

Australian Capital Territory

Heritage (Decision about Provisional Registration of the Pierce's Creek Forestry Settlement, Paddy's River) Notice 2011

Notifiable Instrument NI2011-503

made under the

***Heritage Act 2004* s34 Notice of decision about Provisional Registration**

1. Name of instrument

This instrument is the Heritage (Decision about Provisional Registration of the Pierce's Creek Forestry Settlement, Paddy's River) Notice 2011 -

2. Commencement

This instrument commences on the day after notification.

3. Notice of Decision

Pursuant to Section 32 of the *Heritage Act 2004* the ACT Heritage Council has decided not to provisionally register the Pierce's Creek Forestry Settlement, Paddy's River to the ACT Heritage Register.

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Ms Jennifer O'Connell
Acting Secretary
ACT Heritage Council
GPO Box 158
Canberra ACT 2601

25 August 2011



ACT Heritage Council

STATEMENT OF REASONS

DECISION NOT TO PROVISIONALLY REGISTER THE PIERCE'S CREEK FORESTRY SETTLEMENT, PADDY'S RIVER ((Part) Block 323, District of Paddy's River) IN THE ACT HERITAGE REGISTER

Background

A nomination for the Pierce's Creek Forestry Settlement was made in 1997. At that time the Pierce's Creek Forestry Settlement included:

- 13 houses
- Blacksmith's shop
- Mature exotic plantings
- Site office
- Depot
- Explosives Magazine
- Orchard, and
- Playground

Since this time, the 2003 bushfires have destroyed much of the settlement.

At Council Meeting #38 on 25 August 2011 the ACT Heritage Council endorsed a Statement of Reasons which does not find the Pierce's Creek Forestry Settlement eligible for provisional registration.

Assessment

In assessing the nomination for the Pierce's Creek Forestry Settlement, Paddy's River, the Council considered:

- The material identified under the heading 'References', above; and
- A site visit undertaken by Heritage Unit staff on 16 May 2011.

The Council's assessment against the criteria specified in s.10 of the *Heritage Act 2004* is as follows.

Criterion (a) *it demonstrates a high degree of technical or creative achievement (or both), by showing qualities of innovation, discovery, invention or an exceptionally fine level of application of existing techniques or approaches*

Heritage Council assessment:

The place does not show a high degree of technical or creative achievement and therefore does not meet this criterion.

Criterion (b) *it exhibits outstanding design or aesthetic qualities valued by the community or a cultural group*

Heritage Council assessment:

The place does not exhibit outstanding design or aesthetic qualities and therefore does not meet this criterion.

Criterion (c) *it is important as evidence of a distinctive way of life, taste, tradition, religion, land use, custom, process, design or function that is no longer practiced, is in danger of being lost or is of exceptional interest*

Heritage Council assessment:

The Pierce's Creek Forestry Settlement was a component of a distinctive way of life of forestry settlements in the early to mid twentieth century that is no longer practiced.

Forestry settlements are independent villages that provide permanent residences in isolated locations for Forestry workers and their families. Such settlements were common when road connections were basic, communications were poor, and the forest industry was distant to urban areas. The provision of job-tied housing and services for workers helped to ensure a stable workforce for the industry, and also ensured fire surveillance during the summer months.

The fact that there are few remaining features of the early settlement make it difficult to understand the way of life of the forestry settlement as it operated in the early to mid twentieth century. As such, the Pierce's Creek Forestry Settlement cannot be considered to be 'important as evidence' of this way of life and does not meet this criterion.

Criterion (d) *it is highly valued by the community or a cultural group for reasons of strong or special religious, spiritual, cultural, educational or social associations*

Heritage Council assessment:

No information has been provided to suggest that the Pierce's Creek Forestry Settlement is highly valued by the community or a cultural group.

There is no evidence before Council to indicate that the place meets this criterion.

Criterion (e) *it is significant to the ACT because of its importance as part of local Aboriginal tradition*

Heritage Council assessment:

This criterion is not applicable.

Criterion (f) *it is a rare or unique example of its kind, or is rare or unique in its comparative intactness*

Heritage Council assessment:

The Pierce's Creek Forestry Settlement is of the kind of place of a twentieth century forestry settlement.

However, it is considered now to be a poor example of its kind, due to the limited number of features and structures remaining from this period of settlement. It therefore follows that it can not be considered to be a 'rare or unique' example in this context.

All four forestry settlements in the ACT have a low level of intactness and integrity.

The Pierce's Creek Forestry Settlement does not meet this criterion.

Criterion (g) *it is a notable example of a kind of place or object and demonstrates the main characteristics of that kind.*

Heritage Council assessment:

The Pierce's Creek Forestry Settlement is of the kind of place of a twentieth century forestry settlement.

The main characteristics of this kind of place include a rural village character with housing stock dating throughout the period of settlement including its early origins; community facilities such as school, parkland, sporting facilities, and other amenities; and twentieth century planning layout.

The Pierce's Creek Forestry Settlement today demonstrates very few of these characteristics.

Further, given its low level of integrity, the Pierce's Creek Forestry Settlement cannot be considered a 'notable example' of this kind of place.

The Pierce's Creek Forestry Settlement does not meet this criterion.

Criterion (h) *it has strong or special associations with a person, group, event, development or cultural phase in local or national history*

Heritage Council assessment:

The Pierce's Creek Forestry Settlement has an association with a cultural phase of local ACT history.

The cultural phase is that of the establishment of Forestry Settlements and the commercial harvesting of timber within the ACT soon after the establishment of the Federal Capital Territory.

The Pierce's Creek Forestry Settlement has played a pivotal role within this cultural phase since its establishment in 1928, early in the history of the Federal Capital Territory and nation's capital.

However, the limited remains dating from the early settlement makes it difficult to read and understand the role which the settlement played in the early forestry industry in the ACT.

The Pierce's Creek Forestry Settlement does not meet this criterion.

Criterion (i) *it is significant for understanding the evolution of natural landscapes, including significant geological features, landforms, biota or natural processes*

Heritage Council assessment:

This criterion is not applicable.

Criterion (j) *it has provided, or is likely to provide, information that will contribute significantly to a wider understanding of the natural or cultural history of the ACT because of its use or potential use as a research site or object, teaching site or object, type locality or benchmark site*

Heritage Council assessment:

Given the extent of damage of the 2003 bushfires and the subsequent bull-doing and clearing of the land, it is unlikely that the Pierce's Creek Forestry Settlement will be able to provide information that will contribute significantly to a wider understanding of the natural or cultural history of the ACT.

The Pierce's Creek Forestry Settlement does not meet this criterion.

Criterion (k) *for a place—it exhibits unusual richness, diversity or significant transitions of flora, fauna or natural landscapes and their elements*

Heritage Council assessment:

This criterion is not applicable.

Criterion (l) *for a place—it is a significant ecological community, habitat or locality for any of the following:*

- (i) the life cycle of native species;*
- (ii) rare, threatened or uncommon species;*
- (iii) species at the limits of their natural range;*
- (iv) distinct occurrences of species*

Heritage Council assessment:

This criterion is not applicable.

History

The Pierce's Creek Forestry Settlement is one of four forestry settlements which were established within the ACT. The other three settlements were at Uriarra, Stromlo, and the Kowen Forestry Settlement.

Pine plantations were established in the ACT in the early twentieth century, the earliest being those at Stromlo, dating from 1914 and initiated by Charles Weston, first Superintendent of Parks and Wildlife in the ACT. The early plantations were established for aesthetic purposes for the Territory, although this quickly became a commercial venture.

While these early plantations were essentially part of an aesthetic plan for the Territory, in 1926 their administration was taken over by the Forestry section of the Department of the Interior and their function shifted towards a more commercial basis (Bell 1987).

The main impetus for the establishment of the plantations was to provide for the correction of cleared and eroded land of lower reaches of Cotter River, and the establishment of an industrial forest unit (Baskin, Martin & Riboust 1997).

Shortly after the acquisition of the pine plantations by the Department of the Interior forestry settlements were established at locations such as Stromlo, Uriarra and Pierces Creek.

The forestry settlements were communities with housing allocated to forestry workers on a hierarchical basis. These settlements were located in areas that not only placed the workers close to the forests where they were working, but they were also often in strategic locations that commanded excellent views of the forests and adjacent lands. Something that was essential to the role of forestry was the bushfire fighting service prior to the establishment of the ACT Emergency Service.

Pierce's Creek

The earliest housing at Pierce's Creek dates to 1928, around the time of the earliest development of Canberra as the nation's capital. 'The priority given to the construction of such a place at this time indicates its importance' (Binns, 2001).

Descriptions of the place from the foreman at the time, Harold Tuson, provide an indication of the settlement. In an interview in 1994 he describes how, upon his arrival at the settlement, there was just one house with a single wire telephone and no copper. A second house was constructed in 1932, described as a building with four cubicles that was brought in from the brickyards (Navin Officer, 2004: 24).

'By 1941 there were at least four houses at the settlement and a more informal camp two miles to the south. Another four houses were built between 1952 and 1960; and the remainder constructed around 1969-70' (Navin Officer, 2004: 24).

In the 1980s the houses became the property of ACT Housing and tenants all had continued links with the forestry industry.

The placement of houses at Pierce's Creek was largely determined by the topography of the site, resulting in an informal arrangement.

Binns (2001) states that in 2001, prior to the bushfires, the Pierce's Creek Forestry Settlement was widely regarded as the 'prettiest of the four forestry settlements. Set in a steep small valley with panoramic views east towards the Mt Stromlo Observatory, Black Mountain Tower and Uriarra Forestry Settlement, it was beautified by the deliberate planting of poplars and blossom trees, providing seasonal highlights'. From the 1930s, building sites were chosen to maximise the views, 'which also served as a crucial way of protecting the new forests – particularly from the threat of fires' (Binns, 2001).

The cottages were informally sited in a 'park-like setting on either side and up the slope of the picturesque valley. The settlement was not laid out to address a grid-like street layout' (Binns, 2001).

In 2001, the settlement consisted of 13 cottages. Paddocks and orchards contributed to the self-sufficiency of the isolated settlement.

In 2004 at Pierce's Creek, six European sites were recorded (Navin Officer, 2004: 1): 1 cottage (#7), a blacksmith's shed, burnt remains of a building and yards and three tree plantings.

Physical Description

Pierce's Creek has undergone little redevelopment or revegetation since the 2003 bushfires, and presents as a largely cleared area with some historic remains. Today there exists at the site one cottage, ruins of the Blacksmith's Shop, and some exotic plantings including mature poplars and others.

Cottage 7 is a three-bedroom weatherboard cottage, built around 1959 for the Forestry Officer in charge at Pierce's Creek (Navin Officer, 2004: 38). The cottage later became the property of ACT Housing in 1984.

A galvanised iron shed at the entrance to the settlement operated as a Blacksmith's Shop. Exotic trees have been planted nearby.

Navin Officer in 2004 identified 'at least three examples of tree plantings believed to date from the period of settlement beautification initiated by the Forestry Officer in Charge who was resident at Pierce's Creek from 1959 to 1965. The first of the identified plantings comprises a row of eight regularly spaced poplars' (Navin officer, 2004: 38). Only two of these appear to have survived the fires. The second planting comprises a circle of five Indian bean trees, while the third planting comprises another row of about eight poplars. However, not all of these have survived (Navin Officer, 2004: 39).

Tree planting has also occurred to commemorate forestry workers who have died, with the trees dating from the mid 1970s. The trees include a Silver Birch, Kurrajong, a Holm Oak, Cypress Pine, a possible Ash, a possible Claret Ash and a chestnut. Originally, plaques accompanied each tree. However, only two plaques survived the fires.

Physical condition and integrity

The integrity of the Pierce's Creek Forestry Settlement is considered low, given the damage of the 2003 bushfires.



Cottage 7 – Pierce's Creek



Pierce's Creek settlement



Pierce's Creek settlement



Pierce's Creek settlement

Images taken 16 May 2011

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Conclusion

The Pierce's Creek Forestry Settlement today retains its original layout and comprises only one cottage and one ruin structure.

Given the limited number of extant structures from the forestry settlement period, the Pierce's Creek Forestry Settlement does not demonstrate an easily understandable example of the ACT's forestry industry and its workers and their family's way of life.

The Pierce's Creek Forestry Settlement has a low level of intactness and integrity, rendering it unable to meet any of the criteria of the *Heritage Act 2004*.

This Statement of Reasons provides an assessment of the Pierce's Creek Forestry Settlement precinct and finds that the place does not meet any of the criteria of the *Heritage Act 2004*.

Jennifer O'Connell (Acting Secretary)
ACT Heritage Council

25 August 2011