

# Heritage (Decision about Registration of Tralee and Couranga Homesteads, Hume) Notice 2010

## Notifiable Instrument NI 2010—230

made under the

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

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#### **1. Revocation**

This instrument replaces NI 2009—647

#### **2. Name of instrument**

This instrument is the Heritage (Decision about Registration for Tralee and Couranga Homesteads, Hume) Notice 2010

#### **3. Registration details of the place**

Registration details of the place are at Attachment A: Register entry for Tralee and Couranga Homesteads, Hume.

#### **4. Reason for decision**

The ACT Heritage Council has decided that Tralee and Couranga Homesteads, Hume meets one or more of the heritage significance criteria at s 10 of the *Heritage Act 2004*. The register entry is at Attachment A.

#### **4. Date of Registration**

6 May 2010

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**Gerhard Zatschler**

**Secretary**

**ACT Heritage Council**

**7 May 2010**



ACT Heritage Council

## AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

### HERITAGE REGISTER (Registration Details)

For the purposes of s. 33 of the *Heritage Act 2004*, an entry to the heritage register has been prepared by the ACT Heritage Council for the following place:

**Tralee and Couranga, 88 and (portion of) 100 Tralee Street, Hume ACT**

**Blocks 3, 4, and 6 Section 21, Hume, Jerrabomberra**

#### DATE OF REGISTRATION

Notified: 5 May 2010 Notifiable Instrument: 2009 -

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

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

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

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## **IDENTIFICATION OF THE PLACE**

- Tralee and Couranga Homesteads, 88 and (portion of) 100 Tralee Street, Blocks 3, 4, and 6 Section 21, Hume.
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## **STATEMENT OF HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE**

Tralee and Couranga are considered to have significance at a local level against two of the criteria of the Heritage Act 2004. The property demonstrates the cultural development of the ACT through changes in ownership and occupation of the land, owing to the Commonwealth resumption of land in the early twentieth century. The Tralee slab cottage demonstrates an example of horizontal (drop) slab construction – a technique which is rare and is also no longer practiced within the ACT.

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

The Tralee and Couranga homesteads comprise a number of buildings and outbuildings, including the Tralee slab cottage; associated slab shed; radiata pine tree adjacent to the Tralee cottage; the Couranga homestead; associated meat house; associated temporary residence of corrugated iron; associated three fowl houses; two water tanks; and a tennis court;

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## **APPLICABLE HERITAGE GUIDELINES**

The Heritage Guidelines adopted under s27 of the *Heritage Act 2004* are applicable to the conservation of Tralee and Couranga.

The guiding conservation objective is that Tralee and Couranga Homesteads, 88 and (portion of) 100 Tralee Street, Blocks 3, 4, and 6 Section 21, Hume, shall be conserved and appropriately managed in a manner respecting its heritage significance and the features intrinsic to that heritage significance, and consistent with a sympathetic and viable use or uses. Any works that have a potential impact on significant fabric shall be guided by a professionally documented assessment and conservation policy relevant to that area or component (i.e. a Statement of Heritage Effects – SHE).

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## **REASON FOR PROVISIONAL REGISTRATION**

Tralee and Couranga have been assessed against the heritage significance criteria and are found to have heritage significance when assessed against two of the criteria under the ACT Heritage Act, including (c), and (f).

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## **ASSESSMENT AGAINST THE HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE CRITERIA**

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

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

Not applicable.

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

Not applicable.

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

*The Tralee slab cottage demonstrates a distinctive building technique of vertical and horizontal slab construction reflecting pioneer life, skills and the availability of raw materials. This is a design no longer practiced within the ACT.*

*The slab cottage is in poor condition, giving it a level of local significance when compared with other sites demonstrating this building technique within the ACT.*

*The Tralee and Couranga property has an association with the development of rural properties in the area prior to the formation of the Federal Capital Territory, and the subsequent changes that were brought about by the establishment of the ACT.*

*The property has the ability to demonstrate the effects of Commonwealth resumption of parcels of land for the ACT, including the purchase of land and property from the Morrison family (including the slab cottage), the subsequent lease purchased by the Johnson family, and their construction of a contemporary weatherboard cottage on the property in 1927.*

*The development of the Couranga homestead in 1927 demonstrates the experience of rural properties at the time that Canberra was forming, providing an interesting comparison to the city's earliest suburbs at that time.*

*The construction materials of Tralee and Couranga tell of pastoral experiences before and after the formation of the ACT. Tralee, constructed c.1900, prior to the formation of the ACT, is constructed with timber presumably sourced locally and readily available. The later Couranga, dating from 1927, features more sophisticated materials including weatherboards and stained glass windows.*

*The two cottages together portray the development of the property throughout the twentieth century, progressing from a modest timber slab cottage, to a larger and grander weatherboard cottage.*

*The properties, including the numerous outbuildings and features such as meat house, tennis courts and fowl houses, indicate the capacity for independence in food supply and in entertainment of rural life at the time.*

The place meets the threshold for heritage listing in relation to this criterion.

- (d) **it is highly valued by the community or a cultural group for reasons of strong or special religious, spiritual, cultural, educational or social associations;**  
Not applicable.
- (e) **it is significant to the ACT because of its importance as part of local Aboriginal tradition**  
Not applicable.
- (f) **it is a rare or unique example of its kind, or is rare or unique in its comparative intactness**  
*Tralee is a rare example of a horizontal (drop) slab construction. Throughout the ACT, there are 27 known slab constructions, including only five with horizontal construction.*  
*The Tralee slab cottage has a low level of integrity, with many of the slabs missing, and floorboards rotting.*
- The place meets the threshold for heritage listing in relation to this criterion.
- (g) **it is a notable example of a kind of place or object and demonstrates the main characteristics of that kind**  
Not applicable
- (h) **it has strong or special associations with a person, group, event, development or cultural phase in local or national history**  
There is currently not enough information available to determine whether the place meets this criterion. Further research is required.
- (i) **it is significant for understanding the evolution of natural landscapes, including significant geological features, landforms, biota or natural processes**  
Not applicable
- (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**  
Not applicable
- (k) **for a place—it exhibits unusual richness, diversity or significant transitions of flora, fauna or natural landscapes and their elements**  
Not applicable
- (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.  
Not applicable

*The place is assessed as not being significant in relation to the following criteria: (a); (b); (d); (e); (g); (j); (k); (l).*

*At present there is insufficient evidence to assess values relating to Aboriginal occupation of the property.*

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## SUMMARY OF THE PLACE HISTORY AND PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

### **History**

The Tralee and Couranga homesteads are situated on what was Portion 72, Parish of Tuggeranong, County of Murray. Peter Cahalan was an early owner of this, and other, land within the area.

In 1905 or 1906, John Morrison (jnr) purchased 600 acres of land from Cahalan, including Portion 72. At this time, the Morrison family moved from The Angle to the new property, naming it Tralee. They lived in a small slab cottage with their 10 children, the last of whom was born in 1923.

It is unclear whether Morrison built the slab cottage immediately upon his arrival to the area; or whether it was already in existence when he moved, and he simply undertook extensions upon his arrival.

The family were sheep graziers and farmers, and the acquisition of numerous parcels of land within the area lays testament to their success in this field.

With the establishment of the Federal Capital Territory in 1911, the Commonwealth Government began resuming land from many settlers. In 1912, the first of John Morrison's portions was resumed – 80 acres forming part of portion 38 (Lyons, 1974: 101).

In 1921, a further 714 acres was resumed, including portion 72, on which the slab cottage stood, for £1416:16 (Forrest, Pers. Comm., 20 Oct 2009). In return for this land, the Morrisons obtained 1,400 acres just across the border in New South Wales, where they established a 'new' Tralee Station (Lyons, 1974: 101).

Morrison then went on to provide a ten year sub-lease on the 'old' Tralee site to Jack N. Johnson in 1925.

In 1927, Johnson constructed a new weatherboard homestead in close proximity to the slab cottage, naming the new homestead 'Couranga'.

Extensions to the Couranga homestead were constructed in 1939.

In 1960, Jack's son, Anthony, then property manager at Couranga, built a weatherboard cottage on the property for himself and his family.

The Johnson family moved from the area in 1979, and the property has been tenanted by short-term leaseholders since.

### **Description**

The property today consists of two homesteads: 'old' Tralee, and Couranga, as well as a number of associated buildings and outbuildings which together comprise the complex.

Associated with the 'old' Tralee are a small slab shed and a radiata pine tree adjacent to the Tralee cottage. Associated with the later development of Couranga is a meat house; a temporary residence of corrugated iron; three fowl houses; two water tanks; and a tennis court;

The Tralee slab cottage (homestead) is a post and slab structure using both vertical and horizontal wall slabs. A post and beam framework supports a bush pole roof structure. Floors are constructed of sawn boards. The original building consisted of two internal rooms, a fireplace, and an external covered area.

Later extensions have been undertaken, including a sleep-out and a more recent fibro-clad room. Fragments of material on the ceiling suggest that it was once lined with hessian or calico.

The building is in a poor state of repair, with many wall slabs missing, particularly on the eastern and western sides. A number of structural posts are also missing or in poor repair. Floor boards are decayed and badly affected by termites. In places the roof sheeting is in poor condition. No windows remain. Some openings are covered with corrugated iron. The fireplace remains but the chimney has collapsed (Leeson, 2009: 1).

A small slab shed of similar construction to the cottage is located nearby, thought to have been constructed at the same time. Its original purpose is unknown, although perhaps it was constructed as a small dairy (Johnson, P., Pers. Comm., 27/10/09).

A large radiata pine tree is thought to be part of an original row of trees associated with the homestead.

The Couranga homestead was constructed in 1927, with extensions to the southern end undertaken in 1939. The homestead is of weatherboard construction with a corrugated iron roof. It comprises a dining room, formal lounge, four bedrooms, a hallway and sleepout, laundry and bathroom (Leeson, 2009: 5).

The original 1927 building comprises the northern section of the homestead, though much of the interior has since been reconfigured. The later section is to the south, which comprises a bedroom, bathroom, laundry and utility.

Much of the building is in original condition, and structurally sound, but in poor repair. The building is badly weathered externally, especially on the northern and western facades. The wallpapers are thought to be original, though are badly stained and damaged. Other original elements include sanitary fittings and fixtures and floor and wall tiles (Leeson, 2009: 5).

Other associated outbuildings include a temporary residence of corrugated iron (1930s/40s); three fowl houses; a meat house; two water tanks; and a tennis court;

The property is situated in a rural setting in the suburb of Hume.

## References

- Australian Archaeological Survey Consultants, 2007, 'Hume West Industrial Estate – investigation of heritage places', report prepared for the Land Development Agency, ACT Government.
- Australian Archaeological Survey Consultants, 2008, 'Hume West Industrial Estate – Detailed Archaeological Investigations', report prepared for the Land Development Agency, ACT Government.
- Baskin, J., Martin, J., and Riboust, P., 1997, 'Rural Properties of the ACT Volume 1', report prepared for the national Trust of Australia (ACT).
- Curley, S., 1998, *A Long Journey: Duntroon, Mugga Mugga and three careers*, ACT Heritage, Canberra.
- Forrest, Anne, Personal Communication, 20 October 2009.
- Heritage Archaeology, 2000, 'Historical Archaeological Assessment – Hume Cultural Resource Survey' report prepared for Planning and Land Management, Territory Planning Branch.
- Johnson, R., Personal Communication, 23 October 2009.
- Johnson, P., Personal Communication, 27 October 2009.

Kerr, J. and Falukus, H., 1982, *From Sydney Cove to Duntroon: A Family Album of Early Life in Australia*, Hutchinson Group, Victoria.

Leeson, P., 2009, 'Archival Records Tralee Slab Hut and Couranga Homestead', report prepared for the Land Development Agency, ACT Government.

Lyons, L.D., 1974, 'The Morrisons of Bulga Creek and Tralee', in *Canberra Historical Journal; September 1974*; Canberra and District Historical Society.

Martin, E., 2002, 'Woden Homestead ACT: Heritage Assessment' report prepared for ACT Heritage Unit.

Southern Cross Heritage Consultants, 2000, 'Cultural Resource Survey of Hume and Adjacent Areas' report prepared for Planning and Land Management, Territory Planning Branch by Matthew Barber.

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## NON-STATUTORY BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The homesteads of Tralee and Couranga in Hume, ACT, provide an insight into the development of this land and the families who occupied the site from circa 1905 until 1979. The two homesteads are primarily associated with the families of Morrison and, later, Johnson. The property on which both the Tralee and Couranga Homesteads today stand, was originally known as Portion 72, Parish of Tuggeranong, County of Murray.

### Physical description

A number of buildings and elements associated with Tralee and Couranga are evident at 88 and (portion of) 100 Tralee Street, Hume.

The Tralee cottage is a post and slab structure using both vertical and horizontal wall slabs. A post and beam framework supports a bush pole roof structure. Floors are constructed of sawn boards. The original building consisted of two internal rooms, a fireplace, and an external covered area. Later extensions have been undertaken, including a sleep-out and a more recent fibro-clad room. The fireplace located to the south of the building was used for heating purposes only. Fragments of material on the ceiling suggest that it was once lined with hessian or calico. It is unknown what type of timber has been used for the slab wall construction. The cottage's posts and slabs were once whitewashed and the floorboards are most likely constructed of cypress pine (Leeson, 2009: 1). The cottage had the name 'Willumbong' written on a beam, thought to mean 'dry place', possibly from a Victorian language group.

The building is in a poor state of repair, with many wall slabs missing, particularly on the eastern and western sides. A number of structural posts are also missing or in poor repair. Floor boards are decayed and badly affected by termites. In places the roof sheeting is in poor condition. No windows remain. Some openings are covered with corrugated iron. The fireplace remains but the chimney has collapsed (Leeson, 2009: 1).

The timber used in the construction of Tralee is unknown. It is also unclear whether the timber was imported, relocated from elsewhere, or obtained from the site itself. The 1915 Features map of the Federal Capital Territory shows that the Tralee site (portion 72) consisted of good grazing land; and that nearby portions include 'box suckers' and 'scattered box and gum'.

Remnant stands of vegetation within the area indicate that the original vegetation around Tralee and Cuoranga is Blakely's Red Gum (*Eucalyptus Blakelyi*), apple box (*E. Bridgesiana*), yellow box (*E. melliodora*), red box (*E. polyanthemos*) and scribbly gum (*E. Rossii*). (Southern Cross Heritage Solutions, 2000: 4).

A semi-detached kitchen, linked to the cottage through a covered pathway, was located nearby. However, these features are no longer evident at the site. Archaeological excavations to the rear of the cottage have failed to reveal their location.

A small slab shed of similar construction to the cottage is located nearby, thought to have been constructed at the same time. Its original purpose is unknown, although perhaps it was constructed as a small dairy (Johnson, P., Pers. Comm., 27/10/09). In 2009 it is used as a place for storing coal. This building is located to the north-east of the slab cottage.

A large radiata pine tree is located near to the Tralee homestead, possibly contemporary with the construction of the slab cottage. It was common to plant pines as windbreaks. This pine is thought to be part of an original row of trees associated with the homestead.

The Couranga homestead was constructed in 1927, with extensions undertaken in 1939. The 1939 extensions were carried out by Tom O'Conner, a renowned Canberra builder (Heritage Archaeology: 2000: 9 and Johnson, P., pers. Comm., 27/10/09). The homestead is of weatherboard construction with a corrugated iron roof. It comprises a dining room, formal lounge, four bedrooms, a hallway and sleepout, laundry and bathroom (Leeson, 2009: 5).

The original 1927 building comprises the northern section of the homestead, though much of the interior has since been reconfigured. The later section is to the south, which comprises a bedroom, bathroom, laundry and utility.

Much of the building is in original condition, and structurally sound, but in poor repair. The building is badly weathered externally, especially on the northern and western facades. The wallpapers are thought to be original, though are badly stained and damaged. Other original elements include sanitary fittings and fixtures and floor and wall tiles (Leeson, 2009: 5).

A temporary residence is also located to the south east of the Couranga homestead, thought to have been constructed in the 1930s or 1940s.

Three fowl houses are associated with Couranga to the east of that homestead.

A meat house is also located nearby to Couranga, and includes a butchering area and meat storage facility.

Two water tanks are located south of the Couranga homestead.

A tennis court is located immediately south west of Couranga homestead.

To the southwest of the Tralee slab cottage is a small weatherboard cottage, constructed in 1960 for the property's manager, Anthony Johnson.

A Travelling Stock Route is located to the north of the Couranga homestead.

## **HISTORY**

### **CAHALAN**

1904 plans show that Peter Cahalan owned a number of properties within the Parish of Tuggeranong, including Portion 72. It is not known when Cahalan first became the owner of this property.

Little is known of Cahalan, except that in 1872 the Greville Postal Directory lists a Peter Cahalan's address as being Duntroon, Canberra. No occupation is given (<http://www.familyjoint.net.au/index.php?cid=135&mid=1>; date accessed: 21 October 2009).

It is possible that the same Peter Cahalan associated with Duntroon Estate in 1872, is stated as owning Portion 72 in 1904.

Cahalan Place in Evatt is named after Edward Bernard Cahalan (1891-1953), Parliamentary Draftsman, New South Wales, 1936-53; Librarian and Research Officer to Attorney-General, 1914-21; Assistant State Parliamentary Draftsman, 1921-35. The relationship between Edward and Peter was not able to be established.

## MORRISONS

In 1905 or 1906 John Morrison (jnr) purchased 600 acres of land from Cahalan at Tuggeranong, including Portion 72.

John Morrison (senior) came to Australia from Ireland in the late 1850s and settled at Spring Bank with his wife Catherine. Together they had three or four children before moving to Morrisons Flat and, later, Bulga Creek (Forrest, Pers. Comm, 20 Oct 2009). The family farmed dairy cattle in conjunction with cropping (Lyons, 1974: 96).

The farm was not large enough to employ all their sons, so their three eldest (including John jnr) sought additional work as shearers at stations in the Riverina (Lyons, 1974: 97). Lyons (1974: 97) argues that all three brothers were good shearers and saved their money wisely.

Following this, in the late 1800s, John (jnr) and his brother, James, bought adjoining properties at Angle Crossing and constructed a ‘one-roomed hut on the common boundary’ (Lyons, 1974: 99). Here, John grazed cattle and sheep, and also continued shearing for a few years at the Riverina (Lyons, 1974: 100).

John’s portion of land was 80 acres. In 1902 he built a house here for himself and his new wife, Elizabeth Mary Clowes (Lyons, 1974: 100). This house is said to have ‘consisted of two rooms of galvanised iron built off the kitchen’, and that the amenities were ‘simple enough’ (Lyons, 1974: 100).

John and Mary lived here and had three children before purchasing Cahalan’s land in Tuggeranong.

The family moved to Tuggeranong in 1905 or 1906. The reason for their move is unknown, although it may have been for any of the following reasons: a chance for Morrison to increase the size of his acreage; educational or religious purposes; or because The Angle became isolated in times of flooding.

Cahalan is said to have offered Morrison (jnr) 600 acres of land. Morrison eagerly accepted the offer, with payment of a golden half-sovereign (Lyons, 1974: 100).

John’s oldest sister, Mary Anne, married Francis McGee, schoolteacher at Tuggeranong (Forrest, Pers. Comm, 20 Oct 2009). All of John and Mary’s children attended Tuggeranong School, and were taught by their uncle.

The Morrison family was also very religious, with two of John and Mary’s sons becoming catholic priests, and one daughter becoming a nun. The family attended Mass regularly at the Sacred Heart Church, Tuggeranong, while living at Tralee.

The name ‘Tralee’ was suggested for the Morrison’s property at Tuggeranong by Mary’s brother, Jack Clowes. Clowes had recently sat a geographical exam and, on being asked to name key towns in Ireland, had forgotten to mention ‘Tralee’ in his answer. For this reason, he then suggested it to John and Mary (Lyons, 1974: 100).

Over time, Morrison continued to buy property within the Tuggeranong area, initially from Patrick Sheedy and James Moran, increasing his acreage up to 1,400 acres. Sheep were brought from as far away as Boboyan for shearing at Tralee (Baskin, Martin and Riboust, 1997: 89).

John and Mary lived on this property in a slab cottage with their ten children until 1925. Their last child was born in 1923 (Forrest, Pers. Comm, 20 Oct 2009).

Mary Morrison is considered to have made a valuable contribution to the farm as well as family life – helping with shearing and ‘rolling the wool’; cooking for the family and shearers; sewing; washing; attending to fowls; turkeys and bees; and gardening flowers and vegetables (Lyons, 1974:100-101).

With the establishment of the ACT in 1911, the Commonwealth Government began resuming land from many settlers. In 1912, the first of John Morrison’s portions was resumed – 80 acres forming part of portion 38 (Lyons, 1974: 101).

In 1921, a further 714 acres was resumed, including portion 72, on which the slab cottage stood, for £1416:16 (Forrest, Pers. Comm., 20 Oct 2009). In return for this land, the Morrisons obtained 1,400 acres just across the border in New South Wales, where they established a ‘new’ Tralee Station (Lyons, 1974: 101). John then continued adding to this property, with the subdivision of Hill Station land in 1924, purchasing another 1,040 acres, an additional 800 acres the following year; and 1,400 acres in 1927 (Lyons, 1974: 101). By 1951 the ‘new’ Tralee Station comprised 8,200 acres, as testament to Morrison’s success as a farmer, grazier and shearer.

### **The Slab Cottage**

The date of construction, and the origins, of the slab cottage occupied by the Morrison family are unclear, though it is thought to have been constructed c1890-1906.

Historical research has been unable to indicate clearly whether the slab cottage was constructed by the Morrisons on their arrival to the property in 1905/06; or whether it was already in existence and had been constructed during Cahalan’s ownership of the property.

From the available information, it is possible that the slab cottage was:

- Constructed by the original land owner, Peter Cahalan, in the late 1800s – a time period consistent with the majority of slab construction within the ACT;
- Constructed by the same person and at a similar time to the nearby Woden stables (c.1890);
- Constructed by the Morrison family upon their arrival at ‘Tralee’ c.1906 with materials available on-site;
- Constructed by the Morrison family upon their arrival at ‘Tralee’ c.1906 with materials obtained from elsewhere; or
- Re-constructed by the Morrison family upon their arrival at ‘Tralee’ circa 1906, using materials recycled from their previous home at ‘The Angle’.

Slab hut construction was common in Australia’s early settlement, prior to the ready availability of sawn timber. The technique was labour intensive. Drop slab (horizontal) construction was less common than vertical slabs. Slab constructions vary in their arrangements, shapes and configurations.

The slab cottage at Tralee is one of 27 known properties with slab constructions within the ACT. The majority of these were constructed in the nineteenth century, with just three constructed after 1900. The earliest were constructed in the 1830s/40s at Lanyon and Oaks Estate.

Good examples of slab construction within the ACT can be seen at Well Station, Orroral Homestead and Elm Grove, all of which are entered in the ACT Heritage Register.

Often, slab constructions within the ACT were part of a larger complex of buildings, with uses including stables, gardener’s cottages, a shed, a school room, and kitchens. However, a number of slab constructions within the ACT were also used as cottages or small homesteads.

Five of these buildings demonstrate drop-slab (horizontal) construction, including Tralee (n.d), the Well Station shearer's quarters (1850s/60s), Woden Homestead stables (c.1890), Horse Park cottage and woolshed (1900-1905) and Paddy's River Slab Building (1905). The latter was destroyed in the 2003 bushfires.

It is not uncommon for slab buildings to have been relocated to new locations. This was a benefit of this style of construction.

Other slab constructions nearby to Tralee include a cottage at Hill Station (1862), and a stable at Woden Homestead (c.1890).

The Woden stables were constructed using a similar technique to those of Tralee, as a pole framed building with a cut timber roof framing and slab construction. The walls consisted of both horizontal slabs (to the south) and vertical slabs (to the north). The building was constructed with stone floors, and was divided into sections (Martin, E., 2002: 25).

It has been suggested (Heritage Archaeology, 2000: 20) that the same person may have constructed both the Woden and Tralee slab buildings. They are in close proximity to one another and both demonstrate the unusual style of drop slab (horizontal) construction, coupled with vertical slabs.

If the Woden stables and Tralee cottage were constructed by the same person, it would be expected that they were constructed at a similar time (c.1890).

This would indicate that the slab cottage was in existence prior to the Morrison's arrival at 'Tralee'.

In further support of this argument, Lyons (1974: 98) refers to extensions being undertaken at Tralee by John and Mary Morrison, prior to 1907.

As this was so early in their occupation of their new homestead, it is not likely that they would already have been undertaking extensions to a newly constructed cottage.

In addition, there is reference that the family's previous home at 'The Angle' was constructed not of slabs, but galvanised iron (Lyons, 1974: 100).

A second slab cottage was located on the property, about 500 yards from the main homestead, on the opposite side of the creek (Johnson, P., Pers. Comm., 27/10/09). The construction date and details are unknown. This has since been destroyed by fire in the 1950s.

## **JOHNSONS**

Upon the Commonwealth's resumption of portion 72 in 1921, John Morrison became the leaseholder of the land, although he moved, with his family, across the border to the new 'Tralee Station'. Morrison then offered Jack Nicholas Johnson a ten year lease with 120 acres of 'good grazing land' at Tralee.

The Johnson family had lived in Sydney prior to moving to the ACT (Johnson, R., Pers. Comm, 23/10/09).

In 1927 the Johnson family constructed a new homestead on the property, naming it 'Couranga'. In 1939 extensions were undertaken. Jack passed away in 1959, and from this time his wife Clare and disabled son Nicholas continued to live in Couranga.

Upon their marriage in 1960 Jack's son, Anthony and his wife, Allison built a weatherboard cottage to the rear of the Tralee slab cottage. At this time, Anthony was the manager of Couranga. They lived in this building until 1969 when Anthony's mum, Clare, passed away. At that time, Anthony with his wife, Allison and two children moved back to the Couranga homestead, to look after his disabled brother (Johnson, R., Pers. Comm, 23/10/09). The 1960s cottage was tenanted from this time.

The Johnson family continued to use the slab cottage as a laundry and possibly a bathroom, before it became a garage and storage shed.

The smaller slab shed near to the Tralee cottage was used as a place to store coal for the boiler hot water system (Johnson, R., Pers. Comm, 23/10/09). This may have been constructed initially as a small dairy by either Cahalan or the Morrisons (Johnson, P., Pers. Comm., 27 October 2009).

A number of people were employed at Couranga by the Johnsons, including an Aboriginal man, Peter (Johnson, P., Pers. Comm., 27 October 2009).

A small corrugated iron hut is located near to the Couranga homestead, constructed for use as a temporary residence in the 1930s or 1940s (Leeson, 2009: 1). A New Zealand man occupied this hut, after seeking employment with the Johnsons. He became their gardener, and made the hut quite comfortable. It was lined for warmth and insulation and had a fire (Johnson, P., Pers. Comm., 27 October 2009).

A second slab cottage located on the Couranga property was used by an employee during the Johnson's occupation of the area. In the 1950s, this structure was burnt (Johnson, P., Pers. Comm., 27 October 2009).

In the 1930s/40s, the property had a total of 27 buildings, including aviaries and chook sheds (Johnson, P., Pers. Comm., 27 October 2009).

Couranga is said to have been a social hub, with tennis parties and many Canberra identities visiting the property (Johnson, P., Pers. Comm., 27 October 2009).

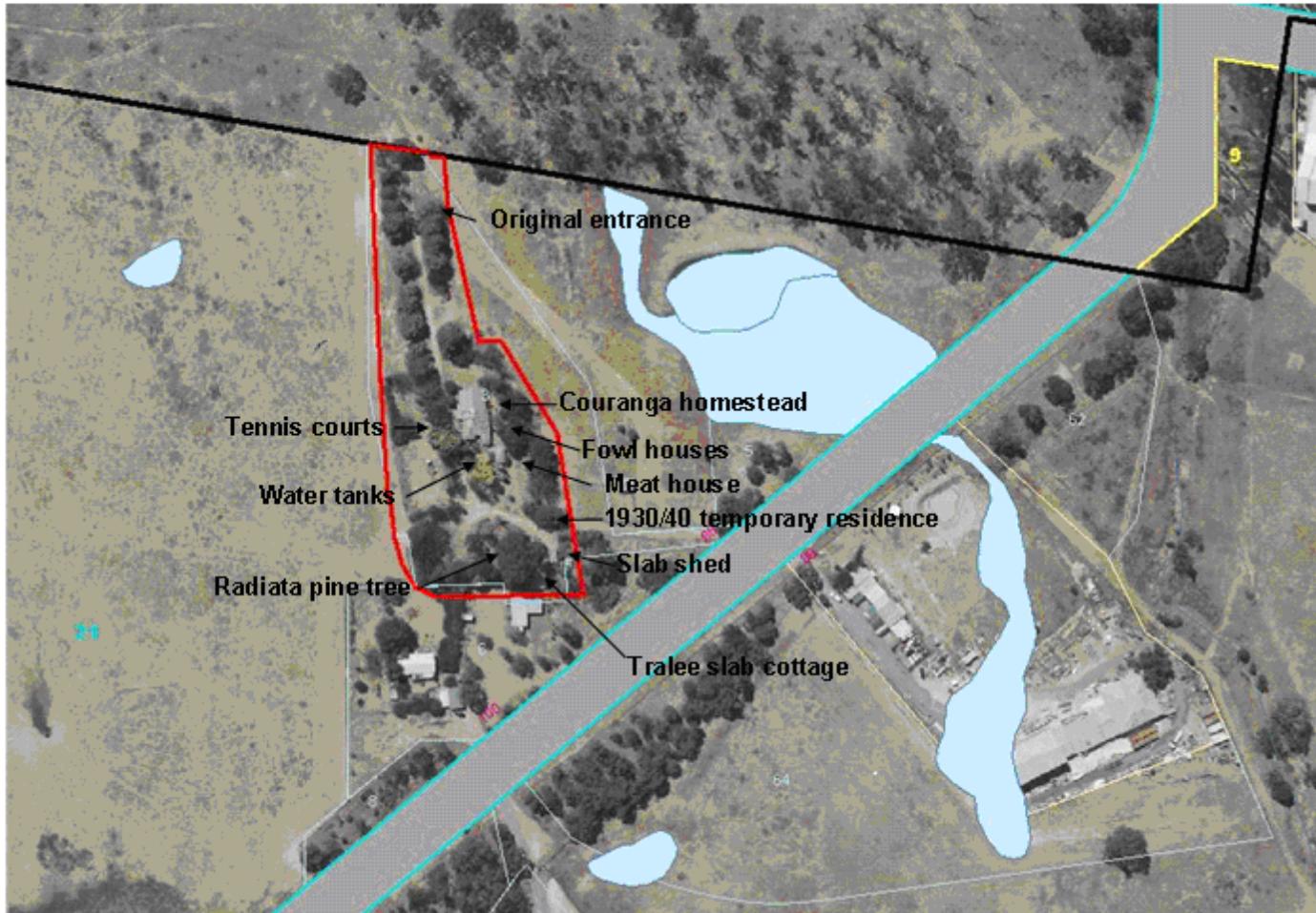
The Johnson family moved from the area in 1979, and the property has been tenanted by short-term leaseholders since.

## **REFERENCES**

## IMAGES AND MAPS

### Site plan

#### Tralee and Couranga curtilage for entry in the ACT Heritage Register



n.b: all boundaries extend at least three metres from any adjacent buildings

