

WESTLAKE NEWSLETTER 2005

My plans to move to the coast are still on hold and until I move I will continue to gather information for the newsletter and send it.

Sadly again our ranks have thinned. I have been informed of a number of deaths. Garry Strickland, husband of Moya nee O'Rourke died on 18th May 2005 aged 65 years. Moya is the youngest child of Annie & Cornelius O'Rourke of 45 Westlake. The husband of Val (deceased - nee O'Rourke -sister of Moya) Don McGrath, died in June this year.

Les Readon, father of *Gunty* (Keith Readon) died in May this year aged 71 years. *Gunty*, along with Roma Banks (nee Brien), Roma's son, Hazel Kennedy (nee Haines) and other family members are responsible for the remaking of our photograph board. We all dipped deeply into our pockets to pay for the materials and the girls repainted the sign. John Bruggeman, a friend, kindly reglued a number of our signs that have come adrift over the year.

A phone call (November) from Lynette Halliday (nee McKissock – daughter of Jimmy & June McKissock of 5 Westlake) conveyed the news that Terry O'Reilly – the last of his family who lived at Westlake – also died. Terry was one of five children and was born during the time the family lived at Westlake. He did not marry.

On a happier note some more of our past history has come to light with a donation of photographs to the Canberra & District Historical Society who in turn allowed me to copy the photographs. They showed on the flats below the Hotel Canberra No 1 Labourers Camp. These photographs would have been taken shortly before the camp was pulled down in August 1927. George Sykes of 29 Westlake was one of the residents of this camp at the time the photographs were taken.

Following is a copy of one of the photographs -



Several of our houses are shown bottom right. The line across the hill from the left are no's 47-43 road 42-40, the old road down the hill shows 48-52. Briar Farm is off to the left above the tree line (now site of Southern Cross Yacht Club) with parts of the links showing. Hotel Canberra is at the end of the track and No 1 camp is on the flat. I have walked the area where the camp was and there are still many signs on the ground of the camp. On the next page is a photograph showing a detail of one of the tents that were 10ftx12ft in size with a brick edged garden bed in front of it. The bricks that define this particular garden bed are no longer in existence but a similar one is still in situ in the area of the Ablution Blocks of the Tradesmen's Camp. It is in the area on the hill below the Brazilian Embassy in Forster Crescent. Incidentally the track and the tree shown in the old photograph are still there.

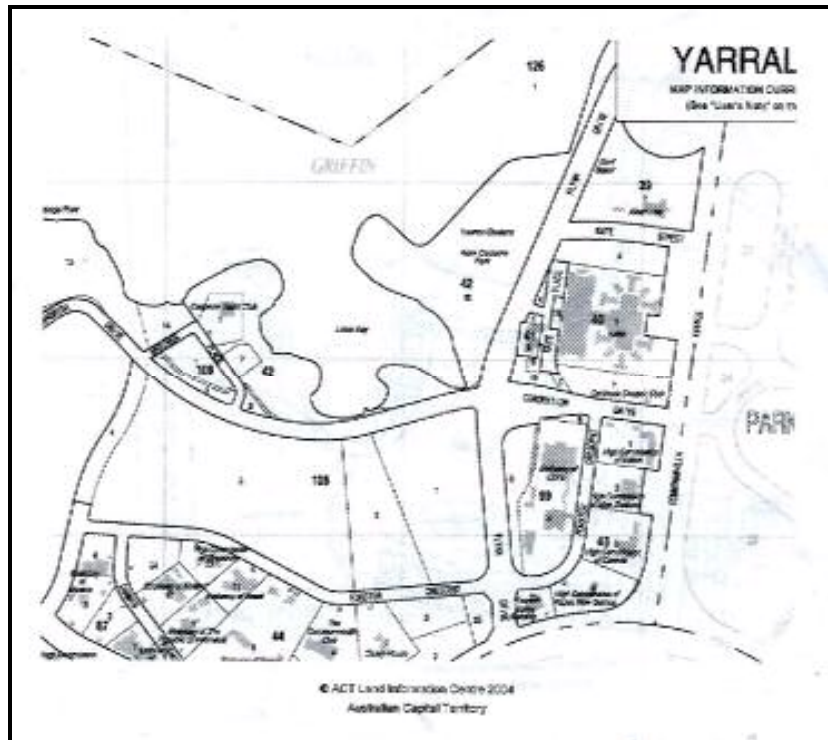


Below are photographs showing the brick edged bed at the Ablution Block site and a photograph taken from the old track looking up the hill towards the embassy.

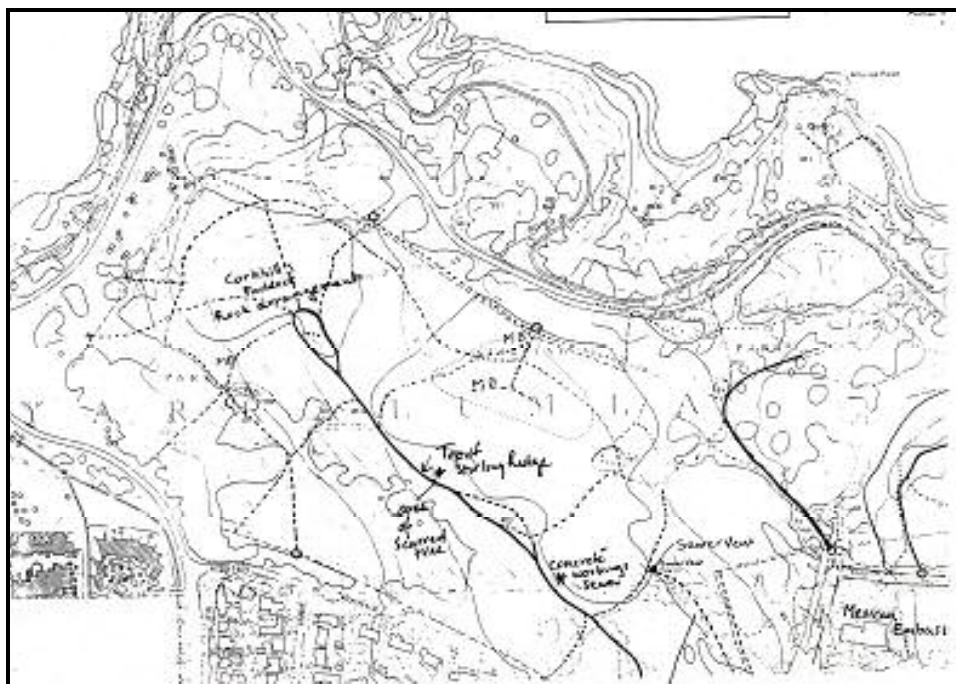


Up until about 1999 or 2000 the area of Stirling Park was Section 22. It is now divided into two Sections – the eastern end of the park is now Section 128 and has four blocks. The western end continues to be Section 22. Block 1 is being developed and is now part of the land belonging to the Chinese Embassy and I have been told that houses are to be built on the site. Two of the stone arrangements on the block have been saved. Block four Section 128 is a long thin block that looks like

a road that could connect Empire Circuit to Marina Place. This 'block' cuts right through the sites of our cottages and the plaque erected in George's (29) yard. A NCA person assured me that this block is just a long thin block. Below is a map showing the area of Section 128. Block 1 is on the right. Block 2 is ACT land and was probably the original site of Darwin Avenue. No 1 Camp was situated on the area of Blocks 2 & 3.



Section 22 is set aside for a new Prime Minister's Lodge. In the 1970s this area along with Collins Park and Attunga Point were three sites for a new Prime Minister's Lodge – final choice was Attunga Point. The map below shows Stirling Ridge & part of the site of our houses – Section 22. The road in front of 29-39 and around the corner is marked on the bottom right side.



During Heritage Week this year I led a walk around Westlake and met up with a number of Westlake people including members of the Kinnane, Carn families and Stan Brill whom much to my shame I did

not recognise immediately – wrong glasses (me) and a big brimmed hat (Stan). Stan was the person who started off my research. He drew a map for me and named the families that lived in each of the cottages. Stan had a good chat on the day with two of the Kinnane family – Barbara Campbell and Bill Kinnane. I later visited Barbara in her home and was shown many great photographs including the one below. I think I know which one is Barbara but have misplaced the information. It has been put in a very safe place. Their Dad was one of the first SP Bookies in Westlake. My generation it was *Lofty* Harrington.



During the year I have given four or five talks to Probus groups about Westlake. The last one this year was to the Canberra North Ladies' Probus Club. It came about because one of the members, Iris Fennest, came on the walk and was fascinated by our history. She also led a walk around Westlake for her group. A common comment is why don't we know about the history of Westlake, Westridge, Molonglo, Causeway etc.

Below – remember the floods & the old hospital! Photograph taken in the 50s or early 60s from the north side of river.



For those who are interested there are a couple of books about to be published – one about Molonglo is by Alan Foskett who lives in Anzac Parade Campbell (phone 02-62486475). Trish Frei will also have a book out on the Austrians of Canberra who arrived in the post World War 2 era. Her number is 02 62881989.

Happy Christmas 2005 & New Year 2006
Ann (Gugler)

[The camp thought to be No 1 in this article was the shortlived camp May 1927 for men taking part in the ceremonies – see *A STORY OF CAPITAL HILL* Gugler 2009]