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Masonic Temple

31 Urquhart Street, Horsham



Photo: 1997

Existing Registrations:

Victorian Heritage Register: nil

National Estate Register: nil

National Trust Register: nil

History: In 1877, masonry was established in Horsham with the formation of Wimmera Lodge no.70. For the first eight years of its existence, meetings were held in various premises around the town.

A permanent meeting place was also desired and in August 1884, it was agreed that a site should be purchased and a hall built. An allotment available in McLachlan Street, north side between Firebrace and Urquhart Streets for 75 pounds. The land was part lots 1 and 3 of Section 6, first owned by William Seeley. The lodge bought it and by May 1885, had erected the surviving brick hall at this location. In 1936, it was decided to sell the hall to Pears Furniture Pty Ltd for 2000 pounds and to buy another site and erect a new hall. A house property in Urquhart Street, east side between Pynsent Street and Roberts Avenue was purchased for 856 pounds and a building committee formed.

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The house was on part lot 2 of Section 13. The land had been owned originally by W. Edmondson. The house was removed or demolished and an imposing two storeyed temple was subsequently erected in cement and steel. The building had a 16 by 10 metre temple on its upper floor and a public hall on the ground floor. The builder was C.E. Brown of Ballarat. It cost approximately 6,000 pounds and was dedicated on the 11 September 1937.

Description: A monumental and conservative public building symmetrically arranged in the manner of the period and distinguished by its two storeyed loggia with giant order columns recalling Egyptian architectural precedents.

Integrity: High (exterior) **Condition:** Sound

Comparative examples: Compares locally with contemporary buildings at Horsham including the T & G building of 1940. At the State level it compares with other masonic temples of the period and some banks, such as the former State Savings Bank, Centre Road, Bentleigh. The Masonic temple of 1925 at Newport is stylistically earlier but of similar stature in the streetscape.

Significance: The Masonic Temple at 31 Urquhart Street when considered with the preceding building in McLachlan Street is important as a testimony to the role of masonry at Horsham since 1885 (Criterion A). Its monumental façade treatment is noteworthy in Horsham and may be an important example of its type at the State level.

References: Town of Horsham, Parish Plan, Department of Lands and Survey, 28.2.1928.
Horsham Sewerage Plan no.131 and 132, c.1927, amended June 1948.
Wimmera Masonic Lodge file, Horsham Historical Society.
Brian Brooke and Alan Finch, A Story of Horsham, A Municipal Century, City of Horsham, 1982, pp.235-6.

Data sheet prepared by Andrew Ward 2/98

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