

# HERITAGE PLACE

**NAME OF PLACE:** SYLVAN GROVE

**ADDRESS/LOCATION OF PLACE:** Mibus Lane CROXTON EAST

**STUDY NUMBER:** 455

**HERITAGE OVERLAY NUMBER:**

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**PRECINCT:** outside

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA:** Southern Grampians Shire

**ALLOTMENT:** 8      **SECTION:** C      **PARISH:** PARISH OF LINLITHGOW

**ACCESS DESCRIPTION:**

CFA 474 B18; VicRoads 73 E6; located on the north side of Mibus Lane between Lake Road and Petschel's Lane about 2.5kms south of Lake Linlithgow.

**SIGNIFICANCE RATING:** Local



Sylvan Grove, Croxton East

**Image Date:** 8/03/02

**EXTENT OF LISTING:**

To the extent of: 1.A) All the exterior of the main house, the forge, the barn, the later outbuildings, and the woolshed. The pressed metal ceilings in the front rooms of the original stone cottage. All of the garden and all of the land within a 50m radius of any edge of the house.

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## **PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION:**

The Sylvan Grove Homestead complex includes the second house, the blacksmith's shop, the barn and, at some distance beside the entrance drive, the slab woolshed.

The second house is a symmetrical single-storey bluestone building in a reduced version of the Italianate style. It is thoroughly conventional for its time and place. Originally it had a timber post supported verandah trimmed with cast iron brackets and fringe and with a concave roof. This was replaced about the turn of the century, when heavier turned posts were introduced and the profile of the roof became convex. The cast iron appears to have been recycled. Many other changes occurred about the same time including, the re-glazing of the front door with leadlight, the introduction of pressed metal ceilings in the principal rooms, and, if not before, the conversion of the façade's twelve paned double hung sash windows into single panes. Stylistically, these changes appear to be linked to the second marriage of Ernst Huf, rather than the first. The painted decoration of the pressed metal ceilings may be original. The house has been extended at the rear, the date being uncertain. Side windows with four-paned double hung sash windows suggest the later 1870s for some of the structure. There appears to have been a separate bluestone kitchen wing since linked to the house with a breezeway. This has two chimneys, the bases of which are bluestone but the shafts of which are brick. One chimney is associated with a baker's oven. The house has been modernised and further altered at the rear. The house is set within a substantial mature garden. It retains a high degree of integrity to the 1904 period and is in excellent condition.

At the rear of the house there is a blacksmith's shop with the original forge surviving although the bellows were removed before 1980. It is a simple vernacular stone structure which may pre-date the present house. The open front has been enclosed with weatherboard. The building was converted into accommodation for the prisoners of war who worked at Sylvan Grove. It has since been converted into a billiard room and is in good condition. Also at the rear is the reconstructed Herrnhut church, built as a stable but now used as a barn. The structure is little altered and is in fair condition.

Two small weatherboard buildings, immediately behind the house and dating from the 1940s, appear to have been used as a dairy and separator room. One section is paved with sandstone, probably from the Grampians. They are not altered and are in fair condition. A corrugated iron sleep-out, possibly built to house prisoners of war, if not before to accommodate children survives in good condition and is little altered.

The slab woolshed is a relatively small building under a hipped roof, extended with skillions on three sides. The roof is corrugated iron and appears always to have been so. The walls have been clad with corrugated iron. Internally, much survives of the original vernacular construction including evidence of the use of timber pegs instead of iron bolts and nails, a rare example at such a relatively late date. The woolshed retains a high degree of integrity and is in good condition.

## **HISTORY:**

Johann Huf Junior (1843-1877) and his wife Luise Pauline Huf (1848-1928), nee Uebergang were born in Prussia in 1843 and 1848 (Huf, 398). Having migrated separately as children to South Australia and then Victoria with their parents, they married at Hochkirch in 1866 (ibid.). They had six children: Wilhelm August (1867-1934), Ernst Ludwig (1869-1959), Paul Ludwig (1871, who died as an infant), Johanna (1872-1963), Marie (1875-1955), and Bertha Johanna (1877-1963) (ibid.). Johann Huf senior and his wife Anna Christina, nee Greuning, established a farm immediately east of Hamilton on land which is now part of the Hamilton Golf Course (Huf, 360). This was on land purchased in his own name from the Crown and from others. "On these blocks of land Johann and his sons worked for the next few years, making enough money

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to enable them to purchase land in the Parish of Linlithgow in the early 1860s" (Huf, 361).

A "J. Huf" purchased allotments 8 and 9 of section C of the Parish of Linlithgow in September 1863, comprising about 86 and 68 acres respectively. "It is unclear whether this was Johann Junior or his father, but it is known that it was on this Allotment that a home was established, probably of wattle and daub, or slab construction. This is where Johann Jnr. lived and farmed" Huf, 399). That it was the father seems more likely because his sons Friedrich Peter Huf and Johann Huf Junior, as individuals, purchased one allotment of 83 acres and five allotments totalling 310 acres respectively. "F. P. Huf, etc." purchased a further three allotments totalling 154 acres.

The first dwelling may have been a wattle and daub cottage, possibly built in the vernacular form used by Lutheran settlers in the area in the 1850s, but nothing remains. The exact date of construction of the existing bluestone house is not known but from its scale, form, materials and detailing, it appears to date from the late 1860s or, more likely, the early 1870s. No architect or builder has been associated with the design and construction of the house. It was called "Sylvan Grove" by Ernst Ludwig who lived there as an adult when it was subsequently extended and modified. "In the late 1860's, a woolshed was also built, constructed from large adzed timber beams held together with wooden pegs. This woolshed, which is still being used, is believed to be the oldest examples of this early type of shed construction still existing in the district" (Huf, 399)

By 1870, Johann Huf Junior was rated as the owner of 265 acres of land at Linlithgow and as the occupant of 117 acres of Crown land (SMRB, 1870, No. 184). No buildings are mentioned in the rate books. The next year, the freehold land increased to 382 acres, suggesting that he had purchased the land he was leasing (SMRB, 1871, No. 341). In 1872, the net annual valuation fell from eighty pounds to 67 pounds (SMRB, 1872, No. 380). In the mid-1870s, both Johann Senior and Junior took the opportunity of purchasing land from relatives who were migrating again, this time to the Wimmera where land was newly opened for selection. Johann Junior was able to extend and rationalize his farm until, by 1876, he owned a total of 700 acres (Huf, 402).

Then, late in 1876, he became infected by the parasite, Hydatids or tape worm which produced a cyst on his lung. Johann Huf Junior died on 2 June 1877 at Sylvan Grove, aged thirty-three, and six weeks before the birth of his daughter, Bertha Johanna (Huf, 403; VPI, Reg. No. ). In his will, he left the homestead block to his wife, Luise Pauline "during her life" and, until their sons Wilhelm and Ernst who were still schoolboys reached the age of twenty-four, all the other land he had so recently acquired (Huf, 403). His wife managed the property with the help of her brother, Carl Uebergang and possibly Johann Huf Senior.

She must have prospered because, in the 1880s, "she began to acquire more land" (Huf, 404). Pauline's most interesting purchase was 'the Church Paddock', section IX (9) of the Parish of Boram Boram which had been purchased from the Crown by Friedrich Krumnow (1811-1880) and on which the church had been built by the Herrnhut religious community, a utopian commune. Pauline purchased it from her brother, J. Traugott Rentsch who obtained it when the commune collapsed after Krumnow's death. "In 1925, Pauline's son Ernst dismantled the former Church building, and erected it [at Sylvan Grove], where it was used as a stable, and was later converted into a barn" (Huf, 405). Other building materials went to Batesworth, where Pauline's daughter Johanna lived with her husband, Hohann Rentsch.

Sylvan Grove was later owned by Ernst Huf. With his bride, Marie Sophie Hotker whom he married in 1897, he moved into a new weatherboard cottage built adjacent to the main house at Sylvan Grove. When his wife died after giving birth to their daughter Marie, Ernst moved back into the blustone house (Huf, 406). Ernst married a second time to Pauline Rentsch in 1904 with whom he had five surviving sons and

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they later adopted a daughter born in South Australia (Huf, 429). Ernst Huf was a very hardworking and successful farmer, mainly sheep grazing and agriculture. He earned the nickname 'Tiger' from his strength and endurance and could turn his hand to a range of specialist tasks, including forging horseshoes and, presumably, other iron implements. He and his wife were devout members of the Tabor Lutheran congregation, for which Ernst acted as trustee and treasurer including the period when the new church was built in 1912. He supported the Lutheran Church financially. He and his wife retired to Hamilton in 1938 but returned to Sylvan Grove for their Golden Wedding celebrations in 1954 (Huf, 430). Ernst died in 1959 and Pauline died in 1962. Both were buried at the Bethlehem Church cemetery at Tabor.

Ernst and Pauline Huf's retirement appears to have been triggered by the marriage of their youngest son, Percy to Clementine Blanchard in 1938 (Huf, 443). They took over the farm and raised their eight children as the third generation at Sylvan Grove. It continued as a mixed farm, with sheep, cattle and cropping. Milk production became important from both cows and goats and the new dairy and separation room at the rear of the house probably date from this period. During the Second World War, they grew carrots and flax. Importantly, Italian prisoners of war lived and worked at Sylvan Grove, accommodated in the converted blacksmith's forge and in a new 'ripple iron' sleep-out (Sinclair, pers. comm.). A concrete gatepost survives with the initials and serial number of one of the prisoners and the date it was made. Some of the Italians continued to work at Sylvan Grove after the war. The timber cottage, built in 1897 for Ernst and his first wife was removed from the property after the Second World War (Sinclair, pers. comm.). Percy's ill health forced the sale of Sylvan Grove in 1976 to people called Burns who in turn sold the property to Robert and Jillian Sinclair in 1980 who continue to own the property.

## **THEMATIC CONTEXT:**

Theme 2 Peopling Australia

2.4 Migrating

2.4.3 Migrating to seek opportunity

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~~

3.16 Struggling with remoteness, hardship and failure

Theme 5: Working

5.2 Organising workers and work places

5.8 Working on the land

Theme 7 Governing

7.6.5 Incarcerating people.

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 homestead is in excellent condition. The outbuildings and the woolshed are in good condition except for the dairy and separator room which are in fair condition.

## **INTEGRITY:**

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High degree of integrity overall

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE:

What is significant?

Sylvan Grove Homestead complex, located in Mibus Lane about 2.5kms south of Lake Linlithgow, dates from the early 1860s when the land was selected by the Huf family. The first occupants were Johann Huf Junior, his wife Pauline and their five surviving children. It began as a small mixed farm, typical of the second generation of German Lutheran settlers in the area east of Hamilton. The first structures to be built were a vernacular cottage, a slab woolshed and a bluestone forge. The principle rooms have fine pressed metal ceilings. Johann prospered and purchased surrounding land to create a large farm of some 700 acres, including land bought from relatives who migrated further north into the Wimmera in the 1870s. The cottage was soon replaced by a substantial but thoroughly conventional bluestone house, probably in the early 1870s. Then Johann died from Hydatids at the age of thirty-three in 1877. His widow, Luise Pauline Huf, nee Uebergang managed the property with continuing success until her second son, Ernst took over about the turn of the century. He called the property Sylvan Grove. He moved into a new timber cottage when he married, for the first time in 1897, although his wife died soon afterwards from childbirth. He married again in 1904 and moved back into Sylvan Grove which seems to have triggered substantial renovations to the second house. In 1925 he rebuilt the Herrnhut church, which Pauline Huf had purchased in 1898, at Sylvan Grove to be used as a stable and then as a barn. Ernst and Pauline Huf, nee Rentsch lived at Sylvan Grove until 1938 when their son Percy took over and they retired to Hamilton. During the Second World War, Italian prisoners of war lived and worked at Sylvan Grove as part of the war effort. The property passed from the Huf family in 1976 and it has been owned by the Sinclair family since 1976. The complex remains in excellent condition overall and retains a high degree of integrity.

How is it significant?

Sylvan Grove is of historical and architectural significance to the community of Tabor and to the Southern Grampians Shire.

Why is it significant?

Sylvan Grove homestead complex is of historical significance for its direct connections with three generations of the important Huf family and its branches, and particularly with Johann Huf Junior, his son Ernst, his grandson Percy and their wives and children. Specifically, it demonstrates the steady success of the second, third and fourth generations of German Lutheran migrants in the area to the south and east of Hamilton in the face of great personal difficulties. The complex is of architectural significance as a group of buildings and in particular for the sobriety of both phases of the second homestead's development, the surviving blacksmith's shop and forge, the reconstruction of the Herrnhut church as a barn, the later outbuildings and the slab woolshed. The mature garden setting of the homestead enhances the overall significance.

## COMPARISON:

260 Burger Homestead Complex (Acacia), Springfield Lane, Penshurst-Macarthur Road, Penshurst  
330 Stirling Homestead and Sheep Dairy, Fisher's Lane, Glenthompson  
389 Batesworth Homestead Complex, Batesworth Lane, Penshurst  
441 Mirtschin Homestead Complex, Springfield Lane of Penshurst-Macarthur Road, Penshurst  
450 Beekeeper's Farm (Anderson's), off Anderson's Road, Glenisla

ASSESSED BY: TFH & MGT

ASSESSMENT DATE:

8/03/2002

EXISTING LISTINGS:

HERITAGE STUDY RECOMMENDATIONS:

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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<br>Elizabeth Huf, ed. | Parish of Linlithgow, County of Villiers<br>Huf, 150 years in Australia 1847-1997 | 1904 |         |
| Jillian Louise Sinclair<br>Shire of Mount Rouse      | personal communication, 22/3/04<br>Rate Books                                     | 1997 | various |
|  |   | 2004 |         |
|  |   | 1870 |         |
|  |   | & 2  |         |