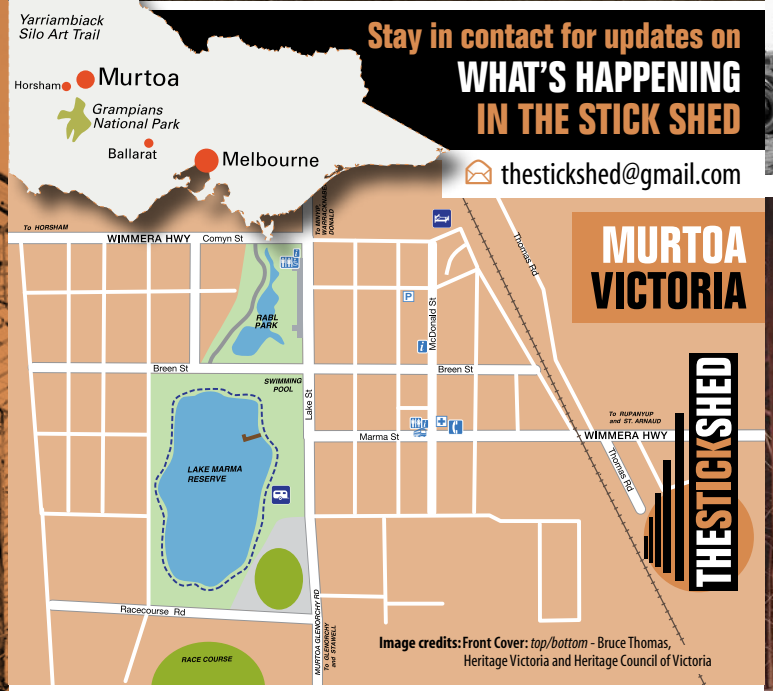
National Heritage Listing

National Heritage listing for The Stick Shed (previously known as Murtoa No. 1 Grain Store) has given recognition to a significant part of Australia's history associated with Australia's wheat industry and the impact of World War Two on the home front. Entry on the National Heritage List also ensures that the place will be protected and celebrated for future generations.

The Stick Shed is the 101st place included in the National Heritage List.

Photo: Rowan Hammerton



Stay in contact for updates on
WHAT'S HAPPENING IN THE STICK SHED

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MURTOA VICTORIA

THESTICKSHED

Image credits: Front Cover: *top/bottom* - Bruce Thomas, Heritage Victoria and Heritage Council of Victoria

VICTORIA State Government | Environment, Land, Water and Planning

Yarriambiack Shire Council | SILO

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MURTOA VICTORIA

National Heritage Listed Cultural Icon.

THESTICKSHED

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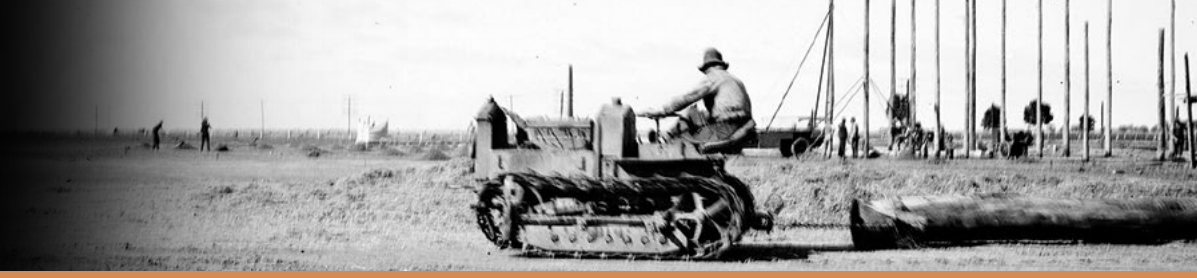
THE MURTOA STICK SHED (previously known as the Murtoa No. 1 Grain Store) is the only remaining emergency grain store built during World War Two and is an enduring testament to iconic Australian bush ingenuity and a symbol of the growth and strength of the Australian wheat industry.



Moving and erecting poles for The Stick Shed, 1941

Completed in 1942, the unique and dramatic structure of The Stick Shed has captured the imagination of everyone who has seen its serene and evocative cathedral-like interior. Referred to by some as the 'Cathedral of the Wimmera'. The Murtoa Stick Shed's ghostly unmilled tall timber poles and central aisle draw the eye upward towards the roof as light spills into the space through skylights as if through a stained-glass window.

Australian Wheat Industry

At 265 metres long, 60 metres wide and almost 20 metres high, the size and scale of The Stick Shed reflects the massive growth of the wheat industry and the need for mass distribution, handling and storage facilities for Australia's oldest agricultural crop.

Wheat exports started in the 1860s from South Australia. and soon extended throughout Western Australia, South Australia, Victoria, New South Wales and southern Queensland.

An increase in production and farm activity led to the development of rural infrastructure, especially the railway, facilitating further growth and prosperity. In 1878 the train line from Melbourne reached Murtoa.

By 1915 the annual wheat crop had reached 75 million bushels. To assist individual farmers and reduce on-farm costs both State and Federal governments began to invest in bulk handling and transport facilities.

World War Two

By the 1930s the wheat industry was producing between 150 and 160 million bushels per year, with 100 million for export. By 1939 it soon became apparent that wheat exports could not continue and it would be necessary to store and keep the upcoming harvests for the duration of the war.

As a result the Australian Wheat Board under the National Security Act purchased all the nation's wheat and set-up a national pool system for its storage and distribution. The construction of emergency wheat stores commenced in 1941. Twenty-two emergency stores were built; 18 in Western Australia and four in Victoria. Due to its location at a key transport hub for the Victorian wheat industry, Murtoa was chosen as one of the sites and our local Stick Shed was the first built.

Designed to hold 3.5 million bushels or 92,500 tonnes of wheat, construction of the Murtoa No. 1 Grain Store began in September 1941 and it is the only remaining emergency wheat store built during World War Two.

The Murtoa No.1 Grain Store was in use until 1989.

Erecting pole directly into ground, 1941

Australian Rural Architecture

The Murtoa No.1 Grain Store is an impressive and unusual example of Australian rural architecture; a form of design and construction rooted in the Australian traditions of bush ingenuity and the adaptation of traditional building techniques and materials. The corrugated iron and timber woolsheds across the Australian landscape are the most iconic depiction of this style of building.

Wartime restrictions meant the builders of the Murtoa Stick Shed had to rely upon and adapt existing bush traditions and techniques. This can be seen in their use of raw, local and recycled materials. The repetitive bay structure and the stability of the pole-in-ground system meant only a small crew of workers without any additional material could complete the building.

The unavailability of steel meant 560 unmilled hardwood poles were used in the Stick Shed's construction. Galvanised hoop-iron was used in most of its structural joints, as the builders adapted the common bush technique for the bracing of end posts in fencing. This bush solution was in response to problems with differing pole sizes and the expected shrinkage, warping and twisting of unseasoned hardwood. This has contributed to the building's capacity to survive more than 75 years, as it gave the structure the ability to move and shift in high winds without collapsing.

The durability of this remarkable building is a testament to the bush skills and ingenuity of its designers and builders and represents a rare and impressive example of Australian rural architecture and building technology to solve a difficult and large-scale engineering problem.

Grain in The Stick Shed, 1984

Photo: Wimmera Mail-Times