

BACCHUS MARSH HERITAGE STUDY.

Ref: 158A

Richard Peterson Architect & Conservation Consultant. Daniel Catrice Historian 1994.

NAME: RSL, Public Library and Hall.

PREVIOUS NAME: Soldiers' Memorial Hall and Mechanics' Institute Hall.

ADDRESS: Main Street.

TITLE DETAILS:

USE: Hall and library

CONSTRUCTION DATE: RSL: 1921; Library: 1971; Hall: 1883 **SOURCE:** 2

ALTERATIONS/ADDITIONS: **DATE:** 1971 **SOURCE:** 1

DESIGNER: 1883, D.R. Stewart **BUILDER:** 1883: J.F. Taylor

SOURCE: 1

CRITERIA: H3./ H2./ H4. **HISTORIC THEME:** Commemorating. Community life.

DESCRIPTION: **STYLE:** Late Victorian/Modern **STORIES:** 1

MATERIALS: **WALLS** Brick **ROOF** Steel **STRUCTURE** Lb

CONDITION: Good **INTACTNESS:** Poor. 1971: Excellent.

THREATS: Amalgamation.

SIGNIFICANT INTACT ELEMENTS:

FORM. VERANDAH. USE.

SIGNIFICANCE:

TYPE: HISTORICAL. ARCHITECTURAL. SOCIAL.

LEVEL: LOCAL.

DESIGNATION EXISTING: Nil

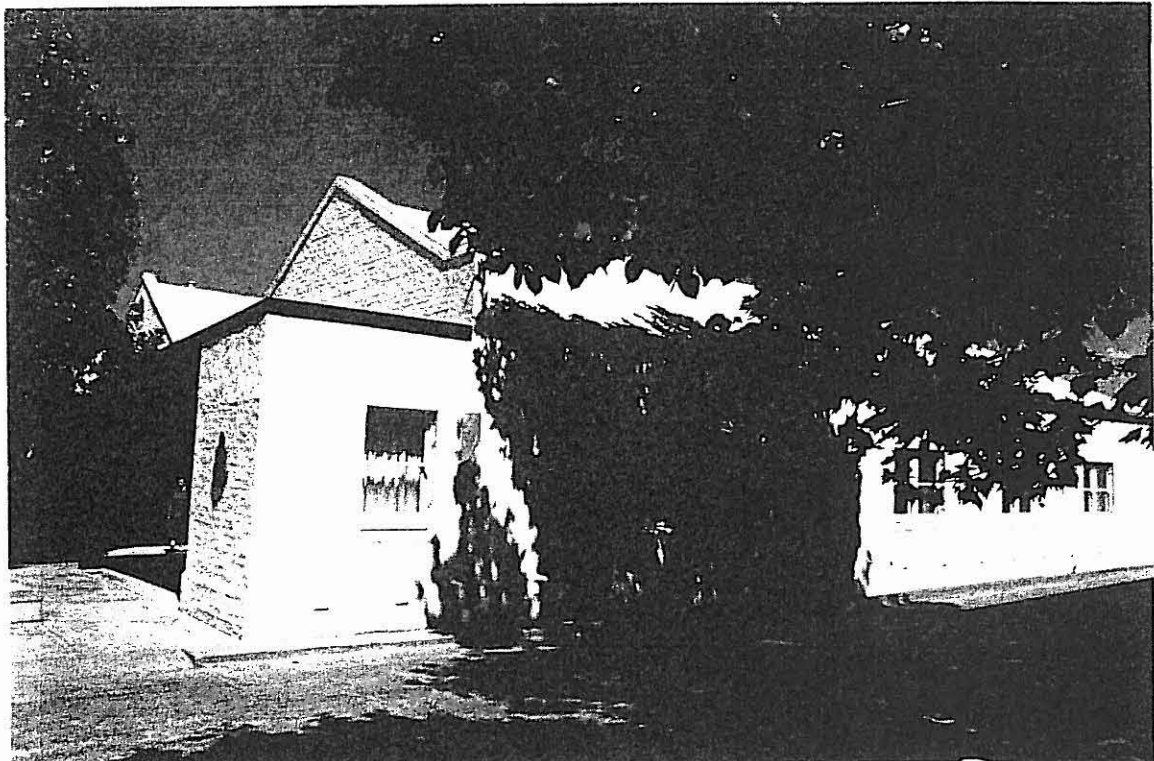
RECOMMENDED CONTROL: PLANNING SCHEME.

MAP NO: U4.07

SURVEY: RP, DC.

DATE: 19.1.94

NEGS: 12.26,27,27A; 13.2, 6-10, 29.13.



HISTORY: This group of buildings comprises three separate structures linked, physically and stylistically, by a verandah, erected in 1971, when renovations were completed to the design of Peter Burns.¹

The first building in the group, the RSL (former **Soldiers' Memorial Hall**), was built in 1921 to commemorate those who volunteered for active service in the Great War of 1914-1919(*sic*). Two decades later, a recreation room was built as an addition to the soldiers' clubrooms. Funded by the Shire Council and RSL War Services Fund, and officially opened on March 16, 1941, the room provided recreation facilities for soldiers on leave from Darley Camp (ref: 361).²

The **Bacchus Marsh Public Library** was built in 1971 on the site of the Shire Hall, built in 1896, but made redundant by the completion of the Shire Offices in 1968. The Library was officially opened on 12 August 1971. The opening ceremony was attended by Hon. Vance Dickie MLC, Mr. W. Stephen MLA, Sir Arthur Nicholson, Chairman of the Library Division of the Library Council of Victoria, and Ken Home, the State Librarian. The Library was erected at a cost of \$64,000 by J.A.W. Nicholson Pty. Ltd., Builders.³

The **Public Hall** was built in 1883 as the Mechanics' Institute. Designed by D.R. Stewart, and erected by local builder, J.F. Taylor, the Mechanics' Institute was the second to be built in Bacchus Marsh.⁴ In 1858, a Mechanics' Institute was established in Young Street (demolished, 1993). This building was offered as a prize in an Art Union to raise funds for the erection of a new Mechanics' Institute in Main Street.⁵ Robert Manning, proprietor of the Royal Hotel (ref: 157), donated the land, and on November 21, 1883, the new Institute was officially opened by Sir William Clarke.⁶

In 1971, the front rooms of the Mechanics' Institute and R.S.L. clubrooms were demolished. The external walls of these buildings were bagged and painted, and a verandah was erected, embracing the Mechanics' Institute, now the Public Hall, the R.S.L. clubrooms, and the new Public Library.

VISUAL DESCRIPTION:

RSL A small brick hall with a gable roof facing Main Street. The brickwork is bagged and painted.

There is a porch in front to right. In front is a *memorial*: a cuboid clad in Castlemaine slate, with bronze plaques. "Erected by the people of the Shire of Bacchus Marsh in recognition of those who served their Country in war". another bluestone *memorial panel* fixed to the

¹ *Bacchus Marsh Express*, 19 August 1971.

² *Back to Bacchus Marsh, 12-20 October 1957. Souvenir*, p.19.

³ *Bacchus Marsh Express*, op.cit.

⁴ "Bacchus Marsh Library", Local History File, BMDHS

⁵ Moore and Oomes, *Bacchus Marsh: A Pictorial Chronicle*, p.38.

⁶ Williams, *A History of Bacchus Marsh and its Pioneers*, p.184.

building commemorates the erection of the building in memory of "... soldiers who fought and died for King and Country in the Great War..."

Public Library A modern (or "contemporary") building with cemented and battered walls, bagged and painted. It has a low pitched steel deck roof across, a contradiction to the roof pitch of the halls which flank it. Its right hand bay thrusts forward in a v-shape. This has useful seating fixed to it. It is linked to the halls by the heavy mission brown stained fascia and battered timber posts of a covered way, which it interrupts. It is lit by a clerestory across. The covered way is also un-related to the footpath which is well forward of it, so its function is really only as a visual link. Fixed to the wall is another *bluestone panel* commemorating a building erected in January 1856. (The construction date of a building which presumably preceded the 1856 Shire Hall, demolished to build the library).

Mechanics' Institute Hall. A brick hall with two parallel gable roofs facing Main Street, that at left is smaller and set back. They are linked with a window-wall lobby, dark glazed. These are also bagged and painted. The covered way, by now with vertical posts, extends across their front. At left is a further *memorial bluestone panel* dated 20 July 1883.

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS: There are 14 public halls in the Shire, but these would have been the finest, before alteration. The Modern design is characteristic of a strain of Melbourne architecture of the period, remotely influenced by English "neo-Brutalism" and Frank Lloyd Wright. The best exponents were Enrico Taglietti (St Kilda Public Library) and Charles Duncan. Robin Boyd's Baker House (ref: 344) is the only directly comparable building in the Shire.

SIGNIFICANCE: A group of three brick public buildings: the RSL (former Soldiers' Memorial Hall, 1921), the Public library (architect Peter Burns, 1971), and the Public Hall (former Mechanics' Institute, architect D.R. Stewart, 1883). Any stylistic characteristics of the halls have been erased and they have been linked to the library by a verandah, also by Burns in 1971, in a Modern, neo-Brutalist style.

The group has local historical significance for its association with cultural, educational and social developments in the community life of Bacchus Marsh. The four memorial stones commemorate commitments by the community to international engagement (rather than casualties) and also the commencement of construction of the Mechanics Institute and an unknown earlier building.

Finally the 1971 construction has local historical significance in demonstrating the effect of local government initiative and as evidence of the approach adopted at that time to conserving the two historic buildings.

INTACTNESS: Poor. The alterations have severely reduced the integrity of these historic buildings, in crating a new design of its own period. This design is intact.

CONDITIONS & THREATS: Generally good. There is at least one structural crack between the two gables of the Mechanics Institute Hall in front. The timber needs staining.

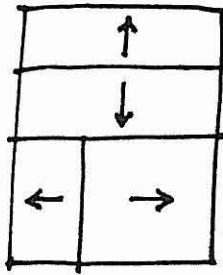
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YOUNG STREET

(159)

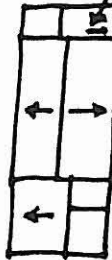
MAIN STREET

CHURCH (158)



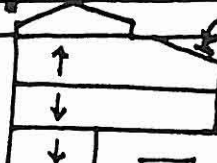
SHIRE OF BACCHUS MARSH

MEMORIAL (158A)



RSL

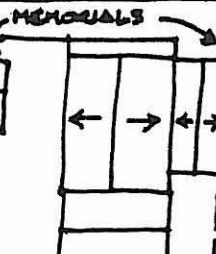
COVERED



LIBRARY

(158A)

WAY



MECHANICS INSTITUTE

MEMORIALS

KINDER-GARTEN

(160)

