

HERITAGE CITATION REPORT



ALPINE SHIRE

name: Tobacco Workers' Houses
Address: 776 Buckland Valley Road BUCKLAND
Place Type: Staff quarters
Citation Date: 2007

File No: AS0406

Significance Level: Local



Tobacco Workers' Houses

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

 HI -

 PS -

History and Historical Context

The first mention of tobacco cropping, pioneered by Chinese miners, is in the Buckland Valley in the 1850s. The Chinese grew tobacco at many places in the Upper Ovens, and in the Kiewa valley at Tawonga, Dederang and Gundowring. The variety grown produced a rough, black tobacco, after drying in long kilns constructed of slabs. The climate in the valleys suited tobacco growing, and Europeans began sharefarming with the Chinese. By 1884, Bright and its immediate district had 82 acres under tobacco, producing 14 tons annually. Tobacco was grown in the Buffalo River from the 1870s, using Chinese labour. In 1895, the estimated value of the tobacco crops on the Ovens and Buffalo Rivers was 800 and 1000 pounds respectively.

Post-WWII Italian migration to the area revitalised the flagging tobacco industry which then boomed in the 1950s and early 1960s. These migrants came from various parts of Italy where intensive agriculture was carried out.

In 1949, Emo Michelini, his wife Olga and their nine month old son Gianni, migrated to Australia. In 1951, Emo and family moved to his uncle's property as a share farmer cultivating tobacco and in 1957 purchased his own



property on the Buffalo River. In 1962, the government approached Emo to purchase his land to erect a dam on Buffalo River.

In 1965, Emo noticed some land for sale in the Buckland Valley, where there were few farms, no electricity and dirt roads. Emo purchased the land and set up his kilns and shed from Buffalo River and rebuilt his tobacco business. It is presumed that the tobacco workers' houses date from this era.

Emo went on, with his two sons, Ilario and Dino, to develop viticulture. They became the first grape growers in the Alpine Shire in modern times, reviving a tradition originally begun by German migrants in the gold rush era, and opened the first winery. Emo Michelini died in June 2006 (Alpine Observer, 15 June 2006).

References:

Temple & Lloyd, 1989, A History of the Kiewa Valley, p. 91

Talbot D, 2001, Tobacco in the Ovens Valley

Relevant Historical Australian Themes

3.9 Farming for commercial profit.

2.4.2 Migrating to seek opportunity.

Description

Physical Description

The housing is rudimentary and can be considered to be vernacular from the 1950s. The spare and utilitarian buildings are identical. The façade is symmetrical in nature with a window on either side of the front door - albeit part of the façade has been recessed to create a porch. They share the simple design precepts of workers' terrace housing from the 19th century. Central hall, rooms on either side and kitchens etc to the rear. They have a simple gable roof and all front onto the roadway.

The condition of these buildings is good and they have undergone minimal modifications.

Physical Condition

Good

Usage / Former Usage

c1965 - present: Agriculture workers accommodation

Intactness

Good

Recommended Management

- Design and finish to be maintained as is, with no additional embellishments
- Adaptive re-use to be encouraged to assist in the maintenance of the buildings
- Maintain galvanised iron roofing

Comparative Analysis



The group of cottages are representative of the type of housing that was provided for tobacco workers during the post war expansion of the industry, in a period that was very important economically to the Alpine Shire. The group is probably the best example of this type of housing in the Shire, taking into account condition, location, associations and integrity.

Statement of Significance

What is significant?

The tobacco workers houses were put up by Emo Michelini after he set up his tobacco farm in the Buckland Valley in 1965. The houses are a group of three identical weatherboard buildings with corrugated iron roofs, situated near farm buildings and kilns. The group of cottages are representative of the type of housing that was provided for tobacco workers during the post-WWII expansion of the industry. Many of the tobacco workers during the post-war period were migrant workers, and eventually many became tobacco farmers.

How is it significant?

The tobacco workers houses are of historical, social & architectural significance to the Alpine Shire.

Why is it significant?

The tobacco workers houses are historically and socially significant to the Alpine Shire as an excellent group that communicate a largely human story of work within a once-important post-war industry, and are closely identified with post war migration and the multicultural identity of this region. The condition is good and the integrity is high. The architecture is utilitarian and illustrates the nature of housing - seasonal workers' cottages. The simple vernacular architecture from the 1950s is of note as is the context and orientation of these buildings.

Assessment Against Criteria

Criterion A

ITS IMPORTANCE IN THE COURSE, OR PATTERN, OF AUSTRALIA'S NATURAL OR CULTURAL HISTORY

A.1 Importance in the evolution of Australian flora, fauna, landscapes or climate.

A.2 Importance in maintaining existing processes or natural systems at the regional or national scale.

A.3 Importance in exhibiting unusual richness or diversity of flora, fauna, landscapes or cultural features.

A.4 Importance for association with events, developments or cultural phases which have had a significant role in the human occupation and evolution of the nation, State, region or community.

Criterion B

ITS POSSESSION OF UNCOMMON, RARE OR ENDANGERED ASPECTS OF AUSTRALIA'S NATURAL OR CULTURAL HISTORY

B.1 Importance for rare, endangered or uncommon flora, fauna, communities, ecosystems, natural landscapes or phenomena, or as a wilderness.

B.2 Importance in demonstrating a distinctive way of life, custom, process, land-use, function or design no longer practised, in danger of being lost, or of exceptional interest

Criterion C

ITS POTENTIAL TO YIELD INFORMATION THAT WILL CONTRIBUTE TO AN UNDERSTANDING OF AUSTRALIA'S NATURAL OR CULTURAL HISTORY

C.1 Importance for information contributing to a wider understanding of Australian natural history, by virtue of its use as a research site, teaching site, type locality, reference or benchmark site.



C.2 Importance for information contributing to a wider understanding of the history of human occupation of Australia

Criterion D

ITS IMPORTANCE IN DEMONSTRATING THE PRINCIPAL CHARACTERISTICS OF: (I) A CLASS OF AUSTRALIA'S NATURAL OR CULTURAL PLACES; OR (II) A CLASS OF AUSTRALIA'S NATURAL OR CULTURAL ENVIRONMENTS

D.1 Importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of the range of landscapes, environments or ecosystems, the attributes of which identify them as being characteristic of their class.

D.2 Importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of the range of human activities in the Australian environment (including way of life, philosophy, custom, process, land use, function, design or technique).

Criterion E

ITS IMPORTANCE IN EXHIBITING PARTICULAR AESTHETIC CHARACTERISTICS VALUED BY A COMMUNITY OR CULTURAL GROUP

E.1 Importance for a community for aesthetic characteristics held in high esteem or otherwise valued by the community

Criterion F

ITS IMPORTANCE IN DEMONSTRATING A HIGH DEGREE OF CREATIVE OR TECHNICAL ACHIEVEMENT AT A PARTICULAR PERIOD

F.1 Importance for its technical, creative, design or artistic excellence, innovation or achievement

Criterion G

ITS STRONG OR SPECIAL ASSOCIATIONS WITH A PARTICULAR COMMUNITY OR CULTURAL GROUP FOR SOCIAL, CULTURAL OR SPIRITUAL REASONS

G.1 Importance as a place highly valued by a community for reasons of religious, spiritual, symbolic, cultural, educational, or social associations.

Criterion H

ITS SPECIAL ASSOCIATION WITH THE LIFE OR WORKS OF A PERSON, OR GROUP OF PERSONS, OF IMPORTANCE IN AUSTRALIA'S NATURAL OR CULTURAL HISTORY

H.1 Importance for close associations with individuals whose activities have been significant within the history of the nation, State or region

Recommendations 2007

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