

Former Police Stables & Lock Up, Smythesdale

Address: 62 Brooke Street, Smythesdale

Construction Date/s: 1859, 1866

Level of Significance: State

Heritage Overlay No: HO68



Former Police Stables, Smythesdale



Former Lock Up, Smythesdale

Statement of Significance¹

What is Significant?

The former police stables and lock up, 62 Brooke Street, Smythesdale, has significance as rare and predominantly intact surviving examples of a 19th century police infrastructure buildings in the Golden Plains Shire. These buildings, along with the neighbouring court house, represent the only surviving structures of a considerable police complex on the former police reserve from 1859. The stables building was erected at this time and the lock up was built in 1866 at the height of the gold rush in Smythesdale. Both buildings are of standard Public Works Department design, in their gabled roof forms clad in slate, rendered brick wall construction (stables) and bluestone construction (lock up) and associated details. The interiors of the buildings are also predominantly intact. Of particular interest in the stables is the brick floor having the bricks set with their lengths into the ground, as well as the timber screen and cement rendered wall finishes. The interior of the lock up symbolises contemporary 19th century attitudes towards confinement and punishment, in the austere flagstone and timber floors, white washed walls, timber-lined ceilings, and especially in the solid timber doors (with substantial iron bolts and hinges) and openings with iron security grilles.

How is it Significant?

The former police stables and lock up at Smythesdale are architecturally, historically and socially significant at the state level. The stables represent the only example of its type in the Golden Plains Shire, and the only known surviving rendered brick police stables by the Public Works Department in Victoria. The lock is only one of two surviving 19th century bluestone gaols in the municipality today.

¹ The heritage assessment criteria and format of this statement of significance accord with the VPP Practice Note 1: Applying the Heritage Overlay, revised September 2012, Department of Planning & Community Development.

Why is it Significant?

The former police stables and lock up at Smythesdale are historically significant (Practice Note Criteria A & B) for their associations with the evolution and development of law and order (and particularly a police presence) in Smythesdale from the height of the gold boom in the town from the 1850s and 1860s. Alongside the neighbouring court house, they served their original purpose until 1959. The buildings symbolise the 19th century police presence in the town, with the lock up servicing prisoners awaiting trial at the neighbouring court house.

The former police stables and lock up at Smythesdale are architecturally significant (Practice Note Criteria D & E) as predominantly intact and rare surviving examples of standard Public Works Department austere designs of the 1850s and 1860s in the Golden Plains Shire. While the buildings have experienced repairs, they reflect their original designs and construction. The former stables building is the only example of its type in the Shire, and the only known surviving rendered brick example in Victoria. The lock up is only one of two lock ups surviving in the Shire (the other example being at Bannockburn).

The former police stables and lock up at Smythesdale are socially significant (Practice Note Criterion G) as symbols of 19th century law and order in the town. While no longer functioning for their original purpose, they are recognised and valued as tangible links to the town's public infrastructure heritage of the booming gold rush years.

Description**Setting**

The former police stables and police lock up buildings are set on a contextually large site that is characterised by a substantial open grassed area at the front (the location of earlier police buildings now removed), with an asphalt footpath and perimeter garden bed on the south side, and exotic and native trees towards the rear. An introduced, gabled amenities block is located towards the south-west corner of the site.

Police Stables

The elevated single storey, rendered brick, former police stables building is characterised by a simple gable roof form clad in slate. The walls are constructed of three bricks in depth for the ground floor and two bricks thick for the upper loft walls, and externally they have ruled lines simulating ashlar blockwork. The north and south ends have simple timber bargeboards while the gable ends have loft door openings with vertically boarded timber doors. There are also single stable door openings with vertically boarded timber doors at ground floor level.

A feature of the design is the four-bayed front (east) elevation which has segmentally-arched openings. Three of these openings have timber louvres with one of the central openings featuring a pair of timber framed four paned timber framed windows. Above the segmentally arched openings are three bays of louvred rectangular openings at loft level. A further four bays of identical louvred openings are located on the rear (east) elevation.

Internally, the stables is identified by brick walls (previously white washed) having hard cement rendered finishes to the undersides of the windows, exposed timber ceiling beams and boards (comprising the attic floor above) supported by stop-chamfered timber posts and a dividing timber screen into two loose boxes. There is evidence that there may have been four stalls originally. Of particular interest is the brick paved floor with the bricks set with their lengths into the ground. The paving is sloped into channels which drain from the building.

The loft has a timber floor and there is a hatch near the north wall for access from the interior. Another hatch is located near the south-east corner with a timber ladder for access (the ladder is missing the lower rungs).

Lock Up

The symmetrical, single storey, square coursed basalt lock up is characterised by a principal gable roof form, together with a minor porch gable that projects towards the front. These roof forms are clad in slate and there are simple timber bargeboards and broad eaves.

High up on the front and rear walls are small, horizontally-aligned, rectangular openings having projecting basalt sills and iron security grilles. Narrow vertical ventilators are located in the gable ends.

The lock up is accessed through a central door opening in the front porch. It has an early iron gate. Internally, the porch has an original flagstone floor, timber lining board ceiling and white-washed stone walls. From the porch are three door openings that lead into the three cells separated by stone walls. There are solid vertically-boarded timber doors with access hatches and substantial iron bolts and hinges. The cells have timber-lined ceilings, timber floors and white-washed stone walls, the spartan appearance reflecting the original 19th century function of confinement and punishment.

History

Relevant Historical Themes (to Golden Plains Shire Heritage Study Stage 2 Thematic History)

- Sub-theme 3.1: Principal Discoveries & Gold Rushes
- Sub-theme 8.3: Crime & Law Enforcement

Establishment of Smythesdale

In 1838, Captain John James Barlow Smythe took up a lease of 10,440 acres on Smythe's Creek in Woody Yaloak, eight miles south of Ballarat. By 1854, gold had been discovered on the west side of Smythe's Creek which had attracted 800 diggers. By 1859, the developing goldfields settlement was known as 'Smythesdale', named after Captain Smythe. The Borough of Smythesdale was created in 1861, the same year when the first sale of surveyed blocks of land were sold in the township. Over the ensuing years, the town became a major centre for the Woody Yaloak district. Its population in 1865 was around 1500, including a large number of Chinese. These were the boom years of the township as by 1924 the number of people living at Smythesdale had declined to 250.

Law & Order at Smythesdale

By 1 November 1854, a police presence was established at Smythe's Creek. Three years later on 29 August 1857 the *Ballarat Star* newspaper reported that the 'new Court House at Black Hill, Smythes Creek is nearly finished.' On 9 May 1859, a police camp reserve of approximately 2 acres was created in Brooke Street. Overall, the police reserve was bound by Heales, Brooke, Loader and Ireland Streets and it was to accommodate several new buildings in addition to the court house. By 1859, contract no. 125 for £801/10/- for police buildings was accepted from Pleydell and Clark. It is assumed that other police buildings were built at this time, in addition to the police residence and the stables. On 14 October 1861, Superintending Inspector, J.N. Hansell reported that 'the Court House and one or two other buildings within the camp reserve being the only places [in Smythesdale] built of brick.' The stables serviced the police horses and it adjoined the horse paddock at the rear of the site. A traced drawing dated 15 September 1904 shows the design of the stables. Other early buildings constructed on the site

included a Mining Warden's Office, Clerk of Court's Office, police barracks and residences for the police Magistrate, Inspector and Watchkeeper.

On 30 October 1866, *The Argus* newspaper reported that a contract had been accepted from James Overend for the construction of a stone lock up at Smythesdale at a cost of £809. It was erected to the south of the police stables and behind the police residence. The principal function of the lock up was to house prisoners awaiting trial before the visiting Police Magistrate.

A site plan of the site by the Public Buildings Department in c.1872 shows the complex of buildings on the reserve. It was at this time when new timber picket fencing and gates were proposed. Another site plan entitled "Police Station Smythesdale Block Plan" (undated) shows the location of the stables and lock up in relation to the police residence, office, horse paddock and court house.

In 1897, repairs and additions were made to the police residence. This building, along with the Mining Warden's office and other structures on the reserve, were demolished in 1962. The surviving buildings – the stables and lock up – were decommissioned in 1959. In July 1980, the site was permanently reserved as a conservation area of historic interest (having been temporarily reserved for public [historical] purposes in 1977). Since that time, the National Trust of Australia (Victoria) was appointed the Committee of Management for the site, although active management has and continues to be vested with the Woody Yaloak Historical Society.

In 2000, a Public Heritage Program grant of \$20,000 was awarded for repairs to the slate roof and stormwater drainage for the stables, while a further \$10,000 was granted from Parks Victoria in 2007 for restoration works. These works were carried out by Nigel Green and included lime washing, new lintels and brick placement. These conservation works were overseen by Chris Smith of Parks Victoria.

Comparative Analysis

Contextual Historical Background

Helen Doyle in 'Dispensing Justice': An Historical Survey of The Theme of Justice in Victoria (May 2000), gives the following overview of lock ups in Victoria:

"Police lock-ups and watchhouses provided small towns with a means of confinement, for the purpose of holding a prisoner prior to a court hearing, or used by the police for overnight punishment. They were usually located at a local police camp or police reserve.

... After 1853, with the growing presence of police in the various districts across the colony, especially on the goldfields, the lock-up or watchhouse was one of a collection of buildings which together made up the government or police camp ... As settlements developed and public buildings improved, there was more uniform construction of lock-ups through the use of standard designs. A large number of lock-ups were commissioned by the Public Works Department from the late 1850s to the early 1860s.

Lock-ups tended to be plain and undecorative, built to a simple box-like plan, with a door, ventilation, but no windows, a design befitting with the prevailing attitudes to those who were confined in them. The interior was usually encased with a tight timber lining to floor, walls and ceiling, to prevent escape. Lock-ups were generally built of bluestone if it was locally available; stone was preferred for being more difficult for prisoners or detainees to escape from. The

sombre shades of bluestone also suited the philosophy of criminal treatment of the period, appearing as oppressive and punishing.

... The lock-up was usually built close to the police station, and also to the court house ... Cell blocks varied in number, usually from between one to four, depending on the size of the town and the size of the court house. They were often designed to accommodate only one prisoner at a time, influenced by contemporary thinking on criminal reform: that solitary confinement would aid reform."

Other 19th Century Lock Ups & Police Stables in the Golden Plains Shire

From the 1850s, lock ups were erected on the police reserves at some of the settlements in the Golden Plains Shire. At Steiglitz, a wooden lock up was built in 1857 and it was also at this time when a bluestone lock up was erected at Lethbridge (it was later dismantled and rebuilt at Bannockburn in 1869). Other lock ups were built in the 1850s at Shelford and Meredith and a lock up was built at Scarsdale in c.1864.

The only other surviving lock up in the Shire is the bluestone building at Bannockburn. This structure is of similar construction and detailing as the lock up at Smythesdale, but smaller in scale.

No other police stables of the 19th century survive in the Golden Plains Shire. The Police Buildings Inventory by the Department of Sustainability and Environment lists 19 other brick stables buildings in Victoria. The Smythesdale stables building is one of the oldest, being built in 1859. The other early stables are those at Dandenong (1859) Ballan (1861), Gisborne (1861), Learmonth (1861), St. Arnaud (1862 – since demolished), Carisbrook (1863), Dunkeld (c.1863) and Strathfieldsaye (c.1863). The stables at Smythesdale are the oldest example constructed of rendered brick.

Condition

The former police stables building appears to be in good condition. The cement rendered interior walls are drummy and cracked, and some bricks have spalled. Some of the timber posts appear to have recently been introduced, replacing deteriorated posts of the same design, construction and profile.

The former lock up appears to be in fair-good condition. There is rusting in the gutters and weathering in the roof slates and timber bargeboards and fascias.

Integrity

Predominantly intact.

Recommendations

Heritage Overlay Schedule Controls

External Paint Controls:	Yes (stables & lock up buildings only)
Internal Alteration Controls:	Yes (stables & lock up buildings only)
Tree Controls:	No
Outbuildings and/or Fences:	No
Prohibited Uses May Be Permitted:	Yes

Extent of Heritage Overlay

It is recommended that the heritage overlay apply to the whole site contained within the gazetted permanently reserved conservation area of historic interest.

References

The Argus newspaper, 30 October 1866,

J.T. Collins, Photographs of the former Stables and Lock Up, 5 March 1966 – 4 November 1981, La Trobe Picture collection, State Library of Victoria.

H. Doyle, 'Dispensing Justice': An Historical Survey of The Theme of Justice in Victoria – A Cultural Sites Network Study, prepared for the Historic Places Section, Department of Natural Resources & Environment, May 2000, p.59.

Heritage Matters Pty Ltd, 'Golden Plains Shire Heritage Study Stage 2' (including Thematic Environmental History), prepared for the Golden Plains Shire, October 2009.

W. Jacobs, 'Smythesdale Police Stables' Condition Survey and Schedule of Repairs, 30 May 1997.

W. Jacobs, V. Johnson, D. Rowe & P. Taylor, 'Northern Grampians Shire Heritage Study Stage 2', prepared for the Northern Grampians Shire, 2004.

G. O'Beirne, 'Lock-up, Smythesdale', technical drawings, Matthew Flinders Drawing competition, 1992, State Library of Victoria.

J.G. Roberts, *Smythes Creek and Smythesdale*, Ballarat, 1930, p.4.

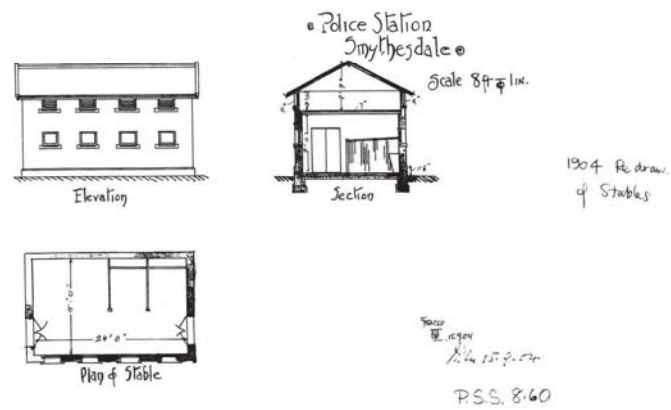
'Smythesdale Police Residence, Smythesdale Lock Up, Smythesdale Police Stables, Smythesdale Police Camp', Police Buildings Inventory (Historic Places – DSE), Police Buildings and Sites Datasheets, kindly provided by Janette Hodgson, Department of Sustainability & Environment, Melbourne.

The Star newspaper, 13 November 1863, p.2, 3 November 1864, p.2.

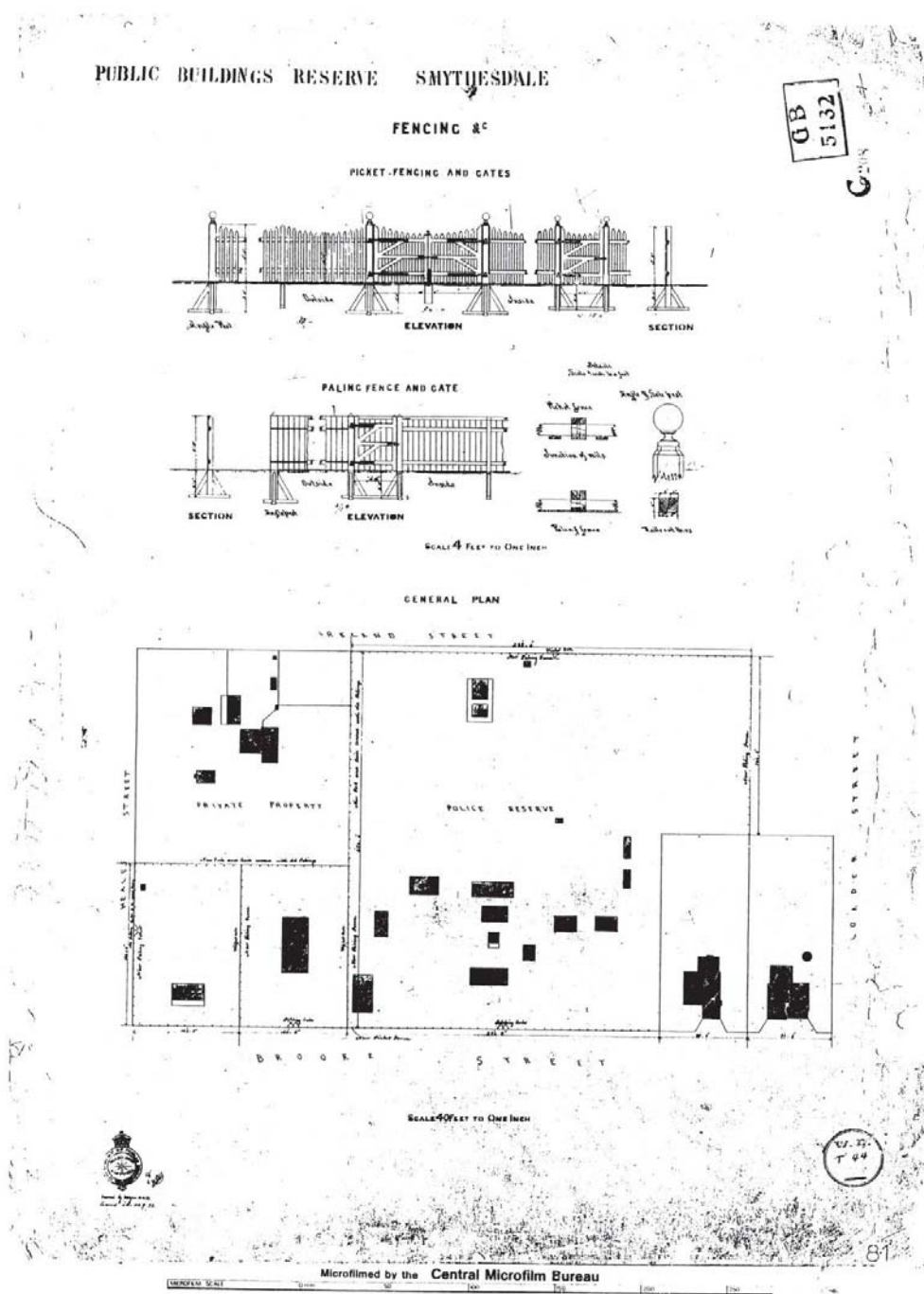
Victoria Government Gazette, 19 January 1977, 9 July 1980.

Wardy Yaloak Historical Society Inc. Newsletters, May 1986, 1995, May – August 2007.

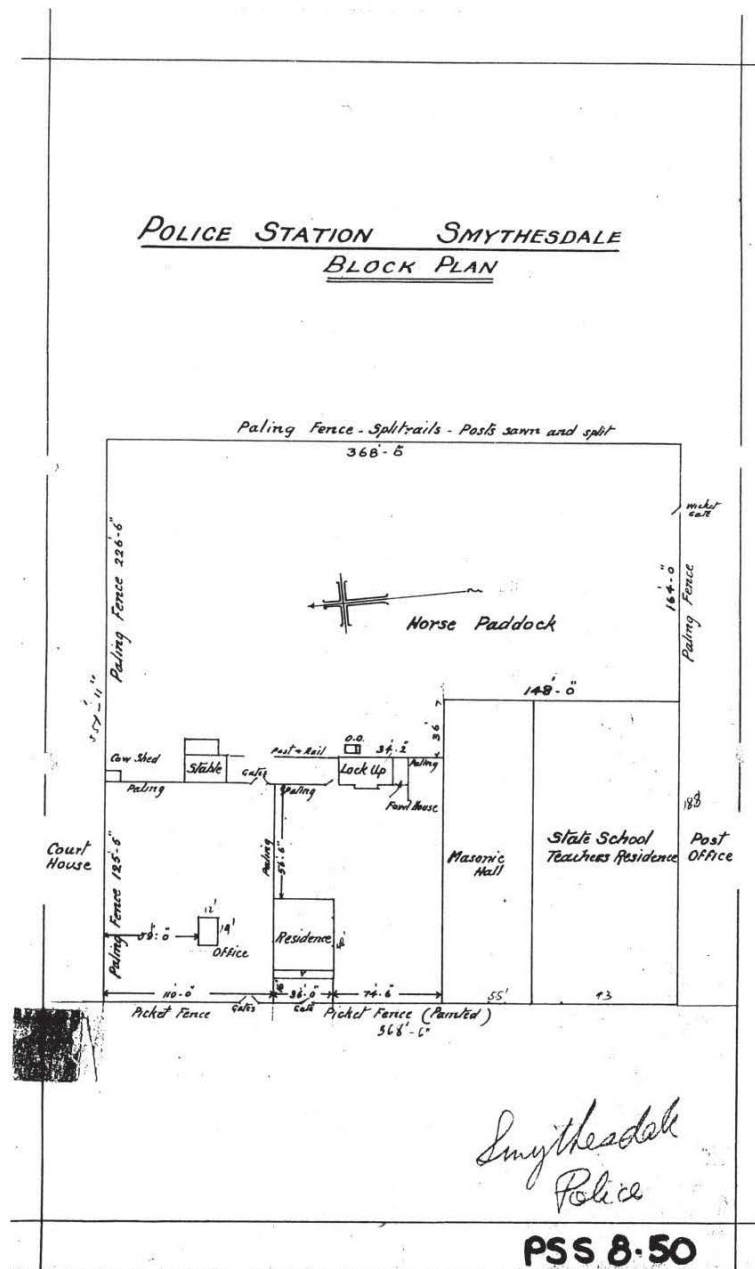
Historical Images



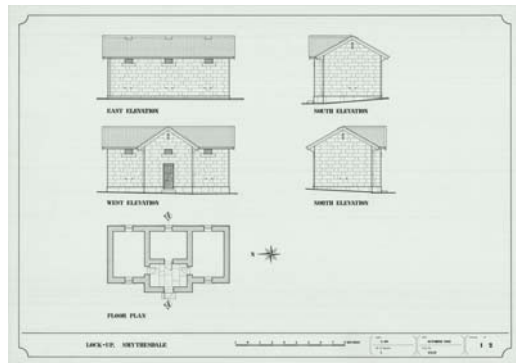
Public Works Department, Drawing of Police Stables, Smythesdale, retraced 15 September 1904. Source: W. Jacobs, 'Smythesdale Police Stables' Condition Survey & Schedule of Repairs, 1997.



Public Works Department, Public Buildings Reserve, Smythesdale, c.1872. Source: 'Smythesdale Police Residence, Smythesdale Lock Up, Smythesdale Police Stables, Smythesdale Police Camp', Police Buildings Inventory (Historic Places – DSE), Police Buildings and Sites Datasheets.



Public Works Department, 'Police Station Smythesdale Block Plan', n.d. Source: W. Jacobs, 'Smythesdale Police Stables' Condition Survey & Schedule of Repairs, 1997.



Floor Plan & Elevations of former Lock Up, Smythesdale. Source: G. O'Beirne, 'Lock-up, Smythesdale', technical drawings, Matthew Flinders Drawing competition, 1992, State Library of Victoria.



Section of former Lock Up, Smythesdale. Source: G. O'Beirne, 'Lock-up, Smythesdale', technical drawings, Matthew Flinders Drawing competition, 1992, State Library of Victoria.

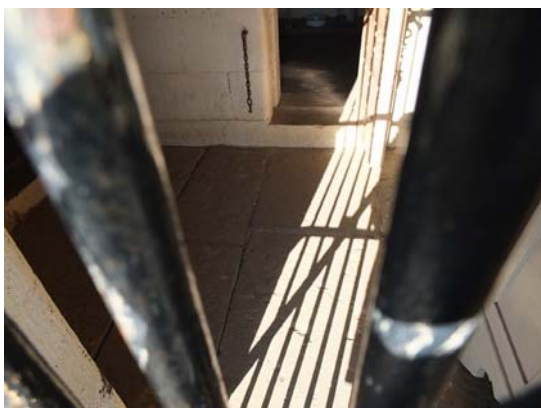
Current Photographs



Former Police Reserve showing the stables and lock up in the background, Smythesdale.



Interior, police stables.



Interior detail of flag stone floor of lock up porch.



Interior of cell from lock up porch.