

Item name: Grandstand Racetrack and Polo Field

Location: 4728 Clarence Town Road Wirragulla 2420

Dungog

Address: 4728 Clarence Town Road

Planning: Hunter & Central Coast

Suburb/nearest town: Wirragulla 2420

Local govt area: Dungog

Parish:

State: NSW

County:

Other/former names:

Area/group/complex:

Group ID:

Aboriginal area:

Curtilage/boundary:

Item type: Complex / Group

Group: Recreation and Entertainment

Category: Grandstand

Owner: Private - Individual

Admin codes:

Code 2:

Code 3:

Current use:

Former uses:

Assessed significance: Local

Endorsed significance:

Statement of significance: The racetrack is a record of the use of this land from 1845 and its continuous use for that purpose until recently. Other uses are also known and these include polo competitions from c1923 and the first local cricket match in c1854 between Bandon Grove and Dungog. The grandstand, built in 1924 and remnant stables are a record of the popularity and establishment of horse racing and polo in the region. The place is associated with the Mackay family who owned the land and built and developed this as racetrack and polo field.

The grandstand is a vernacular timber framed building built as a simple functional building with no decoration. It is a part of a complex that includes the racetrack and remnant stables.

Historical notes of provenance: The first race meeting on this land, originally called Hanleys (Hanles?) Flat was held in 1845 and racing became more established in the 1860s following registration with the Australian Jockey Club. The MacKay family of "Cangon" built the racetrack. A bullock team was used in the construction and terracotta pipes were laid to drain the track. The grandstand was built in 1924 and altered and rebuilt in 1926. A luncheon booth was added at a later date to cater for picnic races.

This was also the site of the first local competitive game of cricket, held in c.1854 between Bandon Grove and Dungog. Polo games were held on the field from c1923 and were begun by John Kenneth MacKay. The Sydney Morning Herald reports the establishment of the Wirragulla Polo Club in 1936.

Themes: **National theme**

State theme

Local theme

4. Settlement

Land tenure

8. Culture

Sport

8. Culture

Sport

Designer:

Builder:

Year started: 1924

Year completed:

Circa: No

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Physical description: The grandstand is designed to provide shelter and a view of the racecourse. It is a timber framed structure with masonry base wall. The roof is a gable form and clad with galvanised iron sheets and gable ends with lapped timber boards. The walls are clad with compressed fibre planks. The masonry base is rendered and painted. It is designed with raked timber seats and access from timber stairs asymmetrically placed on the north-east. The roof is constructed with purlins, rafters and collar beams and cross-bracing and supported on square timber posts and triangular bracing. A timber balustrade surrounds the seating area. A timber framed skillion structure has been added to the rear north-west and this includes a counter used for catering. The area below the seating is used for storage. The earlier external cladding of lapped circular sawn boards are evident on the internal western wall. Double hung windows on the north-west elevation appear to be a later addition. A timber framed addition clad with galvanised steel extends to south-east which includes open areas for stalls. The racetrack is evident in the form of the land and bounded by the timber fences added at a later date. Remnant stables are located to the south-west of the grandstand.

A comparative assessment of showgrounds of the Hunter Valley revealed grander examples than the subject building. Dungog Showground grandstand was built in 1928, 4 years after the Wirragulla grandstand, though simply detailed, it was designed by architect, J.W. Sobie and is an example of the Inter-War Freestyle.

The Maitland Showground, McDonald Pavilion was built in c.1900 as in grander in scale and design as an example of JW Penders work and designed in the Federation Arts and Crafts Style.

The Newcastle Showground includes two Grandstands built in 1906 and 1912. The 1906 building is grander than the subject building with cast iron columns. The 1912 building is Federation Free Classical in style with Classical style entry.

The Singleton Showground grandstand built 1881 and rebuilt in c1910 in the Federation style.

Stroud Showground grandstand built in 1924. This is a simpler structure than other examples. Built with a timber frame and trusses and clad in lapped timber boards. This is similar in vernacular form and materials to the subject building.

Wingham Showground Grandstand was built in 1890 with timber frame, clad with weatherboards and trusses supporting a gabled roof. This is similar to the subject building in scale, materials and vernacular form.

(Jennifer McMonnies, Survey of Rural New South Wales SHOWGROUNDS Hunter Valley 1996)

Physical condition level:

Physical condition: Good to poor. Requires maintenance.

Archaeological potential level:

Archaeological potential Detail:

Modification dates: The grandstand was altered and rebuilt in 1926. The skillion addition to the west is an addition - date unknown. The additions to the south were also built at an unknown date.

Recommended management:

Management:	Management category	Management name
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Further comments:

Criteria a): The racetrack is a record of the use of this land from 1845 and its continuous use for that purpose until recently.
[Historical significance] Other uses are also known and these include polo competitions from c1923 and the first local cricket match in c1854 between Bandon Grove and Dungog. The grandstand, built in 1924 and remnant stables are a record of the popularity and establishment of horse racing and polo in the region.

Criteria b): The place is associated with the Mackay family who owned the land and built and developed this as racetrack and polo field.
[Historical association significance]

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Criteria c): The grandstand is a vernacular timber framed building. It is a simple functional building with no decoration. It is located as a part of a complex that includes the racetrack and remnant stables.
[Aesthetic/ Technical significance]

Criteria d): The Mackay family own the land and continued to be involved in the public use of this place for annual picnic races until recently.
[Social/Cultural significance]

Criteria e):
[Research significance]

Criteria f):
[Rarity]

Criteria g): This is a functional building without decoration built in a vernacular form. In its vernacular form and simplicity it is dissimilar to other grandstands in the Hunter Valley region that have been the subject of a comparative study, with the exception of Stroud and Wingham Showground Grandstands (refer to Description section herein) . It may not be atypical of the smaller grandstands found on sportsfields and this requires further generic research of this specific building type..
[Representative]

Intactness/Integrity: The form of the racetrack is evident and the grandstand is extant. Later alterations and materials obscure the building form to some extent though the earlier form of the grandstand is evident.

References:	Author	Title	Year
	James Mackay		2012
	Sydney Morning Herald, 7/7/1936, p 4		1936

Studies:	Author	Title	Number	Year
	Perumal, Wrathall & Murj	Dungog Heritage Study		1986
	Carste Studio	Dungog Heritage Study Review	16	2013

Parcels:	Parcel code	Lot number	Section number	Plan code	Plan number
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Latitude:

Longitude:

Location validity:

Spatial accuracy:

Map name:

Map scale:

AMG zone:

Easting:

Northing:

Listing: Name

Title

Number

ListingDate

Heritage study

Data entry: Data first entered: 15/01/2013

Data updated: 18/11/2013

Status: Partial

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Image:



Caption: Grandstand Racetrack and Polo Field

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Image by: Carste

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Image number:

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