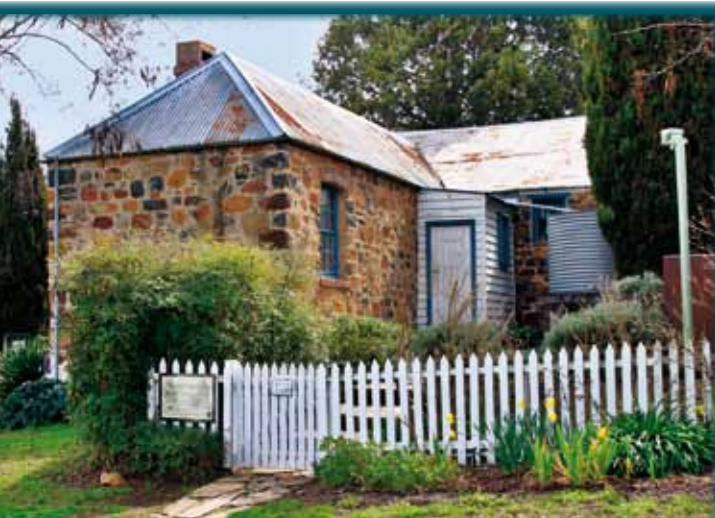


## Blundells Cottage

Step back in time at historic Blundells Cottage. Immerse yourself in the history of the cottage and use the hands-on displays to experience the stories of the people who lived there.



Opening Hours: Thursday and Saturday 10am to 11.30am and 12pm to 4pm (Closed public holidays)

Admission: Free

Special cottage tours are available for schools or other groups (bookings are essential).

Blundells Cottage  
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## 5. Kitchen & Office



Two additional rooms were added on to the cottage in 1888, the year that Joseph Lyle – the eighth child – was born to the Blundells. Initially, room five was used as a bedroom. It probably became a kitchen in the 1930s when the Oldfields moved into the cottage.



Many of the objects on display would have been in use until the 1940s and '50s, although they were invented much earlier.

Also in this room is a Coolgardie Safe or Drip Safe. These were invented in Western Australia during the gold rush era. A predecessor to the refrigerator, it used only water and a slight breeze through the hessian to create a cooling effect. The safes have been known to achieve an eight degree drop in temperature. They were usually kept on the verandah.



The room, which is now used as the office, was probably a store room during the Blundells' time.

### "Moustache cup"

Most 19th century gentlemen had beards and moustaches. These special cups allowed gentlemen to sip their tea without getting their moustache wet. They feature a ledge of china on one edge of the cup rim, with a small opening to allow the tea to be sipped without wetting the whiskers.



### Butter

After milking a cow, the milk is set aside and the cream rises to the top. The cream would keep longer if turned into butter. It was churned until it became hard and salt was added as a preservative.



## 6. Slab building

This building is believed to have been used as a kitchen until room five was converted into a kitchen in the 1930s. Separate kitchens were common at the time as a way of managing the summer heat and the danger of fire.

As the Blundell family grew, the older boys slept out here with their father. They probably used camp beds and kept a wood stove alight.

To the left of the door is a 'corn crusher' or mill. This was used to crush grain or corn kernels to be fed to animals.

The slab building was built using a common pre-industrial building method – which involved making thick timber planks by splitting tree trunks. This was done with hand tools, each 'plank' called a slab.



Bellows and work tools

Shoemaking equipment



**Shoemaking:** leather was cut out using the curved blade. It was then shaped and stitched around the shoe last or mould. Thick leather was nailed on for the sole and often metal caps were also nailed on. The metal caps helped the sole last longer on rough roads.

Due to the isolation of the Canberra area, the community relied greatly on the bullock teams to bring supplies from Sydney, particularly clothing and shoes. Therefore it was out of necessity that shoes be repaired, allowing them to be passed on to siblings.

A **bullock team** could only travel about five to ten miles per day, compared with 12–18 miles a day with a horse and cart. The leading bullocks were the most experienced, while the polers (at the back) were the strongest. George Blundell's lead bullocks were called 'Smut' and 'Smiler'.

## 7. Garden



Whaling pot



Water tank

The current garden was planted in 1964 when the cottage became a museum. The objects on display in the garden include a rabbit poison cart, a ship's water tank and a whaling pot.

In about 1888 the Blundells had a bread oven built on to the east wall of the cottage. This is still present. The bread oven predates Murray's Bakery, Canberra's first commercial bakery, by twenty-one years.

Murray's Bakery was to the west of the cottage in (what is now) Commonwealth Park. It operated from 1909 to 1923.

Even today, the cottage is not connected to town water.



As the rabbit plague spread across Australia, various methods were employed to reduce their number. Poison such as phosphorous, strychnine or arsenic was mixed with bran and dropped around the farms using poison carts like this one.

At the back (east) of the slab building there is a toilet. The 'out house' was originally much further from the cottage, near where the lake shore is now.



To use a brick bread oven, a fire was made inside it first to heat it up. If a handful of flour thrown at the outside of the oven burned up with sparks, the oven was the right temperature. The embers were then put out and the risen dough put in and door closed.

# A Self Guided Tour of Blundells Cottage



## A Look into the Past 30 minute tour

Wendouree Drive, on the northern shore of Lake Burley Griffin off Constitution Avenue.

A hands-on museum



# Welcome to Blundells Cottage

## 1. Parlour



**Did you know:** that seven of the eight Blundell children were born in either January or April.

The photographs displayed in the parlour are of the Blundell family, who moved into the cottage in 1874. Flora became the local midwife and delivered most

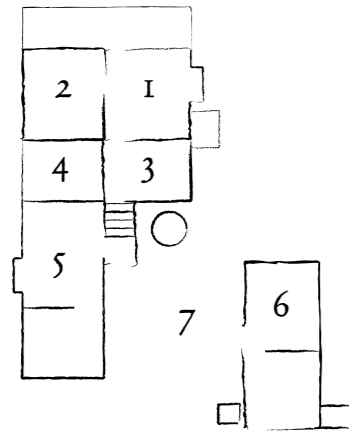
of the babies born in the district. She was also a fine horsewoman.

George was the bullock driver for the Campbells, taking wool to Sydney and returning with supplies such as flour, sugar, salt, clothes, material and tools. The return trip lasted about 6 weeks. The bullock teams also went to Port Nelligen and Goulburn, and once the railway was established, they started going to the closer location of Queanbeyan.

The objects in this room are indicative of the types of activities that were popular at the time. The Blundells had a piano in the parlour and were known to have lively sing-alongs.



Cottage floor plan. Numbers correspond to different rooms.



This small stone cottage was built about 1860 as a home for workers on the Duntroon Estate. A number of families lived in the cottage over the hundred years it was occupied. The first two families, the Ginns and then the Blundells, were employees of Robert Campbell, who owned the Duntroon Estate.

*The borders of Duntroon Estate stretched from the foot of Mt Ainslie to Wickerslack Lane, and from near Northbourne Avenue to well past Queanbeyan in the east.*

At its peak, the Duntroon sheep grazing estate encompassed 32 000 acres (about 13 000 hectares) and had about 27 workers' cottages.

Robert Campbell founded the estate in 1825 when he was granted 4000 acres of land, 400 head of sheep and £2000 as compensation for the loss of his ship, the 'Sydney'. The 'Sydney' had sunk while on government business. Campbell was part of the East India trade. Today, the Campbell warehouses are still standing in The Rocks, at Circular Quay, Sydney.

The landscape around the cottage was very different to what we see today. Paddocks and outbuildings surrounded the cottage. The nearest neighbour lived in a cottage located in what is now Commonwealth Park.

Other buildings that were part of the Duntroon Estate include Duntroon House, Mugga Mugga and Duntroon Dairy. These buildings are still standing today.

Although most of the objects and furnishings in the cottage did not belong to the Blundells, many were donated by other pioneer families and are typical of the period.

Duntroon Estate, Limestone Plains 1910



Flora Blundell nee McLennan

Flora was born on the Isle of Skye, Scotland, in 1845, and emigrated to Australia with her family when she was aged nine. Flora was a traditional name in her family – both her mother and grandmother were named Flora – and in turn she used the name for one of her children.



Stereoscope

Other evening activities, such as sewing, reading and writing, were all done by the light of kerosene lamps and candles.

**Stereoscopes**, with a set of photos, were another form of entertainment. Stereo photographs are photos taken at the same time from two different angles. When seen through the viewer, our eyes compensate and the photo appears three-dimensional.



Zither

The instrument on the table is a **zither**, which was played with a pick or by fingers.



Harmonium

At about the same time as Blundells Cottage was built, this **harmonium** was made in France. Air is pumped into the small reed organ by the bellows, which is operated by pushing the pedal with your feet. Music is created when keys on the keyboard are pressed and the air is released.

*In the nineteenth century childbirth was risky and an experienced midwife was invaluable. At this time mothers stayed in bed for at least 10 days after giving birth.*

### Nineteenth Century midwife's equipment list:

basins of hot and cold water, warm blankets & towels, needle & thread, safety pins, olive oil, scissors, petroleum jelly or lard, brandy, footbath, fan, Condy's fluid, a syringe, napkins, waterproof sheeting, binder (around abdomen). In some rural areas the birth of a child was announced by putting a cushion on the doorstep: blue for a boy, pink for a girl, and black for a child that was stillborn.

## 2. Front bedroom



Agnes (sitting) and Gertrude Ginn, the daughters of the family for whom the cottage was built. Gertrude, born 21 September 1865, was the first of many babies born in the cottage.

William and Mary Ginn and their children were the first family to live in the cottage. William Ginn was the head ploughman for the estate. His employment by Robert Campbell had been arranged in England before they emigrated. The Ginns brought with them

a muzzle-loading gun and a four-poster bed. The family stayed in the cottage for 14 years before buying a property at 'Canberry Park'.

The **hot water bottle**, or 'bed pig', on the bed would have been much appreciated during Canberra winters.



Hot water bottle

Before houses had indoor toilets and bathrooms, a **wash stand** was common bedroom furniture. It holds a jug and basin for a morning wash, and a chamber pot that meant you did not have to make a trip to the outside toilet in the middle of the night.



Wash stand

On the dresser are **curling irons** and **glove stretchers**. The curling irons had to be heated carefully because, if they were too hot, the smell of burning hair would soon alert the user. Glove stretchers were used to stretch gloves back to their original shape after they had been washed.



Curling iron & glove stretcher

## 3. Work room



This room had various uses over the one hundred years that the cottage was occupied. It is probable that it was a winter bath area during the Blundell era, with bath water being carried up from the river and heated over the fire. Each family member bathed in turn, generally on Saturday nights. The soap was made from animal fat and borax or lye.

It may have also functioned as a work room for leatherworking, ironing, and extracting honey from the Blundell family's beehives.

The original shingle roof can be seen through a space in the hessian ceiling. Each shingle was held by only one nail to avoid splitting.

*These irons were either filled with hot coals, or heated on stoves or in fires. A major advance was made in 1870, when American housewife Mary Potts patented an iron designed to stay hot for longer, and with a wooden handle to prevent the user from getting burned. Her invention became famously known as the 'Mrs Potts iron'*



### Parbuckling

The Blundell boys had to pull barrels of water up from the river on homemade tracks. This was called 'parbuckling'.

### Beekeeping

The frames from the hives were put into mosquito netting bags and were taken to an enclosed space, usually a room in the house. The wax covering the full cells was scraped off with a special knife and then the honeycombs were crushed between the hands so that the honey would flow out. The bags were hung up over containers until the honey drained. The bits of comb (wax) remained in the bags.

## 4. Girls' room



Children generally shared beds when space and money were limited. Bedrooms were gender segregated in the Blundells' time.

'Knuckles' or 'Jacks' was a game played with sheep's knucklebones. Players would try to pick up knuckles before the one they had thrown in the air landed.

Other popular toys of the time were skipping ropes, hoops, hobby horses and soldiers.