

## Lyneham/O'Connor: Historical Phases

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## LYNEHAM/O'CONNOR: HISTORICAL PHASES

### ABORIGINAL HERITAGE

Archaeological evidence suggests that Aboriginal people have been living in the Monaro region for over 20,00 years. The Ginninderra district has been the home of Aboriginal people of the Ngunnawal tribe for at least 21,00 years<sup>1</sup> they continue to manage the landscape and maintain their connection to the land to the present day. Walgalu and Ngambri lands adjoined those of the Ngunnawal and evidently extended over parts of what became the Federal Capital Territory. Generally, the Ngunnawal kept to small family groupings but even after European occupation of their lands gatherings of five hundred or more were observed assembling for ceremonial activities. Generations of Aboriginal people have cared for Country, and have been sustained, physically and spiritually through their relationship with the land, waterways and cosmology.

Traditional Custodians have actively managed the landscape through activities such as cultural burning and selectively cultivating certain plants, which created the landscapes first seen by explorers and pastoral settlers. Traditionally, the local Ngunnawal people shared knowledge for Caring for Country. Today, this cultural knowledge continues to be passed down to younger generations and has a role to play in the management of ACT reserves. Aboriginal community organisations and the Murrumbung Ranger Program work with the ACT Parks and Conservation Service run cultural activities to educate the wider community about the cultural landscapes, heritage values and conservation values.<sup>2</sup>

The O'Connor Ridge Nature Reserve protects four known Aboriginal heritage sites. They include stone artefacts that constitute an enduring record of Aboriginal technology and settlement patterns. These artefacts occur individually and in small scatters on the surface. Three of these sites were identified by archaeologists and it is likely that other, as yet unrecorded, sites also occur. All Aboriginal places and objects in the ACT are protected under the *Heritage Act 2004* and must not be disturbed.<sup>3</sup>

It is possible most of the low points of the O'Connor Ridge formed part of a pathway used for thousands of years by Aboriginal and later European travellers, to make their way between the Canberra and Ginninderra valleys. First referred to in the 1830s and now known as the Old Weetangera Road, it is one of the oldest roads in the Canberra region. In 1859, thousands of hopeful miners travelled on it to the Kiandra goldfields and it was formalised into a road in the 1860s. The Old Weetangera Road Trail, used today by walkers and cyclists, follows remnants of the road from O'Connor to the Murrumbidgee River. Europeans brought diseases to the area such as measles, tuberculosis and influenza and

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<sup>1</sup>Mark Butz, The Canberry Ranges, Black Hill, Black Mountain, 'the Golden Hill' and beyond, Black Mountain Symposium 2018 Background Paper No.

19.<http://www.friendsofblackmountain.org.au/SymposiumPapers>

<sup>2</sup> 10 Greg Wood, *The Community That Was*, ACT Government, 2009.p. 10;  
<https://www.environment.act.gov.au/ACT-parks-conservation/healthy-country/murrumbung-ranger-program>

<sup>3</sup> ACT Heritage Council, entry to the ACT Heritage Register (Heritage Act 2004) 20130. Aboriginal Places –Bruce and O'Connor Ridges. Navin Officer Heritage Consultants, <https://www.nohc.com.au/team/>, Lyall L Gillespie, *Ginninderra Forerunner to Canberra* , The Wizard Canberra Local History Series, 1992, p.p.1-4.

possibly also smallpox that were often fatal to its Aboriginal inhabitants. Grazing, fencing of land and water sources and the indiscriminate destruction of native fauna and flora greatly reduced access to hunting lands and traditional food sources, causing the population of Aboriginal people to decline significantly over the century.<sup>4</sup>

## **EUROPEAN OCCUPATION AND SETTLEMENT IN THE 19TH CENTURY:**

### **Pastoralists**

The first wave of European pastoral expansion into Ngunnawal lands began in the Ginninderra district in 1826 when George Thomas Palmer became the district's first European landowner, the year after his uncle, Robert Campbell, received his grant of land further south above the Molonglo River that he named Duntroon. Neither pastoralist lived on their land at that time but employed shepherds to tend to their vast flocks. On his land grant application George Thomas Palmer referred to his property as Ginninderra creek (its Aboriginal name meaning 'sparkling' or 'throwing out little rays of light'). The settlement that developed around Palmer's station soon became known as Ginninderra or Palmerville, and numerous dwellings were built along the Ginninderra Creek, mostly occupied by his employees. The name Ginninderra was adopted officially for the district when a post office was established there in 1859.

Several other non-resident landowners grazed stock in the district but Henry Hall became its first resident landholder in 1836. His property, which he named Charnwood after a forest in Leicestershire, England, abutted the western border of Palmer's Ginninderra Estate. Henry Hall had gained valuable experience working for some years for the Australian Agricultural Company and soon had his property well stocked, mainly with sheep but also a herd of dairy cows and even some angora goats and donkeys. He imported some of the best Arab horses that came to the colony. He employed a number of assigned convicts and had a reputation as a hard master and for his cruel treatment of the local Aboriginal people.

George Thomas Palmer's son, also called George Thomas Palmer, settled on his father's Ginninderra estate in 1844. His manager, William Davis, transformed it into a model estate and one of the most successful properties in the southern districts. In 1850 Davis married Susan Adriana, the younger daughter of George Thomas senior and on his father-in-law's death in 1854 his wife inherited the estate. Her husband William was made one of its three trustees, as married women could not own property in their own name at that time.<sup>5</sup>

John Gillespie settled in Ginninderra in 1843 and became a landowner in 1852. He named his property Horse Park and built his home there the following year. It still remains as the oldest occupied homestead in the district. John is credited with introducing the district's first wagon. In 1854 Thomas Southwell acquired a property he renamed Parkwood and settled there.<sup>6</sup>

To the pastoralists the land was an uninhabited, unsettled or at least uncivilised and it was theirs for the taking. They claimed proprietary ownership of specified land, imported materials and domestic stock and applied European pastoral and agricultural practices. They sought permanence for economic gain and developed supportive village-style

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<sup>4</sup> ACT Heritage signs 1, 7; Greg Wood, p. 9.

<sup>5</sup> Gillespie 1992, p.p. 9-13.

<sup>6</sup> Gillespie 1992, p. xxxi, p. 4, 8.

communities with increasing population density based on European models. For Aboriginal people this same landscape had been theirs since the beginning of time and was imbued with living meaning and significance. These widely different cultural perspectives placed great pressure on the Aboriginal people and created potential for conflict.<sup>7</sup> Most European accounts of settlement in the Ginninderra region assert that there was little direct conflict in the early days between the pastoralists and the Traditional Owners, but contact was not conflict free. Disputes occurred over the spearing of sheep and cattle and the abduction and abuse of Aboriginal women by shepherds. As their lands became increasingly fenced off and the numbers of native animals shot, poisoned, trapped and denied access to grazing land, some Aboriginal people were forced to seek work in the pastoral and farming communities located on their traditional lands. By the 1850s there was nowhere to practice Aboriginal traditional life such as large inter-tribal meetings and corroborees. Aboriginal workers were valued by the settlers and also as sportsmen and friendships were made. Aboriginal players were considered a considerable asset by the Ginninderra cricket team and William Davis, manager of Palmer's Ginninderra estate, met all their expenses. When, during the 1861-62 cricket season the Duntroon cricket team objected to playing against the 'common blackfellows' in the Ginninderra team, such as Johnny Taylor, their fellow team members protested.<sup>8</sup>

## Selectors

Two major legislative changes, the *Crown Lands Alienation Act 1861* and the *Crown Lands Occupation Act 1861*, known as the *Robertson Land Act*, allowed people to select small holdings within Crown land. The release of these Crown lands coincided with a peak in immigration, particularly from Ireland, and the decline of the gold rushes. It brought a new wave of small landowners into the district, enabled closer settlement and some shift from pastoral to agricultural land use, but did not affect the holders of large grant and freehold owners. The 1848 regulations had permitted large areas of Crown lands to be leased prior to survey for 14 years under fairly generous conditions. By 1861, these grantees, including squatters, had secured the best land along the waterways and only the hilly and timbered country in the district, generally with poor soil, was available for selection under the new Land Act.

The *Robertson Land Act of 1861* offered fee selection before survey on crown lands and expired leases. It allowed for a freehold homestead block of 640 acres (259 hectares) to be held on conditional purpose or freehold. The carving of the landscape into small blocks was unwise as it did not take into account the condition of the land allocated. Some were on timbered blocks with no access to reliable water and also created tensions between the different classes of landowners. When taken to court disputes were usually settled in favour of the large landholder.

The earliest selectors came to Ginninderra between 1862 and 1865. One of the first was twenty-year old Richard Shumack who, with his uncle Peter, selected 14 acres (5.6 hectares) on which he built his home, a slab cottage that he called Toll Dale. Richard's house stood where the O'Connor tennis courts now are and his farm dam became today's Brigalow Street wetlands.

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<sup>7</sup>Mark Butz, p. 383.

<sup>8</sup> Gillespie 1992, p.p. 9-13, 37-38; Lyall Gillespie, *Canberra 1820-1913*, AGPS Canberra 1991, p.p. 10-11

Richard's brother, Peter Jnr, bought an adjacent block on 10 July 1863, which he called Fern Hill and where he lived with his wife Betsy, the daughter of Ginninderra's first blacksmith, James Thompson Hatch, until George Southwell acquired it in 1875.

Peter Jnr and Betsy's uncle, Peter Shumack Snr, and his wife Mary lived in Hawthorne Cottage with a garden and orchard close to Sullivans Creek in what is now Lyneham tennis centre and sporting grounds.

Richard and Peter's brother Joseph and his wife Bridget converted their home on the Queanbeyan/Yass road into an inn in 1876. It became a regular stop for the mail coach and a popular venue for meetings and sporting events such as horse racing, cricket, tennis and ploughing matches. It is still operating as the Old Canberra Inn.

Women also could select land on their own behalf like Annie Gabbett, the wife of James Gabbett of Ginninderra (d.1901) and mother of Robert Leslie and Albert Gabbett. Others, like Henry Gozzard's wife who lived at Aston near today's suburb of Throsby, selected land on behalf of their husbands to circumvent the size restrictions placed on selectors.<sup>9</sup>

A flood of new selectors came in 1870 and 1871, and by 1883 there was little unoccupied land in the district. Aboriginal people during the same period found that their lives became even more difficult with the establishment in 1883 of the New South Wales Board for the Protection of Aborigines and many were displaced to missions in Yass and elsewhere.

Many of those who took up small areas, particularly with poorer soil, found it very difficult to make a living. Selectors' land was often heavily timbered and they had to sink wells to provide their homes with water. Often the whole family would assist with the hard outdoor work, particularly when their menfolk engaged in seasonal work, such as ploughing, harvesting and shearing on the pastoralists' larger properties. The selectors' homes were mainly solid slab structures that survived well into the twentieth century. They split the local timber such as Yellow Box (*Eucalyptus melliodora*), Red Stringybark (*Eucalyptus macrorhyncha*) and Blakelys' Red Gum (*Eucalyptus blakeli*) into slabs to build their homes and post and rail fencing, and used bark as roofing material until they could afford corrugated iron (first used in Australia in 1839). The Old Canberra Inn is an example of this kind of building.

## **Social life**

Life for the district's European settlers was generally isolated, especially for the few women who had settled in the area before the late 1830s. As more landholders came to the district during the 1840s opportunities to socialise were created at church, sporting events and by visits to each other's houses where they shared meals and enjoyed conversation and music.<sup>10</sup>

William Davis of the Ginninderra estate was a keen sportsman. He organised shooting and cricket matches often followed by evening entertainment with fireworks, supper and dancing that attracted large crowds dressed in their finery. He celebrated the Queen's

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<sup>9</sup> Gillespie 1992, p.p. 15-18; ACT Administration, Office of City Management. Central Heritage Study, 23.3.1988; Death notice of James Gabbett.  
[http://members.webone.com.au/~sgrieves/deaths\\_yass\\_courier.htm](http://members.webone.com.au/~sgrieves/deaths_yass_courier.htm)

<sup>10</sup> Gillespie 1991, p.p. 53-54.

birthday each year in fine style and in 1863 held a grand celebration in his woolshed to celebrate the marriage of Queen Victoria's son Edward Prince of Wales. Shortly afterwards he hosted a subscription ball to raise funds for the Queanbeyan District Hospital. He also encouraged his employees to participate in these activities. Traveling theatrical shows were occasionally performed in the Ginninderra village and by 1870 Ginninderra was included in the itinerary of Burton's Circus. A family tragedy put an end to the Estate's festivities in 1877 when William Davis's nephew, Ernest Palmer was killed in a horse jumping accident. Grief stricken by the loss of the young man he regarded as a son, Davis sold all his horses and disposed of his Ginninderra and Gungahlin properties to Edward Kendall Crace.<sup>11</sup>

## **Education and Religion**

The construction of churches and schools in the Ginninderra district during the 19<sup>th</sup> century reflected the cultural diversity of the European population, most of which had their cultural roots in either England, Scotland or Ireland.

### *Anglican*

The first school in what is now the Australian Capital Territory was established on George Thomas Palmer's property in 1844. It was recognised as a Church of England denominational school and, until 1848, was funded both by Palmer and the government through the Denominational School Board. During its first four years of operation it had between 17 and 26 pupils. This would have the closest school for children living in the Lyneham/O'Connor area at this time.

After its government funding was withdrawn in 1849, the school at Palmerville and its first teacher, Hugh McPhee, moved in 1859 to a cottage that William Davis had fitted out with 'every requisite for a good school' on the Ginninderra estate. It relocated to the site of the new Anglican church, a neat slab structure named St Paul's Ginninderra at The Glebe (in today's suburb of Evatt), in 1861. Previously the Anglican Community of Ginninderra had had to travel to the Church of St John the Baptist in Canberra (in present day Reid).

Many children had difficulty getting to school as their parents often required them to work on the family farm and poor and often flooded roads and creeks prevented them from getting there. Hugh McPhee, frustrated by the low attendance numbers, threatened to leave but in 1870 several community leaders, including Richard Shumack and William Davis, successfully recommended the establishment of a provisional school funded by the local school board. McPhee remained as an itinerant teacher, working at several half-time schools in the region. St Paul's church at The Glebe was not used after 1900 and quickly deteriorated. Even its adjoining cemetery has been obliterated.

Anglican services were then held in the Old Farmers' Union hall at Ginninderra until All Angels Anglican Church opened at Hall in 1948<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Gillespie 1992, p.p.25-27, 30-31, 218

<sup>12</sup> Gillespie 1992, p.p. 57-58, 66.

## *Presbyterian*

The large local Scottish community had first attended services conducted by the Reverend William Hamilton in 1838, then subsequently by other visiting clergymen in the schoolhouse attached to St John's Anglican Church in Canberra (in present day Reid).

### St Ninian's Church

The Presbyterian congregation finally acquired its own church in 1863. For many of them this small slab and bark church was both a symbol of their rejection of the type of class structured society they had left behind in Scotland, and of the new world they were creating in Australia – a world of democracy, independence and egalitarianism where men and women worked their own land for their own gain. It was built by the Kinlyside family, who had lived in the district since Thomas Kinlyside senior arrived from Scotland in 1835 and built a slab and bark hut on land he selected at Round Hill which he called Triangle Farm. Prominent members of the local community funded the building of the church on land donated by Pemberton Campbell Palmer on the Old Yass Road at the fringe of the Ginninderra district. It was replaced by a rectangular structure built of stone from Black Mountain with a gabled roof and three arched windows in 1873. Peter Shumack is reported to have planted elm trees in its grounds in 1871. The Upper Canberra Presbyterian Church was extended with the same stone in about 1898-1901 as the Presbyterian community grew, and members of other Protestant faiths also used it. It also served as a venue for social functions such as church tea meetings that were often attended by local Methodists, Anglicans and Catholics. Unlike many of the other churches in the district, it became too small to accommodate its congregation and was enlarged in 1902.

By 1912, however, the region's population had declined so much because of the depression during the 1890s, the 1895 -1903 drought and the compulsory resumption of land by the Federal Government, that church attendance fell. The building became derelict, its windows were broken and the floorboards removed. The lease was transferred from the Presbyterian Church to F. S. Southwell in 1922, who used the land for grazing and the church for storing hay<sup>13</sup>

The grove of elm trees, reputedly planted in 1871 by Peter Shumack in the grounds of what is now St Ninian's Presbyterian Church, were removed at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. A Canberra historian, Michael Hill, has speculated that the large elm tree on the corner of Mouat and Archibald streets may be a descendant of this grove.

## *Methodist*

Thomas Southwell first brought Methodism to the district in 1840 and by 1948 regular church services were being held in his home at Parkwood.

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<sup>13</sup> Gillespie 1992, p.p. 59-60,68, 229; ACT Heritage Sign 'From Slab Building to Stone Church'; Australian Capital Territory, Heritage (Decision about Registration for St Ninian's Church – nineteenth century elements), Lyneham; Sites of Significance in the ACT vol. 2 Inner Canberra, Technical Paper 56, NCDC February 1988, p. 22 St Ninian's Church; Notice 2011; Michael Hall 'Under the Elm Tree', *Canberra History News*, no.474, 2010, p. 13; Lindsay Gardiner, *Witness in Stone, The story of the Presbyterian Church in North Canberra*, Verity Hewitt, Canberra 1958; St Ninians Uniting Church, 'A brief history of St Ninian's', <http://stninians.org.au/history/>

On 29 December 1861 the first Methodist service was held in what later became the Stone Hut School on the eastern side of the old Yass Road. In 1863, Southwell built a Wesleyan chapel on his Parkwood property on the western side of the road southwest of the Stone Hut school. Due largely to Southwell's leadership the Wesleyan congregation grew rapidly and a second Wesleyan chapel, opened in 1869 on land near the Presbyterian church (modern-day St Ninian's) donated by Peter Shumack senior. It quickly fell into disuse as settlers moved from the district and was demolished in 1873.

By the late 1870s, under the influence of Thomas Southwell and his sons, the Ginninderra district became a bastion of Methodism and by 1882 had three thriving Methodist churches. One of these was built in 1882 on land Samson and Samuel Southwell had selected in the Spring Range area in 1874. Before its opening, Methodist services had been conducted in Samson's home, Wattle Park. The erection of a new Sunday school hall adjacent to the Wattle Park Church in 1928 provided the community with a venue for concerts and social activities as well as its primary education function.<sup>14</sup>

### *Roman Catholic*

Most of the district's settlers of Irish descent were Roman Catholics. St Francis's church was built largely due to the efforts of Flourence McAuliffe, the Ginninderra blacksmith, who donated the land and collected most of the funds for its construction. It was completed at Ginninderra in March 1872. A neat stone building with a shingle roof and hardwood floor, it was the first Catholic church in what is now the Australian Capital Territory. It also housed the Territory's first Catholic school.

This school replaced the by then closed half-time school at St Paul's Anglican church. Its board of management was composed of three leading Presbyterian, Wesleyan and Anglican farmers and the school was open to children of all denominations. It had a regular daily attendance of about 20 children and became a provisional school in 1873 after the Reverend Father John Gallagher applied to the Council of Education for financial aid. Its opening was an important step in the development of Ginninderra.

In 1881 the school was temporarily moved from the church building to a tent in its grounds, which was cold and draughty in the winter. A new school building and teacher's residence was opened in 1884. By 1900 the congregation of St Francis's church had increased so much that the congregation could not be adequately accommodated. Sufficient funds were raised to replace it by a larger building constructed from local stone in 1910.<sup>15</sup>

### *Government regulation of education in the 19<sup>th</sup> century*

In 1848 the NSW Government established a dual system of denominational and national schools managed by two separate boards, the Denominational and National School Boards. It funded denominational schools in proportion to the size of the four main denominations (Anglican, Catholic, Presbyterian and Wesleyan) as identified through the latest census. The Government funded teacher's salaries but school attendance was voluntary. Children entered and left school at different ages and a range of ages could be found in one

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<sup>14</sup> Gillespie 1992, p. 60, 62-63, 66, 80; Gillespie 1991p.p. 84-85 ; ACT Heritage Canberra Tracks sign 'Old Weetangera Cemetery'; Lyneham Section map 208-606. Draft Development Plan.

<sup>15</sup> Gillespie 1992, p.p.60-61, 68-70, 76; Gillespie 1991, p. 86.

classroom. The close identification of church and state at that time tended to favour the denominational system over the national (common) schools. This system came under pressure in 1862 when lack of funds caused national schools to retrench drastically, close their training facility and reduce teachers' salaries.<sup>16</sup>

Closer rural settlement following the *Robertson Land Act 1861* resulted in the expansion of the population in rural areas. Recognising that the existing system of denominational and common schools was educating fewer than half the children of school age, particularly poorer children and those in the newly settled farming areas, the NSW Premier, Henry Parkes passed the *Public Schools Act 1866*. It lowered the number of pupils required for a public school to operate, abolished both the former Board of National Education and the Denominational School board and established a Council of Education. This body was made responsible for establishing, maintaining or assisting four classes of schools, public, provisional, half time and certified denominational schools. The number of students required for a public school to operate was lowered from 30 to 25, provisional schools could be established in places where attendance was between 15 and 25 and half-time schools could operate in places where only ten pupils enrolled. Traveling teachers worked in half-time schools either in mornings or afternoons, or on alternate days in two different schools. Denominational schools were more tightly controlled, being required to meet certain conditions relating to size, curriculum and distance from government schools to receive government funding. At provisional and half-time schools parents were expected to provide the land, necessary school buildings and furniture for students. They could, however, be converted into public schools if they grew sufficiently in enrolments. It was not until 1875 that the government withdrew the requirement for local communities to provide at least one-third of the capital for a public school.<sup>17</sup>

The *Public Instruction Act 1880 (NSW)* made the State responsible for primary education and for the first time accepted some responsibility for secondary education. The authority exercised by the part time Council of Education was transferred to a minister for public instruction in charge of a department comprised of civil servants and directly responsible to Parliament. The Act aimed to give 'the best primary education to all children without sectarian or class distinction' and required children of school age to attend school for 140 days each year. In the first three years of its operation, enrolment in government schools increased by 60 per cent to 177,000. Many new public schools, including provisional and part-time schools in the country, were opened and itinerant teachers were employed to instruct children in isolated districts. Public schools with at least 20 pupils who had completed the primary course of instruction were permitted to offer higher education and be designated 'superior public schools'.

The Department of Public Instruction proved to be more energetic than its predecessor and during the last two decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century was much more generous with its funding. State aid was withdrawn from denominational schools at the end of 1882 and government schools soon predominated. Most religious denominations except the Catholic Church participated in the system.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Patricia Clarke, *Great Expectations. Emigrant Governesses in Colonial Australia*, p. 76; <https://penrithhistory.com/education/history-of-education-st-marys-19th-century/education-in-nsw-in-the-19th-century/>.

<sup>17</sup> Clarke, p.p. 83-86; Gillespie 1991, p.p. 85-87.

<sup>18</sup> Gillespie 1991, p 89-90, Clarke p. 204..

## **Gungahleen School**

The Stone Hut school, first located on Edward Crace's property, opened as a provisional school in 1873 on the eastern side of Yass Road (now approximately at the current site of the Next Gen Gym/The Sanctuary development on Mouat Street), but it had probably operated as a private school before then. In 1885 the school was relocated into a new, single roomed, weatherboard building on the western side of the road and named after the Stone Hut school it had replaced. Humphrey Wainwright and his wife Lucy Percival, both teachers, lived there until Humphrey died in 1886.

*The NSW Public Instruction Act 1888* provided more funds to public schools and made schooling in New South Wales compulsory. Most students, however, left school at 14 and those few seeking further education had to travel to Sydney or Goulburn. The Stone Hut School was re-named the Gungahleen school in 1888 with Charles Thompson as its teacher.

Ginninderra's population fell during the drought and Depression years of the 1890s. The school was downgraded to a half-time school in 1894 then closed in 1906. It reopened the following year as a full-time school after petitioning from prominent locals. In 1915 a new building that could accommodate up to thirty students was constructed and opened as a full-time school in 1916, however falling student numbers prompted its closure in 1917. Pressure from local residents and the promise of increased attendance resulted in re-opening that year but it closed permanently in 1923.

The building was then extended and converted into a residence to be allocated to a teacher, becoming the home of Stan Melville and his family. It was used as a teachers' residence until 1988 and then left unoccupied until 2001 when the by then vandalised building was restored by the ACT government for use by community groups. It was then one of six of the 19<sup>th</sup> century public schools in the ACT and the oldest timber school from the period.

The restored building, occupied first by Open Family Australia and then by the YWCA, burnt down in 2007. In 2010 a new building was erected in its place, designed to resemble its last state in 2007, but constructed from alternative materials. It has been subsequently occupied by a variety of community organisations.<sup>19</sup>

## **Commercial development**

By the mid-nineteenth century the district of Ginninderra was a thriving centre, more so than the neighbouring village of Canberra. It had the region's first police station, post-office, public school, store and blacksmith's shop. The first post office in what is now the Australian Capital Territory (ACT) opened at Ginninderra on 1 April 1859 with George Thomas Palmer junior as its postmaster. When he retired after only four months, a series of postmasters followed until 1862 when George Harcourt took over and remained for the next twenty years

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<sup>19</sup> Greg Wood, p. 9; 1992, p.p, 65-66, p. 82, see map indicating the locations of schools and churches in the Ginninderra district, p.p.129-30; Lyneham Section map 208-606. Draft Development Plan; ACT Administration, Office of City Management, Central Heritage Study, 23.3. 1988; ACT Heritage Council; Background Information, Gungahleen School, Lyneham; *The Chronicle*, 9 November 2001. (CDHS Library); Gillespie 1991, pp. 93-96.

William Davis had established a well-stocked store on his estate for his numerous employees but it was badly damaged in a fire in 1862. After it was rebuilt, George Harcourt took it over and it also served as the post office. In 1867 he moved the store half a mile up the Ginninderra creek, adjoining the main road between Queanbeyan and Yass and near the blacksmith shop James Thompson Hatch had opened in 1860. By 1878 it was serving many farmers in the district,

A boot-maker, Henry Morris, opened a tannery in the early 1860s to provide leather for his business. After Patrick Grace established the Cricketers Arms Hotel in 1864, the sporting and entertainment centre of Ginninderra shifted from the Ginninderra Estate to the hotel and its associated One Tree Hill sportsground.

In 1877 a plant nursery was added when Edmund Ward, a keen gardener, built his home on the Yass Road. He named it Nine Elms after the elm trees he planted at the entrance of his home and opened a nursery that supplied plants to many selectors in the district. By 1888 the district had developed to such an extent that it was clear that an official village site was required. Much to the consternation of the residents of old Ginninderra a site on Hall's Creek was chosen and named Hall after Henry Hall, a long-time resident of the area.<sup>20</sup>

### **Old Canberra Inn**

In 1857, Joseph Shumack built his family's home on his 405-hectare holding. He cut round bush timber poles for its frame, clad its walls with vertical shingles and roofed it with split shingles he later replaced with corrugated iron. He grew oats and wheat and in 1865 married Bridget Ward and the couple had six children. In 1876 the enterprising couple took advantage of their home's location on the Yass to Queanbeyan Road and converted it into a licensed inn they named the Canberra Inn.

Hungry travellers on the mail coach from Yass to Queanbeyan or the Araluen goldfields via Braidwood, longingly anticipated a meal and excellent beer at the inn. From Bridget's kitchen, a detached building behind the inn, emerged hearty meals of soups, roast meats, fresh home-grown fruits and vegetables, fresh-baked bread, pastries and preserves. The profits enabled Joseph to double the size of his landholding in 1877.

In 1887 Joseph sold the inn to his nephew, John Read. John married a neighbour's daughter, Ellen Maloney, in 1895. The building, renamed The Pines, became a family home where the couple raised their seven children, John, Thomas, Albert (Bert), Jack, Mary, Ellen and Harry.

John was highly respected in the district for his use of scientific methods to grow wheat and cereal crops on his 82-hectare farm. He won many prizes at local agricultural exhibitions, greatly enhancing the district's reputation for wheat growing. John's sons continued to operate the farm until his death in 1917, when the couple's youngest child was only 11. Ellen, an excellent horsewoman when young, died aged 92 in 1962. In 1974 the Commonwealth Government acquired and restored the building then sold it to a private developer.

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<sup>20</sup> Gillespie 1992, p.p. 23-28. (Store and hotel photos).  
p 29 Ginninderra Estate (store and PO p. 29). Gillespie 1991 p. 131, 166.

## 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY: PLANNING THE NATIONAL CAPITAL

In 1908 the Commonwealth Parliament chose the site for the capital of Australia and on 1 January 1911, 910 square miles of land were excised from New South Wales to become the national capital. The Federal Capital Territory, as it was called until 1938, was established. This abrupt transfer of land from the control of the government of New South Wales to another was made without consulting the citizens directly affected by this transfer – neither the Traditional Owners nor the farming community that had displaced them. The hardest hit among the farmers were the small operators who had acquired their land holdings under the *Robertson Land Acts*. It also disenfranchised residents in the Territory who now had no political representation in local, State or Federal governments and would not have for some decades. By this time Traditional Custodians had come under the NSW *Aborigines Protection Act of 1909* and many people were forced to relocate to missions in the region where they lived under supervision.

Those Traditional Owners had by this time come under the NSW *Aborigines Protection Act 1909* and many people had to live under supervision in missions in the region. Amendments to the Act in 1915 gave the Board for the Protection of Aborigines the power to remove children at any time for any reason, with tragic results for generations of Aboriginal families.

The Commonwealth Government, located in Melbourne, held an international competition for the design of the new capital. In 1913, Walter Burley Griffin and Marion Mahony Griffin, the American architects whose design for the capital had been chosen, arrived in Australia. Walter was appointed Director of Design and Construction, a position he held until 1920. The following year the Government appointed the Federal Capital Advisory Committee under the chairmanship of Sir John Sulman to draw up a scheme for the transfer of the capital to Canberra.

In 1938 the territory was renamed the Australian Capital Territory and the National Capital Planning and Development Committee was established.

In 1948 the Territory was empowered to elect a member to the House of Representatives. The final transfer of a number of Commonwealth Departments, hindered by the Great Depression and World War II, was coordinated by a secretariat within the Department of the Interior from 1954.

In a plebiscite held in 1978 the people of Canberra roundly rejected a proposal to grant self-government to the Territory. As the population of Canberra during the 1980s grew to 270,000, the Government took matters into its own hands and passed the *Australian Capital Territory (Self Government) Act 1988*.

In March the following year the ACT's first election was held and in May Rosemary Follett became the Territory's first Chief Minister. <sup>21</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Greg Wood, p.p. 4-5; *Journal of Engineers Australia*, July –August 1956, 'Canberra: Layout and Development'; Legislative Assembly for the Australian Capital Territory; 'The road to self-government', <https://www.parliament.act.gov.au/visit-and-learn/resources/factsheets/the-road-to-self-government>, Mark Butz, p. 389.

## North Canberra in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century

The new century brought important changes and challenges to both the pastoralists and settlers in the Ginninderra district. Virtually all the land in the district had been selected by the time the Canberra site was chosen for the national capital in 1901. When in 1908 the new Commonwealth government compulsorily acquired all the land it required for the new Federal Capital Territory, many of the long established pastoralists whose properties lay within this zone refused to become leaseholders and moved out of the district. Those pastoralists whose holdings lay outside the Territory's boundary were unaffected.

Some of those who left the district were the Harcourt family of Nine Elms who had been very active in Ginninderra affairs. They left for Sydney in 1914 rather than lease the property they had previously owned. Samuel Shumack's, family whose Springvale property was acquired in 1915 moved to Singleton and when the Gungahlin and Ginninderra Estates were acquired the same year, most of the Crace family moved to Sydney.

Commonwealth legislation, passed in 1908, specified that land within the Territory would be acquired by the Commonwealth according to its value on 8 October 1908. The larger properties it acquired were subdivided into smaller portions that were then offered for lease. This was a bad time to make such a change as the harsh climate of these early years caused great hardship to these leaseholders and generated hostility towards the new Federal government. A large bushfire in 1905 was followed by a drought that began in 1908 and lasted many years. The following year brought floods, a plague of locusts and rabbits, and heavy snowstorms in winter.<sup>22</sup>

One of Samuel Shumack's sons recorded the anger and sense of dispossession the selectors felt:

*The resumption of their land by the Federal Government came as a profound shock to the older farmers. That they could stay on as tenants made no difference to their way of thinking. From the day of selection they had been free men on their own holding. With their own hands they had cleared and ploughed the virgin soil, built their houses, dug dams, and in general moulded the selection to their heart's desire. There they married, experienced joy and sorrow in rearing their family and having their own 'vine and fig tree' was no empty phrase. Now all this was changed. They would be under the control of an outsider.<sup>23</sup>*

The Federal government introduced a new generation of farmers to the district in 1920 when it provided small parcels of land to soldiers returning from World War I under its Soldier Settler Scheme. Rabbits, weeds, isolation, financial hardship along with the high prices of stock and equipment, compounded by the lack of transport infrastructure in the Federal Capital Territory were continual problems. Also, the new Commonwealth Public Service as landlord set unrealistic lease conditions on the Soldier Settlers, many of whom had had no previous farming experience. The small size of the rural blocks allocated, along with falling commodity prices throughout the 1920s followed by the Great Depression of the 1930s, saw most soldier settlers struggle to make any sort of living from their leases. However, the leasehold system in the Territory did enable struggling lessees to transfer or

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<sup>22</sup> Gillespie 1992, p.p.141-46,175-79.

<sup>23</sup> Gillespie 1992, p.p.15-20; Greg Wood, p.p.16-18, p.27.

consolidate their leases, allowing those who wished to leave the land to do so with relative ease.<sup>24</sup>

The inter-war years saw the gradual decline of the Ginninderra region as Canberra developed, drawing the inhabitants of its outlying regions into the capital with its amenities and new employment opportunities. The stone church on the Old Yass Road was restored in 1941 and named St Ninian's, after a Scottish saint reputedly the first Christian missionary to Scotland. Its congregation, however, was no longer comprised of Scottish small landholders but public servants, relocated to Canberra to administer the new Federal Capital. They did not, however, forget the small church's pioneer heritage and created a memorial garden in memory of its Scottish founders. A church hall and office block were built in 1961, linked to the original stone building by a covered walkway. Initially a branch of St Andrews, Canberra's principal Presbyterian church, it became a parish in its own right with its own minister in 1977 and its parishioners elected to become part of the Uniting Church of Australia. It was further extended in 1978-79.<sup>25</sup>

Canberra's development began in earnest with the establishment of the National Capital Development Commission (NCDC) in 1958. This body provided more generous funding of public works and managed the transfer of public servants from Melbourne throughout the 1960s. As its population grew, former pastoral properties surrounding the burgeoning city were progressively developed into suburbs.<sup>26</sup>

Despite the best efforts of the Canberra and District Historical Society to preserve the last two old buildings in the Lyneham area, the NCDC concluded that the cost of restoring them was prohibitive. Only the old Gungahleen school would be retained for community use. Many slab huts had been neglected and vandalised or removed over the years in the course of suburban development. Fern Hill Homestead was demolished in 1958.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> ACT Government, <https://www.archives.act.gov.au/repatandrabbits>

<sup>25</sup> Gillespie, p.p. 59-60,68; ACT Heritage Sign 'From Slab Building to Stone Church'; Australian Capital Territory, Heritage (Decision about Registration for St Ninian's Church – nineteenth century elements, Lyneham), Notice 2011; ACT Administration, Office of City Management. Central Heritage Study, 23.3.1988 ;Michael Hall 'Under the Elm Tree', *Canberra History News*, no.474, 2010, p. 13; Lindsay Gardiner, *Witness in Stone, The story of the Presbyterian Church in North Canberra*, Verity Hewitt , Canberra 1958

<sup>26</sup> Gillespie 1992, p.p. 198-202.

<sup>27</sup> Caption under photograph of the Yass-Queanbeyan Mail Coach outside the Ainslie Post Office circa 1910 at the Old Canberra Inn,'Michael Hall 'Under the Elm Tree', *Canberra History News*, 474 2010, p. 13; 2;Correspondence NCDC to the CDHS, 27August1987, 31December 1987; Note submitted by the Canberra and District Historical Society to the NCDC, 11 July 1989 re cottages in North Lyneham; *Canberra Times* 14 December 2000, letter to the Editor by Dick Jenkins who had been involved in the demolition of Fern Hill ; Eric Sparkes, *Canberra 1954-1980*, AGPS Canberra 1988, p.p. 98,111; Fern Hill demolition <http://www.canberrahistory.org.au/detail.asp?rID=15543&searchstring=fern%20hill&searchby=&orderby=title&numPP=10&startAt=0&pictures=no>  
<http://www.canberrahistory.org.au/detail.asp?rID=15544&searchstring=fern%20hill&searchby=&orderby=title&numPP=10&startAt=0&pictures=no>

## Lyneham and O'Connor suburbs established

In 1927 the Federal Government announced that a new suburb, to be named Lyneham after Sir William Lyne, Premier of New South Wales from 1899 to 1901, was to be built 'fronting the northern extremity of Northbourne Avenue on the west side'. The name was gazetted the following year.

Anticipating a population by 1956 of 11,500 in the Lyneham-North O'Connor region, Canberra's planners had set aside for future development 625 acres (253 hectares) 70 acres (28 hectares) of which were liable to flooding from Sullivans Creek).

For planning purposes, the two suburbs were linked when estimating school requirements and the provision of shops and other amenities. The suburb of O'Connor was developed between 1947 and 1955, Lyneham followed in 1958.

Lyneham's tree-lined streets were named after artists and people associated with the early development of Canberra. The Canberra and District Historical Society (CDHS) assisted authorities in the selection of street names.<sup>28</sup>

This was a time when the Australian population was being transformed by migration. Lyneham attracted migrants who had arrived from Baltic countries in the late 1940s such as Rimas Keraitis, one of the 250 Lithuanians who arrived in Canberra and established their clubhouse in Lyneham in 1972. Estonian, Krista Gardener and her three sisters were among the number of Estonian children who attended Lyneham High school in the 1970s.

In 1959, O'Connor acquired a little part of Canberra's history when the old hall that had served from 1924 as a mess hall for the Canberra's first parliament house, and then as a venue for Canberra's Friendly Society and a dance hall in Kingston, was relocated there, with considerable difficulty, by Alois Mikula and his friends. Alois, a refugee from the former Czechoslovakia, had lived in O'Connor since 1952 and was a foundation member of the O'Connor branch of the scouting movement.

The following year the old hall became the home of O'Connor's newly formed 13<sup>th</sup> Canberra Scout Group. The community raised funds for its relocation and renovation and it has been in continuous use by the suburb's children and adults ever since. In 1966, girl guides were given their own home when the Commonwealth Government funded Black Mountain Girl Guides Hall opened on Clianthus Street O'Connor. It attracted large numbers of girls between the ages seven and sixteen into its Brownie and Guides groups and they conducted many of their outdoor activities in the spacious park surrounding the hall.<sup>29</sup>

Despite the removal in 1966 of the ban on married women working in the Commonwealth Public Service, many women were deterred from working by the lack of childcare facilities. Following the introduction of the *Federal Childcare Act 1972*, childcare facilities were

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<sup>28</sup> Letter, Department of Territories to the CDHS 3 December 1984.

<sup>29</sup> *Journal of Engineers Australia*, 'Canberra: Layout and Development (1911-55), July - August 1956, p.195); Information on Rimas Keraitis, <https://artsandculture.google.com/asset/embroidery/EwEHLyF5rXaZCg>; Email Krista Gardiner to Ann-Mari Jordens, 6 November 2020; Canberra Tracks sign '13<sup>th</sup> Canberra Scout Hall'; ACT Heritage Library, interview by Ann-Mari Jordens with Alois Mikula, 30 July 2010; Information from Fiona Langford 25 November 2020.

supported and funded. To assist working women in the Lyneham area, the National Capital Development Commission (NCDC) announced in 1988 that it planned to convert a detached house on Wattle Street into a permanent Educational Child Care Centre for 30 children.<sup>30</sup>

## Housing

From 1927 to 1972, public housing in Canberra was provided for all classes in society relocating there to work in the public service. It was not until 1972, when the NCDC began encouraging medium density private housing and reserving public housing for low-income residents in line with the Commonwealth /State housing agreements, that the number of privately built houses outnumbered those built by the government.<sup>31</sup>

The first contract for the construction of 20 new brick and eight monocrete houses in the new suburb was awarded to ACT Builders Pty Ltd on 8 November 1958 at the cost of £128,673. An interesting development was the Northbourne Precinct (1959-62) on the Dickson and Lyneham sides of the avenue. Comprising one, two, three and four storey buildings with a variety of housing types, it was originally considered by the NCDC as a 'gateway' marking the entrance into the National Capital. It manifests elements of Walter Burley and Marion Mahoney Griffin's vision of the entrance to Canberra as a tree lined boulevard lined with terraces. Designed in the Post War International Style (1940-60) it was set in a landscape of loosely arranged groups of trees planted in open spaces between the housing groups. Further development in the 1970s included the construction of blocks of flats located near the Lyneham shops. In July 2017 the ACT Government announced the demolition of parts of the Northbourne Housing Precinct.

In 1979 the local community vociferously opposed the proposed infill of Lyneham Park and Magpie Hill (now known locally as Magpie Hill Park). In November 1980 the NCDC announced that it proposed to construct 597 houses and 262 flats in Lyneham. This was to be the largest building program in Lyneham since 1958. In 1981 a new type of dwelling was introduced to the suburb with the building of nine townhouses along the section of Lyneham bounded by Northbourne Avenue. It was named 'The Pines' after a nearby grove of mature trees.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> NCDC Draft Proposal for public comment. Lyneham Section 48, Block 29 (submissions due 17 July 1988).

<sup>31</sup> ACT Heritage, Background information, Northbourne Housing Precinct representative sample, November 2015, p.1 , p.p.4-5

[https://www.environment.act.gov.au/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0007/798901/Northbourne-Housing-Precinct-Representative-Sample-Background-Information-November-2015.pdf](https://www.environment.act.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0007/798901/Northbourne-Housing-Precinct-Representative-Sample-Background-Information-November-2015.pdf)

<sup>32</sup> *Canberra Times*, 16 December 1927; 9 November 1957, 14, 10 August and 7 October 1979, 7 November 1989, 17 July 1981. ACT Government, Demolition approved for parts of Northbourne Avenue housing precinct,

[https://www.cmtedd.act.gov.au/open\\_government/inform/act\\_government\\_media\\_releases/gentleman/2015/demolition-approved-for-parts-of-northbourne-avenue-housing-precinct](https://www.cmtedd.act.gov.au/open_government/inform/act_government_media_releases/gentleman/2015/demolition-approved-for-parts-of-northbourne-avenue-housing-precinct)

## Schools

### *Lyneham Primary School*

The National Capital Development Commissioner, J. W. Overall, provided for the future education of Lyneham's children by announcing in November 1958 that a Primary School containing classrooms for 300-400 children and equipped with a library, manual training rooms and an administrative section, would be ready to open at the beginning of the 1959 school year. A new 'Infants' school was scheduled to open in May that year 1958 and the Primary section welcomed its first pupils at the opening of the school year in 1959.

Ten years after opening the primary school had 800 pupils. Unfortunately, most of the school was destroyed in a fire on 20 June 1969. It began in the Principal's office and the police suspected it was deliberately lit. The children were sent to other schools until the school could be rebuilt. The youngest pupils returned to their one-storied 'infants' building in late 1970 and the two-storied primary section opened to older pupils a year later. The installation of fire alarms became mandatory in all ACT schools the same year.

By 1981 the new primary school had only 372 pupils, but a much wider range of facilities. They included music, home science, health and teachers' resource units, an expanded library with multi-media and research facilities, an indoor gymnasium and an English as a Second Language learning area.<sup>33</sup>

### *Lyneham High School*

Lyneham's High School opened in 1960. It was the first high school to include in its original plan an assembly hall, a gymnasium and a tiered demonstration room where pupils were seated above the teacher. Other features of this ultra-modern building were a spacious entrance hall, wide corridors, a covered garden luncheon area and the use of a variety of colours in its décor. Its large, airy library had one complete glass wall overlooking playing fields, and study rooms for pupils working independently on projects. Smaller classrooms and physics and biology laboratories were included to cater for the needs of senior classes.

A school fete was held in November 1959 at which Dame Pattie Menzies officially opened the school and the local community was treated to a fashion parade, talent quest, a barbeque, treasure hunt and displays of art, books, darts, gymnastics and marksmanship.

The school was enthusiastically supported by the local community through its Parents and Citizen's Association and a range of local and Canberra businesses. They not only funded the publication of its first annual yearbook in 1962, but also scholarships and school prizes. The first issue of its year book, *Between the Lynes*, documented the school's development since its opening and the sporting and academic achievements of its by then 772 pupils.

By 1962 the school taught pupils from year 1 to year 5 and proudly showcased the results of its Leaving Certificate class and the wide range of subjects it offered, including languages such as Latin, French, German, Dutch and Russian.

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<sup>33</sup> <file:///Users/ann-marijordens/Desktop/Our%20History%20-%20Lyneham%20Primary.html>; *Canberra Times*, 23 June 1968, 24 June 1969, 7 January 1970, 3 December 1970, 29 March 1981, 1 October 1985.

## *Brindabella Christian College*

In 1980 the O'Connor Christian School, now the Brindabella Christian College, opened on Brigalow St. Lyneham.<sup>34</sup>

## **Lyneham shopping centre**

On 9 February 1956 the government gazetted its intention to amend the city plan to allow a new, modern shopping centre to be built in Lyneham on the northwest corner of the intersection of Brigalow and Wattle streets. Modelled on The Lawns at Manuka, its inner area provided for 10 shop sites divided by service lanes from two large blocks, one of which would contain a post office. A parking area and space for a community hall was also planned for. Lyneham shops have had a number of long-standing and popular businesses supported by locals. They range from the butcher and a bookshop, to Tilley Devine's and the Mee Sing restaurant as well as smaller eateries and businesses that have come and gone over the years.<sup>35</sup>

### *The Mee Sing restaurant.*

During World War II Australian servicemen and their families were introduced to Chinese cuisine, and during the post-war years Australians developed a taste for Chinese meals and began to patronise Chinese restaurants. In 1964 Wing Quan opened the Mee Sing restaurant in the Lyneham shopping centre which is still operating. In 1985 the restaurant transferred to a new proprietor, Peter Ching. The restaurant is still popular with the locals.<sup>36</sup>

### *Tilley Devine's Bar*

Australia's liquor laws prevented women from drinking in the public bars of hotels, usually relegating them to a 'ladies' lounge', often a small, dingy room located in a less salubrious area of the hotel. In 1965, two women in Brisbane attempted to change the *Queensland Liquor Acts 1912-65 Act* to allow women equal access to public bars by chaining themselves to the bars' foot rails. While the law eventually changed in the 1970s, public bars remained unfriendly spaces for many women. In Lyneham in January 1984, Paulie Higginson, a divorced mother with two children, opened her own bar and restaurant in a tiny former dental surgery in Wattle Street. For the first two years men were banned unless accompanied by one or more women. Higginson's purpose was to create a safe place for women to meet. Challenging prevailing stereotypes of women, Paulie named it Tilly Devine's Cafe after the notorious Sydney crime boss, Matilda Mary Devine, who had dominated sly grog, razor gangs and prostitution in Sydney until her death in 1970. Although it could accommodate only 60 customers, 420 customers arrived on her opening night.

Paulie's early policy of admitting men only if accompanied by a woman aroused considerable hostility in some quarters and inadvertently created useful publicity for her

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<sup>34</sup> *Canberra Times*, 7 November 1958, 2 November 1959;  
[http://www.lynehamhs.act.edu.au/our\\_community/school\\_memories](http://www.lynehamhs.act.edu.au/our_community/school_memories);  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brindabella\\_Christian\\_College](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brindabella_Christian_College)

<sup>35</sup> *Canberra Times*, 10 February 1956.

<sup>36</sup> James Jupp (ed.), *The Australian People*, Cambridge University Press, 2001, p. 205,  
*Canberra Times*, 9 October 1964, 13 November 1982, 1 October 1985.

business. Determined to be an equal opportunity employer, Paulie successfully applied for a Commonwealth Employment grant, enabling her to engage women who were long term unemployed, single mothers and from Aboriginal and migrant communities. This, she reported, aroused the ire of Liberal politician Michael Hodgeman, previously Minister for the Capital Territory from 1980-83, who queried why a 'girls place' was getting government money and ordered a police raid on her home in search of incriminating material. Two weeks after Tilley's opening the *Canberra Times* reported that a lone male was evicted from a 'lesbian women's bar'. This was repeated in papers in every other capital city and overseas. She was attacked by John Laws in his popular radio program and her patrons were described by one *Canberra Times* reporter as 'hatchet faced harridans'. Despite Australia's ratification of the United Nations *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women* in 1983, the public response to the opening of Paulie's bar demonstrated how far Canberra's culture needed to change on the eve of the implementation of the 1984 *Sex Discrimination Act*.

Some Labor politicians like Al Grassby supported her, much to the ire of one (male) reader of the *Canberra Times*, who thought it 'interesting' that Grassby, noted for speaking out against racism and discrimination, supported 'a café open only to women, and men accompanied by women' that was 'no great contributor to social equality'. Paulie's feisty reply described the harassment of women in traditional bars and asserted that Tilley's, by 'using the principles of affirmative action', had successfully created an environment free of sexual harassment and aggression for both men and women of all ages, black Australians and people from ethnic communities. The policy regulating the entry of men was relaxed after two years as its non-threatening atmosphere and considerate client base became entrenched. Tilley's was also the first licensed outdoor venue and the first bar to ban smoking before it became a legal requirement.<sup>37</sup>

Paulie's previous experience as a music producer and sound engineer led her to develop her bar into a live music venue. For the next 24 years Tilley's attracted many major Australian and international artists who performed in a silent room as food and drink were not served during performances. Unfortunately, by 2005 Paulie found regular live music performances not economically sustainable and now only hosts occasional performances. Now named Tilley's Devine Cafe and Gallery, the venue has been extended five times since 1984 and remains a popular and distinctive bar and cafe.<sup>38</sup>

### *Book Lore bookshop*

In 1984, Rimas Keraitis opened his second-hand bookshop, Book Lore, next to Tilley's and it too still operates. It specialised in quality non-fiction and academic literature and attracted customers from all over Canberra and interstate. Rimas, was a foundation member of the Canberra Lithuanian Association in 1963 and a member of the Lyneham

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<sup>37</sup> Conversation with Paulie Higgisson by Ann-Mari Jordens 14 October 2020; *Canberra Times*, 15 March 1984, Letter to the Editor by Tim Filshie, 10 October 1986, 16 October 1986, Letter to the Editor by Pauline Higgisson, 20 October 1986.

<sup>38</sup> Australian Women's Register, entry by Roslyn Russell, <http://www.womenaustralia.info/>; Sally Pryor *Canberra Times* 16 January 2003; <file:///Users/ann-marijordens/Desktop/History%20%E2%80%94%20Tilley's%20Devine%20Cafe%CC%81%20Gallery.html>

Lithuanian Club (1972-99). In the 1990s, his partner Joan Clayton took over the bookshop and managed it until its current owner, Michael Johnson acquired it in 2007.

Rimas designed the panel using traditional Lithuanian designs and embroidered by Salomea Mikušionis and Leonarda Veloniškis, that hung in the Lithuanian club from 1975, creating a familiar, homely atmosphere for its members. In 2002 the Lithuanian community donated the panel to the Canberra Museum and Gallery.<sup>39</sup>

## **Archibald Street**

The contribution of different waves of immigrants to enriching the culture and architecture of Canberra is clearly evidenced by three outstanding buildings on Archibald Street.

### *St Volodymyr's Ukrainian Catholic Church*

St Volodymyr's is a small brick building in neo-Byzantine style designed to accommodate about 100 worshippers. Funded by donations from the Ukrainian community in Australia, it was consecrated in 1991 as a monument to the Millennium of Christianity in Ukraine (celebrated in 1988). It was named after Volodymyr the Great, ruler of the area later known as Ukraine, who in 988 AD officially accepted Christianity.

The first generation of Ukrainians arrived in Australia as 'displaced persons' on assisted passages in 1948, fleeing religious persecution in their homeland. In the 1950s they were assisted by the Roman Catholic Church to form parishes and permitted to hold their services in Roman Catholic churches. Although further emigration from the Ukraine was not possible during the Cold War years, the Ukrainian culture remained strong as the first wave of refugees raised their children to value education and preserve their cultural heritage. Emigration from Ukraine to Australia became possible after that country achieved independence in 1991 and a new influx of largely young professionals arrived in Australia.<sup>40</sup>

### *The Sakyamuni Buddhist Centre and Van Hanh Monastery*

The Sakyamuni Buddhist Centre and Van Hanh Monastery is the first, and still the largest, Buddhist Temple in Canberra. In 1983 the Buddhist Federation of Australia sponsored a refugee monk, the Venerable Thich Quang Ba from Vietnam. The following year the 70, mainly Vietnamese, members of the newly formed Buddhist Association of Canberra appointed him as its president and Abbot of the Van Hanh Monastery, initially located in Downer.

The industrious Vietnamese community set to work to raise money to build a magnificent temple complex to be built on 1.65 hectares of land donated by the Commonwealth Government to the Vietnamese Buddhist Association of Canberra. They partly funded the project by making clothes in their homes that they sold under contract to a Sydney manufacturer. The temple's foundation stone was laid on 19 January 1988 and by 1990 the

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<sup>39</sup> *Canberra News* 23-24 April 1994; Embroidery, <https://artsandculture.google.com/asset/embroidery/EwEHLyF5rXaZCg>; phone communication, Michael Johnson 12 January 2021.

<sup>40</sup> James Jupp (ed.), *The Australian People*, Cambridge University Press, 2001, p.716-1; [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ukrainian\\_Australians](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ukrainian_Australians); *Canberra Times*, 29 October 1982; plaque on St Volodymyr's church.

five resident monks had relocated to the new Van Han Monastery on Archibald Street. The Sakyamuni Buddhist Centre, located in the same compound was built to accommodate 200-300 people and intended to meet the needs of the almost 1,000 Vietnamese Buddhists living in Canberra in 1986.<sup>41</sup>

The buildings on this site demonstrate the key features of Vietnamese temple architecture. In its garden stands the tallest open-air statue of the Buddha in Australia, a replica of a famous statue in Bangkok. The temple facilitates community services, charitable and relief activities, education, monastic training and personal and family counselling. It offers group activities for youth, women and the aged, chaplaincy, meditation groups, a library, free books on Buddhism and a vegetarian restaurant.<sup>42</sup>

### *The Wat Dhammadharo Thai Buddhist Temple*

The Wat Dhammadharo Thai Buddhist Temple was founded in 1993, was the first and is still the only Thai temple in Canberra. Commissioned with royal permission to mark the 60th anniversary of Thai-Australian diplomatic ties, it is the only pagoda in Australia featuring traditional Thai architecture and, at 24 metres, is the tallest Thai Buddhist pagoda in Australia.

Constructed in three stages over a number of years the second stage completed in 2016, was pre-fabricated in Adelaide of glass and reinforced concrete and installed over three months. In January 2016, Thai pilgrims from all around Australia, including 35 Buddhist monks, witnessed the final phase of the installation - the ceremony of lowering the golden, tiered umbrella over the main dome. The third and final stage of the project, funded by the local community, will complete the interior of the temple to house holy relics and allow monks to perform religious practices.<sup>43</sup>

### *MacKillop House*

MacKillop House first opened in Archibald St Lyneham as a convent for the Australian Sisters of St Joseph in 1969. In 1989 it became a hostel for female students studying in Canberra's tertiary institutions, closing in 2019 when this became economically unsustainable. In August 2020 it reopened to provide housing for up to 12 months to 26 women, with their children, suffering rental stress due to mental illness, addiction or poverty. Run by Catholic Care and funded as part of the ACT Government's three million dollar emergency housing response to COVID-19, it provides well-equipped private rooms in its hostel for single women over 18, and six self-sufficient, two bedroom villas in a garden setting for women with children.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>41</sup>According to the 1986 Census there were 1890 Buddhists in the ACT, half of which were Vietnamese, Barry York, *Canberra Times*, 13 June 1988.

<sup>42</sup> *Canberra Times*, 13 June 1988 6 December 1989, 16 June 1990;  
<https://visitcanberra.com.au/attractions/56b23b18d270154b4553beb1/sakyamuni-buddhist-centre-van-hanh-monastery>

<sup>43</sup> <https://charinyaskitchen.com/2019/04/06/wat-dhammadharo/>;  
*Canberra Times* 17 January 2016.

<sup>44</sup> MacKillop House 12 June update, <http://mackillophouse.org.au/>  
<https://www.canberratimes.com.au/story/6775153/new-home-to-open-for-homeless-women/>; Holly Tregenza <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-06-12/mackillop-house-convent-now-covid-19-shelter-for-women/12346510>

## **North Lyneham**

In 1983 the NCDC announced that Lyneham was to be extended northwards with the construction of 500 medium density houses, but no shops.

A report commissioned by the NCDC in 1988 comparing North Lyneham with other inner Canberra suburbs severely criticised the suburb's layout. It found the placement of large houses of inconsistent styles on smaller blocks with wide street frontages but shallow depths, created a cramped impression, left little room for trees and the potential to overlook neighbours. It found it to be an inefficient subdivision because it had the lowest percentage of land devoted to residential use and the highest percentage of roads compared to other suburbs. This was despite having narrower roads and verges so narrow that parking was difficult. It recommended that any future subdivisions should provide for larger sections, narrower frontages, longer depth blocks, wider verges and fewer and longer cul-de-sacs.

By the year 2000 North Lyneham had an estimated population of 4,088 and a range of facilities such as places of worship, childcare centres, nursing homes, clubs and schools<sup>45</sup>

### **LYNEHAM AND NORTH O'CONNOR IN THE 21ST CENTURY**

#### **Sullivan's Creek and the Banksia St Wetland**

With the development of suburbs in North Canberra, Sullivan's Creek, formed by runoff from Mt Majura, was enclosed in sealed stormwater channels. The native vegetation was removed and replaced with introduced grass and exotic and native trees. In 2009 the former ACT Department of Environment, Climate Change Energy and Water started community consultation on what became a series of wetlands along Sullivans Creek. As the creek flows into Lake Burley Griffin behind the Australian National University, the ACT Government developed three wetlands with the aim of improving the quality of stormwater flowing into the Lake, and ultimately into the Murray-Darling Basin.

The Banksia St Wetland was developed in 2010 with the Lyneham Wetland following in 2012. It serves to retain flood and stormwater to irrigate school grounds and playing fields instead of using drinking water. The wetlands also provide habitat for waterbirds and bugs, frogs, turtles and yabbies into urban areas as well as restoring the original native vegetation. Volunteers planted a diverse range of plant species, including 1200 native grasses and shrubs. The wetlands are now beautiful additions to local parks where families picnic, school children learn about the local flora and fauna and volunteers meet to care for the park they love. <sup>46</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> *Canberra Times*, 10 November 1983; Diana Kerr, NCDC Residential Subdivision Review, Comparison of North Lyneham with other inner Canberra suburbs, January 1988; ACT Government Neighbourhood and Community Partnerships Team planning leaflet, c. 2001.

<sup>46</sup> <https://www.google.com/search?client=firefox-b-d&q=Sullivans+crrk+lynham+canal>; Department of the Environment, Climate Change, Energy and Water, 1429\_Dickson\_Lyneham\_Wetlands\_A3(2).pdf

## Lyneham Commons Food Forest

In 2014, following community consultation and collaboration with the ACT Government, a group of Lyneham residents developed a food forest on a piece of low use public land behind the Lyneham shops. It became a garden where members of the local community could grow food by employing sustainable organic methods and permaculture principles. It aims to educate the public in regenerating public land, improving food security, reducing the impact of agriculture on the land and growing to benefit all.<sup>47</sup>

## O'Connor Ridge Nature Reserve

O'Connor Ridge Nature Reserve, once a rubbish tip and part of Canberra Nature Park, is a 57-hectare reserve bordering Bruce Ridge and Black Mountain Nature Reserve. Its extensive network of nature trails is popular with bushwalkers, bird watchers, mountain bikers and those wishing to discover more about its great diversity of native flora and fauna, particularly orchids and threatened woodland birds.

The reserve's dry forest vegetation protects a small area of critically endangered Yellow Box –Blakely's Red Gum Grassy Woodland and over 60 native plant species including the Slender Sun Orchid (*Thelymitra pauciflora*) and Common Onion Orchid (*Microtis unifolia*). The grassland area is dominated by several native grasses including Redleg Grass (*Bothriochloa macra*), Wallaby Grass (*Rytidosperma spp.*) and Kangaroo Grass (*Themeda triandra*).

Its vegetation provides habitat for many woodland birds including the regionally endangered Speckled Warbler (*Chthonicola sagittat*). However, much of the reserve has been highly disturbed and partly modified over time, dominated by Phalaris (*Phalaris aquatica*) and other introduced species. A pine windbreak, planted many years ago, is on the eastern slope above the suburb of Lyneham.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> <https://lynehamcommons.wordpress.com/>;

<https://lynehamcommonsproject.wordpress.com/about/>

<sup>48</sup> [file:///Users/ann-marijordens/Desktop/O'Connor Ridge Nature Reserve - Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate - Environment.html](file:///Users/ann-marijordens/Desktop/O'Connor%20Ridge%20Nature%20Reserve%20-%20Environment,%20Planning%20and%20Sustainable%20Development%20Directorate%20-%20Environment.html)