

# Heritage (Decision about Provisional Registration of Coppin Homestead Site, Molonglo) Notice 2016

## Notifiable Instrument NI2016–76

made under the

Heritage Act 2004, s32 (Decision about provisional registration) s34 (Notice of decision about provisional registration)

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### 1 Name of instrument

This instrument is the *Heritage (Decision about Provisional Registration of Coppin Homestead Site, Molonglo) Notice 2016*.

### 2 Decision about provisional registration

On 11 February 2016, the ACT Heritage Council decided not to provisionally register Coppin Homestead Site, Block 3, Section 2, Molonglo (the **Place**).

### 3 Reasons for the decision

The Heritage Council decided not to provisionally register the Place because it did not have heritage significance as it did not meet any of the heritage significance criteria in section 10 of the *Heritage Act 2004*, as set out in the schedule.

### 4 Date decision takes effect

The decision not to provisionally register the Place takes effect on the day after this notice is notified.

Fiona Moore  
A/g Secretary (as delegate for)  
ACT Heritage Council  
11 February 2016



## ACT Heritage Council

### STATEMENT OF REASONS

#### DECISION NOT TO PROVISIONALLY REGISTER

#### Coppin Homestead Site, Molonglo

#### (Block 3 Section 2, Molonglo)

#### IN THE ACT HERITAGE REGISTER

In accordance with Section 32 of the *Heritage Act 2004*, the ACT Heritage Council has decided not to provisionally register Coppin Homestead Site, Molonglo. This Statement of Reasons provides an assessment of Coppin Homestead Site, Molonglo, and finds that the place does not meet any of the criteria under s.10 of the *Heritage Act 2004*.

#### Background

Coppin Homestead Site, Molonglo, was nominated to the ACT Heritage Register in 2013. The site of the homestead is within the old Parish of Yarrolumla, Portion 107, the present-day Division of Molonglo. John Coppin conditionally purchased Portion 107 in 1878, and within eighteen months (by February 1880) Coppin had made improvements to the 200 acre property including a hut, garden fence, land clearing and a yard. In 1891 he and wife Catherine (nee Sheedy) moved to newly acquired holdings in the Parish of Amungula, in present-day Kowen.

In 2015 the site consisted of remnants of a stone fireplace and a pile of dressed stones, probably also representing a fireplace. Some exotic plant species remained near the stone piles, including an Osage orange tree (*Maclura pomifera*), Roman cypress (*Cupressus sempervirens*), box thorns (*Lyium*), briars (*Rubiginosa*), and hawthorns (*Crateagus*).

In 2011 the ACT Heritage Council provided advice on a Conservation Management Plan (CMP) for Coppin's Homestead Site titled: *Molonglo Future Urban Development Stage 2 – Historic Site MHS1 and MHS2* – by Biosis. The CMP noted that site MHS2 (Coppin Homestead Site) had low to moderate cultural and archaeological significance, yet concluded that the place met criteria for listing on the ACT Heritage Register. While the management recommendations proposed in the CMP were approved, the ACT Heritage Council has formed its own opinion regarding the heritage significance of the place.

#### Assessment

The Council's assessment against the criteria specified in s.10 of the *Heritage Act 2004* is as follows.

In assessing the nomination for Coppin Homestead Site, Molonglo, the Council considered:

- the original nomination and documentary evidence supplied by the nominator;
- the Council's *Heritage Assessment Policy* (February 2015);
- information provided by a site inspection on 17 December 2015 and 1 November 2010 by ACT Heritage; and
- the report by ACT Heritage titled, *Background Information Coppin Homestead Site*, February 2016, containing photographs and information on history, description, condition and integrity.

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. Future research may alter the findings of this assessment.

**(a) importance to the course or pattern of the ACT's cultural or natural history;**

Coppin Homestead Site, Molonglo, does not meet this criterion.

While it may be argued that the place has an association with patterns of rural European land use, and vernacular building techniques used by selectors during the late nineteenth century, there is insufficient physical fabric remaining to demonstrate the place's importance to the course or pattern of the ACT's cultural or natural history.

While Coppins Crossing, and Coppins Crossing Road may be read as evidence of John and Catherine's settlement in the area, there is no evidence before the Council suggesting that these features were named after John, Catherine, or descendants as a result of any significant act or contribution made by the family. Further, the Coppins' settlement and industry within the future area of the ACT is better represented by the more substantial Coppin's Homestead Ruins, registered as part of the Glenburn Precinct, Kowen.

Slab construction was adopted as a result of availability of timber, enabling European settlers to build homes from inexpensive, abundant materials, demonstrating the resourcefulness of settlers and the environmental and economic demands of the era and location. While it is likely the house at Coppin Homestead Site, Molonglo, was a vernacular slab construction, there is no evidence of this building technique or material at the place, which was probably divested of slabs once it was no longer occupied. Similarly, there is insufficient heritage fabric at the site that would enable interpretation of the process of dismantling and abandonment.

Remnant exotic landscape elements at late nineteenth century settler sites can suggest patterning of domestic and rural yards, however there is insufficient remaining structure or formality to the planting systems at the place that would permit interpretation or assessment of significance.

**(b) has uncommon, rare or endangered aspects of the ACT's cultural or natural history;**

Coppin Homestead Site, Molonglo, does not meet this criterion.

There are numerous undocumented examples of small nineteenth century rural ruins or standing structures similar to Coppin Homestead Site, Molonglo, scattered throughout the still rural areas of the ACT and surrounding region making a full comparative analysis difficult. However, several examples of pre-Federal Capital rural buildings include Gungaharra Homestead in Harrison, Woden Homestead in Hume, Blundell's Cottage in Parkes, Crinigan's Hut Ruin in Amaroo, Coppin's Homestead Ruins in Kowen (in the Glenburn Precinct), and The Valley in Gungahlin.

Further, there are around 30 properties where slab buildings have been noted in the ACT. However, not all of these buildings are still extant or exist in good condition, and all those that remain are at risk from water and termite damage, general deterioration, and encroaching development. The earliest slab buildings were constructed in the late 1830s/40s at Lanyon and Oaks Estate. Good examples of slab construction within the ACT can be seen at Rosebud Apiary, Belconnen, Well Station, Orroral Homestead and Elm Grove, all of which are entered in the ACT Heritage Register.

However, the place bears no remnant evidence of slab construction. Therefore, owing to its poor level of intactness, combined with the number of comparable nineteenth century rural ruins and places, the Council does not consider the place to have uncommon, rare, or endangered aspects of the ACT's cultural history.

**(c) potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of the ACT's cultural or natural history;**

Coppin Homestead Site, Molonglo, does not meet this criterion.

In 2011 Biosis completed an archaeological excavation at Coppin Homestead Site, Molonglo, recovering artefacts such as nails, fragments of blue floral crockery, plain white bone china, and glass. The excavation did not reveal information on the construction profile or orientation of the building, and the assemblage was not considered to be significant.

The results of the excavation indicated the site had low potential to provide information that would be different to what is already known about 19th century rural life in the ACT. These results represent a significant contrast to, for instance, the registered assemblage retrieved from Crinigan's Hut Ruin, which was extensive and varied, and provided important new evidence of the everyday lives of people in the pre-Federal Capital era of the region.

Although documentary records have produced a coherent picture of the lives of John and Catherine Coppin in the pre-Federal Capital Territory, neither this body of information nor the archaeological record contribute significant new information to this period of the ACT's history, and as such there is little potential for the site to contribute to an understanding of the ACT's cultural history.

**(d) importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of cultural or natural places or objects;**

Coppin Homestead Site, Molonglo, does not meet this criterion.

The site is in very poor condition, with little remaining to the structure, and while some interpretative potential exists at the place, it is not important in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a rural, nineteenth and early twentieth century vernacular slab construction. The only portions of the original house extant are two piles of dressed stones probably belonging to chimneys. Stronger examples of historic slab buildings include Rosebud Apiary, Belconnen, Well Station, Orroral Homestead and Elm Grove, all of which are entered in the ACT Heritage Register.

Further, there are no remains of outbuildings and cultivated areas of the rural landscape to meet the thresholds for inclusion under this criterion as an example of a small, nineteenth and early twentieth century rural holding. For example there is no evidence for raising or managing livestock or crops such as yards, sheds, or fence lines, and while the Osage orange could have been planted as a barrier-hedge, the splitting and spreading of the specimen has resulted in reduction of formal shape and interpretive value. In addition, there are no visible plough lands, and no substantial rural outbuildings have been noted.

**(e) importance in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics valued by the ACT community or a cultural group in the ACT;**

Coppin Homestead Site, Molonglo, does not meet this criterion.

While the place is valued by descendants of the Coppin family who still live in the ACT and surrounding region, this association is familial and personal. The association does not extend to the broader ACT community or a cultural group in the ACT.

The remnant exotic plant species set amongst the piles of stone ruins possesses an element of aesthetic appeal, somewhat evocative of a past era. However, there is no evidence before the Council suggesting the place possesses landmark qualities, artistic excellence, or visual prominence demonstrated to be valued by the wider ACT community or a cultural group.

**(f) importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement for a particular period;**

Coppin Homestead Site, Molonglo, does not meet this criterion.

There is insufficient remaining physical evidence of the original slab structure or surrounding pastoral landscape to demonstrate any degree of integrity, and therefore meet the basic test for

inclusion under this criterion. Further, while one of the dressed stone piles suggests the shape of a chimney, it does not demonstrate a high degree of technical achievement for the period in which it was constructed.

**(g) has a strong or special association with the ACT community, or a cultural group in the ACT for social, cultural or spiritual reasons;**

Coppin Homestead Site, Molonglo, does not meet this criterion.

There is no evidence before the Council suggesting a strong or special association between Coppin Homestead Site and the ACT Community or a cultural group in the ACT. While the place is valued by descendants of the Coppin family who still live in the ACT and surrounding region, this association does not extend to the ACT community or a cultural group in the ACT.

**(h) has a special association with the life or work of a person, or people, important to the history of the ACT.**

Coppin Homestead Site, Molonglo, does not meet this criterion.

The place has an association with a family who features in the history of the ACT in the Molonglo and Kowen districts, however there is no evidence before the Council demonstrating that this family shaped or influenced the pattern of development or the course of the history of the ACT to a degree significant enough to meet this criterion. Further, the lives of John and Catherine Coppin in the ACT are better represented at the Coppin's Homestead Ruins in the Glenburn Precinct, which is listed on the ACT Heritage Register, and retains more heritage fabric.

While it is true that the association of John and Catherine Coppin with the old Parish of Yarrolumla is recognised in the names 'Coppins Crossing,' and 'Coppins Crossing Road,' there is no evidence before the Council indicating that these features were named after John, Catherine, or descendants as a result of any significant act or contribution made by the family.

## **Conclusion**

Coppin Homestead Site, Molonglo, is an interesting feature of pre-Federal Capital settlement in the ACT, but has not been shown to have the necessary evidence required to meet the high thresholds for inclusion on the ACT Heritage Register. The ruined state of the building significantly diminishes its ability to be important as evidence and obscures any features or artefacts that could have contributed heritage values.

While it has some potential to add to existing historical and archaeological knowledge of the area, it has not been shown to an extent acceptable as evidence under the *Heritage Act 2004* to be able to contribute any new information that would extend, fill any gaps, or change our knowledge of the cultural history of the ACT. No evidence has been demonstrated that it could contribute to the cultural history of the ACT any more than other nineteenth century rural houses in the region.

Whilst the Council finds that the place does not meet any of the criteria of the *Heritage Act 2004* this does not mean that the place has no heritage values at all: they are just not demonstrated to be of a high enough degree under section 10 of the *Heritage Act 2004* to be considered significant to the ACT.

This Statement of Reasons provides an assessment of Coppin Homestead Site, Molonglo and finds that the place does not meet any of the criteria specified in s.10 of the *Heritage Act 2004*.

SITE PLAN



Image 1 Site Boundary