

## NATIONAL TRUST REGISTER OF SIGNIFICANT PLACES

### CITATION

**NAME OF PLACE:** ACT-NSW Border Markers (Group 1)

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### LOCATION OF PLACE:

A strip of land twenty metres in width, centred on the ACT-NSW border and following the border for approximately 97 kilometres between Mt Coree and the Boboyan Road/Shannons Flat Road.

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### FEATURES INTRINSIC TO THE HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PLACE:

The place comprises a total of 272 sites, being:

1. Original border markers.
2. Original reference trees.
3. Original mile markers.
4. Original mile reference trees.

(The site numbers and their grid references are given in the appendix.)

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### STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE:

The border markers in this group, dating from 1913-15, are associated with the very foundations of the national capital and its surrounding territory, and are among the earliest surviving structures erected after the birth of the ACT. They continue to define the ACT-NSW border on the ground today, and are directly associated with the determination of the territorial boundary in 1909, which itself was dictated by the need to protect Canberra's water supply. The markers were installed by surveyors who subsequently played a significant role in their profession and/or in the development of the territory.

The group contains many good examples of the types of markers used, including some rare mile reference trees whose engravings (like the engravings on the timber border markers) display skilful use of mallet and chisel.

The markers reflect surveying in an era which has now passed, the equipment used in the border survey being very different from the technologically advanced tools available to today's surveyors.

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### SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS:

The following requirements are identified as essential to the conservation of the heritage significance of this place. These requirements are prepared to implement the following conservation policy for the place:

1. **Requirements Relating to the Building**
  - 1.1 Not applicable
2. **Requirements Relating to the Setting**

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

1. None of the markers or reference trees shall be removed or damaged.
2. No new materials shall be added to the sites unless such materials are necessary to the sites' conservation.

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#### **MANAGEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS:**

In assessing this place for the interim Heritage Places Register, the Trust recommends that the following actions and activities should be undertaken which will enhance the heritage values of the place:

1. That the conservation recommendations in the report 'Surveyors at the Snowline: Surveying the ACT-NSW Border 1910-1915', by Matthew Higgins, be acted upon. In short these recommendations include periodic inspections of markers to gauge condition; education of the public and agency staff about the markers and their significance; safeguards in the event of bushfire; application of preservatives; conservation of original fabric; and interpretation.
2. That detailed conservation measures for timber post type markers and reference trees be compiled and implemented.
3. That the study of original markers be extended along the whole border.

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#### **DOCUMENT HISTORY**

1. date Draft citation considered by Council at Meeting (number)
2. date Revised citation for Council Meeting (number).....APPROVED/NOT APPROVED
3. date Submitted for inclusion in interim Heritage Places Register

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

### 1. DESCRIPTION OF PLACE:

1. (This nomination is called 'Group 1' so that other border markers that may be discovered elsewhere can be nominated in due course' as additional groups.)

The group of sites consists of a range of forms of markers and reference trees. There are seven types of border markers represented, and they invariably have a rockspit (line of stones) extending out from them in both directions along the line of the border. Some marks are buried slightly either with stones or under the soil. The types are:

- (1) hardwood timber posts squared to a nominal 8" face, shaped to a point at the top, and inscribed variously with the Commonwealth survey symbol (the state survey arrow underlined with a bar) and/or the letters 'CT' (Commonwealth Territory);
- (2) 1" galvanised pipes, filled with concrete and having a nail in the centre of the concrete;
- (3) 3" galvanised downpipes, filled with concrete and having a bolt in the centre of the concrete;
- (4) nails set in concrete;
- (5) railway spikes set in concrete;
- (6) concrete cylinders, made using a small can as formwork, with a nail in the centre;
- (7) pre-existing timber pegs or posts.

The reference trees for border markers are marked with a blaze (shield) which usually depicts the Commonwealth symbol, and sometimes 'CT'. Those carved by Surveyor Johnston's party also show the alpha-numeric number of the individual mark itself.

The mile marks are usually concrete-filled 3" downpipes, as above, in many cases entirely covered by a cairn of stones. Reference trees for the mile marks vary. Those carved by Surveyor Mouat's party show the Commonwealth symbol, the mileage, 'CT' and many also show the code '45R', the meaning of which is unknown. One of Johnston's mile trees is in the group; it is simpler and shows the Commonwealth symbol and the mileage. Surviving mile trees are quite rare. They, like the other reference trees, display considerable skill in the surveyors' use of mallet and chisel.

The reference trees are usually within a few metres of the marks to which they refer. It should be noted that some of the trees are on the NSW side of the border.

A small number of marks found (two to three) may be earlier NSW survey marks, dating possibly from the 1880s (i.e. sites 248, 249).

### 2. STATUS OF PLACE AT NOMINATION DATE:

The markers are official survey marks.

The markers are variously on the edge of Namadgi National Park, Kosciusko National Park, Bimberi Nature Reserve and Scabby Range Nature Reserve.

## **BACKGROUND:**

With the creation of the Commonwealth upon Federation in 1901, several years of controversy marked the process of finding a site for the federal capital. Sites as distant as Albury and Armidale were considered. Finally in 1908 the decision was made to locate the federal capital in the Yass-Canberra region. NSW surveyor C.R.Scrivener was commissioned by the Commonwealth to report on a specific site for the city and to recommend borders for the federal territory. In determining the boundary of the Federal Capital Territory (it became the Australian Capital Territory in 1938) Scrivener was guided by the Commonwealth's determination that the water supply for the city should be contained within the territory. After initial proposals by Scrivener (and the Advisory Board of which he was a member) that the territory include the catchments of the Cotter, Molonglo and Queanbeyan rivers, the NSW Government was approached by the Commonwealth to cede the land. NSW was reluctant to lose the Queanbeyan Molonglo catchment and instead offered the Gudgenby-Naas-Paddys River catchments to go with the Cotter. After discussions, the Commonwealth accepted the offer. The territory border for two-thirds of its c.270 kilometre length follows a series of watersheds. The border was officially described in the Seat of Government Acceptance Act of late 1909.

Scrivener ordered surveyor Percy Sheaffe to commence the border survey at Mt Coree in June 1910. From this point Sheaffe surveyed to One Tree Hill and continued onward around the north and north-east territorial boundaries. East of Queanbeyan the border changed from the lower Molonglo watershed to the Goulburn-Cooma railway and Sheaffe followed the railway for over 50 kilometres to just south of Williamsdale. From here his party proceeded along the divide between the Murrumbidgee and Naas Rivers.

By now a second survey party had commenced on the border. Led by surveyor Harry Mouat, this party began in October 1913 to survey south along the Brindabellas from Mt Coree. Mouat followed the western edge of the Cotter catchment. In 1914 the party was hit by blizzards and the winter was spent surveying the course of the upper Cotter before spring enabled the border work to resume on the range. By early 1915 Mouat was moving along the south-western and southern boundary, finishing the Cotter catchment and following the watershed of the Naas system.

At this stage Scrivener retired and Sheaffe was recalled to Acton to take on higher duties. Near Mt Clear on the south-eastern border Sheaffe was replaced on the border survey by Freddie Johnston. Johnston and Mouat met in late April 1915, at a point between Wrights Hill and Sentry Box Mountain, thus completing the border survey.

The survey of the ACT-NSW border was undertaken using turn-of-the-century theodolites for bearings, measuring wires for distance, and other equipment. Transport was by horse-drawn vehicles, the surveyors having to use packhorses in many parts of the rugged ranges. The survey parties (consisting of about six people each) were accommodated in tents which were progressively moved as the survey proceeded.

The border was permanently marked with a variety of marks (see Description of Place). Those in this citation were installed along watershed sections of the border, and were installed where the surveyors' line changed bearing as the natural course of the watershed itself changed. Marks were also installed at mile intervals. These marks still legally define the ACT-NSW border.

Percy Sheaffe (who was accompanied by his wife Katie for some of the survey) subsequently became District Surveyor. He was involved in Canberra's administration for many years and retired in 1948 as Chief Surveyor and Property Officer. Sheaffe also played a notable role in Canberra's civic life and the Anglican church. Sheaffe Street in Holder is named after him, as is a survey point on Isaacs Ridge; Sheaffe surveyed over 150 kilometres of the border. Mouat (who also had been accompanied on the border by his wife Iris for a time) conducted a number of significant surveys in Canberra and played an important role particularly during the Federal Capital Commission period. In 1944 he and his family moved to Sydney and Mouat became Commonwealth Property Officer. Mouat Street in Lyneham commemorates his name; Mouat surveyed over 90 kilometres of the border. Johnston later became Commonwealth Surveyor General (1944-49) and was the first Director of National Mapping; a geodetic station in central Australia is named after him. Johnston surveyed in excess of twenty kilometres of the border.

**3. DISCUSSION AGAINST RELEVANT PRINCIPAL NATIONAL HISTORIC THEMES  
(where relevant) :**

Themes 7.3: Federating Australia, and 3.2.5: Laying out boundaries.

**4. 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;**

Not relevant

- (ii): **a place which exhibits outstanding design or aesthetic qualities valued by the community or a cultural group;**

Not relevant

- (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;**

The markers reflect surveying techniques and technology of the period. Laid out in the days when surveying was dependent on measuring-wires and early twentieth century theodolites and other equipment, they reflect an era far removed from today's electronic and satellite assisted surveying methods. It is noteworthy too that the surveyors erecting the markers had means of transport markedly different from that available for official purposes today.

- (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;**

Not relevant

- (v) **a place which is the only known or only comparatively intact example of its type;**

Particularly important for their rarity value and the quality of their engraved markings are the mile trees which referenced the markers recording the distance travelled from the commencement of the survey.

- (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;**

The group of markers contains numerous good examples of many of the different types of boundary stations erected by surveyors during the survey of the Australian Capital Territory's border. These range from timber posts to concreted galvanised pipes, concrete cylinders and other metal and concrete markers, with rockspits, and marked trees.

- (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 markers in this group are historically highly significant for their association with Federation, the choice of the Canberra site, and the establishment of the national capital and its surrounding territory. The configuration of the territorial boundary was determined by the need to protect Canberra's water supply and was finalised through a process of study and of negotiation with NSW during 1909. The markers were installed between 1913 and 1915 to officially define part of the

territorial boundary as specified in the Seat of Government Acceptance Act 1909 and have continued to define the border on the ground ever since. They are among the earliest structures in the ACT erected after the birth of the Territory. The possible NSW survey marks within the group, some of which may pre-date the border survey, are potentially very significant for their association with early surveys in the region.

Most of the markers are directly associated with Surveyor Harry Mouat who played an important role in the survey of Canberra and the ACT. He subsequently held a senior position in the Commonwealth service in Sydney. Some of the markers are directly associated with Freddie Johnston who rose to prominence in his career, being Commonwealth Surveyor General 1944-49. By association the markers also relate to Percy Sheaffe who surveyed the greater part of the border and was prominent in the Canberra administration and community for many years.

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

Not relevant

**(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.**

Not relevant

**(x) a place which exhibits unusual richness, diversity or significant transitions of flora, fauna or natural landscapes and their elements; or**

Not relevant

**(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.**

Not relevant.

## **6. REFERENCES:**

Author Title date publication

Higgins, Matthew. *Surveyors at the Snowline: Surveying the ACT-NSW Border 1910-1915*. Canberra: National Trust of Australia (ACT), 1996.

APPENDIX

Border markers and grid references:

Site no	Original marker no	Grid reference	NSW 1:25000 map sheet, no.
1	A50a	644911	Cotter Dam 8627-II-N
2	A50	643909	"
3	B50	643908	"
4	C50	642907	"
5	D50	642906	"
6	R50	629877	"
7	V50	631868	"
8	Z50	634861	"
8a	H51	635850	"
9	R53	621777	Tidbinbilla 8627-II-S
10	11 Mile	614770	"
11	C54	609758	"
12	D54	609757	"
13	E54	609756	"
14	F54	608755	"
15	J54	611749	"
16	M54	608743	"
17	P54	608741	"
18	13 Mile	608741	"
19	Q54	607739	"
20	R54	605739	"
21	S54	604738	"
22	U54	602735	"
23	V54	602734	"
24	B55	605725	"
25	155	609714	"
25a	M55	606713	"
25b	O55	604713	"
26	S55	599708	"
27	T55	598705	"
28	16 Mile	598703	"
29	V55	598703	"
30	Y55	599697	Corin Dam 8626-I-N
31	A56	600693	"
32	B56	602692	"
33	C56	603692	"
34	D56	603690	"
35	17 Mile	602689	"
36	E56	601687	"
37	G56	602684	"
38	H56	602684	"

39	156	601683	"
40	18 Mile	602674	"
41	Q56	605668	"
42	T56	605666	"
43	W56	605661	"
44	X56	604658	"
45	19 Mile	604658	"
46	Y56	603657	"
47	Z56	603656	"
48	057	610635	"
49	P57	611634	"
50	R57	606624	"
51	S57	606624	"
52	T57	607622	"
53	U57	608619	"
54	V57	610616	"
55	Z57	613612	"
56	F58	617607	"
57	G58	618606	"
58	158	618604	"
59	F59	601584	"
60	159	603582	"
61	E73	611563	"
62	H73	611559	Rendezvous Creek 8626-1-S
63	173	613558	"
64	J73	613557	"
65	27 Mile	613555	"
66	P73	607547	"
67	Q73	606547	"
68	T73	603542	"
69	U73	603541	"
70	X73	603537	"
71	Y73	601537	"
72	A74	599536	"
73	D74	600534	"
74	E74	601533	"
75	F74	602533	"
76	29 Mile	602533	"
77	G74	603533	"
78	N74	604526	"
79	Y74	614525	"
80	Z74	615524	"
81	A75	615524	"
82	B75	616524	"
83	C75	615523	"

84	D75	616521	"
85	E75	617521	"
86	H75	621521	"
87	I75	622519	"
88	31 Mile	622519	"
89	K75	623518	"
90	L75	625516	"
91	O75	626514	"
92	P75	627513	"
93	Q75	627513	"
94	R75	626512	"
95	S76	621488	"
96	T76	619488	"
97	V76	619487	"
98	e.W76	619487	"
99	E78	627463	"
100	F78	628464	"
101	G78	629463	"
102	J78	631461	"
103	K78	632461	"
104	S78	638454	"
105	Z78	647453	"
106	A79	647452	"
107	B79	648451	"
108	C79	648450	"
109	F79	650448	"
110	37 Mile	651448	"
111	H79	653445	"
112	I79	654444	"
113	M79	657436	"
115	38 Mile	658434	"
116	O79	658434	"
117	S79	660429	"
118	U79	663426	"
119	G80	675419	Yaouk 8626-II-N
120	40 Mile	676413	"
121	I80	675410	"
122	J80	676408	"
123	L80	679407	"
124	M80	680408	"
125	N80	681409	"
126	O80	682410	"
127	P80	683412	"
128	41 Mile	682416	"

129	Q80	682415	"
130	V90	685423	Rendezvous Creek 8626-1-S
131	W80	685424	"
132	A81	688433	"
133	B81	687434	"
134	C81	685438	"
135	D81	686440	"
136	E81	688440	"
137	F81	689441	"
138	G81	689441	"
139	H81	689442	"
140	181	690443	"
141	J81	690444	"
142	K81	691445	"
143	O81	692449	"
144	P81	693452	"
145	Q81	694453	"
146	R81	698459	"
147	S81	698458	"
148	T81	699458	"
149	W81	703455	"
150	X81	705454	"
151	Y81	706452	"
152	Z81	707451	"
153	A82	708450	"
154	B82	709447	"
155	D82	711441	"
156	G82	707434	"
157	182	708431	"
158	K82	709425	"
159	L82	711424	"
160	M82	711421	"
161	N82	711418	Yaouk 8626-H-N
162	O82	712417	"
163	P82	714418	"
164	Q82	716417	"
165	R82	716417	"
166	H83	716400	"
167	183	716399	"
168	J83	714398	"
169	49 Mile	714398	"
170	K83	713397	"
171	L83	712397	"
172	M83	712396	"
173	N83	712394	"

174	O83	712392	"
175	P83	712389	"
176	Q83	711389	"
177	R83	713387	"
178	RA83	712385	"
179	RB83	713384	"
180	50 Mile	713383	"
181	S83	713383	"
182	T83	712381	"
183	U83	712380	"
184	V83	712379	"
185	Y83	713375	"
186	A84	714372	"
187	B84	714371	"
188	C84	715370	"
189	D84	714369	"
190	51 Mile	713367	"
191	E84	713367	"
192	F84	712366	"
193	H84	711365	"
194	J84	709364	"
195	K84	709362	"
196	L84	709361	"
197	M84	707360	"
198	N84	707359	"
199	O84	706357	"
200	P84	706356	"
201	Q84	705355	"
202	52 Mile	704354	"
203	R84	704354	"
204	S84	704354	"
205	T84	703353	"
206	U84	704352	"
207	V84	704352	"
208	W84	705351	"
209	X84	707348	"
210	Y84	708347	"
211	C85	711345	"
212	D85	712345	"
213	E85	713344	"
214	53 Mile	713344	"
215	F85	713341	"
216	G85	713338	"
217	H85	713336	"
218	J85	717335	"

219	K85	718335	"
220	L85	718335	"
221	M85	721333	"
222	54 Mile	721333	"
223	O85	722332	"
224	P85	721328	"
225	Q85	719327	"
226	R85	719326	"
227	U85	718324	"
228	V85	718323	"
229	X85	719321	"
230	G86	720314	"
231	J86	722312	"
232	K86	722311	"
233	L86	722310	"
234	N86	722308	"
235	P86	723305	"
236	56 Mile	723304	"
237	R86	723304	"
238	S86	724304	"
239	W86	726302	"
240	X86	728302	"
241	Y86	729302	"
242	Z86	731301	"
243	B87	733300	"
244	C87	733298	"
245	E87	732296	"
246	H87	736293	"
247	R87	744286	"
248	A43(?)	744283	"
249	Z42(?)	743282	Shannons Flat 8626-II-S
250	V42	748280	"
251	112 Mile	748280	"
252	R42	752276	"
253	Q42	753274	"
254	P42	754273	"
255	N42	755272	"
256	L42	757270	"
257	K42(?)	757269	"
258	J42	758268	"
259	I42	760267	"
260	H42	761266	"
261	G42	763264	"
262	F42	764264	"
263	E42	765263	"

264	B42	766260	"
265	A42	768258	"
266	V41	773255	"
267	U41	774256	"
268	Q41	777259	"
269	K41	785259	"