At its meeting of 19 November 2015 the ACT Heritage Council decided that the Pine Island Homestead and Surrounds was eligible for registration.

The information contained in this report was considered by the ACT Heritage Council in assessing the nomination for the Pine Island homestead and surrounds against the heritage significance criteria outlined in s10 of the Heritage Act 2004.

HISTORY

Historical context

The Ngunnawal people are traditionally affiliated with the lands within the Canberra region. In this citation, ‘Aboriginal community’ refers to the Ngunnawal people and other Aboriginal groups within the ACT who draw significance from the place. Whilst the term ‘Aboriginal community’ acknowledges these groups in the ACT, it is recognised that their traditional territories extend outside contemporary borders. These places attest to a rich history of Aboriginal occupation. Ethnographic and historical information locates Aboriginal people within the region from the time of early European occupation through to the 1870s and 1880s. Traditional Aboriginal society in Canberra during the nineteenth century suffered from dramatic depopulation and alienation from traditional land based resources, although some important social institutions like intertribal gatherings and corroborees were retained to a degree at least until the 1860s.

In 1821 Charles Throsby was the first European to reach the Murrumbidgee River. Following Throsby’s expedition Captain Mark Currie led an excursion into the newly found district in 1823. The land west of the Murrumbidgee was proclaimed by the New South Wales colonial government as beyond the limits of the nineteen counties it had identified. However, by 1828 prospective settlers were beginning to move their cattle across the river.

The following passages are taken from Michael Pearson’s 2002, Context Study of ACT Rural Complexes:

The rural settlement of the ACT was initially dominated by large property acquisitions, a process assisted by the positioning of the Limestone Plains within the ‘settled districts’, the Nineteen Counties identified in 1829 and within which land purchases could take place. Beyond the Murrumbidgee land was ‘beyond the limits of location’ and could not be bought or leased until the policy was eased in 1847. Lanyon, Tuggeranong, Yarralumla and Duntroon were among the pastoral properties taken up in this period. Until 1861 the dominant pattern of settlement was one in which the owners of large holdings added further blocks to expand their properties, while others acquired smaller blocks and added to them over time, often developing a chequer-board pattern of often non-adjointing holdings (Pearson, 2002: 5).
In 1861 the Robertson Land Act allowed for free selection, the selection of parcels of leasehold land and other Crown land was allowed at a set rate of payment, on the proviso that the selector lived on the land for three years and made improvements worth £1 per acre. Closer settlement, introduced with the Crown Lands Act of 1885, solved some of the abuses of the free selection process, and tried to more actively encourage agricultural use of suitable land. These developments influenced the proliferation of smaller holdings through parts of what is now the ACT. The Soldier Settlement Schemes that followed both World Wars in the twentieth century continued the closer settlement theme, and a number of the surviving rural complexes in the ACT originated as soldier settlements (Pearson, 2002: 5).

In 1915 the Federal Government implemented the Soldier Settlement Scheme to encourage voluntary recruitment, to provide employment for returned servicemen and to increase post-war primary production.

The scheme can be summarised as:

- the Commonwealth Government would supply loan funds to the States and Territories for a maximum £500 per soldier settler (later increased to £625);
- the States and Territories would make land available for sale to returned soldiers and would administer the scheme;
- there would be an initial period of low interest charges to settlers;
- the settlers would be paid sustenance during the establishment period; and
- the State would organise training facilities for settlers with no farming experience (Navin Officer, 2001: 6).

In 1919 land was made available in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) for settlement of returned Australian soldiers as a repatriation scheme. In the FCT, this land included areas at Yarralumla, Duntroon, Lanyon, Tuggeranong and Charnwood (Pfanner, 1999: 11). Much of the FCT had already been acquired by the Commonwealth for the creation of the capital, including the Cunningham’s Tuggeranong property which had been compulsorily acquired in 1916 for the creation of an arsenal town which never eventuated. The area was later divided and used for the Soldier Settlement scheme (Archives ACT, 2015). The proposed plans for the arsenal (Image 3) show that what was to become the Pine Island property was at the very north-western limits of the planned arsenal in an area marked as “industrial works” with no features drawn.

Applications were invited from eligible returned servicemen and those who had volunteered for overseas service. Applications for the 4,216 acre Jerrabomberra-Tuggeranong Soldier Settlement Subdivision closed on 28 February 1920. The subdivisions varied in size from 212 to 1,140 acres. A selection board was established consisting of the District Surveyor, Commonwealth Valuator and a senior representative from the Lands and Survey Branch to evaluate applications, assess eligibility and allocate blocks (Martin, 2014: 24).

Most of the soldier settlers had little capital and many had no previous farming experience (Navin Officer, 2001: 6). Soon after taking up their leases, it was usual for the soldier settlers to undertake fencing works, sink dams and place stock on their land (Pfanner, 1999: 14). In the FCT, soldier settlers were given an advance of up to £625 for these purposes. In the conditions of the lease, the settlers were also responsible for rabbit eradication and control of noxious weeds. In addition, Government officials undertook regular inspections (Navin Officer, 2001: 6).

Bad seasons in the late 1920s and the Depression soon meant that many soldier settlers struggled to pay back their loans. Lessees gave up their blocks, many compulsorily, as the land was needed for other purposes (Pfanner, 1999: 22).
In general terms, the Soldier Settler Schemes across Australia were considered to have failed. This is due to a number of factors, including ‘small non-viable blocks on poor land which were unsuitable for farming, over-capitalisation due to the high price of stock and equipment, lack of previous farming experience, a fall in farm commodity prices in the critical years between 1920 and 1924 when soldier settlers were trying to establish their properties, and continued decline in the rural sector from 1924 and throughout the Depression’ (Navin Officer, 2001: 6).

In the ACT, a greater flexibility in the leasehold system enabled struggling lessees to transfer or consolidate their leases, thereby saving the scheme in the ACT from total failure. Most of these leases were eventually resumed for the development of Canberra (Navin Officer, 2001: 7).

Pine Island

In the early 1820s, European explorers reached the area that now forms the ACT. Dr Charles Throsby, his nephew Charles Throsby Smith, Joseph Wilde and James Vaughn reached the Molonglo River and associated valley on their way to find the Murrumbidgee River. Throsby and his party were the first Europeans to see the Murrumbidgee River at a location near Pine Island (Martin, 2014: 14). After exploration, a rush to claim these lands began. Initially, European settlement occurred on the flood plains and slopes above the Molonglo River (now central Canberra), before moving quickly south to the Tuggeranong Valley and Murrumbidgee River. (Martin, 2014: 15)

A 2,000 acre area, including Pine Island, was granted to James Murdoch on 15 June 1827 (Martin, 2014: 15). It was subsequently acquired by John McLaren in 1829 and managed by William Davis Wright before being held by Thomas Macquoid and then Thomas Hyacinth Macquoid from 1835 to 1857. Andrew Cunningham, whose family also owned the Lanyon property, then purchased the property in 1858 and it remained owned by the Cunningham family until it was compulsorily acquired by the Commonwealth in 1916.

After Federation and the surveying of the new FCT, legislation was passed empowering the Federal Government to compulsorily acquire lands within the new Territory’s borders so that no Commonwealth land could be alienated.

Following the acquisition of the property from the Cunninghams, the Pine Island area was under government management and was allocated as a five year grazing lease. The area was part of a larger block known locally as Creek Station, designated as Block 4, and leased out to A.J. and M.N. McDonald. The lease remained with the McDonalds from 1917 until April 1920, when the land was allocated for Soldier Settlement. (Martin, 2014: 22)

On 5 April 1920, Block 4A, Pine Island, in the Lanyon District, consisting of 856 acres was granted to Darcy Thompson for a 25 year lease through the First World War Soldier Settlement lease program. In his application, Thompson stated that he had given 2 years, 246 days service and had been discharged at the termination of the war. He stated that he had previous experience in raising and managing stock, and had 400 sheep ready to run on the block. He also claimed to have £800 capital to invest into the operation. (Martin, 2014: 24)

Darcy Mark Thompson’s war records are available through the National Archives of Australia (NAA: B2455, THOMPSON DM) which show that during his time he served in the 13th Battalion of the 4th Brigade of the 1st Australian Imperial Force (1st AIF) in France. He was wounded during the Battle of Polygon Wood in 1917, but not seriously and managed to rejoin his unit a few months later. He was discharged in March 1919 after several months of recurring bronchitis. The ship he returned home on was the “Kashmir”, the same name he later gave to his house at Pine Island.

Block 4A was described by the Government Assessor as ‘gently undulating nearly cleared ... [with] only occasional dead trees on the western portion [and] rocky outcrop plan, plain country on eastern portion’ (cited in Martin, 2014: 26).
Eight months into Thompson’s lease of Block 4A he was offered a further grazing lease of 41 acres of river frontage adjoining his lease. The contract was for grazing rights, initially for a one year period, and then at quarterly intervals thereafter.

It is most unlikely that Darcy Thompson lived on the property in the first 16 months of the lease (Martin, 2014: 27). However, he did immediately start running stock and improving the property. He received a number of war loans and advances to pay for fencing and stock. By 1927, the homestead had been completed and Thompson was receiving correspondence at the address:

“Kashmir”
Pine Island
Tuggeranong C/O Post Office,
Queanbeyan

The Thompson’s continued to receive advances to improve the property and set themselves up for the future. However, difficult times were ahead in the form of the 1929 Wall Street crash which precipitated a world-wide depression. Australia suffered badly during this time with a sharp decline in international trade. The Thompsons were not exempt from the financial difficulties which lasted for most of the 1930s. Pressure to meet loan and lease repayments continued to build, especially given the reduced markets for their produce.

The FCT administrators appreciated the hardships that the Thompsons and other soldier settlers were under and allowed extension of time periods for repayments, as well as reducing required lease payments. By 1934, the Thompsons had accumulated a debt of £631.14.1 but managed to survive and remain on their property.

By mid-1946, the re-appraisal of the majority of the 25 year soldier settlement leases granted in 1933 was due. The FCT considered it inadvisable to renew these expiring leases, including Block 4A owned by Thompson, as new property valuations would be required and new lease conditions imposed. However, the Commonwealth Government intervened to keep primary producers on the land during the years of the Second World War and offered Thompson a new lease. Thompson accepted the new lease on 8 October 1945 with its expiry due on 30 June 1958, and every five years thereafter (Martin, 2014: 29). With the new lease, the Thompsons were able to mortgage the lease to the Commercial Banking Company in Sydney, enabling them to remain financial and stay on Block 4A.

By 1956, conditions had improved dramatically with the whole of Block 4A under improved pasture and in excellent condition (Martin, 2014: 29). The Thompsons had survived the tough economic times of the Great Depression and were ultimately one of the few successful First World War Soldier Settlement Scheme leases. They successfully remained on their property in a period where many other similar soldier settlers were forced to sell and leave their farms.

The Block 4A (Pine Island) property operated as a soldier settlement lease from 1920 to 1952 when it was passed from Darcy Thompson to his son Ian. The property was run by Ian from 1952 until it was resumed by the Department of the Capital Territory (Commonwealth Government) in 1975 (Martin, 2014: 29). The grazing rights on the property were taken up by Mark Dallas Pty Ltd in 1975 and this continued until about 1996. The property is currently owned by the ACT Property Group, a division of the ACT Government, and is tenanted by employees of ACT Parks and Conservation. In 2013, the ACT Property Group commissioned Eric Martin and Associates to prepare a Conservation Management Plan for the property.
DESCRIPTION

Physical condition and integrity

The Pine Island property has lost several elements of its soldier settlement farm operation, including farm infrastructure such as a woolshed, hayshed and machinery shed. The sheep dip on the property has been filled in. However, all of these features originated during the later development of the property, so the loss has not significantly affected the original Soldier Settlement values of the place. The integrity of the property layout has also been affected, with the property substantially reduced in size due to residential development as the Tuggeranong Town Centre encroaches from the north east (see Image 2).

The Pine Island property suffered significant damage to farm buildings and pastoral infrastructure in the 2003 bushfires. The only remaining structures on the property constructed before 2003 are the original homestead, grain silo (c.1960s) and the raised shed (c.1980s). Also surviving are the remnant orchard, remnant fence alignments and some garden and windbreak trees. New work sheds and storage sheds have been erected on the property since 2003.

The Pine Island homestead is approached from the south east corner of the property, with the homestead visible at the top of a rise. The homestead has panoramic views south over the Tuggeranong Valley and west over the Murrumbidgee River.

The homestead is a substantial building and is in a fair to good condition. It is distinguished from other soldier settlement homesteads constructed in the ACT region due to the initial large investment in its construction, resulting in high quality and long lasting materials used in a design that would not be out of place in the inner suburbs of early Canberra. It is uncommon compared to the homesteads of other soldier settlement period homesteads which were often built using inexpensive and often recycled materials, such as weatherboard (Navin Officer, 2001: 29).

The Pine Island homestead is a bungalow that is closer in style to the earlier Federation Bungalow style (popular from c.1890 to c.1915) rather than the more contemporaneously popular Inter-War Californian Bungalow style (c.1915-c.1940) (Apperly et al, 1989: 144-147 & 206-209). Characteristics of the style displayed by the homestead include:

- simple massing;
- broad simple roof planes;
- verandah roof supported on masonry piers and simple sturdy timber posts;
- favoured materials of roughcast and moulded concrete blocks instead of facebrick;
- leadlights used sparingly;
- generally less decorative than the Federation Queen Anne style and less structurally assertive than the Inter-War Californian Bungalow style.

Following its construction, a government inspector described the house, as:

“Internally, the walls are plastered with art fibro plaster ceilings. The building is divided into four large rooms, hall, kitchen, laundry, sleepout room on verandah with all necessary conveniences. The work has been very well done and finished. Out buildings consist of large garage and W.C. built of concrete blocks with iron roof. The present day value of main and out building is £1400.0.0” (26 May 1927) (cited in Martin, 2014: 28).
BACKGROUND INFORMATION – PINE ISLAND HOMESTEAD AND SURROUNDS

The 2014 Conservation Management Plan by Eric martin & Associates notes the following alterations to the building:

- verandah enclosed to create southeast bedroom/Bedroom 3 (c1960);
- northeast external room/Bedroom 4 modified (c1980);
- metal fire box in Dining Room chimney and Lounge chimney (c1980);
- hot water cylinder (c1990); and
- electrical upgrade (c1975).

Post 2000:

- Colorbond roofing added;
- north verandah, lattice screen and west wall;
- aluminium security screen door to rear and kitchen;
- bathroom fitout;
- bed 1 robes;
- air conditioning unit in lounge;
- kitchen fitout; and
- toilet.

Block and Boundary

The original Block 4A granted to Darcy Thompson as a soldier settlement lease covered an area of 856 acres (346 hectares). Forty-one acres of Murrumbidgee river frontage was annexed from the original Block 4A for the Pine Island reserve. Darcy Thompson was then given grazing rights over 11 acres of the reserve area.

The present day block surrounding the homestead is approximately 22 acres (9 hectares). The block has been substantially reduced in size due to the urban development of the Tuggeranong town centre and surrounding suburbs.

The original Block 4A property included the Tuggeranong Stone Wall as its northern boundary. This 19th century stone wall was originally built to separate the Lanyon and Yarralumla estates. The Tuggeranong Stone Wall is listed on the ACT Heritage Register.

The Canberra and District Historical Society have noted that there is a marker that was used as a survey point for the proposed Tuggeranong Arsenal township. However, this association has not been confirmed from documentary evidence and the marker is located on the far northwest border of the proposed town plan (Image 3) and is unlikely to have any more significance than any other survey marker in the area. The first known reference to the marker is from 1968-69 during surveying for the Tuggeranong Valley. The survey marker consists of three concrete posts, one of which bears the mark ‘TG 57’. The marker posts are erect and in their original positions and are in poor to moderate condition.

The long entrance drive approaching the homestead from the former Pine Island Road provides a connection to the layout of the block in the soldier settlement period. The driveway maintains substantially the same alignment since 1920 to the present day. The section of the entrance drive closest to the house has been realigned to now pass to the east of the homestead compared to its previous alignment on the southern side of the homestead.

Remnant orchard

The remnant orchard enclosure is one element on the property that appears to have remained largely consistent since the soldier settlement period. The square orchard area to the east of the cottage and extant fruit tree plantings provide an insight into the layout of the soldier settlement period orchard. An
aerial photograph from 1944 shows the entire orchard enclosure fully planted out. Given the known remaining orchard species and the scale of the orchard tree canopies in 1944, it follows that if these were original plantings, they would date to the mid-1930s or slightly earlier (Martin, 2014: 50). Other plantings around the cottage seen in the 1944 aerial photograph would date to the same period.

The remnant orchard contains a number of surviving trees, including walnut (*Juglans regia*), mulberry (*Morus sp.*), pear (*Pyrus sp.*) apricot and cherry (*Prunus* cultivars). The remaining trees are a small portion of the original plantings.

The presence of the remnant orchard on the property demonstrates self-sufficient farming that took place on soldier settlement leases and provides a connection for the present day property to the soldier settlement period.

**Other trees**

Due to the effects of fire and natural attrition over the decades, few old plantings remain on the property. Of those currently on the property, some selected trees may have heritage significance. In addition to the remaining orchard trees, these include a line of Kurrajongs (*Brachychiton populneum*) immediately north of the present garage and an Irish Strawberry Tree (*Arbutus unedo*) and a climber (*Campsis*) on the western side of the homestead.

**Remnant fence alignments**

Many of the fencelines on the property have changed over recent decades to the extent that few appear to match those from the soldier settlement period. The remnant orchard enclosure and extension to the northern boundary of the enclosure appear to represent farm divisions from the interwar years.

Also, remnant fence alignments from an enclosure around the homestead appear to be partly consistent with those visible in the 1944 aerial photography. Specifically, on the northwest side of the homestead there is a short section of fencing featuring four old hardwood posts, with recent rails. These posts likely date to the soldier settlement period of the farm.
BACKGROUND INFORMATION – PINE ISLAND HOMESTEAD AND SURROUNDS

SITE PLAN AND IMAGES

Image 1 Pine Island Homestead and Surrounds Provisional Registration Boundary

Image 2 Soldier Settlement Block 4A Boundary
BACKGROUND INFORMATION – PINE ISLAND HOMESTEAD AND SURROUNDS

**Image 3** Pine Island Homestead location against arsenal town plan

**Image 4** Pine Island Homestead south/front facade (ACT Heritage, 2015)
Image 5 Pine Island Homestead front verandah (ACT Heritage, 2015)

Image 6 Pine Island Homestead verandah west side (ACT Heritage, 2015)

Image 7 Pine Island Homestead verandah east side filled in (ACT Heritage, 2015)

Image 8 Pine Island Homestead sleepout on northeast side (ACT Heritage, 2015)

Image 9 Pine Island Homestead north/rear facade (ACT Heritage, 2015)

Image 10 Pine Island Homestead front door temporary bracing (ACT Heritage, 2015)
BACKGROUND INFORMATION – PINE ISLAND HOMESTEAD AND SURROUNDS


Image 12 Pine Island Homestead shed (ACT Heritage, 2015)
REFERENCES


