

## DONALD SHIRE OFFICES



November 2022



3 distant front photo



1 back



4 best foyer



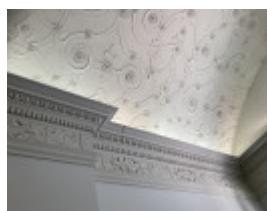
Donald Offices - Aerial 2023



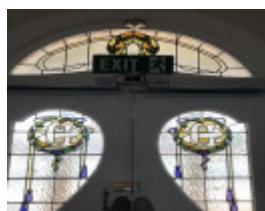
IMG 1876



IMG 1881



IMG 1882



IMG 1877



IMG 1878



IMG 1880



IMG 1883



IMG 1898



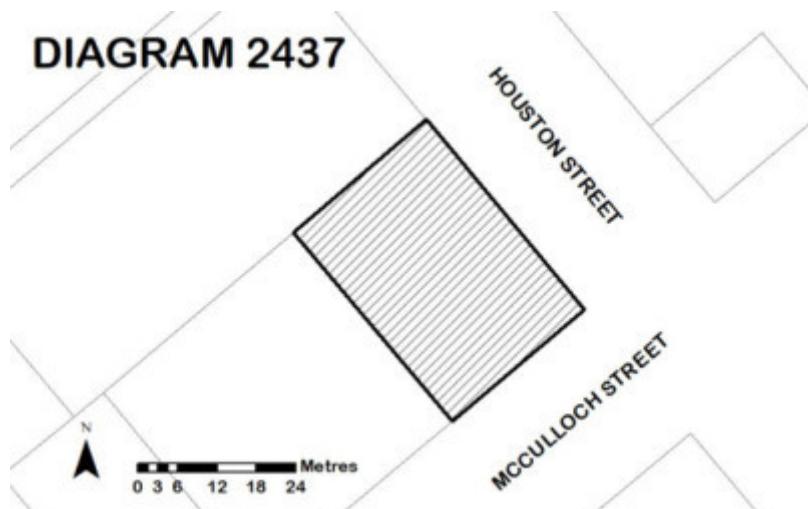
IMG 1899



IMG 1904



IMG 1916



Donald Offices Extent Diagram 2023

## Location

31 MCCULLOCH STREET DONALD, BULOKA SHIRE

## Municipality

BULOKA SHIRE

## Level of significance

Registered

## Victorian Heritage Register (VHR) Number

H2437

## VHR Registration

June 8, 2023

## Amendment to Registration

November 16, 2023

## Heritage Listing

## Statement of Significance

Last updated on - September 1, 2025

The Donald Shire Offices are located on Dja Dja Wurrung Country.

## What is significant?

The Donald Shire Office, designed in 1911 by Harold Bunnett and Gerald Ryan in a Federation Freestyle under the supervision of the architect Harold Desbrowe-Annear.

## How is it significant?

The Donald Shire Office is of architectural significance to the State of Victoria. It satisfies the following criterion for inclusion in the Victorian Heritage Register:

### Criterion D

Importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of cultural places and objects

## Why is it significant?

The Donald Shire Offices are architecturally significant as a fine example of a Federation Free style building. It has stylised Dutch gables, arched apexes crowned by orbs and corner towers surmounted by cupolas and arcaded loggias. Art Nouveau features include stained glassed entrance doors featuring ornamental wreaths into which is set a 'DS' for Donald Shire. The Council Chamber is particularly fine and includes a barrel-vaulted ceiling of pressed plaster and elaborate plastered cornices and a plastered curvilinear Art Nouveau pediment above a bas-relief of the Shire of Donald crest.

(Criterion D)

## 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:**

The works and activities below are not considered to cause harm to the cultural heritage significance of the Donald Shire Offices subject to the guidelines and conditions that follow:

- 1) Repair and maintenance of the carport.
- 2) Demolition of the carport.
- 3) Repair and maintenance of the c.2000s water tanks.
- 4) Removal of the c.2000s water tanks.
- 5) Repair and maintenance of the communications tower within existing footprint/structure.
- 6) Removal of the communications tower.

### **Permit Exemption Guidelines**

1. Where there is an inconsistency between permit exemptions specific to the registered place or object ('specific exemptions') established in accordance with either section 49(3) or section 92(3) of the *Heritage Act 2017* and general exemptions established in accordance with section 92(1) of the *Heritage Act 2017* specific exemptions will prevail to the extent of any inconsistency.
2. In specific exemptions, words have the same meaning as in the *Heritage Act 2017*, unless otherwise indicated. Where there is an inconsistency between specific exemptions and the *Heritage Act 2017*, the *Heritage Act 2017* will prevail to the extent of any inconsistency.
3. Nothing in specific exemptions obviates the responsibility of a proponent to obtain the consent of the owner of the registered place or object, or if the registered place or object is situated on Crown Land the land manager as defined in the *Crown Land (Reserves) Act 1978*, prior to undertaking works or activities in accordance with specific exemptions.
4. If a Cultural Heritage Management Plan in accordance with the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006* is required for works covered by specific exemptions, specific exemptions will apply only if the Cultural Heritage Management Plan has been approved prior to works or activities commencing. Where there is an inconsistency between specific exemptions and a Cultural Heritage Management Plan for the relevant works and activities, Heritage Victoria must be contacted for advice on the appropriate approval pathway.
5. Specific exemptions do not constitute approvals, authorisations or exemptions under any other legislation, Local Government, State Government or Commonwealth Government requirements, including but not limited to the *Planning and Environment Act 1987*, the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006*, and the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (Cth). Nothing in this declaration exempts owners or their agents from the responsibility to obtain relevant planning, building or environmental approvals from the responsible authority where applicable.
6. Care should be taken when working with heritage buildings and objects, as historic fabric may contain dangerous and poisonous materials (for example lead paint and asbestos). Appropriate personal protective equipment should be worn at all times. If you are unsure, seek advice from a qualified heritage architect, heritage consultant or local Council heritage advisor.
7. The presence of unsafe materials (for example asbestos, lead paint etc) at a registered place or object does not automatically exempt remedial works or activities in accordance with this category. Approvals under Part 5 of the *Heritage Act 2017* must be obtained to undertake works or activities that are not expressly exempted by the

below specific exemptions.

8. All works should be informed by a Conservation Management Plan prepared for the place or object. The Executive Director is not bound by any Conservation Management Plan, and permits still must be obtained for works suggested in any Conservation Management Plan.

### **Permit Exemption Conditions**

1. All works or activities permitted under specific exemptions must be planned and carried out in a manner which prevents harm to the registered place or object. Harm includes moving, removing or damaging any part of the registered place or object that contributes to its cultural heritage significance.
2. If during the carrying out of works or activities in accordance with specific exemptions original or previously hidden or inaccessible details of the registered place are revealed relating to its cultural heritage significance, including but not limited to historical archaeological remains, such as features, deposits or artefacts, then works must cease and Heritage Victoria notified as soon as possible.
3. If during the carrying out of works or activities in accordance with specific exemptions any Aboriginal cultural heritage is discovered or exposed at any time, all works must cease and the Secretary (as defined in the Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006 (Vic)) must be contacted immediately to ascertain requirements under the Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006 (Vic).
4. If during the carrying out of works or activities in accordance with specific exemptions any munitions or other potentially explosive artefacts are discovered, Victoria Police is to be immediately alerted and the site is to be immediately cleared of all personnel.
5. If during the carrying out of works or activities in accordance with specific exemptions any suspected human remains are found the works or activities must cease. The remains must be left in place and protected from harm or damage. Victoria Police and the State Coroner's Office must be notified immediately. If there are reasonable grounds to believe that the remains are Aboriginal, the State Emergency Control Centre must be immediately notified on 1300 888 544, and, as required under s.17(3)(b) of the Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006 (Vic), all details about the location and nature of the human remains must be provided to the Secretary (as defined in the Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006 (Vic)).

### **Theme**

6. Building towns cities and the garden state 7. Governing Victorians

Construction dates 1911,

Architect/Designer Harold Desbrowe Annear, Bunnett and Ryan, Gerald Ryan, Harold Ernest Bunnett,

Heritage Act Categories Registered place,

Other Names DONALD SHIRE OFFICE (INCLUDING COUNCIL CHAMBER), COUNCIL CHAMBERS, COUNCIL CHAMBER, BULOKE OFFICES,

Hermes Number 14171

Property Number

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### **History**

### **Shire of Donald**

In 1861 the St Arnaud Road District was created, encompassing an area including what is now known as the Shire of Buleke. From the 1860s to the 1890s the boundaries of districts and shires in this region were redrawn many times. In 1897 the Shire of Donald was created from the Shire of St Arnaud including the localities of Mount Jeffcott, Donald, Lake Buleke and Watchem. The next major change occurred in 1995 when the shires of Birchip, Charlton, Donald and Wycheproof amalgamated to form the present Shire of Buleke. From 1885 the St Arnaud Shire Council offices were located in the Mechanics Institute, Donald. In 1890 when more room became necessary, premises known as the Town Hall were purchased and altered to suit the Council requirements.

## Donald Shire Offices

By 1909 the Donald Shire Council voted to construct new Shire Offices. After several years of public debate, the Council decided in 1911 to call for an architectural competition for the design of the new offices on the corner of McCulloch and Houston streets. The competition was won by the firm of Bennett and Ryan (also known as Harold Bennett Architects) of Collins Street, Melbourne with the work to be carried out under the supervision of Harold Desbrowe-Annear. The builder was J Hornsby. The building was officially opened on 23 April 1912 by Thomas Langdon MLA.

When it opened the *Donald Times* reported that the building was 'a substantial, ornate and spacious building'. Its features included:

- a weathervane, turrets and flagpole
- a brick rough cast exterior painted white
- windows on three sides of the building of Murrine glass
- a red tiled roof
- a portico entrance embellished with lead light windows and doors
- doorknobs and handles of bronze
- air shaft ventilation
- red pine furnishings throughout the building finished in oil.

The interior was described as having a 'pleasing uniformity of design and finish throughout on an American model'. The main room was the spacious and formal Council Chambers with particularly ornate interior detailing:

*... the cove ceiling in which is of a floral design beautifully finished with cornices richly moulded in fibro cement. There is a handsome mantelpiece in red pine with an overmantel in fibro plaster in which the shire's seal and motto 'Unita fortior' is moulded in the centre, the capping to the overmantel being finished agreeably with the cornices.*[\[1\]](#)

## The Design Process

There is some uncertainty around the design contributions from Bennett, Ryan and Desbrowe-Annear. Architectural historian Harriet Edquist writes '... it was not [Desbrowe-Annear's] project and the extent of his design is a matter of conjecture'.[\[2\]](#) Her view is that the building was designed by Bennett and Ryan in Desbrowe-Annear's Office, 'probably with his input'.[\[3\]](#) Available sources indicate the following:

**1911:** An undated drawing of the building's exterior held at the Donald District Archives bears the name of a firm 'Harold Bennett Architects'. This appears to be a drawing submitted for the competition.

**14 July 1911:** The *Donald Times* reported that the architects 'are Messers Ryan and Bunnet [Bennett] 406 Collins Street, Melbourne, and the work is to be carried out in accordance with specifications under the supervision of Mr. H Desbrowe-Annear...'

**10 October 1911:** The *Donald Times* reported that councillors 'had not seen the architect since the building was commenced' and that 'the building was not being properly supervised'.

**11 November 1911:** The *Donald Times* reported that the Shire of Donald Council was concerned about a 'lack of supervision' and 'a meeting had been held with the architect, Harold Desbrowe-Annear'. Desbrowe-Annear's fee

for visiting Donald was £6.6s, but 'after some discussion he would accept £3.3s'.[\[4\]](#)

**5 March 1912:** The *Donald Times* reported on delays in construction, stating that 'the contractor had been hampered through the inability to get details from the architect'. One Council member notes that 'the trouble was the architect had not made up his mind from the start. He was making alterations from day to day...'.[\[5\]](#)

**23 April 1912:** The *Donald Times* report of the opening stated that the building had been constructed by contractor JR Hornsby 'under the general supervision of Mr A. Desbrowe- Annear [Mr H. Desbrowe-Annear], architect of Melbourne, mainly to the designs of Messers. Ryan and Bunnett'.[\[6\]](#)

**1912:** Harriet Edquist reports that the design of the Shire Offices 'was attributed to Desbrowe-Annear by [the journal] *Building* shortly after completion.[\[7\]](#)

**Later addition:** Plans held at the Donald District Archives show that additions were made to the rear of the building after February 1966 (the introduction of decimal currency). The 1911 section of the building was not altered and the additions were not obtrusive. It is unclear who the architect was.

The Executive Director, Heritage Victoria, welcomes further information about the authorship and design history of this place.

## The Architects

Harold Ernest Bunnett (1891-1965) was born in Mildura. He was articled to Ussher & Kemp and attended the Working Men's College (now RMIT) completing all of the subjects in the architectural course from 1906 to 1911. He was employed as a draftsman with Joseph Plottell, architect, of 31 Queen Street, Melbourne, from 1912 to 1916. He commenced practice as an architect in 1916 with FD Warren, with whom he worked until 1918. He registered as an architect in 1923. He died in Kew, Victoria.[\[8\]](#)

Gerald Ryan (1879-1924) was born in Ararat. He was articled to Inskip and Kemp of Collins Street, Melbourne and attended the Working Men's College (now RMIT). He studied the drawing of architectural ornamentation and painting under artist Leslie Wilkie, also of Collins Street, for two years. He was associated with Harold Desbrowe-Annear from 1908 and commenced private practice in 1911. He registered as an architect in 1923, admitted to the Royal Victorian Institute of Architects in July 1924, and died later that year.[\[9\]](#)

Harold Desbrowe-Annear (1865-1933) was an influential Australian architect who was at the forefront of the development of the Arts and Crafts movement. During the 1890s he was an instructor in architecture at the Working Men's College (now RMIT University) where he founded the T-Square Club in 1900. The club acted as a meeting point for Melbourne's architects, artists and craft workers, and helped to develop a strong Arts and Crafts culture in the city.

Chiefly a designer of houses, one of his most noted civic designs was the Federation Arch (1901) a temporary triumphal arch over Princes Bridge built for the visit to Melbourne of the Duke and Duchess of York, one of eight such arches in Melbourne. In that year his Springthorpe Memorial was unveiled (VHR H0522). Another major work outside the field of domestic architecture was the additions to and new interiors in the Menzies Hotel (1909-1911). From 1910, Desbrowe-Annear's practice gained momentum and received many commissions: eight tenders for residences were called in that year, and he was working on the Menzies Hotel. It appears that his commitments in Melbourne placed limitations on the time available to visit Donald as supervising architect.

## Federation Free Style

The Federation Free Style (c.1890-c.1915) drew on the Arts and Crafts idiom but applied it to the design of commercial and institutional buildings. It demonstrated an eclectic combination of elements adapted from styles including classical, Romanesque, Art Nouveau and Queen Anne, with no overall evocation of any particular style of the past. Characteristics included the use of traditional materials, such as stucco, asymmetrical forms and handcrafted elements. The influence of Art Nouveau was sometimes evident in lettering applied to the facade.[\[10\]](#)

# Objects Integral

The commissioning or acquisition of furniture sometimes accompanied the construction of shire offices, town halls and other civic buildings. Photographs indicate that there was a large table and set of chairs in the Council Chambers after the opening of the offices in 1912. These are no longer at the place and their location is unknown. There are no other original or early furniture or movable objects at the place or other known location.

## Selected bibliography

Apperly, Richard, Robert Irving, Peter Reynolds, *A pictorial guide to identifying Australian architecture: styles and terms from 1788 to the present*, Angus & Robertson, Sydney, 1989.  
Donald Shire Offices, Architectural drawings, State Library of Victoria, LTAD33.  
*Donald Times*  
'Architect Delves into History', *Donald Birchip Times*, 10 June 1992, p.3.  
Edquist, Harriet *Harold Desbrowe-Annear 1865-1933: a life in architecture*, Miegunyah Press, 2004.  
Jacobs, Taylor, Rowe, Johnson & Ballinger, *Buloke Shire Heritage Study*, Stage 2, Volume 1, 2011.

- [1] 'Donald's Development: New Shire Hall: "Unita Fortior"', *Donald Times*, 23 April 1912, unpaginated.
- [2] Harriet Edquist, *Harold Desbrowe-Annear 1865-1933: a life in architecture*, Miegunyah Press, 2004, p. 114.
- [3] Harriet Edquist, *Harold Desbrowe-Annear*, p.114.
- [4] 'Donald Shire Council', *Donald Times*, 11 November 2011, unpaginated.
- [5] 'A Building Bungle: Donald Shire Hall', *Donald Times*, 5 March 1912, unpaginated.
- [6] 'Donald's Development: New Shire Hall: "Unita Fortior"', *Donald Times*, 23 April 1912, unpaginated.
- [7] Harriet Edquist, *Harold Desbrowe-Annear 1865-1933*, p.114.
- [8] 'Architect Delves into History', *Donald Birchip Times*, 10 June 1992, p.3. Newsclipping in Donald Shire Offices file, Donald District Archives. This newspaper report reproduces professional career summaries of Bennett and Ryan written by architectural historian Geoffrey Woodfall, who completed a thesis on Harold Desbrowe-Annear in 1955.
- [9] 'Architect Delves into History', *Donald Birchip Times*, 10 June 1992, p.3. Also see Harriet Edquist, *Harold Desbrowe-Annear 1865-1933*, p.80.
- [10] See 'Federation Free Style c.1890-1915' in Apperly, Richard, Robert Irving, Peter Reynolds, *A pictorial guide to identifying Australian architecture: styles and terms from 1788 to the present*, Angus & Robertson, Sydney, 1989. pp. 136-139.

## Extent of Registration

### Heritage Act 2017

#### NOTICE OF REGISTRATION

As Executive Director for the purpose of the **Heritage Act 2017**, I give notice under section 53 that the Victorian Heritage Register is amended by modifying a place in the Heritage Register:

Number: H2437  
Category: Registered Place, Registered Archaeological Place  
Place: Donald Shire Offices  
Location: 31 McCulloch Street, Donald  
Municipality: Buloke Shire

All of the place shown hatched on Diagram 2437 encompassing all of Lot 2 on Title Plan 930720.

16 November 2023  
STEVEN AVERY  
Executive Director

*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/>*