

Appendix A—CHL entry for Blundells Cottage

Blundell's Farmhouse, Slab Outbuilding and Surrounds, Wendouree Dr, Parkes, ACT, Australia

Photographs	
List	Commonwealth Heritage List
Class	Historic
Legal Status	Listed place (15/07/2005)
Place ID	105734
Place File No	8/01/000/0043

Summary Statement of Significance

Blundell's Farmhouse, Slab Outbuilding and Surrounds demonstrate the intricate and well-developed fabric of the pre-Federal Capital Limestone Plains. Along with Duntroon House and Gardens, Duntroon Dairy, Duntroon Woolshed, St Johns Church Precinct, Mugga Mugga Homestead, and Majura Homestead, the cottage and its precinct is a significant component of the large pre-Canberra pastoral property now extant as an array of features scattered throughout central Canberra.

The cottage is significant as an agricultural workers dwelling, which provides evidence of a distinctive way of life of early settlers in the Limestone Plains district. It has clear associations with the Campbells and the pioneer Plains families, including the Ginns, Blundells and Oldfields.

Blundell's Farmhouse, Slab Outbuilding and Surrounds show evidence of the major historical phase of the Limestone Plains development from the mid nineteenth century to the present. The cottage precinct has survived from the early settlement of the district through the establishment and growth of the Federal Capital and now occupies a key position in the Parliamentary Triangle.

Blundell's Farmhouse, Slab Outbuilding and Surrounds also provides a significant educational resource for the study of social history, landscape history and building and construction material history. The cottage precinct is known regionally and nationally for its educational value, particularly

in explaining nineteenth century lifestyle and functions in the family dwelling of a tenant farmer.

The aesthetic significance of the cottage precinct lies in the irregular and vernacular charm of its buildings and landscape.

Official Values

Criterion A Processes

The cottage, with internal layout and features, represents the way of life of a 19th century tenant farmer on the Duntroon estate. The residence was built for a station hand as part of the vast Duntroon estate, and was constructed during the extensive building program that was instigated by George and Marianne Campbell in the 1860s in a period of prosperity.

Along with Duntroon House and gardens, Duntroon Dairy, Duntroon Woolshed, St Johns Church Precinct, Mugga Mugga Homestead, and Majura Homestead, the cottage precinct is a significant component of the large pre-Canberra pastoral property now extant as an array of features scattered throughout central Canberra.

The attributes are the entire cottage precinct, comprised of the six room farmhouse and slab outbuilding in their landscaped setting.

Criterion B Rarity

The c1860 Blundell's Farmhouse, Slab Outbuilding and Surrounds remain today as a rare survivor of pastoral activities on the Limestone Plains.

The cottage precinct demonstrates, along with other remnant nineteenth century sites in the district, the pastoral and agricultural settlement of the Limestone Plains area. The rubble stone farm building is notable as an example of this group, surviving in situ, surrounded by the well-developed Parliamentary Triangle.

The attributes are the same as criterion (a).

Criterion D Characteristic values

Blundell's Farmhouse, Slab Outbuilding and Surrounds, together with other remnant pastoral and agricultural sites within the ACT demonstrate as a group the well developed structure of European settlement of the Limestone Plains prior to the establishment of the Federal Capital. The precinct provides evidence of a distinctive way of life of early settlers in the district who, with their families, worked as tenant farmers on the Duntroon Estate owned by the Campbells.

The attributes are the same as criterion (a).

Criterion E Aesthetic characteristics

The cottage precinct is valued for the aesthetic qualities characterised by the irregular and vernacular charm of the buildings in their parkland setting near the edge of Lake Walter Burley Griffin. The modest nineteenth century cottage site and the surrounding landscape contrast with their developed Parliamentary zone backdrop.

The attributes are the same as criterion (a).

Criterion H Significant people

Blundells Cottage precinct shows evidence of the major historical phase in Canberra's development from the mid nineteenth century to the present. It has clear associations with the Campbells. Robert Campbell being the first white settler to establish a large station on the Limestone Plains. It also has strong associations with the pioneer families who helped to establish the rural settlement of the Limestone Plains, including the Ginns, Blundells and Oldfields.

The attributes are the same as criterion (a).

Description

Cottage

The cottage has undergone three main phases of development, which include the original construction c1860, additions c1890 and modifications to the building in the 1960s. The original 1860s four-room cottage was constructed with a timber shingle gable roof and walls of roughly shaped random rubble stone brought to courses. The bluestone was quarried locally from Black Mountain and Mount Ainslie (Knowles, 1990). The stone was bedded in soft mud mortar with a lime face mortar, with exterior pointing was used to give the appearance of ashlar.

A two-room extension was added to the cottage about 1890. These additions were built of stone and form a wing aligned with the western wall of the cottage. The roof on the extension is corrugated iron on a milled timber frame. The gabled shingle roof remains in situ beneath a galvanized corrugated iron roof, which covered the entire cottage when the extension was built. The shingle roof has been made visible for interpretive purposes from inside the cottage. The walls are locally quarried bluestone, bedded in cement mortar, with raised ribbon pointing. Some patches of limewash are still visible on the external walls.

In addition to the two-room extension, the fireplace was removed from the corner of the parlour and another built in a more central position on the same wall. A bread oven was added externally, and was vented through the original corner fireplace flue. An additional fireplace was built on the western wall. The bread oven and fireplaces are built of sandstone bricks, with a rubble stone to the base of the bread oven. The three chimneys have been extended and weatherproofed with brick (Freeman, Collett & Partners, 1994).

It is likely the verandah was added at the time of the c1890 extensions with some later modifications in the early 1960s (Freeman, Collett & Partners, 1994). The veranda is constructed with timber posts, beams and rails, with a corrugated iron roof and cement mortared flagstone floor.

The porch is constructed on lapped weatherboards, which replaced the original fibro sheet porch construction that was removed during the 1960s modifications.

The interior walls are lime based render over internal stone masonry walls. The walls are finished in white limewash. The interior floors are finished with tongue and groove floorboards, brick, concrete and vinyl. The ceilings are finished with painted tongue and groove boards and plastered hessian. The ceiling finishes, tongue and groove floorboards and concrete floor were added during the 1960s modifications to the cottage.

The cottage opened as a museum in 1964, and has five rooms open to the public and interpreted as master bedroom, parlour, second bedroom, display room and kitchen, all with period furniture, with the site office occupying the southernmost room.

Slab Outbuilding

The slab outbuilding is located to the east of the cottage, running parallel to the 1890s extensions. The two-room vertical slab construction has a gabled corrugated galvanized iron roof. The corner posts are pole timbers, while the tip and bottom plates are sawn timber, Galvanized weather strips were added in an attempt to seal the gaps in the 1960s (Freeman, Collett & Partners, 1994).

Considerable reconstruction of the building occurred during modifications to the site in the 1960s when a fireplace was removed and number of slabs from Murrumbateman, New South Wales were brought to the site to fill the opening (Freeman, Collett & Partners, 1994). The shed is divided into two rooms, the first displaying farm tools and the second used as a storeroom. One room of the shed the displays farm tools and the second is used as a storeroom.

Surrounds

The surrounds of the farmstead have been heavily altered over the last thirty years and today are manicured and park like with mature exotic plantings. Trees located in and around the cottage include plum, olive, loquat, black walnut, almond, native pepper, black and white mulberry, black locust and cypress. The cypress trees are thought to have been planted by Alice Oldfield, while the rest of the trees were planted some 30 years ago by the CDHS.

A picket fence was added during the 1960s, and extends from the northeast corner of the cottage to the east, along the eastern side of the slab outbuilding, finishing at the southeast corner of the cottage. The garden is located at the front of the cottage, and extends into the paved courtyard area between the cottage and the slab outbuilding and to the rear of the cottage.

There is an apple orchard planted in the 1960s to the east of the slab outbuilding, and a corrugated iron water tank is located near the rear porch.

History

Blundell's Farmhouse was originally constructed in 1859, as a cottage for the head ploughman on the Duntroon Estate, William Ginn and his family. The estate was owned by the Campbell family, and formed the first land grant in the Limestone Plains in 1825. The 5,000 acre property was run in accordance to Scottish farming practices, which allowed for tenant farmers to have a house and a

small portion of land within the property, under the understanding that their labour would be available to the landlord.

In 1860, the estate passed from Robert Campbell to his son George who, with wife Marianne, commenced a building program that transformed the farmstead into an estate. Part of the building program was the construction of Blundell's Farmhouse. The original Cottage construction was a simple four-roomed dwelling, consisting of two bedrooms, a parlour and a kitchen.

William and Mary Ginn immigrated from Hertfordshire, England, and arrived in Sydney in 1857 with two boys. The family lived in a slab hut near Woolshed Creek for two years before moving into the new cottage in 1859. The Ginns had two more children, daughters Agnes and Gertrude while working for the Campbells on the Duntroon Estate. Nine years after moving into the four-room stone cottage, the Ginn family moved to their own property, Canberra Park, a few miles north of Duntroon.

Newlyweds, George and Flora Blundell, were the next residents of the house, moving into the cottage in 1874. George worked for the Campbells as a bullock driver and Flora became the district midwife. Flora reared eight children, whose births are recorded in the Family Bible now kept in the cottage. When the eighth child was born in 1888, two stone rooms were added in line with the bedroom on the western side. The entire roof of the cottage was covered with corrugated iron. At the same time a stone bread oven was added to the eastern exterior wall and the corner fireplace in the front parlour was replaced with a brick centered one. The bread oven was vented through the flue from the original internal corner fireplace and a new fireplace was built in the parlour (National Trust, 2004). It is likely that the front veranda and rear porch were added when the extension was built (Freeman, Collett & Partners, 1994).

The two-room slab outbuilding was built primarily as an external kitchen, with a fireplace at the northern end. The second room was used as sleeping quarters for three of the Blundell boys. The mixture of hewn and sawn timber has created some doubt to the outbuilding being original to the site. There is some speculation that the building was created using parts from other structures and brought to the site during the modifications to the site, but a photograph from 1910 indicated the outbuilding has been in this location from at least this time.

Duntroon was resumed by the Commonwealth of Australia in 1913, after Canberra was chosen as the site for the Federal Capital of Australia.

Flora Blundell died in 1917, but George lived in the house until the 1930s, sharing it with a succession of temporary residents. George died in the Canberra Community Hospital in 1933 at the age of 87.

After a short tenancy by Mr and Mrs Walton, the next couple to live in the house was Henry (Harry) and Alice Oldfield. Harry died in 1942, but Alice lived on in the cottage sixteen more years until she died in 1958. She reportedly had a cockatoo that exclaimed 'Shut the bloody gate!' when visitors arrived.

Members of the Canberra and District Historical Society (CDHS) were at the forefront of efforts to save and restore Blundells Cottage. In 1964 the Society became custodians when the building was handed over by J D Anthony, Minister for the Interior.

Since 1964 the Canberra and District Historical Society have operated it as a museum. The house museum exhibition has evolved as an interpretation of cottage life around the 1880s to 1900s and has a 'hands on' museum policy allowing visitors to touch artefacts.

The CHDS managed the cottage on a voluntary basis, with a Commonwealth subsidy to employ casual staff.

During the early 1960s the cottage was modified in an attempt at restoration. These modifications included the laying of stone and cement paths around the cottage, laying a brick paved area in the back courtyard, construction of the white picket fence around the site, and the floral and exotic planting of trees and shrubs around the site. During the reconstruction, fibro sheeting was removed from the veranda and porch, and the limewash was scrubbed off the exterior walls. The cottage ceilings were lined with plastered hessian, outlying sheds were removed, and the rainwater tank was relocated. The ceilings in the front two rooms were lined with pine tongue and groove boards from the Gribble property Murrumbateman, New South Wales in 1971.

Some further work was undertaken to reconstruct the slab outbuilding in 1967. A slab lean-to attached to the southern end of the east wall was removed, and a WC was constructed in its place. The fireplace and chimney were removed from the north wall and slabs salvaged from the lean-to and from another slab outbuilding at McIntosh's farm in Murrumbateman were used to reconstruct this wall. Galvanized strips were attached to the exterior to provide weatherproofing.

In 1994 Freeman, Collett and Partners Pty Ltd completed a conservation plan for the cottage. Between 1997 and 1998 the stabilisation works were conducted on the slab shed and a composting toilet was installed behind the shed.

Due to financial concerns the CDHS transferred management of the cottage back to the Commonwealth, National Capital Authority, in October 1999.

Condition and Integrity

During the period 1961-83 the cottage underwent restoration and modification. Generally the cottage is in good condition. To date the integrity of the building is basically intact (Freeman, Collett & Partners, 1994).

The cottage is managed by the National Capital Authority as a house museum. Daily maintenance and cleaning by staff members has kept the cottage in sound condition (Register of the National Estate, 2001).

Location

Wendouree Drive, Kings Park, Parkes.

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