

A DECADE OF ACHIEVEMENTS IN THE GLENBURN PRECINCT, 2008-2017

Purpose of this paper

For some 15 years, I have been involved in research about the early European structures and associated settlers in the Glenburn/Burbong area of the Kowen Forest, Australian Capital Territory and the protection and conservation of such structures.

I have recently decided to scale back my involvement and that of the Friends of Glenburn.

Now seems to be a good time for me to list and reflect on the massive achievements of the ACT Parks and Conservation Service in the ten years since 2008 (1).

The Parks Service has done this with some financial and other help from the National Parks Association of the ACT (NPA) and the Friends of Glenburn (2).

Responsibilities for the early European structures

For many years, the early European structures in the Kowen forest were left to wither away or demolished. In 1979, for example, the substantial pise Kowen Homestead was bulldozed to make way for pine plantings.

This is not surprising since the key responsibility of ACT Forests was to run a commercial pine forest and there was nowhere near today's interest in our early European heritage. But this was to change.

After the 2003 bushfires that destroyed most of Canberra's pine forests, ACT Forests and ACT Environment were amalgamated, in 2006, into what is known today as the Parks Service. Following an approach to Chief Minister Stanhope by NPA in early 2008, the Parks Service became intimately involved in the protection and conservation of early European relics, particularly for those in what is now known as the Glenburn Precinct. The Precinct was heritage listed in November 2015.

A lot of money, time and effort have been spent by staff and volunteers. Much has been achieved.

Some of the Achievements

The following describes some of the work done at five of the historic sites since 2008.

(i) At Glenburn Homestead :

- . three 100 plus year old dead and dying pine trees that threatened to severely damage both the slab and pise homes were removed. They were replaced with radiata seedlings;
- . the slab and pise homes that had developed significant leans, were stabilised with some financial assistance from the Commonwealth;
- . small acrylic panels were placed over some remnant wall coverings, including wall paper, newspaper and canvas, in the slab home;
- . the pise in the south west corner of the pise home was repaired;
- . guttering, downpipes and a tank were erected at the pise home;

- . the remnants of a cast iron fuel stove (origin unknown) were removed from the pise home and stockpiled outside the protective fence;
- . gravel was spread over the dirt floor of the pise home;
- . acrylic sheets were placed in the windows of the slab home;
- . a chain wire external protective fence was demolished, removed and replaced with a substantial timber post and rail rabbit proof fence;
- . a dilapidated internal wire fence with wooden posts and star pickets was demolished and removed;
- . blackberries were removed, grass was slashed/mowed/whippersnipped around the homestead; and
- . grass was poisoned at the base of the post and rail fence which was painted on two occasions with a 50:50 mix of linseed oil and turps.

(ii) At Coppins Homestead site:

- . very extensive infestations of blackberries were poisoned and removed. The large clumps covered most of the site, totally covering the large, low fireplace remains and surrounding the chimney and nearby Osage orange tree;
- . a rabbit proof protective fence was erected;
- . the grass was mowed/whippersnipped without disturbing rocks or remnant timber and other material;
- . the timber corner posts of the protective fence were painted with a 50:50 mix of linseed oil and mineral turps;
- . the gate and fence damaged by a fallen pine tree were replaced /repaired and another large pine was removed; and
- . serrated tussock was poisoned.

(iii) At Colliers Homestead and Orchard:

- . three 100 plus year old dead and dying pine trees that threatened to damage the homestead ruins were removed;
- . a management plan was prepared for the orchard (including the orchard at Curleys);
- . very large infestations of blackberries near the homestead ruins and surrounding most of the orchard, were poisoned and removed (with the help of some members of the Canberra Bushwalking Club, and staff and students of the Canberra Institute of Technology (CIT));
- . a protective rabbit proof fence was erected around the ruins and orchard;
- . the ruins were capped with a mortar mix;

. the grass around the site was slashed/mowed/whippersnipped, the grass at the bottom of the protective fence was poisoned, plum suckers were cut, timber remnants were painted with a 50:50 mix of linseed oil and turps on several occasions and the donated outdoor setting was repaired and painted; and

. several large barrow loads of loose fallen stones from inside and outside the ruins were removed and stockpiled outside the protective fence.

(iv) At the Colverwell Graves :

. the external wire fence was demolished, removed and replaced with a substantial rabbit proof post and rail timber fence;

.the headstones and footstones were covered with black plastic for several months on several occasions in attempts to control lichens; and

. blackberries were poisoned, the grass around the bottom of the fences were poisoned, the grass around the site was slashed/mowed/whippersnipped and the new post and rail fence was painted on two occasions with a 50:50 mix of linseed oil and turps.

(v) At Curleys Homestead site:

. a very large infestation of blackberries that almost completely covered the homestead ruins, was poisoned and removed; and

. the grass at the site was mowed/whippersnipped, plum suckers were cut in the orchard and the remnant verandah post was painted with a 50:50 mix of linseed oil and turps on several occasions.

But the Parks Services achievements are much more.

First, the Parks Service has encouraged people to visit the historic sites to inspect and appreciate the relics of early European settlement.

With assistance from NPA and the Friends of Glenburn in some areas:

. guided walks and drive/walks have been conducted to many of the historic sites for groups of individuals including descendants of some of the early settler families such as those of John James and Agnes May Edmonds and John and Sarah Coppin. Tours have also been conducted during heritage festivals and for members of organisations such as NPA, the ACT Monaro Riverina Branch of the Australian Garden History Society, the University of the Third Age of the ACT (U3A ACT), the Queanbeyan Museum and the Canberra and District Historical Society;

. 14 informative and interesting interpretative signs have been erected at most of the historic sites in the Precinct;

. three marked heritage walking/cycling trails have been constructed with several small gates through fences and steel mesh 'bridges' across Glen Burn Creek near the Colverwell graves and a creek near Curleys Homestead Ruins and Orchard. The trails connect most of the historic sites in the Precinct;

.solid timber benches have been erected at the site of the Charcoal Kilns and Atkinson trig on the heritage trails for walkers and cyclists to rest. Three more will be erected early in 2018 and together with the donated outdoor setting located at Colliers orchard, will provide six outdoor rest spots;

. a new locked gate has been erected at the Charcoal Kiln Road access point to the Precinct;

. an informative brochure has been prepared on the Precinct and the heritage trails; and

. two large Glenburn Precinct signs have been erected on the Kings Highway on the Queanbeyan and Bungendore sides of the intersection with Charcoal Kiln Road.

Furthermore, the Parks Service has taken an active role in protecting staff, volunteers and visitors as part of its 'duty of care' responsibilities.

Examples of action in this area include:

. removing and stockpiling the remnants of a cast iron fuel stove that were strewn on the floor of one room in the pise home of Glenburn Homestead;

. spreading gravel over the dirt floor of the pise home of Glenburn Homestead to provide an even, firm and safe surface ;

. removing and stockpiling loose fallen stones in and around the Collier ruins;

. constructing a fence on the gun club side of Charcoal Kiln Road and one proposed around the Shearing Shed complex to deter access by visitors because of possible dangers at the gun club and inside the shearing shed complex buildings;

. tidying up of the outside of the shearing shed complex and removing much of the metal;

. removing asbestos from the shearing shed complex;

. employing consultants to examine contamination issues at the sheep dips near Glen Burn Creek and at the Shearing Shed and to propose action;

. employing a heritage consultant to make recommendations on what should be kept and what can be removed from inside the shearing shed complex to protect heritage items and to help make the inside of the buildings safe;

. erecting walkers/cyclists signs on Charcoal Kiln Road and River Road; and

. the proposed erection of speed signs on Charcoal Kiln Road and River Road and a stop sign at the dangerous intersection of Charcoal Kiln Road with the Kings Highway.

.Congratulations to the Parks Service, NPA and the Friends of Glenburn

Congratulations for what you have all done and are doing to protect and conserve the many historic relics of early European settlement and to encourage visitors, particularly walkers and cyclists, to enjoy them safely.

I am proud to have worked with the committed staff of the Googong and Stromlo depots of the Parks Service and with the enthusiastic volunteers of NPA and the Friends of Glenburn. Thank you all.

But there is much more to do

While much has been achieved there is still much to be done to protect and conserve the early European structures in the Glenburn Precinct for the benefit of current and future residents of the ACT and Queanbeyan. The key tasks will be to make the Shearing Shed complex and Glenburn Homestead structurally sound and safe. This will be expensive.

All future work in the Precinct will be guided by the Conservation Management Plan (CMP) that is nearing completion. NPA received an ACT Heritage Grant to fund half the cost, the other half being funded by the Parks Service.

ENDNOTES

1. Prior to 2008, there was some restoration work at two sites.

In 1978 the National Capital Development Commission (NCDC) carried out work on both the slab home and the pise home of Glenburn Homestead. For example, some of the slabs were replaced in the slab home and both homes were reroofed with corrugated iron. The roof of the slab home is attached and integrated into the structure but the protective roof over the pise home is self-supporting and separate.

In 2005, after the intervention of Chief Minister Stanhope, the Colverwell graves were restored by ACT Forests (which was responsible for the area at the time) and the Heritage Unit (the forerunner of ACT Heritage).

2. The NPA donated \$5 000 towards the cost of the Friends activities. It also provided a facility for individuals and organisations to make donations towards work by the Friends in Glenburn. Total donations received under this facility were more than \$10 500. Several people also gave 'in kind' donations. Thank you all donors.

The NPA has handled all the Friends of Glenburn finances.

The NPA website www.npaact.org.au has a wealth of material on the Precinct under Friends of Glenburn (including the text of the brochure on the Precinct and the texts of all the interpretative signs) and Glenburn and Burbong (the text of my monograph on 12 historic sites in the Glenburn/Burbong area of the Kowen Forest published by NPA in 2007).

The Friends of Glenburn volunteers – from NPA, the Kosciuszko Huts Association (KHA) and other interested people - have attended many work parties. Well over 1 000 hours have been worked. They have also carried out research, written articles, submissions and reports, presented papers and given talks, and acted as guides on tours of the Precinct. Thank you all volunteers.

Col McAlister

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