

## Stories of Westlake

**Philomena Kilpatrick daughter in law of Betty nee Knight of 1 Westlake.** “When better housing was provided for tradesmen at Westlake, Alfred [Knight] was given a fine B type cottage valued at 225 pounds...at No 1 Perth Avenue for a weekly rent of fourteen shillings and four pence (\$1.40). So in 1924 Alf, Peggy and Betsy came to join him as a family. The proposed road – Perth Avenue was moved over so perhaps his address should have been 1 Empire Circuit.”

**Rhona Van Ewyk (nee Bourke) 1 Westlake** “We came back [from Uriarra] to Canberra to live about 1941 – at Westlake – soon after war began. My father was called into the army in 1942 and served in New Guinea for two years. My older brothers Kevin and Keith were also called up.”

**Denny Frei and Kay Keeley (Walters sisters) 4 Westlake** “We shifted to 4 Westlake in 1943 after we had come from Bombala. Our father’s occupation was linesman for the PMG. Our first encounter with Westlake was when our neighbour Iris Hunt (who had a bad speech impediment) rushed into our home trying to tell us something. Dad thought she was saying *Fire! Fire!* And rushed out with a hose only to discover that she was saying Mr Milliner the travelling grocer was selling his goods.”

**Kathy Dunn - grandparents lived at 4 Westlake.** “My mother Molly was born into the McKissock family. She had four brothers Archie, John, Jim and Andy – and one sister, Bell. My mother often talked of her days of growing up in Westlake. Her mother died in 1925 (aged forty) when my mother was only nine years old so her sister Bell became the family *Mum*.”

**Lynette Halliday (nee McKissock) 5 Westlake.** “No 24 was the home of Tony & Erminia Ghiradello and their boys Guido and Walter who played AFL for Manuka. They made their own wine from grapes grown over the back verandah, which they crushed in a great oak cask in the back shed. Tony made my mother’s first ironing board out of timber. He was a good carpenter. The family were great gardeners and had a lovely orchard which included apricot and prune trees. They also kept a cow and my daily chore was to call in the afternoon to collect our fresh milk. I recall my mother also making butter at this time. Mrs Ghiradello and my mother obtained casual work from the American Embassy nearby. I had a blackboard of slate, which came from the original embassy construction. My Uncle Andy who lived with my grandfather Jock McKissock at No 4 being a bricklayer on the site.”

**Yvonne Arnell (nee Gibbs) 8 Westlake** “I still hold memories of Westlake. Exploring the surrounding bush. I often found injured birds – we always seemed to be nursing magpies or kookaburras with broken wings... Mrs Kelly lived at No 10 with her husband Bill, a bricklayer. Aunty Kell provided board for Sandy Lands and Stan who were both brickies as far as I can recall. Aunty Kell made the most scrumptious pastries and we would be pleased to do any odd-jobs and receive lollies for payment...”

**Charlie Law** “A very amusing incident happened when Spencer McDonald [No 7] told his family he wanted his wife to place a warm bottle over the boil on his cheek. The word travelled like wildfire among us kids and in no time we were lining the back fence of his home to witness the event. I don’t think Spencer really meant what he said, it was all talk, but when he saw us waiting expectantly he had to go through with it to save face. So he played us up with fake bravado and told us how bad it would hurt. About 11 am Mrs Mac came out with a hot bottle wrapped in a towel. After some heckling from the onlookers Spencer had the bottle placed over the boil. Unfortunately for him the boil was not ready to pop and his cheek disappeared into the bottle. He ran around the yard screaming and crying out for someone to break the bottle, but he was hard to catch. Mrs Mac was in hot pursuit with axe in hand but couldn’t catch him. We were engulfed with laughter, but eventually a couple of the older boys caught him and the bottle was broken. We didn’t see Spencer for a few days.”

**Angela Ivanovici 7 Westlake.** [Spencer McDonald let the house and lived in a shed at the back of the house] “Life in Canberra began at the immigrant camp, located on the southern side of Capital Hill (called Capital Hill Hostel). The family moved to 7 Westlake in March 1953...The house was comfortable, with standard two bedrooms, a living room, kitchen-dining, bathroom and broad verandah right along the back. My room faced west and I recall moonlit shadows from a cherry tree occasionally turning into snakes during the night – much to the concern of my parents as I woke them up in alarm...”

**Mervyn Laybutt 11 Westlake.** “Father, Charles [Laybutt] worked as a plumber on the building of Hotel Canberra and possibly the original Parliament House. Also living with them [at 11 Westlake] was Vera’s [Mother] youngest sister May Ida Green who attended Telopea Park School in 1925. We went by bus and Canberra at the time was nearly all bush. Children used to sing on the bus, *California Here I Come* and other popular songs of the day. Her boyfriend was Joey McFarland and he was nine and lived next door with his sister Mary McFarland. They used to play *Jacks* with sheep knuckle bones. When war broke out Joey joined the RAAF – became a pilot and was awarded the DFC. He was shot down and killed...”

**Alan Gane 12 Westlake**

“I was first approached about becoming a member of West City [from Westlake & other areas] Football Team in 1946/47. As many men were discharged from the military forces in 1945/46 and there were other young men of appropriate age there were plenty keen to organize and compete in local competition. The Canberra League competition comprised first and reserve grades. Teams were entered from West City, North City, Causeway, Rovers, Souths and Eastlake Hostel...”

**Harold Gane 29 & 12 Westlake** “Mum [Alma Gane] was quite friendly with June and Jimmy McKissock and used to visit them at No 5. One day there was shouting from the Reynolds next door at No 6. Mrs Reynolds was being electrocuted. She was stuck on the ironing cord. Mum rushed in to help her and somehow managed to get her off... Following my birth [1939] my mother brought me home to 29 Westlake... The whole yard of 29 was well fenced with a high fence at the side and back and a high well trimmed pine hedge at the front. The hedge was a great place to hide. I could push myself into it and climb up on to a branch and sit there and no one would know I was there.”

**Lesley Clarke (nee Brinkman) 14 & 17 Westlake.** “In 1926 my parents were allotted one of the little houses in Westlake - No 14 and later moved to No 17. My earliest memories were of my neighbours. Pop Hawke [18] who lived on one side of us and the Clowry family on the other...”

**Pat Boyle (nee Clowry) 16 Westlake** Frank (Francis Joseph) Clowry born in 1876 came to Canberra to work in 1923 and lived in one of the Tradesmen’s Camps which was approximately where the French Embassy now stands. He was a carpenter by trade having done his apprenticeship in the Braidwood area as a young man in the 1890s. Before coming to Canberra the Clowry family lived at Reidsdale outside Braidwood and Mrs Clowry ran the post office there including the district telephone exchange as well as looking after the family. Until 1924 when he was allocated a house (No 16 Westlake) Frank used to ride his bicycle home to Reidsdale each fortnight leaving after work on Friday and returning Sunday evening.

**Iris Julian (nee Woodlands) 16 Westlake** “Remembering back as kids we used to walk from Westlake to Manuka to go to the pictures [Capitol Theatre] on a Saturday afternoon. It would cost sixpence (5c) for a ticket and Mum would give us threepence (3c) to spend. I used to buy a creamy toffee.”

**Sylvia Cleveland (nee Menzies) 16 & 28 Westlake.** Mum and Dad [Olive nee Dawson & Eric Menzies] were married at St Christopher’s church Manuka 18<sup>th</sup> August 1934. Mum originally came from Nagambue Victoria and Dad from Innis Italy. They lived at Charnwood Station Hall, Hillside Farm and Lanyon Station Tharwa before moving to 16 Westlake after the birth of their first son, Neville. After which there were eight other children. One died two hours old... As our family increased we moved from No 16 down to No 28 where there was room to extend on the house. There was a room built on to the back near the kitchen for Neville. After a time the Housing Department put a cubicle at the back which we curtained off and made into four rooms, so the sleeping arrangements were a lot better.”

**Doris Blewitt (nee Smith) 17 Westlake.** “My family moved to Westlake around 1929-1930. There was my Mum and Dad, my brothers Roy, George and younger sister Stella. My youngest brother Laurence (Rookie) came about 1934. He was born at Westlake. Old Dr Mollison came and delivered him. Roy, Stella and myself went to Telopea Park School. We used to walk to and from school and catch the bus if it was raining and we had the penny bus fare. When we got home in the afternoon we had to take our shoes and socks off to save wear and put up with cold feet.”

**Colin Smith 17 Westlake** “Colin aged less than three, told his mother that he wanted to visit his grandparents Smith – then living at the foot of the hill in No 49 Westlake. He stated that he wanted to drive the family car. His mother told him to go off and play. Colin went out to the car – got in – stood on the driving seat – put the car out of gear, let off the handbrake and started off! The gate was not open at the time. This did not daunt young Colin as the movement of the car opened it and fortunately Colin turned the wheel just in time to miss the old gum tree opposite the house before continuing down to his grandparent’s place. Part of this tree stands in the grounds of the Finnish Embassy in Darwin Place. The car came to a standstill outside the Smith’s cottage. Colin’s father did not believe Doris’s [mother] explanation about how the vehicle arrived there!”

**Wendy Allen (mother Todd) 18 Westlake** “The Todd family sailed from England on 19<sup>th</sup> July 1911 and travelled steerage to New Zealand... In New Zealand Robert worked in the Rewanui Mine near Runanga, Greymouth... When the mine closed the family decided to move to Australia and arrived in Sydney on 22<sup>nd</sup> May 1922. In 1924 they made the move to Canberra and moved into a Westlake Cottage [No 18]... The family left for Sydney in 1929 to live in Paddington. The Todds, Brinkmans, Eriksons and Oakleys – all met at Westlake – remained firm friends and kept in contact throughout the years.”

**Hildegard Hiedemanns (nee Ziganiuk) 18 Westlake.** “We moved to Westlake in 1952, first to No 49, then No 47 – Sally Drekovic and family – where five of us had two rooms and shared the kitchen before moving in 1954 to No 18 – a place of our own! I can still remember my first impressions of Westlake – bushland all around, tall grass and I imagined – lots of snakes – we were told about the snakes before we left Austria. It was all rather scary. But kids will be kids and it didn’t take long before it was lots of fun running through the bush, playing hide-and-seek and having a great time.” [Hilda met her husband to be Christian Hiedemanns at Westlake

**Stan Brill 22 Westlake** “I’m not sure what year we shifted to Westlake but it could have been 1924 as Dad was employed on the construction of Parliament House... My father was a carpenter and joiner and he told me that he worked on the original Speaker’s Chair. We lived in 22 Westlake and we were all educated at Telopea Park School. My mother was the first postmistress in Westlake...”

**Charlie Law 23 Westlake**

“There was great excitement in our family when my sister May married Stan Hart on 31<sup>st</sup> December 1925. She was married at home in No 23 by a circuit minister. It may have even been the first marriage in a Westlake home. Stan was a tiler and they met at one of the regular dances held in the Westlake Hall. Many a romance began there. When my

sister Eileen married Jack Luton the reception was held in the Westlake Hall and a group of Westlake ladies made sandwiches, cakes etc... During the years my father worked at Parliament House he helped to assemble the beautiful Speaker's Chair. Some of the wood came from Nelson's Flagship. The arms contained places for snuff boxes, gavel and pens and pencils. Every Sunday for the several weeks he was working on the chair, we were assailed by the smell of bullock hide glue being melted. It came in the sheet form, which was broken up and placed in the glue pot, which sat in water in a larger pot and placed at the back of the stove. It was a shocking smell, which even the neighbours complained about but had to put up with until the job was finished. The assembly of the chair was a difficult and painstaking job. Another major work my father took part in was the laying of the parquetry floor in the Kings Hall."

**Vladimir Bondarenko 23 Westlake** "We all came from largish families, our folks relatively poor, and no one was more special or gifted than the others – all of us were equal – right down to the holes in our strides and bare feet! Everyone was referred to by a nickname and this was used so often that we sometimes did not know who we were referring to in any conversation until the identifying nickname was used. These nicknames are too descriptive to use openly. My parents called me and my new friends *Windwalkers* because only the wind would blow us home and only the wind knew where we were at any one time..."

**Tamara Read nee Bondarenko** "Our entertainment consisted of groups playing hopscotch, rope skipping (usually with two persons on each end of two ropes, swinging one in each arm, while the person in the middle skipped and missed being tangled up by the two ropes at the same time), walking on tin stilts made from large baby-food cans, one on each foot, while holding the strings to enable us to walk or run. Most of our recreation was involvement in community street games such as Stop Light, Statues, Mr Wolf etc, swinging from a Tarzan rope that Alex Jesaulenko tied to a huge Eucalyptus tree in the park in front of their place [now in grounds of the Mexican Embassy]; swimming in the Molonglo River that wound its way through the Golf links; hitching a ride on the back of Mr Sykes' truck when he wasn't aware (maybe he was, but he didn't show it) driving on a home made Billy-cart made by my brothers Vlad, Peter and friends... We always got *coloured* chalk from the Quarry [Attunga Point] over the hill towards the Golf Links. This served us with a good supply of writing chalk for our hopscotch games on the road, or just to draw pictures which were all washed away after it rained."

**Beryl Box 25 Westlake. Beryl is the wife of Ron Box. After marriage the couple moved in with Mr Box Sn at Westlake.**

"Always called Mrs Ghiradello – *Mrs Tony* – it always seemed to come naturally. She in turn always called me plain *Mrs*. We shared a love for our own milk. We each ran our own cow in the government agistment paddock [up behind the cottages – now called Stirling Ridge]. I had a cream separator and Mrs Tony made her own cheese. We both

kept our own poultry run and always had a good veggie garden. Each year Tony and I would see who could grow the first ripe tomatoe for that season. One year Tony called me to see the lovely big ripe one he had. From the distance it did fool me, but on closer look found it a bought one fastened on to the bush somehow. They were wonderful neighbours.”

**Gladys Bailey (nee Box) 25 Westlake.** “The Depression in the thirties with one week’s work in six were hard times but we used our imagination and had happy times. I suspect Mum went without many times to keep us clothed and fed. Dad had a vege patch – especially pumpkins – how we loathed pumpkins. They were never ending. Mum died in her early forties. She was in ill health. She burnt her hands badly when the kettle slipped over on the stove and died within weeks. Only in later years [I realised] how hard it must have been on Dad...”

**Ella Campbell (nee Tuson) 24 Westlake** “Harold [Tuson] was Forestry Overseer of the Kowen Forest for some years, planting the first pine there in 1928. A third daughter June, was born in the private hospital Queanbeyan during the time the family lived at Kowen. After some years at Kowen Harold was transferred to Pierce’s Creek as Forestry Overseer. Before moving to Pierce’s Creek the family lived for a short time at Queanbeyan and then at 24 Westlake. During this time Harold travelled to Pierce’s Creek each Sunday night returning home each Friday night.”

**Information from Cecil Jackson 26 & 3 Westlake** “In 1936 Nora [Dixon] married Cecil George Jackson. When they first married the young couple lived for a time at Manuka before moving into 26 Westlake where all the children after Cecil were born. One child, a daughter, the first girl in the family named Robin died in the cottage. Later the family moved to 3 Westlake which because it had been used as a Post Office – Mrs Hunt postmistress – had an extra room – a much welcome addition of space [there were eight children in the family].”

**Ann Gugler (nee Austin) 27 Westlake**

“The Postmistress Mrs Hunt, dripped the heated red sealing wax on to the back of the envelope. She then picked up the metal stamp by its wooden handle and firmly pressed it into the liquid wax which cooled quickly leaving an official pattern indented into its surface. Mrs Hunt was Westlake’s fourth Postmistress. The first was Mrs Law (23) who took up the position in 1927 followed by Mrs Brill of 22 Westlake and later by

Mesdames Davies, Hunt and Patterson. This was considered by the Commonwealth to be a suitable occupation for married women...I remember arriving at the house (27) in our family car and seated on the gate sat a small girl. Her name was Carmel Maxwell... Our house was set in a diamond shaped yard and it was the only one in the settlement not to have a back fence. We also had two gates – one on either side of our two front fences. In the back of the yard was an air-raid shelter. It was lined with galvanised iron and had a roof of the same material. It had a dank smell and we never used it. In front of the yard – in the reserve area [now the grounds of the Mexican Embassy] were a number of trenches...”

**Fay Hodgetts (nee Murphy) 27 Westlake** “In 1940 they [Iris and Fred Murphy] moved to Westlake and stayed there about eighteen months. My father’s sister and her husband Ruby and Tom Rawlings and their two sons Eric and John moved there in 1941 and lived at No 28. My father worked as a Peace Officer for a number of years and rode a bike to Harman Naval Station and Belconnen Station...”

**Kevin Sykes 29 Westlake.**

“Ernie Corey was my Godfather and Sally [his wife] was my Godmother. They lived at No 30 at the time of my birth in 1931. I had a lot to do with Ernie over the years and enjoyed every day of it. I feel very privileged to have known Sally and Ernie...Ernie possessed a very fertile mind when it came to telling stories about the depression years. He told me that one of his get rich schemes was to breed black and white cockatoos. He

got one of each (male and female) and put them in a cage. Nothing happened for a long time because they didn't seem to like each other. Ernie said one of them must be racist. Eventually they mated and the hen laid six black and white eggs. He went to see his bank manager to try and borrow money to go into business. The manager came to see the eggs and decided to invest in these rare birds at once. Three weeks along the way they hatched. You won't believe it – there were three white ones and three black ones...”

**Marianne Heikurinen 29 Westlake** “My daughter Katja and I moved to 29 Westlake in early 1961. Katja was six months old at the time. I had previously been living in Ainslie Hostel where we had come from after staying at Bonegilla Emigration Camp. My parents were living in an adjacent flat, which was owned by Mr Sykes. There was no water supplied to my flat – not even cold! My parent's flat had a sink and cold water tap. As a result my mother cooked all the meals for us. Bath times for us were bad. I would carry water from the laundry (one common laundry for three flats and a house) and heat it on my wood burning stove. In a baby bath I washed Katja first and myself using the same water. That's when we decided to make a sauna in the garage. My father and future husband built it in just a few evenings. The heating stones for the sauna were collected from the Cotter River...”

**Monica Mulcahy (formerly Jario) 29 Westlake.** “Mr & Mrs Jario senior...had lived in a brick flat at Westlake shortly after coming to Canberra. That is how we came to take over the dwelling when they moved into their new home...so although the brick dwellings were rough and ready, jut two rooms to a flat, one being the kitchen and no hot water at all, just an old fuel stove to heat water and cook on, we were all grateful and stayed until we could managed to move on to something better. Water pipes froze, the plumbing was not too well done, all pipes being exposed to the outside, so winter was a hard time for all, and we had to make certain that the kettle was full and a bucket of clean water ready for the next morning. The wiring and electrical arrangements were also a bit of a botchy job and the dwellings had very uneven flooring being made up of all the scraps of bricks with rough cement poured over., so life was not easy but we managed...”

**Viktor Malyszko 29 Westlake** “On his arrival in Canberra Felixs [Malyszko] lived at Fairbairn Hostel until September 1950 with Ilse and his two months old Irena joining him on 17<sup>th</sup> December 1949. They moved from Fairbairn Hostel for a 3 month period to 4 La Perouse Street Griffith before moving to 29 Westlake where they lived until June 1952...He [Felix] was a hard working man who tended to keep to himself rarely speaking of his life but I know that he and other displaced persons who immigrated to Australia had a major part in building the Canberra of today, of which I am very proud.”

**Hannu Hovi 29 Westlake** “In August 1998 Hannu showed me the sites of each of the flats, the garden and the house. He remembered that only a few of the cottages remained [mid 1960s]. One was No 9 or 10 and another 34. The hall was already gone as was the dump. This left plenty of space for the bon fires which in true Westlake tradition were burnt every Empire/Commonwealth night – on 24<sup>th</sup> May. In the same area every Saturday boxing events were held by the boys... In 1965 the Hovi family moved to No 11 – 13<sup>th</sup> Street Narrabundah...

**Ilma Henskens (nee Keir) 31 Westlake** “Dad was a friend of Horace Cleaver and one day he said to Dad *I’m shifting from Westlake why don’t you shift into No 31?* And that is what we did. About a fortnight later Dad went to the Interior and said *No 31 Westlake is empty can I have it?* And they smiled and said *You wouldn’t be there already would you?*... Over the years we nearly always had someone staying with us. When Mrs Champ from 34 or 35 died Mum asked Sam and Joe (Champ) and their relatives to come down for meals. After the relatives left Sam and Joe still came and then Sam asked if he could fill in our back verandah and move in...”

**Marie Carn 32 & 54 Westlake.** “One of my most vivid memories from Westlake was playing on *the forbidden to go to Dump!* – obviously chalky deposit of some of the mining activities. There we used to delight in playing on large slippery dip – much to our Mum’s dismay as we rapidly wore holes in our nickers (panties). We also collected our *writing chalk* from there and used to spend hours playing schools on the outside of the tin chimneys with Jan usually as our teacher.”

**Norm Patterson 33 Westlake.** “One morning as was my chore I went to the woodheap to get the wood to light the wood stove. I heard a voice swearing. A few days later I discovered that it was Bill Haines’ pet crow. The bird could call all of Mr Haines’ children by their Christian names – the whole eleven of them.”

**Eva Warren (nee Johnston) 35 Westlake.** “Even today our years at Westlake still have an influence on our lives. We are still Westlake kids. The older we get the more important those days in Westlake seem to get. When I think of Westlake I think of community – sticking together when things get tough – sharing of joys and sufferings, strong friendships. I close my eyes and I can feel the crispness of a winter’s morning, the sun warm on my back. I see three women standing outside No 35 chatting. I hear a dog or two barking, a baby’s cry, children laughing, birds singing, that warm contented feeling of belonging. I’m on the top of the world. Mum let me have the day off school. Then suddenly it is all spoiled. The women realise that I’m there listening to the gossip – *Eva, go on, off you go inside. I’ll be there in a minute.*” Poop! I was enjoying that.

**Val Clarke (nee Hawke) 36 Westlake. Her grandparents lived at 18 Westlake.**

“Valerie [Hawke] also recalled other facets of daily life in the settlement. Meat, bread and milk were delivered daily and vegetables, fruit and groceries weekly. On Thursday a man from JB Young called to take the grocery order which was then delivered on the Saturday. Every Friday a man (SO Taylor) called with suitcases full of clothes, linen etc and in case he did not have what was wanted or required mail order catalogues from David Jones, Mark Foys, Grace Bros, Wynns and Beverfall contained photographs and order forms for goods that ranged from clothing to hardware. The photographs could be recycled by cutting out to be pasted – using flour and water glue on to brown paper covered school books.”

**Judith Tierney (nee Tschannen 37 Westlake [The house was sublet by Thompson who was in the army]**

“My grandparents are in the Westlake section of the 1943 electoral roll. They are 37 *TSCHANNEN, Irene & Alfred, hd & head chef* [at the Hotel Canberra]. Dad’s parents – Irene British born and Alfred Swiss born. Before arriving in Australia Alfred left South Hampton Docks to work as an apprentice on the P&O Cunard line to learn English. He became a qualified chef at the Langham Hotel in London. He came from a privileged background. His parents owned a hotel in Berne and had servants, maids etc but when the war came (WW1) they lost everything because of the big crash. It must have been quite a culture shock for him living at Westlake. At 15 years of age Dad was a kitchenhand at the Hotel Canberra... When my grandfather Alfred Tsachanen left Canberra for Sydney my uncle Jonnie O’Rourke [45 Westlake] became Head Chef...”

**Vladimir Bondarenko 23 Westlake – about Bell’s Corner – No 39** “From the houses you could always hear the radios playing songs such as my mother’s favorite *Old Fashioned Millionaire* sung by Eartha Kit or Marty Robbins, *A White Sport’s Coat*, or Jonny Cash’s *I Walk the Line*, Elvis’s *Blue Moon Kentucky*, Johnny Horton’s *The Battle of New Orleans* and many others, but if a popular serial would start, we’d all take off to listen to our favourite serial. When the *Space Age* in October 1957, we would often lay down on the warm bitumen road at *Bell’s Corner* [39 Westlake] and stare at the night sky looking for *SPUTNICK*, words such as *Satellite* and *Orbit* became commonplace, so *Bell’s Corner* was always remembered for that reason – as was the song *Twilight Time* sung by the Platters.”

**Kevin Sykes 29 Westlake about Sid Bell No 39.** He lived near the tennis courts. He was a good tennis player and won many trophies around the district and Sydney. I was told he defeated Jack Crawford [Australian Champion] in a Country versus City Tournament. He played with Matt Crow of Mat Crows Wine Bar Gundaroo as a doubles partner...Sid Bell cut wood for me and one day while alone in the bush he accidentally backed on to a turning saw blade. He drove himself to hospital and received 80 stitches in his backside. A pretty tough old bloke”.

**Fred Byrne of 41 Westlake** “One of Fred’s first jobs was at the Canberra Cordial Company at Civic working for Hebditch. Later in the early post war years Fred along with the Westlake lads Alan Bellchambers, Hilton McCauley and Reuben Kirchner worked on the Upper Cotter Dam. He remembered that this was the time that the New Australians with very little English were moved from Bonegilla straight out to the camp on the river to work on this dam. The Westlake lads used to delight in killing snakes and putting the corpses between the bed linen to give the newcomers a fright.”

**Ronnie O’Rourke 45 Westlake** “Big families were in most houses at Westlake. We all played together until dark and then were told to get ready for bed. I remember playing with the Haines boys one night. When Mr Haines told the boys it was time to come and get ready for bed no one took any notice. So the next time he came out of the house with a big razor strap and belted all the boys on the backside – me included. We had all placed bags on our heads so he did not recognize me and apologized for getting me mixed up with his family. **Mad Punters** We had some small and some big time punters living at Westlake when I was growing up – mainly two bob punters and ten shillings and one pound for the big punters. Lofty Harrington, the SP Bookie and his wife would take all bets on race horses on every Saturday and public holidays. During the years between 1930 and 1950 there were hardly any race meetings held on any other days... Lofty and his wife lived at 55 Westlake. They had two big trees near their place and they were a good lookout for the police coming into Westlake. He always paid someone to keep an eye out for vehicles that looked like police cars...”

**Roma Banks (nee Brien) 48 Westlake.** “Mum used to put sand into chaff bags to heat it up. We used this when we had any aches and pains. Also Mum used to heat up a little bit of salt and put it in a sock and tie the end up if we had toothache... Mum would put bricks or big river stones in the oven in winter to heat them up and then Mum would put them in our beds. It would be nice and warm when we went to bed. We used to have lots of fruit trees, which we used to pick and sell the fruit. We also had chooks and we used to sell the eggs. One of my favourite things we used to do was to sit down as a family and my Father taught us how to make paper roses and carnations. The boys undid the old chicken wire with pliers and straightened it out and cut it. The girls and Mum used to make the flowers. We made baskets full of flowers and then we used to sell them to help us survive. I remember quite a few times we would go to school with out lunch which was bread with dripping on it. Sometimes we might get a bit of jam. We always had our lunch wrapped in newspaper.”

**Eva Robinson nee Bellchambers of 50 Westlake.** “I remember ...Our small weatherboard house – open fires in kitchen and lounge room – kettle (iron black) on chain or thick bars in kitchen. Stove in backroom – wood fire. Reading around open fire and kitchen table and being a family unit. Listening to the radio (and later radiogram) and board games and cards. Walking up over the hill to catch the bus to school and home again – friendship of other kids – and fights – with parents arguing over each other’s kids... Playing under the street light after dark and particularly on summer nights – marbles, cricket etc. Older ones swimming in the Molonglo River. River in flood a few times... Mr O’Brien [51 Westlake] and his accordion playing... Bon Fires to celebrate...”

**Matthew O’Brien died at his son John (Jack) O’Brien’s cottage 51 Westlake.** “The death occurred at Westlake on Monday [23<sup>rd</sup> August 1937] of Matthew O’Brien aged 83 years, who had spent the whole of his life in the Canberra District. Born at Ginninderra the late Matthew O’Brien was the son of Mr & Mrs O’Brien who selected land there nearly a century ago. Prior to the resumption of the Federal Capital Territory by the Commonwealth Government Matt O’Brien was employed as a boundary rider for many years by EG Crace of Gunghlin...In the early years of the district when a man was judged according to his ability as a horseman, Matt O’Brien and his friend the late Pat Curley of Mugga were recognised as one of the finest horsemen in the district...”

**Hazel Kennedy (nee Haines) 52 Westlake.**  
“My father came from Tasmania and mother’s mother was German and her father Irish. Dad and Mum got married in Queanbeyan and lived at Gunning. Dad got a job planting

pine trees at Mt Stromlo during the depression and they moved to Ainslie Camp and lived in a tent for a few years... Around 1933 the family moved to 52 Westlake and then we all came one after another. Mum had nine boys and two girls. We had it tough with a big family. We had good times and bad times. I never regretted living in Westlake... Another time [we children] were playing hidings [in the dark]. Duncan Campbell ran around the back of our house to hide in the grape vine. It was a moonlight night. We had a white goat. It was standing eating the grapes. When Duncan saw it he thought it was a ghost and he got such a fright that he ran into the house screaming out *A Ghost!* He was so scared by the *ghost* that Dad had to walk him home every night after that.”

**Information from Colleen West 54 Westlake** “The West family arrived in Canberra in 1939 and moved into 54 Westlake. Reginald West and his wife Margaret (nee Kelleher) married in Sydney where four of their five children were born... Margaret was a local lass. On her mother’s side she was a Coppin after whom the local crossing is named.”

**Leslie Clarke, family friend of the Phillips family of 56 Westlake.** “Walter and Alberta Phillips, their son Brian and Alberta’s mother Marian Ploughman came to Canberra from Hobart Tasmania. Walter was allocated No 56 Westlake... Walter was a carpenter and joiner... Alberta and Walter’s passion was their garden. They spent nearly all of their spare time in it... Albert had two pet kookaburras, Jack and Jill who sat on the back fence most days and always slept on the verandah at night...”

**Carmel Koenig (nee Maxwell) 56 Westlake.** – Hansard - “*Retirement of Principal Attendant Senator O’Byrne (Tasmania) – I shall be very brief in addressing the Senate on a matter that I feel should be drawn to the attention of the honourable Senators. I rise tonight for the purpose of a valedictory to a very well respected and long serving staff of the Senate, Arthur Maxwell who is on the eve of retirement after 30 years in the service of the parliament... Her Majesty was pleased to bestow the British Empire Medal on him in the New Year’s Honours of 1969... Arthur was born in Queanbeyan in 1918... In the late 1930s he married Dorothy Day eldest daughter of Charles Foster and Frances Day (nee Gallagher) of Briar Farm. For a short time the young couple lived in an aunt’s place at Causeway, then Manuka before being allocated a house at Westlake – No 56.*

**Robinson Family of 57 Westlake.** Amos and Edith Robinson in 1928 lived at Russell Hill. By 1930 when their son Clarrie was accidentally killed they lived at Westlake. Clarrie who worked for the Canberra Times died as the result of an accident on 15<sup>th</sup> July 1930. He was 17 years 11 months of age and had been a good and keen tennis player.

**Alex Smijewski (Shore) No 57 Westlake** “Juchim Smijewski [father] was born on 13.10.1905 in the Ukraine to Ivan and Luceria. He was the oldest of seven boys and five girls. The family were peasant farmers. In 1930 the Communist takeover of the Ukraine, the father (Ivan) was taken away by the Communists, presumably murdered. Mother died during the subsequent famine. The children were scattered. The youngest boys were sent to an orphanage and Juchim was sent to Siberia... there he was set to work cutting down heavily timbered forests... after seven years he stayed a little while living with the Eskimos. In 1937 he returned to the Ukraine and meets Nina whom he marries. Nina from a previous marriage has two daughters, Tania and Olga. Later Olga drowns in the river. . Alex is born 6.1.1938 during the Second World... after Germany was defeated in the war ... the family [migrated to] Australia... In late 1949 Juchim and Nina with Alex and Peter (born 1946) move in to live with Mrs Robinson at 57 Westlake... [In 1951 the family moved to Yarralumla and two years later Nina died. Alex died on 31.12.1999 and was buried on his 61<sup>st</sup> birthday.]

**Bernie Rochford nephew of Mrs White of 58 Westlake.** “Darcy White was perhaps more like his father than his mother. He did not get far from home and was a close companion to his mother. From the beginning he addressed his mother as *Mrs White*. He also learnt to smoke when he was about three years old and I recall how his mother used to roll his cigarette on demand or at some regular time. Darcy died young... I recall that Mrs Robinson lived on one side of 58 [White home] and the McCanns on the other.... I have special memories of Mrs Blewitt.. Mrs Blewitt kept a spotless home – even swept the area between the street and her front fence... With affection and respect I especially remember old Mrs Dixon. She was of Aboriginal descent, extremely deaf... I seem to recall that she told me she started life as a school teacher...”

**Adrie Callan (nee O’Neill) 61 & 40 Westlake. Adrie married Laurie Callan of 59 Westlake.** “My parents were the second couple to be married in St Christopher’s parish. After their wedding they lived with my Aunt and Uncle, Kit and Harry Armstrong at 61 Westlake. I was born in their home on 18<sup>th</sup> May, 1929. When No 40 became vacant my parents moved there and Tiny and Uncle Charlie came to live with us... We often used to watch football. My Uncle Bert had been a keen player and although I don’t remember very much about his team I do remember that it was the Sewer Team and every player

was named in a poem written by Jimmy O'Reilly (38 Westlake) which began: *The Captain's name was Eddie Hawke, Five-eight was brother Bert, When they got the ball to Winger Beadman, A try became a cert...* I wonder if anybody has the complete poem or can remember more of the lines. One of the big events for the children was when Mr Dunn brought his Merry-Go-Round to Westlake. He would set it up near Nim Sykes' corner and there would be a session in the afternoon for the little children and another at night. The horse power used to operate the Merry-Go Round were two ponies... “

**Nancy Metcalfe.- Letter home re Mr Jaks of 61 Westlake**

“20.11.1946 Allambie Street Reid - Last Saturday afternoon I went over to Westlake (an old part of Canberra) hidden behind a hill. I hadn't seen the place before as it is away from the road. I saw an 'ad' for some furniture in *The Times* (Cedar and Queensland maple) for sale and I thought I'd go and have a look. I caught the No 1 bus and got off at the Embassy (American) and walked along the road past this huge building through gum and scrub trees – quite a long walk till I came upon this little hollow where about one hundred tiny little green weatherboard houses something like workmen's huts. It was an eye opener to me. Their gardens were quite gay in some places, others not much. At last I found No 61. It was like the other little places except that it was covered with a rambling rose and on the gate a notice, “Beware of the dogs. They may bite.” I wondered if I would venture in to knock at the door and then just decided that I would when a little boy playing on the road called out that they were dangerous dogs and I had to throw a small stone on the roof and then the people would come out. I asked him who lived there and he told me “Mr and Mrs Jaks.” I didn't know if I could hit the roof if I tried so my little friend threw a pebble for me. Open flew the door and out came an old grey haired man to greet me – Mr Jaks. He proved to be quite a nice old chap. I thought he may have been a dealer but it appeared that he made most of the furniture himself – Most of it was in Cedar and Maple and it was very nice...” [Mr Jaks came from Poland and at an early age went to Scotland where he did his apprenticeship 12 years]

**Peter Kimber re Briar Farm and the Kinlyside connection** “How it came to pass that Alison Willis [nee Kinlyside] with a thirteen year old daughter met and finally married

Thomas Bryant (1825-1876) in December 1864. Bryant, a widower who was living at Duntroon at the time, was a local bricklayer in partnership with his friend James Cook (1835-1898). About this time they were co-tenants at Briar Farm and may have had something to do with the construction of the dwelling and outbuildings on it.”

**Claude (Cloudy) Day, Briar Farm.** “My name is Claude James Day. This is my story of what I can remember of our life when we lived at Briar’s Farm which was a small cottage on four acres of land. It was just down the hill from Westlake. My father and my mother, Charles and Frances Day, moved to Briar’s Farm in 1927. My father was employed as a Surveyor’s Assistant at the Department of Interior. Dad was provided with a horse and sulky in which he conveyed the Surveyors with whom he worked to their various job sites...”

**Arthur Freeman, Westlake Mess Hall, tent cottage & 13 Howies Cottages.** “The family [Freeman] moved to the Federal Capital Territory about the end of 1922 or the beginning of 1923. Arthur [Freeman] took up the position boarding house keeper – or Mess Caterer at No 3 Sewer Camp in The Gap, Westlake. The family lived in rooms off the main eating area of the Mess Room. In 1924 the family moved into the cottage tent erected on the hillside opposite Lotus Bay. It belonged to the Commonwealth and may have been the original home of the Mess Caterer for the Trademen’s Camp. This tent, like those of the men of the camp, had wooden sides and floor...In 1927 the Freeman family moved from their tent into 13 Howies Cottages where they remained until 1930 before moving to cottage No 16 Causeway... Arthur Jr was twelve or thirteen years old when he arrived at Westlake and nearly twenty when he left - hence he has a good memory of his Westlake days.”

Letter written by Mr W J Fraser Hon Secretary of The Gap Progress Association 10.9.1924 to the Works Director, Canberra – *Dear Sir, I wish to further draw your attention to the deplorable state of the septic tank overflows at the near of No 30 cottage. As it is now both the overflows from the tanks empty out at about the same place of which is situated not above twenty yards in front of cottage No 5 in the rear of Cottage No 30. I maintain that if these are not very soon seen to it will be the cause of a great amount of sickness. It is the wish of the Progress Association that these pipes be continued another hundred yards or thereabout. I wish to express that this is very important for the health of the residents not only in the Gap but of the whole of the territory and hope it will be seen to at and early date. 2. Could you advise if anything is being done to finalise the*

*fencing of these cottages. The way it is now anything and everybody can come or go through the yard and children playing in the backyard have had several narrow escapes from being run over by different trades people driving in and out of cottages. 3 I further ask if the plugs for bath tubs, sinks and wash tubs can be supplied to several of the householders. We as a body ask if these few home comforts cannot be seen to at an early date. 4 Re paving and guttering back verandah. In the wet weather the women have to go out in the rain to reach the lavatory and get considerably wet from the drips from the roof where a piece of guttering would prevent it...*

**Eva Robinson nee Bellchambers of 50 Westlake.**

“I remember ...Our small weatherboard house – open fires in kitchen and lounge room – kettle (iron black) on chain or thick bars in kitchen. Stove in backroom – wood fire. Reading around open fire and kitchen table and being a family unit. Listening to the radio (and later radiogram) and board games and cards. Walking up over the hill to catch the bus to school and home again – friendship of other kids – and fights – with parents arguing over each other’s kids... Playing under the street light after dark and particularly on summer nights – marbles, cricket etc. Older ones swimming in the Molonglo River. River in flood a few times... Mr O’Brien [51 Westlake] and his accordion playing... Bon Fires to celebrate... “

**The photographs show the same site in 1939 and 1999.**

### **45 Westlake**

This cottage was erected in 1924 and the first tenant was Francis Thornton Oakely, son of Lizette Sophia (nee Zimmerman) and Christopher Wiperman Okely. He was born in Thornton SA and married Veronica Kell in Cobar. They had three children aged 14, 12 and 10 at the time of his death from TB on 21<sup>st</sup> April, 1926. Elizabeth & William Chatham were there in November 1928. Cornelius and Annie (nee Whittaker) O'Rourke probably moved into No 45 in the late 1920s. In 1928 they are recorded as living in Uriarra Road Mt Stromlo. Cornelius and Annie remained until the cottage was sold and removed sometime in the late 1950s or early 1960s.

The following short story was written by Judith Tierney, grandchild of Cornelius & Annie and daughter of Jane (nee O'Rourke) and Ernest Tshcannen.

No 45 Westlake.

Parents: Annie O'Rourke (nee Whittaker) and Cornelius O'Rourke.

Children:

4 boys – Frank, John, David & Ronnie

6 girls – Lily, Mary, Jane, Eileen, Valerie, Moya

The house consisted of 3 bedrooms, cast iron stove for cooking, chip heater to heat bath water, electricity for lighting, water from Cotter River, outside toilet [part of house – door on outside wall], house wire fenced, with a gate. The Government painted the wooden house externally with green paint. No need for air-conditioning – the breeze blew through the

wooden cracks. Floor covered with congolian (lino).  
Rent 15 shillings per week.

Cornelius worked planting pine-trees around Mt Stromlo and also as a labourer on the roads. There was no child endowment in the early days. Times were extremely hard financially. Neighbours made time to communicate with each other, over the fence, and share rations and exchange was coupons.

The O'Rourke children remember these early times *AS THE HAPPIEST TIME IN THEIR LIVING YEARS.*

Ronnie O'Rourke was much involved in the history of Westlake and erecting the Westlake signs. Much celebration when Ronnie helped unveil the Westlake plaque. Ronnie O'Rourke's interest in the history of his beloved Westlake revealed the fighting spirit of these men, women and children. The O'Rourke family will always be remembered for their sense of humour, friendship and willingness to help another in need.

Photograph: Seventeen year old Jane O'Rourke Standing by her yellow and brown Malvern Start Bike circa 1939. She is standing at the side of 45 Westake near the tin chimney that served the open fireplace in the living area.

## 37 Westlake

Ellen & Willie Thompson lived in 37 in 1928. During the war years when Willie was in the army and his wife no longer with him he subleased the cottage to a number of tenants including the Tschannen family. Their son, Ernest, married Jane O'Rourke. Judith Tierney, daughter of Jane & Ernest wrote the following about 37 Westlake.

Jane O'Rourke moved from 45 to 37 Westlake after marrying her childhood sweetheart Ernest. This house consisted of two bedrooms, a covered verandah (working class cottage). Ernest left to serve at Cowra during World War 2. Jane's daughter, Judith, a war baby, was born in 1944. Lily, Jane's sister married to Thomas Williams was living in Sydney and asked if she could live at No 37. She had two children, John and Lorraine.

The rent of 17 shillings per week was paid out of an army allotment for army wives. Ernest received 6 shillings per day pay.

When Jane and her family moved out of 37, her sister Eileen McCauley moved in. Houses were in short supply owing to lack of labour and building materials because of the war. After the McCauleys moved out the cottage was sold and moved to a new site.

The time spent living at Westlake will be forever inscribed in our memories and that of future generations. The families' hard labour and sacrifice laid the foundations for the future development of Canberra.