To: The South Australian Heritage Committee

From: Senior Historic Architect

Subject: REGISTER NOMINATION:
          BLEASDALE WINERY, LANGHORNE CREEK

Date: 12 March, 1982

SUMMARY

This report is prepared as part of the South Australian Heritage Committee's programme of evaluating National Estate items. The item has been assessed by the previous Register Sub-Committee and was deferred pending proper definition and completion of the winery buildings survey.

Historically, the Bleasdale winery group is significant because it was established in the early settlement period of the Langhorne Creek/Strathalbyn district by Frank Potts and has been under family control and continuously producing wine since the first vintage in the 1860's. It contains the only example of a red gum wine press (1892) in existence.

Architecturally, the winery group is an interesting example of a rural industrial complex which has evolved with the development of the wine industry. However, it contains no significantly innovative buildings or equipment apart from the red gum wine press.
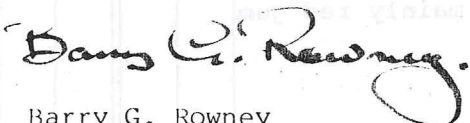
Environmentally, the complex is a well known visual element in the rural landscape which due to its massing composition does blend into the surrounding vineyard.

The Integrity of the group is good. The complex has been associated continuously with wine making and is in fair structural condition.

The Bleasdale Winery is on the Classified List of the National Trust and is on the Register of the National Estate.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended the Bleasdale Winery not be included on the State Heritage Register. However, it is recommended that the red gum wine press be included on the Register and that it be categorized H.1, 3.1.

Barry G. Rowney
SENIOR HISTORIC ARCHITECT

KMcD:SK
12/3/82

South Australian Heritage Act 1978-80	Register of State Heritage Items ITEM EVALUATION SHEET Buildings and Structures	
	Item BLEASDALE WINERY COMPLEX, LANGHORNE CREEK	
Age	Theme	Office
Period 1852 – to present	Subject SECONDARY INDUSTRY Processing of Primary Production Winemaking	Region 4 Fleurieu Peninsula
Building Type Winery & Distillery	Style Early Victorian – Rural Industrial	Status NE NT (Cl.)

Qualitative Data

Component	Comment	E	VG	AG	FP	NA
History						
1. Context:	A house and winery established in the early stages of settlement of the Strathalbyn/ Langhorne Creek area and of the wine industry in S.A. Bleasdale Winery has been producing wine continuously since the 1860's.		*			
2. Person/Group:	Established by Frank Potts Snr. and still owned by members of Potts family.			*		
3. Specific Event:	First vintage 1862. Replacement red gum press 1892.				*	
4. Arch./Engineer/ Builder:	Frank Potts Snr. built the initial two room dwelling and sheds. Additions were made by later members of the family.				*	
5. Design:	A good example of a rural industrial complex which has evolved over a period of 120 years. The materials used create a strong sense of unity despite the various developmental stages.			*		
6. Construction:	Common industrial technique with a progression from the early solid stone wall sections to later lightweight corrugated iron clad frame construction structural timber is mainly red gum.			*		
7. Interior:	Not applicable.					*
8. Representation:	Although not representative of contemporary S.A. winery buildings (e.g. Horndale and Seppeltsfield) it is nevertheless an interesting example of an early rural industrial complex.			*		
Environment						
9. Continuity:	The gradual change in scale and texture helps to blend the buildings into the surrounding vineyard landscape.			*		
10. Local Character:	Not applicable.					*
11. Landmark:	The winery complex is a strong visual element in the rural landscape.		*			

I.E.S./D3/211081

South Australian Heritage Act 1978-80	Register of State Heritage Items ITEM EVALUATION SHEET Buildings and Structures						
	Item BLEASDALE WINERY COMPLEX, LANDHORNE CREEK						

Component	Comment	Grading				
		E	VG	AG	FP	NA

Integrity

12. Alterations: Due to the continuing developments in winery technology, and expansion of the industry, the buildings have undergone constant upgrading and changes in use.

           House rendered.

(Grading: AG marked with *)

13. Condition: The complex is in fair structural condition. Main threat white ants, seems to be being carefully monitored.

(Grading: AG marked with *)

14. Compatibility: Has been constantly used as winery since 1860.

(Grading: E marked with *)

Supplementary Information

15. Adaptation: Has almost unlimited potential for adaptation. Its isolation is, however, a disadvantage.

16. Interpretation: The press has excellent interpretation potential for the history of winemaking in South Australia.

17. Current Situation: No threat.

Evaluated By	L. Brasse Register Architect	K. McDougall Register Historian	Date
Reviewed By	M.A. Butcher Acting Register Supervisor		Date
South Australian Heritage Committee Categorization			Date

HISTORICAL RESEARCH: BLEASDALE WINERY

Frank Potts took up land on the Bremer River in 1850, and planted vines on the alluvial flats in 1858[1] and 1860. The first cellar building was constructed of bricks made from the excavated clay and the equipment for winemaking was made from redgum felled on Potts land. This equipment included a crusher, the first lever press and many vats. Frank Potts also built a small brick distillery for producing spirit to fortify his wines.[2].

The name Bleasdale, chosen by Frank Potts, was in honour of the Reverend J.I. Bleasdale, a Roman Catholic clergyman of Victoria, who believed that more wine and less "spiritous liquors" would improve the health and spiritual welfare of the country's inhabitants.

Most of the wine produced at Bleasdale was sold to local markets. Conigrave in his 1886 survey of South Australia had this comment to make about Bleasdale:

"... on the plains towards Lake Alexandrina, on the rich alluvial banks of Langhorne's Creek are the vineyards of Mr. F. Potts and Mr. E.J. Hector. A large quantity of low class wines has been made at these vineyards, but the distance from Adelaide, and the small local demand has so disheartened the proprietors that they have turned their cattle into the vineyards."[3]

It is doubtful that Conigrave actually visited Bleasdale, and rumour has it that Frank Potts used his cows to "prune" the vines. An actual visitor, only a few years later, reported in a more optimistic vein. E.H. Hallack wrote for the S.A. Register and the Adelaide Observer, and in 1892 published his accounts of his travels around South Australia in book form. His paragraph on Bleasdale and the Potts (Frank had produced eleven sons) discusses the alluvial soil of the vineyard and then turns to the winemaking equipment.

"Near the cellars are the old wooden lever presses for grape-crushing erected by the former owner for that purpose, and constructed almost entirely of gum. They are curios in their way, and now stand as substantial proofs of the ingenuity of their maker. The last edition, modelled and set on the old original lines, was being worked for the first time this vintage. Its overhead galvanised iron roofing might be mistaken for a coverlet to a belfry. The cellarage, although capacious, has recently been added to, and the wines therein may be described as V.G. by any whose privilege it may be to sample them. The vats containing the wine are, as in Mr. Hardy's cellars, all made on the premises, and the produce of this vineyard and orchard may, in brief, be said to promise a bright future to the enterprise bestowed upon it."[4]

1.   Rosemary Burden, Wines and Wineries of the Southern Vales (Adel, 1972) p.129

2.   H.M. Martin, "History of Viticulture in S.A.", Wine & Spirit News and Australian Vigneron, Sept. 2d, 1923, p.387

3.   J.F. Conigrave, South Australia, Its History & Resources (Adel. 1886) p.97

4.   E.H. Hallack Our Townships, Farms & Homesteads: Southern District of S.A., (Adel. 1892) pp58-59

The excavations and extensions of 1892 created a small three-level building with underground storage under the roof for fortified wines. All the flooring and roof framing timbers are of red gum.

Frank Potts died in 1890 and Frank Junior took over Bleasdale. Other sons were involved in grape growing but only Edward also made wine. He established his "Kookaburra Cellars" in the 1890's and installed twenty red gum vats, each of 600 gallon capacity.[5]

In 1903 Ernest Whitington included a short note on the Langhorne Creek vintage which had proven "exceptionally light ... owing to the lack of the usual winter flooding of the land by the overflow of the Bremer ... Mr. F. Potts made approximately 16,500 gallons, Mr. E. Potts 8,000 gallons ..."[6] Edward Potts died in 1919 and his winery ceased production.

Bleasdale continued making mainly fortified wines and by 1923 a new still and the requisite bond store had been constructed.[7] The still and boiler were housed in a corrugated iron building, and extensions to the winery have been in this material.

The buildings at Bleasdale are in fair condition. The most notable construction feature is the use of red gum timber, and the great lever press is a unique piece of winery equipment. Red gum vats made by Frank Potts found their way into many wineries, both at Langhorne Creek and Adelaide.

Kate McDougall

Kate McDougall
REGISTER HISTORIAN

KMcD:SK
12/2/1982

NOTE

This research is an extract from Winery Buildings of S.A. 1836-1936: The Southern Regions, to be published by the Architecture Department of the University of Adelaide.

5. Wilson Berry Smith, Bleasdale, 1850-1950 p10

6. Ernest Whitington, S.A. Vintage, 1903. (Adel) p57

7. Martin, loc. cit.

HISTORICAL RESEARCH: BLEASDALE PRESS

The red gum wine press at Bleasdale is an exceptional piece of winery equipment and its design is a consequence of both the maker's innovative mind and the distance of Langhorne Creek from any large settlement in the initial winemaking years. The press which is on display at Bleasdale is the second one constructed. Frank Potts built a primitive log press from red gum when he was establishing his winery, during the 1860's. This press was used alone until 1982 when a second model based substantially on the same principle was constructed also from huge pit sawn red gum logs. A photograph at the winery, presumed to be from about 1915 shows both the presses together. The first press was retired soon after this.

Winemaking equipment, by the 1890's was fairly refined and quite compact. The actual press mechanism was usually made of iron, as the contemporary examples show, and most of the Australian produced equipment of the time was based on French design.

The Bleasdale press mechanism relies on the sheer weight of the "lever" arm to raise the twin press rods and a system of pegs to control the pressure of the arms on the grape skins in the red gum baskets underneath. The Potts family history states that Frank Potts was influenced by the water lifting equipment on the Tagus River in Portugal (which he had observed before coming to South Australia) when designing the original press.

The 1892 press was last used for the 1962 vintage.

In Australian Pioneer Technology, (p162) the comment is made that the red gum log press at Bleasdale is "... probably the most spectacular relic in the archaeology of the Australian wine industry."

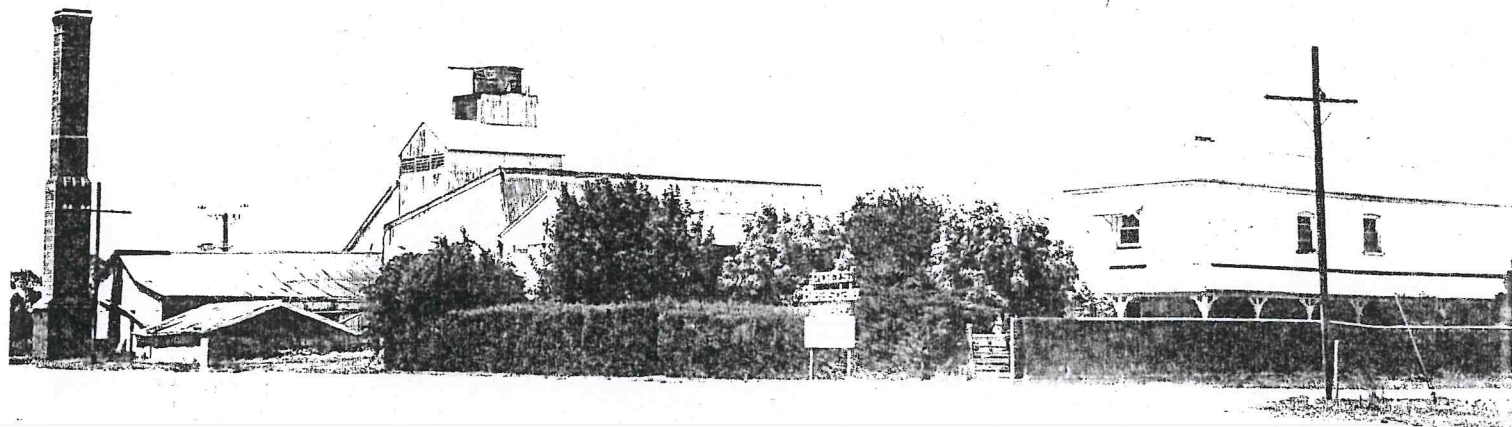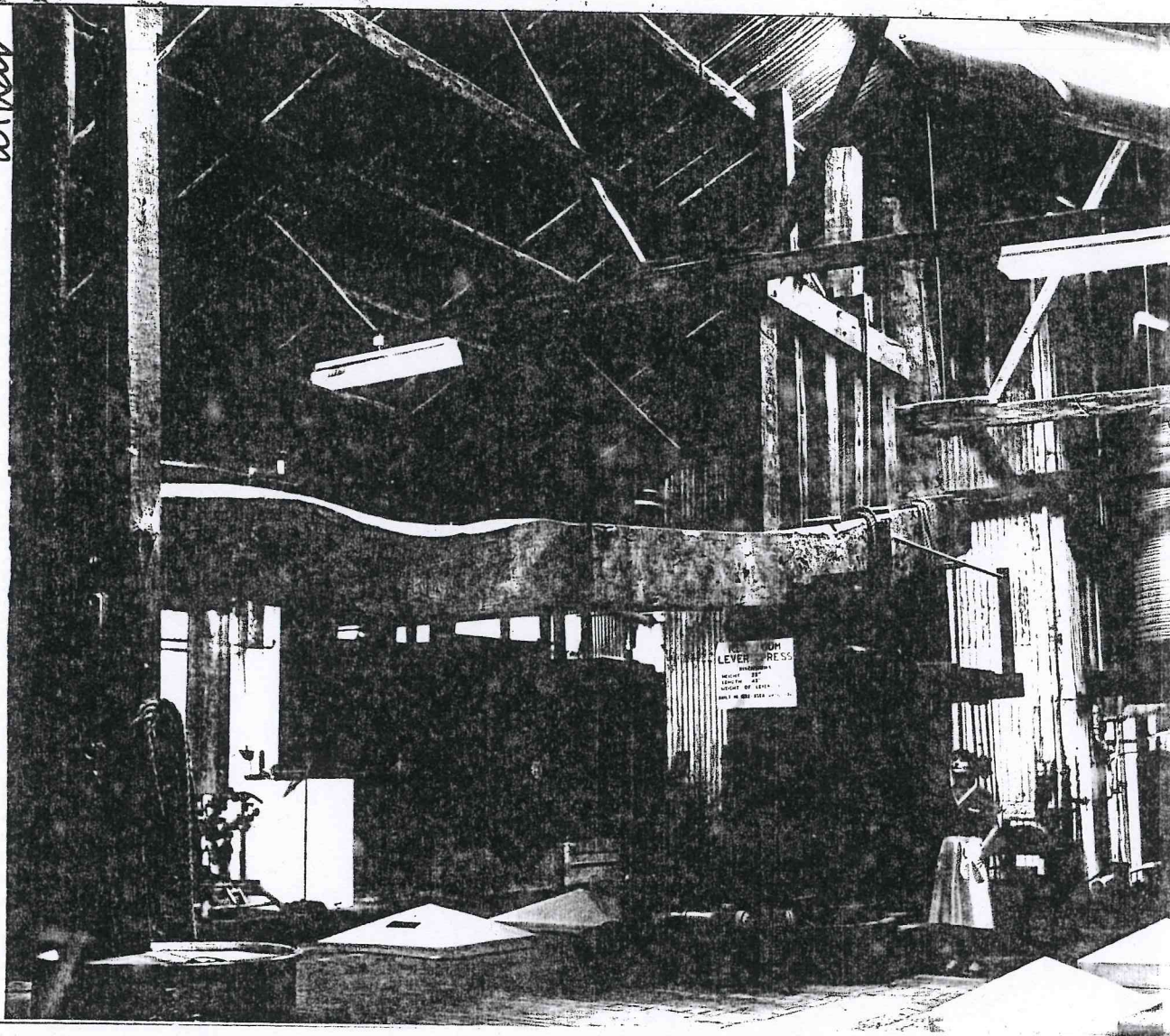Katina McDougall
REGISTER HISTORIAN

KMcD:SK

26/2/1982

FILM 427
No 1

BLEASDALE WINERY COMPLEX
REDGUM LEVER PRESS 4.2.82
Lomau

HERITAGE SURVEY
ITEM IDENTIFICATION SHEET

ITEM NAME: Bleasdale Winery

Former or other

PROJECT
HERITAGE SURVEY REGION 4

Item Ref. No.   149

Office Use
ITEM No.
DOCKET No.

DESCRIPTION: Constructed by common industrial techniques progressing from early solid stone wall sections to later lightweight corrugated iron clad frame construction. The complex includes some massive examples of red gum timber engineering, including a lever action wine press.

HISTORY: Frank Potts planted the first grapes on Bleasdale in the late 1850s and by c.1865 two small brick buildings housed operations. In the early 1890s operations were extended and the winery and its fame have grown ever since.

HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE: The winery complex speaks of the Potts' family ingenuity and local improvisation and is an essential part of the heritage of South Australia's wine industry. The remarkable red gum wine press is unique in Australia.

LOCATION
Address   Wellington Rd.

Town   Langhorne Creek
Postcode 5255
Section 3560
Hundred Freeling
County   Sturt
L.G.A.   Strathalbyn
S.H.P. Region 4
A.M.G. Ref. 6627-III

54 32230 609100

SUBJECT   4.3
           4.10

USE

PERIOD
State

Study Area   1836-61
              1862-80

REFERENCES

R. Burden, Wines and wineries of the Southern Vales, p.128
P.D. Verrier, The town that welcomes floods, pp. 7,15,37ff

Verbal   A. Scutchings
Archival photographs

TYPE OF ITEM
LAND Natural feature ☐
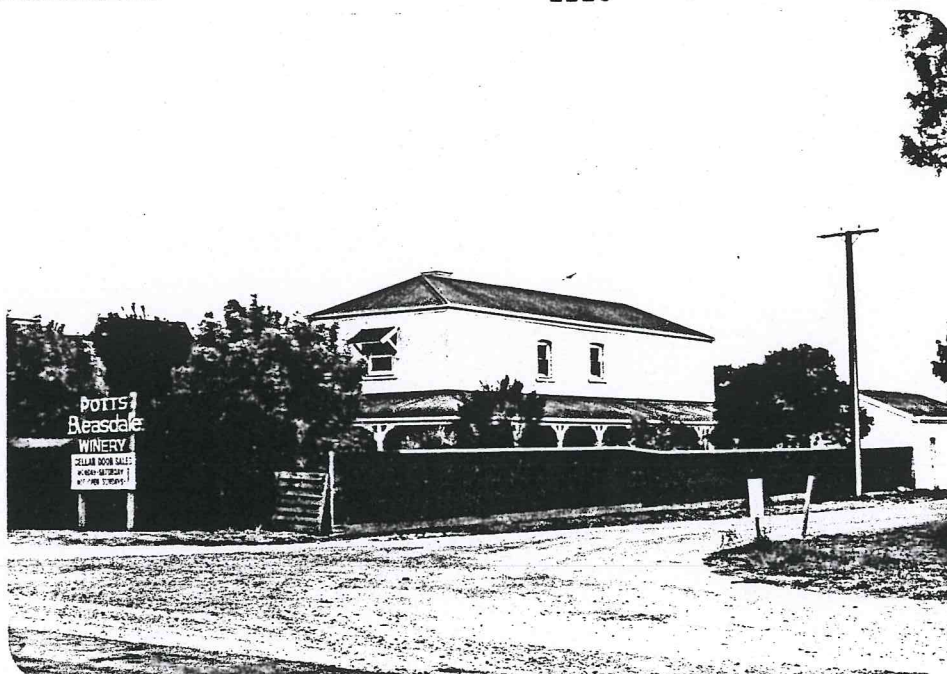   Historical site ☐
     Historical Gdn. ☐
BUILDING   ☒
STRUCTURE   ☐
PHYSICAL CONDITION

PHOTOGRAPH   Film No. 1220   Negative No. 17

STATUS
Reg. of State Her. Items
   Reg. ☒ Interim L☐
   Nominated
National Estate
   Reg. ☐ Proposed L☐
National Trust
   CL ☒ RL ☐ File☐
Other
                     ☐
                     ☐

LAND TITLE
   C.T. 2678/148

RECOMMENDATION

(A) State ☒ (B) Local ☐

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RED GUM
LEVER PRESS