

NATIONAL TRUST of AUSTRALIA (ACT)

A heritage tour

NORTHERN CENTENARY BORDER WALKS

SELF-GUIDED WALKS



NATIONAL TRUST

CONSERVING AUSTRALIA'S HERITAGE

Why is the ACT shaped as it is? When was it surveyed? Who were the surveyors and what problems did they meet as they mapped out the border? What were the ramifications of the border on the property owners who farmed the area? By following these self-guided tour routes and walking in the footsteps of the surveying teams the story of surveying the border and its consequences will unfold.

Following Federation in 1901, a long and somewhat torturous process followed before the 'Canberra-Yass' region was selected for the new Federal Capital Territory. On 14 December, 1908, *The Seat of Government Act* became law specifying not only the Canberra-Yass region but an area of not less than 900 square miles for a federal territory. The Federal Capital Territory (from 1938 called the Australian Capital Territory) officially came into existence with the passing of two complementary *Seat of Government Acts* in 1909 (Surrender by New South Wales and Acceptance by the Commonwealth), vesting the land in the Commonwealth on 1 January 1911.

The Commonwealth authorities wanted a clean and healthy water supply from a catchment area they could control for the new territory and capital city. Charles Scrivener was appointed the Director of the Lands and Survey Department, and he along with members of an advisory board proposed that the border should follow the water-shed of the Cotter River and the Molonglo-Queanbeyan Rivers. This boundary would have included the town of Queanbeyan and a large section of the Yass-Queanbeyan-Cooma railway line. The NSW Premier, Charles Wade, who had agreed to give up state land for the new capital, did not want to lose Queanbeyan or the railway line. He proposed a compromise—use a section of the Molonglo River catchment which excludes Queanbeyan, use the existing railway line easement as the border and include the Cotter River catchment with the combined Gudgenby, Naas and Paddy's River catchments. This was eventually accepted by the Commonwealth.

While the requirements of the NSW Premier were met by the Commonwealth, many landholders were not so lucky. In surveying the ACT border a large number of private land holdings were divided. A letter from the Secretary Department of Home Affairs shows the general view in regards to the division of this land for the greater good of marking out the border of the capital.

The Secretary Department of Home Affairs.

With regard to the suggestions that the north-western boundary of the Federal Territory should be altered to accord with the boundaries of private holdings, - I think it would be an undesirable course to adopt because any alterations in this direction would lead to a tortuous boundary much more difficult to establish than that already agreed to, quite apart from the fact that the survey is now in progress and some miles of the line have been run out and will in the course of a few days be permanently marked.

(NAA 657/1 DS1912833)

Property owners who had any land within the ACT boundary were subject to compulsory acquisition by the Federal Government and were notified of the division by the following letter:

FEDERAL TERRITORY ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE
CANBERRA

I desire to inform you that it is proposed to acquire by compulsory process for Federal Capital purposes certain lands now occupied by you as a tenant from [blank]

Upon the publication of the Notification of Acquisition in the Commonwealth Gazette the land will become the property of the Commonwealth and your present tenancy will be determined.

The Commonwealth, however, does not require immediate possession of the land, and is prepared to allow you to continue in occupation thereof for twelve months from the date of the Notification as tenant of the Commonwealth under and subject to the same conditions and at the same rental as you now occupy such land, all rent and rates, however, to be paid to the Commonwealth.

If the Commonwealth should not require possession of the land at the end of the twelve months mentioned, you will be given the first offer of a further lease thereof at a rental to be determined by the Commonwealth

Please inform me whether you are prepared to continue occupation of the land upon the terms mentioned.

Administrator

(NAA A657 DS1915/2349)

One such property owner was Edmund Rolfe. Rolfe was left with a substantial amount of his holdings completely within the new Commonwealth Territory, dissected by the 'Straight Line Border', with sections either side and complete holdings north of the border remaining in NSW.

The differing NSW and Commonwealth Territory land regulations would have caused Edmund Rolfe a headache or two. Initially after the survey had been completed he could still use the alienated holdings as he had prior to the survey, but when the line was fenced he would have lost the rights of ownership and free access. He, like many others who faced this situation, would have had to apply to the new Commonwealth body for agistment rights to graze his stock or plant his crops on lands he formally owned.

Rolfe would then have had to settle upon an agreement with the Commonwealth to accept the compensation price for the alienated lands when it was acquired. He would have had the choice of employing an independent assessor to determine the value of each of his alienated holdings including the structures and improvements and then negotiating this price with the Commonwealth. Alternatively he could accept the Commonwealth's own separate valuation, based on property prices in 1908. In many cases independent assessments done after 1908 could be higher than those done by the Commonwealth. If this was the case, and often it was, then the land holder would have to negotiate the best price he could from the Commonwealth. This often involved lawyers acting on behalf of the land holders. But lawyers were as expensive then as they are today. While Rolfe could have afforded to have one acting on his behalf, many other landholders facing alienation of their land could not. And of course, if the independent land and holding assessment was lower than the Commonwealth assessment then the Commonwealth were only too pleased to accept it. How many landholders accepted this option is unknown but in all likelihood it would have been very few.

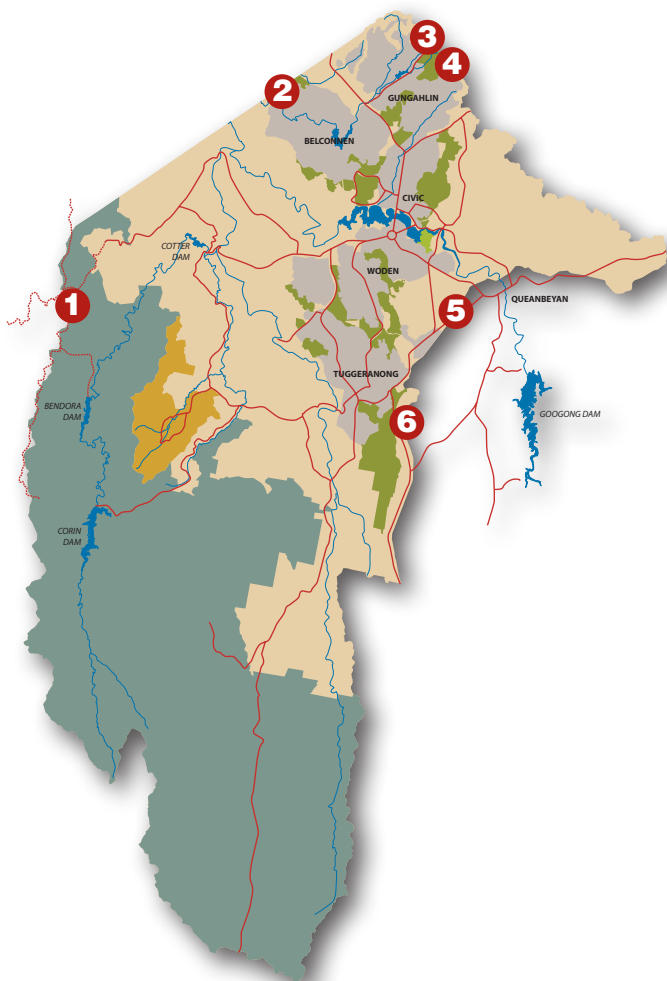
Along with disgruntled land holders the surveyors and their teams had to deal with government pressures, treacherous terrain and unpredictable weather. As such the initial survey to map out the border began in 1910 and took three teams of surveyors lead by Percy Sheaffe, Harry Mouat and Frederick (Freddy) Johnston five long and very eventful years to complete.



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Walk locations

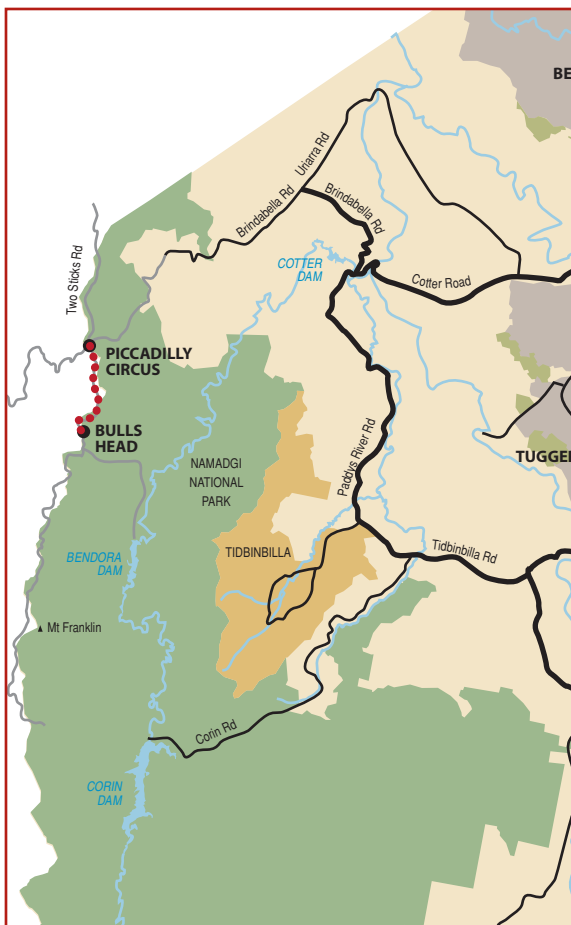


- 1** Piccadilly Circus and Bulls Head (*see page 8*)
- 2** The Straight Line Border (*see page 10*)
- 3** Little Mulligans Flat (*see page 12*)
- 4** Old Coach Road (*see page 14*)
- 5** The Railway Line Border (*see page 16*)
- 6** Marking the Border at the the Railway Corridor (*see page 18*)



*Standing
astride the
stone border
at Bulls Head.*

1 Piccadilly Circus and Bulls Head



Description for this walk is over the page

Piccadilly Circus and Bulls Head

4 km - walk or drive

Where to Start: Piccadilly Circus is 49 km from Canberra and forms the junction of Brindabella Road and Mt Franklin Road. From Canberra take the Cotter Road towards the Cotter Dam Reserve. Before the Cotter Reserve take the Brindabella Road to Piccadilly Circus. The road is sealed for the first 20 km then unsealed, but well maintained, to Piccadilly Circus.

The Walk/Drive: The route along Mt Franklin Road follows the crest of the range for 4 km between Piccadilly Circus and Bulls Head Reserve. The line of the border criss-crosses the road as it follows the Cotter River water catchment. You can park your car at Piccadilly Circus and walk to Bulls Head Reserve, or drive to Bulls Head, park there and walk all or part of the border route towards Piccadilly Circus. There are toilets, wood-fired barbecues and picnic tables at Bulls Head Reserve. If you decide to drive, the road is suitable for two-wheel drive vehicles. However, there may be road hazards in wet weather; if so, drive with care. The road may be closed periodically during wet/snow conditions or in high fire danger periods. (Call Canberra Connet 13 22 81 if in doubt.) Please stay on the road as the terrain either side is very steep.

The Border: Before you leave Piccadilly Circus take some time to find the stone border marker (lock spit) at the junction of Two Sticks Road and Brindabella Road. You can find another stone border marker at Bulls Head Reserve located in a strip of Eucalypts between the Mt Franklin Road and the fence of the reserve. These stone arrangements mark the surveyed line of the border and indicate changes in the direction as it descends from Mt Coree and follows the ridge line and watershed to Bulls Head Reserve. These stone lock spits have been reconstructed from the original markers which were dislodged by road upgrades.

Area history

Aboriginal people occupied this area of the highlands at least 20,000 years ago. The Brindabella Valley, south west of Piccadilly Circus, with the Goodradigbee River flowing through it, was probably used year round. In the summer it provided a base for collecting Bogong moths in the surrounding heights.

In the 1830s Terrance Aubrey Murray set up an outstation of his successful Yarralumla property in the Brindabella

Valley. Later in the 1840s Joseph Franklin tried to settle there but met with Aboriginal resistance and was forced to leave. Franklin, however, was determined and he returned in 1863 to set up Brindabella Station. His granddaughter, Stella Maria Sarah Miles Franklin (1879-1954) spent her childhood in the Brindabella Valley and knew the area well. She became a successful author, writing under the name of 'Miles Franklin'. She is most famous for her book, *My Brilliant Career*. Her autobiographical, *Childhood at Brindabella*, published after her death tells of an idyllic time in this very scenic valley.

By 1910 the mountains regularly rang to the sharp crack of whips as stockmen moved into the area driving cattle over the ranges. They set up a camp at Piccadilly Circus, then known as 'Top of the Mountain', to link up with the grazing lands in the Brindabella Valley.

Bulls Head Reserve. Bulls Head Reserve offers a picturesque and quiet place to stop and rest for a while. Bulls Head was established as a forestry settlement in the late 1930s. After World War II the settlement was the highest and most exposed in the ACT. In the winter snow drifts were known to reach the height of the fence lines. The forestry employees initially harvested the native hardwood Eucalypts but the Forestry and Timber Bureau were also planting soft-wood conifers. Little remains of the former forestry settlement, apart from the pine windbreak, which marks the site of the former tennis court. Bendora Arboretum near Bulls Head is one of the surviving soft-wood plantations remaining in the area.

For the more adventurous

From Bulls Head Reserve you can follow the Mt Franklin Road, 26 km, to the Mt Franklin car park. Check road conditions by contacting Canberra Connect on 13 22 81. From the car park a short walk will take you to visitor shelter built after the original ski lodge was destroyed in the 2003 bushfires. The border line passes between the shelter in the ACT and the small toilet block which is in NSW. The Mt Franklin Heritage Walk, 3 km return, is marked by signage and will take you approximately 1.5 hours.

Or

If you have a four wheel drive vehicle you could take Two Sticks Road from the Piccadilly Circus junction to Mt Coree (approximately 8 km). Mt Coree was the starting point for the survey of the border in 1910. In 2010 a monument to the surveyors was opened to celebrate their achievements and the defining of the ACT borders.

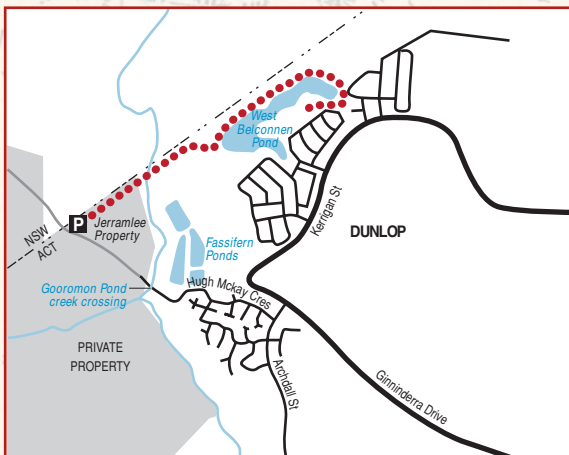
The Straight Line Border

3 km return walk or further if you wish

Where to start: From Hugh McKay Crescent in Dunlop take the off shoot road towards Jarramlee Homestead. Follow this road past Fassifern Pond and Gooramond Pond Creek crossing. Stop at the entrance of Jarramlee (private property) and park on the road verge area. A log entrance leads into a fenced corridor leading northeast. The walk begins here. (Note – this road may be closed after heavy rain).

The Walk: The walk follows the border within a corridor for 1.5 km. Please be aware that the rural properties either side are on private land (NSW) or leased land (ACT). A vehicle track within the corridor runs parallel to the border, crosses Gooramond Creek and then at the crest of a rise above the creek turns to the east from the border to join with a horse trail which follows the edge of the pond and then turns to the southeast. Head towards the northern edge of West Belconnen Pond and curl around to the picnic shelter. There are two signs here celebrating surveyors.

The Border: There are three fence lines on the northern side of the corridor. The timber post fence in the middle was most likely the original fence constructed along the border in the 1920s. The star picket, barbed-wire and mesh fence is a later construction. The third fence of star pickets and electrified strands marks the property of Jarramlee in NSW. The straight line section of the border runs directly through the plain between the summits of Mt Coree to the southwest and One Tree Hill to the northeast cutting across the Murrumbidgee River.





Area History

Australian Bicentennial National Trail

The corridor this walk follows forms part of the Australian Bicentennial National Trail. The trail covers a distance of 5,330 km, across the Great Dividing Range from Cooktown in Queensland to Healesville in Victoria. The concept for the track came from the need for a trail to link the stock routes along the Great Dividing Range. Headed by R M Williams, the Australian Trail Horse Riders Association took on the project and the trail opened in November 1988 in time for the Bicentennial. Dan Seymour, a Canadian by birth, was the first man to plot and trial the route, riding for 21 months straight, often over dangerous terrain, to connect the stock routes. The trail now caters for horse riders, walkers and mountain bike riders.

Wildlife at West Belconnen Pond

The Pond's main function is to manage water quality, hence there is no swimming or boating permitted. However, you will spot much wildlife on and around the Pond.

There are three common resident frogs: the Eastern Banjo Frog or 'Pobblebonk' which emits a 'bonk... bonk' call, the Spotted Grass Frog that makes a 'uck ... uck' sound, and finally the Plains Froglet which goes 'wreeekk ... wreeekk'.

Birds include the Black Swan, the Pacific Black Duck, the White Faced Heron and the Little Pied Cormorant.

Little Mulligans Flat – to the Zig Zag Border

Approx 3km return or further if you wish

Where to Start: Take the Mulligans Flat Road from Horse Park Drive in Bonner. At the junction of Mulligans Flat Road with Old Gundaroo Road there is a small car park lay by to your left and the entrance to the nature park. Your walk will start from here.

The Walk: At the entrance an interpretive sign tells of the former Aboriginal use of this area. A walking track leads from here towards Oak Hill and a line of rounded hills. The border runs along the crest of these hills. Follow the walking track for about 600m, the track then makes a right-angled turn and runs parallel to the hill crests. After 300m the track curves to the north and a short but steep incline heads towards the border. At the crest you will meet a fence line running east-west. This fence is on the border.

The Border: Percy Sheaffe and his team surveyed this portion of the border in May 1911. The border line is marked by a star picket fence of wire mesh with two upper strands of barbed wire. The zigzag nature of this section of the border along the crests of the hills was specifically designed to capture watershed for the ACT.

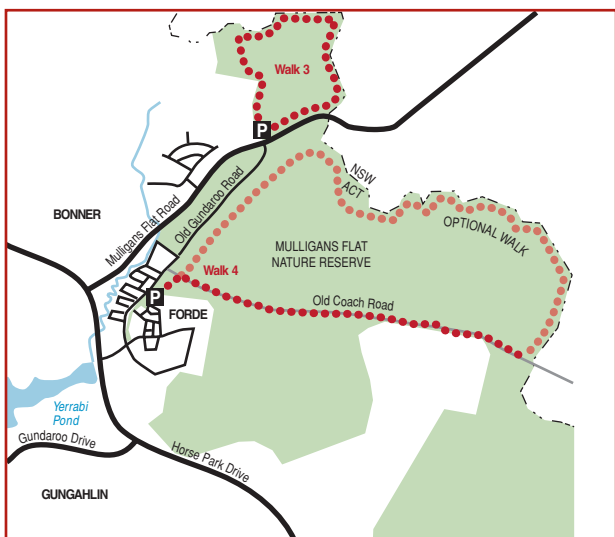
Area History



Today this section of the border overlooks Mulligans Flat Nature Reserve to the east and the rural property of Elm Grove below Oak Hill. This area was once known as the Themeda Paddock because it holds one of the largest stands of native Kangaroo Grass (*Themeda triandra*). The area is also noted for its yellow box and red box.

Elm Grove is on the ACT Heritage Register as the only remaining working property within the Gungahlin area.

Elm Grove was established by James Gillespie who built a timber cottage in 1882 on land adjoining his parents' property of Horse Park that had been settled in 1852. Elm Grove stayed in the Gillespie family until 1986 when it was purchased by the Carmody family who still farm the property.



For the more adventurous

You can finish the walk here but if you follow east along the border fence line through the nature park and stringy bark trees you will see more stone border markers where the bearing of the fence line changes. Some have been disturbed over the past one hundred years and are indistinguishable but the best example is on the crest of the next summit adjacent to a modern trigonometrical point. From here you can retrace your steps back to the car park lay by or continue along the border until you reach Gundaroo Road where it crosses into NSW. From this point it is only a 600 metre walk along the road back to the car park lay by.

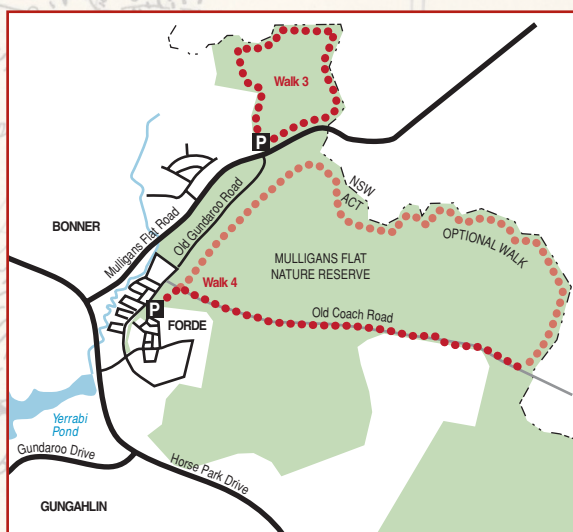
The Old Coach Road Mulligans Flat Nature Reserve

6 km return from car park or further if you wish

Where to Start: Mulligans Flat car park is on the corner of Amy Ackman St and Clegget St, Forde. Park the car here and take the path leading to the reserve entrance. An interpretive sign before the entrance tells the history of the former Mulligans Flat School. Follow the Main Mulligans Trail into the reserve then enter the predator proof fence at the Woodland Gate. (A map of the reserve is displayed on this gate and you can pick up a Mulligans Flat brochure by the entrance, which will guide you to the border). Bear to the right and follow the Old Coach Road. An interpretive sign at the entrance to the Old Coach Road tells its history and use.

The Walk: After approximately 1.5 km the surface of the Old Coach Road begins to fade but you can follow the tree corridor for some distance. Alternatively you can follow the Main Mulligans Circuit/Mawson Road path which is signposted. You will come to the exit gate of the predator proof fence. Follow the gravel track up the slope to a fence. At the crest you have reached the border fence. The entrance to Goorooyarroo nature reserve is at the junction of the border and Mulligans Flat reserve fence.

The Border: A star picket fence of wire mesh with two upper strands of barbed wire is on the border.



Area History

Mulligans Flat School Site

The School site is situated inside Mulligans Flat Reserve. Rows of radiata pine mark the former boundary of the school yard and a photinia bush still stands within the former schoolyard. The first school house, constructed of timber slabs with a bark roof, was erected by volunteer labour, most likely by parents of school-age children in 1896. It stood for seventeen years. A second, more substantial schoolhouse of weatherboard with a corrugated iron roof was erected in 1913. It was built above ground on stone or brick pillars with concrete steps leading up to the entrance and a brick hearth and chimney on one side. A corrugated iron water tank rested on slabs on the opposite side of the building. It was a one-room, one-teacher school catering for all school ages. After a period of closure due to low student numbers the building was repaired and reopened in 1922 as a part-time school. In 1931 the school was finally closed and dismantled and removed in 1933. A few traces of the second school house remain, located approximately 50 metres from the car park.

The Old Coach Road

The Old Coach Road was constructed in 1880 to link the rural settlements of the Canberra/Queanbeyan region to the railhead which at the time terminated at Bungendore. The road provided a valuable social function as well as essential services which included: the mail coach, a means to get to school, church and other social activities. The road was traversed on foot, by horse and cart, bullock drays, coaches and on horseback. It soon became an important road link. When the railway was extended from Bungendore to Queanbeyan and Cooma in 1887 it was not heavily used and served as a local link for the communities.

For the more adventurous

Once you have reached the border you have three choices. You can follow the Mulligans Circuit route to the north which will follow the border for 2.5 km and lead you back to the car park. You can turn south and enter Goorooyarroo reserve and follow the trail for 600 metres before it leaves the line of the border. A foot track leading to the border at the crest of Goorooyarroo Hill will reward you with a fine view of the area. Or you can retrace your route back to the car park.

The Railway Line Border

4.5 km - walk or drive

Where to start: From Canberra Avenue, take the entrance to HMAS Harman defence facility. Follow the sealed section of the road to the left past the entrance to the defence facility and then follow the unsealed vehicle track. The track runs parallel to the Tourist Railway (formerly the Queanbeyan – Cooma railway) line and ends at the junction with Lanyon Drive. The best place to begin is at the 'Roseglen' property across from the Queanbeyan Race Course, from here you can choose to walk or drive the distance.

The Walk: The vehicle track is in a wide corridor of open land, the corridor itself will take you past the Queanbeyan Race Course, then open out to pass privately leased farmlands and then to open grasslands. The walk is easy, quiet and pleasant over undulating land with wide-open views. There are two underpasses along the route where you can walk to the NSW side.

The Border: The fence line of the railway easement is generally aligned to the surveyed line of the border. The fence consists of star pickets supporting a two-strand barbed-wire and mesh fence with timber straining posts. The railway easement and the lines are in NSW.

Area History

Queanbeyan

The first authorised settler in this area was Owen Bowen, a freed convict who obtained a ticket of occupation for one thousand acres in June 1824. Bowen specialised in cattle and by judicious management until his death in 1840 he had increased his holdings to the value of £7000, a princely sum for those times. John Palmer, brother-in-law to the prosperous Robert Campbell of Duntroon, established a rural holding, 'Jerrabomberra' about two miles from the present town centre of Queanbeyan. In 1832 he added an adjoining 640 acres which was known as 'Quinbeane'.

The district flourished and further settlements, holdings and commercial establishments grew through the valley of the Queanbeyan River and Jerrabomberra Creek. In 1838, Surveyor James Larmer was instructed by the colonial government to design a town. He laid it out on a grid pattern on the Queanbeyan River. The first sale of Queanbeyan town allotments was held in Sydney on 15 August 1839.

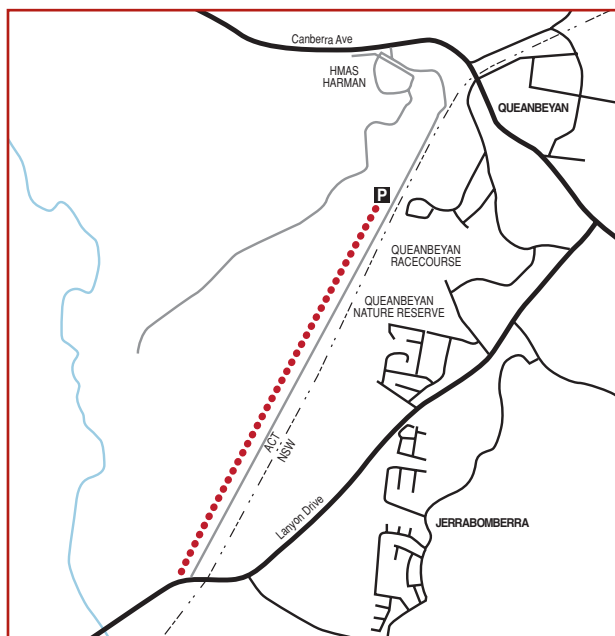
From that time the town of Queanbeyan has grown into the city it is today.

HMAS Harman

In 1937 the Australian Commonwealth Government decided to establish communications facilities at Canberra to serve the Royal Australian Navy fleet. HMAS Harman was established as the receiving station and staff facilities while the powerful transmitters were built several kilometres away in the Belconnen area. On Saturday 17 April the *Canberra Times* reported.

The first batch of 30 Naval officers and ratings to operate and guard the powerful short wave naval radio base at Canberra will arrive next Monday. They will form the advance guard of the 200 men who will occupy the two naval villages now being established on either side of Canberra, 11 miles apart. The base will be the most powerful naval wireless station in the British Empire, and the largest naval or commercial station in the southern hemisphere.

Construction of the station was nearing completion when World War II began and was soon put into operation. Young women who had joined the newly formed Women's Royal Australian Naval Service (WRANS) were some of the first to operate the facilities and communicate with the fleet. The station continued as the primary fleet communications facility, serving through World War II, the Korean War, South East Asian conflicts, the Vietnam War and the Gulf War deployments of the fleet. HMAS Harman now serves as a multi use depot for Defence Forces.



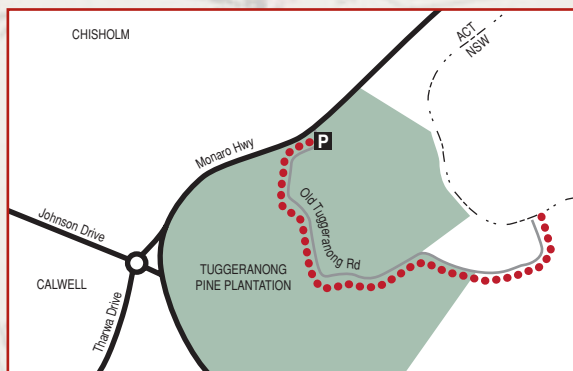
Marking the Border at the Railway Corridor

5km return

Where to start: From Canberra, travel south on the Monaro Highway. On reaching the Tuggeranong Valley suburb of Chisholm, turn off the highway at the sign indicating 'The Old Tuggeranong Road'. Look for a stand of pine trees next to the highway. Park your car in the layby area which serves as an entrance to the Old Tuggeranong Road and the adjacent Paintball Adventure facility. Please note the Old Tuggeranong Road is not open to general vehicle traffic.

The walk: The walk to the border follows the course of the Old Tuggeranong Road and will take approximately 40 minutes. The first section of the walk is over gentle to medium terrain. Uplifted volcanic rock can be observed along the road bearing evidence of the formation of the hills in the area. The walk then brings you to the Melrose Travelling Stock Reserve, part of Canberra Nature Park. The road continues the moderate incline for some 300 metres then levels out to expose views of Melrose Valley to the south. Continue past the entrance to Melrose homestead (this is private property so please do not enter) then follow the road as it turns north and dips towards a fence line and the Queanbeyan to Cooma Tourist railway line. The former Tuggeranong Railway siding is just to the east of the road.

The border: The fence line of the railway corridor generally represents the surveyed border line. Surveyor Percy Sheaffe and his team marked this section of the border and reached the Tuggeranong Railway Siding at the junction with the Old Tuggeranong Road in December 1913.



Area History

The Railway & Tuggeranong siding

Construction of the Queanbeyan to Cooma railway line was completed 1889.

To get the line from Queanbeyan into the Tuggeranong Valley

over the crest at Royalla the surveyors and engineers had to divert more than 1.5 km and construct numerous cuttings and embankments later known as the Horseshoe Bend. More than 400 men worked on the Horseshoe Bend cutting over a period of four years making camp along the route as they went. The Horseshoe Bend terminated at the junction of the Tuggeranong Road and the Tuggeranong Siding. This allowed the people who lived and farmed in the Tuggeranong Valley and further to the west access to reliable transport routes. The express train from Queanbeyan to Cooma made its last journey along the line in January 1989. The line was used for a time by the Canberra Railway Historic Society for tourist trips by steam train to Michelago.



Travelling Stock Reserve

Travelling stock reserves were developed to enable the movement of livestock between local grazing properties and across larger tracts of land to link up with distant market places. Like the reserve along this route cattle were able to be moved from the properties in the Tuggeranong Valley along the Old Tuggeranong Road to the railway siding for transportation as far away as Sydney. There were at least fifteen of these reserves set aside in the ACT for the movement of livestock. Today, nine identified stock reserves that remain have been heritage-listed for their evidence of the former rural period of the ACT and the remaining native vegetation. The Melrose Travelling Stock Reserve would have been used by Melrose Valley station which was formed in 1937 taking up sections of remnant lands established by the early selectors.

For the more adventurous

The walk ends by the Tuggeranong Railway siding but for the more adventurous you can follow the railway fence marking the border past the old siding towards the east or walk along the tracks through the 'Horseshoe Bend' cutting to the west. Whichever direction you take it is advisable to return back to the Old Tuggeranong Road and retrace your steps to the car park.

NATIONAL TRUST of AUSTRALIA (ACT)



ACT
Government

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