

SUMMARY OF STATE HERITAGE PLACE

REGISTER ENTRY

Entry in the South Australian Heritage Register in accordance with the *Heritage Places Act 1993*

NAME: Houghton Union Chapel

PLACE NO.: 26493

ADDRESS: 21 Blackhill Road, Houghton SA 5131

CT 5462/764 AL2 FP3148 Hundred Yatala

STATEMENT OF HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

The Houghton Union Chapel is one of the earliest church, school and community buildings in the State, and has significant associations with the early religious development of South Australia. The Houghton Chapel was built cooperatively by members of the Wesleyan Methodist, Congregational and Episcopalian Churches in 1845, and was shared by them as a place of worship until 1874.



South Australia was founded on principles of non-discrimination against dissenting denominations. Demonstrating the religious freedom the first settlers to South Australia enjoyed, the Houghton Union Chapel has significant associations with the distinctive early religious development of the colony, and in particular with the religious cooperation that prompted the construction of several multi-denominational or 'Union' Chapels. The building was also used as a local primary school from 1847 until 1877 and is one of the earliest examples of a building used for schooling prior to the standardisation of education in South Australia in 1875. The Chapel has been little altered for over 160 years, and thus provides a rare insight into early construction techniques and materials, as well as into the design of early church buildings.

RELEVANT CRITERIA (under section 16 of the *Heritage Places Act 1993*)

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

The Houghton Union Chapel demonstrates significant aspects of the evolution of the State's history, in particular the early religious development of the state. The building also has important associations with the early development of the Tea Tree Gully and Adelaide Hills area, and with the early development of education in South Australia.

Houghton was one of the first townships to be founded outside Adelaide, and was laid out in 1840. The first buildings constructed there were Traveller's Rest Public House (1841), six cottages and a shop (1842), with the chapel and school building being erected by the community in 1845.

The chapel at Houghton was one of the colony's earliest 'Union' Chapels. The way in which religion developed in South Australia was a point of difference for the colony. Unlike other Australian colonies, the Church of England was not the 'State church' – instead, non-conformist denominations were actively encouraged to establish themselves in South Australia under principles of religious freedom. There were four sects of Methodists, and multiple sects of Baptists and Lutherans as well as Congregationalists and Presbyterians. Other smaller groups flourished as well, including Unitarians and the Church of Christ. South Australia was truly a 'Paradise of Dissent'.

The wide spread of different denominations had a significant impact on the development of the State, both culturally and physically. Many settlements constructed more than one church or chapel building to serve the various congregations – alongside the hotel, these were usually the most prominent structures in the village. Houghton was no exception, eventually having three separate church buildings, the first of which was multi-denominational – the Union Chapel.

Houghton Union Chapel was built by its community in 1845 with no aid from the government (aid was only briefly available between 1847 and 1851). Given the village had only been founded four years earlier and Houghton's early residents were still establishing themselves, money was scarce. The Houghton area's small congregations of Wesleyan Methodists, Congregationalists and Episcopalians were not yet in a position to construct their own separate buildings, so they banded together to build one shared chapel – a building that not only provided each group with a place to hold their services and meetings, but also provided a school. This type of practical cooperation was not uncommon in South Australia in the first decade of settlement – several other Union Chapel were also built in the early years, with the first built in Port Adelaide in 1838 (now demolished). The next five Union Chapels to be constructed in South Australia were in Brighton (1843),

Mitcham (1844), Angaston (1844), Houghton (1845) and Gawler (1845). Of these first six Union Chapels, only two now survive, the state-listed chapel at Angaston, and the subject chapel at Houghton.

Slightly later in 1846, a non-denominational Christian Chapel was built in Hindmarsh (SHP13693). While this building also exemplifies the prevalence of non-conformist religions found in early South Australia, and the religious freedom of the first settlers, it has been significantly altered since its early construction. In comparison, the Houghton Chapel stands today as it was first built in 1845 and therefore better demonstrates its association to the first Union chapels of South Australia in its fabric. These early chapels are of great significance to the State because they exemplify the religious freedom of the first settlers and the diverse religious landscape of 'free' settlement.

In order to increase the number of schools in operation and the number of teachers coming to South Australia, the Central Board of Education was established under the 1851 Education Act. Teachers were encouraged to use country chapels or community halls to run classes. At this time there were 31 schools in South Australia of which only six remain, the Houghton Chapel being the third oldest. Due to the growing pressure on the government to improve the standard of schooling in South Australia, in 1875 The Education Act was passed. The Houghton Chapel continued to be used as a school for another three years after the 1875 Act was passed. However, in 1877 the government approved funding for the construction of a new school building which was one of the largest in the State. After this time in many Model School buildings were constructed providing a standardised approach to education in South Australia and many of the original school houses were converted to other uses or were demolished. Therefore, being one of the first buildings used for schooling before the Education Acts of 1851 and 1875, the Houghton Chapel remains as a record of evolution or pattern of the State's education history.

In summary, the Houghton Union Chapel was used as a chapel for the Wesleyan Methodists, Congregational and Episcopal Church from 1845 until 1874. In fact, the Houghton Union Chapel is possibly one of only two churches built in South Australia to accommodate the Episcopal Church. Of the fifteen surviving non-conformist churches built in South Australia from 1836 until 1850, The Houghton Union Chapel is the third oldest and serves to exemplify the religious freedoms of the first settlers. As was common with most of the first churches, the building was also used as a school house and meeting hall for the friendly societies located in the area. By 1875 the Wesleyans and Congregationalists had built their own churches in Houghton and the Episcopalians had merged with the other churches. The school continued to use the building until a new school was built in 1878. After this time the building has been little used other than for storage of farming equipment. This has resulted in the chapel looking much as it did when it was

originally used and its use as a church and school can be demonstrated in its fabric.

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

Houghton Union Chapel is a rare surviving example of an early place of worship and schooling, and represents a way of life which was once a crucial part of early South Australian settlement, but is now no longer practiced.

When South Australia was established, the settlers had the freedom to practice any religion they chose. This led to the construction of over 61 church buildings in South Australia between 1836 and 1850, representing over 11 denominations and sects. Of the known church buildings in this first phase of settlement, 5 were dedicated purely for Wesleyan worship, 8 were Congregationalist, none were Episcopalian, and 9 were Union Chapels – a combination of different denominations. Houghton Union Chapel represents all four of these church types, having been constructed jointly by Wesleyans, Congregationalists and Episcopalians. Of the 61 churches built during this time, there are only around 8 churches which survive which are older or the same age as the Houghton Union Chapel.

When it was constructed in 1845, the Houghton Union Chapel was the fifth building to be built for Wesleyan services, the seventh Congregationalist and the first Episcopalian. It was also the fifth Union Chapel constructed and is now the second-oldest surviving example of a Union Chapel. Overall, it is now one of only four surviving Union Chapels in the State, the others being at Angaston (1844), Hindmarsh (1846) and Morphett Vale (1850). These are all aspects of rarity that link in closely to the earliest period of religious development in the colony that exemplified religious freedom.

As well as its important and rare demonstration of early religious development, the Houghton Union Chapel is also an early surviving school building. Being used as a school prior to the passing of government regulations regarding education, The Chapel is the third oldest surviving building with direct connection to early education in South Australia.

In summary, the former Union Chapel represents several significant qualities that are rare and endangered. It provides a rare insight into the early development of church buildings in rural South Australia, including through its links with three separate denominations, and its representation of the now rare concept of the Union Chapel. It is also one of the oldest surviving chapels and schools in the state, and has rare and endangered qualities because of its state of intactness, having been little altered for over 100 years.

(e) it demonstrates a high degree of creative, aesthetic or technical accomplishment or is an outstanding representative of particular construction techniques or design characteristics.

The Houghton Union Chapel is an outstanding surviving representative of early vernacular construction techniques and materials.

The Houghton Union Chapel is a well-proportioned, simple rectangular three-bay church with three evenly-placed windows along each side wall, and a gable roof. The building is constructed in irregular blocks of local stone that are pointed with a rough mortar. There is a small lean-to at the rear and a rendered entrance porch at the front. The roof is clad in sheets of corrugated iron. The chapel was designed and constructed by members of the local community, and the fact that it has survived for over 170 years despite drainage issues, disuse and neglect is testament to the original quality of construction.

Despite its condition, the integrity of the chapel remains high as it has been so little altered since its original construction. The main change to the fabric has been the addition of cgi roof cladding in the mid-19th century. Since the church congregations and school moved out in the 1870s, the building has been little used other than for storage of farm equipment and building materials. Its untouched state means the building still demonstrates a number of construction techniques that were once prevalent in South Australia but are now rarely found, generally having been lost due to decay, renovations or removal during conservation. Features of note include the external lime-based pointing, the multi-paned timber windows, and the timber roof shingles evident under the sheets of cgi, the lath-and-plaster ceiling, the rough lime-rendered internal walls in the main body of the church, and the lime-washed interior walls in the rear lean-to.

While the Houghton Union Chapel used construction techniques common to other churches built during the early settlement of South Australia, examples of its type of construction are not commonly found. Due to the untouched nature of the place, the integrity of these construction techniques is of a very high standard and provides an outstanding representative of the particular construction techniques highlighted above.

SITE PLAN

Houghton Union Chapel,
21 Blackhill Road, Houghton SA 5131

PLACE NO: 26493



Houghton Union Chapel,
21 Blackhill Road, Houghton

Legend

-  Outline of Houghton Union Chapel
-  Site boundary outline



COMMENTARY ON THE LISTING

Description and notes with respect to a place entered in the South Australian Heritage Register in accordance with the *Heritage Places Act 1993*

Physical Description

The Houghton Union Chapel is a single-storey, stone building built into the face of a gently sloping site in the centre of the village of Houghton. The former chapel is not very visible from the street due to the CWA hall built directly in front of it. However, when the church was built in 1845, it was one of the main community buildings on the village green.

The main body of the church has three bays with a gable porch and lean-to to the rear. It is constructed in irregular blocks of local stone which are pointed in a rough mortar. The front (south-west) facade of the church is constructed from rubble and rendered in a rough lime-based render and lime washed. This end of the chapel is badly cracked and the render at the top of the gable has gone entirely leaving the stones underneath exposed. The gable of the rear (north-east) facade is face stone, this gable has the remnants of dead ivy which once covered this end of the chapel. Both the south-east and north-west facades of the church include three vertical sash windows. The windows are timber-framed with timber lintels. The top and bottom sashes of each window is divided into six panes. Some of the glass is still intact, however, most panes are broken or missing. The roof is clad in corrugated-iron with modern 'D'-profile gutters which probably replaced original gutters. Some of the gutters are hanging loose. The barge boards have rotted out and the sheet of iron on the north-east end of the roof has fallen exposing the original timber shingles underneath. The redbrick chimney from the central fireplace can be seen at the ridge.

A later gabled porch (now roofless) is attached to the front facade and has a central front door that is now blocked in. The porch is also rendered. Deterioration of the porch has revealed the door to the main part of the building. This is a timber double door with a transom light divided into five bays. There is only one pane of glass left in the transom. The original timber lintel is in place.

To the rear of the former church is a stone lean-to with a timber-framed cgi-clad section to the north end, and a cgi skillion roof. This part of the chapel is partly set into the ground. The random local stone (south-east) side of the lean-to has a stone and red-brick chimney topped by a clay chimney pot. The stone in this part of the building is good condition although the mortar has nearly entirely gone. There are two windows in the back wall, one in the stone section and another in the cgi-clad section, this section also has a side door.

The interior of the main section of the chapel is currently being used for storage of farming equipment and building materials. It appears to have not been entered or altered for some time. As a result, evidence of the original construction techniques remain. The walls of the chapel are rough-lime rendered which are coloured brown the height of the ceiling with the lower wall coloured red. The plaster is largely intact however, small sections are cracked. The back wall of the main room of the chapel has a fire place with the chimney breast behind. This is set into a wall which divides the main body of the church in two. There is no door in the dividing wall which means the second room in the main building must be accessed through the lean-to section at the rear of the chapel. The ceiling follows the line of the roof framing above and is constructed using lath and plaster. Large sections of the ceiling are missing. The interior of the lean-to section is face stone painted with a lime wash. Internally the timber framed cgi walls are clad with sheets of timber particle board.

Elements of Significance

Elements of heritage significance include:

- Stone church building including front porch and rear lean-to.

Elements excluded from the listing are:

- CWA building located in front of the church.

History of the Place

On 16 January 1839, John Barton Hack requested a Special Survey of the Tea Tree Gully area. The survey was known as the Little Parra Survey and also the Third Special Survey. The survey included the towns now known as Houghton, Inglewood and Golden Grove. By April 1839, a private surveyor had further surveyed the Little Para survey into 64, eighty-acre sections. These early sections were scattered over the district making the most of the river and its fertile land. Forty-five of the sections were selected by Hack and were jointly acquired with Thomas Williams and Colonel Gawler – who was being represented at the time by Lieutenant George Hall. In 1840, Hack sold his 600 acres of land to Jacob Hagen – woolgrower, shipping agent and moneylender and John Richardson – house, land and commission agent, for £3 per acre.

One of the sections John Richardson had acquired from Hack in 1840 was section 5519. Section 5519 was hilly and as a result was not being used for agriculture. In 1841 shortly after his purchase of land from Hack, Richardson subdivided section 5519 into 50 allotments and laid out the village of Houghton. By the end of 1842 the village of Houghton boasted a pub, six cottages and a shop and by 1845, most of the sections had been sold and the town was gradually becoming a hive of activity.

In 1844, John Richardson sold allotment 18 at Houghton to George Morphett, John Morphett's brother with the intension that the land would be used for the construction

of the first church in Houghton. It was during the early part of 1845, that the combined Congregationalists, Wesleyans Methodists and Episcopalians built a stone, multi-purpose church on lot 18 which they named the 'Union Chapel'. The first three services were held in the church on 18 May 1845. The first in the morning by Mr S. Gill, one in the afternoon by Mr J. Playford the great-grandfather of the former South Australian Premier Sir Thomas Playford, and the third in the evening by Mr W. R. Squibb, who was also the village schoolmaster.

Like a number of other churches in the early settlement of South Australia the Former Union Chapel in Houghton represents the prevalence of non-conformist Christian denominations which had the freedom to establish their own churches in this part of Australia. In the other Australian colonies, the Church of England was a 'state-church' supported and subsidised by the Government. South Australia was founded on principles of non-discrimination against non-conformist denominations. These principles of religious freedom led to a far greater relative percentage of minor denomination churches being established in the colony, as well as slowing down the early progress of the Church of England and discouraging that denomination's domination. It was not until 3 August 1847 that any State aid was available to assist church building in the Colony. This Act was repealed in 1851. Therefore, the task of funding and construction of the first churches in the colony were the responsibility of the community. As was the case in Houghton, in an effort to reduce the number of churches which needed to be built, the construction of a multi-use and multi-denomination church was an attractive and viable option. These multi-use churches were called Union chapels and were built in small townships with the purpose of accommodating a number of different Christian denominations and uses.

In 1847, George Morphett conveyed the church to the trustees of the chapel and also to William Riccard Squibb for use as a village school. Squibb ran and taught at the school. At the time the school had 26 students. From the time of its construction until the 1860s, the church continued to service the Wesleyans, the Congregationalists, the Episcopalians and the local school. However, a rift between the three religious groups occurred and by the late-1860s the three denominations were seeking alternative locations to set up their own independent churches. The Episcopalians were the first to withdraw from the chapel. By 1867 the Wesleyans had also withdrawn from the chapel and laid the foundation stone for their new church on 7 July. The Wesleyan church was situated across the green from the Union Chapel. Finally in 1874, the Congregationalists also withdrew from the Union Chapel. By 1875 they had constructed their own church on the other side of the green, just two doors down from the new Wesleyan church.

In 1874 the chapel was conveyed to the District Council of Highercombe for the purposes of a district school. It was during the 1870s that the chapel become very run down and neglected, possibly due to confusion over ownership and responsibility for the building. In 1875 the residents of Houghton demanded the government provide

resources for a new school building. The passage of the Education Act 1875 resulted in the classification of the Houghton Primary School as a public school and in 1877 the government approved funding for the construction of a new school building. The poor condition of the Chapel also resulted in its other remaining uses being transferred to new buildings in the following years. This included a Rechabite Hall (c1880) and community Hall (1901).

In July 1951, the chapel was transferred to the South Australian Country Women's Association Incorporated (CWA). Soon after the CWA built a small hall on the land directly in front of the chapel. In 1984 the CWA subdivided the small parcel of land on which their hall stands and sold the large strip of land, including the Union Chapel.

Since 1878 when the Houghton school relocated, the Houghton Chapel has been little used other than as an outbuilding. Despite this, the building still stands and is the last remaining building built during the early settlement of Houghton. It is also one of the first Union Chapels and in-deed amongst one of the first churches to be built in South Australia.

Chronology

Year	Event
March 1837	The first South Australian surveys take place and include Holdfast Bay and the land along the banks of the Torrens.
April 1837	John Barton Hack visits the Little Para area and decides to build a sheep fold.
1838	Union Chapel built in Port Adelaide (now demolished)
16 January 1839	John Barton Hack requests a Special Survey of the Tea Tree Gully area
April 1839	The Little Para survey was further surveyed by a private surveyor into 64, 80 acre sections
1840	In May, Hack started leasing small portions of his land for farm use at £4/acre. Later in the same year, Hack sold his 600 acre of land to Jacob Hagen and John Richardson for £3/acre. 16 further sections from the 1839 Special Survey were advertised for general selection.
1841	Richardson subdivided section 5519 into 50 allotments and laid out the village of Houghton. The first allotments in Houghton sold to Charles Millar in October and one of the first public buildings in the town, the Travellers Rest, was built soon after.
1843	The Travellers Rest, a public house in Houghton, was registered to Thomas Neale. Union Chapel built in Brighton (now demolished)

- 1844 Union Chapel built at Angaston (extant)**
- 1845** Gawler's section, which totalled 1,000 acres, was sold to Andrew Shillabeer and Joseph Gould.
- Houghton Union Chapel constructed: The combined Congregationalists, Wesleyans and Episcopalians built a stone, multi-purpose building on lot 18 which was called the 'Union Chapel'.**
- 1846 Union Chapel built in Gawler (now demolished)**
- 1846 Union Chapels built in Hindmarsh (extant SHP13693), Mitcham (now demolished) and Kensington (now demolished)**
- 1847 **Trustees of the Houghton Union Chapel convey the use of the building during the week to the village school, run by Squibb, at a cost of ten shillings per annum.**
- 1848 A postal service in which serviced the Little Para area was introduced.
- 1850 **Union Chapels built in Morphett Vale (extant LHP) and Peterborough (now demolished)**
- 1852 Local Council of Houghton opened.
- 1854 Road running through Houghton diverted to avoid the village and the steep pitch of Black Hill.
- 1855 Construction of Bristol House in Houghton
- 1868 The Wesleyan Methodists built their own church across the green from the Union Chapel in Houghton.
- 1874 **The Houghton Union Chapel was conveyed to the District Council of Highercombe for the purposes of a district school.**
- 1875 The Congregationalists construct their own church on the other side of the green.
- The residents of Houghton demanded the government provide more resources for a new school building.
- 13 The foundation stone for a new primary school was laid.
- February
- 1878
- 1885 Construction of Houghton Rechabite Hall
- June 1951 Houghton Union Chapel conveyed to The Minister of Education. CWA built a small hall on the land directly in front of the chapel. In the**
- July 1951 The chapel is conveyed to the South Australian Country Women's Association Incorporated (CWA).**
- 1984 **CWA subdivided the small parcel of land on which their hall stands and sold the large strip of land, including the Union Chapel.**

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SITE DETAILS

Houghton Union Chapel
21 Blackhill Road, Houghton SA 5131

PLACE NO: 26493

FORMER NAME:	Houghton Primary School/Houghton Union Chapel	
DESCRIPTION OF PLACE:	Single-storey, gable-end stone church with rendered front porch and stone lean-to at the rear.	
DATE OF COMPLETION:	1845	
REGISTER STATUS:	Nominated 06/12/17 Provisionally entered 23/08/18	
CURRENT USE:	unused Date/s 1878-present	
PREVIOUS USE(S):	Church, school, meeting place, possibly farm outbuilding and residence. Date/s used 1845-1878 Unknown dates for outbuilding/residence	
BUILDER:	Local residence Date 1845	
SUBJECT INDEXING:	Group:	Religion
	Category:	Union Chapel
LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA:	Tea Tree Gully	
LOCATION:	Street No.:	21
	Street Name:	Blackhill Road
	Town/Suburb:	Houghton
	Post Code:	5131
LAND DESCRIPTION:	Title Reference:	CT 5462/764
	Lot No.:	2
	Plan No.:	3148
	Hundred:	Yatala
MAP REFERENCE (GDA94):	MGA Zone	54
	Easting (X)	295487.3120
	Northing (Y)	6143729.5250

PHOTOS



Front wall of the chapel. Note the rendered stone work and bricked up front door. (March 2018)

Source DEW



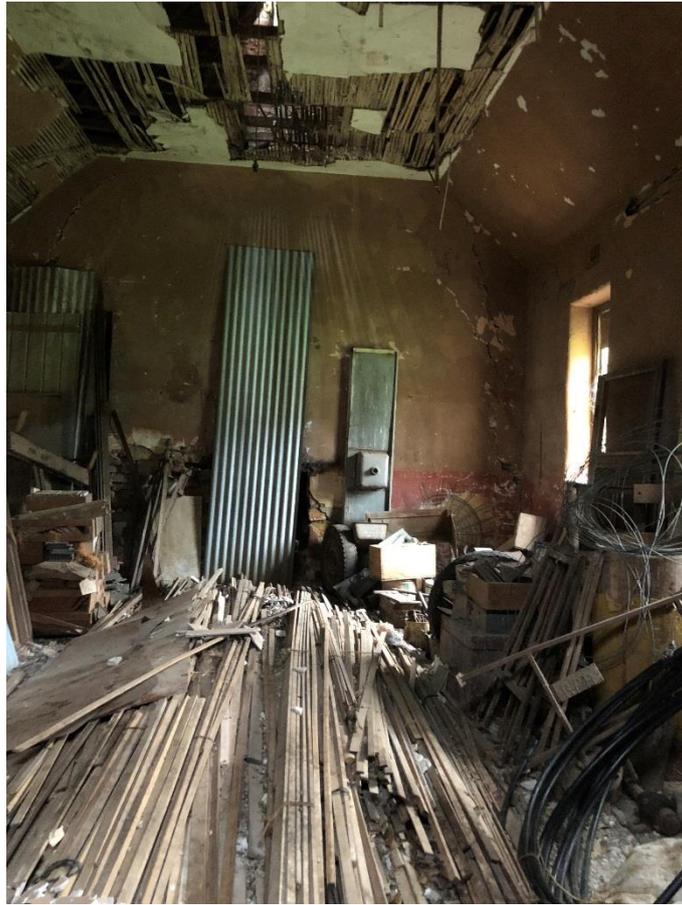
South-west elevation note the stone and brick chimney at the rear. (March 2018)

Source DEW



Rear view of the Houghton Union Chapel (August 2018)

Source- DEW



Interior of the Houghton Union Chapel (August 2018)

Source- DEW



Houghton Union Chapel built (c1909).

Source- State Library of South Australia (B 41902)