

MELROSE VALLEY
PRELIMINARY CULTURAL SURVEY REPORT
2003-2004

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INTRODUCTION

i. PROJECT AIM

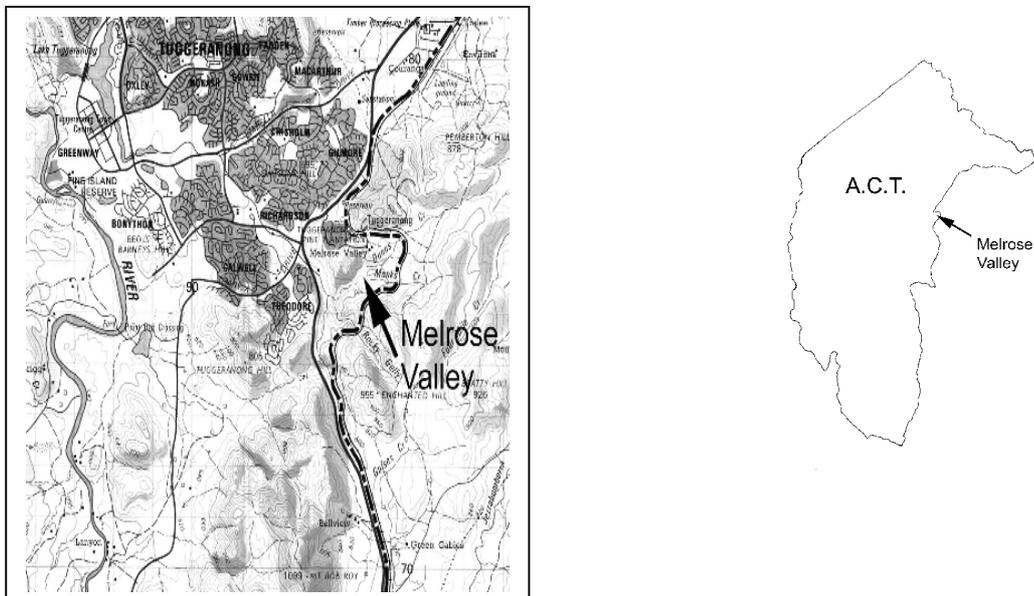
This is a preliminary survey of the cultural landscape of *Melrose Valley* that provides a sense of place and an indication of the heritage values of features and sites identified within its boundaries. The investigations reported in this survey were to identify the heritage potential of the property known as *Melrose Valley* and were undertaken at the request of the current leaseholder Harold Adams. It is anticipated that additional stages of investigation will follow this report and will include further consultation with relevant communities and the encouragement of their participation in the recording of findings and the nomination of sites to appropriate heritage registers.

ii. PROJECT RATIONALE

This project will study the spatial, temporal and ideological changes in the cultural landscape of *Melrose Valley* to understand the pattern of land use over time. This will establish a sense of place and help answer the question of what people were doing in the landscape and why. It will also investigate evidence of overlapping cultural land use and is designed to contribute contextual information to test local and regional archaeological models.

iii. LOCATION OF MELROSE VALLEY

Figure 1. Location of Melrose Valley



Australian Capital Territory 1:10,000 Planning Series Map 208-582, first edition (map reference: 943760).

Melrose Valley is located in the Tuggeranong region of the ACT and has the postal address of RMB 11 Old Tuggeranong Road, Queanbeyan. **Lot number DP plan number.**

It is situated on the eastern border of the ACT and is bounded by the Queanbeyan – Cooma railway line, on the northern, eastern and south eastern sides, the Canberra Nature Reserve to the north west, leased agistment paddocks and the Monaro Highway easement on the western side, and a fence line on the south.

iv. POTENTIAL HERITAGE VALUES

Aboriginal Heritage: social, scientific, spiritual values.

Collectively, it is possible to approach the study of *Melrose Valley* Aboriginal and European sites from the perspective of a comprehensive investigation of overlapping cultural land use. It is also possible to make a comparison of the cultural significance of aesthetic, spiritual and practical values of long-distance views and other features of the landscape.

European Heritage: historic, social, aesthetic.

Melrose Valley is representative of the rural landscape that prevailed prior the Federal Capital Territory and provides an opportunity to study the pastoral, selection and railway construction era in situ and in relation to evidence of Aboriginal occupation.

v. RECOMMENDATIONS

Aboriginal Heritage

- A more complete record of site content and the spatial patterning is required.
- Further work is necessary to record the directional aspect and elevation of sites and their full extent and a more complete archaeological record of artefacts and features.
- The ethnography needs to be further developed so that a stronger sense of place can be achieved. This should be done in collaboration with the Ngunawal community and other relevant communities to better determine the significance of artefacts, features, places and the natural environment. Further investigation needs to be done of the Aboriginal people living on and around Melrose Valley post European settlement. This should be supported by further investigation of findings of Aboriginal stone artefacts in association with glass and crockery sherds.
- A survey of the natural environment should be carried out to gain a better perception of the palaeoenvironment as a context for the cultural record.

European Heritage

- Further investigation of evidence needs to be done of Aboriginal people living on and around Melrose Valley post European settlement to improve knowledge of the extent of the Aboriginal/European contact period in the

Tuggeranong region and to counter the bias of one sided accounts in surviving historical records.

- Further investigation is required of known house or hut sites and a record of sites made. Look for evidence of other hut sites on Melrose Valley.
- Further investigation required of historical records for social connections between people occupying or owning land in the area and movement around the landscape, particularly in relation to the pastoral/selection era.
- Record sites and features and items connected with the railway construction era and the Tuggeranong siding.
- Record all examples of types of Capital Territory boundary markers.
- Record a comparative study of the Melrose Valley landscape with the paintings of Lloyd Rees and the Heidelberg School painters Tom Roberts, Arthur Streeton and Fred McCubbin in particular.

vi. LIMITATIONS

This report is based on a preliminary survey of *Melrose Valley*. Examination of sites was above surface only and was not an exhaustive survey of the sites. It sought only to identify indicative samples of the nature of sites, features or items, hence, this report is based on incomplete information.

The GPS system was found to give unreliable readings on elevations so they were not recorded in this report.

While some stone tool reduction techniques and features have been noted it has been in terms of indicating land use rather than for determining distance from a source material.

A request was denied for access to *Tralee* property located on the NSW side of the Queanbeyan-Cooma railway line. At the time of writing this report the *Tralee* Environmental Impact Report had not yet been registered for public viewing.

vii. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Consultation, advice and assistance:

- Harold Adams (Current leaseholder).
- Ralph Reader (previous leaseholder 1963-1985).
- Don and Ruth Bell (Ngunawal Elders) – including site visits.
- Wolf Mayer (Geologist) – including site visits.
- Rebecca Lamb (field/research assistant and local authority on the history of the Tuggeranong region).

- John Bruggeman (field assistant with extensive knowledge of Aboriginal sites in the ACT).
- Michael Hall (historical research) Canberra and District Historical Society.
- Joe Johnson, C.O.G. member, Bird Survey - January 2004.
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- Barry McCormack, oral history.
- Bob Parker, Railway Historical Society.
- Photos acknowledged with initials of photographers – Karen Williams (KW), Rebecca Lamb (RL) and John Bruggeman (JB).

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Harold Adams, Rebecca Lamb and John Bruggeman, Melrose Valley, Old Tuggeranong Road, Feb. 2004

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Melrose Valley survey area is representative of the landscape that prevailed prior to the Federal Capital Territory and provides an opportunity to study the pastoral, selection and railway construction eras in situ and in relation to evidence of Aboriginal activity and occupation. It is also possible to compare the cultural significance of aesthetic, spiritual and practical values of long-distance views and other features of the landscape. Collectively, *Melrose Valley* Aboriginal and European sites provide a comprehensive perspective for the investigation of overlapping cultural land use. The evidence is representative of Aboriginal lifestyle including exploitation of resources and ritual practices, and colonial expansion through pastoral practices and federation of the colonies. The survey area provides insights into the movement of people across the landscape: where they set up camp or settled; the development of major transport links; and the ideologies that surrounded these activities.

Despite change, it is possible to establish a strong sense of place concerning the items and features in the *Melrose Valley* landscape because it provides a relatively intact environmental context and scale for historical and archaeological investigation. Sites can be studied in a setting that is isolated from the encroaching suburbs, although, the pending development of neighbouring *Tralee* will adversely affect this. However, the setting still contains enough of the character and essential elements of remnant vegetation and topography to determine the factors that influenced site location.

The ethnographic evidence indicates that the *Melrose Valley* survey area was well used by both Aboriginal and European cultures. The current creek channels and spring-fed soaks, although currently in drought condition, still support vegetation, bird and animal life that is indicative of past food resources. Scarred trees, stone artefact scatters interspersed with glass and crockery sherds and remains of hut sites and camp hearths confirm that there was exploitation of these food and water resources. The presence of a locally rare source of grinding quality sandstone, tool quality ashstone and flat alluvial flood plains for hunting or grazing provides a reason for people to want to inhabit the area and utilise its resources. The valley provides a relatively sheltered environment for camping, away from an otherwise wind-swept Tuggeranong Plain, as it benefits from the protection of the surrounding ridges and hills. The presence of culturally significant old, gnarled Eucalypts, particularly scarred Blakely's Red Gum, and stone arrangements hint that some ritual activity was conducted. The long views gained from the high vantage points scattered about the valley provided opportunities, for shepherds and tribes people alike, to observe stock, game, encroaching tribes and signal fires. The hills served as teaching sites and lookouts to the Dreaming trails that pass beyond the Tuggeranong Valley and are part of the network of Dreaming places and pathways that cross the entire Australian continent. Present day appreciation of patterns of Aboriginal and European land use and ideology is possible from these vantage points as they help overcome the European concept of dividing the landscape into artificial boundaries and allow it to be perceived on a landscape scale.

Figure 2. Combined sites and survey boundary (ACT 1:10 000 Planning Series Map 208-582)

