



HERITAGE INTERPRETATION STRATEGY - ROCK VALLEY HOMESTEAD & SURROUNDS TIDBINBILLA NATURE RESERVE ACT



Prepared by

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for the

**Tidbinbilla Pioneers
Association Inc.**

February 2021



Bringing *Tidbinbilla Heritage* to life

Citation

Heritage interpretation strategy: Rock Valley Homestead and surrounds, Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve ACT.
Prepared by Mark Butz for the Tidbinbilla Pioneers Association Inc.
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The **Tidbinbilla Pioneers Association** was formed in 1983 by descendants of European families who lived around the Tidbinbilla and Tharwa area from the mid 1800s. They have a strong and passionate connection to Tidbinbilla and heritage sites such as the 'Rock Valley' and 'Nil Desperandum' homesteads. Association members provide colourful accounts of Tidbinbilla's past, and the joys and hardships of this mountain valley community.

Members provide crucial local knowledge and assist Rangers in maintaining this valuable heritage.

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Under the banner of **Learnscapes** he specialises in works that cast a different light on the world we live in, to:

- ◆ build 'environmental literacy' by helping readers to appreciate the symbolic language of the environment as an integrated whole and as a web of dynamic connections and flows
- ◆ heighten the value placed on the environment as both natural and cultural landscape, by generating new understanding and meaning; and
- ◆ encourage readers to accept their role in creating the future and their responsibility to make choices that benefit the environment and society.

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Acknowledgements

In the spirit of reconciliation the author acknowledges Ngunnawal people as the Traditional Custodians of the Canberra area, holding great respect for their enduring cultural knowledge and continued connection to ancestral Country, and for their contribution to the life of our region and community.

Ngunnawal Country: Always was – Always will be – Never ceded

The strategy builds on years of dedicated work by the Tidbinbilla Pioneers Association (TPA), in collaboration with the ACT Parks & Conservation Service (ACTPCS), to research the European history of the Tidbinbilla valley and to develop cultural heritage stories in precincts and trails in Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve. Their work honours the efforts and achievements of pioneers, who built their own relationships with the land.

The ACT Government made funding available for this project under the ACT Heritage Grants Program.

Particular thanks are due to:

- Geoff Puleston, Vice-President of the TPA, who has provided a great deal of energy, guidance, background knowledge, research and other vital support
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- ACT Heritage Unit, who have been very understanding about the impact of COVID-19 on completion of this ACT Heritage Grant
- ACT EPSDD Engagement and Campaigns, for providing comments on draft signs and brochure text

BACKGROUND

Heritage Grant in brief

This strategy responds to the Tidbinbilla Pioneers Association (TPA) **2019/20 Heritage Grant: Transition Rock Valley into an interpretation 'hub' for the historic heritage of Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve**

- interpretation planning
- directional signs (one modified and one new)
- three new interpretive signs (Canberra Tracks template)

Launch during the ACT & Region Heritage Festival (postponed to 2021).

The strategy is a consultant's report to the TPA.

It provides background to stories available for interpretation, and a suite of possibilities for sharing those stories and enhancing visitor experiences.

The strategy goes beyond the duration of the current Heritage Grant, to outline directions and to guide on-going development of resources, facilities and programs for interpretation.

The content does not represent a commitment by the TPA or the ACT Government to undertake works. Rather, it offers suggestions and approaches for consideration by decision-makers over time.



(Sep 2020 - Mark Butz)

Rock Valley in brief

The **Rock Valley cultural landscape** has 25,000+ years of Aboriginal history and almost 190 years of European occupation history (from the 1830s).

The **Rock Valley Homestead** dates from 1895, and was occupied by three generations of the Green family until it was taken into the Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve in the 1960s.

The place is owned and managed by the ACT Parks & Conservation Service (ACTPCS).

The homestead, house garden and home paddock were severely damaged by bushfire in January 2003.

The building has been stabilised and partially reconstructed, the garden has been partially recovered, and both are tended largely by volunteers.

The Rock Valley Homestead and surrounds have been listed on the **ACT Heritage Register** since 2015.

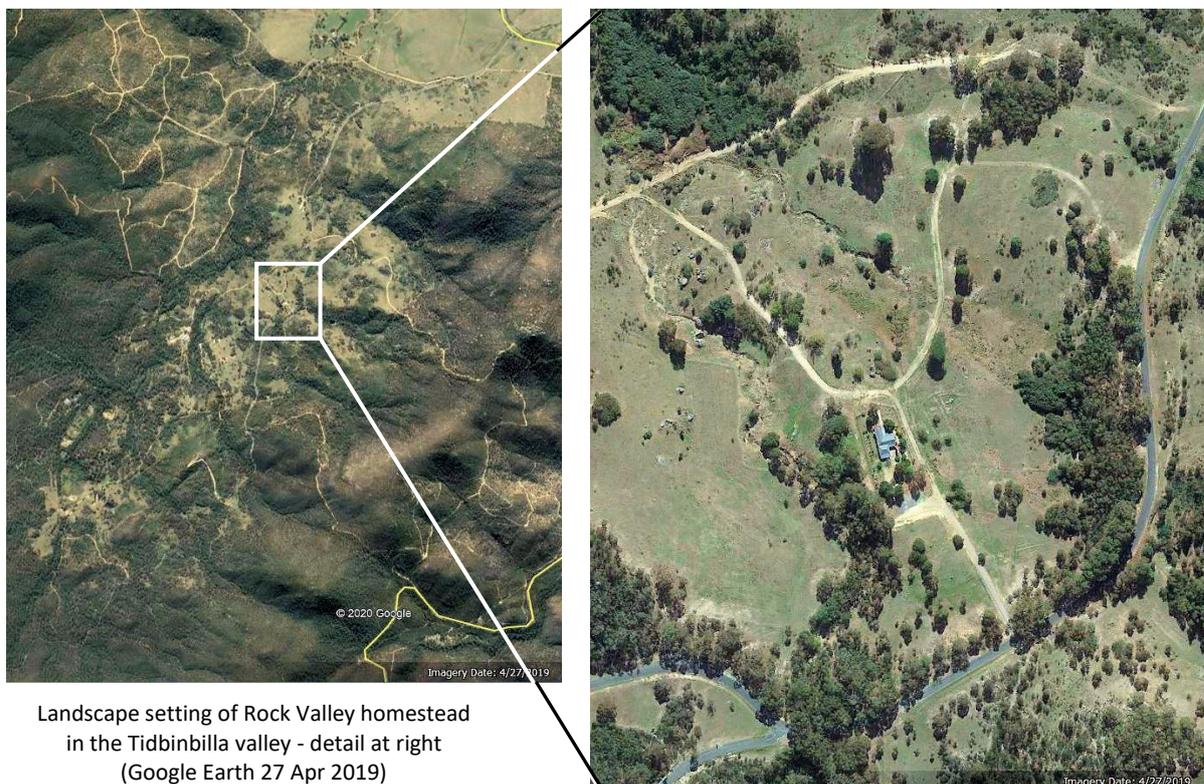
Location

For this strategy the Tidbinbilla valley is the catchment of the Tidbinbilla River, flowing into Paddys River. It is bounded in the north by the range and foothills that define the catchment of Hurdle Creek. In the south it is geographically bound by a spur running north-east from Mount Eliza, but by convention is seen to include the catchment containing Birrigai. The Gibraltar Valley adjoins to the south-east.



Context of Rock Valley Homestead (arrowed) in Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve - halfway between the active visitor hubs of the Nature Discovery Playground and The Sanctuary (ACT Government)

The Rock Valley Homestead is situated on a spur (the toe of Wallaroo Ridge) between two streams (Greens’ Front Creek and Back Creek) which merge and then flow into the Tidbinbilla River.



Landscape setting of Rock Valley homestead in the Tidbinbilla valley - detail at right (Google Earth 27 Apr 2019)

Supporting framework for proposed works

The works and actions proposed in the TPA's Heritage Grant proposal give partial effect to aspirations expressed in the **Shaping our Territory business case and master plan for Tidbinbilla** (ACT Government 2004), which sought to guide recovery from the 2003 bushfires.

That report:

- required that 'everything that is done must exhibit excellence and the highest quality', and attractions must be unique ('Tidbinbilla as before, but better')
- identified cultural heritage values within a natural setting as an integral part of the attraction and experience of the Reserve
- set out initiatives and opportunities that included: 'to provide a place of learning about the human history of Tidbinbilla and the surrounding district', positioned as part of nature-based tourism ('visitation to natural and near-natural areas')
- identified Rock Valley Homestead as an interpretation node for European cultural heritage
- envisaged that the Tidbinbilla Pioneers Association (TPA), in collaboration with government staff, would develop 'a display and interpretation strategy that will bring alive the period of early European occupation of the valley' (developing displays, conducting tours and leading discussions)
- outlined works that included stabilisation and partial reconstruction of the Rock Valley Homestead, with its potential use for interpretation and display dependent on decisions for its long-term future.

These matters were subsequently reflected in the key desired outcomes and policies in the **Tidbinbilla plan of management** (ACT Government 2012), in particular:

- better recognition, conservation and interpretation of **cultural heritage values**
- a more comprehensive approach to interpretation of **Aboriginal and European cultural heritage**
- development and promotion of a **cultural heritage interpretation program** to enrich visitor experience and understanding
- improved **accessibility** of cultural heritage places to visitors, while **protecting values**
- achievement of a **well recognised role** in environment education, and natural and cultural heritage conservation that **attracts involvement** of people from the region and beyond
- **active involvement** of the community and corporate sectors in management programs
- involvement of people and organisations with a **special interest** in protection and conservation of cultural heritage
- recognition of **community attachment** to heritage places
- **encouragement of research** into cultural occupation, heritage places, and ongoing connection
- **encouragement of community participation** in heritage management and interpretation
- training for rangers and volunteer interpreters for a **high professional standard** in cultural heritage interpretation
- practical connection with the **Australian Alps** Co-operative Management Program.

The plan of management specifically mentions:

- development of a '**heritage trail**' (primarily walk/cycle) with Rock Valley Homestead as a focal point for interpretation of European cultural heritage
- preparation of a **conservation management plan** for the Rock Valley site to frame future use of the homestead
- further **interpretation** of the site and possible **re-establishment** of some of the garden and orchard.

PART A – THE PLACE: PAST AND PRESENT

The Story to be Told

This section traces *changes* in the place and in its social and landscape context over time, leading to an account of what has persisted (*continuity*) to form the tangible basis of interpretation today.

The content of this section is not comprehensive, instead summarised as an aid to understanding, for framing works and developing content for interpretive signs, brochures, presentations and tours.

After some contextual overviews that sample from deep time to the present day, the more detailed material is organised into three relatively recent phases:

The Greens' tenure (1895-1968) - The Reserve era (1968-2003) - After the Fires (2003-2020).

Each of these is then organised into three aspects of the landscape: *Buildings – Grounds - Surrounds.*

Aboriginal occupancy

The human story begins with the rich and continuing history of Aboriginal occupation of the Tidbinbilla landscape over at least the past 25,000 years.

The Tidbinbilla valley offered abundant resources of water, food and fibre, stone and timber for manufacturing tools and implements, useful pathways to and through the mountains, refuge from colder weather, shelter in rock overhangs, and places of great cultural and spiritual significance.

This enduring Aboriginal occupation and use is interpreted elsewhere in the Reserve, and there is certainly scope to interpret it also at Rock Valley Homestead, noting that abundant artefact material has been located in the immediate vicinity of the homestead.

This reflects the common physical characteristics that make the place suitable as both an Aboriginal occupation site and a settler homestead site.

Archaeological analysis of artefact finds across the region indicates that sites historically favoured by Aboriginal people would be elevated, fairly level, and well drained, close to a major watercourse, and often near confluences. Artefacts are also more likely on major ridgelines and spurs that provide natural pathways, and in areas with an easterly to north-easterly aspect. (Barber et al. 2004:36-37) All of these conditions apply to the spur on which Rock Valley Homestead is located.

Additionally, within easy reach of the homestead, rock art has been recorded at Wallaby Rocks on the range, and also reported in oral history at Woolpack Rocks, below the homestead and next to the river (the latter art site thought to be not extant).

A little further afield, but still within the Rock Valley holding, there are records of a corroboree site/stone arrangement near the headwaters of Sheedys Creek (Barber & Williams 1996:3) with a significant spiritual site noted at Gibraltar Rocks (TNR Website).

Across the river and opposite the homestead, the former pine plantation (Block 60), now termed Jedbinbilla, has long been reported as an important ceremonial place, which may have continued to be used for some time after European settlement. This area yielded a high density of artefact material when surveyed after the 2003 fires. (Barber et al. 2004)

Artefacts indicate that use was made of the abundant variety of stone available in the area, including quartz, chert, volcanics, quartzite and sandstone. The granite component of the landscape provided abundant rock shelters, as well as being habitat for rock wallabies and other wildlife, and in higher parts potential Bogong moth aestivation sites.

It is likely that, at least for the past few thousand years, the valley would have supported occupation throughout the year, with seasonal forays into the ranges in pursuit of particular resources, or for ceremonial purposes. (Barber & Williams 1996:5)

European ownership and occupancy

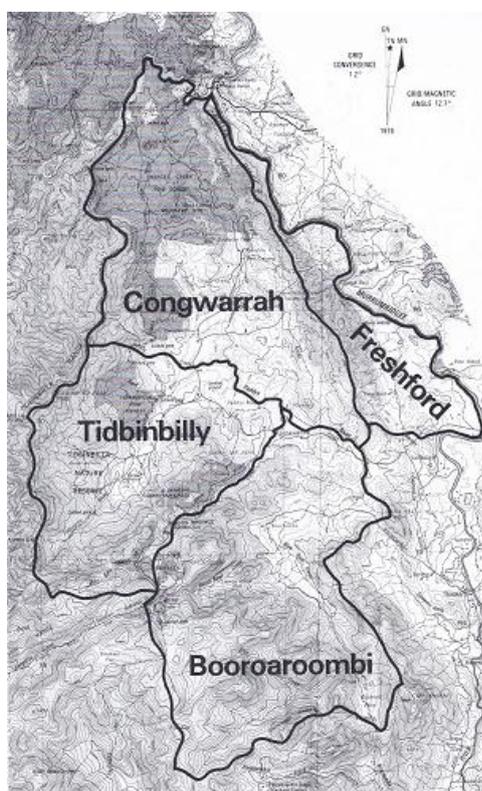
'Squatting' - Tidbinbilly Pastoral Run

The processes of dispossession and dispersal of Aboriginal people began in the 1820s when Europeans first recorded visits to the Limestone Plains and the Monaro, and began to establish settlements and to graze stock beyond the official Limits of Location. The pioneer settlers that we focus on at Rock Valley may have had minimal contact with Aboriginal people from the 1880s-1890s.

In the 1830s **George Solomon Webb** settled on the western side of the Murrumbidgee, initially near Tharwa, and in 1834 he became the first settler at Tidbinbilla. Five years later he took up a lease on the Tidbinbilly Pastoral Run (No.185). The run covered 25 square miles (6,500ha), including the entire Tidbinbilla valley and extending to Paddys River. It was estimated to support grazing of 800 cattle.

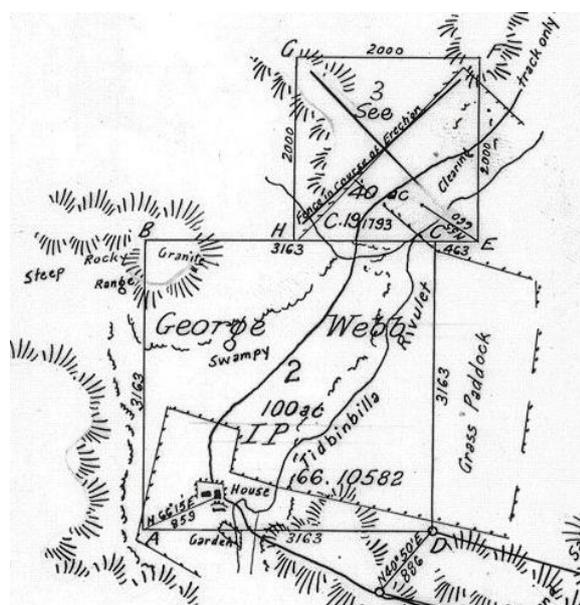
Webb's neighbours in the Murrumbidgee River catchment were Andrew Cunningham (No.200 Congwarrah – 10,000 acres/4,046ha), T H Macquoid (No.120 Freshford - 5,000 acres/2,023ha), and William Davis snr. (No.39 Booroaroombi - 4,480 acres/1,813ha).

In 1864 Webb secured a conditional lease on his house block (on 'Tidbinbilla Rivulet'), close to the current Reserve boundary - portion 2 of Parish Booroomba, County Cowley (100 acres/40.5ha). This formed the heart of Tidbinbilla Station, with a total of 20,000 acres/810ha and capacity for 500 cattle.



Left: Squatters' Pastoral Runs 1848 (Ingwersen n.d)

Below: Webb's portion 2 Parish Booroomba, the heart of Tidbinbilla Station



In 1866 George Webb, widowed since 1845, moved to Uriarra, and auctioned the Tidbinbilly Run. It was purchased by **Andrew Cunningham**, who held the Congwarrah Run to the north. He also held Lanyon, Freshford, Tuggranong [sic], and other properties, and was a major landholder. His sons (Andrew Jackson Cunningham and James Cunningham) continued the family empire after his death in 1887.

By the time of the Cunninghams' tenure, the large pastoral runs were being gradually dismantled as the government allowed smaller settlers to select parcels of land that were once the exclusive domain of the squatters and owners of large runs.

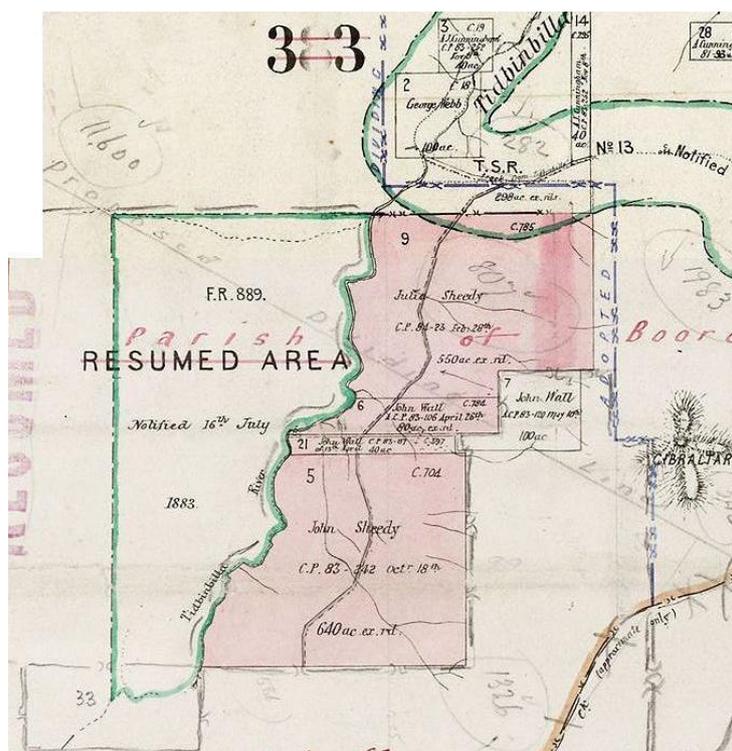
Selection - Small settlers

The major part of the lower valley was selected in 1884 by the family of John and Bridget **Sheedy**, and John's widowed mother Julia Sheedy – portions 5 and 9 of Parish Booroomba respectively, lying upstream from George Webb's selection.

Between these two holdings, John **Wall** had previously selected portions 6, 7 and 21 in 1883 (perhaps 'dummying', posing as a *bona fide* selector, for the Cunninghams of Lanyon, where he worked). These were forfeited, and Patrick Sheedy (eldest son of John and Bridget) took up portions 6 and 21 in 1887.

In the same year William John Sheedy (the second son) took up a selection (later portions 36 and 37) adjoining the southern edge of his father's portion 5.

Right: Early selections removed from the Congwarrah Pastoral Run No.383
- Sheedy and Wall
- detail of 1903 map
(NSW Land Registry Services)



John Sheedy built a house in portion 5 (later within portion 69), and another on portion 6. The Sheedys referred to their holdings as Rock Valley.

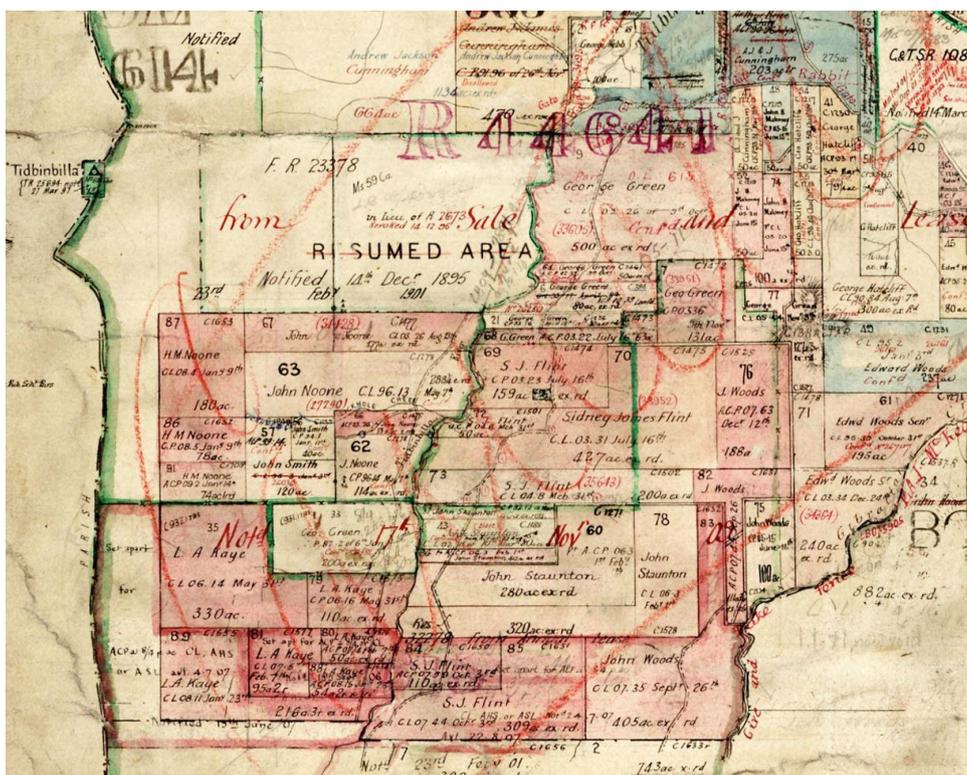
The slab house on portion 6, across Back Creek from the present site of the Rock Valley Homestead, sat adjacent to a granite outcrop that is said to have prompted the name (although portions 5 and 9, the first acquisitions, were also dominated by granite outcrops).

There was also a house on portion 9 held nominally by Julia ('Granny') Sheedy, later the approximate site of Boyden's house, close to Sheedys Creek.

It has been stated that the heavily timbered nature of the landscape favoured cattle grazing, and there was little incentive to undertake clearing, except around house paddocks. However, in 1887 John Sheedy was fetching good prices for his wool clip from Rock Valley (Daily Telegraph 4 Feb 1887:7), suggesting that the Sheedys had undertaken some significant clearing.

Despite the effort required for clearing, construction, fencing and yards, the Sheedys did not stay long. Julia Sheedy had died at Rock Valley early in 1889, and John and Bridget and their family moved in around 1890 to Castle Hill, closer to Tharwa. It is said that John took his house from portion 5 with him.

The forfeited Sheedy holdings were taken up by the Green, Flint and Staunton families. Others - Noone, Smith and Kaye families - soon settled nearby. By 1900 they formed a community sufficiently large to warrant a mail delivery service and a school. In the community's application to open a school (1897), the candidate students, ranging in age from 4 to 14, included four Greens, two Stauntons, and six Noones.



The map of Parish Booroomba expanded rapidly, and smaller portions replaced earlier Sheedy holdings - the base map is Parish Booroomba 1886, updated to 1909 (NSW Land Registry Services)

The story is well documented (e.g. Flint 1983) that George Green, George Hatcliff and John Staunton walked to Tidbinbilla from the Tuggeranong area where they were working on construction of the railway to Cooma. In 1884 the two Georges occupied Apple Tree Flat near the head of the valley.

George **Green** selected portion 33 Parish Booroomba in 1887 and this became Ash Corner, named for alpine ash trees. That portion can be seen sketched in on the 1903 map of the Congwarrah Run.

One of the first holdings on the west (left) bank of the river, it was traversed by Ashbrook Creek. They built a two-room slab hut with a shingle roof, and undertook clearing and fencing. George Green was joined there by his wife Mary Ann and his brother William Cooper (W C) Green in 1886.

George **Hatcliff** moved to his own selection named Gibraltar (later Birrigai) in 1890, and in 1892 W C Green married Ellen Woods and moved on. This gave room for George and Mary Ann to raise their first five children at Ash Corner.

John **Staunton** selected portions 36, 37, 43 and 60 (Mount Domain) directly across the river.

Ash Corner was very isolated, and the Greens soon sought a move to a different block. George retained portion 33 until at least 1907 (later passed to Nina Farrer, who used the Greens' hut as a stable).

The Greens obtained portions 6 and 21 (formerly Patrick Sheedy) in 1895, and built their home there. Over the next seven or eight years they added portions 9 and 64 (formerly Julia Sheedy) and portions 7 (formerly Patrick Sheedy) and 68 (formerly John Sheedy). Ten years after their move, they added Gibraltar Peak (portion 77), and they now directly adjoined George Hatcliff's Gibraltar property.

The total Greens' holding (later Federal Territory Holding 184) is most commonly referred to as Rock Valley. The map of Parish Booroomba (1912) shows a total family holding of 991 acres (410ha). The homestead was built on portion 21, and the home paddock extended also into portions 6, 64 and 68.

In the 1920s the Greens secured a lease over Block 20 Paddys River (109 acres/44ha), bringing their land holding northwards to the Tidbinbilla Road. In 1938 Tom Green began to lease part of portion 76 (Block 52 – 111 acres/45ha), exchanged for the bottom projection of portion 77 (transferred to T Woods as Block 53), bringing the Greens' holding to the crest of the range.

In 1903-04 Sidney James **Flint** formally took up four portions (69, 70, 72 and 73) to the south of the Greens and the north of Staunton; these were previously within portion 5 (John Sheedy). The house was in Portion 69, close to Sheedy’s old house site (used as the site for the school house from 1898).

In 1912 S J Flint married Annie Amelia Noone. The Flints cited Rock Valley as their address into the 1960s (CT 12 Nov 1960:16) and as the identity for their wool clip (Queanbeyan Leader 22 Jul 1915:4).

Tenders for the local mail run (1901-05) (NSW Govt Gazette 1 Oct 1901: 7578), referred to the school as ‘Rock Valley Public School’ (locally termed ‘Church Rock Valley School’).

Historically, the Rock Valley name was applied also to Staunton’s and Ashbrook in the south (NSW Govt Gazette 12 Feb 1895; Queanbeyan Age 20 Jul 1895:3), Gillmans’ in the north (Queanbeyan Age 21 Aug 1895:3) and Smiths’ in the west (Queanbeyan Observer 4 Aug 1899:3) - the whole of the Tidbinbilla valley.



The north-east of Rock Valley: Holdings of the Green and Flint families in relation to the modern landscape (Parish Booroomba overlay on 2019 aerial photograph mosaic - ACTmapi)

In today’s landscape the Greens’ landholding (at its maximum) extended south from the Tidbinbilla Road and Visitors Centre as far as Flints’, and east from the Tidbinbilla River to slopes and heights both north and south of Gibraltar Peak – resembling an amphitheatre rising from the river to the granite range.

Ultimately the Rock Valley property was occupied by three generations of the Green family, including:

- **George** Green (1855-1930) and **Mary Ann** née McCaffrey (1865-1911) – 7 children
- George Thomas (**Tom**) Green (1895-1957) and Mary Elizabeth Mayo (**Elma**) née Woods (1901-1957) – 3 children (1 d. infancy)
- **Keith** Thomas Green (1928-2007) with Edward George (**Eddie**) Green (1933-2009) - 1 child

Social connections

From their first arrival in the district (with John Staunton), George Green and George Hatcliff built relationships across the valley community. For years most of their income came from working away from their own holdings, labouring for larger landholders, particularly the McKeahnies at Booroomba.

'The two Georges' helped with mustering, shearing, crutching and dipping sheep, fencing, tree planting, and gathering and stacking hay. They also became proficient at *pisé de terre* (shortened to *pisé* or *pisi*) building construction.

Off-farm income would have been critical to their fortunes during the 'Federation Drought' (1895-1903).

Through more than seventy years in the valley community, the Greens developed **kinship** connection through marriage directly with Flint, Woods and Blewitt families, and indirectly with the Hatcliff, Maloney, Noone, Dallender, Morton and Maxwell families. There were also ancestral connections, with Elma Green (née Woods, wife of Tom) being a granddaughter of Johanna (Julia) Sheedy, niece of Patrick and Julia ('Granny') Sheedy. And the Greens retained their long and close connection with the Stauntons.

It was common for most of the settler children to be attending the local **school** with their cousins (with various degrees of separation), and within the confines of the valley community those childhood connections might result in further intermarriages.

Beyond family, neighbours would regularly share seeds, cuttings, vegetables, flowers and other produce, and would share labour and the fruits of those labours, in a network of cooperation and **mutual support**.

When the men from Flints' went away to serve in World War II, the very capable women managed the property, with the knowledge that the Greens and others would provide **practical help** as it was needed.

Also during the War, when the eucalyptus cutters upstream needed a lift into town, it was often the Greens that provided car transport.

Rock Valley Homestead was not only the geographic centre of the valley, but also an important **social hub**:

It was a regular venue for night-time **card games**, especially 500 but also euchre and poker. The welcome was extended to the Czech eucalyptus cutters in the 1930s and 40s.

The Greens hosted **woolshed dances** there about three or four times a year (Park 2008), at least from the 1940s and into the 1950s. These dances were described as 'the major social occasion for the district', to which people brought 'basket suppers' (Higgins 1995).

In the same period Rock Valley was also a frequent **venue** for events such as an 'athletic picnic', 'monster sports carnival', 'open air show', or 'district gymkhana', variously offering races, horse events, clowns, sideshows, art union raffles, blackberry picking contests, food, motorbike events, motor and machinery displays, beauty parade of girls, bathing beauty contest for men ('the first of its kind to be held in the ACT'), bonfires, and a concert followed by dancing (CT 6 Dec 1947:5; 22 May 1951:5; 8 Mar 1952:4; 29 Dec 1953:3; 15 Dec 1953:5; Higgins 1995).



Canberra Times 29 Dec 1953:3

A number of these events were fundraisers for charity. Prime Minister Menzies was expected to open the event in 1951, with other Parliamentary members forecast to attend (CT 23 May 1951:6).

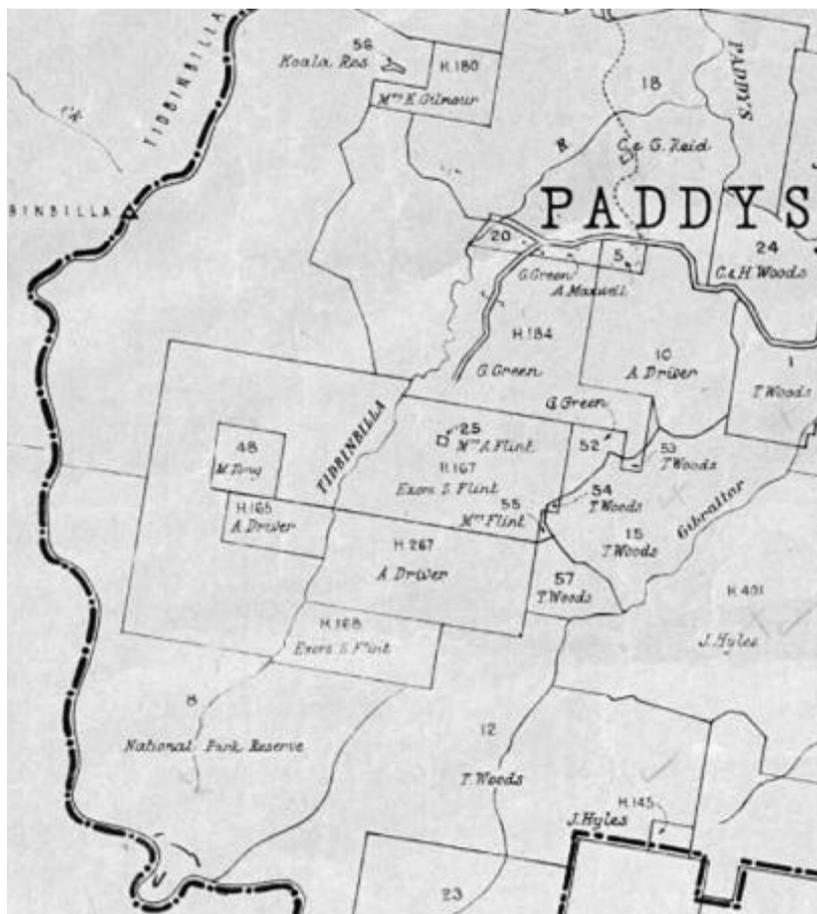
The open welcome at Rock Valley was not confined to family and neighbours. For years access to the property was also available to **picnickers**, who would pay a fee per car (Higgins 1995). In 1953 it was advertised as a destination for camping during the Easter holidays, offering hiking, swimming, fishing and blackberry picking, with farm produce, drinks and sweets available (Canberra Times 1 Apr 1953:5).

Also in the 1950s, a decade prior to Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve, the homestead was a regular hub/start point for **bushwalkers** and hikers in a youthful Canberra, to access the high country. Some of these excursions were guided by Keith Green (CT 15 Dec 1953:4).

Federal Territory

Land for the Federal Capital Territory was ceded by New South Wales in 1911, and processes of resumption began, with a view to all land in the Territory being leasehold. Some of the Tidbinbilla valley families had secured parcels of land only a few years prior, and now they were visited by surveyors recording their holdings and improvements for the purposes of valuation in resumption and leasing. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries the Tidbinbilla area was occupied by up to sixteen landholders. This number declined in the face of economic depressions and drought years, and some leaving the Territory. By the 1950s a few settler families remained, among them the Flints and Greens.

Right: Holdings at Tidbinbilla 1959
- detail; base ACT tenure map 1959
(nla.obj-234142244)



After the deaths of Tom and Elma Green in 1957, the property passed to Eddie and Keith Green.

Eddie travelled overseas from 1959-60, leasing the homestead area to his cousin Phyllis Morton (née Flint) and her husband Les Morton (Higgins 1995:30, 40). In 1964, the year of his return, all of the properties to the south were resumed for addition to the Reserve. At that time there appeared to be no intention to extend the Reserve further north to take in the Greens' property.

Eddie ran tours with Keith, at least from 1967, variously called ACT Pastoral and Bushland Tours (CT 5 Jan 1967: 16), Greens Tours (CT 26 Mar 1970: 19), Green's Tourist Guide Service (CT 11 Jul 1970: 25) and Green's Canberra and Bushland Tours, continuing until at least mid-1972 (CT 19 Jun 1972: 13).

Right: Keith Green's tour bus
above the Cotter Dam, probably late 1960s
(TPA Helen Jeffery)



'Hobby farms' subdivision

When both their parents died in 1957 just ten weeks apart, Eddie and Keith Green had struggled to afford double death duties (P Green pers.comm.). They decided to subdivide the property and sell lots as hobby farms, except for 28 acres in portion 64 (around Turkey Hill) held by Eddie.

These subdivisions are shown on the 1961 ACT 'skeleton map' produced by the NCDC. The Deposited Plan numbers suggest two stages of subdivision, the earliest being four lots within portion 9 in the north (DP 1102 to DP 1105), and the second being three lots in portions 6 and 64 (DP 1394).

The northern blocks were held by A L **Maxwell** (287 acres/116ha), in two parts straddling the block of H L & P P **Morton** (171 acres/69ha), and both adjoining Eddie at Turkey Hill. Les and Phyllis Morton were the cousins who leased the homestead while Eddie Green was travelling. They were also leasing Block 20 Paddys River (109 acres/44ha), previously leased by the Greens.

A L Maxwell was Alan Leslie (known as Pat) Maxwell, who held the adjacent Block 5 (53 acres/21.4ha).

The southern blocks were held by: Mrs S A **Newland** (137 acres/55ha); S **Grimes** (6 acres/2.4ha); and S V **Boyden** (360 acres/146ha), the last including portions 7 and 77.

The Greens' Rock Valley
as hobby farms c.1966
(base: ACT skeleton map
- NCDC 1961)



Eddie & Keith had mixed fortunes in this subdivision. It was fortunate that their forebears had resisted converting their freehold to leasehold. This may have prevented expansion of pine plantations across the valley in the 1950s and 60s, and it also meant that the Greens were able to subdivide.

They were unfortunate that there was increasing scrutiny of remaining freehold lands in the ACT, amid concerns of 'excessive capital gains' from subdivision, although the Commonwealth Department of the Interior stated in 1965 that in the foreseeable future acquisition of freehold west of the Murrumbidgee River was not justified (CT 1 Jun 1965:6). Despite such a claim, scrutiny of freehold subdivisions appears to have prompted resumption on the doorstep of the newly expanded Tidbinbilla Fauna Reserve.

The view was held that subdivision of ACT freehold pastoral holdings into 'farmlet areas' would inevitably destroy the rural character of the land, and would increase the cost to the Commonwealth of acquiring the land in the future (Commonwealth of Australia 1968). The value of rural lands as a 'suitable background for the expanding city' had priority over the needs and interests of rural landholders.

Although purchasers of the Greens' subdivision lots may have undertaken the searches they needed to ensure their purchases would be unencumbered, the Commonwealth was irresistible in its resumption.

The home paddock area was held by Mrs Newland, who apparently intended to use the homestead as a guesthouse or tea shop. This was very short-lived, as in May 1966 the Commonwealth acquired the homestead to add to the Reserve, along with the remainder of the hobby farm blocks in 1967, from April through to September (Commonwealth of Australia 1968). Block 20, leased by the Mortons (previously by Greens), and Block 5, leased by Pat Maxwell, were also withdrawn.

Reserve establishment

Just a year or two after the area for the Federal Capital Territory had been ceded by New South Wales, and three years before the capital was formally named Canberra, the landscape of Tidbinbilla had been suggested as a suitable place to establish a nature reserve.

A **National Park and Fauna Reserve** was formed in 1936 with 2,000 acres/810ha in timbered parts of the southern valley. In the 1960s the Reserve grew by 11,512 acres/4,659ha through a series of acquisitions:

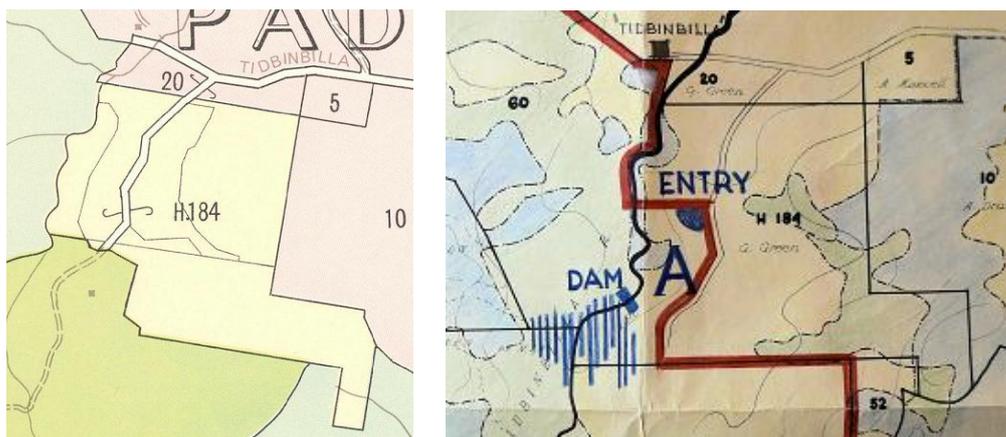
- By end of 1963 - 5,021 acres/2,032ha of unleased Commonwealth lands and some lease withdrawals
- By end of 1964 - 4,966 acres/2,010ha of freehold lands and some lease withdrawals
- In 1966-67 – 1,525 acres/617ha being 989acres/400ha of former Green holdings (now subdivided) and 536 acres/217ha of leased land. (ACT Government 1970)

In 1964 a Ranger caretaker was appointed, living initially at the old Flint homestead. In pursuit of an unsullied natural environment, a key focus in the early years was to 'mitigate the effects of three generations of farming and grazing activities'. This involved removal of fences, structures and most of the 'evidence of the previous occupation' (ACT Government 1970). A 1968 study had concluded that 'there are no historical or cultural features of sufficient magnitude to influence the development plan', but it did favour retention and use of the surnames of pioneers (S R Margules 1968:9).

Not all traces were erased - Rock Valley Homestead was repaired, and renovated around 1966 for staff accommodation, with the Reserve Works Depot in the rear, and Boyden's house (only a few years old) became the manager's house (termed Dalsetta). Eddie Green's freehold at Turkey Hill became the site of the Information Centre (later Education Centre).

An ACT tenure map c.1966 was quick to show the Rock Valley home paddock as part of the Reserve (acquired May 1966), making the front gate of the home paddock also the Reserve's front gate.

A more longstanding intention to acquire at least parts of the holding is suggested by a concept diagram (of unknown date and origin) that shows a Reserve entrance at Turkey Hill and a dam across the Tidbinbilla River at the toe of the spur on which Rock Valley Homestead stands, to form a pond (but excluding the homestead from the Reserve). This concept did not show the eventual boundaries of the Reserve and did not make use of lot boundaries in the Greens' subdivision, so it appears to pre-date both (i.e. 1961 or earlier). However, the whole of the Greens' subdivision was resumed by the end of 1967.



Left: ACT Tenure map c.1966 incorporating the Rock Valley home paddock into the Reserve (nla.obj-369321716)

Right: A hand rendered concept c.1965 showing a Reserve entrance and a dam/pond (origin n.k.)

The **Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve** was gazetted as a Public Park on 11 November 1971.

It was extended over the Gibraltar Range to the Corin Road following the 2003 bush fires that destroyed the pine plantations in that valley.

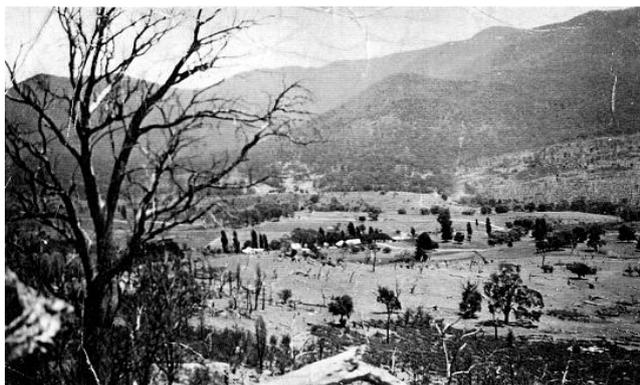
In November 2008 the Reserve was added to the **Australian National Heritage List** as one of eleven areas constituting the Australian Alps National Parks and Reserves.

Continuity in change - Landscape context

1926 – c.30 years after homestead construction



c.1936 - c.40 years after homestead construction



2020



2020



Nearly a century of change - Top: Rock Valley from Turkey Hill 1926 (Flint 1983 p.13);
Second & Third (detail): Rock Valley from Wallaby Rocks c.1936 (E Green TPA); Right column: Oct 2020 (Mark Butz)

Most noticeable in historical images is the extent of clearing undertaken over four preceding decades, with numerous ringbarked trees still standing.

There was little clearing in the valley until the mid 1880s, and the area was densely timbered, with estimates of up to 5,000 trees per hectare.

The original pattern of mixed farming (grazing, dairying, sheep, pigs, crops) was giving way to sheep farming which required increased clearing. This was generally achieved by ringbarking, leaving dead trees standing and requiring a sustained effort to control regrowth 'suckers'.

At this time, timber getting, eucalyptus oil extraction, and planting of exotic trees (e.g. willows, poplars, pines) contributed further to landscape change. Rabbits spread rapidly, finding excellent harbour among the many boulders and fallen timber stags.

It is likely that land clearing, fires, rabbit plagues, and subsequent flash flooding and erosion contributed to entrenched and gullied streams replacing soaks and ponds.

In the same way that native tree cover was seen as the enemy of pasture, native wildlife was seen as competition for grazing stock or as a destroyer of crops and fences. Many native species declined in the face of habitat loss, hunting, trapping and poisoning, and there were numerous local extinctions.

Continuity in change - Access and vegetation

c.1950s – still with the Greens; fresh cultivation



1962



1968 – transition to Nature Reserve (works depot added)



1971 – new main road



1978



2019 - 16 years after the fires

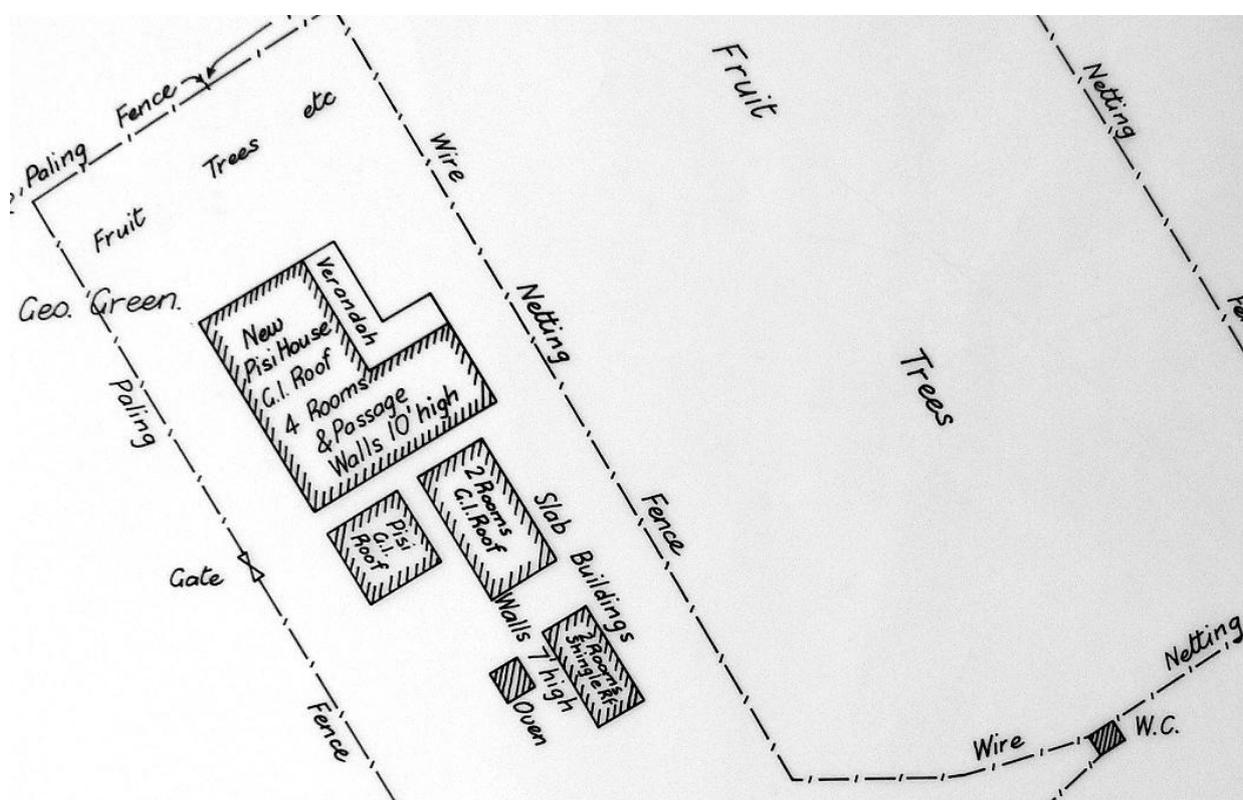


Twenty years of Rock Valley Homestead and grounds in aerial photographs (plus a 40-year update by satellite), showing changes in access, buildings and vegetation cover
(Air photo 12749 date n.k. c.1950s; SMA 10.12.1962 49/128 & 129; ACT Run 14 10.04.1968 8319; ACT 1:9600 Run 28 07.06.1971; ACT Development Record Run 78C26 11.03.1978 190; Google Earth 27.04.2019)

The Greens' tenure - Buildings

The **homestead** was constructed in stages:

- 1895 – Two-room slab building – kitchen/living (with outdoor oven) and bedroom, probably shingled - followed by a single pisé bedroom of grey silty earth on stone footings, probably shingled
- 1897 – Additional two-room slab bedroom, shingled
- c.1905-11 – four additional pisé rooms using decomposed granite, on stone footings (three bedrooms and parlour/lounge room with a fireplace), with galvanised iron roof
- c.1915 – brick infill to join separate pisé structures (later a bathroom and later storage)
- 1917 – pisé rendered with cement
- c.1920 – brick and fibro kitchen/living room with fireplace (replacing slab buildings and outside oven)
- 1940s-50s – enlarged kitchen with a second fireplace plus bathroom; front verandah partly enclosed
- 1967 – (Mrs Newland) - doorway cut into pisé wall to connect living areas, parlour fireplace blocked, verandah and rear porch fully enclosed

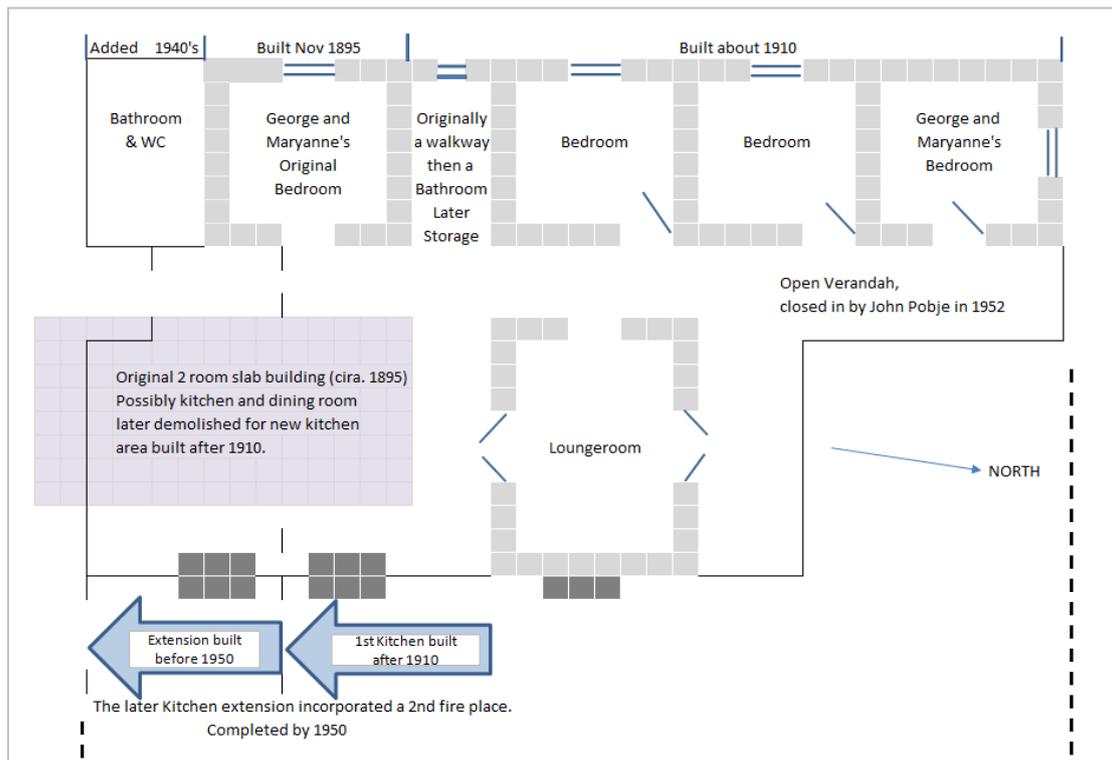


Tracing of Surveyor Rain's 1919 plan of Rock Valley – detail (M Thorn Jun 1982)

The 1919 survey plan of the property shows:

- the original two-roomed slab building (kitchen/living) and outdoor brick oven
- the second two-roomed slab building with 7ft walls and a shingle roof, the 1897 additional bedroom, now with a galvanised iron roof
- two stages of pisé homestead construction, all now with a galvanised iron roof
- an external toilet (WC), placed well away from the house.

The 1920s and 1940s-50s additions replaced the slab buildings and superseded the oven structure (later buried), and set the final built form for the homestead while it was occupied.

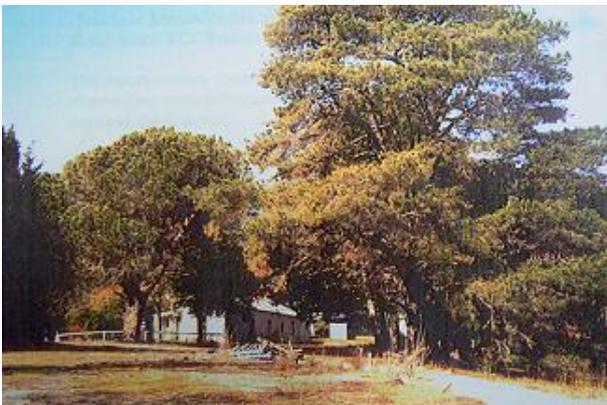
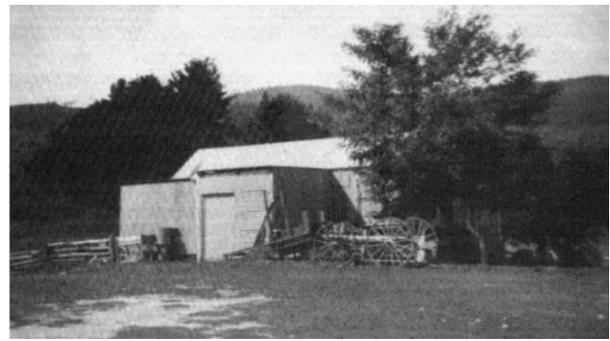


Floor plan of the homestead showing stages of construction (P Green TPA c.2017)



Top & middle: Eastern and western elevations of the homestead; bottom: front (northern) & rear elevations (ACT Government 1992)

Continuity in change - Buildings



Glimpses across more than 50 years
Top: the property in 1948 from the east
- hayloft and poplars to the left and
homestead to the right, beyond a pine
(Keith Green ex Higgins 2009 p.60)
Second row: homestead (left); woolshed with engine room,
date n.k. - exotic trees prominent
(both images clipped from TAMS video)
Third row: homestead from front and side in 1992
- rather obscured by exotic trees (ACT Public Works)
Right: homestead in 2002 (TPA archives)



Pisé at Rock Valley

The presence of multiple pisé buildings at Rock Valley Homestead is often cited as a value of the place. *Pisé de terre* (shortened to *pisé* or *pisi*) was rammed earth construction. It was inexpensive, requiring only simple tools that could be readily found, made or adapted, and timber formwork that could be easily built on a rural property.

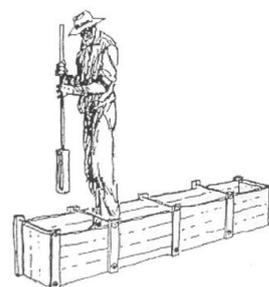
The economy of the method partly explains why the heyday of its use was the 1890s-early 1900s – a time of deep economic downturn exacerbated by the ‘Federation Drought’ (1895-1903) and a serious rabbit plague. This was the very time that the Georges moved to Rock Valley and began to establish the property.

It was highly advantageous that the method made use of free materials on-site. Here the source of the earth (red granite) used in the second stage of pisé (c.1905) is still visible as a levelled area backing onto an uncovered granite outcrop, adjacent to the original driveway/access road.

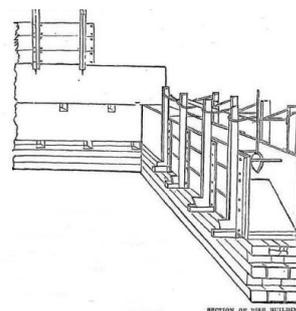
The two Georges (Green and Hatcliff) became adept at pisé construction, and found work around the district using the technology, prior to the first building at Rock Valley (1895).

Their local constructions are thought to include:

- c.1890 ‘Braeside’ homestead, Paddys River valley
- c.1893-94 Farrer experimental wheat laboratory (3 rooms)
+ pisé ground floor of ‘Lambrigg’ homestead
- 1891-94 (likely) cottage at ‘Lambrigg’
- c.1892? ‘Nil Desperandum’ homestead
- c.1895 (possible) Staunton’s original house
- 1898 Church Rock Valley School (single room)
- Late 1890s Outbuildings and smithy at ‘Booroomba’
do. ‘Gibraltar’ homestead (4 rooms)
- 1893-1902 (likely) Pisé section of ‘Tennent’ homestead
do. (likely) ‘Naas’ homestead + a cottage nearby
- c.1907 Lesley Kaye’s house
- 1910 Pisé section of ‘Congwarra’ homestead (4 rooms)
- ? (possibly) Edlington’s ‘Riverview’ homestead, on Gudenby River



Simple ‘home’ formwork for pisé
(Edwards 1988; in Cosgrove & Dowling 2001)

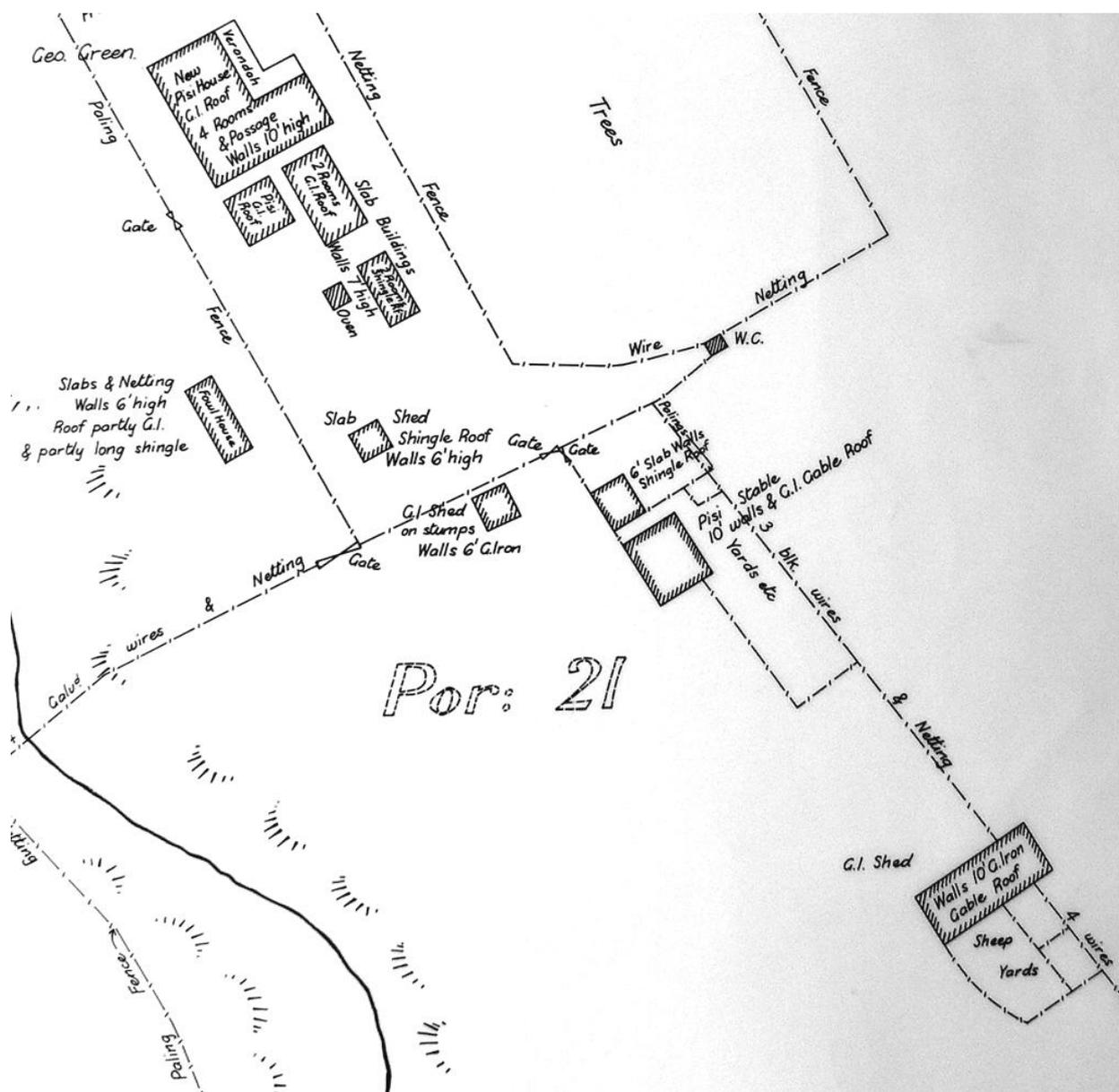


A more ‘industrial’ level of formwork
(Australian Town & Country Journal
11 Nov 1871 p.13)

There may have been others attributable to either or both of the Georges in that period. The district west of the Murrumbidgee, including Tidbinbilla, Gibraltar and Booroomba, had a notably high percentage of pisé constructions. In 2001 some two thirds of the known pisé buildings in the ACT were lost, ruined or degraded; only one third were in ‘good’ condition, with half of these not greatly modified (Cosgrove & Dowling 2001). A number, including ‘Rock Valley’ and ‘Nil Desperandum’, were subsequently affected by fire in 2003.

Another cited value of the pisé construction carried out by the two Georges is its link to migrant knowledge/technology. It is likely that they learned the technique from one or both of Chilean migrants, Eurobi/Eusebio Ponsi/Ponsy/Ponsey and Rupelto/Robert Rodrigues/Rodrigues.

They came to the district as shepherds in about 1872, working for the Cunninghams at Lanyon (where the two Georges also worked from time to time), and were soon building pisé houses for early selectors on the Tuggeranong Plain and around Paddys River. In 1883 Rodrigues selected 320 acres (portion 26 parish Congwarra) on Paddys River below Murrays Hill (now Murrays Corner), although he may well have been ‘dummying’ for the Cunninghams.



Tracing of Surveyor Rain's 1919 plan of Rock Valley – detail of outbuildings
(M Thorn Jun 1982)

The 1919 survey plan of the property also shows **outbuildings** associated with the homestead. These include (with increasing distance from the house):

- a slab shed (**dairy** – store for milk and cream) with shingle roof and 6ft walls (within the house fence)
- fowl house (**poultry shed**) of slabs and netting with roof a mix of shingles and galvanised iron and 6ft walls (outside the house fence and offset towards the creek to the west)
- a galvanised iron shed (**granary**) with 6ft walls raised on stumps (beyond the house fence) c.1915
- a **shed** with 6ft slab walls and shingle roof (in a fenced yard)
- a substantial pisé **stable and hayshed** (loft) with galvanised iron gabled roof and 10ft walls (and large yards adjacent) c.1910 – later used for vehicles and farm equipment
- a large **woolshed** with gabled roof and 10ft walls in galvanised iron (with adjacent sheep yards, cattle yards and milking bails).

Other sources document additional outbuildings and landscape details:

- the old **dairy** (slab walls and shingle roof) was the location of the separator, with cows milked in bails at the woolshed (bark roof for cow pens); the dairy and bails were built 1897, used until c.1945
- there was a **cool room** at the end of the storeroom (shed)
- a **blacksmith's shop** with bellows and forge was located at the rear, over the yard fence and next to a poultry shed
- the **woolshed** was a two-stand shed, originally built by George Green using slabs; it was extended later with timber supplied by Rayner's Sawmill near Mountain Creek in the valley
- shearing was mechanised once an **engine room** was added on the north side of the woolshed
- **poultry runs** ran along the western side of the house block to the north, with fences to exclude fox depredation, and serviced by water piped by gravity from a spring uphill to the south
- a **piggery** ran down the western side, probably near Back Creek
- a pisé **garage** was constructed opposite the front entrance (1930s)
- the **WC** above the orchard was replaced later by a 'chemical toilet' (Hygeia) closer to the house, that drained to Back Creek and the piggery
- the old stone **sheep dip** near Sheedy's (Granny's) Creek was replaced by a concrete dip near the woolshed in 1950
- a **tennis court** was built on levelled ground between the homestead and the creek gully to the west (1950s); this altered the main access for outbuildings at rear to a track on the eastern side, between the house and orchard
- there was an **aviary** in the garden, where Elma Green kept a pet parrot.

The **woolshed** is notable as a community shed, the last one standing at this end of the valley after Flints' shed had fallen down. Several landholders brought their sheep to Rock Valley for dipping and shearing. This included sheep from the Blewitts at Gibraltar, which were driven to Rock Valley through Blewitts Gap between Mt Eliza and Wallaby Rocks (Park 2008). Bill Blewitt sheared, Laurie Dallender classed wool, and Edna Dallender (née Flint) inoculated against fluke (Higgins 1995).

Other shared resources included:

- the **cattle yards** used for branding
- the blacksmith's **forge**, where horse-shoeing was done by Eric Blewitt of Nil Desperandum, a very capable farrier, for the neighbouring families.

The Greens' tenure – Grounds

There are three essential components of the 'grounds': the house garden, the produce garden/orchard and feature trees and plantings in the home paddock.

In the initial settlement by George and Mary Ann Green, the emphasis was on survival - taking a timbered area and making it productive, at least for self-sufficiency and (over time) to turn a profit.

It appears to have been Elma Green in the second generation who inspired a shift from concern for produce alone to creating amenity and beauty in the garden and the home paddock. In turn this would have paved the way for Eddie in the third generation to devote considerable energy to redeveloping the house garden in the 1950s.

The 1919 survey plan shows the homestead flanked to the east by a large area containing fruit trees, surrounded by a 5ft (1.5m) wire-netting fence.

The **produce garden** and **orchard** were vital parts of the Greens' mixed farming production, including:

- the orchard to the east (74 trees in 1897), mostly apple but also pear, peach, apricot, plum, cherry, quince and winter pear
- lemons, grapes, passionfruit, elderberry, walnut, Spanish chestnut, tree lucerne (tagasaste), and fig (within the house garden)
- crops of wheat, oats, corn, maize, rye, lucerne, and rape (canola)
- potatoes and pumpkins in the deep black soil of the river flats
- a trial of tobacco to the north-west 'down by the rocks', and a trial of sugar cane
- a bountiful vegetable garden above the orchard, c.15 metres square, with tomatoes, potatoes, onions, cabbages, carrots, peas, beans, broad beans, cucumbers, parsnips, squash, pumpkins, melons (for jam), strawberries, blackberries, and gooseberries
- leafy greens at the duck pond
- pigs, sheep, some cattle, bees, and poultry including chickens, turkeys, and ducks
- stocking of the river with rainbow trout.

A **second orchard** was developed in the 1940s to the north of the homestead after some of the fruit trees in the old orchard had died. They were not replanted in the old orchard because it was being used for lambs, with poddy lambs closer to the house (Park 2008).

The permanent **spring** upslope of the orchard is seen as the main reason the homestead was built in this location. It would have been a vital resource, with the period 1895-1903 marking the 'Federation Drought'.

The spring fed a dam dug out by George Green, which became the duck pond (also used recreationally by kids with a rubber dinghy).

This enabled development of the **vegetable garden** in the dark soil that was no longer waterlogged. Growth was greatly assisted by deployment of the copious supply of sheep manure available from the woolshed and by emptying of the WC bucket.

Below the duck pond/bog, ditches were used to irrigate the fruit trees (Park 2008).

A second spring to the south of the house was piped to supply water to the homestead garden and poultry runs (Park 2008).

Back Creek had been a perennial flowing stream and an occasional source of fish until 1939, when torrential rain following major bush fires filled the gully with sand. The large pools disappeared, with water then moving through the sand below the surface (Park 2008).

The sediment accumulation in this creek is still evident below the homestead.

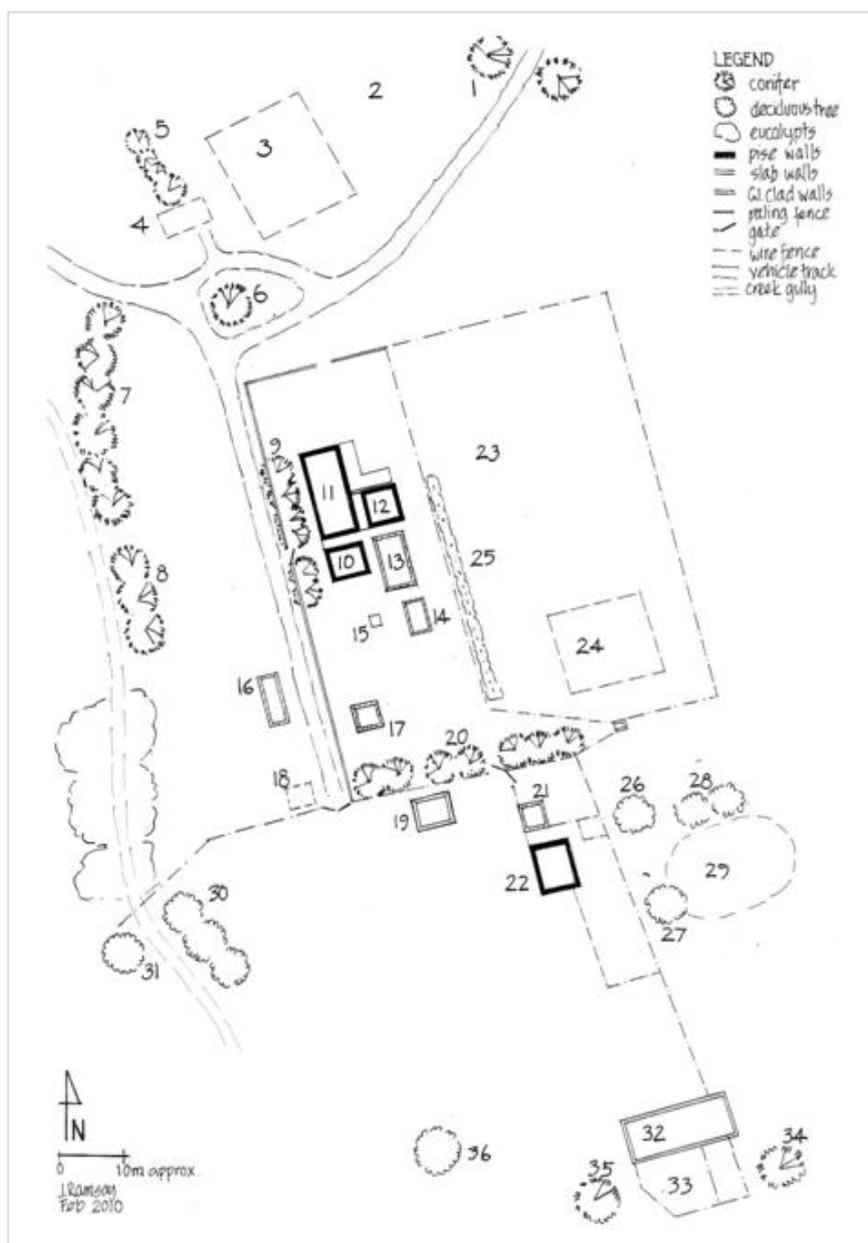


Diagram of landscape developments in the period 1896-1954 (Ramsay 2010 Fig.1)

Built forms in this diagram are based on the Rain survey plan of 1919, and plantings are interpreted from descriptions in Bulbeck and Boot (1991) and recollections of Eddie Green (Park 2008).

In addition to finer details in the house garden and orchard trees, the diagram notes **landscape trees**:

- pine feature trees (1, 6, 34, 35)
- pine windbreaks (7, 8)
- cypress windbreaks (4, 9, 20)
- weeping willows (26, 27, 31)
- Lombardy poplars (30)
- privet hedge (c.1952-53) (25)

A **turning loop**, described by Eddie Green as ‘a small islet’, encircles a feature pine (6).

In the 1950s a **tennis court** was built over the old access track shown in the diagram on the western side of the house (Park 2008).

Much more is known about the form and structure of the grounds and gardens after the mid-1950s. At that time, Eddie Green (teenage grandson of George & Mary Ann) undertook a Junior Farmers project to redesign and develop the **house garden**. His journal and sketches provided meticulous documentation of soil treatment, sourcing and propagation of plants, development of garden beds, fences, bush house, ponds, trellises, terracing, paving and paths.

This record is summarised in Warden (2009) and further detailed in Ramsay (2010), who also includes a measured drawing of the garden in 1990, prepared by Rowena Howard for the Marion Mahony Griffin Measured Drawing competition.

Efforts to understand and reflect the style of the house garden therefore relate primarily to this period, commencing in about 1955 – whilst noting that the property passed to Eddie and Keith in 1957 and the homestead was acquired for the Reserve in 1966.

In 2009 Fiona Sivya drew up a concept plan of Eddie Green’s design, pieced together largely from his first-hand accounts (Park 2008). This detailed what was planted where, along with landscape elements of paths, walls, other structures, and water features that he developed, within a 6ft (1.8m) fence of chicken wire supported by peppermint posts.

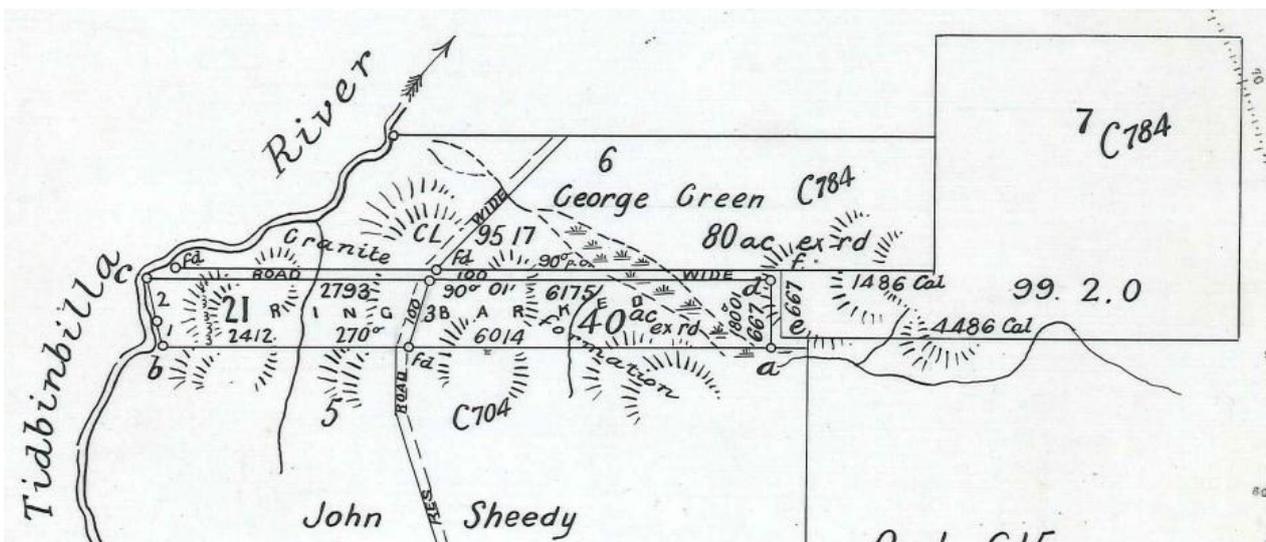
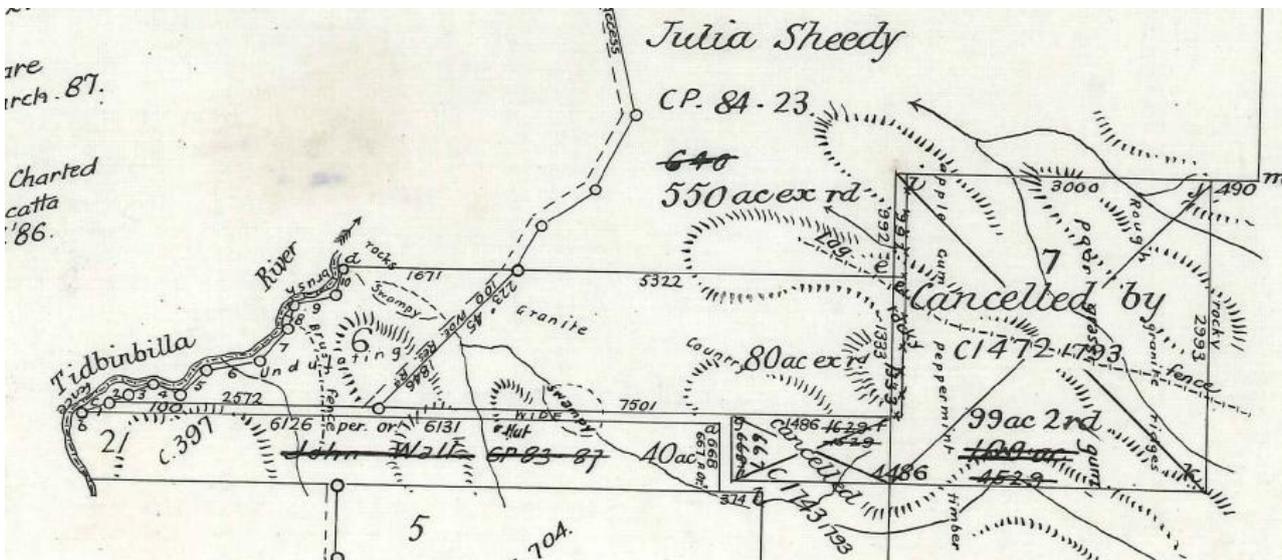


Concept drawing of Eddie Green’s 1955 garden design, based on oral history (F Sivya in Ramsay 2010)

The Greens' tenure – Surrounds

Survey plans of the Greens' holdings are annotated to describe the land and its vegetation at time of survey (ranging from 1884 to 1906). These plans show:

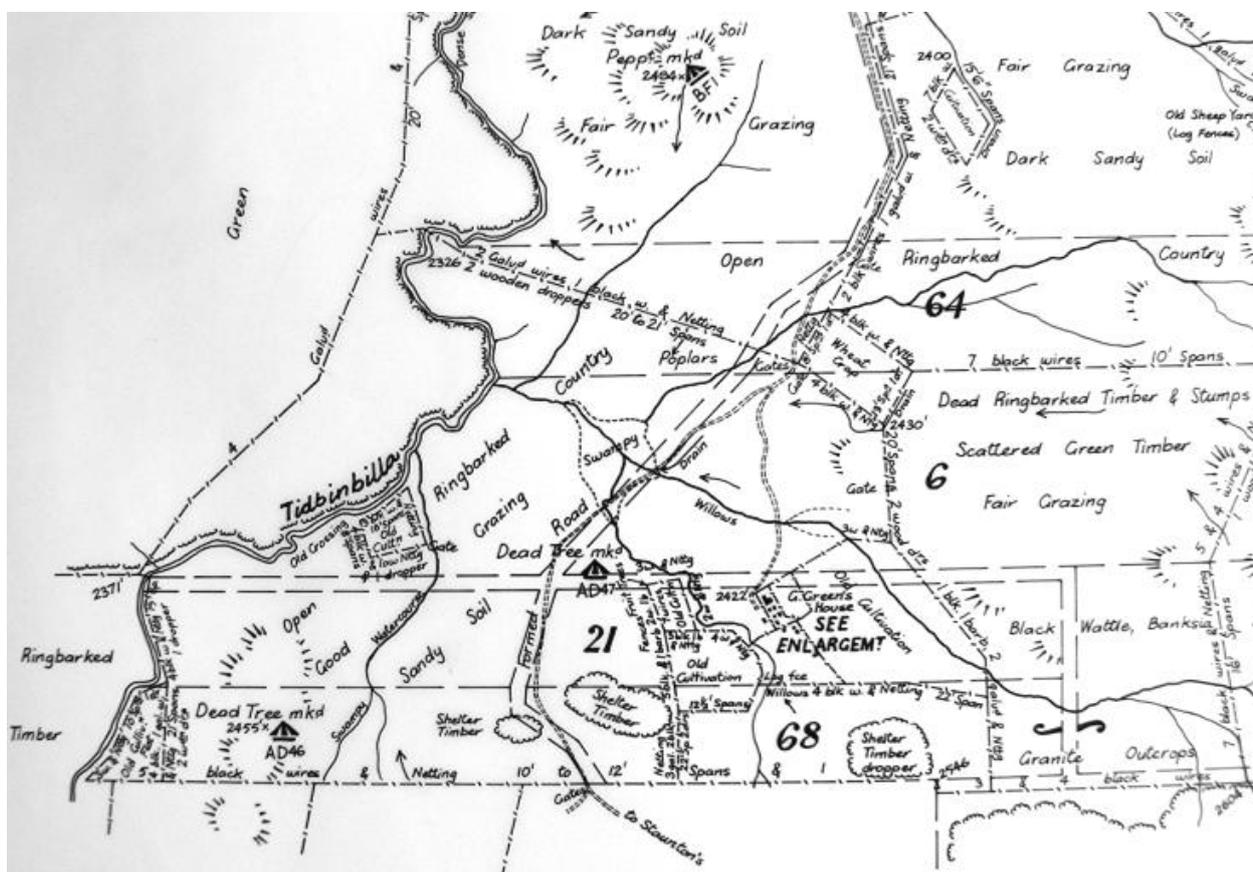
- granite country, varying from 'undulating' to 'steep ranges', with notes showing 'rocks', 'large granite boulders' and 'huge boulders' (the Woolpack Rocks marked, but not named, on the 1884 plan)
- areas of ringbarking and 'old ringbarking'
- swampy ground, 'good water supply' to 'no water supply'
- pasturage (where noted) ranging from 'poor' to 'very poor'
- timbered variously with gum, box, apple, peppermint (thick in parts)
- a mix of fences – old log fences, brush log fences, wire fences, and dog proof fences
- a hut shown (por.21 -1884; close to Greens' later homestead site, but not shown on the 1895 plan)
- a hut referred to in valuation notes but not shown (por.9 - 1885)



Portion plan surveys of the Rock Valley Homestead area (detail of portions 6 & 21 Parish Booroomba) - 1884 (top) & 1895

The 1919 survey plan (R J Rain) documented access, fences and gates, cultivation, and natural features:

- extensive ringbarking, stumps and forest clearing, and areas of dense suckers and scrub
- indications of native vegetation cover – peppermint, gum, apple [apple box?], golden wattle, black wattle, banksia, blackthorn (Bursaria), ti-tree (possibly Kunzea/burgan) along the river
- several areas of swampy flats with rushes, and some swampy watercourses
- novel vegetation arrivals – willow, poplar and briar
- areas retained for shelter timber
- patches of cultivation on river and creek flats, and areas used for cropping, gardens, and grazing - some poor, some good
- remains of some old log fences, and extensive fences of wire, some with barb, many with netting, and a dog fence near Gibraltar Peak (note: the western fence was across the river in the Forest Reserve)
- an old set of yards with a stone sheep dip
- old river crossings, and current access track (formed road) and gates; and
- areas of sandy soil – some poor, some dark.

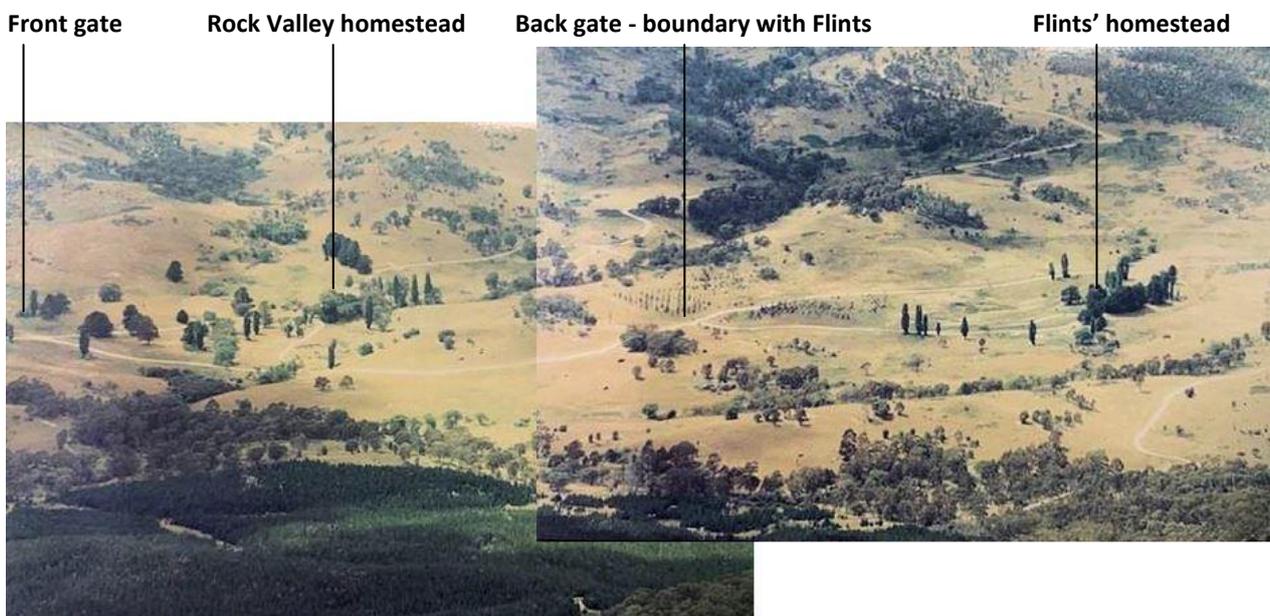


Tracing of Surveyor Rain's 1919 plan of Green's Rock Valley property
 – detail of the home paddock (from gate to gate) and north to Turkey Hill (Tracing M Thorn Jun 1982)

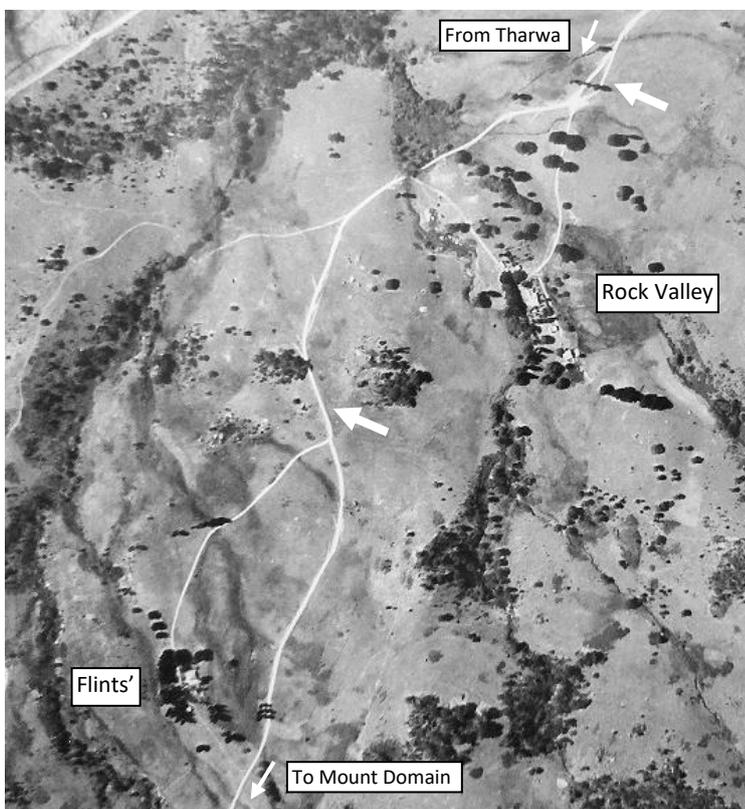
Snapshot of Rock Valley 1913 – List of stock owners (Gugler n.d.)

George Green				
12 horses	47 head cattle	700 sheep	Area 1,730 acres (700ha)	6 acres (2.4ha) cultivation
Sidney J Flint				
2 horses	5 head cattle	225 sheep	Area 1,245 acres (504ha)	0 cultivation

The 1919 survey does not indicate the relationship of Rock Valley to the neighbouring Flints' property. The 'main road' into the valley first reached Rock Valley Homestead where a line of four poplars marked the boundary and front gate of the home paddock. A branch track led south to the homestead, and the main road continued on to the next gate at the boundary with Flints'. From there a branch led to the Flints' homestead and the road continued on to Mount Domain (Staunton's), after which it reverted to a bridle track.



Panorama of two images of the valley taken from the Forest Reserve, probably in the late 1960s, not long before the main road was diverted to the south of Rock Valley Homestead (from J McRae)



The main road passing through Rock Valley and Flints' in 1962 – front and back gates arrowed, marking the Rock Valley home paddock (SMA 10 Dec 1962 49-128)

Life in the valley was affected relatively little by the outside world and the growth of the capital city nearby. There had been a mail service from 1895 when the Tharwa Bridge opened. More immediately, people were kept informed about the world via battery-operated radio (the wireless), with batteries rotated and sent off to Queanbeyan for recharging.

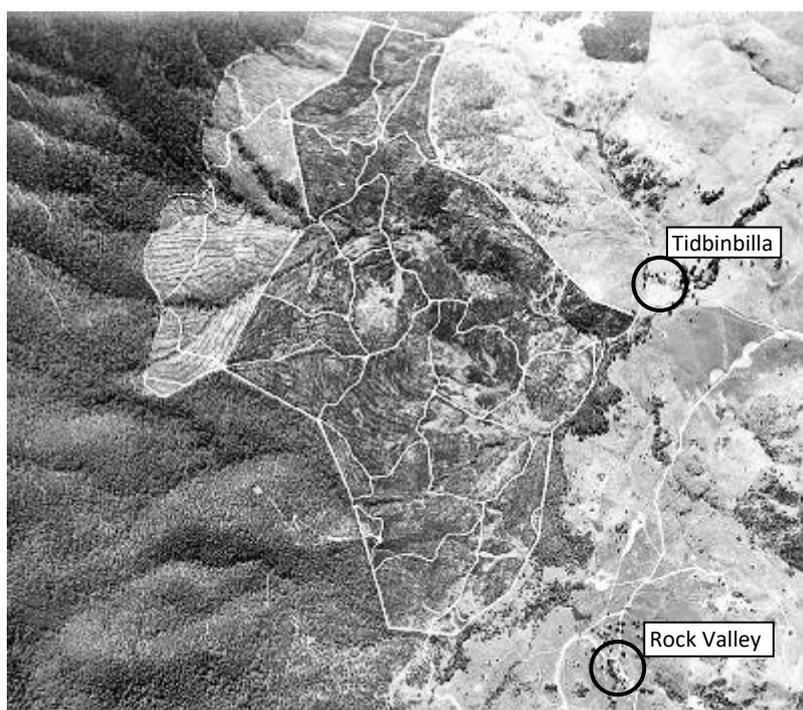
The telephone arrived in the 1930s (a party line) and the power arrived only in 1956, the latter thanks in part to advocacy by Elma Green (who died the following year).

Described in an oral history as ‘the only real intrusion from the outside’, in the late 1950s and early 1960s the Tidbinbilla valley experienced its largest landscape change since the initial ringbarking and clearing effort, with the onset of resumption and clearing of native forest in the western foothills for pine plantations.

The Reid family left Tidbinbilla station when some 800 acres (324 ha) was resumed for pine planting in 1958. Just as profound a change came to Rock Valley when a major part of the north-western outlook from the homestead was cleared for conversion to pine.

The land adjoining Rock Valley on the western bank of the Tidbinbilla River had been a reserve since before the Greens first came to the valley. Forest Reserve 889 of about 900 acres (364ha) was reserved for timber in 1883. This was superseded in 1886 by Forest Reserve 2673 of 1,190 acres (482 ha), and later again by Forest Reserve 23378 of 1,280 acres (518 ha) in 1895.

‘F R 23378’ appears on Surveyor Rain’s survey of the property. The pine plantation became Block 60 Paddys River, or the Tidbinbilla Pine Forest (486ha).



Block 60 showing roads, clearing and 1962 pine planting, close to Rock Valley and Tidbinbilla
(Run 14-8319 - 10 Apr 1968)

It seems unlikely that Tom Green ever conceived of the possibility that those foothills would one day be covered in pines. By contrast, for Eddie and Keith Green, inheriting the property in 1957, it may have been a major source of uncertainty.

The Greens’ southern boundary was with the Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve, all remaining holdings to the south having been resumed for the Reserve in 1964. It is possible that the property would have been planted to pine if it were not freehold. In any case this was averted permanently when the Reserve was extended northwards to take all of Rock Valley in 1966-67.

The Reserve era – Buildings

Following acquisition, all Rock Valley buildings except for the homestead were demolished by 1969.

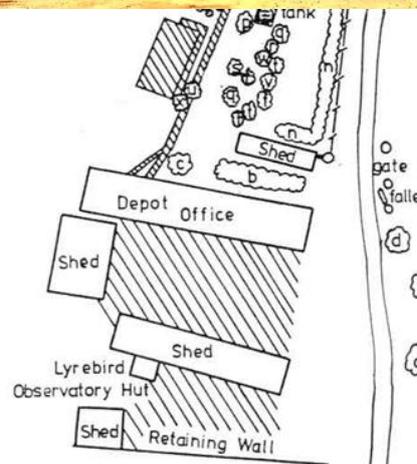
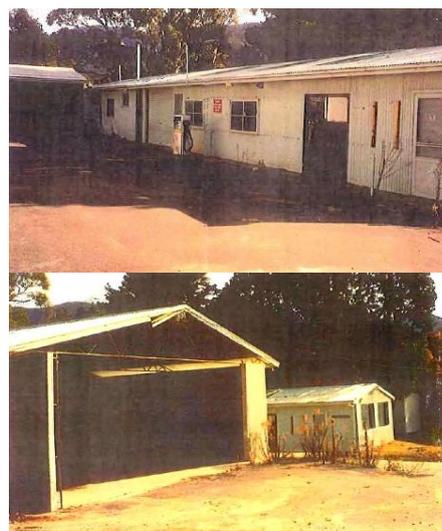
The Reserve **Works Depot** was constructed on the sites of the old granary, hayloft, yards and other outbuildings.

The Works Depot comprised three large white galvanised iron sheds, several aluminium storage sheds and a transportable hut. The shed adjacent to the house garden fence included an office, workshop and staff room. The other sheds contained a vehicle workshop, store and parking.

A small fibro shed attached to the southern large shed was 'the old lyrebird observatory hut'. This was used from 1962 by CSIRO scientists to record lyrebird song and performance within the Reserve. It was incorporated into the Depot as an office in about 1975.

To the north of the homestead a **materials storage area** extended several hundred metres towards the river.

When the Reserve was first opened, the **homestead** was used variously as a visitor centre, office and laboratory (Lester Firth 1987), and in the early 1970s as staff accommodation, with animal pens constructed on a concrete slab to the rear (associated with wildlife programs).



Top & middle: Works Depot 1992
(ACT Government 1992)

Bottom: Works Depot layout 1991
(Bulbeck & Boot 1991 detail Fig. 6-10-4)

A report in the 1980s (Commonwealth Government 1985) assessed cracking in the homestead, noting that the structure had been totally intact until a series of earth tremors (probably those in 1949 and 1952) triggered cracks. A report on repairs and maintenance was prepared in 1988, and a 1992 report (ACT Government 1992) encouraged attention to drainage to protect footings and external walls from seasonal expansion and contraction (shrink and swell).

Options for the future of the homestead were soon being assessed. An ACT Public Works report (ACT Government 1992) identified options for adaptive re-use, including:

- stripping back the building to the 1895/1905 pisé group to accommodate a museum (to be operated by the TPA); or
- keeping enough of the 1920s additions to interpret, and re-using the depot for visitor facilities; or
- keeping the whole building complex to accommodate education and conference groups.

When the new Reserve Depot was completed, it became feasible to use the homestead for accommodation, although in 1990 it was unoccupied and used for storage. In 1993-94 it was extensively renovated and occupied by Ranger Neil **Reckord**.

Options being considered at this time included its use as a heritage interpretation/education centre emphasising human history of the area, or as a coffee shop/art gallery.

The favoured strategy was to keep the homestead occupied as staff accommodation, and to prepare a management strategy/conservation plan to shape its future use. (ACT Government 1999)

By 2003 it housed the Reserve Wildlife Officer, Geoff **Underwood**, and family.

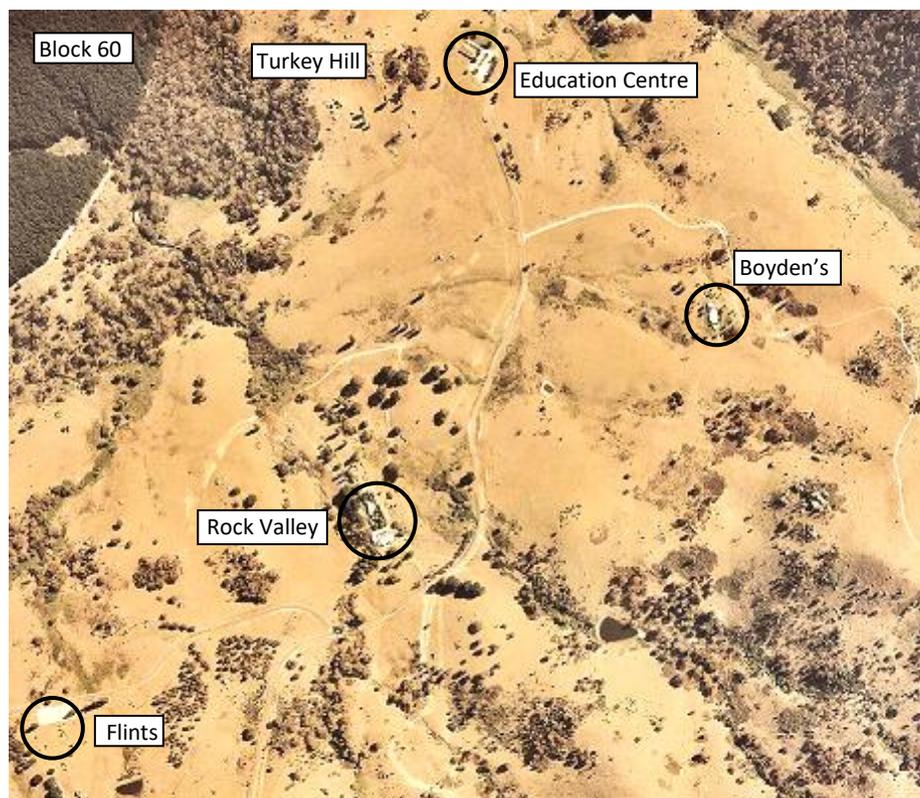
The Reserve era – Grounds

In the **house garden** changes included:

- removal of some exotic tree plantings (including some windbreaks and hedges), decline in others, and non-replacement (also in the broader surrounds)
- simplification of the house garden, presumably in the interests of less arduous maintenance
- removal of ponds, fernery, bush house, trellises
- levelling of landscaping to install animal pens
- erection of a brick barbecue near the house
- removal of the southern and western fences, and lowering of the eastern and northern fences (replaced with a white painted post-and-rail design)

Another notable change in the first few years of the Reserve was a changed route for the **main road**, now deviated to the south of the homestead, and sealed. Eddie Green recalled that this road was routed over a major spring that had previously fed the house yard and poultry runs (Park 2008).

The Reserve era – Surrounds



Proximity of Rock Valley, Turkey Hill (Education Centre), Dalsetta (Boyden's) and Flints' (and Block 60 pines) in the open landscape of 1978 (detail 1978 Run 78C26-190)

Rock Valley Homestead continued to be the centre of the lower Tidbinbilla valley, as the Works Depot. Closely related facilities included:

- the Education Centre, previously Visitors' Centre, at Turkey Hill (amenities, loop trail/geology trail)
- Boyden's (staff housing)
- Flints' picnic area (car park, toilets, bird feeding area).

The Block 60 pine plantation was harvested in coupes from the 1990s. By 2003 it was under its second rotation of pines, with trees aged approximately 3 to 12 years.

Tidbinbilla Pioneers

During this period, there was a shift of awareness about the value of the Reserve's cultural heritage, and a convergence of interest among descendants of pioneer families to mark the contribution of their forebears.

A reunion of descendants of the Green and Hatcliff families was staged at Rock Valley in January 1983, close to 100 years since their ancestors had departed England to make a new life that brought them ultimately to Tidbinbilla.

One outcome of this was a collection of historical and genealogical accounts, combined into a small book *To Green the memory* (Flint 1983).

Another outcome was the formation of the Tidbinbilla Pioneers Association (TPA) in April 1983.

Momentum of the pioneer descendants led to:

- a Bicentennial picnic at Booroomba in October 1988
- a Bicentennial photographic exhibition by TPA 'Preserving the Past', in March 1988, depicting the lives of early Tidbinbilla settlers
- a tenth anniversary celebration at Tidbinbilla in 1993
- publication of the *Remembering Tidbinbilla* oral history project on behalf of the TPA (Higgins 1995)
- development of the Church Rock Heritage Loop trail, signs and brochure in 2001 (with an ACT Heritage Grant)
- 'a 21st century pioneers reunion' (and early twentieth anniversary celebration) in November 2002
- a booklet for the reunion issued by the TPA (Quince 2002)

Complementary to this elevated interest in the cultural heritage of the Reserve, in 1987 the Reserve siting study included a map of historical places (Lester Firth 1987); and in 1991 a year-long cultural resource survey was undertaken for the ACT Heritage Unit and ACT Parks & Conservation Service (Bulbeck & Boot 1991), with recommendations for conservation and interpretation.

The 2003 fires

Less than two months after the pioneers' reunion, the homestead and its surrounds experienced a major re-set in January 2003, when 99% of the Reserve was burned (Higgins 2003). The Greens' Rock Valley had lost pasture and fencing in a fire in 1912, as did neighbours Staunton and Noone (Queanbeyan Age 23 Jan 1912:2), but had been spared from major fires in 1920 (when Staunton's Mount Domain was burned) and in 1938-39 (when the Flints' land was badly affected), and again in 1951-52. Luck ran out in 2003.

The 2003 events burned more than 2 million hectares, with loss of both life and property. Across the Australian Alps area, many cultural heritage places were affected, some irretrievably lost. In common with most of the Alps parks and reserves, Tidbinbilla and adjacent Namadgi National Park suffered damage to Aboriginal places, survey markers, stockmen's huts, yards and fences, homesteads (Tennent, Rock Valley, Nil Desperandum), outbuildings, and many homestead trees, gardens and orchards that marked past use of the landscape. (Higgins 2003; Kaufman 2006)

Tidbinbilla experienced heavy loss of infrastructure for wildlife exhibits and care, along with the Education Centre at Turkey Hill, staff housing (including Dalsetta/Boyden's), signs, trail markers, and bridges. Forested areas saw significant exfoliation of granite tors and subsequent heavy runoff and sedimentation after rain, and the Block 60 pine plantation was also decimated.

Buildings

Rock Valley **Homestead** was severely damaged. The pisé walls (1895 and 1905) largely survived, although some slumped and fell subsequently. The fires took the timber roof, floors, door frames and lintels, as well as the more recent timber and fibro additions (with fireplaces and chimneys left standing).

The **depot** buildings were severely damaged, beyond repair.



Fire damage at the Works Depot at Rock Valley Jan 2003 (Andrew Tatnell)

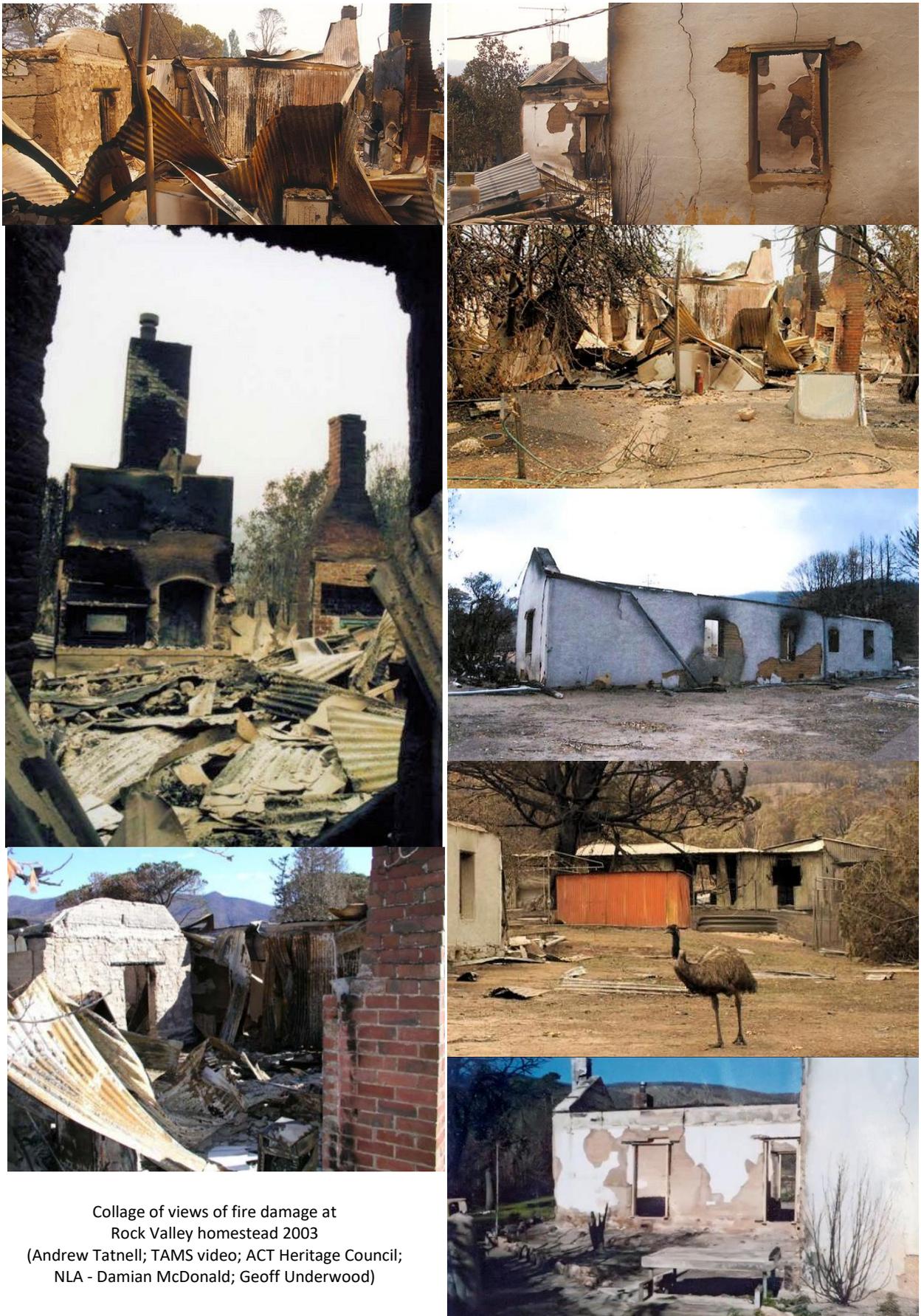
Grounds and Surrounds

The house garden, orchard and exotic plantings in the surrounds were severely impacted, with the loss of many features including:

- many of the more sensitive plants in the house garden
- most of the large pines along the old driveway/access road
- weeping willows
- the pine windbreak to the west of the homestead and cypress windbreak on the southern side
- Lombardy poplars near the house and on the old road, including those marking the front gate, the start of the home paddock.



Fire-damaged pine at Rock Valley homestead 2003 (Geoff Underwood)



Collage of views of fire damage at
Rock Valley homestead 2003
(Andrew Tatnell; TAMS video; ACT Heritage Council;
NLA - Damian McDonald; Geoff Underwood)

After the fires - Buildings

Within a week after the fires, the first of a number of assessments was undertaken.

-
- 2003 A report on fire damage and recommended action (EMA 2003) found that several of the homestead walls were rotting and would become unstable, and that reconstruction was ‘an excessive step’, based on the extent of work required, expense and damage to the walls. It saw as likely possibilities works to prop up and stabilise the walls, record, and demolish. It sought further assessment before a final decision.
-
- 2003 A structural assessment of the homestead and depot (Hooley 2003) noted that nearly all timber (roof, floors, jambs and lintels) in the homestead had been lost and walls were cracking seriously, no longer stabilised by the roof. The Depot was ‘most unquestionably beyond repair’ and there was no reasonable technical argument to try and retain or restore any part of it. It found that reconstruction of the homestead was not structurally viable, but considered demolition to be ‘an anathema’ to people concerned for the building’s heritage values. It also considered that shoring up the walls would be an eyesore. Instead it recommended capping of walls to slow weathering and erosion, and a secure fence surround to allow the building to ‘deteriorate gracefully’ under the influence of natural weathering. If capped and occasionally whitewashed, the building might last a couple of decades before being completely derelict. In follow-up correspondence the assessor also outlined an option to demolish all or most of the structure.
-
- 2004 Another report (Rogers & Jefferis 2004 – cited by Philip Leeson 2005) outlined four options:
- 1) Repair the structure and make it safe and suitable for habitation
 - 2) Leave the walls but make it safe enough to allow public access
 - 3) Leave the walls to deteriorate and prevent public access
 - 4) Demolish the walls to a safe height and allow public access.
-
- 2004 The Tidbinbilla master plan and business case (ACT Government 2004) recommended partial demolition and partial reconstruction, and encouraged restoration of a garden area. It posed possible future uses: a display centre and base for the TPA; or (once reconstructed) either staff accommodation or a bed & breakfast facility. (pp.84-85)
-
- 2005 A preliminary sketch plan report on interpretation and reconstruction of the homestead (Philip Leeson 2005) expanded on the options in the Rogers & Jefferis report. The preferred option was 2), with a variation possible to roof over the 1895 room, 1905 parlour and the fireplaces, while demolishing walls in the remaining 1905 rooms down to the stone footings as an archaeological site. Works were detailed to strengthen footings, improve drainage, repair and render pisé walls that were to be retained, re-roof, net and install guttering, install doors and shutters, and retain the kitchen floor slab.
-

An initial clean-up of the homestead was undertaken, resulting in considerable damage to the house garden and infrastructure and changes in ground levels (Philip Leeson 2005).

The 1960s depot buildings were demolished, with that area becoming a gravelled parking area.



Above: Rock Valley homestead 2006
prior to stabilisation and
partial reconstruction
(John McRae)

Right: Part of a wall collapse (1895 section)
while awaiting decisions on the building's future
(capture from TAMS video)



The walls were protected with plastic sheeting, but by September 2006 the TPA was advising the ACT Government of its deterioration and of a collapsed pisé wall.

The TPA representations, backed by the National Trust of Australia (ACT), resulted in an on-site meeting in October 2006 and a more collaborative approach to shaping options for the homestead. The proposal was still to pursue Option 2) of the Rogers & Jefferis report, with additional consideration of adding a verandah as a viewing platform for the cut-down section receiving 'archaeological' treatment, plus interpretive signs and partial restoration of the house garden.

In March 2007 the TPA made further representations when presented with an option by the contractor working on Nil Desperandum reconstruction. This option would retain the walls and re-roof the structure for marginal extra cost. With further investigation it was agreed to pursue this approach, involving:

- rebuilding of two fallen internal walls and the external wall of the 1895 room
- re-roofing of the pisé sections
- rebuilding the verandah with a separate overhang possible at rear
- external rendering (but not internal)
- stabilising the chimneys
- filling to floor level with decomposed granite

The aim was 'a protected, nearly fully restored building that can be used for heritage interpretation and occasional use'.

After a four-year delay, work commenced in May 2007, and much of it was completed by July.

Community action had saved the homestead.

Rock Valley was opened for public access in April 2008.

Follow-up work on the homestead was undertaken in 2017-19, including:

- filling to floor level, improved drainage, rear verandah awning and re-pointing of the chimneys
- rendering of the east wall and rabbit netting
- painting of barge boards, decking and posts.

After the fires – the Grounds

A catalogue was made of the plants in the **house garden** and around the homestead that survived the fire. Most of the burnt trunks were cut down, leading to new shoots – a spontaneous renewal of the garden plantings prior to the fire.

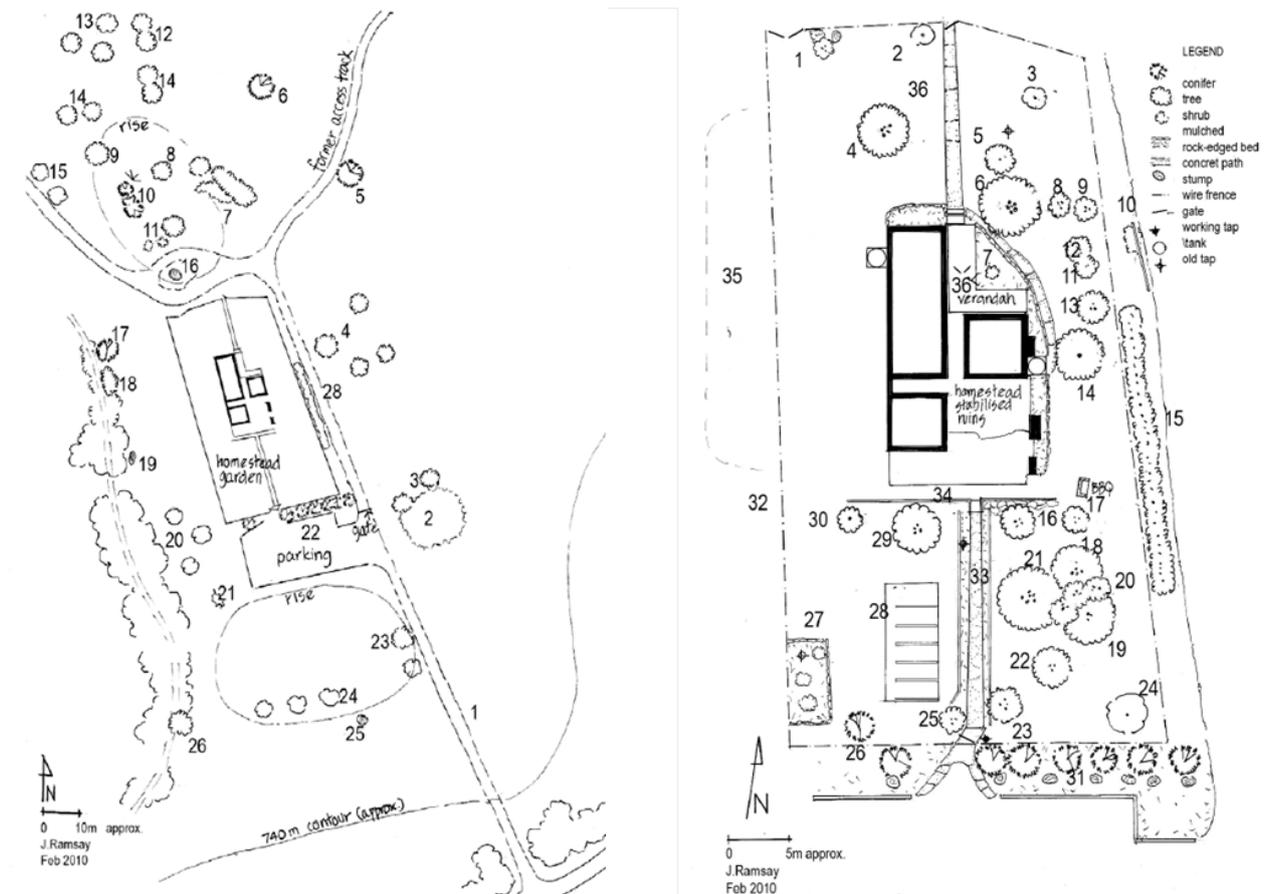
Many pines and poplars could not be saved, although wildings from the old cypress hedge were successfully replanted.

In 2008 a 1.8m wire mesh fence was erected, broadly following the alignment in Eddie Green’s garden design, to protect the homestead and house garden.

In 2010 two reports were prepared - a homestead garden landscape plan (Warden 2010) and a report on future heritage management directions for the garden landscape (Ramsay 2010). These were founded in copious documentation and information from a previous archaeological study (Bulbeck & Boot 1991), measured drawing of the garden (Howard 1990), and detailed oral history from Eddie Green (Park 2008).

Encouraged by some of the regrowth, it was decided to maintain a style sympathetic to Eddie Green’s design, including retention of internal paths.

Improvements were made, including a toilet/storage shed (2011), a mobility access path (2014), regrading of the access road (2016), and a new picnic table at the car park (2019).



Mapping of Rock Valley grounds cultural landscape seven years after the fire (Ramsay 2010)

After the fires – the Surrounds

In the aftermath of the fires, efforts focused on safety, with removal of burnt infrastructure and dangerous trees, and assessment of roads and facilities. Repairs were needed to amenities, picnic areas, walking trails, boardwalks, lookouts, wildlife enclosures, signs and barriers. Organised visits and interpretation activities resumed quickly.

The Tidbinbilla master plan and business case (ACT Government 2004) found that the Education Centre should not be re-built next to Turkey Hill, but instead moved close to Tourist Drive 5 and the entrance.



Dalsetta: the Education Centre at Turkey Hill
19 Jan 2003 (Geoff Underwood)

The Turkey Hill site was mooted as a major function centre but in the interim it has become a trailhead for short walks around Turkey Hill and longer ventures to Gibraltar Peak or foothills.

The site of Boyden's was mooted as a potential site for eco-lodges but this was not realised. The Dalsetta name was transferred to the trailhead at Turkey Hill.

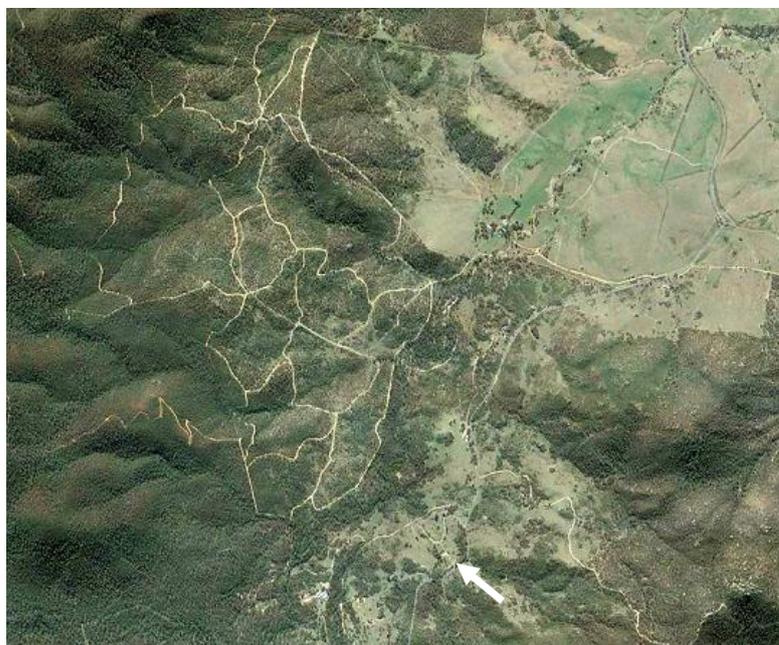
Flints' picnic area was improved with a shelter shed (2018) and removal of the bird feeding area. This area is the focus for the Church Rock Heritage Loop trail, developed by the TPA and Reserve managers in 2001.

Block 60 was targeted for archaeological survey, which revealed 80 previously unrecorded Aboriginal sites, many with large numbers of artefacts. The density of artefacts and remaining stories about the importance of this area led to recognition of its high cultural significance, and re-naming as Jedbinbilla.

The Tidbinbilla master plan and business case reflected on the appropriateness of a pine plantation in that prime entrance location, and found that Jedbinbilla should be revegetated with native species of local origin to the greatest extent possible.

Related works would include erosion and weed control.

Jedbinbilla (former Block 60) 2019
– sixteen years after the fires,
beginning to blend in as it
returns to native vegetation
(Rock Valley Homestead arrowed)
(Base: Google Earth 27.04.2019)

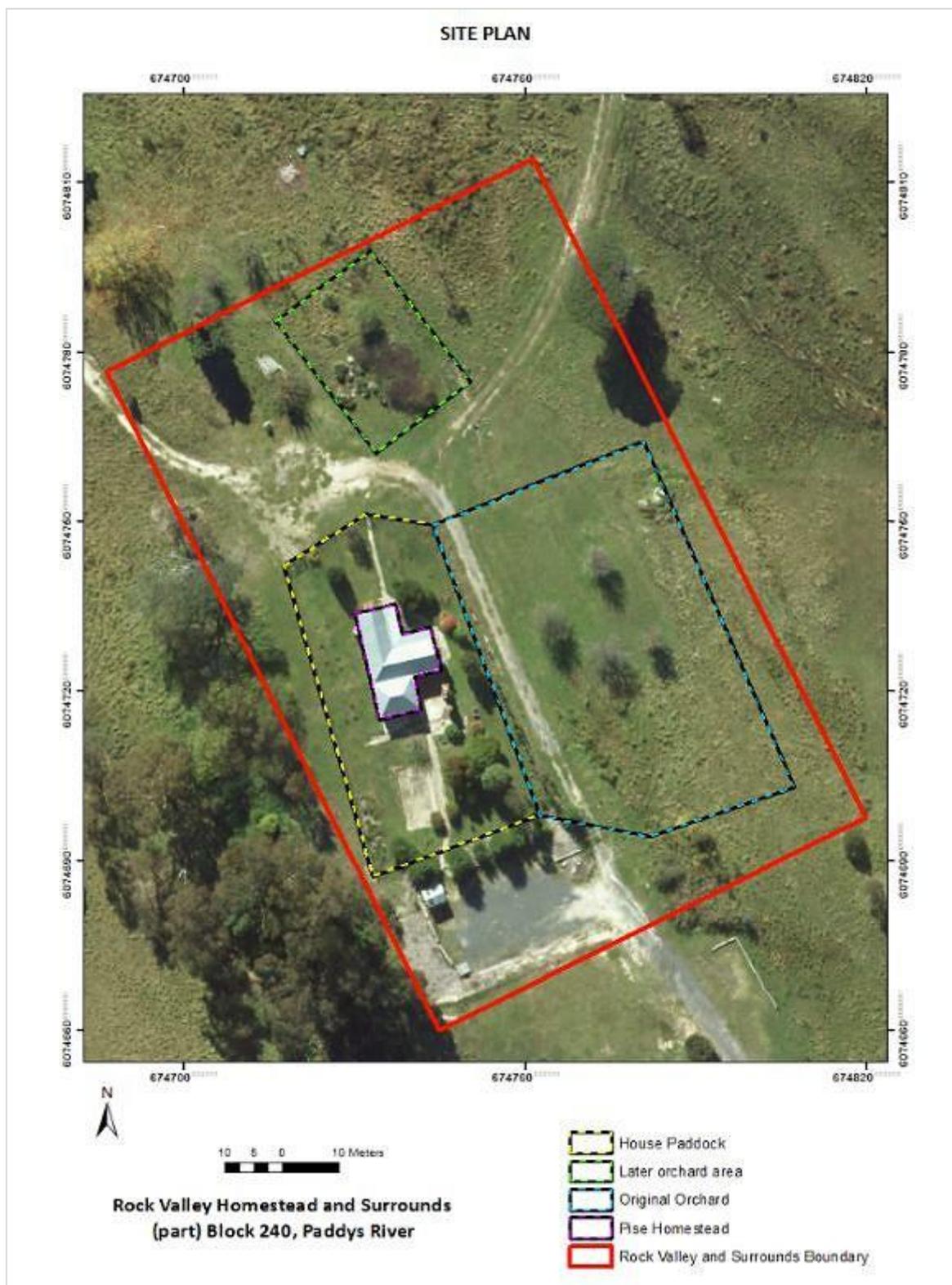


The master plan found that the area could absorb some higher impact activities that are not appropriate elsewhere in the Reserve, notably mountain bike riding and horse riding, and mooted the northern part near the Tidbinbilla River as a potential low-key camping area (pedestrian access only).

Legal Recognition

In July 2015 Rock Valley homestead and surrounds was added to the ACT Heritage Register, with preparation of a background statement for that decision (ACT Government 2015a; 2015b).

The defined place includes the homestead, house garden, produce garden/orchard and later orchard, and select landscape trees.



Site Plan/Layout of the place - Heritage Register nomination 2015 (ACT Government 2015b)

What it is now



Collage of views, showing stabilisation measures, extant chimneys, internal exposure of pisé and plaster construction, and charred lintels, jambs and mantels (Mark Butz - Nov 2019 & Sep-Oct 2020)

The homestead is accessed by a short gravel road, with a turnoff from the main sealed access road. Access past the homestead is controlled with a locked barrier gate at the car park.



Visitor access road: looking north to Tidbinbilla Range



Backdrop: looking south to White Rocks Range

(Oct 2020, Sep 2020 – Mark Butz)

Visitors arrive at the rear (southern end) of the homestead building and enter the fenced house block via the rear garden path.

A mobility access path enables no-step access to the rear and front of the homestead.

Passing down the access road, the visitor sees the setting of the homestead in a semi-cleared valley with a backdrop of high timbered hills of the Tidbinbilla Range (former Block 60 in the foothills).

From the front (northern end of the homestead) the backdrop of hills is of exposed granite outcrops (more prominent after Jan 2020 fires), known as the White Rocks Range.

Outside the house yard, the most obvious indicators of the past rural use of the place are the degree of clearing around the homestead (kept clear by grazing macropods and rabbits), and remnant exotic trees.



The outlook from the northern end of the homestead

Left: expansive views over the Tidbinbilla Range; Right: cleared landscape and exotic trees

(Sep 2020 – Mark Butz)

PART B – THE PLACE: A FUTURE

Telling the Story

Scope

<i>Physical</i>	<i>Social</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Context & connection • Access • Fabric • Works and materials • People management 	↔
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Themes and stories • Audiences • Meanings & associations • Participation of associated people
→ Presentation of the place (works, programs/events, media)	

This **heritage interpretation strategy** addresses the Rock Valley Homestead in its present state (stabilised and partially reconstructed).

This does not obviate the need to prepare a **conservation management plan** that will help to guide decisions about its long-term future.

Broad guiding Objectives/Principles

- Sharing a cultural asset
- Enriching experience, appreciation and learning (these together = valuing)
- Signalling the value of a place to affect people's behaviours in, and towards, that place
- Building connections/relationships between people and place, community and heritage values (landscape embodies: both Nature and people – both past and present – both place and values)
- Focusing on visitor accessibility and experience for different audiences (different levels of experience, knowledge and understanding, and different preferences for participation and learning)
- Being integral in management of site and setting (for education, recreation, building value)
- Linking natural and cultural heritage within landscapes – recognising both history and belonging
- Linking across landscape to illustrate patterns in historical and social context, and to facilitate thematic visitor itineraries
- Expanding the number and quality of linked and interpreted heritage places and precincts available for visitor experience, serving to diversify attractions and broaden appeal
- Strengthening the interest and ability of managers and stakeholders to 'grow' cultural heritage opportunities (places and experiences) into the future – demonstrating 'continuity in change'

Heritage and Interpretation

Cultural and heritage significance is the sum of multiple qualities or values of a place or object – aesthetic, historical, scientific, social and spiritual.

These interconnected values may be inherent, personal or social.

They may be evident in the present or may be projected – we may consider it likely that in the future a place or object will be valued more than it is now. For now it may be perceived as relatively new or common or widespread or undistinguished, and we allow for the reasonable expectation that perceptions will change over time.

Cultural heritage places a value on culture and traditions, and also the ability to pass these on, contributing to shared sense of identity or belonging.

Interpretation is about translation, communication, education, sensations, and meaning (working in both cognitive and affective domains).

Information is the beginning – the desired outcome is a change in the person/visitor:

Information...	Interpretation...	
<i>...stimulates contact and interest</i>	<i>...works directly at levels of learning and experience...</i>	<i>...and may work indirectly to generate levels of response</i>
Learning ABOUT the place gets people started	Learning IN the place gets people more informed & motivated	Learning FOR the place gets people active
Connecting / Engaging	→ Valuing	→ Finding agency
Awareness ↓ Attraction	→ Appreciation ↓ Attunement ↓ Attachment	→ Activation ↓ Advocacy
		© Mark Butz - <i>Learnsapes</i>

Visitor audience assumptions

The works and actions proposed below are based in the following assumptions:

- There is no way of estimating the size of the potential audience
- Visitors may be regular or episodic (first-time or repeat)
- Some will chance on the place, while some will make it a destination
- Some will not have any prior understanding of heritage values of the place or the Reserve
- Some have particular associations with the place (derive personal meaning from the place)
- Visitors may be of any age group or demographic
- Some may have not have English as their first language
- Some may require enhanced accessibility to enable full appreciation
- Some may extend their visit by making use of other nearby opportunities.

Significant features and values for interpretation

Rock Valley Homestead and surrounds has been the subject of multiple assessments and draft plans over the past 25 years. These offer indications of significant features and values that can inform interpretation strategy in 2020, and some are summarised below.

This acknowledges the value of past studies, assessments and recommendations in shaping this strategy.

From the **Heritage listing** (ACT Government 2015a and 2015b):

The place includes the pisé homestead, the footprint of the original house garden and internal pathways, and surrounds including the original access road, exotic plantings, the site of the tennis court, the orchard block and vegetable garden east of the homestead, and the smaller orchard block to the north.

Features and values:

- an example of a rare and endangered vernacular building style adopted by European settlers; demonstrating the main attributes and advantages of pisé construction, now rare - one of the few examples remaining in ACT from the 19th & early 20th century
- strong association with European land use, demonstrating occupation from the selector era, through Federal Capital development, to establishment of the nature reserve
- an excellent interpretive site – survival in the 2003 fires due to rammed earth core, with reconstruction revealing the underlying matrix, materials and methods
- significant as evidence for the era – a landscape important to the course of Australia’s cultural history; demonstrating practices of European settlement, mixed farming and recreational land use, and lifestyles to survive and then to prosper (includes use of local materials, clearing of native vegetation, exotic plantings, cultivation, resourcefulness).

Additional *features and values* from a **building report** (ACT Government 1992):

- the only tangible evidence of early settlement in the [central] valley
- the only example in the [central] valley of an original pioneers construction
- social heritage value that exceeds its simple form
- representing the transition from native vegetation to a viable agricultural and pastoral family holding
- far removed from other [more wealthy] families such as the Campbells and Palmers
- proposal: interpret the 1895-1919 period
- proposal: restore the orchard and house garden (with emphasis on pre-1919)
- proposal: reconstruct 19th century fencing and the original access road
- proposal: use the homestead as a museum with a restaurant, craft shops at the rear
- proposal: identify sites of historical outbuildings (find, expose, consolidate, interpret).

Additional *features and values* from a **homestead conservation plan** (Bale 1995):

- the best site to demonstrate the many changes in the history of the valley and Canberra – housing construction methods, mixed farming to stock grazing, later establishment of the reserve
- a meeting place for the Green family and other social events, continuing today in reunions
- high aesthetic value in its parkland setting with featured exotic trees
- need to maintain gardens, and to retain the site of the woolshed and sheep dip.

Additional *features and values* from a draft **garden landscape plan** (Warden 2010):

- associations highly valued by community members including the Tidbinbilla Pioneers Association
- strong and special association of the garden with a cultural phase of pastoralism in the region
- a restored garden likely to contribute to wider understanding of the cultural history of the ACT
- the homestead and surrounds are positioned in a spectrum of pioneer homes, midway between early mountain huts and the likes of Lanyon, Duntroon, and Yarralumla; in this sphere it can be compared and contrasted with Blundells Cottage and Mugga Mugga
- proposal: reconstruction of the fenced garden, orchard, vegetation penumbra and road approaches (includes removal of the access track separating the house block from the orchard)
- proposal: manage the spring as a small wetland with sedges (used to water the orchard downslope)

Additional *features and values* from **garden landscape heritage management directions** (Ramsay 2010):

- a fire recovery garden, providing historical plant interest for visitors
- trees, shrubs, windbreaks, views, vernacular garden structures, remnant drains, ditches & fences
- practices of pioneering homestead landscaping and self-sufficiency in the mountains
- vernacular architecture of slab structures, pisé here and in the district
- social gatherings in the gardens
- Junior Farmers Association in rural areas and Eddie Green's garden project
- making a life after losing the family property to resumption
- changes in Reserve policy and practice
- proposal: re-establish landmark pines (access road and turning loop)
- proposal: outline the vegetable garden in logs, recreate a segment of the cypress hedge and paling fence to the west
- proposal: establish a repository and develop interpretation for moveable objects from the place.

For the Reserve the homestead has additional value for interpretation due to:

- easy **accessibility** by road, with mobility access within the place
- visual **prominence** in the most open (cleared) landscape within the fold of the valley i.e. beyond the Visitor Centre and sufficiently distant from the Tidbinbilla Road/Tourist Drive 5
- location in the **cleared landscape** of the central valley, favouring its use as a hub for interpretation of European cultural heritage, including potential heritage trail/s (*'Heart of Tidbinbilla'*)
- a history and continuation of strong **community engagement** with the place.

The Rock Valley cultural landscape

The Rock Valley cultural landscape is documented as a landscape of:

- **enterprise:** pastoral; agricultural; horticultural; timber; eucalyptus oil; (on-going) eco-tourism
- **communications:** Aboriginal pathways; European 19th century roads; bridle trails; (on-going) walking routes, interpretive trails
- **experimentation and innovation:** (on-going) plant and animal biology/ecology research and enquiry in the Reserve era; threatened species recovery/captive breeding; science heritage; citizen science
- **leisure:** early bushwalking by Canberra residents; recreational use of farms; fishing in mountain streams; (on-going) nature-based/heritage-based tourism in the Reserve era
- **association with particular communities:** (on-going) Aboriginal communities; pioneer descendants; Canberra bushwalkers and wildlife observers; fishers; research and education communities; protected area managers; building, landscape and garden history interests
- **symbolism:** essence of rural living; (on-going) Aboriginal culture and ceremony; Canberra's wild backdrop (Bush Capital identity); part of the Australian Alps reserves; a survivor of cultural erasure and destructive fires.

(Categories per Ballinger 2012)

Reflecting these, the evident values of the cultural landscape include:

- **aesthetic:** renowned vistas; scenic beauty; patterns and relationships across the landscape; blend of natural and designed and contrived/built landscapes; relict specimen plantings; native plants and animals revealed to visitors
- **historical:** association with/evidence of pastoral era; associated transport and infrastructure; widespread erasure of cultural places post-acquisition (another phase); subsequent phases of Federal Capital influence, Nature Reserve; Reserve established as a place of research, knowledge development, education
- **social:** attachment to places and landscapes held by (multiple) individuals and groups; statements of high value, both historical and contemporary
- **spiritual:** embodying Aboriginal culture; uplifting experiences of the natural world; evoking a sense of place/belonging in the landscape; representing survival, re-emergence and resilience after destructive fires
- **scientific:** potential for further archaeological and historical investigation to provide additional perspectives on the deep and recent past of the place

(Categories per Australia ICOMOS 2013)

Condition

Despite loss of fabric and a record of removal, alteration and disturbance over time, we can still discern Aboriginal and settler pathways, routes, significant places, and land use patterns.

Sufficient elements and features of the landscape remain evident, or can be compared e.g. in historical and contemporary images. Bolstered by strong documentation and oral histories, this enables ready interpretation of the past as it relates to the present (and the future).

Recognition

As part of the Australian Alps National Parks and Nature Reserves, the Reserve (by default its cultural landscape) is listed on the National Heritage Register (as of 2008). This listing recognises in the high country a 'mosaic of interactions between its natural and cultural environments'.

ACT Heritage Register listings include a number of Aboriginal Places across the landscape, and specifically the Birrigai rock shelter, and Rock Valley and Nil Desperandum Homesteads and surrounds.

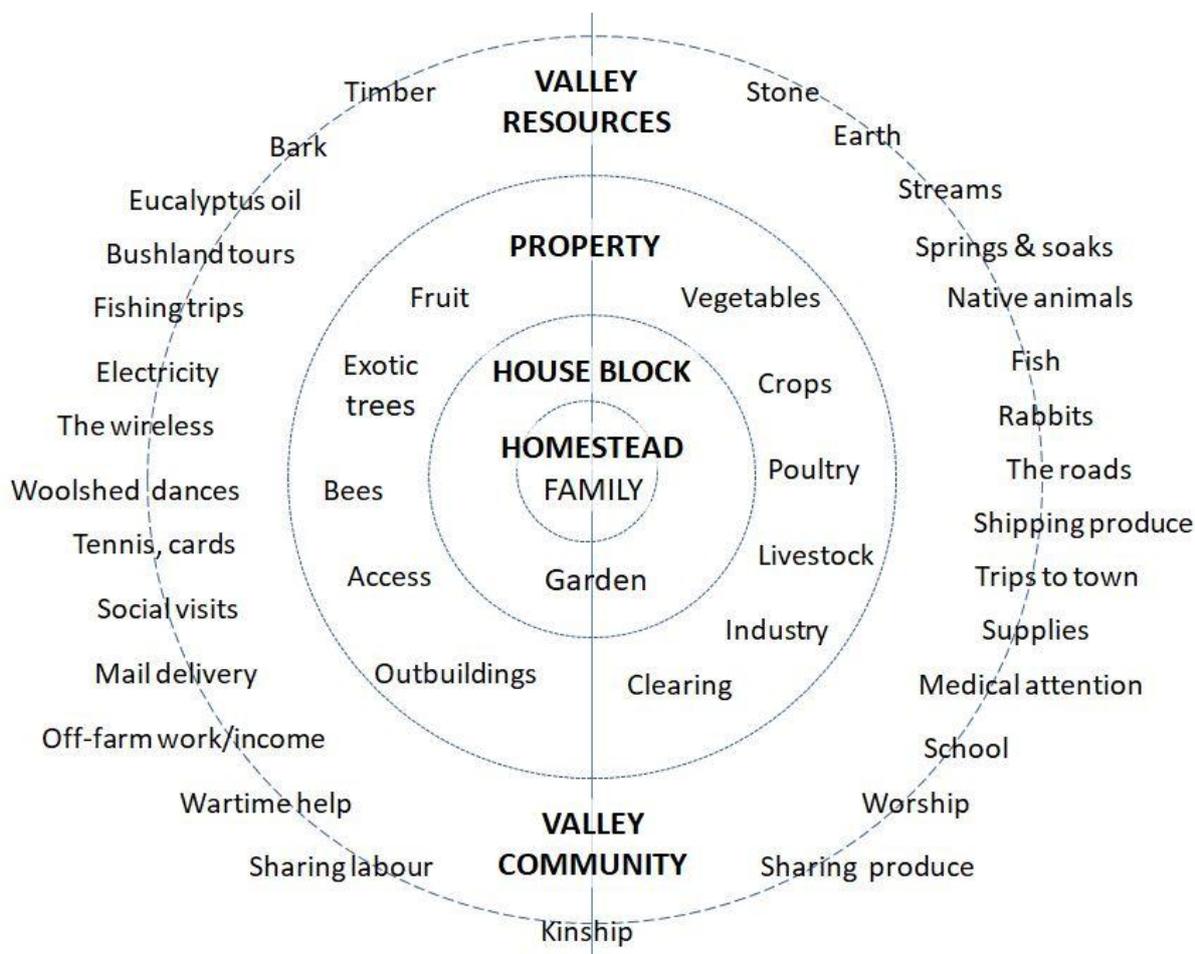
Directions, Themes and Stories – the approach in 2020

Broad directions for interpretation of the place include:

- honouring the spirit and efforts of **Aboriginal custodians** and **Tidbinbilla pioneers** through the Rock Valley **cultural landscape**
- promoting Rock Valley as a **Tidbinbilla destination** (aspiring to visit, finding it easily)
- promoting Rock Valley as a **Canberra region attraction** and **community place**
- offering expanded **visitor experiences**:
 at Rock Valley Homestead (homestead + house garden + grounds + surrounds); and
 through Rock Valley Homestead as a hub for trails across the cultural landscape
- modelling **collaborative heritage management** for Rock Valley Homestead and surrounds.

These broad directions are used to structure the Staging summary of works and activities in **Attachment A**.

Reflecting the lives of the former inhabitants, the place is approached as nested/interlinked precincts: *homestead – house garden – home paddock – property surrounds – valley community – ‘outside world’*.



Rock Valley European cultural landscape story strands and conceptual relationships (Mark Butz)

Selected keys to the rich heritage value and interpretive potential of homestead and landscape include:

- physical links to **Aboriginal occupancy and use** of the valley across 25,000+ years and continuing, including continued cultural and spiritual connection
- homestead status as one of few relict constructions from the **rural phase of settlement** in the valley
- **span of story** across nearly two centuries of European settlement, from 1830s squatting to 1880s selector phase of valley settlement, to 1960s nature reserve establishment, to 2003 bush fires and their aftermath, to today's stewardship and care
- representing **pastoral phases** of selection/carving a property from the bush, relying for survival on off-farm work with large landholders, to self-sufficiency and independence from large landholders
- representing **use value shifts** from mixed farming to sheep grazing to farmlet subdivision to Reserve
- representing the impact of **Federal Capital** uses and controls on rural landholders
- part of Tidbinbilly Pastoral Run, held by the first European settler in the Tidbinbilla district (**Webb**)
- occupation of the place by the earliest official selector family in the valley (**Sheedy**)
- subsequent occupation and homestead construction by one family (**Greens**) through > 70 years
- **well-documented** evolution of the homestead and grounds, including aftermath of the 2003 fires
- homestead saved from demolition (post-fire) by **community action**
- homestead as the only accessible building in Tidbinbilla at which stories from the **2003 bush fires** can be illustrated with physical damage readily evident and interpreted
- an accessible and (now) stable example of **pisé construction** methods and materials, exposed to view to an unusual extent; also the home base for those constructing pisé buildings around the district in the late 1890s-early 1900s
- a singular place in the spectrum of **heritage residences** in the ACT that are accessible for interpretation and education (representing: small landholders, remote setting, diverse livelihoods)
- demonstrating **resourcefulness** and use of local natural resources – site selected for water (spring and streams); buildings created from earth materials (rock base, pisé walls) and timber (sawpits and mills); Aboriginal use of stone for tool making, overhangs for shelter, and ochre for making art
- strong **associations and kinship** links across several early settler families of the Tidbinbilla and Gibraltar valleys, continuing today
- a central element of a coherent mountain **valley community**, connected to other residences, schools, social facilities, local industries, communication and transport, reciprocal arrangements
- a popular venue for **social activity** drawing on the broader district for woolshed dances, gymkhanas and carnivals, and on Canberra for casual recreational use (picnics, camping, fishing, berry picking)
- more than a decade prior to Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve, a hub/start point for early **bushwalkers and hikers** in the youthful Canberra, marking the emergence of rural and high country areas of the ACT as outdoor recreation destinations
- direct links to early **nature-based tourism** from Canberra, beyond the city, and guided
- an **attractive setting** for recounting/recalling past ways of life and physical/social conditions
- demonstration of **respect and care** for cultural heritage in a conservation protected area (following a **shift in values**)
- connection to cultural heritage themes across **Australian Alps** National Parks and Nature Reserves
- connection to the **biodiversity/habitats** of the Reserve as the location for field research plots and wildlife officer duties, and through historical naming of geographic features for wildlife (e.g. Wallaby Rocks, Wallaroo Ridge).

2025: A DESIRED FUTURE FOR THE ROCK VALLEY CULTURAL LANDSCAPE

Tidbinbilla Heritage Brought to Life

For more than half a century Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve has been justifiably renowned for its role in wildlife conservation broadly, and recovery of threatened species in particular.

As we near the close of 2025, Tidbinbilla is also renowned as a showpiece for integrated presentation of natural and cultural values across the landscape, and across a comprehensive timeline from deep time to the present day, telling its stories through a broad range of media, events and programs.

Its diverse recreational and educational experiences have been developed in collaboration between managers, volunteers and pioneer descendants.

These opportunities have found an extensive and eager audience in visitors, from local to international, with 'Tidbinbilla Heritage' now a well-known and popular part of the 'Canberra Tracks' self-drive tour system.

Sixty years ago there was a policy of erasing traces of the pastoral past in favour of a relatively pristine natural presentation. This gave way to a new and growing consciousness of the importance of honouring and learning from the past, and of the value of the Tidbinbilla landscape as a place for both history and belonging, where new stories are constantly being written.

At Tidbinbilla the past lies close to the surface, whether we think of geological time underlying today's landscape features and vegetation, deep time underlying continuing Aboriginal culture, or the vestiges of Australian settler pastoral and agricultural land uses. Here these are no longer merely spots on a map but places brought to life in a dynamic re-storying of the landscape.

Marking the 50th anniversary of the Nature Reserve in 2021, landmark efforts and achievements had begun with the initial reconstruction of a eucalyptus distillery, new interpretive and reconstruction works at Rock Valley Homestead, and more comprehensive documentation of the valley's past. This was followed closely by the initial establishment of the popular Time Trail network, which now extends from near the Reserve entrance to the Ashbrook area deep in the valley, in an echo of Aboriginal pathways, bridle trails, and old settler routes for walking and stock movement.

A few years on and the homestead is a venue for public gatherings such as the annual Picnic at Rock Valley, a unique and popular Canberra district event, bolstered in recent years with enhanced facilities on the site. This is an echo of its historical role as the social and practical hub of the valley (with strong links also to the Gibraltar valley), and of decades ago when the property hosted woolshed dances, gymkhanas, social gatherings, picnics and blackberry picking festivals.

The homestead is the nucleus for a broader and deeper landscape understanding and literacy, with layers radiating out from house to house garden to home paddock to the rest of the property, to kinship and practical links up, down and across the valley(s).

Storylines are conveyed by a series of on-site interpretation experiences and the broader network of Time Trails linking other heritage places, no longer isolated but now inter-connected, as is the natural landscape...because every heritage-themed walk at Tidbinbilla is also a nature walk.

The Time Trail network offers grades for all capabilities, and has greatly expanded recreational and learning experiences through interpretive signage and brochure guides. As mobile phone coverage expanded in recent years, this has been enhanced further with Augmented Reality interpretation at select points - historical identities and stories brought into the present through modern technology.

At Tidbinbilla the past is brought to life to help create a better future.

Works and actions proposed or foreshadowed

In this section, **numbered actions** in square brackets relate to the diagram and staging summary in **Attachment A**.

On-site activity	
<i>Current</i>	<i>Future / Foreshadowed</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Enhance visitor access/engagement (Grant) ◆ Design and install three new interpretive signs (Grant) ◆ Update directional signs to place (Grant) ◆ Develop interpretive brochure and install two dispensers (Grant) ◆ Stage on-site events - open days, tours, demonstrations (continuing) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Develop additional mini-precinct walks with four additional interpretive signs ◆ Consider further on-site reconstruction and simulation (outbuilding, garden, orchard) ◆ Design multi-media augmentation of signs or brochure ◆ Retain/recover historical access ◆ Develop heritage-themed 'Time Trails' + trailhead sign ◆ Encourage place-based art/community arts
Off-site activity	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Deliver off-site presentations (continuing) ◆ Engage media (continuing) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Update locational information ◆ Develop off-site display ◆ Secure archives and records ◆ Broaden oral history ◆ Develop a concise history publication ◆ Develop an education program resource ◆ Prepare a conservation management plan

- **Directional signs to the place** (current – part of ACT Heritage Grant)

The current turnoff from the main access road is located between two curves and, despite a 35km/h speed limit, this may complicate entry to, and exit from, the place.

Despite clear signposting, it is not immediately clear to visitors that they are welcome to visit the place, even when they arrive at the car park - it can easily be assumed to be a Reserve staff residence. The extent to which this inhibits visitors cannot be determined.



Turnoff to Rock Valley - no indication that the place is available to visitors

[1] Improve the Rock Valley Homestead directional sign to:

- remedy ambiguity by addition of decals (could label it as a ‘heritage place’ and state ‘visitors welcome’; suggest future addition of an icon for walking); and
- provide motorists with more warning of the turnoff, with smaller signs on approach (siting to be determined by ACTPCS)

Add ‘Rock Valley Homestead’ to the directional sign opposite the Nature Discovery Playground.

Proposed use of the homestead as a hub for heritage trails elevates the importance of this revision.

- **Arrival at the place** (foreshadowed)

- [2] Reinforce a sense of arrival at Rock Valley by defining three **access points** to the ‘home paddock’ (one by road and two for walkers) using rusted steel signage, with lettering reflecting woolpack stencils to simulate the Greens’ wool clip identifier: ‘Rock GG Valley’

Sample formats include:

**ROCK
GG
VALLEY**

**ROCK
GG
VALLEY**

**ROCK
GG
VALLEY**

- **Locational information** (future revision)

[3] Update and amend off-site print and electronic media that map/indicate location of attractions and label precincts, for promotion and to assist planning of visits

This is a matter for Reserve managers as information materials are upgraded from time to time. Actual timing may need to relate to any launch of works at the place.

This relates also to third party publications such as ‘The world of Tidbinbilla’, produced under an ACT Heritage Grant by Southern ACT Catchment Group, and a myriad of private or organisational Web sites providing information on Tidbinbilla walks and attractions.

While revision in these cases rests with other organisations, it is advisable to keep those providers informed about new developments in attractions and interpretation e.g. by specific invitations to launches, briefings, open days, etc.

- **Visitor access/engagement** (current – part of ACT Heritage Grant)

[4] [5] Implement a new direction for visitors to access and engage with the homestead

At present:

Visitors arrive via access from the main road, entering the rear garden gate and encountering the current interpretive sign before crossing the kitchen slab to the standing structure.

Progression through the structure ends with visitors at the front verandah and seating and/or the picnic table in front of the homestead.

Some visitors progress through the gate to take in the broader view.

Some return to the car park via the mobility access path and others via the homestead.

At no stage of this passage are visitors assisted to understand the layout or fabric of the place.

Alternative proposed:

Visitors arriving by car encounter new interpretive signs and are encouraged and directed (by indicator sign and potentially also by moderate barrier) to the front (northern end) of the homestead via the mobility access path (rather than the narrower 1955 path with steps).

In this way, the structure is revealed from the front steps and door, welcoming guests, rather than from a more industrial and less comprehensible ‘tradesmen’s entrance’ at rear.

All visitors are prompted to progress through the structure from living spaces to working spaces.

All have the option to return to the verandah, seating and views at the front, and/or to explore the surrounds (mini-precincts).

Orientation and comprehension are enhanced by availability of a portable brochure from dispensers at point of arrival:

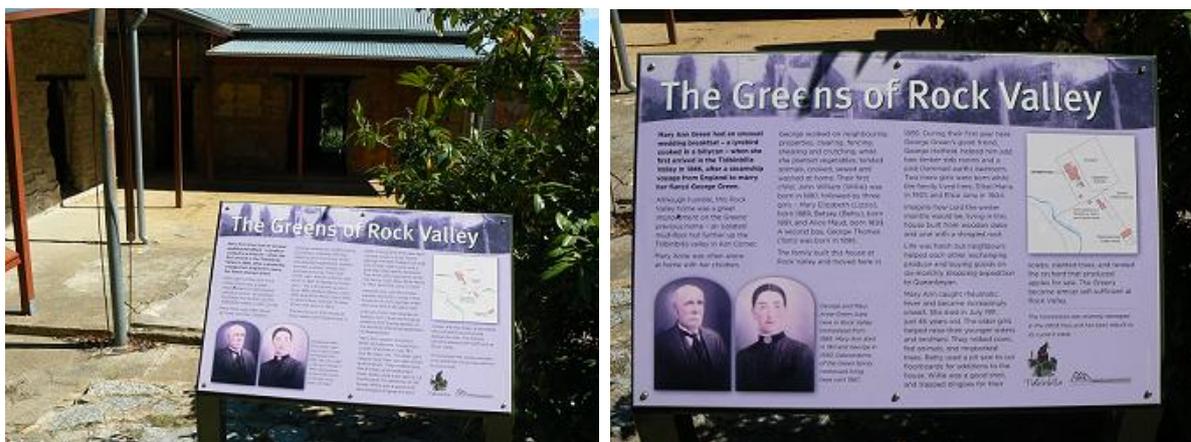
- for car-based visitors next to Sign 1 after entry from the car park
- for walkers from the front house garden gate.

Diverting visitors from the old path will require reorientation of the Visitors’ Register.

See additional details below in ‘*Interpretive signs*’, ‘*Interpretive brochure*’ and ‘*Time Trails: seeing Rock Valley as part of a larger picture*’.

• **Interpretive signs on-site** (current – part of ACT Heritage Grant)

One interpretive sign is already in place at the homestead, encountered when visitors arrive at the rear (southern end) of the homestead.



The existing interpretive sign at the point of arrival – rear of Rock Valley homestead (Nov 2019 – Mark Butz)

Develop three new signs under the current Heritage Grant within the house garden (recommended locations at right):

<p>Sign 1 Pioneers – families – men and women – connections in the district [update/reformat of the existing sign] [+ dispenser for interpretive brochure + reoriented visitors register]</p>	<p>On mobility access path - site of existing sign Facing south-east</p>
<p>Sign 2 Place - homestead and garden – development over time - pisé construction method here and in the district – resourcefulness - the garden, orchard, surrounds and access</p>	<p>On mobility access path - site of existing brick barbecue (unsafe – demolition recommended); overlooks rear of homestead – damage and reconstruction evident Facing north-east</p>
<p>Sign 3 Post-fire (continuation of Place) [8] - damage in 2003 fires – saving the building - stabilisation/partial reconstruction – ‘phoenix’ garden – rescue of homestead from demolition – custodian role of descendants via TPA</p>	<p>On mobility access path near the water tank (draws visitors further down the path; not visible from seats on the verandah; angled to address homestead and orchard) Facing south-west</p>

These signs will employ the ‘Tidbinbilla Heritage’ label recently used at signs for the ‘Black Flats’ eucalyptus distillery site. This branding reflects proposed development (over time) of a new element in the evolving ‘Canberra Tracks’ system [27].

Draft wording and notional form of signs at **Attachment B**.

For other proposed changes that are relevant at this location, see also: ‘*Interpretive brochure*’ below and ‘*Visitor access/engagement*’ above.



Recommended locations for three interpretive signs along the mobility access path:
 Sign 1 on site of existing sign;
 Signs 2 & 3 arrowed
 (Oct 2020 – Mark Butz)

The recommended locations retain and extend the current situation that offers background information to most visitors at the point of arrival and engagement with the place.

Additional signs that could be developed in the short- to medium-term future are mentioned at this point only to illustrate the potential for complementary and more comprehensive storytelling through opportunities outside the house garden fence. Each sign is discussed further below in its appropriate physical location and interpretive context and is shown on the diagram in **Attachment A**.

Sign W 'Industry' [13]	[future] extends the Place story – range of outbuildings – farm skills, activities – facilities, machinery & equipment – reciprocal arrangements in the valley community	At simulated structure (with picnic facilities) to the south of the homestead on the rise above the car park
Sign X 'Produce' ** [15]	[future] extends the Place story – nature's bounty – vegetable garden and orchard – spring – link to choice of house site – irrigation and water use	In the orchard area to the east (part of a short walk, linking with a trail to/from Dalsetta)
Sign Y 'Connections' [18] **	[future] broadens Place and Pioneers stories – links to the 'outside world' – physical: the old road (north & south), Jedbinbilla – social: Flints' and the broader valley(s) – technological: mail, radio, phone	Next to the turning loop, northern side of the homestead
Sign Z 'The Rocks' [21]	[future] extends the Place story – origin of Rock Valley name - granite landscape – tors and split rocks – importance of rock shelters – sediment in the creek - raw material for pisé – different rocks across the river - material for Aboriginal stone tools and rock art	Across Back Creek to the west of the homestead (part of a short walk, linking with a trail to/from Flints' and a loop to/from Woolpack Rocks)

** It may be possible to develop this sign under the current Heritage Grant.

- **Interpretive brochure** (current Heritage Grant funding)

[9] Develop an **interpretive brochure** to complement static signage; primarily as an aid to orientation and understanding

The current sign offers an image that may be difficult to relate to, because it lacks a ‘you are here’ indicator and it precedes visitors viewing the homestead (no frame of reference).

A brochure can:

- be carried around (a take-away/pass-it-on item, as a souvenir and/or to attract others to visit)
- provide a diagram of room layout, and a simple key to the garden and surrounds
- be used to trigger multi-media augmentation of information, both on-site and post-visit
- describe the context of the place within the Reserve and local region
- locate the place relative to cultural heritage themed trails
- provide guidance on behaviours e.g. not removing materials, watching for snakes, European wasps etc.

Draft wording and notional form are at **Attachment B**.

[10] Provide two weather-safe brochure **dispensers** on-site:

- one at the rear (south), adjacent to interpretive Sign 1 (place), for those arriving by vehicle;
- the second at the front gate (north), for those walking from Dalsetta

Multiple locations also enable departing visitors to drop off brochures for re-use if desired (subject to any health concerns about multiple handling).

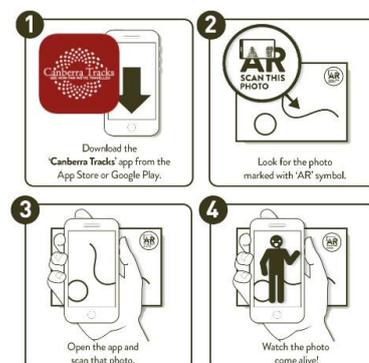
- **Multi-media augmentation** (foreshadowed – under next Heritage Grant to TPA)

This is dependent on enhanced network coverage in the Tidbinbilla valley in the future.

[11] Retro-fit ‘Canberra Tracks’ signs and/or the interpretive brochure to support triggering of additional audio, images or video through an **augmented reality** (AR) Smartphone app

This could:

- offer audio and imagery (including hologram imagery) to bring alive personal anecdotes of the homestead and broader property from the historical record
- link to Web-based off-site resources to strengthen visitor information or education



The AR logo on an image can be added later as a decal, once network coverage supports this feature.

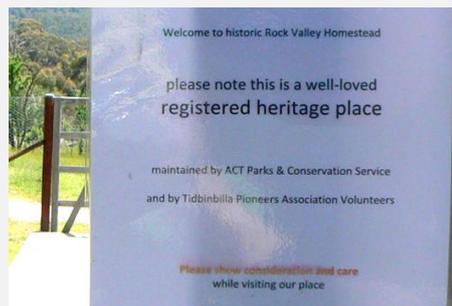
Instructions for downloading and using the app can be included in a future interpretive brochure and/or on a future trailhead/hub sign.

Additional considerations – visitor engagement

Shaping visitor behaviour – ‘Our Place’ signs

Temporary laminated signs at two points emphasise the value of, and attachment of people to, the homestead (‘a well-loved registered heritage place’) and ask for respectful behaviour, noting that the place is tended by ACTPCS and volunteers of TPA.

In the midst of new sign/direction installations, it is timely to replace these with a permanent version, most likely on or adjacent to each house garden gate, and perhaps also adjacent to the front steps.



Temporary signs have been necessary but are not commensurate with the value of the place (Mark Butz - Nov 2020)

Homestead exhibits

Previous proposals for the **homestead** have included reconstruction of a room to provide a glimpse of the past. This is not recommended while the homestead remains in its present stabilised/partially reconstructed condition.

This present condition does portray graphically the ‘bones’ of the house, with tangible, evident fire damage (not just a photo of damage), and that can be interpreted.

Additionally, security of materials may be an on-going concern (from vandalism, theft, fire damage) for however long the structure is relatively incomplete.

A reconstructed room is more appropriate in a *house museum* where interpretation is focused on a facsimile representation of ‘how they lived’.

Decisions on further reconstruction, restoration and usage of the precinct need to be guided by preparation of a **conservation management plan** for Rock Valley Homestead and Surrounds.

Brochure dispensers

The design of brochure dispensers for Rock Valley might also be employed on related heritage-themed trails.

The Church Rock Heritage Loop and brochure were previously developed by the TPA under an ACT Heritage Grant in 2001. The trail is now to be renovated.

The experience relies on visitors picking up a brochure at the Visitors Centre. It is suggested that a dispenser be installed at the start of that loop (with the starting sign moved adjacent to the picnic shelter, to attract and encourage visitor engagement).



Church Rock Heritage Loop at Flints’ - start sign divorced from the picnic shelter (Oct 2020 – Mark Butz)

- **Additional on-site reconstruction/simulation** (foreshadowed)

Visitor interest in the place may warrant additional effort and investment in reconstruction or simulation of aspects of the homestead and surrounds to strengthen its value as a heritage precinct. These enhancements would broaden options and experiences for all visitors to the place.

Such episodic upgrading also serves to ‘freshen up’ the place and to encourage repeat visits to see ‘what’s-new’, and perhaps then to explore other heritage-themed opportunities in the Reserve.

All should help trigger and strengthen visitors’ imagination as (aided by interpretation) they build a mental picture of how people lived, survived and thrived in the home and mixed farming enterprise.

Works within the registered heritage place need to be appropriate, and should be addressed in any conservation management plan to be prepared.

Homestead

Essential conservation works have been previously identified, including structural remediation to address surface drainage and holes in walls.

This heritage interpretation strategy responds to the homestead structure in its current condition and the stories that arise from that condition - stories of hard work, resourcefulness, skill, coping with hazards, resilience.

This does not preclude any future decision to secure/fully reconstruct the homestead.

And these stories would not be negated by such a decision, provided that reconstruction could incorporate durable and protective glimpses into, and interpretation of, underlying construction details and evidence of fire damage (e.g. through perspex panels).

These considerations would need to be addressed in a **conservation management plan**, as would optional additional works that broaden opportunities for interpretation, including:

- any additional interpretive signage within the pre-fire external wall profile of the homestead and any signage to be attached to or affecting fabric of the building (including reconstructed fabric)
- covering of the slab area at rear (former kitchen and living room 1920s-50s); this could:
 - provide a larger firm-based (non-gravel) and shaded area for educational and other tours/activities (broadening opportunities) outside the pisé sections
 - help remediate surface drainage issues by diverting rainwater further from the building
 - help reduce tracking of wet gravel into the homestead and onto the verandah (reduced cleaning, maintenance and damage to surfaces)
 - (option) imitate the former roof profile (gable + skillion) to ‘complete’ the homestead outline in the landscape; this may also enhance stability for the brick chimneys and vent pipe
 - (option) have a full or partial south wall to assist in encouraging visitors to the front entrance (north); this wall could be designed to accept projection of images for interpretation/ education purposes
- reinstatement of power to the homestead; this could:
 - expand options for visitor activities (e.g. presentations, performance art) and maintenance
 - be extended to a future simulated outbuilding/activity area on the rise above the homestead

It is expected that power supply would need to be underground, and any future night-time activities that focus on interpretation of the Greens’ occupancy prior to 1956 (when electricity was connected) would use spirit lamps in preference.

Grounds - Outbuildings

- [12] Reconstruct / simulate one or more **outbuildings** in form and materials that also assist interpretation of the range/nature of outbuildings that used to be present; fence in a vernacular style as in yards – to form a mini-precinct

This ('The Shed') would probably be on the rise above the car park, in the vicinity of the former outbuildings. This area lies outside the place defined on the ACT Heritage Register, and would offer views over the homestead roof to the broader valley and ranges beyond.

Possible materials in the mix include pisé (optimally), galvanised iron, and slab timber (and possibly some shingles). These demonstrate the vernacular building materials used in the place.

It would be useful to consider a semi-enclosed construction above the car park that could act as a shade/'umbrella' structure over a picnic table or two, and additional tables outside.

Given proximity to the access road and car park, this can be a safer activity area if fenced (vernacular style, as in timber 'yards'). It may provide a durable option that would draw some active uses away from the more vulnerable homestead and house garden, reducing potential to damage fabric.



The rise above the car park – suitable for a reconstruction/ simulation of an outbuilding (or two), with 'yards'
(Mark Butz – Oct 2020)

This part of the grounds could also display added **machinery** artefacts, as opportunity arises and as appropriate to presentation of the place's history.

Suitable **access** (a gently graded ramp from the trailhead sign) would be required to enhance visitor access to the rise while limiting batter erosion.

A **marked crossing** and sign may be required in the future to assist visitors to cross the access road safely, between the rise and the vegetable garden/ orchard area.

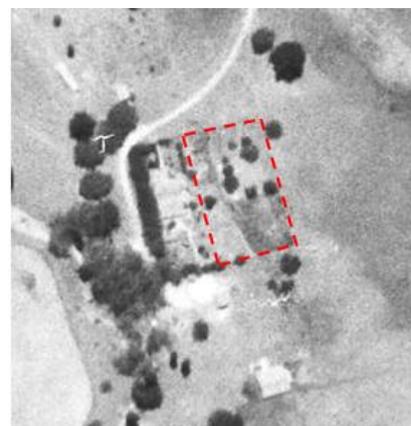
- [13] Develop a future sign (Sign W '**Industry**') to be placed in, or adjacent to, a simulated/ reconstructed outbuilding to interpret farm outbuildings and associated skills and activities

Grounds - House garden and Produce garden/orchard

[14] Develop an interpreted **mini-precinct** encompassing the house garden, vegetable garden and orchard areas, with fencing, delineation, and partial restocking and revival

Previously foreshadowed options include:

- supplementation of the **house garden** with species appropriate to the Eddie Green design
- delineation of the former **vegetable garden** with logs and corner posts (as per air photo c.1950s)
- supplementation of the **orchard** with stock propagated from the remaining trees
- revival of the **duck pond** (weed removal, opening to light)
- extension of the house garden **fence** to enclose the produce garden/orchard (wire netting, not full height, to allow continued macropod grazing) - broadly on the alignments shown in the 1919 'Rain survey' (including the duck pond) and air photo c.1950s, with pedestrian gate access points.



The produce garden and orchard (edged red) c1950s (Image 12748)

While this would appeal particularly to garden history enthusiasts, it would broaden options and experiences for all visitors to the place.



Top: the produce garden/orchard, separated from the homestead and house garden by the vehicle track
Bottom: remnants of the duck pond; the second orchard to the north of the homestead
(Mark Butz – Sep/Oct 2020)

[15] Develop a future sign (Sign X '**Produce**') to be placed in the orchard area to interpret nature's bounty, the vegetable garden and orchard, watering, the spring, duck pond, and livestock

Grounds - Access

- [16] Retain the **original driveway/access road** from the north-east in its present form, and promote its use by walkers; replace/supplement ‘management vehicles only’ signs with ‘walkers only’; conserve the ‘front gate’ road formation and regenerating Lombardy poplars

This proposal is reflected in notional links for the Rock Valley Time Trail.

Walkers using the trail between the homestead and Turkey Hill, whether direct/‘low road’ or indirect/‘high road’, and in either direction, would follow the old access road/driveway, at least in part.

Access from the historical alignment offers a sense of arrival as the homestead comes into view around the curve, assisting walkers to gain a stronger sense of place and landscape setting.



Historical approach frames the homestead (Sep 2020 – Mark Butz)

Care is needed to protect (not compromise with machinery) the old cut-and-fill profile at the ‘front gate’ of the home paddock, and regenerating poplars there (markers in old photographs).

- [17] Reinststate the **turning loop** outside the front (north) gate, as a feature of the grounds and access; consider options for a replanted pine or an artwork

The turning loop is mentioned in oral history accounts and represents a key interface between homestead residents and ‘the outside world’ e.g. mail deliveries, as in contemporary photographs.



The front gate of Rock Valley in 1930: Elma Green receives a mail delivery from Lucy Maxwell & son Pat (TPA archives)



The turning loop (arrowed) still clearly visible in 2005 prior to reconstruction works (Google Earth 27 Apr 2005)

The turning loop was originally around a large pine (*Pinus pinea*) which has been removed to ground level. While there have been proposals to plant a replacement pine on the spot, this is likely to be constrained unless all of the old stump (still present at/below the surface) could be removed.

The ‘small islet’ may be an appropriate location for an artwork in materials derived from the place. Close by the ‘islet’ is an appropriate location (outside the house fence) for an interpretive sign about ‘Connections’ between the homestead/Green family and the ‘outside world’.

- [18] Develop a future sign (Sign Y ‘**Connections**’) to interpret links between the homestead and the ‘outside world’ – physical (the old road, Jedbinbilla); social (Flints’ and the valley community); and technological (mail, radio, phone); this sign should not be visible from the front verandah

The **access on the eastern side of the homestead** (with a gate locked at the car park) came into use in the 1950s when the tennis court was built across the former access on the western side.



Eddie Green and visitors on the access between the house and orchard; Wallaby Rocks at upper left c.1950s (TPA)

Some authors have suggested removal of this access because it separates the homestead and house garden from the produce garden/orchard.

This seems to assume that the access was installed in the 1960s Reserve era to link the Works Depot and materials storage areas.

However, it appears to date from the 1950s, so it actually falls within the focus period for garden/ landscape design retention and interpretation.

Its removal is not recommended.

However, the more recent ‘blue metal’ surfacing is visually intrusive and inappropriate to the pastoral era of the place, and needs remediation to blend in/recede.



Intrusive and inappropriate ‘metal’ surfacing on the side access (left) and northern part of the car park - remediation with decomposed granite would approximate better the look of the pastoral era (Mark Butz – Nov 2020)

- [19] Reduce the visual intrusion of the **vehicle access road** beside the homestead by replacing or topping existing ‘metal’ with pale decomposed granite and if necessary partially re-sowing with grass;
the ‘softened’ track to be used for walkers (emergency only vehicle access);
coordinate with fencing/gating of the produce garden/orchard

If undertaken in conjunction with extending the fence to enclose the produce garden/orchard, this ‘blending-in’ would help to re-create a visual continuum of garden landscape across the vista as visitors approach by car or on foot.

Retained in a visually ‘softened’ form, this will be a useful and much more visually pleasing part of access and circulation as visitors explore the homestead grounds and mini-precincts. It will provide an alternative to passing north-south through the house garden or homestead, and may lessen some visitor impacts within the house fence.

Surrounds – Across the creek

[20] Develop a second mini-precinct (**'The Rocks'**) across Back Creek to the west of the homestead, to broaden further the range of walks and experiences available at the place; linking also to Flints' with a loop to the Woolpack Rocks

A walk in the old cultivated paddock (with outline delineated) would: illustrate the granite landscape setting, historical Green family fruit tree plantings, and George Green's experimental tobacco patch 'down by the rocks'; provide visual connection of the homestead to Turkey Hill and Wallaby Rocks; take in interesting tors, and large split rocks below the homestead; and consider the importance of earth materials to both Aboriginal people and settlers.

The Woolpack Rocks can be accessed from here with a loop walk through Banksia and Hakea fields, with pleasing and remote picnic sites available. Walkers continuing to Flints' would have close encounters with additional tors on an easy-grade walk that approximates the route of the 'old road', passing within view of the site of the 1880s Sheedys' slab building near the river.



Scenes from 'The Rocks' across the Back Creek:
Top: pan across the grounds; Centre: view to Turkey Hill; tors and ranges; Bottom: split rock, Woolpack Rocks
(Mark Butz – Oct, Nov 2020)

[21] Develop a future sign (Sign Z **'The Rocks of Rock Valley'**) across Back Creek, to interpret geology and landform, importance of rock shelters, and raw materials for construction (pisé & field stone), stone tools and ochre, cultivation of soils

- **Interpretation Hub (trailhead) sign** (foreshadowed)

[22] Develop a **trailhead sign** to establish Rock Valley Homestead as a hub for interpretation and heritage trails

Ideally, this would address:

- broader and deeper historical and social context for Tidbinbilla cultural heritage places
- landscape and ‘Time Trail’ connections between Rock Valley and other Tidbinbilla cultural heritage places
- links between Tidbinbilla cultural heritage places and those in other Australian Alps National Parks and Reserves
- links between biodiversity of the Reserve and historical use of the valley’s natural resources.

This scope of content is not easily accommodated on a standard sign (limit of c.300 words).

It is proposed that status of the homestead as an interpretive and trail hub warrants a roofed trailhead sign similar to those at Dalsetta and near the Visitor Centre. This style of sign can address all of the above plus required guidance e.g. registration for extended walks, personal safety.

It is recommended that it also reinforce the ‘**Tidbinbilla Heritage**’ label as part of ‘Canberra Tracks’.



Style of hub sign (this one at Dalsetta)
(Mark Butz Oct 2020)



Proposed site for trailhead sign (arrowed)
(Mark Butz Oct 2020)

A Rock Valley trailhead sign would be best located at the end of the car park at the rear of the homestead and close to amenities, to:

- avoid intrusion on views over the valley from the front of the homestead (and also from a future simulated outbuilding activity area on the rise above the car park); and
- be visible and accessible for both car-based and walking visitors.

Some landscaping will be required to ensure that it cannot be ‘parked out’ and to separate cars from visitors reading the sign.

See additional details below in ‘*Rock Valley Time Trail*’.

This style of sign:

- is beyond the allocated budget for an additional on-site interpretive sign
- needs to be implemented following stronger detailed planning, design and development of ‘Time Trails’ under ‘Tidbinbilla Heritage’, including analysis of historical themes in the valley.

The trailhead sign could be part of a future grant application (co-funding from the Reserve and perhaps Australian Alps National Parks and Reserves).

‘Time Trails’ - seeing Rock Valley as part of a larger picture

Rock Valley Homestead is ideally placed as a hub for cultural–heritage-themed itineraries of the sort that have been envisaged over some years by the Tidbinbilla Pioneers Association. This began in at least 1998 with the TPA proposing a ‘Pioneer Walking Trail’ in the southern Tidbinbilla valley.

A broader vision is now emerging that: links nature and cultural heritage; takes in both Aboriginal and European heritage places and stories; and diversifies opportunities for walking via loop trails. The Tidbinbilla plan of management makes specific provision for this concept.

Due to subsequent development in the Reserve, much of this broader vision could be achieved through a process of connecting existing nodes, precincts and trails, with pedestrian crossings where necessary. The joining-up would form **‘Time Trails’** – this nomenclature is already in use around Birrigai, allowing also for geological and ecological interpretation (‘how the world changes over time’). And in Tidbinbilla every themed walk is also a nature walk.

A *‘central valley’* itinerary (notionally **Rock Valley Time Trail**) could connect the homestead with:

- Flints’ and Church Rock Heritage Loop to the west, with an easy-grade ‘low road’ broadly following the old main road to Flints’, and a ‘high road’ connecting to the lookout at Church Rock ; and
- Dalsetta/Turkey Hill Trail to the east, with a direct easy-grade ‘low road’ broadly parallel to the main road, and with a ‘high road’ below Wallaby Rocks, to Xanthorrhoea Loop, and back to Dalsetta.

In both directions these loops offer a ‘low road’ and a ‘high road’ for experiential variety and for different physical capabilities. They serve also to separate walkers from cars on the main road.

These can be easily defined with waymarkers, with most sections being low relief and easily maintained by occasional machinery passage to keep open routes through regenerating Burgan scrub. Some may require simple close-to-ground structures to negotiate seasonally boggy sections.

Existing trails connect Dalsetta with the Nature Discovery Playground, and with a *‘northern/lower valley’* itinerary (notionally **Gibraltar Time Trail**) for walks to Mount Eliza, Eliza Saddle and Gibraltar Peak, linked with the existing **Birrigai Time Trail** from Eliza Saddle (for enthusiastic walkers) or from the Visitors Centre (for most). A short link could connect to/from the Rock Valley Time Trail from the Xanthorrhoea Loop and an un-named lookout.

A newly defined walk could link Flints’ with the ‘Black Flats’ car park as a portal to a *‘southern/upper valley’* itinerary (notionally **Black Flats Time Trail**), connecting the eucalyptus distillery site and Black Flats Dam (Aboriginal stories), then around the Sanctuary precinct (biodiversity conservation stories) via the ‘management road’/‘old road’ to the sites of Ash Corner, Driver’s piggery, Green & Hatcliff’s hut/ Farrer’s hut, Kaye’s hut and Staunton’s Mount Domain homestead.

(This option identified by TPA as a grant candidate for Australian Alps National Parks, due to high country linkages, both physical and thematic.)

Optional diversions could include: the Hanging Rock walk from the Ring Road; and via Mountain Creek road for the Rayner’s Sawmill site.

[27] Develop and promote these three itineraries under the unifying banner of **‘Tidbinbilla Heritage’**, as the Tidbinbilla Heritage Trail in the ‘Canberra Tracks’ system, complementing those already developed for Belconnen, Gungahlin, Woden and Tuggeranong.

New access, node or walking trail developments would use existing tracks and access wherever possible. The system could be developed and maintained collaboratively between Reserve managers, the Tidbinbilla Pioneers Association, and Friends of Tidbinbilla.

Rock Valley Time Trail

A full suite of cultural–heritage-themed itineraries would take some years to come to fruition. The ‘central valley’ itinerary, with Rock Valley Homestead as the hub, is recommended as an initial step, because it requires minimal funding or new effort, and much can be done with volunteers.

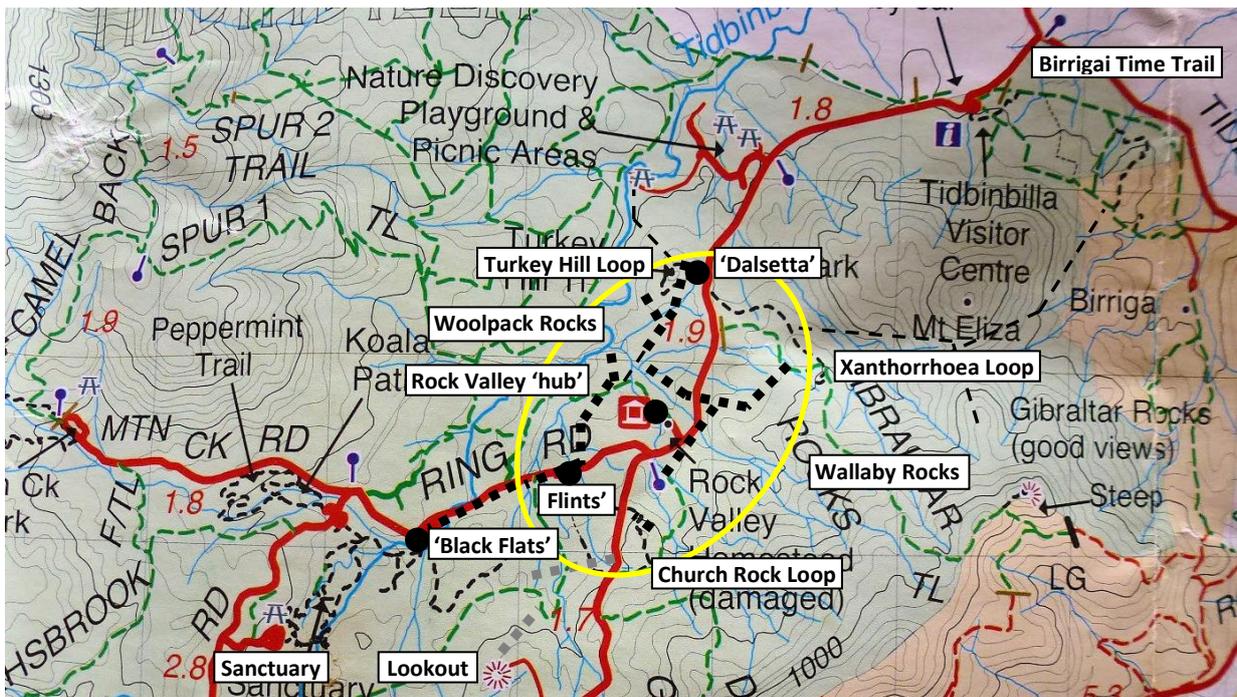
[23] As a first step, develop **walking access** between Dalsetta and Rock Valley (direct, and indirect via Gibraltar foothills) and between Rock Valley and Flints’ with a link to the ‘Black Flats’ car park

[24] – [26] Undertake Design of the Time Trails in close collaboration with field staff to:

- document historic themes across the Reserve (Australian Historical Themes Framework) [24]
- determine places and landscapes that warrant inclusion in trails and interpretation [24]
- identify changes required to existing trail sections and associated interpretation [24]
- identify new trail sections and associated interpretation requirements [24]
- identify requirements for waymarkers and pedestrian crossings [25]
- identify changes required to locational information (signs, brochures, Web) [26]

Integrate with design of the trailhead sign for placement at Rock Valley [22]

The ensuing step would manufacture and install signs, waymarkers and crossings, and prepare interpretive materials e.g. self-guiding brochure, Web content (initially for Rock Valley Time Trail - other itineraries to follow in the future)



Notional ‘missing link’ trail sections (thick dotted lines) in Rock Valley Time Trail + link to ‘Black Flats’ car park



Tidbinbilla styles for trailhead sign (Dalsetta), junction/directional markers and waymarkers

- **Off-site display** (current - being pursued by TPA)

[28] Include in the Reserve Visitor Centre a **display relating to pioneers** of the valley, heritage places and 'Time Trails'

This display would illuminate the broader physical and social context for the place.

It has the advantage of being accessible on occasions when the broader Reserve is closed for safety reasons.

It is likely to include images and might also make use of videos and audio.

It would be useful to include artefacts, including from Rock Valley surrounds.

Ramsay (2010) recommended an action plan for moveable objects at Rock Valley Homestead, including those noted in Warden (2009) and items salvaged after the fire.

Fragments and edges of artefacts are visible near the homestead (probably an old dump), and some salvage may be fruitful. This would need to be undertaken by professional archaeologists.

[29] Consider undertaking **archaeological investigation** of the old dump exposed near the homestead, with a view to locating artefacts of value for display or materials of value in place-based art

See also *Place-based art* below

- **Off-site presentation** (foreshadowed)

[30] Develop a consistent brief **visual presentation package** that could be:

- offered to interested groups (e.g. in person by PowerPoint)
- used in educational settings or on the Web site for general interest
- used in orientation/training of staff and volunteer interpreters.

This would build on previous TPA experience in related presentations (e.g. to Canberra District Historical Society July 2019).

- **Records and archives** (foreshadowed – part under next Heritage Grant to TPA)

[31] Undertake a program to ensure that existing **archives and collections** of text, maps, photographs and oral history recordings are digitised, securely housed, and made accessible for researchers, managers and educators;
a joint program of the Reserve managers and the Tidbinbilla Pioneers Association.

A priority would be to digitise Eddie Green's garden journal.

The range of interpretation themes/stories canvassed in this strategy suggests the need to extend oral history collection about the homestead and cultural landscape to go beyond the rich material that has focused on stories of pioneer families, collected in Higgins (1995) and Park (2008).

[32] Continue collecting and preserving **oral history** (and associated personal **photographs**) as a community resource, broadened to include later phases of history and occupants e.g. Block 60 pine plantation, the era of hobby farms (Boyden, Gilmour), loss of Rock Valley Homestead as home (Underwood);
a joint program of the Reserve managers and the Tidbinbilla Pioneers Association

- **Publications** (foreshadowed)

This strategy aims at a new and stronger focus on Rock Valley Homestead and surrounds as not only a heritage place with many stories to tell and many experiences on offer, but also the hub of a network of heritage-themed itineraries (starting with the Rock Valley Time Trail).

To support strongly that aspiration will require ready availability of historical information for visitors, staff and volunteers. This may be in-print and/or Web-based, and may be a concise history and/or a more comprehensive history (or combinations of these).

The aim encompasses:

- assisting visitors to plan itineraries/visits
- providing reliable historical material for education or broader community interest, and for interpretation staff and volunteers
- having a tangible ('take-away') product to encourage repeat or additional visits, and to stimulate interest in the Reserve and experiences that it can offer; and
- honouring the pioneers and their descendants.

Importantly, this complements (does not replace) interpretive signs, brochures, and augmented reality, and off-site presentation.

[33] Compile a **concise history or guidebook** of Rock Valley (both homestead and cultural landscape, including the 'Time Trail'), for visitors and for interpretation staff and volunteers; a joint program of the Reserve managers and the Tidbinbilla Pioneers Association.

[34] Consider preparation of an **educational program** 'How they lived', using content of oral histories to stimulate student interest and enquiry; a joint program of the Reserve managers and the Tidbinbilla Pioneers Association.

- **On-site events** (current - continuing)

A fundamental premise is that people are the best known system for heritage interpretation. This has implications for training of staff and volunteer interpreters.

[35] Schedule **public events** at the place in the form of guided tours, in peak visitor times or in regional events such as the ACT Heritage Festival, and in the style of past 'Picnic at Rock Valley' events.

These may include guided explanation of the homestead, garden and grounds, including 'The Rocks'.

It may also include guided walks to the 'Black Flats' eucalyptus distillery reconstruction, to Woolpack Rocks, and to/from Dalsetta/Turkey Hill, within the 'high road'/'low road' concept of the Rock Valley Time Trail.

The inauguration of an interpretive hub at the homestead warrants a **launch** that will generate publicity and interest and help to 'lock in' those who have supported/contributed up to that point.

- **Media engagement** (current – continuing)

Robust media engagement is a great aid in increasing awareness of resources and opportunities, and in attracting visitors to ‘try out’ the new and the different, and perhaps to become more (or more regularly) involved in the Reserve. The TPA has a solid track record in this regard, in collaboration with Reserve staff.

[36] Engage **print and electronic media** at the level of promotion, in:

- initial attraction of attention and visitors and stimulus for repeat visits
- acknowledgement of contributors (information, works, maintenance, funding)
- stimulus for additional contributions; and
- enhancement of cultural story-telling and longevity by recognition of descendants of pioneer families, partly through events.

- **Place-based art** (foreshadowed)

Within the spectrum of attractions and opportunities at Tidbinbilla, more can be made of the special values of the homestead precinct, using artworks. This parallels the approach taken at The Sanctuary and the Visitors’ Centre, but can take on themes more appropriate to its rural history.

[37] Develop a program for installation of place- and theme-appropriate **artworks** to define/emphasise the place; these might be commissioned (potentially with sponsorship) and may be temporary or permanent

Some may be sculptural, in rusted steel, in keeping with artworks in other precincts in the Reserve. These might range from simple laser cut-out posts or panels through precinct labels to seating and other ‘furniture’.



The flavour of sculptural works in Tidbinbilla – at the Visitors Centre and The Sanctuary

[38] Develop a program for **community arts** projects (visual art, writing, performance art), seeking creative responses to the place and fostering connection and participation

There are potential grants funds available for such projects.

Some Reserve accommodation (e.g. Cinerea Cottage) has previously been utilised for artist-in-residence programs.

COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

It is vital to recognise *existing associations* with the place that are held by (for example) descendants of pioneer families, each person or group deriving their own meaning from the place.

There are additional individuals who have taken a keen interest in documentation and telling of the valley's history.

Some have previously contributed to oral histories and there may be opportunities to use some of this material in mixed media and augmented reality. Others who attend may be inspired to make their own oral history contributions.

The overall message in enabling participation of these interested groups and individuals is that their histories and contributions are valued along with the place, and help to bring the place alive with a human face/voice.

Sixty years ago, the prevailing mood was to erase traces of European heritage from the landscape of Tidbinbilla and other conservation areas, in an attempt to bury cultural history in favour of Nature. Now we are engaged in re-storying such landscapes as an enriched legacy for future generations (both history and belonging).

[39] Use all available opportunities to **involve interest groups** in landmark events such as launch/opening of development stages, ideas generation for future stages, and so on; to include and attract younger participants in the interests of succession

Broadening engagement and deepening association will be a vital support to implementation of works in the place over time. There is a need to build new *attachment, advocacy and action* in service of the place.

Some of the focus will be on visitors, and this uncertain investment might best be targeted at groups and individuals that already have an attachment to the place, such as bushwalkers, climbers and mountaineers. Working to broaden their interest and understanding in the place might result in some of these people responding to appeals for assistance in working bees and events organisation, displays etc.

A strong potential exists to broaden the interest and participation of groups and individuals already participating in support of other aspects of Reserve management and maintenance, such as volunteers in ParkCare Patch, Visitor Assist and Ranger Assist. This would serve to engage hands-on volunteers in the garden and grounds at Rock Valley, and in 'Time Trail' development and maintenance, and build the historical knowledge and perspective of Volunteer Interpreters in support of their role with visitors.

This requires close collaboration with the Reserve managers.

[40] **Broaden the range of active participants** in development and maintenance of works to protect and present the place; engage specifically with Reserve user groups (to broaden association and attachment) and with existing volunteers in ParkCare and related arrangements (to deepen understanding); to include and attract younger participants in the interests of succession

GOVERNANCE

- [41] Collaborate to develop a **cooperative management model** for heritage interpretation at the place and development of a related heritage precinct, allocating clear responsibilities between the owners/managers (ACTPCS) and the community of interest (Tidbinbilla Pioneers Association)

The agreement needs to be independent of personalities (who come and go over time), and needs to describe:

- a mechanism for *shared decision-making* about, and *collaborative sourcing* of finance for, implementation, running, and conservation needs
- *respective responsibilities* for access, presentation, education, and maintenance.

EVALUATION

- [42] Develop a **framework to evaluate effectiveness** of any significant investment of human or financial resources (from time to time), emphasising outcomes over inputs.

A framework for the place and associated programs needs to address processes for:

- *observation* of behaviours and impacts, physical condition
- *gathering feedback* to gauge awareness and identify sources used to obtain information, and to gauge satisfaction of users (including access, experience) and volunteer participants

Social media may play a major role in feedback.

ATTACHMENT A – WORKS AND ACTIONS PROPOSED - SUMMARY DIAGRAM

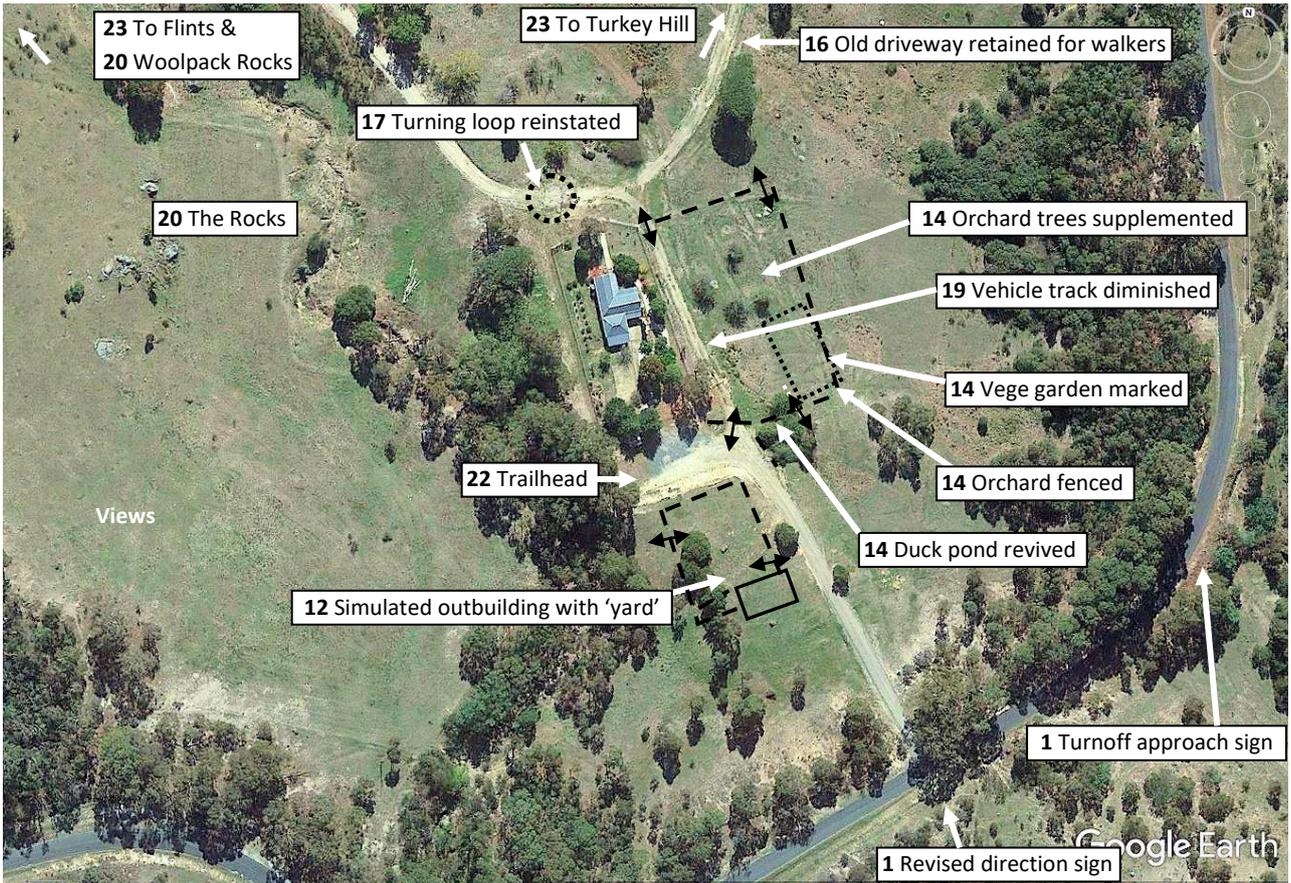


Diagram of works proposed around Rock Valley homestead (Base: Google Earth 27 Apr 2019)



Rock Valley linkages - Yellow dots = Lookouts/vistas; Blue dots = Public amenities
(Base: Google Earth 27 Apr 2019)

WORKS AND ACTIONS PROPOSED - STAGING SUMMARY

Initiatives and Actions		Timing / Duration		
		Current [G=grant]	Next Priority	Future
<i>Rock Valley as a destination (finding it)</i>				
1	Enhance RV direction sign – welcome, status, facilities, approach warning			
2	Define three access points to the 'home paddock' using rusted steel signage, with lettering reflecting woolpack stencils: 'Rock GG Valley'			
3	Update locational information for RV – signs, brochures, Web			
<i>Rock Valley offering broader experiences - experiencing homestead + house garden</i>				
4	Divert people from Eddie Green's path to mobility access path + reorient Visitors' Register			
5	Use signs to direct visitors to front steps and door of homestead around mobility path	G		
6	Develop Sign 1 <i>Pioneers</i> [to replace existing sign]	G		
7	Develop Sign 2 <i>Place</i> [demolish brick barbecue and replace with Sign 2]	G		
8	Develop Sign 3 <i>Post-fire</i> [on mobility access path near water tank]	G		
9	Develop interpretive brochure – layout of homestead & grounds explained	G		
10	Provide brochure dispenser at Sign 1 and also at front gate	G		
11	Develop multi-media augmentation for RV signs and/or brochure		[G]	
<i>Rock Valley offering broader experiences - experiencing grounds and surrounds</i>				
12	Simulate/reconstruct outbuilding above car park – vernacular style picnic shelter + fence (~yards) + machinery artefacts – to form mini-precinct			[G]
13	Develop interpretive sign <i>Industry</i> – outbuildings, farm skills, activities, facilities, machinery & equipment, reciprocal arrangements in the valley		[G]	
14	Develop vegetable garden/orchard mini-precinct + fence orchard and mark outline of vegetable garden + enhance orchard plantings + revive duck pond		[G]	
15	Develop interpretive sign <i>Produce</i> – produce garden, fruit, vegetables, potatoes on river flats, livestock etc		[G]	
16	Retain the original driveway/access road from the north-east in its present form, and promote its use by walkers; protect the 'front gate' road formation and regenerating Lombardy poplars			
17	Reinstate turning loop at front of homestead			
18	Develop interpretive sign <i>Connections</i> - links to the 'outside world', physical, social, technological		[G]	
19	Reduce intrusive impact of the vehicle access road beside the homestead			
20	Develop mini-precinct in marked old cultivation paddock across Back Creek west of homestead – 'The Rocks', connecting with Woolpack Rocks & Flints			
21	Develop interpretive sign <i>The Rocks of Rock Valley</i> – granite landscape, rock shelters, raw materials for pisé, field stones, stone tools and ochre		[G]	

* [G] denotes potential grant-funded activity

Initiatives and Actions		Timing / Duration		
		Current [G=grant]	Next Priority	Future
<i>Rock Valley as a hub for heritage-based trails</i>				
22	Develop trailhead sign – Rock Valley as hub			
23	Develop walking access from Dalsetta to Rock Valley (direct and indirect) + walking access from Rock Valley to Flints' + 'Black Flats' car park			
24	Analyse Tidbinbilla Valley against Aust Historical Themes Framework + identify best places to interpret available themes + identify 'Time Trails'		[G]	
25	Design 'Time Trails' concept (notionally Rock Valley, Black Flats, Gibraltar)		[G]	
	Rock Valley Time Trail - produce waymarkers, directional markers, self-guiding brochure, Web content; pedestrian crossings where required			[G]
26	Update locational information for 'Time Trails' – signs, brochures, Web			
<i>Rock Valley as a Canberra attraction + community place</i>				
27	Develop 'Tidbinbilla Heritage' brand and promote as a new 'Canberra Tracks' entity/itinerary			
28	Visitor Centre display on Tidbinbilla heritage places and 'Time Trails'			
29	Consider archaeological investigation of a possible dump near homestead		[G]	
30	Off-site presentations about Tidbinbilla heritage places and 'Time Trails'			
31	Digitise and secure existing text, maps, photographs and oral history recordings		[G]	
32	Continue collecting and preserving oral history, broadening to include additional historical/interpretation themes		[G]	
33	Compile a concise history or guidebook of Rock Valley - both homestead and cultural landscape, including the 'Rock Valley Time Trail'		[G]	
34	Consider an educational program 'How they lived', based on content of existing oral histories			[G]
35	On-site events at Rock Valley and 'Black Flats' eucalyptus distillery			
36	Media engagement			
37	Place-based art (commissioned)			
38	Community arts projects (including artist-in-residence)			
<i>Collaborative heritage management</i>				
39	Involve special interest groups in landmark events			
40	Broaden the range of active participants in development and maintenance			
41	Cooperative management model/agreement between TPA and ACTPCS			
42	Framework for evaluation of effectiveness			

* [G] denotes potential grant-funded activity

ATTACHMENT B - INTERPRETIVE SIGNS - DRAFT TEXT AND NOTIONAL LAYOUTS

SIGN 1

The Greens of Rock Valley
SMALL SETTLERS WITH BIG DREAMS

Mary Ann Green had an unusual wedding breakfast – a lyrebird cooked in a billycan – when she first arrived in the Tidbinbilla Valley in 1886, following a steamship voyage from England and her marriage to George Green.

Their first home was an isolated slab hut deeper in the Tidbinbilla valley, at Ash Corner, shared at first with George's good friend George Hatcliff and his brother William Cooper Green. There the couple had their first five children - John William (Willie) in 1887, Mary Elizabeth (Lizzie) in 1889, Betty (Betsey) in 1891, Alice Maud in 1893 and George Thomas (Tom) in 1895.

Mary Ann was often alone at home with the children. George worked with George Hatcliff on neighbouring properties, clearing, fencing, shearing and building, while she kept house, cooked, sewed, washed and tended vegetables, fruit trees and animals.



The elder Greens: George (1855-1930) and Mary Ann (1865-1911) (TPA Archives)

After selecting this land at Rock Valley, the family built the house and moved here in 1895, while Tom was a babe in arms. Two more children followed - Ethel Maria in 1901, and Elsie Jane in 1904.

Life was hard but neighbours helped each other, exchanging produce and buying goods on six-monthly shopping expeditions to Queanbeyan.

Mary Ann caught rheumatic fever and became increasingly unwell. She died in July 1911, just 46 years old. The older girls helped raise their younger sisters and brothers. They milked cows, fed animals, and ringbarked trees. Betsey helped with the pit saw to cut floorboards for additions to the house. Willie was a good shot, and trapped dingoes for their scalps, planted trees, and tended the apple orchard.

With much hard work, the Greens became almost self-sufficient at Rock Valley. Three generations of the Greens lived here, from 1895 to 1967, when it was resumed for the Reserve. After George Green passed on in 1930, Tom (1895-1957) and his wife Elma (1901-1957) held the property and passed it to their sons, Keith and Eddie.

The valley community was close-knit and mutually supportive. Through more than seventy years in the valley community, the Greens developed connection through marriage directly with Flint, Woods and Blewitt families, and indirectly with the Hatcliff, Maloney, Noone, Dallender, Morton and Maxwell families. There were further connections to the Sheedy family through the grandparents of Elma Green (wife of Tom). And the Greens retained their long and close relationship with the Stauntons.

ACT Government | Tidbinbilla Pioneers Association | Australian Alps National Parks | Canberra Tracks | Tidbinbilla Heritage

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SIGN 2

Life from the Earth

THE REWARDS OF RESOURCEFULNESS

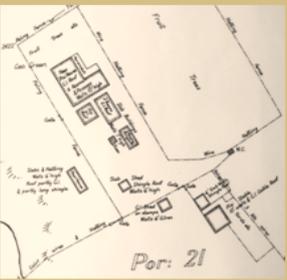


The Greens developed their home and its surrounds over time. The initial buildings were two slab huts and one pisé (rammed earth) bedroom in 1895. It was humble, and it was cold in winter, but it was a great improvement on the mud-floored hut they had at Ash Corner.

Across the next 20 years George Green and George Hatcliff became very capable builders in pisé. They enlarged the homestead with four more bedrooms and a parlour, with timber floors, all under a corrugated iron roof.

Beyond this property the two Georges built about a dozen houses, sheds and outbuildings around the district.

The homestead grew in the 1920s, and again in the 1940s-50s, with a new kitchen and living room with two fireplaces, plus an inside bathroom.



The homestead, house garden, orchard and outbuildings 1919 – tracing of survey plan

The Greens began life here at a time of deep economic downturn made worse by the 'Federation Drought' (1895-1903). While off-farm income was essential for several decades, the Greens worked hard to become more self-sufficient and less reliant on larger landholders for their wellbeing.

They developed a large fenced and irrigated orchard (74 trees in 1897) and a productive vegetable garden, grew feed crops, kept a range of livestock and poultry, and earned extra income from taking rabbits and dingoes.

In the care of Tom and Elma Green, who were no longer focused only on survival, the homestead and its productive surrounds became also a place of beauty.

The house garden flourished with ornamental plantings of flowers, shrubs and trees, a second orchard was established, and many exotic trees served as windbreaks and features in the home paddock.

In the 1950s their son Eddie redesigned the house garden, with new planting, landscaping and water features.

Rock Valley was the heart of the Valley and community. It was a popular venue for card nights, woolshed dances, gymkhanas and carnivals, and for casual recreational use - picnics, camping, fishing, and blackberry picking.

It was also a hub and start point for early bushwalkers and hikers from the youthful Canberra, and the Greens guided walkers in the hills, in some of the earliest nature-based tourism from Canberra.



IMAGE CREDITS: ACT Public Works 1992

The Greens developed their home and its surrounds over time. The initial buildings were two slab huts and one pisé (rammed earth) bedroom in 1895. It was humble, and it was cold in winter, but it was a great improvement on the mud-floored hut they had at Ash Corner. Across the next 20 years George Green and George Hatcliff became very capable builders in pisé. They enlarged the homestead with four more bedrooms and a parlour, with timber floors, all under a corrugated iron roof.

Beyond this property the two Georges built about a dozen houses, sheds and outbuildings around the district.

The homestead grew in the 1920s, and again in the 1940s-50s, with a new kitchen and living room with two fireplaces, plus an inside bathroom.

The Greens began life here at a difficult time of deep economic downturn made worse by the 'Federation Drought' (1895-1903). While off-farm income was essential for several decades, the Greens worked hard to become more self-sufficient and less reliant on larger landholders for their wellbeing.

They developed a large fenced and irrigated orchard (74 trees in 1897) and vegetable garden, grew feed crops, kept a range of livestock and poultry, and earned extra income from taking rabbits and dingoes.

In the care of Tom and Elma Green, who were no longer focused only on survival, the homestead and its productive surrounds became also a place of beauty.

The house garden flourished with ornamental plantings of flowers, shrubs and trees, a second orchard was established, and many exotic trees served as windbreaks and features in the home paddock.

In the 1950s their son Eddie redesigned the house garden, with new planting, landscaping and water features.

Rock Valley was the heart of the Valley and community. It was a popular venue for card nights, woolshed dances, gymkhanas and carnivals, and for casual recreational use - picnics, camping, fishing, and blackberry picking.

It was also a hub and start point for early bushwalkers and hikers from the youthful Canberra, and the Greens guided walkers in the hills, in some of the earliest nature-based tourism from Canberra.

SIGN 3

Risen from the Ashes

A RESILIENT ROCK VALLEY

Bush fires were just one of the natural hazards faced by pioneer settlers. Rock Valley was unharmed by large fires in the area in 1920, 1938-39 and 1951-52. But in January 2003 extensive wild fires burned across most of the ACT, including Tidbinbilla. The firestorm destroyed the Works Depot at Rock Valley and severely damaged the homestead.

The pisé walls largely survived, although some subsequently slumped and fell over. Timber in the roof and structure was lost, along with the post-1920 additions, except for the fireplaces and chimneys that were left standing.

The Tidbinbilla Pioneers Association and the National Trust actively resisted proposals to demolish the older parts of the homestead, in full or part. In the end this community action saved the homestead from removal.

Before the firestorm: 2002

Rock Valley Homestead was listed on the ACT Heritage Register in 2015. Descendants of the Greens and other Tidbinbilla Pioneer families work as volunteers with the ACT Parks and Conservation Service to care for and maintain the building, garden and grounds.

With your care and help this important heritage place can continue to tell its stories of pioneer families and their resilience on the land.

Recognising its value for heritage interpretation, the ACT Government fenced the site, stabilised the pisé walls and brick chimneys, and partially reconstructed the house.

In 2008, some 42 years after the departure of the Greens, the homestead was opened for visitors. Works are continually undertaken to protect the building from deterioration.

The fires also had a severe impact on the house garden, orchard and surrounds, with the loss of many garden plants, windbreaks and large feature trees.

Some plants re-grew spontaneously, but a lot of work was required to replant and renew garden beds and hedges, and to maintain a style sympathetic to Eddie Green's garden design of the 1950s.

IMAGE CREDITS: Damian McDonald, Geoff Underwood, JohnMcRae, TPA Archives

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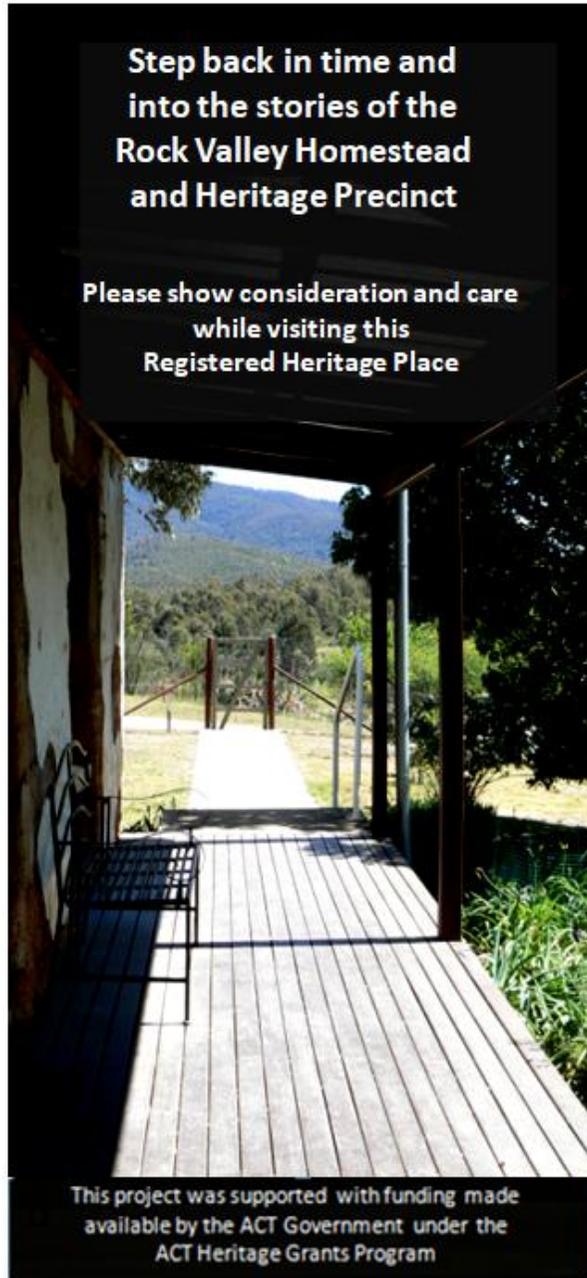
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BROCHURE - DRAFT TEXT AND NOTIONAL LAYOUTS

Twelve-panel brochure



A3 double-sided
 1 horizontal hinge fold
 and 2 vertical box folds



Step back in time and into the stories of the Rock Valley Homestead and Heritage Precinct

Please show consideration and care while visiting this Registered Heritage Place

This project was supported with funding made available by the ACT Government under the ACT Heritage Grants Program

Things to do and see

There is plenty to see, do and learn at Rock Valley. Step into the stories of this heritage precinct, and let its secrets unfold.

Homestead

Make yourself at home in the old pisé homestead, navigating the rooms and imagining the lives of three generations of the pioneer Green family who lived here from the 1890s to the 1960s.

See the marks of the 2003 bushfires that almost erased the homestead, and the reconstruction works that have secured it for future generations.

Walks

Take a calming stroll through the house garden, now carefully tended by descendants of Tidbinbilla pioneer families.

Or explore the grounds, to the orchard and produce garden, or around The Rocks, with views across the lower valley.

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There are numerous places for a picnic in the grounds, in the old orchard, or near The Rocks.

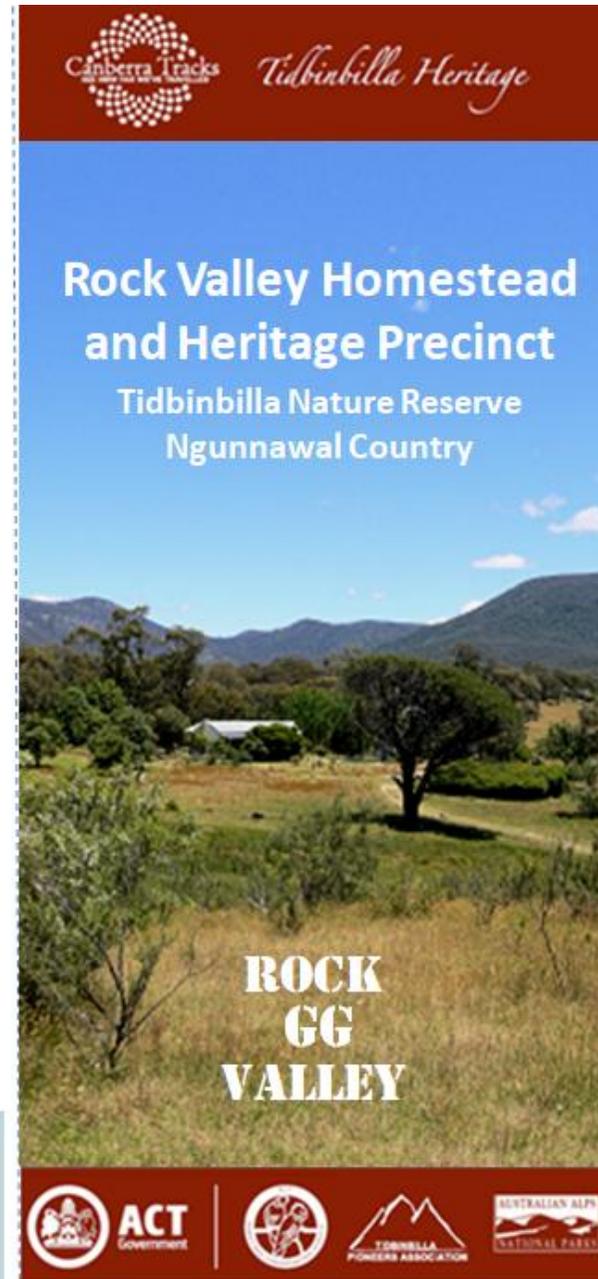
Please do not disturb or remove any materials, and watch for snakes and European wasps.

Further information

 Tidbinbilla Visitor Centre (02) 6205 1233
Access Canberra: 13 22 81

 tidbinbilla@act.gov.au
www.tidbinbilla.act.gov.au

 <https://www.facebook.com/TidbinbillaNatureReserve>



Canberra Tracks Tidbinbilla Heritage

Rock Valley Homestead and Heritage Precinct
Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve
Ngunnawal Country

**ROCK
GG
VALLEY**

There are rich stories in the Rock Valley Heritage Precinct.

The Traditional Custodians of the Canberra region, the Ngunnawal people, have a continuing cultural, social, environmental, spiritual and economic connection to the lands and waters of the Tidbinbilla area that stretches over time immemorial.

Ngunnawal men have a special relationship to the valley, particularly through its use for ceremonies and passing on of traditional customary men's lore/law. Ngunnawal people maintained and used the valley as a gathering place and a place to source food, including the migratory bogong moths. The Ngunnawal custodianship and connection to Country continues strongly today.

The abundant resources used by the Ngunnawal people were similarly attractive to European settlers. In the 1830s George Solomon Webb grazed his cattle on the Tidbinbilly Pastoral Run, which extended over the whole valley and out to Paddys River.

As the large pastoral runs were broken up in the second half of the 19th century, smaller holdings were made available for selection. The first small settlers at Rock Valley were the Sheedy family, from 1884. When they moved to Castle Hill near Tharwa the area around today's homestead was taken up by George Green.

The Greens initially settled deeper in the valley at Ash Corner in the 1880s but moved to this site, building the homestead in stages from 1895.

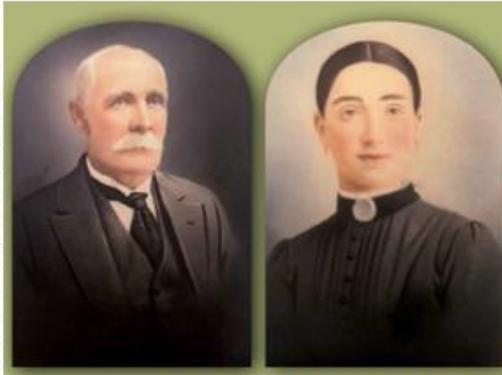
**ROCK
GG
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European settlers in this district relied on sheep and wool. This brand is modelled on Rock Valley's wool bale stencil, with George Green's initials at the centre.

HEART OF THE VALLEY AND COMMUNITY

The settler stories in the Rock Valley Heritage Precinct are told in the homestead, house garden, the larger produce garden and orchard, and the surrounding paddocks.

The homestead stayed in the Green family's hands for 70 years, across three generations. Risen from the ashes of the 2003 wildfires, it is one of few constructions remaining from the rural phase of settlement in the valley.



*The pioneers George & Mary Anne Green
(TPA Archives)*

Its story spans nearly two centuries of European settlement, from 1830s squatting to small holding selections in the 1880s, to nature reserve in the 1960s, to today's stewardship and care.

Of the accessible historic homesteads in the ACT, Rock Valley is the only one that represents the lives of small landholders in a remote setting, who carved a property out of the bush and pursued diverse livelihoods.

Their story takes us from survival through off-farm work with large landholders, to self-sufficiency and independence, to becoming the physical and social hub of the Tidbinbilla and Gibraltar valley communities.



*Eddie and Keith Green with friends and family
at Rock Valley (TPA Archives)*

The families of the Tidbinbilla and Gibraltar valleys looked out for and supported each other, their links made stronger by inter-marriage.

Rock Valley was central to this mountain valley community, connected to other residences, schools, social facilities, local industries, communication and transport.

It was a popular venue for social activities, attracting the broader district to woolshed dances, gymkhanas and carnivals, and luring Canberrans into the countryside for casual recreational use (picnics, camping, fishing, and blackberry picking).

Even before Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve, it was a hub and start point for early bushwalkers and hikers in the youthful Canberra, with rural and high country areas of the ACT becoming popular for outdoor recreation.

The Green family also guided walkers in the hills, in some of the earliest nature-based tourism from Canberra.

The House

Artefact material collected near the homestead indicates that the site was used by Aboriginal people long before the arrival of settlers. It was an obvious place to be – on a gentle slope, close to the river, between two creeks, with soaks fed by permanent springs upslope.

The homestead was built in stages from 1895, commencing with two timber slab buildings and an outdoor oven, followed by a single bedroom of pisé (rammed earth), using material excavated on site. Four additional pisé rooms (bedrooms and a parlour) were constructed in ensuing years.

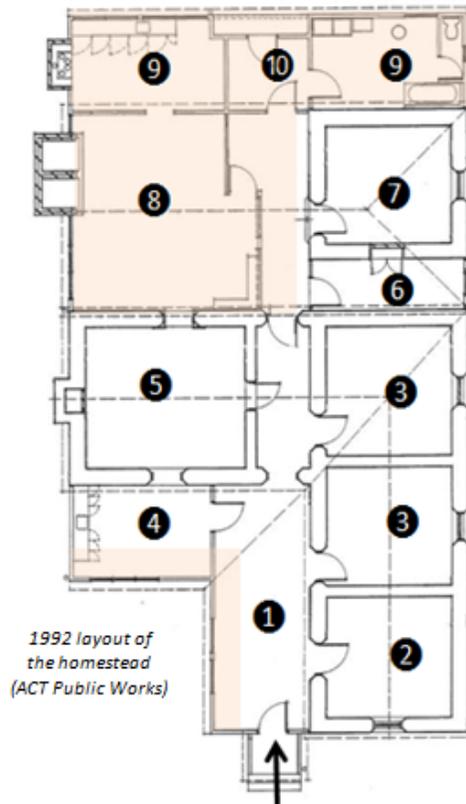
George Green and George Hatcliff had become skilled in pisé construction, and they were responsible for at least a dozen pisé buildings around the district up to about 1911. Most of the pisé structures in the district have been lost over time, and Rock Valley Homestead is one of the very few that are publicly accessible.

The technique of ramming successive layers of earth can be clearly seen in the walls of the homestead, as are relics of the render that was later applied.

Later additions in the 1920s and 1940s-50s (living room, kitchen and bathroom) were built with timber walls and fibro sheeting, replacing the original timber slab buildings.

In January 2003 wildfire affected 99% of the Reserve and almost destroyed the homestead, but most of the pisé walls remained standing.

A new roof, verandah and awnings, and partial reconstruction of walls and floors, have stabilised and protected the structure. Scorched timbers have been retained to help tell the story of the fire. Later fibro additions were not reconstructed, and only the fireplaces and chimneys remain.



1992 layout of the homestead (ACT Public Works)

Shaded area not reconstructed post-fire

Key

- 1 Verandah / entry - enclosed 1967
- 2 George & Mary Ann's bedroom c.1905-11
- 3 Bedroom c.1905-11
- 4 Verandah space enclosed 1940s-50s
- 5 Living room / Parlour c.1905-11
- 6 Breezeway/ later Bathroom & Pantry c.1915
- 7 George & Mary Ann's first bedroom 1895
- 8 Kitchen & Living room c.1920
- 9 Enlarged kitchen plus bathroom 1940s-50s
- 10 Rear verandah & porch enclosed 1967

The House Garden

As the property prospered, plants could be incorporated in the grounds for their beauty and aesthetics alone, without the need to be useful.

With plenty of water available from springs, the second generation Greens (Tom and Elma) developed an attractive house garden and made feature plantings of trees around the grounds and along the access road/driveway.

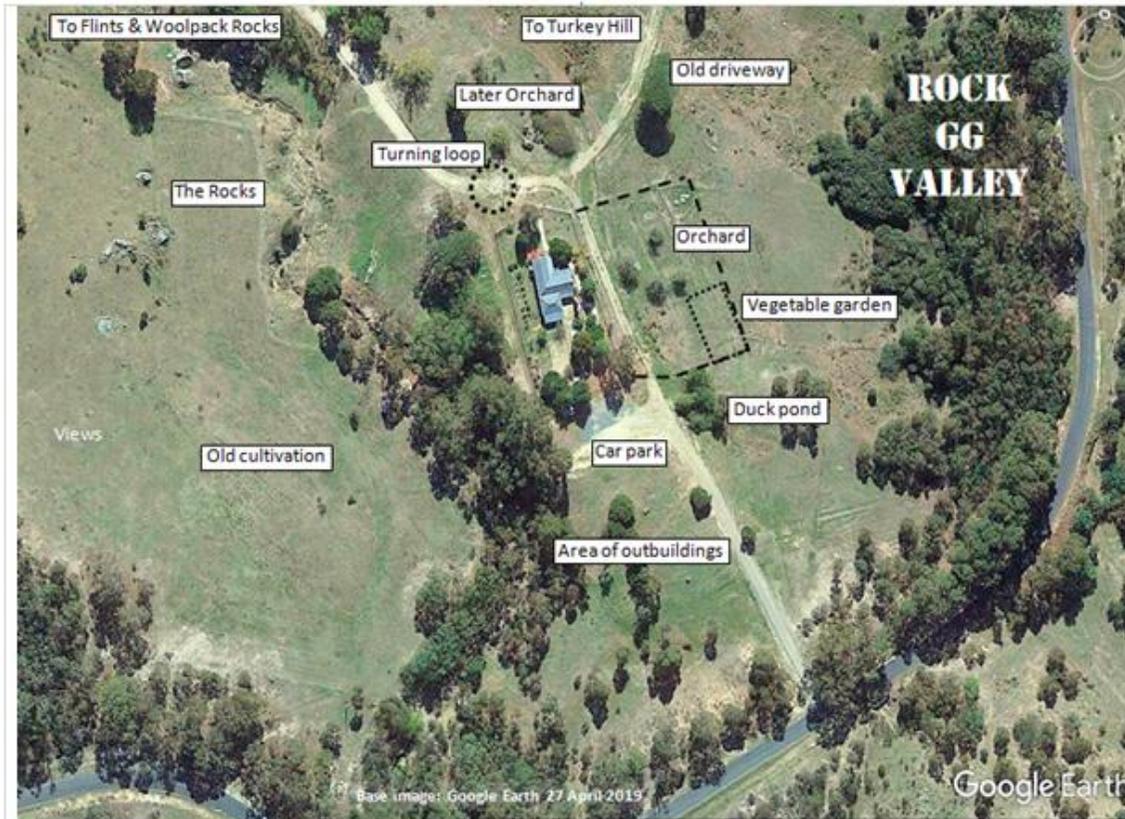
In 1955 Eddie Green (of the third generation) redesigned the house garden as part of a Junior Farmers competition.

This included soil treatment, new planting, garden beds, a 6ft (1.8m) enclosing fence, a bush house, ponds, trellises, terracing, paving and paths.

While much of the landscaping around the house was consumed in the 2003 wildfire, numerous plants regenerated and survive today.



Concept drawing of Eddie Greens' 1955 garden design (F Sivyva 2010)



The Produce Garden

Fed by a spring, with irrigation ditches, the property had a highly productive orchard from the beginning, with 74 trees by 1897. These were mostly apples, but there were also pears, peaches, apricots, plums, cherries, quinces and winter pears.

A second orchard was developed in the 1940s to the north of the homestead.

The garden also supplied lemons, grapes, passionfruit, elderberry, walnut, Spanish chestnut, tree lucerne (tagasaste), and figs.

Crops included wheat, oats, corn, maize, rye, lucerne and canola, with potatoes and pumpkins in the deep black soil of the river flats.

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A bountiful vegetable garden, bolstered by an ample supply of sheep manure, produced tomatoes, onions, cabbages, carrots, peas, beans, broad beans, cucumbers, parsnips, squash, jam melons, strawberries, blackberries, gooseberries, and leafy greens grown at the duck pond.

Outbuildings

While sheep were the mainstay of the property, the Greens also raised cattle, chickens, turkeys, ducks, pigs and bees, and George Green stocked the river with rainbow trout.

A number of outbuildings supported the livestock and mixed farming. Most were located on the rise above the homestead. They included a large woolshed with an engine room, yards and milking bails, a dairy, poultry sheds, a piggery, a shed on stumps for grain storage, a pisé stable and hayloft with yards (later used to house vehicles and equipment), a storage shed and cool room, and a blacksmith's shop with bellows and forge.

A pisé garage was constructed near the turning loop at the front of the homestead in the 1930s. With a more social flavour, a tennis court was added to the west of the house in the 1950s.

All the outbuildings were removed after the property was resumed in the 1960s. The Reserve Works Depot was built here (the site is now the car park), and the homestead was used for storage and staff accommodation until 2003.



The Rock Valley woolshed, servicing both the Greens' wool growing operation and dances for the district (TPA Archives)

DRAFT BROCHURE TEXT

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Personal Communications:

Pat Jeffery (Oct-Nov 2020) via Geoff Puleston

Peter Green (Oct-Nov 2020) via Geoff Puleston

Neil Reckord (Nov 2020; Jan 2021)

Don Fletcher (Nov 2020)