

HERITAGE PLACE

NAME OF PLACE: BEHNKE'S STONEMASON'S YARD AND COTTAGE

ADDRESS/LOCATION OF PLACE: 51 Martin Street PENSURST

STUDY NUMBER: 281

HERITAGE OVERLAY NUMBER:

PRECINCT: Peshurst

LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA: Southern Grampians Shire

ALLOTMENT: 1 and 2 **SECTION:** 37 **PARISH:** PARISH OF BORAMBORAM

ACCESS DESCRIPTION:

CFA 475J ; VicRoads 233; located at the north-west corner of Martin and Dickens Streets and continuing through to Burchett Street, facing south on the north side of the township.

SIGNIFICANCE RATING: Local



Behnke's Stone mason cottage Martin St Peshurst

Image Date: 15/05/02

EXTENT OF LISTING:

To the extent of: 1. All the buildings including the exterior of the cottage, samples of masonry construction, the plant and all of the land.

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PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION:

There is a small bluestone cottage towards the north-west corner of the site on the street boundary. From its form, scale, materials and detailing this appears to date from the earliest period. It is not occupied and appears not to have been used as a residence for a long time. Behind the cottage there are extensive modern sheds and substantial plant for storing and processing stone. Near the cottage and along the street frontage there are various samples of stone masonry.

HISTORY:

The land on which Behnke's Stonemason's yard stands was purchased from the Crown by R. Gunn, allotment 1, and by C. Olle and Co., allotment 2, of section 37 of the township of Peshurst on the 10th November 1872. Robert Gunn, carpenter was rated as the owner and occupier of a "House, Shop and Allotments" with a nett annual valuation of 14 pounds in 1873 (SMR RB, 1872, 353). Charles Olle, bootmaker was only rated as a tenant of J. O'Brien in a house with a nett annual valuation of 15 pounds (SMR RB, 1872, 470). The Olle family became storekeepers in Peshurst. Robert Gunn married Sarah McKenna in 1865 (VPI, Reg. No. 2835). They had six children, two of whom were born in Dunkeld in 1865 and 1867, and four in Peshurst in 1869, 1871, 1873 and 1875. Four of them died at Peshurst, the first aged one year, the second aged one day, the third aged seven years and the fourth, a son called Daniel, aged fifteen years. Robert died at Peshurst, aged 42 in 1883 (VPI, Reg. No. 9207). Their second son, Cunningham Atchison Gunn was the common ancestor of the Gunn family members who remain in the Dunkeld/Peshurst area today. One of his descendants, Graeme Gunn became a highly regarded and award winning Melbourne architect in the second half of the twentieth century. A Daniel Gunn, apparently Robert's brother, was rated as the owner of half an acre of land and a weatherboard house in the 1863 Shire of Mount Rouse rate book.

Subsequently, the land was used by a series of blacksmiths who lived on the site, the most important being the Edlich (or Edlick) family. Wilhelm Edlich was born in Dresden about 1834 and married Mary Ann Flack in 1866 (VPI, Reg. No. 3061). She was born at Pigeon Ponds, south of Harrow, in 1846 (VPI, Reg. No. 34056 and 8081). At first they lived at Byaduk, where they had four children, one of whom, their first born died in infancy. They had moved to Peshurst by 1878 where another three children were born, two of whom died in infancy. The Edlich brothers, Henry Ernest, Alfred and Walter also built jinkers. Wilhelm died in 1890 aged 56 and is buried in the Boram Boram cemetery. The Edlich family appears to have been separate from the German Lutherans of the Tabor/Tarrington/Gnadenenthal communities and from the Herrnhut community immediately north-west of Peshurst.

Plumbers, the last being the McNiece family, then occupied the site. They were in partnership with the Hatherell family who continue as J & R Hatherell Master Builders in Hamilton. After World War Two, the McNiece family purchased the former Victoria Hotel in Bell Street which had been operating as a store since it was de-licensed. They ran their plumbing and tank making business from the outbuildings and yard. The Behnke (or Behncke) family occupied the site from the 1950s and, as well as continuing to provide some plumbing services, they established a substantial stone masonry business, one of the last in the Western District. They specialised in bluestone masonry and worked throughout the district including in Warrnambool. The Shire of Mount Rouse Waterworks Trust accepted G. Behncke's [note spelling] tender of 942 pounds for roofing the service basin at the Peshurst in 1963. The family lived in Watton Street, away from the yard, and was well known for playing football. Like the Edlich family, the Behnke family appears to have been separate from the other German and Lutheran communities. The business closed in the late twentieth century.

THEMATIC CONTEXT:

Theme 8 Developing Australia's cultural life
8.12 Living in and around Australian homes
8.14 Living in the country and rural settlements

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CONDITION:

The cottage and sheds are in fair condition.

INTEGRITY:

Excellent degree of integrity

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE:

What is significant?

Behnke's Stonemason's Yard, located on the Hamilton Highway on the western edge of Penshurst opposite the Botanic Gardens and permanent spring, has always been associated with families in the construction industry. It began as the yard of carpenters and builders, the Gunn family. One descendent, Graeme Gunn became a highly regarded and award winning Melbourne architect in the second half of the twentieth century. Subsequently it became a plumber's and builder's yard, the last being the partnership of the McNiece and Hatherell families who moved to another site after the Second World War. From the early 1950s, the yard was owned and occupied by the Behnke family who were stonemasons as well as general building contractors.

How is it significant?

Behnke's Stonemason's Yard is of historical and architectural significance to the township of Penshurst and the Southern Grampians Shire.

Why is it significant?

Behnke's Stonemason's Yard is of historical significance to the township of Penshurst as a representation of a construction industry, which started in the area around the turn of the century. It is of historical significance for the physical reminder of a previous industry within the township associated with closer settlement, and a way of life, which is no longer supported. It is of architectural significance for its long term connection with the construction industry.

COMPARISON:

121 Victoria Hotel (Former), 100 Bell Street, Penshurst
301 George Thompson Residence, Memorial Road, Glenthompson

ASSESSED BY: TFH

ASSESSMENT DATE:

12-May-02

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
Christine Kinealy	personal communication	2004	
Department of Lands and Survey	Township of Penshurst, County of Villiers	1957	
Mount Rouse Shire Council	Shire of Mount Rouse, In the Centre of the Fertile Western District of Victoria: Centenary Celebrated	1966	
Shire of Mount Rouse	Rate Books, various years		