

HAMILTON RACECOURSE



23522 Hamilton Racecourse
Grandstand 1970s 1836



23522 Hamilton Racecourse
Grandstand old 1837



23522 Hamilton Racecourse
Grandstand old 1838



23522 Hamilton Racecourse
Grandstand old 1839



23522 Hamilton Racecourse
Grandstand old 1840



23522 Hamilton Racecourse
Grandstand old 1841



23522 Hamilton Racecourse
Grandstand old 1842



23522 Hamilton Racecourse
Grandstand old 1843



23522 Hamilton Racecourse
Grandstand old rear 1845



23522 Hamilton Racecourse
Grandstand old side 1844



23522 Hamilton Racecourse
Grandstand Punch 1834



23522 Hamilton Racecourse
Grandstand Punch 1835



23522 Hamilton Racecourse
Grandstand old turret 1846

Location

Henty Highway HAMILTON, Southern Grampians Shire

Municipality

SOUTHERN GRAMPIANS SHIRE

Level of significance

Stage 2 study complete

Heritage Listing

Southern Grampians Shire

Statement of Significance

Last updated on - March 5, 2004

What is significant?

The Hamilton Racecourse complex, located on the west side of the Henty Highway about 4.0kms north-west of the centre of Hamilton, dates from 1859 when the land, then known as Kippen's flat, was made available. In the following year, the Hamilton Turf Club was formed. The land, comprising 120 acres, was permanently reserved in 1864. The first Grand National Steeplechase was held in 1866, starting and finishing at the course but passing through adjacent farms on the way. This was a year before the Great Western Steeplechase began at Coleraine in which the famous horsemen, Adam Lindsay Gordon and Cuthbert Fetherstonhaugh would ride. The Turf Club went into financial decline at the end of 1866, but revived in 1867 as the Western Racing Club. Its committee contained a mixture of pastoralists and leading townsmen, a convention continued during later amalgamations and re-constitutions of the local racing clubs. In 1873, the club built the impressive large timber and iron grandstand. The architect and builder are not known but the combined elegance of its design and novelty of its construction are notable for such an early date and indicate very competent professional involvement. The structure remains substantially intact and in good condition. It can be contrasted with the new grandstand built more than 120 years later, which was designed by the notable Hamilton architect, Frank Punch. The other usual racing facilities support the two grandstands, the whole complex being located within grounds landscaped traditionally.

How is it significant?

The Hamilton Racecourse complex is of historical, social and architectural significance for the city of Hamilton, the southern Grampians Shire and for the State of Victoria.

Why is it significant?

The Hamilton Racecourse complex is of historical significance for its association with the early history of horse racing in Victoria. It has further historical significance for its continuous association with the thoroughbred horse racing industry over 100 years. It has social significance as the provision of substantial facilities for mass public entertainment, bridging the gaps between town and country, rich and poor. The two grandstands are of architectural significance; the older as one of the earliest surviving large grandstands in Victoria, all the more significant for the sophisticated elegance of its design achieved through its novel construction; the newer for providing a contrast in its modern facilities. It is also of interest as an example of the Hamilton architect, Frank Punch.

Heritage Study/Consultant	Southern Grampians - Southern Grampians Shire Heritage Study, Timothy Hubbard P/L, Annabel Neylon, 2002;
Construction dates	1873,
Heritage Act Categories	Registered place,
Hermes Number	23522
Property Number	

Physical Conditions

Both grandstands in excellent condition and the other facilities range from good to very good condition.

Physical Description 1

The Hamilton Racecourse comprises two main grandstands, one built in the later nineteenth century and the other, designed by local architect Frank Punch, in the later twentieth century. They provide an important comparison for the accommodation of patrons and forms of construction for their building type.

The older grandstand is typical of the nineteenth century in its raked form with service areas below the seating section. The large structure is framed in timber with walls clad in corrugated iron. There are small-paned windows in the rear wall. The framing of the walls is essentially post-and-beam with massive diagonal braces. Cast iron columns support the front of the roof with a web-truss beam, which continues on the sides of the structure. The elaborate double-curved roof, also clad with corrugated iron, is supported on iron trusses made up from angled sections riveted together. Iron brackets springing from the timber posts and iron columns of the structure support its very wide eaves. Two octagonal turrets or pavilions with flagpoles surmount the roof and act as ventilators. The seating comprises timber slats on wrought iron frames, possibly dating from the Interwar period rather than the original construction. The balustrade is cast iron with panels in a common design. The ends of the grandstand are glazed. Two modern stairs have been built in front of the grandstand to provide access from the lawn.

The newer grandstand is typical of the twentieth century in two-storey form with service and office areas below and a bar and dining room above. There is an open, bow-fronted balcony across the facade, which extends at one end to form a staircase. The balustrading is an open metal mesh. The structure is built of light pink/cream bricks with contrasting courses of dark brick.

There are the usual supporting structures such as stables, stewards' rooms, mounting yard, judges' box, betting ring and bars to complete the racecourse complex. The grounds are landscaped traditionally.

Historical Australian Themes

Theme 8: Developing Australia's cultural life

8.1 Organising recreation

8.1.1 Playing and watching organised sport

8.1.2 Betting

8.5.4 Pursuing common leisure interests

Usage/Former Usage

Continuing as a racecourse

Integrity

High degree of integrity

Physical Description 2

Western Racing Club, office bearers over the years

Adam Lindsay Gordon and Cuthbert Fetherstonhaugh, possible riders

Physical Description 3

Race Course and Public Recreation Reserve (Permanent)

This place/object may be included in the Victorian Heritage Register pursuant to the Heritage Act 2017. Check the Victorian Heritage Database, selecting 'Heritage Victoria' as the place source.

For further details about Heritage Overlay places, contact the relevant local council or go to Planning Schemes Online <http://planningschemes.dpcd.vic.gov.au/>