

# COPPINS HOMESTEAD RUINS

The few scattered historic remnants at this site are physical evidence of the courage of John and Catherine Coppin. They progressed from shepherd and farm labourer on Ginninderra Station to become self-supported, small rural landowners growing crops and grazing sheep initially in the parish of Yarrolumla and then at Burbong. Their homestead once stood here and their lives were typical of the pioneers of the district.

Between 1859 and 1891, John and Catherine Coppin lived and raised their seven children in Ginninderra and the parish of Yarrolumla. In late 1890, John Coppin again took advantage of the conditional purchase scheme under the *Land Act of 1861* and applied to purchase and lease



*John and Catherine lived for 19 years, from 1859 to 1878, in the Queanbeyan district at the Goat Station (Molonglo Crossing) on Ginninderra Station. Their home would have been close to the river and was washed away twice by floods. Between 1878 and 1891, the family lived on their first conditional purchase holding in the parish of Yarrolumla, just south of Coppins Crossing (named after John Coppin). This holding was purchased in 1891 by Frederick Campbell and it became part of the Yarralumla Estate.*

three portions of land in Burbong totalling 1,280 acres (518 hectares). Coppin's application was successful and by September 1891, the family were living in a homestead complex on this site. It consisted of a four-roomed house, kitchen, stable, milking yard and garden. Extensive fencing was constructed, ornamental and fruit trees were planted and a well was sunk. The Coppins grazed sheep and, for their personal use, grew vegetables and fruit and kept poultry.

The building materials of the homestead site are not known but the four-roomed house was probably built of vertical wooden slabs roofed with bark. All that remains at the site today is the chimney and fireplace of the four-roomed house, the large fireplace from the kitchen, several rocks, pieces of timber and metal and stones surrounding the well site just north of the fireplace.

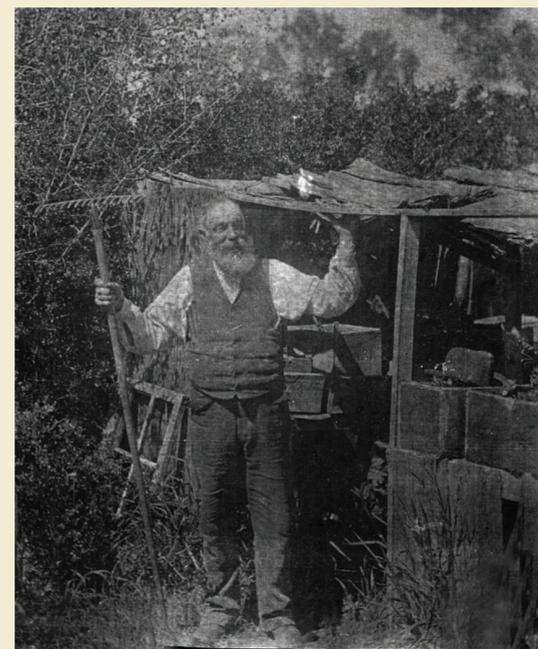
Of the ornamental and fruit trees that were planted to the south of the homestead, only a large male Osage Orange *Maclura pomifera* survives, probably grown from a seedling from the female tree growing at the Coppins Homestead site at Yarrolumla to the south of Coppins Crossing.

The properties the Coppins owned and leased were collectively known as 'Cohen'. Their Burbong neighbours were the families of John Edmonds (at Collier's Homestead), William Cooper (about half way to Collier's) and Luke Colverwell jnr (just across the Molonglo River at the property of 'Argyle').

The family was highly respected in the community with members supporting local activities and gatherings such as the bachelors' ball at Collier's Homestead in 1895. The youngest son Albert Henry, who was MC at the ball, was very involved in the business and social community in Queanbeyan where he became an alderman in later years.

## Illness and the sale of 'Cohen'

In the late 1890s, both John and Catherine experienced poor health. Shortly after Catherine's death at 'Cohen' in 1901, John moved to Naas to live with his second eldest daughter, Ellen Kelleher. In 1902, the properties were sold to Jeremiah Keeffe. John Coppin died at Naas in 1903.



*John Coppin standing outside his shed.*

## Jeremiah Keeffe and 'Cohen'

Jeremiah Keeffe and his family did not live at 'Cohen' but chose instead to continue to reside near Williamsdale. The homestead buildings deteriorated and, when the properties were compulsorily acquired by the Commonwealth in 1913, the only structure listed was an unfloored hut measuring 30 feet by 15 feet (9.1 by 4.6 metres). Consisting of slab sides, a bark roof, two glazed windows and two doors, the hut was described as in bad condition with gaping slabs not fitting the ground and wall plates. The remaining 20 mixed ornamental and fruit trees were also described as bad, neglected and old.

## Protection and conservation

The ACT's Parks and Conservation Service, with assistance from the Friends of Glenburn, now protect and conserve this site.

*Please respect this site. It is an important part of the early European history of the area and is significant to many ACT and interstate families.*

Further information  
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