

# HERITAGE PLACE

**NAME OF PLACE:** ALBERT HOMESTEAD COMPLEX

**ADDRESS/LOCATION OF PLACE:** Springfield Lane Albert Road PENSHURST

**STUDY NUMBER:** 205

**HERITAGE OVERLAY NUMBER:**

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**PRECINCT:** Branxholme

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA:** Southern Grampians Shire

**ALLOTMENT:** part B **SECTION:** XV **PARISH:** PARISH OF BORAMBORAM  
(15)

**ACCESS DESCRIPTION:**

CFA 474 (north of 15)b; Vicroads73d8; located on the west side of Springfield Lane and south of Albert Road (unmade).

**SIGNIFICANCE RATING:** Local



Albert Homestead Complex, Springfield Lane, Penshurst, house ruins

**Image Date:** 21/3/02

**EXTENT OF LISTING:**

To the extent of: 1. The ruins of the original homestead (pug construction), the ruins of the second homestead (bluestone construction), the ruins of the woolshed, the stone walls, the garden and all of the orchard and all of the land included within an area of 5m outside the bluestone walls which surround the site, and where the bluestone is missing, the line of the bluestone.

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## PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION:

It is not possible to determine exactly what the form and plan of the wattle and daub hut which was the first Albert homestead. It appears to be very similar to one of those which survives at the neighbouring property, Acacia and others on different properties which were all built in the 1850s. The hut faced north into a garden enclosed by dry stone walls and towards two Linden trees which marked the entrance. The extensive orchard was to its south. The later house was built immediately to its north-east and beyond that, in a separate walled yard, the later woolshed.

There was probably a central passage in the hut with a small room on either side and two or three smaller rooms across the back. The single massive stone chimney was located at the eastern end. It seems unlikely that there was a habitable attic although the roof space may have been used for storage. The surviving timbers show that the building was constructed with a morticed and tenoned timber frame set on a loose stone base. The major timber were sawn. Within the panels of the frame there were roughly hewn upright timbers tapered at both ends which were covered with clay probably reinforced by straw. In surviving structures the clay and straw appear to have been wrapped around the uprights in a technique know as 'Lehmwickle'. The same system was used for ceilings. The rough, or at least ribbed surface was then smoothed with a second application of clay. The gabled roof would have been framed in timber and covered with split timber shingles.

The plan, form and materials of the later or bluestone Albert homestead appear to be very similar to those built at Willowbrook in 1861, at Acacia in 1864 for Pastor Hiller's House in Hiller Lane, east of Hamilton. In which case, the house was symmetrical about a central front door with the windows of the front rooms on either side. There is evidence of a steep staircase in the front hall indicating a substantial attic and one end gable wall still retains the blocks of stone which formed a small window. The walls are of coursed bluestone rubble with squared rock faced blocks in the outer skin. The inner faces of the walls are rendered and plastered. No ceilings survive and very little joinery. The house faced west also towards the entrance of the walled garden.

Some distance to the north of the second house there are the remains of a bluestone woolshed. It is set within and on the east side of its own yard enclosed by dry stone walls. There were two large openings in the western side with pivoting doors opening into the yard. Smaller openings for the exit of sheep survive on the northern side. The most unusual aspect of the woolshed is that it is comprised of three relatively small rooms rather than one large open space. The origin and purpose of the plan are not known.

An extensive orchard survives to the south of the house including mature specimens of a variety of Pears of different cultivars (*Pyrus comminus* unk. cultivars), Sweet Elder (*Sambucus canadensis*), Peach (*Prunus persica*), a variety of apples (*Malus x domestica* unk. cultivars) a variety of Plums (*Prunus* sp. unk. cultivars), Fig (*ficus carica*). The site has a great deal of garlic growing among the fruit trees, it is not known if this was an early traditional form of insect (pest) control, or has escaped from a vegetable garden and gone wild. Iris have also spread from what was once the homestead garden.

## HISTORY:

The Boramboram Parish Plan shows that a G G. Crouch purchased allotment B of section XV (15), comprising just over 312 acres, possibly early 1853 when Johann Friedrich Krumnow purchased the neighbouring 1,584 acres which was to become the utopian commune of German Lutherans called Herrnhut. About half of Crouch's land was soon purchased by Andreas Albert because, in a letter to his family in Germany, Albert "wrote very positively about his communal neighbours. He was impressed with how they pooled all their income and property, worked hard and paid their bills. He found them to be good Christians,

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commenting that they prayed three times each day, and prayed so enthusiastically that they could be heard at some distance" (Metcalf, 30).

Albert was himself a German Lutheran migrant. He and his wife, Agnes were born in Sachsen, in 1821 and in 1826. Like the other Wendish families who came to settle in the Gnadenthal area, west of Peshurst, in the early 1850s they had emigrated for religious and economic reasons. At the very beginning, Andreas was severely burnt about the legs when his property was attacked by hostile Aborigines (Burger, 11). Like the other German migrants they immediately constructed a wattle and daub hut, using vernacular traditions, the remnants of which still survive. They also planted a garden and an extensive orchard, so much larger than others nearby that it appears to have been managed at a commercial scale. All the German families operated mixed farms with pigs, calves, and dairying as well as horticultural produce such as potatoes and onions. Not all farmed sheep but the Alberts did because they built a substantial bluestone woolshed sometime in the 1860s. They also built a new bluestone house immediately adjacent to the original hut. It is not known exactly when this was built but it is very similar to the new houses which were built at the neighbouring farms, Willowbrook and Acacia in 1861 and 1864, neither of which survive. By the early 1870s Andreas Albert, "farmer" was rated for 248 acres with considerable improvements because, by comparison, the adjacent Burger property of 345 acres was valued at only 10% more (SMR RB, 1871, No. 251 & 273).

It is clear that the Albert family remained on good terms with Krumnow and the other communards because it was Andreas Albert who told Krumnow the news of another German commune in Victoria and because the Albert family attended Krumnow's funeral in October 1880 (Metcalf, 55, 131). As late as 1953, August Albert, the son of Andreas and Agnes recalled Krumnow favourably (Metcalf, 132). The family belonged to the Tabor congregation. They had several other children who were educated at the Tabor school and who married into neighbouring German families. Agnes Albert died in 1901 and Andreas died in 1905. They are buried in the Gnadenthal cemetery, facing east and overlooking their former home. The redundant homestead and woolshed were abandoned after the Second World War and partially demolished for their building materials after the property was purchased in 1958 by the Burger family of the neighbouring farm, Acacia.

## **THEMATIC CONTEXT:**

- Theme 3 Developing local, regional and national economies
  - 3.5 Developing primary production
    - 3.5.1 Grazing stock
    - 3.5.2 Breeding animals
  - 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 complex is in ruins. Many substantial and minor plantings survive in the garden and the orchard.

## **INTEGRITY:**

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Orchard appears to survive substantially intact. The stone homestead has been destroyed for building materials. The original wattle and daub hut has been destroyed.

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE:

What is significant?

The ruins of the Albert Homestead Complex is located on the west side of Springfield Lane, some distance south of the unmade Albert Road. The complex consists of a large (possibly commercial) orchard which surrounds the ruins of an 1850s wattle and daub hut, the ruins of a stone house, dating from the 1860s, and the remains of woolshed, unusually constructed from stone. The property belonged a family of German Lutheran immigrants, the Alberts. The homestead was initially a wattle and daub cottage similar to that which still stands at nearby Acacia, built by the Albert's neighbours, the Burger family. The complex evolved as the Albert family prospered, and a more substantial stone homestead was constructed, probably in the 1860s. The date of the stone woolshed is unknown, but it is likely to date from between 1870-189. No architect or builder associated with the complex. The Homestead complex is in fair (although ruinous) condition, and the orchard is in good condition with a very high degree of integrity.

How is it significant?

The Albert Homestead Complex is of historical significance to the Southern Grampians Shire.

Why is it significant?

The Albert Homestead Complex is of historical significance as one of a number of very small, very early farming complexes which were constructed in a cluster between Peshurst and the Krumnow settlement. The site is of further historical significance as it demonstrates the increasing prosperity of the Alberts through the sequence of development in the buildings. The substantial orchard demonstrates a focus on self sufficiency, or perhaps even a commercial venture around the turn of the century. The complex as a whole is of historical significance for its association with the early German Lutheran immigrant community, for its sequence of development and for the substantial homestead complex which provides us with information regarding a previous way of life and community.

## COMPARISON:

206 Acacia, Macarthur-Peshurst Road, Peshurst  
368 Willowbrook, Macarthur-Peshurst Road, Peshurst

**ASSESSED BY:** tfh

**ASSESSMENT DATE:**

31/01/2002

## 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
Raymond Burger	The Burger Family in Australia, 1851-1983	1983	
William J Metcalf and Elizabeth Huf	Herrnhut, Australia's First Utopian Commune	2002	30, 55, 131