

NATIONAL TRUST REGISTER OF SIGNIFICANT PLACES

CITATION

NAME OF PLACE: GREEN HILLS CORK OAK PLANTATION

LOCATION OF PLACE:

Section and Block Suburb: Section 188

Area bounded by: 3.9 hectares near the Glenloch Interchange.

FEATURES INTRINSIC TO THE HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PLACE:

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

Its historical significance (the first acorns for the plantation were supplied in 1916 by Canberra's designer Walter Burley Griffin to horticulturist TCG Weston to be incorporated in an international arboretum); and its distinctive element in the landscape.

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE:

As above. The arboretum (not proceeded with) was to be a belt of representative plantings of tree species from around the world enhancing the city and providing a fitting international flavour. The cork bark, when stripped, was marketable.

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

1.2

2. Requirements Relating to the Setting

2.1

2.2

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.

(There must be SOME recommendations because in 1988 the article mentions that plans to thin and harvest the trees had been halted because the ACT Heritage Commission so far was not convinced of the need to do so.)

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
On the register of the National Estate but no other information.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION - all information was garnered from an article in Heritage Newsletter: March 1981 and another in "The Chronicle" December 8, 1988

1. DESCRIPTION OF PLACE: CORK OAK PLANTATION

2. STATUS OF PLACE AT NOMINATION DATE:

Good in 1981, when there was a harvest of 10 tonnes of cork.

3. BACKGROUND:

10 hectares covered with some 6000 cork oak trees (*Quercus suber*), a species native to the Mediterranean, which is the major source of commercial cork.

The plantation was entered on the Register because of its historical significance and because of its distinctive element in the landscape today.

The first acorns for the plantation were supplied in 1916 by Canberra's designer, Walter Burley Griffin, to horticulturist TCG Weston who was responsible for much of the early reforestation in and around Canberra, to be incorporated in an international arboretum.

The arboretum was to be a belt of representative plantings of tree species from around the world, enhancing the city and providing a fitting international flavour.

As cork was a strategic commodity and Weston was also experimenting with various species to ascertain their commercial potential, the cork oaks were planted with a view to future harvesting.

There was some difficulty obtaining the acorns. An early consignment gathered in France went down with the SS Boorara hit by a torpedo during the First World War.

Seedlings from a later consignment were planted out in the years up to about 1920 and a few acorns were planted, rather unsuccessfully, in situ.

Burley Griffin's plans for the arboretum did not reach full fruition, but the Cork Oak Plantation has remained healthy despite frequent periods of drought. (The trees were 10 to 15 metres high in 1981).

The plantation is managed by the Forests Section of the Department of Capital Territory which carries out routine thinning and harvests the cork.

Cork trees have a life span of several hundred years. Cork harvesting is not at all detrimental to them but it does require considerable expertise.

The trees have two growth layers - the inner cambium of wood and conducting tissue and the outer cork cambium. At the right time of the year, and with the right technique, the cork can be peeled off like a banana skin. However, too deep a cut could ring bark the tree.

The trees were stripped in the late 1940s and the cork used for industrial purposes by Embelton and Company of Melbourne. Coincidentally, the acorns had been obtained by Mr William Reid of the Australia High Commission, London, who had become a close colleague of Mr George P Embelton during the latter's posting to London for the Commonwealth shortly after the war years. Later sales of cork from the plantation were also arranged by Embelton and Co.

Over the last few years the Forests Section has been experimenting with stripping on the trees that will be removed gradually in thinning operations.

Members of the section have been fortunate in being able to learn the stripping technique from a colleague, Mr Quirino Lopez, in the City Parks Section, who previously worked in the Portuguese cork forests. As well as passing on his technique, Mr Lopez helped import some of the special small axes used in Portugal.

It appears cork oaks are best harvested about once every 10 years, and depending a little upon seasonal conditions, in late spring or early summer.

Rather than undertake a massive operation every 10 years, a small harvest will be done every year. 1981's harvest amounted to 10 tonnes of cork.

4. RELEVANT PRINCIPAL NATIONAL HISTORIC THEMES:

Walter Burley Griffin and TCG Weston and the intended National Arboretum.

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;
- (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;
- (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