
FORMER LITERARY & SCIENTIFIC INSTITUTE



FORMER MECHANICS INSTITUTE HALL SOHE 2008

Location

54 LONGFIELD STREET STAWELL, Northern Grampians Shire

Municipality

NORTHERN GRAMPIANS SHIRE

Level of significance

Registered

Victorian Heritage Register (VHR) Number

H0531

Heritage Overlay Numbers

HO13

VHR Registration

July 14, 1982

Heritage Listing

Victorian Heritage Register

Statement of Significance

Last updated on - June 18, 1999

The building at 54 Longfield Street, Stawell West, in fact has never been a Mechanics' Institute. It was known as the Literary and Scientific Institute and stood on its own institute reserve in 1870 and probably dates from 1866 or earlier. Its function was similar to that of a Mechanics' Institute. A Mechanics' Institute was built at 170 Main Street, Stawell in timber in 1858. This was burnt out in 1866 in a conflagration which wiped out almost all the business premises in main street. A new building was erected only to be burnt down in 1874 when the present building was constructed. These buildings are the only Mechanics' Institutes referred to in Maynard Ord's *History of Stawell Past & Present* which he wrote in 1896.

An exact date for the construction of the Institute has not been established. The earliest reference to the building is 1866. The verandah may be a later addition because it cuts across the "pilasters" and is not usual with this Regency form. It is particularly severe in its detailing. The internal planning of the building is not unusual. Originally the front rooms on both floors were the full width of the facade. They have since been divided by light timber partitions. Presumably these date from about 1876 when the building became a residence. A small staircase leads to the upper floor. There are two smaller rooms at the rear, one of which was used as a kitchen and the other as a bathroom. A timber skillion has been added at the rear.

The western side of the verandah has also been enclosed. There are no buildings which can be directly compared to the form and detail of this building and there are certainly no comparable mechanics institutes. The closest buildings are to be found in the first settled parts of New South Wales and in northern Tasmania. (one building at Fulham near Sale was brought to the attention of the sub-committee after the hearing. It can be compared with the institute but it is larger, more sophisticated in its detailing and was built as a residence).

At present the building is in poor condition due to the lack of maintenance over the last few years. The main damage is from rising damp which has perished the lime mortar and soft bricks and from a flashing which has failed between the front and back sections of the building. The building is quite intact from the period when it was converted into a dwelling. Old wallpapers survive in the upstairs rooms, although they are also damaged.

The building is significant for architectural as well as historical reasons. It is important at a national level.

[Source: Historic Buildings Council]

Construction dates	1874,
Heritage Act Categories	Registered place,
Other Names	MECHANICS INSTITUTE HALL,
Hermes Number	1124
Property Number	

Plaque Citation

This building is unusual in its form and detail and was originally built as an institute in c.1866 before being converted into a residence in 1876.

Extent of Registration

Historic Building No. 531 - Former Literary and Scientific Institute, 54 Longfield Street, Stawell.
[*Victoria Government Gazette* No. 71 14 July 1982 p.2356]

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/>