



MAJURA HOUSE PRECINCT ACT: REPORT ON HERITAGE VALUES



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National Archives of Australia; ArchivesACT; ACTmapi; NSW Historical Land Records Viewer; Open Street Map

FOREWORD

The Majura House Precinct, in the Majura valley ACT has, for more than 30 years, gone largely unrecognised for the value of what it contains, what it represents, and what it has the potential to become.

This report has been prepared for 'Majura House' in response to protracted delays in gaining recognition of the property's heritage values, and in gaining some security of tenure over the property.

The Precinct was recognised more than forty years ago as having heritage value, and was nominated to the Register of the National Estate in 1983 (being listed in 1986 – but with no protective effect since 2007).

Despite professionals repeatedly signalling its heritage value in the 1990s and 2000s, there was evident confusion about its value and its nomination status, seemingly scrambled in the transition to self-government and numerous subsequent administrative and legislative changes.

The Precinct had gone from formal National recognition to no formal recognition at all.

And in 2005 the lease over the property lapsed, despite an application to renew (in common with some other Majura valley properties).

This was concerning, particularly in view of: proposals in the 2004 Spatial Plan for the Eastern Broadacre study area to include the Majura valley (which may have prompted non-renewal of leases); continued steady advancement through the 2010s of reports and planning proposals assuming future broadacre development in that area; and uncertain tenure generated by complex and protracted negotiations between the ACT and Commonwealth Governments over the Majura valley and South Pialligo to allow development.

These factors placed the property in an administrative 'limbo', amidst a seeming lack of interest from the ACT Government in its heritage values or in secure tenure that would enable the pastoral/agricultural enterprise to continue or source finance in the meantime.

Reference to the Heritage Map layer in ACTmapi reveals that the Majura House Precinct is one of few holdings in the valley that is not entered on the Register. Those that are listed relate to Aboriginal places and threatened biodiversity. 'Majura House' appears as an unprotected island in a sea of shading.

There was no apparent progress on nomination until the early 2020s, at which point the ACT Heritage Unit responded to landholder concern with an inspection, and in 2021 with an initial assessment report.

Identification of information gaps in that process showed the need for documentation of heritage values at a level both broader and deeper than in the past, which has prompted this report.

What we have in the Majura House Precinct is a complex of great value to the ACT, for the nature and rarity of its built features, for the two-century span of its connection and association with key stages of historical and social development of the district, and for opportunities that it offers to heritage research and education.

Its retained rural setting and its proximity to the city combine to heighten its value for research and education, while increasing the risk of its loss to unsympathetic development.

Its emergence as a centre for innovation in holistic and sustainable production has attracted considerable community interest in the property and an energetic constituency that shares its aspirations to show us all a better way.

In common with other parts of the Majura valley, at 'Majura House' that better way places strong value on the stories and traces of what it has been, within the emerging story of what it is on its way to becoming.

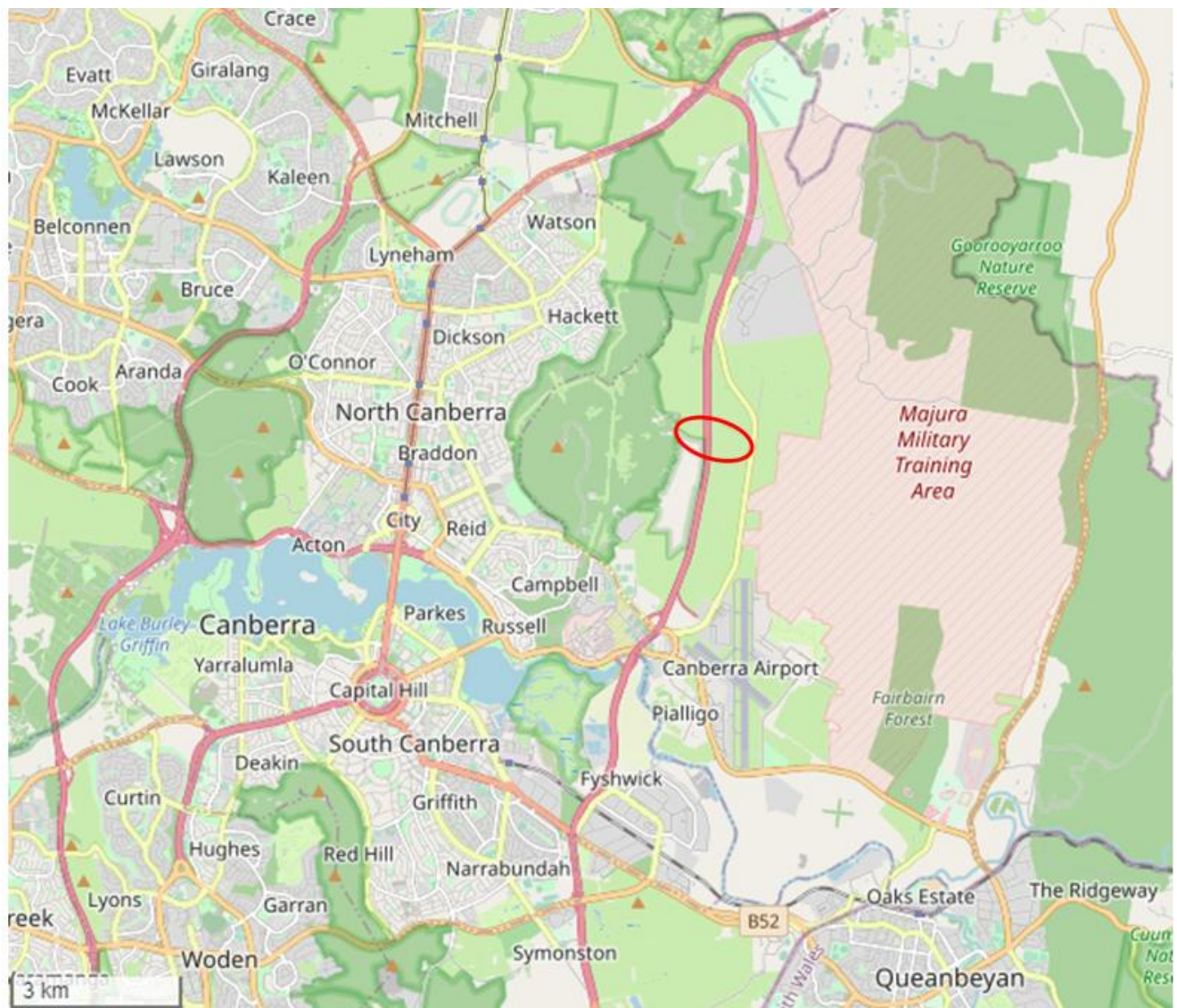
This report is an initial attempt at collating and appraising the breadth of its heritage values, and bringing these to the attention of those who might care about both its past and its future.

Mark Butz
March 2023

See also: *Appendix A* for a Summary Timeline of heritage awareness and status – Majura House precinct

Location

Ngunnawal Country – Majura valley – Canberra ACT



Location of the Majura House Precinct (edged red)
(Open Street Map 2023)

Definition

‘Majura House’ refers to the homestead building located in the Majura House Precinct (Blocks 715 & 716 Majura).

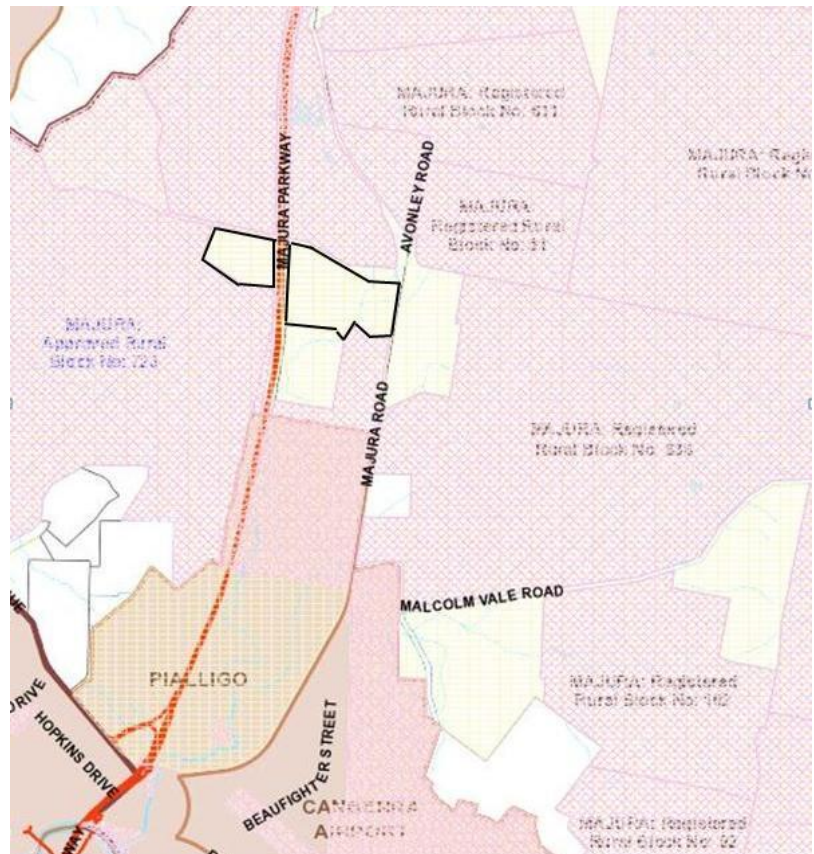
This is to distinguish it from the nearby historical holding of J W Mayo, referred to at times as ‘Majura Farm’ or ‘Majura’.

In some map sources ‘Majura House’ is referred to as ‘Majura Cottage’.

Blocks 715 and 716 Majura were delineated after construction of the Majura Parkway; these were previously Block 59 Majura, and at one stage Blocks 59 Gungahlin and 215 Canberra City.



ACTmapi 2023
Definition of Majura House Precinct
Above: Basic Map layer
Right: Heritage Map layer



SUMMARY OF HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

The Majura House Precinct is a farm area first established in the 1820s at the north-eastern frontier of Robert Campbell's 'Pialligo' (later 'Duntroon') pastoral station. It appeared as a 'cattle station' on the first formal survey of the Limestone Plains (by Hoddle) in 1832, and as a sheep station in subsequent early surveys.

It is one of very few parcels of the 'Duntroon' pastoral/agricultural landscape that has not been greatly encroached upon, absorbed, or obscured, by urban development in Canberra.

It remains a working pastoral/agricultural landscape, and is probably the oldest farm area in the ACT in continuous use.

'Majura House' is the oldest of the three remaining 'Duntroon' worker stone cottages.

It is the only one of those cottages still in continuous use as a farm residence, and is in turn one of the oldest farm residences in the ACT to be continuously occupied.

The cottage has stood for more than 170 years, being 60+ years in a 'Duntroon' tenant farmlet, and 110+ years in a post-Federal Capital Territory (FCT) leased rural holding.

The cottage is rare in its comparative intactness, retaining abundant original materials, lightly modified, and readily restorable.

The Precinct retains all key elements of an early 20th century small farm holding, including numerous outbuildings, farm machinery, mature amenity trees, and evidence of early access tracks and fencelines.

The single-stand woolshed is rare – a vernacular structure of singular form, falling outside the customary template of woolshed types in the ACT, but with all the expected components.

It is still in use after more than a century.

The well, lined with hand-made bricks, is very rare – known to have been used for at least 160 years, and still capable of use.

The external boundaries of the Precinct are as they were in 1915 (now bisected by the Majura Parkway), shaped by an early 20th century creek crossing and boundary adjustments made in defining the Royal Military College (RMC) lands.

The Precinct is part of the cultural landscape of the central Majura valley, which has been shaped by three key phases: the Campbells' early land claims, followed by free selection in the 1860s, followed by FCT leasing after the acquisition of 'Duntroon' in 1912.

The Precinct is directly associated with the incipient village ('Majura Vale') which emerged here in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

It is the only example of such a village remaining in the ACT.

The farm area and its occupants have strong association with numerous families fundamental to the development of Queanbeyan and Canberra, with roots in 19th century pioneers, emancipated convicts, bounty immigrants and selectors, and with particular links to Highland Scots migrant families.

The Precinct has potential to be an important teaching site for social history and early 19th to early 20th century design/construction methods and pastoral/agricultural practices.

A large and growing constituency places a high value on the Precinct, as part of a new era of innovation in sustainable holistic pastoral/agricultural/horticultural practice while respecting biodiversity and cultural heritage.

The Precinct is close to Canberra airport, and within easy reach from most of the city, offering educational potential and possibilities for sustainable heritage tourism and agritourism.

SUMMARY/PLAN OF HERITAGE PHYSICAL ELEMENTS



- | | |
|--|---|
| A Original stone cottage - c.1850 | J Old winnowing shed/tack store |
| B Remains of external kitchen - c.1950s | K Winnowing machine & cover |
| C Slab shed | L Single-bail dairy/milking shed |
| D Relict house garden – paving, arch, hedge | M Mature garden/yard trees |
| E Workers' toilet | N Old telegraph pole with insulator -1920s |
| F Slab and galvanised iron woolshed complex – yards, races, dip - c.1916 | O Historical fencelines – old posts retained |
| G Garage/workshop, storage, turkey shelters | P Riparian willows - early 1900s? |
| H Relict farm machinery and farm paraphernalia | Q Former creek crossing - visible form |
| I Old stock shed/ dairy | R Brick-lined well – 1860 or older
- alluvial flats cultivated for c.190 years |

Other elements out-of-frame in this image include: vegetation corridors and shelter belts, and areas used in 20th century military training to the west.

ASSESSMENT OF HERITAGE VALUES

(Arranged by assessment criteria for the ACT Heritage Register – some repetition is unavoidable)

a) Importance to the course or pattern of the ACT's cultural or natural history

The Majura valley was of prime importance to the First People and was equally so for Robert Campbell. 'Majura House' was his north-eastern frontier outpost, overlooking the new and growing transport routes from Lake George to the Monaro via the Limestone Plains.

The Majura House Precinct embodies many layers of story in the ACT's cultural history that the property has played a role in shaping.

They encompass:

- the earliest European 1820s settlement phase on the Limestone Plains
- the earliest major landholder (Campbell of 'Duntroon')
- major economic development in stock and cultivation, export of produce, and industrial development in flour milling, brick-making and limeburning
- convict labour and bounty immigration, and the transition between them
- a landholder-led migration/settlement system
- social and economic change with introduction of free selection
- definition of the site for the Royal Military College
- tenancy and land use change arising from leasing of remaining (outside the RMC) parts of the former 'Duntroon' as small holdings
- emergence of a new 'village' community ('Majura Vale'), initially prompted by free selection and then by the breaking-up of 'Duntroon'
- the rural-urban transition/'hybrid' phase of Canberra, as stock routes and travelling stock reserves were being delineated to service saleyards within a rapidly emerging urban area; and
- military training in the Majura valley.

b) Uncommon, rare or endangered aspects of the ACT's cultural or natural history

The 'Majura House' stone **cottage** (c.1850) is a rare survivor, as one of only three remaining examples of a 'Duntroon' worker cottage, built in local stone by craftsmen imported by the Campbell family, and the oldest of the three.

It is the only such cottage that is:

- still in any semblance of its original context
- still in relationship with its setting and related outbuildings; and
- still in continuous use.

It is directly associated with the earliest phase of European settlement on the Limestone Plains in the 1820s, and the extensive building program undertaken by Charles Campbell and George Campbell in the 1850s-60s.

It remained an essential part of the 'Duntroon' estate until its resumption for the Federal Capital Territory – a span of about 180 years.

From that point on, it has (for more than a century) been a small holding that has retained its distinctive character and function.

The Majura House Precinct is one of the oldest farm complexes in the ACT that is still occupied and still in pastoral/agricultural use.

Of the remaining elements of 19th century 'Duntroon', 'Majura House' in its pastoral/agricultural landscape setting may be the closest to what it was when it was first constructed more than 170 years ago.

Its occupation by one family through four generations, across nearly 120 years, came close to straddling three different centuries.

The **woolshed** (single stand) is rare in the ACT, being of quite a different scale and nature to other better-known and documented examples; more than a century old, it shows a high degree of adaptation, and is still in continuous use. It may be the sole remaining example on its part of the spectrum of ACT woolsheds.

The brick-lined **well** is a particularly rare feature, at least 160 years old and capable of continued use.

Some of the other **outbuildings and structures** may be the only examples of their type extant in the ACT.

‘Majura House’ was a key element in an ‘**incipient village**’ at ‘Majura Vale’, part of a band of interconnected families and farm operations across the valley, straddling the 19th and 20th centuries, and marking a shift away from dependence on ‘Duntroon’, coupled with a new socio-economic environment following establishment of the Federal Capital Territory.

This ‘incipient village’ is cited as the only surviving ‘village’ complex from the 19th century that has retained its pastoral/agricultural landscape context. It represents the informal and spontaneous growth of a low-density settlement, in contrast to formally-laid-out closer-settled villages such as Hall or Tharwa.

There is potential for these attributes to be endangered by proposals for broadacre development in the Majura valley, which may involve transport, warehouses, storage and security.

c) Potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of the ACT’s cultural or natural history

The old cottage, vernacular outbuildings and structures, brick-lined well, machinery on site, paddocks cultivated over long periods, and evidence of earlier access tracks, present as a compact **pastoral/agricultural complex** that is readily understood.

Together they demonstrate how resources have been used over time, how residents have responded to their environment, and how practices have changed over time in response to physical, social and economic circumstances.

They offer abundant opportunities to study, interpret, and educate about, those past ways of life and pastoral/agricultural practices, designs and functions, with a time span across nearly two centuries.

This potential is enhanced by **movable objects** stored on site, such as old stockbrands, wool bale stencils, and objects left by military personnel using the western parts of the property. These tangible and tactile objects enhance connection with stories of historical use and change.

‘Majura House’ offers particular stories across 170+ years, as:

- the oldest remaining **dwelling** in the Majura valley
- one of the oldest dwellings in the ACT; and
- the nucleus of one of the oldest farm complexes in the ACT to be in continuous use.

It illustrates the ambitions of Robert Campbell in bargaining for additional land grants in compensation, and his strategy of securing the middle of the Majura valley (1830), followed up by an equally strategic purchase in the lower valley, with the Woolshed Block (1835). ‘Majura House’ was built at the absolute north-east corner of Robert Campbell’s holdings, addressing the track from Lake George, Gundaroo, Goulburn and Sydney in to his estate and the Limestone Plains district, en route on to the Monaro.

The building illustrates a worker cottage attached to a small farmlet, later leased by the tenants and descendants as part of a revised holding. That context remains understandable due to its retention of historical boundaries and its pastoral/agricultural setting.

It illustrates the changes undertaken to transition from being a tenant farm on a large estate property with shared resources to a small independent holding that needed to become largely self-reliant while also being inter-dependent with other nearby small holdings.

Specifically, the establishment of the ‘Majura House’ **woolshed**, and reliance of other properties on that woolshed, illustrate the impact on small landholders of the cessation of shearing at the Duntroon Woolshed due to its acquisition for the Royal Military College (RMC).

The retention of old paddock **fencelines** as block boundaries following resumption illustrates the processes involved in leasing former tenant farms (outside the RMC lands) while economising on the need for new rabbit-wire fencing on boundaries.

There is **archaeological potential** in the old well, in sub-floor spaces of the old house, and in former military camps/dumps in the western parts of the Precinct.

d) Importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of cultural or natural places or objects

The stone **cottage** retains its main characteristics, illustrating both comparisons and contrasts with the other two remaining 'Duntroon' worker cottages. The style and layout of the cottage illustrate the provision of robust accommodation for a tenant farmer on the 'Duntroon' estate, as part of a system to foster an industrious and loyal workforce.

Construction styles of the cottage and records of subsequent modifications reflect different phases of the rural enterprise and different occupant families since the earliest European occupation phase.

A number of **outbuildings and yards** retain their main characteristics, as does the physical arrangement of elements of the small-farm operation.

Rustic construction of the **woolshed** and other vernacular **outbuildings** is of particular interest, characteristic of a small rural holding and now rarely seen.

The modest woolshed at 'Majura House' is a marked contrast with more sophisticated structures remaining from larger properties; it is a rare occupant at the opposite and largely unacknowledged end of the spectrum.

Woolsheds tend to be valued highly - for rural communities because they enrich rural life and relate strongly to livelihoods, and for others (perhaps the majority) as icons for Australia's rural past and symbols for the identity of 'outback Australia' (Hobbs 1993: 29-31).

This kind of uncomplicated building, built by relatively small players, using readily available materials, on an accessible scale, is uncomplicated and easily understood. Its 'roughness' is part of its affective/emotional appeal and impact. Such buildings are 'to be felt rather than reasoned' (Cox & Freeland 1980:7).

The brick-lined **well** is a very rare feature of particular interest, with some of its bricks dated from the 1840s. It helps to interpret historical and continuing use of the extensive Majura valley aquifer, and reliance on its yield during periods of drought, as well as historical construction and brick-making methods.

e) Importance in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics valued by the ACT community or a cultural group in the ACT

In recent years there has been emerging interest from the Canberra-Queanbeyan and region community in the Majura valley as a north-eastern gateway to the 'Bush Capital', heightened by development of the Majura Parkway. This includes aesthetics but goes much further to value its cultural landscape and its demonstration of specialised sustainable production practices.

The organically evolved cultural landscape of the valley today is peppered with heritage places that enrich stories of rural life in the valley through two centuries, invoking a sense of the pioneering past through continuity of pastoral and agricultural uses.

With an additional focus on potentials for a sustainable future, the Majura valley cultural landscape is continuing to evolve in response to a changing world, respecting and enhancing interspersed native grassland and woodland ecosystems that are important to biodiversity conservation.

At 'Majura House' this is shown in regenerative and holistic farming practices, coupled with intentional management of land and creeklines to sustain biodiversity.

g) A strong or special association with the ACT community, or a cultural group in the ACT for social, cultural or spiritual reasons

The Majura House Precinct has a strong and growing association with the ACT community (and beyond) for social and cultural reasons. This is not one specific cultural group – more a community of interest that has been growing over the past two decades.

Social network sites and comments on the East Canberra District Strategy demonstrate a very high level of community interest in the Majura valley's continuing and evolving pastoral/agricultural heritage, and a growing constituency of people in Canberra and district who are willing to engage in support of those values.

In 2011 the ACT Rural Landholders Association with the Molonglo Catchment Group prepared a report on 'sustainable farming in the Majura valley', which outlined the aspirations and ambitions of landholders as a showcase not only for responsible and sustainable production but also for integration with protection and enhancement of environment and heritage values.

There are equally distinctive opportunities for recreation and tourism, particularly based in environment and heritage, which have clearly aroused significant community interest and concern.

In 2017 the valley community staged a Majura Valley Bush Festival with associated community-based organisations e.g. Majura Landcare Group and Molonglo Catchment Group (now Molonglo Conservation Group). The event sought to: 'celebrate the people, history and stories that make up the unique heritage of the Majura Valley', and to showcase the working farms and produce of the valley. It was staged by more than a hundred volunteers, and attracted participation of thousands of visitors.

Continuing community outreach programs attract people to the valley not only for produce but to engage in seasonal activities such as the Sunflower Maze at 'Majura House'.

h) A special association with the life or work of a person, or people, important to the history of the ACT

In common with all relict areas from 'Duntroon', the place has association with the Campbell family through several generations, in the eras of Robert, Charles, George, Frederick, and J E R (Col. 'Jack') Campbell.

This connects 'Majura House' and its earliest occupants with the 19th century estate of the Campbells, today marked by relict buildings and recorded sites.

Most remaining buildings are now within the urban area, including the core of the RMC, St John's church and schoolhouse, 'Blundell's Cottage' and 'Mugga Mugga' cottage, and 'The Oaks' in Oaks Estate, along with sites of most of the demolished worker cottages and Glebe House.

In today's peri-urban zone Duntroon Woolshed, Duntroon Dairy and 'Woden' Homestead remain, and we can point to the sites of the windmill and the now-drowned Duntroon Ford (Hudson's Crossing).

The outlook from the 'Majura House' grounds encompasses Campbell's aspirational acquisitions along Woolshed Creek, with the view beyond to the south taking in his Jerrabomberra valley holdings and the road to the Monaro where he established his distant outstations, almost as far as the Victorian border.

As a worker cottage and farmlet, 'Majura House' also reflects the Campbell family's immigration practices. It illustrates occupancy by both types of imported labour – through the convict system (Mayo) and through bounty immigration (McIntosh) – and marks the change of dominance between these following the end of transportation.

The 'airbrushing' of Alfred Mayo's convict origins illustrates an attached stigma, while his nearly sixty-year association with the Campbells illustrates the value placed on a good worker regardless of such origins. In the following phase, the decades-long persistence of spoken Gaelic in the Majura valley highlights the preference of the Campbells for Highland Scots as bounty immigrants.

The cottage has very likely association with George Rottenbury, the imported craftsman responsible for many of the 'Duntroon' worker stone cottages, as mason and limeburner to the Campbells post c.1849.

It has particular association with a range of people who were tenants and small landholder selectors early in the history of the Majura valley and broader area.

They include in particular the McIntosh and Mayo families, from their earliest activities in the district. Both these families remained in the valley and district over two centuries, with the Mayo family resident at 'Majura House' itself through four generations, as well as occupying other properties along Woolshed Creek. Additional functional associations can be drawn with the McPherson, Harman, Cooper, Darmody, Butt, Austen, Edlington, O'Rourke and Cameron families - and many others.

'Majura House' represents the lives of people of modest profile, who were nonetheless fundamental in the economic, social and cultural development of the district. Their stories comprise an essential component of Australian pastoral history, identity, and sense of place - a counterbalance to the customary fare of heroic pioneer models, grazing empires, grand homesteads, giant woolsheds, and highly visible identities.

COMPARATIVE ASSESSMENT

Cottage

Comparing 'Majura House' with a broad range of other types of structures in the ACT can be unhelpful in understanding the heritage value of the place, because it needs to be compared with buildings of the same kind.

While there is some value in aligning the dates of construction of other buildings, age is only one element in understanding their heritage value. For example, Duntroon Dairy (c.1832) pre-dates 'Majura House' (c.1850), but the dairy is a non-residential structure.

It can also be unhelpful to compare a worker cottage with the primary homesteads of large properties such as 'Lanyon' (1850), 'Duntroon' (1833/1862), 'Woden' (c.1832?) or 'Tuggeranong' (1908), or with larger secondary homesteads such as 'The Oaks' (c.1836).

The 'Duntroon' worker cottages and associated farmlets represent a distinctive landholder-led migration/settlement and property management system which was relatively uncommon. Only three examples of these stone cottages remain for comparison, others having been removed in the process of urbanisation.

None of the 'Duntroon' worker cottages were identical, all were altered in different ways, and the remaining cottages offer different and complementary stories and educational opportunities.

When compared with the other extant 'Duntroon' worker cottages - 'Blundells Cottage' and 'Mugga Mugga':

- 'Majura House' is the oldest, but is broadly contemporary (c.1850) and of the same general nature – all three are stone cottages, possibly all built by Rottenbury for Campbell; while anecdotal sources ascribe a date of 1838 to 'Mugga Mugga' this probably refers to a shepherd hut later replaced by the present stone cottage in the 1860s-70s or 1870s-80s (Armes & Winston-Gregson 1989:6)
- 'Majura House' is probably the least modified cottage of the three, with only minor changes to the original stone structure
[note: this contradicts directly some comparative statements made in plans relating to the other two cottages (e.g. EMA 2014:59,60; GML 2014:128, 132)];
while it requires some repair, it is reasonably intact with ample original materials in place, including timber shingles under the roofing iron, and other materials on site but dispersed e.g. original bricks;
being leased, its upkeep is not assisted by government funding, and insecure tenure since 2005 would inevitably discourage private investment
- 'Majura House' retains numerous outbuildings and machinery shelters, in their original location and configuration, as well as an abundance of old agricultural machinery, which together assist understanding of the house as the hub of a small rural enterprise across more than a hundred years;
this is not the case for 'Blundells Cottage' or 'Mugga Mugga', which are both strongly focused on the building and domestic contents, and are government-funded as house museums
- 'Majura House' retains its rural landscape setting and outlook;
this is not entirely the case for 'Mugga Mugga' which has a part-suburban outlook across some open fields, and is certainly not the case for 'Blundells Cottage' which is in a highly developed urban setting, encircled by roads, albeit with a pleasant outlook over the artificial lake

Woolshed

More than 40 woolsheds remain in the ACT, dating from the 1830s to the 1980s.

Some remain in use on farms, including: 'Lanyon' (1938 – 6 stands); Cuppacumbalong (1893 - 12 stands); Elm Grove' (1940s); Booroomba (1860/1990 rebuilt); Gold Creek (1906/1955+); and Callum Brae (1920).

Others have been repurposed to non-pastoral uses, including those at: Duntroon (1833 – 18 stands); Tuggeranong (1929/second shed 1952); Yarralumla (1904 – 20 stands); Kambah (1930s); Strathnairn (1920s); Currans/Mulligans Flat (1940s - relocated and modified); Horse Park (1905-07); Hall (1930s – 2 stands); Glenburn/Kowen (1890 – 6 stands); Naas (c.1900); and Orroral (1929-30 – 3 stands).

Most of these are medium to large woolsheds that have previously served extensive properties.

The 'Majura House' woolshed is of a different order and nature:

- small (single stand)
- vernacular, built of vertical slabs, corrugated iron, bush timber poles, and a range of repurposed materials
- adjacent sheep yards, races and dip intact.

A major study of woolsheds in the ACT pastoral landscape (Hobbs 1993), established a typology of sheds from different dates and phases of construction, and regional groups. That study contained no record or analysis of an extant small shed such as the 'Majura House' woolshed, which does not fit with that study's dates of construction, development phases, or regional groups.

This omission leaves a gap in our perception and understanding of the spectrum of woolsheds remaining in the ACT.

As background information for the Glenburn Precinct, in 2014 the ACT Heritage Unit updated the Hobbs catalogue of ACT woolsheds and included 'Majura House', dating this (probably erroneously) as 1920s-30s, but there is no information on the shed to aid comparison (ACT Heritage Council 2015: Appendix B:31).

The 'Majura House' woolshed may be the only one of this small scale and nature that remains in active service. Even if not, its functional connection with one of the ACT's oldest extant buildings and oldest continuously used farms adds to its value as heritage, and boosts its value for heritage interpretation.

Well

The 'Majura House' well is situated in the front paddock between Woolshed Creek and Majura Road. It appears in a survey plan dating from 1862 (M628 743).

The well has 1.3 metres internal diameter, lined with hand-made bricks. At least one detached brick is attributed to Hunt & Kaye of Queanbeyan, with a very similar specimen dated to 1842 (Gemmell 1986: Plate 11).

Other wells have been noted in the Majura valley, including:

- on the 'Limekilns' block (now in the AFP complex): an old rock-lined well, bottle-shouldered, on the right hand bank of the creek, by the 1980s collapsed and deteriorating due to creek erosion; diameter external 1800mm, internal at the base 1600mm [could feasibly be a lime kiln]; an additional unlined shaft c.2500mm square, capped with timber after cessation of use, 40 metres from the creek bed (Winston-Gregson 1985; NOHC 1999:52,109)
- an 'old well' shown on the August 1912 survey plan (B502 fol.13) at Joseph Mayo's house (now 'Dove Cottage'); not recorded in archaeological surveys in the 1990s (NOHC 1999).
- several possible well sites noted at Thomas Mayo's house (NOHC 1999:57)
- an old brick-lined well (about 4-5 metres depth), in the southern valley, exposed and collapsed due to erosion of Woolshed Creek, on the eastern side of the creek (Mike Hodgkin pers.comm. 2023)
 - this may refer to 'Dove Cottage'; and
- a disused well at 'Malcolm Vale', with the top section concreted (NOHC 1999:65).

None of these other wells are known to be intact or accessible. This makes the 'Majura House' well of particular interest, as perhaps the only remaining well of this kind in the Majura valley (or more broadly, in the ACT).

Other brick-lined wells are known to have existed in Queanbeyan, including one built in c.1869 in front of the Police stables by James Cooper and Samuel Taylor to provide water for Police horses (queanbeyanmuseum.org.au). It is no longer extant.

Late in 2021 a brick-lined well of 1 metre diameter and 9 metres depth was uncovered during demolition work in central Queanbeyan (Rutledge St), thought to date from the 1870s to service Meyers' cordial factory. It is good quality construction and in good condition, and will be preserved in the redevelopment (qprc.nsw.gov.au, 8 October 2021). Like the well at 'Majura House' it is a brick-lined well, but differs in its application (town industrial vs rural), and appears to be more recent, by up to 30 years.

Landscape setting

‘Majura House’ retains its rural landscape setting and outlook. This is not the case for most other historic homesteads or cottages in the ACT which have become road-locked in urban areas, such as ‘Blundell’s Cottage’, or repurposed in suburban developments, such as ‘Gungaharra’, or in industrial developments, such as ‘Hill Station’. In these cases, while the buildings remain intact, it is difficult to envisage their former rural setting and the context for their construction and subsequent history. They seem quaint rather than meaningful.

At ‘Majura House’ the setting remains one of grazing and cropping, with some paddocks known to have been cultivated for more than a century (evident on survey plans). It is noted that cropping was not carried out at ‘Mugga Mugga’ (FCP 1994:55), adding an additional element and some additional value to this continued agricultural practice at ‘Majura House’.

In some ACT homestead settings, pastoral use is passive in the form of stock agistment, whereas use at ‘Majura House’ has at all stages been active, and undertaken by resident landholders.

It is stated that the ‘Woden’ property is the oldest farm homestead in the ACT to be continuously occupied and still part of an operating farm (ACT Government 2012). The same is said of ‘Majura House’. It is difficult to be certain which of these two quite different properties has the stronger claim.

For ‘Woden’, one account (O’Keefe 2018) has it that the land that became Portion 12 Parish Queanbeyan (2560 acres) was initially granted to John Palmer (brother-in-law of Robert Campbell), apparently without title being issued. In 1831, it was granted to Francis Mowatt, and again title was not issued. In 1837 the land was legally purchased by Dr James Fitzgerald Murray who established the ‘Woden’ homestead.

This differs from the account in the ‘Woden’ homestead heritage decision (ACT Government 2012) which states that Mowatt built a stone cottage in 1832 on the land which he called ‘Jerrabomberra’ [perhaps despite not having title to the land, and presumably grazing sheep on it]. Murray then purchased the land and enlarged that cottage into a homestead in 1837, which he called ‘Woden’.

In relation to the **homesteads**, whichever version of the above is correct the original stone cottage core of ‘Woden’ homestead would pre-date the ‘Majura House’ stone cottage, probably by 10-20 years.

In relation to the **farms**, it is clear that Campbell’s ‘Pialligo’ commenced (from 1825) before Mowatt’s ‘Jerrabomberra’ (‘Woden’), and Campbell’s 1000 acre block in the Majura valley dates from early 1829 (Steven 1965:297). With no fences and no competing landholder claims, it is highly likely that the Majura valley was used to graze Campbell’s sheep before he gained approval for it, as appears to have been the case for the woolshed block of ‘Duntroon’. This suggests that the area now occupied by ‘Majura House’ was in pastoral use possibly from 1825 but at least from 1829, and it has remained in pastoral use without interruption.

The two properties, however, tell quite different stories. ‘Woden’ was always a large property, while the Majura House Precinct was at first a relatively small (but strategic) subset of the ‘Duntroon’ estate. From 1912 ‘Majura House’ was a small holding left over from the carve-up of ‘Duntroon’, with an area one-tenth the present size of ‘Woden’, and one-twentieth its original size.

Contrasts probably outweigh comparisons, and we may not need a definitive resolution of the claim for ‘oldest continuous’.

The ‘**incipient village**’, of which ‘Majura House’ was a part, is cited as the only surviving ‘village’ complex from the early-to-mid-19th century that has retained its agricultural landscape context (with ‘Canbury village’ now totally subsumed into the urban form). This represents informal growth of a low-density settlement, in contrast to formally laid-out villages such as Hall or Tharwa (NOHC 1999:43).

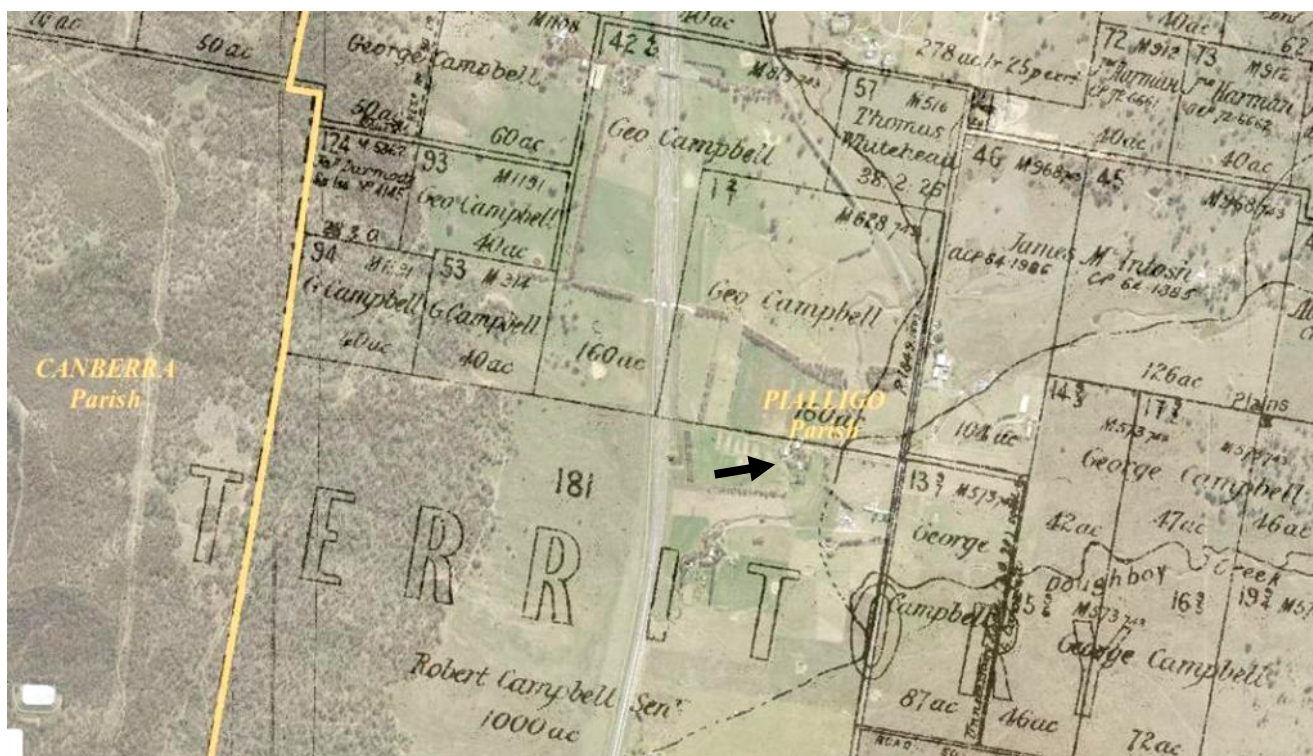
BACKGROUND INFORMATION

HISTORY

Detailed background to the early European exploration and settlement of the Limestone Plains district, and the Campbell family of 'Duntroon', is told in many sources; what follows is a summary of some of the material most relevant as context for 'Majura House'.

Location and origins

The Majura House Precinct (Blocks 715 and 716 Majura) straddles four historical portions of Parish Pialligo County Murray, with their origins in both early land grants to Robert Campbell (1830) and later selections by George Campbell (1860s-70s). These are portions 181, 1, 42 and 53.



Overlay of Parish Pialligo map on 2022 imagery (ACTmap);
'Majura House' is at the top right-hand (NE) corner of portion 181 (arrowed)

All became part of the 'Duntroon' property, through five ownership/management phases, across 87 years:

- Robert Campbell (1769- 1846) - founded as 'Pialligo' 1825; built 'Limestone Cottage' homestead 1830-32, Duntroon Dairy c.1832 and Duntroon Woolshed c.1833; was granted portion 181 parish Pialligo
- Charles Campbell (1810-1888; son of Robert snr) - managed as 'Duntroon' 1835-1854; purchased 'Ginninderra' 1830s and 'Belconnen' 1837; built Duntroon windmill and earliest stone worker cottages
- George Campbell (1818-1881; son of Robert snr) - managed 'Duntroon' 1855-1876; built 'Duntroon House' 1862 and additional stone worker cottages; selected portions 1, 42, and 53 parish Pialligo [inter alia]
- Frederick Campbell (1846-1928; son of Charles, nephew of George) - managed 'Duntroon' 1877-c.1882 for his uncle George, with Trustee James Scroggie; purchased 'Yarralumla' 1882 (then inherited his father Charles' estate in 1888, becoming the largest landholder in the district)
- a succession of on-site managers for Col. John Edward Robert ('Jack') Campbell (1855-1936; son of George), resident in England; rental of the homestead by the Commonwealth from 1910 and final acquisition of the estate in 1912

'Duntroon' beginnings and growth

After the first European visitors to the Limestone Plain in 1820, Robert Campbell was among the first to establish a property there, with sheep and some dairy cattle depastured at 'Pialligo' in September 1825 (Watson 1927:22; Dowling & Cosgrove 2002).

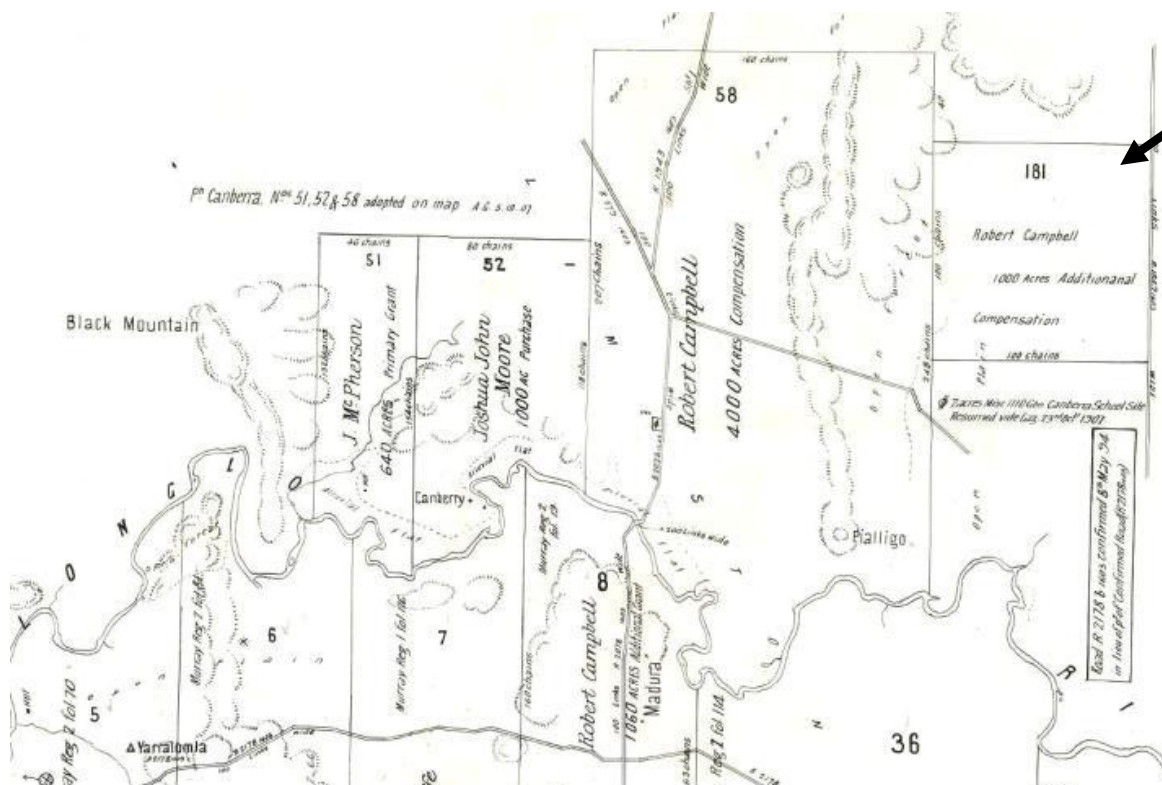
Campbell was highly enterprising and invested heavily in this rural venture. He was willing to test the prevailing assumption that the area was only suitable for stock runs, and 'Pialligo' was one of the first stations in the region to grow wheat, from 1830, and some of it was exported to Sydney with commercial success (CGC 1985:89; Lea-Scarlett 1968:58). It was also the first station in the region to produce wool on a large scale, with a woolshed established in about 1833 (CGC 1985:86, 89). The station exported wool, hides and tallow to England, with wool destined for the Bradford Mills in Yorkshire (Curley 1998:4).

From the original 700 sheep and a few cattle six years earlier, by 1831 Campbell had 10,000 sheep and more than 600 cattle. By 1834 his flock had grown to 20,000 (Steven 1965:299,300). Campbell partnered with explorer Edward John Eyre to overland 3,000 sheep from Liverpool Plains to Molonglo in 1835. After the drought of 1837-41 he overlanded 1,000 sheep and 1,600 cattle from 'Duntroon' to Adelaide, the first time this had been undertaken, with a loss of just 1% of the stock (CGC 1985:34). In the 1820s and early 1830s Campbell had also established three runs or stations to the south, spread as far as Delegate near what is now the Victorian border, running a total of 22,000 sheep (Andrews 1998:96).

'Duntroon' became known for the best stock south of Sydney, in sheep, Durham and Shorthorn cattle, horses exported to India for military use, and later bloodstock Clydesdale carriage horses (Moore 2001:4; Shumack 1967:2; Newman 1961:203; Kerr & Falkus 1982:19).

The commencement site for 'Duntroon' became portion 58 Parish Pialligo of 4000 acres, which was granted as compensation for the loss of a ship in government service (M3 743; Watson 1927:22). Campbell became the first major landholder in the district as he expanded his holdings.

The site of 'Majura House' is at the north-eastern corner of what became portion 181 Parish Pialligo, a 1000 acre block granted to Robert Campbell in February 1829 (deed dated October 1834), as additional compensation for the loss of his ship (Steven 1965:297). It was described by Surveyor Hoddle in 1832 as 'open plain' (M3 743) and labelled by him in 1836 as 'Majura' (M69 743).



Detail of Surveyor Hoddle's 1832 map (retraced); site of 'Majura House' arrowed

Hoddle's survey (1832) also showed Campbell as owner of holdings to the south of the Molonglo (Parish Queanbeyan), including portions 8 (1060 acres additional grant 'Madura'; 1832) and 36 (5000 acres purchase, which included Mill Flat and later 'Mugga Mugga'; 1827) (Steven 1965:298).

The earliest version of Surveyor Hoddle's August 1832 survey shows a 'cattle station' on the site of 'Majura House' (NLA: nla.obj-230053470); at that time it was probably a rough bush dwelling/hut.

This afforded Campbell a firm foothold in the central part of the Majura plains, which he followed up by purchasing additional land at the southern end of the valley. This included (in 1834) portion 98 of 1100 acres around the woolshed (M17 743), which gave the name to Woolshed Creek, and (in 1835) portion 157 of 676 acres (M52 743).

The latter portion, together with portion 182 of 880 acres purchased by Campbell in 1836 (M69 743), encompassed the land now occupied by the main runway of Canberra airport.



Detail from earliest version of Surveyor Hoddle's 1832 map; site of 'Majura House' labelled 'cattle station' arrowed (NLA: nla.obj-230053470)

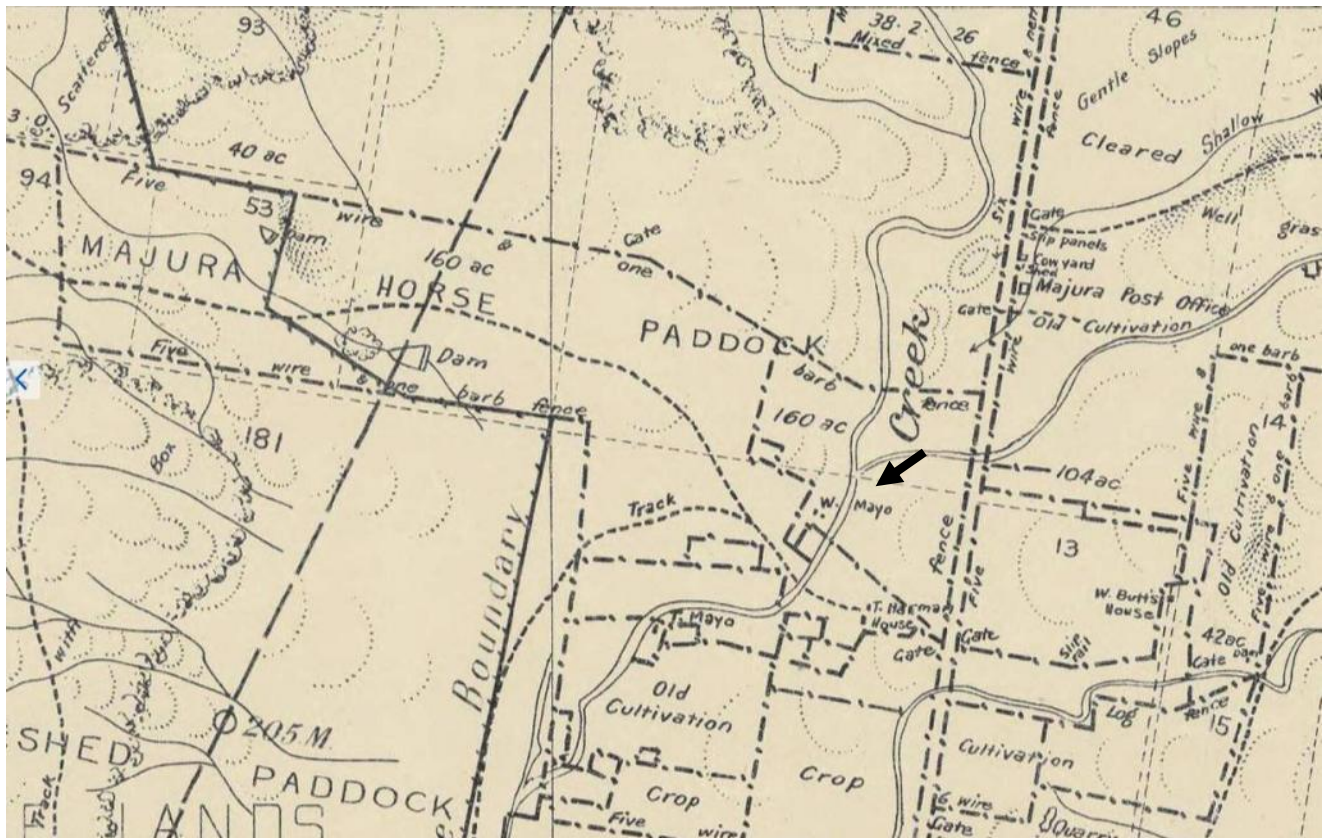
Robert Campbell advocated for the abolition of convict transportation, in favour of willing migrant labour. Charles Campbell followed suit, advocating for establishment of 'frugal and industrious' villages in which each worker and family had 2 acres of ground on which they could keep their own cow and grow their own vegetables and fruit, with assistance to build sheds and cultivate ground, with nearby support for the family in a church and school (Fitzhardinge 1954:21).

Charles Campbell gave evidence before the Immigration Committee of the NSW Legislative Council in July 1841, expressing his preference for firstly hiring shepherds from among emancipated convicts with relevant experience, followed by Highland Scots, believing the latter to be better qualified than English immigrants. (Hannaforde 2020:161)

With so many of his workers having emigrated from the Scottish Highlands, Gaelic was widely spoken in the Majura valley in the second half of the 19th century, and perhaps into the 20th century. There was a tale put about that 'no one could gain employment at Duntroon unless he could speak Gaelic' (Newman 1961:202). William McIntosh stated that he was born at 'Majura House' in 1862, and that he was 12 years old before he could speak a word of English (*Federal Capital Pioneer* 15 Oct 1926:12).

An indication of the Campbells' efforts in populating the district with industrious workers is that when Queanbeyan became a town in 1838 it had no more two stores, an inn, and three or four wooden houses, while by 1839 'Duntroon' was home to about 70 Scots shepherd families (Fitzhardinge 1954:21; Kerr & Falkus 1982:16).

Charles Campbell not only re-named the holdings 'Duntroon', he reconceived the property and its operations, and began fencing of paddocks (Newman 1961:202). Maps produced for the early Federal Capital have left a clear record of subsequent property definition and development, with rabbit-wire fences needed from about the 1880s.



Detail of Federal Territory feature map c.1915; 'Majura House' arrowed
(NLA: nla.obj-233281594)

The c.1915 'Features Map' (NLA: nla.obj-233281594) recorded tracks, fences, gates, dams, wells, structures, yards, cultivation and the like in great detail. This shows W Mayo's house ['Majura House'] on Woolshed Creek, between the road through Majura and the newly-defined boundary of the RMC. To the west and south-west extending back to its namesake is the Woolshed Paddock (within portion 181 Parish Pialligo). Immediately to the north, extending from the road back to the range, is the Majura Horse Paddock (within parts of portions 1, 42, 53 and 94 Parish Pialligo).

In 1915 the western half of the Majura Horse Paddock had been removed from W Mayo's holding, and fenced into the RMC, with the residue to be leased to Mayo. This reduced his holding from 170 acres to 124 acres. (NAA: A363, DSL 1921/1001)

The boundaries set in 1915 continue to define the external boundaries of Blocks 715 and 716 Majura.

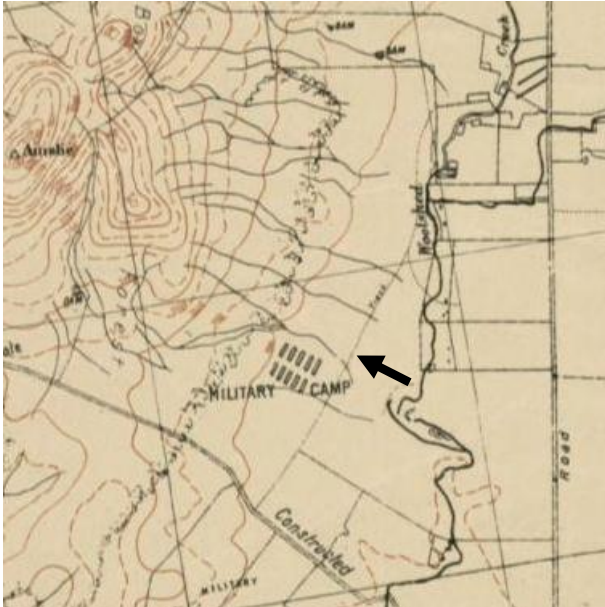


Detail of 1915 boundary adjustment with RMC Duntroon
(NAA: A363, DSL 1921/1001)

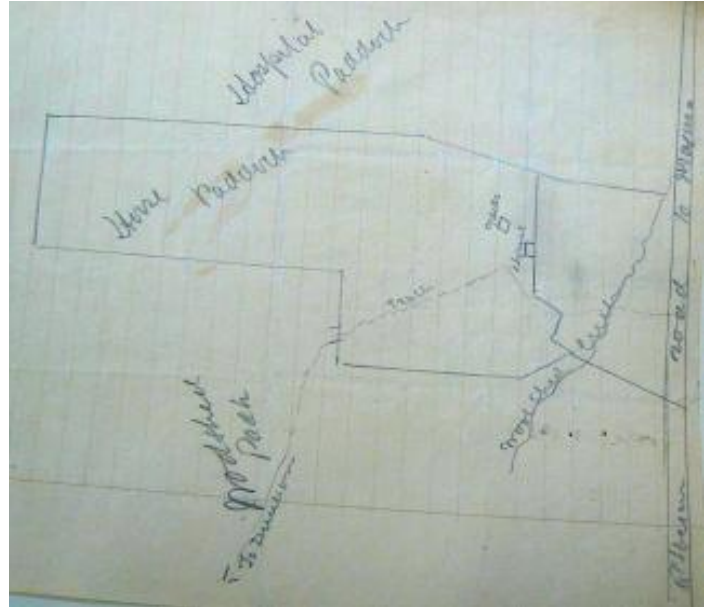
Access

Primary access to the cottage was initially from a track at rear which connected it to the Queanbeyan-Yass road close to the Duntroon Woolshed. The direct link reflected the relationship between the woolshed itself/Woolshed Paddock and 'Majura House', inhabited by the estate's sheep overseer and wool classer.

This track is evident in a 1913 survey map (nla.obj-668243960) and a 1913 hand-drawn sketch by William Mayo (NAA: A363 DSL 1921/1001). It remained clearly visible in aerial photographs up to the 1960s.



Detail from 1913 topographic map showing track west of Woolshed Creek from Queanbeyan-Yass road to 'Majura House' (NLA: nla.obj-668243960)



Sketch map by William Mayo 1913 showing 'Majura House' access labelled 'To Duntroon' at lower left (NAA: A363 DSL 1921/1001)

An old crossing of Woolshed Creek below the house is evident in the 1911-12 survey (B502 fol.19). This would give access to and from the Majura Road/Lane, impassable when the creek was in flood. This crossing directly shaped fence alignments, which were retained as block boundaries after resumption of 'Duntroon', in order to minimise the need to replace rabbit netting on boundary fencing of leased blocks. (NAA: A657, DS 1915/2127)



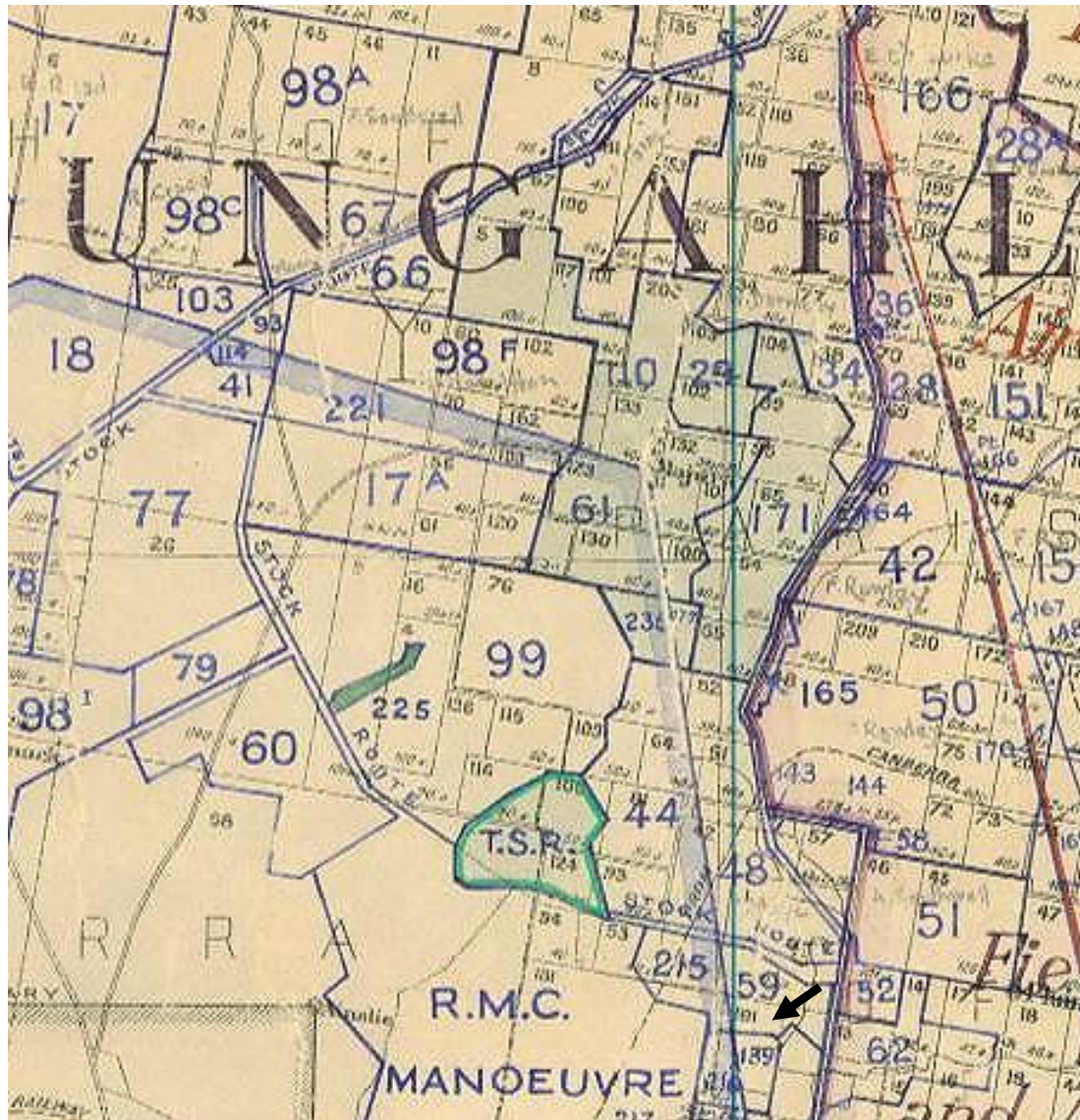
Detail from Surveyor Percival's fieldbook showing the crossing of Woolshed Creek below 'Majura House' (21 Aug 1912 - B502 fol.19)



Detail from 1940 aerial photograph showing 'Majura House', main access from rear and the creek crossing (arrowed) (NLA: Jun 1940 Run 1W photo 14945 - nla.obj-1824423038)

Aerial photographs show the current concrete culvert crossing, upstream from the old crossing, has been in place since the early 1970s, although there may have been earlier fords on this alignment.

A track through the saddle between Mounts Ainslie and Majura was shown on a 1912 map (Dept of Home Affairs 1914) but it is absent from most subsequent maps until formalised as a stock route from the 1940s (now Block 722 Majura). It was established as a shorter droving route through the gap to the cattle saleyards at Ainslie (today's Hackett) (*Canberra Times* 20 August 1935:3). This was referred to in the 1950s as the 'Majura Lane stock route', leading to a Travelling Stock Reserve (TSR) that is now within the Ainslie-Majura Reserve. Old yards remain near the dam on the site of the TSR. Old yards remain near the dam on the site of the TSR.



Detail of 1915 base map of Gungahlin District with amendments to c.1940 showing:
the stock route (arrowed) to north of 'Majura House' (Blocks 215 & 59) and the TSR to the north-west
(ArchivesACT)

Aerial photographs show that in the 1950s and early 1960s 'Majura House' was primarily accessed via a track leading from the stock route.

'Majura House' establishment

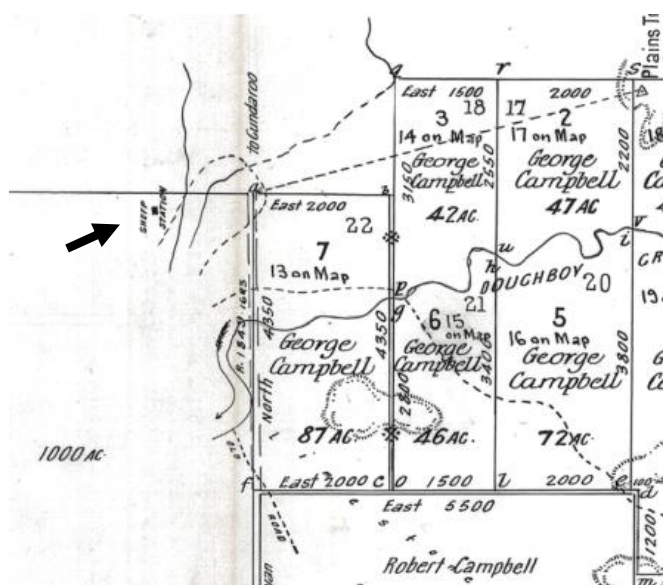
'Majura House' was built as a stone worker cottage, with an attached farmlet of about 2 acres. It was one of about ten stone cottages of this style that were built by George Rottenbury, mason and limeburner for the Campbells from c.1849 (Young 2007:16). Others which remain are 'Blundell's Cottage' and 'Mugga Mugga'.

It is thought to be the first dwelling erected in the Majura valley (CDHS 1967).

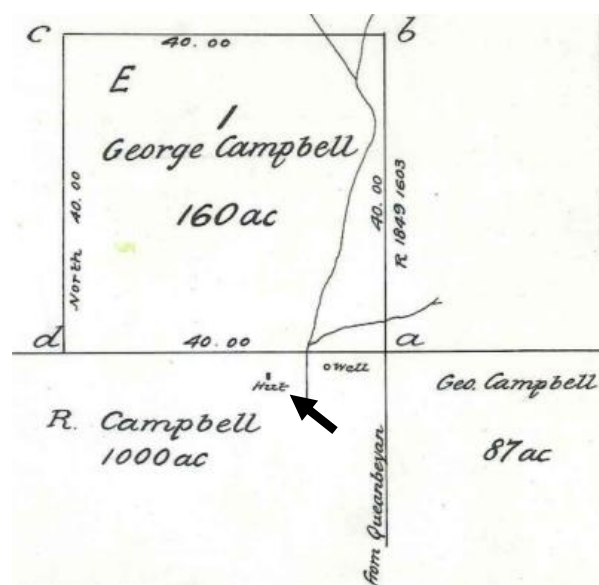
There are numerous untested estimates, with little definitive evidence, of when the stone cottage was built.

It appears to have been built between the 1840s and early 1860s, stated as:

- 1840s with later additions (GHD 1999)
- 1840s? – a brick at the well is attributed to Hunt & Kaye of Queanbeyan, with a very similar specimen dated at 1842 (Gemmell 1986: Plate 11) [note: this may indicate an age for the well only; it may have served a rough dwelling on the site before the stone cottage was built]
- 1848-50 (Cosgrove 1994) [noting also Rottenbury's arrival in the district c.1849]
- c.1850 (AASC 1988)
- 1850 (Baskin et al. 1997; National Trust 1983; CDHS 1997)
- by 1851-2 (John Malcolm McIntosh stated as born at 'the old Majura House' on 25 February 1852 – Queanbeyan Age 14 Feb 1922:2) [note: we cannot be certain this refers to the 'Majura House' of today]
- 1850s (NOHC 1999:16)
- before 1859 (J B Thompson survey plan M573 743, for portions 13 to 19 Parish Pialligo, which shows a 'sheep station' on the site) [note: this does not indicate the nature of the structure]; and
- before 1862 (J B Thompson survey plan M628 743, for portion 1 Parish Pialligo, which shows 'Hut' at site of 'Majura House' and a well to the east [note: this does not indicate the nature of the structure]



Detail of 1859 survey plan for portions 13 to 19 Parish Pialligo
- 'sheep station' in portion 181 (J B Thompson M573 743)



Detail of 1862 survey plan for portion 1 Parish Pialligo
- 'hut' and 'well' in portion 181 (J B Thompson M628 743)

The cottage was sited thoughtfully, set above flood level from Woolshed Creek (still the case), while the farmlet included creek flats with deep alluvial soils, which have remained in cultivation for more than a century.

Archaeological modelling suggests that the relatively elevated house site and the creek flats and creek junctions below it would also have favoured intermittent use by First Nations people (NOHC 1999). Due to the degree and frequency of cultivation and disturbance, little evidence has been located by several archaeological surveys in the area, despite numerous traverses of the immediate vicinity (NOHC 1999b).

Occupancy

Summary

- ?1846 John McIntosh (1826-1892) + Eliza McPherson (1825-1906) married 1842
- c.1864 Alfred Mayo (1820-1897) + Mary Ann Smith (1824-1897) married 1846
- 1880s William Mayo (1855-1936) + Mary Ann Warwick (1859-1946) married 1880
(to Mary Ann on William's death 1936; to daughter Ethel on Mary Ann's death 1946)
- 1946 Ethel Sells née Mayo (1880-1976)
[prev. married 1908 Edwin Alexander Sells (1882-1945); divorced c.1923-24;
Edwin at times recorded as 'Edward']
- 1948 Alex [John Alexander Mayo] Sells (1910-1980) + May [Edna May] Shannon (1910-2002)
married 1931
- 1981 Tony [Anthony James] Sullivan + Pam [Pamela Ann] Hicks
- 1999 Nick [Nicholas Henry] Weber and Anne McGrath

(Tenancy cards – ArchivesACT; biographical detail from: Proctor 2001; McLennan & McLennan 1996)



Mary Ann Mayo née Smith
(1824-1897)



William Mayo
(1855-1936)



Mary Ann Mayo née Warwick
(1859-1946)



Ethel Sells née Mayo
(1880-1976)

(McLennan & McLennan 1996 (from L to R): 14, 48, 48, 61)

Early family backgrounds

The likely first occupant of 'Majura House' was **John McIntosh** (1826-1892) (CDHS 1967:4; Baskin et al. 1997:86). Of Scots origin, McIntosh and his parental family emigrated in 1837 on the *William Nicol*, in the company of six other families who were all to be engaged as shepherds for Charles Campbell (Hannaford 2020:223).

After his marriage to **Eliza McPherson** in 1842 at 'Palmerville', John McIntosh appears to have resided in the Majura area from c.1846. That date might be challenged by births of nine children registered at Ginninderra, followed (from 1862) by five at Majura. However, birth place does not necessarily equate with place of residence, due to the need for support from family and other connections, and for other possible reasons.

A son William stated he was born in 1862 at 'Majura House' (*Federal Capital Pioneer* 15 Oct 1926:12). It appears that John McIntosh had to leave the property shortly after this, having selected his own land to the north-east ('Glade field') in 1864, following the Robertson Act land reforms. This was also the case for the Irish family of John and Mary Darmody, who left 'Duntroon' after selecting land to the north of 'Majura House' in the early 1860s. There are indications that Joseph Mayo (son of Alfred) later selected several portions by 1904, believed to have been 'dummying' for the Campbells (FCP 1994:21)

While documentary evidence is quite scanty, it is likely that McIntosh was replaced at 'Majura House' from c.1864 by **Alfred Mayo** (1820-1897), a convict of British origin who arrived in 1839. He gained his Ticket of Leave in 1845, then his freedom, and he married in 1846 **Mary Ann Smith** (1824-1897). The registered births of children suggest he worked at 'Palmerville' in 1847 and at 'Duntroon' from c.1848. Some sources say he

had been assigned to Campbell at 'Palmerville' and 'Duntroon'. He was noted as a labourer, overseer, and timber splitter. (McLennan and McLennan 1996; Proctor 2001) The work of the timber splitter was vital in construction of slab buildings, fences and yards.

Mary Ann Mayo (née Smith) was known to be experienced with attending mothers in childbirth, and was praised for the risks she was willing to take to provide assistance, including crossing the Molonglo in high flow (Shumack 1967:7).

Confusing information (acknowledged but thought to be inaccurate)

Some sources have suggested that Alfred and Mary Ann Mayo moved to 'Majura House' prior to August 1848 when their second child Thomas is stated as having been born there, with all subsequent births up to 1864 also stated as having taken place at 'Majura House'. These records have not been verified; however, there are indications that the birthplaces are recorded as 'Duntroon'.

It is elsewhere suggested that William and Mary Ann Mayo moved to 'Majura House' in c.1855, with indications that their sixth child Thomas was born at 'Majura House' in 1858. (Cosgrove 1994:9)

Another record by Shumack states that in 1856-57 his next door neighbour at Duntroon was Alfred Mayo, but this does not specify 'Majura House' (Shumack 1977:7).

Another account has it that William and Mary Ann Mayo first occupied 'a stone cottage at the foot of Mount Ainslie, the ruins of which are still in existence' [1905], and that Will Mayo then obtained 'the land on which they built the house in which they have lived since' (*Canberra Times* 9 March 1946:2). The first part may be correct (but vague); the second appears to be inaccurate, with no evidence that Mayo built 'Majura House'.

From tenants to lessees: two generations of Mayo

Until the resumption of 'Duntroon' the Mayo family held 'Majura House' as tenants of the Campbells.

William Mayo, like his father, worked at 'Duntroon', initially as a shepherd, and later as a sheep overseer and expert wool classer.

The demand for his abilities was considerable, with 36,000 sheep being shorn at 'Duntroon' in 1876 (FCP 1994:19).

He married **Mary Ann Warwick** in 1880. He was caretaker of 'Majura House' when it was acquired by the Commonwealth in 1908 (Cosgrove 1994:7,11; *Canberra Times* 5 May 1936:2).



Duntroon Woolshed c.1903 (left to right) E E Hudson, William Mayo, Ernest Davis (McLennan & McLennan 1996: 58)

Mary Ann Mayo (née Warwick), before her marriage, may have been Canberra's first recorded Postmistress, operating the Post Office at The Rocks, between St John's and Scott's Crossing (McLennan & McLennan 1996:51-52). The building here was known as 'Young's Cottage'. Like 'Majura House', this was a stone 'Duntroon' worker cottage, probably built by George Rottenbury (Young 2007:24). Mary Ann is said to have run the Post Office while her father John operated the adjacent blacksmith's workshop.

Ethel Mayo (daughter of William & Mary Ann) was active in the Women's Political Education League (Queanbeyan & District) when it was formed, following the granting of suffrage (voting rights) to women at Commonwealth and New South Wales levels in 1902. Ethel was junior secretary, with Mrs Frederick Campbell the president. The League educated women on the workings of Parliaments and the electoral system, and encouraged women to make their own informed choices rather than relying on opinions of others. It sought to reduce the influence of male-dominated party politics and factions, and encouraged work for the long-neglected interests of women and children. (*Canberra Times* 12 August 1964:17; McLennan & McLennan 1996:56).

Mayo holdings

Arrangements were made to lease areas of the former 'Duntroon' property that were not required by the Military College from 1913, with first offer (no competition) to existing tenants, as annual leases.

Moriarty's valuation of the 'Duntroon Estate' in 1912 noted that a lease had been fixed for lands in portion 181 Parish Pialligo some time previously (NAA: A358, 21), and consequently 'Majura House' was not among lands publicly advertised for lease.

In May 1913 William Mayo formally applied for a lease of 'Majura House' and the adjacent Horse Paddock (total 170 acres). He stated that he had been born at 'Duntroon' [1855] and was a sheep overseer there, having held the block for the previous 35 years [=from 1878], where he reared nine daughters and one son. He now wanted to settle down in his home and end his days peacefully. As referees he cited the Campbell brothers and Mr E E Hudson [manager of 'Duntroon']. (NAA: A363, DSL 1921/1001)

In November 1913 a file note recorded that William Mayo was a boundary rider under Lands Inspector Brackenreg (elsewhere described as a Ranger, and in 1921 as a 'semi-permanent hand'). He had use of the cottage he occupied ['Majura House'] and adjacent land, which was seen as fair because he had to keep and feed his horses for his work duties. Surveyor Scrivener recommended an annual lease from July 1914. In April 1915 adjustments were made to Block 134 (as it was then described) to excise part of the old Duntroon Horse Paddock for inclusion in the Military College, reducing its area to 124 acres. (NAA: A363, DSL 1921/1001; *Canberra Times* 5 May 1936:2, 12 August 1964:17)

William Mayo took up a quarterly lease from March 1916. In December that year it was noted that William was still an employee of Surveyor Sheaffe's branch (NAA: A192, FCL1918/1192). It has been stated that he worked as a ranger until his retirement (McLennan & McLennan 1996:50).

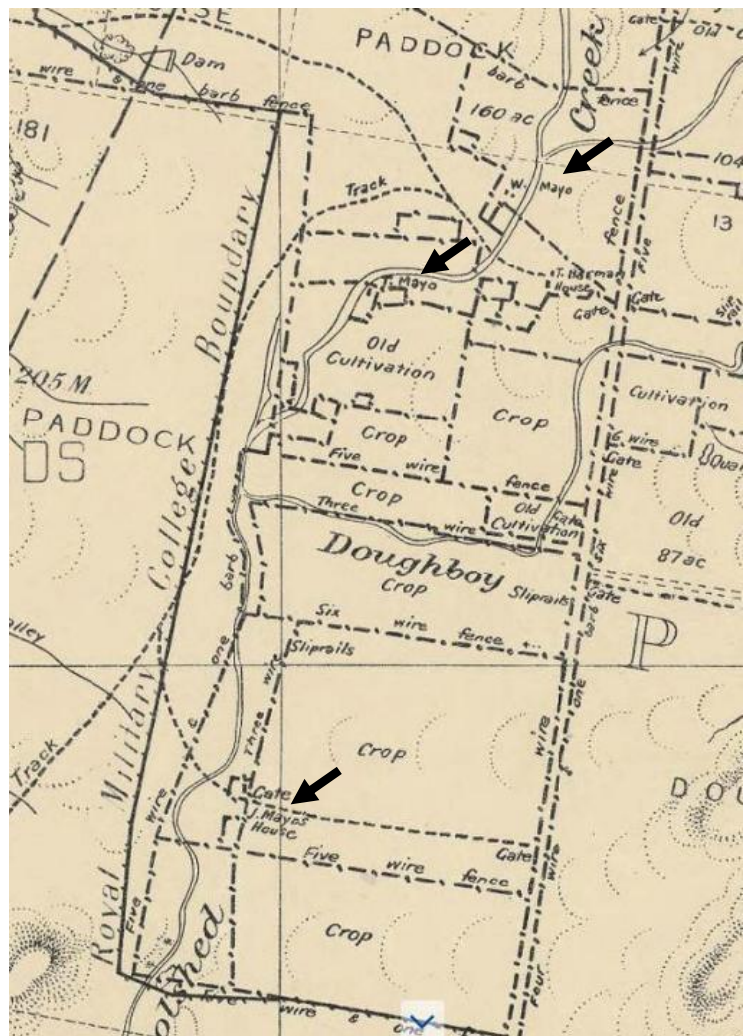
The Mayo family and descendants occupied 'Majura House' for four generations, across nearly 120 years until it was sold in 1981.

A number of Mayo family members lived nearby, further along Woolshed Creek.

The c.1915 features map (NLA: nla.obj-233281594) shows the houses of W Mayo (William) and T Mayo (Thomas 1858-1924, brother of William) immediately to the south.

Further downstream is a property that had been purchased by William Mayo - previously 'Dunn's Hut' (NOHC 1999b:58; GML 2014:31), by the time of the map inhabited by J Mayo (Joseph William 1882-1957, son of William).

While this is known today as 'Dove Cottage', it is shown on some maps around the 1940s as 'Majura' (e.g. NLA: nla.obj-324252327) and is referred to in some sources as 'Majura Farm' (*Canberra Times* 29 March 1957:12, 23 December 1959:13).



(Right) Mayo holdings (arrowed)
on Woolshed Creek c.1915
(Detail: NLA: nla.obj-233281594)

Social-cultural setting

'Majura House' was one of a cluster of small holdings that led to an **'incipient village'** of the 19th and early 20th centuries

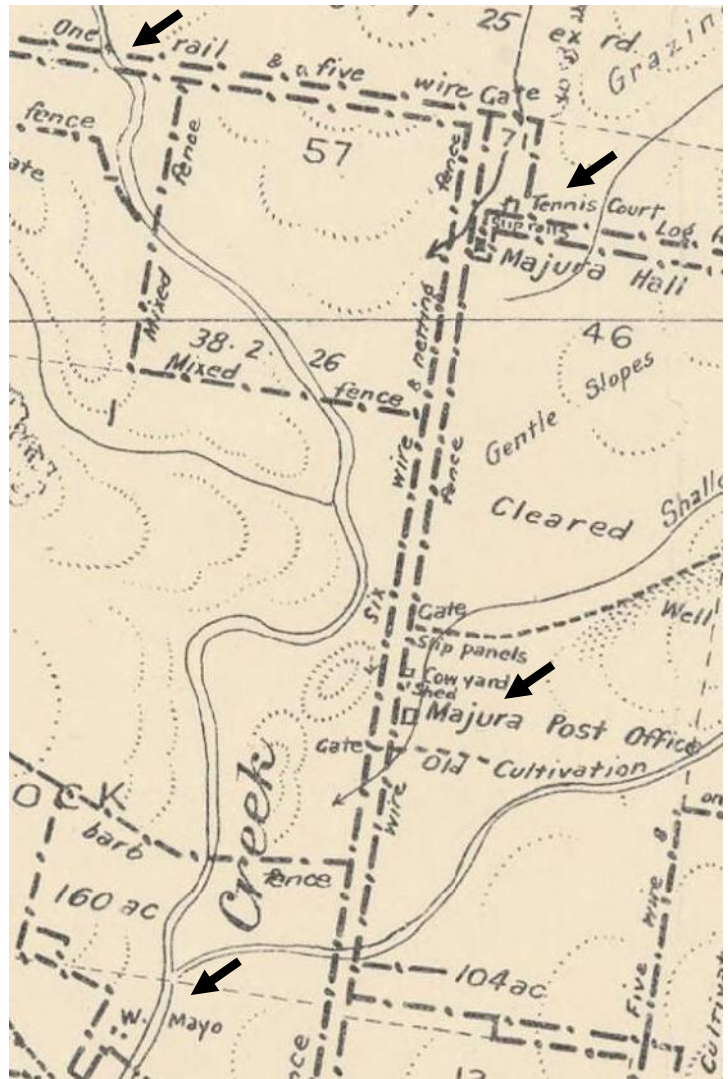
(Winston-Gregson 1985).

This has some parallels with the so-called 'Canbury village' which coalesced on the Campbells' estate around 'scattered and loosely connected dwellings and services' including the St John's church and schoolhouse. This was not a defined place with boundaries, but rather 'a social concept' (GML 2014:25). Its nucleus dates from the 1840s (FCP 1994:12).

At times referred to as 'Majura Vale' (e.g. AASC 1988:22), the 'village' centre was situated just to the north-east of 'Majura House', where the Majura Lane crossed Woolshed Creek. It included a school (from 1874), Post Office (from 1898), and the Majura Hall (1910).

It was made up of a mix of tenants and owners, with a mix of Scots, English and Irish origins.

(Right) the 'incipient village' in c.1915, showing the creek crossing, Majura Hall and tennis court, Majura Post office, and the proximity of W Mayo at 'Majura House' (Detail: NLA: nla.obj-233281594)



(Right) Majura Post Office - late 19th century
Christina, Catherine & William McIntosh
{source uncertain}



In 1841 the Campbell estate had a population of 61 males and 24 females; of these 10 had tickets-of-leave, one was in government service, and 11 were assigned (FCP 1994:12). In the mid-1850s there were about 50 people in the valley (NT 1996); by the 1891 census there were 393 people in 83 dwellings (NOHC 1999:15).

While the valley was always used primarily for grazing and agriculture, the community also came to include trades and manufacturing, with a blacksmith and wheelwright shop, butchery, and lime kiln.

A pattern of mutual support, with sharing of labour and resources, would have strengthened the rural community, which grew after a 1906 subdivision of forty-one blocks in the south-eastern part of 'Duntroon'.

The Majura Hall was a venue for social and fundraising events, balls and dances, and a local youth club, with a tennis court. In the early 20th century this was a hub for active community events including sports days and competitive cycle racing.

A number of local lads enlisted during World War I, and the Majura Hall was the venue for well-attended farewell and welcome-home events, with names inscribed on an Honour Board (now at Canberra Museum and Gallery) listing four Cooper and Harman names (related) and one McIntosh, who served in France.



Majura Community Hall (Hall Heritage Centre)

Several World War I volunteers from the Majura 'village' community took up soldier settlement blocks in the Majura area, and a number of others were among the (largely unacknowledged) soldier settlers on Mill Flat, taking up 'lucerne leases' until they were forced off by the 1922 flood (Butz 2020).

William Mayo of 'Majura House' was prominent in this local 'village' community, frequently described in local newspapers presiding over a range of community events up to the 1920s. At the time of his death in 1936 he was remembered as 'a good gun shot, angler and sportsman' who had commonly been chosen to captain local hare and wallaby drives (*Canberra Times* 5 May 1936:2).

William and Mary Ann Mayo of Majura were among those selected to represent Canberra's pioneers at the opening of Federal Parliament in 1927, and were presented to the Duke and Duchess of York (*Federal Capital Pioneer* May-June 1927:17).

The Mayo family also retained strong links with **St John's** Church and its community.

Alfred's marriage to Mary Ann in 1842 was the second on the Register (before the church was ready for use) (Salisbury 2000:176), and Alfred is stated to have helped build the church around 1846 (FCP 1994:12).

His son William was a Church Warden in 1908 and 1915-18 (McLennan & McLennan 1996:50). It was where William was baptised (second on the Register), confirmed, married, and ultimately buried (*Canberra Times* 9 March 1946:2).

Military training

Some initial work suggests that in the western part of the property there may be additional values related to historical **military training** and related uses.

This area was within some iterations of the RMC Training (Manoeuvres) Area, despite the boundary adjustment in 1915 and the fence that followed.

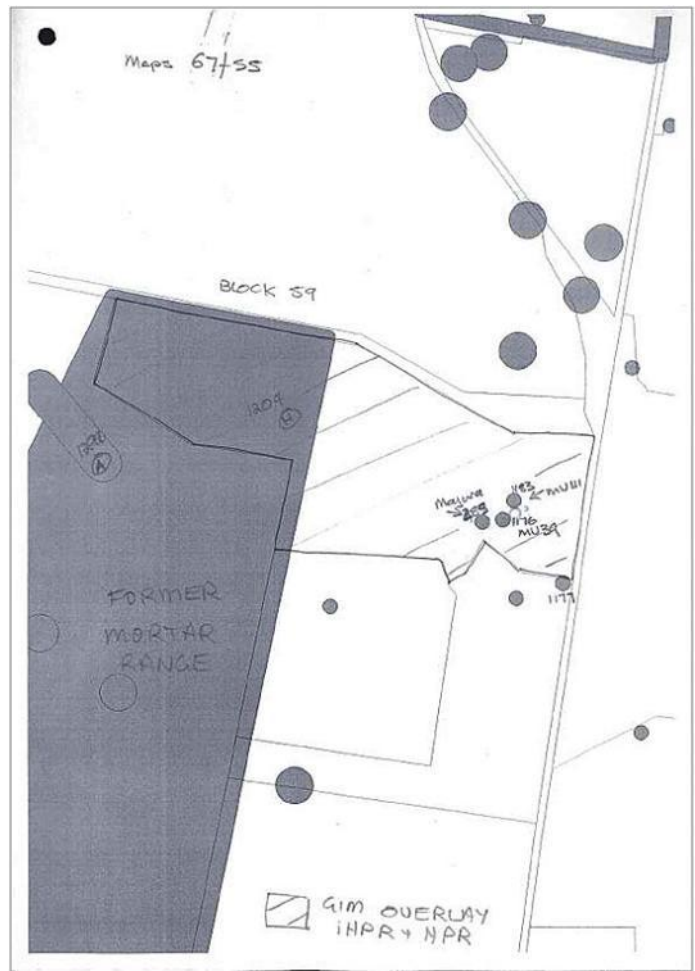
This area was used over some decades for training in small arms and mortar firing.

A map of uncertain date and provenance (at right - contained within FoI materials provided to the lessee, likely related to archaeological survey) indicates 'former mortar range', to the west of the Majura Road and as far north as the Stock Route. There is overlap with what is described as Block 59 (now Block 715 west of the Majura Parkway).

In the field, there are evident numerous pits in Block 715 and also in the old Stock Route (Block 722) to the north of Block 716.

It is possible that these were used by RMC Duntroon.

Over some years a range of artefacts of likely military origin have been turned up and salvaged in Block 715, and stored by the landholders.



The nature of these pits is uncertain due to conflicting understandings and poor recorded evidence. They are consistent with mortar pits, as seen in images from Duntroon exercises. They may have been target pits (to be fired on), assisting students to see the effect (or lack of effect) of firing mortars onto a dug-in position. Or they may have been dug-in firing pits (to be fired from), based on analysis of photographs that contradict the customary view that the RMC always fired mortars from south to north. (Butz 2021)



'Foxholes' used in RMC Duntroon mortar ranging demonstration May 1947 (AWM 132542; 132547)

It is also possible that these pits were used as 'foxholes' in manoeuvres as part of small arms training.

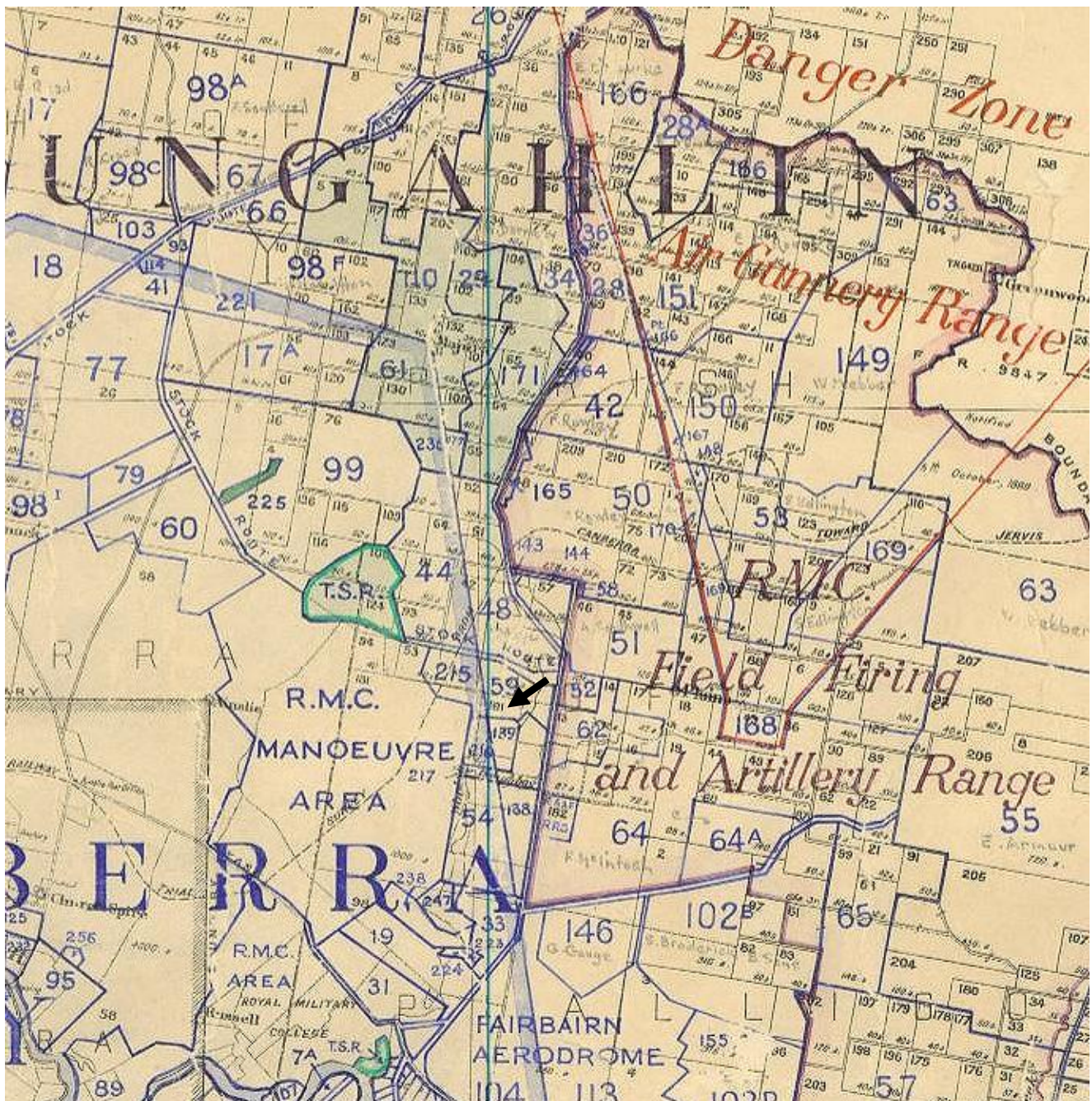
This (with all its uncertainties) places the Majura House Precinct as potentially part of a complex of places that relate to military training use of the Majura valley by RMC Duntroon and the RAAF.

Notionally, it is likely to relate to (at least):

- RMC Duntroon grounds
- Duntroon instructional trench system on Mill Flat (Dairy Flat)
- remnant training trenches in the Woolshed Creek fenced corridor (mostly lost to cultivation)
- a five-panel World War II era Bailey Bridge (noted in 2014; may still exist)
- [depending on the areal extent accepted for the complex of sites] World War II aircraft bunkers at Pialligo and others yet to be identified. (Butz 2021)

At this stage, with inadequate knowledge, this is not yet seen as a notable heritage value.

Additional research and investigation of this layer of history is warranted.



Map c.1940 showing: 'Majura House' (arrowed - Blocks 215 & 59) and RMC-RAAF Defence land use context
(Detail of 1915 base map of Gungahlin District with amendments to c.1940 - ArchivesACT)

DESCRIPTION

Cottage, kitchen and extensions

The original part of the house was built in random rubble of local quarried stone, roughly coursed, with brick fireplaces/chimneys, timber shingle roof, and (originally) lath and plaster ceilings. Roof timbers and lintels appear to be sawn timber, which indicate the importance of nearby Queanbeyan as an industrial centre in the second half of the 19th century (Armes & Winston-Gregson 1989:7).

The original stonework has multiple layers of paint. Flaked areas reveal stone and coarse mortar. The stone is from the Ainslie Volcanics suite (dacitic ignimbrite, or heat-fused tuff), which has formed the Ainslie-Majura range. The great variety in colour (where visible) may suggest field collection rather than quarrying.



'Majura House' cottage: (above) timber shingles under roofing iron (2023 Fred McGrath-Weber); (right) interior (ERM 2013)



'Majura House' stone cottage (western side); wall details visible through flaking paint, showing stonework and mortar (Mark Butz March 2023)

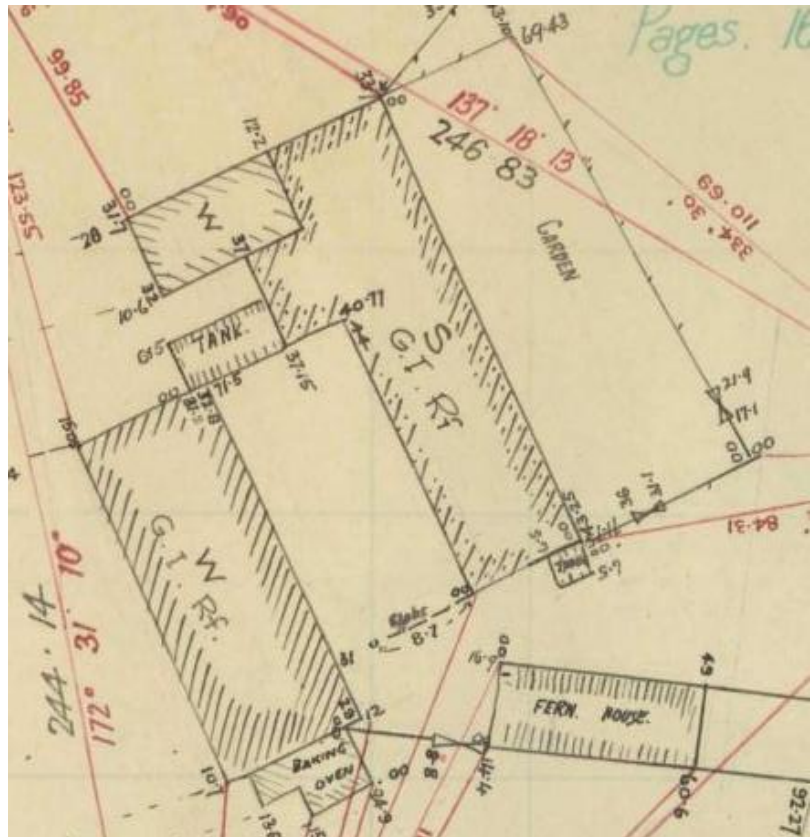
By the **early 1900s** the shingle roof was covered with galvanised iron. This was done in 1888 at 'Blundells Cottage' and c.1902 at 'Mugga Mugga'. At 'Mugga Mugga' two ships' tanks (riveted iron cube-shaped) were acquired to catch and store rainwater runoff (GML 2013:31,52,62; Curley 1998:55). The December 1911 survey plan of 'Majura House' by Percival clearly shows galvanised iron roofs, and tanks (A167 fol.21A). One of the tanks is square, and likely to have been a ship's tank.

The 1911 survey plan showed the stone house ('S GI Rf') – without a verandah - and a timber kitchen block ('W GI Rf'), separated from each other by 2-3 metres.

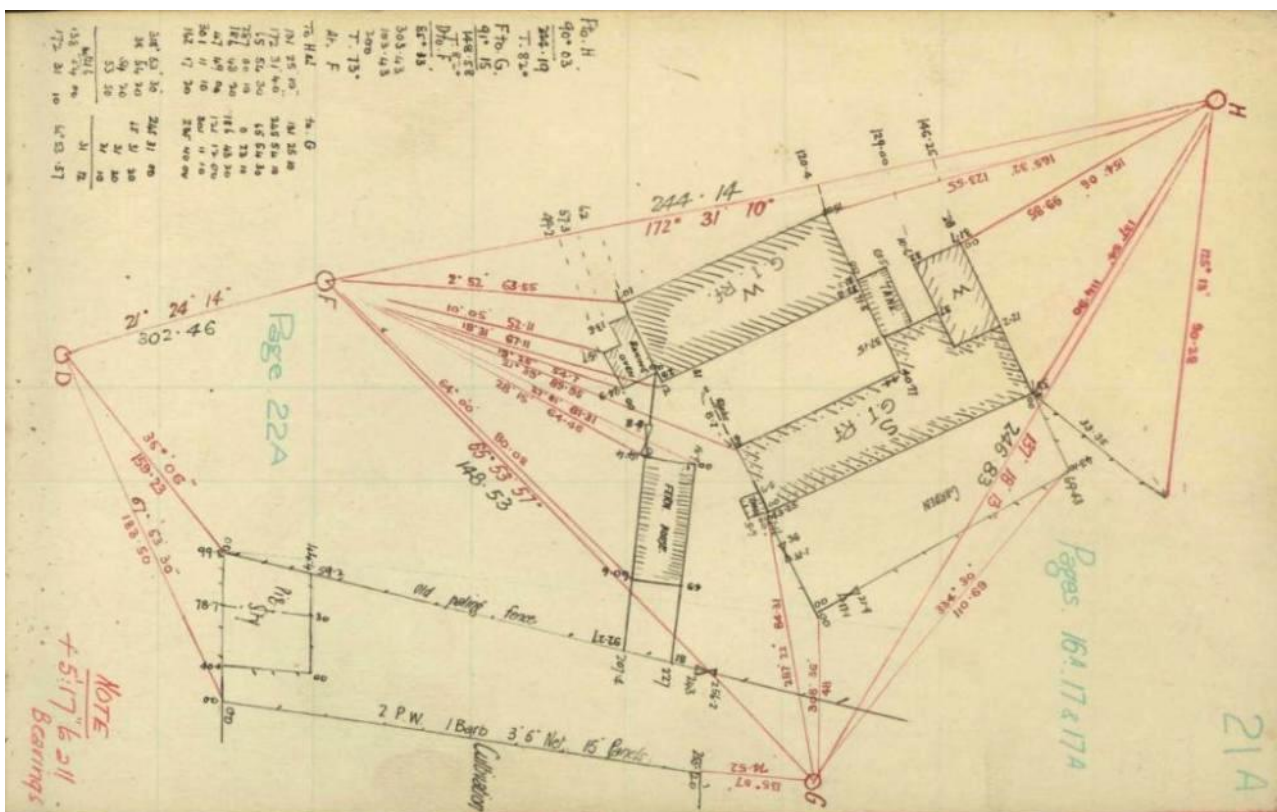
A separate kitchen reduced odours and fire risk, while commonly serving as storage and as sleeping quarters for boys and young men (Young 2007:13).

A baking oven sat adjacent to the kitchen block (A167 fol. 21A). Based on the extant oven at 'Mugga Mugga' (and one at 'Lanyon') it is likely that this was a brick oven that was loaded and fired from outside the building (Armes & Winston-Gregson 1989:10).

A short wall of slabs defined a 'courtyard' space between the two buildings. A nearby stand-alone fern house sat at an angle to the house, separated from the kitchen block by a short fence and gate. (A167 fol.21A)



Survey plan - W Mayo residence - 14 December 1911
Detail above; whole folio below (A167 fol.21A)



When A W Moriarty valued the 'Duntroon Estate' in 1912 he described W Mayo's dwelling (within portion 181 Parish Pialligo) as 'stone walls, roof iron'; the kitchen as 'slab walls, iron roof, floored'; and the dairy as 'slab walls, cement floored', valued at £250, £25 and £10 respectively, with the improved value of the land placed at £739/11/3 (NAA: A358, 21).

The house was extended quite early in its life with a timber slab structure to accommodate the growing Mayo family – this appears in the 1911 survey plan as a wooden room at right angles to the main house at the north-western corner (labelled 'W') (A167 fol.21A).

That structure has not survived and does not appear in any located photographs. In its place today is a smaller, skillion-roofed room (date unknown), accessible both from within the house and to the outside, and described as a 'birthing room' (in later plans 'dressing room').

It is built in vertical timber slabs and corrugated iron, with a hardboard ceiling and wall linings of building paper. The narrow internal doorway was probably modified from a window, with a step down to a floor close to outside ground level.



Skillion roofed vertical slab extension (Mark Butz June 2021)

By 1919 William Mayo declared the house to be in a state of disrepair, 'damp and unhealthy' due to water seeping through the walls. He sought materials to renovate the interior and to build a verandah to divert roof runoff. This work (**1920-21**) appears to have replaced hardwood floorboards and to have lined the ceilings with pine boards (NAA: A363, DSL1921/1001).

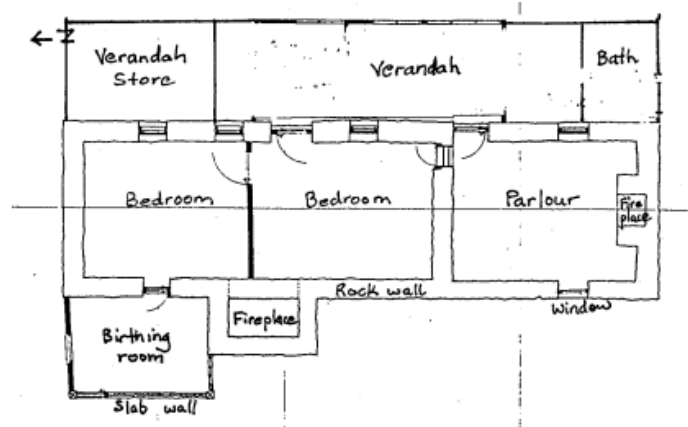


The verandah at 'Majura House' is shown completed in c.1920, also showing an extensive and well-tended garden, with Lyna Mayo and her mother Mary Ann (McLennan & McLennan 1996:49).

The 1911 survey plan does not show a verandah on the eastern side but it does show the garden area, enclosed with a fence (A167 fol.21A).

At some stage, two ends of the verandah were enclosed, the northernmost as storage and the southernmost as a bathroom. A timber partition was built to form two bedrooms, requiring decommissioning of the fireplace and chimney that sat external to the western wall, now closed up to form a void. (Cosgrove 1994:29)

(Right) Floor plan of the stone cottage with the 'birthing room', enclosed verandah, partitioned bedrooms and void (Cosgrove 1994:29)



Some early photographs suggest a separate extension was in place by the late 1920s at least. This timber slab structure appears to continue the line of the kitchen block, extending from its northern end (McLennan & McLennan 1996:48,55). This may have been a laundry/utility building, suggested by a couple of flues, possibly for a copper, and by what appear to be large metal tubs at the end wall.



Two views of a timber slab structure in line with the kitchen block (brick chimney visible at the far end)
(above) Mary Ann Mayo with horses 1928; (right) Coral, Mary Ann & Marion
(McLennan & McLennan 1996:48,55)

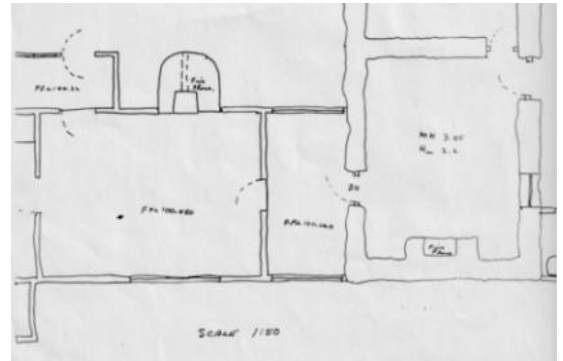


A big family event c.1918, showing in the background: baking oven chimney at the end of the kitchen block at left; the stone cottage left of centre; the fern house just visible behind the car. The car is heading out on the access track towards the Queanbeyan-Yass road (McLennan & McLennan 1996:48)

In the **early 1950s** a fibro structure replaced the old kitchen block and timber extension.

This sat at right angles to the stone cottage, extending from the south-western corner, and was accessed via a narrow door which was probably created from an original window (and is today a window, now full length).

The door opened into an atrium that bridged to the extension, comprising what appears to be a living room with fireplace, a new kitchen at the western end, and probably an adjoining laundry. (Cosgrove 1994:12,30)



Detail of sketch plan showing the 1950s extension at lower left (truncated) (National Trust (ACT) files)

The 1950s extension was in turn demolished when a new extension was built in **the 1980s** (1985-56).

A drawing of this work won second prize in the 1985 Marion Mahony Griffin Measured Drawing Competition for Bernard O'Brien, Andrew Moore and Ian Johnson (*Canberra Times* 19 August 1985:3; RAIA 1985).

The compilation of competition entries included a photograph (source not acknowledged), most likely dated 1985 as it shows site clearing, verandah and pergola structures being built on the western side of the stone cottage, new barge boards and fascias, and battens across the timber shingles to take new roofing iron.

It also shows a robust brick chimney, with inbuilt space heater, located next to the disused fireplace and birthing room at the north-western corner of the stone cottage. Nothing else is known of an extension that would warrant such a significant chimney and stove. A 1994 sketch plan of the cottage (Cosgrove 1994:29) has a vague outline in about the right place, which may represent the footprint of such an addition. We could speculate that the plans were changed, perhaps because it was too close to, or may have compromised drainage around, the stone cottage. In any event, this chimney is known only from this image, although its bricks may have ended up in house garden paving.



Western side of the stone cottage c.1985, showing site clearing and initial construction for the new extension, and an unexplained isolated brick chimney and space heater (RAIA 1985)

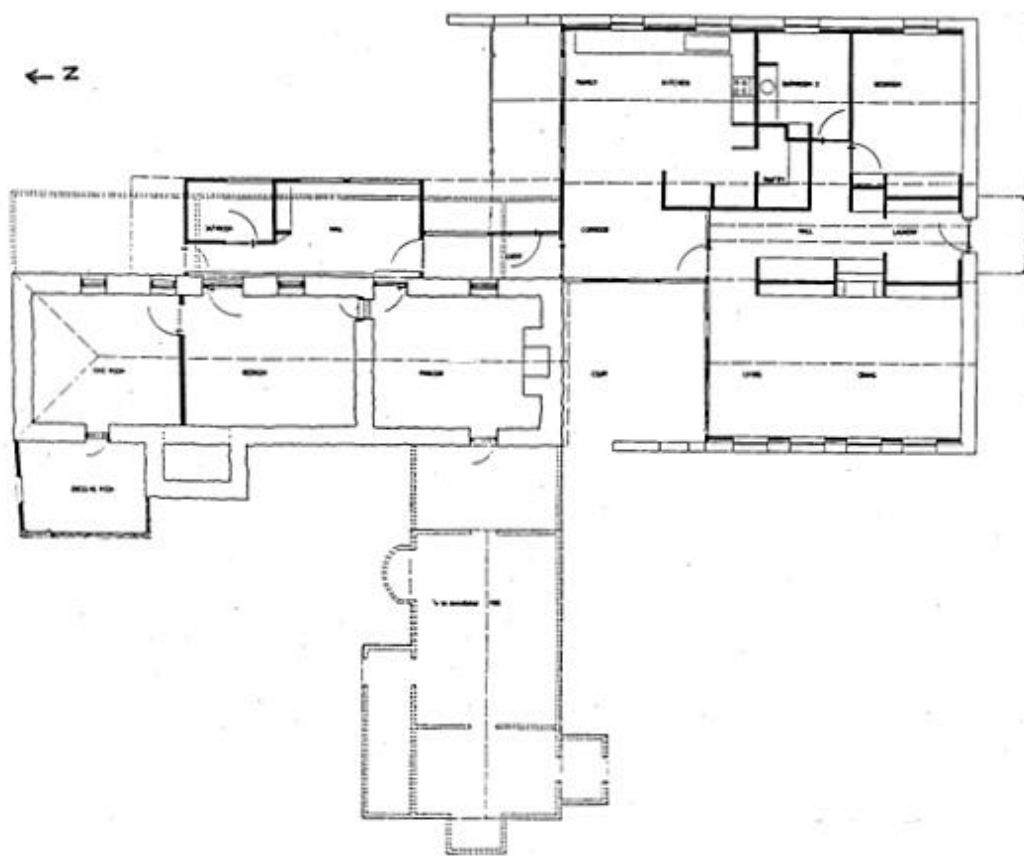
The 1980s extension bridged from the stone cottage using verandahs and pergola-covered stone-paved areas. It made a clear distinction between old and new by using different stone (not locally quarried), cut rather than rubble, and left exposed.

To mirror the original roofline and pitch, the new structure was double-gabled.

A rebuilt verandah on the eastern side of the stone cottage created a small 'office' space and a new bathroom, and some new flooring was installed (Cosgrove 1994:12,30).



Original stone cottage and 1980s extension
(Mark Butz June 2021)



Measured Drawing 1985, showing: the stone cottage at left, 1950s extension 'ghosted' at bottom;
and 1980s extension and modifications at centre and upper right
(Cosgrove 1994:30)

Installation of the new flooring may have been responding to the building inspection of 1983 which noted that the floor in the (then) central room was at a different height to the rooms on either side (NT 1983). It is probably around this time that the timber partition between two of the rooms was removed and the void (former fireplace) was opened up. The inspection report had suggested opening up the void 'under architectural or archaeological or supervision'.

The new flooring may have been part of the 1985 grant from the Community Development Fund towards restoration of 'Majura House', made subject to the house being opened for public inspection on at least two days per year, one of these to be during Heritage Week (ACTLA 1985; *Canberra Times* 27 June 1985:12).

The old stove and hot water system of the 1950s kitchen were retained as part of an outdoor space at the rear. This was a Carmichael 425 wood-burning slow combustion cooker and water heater, of a type that was being advertised in the late 1950s-early 1960s – ‘complete with all the features you’ve ever wanted’.

A brick surround and chimney structure enclose the old stove within a ‘box’ that appears to be a cut-down riveted iron ship’s tank. This may have been a tank used on the site to catch rainwater, as indicated on the 1911 survey plan.



Remnants of the 1950s kitchen – chimney and wood stove with water jacket (Mark Butz March 2023)

(centre left) copper hot water tank

(bottom left) Cut-down iron riveted ship’s tank to house the oven

(below) Advertisement for the sophisticated ‘Carmichael 425’
(*Canberra Times* 15 June 1960:23)

***Carmichael 425**
SLOW COMBUSTION COOKER AND WATER
HEATER complete with all the features you've
ever wanted.



***FREE
HOT WATER**
Connected to your
house hot water
system, the Car-
michael '425' (with
specially designed
AQUA-FLUE) will
supply steaming hot
water throughout
the day or night.

Australia's most modern solid fuel cooking range.

1. FINGERTIP CONTROL
Exclusive to Carmichael,
the attractive Control
Panel gives you calibrated
cooking for greater efficiency.

2. WONDERFUL BIG OVEN
The magnificent oven is
unusually large for size or for
cooking perfection in any other
similar range. Fully vitreous
enamelled inside and out.

3. MINUTE MINDER
For added convenience,
the Carmichael '425' has
a handy "minute minder"
for boiling eggs, vegetables, etc.

4. EXTRA LARGE HOTPLATE
The large capacity hot-
plate allows ample room
for top of range cooking
and gives extra fast
boiling at all times.

Naturally it cooks perfectly . . . it's a Carmichael.
Manufacturers of fine fuel stoves since 1892.
A Unit of Email Limited.
Write for free illustrated literature to W. T. Carmichael Limited, Auburn, N.S.W.,
Buccleugh (Aust.) Pty. Ltd., Sydney, or to your nearest dealer.

ADAM INGRAM & SON

LONGSDALE ST.

Cash
£169.10.0

Enquire
for
Easy Terms

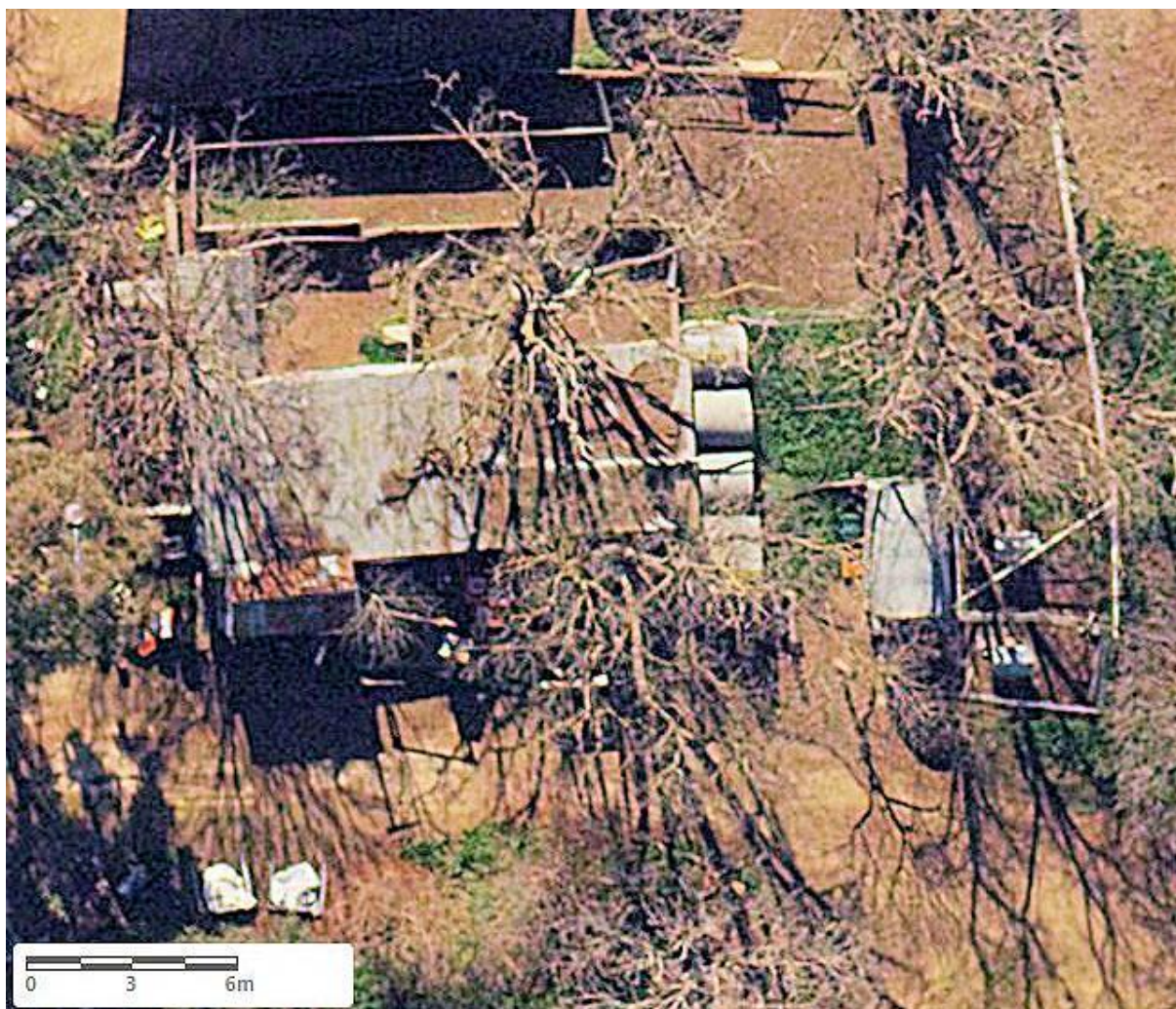
PTY. LTD.
J3341, J3342

Woolshed and outbuildings

The woolshed tended to be the largest building on a land holding and represented a large investment, particularly considering that it was used for its primary purpose for only a few weeks of the year. It was common for an initial woolshed structure to be very simple, and then be upgraded over time as resources permitted, with additional stands and/or to include new technology, often in lean-to structures or enclosures, and/or to become a storage area or workshop outside shearing season (Hobbs 1993).

Mayo would not have needed a large woolshed, given a holding of 124 acres from 1915 (NAA: A363, DSL 1921/1001) and Moriarty's estimation of carrying capacity at one sheep per acre (1912) (NAA: A358, 21 fol.17).

The 'Majura House' woolshed is part of a complex of connected vernacular structures, about 18 metres from the cottage.



'Majura House' woolshed complex, with layout visible through the tree canopy in winter
– June 2019 aerial photography (ACTmapi)

The woolshed is of vertical timber slab and galvanised iron exterior, with bush timber rafters and sawn timber panels. While now a single stand, it may have been 2 stands in the past. The entrance is through an old garage/workshop at ground level, now a wool room with concrete pavers. A timber panel floor (the board) is raised in a slight step. There are areas used for sorting, classing, manual pressing, baling and storage, with chutes from the yards for entry and exit of sheep. Part of the raised floor (small sweating pen) has timber battens to allow droppings to pass through to the ground below.

This structure is likely to have evolved, with a high level of bush carpentry, improvisation and adaptation evident, and a mix of repurposed materials used in the woolshed and adjacent sheep yards and sheep dip.



Interior of the 'Majura House' woolshed (Mark Butz March 2023)



Exterior of “Majura House” woolshed, with garage/workshop, yards, races, and dip (covered) (Mark Butz March 2023)

Previous owners (Sullivan) stated the woolshed was built in ‘the early part of the 20th century’ (*Canberra Times* 29 January 1991:17). One source dates its construction at 1913, and refers to the shed being used (until the 1930s) by a number of valley properties after shearing at Duntroon Woolshed ceased upon its acquisition by the RMC in 1912 (Cosgrove 1994:9, 11). This does not define date of construction, however, as other woolsheds were built in the Territory in anticipation of (rather than following) the cessation of shearing at the Duntroon shed, notably Royalla in 1907 (Hobbs 1993).



Sheds attached to or associated with the "Majura House" woolshed, some making good use of half-tanks as roofs c.1950s; turkey pens at upper right (Mark Butz March 2023)

There were other woolsheds nearby, on selections that had been independent of 'Duntroon'. The Darmody family to the north built their 'new' woolshed in 1897 (*Queanbeyan Observer* 7 November 1905), and Isabella Cameron's woolshed at 'Limekilns' to the north-east was built in 1907 – and destroyed by fire in 1912 (*Queanbeyan Observer* 13 February 1912:2).

It is notable that Moriarty's valuation of the Mayo property in 1912 did not mention a woolshed (NAA: A358, 21), nor did maps on government files dated 1913, 1914, and mid-1915 (including a hand-drawn map by William Mayo in May 1913) (NAA: A363, DSL 1921/1001).

It seems unlikely that William Mayo would make the investment required in a woolshed while he had uncertain tenure. He gained a lease from March 1916 (NAA: A192, FCL1918/1192), and this might indicate the earliest construction date as c.1916 or shortly thereafter.

A pre-1930s date is suggested by the nature of its construction, with more stringent building approval processes enforced by the Federal Capital authorities after the 1930s (Hobbs 1993:26).

Another source dates the woolshed from 'between the Wars' (NOHC 1995:56); however, this may refer more to adaptive updating and mechanisation. The nearby 'Avonley' woolshed was dated at '1890s and/or 1930s' (plus later extensions) (NOHC 1999:54; Hobbs 1993 Pt.2), suggesting a similar origin and subsequent evolution.

Most of the outbuildings and smaller machinery shelters are built with vertical slabs and bush timbers, with corrugated iron and galvanised iron sheet, demonstrating numerous and diverse improvised construction techniques.



Views of outbuildings: (from top) slab shed; winnowing machine cover; extra winnowing shed
(Mark Butz June 2021; March 2023)

A steel-framed tractor shed was built on vacant ground at the eastern end (rear) of the complex in 1987 (date inscribed in concrete slab).

A steel-framed hayshed followed in 2001, erected on the site of a previous hayshed, which was dated to the 1940s and built of light bush poles and corrugated iron, replaced due to structural collapse.

The first steel/aluminium grain silos date from c.1990, with new silos next to the hayshed in 2001.



Views of outbuildings: (from top) single-bail dairy; stock shed/dairy (Mark Butz June 2021; March 2023)
Below: Workers' toilet: (left) recently damaged by high winds (Mark Butz March 2023); and (right) showing construction (ERM 2013)



Well

The extensive aquifer beneath the Majura valley is within deep accumulations of sand, gravel and silts, a mix of colluvium from hillslopes and alluvium from creeks. One study (from bores on the west bank of Woolshed Creek) noted about 5 metres of clay and sand, lying above sand and gravel to depths of at least 15 metres (SMEC 2010:22-23). At the airport, bores revealed water at depths from 4-5 metres to 20-30 metres (Canberra Airport 2018:25), while higher in the valley, on the former 'Limekilns' block (Isabella Cameron's), water was available at 20-25 feet (6-8 metres) below the surface (NAA: A657, DS 1915/2127).

In 1915 Surveyor Reid reported that in the western parts of the valley springs were mostly permanent and fairly widely distributed, leading to permanent water in Woolshed Creek (NAA: A657, DS 1915/2127).

The 'Majura House' well is situated in the front paddock between Woolshed Creek and Majura Road, visible in survey plans dating from 1862 (adjacent to portion 1 Parish Pialligo) (M628 743). This contradicts statements that it dates from the 1890s, dug as a response to the prevailing drought (NOHC 1999:32) although it may have been renewed at that time. It is clearly marked on the 1912 survey plan as 'well and pump' (B502 fol.19).

The well is cited with a depth of 60-70 feet (18-21 metres) (NOHC 1999:65) and 1.3 metres internal diameter, lined with unmortared hand-made bricks. One visible brick is impressed with 'HK' conjoined, attributed to William Hunt and Joseph Kaye of Queanbeyan, with a similar specimen dated at 1842 (Gemmell 1986: Plate 11). This is a likely age (\pm a few years), noting that Hunt and Kaye formed a partnership in 1838, built a new (third) Elmsall Inn in 1843, and dissolved the partnership in 1844 (*Sydney Morning Herald* 25 November 1844:3). This brick is a tangible link with Queanbeyan as an 'official' settlement from 1838.

While a survey noted that the well may contain archaeological deposits (NOHC 1999:44), this has not yet been investigated, beyond an initial inspection some years ago which revealed it had been used to dump some materials, including a bicycle (Fred McGrath-Weber, pers. comm. 2023).



The well on the Woolshed Creek flats: (top) open to the world in 2013 (ERM 2013) and now covered (Mark Butz March 2023); (bottom) internal view, and upper level impressed brick c.1842 (Fred McGrath Weber March 2023)

Land use

The 'Majura House Precinct' exhibits the pattern typical of a smaller holding – all of its working features within sight of the homestead - contrasting with the more widely separated pattern typical of larger homesteads (Hobbs, 1993: 21). At the former parent property of 'Duntroon' for example, the homestead complex was well separated from the cultivation and grazing paddocks, dairy, and woolshed.

With 'Majura House' established as a 'sheep station' (or earlier a 'cattle station'), it is likely that small scale cropping was undertaken on the Woolshed Creek flats from as early as the 1830s-40s. After resumption in the 1910s, with private leasing the farm would have diversified, with a greater range of subsistence cropping, and greater range of livestock.

In 1915 for example, newspapers noted that Majura farmers had cultivated much larger areas than in 'any previous years' (*Canberra Times* 25 June 1915:2). The ploughing of 'the old Majura House Paddock' was specifically mentioned, having 'not been cultivated for upward of 30 years' (*Queanbeyan Leader* 12 July 1915:2).

The c.1915 features map shows in the vicinity numerous areas of cultivation of varying sizes, most on alluvial creek flats (nla.obj-233281594). The presence of multiple winnowing machines also supports the idea that the property was growing wheat.

The 1911 survey plan indicates a pig sty on the slope between the house and the creek (A167 fol.21A).

Moriarty's 1912 valuation noted that portion 181 Parish Pialligo (1000 acres) was a red soil plain, almost level except for the fringe of foothills on the western boundary [Mount Ainslie]; land capability was described as nearly all second class cultivation, fair dairying, and first class grazing.

The area of the Horse Paddock fell within portions 1, 42 and 53 Parish Pialligo, described by Moriarty as chocolate to red loam, originally box and gum forest, nearly all cultivable after removing timber, well sheltered, 'cost very little to make ready for the plough'; land capability was second class cultivation, first class grazing. Both areas were estimated to carry one sheep per acre. (NAA: A358, 21:17)

Some decades later, it is known that Mrs May Sells raised turkeys in pens made from corrugated iron half-tanks, which remain in place at the end of the woolshed (Cosgrove 1994:12).

From 1981 the Sullivans grew fodder and flowers, including oats, lucerne, canola, vegetables and lilies (Cosgrove 1994:12).

From 1999 Nick Weber and Anne McGrath established a bio-dynamic pastured poultry/free-range egg business, while also selling spring lamb and sweet corn. More recently cultivation has included sunflowers, with sales of seasonal garden produce, compost and worm castings.



The modern public interface of the Precinct on Majura Road (left Mark Butz March 2023; right Visit Canberra n.d.)

Access and fencing

Former dry-access **tracks** to the west of the house are no longer evident, although Tony Sullivan reported finding hardened ground indicative of the original access route, which is clearly visible on maps and air photos up to the 1960s.

The former **crossing** of Woolshed Creek is visible on survey plans and early air photos. Today it is evident in the alignment of old fencing and in the erosion profile of the creek banks at the crossing.

When fencing has been renewed, old **posts** have been retained on site.

An old telephone pole with an insulator intact remains (recumbent) next to the creek bank. This is likely to date to the 1920s, based on J W Mayo applying to erect a telephone line to his house in 1924 and connection of the telephone to the Majura Post Office in 1929.



Fencing by Woolshed Creek showing: (left) retention of old fence posts within renewed fencing;
(right) recumbent telegraph pole with insulator (Mark Butz November 2022)

It is notable that the form of the creek crossing is reflected in fence alignments that then translated into surveyed block boundaries, of an unconventional shape. Retention of these existing boundaries was to save the expense of rabbit netting on new boundary fences, which would have been required before they could be leased. (NAA: A657, DS1915/2127)

The boundary line at the western extremity (Block 715) also dates from the 1915 definition and fencing of the RMC lands (NAA: A363, DSL 1921/1001).

Vegetation

Virtually all paddocks on the property have been cultivated or disturbed over many decades, and while some box gum **woodland** persists in the west (Block 715), there is no record of remnant native grasslands.

Around the house and outbuildings are large **trees**. In addition to recent eucalypts, the larger trees are mostly locust (pseudoacacia), with elms, ashes, Mexican weeping pine, and other ornamental shade species.



Mature trees sheltering the stone cottage (top row) and outbuildings
(Mark Butz March 2023)

Some large **willows** remain along the adjacent section of the creek. It is possible that some of these date from the early 20th century, when E E Hudson, the manager of 'Duntroon' undertook planting along the previously treeless banks of Woolshed Creek, favouring the of weeping willow as 'an ornamental and luxuriant shade-tree' and an excellent source of drought fodder (*Canberra Times* 20 November 1908:2).



Old willows on Woolshed Creek within the Majura House Precinct (Mark Butz November 2022)

Significant planting of eucalypts from the 1990s in the old **Stock Route** to the north (Block 722 Majura) has resulted in a mature timber corridor linking the Majura Road with the nature reserve, now interrupted by the Majura Parkway.

Complementing the stock route corridor, within the 'Majura House Precinct' in the past few decades there has been extensive planting of **shelter belts** of eucalypts and casuarinas along fencelines.



Majura House Precinct overlay on February 2022 imagery, showing:

Block 715 remnant woodland patches in the west; Block 722 timbered corridor planted along the old Stock Route; Block 716 amenity trees around the house and outbuildings; multiple shelter belts planted on boundaries and in paddocks; riparian willows on Woolshed Creek

(ACTmapi)

House garden

Close to the cottage are remnants of earlier **gardens**, with some structure still visible in the form of a wormwood hedge and covered gate (1950s or 80s). The garden form appears to be recoverable.



Remnant structure of the old house garden – gateway arch, paving and wormwood hedge (Mark Butz March 2023)

Bricks in paved spaces and paths are mostly ‘Canberra Reds’ made at Yarralumla Brickworks, variously stamped ‘Cwealth’ or ‘Canberra’ (or both) or ‘CB’. These may have been salvaged from the 1950s extension, or perhaps more likely the unexplained isolated chimney, both of which were demolished in the 1980s.

There are less common, but fairly widely distributed, older bricks, some coarsely structured, in sandstock style. Detailed analysis might reveal a range of ages and manufacturing processes. The oldest and coarsest resemble bricks exposed in the fireplace which had been closed off, and some may have come from its chimney which was roofed over. The quantity suggests that some may also have come from the original brick oven from the demolished slab kitchen block.



Old bricks are used in garden pathways and other paved areas (above); most are ‘Canberra Reds’ but there are numerous sandstock bricks also, some exposing coarse structure and random inclusions (above right)

The sandstocks are similar to bricks in the re-opened fireplace in the stone cottage (right), suggesting an origin in the 1850s, subject to further investigation

(Mark Butz March 2023)



These kinds of bricks were locally plentiful, with technical capability available since the earliest days of Sydney Cove, and suitable alluvial clay deposits widespread within the Campbell holdings and wider district. The bricks at 'Majura House' could have been made at 'Duntroon' and/or in the Queanbeyan area. The Campbells were making good quality bricks by at least the 1860s (O'Keefe 2010:14-15), and in that decade it was said that 'brickyards were nearly as numerous in Queanbeyan as hotels' (Cross 1985:196).

Locally made sandstock bricks were used in Blundell's Cottage (GML 1994:42). Even earlier, bricks were used unmortared in the 1830s for the well beneath Duntroon Dairy. Mortared bricks were used in 1865 to raise the walls of the dairy building and to erect a brick cottage nearby. That later work was undertaken by 'Duntroon' tenant and dairyman Ambrose Austen, who had links to 'Majura House'.

In a measure of how close the Duntroon-Majura community could be, two daughters of Ambrose Austen married into the Mayo and Warwick families, which were then linked by two further marriages:

- 1874 Joseph **Mayo** (1848-1895), eldest son of Alfred and Mary Ann Mayo of 'Majura House', married Elizabeth Janet **Austen** (1847-1926)
- 1881 Alice M E M **Austen** (1854-1927) married Frederick **Warwick** (1857-1932)
- Frederick was a brother of Mary Ann **Warwick** (1859-1946) who had (the year before) married William **Mayo** (1855-1936), younger brother of Joseph Mayo
- 1896 Mary Ann's younger sister Christina **Warwick** (1870-1953) married Frederick Reuben **Mayo** (1861-1939), younger brother of William and Joseph Mayo.

(McLennan & McLennan 1996)

In 1907 Elizabeth **Mayo's** daughter Jennet married Charles **Edlington** and continued living in the brick cottage at Duntroon Dairy (by then known as Mayo's Cottage) until 1942. Their children were the fourth generations of the Austen-Mayo-Edlington lines to operate the dairy and call the cottage home (Young 2007:19-20).

There is a high likelihood of mutual support and exchange of skills and labour between these inter-connected families.

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SUMMARY TIMELINE OF HERITAGE AWARENESS AND STATUS – MAJURA HOUSE PRECINCT

The Majura valley and 'Majura House' have been noted for their heritage values for decades, with multiple layers of heritage desktop studies and surveys; this summary also notes some major contextual matters:

- 1967** (November) the Canberra District Historical Society ran an excursion to key places in Majura, and described the nature of 'Majura House'
- NCDC identified the Majura valley as a future urban (town) area from at least the early **1960s**, with a potential population of about 104,000.
- With adoption of the Y-Plan in **1967**, the emphasis shifted from Majura.
- This also reflected the fact that a new town at Majura would have required a new location for the airport. Reluctance of the RAAF to move to a new location stalled such plans, and they were further complicated by military field firing range requirements.
- As a result, priorities for a new town shifted to Tuggeranong from **1969**. However, talk of urban development in the Majura Valley persisted until the **1980s**.
- 1983** (September) the National Trust (ACT) nominated 'Majura House' to the Register of the National Estate (Australian Heritage Commission), attaching (1) a brief history of the holding and (2) report on the cottage and suggested works from Philip Cox & Partners (Eric Martin author)
- It was listed in March 1986 as 'Majura House and outbuildings' - ID 13406. The Register of the National Estate ceased to have any statutory effect (becoming an archive) from February 2007
- 1985** 'Majura House' drawings win second prize in the Marion Mahony Griffin measured Drawing Competition – RAA (ACT) - for Bernard O'Brien, Andrew Moore and Ian Johnson
- 1985** (December) ACT Community Development Fund grant (\$5000) towards the cost of restoring Majura House (appended material from the National Trust nomination 1983)
- 1989** (in the transition to Territory self-government) the ACT Heritage Task Force recommended that the Interim Territory Planning Authority add 'Majura House and outbuildings' to the ACT Heritage Register on two criteria
- 1989** an NCDC study of sites of significance in the ACT included 'Majura House', and disparaged recent extensions and modifications
- In the early **1990s** Canberra Airport was being promoted by the Federal Airports Commission as a major air-freight hub with a business park, necessitating development of freight-related facilities in the Majura Valley.
- 1994** Carol Cosgrove prepared a detailed report on 'Majura House' within its historic cultural landscape, as part of University of Canberra studies
- 1996** the National Trust (ACT) considered classification (listing) of the Majura Valley as a cultural landscape. Instead it favoured classification of individual sites, which included 'Majura House and outbuildings'; this recognition has no statutory effect
- 1997** the National Trust nominated the valley for inclusion on the interim Heritage Places Register
- 1997** (February) an ACT Government file note recorded that Block 59 Majura ('Majura House') was not entered in an Interim Heritage Places Register, and was not on the Heritage Places Register, contrary to the understanding of the lessee at that time (Sullivan), but was shown on the 'Heritage List' [sic] as having 'potential heritage significance'
- 1997** 'Majura House' was included (along with 'Gladefield') in the report on Rural Properties of the ACT (Baskin, Martin & Riboust)
- 1998** 'Majura House' was included in Graeme Barrow's book: 'Canberra's historic houses: dwellings and ruins of the 19th century'

Privatisation of Canberra Airport in **1998** initiated development of peripheral service and commercial areas, the northernmost as 'Majura Park'.

- 1999 to 2007** Navin Officer undertook a number of heritage studies which noted 'Majura House' and the adjacent old well, and the nearby former 'village' area with Majura Post Office, Majura Hall, and site of the Majura School; it was noted by Navin Officer (2007) that the Majura Valley had been nominated to the ACT Heritage Register
- 2001** ACT Heritage comments on a proposal to replace the hayshed on Block 59 Majura show that the farm still had the status of 'nominated to an Interim Heritage Place Register'; this cited the 1999 Navin Officer study and noted a site visit by Heritage Unit staff
- 2002** the ACT Heritage Council received a nomination for Provisional Registration of 'Majura Valley Cultural Landscape'. This was rejected because of the amount of National Land involved, and the fact that Council had not formed a view on the heritage value of places within the nomination. It noted that places on Territory Land would be 'assessed individually in the future'. [Oddly, this decision appears to be dated 'September 2013' and not signed]
- In **2004** the Canberra Spatial Plan identified the Majura valley as 'urban capable' and as a Future Employment Corridor and Transport Corridor (major road and High Speed Rail). Parts of the valley (northernmost and north-eastern) were seen as 'rural setting'. The Spatial Plan accorded development Priority 1 to areas in the southern valley; Priority 2 (medium-term) to areas in the central valley; and Priority 3 (long-term) to areas north of the former 'village'. These would be part of the Territory-identified Eastern Broadacre area, comprising the Majura valley and a southern area to Hume, including Symonston and Jerrabomberra Valley (the two parts separated by a gap around the airport).
- 2004** New ACT heritage legislation was enacted with the *Heritage Act 2004*
- >2004** an undated PowerPoint document is presumed to be from the Heritage Unit and may have been intended to brief the Heritage Council (but not presented to the Council). Entitled 'Majura Valley nomination: background sites strategy', it included a proposal for Provisional Registration of parts of the valley. It also identified places of 'possible heritage significance', including 'Majura House', the former Post Office, Majura Hall, 'Gladefield' homestead, 'Avonley' woolshed, and the grave of Margaret Darmody, and others further to the north and south. This also recorded (within the original nomination area) Registration of multiple Aboriginal heritage places, two geological sites, and Duntroon woolshed, along with six decisions not to register places. It noted that 'Majura House' had been 'Nominated'.
- 2005** The lease over the farm lapsed, although application had been made for renewal prior to expiry.
- In **2009** MacroPlan Australia prepared the ACT Eastern Broadacre Economic and Strategic Planning Direction Study. For the Majura Valley it suggested uses for transport, warehouses, storage and security.
- 2010** AECOM prepared the Majura Valley Engineering Feasibility Study, with 'Majura House' at the southernmost edge of Area B in that study. The study confirmed that all potential development would be dependent on heritage and/or ecological values and repeatedly noted the need for 'clarification of heritage values'. The AECOM study addressed a number of heritage places (but not the Majura Hall). For 'Majura House' it recommended further investigation of 'significant elements and surrounds'. For 'Gladefield' it recommended retention of an 'appropriate contextual buffer'. In both cases it noted that residential use is compatible with conservation of heritage values.
- A number of due diligence studies are mentioned in subsequent papers and were said to be complete by March **2014**. Most (if not all) papers do not mention additional European heritage studies or investigations. Emphasis in studies for West Majura appears to have been on Aboriginal sites, areas

of ecological importance (mostly grassland ecosystems), and location/removal of unexploded ordnance and contamination.

[Note: Block numbers changed with construction of the Majura Parkway/Monaro Highway extension commencing **2013** – Block 59 Majura was divided by the road to become Blocks 715 and 716 Majura]

- 2013** (October) a report by Environmental Resources Management Australia (title uncertain due to redaction, but a 'Stage 1 CHA' or Cultural Heritage Assessment of at least parts of the valley) included information on 'Majura House' and the well (with virtually all other content redacted in FoI).

By end **2015** IKEA opened its Canberra store opposite Majura Park, reflecting (and amplifying) the revenue potential of the southern Majura valley.

- 2016** (January) Chief Minister Barr and the Minister for Planning & Land Management (Mr Gentleman) visited landholders in the Majura valley and heard about uncertainties relating to lease tenure; after the visit the Minister acknowledged that tenure needed to be addressed 'within a reasonable timeframe', and foreshadowed a strategic review of tenure arrangements for short term leases.
- 2016** (June) West Majura was described as 'ready for significant development planning', in contrast to the AECOM 2010 qualifications about heritage investigation requirements; this expected finalisation of negotiations with the Commonwealth (Defence) and landholders in 2016-17.
- 2019** the Majura West Concept Plan mapped 'general industrial' land use across 'split blocks', as far north as the TSR to the Majura saddle, with indicative road servicing.
- It shows 'community facilities' around the 'Majura House' and 'Dove Cottage' homesteads and the Duntroon woolshed. Notably, the area immediately north of IKEA was exempted from development because of 'environmental values'.
- The Concept Plan states it took into account environmental assessment and flooding in Woolshed Creek, but does not mention European cultural heritage.
- 2020** the ACT Heritage Unit advised that they were unable to locate the nomination of Majura Valley, which was assumed to have included 'Majura House'.
- However, it seems likely that this was the June 1996 'citation' from the National Trust, which was supplied under FoI in 2021.
- Late in **2020** and again in June **2021** officers of the ACT Heritage Unit visited the property.
- 2021** (July) a brief report was prepared by Mark Butz discussing the nature and likely origin of small pits on Block 715 and the adjacent TSR – quite possibly being mortar firing or target pits associated with RMC Duntroon - and noting a theme through the valley of military (training) heritage
- 2022** (July) the Heritage Unit advised that the Registration Task Force (RTF) had been unable to form an opinion on nomination of 'Majura House and property – Blocks 715 & 716 Majura' based on the Background Information prepared by the Unit
- 2022** (August) the Background Information prepared by the Unit for the RTF was provided.
- An accompanying email itemised a number of aspects for which additional information might be useful. These included:
- physical features of the land that are linked to its history and heritage (e.g. particular pastures, fences, roads/driveways, etc.)
 - documentation about the slab shed at rear of the house, the chimney at rear of the house, and development of the shearing shed and runs
 - photos/images of the brick well (uncovered).
- Due to several factors there was no indication of when the nomination might be progressed further.

AERIAL PHOTOGRAPH SEQUENCE – MAJURA HOUSE



1993



1995



2006



2009



2012



2014



2017



2019



(Images: 1940 Run 1W/photo 14945 - NLA: nla.obj-1824423038; remainder ACTmap)

