

HERITAGE PLACE

NAME OF PLACE: COLERAINE RACECOURSE

ADDRESS/LOCATION OF PLACE: Glenelg Highway COLERAINE

STUDY NUMBER: 033

HERITAGE OVERLAY NUMBER:

PRECINCT: outside

LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA: Southern Grampians Shire

ALLOTMENT: 4, 4B **SECTION:** 20 **PARISH:** PARISH OF COLERAINE

ACCESS DESCRIPTION:

CFA 430 9A; VicRoads 72 D3; located on the south side of the Glenelg Highway about 3.5kms east of Coleraine on the plateau immediately before the steep descent into Coleraine.

SIGNIFICANCE RATING: Local



Racecourse, Glenelg Highway, Coleraine

Image Date: 09/02/02

EXTENT OF LISTING:

To the extent of: 1. All the main buildings including the grandstand, horse stalls, betting ring, committee room, bars and dining room, photo finish box, judges box, and the racecourse tracks, fence and all the land in the reserve.

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PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION:

Coleraine Racecourse is located on a gazetted reserve of nearly 50 hectares approximately 3 kilometres east of the township of Coleraine on the Glenelg Highway. The layout of the course and facilities is typical of country racetracks. The course is approached via a gravel drive through a formal gateway off the Glenelg Highway, past a single avenue of mature Cupressus sempervirens trees, to the cluster of administrative buildings and public facilities. These consist of a two storey grandstand, with bar and dining room underneath the stands, a public bar, the jockeys' room and secretary's office, and a betting ring, with horse stalls and trainers' facilities at the rear of the complex. These buildings are simple and utilitarian in style, constructed in timber and corrugated iron, with no architectural pretensions. The elliptical track consists of separate steeplechase and flat courses, with an adjacent sand training track. A photo finish box and judges box are located near the finish line, opposite the grandstand. Many of the buildings were constructed in the later part of the 20th century, and replaced earlier structures. The course was redesigned in 1979.

The present grandstand was erected by Henry James in 1902 to seat 400 people, built of timber and corrugated iron, and altered in 1913 when the sides were covered with ripple iron. The grandstand was remodelled in 1948, following its use as a wool store during the Second World War, and has undergone further minor alterations in the later 20th century.

HISTORY:

According to Margaret Kiddle, horse racing was a very popular recreational pursuit in the Western District in the mid 19th century, and large crowds flocked to local race meetings held in the growing towns of the region (Kiddle, 463). She writes "it was the nearby town of Coleraine which boasted 'the prettiest and fairest' steeplechase course in all Australia. This was laid out by Cuthbert Featherstonhaugh and Tom Clibborn and was originally four miles. There were forty-two post and rail fences of strength and height similar to those which had horrified Trollope. Featherstonhaugh and Clibborn were two amongst the famed gentlemen-riders of the Western District for it was the day of the 'gentlemen', not the jockeys." (Kiddle, 464) The most famous of these race meetings was the Great Western Steeplechase held at Coleraine. The first race meeting in Coleraine was held in April 1857, on a flat measured mile course along the valley (Byrne and Dean, 3). From 1858, the racing program concentrated on steeplechasing, with the first running of the Great Western over a 4 mile course designed by Cuthbert Featherstonhaugh and Tom Clibborn. The steeplechase attracted gentleman riders from all over the Western District, most notably the much-loved poet and horseman Adam Lindsay Gordon (Kiddle, 464).

In 1861 the residents of Coleraine appealed to their local parliamentarian for the government to set aside an area for a racecourse. A reserve of 113 acres near Coleraine was gazetted in 1862 for the specific purpose of racing. The first grandstand was built in 1884, using materials donated by James Trangmar, local merchant. The present grandstand was built by Henry James of James Bros in 1902 (Byrne and Dean, 3-4).

The Coleraine Cup may have originated in a race meeting held over two days in 1893, but this meeting was subsequently discontinued. The first official Coleraine Cup was run during a two day meeting on 16th and 17th April 1903. There were 7 starters, who competed over a distance of one and a half miles, for a purse of 30 pounds. This was won by 'Caircorn', owned by Mr W Robertson of Gringegalgona (ibid, 19). John Finn Kirby, who owned Parisian, the winner of the 1911 Melbourne Cup, resided across the highway from the racecourse at Mount Koroite Homestead, and raced many horses on the track. Coleraine Racecourse played an important role in the thoroughbred horse racing industry throughout the 20th century.

THEMATIC CONTEXT:

Theme 8: Developing Australia's cultural life

8.1 Organising recreation

8.1.1 Playing and watching organised sport

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8.1.2 Betting

8.5.4 Pursuing common leisure interests

CONDITION:

The condition of the course and buildings is very good.

INTEGRITY:

Good degree of integrity to the Interwar/post WW2 period.

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE:

What is significant?

The Coleraine Racecourse, located 3kms east of the town, is a complex of buildings and tracks which have been built to serve the racing industry in the district for over 100 years. The buildings are essentially utilitarian, constructed using inexpensive materials and building techniques. The complex consists of the grandstand, stables, committee room, bar and dining room, photo finish box, judges box, and horse stalls and training facilities. The course and fencing around the track are also significant. The two storey grandstand, built in 1902 in timber and corrugated iron, is the oldest surviving building on the site, and replaced an earlier single storey grandstand. It has been substantially altered in the latter half of the 20th century. The land for the racecourse was reserved in 1862 following an appeal from the local community, as a result of the immense popularity of racing in the area, particularly the famous Great Western Steeplechase.

How is it significant?

The Coleraine Racecourse is of historical significance to the community of Coleraine and the Southern Grampians Shire.

Why is it significant?

Coleraine Racecourse is of historical significance for its association with the early history of racing in Victoria, and has particular significance for its link to the immensely popular Great Western Steeplechase, and its famous horseriders, including Adam Lindsay Gordon and Cuthbert Fetherstonhaugh. It has further historical significance for its continuous association with the thoroughbred horse racing industry over 100 years.

COMPARISON:

293 Racecourse and Grandstand, Racecourse Road, Penshurst
410 Hamilton Racecourse, Henty Highway, Hamilton

ASSESSED BY: aen

ASSESSMENT DATE:

31-Oct-01

EXISTING LISTINGS:

HERITAGE STUDY RECOMMENDATIONS:

Include in VHR Include in RNE Include in Local Planning Scheme

No Recommendations for Inclusions

REFERENCES:

Author	Title	Year Page
Cuthbert Fetherstonhaugh	After many days: being the reminiscences of Cuthbert Fetherstonhaugh	1918
Departments of Lands and Survey	Township of Coleraine (Parishes of Coleraine and Konong Wootong County of Dundas)	1873
Departments of Lands and Survey	Township of Coleraine (Parishes of Coleraine and Konong Wootong County of Dundas)	1955

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Louise Byrne and Mary Rose Dean
Margaret Kiddle

A History of Coleraine Racing 1857-1985
Men of Yesterday

1985
1961 464