

Attachment: Additional Assessment of the Noolook Bark Mill Site

On 17 November 2010, the SA Register Committee (the Committee) provisionally entered the Noolook Bark Mill Site in the SA Heritage Register. In response, ForestrySA made a submission to the SA Register Council on 7 December 2010 arguing the extent of listing be altered to exclude some modern elements not related with the bark mill and to include the remains of a stone stable, not considered in the Twentieth Century Survey report. The following report details a second heritage assessment of the Noolook Bark Mill Site, presented to the Committee at its meeting of 13 April 2011.

Figure 1 identifies the built features associated with the Noolook Bark Mill Site, including those provisionally listed in the SA Heritage Register on 17 November 2010, and the proposed alterations to the listing. Details of the proposed change to listing are as follows:

Stable Ruins

Ruins of a stone stables, apparently built before the bark mill to support the mail run. The ruins are significant as one of the earliest structures on the site, and through its association with the management of mail in the region.

1960s Shed

A simple metal shed built to store fuel and hold forestry machinery. The structure relates to modern forestry functions and is **not** a significant component of the site.

Engine Bases

Two simple stone and concrete bases for engines that powered bark mill equipment. Both are damaged but interpretable. The bases are significant components of the site since they relate specifically to the bark mill's functions.

Well

A historic stone lined well. Its date of construction is not known but likely related to the now demolished bark mill. That relationship makes it a significant component of the site.

Sheep Dip

Probably constructed in the 1960s, the dip relates to efforts to extend the sites economic viability by running and shearing sheep. The dip has been filled in with earth with its above ground structure still visible. The dip is significant in its participation in the continued tradition of this site acting as a regional centre of activities.

Statement of Significance

Operational from the 1890s until 1960, the Noolook Bark Mill Site is a remarkable surviving relic of the wattle bark industry, a widespread rural

enterprise whose evidence in the state has almost entirely vanished. Historic remains evidence the site's lengthy tradition acting as a regional centre, from mail change station and way station, to bark mill and wool shearing station.



Figure 1 Site plan showing features already provisionally listed, those proposed for provisional listing and those proposed for removal from the listing.

NOOLOOK BARK MILL

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Place Name and Address:

SUMMARY OF HERITAGE VALUE:

Description:

The former bark mill is dramatically sited in a large clearing surrounded on all four sides by *Pinus radiata* plantations. The mill remains consist of a stone masonry office and residence (the former coach changing station) immediately beside the road, a weighbridge, cgi sheds and water tanks and an orchard of fruit trees. Since the Danvers survey the mill building has been demolished, and the residence has become unroofed.

Statement of Heritage Value:

Built in the 1890s and operating until 1960, the Noolook Bark Mill is a remarkable surviving relic of the wattle bark industry, a widespread rural enterprise whose evidence has almost entirely vanished.

Relevant Criteria (Under Section 16 of the *Heritage Act 1993*):

- (a) It demonstrates important aspects of the evolution or pattern of the State's history
 - (b) It has rare, uncommon or endangered qualities that are of cultural significance
 - (d) It is an outstanding representative of a particular class of places of cultural significance
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RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that the former Noolook Bark Mill be provisionally entered in the South Australian Heritage Register.

ASSESSMENT OF HERITAGE VALUE:

- (a) It demonstrates important aspects of the evolution or pattern of the State's history.**

A rural product which is virtually forgotten today, but which supplemented many South Australian farm incomes in the nineteenth century was wattle bark, which was dried and ground into powder for use in tanning leather. In the early years bark was simply stripped from native Golden Wattle (*Acacia pycnantha*) trees in the scrub, but from the 1870s onward some people in the Cape Jaffa area began to plant woodlots of larger and faster-growing Black Wattle trees (*Acacia mearnsii*), a species native to New South Wales, for systematic harvesting. There was a simultaneous rise in the industry in other areas such as the Fleurieu Peninsula.

There were two bark mills in the Kingston district. One was operated by J. Grice & Company in Kingston, on the foreshore near the jetty, and has vanished without trace. The larger bark mill was opened by Rudolf Wilke and Fred Wight on the Kingston-Robe road at Noolook near Mount Benson in the 1890s. They took over the old horse-changing station on the mail route, and the cottage became the mill manager's residence. The Noolook bark mill burnt down in 1906, but was rebuilt. (Observer 28 April 1906) Wilke and Wight sold the mill to Thomas Paltridge & Son, tanners of Mount Barker in 1912. Paltridges increased the mill's landholding to 6,500 acres (2630ha) planted with wattles, and also bought bark from farmers. Bark stripping was done seasonally, beginning in September, and the bark was stockpiled at the mill and allowed to dry. When about 400 tons were accumulated, contractors were brought in to put the dried bark through milling machinery to reduce it to powder, which was carted to the railway at Kingston. Paltridges sold their enterprise, both tannery and bark mill, to Johnson & Coy, but it became less profitable as time passed. The Noolook Bark Mill closed in 1960. (Vaughan 1986, pp. 83-86)

Johnsons bulldozed the wattle plantations and planted pasture grass, running sheep on the property for some years, and converting the bark mill building to a shearing shed. But before the end of the decade, the property was taken over by the Department of Woods and Forests.

Forestry was a completely new industry in the district. Pine plantations had long been established in the lower South-East, around Penola, Mount Gambier and Mount Burr, but in the post-war era new plantations were established near Mount Benson. A local farmer, Ross Saltmarsh, noticed that *Pinus radiata* grew very well in the district as a windbreak, and he planted some experimental tree lots. The department was impressed by the results, and bought his land in 1952. Larger-scale planting of Radiata pine began in 1953 and the Noolook Forest was established. In 1968 Forestry bought the landholdings of the closed Noolook bark mill and greatly increased the area under pines. (Vaughan 1986, pp. 134-135) The old mill complex has been allowed to remain as a fire safety haven, forming a small island surrounded by pine plantations on all four sides.

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(b) It has rare, uncommon or endangered qualities that are of cultural significance

The wattle bark industry was widely distributed throughout rural South Australia, probably concentrated in the Mount Lofty Ranges from Cape Jervis up to Clare, but little physical evidence of it remains. There were once bark mills at Second Valley, Normanville, Myponga and Yankalilla, but no evidence of these is known to survive. (Blum 1985; Lush 1971; Williams 1985) Some such as Second Valley utilised the excess capacity of an existing flour mill, and while it still exists, there is no feature of the flour mill which can be identified with the bark industry. Others were probably just a chaffcutter in a shed, and the one at Myponga burnt down. Fire was obviously a serious hazard at bark mills, as the first Noolook mill was also destroyed by fire.

The former Noolook Bark Mill is thus of particular importance as the most substantial surviving relic in South Australia of this vanished rural industry, and indeed virtually the only relic. It is a pity that the mill building itself has been demolished since the Danvers Survey of 1983, but since its closure in 1960 this had simply been an empty corrugated iron shed.

(d) It is an outstanding representative of a particular class of places of cultural significance.

For essentially the same reasons given under Criterion (b), the Noolook Bark Mill is also the best surviving representative of the buildings which were once built to serve the wattle bark industry. The industry is extinct and its buildings were mostly ephemeral. The reasons that the Noolook Bark Mill has survived in such a relatively intact state are (a) that it was a large and well-built complex to begin with, (b) that it operated until quite a late date, and (c) that its present owner, Forestry SA, has left it alone since acquiring it.

An assessment of the heritage significance of the Noolook Bark Mill site should also keep in mind that its fabric also incorporates a mail change station older than the mill.

REFERENCES:

- Ron Blum, *The Second Valley*, 1985
Danvers Architects, *Heritage of the South East*, 1984
Adrian Lush, *The Inman Valley Story*, 1971
Observer 28 April 1906
Register 2 November 1904, 30 January 1906
Suzette Searle, *Rise and Demise of the Black Wattle Bark Industry*, 1991
Malcolm Vaughan, *Mount Benson*, 1986
Royston Williams, *To Find the Way: History of the Western Fleurieu Peninsula*, 1985

SITE RECORD:**FORMER NAME:** n/a**DESCRIPTION OF PLACE:** Stone masonry office and residence immediately beside the road, weighbridge, cgi sheds and water tanks in a clearing surrounded by pine forests**DATE OF COMPLETION:** 1906**REGISTER STATUS:** **Description:** n/a**CURRENT USE:** **Description:** Fire Refuge
Dates: 1968+**PREVIOUS USE(S):** **Description:** Bark Mill
Dates: 1890s-1960**ARCHITECT:** **Name:** n/a
Dates: n/a**BUILDER:** **Name:** n/a
Dates: 1890s-1906**SUBJECT INDEXING:** **Group:** Forestry
Category: Plantation**LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA:** **Description:** Kingston DC**LOCATION:** **Unit No.:** -
Street No.: -
Street Name: Kingston-Robe Road
Town/Suburb: Mount Benson
Post Code: 5275
Region No.: 6
Region: South East**LAND DESCRIPTION:** **Title Type:** CR
Volume: 5706
Folio: 286
Lot No.: H 441100/S 20
Section: 20
Hundred: Mount Benson

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SITE RECORD (Cont.):

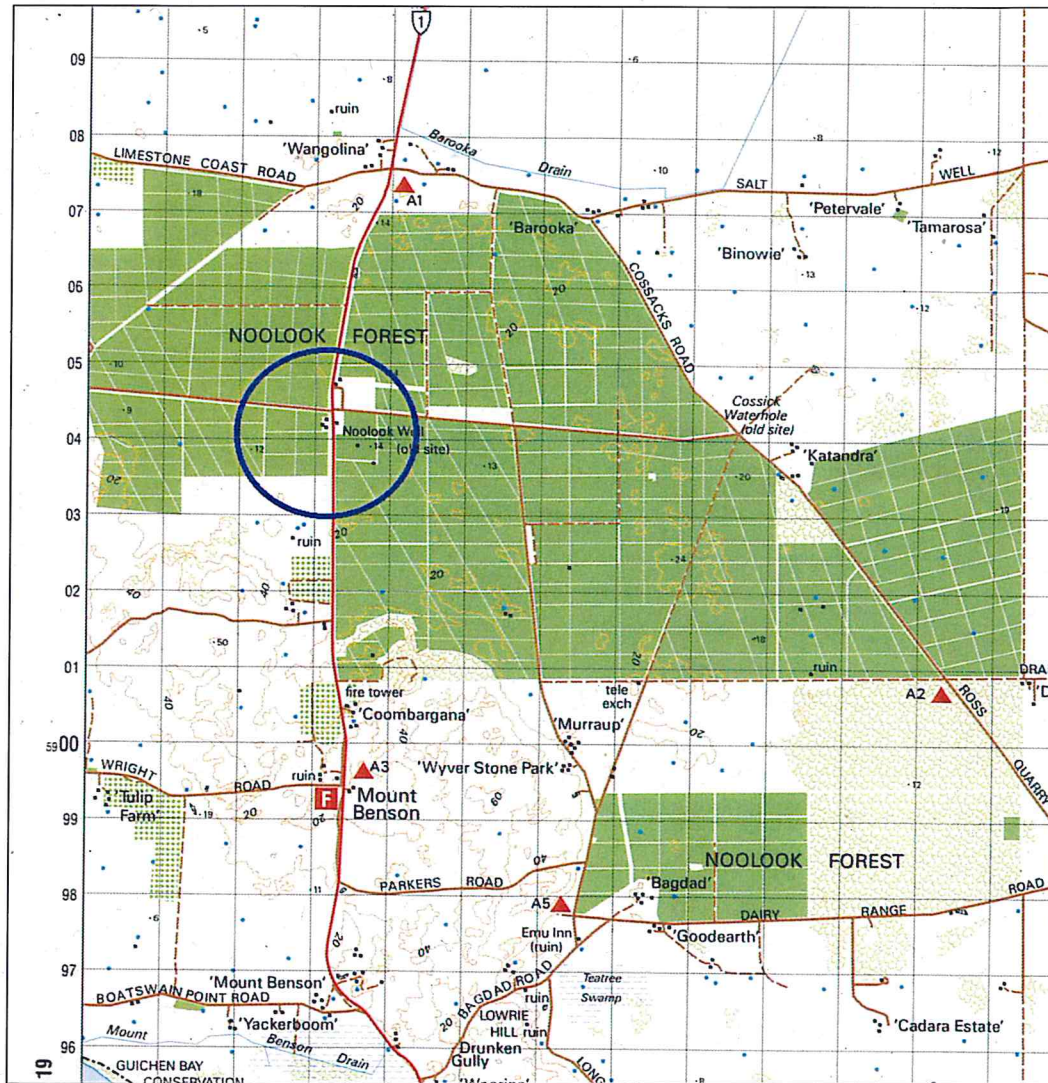
AMG REFERENCE:

Zone: 54
Easting: 0393210
Northing: 5904210
Map Sheet: 6823-II Robe
Map Scale: 1:50,000

OWNER:

Name: Minister for Primary
Industries
Address: PO Box 2343
Town/Suburb: Adelaide
Post Code: 5000

Location Map



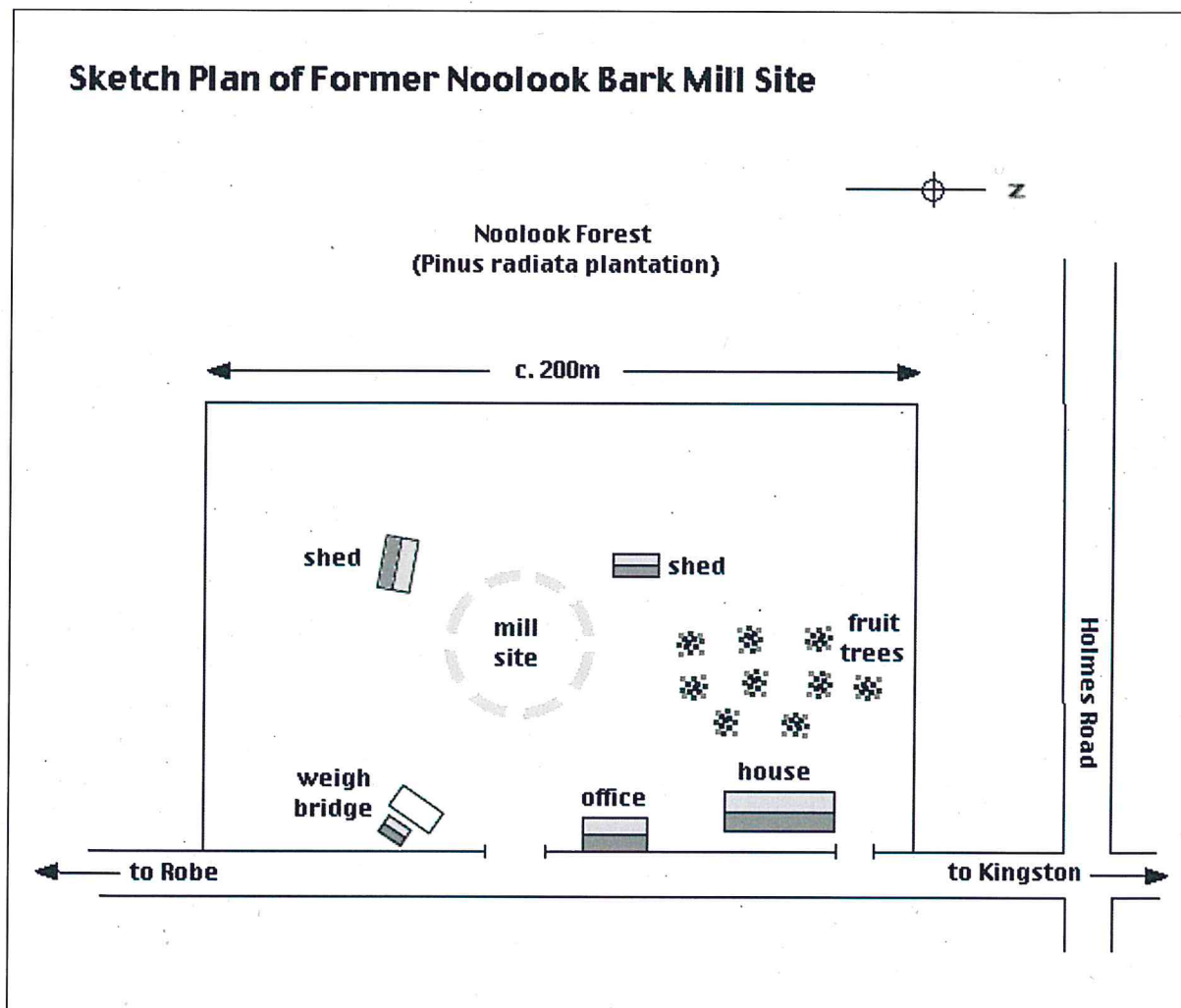
Location of Former Noolook Bark Mill

(Source: CFS Map Book Region 5, 2001)

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Site Plan



Sketch Plan of former Noolook Bark Mill



Noolook Bark Mill, office from SE



**Noolook Bark Mill, manager's house (former mail change station)
and office from NE**

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Noolook Bark Mill, general view of mill site from E



Noolook Bark Mill in operation (Vaughan 1986, p. 84)