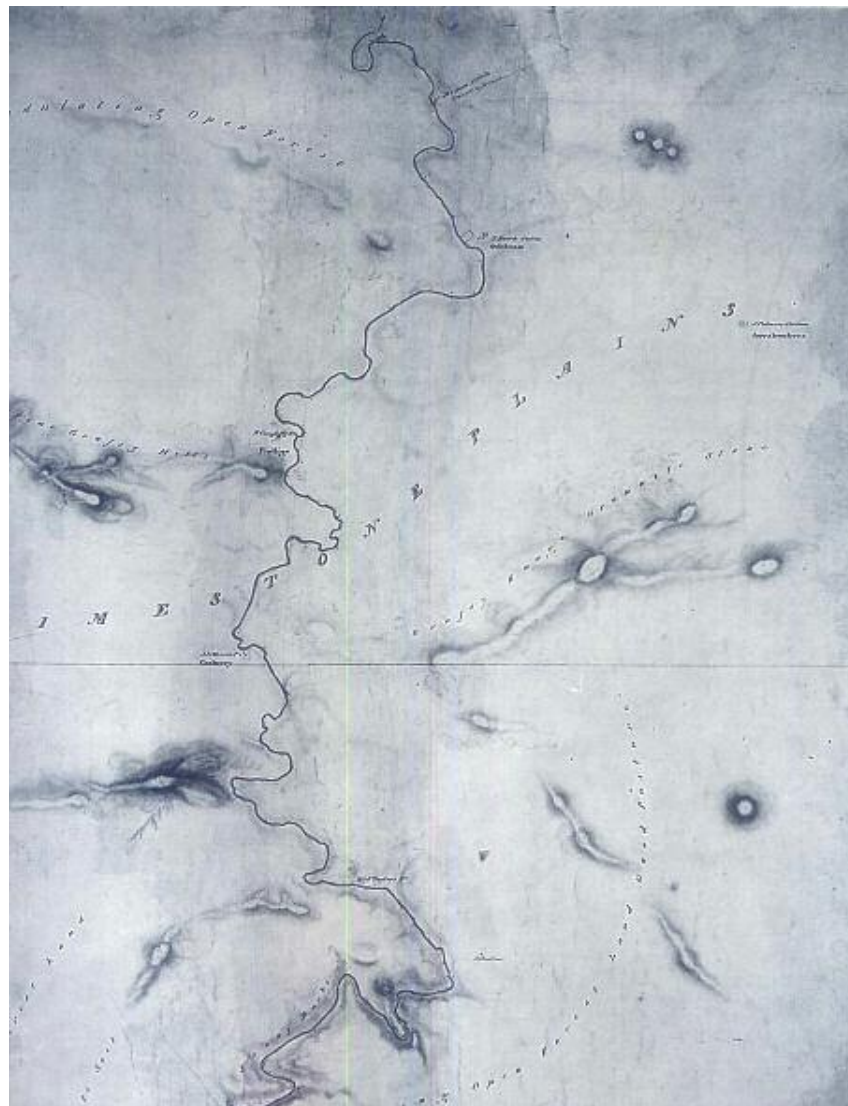


NGUNAWAL COUNTRY
&
The small portion known as Gura Bung Dhaura (on the Kamberra,
Canberra Plain)
Klensendorlffe's Grant
Westlake
Stirling Park & Capital Hill



Above is a copy of Dickson's 1829 map of the area of Canberra. Black Mountain is the big range on the lower left. The *upper prong* of the mountain is now Acton Peninsula and the lower one is Black Mountain Peninsula. Near Acton Peninsula is the **M** (on side) of the Molonglo River that identifies the area on the right side of the Molonglo River as the area of Stirling Park – former Klensendorlffe land grant. The long line of hills on the right are Red Hill and Mugga.



Above is a detail of a 1909 map by Charles Scrivener showing the area of Black Mountain on the north side of the Molonglo and Stirling Park on the southside. *The Gap* is between the hills marked 1981 and 1995.

Stirling Park and Capital Hill (former Westlake) are part of the southern area of Ngunawal country and it's Ngunawal name is Gura Bung Dhaura (stony ground).¹ With the exception of the western

¹ Information about Ngunawal culture and names given to me by Mr Don Bell, Ngunawal elder.

side of Stirling Ridge facing Fitzgerald Street that was part of Yarralumla property, the area was part of Klensendorlffe's grant. Opposite on the north side of the Molonglo River was JJ Moore's grant that he named Canburry (Canberry). Later the property was renamed Acton – a name that this locality still has today. It has been accepted by a number of European authorities that the name *Canberry* means *meeting place*.² According to Gwendoline Wilson, a researcher, who wrote *Murray of Yarralumla - the locality of Canberry was on both sides of the river, but appears to have been mostly within Klensendorlffe land on the south side*.³

Information regarding the European understanding of the meaning of *Canberry* differs to that told to me by Ngunawal elder, Mr Don Bell, who said that Canberry (Kamberry) refers to the two mountains – Black and Ainslie – viewed from the north. It means *woman's breasts*.⁴

Perhaps the meaning - Meeting Place - associated with the word Canberry may have come about because areas around Black Mountain, Mt Ainslie & Capital Hill were meeting places.⁵

² Lionel Wigmore *The Long View Australia's National Capital* (first published 1962) pages 15-18: *As Moore's application [for his land grant 1826] indicated, the locality had already become known as Canberry, a name generally accepted (though without conclusive evidence) as being Aboriginal in origin. W Davis Wright, son of a pioneer settler, frequently talked with members of a tribe of Aborigines in the area. He has recorded having learnt from them the name of their tribe near being four to five hundred, when men first came there, was Kamberra...* Wright also goes on to mention a man making ceremony – *then all the men together left with the boys for Jedbenbilla Mountain, the sacred place...then all proceeded to Kamberra for the great feast.*

Wigmore also goes on to say that the name Jerrabomberra is a misquote of *jerronwongera jerra, beal paialla njaia* that was a reply to a question by an Aboriginal guide from Campbelltown area re the name of the area. The answer was that the young boy asked the question was afraid of lightning. Also mentioned that troops sent from Sydney in 1826 to Inverary (now Bungonia) near Lake George to disperse the natives who were angry about use of Aboriginal women by white men.

³ Information published in *Murray of Yarralumla* from Stewart Mowle's diary – footnote page 102. Reference to the name of Canberry on the south side of the Molonglo is found in the Corkhill family in *True Tales From Canberra's Vanished Suburbs of Westlake, Westridge & Acton* Gugler – in the chapter *Memories of the Corkhills at Riverview* by Margaret Sullivan. *Robert Corkhill was born 31 May 1863...When he came to Australia as a young man of eighteen years in 1881 he was employed as a groom for the Campbell Estate of Duntroon...Robert was offered a small parcel of land near the National Library of Australia that was called Canberry...* This area is also on Klensendorlffe land. *The Glebe Park Story* by John Grey also refers to the area of the Glebe being known as Canberry.

⁴ From the north the two mountains look like a woman's breasts. During a walk on 27th February 2004 on Stirling Ridge Mr Bell told me that Black Mountain and Mount Ainslie were two important mountains – the former the more important of the two. Mr Bell also mentioned that on each mountain and others there would be pyramids of stones that direct the eye from one mountain/hill to another. He also spoke about the importance of pointer rocks that served purposes such as indication that a family group had headed off in a particular direction.

⁵ Black Mountain, known in colonial times and early 20th century as Black/s Hill. Stirling Ridge has an important women's area. The nearby camping area to this site was Capital Hill. The two areas are connected by old pathways and a ford across the Molonglo River. Black Mountain is a men's area where initiations took place. Around the base of the mountain are numerous camping areas. Black Mountain Peninsula was a site of a major battle between the Ngunawal and Wiradjuri people. The Ngunawal people won.

Terry Horan whose parents came to the Yarralumla area in 1910 where his father worked on various jobs on the land identified an Aboriginal Camp near Coppin's Crossing on the south side of the river and was shown Aboriginal paintings in caves under Civic. His father was friendly with the Aboriginal people in the district and intended to show his son more important sites when he became old enough to see them. Unfortunately his father died before he was shown all the promised sites. Other sites were mentioned in documents relating to the construction of the Botanical Gardens – camping site in the grounds. Don Bell also spoke of a family camp site on Black Mountain.

Black Mountain has men's areas where initiation rites took place. Nearby to the mountain on the flat land near Black Mountain Peninsula was a large bora ground used for ceremonial corroborees related to the initiation rites. On the other side of the Molonglo in the area of Stirling Ridge is a significant women's area.

The significance of the cultural landscape of Stirling Park becomes a little clearer when viewed from a vantage point on Stirling Ridge. From this site the surrounding mountains form a ring around the ridge and between them are the old pathways. In turn the hills of Stirling Park form a second smaller circle around the land in *The Gap*.⁶

Stirling Ridge is one of the old pathways that linked the area of Black Mountain via Red Hill and Mugga to Tuggeranong.⁷ Along the ridge and in other areas of the park are numerous river rocks and other small stones foreign to the area.⁸ One river rock used in the arrangement around a mourning tree on the ridge has been identified by a local geologist as probably having come from Black Mountain or Jerrabomberra. Many are incorporated into the numerous stone arrangements found in the park and common to most of the arrangements is the use of small black and white quartz river rocks placed next to each other.

Following is an excerpt from a talk given by WP Bluett to the Canberra & District Historical Society on 29th May 1954. The following are observations made by Europeans living in the area at the time.
The Aborigines of the Canberra District at the Arrival of the White Man
...One group camped at Pialligo and were known to the early settlers as Pialligo blacks; another, of a larger number of families set up their mia-mias at the foot of Black Mountain close to Canburry Creek. These were called the Canburry or Nganbra blacks (John Blundell 1838, and Mrs McDonald, nee Webb 1842). [These are names given to the Aboriginal people by Europeans that links them with the area of camping. Reminiscences such as this give us a glimpse into the early times, but these stories are but the tip of the iceberg of knowledge and come from families who still live in the district.]

Reference to camping in the Hall area is found in a booklet put out for ACT Heritage Week in 1982 – *Hall Historical Society & Village Voice Special Issue*. On page 11 is a quote from *Wattle Park* by Ron Winch – pages 133 part of which is quoted below:
Aborigines have been in the Hall area for at least several thousand years and possibly much longer. A number of prehistoric camp sites have been found in the region, one the largest being on the property of Residale on the Gininderra-Gundaroo Road... Bernie Rochford of Hall added the information that there was a collection of stone axes in the Hall School Museum that came from these camp sites.

⁶ The entrances to *The Gap* follow the area of modern Empire Circuit from the area of the Canberra Mosque down the hill and the area of modern Darwin Avenue. Both roads follow creeks that joined in the area of the Mexican Embassy before continuing down *The Gap* on its way to meet with the big creek on its way to the Molonglo River.

⁷ Red Hill was given its European name because of the intention to plant shrubs such as bottle brush – with red flowers. Information from Charlie Russell who had a property on Red Hill.

⁸ Mr Bell mentioned to me that rocks from Stirling Ridge have been moved to other areas including the Defense area near Bungendore.

To date I have not read any European information about the Ngunawal connection with Red Hill, that is long ridged mountain, but information provided by Mr Bell indicates this mountain was an area where tool making took place and preparation for corroborees was made.⁹

Red Hill, like Attunga Point (Stirling Park) and Capital Hill has a ready source of white and other coloured shales that may have been used by the Ngunawal people.¹⁰ The Red Hill Quarry site is opposite Alfred Deakin High School in Kent Street Deakin. It was later filled in as a dump.¹¹

In the area of Stirling Park there is a second significant peninsula of high land that today is part of Block 1, Section 128¹² on the eastern end of Stirling Park near Flynn Drive. On this land there is a high concentration of stone arrangements four of which may be European in origin.¹³ This area of high ground links directly with Capital Hill that was one of the camping areas used by the Ngunawal people.

Insight of Ngunawal connection with land is found in an on-line article by Karen Williams who has worked closely with Don and Ruth Bell on numerous sites in the territory. The article is entitled - *History of Tuggeranong Homestead* [<http://www.tuggeranonghomestead.com.au/history/default.htm>].

An excerpt follows:

⁹ Europeans have documented a number of the corroborees held in the territory. The sites include Black Mountain, Oaks Estate and Tuggeranong. Karen Williams in her article *History of Tuggeranong Homestead*, wrote about a corroboree at Tuggeranong and massacre of Ngunawal people that may be why they were relatively shy of European contact. Karen wrote - *A corroboree was witnessed and recorded at Tuggeranong by William Edward Riley sometime during the 1820s prior to January 1828.*⁷ However, by 1834 the record of distribution of government blankets from "Jane Vale" (Tuggeranong) indicates that Aboriginal society in the region had already been severely affected by colonisation. G A Robinson, Protector of Aborigines, in 1844, provided a chilling indication of what may have happened to some of the early "Onerwal" (Ngunawal) of the Yass area when he wrote, "Yass and Bathurst blacks in the early settling of the colony were said to have been troublesome, and that in consequence commandoes had been sent out against them."⁸ However, most journal references of the early settlers in and around the Tuggeranong plains suggest that the relationship between the new settlers and the remaining Aboriginal people who moved through the Canberra region was relatively amicable. The occasional corroboree and other ceremonial activities were mentioned into the 1860s, with Aboriginal groups and individuals congregating on the edge of pastoralists' properties, villages and towns. Government polices eventually marshalled Aboriginal people of the region to missions near Yass and Tumut till the mid 1950s.

David Dexter in his book *The ANU Campus* quotes from Dr Josephine Flood's 1981 work on Aboriginal sites in the territory - *In Canberra itself prehistoric campsites have been recorded at Pialligo, Duntroon, Kingston, Barton, Parkes, Yarralumla, Deakin and on the lower slopes of Mt Ainslie, Mt Pleasant and Black Mountain. Doubtless there are many more sites awaiting discovery...*

¹⁰ Mr Bell informed me that the shale in the old quarry - Attunga Point - was not the best quality and that they used white shale from another local source.

¹¹ The quarries at Attunga Point and Red Hill were used by the Canberra Brickworks as a source of white shale for their Canberra Creams. The quarry on Capital Hill was used for construction work in the 1920s.

¹² Changed circa 2006 to Blocks 5, 6 & 8. The majority of stone arrangements are on Blocks 5 & 6. This area is being developed for residential purposes for the Chinese Embassy.

¹³ These arrangements have glass containers dated around the time work was being carried out on the preparation for the filling of the lake - commenced in 1963. They are on the top soil unlike the majority of arrangements that sit on clay. Mr Bell identified one of the arrangements that he saw as being *not my culture*.

The local Aboriginal tribe, the Ngunawal peoples, consists of a number of different clans bounded by the broad language groups of Wiradjuri, Ngriio (Ngarigo), Gundungurra and Yuin. The Tuggeranong plain of Canberra is at the southern extremity of Ngunawal country. The Canberra region is generally understood to have been a meeting place, suggesting that there was a reliable food and water supply and that pathways were significant as people moved from place to place through transitional cultural boundaries following river and creek corridors and the ridges and spurs of hills and mountains. Pathways may be the means of access across the region and, in the case of the main ranges visible from the highpoints of the Tuggeranong area, a physical and visual link to major spiritual centers and gathering places in the Snowy Mountains.

For Aboriginal culture there are inextricable links between sacred and secular landscape values. Aboriginal people always did things with a witness, whether it is the spirits of a mountain, the water, the flowers. Therefore, open sites such as the stone artefact scatters found around the Tuggeranong homestead will be related to other landscape features by story and association. Similarly, grinding grooves, such as those located east of the Tuggeranong homestead, may be found in association with a significant rock outcrop yet equally suitable rock is not used in other places. Put into the local context, Ngunawal Dreaming refers to people emerging from their origins beneath the rocks.¹⁴

Ngunawal connection with their land has been kept through the generations. Don Bell (surname changed from Carroll to Bell when his widowed mother remarried), now an elder, was taught his culture by his father and other elders. He has continued his father's spiritual duties with the land. This knowledge is being passed on to family.¹⁵

Don Bell wrote his story for *True Tales From Canberra's Vanished Suburbs of Westlake, Westridge and Acton*. Part of his story follows:

My Father was James Carroll and my mother was Christina Carroll (nee Brown). I came from a family of eleven children, being the second youngest. I can remember going on walkabouts with my family. The only transport we had was a wagonette with two spare horses trotting behind. Dad and Mum would pack us all into two wagonettes. Dad would drive one wagonette and my eldest brother Cyril would drive the other one.

There would be Dad and Mum and the smaller children in the front wagonette and the rest of the older ones in the second wagonette with Cyril. We would travel to Canberra, Queanbeyan and districts. In Canberra I can remember a creek just away from old Parliament House. We would go there quite often. We would camp on that creek and walk into the scrub to hunt for possums, grubs and wild vegetables or fruit.¹⁶

¹⁴ The land where the Ngunawal people emerged from the rocks is in the Yass area.

¹⁵ Many European documents written in the 19th and early 20th centuries state or imply that the Ngunawal people died out with eg the death of Queen Nellie in the late 1890s. This is not true. Many were herded into missions such as Hollywood near Yass and many who were visible in the territory were moved on.

¹⁶ Refers to the Provisional Parliament House. Valerie Clarke (nee Hawke) and Noel Carn of Westlake recalled seeing an Aboriginal family camping each year on Capital Hill down below the Prime Minister's Lodge near the big creek. Val

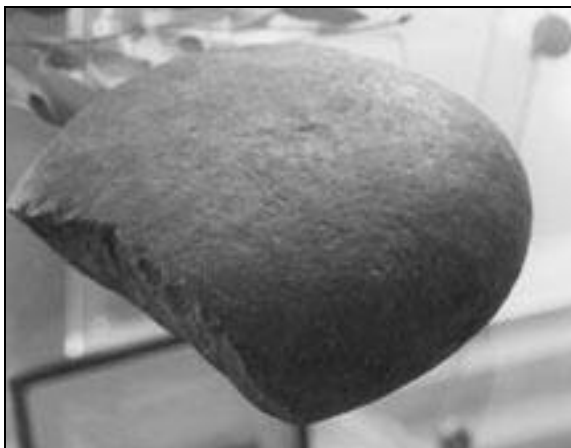
Sometimes we would go right to what is known today as Black Mountain. My Father would not let us go near some places as it was Taboo. Cyril was the only one to see these places. We used to live on fish and trapped water birds.

We camped all over Canberra. There was only bush and some small tracks either made by our ancestors or the wagonette. Everything we done was hard. We washed in cold creek water - that water we also drank, as well as washed our clothes in it. My Father would not tell us anything that was told to him by the Ngunawal Elders. He was a direct descendent of two Ngunawal Queens of the Nugunawal Clan - namely Lucy Carroll and Nellie Hamilton.

We camped all around Canberra - Red Hill, and where the New Parliament House is today. That is why that area is very significant to us Carrolls.

My Father was a man who knew all types of trees, berries and fruits of the bush. He would get water and go to the Nguni tree and pick leaves off it and make tea to drink. As I grew up I have always kept the knowledge of what my Father told me of the early days in Canberra when all you could see would be beautiful trees and nature and it was very peaceful. Even today as a Ngunawal Elder I always get that urge to go back to the significant places even though they have been destroyed by another culture. Spiritually my culture is always drawing me back to the Peace and Quiet of what is left –

Don Bell told me that his mother used to cook on a stone that was carried with the family on their travels. Below left is a photograph of that stone and on the right two stones marked by Mr Bell as stones used for sharpening - one for rough work and the other for finer work. These stones, along with an axe made using traditional methods by Mr Bell, were exhibited at the exhibition and book launch of *True Tales From Canberra's Vanished Suburbs of Westlake, Westridge & Acton* held at Canberra Museum and Gallery in the late 1990s.



recalled the family camped at the time of the big frosts and the children did not wear gloves. She worried that they may have felt the cold.



Above photographs taken February 2002. Photograph on the left - Mr Don Bell on Stirling Ridge holding a stone tool found in the area. Left - Mr Don Bell showing John Bruggeman the scar on a tree marking a burial – Stirling Ridge.



Above left – Mr Bell and John Bruggeman standing near the very old tree identified as being around 500 years of age by Mr Bell. (on right) – May 2004 Stirling Ridge. Right – Mr Bell holding another stone tool – Capital Hill - February 2004.



Above left, Mr Bell with newly cut spear (for his grandson), Capital Hill May 2004. The road in the background is State Circle. Above right, photograph taken from the site of the South African High Commission residence now in Perth Avenue – looking down to State Circle – early 1950s – Ann Austin. The area where Mr Bell stands with the spear is further to the right out of the picture plain in the 1950s photograph.

STIRLING PARK & CAPITAL HILL – POST EUROPEAN SETTLEMENT

With the arrival of Europeans the land was carved up into rectangular shaped blocks that were granted and sold to the newcomers. In turn this land was resumed by the Commonwealth and the land further divided into smaller portions to meet the requirements of a new planned federal city. The Molonglo River still flows through the land, but its now damned waters have swelled to form Lake Burley Griffin. Many of the creeks that flowed into the Molonglo are now underground confined in concrete pipes.

Capital Hill now is artificially separated and isolated from the hills of Stirling Park by roads and buildings. Between Capital Hill and the hills of the park is a big creek (now underground with the exception of a small section near Scrivener's plan room) that begins on Red Hill. It may have been more like a tributary to the Molonglo River than just a creek. In the years before Europeans cut the trees and changed the landscape, the Molonglo River was a chain of ponds. Aerial

photographs taken in the 1920s show parts of the big creek to have similar characteristics (ponds and billabongs).¹⁷

On its way to the Molonglo River this big creek was joined by a number of smaller creeks that came down from the hills of Stirling Park. On the Capital Hill side of the hills in the area of Perth Avenue one spring fed creek joined the big creek near State Circle.¹⁸ Others joined the creek from Stirling Ridge, *The Gap* and the quagmire opposite Lotus bay.¹⁹

In the area of the park below the Brazilian Embassy in Forster Crescent (now Block 3, Section 128) is the quagmire. It is mentioned in a number of archival documents. The prolonged drought (2000-2007) has reduced the size of the quagmire and has dried areas where in the 1990s the grounds still oozed a mixture of mud and water.

However, it is probable that the size of the quagmire was reduced from its full size in Colonial times. From a number of sources that include archival documents and Mildenhall aerial photographs it is known that contour ploughing used to drain areas of both Yarralumla and Klensendorffle land. The lines of contour ploughing show up clearly in many of the 1920s aerial photographs of the area of Block 1, Section 128 and land near and behind the Hotel Canberra and Albert Hall.

An 1890s description of nearby Yarralumla property then owned by Frederick Campbell gives us some idea of the landscape of the area of modern Stirling Park and nearby Capital Hill is found in *The Pastoral Homes of Australia* published in *Pastoral Review Proprietary Limited* – Australian Archives file A199/1 FC21/1165. The document in part reads:

The country itself is of a picturesque undulating nature once heavily timbered. There was only one small plain upon it, but nearly all the timber has been ringbarked²⁰ and the estate is now good open grazing country, with many small patches of agricultural land. The timber is chiefly Blue Gum, Yellow Box, Stringy Bark and apple tree with forest oak on the hilltops.²¹

¹⁷ *A Brief History of Canberra* by Frederick Watson, Editor of Historical Records of Australia. Printed 1927. Reference to descriptions of rivers: *For example the course of the Molonglo river, prior to the settlement on its watershed, was a mere shallow depression in the ground, with occasional deep water holes.*

¹⁸ The head gardener South African High Commission residence told me that the willow trees planted in their grounds were grown to soak up the water from the creek in that area.

¹⁹ A Ngario lady who visited Stirling Ridge with me showed me signs of small springs and said that the water from these springs would have been used for drinking and the big creek in *The Gap* would have been used for bathing after childbirth.

²⁰ The property line between Yarralumla and Klensendorffle land can clearly be seen on the south side of Stirling Ridge because Yarralumla land was cleared and Klensendorffle's not.

²¹ Many of the trees on Yarralumla property were clear felled in the late 1890s. Many of the trees on Klensendorffle land in the area of the park survived.

*The estate is magnificently served with water. Altogether there are fifty miles of water frontage, and where necessary tanks and dams have been constructed. Once upon a time in the wet seasons, parts of this country became flukey but Mr Campbell completely eradicated this by making 500 miles of drains.*²²

Descriptions of the land at the time the Commonwealth took over the area of the Federal Capital Territory is found in the detailed field books of Moriarty. In 1912 he described part of the land in the following manner - *Part of Portion 7 [Klensendorff's] 70 acres of Yarralumla, Quartz Paddock. Quartz iron and slatey ridge (Stirling Ridge?); stringy bark, gum, box and pine; tussocky grass; inferior country – no cultivation; 2nd class grazing.* Moriarty in these reports also noted contour ploughing used for drainage.

A 1994 report prepared for the NCDC by Dr Robert Boden speaks specifically about the natural bushland in Stirling Park. The section of this report that refers to the trees on Stirling Ridge states: *The vegetation on the main part of the ridge consists of an ecotone between EUCALYPTUS MACRORHYNCHIA/EUCALYPTUS ROSSII dry sclerophyll forest and EUCALYPTUS MELLIODORA/EUCALYPTUS BLAKELYI woodland...*

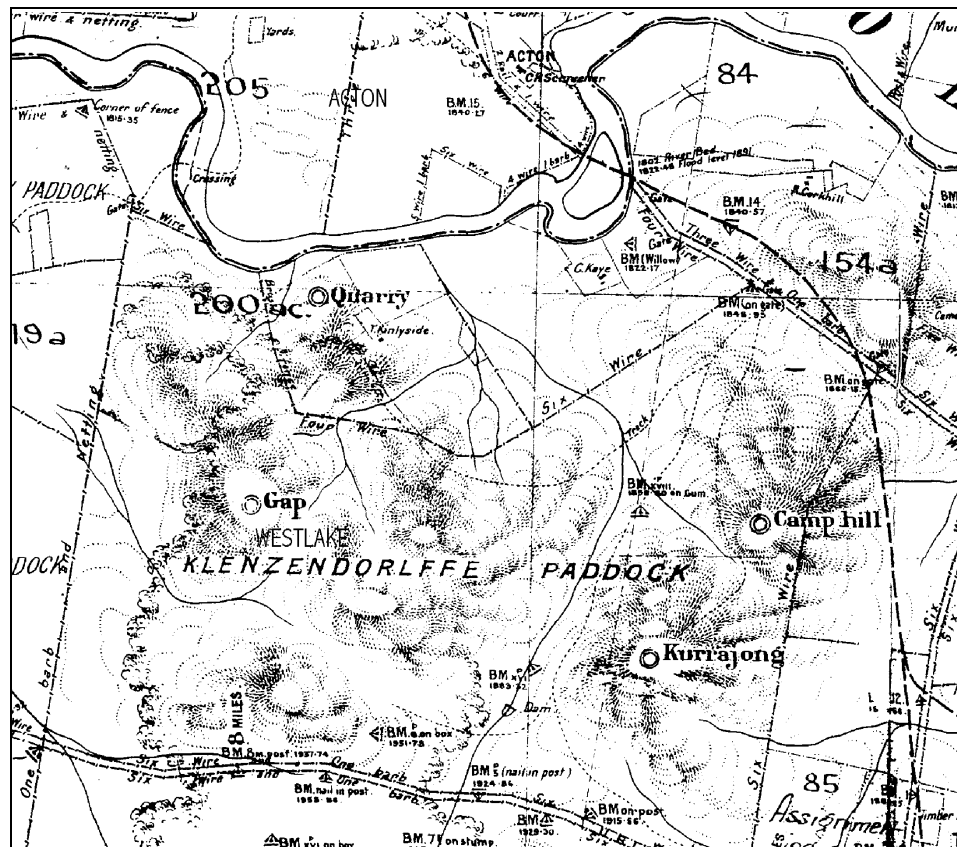
This section [A - Stirling Ridge] and adjacent areas of Stirling Park are the only remaining areas of savannah woodland close to Lake Burley Griffin (Frawley 1991). They also contain the major remaining population of the nationally endangered button wrinklewort...The continued survival of the button wrinklewort in the wild depends upon conservation viable self perpetuating populations on national land in Stirling Park. This may be the only example in temperate Australia of a plant species whose survival is the direct responsibility of the Australian rather than a state or territory government. This places a significant responsibility on the National Capital Planning Authority [NCPA] as the land management agency responsible for the most of Stirling Park. Leeton and Fripp found morphological differences between the Victorian and NSW/ACT populations in both states (sic) are protected so that the generic variability of the species is maintained.

Dr Boden in conversations with me has mentioned that many of the old gums are around two hundred years plus. Mr Bell has identified a number of these old gums as being around five hundred years of age. He added the information that trees have stories told about them and served many purposes that include in Stirling Park scarred trees, climbing, cursing, mourning, birthing, marriage trees and others. Circles of five trees are also significant and on Stirling Ridge there is at least one such group around a stone in the centre. Bark of trees also provided containers, canoes and shields. The roots were used for purposes such as medicines and boomerangs.

²² Aerial photographs taken in the 1920s show that contour ploughing was used on Klensendorff's land to provide drainage and it is likely that the swampy area known as the Quagmire on Block 3, Section 128 Yarralumla was drained in the same manner. Block 1, Section 128 and areas of land behind the Albert Hall and Hotel Canberra show clearly the ploughed lines.

THE GAP, STIRLING PARK

There are two entrances to *The Gap*, which was an old pathway between the hills that led down to the Molonglo River. These tracks, shown on the 1913-15 strip map probably followed Aboriginal pathways. These tracks followed the two creeks that joined in the area of the grounds of the Mexican Embassy and continued down through *The Gap* near Briar Farm (Southern Cross Yacht Club site) where it joined the big creek and continued down to the Molonglo River. The old maps refer to the creek in *The Gap* as a *deep watercourse*. During the 1940s onwards the creek was known as *Haines' Creek*. Part of it is above ground in Stirling Park.



The following photographs show the remnants of the creek that flows through *The Gap*. It is no longer the *deep watercourse* marked on early maps but has been filled with rubbish thrown in by Westlake residents and pushed in (probably by bulldozers) following the removal of the cottages. Around the late 1990s the creek had a long channel gouged out along the creek bed. It was then covered with hessian. Instead of cleaning the creek it has allowed the weeds to take over and one no longer sees the water birds in the creek nor hears the frogs.

Below left - view of the Creek in 2003 - centre photograph shows the hessian laid down and right the same area near the tree in the center photograph taken prior to the work on the creek. Andrew my border collie is cooling off. Note the rocks. These are no longer visible. If it were possible to clean away the rubbish of years evidence of Aboriginal use of the rocks to sharpen tools may be revealed. During a woody weed clearance in the 1990s the one willow tree near the creek was cut down and removed. Willows were planted along the banks of the Molonglo in the 1840s following the big drought – used for stock feed.



EXAMPLES OF SCARRED TREES, STIRLING PARK & EMBASSY AREAS

The following pages show examples of some of the Aboriginal scarred trees and rock arrangements in the area of the Park.²³



Far left is a 1990s photograph of Dr Peter Dowling measuring one of the scarred trees in embassy grounds. Two were measured – one in the grounds of the French Embassy and the other in the grounds of the South African High

Commission residence. The original photograph taken by me is lodged with the ACT

²³ Fuller information and photographs of the Aboriginal sites in Stirling Park may be found in the National Library on a CD – *HISTORY OF HUMAN HABITATION OF STIRLING PARK, YARRALUMLA ACT*.

Heritage Library. The photograph next to the one of Dr Dowling on the previous page is a photograph loaned by Harry Trevallian of the foundation stone on Capital Hill taken in the 1920s. In the background is one of the *fire place* trees. There were several of these trees in the park. One was removed when Forster Crescent was built.

Block 3, Section 128

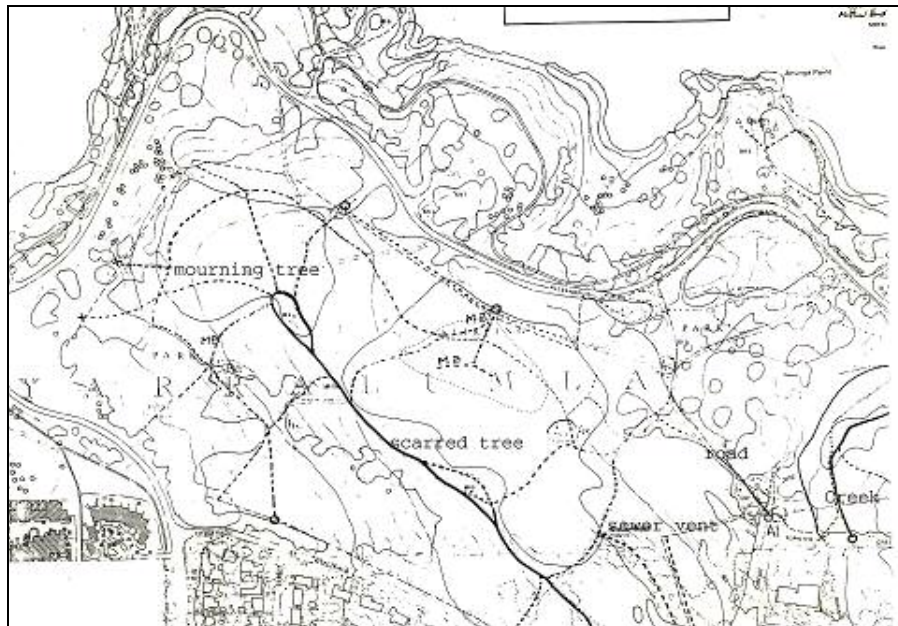
Near the side of Forster Crescent near the Finnish Embassy still grows a large scarred white gum (below left). On the right is another tree further down the hill.



The next two photographs show scarred trees in Section 128, Block 3.



STIRLING RIDGE



The scarred tree marked on the above map is the tree shown bottom left. There are many others on this old pathway on Stirling Ridge.



Photographs above centre show a front view of leaning tree and on the left the tree itself. It is one of many on Stirling Ridge. The wind was from the west.

Below left is another tree that has scars on the inner side of each of the trunks shown in the two details. There are a number of similar trees on this hillside.



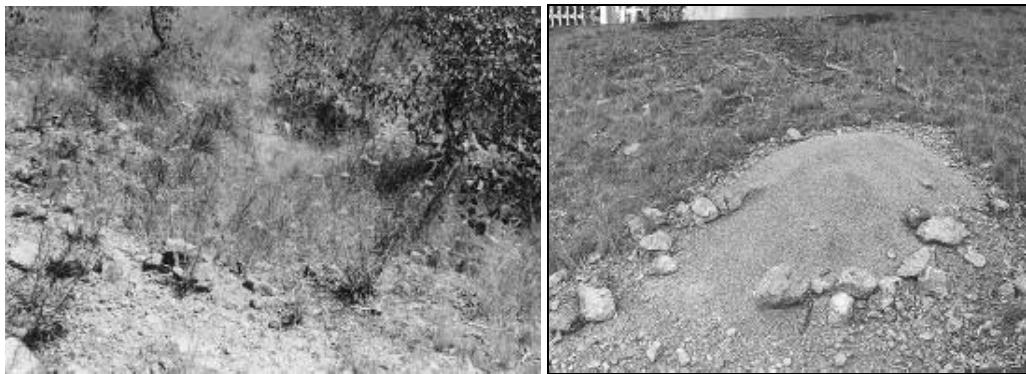
GRAVES – BURIALS - MOURNING

Throughout the park and on the undisturbed portion of Capital Hill a number of burial sites have been shown to me. Burials of important men and women were often in termite or ant nests and in hillsides – some near water – eg creeks. The usual practice was to bring the legs up to the chest and tie them there. To allow this to happen tendons on the back of the legs were cut.²⁴ The body was buried in an upright position facing east. Stone arrangements related to graves are usually orientated east west.²⁵ Some burials were in caves.

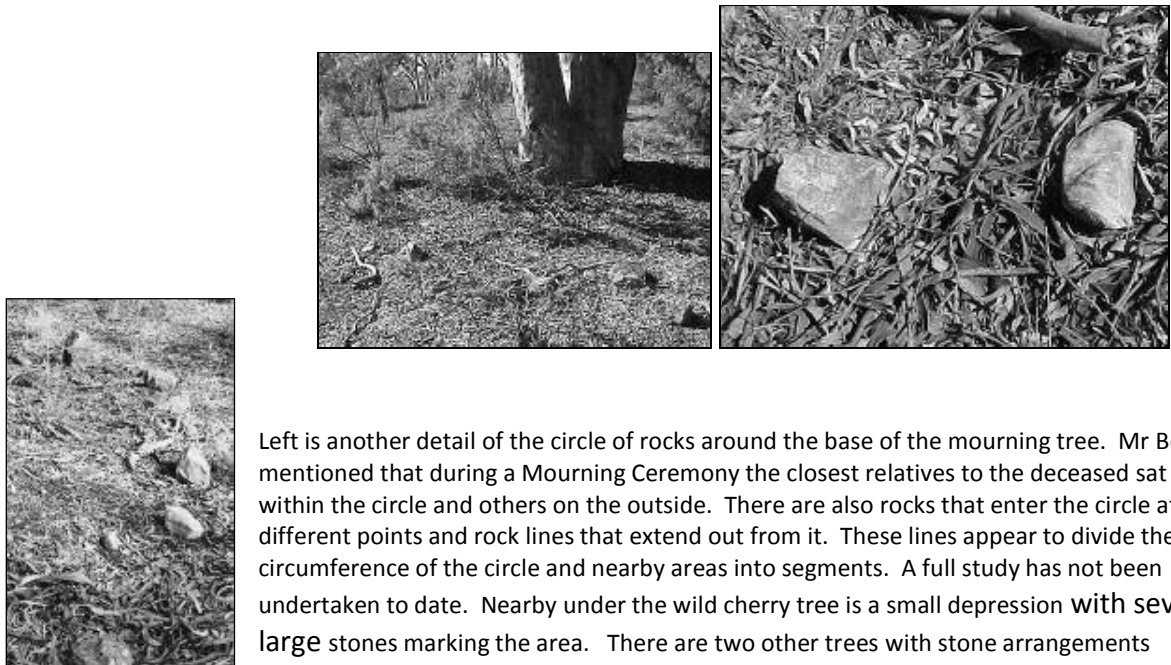
²⁴ Information from Mr Don Bell.

²⁵ Don Bell. A number of burials on Black Mountain are in cave/s. London Bridge has cave where burials took place. I have not heard of any caves in the Stirling Park area, but know of ones in the Yarralumla area. One was entered by men working on the sewer tunnels that resulted in the tunnel being moved.

Below left is one of the oval - circular depressions encircled with rocks on Stirling Ridge. The site has been identified by a Ngarigo lady to be a possible burial site of an important woman. The diameter has not been measured but is at least two to three meters across. The photograph on the right shows one of the ant nests on Stirling Ridge that has an oval shaped pattern of stones around it. This is one of a number of similar patterns used with ant nests found in this area. One either end are pointer or leader rocks.



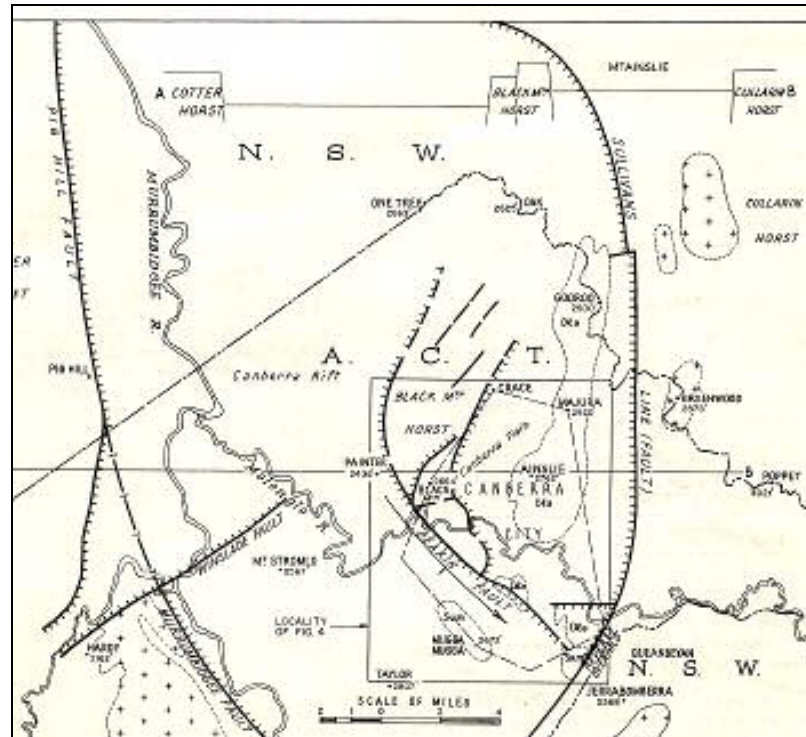
Below: Mourning Tree on Stirling Ridge – identified by Mr Don Bell. Next to the white gum is a native wild cherry tree. There are a number of such pairs nearby. The river rock shown in the arrangement on the right is a light green in colour. It has been identified by Dr Max Brown as quartzite and is foreign to Stirling Ridge.²⁶



Left is another detail of the circle of rocks around the base of the mourning tree. Mr Bell mentioned that during a Mourning Ceremony the closest relatives to the deceased sat within the circle and others on the outside. There are also rocks that enter the circle at different points and rock lines that extend out from it. These lines appear to divide the circumference of the circle and nearby areas into segments. A full study has not been undertaken to date. Nearby under the wild cherry tree is a small depression with several large stones marking the area. There are two other trees with stone arrangements around them (disturbed) that may also be mourning trees.

²⁶ Some of the rocks around the tree have been moved and now sit on leaf litter. Others are embedded in the ground. Another tree on the ridge I believe may be a mourning tree. Most of the rocks surrounding this tree are nearly covered with soil.

FAULT LINES, STIRLING PARK



Running through the parkland are several fault lines, one of which is on the *Register of National Estate Database Place Report*. The date is 25 March, 1986. It states in part that the location is *Approximately 40ha and comprising all that area of Block 3, Section 22, Yarralumla, west of a line drawn from the eastern intersection of Alexandrina Drive and Mariner Place and the intersection of Forster Crescent and Empire Circuit...*

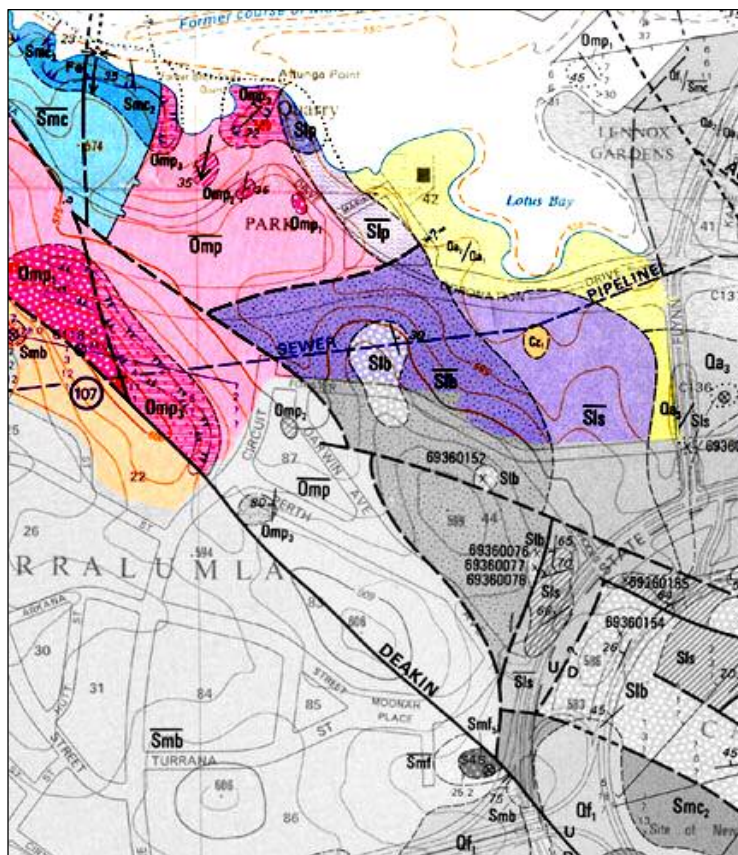
Description: A low ridge on the Deakin Fault, extending in a north-west-east direction consisting of Ordovician and Silurian shales and sandstones of the Acton, pittman and Canberra groups, in altitude from the shore of Lake Burley Griffin (c 556 m) to the summit of the ridge (c600m). The vegetation on the main part of the ridge consists of an ecotone between EUCALYPTUS MACRORHYNCHAA/EUCALYPTUS ROSSII dry sclerophyll forest and EUCALYPTUS MELLIODRA/EUCALYPTUS BLAKELYI woodland.

Condition: The native vegetation on the upper part of the ridge, where the main population of RUTIDOSSI [Button Wrinklewort] are to be found, has suffered some disturbance in the past [mining], but is now regenerating...

Above left is one of the rocks that mark a ley line (fault line) across Stirling Ridge. One fault line connects Black Mountain and Stirling Park.

The map on the following page and the information is from Bureau Of Mineral Resources, Geology and Geophysics - Report 267, Commentary on the Central Canberra 1:10,000 Engineering Geology Sheet, Australian Capital Territory. Stirling Ridge is on the right hand side of the Deakin fault in the

area near the 107 mark. Twenty of the 61 Westlake cottages are not in the parkland - they were erected in the area bounded by Empire Circuit, Forster Crescent, Darwin and Perth Avenues. Near the corner of Empire Circuit and Forster Crescent in the park was the site (on left) of 27 Westlake and (on right) 29 Westlake. The red areas are Middle and Late Ordovician and the purple - Early Silurian. I have taken the liberty of leaving only the area of the park coloured.



Slb = Black Mountain Sandstone - Sandstone & quartzite...;Sis - shale laminated, green-grey where fresh, buff brown with red joint staining where weathered ...;Omp - undivided sedimentary rocks; Omp3 - interbedded sandstone, siltstone, shale and mudstone.



STONE ARRANGEMENTS

Stone arrangements are found throughout the park. Additional information of those found in the area of Block 1, Section 128²⁷ is in the Chapter on Artefacts. Many stone arrangements contain rocks that are foreign to the area and had to be carried to the sites. Some of the stones came from the area of the river and others may have been carried from the Black Mountain or Jerrabomberra. Stone arrangements provide information for those who can read them. Purposes include ceremonial, religious and burial markers. Pointer rocks are functional and give information such as the direction a family group is traveling.²⁸

²⁷ This block may have been broken into smaller blocks sometime around 2007. Section near Flynn Drive is now referred to as Block 8, Section 128 and parts of the block near Alexandrina Drive is now Block 6, Section 128. With the exception of the arrangements that have incorporated 1950s – 1960s glass, the stone arrangements on this block sit on and in the original clay soil.

²⁸ Mr Bell mentioned that there were cairns of rocks places on Black Mountain and Mt Ainslie. I did not ask if there were others but gained the impression that the cairns were there to point to particular places and may be on other mountains in the area.

I believe that many of the patterns formed may have many meanings that are understood only by those who have been initiated into various levels of culture. Some are in areas where both men and women can move freely. Others are in women's or men's areas that can be viewed only by the correct sex and age.

DESIGNS & PATTERNS OF STONE ARRANGEMENTS

During the process of photographing the numerous stone arrangements in the park and Capital Hill I brushed back leaf litter and soft earth that has built up over the years. Once photographed the stones were left to be recovered by nature. I also made a number of drawings of arrangements and noted where they are found.

The stone arrangements found throughout the park are quite different to European garden beds and cannot be confused with them²⁹. Once I began to notice them I found that there are repeats of similar patterns that include eg oval shapes with pointer rocks at either end; circles with stone in centre – these vary from small to ones around two metres across; undulating lines; pathways and pointer rocks. The stones with a few exceptions are all small enough to be easily carried. Many are foreign to the area and may have come from the nearby river and areas such as Black Mountain & Jerrabomberra. White quartz river rocks feature in most of the patterns.

River rocks were probably brought from the nearby Molonglo River. Below is one of the old river rocks on Stirling Ridge. Some of the river rocks are incorporated into rock arrangements and others lie by themselves and may have been used for tool making. Found throughout the park are pieces of glass that may have been used for tool making.³⁰ Many of the broken pieces have rounded edges that suggest that they were used for scraping. Mr Bell, during walks on Stirling Ridge identified some of this glass as tools. Also found on the ridge were a few white quartz stones used for the same purpose.

In the women's area on Stirling Ridge there are patterns that are quite different to others that I have seen in the deserts of WA, NSW, NT and SA and other parts of the ACT.

Following is a diagram of a portion of one of the arrangements in the women's area. The central pattern is a circle around a white quartz river rock (marked black in diagram) – from this central focal area lines of rocks radiate out. Some of the rocks remind me of nearby mountains and may refer to pathways? The tight pattern that has a small rock in the centre that is surrounded by a circle of rocks is common in a number of stone arrangements found in other parts of the ACT that include Black Mountain and Mount Ainslie as well as other parts of Stirling Park.

²⁹ The stone arrangements were found throughout the park and Capital Hill – this land in Colonial times was broken up into a number of tenant farms. Mrs Anne Forrest, descendent of John Morrison who was born during the time the family farmed a tenant farm on Klensendorff's land (1860s-early 1870s) said that farmers usually did not interfere with Aboriginal sites.

³⁰ Mr Bell picked up one piece of glass and said that they used glass for scraping when making boomerangs etc. Also found on Stirling Ridge were a few pieces of white quartz used for similar purpose or cutting.



EXAMPLES OF STONE ARRANGEMENTS ON STIRLING RIDGE

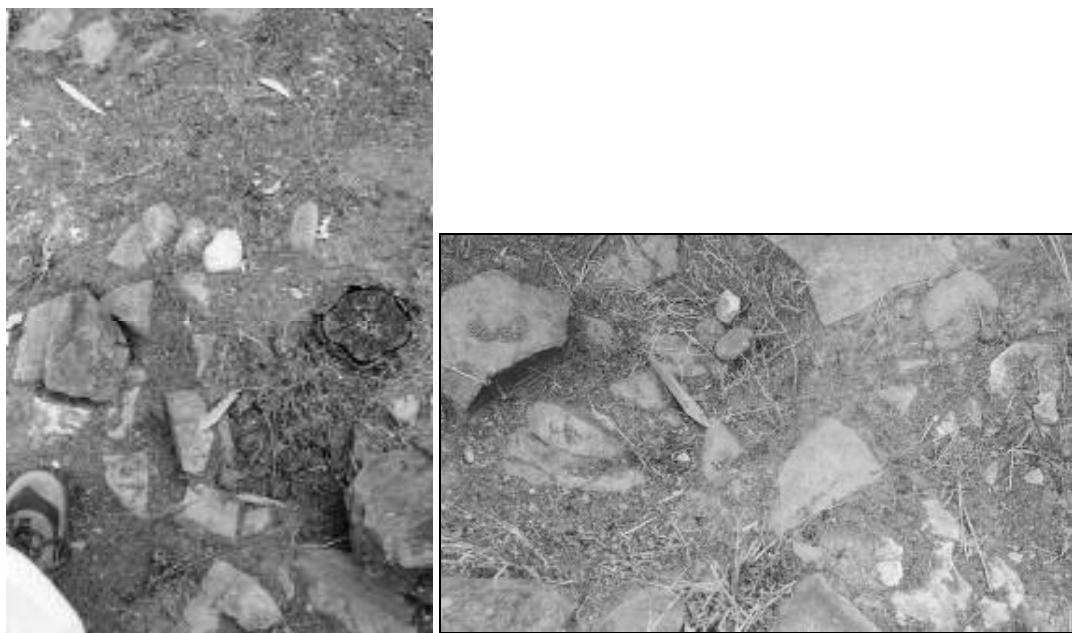
Below are photographs taken in the mid 1990s on Stirling Ridge. At that time I had cleared back some of the leaf litter to expose the rocks. Circles and undulating lines are common arrangements throughout the park.



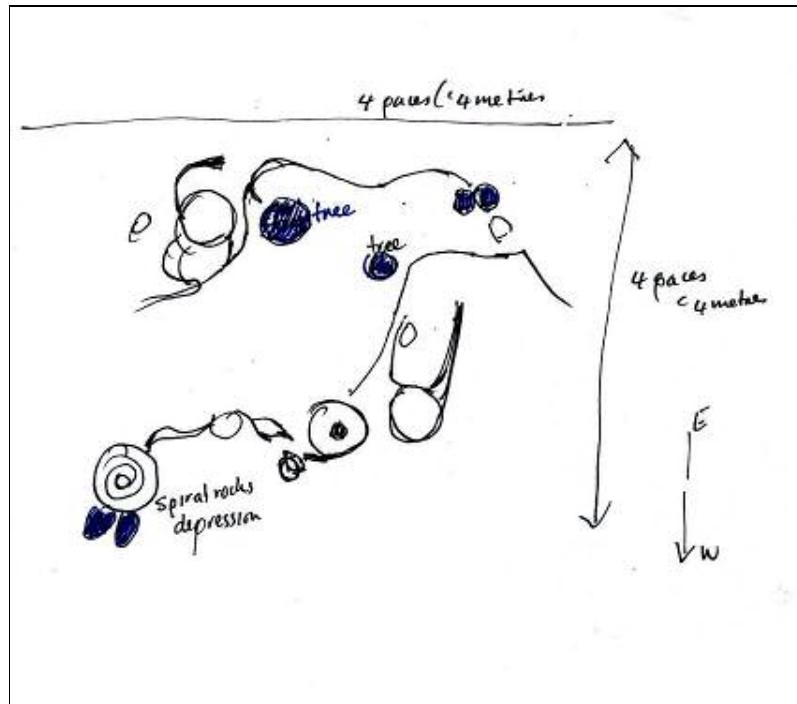
EXAMPLES STONE ARRANGEMENTS Block 1, Section 128 (now further subdivided and being developed)



Above: John Bruggeman looking at one of the stone arrangements in Stirling Park, Block 1, Section 128 (2004).



Above left are details of one of the semi-circles within the big arrangement. It was arranged around a wattle tree now cut off at ground level. Incorporated into its pattern are the usual white quartz and black river rocks. White shale also used. One rock is raised above the others. This particular pattern is different to all the others found to date. Also incorporated in the big pattern is a spiral depression lined with stones that sit into the ground – the majority of which have the flat surface exposed. There is a second such spiral found in a nearby pattern. These are the only ones of this type that I have to date seen. On the right is a detail of the spiral pattern in the big arrangement. Note the small river rocks and white quartz. This arrangement was gently cleared of an earth fill over the years by brushing back the earth. There may be white shale below the cleared area?



Above: Diagram of second largest stone arrangement on Block 1, Section 128 and below – details of that arrangement – John Bruggeman is in photograph below left. 2004.





Above is a detail of stones in one of the largest arrangement remaining on the block. Most of the arrangements were damaged around the time of the inspection by Mr and Mrs Bell. Rocks had been prized out of their beds of clay and many were removed from the site. Some were returned later. The next photograph on the following page shows some of the removed rocks and the holes from which they were removed. Arrows point to the holes.³¹ The legs belong to my dog, *Diddums*.

³¹ The photograph shows some leaf litter in the holes. This photograph was taken the day after the inspection. On the day, the archeologist employed to evaluate the area noted that the stones had only recently been removed at the time – no leaf litter in them. Who vandalized the area is not known, but probably occurred because attention was drawn to the area by the marking of a number of trees with coloured tape.



EXAMPLES – Block 3, Section 128 opposite Lotus Bay

There are also a number of other stone arrangements on the hillside opposite Lotus Bay in the quagmire and close to the Tradesmen's Camp site that do not fit into the categories of gardens or drainage systems. Below are a number of photographs taken of an arrangement below the old road in the area of the tradesmen's camp and a blackened scarred tree. In this arrangement are two black and two white quartz river rocks along with pointer rocks. It runs east west in direction. The photographs were taken on different days in October and early November 2003. Incidentally it was suggested that the blackened scar was caused by a fire in the area. However I would question this supposition because this is the only tree found in Stirling Park to be blackened in such a manner.

Below is a photograph of the same tree as above taken from further back. The dogs are Calisto and Diddums. To the left of the post between the shrub and the tree area are a number of arrangements – one circle and another that is an undulating line.



Below are two photographs that show details of the rock arrangements in the above photograph.



Nearby to the above arrangements is a section of the old road that has another arrangement that is circular on the interior and oval shaped on the exterior with pointer rocks on either end. This arrangement is orientated in east-west direction. Moriarty in 1912 dated the road as 1890. I believe that it was part of an earlier track marked on the 1915 map that shows it came from the Quarry. Stone from this quarry had to be moved by bullock drays to the work site of St John the Baptist Church. The road that skirts the area above the open land fed by waters from the quagmire provided a firm surface for the heavy load and was probably used in the 1860s for that

purpose. The area of the road used for the arrangements was not used for access by the Tradesmen and Howie's men.



A November 2003 photograph of the above arrangement shows that the two black lozenge shaped stones have white quartz rocks on either side. One of the quartz rocks is hidden by the grass and leaf litter in this photograph. Below is a view from below the arrangement showing small trees in the background. A line of rocks runs up to this area. The scarred tree is out of sight to the right of this photograph and near it are more circles and semi-circles of rocks.



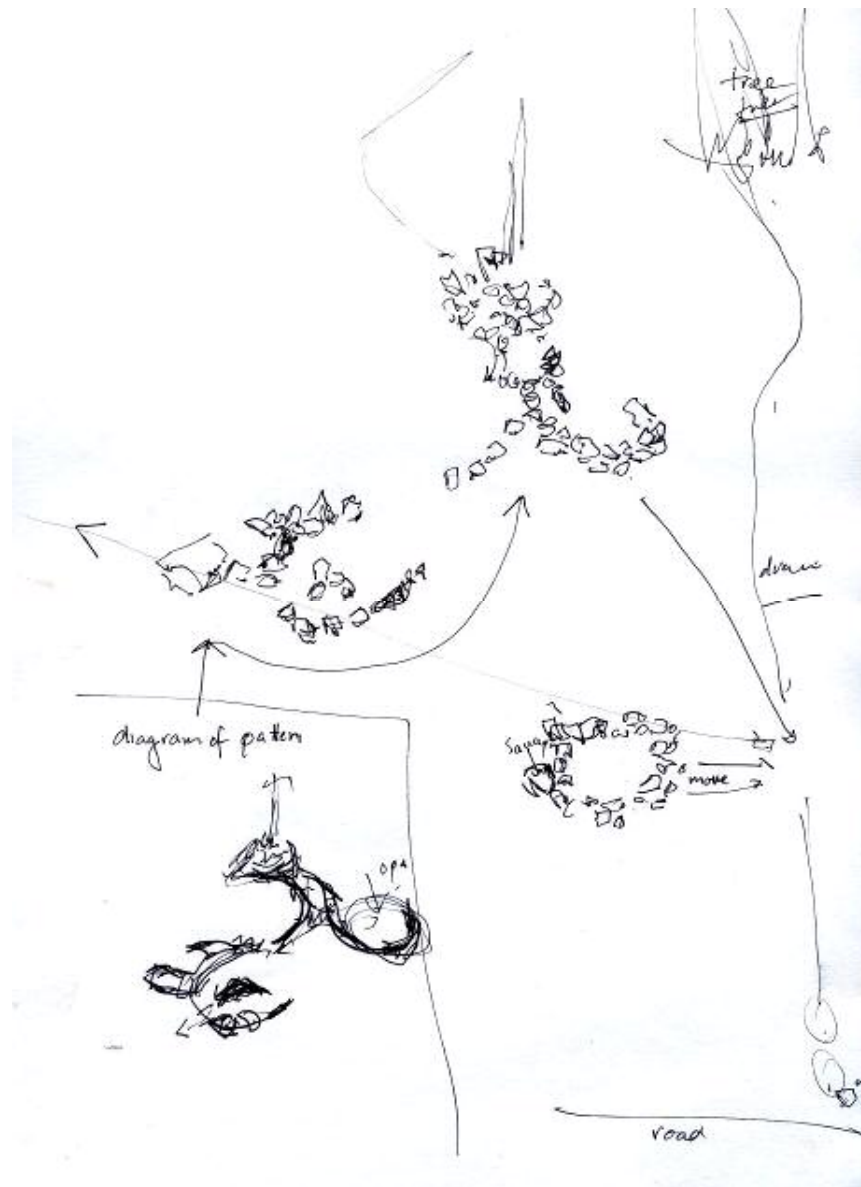
Below left is a photograph showing one of the undulating lines of rocks found near the quagmire in the area below the site of the Tradesmen's Ablution Blocks. The usual white quartz and black river rocks are also incorporated in the pattern. On the right is part of an arrangement in the area of the Tradesmen that incorporates the river rocks.



Below is a photograph of a group of stone arrangements above the old road – below the site of the ablution blocks in the Tradesmen's Camp.







Above: diagram of the rock arrangements shown above. Not in this working diagram is another arrangement with pointer rock that is close to the old road. It is situated to the lower right of these arrangements. The note *MOVE* refers to the positioning of this circular arrangement that does appear to be part of the drainage system.

CONCLUSION

Stirling Park and the undeveloped section of Capital Hill is important Ngunawal land that holds cultural and spiritual *history* of the Ngunawal people. I believe that it is essential that with the permission and help of the Ngunawal elders that this land should be documented. It is an important part of our heritage.³²

A FEW THOUGHTS & OBSERVATIONS

No full examination of Ngunawal lands within the boundaries of the ACT has been carried out. Much of European knowledge is limited to 19th century European reminiscences and reports of sighting of Aboriginal people by explorers.

Because, I believe, that it has been assumed the evidence of Ngunawal cultural links with the land within the city area has been disturbed to such an extent that nothing of significance remains the land has not been thoroughly examined and documented. The truth is that there are numerous stone arrangements, paintings and scarred trees within the boundaries of the ACT that includes the city itself. Stone arrangements, in particular, are still found on the mountains and hills that include in particular the area of Stirling Park and the nearby undeveloped section of Capital Hill.

Examination of the cultural landscape is being carried out by researchers such as Karen Williams, Rebecca Lamb, John Bruggeman and others who are collecting and documenting information. Many are working with elders, Ruth and Don Bell and I believe that it is essential that this work continues under the guidance of the elders.

Following are examples of photographs of scarred trees, stone arrangements, grinding stones etc taken in the city area. Below one of the old scarred trees on Mt Ainslie.

³² Mr and Mrs Bell would like the area of Stirling Park to be used as a teaching area – it position next to the Federal **Parliament House where the decisions and laws that affect all Australians are made is symbolic of the two extremes of society – the Ngunawal people – the traditional owners of the land who have lived here for thousands and thousands of years – and the newcomers who now create the laws by which our country is run...**



Below rock lined hole Mt Ainslie.





Above – details of a large stone circle on Black Mountain. The photograph on the right has large pieces of white quartz used in the arrangement. Below left is a grinding stone – Pialligo – and on the right is another stone used to grind material – Mt Ainslie.

