

# BETHLEHEM LUTHERAN CHURCH COMPLEX



23504 Bethlehem Lutheran Complex Tabor cemetery 0958



23504 Bethlehem Lutheran Complex Tabor cemetery 0959



23504 Bethlehem Lutheran Complex Tabor church 0963



23504 Bethlehem Lutheran Complex Tabor church 0965



23504 Bethlehem Lutheran Complex Tabor cypresses 0961



23504 Bethlehem Lutheran Complex Tabor manse 0968



23504 Bethlehem Lutheran Complex Tabor manse 0969



23504 Bethlehem Lutheran Complex Tabor manse 0970



23504 Bethlehem Lutheran Complex Tabor manse 0971



23504 Bethlehem Lutheran Complex Tabor new manse 0967



23504 Bethlehem Lutheran Complex Tabor new school 0964



23504 Bethlehem Lutheran Complex Tabor old school 0962



23504 Bethlehem Lutheran  
Complex Tabor old school  
0966

---

## Location

Tabor Road TABOR, Southern Grampians Shire

## Municipality

SOUTHERN GRAMPIANS SHIRE

## Level of significance

Stage 2 study complete

## Heritage Listing

Southern Grampians Shire

---

## Statement of Significance

Last updated on - May 4, 2003

What is significant?

The Bethlehem Church complex at Tabor, between Penshurst and Hamilton, dates from the mid-1850s when the general area south-east of Hamilton was settled by devout German Lutherans. It now comprises the second and third churches, the third school, the third manse and the cemetery as well as important trees. Many pastors have served the congregation, some of the more important being the first, Pastor C W Schurmann who was based at Hochkirk, later Tarrington and Pastor Otto Nichterlein, the first resident pastor. The first teacher was Wilhelm Eltze who started in 1863 and the longest serving was Heinrich Zeunert from 1891 until 1932. Johann Mibus sold the land to the congregation in 1860. The first building was a primitive church and classroom built in bluestone but long since demolished was dedicated in 1861. The first manse, a small timber cottage dated from about the same time, which has also been demolished although the two Italian Cypresses, which marked its gateway, survive. The second manse, a single storey timber house in the Federation style was relocated to a nearby property called Batesworth, the home of a parishioner where it survives. After the Second World War the parishioners built the third manse, designed by Warrnambool architect, W. J. T. Walter. It was dedicated in 1952. The second church survives, a rare example of the Romanesque style, although much altered for its role as school. John Montgomery, a surveyor cum architect living in Penshurst, designed it in 1884. The important Hamilton architect, Frank Hammond, designed the present church in 1911. Hammond, who was a long-serving and distinguished member of staff of the municipality of Hamilton, designed for a wide range of clients, including many successful Lutherans. The church survives with a very high degree of integrity including its organ, furnishings and memorials. It is in excellent condition. The cemetery in the west corner of the compound has been in use at least from the late 1860s and probably earlier. The important Warrnambool architect, W. J. T. Walter designed the present manse in 1952. The quality of its construction is remarkable for a period of serious

building material shortage and reflects the dedication of the congregation. It is in excellent condition and substantially intact including its garden setting.

How is it significant?

The Bethlehem Lutheran Church complex is of historical, social and architectural significance to the communities of Tabor, Tarrington and Gnadenthal and to the southern Grampians Shire.

Why is it significant?

The Bethlehem Church complex is historically significant as the continuing spiritual, educational and social focus of one of the several branches of German Lutheran settlement in the Shire. It is architecturally significant because the sequence of churches, through the use of the Romanesque and Gothic revival style, reflects the spiritual values as much as the means of the congregation. Similarly, the sequence of schools reflects the congregation's efforts to maintain its cultural as well as spiritual identity. The Bethlehem congregation must be seen in association not only with the original Evangelical Lutheran congregation at South Hamilton and the Tarrington, Gnadenthal, Purdeet and Lake Linlithgow districts but also the congregations at Warrayure, Byaduk. The churches are of specific architectural significance as examples of the work of John Montgomery and Frank Hammond. The organ made by Fred Taylor is also significant.

Heritage Study/Consultant	Southern Grampians - Southern Grampians Shire Heritage Study, Timothy Hubbard P/L, Annabel Neylon, 2002;
Construction dates	1910,
Architect/Designer	Hammond, F,
Heritage Act Categories	Registered place,
Hermes Number	23504
Property Number	

---

## Physical Conditions

All the buildings are in very good condition.

## Physical Description 1

The second church at Tabor, formerly used as a school and now the earliest surviving building, is built of bluestone in a simple version of the rare Romanesque style. The use of the parallel German Rundbogenstil or 'round arch style' of Kolor Homestead at Penshurst may have influenced this choice of style. The church faces north-west, is three bays long and a belfry surmounts the front gable. There is plaque in the front gable and a vestry at the rear. The building has been substantially altered for its use as a classroom, the most serious changes being the replacement of the original single lancet windows with two large aluminium windows on the south-west side and the glazing of all the other windows being replaced. A heater has been introduced into the middle window on the north-east side. The interior is much altered. The building is in good condition.

The third church is aligned perpendicular to the second and faces south-west. It is in the Early English Gothic revival style, combining bluestone for the walls with sandstone, probably Grampians sandstone, for all the major details such as coping stones, string courses, voussoirs, quoins and sills. It is five bays long with a more complicated plan, including a front porch, two side porches, two vestries and a chancel. The roofs are pitched at 60 degrees and are all slate. The interior is entirely intact with a gallery, organ, pulpit and full altar furnishings. On one wall there is a brass memorial to Pastor Schurmann. The building is in excellent condition.

There is a post World War 2 school building to the rear of both churches, built on the site of the original manse. It is in the Moderne style using cream bricks, large aluminium windows, wing walls and a shallow pitched metal

roof. A cross is built into the end wall.

Beyond the school there is a cemetery with the graves aligned to face south-east. A low Cyclone wire fence encloses it. The grounds are landscaped with shaped Monterey Cypress trees, *Cupressus macrocarpa*. The most important trees are two Italian Cypresses, *Cupressus sempervirens*, which originally marked the gateway to the first manse. These almost certainly date from the mid-1850s and may be amongst the oldest in Western District. The whole of the church grounds are enclosed in a low stone wall.

Beyond the main compound, to the south-east, there is the third manse, the second having been relocated to Batesworth Homestead complex, Batesworth Lane near Penshurst, the home of a parishioner where it survives. This house is cream brick and built in a quasi-American Colonial style. It is an asymmetrical bungalow in form and scale. The projecting room on the north-west side is balanced about the central porch by a segmental parapet over an arched window. The low-pitched roof is dark terra cotta. The house is set in a garden typical of the period. It is in excellent condition.

## **Historical Australian Themes**

Theme 6 Educating

6.2 Establishing schools

6.5 Educating people in remote places

Theme 8 Developing Australia's cultural life

8.6 Worshipping

8.6.1 Worshipping together

8.6.3 Founding Australian religious institutions

8.6.4 Making places for worship

8.12 Living in and around Australian homes

8.14 Living in the country and rural settlements

## **Usage/Former Usage**

church, parsonage and cemetery

## **Integrity**

Excellent degree of integrity as individual buildings and as a complex.

## **Physical Description 2**

Clamor Wilhelm Schurmann, pastor of Tabor and beyond from 1854-1893

Emil Carl Christian Darsow, pastor from 1893-1908

Otto Sylvestris Nichterlein, pastor from 1909-1924

Theodor W Lutz, pastor from 1924-1929

Rudolph H Altus, pastor from 1929-1935

Gerhard O Minge, pastor from 1936-1942

Edmund Wiebusch, pastor from 1942-

F H Eckert, pastor from 1960-1963

N C Schultz, pastor from 1963-1971

J M Janetzki, pastor from 1971-

Wilhelm Eltze, teacher from

Gotthilf Mackenzie, teacher from

Heinrich Wilhelm Zeunert, teacher from 1891-1932

F W Hoffman, teacher from 1933-1939

Eric Hassold, teacher from 1940-1941 and 1948

Bruno Matuschka, teacher from 1949-1952

William Oster, teacher from 1952-1960s

Maurice Schuller, teacher in the 1960s

Marian Enders, Canadian teacher from 1964-1966

James Born, American teacher from 1965-1969

*This place/object may be included in the Victorian Heritage Register pursuant to the Heritage Act 2017. Check the Victorian Heritage Database, selecting 'Heritage Victoria' as the place source.*

*For further details about Heritage Overlay places, contact the relevant local council or go to Planning Schemes Online <http://planningschemes.dpcd.vic.gov.au/>*