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55.
"F" CIT. Old
Canberra
Brickworks

NATIONAL TRUST REGISTER OF SIGNIFICANT PLACES

CITATION

NAME OF PLACE: OLD CANBERRA BRICKWORKS

LOCATION OF PLACE:

Section and Block Suburb: Block 764, Yarralumla

Area bounded by:

FEATURES INTRINSIC TO THE HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PLACE:

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

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE:

The ACT's first manufacturing building. No 1 Kiln (1915) is the only Staffordshire type in Australia. No 2 (1927) and No 3 (1953) are Hoffman type. The chimney (1953) is a fine industrial structure unequalled in the ACT and surrounding regions. No 4 Kiln (1963) is reputed to be the largest down draft type in the southern hemisphere. The manufacturing buildings (1913-1976) are complete although stripped of machinery. The Brickworks is a rare survivor.

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

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.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

1. DESCRIPTION OF PLACE:
2. STATUS OF PLACE AT NOMINATION DATE:
3. BACKGROUND:

BUILDING:

STYLE AND CONSTRUCTION

No 1 Kiln is a 20 chamber Staffordshire type. This Certification of the Hoffman design allowed bricks, tiles and pipes to be fired at the same time. Its fan-induced draft is unusual.

No 2 Kiln is a fan-induced draft Hoffman/Hardie Continuous type. No 3 Kiln is of the same type, with the more usual natural draft, via a 53 m high brick chimney.

No 4 Kiln was built to the then antiquated downdraft design and oil fired. Its 360,000 brick capacity is reputed to be the largest in the Southern Hemisphere.

CONSTRUCTION HISTORY

The brickworks were completed late in 1915, when the No 1 kiln came into operation. Following construction of the Staffordshire type kiln a Hoffman type kiln (No 2) was constructed in 1927. When the housing shortage became desperate in the 1950's a second Hoffman type kiln (No 3) was constructed in 1953. In 1963 the last kiln (No 4) at the Old Canberra Brickworks was built.

CONDITION Good

CONSERVATION
REQUIRED Nil

HISTORY ASSOCIATED WITH ANY OCCUPANT

During 1915 the supervisor, James Thomson, arrived and early in the following year the first burn commenced. Soon afterwards, however, the commitments of World War I necessitated the drastic restriction of public works programs, the brickworks were closed, and little was built in Canberra until after the war ended.

Late in 1920 repairs to the brick machinery began, and early in the following year the works were opened. W.K.Newbold was appointed manager at a salary of 621 pounds a year.

In 1928-29 Govt expenditure was curtailed due to the onset of the Depression, construction was seriously affected. As the depression deepened firewood was often used instead of coal in an attempt to reduce costs. Some 1,250,000 bricks were in stock, so the Works were closed in February 1931. As the economy slowly revived, the Works reopened and moderate production began. Then in 1939 all works 'of a peace time' nature were halted and only works associated with the war and general maintenance were continued. The works were closed in April 1942. As the Govt began to look to post war reconstruction, the Brickworks resumed operation in September 1944. When the housing shortage became desperate after the war another kiln (a Hoffman) was constructed in 1953. Immediately after its completion the builder was employed on increasing the size of the original Hoffman built in the 1920's by two chambers (to twenty).

By the mid 1970's the kilns and equipment were reaching unproductive old age and plans for modernisation were put forward. These were rejected by the NCDC because it felt that the plan was wrongly situated from an environment point of view.

The last burn at Yarralumla was in August 1976, equipment was moved to Mitchell and the plant that had produced tens of millions of bricks for the national capital was closed.

RELEVANT PRINCIPAL NATIONAL HISTORIC THEMES:

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;**
- (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
Canberra's cornerstone, by Ian Carnell.

DOCUMENT HISTORY

1. date Draft citation considered by Council at Meeting (number)
2. 20/7/81 Revised citation for Council Meeting (number).....APPROVED
3. 28/9/82 Submitted for inclusion in interim Heritage Places Register

Old Canberra Brickworks

The old Canberra Brickworks at Yarralumla is an important part of Canberra's heritage. It is Classified by the National Trust, entered on the Register of the National Estate and is included in the Royal Australian Institute of Architects' Register of Significant Twentieth Century Buildings. The Brickworks is also included on the ACT Interim Heritage list.

The Brickworks has six main kilns. A 20 chamber Staffordshire kiln, built in 1915 is the only one of its type surviving in Australia. The other kilns on the site comprise two 20 chamber Hoffman/Hardy kilns, one built in 1927 and the other in 1953, and three downdraft kilns. The Brickworks commenced operation in 1913 and was the first manufacturing complex in the Australian Capital Territory. A Brickworks Camp was established by December 1914 to provide temporary accommodation for workmen and in early 1916 the Staffordshire kiln, together with crushing and processing equipment and brick presses were ready for production. To cope with the demand for bricks during Canberra's development in the 1920s two temporary downdraft kilns were constructed in 1925. A Hardy Hoffman kiln was built and in use by 1927. Production was severely curtailed in 1929 as a result of the Depression and ceased in 1931 when the Brickworks was closed. Restricted production began again in 1935 and in 1944 the Brickworks was re-opened and significantly expanded. During the 1950s an additional Hoffman/Hardy kiln was constructed and existing kilns were increased in size and new buildings replaced older facilities. The brickworks continued to be modified in the 1960s and early 1970s. Three downdraft kilns on the site of the original temporary kilns were added during this period. During the 1960s oil replaced coal as the fuel for firing the kilns and modifications were made to kiln entrances for the use of forklift trucks to set and remove bricks. In 1971, a large building was constructed to house drying kilns, and machinery for making extruded bricks was installed. By 1973 the Brickworks was considered to be in need of extensive modernization and proposals were prepared for upgrading the facility. These proposals were rejected largely on the basis that the land was needed for residential purposes, the neighbourhood roads were being used excessively by heavy traffic and the levels of air pollution were incompatible with the amenity of residential use nearby. As a result of these factors a new site for the Brickworks was selected. In 1976 the Yarralumla Brickworks ceased operation, all suitable material was moved to the new site and the remainder offered for sale.

Since its closure parts of the Brickworks have been used as an arts and craft market place which attracted many Canberra residents to visit the site. In 1997 the markets were forced to move out and site was closed to the public. The decision to close the Brickworks to the public was based on a structural engineering report, supported by the Fire commissioner, which claimed a number of structural and other hazards to public safety. Limited use of the site was resumed but the majority of the buildings have been left vacant and are at the threat of deterioration and vandalism. A limited program of maintenance work has taken place on areas and structures under immediate threat of deterioration. The site has also been considered for standard residential and medium-density dwellings and serviced apartments.

The brickworks is one of the four sites within the ACT which possess major industrial significance. Furthermore, it has a scale and positive appeal which is rare in Canberra, in contrast to older cities which have similar industrial sites in relative abundance. The Staffordshire kiln on the site is the only survivor of its type in Australia. Other kilns are notable examples of their type and the 1953 chimney is a local landmark. The structures of the complex demonstrate the phases of growth of the National capital. Rock outcrops in the brickpits have geological significance.

The National Trust believes that the old Canberra Brickworks site and buildings could provide an opportunity for an exciting adaptive re-use which would preserve the heritage significance of the site.