

# **Crinigan's Hut Ginninderra**

## **Preliminary Report on Artefact Collection**

**Canberra Archaeological Society**

**for the National Trust of Australia (ACT)**

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by the ACT Government under the  
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**Helen Cooke and Marilyn Folger**

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**NATIONAL TRUST**

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All photographs by Marilyn Folger.

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**Crinigans Stone Hut site after stabilisation of the walls.**

## **The Crinigans Stone Hut site**

John and Maria Crinigan were married in 1842. John was assigned to work for George Thomas Palmer and they settled in the stone cottage at Ginninderra on Palmer's land; in 1849 John was pardoned.

The Crinigans had ten babies but only one survived. Eliza Jane, called Jane, was born in 1850 and married Duncan McInnes in 1867. Jane and Duncan McInnes lived in the stone cottage with the first four of their 13 children until about 1875 when they moved to Glenwood, near Hall.

The cottage was not lived in full time after the McInnes family left. The land became part of the Cavanagh family's farm (they were related through John Crinigan's second wife, Margaret Logue). During this time parts of the cottage were recycled, such as some of the timbers and stone. A stone garden wall and ramp at 'East View' homestead (further along Gundaroo Road) came from here. Sites like this were often bulldozed and ploughed as they were considered to be a hazard to sheep.

However the Crinigan descendants never forgot where their ancestral home was and used to visit the site for family events and to pick the fruit which the orchard produced for decades. By the 1920s the house was a ruin, and all that remained of the cottage in the early 1990s was a pile of stones.

Family history attests to picnics to take advantage of the fruit from the three pear trees which survive to the west of the cottage and now lost plum trees, all of which would have been planted in the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century, together with the honey locust (*Robinia*) and hawthorn trees closer to the house. The blue irises still bloom each spring. The Cavanagh's remember a visit by Jane McInnes in the 1920s.

The land was resumed by the ACT Government for development of the suburb of Amaroo. The Crinigan descendants wrote to the Minister advising of the significance of the place to them and to the citizens of ACT, representing part of the history of Ginninderra. Subsequently the area of the cottage and the orchard was listed on the ACT Heritage Register in 1992 and planned into public open space.

The original Aboriginal inhabitants of this area have also left signs of their activities in stone artefacts found nearby and stone resources quarried not far from here at Girrawah Park in Amaroo.

## **Conservation of Crinigan's Hut**

In 1992 the ACT government provided funding to stabilize the remaining walls of the hut for future visitors. There were neither resources nor time to undertake a full excavation and the site was dangerous with many brown snakes in residence.

A stone mason was engaged but was unable to work on the walls unless all debris and snakes were removed from the hut and the outside walls. Under the leadership of trained archaeologists, members of the Canberra Archaeological Society (CAS) and Crinigan family descendants cleared the stones and blackberries from the walls to allow conservation. Many young snakes were relocated away from the site to protect the workers.

The deposit consisted of large and small stones, decayed mortar, soil and snakes. CAS members and Crinigan family descendants cleared the cottage site. The weeds were dug out, and stones and soil carefully and systematically removed from inside and around the walls, placing the soil in piles around the ruin and keeping a record of the source of each pile.



#### **Excavating one of the fire places in Crinigan's Stone Hut**

The wall conservation was completed and concerns were raised about the safety of the stones in the hut ruins as the surrounding land was sold and houses built, so the developer erected a high chain link fence around the area.

### **The artefact collection**

This report includes an inventory of the collected artefacts; a list of any other relevant material such as reports and a nomination of the collection to the ACT Heritage Objects Register.

The assemblage of the material from Crinigans Hut includes some bricks in the ACT Heritage Store. The rest of the material is stored in bags and boxes at the Folger's residence in Curtin.

The bricks in the Heritage Unit store were recorded and re-packaged by CAS as part of the ACT Heritage Unit store project also funded under an ACT Heritage Grant in 2006-07. These are included on the inventory for the Store and on the inventory which is part of this report.

All the material in Curtin has been checked for soundness of packaging and bags replaced where necessary. Leather items were removed from plastic bags and stored in paper and cardboard packaging.

In 1993 CAS arranged for historic archaeologist Graeme Thompson to give a workshop in Canberra and advise on cataloguing and storing the artefact assemblages from other Ginninderra sites *Malton* and *Site B* and give some preliminary analysis of the material. Some of the Crinigan's artefacts were also

considered although not included in Graeme's report. However all three sites were close to each other and contemporaneous so the reports are useful to the study of the Crinigan's artefacts. Notes from the workshop were compiled and are available for study in the CAS archives.

Jean Smith, expert in historic glass, was also lured to Canberra to give CAS members a workshop on glass and its uses in the time frame that Crinigans Hut was occupied. Some of the artefacts were studied and notes from this workshop are also available.

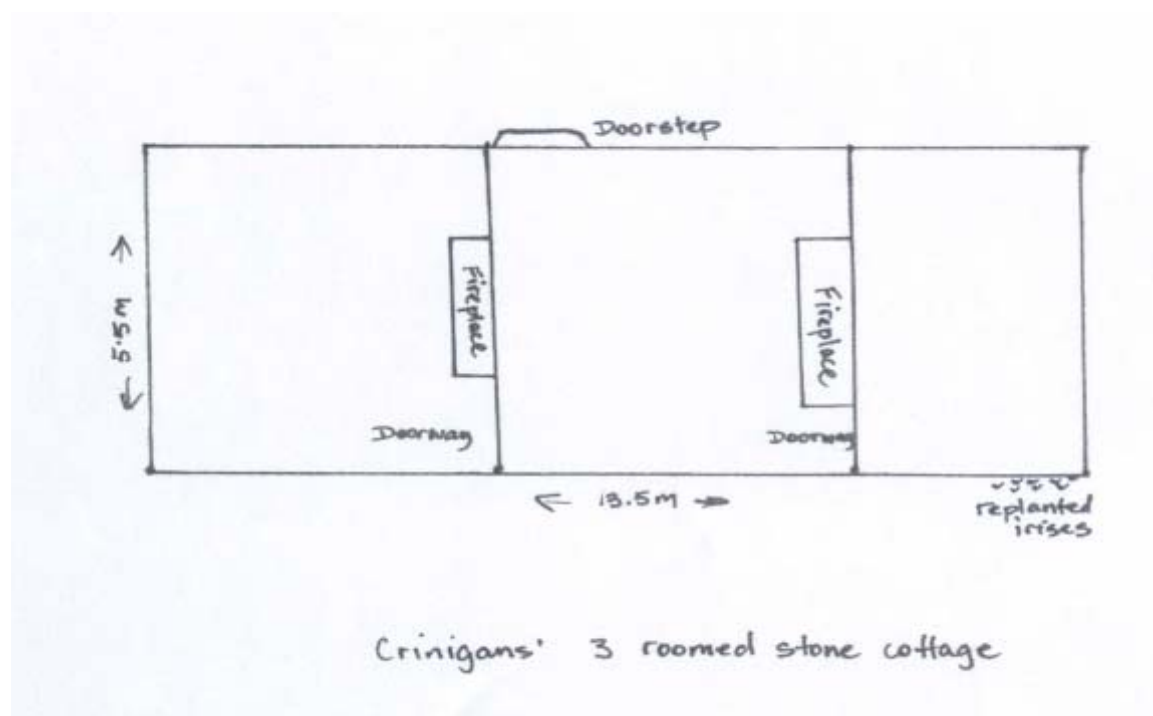
In view of the next project including a nomination to the Register, this report includes preliminary assessment of the significance of the collection. Comparisons with other similar collections will be undertaken in the next project.

## Methodology

After the walls were cleared it was a surprise to find that the stone 'hut' had been a cottage with not two but three rooms and two stone fire places. It must have been similar to the cottages occupied by the 40 or so settlers known to have lived along Ginninderra Creek in the mid 19<sup>th</sup> Century.

Many elements of building construction were recovered, from bricks and mortar to wooden door or window frames, nails and other metal pieces which might have been struts or connectors. There are also metal door hinges and handles.

The artefacts were recovered with note to their spatial distribution but no spits or levels were possible in the excavation due to the nature of the deposit and the danger of snakes. Most of the mound comprised large and small stones and bricks which had to be removed one by one. Smaller artefacts were retrieved as they were found between the stones.



Original site plan, M Folger.

Careful hand sieving of the material removed from inside the walls continued over several years. Crinigan descendants and CAS members continued to sort the material removed, recovering cultural remains and recording from which sector of the hut the artefacts had come.

## Summary of findings

The Crinigans, like other early settlers, relied on their own produce as well as native animals. The archaeological excavations revealed cooked bones of possum and other farmed animals such as pigs. Structural elements of the hut include pieces of several thicknesses of window glass, a wide range of nails, some hand forged and some manufactured later and other metal pieces yet to be analysed. Building hardware includes a door lock, pieces of wooden door or window frames, bricks, mortar and charcoal.

Historic records are usually weighted towards the land ownership and the men who worked the land, since these are the types of official records officially required. Archaeology supplies the presence of women and girls in the landscape, supporting oral and family history which often passes on memories more about the domestic life which supported the growing children.

At Crinigan's Hut sewing materials such as thimbles, needles and crochet hooks show evidence of the women's presence. All family members are represented by leather shoes in sizes suggesting men, women and possibly children found in two of the rooms. Several broken pieces of jewellery were recovered such as brooches and a locket. There are many buttons made from pearl shell, wood and metal and a range of belt buckles.

Children's activities are also represented by slate pencils and toys such as china doll pieces and glass marbles.

Broken pieces of crockery of many patterns have been washed and sorted. Some items may be partially reconstructed and the patterns traced to source and time frame.

As well as window sheet glass, glass is present in many forms such as decorative pieces, jars and bottles, both for alcohol and medicine. Metal fragments include food tins and some pieces are camp ovens or other cooking pots.

Smaller items of daily life include the parts of a watch or clock, only one coin, some commemorative medals and a variety of cutlery.

Further analysis will be reported under the next grant to study the collection.

## Relevant reports and references:

1995 Cooke, Helen. Letter re unsuccessful grant application for further work on Crinigans, Gungahlin and a copy of the grant application. Unpublished, CAS.

1994 Cooke, H. Notes taken on Graeme Wilson's workshop on ceramics for the Canberra Archaeological Society. Unpublished, CAS.

1992 Gillespie, Lyall L. *Ginninderra, Forerunner to Canberra*. The author, Canberra.

1988 NCDC, *Environmental Impact Statement Gungahlin: Draft for Discussion*. April 1988, Canberra.

1989 NCDC, *Environmental Impact Statement Gungahlin: Final Statement*. January 1989, Canberra.

1991 Saunders, Patricia. *ACT Sites Inventory Project Stage 3. Fieldwork report for 27 October 1991 "Tea Gardens" "Malton" and "Crinigans Hut" Gungahlin ACT*. December 1991, Unpublished report to CAS.

1995 Smith, Jean. Notes from Glass identification workshop 9 September 1995. Unpublished, CAS.

1993 Wilson, Graeme. *Malton and Site B Analysis of artefacts, Report on workshop for CAS October 23 and 24*. Unpublished, CAS.

**Various years of the following:**

Registers of Births, Deaths and Marriages, NSW Registrar General's Office

Register of Baptisms, Queanbeyan Roman Catholic Church

Register of Deaths, Registrar's Office Queanbeyan

NSW Archives Office

Queanbeyan Age

Goulburn Evening Post

Goulburn Herald