

Continue along the track at the back of the hall until you come to an old 'sinuous' gum tree. Cut into its trunk are three deep holes that may have been part of a 19th century post and rail fence. High up on the trunk are the remains of a conductor and near the base of the trunk is a boxthorn. A short distance from the tree on the track is a small concrete slab. It may have marked the entrance to a sewer camp building. The boxthorn along with the nearby quince tree and the trunk of an old large hawthorn bush (marked by concrete posts) suggest that this site may also have been used by a 19th century tenant farmer. A number of hawthorn bushes, rowan trees (both planted as protection against evil) and boxthorn bushes (used to confine stock) - reminders of the earliest European land usage of this area - are found throughout the park.

Return to Bell's Corner (Point 6) and follow the road around to the right. Ignore the track heading down to Alexandria Drive. About 80 metres from the corner, on the left, is the site of the Westlake Tennis Court (Point 7). The trunk of an apple tree marks one side of the court, which was built in 1926 by the Westlake people and was still in use in the 1940s. The planks of the tennis pavilion disappeared shortly after the completion of the building and re-emerged in other buildings.

Continue along the road for about 75 metres. You will pass two concrete posts on your right. The second marks the briar rose hedge of 41 or 42 Westlake. A short distance further along on the right are two trees, a prunus, and a gum with ivy climbing the trunk. They grow close to the site of the toilet door of No 43 Westlake. Between cottages 42 and 43 (Point 8) a road turned down Beadman's Hill to join another that went up over the hill to meet State Circle, the site of the Westlake Bus Stop.



Gross Yacht Club (Point 9). This is the site of No 47 Westlake. Concrete paths define the back and side of the cottage. Nearby is a circular concrete hole. It was a butter cooler.

The Southern Cross Yacht Club is built on the site of Briar Farm Cottage that was built from brick in 1870 and pulled down in 1950. It is possible that the material used to produce the bricks came from the Quarry at Altunga Point. (Bill Haines of No 52 Westlake was the quarry's powder monkey for many years). In 1913 Briar Farm's last tenant farmer, Thomas Kinlaysia, left. From that time the cottage was leased to Commonwealth employees. The last was Charles Foster Day.

Return to (Point 8) stopping on the way at the concrete post that marks a concrete slab in the backyard of 46. In its surface is inscribed 'Andy Campbell 1944'. Godown Beadman's Hill and near the bottom on the left hand side of the road is a concrete culvert (Point 10). It was put down in 1951 and into it a number of Westlake kids did not resist the temptation to scratch their names. They included the Poulter children, Duncy Campbell and Hazel Haines. On the other side of the road Kevin Haines added his initials to a concrete apron outside cottage 48.

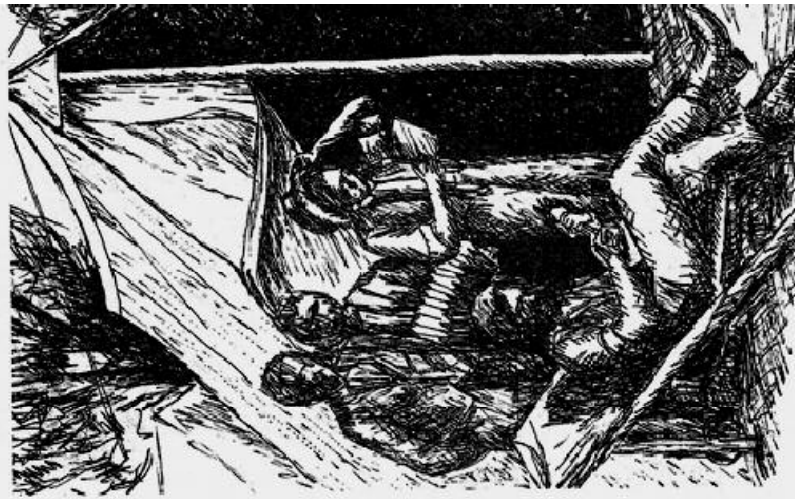
The water used to run under the road into the ditch dug across the hill below cottages 43-47. However the section near the culvert was filled with rubbish many years ago. The sides of the ditch were 'reformed' during the 1990s cleaning and clearing of woody weeds. Between the creek and the ditch is the septic tank (Point 11). The ground between the two is uneven and covered with long grass. It may be prudent to approach it from the other side of the creek.

Return to the Starting Point. George's brick floors and part of the tarred road surface may be seen near Haines Creek at the back of No 29 (Point 12). Nearby was a plank bridge put down to connect the west side of the creek to the track that led across to the old road over to the Hotel Camberra Bus Stop.

Before leaving look up to the site of the four pines that marked the back fence line of No 28 Westlake. (Point 13). They were probably planted in 1924. Between cottages 28 and 53 was one of two large mullock dumps left by the sewer miners. Each was always known as 'The Dump'. The second was near the 1925 heritage listed sewer vent on Stirling Ridge. On top of the ridge are a number of concrete slabs and trench used during the period of sewer work in the area. One slab may cover the deepest shaft in the system and ten metres down the miners discovered silver.

Ngunnawal scarred trees, rock arrangements, earth disturbed by surface mining. On the lower slopes are the sites of a 19th century farm. Sewer Vent and humpies erected by Sewer Miners. The button wrinklewort grows abundantly on this hill.

Access to the Stirling Ridge path is near the Camberra Mosque. Short distance from the entrance, on the right, are three old concrete posts that surround 'The Gap' survey mark. From here entrance to the Gap is clearly seen. It was a well used pathway. The top of the ridge also provides an excellent vantage point to see Lake Burley Griffin and the buildings of modern Canberra nestled below Mount Ainslie and nearby hills - a cogent reminder that the bushland of Stirling Park sits in the centre of the city.



The Walk

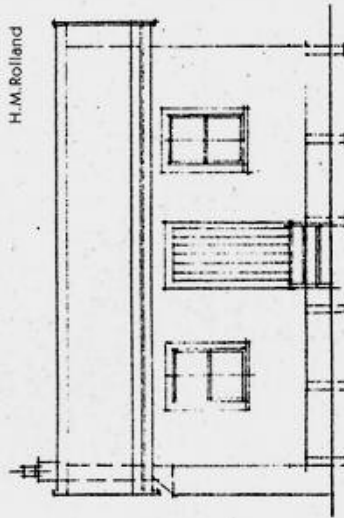
THE STARTING POINT is south of Lake Burley Griffin at the corner of Empire Circuit and Forster Crescent, Yarralumla. Allow about one hour.

Here you will find the Commemorative Plaque erected by the Westlake Community in what once was the backyard of 29 Westlake. Ronnie O'Rourke of 45 Westlake wrote the poem on the plaque.

Three pines formed part of the front hedge of 29 and embedded in the trunk of one is part of the metal front gate. Like all Westlake cottages, No 29 was painted dull green to blend in with the landscape. All the cottages were a basic 7.5 metre square divided into four rooms: two bedrooms, kitchen and living. The roof was galvanised iron. This unlined timber rectangle was raised on concrete piers. Attached to the back of each cottage, and sitting on the ground, was a combined laundry-bathroom and lavatory. The bath was tin and the water for it was heated in a wood fired copper. The lavatory had its own entrance at the back of the house and, prior to the connection to the sewer in 1927, three septic tanks served the settlement. One is somewhere at the rear of 29, near Haines Creek, another is in the grounds of the Mexican Embassy, and the third - now partly excavated - is between the ditch below cottages 43-47 and Haines Creek (**Point 11**).

The first known tenants of No 29 were Jane and Robert Gales who moved into the house on 26th September 1925. The next tenant was George Sykes who, with his bride June, moved into

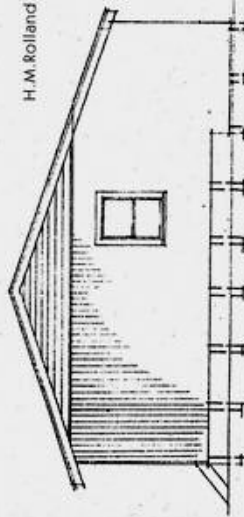
H. M. Rolland



the cottage in 1929. He was Westlake's last tenant and left in 1965. George was also one of Canberra's characters. With his brother Gay he provided Canberra with its first taxi service. He had a passion for collecting bricks and it was not uncommon for him to stop his omnibus to pick up a lone brick. Reminders of his brick collecting activity remain in the park in the brick floors he put down in the laundry-bathroom-toilet, three small flats (let to new Australians) and garage built in the extended backyard of No 29.

In front of No 29 is the old road. Here children played hopscotch and cricket, and people stopped to gossip.

H. M. Rolland



Walk 40 metres along the old road to the site of cottage 31 (**Point 21**). A number of photographs displayed at this point show the houses as they were in the 1940s and Mr and Mrs Keir standing at their gate. They moved into No 31 after Horrie Cleaver (the first hire car driver/owner in Canberra) moved out. Horrie left behind his bees and it is possible that the Park's bees are descendants. In cottage 30 lived Ernie Corey - a very highly decorated man in World War 1. His medals are in the Australian War Memorial.

Walk across the road to the two pines (**Point 3**). They mark the fence line between cottages 54 and 55 and the front fence line of cottages 53-62. These houses were built in 1926 on the sites of the tents of No 3 Sewer Camp.

A nearby concrete post marks the concrete floor of No 55's combined laundry-bathroom and lavatory. The floor plan was the reverse of the 52 cottages erected in 1924. No 55 was

tenanted by SP bookies 'Lofy' Harrington and his wife. On race days their young Cockatoo, Ronnie O'Rourke, climbed one of the two box trees near the front of No 55 to keep an eye out for the police. Before walking down to Ronnie's tree, look up to the left to the old

Callifornian Big Tree (Sequoiadendron giganteum). It grows in the backyard of No 56 and was probably planted in 1926 by the Phillip family.

Return to the road and look down The Gap to a large lone gum tree. (**Point 4**). The toilet door of 36 was near it. Hanging from one of the branches is the wire of Andy Hawke's wireless aerial. The Hawke family, like a number of other residents, came from Arahuen.

Continue along the road until you come to an obvious right hand turn (**Point 6**). This is Bell's Corner - named after the Bell family of No 39. A concrete patio and a drain behind the house remain. The line of pine trees marks the boundary between Nos 38 and 39. Opposite No 39 a line of prunus trees mark the back fence of No 61.

Off to the left is an old track (**Point 5**). Walk along it about 75 metres to the site of the Westlake Hall. A sign erected by Westlake people marks the back of the hall and there are a number of photographs on a post that marks the front. The hall was constructed from galvanised iron. There were two halls on the site. The first was the Mess Room for No 3 Sewer Camp which was left behind after the camp moved. A few years later it was enlarged and a fire place added. The hall was the focal point for community activities. Held here were numerous parties such as Children's Christmas, engagements (all welcome), euehre, farewells to neighbours and to the men going off to war. The hall was the venue for dances, church services, a baby health centre and, from the early 1950s, a preschool. The Hall was 'dry' but outside it many fragments of beer bottles are still to be found. After George Sykes pulled it down a number of gum trees were planted on the site.

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History of the Gap and Westlake

Walter Burley Griffin gave Westlake its name and it was chosen to accommodate workmen because of its proximity to the major construction sites of Hotel Canberra, Provisional Parliament House and the main sewer outfall. This site had a number of important attributes. It had good slopes necessary for drainage, it had ready made tracks to link the suburb with construction sites, it was within walking distance of work (this saved paying the zone allowance) and most importantly, it was out of sight of permanent Canberra. The majority of those who came to build the city were housed in old farm cottages, tents, cubicles, humpies and a few timber cottages. Those transferred to Canberra to run the business of the nation were accommodated in small brick cottages in the islands of permanent suburbs.

In the 1920s the suburb consisted of a number of camps and temporary settlements erected near each other, but separate. On the eastern side of Haines Creek that runs through The Gap, and situated on the hillside above Lotus Bay, were Contractor Howie's 25 timber cottages and Hostel Camp, and the Tradesmen's and No 1 Labourers' Camps. On the western side of the creek were No 3 Sewer Camp and 62 portable timber cottages designed by H. M. Rolland; he based his design on contractor John Howie's cottages. The 62 cottages known as "The Gap Cottages" and later "Westlake" were the first to be built by the Federal Capital Advisory Committee for construction workers.

In 1925 the population of Westlake was 700, one fifth of the territory population. By 1931 only 61 cottages remained in Westlake. In 1965 the last cottage—number 29—was removed. A number of Westlake cottages were moved to Queenbyam. Several are in Gilmore Road.

Since 1965 the land in Stirling Park has been allowed to regenerate and is the only remaining area of Yellow Box/Red Gum Grassy Woodland near Lake Burley Griffin. Many of the gums are centuries old. The Park is one of a handful of Australian sites where the endangered Button Wattlewort (*Rutidosia leptorhynchos*) grows in relative abundance. It is home to over 80 different birds and numerous native animals, insects, spiders and reptiles.

This land is old. It has had many names. The Ngunawal people called it Guru Bung Dhaura (stony ground) and Canberra (meeting place), nineteenth century Europeans knew it as Klentendorff's Land, twentieth century construction workers as Westlake and modern Canberra as Stirling Park. It is encircled by grand buildings including past and present Parliament Houses and embassies. Here lived Australia's most humble.



Golden Everlasting daisies



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Contact:

National Trust of Australia (ACT)
PO Box 3173, Manuka ACT 2603
phone: (02) 6239 5222

OR

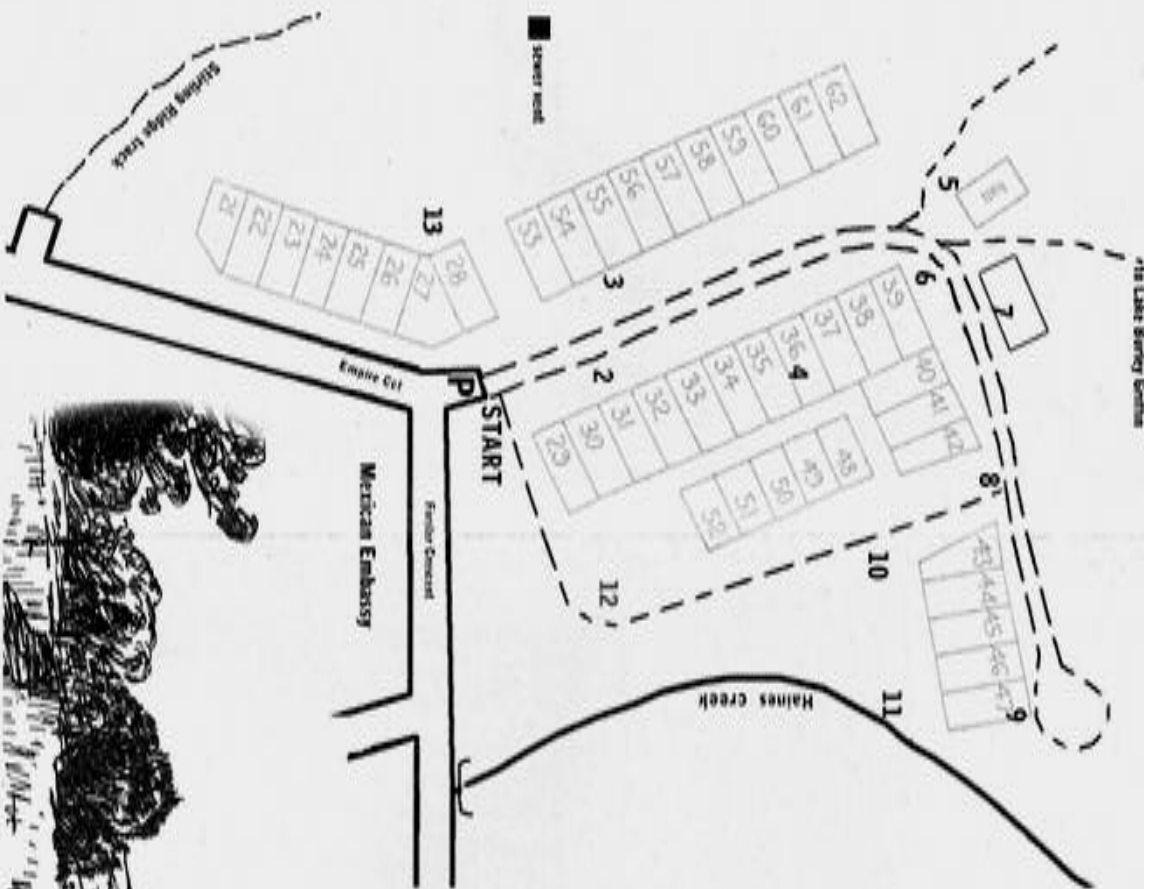
Cultural Planner, PML
GPO Box 1908, Canberra ACT 2601
phone: (02) 6205 0464.

A Heritage
Tour of

STIRLING PARK
formerly Westlake



The Gap



Westlake Stories...

Denay Fret and Kay Kooley (Walters sisters). Our first encounter with Westlake was when our neighbour Jim's hunt (who had a bad speech impediment) rushed into our home trying to tell us something. Dad thought she was saying Fret! Fret! Dad rushed out with a hose only to discover that she was saying Mr. Milner the traveling grocer was selling his goods.

Eva Warren (nee Johnston) 35 Westlake. Even today our years at Westlake still have an influence on our lives. We are still Westlake kids. The other we get the more important those days in Westlake seem to become. When I think of Westlake I think of community—sticking together when things get tough—sharing of joys and sorrows, strong friendships. I close my eyes and I can feel the crispness of a winter's morning, the sun warm on my back. I see those women standing outside No 35 chanting, I hear a dog or two barking, a baby's cry, children laughing, birds singing, that warm contented feeling of belonging. I'm on the top of the world. Mum let me have the day off school.

Nancy Metcalfe. 2011, 1945 Albanee Street had Last Saturday afternoon I went over to Westlake. I hadn't seen the place before as it is away from the road. I saw an 'od' for some furniture in The Times and I thought I'd go and have a look. I caught the No 1 bus and got off at the Embassy (American) and walked along the road through gum trees and scrub till I came upon this little hollow with about one hundred tiny green weatherboard houses something like workmen's huts. Their gardens were quite gay in some places, others not much. At last I found No 61. It was like the other little places except that it was covered with a rambling rose and on the gate a notice. Because of the dogs. They may be there. I wondered if I would venture in to knock at the door and then just decided that I would when a little boy playing on the road called out that they were dangerous dogs and I had to throw a small stone on the roof and then the people would come out. I asked him who lived there and he told me 'Mr and Mrs Jaks'. I didn't know if I could hit the roof if I tried, so my little friend threw a pebble for me. Open flew the door and out came an old grey haired man to greet me - My Jaks. He proved to be quite a nice old chap. I thought he may have been a dealer but it appeared that he made most of the furniture himself - Most of it was in Cedar and Maple and it was very nice.

Angela Ivanovici 7 Westlake. Spencer McDonald let the house and lived in a shed at the back of the house! The in Canberra began at the immigrant camp, located on the southern side of Capital Hill (called Capital Hill Hostel). The family moved to 7 Westlake in March 1953. The house was comfortable with standard two bedrooms, a living room, kitchen-dining, bathroom and broad verandah right along the back. My room faced west and I recall moonlight shadows from a cherry tree occasionally turning into snakes during the night - much to the concern of my parents as I woke them up in alarm.