



ACT Heritage Council

Entry to the ACT Heritage Register

Heritage Act 2004

10009. Civic Merry Go Round and Organ

Garema Place, Intersection of Petrie Plaza and City Walk Canberra City

OBJECTS

This document has been prepared by the ACT Heritage Council.

This entry which was previously part of the old heritage places or the old heritage objects registers (as defined in the *Heritage Act 2004*), as the case may be, is taken to be registered under the *Heritage Act 2004*.

Conservation Requirements (including Specific Requirements), as defined under the *Heritage Act 2004*, that are contained within this document are taken to be Heritage Guidelines applying to this place or object, as the case may be.

Information restricted under *the old heritage places register or old heritage objects register* is restricted under the *Heritage Act 2004*.

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AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY HERITAGE OBJECTS REGISTER

For the purpose of S12 of the Heritage Objects Act 1991, a citation for:

Merry-go-round and Organ

has been approved by the Minister for the Arts and Heritage for entry in the Heritage Objects Register.

The date of the Instrument of Approval: 10 April 1996

Enquiries about this object and copies of this citation are available from:

The Secretary
ACT Heritage Council
TUGGERANONG ACT 2901

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INTERIM HERITAGE OBJECTS REGISTER

DRAFT CITATION

Prepared for the Heritage Objects Standing Committee 12 May 1994

MERRY-GO-ROUND and ORGAN

NOMINATED BY Museums and Galleries Unit,
Heritage, Museums and Galleries Section,
Department of the Environment, Land and
Planning

LOCATION OF OBJECTS **Merry-go-round** - Intersection of
Petrie Plaza and City Walk Canberra
City

Organ and related material- Mechanical
workshop and Playground storeroom,
Engineering Services Unit, Parks and
Conservation Branch, Department of
the Environment, Land and Planning,
Canberra Avenue, Fyshwick

DESCRIPTION

The merry-go-round and organ are described separately. The description of the merry-go-round is divided into the various components.

Merry-go-round

Structure and mechanics

The merry-go-round consists of a timber deck hung from a steel and timber spoked canopy connected to a central shaft of forged steel. Rotation of the merry-go-round occurs when the central shaft rotates and engages the timber spokes of the canopy. The rotating force is directed to the deck via brass diagonal bracing on the inside of the deck.

As the steam engine is no longer operable, a three phase electric motor has been installed and a belt drive connects the horizontal drive shaft which has been disconnected from the steam engine. Electric power is obtained from the mains via a switchboard.

The deck and subframe consist of splayed tongue and groove floor boards, bearers under the alignment of the two brass poles between horses and joists spanning between the bearers.

An edge board cantilevers off the deck to enable users to step on and off the merry-go-round.

The merry-go-round weighs approximately 15 tonnes. It has a diameter of 12 meters, and varies in height from 3.8 to 5.3 meters.

Animals

On the dark red painted timber deck are fitted 52 hand-carved wooden horses and two elephant carriages. Twisted brass poles are located along the inner and outer edges of the deck. Coloured lights are fixed to the outer lower edge of the deck.

The horses are four abreast, each mounted on a twisted brass pole and activated by over head transmission with a 37 cm gallop. They are painted various colours and have brightly painted carved bridle, breast plate, saddle, and saddle cloth which are set with cut glass medallions. The name of each horse is painted on the horse's neck (three not named). At the rear of each saddle is a carved and painted gargoyle-type head. The horses have horsehair tails, leather reins and stirrup straps, and stainless steel stirrup irons.

The two hand carved wooden elephant carriages comprising one white painted elephant, the other grey, have brightly painted carved decoration set with cut glass medallions. Each carriage is encircled by twisted brass railing, has red painted interior and paintings on either side of the entrance.

The animals are in 14 rows. Their names are listed below starting from the outside of each row. The rows are listed in a clockwise direction :

Row

number Names of animals

- | | |
|----|--|
| 1 | Queenie (white elephant), unnamed white horse, Hovel; |
| 2 | Prince Tains, unnamed chestnut horse, Aristocrat #1,
Black Don; |
| 3 | Land Tax, Jai, Lord Fury, Red En; |
| 4 | Morse Code, Consider, Canace, Gay Felt; |
| 5 | Bank Stream, Tamahine, Speedgyk, Usage; |
| 6 | Free Rule, Queston, Raysun, Aristocrat #2; |
| 7 | El Sovino, Lincoln, Great Acre, Akbar; |
| 8 | unnamed grey elephant, unnamed brown horse, Galliant Rob; |
| 9 | Sir Jack, Pharlap, Grey Boots, Star Port; |
| 10 | Durham, King Carnival, Pancia, Spearfolio; |
| 11 | Aldershot, True Course, Bolo Bell, Hydrogen; |
| 12 | Comic Court, Basha Felika, Main Brace, Blue Vest; |
| 13 | Great Art, Steady, Montana, Snowstream; |
| 14 | Bold John, Delta, Midway, Iron Duke. |

Central area

The central shaft is behind decoration comprising three main sections. The upper and middle sections revolve with the deck whilst the lower section is free standing. The paintings in this central area have changed over the years, one is dated 1944. They are of various subjects including landscape, still life, and portraits.

1. The upper section comprises a series of 14 oil paintings on board covered in perspex and framed within white painted timber frames set with cut glass.
2. At the top and bottom of the middle section are yellow and red painted floral designs set with cut glass. In between this border are etched mirrors set in painted timber frames interspersed with carved wooden poles painted red and gold. Circular lamps on twisted brass poles surround this section.
3. The lower section comprises a series of 20 oil paintings on board covered by perspex and framed in white painted wood frames set with cut glass. The larger paintings are above the smaller, three appear below the steam engine.

At this lower section is the housing for the organ which comprises carved gold painted sunflower decoration set in white painted wood with mirror insets. Adjacent to this is the original steam engine (boiler not operational). The engine has a brass plaque inscribed "H Thomson Engineer Armadale Vic." The engine is painted green with gold and red trim. Painted in gold on the boiler is "Advance Australia Made in Victoria. A hand painted sign is fixed below the engine which reads "This Electric and Steam Riding Gallery was designed & Constructed by Herbert Thomson 837 High St Armadale (Victoria) in 1914" The electric powered central mechanism is contained within this central area.

Canopy

The canopy comprises alternating red and white canvas panels within a steel and timber frame. Coloured lights are fixed to the spokes of the canopy.

At the outer rim of the canopy are 12 large oil paintings on canvas signed W Hone and Co, Malvern, dating from 1914. The paintings are adhered to the wooden canopy support and depict hunting scenes. Between the paintings are gold coloured carved Arms of Australia bearing the motto "Advance Australia", gold coloured Arms of United Kingdom and the name of the last owner "MacDonald's Amusements (H E C Hall-Kenney)".

Pavilion

The merry-go-round is located in a colourfully painted pavilion installed by the National Capital Development Commission in 1974.

Organ

The organ is a German fairground 69 key pipe organ. The manufacturer was possibly the well known makers of such instruments around the turn of the century in Germany, Gebruder Bruder, as the letters "G B" are cast into the iron cover of the music reader bar. The serial number 5037 is stamped in two places on the instrument.

The organ is an automatic player instrument in the general style of the street organs which were popular in Europe in the nineteenth century. The organ has been fitted with an electric motor to drive the bellows and card reader mechanism.

The organ originally had mechanically operated figures which were activated when the organ played. It is suggested that three figures performed : two girls struck bells and a conductor beat time with a baton. Only a few pieces of these figures remain and are kept separately from the organ.

It uses pneumatic action to read the music which is comprised of holes punched in the pages of a folding book. The music is of the same age as the organ. The card books comprise pages of heavy card of approximate dimensions 30.5 x 18 cm joined by linen. It is estimated that there is about 10 hours of various music which occupies about 19 metres of card divided into books. The manufacturer of the music is not known.

Conservation of the organ has been undertaken over a number of years by the Carousel Organ Restoration Group.

The organ is mounted on a purpose built trailer.

CONDITION

Merry-go-round

There is no recent and comprehensive report that provides the conservation requirements of the merry-go-round and organ.

Recent Maintenance Inspection Report by ACT Asset Management Service states the urgent need for replacement of the open bearings on the horse drives and recommends: the upgrade of the electric motor control; refurbishment of the components in the mechanical transmission of shafts, gears and bearings; refurbishment of the fascia and eaves; replacement of the brass rails on both elephants; repairs and painting to animals; replacement of bark surrounding merry-go-round; upgrading of the weather protection and security of the merry-go-round.

Inspection of the merry-go-round is undertaken by fitters from Asset Management Services about once a month or upon demand. Once a year a Maintenance Inspection Report is prepared.

Organ and music

The organ has been restored to working condition with the addition of a range of new parts. Many of the original organ pieces have been kept and a small selection of pieces of the accompanying figures. The organ is without a facade.

The music is playable but in fragile condition. The linen hinges have become brittle and have broken leaving miscellaneous separate pieces of books. There is silverfish and water damage to the cards.

HISTORY

The merry-go-round was located at the Lower Esplanade, St Kilda, Melbourne, where it commenced operation in 1915. The opening ceremony was performed by the Mayor of St Kilda with proceeds going to the Wounded Soldiers Fund.

It was designed and built for 7,000 pounds by Herbert Thomson of Armadale, Victoria, for a German showman named Anton Weniger. Mr Thomson was the first successful manufacturer of motor vehicles in Australia from 1898 to 1915 under the name of The Thomson Motor Car Co Ltd.

The order for the merry-go-round was taken early in 1914 and it was completed at the beginning of 1915. The merry-go-round was known as "Weniger's Famous Steam Riding Gallery".

At the time it was built the merry-go-round had the largest ball bearing in Australia. It was also described as the largest portable steam riding gallery in Australia and the first such machine made in Australia.

The organ, the 52 hand carved wooden horses and the two elephants were imported from Germany. The twisted brass upright poles and poles around the elephant carriages were imported from Scotland. The colours of the merry-go-round have changed over the years.

The merry-go-round was designed for travelling, but, with the exception of a brief tour of Wagga Wagga, Albury, Wangaratta and Benalla Shows after World War I, the only trip it has made was to Canberra in 1973.

The merry-go-round has had numerous owners and remained at St Kilda until its sale to the Federal Government in 1973. Shortly after its completion it was sold to a Mr Kelly. It has been recorded that the anti-German sentiment during World War I forced the early sale of the merry-go-round to Mr Kelly. In 1933 it was purchased by Lennon and Phillips who still owned it in 1964. The last owner, whose name now appears on the outer canopy, was Mr Harry Hall-Kenney.

It is believed that the organ was acquired second hand by the builder of the merry-go-round and removed from the merry-go-round in the 1950's. It was held in storage with its music until being included in the sale of the merry-go-round to the Federal Government.

At the instigation of the then Minister for the ACT, Mr K Enderby the merry-go-round and organ were purchased for the people of Canberra at public auction on 28 September 1973 at a cost of \$40,000. One of the reasons given for the agreement to purchase the merry-go-round was :

its appearance, age, and historical association would, when transplanted into the Canberra scene, provide some of the elements of gaiety variety and nostalgia needed in the planned but nevertheless sterile atmosphere of the city.

Assistant Secretary, City Services 26 September 1973.

After extensive restoration work and support from the local community the merry-go-round commenced operation in Civic on 13 March 1974. The organ has been stored separately from the merry-go-round since arriving in Canberra.

Community involvement in the restoration included the following :

Steam engine - volunteers from the Australian National University's Research School of Physical Sciences. The boiler because of its age did not pass the safety tests.

Pipe Organ - Carousel Organ Restoration Group.

Interior panels and fascia/artwork - Australian War Memorial staff and Canberra College of Advanced Education. Painting of elephants by Mrs Wendy Coley.

Painting - Master Painters Association

Mirrors - The Canberra Gem Society

Various intricate pieces and machinery - Model Makers Society

Cash donation and materials - J B Young Pty Ltd

The pavilion was erected over the merry-go-round in 1974 to assist with its preservation. Extensive conservation work was undertaken on the merry-go-round during 1988 and the organ has been conserved over a number of years.

The merry-go-round has operated continuously in its present location for 20 years.

ANALYSIS AGAINST THE CRITERIA

2 An object which exhibits outstanding design or aesthetic qualities valued by the community or a cultural group.

The merry-go-round and organ are of high aesthetic value which is evidenced by the overall design and fine detailing in artwork and craftsmanship. The merry-go-round and organ were purchased for the people of Canberra and their value of their aesthetic qualities is reflected in the communities active role in their restoration.

4 An object which is highly valued by the community or cultural group for reasons of strong or special religious, spiritual, cultural, educational or social associations.

The merry-go-round was one of the earliest merry-go-rounds built in Australia and had a long association with the St Kilda Amusement Park in Melbourne.

Since the merry-go-round started operating in Canberra in 1974 it has been highly valued by the community for its special role in the social life of the city, being a most favoured recreational activity for young children for over two decades.

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The merry-go round is significant to the Canberra community in terms of its aesthetic and social values as demonstrated in the high regard in which it is held by the community, its special place in the recreational activities in the City, and its important role in the development of the centre of Canberra.

CONSERVATION POLICY

The conservation policy is as follows :

1. Preserve as much original material as possible. It is preferable to retain all components on site but if only feasible alternative for preservation is to remove it from the site then it is acceptable, eg the organ.
2. As components wear out they should be replaced with reconstructed components to match the original in detail, material and finish.
3. To restore or reconstruct as much of the original merry-go-round as feasible.
4. Adaptation should be accepted if it means that the original material is better preserved. This has already occurred with the boiler and may be considered for other components. At all times the original material must be retained even if not used.

The heritage significance of the objects is to be retained as described under the Specific Conservation Requirements.

SPECIFIC CONSERVATION REQUIREMENTS

In accordance with Section 6 (d) of the *Heritage Objects Act 1991*, the following requirements are identified as essential to the retention of the heritage significance of the objects :

1. A conservation and management plan is to be prepared and submitted to the Heritage Council prior to action affecting the merry-go-round. The approved plan is to be implemented.
2. The merry-go-round is to be kept operational and in its present location.
3. General requirements for the conservation of the heritage significance of the merry-go-round and organ are adequate protection, sound maintenance, careful operation and the replacement of worn parts.

MANAGEMENT REQUIREMENTS

The ACT Government Conservator is to be consulted in all decisions that affect the merry-go-round and organ.

RESTRICTED INFORMATION

Not applicable

PREVIOUS ASSESSMENTS

National Trust of Australia (ACT) Classified

Register of the National Estate Rejected as ineligible under the Australian Heritage Commission Act as it is a movable object.

Philip Cox, Richardson, Taylor & Partners 1987 *Civic Merry-Go-Round Conservation Report* Canberra

Ferguson, Kathryn 1988 *Assessment and treatment of some of the Canberra merry-go-round paintings* Project for Canberra College of Advanced Education

REFERENCES

Carousel Organ Restoration Group *The Carousel Organ History and Restoration*

Gilltrap, Terry and Marie *Gilltrap's Australian Cars from 1879 A History of Cars built in Australia* Sydney

Laurie, Stephen 1986 *Report on Carousel Organ*

ACT Government Files

74/204, 75/196, 78/1277, 80/1789, 84/7297, 82/1559, 82/1996, 83/2873, 84/3291, 85/3104, 86/0929, 86/3434, 87/13099, 87/13100, 88/0175, 88/13206, 88/3403, 88/4067, 90/03086.

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Prepared by Pamela Fabricius
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