

HERITAGE CITATION REPORT

Name STRATHFIELDSAYE SHIRE HALL
Address 838 Strathfieldsaye Road STRATHFIELDSAYE **Grading** 2008 Local
Building Type Hall Town Hall
Assessment by Context Pty Ltd



Recommended Heritage Protection VHR No HI No PS Yes

Designer / Architect Steane, George

Architectural Style Victorian Period (1851-1901)
 Free Classical

Maker / Builder Pallet, G

Integrity

High

History and Historical Context

History of the Shire of Strathfieldsaye

The land around the former Shires of Strathfieldsaye and McIvor had a long history prior to the arrival of Europeans. The Jaara Jaara people are the original inhabitants of the area.

The area around Port Phillip was explored by Sir Thomas Mitchell, the Surveyor General of New South Wales, and a large party in 1836, on the homeward leg of a journey to Portland Bay. Impressed by what he perceived as the bounty of

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the land, Mitchell named the area *Australia Felix*.^[1]

The Port Phillip district was opened up for settlement soon thereafter, and much of the land in the Western districts of Victoria, including the former Shires of McIvor and Strathfieldsaye, was subsequently dominated by a series of pastoral runs. Most of the area around the town of Axedale and the numerous small towns in its vicinity was licensed to David Jennings as part of the Campaspe Plains run. The run covered an area of more than 144,900 acres and was populated with an estimated 12,000 sheep. A portion of Campaspe Plains was licensed to A. Jennings and George Playne in 1840 and the 67,000 acre station became known as Axedale. In the coming decade the holders of the license changed a number of times. By the time the leasehold over the land was cancelled in 1865, the run had greatly reduced in size.^[2]

Following the cancellation of leasehold, land holdings were of a smaller scale and pastoralists were gradually overtaken by farmers. The discovery of gold at Bendigo and the surrounding areas changed the face of the district and brought about new patterns of settlement and expansion. William John Bulling claimed to be the first man to discover gold at McIvor, and he was granted a £400 reward for the find. By 1853, over one hundred prospectors had assembled at Wild Duck Creek in the hopes of striking it rich. This number expanded the following year, and included some 2,000 Chinese immigrants.^[3]

The Strathfieldsaye Road District was proclaimed in the Government Gazette on the 12th August 1861, and encompassed within it the parishes of Axedale, Strathfieldsaye, Eppalock, Mandurang, Sedgwick and Lyell.^[4] The process of election of the board was punctuated by rivalries between Catholic and Protestant faiths, a characteristic of the district which infiltrates much of its history. Strathfieldsaye met the criterion prescribed to become a Shire in 1863, a transition that was officially proclaimed on the 17th September of that year.^[5]

In 1864, Strathfieldsaye Shire was divided into three wards; Mandurang, Strathfieldsaye and Axedale

History of Strathfieldsaye

The Shire Hall at Strathfieldsaye was built in 1869 to accommodate the officers of the new Shire. Prospectors panned for gold in the nearby Sheepwash Creek at the height of the gold boom. Following the dwindling of the gold boom, many former prospectors turned to farming and agricultural pursuits. Orchards were established and flourished in the rich soils of the district, though Strathfieldsaye remained one of the smaller townships in the district. The forestry industry was also of some import to the township of Strathfieldsaye, especially during the height of the gold rushes.

By the late 1800s, the area around Strathfieldsaye was being used extensively as vineyards, though the industry was devastated by the Phylloxera outbreak in the 1890s. The failing of the wine industry then prompted the development of many of the already established orchards in the vicinity of the town. The provision of dried fruit to prospectors had proved a valuable industry during the gold rushes, and orchardists continued to expand in the district into the twentieth century.

During recent times Strathfieldsaye has expanded in response to growing pressure for residential land, and has gradually shifted away from its previous agricultural focus.

Contextual History of Town Halls

Under the Parish Roads Act of 1840 local communities had the facility to request the establishment of parish road trusts, but few were ever established. The discovery of gold in the 1850s prompted a shift towards the formalisation of local government, prompted by the rapidly increasing population and a need for its regulation.^[6]

The Road District and Shire Act was passed in 1863. This categorical system manifested distinctions between Roads Districts and Shires and implemented a system of qualification for inclusion in each category. During the 1860s and

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1870s a number of rural shires were established, initially covering vast tracts of land which were gradually reduced as increases in population prompted the formulation of new Shires.[7]

The establishment of a Roads District or Shire was usually accompanied by the construction of a Shire or Town Hall soon thereafter. Such Shire Halls served the dual function of provision of offices associated with the Shire, and also as the social and civic centre of the community.[8]

History of Strathfieldsaye Shire Hall, 838 Strathfieldsaye Road, Strathfieldsaye

The Strathfieldsaye District Road Board held its inaugural meeting in September 1861, incorporating the membership of Messr Teague, the Chairman, Cook, Harris, Brennan, Clack, Payne, Ritchie, Somerville, Campion, Crawford and Farquarson. In a subsequent meeting held on the 15th October 1863, the district surveyor was instructed to prepare plans for a building to house offices and a meeting hall for the Roads Board. While the building had not yet been approved by the government, tenders were called for a builder for the project in March 1864.[9] Meetings of the Roads Board were in the meantime conducted at the Duke of Wellington Hotel.[10]

Approval from the government proved not forthcoming and plans for the Roads Board offices were redrafted in 1866. Tenders were called once again, but either no tenders were received, or none came in under the stipulated budget of £120.[11] Tenders were recalled in July 1866, and despite a budget of £150, were variously received totalling between £312 and £363. The Roads Board ultimately purchased the Duke of Wellington Hotel from Thomas Holmes as a temporary solution to their accommodation problems, though the degree of works required at that premises made the decision a difficult one.[12]

Strathfieldsaye was declared a Shire on the 17th of December 1866, heightening the feelings of inadequacy with regard to their accommodations.[13]

Plans for a Shire Hall for Strathfieldsaye were again drawn up by the surveyor in 1868 and a committee formed to make inquiries into a suitable site for the building. By this stage estimates for the cost of the Hall had risen to over £400. The Hall was eventually planned to be constructed adjacent to the Duke of Wellington Hotel, on land already owned by the Shire through their purchase of that building.[14]

Plans for the building were designed by architect George Steane, and community consultation has also indicated that he may also have been the Shire Engineer at the time [15]. George Pallett's tender of £629/3/6, incorporating a stable, toilets, fencing and gates, won the project and Shire Hall opened on the 25th June 1869. The building was heralded as 'an unpretending but substantial building of red brick with white quoins and string courses'.[16] The building was opened with a celebratory banquet chaired by Council President R. B. Sibley Esq, and attended by the Hon. Minister Justice, members of the Borough, the Presidents of Marong and Huntly Councils as well as the Mayor of Sandhurst.[17]

The Shire Hall was used as a temporary schooling facility for the students of Strathfieldsaye for fifteen months in the 1870s, but the frequency of holidays taken by Councillors proved this an inadequate situation in which to conduct education.[18]

The Hall proved an important facility for the community of Strathfieldsaye, including during times of need. During the floods of 1889 up to thirty people lodged at the Hall overnight after rising waters had destroyed or made inaccessible their homes.[19]

The Shire of Strathfieldsaye occupied the Hall until new premises were constructed in 1972.[20]

[1] Randell, J. O. (1985). *McIvor: A History of the Shire and the Township of Heathcote*, Shire of McIvor, p. 1.

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- [2] Spreadborough, Robert and Anderson, Hugh (1983). *Victorian Squatters*, Red Rooster Press, Ascot Vale, p.150
- [3] Spreadborough & Anderson (1983), p. 31.
- [4] Hewat, Tim (1983), *Bridge Over Troubled Waters, A History of the Shire of Strathfieldsaye*, Shire of Strathfieldsaye, Victoria, pp. 11 - 12.
- [5] Hewat, Tim (1983), p. 18.
- [6] Ward, Andrew (1996), *Typological study of Local Government Offices/ Halls in Victoria*, Historic Buildings Council, Victoria, pp. 31 - 52.
- [7] Ward, Andrew (1996), pp. 31 - 52.
- [8] Ward, Andrew (1996), pp. 31 - 52.
- [9] Mitchell, Barbara (2005). *On the Creeks: Early Life at Strathfieldsaye in the Valley of the Three Creeks - Axe, Emu and Sheepwash*, Barbara Mitchell, Bendigo, Victoria. p. 36
- [10] Mitchell, Barbara (2005). p. 36
- [11] Mitchell, Barbara (2005).p. 36
- [12] Mitchell, Barbara (2005). pp. 36 & 37.
- [13] Mitchell, Barbara (2005). pp. 36 & 37.
- [14] Mitchell, Barbara (2005). pp. 36 & 37.
- [15] Mitchell, Barbara (2005). p. 37 and information supplied by National Trust, 2009.
- [16] Mitchell, Barbara (2005). p. 37.
- [17] Mitchell, Barbara (2005). p. 37.
- [18] Mitchell, Barbara (2005). p. 104.
- [19] Mitchell, Barbara (2005). p. 13.
- [20] Mitchell, Barbara (2005). p. 37.

Secondary sources

Hewat, Tim (1983), *Bridge Over Troubled Waters, A History of the Shire of Strathfieldsaye*, Shire of Strathfieldsaye, Victoria

Mitchell, Barbara (2005). *On the Creeks: Early Life at Strathfieldsaye in the Valley of the Three Creeks - Axe, Emu and Sheepwash*, Barbara Mitchell, Bendigo, Victoria

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Ward, Andrew (1996), *Typological study of Local Government Offices/ Halls in Victoria*, Historic Buildings Council, Victoria

Information supplied by National Trust, 2009.

Relevant Historical Australian Themes

7 Governing Victorians

7.1 Developing institutions of self government and democracy

Description

Physical Description

The Strathfieldsaye Shire Hall is a brick building designed in the Free Classical manner. This style was favoured by the Public Works Department for a number of public buildings including Shire Halls and courthouses. The form includes a central taller volume flanked by matching smaller gables. In the case of the Shire Hall these would be occupied by the Shire Secretary and Shire Engineer whilst the larger volume was the council chamber. The portico at the front is designed with a flat arch in the centre and matching smaller arches each side. The face red brick is unadorned apart from a plain string course at the roof springing point, brick quoining and dressings to the round arch windows. There are matching chimneys that are located to reinforce the symmetrical design. Painting of the detailed brickwork to window openings and quoining has been done, however this is the extent of the external alterations. The roof is now corrugated iron but may have been slate.

The picket fence is complementary to the building. The interior has not been investigated, however it is reported that the building utilises the cavity wall construction method. [1] The building at the rear is not significant.

Information supplied by National Trust, 2009.

Physical Condition

Good

Conservation Policy

It is recommended that the face brick not be painted.

Statement of Significance

What is significant?

The Strathfieldsaye Shire Hall site, including all the fabric of the 1869 red brick building, is significant.

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How is it significant?

The Strathfieldsaye Shire Hall is of local historic, architectural, and social significance to the City of Greater Bendigo. The modern buildings at the rear are not of interest.

Why is it significant?

The site of the Strathfieldsaye Shire Hall is historically significant for its early association with the establishment of the Strathfieldsaye District Road Board (later the Roads Board), and the declaration of the Strathfieldsaye Shire in 1866. The Hall is also historically significant for continuous occupation by the Shire of Strathfieldsaye for over one hundred years. Built in 1869, this is one of City of Greater Bendigo's earliest surviving public buildings. *Criterion A*

Designed by George Steane and built by George Pallett in 1869 the Strathfieldsaye Shire Hall has aesthetic significance as a purpose built Shire Hall designed in the Free Classical manner. It is also of importance as an early example of the novel system of cavity wall construction. The building is largely intact and unaltered. Other important elements include the arched portico of the main entrance with brick arched features on either side; the brick quoining and dressings to the round arch windows; the three gabled roof; and the matching chimneys that reinforce the symmetrical design. Retention of the picket fence is also important. *Criterion E*

The Hall has social significance as a temporary schooling facility in the 1870s and as a flood refuge in 1889. *Criterion G*

Assessment Against Criteria

HERCON CRITERIA

Importance to the course or pattern of our cultural or natural history. *Criterion A*

Possession of uncommon rare or endangers aspects of our cultural or natural history. *Criterion B*

Potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of our cultural or natural history. *Criterion C*

Importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of cultural or natural places or environments. *Criterion D*

Importance in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics. *Criterion E*

Importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement at a particular period. *Criterion F*

Strong or special association with a particular community or cultural group for social, cultural or spiritual reasons. This includes the significance of a place to Indigenous peoples as part of the continuing and developing cultural traditions. *Criterion G*

Special association with the life or works of a person, or group of persons, of importance in our history. *Criterion H*

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Recommendations 2008

External Paint Controls	Yes
Internal Alteration Controls	No
Tree Controls	No
Fences & Outbuildings	No
Prohibited Uses May Be Permitted	No
Incorporated Plan	Yes
Aboriginal Heritage Place	No

Other Recommendations

It is recommended that the former Town Hall at 838 Strathfieldsaye Road, Strathfieldsaye, be retained as an individual place on the Heritage Overlay of the Greater Bendigo City Planning Scheme with the schedule entry as shown above. The extent of registration is the whole of the property as defined by the title boundaries. The mapping should be amended to reflect the correct address of this building. The recommended Incorporated Plan is the 'Permit Exemption Incorporated Plan - Former Shires of McIvor and Strathfieldsaye.'