

Photographic recording of Christmas Hills Mechanics' Institute and Free Library, 787 Ridge Road, Christmas Hills

Background

This photographic recording of the Christmas Hills Mechanics' Institute and Free Library, has been carried out as a condition of permit for its demolition.

Heritage listings

Christmas Hills Mechanics' Institute Hall and Free Library (Harold Muir Hall) was covered by Heritage Overlay HO243 under the Nillumbik Shire Planning Scheme.

Christmas Hills Mechanics' Institute.

The following information was drawn from the place citation from the C13 Heritage Stage 2 Final Report Revised Citation, Graeme Butler and Assoc., 2001.

Description

Prior to its demolition, the Mechanics' Institute Hall was a simple, gabled roof weatherboard building, with corrugated iron roofing, some six-pane timber-framed glazing and a gable finial. The floor had been replaced with new Tasmanian oak boards. The three windows along the south had top hopper sashes. Wired wall vents provided fixed ventilation to the hall. Pole-section hardwood stumps and sawn subfloor framing set the hall onto the hillside while various timber sections internally, it had a chamfered profile ceiling clad with tongue & groove bead-edge pine boarding, presumably once stained and lacquered but painted over. Some of the lower walls of the hall were reclad with strap-jointed fibre cement sheet or hardboard as were the walls to the kitchen addition.

The hall was located in open pasture on the side of a hill, with remnant fruit trees in an adjoining paddock to the north and public tennis courts located to the south (said to have been created by Melbourne Water in exchange for land used at the yacht club). The road reserve it faced is wide and fringed with native forest. To the north at the corner of the main road, is the Christmas Hills First War memorial.

History

This was the second Mechanics' Institute Hall in Christmas Hills. The first one was constructed 1877-78 on the triangular reserve at the junction of Ridge and Ashmore roads. The site was controversial, in the upper (north) part of Christmas Hills, dictated by the early phase selectors, the families of the two original pastoral families. There had been a similar disagreement over the location of the school between the 'topenders' (farmers to the north) and 'bottomenders' (those at the south). In 1893 the first hall burnt down along with all its books and furniture. It was reputed to have been arson. The trustees began to reconstruct the hall on the same site, and by June 1894 the walls had been built and roof pitched. But construction halted here because, local tradition has it, the roof mysteriously disappeared overnight. So a compromise site was chosen, 1 kilometre down Ridge Road, midway between the original site and the 'bottom end' of town. The land was donated by Thomas Young. Once the partially constructed hall had

been moved to the new site, the roof reappeared and the building completed. It was officially opened on 15 March 1895.

An addition was made to the north side of the hall in the 1990s with the help of TAFE apprentices. It was then renamed the Harold Muir Hall after a long-term member of the committee of management.

Statement of significance

Prior to demolition, the 19th-century fabric of the Christmas Hills Mechanics' Institute Hall was considered locally historically and socially significant as:

- a long-standing public building in the Christmas Hills locality and among the oldest mechanics institutes in the Shire (Criterion A4);
- part of a significant building group, including the former post office, Lee house and war memorial, each having had a major role in the local community (Criterion A4, G1)

Technical details

All photos were taken by Aaron H. Murphy on 20 October 2010.

Photos were taken in RAW format with a Canon EOS 5D MKII 21-megapixel camera. The photos were then converted into TIFF files, around 120 megabytes in size each. Using DXO Optics, the TIFF versions of the photos were given contrast and distortion correction.

The report consists of photographic A4 prints and a contact sheet that are giclée printed on Hahnemuhle Photo Rag using Ultrachrome K3 inks, key plan showing photos taken, photo record with description printed on archival acid free paper, and two Kodak Gold Preservation DVDs (100-year archival) containing two copies of the photos, contact sheet, key plan and photo list. The entire report is stored in archival sleeves in an archival box folder

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Camera: Canon EOS 5D MKII		Lens: 17-40mm Canon L 70-200mm Canon L	
Sensor size: 21 megapixel			
Date taken: 20/10/2010		Photographer: Aaron Murphy	
Image File No.	Description		
Christmas Hills Mechanics Institute 01	East elevation of Hall (left) and 1990s addition (right), looking west		
Christmas Hills Mechanics Institute 02	East elevation of Hall with 1990s addition in foreground, looking west		
Christmas Hills Mechanics Institute 03	East end gable of Hall, showing finial, looking south-west		
Christmas Hills Mechanics Institute 04	Hall in context, looking north-west		
Christmas Hills Mechanics Institute 05	South elevation of Hall, looking north		
Christmas Hills Mechanics Institute 06	Detail of six-light window on south elevation, looking north		
Christmas Hills Mechanics Institute 07	West elevation of Hall with toilet block in foreground, looking east		
Christmas Hills Mechanics Institute 08	North elevation, showing 1990s addition, looking south		
Christmas Hills Mechanics Institute 09	Interior of Hall, showing coved ceiling profile, looking east		
Christmas Hills Mechanics Institute 10	Detail of south-east corner inside hall, showing lining boards to walls and ceiling, looking south-east		
Christmas Hills Mechanics Institute 11	Detail of architrave and sill of east end window		
Christmas Hills Mechanics Institute 12	Interior of Hall, showing kitchen addition at end, looking west		