of honour.

The group of Rosedale memorials comprises two soldiers memorials and an Angus McMillan memorial. Listed on the Briagolong soldiers' memorial are the names of six Whitelaw brothers, three of whom were killed on active service and one who died later from wounds received. A memorial to their mother, Annie Whitelaw, was erected at her grave in honour of her sacrifice, and to all mothers of sons who served at the front. Soldiers' memorials also remain at Maffra, Stratford and Yarram, to name a few. While St James Anglican Church in Heyfield stands as a Soldiers' Memorial Church and two adjoining halls at Maffra were constructed as Soldiers' Memorial Halls. There are also remnants of avenues of honour. The pine trees at Stratford lining the route of the former highway were planted as a memorial to soldiers who served in the First World War. Many of the memorials also have plantings, such as a lone pine, planted in connection with the memorial.

## Place history

The Mechanics Institute is located on lot 4 (section 7, Township of Stratford), which was originally purchased from the Crown by D. Clarke in June 1855. Clarke also purchased lot 2 (the lot to the west) at the same date. At this date, the lots extended from Hobson Street to Raymond Street at the northern extent (Township Plan).

In August 1866, a public meeting was held in the old Shire Hall during which the establishment of a Mechanics Institute was discussed. A site was reserved for a Mechanics Institute in 1866, however, the organisation lapsed by the 1870s (and the land revoked for this purpose in 1885). In 1874, a second attempt to establish an Institute with a library was unsuccessful. However, in 1882, a committee was elected and a library established in the old Shire Hall from June 1882, with new books purchased and the library open three evenings per week (Baragwanath & James 2015; PROV; VGG 11 Dec 1895:3478).

In 1885, the site for the Mechanics Institute was reserved and by 1888 the decision to build was confirmed (Baragwanath & James 2015; PROV). In May 1889, architect E. J. Henderson let the tender for the erection of the Stratford Mechanics' Institute to builders Hailes and Hale (AB&C News 1889:502). The foundation stone for the existing mechanics hall and free library was laid in the same year and the building completed in 1890 (Baragwanath & James 2015; PROV).

The parapet of the building reads 'Mechanics Institute and Free Library'. The foundation stone notes that it 'was laid by Alfred Deakin, Chief Secretary of Victoria' on 30 October 1889, however, it is known that Deakin did not actually attend the ceremony. By 1900, the hall had a library holding 1,500 volumes (Baragwanath & James 2015).

A photo dating to 1910 (SDHS) showed the facade and west elevation of the hall (Figure H1). At the peak of the roof, the existing gablette, timber flying gable end, timber vents and the pendant and finial were evident, as well as the triangular vents to the roof (these since removed). The decorative rendered details and coping to the façade, including the balustrade parapet, had retained their original unpainted finish. The projecting porch, which had face brick surrounding the front double doors within a round arched doorway, was demolished in the 1950s for the cream brick extension. The wider section at the rear of the hall was also evident in the photo. A flagpole stood to the right of the facade, while a timber picket fence and pedestrian gate ran along the front (south) boundary. A photo of a similar date also showed the facade and windows of the west elevation (Figure H2). Four triangular roof vents projected from the west roof plane (since removed). The west side of the porch had a panelled entrance door (since removed) (SDHS; PROV).

The hall is known to have also served as a picture theatre, showing movies as they travelled regional Victoria (SDHS). The hall houses a brass Boer War Memorial Plaque, (Figure D6) naming 16 fallen

and returned locals, who served in the war (1899-1902) (Vic. War Heritage Inventory). The plaque also notes that it was in memory of Sergeant D. M. Pruden who was killed in action at Koster River on 22 July 1900. The memorial was hung in the hall in 1902 with an unveiling ceremony (PROV; *Maffra Spectator*, 15 Sep 1902:3).

An unsympathetic and intrusive addition to the façade is evident in a photo dating to 1958, probably taken soon after its construction (Figure H3). No fence remained along the front boundary at this date and the flagpole had been removed. The single-storey cream brick addition (comprising toilets), with a flat roofline, extended almost the width of the facade, and had a central entrance covered by a porch. Above this, a narrow box-like construction was built to the height of the parapet, to conceal the historic façade, providing an entirely new modern facade. These unsympathetic additions were removed between 2005 and 2010 (SDHS).

Since c1995, major restoration works and many functional improvements have been carried out, including the construction of the addition to the rear (a kitchen and supper room), the concreting of the driveway (after 2009), installation of window shutters and the removal of the unsympathetic 1950s addition to the facade (Baragwanath & James 2015). In 2004, the series of changes included the glass additions built on the facade, either side of the porch (as the side and front walls of the porch were most likely removed during the 1950s toilet block extension). In 2004, a large and more sympathetically designed addition was built, more appropriately, on the west elevation instead of the 1950s one at the front (2004 Plaque).

Internally, the sides of the stage were altered and hallways created to access the modern addition (kitchen and supper room) to the rear. The coved ceiling of the hall is lined with decorative stained timber, with cast iron ceiling rose vents, while the timber floor was replaced c1995 (SDHS). The works were completed in 2004. A plaque on the facade reads 'Stratford Mechanics Hall extension and refurbishment, Officially opened by The Hon John Brumby MP Minister for State and Regional Development 10<sup>th</sup> December 2004. Funding partners, The local community, Victorian Government, Small Town Development Fund, Wellington Shire Council.'

A flagpole and 'old style' lamp stand in a modern landscaped area was constructed in front of the hall by 2009. The hall is currently used for private events, Red Cross and Lions Club meetings, community classes, school concerts, and local festivals (Baragwanath & James 2015).

### **Edgar J. Henderson, architect**

The following is extracted from Dr John J. Taylor's (Feb 2013) biography 'Edgar Jerome Henderson':

Edgar Jerome Henderson (1861-1928) was born at Hawthorn in Melbourne, educated at St Francis' College, Kew, and served articles with Ernest A. Barker, architect and surveyor of Melbourne. In 1883 Edgar commenced practice on his own account at Fraser's Buildings in Queen Street, Melbourne. He became a member of the Victorian Institute of Architects, and in 1887 was made an honorary member of the South Australian Institute, possibly through connection to elder brother Henry John, an architect in Adelaide. In 1888 it was noted that 'among his principal early works is the Catholic Cathedral at Sale, Gippsland, and he also designed several churches and schools, and many private residences and business premises in and about Melbourne.'

In 1888 Henderson designed a block of shops on the north-east corner of Puckle and Margaret Streets, Moonee Ponds in the Queen Anne style. He also designed the Shamrock Hotel in Echuca and the Rochester Shire town hall, both in 1892.

Of Henderson's ecclesiastical work, the previously mentioned St Mary's Cathedral at Sale was constructed in 1886-7 to the design of Barker and Henderson. Henderson was also to design St James' Church, Gardenvale, the nave of which was built in 1891, and the enormous St Mary's Star of the Sea Church, West Melbourne. The foundations of St Mary's, West Melbourne were laid in June 1892. As a relatively young and at that time little-known architect, Henderson produced plans for a sandstone church in simplified Gothic style. Phillip Kennedy took over the architectural role following

Henderson's move to Western Australia, and the contrast between the church exterior and interior can be attributed to this fact.

With depressed economic conditions in Victoria, Henderson and his young family joined an exodus of architects (and many others) for the gold boom conditions of Western Australia. The Hendersons arrived in Perth from Melbourne in 1896. In 1897 Henderson formed what was to be a successful partnership with Harry Jefferis at the Austral Chambers in Barrack Street, Perth. Through Henderson, the firm secured a great deal of ecclesiastical commissions for the Catholic church, houses and villas, shops. With a slowing of building activity, the joint practice was formally dissolved as from 1 January 1906, and both parties then carried on business on their own account in Perth. Henderson's son, Edgar Le Blond (often referred to as 'E Le B'), joined the practice which became Edgar J. Henderson & Son. Edgar Le Blond later formed the successful Perth practice Henderson & Thompson. With his second wife Esther, Edgar developed a farm Kokkapinn at Kwollyin, south of Kellerberrin in WA. Edgar Jerome Henderson died 27 December 1928 at Subiaco aged 67 years.



**Figure H1. The hall in 1910. At the peak of the roof the gablette, flying gable end, finial and timber vents were evident, as well as the triangular vents to the roof (since removed). A flagpole stood to the right of the facade, while a timber picket fence and pedestrian gate ran along the front boundary (SDHS).**



Figure H2. The hall at an unknown early date (similar to 1910 photo). At this date the roof had four triangular roof vents and the west side of the porch had a panelled entrance door (all since removed) (SDHS).



Figure H3. The hall in 1958. The front elevation had been replaced with an intrusive cream brick addition and section above, which covered the entire facade of the hall, all since removed (SDHS).

### Sources

*Australasian Builder and Contractor's News* (AB&C News), 25 May 1889 (page 502). As cited in Miles Lewis' Australian Architectural Index, record no. 263, < <https://aai.app.unimelb.edu.au/>>, accessed 11 Jan 2016.

*Australian handbook* (1903), as cited in Victorian Places 'Stratford', <<http://www.victorianplaces.com.au/maffra>>, accessed Feb 2016.

Baragwanath, Pam & Ken James (2015), *These Walls Speak Volumes : a history of mechanics' institutes in Victoria*, Ringwood North.

Context Pty Ltd (2005), *Wellington Shire Heritage Study Thematic Environmental History*, prepared for Wellington Shire Council

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*Maffra Spectator*

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Stratford & District Historical Society (SDHS) collection: historical information and photos generously provided by Judy Richards and Linda Barraclough, provided Nov 2015.

Stratford Township Plan

Taylor, Dr John J., (Feb 2013) 'Edgar Jerome Henderson', biography cited at Australian Institute of Architects <<http://www.architecture.com.au/>>, accessed 29 Feb 2016.

Victorian Government Gazette (VGG), No. 117, Friday 11 December 1885.

Victorian Places, 'Stratford', <<http://www.victorianplaces.com.au/stratford>>, accessed 16 February 2016.

Victorian War Heritage Inventory, Victorian Heritage Database entry for 'Stratford Boer War Memorial Plaque', <<http://vhd.heritagecouncil.vic.gov.au/places/156617>>, accessed 4 Jan 2016.

## Description

This section describes the place in 2016. Refer to the Place History for additional important details describing historical changes in the physical fabric.

The Stratford Mechanics Institute, built in 1890, is Federation Free Classical in style, with a dominant Classical façade. The hall was built on the north side of Hobson street, off the main street of Stratford. The building has a medium setback, set behind a modern landscaped garden. Overall, the 1890 hall is in very good condition and retains a medium level of integrity externally and a high level of integrity internally.

**Figure D1.** The brick hall is rectangular in plan with a hip and gabled roof (with modern metal tiles). The roof has a ridge vent, and on the gable end facing the street are a timber finial, flying gable end and horizontal vents (see Figure D3). The hall has a bold symmetrical Classical facade with tuckpointed face-brick and rendered dressings (overpainted). A tall parapet bears the name 'Mechanics Institute and Free Library' with a short balustraded parapet to each side. Below this is the central projecting entrance porch with a large rendered parapet with orbs to the corners (not original, see Figure H1). The front wall of the porch may have been reconstructed (to match the original, see Figures H1 & 2) after the intrusive 1950s cream brick addition was recently removed from the facade, as it has a modern window and recent render, but replicated the details of what originally existed. The front two corners of the porch have rendered (overpainted) 'capitals', which are repeated on the corners of the facade.

A flagpole and lamp stand the landscaped area in front of the hall.

Two small glass additions have been added either side of the entrance porch. A long addition has been constructed on the west elevation (the original elevation remains on the interior). A concrete driveway (laid after 2009) runs along the east side of the building.

**Figures D2 & D3.** The side elevations have a rendered plinth. The side elevations have simple engaged buttresses between the windows (covered by modern security roller shutters), which have rendered sills above a brick apron. Below each window is a modern louvre vent. At ground level, multiple metal vents rise to allow for sub-floor ventilation.

The east elevation has a timber paneled door at ground level, below a window, and a ledged timber door above ground level that allowed access to the stage (may have been altered, as a second arch remains in the wall at a higher level).

A large modern brick addition was built c1995 off the rear (north) elevation, extending beyond the side elevations. It has a lower roof-line than the 1890s hall.

**Figure D4.** The roof at the rear elevation has a longer hip than at the south end (see the aerial map) but it appears to be the original extent. The gablette has the original timber louvred vent, flying gable end, finial and pendant. The large modern brick addition to the rear has a modern verandah with a bull-nosed profile.

**Figure D5.** The interior of the hall retains its original timber details including the stage, timber lined ceiling, hammerbeams, dado, doors and aedicules to the doorways either side of the stage (the floor was replaced c1995). The openings and stage height were altered either side to allow access to the rear extension.

**Figure D6.** The hall retains a brass Boer War Memorial Plaque, naming 16 fallen and returned locals, who served in the Boer War (1899-1902).



**Figure D1.** The hall setback behind a modern landscaped area with a flagpole. The 1950s cream-brick addition was removed from the facade in 2004 and glass additions were constructed either side of the entrance, and a large brick extension built down the west side of the building. The original bold Classical facade is now visible with its balustraded parapet and entrance porch with its bold parapet. The central arched window is a representation of the original entry doorway.



**Figure D2.** The east elevation with windows (behind modern roller shutters) with rendered sills and a brick apron, above a modern vent. Simple engaged buttresses are located between each window. The large modern addition to the rear extends beyond the side elevations.



**Figure D3.** The west elevation of the hall is partly visible behind the modern addition. The gablette to the roof is visible, with its timber detail and finial.



**Figure D4.** The rear (north) elevation with the gablette to the original section of the building, which is clad in modern metal red decking, and the lower roof-form of the modern addition, with its heritage style verandah, clad in modern red Colorbond.



**Figure D5.** The interior of the hall with its original timber stage, proscenium with wreath, timber lined ceiling with cast iron ceiling rose vents, hammer beams, dado to the walls and aedicules to the original doors at the side of the stage.



was moved to higher ground and survived the town's drowning when the Glenmaggie Weir was built. It is an important reminder of the small town that once served its farming community. When their mechanics institutes were burnt at Binginwarri and Gormandale, the residents rallied and built new ones. At Maffra, the mechanics institute building has been incorporated into the town's library. The Sale mechanics institute, a two storey building dating from 1891, has had a long association with education, first accommodating the Sale School of Mines, Art and Technology, and later becoming part of the Sale Technical School, and is now amalgamated with Sale High School to form the Sale College.

The complex of halls and memorials at Maffra was the largest in the Maffra Shire, and it remains the largest in Wellington Shire, outside of Sale. The 1892 Federation Free Classical design of the Maffra Mechanics Institute is a typical example of a well proportioned and detailed design. The 1922 Great War Peace Memorial Hall however, is unique in the Shire, with its inter war Free Classical design especially with the Mannerist overtones. The plain inter war stripped classical design of the 1925 hall made up for a lack of decoration, by the generous size of the hall and associated facilities. The 1990s extensions at the rear of the complex of buildings are the most sympathetically designed extensions, compared with those on the other historic halls in the Shire.

Boisdale Hall (1904) plan and roof form is representative of many halls in small towns in Victoria, however, it is rare in Wellington Shire as the only hall commissioned by a private owner for use as a community facility in his private town, for its hand made bricks from the local quarry, and for the use of a Second Empire style square dome. It was designed by architect George Henry Cain, who is not known to have designed any other community halls, but he was engaged by the Foster brothers, owners and developers of the Boisdale Estate, to design the Boisdale Estate dairy farm houses as well as buildings and workers houses in the Boisdale village, which included the general store, adjoining house and bakery (1902) and the Public Hall (1904).

The 1885 Yarram Mechanics Institute hall is larger and more elaborate than many of the simple rectangular timber halls in some of the smaller villages in Wellington Shire, however, it's architectural design has an unusual Classical simplicity for the late Victorian era. Internally, the large hall space is accentuated by a flat timber lined ceiling with coved edges, giving the room a spacious and elegant feeling. There are no other halls in the Shire of similar design.

## Management Guidelines

Whilst landowners are not obliged to undertake restoration works, these guidelines provide recommendations to facilitate the retention and enhancement of the culturally significant place, its fabric and its setting, when restoration works or alterations to the building are proposed. They also identify issues particular to the place and provide further detailed advice where relevant. The guidelines are not intended to be prescriptive and a pragmatic approach will be taken when considering development proposals. Alternative approaches to those specified in the guidelines will be considered where it can be demonstrated that a desirable development outcome can be achieved that does not impact on a place's heritage integrity.

1. **Setting** (Views, fencing, landscaping, paths, trees, streetscape).
  - 1.1. Retain clear views of the front from along Hobson Street.
  - 1.2. Relocate services such as power poles, bus shelters, signs, etc away from the front.
  - 1.3. Landscape the front in a traditional classical design to enhance the classical architecture and preferably use asphalt paving or exposed aggregate sand coloured concrete paving. The current garden design is beautiful, but it would be more appropriate at the newer northern entry to the building.
2. **Additions and New Structures**

- 2.1. New structures should be restricted to the rear of the property and concealed behind the heritage fabric when viewed from Hobson Street, as shown in the blue polygon on the aerial map below.
- 2.2. However, together with 1.1, appropriately designed and sympathetic extensions could be built to the sides if necessary, as has been done on the west side. E.g. Parts that are in the same view lines as the historic building should be parallel and perpendicular to the existing building, single storey, similar proportions, height, wall colours, rectangular timber framed windows with a vertical axis, but parts not visible in those views could be of any design, colours and materials.
- 2.3. Signs should be attached in such a way that they do not damage the brickwork. Preferably fix them into the mortar rather than the bricks.
- 2.4. If an extension is to have a concrete slab floor, ensure it will not reduce the air flow under the historic masonry building.
- 2.5. Avoid concrete paths or driveways against the solid masonry walls. Install them 500mm away from the walls and 250mm lower than the ground level inside the building. Fill the gap between the path and the wall with very coarse gravel to allow moisture to evaporate from the base of the wall. The works to this building over the past 20 years have substantially reduced the air flow to the subfloor of the hall, the concrete driveway being the most recent (about 80%, the small upvents along the east wall appear to be the only subfloor vents and this will not provide an adequate cross draught under the floor). The likely result will be damp in brick footings that cannot escape, damp in the walls if the damp proof course breaks down at any point, and most likely will be termite and rot attack to the timber subfloor and floor structure.
- 2.6. New garden beds
  - 2.6.1. These should be a minimum of 500mm from the walls, preferably further, and the ground lowered so that the finished ground level of the garden bed is a minimum of 250mm lower than the ground level which is under the floor, inside the building. Slope the soil and garden bed away from the building, and fill the area between the garden bed and walls, with very coarse gravel up to the finished level of the garden bed. The coarse gravel will have air gaps between the stones which serves the function of allowing moisture at the base of the wall to evaporate and it visually alerts gardeners and maintenance staff that the graveled space has a purpose. The reason that garden beds are detrimental to the building, is by a combination of: watering around the base of the wall and the ground level naturally builds up. The ground level rises, due to mulching and leaf litter and root swelling, above a safe level such that it blocks sub floor ventilation, and the wall is difficult to visually monitor on a day to day basis, due to foliage in the way.

### 3. Accessibility

- 3.1. The building has good accessibility

### 4. Reconstruction and Restoration

If an opportunity arises, consider restoring and reconstructing the following:

- 4.1. Remove the false front (south) elevation of the porch and reconstruct the original brick wall with round arched opening and timber double doors (see Fig H1.) As a temporary measure, to reduce the visual impact of the white joinery in the new window, paint the joinery a dark colour such as Deep Indian Red.
- 4.2. Reduce the visual impact of the new glass wing walls by painting the metal parts, particularly the parapet on the new glass wing walls Deep Indian Red, so that they do not dominate and contrast with the historic dark red brick walls behind them. Also paint the internal plaster that can be seen from the front elevation, Deep Indian Red.
- 4.3. Roofing, spouting and down pipes
  - 4.3.1. Use galvanised corrugated iron roofing, spouting, down pipes and rain heads. Classical

buildings were never designed with red roofs, they were either slate or unpainted galvanised corrugated iron. The existing roof is a modern Colorbond decking with fading and growing lichen, which is a common outcome for Colorbond.

4.3.2. Do not use Zinalume or Colorbond.

4.3.3. Use Ogee profile spouting, and round diameter down pipes.

#### 4.4. Fences

4.4.1. Reconstruct the timber picket fence and gate as shown in Figs H1 and H2.

#### 4.5. Paving

4.5.1. For Victorian and Federation era historic buildings, such as this one, the most appropriate paving is pressed granitic sand, however, if hard paving is preferred, asphalt is the most appropriate. Concrete is not recommended but if required should have a surface of sand coloured and size exposed aggregate.

### 5. Brick and Stone Walls

5.1. Never use modern products on these historic brick walls as they will cause expensive damage. Use lime mortar to match existing. Traditional mortar mixes were commonly 1:3, lime:sand.

5.2. **Do not seal** the brickwork with modern sealants. Allow the structure to evaporate water from the surface and to expel water that may enter from cracks, corrosion, etc.

5.3. Mortar: Match the lime mortar, do not use cement mortar.

5.4. Tuck pointing is now a rare craft and expensive to repair or reconstruct, which makes caring for the existing remnants particularly important.

### 6. Render/Hard plaster work

6.1. The decorative rendered window sills, cornices, capitals, stringcourses, etc have been painted, however, these architectural features were not designed to be painted (see Figures H1 & H2). They were a light-coloured unpainted render. It is recommended that the paint be chemically removed, which will restore the original finish and save on 10 yearly repainting costs.

### 7. Care and Maintenance to mitigate issues such as damp, neglect, vandalism and other problems

#### 7.1. Key References

7.1.1. Obtain a copy of "Salt Attack and Rising Damp" by David Young (2008), which is a free booklet available for download from Heritage Victoria website. It is in plain English, well illustrated and has very important instructions and should be used by tradesmen and Council maintenance staff.

7.1.2. Further assistance is available from the Shire's heritage advisor.

#### 7.2. Roofing, spouting and down pipes:

7.2.1. Use galvanised corrugated iron roofing, spouting, down pipes and rain heads.

7.2.2. Do not use Zinalume or Colorbond.

7.2.3. Use Ogee profile spouting, and round diameter down pipes.

#### 7.3. Fences

7.3.1. Replace the metal palisade fence with a timber picket fence to match the timber gate on the south side of the post office.

#### 7.4. Render/Hard plaster work

7.4.1. It is strongly recommended that paint be removed chemically from the render (but never sand, water or soda blast the building as this will permanently damage the bricks, mortar and render and never seal the bricks or render as that will create perpetual damp problems.)

#### 7.5. Paint and Colours

7.5.1. Removal of the paint will not only restore the elegance of the architecture, but it will remove the ongoing costs of repainting it every 10 or so years. However, if it is decided to repaint the render, it should be one colour only (do not paint the base a different

colour) and closely resemble the colour of new render.

## 8. Damp

- 8.1. Signs of damp in the walls include: lime mortar falling out of the joints, moss growing in the mortar, white (salt) powder or crystals on the brickwork, existing patches with grey cement mortar, or the timber floor failing. These causes of damp are, in most cases, due to simple drainage problems, lack of correct maintenance, inserting concrete next to the solid masonry walls, sealing the walls, sub floor ventilation blocked, or the ground level too high on the outside.
- 8.2. Water falling or seeping from damaged spouting and down pipes causes severe and expensive damage to the brick walls.
- 8.3. Repairing damage from damp may involve lowering of the ground outside so that it is lower than the ground level inside under the floor, installation of agricultural drains, running the downpipes into drainage inspection pits instead of straight into the ground. The reason for the pits is that a blocked drain will not be noticed until so much water has seeped in and around the base of the building and damage commenced (which may take weeks or months to be visible), whereas, the pit will immediately fill with water and the problem can be fixed before the floor rots or the building smells musty.
- 8.4. Damp would be exacerbated by watering plants near the wall, or if a concrete floor has been inserted inside the building or a concrete path on the outside. Refer to the manual, by David Young listed below for a full explanation of the problem and how to fix it. Water falling or seeping from damaged spouting and down pipes is also causing severe and expensive damage to the brick walls.
- 8.5. Ensure good subfloor ventilation is maintained at all times to reduce the habitat for termites and rot of the subfloor structure. Subfloor ventilation is critical with solid masonry buildings. Check that sub floor vents are not blocked and introduce additional ones if necessary. Ensure the exterior ground level is 250mm or more, lower than the ground level inside the building. Good subfloor ventilation works for free, and is therefore very cost effective. Do not rely on fans being inserted under the floor as these are difficult to monitor, they will breakdown as they get clogged with dust, etc, and there are ongoing costs for servicing and electricity.
- 8.6. Never install a concrete floor inside a solid masonry building as it will, after a year or so, cause long term chronic damp problems in the walls. Do not install a new damp proof course (DPC) until the drainage has been fixed, even an expensive DPC may not work unless the ground has been lowered appropriately.
- 8.7. Never seal solid masonry buildings, they **must be able to evaporate water** which enters from leaking roofs, pipes, pooling of water, storms, etc. Use appropriate cleaning materials, agents and methods, as recommended by the Shire's heritage advisor. The biggest risk to solid masonry buildings is permanent damage by the use of cleaning materials, agents and methods. Sand and water blasting removes the skilled decorative works of craftsmen as well as the fired surface on bricks and the lime mortar from between the bricks. It is irreversible and reduces the life of the building due to the severe damp that the damage encourages.
- 8.8. Never use cement mortar, always match the original lime mortar. Cement is stronger than the bricks and therefore the bricks will eventually crumble, leaving the cement mortar intact! Lime mortar lasts hundreds of years. When it starts to powder it is the 'canary in the mine', alerting you to a damp problem – fix the source of the damp problem and then repoint with lime mortar.
- 8.9. Remove the dark grey patches to the mortar joints. This is cement mortar which will damage the bricks and longevity of the walls. Repoint those joints with lime mortar. Lime mortar is not the problem it is the messenger.

## 9. Signage (including new signage and locations and scale of adjacent advertising signage)

9.1. Ensure all signage is designed to fit around the significant architectural design features, not over them.

## 10. Services

10.1. Ensure new services and conduits, down pipes etc, are not conspicuous. To do this, locate them at the rear of the building whenever possible, and when that is not practical, paint them the same colour as the building or fabric behind them or enclose them behind a screen the same colour as the building fabric, that provides adequate ventilation around the device. Therefore if a conduit goes up a red brick wall, as is the case on the south façade of the post office, it should be painted red, and when it passes over say, a cream coloured detail, it should be painted cream.

NOTE: The blue shaded area is the preferred location for additions and new development



### KEY

- Recommended for Heritage Overlay
- Title boundary

### Mechanics Institute and memorial 17 Hobson St, Stratford

Project: Wellington Shire Stage 2 Heritage Study  
 Client: Wellington Shire Council  
 Author: Heritage Intelligence Pty Ltd  
 Date: 12/2/16

## *Resources*

Wellington Shire Heritage Advisor

Young, David (2008), "Salt Attack and Rising Damp, a guide to salt damp in historic and older buildings" Technical Guide, prepared for Heritage Victoria.

The following fact sheets contain practical and easy-to-understand information about the care and preservation of war heritage and memorabilia commonly found in local communities across Victoria. They can be downloaded at <<http://www.dpc.vic.gov.au/index.php/veterans/victorian-veterans-virtual-museum/preserving-veterans-heritage/preserving-war-heritage-and-memorabilia>>:

**The ones listed below are particularly relevant for the care of the metal memorial plaque inside the hall.**

- Finding-the-right-conservator-tradespeople-and-materials
- General-Principles
- Metal-objects: including swords and edged weapons.