



## ACT Heritage Council

### BACKGROUND INFORMATION

#### Calvary Homestead Ruin

#### (part Block 29, Paddys River)

At its meeting of 4 June 2015 the ACT Heritage Council decided that the Calvary Homestead Ruin was not eligible for provisional registration.

The information contained in this report was considered by the ACT Heritage Council in assessing the nomination for the Calvary Homestead Ruin against the heritage significance criteria outlined in s10 of the *Heritage Act 2004*.

### HISTORY

The Murrumbidgee River Corridor, incorporating the Paddys River District, has been a focus of activity for Aboriginal people well before Europeans arrived. The earliest known date for Aboriginal people in the region comes from Birrigai Rock Shelter which contains evidence of Aboriginal occupation from approximately 25,000 years ago. The area is known to be part of an Aboriginal pathway leading towards the mountains where past peoples would gather seasonally to feast on Bogong moths. During this period groups from the coast, the lower Lachlan and Murrumbidgee Rivers and all neighbouring regions in between would gather in the alpine regions south and southwest of the ACT to feast on the plentiful supply of Bogong moths as they aestivate over summer (Flood, 1996; Gale 1991; Kabaila, 2005). The nearby Tidbinbilla Range was of spiritual importance to Aboriginal people, and is said to be a variation of the Aboriginal word 'Jedbinbilla' which means place of initiation (Freeman and Collett et al. 1994, p. 7).

The first Europeans in the Canberra area were the early explorers who relied on their Aboriginal guides' prior knowledge. Charles Throsby and his team are credited with the first European discovery of the region around 1820 with further excursions by his team and others extending his recording of the area over the next few years. The Murrumbidgee River was located in 1821, and by the late 1820s, settlers had pushed south to the Tuggeranong area, some illegally grazing stock west of the Murrumbidgee, beyond the limits of the Nineteen Counties (Freeman and Collett et al. 1994, 8).

The first half of the nineteenth century saw squatters become a powerful force in colonial New South Wales. Their pastoral leases occupied large tracts of land, making it difficult for smaller graziers and farmers to obtain holdings. Calls for a more equitable land policy were heard before the gold rushes, but the increased population and wealth created by gold heightened the cries to 'unlock the land'.

The Squatters' runs of Congwarrah, Freshford, and Tidbinbilly, incorporating land that would later be selected by the Maloneys of Calvary Homestead Ruin, were acquired during the nineteenth century by wealthy pastoralist Andrew Cunningham of Lanyon and Tuggeranong (Flint, 1983; Hobbs, 1996).

From 1861, when John Robertson's free selection legislation became law, a series of land acts were introduced to open land to selectors. While some of these small landholders failed, either through under capitalisation or squatter tactics such as 'dummying' and 'peacocking,' other selectors were successful (Freeman and Collett et al. 1994).

### The Maloneys and Calvary Homestead Ruin<sup>1</sup>

In 1877 Michael and Susan Maloney travelled from America as assisted immigrants, arriving in September of that year and coming almost immediately to the Queanbeyan district. Subsequently Michael was employed by Leopold Fane de Salis at Cuppacumbalong.

Michael and Susan held freehold land on Portion 50, Parish of Booroomba at 'the Pines' (Pleasant Valley), from 1883. The Maloneys ran 4 horses, 8 cattle and 3 pigs on the 300 acre Portion, but lost the flocks and land due to an ill-fated transaction involving their mortgage with the McKeanhies of Booroomba Station.

Part of Andrew Cunningham's pastoral holdings, including the abovementioned former Congwarrah and Tidbinbilly Runs, became available for selection after 1884, and in November 1890 Michael Maloney applied for Portions 97 and 98 in the Parish of Congwarra.<sup>2</sup> Conditional purchase of portions 97 and 98 (see Image 2), confirmed in June 1891, required survey by the District Surveyor before acceptance. Upon selection, neither portion had any improvements except for six wire and brush fences over the summit of the Freshford Hills (Bullen Range), built by Cunningham

In 1893 Maloney applied to select portions 124, 127, and 128 in the Parish of Congwarra. He selected portions 125 and 126 to the north in his eldest son William's name. The Maloney family holdings now stretched from the summit of the Bullen Range (Freshford Hills) to the Murrumbidgee River. By 1894 William Maloney was living at 'Red Rocks,' on his selection. His parents stayed on at the Pines for some time after losing Portion 50, but by 1896 Michael and wife Susan were living with William at Red Rocks.

Michael Maloney and son William were described as farmers in the Electoral Roll of 1895, and Susan acted as a midwife from her home. Michael took every opportunity to better his financial position. In 1892 he was involved with the unsuccessful Cotter Silver Mine, and in 1894 and 1895 operated a gold mine at Point Hut with another selector, John Noone. Michael Maloney was still periodically employed by the de Salis family, as well as William Farrer, after Farrer moved to Lambrigg, The work he did included pruning and grafting grape vines and fruit trees and planting new grasses for stock feed.

A man of many skills, Michael Maloney was involved with his son-in-law George Hatcliff in the construction of a pisé house at Lambrigg for William Farrer in April 1899. Selector George Hatcliff had married Michael and Susan's daughter Margaret Maloney on 26 May 1896. Calvary Homestead Ruin, a pisé building on Maloney's Portion 97, constructed between 1891 and 1903, could have been built with the assistance of George Hatcliff.

George Green and George Hatcliff built a large number of pisé structures in the district. Green and Hatcliff worked on neighbouring properties, such as Booroomba, as well as running their own holdings. It is thought that they acquired these skills from two Chileans, Eusebio Ponsi and Rupelto Rodrigues, who arrived in the area in 1872. Both of these men worked as shepherds for Andrew Cunningham. It is likely that Green and Hatcliff could have had contact with Ponsi and Rodrigues and learned about pisé from the two South Americans.

In addition to the pisé homestead, a horizontal 'drop slab' building was constructed on Portion 97. This structure was attached to the pisé house and used as a kitchen, however, it is possible the slab kitchen was constructed first in order to fulfil requirements of selection. Slab buildings are rare in the ACT, with an estimated 27 remaining, including only five with horizontal construction (ACT Heritage Council 2010).

Michael Maloney was an active member of the community of small selectors in the district. In March 1892 he collected signatures to a petition requesting the proposed bridge over the Murrumbidgee River be erected at Freshford instead of Tharwa which was unsuccessful. He later became a member of the committee that arranged the

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<sup>1</sup> The sub-headings titled 'The Maloneys and Calvary Homestead Ruin,' 'Pisé,' 'Description,' and 'Physical Condition and Integrity' have been extracted from *Pisé Places in the ACT* by the National Trust of Australia (2001) and *Calvary Homestead Conservation Analysis* by Roger Hobbs and Associates (1996) unless stated otherwise.

<sup>2</sup> Note different spelling: Congwarra and Congwarrah. The original Nineteen Counties of NSW were subsequently divided into over 7,000 parishes. 'Congwarrah,' refers to original pastoral Run, where Congwarra represents spelling of the NSW Parish.

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opening, in March 1895, of the bridge at Tharwa.

In spite of opportunities offered by the bridge, life west of the Murrumbidgee was hard. Many of the selectors worked throughout the district on the larger properties for additional income. Michael and Susan's younger son, John Bryan Maloney worked as part of the Cuppacumbalong Shearing Team in the early 1900s and travelled throughout New South Wales as a shearer. On 15 June 1905, he increased the family's holdings when he selected, as a conditional purchase and conditional lease respectively, portions 48 and 74 in the Parish of Booroomba. 'Bryan Vale,' the new selection on Ghost Gully, lay between the holdings of George Green and George Hatcliff.

Improvement of the Maloney's land resulted in 80 acres of first class grazing, 120 acres of second class grazing and 200 acres of third class grazing. First class grazing could support one sheep per acre, third class one sheep to four acres, at best.

Michael Maloney did not live to see the resumption of his land for the Federal Capital Territory. Following his death in Queanbeyan Hospital on 31 December 1915, he was buried in the Roman Catholic portion of the Riverside Cemetery, Queanbeyan. As sole beneficiary, Susan Maloney applied for resumption, and subsequently purchased land at Castle Hill, Sydney, where she farmed until her death in July 1933. Calvary Homestead Ruin has been unoccupied since her departure in 1916.

The holdings of William Maloney were resumed on 28 November 1914 for the Federal Capital Territory following his application to the Commonwealth. John Bryan (Jack) Maloney remained on his land at 'Bryan Vale' until 1951, by which time his property was referred to as the Paddys River leases.

### **Pisé**

*Pisé de terre* is the method of earth building characterised by ramming earth into in-situ formwork similar to that used today for mass concrete. It is a cheap building construction style that was introduced into Australia in the 1820s. First a timber framed mould is constructed on top of a stone or brick base layer (which protects the wall from moisture) and then earth is poured in about 10-15cm thick and then rammed into the mould until it is hard enough that a hammer will only leave a small dent when struck against the top surface, then another 10-15cm of soil is spread on top and the process repeated until the mould has been filled. When the mould has been filled, it is moved up and the process repeated until the full height of the wall is reached. The building can be used as soon as it has been erected with the walls being able to support heavy loads, such as roof structures; however, the walls must be allowed to dry for several months before they can be plastered, providing a pleasing finish that also helps to protect the walls from moisture.

In the area that is now the Australian Capital Territory, the County of Cowley was prodigious in the art and use of earth construction within a radius of 100 miles, this included areas near the Murrumbidgee River such as the Parish of Congwarra where Calvary was built. Notable pise buildings include Congwarra, Nil Desperandum, Rock Valley, and Lambrigg.

In their pisé study of 2001, Cosgrove and Dowling listed 42 historic Pisé buildings in the ACT. However, only fourteen of these were noted as being in 'good,' condition, with a further nine cited as ruins. Approximately seven of the fourteen 'good' structures survived at this time without being subject to major modification, with others, such as Nil Desperandum and Rock Valley homesteads, subsequently affected by bushfires in 2003.

### **DESCRIPTION**

Calvary Homestead Ruin is located in the upper reaches of Larry's Creek, south of the Bullen Range. The morphology created by the proximity of granitic rocks and metamorphosed sediments has resulted in a small scale drainage pattern with many feeder creeks and extensive rocky ridges on the summit ridges of the Bullen Range. Deposition of sediments along the creeks has created a number of small 'flats', enhanced by ringbarking and clearing.

The pisé homestead appears to have been built after the kitchen building of horizontal slab construction. At valuation in 1916 the homestead buildings included the slab kitchen building and pisé dwelling, which were surrounded by netted rabbit-proof fences.

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The six by eight metre pisé dwelling is of an unusual L-plan form and was possibly a two room structure (see Images 3 and 4). Several remnant posts and metal fragments of a cow bail, slab-sided shed and skillion lie immediately west of the pisé ruin (see Image 5).

The orientation of the pisé building on sloping ground determined that the floor was at ground level at the western end and slightly raised on the other sides. The 450mm thick external shell of pisé (rammed earth) sat on simple stone footings established approximately 150 mm above ground level. This footing probably once provided some degree of protection from rising damp for layers of rammed earth 40-140mm thick, taken from the creek bank near the site.

A small alleyway, 1.8m wide, separated the horizontal slab kitchen (now no longer extant) from the pisé dwelling. Each long wall of the kitchen was supported by three roughly squared posts, set in an earth floor, with the top member of each supported on inward sloping rebates.

Two netted cultivation areas were recorded to the north and south east of the homestead in 1996, with a fallen fence recorded in 2015 suggesting the location of the south eastern area. A 1916 reference to exotic trees surrounding the homestead can only be illustrated by the proliferation of Tree of Heaven, *Ailanthus altissima*, seedlings which originate from the south-east corner of the homestead building. This species was introduced from China as a fast growing shade tree. Other plants in the homestead area include *Cotoneaster lactea*, a self seeded apricot and iris plants along the creek.

The homestead buildings and their grouping are characteristic of those found on small selections in the late nineteenth century, their materials and relationship modified by terrain and economics, and a consistent theme which unites individual buildings is the use of local materials. The economics of living on a small, remote pastoral holding are suggested by the buildings and materials employed.

### Physical condition and integrity

The condition of the cultural landscape and individual buildings is poor.

Structural distortion of the walls has caused cracking of the pisé at vertical joints which define sections of walling rammed in relatively small formwork that was moved progressively around the building (see Image 6). Corner formwork does not appear to have been used. Common formwork lengths are 1200 mm with 750 mm on the inside corners allowing for the wall thickness. There is a distinct difference in the erosion of the wall surfaces, which contain feldspar grains and small mica flakes, expressed in the striation of the rammed layers suggesting that the earth mixture or its source was changed during construction.

Window and door frames appear to have been of poorly wrought timber set into the pisé during construction (see Image 7). Side members are nominally joined to the lintel by shallow rebates. No trace of the timber floor or galvanised iron roof remains.

While the pisé appears to be well rammed and of suitable materials and consistency for such work, the building shows little evidence of an appreciation of structural issues by the builders as there is too little bonding or overlap between rammed sections. This has resulted in long vertical 'joints' which have contributed to the failure of the structure and suggests that the formwork used for the pisé may have been extremely limited in size and flexibility.

The form of the roof structure is difficult to envisage. In 1996 an extant wire tie and pole suggested that it was of hipped form, however as of 2015 this pole is no longer present. The chimney is pisé, which, following removal of the roof, has collapsed along with substantial sections of the north and south walls.

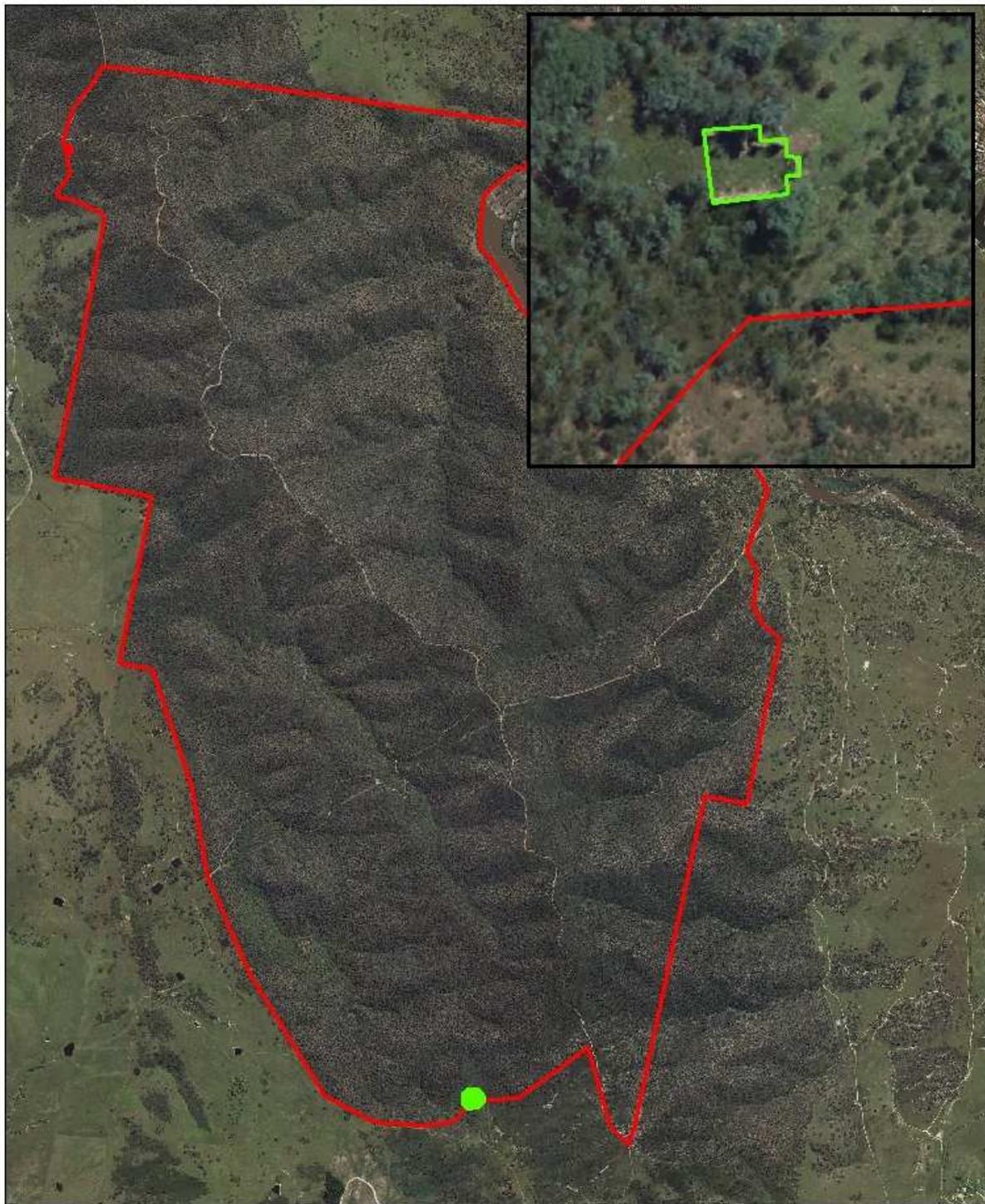
The kitchen building is of low integrity having lost its roof, wall infill panels and chimney, although a stone hearth remains at the north of the building's footprint (see Image 8). Timber posts, some squared, remain at the site (see Image 9). A limited surface scatter of late nineteenth and early twentieth century domestic artefacts occurs within the footprint of the former kitchen building.

The location of the cow bail, slab shed and skillion is evident in a collection of collapsed posts and stone foundations immediately west of the pisé dwelling. The sheds and cow bail would have provided effective shelter for the homestead on the exposed western side of the range.

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Evidence for one netted cultivation area remains near an apricot tree to the south east of the pisé dwelling. The *Ailanthus altissima* is no longer extant in the area. No other evidence for cultivation or ornamental plantings remains at the site.

SITE PLAN



**Nominated Boundary Calvary Homestead (Block 29 Paddys River)**

 Calvary Homestead Ruin

 Nominated Boundary

**Image 1 Nominated Boundary Calvary Homestead Ruin (Block 19 Paddys River)**

IMAGES

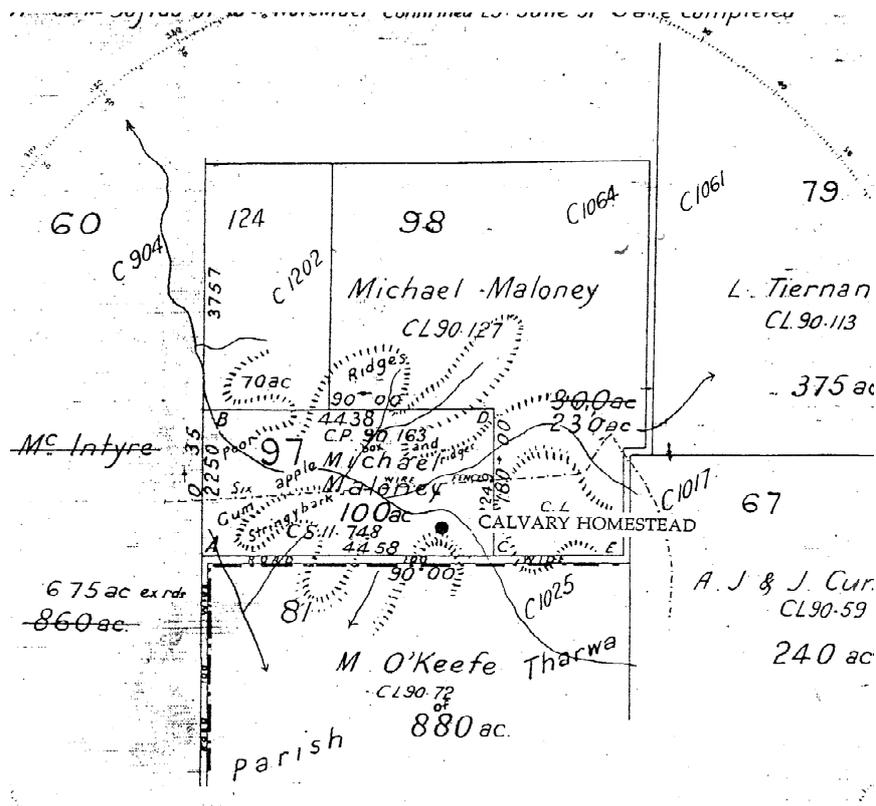


Image 2 the Maloney's Portions 98 and 97 (Hobbs 1996)

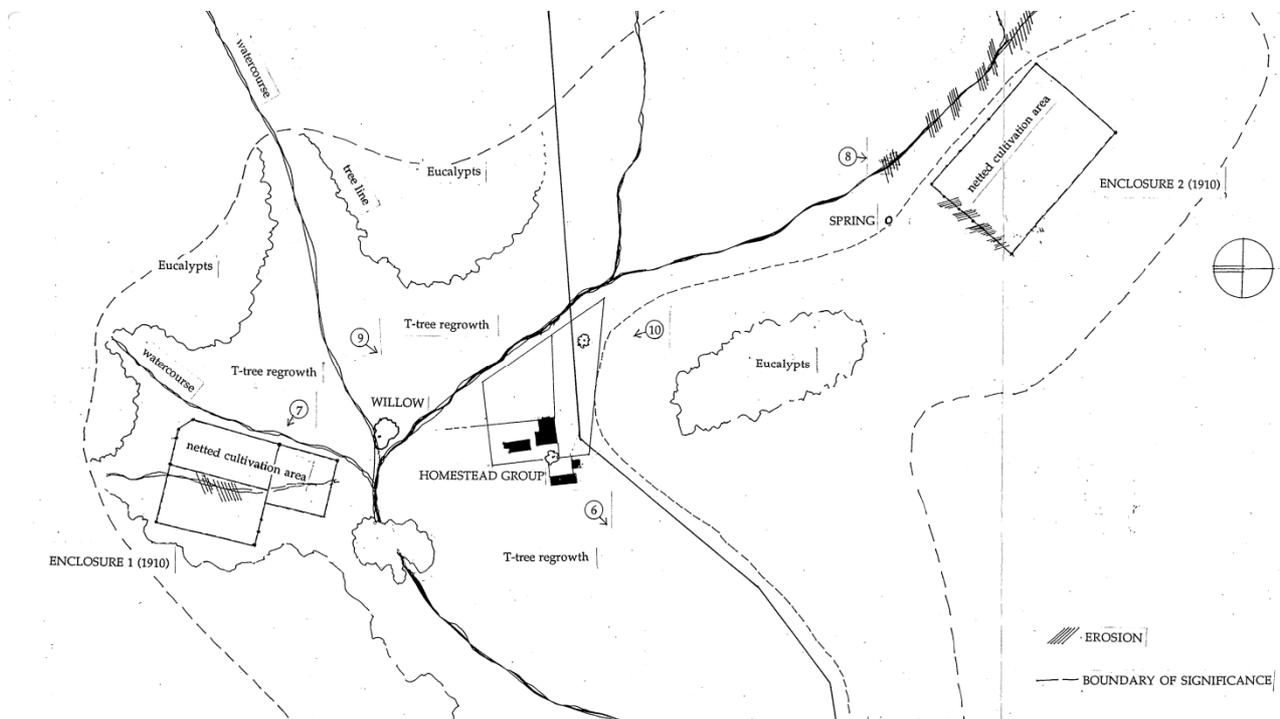


Image 3 Calvary Homestead Group and Landscape 1916 (Hobbs 1996)



Image 4 Calvary Homestead Ruin (ACT Heritage 2015)

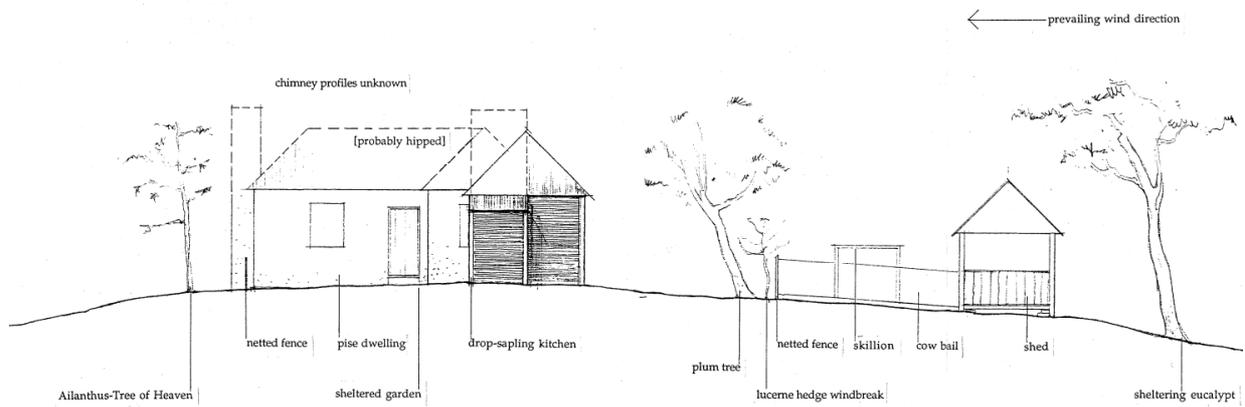


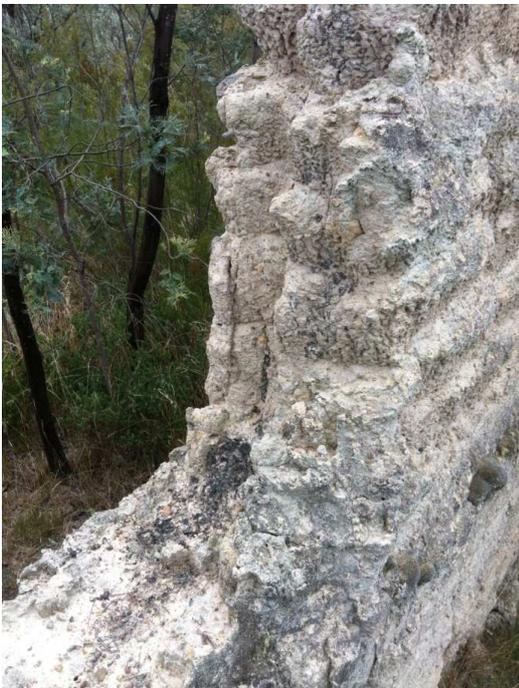
Image 5 Calvary Homestead Group (Hobbs 1996)



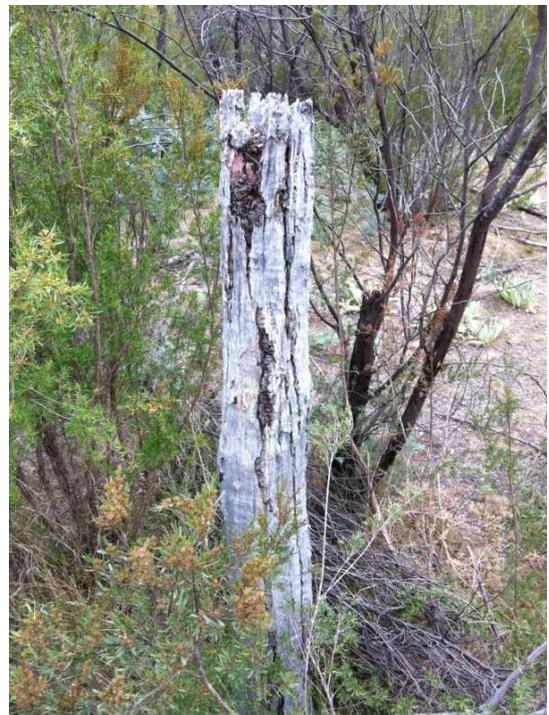
**Image 6** Calvary Homestead Ruin wall cracking (ACT Heritage 2015)



**Image 8** Calvary Homestead Ruin kitchen fireplace (ACT Heritage 2015)



**Image 7** Calvary Homestead Ruin rotten timber beam (ACT Heritage 2015)



**Image 9** Calvary Homestead Ruin kitchen post (ACT Heritage 2015)

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