

**former tannery**

**Place no.: 1290**

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**Address**

2 Thomas St, Nairne

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**ASSESSMENT OF HERITAGE VALUE**

**Description**

Three-level building constructed of random rubble with stone dressings and a cgi gable roof. Features include timber-framed openings with multi-paned timber-framed tall casement windows with substantial timber lintels.

**Statement of Heritage Value**

This is significant as a rare surviving example of a tannery building which is also the oldest surviving example in the State. It retains a high integrity and has significant associations with smallgoods manufacturers Jacobs and Chapman.

**Relevant Criteria**

- (a) *it demonstrates important aspects of the evolution or pattern of the State's history, having significant associations with the early development of tanning in the Colony, as well with the early development in smallgoods production of Jacobs and Chapman.*
- (b) *it has rare, uncommon or endangered qualities that are of cultural significance, being one of the only tannery buildings to survive in South Australia.*
- (d) *it is an outstanding representative of a particular class of places of cultural significance, being an outstanding surviving example of a tannery.*

**RECOMMENDATION**

This place is recommended for inclusion in the State Heritage Register.

Note: the tannery forms the historical focus for the highly significant group of early buildings associated with tanner Henry Timmins. The most significant elements of this group are Timmins' tannery, his original cottage (Bigmore Cottage at 107 Princes Highway) and the house & shop now known as Upstairs, downstairs. The latter is currently included in the State Heritage Register, and the cottage & tannery have both been recommended for the same by this survey.

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**Criterion (a)** *it demonstrates important aspects of the evolution or pattern of the State's history.*

Tanning was one of the earliest industries in South Australia. As early as 1839, complaints were made that a tannery on the bank of the Torrens was polluting the drinking water (Jensen 18). Mr Bean established a tanning office on King William Street in the mid 1840s. In 1875, there were 30 people employed by the tanning industry within the Adelaide square mile (Jensen 446). Other early tanneries were established in the Thebarton, Bowden & Hindmarsh areas. There were also tanneries in several of the State's major towns, including Nairne, Hahndorf, Mount Barker, Mount Gambier, Birdwood, Kapunda (1872), Port MacDonnell et al. The significant Mount Barker tannery on Cameron Street was rebuilt twice after fires and was eventually demolished in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The first tannery to be established south of Adelaide was Henry Timmins' tannery at Nairne (Hignett). Timmins arrived in Nairne in 1851, soon afterwards establishing and constructing a tannery on the banks of the Nairne Creek. There are differing references as to when Timmins operated his tannery in Nairne. Several date his tanning operations as 1851–1877, but it is not clear exactly when the current stone building was constructed. He purchased the land from Albert Elder and George Tinline in 1854, and the construction methods indicate that it was likely to have been constructed in the early to mid 1850s. At about the same time, Timmins also constructed a sturdy stone cottage in front of the tannery and adjacent to the main road. Jensen refers to Timmins as opening a second tannery in Nairne in 1868. It is not clear where this was located. Timmins also constructed a larger cottage at no. 103 soon after purchasing the land in 1859. He then lived at no. 103 until his large new house at 107 was completed. Timmins' business had proved so successful, that in 1870, he commissioned Spence Bros to construct a fine two-storey shop & residence adjacent to the main street in front of his tannery ('Upstairs Downstairs' -currently entered in the State Heritage Register). Jensen speculates that this house may have been designed by Edmund Wright. If this was indeed so, it serves to illustrate how successful Timmins had become since first establishing his tannery. Timmins continued to operate his tannery until 1877 when he leased the property to JA Tiggemann & CCT Pflaum. By the 1880s, the property was being used by smallgoods manufacturers W Jacobs and George Chapman. In 1899, Chapman moved his bacon and smallgoods factory to larger premises on the corner of Princes Highway and Sydney Road, and Chapman's has since become a household name for meat products. Thus the old tannery building in Thomas Street has significant associations with two important branches of the livestock industry and demonstrates two of Nairne's (and South Australia's) most significant industries.

**Criterion (b)** *it has rare, uncommon or endangered qualities that are of cultural significance.*

Tanning was one of South Australia's earliest industries and there were many tanneries established throughout the State. However, there are now very few 19<sup>th</sup>-century tanneries surviving in South Australia and this example at Nairne is a rare survivor of this significant building type.

**Criterion (d)** *it is an outstanding representative of a particular class of places of cultural significance.*

Despite the significance of the tanning industry to the history and development of several parts of South Australia, there are currently no tanneries listed on the State Heritage Register. Very few examples of this class of buildings even survive in the State. The Nairne Tannery is one of the few surviving examples of a 19<sup>th</sup>-century tannery, and is also the best surviving example to be located in any of the references below. The building was used as an industrial building during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, initially as a tannery (1851-1880s) and then as a bacon factory until the current Chapman's factory was established in 1899. During the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the building was disused for

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**ASSESSMENT OF HERITAGE VALUE**

**Criterion (d), cont.**

some time until its conversion to its current use a residence. Because the building was not much further developed during its period as a bacon factory, it has been relatively little altered and still reflects the original form and construction of the old tannery building. Thus the building remains an outstanding representative of a tannery building.

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**REFERENCES**

- Gardiner, F 1997, *Interim Mount Barker & Nairne Townships Heritage Register*, pp 360-2.
- Griffin, T and M McCaskill [eds] 1986, *Atlas of South Australia*, pp 37 & 80.
- Hignett & Co. 1983, *Mount Barker District Heritage Survey*, S251.
- Jensen, Elfrida & Rolf 1980, *Colonial Architecture in South Australia*, pp 18, 20 59, 67, 69, 348, 352, 402, 409, 446, 477 & 550.
- Local History Centre, heritage files & photographs.
- Martin, V 1982, *Mostly Mount Barker*, pp 62-3.
- *Mount Barker Courier*.
- National Trust of South Australia, Walk, Recorded list 3193.
- *Register*, 10 September 1874.
- Schmidt, Bob 1983, *Mountain upon the Plain, A History of Mount Barker and its Surroundings*.
- [www.heritage.gov.au/ahpi](http://www.heritage.gov.au/ahpi), [www.slsa.sa.gov.au](http://www.slsa.sa.gov.au), [www.southaustralianhistory.com.au](http://www.southaustralianhistory.com.au)



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**SITE RECORD**

<b>Location</b>	2 Thomas St, Nairne
<b>Description</b>	Three-level stone building adjacent creek.
<b>Significant fabric</b>	Stone walls & dressings, cgi roof and timber-framed openings including casement windows.
<b>Condition</b>	Vulnerable
<b>Land Description</b>	Allot 43 D67242 Pt Section 5201, Hundred of Kanmantoo CT 5943-523
<b>Local Government Area</b>	District Council of Mount Barker
<b>Current Use</b>	Residence
<b>Original Use</b>	Tannery
<b>State Heritage Status</b>	L02
<b>State Heritage File No.</b>	16486
<b>Other Assessments</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• District Council of Mount Barker 2002, L261</li><li>• Gardiner, F 1997, <i>Interim Mount Barker &amp; Nairne Townships Heritage Register</i>, L3:359</li><li>• Heritage Online 2004, <i>Mount Barker Heritage Survey</i>, included in the proposed Nairne State Heritage Area</li><li>• Hignett &amp; Co 1983, <i>Mount Barker District Heritage Survey</i>, S251</li><li>• National Trust of South Australia, Walk, NTR3193</li></ul>
<b>Photograph File</b>	Mt Barker Heritage Survey\MBHS Photos\Nairne\NA Thomas tannery#2-4
<b>Report by</b>	Anna Pope

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