



The Narraport Hut

BULOKE SHIRE COUNCIL
 Building Act 1993
BUILDING REGULATIONS 1994
 Regulation 2.1 (1) (a)
APPLICATION FOR A BUILDING PERMIT

Form 1

To Municipal building surveyor / Private building surveyor*

*Circle whichever is applicable

From
 Owner of land BULOKE SHIRE COUNCIL
 Postal address P.O. BOX 1 WYCHWOOD Post code 3527

Contact person Telephone

or
 Agent of owner BIRCHIP HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Postal address P.O. BOX 35 BIRCHIP Post code 3483

Contact person DOROTHY REID Telephone 0353 990 564

Property details

Number 2 Street/road CUMMINGAWE City/suburb/town BIRCHIP

Lot/s LP/PS Volume Folio

Crown allotment Section Parish County

Builder (if known)

Name Address

Post Code Telephone

**Building practitioners¹ and architect
 (a) to be engaged in the building work²**

Name Category/class Registration No.

Name Category/class Registration No.

(b) who were engaged to prepare documents submitted with this application³

Name Category/class Registration No.

Name Category/class Registration No.

Nature of building work*

- | | | | |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Construction of new building | <input type="checkbox"/> | Extension to an existing building | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Alterations to an existing building | <input type="checkbox"/> | Change of use of an existing building | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Demolition of a building | <input type="checkbox"/> | Removal of a building | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Re-erection of a building | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Other <u>RENOVATION</u> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |

*Tick if applicable or give other description

Intended use of building HISTORICAL DISPLAY

If work is for prescribed building work²

I intend to carry out the work as an owner builder

I intend to engage an approved builder/supervisor to carry out this work.

Certificate from approved guarantor attached.

Name of approved builder/supervisor if known.

Value of building work
 Estimated value of building work/contract sum \$ Nil

For Office Use Only.

Building Permit Fee \$
 Building Permit Levy \$
 Septic Tank Fee \$
 Deposit Against Damages \$
 Total Fees \$

Stage of building work
 If application is to permit a stage of the building work:

Extent of stage

Value of building work for this stage \$

Receipt Number

Signature of owner or agent W. Davis Date 29.10.1997

Date of Receipt

New Life for Shepherd's Hut

(By Maureen Donnellon)

On Wednesday, December 8, 2015, the Shepherd's Hut, the oldest building in the Birchip district was declared officially open by Bryan Hogan, leader of the reconstruction team which has worked very hard to erect the building in the grounds of the Birchip History Museum.

The building's roof languished for 19 years in Birchip backyards on drums. The Shepherd's Hut was formerly referred to as the Narraport Shepherd's Hut, because its original place of residence was approximately 6kms S-SW of Birchip, 500 metres off the Corack Road. It was built on farm land that once belonged to the Sanders family and had originally been part of the Morton

Plains station and then part of the Narraport station when the original pastoral run was subdivided.

Early research states that the building was built in approximately 1847 by George Russell and one of his shepherds, by the name of Shelford, lived there.

Society members decided to thank the men who had been part of the many working

bees, by holding a special dinner in the hut. Fortunately the weather was very kind and approximately 35 people were able to enjoy a beautiful meal with barbecue meat, an extensive array of salads, desserts and drinks provided by Birchip Historical Society members. Early meals enjoyed by the poor shepherd would probably have been a little mutton from a lame sheep birds and possum. Rabbits were not in the area in those days.

Opening

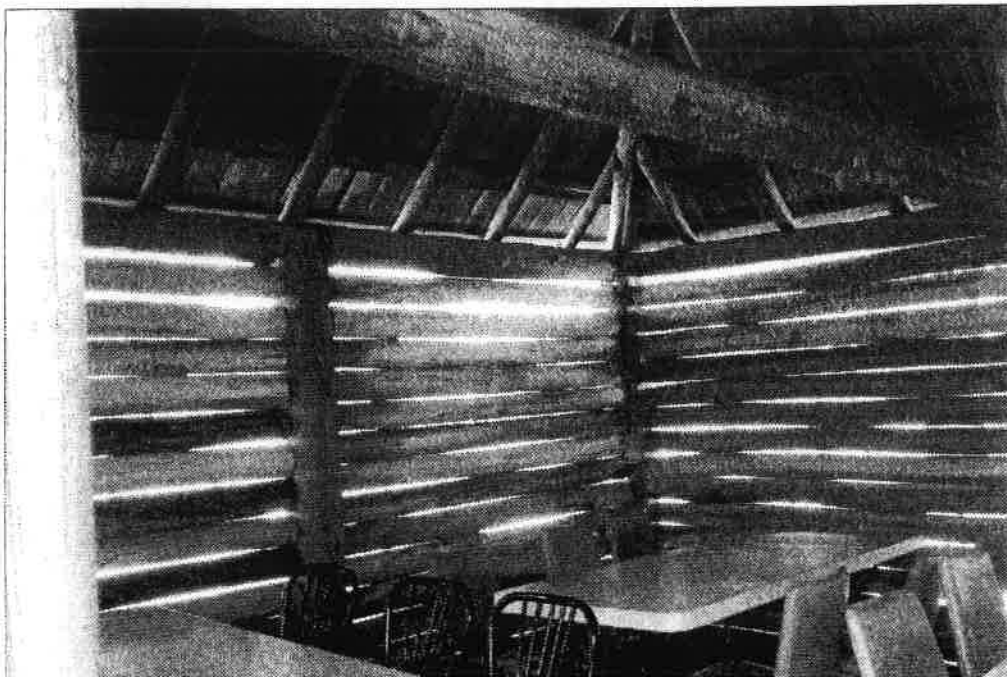
After a welcome to all by President Warren King, Bryan Hogan cut the ribbon to the hut and the door was opened to reveal tables and chairs arranged to seat all present. The hut was decorated for Christmas with jars of pine branches and gurtips and lit by large kerosene lanterns.

Bryan thanked all co-worker and also secretary Dorothy Reid who had provided morning and afternoon tea for the men. He felt very privileged to have been asked to officially open the building.

After the main course, Warren called everyone together to tell the history of the restoration



• Barbecue at the Museum for opening of Shepherd's Hut. Dorothy Reid, Mary Fielding and Warren King members getting ready for the opening.



the building. The research and initial plans for moving the building to Birchip began when Mr Iain Atkin, the history teacher at the Birchip Community Education Complex (as the school was called in 1996), together with his history students, researched the building and took many photos, cleaned up the building and wrote out all their project ideas which they presented to the Historical Society.

The hut was moved to Birchip in pieces but with the roof intact. Many problems ensued with building permits, building plans and lack of people experienced in finalising the project. An FRRR grant was successful but workers were needed. Mary Fielding joined the Society a few years ago, and decided she would make the restoration a priority.

Right Person

Having recently been the driving force behind the Restoration of the Railway Station, she was just the right person for the job and with all members renewed in their endeavours to restore the building before the Zone meeting, the rest is history. Bryan's motto of "never say never" was put to the test and the wonderful and historic building was the result of many, many hours of work.

Bryan was presented with three books on various aspects of local history by Warren on behalf of the Society.

Further plans for the building, which has been already used as a restaurant, is to house some artefacts that would have been symbolic of the era, some of which are in the museum or housed by members.

Warren thanked all for attending, society members for providing the food and helping arrange the night and asked all present to seriously think of joining the society, which is seriously short of members. He reminded all present that if the society were ever to fold, all the wonderful artefacts, photos and documents held from the area would very likely disappear to Melbourne where they would be locked away out of sight and not available for research unless people were prepared to pay well.

Reminiscing

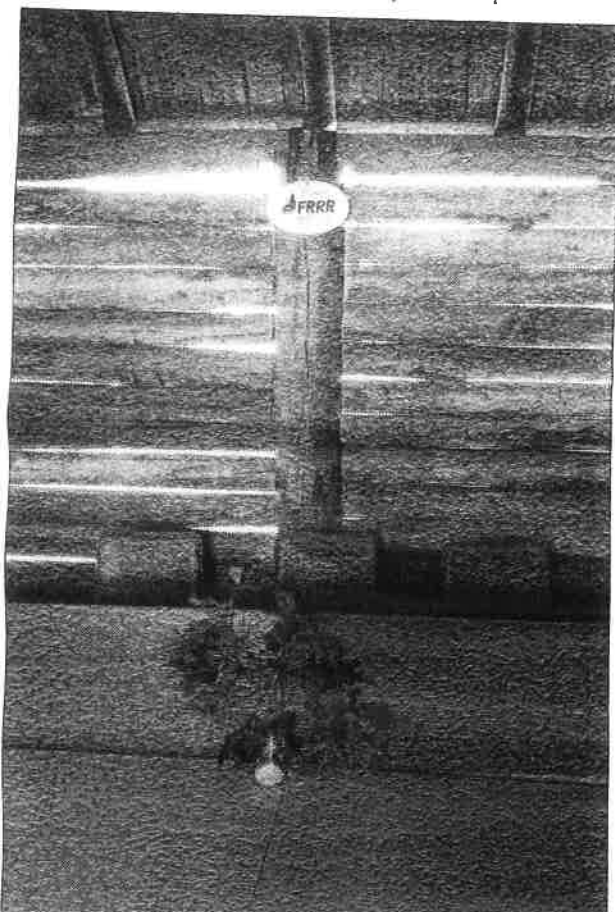
A wonderful and very happy night of reminiscing and dining was enjoyed by all who were present, although a few of the hard workers were unable to attend.

The Birchip P12 students of the VCAL class with their teachers have been responsible for several projects at the Museum in the past few years and, on a very positive note, the history teacher Mr Simon McCart recently joined the Society with his wife Jac. and son Ethan, and already has interesting plans for his students next year.

The Birchip Historical Society has had one of its busiest years with visits from

school children, being part of the Railway restoration, ongoing research work, submission writing, archival work, maintenance of the buildings, hosting the Zone historical meeting and finally the restoration of the Shepherd's Hut.

Members wish everyone a very happy Christmas and New Year, and ask all to consider becoming members of the Society to keep Birchip's history in Birchip.



• *Shepherd's Hut restoration and opening through FRRR grant. Tables and chairs with Christmas decoration ready for the opening.*



• *Opening of the Shepherd's Hut. Simon McCart and Elaine McCallum cooking the barbecue.*

Report on the future of the Narraport Shepherds' hut built c.1847.

This report was prepared by students of the Birchip Community Education Complex as part of their year 9 history studies of the Squatting era, under the guidance of their teacher, Mr. Iain Atkin

Preamble:

The Narraport hut is situated approximately six kilometres south, south-east of Birchip, about 500 metres off the Corack Road. It is reputed to be the oldest building still standing in the Birchip area and is in an advanced state of disrepair. Within a few years it will have fallen in completely. What the students aimed to do was to conduct an extensive survey of the hut and its surrounds which would then be presented to the Birchip Historical Society in order that a decision can be made as to the hut's future.

Before examining the area, the students chose to work in groups investigating an aspect of the exercise. These were:-

1. Squatting in the Birchip area and its relation to the wider squatting period (1830's - 1860's) in Victoria.
2. An examination of the surrounding area of the hut
3. Measurements of the hut with all distances noted.
4. Internal features noted and speculations as to their functions.
5. A general description of the exterior of the hut, the type of timber used and the state of any of its original construction.
6. The construction of the hut, with specific reference to the roofing joints and wall-to-upright joints.
7. What options are there for the hut and suggestions about implementing these.

The students were driven out to the site and started to clean up the inside of the hut and the surrounds, as can be seen the hut was not only in a parlous state of repair, it was full of junk.



The students made decisions as to what should be kept under cover and preserved (such as pieces of the original timber of the hut and artefacts that might have some value or relevance) and what should be discarded. The cleared site was then inspected and the students started to investigate their particular aspect.

1. Squatting in the Birchip area and its relevance to the squatting period (1830's - 1860's) In Victoria.

The first reference to squatting in the Birchip area was when George Russell, a squatter near Shelford, 35km north-east of Colac, came to the Birchip district in 1838. He dismissed its potential as he complained of the lack of water and the barrenness of the country.

For this reason, by the early 1840's, the area was amongst the only unsettled land left in North-Western Victoria. By 1847, this view had changed and several pastoralists were seriously considering taking up some land in the district. William Morton was the first person to establish a homestead of sorts at what is now called Morton Plains. It was from this base that shepherds and overseers were sent out to out stations near the swamps in the area. Here they looked after mobs of sheep, driving them out to graze during the day and bringing them back to pens at night to protect

2. An examination of the surrounding area of the hut

Our task was to look for any clues that may be associated with the hut in the surrounding area. We found a chimney to the east of the hut and 13 peppercorn trees forming a "L" shape around where other buildings had been. These peppercorns can be seen as approximately five-year old saplings in the original photograph. The size of the peppercorns has no doubt helped the preservation of the hut as one shields it from the prevailing winds.

Looking at the photograph of the established buildings it seems that the hut was built first because of its style of construction and lack of windows. It could be that the first settlers would have most likely built a small hut to live in whilst they began construction on the house, but bearing in mind what is known about the area, and the differences in age between the two buildings, it is much more likely that the hut preceded the larger houses by many years and was never intended for long-term occupation.

The second building was constructed approximately three metres to the east of the hut. It was built at a different time to the third building because the spouting doesn't have any downpipes, the third building is of a different style, is higher and has more sophisticated windows. There was what we presumed to be a vegetable garden near the east end of the third building, as we found a length of wild dog fence which may have been used to keep the rabbits out. This would support the memories of the late Mr. Rob. Sanders who was the grandson of the original selector who built the two more recent houses. He remembered a vegetable garden at the west end of the house.

The middle chimney on the photograph is still standing. It faced west into what must have been the kitchen as a wood stove with an oven that was in fairly good condition with a tray in it was still in its base.

Very close to the edge of the swamp we came across a shed. It had what looked like old carts in it and around it. Whether this has any relevance to the hut or not is undecided. We also found the uprights of a shed approximately 400 m. to the south of the site, with an old seeder beside it. This had some newspapers pieces from the 1960's in it. For a detailed map of the area, see appendix one.

The buildings were situated on the highest piece of land in the area. This is a sandy rise which has been created by the prevailing winds from the west blowing over the swamp and depositing the sand from the swamp on the east side. This feature is common in the Mallee and is called a "Lunette" It also gave rise to the aboriginal word "Narraport" which means "Lizard's back" - the rise being thought to resemble the backs of a lizard.

The land directly to the south is approximately half a metre higher than where the buildings used to stand. These are thought to be the remains of the mud bricks from which the two more substantial houses were built. A soil test could be done to be more precise.

5 A general description of the exterior of the hut, the type of timber used and the state of any of its original construction.

The hut is constructed out of Murray Pine and Box Eucalypt. Murray Pine is termite-resistant, light and durable. It was easily available from a large forest near Wooranook Lakes. There were several saw mills in the forest which is no longer there, attesting to the popularity of the timber for similar constructions when the hut was being built. This timber was used to make horizontal logs walls of the hut. There were over sixty original logs, most still in position, although some had split.



These photographs show the two original poles on the north side of the hut. They also show clearly the horizontal Murray Pine logs.

The hut is roofed by shingles which were attached to the battens by handmade nails. These shingles have been covered at a later date by corrugated iron, which has been screwed on to battens. This covering has no doubt lead to the excellent state of the roof, and hence allowing the rest of the hut to be preserved.



Photograph showing interior of roof with the shingles under the tin.

Box Eucalypt was used for the uprights as Murray Pine trees do not grow thick enough for frame timber. They were most likely from the swamp which is only two or three hundred metres away. Although very hard, they do not like being in the ground for long periods. There are ten uprights still holding the roof up, all from different time periods with only three of the original posts still in position. We know this by closely looking at the original photograph, which shows the upright on the north-east corner to be a different shape to the one that is there now and also because posts that make up the door frame have a small section cut out which does not match anything. This post is also too wide to fit into the groove made in the top beam where the original post would have been situated. Rather than having slots cut into them, many of the non-original posts have pieces of old bed-iron nailed on to them with machine-made nails, thus creating the necessary channel or groove for the horizontal logs to slot in. The floor of the hut was made from mud which most likely had been compacted by using blood and cow manure to harden it. This mixture has now disintegrated into dust.

Although no evidence can be found to determine why there is no spouting on the west side of the hut, no logical reason can be thought of as to why it would not have originally been there. It was originally attached to the uprights with blocks of oregon with a semi-circular groove cut into the top attached to the uprights. These again can be seen in the photograph of the east wall showing the railway sleepers and two were still found nailed to the uprights. One was also found when we cleaned out the hut. Elsewhere, strips of tin have been screwed on to the roof to hold the spouting up, which would have taken the place of the oregon as it rotted.



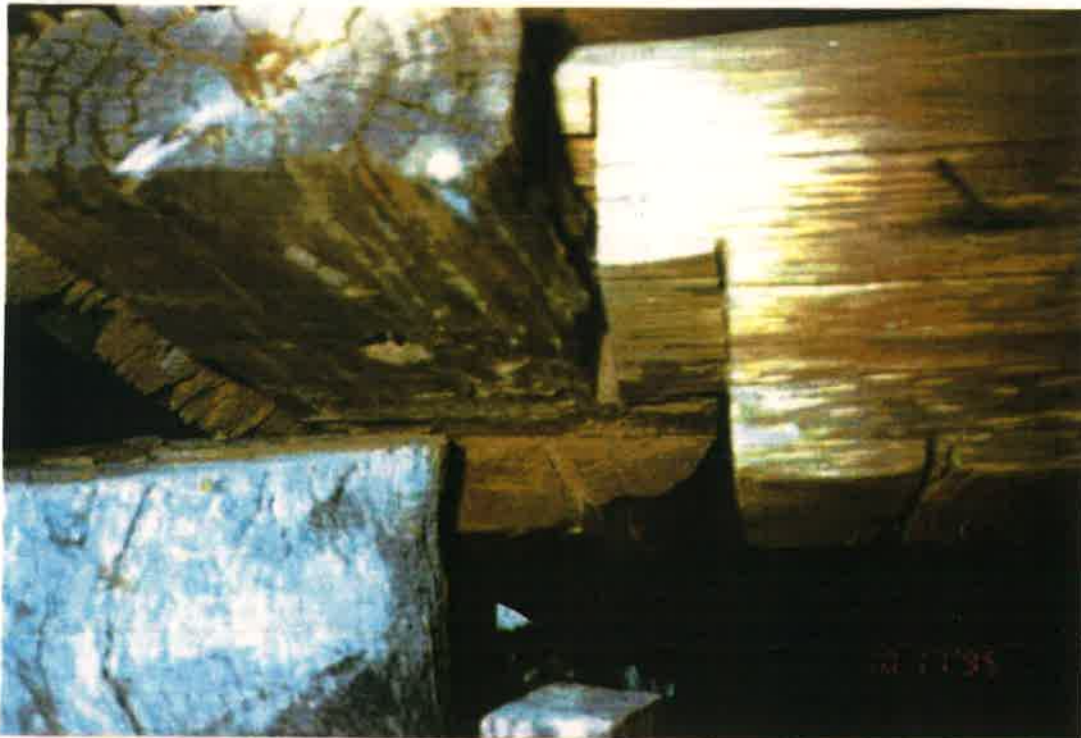
Photograph showing replacement strips of tin used to hold up spouting.

Handwritten scribble

Handwritten scribbles and red marks

6. The construction of the hut, with specific reference to the roofing joints and wall-to-upright joints.

The hut originally consisted of 10 posts approximately 3 metres apart from each other. These formed the uprights for both holding the roof up and for anchor points for the walls. The roof is attached to the upright posts by having a 10 centimetre hole drilled vertically into their tops which corresponds to a hole drilled into the bottom beam of the roof.



A wooden peg was inserted into the holes which kept everything together. On the two original poles, bits of the peg are still in position. The whole hut is remarkable for its lack of nails - no doubt as when it was first built, the nearest supplies would have been Melbourne. Nails in the 1840's were all hand made and there are still several to be found on and around the site.

The hut walls were built using the unusual construction called the 'drop-slot' method - most huts from this time being made of vertical slabs of log fitting into a slot on the top and bottom plates. The drop-slot construction is still clearly shown on the hut today where the horizontal logs fit into a slot cut into the uprights. These slots were cut by boring holes approximately four centimetres deep in a line along the length of the upright. These were then chiselled out and a slot or trench ensuing. The marks from the brace-and-bit can still be seen in the original slots.



Close-up of two of the original posts, showing several circular marks from the bit used to cut the slot and the "drop-slot" method of attaching the logs to the uprights.

The horizontal logs were sawn to form a tongue which fitted into the slot. All the logs show this type of construction. Many cracks existed throughout the walls of the hut. These had been filled with mud to block out wind or rain, some of which still remains.

7. What options are there for the hut and suggestions about implementing these.

These must be considered in light of Birchip not 'owning' the hut. All decisions must be taken with the co-operation of the owners of the land. However, can a building such as this ever belong to a person or is it the property of the area, or even the nation?

a). Do nothing. The hut will fall down by itself within 12 months and an argument could be forwarded that as very few people know of it, it is not of any importance. It should therefore be pulled down to avoid anyone being injured.

b) It should be propped up so that it is not a danger but otherwise left as it is.

c) It should be restored on site as far as possible using original timbers. Where this is not possible the gaps should be filled in with the same type of wood. The hut should remain as private property and accessible only on application to the owner by people with a bona fide interest.

d) As above, but a replica built to the exact specifications at a suitable site in the Birchip area so as to be accessible to a wider public.

e) The whole hut to be moved to a suitable site in the Birchip area where it will be accessible to a wider public. As much of the original construction be maintained and the gaps filled in with the same type of timber and using the same type of construction method.

f) Involve the National Trust and Heritage Council and be guided by their expertise.

All of these options have merit and problems.

If we are to do nothing, it will be the easiest option but it will mean that the earliest part of our local heritage is lost. Can we as people with an interest in history allow that to happen? We not only have a responsibility to understand the past, we have a responsibility to make sure future generations have a chance to understand it too.

If we are to prop it up but otherwise leave it, we are only delaying the hut's ultimate decay. We are not allowing a wider audience to see it and to understand the skill and perseverance of our pioneers. People would be able to understand that everything has a finite lifespan and the hut will still be able to be seen in relation to the topography of the area.

If we rebuild the hut on site using as much of the original as possible, we are only continuing to repair a building that has seen much repairing in its life already. In this sense we are not recreating history to suit ourselves, we are continuing a maintenance schedule. However, if it is to become a 'tourist attraction' there is the problem of right of access. The goodwill of the owners of the land in this respect is likely to be limited.

If we rebuild a replica elsewhere we have to come to terms with no matter how accurate we are in our recreation, do replicas have the same value as originals? The issue of a suitable site is discussed elsewhere.

If we rebuild the hut at another suitable site we have to come to terms with the fact that the site chosen, no matter how sympathetic, is not the one that was selected by those early pioneers, some 150 years ago. However, it does bring their skills and strength to a wider audience and could act as a tourist venue for the area.

If we involve the National Trust or Heritage Council, the issue is taken out of our hands. However, they could be used as a last resort to apply leverage if the owners of the property respond negatively to our final decision. (I would like to think that this would not be the case, though)

8. Some suitable sites. There could well be others not considered by the students.

1. Taylor's Sunset Park
2. Five-ways junction
3. The Historical Society's back yard.
4. The median strip near the Mallee Bull
5. At the B.C.E.C.

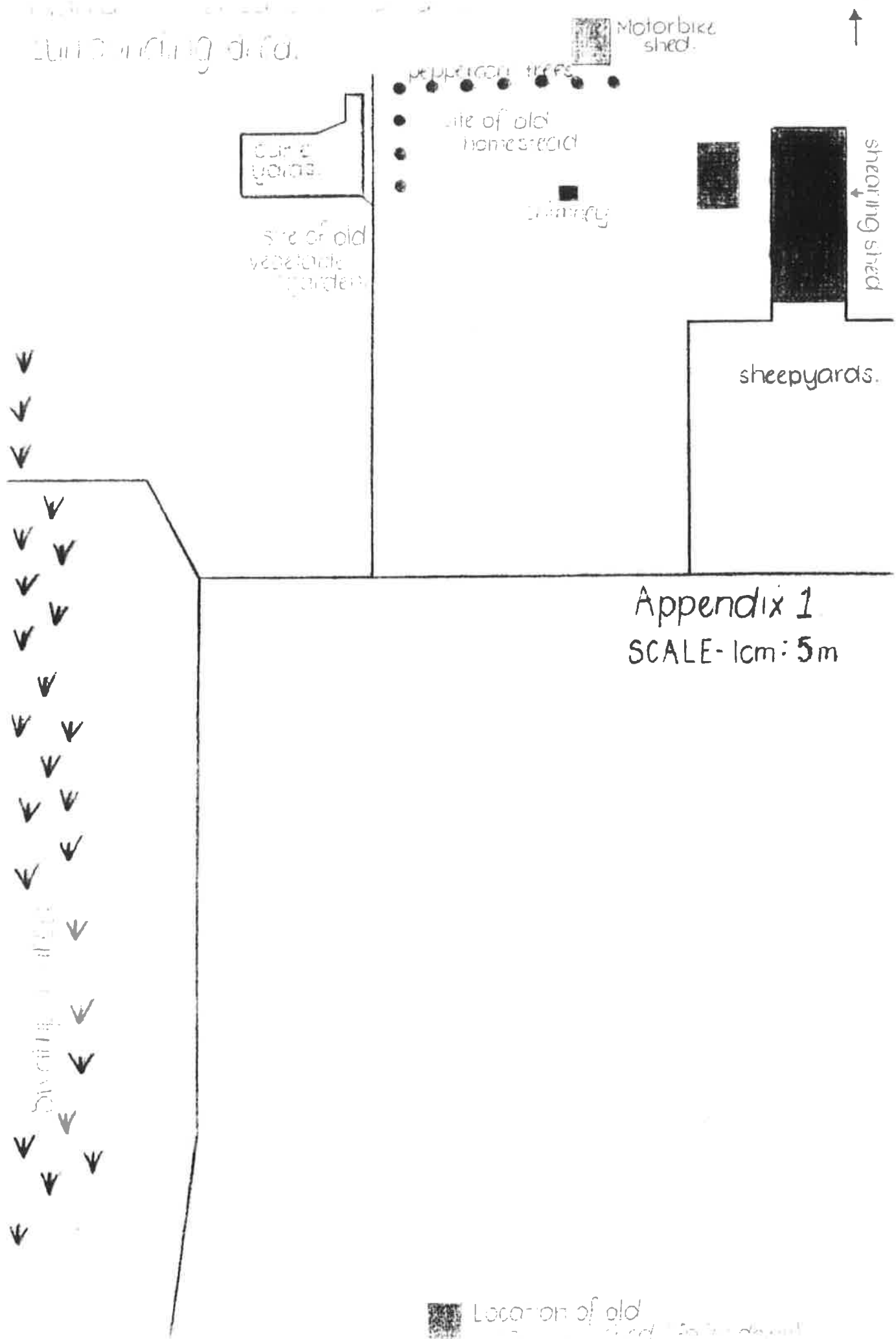
9 Where do we go from here?

The Historical Society, as the guardians of the area's heritage, must decide in line with this report. Wider consultation could be canvassed but a final decision and action must be sooner, rather than later.

Service clubs could be involved if rebuilding/reconstructing is the preferred option. Students would be prepared to talk to them to explain the project.

Appendix 1. Site plan of the old homestead.

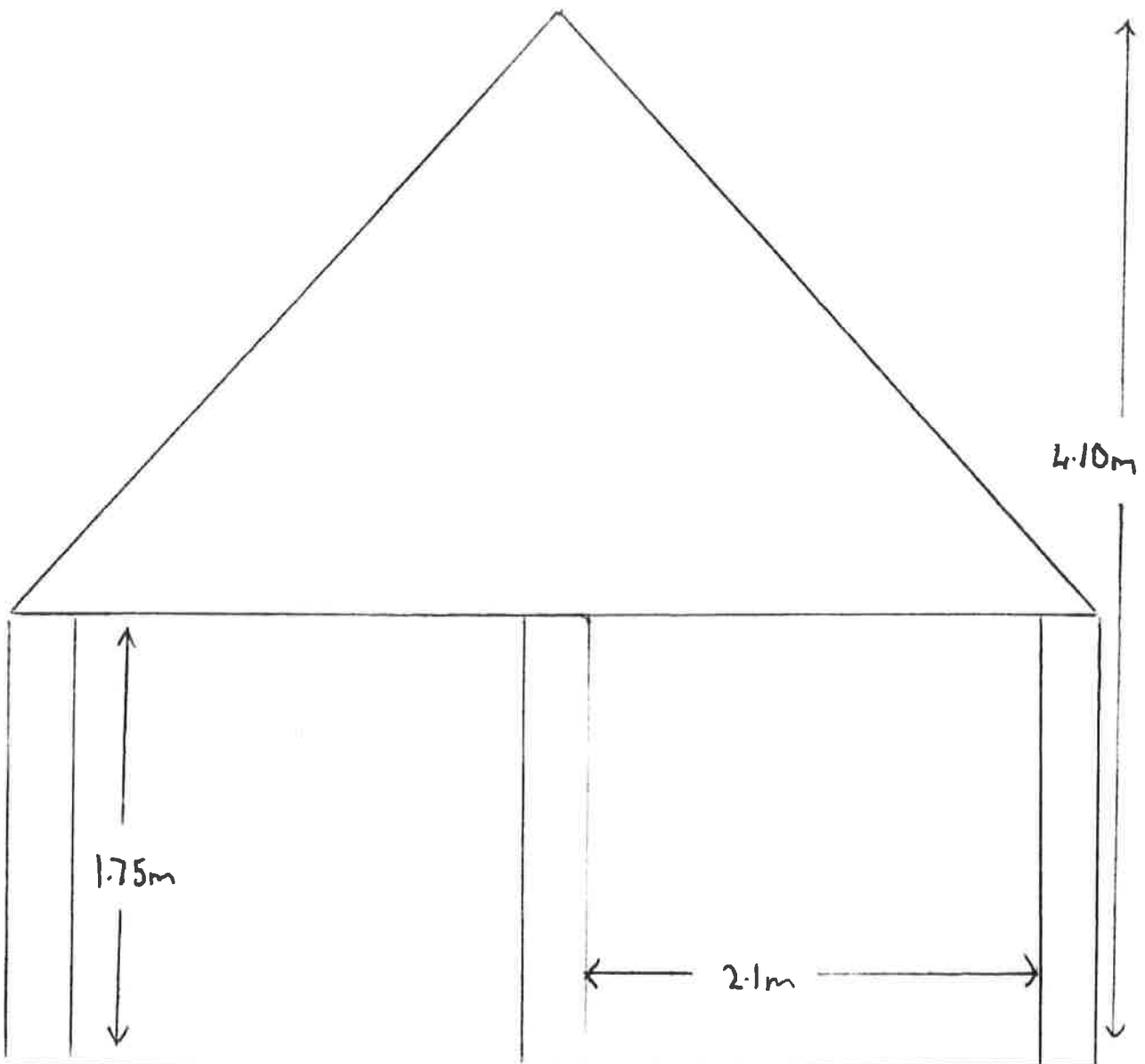
Site plan of old homestead.



Appendix 1.
SCALE - 1cm : 5m

Location of old homestead

Appendix Two
Scale drawing of hut showing dimensions.



Bibliography and other sources

Their Ghosts may be heard, Sheena Coupe, Longman Cheshire, Melbourne, 1994

Conquerors of the Bush, The Australian Squatters. R.J.R. Donley, Rigby, Adelaide 1979

History around us - An inquiry approach to local history, Gilbert, Driscoll and Sutherland. Hicks Smith, Sydney 1976

Squatters and Immigrants, P.F. Gilbert, Jacaranda Press, 1970

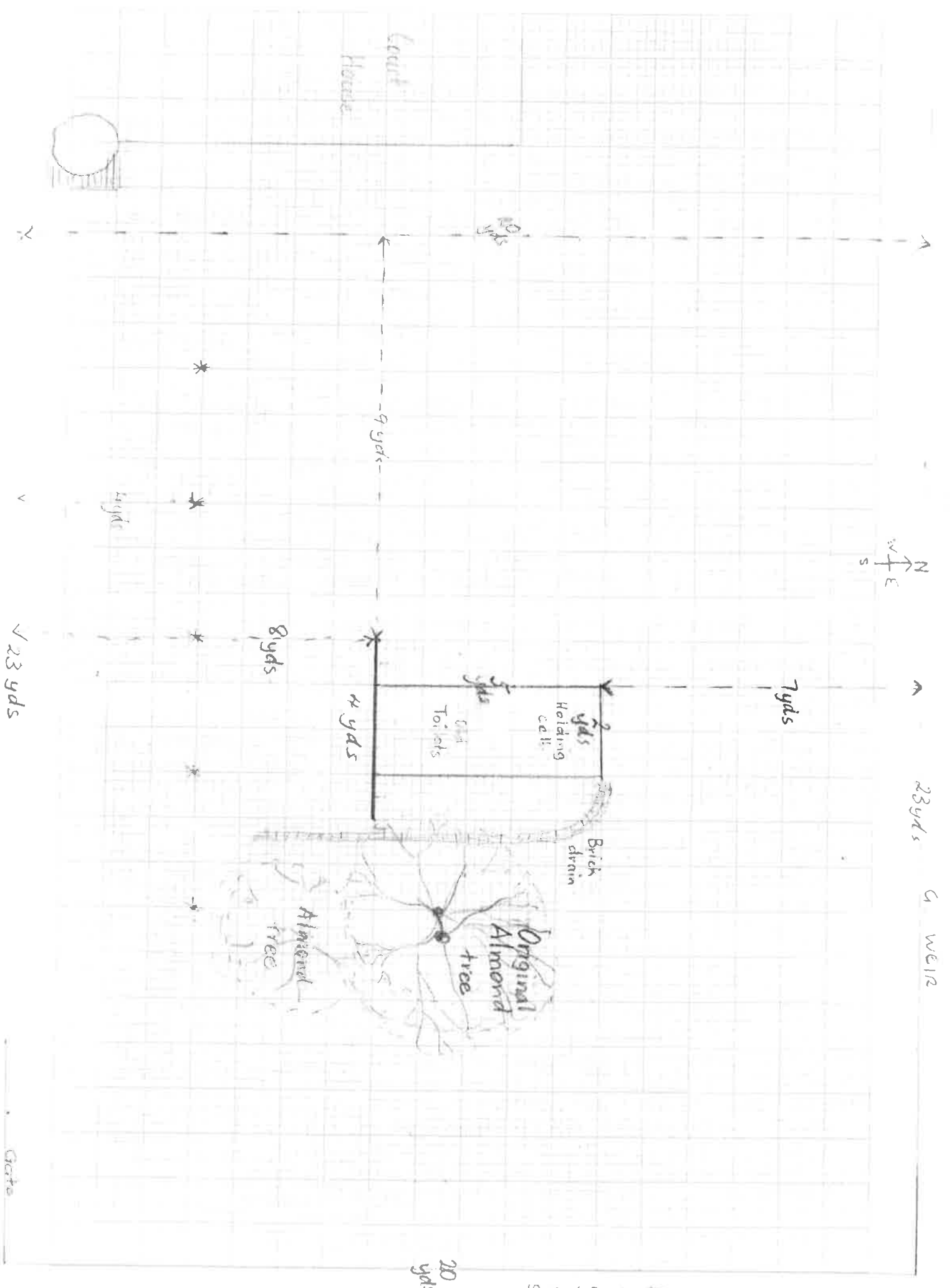
Essays on a Shire, June E. Senyard, Shire of Birchip 1970

Oral Sources

The memories of the late Mr. Rob. Sanders, grandson of the ^{Sanders family} original selector of the Narraport Selection. who purchased the property in about 1880. There would have been a previous owner or owners.

I would like to acknowledge the interest and help of the late Mr. Rob. Sanders in all aspects of the B.C.E.C.'s History Department, and his willingness to be involved in the growth of the students' awareness as to their heritage.

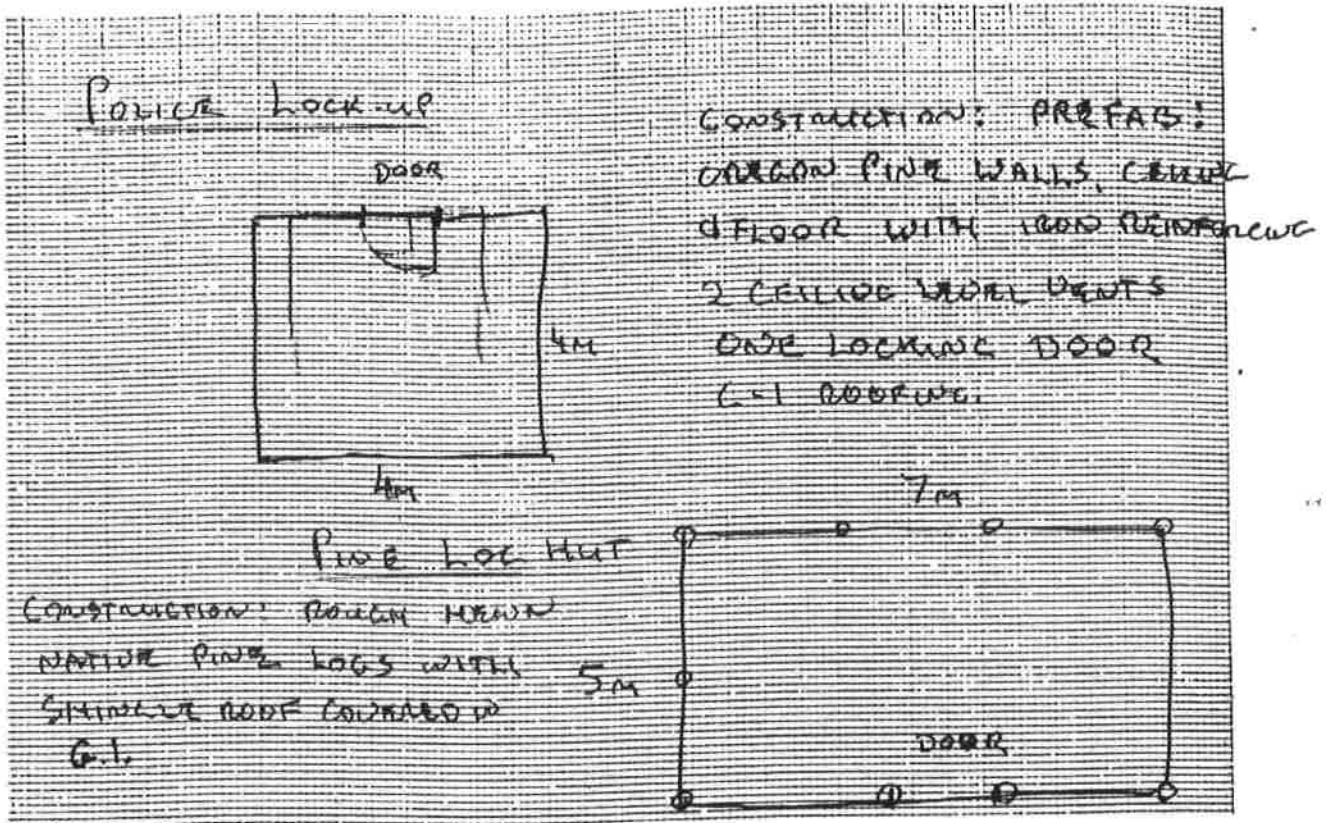
Iain Atkin



4. P.D.V.S

20 yds

Ground plan and elevations (front and side) and dimensions of all buildings to be erected, designation and dimensions of each room, position of doors, windows, chimneys, ventilators etc. Scale, 1:100. Show all outside dimensions of Main Building on ground plan. Note: Use separate larger drawings if required.



Plan showing boundaries of lands, abutting streets, lanes and right-of-ways position of all buildings erected or to be erected thereon clearly marked or figured, in case of "party walls" the position of all buildings on adjoining allotments and drainage. In unsewered areas show position of grease trap. Scale, 1:500 or larger. All new and old boundary fences shall be clearly marked on this plan, showing length and position of all classes of fence. Note: Use separate larger drawings if required.

