

HERITAGE CITATION REPORT

name: Showgrounds - J W Power Memorial Gates
Address: 95 McPherson Street HORSHAM
Place Type: Showground,Memorial
Citation Date: 2022



Recommended Heritage Protection **VHR -**
HI -
PS
Yes

Integrity

Fair to poor for pavilions/ sheds - all altered in parts and condition poor. Good to excellent condition and intactness for JW Power Memorial Gates. Site and buildings still used for annual show.

History and Historical Context

On 2 August 1876, the Horsham and Wimmera District Agricultural and Pastoral Society held the first show in Horsham in the yards of Mr R. W. Bennett in Pynsent Street.[1] In 1877, the second Horsham Show was again held in Bennett's yards, whilst the third show took place in 1878 at the site of the former Wimmera Base Hospital (now known as Wimmera Health Care Group). The later site was the first grounds gazetted for use by the Agricultural Society. Town maps during this period confirm this site as the 'Agricultural Show Yards', which comprised of approximately six acres. According to a letter to the editor published in the *Horsham Times* in 1900, these show yards were later sold to 'Messrs Carroll, a Wimmera Shire Secretary, Moon and others'.[2] The fourth show, which took place in 1879, was held on gazetted grounds at the present site of the Horsham City Oval, and continued up until 1901 when the last show on that reserve was held. In 1902, the show was held at Queen Victoria Park, which was bordered by the Wimmera River, and McBryde and McPherson Streets. It remains the present site of the Horsham Showgrounds, though it is no longer known as Victoria Park.

The exact circumstances in which the Horsham and Wimmera Agricultural Society was formed are unknown, as no minute books for this period have survived. Similarly, it is not known when the Society ceased using the word

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'Wimmera' in its name. Some of the first members of the Horsham and Wimmera Agricultural and Pastoral Society were men from local squatting families, as well as leading local businessmen – none of whom would be classed as farmers in the present day sense.[3] Shows were held in Horsham every year, except during the Second World War. The Horsham Agricultural and Pastoral Society celebrated its 100th Horsham Show in 1978.

Ian Maroske, explains that it is difficult to 'unravel the changes to the show grounds' since 1902, due to a tendency of the Society's minutes to convey the intentions of the committee, rather than being an actual record of what happened. For example, although the exchange of the Reserves took place in 1902, the official records were not completed until 1932. Maroske provides a summary of what occurred on the present show grounds over the period from 1902-1978, as follows:

The land, which in 1978, is the Horsham show grounds was set aside as a Temporary Recreation Reserve between McPherson Street, Robinson Street, Hamilton Street and the Wimmera River in 1873. ... The whole of the original allotment of 25 acres which was designated as Allotment 24 on the town plan was subdivided by a road in a survey by R.W. Stokell in 1880. The surveyed road became the continuation of Sloss Street and the section of the old Allotment 24 north of the continuation of Sloss Street became a Municipal Reserve for use as a Metal Depot. The Basketball stadium is now on this site. The part south of the continuation of Sloss Street became a recreation reserve. In 1901, the section south of the continuation of Sloss Street and which was under the direct control of the Horsham Borough Council, was exchanged for the show grounds then used by the Agricultural Society and the trustees also exchanged their territory. Almost immediately after 1902, a series of changes took places which were not finally officially entered on the plans until 1922.[4]

Maroske explains that this resulted in the following changes:

1. The continuation of Sloss Street was closed and a new road was excised from the Municipal Reserve which became McBride [sic] Street. Gaz. 31 p.550 and Gaz. 31 p.1076.

2. McPherson Street on the western boundary of the reserve was reduced in width thus adding part of McPherson Street to the show grounds. Gaz. 31 pp. 1776,3501.

3. The portion of Robinson Street which formed the east boundary of the show grounds was closed and included in the show reserve. Gaz. 31 p. 550.

4. The show grounds was then surveyed as a permanent reserve in 1929, Gaz. 32, p. 708.[5]

In summary, the end result was that the showgrounds included portions of McPherson Street, Robinson Street and the continuation of Sloss Street. Whilst Maroske explains that there is little definitive evidence of the discussions that must have taken place regarding these changes, he asserts that 'there is little doubt that the early vision for the acquisition of extra land came from the initiative of John Weldon Power, under whose presidency, the change to the present show grounds ... took place in time for the 1902 show'.[6]

Maroske also notes that very little is known about the assets of the Agricultural Society for the period when shows were held at the present day Horsham City Oval. However in 1893, records show that the Society's assets were insured with the National Insurance Coy, which Maroske cites as follows:

The details are: Buildings £

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1. Dwelling (i.e. caretaker's cottage) 70

2. Show Shed 150

3. Grain Shed and retiring room 100

4. & 5. Sheep pens 300

6. Grand Stand 280

7. Open Shed 80

8. Luncheon Room 70

9. Bar Pavilion 50

TOTAL £1100[7]

On 19 November 1897, a fierce windstorm whipped through Horsham causing extensive damage to the grandstand and show pavilions. The high cost of reinstating the severely damaged assets, as well as the need for more space to accommodate field activities such as a horse jumping course, sheep dog trials, trotting and harness racing, was another contributing factor that led to show's eventual move to its present site. The 1902 drought had a significant effect on the show evident by low numbers of exhibitors. The move to Victoria Park had been costly and this combined with the drought had a significant impact on the finances of the Society. However, under the leadership of J. Weldon Power from the Horsham Agricultural Society consolidated its use of the new showgrounds and steadily improved its financial position over the following decade. This period also saw the introduction of the two day show, first held in September 1907.

The Society's committee was largely unaffected by any of the dramatic events of World War I, with only one member, Mr Harold Smith, absent whilst fighting on the front. Committee books reveal that there was a large focus to protest against any movement on behalf of the government to close Longerenong College for the benefit of another Agricultural College, Dookie near Shepparton. However, there is no evidence to suggest that their protests contributed to the government's decision to continue to keep Longerenong open. In 1917, there was also concern over the allocation of booths to publicans, due to increasing support for the Temperance Movement. There was great public debate over the temperance issue; however, the Society eventually ruled that future shows should be 'dry' events.

The immediate post WW1 period saw the Horsham Agricultural Society prosper with a well-established office under the leadership of President Percy Learmonth who ran successful shows up until his death in 1932. Notable events during this period included the establishment of a Wool Instruction Class to teach young men to class the wool clip at home and elsewhere. Despite several good seasons, the impact of the 1930s depression coincided with the urgent need to upgrade show ground facilities, thus making it difficult for the Society to meet its financial commitments. As Maroske notes, 'there was no point asking members to take up debentures because the members of the Society did not have the money to buy them. The Society borrowed from the banks in order to tide itself over, and it was a long hill to climb back into solvency'.[8] The Society was however, offered relief in the form of a proposal by the Horsham Trotting Club to build a permanent trotting track and fencing. Additionally, the local Council donated a small piece of land to the Society, formerly the street on the north boundary of the show grounds, now the present site of the J. Weldon Power memorial gates.

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JW Power Memorial Gates

John Weldon Power was born in Tipperary Ireland in 1863. He arrived in Australia in 1887 and travelled Horsham soon after his arrival where he was employed by a leading Horsham solicitor, Alexander Twigg. Power was present at the annual meeting of the society on 10 April 1887, at which he was elected to membership of the committee. He served as a committee member from April 1897 until April 1915. During his 18 year involvement with the committee, he served as vice-president in 1900 and was president for 14 years (1901-1915). Power is credited as being an influential and progressive Agricultural Society committee member who had a great passion for horses.

The decision to erect memorial gates to perpetuate the memory of Power was made at an Agricultural Society committee meeting in 1922. However, the gates themselves were not erected until 1924, awaiting the alteration of Sloss Street and the formation of McBryde Street. This resulted in the north-west corner of the showgrounds being expanded by grant of a small piece of land by the Borough Council (mostly the former continuation of Sloss Street).

The J. Weldon Power memorial is situated on the corner of McPherson and McBryde Streets, and is the main public entry to the Horsham Showgrounds. The reinforced concrete arch with large black lettering stating, 'J. Weldon Power Memorial 1921' (the date of his death), is accentuated by double gates made of black painted wrought iron. Two single black wrought iron gates are situated on the inside of the memorial columns allowing for pedestrian access. The memorial was officially opened on 1 October 1924, the first day of the show for that year.[9] During the ceremony, prominent Horsham stock and station agent, Mr Thomas Young, credited J. Weldon Power with 'introducing the [horse] trotting breed to the Wimmera', whilst the president of the Agricultural Society, Mr Percy Learmonth proclaimed that:

Mr Power was a man who was worth of something of his mien – something that would stand for some time, something that when their children came along and saw, would ask, 'who was J. Weldon Power?', and their fathers would be able to say to them: 'He was the man who did a great deal for the Agricultural Society.'[10]

The Power Memorial was funded by money raised by a sub-committee of the Agricultural Society committee between mid-1922 and 1924, and is one of the most prominent memorials in Horsham.

Ladies Pavilion

The cream weatherboard Ladies Pavilion was established in the mid-1930s. During the Show of 1938 the committee raised £80, which covered the cost of the installation of glass cases in the Pavilion, to display and protect cookery and craft exhibits from dust.[11] The Ladies Pavilion has hosted craft and cooking competitions at the Horsham show since its erection.

Maydale Pavilion

Established in 1962, the steel frame corrugated-iron clad building known as Maydale Pavilion was originally built as a stud and stock pavilion, though it has since been utilised by sporting bodies, such as the Horsham Table Tennis Club.[12] Its name originated from a motion made at a Society Committee meeting on 31 August 1962, when it was moved that the pavilion should be known as the "Maydale Pavilion". This was due to its construction on a 13 acre paddock known as Maydale, which was purchased by the Agricultural Society in 1915 using a £300 donation from the family of one of the first members of Horsham's Agricultural Society, Mr Samuel May. Maroske explains, 'because there was already a May Park in Horsham, three alternatives were considered [for the naming of the paddock], Mayside, Maydale and May Grange, and of the three, Maydale was selected'.[13] This era also saw the erection of a number of memorials to former Agricultural Society members, such as

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Russell Hall, the Langlands memorial gates and McGenneskin Hall.

Russell Hall

At least three generations of the Russell family have been associated with the Horsham Agricultural Society, beginning in 1909, when Mr John Russell Snr became a committee member.[14] In 1927, Russell Snr was bestowed life membership in appreciation for his son's donation of £170 for the erection and extension of the shearing shed at the Showgrounds.[15] In 1953, the Russell family donated a further £500 to convert the shearing shed into a member's bar, which was named "Russell Hall". In 1954, Russell Hall of Commerce (as it was then known), was described by the local press as a 'modern hall' that was the 'pride of Horsham show grounds'.[16] Between 1954 and 1967, the weatherboard building was used to hold the Horsham Agricultural Society's committee meetings and also exhibitions during Shows. Russell Hall is presently situated next to the Maydale Pavilion and is utilised by the Society as an administration office. It remains in a similar position to its original construction on the corner of 1st Avenue and 2nd Avenue, as demonstrated in a map of the show grounds published in 1954.[17]

Langlands Memorial Gates

Mr F.A.J. 'Frank' Langlands, a Horsham merchant, was a member of the Horsham Agricultural Society for 16 years from 8 September 1933 to 17 August 1949. During this time he served as Vice-president in 1934 and President from 1934 to 1949. In 1957, Frank's wife and son offered to erect memorial gates in commemoration of his longstanding service to the society.[18] Originally located at the main stock gate entrance on McBryde Street, the memorial featured two tall white columns with ornamental wrought iron gates. The simple plaque on the left post stated: "*To the memory of Frank A.J. Langlands. A past president of this Society.*" The memorial gates and plaque have since been relocated approximately 50 metres to the left of their original location on McBryde Street to make way for a larger stock entrance. They are now positioned between two stone columns with the original plaque attached to the left column.

McGenniskin Hall

In 1953, life member Mr T. McGenniskin and his family made a substantial donation of £1,000 to the Horsham Agricultural Society, as well as the proceeds of ten acres of wheat. Their donation was used to build a catering pavilion at the Horsham Show Grounds in time for the 1958 show.[19] The first committee meeting was held in McGenniskin Hall on 30 January 1959. Maroske notes that in the years following its construction, 'various improvements were made to the floor coverings, blinds and kitchen fittings'.[20] McGenniskin Hall is located on the McPherson Street side of the site and currently used as a dance studio.

Newton Memorial Gates

A third set of memorial gates were erected in October 1981 in honour of Robert Newton's service and passion for the Agricultural Society. Set slightly back from McPherson Street, the decorative black wrought iron gates are situated between two stone columns with a plaque mounted on the left column. It reads: "*Presented by Mr and Mrs R.C. Newton. October 1981. President 1939-1943 ... 1958-1954.*" Newton was the proprietor of Horsham carrying and grain merchant firm, Newton and Miller, and joined the Horsham Agricultural Society committee in December 1931.[21] Despite resigning from his four year presidency in 1954 upon moving to Geelong, he continued to regularly attend committee meetings in Horsham up until his death in 1961.

Grandstand

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In 1982, a new 600 person grandstand was erected by contractor A. Coutts Pty Ltd of Horsham, replacing the previous grandstand constructed in 1920. The construction of the grandstand was planned as the first stage of a two-stage project costing approximately \$350,000. In November 1985, Horsham Agricultural Society secretary, Mr Jim Wright, announced that the grandstand was finally free of debt. The *Mail-Times* reported that 'the Youth, Sport and Recreation Department's racing division paid for the grandstand from greyhound and trotting funds' and 'the agricultural society as showground controller borrowed money from Westpac Bank and the government department allocated money each year to repay the debt'.^[22] In June 1996, the 76 year old grandstand (condemned in 1991), with rotted foundations was demolished. A new brick building, designed by Horsham architects Wilson Beyer and Crisp, incorporating a tote, taboret, licenced lounge and undercover-terrace was erected in its place, costing approximately \$750,000.^[23]

Today (2014) the Horsham Show is still held annually – in September/October. The site is also used by several community groups for meetings and activities, on an on-going basis. Stables are offered for permanent hire and several businesses operate out of Showground buildings.

[1] Maroske, I. (1978). *A History of the Horsham Agricultural Society*. Horsham: Horsham Agricultural Society, p. xi.

[2] Letter to the editor (1900) *Horsham Times*. 12 October.

[3] *A History of the Horsham Agricultural Society*, p. 2.

[4] *Ibid*, p. 84.

[5] *Ibid*.

[6] *Ibid*, p. 84.

[7] *Ibid*, p. 82.

[8] *Ibid*, p. 44.

[9] *Ibid*, p. 106.

[10] *Ibid*.

[11] Horsham Times (1937 Agricultural Society Annual Meeting: Improvement in financial position. *Horsham Times*. 25 May, p. 6; Horsham Times (1938) Agricultural Society elects officers. *Horsham Times*. 28 June, p. 10.

[12] *Ibid*, p. 65.

[13] *A History of the Horsham Agricultural Society*, p. 87.

[14] *A History of the Horsham Agricultural Society*, p. 65.

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[15] *Ibid.*

[16] Mail-Times (1954) Hall is memorial. *Mail-Times*. 4 October, p. 3.

[17] Mail-Times (1954) Your guide for the Horsham Show today. *Mail-Times*. 6 October, p. 1.

[18] *A History of the Horsham Agricultural Society*, p. 62.

[19] *Ibid*, p. 66.

[20] *Ibid.*

[21] *Ibid*, p. 64.

[22] Mail-Times (1985) Grandstand debt is fully paid. *Mail-Times*. 18 November, p. 4.

[23] Mail-Times (1996) Grandstand foundations rotted out. *Mail-Times*. 28 June, p. 4.

Description

Physical Description

Showground site contains several buildings around a central oval/ trotting track space. Buildings are of a variety of styles and date from the early 20thC to today. Stables and sheds are located at the NE end of the site, with offices, halls and a grandstand along the west boundary, facing the highway. Memorial Gates located at driveway entry points to site. Tucker Pavilion – horse and cattle stables/ shed – c 1920 in construction, with corrals inside. JW Power Memorial Gates – ‘1921’ – well designed masonry/ render gate archway in the ‘free classical/mannerist’ style, in good condition, with CGI-clad ticket booths to either side. Good example of building type of the period. Langlands and Newton gates – plaques fixed to post WW11 stone faced pillars. Ladies Pavilion c1930s – simple timber clad ‘hall’ building – poor condition due to ground settlement. Maydale Pavilion – large 1962 CGI clad shed of utilitarian design and average condition. Russell Hall – simple timber plank clad hall building (1954) – CGI roof, converted from former shearing shed. 1959 McGennissen Hall – simple skillion roof hall/ building, clad with timber planking – structural settlement evident. Grandstand dates from 1982 and is contemporary in design.

Physical Condition

Showground buildings are in fair-to-poor condition. Some sheds have settled on stumps (due to soil movement), timber is weathered, metalwork corroded and paint is required for all structures. JW Power Gates are in good to excellent condition. All buildings have been adapted over time, to suit new needs. No building on the site is in original condition and alterations to many compromise the original form and finishes of buildings/ sheds. Langlands Memorial Gates have been relocated. Langlands and Newton Gates are of historic interest, but are simple in design and not significant entry points to the Showgrounds.

Australian Heritage Commission Criteria

Relevant HERCON Criteria

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Criterion A: Importance to the course, or pattern, of our cultural or natural history. (site of the annual Horsham Show from 1902. Significant to HRCC as a key part of the establishment and development of the agricultural importance of the district and the wealth of Horsham. Shedding and halls altered and intactness compromised. JW Power Memorial Gates intact and represent criterion.)

Criterion E: Importance in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics. (JW Power Memorial Gates are a well resolved example of 'free classical' design, as applied to a Memorial gateway – not found elsewhere in HRCC. Shedding and halls not of aesthetic value.)

—*Criterion H:* Special association with the life or works of a person, or group of persons, of importance in our history. (direct association with FJ Langlands, JW Power and others. Association with the Horsham Agricultural Society – supporting agricultural excellence, provider of education, organiser of community-based Show events. JW Power Gates best representative eg of theme – well maintained, of aesthetic value, built during prosperous Horsham interwar period and mark the entry to the place.)

Comparative Analysis

The Showground (inc. Memorial Gates) is the only one of its type in Horsham Rural City. Other showgrounds of note within Victoria include as below. They are in various states of repair, but several are of higher integrity (condition, or of same period) than Horsham – so the place is not considered of wider heritage value.

Koroit Ag showgrounds, High St, Koroit (HO37), Hermes no. 81164: Few sheds, mix of eras, set around oval

Nhill Ag Showgrounds, Nhill, Hermes no. 81164: Mix of sheds in park – bigger than Horsham

Royal Ag Showgrounds, Flemington, Melb (HO221), Hermes no. 81266: Principal showgrounds for Victoria – substantially larger & high historic integrity in comparison

Traralgon Showgrounds, Whittkers Rd, Traralgon, Hermes no. 81214: Similar scale – several buildings built same era and are decorative brick – higher historic integrity

Ballarat Showgrounds, Creswick/ Howat St Wendouree: Large, intact complex

Shepparton Showgrounds, Shepparton, Hermes no. 126746: Big complex of mixed era – memorial gate of similar scale and date to Horsham.

Kerang Showgrounds, Kerang, Hermes no. 81486: Small collection of buildings – good historic integrity though

Wangaratta Showgrounds, Evans St, Wangaratta: Good collection of sheds of similar era of construction – higher integrity

Sale Showgrounds, Maffra-Sale Rd, Sale, Hermes no. 127814: Comparable in size to Horsham, but more buildings extant from establishment of ground.

Statement of Significance

What is significant?

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The elements of heritage value of the Horsham Showgrounds, 95 McPherson St, Horsham include:

- 1924 JW Power Memorial Gates - including masonry arched gateway, wrought iron gates x 4, parapet signage.
- The associated c1920s corrugated-iron clad ticket booths adjacent to the gate piers are contributory.

Excluded -

The other gates, shedding, grandstand and halls are excluded.

How is it significant?

The 1924 JW Power Memorial Gates, of the Horsham Showgrounds, McPherson St, Horsham are of historical and aesthetic significance to Horsham Rural City.

Why is it significant?

The 1924 JW Power Memorial Gates, located at the entrance of the Horsham Showgrounds, McPherson Street, Horsham are:

- Of local historical significance, representing the important role of the Showgrounds and the Horsham Agricultural Society in the agricultural and recreational development of the region. The Gates stand as the earliest remaining intact fabric in the Showgrounds and date from Horsham's prosperous agricultural inter-war period. (Criterion A)
- Of associational significance, as a representative example of the Society's practice of memorialisation of founding and long-standing Society committee members. Memorialisation of structures/ gates in such venues is a common practice. The JW Power Memorial Gates acknowledge John Weldon Power's contribution as one of several key foundation committee members of the Agricultural Society. (Criterion H)
- Of local aesthetic significance, as a high integrity design example of 'free classical' design, applied to a gateway structure. The proportions, architectural decoration and arch configuration reflect design ideals of the 1920s period and the Gate is the only remaining structure of this type and period in the Council area. (Criterion E)

Recommendations 2022

External Paint Controls	No
Internal Alteration Controls	No
Tree Controls	No
Fences & Outbuildings	No
Prohibited uses may be permitted	No

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Incorporated Plan

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Aboriginal Heritage Place

No

References

Literature title: A History of the Horsham Agricultural Society

Literature type: General Reference

Literature author: Maroske, I.

Literature publisher: Horsham: Horsham Agricultural Society

Literature year: 1978

Literature title: Horsham Agricultural Society

Literature type: General Reference

Literature author:

Literature publisher:

Literature year: 2013

Literature title: Horsham Times Newspaper

Literature type: General Reference

Literature author:

Literature publisher:

Literature year:

This information is provided for guidance only and does not supersede official documents, particularly the planning scheme. Planning controls should be verified by checking the relevant municipal planning scheme.