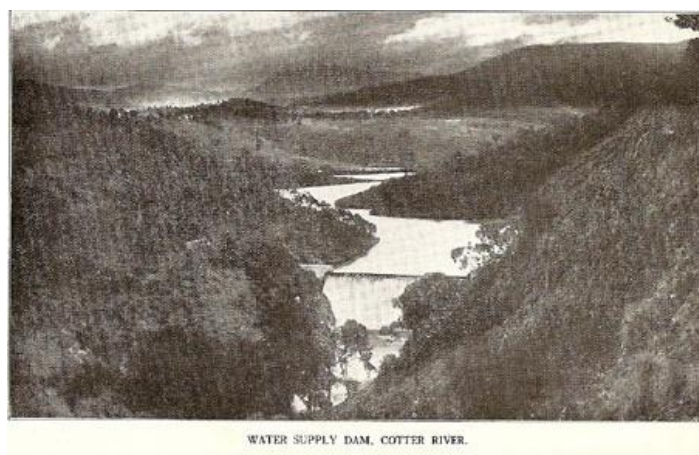


CHAPTER FIVE

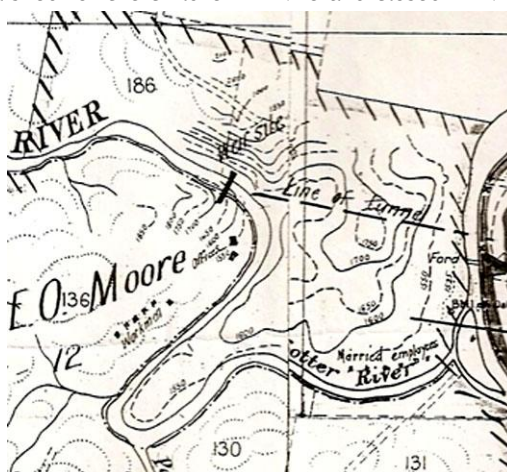
CANBERRA'S WATER SUPPLY; THE COTTER DAM, PUMPING STATION, BRIDGE BUILDING & COTTER RIVER CAMPS [1913-1917 & c1922]



Above: 1926 view of Cotter Dam. The Dam was designed by Colonel PT Owen.

BACKGROUND

Essential to the proposed construction of the federal city was a good water supply. It was found in the Cotter River. It was considered to be a good reliable supply of clean water sufficient for a city and the site selected for the dam was on the Cotter River near its meeting place with the Murrumbidgee. Work commenced in 1912. Construction workers camps were established by 1913 near the work sites. The single men's camp was set up not far from the dam and the married quarters on the other side of a hill near the meeting of the two rivers. A tent school was established for the children in 1913 and closed in 1917.



Above: Detail of map dated 30 June 1913 [NAA A657/1 D514-1919] The Cotter River is on the left and joins the Murrumbidgee right.

With the decision to build the dam the construction camps at the Cotter became one of the five early settlements of Canberra. The men worked on the dam and other infrastructure that included cutting a tunnel through a hill, laying pipes and building a road. That there were industrial problems at the dam site is noted in one of the documents in NAA that refers to a strike in 1913 when James Ryan, working on the pipe line at Cotter was sacked. [1a]. During the time of the work the locals used a ford to cross the river close to the site of the Married Quarters 1913-1917 Camp which was at the junction of the Cotter and Murrumbidgee Rivers.

Other camps were established in the area as other work was required. One was set up in the early 1920a on the bank below a hill opposite the permanent bridge across the Murrumbidgee River opposite the pumping

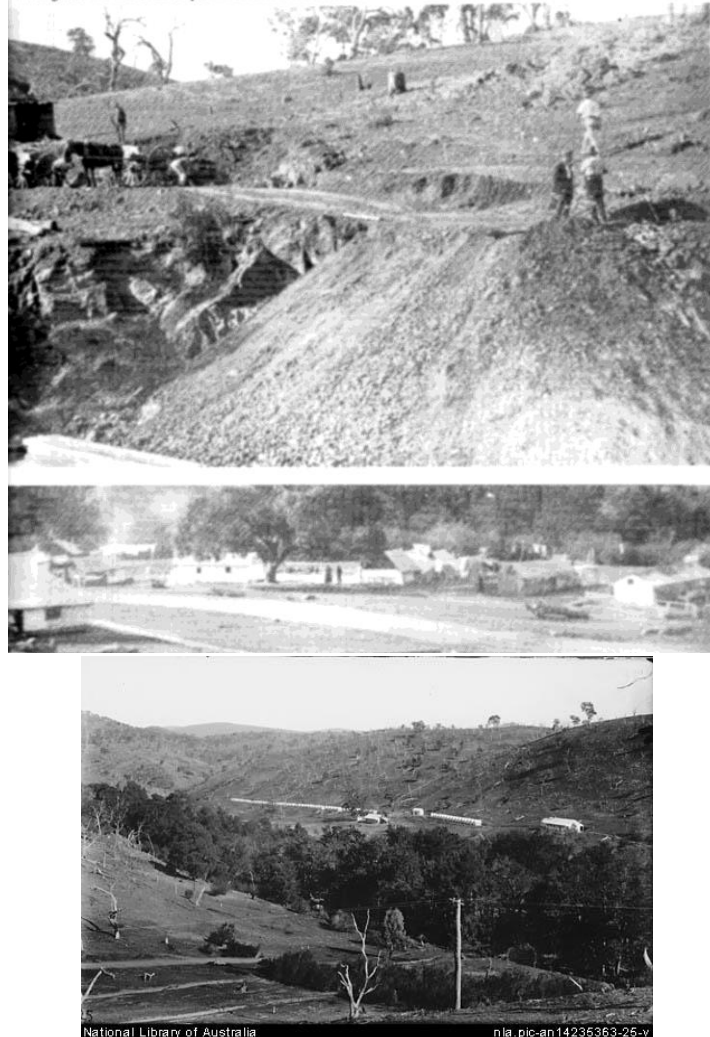
station. The men in this camp worked on the construction of the permanent bridge. Mrs Marion Stanley was the Mess Caterer and the site of this camp was shown to me by her daughter, Mrs Cecily Hinchliffe.

Water from the Cotter was pumped to a reservoir on Mt Stromlo and then flowed by gravity down to Red Hill Reservoir. This reservoir was under construction in 1913 and nearby a camp was established for the men working on the project.

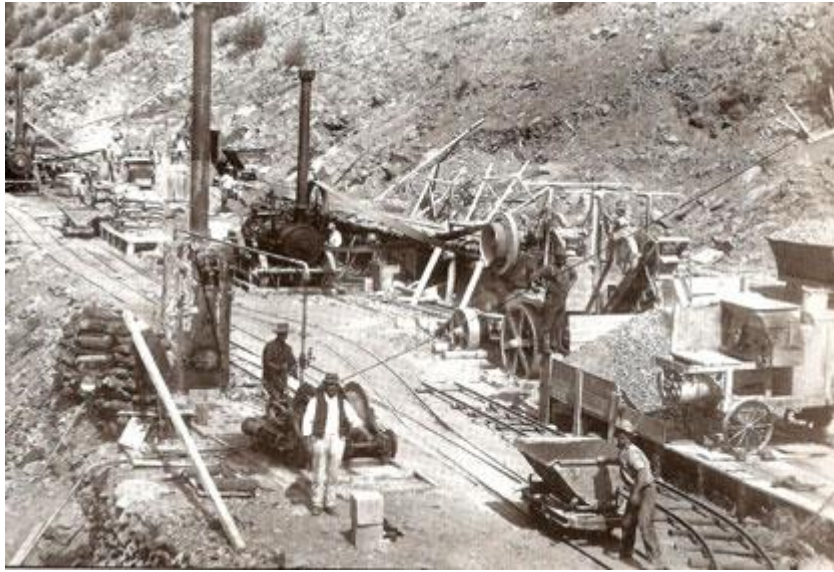
The dam and pipeline were completed before the end of 1917 and by 12 May the following year the pumping station on the Murrumbidgee was ready for use. [1]

Water was not pumped to Canberra until 1919 when the electricity supply from the Power House was connected. It is interesting to note that the first supplies were not destined for the settlements where the builders of Canberra lived. Instead the supply was intended for the Royal Military College Duntroon, Molonglo Internment Camp and the Arsenal Township and Factory. Costs related to connecting this service was to be shared by the three. However, the decision to scrap the arsenal project left the bill with the remaining two. Pumping of water occurred only once or twice a month in this early period and stored in tanks. [2]. Because of lack of local expertise in the use of the pump men were brought up from Melbourne to carry out the task.

Photographs: Top: Site for the Pumping Station Cotter River 25.4.1914 Middle: Married men's camp Cotter River 27.7.1914 Bottom: Single men's camp near the Cotter Dam 27.7.1914. All photographs taken by Harry Connell, Chief Civil Engineer Works Section Department of Home and Territories.



Top photograph 24.4.1914 men working on the pumping station site. Centre Married quarters Cotter. Bottom photograph: Single men's camp Nla.pic-an 14235363-25-v All photographs taken by Harry Connell 27.7.1914.



Above: CDHS photograph showing men working in the area near the dam wall.

THE HOUSE FOR THE ENGINEER & OTHERS WORKING AT THE PUMPING STATION

There were a group of houses near the pumping station. The 2003 fires destroyed some of the cottages. The first of the cottages was constructed for the Chief Engineer of the pumping station. Prior to the construction of this cottage he was not supplied with a local home. The plans were initially for a brick cottage but were soon reduced to timber with brick entrance. Some understanding of the plan and change of plan may be noted in the following archival document.

- 25 August 1925 - G3 type of cottage selected. The Chief Engineer decided that the cottage should be built about 100 ft to the North of the Power House and Pumping station.
 - Walls up to floor line to be constructed in concrete.
 - Outside walls to be rendered similar to Pump House
 - Ends of rafters to shew as in pump house
 - The ground will not be cut away at the back door and so the back step will be 6in above the ground. This will make from wall about 3ft high.
 - Roof in tiles in similar colour to Pump House
 - Water and sewerage services only to outside of hours;
- 5 July, 1926 the Chief Engineer, Mr Brownless, wrote:

On a visit to the Pumping Station I found the pump Attendant, Mr Pike, very dissatisfied with his lot in that there is no sign of a house being built and it is recommended that this matter be finalised.

Bancroft wrote in reply that the cost of the house would be 900 pounds.
- 4 November 1926 the building was changed to T1 style with tiles red, walls up to floors in concrete and painted cream and white to match as near as possible the exterior of the pump house.
- The style again changed to G3 type which was also rejected because of costs
- 12 May 1927 decision made to erect a T12 style. [6]
- The other cottages were erected in 1938 and the 1950s.



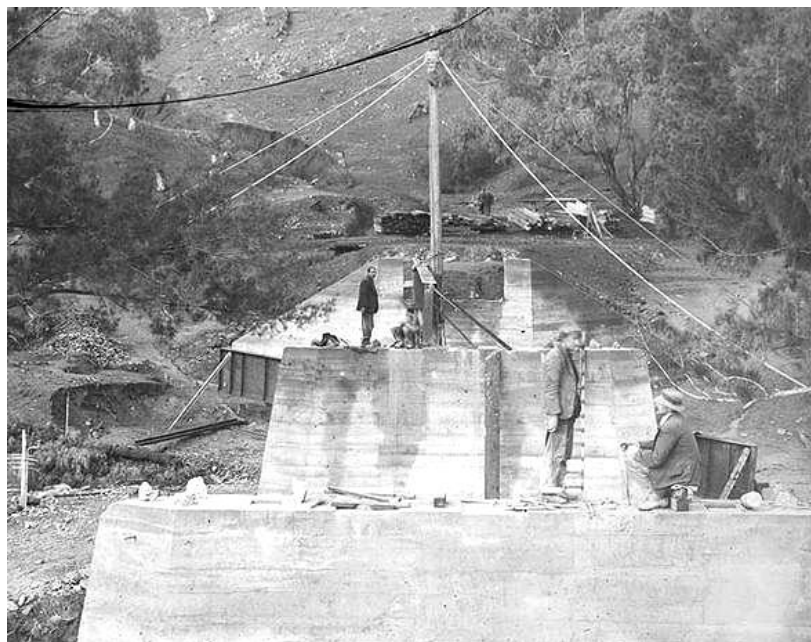
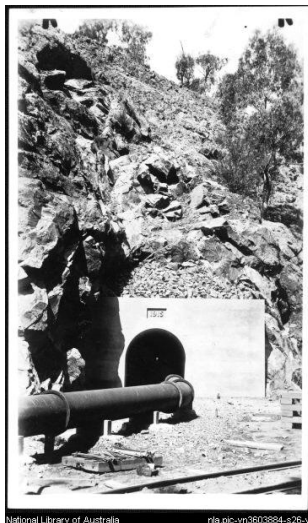
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- Nla.pic-vn3299631-v Harry Connell photograph



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- Nla.pic-vn32999586

The early 1920s camp for men working on the bridge across the Murrumbidgee River was on the flat land on the right. It was below the exit of the tunnel through the hill constructed for the water pipe from the Cotter Dam to the pumping Station. This was one of the favoured walking areas for children who visiting the Cotter. Below right: *We rode our bikes to the Cotter*. L-R rear: Carmel Maxwell, Kath Poulter, Jimmy Byrnes, ..Poulter. Centre: Ann Austin and below: Raymond Menzies





Above left: 1915 Eric Milton Nicolls collection nla.pic-vn3603884 - photograph taken from the Cotter Dam side.
right: Mildenhall nla.pic-an 11030057-392-v – men working on the bridge across the Murrumbidgee

Adrie Callan (nee O'Neill) who was born at Westlake, remembered the tunnel in her story in *True Tales From Canberra's Vanished Suburbs of Westlake, Westridge & Acton*. She wrote: *My father Joe O'Neill and his brother, Leo, who were experienced miners, came to Canberra in 1913 to work on the Cotter Dam and tunnel. Nearly seventy five years later, Work Supervisor, Eric Lowes who had been involved in the inspection of the tunnel told me that he had seen their names on the tunnel wall.*

My memories of the Cotter are linked with the Trades & Labour Day picnics when trucks with long stools in the back pulled up, loaded us aboard and took up to the picnic day at Cotter. These were exciting times. In the late 1950s the area of the Cassarina Sands below the Pumping Station area became a favoured picnic spot.

THE COTTER - NEWSPAPER ARTICLES:

The Argus 7 September 1912: *Federal Capital. Construction of Reservoir. Another stage in the erection of the Federal capital will shortly begin by the construction of a dam on the Cotter River and a reservoir ten miles distant which will be connected with the dam by a cast iron pipe. The total cost of the dam and reservoir is estimated at 90,000 pounds, but is not likely that more than 9,000 pounds will be spent in the current financial year. Tenders will shortly be called for the supply of the pipe...*

The Argus 22 January 1913

FEDERAL CAPITAL - PRELIMINARY WORK- WATER SUPPLY GOOD

From investigations which were recently completed by Colonel Owen, director of general works in the Home Affairs Department, it would seem that the water supply in the Federal capital territory promises to be satisfactory. Colonel Owen has inspected the watershed of the Cotter River, which is to be the source of the domestic supplies for the capital city. He was greatly impressed with what he saw, and there was a good flow in the river bed in spite of the dry season which has been experienced. 'There is enough water going down the Cotter,' Colonel Owen remarked, 'to supply, with storage, a city the size of Melbourne.

Preliminary work has already been commenced in connection with the damming of the river, and a start has been made on the earthworks for the service reservoir which is to be established at Head [sic Red] Hill. When completed it will be filled by pipes from the reservoir which is to be constructed on Mount Stromlo.

For the main power-house which is to supply the Federal Capital with all its energy tenders have already been accepted. This is to be one of the permanent buildings, and it will be constructed in accordance with

the design which was approved by the Minister (Mr O'Malley) at the end of the last Federal session. The power-house is to be a steel framed structure, and will be capable of accommodating the immense plant which will eventually be needed. Only one unit of power is to be installed immediately, and this will be gradually increased as the energy is required. Tenders are shortly to be invited for the supply of cables to be used in connection with the distribution of electricity, including a high-tension line to the Cotter River for operating the pumping station.

Bricks to be used in the public buildings are to be made by the Home Affairs department in the territory. Plans are now being prepared for this phase of the work, but the preliminary stage will be confined only to the making of bricks which will be used for constructing the permanent kilns at which later on the material to be used in the public buildings will be made.

An extensive workmen's camp is being arranged for in the vicinity of the capital site and it includes offices and storehouses. For those men who do not desire to make their own living arrangements tentage accommodation will be provided on liberal terms. Water for the camps will be drawn from the Cotter River, and there will be a proper septic system of sewerage. The camps will be conducted on the most hygienic lines.

The Mercury 4 March 1913: Clearing operations at the Cotter River dam are reported to be proceeding satisfactorily, while the stripping of the foundation is just being put in hand. Excavations have already begun at the site of the service reservoir on Red Hill. A special road is being constructed between the city and the Cotter River, to facilitate transport in connection with the water supply scheme. A temporary bridge is being built over the Murrumbidgee River for the same purpose. Tenders have been accepted for the first unit of the power plant which is to supply electricity for lighting and power purposes. The latter will include pumping and brickmaking. Tenders have recently been obtained for the provision of 1,000,000 additional super feet of timber for use in building operation of the most valuable joinery timbers is now being erected.

The Canberra Times 12 December 1953: 40 YEARS OF CHANGE AT THE COTTER; When Mr CR Scrivener selected the Canberra site for the Australian capital he proposed that the territory should include the whole of the catchment area of the Cotter River 'in order that a pure water supply may be placed beyond doubt.'

Canberra has, in fact the purest water supply of any large Australian city... The dam as originally designed by Col PT Owen was to have been taken to a height of 110 feet, but the first structure has been completed to a height of 60 feet when the first water was conveyed to the Canberra area in 1921.

Meanwhile the early needs of Canberra in the construction period were met from soakage wells close to the Molonglo River. Towards the end of 1913 6,000 tons of cast iron pipes were delivered to the Cotter site and the river bed was stripped to the foundations while boring of rock proceeded to receive the main superstructure.

An approach bridge had to be built across the Murrumbidgee for the delivery of materials, and work started on the first service reservoir at Red Hill.

The first camp for workmen engaged in permanent works in connection with Canberra was established at the Cotter River where a school was also provided for about 30 children of workmen.

The original beauty of the lower Cotter was largely restored by the laying out of picnic grounds and tree planting which followed the completion of the dam in 1922...

The Sydney Morning Herald 14 June 1915:...But the busiest perhaps, of all the works in progress in the initiatory stages of the Federal city are those in connection with the city's water supply. From Bulga Creek to the Murrumbidgee River and thence across to the Cotter River dam, whence is to be supplied the water for Canberra, and farther still (with the main object of furnishing an artery of communication for tourists to the famous attractions on the tablelands beyond, there is road construction as far as the eye can reach, camps of workmen forming a continuous connection. Splendid roads, exhibiting wonderful engineering skill wind by curves and zigzags down to the river itself. There they connect with a bridge spanning the river. The structure is formed of four spans, formed by piers of concrete, with a concrete abutment on either side of the river. The two main spans are each of 35 ft with two narrower stretch. Steel girders are already laid across the narrower spans, the two main spans having yet to have their girders placed in position. The work

would have been in a more forward state but for a recent high flood, which did considerable damage to the structure.

When completed and thrown open for traffic the Cotter Junction bridge will connect with the road beyond, which not only gives access to the Cotter weir, but is to be carried on to the Brindabella Road somewhere on the north side of Mount Coree....

At the weir, a short distance up the Cotter River there is a populous camp engaged in their work proper and in tunnelling operations.

These latter operations are needed to conduct the outflow from the dam as far as they can be conducted by gravitation to the point whence pumping power will be necessary to convey the water to the service reservoir on Mugga Mugga Hill for distribution by gravitation into the Federal City. The tunnelling is the continuation of a channel connecting with the dam. And pierced a hill some 330ft high at a level which carries the channel below the river bed, and to the east side of the Murrumbidgee into a reservoir to be sunk there. Here the pumping machinery will be erected to force the water as above explained. For the pumping machinery will be erected to force the water as above explained. For river-gauging, meteorological and other valuable information is to be recorded at Mount Stromlo Observatory, a telephone and telegraph line is also in course of construction from Cotter Junction to the Observatory.

The Canberra Times 7 February 1928: Engineers' Conference Held in Canberra part of the report reads as follows:

There were three sources from which supply might be taken:- The Queanbeyan River Catchment Area, The Gudgenby-Naas Catchment area [and] the Cotter Catchment Area...The Cotter was found to be the source of the purest water supply and the best catchment area for the conservation and was a tract practically unalienated by the Crown...The construction of the dam presented no great engineering difficulties beyond dealing with water during river floods. One of the floods carried away part of the construction plant which had been occupying the river bank as there was no space for it on the steep slopes of the Gorge...The water had to be pumped up to the Stromlo Reservoir and Red Hill and from these sites gravitation was used.

COTTER RIVER CAMPS -

31 December Census 1913 at Cotter River

Head of Household	M	F	Total
Cotter Junction			
Anderson, CA	1	0	1
Ashton, H	4	0	4
Boyd, R	3	3	6
Burke, R	1	0	1
Chalker, W	1	0	1
Chappell, C	2	0	2
Chatterton, MJ	1	1	2
Crough, F	1	0	1
Dickens, J	1	0	1
Donner, M	2	1	3
Dunne, M	1	0	1
Dunphy, T	1	0	1
Favargul,	1	0	1
Goss, Joseph	1	0	1
Grant, John	3	3	6
Johnson, JE	1	0	1
Hall, Charles	1	0	1
Harris, GE	1	1	2
Henderson, A	3	2	5
Kennedy, AE	1	0	1
Lewis, W	2	2	4
Louder, W	2	0	2

Manny, Thos	1	0	1
Moore, AJ	4	2	6
Murrin, J	2	2	4
McCauley, SR	1	1	2 (married 1913)
McGlynn, V	2	2	4
McKenna, P	1	0	1
Nilsson, A	3	2	5
O'Neill, Jas	1	0	1
Potter, FW	1	2	3
Prout, John	1	0	1
Pryor, Jack	2	1	3
Pullin, James	4	1	5
Ray, Harold	4	2	6
Ray, Hanes	4	1	5
Robinson, James	3	3	5 (or 6?)
Ryan, Geo	1	0	1
Ryan, Jas	1	0	1
Scott, John B	1	0	1
Sparks, JH	1	4	5
Taylor, D	1	2	3
Thomas, RF	1	0	1
Tyquin, W	1	0	1
White, PP	2	1	3
Wilson, H		2	2
Winter, J	1	0	1
Wood, WH	1	0	1
Woodward, John	1	0	1
Total:	80	42	122

Cotter Falls

Oldfield, HT	3	1	4
Rustin, John	4	0	4
Total	7	1	8

1916 ELECTORAL ROLL COTTER

Cotter JUNCTION

ALDERTON, Lillian May & William	home duties & labourer
ALLISON, Thomas	labourer
DALEY, Francis	school teacher
MOORE, Emily & Henry	home duties & grazier
WHITE, Emily & Feliz	home duties & labourer

COTTER RIVER

BASHFORD, Edward	labourer
BENNETT, Louise and Gilbert	home duties & engine driver
BLEWITT, Elizabeth and Ernest	home duties & labourer
BOURKE, Alice	home duties
BOURKE, Charles	labourer
CANNING, James	labourer
BOURKE, Thomas	labourer
CHALMERS, Alick	labourer
CLUB, George	labourer
DREDGE, Olive & Richard	home duties & labourer
DUNN, George	blacksmith
ELGAR, Elizabeth & Thomas	home duties & engine driver

FAY, Patrick	labourer
FINLAYSON, John	clerk
FRASER, Olive & William	home duties & carpenter
GIFFORD, Eva	home duties
GREALIS, John	labourer
HATTERLEY, Alfred	engine driver
HAZELWOOD, Sarah & Alick	home duties labourer
LYNCH, Luke	labourer
LYNCH, Owen	labourer
MAHONEY, John	labourer
MOORE, Harriett & Arthur	home duties & labourer
MURRIN, Emily & George	home duties & labourer
NOONE, Herbert	labourer
ROBINSON, Jane	home duties
SEARSON, Jack	labourer
SIVYER, Leon	cook
STAUNTON, John	labourer
TAYLOR, Mary & Daniel	home duties & axeman
TINKER, Lily & Nathaniel	home duties & labourer
WALSH, Ellen & John	home duties & labourer
WOODS, William	labourer
WOODWARD, Mary & John	home duties & labourer

On 11 February 1917 at Cotter single camp there were 25 camp sites available. Only a few (6d per week rental) were used. No 1 Hazlewood; No 11 Robinson J; No 15 Woodward J; No 16 Tinkern; No 17 Taylor, D; No 18 Bourke, C; No 19 Murrin G and No 22 White F. [7]

1917 ELECTORAL ROLL

COTTER JUNCTION

MOORE, Emily & Henry	home duties & grazier
OLDFIELD, Sarah	home duties
WHITE, Emily & Felix	home duties & labourer

COTTER RIVER

BLEWITT, Elizabeth & Ernest	home duties & labourer
BLEWITT, Louisa & William	home duties & labourer
CANNING, James	labourer
GIFFORD, Eva	home duties
McDonald, John	labourer
MOORE, Harriett & Arthur	home duties & labourer
NOONE, Herbert	labourer
RITTER, Louisa	home duties
ROBINSON, Jane	home duties
SIVKER, Leon	cook
STAUNTON, John	labourer
TAYLOR, Mary	home duties
TINKER, Lily & Nathaniel	home duties & labourer

1928 ELECTORA ROLL - COTTER

COTTER DAM

GRAY, David	labourer
LAWLESS, George	labourer
PIKE, Louisa & John	home duties & engineer
PRINGLE, John	labourer
WITT, George	ganger
WITT, Harold	labourer

COTTER JUNCTION

COOKE, James	labourer
MATHIESON, Amy & Andrew	home duties & labourer
O'BRIEN, James	labourer
WILSON, Ethel & Matthew	home duties & labourer

COTTER ROAD

ALISON, William	grazier_
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Arawang COTTER ROAD

BROWN, Henry	grazier
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Fairvale COTTER RIVER

STUART, Douglas	grazier
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Illowra COTTER ROAD

TANNER, Guy	grazier
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The Pines, COTTER ROAD

WEAVER, Marie & Herbert	home duties & ranger_
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COTTER RIVER

BLEWITT, Ernest	grazier
HANCOCK, Edith & James	home duties & carter
OLSSON, Violet & Henning	home duties & ganger
RITTER, Louis & Louis	labourer & turnkey
TANNER, Guy	grazier
WIDSTALL, Charles	labourer

Spring Valley COTTER ROAD

JAMIESON, Evelyn & Thomas	home duties & farmer
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EXAMPLES OF DOCUMENTS:**22 July 1916: Page from a Report on Work in Hand****22.7.1916 Sewer:**

• 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 asst powder monkeys @ 11/-	6 pounds 12/-
• 1 engine driver @ 12/4	3 pounds 14/-
• 2 gangers @ 15/-	9 pounds
• 5 winch drivers @ 11/-	16 pounds 10/-
• 2 carpenters @ 14/-	8 pounds 8/-
• 6 truckers @ 11/4	20 pounds 8/-
• 1 electrician @ 14/6	4 pounds 7/-
• 1 toolsharpeners @ 12/-	3 pounds 18/-
• 1 bullock driver @ 10/6	3 pounds 3/-
• 1 ganger @ 16/6	4 pounds 19/-
• 2 leading hands @ 14/-	8 pounds 8 shillings
• 7 builder's labourers @ 13/6	28 pounds 7/-
○ [Total]	220 pounds 1/-

Yarralumla

Additions and repairs Yarralumla house nearing completion. Men employed on this work are:

• 2 plumbers @ 15/-	9 pounds
• 1 plumber's assistant @ 9/-	2 pounds 14/-

- 2 carpenters @ 14/- 8 pounds 8/-
- 1 painter @ 14/- 4 pounds 4/-
- [Total] 24 pounds 6/- per week

TELEPHONE LINE, STROMLO RESERVOIR TO MAIN TRANSMISSION LINE

Now in progress. Men employed on this work are:

- 1 bridge carpenter @ 13/- 3 pounds 18/-
- 2 labourers @ 11/- 6 pounds 12/-
- 1 horse, dray & driver @ 15/4 4 pounds 12/-
- [Total] 15 pounds 2/- per week

COTTER PUMPING STATION

Laying of floors nearing completion, pumping operations Murrumbidgee to Stromlo usual progress. Men employed on this work are:

- 4 builders labourers @ 13/6 16 pounds 4/-
- 1 carpenter @ 14/- (part of week) 4 pounds 4/-
- 1 horse, dray & driver @ 15/4 (pt of week) 4 pounds 12/-
- [Total] 25 pounds per week

COTTER WALL

General concreting operations going on, 324 yards of concrete placed in position during the week, clearing reservoir site nearing completion. Men employed on this work are:

- 43 builders labourers @ 13/6 176 pounds 3/-
- 13 labourers @ 10/- 39 pounds
- 7 horse & dray drivers @ 15/4 34 pounds 4/-
- 1 foreman @ 17/6 5 pounds 5/-
- 3 carpenters @ 14/- 12 pounds 12/-
- 1 leading hand @ 14/- 4 pounds 4/-
- 1 blacksmith @ 14/4 4 pounds 6/-
- 1 timekeeper @ 12/6 3 pounds 15/-
- 1 striker @ 11/- 3 pounds 6/-
- 1 nipper @ 8/- 2 pounds 8/-
- 5 engine drivers @ 13/4 20 pounds
- [Total] 301 pounds 3/- per week

GUNGHALEEN

Repairs and additions to Gungahleen house under way. Good progress being maintained, the number of men employed on this work are....

29 August 1917 WO Russell's Report stated:

Cotter Mess Rooms (6 rooms), empty, lavatory, telephone, vacant - Pumping Station 2 buildings required by Works- machinery and electrical required. [8]

25 October 1917 - Only the vacant messroom and office needed a caretaker. Mr Brilliant required the two solid brick buildings at the Pumping Station. They contained set and unset machinery and electrical appliances. The key for same was at the Power House. [9]

COTTER DAM, RECREATIONAL AREA

TOURISM

From the beginnings of the Cotter Dam the area was conceived as an important recreational area for locals and visitors. Camping grounds and a kiosk were established in the twenties and in 1922 a proposal was made to build a twelve bedroom guest house to be built opposite the bridge. The project was never completed. [3] However, cubicles were brought to the area in the 1930s and were erected in the area of the tent camp opposite the kiosk. [4]



Strangman photograph nla.pic-vn4388176 - detail of the grounds of the kiosk at the Cotter

The Cotter was a favourite recreation place for both locals and visitors. The Trades and Labour Day Picnics were particular favourites of adults and children alike - I speak from personal experience. Following are articles from *The Canberra Times* about these picnics which were looked forward to all year by children in the settlements:

The Canberra Times Friday 5 January 1934 page 2

THE COTTER

Improvements to be Made - Swimming Pool and Caves

The influx of tourists to Canberra during the Christmas and New Year holidays has been more marked than any previous years and in order to induce tourists to come to Canberra it is the intention of the Federal Government to make access to the different places of interest more easy and attractive.

With this in view the first place to receive attention will be the Cotter River and its environs.

The Minister of the Interior (Mr Perkins) stated yesterday that a number of unemployed men would be given work at the Cotter River carrying out certain improvements. The first of which would be the deepening of the swimming pool and other work would be in connection with the caves.

Mr Perkins called for a report on the work and as soon as that report had been made available to him work will be commenced immediately.

Referring to the caves, Mr Perkins said that a track would be made from the picnic ground near the swimming pool to the caves which are situated about three-quarters of a mile up Paddy's River. In addition to the track, the approach to the caves would be made much easier and the descent not so hazardous. so that tourists may be able to visit the caves with every confidence of safety, the roof in parts will be made safe and the electric light installed. This will be run from the mains at the pumping station, which is situated at the junction of the Cotter and Murrumbidgee Rivers.

Mr Perkins pointed out that the idea will be to add to the attractions of the tourist resorts in and around Canberra which will be an asset to the community.

'Nature has provided Canberra with these beauties,' he said, 'and it is a pity that full use is not made of them.'

After the work has been completed at the Cotter River consideration will be given of making of a motor road to the top of Mount Ainslie.

Above: Picnic party at the Cotter 1930s. Seated centre is Jene Saunders and younger sister and husband to be ...Baker. The young woman far right in foreground is one of the Knight girls from Westlake.

The Canberra Times 19 November 1938 - Labour Picnic - At Cotter in January

The Canberra Trades and Labour council will hold its first annual picnic at the Cotter River on the Sunday prior to Anniversary Day, January 22. A ball will be held on Saturday evening January 21. It is intended to make the picnic one of the most attractive outdoor events of the year, and preparations will be made to cope with a crowd of at least 1,500 persons. Children will be admitted free, and a nominal charge will be made for adults.

The Canberra Times 30 December 1939 - LABOUR PICNIC -Organising Canberra Outing

The Canberra Trades and Labour Council is planning for a record gathering at the second annual picnic to be held at the Cotter River Picnic Grounds on Sunday, January 28. A programme of sports events for young and old has been arranged and in this respect the Council acknowledges the support of business firms which have made donations and provided trophies for the contests.

Motor truck owners have also co-operated with the organisers of the picnic, and arrangements have been made to pick up passengers at Manuka, Westridge, Westlake, Ainslie and Civic Centre.

It is anticipated that a picnic will be officially opened by Mr D Watkins MHR. Adults will be charged 1/- for admission to the grounds but children will be admitted free of charge.

The programme of sporting events will comprise three sections of tug-o-war teams, races for men and women, teams relay race for members of affiliated unions, throwing at wicket, rope, quoits, sack races, truck drivers' races, and a number of contests for children. In addition each child will receive an ice cream, and a bag of lollies. Hot water will be available.



Above: Molly Dunn, sister Isabelle and Violet Austin - at the Cotter in the area below the Dam circa 1941 and right Jene Saunders (centre seated - younger sister centre and future husband - Baker) 1930s Cotter. One of the Knight girls from Westlake bottom second right.



Above: Circa 1926-27 At the Cotter Dam. Ron Baum photograph.

The Canberra Times 19 January 1940 - LABOUR PICNIC - Canberra's Annual Outing

The picnic committee of the Canberra Trades and Labour council has allotted the trophies for the various sporting events to be held at the annual picnic at Cotter River on Sunday January 28.

Many fine trophies have been donated and these are on display at Freebody's Sports Depot Kingston. It was decided to include in the programme a 100 yards open foot race for members of the Defence Forces (Naval, Military and Air units).

Unless three teams nominate for the ladies' tug-o-war the event will be cancelled.

Transport arrangements will be completed early next week, and the public will be notified regarding the pick-up depots and times of departure through the columns of this paper.

The Canberra Times 27 January 1941 - UNION MARCH - TRADES AND LABOUR COUNCIL PICNIC

Granted fine weather the Trades and Labour Council's carnival at the Manuka Oval to-day should be a success. It is expected that more than 3,000 people will attend. More than 3000 unionists will march from the Canberra Railway station to the Manuka Oval. The march is scheduled to commence at 9.30am.

The Manuka Oval during the week-end presented a hive of activity. Marquees have been erected around the ground and a merry-go-round has been installed for the younger generation. Many families are making the day a picnic one and hot water will be provided free. Races for women and children will take up the morning, while in the afternoon the pedestrian events which have aroused considerable interest will be decided. At night, a dance will be held in the Albert Hall.

From the early years a bus service to the Cotter at the weekends was available. The Cotter was well used by bushwalkers as a starting point and at one stage White City Camp held a moonlight picnic at the Cotter [see White City Camp section for details].

The Canberra Times 14 October 1927 has a lengthy article that notes A service of motor 'bus trip to the Cotter River on Saturday afternoons and Sundays will be inaugurated this week-end by the Commission. The article then continued with a timetable of pickups and returns. Allowance was made for people who attended church and children who attended Sunday School.

The Cotter and nearby Murrumbidgee River were also places of sad events that included a number of drownings. One drowning recorded in the pages of *The Canberra Times* was that of Mrs Betty Hardie McKinnon aged 41 of La Perouse Street Griffith. The paper dated 26 April 1933 noted that Mrs McKinnon had driven out to the Cotter to pick up her son who was in a Boy Scout's Camp. Her body was found in the pool below the dam wall. *Mrs McKinnon was the wife of Mr James McKinnon, a plumbing inspector.* This lady had lived at Howie's cottages and later moved into a Westlake house before the final move to Griffith.

Another drowning at the Cotter Swimming Pool was recorded in *The Canberra Times* 29 January 1941. Wallace Ford (also known as *Bunty Dunn* because he lived with his guardian, Mr Bert Dunn) of *Ferndale* Queanbeyan drowned. He was 16 years of age and was a member of a party which visited the Cotter for the Trades & Labour Day picnic. The young man could not swim and waded into the water which was only nine feet deep at the deepest point. There were over a hundred people in the pool at the time and his plight was not noticed for about two minutes. Don Boag of 77 Causeway saw him under the water and pulled him out but it was too late.

The same article mentioned that during the day 11 children and two adults were also rescued from the pool.

And yet another recorded in *The Canberra Times* 31 January 1941 was the death by drowning of Rev Father John McCusker and Clifford Lee 13 both of Bungendore both drowned. They were part of a picnic party from Bungendore. *After lunch two of the boys, Lee and Campbell were paddling about 400 yards below the dam when they stepped into a hole about seven feet deep. Neither boy could swim. Although himself unable to swim, Father McCusker plunged to their assistance. He grasped the two boys hoisting one on to his shoulders though his own head was below water. Hearing the cries of other boys, Mrs Fisk ran to the scene and swam in their rescue. She brought Campbell to the shore, but meanwhile Father McCusker and Lee had disappeared. Mr Harold Cabban, proprietor of the Cotter Kiosk continued diving for almost an hour before he located the body of Father McCusker. Meanwhile Senior Constable Brodribb and Constables Grove and Egan had been summoned and Constable Grove recovered the body of Lees in almost the same spot...*

But there were also many joyous occasions such as camps of scouts, girl guides and others that included the Ainslie Boys Club [**Canberra Times 4.12.1929**]

Another link with the name of Cotter is the Cotter Cordial Company that was in operation by 1927 when the then owner complained that his soft drink although local and tendered at the lowest price was not chosen for the functions held in May 1927. Instead Sheeky of Yass, who had also provided the soft drinks on 9 May 1913 in Canberra, was chosen. In May 1934 the Cotter Cordial Company plant was purchased by Mr RA McKillop and leased to the Commonwealth Cordial Company (FCT) and Messrs WE Oldfield and Son for a term of years. They took over the lease of the buildings at Civic Centre on May 14. [**CT 12 May 1934**]. The Commonwealth Cordial Company used the three Cs logo later used by Capital Cordial Company.

The Canberra Times 25 November 1933 also reported questions raised in parliament regarding Cordial Contracts. I raised the question of *The method of purchasing cordials and ice by the Commonwealth Government especially by the Department of the Interior for the use in the Government Hotels and Parliament House was criticised in the House of Representatives yesterday afternoon...he* [Mr Blakeley] *then referred to the Cotter Cordial Company's tender which was lower than the outside firm...*

At the time of writing -2010- the height of the dam wall is again being heightened and people can no longer visit the old dam during the period of construction.
