

FORMER LEIGH SHIRE HALL AND TOLL HOUSE



Former Leigh Shire Hall and toll house



Former Leigh Shire Hall rear view



Former Leigh Shire Hall



Former Leigh Shire Hall safe and road board trunk



Former Leigh Shire Hall Shelford Road Board trunk



Former Leigh Shire Hall WWI Honour Board



Former Leigh Shire Hall Council honour board



Former Leigh Shire Hall WWII Honour Board



Former Leigh Shire Hall interior



Former Leigh Shire Hall former Hesse toll house



Former Hesse toll house rear



leigh shire hall.jpg

Location

1372 ROKEWOOD-SHELFORD ROAD SHELFORD, GOLDEN PLAINS SHIRE

Municipality

GOLDEN PLAINS SHIRE

Level of significance

Registered

Victorian Heritage Register (VHR) Number

H2274

Heritage Overlay Numbers

HO89

VHR Registration

April 14, 2011

Heritage Listing

Victorian Heritage Register

Statement of Significance

Last updated on -

What is significant?

The former Leigh Shire Hall is a bluestone building located at Warrambine, an isolated rural location on Warrambine Creek, half way between Rokewood and Shelford. Next to it is a small timber toll house, which was originally located at Hesse, about 19 kms to the south. The former Leigh Shire Hall, designed by the Shire Engineer C Wilson, was built in 1871-2 at a cost of £455. Local government in Victoria originated from the early 1850s with the establishment of the local road boards. These were later replaced by local councils, which continued responsibility for the construction and maintenance of roads. The Shelford District Road Board was formed in 1861, its first meeting being held in 1862 in an inn at the Warrambine Creek crossing. The road district became the Leigh Shire in 1864 and the new shire hall was built opposite the inn in this central location within the shire. The toll house was built by the Council in 1870, on what later became the Hamilton Highway. At some time after tolls were discontinued in 1877 the toll house was moved to a site next to the shire hall, where it was used as a waiting room. The hall was used until 1968, when the shire offices were moved to Rokewood.

The former Leigh Shire Hall is a small symmetrical Gothic Revival style bluestone building with fretted bargeboards and verandah valance and with a corrugated iron roof. There is a projecting gabled entrance foyer and a verandah sheltering the doorway. Internally the hall has only one room, with a sloping timber ceiling and plastered walls. There is a fireplace with timber surrounds on the wall opposite the entrance and there are World War I, World War II and Shire Council Honour Boards. An early freestanding steel safe and a metal trunk with 'Shelford District Road Board' (implying a date of 1862-64) written on the side in Copperplate have been retained in the building. Adjacent to the hall is the former Toll House from Hesse, a small symmetrical timber building with a corrugated iron hipped roof and a with a skillion addition at the rear. The site is bordered by mature conifers.

This site is part of the traditional land of the Wathaurung people.

How is it significant?

The former Leigh Shire Hall and Toll House are of architectural and historical significance to the state of Victoria.

Why is it significant?

The former Leigh Shire Hall and Toll House are historically significant for their association with the beginnings of local government in Victoria. The shire hall is unusual in being located not in a major town but at a central though isolated location within the shire, minimising travel distances for members and residents, and reflects the difficulties of travel during the nineteenth century. The former Toll House is historically important as one of the last remaining nineteenth century toll houses in Victoria. The former shire hall and the toll house together reflect the association between the district road boards and their successors, the early shire councils, the main responsibility of both of which was the construction and maintenance of roads, funded partly by the collection of tolls. The metal trunk in the hall once owned by the Shelford District Road Board is a rare reminder of the early road boards, the short-lived precursors of local government in the state.

The former Leigh Shire Hall is architecturally significant as a fine example of a small bluestone shire hall in a Gothic Revival style, with fretted bargeboards unusual for this period. The toll house is architecturally significant as a now rare example of a building type which was once common, but of which only a few examples survive in Victoria.

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 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 all works shall be in accordance with it. Note: A Conservation Management Plan or a Heritage Action Plan 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 must 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.

Theme

3. Connecting Victorians by transport and communications 7. Governing Victorians

Construction dates 1871, 1870,

Heritage Act Categories Registered place,

Other Names WARRAMBEEN HALL, WARRAMBINE HALL,

Hermes Number 6010

Property Number

History

CONTEXTUAL HISTORY

Local government in Victoria

Local government in Victoria began with the establishment in 1852 of a Central Roads Board, which had the power to establish local road boards, responsible for building and maintaining the roads in their district. The 1863 Road District and Shires Act provided for the continuation of the Roads Boards but enabled them to become shires and meant that they could borrow for permanent works, collect licence fees and administer certain minor acts. This act was replaced in 1869 by the Shires Statute, which abolished roads districts, converting them to shires. Many of the early shires covered vast areas, but the difficulty of attending council meetings resulted in the break-up of some of these large units.

The main function of the local councils, especially in county areas, remained the construction and maintenance of roads, as well as minor activities such as look after government reserves, impounds stray livestock, collect dog licences, supply water and remove night soil. Their income was limited and the only permanent indoor staff were the town clerk and the engineer, sometimes combined. So the typical accommodation required was a council chamber and two adjoining offices.

By 1878 Victoria had four local government areas classed as cities, seven as towns, 48 as boroughs and 111 as shires (classified according to population and rate revenue).

Toll houses

In 1851 Victoria became a separate colony, no longer, as previously, a part of New South Wales (NSW) and became responsible for its own building and maintenance of roads. The roads were so bad that in 1853, the Central Roads Board was established, responsible for making and improving Roads in the Colony of Victoria. In 1853 a Roads Act established toll-bars on roads throughout Victoria. The Act empowered District Road Boards to collect fees on their boundaries to be used for the upkeep of local council roads. The Board was also responsible for the calling of tenders, deciding the position of toll gates, appointment of toll keepers, levying of tolls and for prosecutions for the non payment of tolls. By the early 1870s, the toll-bar system was proving uneconomical and the number of toll bars declined until, in 1877, the Victorian Government discontinued the system of toll-collection. (<http://www.onmydoorstep.com.au/heritage-listing/4059/maldon-road-toll-bar-house>)

The toll charges were published in the Victorian Government Gazette in 1850:

For every wagon, wain or other vehicle, with four wheels, drawn by one or two horses or other animals....1 shilling

For every wagon, wain or other vehicle if drawn by three horses or other animals.....2 shillings.

For every wagon, wain or other vehicle if drawn by four horses or other animals.....2 shillings and sixpence and add three pence for each additional horse of other animal drawing.

For every cart, dray or waggon drawn by two bullocks or other animals.....1 shillings and sixpence and every additional bullock drawing gig or chase or other such carriage constructed to carry passengers, with two wheels and drawn by one horse or other animal and extra 6 pence.

For every wagon, wain or other vehicle if drawn by two of more horses or other animals add an extra 5 pence.

For every wagon, wain or other vehicle if drawn by more than 2 horses or other animals.....2 shillings.

Tolls payable one way only going and returning only on the same day.

Three fourths only of the above rates for any vehicle to be paid when the tires of the wheels of such vehicle are not less than four and a half inches wide and are perfectly flat and level throughout their whole width.

(By order) C. Gavan Duffy

President of the Lands Boards and Works (1850)

HISTORY OF PLACE

[Information mainly from Gladys Seaton, *Gold Reef and Silver Tussock. A History of the Shire of Leigh*, Shire of Leigh 1988.]

From the early days of settlement there was an inn, the Half Way house, at a crossing on the Warrambine Creek half way between Rokewood and Shelford, opposite the future site of the Shire Hall. The area was mostly a flat

plain with Warrambine Creek a major feature. The main towns were Shelford and Inverleigh.

The first step towards local government in the area was the proclamation of the Shelford Road District in August 1861, with its first meeting held in September 1862 at the Halfway House. Following the Road District and Shires Act of 1863 the Leigh Shire was proclaimed on 22 March 1864.

The Shire Hall of local bluestone was built and furnished in 1871-72 at a cost of £455. It was built not in one of the main towns but at Warrambine, half way between the towns of Rokewood and Shelford. Its central location within the Shire and so made travel from various parts of the shire easier. It was designed by C Wilson, the Shire Engineer. Trees were planted and the site fenced in the same year.

Hesse was only a postal township, with a post office in a local farmer's house serving the local area. It was located 12 miles south of Warrambine, at another crossing of the Warrambine Creek, half way between Inverleigh and Cressy on what is now the Hamilton Highway, where a hotel had been built in 1862. The Council decided in mid-1870 to build a toll gate at the site, and tenders were called the same year for a 12 x 24 foot timber toll house. The keeper David Cations lived there with his wife and three sons, who were born there between 1871 and 1875.

The system of toll roads was discontinued in 1877, and in February 1877 Council resolved to remove all toll gates. The income from tolls had also probably declined after the construction of the Geelong to Colac railway line. After the toll house at Hesse became redundant, at an unknown date, it was moved to a site next to the Shire Hall. Contractors whose presence was required at Council meetings used the former toll house as a waiting room.

At Warrambine was the inn, very few houses and the shire hall. *Vision and Realisation* notes that a small non-vested school opened at Warrambine in 1871, State School no 1322 opened in 1874 in a hut 'quite unfit for the purpose', and was replaced by a portable in 1876. The school closed in September 1876, to be replaced by SS 1793 Warrambine in October 1876 in 'a portable school with quarters provided'. It operated half time with SS 1376 Hesse (also known as Barunah Plains), but closed in 1882. *Vision and Realization* does not record the location of these schools.

In the 1950s the Wurrock South area was subdivided for soldier settlement. By 1957 the local population had increased and a new school opened with thirteen pupils in an annexe to the Leigh Shire hall. In 1959 the school moved into the disused Duverney school building had been moved to a site adjacent to the hall, but this closed in the 1970s and the building was removed.

The shire offices at Warrambine were vacated in 1968 and new offices were built in Rokewood. After Council amalgamations the Leigh Shire became part of Golden Plains.

Assessment Against Criteria

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

The former Leigh Shire Hall and toll house are historically significant for their association with the beginnings of local government in Victoria. The shire hall is unusual in being located not in a major town but at a central though isolated location within the shire, reflecting the difficulties of travel during the nineteenth century. The former Hesse Toll House is historically important as one of the last remaining nineteenth century toll houses in Victoria. The former shire hall and the toll house together reflect the association between the district road boards and their successors, the early shire councils, the main responsibility of both of which was the construction and maintenance of roads, funded partly by the collection of tolls.

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

The toll house is a now rare example of a building type which was once common, but of which only a few examples now survive in Victoria.

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 former Leigh Shire Hall is a fine example of a small bluestone Shire Hall in a Gothic Revival style, with fretted bargeboards unusual for this period. The former toll house is a good example of the small utilitarian structures once used for this purpose.

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.

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

Plaque Citation

This hall was designed by the Shire Engineer C Wilson and built in 1870-71 at this central location in the Shire. The toll house was built by the Shire in 1870 at Hesse on the Hamilton Highway and moved here after 1877.

Extent of Registration

1. All the land marked L1 on Diagram 2274 held by the Executive Director, being all of the land described as Lot 1 on Title Plan 72449H
2. All the buildings B1-2 on Diagram 2274 held by the Executive Director.

B1 Former shire hall

B2 Toll house

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/>