

# HERITAGE PLACE

**NAME OF PLACE:** GLENTHOMPSON BRICKWORKS

**ADDRESS/LOCATION OF PLACE:** Donald Forbes Street GLENTHOMPSON

**STUDY NUMBER:** 300

**HERITAGE OVERLAY NUMBER:**

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**PRECINCT:** Glenthompson

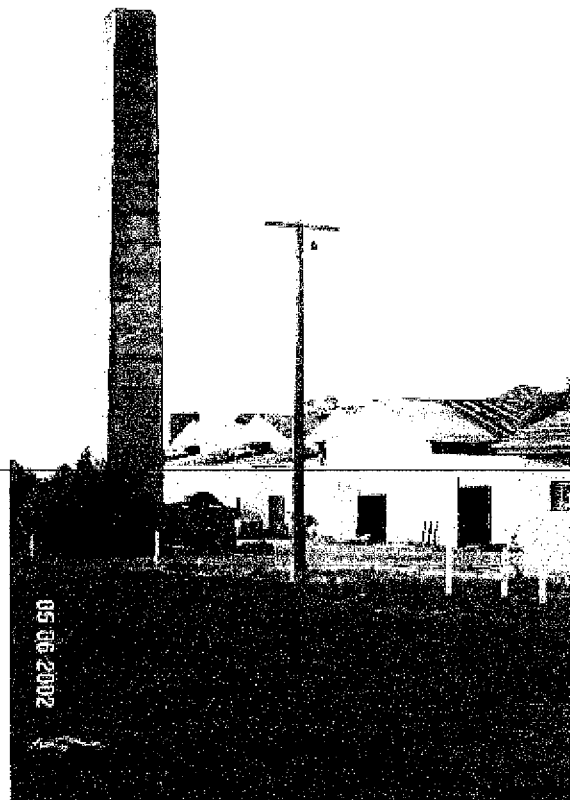
**LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA:** Southern Grampians Shire

**ALLOTMENT:** 31a      **SECTION:** A      **PARISH:** PARISH OF NANAPUNDAH

**ACCESS DESCRIPTION:**

CFA 434J4, VicRoads 299 M10, located on the corner of Donald Forbes Street and Glenelg Highway to the north east of the township of Glenthompson

**SIGNIFICANCE RATING:** Local



Glenthompson Brickworks

**Image Date:** 5/06/2002

**EXTENT OF LISTING:**

To the extent of: 1. All the buildings, plant and equipments and all of the land.

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## **PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION:**

The Brickworks comprise the pit, now very extensive and a range of industrial buildings, including kilns, of various ages, forms of construction and materials and a brick chimney. The pit extends away from the structures towards the north-east. The dark cream brick chimney, located near the entrance off Donald Forbes Street, is the most distinctive structure on the site and a landmark for the area. It is square in section, slightly tapering and approximately 25m high. It is reinforced with iron straps at regular intervals. The corrugated iron sheds are conventionally industrial with a series of gabled roofs and large doorways. The kilns are also brick. Smaller brick buildings, mostly built of cream brick, are used as offices.

## **HISTORY:**

The land on which the Glenthompson Brickworks stands was originally purchased from the Crown by Samuel Fielding on 8th September, 1873. The 1872 Shire of Mount Rouse rate book indicates that, at this time, the holding comprised 245 acres and a homestead. The immediate area was already known for the suitability of its clay for brick making. Many places in the Shire of Southern Grampians had limited supplies of suitable clay and small brickworks, sometimes only opened and operated for individual construction projects, operated in Balmoral, Cavendish and Branxholme, where the Wiltshire Brothers had a kiln.

The Thompson brothers, George and Joseph, who arrived in the Glenthompson area in 1900 from Ballarat, taking up a farm called Yallam Park twelve miles north of the township, established the Glenthompson Brickworks. By 1901, they had a small brickyard in a paddock east of the State School Reserve, near the Railway line, on Thompson Street, which is named in their honour. George Thompson and his wife Emma retired to a small brick cottage in the Glenelg Highway. Emma died in 1924 and George died in 1926. Joseph Thompson died in 1910. All are buried in the Glenthompson cemetery.

In 1902, the demand for red bricks caused the Brickworks to relocate to the present site, where a large deposit of red clay was located. At the height of demand, the Brickworks produced up to 70,000 hand made bricks per month, which were used for constructing buildings throughout the Southern Grampians Shire. Bricks were made in a strictly traditional method, using timber moulds made by James Gunn, a member of a local family of carpenter, which were filled with clay by Alf Abrahams and his sons, Ray and Thor. After drying under thatch, the bricks were fired and after cooling and sorting, dispatched via the Glenthompson railway station. In the 1930s and 1940s, the demand for handmade bricks decreased, and in 1947, the Thompson Brothers sold the company to Donald Forbes and Reg Williams.

Donald Forbes grew up at Cherry Mount near Glenthompson, and purchased the property Wintoc from Arthur Thacker in 1919, running Hereford cattle and sheep. He built a new home, the existing house, on the property in the Interwar years.

Reg Williams was an important local master builder, based in Hamilton, who was responsible for constructing the finest commercial buildings in Hamilton in the mid twentieth century, many of which were designed by the leading Modernist architects, Seabrook and Fildes of Melbourne. He also built many of the finer homes in and around Hamilton.

After Forbes and Williams purchased the yard, they installed a small crusher and a press. Four Scotch kilns were also erected. The partnership sold out in June 1949 to a company, Glenthompson Brickworks Pty Ltd with Donald Forbes as Managing Director, to exploit the continuing abundance of local materials and to supply the great demand for bricks at the end of World War Two. Four new 'down draft' kilns were installed and a 96 foot high chimney was built, as well as a modern machinery house, resulting in an 18,000 bricks a day capacity. The reopening of the brickworks in 1946 by Forbes and Williams was instrumental in bringing an electricity supply to the town.

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After Donald Forbes' accidental death in 1953, his successor, Frank Borbiro began to explore alternative fuels for firing the kilns. In 1956 the works became the first plant in Victoria to make the transition to oil firing. Borbiro was a Hungarian refugee who arrived in Australia in 1949, and took up employment as a labourer at the brickworks in 1950. He became managing director of the firm in 1956, and served on the Shire of Mount Rouse council for 12 years, and was a member of the Portland District Development Committee, Glenelg's regional planning authority and Willaura Hospital Board. Borbiro was awarded an MBE for community service in 1979.

In March 1988, Angora Banner Pty Ltd purchased the Brickworks. The brickworks continue to run today and is the most important supplier of bricks in the Western District outside Ballarat. The Brickworks are of particular interest because of its traditional, although much improved method of firing in single kilns rather than the Hoffman process of continuous firing in circular kilns which was adopted from the 1870s in metropolitan Melbourne. The Brickworks distributes from outlets in Melbourne, Warrnambool, Ararat and Hamilton.

Some important district buildings built with Glen bricks include Monivae College, Hamilton Police Station, Lutheran Old Folks Home, Hamilton Public Offices, Hamilton Nurses Home, and the east wing of the Hospital, the district Ambulance stations, several churches, Warrnambool Hospital, and St Joseph's College, Warrnambool

## **THEMATIC CONTEXT:**

Theme 3: Developing local, regional and national economies

3.5 Developing primary production

3.13 Developing an Australian manufacturing capacity

## **CONDITION:**

The buildings are in fair to good condition and appear to be in working order.

## **INTEGRITY:**

Excellent degree of integrity as an operating brickworks.

## **STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE:**

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What is significant?

The Thompson brothers, George and Joseph, formerly of Ballarat and the new owners of Yallum Park, established the Glenthompson Brickworks in 1900. The clay in the area was already known for its suitability for brick making. The business prospered and consolidated with the increasing demand for the red bricks that it could produce using traditional manual methods. With the decline of that demand, the Thompson family sold the business to Donald Forbes, a local pastoralist and Reg Williams, a local master builder in 1947. They made immediate improvements to the plant and, in 1949, sold out to Glenthompson Brickworks Pty Ltd, with Forbes remaining as Managing Director. The company prospered with the post World War Two boom. Again, it invested in substantial plant and equipment resulting in a production of 18,000 bricks a day. Forbes died in 1953, and his successor, Frank Borbiro began to explore alternative fuels for firing the kilns. In 1956 the Brickworks became the first in Victoria to make the transition to oil firing. Borbiro, a Hungarian refugee, served on the Shire of Mount Rouse Council, the Portland District Development Committee, Glenelg's regional planning authority and Willaura Hospital Board. Borbiro was awarded an MBE for community service in 1979. Countless buildings have been constructed throughout the region using Glenthompson bricks, including many of great architectural significance. Angora Banner Pty Ltd purchased the Brickworks in 1988 and is the current owner. The Brickworks, the most important supplier of bricks in the Western District outside Ballarat, is of particular interest because of its traditional method of firing in single kilns rather than the Hoffman process of continuous firing in circular kilns used in Melbourne. The Brickworks are in full working order and retain an excellent degree of integrity.

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How is it significant?

The Glenthompson Brickworks are of historical, scientific and architectural significance to the Southern Grampians Shire and the township of Glenthompson.

Why is it significant?

The Glenthompson Brickworks are of historical significance to the township of Glenthompson as a representation of a new industry, which started in 1901, which became one of the major employers in the town. The Glenthompson Brickworks are also historically important as one of the most substantial industrial complexes in the study area and for their regional market share. It is of technical significance for replacing the laborious and strictly limited production of bricks in other towns and on major properties, but still using strictly traditional, although much improved methods. It is of architectural significance for its long-term connection with the construction industry generally and especially through the master builder, Reg Williams and his connections including the architects, Seabrook and Fildes.

## COMPARISON:

Behnke's Stonemason's Yard, Martin Street, Penhurst

**ASSESSED BY:** tfh

**ASSESSMENT DATE:**

25-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
Elsie Clabburn, Iris Field, Betty Gordon & Kathleen Dickie	Dunkeld and District, A Short History	1989	28-29
Glenthompson Historical Society	Newspaper clippings file		various
Hope Henry	Glenthompson History	1954	1-3
Shire of Mount Rouse	Shire of Mount Rouse Centenary	1964	