

# HERRNHUT UTOPIAN COMMUNE



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SOHE 2008



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H2107 Herrnhut H2107 Krummnows  
house ruin b April 2006



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house ruin April 2006



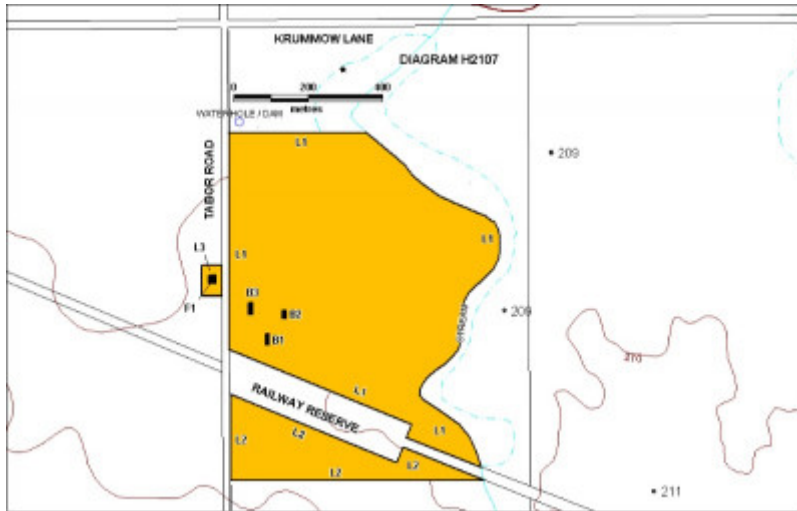
H2107 Herrnhut H2107 general view  
April 2006



H2107 Herrnhut H2107 cemetery April  
2006



H2107 Herrnhut H2107 ridge and  
furrows April 2006



H2107 Herrnhut H2107 extent July 2006

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## Location

KRUMNOW LANE PENSHURST, SOUTHERN GRAMPIANS SHIRE

## Municipality

SOUTHERN GRAMPIANS SHIRE

## Level of significance

Registered

## Victorian Heritage Register (VHR) Number

H2107

## Heritage Overlay Numbers

HO421

## VHR Registration

October 12, 2006

## Heritage Listing

Victorian Heritage Register

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## Statement of Significance

Last updated on - October 17, 2006

## What is significant?

Herrnhut was a utopian commune, initially of less than 20 religious dissenters who had migrated from Germany via South Australia and Geelong. It is located about 5 kms north-west of Penshurst and was originally located on 1600 acres purchased for one pound per acre. 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, millenarianism and pietism. The name of the commune Herrnhut is the same as the town in Saxony Germany, where the Moravians established a commune for Moravian refugees in the early 18th century.

Krummnow's determination, passion and charismatic leadership, despite his eccentricity, physical deformities and opposition from established local German pastors, seems to have been a major factor in the early success of the commune. Various bluestone buildings were constructed over the years. These included a house for Krummnow, a church, a communal kitchen and dining room, and a dormitory. There was a cemetery located immediately behind the church. Other works included a dairy complex, various dams and wells, a mill, quarries, an orchard and vineyard.

The commune was intended to be self-sufficient with all excess produce sold. Over the years, the commune was very successful although markets for its wool, wheat and other produce were limited and distant. The communards put their religious principles to practical purpose 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.

By the 1870s, Herrnhut was increasingly in debt and Krummnow was losing his absolute hold over the commune. The crisis was averted when it absorbed the 60 members of another utopian commune established by Maria Heller at Pine Hills in northern Victoria. But Heller eventually defected to the nearby community of Tabor and by the late 1870s Herrnhut was in grave financial difficulty. Krummnow's failure to make a suitable rearrangement of its ownership before he died became an acute problem. Nine years after the death of Krummnow the communards agreed to the dissolution of the commune. 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.

The visible remains at Herrnhut consist of 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.

## How is it significant?

Herrnhut Utopian Commune is of historical and archaeological significance to the State of Victoria

## Why is it significant?

Herrnhut Utopian Commune 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 historical 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 archaeological significance for the potential of the site remains to demonstrate a communal way of life using simple technology, local materials and vernacular forms and details, and to reveal the farming practices and broader activities associated with the commune.

## Permit Exemptions

<span class="c1">General Conditions: 1. All exempted alterations are to be planned and carried out in a manner which prevents damage to the fabric of the registered place or object.</span> <span class="c1">General Conditions: 2. Should it become apparent during further inspection or the carrying out of works that original or previously hidden or inaccessible details of the place or object are revealed which relate to the significance of the place or object, then the exemption covering such works shall cease and Heritage Victoria shall be notified as soon as possible. Note: All archaeological places have the potential to contain significant sub-surface artefacts and other remains. In most cases it will be necessary to obtain approval from the Executive Director, Heritage Victoria before the undertaking any works that have a significant sub-surface component.</span> <span

class="c1">General Conditions: 3. If there is a conservation policy and plan endorsed by the Executive Director, all works shall be in accordance with it. Note: The existence of a Conservation Management Plan or a Heritage Action Plan endorsed by the Executive Director, Heritage Victoria provides guidance for the management of the heritage values associated with the site. It may not be necessary to obtain a heritage permit for certain works specified in the management plan.</span> <span class="c1">General Conditions: 4. Nothing in this determination prevents the Executive Director from amending or rescinding all or any of the permit exemptions.</span> <span class="c1">General Conditions: 5. Nothing in this determination exempts owners or their agents from the responsibility to seek relevant planning or building permits from the responsible authorities where applicable.</span> <span class="c1">Regular Site Maintenance : The following site maintenance works are permit exempt under section 66 of the Heritage Act 1995: a) regular site maintenance provided the works do not involve the removal or destruction of any significant above-ground features or sub-surface archaeological artefacts or deposits; b) the maintenance of an item to retain its conditions or operation without the removal of or damage to the existing fabric or the introduction of new materials; c) cleaning including the removal of surface deposits, organic growths, or graffiti by the use of low pressure water and natural detergents and mild brushing and scrubbing; d) repairs, conservation and maintenance to plaques, memorials, roads and paths, fences and gates and drainage and irrigation. e) the replacement of existing services such as cabling, plumbing, wiring and fire services that uses existing routes, conduits or voids, and does not involve damage to or the removal of significant fabric. Note: Surface patina which has developed on the fabric may be an important part of the item's significance and if so needs to be preserved during maintenance and cleaning. Note: Any new materials used for repair must not exacerbate the decay of existing fabric due to chemical incompatibility, obscure existing fabric or limit access to existing fabric for future maintenance. Repair must maximise protection and retention of fabric and include the conservation of existing details or elements.</span> <span class="c1">Fire Suppression Duties : The following fire suppression duties are permit exempt under section 66 of the Heritage Act 1995, a) Fire suppression and fire fighting duties provided the works do not involve the removal or destruction of any significant above-ground features or sub-surface archaeological artefacts or deposits; b) Fire suppression activities such as fuel reduction burns, and fire control line construction, provided all significant historical and archaeological features are appropriately recognised and protected; Note: Fire management authorities should be aware of the location, extent and significance of historical and archaeological places when developing fire suppression and fire fighting strategies. The importance of places listed in the Heritage Register must be considered when strategies for fire suppression and management are being developed.</span> <span class="c1">Weed and Vermin Control : The following weed and vermin control activities are permit exempt under section 66 of the Heritage Act 1995, a) Weed and vermin control activities provided the works do not involve the removal or destruction of any significant above-ground features or sub-surface archaeological artefacts or deposits; Note: Particular care must be taken with weed and vermin control works where such activities may have a detrimental affect on the significant fabric of a place. Such works may include the removal of ivy, moss or lichen from an historic structure or feature, or the removal of burrows from a site that has archaeological values.</span> <span class="c1">Public Safety and Security : The following public safety and security activities are permit exempt under section 66 of the Heritage Act 1995, a) public safety and security activities provided the works do not involve the removal or destruction of any significant above-ground structures or sub-surface archaeological artefacts or deposits; b) the erection of temporary security fencing, scaffolding, hoardings or surveillance systems to prevent unauthorised access or secure public safety which will not adversely affect significant fabric of the place including archaeological features; c) development including emergency stabilisation necessary to secure safety where a site feature has been irreparably damaged or destabilised and represents a safety risk to its users or the public. Note: Urgent or emergency site works are to be undertaken by an appropriately qualified specialist such as a structural engineer, or other heritage professional.</span> <span class="c1">Signage and Site Interpretation : The following Signage and Site Interpretation activities are permit exempt under section 66 of the Heritage Act 1995, a) signage and site interpretation activities provided the works do not involve the removal or destruction of any significant above-ground structures or sub-surface archaeological artefacts or deposits; b) the erection of non-illuminated signage for the purpose of ensuring public safety or to assist in the interpretation of the heritage significance of the place or object and which will not adversely affect significant fabric including landscape or archaeological features of the place or obstruct significant views of and from heritage values or items; c) signage and site interpretation products must be located and be of a suitable size so as not to obscure or damage significant fabric of the place; d) signage and site interpretation products must be able to be later removed without causing damage to the significant fabric of the place; Note: The development of signage and site interpretation products must be consistent in the use of format, text, logos, themes and other display materials. Note: Where possible, the signage and interpretation material should be consistent with other schemes developed on similar or associated sites. It may be necessary to consult with land managers and other stakeholders concerning existing schemes and strategies for signage and site interpretation.</span> <span class="c1">Mineral Exploration : The following Mineral Exploration activities are permit exempt under section 66 of the Heritage Act 1995, a) mineral Exploration activities provided

the works do not involve the removal or destruction of any significant above-ground features or sub-surface archaeological artefacts or deposits; b) preliminary non-intrusive exploration, including geological mapping, geophysical surveys, and geochemical sampling and access to shafts and adits; c) advanced forms of exploration (drilling), including the location of drill pads and access tracks where this has been the subject of on-site negotiation and agreement with representatives of Heritage Victoria, DSE and Parks Victoria, and where all significant historic site features have been identified and protected as part of an approved work plan.

Minor Works : Note: Any Minor Works that in the opinion of the Executive Director will not adversely affect the heritage significance of the place may be exempt from the permit requirements of the Heritage Act. A person proposing to undertake minor works may submit a proposal to the Executive Director. If the Executive Director is satisfied that the proposed works will not adversely affect the heritage values of the site, the applicant may be exempted from the requirement to obtain a heritage permit. If an applicant is uncertain whether a heritage permit is required, it is recommended that the permits co-ordinator be contacted.

Landscape Permit Exemptions

- \* Management of trees in accordance with Australian Standard; Pruning of Amenity Trees AS 4373.
- \* Vegetation protection and management of the possum and rabbit population.
- \* Removal of plants listed as noxious weeds in the Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994

Construction dates 1852,

Heritage Act Categories Registered place, Registered archaeological place,

Hermes Number 14358

Property Number

## History

Herrnhut was a utopian commune 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. Krummnow had migrated to South Australia in the company of other German religious dissenters in 1839. He assumed the role of teacher, leader if not pastor but without any religious training. He was a disruptive influence in the general Lutheran community in SA and left for Victoria in 1850 where he worked as a tailor. He preached in Melbourne and Geelong, attracting adherents to his communal ideas. The commune could be said to date from the joint signing in early 1852 of the charter written by Krummnow and choosing the name Herrnhut, 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.

Resources and assets were sold and pooled, and land totalling about 1,600 acres was eventually purchased near Peshurst in 1853 at the cost of one pound per acre. The land was registered in Krummnow's name as an individual, a fact which caused great difficulty later. The commune's remaining funds went to the purchase of livestock and equipment and immediate expenses.

Other Germans, including the minorities Wends and Sorbs also acquired land in the vicinity, but relations between these more conventional Lutherans and the communards were not amicable. The other groups were centred on the communities of Tabor and Hochkirk, now Tarrington. Over the years some communards defected to the larger community. Their leader, Pastor C. W. Schurmann was a particular antagonist of Krummnow. There were also difficulties with the local government, the Shire of Mount Rouse based in Peshurst, particularly over the construction of roads.

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. A church was constructed on section IX (nine). There was a cemetery located immediately behind the church.

By the 1870s, Herrnhut was increasingly in debt and Krummnow was losing his absolute hold over the commune. The combination of aging communards, lack of new

members, defections as well as a lack of income meant that its existence was seriously in question. By coincidence, another similar utopian commune had been established by a woman, Maria Heller at Pine Hills in northern Victoria. She was a charismatic prophet and faith healer who induced a strong antagonism from the broader community. Heller's commune was immediately in danger of failing due to her impracticality and Krummnow literally came to its rescue although, it seems, with his own interests in mind. The group of about thirty joined the Herrnhut commune but the change was difficult. Heller eventually defected to the nearby community of Tabor and joined the congregation of Pastor Schurmann.

By the late 1870s, the Herrnhut commune was in grave financial difficulty with mounting debt Krummnow's failure to suitably rearrange ownership details became a contentious issue. He died on 3 October 1880 without the problems being resolved. It was a young defector, Louisa Roehr who had married a much older non-German/Lutheran member of the commune, Fred Elmore, who 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. By 1890, the long awaited railway line passed through Herrnhut but it was too late to revivify the commune.

In 1897 the land was subdivided into smaller farms and sold. The buildings slowly fell into disrepair. The land on which the Church stood was purchased by Pauline Huf, the widow of Johann Huf Junior, in 1897. The church was demolished and rebuilt as a barn at Sylvan Grove, Mibus Lane, Croxton East in 1925 by Ernst Huf. Rare early corrugated iron with a heavy gauge and wide corrugations was recycled at Batesworth Homestead, Batesworth Lane, near Penshurst.

## Plaque Citation

Herrnhut Utopian Commune, (1852-1897) is a rare example of a religious utopian community in Victoria, with links to German immigration. Archaeological investigations have revealed evidence of the communards' living and farming practices.

## Extent of Registration

### NOTICE OF REGISTRATION

As Executive Director for the purpose of the **Heritage Act 1995**, I give notice under section 46 that the Victorian Heritage Register is amended by including the Heritage Register Number H2107 in the category described as a Heritage Place; Archaeological Place:

Herrnhut Utopian Commune, Tabor Road, Penshurst, Southern Grampians Shire Council.

### EXTENT:

1. All the buildings marked as follows on Diagram 2107 held by the Executive Director:

B1 Krummnow's house ruin  
B2 Dormitory ruin  
B3 Kitchen ruin

2. All of the cemetery marked F1 on Diagram 2107 held by the Executive Director

3. All of the land marked L1, L2 and L3 on Diagram 2107 held by the Executive Director.

Dated 12 October 2006

RAY TONKIN  
Executive Director

[*Victoria Government Gazette* G 41 12 October 2006 2186]

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*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/>*