

Victorian Heritage Database Report

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ST KILDA CRICKET GROUND



St Kilda Cricket Ground_KJ_Oct 09



St Kilda Cricket Ground_Murray
Stand_KJ_Oct 09



St Kilda Cricket Ground_Murray Stand
rear view_KJ_Oct 09



St Kilda Cricket Ground_Blackie
Ironmonger Stand_KJ_Oct 09



St Kilda Cricket Ground_Blackie
Ironmonger rear_KJ_Oct 09



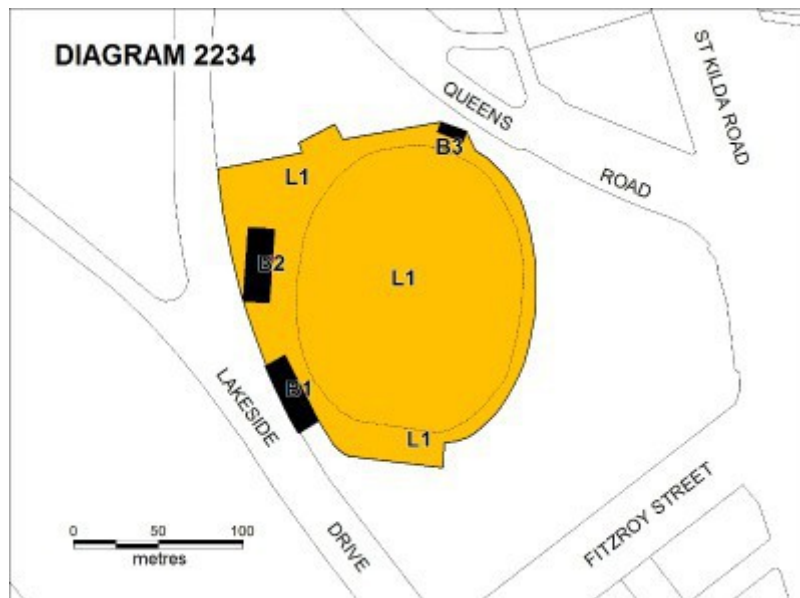
St Kilda Cricket Ground_Committee
room_KJ_Oct 09



St Kilda Cricket Ground_members'
bar_KJ_Oct 09



St Kilda Cricket
Ground_scoreboard_KJ_Oct 09



st kilda cricket ground plan.jpg

Location

QUEENS ROAD and FITZROY STREET and LAKESIDE DRIVE ST KILDA, PORT PHILLIP CITY

Municipality

PORT PHILLIP CITY

Level of significance

Registered

Victorian Heritage Register (VHR) Number

H2234

Heritage Overlay Numbers

HO463

VHR Registration

February 11, 2010

Heritage Listing

Statement of Significance

Last updated on -

What is significant?

St Kilda Cricket Ground was established on its present site in 1856 as the home of the St Kilda Cricket Club, which was formed in 1855. Its location near what was to become St Kilda Junction gave rise to its nick-name Junction Oval. The ground also became the home ground of the St Kilda Football Club, which was formed in 1873. This was one of the first members of the Victorian Football Association (VFA), which began in 1877, and in 1897 became a foundation team in the Victorian Football League (VFL). The St Kilda Cricket Ground has always been one of Victoria's most important sports grounds, and was often used for important cricket matches when the MCG was unavailable. Twenty-eight first class cricket matches have been played there, including twenty-five Sheffield Shield games. The VFL Grand Finals were played there in 1898 and 1899, and other major events have been held there, including the 1898-9 Victorian athletic titles, numerous bicycle meets, and two inter-colonial lacrosse matches between Victoria and New South Wales. The first grandstand at the ground was purchased from the old Elsternwick racecourse and erected in 1892 at the southern end of the ground. A new grandstand was built in 1925-6 at a cost of £7000, designed by the architect E J Clark and built by H H Eilenberg. It was originally called the G P Newman Stand but has been renamed the Kevin Murray Stand after one of the club's most famous footballers. It is no longer used for spectator seating, but the administration and changing rooms beneath are still used. A second brick stand designed by E J Clark to complement the Murray Stand was built by H H Eilenberg in 1933-4 at a cost of £7500. It was named the Don Blackie Bert Ironmonger Stand in honour of the St Kilda Cricket Club and Test cricketers. It still functions as a public pavilion. A new £6000 manual scoreboard and kiosk at the northern end of the ground was built in 1956-7, the club's centenary year. Many famous players have been associated with the St Kilda Cricket Ground, notably Bill Ponsford and Shane Warne. The ground is still used by the St Kilda Cricket Club. It was the home ground of the St Kilda Football Club until 1965, and of the Fitzroy Football Club from 1970-84.

The St Kilda Cricket Ground, comprising the grassed playing field, surrounded by a white picket fence, the terraces around the ground, the two grandstands and the scoreboard, is considered to be one of the finest combined cricket and football grounds in Victoria. The playing field occupies the same site as it has since 1856. Much of the ground is surrounded by sloping concrete terraces with timber bench seating. The Kevin Murray Stand is a red brick structure with a timber roof and seating. It has administration rooms and dressing rooms beneath. The Don Blackie Bert Ironmonger Stand is also made of red brick and timber, and was designed to complement the earlier Kevin Murray Stand. Inside are the St Kilda Cricket Club's dressing rooms, members' bar, containing the 1956-7 honour boards and various memorabilia, and the committee room with its original furniture. In front of the stands are sloping grassed viewing areas. The old timber scoreboard at the north end of the ground is operated manually by a series of pulleys. Player and team names are displayed using metal sheets, and the scores are displayed on cloth banners.

How is it significant?

St Kilda Cricket Ground is of historical, architectural and social significance to the state of Victoria.

Why is it significant?

The St Kilda Cricket Ground is historically significant as the home ground since 1856 of the St Kilda Cricket Club, which was formed in 1855, and is one of the oldest clubs in Victoria still playing at its original home. It is also significant as the home from 1873 of the St Kilda Football Club, one of Victoria's major football teams, which was a foundation member of the Victorian Football Association (VFA) and of the Victorian Football League (VFL). It has been associated with some of Victoria's most famous and popular sportsmen, such as Bill Ponsford and Shane Warne.

The Murray and Blackie Ironmonger Stands at the St Kilda Cricket Ground have architectural significance as fine examples of early twentieth century grandstands. The manual scoreboard is significant as a now unusual example of its kind at a major sports ground in Victoria.

The St Kilda Cricket Ground has social significance as the home of the St Kilda Cricket Club and for many years of the St Kilda and Fitzroy Football Clubs, all of which have always had a strong following in Victoria, and their supporters have maintained a strong attachment to the Ground.

Permit Exemptions

General Conditions: 1. All exempted alterations are to be planned and carried out in a manner which prevents damage to the fabric of the registered place or object. General Conditions: 2. Should it become apparent during further inspection or the carrying out of works that original or previously hidden or inaccessible details of the place or object are revealed which relate to the significance of the place or object, then the exemption covering such works shall cease and Heritage Victoria shall be notified as soon as possible. General Conditions: 3. If there is a conservation policy and plan endorsed by the Executive Director, all works shall be in accordance with it. Note: The existence of a Conservation Management Plan or a Heritage Action Plan endorsed by the Executive Director, Heritage Victoria provides guidance for the management of the heritage values associated with the site. It may not be necessary to obtain a heritage permit for certain works specified in the management plan. General Conditions: 4. Nothing in this determination prevents the Executive Director from amending or rescinding all or any of the permit exemptions. General Conditions: 5. Nothing in this determination exempts owners or their agents from the responsibility to seek relevant planning or building permits from the responsible authorities where applicable. Minor Works : Note: Any Minor Works that in the opinion of the Executive Director will not adversely affect the heritage significance of the place may be exempt from the permit requirements of the Heritage Act. A person proposing to undertake minor works may submit a proposal to the Executive Director. If the Executive Director is satisfied that the proposed works will not adversely affect the heritage values of the site, the applicant may be exempted from the requirement to obtain a heritage permit. If an applicant is uncertain whether a heritage permit is required, it is recommended that the permits co-ordinator be contacted.

Heritage Act Categories	Heritage place,
Other Names	JUNCTION OVAL, ST KILDA CRICKET CLUB,
Hermes Number	117260
Property Number	

History

CONTEXTUAL HISTORY

[Information mostly from Marnie Haig-Muir et al, 'Sport in Victoria: A thematic history', Stage 1 of a Heritage Study, Deakin University 2000, pp 10, 43-6.]

Cricket was one of the earliest sports taken up in Victoria, and has always been one of Australia's most popular. The first match between the newly established Melbourne Cricket Club and the military took place in 1838 and the game was firmly established in Geelong and Brighton by the 1840s. The oldest clubs in Victoria are Melbourne (1838), Corio/Geelong (1841, Brighton 1842, Williamstown (1852), Emerald Hill (1853), Richmond (1854), St Kilda (1855), University (1856), East Melbourne (1860) and South Melbourne (1862). Many of the clubs formed then have operated continuously or near continuously to the present day.

In the absence of a state or national body the Melbourne Cricket Club became the dominant force in the sport in Victoria, but early games and tours often relied on local initiatives, including the first overseas tour by an aboriginal team in 1868. English teams visited from 1873-4, when W G Grace led an English touring party, and by the 1880s tours were a regular occurrence.

Australian Rules football was conceived in part as a means of keeping cricketers fit in winter. The game evolved in the 1850s out of a number of team ball games, and the first set of rules was set down in 1859 by the Melbourne Football Club. The Victorian Football Association began in 1877 with five teams: Albert Park (later

South Melbourne), Carlton, Hotham, Melbourne and St Kilda. The game gradually moved from uneven paddocks into cricket grounds, which were ideal for the evolving game. The MCG, the South and East Melbourne cricket grounds, St Kilda (Junction) Oval, Victoria Park, Punt Road, Albert Park/Lakeside Oval came into use as football grounds, and virtually every suburb had a football/cricket oval as a sign of its identity. After WWII crowds grew dramatically, and as the suburbs expanded so did the football league.

One of the striking features of Victorian sporting venues is the existence of multi-sport facilities as distinct from specialised single-sport resources. The use of ovals for two of the major summer and winter sports, cricket and football, is quite distinctive, and ovals have become the signature sports grounds in Australia, particularly in Victoria. Games draw huge crowds, requiring grandstands for large numbers of spectators.

Albert Park was temporarily reserved in 1862, by which time the St Kilda Cricket Club had been established (1855) and the South Melbourne Cricket Club was formed in 1862. A third cricket ground, the Warehousemen's (now the Albert Ground) was present by 1864.

HISTORY OF PLACE

[Information from: the nomination report; and Ken Piese, *Down at the Junction there's a cricket ground. St Kilda Cricket Club. The first 150 Years*, St Kilda West 2005.]

Home Park (approximately corresponding to Albert Park) was first reserved as a public park in 1853, and in 1856 Melbourne City Council moved to enclose the area, then known as South Park. St Kilda then was a desirable residential area, attracting successful gold miners as well as prominent members of Melbourne society, and was also a popular holiday destination.

St Kilda Cricket Club was formed in 1855, and the new club immediately attracted prominent Melbournians. There were 158 foundation members, and the first president was Sir George Stephen, a lawyer and later QC, and the first man knighted by Queen Victoria after her ascent to the throne in 1837. The first treasurer was William Fairfax of the *Argus* newspaper.

St Kilda's maiden games were played on a swampy part of South Park near a small piggery, but the secretary asked the Surveyor-General for another eight acre site in the park, bounded by Queens Road, Fitzroy Street and the lagoon (near what was to become St Kilda Junction). This was granted on the proviso that should future governments need the land, it would be surrendered. The Club's inaugural fixture at the Junction was on October 25, 1856, against Melbourne University. The present St Kilda Cricket Ground still occupies the same site, making it the longest-serving home ground of any cricket club in Australia. ???

The club's excellent facilities from the beginning attracted some of the colony's highest-profile sportsmen, including one of the fathers of football Tom Wills, promoter John Conway, Jerry Bryant, James Brodie and Daniel Wilkie.

In 1860 Elmslie Stephens, the club secretary sought the council's help to build the first members' pavilion at the Junction, proposing that the club and the council contribute equally.

Other sports were also played at the ground. Tennis was popular, with lawn courts just north of the ground, and baseball was played there from 1879. By the 1880s the Junction's facilities included the first spectator mounds on the outer flanks from earth excavated from the first cable tram lines. Football was first played at the ground in 1873, and the club was based at the Junction in the winter months from 1886. (Piese, p 13)

The ground was also a centre municipal for happenings and in May 1887 the Jubilee of Queen Victoria's reign was celebrated with a fete for 4000 children. When St Kilda became a city 5000 residents celebrated at the Oval as part of Proclamation Day. (Piese, p13)

In 1892 the first wooden grandstand was erected at the southern end of the ground, having been purchased for 33 pounds from the old Elsternwick racecourse. It was to be part of Junction life for 110 years. A bicycle track was also built.

Membership increased at the end of the century under the influential secretary G H Inskip (secretary 1896-1933), and the additional subscriptions allowed the club to finance many much-needed improvements, including new dressing rooms for cyclists, as well as the widening and repair of the track. At this time the Junction was the only club with a banked cycle track.

The St Kilda Cricket Ground was often used when the MCG was unavailable. Twenty-eight first class matches have been played at St Kilda, including twenty-five Sheffield Shield games. (*Oxford Companion to Australian Cricket*, entry for St Kilda Cricket Ground) The VFL Grand Finals were played at the Junction in 1898 and 1899,

and other major events were held there, including the 1898-9 Victorian athletic titles, numerous bicycle meets, and two inter-colonial lacrosse matches between Victoria and New South Wales.

By 1906 the cycling track was falling into disrepair and was bulldozed to bolster the embankments. The improvements to the embankment increased accommodation at the ground to more than 40,000. Portions were terraced and increased seating accommodation provided. (Piese, p 20)

Membership numbers halved during WWI, and many members were killed. The club all but lost its tenancy after long-standing arrears in back rents remained unpaid. (Piese, p 27) Club debts were met by local residents, following an appeal by the mayor and councillors. In 1915, when players were few, a fifteen year old Bill Ponsford, dubbed 'The Recordbreaker' appeared, who was to become St Kilda's ultimate batting champion and the new darling of Australian cricket.

By 1921 a committee room, secretary's office and new clubrooms were built. There was also a press box and a curator's cottage.

The St Kilda Football Club won four premierships in a row and was challenging the Cricket Club for control of the Junction. By the early 1920s football was providing a third of the club's income, but an upgrading of facilities was long overdue. The two clubs both agreed to support the development of new facilities. A new scoreboard was built c1923. A new grandstand was built in 1925-6 was to cost more than £6000 (but blew out to £7000), with excellent seating accommodation, home, visitors' and umpires' rooms, a secretary's office, committee rooms, storerooms, three bathrooms and sixty lockers in the home rooms. The builder was H H Eilenberg and the architect E J Clark. Clark had built a similar stand at Windy Hill, home of Essendon football and cricket clubs. The new public grandstand was named in honour of vice-president G P Newman who died in 1926 after almost 35 years of service to the club, but was renamed the Kevin Murray Stand in the early 1970s when the Fitzroy Football Club were co-tenants of the ground. Kevin Murray was a champion footballer for Fitzroy and won the Brownlow Medal. Following the fatal fire at the Bradford Oval in England in 1985 the seating area of the stand was closed and has not yet been renovated to allow public seating. The Melbourne Football Club currently occupies the interior of the building using it for administration offices and for training.

In 1933-4 a new brick stand, the Don Blackie Bert Ironmonger Stand, was built to replace the old wooden one. It was again designed by E J Clark, and built by H H Eilenberg, made of red brick and timber and designed to complement the earlier Kevin Murray Stand, cost £7500 and seated two thousand. Beneath it were a members' bar, a billiards room with two tables, a card room and two new dressing rooms. It was named in honour of champion St Kilda Cricket Club Test cricketers Don Blackie and Bert Ironmonger. A plaque was installed on the front of the pavilion in honour of Don Blackie and Bert Ironmonger at the opening in 1934. Inside are the St Kilda Cricket Club's dressing rooms, members' bar (containing honour boards and memorabilia) and committee rooms, with its original furniture. The honour boards were unveiled by the Prime Minister, Sir Robert Menzies, in the club's centenary year of 1956-7. They record winners of the club's bowling averages dating back to the 1856-7 season. The club also has a vast collection of photographs of teams and players dating back to the nineteenth century, and in the members' bar are all of the club's many championship flags and trophies. It is said to be the largest single collection of memorabilia and photographs of a single cricket club in Australia outside the Melbourne Cricket Club.

The original R L Morton Pavilion, constructed in 1936, had seating for 1100 members as well as a modern press box, a members' refreshment room, a members' bar, players lunch room, secretary's office, and dressing rooms. The curator's cottage was demolished to make way for the pavilion, and was replaced with a new brick cottage on the Queens Road frontage. (Piese, p 74) The old pavilion was demolished as part of the upgrading of the ground associated with the works undertaken at Albert Park for the first Formula One Grand Prix in 1993. The new R L Morton Pavilion was opened in 1995. It is a concrete block building with floor to ceiling glass windows, and a timber deck has recently been added to the front for outdoor functions and viewing

The building of a new £6000 scoreboard and kiosk at the northern end of the ground - named in honour of the club president Ralph Smith - was a major part of 1956-7, the club's centenary year. (Piese, p 111) The timber scoreboard is said to be a replica of the one at the city end of the MCG at that time (built in 1901 and moved to Manuka Oval (ACT) in 1962), and is still in operation. It is operated manually by a series of pulleys and cloth banners to display runs and wickets, or in the case of football, goals and points. Players or team names are displayed by metal sheets. It is one of the few remaining scoreboards of its kind in the country, and is an excellent example of a traditional scoreboard of the type used in the early twentieth century

The St Kilda Football Club relocated to Moorabbin in 1965. The ground was later used by Fitzroy Football Club, and now by Melbourne Football Club.

Plaque Citation

Established in 1856 as the home of the St Kilda Cricket Club, this also became in 1873 the home of the St Kilda Football Club, later a foundation member of the VFL. The two grandstands by E J Clark were built in 1926 and 1934.

Assessment Against Criteria

a. Importance to the course, or pattern, of Victoria's cultural history

The St Kilda Cricket Ground has been the home ground since 1856 of the St Kilda Cricket Club, which was formed in 1855, and is one of the oldest clubs in Victoria still playing at its original ground. It is also significant as the home from 1873 of the St Kilda Football Club, one of Victoria's major football teams, which was one of the nine foundation member of the Victorian Football Association (VFA) in 1877 and one of the eight of the Victorian Football League (VFL) in 1897. It has been associated with some of Victoria's, and Australia's, most famous and popular sportsmen, such as Bill Ponsford and Shane Warne.

b. Possession of uncommon, rare or endangered aspects of Victoria's cultural history.

c. Potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of Victoria's cultural history.

d. Importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of cultural places or environments.

The Murray and Blackie Ironmonger Stands at the St Kilda Cricket Ground are fine, and now unusual, examples of early twentieth century grandstands, both designed by the architect E J Clark. The manual scoreboard is a now unusual example of its kind at a major sports ground in Victoria.

e. Importance in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics.

f. Importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement at a particular period.

g. 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 their continuing and developing cultural traditions.

The St Kilda Cricket Ground has social significance for many Victorians. Commonly known by its nickname, Junction Oval, it has since 1856 been the site of many major cricket and football matches, and has played an important role in the lives of many Victorian sports fans. It has been the home ground of the St Kilda Cricket Club and the St Kilda and Fitzroy Football Clubs, which have always had a strong following in Victoria, and their supporters have maintained a strong attachment to the ground.

h. Special association with the life or works of a person, or group of persons, of importance in Victoria's history.

Extent of Registration

1. All the land marked L1 on Diagram 2234 held by the Executive Director, being Part of Crown Allotment 2109 City of South Melbourne Parish of Melbourne South

2. All the buildings marked B1-3 on Diagram 2234 held by the Executive Director

B1 The Kevin Murray Stand

B2 The Blackie Ironmonger Stand

B3 Scoreboard

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 data owner.

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