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Heritage in Trust

National Trust (ACT)



THIS ISSUE

- Acton Peninsula — Canberra's Forgotten Heritage
- Canberra National Seventh-Day Adventist Church

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*Aerial view of the hospital and houses, Canberra, Canberra, ca.
1930 (Fairfax Corporation. 1930, [picture]. <http://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-162933497>*

About *Heritage in Trust*

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*Aerial view of the hospital and houses, Canberra, Canberra, ca. 1930 (Fairfax Corporation. 1930
<http://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-162933497>)*

Acton Peninsula — Canberra's Forgotten Heritage

Trevor Lipscombe

Every year tens of thousands of visitors drive along the edge of Lake Burley Griffin and on to Acton Peninsula to visit the National Museum of Australia, completely unaware of the peninsula's heritage importance. We are approaching the bicentennial of an important event there which most people (even National Trust members!) are completely unaware of. Nearly a century later, in 1911, the area became the birthplace of Australia's new Federal Capital, the site of Canberra's first government offices

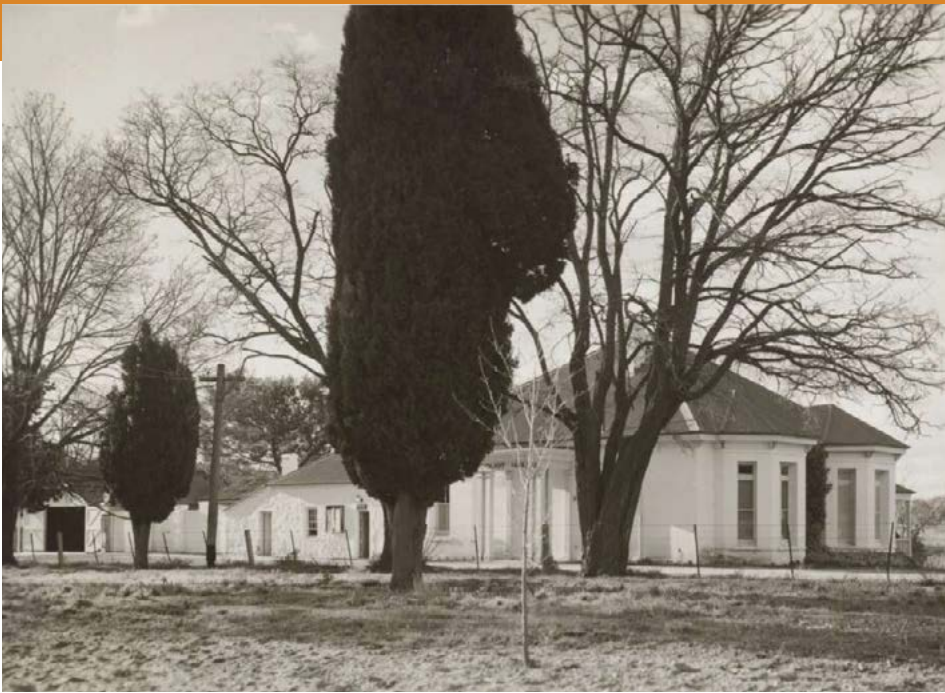
and the homes (mostly tents) and recreation places for surveyors, architects, tradesmen, labourers, foresters, engineers and administrators. It was also the site of Canberra's first plant nursery, police station and court house, and even the first children's playground. This area was to remain the heartbeat of the new capital until after the Second World War.

Most Canberrans know that the first European explorers reached the area in the early 1820s, but how many know that the peninsula was the site of the first European dwelling in today's Canberra and indeed the ACT? Following the explorers' discovery of the Limestone Plains, settlers began to arrive with cattle and sheep to occupy the grasslands along the Molonglo River. The first to reach the area was Joshua John Moore's overseer John McLoughlin with two assigned convicts. They arrived with cattle in late 1824 to find the Molonglo was just a chain of ponds due to drought. Reassured by the debris of earlier floods, McLoughlin chose a site above the debris line and the deepest waterhole, and a bark hut was erected. Further up the ridge other huts and stockyards followed. McLoughlin chose well as the hut site was also close to one of very few shallow crossings of the Molonglo, giving access to additional grazing land on the south side of the river, and later named Lennox Crossing.

Canberra is often thought of as a new city, but European settlement here in 1824 preceded that at Brisbane, Perth and Melbourne, and was only preceded



Canberry cottage, Acton House, Canberra, approximately 1920. <http://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-138293665>



Pregnant Pine, Between 1930 and 1950 (Strangman, R. C., 1895–1969). 1930, Court House in Acton, Canberra, Australian Capital Territory, ca. 1940 [picture] / R.C. Strangman. <http://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-140358964>

by that at Sydney and Hobart. Acton Peninsula is indeed Canberra's veritable Sydney Cove. The original bark hut above the waterhole was soon replaced by a sturdier slab hut. By 1832, a stone hut was built north of this hut with the slab hut being used as its kitchen. This was claimed by Samuel Shumack to be the first stone hut in the County of Murray. These two buildings proved to be subject to river flooding but survived and were occupied until 1919, then fell into decay, and by the 1940s nothing was left of Canberra's first building. Today this important site is below Lake Burley Griffin and just to the east of the paddle steamer mooring – and remains unmarked.

Another more substantial stone cottage was built, higher on the ridge and above flood level, in the early 1830s. Known as Canberry Cottage, its veranda faced east with views of Mount Ainslie. JJ Moore fell on hard times and sold the Canberry property to retired naval officer Arthur Jeffreys, husband of Sarah Campbell of Duntroon. Jeffreys renamed Canberry as Acton, after his family's former seat, Acton Hall, Wrexham, in Wales. From 1850 this dwelling became the rectory for St John's, Reid and, from 1855 until 1873, the home of Reverend Pierce Galliard Smith and his family. Smith was a keen gardener and in about 1870 is believed to have planted a roman cypress, which still stands, in the garden. As this tree matured it developed a strange lump on one side and became known at some stage as the 'Pregnant Pine'. It remains the only trace today of the pastoral history of this area.

Canberry Cottage was extended to the south in the 1890s and became known as Acton House. Bridging the pastoral and Federal Capital eras at Acton, from 1911 it became an important building in Canberra's development. Surveyor Charles ('Charley') Scrivener lived here with his family. Later it became the first Canberra police station and courthouse,

View from the verandah of old Acton House – 1913

A beautiful watercolour by HM Rolland, (1882–1972) depicting the view looking east from the verandah of old Acton House painted in 1913 is part of the collection of the National Library of Australia. You can view it online in Trove, using the following link:

<http://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-135217660>

and the venue for the first sitting of the Supreme Court of Australia in 1934. The building, amidst public outcry, was demolished in the 1940s to make way for a hospital. Before 1975 there was no heritage legislation in Australia.

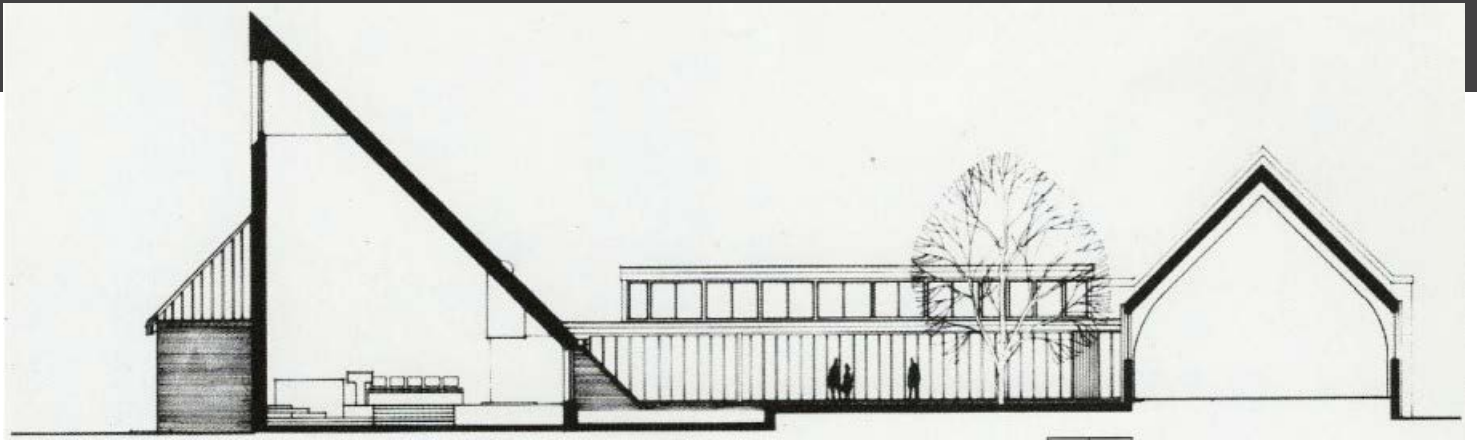
As work began on the early infrastructure of the new Federal Capital, Scrivener moved the Surveyors Camp from Camp Hill to an area below and to the east of today's Lennox House. Well positioned at a key river crossing between the Municipal group (Civic) to the north and the Government group to the south of the river, this was the ideal place for Canberra's first administrative centre. It was always intended as a temporary home with wooden rather than stone and brick buildings.

But today this lower area of the Acton Peninsula, below Lennox House, and the site of the National Museum of Australia and an extensive car park, also shows little trace of modern Canberra's birthplace. This lower area of today's peninsula sprouted government offices, a post office, Commonwealth Bank and a community hall. Forester and horticulturalist Charles Weston's first plant nursery was here, with a small hut in one corner where he lived alone from 1911 to 1921, his wife and three daughters remaining in Sydney so that the girls could have a good education. Accommodation was at a premium, with most of the lower ranks living in tents or humpies on the river flats below the government buildings, and under today's Lake. They were fed in communal messes, and shared ablutions. Those of higher rank – architects, surveyors, administrators – lived in Upper Acton, in the Bachelors' Quarters, now Lennox House, or, if married, in one of ten Henry Rolland designed houses nearby. Some of the buildings in this upper residential area, along with the Residency, Old Canberra House, still survive and are heritage listed.

This then remote community of around 600 people lived in a remote bubble, most of them far from where they grew up, many without their families. They became close-knit, helping each other, organising community events and enjoying sports. The river flats housed two golf courses, football fields, a racetrack, hockey ground, cricket pitches and tennis courts.

This important site in Canberra's history is crying out for heritage interpretation. The National Trust of Australia (ACT), Canberra and District Historical Society, and Canberra and Region Heritage Researchers are working together to lobby for a heritage trail in the area. Following a recent and encouraging meeting with Sally Barnes, Chief Executive Officer, and senior officers of the National Capital Authority, which is responsible for this area, the group presented a Vision statement outlining the possible form that a heritage trail might take.

Want to know more about this important area? Allen Mawer's *Canberra Tales: an informal history* (Arcadia, 2012) is a must read that brings this area to life. Another is WM Rolland's (son of Henry Rolland, architect and artist, an early Acton resident), *Growing up in early Canberra: birthpangs of a capital city* (Kangaroo Press, 1988).



Ken Woolley's design – a profile of the main buildings (on the left) connected via a link corridor to the original 1950s church building (now serving as the Church Hall)

Canberra National Seventh-Day Adventist Church

Irena Ali, Canberra National Seventh-Day Adventist Church

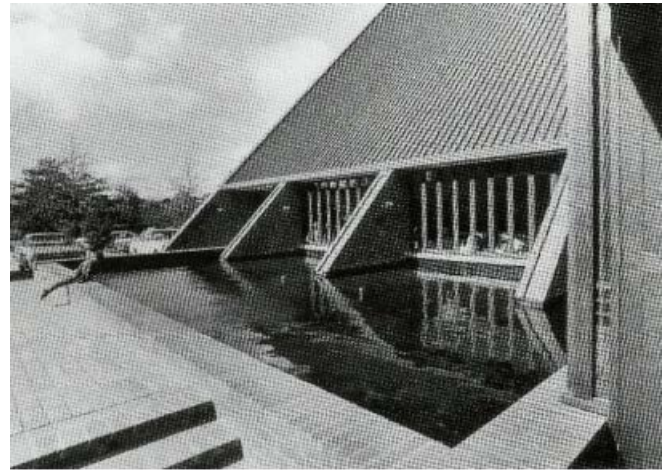
On 2 June 2022, the Canberra National Seventh-Day Adventist (SDA) Church, nestled in the inner-city suburb of Turner, was granted a prestigious heritage listing by the ACT Heritage Council. One of the reasons for listing is the Church's distinctive architecture that reflects, in a symbolic way, the key SDA doctrine.

The Canberra National SDA Church (CNAC) was designed by renowned Australian architect Ken Woolley (1933–2015) of Ancher, Mortlock and Woolley. Woolley's career spanned 60 years. He is recognised as a leading figure in an architectural movement referred to as the 'Sydney School' and characterised by its organic design embodying the harmonious relationship of nature, architecture and its purpose.

Woolley designed buildings of every type and scale – from small homes and project houses to office towers, apartments, corporate headquarters and civic squares. He designed for public and private clients from prestigious to ordinary and every one of his designs seems right for its place and purpose.



Although churches did not feature strongly in his distinguished designs, there are three notable ecclesiastical structures designed by Woolley: St Margaret's Hospital Sister's Chapel completed in 1958, the Canberra National SDA Church completed in 1971, and the Leura Latter-Day Saints Chapel completed in 1983. The Canberra and Leura churches attracted awards by the Royal Australian Institute of Architects, but it is the St Margaret's Chapel and the Canberra National SDA Church that have heritage status.



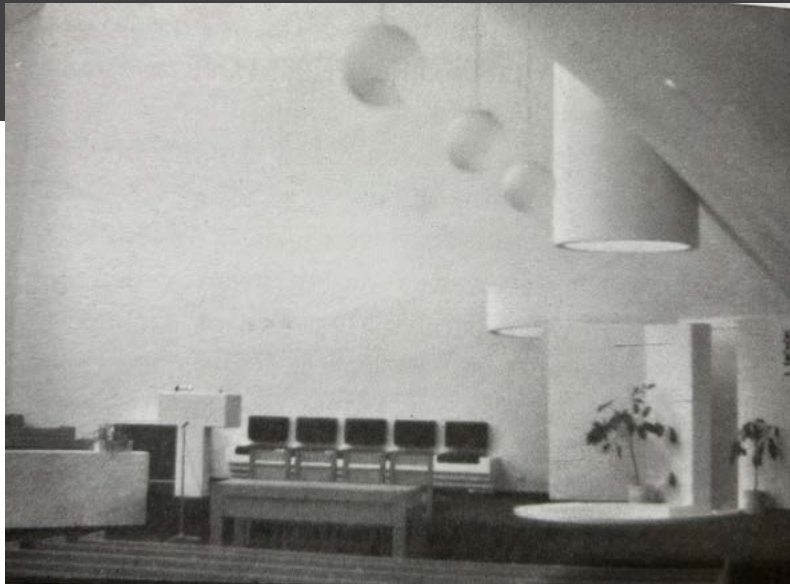
Courtyard pool

In CNAC's design, Woolley combines the Late Twentieth-Century 'Ecclesiastical Style' with the focus on the preaching space, not on the ritualistic aspects of religion, and elements from the Late Twentieth-Century 'Sydney School' movement. This emphasis was especially relevant since the SDA worship service doesn't involve elaborate rituals or traditions.

While Ken Woolley contributed to several projects during the 1970s and 1980s, the SDA Church in Turner is the only ecclesiastical masterpiece designed by him in Canberra. It is also the only example of his design in the ACT from his early practice years. Woolley's creative prowess uniquely weaves the SDA Church's doctrine into the very fabric of its architecture.

The Church design intertwines the outside courtyard pool with the interior space of the Church combining symbolic meaning of water and light. Water symbolises baptism and cleansing, and light embodies the peace and grace bestowed by God upon His people.

Sunlight is reflected from the pool's surface and as the light filters through the windows, it casts a delicate glow inside the Church creating a visual representation of God's boundless grace in action. The building itself emerges gracefully from the water, mirroring the buttresses rising from the courtyard pool. As each person enters the Church, they symbolically pass beneath the pool's water level.



Church interior

The interior of the Church is white, reflecting purity and providing plenty of light. A cross, a familiar feature in many churches, does not feature in Woolley's design, but it can be seen subtly in the form of the pulpit.



Baptism by immersion, a key element of the SDA doctrine, is given a prominent position in the design of the Church. Woolley emphasises this doctrinal aspect by the baptismal structure (immersion font) being placed on the podium of the Church, with a cylindrical skylight from above representing God's grace. The baptismal font forms the visual focus of the Church's interior, even though located to the north-west corner.

Through the interplay of light and water, Woolley's architectural design brings the SDA church doctrine to life. CNAC takes pride in being the sole SDA church in Australia that beautifully incorporates these symbolic aspects through its extraordinary architecture.

The Church's architectural significance was acknowledged with a design award upon its completion, and in 1997 by the ACT Chapter of the Royal Australian Institute of Architects (RAIA) 25-Year Award.



Baptismal font with a cylindrical skylight

The award recognised the enduring significance of the Church's design. The Church stands as a remarkable testament to the modern trends in church architecture of its time.



25-Year RAIA Award displayed in the Church's foyer

In view of the heritage listing, the CNAC sought support from the National Trust (ACT) in establishing a tax-deductible conservation appeal fund to maintain and preserve this architectural gem. The CNAC's heartfelt thanks and appreciation go to the National Trust Council for their support and invaluable advice. The CNAC looks forward to working together for future projects.

Please visit the National Trust's website to find details of the Seventh-Day Adventist Church, Turner Conservation Appeal Fund and other worthy appeals.

<https://www.nationaltrust.org.au/services/heritage-appeals-act/>

The CNAC hopes that with the National Trust, we can rally behind this newly established fund and ensure the future preservation of this cherished architectural treasure. Thank you.

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ACT Trust News

President's Update



Dear Members

The Assembly Committee Inquiry into ACT Heritage Arrangements recently delivered its report and it is pleasing that the Trust submission and appearance before the Committee hearing was referenced in many parts of this document. The Trust also made a written submission to the ACT Government's ACT Heritage Jurisdictional Review.

The ACT heritage system needs considerable updating and additional resourcing and the findings of these two reviews will provide excellent pointers to the way forward.

The announcement of the Trust's 2023 Heritage Awards will take place at an Awards ceremony on Monday, 4 December 2023 at the Canberra Museum and Gallery. We would love to see you there to help us recognise the contribution to ACT heritage made by the winning entrants and other nominations. Please book online using the link on our website.

Don't forget to participate in the Trust's walks and tours – you will find details of previous tours elsewhere in this edition of *Heritage in Trust*. We are sure you will find forthcoming tours just as interesting and popular.

We are about to publish updated and new self-guided heritage walk brochures. Rolling out more of these will continue to be a priority in coming months. Check our website or contact the office for details.

We are extremely disappointed that a number of circumstances beyond our control led to the cancellation of this year's Canberra Region Heritage Symposium. We are already working on next year's and will look at holding the event next year in August, as in previous years, as that timing appears to work better for participants. We may revisit the planned theme for this year, Planning for Heritage. However, if you have other ideas for the theme, please let us know.

Our Annual General Meeting at St John's Church in Reid on 19 October was a great success. Those present enjoyed the presentation by our guest speaker, Duncan Marshall AM, Chair of the ACT Heritage Council.

Thank you to retiring Council members Brad Fraser, Pam Saunders and Rebecca Scouller for your work on behalf of the Trust. Welcome to our new Councillor John Baker, who brings a wealth of heritage and management experience to the Trust.

In 2024, we will face many challenges and it is important that we are quick on our feet. A key need will be to engage in further consultations on the review of ACT heritage arrangements. One outcome we look forward to next year is the successful delivery by GML Heritage, who we recently contracted, of our review of Mid-Century Modernist Housing.

The ACT Assembly elections are scheduled for October 2024 and the Trust is working on a list of policy priorities to place before election candidates. Please write to me at president@nationaltrustact.org.au should you have any suggestions.

I hope to see you at our Christmas party on Saturday, 9 December at Gungaharra Homestead in Harrison, ACT. Don't forget to book through the Trust's website.

On behalf of Council I wish you a merry Christmas and a happy and healthy New Year.

Best wishes.

Gary Kent
President

Mid-Century Modernist Housing Project

As part of the Special Grant Work Plan, the Trust proposed to ACT Heritage that a Thematic Study of Mid-Century Modernist Housing in the ACT be conducted. Recently, a Research Methodology and Community and Stakeholder Engagement and Communications plan, submitted by the Trust, was approved by ACT Heritage allowing the study to commence.

Over a number of phases, the study will look to review historical information, identify key themes, building topologies, examples, and case studies of Mid-Century Modernist Houses in the ACT. It is intended that the outcome of the study would summarise the findings from the research and form the basis of further inquiry.

Due to the specialised nature of the study, the Trust has engaged GML Heritage Pty Ltd to undertake the substantive work of the study. GML have previously provided expert assistance in developing the Research Methodology.

A two-part feature article on Mid-Century Modernist Houses was in the November 2022 and March 2023 editions of *Heritage in Trust* and can be found on the Trust's website. Progress of the study will be mentioned in future editions. If members have any information they believe would be of assistance to the study or would like further information, they should contact the office (info@nationaltrustact.org.au).

Legislative Assembly Inquiry into ACT Heritage Arrangements and ACT Heritage Jurisdictional Review

Heritage has been in the news this year with the Legislative Assembly for the Australian Capital Territory's Standing Committee on Environment, Climate Change and Biodiversity conducting an Inquiry into ACT's heritage arrangements. More recently, the Minister for Heritage Rebecca Vassarotti MLA sought community input on a proposed refresh of the ACT's heritage system as part of an ACT Heritage Jurisdictional Review.

The full report of the Assembly's Heritage Arrangements Inquiry was recently released and is available at https://www.parliament.act.gov.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0004/2307019/Report-9-Inquiry-into-ACTs-heritage-arrangements.pdf. The Trust will be reviewing the contents of the report. Trust President Gary Kent appeared before the committee in May.

The ACT Heritage Jurisdictional Review sought input to better identify, protect and celebrate places of natural and cultural significance via the ACT Yoursay Conversations platform. The Trust replied to the survey and also wrote a letter raising a number of issues, particularly with the nature and scope of the survey. The Trust continues to work with ACT Heritage, the ACT Government and the Minister for Heritage to ensure that the ACT's heritage arrangements are fit for purpose.

AGM Report

The 48th Annual General Meeting of the Trust was held on Thursday, 19 October 2023 in the Robertson Room, St John's Church, Constitution Avenue, Reid.

Duncan Marshall AM, chair of the Interim ACT Heritage Council, was the guest speaker and gave a broad ranging address covering a number of contemporary heritage matters in the ACT.

The President's Report and Committee Reports were presented. The Financial Accounts were unable to be presented due an incomplete audit dependent on sign-off of the 2022–2023 Work Plan Annual Report. Financial Accounts are intended to be presented at the Trust Christmas Party.

Retiring Councillors Kerry Blackburn, Gary Kent and Linda Roberts were re-elected to Council. A nomination was also received from John Baker and he was elected to Council. Mary Johnston, Eric Martin and Scott McAlister continue for the second year of their term. There are five vacancies on Council.

At the November meeting of the Trust's Council, the first after the AGM, Gary Kent was re-elected President, Linda Roberts elected Vice President and Scott McAlister re-elected Treasurer. The Secretary role remains vacant with administrative support to Council provided by the Trust Manager.

Heritage Brochures and the Trust Website – Update

Work is continuing to complete Phase 1 of the refresh of the Trust's Heritage Brochures. For a number of reasons, this project has been more difficult than anticipated. However, in addition to completing the outstanding work, planning has commenced on the next stage of the project using the lessons learnt from the first phase. Phase 2 will include further revisions to some existing brochures plus some new ones.

Work on the refreshed website is continuing.

Heritage

Happenings

Eric Martin, AM

The major issues at present are the:

- Legislative Assembly Enquiry into ACT's heritage arrangements which has tabled a report to be considered by Government.
- The ACT Heritage Jurisdictional Review which is also having a report finalised for consideration by Government.

The National Trust provided submissions to both, so we await further outcomes and hope for a positive improvement in the identification, understanding and promotion of ACT Heritage.

The ACT National Trust awards will be announced shortly and we look forward to presenting the awards to the winners.

There are several issues that the National Trust has maintained a strong interest in and will become finalised/formalised in the next six months.

These include:

- Canberra Brickworks Stage 1
- Forestry Place in Yarralumla
- UNSW on the former Reid CIT site Stage 1
- Future of Canberra Olympic Pool which is a significant architectural and social facility
- Commonwealth Avenue Bridge upgrade
- Acton Foreshores development.

Places that remain under threat include modernist houses, and the special study by the National Trust has been activated following the response on the methodology received from ACT Heritage.

Modernist commercial buildings are also in need of refurbishment. There are potential heritage issues to consider with these buildings as well as environmental/sustainability aspects especially of embodied energy. The National Trust will continue to assess and comment on these issues as and when they arise.

The ACT National Trust Heritage Committee is one of the committees that report to the National Trust Council and is always looking for new members with an interest in ACT Heritage. We would welcome your consideration and contribution to this committee.



Merribee gardens (photo: Liz McMillan)

Tours & Events

July—October 2023

Mary Johnston,
Tours and Events Committee

The National Trust (ACT) has organised two coach tours in recent months, which were both very well received by participants:

- The Postman's Cruise coach tour with Linda Roberts to the NSW Central Coast – a picture perfect day for the 20 km cruise upstream delivering post to various waterfront villages. Other visits included Harpers Mansion and the Alison Homestead Museum pictured on the right.
- The Shoalhaven tour experienced a couple of unseasonably warm days, but the variety of places visited delighted travellers. Highlights included visits to Arthur Boyd's properties at Bundanon and Riversdale, the museums, the excellent local bus driver and, of course, Marianne Albury-Colless who organised and led the tour.



Bundanon (photo: Liz McMillan)



*Bundanon's Art Museum and bridge
(photo: Liz McMillan)*

*Top: Postman's Cruise,
Middle: Harpers Mansion,
Bottom: Alison Homestead Museum
(photos: Linda Roberts)*



*Daffodils at Sherwood
(photo: Mary Johnston)*



*Mugga Mugga Grasslands
(photo: Mary Johnston)*



*Kingston Foreshore
(photo: Linda Roberts)*

Several Heritage Walks were completed and covered a range of areas and experiences – Acton, Swinger Hill, Sherwood homestead site, Hackett, the Mugga Mugga Grasslands and parks and gardens at the Kingston Foreshore. The final walk in November is from the Tharwa Bridge to the de Salis Cemetery.

A visit to Lanyon in September to view the results of the conservation work complemented our earlier visit to see the work in progress earlier this year. We thank ACT Historic Places for welcoming the Trust to Lanyon (twice) and Mugga Mugga this year.

The 15th (yes, that is correct) Reid Open Houses and Gardens was held in late October and, again, very positive comments were received. We gratefully acknowledge the generosity of owners who opened three different houses and gardens to around 60 visitors who also enjoyed afternoon tea provided by the Reid Preschool.

The National Trust (ACT) AGM was held at St John's Church in Reid in October but unfortunately the Heritage Symposium was cancelled.

Our final event for the year will be the Christmas Party at Gungahderra Homestead in Harrison. We hope to see many of you there to learn about the history of the Homestead and how it is benefiting the local community today. Of course, there will be the usual Christmas treats – fruit cake, mince pies and shortbread, anyone?!

Future activities include a coach tour to Tumut which will include a visit to Yarrangobilly Caves and many autumn delights in May next year. Our 2024 Heritage Festival Open Day will be at Yarralumla Woolshed – a chance to visit (or revisit) this iconic heritage-listed building.

The Tours and Events Committee wishes you a pleasant festive season and hopes to see you on a tour in 2024!



Reid Open Houses and Gardens (photos: Sue Byrne)

New Members

The National Trust (ACT) warmly welcomes the following new members since August 2023:

Ms Lisa Andersen and Mr Robert Bunzli
Ms Lynette Bender and Mr Michael Dogan
Mrs Claire Borys
Mrs Margarita Carlus
Dr Michael Carrel and Ms Susan Hall
Mr Michael and Mrs Moira Castle
Mr Peter and Ms Pam Core
Ms Anne and Mr Richard Corver
Ms Sarah Day
Mr Lloyd and Mrs Sonia Dobson
Dr Michael Doherty and Ms Paula Waring
Rev John and Mrs Susanne Downs
Miss Sue Duggan
Ms Peta Dunn and Mr Kenneth Ward
Prof Rob Fitzgerald and Dr Jennifer Jones
Ms Bethany Flanagan and Mr Daniel Hills
Mr Paul Flanagan and Mrs Louise Dooley
Mr Ian and Mrs Gillian Graham
Mrs Rosanna and Mr Stephen Horn
Ms Pauline Jennings
Mr David and Mrs Jennifer Johnson

Ms Rebecca Kellett and Mr Keiran McLean
Mrs Cynthia and Mr Christopher Kimlin
Mr Martin Krippner
Mr Thomas Lawrence
Mr Robert Lawton
Ms Jennifer Mackenzie
Mr Anthony and Mrs Madeleine Maple
Dr David Marshall and Ms Linda Henschke
Mrs Margaret McDonald
Ms Lisa McGlynn and Mr Mark Cormack
Ms Sally McNeill
Ms Jennifer Nagy
Ms Lyn O'Brien
Mr Michael and Mrs Kylie Pearson
Ms Carolyn and Mr Ian Sakkara
Mr Greg Trigg
Ms Eve Warren
Mr Ian and Mrs Wendy Wingett
Mr Malcolm and Mrs Bonnie Wright

Bequests

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Keeping up with the Trust

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For Twitter, go to <http://www.twitter.com> and enter your name and email, and choose a password to sign up and then navigate to https://twitter.com/NatTrust_ACT and click the follow button.

Benefits for National Trust Members

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Annual Membership

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Individual Senior \$75

Individual Concession \$60

Household \$125

Household Senior \$110

Household Concession \$90

Discounts for three year renewals.

Life Membership

Single \$1,884.00

Household \$2187.50

- Reciprocal visiting arrangements within Australia, plus 20 NT organisations worldwide, including the UK and Scottish National Trusts. See: <https://www.nationaltrust.org.au/international-places/>
- Participation in a range of social and educational activities.
- New Members are entitled to one Heritage Walk or Trust Talk free of charge.
- Email receipt of regular ebulletins and the ACT National Trust's publication *Heritage in Trust* three times a year.
- Your membership subscription and participation in Trust activities contribute to the conservation and preservation of Australia's heritage.
- The opportunity to take part in the work of the National Trust through various Committees.
- Information on our range of local, national and overseas tours.
- A 10% to 15% discount in National Trust gift shops throughout Australia.
- Benefit from our partnership with the National Library of Australia – 10% discount in the NLA Bookshop, Friends discounted price for Friends events and access to the exclusive Friends Lounge.
- Concessional entry to ACT Historic Places and 10% discount at Lanyon Homestead shop.