

# Church Rock



## Heritage Loop



Tidbinbilla



The Church Rock Heritage Loop, 1.8 km return, 1 hour, easy to moderate grade with some steps. Numbers in the brochure refer to numbered posts.

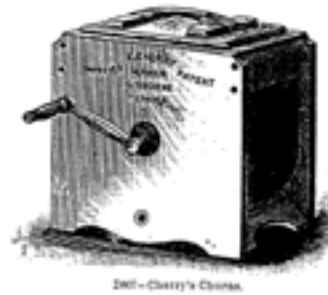
Many city people today may think that a return to country life as it was 100 years ago would be easier and far less stressful than their lives today. History tells us this is not the case. Life at Tidbinbilla, although much simpler than today, was certainly not easy. The pioneers worked from dawn to dusk to keep the pantry full and make ends meet.

### 1 Sid and Annie Flint's Milking Yard

Each day Annie Flint made her way to the milking yard that was here, to hand-milk the house cow. A simple, four-sided, timber-slab milking shed protected her from the weather.

The milk was essential for their own household needs. From the milk Annie extracted the cream which she then churned to butter.

Some residents in the Valley were able to sell excess milk and butter. Other home produce, such as honey, fruit and vegetables were also sold or bartered locally.



*Butter was made every third day, with the kids sitting on the lid of the churn while Ethel turned the handle.*

Thelma Cabban (nee Blewitt)

### 2 Sid Flint's Pine Trees

In 1910, Sid Flint first planted some pine trees *Pinus radiata* here. In about 1925, pines were also planted as a wind break for cattle near the present toilet block. These trees are fast growing, drought and frost tolerant and make a dense and effective wind break. They provided vital shelter and shade for livestock, reducing deaths due to cold and heat.

### 3 Pine Windbreak

Laurie Dallender, who farmed sheep here for 20 years, planted pines here in about 1939 to protect the house and sheds from the icy winds that hurl over the mountains and sweep down the valley. All that remains today are the pine stumps in the gully to the right.

### 4 Flints Homestead

Self-sufficiency was the key to survival in the Valley, especially when snow or flooded rivers prevented access to Queanbeyan and Tharwa for several weeks. Each homestead had a large vegetable garden and orchard.

*George ploughed up a nice bit of new ground. Bought 10/6 worth of new fruit trees. Have 74 fruit trees altogether now.*

Valley resident Mary Ann Green, 1897.

Here at Flint's homestead a large vegetable garden was behind the house. Potatoes, pumpkins, marrows, tomatoes, beans, peas, cabbages and turnips were grown.



Flint's homestead and farmland from Church Rock, late 1940s. Photo: TPA Collection.

## 5 Sheedy's Home Site

The Sheedy family lived at Rock Valley for around five years from 1885. Julia Sheedy owned the Rock Valley property and her son, John, owned the land around you. The bitter aloes growing at the base of the poplar tree in front of you mark the site of Sheedy's homestead.

Julia Sheedy was the only woman to be an official landowner in the Valley at this time. Women in the Valley worked very hard, carrying out domestic chores and managing the property while the men were away. These extracts from Mary Ann Green's diary tell us a little about life at Tidbinbilla:

**1897- Planted some tree lucernes on Jubilee Day  
June 22 1897.**

**Sowed some peas and broadbeans in June.**

**Planted cabbage plants out on the 23<sup>rd</sup>. Got some seeds and  
strawberry roots from Bills.**

**GH [George Hatcliff] came up for Bill [William Green—Mary  
Ann's brother-in-law] to go for the doctor for the baby. It  
died that night. I went down there.**

**Thursday I went down [to] Mrs Noone. Friday it was  
buried. G [George Green—Mary Ann's husband] put in  
some cabbage seeds. Bill came up on Monday to help  
with the fence.**

**1898 - Muzzled the calves on 23 April. George [Green] went  
up to Orroral to work at the fence, was up there three weeks.**



Mary Ann Green (1865-1911) taken in 1895.  
Photo: TPA Collection.

## 6 Church Rock Valley School

Imagine the Government saying we will give you a part time teacher if you build your own school. That's exactly what happened in the Tidbinbilla Valley.

George Green and George Hatcliff built a small pise' and timber classroom. The school opened in April 1898. Classes were conducted every second week. For the first time, twelve children (aged 4 to 14) from the Green, Noone and Staunton families attended school. On their way to and from school they checked and reset the rabbit traps.

## 7 Old Tidbinbilla Road

The old Tidbinbilla Road wound its way from here to the Mount Domain property further up the valley where it ended. In the other direction it led to Tharwa and Queanbeyan. This road was the only form of communication until the arrival of the telephone in 1928. Mail was carried by horseback once a week from Tharwa to the Tidbinbilla Valley.

The road allowed the residents to sell their produce to a local merchant who bought wool, skins, hides and honey. Every month the Anglican parish minister made his way to Tidbinbilla to deliver a church service and visit settlers.

## 8 Dallender's Spring

The early settlers of Tidbinbilla carried water in buckets from the creek, spring or well to their houses. It was only in later years that water tanks were used to collect rainwater. In front of you is the site of the spring that Laurie Dallender dug out and piped water by gravity to the gardens of the Flint's Homestead.

*The walk crosses the Tidbinbilla Ring Road (watch for cars) and continues up to Church Rock.*

## Church Rock

The name Church Rock came from the tall spire-like rock which would have been clearly seen from the valley floor in the 1800s. From stories passed down through the families of Tidbinbilla Valley it is believed that Church Rock had religious significance for the community. Mass was held for residents here and also at the Staunton's (Mt Domain property).

The priest would take Catholic school children to the rock for religious instruction. Also Mary Ann Green took her children here occasionally for Sunday School tuition (Wesleyan).

There is also evidence that Aboriginal people visited this site.

Guided tours of this walk for groups can be organised through the Tidbinbilla Visitor Centre.

This walking track is a joint Tidbinbilla Pioneers' Association Inc (TPA) and Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve project.

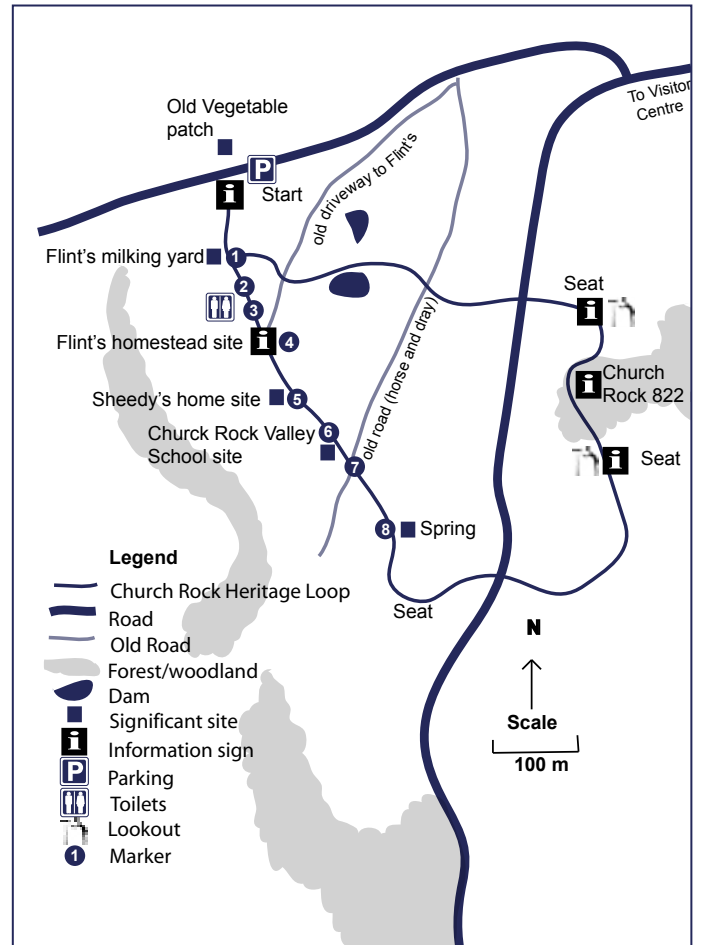
The Tibinbilla Pioneers' Association Inc (TPA) is a community group with direct links and a strong interest in the history of the Tidbinbilla area. The Church Rock Heritage Loop was funded by the ACT Heritage Grants Program.



Mrs Lucy Maxwell and her son Pat delivering mail to Elma Green at Rock Valley 1930. Photo: TPA Collection.

## The Good Old Days

Next time you think about retreating to the ‘good old days’, cast your mind back to early life at Tidbinbilla. Imagine yourself rising at dawn and working until dusk — carrying water, fetching firewood, fixing fences, milking the cow, tending the gardens and the livestock, coping with drought or floods, making butter, bread and your own clothes. There’s no supermarket or corner shop to buy from.



*Life at Tidbinbilla in the early days was very isolated and quite hard but worry free.*

*...a good dance would finish at dawn; it was a real night out, then we had to go home and milk the cows.*

Phyllis Morton (nee Flint)

### Further Information

Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve Visitor Information Centre  
 Phone (02) 6205 1233  
 Enquiries: Phone Canberra Connect on 13 22 81  
 Website: [www.tams.act.gov.au](http://www.tams.act.gov.au)