

# Heritage (Decision about Registration for Booroomba Station – incorporating Blythburn and Braeside and adjacent ploughlands). Notice 2011

Notifiable Instrument NI 2011 - 738

made under the

***Heritage Act 2004* section 42 Notice of Decision about Registration**

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**1. Revocation**

This instrument replaces NI 2011 – 488

**2. Name of instrument**

This instrument is the Heritage (Decision about Registration for Booroomba Station – incorporating Blythburn and Braeside and adjacent ploughlands) Notice 2011 -

**3. Registration details of the place**

Registration details of the place are at Attachment A: Register entry for Booroomba Station – incorporating Blythburn and Braeside and adjacent ploughlands.

**4. Reason for decision**

The ACT Heritage Council has decided that Booroomba Station – incorporating Blythburn and Braeside and adjacent ploughlands, meets one or more of the heritage significance criteria at s 10 of the *Heritage Act 2004*. The register entry is at Attachment A.

**5. Date of Registration**

1 December 2011

**Gerhard Zatschler**  
**Secretary**  
**ACT Heritage Council**  
**1 December 2011**



ACT Heritage Council

**AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY**

**HERITAGE REGISTER  
(Registration Details)**

**Place No:**

For the purposes of s. 41 of the *Heritage Act 2004*, an entry to the heritage register has been prepared by the ACT Heritage Council for the following place:

Booroomba Station (incorporating Blythburn and Braeside and adjacent ploughlands)  
Booroomba Road, Tharwa

(Part) Block 328 District of Paddy's River

**DATE OF REGISTRATION**

Notified: 1 December 2011 Notifiable Instrument: 2011/

Copies of the Register Entry are available for inspection at the ACT Heritage Unit. For further information please contact:

The Secretary  
ACT Heritage Council  
GPO Box 158, Canberra, ACT 2601

Telephone: 13 22 81 Facsimile: (02) 6207 2229

## IDENTIFICATION OF THE PLACE

Booroomba Station, Tharwa, (Part) Block 328, District of Paddy's River

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### STATEMENT OF HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

This statement refers to the Heritage Significance of the place as required in s12(d) of the *Heritage Act 2004*.

Booroomba Station (incorporating Braeside and Blythburn and adjacent ploughlands) provides important, rare and intact evidence of a pastoral property dating from the 1840s to the present, representing the earliest period of European settlement of the region.

The Station provides a well preserved record of the district in the nineteenth century, and tells of a working property with remaining physical fabric dating from the 1840s and continuing to the present. It is important as evidence of a distinctive way of life no longer practiced, providing evidence of an early European settlement in the region. The rural landscape demonstrates nineteenth century farming traditions and processes.

The Blythburn ploughlands contribute an additional historical element to this component of significance, as demonstrating a distinctive farming process and a way of life (using draught animals) of exceptional interest and in danger of being lost; as a rare example of a ploughlands of a relative degree of intactness; as a notable example of non-mechanised ploughing activities and demonstrating the key characteristics of this kind of place; and for its special association with the cultural phase of the pastoral and agricultural development of the area.

Booroomba Station (incorporating Braeside and Blythburn and adjacent ploughlands) has a strong association with the McKeahnie family, who were prominent early pioneers in the region having, at various times, owned and farmed many properties within the area including the Orroral and Gudgenby stations.

The Blythburn homestead is unusual as a documented example of a nineteenth century rural pastoral property owned and managed by a female, with female assistance.

The property is a notable example of a nineteenth century pastoral property, exhibiting evidence of the pattern of family holdings and familial ties and connections in close proximity to one another.

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### OTHER RELATED PLACES

Other places in the ACT associated with James Wright include:

- Lanyon; and
- Cuppacumbalong.

Other places in the ACT associated with the McKeahnie family are:

- Orroral homestead;
- Gudgenby Homestead; and
- Well Station.

Other places which are of a similar history to the Blythburn ploughlands include four ploughlands sites within the ACT which have been identified as having significance worthy of registration to the ACT Heritage Register. The following places form separate nominations/registrations to the ACT Heritage Register:

- Mulligan's Flat Ploughlands
- Old Orroral homestead and ploughland

- Glenburn rural group
- Orroral Homestead ploughland

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### FEATURES INTRINSIC TO THE HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PLACE

The attributes listed below are assessed as features intrinsic to the heritage significance of the place and warrant conservation:

#### Booroomba

- blacksmith building and adjoining slab cottage, including associated objects and artefacts
- shearer's quarters
- meat house
- stores
- stables
- hay shed
- stockyards
- mature plantings
- Relationship of outbuildings to the main homestead

*n.b – while the relationship of outbuildings to the Booroomba homestead location is important, the Booroomba homestead itself is not an intrinsic feature of this citation, given its modifications, and its inability to portray its nineteenth century origins, or a clear understanding of its evolution over time.*

#### Blythburn

- Blythburn cottage
- The kitchen building including internal features: the open fireplace; the bread oven, the stone-flagged floor.
- Mature plantings
- Archaeological sub-surface remains

#### Braeside

- Homestead and mature plantings

#### Ploughlands

- Ploughlands
- Fence posts

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### APPLICABLE HERITAGE GUIDELINES

The 'Heritage Guidelines: General Conservation Guidelines for Historic Heritage Places 2011 adopted under s25 of the *Heritage Act* 2004 are applicable to the conservation of Booroomba Station (incorporating Braeside and Blythburn and adjacent ploughlands).

The guiding conservation objective is that Booroomba Station (incorporating Braeside and Blythburn and adjacent ploughlands), shall be conserved and appropriately managed in a manner respecting its heritage significance and the features intrinsic to that heritage significance, and consistent with a sympathetic and viable use or uses. Any works that have a potential impact on significant fabric (and / or other heritage values) shall be guided by a professionally documented assessment and conservation policy relevant to that area or component (i.e. a Statement of Heritage Effects – SHE).

## REASON FOR REGISTRATION

The Booroomba Station (incorporating Braeside and Blythburn and adjacent ploughlands) has been assessed against the heritage significance criteria and been found to have heritage significance when assessed against four criteria under the ACT *Heritage Act 2004*:

- (c) it is important as evidence of a distinctive way of life, taste, tradition, religion, land use, custom, process, design or function that is no longer practised, is in danger of being lost or is of exceptional interest;
- (f) it is a rare or unique example of its kind, or is rare or unique in its comparative intactness
- (g) it is a notable example of a kind of place or object and demonstrates the main characteristics of that kind
- (h) it has strong or special associations with a person, group, event, development or cultural phase in local or national history

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## ASSESSMENT AGAINST THE HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE CRITERIA

Pursuant to s.10 of the *Heritage Act 2004*, a place or object has heritage significance if it satisfies one or more of the following criteria. Significance has been determined by research as accessed in the references below. Future research may alter the findings of this assessment.

- (a) it demonstrates a high degree of technical or creative achievement (or both), by showing qualities of innovation, discovery, invention or an exceptionally fine level of application of existing techniques or approaches;**

Booroomba Station (incorporating Braeside and Blythburn and adjacent ploughlands) does not meet this criterion.

- (b) it exhibits outstanding design or aesthetic qualities valued by the community or a cultural group;**

Booroomba Station (incorporating Braeside and Blythburn and adjacent ploughlands) does not meet this criterion.

- (c) it is important as evidence of a distinctive way of life, taste, tradition, religion, land use, custom, process, design or function that is no longer practised, is in danger of being lost or is of exceptional interest;**

Booroomba Station (incorporating Braeside and Blythburn and adjacent ploughlands) is important as evidence of a distinctive way of life that is no longer practised. Together, the Braeside and Blythburn homesteads and outbuildings of Booroomba demonstrate the way of life on a rural property in the nineteenth century in the region which has since become the ACT.

The place demonstrates the rural pastoral settlement of the area from the 1840s. The close association of the three homesteads, developed under the ownership and management of the McKeahnie family, demonstrates the pattern of family holdings typical of the region. Other family holdings which demonstrate this pattern include Elm Grove and Horse Park; and Canberra Park and other settlements of the Winter family in the (now) Gungahlin area.

The Blythburn and Braeside homesteads and remaining outbuildings are testament to the early European settlement and evolution of the district that subsequently became the ACT. The extant buildings and other remains demonstrate the living conditions and way of life in an isolated area as a sheep, dairying and cattle station from the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century.

The various phases of homestead development reflect the evolution and growth of the property over time. The Blythburn and Braeside buildings, together with outstations of the Booroomba homestead, illustrate a continuity of use of the site and the evolution of farm living and management in the region over a period in excess of 150 years (1840 – present), and remain as historical markers in the landscape.

The Blythburn ploughlands, being created with animal-drawn ploughs and bearing the pattern of broad 'lands', were the result of a distinctive farming process and a way of life (using draught animals) that ceased with the adoption of motorised tractors.

The ploughing of 'lands' reflects the survival of a tradition of Saxon and medieval British agricultural practice in nineteenth and early twentieth century Australia, that is of exceptional interest. The ratio of surviving ploughlands to destroyed ploughlands in the ACT demonstrates that they are threatened as a type.

The Blythburn ploughlands are an integral component of a broader rural landscape that in combination with the homestead demonstrates some of the farming traditions and processes that are distinctive to pre-mechanised farming.

The ploughlands remain as an important historical marker in the landscape, reflecting the early agricultural character of the area.

Booroomba Station (incorporating Braeside and Blythburn and adjacent ploughlands) meets this criterion.

**(d) it is highly valued by the community or a cultural group for reasons of strong or special religious, spiritual, cultural, educational or social associations;**

Booroomba Station (incorporating Braeside and Blythburn and adjacent ploughlands) does not meet this criterion.

**(e) it is significant to the ACT because of its importance as part of local Aboriginal tradition**

Booroomba Station (incorporating Braeside and Blythburn and adjacent ploughlands) has not been assessed in relation to this criterion.

**(f) it is a rare or unique example of its kind, or is rare or unique in its comparative intactness**

Booroomba Station (incorporating Braeside and Blythburn and adjacent ploughlands) is a rare example of a rural property in the ACT which demonstrates the development and different phases of occupation as a continuing rural property since its earliest European settlement in the 1840s. Within the ACT there are few examples of such rural properties with this same longevity of use and ability to portray such strong familial ties and connections. Other examples include Lanyon Homestead, Belconnen Farm, and Horse Park Homestead.

The Blythburn cottage remains as evidence of a rare documented example of a nineteenth century property operated by a female, under the management of Elizabeth Julia McKeahnie. . The main characteristics of a nineteenth century rural pastoral property are evident in the cottage and outbuildings utilising vernacular building methods, mature exotic plantings and the associated ploughlands. There are few documented examples of properties owned and managed solely by women during this time.

The Blythburn Ploughlands are a rare example of a relatively intact ploughlands site in the ACT. In a 2002 study, 65 historical ploughlands sites across the ACT were identified (Pearson, 2002: 37). Of these, only six were identified as being of a sufficient level of integrity to warrant

nomination to the ACT Heritage Register. Since this time, evidence shows that at least one ploughland has been impacted such that it can no longer be considered for entry to the ACT Heritage Register.

Of the 65 ploughlands sites which were once evident in the ACT, only five have a level of intactness that renders them good examples of this type of place, including that at Blythburn.

Booroomba Station (incorporating Braeside and Blythburn and adjacent ploughlands) meets this criterion.

**(g) it is a notable example of a kind of place or object and demonstrates the main characteristics of that kind**

The Blythburn property at Booroomba is an example of a nineteenth century rural pastoral property. It is notable as a property which has been documented as being operated entirely by females, under the management of Elizabeth Julia McKeahnie. The main characteristics of a nineteenth century rural pastoral property are evident in the cottage and outbuildings utilising vernacular building methods, mature exotic plantings and the associated ploughlands.

Booroomba Station (incorporating Braeside and Blythburn and adjacent ploughlands) is also a notable example of this type of place, given their clear evidence of close familial ties in the development of homesteads in close proximity to one another.

Further, ploughlands constitute a class of cultural places that are of historical importance. The characteristics of a 'notable example' of a ploughland include:

- relatively clear ridges and furrows forming visible 'lands' over a substantial area of paddock;
- lands that run across contour, demonstrating the limitations of draught animal ploughing;
- boundary demarcation by ditch, bank or fence (though this feature is not a universal characteristic of ploughlands).

The Blythburn ploughlands possess the first two characteristics and, as such, meet this criterion.

The Booroomba Station (incorporating Braeside and Blythburn and adjacent ploughlands) meets this criterion.

**(h) it has strong or special associations with a person, group, event, development or cultural phase in local or national history**

Booroomba Station (incorporating Braeside and Blythburn and adjacent ploughlands) has a strong association with the McKeahnie family, who were prominent early pioneers in the district, having owned many properties in the region.

The Blythburn ploughlands are associated with the cultural phase of the pastoral and agricultural development of the area of the ACT when it was part of NSW prior to the establishment of the Federal Capital Territory. This association is special, given the limited number of ploughlands in the ACT that are able to bear testimony to this phase of development.

Booroomba Station (incorporating Braeside and Blythburn and adjacent ploughlands) meets this criterion.

**(i) it is significant for understanding the evolution of natural landscapes, including significant geological features, landforms, biota or natural processes**

Booroomba Station (incorporating Braeside and Blythburn and adjacent ploughlands) has not been assessed in relation to this criterion.

- (j) **it has provided, or is likely to provide, information that will contribute significantly to a wider understanding of the natural or cultural history of the ACT because of its use or potential use as a research site or object, teaching site or object, type locality or benchmark site**

Booroomba Station (incorporating Braeside and Blythburn and adjacent ploughlands) does not meet this criterion.

- (k) **for a place—it exhibits unusual richness, diversity or significant transitions of flora, fauna or natural landscapes and their elements**

Booroomba Station (incorporating Braeside and Blythburn and adjacent ploughlands) has not been assessed in relation to this criterion.

- (l) **for a place—it is a significant ecological community, habitat or locality for any of the following:**

- (i) **the life cycle of native species;**
- (ii) **rare, threatened or uncommon species;**
- (iii) **species at the limits of their natural range;**
- (iv) **distinct occurrences of species.**

Booroomba Station (incorporating Braeside and Blythburn and adjacent ploughlands) has not been assessed in relation to this criterion.

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## **SUMMARY OF THE PLACE HISTORY AND PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION**

### **HISTORY**

The Booroomba property was established around 1840 by James Wright, with Blythburn and Braeside constructed during the McKeahnie family's long-standing ownership of the property from 1860 - 1925. Associated ploughlands dating from the late nineteenth/early twentieth century also form part of this registration.

#### **Contextual background**

Prior to the declaration of conservation reserves in the mid twentieth century, the high country of what is now the ACT was pastoral land.

'One of the first Europeans to enter the high country of the Murrumbidgee was Garrett Cotter' (Higgins, 2009: 23). He was effectively banished into the high country after getting in trouble with the law in 1832. Other settlers were also in the area in the early 1830s including English migrant William Herbert in the Naas Valley with the Orroral run (Higgins, 2009: 24). Other runs were also being taken up in the area, including in the Boboyan Valley.

'Scottish emigrants Charles and Elizabeth McKeahnie had managed Boboyan for John Gray for a time. In the early 1840s, after Gray was declared bankrupt, they briefly went into partnership there with another Scottish family, the Crawfords' (Higgins, 2009: 24). Soon after, the McKeahnies moved north to manage the Gudgenby property and one of the Crawford sons continued to run Boboyan. In 1853 the McKeahnies bought the Gudgenby property. They did well here and branched out to extend their holdings to other nearby stations, including Orroral and Booroomba.

#### **Booroomba**



'Boorooroomba' is an Aboriginal word for plovers.

In 1840 James Wright of Lanyon purchased Booroomba, situated in a secluded valley at the headwaters of Paddy's River midway between Mt Tennant and Tidbinbilla.

In 1841 his Booroomba station is recorded as having had 20 people and three wooden houses (EMA, 2000: 5). The original slab homestead was built on the property around 1842 by Wright for his parents-in-law, Jane and William Davis, on their arrival in the colony (EMA, 2000: 5). The property was occupied by the Davis's from this time until 1860.

Some of the minor buildings are thought to date from this period (Gray, 1975).

By 1845, the Booroomba Station is recorded as having '13 residents, buildings – excellent huts, cattle 450, horses 20' (EMA, 2000: 6).

In 1860 Charles McKeahnie acquired the property and it remained under his ownership for 66 years. 'Booroomba was developed by the McKeahnie family into an outstanding Hereford cattle property' (Butt, 1983). It was during this period of ownership that the outstations of Blythburn and Braeside were established.

Sheep have been grazing on the property since c.1875. Cattle may have been introduced prior to sheep. There is also evidence of growing crops – an old piece of machinery still lies in one of the paddocks.

Wild dogs in the area caused severe loss of stock. As a result, McKeahnie constructed 'many miles of dog proof fence along the southern and western boundaries' (Moore, 1999: 110). In 1886 bushfires destroyed most of Booroomba. The homestead and outbuildings were spared, though much of the fencing was destroyed (Moore, 1999: 110).

Circa 1882 the old McKeahnie couple and their daughter Elizabeth moved a few miles up the valley to a new house which they called Blythburn. The couple lived here in retirement, while their daughter Elizabeth was largely responsible for the management of the Blythburn property (Moore, 1999: 113).

Charles' son, Charles Henry and his new bride (Sarah Jane West) occupied the Booroomba homestead from this time (Moore, 1999: 111).

In 1895 the Booroomba run included 7,000 sheep and 1,000 head of cattle (Moore, 1999: 113).

In 1899 Mrs McKeahnie died at Blythburn, at the age of 87, having been one of the first females to reside in the mountainous area. Charles McKeahnie lived on at Blythburn, cared for by his daughter Elizabeth, until his death in 1903, aged 92.

Charles Henry McKeahnie had become responsible for the management of Booroomba since the time of his father's retirement to Blythburn. 'Under his expert guidance the Booroomba Hereford herd became known throughout the state' (Moore, 1999:113).

### **Blythburn**

In 1869 Charles McKeahnie purchased 40 acres on Portion 11, County of Cowley as his sixth block of land in the area. It was located some distance from the other five at Booroomba, roughly one and a half miles from the Booroomba homestead. This is the first of the blocks which later became Elizabeth Julia McKeahnie's Blythburn property, which grew to 2000 acres during her time of management.

A stone cottage was constructed on this portion circa 1882 for Elizabeth, and became known as Blythburn. On this property, she ran a successful cattle station and dairy.

Elizabeth 'was generally recognised throughout the region as being as good a stockman as any man. Her courage in entering a yard full of wild Hereford bullocks and her ability to deal with them was freely recognised and admired by her neighbours' (Moore, 1999: 113). Those who worked for her included Ruth Kirchner, Grace Kirchner and Mary Ann Warner (EMA, 2000: 20).

This is a remarkable achievement for the time; it is possibly the first and only example in the nineteenth century of a cattle station being run by a woman, with only female assistance, in the colony of New South Wales (Corp, 1982, 29).

Although there are no detailed records of Elizabeth's time on the property, family and oral history indicate that she was an excellent horsewoman and often travelled to Queanbeyan with a load of dairy produce and vegetables. She also visited her brother, Archibald, and his family, who had moved from 'Orroral' to 'Well Station', just north of Canberra, in the 1880s. Elizabeth must have been an imposing sight on these journeys as she was a tall woman and was always impeccably dressed; she carried with her a small revolver with an ivory handle (Corp, 1982, 29).

Elizabeth had a romantic association with Kenneth Cameron, to whom her father strictly forbade marriage. The reasons for this are not clear. Elizabeth accepted her father's ruling, though 'no doubt she hoped that the day might come when they could be married but this was not to be for Kenneth died on 23 October 1891, at the age of 70' (Moore, 1999: 113). Elizabeth wrote two poems for him, mourning her loss.

Elizabeth continued to run Blythburn from 1882 until the establishment of the Federal Capital Territory in 1911. Blythburn was then transferred to Charles Henry McKeahnie, Elizabeth's younger brother. Charles Henry had taken over active management of the family's Booroomba property in 1873 (Maitland, 1923, 283).

Although Blythburn was now leased by her brother, Elizabeth remained there until her death in 1919, aged 75. It is not known if she continued to run Blythburn after it was transferred to her brother in 1911, or whether, being 67 years old, she 'retired' there until her death.

The cottage still carries the imprint of Elizabeth's time there. The only known use of Blythburn from her death to the present is by Mr Bevis West, a stockman and rabbitier, who occupied the place regularly with his sons, from around 1940-1945 (Strine Design, 1983, 79).

### **Braeside**

Little is known about the Braeside property. However, it is believed to have been constructed sometime in the late nineteenth century, possibly around 1890, as the main homestead to supersede Booroomba.

In the 1900s, when the family chose to undertake repairs and maintenance to the Booroomba homestead, this again became the main family home.

Braeside is now occupied as a secondary homestead on the property.

### **McKeahnie family**

The McKeahnie family were prominent early settlers in the region.

Charles McKeahnie emigrated from Scotland with his wife, Elizabeth and eight month old daughter, Anne, and arrived in Queanbeyan in 1838. He was employed initially on Joshua John Moore's Canberry run. He later became overseer on John Gray's Boboyan run between Gudgenby and Adaminaby.

At different times the McKeahnie family owned the Boboyan, Gudgenby, Congwarra, Booroomba, Orroral, Cuppacumbalong and Cooleman Plains runs. During the nineteenth century they became the foremost cattle breeders of the area (Moore, 1999: 106).

Charles McKeahnie sold his partnership in 'Boboyan' to his partner in 1845, the same year he acquired it, and the family moved north to 'Gudgenby' station. Charles became overseer of 'Gudgenby' for Edward Severne for about four years, after which time Charles bought the property (Corp, 1982, 26). Another child, Charles Henry, was born in 1851. Also in that year, the McKeahnie's eldest son, Archibald, who had been left in Scotland and was now aged eighteen years, came to join the family, together with his uncle, Charles' brother, and his grandmother, Elizabeth's mother. This increase in the family may have been the reason Charles acquired 'Booroomba' in 1860 from William Davis. Charles and his son, Charles Henry, built this property up into an outstanding Hereford cattle property and it was to remain in the family until 1925. Charles also managed to acquire the nearby properties of 'Orroral' and 'Naas', as well as 'Congwarra' which he sold again soon afterwards (Corp, 1982, 26).

### **Twentieth century history**

In 1923, Charles Henry McKeahnie died at Booroomba and two years later his son, Charles Henry Alexander George McKeahnie died at Booroomba.

In 1925 the buildings of the property of Booroomba consisted of Booroomba Homestead (a brick and stone house of 8-9 rooms) and outbuildings (stables, woolshed, shearers' quarters, garage, blacksmith's shop, store rooms, haysheds), Braeside homestead (8 rooms), and Blythburn homestead, and an additional three cottages for men.

In 1926 the lease on both Booroomba and Blythburn were transferred to William Keough and Patrick Rowe. In 1948, Sir Keith Murdoch purchased the Booroomba estate, including Blythburn and Braeside.

Prior to this, in the mid 1940s, Murdoch had bought the *Canberra Times*. His purchase of Booroomba came about from a search to find a suitable property 'close to Canberra as an operational base for entertaining politicians and other important contacts. He was shown Booroomba, a lush station property of 13,000 acres in the beautiful and rugged Tidbinbilla Ranges overlooking the Australian capital. He paid £64,000 for it' (Monks, 1994: 176).

Monks (1994: 176) states that the Murdoch's visits to Booroomba were rare, with a few family holidays shared by Sir Keith and his son Rupert, and only one visit by Dame Elisabeth. Dame Elisabeth is quoted by Monks (1994: 176-177) as stating:

*(Keith) loved the idea of breeding stock, running cattle and, as he did with all his interests, he got literature and read up all the information and decided that Belted Galloways would be ideal for that wild country... There was nothing enormously grand. It was just a nice station property and we furnished the main room of the house and put in Tasmanian wood panelling and I chose the material for the curtains. We sent up some beautiful furniture and pictures and Keith was looking forward to fishing in mountain streams and lakes. Keith had several lovely little holidays there with Rupert but I only had one and I found it very frustrating and tedious trying to cast a fly and getting caught up in the trees behind. In winter it was so bleak and, of course, we had beautiful Wantabadgery'.*

During his ownership of the property, Murdoch relocated two snowy hydro huts to the property, joining them together as one house not far from the Booroomba homestead.

After owing the property for five years, John Hyles purchased the property from Murdoch in 1953.

In 1966, Enrico Taglietti prepared extensions for the Booroomba Homestead, extending the nineteenth century homestead. He added upturned arches along the verandah.

'Beyond the inverted arches, each framing a different vista, is an entrance foyer and the glass wall of the morning room. Glimpsed above the verandah are windows of a suite of bedrooms' (Charlton et al, 2007: 36). In the centre of the present house are the original rooms built by James Wright.

In 1973, the Commonwealth of Australia compulsorily acquired the property and it has been under leasehold since. It was originally split into a variety of leases, though the property was run as one.

Upon the death of John Hyles in 1998, the lease on the property, under one lease, passed to John's son and his wife.

## **PLOUGHLANDS**

*The following information has been excerpted verbatim from Pearson, 2002.*

### Background

Ploughlands are areas of land cultivated with ploughs for the planting of crops. They are most commonly associated with cereal crop production and orchards. Such preparation of arable land has become rare in the ACT, with many previously ploughed paddocks being given over to grazing, subsumed within the spread of suburbia, or taken into land reserved for nature conservation or recreational purposes.

Ploughing was the basic means of tillage used in farming. It provided a deep seed bed for crops by turning over the soil, burying weeds and bringing fresh soil to the surface. Tillage with lighter tined implements, such as tine cultivators and harrows, simply stirred the soil, being used for preparation for some crops (such as pasture grasses), or for levelling the top of ploughed land.

Ridge and furrow ploughlands were created predominantly with a single share plough fitted with a coulter and mould board. The plough share made a horizontal cut through the soil, and the coulter in the form of a knife or small disc, set immediately above the point of the share, made a vertical cut. The mould board, twisted like a propeller and attached behind the share, threw the soil behind the cuts to one side forming a ridge of soil adjacent to a furrow left by the share.

Locally made wooden ploughs were commonly used in the early European settlement period in Australia, though manufactured iron ploughs were also imported. The iron plough had revolutionised farming in Britain from the late eighteenth and into the early nineteenth centuries. Iron ploughs largely replaced wooden ones in Australia in the 1850s and 60s. For the most part iron mould board ploughs, made first of cast iron and wrought iron, then from about the 1880s of steel, were used through the latter half of the nineteenth century. Two and four share ploughs were developed, though single share ploughs continued to be manufactured as they could be pulled by a smaller team of animals and better suited smaller and less wealthy settlers, a common characteristic of the 'closer settlement' farmer in parts of the ACT.

The steam engine was modified for ploughing in the USA and Britain from the mid-1800s, and by the 1870s ploughing using traction engines with winch drums located beneath their boilers became common there. Steam ploughing engines were used in the ACT, William Winter providing one for hire in the Gungahlin district in 1909, though the extent of their use is not clear.

The characteristic profile of simple ridge and furrow ploughlands in Australia is a broad roughly level-topped ridge, 2 to 6 or more metres wide, separated by 'V'-shaped furrows cut to the full depth of the plough and two plough widths wide. The broad parallel ridges, often referred to as the '*lands*', ran the length of the field being ploughed, a narrow space being left at each end in which to turn the plough for the next run. The *lands* were created by the ploughman ploughing up and down the field in an anti-clockwise direction, making each successive furrow close to the edge of the proceeding furrow, alternately on either side of the first cuts. The ridges of soil turned by the mould board therefore overlapped each other, creating a raised platform of ploughed soil, the *land*.

Ploughing field in long strips comprising raised *lands* separated by furrows is thought to have originated in Britain in Saxon times (4<sup>th</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> centuries AD). This 'ridge and furrow' ploughing technique persisted in the English landscape until the late nineteenth century. The major difference between the older 'open field' ridge and furrow systems and those of the post-enclosure times (enclosure occurring progressively from the 17<sup>th</sup> to the 19<sup>th</sup> century), other than the imposition of fences on the landscape, was that the earlier lands often took a reverse-'S' shape, reflecting the persistent turning of the plough at the end of the foraker. After enclosure the *lands* conformed to the enclosing fencelines, taking on a straighter form. This latter pattern is that common in Australia.

A large percentage of the ploughlands of the ACT have been destroyed due to the development of Canberra, or have been reworked by later agricultural or grazing activity. Over about 90 former (pre 1915) cultivated areas (in 30 groups) have been identified as having been destroyed by urban development or agricultural activity, and another 28 (in 19 groups), while still agricultural or pastoral land, have been found not to contain surviving ploughland features. In all only 16 examples have been found with substantial evidence of ridge and furrow plough features. Of these, only five are found to be of heritage significance worthy of registration to the ACT Heritage Register.

These five ploughlands are:

- Mulligan's Flat
- Blythburn
- Glenburn
- Old Orroral
- Orroral

#### Brief contextual history of Blythburn Ploughlands

The Blythburn Ploughlands are likely to have been managed by Elizabeth McKeahnie.

In the Tharwa, Orroral and Gudgenby Districts land was primarily used as grazing runs. 'While a number had some cultivated land, the mountain runs in particular were never major wheat producing properties. Wheat was primarily for domestic use.' (Pearson, 2002: 16). The McKeahnie family established ploughlands adjacent to the Blythburn homestead.

There were two ploughlands in close proximity to the Blythburn homestead – one located on grass flats across the creek south-east from the blythburn homestead. The other is located on dry flats west of Blue Gum Creek. These ploughlands also show evidence of field boundary ditches and fencelines, one planted with poplars.

## **DESCRIPTION**

### Booroomba

The main homestead of the Booroomba complex is not included in this registration. The extensions and alterations which have been undertaken over time have limited the ability to 'read' the materials, layout and design of the original homestead and don't contribute a clear story as to the building's evolution over time..

However, other features associated with the homestead form significant components of this registration. Their setting and relationship to the homestead remains important in understanding the nineteenth century operation of the Booroomba property. In particular, the close proximity of all features to the main homestead is of interest in understanding and reading the nineteenth century history of the place.

The Booroomba complex includes:

- blacksmith building and adjoining slab cottage
- servant's quarters

- meat house
- stores
- stables
- hay shed
- stockyards
- mature plantings
- Relationship of outbuildings to the main homestead

The Blacksmith's building is a rendered stone building, adjoining a vertical slab cottage. The two buildings share a gabled roof of corrugated iron. The interior of the Blacksmith's building comprises a vast collection of items associated with blacksmithing, including a working forge with bellows; horse shoes, branding irons and melting pots. The Blacksmiths shop illustrates the continuing reliance on horses to operate the sheep and cattle property. The working forge is doubtless one of very few in the district and illustrates the continuing reliance on horses to operate the cattle property.

The shearer's quarters are located adjacent to the homestead, forming a small courtyard space, and are constructed of rendered stone with a gabled roof of corrugated iron. A verandah, supported by timber beams is located to both the front and rear.

The meat house is constructed of rendered brick, with wide verandah and timber effect.

The stores is a small two roomed weatherboard building, with twin gables of corrugated iron, supported on timber stumps.

The stables are an L-shaped rendered building with gabled roof of corrugated iron. A lean-to exists to one side.

The hay shed is constructed of vertical slabs with a corrugated iron gable roof.

The stockyards are constructed of timber.

The original woolshed burnt down in the late 1980s. A new woolshed has been built in the same location, with the same design. This woolshed is not an intrinsic feature.

### Blythburn

The Blythburn homestead comprises a homestead cottage, detached kitchen building, water tank and mature plantings.

The cottage is a three-roomed symmetrical stone structure, with gabled roof and a chimney to either end. Shingles have been covered with more recent corrugated iron. All three rooms open to an external verandah, with no internal doors. Room one also has an external door to the rear. The walls are constructed of fine random granite masonry with ashlar coursed pointing. A lime-wash finish has been used on the walls. The third room was converted into a kitchen around 1945, with a "Metters Canberra" wood fuel stove, hot water service, sink and cupboard units.

A stone kitchen building is set at a 40 degree angle to the rear of the cottage. The kitchen has a flag-stone floor, with internal fireplace and bread oven. Adjacent to the kitchen is a small covered storage area.

A water tank is situated on a high stand to the rear of the cottage.

There are no outbuildings remaining at the site but there is much evidence of the existence of previous buildings, including stone flagging, building outlines and loose artefacts. The foundation lines of three small buildings can be seen a few metres to the west of the homestead. More foundations are located a short distance to the North West (to the left just outside the entrance gate).

There are two mature elms at the front of the cottage, and many more elm suckers which have grown into trees. A stand of *Narcissus sp.* (daffodil, jonquil), possibly an old variety, has been identified at the front of the cottage, near the elms. An avenue of poplars to the north of the cottage, outside the homestead paddock, possibly flanked an old entrance way.

### Braeside

The Braeside cottage is a rendered brick building with a protruding front gable with decorative bargeboard and finial. It has gabled and hipped roof forms and large pane double-hung sash windows. A front verandah returns around the northern side of the house. The verandah is supported by timber posts with decorative brackets.

A bay window extension has been added to one side of the house, and a lean-to weatherboard extension has also been added.

### Ploughlands

The ploughlands are significant evidence of cultivation of the Blythburn paddocks before the advent of tractors. The evidence of ridge and furrow features, while sporadic rather than continuous lands across the paddocks, is sufficient to indicate the nature of the agricultural activity. The ploughlands are among a small number of clear early ploughing features surviving in the ACT associated with historically documented settlement sites.

There are two paddocks with fragmentary evidence of ploughing, but with evidence of field boundary ditches and fencelines, one planted with poplars. Also evident are fence post remains, a boundary demarcation, extensive exotic tree plantings and marshland drainage works (Pearson, 2002).

- Paddock 1:

Paddock 1 is located immediately across the small tributary creek South East from Blythburn Cottage. A ditch runs North West-South East across the western side of the flat, and may have been the field boundary, or part of cross-ploughing remains. Remnants of ridge and furrow lands are located across the field, some traceable for up to 150 m to the North East where marshy land borders the creek. An alignment of poplars and a series of ditches are located west of the ploughland, and a small section of ploughed land is located to the south. The ploughland is 160 m wide, with a land width c.6 m and ridges up to 150 m long (area approx. 2.4 ha or c.6 acres) (Pearson, 2002).

- Paddock 2:

Paddock 2 is a ploughed paddock on dry flats west of Blue Gum Creek, about 800 m South East of Blythburn Cottage. The North East edge of the field is marked by two poplars, part of a longer alignment of poplars suggesting an earlier fenceline. Two fenceposts mark the alignment of a fence on the North West side of the paddock. Furrows are not continuous or well preserved, but can be traced in a number of places across the field. Located approximately in the centre of the ploughland is a 1.75 x 3 m rectangular pile of granite rocks, suggesting a collapsed chimney or masonry plinth. Plough furrows run within 2 m of the structure, suggesting that if it is a chimney the associated building pre-dated the ploughing. Ploughmarks show on airphoto (1944). The ploughland is 170 m wide, with a land width 7-10 m and ridges up to 155 m long (area approx. 2.6 ha or 6.5 acres) (Pearson, 2002).

### Setting

The Booroomba Station is set at the foothills of the Brindabella Ranges. The homesteads are set in a large valley, with the Ranges occupying an imposing position to the west.

A sense of arrival is provided to the property as one approaches the Booroomba Homestead and Station, with the valley opening up and views and vistas cast to the south, in the direction of the homesteads of Braeside and Blythburn.

### Physical condition and integrity

Booroomba Station retains a high level of integrity. While the Booroomba Homestead itself has been highly modified, the two homesteads of Braeside and Blythburn, along with outbuildings associated with the Booroomba and Blythburn homesteads, retain a high degree of original material and are in good condition.

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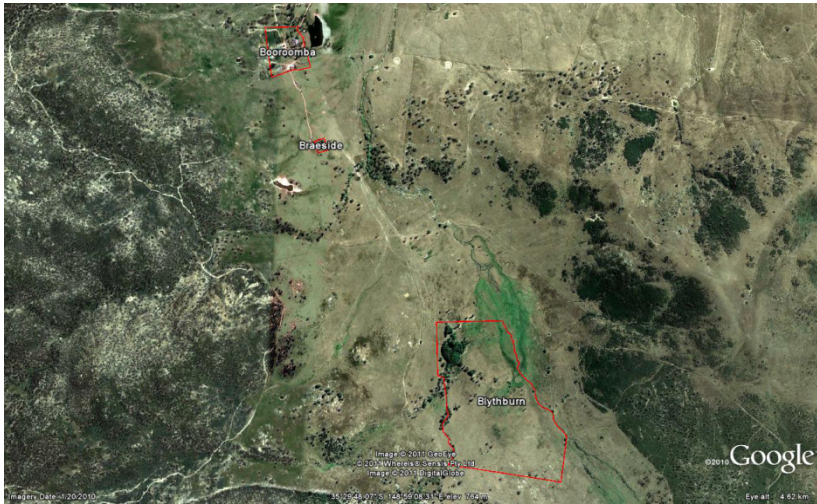
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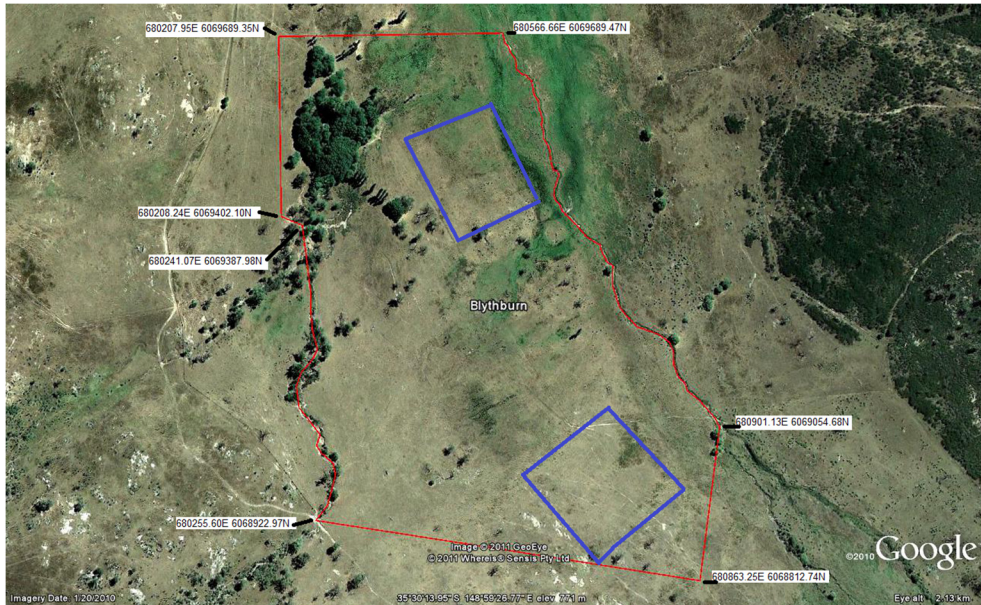
## SITE PLAN AND IMAGES



Site Plan Overview



Boundary surrounding Booroomba outbuildings indicated by solid red line



Boundary surrounding Blythburn homestead, mature trees and ploughlands indicated by solid red line  
 Approximate location of Blythburn ploughlands are indicated by areas identified by solid blue lines



Boundary surrounding Braeside homestead indicated by solid red line

Images taken 17 June 2011



Slab building and blacksmith's



Blacksmith's - interior



Servant's quarters



Servant's quarters



Meat house



Stores



Stores



Stables



hay shed



Stockyards



Blythburn cottage



Blythburn cottage and kitchen at rear



Blythburn water tank



Braeside



Braeside



Braeside



Setting

## NON-STATUTORY BACKGROUND INFORMATION

At the time the property was transferred to her, Elizabeth Julia was listed as 'spinster'. Although she never married, it is known that she had formed an attachment to Kenneth Cameron, who was 21 years her senior. This love affair had an unhappy outcome, as Charles refused permission for the two to marry. Following the refusal, Elizabeth wore a gold "wedding" ring banded in black on each side and engraved with the initials K.C. (Strine design, 1983, 34; Corp, 1982, 29). Elizabeth was fond of poetry and wrote some verse herself, including the following, written in December 1891, which indicates the refusal of permission to marry (Corp, 1982, 29):

She was the dearest of his life,  
She loved him well I know;  
He asked for her to be his wife,  
The answer stern was 'No'.

It is clear that the refusal was not due to religious differences, as both Charles McKeahnie and Kenneth Cameron have their names recorded on a pioneer memorial tablet in St Stephen's Presbyterian Church in Queanbeyan. Neither were there any financial problems in Cameron supporting a wife, as he supplemented his income as a farmer by running the Michelago Post Office in partnership with his brother. Corp suggests that Charles McKeahnie took exception to his daughter marrying a man twenty-one years her senior (Corp, 1982, 29). Other possibilities suggested are that Cameron was friendly with the Campbells of Duntroon, whose clan disgraced themselves in McKeahnie's eyes at the Glencoe massacre in Scotland centuries before, by siding with the English against the highland Scots; or that differences arose between the two men over road closures in the district, the cause of bitter battles between squatters and selectors. Whatever the reason, family history records that Elizabeth was given Blythburn as some form of recompense for her father's refusal to allow her to marry Kenneth Cameron (Strine Design, 1983, 78).

Cameron died a bachelor in 1891. Elizabeth wrote another poem, which is engraved on Kenneth Cameron's gravestone in Queanbeyan cemetery (Corp, 1982, 29):

Rest my beloved rest,  
Your journey is over,  
Again midst the blest,  
We meet to part no more.

## Images



Booroomba Homestead – 17 June 2011