

HERITAGE PLACE

NAME OF PLACE: RSL HALL

ADDRESS/LOCATION OF PLACE: Ritchie Street PENSURST

STUDY NUMBER: 270

HERITAGE OVERLAY NUMBER:

PRECINCT: Penshurst

LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA: Southern Grampians Shire

ALLOTMENT: 1 **SECTION:** 2 **PARISH:** PARISH OF PURDEET

ACCESS DESCRIPTION:

CFA 475J D12; VicRoads 233 O11; Located on the south side of Ritchie Street at the end of French Street on the south side of the township

SIGNIFICANCE RATING: Local



RSL Hall, Ritchie Street, Penshurst

Image Date: 29/04/02

EXTENT OF LISTING:

To the extent of: 1. All the hall building but excluding its interiors, the flagpole, the cannon and all the land.

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PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION:

The RSL Hall is a small, asymmetrical weatherboard hall in a vernacular style with a porch at the front and a dominating brick chimney. The RSL insignia is located on the chimney. The windows on either side of the chimney appear to have been altered. The hip roof which is half gabled, is corrugated iron. There are extensions on the east side under a skillion roof. The grounds are sparse but include a traditional flagpole in front of the building and a cannon in the north-west corner. Despite its humble scale, the building assumes a formal axial position looking north down French Street.

HISTORY:

The land on which the hall stands, being part of allotment 2 of section 1 of the Parish of Purdeet, was sold to J. Twomey on 30th December 1857 (Department of Lands and Survey, 1957).

The Returned Servicemen's League was founded in 1916 as the Returned Soldiers and Sailors Imperial League of Australia. Don Garden, in 'Victoria, a History' pp. 326-7, writes "It was a pressure group for the interests of returned soldiers, but also came to have profound social significance for the men. Its reunions, its commemoration of Anzac Day and the RSL clubs which sprang up throughout the country enabled the camaraderie and sense of purpose generated within the AIF to live on." The Penshurst RSL clubrooms should be set against this general background and more specifically in the context of the Soldier Settlement program in the area. More seriously perhaps, according to Garden, the RSL in Victoria "in the second half of 1919 agitated to force the Government to close the German Lutheran schools in the Western District, arguing that they still operated as seedbeds of pro-German sentiment." The schools remained open.

Victoria, under pressure from the RSL, proclaimed Anzac Day a public holiday in 1925, the first state to do so. The first Anzac Day March was held in Melbourne in 1926. Marching on Anzac Day and Remembrance Day, 11th November to commemorate those who served and especially those who fell during Australia's wars, has become a national cultural value.

The existing building was moved to the site. The exact date of its construction is not known but it seems likely to have been built in the early 1920s. No designer or builder has been associated with its construction. The cannon was moved to the grounds from the Penshurst Botanic Gardens in 1995.

THEMATIC CONTEXT:

Theme 8: Developing Australia's cultural life
8.5 Forming Associations
8.5.1 Preserving traditions and group memories
8.5.2 Helping other people
8.5.3 Associating for mutual aid
8.8 Remembering the fallen

Theme 9: Marking the phases of life
9.7.3 Remembering the dead

CONDITION:

The building is in good condition.

INTEGRITY:

Good degree of integrity

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE:

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What is significant?

The RSL Hall, Ritchie Street is a small weatherboard building located in Ritchie Street, on the edge of the township of Penshurst, and on axis looking north down French Street. It is not certain when the hall was built but it appears to date from the early 1920s. No designer or builder has been associated with its construction. It has been altered and extended but remains substantially intact and in good condition. The flagpole outside the front entrance is a key element in the significance of the place as is the cannon, moved in 1995 from the Penshurst Botanic Gardens.

How is it significant?

The RSL Hall, Ritchie Street is of historical and social significance to the Southern Grampians Shire and to the township of Penshurst.

Why is it significant?

The RSL Hall, Ritchie Street is of historical and social significance as the focus for the activities of the Returned Servicemen's League and the commemoration of those who served and died in active service.

COMPARISON:

271 Avenue of Honour, Scales Street, Penshurst

428 RSL Hall (former Mechanics Institute?), NE Cnr Stirling & Wills Street, Dunkeld

ASSESSED BY: TFH

ASSESSMENT DATE:

29-Apr-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 |
|--------------------------------|---|------|------------|
| Department of Lands and Survey | Township of Penshurst, County of Villiers | 1957 | |
| Don Garden | Victoria, A History | 1984 | 326-7, 338 |
| Mount Rouse Shire Council | Shire of Mount Rouse, In the Centre of the Fertile Western District of Victoria: Centenary Celebrated | 1966 | |