

HERITAGE ADVISOR'S REPORT/MEMO

Proposal: Demolition of Penoyre Cottage, Wesley Hill; 109 Duke Street Castlemaine
To: Fiona McMahon
Date: 29 June 2011

General Overlay No.: NA

Individual Overlay No.: NA

BACKGROUND:

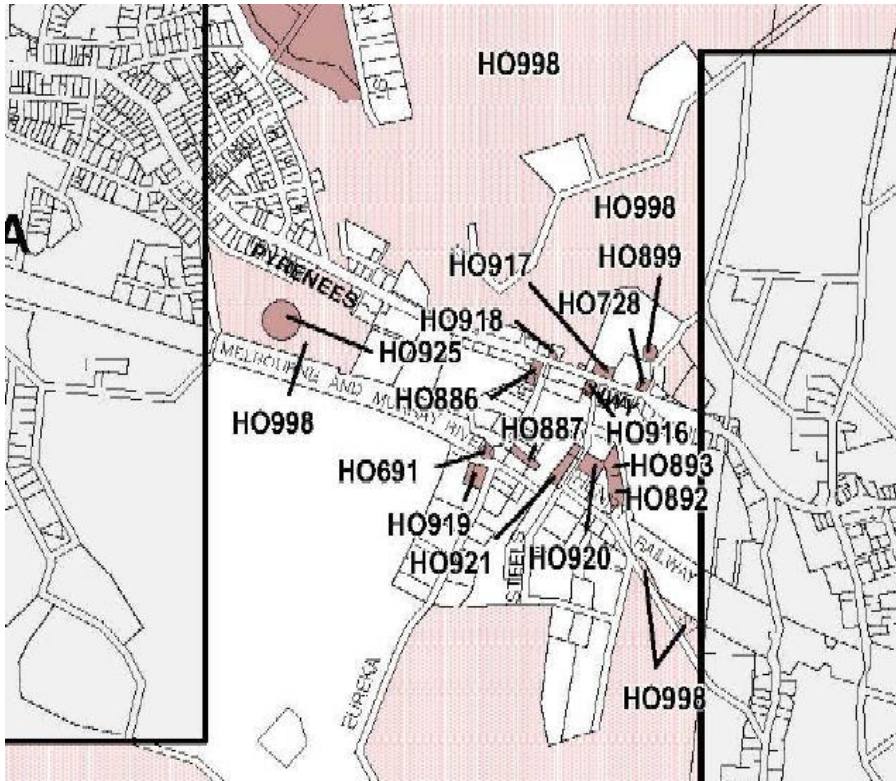
A site inspection was made with Julian Peck Council Building Inspector and Greg MacKay Compliance officer on 12 May to discuss the impending demolition application to be made on structural grounds based on a private building survey.

This building surveyor's report stated that the cracking of the building was considered by the owner's building surveyor to be irreparable and made the building both unsound and unsafe.

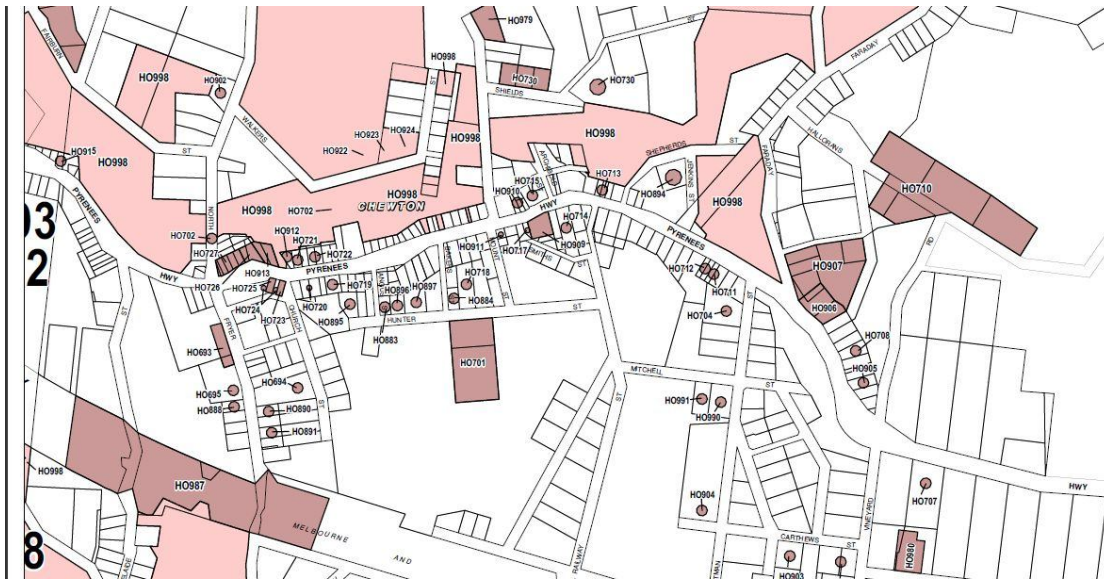
The building and this part of the Pyrenees Highway in Wesley Hill between Castlemaine and Chewton are not covered by a Heritage Overlay.



Pyrenees Highway showing the whole Wesley Hill precinct not covered by HO. The subject site is adjacent to triangular site at junction with Murphy Street



Pyrenees Highway east of Wesley Hill extending toward Chewton with some HO places located on it



Pyrenees Highway in Wesley Hill also showing HO places along it

SIGNIFICANCE:

Penoyre Cottage is one of a number of key early buildings on the Pyrenees Highway section in Wesley Hill. This section forms part of one of the most significant roads in any Victorian goldfield town, running from Chewton to Castlemaine. Other key buildings in the immediate precinct are the early house with projecting verandah nearby on the same side, and a Welsh chapel almost opposite. They provide an essential linkage of historic buildings between the two historic precincts.

The road alignment and its formation is a classic example of an un-surveyed road formed within a gold rush era diggings, running on high ground and parallel to a creek. It is the original or extremely early route to the Forest Creek diggings and provides significant values to the early buildings built along on it.

Most of the early buildings of Wesley Hill have the same significance as comparable buildings of a similar age and style in Castlemaine and Chewton, yet many of these are covered by a Heritage Overlay. The significance of the Wesley Hill area justifies a Heritage Overlay, at least for key buildings, including 109 Duke Street. It is great concern that such a large section of the Castlemaine - Chewton road does not to have any buildings protected by a Heritage Overlay.

This cottage appears to date from the late 1850s or early 1860s. Apparently named after Penoyre in Central Wales, it provides clear evidence of the important Welsh legacy in this area. This area is well known to mining historians in Wales and of great interest to them.

Built of local hand made bricks, Penoyre Cottage is notable for a number of attributes. These are the simple gabled form combined with parapeted walls and dentillated brickwork to the façade parapet. The relief name plates are unusual in this location flanking the entrance door at the mid point of the windows. The modest size is typical of miner's cottages. The secondary skillion section on the east side appears to be of the same or similar date (Figure 1). The brick jointing may represent a construction phase, not a later date. The casement windows in this section is a design normally associated with the 1850s – 1860s, and it is not unusual to have different windows on side elevations at this time. Other rear brick and timber sections appear to be of a later date and may be of less significance.

It had been anticipated that a full report was to be commissioned to establish the date and history of the building though archival research, and the extent o significant fabric. It is suffice to day that this cottage shares many material and design details of the 1855 to 1865 period in this region.



Figure 1 View from east



Figure 2 Front view



Figure 3 View from west - Castlemaine side



Figure 4 Rear view east side



Figure 7 Connection between gable and skillion sections – note casement window



Figure 5 Name plate left of door note exposed brickwork below paint



Figure 6 Name plate right of door



Figure 8 View from east when heading to Castlemaine from Chewton – note conspicuous location on bend of road



Figure 9 Nearby house to the east, also not covered by an HO.

STRUCTURAL CONDITION:

It was my view, and that of Julian Peck, that the cracking was not primarily due to this excavation, and that the cracking was not sufficient to make the building unsafe. The building is suffering many years of neglect however, in particular the roofing, which needs re-fixing in several places, and roof plumbing repaired.

It appears that the structural defects have been over-stated in the building surveyor's report. Furthermore, it does not mention the principal cause, the impact of the wattle tree. There will always be differences of opinion about what makes a building unsafe. My advice is based on many years of specialising with historic building restoration including many brick buildings similar to this cottage. This has involved the restoration of buildings with more serious problems, and working with an engineer who has extensive experience with historic structures.

The building does not demonstrate rotation on the side wall to a degree that cannot be readily rectified. The current props are too flimsy to serve any structural purpose. The excavation does not appear to be the main factor contributing to the cracking along the front façade, however, or the separation of the internal wall from the side wall shown in the surveyor's report. The distance of the building from the excavation is outside the natural angle of repose, given stability of the foundation material. However, the excavation does contribute to drying of the foundation material, especially as it is exposed to the hot west sun.

It is my view that large wattle tree appears to be the main cause of cracking of the brickwork, through excessive drying and shrinkage of the foundation material in drought periods near the tree. This is particularly bad tree species to plant near a building as it is able to extract maximum moisture from the ground. This shrinkage movement is transferred to the weakest part of the wall, that section above the nearest window to the tree, although the roots may extend for some distance seeking moisture. Such shrinkage also causes internal walls to separate from external walls due to differential in shrinkage. Removal of the tree and stabilising the surrounding 1 metre of the building with a surface seal would stabilise the moisture content. Some supplementary underground moisture injection may be required along the west. Then tie rods in appropriate locations and minor brick repairs using lime mortar would be sufficient to restore the brickwork.



Figure 10 Excavation on adjacent property made many years ago. This wall has not demonstrated any marked rotation.



Figure 11 This is the worst external cracking, above the window nearest the tree and corner of the building, the weakest part of the structure. Some minor rebuilding is now required to rectify the alignment, and to replace damaged bricks. Note elaborate parapet detailing.

COMMENTS:

Penoyre Cottage, located at 109 Duke Street is of outstanding significance to the overall Castlemaine and Chewton area as a crucial marker on this highly significant goldfield road, apart from its significance in its own right. It should not be demolished on structural grounds. The procedures required to stabilise and conserve the brickwork of this structure are straight forward and not expensive.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

This building, along with all other early buildings in Wesley Hill Wesley Hill, especially those on the Pyrenees Highway should be given interim heritage protection.

An engineer with proven experience with historic buildings should be consulted to review the surveyor's report.

Assistance with the restoration of this building should be provided with expert advice.

NIGEL LEWIS
Heritage Adviser
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