Victorian Heritage Database Report

Warburton Mechanics Institute



Location:
3409-3411 Warburton Highway, (Main Street), WARBURTON VIC 3799 - Property No 45374

Heritage Status / Level of Significance:
Included in Heritage Overlay

Heritage Inventory (HI) Number:
Listing Authority: HI

Heritage Overlay Number: HO338

Statement of Significance:
The Warburton Mechanics Institute is of at least high local significance as an important public building, which has played a major role in the social and cultural life of the town for over a century. It is one of the few Mechanics Institutes in Victoria which still has its library. The building has architectural significance as a good example of a relatively intact Edwardian timber Mechanics Institute. Its rear two-storey section (the earlier 1897 Mechanics Institute) makes the building one of only a very small number of two-storey Mechanics Institutes in the State. The Warburton Mechanics Institute is one of eight remaining Mechanics Institutes in Yarra Ranges

Shire; this is an increasingly rare building type in the State.

The Warburton Mechanics Institute has been added to the Interim List of the Register of the National Estate with the following Statement of Significance:

The Warburton Mechanics Institute has strong historic and social value for the community as the Institute served as a meeting and social gathering place from 1897 until 1992. The Institute is symbolic of the value of collective endeavour, being a building constructed by and for the community. (Criteria A.4 and G.1)

The Warburton Mechanics Institute is important as a good example of a rare Edwardian style wooden mechanics institute, and retains various internal details of its original form and function. (Criterion D.2) (Historic Theme 6.1 Forming associations, libraries and institutes for self-education.)

Description

Warburton Mechanics Institute is a large timber building constructed right to the street alignment. It size and community function have made it a landmark and important community meeting place serving Warburton for more than one hundred years.

The present building contains the second and third Mechanics Institute's built in Warburton, the first having been destroyed by fire. The Warburton Highway frontage of the building is single storey, while the rear is two storeys, reflecting the steep drop from the main street level to the river flats at the rear. The building is in three distinct parts: the front rooms, main hall and the supper room.

The supper room at the rear of the building is the oldest section. This two-storey element is the second (c1897) hall that was moved to its present position c1912 to enable a larger hall to be built. Today it is a rare surviving example of the few two storey halls built in Victoria. This section of the building has served as a supper room, its external chimney indicating its function. This section of the building has a gabled, corrugated iron roof and, like the whole, is clad in weatherboards. The windows have been boarded over. There is a rear door in the small skillion extension that is most likely the kitchen.

The main hall and the front rooms form the main part of the building. The main hall is rectangular in plan. The main decoration is its half timbered front gable set on simple Edwardian timber brackets. This detailing is repeated in the front section, with a small gable set above the recessed entry. This section has characteristically narrow eaves with paired eave brackets. The windows are generally boarded up; the one exposed window has six-paned sashes. A chimney is located on the western firewall of the front section.

An illustration of the building in 1988 shows that the building had two double-hung sash windows and a larger picture window on the main facade. The windows on the side facade appear to have multi-paned windows, with an upper highlight window. (Whitford 1988:27-28)

The building has not been inspected internally, however the interior has been described as including a large hall, with a sprung dance floor, two front rooms, one of which was used for the free library, a stage with dressing rooms, and the supper room underneath the stage at the rear of the hall. It also retains a pressed metal proscenium arch, and the projection booth, which was built for the 'Bioscope'. (Register of the National Estate, Interim Listing)

There is a large mature cedar on the rear boundary, and another tree overhanging the rear section of the building.

The integrity of the building is quite high. The original hall (1897) was incorporated into the new structure, which was built in 1912. In 1997 it was reported that the building had some structural problems as the result of neglect. The sub floor at the front of the building had partially collapsed, which had resulted in the apparent

collapse of the western side of the building facade. However, an engineer reported favourably on this situation at the time. Drainage work was also required to prevent further moisture damage to the building. In 1999, the building was reported to be in an unsafe condition. (Register of the National Estate, Interim Listing)

Good

Minor Modifications

Heritage Study / Consultant	Yarra Ranges - Shire of Yarra Ranges Heritage Study, Context Pty Ltd, 2000
Construction Date Range	
Architect / Designer	
Municipality	YARRA RANGES SHIRE
Other names	
Hermes number	115931
Property number	45374

This place/object may also be State heritage listed. Check the Victorian Heritage Database. For further details, contact the local Council or go to Planning Schemes Online