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# BURGER HOMESTEAD COMPLEX

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## Location

Penshurst-Macarthur Road and Springfield Lane PENSHURST, Southern Grampians Shire

## Municipality

SOUTHERN GRAMPIANS SHIRE

## Level of significance

Stage 2 study complete

## Heritage Listing

Southern Grampians Shire

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## Statement of Significance

Last updated on - January 7, 2004

What is significant?

Acacia, the Burger family homestead complex, located off the Penshurst-Macarthur Road, in Springfield Lane, 4kms due west of Penshurst was established as a small mixed farm by December 1853. Peter and Agnes Burger migrated from Germany to Adelaide with their children Johann, Magdalene and Andreas and other Lutheran dissenters in 1851. They eventually moved to the German settlement called Gnadenthal near Penshurst associated with Tabor and Hochkirk, now Tarrington. Peter and Agnes are buried in the Gnadenthal cemetery, looking over their farm. The fifth and sixth generations of the family now occupy the property. Some of the earliest structures survive, including the original cottage and stable and extensive animal yards. The first buildings are of particular interest because they use the traditional German vernacular technique of mud and straw on a timber frame called lehmwickel. The technique appears to have been used frequently in the area to the east of Hamilton but very few examples survive, the Burger cottage being the best. Other, more conventional vernacular techniques are used in the outbuildings, animal yards and extensive stone walls. The first woolshed, subsequently extended, also survives. Like many other German families, the Burgers had close connections with the opening up of the Wimmera. The present homestead, similar to those built in the Wimmera, dates from 1917 and is built with materials from the second homestead. All the structures are in good condition and retain a high degree of integrity. The oldest buildings include many pieces of original furniture, such as beds, and other furnishings and paraphenalia, which appear to have been imported from Germany.

How is it significant?

Acacia, the Burger homestead complex, is of historical, social and architectural significance to the state of Victoria and the Southern Grampians Shire.

Why is it significant?

Acacia is of historical significance for demonstrating the early immigration and settlement of a minority German

group, specifically the Wends or Sorbs into Western Victoria from South Australia. It is of social significance as one of the best and most intact demonstrations of their lifestyle. It is of further significance for its links with the settlement of the Wimmera. The complex is of architectural significance as a complete small mixed farm and especially for the use of vernacular construction techniques, one of which, lehmwickel is now extremely rare.

Heritage Study/Consultant	Southern Grampians - Southern Grampians Shire Heritage Study, Timothy Hubbard P/L, Annabel Neylon, 2002;
Construction dates	1855,
Heritage Act Categories	Registered place,
Other Names	ACACIA,
Hermes Number	23344
Property Number	

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## Physical Conditions

The condition of all the buildings and works is good

## Physical Description 1

The original cottage is comprised of two rooms. It is single storey, has a gabled roof with an attic used for storage accessed by a hatch in the south gable and an L-shaped skillion extension. It is approximately 6.0 x 9.0 metres in plan including the extension. There is a massive bluestone chimney, possibly built later, on the west wall serving the living room. The main walls are constructed of lehmwickel, as is the ceiling. The gables are covered with weatherboard. The corrugated iron roof has half-round guttering and a downpipe that empties into a barrel. The skillion is built as a dry stone wall. Remnants of the interior decoration, such as simple wallpapers, survive.

The second dwelling is single storey, has a hipped roof with a skillion extension and is approximately 5.0 x 8.0 metres in plan. This also uses lehmwickel and the technique is particularly evident in its construction where some failure has occurred. Some of the internal timber framing has lost its mud and straw cover, the surviving stakes now acting as a grille between spaces. The building has four spaces: the middle area with a dirt floor was possibly used for animals but, more probably, the living room is now used as a workshop, two rooms with separate access used as bedrooms, and the skillion along the rear which may have been used to store hay and fodder.

Behind the cottage is a cow yard, with thick dry stone walls, about 1.5 metres high. The walls are curved and include drainage holes. The bluestone pitcher floors survive. There was also a cow-milking shed behind the cottage. To the north of the cow paddock, the dry stone wall has become infested with ivy. A timber cowshed and separator shed are to the far north of the cow paddock. The separator shed was built in 1960.

There is a pigsty to the north west of the cow paddock and a yard enclosed by a dry stone wall. The pigsty is constructed with similar style as the lean to at the rear of the cottage. Massive thick stone walls crudely constructed with a timber roof. The timber roof was replaced in the 1960s. Near the pigsty and yard there is a chicken house and run. While these are not necessarily old, they are typical.

The present homestead is a symmetrical single storey house with gabled side wings. The hipped main roof was recently covered with Colourbond. The walls are built of bluestone with red brick quoins, all tuck-pointed. The front door is conventional with side and fanlights. The front windows are four paned double hung sashes. The house was extended using similar materials and forms in 2001. There is an external oven near the homestead.

## Historical Australian Themes

Theme 3 Developing local, regional and national economies

3.9 Farming for commercial profit

3.14 Developing an Australian engineering and construction industry

3.14.1 Building to suit Australian conditions

3.14.1 Using Australian materials in construction

Theme 5 Working

5.8 Working on the land

Theme 8 Developing Australia's cultural life

8.12 Living in and around Australian homes

8.14 Living in the country and rural settlements

## **Usage/Former Usage**

Continuing as a mixed farm.

## **Integrity**

Excellent degree of integrity, including furniture and household goods.

## **Physical Description 2**

The Burger family

*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/>*