HERRNHUT RUINS

23323 Church Ruins
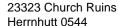Herrnhutt 0544

23323 Church Ruins
Herrnhutt 0546

Location

Day's Lane and Tobin's Lane PENSHURST, Southern Grampians Shire

Municipality

SOUTHERN GRAMPIANS SHIRE

Level of significance

Stage 2 study complete

Heritage Listing

Southern Grampians Shire

Statement of Significance

Last updated on - December 14, 2003

What is significant?
Herrnhut was a utopian commune, initially of from 12 to 20 religious dissenters who had migrated from Germany via South Australia and Geelong. It is located about 5.0 kms north-west of Penshurst. It was founded in 1852 by Johann Friedrich Krummnow (1811-1880) loosely following the religious principles of the Moravians, although not officially linked with that denomination, and mixed with other values including mysticism and pietism. The name is derived from Herrn Hut, or the Lord's Watch. There were from 12 to 20 initial members. Krummnow's passion and charisma, despite his unusual even ugly appearance, seems to have been a major factor in the early success of the commune. Pastor C W Schurmann of Tabor and Hochkirk, now Tarrington opposed him. Over the years some communards defected to the larger community. The commune was intended to be self-sufficient with all excess produce sold for its benefit. It appears that, over the years, the commune was very successful in this practical way although markets for its wool, wheat and other produce were limited and distant. One way in which the communards put their religious principles to practical purpose was to support other minorities. These included

the local Aborigines, women in distress and homeless or destitute men. People were taken in, housed and fed but they were required to work and pray together with the communards. Various buildings were constructed over the years. These included a house for Krummnow, a communal kitchen and dining room, a dormitory, all of which were located on allotment A of section X (ten) of the parish of Boramboram, and on section IX (nine) a church. There was a cemetery located immediately behind the church. By the 1870s, Herrnhut was increasingly in debt and Krummnow was loosing his absolute hold over the commune. The crisis was averted when it absorbed the members of a similar utopian commune established by Maria Heller at Pine Hills in northern Victoria. Heller eventually defected to the nearby community of Tabor and joined the congregation of Pastor Schurmann. By the late 1870s, Herrnhut was in grave financial difficulty and Krummnow's failure to make a suitable rearrangement of its ownership before he died became an acute problem. A young defector, Louisa Roehr who had married a much older non-German/Lutheran member of the commune, Fred Elmore eventually took command. By April 1889 the communards had agreed to the dissolution of the commune. The Elmores continued to live there by a special arrangement. In 1897 the land was subdivided into smaller farms and sold. The buildings slowly fell into disrepair. The church was demolished and rebuilt as a barn at Sylvan Grove and rare early corrugated iron was recycled at Batesworth, both properties in the district. All that remains at Herrnhut are the scattered ruins of Krummnow's house, the dining room, vestiges of the dormitory and the cemetery. There are two massive Lombardy Poplars, Populus nigra, immediately adjacent to Krummnow's house and Radiata Pines marking the cemetery. The whole property, including both original allotments, has archaeological potential.

How is it significant?
Herrnhut is of historical, social and architectural significance to the State of Victoria and to the Southern Grampians shire.

Why is it significant?
Herrnhut is of historical significance as the first example of a utopian community in Australia with particular links to German immigration as the result of religious persecution. It is of social significance for its association with German immigration, the welfare of oppressed members of the broader community including Aborigines, women and destitute men. It is of architectural significance as a group of buildings displaying a communal way of life using simple technology, local materials and vernacular forms and details.

Heritage Study/Consultant	Southern Grampians - Southern Grampians Shire Heritage Study, Timothy Hubbard P/L, Annabel Neylon, 2002;
Construction dates	1853,
Heritage Act Categories	Registered place,
Hermes Number	23323
Property Number	

Physical Conditions

High degree of archaeological potential

Physical Description 1

The major surviving fabric includes a house of several rooms for Krummnow, which exhibits some unusual features, such as an internal well. It is now in ruins. Two enormous Lombardy Poplars beside the remaining walls now make it a landmark. In another building about 100m away there was a communal kitchen with a bakery and dining room, much of which survives. It incorporated a substantial baker's oven. It is in ruins. A large three-roomed dormitory complex was built some distance from the other buildings. It is now almost completed gone. All the buildings were plainly detailed, built of bluestone and single storey. The buildings show no particularly German forms of construction or planning in the surviving fabric. One of the more interesting characteristics is the

changing pattern of masonry from one structure to the next and within each structure. They, and other works, were located on the east side of Day's Lane. The most important building, in a sense, was the commune's church. This was built on the west side of Day's Lane and slightly north of the others. It too was very plain, built of bluestone and single storey. The entrance faced east. The double doors are said to have been made from local Blackwood, Acacia melanoxylon, and had hand-forged iron lettering in the rectangular fanlight. There appears to have been a fireplace on the south wall. The building was demolished and rebuilt as a barn on a nearby property. There was a cemetery located behind the church. The only gravestone is a loose, unusually shaped stone incised with a cross. There are senescent Radiata Pines in the cemetery, possibly planted as a hedge.

The other works included: a dairy complex to the south-east of Krummnow's house, buildings to the north of the communal kitchen, buildings to the east of the communal kitchen, various dams and wells, a mill, quarries and the east west road through the site and an orchard and vineyard.

Historical Australian Themes

Theme 8 Developing Australia's cultural life
8.6 Worshipping
8.6.1 Worshipping together
8.6.3 Founding Australian religious institutions
8.6.4 Making places for worship
8.12 Living in and around Australian homes
8.14 Living in the country and rural settlements

Usage/Former Usage

abandoned ruins

Integrity

very low integrity for the buildings, works, orchard, vineyard, etc but relatively undisturbed as an archaeological.

Physical Description 2

Friedrich Johann Krummnow, religious leader and founder of the commune
Maria Heller, prophet and one-time member of commune
Louisa and Fred Elmore, members and later leaders of the commune

Physical Description 3

all of Section IX, Part A of Section X, and all of Section XVI of the Parish of Borum Borum

This place/object may be included in the Victorian Heritage Register pursuant to the Heritage Act 2017. Check the Victorian Heritage Database, selecting 'Heritage Victoria' as the place source.

For further details about Heritage Overlay places, contact the relevant local council or go to Planning Schemes Online http://planningschemes.dpcd.vic.gov.au/