

Register of Historic Places and Objects

SHI Number

4671002

The PHA NSW Heritage Register

Item Name: **No. 2 Stockade, Cox's River**Location: **Lake Lyell, near Rydal**

Address:

Corner:

Suburb / Nearest Town: Lake Lyell, near Rydal

State:

Local Govt Area: Local Government Area:
Lithgow CityDUAP Region:
Southern & WesternHistoric region:
Central Tableland

Property Identifier:

Boundary:

Item Type: Archaeological-Terrest Group: Law Enforcement Category: Convict labour depot

Owner:

Owner Codes:

Code 2:

Code 3:

Current Use: Dam

Former Uses: Convict stockade

Assessed Significance:

Endorsed Significance:

Statement of Significance: The No. 2 Stockade on Cox's River is significant because it was the second major stockade on the important new route to Bathurst; it was the largest and most complex stockade of the 1830s with many auxiliary buildings and it was a focus of activity over almost eight years of occupation by convicts, the military, surveyors and other officials, longer than many other such sites. The site demonstrates characteristics of life in the convict era and has the potential to illuminate the state of historical knowledge about the convict system which dominated New South Wales in the 1830s, including convict and military lifestyles, working conditions and discipline.

Historical Notes or Provenance: Between 1832 and 1840 the study area was the site of a large convict stockade known as the No.2 Stockade Cox's River. The site for the stockade was proposed by Surveyor General Major Thomas Mitchell in 1830 to house convicts in irons working on the latter part of his new route across the Blue Mountains to Bathurst. Work began on the stockade in early 1832 under the direction of Assistant Surveyors Lambie and Nicholson. The stockade was based on directions issued by Governor Darling in 1830 and was square in shape and surrounded by a high fence. The convicts' huts were arranged within the fence and auxiliary buildings for the hospital, military and superintendents were outside its perimeter.

Four iron gangs were accommodated in the stockade. Estimates of the numbers housed vary between 500 and 800. The stockade was the focus of many bitter battles between the Surveyor-General's department and the Governor and military over how the convicts' labour was to be used and supervised. Work on the road over the Cox's River proceeded slowly and the stockade remained in use probably until 1839. The stockade became the administrative and judicial centre for the western road work sites from Mt. Victoria to at least Honeysuckle Hill.

The structure, length of establishment and function of the Cox's River Stockade reflected changes in the convict system and the complexities and conflict inherent in the road making system. There was tension between the Surveyor General's desire to build lasting roads; the pressure for roads to be finished; the problems of managing forced labour; and of a lack of

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control because of the military supervisors' concern with security rather than efficient work practices.

Descriptions of the stockade exist in several contemporary accounts and include a rare account of living and working conditions by a convict, who was in one of the iron gangs. There are also several graphic representations, including an important painting of the stockade showing many details (Sue Rosen, Dr. Michael Pearson, "The No. 2 Stockade Cox's River - Its Life and Times," for Pacific Power, 1997, p.11).

National Themes: Working

State Themes: Convict

Labour

Law and order

Transport

Study Themes:

Designer:

Maker / Builder:

Year Started: 1832 **Year Completed:** 1840 **Circa:** Yes

Physical Description: The site is adjacent to the shoreline of, and partly submerged beneath, the Lyell Lake created by the construction of Lyell Dam owned by Pacific Power.

Associated elements in the vicinity of the stockade area include the early line of the Western Road between Old Bowenfels, Rydal and Bathurst; a grave site/former burial ground; and prior to the creation of Lyell Lake, included an old bridge and river crossing.

Physical Condition: Although a portion of the study site has been submerged beneath the waters of Lake Lyell the site as described by Govett was centred on top of the ridge and this area has not been flooded. Further, the general use of the area has been low intensity activity such as stock grazing and recreational use. This means that the below-ground archaeological resources of the site have not been impacted upon.

Modification Dates:

**Recommended
Management:**

Further Comments:

Historical Significance: (a) No. 2 Cox's River Stockade is significant because of its place in the development of the convict works system which evolved in the first half of the nineteenth century. The Stockade was constructed at a time of considerable change in the convict road gang system, reflecting both administrative and social changes in the colony. It was probably the last truly stockaded (palisaded) road gang camp constructed before the change in policy to open-policing of convict gangs. The importance of the physical remains in demonstrating aspects of this historical phase is enhanced on the one hand by the relatively rich historical record which documents the place, both from official and convict perspectives, and on the other by

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the relatively extensive archaeological remains of the stockade complex.

The Stockade site is one of only two documented convict road gang sites known to have substantial archaeological evidence of individual buildings (the other being at Wiseman's Ferry). While the existence of many other road gang sites is known through the historical record, little survey or other archaeological work has been carried out at the indicated sites. The No. 2 Stockade Cox's River therefore must be seen as a significant site representing the physical evidence of this class of place.

The No. 2 Stockade Cox's River site demonstrates key aspects of the nature of convict road gang life (isolation and primitive conditions), and has the archaeological potential to demonstrate the physical remains of convict accommodation. The archaeological remains already excavated, and deposits not yet investigated, demonstrate the nature of accommodation of the military and commissariat functions. The archaeological remains of the Commanding Officer's cottage are also thought to exist. The proximity of major engineering features of Mitchell's road, in a rugged landscape, demonstrates both the underlying reason for the use of road gangs, and the nature, scale and quality of the work undertaken (Rosen, Pearson, 1997, 217-219.).

(b) The stockade is associated with Surveyor-General Major Thomas Mitchell and is an element of the convict road construction system which created Mitchell's line of road over the Blue Mountains to Bathurst, a major transport route, which opened up the colony to further settlement. The road was arguably one of the most significant engineering accomplishments of its age in the Colony (Rosen, Pearson, 1997, 217.).

Aesthetic Significance:

Social Significance:

Technical / Research: The Stockade site is the most intact surviving work station on Mitchell's line of road over the Blue Mountains to Bathurst, (or, as far as is known, on any other), and contains archaeological evidence which might enhance our knowledge of the technical achievement of the road's construction.

The Cox's River Stockade has undoubted and major research significance. There are very few large convict road gang sites which have escaped substantial disturbance or destruction, and the No. 2 Stockade Cox's River site is, on present evidence, the least disturbed of them all. The research potential resides in the demonstrated presence of archaeological evidence of the military buildings, the potential archaeological survival of the convict huts and the stockade itself, and the likely presence of archaeological deposits in the Deedes Grant Area, which may be the residence of all Officers in charge of the stockade's military detachment.

The documentary evidence associated with this site, the paucity of archaeological evidence at convict sites generally, and the relative archaeological intactness of the No. 2 Stockade Cox's River site gives it a greater archaeological potential than any other known sites of its type. The site therefore satisfies the test of research relevance in being able to demonstrate its potential to provide evidence no other research source can provide, and the likelihood that it can provide evidence no other place can provide, relevant to a topic (convict work and punishment) which is subject of lively and ongoing research debate. The evaluation of the research significance of the Cox's River site might need to be re-assessed if substantial archaeological remains are demonstrated on any other road gang sites (Rosen, Pearson,

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1997, 217-218.).

Representativeness: Road gang stockades were an important aspect of the development of communications in NSW. The remains at No. 2 Stockade Cox's River, despite its being larger and longer-lived than most, are representative of the principal characteristics of many of this class of place (Rosen, Pearson, 1997, 218.).

Rare Assessment: The No. 2 Stockade Cox's River site is rare on several counts. Its size and duration of operation made it uncommon among contemporary road gang sites.

The rarity of the site is increased by the existence of documentary evidence, both official, convict and free which allows the site to be interpreted more clearly than any of its contemporaries might be. It is now the only convict road gang camp for which the layout of buildings has been reconstructed from documentary and archaeological evidence (Rosen, Pearson, 1997, 219.).

Integrity / Intactness: Partly submerged by Lyell Dam

References:	Author:	Title:	Year:
	Rosen, Sue, Pearson, Dr. Michael, for Environmental Services, Pacific Power	The No. 2 Stockade Cox's River - Its Life and Times	1997

Studies:

Listings:

Custom Field One:

Custom Field Two: Rosemary Kerr of Sue Rosen & Associates, Heritage Assessment And History

Custom Field Three: 1/09/2000

Custom Field Four:

Custom Field Five:

Custom Field Six:

Data Entry: Date First Entered: 03/07/2001 Date Updated: 03/07/2001 Status: Completed