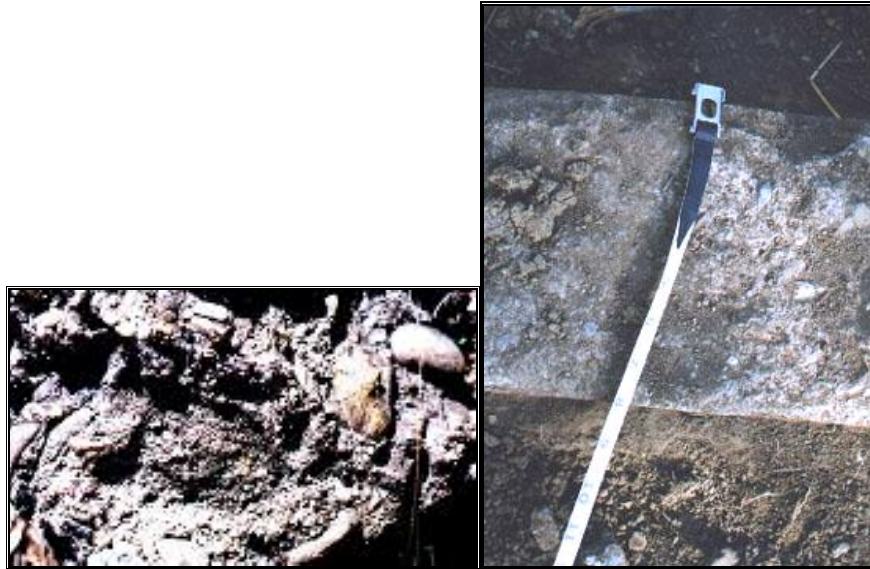


**WESTLAKE SEPTIC TANKS CONTINUED  
PART TWO  
THE TANK 'TODAY' & HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THE SEWER WORK**

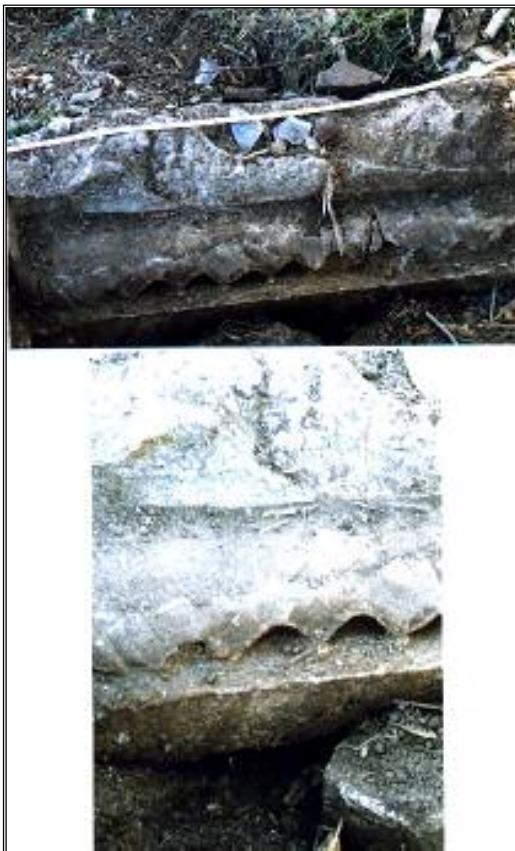


The outside walls of the tank vary in width from around 6 to 8 inches. The tank when in use had a concrete lid. Nearby in Haines Creek there are a few broken slabs of concrete that may have been part of the original lid. The concrete was mixed with river rocks (above left) and below is a detail of the end section of the tank. The top section has the indents of the corrugated iron lid that may have formed part of an inspection hole. Still embedded in the concrete are small pieces of rusted iron.



Below are details of this section of the wall. On the lake end of the tank on the left side the concrete on the shelf has taken the shape of corrugated iron. The iron has rusted away leaving only its impressions behind.

The corrugated iron sheet measured from the left hand corner two feet six inches across. The area that surrounds the tank is now filled with the rubbish of years. However in the area near the corrugated iron on the outside a shallow depression in the earth suggest that an overflow section may have been there.



Details of the corrugated iron imprints on the tank wall.

Below: Lead still in situ on one of the middle dividing walls.



### Work on the Westlake Tank

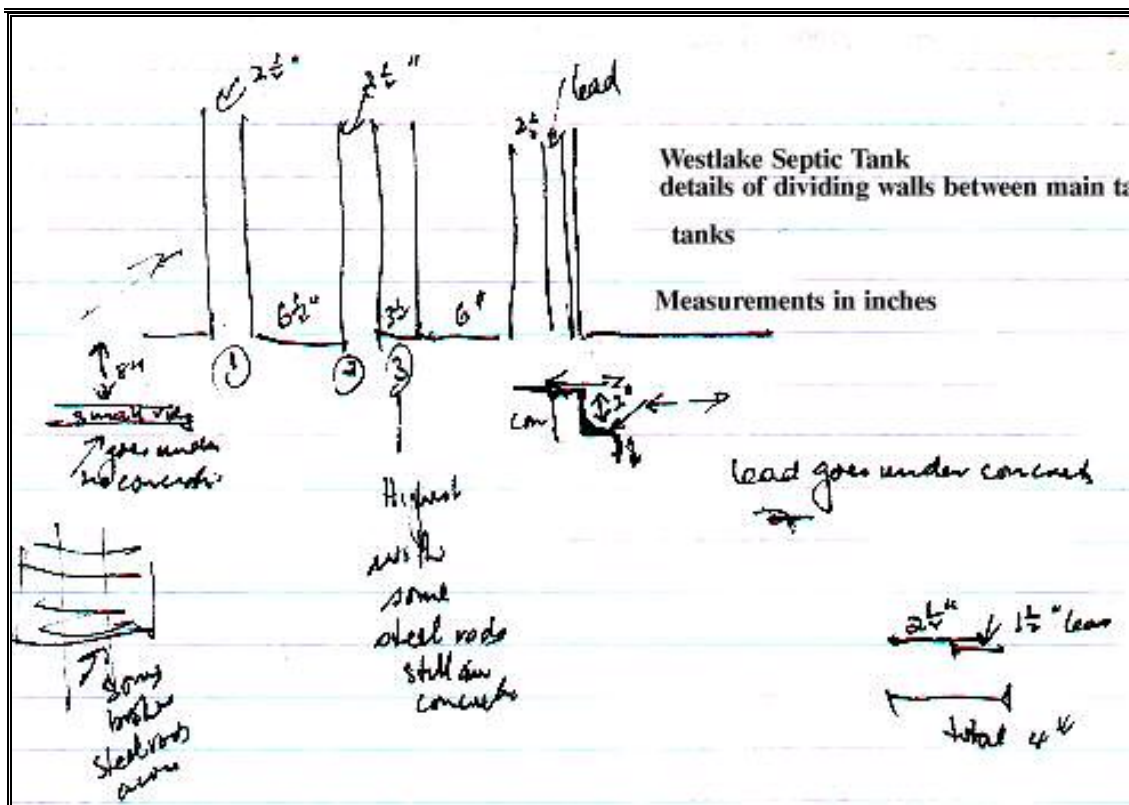
Some preliminary work has been carried out on the surviving tank at Westlake. The tank consisted of two large rectangular spaces divided by a series of smaller walls. Each wall in the centre is around 4 inches in width and the spaces between are approximately six inches, three inches and six inches. One had a ledge lined with lead. The outside walls of the tank range in width between six and eight inches. The total length of the tank is twenty-two feet, ten inches and it is in square. This was a rough job because one would expect the walls to be of a consistent thickness and in multiples of 4. I would have expected the length to be twenty four feet. It is around eight feet across. To date the depth is not known because it has not been dug out. However, Hazel Kennedy (nee Haines) of Westlake recalled playing in the then empty concrete tank in the 1940s. It had a concrete lid and was from her memory around six to eight feet deep.

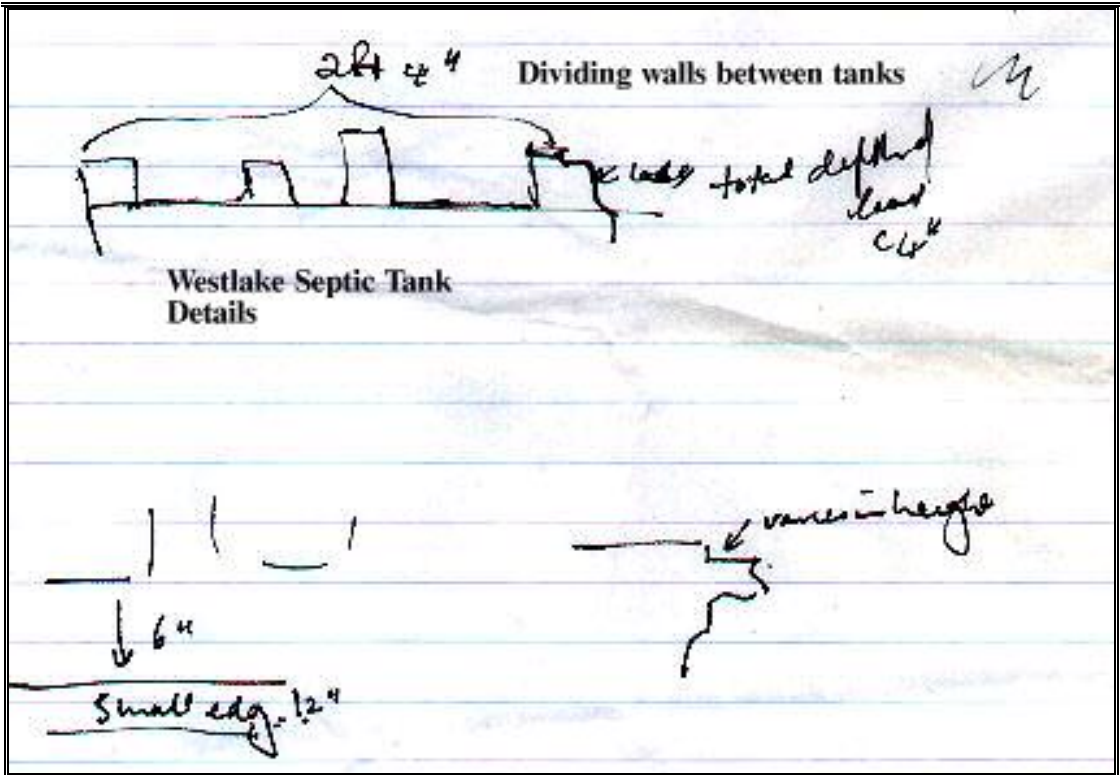
Walking in the area of the tank today is difficult because of the uneven lie of the land caused by recent works and rubbish now covered with thick growth of grasses through



which briar roses, daffodils and other bulbs protrude and flower in the spring months. Haines Creek was used for the overflow from the septic tanks and a place to throw rubbish. Hidden amongst the undergrowth also are a number of exposed pipes that connected cottages to the septic tank.

Left: Henry the fox terrier standing near the central walls that separates the two large tanks. The lead is held by concrete on the left hand side wall. On the right below is a view of the area of the septic tank looking down towards the lake side of the park.





2ft 4"

Dividing walls between tanks

M

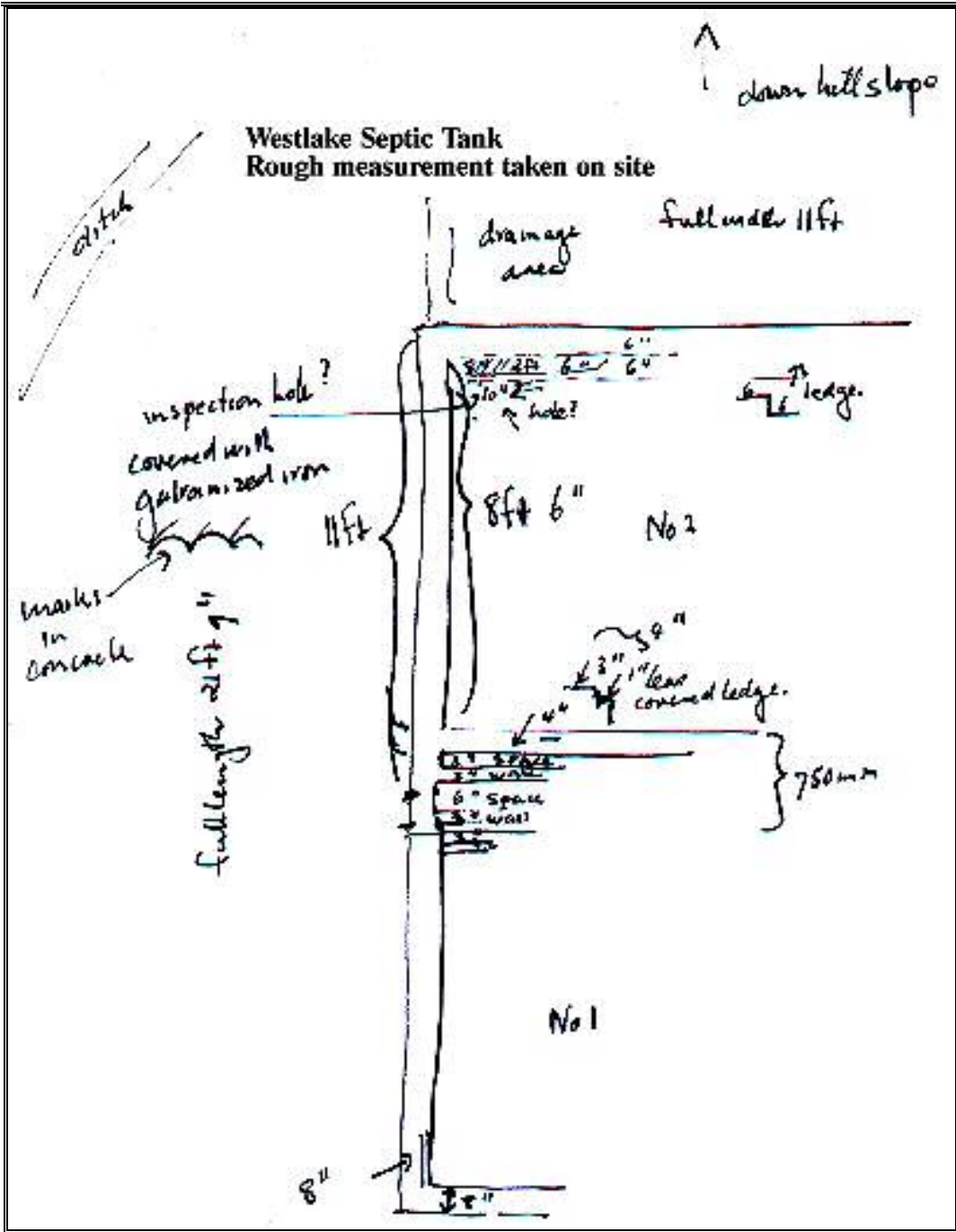
total depth lead  
6"

Westlake Septic Tank  
Details

6"

Small edge 1/2"

varies in height



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### **Main Intercepting Sewer System (1915 - 1916 & 1921-27 construction period)**

As mentioned previously work on Canberra's Sewer commenced in 1915. By the end of 1916 work stopped as men and money were directed into the war effort and work on the city came to an almost standstill. By the 11th September 1916 the only man employed on the sewer works was the caretaker who was paid 9 shillings per day. Work recommenced in 1921.

A report dated 22nd July, 1916 listed the number of men engaged on sewer work and the occupation of each. The report also noted that the lining of the tunnel with concrete was being carried out. The list is as follows:

<b>Occupation</b>	<b>Wage per day per man</b>	<b>Wage per week (Total)</b>
1 foreman	17/6	5 pounds 5/-
1 rough carpenter	12/-	3 pounds 12/-
2 horse & dray drivers	15/4	9 pounds 4/-
16 sewer miners	13/6	64 pounds 16/-
6 bracemen	11/-	19 pounds 16/-
2 assistant powder monkeys	11/-	6 pounds 12/-
1 engine driver	12/4	3 pounds 14/6
2 gangers	15/-	9 pounds
5 winch drivers	11/-	6 pounds 10/-
2 carpenters	14/-	8 pounds 8/-
6 truckers	11/4	20 pounds 8/-
1 electrician	14/6	4 pounds 7/-
1 tool sharpener	12/-	3 pounds 12/-
1 bullock driver	10/6	3 pounds 3/-
1 ganger	16/6	4 pounds 19/-
2 leading hands	14/-	8 pounds 8/-
7 builders labourers	13/6	28 pounds 17/6
<b>Total Wage Bill</b>		<b>220 pounds 1/-</b>

In 1921 work started again from the Western Creek end across through Yarralumla (Westridge), Westlake, Commonwealth Bridge area and thence to Parliament House (refer to map below). There were four major camps established for sewer workers. They were called No 1, No 2, No 3 and No 4. No 1 was near the corner of modern Tuggeranong Pathway and Cotter Road; No 2 was near the corner of Brown and Banks Streets Yarralumla, No 3 in The Gap Westlake and No 4 in the area in front of the Provisional Parliament House near the Molonglo River. This camp was later converted for use by the Tradesmen after their move from Westlake and then for single

unemployed men coming to the FCT in search of work - they could only stay for two weeks. No 4 was renamed Parkes Barracks.

Many of the men who came to work on the sewer were miners from places such as Araluen, Major's Creek and Captain's Flat.

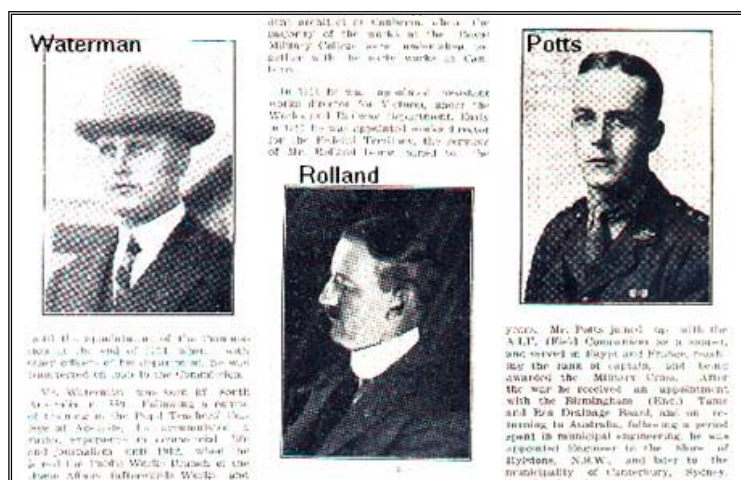
No 1 Sewer Camp was probably typical of all the sewer camps. The tents were made from a variety of material including bag as well as the usual calico. Some of the tents (see middle row) had tin chimneys added. Up on the right is the timber Mess Hall.



Not mentioned in archival documents are a number of humpies built by sewer men near work sites. Reference to some of these humpies is found in a letter from Robert Corkhill who was concerned that men had built on the south-east boundary of his lease near The Gap (Westlake). Work on Stirling Ridge on the slopes in the vicinity of a line across the hill near the Sewer Vent indicate that a number of humpies were constructed.

Further evidence is shown in the background of photographs. Below is a photograph taken in 1928 of baby Morris being nursed by his aunt at 6 Westlake. In the background are cottages that do not belong to *The Gap* cottages in Westlake. One has a verandah. I would suggest that these cottages may be sewer men's humpies erected around 1922. Oral histories indicate that some cottages remained

into the 1930s.

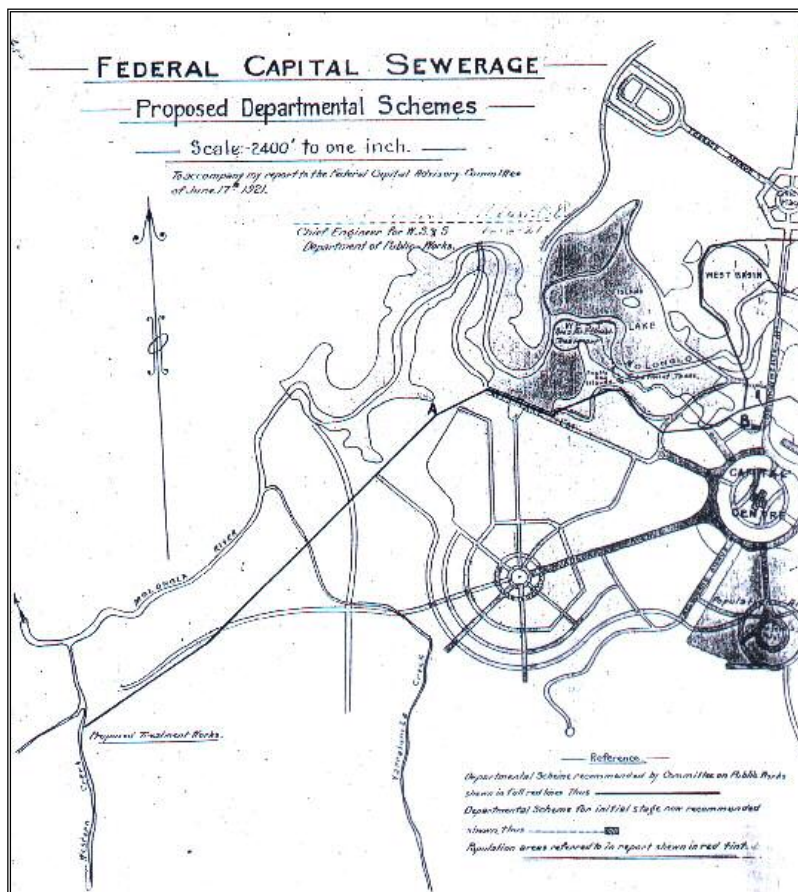


LEFT: Photograph of HM Rolland (centre) – the man who designed the Westlake cottages.



Left is a photograph of the sewer men. In the background is Red Hill and the buildings just discernable on the right above the men's heads is the Hotel Canberra

Canberra – 1925. This photograph was loaned by Marjie Rundle (nee Hawke) who lived at Westlake. Her father and grandfather worked on the sewer.



Left is a map showing the line of the sewer tunnels from the Western Creek area to the Provisional Parliament House. The men of No 3 Sewer Camp worked on the sewer tunnel and on the hillside of Stirling Ridge are the concrete remains of slabs etc where the main shaft dropped down a couple of hundred feet to the tunnel. In the vicinity of this shaft and/or the Heritage Listed Sewer Vent further on Stirling Ridge is one of several silver lodes found in the ACT. The Westlake area is near Lotus Bay, which

is the Bay in the shape of a boot/shoe just to the left of A.





Above is the sewer vent on Stirling Ridge. It is still known to most Westlake people as *The Chimney*. It still brings to the surface the pungent odours of methane gas and during the 1930s was blamed for an outbreak of a childhood disease. Upon inspection it was discovered that children had managed to get the lid off the nearby manhole and had made an attempt to fill the tunnel at that point with rocks. Once cleared the flow went back to normal and the stink lessened. Nearby to the vent was one of two mullock dumps left over from sewer work. It like the one between cottages 28 and 53 has now been spread out over the hillside. Both were always referred to as *The Dump*. The above view taken in the late 1990s looking out towards the city of Canberra has in the background Mount Ainslie. Below Right: Ilma Keir standing outside 31 Westlake. In the background is one of the two mullock *Dumps* at Westlake.



Ilma Keir in yard of 31 Westlake 1940s  
In the background is "the Dump".