

WESTLAKE NEWSLETTER 2009

In October this year I was asked by CDHS to write an article on the Surveyors' Plan Room. This is the small concrete building off State Circle in the area nearly opposite Flynn Drive. I know the building under the name Scrivener's Plan Room. During the research that included the newspapers now on-line (National Library) I came across a few interesting facts – that included that the plan room was built in 1911. The photograph below taken by Trish Frei shows the plan room in 2009.



One of the problems that confronted me was that the documents refer to the site of the camp as being erected on Camp Hill when today it is on an area of land known as Capital Hill. The penny dropped at a later stage when I realized that when State Circle was completed it included capitol and camp hills – or rather parts of each – the whole lot then became Capital Hill.

This reminded me of the cutting and where was the earth dumped. I believe it was dumped into the gully, which today is part of Block 2, Section 128 Stirling Park and explains why a large section of the block is treeless and quite different to the rest of the native parkland.

Briar Farm – Southern Cross Yacht Club built on the site - was the home from around the 1860s of members of the Kinlyside family who moved to Oaks Estate in 1913 when the Commonwealth took over the land. In 1927 Charles Foster Day with his wife, Frances, and children moved into the cottage where they remained until the early 1950s. I knew that the house was leased to others and it was from Val Emerton's research that I learnt that Percy Douglas, Fire Brigade Chief and his bride, Una Southwell, also lived at Briar Farm. The couple married at St Gregory's RC Church in

Queanbeyan in May 1921. And there are many stories about Percy.



Above: Percy Douglas's funeral, courtesy of Brenda Hennessy.

I have the privilege of typing some of Lyall Gillespie's cards and one article mentioned a big fish caught in the Molonglo by Westlake men, Les Brill and Spencer McDonald:

On Saturday night Messrs S McDonald and LW Brill of Westlake caught a good haul of cod in the Molonglo River below Corkhill's dairy. One of the catch being a cod weighing 50lb and five smaller cod were landed. The big fish was sold to Mr H Notarus of Kingston. Canberra Times 31.3.1930

By the time we moved to Westlake, Mrs McKissock senior had died and Jock had remarried. The death of the first Mrs McKissock is recorded by Lyall Gillespie:

McKISSOCK, MRS J -1925

The sympathy of the residents of Westlake and the members of the Canberra Burns Club go out to Mr J McKissock who with his young family have passed through a season of trouble. The loss of a good wife and mother is a blow only time can heal. Queanbeyan Canberra Advocate 29.10.1925

Another couple I had come across before typing Lyall's card is that of Mrs Bettie McKinnon and her son Ronald, both of whom are buried in St John the Baptist Church Cemetery in Reid. The family lived in Howie's (I believe) before moving into a Westlake cottage - then by 1928 Braddon

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and at the time of her death, at Griffith. The tombstone in St John the Baptist Church Cemetery states:

McKINNON, BETTIE (BETTY) HARDIE (MRS J McKINNON) and RONALD Beloved wife of JG McKinnon accidentally drowned 17.4.1933. Son Ronald died 27.9.1925 aged 10 months.

St John's Churchyard by Jean Salsbury provides addition information – Betty Hardie McKinnon nee Bell was an immigrant from Scotland. She married James Goodall McKinnon and the couple had two sons. A newspaper article notes the death of Ronald Edward William aged 10 months on 27th September 1925 the dwelling place was *The Gap Cottages* [Westlake].

The *Queanbeyan Age* 21.4.1933 detailed the search and the finding of the body of Mrs McKinnon: *After searchers had spent all night in the vicinity of the Cotter Dam the body of Mrs Betty Hardie McKinnon aged about 40 of Canberra who had not been seen since Saturday morning, was found in a pool below the 40ft wall of the dam on Wednesday. The police theory is that she met her death by accidentally slipping from the steep cliff like country above the banks of the Cotter. Her car was found unattended at the end of the roadway leading to the dam.* [Lyll Gillespie's cards]

Another find in Lyll's cards was what happened to Bill Mitchell who was Mess Caterer at Westlake for No 3 Sewer Camp after Arthur Freeman – then to No 1 Labourers on Capital Hill after Herbert Daniel and lastly to White City where he went broke.

A well known identity in local sporting circles Mr John (Bill) Mitchell died suddenly at his residence, The Causeway, on Monday morning. Deceased who was 60 years of age and unmarried came from his native state of Victoria with the first gangs of workers to come from there on the newly begun construction works in the Federal Territory more than 10 years ago. The late Mr Mitchell conducted one of the first messes in the Territory where the Railway Station now stands and continued in that line of business for a number of years...of late years he became interested in local sporting ventures and

was a familiar figure at the dog racing where he fielded with some success. The funeral which took place this afternoon was largely attended many following the cortege from Canberra to the RC Cemetery at Queanbeyan where the Rev Father Toomey of Canberra officiated. Queanbeyan Age 1.10.1935

A death of an old friend and Westlake identity occurred late last year. Alan Rommel Gane born 29.9.1925, son of Mrs Gane of Westlake died 12th December 2008 at 10am. He is survived by his wife of 62 years, Gwynneth and children Barbara, Alan and Robert, ten grandchildren, eleven great grandchildren and brother, Harold Gane of Sydney. His funeral was held at the Crematorium in Canberra on Wednesday 17th December.

Alan wrote for our book, *True Tales From Canberra's Vanished Suburbs of Westlake, Westridge and Acton*. A photograph loaned by him and published in the book showed him on one of Llewellyn's horses that he had ridden across from Acton to his home at 12 Westlake. Alan is in his AIF uniform in this photograph. He lied about his age to join up when he was 16. When he officially made the enlistment age he moved from AIF to the RAAF.



During a wander through the Woden Cemetery I came across in the lawn section in the Presbyterian portion of a grave that had the standard small bronze plaque on which is written: LEWIS WINDERMERE NOTT DIED 27 OCTOBER 1951 AGED 63 YEARS 156C

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There is no mention of his relatives or that he was one of Canberra's early medical practitioners and for many years was Superintendent of the Canberra Community Hospital (1929-1934); elected member of the Advisory Council (1934-1939) and was Canberra's first elected federal member of the House of Representatives (1949-1951).

Whenever one speaks to people who lived in Canberra from the 1930s and earlier there are several doctors that are always recalled. The first is Dr Blackall of Queanbeyan, the second would be Dr Finlay who was our first resident doctor who lived at Kingston followed by Dr Nott.

All of these medical practitioners made house calls – and that was the norm then. There are many stories that I have heard about Dr Nott in particular. One was told to me was an occasion when the good doctor called and during the process of getting something from his pocket also pulled out by accident a number of bills that fell to the floor. The patient tried to pick them up for the doctor but was told to leave them because he couldn't pay his bills because his patients couldn't pay him. (The words were slightly different, but the meaning was the same!)

I have forgotten how I found on the internet the site for the Mackay Historical Society in Queensland, but through contact with the society and the detailed information on their web pages a fuller picture of our Dr Nott emerged. From this site one can learn about the man who played such an important part of our early history. The site for those who wish to read the information in full is:

<http://www.mackayhistory.org/research/mayors/mayors.html>

From this site I learnt that Lewis Windermere Nott was Mayor of Mackay between 1924-1927 and that he had a long record of public service before coming to the Federal Capital Territory. The information provided informs the reader that Dr Nott was born 12th February 1888 at Bundaberg Queensland, son of Frederick Lewis Nott, a plantation owner and Jane/Jean Blair. In 1913 he married Doris Ashbury. During the

Great War he served with Scottish Regiments from 1914-1917 and was twice mentioned in dispatches.

His tertiary education included Sydney University, Ballarat School of Mines and the Royal College of Surgeons in Edinburgh Scotland.

The Mackay Historical Society published on their web page a copy of the obituary published in *The Daily Mercury* Monday October 29, 1951. It follows: *Canberra, Sunday – The body of Dr LW Nott will be brought from Melbourne tomorrow by train and the funeral service will be held at 2.30pm in St Andrew's Cathedral, Canberra.* [the train service still does not connect with Canberra and I presume that the body would have been picked up at Yass by the funeral directors in charge of the funeral] *Dr Nott was on his way to take up an appointment as superintendent of the Yallourn Diagnostic Centre yesterday when he collapsed on the way from Canberra to Essendon. He died shortly after admission to the Royal Melbourne Hospital. Dr Nott was 63 years of age. He was the first member of Parliament for the ACT. He was a member of the Advisory Council for 15 years and chairman of the Hospital Board for a similar period. Mr J Fraser who defeated Dr Nott said to-night that Dr Nott would long be remembered by the people of Canberra for his unstinting services during the depression years and for his kindness to all who knew him. Mr Allan Fraser, member for Eden Monaro and chairman of the Canberra Hospital Board, also paying a tribute said, Dr Nott will be remembered for many things, including his sensational defeat of Mr GS Theodore in Herbert in 1925.*

The Woden Cemetery Burial Register has the information that Dr Nott's grave was purchased 14th November 1951 by Mrs Doris Nott of 25 Grant Crescent Griffith. The address for Dr Nott at the time of his death in October 1951 was Weston St Yarralumla.

Dr Nott is not the only person who gave service to the city and it's people whose graves have been allowed to 'disappear' into obscurity. In the RC portion of Woden Cemetery is the grave of Father Haydon, another old identity well known and loved in his day and in the Anglican

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portion there lie the Knowle family ... and there are many others that perhaps a plaque should be added by the local government or by... to mark their resting places and note their place in the history of the federal city.

The launch by Jill Waterhouse of my last book, A STORY OF CAPITAL HILL on 21st February 2009 in the Robertson Room, St John the Baptist Church Reid was a quiet and pleasant one that had about 40 to 50 people attending. As usual it was also a time of catching up by many and one person who was unable to attend was Betty O'Rourke, whose brother Alan Bradley had taken *a turn for the worst*. He died at 12.05 on Saturday morning 28th February. His 73rd birthday was on the previous Wednesday. He spent his early years in Captains Flat and moved to Canberra some forty or so years ago. He is survived by his wife Ruth (nee Crandell) and two children, Kym and Alan. His parents were Daisy and Alex Bradley.

Another recent death of another old friend is that of Gabriel (Gary) Fischer who was one of (I think) Jennings' Germans who came to Australia after World War 2. Gary was a friend of my husband, Florian and died in Austria on Thursday 26th February.

Tuesday 1st September 2009 – front page with photograph *Canberra Times*



CITY LOSES A TRUE MAN FOR ALL SEASONS

By Rosslyn Beeby, Science and Environment Reporter

Robert Boden, one of Australia's most influential environmental thinkers

and passionate champion of Canberra's heritage treescapes, has died aged 74.

Dr Boden – who died on Saturday after battling leukemia – was the founding director of the Australian National Botanical Gardens and a driving force in shaping national conservation policy under the Whitlam and Frazer governments.

Scientists, politicians and conservationists have paid tribute to Dr Boden as a man of 'deep impeccable and meticulous scholarship' who enjoyed lively debate and 'brought a sharp intellect and a wise and dignified air to environmental advocacy.'

Australian National University landscape architect Emeritus Professor Ken Taylor has suggested a new city park and urban landscape scholarship should be established to honour Dr Boden's immense contribution to local conservation.

"Canberra should have a major park named after him. That would be a fitting tribute to his legacy," he said.

One of Dr Boden's favourite green spaces in the city was the yellow box woodlands on Stirling Ridge in Yarralumla, which colleagues say could form a part of park named in honour of his heritage work and eucalypt research...

I have transcribed the full obituary and it is to be found on my second web page – Early Canberra, under the section on PEOPLE.

<http://earlycanberra.webs.com/>

<http://earlycanberra.webs.com/people.htm>

In this section of the web I have added more about Dr Nott including eg his State Funeral. Federal Parliament adjourned so that members could attend his funeral.

The majority of Westlake information that I have put on the internet is in Hidden Canberra <http://hiddencanberra.webs.com/> which also has the electoral rolls for the 1916, 1928, 1935, 1943, 1949, 1955, 1959 and 1967 – with separate sections for suburbs and camps. The people on the roll had to be 21 or over and of British or Australian Citizenship. I've also added the 1913 census which only has head of household and the 1903, CANBERRA NSW plus a few 19th century ones for the area. Some of our stories are there too.

The Early Canberra Web has articles from newspapers etc and I found a few choice ones for Westlake (not yet included) that includes the burning down of Mrs Dixon's house - 53. The

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family later moved around to 42. Mrs Dixon kept her horse on the flat land opposite the house and protecting the horse yard was a blue heeler dog. He bit me once when I wandered past with my bike on the way down to the river. We both got a fright and from that time on we got along well.

During the collection of stories from the Canberra Times I came across a number that reported drowning in the Molonglo. One mentioned that the first 18 inches or so of the top layer of water was warm and then under that – freezing cold. I remember that and learnt to kick gently. Not far from our swimming hole, one year, I saw a platypus. It was not uncommon to see snakes swimming with head up – meant a quick turnaround for the swimmer away in the opposite direction.

During the year there was reference in The Canberra Times to the Causeway and that the people living there may be moved to make way for new development. The article referred to the Causeway Settlement as a camp, which is of course, quite wrong. The Eastlake Camp and Causeway Mess were nearby, but Causeway had 120 houses plus. Causeway was one of the major Post World War 1 Settlements. The first was Molonglo – the ex-internment Camp, established 1921-1922, next was Westlake (now Stirling Park, Yarralumla) 1922-1965 – it was the first built by the FCAC, followed by the Causeway 1925- built by FCC. Oaks Estate shouldn't be forgotten either.

What makes me a little cranky is that our settlements are still within living memory and the youngsters in the schools, with few exceptions, are not learning about our early history that includes the pioneers who came to build the place in successive waves from 1912 into the post WW2 period.

Brodie's Garage in Wentworth & Canberra Avenues has gone the way of Capitol and Civic Theatres, Wellington and Civic Hotels, Printers Quarters (later Kingston Guest House) and the buildings pulled down for the Kingston Foreshore flats etc. Brodie's was built in 1927.



Above is a photograph of Brodie's under construction. The lantern was to light the way from the Queanbeyan side to Canberra. Brodie's was known as the 6 mile and was the turning place for many of the bike races that used the bikes used daily to get to and from work. Nobby Robertson of Oaks Estate was one who used to do well with the winnings – they were not much, but in the Great Depression in the thirties every bit helped. Brodie paid 11,400 pounds for the block – the upset price was according to one document I read – 1,500 pounds and the newspaper articles of the day – 2,000 pounds. At a time when the average wage for a labourer was somewhere between 3 pound odd and 4 or 5 pounds – this was a great amount.

Another building that comes to mind is that of JB Young, Kingston. His 'emporium' was sold – sometime in the 1970s or later? Someone can perhaps remind me – and nary a sign or plaque to mark the passing of the first shop (some say Hayes & Russell) in Eastlake/Kingston. – Also Hunt's Garage behind the Hotel Canberra.

The Canberra Times 14 November 2009 has another article of significance for those of us



who want our history and heritage to be remembered and for that matter even 'known about'.
NEW BID FOR

HERITAGE LISTING OF OLD KINGSTON BUS DEPOT. The caption reads "Third chance: Kevin Helmers, left, Ed Carnall, Eric Martin, Nola Helmers and Jean Carnall want to save the old bus depot at Kingston. Photo Graham Tidy. At the time of writing a public meeting at 16 White Crescent Campbell (old Parks & Gardens Depot)

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on Tuesday night (24.11.09). They will be working for a new nomination for heritage listing for the building. As this is prime land, they have an uphill battle.

Incidentally, the pines in the background are probably those planted around 1921. Cecily Hinchliffe whose mother, Mrs Marion Stanley was the Mess Caterer for the Engineers' Mess (near the Power House) at the time recalled that their pet cockatoo used to pull out the newly planted trees and Cecily's job was to quietly replant them. They survived and of course were, like the ones in Northbourne Avenue, planted as a windbreak.

Trish Frei, whose father ran the old Capitol and Civic Theatres has walked with me on many occasions the sites of our houses and other sites in Stirling Park. On one recent walk in October we came across the site of a humpy on Stirling Ridge in the area of Corkhill's paddock.



On the earth floor is a white cross made from small stones. And around the area which a number of small cairns of stones were arranged. The area has been used by a homeless person

who was at home in a tent within the humpy on one visit. Unfortunately some stones have been removed from Ngunawal arrangements that included the Mourning Tree. The person had also cleared some areas of land around the arrangements that may have flattened some button wrinklewort plants. This endangered wild flower grows in Stirling Park. The NCA was informed and steps taken to ask the person to move on.

During the year, Trish Frei, prepared a submission for the 2013 celebrations in which a number of proposals have been made for the area of former Westlake. This submission takes the form of some signage in the area opposite Lotus Bay (Section 128, Block 3 Stirling Park, Yarralumla) sites of Howie's Cottages and Tradesmen's Camp and the old 19th century track – and the area of our cottages and the one surviving temporary septic tank from the pre sewerage days (Section 22). Discussion with Mrs Ruth Bell (Ngunawal elder) and the Buru Ngunawal Aboriginal Corporation has resulted in consideration of teaching walks in the area of Stirling Ridge.

During the year I read the most recent NCA report for Stirling Park and note that this report suggests that the proposed road through our cottage sites and that of the septic tank should not be built notes the importance to us of the sites of our old homes and suggests that the area not be developed. The authors made one mistake in that they put all the camps and settlements from the 1920s into the area of our homes. Bit crowded if it had happened – population in 1925 was 700 living in three single men's tent camps, John Howie's settlement of 25 cottages and the single men's barracks known as the Hostel Camp (Burns Club founded there in 1924) and 52 of our houses. Only one camp (No 3 Sewer) and the Westlake houses were in the Gap – Section 22 – Howie's and Tradesmen Camp were opposite Lotus Bay (Block 3, Section 128). No 1 Labourers Camp was on Capitol Hill, Westlake.

This is the first time that a NCA report has included the camps and settlements. A citation written in the late 1990s on behalf of the National Trust by Dr Peter Dowling and myself

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also included the human history of the park but this has been ignored up until this time. Only the button wrinklewort and the ancient trees [red gum, yellow box woodlands] have been considered in the past. This citation still sits somewhere in the Heritage Department and has not progressed. This dept like a number of others is probably understaffed and cannot catch up on work. This is to use the old colloquial phrase – ‘a bit of a worry’.

Tucked away in another part of the March 2009 NCA report was a reference the area of Stirling Park next to Flynn Drive on the far eastern end which was not part of this latest report. This land has already been transferred to the Chinese Embassy for development. On this block are stone arrangements that stretch back about 150 meters from the Alexandrina Drive end.

One sentence on Page 51 – 4.4.2 LAKE BURLEY GRIFFIN HERITAGE DRAFT REPORT MARCH 2009 – SUBMISSION TWO states:

The Chair of the Buru Ngunawal Aboriginal Corporation, Don Bell, has stated that the stone arrangements in the eastern section of Stirling Park, outside the study area, have cultural significance to Aboriginal people. These stone arrangements have been subject to previous archaeological assessment and have been, we believe, conclusively identified as being the remains of stone edged garden beds/tree plantings and European in origin...

As I was present at the three meetings between Mr and Mrs Don Bell, NCA representative and members of the firm employed to carry out the report I find this an unusual statement to be included in this report and wonder the purpose.

Mr Bell died 16 March 2008 and is no longer able to speak. However, I can. During discussions when Block 1, Section 128 was under inspection and the comment made about garden beds I said that there were no houses on the site. And there is no need to take my word for it or for the word of many others who lived in the area – the aerial photographs taken from the early 1920s through to contemporary times shows no houses.

The archeologist in charge of the report, when I asked him how he explained gardens in the area said that people liked to go into the bush and make gardens. Since the stones sit in and on the clay surface and there is no evidence of gardens or for that matter houses which would require necessary infrastructure such as electricity, water and sewerage and the nearest water supply for gardens would have to be carried from the Hotel Canberra or the River – quite a distance away - this conclusion was to me a little odd.

Incidentally, houses and for that matter, buildings, constructed within the parliamentary triangle require permission to build and submission of plans.



The above photograph taken May 1927 (courtesy CDHS) shows the short-lived camp in mid distance erected for the Police and other servicemen taking part in the opening celebrations. This camp is the closest to the site of Block 1, Section 128 [now further subdivided] and the actual site on a modern map may be seen in *A Story of Capital Hill*. The camp is close to the Chinese Embassy and Flynn Drive and not in the area of Block 1, Section 128.

The authors of this report used the July 1952 aerial photograph to prove that there were no stone arrangements on the Block 1, Section 128 and made the argument that if present the stone arrangements show in the photograph. Strangely enough Dad took a photograph of me in mid 1952 standing outside – holding the cat – next to Mum’s stone edged garden bed open to the sky. My house, 27 Westlake that shows in the uncropped photo used in this report shows my house to be about an eighth of an inch

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square. Mum's garden bed cannot be seen – the stones are too small.

I am familiar with the stones in this block of the park and have along with a few friends, photographed and documented the majority of them. It took around two years and copies of the photographs were given several years before the report was made to the NCA.

The next photograph shows the area of former Block 1, Section 128 superimposed on the 1952 aerial photograph (from the report).



The blue outline is, I believe, not quite accurate – the dotted line of the old track belongs to the track just above it. The aerial photograph was taken as the plane swept over the area in the late afternoon in July 1952 when the sun was low in the sky. This shows the contour ploughed areas which also show up in Mildenhall photographs taken in the mid 1920s.

The next photograph shows a copy of the sites of some of the stones marked with a GPS at the first meeting on site. The majority of which are between the track crossing the site and Alexandrina Drive end. The penny dropped recently when I realized where the fill from the cuttings around State Circle and road work probably was used as fill in that area and nearby Block 2 – original area chosen for Darwin Avenue.



Figure 12 Location of sites in Block 1 Section 128, Yarrakilla, early 1950s



The photograph below is of the GAP survey mark on Stirling Ridge near the Canberra Mosque end. It, like the one marked QUARRY is



on the very early maps of the Territory and I believe was surveyed in 1909-1910. So we have yet another very early link

with the beginnings of the Federal City.

*Happy Christmas 2009
& New Year 2010
Ann [Gugler]*