

To: The South Australian Heritage Committee
From: Head, European Section, Heritage Conservation Branch
Subject: REGISTER NOMINATION:
WISANGER SCHOOL,
WISANGER, KANGAROO ISLAND
(Formerly the Wisanger Farmers Assembly Room)
Date: 26 January 1983

SUMMARY

This report has been prepared following a nomination by the current owner of the property. Wisanger School, which is located 12 miles west of Kingscote, was closed in 1945 and has deteriorated in the intervening years.

Historically, the Wisanger School building represents an important focus of social, cultural and religious life in the local community from 1884 until a few years ago; of the early bush schools on Kangaroo Island Wisanger gave the longest continuous service, and in its original form.

Architecturally, the Wisanger School, which is primitive in both form and construction, symbolises the hardship of life on the Island in the 1880's.

Environmentally, the building is sited in a lonely and romantic setting, surrounded by trees. It is a well-known local landmark.

The Integrity of the building is fair for its age, particularly considering that it is also derelict.

The building is listed on the Register of the National Trust, Recorded List.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Wisanger School, Wisanger, Kangaroo Island, be placed on the Register of State Heritage Items, and that it be categorized A2, A3.

Mark A Butcher.

per

Barry G. Rowney
CW:JD

South Australian Heritage Act 1978-80	Register of State Heritage Items ITEM EVALUATION SHEET Buildings and Structures						
	Item WISANGER SCHOOL WISANGER, KANGAROO ISLAND.						
Age 1884	Theme		Office 6426-10977				
Period 1844-1913	Subject EDUCATION & CULTURE - Formal Learning		Region 14 Kangaroo Island				
Building Type School	Style VERNACULAR		Status N.Tr.(R.L.)				
<u>Qualitative Data</u>			<u>Grading</u>				
Component			E VG AG FP NA				
<u>History</u>							
1. Context: Associated continuously with the social, religious and cultural life of the Wisanger farming community from 1884 until several years ago. Used continuously as an Education Dept. day school 1886-1945 (longest period of continuous use of a schoolroom in the Island); also for religious services and Sunday school regularly 1885-1925, public meetings, weddings, socials, concerts, voting etc.			*				
2. Person/Group: Associated with Wisanger farmer settlers, the Education Department, the local Agricultural Society, various Protestant Churches, social and sporting groups in the area.			*				
3. Event: The annual High Tea and Concert, an important social event in the local area.			*				
<u>Architecture</u>							
4. Architect/Builder: Not yet known. Not yet known.			*				
5. Design: Rectangular plan, single room with fireplace, projecting porch, high gabled roof.			*				
6. Construction: Local limestone walls, corrugated iron roof with sapling rafters; four paned sash windows.			*				
7. Interior: Stark - rendered walls, timber floor and ceiling.			*				
8. Representation: A primitive but functional example of vernacular building reflecting austere conditions on the Island at that time.			*				
<u>Environment</u>							
9. Continuity: Isolated rural setting 19 kilometres from Kingscote on Main North Coast Road, Wisanger Park homestead opposite is only other building in environ.			*				

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Item WISANGER SCHOOL, WISANGER, KANGAROO ISLAND							
Component	Comment	Grading E VG AG FP NA					
10. Local Character:	The building is one of many lonely and romantic ruins to be found in the Kangaroo Island landscape.		*				
11. Landmark:	An important local landmark.		*				
<u>Integrity</u>							
12. Alterations:	Structural repairs rather than alterations have been carried out.			*			
13. Condition:	Poor, the walls are severely cracked and bowed, metal bands have been placed around church. Matchboard ceiling almost non-existent and many ceiling timbers and roof need replacing, also window frames.				*		
14. Compatibility:	Unused and unusable at present.				*		
<u>Supplementary Information</u>							
Adaptation:	The building will rapidly deteriorate to a ruinous state, the alternative of complete restoration requires reroofing, replacement of roofing timbers, guttering, ceiling, floor and windows with extensive repairs to walls.						
Interpretation:	A policy decision on the long term future of this and similar Kangaroo Island sites is essential. A site with ruins would retain a high potential for passive interpretation, however consideration should be given to potential for interpretive centre if the building is restored.						
Current Situation:	The building is owned by W.R. & M.E. Boxer who also own the Wisanger Park Homestead. The owners are aware of the history of the building which they are anxious to preserve and will probably apply for funding for restoration.						
Evaluated By Carolyn Wigg, Consultant Architect Reviewed By Mark A. Butcher Kathleen Patitsas, Consultant Historian							

HISTORICAL RESEARCH REPORT: WISANGER SCHOOL, WISANGER

In September 1884 residents of the North West part of the Hundred of Menzies met and agreed to build a room for a school and meetings on Section 112, made available by Mr. H. Chenoweth. Five trustees were appointed and the building was to be called the Wisanger Farmers' Assembly Room. It was constructed by local people in a series of working bees, stone being carted by bullock wagon from Smith Bay and Emu Bay, sand excavated from the roadside close to the site and some native timber from the scrub was used in the roof.

The building was rented to the Education Department in 1885 and from then on became known as the Wisanger School. It remained open continuously for the next sixty years, a record period of time on the Island for use of a school-room in its unaltered form. The school area included a garden for teaching purposes. In December 1945 the school was closed and in 1954 the land and building were sold, the proceeds being donated to Kingscote Area School. The new owner braced the structure with rods to stabilise the walls and erected new guttering. The room continued in use for meetings and a polling booth until a few years ago.

The building is most important for the length of time it remained in use as a school, but is also significant for its contribution to local social life; from 1885-1925 it was used regularly (usually weekly) for religious services held by various church denominations and for Sunday School. It was also used for weddings, socials, concerts and sporting get-togethers in the district, and throughout its lifetime (until recently) served as a space for public meetings. Probably the most important social event held there was the High Tea and Concert held annually; cricket (until the 1950's) and tennis were played on areas laid out for the purpose in a paddock adjacent to the schoolyard.

The building is of local rather than state-wide importance, and most significant for the length of time it remained in use as a bush school virtually unaltered in appearance.

Sources:

L. Bell & F. Davidson: A history of Kangaroo Island Schools 1836-1980, Kingscote, 1981.

W.H. Newnham: Kangaroo Island Sketchbook (Adelaide, 1975).

C.T. 3055/25.

Kathleen Patitsas
Register Historian

KP:JD
26/1/83



WISANGER SCHOOL, WISANGER

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Wisanger School, Wisanger
Kangaroo Island

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