

HERITAGE PLACE

NAME OF PLACE: HERRNHUT RUINS

ADDRESS/LOCATION OF PLACE: Day's Lane Tobin's Lane PENS Hurst

STUDY NUMBER: 239

HERITAGE OVERLAY NUMBER:

PRECINCT: outside

LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA: Southern Grampians Shire

ALLOTMENT: A of X **SECTION:** IX, X, **PARISH:** PARISH OF BORAMBORAM
and
XVI

ACCESS DESCRIPTION:

CFA 474 D14, 15 & 16; VicRoads E7; located on either side of Days Lane (also called Tobins Lane) south of the intersection with Krummnow Lane about 5.0kms north-west of the township of Penshurst

SIGNIFICANCE RATING: State



Krummnow's House, Herrnhut, Penshurst

Image Date: 04/02/02

EXTENT OF LISTING:

To the extent of: 1. All the buildings including all ruins, works and objects above and below ground, the orchard and vineyard, the dams and quarries and all the land in the original ownership of the commune.

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PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION:

The major surviving fabric includes a house of several rooms for Krummnow, which exhibits some unusual features, such as an internal well. It is now in ruins. Two enormous Lombardy Poplars beside the remaining walls now make it a landmark. In another building about 100m away there was a communal kitchen with a bakery and dining room, much of which survives. It incorporated a substantial baker's oven. It is in ruins. A large three-roomed dormitory complex was built some distance from the other buildings. It is now almost completed gone. All the buildings were plainly detailed, built of bluestone and single storey. The buildings show no particularly German forms of construction or planning in the surviving fabric. One of the more interesting characteristics is the changing pattern of masonry from one structure to the next and within each structure. They, and other works, were located on the east side of Day's Lane. The most important building, in a sense, was the commune's church. This was built on the west side of Day's Lane and slightly north of the others. It too was very plain, built of bluestone and single storey. The entrance faced east. The double doors are said to have been made from local Blackwood, *Acacia melanoxylon*, and had hand-forged iron lettering in the rectangular fanlight. There appears to have been a fireplace on the south wall. The building was demolished and rebuilt as a barn on a nearby property. There was a cemetery located behind the church. The only gravestone is a loose, unusually shaped stone incised with a cross. There are senescent *Radiata* Pines in the cemetery, possibly planted as a hedge.

The other works included: a dairy complex to the south-east of Krummnow's house, buildings to the north of the communal kitchen, buildings to the east of the communal kitchen, various dams and wells, a mill, quarries and the east west road through the site and an orchard and vineyard.

HISTORY:

Herrnhut was an utopian commune founded in 1852 by Johann Friedrich Krummnow (1811-1880) loosely following the religious principles of the Moravians, although not officially linked with that denomination, and mixed with other values including mysticism and pietism. Krummnow had migrated to South Australia in the company of other German religious dissenters in 1839. He assumed the role of teacher, leader if not pastor but without any religious training. He was a disruptive influence in the general Lutheran community in SA and left for Victoria in 1850 where he worked as a tailor. He preached in Melbourne and Geelong, attracting adherents to his communal ideas. The commune could be said to date from the joint signing in early 1852 of the charter written by Krummnow and choosing the name Herr Hut, or the Lord's Watch. There were from 12 to 20 initial members. Krummnow's passion and charisma, despite his unusual even ugly appearance, seems to have been a major factor in the early success of the commune.

Resources and assets were sold and pooled and land totalling about 1,600 acres was eventually purchased near Penshurst in 1853 at the cost of one pound per acre. The land was registered in Krummnow's name as an individual, a fact which caused great difficulty later. The commune's remaining funds went to the purchase of livestock and equipment and immediate expenses.

Other Germans, including the minorities Wends and Sorbs also acquired Land in the vicinity, but relations between these more conventional Lutherans and the communards were not amicable. These others were centred on the communities of tabor and Hochkirk, now Tarrington. Over the years some communards defected to the larger community. Their leader, Pastor C. W. Schurmann was a particular antagonist of Krummnow. There were also difficulties with the local government, the Shire of Mount Rouse based in Penshurst particularly over the construction of roads.

The commune was intended to be self-sufficient with all excess produce sold for its benefit. It appears that, over the years, the commune was very successful in this practical way although markets for its wool, wheat and other produce were limited and distant. One way in which the communards put their religious principles to practical purpose was to support other minorities. These included the local Aborigines, women in distress and

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homeless or destitute men. People were taken in, housed and fed but they were required to work and pray together with the communards.

Various buildings were constructed over the years. These included a house for Krummnow, a communal kitchen and dining room, a dormitory, all of which were located on allotment A of section X (ten) of the parish of Boramboram, and on section IX (nine) a church. There was a cemetery located immediately behind the church.

By the 1870s, Herrnhut was increasingly in debt and Krummnow was losing his absolute hold over the commune. The combination of aging communards, lack of new members, defections as well as a lack of income meant that its existence was seriously in question. By coincidence, another similar utopian commune had been established by a woman, Maria Heller at Pine Hills in northern Victoria. She was a charismatic prophet and faith healer who induced a strong antagonism from the broader community. The commune was immediately in danger of failing from her impracticality and Krummnow literally came to its rescue although, it seems, with his own interests in mind. The group of about thirty joined the Herrnhut commune but the change was difficult. Heller eventually defected to the nearby community of Tabor and joined the congregation of Pastor Schurmann.

By the late 1870s, the Herrnhut commune was in grave financial difficulty with mounting debt and the failure of Krummnow to arrange a suitable rearrangement of its ownership became an acute problem. He died on 3 October 1880 without the problems being resolved. It was a young defector, Louisa Roehr who had married a much older non-German/Lutheran member of the commune, Fred Elmore who eventually took command. By April 1889 the communards had agreed to the dissolution of the commune. The Elmore's continued to live there by a special arrangement. By 1890, the long awaited railway line passed through the commune but to avail.

In 1897 the land was subdivided into smaller farms and sold. The buildings slowly fell into disrepair. The church was demolished and rebuilt as a barn at Sylvan Grove, Mibus Lane, Croxton East. Rare early corrugated iron with a heavy gauge and wide corrugations was recycled at Batesworth Homestead, Batesworth Lane, near Penshurst. All that remains are the scattered ruins with their archaeological potential.

THEMATIC CONTEXT:

- Theme 8 Developing Australia's cultural life
- 8.6 Worshipping
 - 8.6.1 Worshipping together
 - 8.6.3 Founding Australian religious institutions
 - 8.6.4 Making places for worship
- 8.12 Living in and around Australian homes
- 8.14 Living in the country and rural settlements

CONDITION:

High degree of archaeological potential

INTEGRITY:

very low integrity for the buildings, works, orchard, vineyard, etc but relatively undisturbed as an archaeological.

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE:

What is significant?

Herrnhut was a utopian commune, initially of from 12 to 20 religious dissenters who had migrated from Germany via South Australia and Geelong. It is located about 5.0 kms north-west of Penshurst. It was founded in 1852 by Johann Friedrich Krummnow (1811-1880) loosely following the religious principles of the

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Moravians, although not officially linked with that denomination, and mixed with other values including mysticism and pietism. The name is derived from Herr Hut, or the Lord's Watch. There were from 12 to 20 initial members. Krummnow's passion and charisma, despite his unusual even ugly appearance, seems to have been a major factor in the early success of the commune. Pastor C W Schurmann of Tabor and Hochkirk, now Tarrington opposed him. Over the years some communards defected to the larger community. The commune was intended to be self-sufficient with all excess produce sold for its benefit. It appears that, over the years, the commune was very successful in this practical way although markets for its wool, wheat and other produce were limited and distant. One way in which the communards put their religious principles to practical purpose was to support other minorities. These included the local Aborigines, women in distress and homeless or destitute men. People were taken in, housed and fed but they were required to work and pray together with the communards. Various buildings were constructed over the years. These included a house for Krummnow, a communal kitchen and dining room, a dormitory, all of which were located on allotment A of section X (ten) of the parish of Boramboram, and on section IX (nine) a church. There was a cemetery located immediately behind the church. By the 1870s, Herrnhut was increasingly in debt and Krummnow was losing his absolute hold over the commune. The crisis was averted when it absorbed the members of a similar utopian commune established by Maria Heller at Pine Hills in northern Victoria. Heller eventually defected to the nearby community of Tabor and joined the congregation of Pastor Schurmann. By the late 1870s, Herrnhut was in grave financial difficulty and Krummnow's failure to make a suitable rearrangement of its ownership before he died became an acute problem. A young defector, Louisa Roehr who had married a much older non-German/Lutheran member of the commune, Fred Elmore eventually took command. By April 1889 the communards had agreed to the dissolution of the commune. The Elmore's continued to live there by a special arrangement. In 1897 the land was subdivided into smaller farms and sold. The buildings slowly fell into disrepair. The church was demolished and rebuilt as a barn at Sylvan Grove and rare early corrugated iron was recycled at Batesworth, both properties in the district. All that remains at Herrnhut are the scattered ruins of Krummnow's house, the dining room, vestiges of the dormitory and the cemetery. There are two massive Lombardy Poplars, *Populus nigra*, immediately adjacent to Krummnow's house and Radiata Pines marking the cemetery. The whole property, including both original allotments, has archaeological potential.

How is it significant?

Herrnhut is of historical, social and architectural significance to the State of Victoria and to the Southern Grampians shire.

Why is it significant?

Herrnhut is of historical significance as the first example of a utopian community in Australia with particular links to German immigration as the result of religious persecution. It is of social significance for its association with German immigration, the welfare of oppressed members of the broader community including Aborigines, women and destitute men. It is of architectural significance as a group of buildings displaying a communal way of life using simple technology, local materials and vernacular forms and details.

COMPARISON:

226 Bethlehem Lutheran Church & Cemetery, Tabor Road, Tabor
382 St Michael's Lutheran Church Complex, Hamilton Highway, Tarrington
389 Batesworth Homestead Complex, Batesworth Lane, Penshurst
455 Sylvan Grove, Mibus Lane, Croxton East

ASSESSED BY: tfh

ASSESSMENT DATE:

19-May-02

EXISTING LISTINGS:

HERITAGE STUDY RECOMMENDATIONS:

Include in VHR Include in RNE Include in Local Planning Scheme

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No Recommendations for Inclusions

REFERENCES:

Author	Title	Year	Page
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	Moravian Bretheren	127 Oct 1881	
	The Peculiar People, Death of an Eccentric Character	16 Nov 1880	p. 4, col. 1
Augustin von Lodewyckx.	Die Deutschen in Australien	1932	
Don Garden	Hamilton, a Western District History	1984	p. 47- 48
The Vagabond	Picturesque Victoria	18 Apr 1885	
William J Metcalf and Elizabeth Huf	Herrnhut, australia's First Utopian Commune	2002	