

STIRLING RIDGE, STIRLING PARK, YARRALUMLA FROM MOSQUE END 3 MAY 2011



Some of the GPS markings did not register and some sites will be rechecked. They are: 16, 17, 20, 21, 25, 28 and numbers to be rechecked: 29, 30 & 33. The above has 1-15; 18 & 19: 34 & 35. Further down in the document is a second google map which adds from 20-35 [minus the missing numbers] The street on the right is Empire Circuit. The embassy on the right is Mexican Embassy. The yellow arrow on right points to the general area of the earth dump between the Westlake cottages. The arrow near 13 marks the area of the dump next to the sewer vent. The path on the top of the ridge can be seen from 9 and along below 19 & 18

No 1

Vlad Bondarenko's tree. This tree was at the rear of 22 Westlake. Vlad lived at 23 and this became one of his favourite trees with a number of photographs showing him standing on it. Following his death his ashes were spread around this tree.



No 2

Survey pegs & posts and disturbed stone arrangements nearby. This survey peg is marked by concrete posts and is not far from *THE GAP* survey marker on the top of the ridge. Nearby to this marker are a number of disturbed stone arrangements. These were documented in 2003.





The road in the background is Empire Circuit - the Canberra Mosque is off to the right. Following are photographs of some of the nearby stone arrangements which were more fully documented in 2003.





No 3

Mound pre 1926 concrete, stones, moss covered.



No 4

T shaped ditch. Somewhere on the ridge was a 'bunker' used to store explosives used by the sewer men and this area was part of the Westlake Horse Paddock. This ditch may be something to do with either?



Stirling Ridge has many white gum trees - the majority are probably scribbly gums. The majority of the old gums which predate the arrival of Europeans have scars some of which have been made with metal axes. There are also several old tracks/roads in the area of Stirling Ridge and *The Gap* down below on the eastern side. The western side of the ridge was part of Fred Campbell's property, Yarralumla which was clear felled in the late 1890s. By looking at the line of native bush land one can see roughly the line of the old property boundary. The remainder of the park was part of Klensendorff's land grant. One person with a metal detector mentioned that he had found 19th century coins on the end of Stirling Ridge where the remains of a track cut across the hill. This suggests the track that cuts across the lower section of the ridge on the lake end was probably the connecting track from the area of Kaye's farm in the area behind the Hotel Canberra.

Stirling Ridge and nearby Gap is of particular significance to Ngunawal people and was on the old pathway from Black Mountain to Red Hill and down to Tuggeranong. There is a women's area on the ridge and a number of Mourning Trees and burial sites have been pointed out to me by Mrs Ruth and Mr Don Bell and a visiting Ngario lady.

The majority of stone arrangements on the ridge can be seen on the end nearest the lake. There may be others but these in the vicinity of the sewer vent and on either side of it have been covered with mullock brought up from the sewer tunnel below. This mullock placed in skips was moved by steam driven traction engine along on rail tracks and dumped along the hillside. In parts of the hill the sites where the tracks were are visible. Near the sewer vent mid way down the ridge there was one of two large earth dumps from the sewer tunnel. The one near the sewer vent was grey in colour and the one further down the hill not far from my place - 27 Westlake - opposite the corner of Empire Circuit and Forster Crescent - was orange in colour. Arthur Freeman, son of the Mess Caterer No 3 Sewer Camp in *The Gap* told me about the skips. He was lowered down the shaft on the top of the hill and walked in the tunnel across to Westridge.



View of the tunnel with the break through from one side to the other. Jeremiah Dillon foreman of the sewer works second from the right. A story told to me by one of the Thompson boys (father a sewer worker) is that on the western side of the ridge underground - is a drainage system and the men often worked waist deep in water in this section. There are many springs in the area of Stirling Park. [Mildenhall photograph]



I think the above Mildenhall photograph was taken on the western side of Stirling Ridge rather than the eastern side. This side the land had been cleared and was the Westlake Horse Paddock in use until the extension of the suburb of Yarralumla brought the houses into the area nearby. Below are details from a Hawke family photograph showing Mr Hawke on the left in the photograph on the right. The skips are clearly shown along with the steel cable at the front of the skip. A detail of the steam driven traction engine with tents of No 3 and Westlake Cottages [1924-1925] in *The Gap* in background.



No 5

Aboriginal scarred tree, Scribbly Gum, stone arrangement on upper side of road & evidence of mining. Two known period of mining are documented - 19th century - probably in the 1860s and probably for gold and sewer mining during the period when the tunnel was put in between 1922-1925 in this area. This tree is close to an old road that linked the old entrance road into *The Gap* with the sewer vent. There are numerous stone arrangements in the area that are disturbed. This entrance following the construction of the American Embassy in the early 1940s was no longer used by the people living in the Westlake cottages in *The Gap*. Instead the track where Darwin Avenue and Perth Avenue now sit was used. Another track connected the cottages with the Hotel Canberra.

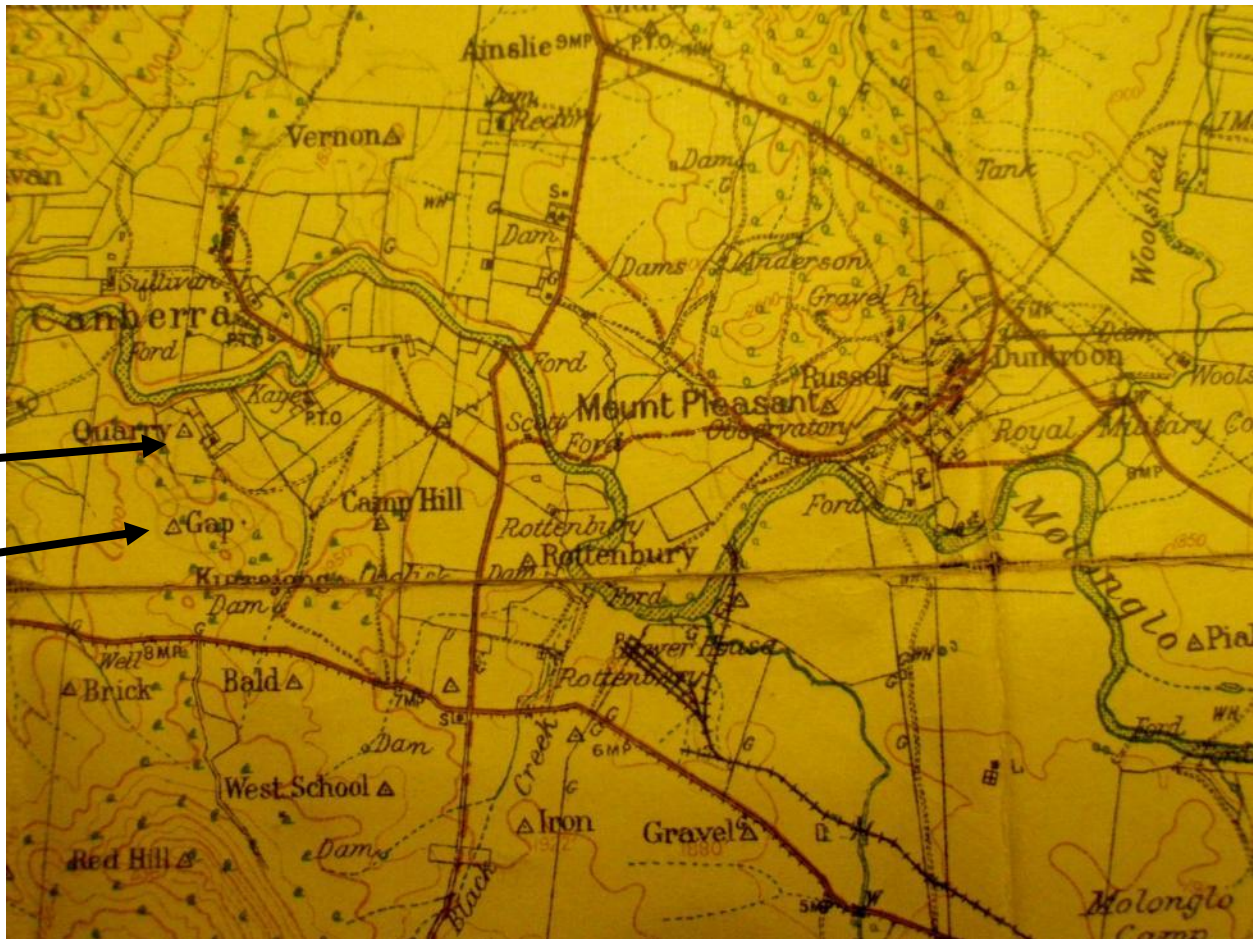




No 6
THE GAP Survey Marker



Above left *The Gap* survey mark. The Westlake people put a small sign on one of the posts. This is now missing. This marker is on the 1913 strip maps. A story told to me by Charles Law of Westlake is that the Gap was used by the cattle rustlers to bring the stolen cattle up from the river on their way to ?



Above: Map loaned by Patricia Fry. Arrows point to *The Gap* survey mark on Stirling Ridge and above that *Quarry*. This today is Attunga Point. The road across the bottom section of the map is the old Uriarra Road which continued to Queanbeyan. The road that crosses it was the Yass Road and near this intersection was the old Narrabundah School - also known as *The Cross Roads School*. The site is opposite the Forrest Fire Station. Part of the old Uriarra Road is near the pines opposite the Brickyards (see draft chapter Brickyards).

No 7

De-cursing tree, Scribbly Gum with natural scar and steel axe blow marks. In 2004 Mr Don Bell, Ngunawal elder referred to this tree as a de-cursing tree associated with the nearby Cursing tree, also a scribbly gum. Mr Bell said that he dated the tree to around 500 years of age. Dr Robert Boden dated old trees to be grown before the arrival of Europeans.



View along the walking track on top of Stirling Ridge looking from the Canberra Mosque and Empire Circuit end towards Lake Burley Griffin. Below one of several scarred trees with regrowth. The lean on the tree and others indicates a wind from the west. Several of these trees still bear the marks of axes.





Above: detail of one of the roots of the gum. There are a number in this section of the park that are similar. They may have been used as a 'work bench' by Aboriginal people. Below: Concrete with river rocks. This type of concrete was used in the 1920s.





Above: General view from the walking path looking down the hill towards *The Gap*. In the far distance top right part of Mt Ainslie can be seen. The humps of earth may come from the sewer working time when skips pulled along on rail lines were used to disperse earth from the sewer tunnel. The deepest shaft in the system is on top of Stirling Ridge. The shaft where men were lowered down to the tunnel that has been capped with concrete slab is further along the ridge. Nearby is the concrete lined trench probably used to 'house' the belt driven by the steam driven traction and the lowering devise that lowered to the cage with men and brought up the mullock. In this area are a number of coppiced trees. Wood was used to fuel the steam driven traction engines.



No 8

Above: Blakely's Red Gum heavily axe marked

No 9

Following are photographs of the huge old cursing tree. Mr Bell in discussions with him said that he thought this tree to be around 500 years of age. It is the biggest tree on the Ridge. There are at times a circle of rocks around the trunk of the tree.





No 10

Below the walking track with another of the scarred trees on the right that has been coppiced and has a large scar.





Above left detail of the scar on the tree shown in photograph on the right. Off to the right of the scribbly gum is a large conglomerate stone. There are a number of these stone that range across the ridge on *The Gap* side. A discussion with a Ngario lady who visited the site with me noted that these stones follow a ley line. When one examines geological maps of the area it is evident that these stones follow the major fault line that goes through the area.





Above detail of the large conglomerate rock and below another rock not far from this one. These rocks continue in a line across the ridge on the eastern side of the ridge.





No 12

Above: Concrete slab the remains of the cow bail where the Westlake cows were milked.



No 13

Brick sewer vent No 3. This vent was erected around 1925 and can be easily found by following the stench that still comes out of the vents. It is one of three surviving vents. The one near the Commonwealth Bridge was removed. The first is in the grounds of the Royal Canberra Golf Club Yarralumla and the second opposite the entrance into RSPCA off Cotter Road. Nearby to this vent which is roughly half way down the slope of the ridge on the Westlake Cottages side [in *The Gap*] was a huge dump of earth one of two in the area. The other one was between cottages 28 and 53 [not a big distance between cottages - cottages 1-52 were tenanted from 1924 and cottages 53-62 built on the site of the tents of No 3 Sewer Camp following their removal.] The dump near the vent was grey slate and the dump between the cottages, orange coloured slate. The earth from both dumps was spread sometime around 1965 following the removal of the last Westlake Cottage in the area. The grey slate can still be seen near the vent.



No 14 - Above: Nearby to the vent is one of the NCA concrete markers with a Westlake sign. This marks the site of one of the humpies built nearby [c1922-1925]. The arrow points to the ring of rocks around the iris plants. Before a woody weed clearance there was also a rectangular shaped hedge growing nearby that defined a yard. Sites of other cottages have been found along a line from this point towards the lake. Kevin Sykes of Westlake recalled a fibro shed on this hill that survived but was gone by the time I moved to Westlake in 1941. There are a number of small dumps nearby to the cottages and drainage ditches.

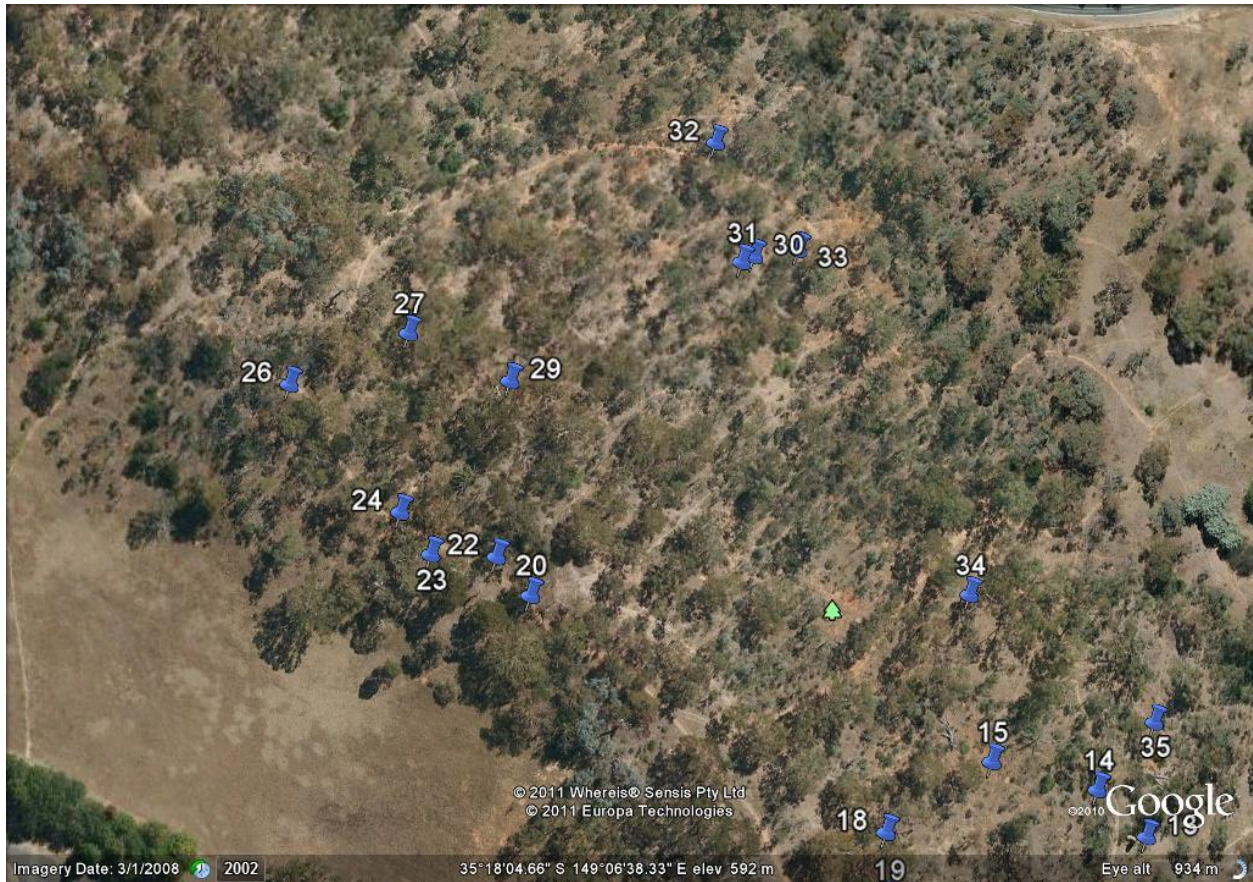
No 15 - Fallen tree trunk with steel cable wrapped around it. This cable is found in other parts of the park. It may have been used to put the tree over. The steam driven traction engines were fuelled by wood. There are a number of coppiced trees in the vicinity of the sewer workings.



No 16 - Scarred tree - the GPS in the Google Map at beginning of this chapter did not show and will have to be redone. This may be a mourning tree. The tree is the larger tree behind the trees in the foreground.







No 17 - Following is the 'Grandmother tree'. As with the tree shown in No 16 this site has to be redone. The nobbly growths were cut off by Ngunawal people, scooped out and used to carry eg water. On this hill and others in the Park there are many springs.



No 18 Below and following are a number of concrete slabs and the concrete trench - part of the sewer workings. This is the area where the deepest shaft down into the tunnel below is to be found. In the centre top section of the above photograph is one of the NCA concrete posts which marks this section. Following are photographs of coppices trees nearby to the slabs.



In the background of the photograph below is Mount Ainslie on far right.



Following photographs on next page show concrete slabs part of the sewer workings.



Below - concrete trench





Details of the slab with cut off metal rods. Note river rocks used in the concrete.









No 19 - Below gum tree with wire attached and embedded in the trunk. This is near several mounds of earth dumped from the sewer workings. The following photograph is of the hole in the trunk of the tree.





No 20 - On the following page are two scarred trees on the ridge. The first shows a scarred tree that was a fully grown tree before the arrival of Europeans. This tree along with the one nearby which has a scar now at ground level and others in the park were identified as Aboriginal by Kevi [deceased] who was a member of the Heritage Dept. She was a Koori lass from another area employed in the Dept. The scarred trees etc were identified by Ngunawal elders, Mr Don Bell and Mrs Ruth Bell. They confirmed that this area is of great significance to Ngunawal people and the trees identified at Ngunawal scarred trees. The person later was asked to identify the trees stated that he was not sure, and stated that the scar could have been made by animals rubbing against the trunk. This person also dismissed the nearby scarred tree as being Aboriginal in origin because Aboriginal people did not make scars low to the ground.

The soil near the second tree with the low scar has been heightened probably by the sewer men and no work has been carried out to find the natural level of the land. Mr Bell made an interesting comment - he noted that they did sit down at times to make the scars.

The cleared land behind the tree in the following photograph is part of Yarralumla property which was clear felled by Fred Campbell in the late 1890s. This area was the Westlake Horse Paddock and in later years a pound paddock. The men of HMAS Sydney who took part in the opening of Parliament ceremonies in May 1927 camped in this

paddock. They employed young Westlake lads to make a race track marked with white washed stones and to race the horses for them. When they left they piled the stones in a cairn and put a notice that referred to the city being dry at that time [ref Charlie Laws who was one of the Westlake lads].



The old tree shown above has been identified by Ngunawal elders, Mr and Mrs Bell, Kevi(deceased) a Koori lady who worked for the Heritage Dept as a Ngunawal scarred tree. Dr Robert Boden identified this tree as being fully grown before the arrival of Europeans. The tree in the next photograph which is nearby - off to the right of this photograph is that the current level of the soil comes up to the scar.





Above one of the stones in the area that appears to have been worked.

Information continued in Part 2