

HERITAGE CITATION REPORT

name: Thatched Barn
Address: 1665 Obrees Road VECTIS
Place Type: Barn
Citation Date: 2022



Thatched Barn

**Recommended
Heritage Protection** **VHR -**

 HI -

 PS
 Yes

Integrity

The original cladding of the south end wall has been replaced with corrugated steel sheets.

History and Historical Context

The thatched barn at 1665 O'Brees Road, Vectis was built in the mid-1920s by Mr Carl A. Klowss, who purchased the allotment in 1925.[1] The land on which the barn was constructed was originally located in Parish of Quantong County of Borung, and was part of the original Vectis Estate owned by prominent local selectors, the Wilson family. In 1906, the Estate was subdivided and sold to successful tenderers. Klowss was the third owner of the allotment following subdivision.

The barn's design was influenced by Klowss' German heritage, as were other Wimmera barns built from as early as the 1850s when German emigrants arrived from South Australia and established settlements. Klowss' father, Gottlieb was one of the earliest German pioneers in the region when he arrived from Adelaide in 1871 and selected land near Natimuk Lake. Former owner of the property, Mr Hugh Light explains that 'this shed was slightly different in construction to the usual run of bush sheds which had a ridge pole running down the centre with rafters running down to wall plates forming a gable roof pattern; all constructed with natural timber'. [2] Light describes the barn as comprising of two rows of forked posts set well into the ground approximately 12 feet apart along the full length of the shed, with a passageway of approximately 10 feet wide down the centre. The rafters are long, lighter timbers form inside the wall plates, crossing in the centre and fastened to form the ridge. Lighter timber was used to cross the rafters to form a base to take the straw thatch, which was held down by wire netting. Miles Lewis describes this type of thatching as the most 'primitive' of styles. He explains that 'this is found in numerous farm buildings in which wheat straw is heaped almost at random on a low pitched roof, and held down with wire netting'. [3] He states that these types were especially typical of Wimmera barns.

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The interior of Klowss' barn features eight stalls each side of the centre passage, designed to stable two eight-horse teams. Light describes how chaff feeders were shaped as wide troughs made from Baltic Pine flooring boards and were divided into sections for each stall. 'There was a walkway in front of the feeders and a doorway at the south end leading to a chaff-shed built separately of corrugated iron, for feed to be carried to each horse', he explains.[4] Despite Klowss' fine workmanship when he constructed the barn in the 1920s, it was in poor condition when Light purchased the property in 1947 from his employer Mr Crossley. Light explains that half of the straw on the roof had blown away because, according to Crossley, the wire netting used to hold it down had been stolen by vandals to catch fish in nearby waterholes. As it was the only shed on the property at the time and badly needed, Light undertook basic repairs upon purchasing it. He replaced rotted or missing timber roof beams and rethatched the roof with straw. Light describes how the wheat was taller in those days and the old harvesters, which just threshed the grain out and left the straw still standing to about 3 feet in length, was ideal for thatching. After a lot of hard work, Light claims that the barn 'was back to somewhere [near] original condition and waterproof again'. [5] He initially used the barn to stable his two draught horses.

In 1950-51, Light constructed a house on the allotment, which he made from sun-dried bricks using loam from the nearby (Wimmera) river flats. Over the course of 12 months, Light made 2,200 bricks measuring 18 inch long, 9 inch wide and 7 inch deep. During this period, the barn proved useful as a storage space for the dry bricks. Once the house was finished, the two stalls on the west side of the barn, just inside the door, were made into cow bails, and used until Light eventually built a dairy. After that, the barn was utilised to house small machinery, such as 'the stationary hay press, cement mixer, at times the odd ute, and even the Fordson tractor', Light explains.[6] Later, it was used to store baled hay, as it provided exceptional protection from the weather. As Light demonstrates, thatched barns had many uses and were a valuable asset to farmers. 'Like a lot of other straw sheds, they were an essential part of our early history, made out of the natural bush timber that was available', he states.[7]

[1] Rate Book Shire of Wimmera: 1863-1941.

[2] Light, H. (2010) *History of the straw roofed shed on "Bilabank", as told by Hugh Light*. Unpublished.

[3] Lewis, M. (1977) *Victorian Primitive*. Greenhouse Publications: Melbourne., p. 6.

[4] *History of the straw roofed shed on "Bilabank", as told by Hugh Light*

[5] *Ibid.*

[6] *Ibid.*

[7] *Ibid.*

Description

Physical Description

9 x 6 metre barn/ shed, constructed in c1920s in the traditional 'thatched barn' style for the region (Silesian/ German influence). Constructed of six rows of redgum or Buloke tree trunks, cut with tree forks remaining to tops, for support of roof. Trunks also include slots for timber rails, for animal pens. Roof framing comprises six

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rows of native pine roof bearers, with loose scarf joints over posts. Joints pegged with concealed timber pegs and later wire strapping. Similar size and species rafters are fixed to bearers by concealed timber pegs and later wire strapping, at half-bay intervals. Small section battens at approx. 450mm centres support straw thatching. Approx 20 degree pitch thatching is held down in the traditional manner by galvanised steel mesh, weighed down along eaves with timber poles. Side walls are enclosed with melaleuca timber faggots, strapped to intermediate timber branch rails. The floor is dirt. The roof frame has been braced in the past with several timber collar ties and two steel collar ties. The gable end facing the dwelling has been reclad with galvanised iron corrugated sheeting (with an entry door). The other gable end wall had collapsed in part. Some roof thatching has been repaired (in the past) with corrugated iron sheets, but most thatch remains.

Physical Condition

Fair condition. Roof and walls largely intact, despite some collapse of thatching and loss of gable end wall cladding.

Australian Heritage Commission Criteria

Relevant HERCON Criteria

Criterion A: Importance to the course, or pattern, of our cultural or natural history. (illustrates type of farm buildings erected by German/ Silesian settlers in 19th and early 20thC in agricultural areas of Horsham)

Criterion B: Possession of uncommon, rare or endangered aspects of our cultural or natural history. (rare colonial era construction type in good condition - in Wimmera and Victoria; illustrates a rare and disappearing traditional trade - thatch barn construction)

Criterion D: Importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of cultural or natural places or environments. (early pioneering indigenous barn structures - one of few left from 19th/early 20thC period - mostly intact; illustrates well-considered construction techniques of early settlement period - utilising local materials and traditional skills)

Criterion H: Special association with the life or works of a person, or group of persons, of importance in our history. (reflects local impact of German/Silesian immigrants, who brought dry-land farming methods (including thatched building construction methods) across from S Aust to the Wimmera in the late 19thC)

Comparative Analysis

The Victorian Heritage Database lists few barns with thatch/straw roofs in Victoria. VHR database doesn't identify thatched barns - just use of thatch in some homestead roofs. Several thatched barns located in Horsham Stage 1 study. Either, they are particular to the local area, most have been lost due to fire or neglect, or little study has been undertaken across Victoria (more likely). Vectis barn is comparable with the one at Glenwilliam Homestead - in intactness and construction method. It is smaller than Glenwilliam though. The Vectis barn may have survived because it is located close to the farm house and has been continuously used for farm animals (hence continuous repair/ maintenance). HeritageChat investigation confirmed that there are few known/ HO listed thatched barns in Victoria.

Barn, Trotters Rd, Banyena: Thatched barn in moderate to poor state of repair - similar scale to Vectis, but collapsing.

Outbuildings, Wimmera, Hermes no. 68615: Hermes entry - 'Wimmera farm buildings' - but no address or

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description or photos - could be referring to Fulham outbuildings?

Barn, 3983 Blue Ribbon Road Wallup, Yarriambiack, Hermes no. 183586: Significant c1880s thatched barn - 'I-shape' in plan, complete with timber feed trough. Comparable in construction type and detail to Vectis. Similar degree of intactness and condition.

Thatched barn, 875-887 Henty Highway, Dooen, Hermes no. 186070: Thatched barn - not in good condition - outbuilding to farm.

Thatched barn, 101 Greenhills Rd, Jung, Hermes no. 186133: Green Hills farm - outbuilding - similar in type and condition in 1979 (J Collins collection - H97.250/1160 SLV) could be dilapidated now - farm was affected by floods a couple of years ago - needs inspection.

Thatched barn, Jenkinson Rd, Dooen, Hermes no. 186073: Poor condition (seen from road).

Thatched barn, Reynolds Rd (near Blue Ribbon Rd) Kalkee, Hermes no. 186135: Large barn structure, but collapsed one end. No walls either, just posts.

Thatched Barn, Wail-Polkemmet Rd, Pimpinio, Hermes no. 186201: Still standing, but in poor condition - mix of thatch and galvanised iron sheet cladding.

Thatched barn, Kewell Homestead, Yarriambiack Shire: Tall thatched barn with only 4 rows of posts - rougher construction than Vectis - unclear if extant (saw 2006 photo HHS).

Statement of Significance

What is significant?

The elements of heritage value of the c1920 thatched barn at 1665 O'Brees Rd, Vectis, include:

. Whole of thatched barn structure, including form, timber structure, later steel section bracing, wire mesh/ timber pole roof covering, timber faggots to walling and straw roof thatch.

Excluded - later corrugated galvanised steel sheet walling and roof sheet.

How is it significant?

The c1920 thatched barn at 1665 O'Brees Rd, Vectis, is of historic and representative significance and rarity value to Horsham Rural City and potentially to the State of Victoria.

Why is it significant?

The c1920 thatched barn at 1665 O'Brees Rd, Vectis, is:

. of local and potentially State historical significance, illustrating a typical, but now mostly lost traditional 19th century type of farm building erected in agricultural areas, in particular in the Wimmera, by Silesian (German) farmers settling in the district during this period. The construction type utilised materials and skills at hand, illustrating the ingenuity of local farmers. The shed style was also common in 19th century Silesian settlement

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areas in South Australia. These farmers moved on to the Wimmera in the mid-late 19th century, bringing tested dry land farming skills with them. This group had a significant impact on the agricultural development of the district. (Criteria A and H)

. Of local and potentially State representative significance, illustrating the traditional construction techniques used for the erection of such unique Silesian influenced sheds/ barns, adapted to suit availability and type of local materials - red gum, buloke, melaleuca and straw thatching. It illustrates a rare and rapidly disappearing traditional trade. (Criteria B and D)

Recommendations 2022

External Paint Controls	Yes
Internal Alteration Controls	No
Tree Controls	No
Fences & Outbuildings	No
Prohibited uses may be permitted	No
Incorporated Plan	-
Aboriginal Heritage Place	No

References

Literature title: Victorian Primitive

Literature type: General Reference

Literature author: M. Lewis

Literature publisher: Greenhouse Publications, Carlton, Victoria

Literature year: 1977

Literature title: History of the straw roofed shed on "Bilabank", as told by High Light

Literature type: General Reference

Literature author: Light, H.

Literature publisher: Unpublished

Literature year: 2010

Literature title: Rate Book Shire of Wimmera: 1863-1941

Literature type: General Reference

Literature author:

Literature publisher:

Literature year:

This information is provided for guidance only and does not supersede official documents, particularly the planning scheme. Planning controls should be verified by checking the relevant municipal planning scheme.