This is the published version

Young, Linda 2007, Lost houses of the Molonglo Valley : Canberra before the federal capital city, Ginninderra Press, Canberra, A.C.T.

Available from Deakin Research Online

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LOST HOUSES OF THE MOLONGLO VALLEY
LINDA YOUNG

LOST HOUSES OF THE
MOLONGLO VALLEY

CANBERRA BEFORE THE FEDERAL
CAPITAL CITY

Ginninderra Press
Acknowledging the Kamberri people, who were here first,
this book is dedicated to the memory of Lyall Gillespie, Canberra historian.
The bush community of Canberra was transformed forever in 1908 when the valley of the Molonglo River was selected as the site for the federal capital city of the Commonwealth of Australia. As it happens, local people had voted decisively against federation in the referendum of 1898, well before the place was nominated for the honour of becoming the national seat of government. The selection pleased some, but many were disenchanted by the bureaucratic demands of planning the embryo city.

The Molonglo rises on the western side of the Great Dividing Range and flows north-west, gaining volume from its main tributary, the Queanbeyan River, whence it flows into the region known since the 1850s as Canbeley or Canberra. Here the Molonglo valley is a subset of the Limestone Plains, an area explored and then inhabited by British settlers (or, to be precise, their agents) in the 1820s, about thirty years after the First Fleet began the colonisation of Australia. At this time, exploration of the inland created the grounds for discoverers to claim that they should be granted possession by the military government of the colony. Depending on how much capital they could bring to develop the land, men received title to vast properties. The Indigenous inhabitants were regarded as mere nomads without any rights of ownership; they were simultaneously nearly eliminated by violence, trickery and epidemic disease. Nonetheless, Aboriginal people remained in the ancient Kamberri lands, watching and even assisting the interlopers.\(^1\)

Queanbeyan developed as the local town of the Limestone Plains in the 1830s. It was officially surveyed in 1838, by which time it already hosted a blacksmith, a store and a newly appointed police magistrate. A few years later, Queanbeyan had two inns, a lock-up, two stores and three residences; by 1850, there were Anglican and Catholic churches and schools and a post office. It was flourishing with a courthouse and hospital by 1860, when the gold rush to Kiandra began. Canberra was not even recognised as a village for the 1871 or 1891 censuses, being merely part of the Queanbeyan district.\(^2\)

The original land grants in the Molonglo valley were gradually sold and consolidated, and soon overtaken by a system of land purchase. In these ways, four great landholders emerged on the Limestone Plains in the 1830s:
the Campbells of Duntroon, the Murrays of Yarralumla, the Klensendorffes of Elizabeth Farm, and the Macphersons of Springbank (though the latter two departed from residence in the 1840s). Branches of the Campbell clan later acquired Acton via a son-in-law, Klensendorffe’s via insolvency and Yarralumla after a family feud.

The Molonglo country was amenable to two forms of land use: cropping on the river flats – wheat, oats, maize and potatoes – and grazing sheep on the stony bush uplands. Wool was the primary product, creating a big labour market for shepherds before fences were constructed. Every household kept a few cows, chooks and pigs to provide family food. Several households ran a dozen or more cows, indicating small dairy industries, which were usually managed by women.

Chains of kin-and-neighbour migration peopled early white Australia, and thus the family trees of Canberra’s population show the arrival of unmarried brothers, widowed sisters-in-law, nephews, nieces and cousins, from all over the British Isles and often from less successful stints elsewhere in New South Wales. Family research also shows that in the earliest period – though not later – Aboriginal people married into the white community. Large families produced husbands and wives for the new generations, creating a web of marriage links between Goulburn and Cooma and beyond.

Before the Commonwealth resumed the land in 1912–13, many landholders
Making a life on a family farm required the labour of men, women and children at a multitude of tasks, typical of bush life in south-eastern Australia, 1882.

had occupied their patches for the best part of their lives. One such was William Sullivan, who over twenty years took up lease after lease on Springbank until he owned the lot; he lived there for fifty years. Several of the Duntroon estate houses were occupied by the same family for two and three generations, though the female line through which they moved is not always apparent because the tenancy was in men’s names. For instance, the farm known as Corkhill’s actually housed the widowed Catherine Logue, who remarried a Crinigan, and whose granddaughter Catherine Rolfe married the Corkhill whose name is associated with the cottage. Other houses changed hands more frequently.

After the Commonwealth takeover, some families were able to remain on their old leases for ten to forty years, until the land was required for urban development. Many houses were demolished in the 1920s, but others survived until the coming of the lake in the early 1960s; both fates are represented by the Kayes, who left their old cottage near Klensendorffe’s and moved to Springbank in 1923. Other families found the new Commonwealth conditions unbearable and chose to move elsewhere in the district, or entirely away from it. But scattered in the mix of Canberra’s modern population are descendants of nearly all the old families, and a few relics of their presence. In this, Canberra shares the character of so much of Australia: an old bush soul inhabits the modern body of the city.
PEOLING THE MOLONGLO VALLEY

The white men who settled the Limestone Plains in the 1820s were servants of richer colonists. Few of the pioneers' names are known, but it is likely that many were ex-convicts, trying to make a living after the rigours of penal servitude. Their primary task was shepherding, together with the annual washing and shearing of the sheep, but they also had to house and feed themselves in order to sustain life in the bush. James Ainslie, boss of the first land grant, Duntroon, was a veteran of the battle of Waterloo; perhaps his status as leader enabled him to form a relationship with a Kamberri woman, with whom he may have lived for ten years before his return to Scotland. Their daughter, Nanny, survived (though many mixed race children were killed at birth) and married a second-generation white settler.

The first landholder to live in the valley was John Macpherson; he brought his wife to Springbank estate about 1829, and their daughter Helen was the first white child born in the valley soon after. The presence of wives and children was a critical factor in the standard of living on a bush frontier. The domestic roles assigned to women tended to lift lifestyle from the make-do of the all-male bush camp towards the conventions of the nineteenth century home. Albeit at a rough level, women were accommodated with cottages that introduced some privacy into sleeping arrangements; replaced eating around the fireplace with a table; and facilitated the servicing of men and children with cooking and laundering. The 1841 census recorded ninety-two females among the total local population of 359.

As the number of landholders in the Limestone Plains grew, they required a workforce to manage their flocks and agriculture. In the 1830s, official convict management policy introduced the sentence of assignment, making convicts available to settlers as free labour. Rules specified how convicts were treated, worked and housed, basically equivalent to conditions for free labourers but for the fact that they couldn't leave. In the 1841 census, out of a total population of 359, there were 180 convicts assigned to work on the Limestone Plains (the Campbells declined to take convicts). Masters were not permitted to punish convicts themselves; malefactors had to be sent to the magistrate at Queanbeyan for a hearing and legal punishment.

But assigned and ex-convicts made an unreliable workforce, for few had real skills, and many had been broken or damaged by the convict experience. Both the government and individual entrepreneurs concluded that the colony needed a 'better' class of sponsored emigrants, ideally, honest countrymen
with agricultural skills, hard-working wives and strong children. In 1834, Charles Campbell commenced a scheme to bring highland Scots families to work on Duntroon and other Campbell properties, with the vision that they would establish villages where they would practise various trades on the side of regular employment as shepherds. They would have two acres (0.8 hectare) to cultivate for family food and were encouraged to acquire a cow; in time, their sturdy labour would set them up as tenant farmers and even small landowners.

This vision of emigrant success transpired for some, such as Henry and Mary Ginn, the first occupants of what is still known as Blundell’s cottage. Having worked for the Campbells from about 1860-70, the Ginns began to acquire their own farm, Canberra Park, in the modern district of Gungahlin, and as they grew up, the Ginn children selected further properties on the margins of Duntroon. Other emigrants were less determined or less lucky, and moved from lease to lease throughout their lives. Still others, such as George and Flora Blundell, inhabited the same small farm and house on Duntroon estate for their entire married lives. Sometimes a widow was moved into a smaller cottage and brought up her family there, such as Mary Curley, abandoned by her husband Patrick about 1860, but accommodated with her children until they too grew up to work on the estate. Both James and Patrick junior married local women and brought up further generations of children in Duntroon houses.

BUILDING THE HOUSES OF THE MOLONGLO VALLEY

Building in the bush means using local materials. The most obvious resource in the Molonglo valley was yellow box eucalyptus, which was not an easily worked timber. It could, however, be converted into walls by splitting into slabs and chamfering the ends to fit into the grooved top and bottom plates of a house frame. The slab cottages that spread through the Australian bush were rough, but they could be built quickly and cheaply by an experienced bushman. They were made snug by lining the cracks with mud or battens, and papering the interior. Plenty of humble huts achieved cosy homeliness thanks to mass produced wallpapers and home-made rag rugs.

Until the 1860s or 1870s, slab and other dwellings were roofed with timber shingles, overlaid in the later nineteenth century by corrugated galvanised iron, though the shingles often remained underneath and can still be found there in survivors such as Blundell’s cottage. Outbuildings such as kitchens and extra bedrooms were commonly roofed with sheet bark, held down from the wind by
bush timber weights. An iron roof was valued not only for longevity (shingles might last fifteen years if well maintained), but for harvesting water. Thanks to galvanised-iron gutters and drainpipes, roof water could be drained cleanly and simply off the metal surface into tanks, improving the household water supply.

While slab cottages were the dominant form in the Molonglo valley, about a third of houses were made of stone or brick. Both techniques require specialised knowledge and skill. Convicts and emigrants with such skills were in high demand throughout the nineteenth century, and some can be identified at work throughout the Molonglo valley. The skill and time to build in stone or brick masonry increased costs by a factor of three or more over a slab cottage, but the product was more permanent and more substantial, making a claim to solidity and civilisation that bush materials and techniques could never equal.

Several types of stone were handy and suitable for building, and there was plenty of clay for bricks. Mt Ainslie yielded a dark blue volcanic stone, a semi-basalt, which weathers to yellow. A silty mudstone came from ancient seabeds. The limestone after which the district was initially named provided occasional lintels. More importantly, limestone was burned to produce lime, the key ingredient of mortar and paint. All these stones were worked in small quarries, as near as possible to the building site; several can still be seen on Mt Ainslie.

Most of the stone cottages of the Molonglo valley were of rubble construction, meaning that the stones were not cut and shaped to a high degree. To aid their strength, the local cottages were universally whitewashed, both stone and slab. The white limewash made them look crisp and fresh, and equally importantly, protected the walls from damp.

Brick-making was a specialist, but occasional, skill, with jobs interspersed by regular farming. Bricks were made by hand, one by one in a wooden stock or frame, and were often made directly on site, said to be the case for Glebe House and Briar Farm. Before the industrial kilns of the Canberra Brickworks were established in 1913, the green bricks would air-dry for some weeks and then be fired in a clamp, a huge pile with a fire set in the middle. The uncontrolled temperatures obtained in a clamp caused the variable quality of handmade bricks, to be seen in the extreme weathering of under-fired bricks. Bricks were also valuable to shape certain elements of stone buildings, such as window lintels and the upper height of chimneys.

The stone and brick houses tended to be a little bigger than the slab cottages, with four or more rooms, whereas the slab structures tended to be of two or three rooms. However, whatever the wall material, the rooms were much the
same size: the dominant ‘cell’ of Molonglo houses was a room of twelve to fourteen feet. This is small by modern standards, indicating the cost even of cheap bush construction and residents’ modest expectations of personal space. Almost everyone shared bedrooms: adults with babies, siblings with cousins, hired hands with sons of the house. At the same time, the basic house shape offered several ways of enlarging its accommodation: skillion (lean-to) at the back, enclosed veranda at the front and detached kitchen.

Half the houses had separate kitchens, a short distance from the back door. This is usually explained as isolating the heat of cooking from the dwelling house (though heat would be welcome in a Canberra winter!), and/or as reducing the fire risk to the whole house (though kitchens were almost always built of slab). While both reasons contain sense and nonsense, the detached kitchen was only a partial practice, so it may be that the extra space created by an additional building was equally important. It is clear that kitchens were also used for storage and for sleeping, specially for young men, as well as being the chief workplace of women.

The small houses of the Molonglo valley were specimens of the most typical kinds of housing in colonial Australia. Two of those described in this book survive – St John’s Schoolhouse, a cottage with a schoolroom attached; and Blundell’s, now with Lake Burley Griffin lapping its curtilage. A further two survive just out of the frame of central Canberra: Mugga Mugga, a more distant Duntroon outstation; and the Old Canberra Inn, alternately a house and a pub, in the suburb of Lyneham. The two big houses at each end of the Molonglo valley serve modern uses as the Royal Military College, Duntroon, and Government House, Yarralumla. Their early function and style can be seen today at Lanyon historic homestead, now at the edge of the southern suburbs, a big house that is the product of several periods of enlargement, still surrounded by outbuildings and a number of estate cottages.

The people and houses of the Molonglo valley shaped the modern national capital; they merit attention today. Multiple generations of many families are mentioned in the following house biographies, but the houses are listed according to their inhabitants in 1910-12, when the Commonwealth acquired the valley lands that became Canberra.
The extended Campbell family poses in front of the new Gothic addition to old Duntroon House (left) in the early 1860s.

The service quarters of Duntroon (rear buildings) were enlarged in 1876, and the new conservatory added at the same time. The lads in the foreground may be the sons of George and Marrianne Campbell, who were taken to school in England that year and never returned to Australia.
THE HOUSES OF
THE MOLONGLO VALLEY

THE NORTH-SIDE HOUSES

DUNTRON HOUSE: HOME OF THE LATE MARIANNE CAMPBELL
PARISH OF CANBERRA, DUNTRON HOUSE

In 1825, the site of Duntroon became the first place in the Limestone Plains district to be occupied by white settlers. James Ainslie, working for Sydney merchant Robert Campbell, drove sheep south of Goulburn in search of suitable land for a grant in a compensation case. Campbell seems to have visited the place first in 1830, and decided to build a country house there. Having checked the lie of the land and the local building materials, he obtained a workforce of convict masons and carpenters and the house was completed in 1833. Built of rendered stone, it was a commodious colonial Georgian cottage of seven rooms, surrounded by verandas, with a detached kitchen.

Named after an ancestral castle in Scotland, Duntroon was the focus of an ever-expanding pastoral estate, enlarged by strategic purchases of adjoining land, as well as new properties at Tumbarumba and Delegate. Robert’s third son Charles took over management in 1835. Reliable shepherd labour was scarce, so Charles initiated a scheme to subsidise Scottish highlanders and their families to emigrate. So many did that Gaelic was said to have been spoken on Duntroon well into the 1860s. The families were encouraged to keep a cow and cultivate two acres (0.8 hectare) of land for their own use, in the expectation of gradually setting up as tenant farmers, as indeed happened.

Robert Campbell died in 1846, leaving Duntroon to his fourth son, George. However, George did not take up residence until his marriage in 1854 to Marrianne Close. In the meantime, Charles remained manager of Duntroon.

In the early 1860s George and Marrianne embarked on major improvements to Duntroon House and to the estate infrastructure. The centrepiece was a fashionable, two-storey Gothic addition of ten rooms, adjoining the old house. It was designed by the rector of Christ Church, Queanbeyan, the Rev. Alberto Soares, architect of numerous Gothic buildings in the district. The kitchen was enlarged into a two-storey service wing with several Gothic gables, and added...
to again in 1876. The same year, a prominent conservatory with conical glass roof joined the north-west end of the house.

At this point, George took his sons to school in England, where he died in 1881. Charles's son Frederick had stepped in to manage Duntroon in 1877 but, on George's death, he departed to Yarralumla in frustration with his aunt and sorrow over the death of his young wife. Duntroon was now managed by trustees on Marianne's behalf. She lived there, the greatest lady of the district, until her death in 1903, but the estate stagnated for twenty years. Her eldest son, John, still resident in England, inherited Duntroon.

In 1910, Duntroon was earmarked for development as the Commonwealth's military college, the first federal institution to be established in Canberra. Even before resumption in 1912, the house and 370 acres (150 hectares) were leased directly from John. When the compulsory acquisition was enacted, he received £141,000 compensation. The tenants of Duntroon received nothing because they were on short-term leases which simply expired.

DUNTRON OUTBUILDINGS
PARISH OF CANBERRA, DUNTRON ESTATE

Duntroon was a great house on the feudal model, surrounded by a cluster of accommodation and service buildings for the house and estate workers. In the 1850s, about fifty station hands, wives and children lived on the homestead block.

By the time of Commonwealth resumption in 1910, they occupied some ten stone and more slab houses and cottages around Duntroon House. There seems to have been turnover every few years, according to the specialised jobs of estate workers. It is likely that most of the cottages were built by mason George Rottenberry, who, with his wife Maryann and two children, had emigrated to Australia in 1849, sponsored by the Campbells.

But there were also two finely built cottages ornées, deliberately ornamental in the rustic Gothic style; they (and the Gothic addition to the big house) were built by a mason remembered as Mr Wetherspoon. Situated on the approach roads, within the view-field of the big house, the cottages were elements of Marianne Campbell's early 1860s building program to introduce picturesque taste to Duntroon. They still stand in the grounds of the Royal Military College, masked by subsequent additions and high hedges.

Though the other estate houses were simple and utilitarian, some were very large. The manager's house, south of the big house, appears to have been a
George and Marianne Campbell had two picturesque cottages for property staff built near Dunroon House, creating a vision of charming English yeomanry at work around their noble seat. This and the photo below were taken for an album of about 1876, probably to show the family back in England.

On the Molonglo side of Dunroon House, the manager's house (centre) was set among the service buildings of a working sheep station.
The Duntroon woolshed still stands beside Woolshed Creek, though the stock shed for keeping sheep dry before shearing, and the extensive yards and associated cottages, have disappeared.

plain stone cottage that grew, comprising fifteen rooms by 1910. Next to it stood the working stables, a long, functional stone shed. There was another large stone house of twelve rooms.

Behind Duntroon House, an imposing, but only slightly Gothic, new stable and coach house was built in the 1860s for the Campbell family’s horses and vehicles. Two small stone cottages stood behind and to the side. Nearby were large office and store buildings, the latter with deep storage cellars.

Further out to the west was the Duntroon dairy and its brick cottage; east were the bullock driver’s slab cottage and another of stone. West again were the eleven Duntroon cottages let to the tenants whose histories are detailed in the following pages.

Also close to Duntroon House was a range of agricultural buildings: hay and chaff sheds; a slab tool shed and forge. East in the Majura valley on Woolshed Creek stood the stone and slab stock shed and the tall, stone wool shed, which still survives, plus associated stock yards and another cottage. Out on the low-lying paddocks on the south side of the Molonglo was a wind-powered flour mill, operated by Duntroon miller John Gregory from the 1840s until 1876, when it was destroyed in a storm. It was probably a timber-post mill – a heavily braced upright, supporting the rotating body of the mill, powered by sails – of the eighteenth century type seen in Dutch landscape paintings and views of early Sydney. The area was known as Mill Flat and was the site of Mill House, another characteristic local stone cottage, but ruined and abandoned by 1910.
OLD DUNTROON DAIRY: HOME OF ELIZABETH MAYO
PARISH OF CANBERRA, DUNTROON ESTATE

Mayo’s cottage was built of rendered brick about 1865, immediately adjacent to the Duntroon dairy building. The dairy is referred to in records of the late 1830s and still survives, now Canberra’s oldest European construction. It is likely that earlier dairy workers lived in a slab house nearby. Records made before the brick cottage was demolished 110 years later show that it comprised an L-shaped arrangement of six rooms: four at the front and two behind, the latter likely to have been an addition. The house was originally shingled, later roofed with corrugated iron. The front veranda was enclosed and a service wing added in the post-Campbell ownership period (as well as a second house in front of the dairy).

A number of farm outbuildings were associated with the cottage, including a tall hay shed and a thatched shed west of the house. Eight people are said to have been buried at this end of the site. In 1974 after a public call for information, the cottage was assessed as having ‘little or no architectural importance’; it was demolished in December 1975.

Mrs Elizabeth Mayo was the tenant of the Duntroon dairy cottage in 1912, when the estate was resumed by the Commonwealth; she was the middle of a three-generation family connection to the house. Elizabeth was a daughter of Ambrose and Grace Austen, who appear to have built the new brick cottage close to the dairy about 1865. The dairy function of the site seems to have gone
Demolition of the cottage in 1975 shows the front as originally without a veranda and with battens for shingles on the roof.

out of use at this time, for the dairy building became a temporary schoolhouse when the school at St John's burned down in 1864. The place became simply another of the many small tenant farms on Duntroon estate.23

After Mrs Austen died in 1881, her newly-married younger daughter, Alice, continued to inhabit the old dairy house with her husband Frederick Warwick. They appear to have been followed by the elder Austen daughter, Elizabeth, married to Joseph Mayo; she was widowed in 1895, when she moved into the house with her four daughters.24 One of the daughters, Jennet, married Charles Edlington in 1907 and the new couple took over the farm. Following Commonwealth resumption of Duntroon, the Edlingtons occupied the house until the army required it in 1942, introducing a fourth generation of the Austen-Mayo-Edlington family to the site.25

The dairy was tucked into a cutting on the south side of Mt Pleasant to maximise a cool internal environment.
ANDERSON’S COTTAGE
PARISH OF CANBERRA, DUNTRON ESTATE

Anderson’s cottage was one of the many small dwellings on Duntroon estate. It stood just below a knoll on the lower slopes of Mt Ainslie towards Mt Pleasant, between present-day Savige and Garsia Streets in Campbell. Described in the valuation report as ‘old’, it was built of stone, with a veranda and timber skillion. Sam Goddard’s ‘View of Canberra’ (1920) shows that it was a characteristic Duntroon Rottenberry-built house with uneven roof pitches. The picture also shows a detached outbuilding.

Anderson’s appears to be the cottage occupied by the Curley family after they came to Duntroon about 1857, inhabited...
until the 1880s by Mary Curley and her children after shepherd Patrick departed to the goldfields, never to be seen again. Her son Patrick junior spent his entire life as a Duntroon hand, eventually living in one of the larger Duntroon houses close to the big house.²⁸

It is hard to be certain which of many local Andersons occupied it at the time of Commonwealth resumption, but a likely candidate is Archibald Anderson. He came to Duntroon about 1881 and worked as coachman and later stud-master at Duntroon. Limited records tell that he married Emily Wilson and they had eight children, the eldest of whom was born in 1884.²⁹

Little is known of the subsequent history of the house, though it is said to have been occupied by Duntroon staff until 1908.

**FLORA & GEORGE BLUNDELL’S COTTAGE**
**PARISH OF CANBERRA, DUNTROON ESTATE**

The only surviving Duntroon estate cottage in central Canberra, Blundell’s was built about 1860. It was one of some twenty-five houses on Duntroon estate (including the big house and its dependencies) and was probably built by estate mason George Rottenberry.³⁰ The rubble stone cottage comprised four rooms under one roof, with a shorter pitch to the front and longer to the back, giving it a distinctive uneven profile. An ‘ell’ extension of two rooms was added, also in masonry, in 1888. When valued in 1912, the house was noted as roofed with iron over old shingles (still visible today), and floored with hardwood, but without a veranda; the present one was added as ‘restoration’ in 1963. The slab timber detached kitchen of two rooms remains earthen-floored. An external brick oven is built against the house wall on the sheltered east side.³¹

The cottage’s first inhabitants were William and Mary Ginn and their four children. Ginn was employed on Duntroon as a ploughman, and farmed sixty acres (twenty-four hectares) as a tenant. He later selected land a few miles

*Blundell’s cottage is dwarfed by haystacks, viewed from the river flat looking at the back of the house.*
The front elevation and floor plan shows the original four-room cottage with a two-room extension at the back and bread oven at the side.

north and by 1874 the family was established at Canberra Park, a slab cottage which still survives close to the Federal Highway.\textsuperscript{32}

The Blundells were the second family to occupy the cottage, having moved in as newlyweds in 1874 and living there all their lives. George (1846–1933) was born nearby on Duntroon and worked there as a bullock driver. He and Flora (1845–1917) brought up eight children in the house. When the Commonwealth acquired Duntroon estate, George Blundell took on the lease of the immediate paddocks as well as some south of the river.

The house subsequently became the home of Harry and Alice Oldfield, selling farm goods to the growing Canberra community. They died there, respectively in 1942 and 1958. The house was then scheduled for demolition to prepare for the building of Lake Burley Griffin in 1962. But a new consciousness of the Canberra district’s history impelled the nascent Canberra & District Historical Society and a handful of planners to declare that the little stone cottage now amounted to a rare relic of the rural origins of the city and merited preservation.\textsuperscript{33}

The Historical Society took on the lease of the house in 1963 and opened it as a historical museum under the name Blundell’s Farmhouse, to commemorate its longest inhabitants.\textsuperscript{34} Today it is operated by the National Capital Authority.
BRIGID YOUNG’S COTTAGE
PARISH OF CANBERRA, DUNTROON ESTATE

The widowed Mrs Young’s house was situated close to St John’s Church on the Yass–Queanbeyan road, at the bottom of modern Anzac Parade. This made it a prime location for a blacksmith’s business, the equivalent of a hardware depot-cum-vehicle repair shop. A series of blacksmiths worked here.

The first was Duntroon blacksmith Francis Williams (1829–?), from 1858 until 1878.35 The roadside location enabled Williams to operate Canberra’s first post office, commencing in 1863, receiving and despatching mail via the contractor who carried it between Yass and Queanbeyan and the world beyond.36 Even in 1900, when the post office had changed hands and moved three times, the house was known as ‘the old post office farm’.37 Subsequent occupants and blacksmiths, Thomas Whitehead and John Warwick (c. 1824–1900), held the office of postmaster from late 1878 to early 1880.38

It is unknown when Mrs Young moved into the house. Brigid Brady was the widow of William Young (1847–94). They had married in 1871 and had eleven children, of whom seven were still teenagers (and two already dead) when their father died.39

The house was another of the stone cottages of Duntroon estate, almost certainly built by mason George Rottenberry.40 Details of the house are scarce, but photos show it was similar to the nearby Blundell’s cottage, complete with a substantial extension behind. The large shed at the front of the house was probably the smithy.

The cottage was a typical Duntroon stone structure. The shed at the front was used before Mrs Young’s time as a smithy; the old post office probably operated from inside the cottage.
The subsequent history of the house is unknown, but it appears to have been demolished about 1925 for urban development.

The road between Yass and Queanbeyan passed nearby Mrs Young's cottage.

**Canberra Post Office: Home of Priscilla & Thomas Murty**

*Parish of Canberra, Duntroon Estate*

The house seems to have been built for Ebenezer Booth, formerly of the Glebe Farm, in 1879, when he successfully applied to have the Canberra Post Office contract moved from the blacksmithy near St John's. The new site, located on modern Limestone Avenue near Allambee Street on the foothills of Mt Ainslie, was argued to be more convenient for the mail coach run between Yass and Queanbeyan.

*The mail coach pulls up outside the Canberra Post Office at the foot of Mt Ainslie, about 1910.*
The post office was always a gathering place for the exchange of news.

In 1884, both house and post office were taken over by George Kinleyside (1854–1886), whose wife Priscilla succeeded him, becoming postmistress when George died. She married Thomas Murty, a farmer, in 1889, maintaining the Canberra Post Office until the Murtys moved on in 1913.42

Hilda McIntosh (1887–1958) took over as postmistress, having married Hector McIntosh in 1913, when they took up residence in the house.43 A new central post office opened in Acton in 1912, causing the old PO to be renamed Ainslie Post Office in 1913. The old building was demolished for suburban development in 1925, and the local post office moved to Braddon.44

The post office occupied the enclosed eastern end of the veranda of the house.
ST JOHN’S SCHOOLHOUSE: HOME OF THE WINTER FAMILY
PARISH OF CANBERRA, DUNTRROON ESTATE

The schoolhouse and attached teacher’s residence close to St John’s Church was built in the early 1840s by Robert Campbell to enable an elementary education for the children of his estate workers. The project began before any state education scheme existed, but by 1848 it was certified as a Church of England school under the direction of the Denominational School Board in Sydney. The school closed in 1880, but the replacement public school at Springbank proved inconvenient and in 1895 the old schoolhouse was opened again by the Department of Public Instruction. Its new title was Canberra Public School, but it was always known as St John’s. The building was already dilapidated, and in 1908 a new weatherboard school opened next to St John’s cemetery.45

The earliest configuration comprised the large schoolroom and an attached two-room dwelling. After the roof burned down in 1864, three more rooms including a skillion kitchen were added to the residence.46 The walls were constructed of rubble stone, the roof was shingled and later covered with corrugated iron. A stone stable block stood nearby.47

It was a major advantage to offer a teacher a home as well as a job. Six teachers occupied the residence (one twice) before the 1880 closure; most of them stayed for one to three years. James Abernethy and his wife Eliza were the longest serving, from 1864 to 1880. For an extra few pounds on his salary, the teacher’s wife taught needlework and music to girls, while the teacher himself was often also employed as parish clerk.48

When the school closed in 1880, the residence was let to tenants and never housed a teacher again, to the great inconvenience of teachers who had to find lodgings elsewhere. The history of occupation is not clear, but various local families evidently lived there for a few years. In 1912, after the site had been
acquired from Duntroon estate by the Commonwealth, it was leased by John (1873–1954) and Elizabeth (1878–1959) Winter and their family.49

While the residence was maintained by being inhabited, the schoolhouse deteriorated through neglect. The Griffin plan for Canberra planned a road directly through the building and it was assumed it would be demolished. As the city grew, there was increasing demand for public spaces, and in the late 1920s, a Boy Scout group moved in and cleaned out the old schoolroom. By the 1930s the Scouts occupied the residence as well, and did so until 1967, thus preserving the schoolhouse into a period when it became appreciated for its historic character.50

The development of St John’s parish centre in 1959 eventually saw the end of the proposed street through the schoolhouse, and interest in local history propelled a group of parishioners to begin conservation plans. After restoration work funded by the National Capital Development Commission, St John’s Schoolhouse Museum opened in 1969 and continues to open the site to the public.51

GLEBE HOUSE: HOME OF REV. ARTHUR CHAMPION
PARISH OF CANBERRA

Glebe House was built in 1871–3 as the permanent rectory of the church of St John the Baptist; before then, the rector lived in Acton House. The 100 acres (forty hectares) of land on which it was built had been given in 1844, along with the church site, by Robert Campbell of Duntroon. In the English tradition, the glebe land was intended as an estate for the rector, so he could garner a gentleman’s income from rent.

The house was sited about half a mile (one kilometre) from the church, at the northern end of the glebe. Designed by Queanbeyan rector and engineer-
St John's Rectory, also known as Glebe House, was set in a well planted garden, some of whose trees still stand in Glebe Park. The size of the trees suggests that this picture dates to the 1890s.

The drawing room of the Glebe house in the 1890s shows the influence of women acquainted with fashion, evidenced by lavish, asymmetrical drapery.
architect, A.D. Soares, it was a large, rather plain two-storey Victorian house. Built of bricks made on the site by Queanbeyan builders Thomas Bryant and James Cook, its corners were marked with rendered quoins for a hint of grandeur. It was a gentleman’s house, made for a family with the resources to keep servants and a carriage, and with the leisure to enjoy a large garden. There were twelve rooms, plus a basement and a separate stable and coach house.52

Here lived St John’s longest-serving minister, the Rev. Pierce Galliard Smith, until 1905; followed by the Rev. Arthur Hopcraft from 1905 to 1909; and the Rev. Arthur Champion from 1909 to 1913. The Commonwealth resumed both the church and glebe blocks in 1912, and leased them back to the diocese. Glebe House was not well maintained and the next rector, the Rev. Frederick Ward, badgered the Commonwealth for a new rectory adjacent to St John’s; it was eventually built in 1926.53

Glebe House then became briefly the home of St Gabriel’s Church of England School for Girls and then of Canberra Grammar School. In 1930 it opened as a boarding house, operated for twenty years mainly by the MacAlister family. But in 1954, post-war development of Canberra required its demolition.54 Laurie Fitzhardinge, president of the Canberra & District Historical Society, wrote to the Canberra Times asking, 'what is to become of this building, the most important private relic of older settlement in the city area? Is it to go the way of Acton House?’55

The answer was blunt; Glebe House was demolished in 1954 despite protests about its historic significance. But the next old building to be threatened, Blundell’s cottage, became the turning point for the conservation of Canberra’s pre-federal capital heritage.

MURRAY’S HOUSE: THE GLEBE FARM
PARISH OF CANBERRA

The site of St John’s Church was given by Robert Campbell of Duntroon to the Church of England in 1844, together with 100 acres (forty hectares) of glebe lands fronting the Molonglo. Renting part of the glebe to tenants funded an income for the parish rector.

The first tenant was John Shumack and his family in 1845; he built a three-room slab cottage which, after his death in 1849, was occupied by a sequence of tenants: the Mackenzie, Line and Slade families. In 1863, the then-widowed Mrs Slade married Ebenezer Booth and in 1874 they built a more substantial house on the site.56 Here they operated a local shop and bakery. The Booths
Murray's house was a substantial stone cottage facing the Molonglo; the bakery occupied the outbuildings at the back. Behind Murray's, towards the foothills of Mt Ainslie, are the gardens of Glebe House.

Murray's can be seen tucked between the two gum trees to the left. To their right is St John's schoolhouse.
moved to a new house at the foot of Mt Ainslie in 1879, to take up the post office contract.\textsuperscript{57}

In 1909 the Glebe Farm shop and bakery operation was taken over by John Murray, of whom little is known. He enlarged the bakery and employed a baker who, together with Murray and his son, produced more than 2,000 loaves a week by the time the property was resumed by the Commonwealth.\textsuperscript{58} Murray maintained a lease on the bakery, but was persistently criticised by the Federal Capital Territory medical officer-in-charge for inadequate hygiene.\textsuperscript{59}

The house built by the Booths was of brick, with three downstairs and two attic rooms, and a skillion at the back. The kitchen and bakehouse, extended about 1906, were of weatherboard with external brick ovens, plus a corrugated iron hut for staff.\textsuperscript{60} Elms and pines from the house site still stand in Commonwealth Park, close to the edge of Lake Burley Griffin, west of the Pioneer Women’s Memorial.

The house burned down in 1923.

\textbf{Canberry, Later Acton House: Home of Arthur & Salome Brassey}

\textbf{Parish of Canberra, Acton Estate}

Canberry was the first officially settled land on the Molonglo: Joshua Moore purchased 1,000 acres (407 hectares) in 1826, though he lived in the Goulburn
The Brassey added a smart Victorian house to the old vernacular cottage, including drawing rooms with bay windows, which later served as the ACT's first court rooms.

district and was always an absentee landlord. Moore sold the property in 1843 to Arthur Jeffreys, son-in-law of Robert Campbell of Duntroon; Jeffreys renamed it 'Acton' after his home town in Wales but never lived there, returning with his family to England. However, it was still owned by the Jeffreys family when resumed by the Commonwealth in 1911.

A rendered stone house was recorded at Canberra in the 1841 census. This could be the old portion of Acton

Acton House was composed of three buildings: the oldest portion of three rooms, opening on to the top half of the veranda (with two extra rooms in a skillion at the top end; the kitchen directly behind the old house; and the new house, adjoining the old house via the lengthened veranda. Surveyor Rain was correct that the old house was stone, but the new house was rendered brick.
Acton House's tall iron roof shines, south (bay window) end towards the camera.

House: rendered stone, shingle-roofed, with plaster ceilings and 'well finished throughout', meaning it was ceiled, floored and perhaps dressed with skirtings. Such finish was the mark of a high-class dwelling intended for gentry, though such detail may have been introduced later than the initial construction. The house had a wide, brick-floored veranda with enclosed rooms at the ends. A detached but adjoining kitchen, also of rendered stone, stood at right angles to the west of the house.63

This house became the home of the first Rector of St John’s Church of England, Rev. George Gregory, who drowned crossing the flooded Molonglo fifteen months after his appointment in 1850. He was succeeded by the Rev. Thomas Wilkinson, from 1851 to 1854. St John’s third, long-time rector, the Rev. Pierce Galliard Smith and his family, lived at Acton House from 1855 to 1873, when they moved into the new rectory, Glebe House.64

Acton estate was leased by Arthur Brassey JP and his wife Salome in the 1880s; they ran a sheep stud, and lived there until it was resumed in 1911, the first people to be displaced by the Commonwealth. A new house was built adjoining the old one in 1890 after the birth of the Brasseys’ first child. It was rendered brick with an iron roof and a ten-foot-wide veranda, comprising three rooms plus a hall, bathroom and dressing room. Brassey later added two bow windows to the south of the new house, suggesting that it comprised a dining and drawing room; that the third room was a main bedroom is suggested by the presence of dressing and bath rooms.65 The old house was probably used for bedrooms, with two more being added at a later date in a skillion off the north end.66 The Brasseys departed, having been compensated, as leaseholders, for the Commonwealth resumption.

Acton House was then inhabited by Director of Commonwealth Surveys Charles Scrivener, who retired in 1915, and thereafter by surveyor Percy
Sheaffe. In 1929 it became the Canberra police station and court. The old kitchen had been removed in 1913, and Acton House itself was demolished in 1941 in preparation for the construction of Canberra Hospital. Its site was taken by the isolation ward, later the hospice, currently offices for the National Museum; old plantings still stand here.

ACTON OUTBUILDINGS: RYAN’S & ROTTENBERRY’S COTTAGES
PARISH OF CANBERRA, ACTON ESTATE

Acton was a grazing property of 2,107 acres (853 hectares), though, like much of Canberra at the time, its value was reduced by rabbit infestation. Maize, oats and wheat were grown on the river plain. Around Acton House clustered a group of farm outbuildings: sheds made of slab timber and corrugated iron for storing feed, farm equipment, and vehicles, as well as stables and a horse yard. A slab woolshed and sheep yards stood further north.

There were three more houses on Acton estate. A two-part slab cottage nestled below the main house on the river flats towards the ford at Lennox Crossing. It was said to date from the earliest period of white occupation, the
Ryan's was a characteristic two-building house, with kitchen slightly detached from the main house but of equal size and probably used for sleeping as well as cooking and eating.

1830s. At the time of Commonwealth acquisition, this cottage was occupied by Edmund (1876–1963) and Alice (1885–?) Ryan, but it was demolished after their four-year-old died there from a snakebite in 1919.70

The other two houses were on the ridge, north of Acton House, along the modern line of Liversidge Street. Both built of brick, they were fairly substantial three-room-plus-skillion cottages with detached kitchens and sundry sheds.71 One was uninhabited when Acton was resumed.

The house furthest north had been occupied for many years by George

The Acton outbuildings included several groups of cottages such as these, overlooking what is now the west basin of the lake. The cottage on the right, composed of a brick house and a separate slab kitchen, was occupied by lime-burner and mason George Rottenberry when he died in 1910.

The survey sketch of Rottenberry's house on Acton shows the self-sufficient nature of the Molonglo valley cottages, complete with vegetable gardens and orchards.
Rottenberry (1819–1910), patriarch of the Rottenberry clan of local masons and builders. He died at Acton, having operated a lime kiln in the river cliff there since the 1860s; his obituary claimed that he had built most of the small stone and brick cottages on Duntroon estate.\(^72\)

The Acton ridge became the site of the new Federal Capital Commission offices, services and houses, some of which still stand amid the buildings of the Australian National University.

**SPRINGBANK: HOME OF ANASTASIA & THE LATE WALTER SULLIVAN**

**PARISH OF CANBERRA**

Springbank, between the Molonglo and the eastern side of Black Mountain, was among the oldest land grants in the Canberra area. It had been selected in 1831 by John Macpherson, who had lived there since 1829. The 1841 census recorded eleven inhabitants in residence; two of them were assigned convict workers. Though they tripled the size of the property in 1836 by acquiring a large part of Black Mountain, the Macphersons moved to Port Philip (Melbourne) in 1842.\(^73\)

For the next ten years, Springbank was leased by Joseph Kaye, who abandoned it after a flood in 1852. The property was sold in 1857 to Dr William Hayley, a medical practitioner in Queanbeyan; it was sold by the widowed Mrs Hayley in 1881 to Andrew Cunningham of Lanyon, who bequeathed it to his daughter Sarah in 1887. Springbank was by now divided into four leases, occupied in the short term by various families. The four leases were gradually all taken up by William Sullivan, who purchased the whole from Miss Cunningham in 1889 for £5,000.\(^74\)

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*Reconstruction of Springbank in 1910, based on valuation descriptions, showing the old house composed of slab buildings, contrasting with the modern cottage.*
Sullivan (1829–1911) emigrated in 1860 and apparently took up farming at Springbank after a stint on the goldfields at Kiandra. He married Anastasia Pike (1847–1912) in 1865 and they had ten children. In the 1870s he also selected Sulwood at Kambah. Sullivan died in 1911 and his wife the next year; the Commonwealth resumed the land from his estate for £8,500. In 1924, Charles Kaye, son of Joseph, who had lived here in the 1840s, returned to Springbank under Commonwealth lease. His sons George, Joseph and Gordon
Kaye continued to farm the property and operated a big dairy business until the house was demolished for the construction of Lake Burley Griffin in 1961.77

Springbank House comprised an old three-part slab house, hut and kitchen, and a smart new weatherboard house built in 1908–9. The slab buildings were probably built sequentially; the three-room-plus-skillion house was the third, recorded as built in 1890.78 The large kitchen part of the house was described by the Commonwealth valuer in 1912 as 'rough and badly finished' and in bad condition; it may have dated from the 1860s. The new house was lined and ceiled with pine boards, a considerable degree of comfort more than the hessian-lined and ceiled old house and the unlined kitchen and the 'hut' between. By the time the new house was added to the complex, it totalled twelve rooms. The house complex was surrounded by a hawthorn hedge and a split post fence, enclosing an orchard of 120 mixed fruit trees. Close to the house was an old timber stable for three horses and a slab shed.

Springbank was a large property with extensive river flatland, ideal for its fifty dairy cows; Sullivan also ran sheep and grew wheat, maize, barley, oats and potatoes.79 Behind the house were a pisé dairy, two slab sheds and another slab house for farm hands, even bigger than the Springbank kitchen. Nearby was another old pisé hut, 'very much washed and scarred', doubtless by flood; its massive stone and brick chimney suggests it could once have been a dwelling.80 At the north end of the property were a corrugated iron woolshed, stockyards, horse yards and sundry sheds.
George Henry Rottenberry's house stood by the stream that is now a drain through Telopea Park.

The bare landscape that became Kingston and Narrabundah was home to George Henry and Eliza Rottenberry.

The third generation of Canberra Rottenberrys lived in this cottage, close to the modern-day south end of King's Avenue Bridge.
THE HOUSES OF THE MOLONGLO VALLEY
THE SOUTH-SIDE HOUSES

ELIZA & GEORGE HENRY ROTTENBERRY’S COTTAGE
PARISH OF NARRABUNDAH, DUNTRON ESTATE

George Henry Rottenberry was the eldest son of George Rottenberry, the Duntroon mason and lime-burner from 1849, and his wife Maryann. Born in 1853, George Henry had the rare distinction of having been baptised, confirmed, married and buried (in 1948) at St John’s – truly a local lad. He married Eliza Kaye in 1877 and they had five children, including a third-generation George. George Henry worked with his father as a lime-burner and quarryman, and conducted the usual local mixed farming on several leases between Kurrajong Hill (site of Parliament House) and the Molonglo River.

The second-generation George Rottenberry had worked and lived around the valley at different times. The house on Block 73, Parish of Narrabundah – today Telopea Park – was on the Duntroon estate and dated from about 1880. It was four rooms wide, built of slab with a weatherboard front shielded by a veranda, and with a skillion at the back the entire length of the house. It was roofed with iron, ceiled inside with hessian, the walls were nicely papered and it was properly floored with hardwood. The detached slab kitchen had a brick chimney and baker’s oven. Round about were the paraphernalia of a dairy, stock sheds and yards. A flower garden in front of the house was protected from rabbits with wire netting.

George Henry Rottenberry took on the job of night watchman at the new Canberra powerhouse, which was on the same block as his house. After the Commonwealth acquired Duntroon, he and his son leased several blocks and continued cropping for several years. The house was finally demolished in 1923.

KATE & GEORGE ROTTENBERRY’S COTTAGE
PARISH OF NARRABUNDAH, DUNTRON ESTATE

George Rottenberry (1879–1933) was the third generation of his family and name to live in the Canberra valley, grandson of the Duntroon mason George Rottenberry. He married Kate Sheedy (1876–1944); they had two children.
A very basic slab shed functioned as the kitchen next to George and Kate Rottenberry's bright new corrugated-iron cottage.

The Rottenberrys' cottage peeps over the brow of the hill leading down to the Molonglo. The panorama perspective distorts the hills: to the left, Black Mountain, to the right, Mugga.

Like many local residents, he was disaffected by the offer of a lease instead of freehold when the Commonwealth resumed Duntroon. The youngest Rottenberry family moved to Glen Innes in 1915. The house was sold to W. Southwell and moved from the site.

This was the newest house in the Molonglo valley, built in 1900 on block 92, at the foot of what was locally known as Rottenberry Hill, close to the southern end of King's Avenue Bridge. It was unique in being the only house (as opposed to many sheds) clad in corrugated galvanised iron, and was of the locally rare four-room square plan. Nonetheless, the detached kitchen, built at the same time, was walled with slabs, shown in the panorama photos to have been horizontal-style slab, fairly unusual in this district. The new forge, also of 1900, was a conventional shed enclosed with old fence rails and bark.

**Catherine & John Scott's Cottage**

**Parish of Narrabunda, Duntroon Estate**

John Scott (c. 1850–1927) came to Canberra in the 1860s and selected a portion of land but apparently sold it without ever taking up residence. Instead he leased part of Springbank, where Yewin's Directory lists him in 1899
as dairying and growing wheat and maize. He married Catherine Logue (d. 1932) in 1874 and they produced thirteen children.89

By the turn of the twentieth century they had moved to the cottage on the south bank of the Molonglo near the ford that came to be called Scott's Crossing in the twentieth century. The name is a confused retro-creation, for the ford was known as Church Crossing in the nineteenth century, and Scott's house was upstream of it, overlooking a much smaller ford.90

The cottage was described as 'very old' when the Commonwealth acquired it in 1912. It was a small, whitewashed slab place, probably of two rooms, plus a detached kitchen also of slab, with a bark roof.91

**CAMERON’S COTTAGE**

**PORTION 8, PARISH OF NARRABUNDAH, DUNTROON ESTATE**

Cameron’s cottage was another of the small Duntroon houses, made of slab with a brick floor and a tiny square detached kitchen.92 It stood on the river flat
Cameron's cottage, south side of the Molonglo.

between Scott's to the east and Corkhill's to the west and is marked on some maps as Avery's place.

The house seems to have had a history of short tenancies, which are hard to trace. William and Isabella Avery appear to have lived there in the early 1890s, perhaps when they first married. William (1862–1950) managed the Yarralumla dairy.93 Later in the 1890s it was probably occupied by Allan Cameron (1840–1917), a locally born man who remained single all his life.94

Catherine & Robert Corkhill’s Cottage
Parish of Narrabundah, Dunroon Estate

Corkhill's was a small four-room slab house with a corrugated-iron roof. Like all the slab houses of the district it was regularly lime-washed. The bright white limewash was a weather-proofing treatment as well as a 'civilising' detail that demarcated the simple wooden dwelling from sheds and animal houses. There was a two-room detached slab kitchen at right angles to the house, also lime-washed but with a roof of sheet bark.95 Both buildings had brick chimneys. An open-sided slab cart shed with bark roof stood at right angles to the kitchen,
Corkhill’s was sited at the edge of the modern lake near the National Library. This photo shows the cottage between the Molonglo and the foreshortened slope of Capital Hill, with Red Hill rearing behind.

enclosing an informal back courtyard behind the house.

In 1913 it had been inhabited for ten years by Robert Corkhill (1863–1954), his wife Catherine (1867–1952), and their ten children. Corkhill was listed as a grazier, dairyman and grower of wheat, maize and oats in the 1900 Directory, but the property had an older history via the female line. Catherine, whose birth killed her mother, had been brought up there by her grandmother, Margaret Logue, who with her first husband Bryan had managed the Duntroon dairy since about 1845. Margaret moved to the cottage, still on Duntroon estate, when she was widowed in 1860; she married again, to widower John Crinigan, and it seems that the old couple welcomed Robert Corkhill to the property when he and Catherine married in 1893. The Corkhill family left the cottage after the Commonwealth resumed Duntroon in 1913 and took over the lease of the Yarralumla dairy.

The Corkhills’ story represents the lifestyle of three generations of tenant farmers along the banks of the Molonglo. One room of the house was probably reserved for clean work and polite recreation as the parlour. The other big room would have been the main bedroom, where babies slept with their parents, while the elder Crinigans probably occupied one of the smaller back rooms. The older Corkhill children must have been distributed between the other back room and one of the kitchen rooms. The kitchen was certainly the focus of the household, warm in winter and hot in summer, where meals were eaten and much of the women’s days spent in sewing and cooking.
KLENSENDORLFFE'S HOUSE
PARISH OF NARRABUNDAH, DUNTRON ESTATE

William Klensendorlffe, a German who had fought on the British side in the Napoleonic wars, emigrated to New South Wales in 1818. He married Elizabeth Guise and rapidly built up property in Minto, Tahmoor and Gundaroo. In 1829 Klensendorlffe purchased 2,560 acres (1,036 hectares) on the Limestone Plains from its original grantee, but it took a ten-year legal case to settle the deal. In 1839 he built a large stone house on the south bank of the Molonglo, about the present site of the Albert Hall; it was named as Elizabeth Cottage in the 1841 census. The census recorded fourteen residents, of whom three were female and five were convict. However, Klensendorlffe's business interests crashed in the 1840s depression; he was declared insolvent in 1847 and left the Canberra district. 98

The sequestrated property was purchased that year by Peter Plomer of Sydney. He leased it to Terence Murray of Yarraluma, who sub-leased it to Stewart and Mary Mowle. Absentee landlord Plomer sold what long continued to be known as Klensendorlffe's land to George Campbell in 1860, who added it to Duntroon. 99 The Mowles departed Canberra in 1852 and the house and the eastern half of the farm were quickly taken up by Joseph (1809–1895) and Eliza (?–1891) Kaye, after their family had been washed off Springbank by the great flood of 1852. The Kayes lived at Klensendorlffe's, farming wheat, maize and oats for nearly forty years; the last four of their eleven children were born there. The Kayes retired to Queanbeyan in 1889 and their son Charles took over the farm.

This reconstruction of Klensendorlffe's about 1850, based on valuation descriptions and kaye family sources, shows that the house was large and homely in its times.
Klensendorlffe's was occupied by the Kaye family for nearly fifty years, but fell into ruin in the 1890s.

The house that Klensendorlffe built was very substantial, and it can be reconstructed from occasional references, historic photographs and comparative examples. The Kaye family remembers the house as having a veranda, ten rooms and store rooms below. This shows that it comprised ground and attic floors, possibly with dormer windows in the attic, and that the basement was subdivided into cellars. At the back was a large detached kitchen, probably of slab timber.

The tradition that convicts were caged in the cellar is mythical, for cellars were storage areas for crops and other valuable commodities; it is more likely that convict workers were housed in slab outbuildings among the sheds and barns that equipped a working farm. As shown in photos of the ruined house, it was lit by prefabricated cast-iron casement windows and the stone walls were rendered. It was originally flanked on both long sides by timber verandas.

Elizabeth Cottage cannot have been well built, for by 1913, when the Commonwealth valuer assessed the house, it was described as 'ruins of house used as a dairy'; he noted its stone walls and stately dimensions of sixty-six feet by twenty-two (twenty by 6.7 metres), but valued it at just £20. The stone chimneys had been cannibalised for Charles Kaye's 1893 house nearby, and the big house was finally demolished in 1923.
Samuel Charles Kaye (1861–1933), second-youngest child of a family that had been in the Canberra district since the 1830s, married Letitia Sandford (1868–1948) in 1895. They moved into a new house, a little south-west of the now-ruinous Klensendorfle’s house in which Charles had been born. The elder
Kayes had retired to Queanbeyan and the younger pair took over the lease, growing wheat and potatoes, and using the basement of Klensendorlffe's as a dairy. They brought up ten children here, departing in 1924 at Commonwealth behest, when they moved to Springbank.

Kaye's cottage was built of slab timber, a three room house with two short skillion rooms at the back and a veranda at the front, plus a detached slab kitchen of one square room. Both house and kitchen had masonry chimneys at the south end, the stones taken from the old Klensendorlffe house chimneys.105

Kaye's house was repaired to serve as the clubhouse of the Canberra Golf Club in 1926, enlarged with an additional cottage in 1929.106 Though plans were prepared for a new clubhouse in 1930, it was not built until 1948 and the original Kaye's house survived until it burned down in 1965, a couple of years after the club moved to Yarralumla.107

**BRIAR FARM: HOME OF ELIZABETH & TOM KINLEYSIDE PARISH OF NARRABUNDAH, DUNTRoON ESTATE**

Briar Farm was a Duntroon lease of seventy-three acres (thirty hectares) on the south side of the Molonglo. The house was a brick square of four rooms, with a one-room skillion kitchen built of corrugated iron. Two two-room cottages, one of pisé, the other of slab and iron, stood near the house, and a third new iron cottage of four rooms was built about 1912 at the southern side of the lease. The farm possessed a fully fitted blacksmith's shop as well as the usual sheds for cows, chooks and machinery. It had a good well and an old orchard.108

Briar Farm was jointly leased from the Campbells about 1865 by Thomas Bryant and James Cook, brickmakers and builders in Queanbeyan.109 At the same time, Bryant became the second husband of Alison Willis, née Kinleyside (?–1913), who, after her first husband's death, came to the Canberra district with her daughter Elizabeth (1852–?) and her extended Kinleyside family. Bryant died eleven years later and Alison married his partner James Cook (?–1898) the next year. In 1882 Elizabeth Willis married her cousin Tom Kinleyside (1857–1915), a wheelwright and blacksmith who wrote doggerel poetry under the name 'The Jingler'. At Briar Farm the young Kinleysides brought up five children and cultivated the typical crops that flourished on the river banks: wheat, maize, oats and barley. They all lived under the wing of Grandmother Kinleyside-Willis-Bryant-Cook, who died just before the Commonwealth resumed the property, having lived at Briar Farm for nearly fifty years. The Kinleysides were dissatisfied with the Commonwealth lease conditions and departed to live at Oaks Estate.110
A romantic view of Briar Farm in the 1930s, from West Ridge looking towards Mt Ainslie.

Reconstruction of the Kinleysides' Briar Farm in 1910, based on valuation descriptions.

The buildings of Briar Farm can be seen on West Ridge, across the willow-lined Molonglo.
Thereafter, the farmlands were taken over by Charles Kaye and the house was inhabited by a frequent turnover of tenants, for, even though it was described as in bad condition in 1913, housing in Canberra was scarce. Its last residents were Charles and Frances Day, who lived there from 1927 until it was demolished about 1950.

YARRALUMLA DAIRY: HOME OF ISABELLA & WILLIAM AVERY
PARISH OF YARRALUMLA, YARRALUMLA ESTATE

A new two-storey brick house was built at the Yarralumla dairy in 1889. The site was towards the eastern edge of the property, close to the Molonglo, on what is now known as Yarralumla, opposite Black Mountain peninsula. The dairy complex also comprised another smaller cottage, a slab hut, the dairy itself (a double-walled timber building), a byre for ten cows, and a roofed pit for silage.

The dairy had been operated by John and Margaret McPherson; one of their daughters, Isabella (1864–1938), married William Avery (1862–1950), in 1893. The couple lived there until Yarralumla was resumed by the Commonwealth in 1912. Catherine and Robert Corkhill took over the dairy as Commonwealth tenants in 1913, naming the house Riverview.

The house was unlike any other in the Canberra district, with Gothic proportions, asymmetric plan and steeply pitched iron roof, but was otherwise very plain. It had three rooms up and three rooms down, with plastered finish.

"YARRALUMLA"

Dairy Buildings

The dairy house was a commodious dwelling for farm servants, with an indoor kitchen, parlour and bedroom on the ground floor, and three more bedrooms on the upper floor.
The Corkhills moved to the Yarramlluma Dairy house, which they named Riverview, when the Commonwealth acquired the Duntroon estate cottage they had occupied for ten years.

Demolition of Riverview, about 1962.

inside; the face brick exterior was later rendered, perhaps when the Corkhills moved in. The house was demolished about 1962, to make way for the development of Lake Burley Griffin.16
YARRALUMLA HOUSE: HOME OF CHRISTINE & FREDERICK CAMPBELL
PARISH OF YARRALUMLA, YARRALUMLA ESTATE

Yarralumla, at the western edge of the district that became Canberra, was one of the two great properties of the Molonglo valley, the other being Duntroon. The land was first granted in 1828, and a series of absentee landlords on-sold it until 1837, when a partnership including Terence Murray acquired the property and Murray took up residence, improving the house and estate. A bitter family feud resulted in his deceased wife’s family, the Gibbeses, taking control of Yarralumla from 1859 and formally buying the property in 1864. Augustus Gibbes lived there until 1881, when he sold it to Frederick Campbell.117

Frederick Campbell (1846–1928) was born at Duntroon, a grandson of the original Robert Campbell. In 1877 he became manager of Duntroon in the absence overseas of his uncle George, and the same year, he married Frances Wright of Lanyon. Their first child died of fever and so did Frances, in 1881. Frederick borrowed money to buy Yarralumla, and he and his surviving baby daughter Jean moved into Yarralumla. He married again, in 1889, to Christine McPhee (1861–1933); they had four more children.118
Campbell built up the Yarralumla estate to a model pastoral operation of 39,000 acres (15,780 hectares). The extensive river frontage became marshy in wet seasons, and Campbell had miles of drains ploughed to improve the land for grazing. At the turn of the century, almost the whole property was enclosed with rabbit-proof fences to protect it from the local plague, which from 1900 to 1910 had reduced the carrying capacity from 40,000 to 25,000 sheep. Staff based on outstations managed the paddocks to the north, south and west, living in slab cottages, with sheds, yards and dams to service stock. A big new shearing shed with twenty stands, plus associated accommodation and machinery sheds, were built in 1904.119

The same industry and investment were applied to the homestead. The old house built by Murray about 1840 was gradually demolished and enlarged. A three storey Victorian wing with prominent bay windows was constructed of brick in 1891, when it seemed that Campbell’s widowed sister Sophia might return from England with her five children. They didn’t arrive, but the house kept growing. The old south wing was replaced by a modern Federation style addition in 1899, with library, billiard room, several bedrooms and a glass conservatory at the end of the veranda. The entire house was lit by sixty gas lamps, burning acetylene manufactured on site, and had a water-flush sewerage system – sophisticated comforts rarely found in the bush. In 1900, a telephone system was installed to connect the homestead with the outstations at Ginninderra, Cuppacumbalong, Belconnen and Beulah.120
The oldest stone portions of the building housed the servants’ wing of thirteen rooms, including the kitchen and stores, opening onto a back courtyard. Here there was no plumbed-in bathroom or water closet; the servants used dunnies in the yard. Six tanks on raised stands supplied the house with water. Another serviced the flower and vegetable gardens, orchard and shrubbery, enclosed by a box thorn hedge and post and rail fences.

The Commonwealth resumed Yarralumla in 1913 as an official residence for visiting members of parliament and then for the Governor General. The Campbell family moved to Goulburn, later to Tumut. The house was remodelled in 1925–27, including the rendering of the brick walls to today’s familiar cream colour.

**YARRALUMLA OUTBUILDINGS**

Around the homestead a complex of service buildings, offices, cottages and sheds had developed from the 1850s on. The grandest was the fine brick stable built in 1901, complete with a clock tower. It contained horse stalls; a vehicle house; various store rooms, including one for bicycles; and quarters for grooms; it also housed the laundry for the homestead. Other outbuildings included wagon sheds, engine house, store building with accommodation, large hay sheds, granary and blacksmith’s shop.
The overseer's cottage on Yarralumla was occupied for twenty years by the Vest family, seen here c. 1900.

There were several cottages for station hands. The most substantial was a brick house occupied by Richard Vest, overseer of Yarralumla since Campbell acquired the property, and his wife Christine. Common slab cottages were inhabited by the gardener, the farmer, the bullock driver, the watchman and another was available for travellers. A group of three more slab huts housed single men and nearby stood the rough bush stable for the estate's working horses.\(^\text{122}\)

After the Commonwealth took over, the Vests moved to Queanbeyan.
EPILOGUE

THE HERITAGE OF THE MOLONGLO VALLEY

Modern Canberra is a miracle of urban planning. The phases of its development since the first surveyors mapped and photographed the proposed federal capital site in 1910 have so altered the original landscape that it is a challenge to see many vestiges of the old scene.

The most dramatic change is the afforestation of the Molonglo valley (and the other valleys now inhabited by Canberra) with trees both native and introduced. This beautiful transformation disguises the fact that the district had been grazed and farmed for eighty years before the new city was planted. The construction of Lake Burley Griffin in 1961–62 further altered perception of the once common Australian rural landscape: bare paddocks flanking a shallow, winding river, edged with introduced willow trees. The Molonglo occasionally flooded naturally (Canberra’s first Anglican minister was drowned in a flood in 1851), and photos of the 1926 deluge show how easily a lake could be formed on the flood plain.

What remains of the twenty-odd houses between Duntroon and Yarralumla? Typical of preservation tendencies, those two—the biggest, grandest specimens—survive with ongoing use as the mansions they were. Notwithstanding mansion status, both have been enlarged to meet the modern standard of a great house. Several of their outbuildings also remain: the picturesque Gothic cottages at Duntroon, Vests’ cottage at Yarralumla, woolsheds at both. All but the Yarralumla woolshed are built of stone, which defines a further parameter in the survival of old houses.

Modern tastes appreciate old stone buildings: two stone cottages are still extant. St John’s Schoolhouse was redundant as either a school or a house when it was revived by the Scouts; now conserved as a museum, it presents its story of the civilising influences of religion and education in the Molonglo valley. Blundells’ stone cottage was inhabited until it was scheduled for demolition, along with Riverview (Aversy’s) and Springbank, in the 1961–62 landscaping of Lake Burley Griffin. Its survival as a picturesque relic of old times may have been less certain had it been a more common slab timber cottage. The veranda, shutters (now gone) and picket fence that make it so cute were installed at this time, suggesting a past of venerable pioneers.
All the other dwellings of the Molonglo valley have been lost to development, from the 1920s to the 1970s – but similar cottages still stand on the margins of modern Canberra. Several are in private hands and two important examples are conserved by the ACT Government at Lanyon and Mugga Mugga.

The latter was a Duntroon estate cottage and, in the era of treeless paddocks, was visible by telescope from Duntroon House. Mugga is a two-room stone cottage with a brick skillion at the back and a slab skillion to the side, and a detached slab kitchen behind. In the vernacular tradition of updating with skillion additions, the last residents, the Curley sisters, built on a fibro cottage in the 1930s. Before the Curleys, the cottage was inhabited by a succession of Duntroon tenant families; Elizabeth Mayo moved from Mugga to the Duntroon dairy cottage when she was widowed in 1895. Still surrounded by a paddock-width of native grassland, Mugga is a reminder of living in the pre-federal capital landscape.

Lanyon demonstrates the complex of an estate big house surrounded by outbuildings including stone and slab cottages, barns, stables and sheds. The survival of these humble buildings makes the estate even more significant, for they are the kind of functional structures that tend to disappear with disuse. Lanyon House is similar to Acton House in being an accretion of stages, with a wing of modern comforts in 1913 as the latest addition. The slab and stone workers’ cottages are minimal two-room structures with large cooking hearths, indicating that though they may have been enlarged with skillions at various times, they did not have external kitchens. The contrast shows that the living standards of the gentry and the workers were very different.

Such are the historical meanings that the relics of pre-Canberra convey about everyday life at the turn of the twentieth century. It is equally important to recall the wider context of the environment, that Canberra was planted in Australian paddocks and, although its modern character is urban, it has a bush soul.
NOTES

INTRODUCTION


3. Gillespie, p. 34.


5. Knowles, pp. 34, 42.


HOUSES OF THE MOLONGLO VALLEY: THE NORTH-SIDE HOUSES

DUNTROON HOUSE


DUNTROON OUTBUILDINGS


OLD DUNTROON DAIRY


22. Austen was a brickmaker by trade, working as a shepherd on Duntroon and perhaps thus coming into possession of the dairy cottage: Cross, *Queanbeyan Age*, 31.8.1977.


Register of the ACT 1820–1911, Canberra, 1993, p. 109. See also a note in Small Pictures File, National Library under Canberra-Dwellings-Duntroon, in response to an undated ad in the Canberra Times calling for information on the history of Duntroon Dairy; it elicited a letter (11.10.1973) from Mrs Ranken nee Edlington.


29. Lyall Gillespie, card index.

30. Though the extension was built by a visiting mason, according to Jack Blundell, CDHS Newsletter, no.48, April 1964.


33. Knowles, pp. 43–51.


43. Hilda McIntosh obituary, Canberra Times, 10.4.1958.


51. Hewitt, ch. 10.


53. A.H. Body, Firm Still You Stand: The
Anglican Church of St John the Baptist Canberra, Canberra, 1986, pp. 121-3.


55. Canberra Times, 30.3.1954.

MURRAY'S HOUSE


60. Duntroon valuation, NAA: A358, f.21; Acquisition of Canberra Church and Glebe Land, Parish of Canberra, Valuation of FCT Holdings, NAA: A358, f.38, 38a.

CANBERRY, LATER ACTON HOUSE


64. The photo in Gillespie 1991, p. 49, is incorrectly identified as Acton; it is in fact the rectory at Queanbeyan (personal communication by L. Gillespie, 2001).


ACTON OUTBUILDINGS


SPRINGBANK


74. Gillespie, p. 18.

75. William Sullivan: biographical notes, CDHS files.


80. Incorrectly titled 'Kaye's dairy' in Small Pictures File, NLA.
HOUSES OF THE MOLONGLO VALLEY: THE SOUTH-SIDE HOUSES

ELIZA & GEORGE HENRY ROTTENBERRY'S HOUSE


KATE & GEORGE ROTTENBERRY'S HOUSE


CATHERINE & JOHN SCOTT'S COTTAGE

85. Ayre, p. 2.

CATHERINE & ROBERT CORKHILL'S COTTAGE

89. Lyall Gillespie, card file.
93. Lyell Gillespie, card index.
94. Lyell Gillespie, card index.

LETITIA & CHARLES KAYE'S COTTAGE


KLENSENDORLFFE'S HOUSE

102. The source of the myth is a picture caption in an article, 'Land-of-the Used-to-be', about the Canberra region in *The Lone Hand*, 1.12.1909, p. 218.

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BRIAR FARM


YARRALUMLA DAIRY

112. Doug Vest, ‘Notes on Yarralumla 1881–1913’, pp. 6–8: Yarralumla file, CDHS.

113. Yarralumla valuation, p. 6: NAA: A357 1913/2448


YARRALUMLA HOUSE


118. Clark, pp. 29–32.


120. Yarralumla valuation: NAA: A357, f. 6/9; Peter Freeman in Clark, pp. 94–98.


PICTURE SOURCES

ABBREVIATIONS

NAA: National Archives of Australia
NLA: National Library of Australia
CDHS: Canberra & District Historical Society
ACTPLA: ACT Planning & Land Management Authority

p.8 Robert Hoddle, View from Limestone Hill called Campbell’s Hill, NSW, 1832: NLA: pic vn3289506.
Illustrated Australian News, 10.6.1882.
p. 14 NLA: pic an2368334.
NLA: pic vn3887402-m.
p. 17 NLA: pic vn3887390-m.
NLA: pic vn3887409-m.
p. 18 NLA: pic vn3887452-m.
p. 19 Harvie family photo, c. 1926.
Courtesy of the Harvie family/Robert Harvie.
p. 20 Arthur Percival, Survey Field Book no. 43A: ACTPLA.
p. 21 Sam Goddard, View of Canberra, c. 1920; NLA: PIC R7061.
p. 21 Arthur Percival, Survey Field Book no. 49A: ACTPLA.
p.23 Morton I-lerman, Conservation plan, 1961: CDHS.
p. 25 Detail and super-detail of panorama photo in Album 300, 1910:
NLA: PIC 8470/8
Canberra Post Office: NLA: pic vn 3259257-v.
p. 26 Joseph Wolinski, Ainslie Post Office, 1912: NLA: PIC R244:
Survey Field Book no. 43A: ACTPLA.
p.29 Glebe House: CDHS.
NLA: pic vn3887460-m.
p. 31 Detail and super-detail of panorama photo in Album 300, 1910:
NLA: PIC 8470/8.
p. 32 Joyce Bowden, Acton House: NLA: PIC 6164.
p. 33 Acton Courthouse, 1929: NAA: A3560, 5934.
R.J. Rain, Survey Field Book no. 143A, 1910: ACTPLA.
p. 34 Detail of panorama photo in Album 300, 1910: NLA: PIC 8470/4.
R.J. Rain, Survey Field Book no. 143A, 1910: ACTPLA.
p. 36 R.J. Rain, Survey Field Book no. 143A, 1910: ACTPLA.
p. 38 Details of panorama photo in Album 300, 1910: NLA: PIC 8470/12.
Charles Coulter, Detail of cycloramic view of Canberra capital site, 1911:
NLA: PIC S4106.
Charles Coulter, Detail of cycloramic view of Canberra capital site, view from Camp Hill 1911: NLA: pic an77464183-v.

p. 43. Detail of panorama photo in Album 300, 1910: NLA: PIC 8470/8


p. 47 Kaye family photo, c. 1913.
Courtesy of the Kaye family/Gordon Shannon.

p. 48 H.M. Rolland, View of Canberra looking north-west from KIensendorfife’s farm, 1913. NLA: PIC 5739.

p. 50 A.R. Peters, Old shepherd’s hut, Canberra, c. 1930: B. and M. Knowles.
Detail of panorama photo in Album 300, 1910: NLA: pic 8470-4 frame 2-rn.


p. 52 Photo, c. 1920: CDHS.
Transparency, Richard Clough, Demolishing old farmhouse, Yarralumla Bay: NLA: pic an14324452-313.

p. 53 NAA: A3560, 5683.

p. 54 NAA: A3560, 3157.

p. 55 NAA: A3560, 3157.

p. 56 Photo c. 1900: NLA MS2043 Record no. 1259352, Box 5, Vest Family Papers.

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**SPRINGSANK ESTATE**

Sullivan valuation: NAA: A358
Acton Estate
Acton valuation: NAA: A657; DS1912/2408

**HOUSES ON YARRALUMLA ESTATE**

Yarralumla valuation, p.6: NAA: A357 1913/2448
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PANORAMA VIEW OF THE FEDERAL CAPITAL SITE, FROM CAMP HILL
(Reproduced by courtesy of Canberra)
[L (APPROXIMATELY THE SITE OF OLD PARLIAMENT HOUSE), 1910.
(SERRA & DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY)