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# LEONGATHA MECHANICS' INSTITUTE & FREE LIBRARY (FORMER)



Leongatha Mechanics'  
Institute & Free Library

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## Location

10 MCCARTIN STREET, LEONGATHA, SOUTH GIPPSLAND SHIRE

## Municipality

SOUTH GIPPSLAND SHIRE

## Level of significance

Included in Heritage Overlay

## Heritage Overlay Numbers

HO6

## Heritage Listing

South Gippsland Shire

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## Statement of Significance

Last updated on -

### What is significant?

The former Leongatha Mechanics' Institute Library & Billiard Room, designed by H.V. & A. Champion and constructed by Loring & Speers in 1911-12 at 10 McCartin Street, Leongatha.

### Why is it significant?

The former Leongatha Mechanics' Institute Library & Billiard Room is of local historic, aesthetic, technical and social significance to South Gippsland Shire.

Historically, the building illustrates the development of Mechanics' Institute in Leongatha and their important role in the development of the local community, both in a social and intellectual sense. It is also important for its use as the first Leongatha Public Library. (AHC criteria - A.4 and D.2)

Aesthetically, it is a notable example of early 20th Century Federation design, unusually and effectively employing concrete blocks in Classical detailing. It is an integral and notable part of the highly important group of civic buildings that are an essential part of the historic character of Leongatha. (AHC criterion - E.1)

Technically, the building is notable for its early use of concrete blocks, also for the technique of precast river reed reinforced plaster block used in the construction of the walls. This latter technique is unique within the Shire, and possibly also the State of Victoria. (AHC criterion - F.1)

Socially, it is significant as an important early education facility in the Leongatha region

Heritage Study/Consultant	South Gippsland - South Gippsland Heritage Study, David Helms with Trevor Westmore, 2004;
Construction dates	1911,
Architect/Designer	Champion, HV & A,
Hermes Number	30795
Property Number	

### Physical Description 1

The Leongatha Mechanics' Institute Library & Billiard Room, built in 1911, is a longitudinal hipped roof structure with concrete block walls. The interior has the former library at the rear, accessed by a wide passage to the west side. The full width library has a box truss roof structure with a clear storey lantern and a pressed metal ceiling. The front room has a splendid elaborate pressed metal ceiling and cornices, while the hall has a recent false ceiling.

Of particular interest are the internal partitions, which are constructed of plaster blocks 65mm thick and reinforced with horizontal river reeds. Only a small sample was seen and the size of the full blocks is uncertain. Given their thickness and the considerable height of the walls, it is possible that they are located between a timber frame as "brick nogging", possibly for the purpose of sound insulation.

(Note: Jack Miles of 4-6 Ogilvy Street, who has made alterations at the building, may be able to assist).

The front facade exposes the hip roof slopes at the sides (they were formerly extended as bracketed hoods over the side openings), with a parapet surmounted by an ogee scrolled pediment with an acroterion at the centre. The words "Mechanics Institute" are placed in raised render letters on the parapet. At either side, panelled pedestals are raised above the roof with ogee caps surmounted by spheres. Three semicircular arched openings are located symmetrically in the facade, the western being the entry opening to the side passage. The windows are tri-part with the arch vertically divided and the body below the springing line being of casements with hoppers above.

The whole of the facade is finished in splayed concrete blocks, including the parapet, the side pedestals, the quoined window surrounds and arches. Only the mouldings are in cement render.

The blocks are dimensioned 290x167x145mm. Header courses in the side wall suggest that the wall is solid.

*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/>*