

JOINT HERITAGE NOMINATION:
National Trust of Australia (ACT) and No. 3 Squadron RAAF Association

1925 Canberra Aerodrome (NAA)



Joint heritage nomination lodged 15 June 2020 by the National Trust of Australia (ACT) and No. 3 Squadron RAAF Association

**Canberra's original aerodrome and first air crash
Dickson's heritage of the air**

1. The original aerodrome dates back to the dawn of aviation in Australia in the early 1920s, envisioned by Walter Burley Griffin in his final blueprint for Canberra and brought to life by the Federal Minister for Works and Railways, the Minister for Defence, and the newly formed Civil Aviation Board.
2. The aerodrome was heavily used by the new Federal Capital Commission in 1925-26 for aerial photography and surveys to realise the Griffin Plan. It operated for almost 3 years.
3. The crash that happened here in 1926 was a tragedy - two young Air Force members flying in from Richmond were killed, as they arrived to carry out an aerial survey mission of the Murrumbidgee.
4. The 26 year old pilot was a Queenslander and Duntroon graduate, named Philip Mackenzie PITT.
5. His 25 year old observer, the aerial photographer, was born in Melbourne and had moved to Perth. His name was William Edward CALLANDER.
6. The two young men are both buried in the district, the pilot at Queanbeyan and the observer at St John's in Reid.
7. The biplane that crashed was a De Havilland DH9, one of 128 given to the new Australian Air Force by Britain. They were built to be World War 1 bombers.
8. The aerodrome occupied a third of one of the capital's very first soldier settlement blocks, leased to Edward Shumack, whose family were one of the district's earliest settlers.
9. The aerodrome covered roughly 70 hectares.
10. There is good reason to believe that archaeological remains of three historic landing ground structures still exist, based on the history of land use and development in the area, sophisticated mapping, and a number of finds.
11. The centre of the landing ground was marked by a 60 foot diameter whitewashed concrete ring so it was clearly visible from the air to guide the pilot in to land.
12. The 4 corners of the landing ground were also marked by whitewashed concrete to show the boundaries.
13. At the time the stormwater channel was being built in 1958, part of the central ring was still visible - but by the time the trees were planted along the sides of the channel, the ground had been disturbed and spoil dug out from the channel was probably spread along both sides of the channel to help prevent the floodway overflowing.
14. In order to determine exactly what remains are still in the ground, we will need to get provisional registration. That process has now begun.

