

134 Macquarie Street (GPO Box 618)
Hobart Tasmania 7001
Phone: 1300 850 332 (local call cost)
Email: enquiries@heritage.tas.gov.au
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Name: Slaughterhouse
Status: Provisionally Registered
Tier: State

THR ID Number: 12045
Municipality: Break O'Day Council
Boundary: CPR11256

Location Addresses

58-76 GRAY RD, ST MARYS 7215 TAS

Title References

111915/1

Property Id

6402924



Slaughterhouse, St Marys
Heritage Tasmania



Slaughterhouse, St Marys
Heritage Tasmania



Slaughterhouse interior
Heritage Tasmania



Vanishing Tasmania: a photographic essay p.140
Frank Bolt, 1985

Statement of Significance: (non-statutory summary)

The slaughterhouse at St Marys demonstrates an era when domestic meat production was localised, with every town having one or more butchers and meat being slaughtered locally; and an era in which split timber was a common building material in

country Tasmania. It is a rare example of a vernacular, split timber and bush pole slaughterhouse. The combination of bush carpentry in the construction of the building; the once typical siting of abattoir facilities near a waterway for easy disposal of waste; the rudimentary windlass for raising carcasses; and more modern interior features compliant with twentieth-century health regulations (impervious galvanised iron walls; concrete, sloping floor for drainage; drainage channel and blood pit) suggest an evolution of technology and standards over time. The slaughterhouse has the potential to provide information leading to an improved understanding of the development of early-to-mid-twentieth century rural meat production.

Why is it significant?:

The Heritage Council may enter a place in the Heritage Register if it meets one or more of the following criteria from the Historic Cultural Heritage Act 1995:

a) The place is important to the course or pattern of Tasmania's history.

The slaughterhouse at St Marys demonstrates an era when domestic meat production was localised, with every town having one or more butchers and meat being slaughtered locally; and an era in which bush poles, split timber and sawn timber were common building materials in country Tasmania.

b) The place possesses uncommon or rare aspects of Tasmania's history.

This is a rare example of a vernacular, split timber and bush pole slaughterhouse.

c) The place has the potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of Tasmania's history.

The combination of bush carpentry in the construction of the building; the once typical siting of an abattoir facility near a waterway for easy disposal of waste; the windlass for raising carcasses; and more modern interior features compliant with twentieth-century health regulations (impervious galvanised iron walls; concrete, sloping floor for drainage; drainage channel and blood pit) suggest an evolution of technology over time. The slaughterhouse has the potential to provide information leading to an improved understanding of the development of early-to-mid-twentieth century rural meat production.

d) The place is important in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of place in Tasmania's history.

No Data Recorded

e) The place is important in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement.

No Data Recorded

f) The place has a strong or special association with a particular community or cultural group for social or spiritual reasons.

No Data Recorded

g) The place has a special association with the life or works of a person, or group of persons, of importance in Tasmania's history.

No Data Recorded

h) The place is important in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics.

No Data Recorded

Heritage approval is required for work that will result in changes to the nature or appearance of the fabric of a Heritage place, both internal and external.

Please refer to the Heritage Council's Works Guidelines (www.heritage.tas.gov.au) for information about the level of approval required and appropriate outcomes.

Heritage Advisors are also available to answer questions and provide guidance on enquiries@heritage.tas.gov.au or Tel 1300850332

This data sheet is intended to provide sufficient information and justification for listing the place on the Heritage Register. Under the legislation, only one of the criteria needs to be met. The data sheet is not intended to be a comprehensive inventory of the heritage values of the place, there may be other heritage values of interest to the Heritage Council not currently acknowledged.

Setting:

The slaughterhouse is located on the outskirts of the east coast township of St Marys in the Fingal Valley and stands at the edge of a paddock within 50 metres of the main road between St Marys and Gray. The property is known as Fairview, and the area is semi-rural, with farms being separated by patches of light bush. A tributary of St Marys Rivulet flows through the paddock below the slaughterhouse.

Description:

The slaughterhouse, the primary subject of this registration, is a rough timber building situated on a gentle slope between cleared land and the bush. It is a tall structure relative to its small footprint; constructed using bush poles, walls of split eucalypt slabs, palings lined internally with flat galvanised sheet, and a saddle roof clad in split timber shingles. This registration includes a timber barn and timber shed, but excludes the modified main house, as per the boundary plan.

Distinctive features of the slaughterhouse, relating to its historical use, are the poles with forked tops central to either gable end, which support a bush pole that served as a windlass for raising carcasses; a wide opening on the southern side evidently used for bringing a vehicle in to load dressed carcasses; a narrower doorway on the north-western corner alongside the remnants of a post and rail fence that may have been a cattle race or corralling yard, the purposes of which were to direct beasts for slaughter into the shed. The slaughterhouse has a concrete floor that is graded to drain into a concrete 'blood pit' on the downhill side. The concrete floor appears to have been poured after the building was erected, indicated by the imprints of wall slabs and main upright posts on the concrete edge and tin lining above the concrete rather than encased within it (pers. comm., Hayes, 2021). There is no drain from the blood pit, which simply overflowed into the adjacent paddock and towards the small creek draining the paddock.

The slaughterhouse contains suspended boards with nail holes that suggest that it was repurposed as a skin shed for the drying of animal skins (pers. comm., Hayes, 2021). Similar boards were suspended from the roof in the skin shed of Yackandandah (Sunshine) Hut (THR#11964).

The registered area also includes a timber barn and timber shed, which contribute to the setting of the slaughterhouse. The timber barn on site located to the west of the slaughterhouse is a vertical slab building with slab floor and galvanised iron roof. Skillion additions are situated on the eastern and western elevations. A stud framed timber shed with galvanised iron roof is situated to the south of the barn building. Both these buildings demonstrate the historic setting of the slaughterhouse within a working farm.

History:

The islands known as Tasmania were home to the First Tasmanians for thousands of years. The land now known as the Fingal Valley was occupied and traversed by the Oyster Bay, Northern Midlands, Ben Lomond and North Eastern Aboriginal nations; only possible due to a system of reciprocal rights and obligation, which had existed for centuries (Scripps, 1999 p.5). After dispossession of the Aboriginal owners, European settlement in the area was driven by generous land grants, rich agricultural and dairying prospects, and the discovery of gold in the 1850s.

The intensive slaughter of stock for meat supply in Tasmania was problematic until modern times, with abattoirs frequently blamed for causing or contributing to the spread of water-borne disease and pollution of waterways. Slaughterhouses located near towns were also unpopular because of their smell and effluent consisting of blood, offal and dung.

Efforts were made to improve the sanitary standards of abattoirs in the Tasmanian *Public Health Act (1885)*, which stipulated that such facilities were to be 'paved or flagged with brick, stone, cement, asphalt or other impervious material' and should have 'such impervious drains and receptacles for offal, dung, or other filth or refuse' (Section 135). The Act gave the Central Board of Health or any local board or police constable the right to inspect abattoirs for diseased animals, unwholesome food and general condition which might cause a nuisance or be injurious to health (Sections 62 and 101).

Criticism of abattoirs continued at a time when there were epidemics such as diphtheria, scarlet fever and typhoid. In the mid-1890s Tasmania's Central Board of Health Secretary Alfred Mault advised municipal councils to restrict the slaughtering of animals to areas outside town boundaries (see, for example, 'Westbury' 1894). St Marys was a dairy farming district, and the typical regime of a dairy farm involved the keeping not just of cattle but of pigs which were fed on the skim milk left over from the process of separating cream. In the wake of deaths from diphtheria at St Marys in 1911, the town's water supply was scrutinised. Much of the town water was taken from a stream, St Marys Rivulet, which was said to be polluted by sewage, piggery waste and the refuse from three slaughterhouses along its banks ('Diphtheria at St Marys' 1911). Responding to regular local health crises such as this one, Tasmania's Chief Health Officers railed against 'primitive' country town slaughterhouses kept in 'abominable and revolting' conditions, with pigs typically housed beside the facility so that they could be fed the offal ('Public Health Department: annual report' 1911). The establishment of up-to-date facilities on approved sites some distance from town was recommended ('Public health' 1914).

Like the three other St Marys abattoirs mentioned above, the slaughterhouse which is the subject of this registration was located near a small tributary of St Marys Rivulet. While the building's primitive exterior suggests that it wasn't one of the up-to-date facilities ordered by public health officials, it did have impervious interior surfaces and drainage. It appears to be an example of a butcher's slaughterhouse located on private property on Gray Road owned by the Haas/Hayes family outside the town boundary.

The Haas/Hayes family were one of several German immigrant families who arrived in Falmouth in 1855 (McManus 1993, p.101). In 1915 the Tasmanian-born Albert Frederick Haas (1874–1960) purchased 21 acres (Lot 29) of the Groom family's Harefield Estate outside St Marys (conveyance 236/22). The name Haas was later Anglicised to Hayes, possibly in response to anti-German feeling generated by World War One. Albert Hayes and his wife Gertrude Oliver (1873–1950) built a house on the property they called Fair View in the 1930s (St Marys assessment roll 1939). During this decade their son Lionel Hayes (1901–56) operated a butcher's shop in Story Street, St Marys, apparently slaughtering stock on his parents' farm in Gray Road (St Marys assessment roll 1939). The slaughterhouse, built well away from the house, appears to have served both for slaughtering and drying of animal skins. Like the slab barn on the property, it was maintained by the Hayes family who owned Fair View until 1995.

The slaughterhouse building featured in Frank Bolt's 1992 photographic essay *Vanishing Tasmania* (p.140). It collapsed in 2018 but was afterwards restored using similar traditional bush construction techniques employed in the original construction. Today country butcher's shops have largely disappeared, and Tasmania is served by fewer than 20 large, modern, heavily regulated abattoirs. Those small rural abattoirs that still exist are mostly disused and no longer maintained.

Comparative analysis

Vernacular slaughterhouses are rare, and most that exist are in declining condition. Other surviving vernacular timber slaughterhouses include the shingle-roofed slab- or paling-walled structures at Lawrenny (THR#877) near Ouse and the one on the Nant property (THR#67) near Bothwell. A few others around the state have sawn weatherboard walls and corrugated iron roofs. These include Mundy's Slaughterhouse at Premaydena, the Whitewater Slaughterhouse at Kingborough and the ones at Boomer Bay, Dunalley, and Hamilton's farm, Oakwood, Tasman Peninsula. The so-called 'old meat house' at Belmont near Swansea (THR#1558) has a paling roof and milled weatherboard walls. It has a skillion with a roof of corrugated iron. The corrugated-iron-walled, abandoned abattoir still standing at Harvey Street, Strahan, represents slaughtering on a much larger scale, with more sophisticated technology, being equipped with electricity. It is unknown if any of these slaughterhouses feature a rudimentary windlass like the one still evident at St Marys.

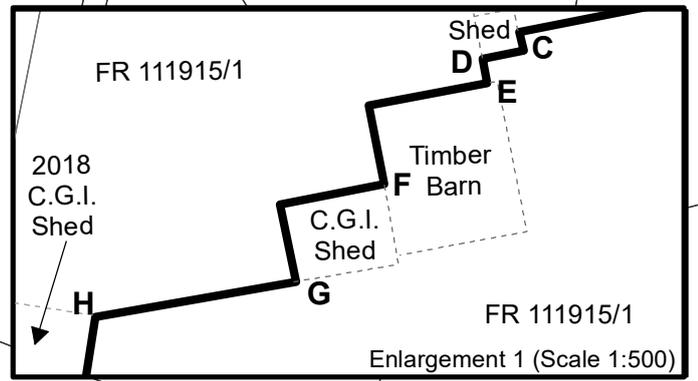
Large estates such as Quamby (THR#4832), Eskleigh, Perth (THR#5242), Strathroy, Breadalbane (THR#5050) and Killymoon near St Marys (THR#604) have surviving private abattoirs of a much more sophisticated design in keeping with the status of the property. The Quamby slaughterhouse, for example, is a fine and rare example of a commercial abattoir on a private estate. It features a base of coursed bluestone, a panel of red brick, slatted wooden ventilators designed to disperse warm air, wide eaves and a hipped corrugated iron-clad roof originally surmounted by a ridge ventilator. Like the slaughterhouse at Fairview, the Quamby abattoir still contains a winching system for hanging meat.

References

- Bolt, Frank 1992, *Vanishing Tasmania: a photographic essay*, Waratah, Kingston.
Conveyance 236/22, The LIST database.
Daily Telegraph, 19 January 1894.
Examiner, 1 July 1911, 13 November 1914.
Hayes, Ian, personal communication October 2021.
Marwood, Jim 1984, *Valley People* Kangaroo Press.
McManus, Tim 1993, *Thanks to providence: a history of Falmouth, Tasmania, and its people*, the author, Falmouth.
Public Health Act (1885), Austlii database.
Mercury, 2 December 1911.
Scripps, Lindy 1999 *The Fingal Valley: Historical Study* Foot & Playsted.
St Marys assessment roll, *Tasmanian Government Gazette*, 3 July 1939, p.2071.

Note

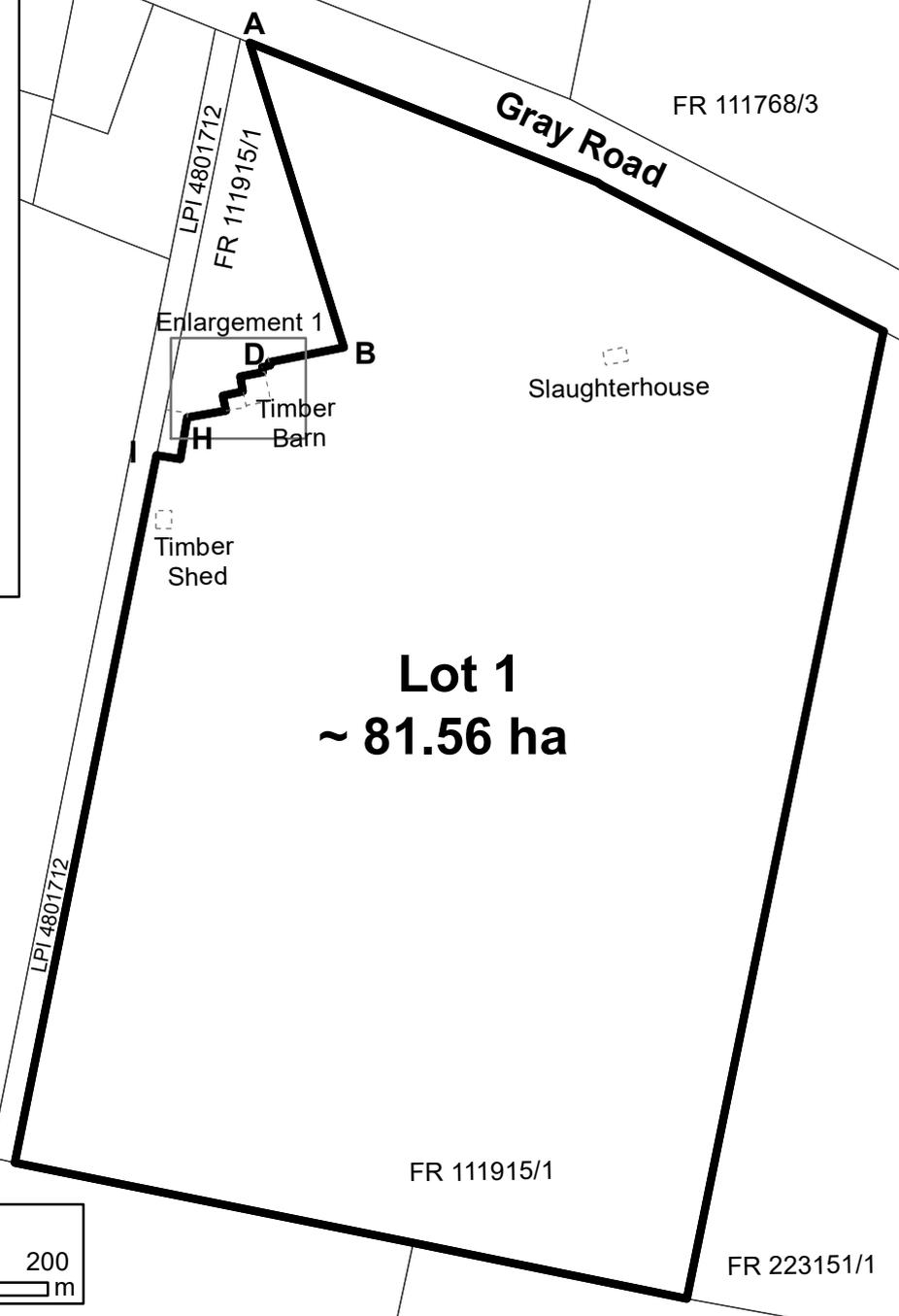
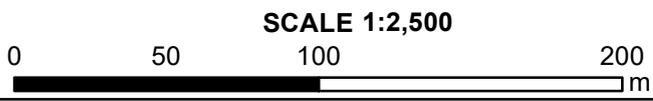
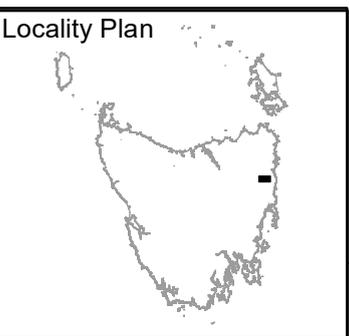
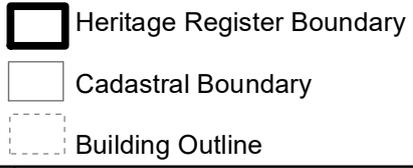
1. Lot 1 represents the registered boundary for 'Slaughterhouse', #12045 on the Tasmanian Heritage Register.
2. Lot 1 consists of part of FR 111915/1, the boundary of which is marked by a thick black line and described below.
3. Dashed lines represent features described in the accompanying datasheet for THR#12045.
4. All boundaries are cadastral boundaries unless otherwise described, details of land parcels may be accessed through the Land Information System Tasmania (the LIST).



Point & Boundary Description

- A. Intersection of a post and rail fence and the cadastral boundary.
- B. Corner post of post and rail fence.
- C. Intersection of post and rail fence with shed.
- D. South-west corner of shed.
- E. North-east corner of timber barn.
- F. North-east corner of C.G.I. shed.
- G. Intersection of post and rail fence with C.G.I. shed.
- F-G is a straight line.
- H. North-east corner of C.G.I. shed.
- I. South-west corner of C.G.I. shed (intersection with cadastral boundary).

Lines A-B, B-C, D-E, F-G represent post and rail fences.
 Lines C-D, E-F and H-I represent the external face of buildings.



TASMAP: ST MARYS - 5839		GRID: MGA94 / ZONE 55		DATUM: AHD		CONTOUR INTERVAL: N/A	
No.	PRODUCTION / AMENDMENT	AUTHORITY	REFERENCE	DRAWN	APPROVED	DATE	 Tasmania
1	Production	THC	12045	JS	A ROBERTS	30JUN22	

Slaughterhouse
 58-76 Gray Road, St Marys

PREPARED BY
 HERITAGE TASMANIA



CENTRAL PLAN REGISTER

p.p. Surveyor General: _____
 Date Registered: 1 JULY 22



CPR
11256