

DUMPS IN STIRLING PARK (former Westlake), YARRALUMA, ACT

Stirling Park is Ngunawal land. From the early 1920s to the mid 1960s it was known as **WESTLAKE** and was home to construction workers who built the Provisional Parliament House, main intercepting sewer and the politician's hostel, the Hotel Canberra. During the 1920s these men and their families lived in three government single men's tent camps, humpies, 62 small timber cottages and Contractor John Howie's settlement that consisted of 25 timber cottages and 18 timber huts for his single men. In 1925 the population of Westlake was 700 of whom 350 lived on the eastern side of the Haines Creek that ran through *The Gap* between the hills and 350 on the western side. By 1930 all camps and Howie's settlement were gone leaving 61 two bedroom unlined timber cottages in *The Gap*. The last cottage was removed in mid 1965.

The largest dump found is in the old quarry – now Attunga Point. From the rubbish found in this dump that is around 2-3 metres in depth, one can surmise that it was used between 1922 and 1925. Because it contains a mixture of rubbish from the Hotel Canberra (work commenced in 1922 and finished in 1925) and construction workers that includes artifacts used by the workmen and women & children it is relatively safe to presume that the rubbish comes from Howie's Settlement and the Hotel Canberra. This dump appears to have ceased use in 1925.



Above is a piece of plate found in the dump that has the Hotel Canberra motif on it.

On the hillside opposite Lotus Bay a number of small dumps have been found. One is on the site of No1 or 2 Howie's Cottages and appears to be the remains of a clean up prior to the departure of the tenants (1930-1931). Another nearby dump is close to the site of the married quarters recreation hall. Small dumps near the sites of tents have also been found along with rubbish that was missed at the time of departure of the people who lived in the area.

Several dumps that range between four or five metres by three and are shallow in depth have been found near the sites of Howie's settlement in areas where the

camps used to be. From the rubbish found in these areas it appears that much of it was burnt and a few of the bottles etc missed the heat of the flames and survived.

One of the dumps on Block 2 Section 128 Stirling Park has a lot of charcoal that suggests that it may have been used as a blacksmith's area. The photograph below shows one of the small dump areas on the hillside opposite Lotus Bay. The half bricks shown in the photograph probably held down light materials during the burn up. The following photograph shows some of the material just on the surface of the dump.





More dumps are found in the area of *The Gap* where the Westlake cottages were erected and in the creek which according to the old maps was a deep water course. Now this creek is filled with rubbish and is sluggish. During a 1990s cleanup in the area of the creek a scoop was used to re-create the shape of the creek and it was covered with hessian. Unfortunately this has changed the creek and the frogs and water birds often seen and heard before the change no longer frequent the area.

The creek that is in the area of Empire Circuit is also filled with rubbish including old car bodies. This is now covered in. On the hillside of Stirling Ridge a few small dumps have been found near the site of the sewer men's humpies that stretched across the hill in line with the sewer vent.

Not examined in this area are the sites of the numerous air-raid shelters and trenches that may have been filled with rubbish following the end of the war when they were no longer needed. A number of the shelters and not near the sites of the cottages. We had an air raid shelter in our backyard - 27 Westlake – near the corner of Empire Circuit and Forster Crescent.

Briar Farm (site now covered with buildings of Southern Cross Yacht Club) that is known to have been occupied from the 1860s until 1950 did have dumps but from information received from people who lived in the cottage it is believed that the dumps are now under the water of Lake Burley Griffin.

The work that follows is the 'tip of the iceberg'. It attempts only to documents some of the objects found on or near the surface of the dumps. In the area opposite Lotus Bay – site of Howie's settlement, Old Tradesmen and No 1 Labourers Camp – most of the rubbish on this site can be dated between 1918-1930. In the area of *The Gap* where 61 Westlake cottages stood and No 3 Sewer Camp – the rubbish dates in general between 1918 – 1965. (NB No 1 Labourers Camp was on Capital Hill, which

was then part of Westlake. Recently (2008) a big dump was found on the hill on a section that has not been developed.

Included in the information that follows are photographs of bottles from my collection and other bottle collectors and from e-Bay.

This work has no ending because it will continue to be a work in progress and it is a work that hopefully others will add their *two bobs worth* before the knowledge is lost.



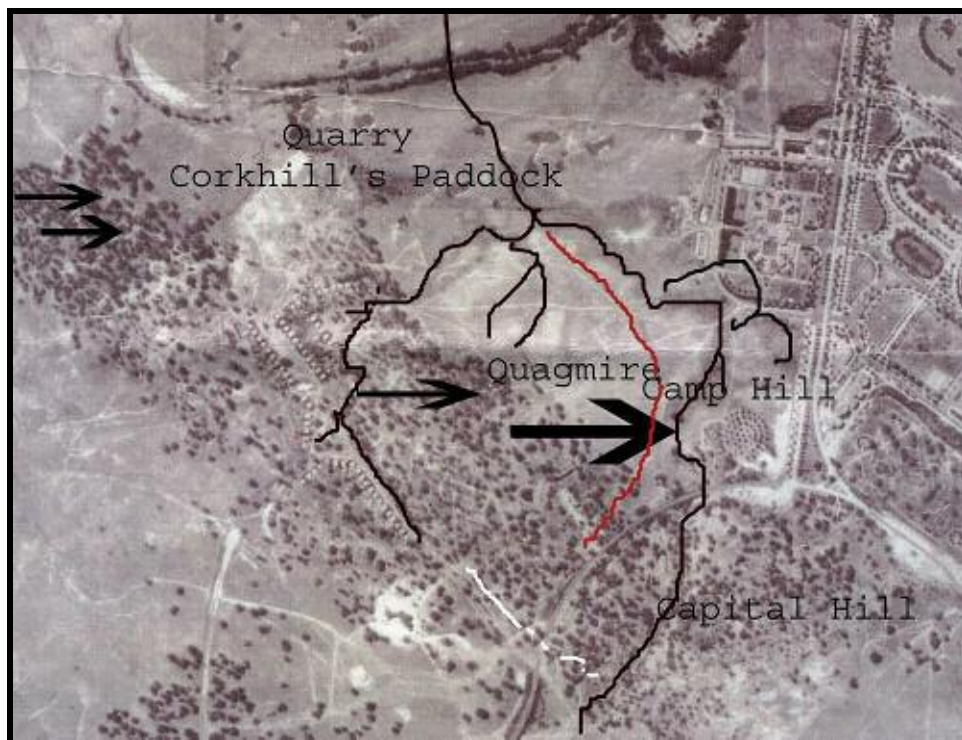
Above is Empire Circuit and Forster Crescent (road off to right). The open areas are in Stirling Park. The creek is off to the right of the car and continues down through *The Gap*. My house – 27 Westlake is off to the left in an area mid way between the two light poles. Empire Circuit covers one of the creeks that joins the main creek that runs through *The Gap*. The other part of the creek runs down the area of Darwin Avenue off on the right of this photograph.

Below is a photograph of me taken around 1952. In the background is 53 Westlake and in the far distance is Black Mountain. Stirling Ridge is off to the left.



Above left is a photograph of the Smith family humpy. This family later moved into a Westlake cottage. The Smith humpy is a typical example of buildings constructed by married men prior to the availability of more permanent dwelling built for them. A number of sites on Stirling Ridge indicate that married sewer workers built humpies for themselves and their families. Single men in No 3 Sewer Camp lived in tents on the lower slopes of the Ridge. The Tradesmen's Camp and No 1 Labourers Camps were erected on the hillside opposite Lotus Bay and Capital Hill. The photograph above right shows the tents of the Tradesmen in May 1927. The timber building is probably the Mess Room for the camp.

The next two photographs show examples of houses erected in the area of the park. On the right is the only known photograph of a Howie's cottage. Near this cottage was the small dump that contained the clean up rubbish. On the left is one of the Westlake cottages tenanted by the O'Rourke family.



Above is a December 1944 photograph showing the hills of Stirling Park and Capital Hill. The major creeks are outlines using a black line. There are other creeks not marked. The Westlake cottages are shown as small dots.

RUBBISH – ARTIFACTS

During the first two decades of the 20th century the construction workmen's camps were responsible for the removal of their rubbish. Rules, such as those quoted below in the following document, give us an indication of how this rubbish was disposed of.

WORKMEN'S CAMP SITES AND SANITATION

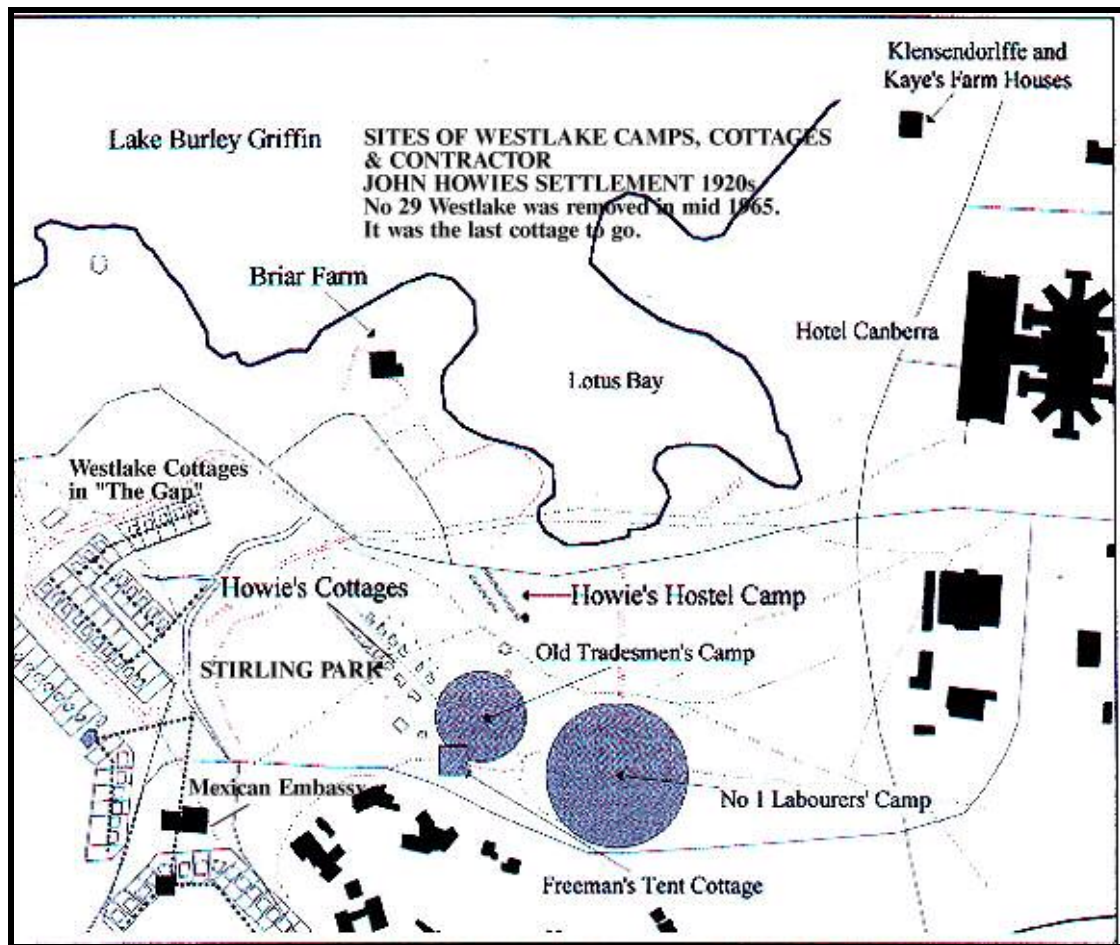
1. When choosing a camp site bear in mind the length of time the occupation is likely to last, elevation, aspect, the neighbourhood of storm water, and convenience to the works; carefully select accordingly. If the water supply is to be taken from either a surface streams or well, no person should be allowed to camp above or within 100 yards of the point from which water is to be taken. Intercepting or diverting drains should, if necessary, be made to prevent the contamination of the water supply.
2. Avoid camp sites that have been recently occupied. High ground and the slope of a hill with grass are the best. Clay should be avoided and gravel or sand chosen. Although the neighbourhood of trees is desirable, avoid thick undergrowth. Rank vegetation indicates dampness of soil. River beds, ravines, depression, tilled or made ground should be avoided.
3. Ground should be prepared before pitching tents, and long grass, stones, and rubbish should be removed. Long grass and bushes within the camp harbour insects, hide refuse, and make it difficult to detect the fouling of the ground. The surface of the ground might be hardened by using all ashes from kitchen fires.
4. The form of the camp depends upon the space available, but in every case the tents should be arranged in an orderly manner. Enough space should be allowed to make it possible to occasionally shift every tent forward or to the side and thus allow ground covered by the tent to occasionally be exposed to the sun.
5. Whether the camp is to be occupied for a short or a long time, it is essential that the ground it covers should be kept clean, and this is materially aided by keeping the surface dry; in all camps channels should be cut to drain the ground, and to carry off rainwater from the trenches surrounding the tents.
6. Nothing should be allowed to foul the surfaces; it commonly happens that refuse from tents, such as meat-tins, bones, washings from the men's mess-tins &c, are thrown on the ground outside the tents and at night the men will urinate there, especially if the urine trenches are far away, and there is a want of supervision. All these cause fouling of the surface of the ground, and may become a grave source of disease.
7. There should be night urinals close to the lines, and men should be discharged for breaking the camp regulations. It may be necessary to dig special trenches; but wherever possible pans or tubs, one for each ten men, should be provided. A very useful urinal for night use can be made by filling a

wheat sack with sawdust. This can be used without emptying for several weeks.

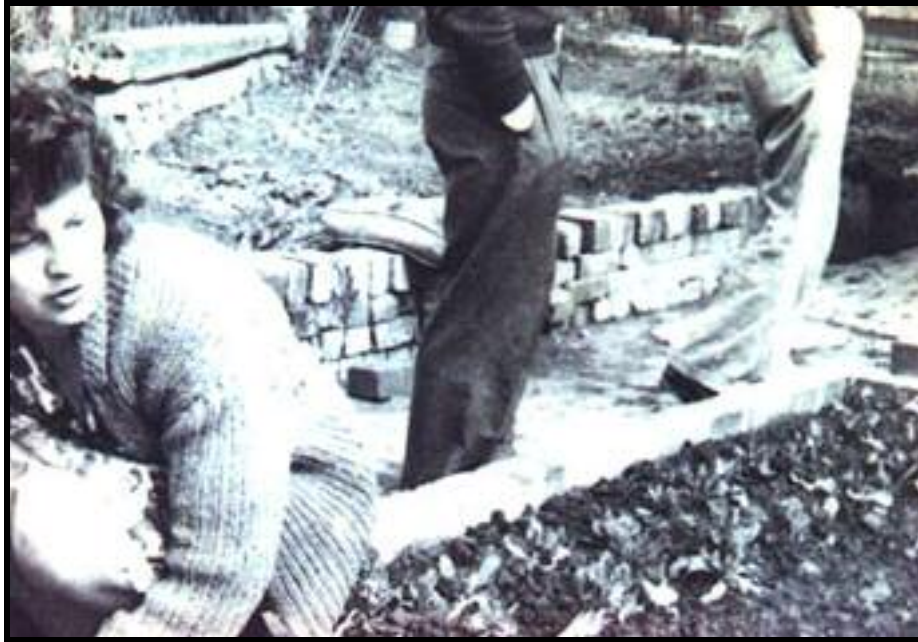
8. In standing camps an ablution place, for all washing, with proper gutters or drains and concrete floors, are necessary.
9. Kitchen refuse and grease readily decompose and become offensive. Rubbish bins must be used at all kitchens. Refuse must be burned or buried each day, care being taken that such method of disposal does not contaminate the water supply. Apply fire to all refuse. Burn everything that will burn; bury what the fire leaves.
10. Latrine should not be closer than 100 yards from the tents on the leeward side, and as far from the kitchens as possible to avoid the danger of flies passing from the latrines to the food. Ample chloride of lime or quicklime is needed for latrines and urinals to prevent contamination. Blue oil freely sprinkled over the trench contents daily is useful for the development of flies. Enforce the use of deodorants to be provided for latrines. If closet pans are used in the latrines, the contents must be buried 9" below ground level outside the lines of the camp, but if the cesspit method be adopted the pits must be filled in on the breaking up of camp, or as soon as the contents come within 9 inches of the surface of the ground.
11. The ground around latrines should be covered with cement concrete or ashes laid down as often as available.
12. Horse stalls or tethered ground must be kept very clean and horse dung removed daily, otherwise it will breed flies and get blown about into food and water. If the horse dung or litter cannot be removed daily right away from the camp for manurial purposes, it should be burned or buried.



Above is a detail of a photograph of No 1 Labourers Camp that shows the old road and a garden bed defined by bricks.

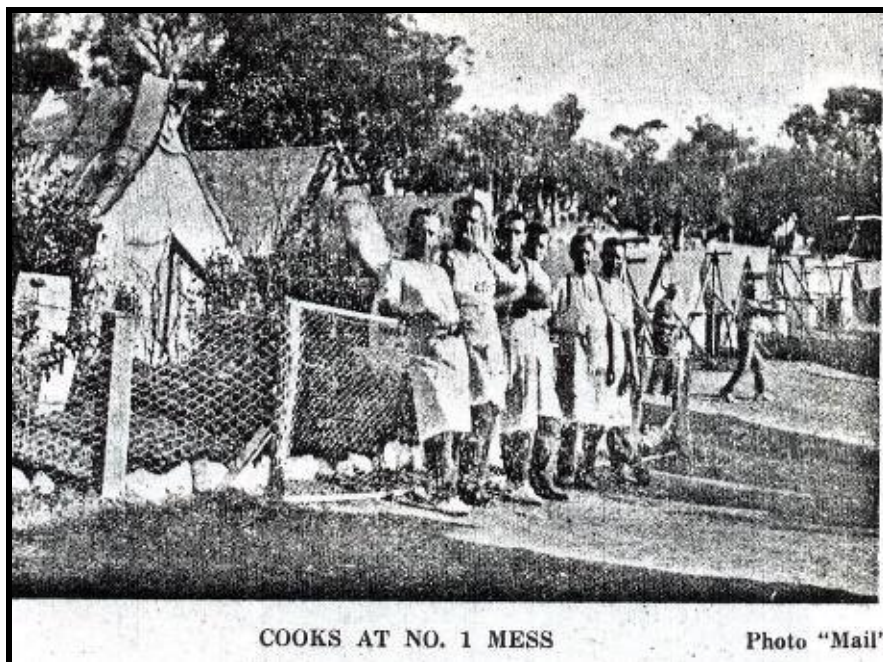


The above mud map was drawn before the site of No 1 Labourers Camp was found on Capital Hill. The site marked on this map was the camp area used by the police and others brought to Canberra for the opening of Parliament in May 1927. This camp lasted only about a week and in contrast to the other areas there is very little in the way of rubbish left behind. Not shown in the above mud map are cottages 15-20 (bottom left), No 3 Sewer Camp and the humpies on Stirling Ridge (off to left).



Above is a photograph taken in the early 1960s in the backyard of 29 Westlake. Note the built up garden beds.

SINGLE MEN'S CAMPS

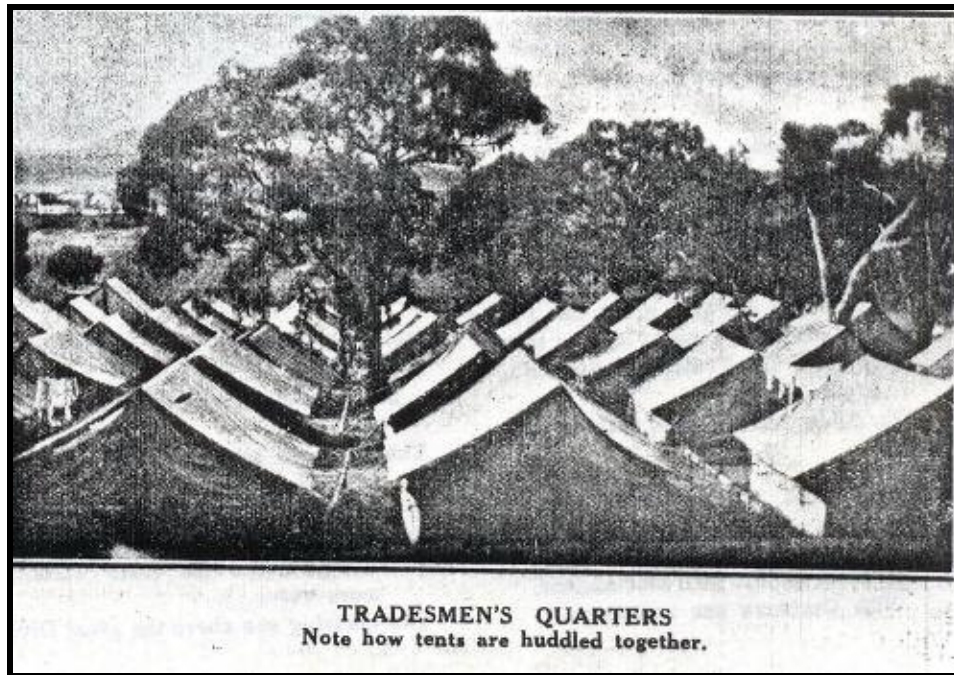


Above Cooks at No 1 Labourers Camp.

Below a detail of No 1 Labourers Camp.



SUNDAY MORNING SERVICE.



Evidence of the camps is still to be found on the hillsides opposite Lotus Bay and on the lower slopes of Stirling Ridge. The men cleaned up the general area when they left, but did not smooth out the contours of the land. Particularly in times of drought the areas dug out to allow ease of building and drainage of water around buildings and from them to the creeks and quagmire can be clearly seen.



Every old tree has some mark of use by man. The next photograph shows bike pieces firmly wedged (by tree growth) in the fork pieces of a push bike. This tree is in the are of the quagmire between Howie's cottages and Old Tradesmen's Camp.





Left and below are examples of objects found in the Quarry Dump. Note the HC intertwined letters – Hotel Canberra. Not shown in this group of photographs are the numerous tea-spoons engraved with the motif, knives, butter and jam dishes, etc. Also found were numerous pieces of mouth organs and bakelite cigarette holders, light globe, batteries etc. Oyster shells

have also been found in this dump and others on the hillsides of Stirling Park. A few examples of the rubbish used by Howie's men and the Hotel are shown below.







The next two photographs show items found on site by Gary Skewes.





Following are chapters devoted to different aspects of the artifacts of Stirling Park. The first chapter gives information about how to date glass. Different sources give differing dates for particular bottle manufacturers and unless I have definitive accurate information I have left the dates as given in the information.

[NB only three chapters of this book have been placed on the web – the full work is available from me – please e-mail if the full work is required. annrobina@actewagl.net.au or annrobina@gmail.com]