

# LEONGATHA SECONDARY COLLEGE



Leongatha Secondary College\_1934 building\_24/10/2007



Leongatha Secondary College\_sloyd room\_KJ\_24/10/07



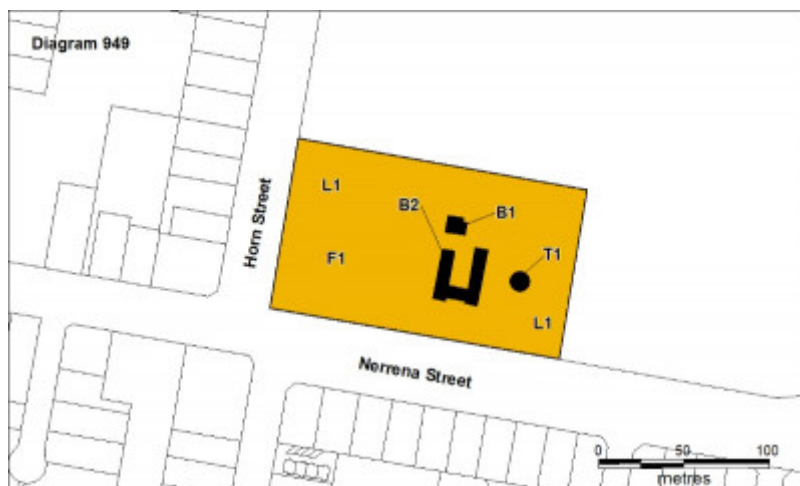
Leongatha Secondary College\_rear of 1934 building\_Kj\_24/10/07



Leongatha Secondary College\_Silver Jubilee Park\_KJ\_24/10/07



Leongatha Secondary College\_Oak tree next to Bristol building



Leongatha Secondary College\_plan\_Dec 07

## Location

1-47 HORN STREET LEONGATHA, SOUTH GIPPSLAND SHIRE

## Municipality

## Level of significance

Registered

## Victorian Heritage Register (VHR) Number

H0949

## Heritage Overlay Numbers

HO72

## VHR Registration

June 5, 2008

## Heritage Listing

Victorian Heritage Register

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## Statement of Significance

Last updated on -

What is significant?

Leongatha Agricultural High School was among the first state secondary schools established in Victoria, with classes commencing in February 1912 and a new school building completed by the end of 1912. The site was part of the Leongatha Labour Colony, established on crown land, which operated from 1893 to 1919 to provide food, shelter, employment and training in farm skills for unemployed men. In 1914 a detached sloyd room was added at the rear of the school. The sloyd program was developed in Sweden and introduced into Victorian schools in 1901, to foster the 'general development of boys' natural facilities', mainly by the teaching of woodwork skills. Girls were not included, and instead were taught cooking or needlework. The agricultural side of the school never flourished, and the farm ceased operating in 1930 and the school became Leongatha High School. In September 1933 the school, but not the sloyd room, was totally destroyed by fire. A new high school building, designed by the Public Works Department and similar in design to the original, was built in 1934 by J Cox. During 1935-36 sixty trees were planted on the south-west corner of the site to commemorate the school's Silver Jubilee. By 1954 the sloyd room was used as the school cafeteria, and later as a home room. The 1934 school building is still in use.

The 1934 school building is a single storey weatherboard H-plan building with a verandah between the two short projecting front wings, and a courtyard between the two longer rear wings. It has a low pitched hipped corrugated iron roof and large banks of multi-pane double hung sash windows with hopper lights above. Verandahs around two sides of the rear courtyard provide access to the classrooms. The exterior of the building is largely intact, but some room arrangements have been changed, particularly in the office area at the front of the school. The sloyd room is a detached timber structure, originally of one room with a skillion on one end for a timber store and a brick chimney in the centre of one long side. Along the north side is a brick-floored skillion, added in 1927 as a sheet metal room and blacksmith shop. The Silver Jubilee Park is on the south-west corner of the site, and to the east of the 1934 building is an Algerian Oak tree (*Quercus canariensis*) planted in 1912 by the first manager of the school farm.

How is it significant?

Leongatha Secondary College is significant for historical and architectural reasons to the State of Victoria.

Why is it significant?

The Leongatha Secondary College is historically significant as one of the earliest secondary schools established in Victoria. The 1934 building is a rare example of a single storey timber secondary school built during the Depression from locally available materials. The significance of the school is greatly enhanced by the survival of its sloyd room, once a common feature in primary and secondary schools in Victoria but now rare, particularly in secondary schools. This is the only known surviving sloyd room in Victoria associated with a secondary school. The 1914 sloyd room is historically significant for its association with an important educational technique, taught only to boys in a large number of schools in Victoria in the first half of the twentieth century. It is significant as a reflection of gender biases in education in the first half of the twentieth century and differing expectations in the education of boys and girls. The 1912 oak tree and the Silver Jubilee Park, planted to commemorate the Silver Jubilee of the school in 1937, are significant for their association with the history of the school: trees were often planted at schools to commemorate important events, but few have survived, and commemorative school gardens are now rare. The site is also historically significant for its association with the former Leongatha Labour Colony.

The Leongatha Secondary College is architecturally significant as an intact example of an early twentieth century timber rural high school with its original timber sloyd room.

## Permit Exemptions

### General Exemptions:

General exemptions apply to all places and objects included in the Victorian Heritage Register (VHR). General exemptions have been designed to allow everyday activities, maintenance and changes to your property, which don't harm its cultural heritage significance, to proceed without the need to obtain approvals under the Heritage Act 2017.

Places of worship: In some circumstances, you can alter a place of worship to accommodate religious practices without a permit, but you must [notify](#) the Executive Director of Heritage Victoria before you start the works or activities at least 20 business days before the works or activities are to commence.

Subdivision/consolidation: Permit exemptions exist for some subdivisions and consolidations. If the subdivision or consolidation is in accordance with a planning permit granted under Part 4 of the *Planning and Environment Act 1987* and the application for the planning permit was referred to the Executive Director of Heritage Victoria as a determining referral authority, a permit is not required.

Specific exemptions may also apply to your registered place or object. If applicable, these are listed below. Specific exemptions are tailored to the conservation and management needs of an individual registered place or object and set out works and activities that are exempt from the requirements of a permit. Specific exemptions prevail if they conflict with general exemptions.

Find out more about heritage permit exemptions [here](#).

### Specific Exemptions:

General Conditions:

1. All alterations are to be planned and carried out in a manner which prevents damage to the fabric of the registered place.

2. Should it become apparent during further inspection or the carrying out of alterations that originally or previously hidden or inaccessible details of the place are revealed which relate to the significance of the place, then the exemption covering such alteration shall cease and the Executive Director shall be notified as soon as possible.
3. If there is a conservation policy and plan approved by the Executive Director, all works will be in accordance with it.
4. Nothing in this declaration prevents the Executive Director from amending or rescinding all or any of the permit exemptions.
5. Nothing in this declaration exempts owners or their agents from the responsibility to seek relevant planning or building permits from the responsible authority where applicable.

Construction dates            1914, 1934,  
Heritage Act Categories    Registered place,  
Other Names                    LEONGATHA HIGH SCHOOL, LEONGATHA SECONDARY COLLEGE,  
Hermes Number                27428  
Property Number

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## History

### Contextual history

Throughout the nineteenth century there were no State high schools in Victoria, only State primary and technical schools, the only secondary education being provided by private schools. In 1899 it was proposed that continuation classes be established in State primary schools to raise the standard of primary education, in order to provide a higher level of education for working class children who were otherwise destined only for a future as manual workers. Victoria's first Director of Education, Frank Tate, was appointed in 1902, and stressed the advantages to the nation of extending the State education system, as had already been done for example in Germany, France, Great Britain and the United States, and even in New South Wales and New Zealand. An extension of the State education system however aroused antagonism in many as it was considered to be an attack on existing class privileges and interests, in particular on the existing private schools.

The Melbourne Continuation School, the first State secondary school, was opened in 1905 at the old Model School in Spring Street. As before, this continued to provide teacher training, but some students, even those from poor backgrounds, could pursue courses leading to University entrance. The school was in effect Victoria's first State high school. Other continuation schools were established in 1907 in Ballarat, Bendigo, Warrnambool and Sale.

The Education Act of 1910 gave the government authority to establish district high schools (as well as higher elementary schools, continuation schools, preparatory trade classes, trade schools and technical schools). As well as the five continuation schools already established, high schools opened in 1909 in Shepparton and Wangaratta, in 1910 in Melbourne (University), Castlemaine and Geelong, in 1911 in Coburg, Colac, Mansfield and Warragul, and in 1912 eight high schools opened (the highest number established in any one year until 1954): at Leongatha, Maryborough, Horsham, Kyneton, Stawell, Bairnsdale, Echuca and Mildura. (A Max Badcock, 'The Secondary Division', in *Vision and Realisation*, pp 436-462.) Except for two, these were all located in country areas, a reflection of the belief of the Director of Education, Frank Tate, that Victoria's destiny lay in the country, and he gave strong support for the establishment of high schools in country towns.

According to 'Historic Government Schools. A Comparative Study' (p 7), although one in seven smaller schools in Victoria were built of timber, after 1890 red brick predominated, and larger schools were only exceptionally built of timber. This was often because of a projected declining population in the area, or on potentially unsound sites.

Another possible reason in Gippsland is because of the ready availability of cheap timber.

The sloyd system and sloyd rooms

[a report prepared by Frances O'Neill, ]

The introduction of manual training into Victorian primary schools in the early years of the twentieth century had a number of educational objectives.

These included providing a means by which a knowledge of form, colour, and the properties of materials may be imparted, stimulating inventiveness and independent effort, and securing a training of hand and eye. Manual training was believed to encourage children in observation by the presentation of objects, imitation by utilizing the child's strong desire to do what it sees done, obedience by the failure that results from inattention to instructions in a piece of handwork, a taste for the beautiful in nature and in art, and by giving deftness to the hands, to render the technical education of later years more likely to be appreciated and successful.

Such activities were intended to utilize the hand systematically in the development of the mind and to produce as a result not only the trained intelligence but also the skilled hand (Report of the Minister for Public Instruction, *Victorian Parliamentary Papers*, 1898-9 no 21, p 30).

The basic principles of this educational technique, heavily influenced by the theories of Pestalozzi and Froebel, were adhered to in the kindergarten curriculum and carried on in the early primary years by the teaching of handwork or 'hand and eye training'. In the later primary years this was continued by the training of boys in woodwork or metal work.

The model of manual training adopted by the Victorian education authorities was the Swedish one. This in turn was derived from the method evolved by Uno Cygnaeus, a teacher from Finland based on the principles expounded by Pestalozzi and Froebel. The Sloyd system was named from the Swedish word 'slojd' meaning skilful.

The first exponent of the Sloyd system in Victoria was John Byatt who had studied it at Naas in Sweden at the Abrahamson Sloyd Institute. The first Sloyd room set up in Victoria was at the Queensberry Street Primary School no. 307 in North Melbourne where in 1901 John Byatt trained the first twenty teachers in the new procedures (*Vision and Realisation* . p. 1097?). An exhibition of the work resulting from the training course was held in August 1901 and was attended by 5000 visitors. The display included types of timber, leaves and bark, tree products and models made during the course. A Teacher's Certificate in Sloyd Woodwork was introduced in 1901 and training classes for teachers were held in Melbourne, Maryborough and Bendigo by 1905.

Byatt's version of the Swedish system emphasised 'the general development of the boys' natural facilities' rather than industrial training. He proposed the establishment of a number of training centres with a qualified teacher in charge where 200 boys from nearby schools would attend in groups of 20 for a half-day per week. By the end of 1904, sloyd woodwork centres functioned at nine metropolitan schools. Ballarat, Geelong and Bendigo had two centres each and others existed at Castlemaine, Maryborough and Warrnambool.

In 1907 the Education Department authorized the establishment of centres in any country school with a qualified sloyd teacher on the staff. If a school had no spare classroom the Department offered a £ for £ subsidy up to £25 for the purchase or erection of a suitable building. Later it was agreed that if a community with 200 boys of suitable age could provide rent-free a suitable space would receive benches, tools and timber free and a full-time teacher. In less populous districts a teacher could operate several centres part-time.

By 1912 there were forty-two centres in operation and another twenty planned. However as the secondary system expanded and primary schools finished at Grade 6, the sloyd movement in primary schools faltered. Manual training after 1912 was expanded to include activities such as modelling, gardening, leatherwork, stencilling and weaving. This expansion foreshadowed the development of arts and crafts as part of the general curriculum.

Girls were not included in the sloyd training programme. Parallel classes for girls in cookery and needlework were held in the schools or in central locations. It was not until the 1960s that the term Sloyd went out of use when Art and Craft rooms were built for the teaching of both girls and boys.

History of place

The first secondary school in Leongatha, the Leongatha Agricultural High School, opened in February 1912 in a room at the old Leongatha Primary School, with fifty-five pupils in the charge of the principal A Mesley and two assistant teachers. The new buildings, completed by the end of 1912, were occupied in February 1913 and officially opened by the Director of Education, Frank Tate, on 13 March 1913. An oak tree was planted in 1912. Part of the cost of the construction of the new school was raised by Woorayl Shire Council, who in 1906 struck a special rate of 3d on the pound to raise ?750 for the project. (*Vision and Realisation*, v 3, p 1348; South Gippsland Shire Heritage Study, p 95.) These funds, together with a deputation to the Minister of Education from the Shire and the guarantee by the residents of a minimum enrolment of fifty pupils convinced the Department to agree to the establishment of a secondary school in the town (Lynette Skillern, *En Avant. Leongatha High School 1912-1987*, Leongatha 1987, p 5).

The site chosen for the new school was part of the Leongatha Labour Colony which had been established in 1893 on 822 acres of Crown Land adjacent to the town, in a scheme devised to help those affected by the 1890s depression. It was based on similar labour colonies in Germany, and was the only such colony established in Victoria. Men were brought from Melbourne, fed the same rations as the Armed Forces and paid a small wage. For this they did general farm work, principally forest clearing, and were taught the rudiments of farming, after which they were expected to find employment elsewhere. More than nine thousand men were billeted here before it closed in 1919. The land was subdivided, most for soldier settler farms and with fifteen acres added to the school farm, and the buildings were sold and removed. No buildings remain, though there are two parallel rows of walnut trees along the former entrance drive, no part of the Mary McKillop College, north of the Secondary College. (Skillern, *En Avant*, pp 5-8, and John Murphy, *Leongatha labour Colony 1893-1919*, Woorayl Historical Society 1983.)

Part of the school grounds was used for a school farm: crops were raised, an orchard was established and pedigree jersey cattle and pigs were bred. In the first year twenty-two boys undertook the agricultural course, with the boys working on the farm for a half day a week. However the agricultural side of the school, probably the main reason given for its establishment, never really flourished and ran at a loss; in 1917 only nine students enrolled for the full-time agricultural course, and none after this. In 1930 the pretence of the school being an 'agricultural' high school was abandoned, and all stock and plant were auctioned.

Although established primarily as an Agricultural High School, a broad based curriculum was developed to cater for girls as well as boys. A science room, art room and cookery centre were included in the main building, and in 1914 a sloyd room was added, opened again by Frank Tate. It followed the opening of a sloyd room (which also survives) at Meeniyah State School, now Tarwin Valley Primary School, in the previous year.

There was a need for accommodation in the town for pupils from outlying areas, and in 1917 a hostel for girls opened in Horn Street opposite the school, accommodating about fifteen girls, and one for boys opened in the late 1920s. These were used until the early 1940s, when both were sold.

Alterations and additions to the main building were carried out in 1924 when additional classrooms and a boys' room in the basement were added.

On 16 September 1933 the main block of the school was totally destroyed by fire, the cause of which was never discovered. The only building left was the sloyd room. A new school was built by the end of 1934, designed by the Public Works Department and built by J Cox. Until then classes were accommodated in the Catholic Hall, the boys' hostel and the sloyd room.

In 1935-7 trees were planted at the suggestion of the local Country Women's Association in the south-east corner of the site, then the girls' section of the grounds, to commemorate the school's Silver Jubilee. The first of sixty trees was planted by the CWA president Mrs H Rossiter. ('South Gippsland Shire Heritage Study', p 95.)

Significant expansion occurred in the post-WWII years, and a number of portable buildings were erected. Various additions were made in the 1950s, comprising the domestic science and manual arts wings, the music and drama room, the library and two common rooms. A number of Bristol buildings were used (many of which have now been removed), including some joined lengthwise for use as a library (these are extant but altered and are no longer considered to be good examples of their type). Woodwork and metal work were taught in the sloyd room until 1954, when new rooms were built for that purpose. It became a general classroom until 1960 when it became the cafeteria, with classes still being held at one end of the room while lunches were made up at the other. The school assembly hall, Mesley Hall (named after the first principal), was built in 1965, and a new science wing in 1966.

The 1967 Nicholas Memorial Gardens along Nerrena Road were the work of the school staff, and named as a tribute to the memory of L Nicholas, who was on the staff for twenty three years, first as sports-master, then senior master.

The Leongatha Technical School was founded in 1969 in portables at the rear of the high school, and a new school built in 1970-1 on the old school farm site, east of the former High School. From the early 1980s the TAFE, McMillan Rural Studies, the Sports Centre and the Leongatha Specialist School were established between the two schools. In 1990 the High School and Technical School amalgamated to form Leongatha Secondary College. Many of the old portable buildings were later removed. In 2007 the sloyd room became a home room.

## References

A Max Badcock, 'The Secondary Division', in *Vision and Realisation*, pp 436-462.

Lynette Skillern, *En Avant. Leongatha High School 1912-1987*, Leongatha 1987.

## Plaque Citation

This was one of Victoria's first state secondary schools, and retains an oak planted in 1912, when the school was established, a rare 1914 sloyd room and an unusual single-storey timber school building of 1934.

## Assessment Against Criteria

The historical importance, association with or relationship to Victoria's history of the place or object.

The Leongatha Secondary College was one of the earliest secondary schools established in Victoria, and retains its 1914 sloyd room, once a common feature in primary and secondary schools in Victoria but now rare, particularly in secondary schools. This is the only known surviving sloyd room in Victoria associated with a secondary school. Sloyd was an important educational technique, taught only to boys in a large number of schools in Victoria in the first half of the twentieth century. It is a reflection of gender biases in education in the first half of the twentieth century and differing expectations in the education of boys and girls. The site is also historically significant for its association with the former Leongatha Labour Colony, the only such colony established by the state government in a scheme designed to help men affected by the 1890s depression.

The importance of a place or object in demonstrating rarity or uniqueness.

The sloyd room is one of the few surviving examples in Victoria and the 1934 building is an unusual example of a rural timber secondary school building. The combination of an early rural school and its sloyd room is unique in Victoria. The 1912 oak tree and the Silver Jubilee Park, planted to commemorate the twenty-fifth anniversary of the school in 1937, are representative of the trees and gardens which were once planted at schools to commemorate important events. These commemorative gardens are now rare.

The place or object's potential to educate, illustrate or provide further scientific investigation in relation to Victoria's cultural heritage. The importance of a place or object in exhibiting the principal characteristics or the representative nature of a place or object as part of a class or type of places or objects. The importance of the place or object in exhibiting good design or aesthetic characteristics and/or in exhibiting a richness, diversity or unusual integration of features. The importance of the place or object in demonstrating or being associated with scientific or technical innovation or achievements. The importance of the place or object in demonstrating social or cultural associations. Any other matter which the Council considers relevant to the determination of cultural heritage significance.

## Extent of Registration

1. All of the land marked L1 on Diagram 949 Held by the Executive Director, being part of the land described as Crown Allotment 12G, Parish of Leongatha.
2. All the buildings and structures B1 and B2 on Diagram 949 held by the Executive Director.
3. The Silver Jubilee Gardens marked F1 on Diagram 949 held by the Executive Director.

4. The oak tree marked T1 on Diagram 949 held by the Executive Director.

B1 Sloyd room

B2 1934 building

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*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/>*