HO24 – Racecourse Hotel, 78-80 Cottrell Street, Werribee

Heritage Place: Racecourse Hotel	**HO Reference:** HO24 **Date updated:** 15 October 2026
Address: 78-80 Cottrell Street, Werribee	



Figure 1. The Racecourse Hotel at 78-80 Cottrell Street, Werribee. *Source:* Extent Heritage Pty Ltd. 2025.

Item Group: Commercial **Item Type:** Inn/Tavern	**Key Theme:** Building connections through transport and communication; servicing the community **Key Sub-theme:** Early tracks and travel routes, building roads and bridges; social life
Designer: Harry Lording (1930s rebuild) **Builder:** Unknown	**Construction:** 1930s, 1970s. **Style:** Post-war Suburban Modernist
Significance Level: Local	
Recommendation: Retain solar energy controls.	

Controls:	○	External paint controls	○	Internal alteration controls	○	Tree controls
	○	Included on Victorian Heritage Register	○	Incorporated Plans	○	Outbuildings and fence not exempt
	○	Prohibited uses may be permitted	○	Aboriginal Heritage Place	●	Solar energy system controls

Curtilage



Figure 2. Aerial map showing the curtilage boundary of the Racecourse Hotel at 78-80 Cottrell Street, Werribee. *Basemap source*: Nearmap. 2025. Spatial data source: VicMap & Department of Transport and Planning

HERCON Criteria Assessment

A	*Importance to the course, or pattern of our cultural or natural history*	The Racecourse Hotel is of historical significance as one of the earliest hotels in the region offering a coaching stop for those travelling between Melbourne and Geelong prior to the introduction of railways in the region. The hotel is also of historical significance to the establishment of local governance in the area, with the site used historically as a community meeting place. In its early years, the hotel was under the ownership of Elliot Armstrong and the hotel, then known as the 'Armstrong Hotel' played host to the establishment of the Werribee District Roads Board, with Armstrong elected a member of the board. This marked a key progression in the development of Werribee reflecting the importance of hotels as meeting places in the community for the establishment of key bodies to progress development.
B	*Possession of uncommon, rare or endangered aspects of our cultural or natural history*	The place does not meet this criterion.
C	*Potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of our cultural or natural history*	The place does not meet this criterion.
D	*Important in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of cultural or natural places or environments*	The place does not meet this criterion.
E	*Importance in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics*	The place does not meet this criterion.
F	*Importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement at a particular period*	The place does not meet this criterion.
G	*Strong or special association with a particular community or cultural group for social, cultural or spiritual reasons. This includes the significance of a place to Indigenous peoples as part of the continuing and developing cultural traditions*	The place does not meet this criterion.

H	*Special association with the life or works of a person, or group of persons, of importance in our history.*	The place does not meet this criterion.

Statement of Significance – Racecourse Hotel, 78-80 Cottrell Street, Werribee

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Figure 3. The Racecourse Hotel at 78-80 Cottrell Street, Werribee. *Source:* Extent Heritage Pty Ltd. 2025.

What is significant?

The Racecourse Hotel, including the c. 1930s hotel, and c. 1960s two storey built form to Cottrell Street, is significant. The later single storey additions, drive through and asphalt car park are not significant.

How is it significant?

The Racecourse Hotel is of historical significance to the City of Wyndham.

Why is it significant?

The Racecourse Hotel is of historical significance as one of the earliest hotels in the region offering a coaching stop for those travelling between Melbourne and Geelong prior to the introduction of railways in the region. The hotel is also of historical significance to the establishment of local governance in the region, with the site used historically as a community meeting place. In its early years, the hotel was under the ownership of Elliot Armstrong and the hotel, then known as the 'Armstrong Hotel' played host to the establishment of the Werribee District Roads Board, with Armstrong elected a member of the board. This marked a key progression in the development of Werribee reflecting the

importance of hotels as meeting places in the community for the establishment of key bodies to progress development (Criterion A).

Source:

Racecourse Hotel citation, Extent Heritage, 2026.

Description

Physical Analysis

The Racecourse Hotel at 78-80 Cottrell Street, is located to the corner of Cottrell Street and Werribee Street, overlooking the Werribee railway line and Werribee River to the south. The hotel comprises several stages of development, with a c.1960s two storey brick rendered hotel addressing Cottrell Street, an earlier c.1930s hotel building located directly behind (distinguished by square hipped roof), and single storey contemporary additions c.1980-90s to the west and north. The hotel is part of a large allotment which also includes an asphalted carpark and driveway access to the north and west of the hotel.

The c.1960s two storey component facing Cottrell Street is a rectilinear building with a long, pitched roof clad in terracotta tiling. It is of a post-war suburban modernist style, with a simple form, fine metal framed windows to the upper level and projecting doorway and window awnings at ground level. The front elevation is primarily clad in render with a cream finish, and dark bronzed mosaic half wall tiling to the lower extent. Signage of the hotel's name "Racecourse Hotel" is located centrally on the street facing roof plane facing Cottrell Street. Additional contemporary signage is located to the front elevation, including a circular projecting Calton Draft sign to the southeastern corner of the building.

Behind the c.1960s two storey form is an earlier c.1930s hotel building, which adopts a square form with a hipped roof clad in terracotta tiling, distinguished from the later two storey front building by its form and lighter toned roof. The building is surrounded and obscured by later development, however the roof remains visible in long oblique views from Werribee and Cottrell streets.

The contemporary single storey additions to the north adjoins the two storey hotel component, extending up the Werribee Street boundary. As it addresses Werribee Street, the elevation is constructed of contemporary face red brick with tripartite thin metal framed windows and capped with an extended vertical timber lining board clad parapet, concealing a flat skillion roof. A small colonnade to the northern corner frames a secondary venue entry. The architectural language continues around to the north elevation, with large linear glazed windows at regular intervals along the face red brick elevation.

Adjoining the west of the c.1960s two storey hotel component is a contemporary c.1980-90s single storey drive through liquor store with an open awning and driveway accessed via Cottrell Street. This addition matches the broader rear and eastern additions with face red brick, flat roof and vertical timber lining board clad parapet. Two square bricked columns support the drive-through awning which is heavily adorned with signage. Behind the store the contemporary addition adjoins a partially glazed secondary entry courtyard, with an arched portico providing access to patrons from the carpark. The courtyard includes a green hedge and mature palm trees.

Alterations and Additions

- Construction of a two storey hotel c.1950-60s, fronting the corner of Cottrell and Werribee streets. Alterations to this section include:

- New render and paintworks including new lower dark bronze mosaic tiling, painting of lower awnings and window surrounds.*
- Replacement of central windows at ground level.
- Replacement of Racecourse Hotel signage to primary southern elevation.
- The addition of plantings at the front façade, in front of the central windows and corner.

- All surrounding contemporary c.1980-90s single storey extensions including the liquor store to the west

The Racecourse Hotel has evolved over time due to fire damage and rebuilding. The hotel is therefore of low integrity and good condition.

**** Denotes element that does not contribute to the cultural significance of the place.***



Figure 4. Construction date map of the Racecourse Hotel. *Basemap Source:* Nearmap. 2025. *Spatial data source:* VicMap & Department of Transport and Planning.

History

The Racecourse Hotel, is located on the traditional and unceded lands of the Wadawurrung peoples of the Kulin Nation, the Traditional Custodians of Country. Wadawurrung people are deeply connected to Dja (Country), including the lands, waters and skies, and to Yaluk (waterways), Murran (nature), Weeagoon (living things) and Wiyn (fire). Wadawurrung Country encompasses vast volcanic plains and mountains, Little River (Worrin-yaloke) to the west and the mighty Werribee River (Wirribi Yaluk) in the east, and abundant coastlines and wetlands, all of which hold the stories and memories of Wadawurrung ancestors.

Despite the impacts of colonisation, including dispossession of land and disruption to cultural practices, Wadawurrung people have maintained and continue to sustain their deep connection to Country, Land, Waters and Culture. The memories embedded in Country remain alive today, including intangible cultural heritage and song lines, reflecting the continuity of cultural knowledge, custodianship and resilience passed down through generations.

The Racecourse Hotel is located in proximity to the Werribee River (Wirribi Yaluk), a significant waterway for the Wadawurrung peoples. Functioning as a major linking corridor across Country, the river formed an important travel route for movement and exchange and served as a 'spine' within the broader cultural landscape, marking the eastern boundary of Wadawurrung Country. As a major and reliable source of permanent freshwater, food and other resources, the river and its waterholes were central to cultural, social and economic life, each with their own names and stories. Areas of remnant bush along the river corridor continue to provide a rare and tangible connection to the pre-colonial landscape and Wadawurrung ways of life.

Following the arrival of colonists into Port Phillip Bay from the 1830s, land north and west of the infant settlement of Melbourne was quickly usurped. Reports from early explorers highlighted the basalt plains as open, grassy and lightly vegetated—ideal for overlanding stock (Vines 1993, 9; Broome 1984, 23). The Wyndham region was soon dominated by squatter pastoralists (James and Pritchard 2008, 4; Ecology and Partners 2015, 8).

Place History

Settlements within the Wyndham area were initially established as stopping points along the early routes between Geelong and Melbourne, with Werribee River offering a suitable place to rest and water horses resulting in the development of hotels for travellers in proximity to the road and river (Lovell Chen 2023, 51). The present Racecourse Hotel stands on an historic site on Allotments 8 and part 7 of Section 3 (Department of Lands and Survey 1954). The existing hotel replaced two earlier hotel buildings from the 1850s and 1880s.

Bridge Inn, c.1840s

The earliest hotel on the site was known as the Bridge Inn (Geelong Advertiser 1888, 3), however, the original ownership and date of construction is uncertain. In 1951 Charles Nantes purchased a number of allotments within Section 3, including Allotment 8 for £40 (The Argus 1850, 2). The price of the lot was significantly higher than neighbouring properties sold at the time, indicating that it was likely that Nantes purchased the land with a hotel already constructed on the site.

Charles Nantes was a well-known official figure within Geelong and significantly contributed to the broader community within the township. Nantes was involved in the creation of the railway service between Geelong and Melbourne and represented the Railway Directors at the opening of the railway in 1853 (Geelong Advertiser and Intelligencer 1853, 2). It is likely that his involvement spurred the personal purchase of land within the early settlement of Werribee. Charles Nantes later became a member of the Shire of Wyndham Council and was eventually elected Chairman in 1859. He was also later noted as a Justice of the Peace (Geelong Advertiser 1859, 2). Charles Nantes' broader community involvement included: his membership of the Church of England Association (Geelong Advertiser 1906, 8) and Committee of the Geelong Orphan Asylum (Geelong Advertiser 1860, 3), as well his role as Trustee for the Geelong Grammar School (HO142 - Greater Geelong) (The Argus 1859, 5). Charles Nantes later became Stationmaster of the Little River Railway Station (HO91) before his death in 1877 (The Argus 1877, 8).

Whilst Nantes owned the land, the hotel was occupied by Elliot Armstrong, a well-known figure in Wyndham, notable as the originator of the first school and the first mail contractor within Werribee (The Bacchus Marsh Express 1869, 3). The Bridge Inn quickly became a coaching stop between Melbourne and Geelong prior to the construction of the railway (Geelong Advertiser 1888, 3).

Armstrong's Hotel, c.1860s

The hotel was renamed Armstrong's Hotel in the mid-1860s, reflecting Armstrong's ownership (Figure 5). The hotel became central to the administrative operations of the municipality, with the first public meeting to establish a Werribee District Road Board held on 29 December 1862 in Armstrong's Hotel, with Armstrong himself becoming an elected member of the board (The Argus 1862, 5).

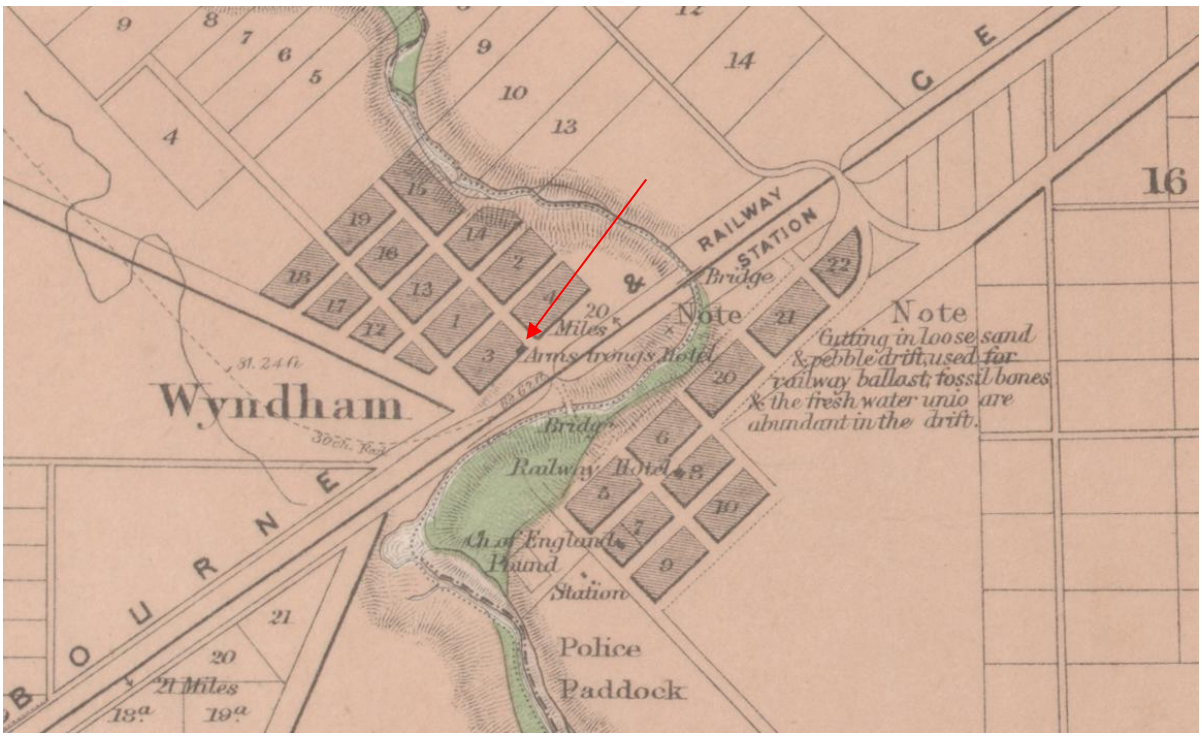


Figure 5. Extract from 1863 map of Wyndham (Werribee), showing Armstrong's Hotel (later Racecourse Hotel), indicated with red arrow. *Source:* Geological Survey of Victoria. 1861. *Geological Survey of Victoria. No. 20: N.E., Part of Tarneit, Part of Truganina.* Digitised cartographic material. National Library of Australia (website). http://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-235074662

The Armstrong's continued to own and operate the hotel into the 1870s. In 1861 the Wyndham Racecourse (now Werribee Racecourse HO12) was established nearby at the western end of Cottrell Street. Likely due to its proximity to the racecourse, the hotel facilitated race administration needs, including as the place of receivership for race nominations (The Bacchus Marsh Express 1874, 2). By 1873, Mr. Elliot Armstrong was seventy-five years old (The Bacchus Marsh Express 1882, 3), and whilst he retained ownership of the hotel into the late 1870s, the hotel's licence was passed to Michael Wall sometime within the same decade (Context 1997, 235-236).

Racecourse Hotel, 1882

Wall operated the hotel under the name "Armstrong's Hotel" until 1882 when his lease on the hotel expired (The Age 1884, 4). It is likely that Wall then purchased the Hotel from Elliot Armstrong, indicated by the name change to the "Racecourse Hotel". The renaming reflected Wall's personal involvement within Wyndham's racing industry, including his role within the management committee of the Wyndham Racecourse (The Bacchus Marsh Express 1879, 2). Wall had also operated as the secretary of the Wyndham Handicap race (The Australasian 1872, 10), as well as the "chief motor" of the Wyndham Racing Club (Weekly Times 1882, 4). Wall was later associated with the Werribee Club Hotel (now the Werribee Hotel) which was built in 1882-83 on the corner of Station and Werribee streets (Williamstown Advertiser 1883, 2). Wall had applied for a license for both hotels, however council rejected his application on the basis that he was not legally permitted to hold two (The Age 1882, 7). It is likely that Wall

subsequently left the Racecourse Hotel to pursue his new hotel, with the Williamstown Chronicle noting licenses granted to William Charles Downey of the Racecourse Hotel in 1886 (Williamstown Chronicle 1886, 2).

Post 1888 fire - current

The Racecourse Hotel continued to change hands into the late 1880s and was owned by Melbourne Brewing Company when it burnt down in August 1888 (Geelong Advertiser 1888, 3) (Figure 6). Two months following the destruction of the hotel, Melbourne architect Harry Lording of North Melbourne called for tenders for the re-erection of the Racecourse Hotel at Werribee (The Argus 1888, 18). A new hotel was quickly constructed with the hotel advertised as open by Mr. J.H. Styring in 1889 and noted to include "splendid stabling" (Williamstown Chronicle 1889, 3).



Figure 6.The Racecourse Hotel in the early-mid 1880s, prior to its destruction by fire in 1888. No evidence of this earlier hotel remains at the existing site. *Source:* Lost Werribee. n.d. *Racecourse Hotel, Cottrell and Werribee St North.* Facebook: Lost Werribee (website). https://www.facebook.com/photo?fbid=584323894982445&set=a.584323854982449

In 1932, another fire engulfed and mostly destroyed the Racecourse Hotel. It was noted that the hotel was "…an old weatherboard building of 20 rooms. Only the car and its contents, the wall facing Cottrell Street, and the outside walls of some rooms attached to the hotel were saved" (Werribee Shire Banner 1932, 5). Following the fire, within the same year a new two storey building was erected on the site in the Interwar style, featuring a square pyramidal hipped roof and partially solid verandah balustrading (Figure 7 & Figure 8).



Figure 7. Photograph of the Racecourse Hotel c. 1940s, looking north from Cottrell Street to its primary facade. The image shows the pyramidal roof which remains partially visible behind later additions. *Source:* Lost Werribee. n.d. *Racecourse Hotel.* Facebook: Lost Werribee (website). https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=598111600270341&set=a.584323854982449.



Figure 8. Extract from 1951 aerial photograph of Werribee, with the Racecourse Hotel located at the corner of Cottrell Street and Werribee Street, indicated with red arrow. *Source:* Landata. Digitised aerial photograph.

In the 1970s, alterations were made to the site, with the construction of a new two storey rectilinear building addressing Cottrell Street in front of the c.1930s structure, obscuring the earlier hotel building in views from Cottrell Street. The new two storey hotel adopted a suburban modernist design, with thin metal framed windows, unique door awnings and a terracotta pitched roof (Figure 9). Further additions were constructed in the late twentieth century, including single additions to the north, east and west of the hotel, enclosing the Interwar component. The later additions are distinguished by their use of mottled red brick and vertical timber panel parapet. The Racecourse Hotel remains in operation as a hotel (Figure 10).



Figure 9. Photograph of the Racecourse Hotel c.1970s, looking north across the railway line from Werribee Street towards the front façade of the new addition. *Source:* Lost Werribee. n.d. *Racecourse Hotel.* Facebook: Lost Werribee (website). https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=5087585061322950&set=a.853602684721230.



Figure 10. 2008 photograph of the Racecourse Hotel as viewed from the Werribee Public Garden Reserve at the southeastern corner of Werribee Street and Cottrell Street, looking northwest. The image shows the c.1970s front addition as well as later contemporary single storey extensions. *Source:* Strong, Bill. 2008. *20080720_0429 Racecourse Hotel, Werribee.* Flickr. https://www.flickr.com/photos/87791108@N00/2688283890/in/dateposted/.

Comparative Analysis

The Racecourse Hotel is comparable to the following heritage places:

Bridge Hotel (HO113)

The Bridge Hotel is comparable to the Racecourse Hotel as an example of an early hotel that has undergone various modifications including later additions, and as one of the major hotels within Werribee, notable as a popular community meeting place. While the Racecourse Hotel is not as architectural intact as the Bridge Hotel, it has strong historical significance to the City of Wyndham, including through its association with the creation of governance in Wyndham and its connections to the racing industry established by a former owner.

Commercial Hotel (HO112)

The Commercial Hotel is comparable to the Racecourse Hotel as an example of an early hotel with subsequent phases of construction including the 1930s with later additions. The Commercial Hotel is comparable for its connections with significant family of early settlers and its associations with the development of the Werribee township. While the Racecourse Hotel is not architecturally comparable to the Commercial Hotel, it has strong association with the creation of governance in Wyndham and is identified as a landmark with the community both in its early stages and in more contemporary ways.

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Images



Figure 11. Overview of the southern elevation, looking northwest from the intersection of Cottrell Street and Werribee Street North. *Source:* Extent Heritage Pty Ltd. 2025.

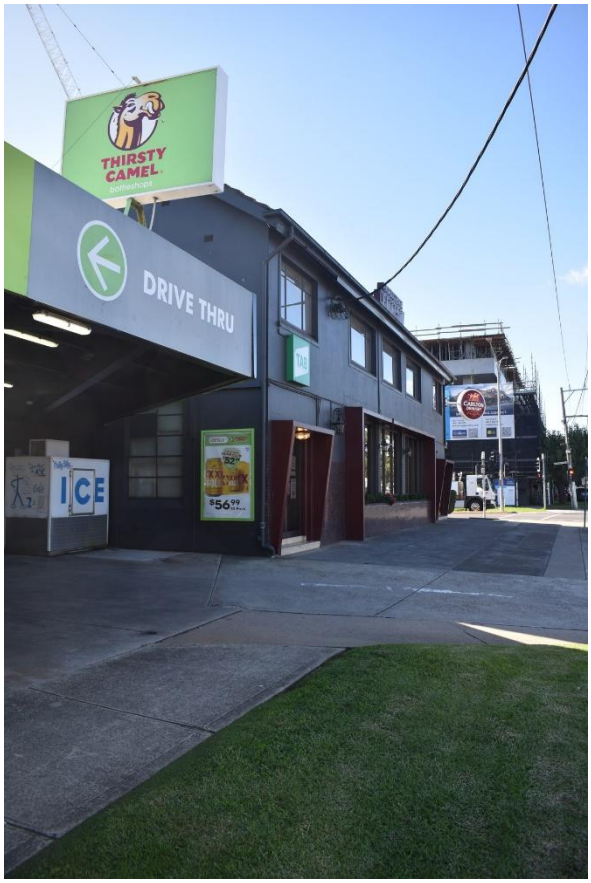


Figure 12. Overview of the southern elevation, looking east from Cottrell Street. *Source:* Extent Heritage Pty Ltd. 2025.



Figure 13. Detail view of southwest door to the c.1960s building, including painted projecting doorway awning and mosaic tiling. *Source:* Extent Heritage Pty Ltd. 2025.



Figure 14. Detail view of the southeastern corner of the Racecourse Hotel, including oblique views down the eastern elevation along Werribee Street North. *Source:* Extent Heritage Pty Ltd. 2025.



Figure 15. Overview of the Racecourse Hotel, looking southwest from Werribee Street North. *Source:* Extent Heritage Pty Ltd. 2025.



Figure 16. Overview of the Racecourse hotel from the carpark, looking southeast. *Source:* Extent Heritage Pty Ltd. 2025.



Figure 17. View of the hotel entrance from carpark, including mature plantings, looking east. *Source:* Extent Heritage Pty Ltd. 2025.



Figure 18. View of the west elevation of the Racecourse Hotel's adjoining addition, looking east from the Cottrell Street carpark entrance. *Source:* Extent Heritage Pty Ltd. 2025.