

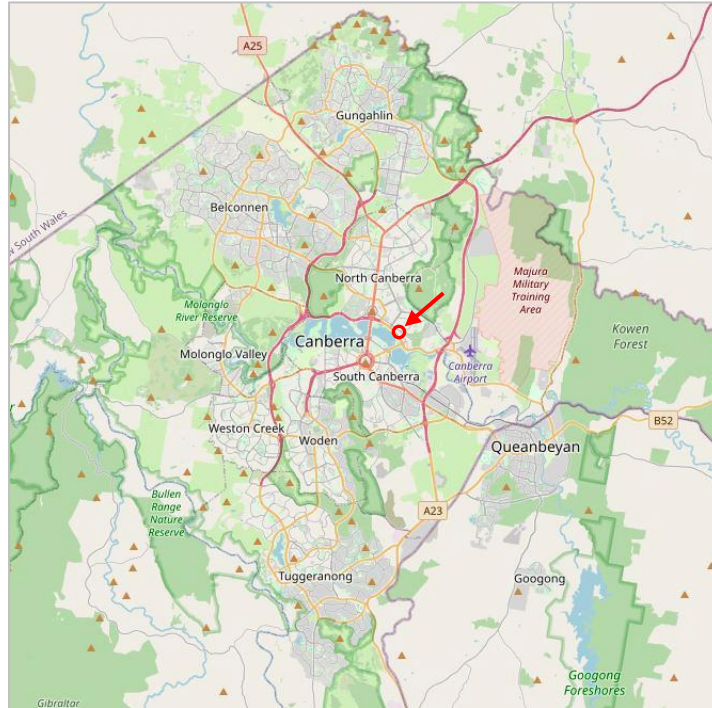
RSL PARK CAMPBELL (A.C.T.): THE PLACE THROUGH TIME



Prepared by Mark Butz
for the Friends of RSL Park
March 2022



The Place in space



Location of RSL Park Campbell ACT [detail]
(base: Open Street Map)

Introduction

This is a brief, and by no means exhaustive, historical account of the area that we now call RSL Park Campbell ('the park area').

It outlines some of the significant changes in the park area over time, to help us understand why it is the way it is and to share some of its stories.

These stories may be useful in communication about the park area, particularly in future interpretive signs and/or artworks.

To aid orientation, selected images are tagged with a blue triangle marking St John's (the Anglican Church of St John the Baptist, Reid) – a consistent beacon across 180 years.

At the end of the document are a one-page history summary and a map of historical elements in and around the park area (locations indicative).

The earliest publication to offer any specific information about the park area appears to have been a map, showing a low hill of 'granitic boulders' rising above a sinuous 'well-defined watercourse', with few trees. In effect it was the corner of a sheep paddock. Previously it may have been a grassed wet alluvial flat at the foot of that low hill, until grazing stock (or perhaps gold seekers, or both) broke it open to start a gully.

As the suburb of Campbell developed, the un-named creek was straightened out and sent underground into a pipe. Above this a stormwater easement precluded any building, and the rocky hill made it very difficult to squeeze in additional building blocks to the west. That left an odd residual space, edged with seven straight lines and two arcs, its length a product of the stormwater pipe, and its angular western boundary a product of the rocky hill.

Nearly a century after its earliest depiction, the space became a place of commemoration for the RSL (Returned & Services League), with a stone wall, plaque and seats. That changed the nature of the park. No longer just a passageway over a pipe, it acquired a name, and became a destination for people.

Recent development along Constitution Avenue has increased the neighbouring population and in turn increased visitor pressure on the park, and there is still more change to come. The local community, seeing more value in the place than its use as a pathway, formed a care group - the Friends of RSL Park - and set about designing a sustainable landscape that could support more diverse values and uses.

Their commitment and effort prompted this small-scale study to document changes in the place over 420 million years, give or take, with greater detail in the last 200 years, uncovering layers of story that might enrich and broaden appreciation of the park area.

This work was prompted by the belief shown by the Friends of RSL Park in the place and its values.

I also wish to acknowledge the debt owed in this work, as in many others, to the prolific research and writing of the late Alan Foskett OAM (1929-2022). Alan was a Campbell resident for 60 years, an urban geographer, history writer, and staunch champion of community.

I intended to seek Alan's comments on this work before finalising it, but that was not to be. Since it has been prepared while wearing the mantle of the physical and social geographer, as reflected in numerous maps and aerial images, I trust that Alan would approve.

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Learnsapes April 2022

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Foundations: the first 420 million years

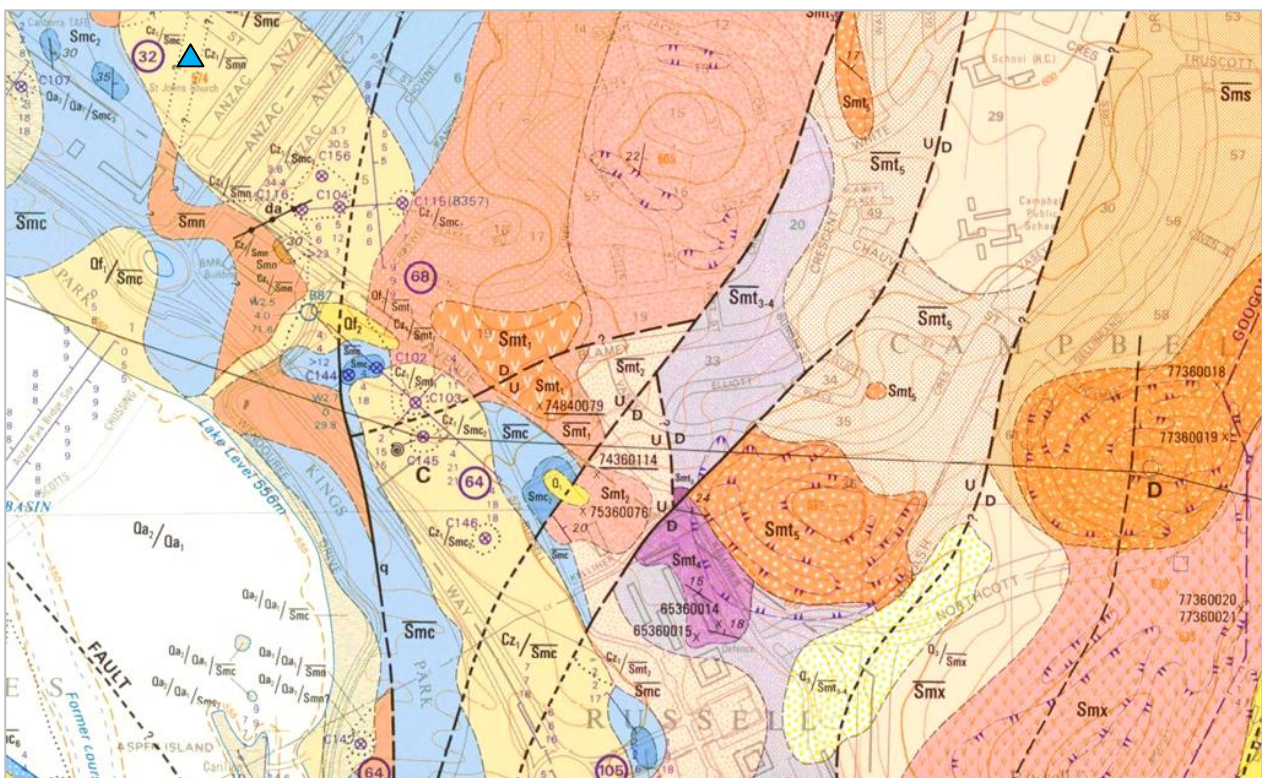
Underlying geology shapes landforms and soils and, in turn, vegetation and habitats, and influences human use of the landscape. It is a key to understanding the form of the park area and its consequent use. What follows is a much simplified geological story.

In common with much of central Canberra, the area around the park is underlain by a mix of sedimentary and volcanic rocks from the early Silurian period c.428 million years ago (Ma). The sediments were laid down in warm shallow seas, while the volcanic rocks (a dacite or dacitic ignimbrite) formed from ash, pumice and molten rock ejected by volcanic eruptions and fused by intense heat.

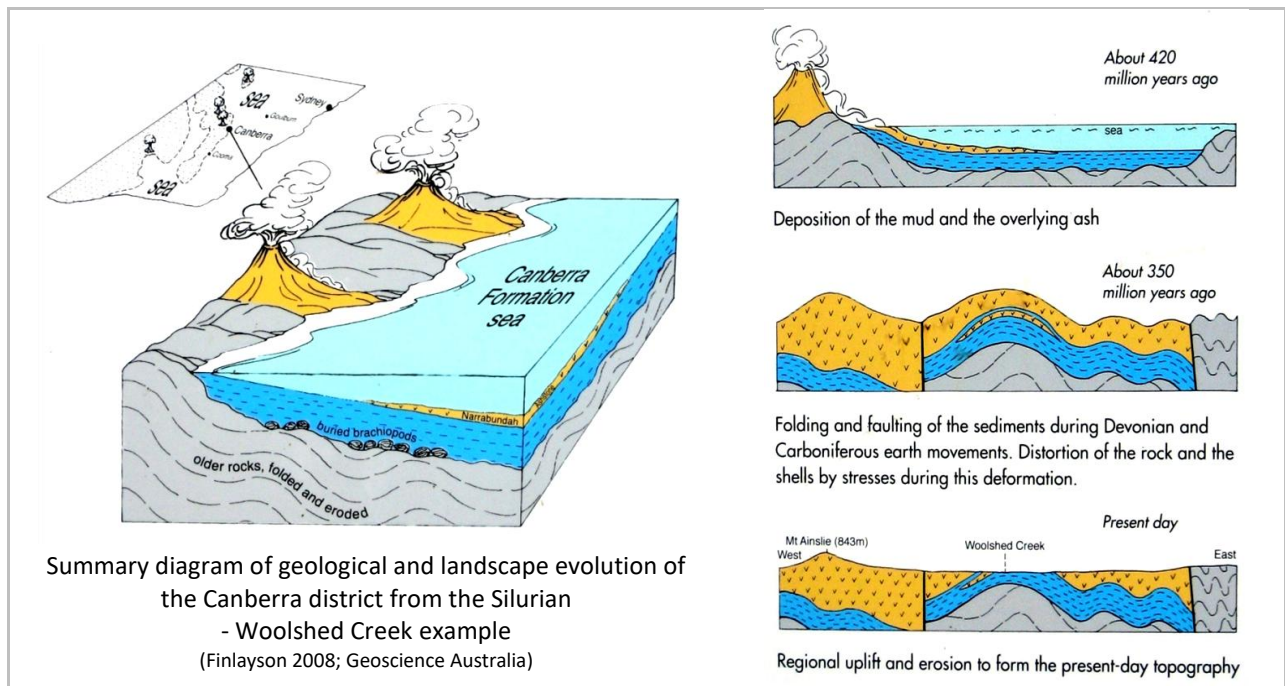
Around 444Ma continental crust was developing on the eastern margin of the supercontinent Gondwana, marked by major mountain building, accompanied by intense folding, faulting and uplift. The location of Canberra was on the Equator at this time. A tropical shallow sea accumulated sediments that became shale, siltstone, sandstone and limestone in the Canberra Formation, punctuated by tuff and ashstone from increasing activity of volcanoes in the Hawkins Volcanic Suite. (Finlayson 2008)

Limestone outcrops that dotted the valley floor here lent the name Limestone Plains to the district. Few of these outcrops remain visible, due largely to urban development and landscaping. There is a sizable outcrop at Acton, largely drowned by Lake Burley Griffin, and a small outcrop in Eyre Street, Kingston. (Butz 2022) The outcrop closest to the park area was to the south-west of St John's; by 1938 it had been almost obliterated by enthusiastic fossil collectors. (Woolnough 1938:112)

The landform of the park area is dominated by a low ridge of hard rock from the Ainslie Volcanics (within the Hawkins Volcanic Suite), the western outcrop limit of a belt that extends northwards from Mount Pleasant through Ainslie, Majura, and Goorooyarroo, to just north of the ACT-NSW border, near Throsby.



Geology as portrayed in 1986 shows: dominance of Ainslie Volcanics dacite types in the east (Smt series/Smx) and Canberra Formation sediments to the west (Smc/Smn), with Tertiary gravels (Cz₁) from a much larger Molonglo; a small pocket of Pleistocene aeolian sand (Q₁) visible just below centre; left of centre is an area of landfill (Qf₂) placed in the former course of the creek that ran through the park area [detail] (Henderson 1986)



From c.145Ma the 'modern' landscape developed after the Australian continent separated from Gondwana and drifted northwards from its position close to the south pole.

The Pleistocene (2.6Ma to 11,700 years ago) was a time of highly variable climatic regimes, swinging between drier glacial phases/lower sea levels and wetter warmer phases/higher sea levels. Evidence from Lake George sediments indicates four or five major glacial phases in the past 40,000 years.

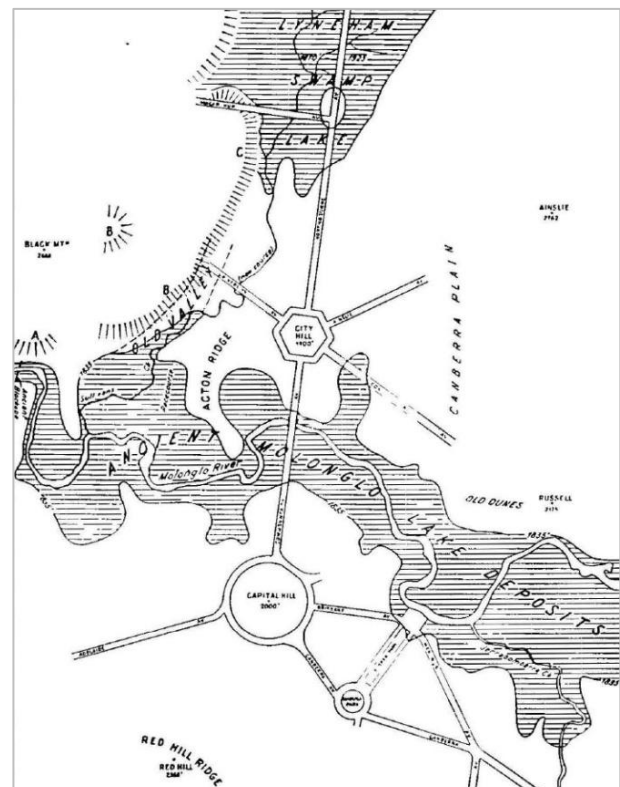
At the peak of the last ice age temperatures were cooler by about 9°C, the high country had an ice cap of about 50 sq km, and glaciers advanced at 19,000 and 16,000 years ago. By 25-18,000 years ago, sea levels were about 135m lower than at present, making the continental landmass about one third larger than it is today, and most of it was in extreme perpetual drought. (Cane 2013)

A number of writers have suggested that during that dry phase of the Pleistocene the central Canberra valley floor was occupied by an ancient Molonglo Lake, dammed by a barrier of stone and sediment that washed from Black Mountain.

Sediments indicate that this lake would have been similar in position to Lake Burley Griffin, although deeper in parts, wider and extending further to the east (upstream).

It left behind sandy flats after the barrier was breached. (Woolnough 1938; Öpik 1958) These lacustrine sediments were moved and reshaped by wind to form aeolian sand dunes up to 2m high, which were later mined for the building of Canberra. (White et al. 2013).

In today's geography, large dunes were recorded at Pialligo and Russell, with smaller dunes at Duntroon, Parkes and Acton.



A fossil lake of the dry cool Pleistocene; 'old dunes' shown west of 'Russell' (Mount Pleasant) (Öpik 1958:66)

First People

The Pleistocene was a time of low humidity, high wind speeds, high evaporation, high summer heat, cold southern air masses pushing further into the continent, frosts inhibiting plant growth, and widespread instability of sand dunes. This lasted about 10,000 years – described as the coldest and driest period, and the most hostile living environment, in human history. (Horton 1994: 201; Cane 2013: 152, 156)

Into this inhospitable environment walked the First People, at least 21,000 years ago, around the time of the last ice age peak. They would have made use of a Pleistocene lake.

Amelioration in the climate, particularly from about 5,500 years ago, encouraged population growth. At that time, and until about 200 years ago, the descendants of the First People would have witnessed slow-flowing waters that deposited dark silts. The swampy meadow sediment typified a chain-of-ponds stream structure, as described in the earliest written accounts of the district. This landscape persisted for only a few decades after European settlement, as erosion and floods following drought periods incised stream channels, and transported large quantities of sand and gravel. (White et al. 2013; Eyles 1977)

Early European accounts of Aboriginal ways of life in the vicinity of the floodplain describe aspects of a successful economy, with eventful social life and a range of contacts between groups. They record that local Aboriginal people numbered between 400 and 500, based on numbers seen at corroborees. The people lived most of the time in relatively isolated bands or groups of 20 to 30, and based themselves where food was relatively plentiful, across an estate of some 2 million acres/810,000ha. (Bluett 1954; Watson 1927:14)

One recorded area of regular occupation was about halfway between modern Pialligo and Black Mountain, close to a reported gathering area in the vicinity of Duntroon Dairy.

Written descriptions from the 1820s suggest that the rivers were then a series of waterholes, and that valley floor areas were primarily temperate grassland. (Eyles 1977; Watson 1927) It is likely that the combined action of cold air drainage, flood events and soils would have favoured grassland over trees on the valley floors, and Aboriginal mosaic burning may also have played a part. Above the flats were woodlands and forests on foothills below hills and ridges, offering higher, drier and less frost-prone camping spots, with ample firewood.

The streams, wetlands and open grassy plains of the floodplain, coupled with surrounding lightly timbered hills, provided a wide variety of plant and animal materials for shelter, warmth, food, fibre, medicine, dyes, ritual ornamentation, glues, tools and ceremony.

European exploration

An area on the north bank of the Molonglo below Mount Pleasant appears to be the first camp site used by Europeans within the present ACT border. It is possible that this was not far from today's park area, but equally it may have been in the vicinity of modern Duntroon.

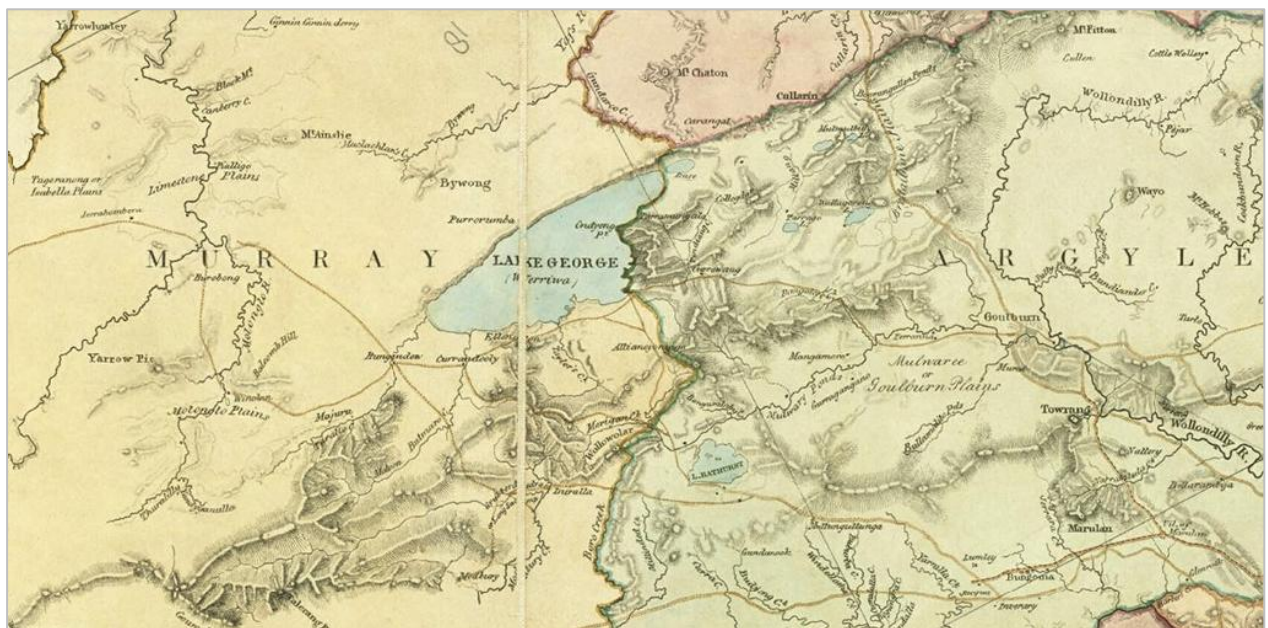
On 7 December 1820 the party, led by Joseph Wild, and including Charles Throsby Smith and James Vaughan, provided the first account of the district that was later known as Limestone Plains for the outcrops of that stone along the river. (Fitzhardinge 1954)

Smith's journal described the open landscape as 'a very extensive plain, fine rich soil and plenty of grass' with 'a Beautiful River that was running thro' the plains'. The group also recorded the sighting of Aboriginal campfire smoke in the distance. (Watson 1927:7-8)

The first printed account of the area appeared in the *Australian Magazine* of June 1821.

Dr Charles Throsby (uncle of Charles Throsby Smith), after he had located the Murrumbidgee River, described the country as 'perfectly sound, well watered with extensive meadows of rich land on either side of the rivers; contains very fine limestone, in quantities perfectly inexhaustible, slate sand-stone and granite fit for building, with sufficient timber for every useful purpose...'. (Fitzhardinge 1954)

Such descriptions were to prove irresistible to pioneer settlers. In 1823 Capt Mark Currie recorded that the last settlement south of Sydney was an outstation on the Goulburn Plains, and the last residence was Throsby's, located at Bong Bong. (Fitzhardinge 1954:16) The Limestone Plains lay three to four days (or 45 miles/72km) further south from Goulburn.



1834 Map of New South Wales – Surveyor-General Mitchell [detail], the earliest published map to show the country between Goulburn at right (County Argyle) and Limestone Plains at left (County Murray);

Pialligo, Mount Ainslie, and Black Mountain are marked

(State Library of New South Wales FL3541847)

European settlement

The first European settlers on the floodplain were employees of Joshua John Moore, who grazed sheep in 1823 near Canberry [modern Acton/Sullivans Creek].

In 1825 James Ainslie is said to have been guided by Aboriginal people to well-watered grasslands near the confluence of the Molonglo River with modern Woolshed Creek and Jerrabomberra Creek. Here he depastured 700 sheep and built huts, on behalf of his employer Robert Campbell. A prominent Sydney merchant, Campbell was the first resident settler, on a 4,000 acre land grant, made in 1825 as 'additional compensation' for the loss of his ship the *Sydney Cove*, in service to the Colony. (Watson 1927:22)

The property was initially called 'Pialligo' (or 'Pialaga'), derived from the Aboriginal name for the locality (byalegee or bialigee). (Mowle 1896) This probably applied to much of the landscape upstream from modern Mount Ainslie through Fyshwick to the outskirts of Queanbeyan. (Jackson-Nakano 2005) The next generation of Campbells renamed the estate 'Duntroon' after the family's ancestral location in Scotland.

The name 'Pialligo' first appears on a map by Surveyor Robert Dixon, from the first general survey of the area in 1829. This helped to delineate County Murray, one of the Nineteen Counties that defined the Limits of Location for the colony. (Watson 1927:28) Dixon's map was upgraded by Surveyor Robert Hoddle, who undertook the first detailed survey in 1832 and delineated portions in the Parish of Canberra.



1832 Survey of Limestone Plains district – Hoddle - Parish Canberra [detail]
(NLA: nla.obj-233262534)

The park area is within the former portion 58 Parish Canberra, Campbell's original 4,000-acre block.

In 1830 Campbell constructed a homestead (in portion 58), using convict and ex-convict quarrymen, masons and carpenters from Sydney. (Kerr & Falkus 1982:13) Built of local 'bluestone' (Hawkins Volcanic Suite) from Mount Pleasant, the single-storey cottage was completed in 1833, at that time the only permanent residence within a hundred miles. (Godden Mackay Logan 2013; C G Cummings 1985:32; Kerr & Falkus 1982:12)

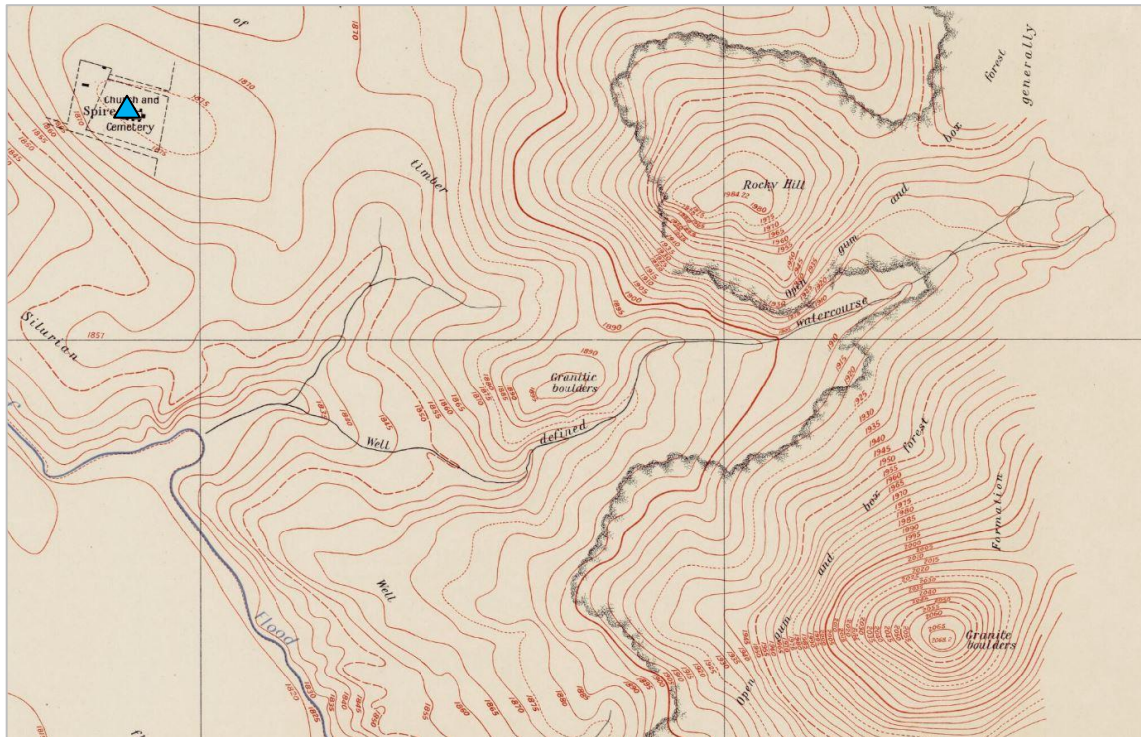
Other early stone buildings on 'Duntroon' made use of volcanic rocks quarried from Mounts Ainslie and Pleasant, including the dairy (1830s), St John's church and schoolhouse (1840s) (all within portion 58), and a series of worker cottages (1850s-60s). Some parts of St John's display also the contrasting gold of Black Mountain Sandstone – a building born of both seabeds and volcanoes.

Shape of the land

The park area lay on the lower reaches of a creek with an extensive catchment draining higher ground to the north [Mount Ainslie] (c.250m higher) and east [Mount Pleasant/Russell Hill] (c.105m higher).

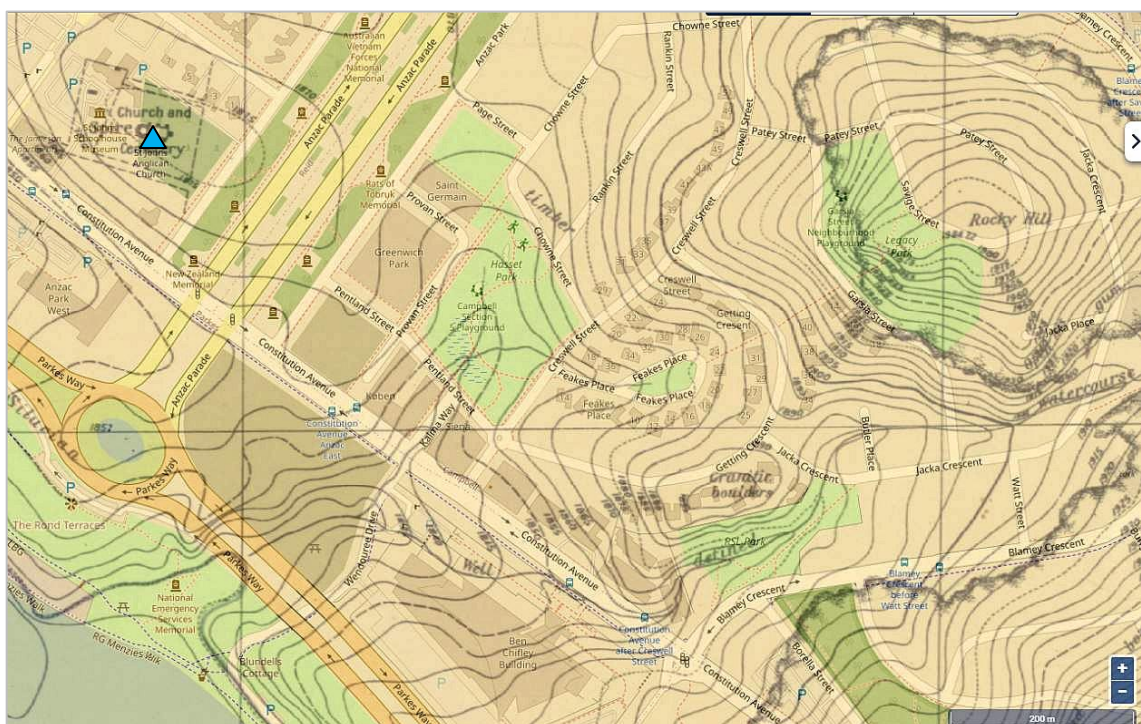
This part of the creek was labelled on the 1910 Contour survey map as a 'well defined watercourse' (NLA: nla.obj-232175565) and early aerial photographs (from the 1940s) suggest active gullying along this creek. The steep nature of its upper catchment suggests it may have been prone to flash flooding in runoff from higher ground.

The un-named creek through the park area was joined downstream by a tributary creek, draining the area just to the east of St John's [south-western corner of modern Campbell].



1910 Contour survey [detail] – provided to competitors in the Federal Capital design competition

Below: Overlay on Open Street Map (NLA: nla.obj-232175565)



The park area lies on the eastern (and leeward) side of a moderately high outcrop of dacitic volcanic rock, labelled as a hill of 'granitic boulders'. The resistant outcrop appears to have steered the creek into a fairly wide curve, forming an alluvial flat from sediments dropped as the water slowed.

It is possible that the gullies had been etched into what was previously a series of grassy flats and soaks with occasional ponds and largely indistinct channels. This may also have been the case for the tributary creek, which for much of its lower reaches appears in early aerial photographs to be an extensive soak. The soak appears to have inhibited urban development of that area, despite the relatively flat terrain [now managed in the water sensitive design and water feature of Hassett Park].

All early maps show that the creek ran to the Molonglo [the line of Wendouree Drive just below Blundells Cottage], with its lower reaches being indistinct in the sands and gravels of the floodplain tract.



1911 Contour model of Canberra site [detail] with 4x vertical exaggeration – sent to several cities to be available to competitors in the Federal Capital design competition
(NLA: nla.obj-150466378)

The park area is likely to have carried sparse tree cover, being located at the edge of natural grasslands on the Molonglo floodplain. In the 1910 and 1911 Contour survey maps (NLA: nla.obj-232175565; nla.obj-232176281) it appears to be at the edge of the timber on hills, while just four years later, on the Federal Capital Territory feature map, that timberline appears to have receded (NLA: nla.obj-233281594). This may be due to inaccuracy of mapping, but it could also reflect tree removal for fence posts and firewood, and for opening up additional grazing area.

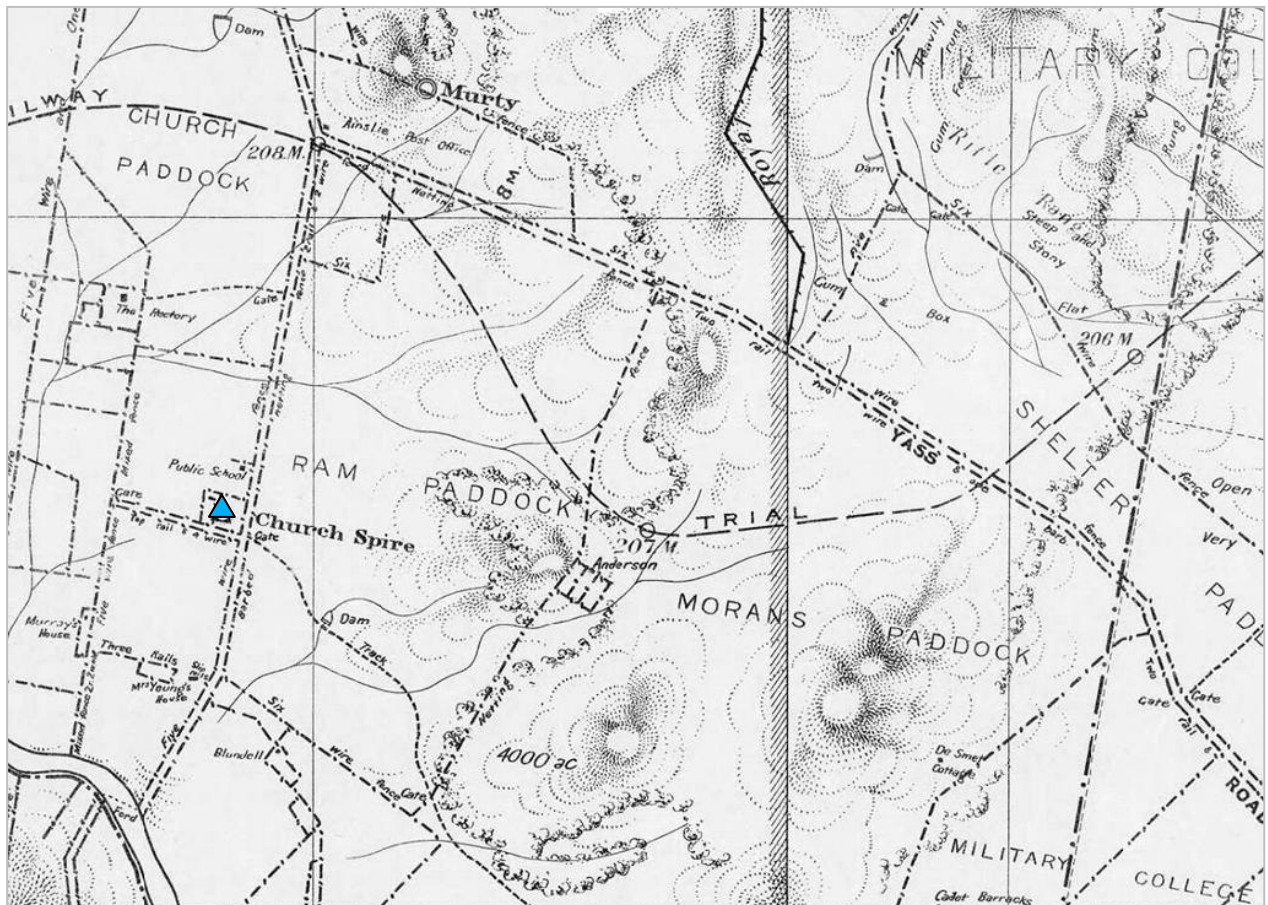
European pastoral landscape

In today's geography the 'Duntroon' estate extended from Mitchell in the north to Hume in the south, and from the edge of Queanbeyan westward over Capitol Hill to Deakin.

By late 1877 the estate included 40,000 acres/16,000ha freehold with an additional 45,000 acres/18,000ha leasehold. The estate was based primarily on sheep (36,000 sheep shorn that year), with breeding of horses and Durham cattle, supported by farming of grain and fodder, with a hay yield of 150 tons. (Godden Mackay Logan 2014:21)

The extensive estate was fenced by the Campbells from the 1860s, defining and naming paddocks. Fences and gates formalised tracks that had developed between the homestead, outbuildings, worker cottages, church, school, glebe farm, and river crossings. The park area lay on the eastern edge of the Ram Paddock, abutting the fence that divided it from Morans Paddock. (Godden Mackay Logan 2014:26-27)

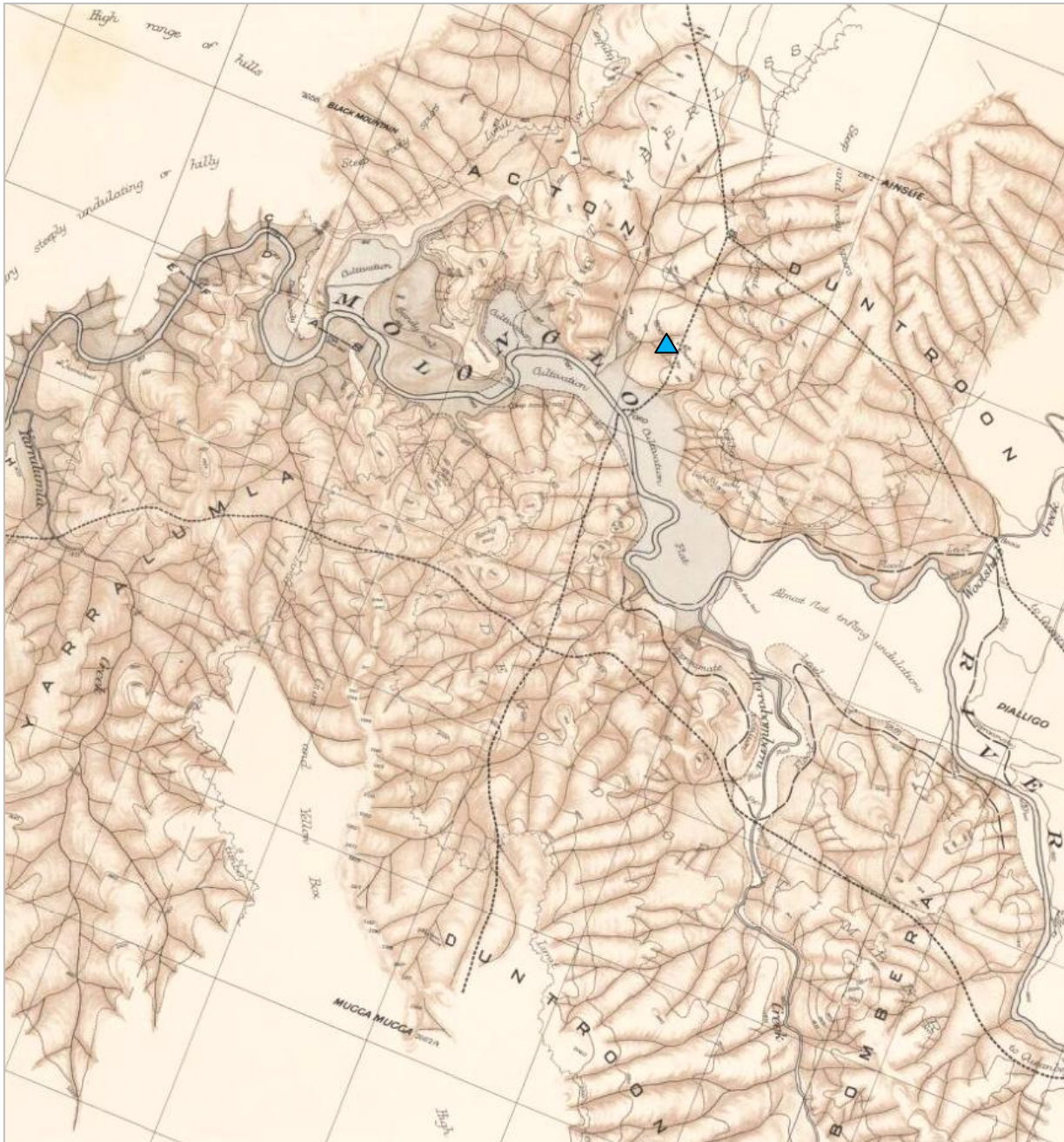
The dairy lay to the east, cut into the south-facing slope of Mount Pleasant, with St John's and the Rectory or Glebe (house and farm) to the west. A track connected these to the homestead, running just south of the park area [near Constitution Ave].



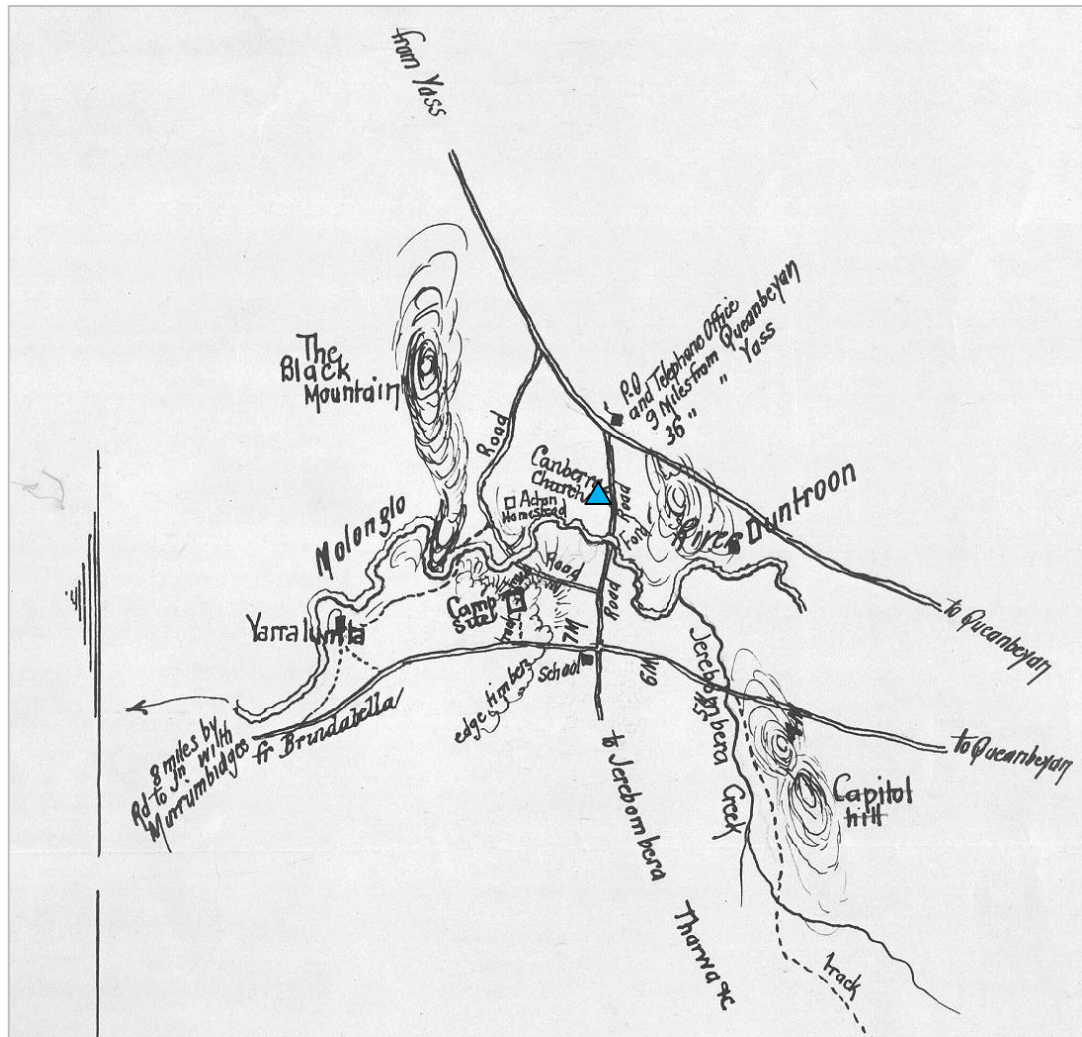
The Ram Paddock and Morans paddock - c.1915 Federal Territory Feature map sheet 4 [detail]; also showing the cottages of Anderson, De Smet, Blundell, and Mrs Young
(NLA: nla.obj-233281594)

Some notable early roads around the park area provided access to surrounding areas.

From east to north, an early reserved road led from Queanbeyan via 'Duntroon' to 'Ainslie' Post Office, meeting there a road north-west through North Canberra to Yass ('the Yass Road'), and another to the south ('Church Lane') past St John's and across Church Crossing to intersect at a crossroads with the east-west road between Queanbeyan and the Murrumbidgee at Uriarra ('the Uriarra Road'), and beyond to Brindabella. From the crossroads a road tracked south to 'Narrabundah' and beyond to Jerrabomberra, Tharwa and the Monaro.



Map showing roads remaining from the pastoral era in the early Federal Capital;
the southern continuation of Duntroon as a district name reflects the extent of Campbell holdings
– base map 1911 Canberra Contour survey [detail]
(NLA: nla.obj-232176281)



A less formal map by Surveyor Scrivener 1909 - 'Rough sketch shewing site for Federal Camp at Canberra about 8 miles from Queanbeyan'; also showing the principal roads servicing the site prior to the Capital
(NLA: nla.obj-234369571)

Worker cottages

Close to these roads were a number of 'Duntroon' estate worker cottages. Most had been built for the estate by mason George Rottenberry whose emigration in 1849 was sponsored by the Campbells. Charles Campbell ran the estate from 1835 and instituted a scheme to sponsor and settle (mostly Scottish) labourers, placing the emigrants in cottages with a couple of acres, intending that they become tenant farmers. This continued under George Campbell from 1854.

Upstream from the park area lay 'Anderson's cottage', favourably located in a reasonably elevated position [vicinity of Jacka Place] in the lee of a hill [now topped by Legacy Park] and by a creek. It stood on the eastern side of a fence between the Ram Paddock and Morans Paddock, and adjoined that fence.

From 1857 this cottage was occupied by Patrick Curley, a 'Duntroon' shepherd, and his wife Mary (née Fahee) who arrived from Ireland as bounty immigrants in 1842. (Procter 2001:67) Their son Patrick and his wife Annie Elizabeth (née Tong) would later occupy 'Mugga Mugga' (they were parents of Sylvia Curley OAM, well-known nurse and advocate, and writer of a significant memoir).

Before it was 'Anderson's' it had been known as 'Moran's Cottage'. It became 'Anderson's' in the 1880s when it passed to Archie (Archibald) Anderson, a coachman and later studmaster at 'Duntroon', presumably after his 1882 marriage to Emily Ann Wilson. They had eight children and most of this family are buried at St John's. (Godden Mackay Logan 2014:26-28; Young 2007; Salisbury 2000) Anderson remained there until 1913, moving to Acton where he was employed to drive a government dray. The cottage was then occupied by tenants on a monthly basis. (NAA: A657 DS1914/781)

In 1913 it was described as a cottage with three rooms in stone and two rooms in weatherboard, the earlier room having an old shingle roof later capped with galvanised iron. (NAA: A657 DS1914/781) This would suggest it was a Rottenberry construction. It was still standing in about 1920 when it was included in Sam Goddard's 'View of Canberra' painting. (NLA: nla.obj-134346837)



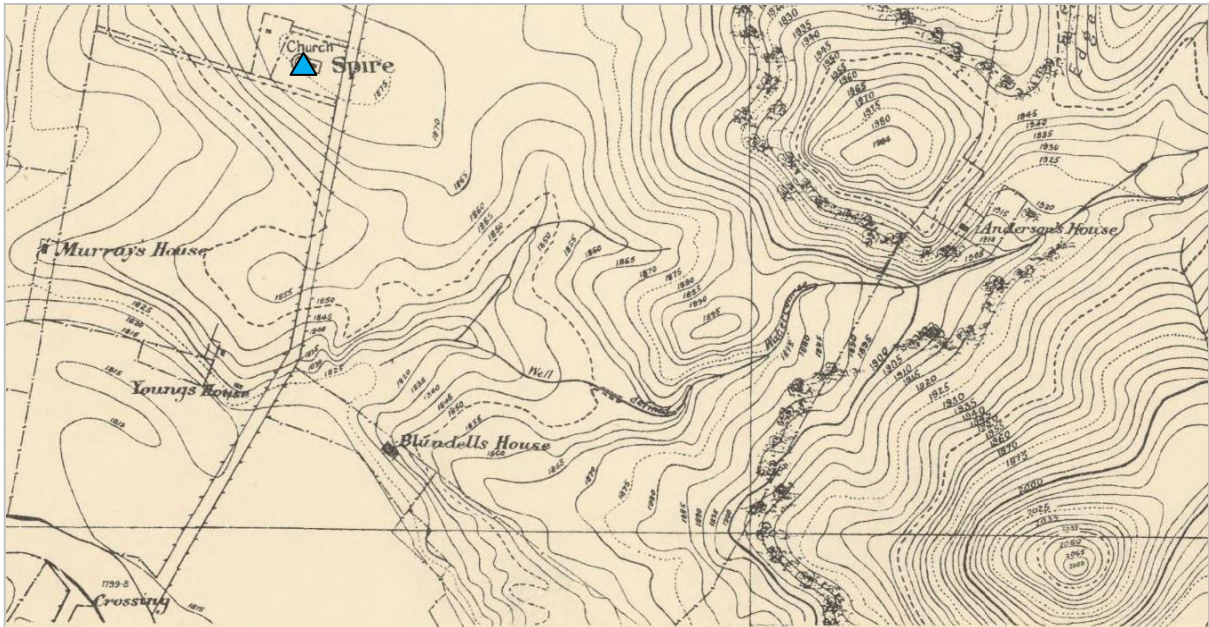
View of Canberra c.1920 - Sam Goddard – St John's spire in centre, Black Mountain at right; said to be Anderson's cottage in left foreground (NLA: nla.obj-134346837)

Despite the previous descriptor 'Moran's cottage' within 'Morans Paddock', the origin of the name remains unclear. There is a recollection of 'Mr & Mrs Moran' having lived in this vicinity. (Williams 1929) A 'Mrs James Moran, Duntroon' is noted as having made a charitable donation in 1878. (Queanbeyan Age 23 Nov 1878:3) Other contemporary references to a James Moran do not cite a location near Duntroon.

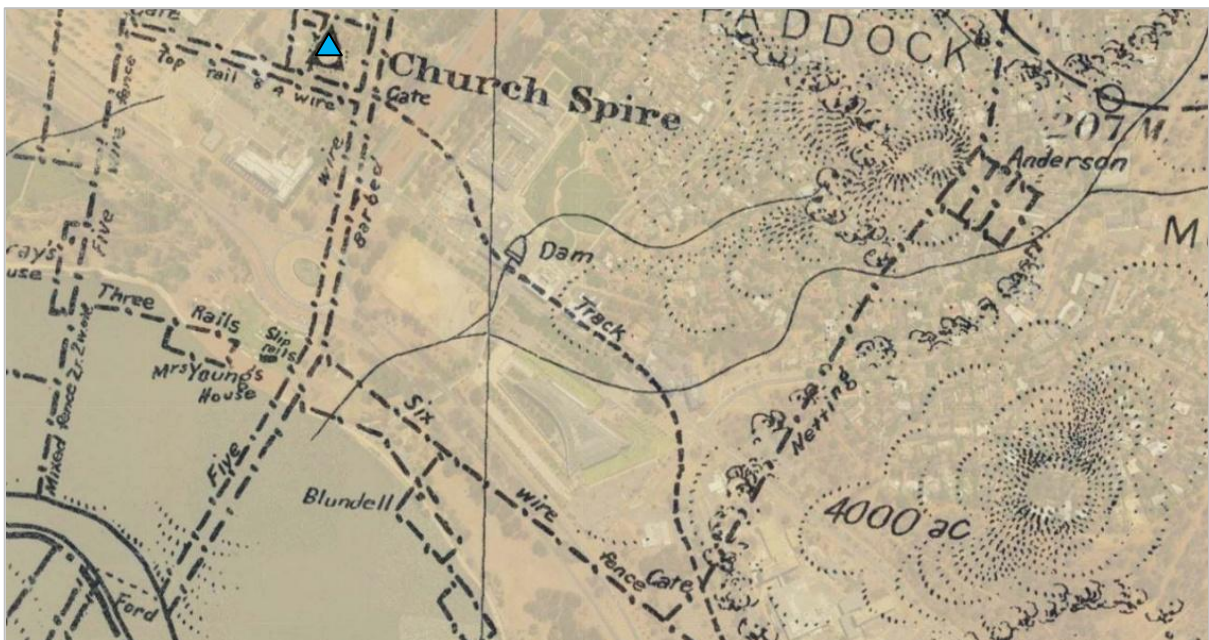
On the eastern edge of Morans Paddock, adjoining the Royal Military College (RMC), the 1915 feature map shows 'De Smet cottage'. Described in 1913 as a three-room cottage in stone (possibly built by Rottenberry), it was occupied from about 1903 to 1915 by Albert Victor De Smet. (NAA: DSL1921/703) He was a groundsman at 'Duntroon', where his brother Charles Emanuel De Smet also worked for a time, along with their father Jules De Smet, who worked as a carter. (Procter 2001:77; 1917 Electoral Roll - Duntroon)

The cottage was also referred to as 'De Smet's Boarding House', located in the 'Home Affairs Camp' for married workers, an overflow area from the official camp set up in the grounds of the RMC for those engaged with its development. Sites in the highly informal and dispersed Home Affairs Camp had originally been arranged with the manager of 'Duntroon', before its acquisition by the Commonwealth. Facilities in the camp were considered by the authorities to be most unsatisfactory. In 1913 it housed 12 to 13 married workers plus one boarding house (in 1914 this was listed in the name of Moran, quite separate from De Smet's occupancy). (NAA: A207, G1915/2283)

By late 1914 the Home Affairs Camp was within an area proposed as an extension to the RMC, bringing its boundary to the top of the ridge. Reflecting this, the site of the De Smet cottage is now within the grounds of the Australian Defence Force Academy. After De Smet's departure the cottage was occupied by at least four successive tenants into the 1920s. (NAA: DSL1921/703) The date of its removal is uncertain.



1914 Federal Territory contour map of city site and adjacent lands [detail]
(NLA: nla.obj-233544536)



c.1915 Federal Territory Feature map sheet 4 [detail] overlay on 2019 imagery
(NLA: nla.obj-233281594; ACTmap)

Downstream from the park area the creek met the Molonglo floodplain between the stone cottages of Blundell and Young, close to the ford of Church Crossing.

George and Flora Blundell occupied their cottage ('The Poplars') from 1874. George was a 'Duntroon' carrier and bullock driver. Built by Rottenberry in about 1860, it was first occupied by William Ginn, a ploughman at 'Duntroon', and his wife Mary and four children. From the 1930s it passed to Harry and Alice Oldfield. It was to be demolished in 1962 but was reprieved and became a museum.

'Mrs Young's cottage' was built in about 1858, probably by Rottenberry, and was first occupied by 'Duntroon' blacksmith Francis Williams. In 1863 it became the first Canberra post office and remained both post office and smithy until 1879, when the post office moved to the Yass Road, a better location for the coach mail run between Yass and Queanbeyan. In 1913 this was re-named 'Ainslie' post office to avoid confusion with the new central post office established at Acton, and it was demolished in 1925.

Brigid/Bridget, widow of William Young (d.1894) occupied the old cottage near Church Crossing after the post office had moved. That cottage was demolished in 1925. (Godden Mackay Logan 2014:28; Young 2007)

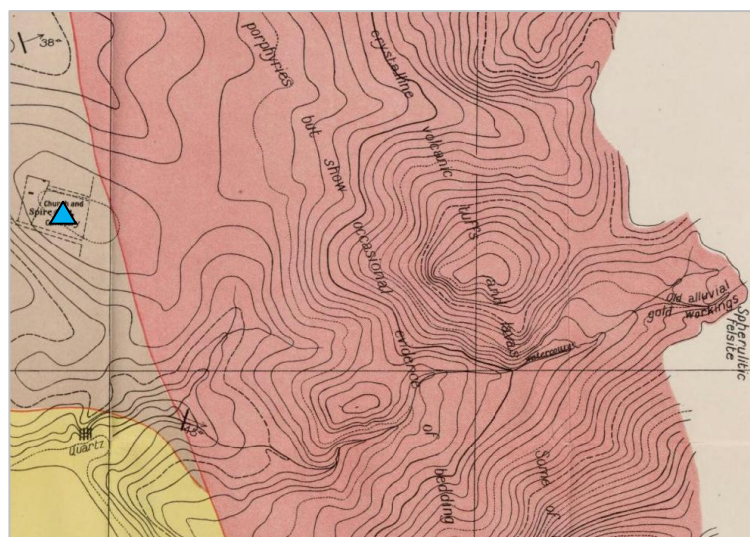
Gold!

The alluvial flat at the northern end of the park area may have been worked for gold in the 19th century.

After the discovery of payable gold at Bathurst in NSW was publicised in 1851, a series of gold rushes began as other districts began the search. This triggered significant migration of diggers from overseas, as well as from rural holdings to gold fields. Overall, the Canberra district was not greatly affected by gold rush migration of workers. Perhaps this was due partly to the policy of the Campbells of 'attaching workers to the soil' with houses and small blocks to work for themselves. (Fitzhardinge 1954:21-22, 30)

The first gold find near 'Duntroon' was in 1856-7, probably the shaft sunk by Bob Slade, with George Campbell's permission, to the east of Mount Pleasant. (Queanbeyan Age 25 Jul 1930:2) In February 1861 a digger from Lambing Flat [now Young] found gold in alluvial material near 'Duntroon' but Campbell prohibited further prospecting. (Sydney Morning Herald 23 Feb 1861:5)

Whatever his early misgivings, in 1863 Campbell erected a crushing plant and obtained quartz from a reef on 'Duntroon' by sinking a 15ft (4.6m) shaft, apparently without SUCCESS. (The Golden Age [Queanbeyan] 3 Sep 1863:2; Queanbeyan Age 25 Jul 1930:2)



1910 Geology map [detail] shows 'old alluvial gold workings' at the head of the creek [rear of Campbell shops] and a quartz reef downstream [near the National Emergency Services Monument] (NLA: nla.obj-232175330)

It is also recorded that Campbell obtained a nugget of nearly 3 ounces (85g) in March 1867, and did some crushing from a quartz reef on Mount Pleasant a few months later. (Moore 2001:4)

Late in 1871 Campbell offered a reward of £250 to anyone who discovered a payable quartz reef that proved to be the origin of the gold in alluvium on 'Duntroon'. (Queanbeyan Age 23 Nov 1871:3) Some 13 to 14 ounces (383g) was won from alluvial workings in 1872. (Queanbeyan Age 5 Sep 1872:2) These may have been the alluvial works started by George Coleman, with a dam, pump and puddling machine, which continued for 18 months. (Queanbeyan Age 25 Jul 1930:2) These are probably the 'old alluvial gold workings' shown on Pittman's 1910 geology map. (NLA: nla.obj-232175330) The newspaper declared optimistically that 'the Duntroon estate abounds with gold, as indeed does the whole district of Queanbeyan, and it only requires capital and enterprise to develop it'. (Queanbeyan Age 5 Sep 1872:2)

The Campbells

George and Marianne Campbell returned to England to attend to the education of their children, leaving management of 'Duntroon' to Frederick Campbell (son of Charles and Catherine) from 1877. (Kerr & Falkus:22) After George Campbell died in 1881 the property was legally inherited by their first son 'Jack' (Col. John Edward Robert Campbell DSO, a Boer War veteran living in England). Marianne returned to 'Duntroon'. This did not sit well with Frederick and in 1882 he purchased the 'Yarrowlumla' (Yarrowlumla or Yarralumla) property. (Kerr & Falkus 1982:23; Watson 1927:61)

Management arrangements for 'Duntroon' in the 1880s are unclear, although David Tully appears to have managed the property in the 1890s. (Hall 2011; Bluett 1927) After Marianne Campbell's death in 1903, it was managed for Col. Campbell by E E (Ernest Edward) Hudson, until 1913. (Queanbeyan Age 29 Jul 1913:2) A number of local landholders paid to agist stock on the property.

Federal Capital purposes

In resumption for the Federal Capital, the Commonwealth acquired the 'Duntroon' property in 1910. The old Campbell residence became the Royal Military College, the first Federal institution to be established, while the extensive pastoral holdings were leased or licensed for agistment.

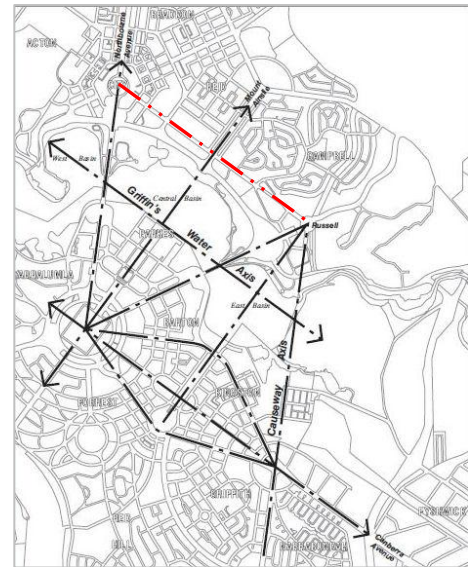
The successful city plan in the design competition was that submitted by Walter Burley Griffin and Marion Mahony Griffin.

The Griffins conceived a city shaped by the landscape, with a design organised in a series of axes and consequent triangles. (NCA 2004:54)

Mount Ainslie was the originating point for a Land Axis which continued south-west towards Mount Bimberi, intersecting at right angles with a Water Axis originating on Black Mountain and extending south-east to the southern shore of East Lake, within Lake Park.

The Causeway Axis marked an elevated causeway which was topped with a railway and road into the city, also retaining the waters of the vast East Lake.

(Butz 2019)



Axes of the Griffin Plan overlain on the modern, with Griffin's Municipal Axis in red (base: ACTPLA 2007)

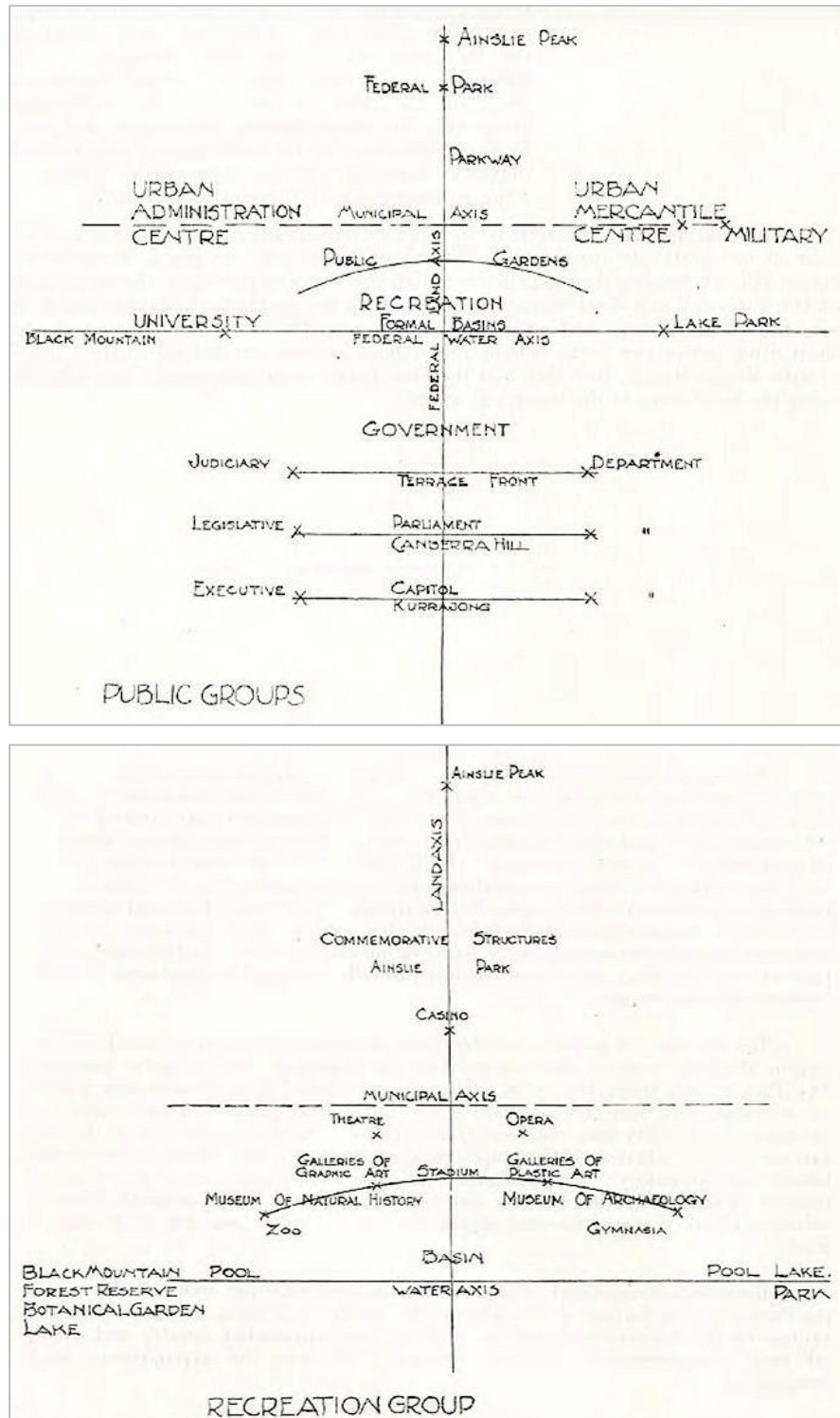
In the Griffin plan, the park area was in the eastern part of the city. The hilly topography here precluded continuation of the grid pattern drawn in the west. Instead, the creek valley containing the park area had at its heart The Parade (later Sandhurst Parade), curving to the north-east, through the gap between Mounts Pleasant and Ainslie, as a ceremonial connection between the Military and the City – a quite different geometry determined by the terrain. The Military Group had a residential component on the northern shore of East Lake. (NCA 2004:62)



Canberra, plan of city and environs - Walter Burley Griffin 1918 [detail]
(NLA: nla.obj-232723984)

The Griffin idea was to develop commercial functions at Russell around the Market Centre and its railway station, with municipal administration functions at Vernon [City Hill]. These would be linked by Capital Terrace [Constitution Avenue] as the Municipal Axis, three kilometres long, forming the central spine of the main business district, with the highest commercial and residential density in the city, and serviced by streetcars (trams).

This axis also formed the base of the central triangle in the Griffin plan, an expression of the People, as distinct from the Government on the opposite shore of the central lake basin. Between Capital Terrace and the lake would be the Recreation Group – an extensive central park and cultural buildings easily accessible to the people. In this schema, the park area lies just above (north of) the Municipal Axis and to the right (east) of the Land Axis, about halfway to the Market Centre. (Griffin 1913; NCA 2004:60, 62)



Grouping of functions in the Griffin Plan – (Griffin 1913:4, 8)

City railway



Canberra plan of city and environs 103C 1918 [detail] - Walter Burley Griffin - shows proposed stations and tunnel/cuttings on the City railway from the Market (General) to the City
(NLA: nla.obj-230572593)

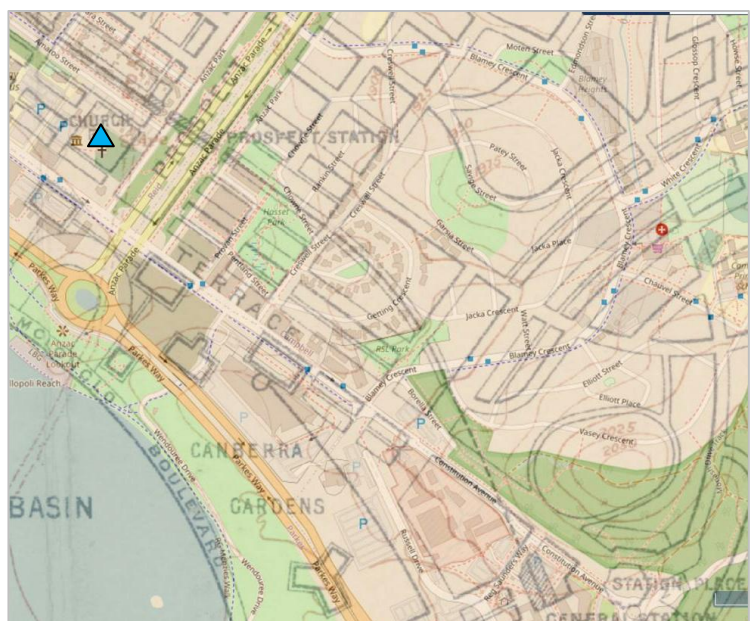
The hard volcanic rock foothills of modern Russell Hill also influenced design of the City railway, which was planned to continue on to Yass. After crossing the floodplain on The Causeway the line was to enter a tunnel and meet an underground General Station [near the Australian-American Memorial], intended as the major arrival point and gateway for the city. Above this was the Market building and Station Place, at the apex of a triangle framed by The Causeway and Federal [Kings] Avenue. (Butz 2018)

The line was to emerge from the tunnel and continue in a cutting underneath the level of The Parade. The cutting for the line would have traversed the park area approximately at the narrow 'neck' of the park south of Jacka Crescent, and through the northern end of the low rocky hill.

This route approximates the earliest drawn track from 'Duntroon' to St John's, reflecting a relatively easy grade, which would be made even easier in a cutting.

The railway was then to pass underneath roads all the way to and through the city (no level crossings).

(Butz 2018)



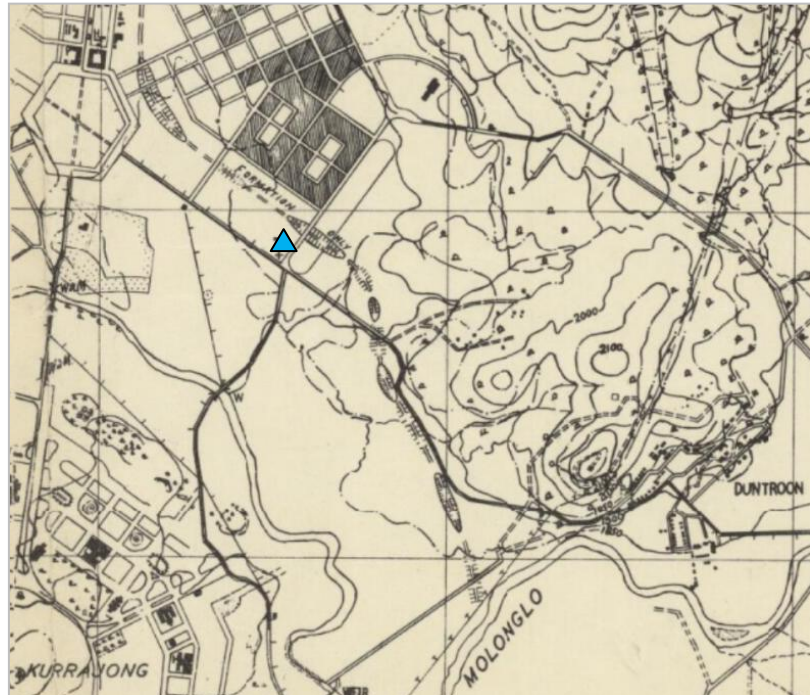
1918 Plan of city and environs 103C [detail]
overlay on Open Street Map (NLA: nla.obj-230572593)

This line was not built due to austerity during the Great War, but Griffin persisted with a temporary construction tramway at a much reduced scale and cost.

This crossed the floodplain on a low embankment and the Molonglo on a timber trestle bridge. To avoid tunnelling, the temporary line swung away from the rocky foot slopes of Mount Pleasant and headed north-west. (Butz 2018)

It crossed the creek that ran through the park area on a bridge [Constitution Avenue near Blamey Crescent] and skirted the rocky hill. While this approximated an old track from 'Duntroon' to St John's shown in 1913

(NLA: nla.obj-232695502; nla.obj-230052158), it still required significant cuttings to reduce the gradient for trains. (NLA: nla.obj-359762205)



Canberra map showing cuttings and embankments on the temporary construction tramway 1942-49 [detail] (NLA: nla.obj-359762205)

The temporary line then followed the planned permanent route [from Creswell Street].

After only a year or two of operation, the flood of 1922 damaged the trestle bridge and embankment across the floodplain, and the ensuing (larger) flood in 1925 finished their destruction. (Butz 2018)

Until 1950 there was a possibility of the line being used once again, and the rails and sleepers and bridges were left in place. Oral history (1930s) recalls yabbing in a large pond near the railway bridge just south of the park area. (Foskett 2008:30 citing Pat Connor née Brodribb)

Ultimately this part of the line was never resurrected. The rails were lifted from 1940, and the last bridge, adjacent to the Duntroon Road, was removed in 1959. (Canberra Times 26 Oct 1959:1)

Several alternative routes were considered over the years. One (1929) proposed that the railway line towards Yass would by-pass the city on a route along the foothills of Mount Ainslie. This option would have run through the centre of the park area [opposite Borella Street], past the rocky hill [Getting Crescent] and then headed northward.

(NLA: nla.obj-233327796)



1929 Canberra [detail] overlay on Open Street Map shows a possible City railway route heading north to the foothills of Mount Ainslie (NLA: nla.obj-233327796)

Workers settlement

After the funding austerity of the Great War, a commitment was made to open Federal Parliament in Canberra in 1926, later altered to 1927 when a Royal Visit was locked in to open Parliament in May of that year. At least a 'nucleus' of the public service would have to be transferred by June of that year.

(Brown 2014:73; Andrews 1983) This would require a flurry of building activity, and the resulting influx of workers was to be accommodated in temporary camps, in a range of shelter from tents through hutments (sleeping cubicles) and tenements (multiple occupancy) to cottages.

In 1926 a worker camp of 120 sites commenced at Russell Hill as a temporary measure.

Intended to last no more than three years, the settlement was not connected to electricity or the sewer, and had no public telephone, but it did have piped water.

A track connected the camp to the formed road [Constitution Avenue] but there was no public transport into the city area for decades. (Foskett 2008:25, 32)



1929 Canberra overlay on Open Street Map [detail]
showing sites in the Russell Hill settlement
(NLA: nla.obj-233327796)

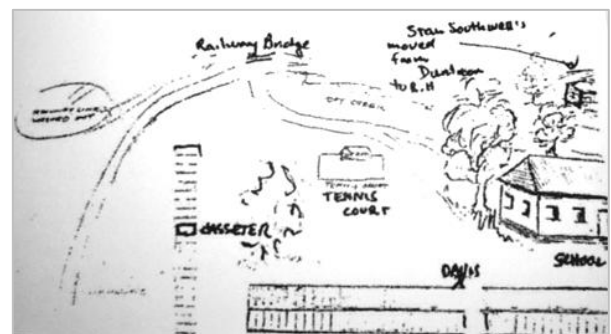
The settlement dwellings were built by the people who inhabited them, using materials donated by the Federal Capital Commission. As a result there was great variation in quality. (Warden 2014)

By 1927 (September) the Russell Hill School opened with 110 students [western side of Blamey Crescent] and by the following year Russell Hill was home to about 115 families.

Despite its intended short life, by the late 1920s the settlement had a school, children's playground, football field, tennis court, and a pavilion (moved from other camps). A sketch from memory showed the 'railway bridge' and the 'dry creek', the school, and the tennis court. (Foskett 2008:19, 23; Foskett 2015:20)

The authorities considered the camp to be an embarrassment, similar to the nearby Home Affairs Camp a decade earlier. They sought to relocate tenants to Molonglo and Causeway cottages as they became available, while other tenants were moved to Queanbeyan. By 1929 all but 39 homes had been removed. The school closed in 1930 (April) and was moved to Corroboree Park as a community hall. It had previously seen service as the Freemasons' Hall at Acton, and before that may have first been a Molonglo Camp structure.

(Canberra Times 29 Jul 1927:10; Foskett 2008:20-21; Gugler 1994)



Sketch of Russell Hill Settlement by Daphne Davis
[detail - closest to the park area]
showing 'railway bridge' over 'dry creek'
(Gugler 1994)



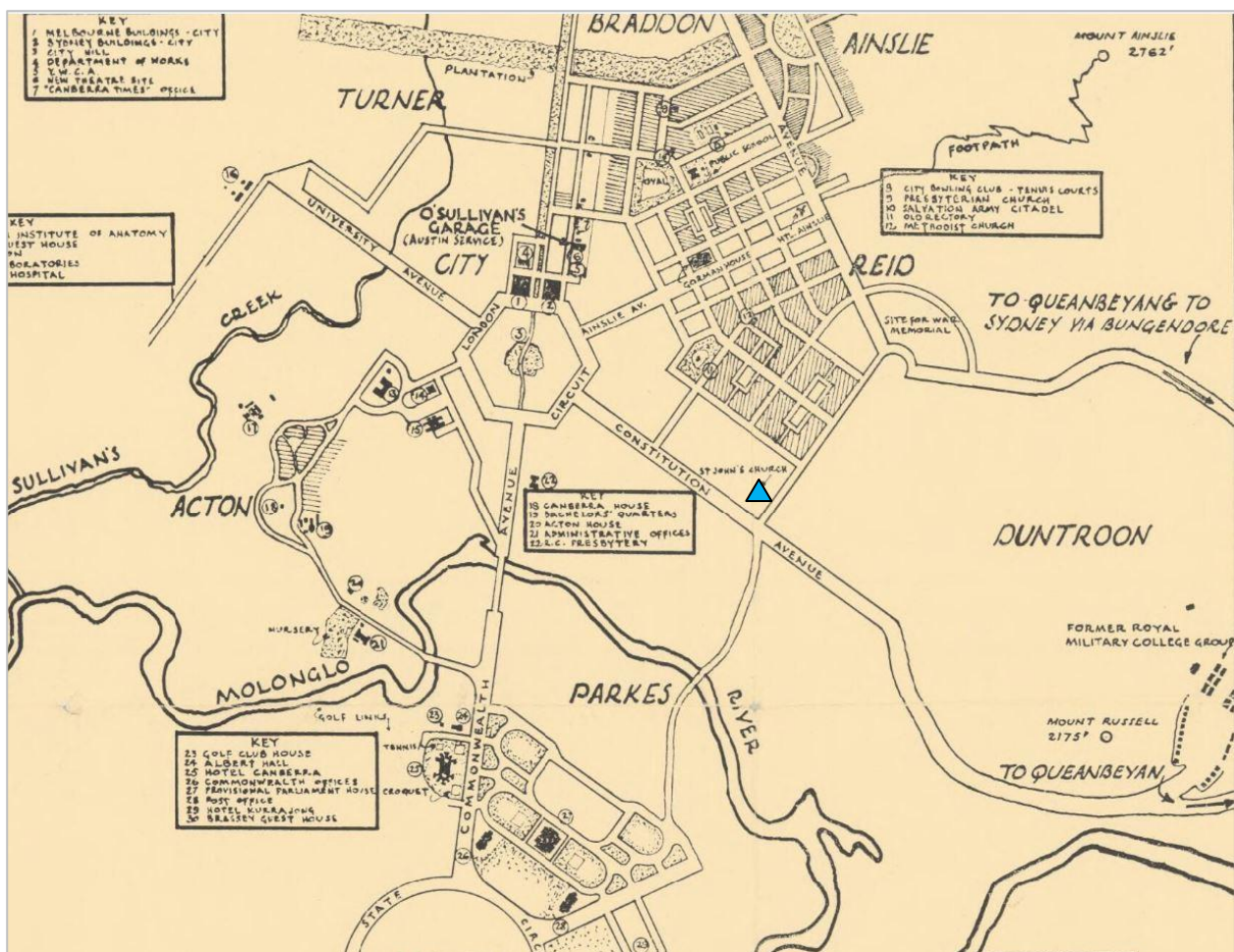
Russell Hill school in its previous incarnation
at Acton; built 1923
(NAA: A3560, 7185)

The Russell Hill Settlement officially ceased in 1934 but its closure was frustrated by the Great Depression and World War II, with numerous homeless people remaining there despite its deprivations. The last dwellings from this phase of occupancy were demolished in the late 1950s. (Foskett 2008:20; Gugler 1994:229, 231-234)

That late finalisation of the settlement may have thwarted plans mooted in 1950 to establish an additional tourist motor camp for Canberra, in the Duntroon-Russell Hill area. (Canberra Times 7 Dec 1950:7)

Oral history includes recollection of gold panning on the creek that now underlies the park area. This may have been in the old 1870s alluvial workings shown on the 1910 geology map but may have been along its length. (NLA: nla.obj-232175330)

The name 'Poverty Gully' was coined for the area (or a part of it), said to relate to lack of success in gold-seeking, or to conditions in the remnant settlement more broadly. (Queanbeyan Age 25 Jul 1930:2; Foskett 2008:22 citing Ann Gugler) More grimly, and perhaps indicative of the latter possibility, the name 'Hangman's Gully' was used at times, reflecting reports of two suicides there. (Daley 1965)



1932 Map of Canberra showing development [detail]; Duntroon is used as a suburb/district name; the Military College has relocated to Sydney as a Depression-era savings measure and is being used for worker accommodation; note the end of the straight line of Constitution Ave [now close to the intersection with Blamey Crescent] (NLA: nla.obj-233327173)

The onset of the Great Depression slowed city development. Commissioned in the aftermath of the Great War, the foundation stone of the Australian War Memorial was laid on 25 April 1929, but work was curtailed by the Depression. Work on the main structure began in 1936 and the Memorial was officially opened on Armistice Day 1941, in the midst of another war, by Prime Minister John Curtin.

(www.awm.gov.au)



Aerial view looking east-south-east along Constitution Avenue (mid-right) c.1940s [detail]; showing:
 the park area in context, beyond Anzac Parade and below the Russell Hill workers settlement (1);
 the lightly timbered rocky hill above the park area is visible (2) on this side of the straight track into the trees;
 the temporary tramway route (3) enters from right and crosses the creek at the site of the old railway bridge (4),
 then it skirts the rocky hill and curves onto the planned permanent route (5);
 a farm dam is formed in the wet soak just to the east of Anzac Parade (6);
 the creek continues at right on its way to the Molonglo floodplain (7);
 from the end of Constitution Avenue the Duntroon road bends around the foothills of
 Russell Hill and Mount Pleasant to connect with the Military College
 (base: Archives ACT)



Jun 1940 Run 2W photo 14587[detail] showing clearly the route of the temporary tramway and site of the former railway bridge over the creek; Russell Hill settlement in treed area at right; Scott's (Church) Crossing at lower left and the last railway bridge to be removed visible at lower right of centre
 Below: detail of the park area and creek, with Blundell's at lower left and Anderson's at upper right
 (NLA: nla.obj-1825146894)



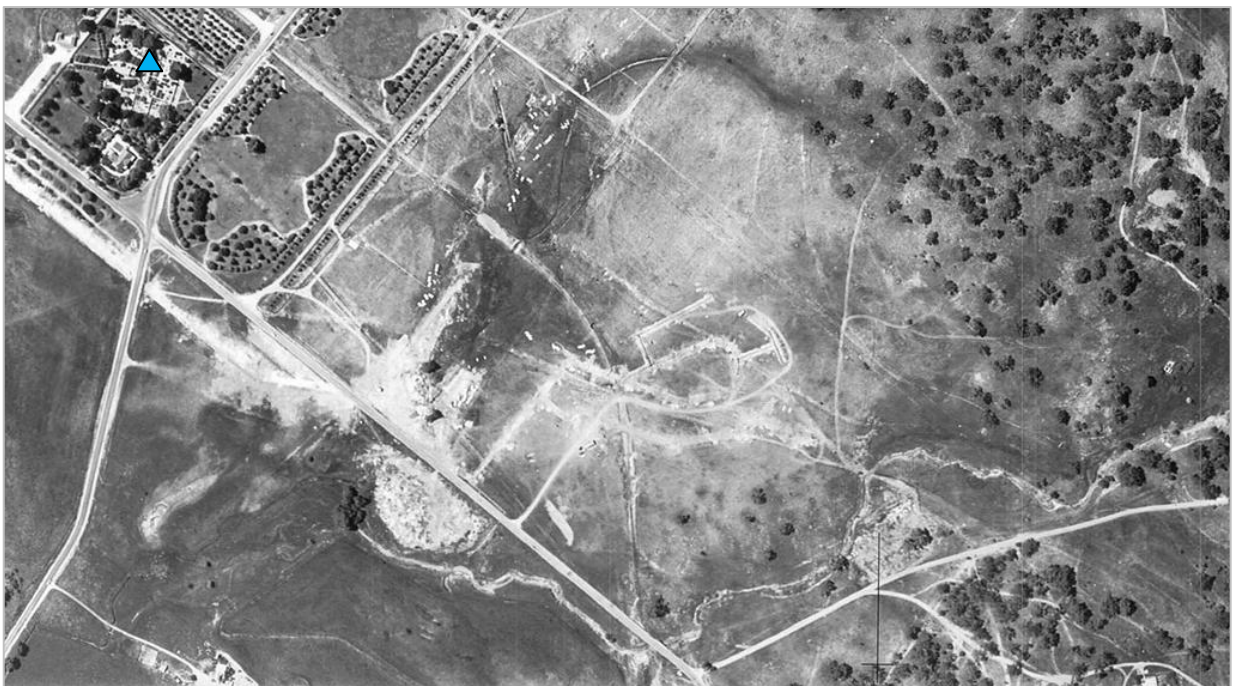
Growing a City

The 1950s saw renewed interest in developing the Capital, with a new plan and dramatically increased construction. By 1958, the population would grow to 39,000, increasing at 5% per annum. (NCA 2004:100)



Before development: Mar 1953 aerial oblique looking westward to the city – the park area in the foreground; an entrenched creek gully, and disruption to soil in the flat at right [Butler Place], possibly from gold seeking; track in foreground giving access to Russell Hill workers settlement; route of the temporary tramway still visible; extensive soak and farm dam in the paddock to the west (left centre)

(ACT Heritage Library 009602)



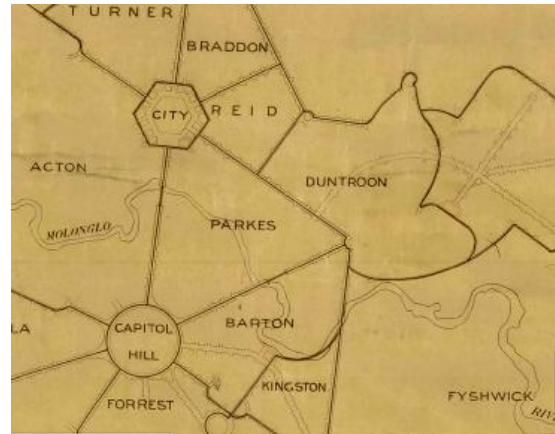
1955 aerial photograph [detail] shows initial groundworks for Campbell (Feakes Place taking shape near centre); extensive areas of fill (rubbish dump) evident - Canberra Run 5 - 4 Nov 1955 - 5054

(ACTmapi)

In 1956 (25 May) the name Campbell was approved for an area previously described (from 1927) as Duntroon. This change was partly prompted by concerns about 'Duntroon residents' involved in court cases that might reflect poorly on RMC Duntroon. The new name commemorated Robert Campbell and his successors, with Duntroon retained exclusively for the college area.

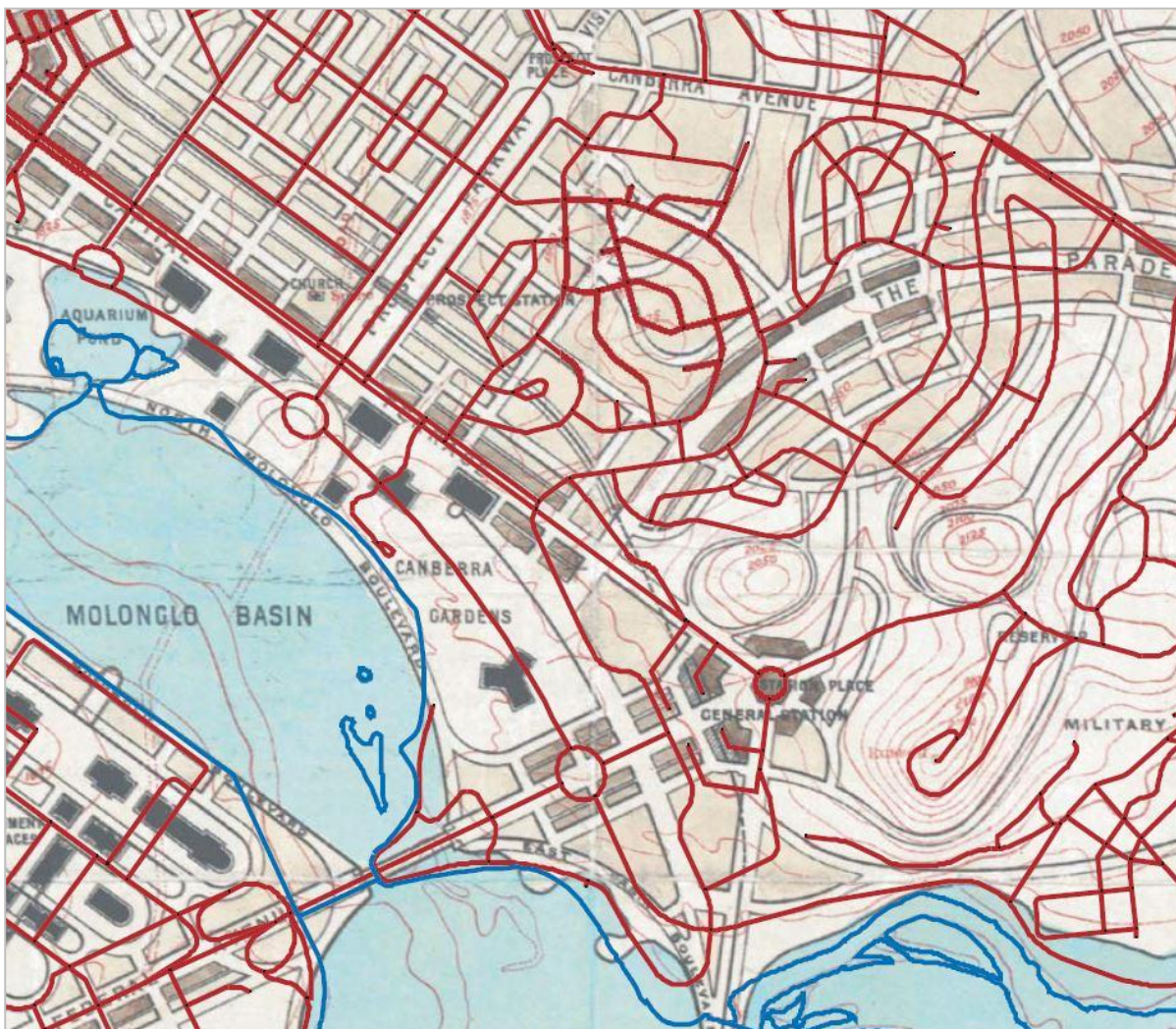
(Canberra Times 7 Jun 1956:2; 15 Jun 1956:2; Fosskett 2008:7)

Reflecting proximity to the Australian War Memorial, in June 1956 the National Memorials Committee chose as the suburb's theme names and roles in military history, tersely summarised as 'Defence personnel'. (Fosskett 2008:44)



1928 Canberra map of Divisions [detail]
(nla.obj-363159444)

A plan had been prepared in 1955, with Campbell the first Canberra suburb to depart from the 1925 gazetted city plan, and the first to be designed on the 'neighbourhood model'. This concept fashioned a suburb around a population of 3,500-6,000 people, large enough to support an infants/primary school near central shops, ovals and other facilities, arranged so that no child would have to walk more than 800m to school. Local streets curved, with cul-de-sacs, and arterial traffic was confined to the edges of the neighbourhood. (Fosskett 2008:41, 44)

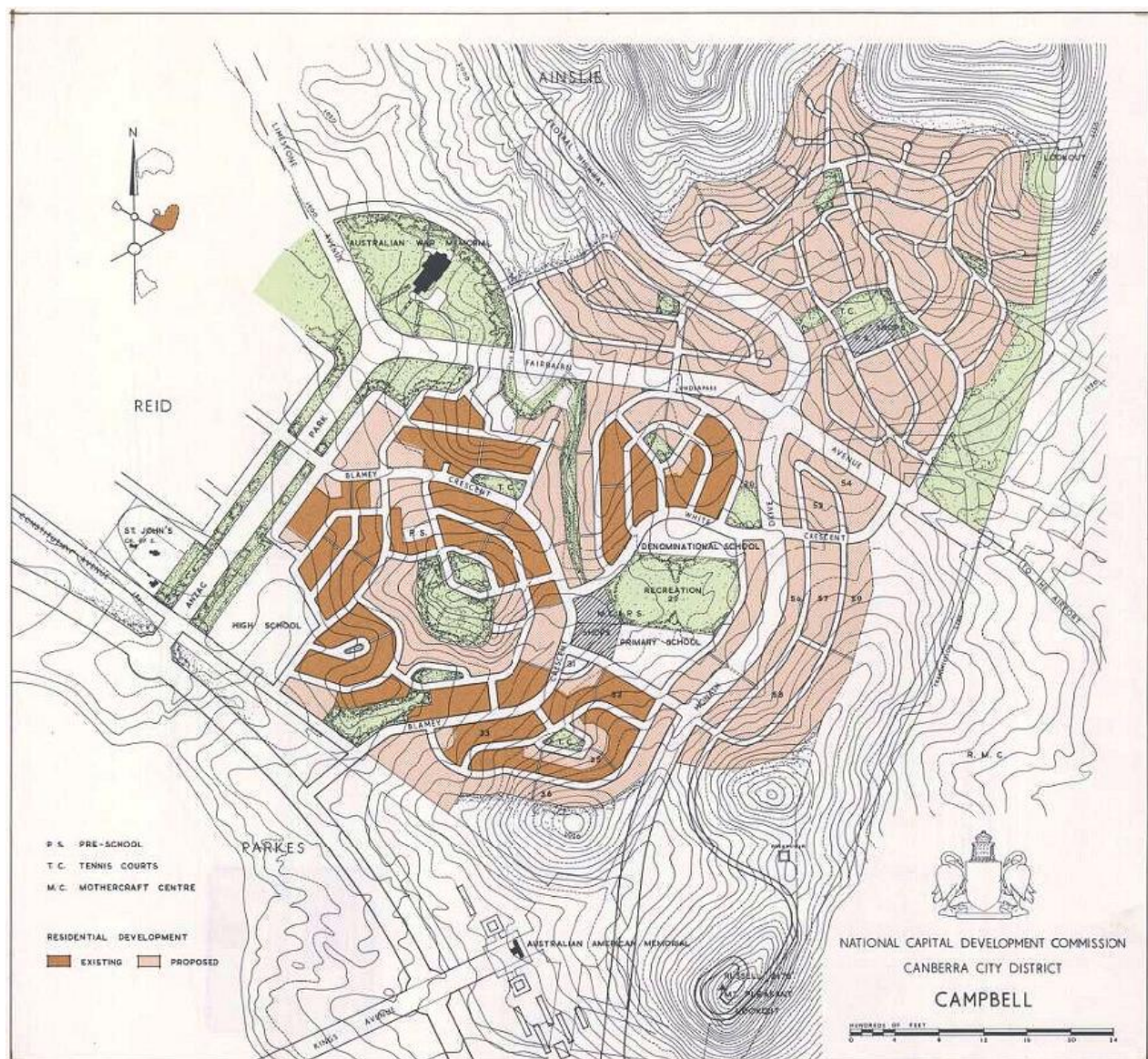


Campbell - Canberra Street Plan 2004 overlaid on the 1918 Griffin City Plan [detail]
Contrasting street layout – the grid of Reid to the west and the neighbourhood model in Campbell to the east
(NCA 2004:111)

The terrain in parts of Campbell posed some challenges for the planners in following the neighbourhood model, as did constraints relating to the War Memorial, Anzac Parade, and Constitution Avenue. A balance was needed between a suitable road layout and the need for home sites in the face of an ambitious building program. Initial priority was given to the gentler terrain areas, with later attention paid to layouts for the steeper slopes in the east. (Foskett 2008:41, 42)

This is reflected in the 1959 plan for Campbell, by that time under the National Capital Development Commission (NCDC). (NLA: nla.obj-863750441) Even at that time, some steeper areas were not finalised, and the plan omitted some streets. For example: Garsia Street now traverses the central hill topped by Legacy Park, between Jacka Crescent and Patey Street; and Butler Place has supplanted a park area drawn on the old creek flat (labelled 'Butler Gardens' in a 1961 version [NLA: nla.obj-362084680]). Both changes provided a substantial number of additional building sites.

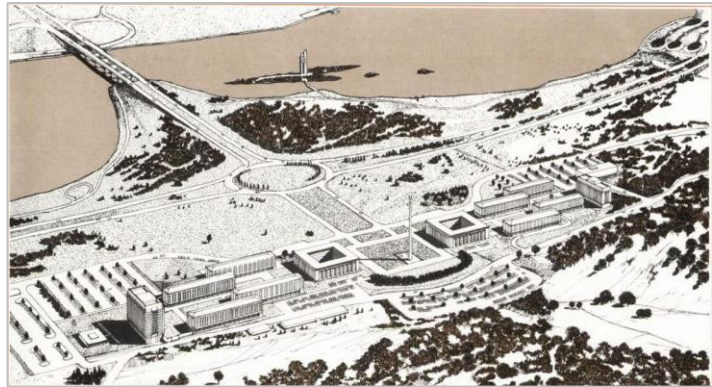
It is also notable that the 1959 plan shows a high school site next to Anzac Parade, and a substantial residential area in the foothills of Mount Ainslie (north-east of Monash Drive). Neither of these eventuated. The suburb layout was not completed until the early 1960s.



1959 NCDC plan for Campbell on the neighbourhood model
 – already partly developed, but this portrayal is not quite how it turned out
 (NLA: nla.obj-863750441)

A significant transition marked 1957: the first 91 residential blocks in Campbell were auctioned (8 May) and the suburb was connected to electricity; and in mid-October the last Russell Hill home was relinquished, by the Wensing family. (Foskett 2008:7, 20, 29)

City planners saw the Russell Hill area as 'the third corner of the 'City Triangle', the others being Civic Centre and Capitol Hill. (Canberra Times 12 Mar 1959:1) The Australian-American memorial had been built near this apex in 1953 and by 1958 major office development was envisaged for the Defence forces. (Canberra Times 12 Sep 1953:1; 2 Oct 1958:9) A succession of buildings followed rapidly, the first occupied in 1960 and three more by mid-1962. (Canberra Times 22 Oct 1958:1; 12 Jul 1960:3)



Russell Hill Offices – artist's impression; a car park at the apex (NCDC 1970: 55)

At the same time, the Kings Avenue Bridge and the first parts of Parkes Way were opened. (Canberra Times 29 Nov 1961:4; 12 Mar 1962:1,3) The suburb gained a nucleus in late 1962-early 1963 when the Campbell shops commenced. The new lake was filling (slowly) and it was officially inaugurated by Prime Minister Menzies in 1964 (Oct 17). (Canberra Times 19 Oct 1964: 1)

The transfer of significant numbers of Defence personnel from Melbourne began in 1959, and in Campbell Defence housing occupied all of the block between Blamey Crescent and Jacka Crescent beyond Watt St, and also Feakes Place. (Foskett 2008:7, 65)

The ANU also developed housing stocks in Campbell, with two blocks in Jacka Crescent from the park area to Getting Crescent. (Foskett 2008:76)



Services infrastructure map [detail] – stormwater and sewer easements shape the park area at centre (Block 29); the mauve shaded stormwater easement has straightened, piped and buried the creek; additional constraints on housing are imposed by the low rocky hill in the upper (northern) half of Block 29 (ACTmapi)



May 1958 aerial photograph [detail below] the north-eastern end of the park area not fully rehabilitated,
 earthworks along the length of the park, for stormwater and sewer installation
 - Canberra Run 6 21 May 1958 5014
 (ACTmap*i*)





1959 aerial photograph shows eastern parts of Campbell in early development, replacing the worker settlement, bounded on the eastern side by the alignment reserved for Monash Drive
- Canberra 8 Apr 1959



Oblique aerial photograph over Campbell looking westward [detail], probably c.1959
- length of the park area visible at left centre; the creek now piped, alluvial flat filled, and few trees remaining
(ArchivesACT 6808323518)



Oblique aerial photograph over Campbell looking westward 1959 [detail below]
 – northern end and narrow 'neck' of the park area at centre right; fill evident in the creekline and upstream flat;
 the last railway bridge near the Duntroon road is yet to be removed, visible at upper right of top image
 (ArchivesACT 6808372326)



Russell

In 1965 it was announced that the area around the Russell Hill offices would be designated as a new suburb called Russell. Former Canberra Administrator C S Daley saw it as most 'unfortunate, even scandalous' to revive this name 'in view of its long unsavoury association with "poverty gully" ', and also to depart from the 1928 decision to name suburbs after pioneers of Federation. (Canberra Times 26 Jan 1965:1; Daley 1965)

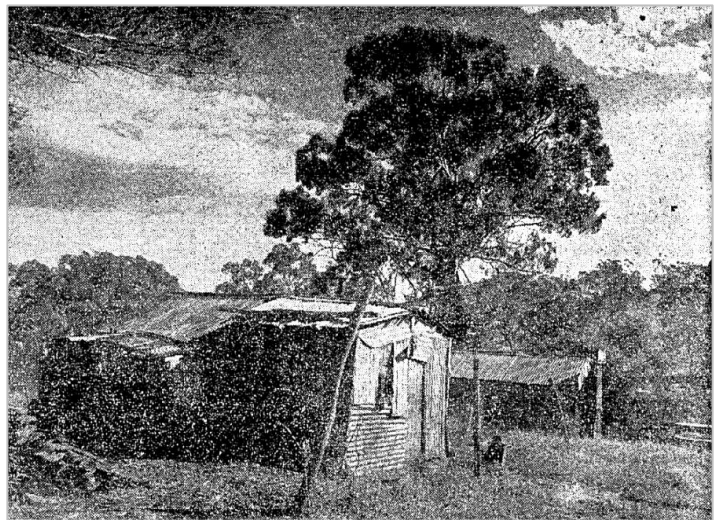
Daley drew attention to the uncertainty surrounding the identity of Russell, for whom Surveyor Scrivener labelled a trig station on Mount Pleasant. It seems that the inspiration for the naming was SA Senator William Russell, a staunch advocate of Yass-Canberra to be the site of the Federal Capital. He visited the area in 1908 and assessed the water supply. He came to know Scrivener, in whom he had 'the greatest faith'. Most notably, it was Russell who deviated from the Labor Party line favouring Tumut, to cast the deciding vote in the Senate for Yass-Canberra. While Russell may not have been 'a pioneer of Federation' as desired by Daley, he played a (perhaps the) key role in determining that the Capital would be in Canberra. (Daley 1965; Millar 2000; Lipscombe & Maple 2019)

Further confusion arises from use of the descriptor: the trig station named *Pialligo* by Dixon and Hoddle was renamed *Russell*, at least as early as 1913-14, with a new *Pialligo* trig established to the south-east in what is now the suburb of Pialligo. The *Russell* trig sits atop what we now call Mount Pleasant, whereas a lower rise to the north-west, across Northcott Drive and adjoining Campbell, is what many regard as 'Russell Hill'.

'Happy Valley'

Despite the apparent closure of the Russell Hill settlement in 1957, a rather squalid camp, mostly occupied by pensioners, persisted in the area for some years. Where the settlement had been termed 'Poverty Gully' this later incarnation was (facetiously) termed 'Happy Valley'.

In mid-1960 it was portrayed in disparaging terms, describing the government and the NCDC as being 'in the clouds [by] building a brave new city with modern suburbs while they bravely forget the hidden valleys of disgrace which are never shown to tourists and are seen by visitors only by chance'. It was noted that the collection of tin humpies lay in scrub country less than 400 yards from the £2 million Defence Offices construction area. (Canberra Times 18 Jun 1960:1, 3)



Humpies at 'Happy Valley'
(Canberra Times 17 Jun 1960 p.6 left; p.1 above)

Monash Drive

In 1960 Campbell had been extended, but planning maps had it bisected by a road reserve, later termed Monash Drive.

This route was first proposed in the NCDC 1959 Planning Report but it was not expected to be needed until the late 1970s or early 1980s.

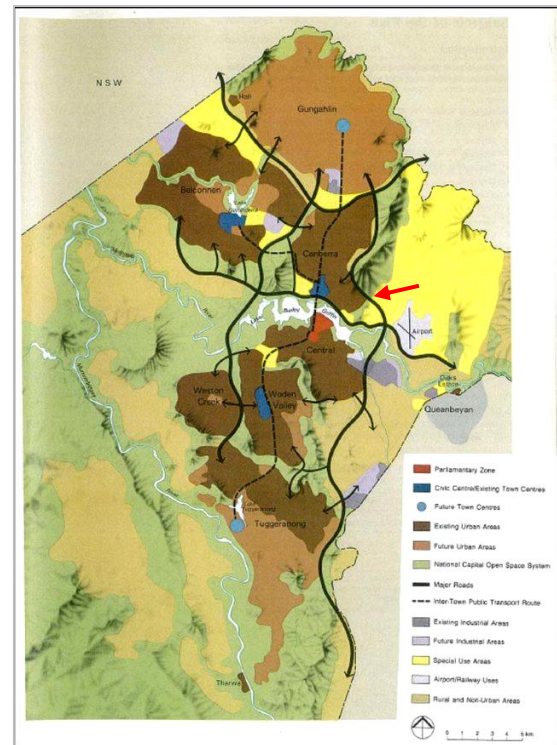
It was seen as a north-south arterial road, on the western foothills of Mount Ainslie, crossing the Molonglo to link to major roads to the south.

(NCDC 1959; Canberra Times 6 Oct 1962:9; 27 Nov 1969:14; 4 Dec 1976:1)

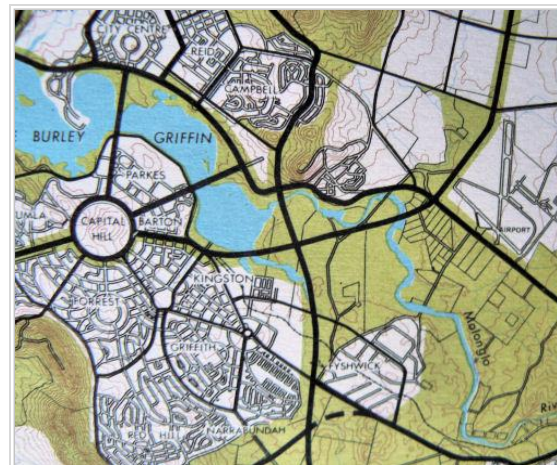
The proposal met with concerted community opposition which continued after the advent of self-government, with few firm commitments either way until, in 2004, the ACT Planning Authority omitted Monash Drive from the Canberra Spatial Plan and Sustainable Transport Plan, and in 2009 the National Capital Authority followed suit and removed it from the National Capital Plan. (ABC News Online 2009)

The eastern side of Campbell is now traversed by a linear park rather than by a major arterial road.

However, some believe that the idea has not been definitively and permanently ruled out.



Metropolitan Canberra Policy Plan 1984,
with a version of Monash Drive (arrowed)
(NCDC 1984)



An earlier version from *Future Canberra* 1965
[detail], with Monash Drive traversing Campbell
(NCDC 1965)

RSL National HQ and RSL Park

The Returned Services League (RSL) moved from Melbourne in 1956 to a new National HQ in Canberra (14 Mort St Braddon).

In 1961-62 a new site was allocated for the National HQ at the head (eastern end) of Constitution Ave (no.81).

In May 1963 Prime Minister Menzies unveiled a stone from Kokoda which had been placed in the foyer. The building was completed in July and formally opened on 7 Aug by the Governor-General Viscount De L'Isle, with Prime Minister Menzies also present. (RSL c.2008)



The new RSL National HQ in Constitution Ave
(Libraries ACT: ACT Administration Collection 006151)

There was much activity in Canberra in April 1965 to mark the 50th anniversary of Anzac Day, including a personal message from the Queen read by the Duke of Gloucester, the inauguration of Anzac Parade as a ceremonial way, military bands, and a march by a battalion of servicemen. (Canberra Times 23 April 1965:14)

Extra significance arose from the Duke of Gloucester's previous term as Governor-General of Australia (30 January 1945 to 11 March 1947).

(Canberra Times 23 Sep 1964:1)

On 25 April the Duke and Duchess each planted a tree in the grounds of the RSL National HQ, the ceremony and subsequent morning tea being attended by Gallipoli veterans including nursing sisters, and wives and widows of Gallipoli veterans. These trees were Aleppo pines (*Pinus halepensis*), progeny of the iconic Gallipoli Lone Pine. (RSL c.2008)



H.R.H. the Duke of Gloucester plants a seedling from the Lone Pine of Gallipoli in the grounds of RSL National HQ;
Right: commemorative plaques (RSL c.2008)



Reflecting the naming theme of Campbell, a succession of commemorations followed:

2000 (24 July) Victoria Cross Park (Monument Australia)

2001 (4 April) George Cross Memorial Park, dedicated by Governor-General Sir William Deane (AWM)

2001 (30 September) Legacy Park Campbell opened, marking the 75th anniversary of Legacy (Wikipedia)

2002 (13 May) RSL Park officially named (ACT Govt 2002); (2 July) opened (Foskett 2015: 28)

2006 (30 June) an Aleppo pine, progeny of the Lone Pine of Gallipoli, planted in Legacy Park (Wikipedia)

2016 (18 July) new park in Campbell 5 subdivision named for General Sir Francis Hassett, first Chief of Defence Force Staff (SLA 2016)



RSL Park walls and plaque, dedicated 2002
(Foskett 2015: 28)

Naming and dedication of RSL Park can be seen as marking a transition from a left-over space to a place, becoming a destination.

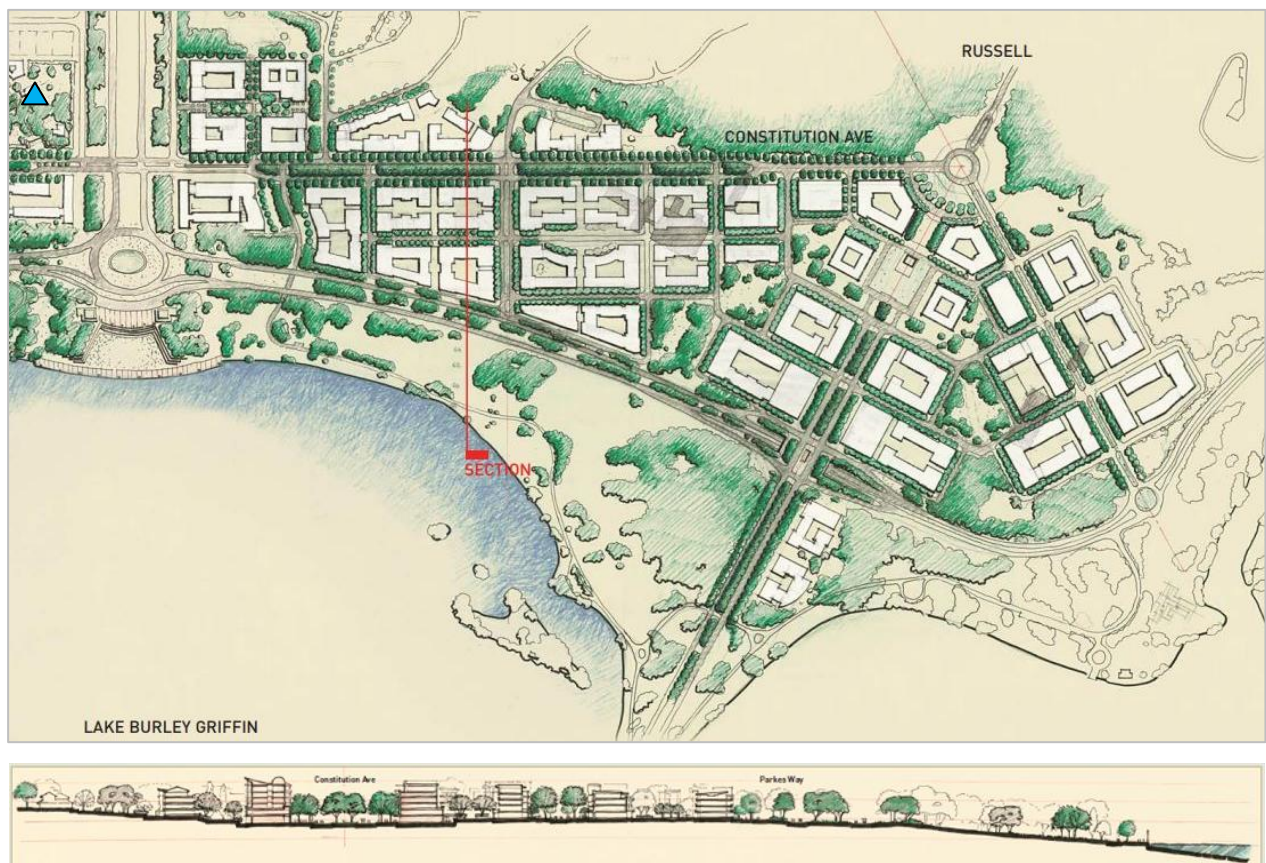
Constitution Avenue: along the grand boulevard

Fuelled by the growth of urban Canberra, a new emphasis on Constitution Avenue brought some quite dramatic changes to the environs of the park area.

This grew out of longstanding concern among planners that the main triangle of the Griffin Plan was incomplete, with an apex corner missing in the truncation of Constitution Avenue. This was advanced in 1994 with proposals to replace eight of the Defence office buildings at Russell. A new master plan by the National Capital Planning Authority resulted in extension of Constitution Avenue (after much excavation) and Kings Avenue (somewhat indirectly) to a roundabout marking the apex and connecting both avenues with Northcott Drive. It also created a road (Shellheim Avenue) on the uppermost part of the Causeway Axis, although this can go no further until additional buildings are replaced. (Reid 2002:334)

In 2004 the National Capital Authority (NCA) prepared a major strategy for the central National area, and the surrounding landscape and approaches. *The Griffin Legacy: a policy framework* would guide public and private investment in key areas, seeking to create 'vibrant, mixed use precincts alongside cultural institutions, government buildings and major national attractions' and to restore 'the intended urbanity and vitality of Canberra as a cosmopolitan lakeside city'. (NCA 2004; 2006a)

RSL Park made an appearance in the Constitution Avenue Development Plan Concept, with a transect showing its south-western corner as a high point grading to lake level across the section. (NCA 2004:159)



Constitution Avenue Development Plan Concept - Top: Plan Concept [detail] Bottom: Section
(NCA 2004:159)

In November 2006 the NCA approved Amendment 60 to the National Capital Plan, to formalise Constitution Avenue as 'central to the implementation of *The Griffin Legacy*'. The amendment addressed land uses and policies for planning and urban design, from London Circuit to Russell, 'increasing the vitality of the Central National Area and completing the National Triangle'. This would also involve an integrated transport system, broad tree-lined footpaths, and outdoor dining and street parking. (NCA 2006b)

A decision had earlier been taken (August 2006) to develop a new building for ASIO and ONA in what was newly termed 'Canberra's security precinct'. The site was between Constitution Avenue and Parkes Way, next to Anzac Park East. While notably contrary to Amendment 60 and its vision for Constitution Avenue, and despite considerable community opposition, it proceeded to construction, commencing in 2009. The Ben Chifley Building was occupied in the second half of 2013. (NCCC 2009; Brew 2013)

On the block adjoining to the west, at 62 Constitution Avenue (Block 2 Section 4 Parkes) demolition of the Anzac Park East office block began early in 2019. This had previously housed the Bureau of Mineral Resources (later Australian Geological Survey Organisation) from 1965 for 32 years until its move to Symonston (as Geoscience Australia). This was the eastern half of a pair of 'portal buildings', so named to denote their design role framing the foot of Anzac Parade on Griffin's Land Axis. Redevelopment by Amalgamated Property Group proposed mixed residential and commercial uses, with community consultation undertaken in 2021. It is intended that the replacement building will maintain the 'portal' nature of its predecessor, with similar intent for the Anzac Park West office block (dating from 1967-68) when it is replaced in the near future, also an Amalgamated Property Group development. (APG 2022)

On the opposite (northern) side of Constitution Avenue, in 2013 the ACT Government Land Development Authority initiated a major new precinct of five development sites in Section 5 Campbell (known as 'Campbell 5' or 'C5'). The precinct would include residential and commercial, mixed use, and two potential hotel sites, as well as a major new public park incorporating sustainable stormwater management. (SLA 2000) 'The Parade' was the final release (in 2021), named for its frontage to Anzac Parade. This followed staged releases of previous themed developments: 'Saint Germain' (French), 'Greenwich Park' (New York), 'Køben' (Danish) and 'Siena' (Tuscan).

Further east along the boulevard, at Creswell Street, in 2014 Hindmarsh began developing the six-storey 'Creswell Residences' at 65 Constitution Avenue (Block 33 Section 19), offering apartments above commercial spaces. (Clisby 2013)



View eastwards along Constitution Avenue from Anzac Parade – May 2015, extended beyond Blamey Crescent to terminate at the new roundabout above the Russell Defence Offices; 'Creswell' and the Ben Chifley Building in middle distance; Campbell 5 site and Anzac Park East in the foreground; (ACT Government Suburban Land Agency)

'Creswell' included new offices for Hindmarsh, replacing their original office (from the 1980s) at 71 Constitution Avenue (Block 32 Section 19). This latter site was to be replaced by another Hindmarsh development, to include 71 apartments (known, appropriately enough, as 'Seventy One'), townhouses facing Getting Crescent (later amended to apartments), and commercial spaces at ground level. In public consultation concerns were raised about traffic and parking, impact on amenity, building height, tree removal, and details of balconies, lighting, fencing and powerlines. (Doherty 2018) Site works commenced late in 2020, with completion expected in 2022.

Recalling the Griffin Plan intention for trams on Constitution Avenue, in 2016 parties wishing to tender for Stage 1 of the Canberra Metro light rail project were asked to include the possibility of an extension of the line to the Russell Offices. This might later be extended to the Airport and/or to the Parliamentary Triangle. (Foskett 2015:36) This was set aside until after the 2016 election, and in the following year it was foreshadowed as part of Stage 2. (Knaus 2016) Perhaps reflecting the insistence of the National Capital Authority on not having overhead wires to power the tram, this has not yet proceeded.

'Iskia' rising

A third piece in redevelopment along the boulevard was a \$70m 7-storey building at 81 Constitution Avenue (Block 34 Section 19) adjoining Blamey Crescent, announced by Hindmarsh in 2009. (Doherty 2009)

The apartments and residences, named 'Iskia', were designed by the late Colin Stewart.

Plans initially included a stormwater control pond in the adjacent RSL Park. (Doherty 2009)



Artist's impression of 'Iskia' c.2014-15,
at the end of RSL Park (Allhomes)

Following approvals in 2013, building works occupied the lower reaches of the park from 2017 to 2019. Before the building could rise it was first necessary to dig deeply into the low rocky hill, providing a glimpse into the geological foundations of the park area.



Aerial photograph Mar 2018 [detail] - Excavation of 'Iskia' for foundations and three underground levels,
also showing at right works buildings occupying part of the park area
(ACTmapi)

The RSL had agreed to demolition of their HQ on the site of 'Iskia', to be replaced within the new development. (Doherty 2009) Earlier aspirations for a stand-alone building on the site, perhaps in time for the RSL Centenary, could not be sustained. (RSL National HQ website)

It was reported that the two Aleppo pines that were planted by the Duke and Duchess of Gloucester in 1965, progeny of the Gallipoli Lone Pine, would be removed. The plaques would be retained and displayed on a plinth and it was intended that two new pines would be planted in the redevelopment, with agreement gained from the then (2009) Duke of Gloucester. (Doherty 2009; NCA 2013)

Staff moved out of the building into temporary accommodation in 2011, but the new building was delayed in the absence of a major tenant committing to occupy commercial space. (Doherty 2009)

Governor-General David Hurley officially opened the new RSL National HQ in the 'Iskia' building in 2019 (4 Dec). (RSL National HQ website)

The forecourt includes the artwork 'Field of Light' by Matthew Curtis, 'evoking an image of the poppies in Flanders field' as a reflection of RSL history on the site. (Musa 2019)



One colour phase of 'Field of Light' by Matthew Curtis
(2019 RLDI – Curtis Glass Art Studio)

For the first 50 years of the old RSL National HQ, sitting in a kind of splendid isolation at the head of Constitution Avenue, the park area had a sweeping southward outlook over the lake and central Canberra. That outlook was reduced by construction of the Ben Chifley Building and curtailed further by the eight storeys of 'Iskia' on its boundary.



Above: 'Iskia' closes off the southern end of RSL Park (Commercial Real Estate)

Below: the park outlook improves the asset value for some of the apartments in Iskia East (Belle Property)



Population pressure on the place may increase with future redevelopment to the east – as indicated in the *Griffin Legacy* (NCA 2004) – particularly along Borella Street (Block 3 Section 117 Campbell), currently a car park, and also around the western truncated end of Russell Drive (Sections 80 and 88 Russell).

Care from the community

The volunteer community group Friends of RSL Park Campbell was established in 2020 to conserve and maintain RSL Park Campbell.

The group was inducted as an Urban Parks and Places Volunteering Group by the ACT Government in February 2021.

In July 2021 the group received a grant as part of the ACT Nature in the City Program, to improve landscape health in the park. (Friends of RSL Park)



(Friends of RSL Park)

The initial stages of work involved revitalising the southern section of the park area with nature-based solutions. This included control of woody weeds, planting of native trees and shrubs in the understorey, and development of an integrated landscape plan for the park in collaboration with key stakeholders.

(Friends of RSL Park)

The initial design drafting and public consultation sought to strengthen the standing of the park area as a destination and neighbourhood place rather than as a path along the stormwater easement, and as an area cared for by the local community in partnership with the ACT Government.

The landscape plan has just been finalised at time of writing.

Postscript

This historical profile has sought to share layers of story to enrich experience of RSL Park and to broaden appreciation of the place.

From ancient seabed and volcanoes, to largely treeless tract with a creek, in the corner of a paddock, supporting grazing stock and later offering hope to the occasional gold seeker, to a leftover space in suburban design, to a place valued by the community.

That is quite a sweep of stories, depicted at the end of this document in a one-page historical summary, with a map of some of the historical elements in and around the park area (locations indicative).

Readers are encouraged to seek out the park, to discover traces of these stories, and to experience the place for themselves – and to consider pitching in to help the Friends of RSL Park to care for it.

Time sequence aerial photographs - ACTmapi

2004



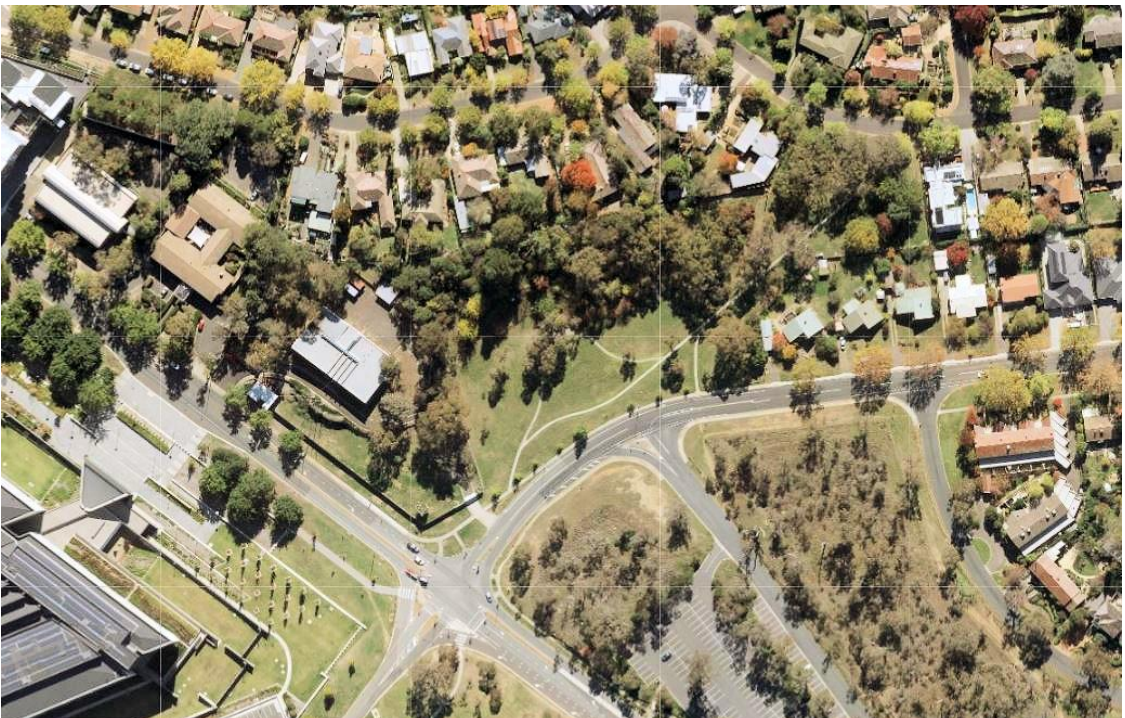
2012

ASIO
building
taking
shape



2016
Mar

'Creswell'
built;
RSL HQ
site being
fenced



2018
Mar

Digging
for 'Iskia';
works on
the park
area



2019
Jun

'Iskia'
built;
but the
park area
still
occupied



2021
Apr

'Iskia'
complete
- site
works for
'Seventy
One'



INFORMATION AND IMAGE SOURCES

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These images can be accessed on Trove by copying & pasting the nine digits into the following URL formula to replace 'XXXXXXXXXX': <https://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-XXXXXXXXXX/view>

RSL PARK POCKET HISTORY

Time Period	Context / Use	Identity (Name / Image)	‘Features’ / Environs
400+M yrs	Landscape origins and foundations		Volcanic rock Alluvium and gravels
21,000+ yrs	First Peoples Country (continuing to present)	Between Byalegee/Biyaligee in the east & Ngambri/Kambri in the west	Huge water flows and sediment transport Fossil lake / Aeolian sand dunes
1820-1905	Rural development and economy	Within Limestone Plains Part portion 58 Parish Canberra Within ‘Pialligo’ / ‘Duntroon’ Within Ram Paddock / adjoining Morans Paddock	St John’s Track to ‘Duntroon’ homestead Workers’ stone cottages (Moran’s/Anderson’s, Ginn’s/Blundell’s, De Smet) Gold seeking
1906-1913	Federal Territory and Capital City foundations	‘Well defined watercourse’ + hill of ‘Granitic boulders’	RMC Duntroon ‘Home Affairs’ workers camp
1914-1918	Wartime	[plan only] Midway between ‘General Station’ and ‘Prospect Station’	Griffin Plan: Municipal Axis / Capital Terrace [plan only]
1919-1925	Post-war recovery		Civic Railway / Causeway embankment [plan only] Temporary construction tramway (railway bridge over creek)
1926-1954	Capital city establishment	Within Duntroon (district) Part ‘Poverty Gully’ aka ‘Hangman’s Gully’	Russell Hill worker settlement More gold-seeking Constitution Ave
1955-1969	Urban development	Within Campbell (suburb) Stormwater easement Blamey Cres & Jacka Cres	Russell Hill Defence offices ‘Happy Valley’ shanty town Kings Ave Bridge / Parkes Way RSL National HQ at Campbell ANZAC jubilee ceremonies
1970-1999	Urban redevelopment		Russell Hill Defence office rebuilding Extended Constitution Ave (new triangle apex)
2000-2022		RSL Park	Commemorative parks in Campbell <i>Griffin Legacy</i> : Constitution Ave ‘grand boulevard’ Hindmarsh & other redevelopments RSL National HQ in ‘Iskia’ Friends of RSL Park

RSL PARK & ENVIRONS – HISTORICAL ELEMENTS [INDICATIVE LOCATIONS]



