



**ACTON/WEST BASIN • CANBERRA
CULTURAL HERITAGE STUDY**

**VOLUME 1
CONSERVATION ANALYSIS**

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VOLUME 1

CONSERVATION ANALYSIS

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ACTON/WEST BASIN • CANBERRA CULTURAL HERITAGE STUDY

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Cultural Heritage Study

The Acton/West Basin Cultural Heritage Study has been prepared as part of an overall Design Study for the Acton/West Basin area. Other areas of study include Landscape; Marketing; Building Condition; Infrastructure; Social Planning; Transport and Movement; and Health. The studies will culminate in an Urban Design Forum, to be conducted in November 1993, aimed at providing guidelines for the future use of the precinct.

The Cultural Heritage Study is presented in three volumes:

- Volume 1 Conservation Analysis**
Including historical and physical overview and analysis, and the assessment and statement of cultural significance; inventory of existing buildings and landscape.

- Volume 2 Conservation Analysis**
Illustrated Chronology

- Volume 3 Conservation Analysis**
Sequential Plans and Landscape Analysis

- Volume 4 Conservation Management Policy**
including Archaeological Survey

The brief for the Cultural Heritage component of the Design Study, Study Brief Number 93/23, has been prepared by the National Capital Planning Authority (NCPA). The brief is appended at Appendix 1 of Volume 2 **Appendices to Cultural Heritage Study**. The Brief proposed a **Study Area** bounded by the Australian National University, Parkes Way and Commonwealth Avenue. A diagram of the precinct area is included within the Brief.

1.2 The Consultant Team

The consultant team for the study is as follows:

Project Manager	Peter Freeman
Conservation Architect	Pip Giovanelli Freeman Collett & Partners Architects & Planners
Archival Research Historians	Vivid Histories Historians • Canberra
Site Analysis and Site Documentation	Roger Hobbs Cultural Heritage Consultant • Canberra
Landscape Analysis	Malcolm Munro Malcolm Munro & Associates Landscape Architects

2.0 STATEMENT OF CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

- The landscape of the Acton/West Basin area, particularly the landscape of the Lake shore around the West Basin has aesthetic qualities highly valued locally and nationally.
- Aboriginal occupation of the site is evidenced by the collection made by H.P. Moss between 1937 and 1941. The artefacts show it to have been a camp site of reasonable proportion and an area of considerable tool and weapon manufacture. The European uses of this site, first for pastoral uses, then for community/civic use, and later Hospital use have now been superseded and the remnants of those occupancies are now important culturally.
- The Black Mountain foothills and spur are important to the Aboriginal community as a meeting place.
- Since 1911, there has been medical care located on the Acton Peninsula. For three generations of Canberra residents, the site has been the Hospital peninsula. The depth of community affection for the Hospital, primarily because of its strong cultural and social association, has been evidenced in the years prior and following the Hospital's closure.
- There are a number of landscapes within the Acton/West Basin area which are notable remnants from the early pastoral, and later Early Federal Capital phases of the site. These include the landscape of the eastern shore of West Basin and the courtyard plantings of Bennett House. *
- The first Administration buildings, the first residences and hostel accommodation, and the first recreational facilities were all built on or near this site. The first Administration buildings were progressively extended, but remained the Administration centre for the ACT right up to 1960.
- This is the first major site of Federal Capital occupancy. The site has direct and tangible links with many 19th and 20th century figures associated with the pastoral and early Canberra phases. The Hospital history of the site is equally rich as evidenced by the memorials within the site erected to people associated with that function. Royal Canberra Hospital was associated with the development in medical care in Canberra for it is here that the improved and then extended hospital and teaching facilities grew between 1940 and 1984 to meet the needs of an expanding city.
- Limestone outcrops exist along the peninsula. It was these outcrops which gave the area its original name; the Limestone Plains. Most of these outcrops have been obliterated by European occupancy. The outcrops on the Acton Peninsula are among the few remaining which are still visible.
- The site represents a remarkable collection of late 19th century and 20th century landscapes, and as such is invaluable as a benchmark/teaching site demonstrating the evolution of the site through Aboriginal to European occupancy, and from pastoral use centred on the Molonglo River, to a central feature of one of the world's great capitals.

3.0 HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

3.1 THE FIRST INHABITANTS

3.1.1 The Beginning

Aborigines have lived in the region now occupied by Canberra for thousands of years. The Molonglo River flats and the adjoining mountain, now Black Mountain, and its peninsula were some of the areas favoured for a meeting place by the Aboriginal people of the region. The region was occupied by three groups, the Ngarigo, the Walgalu and the Ngunnawal. The Ngunnawal people are thought to have occupied the environs of Black Mountain. They apparently lived in ecological balance with the harsh climate and landscape, and modified the vegetation through the use of fire. The Molonglo River swept around a ridge, now Acton Peninsula, providing a readily available source of water and abundant food resources. The wetlands provided water birds and their eggs, bull-rush roots and other vegetation making the area an invaluable resource. The area would also have provided shelter from the prevailing westerly winds, flat and fertile camping areas and defensible territory.

Aboriginal artefacts were recovered on the site between 1937 and 1941 and indicate that the Aborigines occupied an area skirting the base of the Mountain and on either side of the River. These artefacts were recovered on the site of the early Federal Capital Administration Offices and at the site of the Canberra Hospital buildings which were constructed in the early 1940s. Many of these artefacts are presently housed in the H.P. Moss collection held by the National Museum of Australia. There remains the possibility that more archaeological evidence exists within the Peninsula. A more complete account of Aboriginal occupancy and the Moss Collection of artefacts is given within the Archaeological Survey, Volume 4.

3.1.2 Contact with the Europeans

One of the best existing accounts of the impact of the European settlers, from 1824 onwards, on the Aboriginal culture has been prepared by Ann Jackson-Nakano on behalf of the Ngunnawal.

When the European settlers arrived they saw the smoke of our ancestors' fires, raised their guns in the

allowed their beasts - sheep, horses, cattle - to eat and drink our waterholes; and gradually destroyed an ecological system that had provided our ancestors with a balanced diet.

Our ancestors grew hungry and tried to spear the beasts that had chased off the emu and the kangaroo. For this, they were shot and sometimes killed by the white men. In the early days of European settlement, the Ngunnawal men got together and vowed to keep fighting the white men but their spears were no match for the European firearms. As the number of our men dwindled, the women killed their half-caste children but, as the numbers of our people became so few, they later kept and raised them in traditional ways.

Instead of fighting, the remaining groups of Ngunnawal families tried their best to hide from the Europeans and fled to their tribal borders or to the high country to escape. Some of them joined their kin by marriage in other tribal areas . . . After the white women arrived, the men were less brutal and some of the European families took pity on our ancestors and gave them food and clothing and permitted them to camp on the land that had been stolen from them."¹

As stated above, it is clear that the early settlement period involved incidents of cohabitation between non-Aboriginal men, usually the convicts, and Aboriginal women. There could be repercussions of such relationships for the Europeans as well as the Aboriginals. In 1829, John McLaughlin, an overseer of the first out station established in the Limestone Plains that is Canberry, took one of his bullock drivers, MacDonald Smith, before a magistrate for 'cohabiting with, and harbouring, a black native woman on his employees farm'.² MacDonald Smith was subsequently sent to the convict barracks in Sydney for punishment.

¹ Ann Jackson-Nakano, "We are the Ngunnawal". An introduction to the Ngunnawal of the Australian Capital Territory and the surrounding area in New South Wales.

² J. J. Moore to Colonial Secretary, AONSW 4/2052.

Summarily, the impact of the European settlers on the Aborigines of the region is accounted by Jackson-Nakano as follows,

*The might of the Europeans forced our great-grandparents to make some choices. Some of them decided they could survive better by sticking together, while others represent a link between the future and the past, a past that goes back thousands of years. The new Canberra suburb of Ngunnawal is the first monument to recognise us and our ancestors, the forgotten founders of the Canberra region."*³

3.2 THE EUROPEAN SETTLEMENT PHASE c 1824 - 1911

Refer Sequential Map No. 1,
Volume 3, The Pastoral Period
to 1911

The arrival of the Europeans in the region resulted in the first major impacts on the natural landscape. After the region had been explored by Joseph Wild, Charles Throsby and James Vaughan in 1820, news reached Sydney that the Limestone Plains offered good grazing land.

Consequently between 1824 and 1834, the region known as the Limestone Plains (later Canberry, and Canberra) was divided up among a small number of mainly absentee landlords. The landlords sent in overseers, stockmen and convicts to stake their claims.

From this point on, the Molonglo River basin and its environs played a significant role in the development and transformation of the landscape and community in the region by the Europeans.

3.2.1 The First European Landlord

Refer Figure 4, Illustrated
Chronology, Phase 1
Photograph of John Joshua
Moore, c 1860

John Joshua Moore was the first such landlord to establish a property in the Limestone Plains. He wanted to establish a southern outstation for his Goulburn property 'Baw Baw'. In 1824 he sent a party from 'Baw Baw' led by John McLaughlin, an Irish convict granted a conditional pardon in 1822. Accompanying McLaughlin were two assigned convict servants James Clarke and John Tennant. The Colonial Secretary gave Moore permission for the temporary occupation of a grazing run on 2 000 acres of

³ Jackson-Nakano, op. cit.

land within by a semi-circle along the northern side of the Molonglo.⁴

McLaughlin established Moore's outstation close to the Molonglo River, and the prominence of the adjacent mountain made the area a logical place for settlement and afforded protection from flooding. It was good land, particularly because of its connection to the fertile river area. There is no evidence that Moore visited his outstation and it is presumed that it was McLaughlin christened the property 'Canberry'. It is also presumed that it was McLaughlin who learnt that name from the Ngunnawal people for the area.⁵ According to the descendants of the Ngunnawal people, the transposed name Canberry is 'women's place.' It is known that Canberra was always, and still is, a meeting place for people of different communities and nations, speaking different languages.⁶

Refer Figures 1 & 2,
Illustrated Chronology,
Phase 1

Detail of Mitchell's Map of the
Colony 1834,, and detail of
Dixon's Survey of Early
Landholdings, published 1837.

Moore's men were probably the only European occupants of the Canberry plain in 1824 and did not have to worry about the boundaries of their master's outstation. The arrival of James Ainslie in 1825 changed matters. Ainslie was sent to establish a property for Robert Campbell and he made his first camp at the foot of what is now Mount Ainslie, to the west of Moore's holdings. Ainslie's migration to the area forced Moore to affirm and define his claim in the region. So in 1826 he applied to the Colonial Secretary to buy the land, reducing his claim to 1 000 acres. By 1829, and as part of the Surveyor General Thomas Mitchell's 'Survey of the Colony of New South Wales', the surveyor Robert Dixon undertook considerable survey work in the Limestone Plains region. Dixon's 1828 survey showed Canberry Creek (with a dot representing a European occupancy), and Black Mountain adjacent and to the west. To the east was the 'Pialligo' station (later Duntroon), and Mount Ainslie. Dixon's 1829 survey of landholdings clearly shows 'J Moor' (John Joshua Moore) occupying an unnamed allotment, with Robert Campbell at 'Pialigo' (sic) adjacent in 1831.

⁴ Allen Mawer, 'Pioneering exploits on Canberry Station', *Canberra Historical Journal*, no. 11, March 1993, p. 11.

⁵ *Ibid*, p. 13.

⁶ Josephine Flood, *The Riches of Ancient Australia. A Journey into Prehistory*, University of Queensland Press, Brisbane, 1990, pp. 295-297.

In 1831 the land to the east of Moore's outstation was taken up by John MacPherson on the eastern slopes of Black Mountain and east of 'Canberry Creek' (now known as Sullivan's Creek). He named his property 'Springbank' (hence the modern Springbank Island) and proceeded to clear the lower slopes of the mountain for grazing land.

The area was officially surveyed in 1832 by Robert Hoddle, who arrived in the Limestone Plains to formally determine the squatter's boundaries. Moore's 1 000 acre outstation was officially delineated. The property encompassed a river frontage between what is now known as Acton Peninsula and Regatta Point, and extended approximately 3 kilometres north. Moore extended the property by 742 acres, to the north, in 1837 which brought its northern boundary against Weetangera Road, centred roughly around the intersection of the Yass/Queanbeyan Road.

3.2.2 Bushrangers

Moore's convict John Tennant became the earliest and best known bushranger in the Canberry region. In 1826 he was sentenced to an iron gang for stealing six pounds. He escaped soon after, robbed Moore's station then took to the bush with a gang of bushrangers. The following year, Tennant twice raided huts at Duntroon, escaping each time. In January 1828 Tennant was in the company of 'Dublin Jack' Ricks and together they held up Canberry station. The overseer James Cowan, a free immigrant, and William Waterson, a convict, secured themselves within a hut which the bushrangers tried unsuccessfully to burn. Eventually the bushrangers were caught at their Tuggeranong encampment by a party consisting of Cowan, James Ainslie, Duncan McFarlane, the district constable John Jones, two servants and four aboriginal trackers. The bushrangers were subsequently sent to Sydney and sentenced to seven years in jail on Norfolk Island. Cowan and Ainslie received grants of 100 acres for their involvement in the arrests.⁷

⁷ Alan Fitzgerald, *Canberra in Two Centuries. A Pictorial History*, Clareville Press, Canberra, 1987, pp. 12-13.

3.2.3 Court of Petty Sessions

Some of the original huts on Canberry station in 1838 were required to provide a location for the region's first court house and lock-ups. On 23 July 1838 the first Court of Petty Sessions in the region was held at the property, resided over by Captain Alured Faunce who was appointed Magistrate of the neighbouring town of Queanbeyan and lived temporarily at Canberry. The magistrate powers of Faunce were exercised to curb the unruly behaviour of cattle stealers, runaway convicts and those who protected them, and the keepers of illicit spirit shops in the region. Faunce occupied the Canberry residence for eighteen months.

3.2.4 The Second Landlord and His Tenants

The early 1840s saw Moore's security threatened by severe drought and depression and in November 1843 he filed for bankruptcy. In 1844 Canberry was purchased by Arthur Jeffreys, a naval officer and son-in-law to Robert Campbell. Jeffreys renamed the property 'Acton' after his ancestral home in Wrexham, Wales. However, the name 'Canberry' was still used locally to refer to the property and became increasingly applied to refer to distinguish the district from Queanbeyan. Jeffreys returned to England in 1849, and from then until the Commonwealth resumed the land in 1911, portions of the property were leased out to various tenants.

Refer Figure 3, Illustrated
Chronology, Phase 1
Acton House as Rectory for St
John's Anglican Church, c 1870

Acton House, as the Canberry homestead came to be known, was leased as the first Rectory of the St John's Anglican Church, which had been consecrated in 1845. It was initially occupied by Reverend George Gregory, the first Rector, who was drowned in the Molonglo River when returning to Acton from Tharwa shortly before he was to be married in Sydney. Acton House was subsequently leased by Reverend Wilkinson then by Reverend Pierce Galliard-Smith, the third Rector, who occupied Acton House from 1855 to 1873 until the new Glebe Rectory was built on land donated by George Campbell of Duntroon Station.⁸

The continuing history of Acton house saw its occupation by a succession of tenants who grazed and cultivated the land in the absence of their landlord. Pioneer names like

⁸ Lyall Gileespie, *Canberra 1820-1913*, AGPS, Canberra, 1991, p. 80.

Southwell, Gates and Wright were recorded amongst them. Tenant farmers included Elijah Bambridge, Patrick McLaughlin, Timothy Noonan, John Whielding and Thomas Joslyn. Arthur Brassey occupied the house from the late 1880s until its was resumed by the Commonwealth in 1911.

3.2.5 The Development of the Homestead and its Environs

The first buildings on Moore's outstation were slab huts erected on the ridge above the bend in the Molonglo River. About 1826 a more substantial residence was completed. This was Canberry cottage, built for the property's overseer, McLaughlin. The cottage was located to the south of the original huts, farther down the ridge towards the river and slightly less exposed to the prevailing westerly winds. The cottage was later subsumed as the rear section of Acton House.⁹

Refer Figure 5, Illustrated
Chronology, Phase 1
The Acton Property, 1890

Refer Figure 6, Illustrated
Chronology, Phase 1
Land grants, Limestone Plains,
c 1870

The homestead and the outbuildings were further extensively modified by Arthur Brassey, who leased the property, from 1889 to 1911. Brassey added large brick portion with a prominent bow window on its southern end and he made considerable rearrangement of the outbuildings. When the property was resumed in 1911 it was described by the District Surveyor as "a well built cottage, the original portion of it being built of stone roofed with iron . . . though comparatively old [is] in a good state of preservation."¹⁰ Henry Maitland Rolland, Chief Architect to the Department of Home Affairs, also described the house in 1912 as an original quaint building, built of local stone, with a stone flagged floor, small windows and narrow, low doorways facing east overlooking the river. Below the house on the river bank was a small white washed cottage, presumed by Rolland to be one of the huts built for Moore's men. The house in the 1870s had a long verandah with plain supports and shuttered French windows.¹¹

Throughout the period of settlement, there had been some clearing and grazing of the native woodland on the

⁹ Mawer, op. cit., p. 15

¹⁰ Australian Archives, Series A358/2

¹¹ Refer E. Lea Scarlett *First Light on the Limestone Plains. Historic Photographs of Canberra & Queanbeyan*, Hale & Iremonger, Sydney, 1986, pp. 78-79, shows photographs, from 1870 & 1890, of the Acton property.

western sloped of the ridge and a reduction in tree density on the remainder. There was also an introduction of exotic vegetation in the vicinity of Moore's cottage. An 1872 account of the homestead by Reverend Stanley Howard, a guest with the Galliard Smith's, described the house as nestling amongst acacias, and its grove of willows looking green and fresh. The need for homesteads in the region to be self sufficient, as there were no village centres, make it likely that the homestead was surrounded by extensive gardens and an orchard as the rich soil of the flats were very fertile.¹²

Along the Molonglo River, willows were planted by one of the tenant farmers, Elijah Bambridge. The nineteenth century produced an European overlay to the native landscape.

3.3 THE EARLY FEDERAL CAPITAL PERIOD 1911 - 1921

Refer Sequential Plan No. 2,
Volume 3, 1911 to 1939

Refer Figure 1, Illustrated
Chronology, Phase 2
Survey map of Acton property,
c 1911

By the end of the nineteenth century the colonies of Australia had determined to join forces and become a federation. The Commonwealth was proclaimed on the first of January 1901. The newly federated nation required a Capital a centre for government, a place for Parliament to sit, and a show-piece of European-based Australian development. The selection of a site was a vexed question. Finally, after seven years of controversy, the members of the House of Representatives on 8 October 1908 selected the 'Yass-Canberra' region as the nation's capital.¹³

In 1909 C. R. Scrivener surveyed the region between Yass and Canberra and decided that the Canberra valley was best suited to the Capital's needs. With the Cotter and Molonglo Rivers at hand and the railway as close as Queanbeyan, the area was functionally suitable as well as picturesque.¹⁴ A surveying team gathered details of the site and prepared a contour survey of the region.¹⁵ All was finalised by April 1911, and at last, ten years after federation, a world-wide competition to select a design for the capital was announced.

¹² C.S. Daley, *The changing face of Acton*, unpublished, May 1962, p. 3.

¹³ Pegrum, *The Bush Capital*, p. 138.

¹⁴ Report by Scrivener to Mahon, 25 February 1909, in *Federal Capital Site, Papers and Plans, etc.*, NSW (Legislative Assembly) P.P., 39 of 1909, referred to in Pegrum, *The Bush Capital*, p. 146.

¹⁵ Daley, *op. cit.*, p. 3.

Refer Figure 6, Illustrated Chronology, Phase 2
Extract from schedule of improvements, 24 June 1912.

Refer Figures 9,10,11 & 12, Illustrated Chronology, Phase 2
Photographs and sketches of Acton House, 1911 to 1920

A valuation of the entire Acton property was completed in 1912, and all buildings, fences and improvements were valued in Lamb's 12 page schedule of improvements. This document provides an excellent understanding of the extent and physical condition of the buildings of Acton Holding. **Acton House** was described as:

Brick, plastered, with iron roof and pine ceilings, cedar finished throughout, with hardwood floors, 11 foot ceilings, and 10 feet wide verandahs with brick floor.

This description referred to Brassey's extension to Acton House.

Acton Old House was described as of

Stone, plastered, with iron roof over shingles and ceilings of plaster, fibrous plaster and wood. The House was properly finished throughout with 10 feet wide verandah with brick floor.

The condition of both buildings was described as fair to good.

3.3.1 The Capital Begins

While awaiting the completion of the competition and the final settlement of the Federal Capital plans, the Department of Home Affairs incorporating the Public Works and Lands & Survey Branches, allowed separate arrangements for construction on the Acton ridge. They chose to set up provisional administrative and building headquarters near the Molonglo River by Acton House. Residential and medical facilities were planned to be placed higher up on the ridge.¹⁶

Refer Figures 2,3,4 & 5, Illustrated Chronology, Phase 2
Survey and acquisition maps and plans, Acton property, 1911 & 1912

In early 1911 the Commonwealth Government obtained, by resumption, the 1 742 acres of the Acton estate, and the construction of the Capital began in earnest.¹⁷ The ambitious Federal Capital building program attracted large numbers of labourers from around the country. These workmen lived in White City Camp, rows of tents erected in June 1911 on the crest of the Acton ridge. The Acton

¹⁶ Ibid, p. 10.

¹⁷ 1911 Official Year Book of the Commonwealth.

administrative offices and associated buildings began to take shape, a ford was built across the Molonglo nearby, and the construction of a tennis court and sports ground was undertaken.

3.3.2 Services to the City and the Nation

On 22 August 1912, the weatherboard Administrative Offices and Works building were finished and the officers moved in.¹⁸ The complex of buildings that surrounded a central garden also included the Commonwealth Bank, which had opened in temporary quarters in the administrative offices in January that year, but moved to its own, austere columned, building in October. It was the first permanent building of the Commonwealth Bank in Australia. Within the complex there were also quarters for the bank's staff and a post office, which opened in November of that year. To the north of the offices a large house was commissioned as a residence for the Administrator of the Federal Capital Territory, Colonel David Miller. 'The Residency' (now known as Canberra House), was a substantial feature in a fairly barren landscape.¹⁹

An official ceremony to inaugurate the new capital was needed. On the 12 March 1913 dignitaries and local families gathered in a dusty paddock, dressed in their finest, to witness Lady Denham name the capital 'Canberra'. The chosen name was, of course, a derivation of the Aboriginal word for the region, interpreted by the early Europeans as 'Canberry'.

3.3.3 Houses and Hospitals

At the time of Federal acquisition the Acton Peninsula was operating as a pastoral station. On the Acton property itself were fencing, houses, station buildings, and mature stands of native and exotic trees. Across the river to the south, and reached by a ford over the Molonglo River, was the ruined remains of Klensendorffe's Elizabeth Farm building and adjacent new homestead. Further to the east was Duntroon and further to the west was Yarralumla Station.

Refer Figures 13,14 & 14a,
Illustrated Chronology,
Phase 2
The new Administrative Building
for the Department of Home
Affairs, 1912 & 1914

Refer Figure 7, Illustrated
Chronology, Phase 2
Klensendorffe's Elizabeth Farm
and Acton road.

¹⁸ Daley, op. cit., p. 4.

¹⁹ J. Barder, 'Canberra House - Westminster House 1931-1993', MS, British High Commission, Canberra, 1993, p. 1.

Refer Figure 8, Illustrated
Chronology, Phase 2
Panorama of Canberra, by
Henry Maitland Rolland, 1914

Construction of Federal Capital facilities on Acton continued. An outbreak of diphtheria in the region prompted the decision to build a hospital for the Federal Capital at Acton to supplement the medical facilities at Duntroon. The Canberra Community Hospital, providing free medical treatment, was planned and built in only a year and opened in May 1913.²⁰ It was located closer to Black Mountain than the Administrative buildings. The main buildings are still standing, and are within the ground of the Australian National University.

Construction began in 1913 of a many-roomed complex to house the unmarried officers of the Department. It was called the Bachelors' Quarters and now forms part of Lennox House. Four weatherboard cottages were also built in early 1913 for the married officers. The cottages and Bachelors' Quarters faced out on to the Acton flats and the Molonglo River flood plain, which was used as a horse paddock and later became the west basin of the Federal Capital lake.

Canberra's environment was still, at this stage, a harsh one. The government resolved to soften Canberra's winds and create a well-treed landscape. Mr. Thomas Charles George Weston, horticulturalist, was employed to manage the planting of forests as well as urban planting. He moved to Acton in 1913 and resided there for nine years. At Acton, he established an extensive experimental nursery alongside the Acton offices, testing the suitability of trees and shrubs for Canberra's climate. The nursery received recognition on a national level for his innovative achievements.²¹

3.3.4 Basic Living

Living conditions during the early phase of development in Acton were hard. J.C. Brackenreg, one of the twenty-nine officers of the Department of Home Affairs in Canberra, arrived in March 1913. He was employed as a stock inspector and rabbit controller. Both he and his wife, Mary, wrote a good deal and their son has been able to piece together a picture of his parent's early years in Canberra:

²⁰ H. J. Gibbney, *Canberra 1913-1953*, Canberra, 1988, p. 174.

²¹ M. Mulvaney, 'The History of Ornamental Tree and Shrub Planting in the Canberra Region', Canberra and District Historical Society publication [?], pp.24-29, p.27.

*After my father arrived, he very soon found out that the Administrator, Colonel Miller, was very much against wives and moreover there was nowhere to live. He sent for my mother to come to Canberra to see what could be done. They were very lucky to get a room with the Sullivans at Springbank with the use of a bagged-in end of a verandah as a dining room. Cooking was done over an open fire in the backyard."*²²

Refer Figures 15,16 & 16a,
Illustrated Chronology,
Phase 2
Workmen's cottages and tents,
1914

For many, regardless of their social standing, tents were all the shelter that was available. Mary Brackenreg described the situation:

*When we first came in 1913, the...houses in Liversidge Street, Acton were just completed and the tenants moving in . . . The Administrator's wife and son were sleeping in tents and a weatherboard kitchen and dining room in the grounds of the Residency . . . Bachelors lived in tents in front of what is now Lennox House . . . the work people lived in bag houses . . ."*²³

Such accommodation was especially uncomfortable in the extremes of winter and summer. Where possible, supplies were obtained from Queanbeyan, a long ride both ways. The post office and bank down the road will have helped in day-to-day operations, but services were, on the whole, sparse. There were, at least, a few sports facilities, a tennis court and playing field. Residents had formed the Acton Cricket Club in 1912. On 4 April 1913 a small recreation hall with a lean-to annexe was opened.²⁴ Acton Hall hosted the majority of Canberra's social activities for several years.

3.3.5 Weston's Nursery

Refer Figures 17 & 17a,
Illustrated Chronology,
Phase 2
Weston's Acton Nursery, plan
and photograph, c 1914

T C G Weston established a Federal Capital Nursery on the Acton site, just west of the newly completed Federal Capital Administration Offices. Weston's Nursery will be

²² J.R. Brackenreg, 'Brackenreg Lives and Times', *Canberra District Historical Society* new series no. 15. March 1985, pp. 1-12, p. 4.

²³ *Ibid*, p. 5.

²⁴ P.L. Sheaffe, District Surveyor, Memo., 17 May 1918, Australian Archives (ACT) A361/1 DS918/1072

covered in greater detail in the Landscape overview, Volume 1 of the Conservation Analysis.

Weston's Nursery was laid out over the south facing slope to the Molonglo River. The Nursery was regularly organised with rectangular building plots and a primitive watering system. To the north of the Nursery was Weston's own shed, which he used for 9 years as his dwelling.

3.3.6 Foot Bridges and Road Bridges

Refer Figure 19, Illustrated Chronology, Phase 2
Walter Burley Griffin's plan of 1918 showing proposed Lake bridges.

Walter Burley Griffin's plan for the Federal Capital proposed a grand bridge for Commonwealth Avenue over the proposed ornamental lake. The alignment for the Avenue and the bridge was clearly defined in his City Plan proposals, however, the first Commonwealth Avenue bridge to be built over the Lake in 1916 was **not** on this alignment. Griffin had also proposed a second Lake crossing which would effectively join the Peninsula with the south side of the city. This facet of Griffin's design was never proceeded with.

Refer Figure 18, Illustrated Chronology, Phase 2
The first Commonwealth Avenue bridge, 1916

Refer Sequential Plan No. 2, Volume 3

Further to the west along the River were the golf links of the Royal Canberra Golf Club. The golf links extended on both sides of the River, and access across the River was by means of a small suspension bridge, completed c 1915. The ford at Lennox Crossing was replaced by a small wooden bridge.

3.3.7 The First World War

During the war the offices and services of Acton continued to operate. Nevertheless, development virtually ceased. Attention had shifted from local affairs to international concerns. Many of Acton's people left for combat, some left to serve in war offices or munitions factories in other states. Materials and man power were difficult to obtain through the war years and remained scarce in the year that followed.

3.4 THE COMMUNITY MATURES 1921 to 1939

3.4.1 Revitalisation

By 1921, following the Great War, conditions began to improve. The Federal Capital Advisory Committee took over from the Department of Home Affairs and started their term with various new projects in Acton. They ordered the construction of a building to house police officers and a consulting room for two Queanbeyan doctors attached to the hospital.²⁵ The ford across the Molonglo was replaced with a small bridge, Lennox Crossing. It was a narrow bridge, particularly alarming to the few drivers now in Canberra. Crashes on the bridge were, for a few months in 1926, common.²⁶ The bridge was repeatedly submerged throughout the 1920s and 30s. A larger bridge, capable of withstanding floods, could not yet be justified for the population was too small and the vehicular usage was necessarily limited. Walter Burley Griffin's design for the capital had been selected and, despite government wrangling, the government did expect the Molonglo to be dammed to create an ornamental lake.

Refer Sequential Plan No. 2,
Volume 3
The Acton Hall was midway
between the Administrative
Offices and the Bachelor's
Quarters and Administration
Residences

Refer Figures 16 & 17,
Illustrated Chronology,
Phase 3
The Federal Capital Commission
omnibus service and the route
through Acton, 1928

The facilities on the peninsula were extended in the 1920s. A school was started on 9 February 1920 with one teacher, eight pupils from Acton, and eight or more to attend "as soon as the flooded river is low enough for them to cross."²⁷ The school moved from the old Department of Works office in February 1921 into the Acton Amusement Hall. Gordon Kaye was a student at the school and reports that they had sometimes to "pack up our goods and chattels to allow a dance or concert to take place."²⁸ A playground was built nearby, near the present-day jetty on the western side of the peninsula, and a vegetable patch, was created.²⁹ Two of the four bus routes established in Canberra in 1923 came through Acton. With the arrival of a bus service came the closure of the Acton school as children caught the bus to the newly opened Telopea School.

²⁵ Daley, *op. cit.*, pp. 6-7.

²⁶ Chief Engineer to the Secretary, F.C.C., 29 July 1926, A292/71 C22013.

²⁷ District Surveyor's report, 12 February 1920, Australian Archives (ACT) A361 DSG21/209.

²⁸ G. Kaye, unpublished paper, held at the Museums and Galleries Unit.

²⁹ Miss Kilgour, letter, 26 February 1921, Australian Archives (ACT) A361 (Item 35) DSG21/209.

By this stage a close connection had developed between Acton and the residential, commercial and industrial development on the southern side of the river, with the Albert Hall a social centre for the region.

3.4.2 Roads and Communication

Refer Figures 3,4,7 & 8,
Illustrated Chronology,
Phase 3
The bridges and roads of the
Acton area, 1920 to 1930

The 1920s brought a series of massive floods which wreaked havoc with the nascent communications of the Federal Capital. The 1916 Commonwealth Avenue bridge was wiped out in the 1921 flood and was replaced by 1924. That bridge was, in turn, wiped out by the 1925 flood with only the concrete abutments left standing. The Commonwealth Avenue bridge was renewed, and strengthened for a third time. Further south, along Commonwealth Avenue, the 'Billabong' Bridge was built over an Oxbow in the Molonglo River.

Refer Figure 13, Illustrated
Chronology, Phase 3
Canberra's road system in 1924
and 1933

The major access to the Acton area was still via Lennox Crossing in this period, and it appears that the connections to Acton from the south (Parliament House, Kingston, Power House etc) were much more important than those to the north (Civic etc). By this time also, the connections along the Peninsula were much more developed, for there was settlement and activity along the entire length of the Acton area. This was, after all, the centre of the early Federal Capital.

3.4.3 Games and Churches

Refer Figures 1 & 2 Illustrated
Chronology, Phase 3
There were tennis courts all over
Acton. The Bachelor's
Quarters/Acton Guest House
got its tennis court c 1923

Community facilities for recreation and worship in Acton had broadened by the 1920s. The Royal Canberra Golf course opened and was well patronised by the local officials and officers. There were four tennis courts in Acton alone. Tennis parties were held at the Residency for Acton officers.³⁰ A rough racecourse was established by 1921 on a level area between Balmain Crescent and Sullivan's Creek. In 1928 the Commission gave over the land between Acton House and Hotel Acton for a women's sportsground.³¹ Hockey and cricket appear to have been the favourite sports played there. It was on the

³⁰ R. Robinson, *Yabbies at Acton: a Story of Canberra 1913-1927*, Gordon NSW, n.d., p. 9.

³¹ *Canberra Times*, 1 March 1928.

Acton grounds that the Women Cricketers played a match against the English Women's team in January 1935.³²

The Masonic Hall operated from 1923 to 1926. The Acton Hall had been moved in May 1926 to the front of Acton Road. It was operating at that stage as a venue for Churches and Sunday schools as well as more ribald concerts; both local and travelling.³³ At a flower show in Acton on 3 December 1924 the hall became the site of the first wireless broadcast of news to and from Canberra. The first newspaper in Canberra was also printed on that day. It was called the *Federal Capital Pioneer*.³⁴

3.4.4 Parliament and Public Servants

In August 1923 the building of the provisional Parliament House commenced on the southern side of the Molonglo River. Houses and public buildings were also being constructed in the Civic region.

Responsibility for administration and development of the capital passed to the Federal Capital Commission (FCC) on 1 January 1925. The FCC was a statutory corporation with greater administrative and financial powers than previous bodies had held.

On 9 May 1927 Parliament opened. Early in 1927 the Commission announced its intention to transfer 646 public servants from Melbourne to Canberra that year and a further 233 in 1929.³⁵ A second phase of residential construction began in Acton. Eastwards from the administrative centre, the Hotel Acton was built to help accommodate the inflow of officers. The workmen and their families sheltered in the fifteen huts erected in a row facing the Molonglo.

The Administrative Offices developed from their original linear format into a hollow 'U' facing onto a circular meteorological station within the courtyard. The new Federal Capital Commission offices formed the southern part of the Offices and overlooked the Molonglo River,

Refer Figures 14 & 15,
Illustrated Chronology,
Phase 3
The Federal Capital Commission
Offices, Acton

32 YWCA, letter, 30 October 1934, Australian Archives (ACT), A1/1 36/11839

33 'Acton Hall When I was Younger', *Canberra Times* (?), about July 1946.

34 L. Wigmore, *Canberra: History of Australia's National Capital*, Canberra, 1972, p. 87.

35 Brackenreg, *op. cit.*, p. 10.

Refer Figures 11 & 12,
Illustrated Chronology,
Phase 3
The Commonwealth Bank, Post
Office and Meteorological
Station

and Lennox Crossing, to the south. The twin portions of this elevation formed the site for the early public lease sales of land in the Federal Capital.

The northern side of the Office complex was formed by public institutions. Closest the road was the Commonwealth Bank (which was later considered as a potential Court House when the Commonwealth Bank moved to Civic) and the Canberra Post Office, housed in a diminutive building flanking the Bank.

The development of Canberra continued to expand out from its focus on Acton to begin in earnest in new suburbs.

3.4.5 The Community Expands

The transfer of officials meant a substantial change to community relationships and the general atmosphere of Acton. J.R. Brackenreg recalled that . . .

*Up to early 1927, most of the people living in Canberra had come of their own free will. They all had a common bond - they all worked for the Commission and moreover they all saw Canberra as something worthwhile. . . Most of the new arrivals did not want to come to Canberra. They spoke of being shanghaied. They were unhappy ..*³⁶

Those who were transferred had to leave established homes, close friends and family. Life in Canberra was not easily reconciled with such loss. Many did, however, become used, and even fond of, the place. W.J. Mildenhall, the Commission paymaster and photographer, had been transferred to Canberra, and lived on Acton Road. His wife had found life in Canberra depressing at first, but then, she recalled . . .

*. . . the pattern of Canberra in the future began to unfold. We were very excited when the first houses commenced in Ainslie near Gorman House, we would walk across on a Sunday afternoon from Acton to view their progress.*³⁷

³⁶ Ibid, p. 10.

³⁷ E.A. Mildenhall, 'The Early Days of Canberra From 1920', unpublished paper, held at the Museums Unit, Folder 38, Canberra, 1982, p. 1.

The depression that struck in 1929 and lasted for much of the 1930s slowed construction in Acton and the rest of the capital. The Commission concentrated instead on finding new ways to use existing buildings, and selling or leasing buildings to outside bodies where possible. The British High Commission bought the Residency. The Bachelor's Quarters were leased to a private firm and became the Acton Guest House.

3.4.6 The Acton House Site

The Acton House site consisted, as most pastoral homesteads do, of a main homestead building (albeit much altered), a series of outbuilding enclosures and, of course, a tennis court. We are fortunate to have excellent documentary evidence of the house site.

Refer Figures 5 & 6,
Illustrated Chronology,
Phase 3
Acton Homestead 1924

Because of the proximity of the House site to the Federal Capital Commission/Department of the Interior Administrative Offices, it was inevitable that the House and grounds would be pressed into service for administrative purposes. Up until 1924 the house had been empty, and was becoming derelict. Subsequently the House was offered to Percy Sheaffe, the surveyor, as a residence, and Sheaffe and his family cleaned up and restored the precinct and homestead.

Refer Figures 18 & 18a,
Illustrated Chronology,
Phase 3
The Acton House complex, plan
and photographs, 1928 and
c 1931

By 1931 the buildings were being used as the Canberra Police Station and Court House and then, in 1941, following the commencement of works for the relocated Canberra Community Hospital, the Homestead was demolished to make way for the new Canberra Community Hospital isolation and obstetrics wards.

Refer Figures 2 & 3,
Illustrated Chronology,
Phase 4
The Acton House site and the
Canberra Community Hospital

3.5 THE RISE OF THE INSTITUTIONS 1939 - 1958

3.5.1 The Second World War

Refer Sequential Plan No. 3,
Volume 3

Refer Figures 2 & 3,
Illustrated Chronology,
Phase 4
Acton House and Canberra
Community Hospital, 1941

It is perhaps not surprising that the major building project in Acton in the war years was a hospital. The old Canberra Community Hospital was critically short of accommodation for patients and nurses. Twelve nurses were sleeping on the verandah in 1942.³⁸ The Government decided to commence the implementation of Griffin's planned placement of the hospital at Acton. In May 1940 a new hospital building was begun on the end of what would become the peninsula. To make room for this development Acton House was demolished on 27 November 1941.³⁹ Whilst under government occupation the house had served as the surveyor's residence, as an office of the Commission's Social Service Branch, as a community library and court house, and as a police station.⁴⁰ A memorial fountain, constructed of stones from the house, was erected near the original site.

The war made its presence felt in Acton through the presence of military personnel in the area. The 7th Fleet of the U.S. Navy ran a radio training station in the Acton Guest House during 1940. The Medical Corps (5th Station Hospital) of the U.S. Army pressed for the completion and equipping of the new hospital building and in August 1942 took up occupation of the building. They left after a few months, however, when it appeared that they needed to be closer to the battle up north.⁴¹

3.5.2 Meetings and Music

During the war the Acton Hall was used for rescue squad and ambulance training, as a venue for meetings of the Trades and Labour Council, as a site for church jumble sales, and for various entertainments. A piano was bought in 1943 and performances were made by a local drama society, the Acton Players.⁴²

3.5.3 Post War developments

38 J. Newman & J. Warren, *Royal Canberra Hospital, An Anecdotal History of Nursing 1914-1991*, Canberra, 1993, p. 224.

39 File: 'Demolition of Acton and Memorial Fountain', correspondence and advertisement for demolition contract, *Canberra Times* 15 January 1940, Australian Archives (ACT) A292 T1 C19925.

40 File: 'Acton House - Leasing Alterations', Australian Archives (ACT) A6273/1 L29/2782.

41 Newman & Warren, op. cit., p. 77.

42 Museums and Galleries unit data base, file: 'Acton Hall'.

The realisation of Griffin's plan continued when a 1946 act created a University and gave for its site the upper region of Acton. The Australian National University, an institution for research and post-graduate studies, commenced functioning in 1948. The residences and old hospital buildings that had been Commonwealth property were gradually handed to the University.

Refer Figure 1, Illustrated
Chronology, Phase 4
Aerial view of Canberra
Community Hospital, c 1949

Meanwhile, the hospital's move to its new site had been completed in 1943. By the end of the Hospital's first decade on the lower Acton site, the complex had grown dramatically. To the north of the Hospital complex were the residences for Hospital staff, the TB and isolation wards, and the Main Ward Blocks containing the entry, obstetrics and general wards. To the south, and anticipating in plan form the future Lake buildings, were the Nurses' Quarters (Bennett House), constructed in stages from 1943 (1943, 1948 and 1956).

Even the old Government Offices (most recently occupied by the Department of the Interior) were pressed into service for Geriatric and other wards. As shortages of rooms again became a problem in the early 1950s, multi-storey buildings were planned and were constructed in 1963.

3.6 THE DEVELOPMENT PERIOD 1958 to Present

3.6.1 The Lake

Refer Sequential Plan No. 4,
Volume 3

It was not until 1958 that the Lake, central to Walter Burley Griffin's scheme for the city, received program status with the newly established National Capital Development Commission (NCDC). The Lake was also needed to alleviate the problems of the flooding river. The NCDC followed Griffin's scheme of the Lake as an unifying feature for the city, but Griffin's concept of uncompromising formality of the East and West Basins was abandoned to pay greater respect to the natural contours. Also, the formality of the Central Basin was confined, for the most part, to the south side where the long straight line he had planned for the embankment was reduced to splays at right angles to each bridge. The actual scheme came close to that of the bureaucratic opponents to Griffin's scheme. The advice of Lord Holford, an eminent British town planner, was adhered to. He saw the Lake as an 'open space system', preserving

the forty kilometres perimeter as parkland. The completion of the Lake scheme represented a key move in transforming a rural town into a national capital - and also to demonstrate that the newly formed NCDC was on the job.

Excavations, landscaping and construction of the retaining walls for the Lake began in 1960. During construction, the magnificent trees that graced the Acton site of the Royal Canberra Golf course were uprooted and some of these trees were planted elsewhere. The racecourse was churned up and the willows lining the Molonglo were ripped out and the river's course was summarily changed. Down came the cottages and the grandstand at Acton and the old timber truss bridge at Commonwealth Avenue.⁴³

The good river soil deposits and the excavations of the Molonglo River were employed in the Lake's landscape projects and for the city's parks and gardens. This included the formation of an island in the West Lake area on high ground where Springbank Homestead once stood.

Not only did the construction of the Lake radically change the landscape, it also changed the community's associations with the area. Gone were the familiar, the childhood haunts, the recreational facilities, the familiar crossings of the river. In essence, the whole feeling and aesthetics of the place changed.

On 20 September 1963, the valves of the dam were closed and the Molonglo River began to fill the lake. The impounding process was painfully slow and it was not until 30 April 1964 that the water finally reached its planned level.

The Lake was intended by Griffin to play an important ornamental and community role in the Nation's capital, a role which it continues to fulfil to the present day.

3.6.2 The Development of the Foreshores and Recreation

Although the construction and the completion of the Lake resulted in the loss of many community facilities and landscapes, new ones were created.

⁴³ Eric Sparke, *Canberra 1954-1980*, AGPS, Canberra, 1988, p. 138.

The Government's landscaping policy for the Lake aimed to give each area an individual character based on its dominant species or on new trees likely to grow well. Thus exotic tree plantings were extended along the peninsula's shores on West Basin and the western lake. These plantings generally consisted of willows, poplars and elms. Also, the landscape development of the foreshores of the Lake was planned to vary according to the sites requirements.

West Basin was identified as one of three major developments nodes where limited lakeside development could take place. Waterside development was strongly resisted, and only in the last decade of the NCDC's existence did the Commission entertain the concept. About 1964, the Acton Ferry terminal was constructed. It thus became possible to embark on a cruise of the Lake from this point, and also possible to hire watercraft for one's own cruise of the water. Another jetty on the western side of the peninsula was constructed in 1964.

The foreshore of the site was treated in a traditional manner at West Basin with trees and shrubs, gravel and sand beaches. Elsewhere along the shoreline of the peninsula and West Basin, the treatment varied from stone pitching to steep rocky banks to beach to natural shoreline and to stone pitching.

Other recreational facilities which were later created in the area include a bicycle hire facility, to take advantage of the many cycle routes with in the vicinity. The facility was erected in 1988 bringing another recreational focal point for the site, with the associated carpark, originally completed in 1970, being extended in 1989.

3.6.3 Highways and Byways

Immediately prior to this period, the most significant development of the transport routes in the city was the completion of Commonwealth Avenue Bridge and Kings Avenue Bridge. The bridges completed the grand avenues radiating from Capital Hill, at last defining the sides of Griffin's triangles. Commonwealth Avenue Bridge, the main artery into the nation's symbolic centre and was opened in November 1963 (it was a third in a series of bridges with the first being constructed in 1916 and the

Refer Figure 3, Illustrated
Chronology, Phase 5
The Lake and the new
Commonwealth Avenue Bridge,
1965

second in 1924). Kings Avenue Bridge was completed earlier and was opened in March 1962.

The second major development on the area was the construction of Parkes Way. It was a dual carriageway east-west connector originally suggested by Lord Holford on the northern side of the lake. The road was completed in stages. The initial stage was completed in the early 1970s from Kings Avenue to Commonwealth Avenue bridges. The extension, with its tunnel through the ridge at Acton Peninsula, designed to protect the Australian National University site, was constructed from 1976 to 1978. The development of Parkes Way around West Basin required the realignment of Lawson Crescent to ensure continued access to Acton Peninsula. Parkes Way enabled an efficient and direct route from east to west, but it created a major, seemingly insurmountable, barrier between the Lake and Civic. Pedestrian overbridges were erected to cross the road barrier. The overbridge which extends from Acton Hotel to the shoreline of West Basin was completed at the end of the 1970s.

Well-designed bicycle paths, built sympathetically with the contours of the foreshore, also provide routes on the site. They were constructed in 1972. They circumnavigated West Basin but at Acton Peninsula, in the vicinity of the Hospital, the system became confused and in places ceased to exist.

3.6.4 The Hospital

For the Hospital, the period from 1964 to 1991 began as a time of physical and medical development. It ended in closure, a victim of a combination of budgetary and planning decisions involving the Territory's public hospital system.

The years of the late 1950s brought a substantial amount of development at the Hospital; the Nurses' Quarters were extended with a southern wing in 1956, and new prefabricated ward block on the north eastern side was also completed that year.

The years from 1963 to 1966 saw intense building activity as the Hospital expanded its resources as Canberra's central medical facility. In late 1963, the first stage of the new nurses' home was completed and handed over.

Refer Figures 1 & 2,
Illustrated Chronology,
Phase 5
The last wing, Bennett House, c
1959, and plan of Canberra
Community Hospital, 1959

'Sylvia Curley House' was opened by Dame Pattie Menzies at a combined Graduation/Official Naming and Opening Ceremony on April 17th, 1964. The Chairman of the hospital Board, Dr Harrison, said in his address at the official opening,

The new nurses' home is named after the Deputy Matron of the hospital, Miss S.M. Curley, to perpetuate her association with the work of the hospital, and who, in her own service, has earned the esteem and affection of both patients and staff.⁴⁴

Sylvia Curley was also a descendant of a Canberra pioneering family associated with Duntroon Station. She was a dedicated educator and was successful in establishing nursing training in Canberra.

Hospital construction continued with the development of two carparks in 1964 and October 1965 saw the new main block, the tower block, completed and occupied. The tower block provided much needed facilities such as the Nuclear Medicine Department, kitchens and new wards. The mortuary was completed in 1967 and provided a holding facility for the transfer of bodies to the Public Mortuary and for the use of hospital autopsies. A further residence for medical staff was completed in 1969 on the peninsula. The final major building project was the completion of the long awaited Child Care Centre in 1975 when it was equipped, staffed and ready for business. Unfortunately and inevitably there were casualties from this period of development. The old Acton Administrative Offices were demolished in 1974 and with it went much of Acton Peninsula's early history.

The Acton Offices had been serving most recently as a Geriatric Ward. Another building removed at this time was the prefabricated Nurses' Home (south of the new Sylvia Curley Building). This building was removed in 1965.

Since 1965, an extension of the John Curtin School of Medical Research at the Australian National University was established at the Royal Canberra Hospital, as an extension of the Clinical Science Department. The close physical proximity of the institutions resulted in close liaison between medical research and hospital treatment,

⁴⁴ Newman & Warren, op. cit., p. 224.

thus leading to an extension of research activities and higher standards of medical treatment. Research work completed at Royal Canberra Hospital resulted in world-wide recognition. For example, research at the Hospital led to a test and antidote for Denborough's Syndrome which is now used world wide.⁴⁵ These initiatives and research breakthroughs would probably not have been possible without the close association and geographical proximity between the institutions which is vital in the efficient performance of such work.

The thirty year period between 1959 and 1989 was perhaps the finest years of the Hospital. The institution received well deserved praise as a nursing, teaching and community institution. The story of this period, and of the life of the Canberra Hospital generally has been ably told in a recent book by Newman and Warren, *The Royal Canberra Hospital: An Anecdotal History*.

In 1989 a Steering Committee for Public Hospital Development recommended to the then ACT Government that Canberra should have two hospitals with the Woden Valley facility developed as the principal hospital for the ACT, and the Calvary Hospital facility be developed as a community hospital. Royal Canberra Hospital was to be closed by the end of 1991. The doors of the Hospital were closed on 27 November 1991.

The closure of the Hospital was a traumatic event for the people of Canberra and the region generally. From that ending, however, have sprung a number of other initiatives, the present Background Study of the Peninsula being one of them.

In 1992, a combined NCPA/ACTPA workshop and seminar entitled *Where the City Meets the Lake* was held to open up the community discussion on potentials and ideas for the ongoing use of the Acton Peninsula.

3.7 SUMMARY

The spirit of the place is essentially that of the lives that have been lived there - the joys and sorrows of ordinary people. Acton is rich in this sense, as people

Refer Figures 4 & 5, Illustrated Chronology, Phase 5
The Geriatric Ward and Nurses' Home, Canberra Community Hospital, 1965

Refer Sequential Plans 5 & 6, Volume 3
NCDC Development 1970 to 1979 and NCDC/NCPA Period, 1979 to Present

Refer Figures 6 & 7, Illustrated Chronology, Phase 5
Ideas from NCPA/ACTPA workshop, 1992, *Where the City Meets the Lake*

⁴⁵ ACT Heritage Unit Report. Acton Peninsula. Preliminary site assessment. March 1991.

*have been born, lived, worked and died in this part of the Limestone Plains for at least 15 000 years.*⁴⁶

The Acton/West Basin area is one of the more culturally significant areas in the Australian Capital Territory's history. The area featured or participated in most of the known prehistoric and historic activities associated with the region. People's associations with the site are reflected in the modifications of the landscape to meet their needs and aspirations, these include key phases of the site's history of development and transformation.

The site provided a focal point in the region for both the Aborigines and the first European settlers. They realised the valuable resources that the site provided by way of food, water, shelter, and a meeting place.

Acton played a central role in the new Federal Capital. The first administrative centre for the settlement of Canberra was established at the site. The community that developed there was strong, closely-knit and the facilities they developed there provided a lively focus for Canberra social life.

The hospital site at Acton provided medical services to meet the needs of a growing city and district. The site was designated by Walter Burley Griffin's plan for the new city for a hospital and three generations of residents identified with the site as such. Many landmarks in both Australian and world medical history have been made over the forty-seven years the hospital has been on the site.

The extant natural landscape reflects the impact of the various key phases in Acton's development. For instance, the existence of historic tree plantations offer tangible reminders of T.C.G. Weston's influence and the remnant limestone outcrops offer physical evidence for the naming of the Limestone Plains, and are also significant geological formations.

Lake Burley Griffin is one of the largest ornamental lakes artificially created in Australia. It was an integral feature of Walter Burley Griffin's scheme for the City of Canberra. The lake and its foreshores are a major recreational area

⁴⁶ Canberra Community Action on Acton, *Lives Lived at Acton where "Canberry" became "Canberra"*, Canberra Community Action on Acton, June 1993.

widely used by the community for recreation and communal events. The open-space landscape elements of the Peninsula provide a backdrop for the lake and as such form an integral part of the lake's environment.

3.8 HISTORICAL OVERVIEW - LANDSCAPE

3.8.1 Original Vegetation

The natural vegetation in the study area probably consisted mainly of grassland, since the site is below the 600 metre contour. It has been determined that within what is now the Canberra area, in most areas below this level cold air drainage induced frost hollows and inversion layer micro climate conditions which inhibited tree growth. Some isolated pockets of unusually favourable soil and ground water conditions below this level did however support tree growth. The predominant grassland species was probably Kangaroo grass (*Themeda australis*).

There appears to be little evidence that frequent burning by Aborigines, which impacted significantly on vegetation patterns elsewhere, was a major factor in modifying the grassland distribution relative to elevation in this vicinity. (Pryor and Banks - 1991).

On higher ground, in areas immediately adjacent to the study area was a savannah woodland alliance in which the predominant species were yellow box (*Eucalyptus melliodora*), Blakely's red gum (*E. blakeyi*), apple box (*E. bridgesiana*), plus some red box (*E. polyanthemos*).

Records indicate that there were also some stands of ribbon gum (*E. viminalis*) on levee banks along the Molonglo. There are examples of this species on the site, planted circa 1950's.

Probably the only remnants now extant on the site are the two excellent specimens of apple box near the former Sylvia Curley house dining room. This species is usually found along creeks and lower southern slopes. During the filling of adjacent areas care was taken to protect these trees, and every effort should continue to be made to ensure protection during any future works to conserve these two significant trees.

There is one Kurrajong (*Brachychiton populneus*) on the northern shore of the peninsula, which may possibly be a self sown remnant of this partially frost sensitive species, which generally grows on higher ground.

3.8.2 Influence of Settlement

The earliest Europeans to reach the area identified the area known as the Limestone Plains as suitable for grazing. Charles Throsby described the Canberra area in the 1920's as 'extensive plains, with a considerable portion of rich meadow land on the banks of the rivers'.

Progressive modification of the landscape occurred from the arrival of a party, led by John Moore in 1824 and the establishment of grazing and agricultural practices. Close cropping of the grass by sheep, and 'pasture improvement' comprehensively altered the balance of grassland species and suppressed natural regeneration. The lower slopes of adjacent woodland were cleared for grazing.

Introduced trees and shrubs were planted around the homesteads, some of which began to 'colonise' the area, such as weeping willow (*Salix babylonica*) which spread along the water courses, and false acacias (*Robinia pseudoacacia*).

The Reverend Galliard-Smith, an enthusiastic grower and distributor of plant material, occupied Acton House from 1855 to 1873 when it was the Canberra rectory, and a number of trees on the site appear to date from around this period, including the Roman Cypress (*Cupressus sempervirens* 'Stricta') some false acacias (*Robinia pseudoacacia*) and possibly a few English elms (*Ulmus procera*).

The Canberra Times of 21 June 1927 described the planting carried out before the establishment of the Capital thus:- 'the early settlers dotted the plain country with small plantations of exotic trees, such as pine, elms, oak, false acacias and hawthorn, planted mainly around the old homesteads and as copses in the paddocks'.

3.8.3 Thomas Weston and the Acton Nursery

The competition for the design of Canberra was won by Griffin in 1912. The lake and environs a major element,

but little is known of Griffins planting concepts for the area, except that the area to the west was designated as an arboretum.

In 1911, after resumption of the Acton estate, preparation for construction of the Capital began. Thomas Weston visited the site, in 1911 and 1912 and moved to Acton in 1913 to establish the experimental nursery. He considered the nursery site to be relatively unsuitable, but virtually had no choice. (The nursery was later moved to Yarralumla).

The experimental nursery was very significant in the establishment of the garden capital. A very extensive list of tree species was tested for suitability to local conditions and propagation and distribution of successful species was undertaken in great quantity. Weston's capacity for record keeping and organisation was impressive. Sir Arthur Hill, Director of the Royal Botanical Gardens, Kew, England, (which was for Weston and others 'the hub of the botanical world'), was astonished by Westons meticulous records which he described as the most complete horticultural records in existence (Murphy 31.7.1914).

Much of early inner Canberra was landscaped with plant material grown by the government nursery.

The planting of the native and exotic trees on the Acton peninsula was continued up to the 1950's by Bruce, Hobday, Pryor, and Shoobridge, who followed Weston as Superintendents of Parks and Gardens.

Photographs from the 1950's show by that the nursery site and environs were heavily planted, particularly with screen planting around the perimeter and between the functional areas. Most of this planting was largely removed when the area was filled and developed in the 1960's.

3.8.4 Landscaping from Construction of the Lake to the Present

In the early 1960's the National Capital Development Commission (NCDC) began construction of Lake Burley Griffin. Most of the then extensive nursery and golf course plantings were below the lake level and were removed.

The NCDC recognised the significance of the remaining trees on the lower part of the peninsula and their value in breaking down the massive scale of the future large hospital extensions, and established policies and planting programmes to reinforce that landscape character. (Gray 1993).

Extensive additional planting of the lake edge within the study area was carried out by the NCDC in the 1960's plus some later infill planting. The predominant species of this stage of the planting were willows and poplars, reflecting the landscape policies of that time.

Some planting of the carpark etc, particularly near Barrine Drive and along the verge of Lawson Crescent, was carried out in the last two decades.

**4.0 PHYSICAL ANALYSIS
ACTON/WEST BASIN PRECINCT**

**4.1 SITE SPECIFIC STATEMENTS OF SIGNIFICANCE
AND SIGNIFICANCE RATING**

Statements of significance for each of the Precinct elements have been included within the building and landscape site inventories. The **summary** inventory descriptions are included below. The complete site and landscape inventories are appended at Volume 3, Conservaton Analysis, **Site Inventories**. With the inventory statements of significance a 'rating' value of significance has been proposed to allow an understanding of the relative importance of the various elements of the Precinct.

The ratings proposed for buildings and landscape elements are as follows:

Value	Meaning	Policy Implication
A	of exceptional significance	Buildings and landscape elements which must be preserved and protected at all costs.
B	of considerable significance	Buildings and landscape elements which should be preserved and protected where they do not conflict with the conservation of a feature of higher heritage value.
C	of some significance	Buildings and landscape elements whose retention may be justified for function reasons or where there is no conflict with items of higher heritage value. Trees should be retained and incorporated with any development where possible.
D	of little significance, or not relevant	Buildings and landscape elements which may be retained for functional reasons where there is no conflict with items of significance. Retain or or relocate trees where possible if appropriate to development.
I	Intrusive - obscures heritage value	Buildings and landscape elements which should be replaced or concealed if practicable, where this will assist interpretation.
N	Negative - actively detracts from significance	Buildings and landscape elements which should be removed or replaced.

With reference to the 'ratings' schedule above, it should also be noted that, on a site such as Acton/West Basin, the consideration of significance must involve an understanding of the integral nature of building and landscape. This caveat is especially important for the Acton/West Basin site because the buildings and landscape are largely a **construct** of a man made plan, ie all the buildings of the Canberra Community Hospital and the Royal Canberra Hospital were sited to accord with the proposed Lake (Burley Griffin). Thus there remains a close affinity and integration of building and landscape.

The assessments have also had to take into account the dysfunctional nature of the present Hospital complex, ie the assessments of significance must take into account the fact that the Hospital buildings are no longer used or will not be used in the future for their original use. The assessments also take into account the fact of Acton Peninsula site as being a precinct in its own right, ie a single function peninsula of building/landscape elements.

4.2 COMPARATIVE SIGNIFICANCE RATINGS

4.2.1 Assessment of Significance: Landscape

The ratings for landscape are given according to the **landscape character zones** already established. Refer attached diagram below. Where joint ratings are given, those ratings refer to **specific elements** within that zone.

Landscape
Character Zone

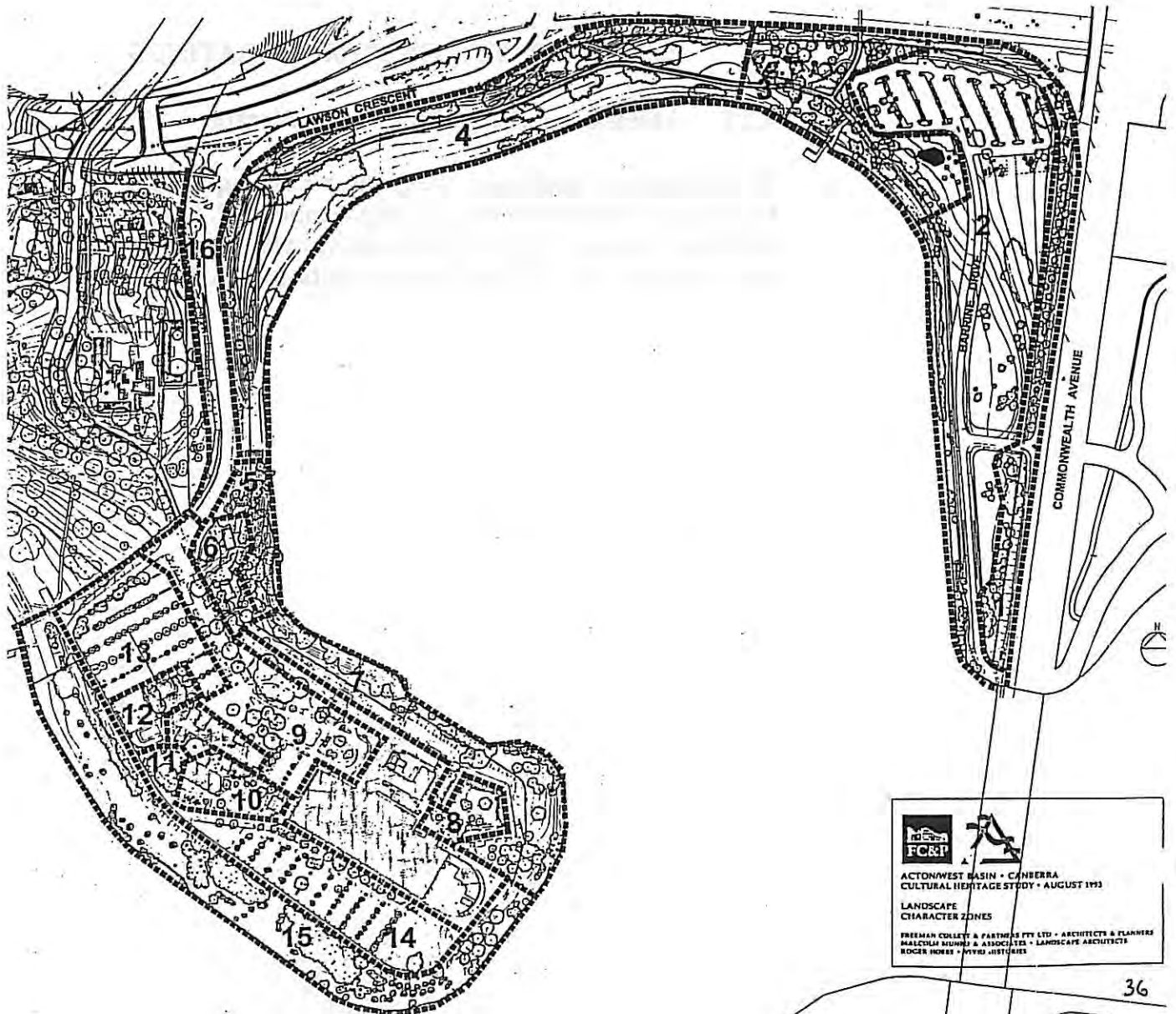
Rating



1		B
2		C
3		B
4		C
5		A
6		C
7		A
8		B
9		A
10		C
11		A
12		D
13		C & D
14	Line of elms below flood bund, Original trees - Weston experimental nursery (poor condition) General carpark landscaping	C
15		B
16		D

Landscape Character
Zones

Source:

Malcolm Munro &
Associates 1993



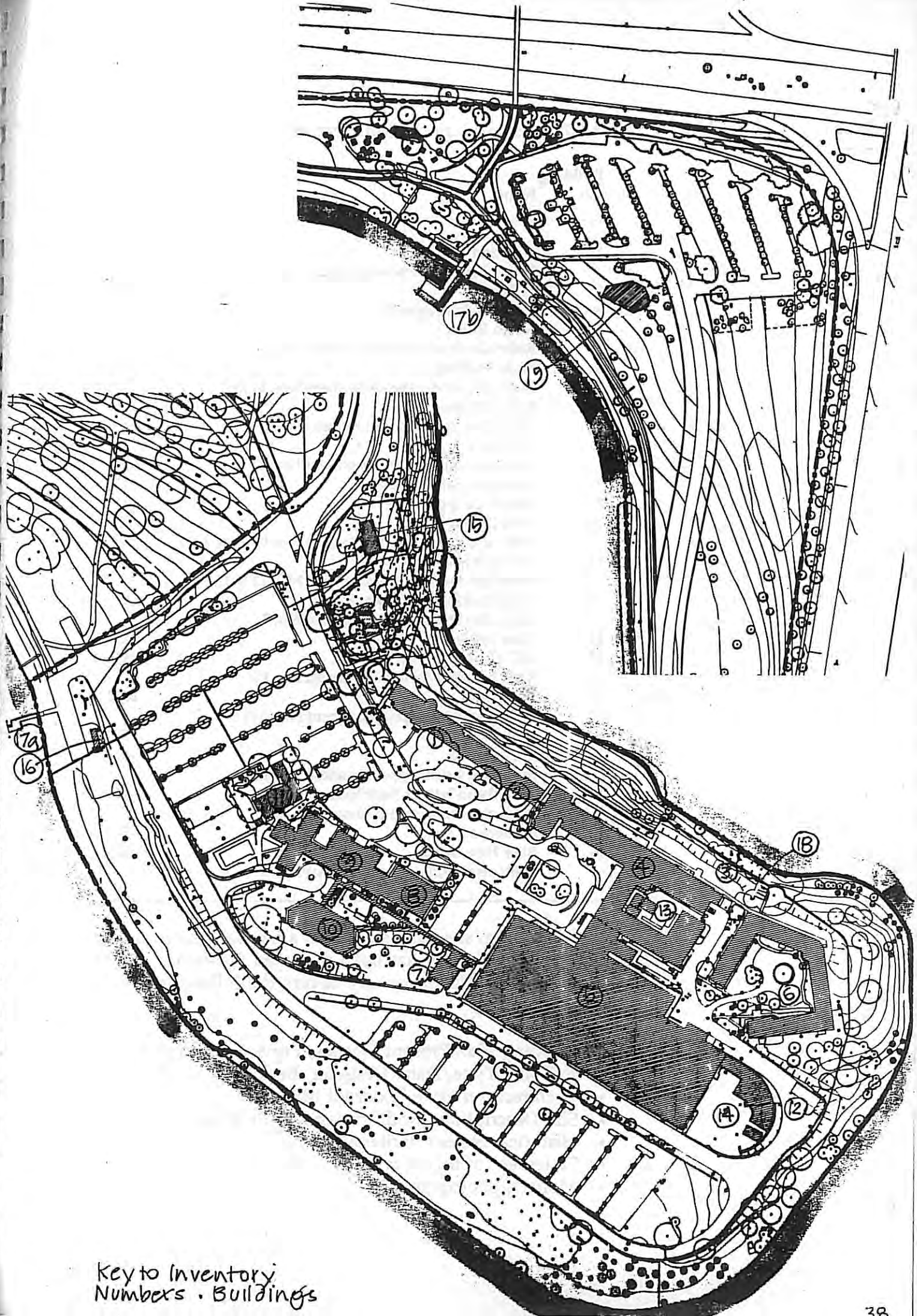
 ACTONWEST BASIN • CANBERRA
 CULTURAL HERITAGE STUDY • AUGUST 1993
 LANDSCAPE
 CHARACTER ZONES
 FREEMAN COLLETT & PARTNERS PTY LTD • ARCHITECTS & PLANNERS
 MALCOLM MUNRO & ASSOCIATES • LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS
 RODER HODGE • PHOTOGRAPHER

4.2.2 Assessment of Significance - Buildings

Building No.	Name	Rating
1.	Isolation Block Refer also landscape assessment No. 7	B
2.	H Block	B
3.	J Block (demolished)	D
4.	North Block Refer also landscape assessment No. 7	C
5.	Main Building Refer also landscape assessment Nos 14 & 9	C
6.	Bennett House Refer also landscape assessment Nos 8 & 7	B
7.	Mortuary Refer also landscape assessment No. 10	D
8.	Personnel Services Unit	C
9.	Sylvia Curley House	C
10.	Staff Dining Refer also landscape assessment Nos 9, 10, 11 & 12	C
11.	Child Care Centre Refer also landscape assessment Nos 12 & 13	D
12.	Brick Enclosure/Gas Store Refer also landscape assessment No. 7	D
13.	Store Room	D
14.	A/C Central Plant & Wall Refer also landscape assessment No. 15	C
15.	Residences Refer also landscape assessment Nos 5 & 6	B/C
16.	Toilets	C
17a.	West Beach Refer also landscape assessment No. 15	C
17b.	West Basin Jetty & Terminus Refer also landscape assessment No. 3	C
18.	Barbecue Area	B
19.	Bike Hire Shop Refer also landscape assessment No. 3	D

Each building/site has been given a key reference number. An 'inventory' sheet has been prepared for each building/site. This inventory covers the following categories:

- Building No./Present Names/Previous Names
- Building Type/Date/Designer, Builder
- Architectural Style/External Materials
- Site Description/Modifications (with dates)
- Historical Notes/Heritage Listings
- Statement of Significance & Comparative Rating
- Modern photographs



Key to Inventory
Numbers - Buildings

Each of the identified structures within the Precinct has been similarly examined. The resultant building and landscape inventories are included herewith. The numbering system for buildings is as documented by the NCPA.

4.3 ACT LAND ACT 1991 CRITERIA FOR HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

The statements of significance, and subsequent comparative significance ratings are based on criteria established in Schedule 2 of the *ACT Land (Planning & Environment) Act 1991; Criteria for the assessment of Heritage Significance of places.*

These criteria are as follows:

1. A place which demonstrates a high degree of technical and/or creative achievement, by showing qualities of innovation or departure or representing a new achievement of its time;
2. A place which exhibits outstanding design or aesthetic qualities valued by the community or a cultural group;
3. A place which demonstrates a distinctive way of life, taste, tradition, religion, land use, custom, process, design or function which is no longer practised, is in danger of being lost, or is of exceptional interest;
4. A place which is highly valued by the community or a cultural group for reasons of strong or special religious, spiritual, cultural, educational or social associations;
5. A place which is the only known or only comparatively intact example of its type;
6. A place which is a notable example of a class of natural or cultural places or landscapes and which demonstrates the principal characteristics of that class;
7. A place which has strong or special associations with person, group, event, development or cultural phase which played a significant part in local or national history;

8. A place which represents the evolution of a natural landscape, including significant geological features, landforms, biota or natural processes;
9. A place which is a significant habitat or locality for the life cycle of native species; for rare, endangered or uncommon species; for species at the limits of their natural range; or for district occurrences of species;
10. A place which exhibits unusual richness, diversity or significant transitions of flora, fauna or natural landscapes and their elements; or
11. A place which demonstrates a likelihood of providing information which will contribute significantly to a wider understanding of natural or cultural history, by virtue of its use as a research site, teaching site, type locality or benchmark site.

4.4 REGISTER OF THE NATIONAL ESTATE LISTING

It is proposed that the Comparative Assessment Rating Categories A & B be considered as those items suitable for nomination to the Register of the National Estate.

4.5 SUMMARY OF COMPARATIVE RATING ASSESSMENTS - LANDSCAPE

✓ LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ZONE 1

The avenue planting contributes significantly to the landscape composition of Commonwealth Avenue and the bridge, and frames views across the lake. All healthy trees should be retained and growth conditions protected.

The groups of poplars near the bridge abutment are important in reducing the impact of the batter and blending the bridge into the lake edge.

The landscape is highly valued by sections of the community for reasons of cultural and social associations and is thus significant pursuant to **Criterion (iv)**.

Comparative Rating Assessment: B

LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ZONE 2

The lake foreshores are a major recreational amenity widely used for passive recreation. Lake Burley Griffin and foreshores are classified by the National Trust of Australia and registered by the Australian Heritage Commission. The foreshore landscaping provides a backdrop to the lake and reduces the visual impact of development. The cycle path which traverses the area is a vital, well used amenity on the lake perimeter.

However, substantial sections within this zone are currently of low aesthetic quality and landscape significance.

The area is highly valued by sections of the community for reasons of cultural and social associations and is thus significant pursuant to **Criterion (iv)**.

Comparative Rating Assessment: C

✓ LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ZONE 3

This section of the lake shores is a major recreation area heavily used by the tourists and general public for active and passive enjoyment. The area contains a number of historic trees, the Ruddock memorial, and the barbecue shelter.

As part of the Lake Burley Griffin foreshore the area is classified by the National Trust and registered by the Australian Heritage Commission.

It is a place which is highly valued by sections of the community for reasons of cultural and social associations and has significance pursuant to **Criterion (iv)**.

The Ruddock memorial and the Weston tree planting have strong associations with particular persons and cultural phase which played a part in local history, and are therefore significant pursuant to **Criterion (vii)**.

Comparative Rating Assessment: B

LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ZONE 4

The zone has significance as part of the Lake Burley Griffin foreshores and as such is classified by the National Trust and registered by the Australian Heritage Commission.

However, much of this particular area has an exposed, open, bleak character lacking in aesthetic significance and landscape amenity.

The area is valued by sections of the community for cultural and social associations and is therefore significant pursuant to **Criterion (iv)**.

Comparative Rating Assessment: C

LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ZONE 5

The limestone outcrop on the north eastern shore of the Acton peninsula.

It is a place which is the only known or intact example of its type which is readily accessible within the urban/suburban limits, and is therefore significant pursuant to **Criterion (v)**.

This area is a place which represents the evolution of a natural geological feature and therefore has significance pursuant to **Criterion (viii)**.

It is a place which demonstrates a likelihood of providing information which will contribute significantly to a wider understanding of natural history by virtue of its use as a research and teaching site, and will contribute to cultural history re the 'limestone plains' nomenclature, and is therefore significant pursuant to **Criterion (xi)**.

Any trail or cyclepath should deviate around this area to obviate possible damage.

Comparative Rating Assessment: A

LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ZONE 6

The gardens within the curtilage of the residences.

It is a place which exhibits aesthetic qualities valued by sections of the community and cultural groups and is therefore significant pursuant to **Criterion (ii)**.

This zone is a notable example of a class of cultural landscapes and is therefore significant pursuant to **Criterion (vi)**.

Comparative Rating Assessment: C

LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ZONE 7

As part of the Lake Burley Griffin foreshore the area is classified by the National Trust and registered by the Australian Heritage Commission.

This excellent zone of mature and historic trees along the grassed slopes and lake edge has significance under the following criteria:-

A place which exhibits outstanding aesthetic qualities valued by the community (**Criterion ii**).

A place which is highly valued by the community for reasons of strong cultural and social associations (**Criterion iv**).

A place which is a notable example of a class of cultural place and a landscape (**Criterion vi**).

A place which has strong associations with the first experimental nursery and with the hospital (**Criterion vii**).

Comparative Rating Assessment: A

LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ZONE 8

The landscaped courtyard and the historic cedar have significance pursuant to the following criteria:-

'a place which exhibits outstanding aesthetic qualities valued by the community and/or cultural groups'. (**Criterion ii**)

'a place which is a notable example of a cultural place or landscape'. (**Criterion vi**)

Comparative Rating Assessment: B

LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ZONE 9

The Lennox Crossing road avenue planting and hospital forecourt.

The mature and historic trees in this zone comprise a landscaped precinct which exhibits outstanding aesthetic qualities valued by the community and cultural groups, and is therefore significant with respect to **Criterion (ii)**.

The place is highly valued by the community for reasons of strong social and cultural associations and is therefore significant pursuant to **Criterion (iv)**.

The trees planted by Weston along the Lennox Crossing road and the entrance to the former hospital site comprise a place which has strong or special associations with a person, development and cultural phase which played a significant part in local history, and is therefore significant pursuant to **Criterion (vii)**.

Comparative Rating Assessment: A

LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ZONE 10

The groups of semi mature trees are a notable example of a class of landscape and has some significance pursuant to **Criterion (vi)**.

Comparative Rating Assessment: C

LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ZONE 11

These splendid specimens of apple box trees have significance as the only known, substantial example of the original vegetation on the site, and thus have significance with respect to the **Criterion (v)**.

Being immediately adjacent to Westons former nursery site the place is highly valued by the community for strong associations with a person and cultural place which played a significant part in local history and is therefore pursuant to **Criterion (vii)**.

The place demonstrates a likelihood of providing information which will contribute to a wider understanding of cultural history by virtue of its use as a teaching site and therefore has significance with respect to **Criterion (xi)**

Comparative Rating Assessment: A

LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ZONE 12

The semi mature trees currently function as essential shade trees for the child care centre, and in this respect are valued by a section of

the community for social reasons, so that they have significance with respect to **Criterion (iv)**.

Comparative Rating Assessment: D

LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ZONE 13

The Manna gum is a fine specimen tree with high aesthetic qualities near the entry to the site and therefore has significance pursuant to **Criterion (ii)**

Comparative Rating Assessment: C

Other tree planting in this zone

Comparative Rating Assessment: D

LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ZONE 14

The long line of elms, the stone flood wall and the (now mostly moribund) trees planted by Weston have some aesthetic value and constitute a place valued by groups within the community and therefore have some minor significance with respect to **Criterion (ii)**.

It is a place which has associations with a development phase which played a significant part in local history i.e., construction of the flood wall and filling the lake, and therefore has some significance with respect to **Criterion (vii)**.

Comparative Rating Assessment: C

Other tree planting and the zone generally has little significance.

LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ZONE 15

As part of the Lake Burley Griffin foreshore the area is classified by the National Trust and registered by the Australian Heritage Commission.

Although somewhat bleak in parts, this area has some aesthetic qualities valued by the community and thus has some significance pursuant to **Criterion (ii)**.

This section is part of the Lake Burley Griffin foreshore valued by the community and cultural groups for reasons of strong social and cultural associations and therefore has significance with respect to **Criterion (iv)**.

It is a place which is a notable example of a landscape and has significance with respect to **Criterion (vi)**

Comparative Rating Assessment: B

LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ZONE 16

Although lacking in cohesive landscape character, this area has some aesthetic qualities valued by the community and therefore has minor significance pursuant to **Criterion (ii)**.

Comparative Rating Assessment: D

4.6 SUMMARY OF COMPARATIVE RATING ASSESSMENTS - BUILDINGS

- BUILDING NO:** 1
PRESENT NAME: Isolation Block
PREVIOUS NAMES: TB Chalet
- STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE:** The **TB Chalet** evidences the early methods of 'chalet' treatment of Tuberculosis and other infectious diseases, and is thus significant with respect to **Criteria 3**. The original 1943 Canberra Community Hospital buildings are still highly valued by sections of the community, and is thus significant with respect to **Criteria 4**. The building has a strong and special association with cultural phases/development of the Federal Capital, and is thus significant with respect to **Criteria 7**.
Comparative Rating Assessment: B
- BUILDING NO:** 2
PRESENT NAME: H Block, Royal Canberra Hospital
PREVIOUS NAMES: Isolation Ward
- STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE:** The **Isolation Ward** evidences the early methods of isolated treatment of infectious diseases, and is thus significant with respect to **Criteria 3**. The original 1943 Canberra Community Hospital buildings are still highly valued by sections of the community, and is thus significant with respect to **Criteria 4**. The building has a strong and special association with cultural phases/development of the Federal Capital, and is thus significant with respect to **Criteria 7**.
Comparative Rating Assessment: B
- BUILDING NO:** 3
PRESENT NAME: J Block site
PREVIOUS NAMES: Prefabricated Ward
- STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE:** Temporary ward block, site is of slight significance.
Comparative Rating Assessment: D
- BUILDING NO:** 4
PRESENT NAME: North Block
PREVIOUS NAMES: Main Ward Block including Obstetrics Ward, Administration, Main Entrance, Casualty and Service Rooms
- STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE:** The **North Block building** is part of the 1943 complex of Canberra Community Hospital buildings which are still highly valued by the community and cultural groups, and is thus significant with respect to **Criteria 4**. The 1943 buildings have strong associations with development/cultural phases of the early Federal Capital, and is thus significant with respect to **Criteria 7**. The North Block has, however, been modified over time.
Comparative Rating Assessment: C
- BUILDING NO:** 5
PRESENT NAME: The Main Canberra Community Hospital Building, later Royal Canberra Hospital, comprising Link Building (5A) Tower Building (5B) and Peripheral Building (5C)
- STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE:** The **Main Royal Canberra Hospital building** is a place highly valued by the community/cultural groups and is thus significant with respect to **Criteria 4**. The place has strong and special associations with the people/developments/cultural phases of Canberra in the late 20th century and is thus significant with respect to **Criteria 7**.
Comparative Rating Assessment: C