

No 3 Sewer Camp 1922- May 1925 in *The Gap* Westlake

Main Intercepting Sewer System (1915 - 1916 & 1921-27 construction period)

Work on Canberra's Sewer commenced in 1915. By the end of 1916 work stopped as men and money were directed into the war effort and work on the city came to an almost standstill. By the 11th September 1916 the only man employed on the sewer works was the caretaker who was paid 9 shillings per day. Work recommenced in 1921.

A report dated 22nd July, 1916 listed the number of men engaged on sewer work and the occupation of each. The report also noted that the lining of the tunnel with concrete was being carried out. The list is as follows:

Occupation	Wage per day per man	Wage per week (Total)
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 assistant powder monkeys	11/-	6 pounds 12/-
1 engine driver	12/4	3 pounds 14/6
2 gangers	15/-	9 pounds
5 winch drivers	11/-	6 pounds 10/-
2 carpenters	14/-	8 pounds 8/-
6 truckers	11/4	20 pounds 8/-
1 electrician	14/6	4 pounds 7/-
1 tool sharpener	12/-	3 pounds 12/-
1 bullock driver	10/6	3 pounds 3/-
1 ganger	16/6	4 pounds 19/-
2 leading hands	14/-	8 pounds 8/-
7 builders labourers	13/6	28 pounds 17/6

Total Wage Bill 220 pounds 1/-

The men who started work in 1921 would have had similar work skills to those employed in 1916. Jeremiah Dillon who was the Sewer Foreman in 1916 continued on with the job when work recommenced. He couldn't read or write but was an intelligent capable man who loved his football. There are many stories about Jeremiah who was a well-loved man.

There were four main sewer camps in the post war period – No 1 was near the corner of Tuggeranong Parkway and Cotter Road on the suburb of Curtin side; No 2 in the area of Banks

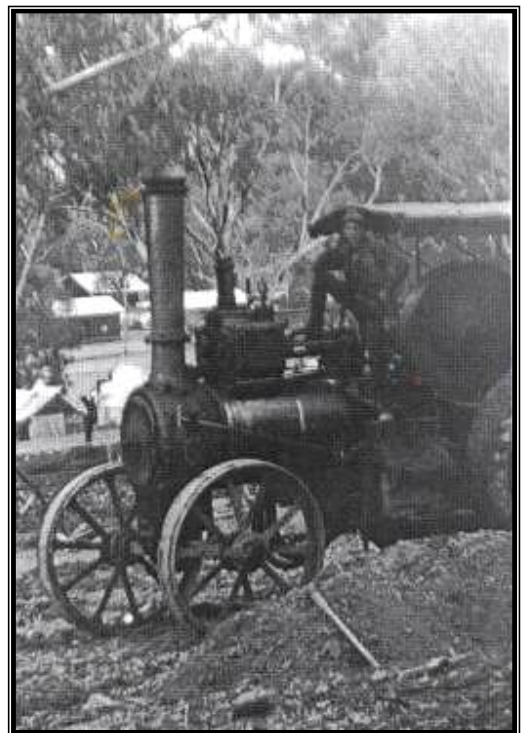
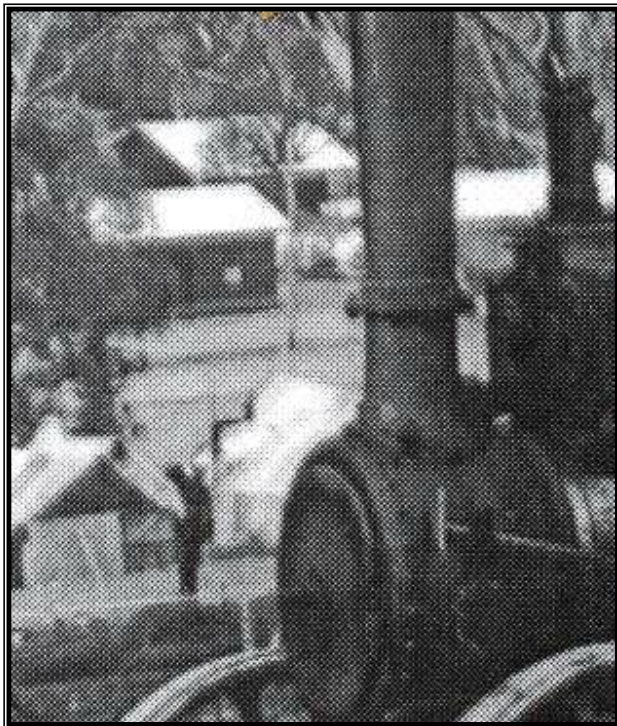
Street where it meets the lake road at Yarralumla, No 3 in *The Gap* Westlake (Stirling Park) and No 4 opposite the Provisional Parliament House on the south side of the Molonglo River.

Below is a photograph of No 1 Sewer Camp. The men of No 3 Sewer Camp would have had tents similar to those shown below. Many of the men added tin fire places and chimney to their tents in an attempt to keep warm during the winter months.



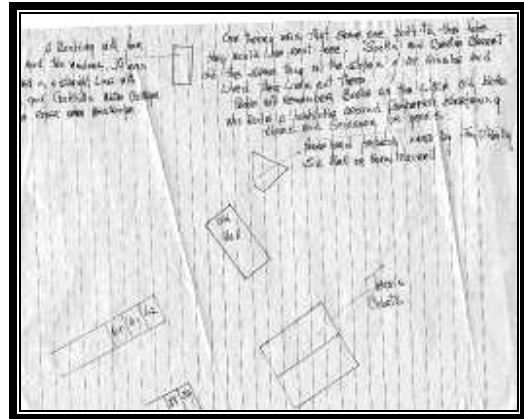
No 3 Sewer Camp, Westlake 1922-May 1925

This camp that consisted of around 50 tents erected in two rows across the base of Stirling Ridge had a population of around a 100 men. Arthur Freeman, son of the Mess Caterer for No 3 Sewer Camp, showed me the sites of the tents – later used to erect Westlake Cottages 53-62 - and the information that the tents were erected in two rows. On the upper slope side of the tents a storm water channel was dug across the hill. Part of this drain remains on the hill. The Westlake Hall was built initially as a Mess for the men of No 3 and left behind following the departure of the camp in May 1925.



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One area near the sewer vent on Stirling Ridge up until a woody weed clearance in the mid 1990s had a clearly defined rectangular edge of shrubs that outlined a yard (see above mud map). Still in situ on that site is a small circular rock edged garden bed that had a prunis tree and white irises. The tree was removed at the time of the woody weed work and has partly grown back. The white iris plants survive. On the next page is a photograph of the overgrown bed taken in 2003 and on the right is a diagram by Kevin Sykes showing the site of one of the buildings (top center left) not part of the Westlake Community.



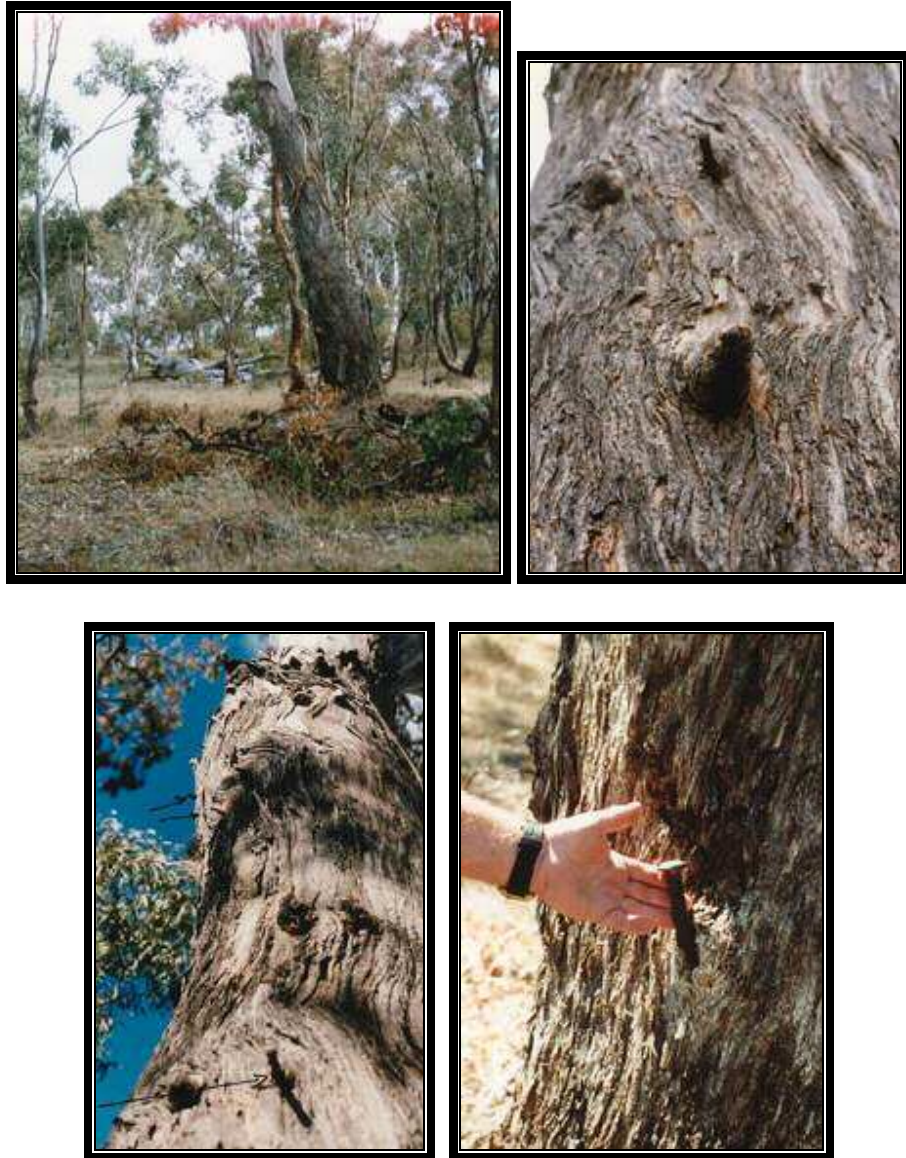
Examples of Evidence of Sewer Camp Humpies on Stirling Ridge



Above left is an area of cutaway earth. It is near the sewer vent. On the right is the remains of a water tank. Nearby were a number of kerosene or petrol tins cut in half filled with concrete. They may have formed piers for the cottage on the site.

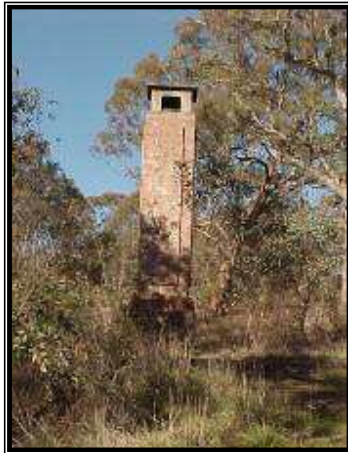
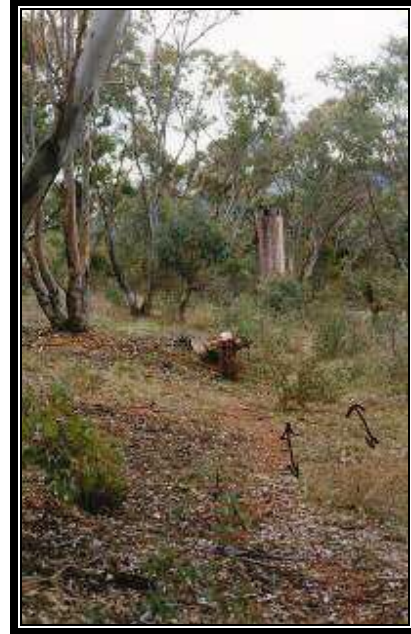
Above is one of the petrol tins (empty) found on the hillside. The tree on the left is near a dump of earth. The tree has wire protruding from its trunk.

Many of the trees along the sewer line and near humpy sites in Stirling Park have metal bolts, nails etc embedded in their trunks. The next three photographs show a tree on Stirling Ridge that has a series of metal pieces protruding from the trunk. The purpose is not known for certain but it is likely that this tree was an Aboriginal climbing tree – possibly as a lookout tree – that had toe holds cut. Later the metal spikes were inserted into the trunk in the toe hold cuts.

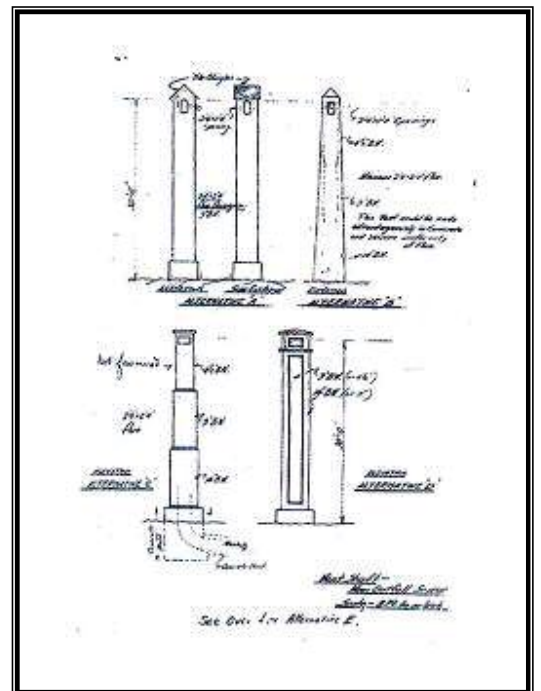


The photograph on the right is a different tree to the one shown in the left and two earlier photographs. Note the large bolt in the trunk. The hand belongs to Noel Carn.

Below left is a tree near the old hall. Note the electrical ceramic condenser in the trunk. On the right is a photograph showing the old track/road that led from the area of Perth Avenue across the parkland to the sewer vent. Black Mountain is in the background.

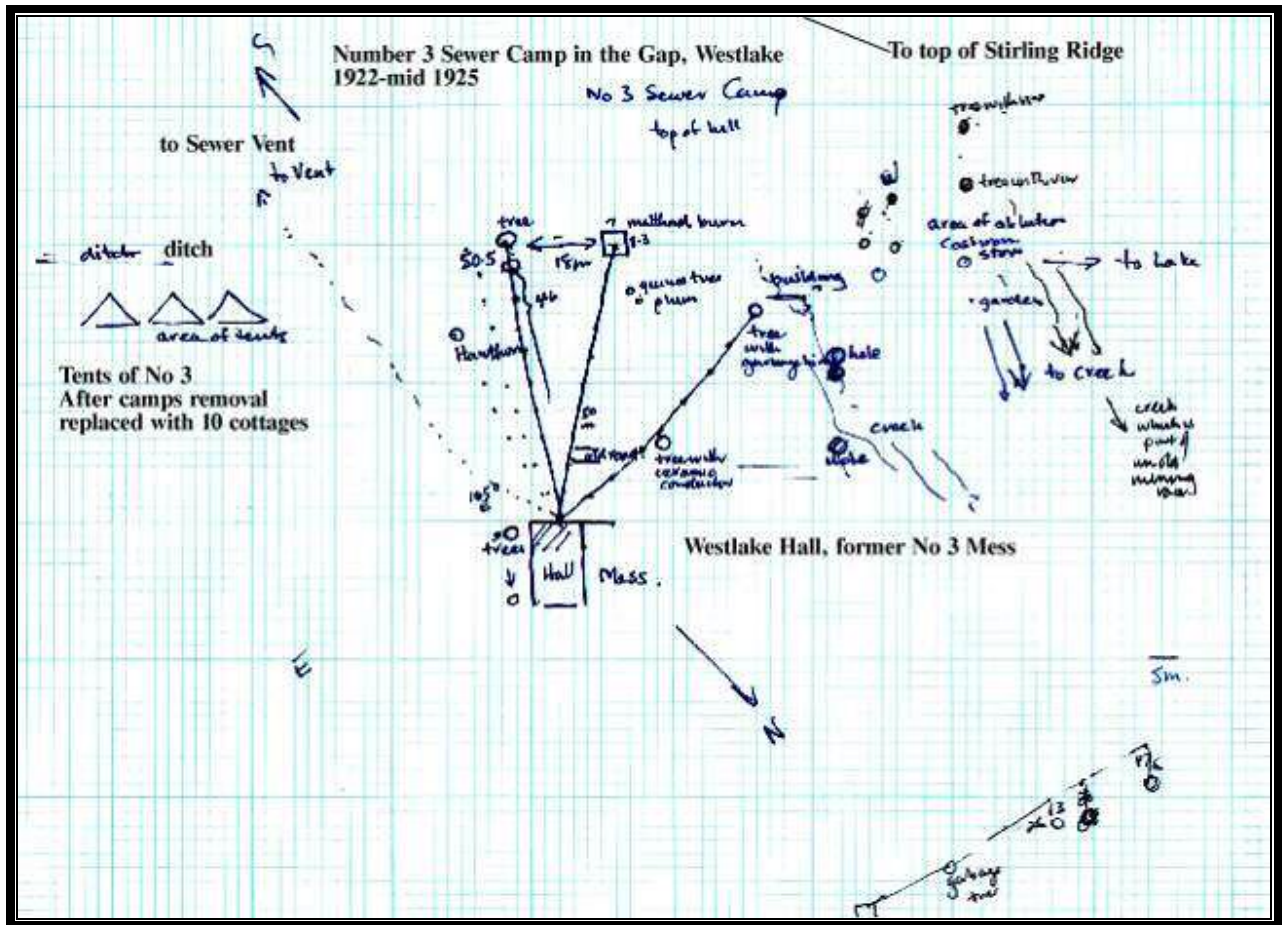


The sewer vent is now on the Heritage List and is one of four constructed in the 1920s. The others are near the corner of Tuggeranong Parkway and Cotter Road; in the grounds of Royal Canberra Golf Club near the incinerator; Stirling Ridge and the last one – now gone – was near Commonwealth Avenue. On the right are some of the designs for the vent.



The one lower right was chosen.

As mentioned earlier the Mess Caterer for No 3 Sewer Camp was Arthur Freeman Senior who lived with his wife and family in rooms off the Mess Hall. The Mess following the departure of No 3 remained in the settlement for use as a community hall. In 1926 it was enlarged. Below is a working diagram of the area of the Hall showing tree with ceramic condenser, gardens etc. There is also a site where malthoid has been burnt. Another building was probably on this site – probably a bathing area for the men.

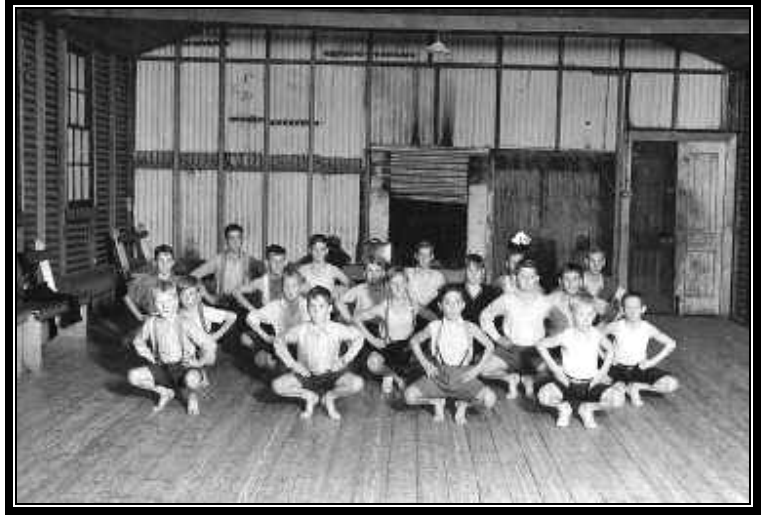


There are a number of photographs of the Westlake Hall taken in later years that give some indication of what the earlier building was like. The walls for example were unlined corrugated iron. Near the hall site under a large gum one of the old garbage bins used by the camp was found.



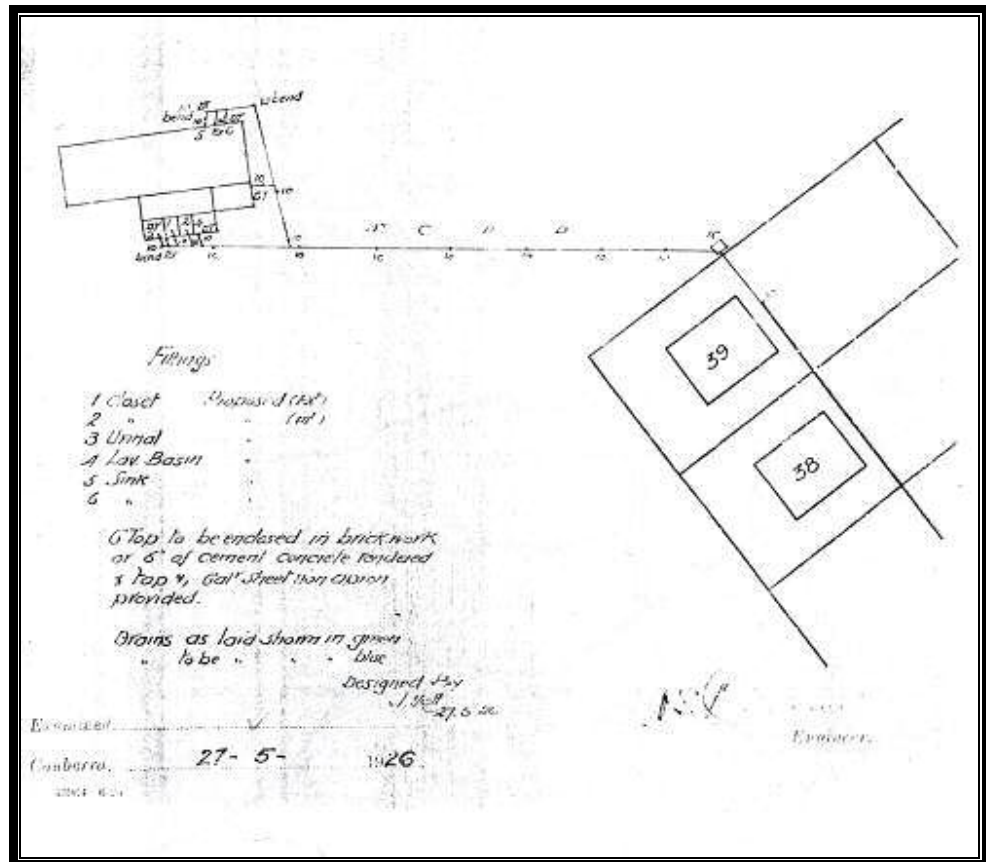
Left is a photograph of the flattened garbage bin found under a tree near the hall. In this area are large patches of sweet peas – purple and white.

Below left is a photograph of Angela Ivanovici outside the Westlake Hall (on the lake side) 1950s and on the right is the interior of the Westlake Hall in the late 1930s. (Full details of this photograph loaned by Vic Reynolds is found in the section on Westlake).



Below on the left is another photograph loaned by the Ivanovici family showing Angela and her mother outside the hall (opposite side of the hall to the one above). On the right is a 2003 photograph of the same area. The building showing in the background is the Finnish Embassy in Forster Crescent Yarralumla. The site of the tents was on the right in both photographs – but further back on the lower slopes of Stirling Ridge.





In May 1925 following the departure of the sewer camp, their Mess was converted into the first Westlake Hall. Twelve months later a decision was made to enlarge the hall and provide additional lavatory accommodation. At that time the cottages were serviced by three septic tanks. The above plan shows the proposed connection to the septic line at a point near 39

Westlake. During recent walks (2003-2004) during the period of drought several brick lined square holes were discovered. One is in the same position as marked on the map above. Another is found near cottage 42 and next to cottage 28. The purpose of these holes was not known until the above map was re-examined. Above is the brick lined hole near 39 Westlake.

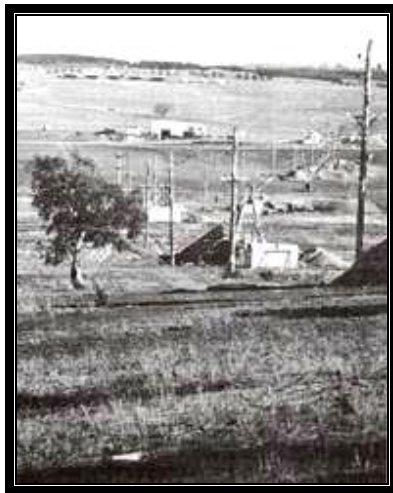


Above is a photograph of the square lined hole near 28 Westlake. On the right is a detail. Below are two photographs showing on the left the site of another square brick lined hole and on the right a detail. In the background is Lotus Bay. This site is near Camp Hill and is the area of flat land below the sites of the Tradesmen's and No 1 Labourers Camps. A man hole is on the area of land in the background to the right. My guess is that this square hole may have been an inspection hole linked with the sewer line. Briar Farm and Kaye's were not connected to the sewer or electricity.



Work on the Hill – Stirling Ridge.

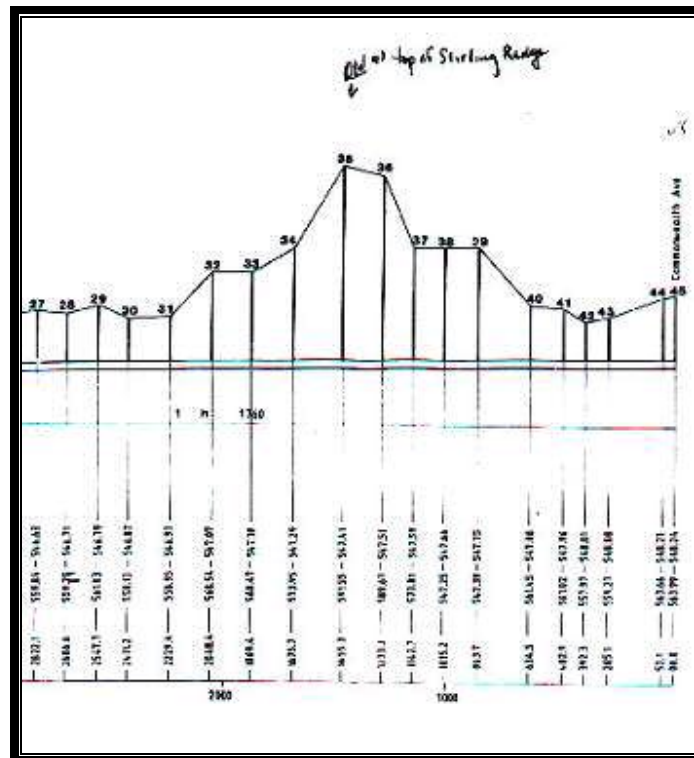
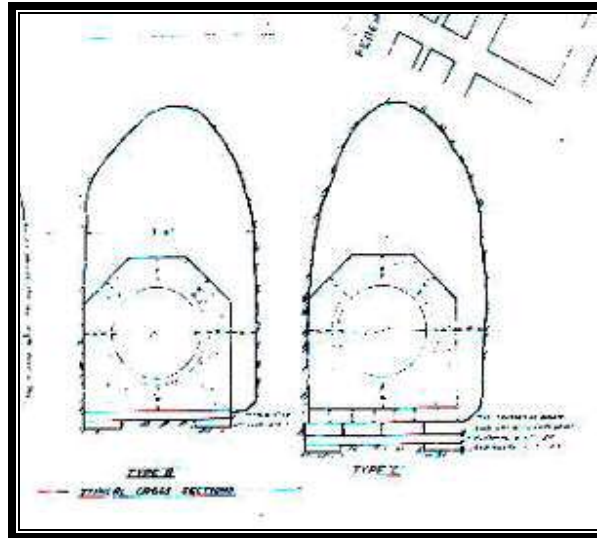
The photograph below right was taken in the early 1920s from Stirling Ridge looking back towards Westridge (Yarralumla). On the right is a 2003 photograph showing a similar view. The five small dark coloured buildings in the background are ex-Molonglo buildings moved in 1921 to the Brickyards – Westridge (now Yarralumla) to accommodate workmen. The sites of these houses today is Banks Street near the Forestry School.



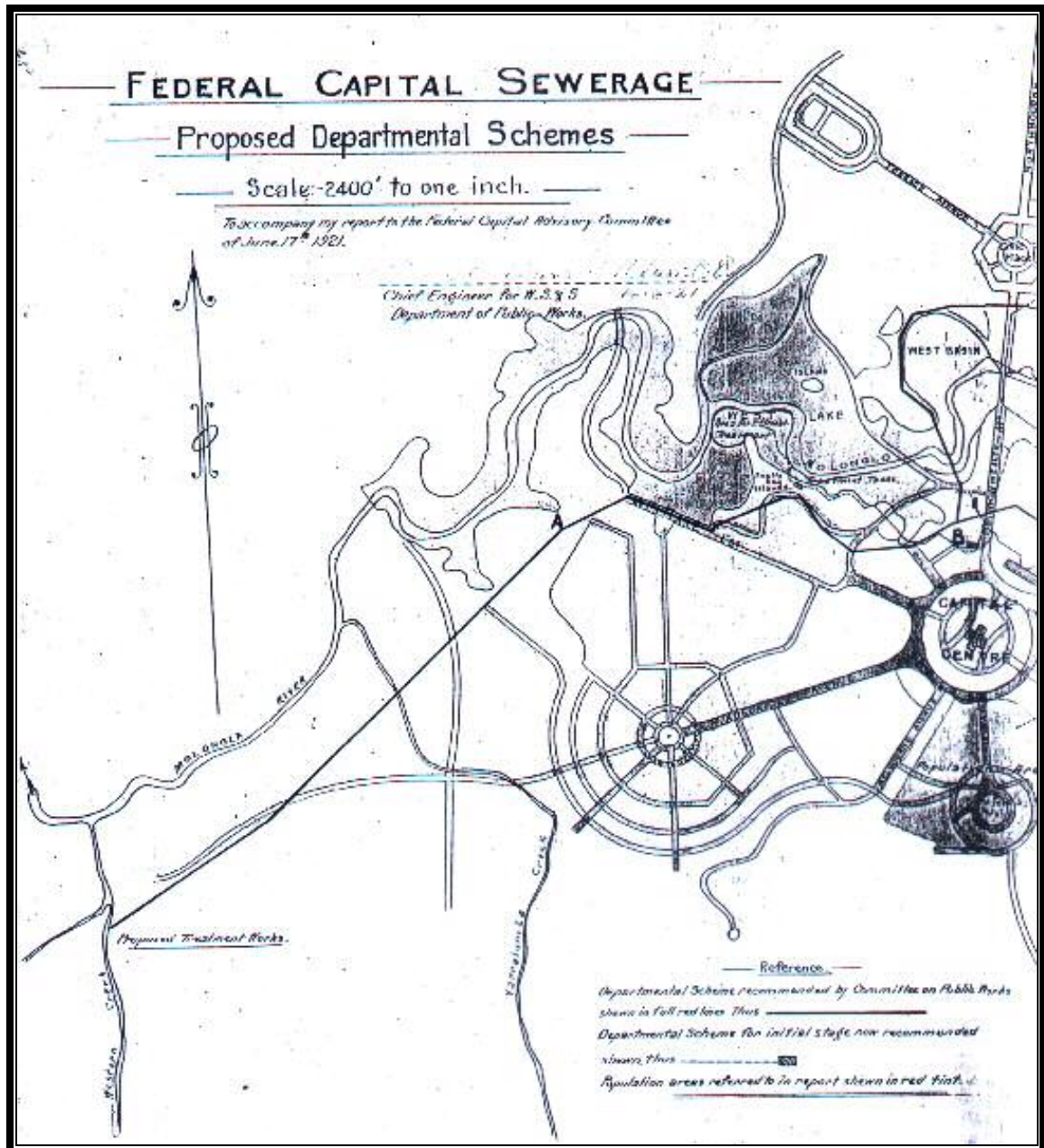
Many of the men who worked on the construction of the main intercepting sewer were ex-miners. A number came from around Captain's Flat, some from Braidwood area and others from Araluen. The Sewer Workers formed their own football team and their *Leader* was the foreman of the Sewer Works, Jeremiah Dillon. [Cartoon of Jerry Dillon left]



There are quite a few documents in Australian Archives that show the tunnel systems and line of the sewer. On the next page is an example of the tunnels and on the next page a diagram showing a cross-section of the area of Stirling Park where the deepest shaft in the system is. A story told by the miners is that a silver lode was found around forty feet below the surface on Stirling Ridge.



[The numbers on the man holes differ today from those shown above.]



Above is a map showing the line of the Main Intercepting Sewer from Western (later Weston) Creek end. Capital Centre is Capital Hill – site of the new Parliament House. The proposed Lotus Bay is marked on the map. On the next page is a detail of an early map showing the planned sewer line from the Western (now Weston) Creek end. The bottom left section is the area of Stirling Ridge. The line continues over towards Camp Hill.

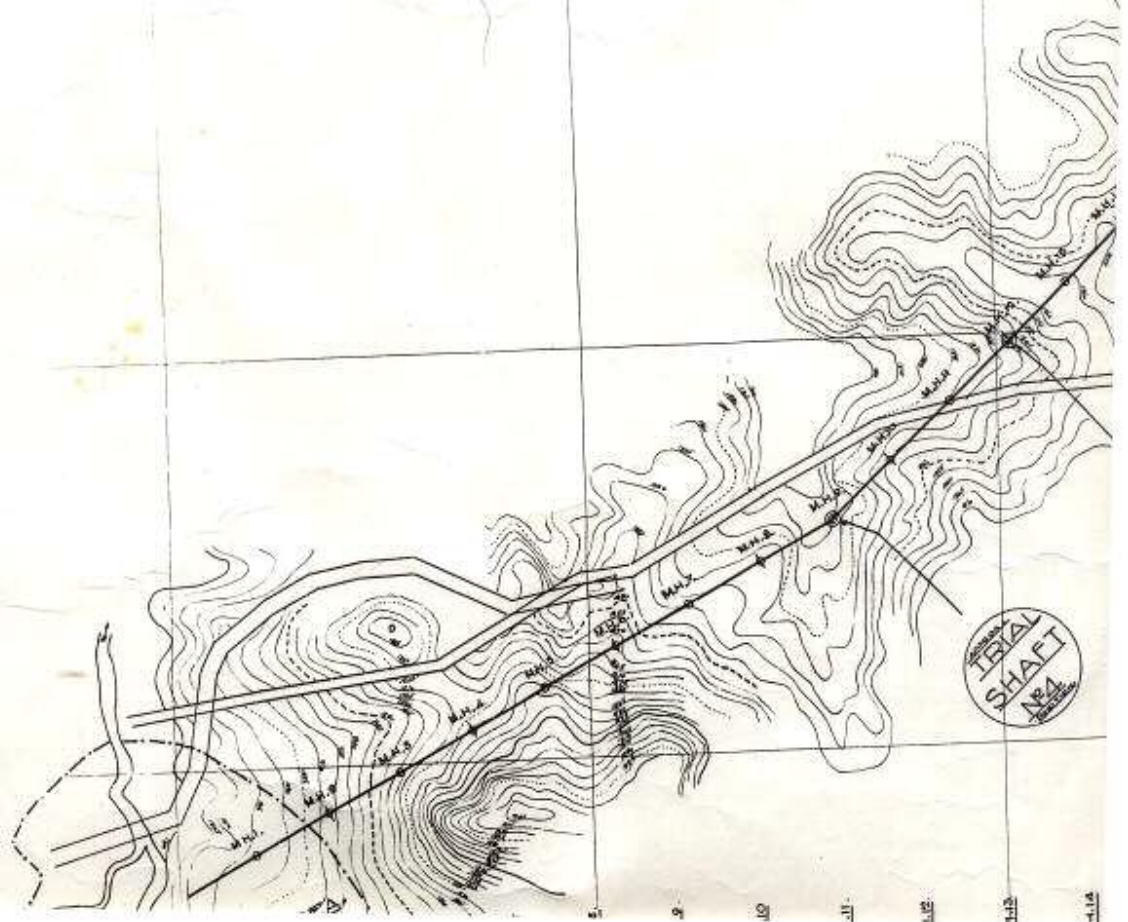
PLAN AND SECTION OF TRACK OF -
MAIN OUTFALL SEWER, FROM SEWAGE FARM TO CITY
- FEDERAL CAPITAL TERRITORY. -

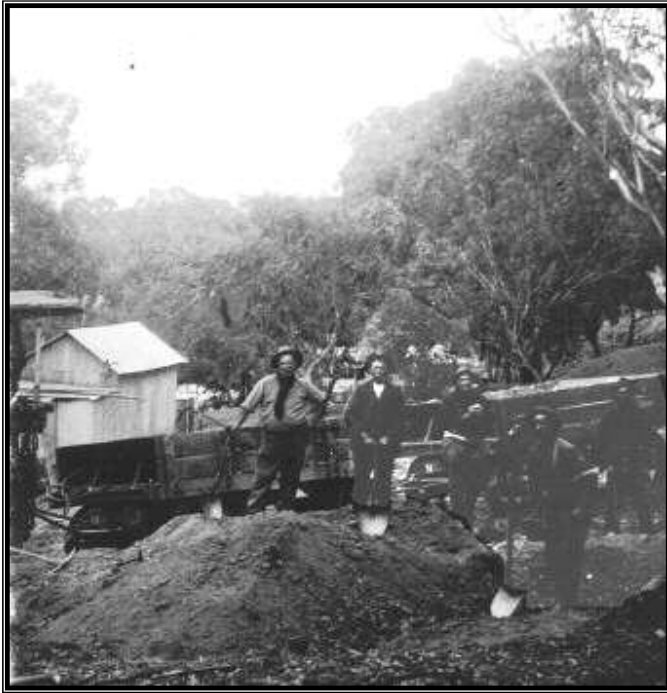
SCALES. VERTICAL 20 FEET = ONE INCH.
HORIZONTAL 400 " " "

MANHOLES FOR INSPECTION 500 FEET APART SHOWN THUS ○
THOSE WITH ORNAMENTAL VENT COLUMNS SHOWN THUS ⊕ EVERY 1000 FEET.



Drawn by J. H. C. 211.





Arthur Freeman Jr recalled in a conversation about life in the camp mentioned that he had gone to the top of the hill (Stirling Ridge) where he was lowered down in a cage to the tunnel floor and walked across to Westridge through the tunnel. He told me that the power to lower the cage was supplied by a steam driven traction engine. He also said that the earth brought up from below was put into skips and moved away from the shaft along the hillside where it was dumped. Another photograph loaned by the Hawke family shows that these skips were pulled by traction engines- see left.

The photograph left below shows a detail of the pulley system along with the cage used to lower and raise men to and from the tunnel below. I think that earth was brought

up at various points via smaller holes and a pulley system operated by one or two men. There are numerous small rectangular holes lined with bricks on the sewer line. On the right is one of the sewer men who probably was an ex-serviceman. Some buttons from old army uniforms have been found on the hill.

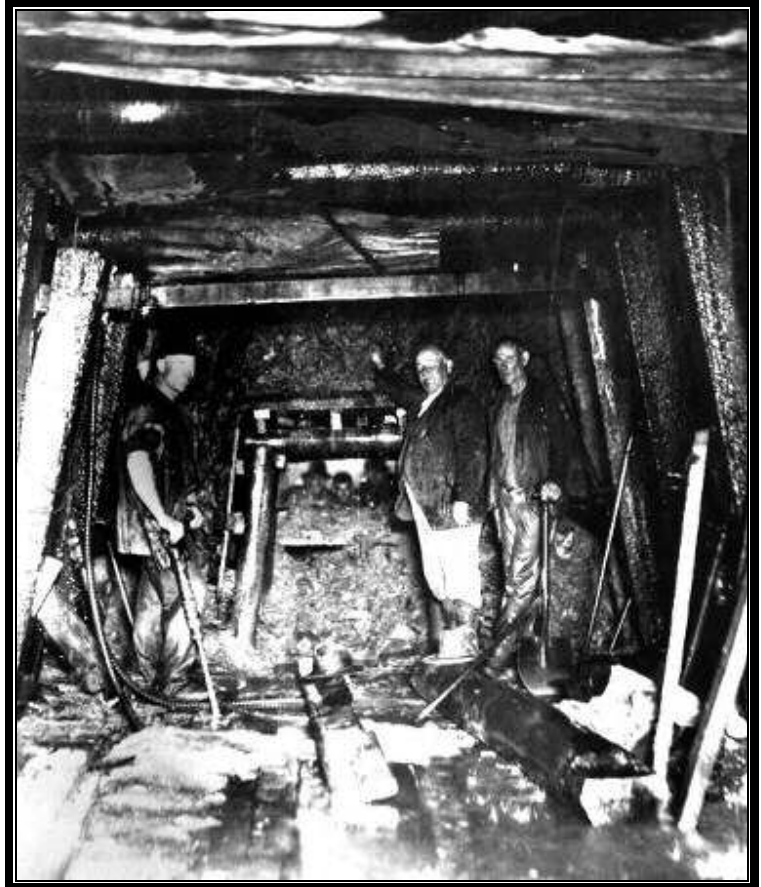


Haven Thompson whose father was one of the sewer men, told me a story about a sewer worker being struck by lightning. The man at the time was working in the Turner area and his job was that

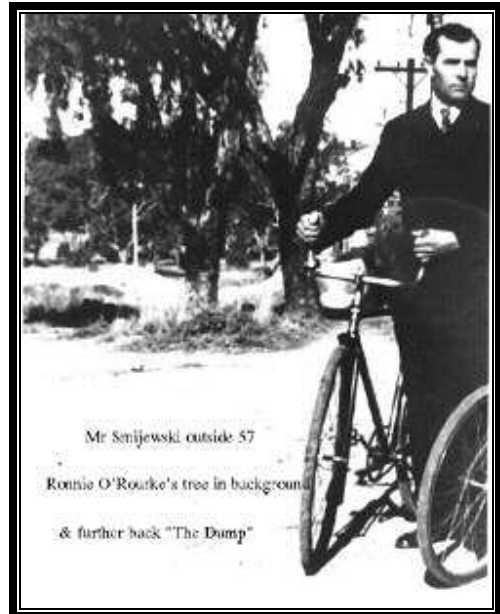


of winding a winch to bring the buckets of soil up from below. On previous page is a bucket found in Haines Creek and on the left is a bucket used by miners at Bywong.

Below Jeremiah Dillon (foreman) and other sewer workers in the tunnel – two sections meeting. Note that Jeremiah is the only dry person in the tunnel.



The earth brought up from the tunnel below was loaded on to light skips that were moved by light rail along the hillside where the earth was dumped. Dints in earth still mark the site of parts of this rail line. Further down the hill at the site of the sewer vent one of two large earth dumps - each known as *The Dump* was placed. The second was between cottages 28 and 53. Following left is a photograph of Ilma Keir taken outside 31 Westlake in the 1940s. In the background is a section of *The Dump* between cottages 28 and 53. On the right is another photograph showing *The Dump* in the background. The photograph shows Mr Smijewski outside 57 Westlake. He, his wife and family shared a house with the Robinson family of Westlake until a cottage became available at Westridge. Another earth dump was near the sewer vent. It was predominately a grey colour. The dump behind Ilma and Mr Smijewski was a light orange colour.



Below left is Val Hawke (on right) and ? outside 36 Westlake 1940s. On the right is a similar view taken in the mid 1990s. The site of the dump is marked in both photographs. The silver birch trees were grown after the removal of the cottages and dump. They were removed in the late 1990s.



On top of Stirling Ridge are concrete slabs and a trench that belonged to the sewer construction work. I have been told that one slab covers the shaft where the men were lowered down to the tunnel below. Two photographs of the concrete trench are shown below. Both were taken in the 1990s.

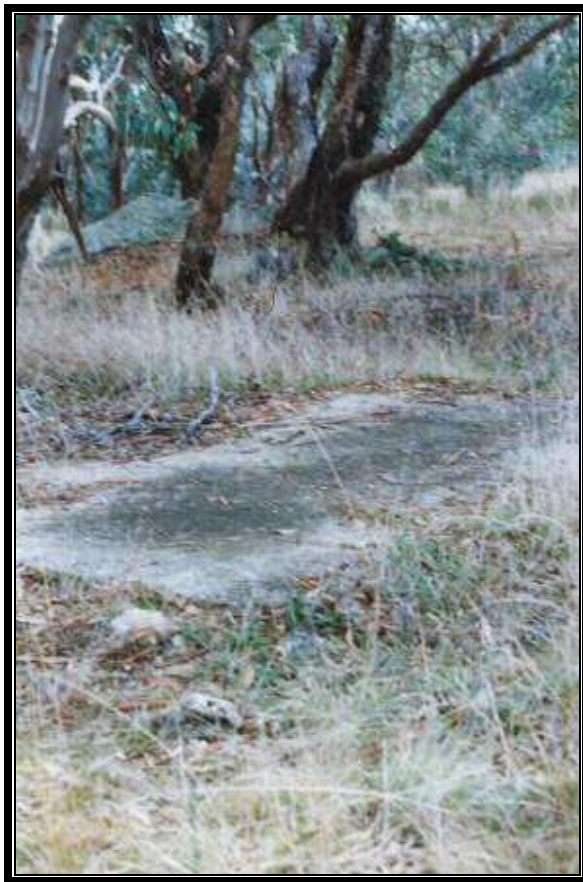


Nearby are several concrete slabs shown in the next two photographs.





Above is a view of the largest slab. In the background, top left, is the concrete trench. Below different views of the concrete slabs.

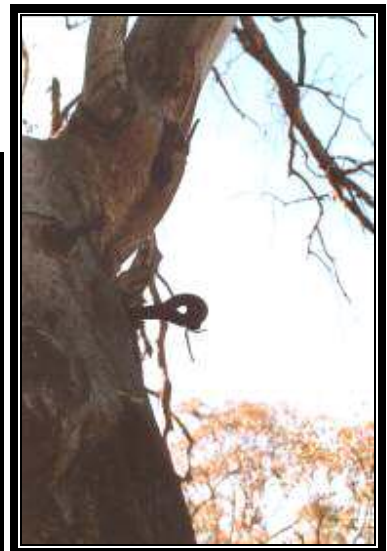
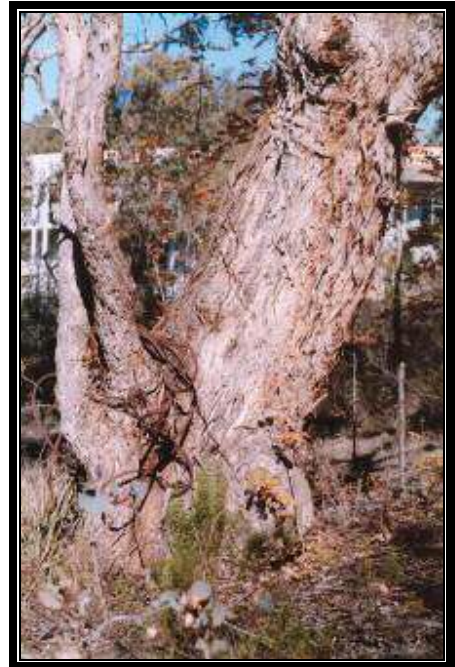




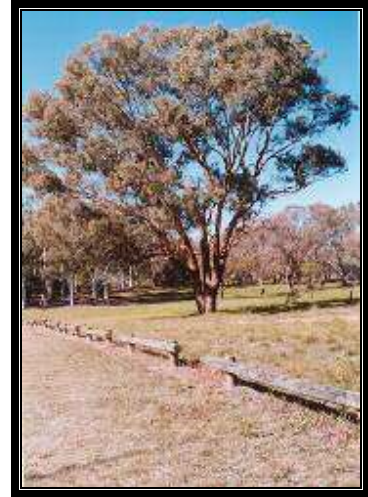
Below is a photograph taken in the 1920s. In the background are two posts that I think may have been in the area of the slabs.



The Sewer Men left a trail of metal cable across the hillsides of Stirling Park. The following photographs show some examples of the cable. The photograph on the left was taken on Stirling Ridge and the other two with cable on the hillside opposite Lotus Bay.



The sewer line at one point is above No 1 or 2 Howie's cottages. In the trunk of an old tree are a number of metal pieces including one seen in the photograph above right. Nearby to this tree is one of the manholes in the area.

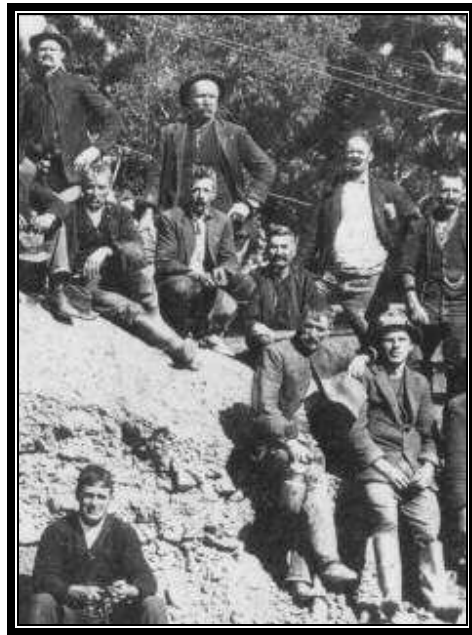


The photograph above left was taken around 1924 on the flat land opposite Lotus Bay. It belongs to the Hawke family of 36 Westlake. The tree shown above right is the same tree as shown in the 1924 photograph. The line of mullock follows the ditch dug across the flat land part of which can be seen in front of the tree in the photograph on the right. On the small rise in the background is one of the sewer man-holes. The next one is on the peninsula of high land behind the high rise of land in the above photograph. It is shown in photographs shown below. The concrete posts mark an old survey mark.



Left is another photograph belonging to the Hawke family. It shows sewer men lined up with their horses and drays. In the background is Red Hill.

Below – Some of the miners on a mullock pile on Stirling Ridge



The sewer miners worked under difficult conditions underground. I have been told that there is a natural drainage system on the low land below Stirling Ridge on the Westridge side (Yarralumla – western side of the ridge). Men working in the tunnel there were often waist deep in water. They



had similar work conditions in the tunnel under the Molonglo River. During work on the end of the tunnel near Yarralumla the men also broke into one of the many limestone caves near the river resulting in a change of direction. With the exception of a few names the majority of men who worked in the sewer tunnels are unknown.

Many of the men who worked as sewer miners came from old mining areas such as Captain's Flat,

Araluen, around the Braidwood area etc. Above another view of the slab on Stirling Ridge and traction engine and furphy.