

NATIONAL TRUST REGISTER OF SIGNIFICANT PLACES

CITATION

NAME OF PLACE: CUPPACUMBALONG WOOLSHED COMPLEX

LOCATION OF PLACE

- a) Block 216 Paddy's River, Cuppacumbalong Woolshed Complex is located near the confluence of the Gudgenby and Murrumbidgee Rivers, 2 kilometres south of Tharwa, on river flats to the west of the Murrumbidgee.
 - b) Map 200576/12. Grid Reference 205400 - 576750.
 - c) The complex is bounded by Naas Road, Smith's Road, and the Gudgenby River.
 - d) The area is approximately 1 hectare.
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FEATURES INTRINSIC TO THE HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PLACE:

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

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE:

The complex presents a clear example of the self contained nature of a shearing complex and illustrates the facilities provided for, and the way of life of shearers on a large sheep grazing property.

The woolshed is a good example of balloon framing and bush carpentry retaining original integrity. It still retains some elements of the original machinery as well as progressive eras of technology.

The landscape setting and scale of the woolshed serve as reminders of the times when Cuppacumbalong was the centre of a pastoral community, and of Tharwa Village and its owners producer of large quantities of fine wool.

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 The existing built elements listed below are to be conserved in accordance with a conservation and management plan to be prepared and submitted to the Heritage Council of the ACT for approval within a time specified by the Council in consultation with the lessee (s):

- The woolshed and yards.
- The sheep dip.
- The shearers quarters or dormitory, kitchen/dining, overseers two-roomed huts, showers, tanks, toilets.
- fences

2. Requirements Relating to the Setting

The existing landscape features must be conserved in accordance with a conservation management plan to be prepared and submitted to the Heritage Council of the ACT for approval within a time frame specified by the Council and in consultation with the lessees.

- eucalypt plantings
 - willows by the Gudgenby River
 - holding paddocks
 - cultivation paddock
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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.

DOCUMENT HISTORY

1. date Draft citation considered by Council at Meeting (number)
2. 3/5/82 Revised citation for Council Meeting (number).....APPROVED
3. date Submitted for inclusion in interim Heritage Places Register

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

1. DESCRIPTION OF PLACE:

The complex comprises of woolshed, yards, sheep dip, shearers' quarters of kitchen, dormitory or bunkhouse, overseer's two-roomed hut, showers, water tanks, toilet, fences, cultivation and holding paddocks and plantings.

The woolshed is galvanised iron, with a sawn timber frame and on timber stumps. Framed in sawn timber, the structure is entirely clad in galvanised iron except for the wall area adjacent to the stands which is clad in wood. It is of a balloon frame construction which is a system using relatively thin sawn timber members nailed together. It is so called because of the lightness of the stud walling, floor and roof elements.

Internally the shed displays a classic T shape. The main floor consists of two areas; 9 x 102 feet (approx 3m x 34m) with wooden boards for the 'floor', and 31 x 102 feet (10m x 34m), battened, for the pens. A simple wing functions as the classing and pressing area. On the southern side there are 5 stands with Wolseley power shaft driven by electric motor, and external chutes to tally pens. An overseer's/machine room is located at the south western end of the shed. Within the dividing wall on the left hand side of the entry into the overseer's/machine room a combs and cutters box is situated. The overseers/machine room houses a single cylinder magneto ignition "Lister" engine c1928 no longer connected to the shaft, with instructions for supervisors glued to the wall nearby and a Cooper double ended blade grinder with straps and pulley (possibly 1928).

A large metal scale, W & T Avery Ltd Birmingham c1920 and two wool presses remain in situ on the main area of the shed. One press is wooden with hand operated ratchet pull down mechanism. It has the maker's mark "C KOERSTZ" on the lower portion and is embossed with white design on the upper sections. A large red metal Sunbeam Hydromatic wool press is located beside the older press.

The internal walls bear wool classers' mark and tallys while the back doors have stencil markings, "L.KIRSCHNER".

Lighting is by roof lights over the floor, supplemented by wall windows and electric lighting in the classing and shearing areas. Ventilation is provided by door and window openings plus the battened floor.

The roof is hipped with gutters that originally drained into rainwater tanks. A galvanised iron water tank to supplement the rainwater is supported on a steel tower on the south eastern side of the shed.

The yards constructed from timber post and rail with batten gates are on the southern side of the shed. They retain their original position (c1892) though have periodically been re-built.

The dip lies south east of the shed, approximately 200m from the shed, and 100m from the river. It is cement rendered with morticed post and rail fence in need of repair.

The shearers' quarters, erected north of the woolshed in a group of eucalypts, consist of a bunkhouse or dormitory built in wood and galvanised iron on concrete stumps. A large water tank and a bath/laundry is alongside. In front of the bunkhouse is the kitchen dining room in wood galvanised iron and brick on timber stumps. Its two chimneys are sandstock brick possibly c1900 and the inspection of roof structure indicates similarities in age and design to the woolshed. An early Metters stove is lying under the eastern section of the building. A small brick flat roofed addition, a bath/laundry is adjacent to the chimneys and a water tank collects rain from the roof.

Parallel and closest to the woolshed is the overseer's quarters, two rooms constructed in wood with galvanised iron and on concrete stumps. The quarters are shaded by a dump of eucalypts. The toilet is located 50m south west of the quarters.

The fences, post 1950, have wood posts and three strand wire - they appear to have been re-used.

Old cultivation paddocks for lucerne to 1870's are located close to the dip and the holding paddocks for shearing are in the paddock area between Naas Road and the Gudgenby River.

The vegetation in the area is modified savanna with *Eucalyptus melliodora*, *E. bridgesiana* and *E. blakelyi* are found in regenerating tussock grassland and improved pastures. Plantings of willow are found near the Gudgenby River.

The area also accommodates a campsite that is part of the Bicentennial Riding Trial. It consists of a wire fenced enclosure and an outside BBQ.

2. STATUS OF PLACE AT NOMINATION DATE:

- Recorded by the National Trust of Australia (NSW) 3 May 1982.
- Classified by the National Trust of Australia (ACT)
- Submission for ACT Heritage Register and date 1990
- NCDC Sites of Significance, Volume No IV, Page No. 126.
- ACT leased land. Lessee CORANCA Pastoral Company, Hall, Tony Johnson.

3. BACKGROUND:

Whilst aboriginal occupation of the west bank of the Murrumbidgee is known to have dated from 20,000 years ago, the first official white occupation in the Tharwa area was in 1837 when a licence was granted to George Webb. Webb moved outside the settled counties, over the Murrumbidgee with his wife and daughter Eliza and built his home in the ridge near the present day Tharwa Bridge on land he called "Port Hole". Webb later moved to Tidbinbilla, and James Wright of Lanyon relocated to Port Hole. Maps of 1847 indicate James Wright as owner of the property, which was renamed Cuppercumbalong (aboriginal meaning 'meeting of the waters').

In 1848 J.J. Wright, re-located from Lanyon to Cuppacumbalong, erected the first permanent homestead. By 1856 he had sold to Leopold Fane de Salis who used it as head station to his vast grazing empire, and it was around the employment provided at Cuppacumbalong that the small village of Tharwa evolved.

Cuppacumbalong, as it became known, was located on the ford at Tharwa close to the junction of the Gudgenby and Murrumbidgee River possibly to take advantage of the natural river crossings and tracks established by 1838, and to control access to and grazing on the River flats.

A woolshed would appear to have operated at some distance from the homestead since the mid 19th century. In the 1870s it was recorded as being in the 'Lower Paddock'. The location of shearers huts in 'Lagoon Paddock' until at least 1913, just north of the present woolshed, would suggest that 'Lower Paddock' was in the vicinity and may possibly have been in the area of the old crossing for Smith's Road, which would have served as a stock route to other De Salis properties. The location of the earlier woolshed would appear to have been determined by the circulation of stock in relationship to water, pasture and the Naas Road (R Hobbs 1993).

In 1890 the property was transferred to the Union Bank, and it is thought that the present woolshed was erected by the Bank c1892-3 to make the property more attractive to potential purchasers. (The shed incorporated all developments at that time under one roof, sweating pens, catchers pens, engine room and 12 Wolseley equipped stands symmetrically placed on either side of the wool classing and pressing area.) In 1899 the property was bought by F. Campbell and G.C. Perry Circuit; in 1910, 6118 acres of Cuppacumbalong holding were purchased by A.G. McKeahnie to run with his Booroomba property.

Moriarty valuation show the property as 'Holding 358', with 5121 sheep and two sheep to three acres (ie. approx 7,500 acres).

From 1921-1924 the property was owned by N.A. Thomson, and from 1924-64 by F.N. Snow. At that time it was purchased by Cuppaland Pty. Ltd. and the acreage was 2738 acres. Resumption took place in 1973 with continued pastoral use, but with management by Agronomy and Landcare Division. Presently, ie. 1994, Coranga Pastoral Company (Tony Johnson) has use of the woolshed and it continues to be used its original purpose.

The woolshed operates independently of the homestead. There is no connection between the original families and the property.

The first mechanical shearing machine was patented in America in 1856, but it was not until 1888 that a system developed by the Australian Frederick Wolseley was successfully tested commercially.

By the early 1900's most large sheds had converted to machine shearing. (Hobbs 1993.) It is believed that Cuppacumbalong shed was the first shed in the ACT to be specifically built for machine shearing rather than being converted.

The woolshed was built in two or three stages:

- 1892 the main rectangular shed area,
- pre-1916 the short annex to the east containing pressing and storage, and
- 1920s lean-to extension for storage.

Internally there is a progression of machinery from 1890's still in situ.

The pastoral landscape of the late 19th century Canberra region was one of large pastoral holdings with village-like homesteads, and simple vernacular buildings. The decision to locate the Federal Capital Territory in the Yass Canberra area had significant effect on the pastoral empires of the 19th century landowners.

Most of the other large early properties were acquired between 1911-1916, and their woolsheds were no longer used for their original purpose.

- Canberry Acton 1911
- Duntroon (C) 1912
- Yarralumla (C) 1912
- Tuggeranong (C) 1916.
- Lanyon (C), though not acquired till 1920's, and still operating as a pastoral enterprise, has a shed built c1920.
- Booroomba (burned down, replaced 1990).
- Lambrigg (no woolshed).

Cuppacumbalong was acquired in 1970's but its shed is still used for its original purpose making it the sole shed of the early large landholdings in the ACT of the late 19th century still in continuous use.

Its location and orientation was in response to sheep circulation terrain and roads of the 1880s. The dip is located approximately 600m from the 1892 woolshed and was used to de-lice the sheep.

The woolshed retains its rural integrity. It is prominently sited within grazing land and has been a landmark of the area for over 100 years.

The shearers quarters were erected post 1938 in response to the ACT Rural Workers Ordinance and possibly re-using timber and were used by group of shearers who took up residence for certain periods each year. The old cultivation paddocks close to the dip were used for lucerne grazing to 1870s.

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;

Cuppacumbalong Woolshed and its associated buildings demonstrate the raison d'etre of a major facet of pastoral life - wool production. It is of exceptional interest as a reminder of earlier pastoral origins of the ACT with its distinctive way of life, prior to the declaration as the Federal Capital Territory, and prior to increasing urbanisation which threatens the previously rural nature of the area.

The complex is representative of the self contained nature of a shearing complex and reflects the way of life and working conditions of the shearers. It is a reminder of the isolation of the past when shearers were forced to reside on site for the duration contract rather than the more accepted present practice of travelling to work each day.

- (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;

The shed is thought to be the earliest example in the ACT of a purpose built machine shearing shed, and it is the sole surviving shed of the late 19th century that is still in continuous use.

It is part of the vernacular tradition of bush carpentry, and it is the epitome of light weight construction of balloon framing of the time. It is intact, and still retains original as well as a progression of pastoral technology.

- (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;

Cuppacumbalong Woolshed has special associations with three prominent identities; Campbells, McKeahnie and Snow families who as pastoralists contributed significantly over 80 years to the wealth and development of the area.

The shed too has significant links with the pastoral tradition on which Australia's early national image was related. It is also inseparable from the local history of the Tharwa area which was founded on the wool industry interests of Cuppacumbalong.

- (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.

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6. **REFERENCES:**

Author Title date publication

- *De Salis diaries.* National Library of Australia
- NCPA. *Sites of Significance Vol IV*
- Roger Hobbs *ACT Pastoral Heritage: Woolsheds and their contribution to a Cultural Landscape.* University of Canberra. NEGP 1993.
- Australian Archives - *Moriarty files.*

Oral Sources

- J Hyles, Booroomba
- Snow family, ex Cuppacumbalong
- Mrs Tony Johnson, Coranga Pastoral Company.

MORE INFORMATION ON FILE (EA)