

Australian Capital Territory

# Heritage (Decision about Provisional Registration of the Majura Stone Cottage, Majura) Notice 2011

Notifiable Instrument NI2011-502

made under the

***Heritage Act 2004* s34 Notice of decision about Provisional Registration**

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**1. Name of instrument**

This instrument is the Heritage (Decision about Provisional Registration of the Majura Stone Cottage, Majura) Notice 2011

**2. Commencement**

This instrument commences on the day after notification.

**3. Notice of Decision**

Pursuant to Section 32 of the *Heritage Act 2004* the ACT Heritage Council has decided not to provisionally register the Majura Stone Cottage, Majura to the ACT Heritage Register.

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**Ms Jennifer O'Connell**  
**Acting Secretary**  
**ACT Heritage Council**  
**GPO Box 158**  
**Canberra ACT 2601**

25 August 2011



ACT Heritage Council

## STATEMENT OF REASONS

### **DECISION NOT TO PROVISIONALLY REGISTER THE MAJURA STONE COTTAGE (Block 622, District of Majura) IN THE ACT HERITAGE REGISTER**

#### **Background**

A nomination was received some time ago for the Majura Stone Cottage. It forms part of the area of land subject to the Eastern Broadacre Planning Study and, as such, a number of cultural heritage assessments of the area have been carried out in recent years. This assessment draws on much of that material.

At Council meeting #38 on 25 August 2011, the ACT Heritage Council endorsed a Statement of Reasons which does not find the Majura Stone Cottage eligible for provisional registration.

#### **Assessment**

In assessing the nomination for the Majura Stone Cottage, the Council considered:

- the material referenced above.

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

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

*Heritage Council assessment:*

The Majura Stone Cottage does not demonstrate a high degree of technical or creative achievement and does not meet this criterion.

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

*Heritage Council assessment:*

The Majura Stone Cottage does not demonstrate outstanding design or aesthetic qualities and does not meet this criterion.

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

*Heritage Council assessment:*

The Majura Stone Cottage may provide evidence of a custom no longer practiced. It may be associated with lime-burning to produce mortar and plaster for building works in the area in the nineteenth century. However, there is insufficient evidence to confirm that a lime kiln was

established on portion 40. Archaeological field-walking has already been conducted on the site and was unable to verify the establishment of a lime kiln.

The Majura Stone Cottage does not meet this criterion, based on the available evidence.

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

*Heritage Council assessment:*

No information has been provided to suggest that the Majura Stone Cottage is highly valued by the community or a cultural group.

The Majura Stone Cottage does not meet this criterion, based on the available evidence.

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

*Heritage Council assessment:*

The Majura Stone Cottage has not been assessed in relation to this criterion as it is unlikely to be of relevance.

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

*Heritage Council assessment:*

The Majura Stone Cottage is of the type of place of a mid-nineteenth century stone cottage. There are many better and more intact examples of this type of place in the ACT including Belconnen Farm and the Woden Homestead.

The Majura Stone Cottage does not meet this criterion.

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

*Heritage Council assessment:*

Given its low level of intactness, the Majura Stone Cottage cannot be considered a notable example of this type of place. It does not meet this criterion.

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

*Heritage Council assessment:*

The Majura Stone Cottage has an association with the nineteenth century European occupation and development of the area and with the Campbells of Duntroon. However, its association with these aspects of history is neither strong nor special, given the number of other places in the area associated with this phase and family, and the low level of integrity of this place. Other outstations of Duntroon exist in better condition than the Majura stone cottage, and with clearer understandings of their relationship to the Campbells and the Duntroon Estate. Examples include Blundell's Cottage, Mugga Mugga, and the Woden Homestead.

In addition, the limited historical information available about the early origins of portion 40, and its connection to Duntroon, is indicative that it was not a critical or particularly significant component of the Duntroon Estate, but was rather merely one of many components of this estate.

The suggested association of the place with the cultural phase of local lime burning for building works in the region cannot be substantiated based on the available evidence. The association with lime burning would only apply to the place if there was definite physical evidence of burning related in some way to the stone remains, and as yet none have been found despite archaeological survey. Without that physical evidence the historical documentary evidence is unclear.

The Majura Stone Cottage does not meet this criterion.

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

*Heritage Council assessment:*

Not applicable.

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

*Heritage Council assessment:*

Archaeological field-walking has been undertaken at the Majura Stone Cottage, in an attempt to determine whether a lime kiln was established at the site. This testing has been inconclusive.

It is possible that further archaeological sub-surface testing may provide further information in relation to this site.

While an understanding of the association of lime burning with this property may add to a wider understanding of the broader cultural history of the ACT and answer research questions about this industry within the region in the nineteenth century, there is insufficient documentary evidence to suggest a high level of potential for this.

The Majura Stone Cottage does not meet this criterion.

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

*Heritage Council assessment:*

Not applicable.

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

*(i) the life cycle of native species;*

*(ii) rare, threatened or uncommon species;*

*(iii) species at the limits of their natural range;*

*(iv) distinct occurrences of species**Heritage Council assessment:*

Not applicable.

**History**Overview

The early European history of the Majura area dates to the 1820s, with the allocation of two land grants to Robert Campbell, on which he established his Duntroon station. The Campbell family became the largest landholders in the Majura region and, possibly, in the broader Canberra region. By the mid 1850s there were around 50 people residing in the Majura region (Navin Officer, 2007: 15).

‘In the years preceding the Robertson Land Act (1861) the Campbells pursued a policy of settling their workers on small holdings of about two acres on which they were encouraged to raise cattle or to cultivate crops’ (Navin Officer, 2007: 14). Following the Robertson Land Act, many of the Campbell workers selected their own parcels of land in the Majura valley. As a result of the closer settlement of the Majura Valley, a community, independent of Duntroon, grew in the valley including a school, community hall and post office (Navin Officer, 2007: 15).

By 1891 there were 83 dwellings in the region, housing 393 people (Navin Officer, 2007: 15). Occupations included not only farming, but also trades.

Stone cottage

The exact origins of the stone cottage located on Block 622, District of Majura are unknown. However, it is most likely that it was constructed sometime prior to 1864, possibly as part of the Duntroon Estate, and possibly for Thomas Sayersbury (Salisbury).

Portion 40 (on which Block 622 is now situated) was the first site surveyed and alienated following the *Robertson Land Act* of 1861. George Campbell applied for this land in 1864. It was described at this time as the ‘limekiln station’, comprising 250 acres of arable and well-watered valley floor land (Navin Officer, 2003: 11). At this time, a survey conducted by J.B Thompson recorded:

- ‘a plentiful water supply
- vegetation consisting of ‘chiefly open forest’
- the presence of a stone house associated with some fencing
- a ‘dam’ downstream of the house on the eastern branch of Woolshed Creek
- an ‘old track’ intersecting the southern boundary, and
- the Gundaroo-Canberra road traversing the northwestern corner of the portion’ (Navin Officer, 2003: 11).

The stone house recorded at this time is thought to be the same as that which survives on the site in a ruinous form today. Navin Officer (2003: 11) suggests that Campbell’s ‘application of portion 40 in 1864, and the presence by this time of a stone cottage, fencing and a dam on this land, strongly suggests that this land formed part of the Majura Valley lands which were developed by the Campbells as part of their Estate interests prior to the pressure on landholdings from smaller land selectors following the Robertson Land Acts’ (Navin Officer, 2003: 12). This was the most northerly portion acquired by the Campbells, presumably to protect valuable arable and well-watered land.

It seems likely that the stone cottage on Portion 40 was built prior to 1864 for an estate worker of the Campbells, and that Sayersbury may have taken over portion 40 circa 1867.

However, there is some discrepancy in the historical literature between the naming of portion 40 in an 1864 survey as 'Limekiln Station', and the suggestion that it was not until 1867 that lime-burner Thomas Sayersbury established a lime kiln at Majura. There is also suggestion that from the 1860s, 'Limekilns' was the home of the Cameron family (information below) rather than Thomas Sayersbury.

Thomas Sayersbury was a shepherd and farm worker, convicted of stealing a gun in 1830 and was transported to Australia. He was later assigned to work for Campbell as part of his Duntroon estate (Navin Officer, 2003: 12). Through Campbell, Sayersbury began burning lime, and is said to have been Canberra's pioneer lime-burner (Barrow, 1998: 31). He soon established a lime-burning enterprise in the area.

Lime burners made lime by burning or calcining limestone, using the product for mortar and plaster in the early stone and brick buildings of the region.

It is thought that in 1867, having had lime ventures elsewhere in the region including at the Molonglo River, Sayersbury sought advantage over rival lime burner George Rottenbury and moved closer to the markets of Queanbeyan and Bungendore and established a kiln at Majura, undercutting Rottenbury's price for lime and forcing him out of business (Navin Officer, 2003: 12 and 53; Barrow, 1998: 31).

The Stone Cottage Ruins at Majura may be evidence of the lime burning industry in the region in the mid nineteenth century. However, there is much debate about the establishment of a lime kiln on portion 40 and in association with the stone cottage.

Archaeological surveys undertaken by Winston-Gregson in the 1980s did not find any conclusive evidence that lime kilns had been located at the site, nor any signs of nearby quarrying. However, this portion is also considered the most likely location of Sayersbury's limekiln, given the surface presence of limestone.

Oral and documentary place names suggest that there was a kiln located on portion 40.

Portion 40 was surveyed as 'Limekiln Station' in 1864 and as the 'Lime Kiln Block' on the c.1915 Federal Territory Feature Map (Navin Officer, 2003: 12).

The name 'Limekilns' is also recorded as the home of the Majura Camerons, possibly from the 1860s to the early 1900s (Navin Officer, 2003: 12-13). The 1915 Federal Territory Feature Map indicates the portion 40 house as the residence of a 'Miss Cameron'.

In 1916 the land was resumed from Miss Isabella Cameron for the Federal Territory and the majority of portion 40 became part of Block 42 in the district of Gungahleen, later known as the district of Gungahlin (Navin Officer, 2003: 13).

There are records dating to 1923 which refer to repairs undertaken to the cottage, indicating it was still in use at this time (Navin Officer, 2003: 13). It would appear that it fell into a ruinous state after 1944 (Navin Officer, 2003: 22).

The ruins of a second house site are also located on Block 622. This is thought to have been John Harman's house and is thought to date from the mid-late nineteenth century (Winston-Gregson, 1985). There is no structural material in place save two posts. Harman was noted as resident here in 1871. In 1890 he purchased additional portions. (Navin Officer, 2003: 14). The Harman family held 667 acres in the Majura region in 1912.

## Description

The place comprises the ruins of a stone house, ruins of a separate kitchen, three pear trees, the relict stumps of a footbridge over a nearby creek, and two wells.

The cottage portrays evidence of three rooms of equal size. An unusual feature of the cottage is that there is no hearth for cooking or heating.

A number of surface artefacts also exists and includes charcoal, porcelain, burnt and fused clear and green glass, metal fragments and rusted nails. 'In addition, a substantial *in situ* archaeological deposit of historic occupation debris has been exposed in the southern creek bank, adjacent to the stone cottage. The stratigraphy revealed by the vertical creek bank indicates that the deposit was a former residential dump site' (Navin Officer, 2003: 23).

A second stone ruin site is located nearby. This site includes two earth mounds and building rubble, as well as tree plantings and orchard remnants. It is also possible that a female child's grave is located 12 metres due east of the house site (Navin Officer, 2007: 54).

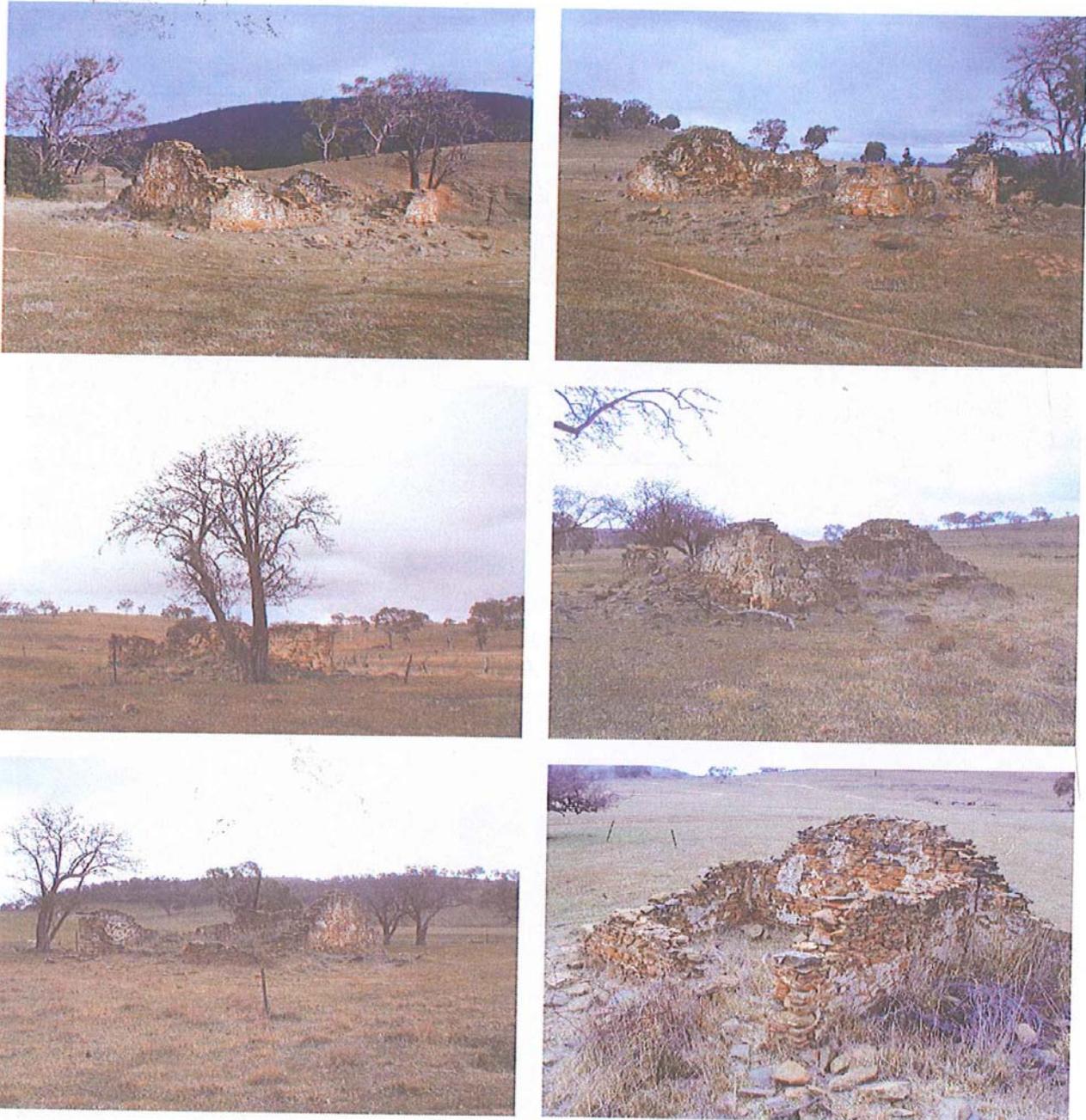
## Physical condition and integrity

The integrity of the stone cottage is low. While it retains its original material, it is today a ruinous structure.

## Images (and maps/plans)



Aerial views of the Majura Stone Cottage



Stone cottage ruins, images taken in 2003 by Navin Officer

### References

Barrow, G., 1998, *Canberra's Historic Houses – Dwellings and Ruins of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century*, National Library of Australia ACT.

Navin Officer, 2007, 'ACT Eastern Boradacre Planning Study – Cultural heritage Component Desktop Study', a report to MacroPlan Australia.

Navin Officer, 2003, 'Cultural Heritage Assessment of Part of Block 622, Majura ACT', A Report to Smith Kostryko Cohen Middleton Pty Ltd.

Winston-Gregson, 1985, 'Australian Federal Police Site at Majura, Block 42'.

### Conclusion

The exact origins and early history of the Majura Stone Cottage are unclear. It is possible that the residence was associated with the site of Thomas Sayersbury's lime kiln for which he produced material for the Queanbeyan and Bungendore markets in the mid to late nineteenth century. However, there is inconclusive evidence to support this claim. As such, the Majura Stone Cottage, while of some historical interest, is not of sufficient heritage significance to the history and community of the ACT to warrant its protection under the *Heritage Act 2004*.

While the stone cottage does not meet the threshold for the heritage register, it is an element of local interest in the rural landscape of Majura, and the Heritage Council would support consideration of its retention in the future development of the valley. Accordingly, adverse impacts should be avoided.

This Statement of Reasons provides an assessment of the Majura Stone Cottage and finds that the place does not meet any of the criteria of the *Heritage Act 2004*.

**Jennifer O'connell (Acting Secretary)**  
**ACT Heritage Council**

25 August 2011