

# HERITAGE PLACE

NAME OF PLACE: PENSURST HERITAGE PRECINCT

ADDRESS/LOCATION OF PLACE: Hamilton Highway PENSURST

STUDY NUMBER: 403

HERITAGE OVERLAY NUMBER:

located in an elevated position at the south-east corner of Martin and Cox Street, overlooking the spring and addressing the diagonal approach of the road from Hamilton.

The residential density of the township is low to medium in the centre and lower on the outskirts. The historical housing is very widely dispersed. Many of the surviving houses are small mid-nineteenth century cottages set on large allotments. Several late nineteenth and early twentieth century houses stand out, such as the former teacher's residence at the eastern end of Bell Street. Later twentieth century housing has, for the most part, reinforced this density and scale. One of the most distinctive characteristics of Penshurst is the low dry stone walling which delineates the properties. The most distinguished residential street appears to have been Cobb Street. Certain important nineteenth century houses have been lost recently.

The memorial plantings in Martin Street are particularly important for its streetscape. Mature street trees mark the approach from the east on the Hamilton Highway. There is a lesser avenue in the approach from the west.

## Other Notable Places:-

Timber House (Penshurst 23), 116 Bell Street, Penshurst, (CFA 474 c-27)  
Timber Cottage (Penshurst 8), 115? Bell St, Penshurst, (CFA 474 D-27)  
Railway Cottage, 12 Chesswas Street, Penshurst, (VR 233 N-10)  
Californian Bungalow, 9 Chesswas Street, Penshurst, (VR 233 N-10)  
Cottage (Timber?), 45 Kennedy Street, Penshurst,  
Bluestone House Ruins, 138 Kennedy Street, Penshurst,  
Cladding Cottage (Penshurst), 71 Cobb Street, Penshurst,  
Gunnadoo, 85 Cobb Street, Penshurst,  
Timber House (Penshurst 2), 87 Cobb Street, Penshurst,  
Timber House (Penshurst 3), 91 Cobb Street, Penshurst,  
Bluestone House, Watton Street, Penshurst,  
Bluestone House, Bell Street, Penshurst,  
Timber House (Penshurst 4), 25 Hutton Street, Penshurst,  
Sheepwash (& woolshed?), O'Connors Lane (Nareeb-Nareeb), Penshurst, (CFA 476 A24)  
Dr Sweetnam's residence (Former), 77 Cobb Street, Penshurst, (VR 233 P-11)  
House unknown, 63 Chesswas Street, Penshurst,  
Lynwood (old site), Penshurst-MacArthur Road, Penshurst, (VR 73 D-8/CFA 474-10)  
Shop and warehouse, 36? Martin Street, Penshurst, (CFA 474 J-75)  
Penshurst Newsagency, 86 Bell Street, Penshurst,  
Timber House (Penshurst 5), 127 Watton Street, Penshurst,  
Timber House (Penshurst 6), 132 Watton Street, Penshurst,  
Timber House (Penshurst 7), 119 Watton Street, Penshurst,  
Timber House (Penshurst 8), 117 Watton Street, Penshurst,  
House (Does this exist?), 17 Kennedy Street, Penshurst,  
Timber House (Does this exist?), 21 Kennedy Street, Penshurst,  
Timber Cottage (Penshurst 4), 102 Watton Street, Penshurst,  
Timber House (Penshurst 10), 85 Watton Street, Penshurst,  
Timber House (Penshurst 11), 79 Watton Street, Penshurst,  
Timber House (Penshurst 12), 57 Watton Street, Penshurst,  
Timber Cottage (Penshurst 5), 42 Watton Street, Penshurst,  
Cottage (Penshurst 1), SE Cnr Watton & Thackeray St., Penshurst,  
Timber House (Penshurst 13), 26 Scales Street, Penshurst,  
Timber House (Penshurst 14), 48 Bell Street, Penshurst,  
Timber House (Penshurst 18), 22 French Street, Penshurst,  
Kelly's Merchandise, 76a Bell Street, Penshurst,

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Senior Citizens' Centre, Bell Street, Penshurst,  
Rural Fire Brigade (Penshurst) Garage, 91 Bell Street, Penshurst,  
Timber House (Penshurst 21), 112 Bell Street, Penshurst,  
Timber House (Penshurst 22), 113 Bell Street, Penshurst,  
Timber House (Penshurst 20), 104 Bell Street, Penshurst,  
Timber House (Penshurst 19), 103 Bell Street, Penshurst,  
Timber Cottage (Penshurst 6), 101 Bell Street, Penshurst,  
Brick House (Penshurst 3), 119 Bell Street, Penshurst,  
Cottage (Connite), 121 Bell Street, Penshurst,  
Timber House (Penshurst 24), 123 Bell Street, Penshurst,  
Glen Don, 128 Bell Street, Penshurst,  
Timber House (Penshurst 25), 25 Hutton Street, Penshurst,  
Cotterill's Plumbing, 26 Martin Street, Penshurst,  
Shop (Penshurst 1), 28 Martin Street, Penshurst,  
Timber House (Penshurst 28), 45 Kennedy Street, Penshurst,  
Timber Cottage (Penshurst 8), 121 Cox Street, Penshurst,  
Timber House (Penshurst 29), 39 Burchett Street, Penshurst,  
Timber House (Penshurst 30), 37 Burchett Street, Penshurst,  
Timber House (Penshurst 31), 38 Burchett Street, Penshurst,  
Timber House (Penshurst 32), 57 Martin Street, Penshurst,  
Peppercorn Cottage, Martin Street (Hamilton Hwy), Penshurst,  
Timber House (Penshurst 35), 2 Martin Street, Penshurst,  
Carinya, Hamilton Highway, Penshurst, (CFA 475 C)

## HISTORY:

John Cox (1813-1853), who was from Van Diemen's Land and who had whaling and mercantile interests at Port Fairy, took up the Mount Rouse run in 1839 (B&K, 51). He was ejected from the Mount Rouse run in April 1842, as the land was required to form an Aboriginal Protectorate under the Chief Protector of Aborigines, George Augustus Robinson. Nominally, the Protectorate was extensive, being some 100 square miles. There was great animosity by the majority of the squatters to the Protectorate and how it came to be (Critchett, 151). Some believed that it made matters worse (Critchett, 102). Generally, the Protectorate's establishment coincided with the serious depression in the early 1840s caused by the fall in wool prices and the consequent collapse in the capital value of squatting runs. Specifically, most squatters considered the treatment of the original holder of the Mount Rouse run, John Cox, to have been shameful or at least unfair.

Charles Wightman Sievwright managed the Protectorate for most of its existence. Some historians have considered him unhappy, unpopular and unsuccessful in his role (B&K, 139). But Garden believes that "Despite his unpromising start, Sievwright appears to have undertaken his duties at Mount Rouse conscientiously" (Garden, 19). Dr John Watton replaced him as Medical Officer (Critchett, 1990, 146ff). One of the streets of the township that succeeded the Protectorate was named after Watton but none was named after Sievwright.

By 1850, the Argus newspaper reported "the Government Surveyor is busy laying out the Mount Rouse Reserve, into allotments suitable for farming purposes. A Township is to be in the centre" (Argus, 31/08/1850). By 1851, it was formally announced that the Protectorate had failed and the grazing rights of the Mount Rouse run, then called Purdeet and Kolor, were open to tender. Adolphus Sceales was the successful tenderer for both parts but refused to complete the lease due to the lack of labour resulting from the gold rush (B&K, 267). David Hutton then took over the Purdeet licence, which was finally cancelled in 1872, and John Twomey took up the Kolor licence, which was cancelled in 1870 (B&K, 267). These families, along with the Ritchie family of Blackwood and the Ross family at The Gums, were particularly influential on the development of Penshurst throughout the nineteenth century and beyond.

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C. C. Howell surveyed the township in 1851, apparently naming it Penshurst after the birthplace of the (unknown) hotel owner he had stayed with while surveying the land (Specialist Garden Developments Pty. Ltd., 35). The grid plan of the township was standard, being aligned north-south and centred on the intersection of the track from the south, the track running east-west and the everlasting spring. The survival of the Protectorate huts, which may have even dated from Cox's occupation, seems to have influenced the location of the Police Reserve which was developed first by the construction of the Post Office and the Courthouse and which was eventually occupied by the Police. This group of buildings makes an especially strong contribution to the streetscape.

The plan was one of the most ambitious and far-sighted in the district. It provided streets of 150 feet and 300 feet width, which were used in no apparent pattern. The streets in Coleraine and Branxholme, by comparison, were 150 and 160 feet wide. Martin Street, the road to and from the south, is wide and on high ground. Cox Street, the east-west road, is narrow and low-lying. Martin Street, which is also narrow but on higher ground, became the de facto commercial street. The plan eventually provided reserves for a sanatorium, for cricket and recreation, for the major religious denominations, the state school and a mechanics institute. The largest was the reserve for public gardens around the spring. Land was later alienated for the Hamilton to Warrnambool Railway and, at the end of the nineteenth century, the Penshurst to Dunkeld branch line. Immediately to the south of the town boundary, land around Mount Rouse was reserved for public and recreation purposes.

One of the first substantial buildings to be erected was the Penshurst Hotel. The exact date of construction of this building is not certain, but the use of bluestone; and the twelve pane double hung sash windows suggest it was the early 1850s. There were at least seven hotels in Penshurst. The more important included the Prince of Wales, the Victoria, the Mount Rouse Inn and the Cricketer's Arms. To counteract their influence a fine Temperance Hall was built in Watton Street in 1872. In 1888, as reported in the Hamilton Spectator, 05/04/1888, 135 out of 193 voters in the Penshurst Riding of the Shire of Mount Rouse voted to retain the seven hotels in Penshurst. The Temperance Hall was later used as a substitute State School and, from 1914, as the Penshurst Masonic Lodge. For a long time, the Victoria Hotel was the staging place for Cobb & Co coaches.

One of the first industries was Aitken's tannery. It was located at the eastern end of Bell Street. There were several blacksmiths and a saddler, all in Bell Street. Charles Dodds' saddler's shop survives. Much later there was the Penshurst Butter Factory. A group of local farmers and Hamilton businessmen had floated a Hamilton Butter Factory Company in 1892. Garden states that "The company established creameries in the Victoria Valley and at Penshurst, Croxton, Byaduk and at the butter factory which was erected on the Mill Road in Hamilton." The Penshurst and District Butter and Cheese Co. Ltd. was established in 1898 and prospered throughout the first half of the twentieth century, completely remodelling the plant in 1929. Throughout the nineteenth century and well into the twentieth the quarrying of scoria was a significant industry for the township, the scoria being moved by train throughout the district after the advent of the railways.

There were many general stores, produce stores and specialist shops in Penshurst which demonstrate that retailing was a significant function for the town. They were located principally in Bell Street. The families that ran them were very influential on the town's development. Ah Wong was a general goods merchant and one of the few Chinese to establish such a business in the district, most Chinese being employed as gardeners. Some of the more important stores in the nineteenth century were Lane's which became Olle's in Bell Street, and Madigan's, next door at the most important corner of the town. The Olle family also operated a bakery. Malcolm's Produce Store was built in 1906 on part of the land owned by the Madigan family. The Cook & O'Connor store, which was established in the twentieth century remained in the same family for over 70 years and became a supermarket. The two butchers were opposite each other in Bell Street. One, owned by O'Brien and later by Ross & Clark, operated later as the Penshurst Free Press Printing office. The Olle family owned the other, on the corner of Bell and Martin Street. It was in a pair of shops designed by the local architect, W. J.

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Schooling. Later it was owned by Hannah Buckley, nee Olle and occupied by her husband, Daniel Buckley, another butcher. The largely Anglo-Celtic origin of the Penshurst storekeepers is in contrast to the German Lutheran communities of nearby Gnadenthal and Herrnhut which they serviced.

In the early twentieth century, the sale and serving of motor cars became important. Thomas William Hill, a motor mechanic ran a service station from Madigan's General Store. He bought Olle's general store and turned it into Penshurst Motors. Hill remodelled the store substantially by removing the verandah and by painting the parapet with the words in large lettering "Hill's Motors" but his occupation of it was, moving his business to Warrnambool. William French then Capes and Co. ran it for a few years. By 1930, Ray Schramm, a motor mechanic and electrician ran it. He was soon to have a business in his own right next to the Penshurst Hotel.

The Belfast police officer who was in charge of the whole district condemned the huts which survived on the Police Reserve as completely unsatisfactory when he came to inspect them. The first police constable at Penshurst, Samuel Watson was appointed in late 1861. He was given permission to rent a stone cottage and stables. In 1876, the police were operating from a timber and stone house with stables and a single cell on the eastern side of Scales Street, between Cobb and Watton Streets. In 1908 the Penshurst Progress Association agitated for the police to be moved from Scales Street to the more central Police Reserve. The police did move back to the Police Reserve in 1914, the date of construction of the present house. The timber stables and the single cell were relocated from Scales Street to the Martin Street site. The Police Reserve was further subdivided and developed. Its present functions continue its role as the focus for the community and public purposes. The ambulance station was built in the 1960s. The portable police station was built in the 1980s.

One of the most important functions in the township was municipal administration. The local Roads Board was created in October 1860 but was strictly limited in its capacities and functions. The first Chairman was Daniel Ritchie. The Shire of Mount Rouse was proclaimed in 1864 and Ritchie was its first President. The council building, with stables at the rear, was constructed in 1864, to the design of John S. Jenkins (c1835-1913), architect and engineer. Jenkins was appointed engineer of the Roads Board in December 1860, and served in that capacity until 1863, when the transition was made to the Shire of Mount Rouse. He served both as Shire Secretary and Engineer from 1870 to 1876. He had a substantial private practice and was responsible for some important homesteads and woolsheds. After leaving the district he had a very successful career in Melbourne not only as an architect and engineer but also as a Councillor for the City of Richmond.

John Mackiehan, the clerk of courts in Penshurst for many years, was one of the first Shire of Mount Rouse Councillors, as well as Mount Rouse Shire President in 1879. He was born in Argyleshire, Scotland in 1839. He sailed to the Cape of Good Hope in 1856, remaining there for three years, during which term he acquired a thorough knowledge of the wine industry. He purchased Yulangah, where he established the first vineyard in the south west of Victoria outside Geelong. He has been credited with the original concept of the Municipal Association (HS 30/03/1912). Its first meeting, chaired by him, was held at the Hamilton Town Hall in June 1879. Mackiehan, who was elected unopposed as Chairman and President, a position which he retained until his retirement in 1885. He moved to Melbourne in early 1885 to take up a position as Manager of the Union Trustee Company of Melbourne and remained there for twenty seven years, becoming one of the best known businessmen of the city (PFP 05/04/1912, 2). The collection of records of the Shire of Mount Rouse may be one of the most intact outside metropolitan Melbourne.

The four main religious denominations were represented in Penshurst, although the Anglican Church was surprisingly small compared with the others. Perhaps the strongest presence was that of the Presbyterians at St Andrews, reflecting the power and prestige of the squatters in the district. The Ross family of The Gums supported it strongly. Similarly, the St Joseph's, the Catholic Church complex, was substantial and included a presbytery, school and separate convent. This may reflect the influence of the Twomey family, unusual amongst the squatters for their Catholic Irish background. The Wesleyan Methodists had a chapel in Bell Street from

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1860 which was designed by the architect, John Mason of Belfast (Port Fairy). His daughter married into the Hutton family and he probably designed the second house at Cheviot Hills. Silas Harding of Linlithgow Plains was its particular supporter. Now, only the Catholic and Uniting Churches are active.

The provision of secular education in Penshurst has been varied. The National School opened in 1858, with an enrolment of 34 pupils, in two stone rooms in Bell Street. The land was reserved for a National School and then as a Common School. The first teacher was Mr. Patrick D. Baxter, a qualified ship's master. Mr. Baxter also served as the first secretary of the district Roads Board in 1863. The new bluestone school was established on a separate and much larger site on the corner of Watton and French Streets as State School No 486 after the introduction of free, secular and compulsory education in 1872. The State school has since relocated to land excised from Kolor and donated by the Twomey family. Adult education, and more general entertainment, was provided through the Mechanics Institute and Library. It was established as early as 1871 and the bluestone carcass of the surviving building probably dates from 1884 when the local architect, John Montgomery called tenders for a "bluestone hall in connection with the Penshurst Mechanics Institute" (Tonkin, 1971). It was the centre of social life in Penshurst and continues to be used for community purposes. After the Second World War it was remodelled and renamed the Memorial Hall.

The War Memorial proposed and paid for by Mr. R. B. Ritchie, the owner of Blackwood in 1919 marks the intersection of Martin and Bell Streets, which had become the crossroads of the town. It is supported by memorial plantings in Martin Street, which have a distinctive ABACABA rhythm, which may have been influenced by the eminent landscape designer, Hugh Linaker. There are also significant plantings, possibly memorial, on the eastern and western approaches to the town. The Botanic Gardens were never well developed but in recent years they have been beautified and planted out as wetlands. They have included sporting facilities since the Second World War. The main oval is located on the Hamilton Highway, to the east of the town. The Mount Rouse reserve has also been an important recreational facility.

Growth declined after 1954, as economic factors forced many small landholders and soldier settlers from the land, reducing the rural population and therefore demand for services within the township. The wool boom ended after the Korean War. The Butter Factory closed after a merger offer by Murray Goulburn was accepted in 1966. The railway closed and the station was demolished by the 1980s. Over the past five decades, the town has gradually reduced to play only a minor service role in the district. Hamilton now serves as the major regional centre for the provision of goods and services, further compounded by the amalgamation of the Wannan, Dundas and Mount Rouse Shires in the 1990s to form the Shire of Southern Grampians, administered from Hamilton.

## **THEMATIC CONTEXT:**

Theme 2 Peopling Australia

Theme 3: Developing local, regional and national economies

3.5 Developing primary production

3.5.1 Grazing stock

3.5.2 Breeding animals

3.5.3 Developing agricultural industries

Theme 5: Working

5.8 Working on the land

Theme 6 Educating

6.2 Establishing schools

6.5 Educating people in remote places

Theme 8 Developing Australia's cultural life

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8.12 Living in and around Australian homes  
8.14 Living in the country and rural settlements

## INTEGRITY:

Good

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE:

What is significant?

The township of Penshurst located on the Hamilton Highway approximately 30.0kms south-east of Hamilton, immediately adjacent to Mount Rouse which dominates its cultural landscape. In a sense, the settlement of the area began with the very early Mount Rouse squatting run of John Cox in 1839 which was superseded by the Mount Rouse Aboriginal Protectorate in the early 1840s under Charles Wightman Sievwright and Dr. John Watton. This had failed by the early 1850s and the Surveyor C. C. Howell planned an ambitious town of wide formal streets centred not on a permanent stream, as was the usual case, but on a permanent spring and the intersection of the principal routes north-south and east-west. The site of the Protectorate, strategically positioned overlooking the spring, became the Police Reserve and to be developed later with the main civic buildings. Penshurst was an important service centre for its prosperous pastoral and agricultural hinterland. This is reflected in the large number of substantial stores, many of which survive, at least six hotels, some of which survive, and the municipal offices of the former Shire of Mount Rouse which survive including much of its municipal records. The squatting families from surrounding properties, as usual, supported the various churches with the notable example of the Twomey family, Irish Catholics, of the Kolor, Banemore and Langulac runs who supported St Joseph's Church. The advent of the Hamilton-Warmambool railway line in the 1880s and the branch line to Dunkeld in 1898 reinforced the town's importance and prosperity. The Penshurst Butter Factory, built at the end of the nineteenth century, was located adjacent to the station and was a major industry until the Second World War. The other important public buildings were the Mechanics Institute and the Temperance Hall, founded in 1870s by leading townsmen. Penshurst State School No. 486, which emerged from a Common School, was built in the mid-1870s and was relocated after the World War Two onto land formerly part of the Kolor Estate. The residential development is unusually widely dispersed and characterised by its cottage form, for the most part, and dry stone walling around the allotments. Although the township has been in decline, measured by its population and commercial activity, Penshurst retains a dignified and well-established character. It provides an important contrast to the neighbouring township of Tarrington and can be compared with the formality of Dunkeld, Coleraine, Cavendish, Braxholme and Balmoral.

How is it significant?

The Penshurst Heritage Precinct is of historic, cultural, social and architectural significance to the community of Penshurst and the Southern Grampians Shire.

Why is it significant?

The Penshurst Heritage Precinct is of historic significance as a township dating from the early 1850s, for its connection with the Mount Rouse Aboriginal Protectorate, and as one of the satellite settlements around Hamilton, and for representing the emergence of various aspects of pastoralism and agriculture in the area. It is of cultural significance as a mixed settlement with all elements of the broader community represented, including influence from the surrounding squatting properties and the German Lutheran communities of nearby Gnadenthal and Herrnhut. It is of social significance as the focus for the community's education and recreation, roles that continue to the present. The architectural significance of the town lies in the formality of its urban development, perhaps the most ambitious in the Shire, in contrast to the irregular towns such as Byaduk and Tarrington. This is reinforced by many particularly fine buildings, which survive to demonstrate the late nineteenth and early twentieth century prosperity of the town, largely the result of its role as the municipal centre of the Shire of Mount Rouse and later as a railway junction.

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## COMPARISON:

- 408 Balmoral heritage precinct Henty Highway Balmoral
- 402 Branxholme heritage precinct Henty Highway Branxholme
- 409 Byaduk heritage precinct Hamilton-Port Fairy Road Byaduk
- 407 Cavendish heritage precinct Henty Highway Cavendish
- 401 Coleraine heritage precinct Glenelg Highway Coleraine
- 406 Dunkeld heritage precinct Glenelg Highway Dunkeld
- 405 Glenthompson heritage precinct Glenelg Highway Glenthompson
- 404 Tarrington heritage precinct Hamilton Highway Tarrington

ASSESSED BY: TFH

ASSESSMENT DATE:

09-Apr-04

## EXISTING LISTINGS:

### HERITAGE STUDY RECOMMENDATIONS:

Include in VHR  Include in RNE  Include in Local Planning Scheme

No Recommendations for Inclusions

### REFERENCES:

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Murray Hedgcock	Penshurst Revisited	1999
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R V Billis and A S Kenyon	Pastoral Pioneers of Port Phillip	1974 var.

# HERITAGE PLACE

NAME OF PLACE: PENSURST HERITAGE PRECINCT

ADDRESS/LOCATION OF PLACE: Hamilton Highway PENSURST

STUDY NUMBER: 403

HERITAGE OVERLAY NUMBER:

R. W. Connell & T. H Irving	Class Structure in Australian History, Documents, Narrative and Argument	1980	1 var.
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