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**“White Hart” Hotel**

55 Firebrace Street, Horsham

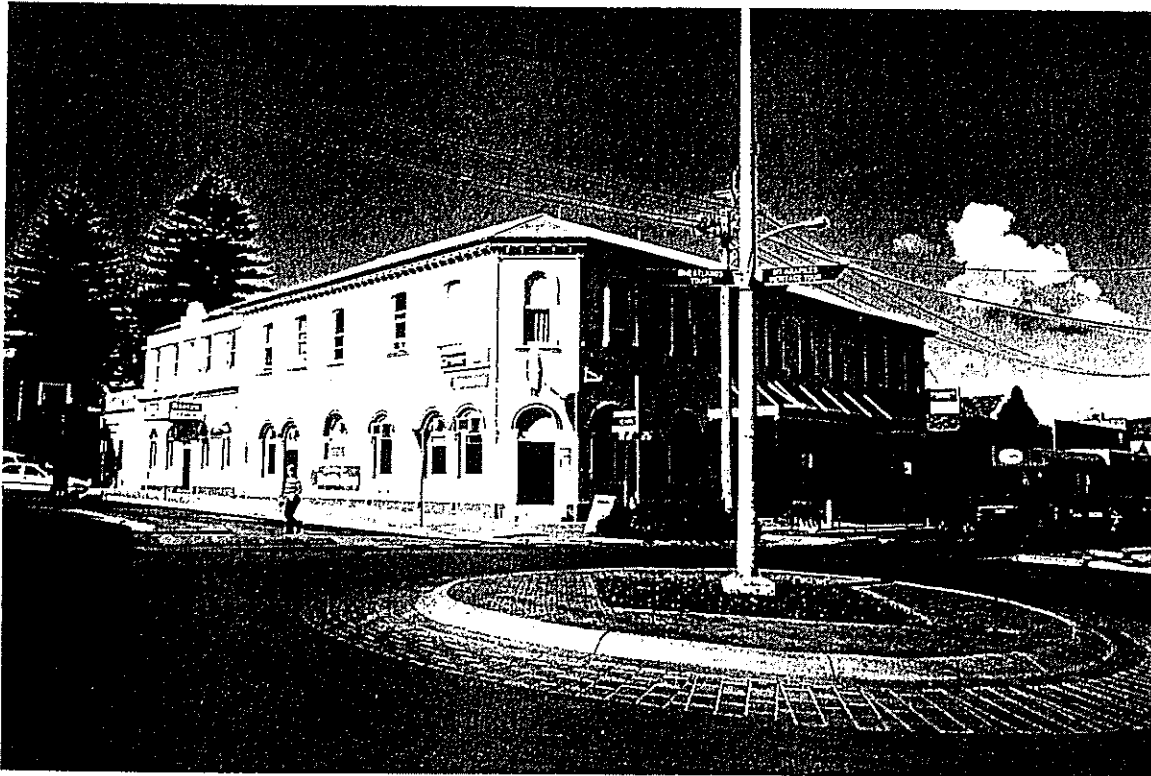


Photo: 1997

**Existing Registrations:**

Victorian Heritage Register: nil

National Estate Register: nil

National Trust Register: nil

**History:** When the township blocks for Horsham were surveyed, Section 8, bounded by Firebrace, Splatt (now Roberts Avenue), Urquhart and Pynsent Streets, was subdivided into ten lots, each with an area of two roods. Nine of those lots were acquired from the Crown by John Campbell, including lot 2, on the south east corner of Firebrace and Splatt Streets. He held his publican’s licence for his house in Splatt Street c.1849.

By the 1870’s, land in Section 8, was owned by John Gillies. On a centre allotment he built Horsham’s first flour mill c.1873. Ten years later, in March 1883, he opened a hotel on part lot 2 built to the design of his son, Henry Alexander Gillies, an auctioneer, insurance agent and architect. The hotel was named the “White Hart” and John Gillies was the licensee. The NAV was 300 pounds.

At the time of opening, it was reported that the rooms were “large, lofty and well ventilated” and that the second storey was nearing completion. The hotel contained a

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large billiard room and had stabling "unsurpassed out of Melbourne". A photo in Victoria and its Metropolis, 1888 shows the "White Hart" with its two storeyed iron verandah along both street fronts confirming that the additional floor had been built by that time. This was not the case for the single storeyed eastern section facing Roberts Avenue which received its present additional floor at a later time.

After Gillies' death in 1898, the hotel was sold to Annie Church. Subsequent owners included the Donovan family (1913) and Carlton and United Breweries (1935). Licensees included William Robinson (1883), Hydro Mort (1912), the Donovan family (1913-1951), Leonard Butler (1951), Clem Righetti (1955-69).

Refurbishment of the hotel took place during the early 1950's. In 1960, however, the CUB engaged local contractors P. and A. Coutts to carry out major renovations. Although most of the alterations were confined to the ground floor they were extensive. At the same time, the verandah and stables were removed.

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**Description:** A substantially altered two storeyed hotel built in stages and consisting of two clearly defined sections in the Classical Revival manner. Although overpainted, distinguishing elements include the patterns of round arched and segmentally arched openings, the corner splay, bracketed cornice and prominent location on the corner of Horsham's main shopping street. The stuccoed eastern wing is slightly more complex in its façade treatment, suggestive of its later construction date and consisting of its two stages separated horizontally by a stringcourse and having a surmounting central pediment. Inside, it is understood that the alterations at ground floor level have been comprehensive and have included removal of the original main staircase. The upper level rooms, however, substantially unaltered.

**Integrity:** See above. The two storeyed verandahs have been removed and a small cantilever erected along the Firebrace Street elevation.

**Condition:** Sound.

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**Comparative examples:** There are no stylistically comparable hotels in Horsham. The "Royal" at the corner of Timor and Fairy Street in Warrnambool (pre-1867) adopts a similar fenestration although it has a parapeted façade and the "Albert" in McCrae Street, Bendigo (1873), though much smaller, has lower level arched windows comparing with the "White Hart".

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**Significance:** The "White Hart" hotel is important as a rare surviving mid Victorian hotel in Horsham (criterion B) which though altered, retains the principal early elements of its façade including the fenestration pattern, hipped roof and corner splay. It is a prominent building in the City's principal commercial thoroughfare and is socially important not only as a hotel of long standing but also for its connections with the Gillies family (criterion G). Members included blacksmiths, flour millers, hoteliers, a Shire councillor, cemetery trustee and an architect. They were amongst the City's earliest landowners and businessmen.

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- References:** Hotel File, Horsham Historical Society.  
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Data sheet prepared by Andrew Ward 2/98