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namadgi



Expand your horizons

The Historic Homestead Triangle of Namadgi National Park

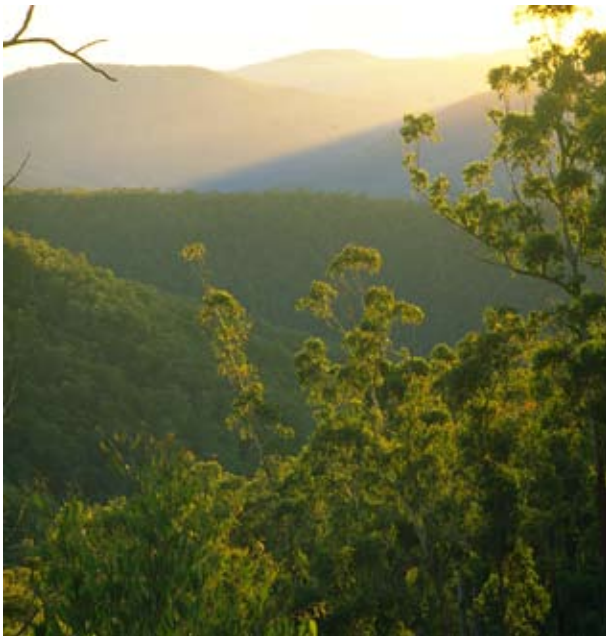
Waterhole Hut
Brayshaw's Homestead
Westerman's Homestead



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Namadgi National Park—Mountainous & Diverse

Gazetted in 1984, Namadgi National Park is 106,095 ha in size and occupies the western half of the ACT. It is a diverse land of mountains and wide valleys, clear streams, granite tors, twisted snow gums, tall alpine ash and open, grassy frost hollows.



Many people have been part of the land now known as Namadgi. Aboriginal people, pastoralists, foresters, skiers, scientists, bushwalkers, rangers and even astronomers have played a part in its history.



Honeysuckle Creek Tracking Station Site.

Some of the more tangible reminders of Namadgi's pastoral history are the many huts and homesteads built by pastoralists and their employees who managed and owned properties in the region. Usually simple in structure, they tell of the many challenges these people faced including isolation and a harsh climate. They also reveal stories of survival and the ability to improvise.

Skiing also had its debut in Namadgi with the highlight being the construction in 1938 of the Mt Franklin Chalet by the Canberra Alpine Club.



Mt Franklin Chalet, destroyed by fire Jan 2003 (above), Chimney, Bobeyan Homestead ruins (right).



Before Namadgi National Park—a History of the Pastoral Historic Buildings of Namadgi

The area of the ACT now known as Namadgi National Park was first explored in 1820 and opened to pastoralism in the 1830s. The first licensed property was William Herbert's Orroral run, gazetted in 1836, followed soon after by James Ritchie's claim to Bobeyan in the Naas Valley, which was taken up by John Gray in 1838.

By the late 1840s, land in all the valleys had been gazetted, and with the Land Acts of the 1860s and the 1880s, even greater numbers of people and stock came to settle in the region. Some parts of these mountain valleys have been farmed by generations of the same families.

Their certainty of freehold tenure came to an end in 1901 as the new Capital Territory began to be debated. The Capital Territory was formed in 1911 and Crown Land was resumed progressively after that. With the declaration of the Gudgenby Nature Reserve in 1979, followed by the Namadgi National Park in 1984 (and extensions in 1991), all farming ceased within the park boundaries.

Structures of all kinds, from the temporary bark shelters of the earliest pioneers, through slab or mud huts to weatherboard and fibro cottages surrounded by outbuildings and yards, were all once represented here.

The Kosciuszko Huts Association (KHA), in collaboration with the ACT Government have identified over 90 sites in Namadgi where structures once stood. Of the larger homestead complexes, a few have a single building still standing, but most are represented by a crumble of chimney stones or rusting pieces of corrugated iron. Gudgenby is the only intact complex that remains. Orroral still has two structures remaining, the homestead and the shearing shed.

The fires of January 2003 destroyed five huts including some at Mt Tennent, Franklin Chalet, Slalom Hut, Bushfold/Reads and Mt Coree Fire Tower Hut.



Curtis Family at Horse Gully Hut, southern Namadgi (below).



The Battlers of Namadgi

As a group, Brayshaw's Homestead, Westerman's Homestead and Waterhole Hut demonstrate how the early European settlers lived in this region. These settlers were the battlers who opened up this country to European settlement. Life was hard, particularly for the women who were often left at home with the children and the stock while the men went droving or into Queanbeyan for supplies. They are amongst the most frequently visited of the huts and homesteads in Namadgi National Park. All are located within 3 km of each other in the very southern section of the park.



Westerman's Homestead. Photo Babette Scougall 1989.

Brayshaw's Homestead

Built in 1903, Brayshaw's Homestead is a traditional slab built construction. It was built for David Brayshaw, one of the sons of the Brayshaws that lived in Bobeyan Homestead, a few kilometers to the north. In 1931, David died from exposure after falling off his horse between his and his parent's home.



After David, the homestead was lived in by Roma Brayshaw and husband William Edward (Ted), as newly weds. In 1935, Roma wallpapered the internal walls with newspapers to keep out the drafts. Some snippets of that wallpapering still remain.

The last owners of the homestead were Daphne and Colin Curtis, who extended the homestead to turn it into shearers' quarters.

The building has been unoccupied since the mid 1970s, when the area became part of Gudgenby Nature Reserve and later Namadgi National Park. Because of its closeness to the road, the homestead was a prime target for vandalism. The KHA became involved in the restoration of this homestead in the late 1980s. The original slab structure had subsided and was in danger of collapsing.

Many of the base plates and corner posts were cut and replaced using traditional methods. Drainage work, a new verandah facing north and rebuilding of the top section of the chimney were important aspects of the restoration.

Since its restoration, there has been very little vandalism and the building is now regarded as a good example of a traditional slab hut which is now over 100 years old.

Nearby are the remains of the Tin Dish School which operated as a single teacher school for the children of the area around 1910.



Brayshaw's Homestead

Photos: J Winston 1976 (top right),
Peter Rose 1987 (above),
Charles Walker 1992 (above right).



Brayshaw's Homestead
 'Wallpaper' (top left),
 Restored post. Photo: Maurice
 Sexton 1987 (top right),
 Peter Rose 1987 (left and below).



Westerman's Homestead

Westerman's Homestead is a five room, weatherboard home built in 1916 and known as 'the big house'. It was the third house built on the site, the earlier buildings being built in the 1880s by Thomas and Mary Westerman (who were engaged in pastoral activity in the valley). The existing homestead was built by Bruce Jeffery for his bride, a Westerman. He and his wife lived there for some years, and after they left, it became the residence of the in-laws, Thomas and Mary. There is a sheep dip nearby.

The last owner of the property was a descendant, Dollie Oldfield, who used it as a family retreat.

Nearby is the grave site of Elizabeth Shiels who died in 1922, and an un-named stillborn baby who died in the 1880s. The ceiling lining boards in one of the rooms were used to build Elizabeth's coffin. For this reason they have not been replaced as part of the restoration.



Grave at Westerman's Homestead Photo: Richard Stanley 2005.



Westerman's Homestead fell into disrepair after the area became a nature reserve, and was also vandalized.

The chimneys collapsed, the floor subsided and many of the structural timbers were eaten out by white ants. The KHA became involved in caring for this building in the late 1980s.

A stonemason was contracted through a Heritage Grant to rebuild the chimneys. All of the other work was undertaken by KHA volunteers.



Stockyards, Westerman's Homestead (top left)
(above) Westerman's Homestead. Photo: Babette Scougal 1989.



Westerman's Homestead
Photos: Pauline Downing 1999
(above),
Richard Stanley (below left and below
right).



Waterhole Hut

Waterhole hut is a typical shepherd's tin hut built by the Olfields in 1939 for the shelter of stockmen. It was extended in 1940 but still remained a one room hut with a verandah. The chimney and the verandah had collapsed and the building was a sorry site when the KHA started work on it in 2000. The verandah and the chimney have been rebuilt.



Waterhole Hut. Photo: Richard Stanley 2005.



Near Waterhole Hut is one of the best examples in the region of drop log fence sheep yards which have also been restored by the KHA.

Drop log fence sheep yards. Photo: Richard Stanley 2005 (top).

Waterhole Hut (bottom) Photo: Richard Stanley 2004.

Caring for Huts—ACT Parks, Conservation and Lands and the Kosciuszko Huts Association (KHA)

The huts in the high country of the ACT, NSW and Victoria were built by pastoralists, stockmen, prospectors, recreational fishermen, skiers and the Snowy Mountains Hydro-electric Authority to meet their accommodation, shelter, recreational and hydrology needs at the time. There are about 80 complete and standing huts in the Kosciuszko National Park (at 90 distinct sites, some with multiple buildings), with a further 20 partially standing. More than 20 were lost in the fires of January 2003.

There are also 22 mountain hut sites (again with some multiple buildings like Mt Tennant) in the Namadgi National Park.

Today they are cared for co-operatively by the KHA and the respective parks services.



KHA members restoring Waterhole Hut.
Photo: Richard Stanley 2005.

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Expand your horizons

The Kosciuszko Huts Association and the ACT Government welcome new members to the KHA to assist in the preservation of the cultural heritage of Namadgi.

Further information

KHA

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Website: www.khuts.org

This brochure can be downloaded from the KHA website



ACT Government

Namadgi National Park: (02) 6207 2900

www.tams.act.gov.au

Canberra Connect: 13 22 81



Westerman's Homestead. Photo: Pauline Downing 1999 (above). KHA members restoring Waterhole Hut. Photo: Richard Stanley 2005 (left).



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