

Conserving Rechner Cottage

Photo – A Grope



RECHNER COTTAGE
CONSERVATION
ASSOCIATION

Prospectus - 2021

About Rechner Cottage

Rechner Cottage, situated at Light Pass, South Australia, is a State Heritage Listed property of historic significance. Built in the mid-1800's, it is full of surprises, with many architectural features of interest. These include its German Fachwerk building technique, its intact red gum drainage system, and the fact that it is one of only two known barnhouse cottages in the southern hemisphere where animals and people were housed under the one roof¹.

The cottage is pivotal to the social history of Light Pass, the Lutheran Church, and the Barossa Valley. It was built on land first owned by George Fife Angus and bought in the 1850's, by GJ Rechner, the school teacher at Light Pass Immanuel Lutheran School. In 1860 GJ Rechner became pastor of the newly formed Strait Gate Lutheran Church, and sold the land to the congregation. Pastor Rechner was an influential and much-loved member of the local community and his family's use of the cottage over many years led to it commonly being known as Pastor Rechner's Cottage. It is widely assumed it was built by him, but this has not been established for certain.



1. Architectural information from Heritage SA and Hosking Willis Architecture reports.

The Rechner Cottage Conservation Association

Our association is a not-for-profit charity registered with the ACNC. Formed in 2018, shortly after a Rechner family reunion was held at Light Pass, a group of interested family members agreed to take up the challenge of conserving the cottage. The Committee, which meets monthly, consists of: Robyn Windham (Chair), Catherine Baldwin (Secretary), Andy Grope (Treasurer), and Jo De Corrado (Research).



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This prospectus is for you if:

You appreciate the history of our early pioneers.

Craftsmen and carpenters from Germany brought their specialized skills, knowledge and ideas from their old lands, using and adapting them in order to build new lives and communities in Australia. The buildings and their lives are intertwined – each has a story to tell.

You are interested in promoting the history of the Barossa Valley Region.

Although only a small settlement, Light Pass contains many historic buildings, and has potential as a heritage precinct. As well as showing the hard work and skills of the pioneers, the cottage highlights the impact of lives and weather on buildings over the years. In its current state, the cottage is a potent reminder of the need to conserve it before its history is lost forever.

You are a member of the Lutheran Church.

Conserving the cottage and telling its stories provides a strong link to the history of the Lutheran Church in Australia. GJ Rechner and the community at Light Pass were significant founders in early church history. They helped establish the church's focus on education and mission work. The strong faith and beliefs which led them to Australia also led to doctrinal differences which caused a division in the church for over 100 years. The two Lutheran churches at Light Pass tell this story of division and reconciliation.

You are a member of the Rechner Family.

GJ Rechner migrated to Australia in 1848, and his future wife, Bertha Bergmann, followed him in 1850. They had seven children, and many descendants. Throughout the lineage, the focus on ministry, education, music and community involvement have been powerful influences. In researching and documenting the history of Rechner Cottage, new generations of Rechner descendants are uncovering a myriad of stories.



Photo – R Windham



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What are the plans for the conservation?

The Rechner cottage is part of a suite of different historic buildings. It sits behind the Strait Gate Lutheran church, between two other historic landmarks – the Mission House and the cemetery. The cemetery has many significant headstones, honouring local identities who have contributed to the Light Pass community.

The State Heritage listing of the cottage ensures it will not be demolished. Our conservation plans will secure the integrity of the building and honour its heritage significance.

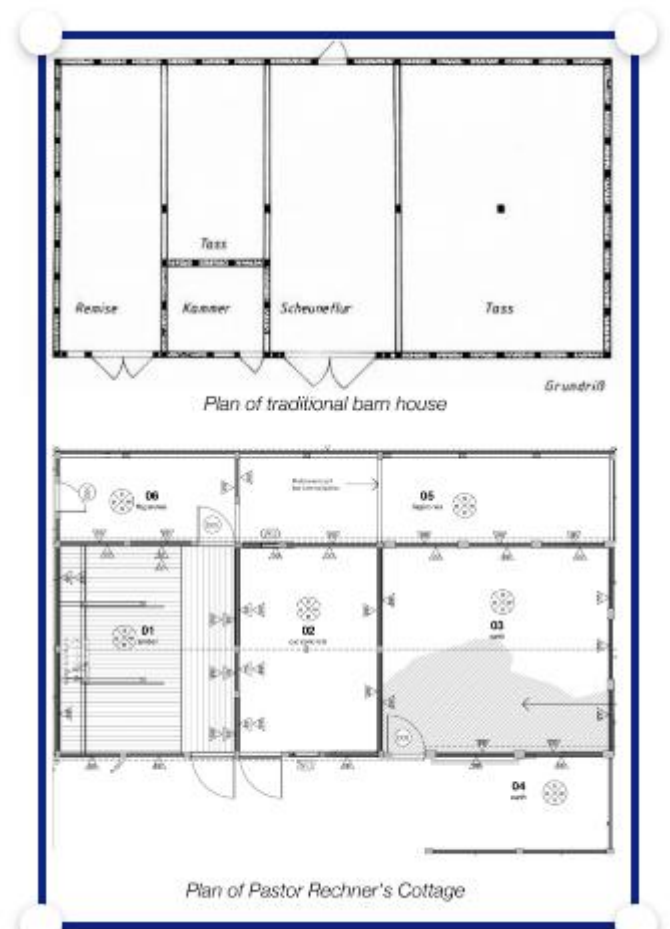
Conservation, not restoration.

The development approval is for the conservation of the cottage, rather than restoration. Conservation will allow visitors to see and appreciate its unique architectural features. These include the unique European barnhouse design, the use of old central European construction methods for all the timber components, the *Fachwerk* construction, the redgum floor drainage system, and the use of pug to clad the walls.

We plan to re-pug and lime the walls, as it would have originally have been done, but want to have a section where the timber is not infilled. This will be preserved as it is (protected by glass or Perspex), so that visitors can see the method of construction. They will be able to see the identification marks on the beams, and many other features which would be hidden by a complete restoration.

Mapping the history.

There are already several restored buildings in Light Pass which visitors can view. Our conservation plans will complement Luhrs Cottage, which sits across Light Pass Road, where visitors can see a pug cottage as it was originally. With Rechner Cottage we will be able to show the 'inside skin' – the techniques and degree of craftsmanship that went into even humble dwellings. Visitors will also see the ongoing history, how over time buildings were adapted to suit changing needs and circumstances. We want to use on-site signage, QR codes, brochures, our website and social media to tell people the story of the building, the community and the church in which it has played a part for over 160 years.





Capturing the stories

In addition to conserving the building, we will be capturing the lived history of Light Pass – the stories of those who have been associated with the building and the community. Old buildings such as the cottage give layers of meaning to our surroundings. We realize we are part of many things that have come before us. The buildings remind us that people have lived and worked and found meaning in these places, and that our lives are shaped by the patterns of people and place.

What is the expected time frame?

We have Development Approval from the Barossa Council, and expect the conservation to be completed by 2023.

Who are the professionals involved in the work?

Architect: Sam Hosking, of *Hosking Willis Architecture*

Sam is the Heritage Consultant to the Barossa Council. His expert knowledge and passion for the heritage of the Barossa is seen in many local restorations. (<https://www.hoskingwillis.com.au>)

Builder: Andrew Steinkopf of *Building Conservation Technology* (ABN: 45 372 734 395)

Andrew is recognized by *Heritage SA* as having wide local experience in conserving and restoring historic buildings. He has restored pug cottages in Hahndorf and Marananga in the Barossa.

How much will it cost?

The cost of conservation is expected to be between \$80,000-100,000.

Where will the money come from?

Stage 1- stabilization (now completed) was made possible by grants from *Heritage SA*, the *Peter Lehmann Arts and Education Trust* and the Barossa Council, and the many individuals who made donations.

Stage 2 – conservation, for which we will be seeking tax-deductible donations via the Australian Cultural Fund, and fundraising through Rechner-labelled wines, sale of artwork, pugging workshops and grant applications. We are truly grateful for this support and plan to honour our donors with an on-site acknowledgement.



Manger at Pastor Rechner's Cottage

Contact Us: We would love to hear from you. Please contact us via email, on *Facebook (Rechner Cottage)* or through our website <https://rechnercottage.carrd.co/>



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