
Former Free Library & Mechanics Institute, 168-172 Main Street, STAWELL



SL 230a - Former Free Library and Mechanics Institute, 168-172 Main Street, STAWELL



SL 230b - State Library of Victoria Picture Collection.



SL 230c - Picman database.

Location

168-172 Main Street STAWELL, NORTHERN GRAMPIANS SHIRE

Municipality

NORTHERN GRAMPIANS SHIRE

Level of significance

Recommended for Heritage Overlay

Heritage Listing

Northern Grampians Shire

Statement of Significance

Last updated on - July 15, 2004

The former Mechanics Institute building at 168-172 Main Street, Stawell, makes a significant contribution to the architectural and visual amenity of the predominantly 19th and early 20th century commercial streetscape. The form and rear sections of the building also contribute to the architectural amenity of the area. Built in 1874 as the third Mechanics Institute to a design by George Inskip, Stawell architect, the building has served as the the location of the Mechanics Institute, School of Design (later School of Mines) and Borough Library until 1960.

The former Mechanics Institute building at 168-172 Main Street is **architecturally** significant at a **LOCAL** level. It demonstrates original design qualities of a Victorian Italianate style. These qualities include the crowning rectangular parapet having a central pediment with "Free Library" incised in the title panel and a broadly projecting moulded and dentillated stringcourse below. Other intact or appropriate qualities include the symmetrical three bayed composition, two storey height (plus basement), face and rendered brick wall construction, entablature with incised signage that reads: "Mechanics 1875 Institute", rendered pilasters with stylised capitals (with patera) and incised panels, projecting rendered stringcourse interrupted by the window heads that spring above into blind arches having moulded architraves, punctuating keystones, decorative motifs, six paned timber framed windows, central recessive doorway and shallow balconette, and the rendered pedestals, stringcourses and incised panels and bands below the first floor windows and doors. The rear hipped roof forms, galvanised corrugated steel roof cladding, face brick wall construction and side parapets, brick chimneys, timber framed double hung windows, shallow-arched basement openings, Stawell stone plinth and the red brick window and basement opening voussoirs also contribute to the significance of the place.

The former Mechanics Institute building at 168-172 Main Street is **historically** significant at a **LOCAL** level. It is associated with the development of cultural buildings in Stawell after the 1874 fire. In particular, this building has associations with the Stawell Mechanics Institute who instigated its construction in 1874 after a previous building had been extensively damaged by fire. The building also has associations as the location of the Stawell School of Design (later School of Mines) between 1883 and 1890, and the Borough Library until 1960. The building has further associations with the Stawell architect, George Inskip who was responsible for the design.

The former Mechanics Institute building at 168-172 Main Street is **socially** significant at a **LOCAL** level. It is recognised and valued by the Stawell community as an important and long-serving cultural and community building.

Overall, the former Mechanics Institute building at 168-172 Main Street is of **LOCAL** significance.

Heritage Study/Consultant	Northern Grampians - Shire of Northern Grampians - Stage 2 Heritage Study, Wendy Jacobs, Vicki Johnson, David Rowe, Phil Taylor, 2004;
Hermes Number	112518
Property Number	

Physical Description 1

The former Mechanics Institute building at 168-172 Main Street, Stawell, contributes to the architectural and visual amenity of the predominantly Victorian and interwar streetscape.

The symmetrical, three storey (including basement), unpainted brick and rendered Victorian Italianate styled Mechanics Institute is characterised by a crowning rectangular parapet having a central pediment with "Free Library" incised in the title panel and a broadly projecting moulded and dentillated stringcourse below. Under the parapet is also an early entablature with incised signage that reads: "Mechanics 1875 Institute". The upper floor is characterised by a three-bayed composition having a narrow and slightly projecting central bay and two flanking wider bays. The bays are separated by early square, rendered pilasters with stylised capitals (with patera) and incised panels, with a projecting rendered stringcourse interrupted by the window heads that spring above into blind arches having moulded architraves, punctuating keystones and decorative motifs. Above the central bay is additional decorative work. The flanking six paned windows are early and have timber frames. The central bay has an early recessive doorway, with timber and glazed doors and a shallow balconette. Below the windows and pilasters are rendered pedestals, stringcourses and incised panels and bands.

Separating the first and ground floors is an introduced cantilevering canopy. Under the canopy the ground floor openings has been altered, with introduced shopfronts and central doorway.

Beyond the main facade are early hipped roof forms clad in galvanised corrugated steel, together with early rendered and face brick chimneys, face brick wall construction and side parapets. There are also early timber framed double hung windows, shallow-arched basement openings, Stawell stone plinth, and red brick window and basement opening voussoirs. The rendered wall band under the springing of the roof appears to have been introduced.

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/>