

# HERITAGE PLACE

**NAME OF PLACE:** BURGER HOMESTEAD COMPLEX

**ADDRESS/LOCATION OF PLACE:** Penshurst-Macarthur Road Springfield Lane PENSHURST

**STUDY NUMBER:** 260

**HERITAGE OVERLAY NUMBER:**

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**OTHER NAME/S  
OF PLACE:** ACACIA

**PRECINCT:** outside

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA:** Southern Grampians Shire

**ALLOTMENT:** part B **SECTION:** XV **PARISH:** PARISH OF BORAMBORAM

**ACCESS DESCRIPTION:**

CFA 474 B15; VicRoads 73 D8; located off the Penshurst-Macarthur Road in Burger's Road, 10kms due west of Penshurst

**SIGNIFICANCE RATING:** State

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Acacia Homestead, Penshurst, First Homestead

**Image Date:** 8/03/02

**EXTENT OF LISTING:**

To the extent of: 1. All the buildings, including the interiors, and all the outbuildings and other works and the surrounding land to the extent of 10,000sq m.

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## PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION:

The original cottage is comprised of two rooms. It is single storey, has a gabled roof with an attic used for storage accessed by a hatch in the south gable and an L-shaped skillion extension. It is approximately 6.0 x 9.0 metres in plan including the extension. There is a massive bluestone chimney, possibly built later, on the west wall serving the living room. The main walls are constructed of lehmwickel, as is the ceiling. The gables are covered with weatherboard. The corrugated iron roof has half-round guttering and a downpipe that empties into a barrel. The skillion is built as a dry stone wall. Remnants of the interior decoration, such as simple wallpapers, survive.

The stable is single storey, has a hipped roof with a skillion extension and is approximately 5.0 x 8.0 metres in plan. The stable also uses lehmwickel and the technique is particularly evident in its construction. Some of the internal timber framing has never had mud and straw applied to it, the stakes being used instead as a grille between spaces. The stable has three spaces: the area for horses now used as a workshop, a room with separate access, and the skillion along the rear which may have been used to store hay and fodder.

Behind the cottage is a cow paddock, with thick dry stone walls, about 1.5 metres high. The walls are curved and include drainage holes. The bluestone pitcher floors survive. There was also a cow-milking shed behind the cottage. To the north of the cow paddock, the dry stone wall has become infested with ivy. A timber cowshed and separator shed are to the far north of the cow paddock. The separator shed was built in 1960.

There is a pigsty to the north west of the cow paddock and a yard enclosed by a dry stone wall. The pigsty is constructed with similar style as the lean to at the rear of the cottage. Massive thick stone walls crudely constructed with a timber roof. The timber roof was replaced in the 1960s. Near the pigsty and yard there is a chicken house and run. While these are not necessarily old, they are typical.

The present homestead is a symmetrical single storey house with gabled side wings. The hipped main roof was recently covered with Colourbond. The walls are built of bluestone with red brick quoins, all tuck-pointed. The front door is conventional with side and fanlights. The front windows are four paned double hung sashes. The house was extended using similar materials and forms in 2001. There is an external oven near the homestead.

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## HISTORY:

The Boram Boram Parish Plan shows that a G. G. Crouch purchased the two allotments, A (to the west) and B (to the east), of section XV (15), comprising 312 acres each, possibly early in 1853 but probably after 1855. Nothing is known of George Crouch. A plan of 'Suburban and Country Lands & the Township of Penshurst near Mount Rouse in the Parishes of Yalimba and Boramboram' was published in 1855 with his name on Section XIV but not on the adjacent allotment. Johann Friedrich Krummnow purchased the neighbouring 1,584 acres, which was to become the utopian commune of German Lutherans called Herrnhut. These two allotments were then amalgamated and re-subdivided into a northern, middle and southern third. The Albert family established a farm on the northern third, Peter Burger established Acacia on the middle third and the Mirtschin family established its farm on the southern third, bounded by the Penshurst-Macarthur Road.

Peter Burger was born in Saxony in 1795 and died at Gnadenenthal in 1878, aged 83 (VPI, Reg. No. 12226). With his wife Agnes and their three teenage children, Johann, Magdalene and Andreas, he migrated with other Lutheran dissenters, specifically the Slavic ethnic group called Wends or Sorbs, from Cuxhaven, arriving in Adelaide in late 1851. They appear to have brought with them many of their household goods, including furniture and Bibles. "They first purchased a few acres at Rosenthal, now Rosedale, but were on the move again in April 1852, first to Portland. On the recommendation of Edward Henty, some families moved north to The Grange, now called Hamilton". Magdalene, who was born in 1834, married Johann Rentsch in 1856 (VPI, Reg. No. 3041). Johann and Andreas were born in 1833 and 1835. Andreas married Anna Mirtschin from the

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neighbouring farm in 1860 (VPI, Reg. No. 4287) and they had three sons, each called Johann, who died as children. Johann married Johanne Caroline Uebergang in 1861 (VPI, Reg. No. 1028) and they had fourteen children. Two died in infancy, one of whom was a son called Johann (Uebergang, 439). Peter Burger farmed in partnership with his son Johann, paying rates to the Shire of Mount Rouse in the early 1870s on 156 acres of land at Boram Boram (SMRRB, 1870, No. 48 & 49). Johann was killed accidentally at the Murtoa railway station in 1901 (Uebergang, 494). Andreas Burger is rated separately for 245 acres at Yatmerone, (SMRRB, 1870, No. 47). He eventually settled north of the Hamilton Highway at Yulungah (Nagorcka, 50-4).

At least three vernacular structures were built on the Burger land in the mid-1850s. There was a cottage of two rooms with a lean-to addition and a small attic accessed from outside; a detached kitchen about six metres south-east of the cottage; and stables with an extra room with its own entrance and a skillion along the rear about twelve metres to the south-west. These all used the traditional German lehmwickel technique. It consisted of a straw and mud mixture rolled up on stakes of split timber pointed at both ends, which were set into holes in a rough timber frame. (The stakes are said to be Blackwood, *Acacia melanoxylon*, which was common in the area.) The technique was also used for ceilings when the stakes were unrolled in situ onto joists to form the ceiling. This was lined underneath by calico, suggesting that the mud and straw were intended for insulation rather than as the finished surface. The uneven finish of the walls was then plastered smooth to produce the usual appearance of half-timber construction. The same technique was used at the adjacent Albert farm where the building has collapsed, and at a farm at Yuppeckiar (now called Stirling Farm) which was owned for many years by Scottish immigrants but presumably was first owned by Germans.

Agnes Burger, who was an invalid in her old age, was the last person to inhabit the cottage, living in the small northern bedroom. The southern room was used for living, having a massive bluestone chimney on the western side. Agnes died in the late 1890s and the building is now presented as a house museum. The detached kitchen fell down about 1930 (Burger, pers. comm). One of Agnes' grandsons used the extra room in the stable as a bedroom until 1908. The stable was clad with corrugated iron in the 1930s, some of which is now removed (Burger, pers. comm).

By the mid-1860s, a much more substantial home was built using a traditional form seen in other German homesteads both in the Hamilton area, such as Pastor C. G. Hiller's house dating from 1865 and earlier houses in South Australia. This was demolished to construct the present homestead in 1917, a conservative symmetrical house with a timber bullnose verandah. The third house, in turn, appears to have been influenced by construction techniques typical of the Wimmera, with brick quoins and bluestone infill. The bluestone from the second house was reused (Uebergang, 494). The very late use of four-paned double hung sashes is of interest and suggests that they may also have been recycled from the second homestead. The present homestead was extended and altered in 2001. The external oven, used for preparing traditional foods, located on the west of the homestead was built in 1918.

Friedrich Burger, the thirteenth child of Johann and Caroline Burger, built the new house. He was born at Gnadenthal in 1883. Friedrich (or Fred) had worked on the family farm after leaving school with his brothers, Ernst and John. When they established their own farms at Linlithgow and Tabor, Friedrich continued at the original property from 1908. He married Meta Schultz, of Tarrington, in 1918 (Uebergang, 494). They had six daughters and two sons. Mixed farming continued with Merino sheep and some cropping. Friedrich is remembered for being strict in the raising of his family, a diligent Christian, very sociable, and particularly skilful in the construction and repair of dry stone walls (Uebergang, 495). He and his wife retired from farming and went to live in Horsham, where he died in 1957, although he is buried in the Gnadenthal cemetery. Meta Burger died in 1978.

The other outbuildings and animal yards appear to date from the earliest period and form a complete and rare mixed farm complex. The extensive and substantial stone walls at Acacia are particularly fine and include special details such as drainage holes. Behind the cottage there is a cow paddock with thick stone walls about

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1.5 metres high. There was also a cow-milking shed behind the cottage. Pitch floors still remain. A timber cowshed and separator shed are to the far north of the cow paddock. The separator shed was built in 1960. There is a pigsty to the north-west of the cow paddock and a pig yard enclosed by a stone wall. The pigsty is constructed in a style similar to the lean-to at the rear of the cottage with massive thick stone walls crudely constructed and a timber framed roof. The present chicken house and run may be recently constructed but would be typical of the later nineteenth century. The woolshed is located well to the south. It has had three extensions. The sheep yards survive but have been altered. The homestead has two encircling stone walls, one around the immediate complex and one some distance from the complex. There was formerly a substantial orchard associated with the cottage but few fruit trees survive. Vegetable gardens appear to have been established and then abandoned for fresh ground on a cyclical basis.

Mr. and Mrs. Raymond Burger retired to live in Penshurst. The Burger Homestead complex, now called Acacia, is still owned by the Burger family and is occupied by their youngest son, Stuart Max Burger and his wife, representing the fifth generation, and their children, the sixth. Acacia is still run as a mixed farm and in association with other business interests.

## **THEMATIC CONTEXT:**

Theme 3 Developing local, regional and national economies

3.9 Farming for commercial profit

3.14 Developing an Australian engineering and construction industry

3.14.1 Building to suit Australian conditions

3.14.1 Using Australian materials in construction

Theme 5 Working

5.8 Working on the land

Theme 8 Developing Australia's cultural life

8.12 Living in and around Australian homes

8.14 Living in the country and rural settlements

## **CONDITION:**

The condition of all the buildings and works is good

## **INTEGRITY:**

Excellent degree of integrity, including furniture and household goods.

## **STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE:**

What is significant?

Acacia, the Burger family homestead complex, located off the Penshurst-Macarthur Road, in Burger's Road, 10kms due west of Penshurst was established as a small mixed farm about 1855. Peter and Agnes Burger migrated from Germany to Adelaide with their children Johann, Magdalene and Andreas and other Lutheran dissenters in 1851. They eventually moved to the German settlement called Gnadenthal near Penshurst associated with Tabor and Hochkirk, now Tarrington. Peter and Agnes are buried in the Gnadenthal cemetery, looking over their farm. The fifth and sixth generations of the family now occupy the property. Some of the earliest structures survive, including the original cottage and stable and extensive animal yards. The first buildings are of particular interest because they use the traditional German vernacular technique of mud and straw on a timber frame called lehmwickel. The technique appears to have been used frequently in the area to the east of Hamilton but very few examples survive, the Burger cottage being the best. Other, more conventional vernacular techniques are used in the outbuildings, animal yards and extensive stone walls. The first woolshed, subsequently extended, also survives. Like many other German families, the Burgers had close

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connections with the opening up of the Wimmera. The present homestead, similar to those built in the Wimmera, dates from 1917 and is built with materials from the second homestead. All the structures are in good condition and retain a high degree of integrity. The oldest buildings include many pieces of original furniture, such as beds, and other furnishings and paraphernalia, which appear to have been imported from Germany.

How is it significant?

Acacia, the Burger homestead complex, is of historical, social and architectural significance to the state of Victoria and the Southern Grampians Shire.

Why is it significant?

Acacia is of historical significance for demonstrating the early immigration and settlement of a minority German group, specifically the Wends or Sorbs into Western Victoria from South Australia. It is of social significance as one of the best and most intact demonstrations of their lifestyle. It is of further significance for its links with the settlement of the Wimmera. The complex is of architectural significance as a complete small mixed farm and especially for the use of vernacular construction techniques, one of which, lehmwickel is now extremely rare.

## COMPARISON:

205 Albert Homestead Complex, Springfield Lane off Peshurst-Macarthur Road, Peshurst

239 Herrnhut Ruins, Day's Lane, Peshurst

330 Stirling Homestead Complex, Fishers Lane, Glenthompson

441 Mirtschin's Homestead Complex, Peshurst-Macarthur Road, Peshurst

**ASSESSED BY:** TFH

**ASSESSMENT DATE:**

07-Jan-04

## EXISTING LISTINGS:

## HERITAGE STUDY RECOMMENDATIONS:

Include in VHR  Include in RNE  Include in Local Planning Scheme

No Recommendations for Inclusions

## REFERENCES:

Author	Title	Year	Page
Alan Uebergang	The Uebergang Family in Australia, 1848-1985	1985	var.
Edna E. Nagorcka	The Mibus Family in Australia 1847 -1985; Johann and Dorothea Mibus	1985	
Elizabeth (Betty) Huf	Huf: 150 Years in Australia 1847 - 1997	1997	59
Elizabeth Huf	Courage Patience and Persistence-150 Years of German Settlement in Western Victoria	2003	
Raymond Burger	The Burger Family in Australia, 1851-1983	1983	