

NATIONAL TRUST of AUSTRALIA (ACT)

A heritage tour

SOUTHERN CENTENARY BORDER TOURS

SELF-GUIDED WALKS AND DRIVES



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 the surveying of the border and its consequences will unfold.

Following Federation in 1901 a long and somewhat tortuous process commenced 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 NSW and Acceptance by the Commonwealth), vesting the land to 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 had been crucial in choosing the Yass-Canberra region for the capital and was appointed the Director of the Lands and Survey Department. From his thorough knowledge of the area Scrivener, 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 — using 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 Paddys River catchments. This was accepted by the Commonwealth.

The border surveying began in June 1910 between two trigs, one at Mt Coree and One Tree Hill. In 2010 a monument to the surveyors was opened at Mt Coree to celebrate their achievements and the defining of the ACT border.

Four years later, the survey teams finally reached the southern area. They had suffered a number of setbacks and overcame numerous hurdles and government red-tape, all while coping with a challenging lifestyle.

By 1913-14 it was clear that the surveying of the border was taking longer than expected. The Federal Government was becoming anxious over the delays, particularly the process of drafting the required maps. Charles Scrivener informed the Minister for the Federal Territory:


For some reason it is difficult to induce good men to come to Canberra; when recently advertising though there were a large number of applications very few were worthy of the name of draftsmen, and none were skilled men. Two of the best were selected. One will join on the 30th September; the other has not yet fixed a date. There is a large amount of current work that occupies a great deal of time...There is in the branch only one Draftsman who can draw a high class finished plan. Many of the officers are capable men but have not had special training as Lithographic draftsmen or in work of a high standard.

It will be necessary when additional accommodation is provided to secure the services of at least 2 officers who are capable of drawing and finishing the best work and not until then can plans be brought up to date. I would urge that the provision of more accommodation is very necessary, since without it there cannot be that increase of staff that is necessary, neither can any important work be taken up with any prospect of its being completed within a reasonable time.

Director of Commonwealth Lands and Surveys

20th September, 1913

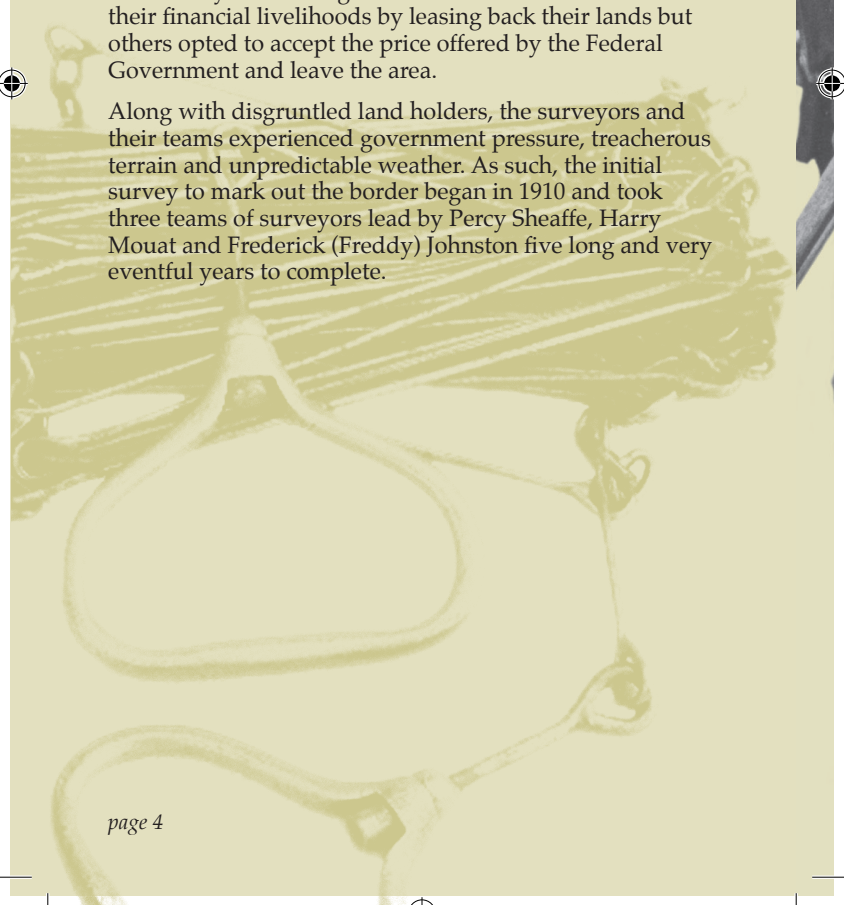
(NAA A657 DS1914 / 1949)

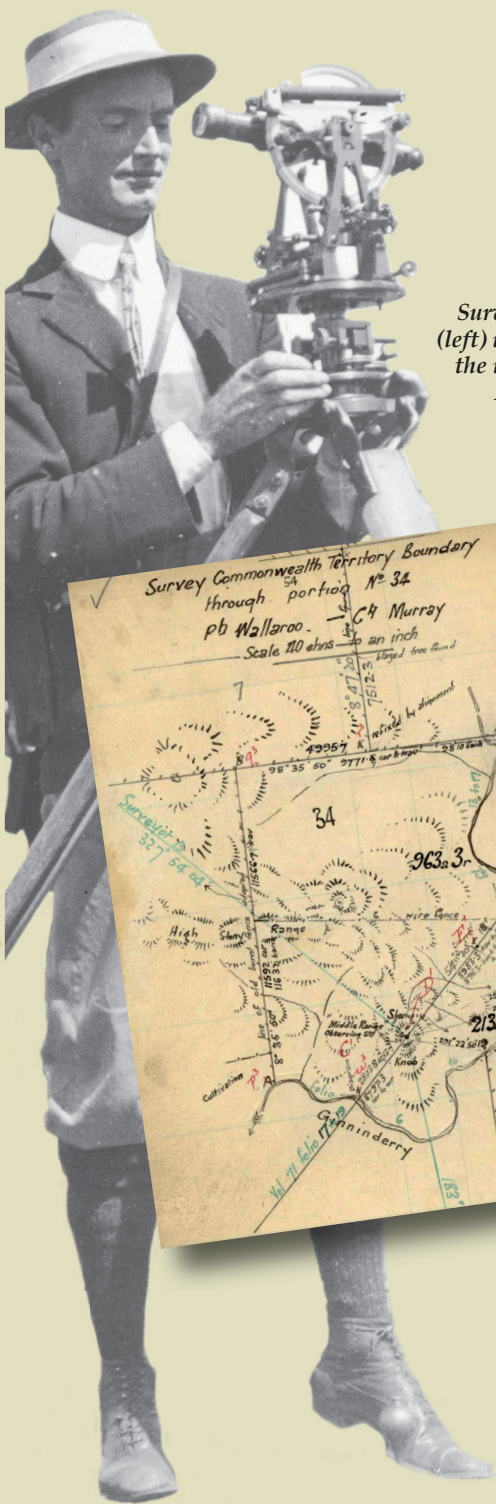


The delays in surveying the border were a concern because of the cost and because the exact details of the border were needed for the design and creation of Canberra as a planned city. The border was not only in place simply to delineate between New South Wales and the Federal Capital Territory but was necessary to get the coordinates and base topographic information initially for those partaking in the design competition for Canberra and more importantly for when the construction began.

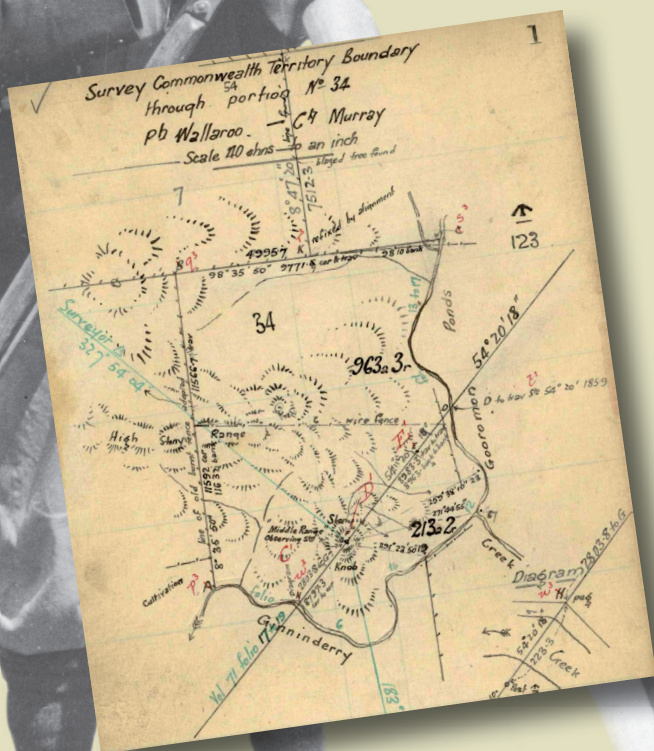
The survey and delineation of the border was as much, if not more, of a headache and disruption for the landowners in the Canberra region as it was for the government bureaucrats and surveyors. As the survey progressed through this area in 1914 the land holders were well aware that their properties fell within the boundary of the Federal Territory and would soon be subjected to compulsory resumption by the Government. The survey teams would no doubt have been approached by concerned land holders asking which sections of their lands would fall into the new Federal Territory and which sections they could retain as freehold in New South Wales. It was a time of great uncertainty for all the graziers. Some were able to maintain their financial livelihoods by leasing back their lands but others opted to accept the price offered by the Federal Government and leave the area.

Along with disgruntled land holders, the surveyors and their teams experienced government pressure, treacherous terrain and unpredictable weather. As such, the initial survey to mark 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.

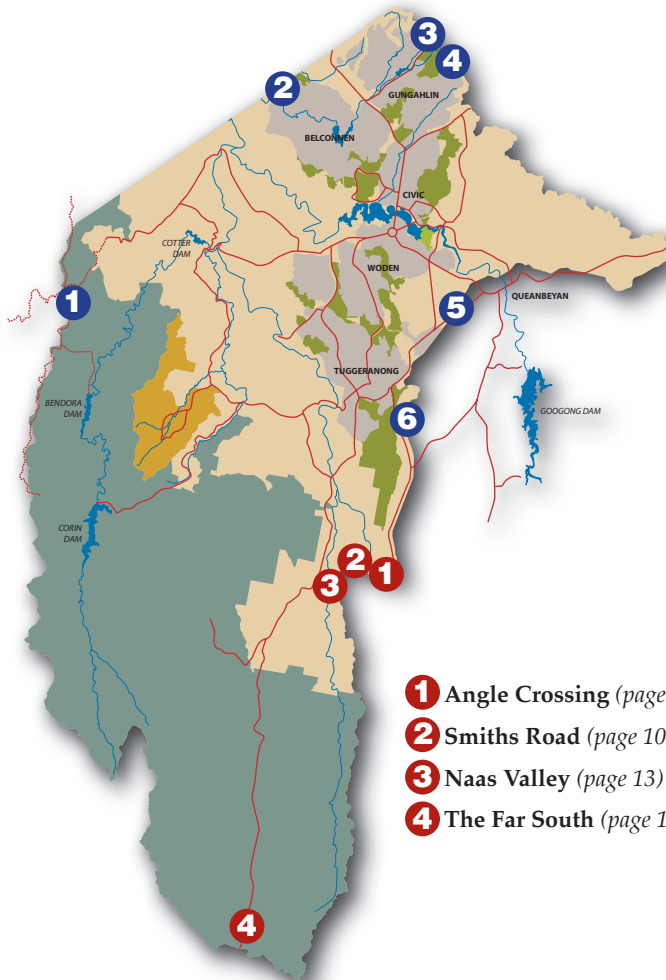




Surveyor Percy Sheaffe (left) uses a theodolite in the initial stages of the ACT border survey.



Walk locations



- 1** Angle Crossing (page 7)
- 2** Smiths Road (page 10)
- 3** Naas Valley (page 13)
- 4** The Far South (page 16)

NORTHERN BORDER WALKS

(see NBW brochure for more information)

- 1** Piccadilly Circus and Bulls Head
- 2** The Straight Line Border
- 3** Little Mulligans Flat
- 4** Old Coach Road
- 5** The Railway Line Border
- 6** Marking the Border at the the Railway Corridor

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1

Angle Crossing Road Where the Border Follows the Murrumbidgee

6 km return drive from Monaro Highway
THE SHEAFFE LINE

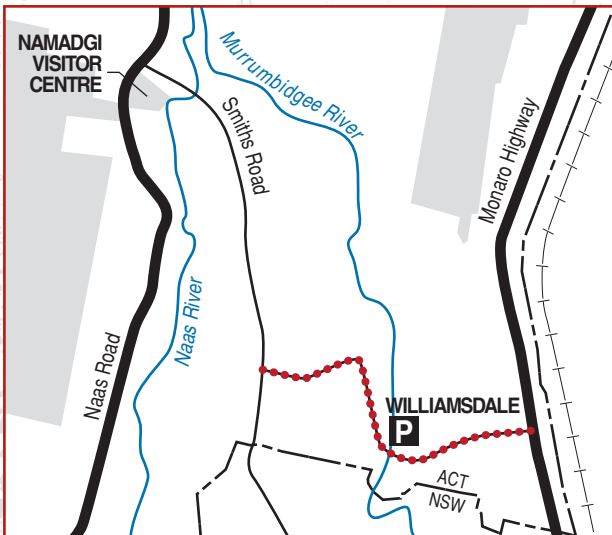
Where to start

- Take the Monaro Highway to Williamsdale.
- Turn right onto Angle Crossing Road (towards Tharwa).
- Drive to Angle Crossing.

As you drive south from Canberra/Queanbeyan along the Monaro Highway and leave suburbia behind, you will be following the railway line, which forms a section of the border to just south of Williamsdale.

The drive

Follow the road to Angle Crossing. The drive is over a moderately hilly terrain but after 2 km the road enters the Murrumbidgee Corridor and takes a short but steep descent to the Murrumbidgee River Crossing. Please stay within the road corridor at all times as the land either side is under private lease. There are parking, toilet and picnic facilities just before the crossing. On a nice day when the crossing is open this drive can be combined with the Smiths Road Drive (See page 10) to extend the tour.



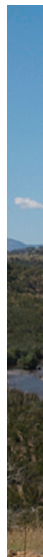
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The border

In order to follow the agreed water catchment the border departs from its southerly course bordering the Queanbeyan to Cooma railway line and takes a sharp turn across the Monaro Highway at the northern foot of Cunningham Hill, 2.3 km from Williamsdale. It then proceeds in a westerly direction towards the Murrumbidgee River. The border reaches the Murrumbidgee at The Angle (an S-bend in the river) and rounds the foot of a low spur. The border follows the bends for a short distance then leaves the river and follows old lot lines in a straight westerly line to follow the summits of Clear Range.

Just before Angle Crossing Road drops down to the river channel you can get a good view of the river bends. Stop at the crest of the slope and look south. The Angle is the only place the border follows the course of the Murrumbidgee River.



Area history

The Angle Crossing Road provides a link between the small villages of Williamsdale and Tharwa. The road derives its name from the bend where the river could be crossed when not in flood. The road and crossing provided a vital transport link between the rural properties lying between the two villages.

In the early days of settlement the Murrumbidgee River played a significant role in the lives of those who lived near its banks. The river, flowing along a geological fault line, was a natural boundary between the more fertile lands of the Tuggeranong Valley and the rugged ranges to the west. It had formed a boundary delineating the 'Limits of Location' allowable by the New South Wales colonial government for legal settlement in 1826. However, such a statutory restriction did not stop the first settlers, a long way from the seat of government in Sydney, from moving freely across the river to graze their stock and extend their holdings.



The Angle, Murrumbidgee River. The ACT border follows the right bank of the river at this point. It is the only area where the border follows the course of the Murrumbidgee.
(Photo P. Dowling 2010)

Charles Bates was one of the first free selectors at Williamsdale. His wife Esther Penniston was the first postmistress. By 1914 Charles Bates and Andrew Cunningham owned much of the land in the area of the surveyed border. They had to face the prospect of compulsory acquisition by the Federal Government of their properties, which were divided by the surveyed line of the ACT and NSW. Compulsory acquisition of land was often a protracted and complicated process which had to deal with many disgruntled land owners and large tracts of land severed by the border. The last property in the Williamsdale area to be acquired by the Federal Government was *Burraburroo* in 1972 owned by Bruce Moore.

2

Smiths Road – Between the Rivers (Gigerline Nature Reserve)

7.5 km from Naas Road drive and walk

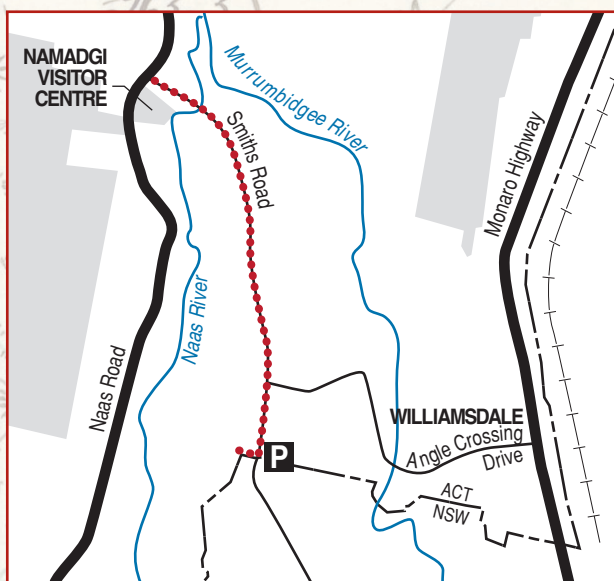
SHEAFFE LINE

Where to start

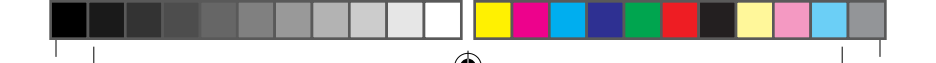
- Cross the Murrumbidgee River at the Tharwa Bridge.
- Follow Naas Road for 1.5km to the junction of Smiths Road.
- Turn left onto Smiths Road for 7.5km. The road is sealed for a short distance. The unsealed section is well maintained.
- The border is well marked.
- Park to the left of the cattle grid on the ACT side of the border.
- Walk along the border up the hill. (Please be aware this area is freehold land and respect the privacy of the owners.)

A second route to this part of the border is from Angle Crossing (see page 7).

- If road open at Angle Crossing (observe road warnings) follow Angle Crossing Road across Murrumbidgee River.
- Turn left onto Smiths Road.



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The drive and walk

Much of this route is through the Gigerline Nature Reserve, the Murrumbidgee Corridor Reserve and former Ingledene pine forest regions. Vehicles must stay on the formed roads while in this area.

Smiths Road follows a ridgeline which divides the Murrumbidgee and Gudgenby river catchments. The route is part of the Bicentennial National Trail. The road derives its name from early property holdings further south owned by the Smith family. It was, and still is, a well-used route to rural holdings in New South Wales.

Once you reach the border you can walk about 800m along the fence line to the west on the ACT side of the border to a slight rise. The area is closed to vehicles but you are welcome to walk through the gates to the top of the hill. From here you have a view of the straight line of the border as it crests the ridge above the Murrumbidgee River in the distance to the west and across Smiths Road to the slopes of the Clear Range in the east.

The border

This part of the border was surveyed by Percy Sheaffe and his team in 1914. To enclose the catchments of the major water courses in this area, the Gudgenby and Naas rivers, the team made a straight-line transect from the Murrumbidgee River at Angle Crossing to the lower northern slopes of the Clear Range. From the border turns south following the ridges of the Clear Range.

Sheaffe was to continue leading the survey team to the southern margins of Clear Range near the headwaters of Left Hand Creek (known as Corner B35) before he was recalled to Canberra to take over management of the whole survey from Charles Scrivener, who was retiring as Director of Commonwealth Lands and Surveys. Percy Sheaffe had begun the difficult task of surveying the border in 1910 and by the time he was recalled in 1914 had surveyed 184.7 km of the border.

Area history

The Gigerline Nature Reserve is one of a number of north-south running valleys in the southern highland area of the Australian Capital Territory west of the Murrumbidgee River. The valley, with ephemeral creeks and the Gudgenby and Murrumbidgee rivers, had provided a focal area for Aboriginal groups. Archaeological investigations have indicated that Aboriginal groups used the valleys in this region of the Australian Capital Territory for at least 24,000 years.

The first European explorers had made their way along the Murrumbidgee in the 1820s. A decade later, grazing and cropping holdings were being established in the valleys on the western side of the river including the Gigerline area. By the end of the nineteenth century this area, within the NSW parish of Cuppacumbalong, was divided into a mosaic of small freehold paddocks. Sheep and to a lesser extent cattle grazing were the main focus for the land holders.



*The ACT/NSW border follows this fence line to the ridge of the hill and beyond. Walking to the top of the hill provides you with some stunning views of Namadgi National Park and a sense of the remote and isolated nature of the surveyor's work.
(Photo B. Lance 2013)*

3

Top Naas Valley to Caloola – The Ridge Line

13 km return from the junction of Boboyan
& Naas Roads (Drive or Cycle) **SHEAFFE LINE**

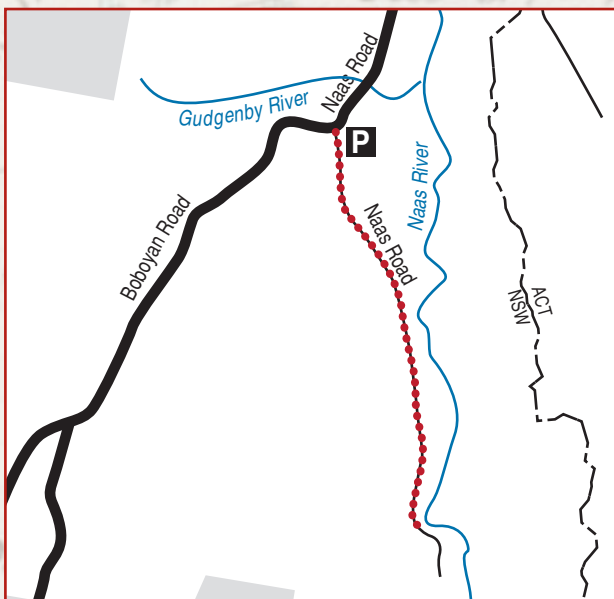
Where to start

- Cross the Murrumbidgee River at the Tharwa Bridge.
- Follow the Naas Road south for 9km.
- Cross the Gudgenby River and turn left onto the Top Naas Road, which is unsealed but well maintained.

The drive

The route will take you through the northern section of Naas Valley along the course of the Naas River to low level crossing 3km before Caloola Farm; the drive ends here. The route is also part of the Bicentennial National Trail.

When driving the route it is worth stopping along the way to observe the ridgeline which forms the border. Along this route you will get a good idea of the rugged nature of the bordering terrain on the skyline and realise the difficulties the surveyors had when following the very edge of the watershed.



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Within the valley the terrain is gentle and cycling along the edge of the road is easy but please take care when driving or cycling as the road passes through various private properties and is unfenced, so there may be livestock on the road.

The border

The Top Naas Valley line of the border was surveyed by Percy Sheaffe and his team in 1914. The ACT/NSW border follows the crest of the Clear Range ridge line above the Naas River. The Naas River rises in the southern ranges of the Australian Capital Territory within Namadgi National Park and flows north into the Gudgenby River and on into the Murrumbidgee near Tharwa. Its watershed boundary defines much of the south-eastern border of the ACT.

Area history

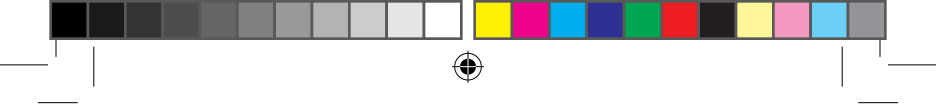
The Naas River is confined within the narrow north to south Naas Valley for much of its 26km. The valley is bounded by Clear Range to the east and Billy Range to the west. For many thousands of years the Aboriginal people of the area used the river and valley as a route from the Tuggeranong Valley plains to the highland regions of the ACT. As well as providing a corridor to the south, the valley floor and low slopes provided a reliable source of food, water and shelter. Radio-carbon dating of a rockshelter at Tidbinbilla has revealed that Aboriginal people were in this area over 20,000 years ago. We can therefore assume that they were also using the Naas Valley at that early time.

The area was named after Naas in County Kildare in Ireland.

By 1835 William Herbert, a farmer from Bungaree, was grazing cattle in the valley assisted by three employees. The monument commemorating Herbert at the junction of Top Naas Road and Naas Road where this route begins, unfortunately names Michael Herbert, William's younger son, as the first settler.

In 1837 William Herbert was able to acquire a licence from the New South Wales Government for a squattage run in the valley. He ran 700 cattle and horses but initially no sheep. The narrow, well-watered valley slopes were soon an attraction for others interested in acquiring grazing land in the district.





The border follows the rugged ridgeline shown behind these curious cattle. (Photo P. Dowling 2010)

The valley was not far from the developing grazing lands in the Tuggeranong and Canberra valleys on the eastern side of the Murrumbidgee River and was easily accessed by foot or by horse.

Further grazing lands within the Naas Valley were acquired, particularly after the Crown Land Act of 1861, which allowed selection and freehold purchase of small 40–320 acre (16–130 ha) blocks of land. Michael Herbert acquired 42,000 acres (17,000 ha) of grazing land but sold the land in 1865 after his young son died. The Naas Valley has, up to this day, been a successful grazing area, particularly for cattle.

4

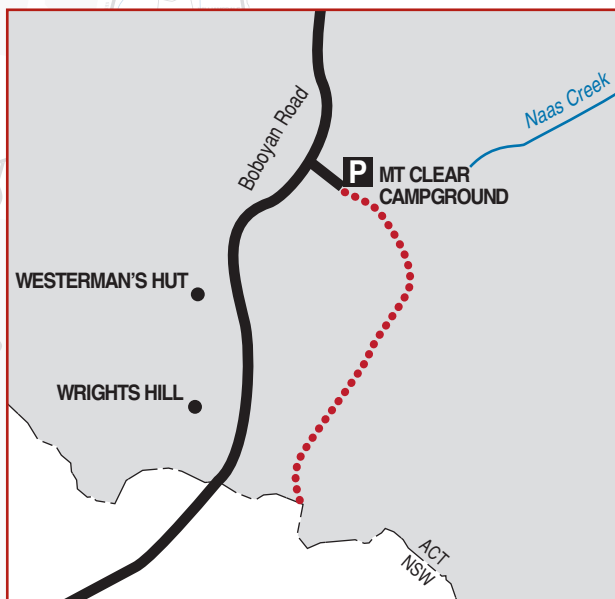
The Far South Border

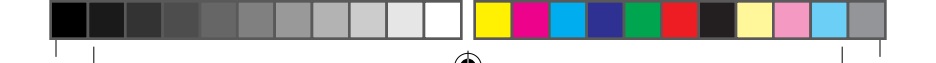
8km return walk or further if you wish

THE JOHNSTON LINE

Where to start

- Cross the Tharwa Bridge and follow Naas Road for 3km to the Namadgi Visitors Centre. Staff at the Visitors Centre will advise on road and access conditions.
- Pick up Settlers Track walking brochure for more information on the area.
- Follow the Naas/Boboyan Road for 35km.
- Turn left to the Mount Clear campground.
- Veer right at the fork in the road towards car park at the beginning of Horse Gully Hut Walk. The walk begins here.





The walk

Starting at the gate take the Naas fire trail along the flat towards The Pound. Follow the Southern Border Walk track markers. The moderate terrain gradually gets steeper as you rise to the top of the hill but the track is well defined.

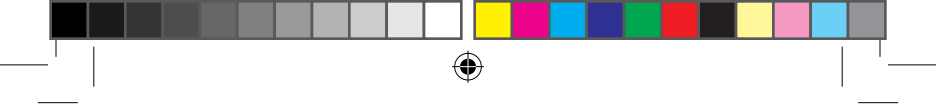
Horses are sometimes kept in the yards to the left of the track adjoining the site of the old Mt Clear homestead. (The Bicentennial National Trail, running for 5,330km down eastern Australia, is also here.) The homestead was demolished with other buildings in the late 1970s. The first hut on the property was built in 1870.

A ruin further along to your right is Potters Chimney, part of a hut of which little remains, built by stonemason/plasterer Charles Potter. Slate quarried nearby and fixed with mud mortar provided the building materials. It is not known when the hut was built, but in 1879 it was valued at £80.

Once you reach the top of the hill the border is directly in front of you, clearly marked by a wire fence. From here you are welcome to continue your walk along the fence line. If you walk uphill to the left, you are provided with stunning views of the Snowy Mountains on the southern horizon and a view to the pine trees and poplars that surround Westerman's Homestead to the west. Downhill, to the right, approximately 400 metres along the fire trail, you will come across a large intact example of a tree survey marker created by the surveyors.

The border

This part of the border was surveyed in 1915. It was the last stretch of the border to be surveyed by Freddie Johnston and close to where Johnston's team met with Harry Mouat's team, which had been completing the western border. The presence of a number of blazed tree survey markers along this stretch of the border shows one of the many different ways the border itself was signalled. The border was more than just lines on a map; the hard working survey teams clearly indicated where the border was by a variety of wooden posts, concrete blocks, galvanised iron pipes, marked trees and lockspits. From Boboyan Road, along the western border to Mount Coree there are 272 recorded markers which are registered as a group on the ACT Heritage Register. These remaining markers are not only a physical reminder of the border and the surveyor's work but also a testament to their achievements.



Area history

James Ritchie took out the first licence for the Boboyan run in 1838, but had lived in the region for at least two years prior to that. In 1839 the Boboyan property was 14,080 acres (5,700 hectares) with seven acres (3 hectares) under cultivation. There were 494 head of cattle, 1,132 sheep and 11 horses on the property along with a staff of 15, some of whom were assigned convicts. Ritchie sold the property in 1842 and the Boboyan region became the home for several other families, mainly of Scottish origin. Gaelic was often spoken in the home and the fields and no doubt the hills and valleys of this area of the high country echoed to the skirl of the bagpipes.

Westerman's homestead

This small cottage was built in 1916 and was owned by the pioneering Westerman family of the southern regions of the ACT. It is one of only a few pastoral homesteads still standing in the Namadgi National Park. Another homestead, Brayshaw's Homestead, is nearby and can be reached by the *Settlers Track*. Westerman's Homestead is heritage listed by the ACT Government and is typical of the small, simple but functional cottages that were erected in this highland area and isolated from the main farming regions east of the Murrumbidgee River. Willows, pines and poplar trees were planted on the western side of the homestead to protect against the prevailing north and westerly winds and irises were planted in a small plot by the front entrance to give the place a homely feel.

A small cemetery nearby is a poignant reminder of the families living in such isolation. An unnamed infant of Thomas and Mary Jane Westerman was buried in 1886 and Elizabeth, an adult daughter, died of tuberculosis in 1922.



Trees such as this one were used by the surveyors to identify the border. Get up close to see the markings and if you can, decipher the exact location number. (Photo L Roberts 2013)



NATIONAL TRUST *of* AUSTRALIA (ACT)



ACT
Government

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