

This 17/10/1997

INTERIM HERITAGE PLACES REGISTER

CITATION

Name of Place: ACTON FOUNTAIN

LOCATION OF PLACE: Outside former Obstetrics Ward, Royal Canberra Hospital

Section and Block Suburb: Block 1, Section 55 Acton

Area bounded by

FEATURES INTRINSIC TO THE HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PLACE:

The features intrinsic to the heritage significance of the place are:

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STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE:

Acton Fountain comprised of stones from Acton House provides a reminder of the earliest white settlement of the ACT. It has special association with pastoral, religious, early law enforcement phases of Canberra as well as the beginnings of the Federal Capital.

SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS:

In accordance with s.54(1) of the Land (Planning and Environment) Act 1991, the following requirements are identified as essential to the conservation of the heritage significance of this place.

- The fountain should remain in situ and be operative.

These requirements are prepared to implement the following conservation policy for the place:

- The fountain should remain in situ and be operative.
- Interpretation of its association with JJ Moore should be maintained.

Any action relating to these requirements is development for the purposes of the Act and will require approval prior to undertaking the activity. To undertake development without such approval may be an offence.

1. Requirements Relating to the Building

- 1.1
- 1.2

2. Requirements Relating to the Setting

- 2.1
 - 2.2
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MANAGEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS:

In assessing this place for the interim Heritage Places Register, the Council recommends that the following actions and activities should be undertaken which will enhance the heritage values of the place. They are made as recommendations and have no legal effect.

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DOCUMENT HISTORY

1. date Draft citation considered by ACT Heritage Council at Meeting (number)
2. date Draft citation released for public comment
3. date Revised citation for ACT Heritage Council Meeting (number)
4. date Gazetted in an interim Heritage Places Register
5. 17/8/95 Classified by the Council of the National Trust of Australia

Attachment A

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

1. DESCRIPTION OF PLACE:

The fountain is a raised water feature made from roughly dressed cemented stones. The outer profile of the work is an octagon (approx. 66cm in height). The central pool area has a raised lip (approx. 5cms) to a circular dished bowl made in cement. There is a simple central spray. The drain for the pool is a chromed brass fitting.

The plaque set at the front of the water feature is trachyte with incised lettering.

On this site
JJ Moore
The first settler in this district
Built his residence about AD 1826
Some stones from it now
form this fountain

2. STATUS OF PLACE AT NOMINATION DATE:

3. BACKGROUND:

Acton Fountain is built close to the original site of the former Acton House (otherwise known as Acton Cottage) and marks the site of the first white settlement in the ACT by employees of Lieutenant JJ Moore.

Lieutenant JJ Moore was the younger son of a gentleman farmer in Cambridgeshire. After a short period in a London office he joined the Army and saw action at the Battle of Waterloo. At the conclusion of the war he came to Australia with his brother-in-law, John Wylde, who had been appointed Judge Advocate General to the Colony. Moore became his clerk and Registrar of the Governor's Courts and when the Supreme Court was established he became its first Pro-Notary. He was granted 600 acres at Cabramatta and a station (occupied in 1821) at Goulburn in recognition of his services. Moore was also granted 2000 acres of land at the foot of Black Mountain in 1823. On arrival in 1825 Moore's stockmen erected huts at Canberry (Moore's name for the station) on the site close to the former Royal Canberra Hospital. These rough huts were replaced c1835 by a small pise and stone cottage, Canberry House.

The drought of 1828/1842 ruined Moore, who sold to Jeffries in 1843. Jeffries changed the name of the property to Acton after his hometown near Wexham in Wales. In 1850 Jeffries returned to England and Action House was leased by the Church of St John the Baptist, thus becoming the first rectory in the ACT.

Leased at \$30 per annum Acton House was home to Reverend Pierce Galliard Smith until Glebe House was built in 1873. The property was then leased to various tenants, including Southwells, Gates and JJ Wright and finally to Arthur Brassey who lived there intermittently between 1880-1911.

The property 'Acton' was the first compulsory acquisition in the Federal Capital Territory (now ACT) when the Commonwealth assumed control of the Federal Capital Territory. The homestead was used in the earliest days of the Federal Capital by various public servants including the Scrivener family and the Sheaffe family and later became the police headquarters and Courthouse.

It was demolished in 1941 to make way for the former Royal Canberra Hospital.

Prior to demolition it was decided by the Board of the Hospital, at the instigation of the Deputy Matron, that some stones be saved from the building with the intention of incorporating the stones into a memorial cairn to be constructed near the former site of the Acton House.

After collection the stones were stored in a builders shed on the hospital site and forgotten. It was approximately 12 years later, and with the prodding of the same Deputy Matron that the stones were relocated. Permission was granted from a memorial by the National Capital Planning Committee in 1953. The stones were then incorporated into a simple fountain erected in 1954 by the Department of the Interior at the cost of 350 pounds.

A simple opening ceremony took place on site on a Sunday 6 December 1954. The address was delivered by Mr Laurie Fitzhardinge representing the Canberra and District Historical Society, which was fitting as CDHS, together with others had played a part in having the fountain erected close to the site of Acton House. Since the Royal Canberra Hospital was vacated in the 1990s, the fountain and associated plaque have fallen into disrepair. An unsympathetic interpretive plaque has been placed nearby, and is not part of the classification.

4. RELEVANT PRINCIPAL NATIONAL HISTORIC THEMES:

5. ANALYSIS AGAINST THE CRITERIA SPECIFIED IN SCHEDULE 2 OF THE LAND (PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENT) ACT 1991

Under Section 56 the criteria for the assessment of the heritage significance of places are:

- (i) a place which demonstrates a high degree of technical and/or creative achievement, by showing qualities of innovation or departure, or representing a new achievement of its time;
- (ii): **a place which exhibits outstanding design or aesthetic qualities valued by the community or a cultural group;**
- (iii) **a place which demonstrates a distinctive way of life, taste, tradition, religion, land use, custom, process, design or function which is no longer practised, is in danger of being lost, or is of exceptional interest;**
- (iv): **a place which is highly valued by the community or a cultural group for reasons of strong or special religious, spiritual, cultural, educational or social associations;**

The fountain commemorates the site of the former Acton House homestead which is associated with the first white settlement in the ACT. It was the first Rectory in the ACT and also the first homestead to be resumed on announcement of Canberra as the National Capital.

- (v) **a place which is the only known or only comparatively intact example of its type;**
- (vi) **a place which is a notable example of a class of natural or cultural places or landscapes and which demonstrates the principal characteristics of that class;**
- (vii): **a place which has strong or special associations with a person, group, event, development or cultural phase which played a significant part in local or national history;**

The fountain is in close proximity to, and incorporates fabric from, the former Acton House, home of JJ Moore, first white settler in the ACT. The homestead has special association with the Rev. Pierce Galliard Smith, pastor in the ACT for 51 years and later was residence of Scrivener and Sheaffe notable public officials of early Canberra.

It also was the site of administrative and judicial functions during the earliest phase of the National Capital.

- (viii) **a place which represents the evolution of a natural landscape, including significant geological features, landforms, biota or natural processes;**

- (ix) a place which is a significant habitat or locality for the life cycle of native species; for rare, endangered or uncommon species; for species at the limits of their natural range; or for district occurrences of species;
- (x) a place which exhibits unusual richness, diversity or significant transitions of flora, fauna or natural landscapes and their elements; or
- (xi) a place which demonstrates a likelihood of providing information which will contribute significantly to a wider understanding of natural or cultural history, by virtue of its use as a research site, teaching site, type locality or benchmark site.

6. REFERENCES:

Author Title date publication

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| 1. | Canberra Times | 15/10/1953 |
| 2. | Canberra Times | 6/12/1954 |
| 3. | Canberra Times | 22/12/1973 |
| 4. | Sydney Morning Herald | 5/7/1953 |
| 5. | Address at Acton House Ceremony | 5/12/1954 |
| 6. | CS Daley | <u>The Changing Face of Canberra</u>
Address to CDHS 17/5/1962 |
| 7. | Fitzgerald, Allan | <u>Canberra in Two Centuries (1987)</u> |
| 8. | Freeman, Collett & Partners | <u>Acton West Basin Design</u>
Cultural Heritage Background Study Report, Vol 1-4, Canberra |
| 9. | Gillespie, Lyall | <u>Canberra 1820-1913</u>
AGPS Canberra |
| 10. | Robinson, Ruth | <u>Yabbies at Acton. A Story of Canberra 1913-1927</u> |
| 11. | Oral Information: | Miss Sylvia Curley, Former Deputy Matron RCH
Mr Arthur Cole, former RCH Administrator
Mr Laurie Fitzhardinge, CDHS |