

HERITAGE PLACE

NAME OF PLACE: MOUNT ROUSE ABORIGINAL PROTECTORATE (FORMER)

ADDRESS/LOCATION OF PLACE: Martin Street Cox Street PENSURST

STUDY NUMBER: 456

HERITAGE OVERLAY NUMBER:

OTHER NAME/S OF PLACE: KOLOR

PRECINCT: Penshurst

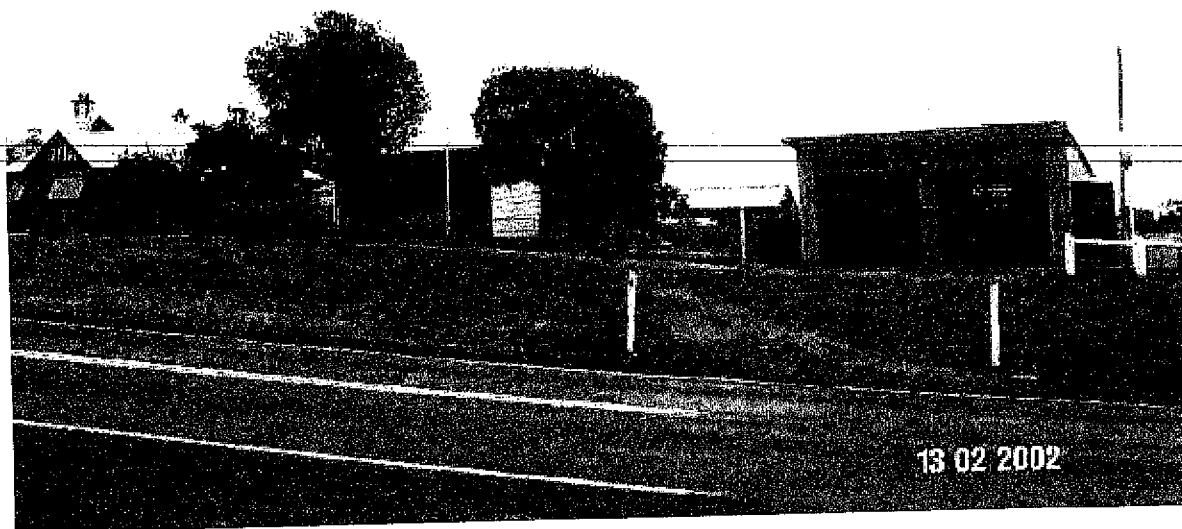
LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA: Southern Grampians Shire

ALLOTMENT: 2 **SECTION:** 18 **PARISH:** PARISH OF BORAMBORAM

ACCESS DESCRIPTION:

CFA 475J C11; VicRoads 233 O11; located on the south-west corner of Martin and Cox Streets beside the Post Office in the centre of the township.

SIGNIFICANCE RATING: State



Protectorate Site (Former), Martin Street, Penshurst

Image Date: 13/02/02

EXTENT OF LISTING:

To the extent of: 1. All the land but excluding the police station and the ambulance station structures.

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PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION:

The Mount Rouse Aboriginal Protectorate was centred on what is now the township of Penshurst and historic maps indicate several buildings on what became allotment 2 of section 18. These buildings almost certainly predate the survey and layout of the town. There are later documentary references to them, particularly when they were proposed for police accommodation, which indicates that they were crude structures and in poor condition. They existed until at least the mid-1860s because they were rated as used by various individuals who paid rent to the Crown. No image of them has been discovered. The site is now occupied by a Federation period red brick police residence, relocated timber stables, a small prefabricated police station erected in the 1990s and a cream brick ambulance station built in the 1960s. The new police station is set on stumps and the ambulance station is built on a raft concrete slab which have done little to disturb the ground. No archaeological works have occurred on the site.

HISTORY:

The land on which the present Penshurst police residence, police station and ambulance station stand has a particular significance for its earlier use as the centre of the Mount Rouse Aboriginal Protectorate. This was established early in 1842 and operated until about 1850 although not abandoned formally until 1858 (Critchett, 143). The protectorate system began in the Port Phillip District in 1838 and George Augustus Robinson, who had fulfilled similar duties in Van Diemen's Land and declined the role in South Australia, was appointed Chief Protector (Kiddle, 38; Plomley, in Pike, 387; Critchett, 142-3). With his responsibilities across the whole of the Port Phillip District, he did not reside at any particular protectorate but travelled extensively throughout it (Critchett, 5 & 7, 16-17). His second-in-command was Charles Wightman Sievwright, the 'hated protector' who did live at the Mount Rouse site and was responsible for the immediate running of the Protectorate (Arkley, var.). There was little or no concern for the Aboriginal sub-division of the country into tribal groups and their inability to travel over 'foreign' or enemy country. Rather, the mingling of different tribes and clans was seen by Robinson and Sievwright as "good in itself" (Critchett, 143). Other protectorates were established at Franklinford, Narre Warren, Goulbourn and Birregurra.

The death of an overseer, Patrick Codd in May 1840 triggered the establishment of the Protectorate at Mount Rouse although several more incidents occurred which reinforced the need for a solution to the deteriorating situation (Garden, 17-21). ~~Codd's body is believed to have been buried in a grave, now built over, about 250m north-west of the spring.~~ It must be remembered, firstly, that both the permanent spring and Mount Rouse itself, which they called "Kolor", would have been a traditional meeting place deeply significant to the Aborigines. Robinson recommended Mount Rouse to the government as the site for this very reason (Garden, 19). Secondly, there was both public and private concern in Britain about the present condition and future prospects of indigenous people. A Select Committee of the House of Commons was established in 1835 to inquire into the condition of indigenous people throughout the Empire (Woolmington, 106). It recommended the establishment of a Board of Protection in NSW to oversee individual officers, known as protectors "who would be given the responsibility of reporting and preventing abuses against Aborigines" (see Woolmington, 106-9). Superintendent Charles La Trobe travelled in the Western District in May 1841, at the same time as Robinson, and this first hand experience seems to have consolidated his thoughts. An area of one hundred square miles, more or less centred on Mount Rouse and the spring, is delineated on Ham's Map of Australia Felix published from the early 1840s. It is noted in the schedule, comprising mostly squatting runs but also several inns, as "No. 145 Aboriginal Establishment". It is the only one so listed in the 1847 edition.

There was great animosity by the majority of the squatters to the Protectorate and how it came to be (Critchett, 151). Some believed that it made matters worse, especially when the Aborigines were told by Sievwright "that Europeans who threatened or shot them would be punished, thus encouraging them to take a stand against Europeans and no longer be intimidated" (Critchett, 102). Generally, the Protectorate's establishment coincided with the serious depression in the early 1840s caused by the fall in wool prices and the consequent collapse in the capital value of squatting runs. Specifically, most squatters considered the treatment of the

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original holder of the Mount Rouse run, John Cox, to have been shameful or at least unfair.

Some historians have considered Sievwright, a squatter in his own right, to have been unhappy, unpopular and unsuccessful in his role (B&K, 139). Metcalf and Huf believe that Sievwright "was a man who seems to have been unable or unwilling to do much good" (Metcalf and Huf, 26). But Garden believes that "Despite his unpromising start, Sievwright appears to have undertaken his duties at Mount Rouse conscientiously" (Garden, 19). Dr John Watton replaced him as Medical Officer (Critchett, 1990, 146ff). Watton, something of a squatter himself although not listed by Billis and Kenyon, participated more broadly in the general community. His daughter Anna married Acheson French, one of the Hamilton Police Magistrates, his son Edmund married Adelaide, one of the daughters of the other Hamilton Police Magistrate, Cuthbert Fetherstonhaugh, and his daughter Harriet married James Moore, squatter. One of the streets of the township that succeeded the Protectorate was named after Watton.

A feature plan prepared by the Surveyor, Robert Hoddle indicates a small cluster of buildings towards the northern end of what, in 1858, became the Police Reserve of the new township. Neither their origin nor use is certain. It may be that these were the huts of John Cox's Mount Rouse station, located in a practical position above permanent water at the intersection of routes from north to south and east to west (Huf, 26). One may have been used as a school. In 1841, Sievwright was calling for a teacher because there were over one hundred children at the Protectorate (Critchett, 38). There was never a church or chapel on the site and the Protectorate should be seen as different from the Aboriginal Missions established by the government and religious denominations later in the century. By 1850, the Argus newspaper reported "the Government Surveyor is busy laying out the Mount Rouse Reserve, into allotments suitable for farming purposes. A Township is to be in the centre" (Argus, 31/08/1850). By 1851, it was formally announced that the Protectorate had failed, and Mount Rouse run grazing rights were open to tender.

The role of immediate benefactor to local Aborigines, other than those squatters such as the well-known James Dawson, John McMahon Allan and even Thomas Brown (or Rolf Boldrewood), who had always been supportive, then fell to an unusual quarter. Not far from Penshurst the charismatic German Lutheran preacher, Friedrich Krummnow was establishing the utopian commune Herrnhut just as the Protectorate was failing. He had already tried missionary work unsuccessfully with Aborigines on the Murray (Metcalf & Huf, 16). He would accept those Aborigines, along with "travellers, wayfarers and the destitute", into the community temporarily who would work for their sustenance and, it was hoped, participate in worship (Metcalf & Huf, 16, 23-7). Many missions with the deliberate purpose of evangelising were established from the 1860s. The most important for Aborigines in the area were at Lake Condah and Framlingham and former members of the Herrnhut community continued their charity towards Aborigines after moving to Myamyn near Lake Condah (Metcalf & Huf, 54).

It may be that the structures associated with the Mount Rouse Protectorate survived and continued to be used, at least in the short term. At the end of May 1852, David Hutton who was establishing his property, Cheviot Hills "asked permission to use the Government huts at Mount Rouse for a short time until he had new huts and undertook to be responsible for all Government property that may be there" (Shire of Mount Rouse, 1964). When the community called for permanent police protection in 1860, the officer in charge of the Belfast police district considered the proposed accommodation to be "in a most dilapidated condition and certainly not fit for any human being to live in, in fact, the place is going rotten and tumbling down". The huts appear to have been used, but not necessarily occupied, by private individuals and rated by the Shire as late as the 1860s but they do not appear in the early 1870s ratebooks.

The reserved function for the land, which had been the site of the Protectorate, was inevitable as Penshurst prospered. The community petitioned for a permanent policeman again in 1861, claiming that patrons from the three licensed premises, one more than in the previous year, were causing trouble. The first constable was Samuel Watson, appointed in late 1861. He was given permission to rent a stone cottage and stables. This may

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have been allotments 18, 20 and part of allotment 1 of section 54 of the township of Peshurst, at the north-east corner of Chesswas and French Streets. In 1876, the police were operating from a timber and stone house with stables and a single cell on the eastern side of Scales Street, between Cobb and Watton Streets. This was allotments 9 and 10 of section 30, which was later purchased from the Crown by G T. Ewing in 1915.

In 1908 the Peshurst Progress Association agitated for the police to be moved from Scales Street to the more central Police Reserve. The police had known nothing about the infamous hold-up of the Bank of Victoria, located opposite the Reserve, in the 1870s when it happened. The police did move back to the Police Reserve in 1914, the date of construction of the present house. The timber stables and the single cell were relocated from Scales Street to the Martin Street site.

The Police Reserve was further subdivided and developed. Its present functions continue its role as the focus for the community and public purposes. The ambulance station was built in the 1960s. The portable police station was built in the 1980s.

THEMATIC CONTEXT:

Theme 2: Peopling Australia

2.1 Living as Australia's earliest inhabitants

2.6 Fighting for land

2.6.2 Displacing Indigenous people

Theme 3: Developing local, regional and national economies

3.10 Integrating people into the cash economy

3.10.1 Assisting Indigenous people into the cash economy

Theme 5: Working

5.7 Surviving as Indigenous people in a white-dominated economy

Theme 7: Governing

7.6 Administering Australia

7.6.4 Dispensing justice

7.6.6 Providing services and welfare

7.6.7 Enforcing discriminatory legislation

7.6.8 Administering Indigenous Affairs

CONDITION:

Said to have a very high degree of archaeological potential.

INTEGRITY:

no structures survive

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE:

What is significant?

Charles La Trobe, Superintendent of the Port Phillip District established the Mount Rouse Aboriginal Protectorate in early 1842 at what would become the township of Peshurst. On behalf of Governor Gipps, he was responding to external pressure from Britain, both public and private, to deal humanely with the indigenous people and internal pressure from local squatters to deal with 'outrages' by both sides. It was deliberately sited in the vicinity of Mount Rouse, or Kolor and a permanent spring to the north-west, which was a traditional meeting place for Aborigines. There were other culturally insensitive aspects that eventually undermined the Protectorate's success. The aim was to stop the sometimes fatal hostility between Aborigines and Europeans, to educate Aboriginal children and to care for the increasingly ailing population. The establishment appears to

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have comprised little more than a cluster of crude huts on the slight rise above the spring. Nominally under the control of the Chief Protector, George Augustus Robinson, local responsibility fell to his deputy, Charles Wightman Sievwright who had investigated the death of the overseer, Patrick Codd in 1840 which had triggered La Trobe's concern. While frustrated by his circumstances, limited by his resources and having to endure the antagonism of most of the squatters, Sievwright appears to have worked conscientiously. Dr John Watton replaced him as Medical Officer. More popular with the local squatters, he and his family integrated themselves with the squattoocracy through their connections and by marriage. The Protectorate had failed by the early 1850s. Certain benevolent individuals, the local Herrnhut community and the Aboriginal Missions at Lake Condah and Framlingham then cared for the surviving Aborigines. The government threw open the land for squatting again and surveyed the township of Peshurst. The town's plan was centred on the cluster of huts and that land became the Police Reserve. A plan drawn by the Surveyor, Robert Hoddle dated 1858 shows the huts and Codd's grave. The huts survived, at least until the 1860s, when it was proposed to use them as a police station and residence. This was rejected because of their intolerable condition and it was not until the early twentieth century that the present police residence was built including a small police station. The Peshurst Telegraph Office was built in 1863 and the new Post Office, Post Master's Residence and Court House were built in 1877. The area where the huts had been remained relatively untouched until the construction of the ambulance building and prefabricated police station after 1960. While no above ground fabric survives, the site retains a very high archaeological potential.

How is it significant?

The Mount Rouse Aboriginal Protectorate is of historical, social and archaeological significance the township of Peshurst, the Southern Grampians Shire and the state of Victoria.

Why is it significant?

The Mount Rouse Aboriginal Protectorate is of historical significance as a protectorate established as a result of the British government's response to a Select Committee of the House of Commons which recommended a Board of Protection in NSW and because of the death of Patrick Codd. It has specific historical significance for its direct connections with Superintendent La Trobe, the Chief Protector, George Augustus Robinson, who had acted similarly in Van Diemen's Land, his deputy, Charles Wightman Sievwright, and Dr David Watton, the later Medical Officer. This official connection continues through the planning and development of Peshurst from 1851 until today. It has further historical significance for its general associations with the squattoocracy, especially the displaced squatter John Cox. The Protectorate has social significance as a demonstration of humane principles in the treatment of indigenous peoples, as a response to the hostility between two sides of an imbalanced conflict, and, ultimately, for its failure to resolve the cultural gap between Aborigines and Europeans. The site has archaeological significance for its potential to elucidate the relationship between Aborigines and Europeans from the early 1840s until the early 1850s.

COMPARISON:

239 Herrnhut Ruins, Day's Lane, Peshurst
Franklinford Aboriginal Protectorate, Franklinford
Narre Warren Aboriginal Protectorate, Dandenong
Goulburn (North-Eastern) Aboriginal Protectorate, Murchison
Aboriginal Protectorate, Birregurra
Coranderrk Aboriginal Mission, Healesville
Lake Tyers Aboriginal Mission, Lake Tyers
Lake Condah Aboriginal Mission, Lake Condah
Framlingham Aboriginal Mission, Framlingham
Ramahyuck Aboriginal Mission, Sale
Lake Boga Moravian Mission, Lake Boga
Ebenezer Lutheran Mission, Antwerp

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ASSESSED BY: tfh

ASSESSMENT DATE:

14-Apr-03

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
Garden, Don	Hamilton, A Western District History	1984	17, 18- 19, 21, 22, 26
J. Woolmington	Aborigines in Colonial Society: 1780-1850, from 'noble savage' to 'rural pest'	1988	106-9
Jan Critchett	Untold Stories, memories and lives of Victorian Kooris	1998	
Jan Critchett	A Distant Field of Murder	1990	var.
Kiddle, Margaret	Men of Yesterday	1961	38
Lindsay Arkley	The Hated Protector, the story of Charles Wightman Sievwright	2000	var.
N J B Plomley, ed.	Friendly Mission, the Tasmanian journals and papers of George Augustus Robinson, 1829-1834	1966	var.
N. J. B. Plomley, in Douglas Pike	Australian Dictionary of Biography, Vol 2	1979	385-7
William J Metcalf and Elizabeth Huf	Hernhut, australia's First Utopian Commune	2002	var.