

📍 Ngunnawal Country

AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

# Barton





**Telopea Park to Manuka Oval, 1953** [ACT Heritage Library 009642]

 See map in centre spread

The walk can be done in two parts.

**Stops 1–8** between Telopea Park and Brisbane Avenue is approximately 3.5km and 2 hours.

**Stops 9–15** between Brisbane Avenue and Kings Avenue is approximately 3.5km and 1hr 15mins.

Optional loops mentioned in this brochure are additional.

Stops 1–8 are numbered assuming a start at Telopea Park (near the public toilet block). Stops 9–15 assume a start at Bowen Park near the café. However, for either, you can start at any point and do sections if time is limited.

While two stops are technically in Forrest, they are strongly connected with Barton and are included here.

Public toilet facilities are available in Telopea Park (stop 1) and Bowen Park (stop 8). Parking is available near these sites.

This walk adjoins the walk set out in the National Trust (ACT) *Kingston* brochure.



Denotes Canberra Tracks sign at sites for more information



Site listed on the ACT Heritage Register or on the National Heritage

# Barton

The suburb of Barton is named for Australia's first prime minister Sir Edmund Barton (1849–1920). He played key roles in the lead-up to Federation and in setting up the Commonwealth administration. Barton was prime minister from 1901 to 1903 and resigned to become a founding justice of the High Court of Australia where he served for 17 years until his death.

The suburb was gazetted in 1928, although initial construction and occupancy in the area began in 1922. Streets are named after colonial governors.

The planning concepts of Walter Burley Griffin and Marion Mahony Griffin and, later, architect-town planner Sir John Sulman and horticulturalist Charles Weston, are preserved in the street and park layout of Barton – the 'garden city' of communal parks and spacious house blocks designed to suit middle income public servants and their families.

This walk takes in three of the eight avenues radiating from Capitol Place (now Capital Hill) that were named for Australian and New Zealand capital cities, each terminating in a circle or square named for an appropriate floral emblem: Wellington (now Canberra) Avenue ending at today's Manuka; Sydney Avenue ending at Telopea Park; and Brisbane Avenue ending at Grevillea Place.

The walk also takes in the hierarchy of circuits shown in the Griffins' plan – National, Dominion and Empire Circuits and it touches on State Circle. Names have changed over time: Dominion Circuit was State Circuit; Empire Circuit was Australia Circuit; and State Circle was Capitol Circuit and Acacia Circle.

# STOPS 1–8

## 1 Telopea Park



**George Rottenberry's farm and timber slab home**

[CDHS ID 16677 Photo 2974]

Telopea Park was a feature of the earliest Griffin plans for Canberra. It was labelled Waratah Parkway before being renamed as a park. Telopea is the scientific name of the Waratah, the floral emblem of New South Wales.

The park lay between the mainly government housing of Barton and the private housing of Kingston/Eastlake.

The creek which ran the length of the park was enclosed in an open stormwater drain in 1925. Its early name of Black Creek may suggest earlier use by First Nations peoples. It may have been a series of springs and pools before erosion created a defined channel.

The creek was later known as Rottenberry's Creek. George Henry and Eliza Rottenberry were one of three generations of Rottenberrys to live in the area from 1848. The Canberra Tracks sign opposite Tench Street tells their story.

Telopea Park features plantings of exotic and native trees by Charles Weston from the 1920s. This style continued under his successor Lindsay Pryor, most notably at the lake (northern) end of the park. See the Canberra Tracks sign opposite Currie Crescent.

The Canberra Tracks sign opposite Telopea Park School recounts the history of the school [stop 6].

*At the southern end of the park, cross NSW Crescent to Manuka Circle.*

## 2 Manuka Circle precinct

Manuka Circle is named for a New Zealand tea tree (*Leptospermum scoparium*). In early city plans the Circle terminated at Wellington (now Canberra) Avenue which pointed towards the New Zealand capital. New Zealand had at times considered joining the Australian Federation.

### Manuka Swimming Pool



The Swimming Pool, opened in 1931, was the first public pool in Canberra. Previously, sites along the Molonglo River were used for swimming. The pool's construction helped to ease unemployment in the early years of the Great Depression. Designed by Edwin Henderson in the Art Deco style, it features a distinctive entrance, walled pool of ceramic tiles and change rooms with terracotta tile roofs. The pool was an important focus for social activities from the 1930s and remains popular today.

### Manuka Oval



The area now occupied by Manuka Oval was used for recreation from 1922. It was upgraded and enclosed in 1929. In 1982, the 1901 Jack Fingleton scoreboard from the MCG was acquired. The oval has been used for cricket and football, and later also for other sports, sheepdog trials and special celebrations.

Charles Weston created the landscape around the oval in 1923–1924, with poplars, oaks, elms and cypresses.

The Curator's Cottage remains, a rendered brick building with tiled roof, built in 1937.

### Manuka Arts Centre (former Mothercraft Centre)

Next to Manuka Swimming Pool is the Manuka Arts Centre. It opened in 1937 as Canberra's first permanent Mothercraft Centre, moving here from temporary premises opened in 1927 in Jardine Street, Kingston.

*Continue on Manuka Circle to Fitzroy Street. A short diversion can be taken to Canberra Avenue*

## Canberra Services Club



The Services Club was established during World War II as a Rest Hut for members of the armed services. It was known affectionately as 'The Hut'. Lady Gowrie, wife of the then governor general, was a key supporter and served as its first patron.

The Club was extended in 1943 with a dance hall and became an important social resource for the defence forces community, and later for police personnel.

After World War II it became the Canberra Services Club and over time acquired an anti-aircraft gun (1981), Kokoda Memorial (1981) and battle tank (2010). The building was destroyed by fire in 2011. The future of the site is still being considered.

*Continue along Fitzroy Street and take a short diversion into Empire Circuit.*

## 3 Forrest Fire Station precinct



The precinct comprises the Fire Station and seven houses in the block bounded by Canberra Avenue, Manuka Circle, Fitzroy Street and Empire Circuit. Designed in 1938 by Edwin Henderson and Cuthbert Whitley, these are the earliest examples of Inter-War Functionalist architecture in Canberra. This contrasted with the 'Federal Capital architecture' style prevalent in the 1920s and 1930s. The precinct is listed in the Australian Institute of Architects Register of Significant Century Architecture.

The Fire Station on Empire Circuit housed fire engines and duty staff. It operated from 1939 to 1983 and is now a museum for the Fire Brigade Historical Society of the ACT.

The two-storey houses and duplexes were built for employees to enable rapid response. Their attached garages were a sign of the emergence of private motor cars. While some were converted to offices, the former Fire Station residences have had little modification and are highly valued as the last remaining examples of government-sponsored Inter-War Functionalist residential architecture in Canberra.

## **'The crossroads'**

The intersection of Fitzroy Street and Empire Circuit approximates a crossroads pre-dating the establishment of the Federal Capital Territory – a north-south road from old Canberra to Mugga Mugga (and beyond to the Monaro) and an east-west road between Queanbeyan and Uriarra.

## **The former Wellington Hotel site**

Near the end of Fitzroy Street, on the western side, is now the rear of Rydges Hotel. The site was originally the Hotel Wellington, built for the opening of Parliament House in 1927. It was named for its location on Wellington Avenue (now Canberra Avenue) and nicknamed 'the Wello' and 'the Journos' Pub'. It was demolished in 1984.

## **4 Wesley (Uniting Church) Centre**

On the eastern side of Fitzroy Street, and also bordered by National Circuit and Sydney Avenue, is the Wesley Centre, established on land selected in 1924 as a cathedral site. The church hall building was opened in 1930 as a cooperative hall for Methodist, Presbyterian and Congregational church communities. The parsonage in brick with a slate tile roof (next to Sydney Avenue) was built in 1938.

The Methodist National Memorial Church was built in 1955, some 28 years after fundraising had begun. It includes a notable pipe organ and timber slabs from the first Methodist church in Canberra (1869). The Memorial Fellowship Centre opened in 1962 and the Wesley Music Centre, a highly regarded classical and chamber music venue, in 2002.

*A diversion towards St Andrew's Church can be taken by crossing National Circuit and taking the pathway adjacent to the childcare centre to Game Court. Continuing to the Church precinct will add more than 20 minutes to the walk.*



## 5 St Andrew's Presbyterian Church precinct



The precinct (Manse, Caretaker's Cottage and Church) was designed as a complex by architects John Barr and Henry Hardie Kemp on a site selected for a cathedral in 1924. It fronts State Circle, directly opposite Parliament House.

The Manse was completed in 1928 and the Caretaker's Cottage (or Beadle's Cottage) in 1929. Both are in the Inter-War Georgian Revival style.

The foundation stone for the church was laid in 1929 and the initial stage opened in 1934, its completion frustrated by lack of funding in the Depression years.

The Church is ornate, built in the Inter-War Gothic style, clad in sandstone with buttresses and numerous stained-glass windows, carved decorations including gargoyles and the heads of leaders of the Reformation. The tower has a peal of eight bells, cast in England.

The War Memorial Church Hall opened in 1955 and was extended in 1962; the Peace Memorial Nave, designed by Professor JC Haskell, opened in 1979; and the Warrior's Chapel was finally completed in 1980 to commemorate those who died in the two World Wars.

*Turn right from Fitzroy Street at National Circuit, continue to Sydney Avenue and turn right.*

## 6 Telopea Park School

At the end of Sydney Avenue in New South Wales Crescent is the Telopea Park School, named for its siting on the then Telopea Park.

The school, opened in 1923, was one of the first major buildings constructed in the Federal Capital. It was designed by chief architect John Smith Murdoch for 500 students from kindergarten to school leaving age but opened with 58 pupils. (Today, after many extensions, there are more than 1,500 students.) Since 1983, it has been a bilingual French–Australian school, established through an agreement between the Australian and French governments.

The best-known of the school's alumni is Gough Whitlam, prime minister from 1972 to 1975.



A war memorial in the school grounds was unveiled in 1953, dedicated to the former students who served in World War II.

*Continue along New South Wales Crescent to Macquarie Street. On the corner is one of the area's street-naming pillars.*

## 7 Brassey Hotel

Barton was an obvious location for accommodation for public servants transferred to Canberra, mainly from Melbourne, in the 1920s and 1930s, and again for transferees in the 1960s and 1970s.

Brassey Hotel opened in 1927 as Telopea Park Hostel but soon became Brassey House, named for Sir Thomas Brassey, governor of Victoria 1885–1891.

Designed by Sydney architects Budden and Hood in the American Colonial style, it differed from most other hostel designs of the period. It catered for 60 residents but was extended in the late 1950s. It was sold in 1987, refurbished and now caters for the tourist and business markets as the Brassey Hotel.

It is rumoured to have been built back to front with the grander entrance facing Belmore Gardens.

At the north-western corner of Macquarie and Bourke Streets is **Barton Court**. Notable for its distinctive Tudor style, the work of architect Kenneth Oliphant, it was the largest private building to have been commenced in Canberra since the onset of the Depression in 1929. The initial pair of buildings facing Darling and Bourke Streets were fully occupied in 1935, offering 16 flats with 'all modern conveniences'.

The block opposite, bounded by Macquarie Street, Bourke Street, National Circuit, Sydney Avenue and New South Wales Crescent, contained the last hostel funded by the Commonwealth, the 600-person Macquarie Hostel, completed in 1969. The hexagonal structure was built around a shared amenities building and landscaped courtyard. From the 1990s it was a private hotel until demolished in 2004 and replaced by apartments and the Hotel Realm.





## Barton

- 1** Telopea Park
- 2** Manuka Circle precinct
- 3** Forrest Fire Station precinct
- 4** Wesley Centre
- 5** St Andrew's precinct
- 6** Telopea Park School
- 7** Brassey Hotel
- 8** Barton Heritage precinct
- 9** Bowen Park
- 10** Blackall Street
- 11** St Mark's Centre
- 12** Kings Avenue
- 13** York Park precinct
- 14** Hotel Kurrajong
- 15** Brisbane Avenue

**Kingston Tour  
Brochure**

*Continue along Macquarie Street, turn right at Darling Street then right at Young Street to Belmore Gardens.*

## 8 Barton Housing precinct



Belmore Gardens is the centre of the heritage area that wraps around the rear of the Brassey Hotel. The Barton Housing precinct represents the initial phase of housing development in Canberra and associated landscaping.

The Barton houses were built for middle-income public servants, and contrasted with larger brick homes in Forrest and Griffith for senior staff and weatherboard houses in Ainslie for blue-collar workers.

The 60 houses in the precinct include a mix of Federal Capital Commission (FCC) houses from 1926–1927, privately built homes from 1926 and government-built houses from 1933–1939. The FCC houses are in the Mediterranean and Arts and Crafts styles, single storey brick, most rendered, with terracotta tile roofs. Thirteen of the 50 FCC designs remain, with 20 or more variations.

The heritage listing recognises Sir John Sulman's 'garden suburb' streetscapes with varied setbacks, hedges, 1920s street signs and lamps, and red fire hydrants.

*This ends the stops 1–8 walk: Follow Belmore Gardens to Darling Street and turn right to return to Telopea Park.*

*OR to continue to stops 9–15: Return to Young Street then north to Brisbane Avenue and follow the stops in reverse order.*



## STOPS 9–15

### 9 Bowen Park

Before Lake Burley Griffin was formed, the Molonglo River adjoined fertile alluvial flats. In the 1940s, the south bank was the site of the Lloyd family's commercial vegetable garden. Flats on the opposite bank were grazed for the Duntroon Dairy, last operated by the Edlington family until 1963 when the land was taken over by the government to build the lake.

Bowen Drive and Bowen Park were named for Sir George Bowen, first governor of Queensland 1859–1868, and other pioneers named Bowen.

The road covers the site of the government sandwash which processed large quantities of sand and gravel to build the city from about 1926 until 1959.

Part of today's Bowen Park was the site of worker accommodation: the Eastlake Tenements or Power House Tenements in buildings relocated from the Molonglo internment camp (now Fyshwick) and since removed.

In the centre of the park is the hand-carved wooden Székely Gate, a gift to Canberra in 2014 for its centenary. It symbolises enduring friendship between the peoples of Australia and Hungary.

The Griffins' plan for Canberra enclosed a square of roads drawn as Bowen Place (or Queensland Square) near Telopea Park and today's Bowen Park.

The creek was crossed by a low bridge carrying the Brickworks railway to the Power House. A pneumatic tube across the creek transferred material (including Hansard) between the Government Printing Office in Kingston and Parliament House – considered a technological marvel in the 1920s.

*Cross Bowen Drive, walk up Brisbane Avenue to the laneway on the right opposite Young Street and at the end of the laneway turn right into Blackall Street.*

## 10 Blackall Street

The block on the western side of Blackall Street was the site of a group of government buildings described as 'blatantly temporary in appearance' and nicknamed 'the Woolsheds'. They were demolished in about 1997.

On the eastern side of Blackall Street, where the land drops away towards the lake, the Landmark residential development marks the site of the Riverside Camp (or Hostel), a collection of barracks-style buildings constructed in 1946 for about 200 tradesmen recruited from Britain to address the post-World War II housing shortage. After extensions in 1947 to house another 300 workers, it was closed in 1951 and used for various community purposes. The last buildings were removed in the early 1990s.

*Opposite Broughton Street, a diversion into the grounds of St Mark's will add 15–20 minutes to the walk.  
OR continue along Broughton Street.*

## 11 St Mark's National Theological Centre

A directory map of the precinct is located in the car park.

The site was originally reserved for a Church of England cathedral. In 1927 it was proposed to dismantle St Andrew's Cathedral, Sydney, and reassemble it in Canberra but this was deemed 'inadvisable'. An architectural competition was won by Harold Crone with a Romanesque design, and the site dedicated in 1927, one day before the formal opening of the provisional Parliament House. The Depression years hampered fund raising, which deferred the cathedral indefinitely.

Plans were developed for an institution of theological education and research. In 1957 the theological library, designed by architect Robert G Warren, was opened. In 1978 the library and other educational arms were amalgamated into St Mark's National Theological Centre.



***Plants featured in the Bible make up the Bible Garden.*** [L Roberts]

Its reach was extended through partnership with Charles Sturt University from 1995 when the Anglican Church agreed with other Christian churches to develop the site in consultation with the local Aboriginal community.

A walk around the grounds takes in areas that recognise the spiritual significance of the site to Aboriginal people. The steps up through the Bible Garden, featuring plants described in the Bible, lead to an excellent view of Lake Burley Griffin.

The Native Grassland Biodiversity Project protects and manages two hectares of remnant natural temperate grassland, an endangered ecological community.

Broughton Street differs from the governors' theme for street naming. It was named for Bishop William Broughton, the first (and only) Church of England bishop of Australia (1836–1852).

The building on the left of Broughton Street, the site of the highly-regarded Ottoman Restaurant, was built in 1985 but designed to reflect 1920s era buildings. It was originally known as the Barton Cafeteria for public servants.

*Turn right at Macquarie Street to Kings Avenue.*



## 12 Kings Avenue

Kings Avenue forms a major arm of the National Triangle, connecting Capital Hill with Russell Hill.

### Edmund Barton Building



A statue of Edmund Barton by sculptor Marc Clark was unveiled in 1983 and stands on the corner of Kings Avenue and Macquarie Street in front of the Edmund Barton Building, constructed between 1969 and 1974. The building was designed by architect Harry Seidler in the late twentieth-century International style as the Trade Group Offices, to house related departments with up to 3,000 people. The five-storey wings joined by circular access cores were nicknamed 'The Silos'. Major artworks feature in the open courtyards. The building now houses the Australian Federal Police.

This was the site of the original National Library Building, designed by Edwin Henderson. The first stage, a four-storey building in the Stripped Classical style, was opened in 1935. The remaining wings were to house an art gallery and museum. These were never realised despite design work by Cuthbert Whitley. The old building was demolished in 1968–1969.

### Robert Marsden Hope Building



Between Macquarie Street and National Circuit is the Robert Marsden Hope Building, built between 1939 and 1941. This signalled a short-lived revival of Canberra building at this time. It was designed by Henderson and Whitley in the Inter-War Stripped Classical style, with external cladding of Hawkesbury sandstone.

The building housed the Patent Office until the 1970s, as well as courts, security services and later the Commonwealth Public Service Board. From 1983 it housed the Attorney-General's Department, extended and renamed as the Robert Garran Offices for the first secretary of that department. The building was refurbished in 2011 and named for Robert Marsden Hope, a former NSW justice and royal commissioner. It now houses the Office of National Intelligence.

## 13 York Park precinct



Towards the end of Kings Avenue is York Park. Most of the 80 English Oaks (*Quercus robur*) were planted as unemployment relief work in the Depression years. The plantation is the only one of six coppice plantations proposed for Canberra in the late 1920s and early 1930s that remains largely intact.

The first tree was planted by the Duke of York in 1927, the day after he opened the provisional Parliament House. The area, the Review Ground, was where the Duke reviewed Australian military forces and watched an aerial flypast. Nearby, a large crowd welcomed pioneer aviator Bert Hinkler and his Avro aircraft to Canberra in 1928, shortly after he completed the first solo flight from England to Australia.

The open space, including an area of native grassland habitat, is now the site of the R G Casey Building (housing the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade since the 1990s) and the National Security Office precinct.



**Bert Hinkler starting the propeller on his Avro Avian biplane at York Park 1928** [<http://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-152757188>]

*Take Windsor Walk to Blackall Street, then turn right at National Circuit to Brisbane Avenue.*

## 14 Hotel Kurrajong



The Hotel Kurrajong opened as Hostel No. 2 in 1926. It housed staff transferred from Melbourne and was renamed The Kurrajong in the 1930s. (Hostel No. 1 became Hotel Canberra and is now the Hyatt Hotel.) John Smith Murdoch designed both in the Garden Pavilion style with rendered brick walls and terracotta tile roofs. The landscaped grounds are the work of Charles Weston.

The Kurrajong housed Members of Parliament and public servants for decades. Ben Chifley lived at the hotel even while prime minister (1945–1949) and died of a heart attack there in 1951.



**'Hotel Kurrajong from Capital Hill 1950.'** [ *Canberra & District Historical Society* 17813].

The hotel closed in the late 1970s and was used as offices for parliamentary staff until it was reopened by the ACT Government in 1995 as a hotel and campus for the Australian International Hotel School.

It was later sold, refurbished to highlight its architectural detail with an elegant Art Deco style, and reopened in 2015.

The hotel is listed on the Australian Institute of Architects Register of Significant Architecture.

## 15 Brisbane Avenue

The demand for hostel accommodation for public servants during and post-World War II placed a strain on existing guest houses and hostels.

Brisbane House opened in 1949 on the eastern corner of Young Street and Brisbane Avenue. Renamed Lawley House, it has housed the Australian Federal Police College since 1979.

On the western corner Barton House opened in 1941 to provide low-cost accommodation for about 120 people. It was replaced in 1981 with Macquarie Court, apartments and townhouses with open space in the middle.

On the next block to the west, The National Hotel occupies the site of Lachlan Court, built in 1959 with 118 apartments in four blocks around an open court. It was sold by the ACT Government in 1999 and demolished.

Prior to construction of the road on the northernmost carriageway of Brisbane Avenue, the alignment was used until 1927 to carry the temporary brickworks railway between the Government brickworks at Yarralumla and the Power House at Eastlake/Kingston. The line joined Brisbane Avenue where Engineering House now stands, on the north-western corner with National Circuit.

### **Barton Conference Centre**



Tucked behind the office building on the opposite (north-eastern) corner is a structure that was built as the Barton Conference Centre in 1967. It was a highly innovative design in the early work of architect Enrico Taglietti, who placed most of the convention centre underground. While now modified, the building represents the Twentieth Century Organic style. The above-ground area is now a café and the below-ground section a gymnasium.

*Return to Bowen Drive and Bowen Park.*

**Gertie with 'Betty Ford' outside the Brassey Hotel, 1930.**

*[Canberra & District Historical Society 23648]*

**Front cover: Edmund Barton statue on corner of Kings Avenue and Macquarie Street. [L. Roberts]**

**Visit Barton to discover the rich history of some of Canberra's earliest office, residential and transport developments, places of worship, parks and recreation areas, as well as relics of native grasslands that have survived European settlement.**

Barton

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