

# Heritage (Decision about Registration of former Sewerage Attendant's Cottage, Weston Creek) Notice 2010 -

Notifiable Instrument NI 2010—597

made under the

*Heritage Act 2004* section 42 Notice of Decision about Registration

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**1. Revocation**

This instrument replaces NI 2010 – 326

**2. Name of instrument**

This instrument is the Heritage (Decision about Registration for former Sewerage Attendant's Cottage, Weston Creek) Notice 2010 -

**3. Registration details of the place**

Registration details of the place are at Attachment A: Register entry for the former Sewerage Attendant's Cottage, Weston Creek.

**4. Reason for decision**

The ACT Heritage Council has decided that the former Sewerage Attendant's Cottage, Weston Creek meets one or more of the heritage significance criteria at s 10 of the *Heritage Act 2004*. The register entry is at Attachment A.

**5. Date of Registration**

21 October 2010

**Gerhard Zatschler**  
Secretary  
ACT Heritage Council

21 October 2010



ACT Heritage Council

AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

HERITAGE REGISTER  
(Registration Details)

Place No:

For the purposes of s. 41 of the *Heritage Act 2004*, an entry to the heritage register has been prepared by the ACT Heritage Council for the following place:

Former Sewerage Attendant's Cottage, Weston Creek

Block 1168 and Part 1196, District of Weston Creek

#### DATE OF REGISTRATION

Notified: 21 October 2010 Notifiable Instrument: 2010 -

Copies of the Register Entry are available for inspection at the ACT Heritage Unit. For further information please contact:

The Secretary  
ACT Heritage Council  
GPO Box 158, Canberra, ACT 2601

Telephone: 13 22 81 Facsimile: (02) 6207 2229

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## IDENTIFICATION OF THE PLACE

Block 1168 and part of Block 1196 District of Weston Creek

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### STATEMENT OF HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

The former Sewerage Attendant's Cottage at Weston Creek is significant for the following reasons:

It is one of a very few remaining examples of built evidence of the Weston Creek Sewerage Treatment Works – an important element of early infrastructure in the development of Canberra as the national capital in the 1920s, which is no longer operational.

It is a rare remaining example of tied housing, that is housing provided for the holder of a particular occupation and usually attached to or close by the workplace – usually a caretaker /manager role.

The cottage and its surrounds provide important evidence of the continuity of two early settler families, the Gibbs and the Vests, the work they did and the role they played in the initial construction of Canberra as the national capital.

The surrounds of the house are important as evidence of a past way of life and its continuity until the very recent past. The gardens, plants, structures, and uses of different parts of the surrounds tell of how families lived there when the house was more distant from the newly established capital, and how, whilst the suburbs grew closer, life there maintained a more remote, even hidden, rural style of life.

The house is a remarkably intact example of a Federal Capital Commission (FCC) Type 20 cottage and the only remaining one of its type built outside the main suburban area. As such it demonstrates the typical characteristics of a typical 1920s middle class Canberra dwelling. Unlike the many surviving FCC houses in the Canberra suburbs, which have been substantially altered in private hands, the lasting integrity of this building has the potential to be maintained through careful conservation and management.

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### FEATURES INTRINSIC TO THE HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PLACE

The features intrinsic to the heritage significance of the former Sewerage Attendant's Cottage and which require conservation comprise:

1. The 1927 FCC Cottage and its original interior and exterior fabric, including:

#### Exterior

- cavity brick walls with 'Canberra Red' subfloor walls and steps, painted rough cast render to window head height, smooth rendered frieze above
- distinctive smooth rendered panels below some window openings
- painted timber double hung, multi - paned windows
- red unglazed, terracotta tiles on 'cut' timber roof structure
- raking eave lining of painted v jointed timber boards with exposed rafters
- painted galvanised quad gutters
- painted galvanised circular downpipes

- painted roughcast rendered brick chimneys with brick string capping

#### **Interior**

- timber floor structure with tongue and groove pine floor boards
- cement rendered brick walls with set plaster skim coat
- a combination of fibrous plaster and caneite ceiling panels with square edge battens and moulded timber cornice
- timber double hung, multi - paned windows, some painted some with original varnish, original brass pulls and catches
- 100 x 25mm splayed cedar skirtings, architraves and picture rails, some painted, some with original varnish
- 4 panel cedar doors with quad beading, original brass knobs, latch sets and covered key holes
- original closets in bedroom 1 including cedar shelves, brass hanging rails, brass latches
- original bathroom fittings
- original kitchen cabinets and 'Canberra' wood stove
- original Alpine Ash mantelpieces in Sitting Room & Bedroom 2.
- painted concrete floors to porches, toilet and laundry

2. The site within the existing perimeter fencing, including;

- Plantings immediately adjacent to the house and objects and plantings within the existing fenced curtilage as listed on the following site plans at ***Site Location and Plans***

### **APPLICABLE HERITAGE GUIDELINES**

The Heritage Guidelines adopted under s27 of the *Heritage Act 2004* are applicable to the conservation of the former Sewerage Attendant's Cottage.

The guiding conservation objective is that the former Sewerage Attendant's Cottage and its curtilage shall be conserved and appropriately managed in a manner respecting its heritage significance and the features intrinsic to that heritage significance, and consistent with a sympathetic and viable use or uses. Any works that have a potential impact on significant fabric (and / or other heritage values) shall be guided by a professionally documented assessment and conservation policy relevant to that area or component (i.e. a Statement of Heritage Effects – SHE).

### **REASON FOR REGISTRATION**

The former Sewerage Attendant's Cottage & surrounds have been assessed against the heritage significance criteria and been found to have heritage significance when assessed against four criterion under the *Heritage Act 2004* including (c), (f), (g) and (h).

### **ASSESSMENT AGAINST THE HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE CRITERIA**

Pursuant to s.10 of the *Heritage Act 2004*, a place or object has heritage significance if it satisfies one or more of the following criteria. Significance has been determined by research

as accessed in the references below. Future research may alter the findings of this assessment.

**(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 practised, is in danger of being lost or is of exceptional interest;**

The former Sewerage 'Attendant's Cottage is important as evidence of past ways of life, land use and processes that is no longer practised. The cottage is the only surviving element of the Weston Creek Sewerage Treatment Works, being built especially as a component of the Works as the residence for the Attendant. The only other above-ground features connected to this original sewerage system for early Canberra, are the Main Outfall Sewer Vents

The cottage is also important as evidence of how changes to its use met ongoing needs in Canberra's first decades as national capital, initially as tied accommodation, later as general housing let by Department of Territory, and later again possible 'tied' or at least, outlying accommodation, for workers in forestry. This type of housing is largely no longer practiced in Canberra.

The cottage is only one of two surviving that were built especially for Sewerage workers, the other being located in Kirkpatrick St, Weston. The cottage appears to be the earliest surviving specially built job-tied house (not including the main residential suburbs) in the ACT.

The first two families, who lived at the cottage, the Gibbs and the Vests, and the work they undertook in relation to the nearby Sewerage Treatment Works, provide important evidence of the continuity of early settler families and their roles in the initial construction of Canberra as the national capital. This is a sharp contrast to the more general custom of bringing specialised workers to Canberra from its very beginnings as the capital.

The surrounds of the house are important as evidence of a past way of life and its continuity into the recent past. The gardens, plants, structures, and uses of different parts of the surrounds tell of how the families lived there when the house was more distant from the newly established capital, and how, whilst the suburbs grew closer, life there maintained a more remote, even hidden, rural style of life. Growing vegetables and fruit, having chickens and a milk-cow were typical of that life-style, something that is less prevalent today.

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

The former Sewerage Attendant's Cottage is one of 13 known surviving FCC Type 20 cottages erected in 1926-7 to house the influx of public servants transferred to Canberra in advance of the opening of Federal Parliament in 1927. It is believed to be the only FCC Type 20 cottage constructed outside of the city limits. It is rare in its comparative intactness, including only minor modifications and mostly original fittings including cedar joinery, cabinetry, windows and hardware. Although there is some damage, sympathetic repairs and conservation can easily restore the building to a high level of intactness.

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

The former Sewerage Attendant's Cottage is a notable example of an FCC 20 cottage and more generally demonstrates the main characteristics of FCC cottages. Typical design elements including an amalgam of English Georgian, Arts & Crafts and Mediterranean design elements, an efficient floor plan of modest area,

deep shaded porches, small windows relative to wall area, with each elevation carefully composed, raking eaves, a service porch with external laundry and toilet. Typical exterior materials include 'Canberra Red' face brick base coursing, contrasting panels of smooth and roughcast painted render, unglazed terracotta roof tiles, painted multi-paned double hung timber windows. Typical interior elements include pine flooring, plastered walls, panelled ceilings, cedar joinery and cabinetry, panelled cedar doors and brass hardware.

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

The cottage is important for its association with the development of the Weston Creek Sewerage Treatment Works, being built especially as a component of the Works as the residence for the Attendant, and being the only surviving trace. The only other above-ground features connected to this original sewerage system for early Canberra, are the Main Outfall Sewer Vents.

**The following criteria were found not to be applicable: a,b,d,e,i,j,k,l.**

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## **SUMMARY OF THE PLACE HISTORY AND PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION**

### **HISTORY**

The former Sewerage Attendants Cottage was built in 1926 as accommodation for the senior officer for the Sewerage Treatment Works and his family and was known as the 'Attendant's Cottage'. The location of the house is some few hundred metres from former site of the Treatment Works across Weston Creek. The design used for the house was a Federal Capital Commission (FCC) Type 20 G.3.1 (FCC, NAA Series A6270 notes).

#### **The Gibbs Family 1927 - 1940**

Charles ('Charlie') Gibbs was the Weston Creek Sewerage Attendant. His wife, Maude and two children, Peg (Margaret) and Geoffrey, lived in the cottage from 1927 to approximately 1940. The 1927 Sewerage Treatment Works were designed to serve a population of 5000, but were extended several times between 1939 and 1973 as the population increased. It closed in 1978.

In c.1940 the family were relocated due to the malodour from the works, possibly due to an increase in the size of the plant in 1939. The house is said to have been downwind from the Works. They moved into a second purpose built cottage at 1 Kirkpatrick Street, known as No. 2 cottage. The original house was known as No. 1 cottage.

In 1952 the family moved to Turner but Charlie Gibbs continued at the Works for another 18 months, and then worked elsewhere in Sewerage until his retirement at 67, in 1959.

Both Charlie and Maude were 'locals', members of 'early Canberra' families resident in the district before the selection and building of Canberra as the federal capital. The Gibbs family had arrived in the Queanbeyan-Burra area in 1836, and Charlie had worked at 'Yarralumla' before it became the Governor-General's residence. Both Charlie and his brother worked on the Main Sewer in the 1920s. Maude was a member of the Taylor family that worked at 'Cuppacumbalong' at Tharwa.

The Gibbs family social life was connected to both early Canberra and those living nearby. Tennis was played at 'The Pines' along the Cotter Road, near the Ranger's Cottage just west of the Mt Stromlo turn-off. The children went into Telopea Park School on the Cotter bus. Neighbours included local farmers, as Yarralumla was the nearest suburb of Canberra. All major parties, for birthday and Christmas or 'Old Time Dances', were held at the Westridge hall in today's Yarralumla. The family was largely self-sufficient, growing fruit and vegetables as well as having chickens and a cow for milk.

Following in his father's footsteps Geoff Gibbs trained as a plumber and worked in the Works Department for 40 years. He retired in 1984 as senior officer in charge of the Sewerage and Water Supply Depot at Fyshwick.

### **The Vest Family 1941- 1975**

The Vest family took up residence in 1941, and lived there for a total of 34 years. The family consisted at that time of Doug Vest, his wife Edna Vest, and their two sons, Wally (11 years old) and Bert (8 years old), and baby daughter, Yvonne (1 year old). They had two more children while living at the house, a daughter, Robyn in 1940, and son Ross, in 1949. Doug Vest lived there until August 1975, with his second wife, Ada, Edna Vest having died in 1965. (see Oral Histories at Appendix 2 : B & C)

The Vest family rented the property from the Department of the Interior. Doug Vest had been one of the construction workers, a foreman, on the main sewer in the 1920s, but this was his only association with the Sewerage works. He worked in various jobs, including at the Forestry Checking Station, but despite this role, there was no formal association with the cottage, as it was not 'job-tied housing'.

Both Doug Vest and his wife were 'locals', members of 'early Canberra' families resident in the district before the selection and building of Canberra as the federal capital. Doug Vest's father, Richard, had come from Wales and worked as an overseer at 'Yarralumla'. Edna Vest was a member of the Shumack family, who owned 'Spring Vale', in present-day Belconnen.

The children went to Telopea Park School, then Wally and Robyn attended Canberra High School (today's School of Art), going in on the Cotter bus. The boys played football and cricket in town, the girls did the housework after their mother had her stroke. Neighbours included local farmers, but also the Gibbs family at 'No.2' cottage across Weston Creek. The entire back garden was given over to vegetables and fruit, feeding the family and many others especially during the shortages of World War II. They had chickens, poddy sheep and a cow for milk.

### **1975 - 1982**

No records have been researched from this phase of use of the house. Anecdotal evidence suggests it was used by itinerant forestry workers. It is not clear what formal arrangement ACT Forests had with the house at this time.

### **The Farrell Family 1982 - 2008**

In 1982, the Farrell family, Peter and Jenni, and their sons, Dan (4 years old) and Jake (6 months old), moved into the house. This was an 'informal' arrangement organised via a friend who worked in ACT Government. They were given keys, and a caretaker note that they were responsible for the repair and maintenance of the property.

The Farrells lived there until 31 May 2008, a total of 26 years. During that time they affected various changes to the surrounds, and within the house. Most uses of the surrounds were primarily the same as the past residents, such as the vegetable gardens and animal pens, the garage and sheds. New plantings were made, especially after the 2003 firestorm, but many elements and plants pre-date the Farrell family phase, being sustained by the Farrell family, and are still there today.

The Farrell family maintained an extensive vegetable patch, had chickens and other animals, including cows, sheep, goats and donkeys. Jenni Farrell had a felting business based on the sheep wool.

During the Farrell family's early occupation of the house, they were often involved with assisting those in the nearby forest who had accidents, including horse-riders, cyclists and car rally spectators.

### **Job Tied Housing**

Specific detail about the planning and building of the house has not been found in the records. It appears to be one of very few houses purposely built at the time outside the city limits to house specific workers. Binns and Heap have researched such job-tied housing outside the suburbs and in the more remote parts of the Australian Capital Territory (2001). This house was not included in their study, although referred to briefly (2001:15).

Other houses purpose-built as tied-job housing for the Weston Creek Sewerage Treatment Works were constructed later in 1940/41 and during the 1960s and '70s across the other side of Weston Creek. Most of these cottages burnt down in the 2003 bushfire, the only one left standing being 2 Kirkpatrick Street, built in the mid-1960s.

There was only one other specially built house from the same early development phase of Canberra, being the single worker's house for the forestry overseer, Southwell in 1928 at nearby Stromlo Forestry Settlement. (Binns & Heap 2001:49, 55-58). The other housing at the Stromlo settlement was not built until 1941, with other houses added to the group in the 1950s, '60s and '70s (Binns & Heap 2001:49, 55-89). Seventeen of the 20 Stromlo Forestry Settlement houses, including the Southwell house, were destroyed in the 2003 bushfire.

It is possible that other 1920s job-tied houses were built outside the suburbs, but the research that time has permitted does not indicate this, and it seems unlikely.

### **PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION FCC 20 House Type**

The former Sewerage Attendant's Cottage is a Federal Capital Commission Type 20 G.3. It was one of a number of standard house types built by the FCC to accommodate low to middle ranking public service officers in 1926-27, many transferred in advance of the opening of Federal Parliament in May 1927.

FCC Type 20 houses were erected in Braddon in c.1926. The Attendant's Cottage is the only known example of the type outside of the urban area. A walking tour of Braddon revealed 12 surviving buildings, most immediately adjacent to the Braddon Housing Precinct. It is assumed many were demolished to make way for commercial and residential developments in the 1980s and 90s.

Of the twelve houses eleven have undergone extensive alteration by their owners. One remaining example of the type appears in almost original condition externally, although it is assumed some degree of internal alteration will have occurred.

This suggests that the Attendant's Cottage at Weston Creek is likely to be the most intact of its type. Furthermore, unlike the other private residences, it has the potential via a CMP, to be managed to conserve its integrity.

### **Description of the House**

In its present form the house comprises front verandah, entry hall, sitting room, 3 bedrooms, bathroom, kitchen, rear lobby, back verandah, laundry and toilet.

## Exterior Materials & Finish

- cavity brick walls with 'Canberra Red' subfloor walls and steps, painted rough cast render to window head height, smooth rendered frieze above
- distinctive smooth rendered panels below some window openings
- painted timber double hung, multi - paned windows
- red unglazed, terracotta tiles on 'cut' timber roof structure
- raking eave lining of painted v jointed timber boards with exposed rafters
- painted galvanised quad gutters
- painted galvanised circular downpipes
- painted roughcast rendered brick chimneys with brick string capping

## Interior Materials & Finish

- timber floor structure with tongue and groove pine floor boards
- cement rendered brick walls with set plaster skim coat
- a combination of fibrous plaster and caneite ceiling panels with square edge battens and moulded timber cornice
- timber double hung, multi - paned windows, some painted some with original varnish, original brass pulls and catches
- 100 x 25mm splayed cedar skirtings, architraves and picture rails, some painted, some with original varnish
- 4 panel cedar doors with quad beading, original brass knobs, latch sets and covered key holes
- original closets in bedroom 1 including cedar shelves, brass hanging rails, brass latches
- modern electrical fittings
- original Alpine Ash mantelpieces in Sitting Room and Bedroom 2.
- red oxide "Ironite" concrete floors to verandas, porches, toilet & laundry
- original kitchen and fittings including cabinetry and Canberra stove
- original cabinets to back lobby
- original bathroom fittings including enamelled steel bath, and chrome plated shower curtain rail

## Condition Summary

- The exterior is in generally good condition and is largely intact.
- The interiors are in a fair condition with no serious structural problems. Much of the original fabric remains. Items such as windows, joinery and hardware require some repair and restoration. Carpets and blinds need replacing, All areas require repainting in an appropriate neutral colour scheme, with consideration given to restoring some of the original varnished finishes

## Modifications from the Original

1940/41	Bedroom 3 added.
1970's?	Front veranda enclosed
1980's?	Original kitchen / hall closets removed Bathroom upgraded Modern electrical fit out Modern paint finishes and floor coverings Modern sink, bathroom basin, toilet and laundry trough Slow combustion stove to Sitting Room Modern roller blinds Modern toilet cistern

## Leadlight window

2001/02 Exterior repainted a yellow-ochre colour with dark green trim

### **The 'block'**

It is clear from the oral histories of provided by former occupants describing the their use of the area while living in the house, that the entire area currently within the fence extending well into Block 1196, was considered and used as the house-block and not only the smaller area, Weston Creek Block 1168. In fact the families' use extended beyond the fence-line further into the surrounds, including south onto the road easement of Kirkpatrick Street. At the time the Farrell family moved in (1982), the surrounding fence-posts stood, but the fences had collapsed, and were replaced. The southern entrance was moved further east to the current gate.

Today's appearance is much changed to the surroundings in the past. The pine trees that appear to have been planted in the 1920s, and grew tall to surround and 'hide' the house from view, burnt down in the 18 January 2003 bushfires. As a result, the cottage stands proud in the landscape as it did when first constructed in 1926, before the pines grew.

### **REFERENCES**

Philip Leeson Architects & Marilyn C, Truscott, Heritage Assessment - Former Attendant's Cottage at Weston Creek Sewerage Treatment Works, for ACT Department of Territory & Municipal Services, March 2009.

Federal Capital Commission. *Canberra- General notes for the Information of Public Servants*, April 1926

## SITE LOCATION AND PLANS

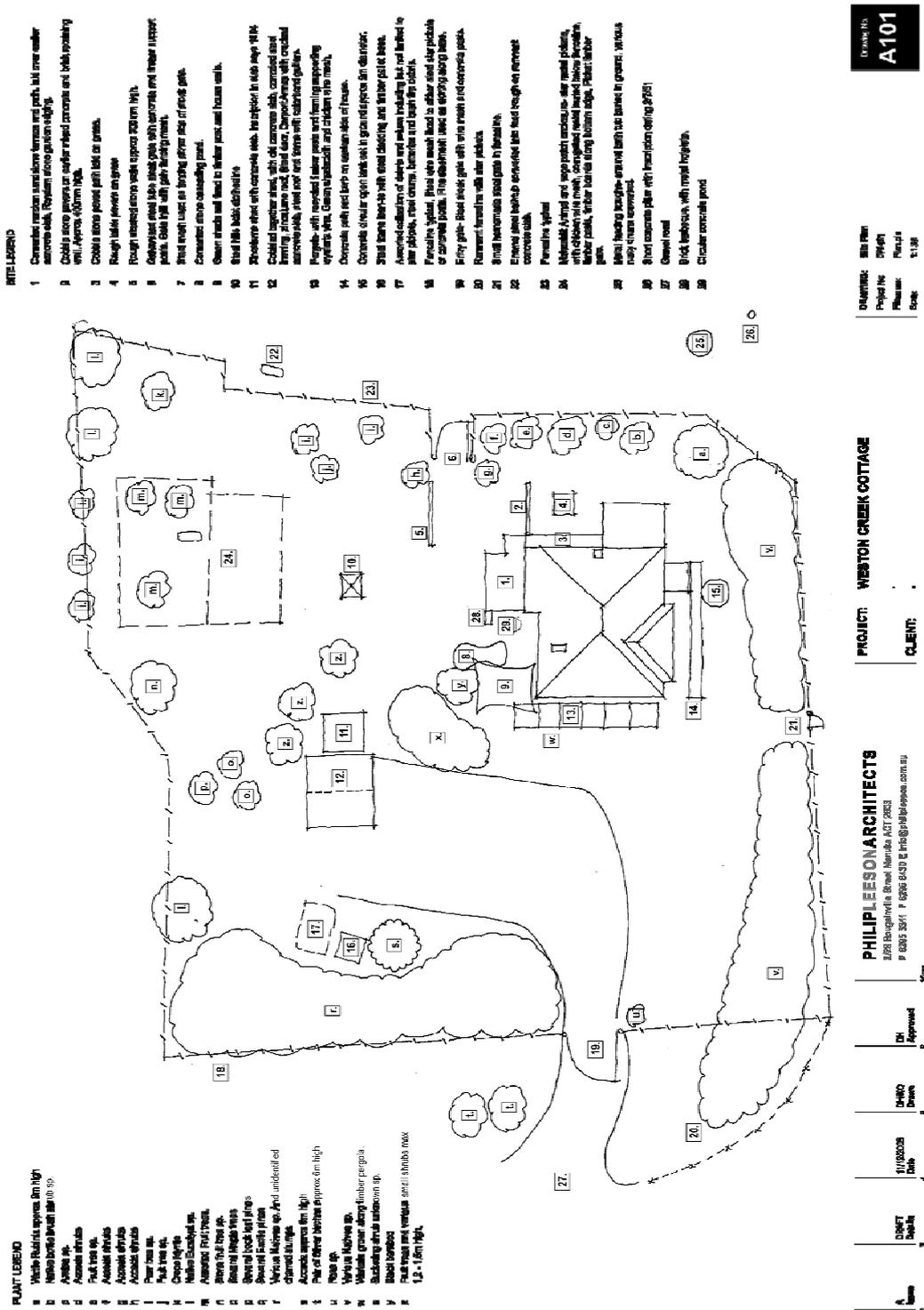


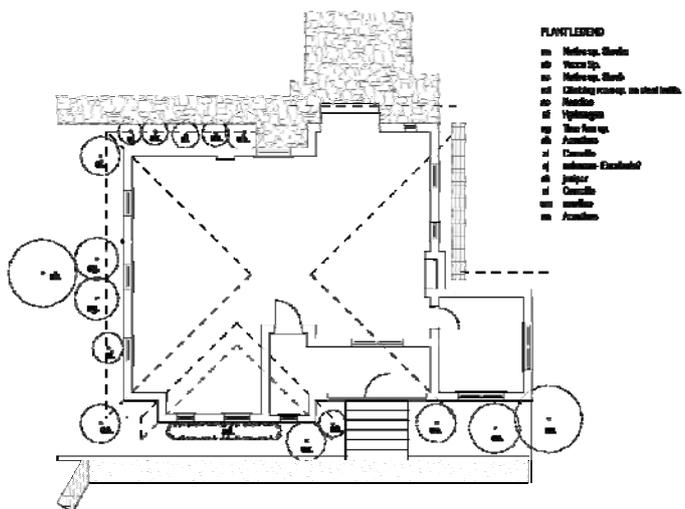
Location of Former Sewerage Attendant's Cottage (Source: ACTMAP)



Former Sewerage Attendant's Cottage boundary as defined by red line (Source: ACTMAP)

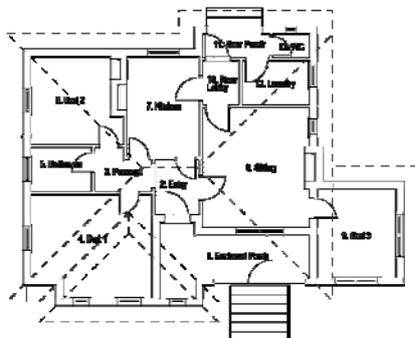
Site Plan and Plantings (Source: Philip Leeson Architects)





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Plantings adjacent to the Cottage (Source: Philip Leeson Architects)

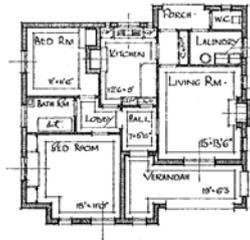
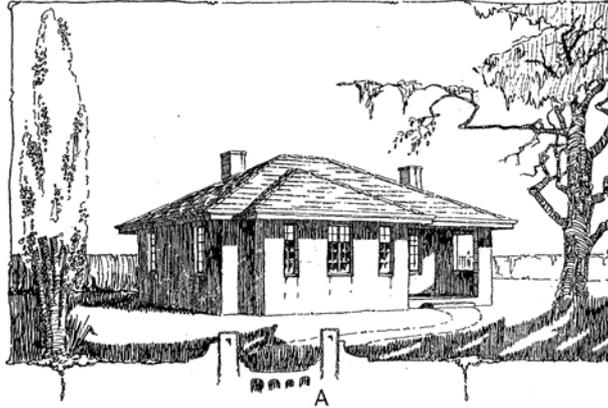


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1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18					

Floor Plan (2009) (Source: Philip Leeson Architects)

FEDERAL CAPITAL COMMISSION

TYPE  
F.C.C. 20 G.3



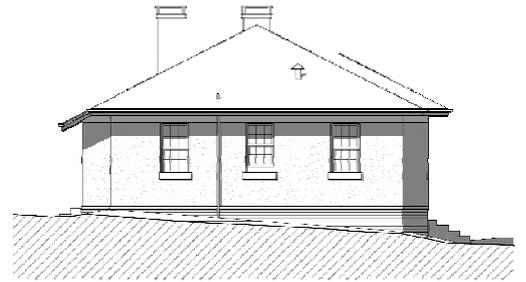
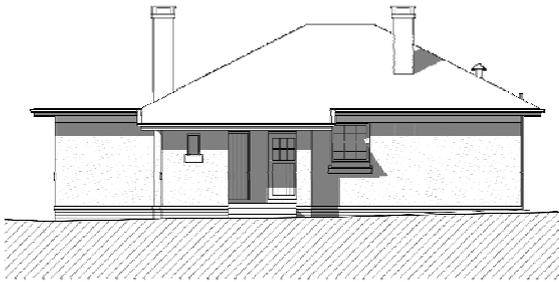
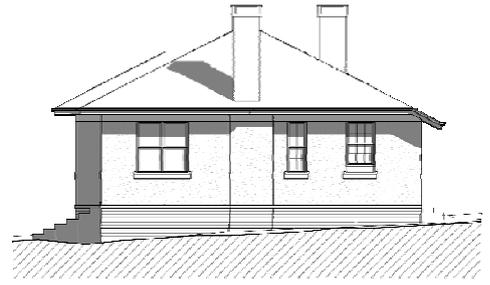
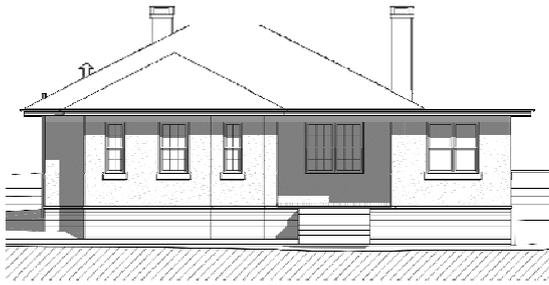
Area of Cottage .. .. 998 square feet  
Area of Verandahs .. .. 193

Total Area 1,191

**PRICE £1,300**

(Including fuel store, toolhouse, and gravel footpaths)

FCC Type 20 Plan (Source: *Canberra, General Notes for the Information of Public Servants. Federal Capital Commission, 1926*)



Elevations (Source: *Philip Leeson Architects*)

A Scale	DRAFT Details	1/1/2024 Date	D-200 Phase	CH Approval	1/2024 Year	<b>PHILIP LEESON ARCHITECTS</b> <small>333/335 George Street, Canberra ACT 2601          P 0262 5211 F 0262 6122 E info@philipleeson.com.au</small>
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<b>PROJECT:</b>	<b>WESTON CREEK COTTAGE</b>
<b>CLIENT:</b>	-

<b>DRAWING:</b>	Exterior
<b>Project No:</b>	1978
<b>Phase:</b>	Final
<b>Scale:</b>	1:125

Drawing No.  
**A104**