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Name: Pelion Copper Mine including Old Pelion Hut
Status: Permanently Registered
Tier: State
State

THR ID Number: 5616
Municipality: Meander Valley Council
Boundary: CPR9949

Location Addresses

Pelion Plains, Cradle Mountain Lake St Clair National Park 7000 TAS

Title References

Property Id



Old Pelion and Mount Oakleigh c1921



Old Pelion Hut c1920 with second door
Private collection



Old Pelion Hut end view 2014
Private collection



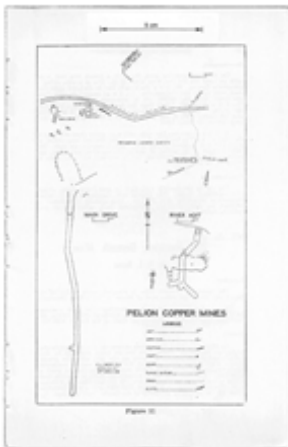
Old Pelion Hut 1936 with original chimney
Private collection





'Pelion Camps with Pelion East' January 1931
TAHO NS1155-5-14

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Pelion Copper Mines - 1958 Map
Mineral Resources Tasmania 2014

Statement of Significance: (non-statutory summary)

Old Pelion Hut is of historic cultural heritage significance because it demonstrates the evolution of Tasmanian history , particularly the working of the mining industry, and the development of conservation, bushwalking and tourism. It is a rare example of a purpose-built mine manager's house, of a King Billy pine bush hut and of the adaptive use of a mining structure as a bushwalkers' hut. It is also of historical cultural heritage significance because of the research potential of its historical graffiti, and because of its value to the bushwalking community and its part in the cultural memories of the Sheffield area .

Why is it significant?:

The Heritage Council may enter a place in the Heritage Register if it meets one or more of the following criteria from the Historic Cultural Heritage Act 1995:

a) The place is important to the course or pattern of Tasmania's history.

Old Pelion Hut is of historical significance because its demonstrates the part of the evolution of the mining industry in Tasmania, particularly in respect of mining in remote and isolated areas. It was built as the manager's residence of a copper mine during World War I when copper, used as a strategic metal in wiring, motors and bullets, was very valuable.

It also demonstrates the evolution of conservation, recreation and tourism in Tasmania. Old Pelion Hut played an important role in early tourism to the region which led to the creation of the Cradle Mountain-Lake St Clair National

Park and was strategically sited in the development of the Overland Track, running from north to south and connecting existing huts. The Overland Track has since been recognised as an internationally significant multi-day walk. The hut, now located in the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area, communicates by its very presence that wilderness is culturally constructed and that land now managed as national park once had other uses.

b) The place possesses uncommon or rare aspects of Tasmania's history.

Old Pelion is a rare example of a purpose-built mine manager's house and the adaptive use of a mining structure as a bushwalker's hut. Built in 1917, it is one of the few standing structures which pre-date the founding of the national park in 1922, and is a rare example of a King Billy pine bush hut.

c) The place has the potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of Tasmania's history.

The hut's walls contain an array of historical graffiti from the 1920s left by hunters, cattlemen and bushwalkers that, if fully documented, could contribute to our understanding of the use of this place. Surface and subsurface remains of the miners huts and their associated cultural deposits have the potential to yield information that could demonstrate undocumented aspects of a remote prospecting camp at the turn of the 20th century.

d) The place is important in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of place in Tasmania's history.

No Data Recorded

e) The place is important in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement.

No Data Recorded

f) The place has a strong or special association with a particular community or cultural group for social or spiritual reasons.

Old Pelion Hut is of historical cultural heritage significance because it is much loved and valued by the bushwalking community, and because it is important in the cultural memories of the Sheffield area. Men from that area used it as a base when grazing cattle and hunting on Pelion Plain in the 1930s and their graffiti lines its walls. It has also featured in several books about Tasmanian highland huts and highland heritage.

g) The place has a special association with the life or works of a person, or group of persons, of importance in Tasmania's history.

No Data Recorded

h) The place is important in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics.

The picturesque location of Old Pelion Hut, with the 'organ pipes' of Mount Oakleigh as a background, has been captured by notable amateur photographers such as Fred Smithies and HJ King.

Heritage approval is required for work that will result in changes to the nature or appearance of the fabric of a Heritage place, both internal and external.

Please refer to the Heritage Council's Works Guidelines (www.heritage.tas.gov.au) for information about the level of approval required and appropriate outcomes.

Heritage Advisors are also available to answer questions and provide guidance on enquiries@heritage.tas.gov.au or Tel 1300850332

This data sheet is intended to provide sufficient information and justification for listing the place on the Heritage Register. Under the legislation, only one of the criteria needs to be met. The data sheet is not intended to be a comprehensive inventory of the heritage values of the place, there may be other heritage values of interest to the Heritage Council not currently acknowledged.

Setting:

The hut is perched on the bank above Douglas Creek near the western end of Pelion Plain. It is in a relatively sheltered position with an outlook to the dolerite cliffs of Mount Oakleigh and the wide open expanse of the plain on the opposite side of the steep-sided creek. It is approached from the Overland Track, approximately 300m to the south.

Description:

Old Pelion Hut is the only extant building of the former mining camp, a detailed description is presented in the 1994 CMP (Nolbe and Travalia 1994). The hut is a single-roomed, gable-roofed structure, 5.2 metres x 4.3 metres. It sits

on an excavated platform on timber stumps with stone footing used on the southern side. These stumps support edge plates to which the floor joists are fixed. The floorboards are King Billy pine. The hut has a corrugated iron roof, a door and a tin chimney on the northern wall and a narrow window in the southern wall partially filling a space that was once a second door. Externally, the building is clad with horizontal split boards that are a mix of King Billy pine and hardwood. The southern wall, for example, is principally King Billy, while the northern and western walls are predominantly hardwood. Internally, the walls and ceiling are lined with split King Billy pine boards that have been fixed horizontally. An internal partition, which does not extend to the ceiling, divides the building into two spaces. The western 'room' contains large bunks that have been built with split and round hardwood frames and hardwood bed bases. The eastern 'room' is arranged around a large fireplace. The internal lining around the fireplace shows significant evidence of change, apparently to accommodate progressively smaller chimneys that appear to have been added to the building over time. Within the sitting/cooking area are two small benches for sitting, one against the southern wall and the other against the northern wall of the cooking area. Two tables were installed in this room in 2010 and are not considered of historic significance.

Graffiti is written on the walls and other internal structures. The earliest identifiable, 'A Hartnett', is written in pencil and dates to 1920; this is located on the mantle which is currently stored in the Peilion Rangers Quarters. Other early examples include the Northern Tasmanian Alpine Club in 1932 and mountain cattlemen who drove cattle to Pelion in the early 1930s. Modern graffiti produced by felt pen and pocket knife, mostly names and dates, overwrites much of the older material.

A legacy of the care with which it was built, the hut is in good condition. Some collapsed footings have given the building a lean, but there are plans to fix this and to remove the occasional rotten board.

Old Pelion Hut is managed by Parks and Wildlife according to the guidelines established in the *Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Management Plan, 2002*. This and Brett Noble and David Travaia's *Old Pelion Conservation Plan* (1994) should be regarded as the guides to appropriate management and maintenance. The hut was originally one of three structures built for the Mount Pelion copper mine, the main workings of which are about 200 metres west of the hut. The blacksmith's shop stood near the main workings. One of the shafts of the mine is within a few metres of Old Pelion Hut, while the site of the former mine workers' hut is about 20 metres north-west of Old Pelion. All these sites are included in the registered area.

The mine workings are located to the west of Old Pelion Hut (Burns 1958). A mullock heap is located near the Douglas Creek, approximately 250m north-west of the hut, which marks the location of an adit (mine entrance) which leads to a N-S orientated drive extending approximately 70m. An open cut and associated smaller drive is located 60m east of the mullock heap. The former black smith's shop and mine worker's hut are both within the registered area.

Comparative analysis

There are a few Tasmanian mine manager's residences remaining from the mining boom of the late 19th century, including those of the Mount Bischoff Tin Mining Company (1881, THR 5628) at Waratah, Penghana (1897, THR 5642) at Queenstown, Ballarat House, the former Ringarooma Tin Mine Company's manager's residence at Derby (c1900) and the second manager's residence for the Tasmania mine at Beaconsfield (c1900). As a mine manager's residence, Old Pelion Hut is much more modest than any of these, representing a much smaller mining company operating in a remote location. Such buildings are rare in Tasmania, as are King Billy pine huts, Du Cane Hut, built as a tourist lodge, being one of the few other examples.

History:

In 1891 prospectors clambering along the steep sides of Douglas Creek cracked open mineral-bearing lodes. Their finds, suggesting the presence of silver, then a much sought-after metal because of the Broken Hill silver boom, sparked interest. Within a month prospecting companies and speculators pegged mining leases across the plain and explored the mineral deposits. They were soon disappointed, and the leases were abandoned. In 1897, however, at the time of the Mount Lyell copper boom, the field underwent a revival with the formation of the Mount Pelion Consolidated Copper Mining Company, which was keen to explore the copper associated with the silver at Pelion Plain. The company undertook extensive investigations, sinking shafts, driving tunnels and cutting trenches across promising outcrops. Huts and associated buildings were constructed. In about 1900, however, the company called a halt after failing to find lodes rich enough to warrant further development.

The mineral field had a final revival in 1916 with the formation of the Mount Pelion Mines No Liability Company. While silver and tin mines went into abeyance because of the closure of European metal markets during World War I, copper, tungsten (wolfram) and molybdenite mines prospered in the production of strategic metals for the war effort. The Melbourne-based company invested significant funds, firstly in improving access up the Forth Valley to Pelion Plain, then in driving a long tunnel into a mineral lode on the southern side of Douglas Creek. It built a couple of huts: one a blacksmith's shop and forge down by the adit, and the other a two-roomed mine workers' hut on the bank above it. In 1917 another hut was built from King Billy pine from Mount Oakleigh for mine manager Teck Brook (Harold Tuson; Transcript; PWD24/1/3). This is the present-day Old Pelion Hut.

The two huts were very different. As old photographs and other sources indicate, the workers' hut was a typical bush construction clad with vertical eucalypt palings, probably unlined and with two rough wooden chimneys angling away from the wall. Old Pelion, on the other hand, was carefully crafted out of horizontal King Billy pine weatherboards sourced from the forests under Mount Oakleigh. It was lined inside and had a most elaborate wooden chimney and ornate fireplace surrounds. Originally there was a door at each end of the building. The fact that the hut was the registered office of the mining company as well as the abode of the mine manager may account for the two entrances. While the huts had marked differences, they had also had one key similarity: no windows. These huts were built for men who worked from daylight to dark and had no need for natural light.

The Pelion field failed to live up to expectations. While not the only huts at Pelion at the time of World War I—there were a number of snarers' huts, for example—Old Pelion and the mine workers' hut were strategically located in relation to the Forth Valley Track and the Mole Creek Track (the basis for the later Overland Track in the Forth Gorge area) and continued to get some use. Thus they provided welcome shelter to the occasional prospector, snarers tramping through the snow with loads of skins on their backs at season end and cattlemen mustering stock on the plains. Increasingly, they also began to be used by walking groups exploring the recreational opportunities of the plains. From around 1920, for example, Lorinna hunter/pro prospector and tourism guide Paddy Hartnett began using them to accommodate walking groups that he guided in and across the plains (Cubit and Haygarth, 'Paddy Hartnett', p.88). The people whom Hartnett led, such as Stephen Spurling III, George and Florence Perrin, Fred Smithies, Frank Heyward, HJ King, Ray McClinton, Jack Savigny and Karl Stackhouse became influential champions of the national park idea. Gustav Weindorfer's vision for a national park took in only Cradle Mountain and Barn Bluff, but their visits to Pelion and south to Lake St Clair probably encouraged the ultimate creation of a larger park which included these features to the south.

Walking use increased over time, especially when the Cradle Mountain-Lake St Clair area was proclaimed a scenic reserve in 1922 and came under the control of the Scenery Preservation Board. Interestingly, the photographic and documentary records suggest that some of these visitors stayed in the larger, more comfortable workers' hut. In 1932, the hut was described as 'palatial accommodation' because 'it contained two rooms, each with its own fireplace and bunks' (Alice Brearley, 'Cradle Mountain', *Tasmanian Tramp*, December 1933, p.9). It is likely that Old Pelion was used for overflow accommodation.

In the mid 1930s, as the Overland Track was being established, the Scenery Preservation Board gave consideration to walker accommodation along the track. By this time the mine workers' hut had fallen irretrievably into disrepair. With Old Pelion too small and unable to accommodate walking groups, the board made a decision to erect a new purpose-built walkers' hut. This was constructed in 1936 by ranger Lionel Connell, who made the decision to build it 10 minutes walk across the plain in a sheltered position close to wood and water. Connell and his son Esrom and Wallace substantially renovated Old Pelion to use as their base while they built the New Pelion Hut. They re-roofed it, repaired the chimney, removed one door, partially replaced it with a window, installed the bunks and may have installed the partition at this time. With these renovations Old Pelion was remade into a walkers' hut.

From 1936 to the present, Old Pelion has played a supporting role to a range of purpose-built walkers' huts across the plain successively known as Pelion Hut or something similar. The Connells' New Pelion Hut burnt down in 1943 and was replaced in 1950 by Pelion Chalet, a split-timber hut built by Tommy McCoy, and then by a metal-clad building on a metal frame when McCoy's hut burnt down in 1967. New Pelion, the current large walkers' hut, was built in 2001.

That Old Pelion has survived is providential. It has been spared the large numbers of walkers now using the Overland Track. While providing overflow accommodation, it tended to be used more by seasoned walkers keen to escape the crush on the track and perhaps those more experienced in the use of the fireplace. However, while it has survived, it has undergone change. Over the years it has been re-roofed with iron, various repairs carried out and at least four successive chimneys installed, all requiring modification to the fireplace surrounds. The effect of these changes, visually at least, has been to remove some of the features that made it special and different.

Perhaps the most significant change in functional terms since the Connell renovations in the 1930s occurred in the early 1990s, when the Parks and Wildlife Service prohibited the use of the fireplace. To give effect to this prohibition a corrugated iron sheet was fixed across the fireplace, preventing its use. Walkers who subsequently tried to remove the iron sheet broke the carved mantelpiece and ornate surround (Noble and Travalia, *Old Pelion Conservation Plan*).

There have been other, perhaps more subtle, changes, for example, an exposition of graffiti in the hut. It is presently managed as an emergency shelter.

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