

HERITAGE OF EIGHT LOWER NORTH TOWNS

Register Assessment Report

South Australian Heritage Act 1978

10325  
Tanunda Survey Item No.: 35

Chateau Tanunda—first cellars; distilling tower and chimney  
Basedow Rd  
TANUNDA

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Statement of Cultural Significance

Chateau Tanunda was built by G.F. Cleland & Co. Ltd in 1889–90. The cellars, distilling tower and chimney are the most significant elements on the site relating to the foundation of the winery. The company was born from local necessity and over the years became famed for its brandy. In 1916, the Company was taken over by B. Seppelt & Sons Ltd.

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Relevant Criteria

A building important to the understanding of the evolution and pattern of South Australia's environmental, social or cultural heritage.

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Significant Interest

1. Architectural: a remarkable cellar building, distilling tower and chimney of immense significance in the history of the Barossa wine industry. The cellars and tower show exceptional craftsmanship in their construction. Their design is functional, yet beautiful.
2. Historical: Chateau Tanunda was built in 1889–90 by G.F. Cleland & Co. Ltd. The buildings were considered to be of advanced design and to contain the latest in wine-making equipment. The winery soon became famous for its products. In 1916 it was taken over by B. Seppelt & Sons Ltd.

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Recommendation

It is recommended that this item be included on the Register of State Heritage Items

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ANALYSIS OF SIGNIFICANT INTEREST

Architectural

Built during 1889–90s as a winery complex.

The main cellar building is based on a rectangular floor plan on two levels and measures approximately 77m x 34m. This massive structure is constructed of stone, interspersed with rectangular grids of brick. Quoins and surrounds to openings are of brick. The design of the main facade is with a central rectangular tower and gable sections projecting at either end. These three elements are linked by a timber and corrugated iron verandah on the ground level. The interior of this building has some wine making equipment, cask storage space and storage space for dry goods. It is largely open space with cast iron poles supporting flooring and ceiling.

All windows and doors are of arrow head shape.

*Dutch* The dominant feature of this structure that has been carried on in other buildings on all levels are the ornate masonry gables, scalloped to the ridge. The distilling tower incorporates this gabled element also.

The brick chimney stands some distance away from the cellars and tower and carries a dominant sign, Chateau Tanunda

Historical

It was the blossoming of the wine industry that gave Tanunda an industrial base, yet it also linked the town to the rise and fall of grape prices on the open market. Eventually this led to the rise of grower-operated wineries and the establishment of a more stable wine industry.

By the time that George Sutherland was making his way through the countryside of South Australia in the late 1880s, penning his articles on rural life for the Adelaide papers, the wine industry was extraordinarily important. Sutherland saw that the country around Tanunda was so greatly planted with vines that 'the general effect is that of an immense estate devoted to viticulture'. One further thing he noticed was that because Tanunda was the local centre of this industry it was proposed to form a Company that would manufacture wine. Other winemakers were not troubled by this new concern, for the market appeared to be almost limitless.

The resulting enterprise, G. F. Cleland & Co. Ltd, had as its main founder G. F. Cleland, an Adelaide winemaker. Other shareholders in G. F. Cleland & Co. Ltd were William Jacob of Moorooroo, Sir Samuel and Lady Davenport, Dr and Mrs E. D. Cleland and C. J. Horrocks. Cleland responded to approaches from local Tanunda growers such as John Basedow who sought a market for their unsold grapes in glut years. The formation of a new winery would give a certain sale for their grapes. From these origins Chateau Tanunda was formed. The cellars were begun in 1889 and completed in the next year. An 1893 visitor to the site wrote that:

... the principal building is built of stone with brick dressings, and is 250 ft long by 110 ft wide and 40 ft high, and capable of holding 1,000,000 gals of wine. The cellars are built on the face of a hill sloping towards the south. Owing to the fall of the ground the grapes are delivered into the top storey direct from the wagons, and are taken by the steam elevators to the strippers and crushers, which are capable of treating 100 tons of grapes per day. The crushed grapes fall into shoots, which carry the must into vats by gravitation. In addition to the wine cellars there are other buildings including the distillery and bonded stores.

When the delegates to the convention for the British Association for the Advancement of Science made an excursion to Tanunda on Monday 10 August 1914, they were told that Chateau Tanunda's 'specialty' was 'their well-known Chateau Tanunda Brandy; of each season's production of 600,000 gals of wine, 500,000 gals are distilled for brandy'. By 1916, though, the Adelaide Wine Co., which now ran the Chateau, could not stand the financial pace and the operations were taken over by the long-running firm of Seppelts.

At the current time Seppelts have placed the complex on the market.

#### References

George Sutherland, *Our Inheritance in the Hills*, Adelaide, W.K. Thomas & Co., 1889.

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Back to Tanunda Committee, *Souvenir*, Tanunda, 1927.

H.T. Burgess, *The Cyclopedia of South Australia*, vol. 2, Adelaide, The Cyclopedia Company, 1909.

British Association for the Advancement of Science, *Excursion to Angaston, Seppeltsfield, and Tanunda, Monday 10 August 1914*, Adelaide, the Association, 1914.

Katrina McDougall, *Winery Buildings of South Australia, 1836-1936: Part One, The Barossa Region*, Industrial Buildings of South Australia, Working Paper 6, Department of Architecture, University of Adelaide, 1980.



BUILDING AUSTRALIA'S FIRST GROWTH WINERY  
AND PREMIUM TOURIST DESTINATION  
THROUGH RESTORATION OF A CULTURAL AND HERITAGE ICON.



Bought by the Geber family in 1998 the Chateau, an icon of the valley left as an empty shell, has been carefully and tastefully restored. This Development to date represents an investment by the Geber family of well in excess of \$5 million to date and is an indication of their commitment as custodians of this Barossa icon to its restoration and to its eventual role as Australia's First Growth Chateau.

## Background & History

The Barossa Valley is widely recognized as Australia's premier wine region. The picturesque town of Tanunda, located 70 kilometres north of Adelaide is the recognized heart of the Barossa Valley and its principal tourism town. Château Tanunda is located some 500 metres from the main commercial street of Tanunda. The Château (as it is known by Barossans) is situated on the highest point of the valley floor and affords panoramic views of the Barossa Valley to the Barossa Ranges, providing an attractive, picturesque setting, definitive of the charming character and ambience of the Barossa.



Since the mid 1850's the Barossa had been planting vines. However, viticulture was carried out on a small commercial scale on a subsistence basis. With the demands created by the impact of the phylloxera epidemic in Europe in the 1870's Australia was suddenly thrust into the world market with huge demand for wine at very good prices. At this time a group of prominent Adelaide businessmen including GF Cleland, Johan Basedow, Sir Samuel Davenport and four other shareholders approached the farmers of the Barossa with a plan to capitalize on this opportunity. They understood that the Barossa had 560 very good growers of grapes with an undisputed wine culture. These businessmen built the biggest wine making

building in the Southern Hemisphere to process the grapes of these 560 growers. They financed the venture, shipped the wine on their boats to England and France and maximised on the shortage in Europe. The farmers benefited from this arrangement year after year. The only proviso was that they contracted all their grapes to the Château for a minimum of 10 years. A company was formed called the Adelaide Wine Co. later to be called Château Tanunda Pty Ltd and the Château was built in 2 years 1888-1890.



*Growers at The Château*



*The Château Coopers*

Château Tanunda has had only three changes of ownership in over one hundred years:

1890-1916	Adelaide Wine Co. later called Château Tanunda Wine Co.
1916-1998	Seppelts Wine Co. (became Southcorp)
1998-present	Geber family

Its heritage is remarkable in viticulture. Many of today's most successful grape growers and their ancestors have worked and provided grapes to The Château. There are still some 300 growers in the valley. By far most of these are descendants of the original 560 growers who had a direct link with the Château. A walk around the Château is a walk around the history of winemaking in the valley, if not the country. Look for the signatures in the rafters and you will see some of the most famous names in Australian wine history, past and present, all of whom have worked or trained at the Château.

- Professor Arthur J Perkins (Roseworthy College)
- Professor Soebels (first qualified oenologist in Australia)
- Max Schubert (Grange Hermitage)
- Bill Seppelt
- Jack Mann
- Peter Taylor
- Grant Burge
- Geoff Merrill
- Craig Stansborough (Grant Burge Wines)
- Robert O'Callaghan (Rockford Wines)
- Kevin Glastonbury (Yalumba)



## The Château – Buildings

**Heritage Listings** - The Château, Spirit Bond, Distillery, corrugated iron sheds and brick chimney were entered on the Register of State Heritage Places in April 1994. The building was initially constructed as a winery with some additional winemaking and storage facilities. The Château is a two storey building constructed in 1890 of brick and bluestone from the Bethany quarry (where Bethany wines are now situated). It is a most significant and visually impressive building. At the time of building it was the largest building in South Australia and the largest winery in the Southern Hemisphere.



*Château 'rear'*

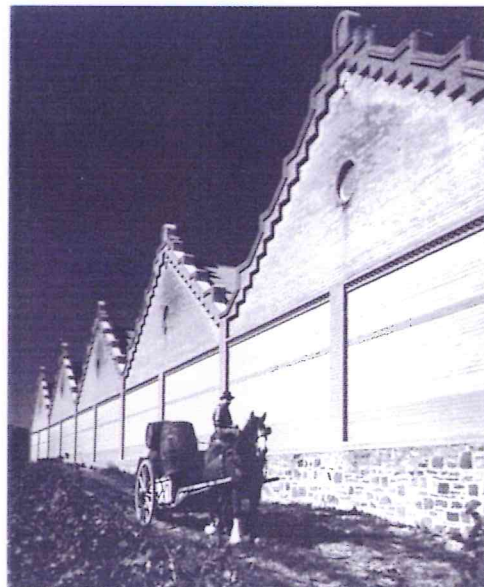


*Château 'front' with original railway spur*

The Distillery was constructed in 1890 and the Bond Store was constructed in 1911. Both buildings incorporate similar design elements to the Château.



*Distillery today from Croquet Terrace*

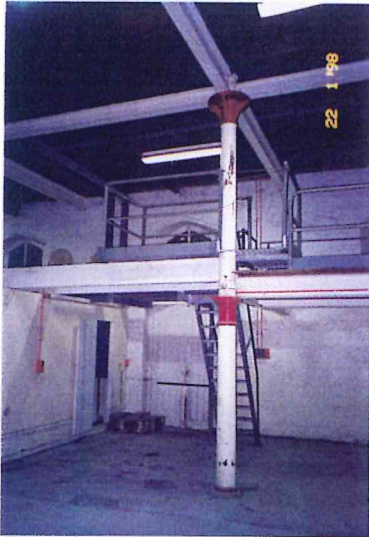


*Spirit Bond Store*

## The evolution from 'shell' to 'Château'

### Internal works – David Dawson Architects

Development of the **Cellar Door Sales** area included the opening up of entrances, removal of old offices, building of new offices and bathroom, installation of staircase, massive red gum tasting bench & bar area, fireplace and hand cut Mintaro slate floors. Previously, the area was filled with pallet storage, general warehousing and fibro offices. It is now one of the Valley's most atmospheric Cellar Doors housed amongst hundred of barrels of maturing wine.



### **The Long Room**

Creation of the Long Room required installation of new windows on Eastern façade of Long Room and opening up of Long Room entrance. The Long Room is now a premium event space used for elegant banquets, long table luncheons, Château Fare and Degustation dinners.



**Function Rooms** - Clearing of the top floor to create elegant and atmospheric function and event areas while maintaining the historic character of the building. This space was 8 inches deep in pigeon droppings. It now hosts functions for top businessmen, judges and visitors.



Feature wall with lit niches



Function Room kitchen



Function Room



Bar under construction

## The evolution from 'shell' to 'Château'

### External works and landscaping – Brenton Hann Landscape Design & Build

#### **Clearing of tank farm plinths**

The Château had for many years been shrouded and surrounded by massive tank farms and accompanying expanses of concrete. These have been stripped away and extensive landscaping undertaken to enhance the Château building and public function. Some 6,000 tonnes of cement were cleared from this area along the rear of the Château. Much of the cement removed from this area was broken up and used to build up the mound on which the cricket oval was engineered. (from June 1999)

**Creating a croquet lawn and terrace** - Removal of a further 3,000 tonnes of concrete made way for the creation of a competition standard croquet lawn, adding to the Château's eclectic sporting theme. The first Château croquet tournament took place in the Spring of 2002 in conjunction with the South Australian Croquet Association. The croquet lawn is frequently used by visitors to the Château.



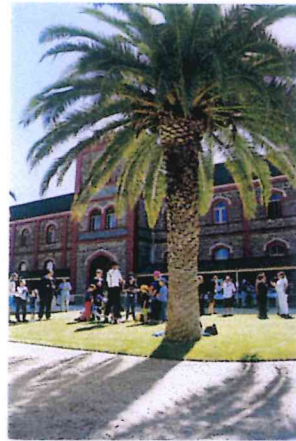
**Laying of historic ballast stones or 'Cobbles'** - In 2000, Château Tanunda acquired over 5,000 square metres of the historic ballast stones that were auctioned from the decommissioned abattoir at Gepp's Cross. These stones are being laid by local tradesmen on walkways and roads throughout the Château grounds.



**General restoration and landscaping** - Clearing of tank farm and laying of hand cut Mintaro slate walkways and steps and removal of asbestos drainage pipes from exterior façade.

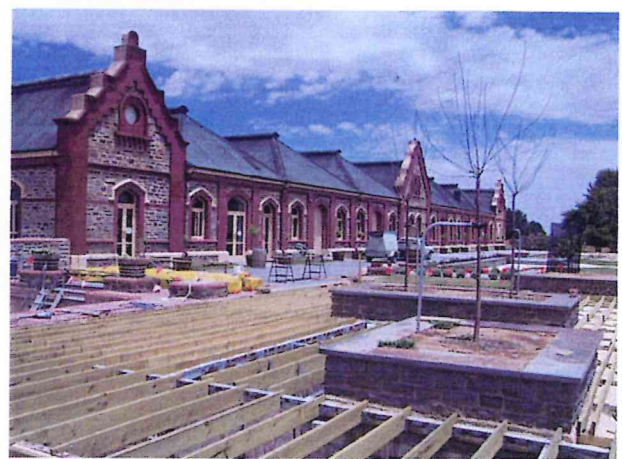


**Formal Gardens** - The expanse of 2000 square metres at the rear of the Château, which was once an unsightly cement tank farm, has been cleared, and a classic sunken garden built allowing public access and enjoyment of the northern façade of the Chateau.

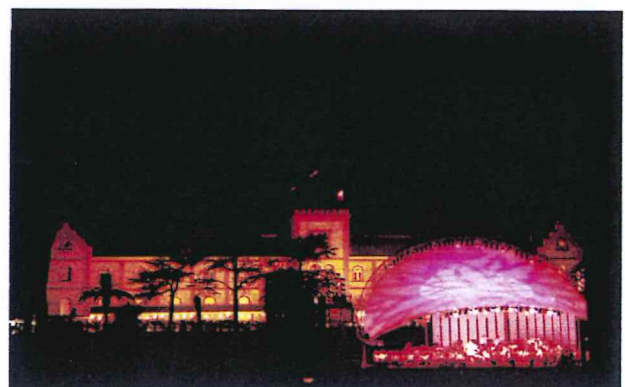
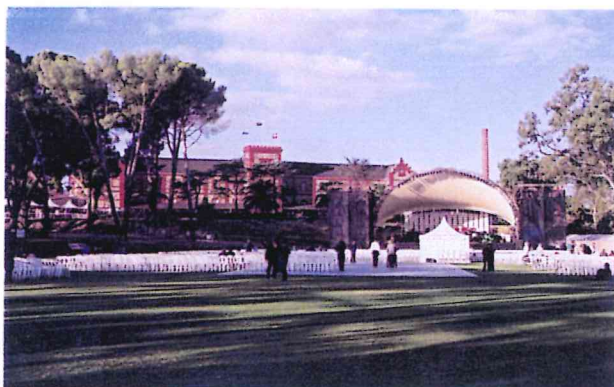


**Creation of formal lawns at front of Château & Palm Court**

**Orangerie and Long Room Terrace** - The recent development of this area has undertaken while still maintaining use of underground tanks holding over 500,000 litres of wine. The old fermentation banks and tank farm has been transformed, incorporating historic cobblestones, hand cut Mintaro slate and hardwood decking realizing a beautiful public space with spectacular views of the Barossa Ranges.



**View of The Chateau from the Cricket Oval during Dame Kiri Concert**



## The evolution from 'shell' to 'Château' - A visit to The Château Today

The Château reopened to the public in 2001 and now offers:

- A superb **Cellar Door** housed amongst hundreds of barrels of maturing wine.
- The Cellar Door, offers fine Château wines and wines from over 20 smaller producers housed in the **Barossa Small Winemakers Centre** – continuing the historic relationship between the Château and the growers of the Barossa Valley.
- Elegant and atmospheric **Function and Events** areas catering for 14 - 450+ people:
  - Château Long Room (100 people)
  - Château Ballroom (400+ people)
  - Château Board Room (16 people)
  - Orangerie & Terrace (140 people)
  - Cellar Door (200 people)
  - Croquet Terrace (150 people)
  - Palm Court (50 people)
- International standard **croquet green and cricket oval**
- Continues to be a key **wine facility**

The Château's has developed a preferred catering partnership with 'Jaguar Award for Excellence' winner **Saskia Beer** of Barossa Farm Produce providing world class food to match the Château experience for Château clients.

The Château works closely with regional tourism operators and accommodation providers to ensure that the Château is accessible to visitors to the Barossa and that the region continues to offer unique and quality products and experience.

