



Cuppacumbalong Homestead and Gardens

The Vision

Since purchasing Cuppacumbalong Homestead in September 2017, my partner Karim Haddad and I have embarked on a massive restoration journey. Cuppacumbalong has been a strong part of my life since moving to the ACT in 1993 having come for a position with Outward Bound. Many afternoons were spent sipping coffee in the café overlooking the garden and through to the Rob Roy Range beyond the river.

Having grown up on a large sheep property and living in an old homestead, I now feel right at home having started work on the garden and adjoining paddocks (4 hectares in total), which are now all that remain of the original holding of the late 1800's.

With the current homestead a feature of 1920's architecture, a Californian Bungalow, our vision is to restore the internal décor to that of the Art Deco period and highlight the style of the early days of the fledgling capital. The walls will continue to feature the early days for the new settlers as they endeavoured to come to terms with the new environment that surrounded them.

Flowing from that, the gardens will be re-stylised to also reflect the period with heavy planting from the 1920's. This is currently a huge undertaking as they were quite overgrown when we settled last year. The main structure of the garden will be retained allowing the sweeping vistas from the verandah to be showcased in their full beauty, encapsulating the hills beyond.

In the paddocks outside of the main garden, the vegetation will be that which is indigenous to the Ngunnawal nation. A plan to integrate bush tucker and medicinal plants will be incorporated in the understory plantings of the treed groves.

The massive area allotted to growing vegetables and orchard will also be reinstated. Opportunities to grow for local restaurants and also the homestead will be a feature of this component, focusing on seasonal organic produce.

Running concurrently to this undertaking, is the business stream of the site, which is that of a making space. Tharwa Valley Forge currently runs numerous classes in blacksmithing, knife making, and Japanese razor making along with leather and engraving classes. An opportunity to grow the range of classes exists with the long-term vision of the site to be a full time making hub.

Just as the early settler families had when they arrived in the Tharwa Valley, it is a long term journey and vision that Karim and I have for the site. We hope that while we are custodians, we are able to restore the grounds to both their English influenced beauty and also that of the first Australians.

Ali Wass, 2018