

# Heritage (Decision about Registration of the Hibernian Hotel Site, Kowen) Notice 2014

Notifiable Instrument NI2014—353

made under the

**Heritage Act 2004, s42 Notice of decision about registration**

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## **1 Revocation**

This instrument replaces NI2014—160.

## **2 Name of instrument**

This instrument is the *Heritage (Decision about Registration of the Hibernian Hotel Site, Kowen) Notice 2014*.

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

Registration details of the place are at [Attachment A](#): Register entry for the Hibernian Hotel Site, Kowen.

## **4 Reason for decision**

The ACT Heritage Council has decided that the Hibernian Hotel Site, Kowen meets one or more of the heritage significance criteria at s 10 of the *Heritage Act 2004*. The register entry is at [Attachment A](#).

## **5 Date of registration**

24 July 2014

Anna Gurnhill  
A/g Secretary (as delegate for)  
ACT Heritage Council  
24 July 2014

 <p>ACT Heritage Council</p>	<p><b>AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY</b></p> <p><b>HERITAGE REGISTER</b> <b>(Registration)</b></p>
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For the purposes of s. 41 of the *Heritage Act 2004*, an entry to the heritage register has been prepared by the ACT Heritage Council for the following place:

**Hibernian Hotel Site**

Rural Block 114 (part) and verge of Kings Highway adjacent to Rural Block 114 (part), Kowen

**DATE OF REGISTRATION**

24 July 2014    Notifiable Instrument: 2014–

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

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

Telephone: 13 22 81

## IDENTIFICATION OF THE PLACE

Hibernian Hotel Site, Rural Block 114 (part) and verge of Kings Highway adjacent to Rural Block 114 (part), Kowen.

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This statement refers to the Heritage Significance of the place as required in s12(d) of the *Heritage Act 2004*.

## STATEMENT OF HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

The Hibernian Hotel Site (the Hibernian) is the remains of the only 19<sup>th</sup> century roadside inn within the ACT that can provide substantial physical evidence about the cultural history of the coaching network that was essential for European settlement in the area. [*Criteria (f)*]

The Hibernian was run by the Sparrow family from 1859 until 1887. It is located approximately half-way between Queanbeyan and Bungendore and served as a stop for the horse-drawn coach route that formed part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century coaching network across the region. The Australian roadside inn during the 19<sup>th</sup> century provided a nucleus for new settlements and a hub of social interaction for isolated communities as well as affording staging posts for horses and rest for travellers and coachmen. As the chief means of travel for people and goods across long distances, the coach network was vital to the occupation of land and the development of local communities in the first century of the Australian colonies. The Hibernian is important as evidence of a roadside inn and part of this network. [*Criteria (c) and (j)*]

There were five known 19<sup>th</sup> century inns in the area that is the ACT, with physical evidence remaining for only three, and of these only the Hibernian site has not been encroached by suburban development. [*Criteria (h)*]

Remaining largely undisturbed, the Hibernian site reflects a way of life in the last decades of the coach network in this region, and is an important historical archaeological site. Excavations have revealed previously unknown aspects of operations at the former Hotel and the artefact collection has the potential to be used as a benchmark assemblage for the study of other Australian 19<sup>th</sup> century inns. [*Criteria (j)*]

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## FEATURES INTRINSIC TO THE HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PLACE

The attributes listed below are assessed as features intrinsic to the heritage significance of the place and warrant conservation:

The remains of the Hibernian Hotel Site, including:

- Evidence of the building footprint;
- The un-excavated archaeological deposits;
- The remains of the toilet and drain system;
- The remains of the outbuildings;
- The remains of the stables; and
- The existing row of five original Dutch Elm (*Ulmus x hollandica*) trees.

## CONSERVATION OBJECTIVE

The guiding conservation objective is that the Hibernian Hotel Site be conserved and appropriately managed in a manner respecting its heritage significance and the features intrinsic to that heritage significance.

The ACT Heritage Council may adopt heritage guidelines applicable to the place under s25 of the *Heritage Act 2004*.

For further information on guidelines applicable to the place, or for advice on proposed works or development, please contact the ACT Heritage Unit on 13 22 81.

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## REASON FOR REGISTRATION

The Hibernian Hotel Site has been assessed against the heritage significance criteria and been found to have heritage significance when assessed against four criteria [(c), (f), (h) and (j)] under the *Heritage Act 2004*.

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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;**

The Hibernian Hotel Site, Kowen, does not meet this criterion.

The Hibernian, now partially buried ruins, was a pisé building on a stone base, common during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. All of its ancillary buildings were of wood construction which have been destroyed leaving little evidence of their design and what evidence does exist does not show any qualities to demonstrate a high degree of technical or creative achievement. The toilet and drain system, while interesting, is considered to be a very basic and does not show any qualities that demonstrate a high degree of technical achievement.

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

The Hibernian Hotel Site, Kowen, does not meet this criterion.

There is no information available to demonstrate that the design or aesthetic qualities of the Hibernian are valued by the community or a cultural group.

**(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 Hibernian Hotel Site, Kowen, meets this criterion.

The Hibernian is evidence of a distinctive way of life and function, the roadside inn, which is no longer practiced and is of exceptional interest. Although much of the physical fabric of

the place has been lost, so few of these places are left in the ACT that the ruins of the Hibernian are important evidence.

The Australian roadside inn is an icon of Australian rural identity, vital to the network of horse-drawn coaches that connected towns across vast distances and represents a distinctive way of life in 19<sup>th</sup> century rural Australia. The roadside inns servicing horses, coaches, passengers, mail and freight were hubs in a road transport network which connected communities. The Hibernian was a district hub on the main road between Goulburn and Queanbeyan, linking routes to Braidwood and south to the Monaro and the goldfields of Kiandra.

As a ruin the Hibernian does not show any features that clearly distinguish its past function as a roadside inn such as kitchen and dining room, accommodation, stables, or signage. Documentary sources, archaeological remains, and its location provide the evidence of a distinctive way of life and function at the Hibernian. Documentary evidence of the Hibernian's past can be found in official records, such as licensing and land titles, as well as newspaper articles and advertising. These sources show that the Hibernian was opened in 1859 by George Sparrow and stopped operating after 1887; that Innkeeper George Sparrow was held in high esteem by the community and was involved in several social activities including organising horse racing at the Hibernian; and that the Sparrow family quickly became quite prosperous, but by the 1890s had lost their affluence. The archaeological record provides details such as the fare at the Hibernian which included mutton chops, the fast food of the time, and was likely to have served as a mail station.

Of the 19<sup>th</sup> century inns in the ACT, there is physical evidence known for only three: the Hibernian, Elmsall, and Canberra Inn. The Elmsall and Canberra Inn have had relatively unbroken occupation mostly as residences. This has resulted in buildings that are excellent examples of changing use over a long period of time, but their ability to provide information about any one specific period in their history, notably, as 19<sup>th</sup> century roadside inns, has been compromised by subsequent occupation and changing use. The Hibernian, while not a standing building like the other two examples, was built as an inn, operated only as an inn, and then closed down and fell into decay before any subsequent use could overshadow the evidence from this period of history. Additionally, the location of the Hibernian, roughly, but strategically, halfway between Queanbeyan and Bungendore, remains relatively separate between the two towns, whereas the other two ACT 19<sup>th</sup> century inns for which physical evidence remains, the Elmsall (currently the Oaks homestead) at Oaks Estate and the Old Canberra Inn at Lyneham, have both been encroached by suburban development. This means that the Hibernian Hotel Site is the only substantial physical evidence in the ACT of a 19<sup>th</sup> century roadside inn; an important period in the settlement of the area.

**(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;**

The Hibernian Hotel Site, Kowen, does not meet this criterion.

There is no information available to demonstrate that the Hibernian is highly valued by the community or a cultural group for reasons of strong or special religious, spiritual, cultural, educational or social associations. While the place may have associations with early Irish Catholic settlers in the area there is no evidence that it is valued for this association.

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

This criterion does not apply to the Hibernian Hotel Site, Kowen.

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

The Hibernian Hotel Site, Kowen, meets this criterion.

The Hibernian is one of only five 19<sup>th</sup> century inns that operated in the area that became the ACT:

- The Elmsall, Oaks Estate – built as a residence as part of the Campbell estate ~1836 but leased out when it was no longer needed. It was licensed from 1837 to 1840, when it moved to Queanbeyan and the place reverted to a residence. It was again licensed in 1886 but quickly reverted to a residence again. It is today a residence known as The Oaks;
- The Grant Inn, Ginninderra/Charnwood area (exact location unknown) – a sly grog shop that ran in the 1840s and 50s for which there is currently no known evidence.
- The Hibernian Hotel, Kowen – built and licensed from 1859 to 1887 and abandoned shortly thereafter. Today it exists as a ruin;
- The Canberra Inn, Lyneham – built as a residence presumably in the late 1850s and licensed from 1876 to 1887, when it reverted to a residence. Today it is known as The Old Canberra Inn after another licence was issued in 1976 and has been heavily modified; and
- The Cricketer's Arms, Hall – built and licensed from 1864 to 1918 when it was resumed by the government until it was demolished in the 1930s.

Only the Elmsall, Hibernian, and Canberra Inn still have physical evidence of their existence, but the licensing of the Elmsall and the Canberra Inn was incidental to their much longer use as residences. Only the Hibernian continuously operated as a roadside inn during the peak occupation of the region in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century.

The Hibernian operated between 1859 and ~1887 to service the main road between Goulburn and Queanbeyan, influencing the development of townships like Bungendore as well as other settlements and routes throughout the region. It closed shortly after the railway opened between Bungendore and Queanbeyan, ending the era when coaching was the sole means of transporting goods, mail and passengers through the region. In its distinct and prominent location on what is still a main road today and with its archaeological evidence, the Hibernian Hotel Site is a rare example of a 19<sup>th</sup> century inn in the ACT.

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

The Hibernian Hotel Site, Kowen, does not meet this criterion.

As the place is a ruin, it is not capable of being a notable example of a roadside inn, a pisé building, or a 19<sup>th</sup> century building. The level of intactness of the Hibernian does not demonstrate any characteristics of its kind other than the building footprint as evidenced by the stone footings and, as a result, is not considered a notable example of any kind of building.

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

The Hibernian Hotel Site, Kowen, meets this criterion.

The Hibernian has a strong association with the peak development and decline of the coach network in this region of colonial New South Wales. Established soon after the first

Queen's Bridge over the Queanbeyan River was completed in 1858, the Hotel operated until the Bungendore to Michelago section of the Goulburn to Cooma branch line of the 'Great Southern Railway' was completed in 1887. The daily train between Goulburn and Queanbeyan, and subsidised freight charges, terminated the era of coaching and transferred the role of roadside inns to the railway stations that became the new transport hubs. Of the known five original 19<sup>th</sup> century inns in the ACT, the Hibernian is most clearly associated with the coaching era and its rapid demise.

The Hibernian officially opened for business in 1859, advertising its services to travellers between Queanbeyan and Bungendore. Newspapers also indicate the Hibernian was a well known stop for the coach and was also known for holding social events such as horse racing. George Sparrow advertised that the Hibernian had a wide range of alcoholic drinks and cordials available as well as food and stable facilities – all expected by travellers and some even required by law. Business would have been affected by events like the failure and replacement of the Queen's Bridge and the Kiandra gold rush in the 1860s, as well as by business decisions, for instance George Sparrow's loss-making investment in a punt across the Molonglo River. Railway construction initially brought increased custom from 1885 when the railway opened at Bungendore and until 1887, the workers' camp was situated just over a kilometre to the east of the Hibernian. The year 1887 was the last in which the Hibernian held a liquor licence.

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

This criterion does not apply to the Hibernian Hotel Site, Kowen.

The Hibernian is on an anthropogenic landscape that has been cleared of natural vegetation, planted with exotic species and physically modified to accommodate the structures that were built since the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. There is no significant evidence of natural landscapes on the site that can be assessed in relation to this 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**

The Hibernian Hotel Site, Kowen, meets this criterion.

As a roadside inn that serviced a main coaching route in the region from the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, the place has provided, and is likely to continue to provide, information that will contribute significantly to a wider understanding of the cultural history of the ACT. Its use as a research site has produced evidence of past lives and functions important to the history of the region and it provides a benchmark assemblage for the study of 19<sup>th</sup> century roadside inns.

Throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> Century the site remained undeveloped, so that it now provides a rare glimpse into the life and function of a mid-19<sup>th</sup> century roadside inn. It is significant because it is able to be directly linked to a very specific historical period and function - the few similar in the ACT places having undergone so many changes that they do not manifest the explanatory potential of the Hibernian Hotel Site.

This has been borne out by archaeological investigations in 2008 which found artefacts that relate to this brief time period and in proportions that clearly indicate that it was a commercial building. Few inn sites in Australia and no other inn site in the ACT has been archaeologically studied as thoroughly as the Hibernian. The bones of animals recovered during the archaeological excavation has been noted by F. Wilfred Shawcross as an

important body of comparative evidence. This can be used as a benchmark that can show the difference between commercial and residential activity as well as preferences for food and availability of resources. The same applies across the entire archaeological assemblage which shows distinct patterns of bottle and ceramic use that results from the running of an inn and the kinds of personal items associated with travellers. The excavations were focused on the rooms fronting the road, likely the main public and accommodation areas, but the back rooms where most of the work would have been done and where the Sparrow family would have lived were not investigated. This unexcavated area is of significance to historic archaeology studies as it is the area most likely to provide information about the many Sparrow children and Mary Sparrow, who may have run the hotel while George Sparrow was occupied with farming operations and other business activities associated with their large property holdings. The lives and work of women as well as of children are of high interest in history and archaeology as they have previously been little studied.

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

The Hibernian Hotel Site, Kowen, does not meet this criterion.

Whilst the Hibernian site contained evidence of quoll and koala, today locally extinct species in the area, there is no evidence for any current species that could be assessed in relation to this criterion. Additionally, the place is in a landscape that has been heavily modified by human use and has no significant evidence that can be assessed in relation to this criterion.

**(i) 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.**

The Hibernian Hotel Site, Kowen, does not meet this criterion.

Whilst the Hibernian contained evidence of quoll and koala, today locally extinct species in the area, there is no evidence for any current species that could be assessed in relation to this criterion. Additionally, the place is an anthropogenic landscape and has no significant evidence that can be assessed in relation to this criterion.

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## **SUMMARY OF THE PLACE HISTORY AND PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION**

### **BACKGROUND**

Aboriginal people utilised the area for over twenty-thousand years before European occupation in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. The archaeology and ethnohistory of the area suggest that it was part of a wide range of landscapes utilised by past Aboriginal peoples based on seasonal use and pathways across the landscape.

The pre-European landscape is likely to have been a combination of Yellow Box Open Woodland and Brittle Gum/Broad Leafed Peppermint Open Forest (URS Australian 2003, cited in Williams, 2008) and would have supplied the past Aboriginal peoples with diverse selection of resources. These would have included wood and bark from trees and access to the animals that would have been found in these

environments such as koala, possums, wallaby, kangaroo, various birds and marine resources from the rivers and creeks such as fish, yabbies and mussels. However, much of these resources were heavily impacted by European settlement in the area which resulted in the clearing of much of this open woodland and forest.

The first Europeans in the area were the early explorers who relied on their Aboriginal guides' prior knowledge of the area. 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. Their reports of fertile plains and well supplied rivers soon attracted settlers to the area. (Lambert-Tracey & Williams, 2008; and Wickens, 1931)

The first European settlers in the area were the employees of John Joshua Moore, who set up a large stock grazing station in what is now the suburb of Acton. Soon to follow and acquire most of the land that now comprises the ACT were Robert Campbell, James Ainslie (Campbell's overseer), George Thomas Palmer, John Macpherson, Thomas Walker and Terence Aubrey Murray. These landholdings were primarily used for grazing of stock by overseers. Apart from Macpherson, it was not until the mid- to late-1830s that many of the landowners actually lived on their holdings and began to form a community. (Lambert-Tracey & Williams, 2008; and Wickens, 1931)

By 1837 Bungendore had been established but it was in 1838 after the mail service came that it was formally declared a township. Only 63 residents were counted in 1851, with 300 by 1881 when the town had several inns, a coach staging post, churches and schools being established. Four years later when the Goulburn railway line reached Bungendore the population had doubled and the township was the centre of the region until the line reached Queanbeyan in 1887. (Lambert-Tracey & Williams, 2008)

The severe drought from 1838 until 1842 ruined many settlers, with crops failing and the Murrumbidgee River ceasing to run for two years,. Trade and transport throughout the colony became difficult to maintain, with feed and watering stations for horses or bullock trains unavailable. The economic outlook did not improve until the gold rushes began and from 1851, caused generated a general economic uplift throughout the colony and brought many travellers seeking provisions through the area. (Wickens, 1931)

The NSW coach network developed slowly with roads costly to make and to maintain and the English coaches initially imported unsuited to the poor roads. While public transport in coaches was operating in the Colony as early as 1805, it was not until the 1850s with the establishment of a Public Works Department that systematic expansion beyond major towns began. The introduction of lighter and faster American style coaches improved mail and passenger services as well as transport of lighter goods. The methods devised by Cobb & Co in the mid-1850s quickly became standard, with horses changed every ten miles or so in order for them to keep a fast past throughout an entire journey over vast distances. This led to a pattern of small settlements centred around these staging posts with less populous areas having isolated roadside inns between towns to service the coach routes. This heavily influenced the settlement patterns as many towns evolved around the inns of the coach network, before they were replaced by the railway stations situated in townships along the main lines and branch railways largely established in New South Wales between 1856 and 1889. (Everingham, 2007)

In 1867 the main railway line linked Goulburn to Sydney and by 1886 the branch line reached Queanbeyan (Lambert-Tracey & Williams, 2008; and Wickens, 1931). Horse drawn coaches continued to service regions around the railway stations until the development of motorised transport from the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century.

The Commonwealth of Australia was established in 1901 and the land for the Federal Territory taken over in 1911. This ended the freehold leases that existed in the area that had kept many properties in the same family for generations; the land now being owned by the Commonwealth and leased back to landholders. (Wickens, 1931)

## HISTORY

George Sparrow, later to become the proprietor of the Hibernian Hotel, came to Australia from Ireland as a 'Bounty Immigrant' under the sponsorship of Nicholas James & Co. as a farm labourer. He was employed in the Michelago district where he married Mary Ryan in 1846. Of particular interest is that he was a Protestant who apparently converted to Catholicism when he married. This conversion, which was generally not encouraged at the time, is likely to have influenced his decision to name the hotel after Hibernianism (a movement founded in the 16<sup>th</sup> century to protect the rights of Irish Catholics, which is best known today through the Ancient Order Of Hibernians), to solidify his commitment as a Catholic in the Irish Catholic dominated Bungendore area. (Lambert-Tracey & Williams, 2008)

The portions of land that the Hibernian Hotel Site is situated on, called 'Felled Timber', were officially purchased by George Sparrow in 1855, even though he had probably been settled there since the late 1840s. The Sparrow family steadily bought further blocks of lands and at their peak had 30 separate portions for a total of over 2,000 acres of land. The Sparrows had large holdings over a wide area and the hotel was probably only a small portion of their income. The first liquor licence was granted to George Sparrow at Felled Timber in 1859 and renewed at regular intervals. George Sparrow died in 1885, but the last liquor licence for the Hibernian was in 1887 as the property and the inn were passed down through the family. (Lambert-Tracey & Williams, 2008)

It was not until the 1850s gold rush that a coach route was established through the area. There was a daily coach from Picton to Goulburn and a tri-weekly coach from Goulburn to Queanbeyan (Lambert-Tracey & Williams, 2008; and Wickens, 1931). In August 1866 *The Queanbeyan Age* reported that an elderly woman on the mail coach between Cooma and Goulburn had been found dead when the coach reached "Sparrow's Inn". The coach had left Cooma in the morning, reaching the Hibernian around midnight after a half hour stop at Queanbeyan, indicating an average speed of ~5mph and a travel time of four hours from Queanbeyan to the Hibernian.

The death of George Sparrow was widely reported and all accounts gave the image of a man that was well known and respected by the community. Some of the papers that carried the news included the *Australian Town and Country Journal*, *The Goulburn Evening Penny Post*, *The Maitland Mercury & Hunter River General Advertiser*, *The Sydney Evening News*, *The Southern Argus*, and many others. It was noted that he came from a large and respectable family and was an important figure in the community. It is significant that the Hibernian remained in the same family serving the same purpose during its entire history from 1859 through to 1887. It was established to service the coach route between Queanbeyan and Bungendore and likely also served as home for the Sparrow family, first with George and Mary, then taken over by his sons John and Patrick. In 1887 the railway reached Queanbeyan, severe drought had hit and the gold rush had all but died out. By the late 1890s much of the Sparrow family property was in the ownership of the Commercial Banking Company of Sydney. It is unknown how long the building was used for after this time, but in the 1920's it was described as 'long since demolished' and did not feature on the 1912 Feature Map of the Federal Territory. There is a photo of the inn dating from the early 1900s from the Frank Walker Glass Lantern Slide Collection from the Royal Australian Historical Society library that shows a whitewashed stone building devoid of roof (Image 3). Williams (2008) suggests that it was demolished sometime after this as the amount of stone rubble on site does not match what is obvious in the photo – presumably it was demolished when the Kings Highway road cutting was made. (Lambert-Tracey & Williams, 2008)

## AUSTRALIAN 19<sup>th</sup> CENTURY ROADSIDE INNS

*"The pub is one of the most socially significant, historically valuable, architecturally interesting, and colourful features of Australian society" (Freeland, 1977 p1)*

In the Australian vernacular the terms 'hotel', 'pub', 'inn', 'bar', 'public house', 'tavern', etc. were all interchangeable as the licensing laws in Australia did not differentiate between different types of establishment, although there does seem to be a preference for calling smaller or country establishments 'pubs' and the larger or city establishments 'hotels'. What differentiated places was the service they

offered and this was often largely determined by its location; whether it was in a town or city or whether it was along a route connecting different places. (Kirkby, et al, 2010)

The inn is an important institution in the history and development of Australia. Freeland (1977) notes that few early settlements in Australia had churches, but there was always an inn. Kirkby et al (2010) posit that the Australian inn is an important part of the European colonisation of Australia. It was a part of the transport and communication network of early Australia and the movement of goods and people relied on them. The inns located in cities and towns were often staging posts for transport with a wide and varied clientele competing for business. Most stops along a coach route were spaced about 10-20 miles (16-32 kilometres) distance from each other as this distance would allow the horses to keep a good pace until they were swapped over at each stop. Swapping the horse over in this fashion meant that a coach could reasonably travel over 60 miles each day, however due to the demands of the government mail contracts, many coaches were forced to travel over 100 miles through the night to deliver the mail on time (Everingham, 2007). In their reminiscence of a trip through Australia in 1875, Rosamond and Florence Hill describe several coach trips over a similar distance that would take between a few hours to an entire day to traverse depending on the quality of the road and the weather conditions. Inns located in small towns or along coach routes were often the only business in an area and would serve as a brief respite from travels, a place to get supplies and quite often would subsume many official roles such as post office, general store or bank. (Baglin and Austin, 1989)

The local inn was generally the centre of the community. In such a widespread community as early rural Australia, it was important to have a place where people could get together in a social environment. They were more than just a convenient place to collect the mail and have a drink; they were a place to discuss local news, organise business and socialise – it was a place to build communities. The innkeeper was generally the most sedentary of the local residents, as well as being the most centrally located, so they were often the best choice for official positions such as postmaster, constable or pound-keeper (notices often appear in papers that stray animals may be collected at so-and-so inn for a fee). Kirkby et al (2010) note that one of the common events organised through the local inn was horse racing. This was not just an excuse to have a fun day out; the publican would sell their wares to the punters and often would take on the role of bookkeeper as well. In some of the larger town centres there were large races during which anyone with a liquor licence would be able to sell alcohol at as the licensing laws in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century were linked to the person instead of the building.

There are many variations of what an inn looks like. In the early period of Australia's history there were no requirements for what an establishment had to include and no standard features as a result. These early inns are likely to have been set up in the home of the licence holder with the patrons being treated as 'guests' of the house. It was not until the 1830s that architects were designing buildings specifically as inns in Australia and it was from these times that the licensing laws also changed that required the premises to have accommodation. The Acts that governed liquor licensing went through a series of changes in the late 1820s and early 1840s that changed opening hours, added the requirement for accommodation to be available, separated the selling of other goods, signage to include the licensee's name and include lighting during the night, and separating the tap room that led to the adoption of the counter bar. These changes are what shaped the Australian inn and there were to be no major changes to the Acts until the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. As a result of these Acts the design of the inn went through a series of changes that included different rooms for different purposes and crowds, but it was the public bar, the first room off the street, that is synonymous with the Australian inn. This is the area that has a long bar for the serving of drinks and the patrons would generally stand. Cheap quick food could be served as 'counter meals' to keep the customers from going elsewhere (or so they would not need to stop drinking). (Freeland, 1977; Kirkby, et al, 2010)

The larger stone and brick two storey inns were generally restricted to towns and the busy, lucrative routes between the largest cities; the rest of the routes were serviced by the standard single-storey, homely roadside inn. The architectural details of the wayside inn, while diverse, were actually quite similar. It followed a general pattern of a long low house with a verandah that accessed all rooms. The main bar or public room was the large one at the front. The kitchen was attached to the public room or was in a detached building immediately behind. There were small rooms for guests of variously quality

and usually the innkeeper's family rooms as well. Behind the inn was the stables and room for coaches to park overnight, often with facilities for repairs. The materials used depended on what was available locally as well the skill of owner/builder – wattle-and-daub, slab, weatherboard, and rarely/late brick (another source noted that the brick was often mined and fired on site and was the reason why many establishments had underground cellars – they were the clay mine pits). (Freeland, 1977)

The roadside inn flourished for half a decade, from the mid-1820s to the 1870s, during which time it provided food, shelter and provisions for the weary traveller until the railways made them redundant. Roadside inns were established to serve coach or travel routes across the country. They were places for travellers or coach operators to rest from the harsh road conditions and for horses to drink and eat, or to be swapped for fresh horses. There were several regulations attached to these inns at varying times, such as keeping a lamp burning for travellers during the night, facilities for horses, accommodation, the provision of food and drink, public areas, and so on. These once numerous establishments are now commonly seen as the remnants of stone chimneys lying next to major highways as the introduction of the automobile meant the end of the demand for those places that had managed to survive past the introduction of the railroad. (Baglin and Austin, 1989; Freeland, 1977; Kirkby, et al, 2010)

### **ROADSIDE INNS IN THE ACT**

The first roadside inn in the area that became the ACT dates to 1838 when William Hunt and Joseph Kaye were granted a liquor licence at the cottage at the Oaks (today Oaks Estate) and called it the Elmsall. The Elmsall was well placed at the crossing of the Molonglo River and would have serviced the passing traffic through the area. The Elmsall later relocated to Queanbeyan as the town developed. The partnership dissolved in 1844. The Oaks went through a succession of owners until it was reopened as a hotel in 1886 by Mathew McAlister to service the new railway, but had closed by 1888.

While not considered at the time to be a part of Canberra but now in the ACT, George Sparrow obtained his licence for the Hibernian Hotel at Felled Timber along the Bungendore Road in 1859, with the last licence renewed in 1887. The Hibernian followed a similar path as the other inn from the time and is covered in greater detail throughout this document.

Next were Patrick and Mary Grace who opened the Cricketers Arms Hotel at One Tree Hill, near Hall, in 1864. The Cricketers Arms became the social hub of Ginninderra and featured many sporting events. After several license transfers the Cricketers Arms closed in 1918.

Following this was the Canberra Inn (today, the Old Canberra Inn, Lyneham) opened by Joseph Shumack in 1876 to service the route between Queanbeyan and Yass. Like the previous inns, it did more than just serve drinks; it became a sporting venue, town hall, makeshift hospital and served as the venue for numerous social events. The Canberra Inn changed owners several times, closed shop, and then reopened again and has continued as an inn from 1976 to this day. The Canberra Inn has followed the pattern of a successful inn that Freeland (1977) highlighted in his seminal work on Australian pub history and architecture; for the inn to succeed it needs to continually evolve and supply the “latest in comfort, service and amenities consistent with the demands of its customers” (p.4), which in the case of the Canberra Inn involved extending the premises, adding a beer garden, converting the stables into a billiards/pool room, upgrading the bar facilities, introducing karaoke, etc. Its continued success has been to adapt to changing circumstances.

Also of note are the many sly grog shops, or unlicensed premises, that often operated out of peoples' homes or temporary tents. The sly grog shop would cater to people who would not be served at other establishments, often Aboriginal people or convicts, or would be set up to service a particular crowd or event, such as rail workers as the track moved across the country or in the goldfields. The most famous sly grog shop in Canberra during the 1840s and 1850s was the Grant Inn, owned by Mrs Julia (Judy) Webb, which operated out of a slab hut near Ginninderra Creek (today the suburb of Charnwood). (Dawson, 1999)

## ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXCAVATIONS

The Hibernian Hotel Site was the subject of substantial archaeological investigations during 2008 as a part of the associated infrastructure developments for the Head Quarters Joint Operation Centre (HQJOC) for the Department of Defence. The northern half of the site was going to be destroyed by works to widen the Kings Highway and so was excavated in its entirety. The southern half of the site, as well as several associated structures, underwent partial excavation for comparative analyses with the majority of the area left untouched to conserve a significant portion of the archaeological deposits.

The excavations showed that the structure was a pisé construction on a field stone rubble base. The scarcity of stone rubble in the excavated deposit indicates that either the stone walls were low, as in footings, or that material had been reused elsewhere. There was also a scarcity of larger framing nails nor the numbers of smaller nails that would have been used on a weatherboard structure. There was also a lack of wood or charcoal that would be expected of a wooden structure. Also of note was the presence of a small number of brick pieces, all fragmented and all found out of context, indicating that they were likely used after the building was constructed for repairs or other minor purpose. The bricks may have originated from the bricks kilns left over from the railway construction ~1km to the south that date from the late 1880s.

The collection of animal bones recovered during the excavation of the Hibernian is one of the very few that have been studied from this period of Australia's history. More importantly it provides an insight into what was on offer at a commercial establishment which was often only recorded on the slate menu boards of the day. The analysis by Shawcross shows a preference for what he has called 'the fast food of the day' – mutton chops. This was so ubiquitous an offering that it was viewed with some amusement by travelling visitors from other countries (Hill and Hill, 1857). It was also shown that butchering was likely to have occurred off-site, so they were either buying meat from town or were butchering their own animals elsewhere on the block. The later is more probable given the large landholdings of the Sparrows' and George Sparrow's farming background. There was also a theme of thrift present with evidence that meat was cooked on the bone, the bones then used for soups, then likely used for making soap before finally being burnt and discarded in the surrounding garden. Beyond the commercial aspects of the zooarchaeological assemblage there was also evidence of species that are no longer endemic to the area such as koala and quoll.

The ceramic artefacts excavated at the site are what would be expected from an inn, consisting mostly of tableware and items of domestic consumption. There was a wide range of tableware styles of good quality, indicating that small numbers of items were purchased as required, rather than whole sets. This pattern has been reported by Crook (2000) to be indicative of middle class Australians who wanted to have an air of respectability by having good quality porcelain, but could only afford to buy a few pieces at a time.

Considering George Sparrow's conversion to Catholicism and the nationalistic naming of the Hibernian, it is of note that there was Scottish clay tobacco pipes found on the site, yet relatively few Irish pipes. These cheap clay pipes were often a way to display ones political leanings and nationality. It is not too surprising to find a wide range of clientele represented at the Hibernian as it was the only choice to stop along the coach trip between Bungendore and Queanbeyan, whereas we would expect to find a greater clustering of nationalist branded paraphernalia at either of the aforementioned staging posts where there was a greater choice of establishments for travellers to choose from. Another explanation for the presence of Scottish pipes at the site relates back to the dominance of Scottish settlers in the area, such as the Campbells who imported many goods from Scotland via the family business, Campbell Wharf in Sydney, and distributed these goods as a wholesaler to stores such as was found in Ginninderra.

One of the surprising results, or rather lack of results, is the scarcity of children's items. According to historic records George and Mary Sparrow had fourteen children, yet there were only a few possible toys found at the Hibernian site. There were a number of glass and ceramic marbles, but it is possible that some of these may have come from soda bottles that used a glass or ceramic ball to help create a seal. Also located were fragments of writing slate and paraphernalia that may have been used in the education

of the Sparrow children. We know that the children were educated on site as there is a record of their tutor suing George Sparrow for wages. However, it is just as likely that the writing artefacts were used in the everyday operation of the inn for keeping bar tabs, writing orders, displaying menus or numerous other administrative tasks. Of interest are some scale weights from a small, likely commercial, scale. This could have been used for measuring out goods for purchase or for weighing mail and parcel items to be put on the coach.

All of the artefacts recovered during excavation point to the Hibernian being built in the mid-1800s and abandoned by the late-1800s. This echoes the findings of the historical investigations that showed that the Hibernian was quickly developed into a 'first class inn', but that following George Sparrow's death in 1885, the fortunes of the family quickly disappeared, with most of the Sparrow land being handed over to the Commercial Banking Company of Sydney by the late 1890s.

## **DESCRIPTION**

The Hibernian Hotel Site today exists only as a set of stone footings barely visible in the ground. The northern rooms have been removed when the Kings Highway was expanded in 2008, leaving the southern rooms and the row of five extant Dutch Elms. The footings sit in a mound of stone and clay rubble that has formed as the pisé walls disintegrated and filled in the room areas inside the footings and spilled out over the outside footings, forming a mound. The rubble layer has formed a cap over the original floor of the building, sealing in the archaeological evidence that accumulated over the lifetime of the building's use.

### **Physical condition and integrity**

The Hibernian Hotel Site is in extremely poor physical condition with very little integrity of original materials. All of the pisé structure and roofing have decayed and the northern half of the remains of the building have been destroyed by road works. What remains of the Hibernian are conserved as stone footings mostly covered by dirt and stone from the former pisé walls while the rest of the associated structures remain covered by earth. The area is being grown over by pest species of bush and rabbits have been burrowing in and around the remains. These are having an effect on the integrity of the site as the rabbits undermine the stone and dig up archaeological materials while the roots of the pest plant species disturbs deposits and push apart stone structures. However, this echoes the condition of the site when it was subject to archaeological investigation in 2008 and, while there was some effect on the integrity of the site, the damage was not enough to have a significant effect on the archaeological evidence.

The five Dutch Elms that form the western border are in various states of health with those on the southern end appearing to have greater vigour than those on the northern end of the line of trees. The northernmost tree was removed from this line in 2007 following a report from Burgess Horticultural Services that stated that the tree was showing signs of distress from disease and drought. The next northernmost tree is in a similar state of distress, but is still alive despite a chainsaw cut through the majority of the trunk. The health and vigour of the trees increases down the line towards the south.

**SITE PLAN**



**Image 1** Hibernian Hotel Site boundary.

## IMAGES



**Image 2:** Dutch elms that form the western border for the Hibernian Hotel Site. (ACT Heritage, 2013)



**Image 3:** Footings of the Hibernian barely visible under soil and vegetation. Evidence of rabbit burrow disturbance in the foreground. The row of Dutch Elms in the background. The Kings Highway in the background to the right. (ACT Heritage, 2013)



**Image 4** The standing ruins of the Hibernian Hotel from the late 19<sup>th</sup> or early 20<sup>th</sup> century from the Frank Walker Glass Lantern Slide Collection from the Royal Australian Historical Society (from Williams, 2008)

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