



Above: Hillside Hostel (left) and Capital Hill Hostel (right) 1950s or early 1960s.

CANBERRA'S POPULATION & THE ELECTORAL ROLLS 1928-1967

The first survey of 36 square miles Canberra city area was carried out in March 1909. A few years later Walter Burley Griffin won the design competition for the Federal Capital of Australia. In 1912 work on the infrastructure of the city began and the following year the future city was named – **CANBERRA**.

Construction work was interrupted by World War One when manpower and money was diverted to the war effort. In 1921 work resumed but on a far reduced scale than originally envisaged. The grand plans for a permanent Parliament House and other public buildings were scrapped in favour of a Provisional Parliament House, temporary administrative buildings and just sufficient buildings – houses, shops etc - to enable to Federal Parliament to move from Melbourne to Canberra. In 1926 the Government Printers moved to Canberra and the following year the public servants arrived. The Duke of York officially opened the Federal Parliament on 9th May 1927.

Construction work on the city slowed during the years of the Great Depression (1929- early 1940s) and World War Two (1939-1945). At war's end, Ben Chifley, the Labor Prime minister turned his attention to renewing the effort to continue construction the city. In 1949 Labor lost the election. However it was fortunate for the city that the new Prime Minister, Robert Menzies, took up the challenge to complete the city and it was his influence that saw the completion of the major landscape feature of Canberra – Lake Burley Griffin. As part of his plan, in 1958, Menzies had the National Capital Development Commission (NCDC) formed. The purpose of this organization was to continue the planning of the city. Part of this work was the development of the satellite cities of Woden and Belconnen.

In the early years Walter Burley Griffin was the man in *officially* in charge of design & planning. He was followed by the Federal Capital Advisory Committee (FCAC 1921-1924) and Federal Capital Commission (FCC 1925-1930). During this period the local population had no say in their civic affairs with the exception of 1928 when a vote for the return of alcohol sales to the territory and 1929 when some of the locals were given a vote to decide the Third

Commissioner. The 1929 vote was limited to one person per household and to people who had bought (leased) land in the territory. The people of Russell Hill and Oaks Estate were disenfranchised.

In 1930 the ACT Advisory Council was formed to advise the Minister for the Interior on matters relating to local needs. This elected advisory group continued under different names until self government in 1989 and allowed the people of the ACT to have some say in their local affairs. However it was only an advisory group and the Minister could and did overturn decisions made by the council.

At the Federal level the people of the ACT remained unrepresented until 11th May 1949 when their first elected representative sat in to the House of Representatives. However, it was not until August 1974 that the ACT gained two Senators to represent them in the Federal Parliament.

The transcribed electoral rolls are from the years – 1928, 1929, 1935, 1943, 1949, 1959 and 1967. They reflect the growth of the city and the occupation of the population during that period. They document the names of people living in the FCT (changed to ACT in 1938) 21 years of age or older of British or Australian citizenship. Australian Aboriginals were not counted as Australian citizens.

The National Capital Development Commission report Planning Survey Report of Canberra City District 1959 – pages 22-24 refers to these early years.

Population

Few expect to experience, within their own lifetime, the birth of an urban community and its growth to a metropolis. Yet this may well be the experience of some of today's residents of Canberra.

In 1911 Canberra was a village and the population of the whole of the Australian Capital Territory was only 1,921 persons. There-after growth of the territory was primarily determined by Canberra's development. In 1921 when building was resumed after the interruption caused by the 1st World War there were 1,200 residents, but by the census of June 1947, the population had risen to 15,156.

Until 1947, [sic – from 1927] the population growth had been due primarily to immigration of public servants from other parts of Australia. In 1947, only 4,800 of the 16,900 persons residing in the ACT were locally born while 43 percent of males and 53 percent of females, also breadwinners, were classified as employed in "public and professional" activities. At the same time, however, the 1,500 males employed in building and construction provided evidence of the plans which were being laid for future growth. Almost 16 percent of the population of the ACT was of school age and some seventy percent were within the working age group of 15-64 years. With such a high proportion engaged in public authority and professional activities, the work force for the expansion of schools, housing and retail and industrial services had to come from new immigrants. After 1947, many of these were new settlers from overseas, non-British as well as British.

The combination of a high birth rate and high rate of immigration almost doubled the population in the next intercensal period, June 1947 to June 1954. By the latter date there were approximately 28,300 residents in Canberra...

Other interesting features of the population structure are the masculinity rate and the high proportion of overseas born people. In all age groups over 15 years there is an average of between 110-125 males to every 100 females...

The First Citizens of the FCT and where they lived

Many of the people who lived on the land either as tenant farmers or owners prior to the resumption by the Commonwealth did remain in the territory. The Commonwealth gave people the option of leasing land on an annual basis up until the time the land was required by the Commonwealth.

Records of the local Aboriginal people in the area are limited. However, through oral histories it is known that some Ngunawal families continued to visit and live on lands within the ACT.

Construction workers in the period 1911-1921 were accommodated in segregated camps (married & single) near to worksites and out of sight of permanent Canberra. Prior to 1921-22 married men built humpies out of hessian, timber and iron for their families and single men lived in tents constructed from canvas and/or hessian. From 1921-22 a few cottages were provided for married men and single men continued to live in tents. From 1926 many tents were gradually replaced with timber cubicles. The four major camp sites were Cotter (construction of dam), Power House (Eastlake – Industrial area), Acton (Administrative) and Brickyards (Westridge – later named Yarralumla). Oaks Estate was part of Queanbeyan until the rail line was used to mark the border. This Canberra suburb is often ignored. It developed into a workmen's suburb in the 1920s.

1921 – circa 1929

The first married quarters provided for married men and a few single tradesmen was in the converted ex-internment camp at Molonglo (Fyshwick). This temporary suburb was followed by others - Westlake (Stirling Park, Yarralumla), Howie's Settlement (Stirling Park), Causeway, humpy suburbs of Riverbourne and Russell Hill (Campbell). Single men's camps were erected near work sites and in 1925 three semi-permanent camps were erected – on the north side near Civic - White City Camp, on Capitol Hill in the centre of Canberra – Capitol Hill Hostel and on the south side – Causeway Camp. The majority of camps closed by 1927, however some such as Capital Hill, Causeway, Mugga Quarry, Parkes Way and Red Hill remained and men from these camps are recorded on the 1928 roll. (Canberra has a record in the early years of renaming areas – Blandfordia became Forrest, Eastlake became Kingston; Molonglo became Fyshwick and the former Fyshwick became Pialligo.)

The Federal Beginnings and the Arrival of the Public Servants

From early 1927 the majority of government departments necessary for the running of the Federal Government arrived in readiness for the opening of Parliament. The newcomers were moved into the newly erected dwellings in the suburbs of Ainslie (later divided into Ainslie, Braddon and Reid) for lower paid public servants; Blandfordia (Forrest – for upper class public servants); Griffith, Red Hill, Mugga Way, Eastlake (Kingston) and Barton. Deakin was established but had only a couple of houses. Single people were moved into the Hotels Acton and Ainslie and Houses – Gorman (former Hotel Ainslie 1925-27), Beauchamp and Brassey. The Bachelors Quarters at Acton that opened in December 1912 continued to accommodate single men of the white collar class. The Printers Quarters and Lady Hopetoun Club were established in 1926. The former was used to accommodate the printers and the latter single women some of whom came to Australia to work as servants. Others worked in lower paid office positions. Hotels Canberra was Hostel No 1 built to house politicians. Later the Hotel Kurrajong also became a politician's hotel. The Hotels Wellington and Kingston were also early hotels and in the early 1930s the Hotel Civic was built.

The Depression and World War Two years 1929-1945

Very little construction work was carried out during these years. The established suburbs were expanded and the suburb of Turner was begun.

Post World War 2 1946 – 1960s

1947-1955 O'Connor was the new suburb developed during this period of time and was followed in the 1956-58 period by the suburb of Campbell.

In the post World War Two era with the resumption of construction work it was necessary to provide additional single accommodation to house the influx of people. Single men's camps constructed at this time include, Riverside, Fairbairn, Turner, Capital Hill (new camp) and Hillside Hostels. Ainslie Hostel was established for married couples. Single blue and white collar workers – both male and female – were accommodated in Reid House, Mulwala and Narellan Hostels. These were in addition to the permanent buildings already in use that included the Houses - Gorman, Beauchamp, Lawley, Havelock, Brassey, Barton, Lennox (former Bachelors Quarters and later Acton Guest House) and the Kingston Guest House (former Printers Quarters). Accommodation at Acton for students was also provided for people attending the Australian National University and for nurses working at the Royal Canberra Hospital. The construction of flats also increased to help ease the housing shortage. They included on the north side the Bega, Allawah, Currong and Northbourne Flats.

By 1967 – The Woden Valley suburbs of Curtin, Hughes, Garran, Lyons, Chifley, Pearce, Torrens, Mawson and Farrer were established. Some suburbs such as Mawson were only partly built in 1967.

During the period that the electoral rolls cover there was a severe housing shortage that often led to several generations of the one family sharing a house. Most people lived in government owned housing. For those who could afford to build after World War Two they were faced with a two year limit to build the house and a shortage of tradesmen and building materials that included bricks. The brick rationing limited dwelling size to 11 squares.

YEAR	Number of people enrolled	Additional information
1928	4,698	First electoral roll FCT
1929		Oaks Estate and Russell Hill residents were disenfranchised.
1935	5,351	Depression year
1943	8,438	<i>Australian Facts & Figures</i> states that the census of 30 th June 1933 showed a population of 8,947 in the ACT and the census of 30 th June 1947 the population had increased to

		16,905
1949	12,331	
1959	22,149	The total population of the ACT was 46,070 of whom 43,973 lived in the Canberra City District (NCDC 17 th Annual Report 1973-74)
1967	50,671	The total population of the ACT in 1967 was 103,478 of whom 100,938 lived in the Canberra City District (NCDC 17 th Annual Report).

THE ROLLS

In this transcription of the rolls only the first name and surname are copied. These rolls in addition to address include occupations. Particularly in the early years the majority of married women did not officially work for paid employment. They have **home duties** after their names. The spelling of typist often uses the feminine form - **typiste**. Some other occupations in the early years that may need explanation are – **useful**, **vulcanizer** and **spawler**. The first is perhaps self explanatory – he was a useful – perhaps a *jack of all trades*. The vulcanizer fixed inner tubes of tyres and the spawler broke up the rocks that formed the basis of roads.

The majority of men in the 1928 roll put **labourer** as their occupation and this included many who certainly were not labourers. One example is that of Harold Tuson who was one of the four men put in charge in 1926 of the forestry plantings.

By 1967 the majority of women on the roll still put down **home duties** for their occupation. However the range of women's occupations expanded greatly and included professional occupations such as **medical practitioner**, **dental nurse**, **receptionist**, **botanist** and **horticulturalist**. The occupations of the men are also more varied than 1928 and as well as the trades occupations included **TV repairers** and **computer operators**. The professional classes are well represented and include for example **university lecturers**, **medical practitioners** and **dentists**. At least one **air traffic controller** is in the 1967 electoral roll and a number of representatives. The army, navy and airforce are also well represented amongst the 1960s occupations.

The names of people living at Jervis Bay, Wreck Bay and Sussex Inlet – the coastal area of the ACT – are also included.



