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# MOUNT ROUSE ABORIGINAL PROTECTORATE (FORMER)



23746 Mount Rouse  
Protectorate site 0070

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## Location

Martin Street Cox Street, PENSHURST VIC 3289 - Property No 0024

## 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 - March 22, 2004

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 Penshurst. 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 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 squattocracy 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 squattocracy, 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.

Heritage Study/Consultant	Southern Grampians - Southern Grampians Shire Heritage Study, Timothy Hubbard P/L, Annabel Neylon, 2002;
Construction dates	1842,
Heritage Act Categories	Registered place,
Other Names	KOLOR,
Hermes Number	23746
Property Number	

## Physical Conditions

Said to have a very high degree of archaeological potential.

## Physical Description 1

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.

## **Historical Australian Themes**

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

## **Usage/Former Usage**

police and ambulance stations

## **Integrity**

no structures survive

## **Physical Description 2**

George Augustus Robinson, Chief Protector of Aborigines

Charles Wightman Sievwright, Deputy Protector

Dr John Watton, Medical Officer

*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/>*