

THE HISTORY OF DEAKIN

ABORIGINAL HERITAGE

Aboriginal people have been living on the Australian continent for around 65,000 years. About 12,000 years ago the very dry and cold Glacial period transitioned into the Holocene period and the earth began to warm. By around 9,000-5,000 years ago, the lives of the Ngunnawal people on the Molonglo floodplain had greatly improved. Their environment was probably warm and lush, with extensive forests and rich biodiversity. More diverse plant species emerged, and animal populations became more prevalent. Its rivers and lakes could have been more extensive or permanent, supporting a variety of aquatic and terrestrial life. This was the land on which the suburb of Deakin was built, thousands of years later.

The Ngunnawal 'lived lightly' on the land by applying their sophisticated ecological knowledge of patterns and cycles to enable the landscape to recover from disturbance and from their use of natural materials. These Traditional Custodians modified the landscape to suit their needs. For example, patch burning served to flush out game, to favour certain plants or vegetation structures for their use or as food to attract game animals, and to open up the landscape for easier passage and safety. They also actively managed the landscape through activities such as cultural burning and selectively cultivating certain plants for food and fibre and raw materials for medicines, dyes, ornamentation, glues and tools. They created the landscapes first seen by explorers and pastoral settlers. Traditionally, the local Ngunnawal people shared knowledge for caring for country.

The lands of the Walgalu and Ngambri people adjoined those of the Ngunnawal and evidently extended over parts of what became the Federal Capital Territory. Generally, the Ngunnawal kept to small family groupings but, even after European occupation of their lands, gatherings of five hundred or more were observed assembling for ceremonial activities. Generations of Aboriginal people have cared for Country, and have been sustained, physically and spiritually, through their relationship with the land, waterways and cosmology.¹

¹ Flood, J (1980) *The moth hunters: Aboriginal prehistory of the Australian Alps*. Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, Canberra; Butz, M (2018) *The Canberra Ranges, Black Hill, Black Mountain, 'The Golden Hill' and Beyond*, Black Mountain Symposium 2018, Background Paper No. 19, <http://www.friendsofblackmountain.org.au/SymposiumPapers>; McBryde, I (1996) 'Exchange in south-eastern Australia: an ethnohistorical perspective', in V Chapman and P Read (eds) (1996) in *Terrible hard biscuits: a reader in Aboriginal history*, *Journal of Aboriginal History*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 42–68.

EUROPEAN OCCUPATION AND SETTLEMENT FROM THE 19th CENTURY TO 1912

Pastoralists

The early colonial explorers and settlers were attracted to the region for the same reasons as the Traditional Custodians were: easy access from many directions, low relief areas with waterholes and grasslands, higher places to provide shelter from adverse winds or to stay dryer and warmer, and provide views over the landscape on which they relied for survival.

The first wave of European pastoral expansion into Ngunnawal lands began in the Yarralumla district in August 1828, when land was granted to Henry Donnison, a Yorkshire-born Sydney merchant and landowner. His capital enabled him to buy 2,500 acres (1,037 hectares) of land on the south bank of the Molonglo River that he called Yarrowlumla, based on an Aboriginal name 'Arralumna' or 'Yarrowlumly'. He had his overseer build a hut, known as Taylor's Hut, near where the woolshed was later built. On 2 November 1831 Donnison received a supplementary grant of 2,560 acres (1036 hectares), expanding his holding to a total of 5,120 acres (2,072 hectares). The second block, known as 'Donnison's Reserve' adjoined the eastern side of the original grant. He probably never lived there but relied on his overseer to manage the estate. It remained largely undeveloped until, on 6 September 1832, he sold off his Yarralumla interests for 250 pounds to the last of the non-resident landowners, Sydney shipping agent and merchant, William Dawes. Dawes sold it on 2 January 1833 to Francis Mowatt, a civil servant who had been appointed to the NSW Customs House as a landing, water and tide surveyor in 1828 and who left the service in April 1870. Mowatt lived at Yarralumla only intermittently, coming there with his wife Sophia and their four children for three months at Christmas time to escape the heat of Sydney.

By 1912, the eastern block was still known as 'Klesendorlffes', although Robert Klesendorlffe had occupied it for only a few years before becoming bankrupt. This block extended well south of Red Hill towards modern Hughes and its western boundary ended about where Hopetoun Circuit is today. The western block included modern Deakin, Weston Park, and Yarra Glen down to the current Woden, and was owned by Fredrick Campbell. Klesendorlffe's block had passed through several hands over the years before coming under the ownership of the Campbell family. All the early settlement and intensive farming both seem to have taken place in the more fertile land in the northern part of both blocks near the Molonglo and other watercourses. The paddocks on the higher, drier land, on which Deakin was later built, were used for grazing, timber-getting and some quarrying. Both blocks were resumed by the Commonwealth in 1912.²

² Coulthard-Clark, CD (ed) 1988, *Gables, Ghosts and Governors-General*, Sydney, Allen and Unwin in association with the Canberra and District Historical Society; Wilson, G (2001) *Murray of Yarralumla*, Tabletop Press; Blair S and Coulthard-Clark, C (1988) 'They made it, Terence Murray, Gibbes and Campbells', chapter in C. D. Coulthard-Clark (ed), *Gables, Ghosts and Governors-General*.

By 1918 the construction of Canberra was well under way. A narrow-gauge light rail line ran from behind the land now occupied by the Deakin shops to all the main centres of Canberra, terminating at the main railway line at Kingston. Its train carried white clay excavated from the area of the Deakin Anticline, a geological site behind the Deakin shops, to the Yarralumla brickworks. It then took finished bricks, tiles and pipes along Adelaide Avenue, around State Circle, and on to building sites at the Hotel Canberra and Old Parliament House. On its return it would bring coal from the Kingston rail terminal to fire the brickworks. The light rail was closed and dismantled in 1927 when the initial construction phase ended.³

FROM BUSH AND PADDOCKS TO A THRIVING SUBURB AND COMMUNITY

Naming Deakin

In 1928, the Canberra National Memorials Committee determined that the streets and suburbs of the national capital should reflect Australia's national identity (as it was conceived at that time). It determined that 'Every name that has been used commemorates a name famous in the annals of Australia, exploration, navigation, pioneering, colonisation, administration, politics, science and letters.' Most of the streets in Deakin are named for governors and governors-general. The suburb of Deakin was named after Alfred Deakin (1856-1919), the second Prime Minister of Australia, a leader of the movement for Australian Federation. He served as Prime Minister for three terms (1903-04, 1905-08 and 1909-10). Born and educated in Melbourne, he studied law at Melbourne University and was admitted to the Bar in 1877. Elected to the Victorian Parliament in 1879 he held several important portfolios, introducing socially progressive legislation inspired by his concern for the welfare of the underprivileged.

From 1887-1900 Deakin became increasingly involved in the movement for federation. He was influential in the drafting of the Australian Federal Constitution and, following the first federal election in March 1901, served as leader of the House of Representatives as well as Attorney General. The National Archives of Australia acknowledges the longevity of his influence: 'Often referred to as 'the constructor', his work in building soundly on the nation's constitutional foundations is evident over 100 years later.'⁴

Deakin's determination to enshrine his vision of modern Australia as a continent reserved for Anglo-Saxons only, helped the campaign to exclude Indigenous Australians from the community of the nation in the Constitution (section 51(26)), and the passing of the racially discriminatory Immigration Restriction Act 1901. His views on race were widely held by many white Australians, Convention delegates and most of his parliamentary colleagues. His standing, determination and debating skills influenced Australia's immigration policies and facilitated federal and state powers to restrict the human rights of Indigenous Australians for most of the 20th century. Particularly damaging was the removal of mixed-race children,

³ Canberra Railway Museum, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wjcoCV8lOck>

⁴ Canberra National Memorials Committee (1928) *The Naming of Canberra's Streets and Suburbs*, [Naming of Canberras Streets and Suburbs.pdf](#) ; National Archives of Australia - Alfred Deakin, [Australias-prime-ministers/alfred-deakin/before-office](#) ; Deakin University, [Naming our university.](#) ; Brett, J (2019) *The Enigmatic Mr Deakin*, Text Publishing.

which had catastrophic effects on families and kinship groups and resulted in long-term intergenerational trauma. As Australia's first Attorney-General in 1903, Deakin declared that Aboriginals of 'Aboriginal and white blood' were not Aboriginal at all and that 'full bloods' were a dying race. The part of Section 51 (26) in the Constitution that forbade the federal parliament from making laws for Aboriginal people was only removed, with the support of more than 90% of Australian voters, following the 1967 referendum. That referendum also removed Section 127, which had prevented the counting of Aboriginal people in the Census.⁵

Old Deakin

The streets of old Deakin followed the visionary plan for Canberra laid down by Walter Burley Griffin and Marion Mahony Griffin with the radiating avenues of Melbourne and Adelaide Avenues, the concentric circles of National, Dominion and Empire Circuits and the smaller streets that follow the contours of the land. The size of the individual housing blocks reveals the prevailing class consciousness of Canberra's planners with larger lot sizes allocated in old Deakin and smaller lots in central Deakin.

The Lodge

The Lodge was designed by the architecture firm of Oakley and Parkes in 1925 as the official home of the prime ministers of Australia. It was completed in 1927 just in time for its first occupants, Prime Minister Stanley Bruce and his wife Ethel, to move into it on 4 May 1927, the 26th anniversary of the opening of the first Commonwealth Parliament in Melbourne, and a few days before the Duke of York opened the national Parliament in Australia's capital on 9 May 1927. It stood alone in a bare paddock on the fringe of the few buildings that were to become the city of Canberra. A comfortable, fairly-modest two-storied building set on 2.5 hectares of land, its official address is 5 Adelaide Avenue, Deakin. Although it worked well as a residence for successive prime ministers and their families, it was less successful as a formal reception venue for visiting dignitaries. There was no office, as the Prime Minister was expected to work from nearby Parliament House. Gradually its setting was softened by planting trees, shrubs and vegetable gardens. Later, a tennis court, croquet lawns and a swimming pool were added. Unfortunately, during the 1960s, the construction of Adelaide Avenue reduced the grounds by one hectare and created a noise problem that was not successfully solved by the construction of a brick wall in front of the Lodge.⁶

Today the Lodge is protected by a high fence and other security provisions, isolating the Prime Minister from contact with neighbours. This was not the case when Robert Menzies was Prime Minister. His wife chatted over the Lodge's low fence with Betty Brand and other local housewives and Bob and Patty Menzies walked the streets of Deakin each day

⁵ Wright, T (2023) 'Alfred Deakin, architect of modern Australia ... and white supremacist', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 1, September 2023; Chesterman J and Galligan, B (1997) *Citizenship Without Rights*, Cambridge University Press, 120 and 182-85.

⁶ Graeme Barrow, G (2008) *The Prime Minister's Lodge Canberra's Unfinished Business*, Dagara Press, 1-3; https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Lodge,_Australia .

unescorted. Wendy and Llois Johnson, daughters of the Hansard reporter Harold Johnson, who lived opposite The Lodge, regularly cut across the parkland adjoining The Lodge's garden on their way to school. Once, when Wendy was dining with the Menzies family, a young boy, Bill Fisher, came into the dining room where he asked Mr Menzies for information for a school project. Adele Rosalky, daughter of senior public servant Earle Hoffman, who built his family home at 9 Northcote Crescent in 1958, fondly remembers the annual Girl Guides fêtes held in The Lodge's garden.

In the 1950s, the local residents treated the Menzies like normal neighbours. There was little entertainment for the residents of Canberra at that time, including for the various senior public servants and their families who came from Melbourne and other well-developed cities of Australia or overseas. To remedy this, Norm Fisher, the newly appointed Chief Geologist in the Bureau of Mineral Resources who lived in a house on National Circuit surrounded by a very large garden, decided to build a tennis court. Being a country boy and used to doing everything himself, Norm loaded shovel loads of dirt into a wheelbarrow that he pushed countless times across the road dumping its contents, with the consent of Mr Menzies, in the Prime Minister's garden. The Fisher's tennis court proved to be such a success, particularly with young people, that Norm then decided to dig a swimming pool, the first private one in Canberra. As before, he dumped the soil in the garden of the Lodge, raising its height by several feet.⁷

The Canberra Girls Grammar School

Canberra Girls Grammar School was established in June 1926 by Bishop Lewis Bostock Radford, the Cambridge-educated Anglican Bishop of Goulburn. A strong advocate of equal access to religious education, he invited Sisters Hilda and Phillis of the Anglican Community of the Sisters of the Church, to establish a girls' school in the Federal Capital Territory. Its first ten pupils, boys and girls, were initially taught at what was then known as St Gabriel's Anglican Grammar School, located in the old rectory of St John the Baptist, Reid (in present-day Glebe Park). In May 1927, Dr Radford laid the foundation stone of the mock Tudor building, designed by L.H. Rudd and D.E Limberg, which today comprises the school's boarding house on Melbourne Avenue.

As the Great Depression of the 1930s brought hardship to the local rural community, enrolments dropped and the school was threatened with closure. With the assistance of Canon (later Archdeacon) Charles Shearer Robertson, a committee of parents and friends purchased the school, now renamed the Canberra Church of England Girls Grammar School, from the Sisters in 1935.

With the post-war expansion of Canberra's population, the school outgrew its original site. In 1972 its junior school moved to a new campus in Grey Street Deakin to allow for expansion of both the senior and junior schools. In 2004, the again renamed Canberra Girls

⁷ Information from Llois Cutts (née Johnson) to author 29 November 2023 and Adele Rosalky 4 December 2023; Bill Fisher, 'Ellise Fisher (née Summers)', in Robbie Henderson, *Our Mothers*, pp 45-46;); David Brand, 'Around the block on Grey Street, Deakin, for Canberra Modern talk, ACT Heritage Festival, 24 April 2022.

Grammar School opened its Early Learning Centre next to the Junior School and a 1,000-seat concert hall and adjoining Music Centre in the Senior School campus. In 2012 it opened a Science Wing at the Senior School and in 2018 it built a multipurpose lakeside facility in Yarralumla. In 2024, the school has a student population of around 1,300.⁸

The suburban development in Deakin from 1947

The gradual transfer of Commonwealth departments after World War II, particularly following the establishment of the National Capital Development Commission in 1957, drew large numbers of public servants and military personnel to Canberra, who needed housing. The major part of this transfer was completed by 1960. Those who were unmarried mostly lived in government hostels, in varying degrees of discomfort. But the Commonwealth Government provided couples with generous incentives, such as access to government housing (via a waiting list), rental assistance while they were saving to buy a house, and living-away-from-home allowances, play centres, good schools and community facilities along with free shrubs for their gardens once they had built their new home.⁹

Most of the early houses in old Deakin were built privately by senior public servants, many of whom played very significant roles in Australia's post World War II Commonwealth Government and institutions and diplomatic service, academics, scientists, diplomats from other countries and the occasional politician. They formed both a professional and social network, often meeting to play tennis or cricket or to dine or socialise in each other's homes. Some had tennis courts or swimming pools in their back gardens which also provided opportunities for their wives and children to socialise. Children roamed freely in the surrounding paddocks and there were easy interactions between residents and the families of overseas diplomats.

Quite a number of the homes in old Deakin were designed by some of the best Australian architects of that period such as Harry Seidler, Gilford Bell, James Birrell and Sydney Ancher. The local firm of Moir and Sutherland, founded in 1936 by husband and-wife architects Malcolm Moir and Heather Sutherland, won commissions to design five houses in this area of Deakin. An early example of their work was the home of Treasury statistician, Lindsay Brand and his wife Betty at 9 Grey St Deakin, built in 1948. Following Heather Sutherland's death in a car accident on the corner of Hopetoun Circuit and Adelaide Avenue Deakin in 1953, Malcolm Moir entered into partnership with other architects and built four more houses in Deakin.

⁸ Information from Clair Murray, Archivist, Canberra Girls Grammar School, 1 November 2023; Radford College <https://www.radford.act.edu.au/our-college/our-history/who-was-bishop-radford>; *The Canberra Times*, 'Canberra Girls Grammar', by Hope Hewitt, 7 October 1976, .2; ACT Heritage (Decision about Provisional Registration of 13 Canterbury Cres, Deakin); *The Canberra Times*, 'Archdeacon C S Robertson Leaves Canberra', 25 February 1949, 4.

⁹ Canberra Snippets (2015) 'Earlier-days Canberra', by Geri Bryant-Badham, 19 March 2015, <https://www.canberrasnippets.com.au/>.

Sydney architect Harry Seidler designed a house in Deakin for Ivor Bowden in 1951. The most outstanding building in Deakin is a house built by Prague-trained Czech refugee architect Alex Jelinek, whose qualifications were never recognised in Australia. His 'Benjamin House' at 10 Gawler Crescent (locally known as 'The Round House'), commissioned in 1957 by ANU philosopher Bruce Benjamin and his wife Audrey, is considered a significant contribution to experimental modernism in Australia and a Canberra icon. It was named the Australian House of the Year in 1957 and heritage listed in 2003. It was the first and only house he ever built.¹⁰

The Residence of the British High Commissioner, Westminster House

Until 1936, the Governor-General of Australia served as both the chief official intergovernmental representative of the British Government of Australia as well as being the personal official representative of the Crown, acting as Australia's head of state. Following the enactment of the Statute of Westminster in 1931, a separate office of High Commissioner to Australia was established. In the early years the various British High Commissioners rented buildings both as their residences and offices. The British High Commission Chancery was built on Commonwealth Avenue in 1952, the same year as the British High Commissioner's residence, Westminster House, was built at 76 Empire Circuit, Deakin. The chancery and the residence cost a quarter of a million pounds - an enormous amount in those days. Today, the British High Commissioner's residence seems a relatively modest building compared with some of the more lavish diplomatic residences in Canberra, but at the time it was built Britain's economy was still burdened with the cost of post-war reconstruction.

The Italian Embassy Residence and Chancery

The Italian Embassy Residence was opened at 12 Grey Street Deakin in 1967 after the site opposite The Lodge was assigned to the Italian Government in 1958. In 1961 a contract for construction was signed and later foundations were laid but for various reasons the project languished. In 1966 a contract for the completion of the Residence was awarded to Canberra company Flamia Construction Company. The Chancery was built some years later.

¹⁰ Freeman, P (2021) *Thoroughly Modern. The life and times of Moir and Sutherland Architects*, Uro Publications, Melbourne, p 215. Other Moir and Sutherland designed buildings were for: Dawn and Douglas Waterhouse, 60 National Circuit 1948 (p.216); Mrs H. Smith, 16 Gawler Cres 1948, (p. 257- 58); Mr and Mrs B Warwick-Smith 1954, 14 Melbourne Ave (and W. H. King, 2 Carrington St 1960 (p. 286). Harry Seidler house for Ivor Bowden 1951, 11 Northcote St, (pp. 240-41); Lindsay Brand, 9 Grey St Deakin (p.239, pp. 240-41); David Brand, 'Around the block on Grey Street, Deakin, for Canberra Modern talk, ACT Heritage Festival, 24 April 2022; Roger Benjamin and Gillian Forwood, Obituary of Alex Jelinek, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 2 March 2007; Alex Jelinek, *Australian Dictionary of Biography* online; Benjamin, R (2023) *Growing up Modern, Canberra's Round House*, Halstead Press; <https://www.environment.act.gov.au/heritage/heritage-register/register-by-place>.

The Residence was designed by the chief architect of the Ministry of Works in Rome, Dr Cesare Valle, in collaboration with Italian-born architect Dr Enrico Taglietti AO (1926-2019) who had settled in Canberra by this time. It pays homage to the plan of the Roman Domus with its internal spaces distributed around a central open courtyard that, until 1980, had at its centre a pool supplying water to the Residence and cooling its spaces. The formal rooms are lit by large glass panels which blur the limits between the inside and outside spaces allowing contact with nature. The floors are in fine Carrara marble with the thresholds in pink Verona marble, and ‘therefore, on entering the Embassy, one is not only on Italian territory, but one actually walks on its ancient soil’.

When the Residence was opened in September 1967 during the official visit of the President of the Italian Republic Giuseppe Saragat and the Minister for Foreign Affairs Amintore Fanfani, it became Canberra’s largest Residence. Dr Majoli was its new Ambassador. A series of magnificent artworks are displayed in the Residence.¹¹

Central Deakin

The St Luke’s Church

The foundation stone of St Luke’s Anglican Church in Newdegate Street, Deakin was laid by Lady Slim, the wife of the then Governor-General Sir William Slim, on 24 April 1959. It was originally intended to be the hall of a more permanent place of worship that was never built. When St Luke’s was dedicated on 18 October 1959 it received the first organ ever built for the Canberra district, and the only example in Australia of an organ built by the Manchester firm of Kirkland and Jardine. It was lent to St Luke’s by the Anglican Church of St John the Baptist, Reid, where it was first installed as a gift from the Campbell family of Duntroon in 1865. When St Luke’s church was closed in 2016, the organ was installed in the gallery of the ballroom of Abercrombie House, Bathurst. A development application was lodged in 2018 to build eight two-storied semi-detached townhouses on the site. Another application in 2019 by Early Education Services to build a childcare centre for 120 children and two townhouses for church workers on an island site between Newdegate Street and Macartney Crescent was opposed by the Deakin Residents’ Association in the ACT Civil and Administrative Tribunal but approved by ACT Planning on 12 September 2023.¹²

¹¹ Wikipedia, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Enrico_Taglietti; Caption to photo of the embassy under construction held by the National Archives of Australia; *Canberra Times*, 29 September 1965, p. 3, 29 March 1966, p.3 and 1 February 1967, p. 14; information supplied by Gabriella Quadraccia, the Residence tour guide and Valentina Biguzzi, Education and Cultural Attaché, 14 March 2014. Information supplied by the Italian Embassy in 2024 in English and Italian detailing the construction chronology and art works is at appendix 4.

¹² *The Canberra Times*, 24 April 2018, Katie Burgess ‘Anglican Church to redevelop St Luke’s Church Deakin’, (photo of laying of foundation stone); Organ Historical Trust of Australia, <https://ohta.org.au/organs/organs/CanberraStLukes.html>; *City News*, 7 February 2012 ‘Residents battle church on early learning centre parking’ by Lilly Pass (good photo of church); *The Canberra Times*, 24 November 2023; *The Sector*, 2023, ‘Early Childhood Education Services’ by Freya Lucas 24 November 2023.

The Deakin Preschool

The Deakin Preschool on Hopetoun Circuit was officially opened by the Minister for the Interior, Mr Gordon Freeth, on 12 May 1959. It was built by the Department of the Interior following a public meeting of Deakin residents in September 1955 who decided they would raise 500 pounds to furnish the school if the Department would build it. In 1967 the Deakin Mothers' Club complained that as residents in the Woden Valley had not been as proactive in getting preschools established in their suburbs, Deakin children on the Preschool's 100-long waiting list were being deprived of places in their own Preschool. They pointed out that children from Garran, whose parents had made no financial contribution to the Preschool, outnumbered Deakin children by two to one and that this was the consequence of the Department prioritising the entry of four-year-olds and preventing children from transferring from one preschool to another in their area when vacancies occurred.¹³

The La Trobe Park

It is fitting that the small community park, between Stonehaven Circuit and Gawler Crescent, which developed progressively from the late 1950's, was named after Charles Joseph La Trobe (1801-75). From 1839 he had served as Superintendent of the Port Phillip District (Melbourne), and from 1851 as Lieutenant-Governor of Victoria following its separation from New South Wales and establishment as a colony. He was a keen amateur botanist and had collected botanical specimens in Switzerland, North America, Mexico and the West Indies and continued his collection after arriving in Australia. He designed the garden of his prefabricated cottage in Jolimont (East Melbourne), grew imported plants, and oversaw the establishment of the Royal Botanical Gardens, probably his most valuable legacy.

As with Alfred Deakin, La Trobe's legacy is mixed. An evangelical, he saw his mission as civilizing the colonists of Victoria. He was a strong supporter of religious, cultural and educational institutions in Victoria. His benevolence did not extend to Indigenous Australians. As Superintendent in 1842 he funded the Native Police Corps, a brutal and destructive force of Aboriginal police, under the command of white officers, who patrolled vast areas along the colonial frontier. The Corps conducted indiscriminate raids and punitive expeditions against Aboriginal people, resulting in the disintegration and dispossession of Indigenous Australians for generations. He resigned his position as Lieutenant-Governor in 1852, suffering from self-doubt and public criticism of his inexperience as an administrator, and returned to England in 1854. However, La Trobe did much to transform Melbourne from a rough colonial outpost to the garden city it is today.

A key objective of the Deakin Residents' Association is to enhance the residential, suburban, social and environmental qualities of Deakin in a way that is consistent with garden city planning principles. It is dedicated to the preservation of Deakin's precious green spaces and streetscapes. La Trobe Park is largely planted with eucalypts and open grassland. With its

¹³ Caption of photograph by R. Reves of the Deakin preschool's official opening held by the National Archives of Australia; *The Canberra Times* 21 September 1955, p.2, 16 June 1967 p.3.

picnic area and children's play equipment, it is highly valued by the Deakin community. It is used for sport and recreational activities by groups such as Canberra Girls Grammar School, the Deakin Preschool and the local scout group as well as by local residents and families.¹⁴

The Scout Hall

The 2nd Canberra Scout Group's first meeting was held on 17 December 1925 at Duntroon. In 1930 the Governor-General, Lord Stonehaven, opened the group's new hall on the corner of National Circuit and Blackall Street, Riverside (now Barton). The following year, the Group was visited by the scouting movement's founder, Robert Baden-Powell (1857-1941). During the 1950s, the Deakin scouts and their parents decided to raise funds to build their own hall in La Trobe Park. They assiduously collected empty beer bottles and used car batteries that they sold to traders to raise the necessary funds. The 1st Deakin Group's hall was officially opened on 23 November 1963 by Governor-General Lord De L'Isle. The attending dignitaries wore black armbands as the previous day the United States President, John F. Kennedy, had been assassinated. Some time later Naval Commodore and artist Dacre H. Smyth AO (1923-2008) presented the group with a carved walking stick given to Baden-Powell by scouts from the Solomon Islands, where it was made. In 1978 the Deakin and Yarralumla scout groups united as the La Trobe Park Scout Group, with the La Trobe Park Scout Hall as their base. In 2003 the group was renamed Air Scouts Canberra.¹⁵

The shops

A small creek flowed into a pond about 20 metres long behind what is now the area between the Doubleshot Cafe and the petrol station. This pond provided endless fun to little Bill Andrews, who came to Canberra in 1958 when his father, an engineer and town planner, was appointed Associate Commissioner of the National Capital Development Commission. Bill and his friend Peter Murphy built a canoe out of a sheet of corrugated iron and lots of tar to plug up the holes. They dragged it down to the creek and spent many happy hours paddling it in the pond's clean water and gathering tadpoles in spring, until the creek was replaced by a large pipe and the shopping centre was constructed in 1963 to meet the everyday needs of Deakin's growing population. The shopping centre's first supermarket was run by J.B. Young's, a firm that had relocated from Queanbeyan to Canberra in 1920. The Deakin store's manager ordered in anything the customer asked for. Because of

¹⁴ Hawthorn Rotary Club, <https://hawthornrotary.org.au/Stories/la-trobe-s-jolimont> ; Monument Australia, <https://monumentaustralia.org.au/themes/people/government---colonial/display/95719-charles-joseph-la-trobehttps> ; Wikipedia, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charles_La_Trobe ; The C J La Trobe Society, <https://www.latrobesociety.org.au/la-trobe-the-botanist> ; Marr, D (2023) *Killing for Country*, Black Ink, 172 ff; ACT Planning & Land Authority, Deakin Neighbourhood Plan. February 2003, 13; Deakin Residents' Association, <https://deakinresidents.asn.au/who-is-deakin-residents-association> ; Woodcraft Guild, <https://www.woodcraftguild.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/ACT-STREET-TREES.pdf>

¹⁵ Air Scouts Australia, <https://www.airscouts.com.au/about> ; Information from Bill Andrews, 7 November 2023, Email, Keith Jobson to author 11 November 2023; *The Canberra Times*, Ian Warden, 11 November 2013.

the problem with flies in this still partially rural area, its delicatessen section was located at the rear of the shop, enclosed in a cage-like structure with a sliding door through which tasty products were quickly served. Later, the supermarket was taken over by the Shop-Rite chain. In June 1983 the building was largely destroyed and the adjacent pharmacy, newsagency and butcher's shops were damaged by a fire caused by an arsonist who also targeted three other Canberra supermarkets on the same evening. The distraught owner of the Deakin Shop-Rite, Chris Panagakis, and his staff were consoled the morning after the fire by the Greek Ambassador, Mr Alexander Vayenas. A pharmacy, medical centre, dental practice, ladies' hairdresser, bakery, take-away food outlets, cafes and restaurants were later added to the shopping centre.¹⁶

The Fuller Street community

Fuller Street, located in the furthest north-west, and last, area of central Deakin to be developed for residential housing, is a typical and remarkably well documented, example of Deakin's suburban family streets. Its development was gazetted on 30 May 1963 and named after Sir George Warburton Fuller (1861-1940), a member of the first Commonwealth Parliament from 1901-13 and Minister for Home Affairs in Alfred Deakin's government from 1909-10. Knighted in 1891, he served as NSW Agent-General in London from 1928 to 1931.

All but two houses in the street were constructed by builders without the involvement of architects. Its first occupants, like the pioneer families who settled in old Deakin in the 1950s, developed a strong sense of community which persists today. The Jennings family was one of the first. Medical practitioner John Jennings and his wife Mimi bought their almost completed house at number 10 from its builder and moved in in late December 1964. They immediately went to the Yarralumla Nursery to get their three free trees and six shrubs for their bare garden and soon the street was filled with children as other young families moved in.

Helen Jennings described the fun the children shared. They had bonfires on the last unoccupied block on 'cracker night' each year and 'the boys and girls skateboarded' and roller skated down Fuller Street. They saved up their pocket money and bought lollies and chips for parties they held in the completed but unsold houses in the street, as they discovered that the builders left the keys in their meter boxes for prospective buyers to inspect them. They rode horses across the paddocks from Weston before the Mint and major roads were constructed. They took the bus together from Strickland Crescent to Forrest Primary School each day. A preschool and mothercraft centre on Strickland Crescent was built in 1963 and in 2013 the Fuller Street community chose to name the small park next to the pre-school after the poet Rosemary Dobson as part of the ACT Centenary celebrations. She had lived with her family at 61 Stonehaven Crescent, Deakin from 1971 and died in a Canberra nursing home in 2012.¹⁷

¹⁶ Bill Andrews, email to author 2 October 2023; Shirley Storey, recollections of Deakin Shops (c 2008); *The Canberra Times*, 11 June 1983.

¹⁷ *Fuller St Deakin. Celebrating over half a century* (2022), 5; Rosemary Dobson, Wikipedia, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rosemary_Dobson; Encyclopedia. Com,

The Embassy Motel

The Embassy Motel, with its distinctive octagonal reception block on the corner of Hopetoun Circuit and Adelaide Avenue, Deakin, was built in the early 1960s. A four-star 150-bed motel in the middle tariff range, it was conveniently located for visiting tourists. Its restaurant and conference facilities were also valued by Deakin residents. Its two conference and meeting rooms, accommodating up to 120 attendees, were used by a wide range of clubs across the inner south and for weddings and other community events, as well as by members of Federal Parliament in sitting times. Although refurbished in 2002 and still economically viable, it was demolished in July 2009. The Deakin Residents' Association campaigned actively over plans for a high-rise residential development on the site and a community petition was lodged in the Legislative Assembly. The Embassy Motel was replaced by the luxury Ambassador Apartments.¹⁸

The Croatia Soccer Club

Founded in 1958 by Croatian immigrants to foster sport and provide a place where the Croatian community of Canberra and Queanbeyan could socialise, the club was officially opened in the Deakin shopping precinct on 11 November 1969. The club rooms also housed the Croatian Women's Association, which aimed to preserve Croatian cultural and social traditions such as folk songs, dancing and costumes, for future generations.¹⁹

The Bridge Club

Bridge has been important in connecting the women of Canberra, who so often had to leave their family and friends when their husbands were transferred here. The Club was established in March 1954 with Olive Lett as its president. It met in various locations around Canberra until 1970, when its membership had grown so much that Olive decided it needed its own venue. She established a building fund in 1970, and on 16 June 1974 the first stage of the club's building had opened in Duff Place. Its 484 members now had access to a kitchen, toilets and a room large enough to fit 36 tables. The second stage of development, completed in 1981, doubled the size of the venue, making it the largest permanent bridge club in Australia. In 1988 the ACT and Canberra Bridge Clubs amalgamated under the name 'The Canberra Bridge Club'.²⁰

The Solander Gallery

In 1986, former journalist and public relations consultant for the NSW Sculpture Gallery, Joy Warren, relocated her Solander Gallery to the corner of Grey St and Hopetoun Circuit. Then

<https://www.encyclopedia.com/arts/culture-magazines/dobson-rosemary-de-brissac>;
Information from Angelo Zorbas and Martin Jennings, 2 10 2023.

¹⁸ [Parliament ACT](#) , 7 March 2005; ABC News Online, 6 July 2009 (photo of demolition).

¹⁹ Croatia Soccer Club: <https://croatiadeakinsoccerclub.com.au/>

²⁰ Canberra Bridge Club, <https://canberrabridgeclub.com.au/past-and-present/history-of-bridge-in-the-act> .

one of Canberra's two commercial art galleries, the building was architect designed and purpose-built. It specialised in contemporary Australian paintings, sculpture, prints and drawings. The Solander Gallery closed on this site in 1997 and was re-located to Yarralumla. Later it reopened as the Margaret Dimoff Gallery. Margaret, a South Coast sculptor, had graduated from the ANU School of Art in ceramics in 1983 and in sculpture in 1992.²¹

The Grange

Planning for The Grange retirement village, located behind the Deakin shops, began in 1979. Designed by architects Lawrence Neild and Partners and project managed by the Hindmarsh Group, it aimed to blend in with the domestic architecture of the area and appeal to older people coming from larger, older-style houses, by creating a village atmosphere and a sense of spaciousness by using traditional decorative architectural features and landscaping with exotic plants. The completed first stage of the village was opened by the ACT Minister for Housing and Community Service, Bernard Collaery, on 3 August 1990. It started with 24 self-care residential units and a central gathering building, Murray House, with an open fire and a room for visiting professionals. It was further expanded in 1995.²²

West Deakin

The medical centers, offices and diplomatic premises

West Deakin is bordered by Adelaide Avenue in the south, Kent Street in the east, Carruthers Street in the north and Yarra Glen in the west. It has a very different character from residential Deakin, combining commercial, community, health, educational and historical premises for a wider population. The headquarters of a number of national organisations, such as the National Council of Women and the Australian Local Government Association, are located there.

The embassies and high commissions of sixteen countries are currently to be found in its embassy precinct: some reflect the traditional construction and ornamentation styles of their traditional architectures. The Afghan embassy was designed by its first ambassador, Mahmoud Saikal, who came to Australia as a refugee in 1982 and qualified as an architect before becoming a diplomat.

John James Hospital was established in 1970 and named after one of its founders, Dr John James. A medical practitioner and surgeon, he was one of the first superintendents at Canberra Hospital. A medical centre was added to the John James Hospital in 1978, and in 2006 it became part of the Calvary group founded by the Sisters of the Little Company of Mary.²³

²¹ *Australian Financial Review*, 29 April 2004, by Ebony Barrett; *The Age*, 14 November 2017; *The Canberra Times*, 18 April 2018; *Riotact*, 3 December 2022.

²² *The Canberra Times*, 12 October 1989, 31 August 1990 and 2 July 1995.

²³ The countries represented in West Deakin are: Afghanistan, Bhutan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Cyprus, Ethiopia, Fiji, Hungary, Italy,

The Royal Australian Mint

The Royal Australian Mint was built as the sole producer of all Australia's new decimal currency coinage. It is a Commonwealth Government entity within the portfolio of the Treasury. Planning for the Mint began in 1959, when it was proposed to move the Melbourne branch to Canberra. It was designed by the Chief Designing Architect in the Commonwealth Department of Works, Richard Ure. Located on a large block of land in Denison Street, it was opened by the Duke of Edinburgh on 22 February 1965, coinciding with the introduction of decimal currency on 14 February 1966.

The Mint comprises two buildings. The administration building, constructed by Civil and Civic, houses the engravers, a laboratory and a vibration-free basement where coinage is measured to ensure correct size and weight. The process building, completed by E. S. Clementson Pty Ltd, is where the coins are manufactured. Notes are produced in Melbourne by Note Printing Australia. During 1984-86, renovations were carried out to support the increasing demand for collector coins and to improve visitor facilities.

Since its opening, the Mint has produced over fifteen billion coins and has the capacity to produce two million coins each day. It also produces coins for several Asian and South Pacific nations as well as medals for military and civilian honours and tokens for commercial organisations such as casinos and car washes. The Mint was again refurbished in 2009. It is listed on the Commonwealth Heritage List.²⁴

The Alfred Deakin High School

In October 1964 the National Capital Development Commission contracted A. V. Jennings Industries to construct the first stage of Deakin High School. It was designed to accommodate 700 students and comprised four buildings housing 16 classrooms, four science laboratories, arts and craft rooms, music rooms, a library, toilets, a lunch shelter, a kitchen and change and shower rooms. The seventh Government high school in Canberra, it opened on 2 February 1966 with Neil Madson, a former deputy headmaster of Canberra High School, as its headmaster. In 1989 it amalgamated with Woden Valley High School in Mawson on the Deakin campus and was renamed Alfred Deakin High. It had been refurbished and modern kitchens, information technology and photography areas were added. During 1989, the school gymnasium was completed and later special purpose rooms for dance and drama, computing, multi-media and problem solving in mathematics were added. In early 1999 major refurbishments were completed in the science area.²⁵

Mauritius, Portugal, Solomon Islands, Timor-Leste and Tonga.(2023) <https://protocol.dfat.gov.au/Public/MissionsInAustralia> ; Jordens, A-M (2012) *Hope, Refugees and their Supporters in Australia since 1947*, Halstead Press, 68-69; Calvary John James Hospital, <https://www.calvarycare.org.au/john-james-private-hospital-canberra/> ; *The Canberra Times*, 21 November 1978, 7.

²⁴ Royal Australian Mint, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Royal_Australian_Mint .

²⁵ *The Canberra Times*, 3 October 1964, 22, 29 January 1966, 3, 3 February 1966, 8, 26 July 1966.

The Woden School

The history of The Woden School illustrates the ongoing debate about the role of special schools for children with learning difficulties or their integration into mainstream schools. In 1966 the Department of the Interior surveyed the educational needs of children in the ACT with physical or intellectual disabilities. In late 1967 it announced the provision of three specially designed classrooms at Narrabundah Primary School, remedial or opportunity classes at Ainslie Primary, the addition of a new classroom to Koomarri School and the building of a completely new school in the Woden Valley 'for children whose mental handicap is more severe than those in opportunity classes'. There were also two opportunity classes at Ainslie School for 'hard of hearing' children and the needs of partially sighted children were being investigated.²⁶

The Woden Special School was opened on 23 July 1974 by the Minister for Education, Kim Beazley (snr). In April that year it had enrolled its first students, 10 primary school students and 53 at the secondary level. Its first headmaster, Clive Monty, had previously established a Canberra branch of L'Arche, an international organisation that created communities of people with and without intellectual disabilities to enable people with intellectual disability to live with independence and choice in their daily life. A wide range of Canberra service clubs donated funds for a small bus to transport the children to school and the Department of Social Services provided six Australian universities with funding to establish courses to train special education teachers.²⁷

The Woden School catered for students of various levels of competence. It aimed to normalise their education as much as possible and maintained close contact with their parents, involving them in planning their children's programs. It conducted classes in practical cooking, literacy and numeracy and some students were integrated into Phillip College, Curtin Primary School and the adjacent Alfred Deakin High School, accompanied by a teacher and a teachers' aid. Several of the school's pupils won Duke of Edinburgh Awards and a highlight for students was the visit of the then Prince Charles, the Prince of Wales, and his wife Princess Diana in 1983.²⁸

The Beaver Galleries

In 1975, seven years before the National Gallery and other Canberra art institutions were established, the Beaver Galleries joined Canberra's rapidly expanding commercial art sector. Ron and Betty Beaver's gallery first opened in Investigator Street, Red Hill and moved to its present location in West Deakin in 1984. Their children, Martin and Suzie, took over its management. In its earlier location its emphasis had been on traditional craft media such as

²⁶ *The Canberra Times*, 14 October 1967, 2.

²⁷ *The Canberra Times*, 24 July 1974, 3.

²⁸ Information from Noni Edwards, headmistress of The Woden School 1979-94; *The Canberra Times*, 20 August 1981, 3.

ceramics, glass, wood and precious metalwork; this was supplemented in its new location to include printmaking, painting and sculpture.²⁹

The swimming pools

The first swimming pool in Deakin was the indoor 25-metre pool built in Macgregor Street by famous Australian swimming coach Frank (Sep) Prosser in 1966. He intended it to be used by qualified instructors to train more advanced swimmers for competition and it included a gymnasium and sauna. Its first manager was former Olympic champion swimmer and world record holder John Konrads. Located in the Deakin Health Spa and later taken over by a gymnasium, the pool closed in 2003.

On 15 November 1980, the Federal Minister for Home Affairs and the Environment, Bob Ellicott, opened a 50-metre, public open-air Deakin Olympic pool, at what became the Oasis Leisure Centre. In 1987 it was redeveloped by architect Bryan Dowling and leased to Ron Watkins, who covered and heated the pool and added a gymnasium and indoor sports complex. Several large swimming clubs, including the Burley Griffin Swimming Club, which had relocated from the Deakin Health Spa, used the pool. It was also used for school carnivals. In 2005 average daily attendance at the pool was 400, with 750 children attending for learn to swim classes each week. It was used regularly by 15 schools and 12 aged groups.

Subsequently leased, then sold to Cypcill Pty Ltd, by 2005 the pool was in poor condition and in urgent need of refurbishment. It closed in 2008. Despite representations from various community organisations, including the Deakin Residents' Association, the pool was replaced by Cecil and Kings Swim Program with a 25-metre pool and is now operating as King swim Deakin.³⁰

The Deakin Residents' Association

Deakin has an active resident community. Over the years, residents' groups have been formed in response to pressing local issues and concerns over plans for inappropriate developments in Deakin. There were widespread local consultations in 2002 on a neighborhood plan, issued in February 2003, which although now overtaken, helped give the community common purpose in planning for Deakin's future. The Deakin Residents' Association Inc (DRA) became incorporated in 2012.

The DRA has a large membership and advocates for Deakin as a garden suburb. Environmental issues have been a key focus, including protection of Deakin's streetscapes,

²⁹ *The Canberra Times*, 'Beaver Galleries in Canberra turn 40', by Sasha Grishin, 15 December 2015.

³⁰ *The Canberra Times* 20 December 1966, 13 November 1980 and 30 June 1997; ACT Legislative Assembly, Draft Variation to the Territory Plan No. 205 Deakin Block 11 Section 68 (Oasis Leisure Centre) Proposed Office Use, April 2005; Burley Griffin Swimming Club, [swimming club history](#)

green spaces and parklands. On behalf of residents, the DRA has contested many major developments, including through appearances at the ACT Civil and Administrative Tribunal (ACAT). It regularly holds public meetings, arranges community gatherings and working groups such as around the annual Floriade festival, and is currently pursuing a Deakin heritage project. More information is available on the DRA website at <https://deakinresidents.asn.au/>

The Registered heritage sites in Deakin

There are currently several registered heritage sites in Deakin, including some listed houses, and more information about these sites can be found on <https://www.environment.act.gov.au/heritage/heritage-register>. There are currently no registered Aboriginal heritage sites in Deakin but these may be identified in future stages of the heritage project.

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18 January 2024

Appendix 1: Photo acknowledgements and additional photos

Appendix 2: Background History of Street Names in Deakin

Appendix 3: List of registered Deakin heritage sites

Appendix 4: Information provided by the Italian Embassy

Note: *This essay has been produced by Historian Ann-Mari Jordens as a part of the Deakin Heritage Project undertaken by the Deakin Residents' Association Inc with a generous Heritage Grant from the ACT Government. For any corrections or to raise any issues please contact secretary@deakinresidents.asn.au*