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# PENSHURST MEMORIAL HALL

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## Location

Martin Street, PENSHURST VIC 3289 - Property No 002?

## Municipality

SOUTHERN GRAMPIANS SHIRE

## Level of significance

Stage 2 study complete

## Heritage Listing

Southern Grampians Shire

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## Statement of Significance

Last updated on - August 10, 2003

What is significant?

The Penshurst Memorial Hall located in Martin Street in the centre of the township began as the local Mechanic's Institute in 1871. No architect or builder has yet been positively linked with the design although John S. Jenkins, Shire Secretary and Engineer is one possibility and the local architect, John Montgomery, who called tenders for a bluestone hall, is another. Mechanics Institutes were an important reflection of the prosperity, culture and aspirations of a town. They were also important as social centres. The original building was bluestone, typically Classical in style and rather austere in its architecture. Over the years several weatherboards additions were made which have since been demolished. Finally, in 1963 it was completely remodelled as a Memorial Hall, incorporating much of the original building's carcass within a new cream brick building. The designer was a junior engineer on the staff of the Shire. The foundation stone of the new building was laid by Viscount de Lisle on 26th October 1963, in his capacity as Lord of the Manor of Penshurst as much as Governor General of Australia. The building remains substantially intact to its 1963 design and in excellent condition.

How is it significant?

The Penshurst Memorial Hall and former Mechanics Institute is of historical, social and cultural significance to the Southern Grampians Shire and to the township of Penshurst.

Why is it significant?

The Penshurst Memorial Hall is of historical significance as the principal public meeting place of the township for over 130 years. Culturally, the hall is significant to Penshurst because, in the 19th and early 20th centuries it reflected the town's status and was associated with the self-improvement of its citizens through reading, lectures and concerts. Socially, the hall provided a focus for community activities such as dances and film nights. These roles continue and the hall is still used for a range of activities.

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|---------------------------|--|
| Heritage Study/Consultant | Southern Grampians - Southern Grampians Shire Heritage Study, Timothy Hubbard P/L, Annabel Neylon, 2002; |
| Construction dates        | 1870,  |
| Heritage Act Categories   | Registered place,  |
| Other Names               | PENSHURST MECHANICS INSTITUTE,   |
| Hermes Number             | 23369  |
| Property Number           |  |

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## Physical Conditions

The whole building complex is in excellent condition.

## Physical Description 1

The Penshurst Memorial Hall is a large cream brick building constructed in 1963 which incorporates sections of the original 19th century bluestone building. Facilities include the main hall, stage and backstage area, the foyer and associated services, and the supper room and kitchen. The large aluminium and plate glass front doors are typical of the period. The large steel framed windows are distinctive for their use of 'one-way' blue glass. The facade includes the name of the building in red, sans-serif lettering derived from the typeface developed for the London Underground. The use of primary colours, specifically red, blue and yellow (as cream bricks) can be linked to the avant garde Moderne architecture of the de Stijl group and the architect, W M Dudok who were active in Holland before the Second World War. They strongly influenced the Melbourne architects, Seabrook and Fildes who were very active the Hamilton district before 1939. The building has been further altered and modernised since 1963 but always in sympathy with the Moderne design. It retains a high degree of integrity to its 1963 appearance.

## Historical Australian Themes

Theme 3: Developing local, regional and national economies

3.21 Entertaining for profit

Theme 6: Educating

6.1 Forming associations, libraries, and institutes for self-education

Theme 8: Developing Australia's cultural life

8.5 Forming associations

8.5.3 Associating for mutual aid

8.5.4 Pursuing common leisure interests

8.8 Remembering the fallen

## 8.14 Living in the country and rural settlements

### **Usage/Former Usage**

library and public hall

### **Integrity**

High degree of integrity to the 1963 condition. Only sections of the original stone building survive.

### **Physical Description 2**

John S Jenkins, probable architect of the earliest building.

John Montgomery, probable architect of the bluestone building.

### **Physical Description 3**

Mechanics Institute Reserve

*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/>*