

HAHNDORF

STATE HERITAGE AREA



State Heritage Branch

**DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENT
AND NATURAL RESOURCES**

History of Hahndorf

Take a walk down Main Street and you can enjoy two different tourist experiences in Hahndorf today.

On the one hand, there are the Bavarian-style restaurants, coffee houses and numerous craft and gift shops lining the street which cater to the passing visitor. However, they have only been part of Hahndorf since recent times.

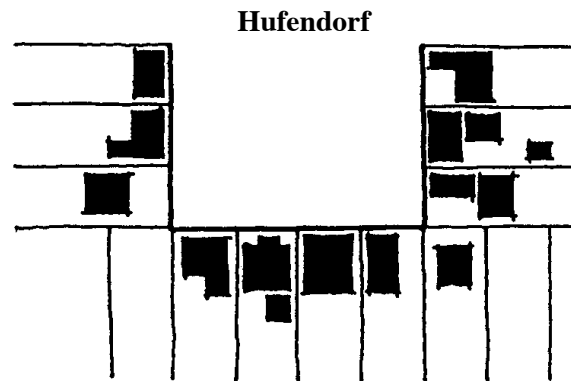
On the other hand there is still physical evidence in the layout of the street and construction of buildings of the Lutheran pioneers and their descendants who settled here from 1839 onwards. The daily pattern of their peasant life has been immortalized in the art of Sir Hans Heysen who lived here for many years.

Hahndorf is the oldest surviving German settlement in Australia. It is one of the few Australian towns with a significant number of buildings which reflect a distinctive German character.

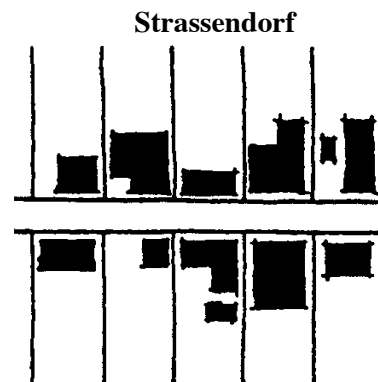
This can be seen in the single detached buildings, set one to an allotment, evenly spaced and built close to the street. Some of these buildings are also noteworthy for their half-timbered construction with brick or earth infill, steeply pitched roofs and austere, symmetrical facades. This is still visible despite the addition of Australian design features such as bullnose verandahs and iron lace.

The original village of Hahndorf was located on the north eastern side of Main Street, along English, Church and Victoria Streets.

In 1839 it was planned as a U-shaped *hufendorf* of small farmsteads with the Lutheran church, where St. Michael's Lutheran Church now stands, as the focus.



In 1849 the original settlement was extended to include the south eastern side of Main Street which then had the appearance of a *strassendorf* village. This can still be seen in the arrangement of allotments which were subdivided in 1850.



As Main Street was part of the Great Eastern Road, it became an important thoroughfare and the focus for the town's commercial activity. Most of the early shops and industries were family businesses with many of the buildings reflecting a dual residential and commercial function.

Wheelwrights, blacksmiths, publicans, shopkeepers, carpenters and joiners soon established their premises along Main Street to service the local community as well as the increasingly busy through traffic.

On 19 August 1885 Hahndorf became the focus for civic pride when the Main Street trees were planted. These included the beautiful cork elms, chestnuts and plane trees, which can still be seen today.

The original Lutheran pioneers who settled in South Australia came from the eastern provinces of Prussia. Some emigrated to escape the religious persecution because of their refusal to join the new state church of King Friedrich Wilhelm III. Others came to South Australia for economic opportunities. One of the deposed Lutheran ministers, Pastor August Ludwig Kavel, was able to enlist the help of George Fife Angas, a founder of the new colony of South Australia, established in 1836.

Many of Hahndorf's pioneers were passengers on the "Zebra" which reached Adelaide on 28 December 1838. Captain Hahn, the master of the ship, was able to help them achieve their goal of settling together on farm land.

Approximately fifty two families were settled on 150 acres which was part of the First Special Survey made available to W.H. Dutton, D. McFarlane and John Finnis in the Mount Barker district on 11 January 1839. A contract was drawn up whereby the settlers would be provided with livestock, provisions and rent-free land for one year. Although they resolved to purchase their land in 1840 it was many years before they were able to discharge the debt.

The cultural traditions established by these early settlers were threatened during the First World War when anti-German feeling engulfed South Australia. In 1917 Hahndorf's name was changed to Ambleside, after a nearby railway station and its Lutheran Day school was closed.

The town was renamed Hahndorf in 1935 as part of South Australia's contribution to its German pioneers for the centenary celebrations taking place the following year.

Hahndorf has been a tourist centre for about two decades. From 1964 the S.A. German Association has held its own *Schuetzenfest*, a shooting competition, which has become a national annual festival. By the early 1970s the former Lutheran Day School and Hahndorf Academy had become art galleries, and Wittwer's Mill, a restaurant.

These developments helped to popularize Hahndorf and marked its genesis as a tourist destination. This process was accelerated when through traffic was diverted from Main Street to the South Eastern Freeway in 1974, highlighting the rustic tranquility of this historic German town and its potential as a byway on the tourist map.

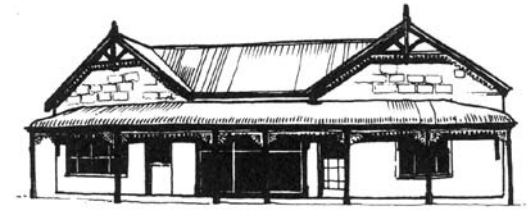


Shop former Thiele Cottage 102 Main Street

The young couple who originally lived here are believed to have been the first couple to marry in Hahndorf.

They were Johann Friedrich Thiele, son of Hahndorf pioneer, Samuel Thiele, and Anna Dorothea nee Schmidt. According to family tradition, the wedding ceremony took place under an old red gum on this site. Legend has it that the tree was later felled to help build the house in 1845.

Johann Friedrich and his wife lived here until their deaths. The house was subsequently occupied by various family members until the 1950s



Thiele Residence 100 Main Street

The late owner, Andrew Thiele, great grandson of Hahndorf pioneer, Samuel Thiele, was born in this house. His father, J.O. Thiele, and his nine brothers and sisters were also born here.

Until late 1989 Andrew was the only descendant of a pioneer of Hahndorf still occupying the original block allotted to his ancestor in 1839.

J.O. Thiele opened a grocery and drapery business in the store section of the building at the turn of the century. In 1912 he bought a Ford motor car which he used to hire out to local residents. The only other car in Hahndorf at that time belonged to Dr. Auricht.

J.O. Thiele later operated a number of agencies on the premises as well as a florist shop, with many of the flowers grown on the property.



Old Mill Motel
former Wittwer Mill
98 Main Street

Originally a steam-powered flour mill which operated for nearly sixty years producing brands of flour such as 'Pride of the Hills', 'Windmill' and 'Phaultless'.

The mill was built by the miller, F. Wilhelm Wittwer Jr., one of Hahndorf's foundation settlers. His three sons carried on the milling business following his death in 1904. The mill ceased operations in 1912. Members of the Wittwer family subsequently used the premises for milling chaff and as a fodder store until the late 1960s.

In 1971 the mill was converted to a restaurant. The dining room is still much as it was when it was stacked with bags of wheat to be milled in the early days.

The house opposite the Old Mill Motel, at 85 Main Street, was built in the 1850s and was F. W. Wittwer's home for many years. Its size and style reflect the prosperity of his milling business.

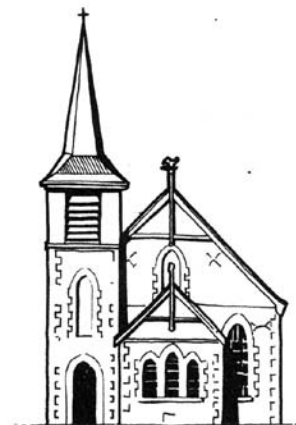


Cafe / Restaurant
former Sonnemann's Bakery
72 Main Street

A bakery had been in continuous operation in this building for about 100 years. The stone bakehouse at the rear of the shop still has its oven door in position.

Franz Heinrich Sonnemann established his bakery in these premises in the early 1860s and supplied the district with traditional German cakes, as well as bread. By the 1880s he was advertising himself as a baker and grocer, licensed dealer in wine and spirits and manufacturer of jam and jelly.

The property remained in the Sonnemann family until 1923 when it was sold to Ernest George Perryman Smith who continued the bakery business. His daughter, a Hahndorf resident, remembers that Streusel Kuchen (German coffee cake) cost 10 1/2 d per pound before the Second World War. E.G.P. Smith continued to supply the district with traditional cake, as well as bread until he sold the property in 1960.



St. Michael's Lutheran Church
Cnr. Balhannah and Church Streets

This church was opened in 1859 and named St. Michael as the foundation stone was laid on St. Michael's Day, 29 September 1858. St Michael's Lutheran Congregation was originally established in 1839 and is the oldest surviving Lutheran congregation in Australia.

In 1840 a mud-walled church was built on the site of the present church and dedicated by Pastor Kavel. However, the congregation split in 1846 when doctrinal differences between Pastor Kavel and Pastor Fritzsche became official.

Pastor Fritzsche and his followers retained the original church property while those of Pastor Kavel built a small brick church at the southern end of Hahndorf which became the home of St Paul's United Evangelical Lutheran Congregation. In 1966 the rift between the two churches was healed when they both became members of the Lutheran Church of Australia.



Hahndorf Academy
68 Main Street

Traugott Wilhelm Boehm established the Hahndorf Academy in 1857 as Hahndorf's first government supported primary school. It aimed to provide 'a sound and good English and German education in order to enable its pupils to enter the learned professions or to prepare for commercial life'.

In 1877 the academy also became a Lutheran teacher's college and seminary under the leadership of Pastor C.F.A. Stempel. It was renamed the Hahndorf College in 1878.

Douglas John Byard, an Oxford M.A. graduate and Anglican lay preacher, purchased the property in 1866. As headmaster, he continued the educational traditions established by his predecessor including the promotion of German. The closure of the college in 1912 marked the end of its long standing role as an educational institution.

In 1967 it was opened as a gallery on the ninetieth birthday of Sir Hans Heysen by Mr. and Mrs. Walter Wotzke, the new owners, who had restored it. In 1988 it was purchased by the Hahndorf Academy Foundation Incorporated.

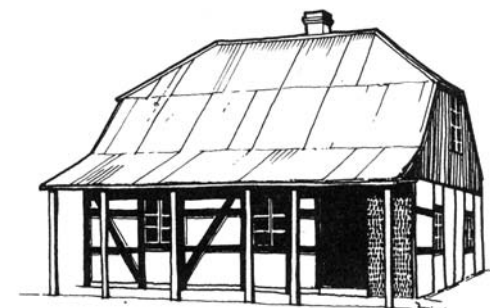


Shop
former Lutheran School
64 Main Street

The first Lutheran school in Hahndorf was established in 1839 and the classes were held in the church. The school moved to Main Street in the 1850s. The new Lutheran Day School was opened on the present site on 1 February 1871.

All Lutheran schools in South Australia, including Hahndorf's Lutheran Day School, were closed by an Act of Parliament in 1917 due to the anti-German feeling generated by the war.

The building was subsequently used as a drapery shop for many years. On 7 December 1958 it was officially opened as an art gallery but closed when the proprietor and his wife restored the Hahndorf Academy.



Shop
former Australian Arms
46 Main Street

Gottlieb Andreas Schuetze was the first licensee of the Australian Arms, built about 1854.

The building is typical of the early construction technique used in Hahndorf, which was half-timbering with infill panels, made of pug in this case. A feature of this style is the building's steeply pitched, half-hipped roof with attic windows.

In the early 1860s the licence was transferred to the building opposite and renamed the Union Inn, now known as Hahndorf Inn. The former Australian Arms has been a residence for many years.



**Craft Gallery
former Mortuary
36 Main Street**

This stone cottage was for many years the mortuary of Hahndorf's undertaker, Carl Rodert. It was built in the 1850s and has the characteristic German half-hipped roof.

A century later, from 1949 to 1953, Stefan Heysen, son of artist Sir Hans Heysen, turned it into a public gallery, which was carried on from 1955 by Walter Wotzke. When he moved to the old Lutheran School, it became a delicatessen for a period. It has since been restored as a shop and gallery.



**Shop
former Residence
34 Main Street**

Carl Rodert, the undertaker, lived in this low built cottage, reputedly built in 1847. The date is carved on the lintel over the front door.

Its half-timbered construction is based on a traditional German building technique called '*Fachwerk*'. This is basically a timber skeleton with infill panels in pug, brick or stone.

Other examples of similar pioneer German cottages can be seen at Nos. 1, 75, 84 and 90 Main Street.



**Rodert's Farm
20 Main Street**

This property was worked as a *hufe* (small farm holding) until the 1920s.

The main house was built in the 1880s, with a lean-to kitchen added about 1928. At the rear is a 2-room cottage with central chimney, loft and bake oven as well as a slab-sided barn and pigsty.

The complex has been in the Rodert family from the turn of the century. In 1901 Anna Amalie Nathaniel Rodert, wife of Johanna Julius Carl Rodert, labourer of Hahndorf, purchased the property from Gottlieb Fischer.



St Paul's Lutheran Church
Main Street

St Paul's was built in 1890 to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the first Lutheran church in Australia. It was designed by well known Adelaide architect, F.W. Dancker, and the bell was imported from Germany.

It replaced the original St. Paul's Church, erected in Windsor Avenue in 1858, now the Sunday school hall, as the worship centre of the congregation that Pastor Kavel served following the rift within Hahndorf's Lutheran congregation in 1846.

It was traditional for brides in the early days to arrive at the Lutheran church in German wagons wearing black wedding dresses with wreaths of green and white leaves in their hair and carrying posies of the same foliage.

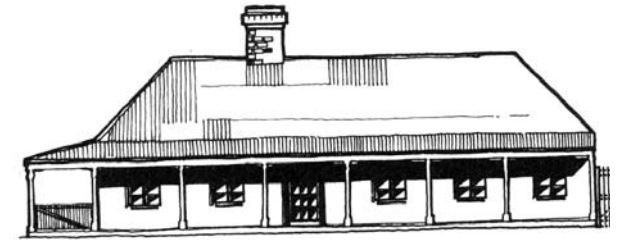


Hahndorf Inn
35 Main Street

This hotel commenced trading in 1863 as the Union Hotel taking over the licence of the Australian Arms. It was originally a single storey building with a second floor added in the 1880s. Like the German Arms, it became a venue for public gatherings before the institute was built in 1893.

The bottle shop alongside the hotel was once a blacksmith shop. Carl Borchers, blacksmith, conducted a thriving business here for many years which could no doubt take advantage of the hotel trade.

The stables for draught horses and smoke house for curing meat were situated in the small building set back from the road, adjacent to the bottle shop.



Shop and Railway Museum
former Jaensch House
47 Main Street

The Jaensch family settled in Hahndorf in 1839 and was one of the most prosperous families in the district for many years. Johann Christian Erdmann Jaensch was one of the trustees chosen by the settlers to hold the land they wished to take up, and negotiated loans with W.H.Dutton and others.

J. Christian Jaensch Jnr. established one of Hahndorf's first butcher's shops on these premises where he lived and operated the family business for many years. The butcher's shop was located in a room at the northern end of the building.



Shop
51 Main Street

This typical German vernacular building, characteristically sited with its gable end to the street, was built in the 1850s. The upper storey, with its high pitched, half-hipped roof and attic windows, was probably the original living quarters.

The first recorded proprietor was watchmaker, August Christoph. The shop has changed little since the 1920s when it became the village deli established by Olive Post.

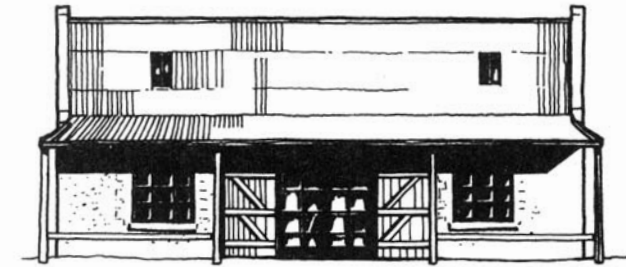
Olive's daughter, Betty Cleggett, who ran the shop until 1994, says her mother always made the store's pies and pasties which were particularly popular with the local football team.



German Arms Hotel
69 Main Street

The original German Arms was established in 1839 at 80 Main Road and was the first licensed hotel in Hahndorf. The hotel business was transferred when this two storey building was constructed in the early 1860s on its present site.

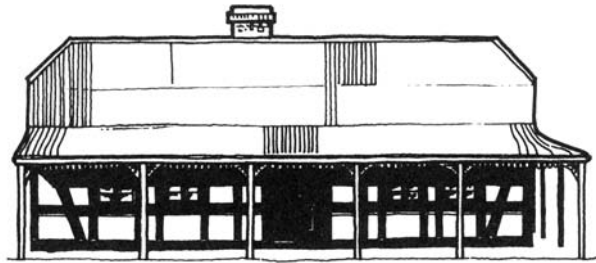
The German Arms was one of the buildings searched when Hahndorf was placed under martial law during World War 1. It was renamed Hahndorf Hotel in 1916, and the following year, Hotel Ambleside. In 1917 German towns in South Australia were changed by an Act of Parliament and Hahndorf was renamed Ambleside after the nearby railway station. In 1976 the hotel reverted to its original name following renovations.



Shop
former Haebich Blacksmith's Shop
73 Main Street

This smithy was built in 1880 by August Haebich, who had taken over the business of his late father, George Haebich, in 1872.

It was still functioning in the 1920s and has been depicted in some of Sir Hans Heysen's drawings. In 1973 it was converted into an art and craft centre.

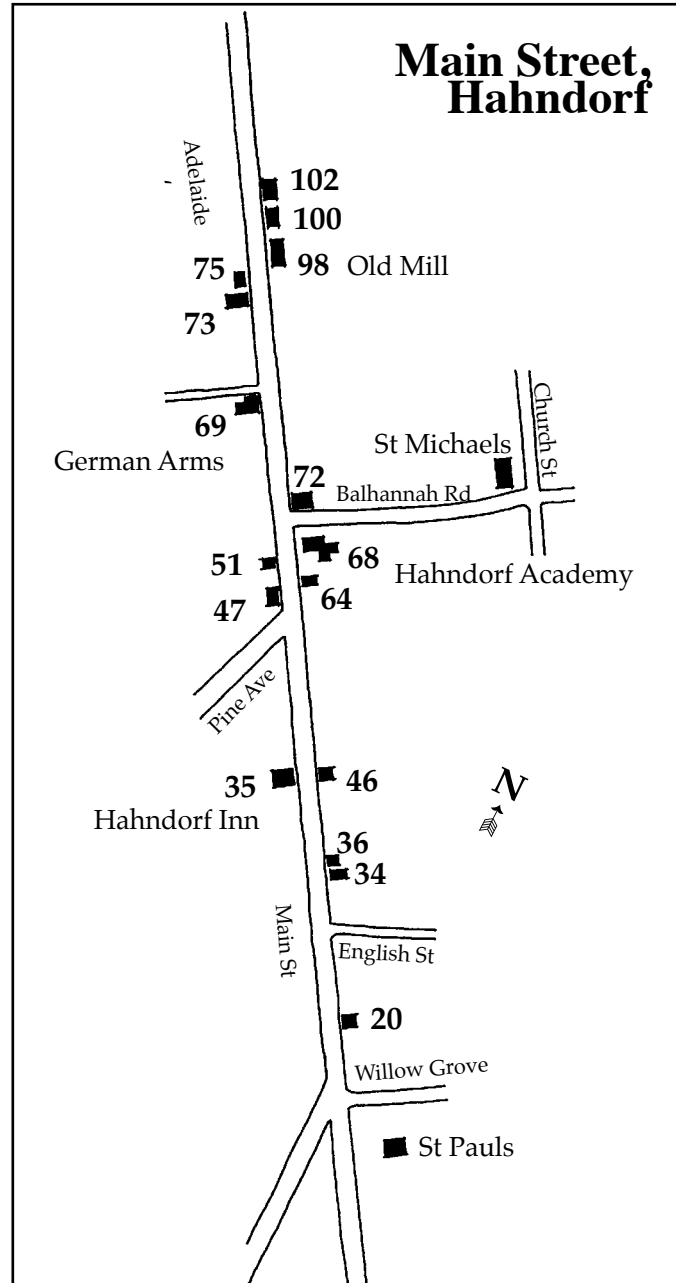


**Accommodation
former Haebich Cottage
75 Main Street**

George Haebich, blacksmith, arrived in Hahndorf in 1846 with his wife and three children. He built this house in the 1850s.

Although additions were made later, including the bullnose verandah, it is a scarce example of traditional German timber-frame construction, infilled in this instance with brick.

The original structure beneath the main half-hipped roof consists of a rectangular plan of two large end rooms and central entrance and kitchen area. This German plan form is known as *Flur Kuechen* or passage kitchen house.



Hahndorf State Heritage Area

It is important to appreciate that the surviving historic buildings in Main Street are durable, yet fragile. Although they have stood the test of time, they are also in constant danger of being misrepresented or falsified by inappropriate development. In 1988 the town of Hahndorf was declared a State Heritage Area. This was in recognition of the way it represents the distinctive contribution the early German settlers made to South Australia's cultural landscape and to safeguard it for future generations to enjoy.

Places within a State Heritage Area can be altered or developed, but it is necessary to obtain planning approval from the District Council of Mount Barker before doing so, (approval is required for most development whether the property is in a State Heritage Area or not). Any alterations should be sympathetic to the character of the original place. A Heritage Adviser is available to give free conservation advice to owners in the Hahndorf State Heritage Area. Ring the Council for more information.

There is no increased right of public access to heritage places. The buildings in Hahndorf are all occupied and cared for, and the occupants' right to privacy should be respected. Treat their property and this historic town in the same way you would want others to treat your property.

For more information about the Hahndorf State Heritage Area see the State Heritage Areas of South Australia website www.stateheritageareas.sa.gov.au

Contact the Heritage Branch:
Phone (08) 8124 4960
heritage@saugov.sa.gov.au
www.heritage.sa.gov.au

Text by State Heritage Branch
Layout and design by Public Communications Branch
Index no. 14771

First printed Sept 1989
Department of Environment and Planning

Reprinted April 1990
Department of Environment and Planning
and Hahndorf Tourist Association Inc

Reprinted April 1994
Department of Environment and Natural Resources

Published online in September 2008 with revised contact details
Department for Environment and Heritage

DEH Information Line (08) 8204 1910
dehinformation@saugov.sa.gov.au