

# HERITAGE PLACE

**NAME OF PLACE:** ST MARTIN'S PRIVATE HOSPITAL (FORMER)

**ADDRESS/LOCATION OF PLACE:** 89 Cobb Street PENSURST

**STUDY NUMBER:** 275

**HERITAGE OVERLAY NUMBER:**

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**PRECINCT:** Penshurst

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA:** Southern Grampians Shire

**ALLOTMENT:** Part 9 **SECTION:** 4 **PARISH:** PARISH OF YALIMBA

**ACCESS DESCRIPTION:**

CFA 475J ; VicRoads 233 ; located at 89 Cobb Street, on the south side approximately 33m east of the intersection with Martin Street on the southern side of the town.

**SIGNIFICANCE RATING:** Contributory



Hospital (Former), Cobb St, Penshurst

**Image Date:** 21/05/02

**EXTENT OF LISTING:**

To the extent of: 1. All the building (excluding the interior) and all of the land.

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## **PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION:**

The former St Martin's Private Hospital at 89 Cobb Street Penshurst is a single storey, double fronted timber house with a corrugated iron roof. The house has been surfaced with artificial brick cladding in recent years. The building has been extended on both sides, with the addition of extra rooms, at various times in the 20th century. An early 20th century photograph shows decorative timber work on the verandah and in the apex of the front gable, all of which has been removed.

## **HISTORY:**

The land on which the former St Martin's Private Hospital now stands was purchased from the Crown on 15th January 1858 by James Blair, Police Magistrate at Portland, Commissioner of Crown Lands and squatter.

By 1885 Blair had acquired more land in the section, holding allotments 5-10 of Section 4 in partnership with William Collis, carpenter. Collis became the sole owner and occupier in 1887, retaining the property until 1911.

In 1911, Sarah Jane Walker, domestic duties, is listed as the owner and occupier of a house and part Allotment 9, Section 4. Mrs. Walker also owned part Allotment 7, and her husband Thomas owned Allotment 8 and part Allotment 7. By 1912, the house was occupied by Rosina Elford, whose occupation was given as domestic duties. However, in 1914 and 1915 her occupation was given as nurse, which suggests the first association of the house at 89 Cobb Street with the health professions.

In 1925, Sister McKechnie is listed as the occupier of the house, still owned by Sarah Walker. The ownership changed by 1930, when the house was listed as St Martin's Hospital, owned by the Bush Nursing Hospital. During the second world war period, Sister O'Brien worked and possibly resided in the house. In 1947 the hospital was bought by Dr Janet Patterson Watt, a well known medical practitioner in the district. Dr Watt was also associated with 77 Cobb Street, where she had consulting rooms, which was formerly the home of Dr Sweetnam. The former St Martin's private hospital is well known to many older present day residents of Penshurst as the place where they were born, and treated for medical ailments.

In her obituary, Dr. Watt was described as [someone who had given] "A lifetime of service given to the care and welfare of others". Dr. Watt was 55 years old at the time of her death. She was born to a family which also gave their lives to the welfare and advancement of humanity. Her parents were the late Rev. William Watt and his wife Jessie, who were missionaries in the New Hebrides and India, and she was born at Richmond, Victoria, when the couple were on furlough from the New Hebrides. She is described as being heavily involved in public interests, a member of St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church and "had joined wholeheartedly with citizens in the battle to have the hospital constructed at Penshurst, and she was probably the most thrilled person in the community when it was officially declared open for use just over 7 months ago. She was a member of the original committee"(ibid., 1). Dr. Watt was also an important lobbyist for the establishment of the Penshurst and District ambulance service, she held the Presidency of the committee for the development of the Swimming Pool for many years, and was passionate about the construction of a new and modern pool in the interests of public health and the township.

Other local interests which she had included the leadership of a committee to establish an Infant Welfare Centre in Penshurst, as well as being a keen member of the Mechanics Hall committee, and of the Penshurst Hospital Ladies Auxiliary, and the local CWA branch.

Dr Watt came to the service of the people of Penshurst and district in 1939, and during the war served at the

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Hamilton Base Hospital for a period of over 3 years, 1942-45, while providing Penshurst with a periodical and on-call service. At the end of the war, she resumed full time practice in Penshurst.

Her obituary in the Hamilton Spectator described Dr. Janet Paterson Watt as "one of the best known and respected medical practitioners in the Glenelg district... She was one of the prime movers in the creation of a blood bank at the base hospital" (HS 11/03/58)

## **THEMATIC CONTEXT:**

Theme 3: Developing local, regional and national economies

3.26 Providing Health Services

3.26.2 Providing hospital services

## **CONDITION:**

The building is in good condition.

## **INTEGRITY:**

The building's integrity is only fair, with the loss of original decorative timber work, the false brick cladding, and the accretion of unsympathetic alterations during the 20th century.

## **STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE:**

What is significant?

The former St Martin's Private Hospital is located on Cobb Street, on the south side approximately 33m east of the intersection with Martin Street on the southern side of the township of Penshurst. The building is a single storey, double fronted timber house, which has been surfaced with artificial brick cladding in recent years. The building has been extended on both sides, with the addition of extra rooms, at various times in the 20th century. There has been no architect or builder associated with the building, and it is in good condition with a fair degree of integrity, due to the loss of the original verandah.

How is it significant?

St Martin's Private Hospital (former) is of contributory historical significance to the precinct of Penshurst.

Why is it significant?

St Martin's Private Hospital (former) is of historical significance because it provided medical support over several generations to the community of Penshurst and, in particular, it was the place where most people were born. It is of further historical significance for its association with Doctor Janet Paterson Watt, who served in the area for many years, and was unusual as a woman in her profession in the mid twentieth century (especially in a small community). The hospital is of further historical significance as it provides evidence of a past way of life, where private hospitals were housed in residential buildings.

## **COMPARISON:**

182 Private Hospital (Former) McKebery Street, Coleraine

**ASSESSED BY:** mgt & tfh

**ASSESSMENT DATE:**

10/05/2002

## **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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Author	Title	Year	Page
	"Obituary Dr. Janet Watt" Peshurst Free Press	12/03/58	1958
	"Obituary" The Hamilton Spectator	11/03/58	1958
Department of Lands and Survey	Township of Peshurst, 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, 1864-1960		var.