

📍 Ngunnawal Country

AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

Braddon





Braddon shown in City map, 1929 [nla.obj-233327915]

 **See map in centre spread**

The tour numbered 1 to 14 is 3.5 km and takes 1.5–2 hours. The stops are numbered from the corner of Currong and Mort Streets but may be followed in any order or taken in parts.

Additional places to the north of Haig Park are shown at A to G. Walking from A to G is about 3 km. You can also drive to these stops.

The tour adjoins the *Ainslie* and *Reid* tours, brochures also published by the National Trust (ACT).

Public toilet facilities with disabled access are available at Haig Park (stop 4) near the top of Mort Street and in the Canberra Centre. Cafes are also located in or near the tour area.



Denotes Canberra Tracks sign at sites for more information



Site listed on the ACT Heritage Register or the National Heritage List and/or the Australian Institute of Architects Register of Significant Architecture. There are National Capital Authority signs at some sites.

Braddon

The suburb of Braddon in North Canberra is bounded by Northbourne, Macarthur, Limestone and Ainslie Avenues and Cooyong Street.

Braddon is situated on the lands of the Ngunnawal people for whom it was an important meeting place.

It is named for Sir Edward Braddon (1829–1904), a Tasmanian politician who was a staunch advocate for Federation, a key player in shaping the Constitution and a member of the first House of Representatives in 1901. The street names are from Aboriginal words, pioneers and legislators.

Braddon was gazetted in 1928. It had been part of a larger Ainslie district. By the time Braddon was created, several buildings and roads within it had already been named 'Ainslie'. These included the Ainslie Schools, Ainslie Hotel and 'Ainslie Cottages' housing precinct. The south-western extremity of the original Braddon is now included in 'City'.

With the arrival of Europeans, the (now) Braddon area was part of two early pastoral properties on the Limestone Plains. The eastern part lay within the 4,000-acre home block of the Campbells' 'Duntroon' property, granted in 1825 as compensation for the loss of a ship. Most of the remainder lay in two blocks purchased by Joshua John Moore; 2,000 acres in 1824 and 1,000 acres in 1826. The latter was the home block for his 'Canberry' property, the name derived from a local Aboriginal word. Moore's property gave its name to the Parish of Canberra. The property was renamed 'Acton' after he sold it in 1843.

Adjacent to the then-fledgling city centre, Braddon is a suburb with many 'firsts' dating from the 1920s. However, from its light industrial past it is now an eclectic mix of apartments, innovative businesses, restaurants, cafes and eye-catching building murals.

(A map showing the murals is available through <https://braddoncollective.com/braddon-street-art-map/>)

1 'Manufacturing Section'

The Walter Burley Griffin 1918 plan for Canberra proposed a separate industrial suburb, a 'manufacturing section'. In the 1920s, the Federal Capital Commission gazetted the area bounded by Cooyong, Mort, Girrahween and Torrens Streets as a 'light industrial zone'.

The first development was in 1926 when the Canberra Steam Laundry opened on the corner of Cooyong and Torrens Streets. This was followed by two bakeries, three motor garages and the *Canberra Times* office, most of which were built in Mort Street.

Head north along Mort Street and turn right at Elouera Street.

2 Coggan's Bakery



Coggan's Bakery at 36 Mort Street (but facing Elouera Street) opened in 1925 as the Tantau Bakery and operated as a bakery under different names until 1991. The Coggan family was associated with the building from the 1940s and the name changed to Coggan's Bakery in 1969.

The bakery was designed by architect James W Sproule of Queanbeyan and Canberra Architects. It is a rare example of Federal Capital Architecture and the Inter-War Stripped Classical style.

The bakery's exterior is retained with plans to transform the immediate precinct into a mixed-use development. Coggan's is one of few buildings remaining from the original 1920s zoning of Braddon for light industrial uses. A 1987 image is on the front cover.

Continue along Elouera Street to Lonsdale Street.

3 Railway Reserve and Lonsdale Street

An essential part of Walter and Marion Mahony Griffins' 1912 award-winning plan for Canberra was railway connections with Yass and Goulburn. These would be preceded by a line to the city from the existing line from Queanbeyan that would bisect the Braddon industrial area. The plan set aside railway reserves with tree plantings for screening.



The former railway easement of Lonsdale Street in the Braddon Minor Industrial Area 1953 [Archives ACT 69/0555]

A temporary city railway carried workers and construction materials from 1921 but this ceased when the bridge across the Molonglo was destroyed by the 1922 flood.

The temporary railway had traversed the city area through (now) Glebe Park and along what became City Walk, with a terminal platform in modern Garema Place. Marshalling yards were along (now) Lonsdale Street to Elouera Street.

In the 1950s all prospects of a city railway and a link to Yass were abandoned and this freed up railway reserves for development. This effectively created what is now Lonsdale Street, and its zoning for light industrial uses. The pines that had been planted to shield the railway were removed in favour of buildings.

Turn left at the Lonsdale Street roundabout towards Haig Park.

The **Rainbow Roundabout** at the intersection of Lonsdale and Elouera Streets was commissioned by the ACT Government to celebrate the ACT recording the highest 'Yes' vote in the successful same-sex marriage plebiscite held in 2017. It was painted by volunteers. In 2020 it was awarded 'International roundabout of the year' by the UK's Roundabout Appreciation Society. After being vandalised in 2023, it was restored and the Progress Pride flag incorporated to represent additional communities.

4 Haig Park



Aerial view of Haig Park, 1951 [NAA: A1200, 11132298]

Haig Park covers 19 hectares in Braddon and Turner. Its dark belt of trees, almost 1.8 km long, is conspicuous in early images of the capital. Designed by Charles Weston, the ACT's first superintendent of Parks and Gardens, it was established in 1921 and planted with more than 7,000 mainly exotic evergreen and deciduous trees and shrubs.

Called the 'East-West Shelter Break', the trees were to protect emerging suburbs from wind and dust; northern Canberra was still largely open grazing land in the 1920s. Designated a public park in 1987, it was named for Field Marshal Sir Douglas Haig, commander of the British Expeditionary Force during World War I.

The park became a popular recreational and social space for the growing residential population of Braddon and is the site of community markets. The original design remains largely intact with some recent tree replanting.

In the Haig Park carpark on the corner of Lonsdale and Girrahween Streets is the **Mandalay Bus**, a vibrant yellow double-decker bus from which is served 'gourmet late-night food'. Kyaw 'George' Thaung from Myanmar replaced his 1969 Mort Street food van with the bus in the early 1980s. It lay dormant from 1992 (when George was viciously bashed) until 2013, and again after his death in 2019 until his son Stewart reopened the bus in 2025. It quickly regained its reputation and icon status.

Turn right from Lonsdale Street into Girrahween Street, continue past Torrens Street to Fawkner Street and turn right.

5 Shakespeare Hall, formerly St Columba's Presbyterian Church Hall



Near the corner of Fawkner and Farrer Streets, Shakespeare Hall was the first permanent ecclesiastical structure to be built in the national capital.

The 1926 Presbyterian Hall was built to serve as St Columba's Church until a Presbyterian cathedral could be built on land leased by the Commonwealth (now the site of St Andrew's Church in Forrest).

The building was designed by Oakley and Parkes of Melbourne and their chief architect in Canberra, Kenneth Oliphant, in Inter-War Gothic style.

The hall has been used by many groups, other Christian denominations and for community social events. During World War II slit trenches were dug in the grounds as shelters in the event of a bombing raid.

The hall was saved from demolition through a generous donation in 1991 by the Shakespeare family, owners of the *Canberra Times* for almost 40 years from its inception in 1926, and who were prominent in Canberra business and community organisations. Renamed in their honour, the hall remains largely unchanged except for a utility hall (Lewis Hall) added in 1957 and a car park.

Continue along Fawkner Street to Elouera Street.

6 Salvation Army Hall

The Salvation Army Hall at the corner of Fawkner and Elouera Streets opened in 1929, marking the start of Salvation Army activities in Canberra. The architects were L S Robertson and Sons from Sydney. The hall functioned as a citadel, and community and social welfare centre site. The adjacent annex was built some 40 years later.

The rear of Northbourne Oval is on Elouera Street. (The main entrance to the oval is on Torrens Street near Donaldson Street.)

7 Northbourne Oval

Northbourne Oval has been in continuous use since it was established in 1925, developed by local volunteers. It is easily discerned in early images of the Braddon area from the line of Monterey pine trees (*Pinus radiata*) around the irregular shaped block. The location was designated 'green space' in the Griffins' 1912 plan for Canberra.

It was the home ground for the Northbourne Cricket Club from the 1920s to the late 1960s, and for the Ainslie Football Club (1927–1975). Rugby and soccer matches and schools' sports days were also held at the oval.

The '1908–2008 Centenary of Rugby League' plaque recognises Northbourne Oval as the foundation site for rugby league in the ACT. The Canberra Raiders rugby league team's Centre of Excellence for training and development was established there in 2020.

Turn left from Fawkner Street into Elouera Street.

8 Ainslie Arts Centre



The Ainslie Arts Centre began as Ainslie Public School, the second school built in the ACT (after Telopea Park School in 1924). This was a major step in developing an inner north community. It was opened in 1927 by Prime Minister Stanley Bruce in his first official act in Canberra.

The Art Deco style building was designed by government architect John Smith Murdoch, who also designed the provisional Parliament House. The school incorporated then-modern facilities, spacious playgrounds and was designed to suit the Canberra climate.

It became the Infants School in 1938 after a larger building for the primary school was completed next door (stop 9) and was further enlarged in the 1940s and 1950s.

From 1980 to 1997, the building housed the public alternative school, School Without Walls, collocated until 1988 with the first home for the Questacon hands-on science centre.

The building was repurposed and in 2009 became a designated music hub and arts venue, managed by Arts Capital Ltd., which includes Gorman House (stop 11).

Continue along Elouera Street and turn left at Donaldson Street.

9 Ainslie School

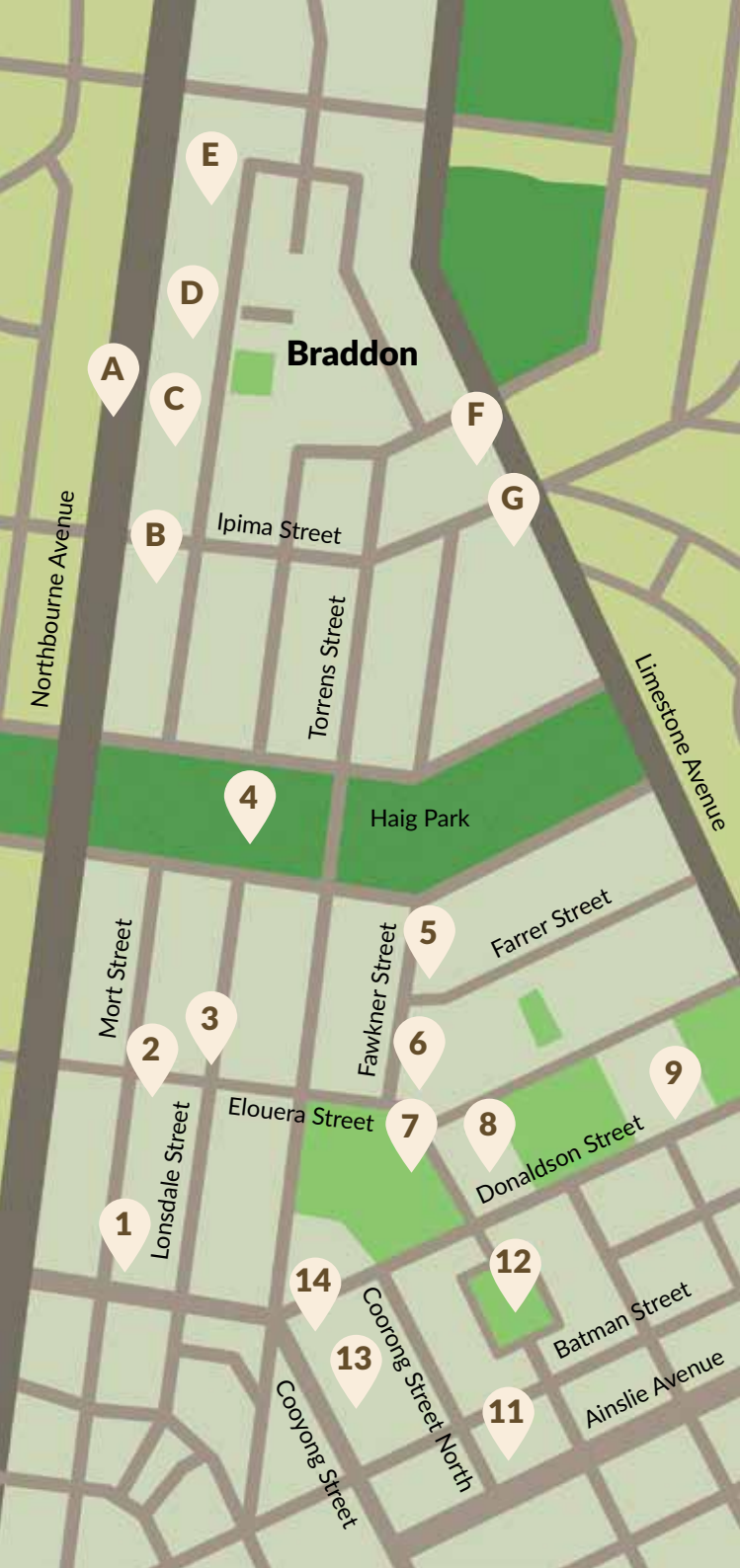


Ainslie Primary School library [Ainslie School]

Fronting Donaldson Street, the Art Deco style Ainslie Primary School (opened in 1938) was designed by government architect Cuthbert Whitley under E H (Edwin) Henderson. It is said to have been the first school building in Australia designed to include a library, lecture room with tiered seats and needlework room. The library features striking artworks – on the west wall, the 1938 *Peter Pan*-themed mural by Sydney artist T F W S (Tom) Alban (partly seen in the above image); and on the east wall, images by Canberra artist Mrs J Nielson inspired by *Alice in Wonderland* and other popular children's books.

During World War II, students undertook air raid drills, with a siren on top of the building, and there were slit trenches for shelter along the edge of the grounds.

Tree plantings on the site are largely intact. Changes to the building have not diminished its value. The Assembly Hall dates from 1960 and an addition was built in 1970. The infants and primary schools were merged in 1974, and the name Ainslie School refers to both.



Braddon

A

E

D

C

F

B

Ipima Street

G

Torrens Street

4

Haig Park

Limestone Avenue

Mort Street

2

3

5

Farrer Street

Fawknor Street

6

9

1

Lonsdale Street

Elouera Street

7

Donaldson Street

8

14

Coorong Street North

13

12

Batman Street

Ainslie Avenue

11

Cooyong Street

Braddon

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- 2** Coggan's Bakery*
- 3** Railway Reserve and Lonsdale Street
- 4** Haig Park*
- 5** Shakespeare Hall
- 6** Salvation Army Hall
- 7** Northbourne Oval
- 8** Ainslie Arts Centre*
- 9** Ainslie School
- 10** Hotel Ainslie (Mercure)*
- 11** Gorman House*
- 12** Braddon Housing Precinct*
- 13** Site of 'ABC Flats'
- 14** St Patrick's Catholic Church

10

- A** Northbourne Avenue
- B** Canberra Rex
- C** Former Gowrie Private Hostel
- D** Former AAA building
- E** Former Churchill House
- F** Whitley house
- G** Merici College

**indicates Canberra Tracks sign at site*

Continue on Donaldson Street and turn right at Limestone Avenue.

10 Hotel Ainslie, now Mercure Canberra



The Hotel Ainslie, on the corner of Limestone and Ainslie Avenues, opened in 1927, one of eight government hostels to house public servants transferred from Melbourne.

It was built in the English Arts and Crafts style, with a distinctive Y-shape plan. The architects were Burcham Clamp and Finch from Sydney. The building has been extensively but sympathetically extended to the rear. The heritage listing relates to the exterior of the original building structure, street landscaping and landscaped central courtyard.

Since 1928 it has operated as a hotel. In 1950 it became the first property of the Rex Group, a division of L J Hooker, and was called Hotel Ainslie Rex. From 1989 it was Olims Canberra Hotel, before being acquired by the Accor Group in 2011 and extensively refurbished to become Mercure Canberra. Its popularity as a social meeting place continues.

Nearby, the **Braddon Flats** bounded by Ainslie Avenue and Elimatta, Batman and Gorean Streets were built as part of the effort to address the post-World War II housing shortage. The two-storey blocks, with a central shared communal area, were first occupied in 1951. The new tenants considered the flats the 'height of luxury' with kitchens and heating. They were demolished in 2017 as part of the ACT Government's housing renewal program.

In 1966, the Commonwealth Bank built a hostel for staff, designed in keeping with the government's planning principles. It was named **Richardson House** for a senior executive of the bank. The building has since been demolished.

Flats and hostels were important in Canberra's social fabric with many young people having moved from interstate and strong social networks were formed by the new residents.

Turn right at Ainslie Avenue past Doonkuna Street.

11 Gorman House



Today Gorman House with the former Ainslie Infants School operates as an arts centre [L Roberts]

The second hostel to be built in Canberra for public servants opened in 1924 as Hostel No. 3 (the [now] Hyatt Hotel Canberra and Hotel Kurrajong were called Hostels No. 1 and No. 2). Hostel No. 3 was known briefly as the Hotel Ainslie (not to be confused with the building at stop 10). In 1927 it was renamed Gorman House in honour of the late Federal Capital Commissioner Clarence Gorman.

The building was designed by government architect John Smith Murdoch in the Federal Capital Garden Pavilion style, offering symmetrical interconnected pavilions with landscaped courtyards, a cream and green exterior, roughcast rendered walls and red brick detailing.

Until 1937, the hostel was used primarily for young women. Men were forced to vacate rooms in favour of women although they could still have meals there. They were excluded altogether from 1937 but readmitted from 1949 until the hostel's closure in 1972.

The building was then used as Commonwealth offices and later as training headquarters for the Commonwealth Police and its successor, the Australian Federal Police.

In 1981, the refurbished and adapted building opened as a community arts centre with performance spaces, artists' studios and a gallery. Gorman House operates in conjunction with the Ainslie Arts Centre (stop 8).

Turn right at Currong Street North.

12 Braddon Housing Precinct



The Braddon Housing Precinct is bounded by Currong Street North and Donaldson, Elimatta and Batman Streets, and is bisected by Doonkuna Street.

The precinct, first named Neighbourhood No. 1, was the first expression of the Garden City concept in Canberra and the capital's only completed example of the Griffins' intentions for residential development.

The 'Ainslie Cottages Project' was developed in 1921–22 to provide rental accommodation for lower grade public servants and construction workers.

Streets are arranged symmetrically around two internal reserves or pocket parks, and relatively modest houses are set in generous gardens. The landscaping of streets and shared spaces was the work of Charles Weston.

A pedestrian pathway (Scott's Crossing) leads from a landscaped plaza off Currong Street North to Cooyong Street.

13 Site of 'ABC Flats'



Three blocks of flats in Cooyong Street were completed in the 1950s as Canberra's first medium density housing; a total of 440 one- and two-bedroom flats.

The 'ABC Flats' (Allawah, completed in 1956, Bega, in 1957, and Currong, in 1959) were designed by government architects Richard Ure and Ian Slater. Bega and Currong were in Braddon and Allawah in Reid.

The flats were considered good examples of the Post-War International style, influenced by British new housing schemes, well suited to their sites, a departure from post-War austerity and modern for the time.

The ABC Flats were 'decommissioned' in 2003 although they continued to be used until their demolition between 2016 and 2018, replaced by modern apartments.

Ure also designed the Australian-American Memorial (unveiled in 1954), Royal Australian Mint (opened in 1965) and Black Mountain Tower (completed in 1977).



Currong Flats (top) and Bega Flats [CDHS and Woman's Weekly 1957]

Turn right at Cooyong Street to Donaldson Street.

14 St Patrick's Catholic Church

Situated on the corner of Donaldson and Cooyong Streets, St Patrick's opened in 1935 as St Patrick's School. Classrooms were cleared at weekends for services to be conducted. The buildings were established to address the educational and spiritual needs of the Catholic community of north Canberra. They continued to be used as both a school (in 1955 it was renamed St Mary's – Our Lady of Mercy) and a church until 1973. For the first 20 years, St Patrick's was the only Catholic school and church in north Canberra.

The school population peaked in the 1950s. Overcrowding was relieved with additional schools and colleges opening but declining enrolments led to the school closing in 1973. It was then occupied by the School Without Walls from 1974 to 1980.

The growing population led to a 'new' St Patrick's (known as St Patrick's War Memorial Church) opening on Limestone Avenue, Braddon, in 1953. To avoid confusion, the 'old' building adopted the name St Mary's.

In 2000 the 'new' St Patrick's became part of Merici College, and in 2002 the original church in Donaldson Street regained its former name.

The following places, north of Haig Park, are part of the Braddon story. They can be visited by walking or by vehicle.

If starting from the corner of Cooyong Street, walk north along Northbourne Avenue towards Wakefield Avenue.

A Northbourne Avenue

In the late 1950s and 1960s, Northbourne Avenue, the 'gateway' to Canberra, became a focus for visitor accommodation and medium density housing.

The Canberra Rex and Gowrie Hostel are among the few surviving buildings (renamed and refurbished) along what was once a string of motels and hotels along Northbourne Avenue heading north from Cooyong Street. Well-known accommodation at the time between Cooyong and Girrahween Streets were the Travelodge (at no.76), Downtown Speros Motel (at no.82) and Canberra Park Royal Motor Inn (at no.102). These properties have since been demolished or redeveloped as commercial offices or apartments.

Northbourne Avenue has changed significantly with the installation of light rail.

B Canberra Rex

At 150 Northbourne Avenue near Ipima Street, the Canberra Rex opened in 1960 as 'the Luxury Hotel' in Canberra. It was one of the city's first high-rise modernist buildings. Guests included international dignitaries and politicians. The building has undergone several refurbishments and name changes. It is now the Canberra Rex Hotel and Serviced Apartments.

On the front wall is the 14-metre-long mosaic mural **Expansion**, commissioned from designer and artist Margo Lewers from NSW who laid irregular hand-cut glass, and vitreous and porcelain tiles over an original drawing. It is the only example of a mosaic mural in Abstract Expressionist style in the ACT and underwent restoration in 2010. A section of the mural is shown on the back cover.

C Former Gowrie Private Hostel

The two connected high-rise blocks at 210 Northbourne Avenue were opened in 1965 as housing for single public servants. Known as Gowrie Private Hostel in the 1970s, it also accommodated school groups and tourists.

In 1992 it was acquired by the Australian National University for student accommodation and renamed Fenner Hall. In 2019 it was again renamed as Gowrie Hall when operated by UniLodge. It closed in late 2020 and became the Canberra Accommodation Centre.

D Former AAA building



Former AAA Building [L Roberts]

The former national headquarters of the Australian Automobile Association (AAA) at 212 Northbourne Avenue is a notable example of a building in the Late Modern style – sleek, glossy and with a three-dimensional curved form clad in aluminium.

The lead architect was Guy Maron. Construction was completed in 1979. The black painted sun control scaffold along the northern façade was added in the early 2010s but designed to be sympathetic to the original form.

The AAA moved out of the building by the mid-2010s and it is now occupied by other commercial tenants.

E Former Churchill House



Churchill House designed by Robin Boyd 1969

[www.darrenbradleyphotography.com/site-search]

The building at 218 Northbourne Avenue is an early example of the Late Twentieth-Century Brutalist style, with strong shapes, large areas of glass, blank walls and off-form concrete. It was Canberra's first brutalist building.

It was built as Churchill House for the Winston Churchill Memorial Trust of Australia, formed to award Churchill Fellowships to Australians to travel overseas for study and training.

Designed by Robin Boyd, it was his last major commission before he died in 1971 and differs somewhat from his earlier designs. His office oversaw completion of the project and the building opened in 1972. The Trust moved out in the late 1990s to a new location on the ANU campus. The building is now called Open Systems House and occupied by multiple tenants.

Other notable Boyd designs in Canberra include Manning Clark House, the Zoology Building at ANU and private residences.

Turn right at Wakefield Avenue and right at Limestone Avenue to just before Ipima Street.

F Whitley house



The red brick house at 107 Limestone Avenue, near the corner of Ipima Street, was designed by architect Cuthbert Whitley in 1940.

This well-preserved house is one of the last remaining intact examples of Inter-War Functionalist style public housing in Canberra designed by the Works Branch in the Department of the Interior. It features asymmetrical simple, cubic shapes, a flat roof and plain surfaces to emphasise its horizontal design.

It was Whitley's aim to introduce modernist architecture to Canberra's public housing and he, with Chief Government Architect Edwin Henderson, designed many important government buildings in the 1930s.



Whitley house, 107 Limestone Avenue [L Roberts]

Turn right at Ipima Street and left at Wise Street.

G Merici College

Merici College was founded in 1959 as Canberra Catholic Girls' High School, the first Catholic girls' school in Canberra. It was originally established and staffed by nuns from six different religious orders.

The school briefly trialled coeducation in the late 1970s but soon reverted to an all-girls school. It has been known as Merici College since 1983.

The building was designed by Canberra architect Kevin Curtin in the Mid-century Modern style. Some of the original structure remains but the school has since undergone substantial modification and additions.

*'Expansion' Mosaic Mural Wall, Margo Lewers, 1960,
at Canberra Rex [L Roberts]*

*Front cover: Coggan's Bakery, 1987, Elouera Street,
Braddon [Michael Hall]*

**Visit Braddon to discover many Canberra
'firsts' in the suburb adjacent to the
city centre – in design, landscaping,
manufacturing, schools, churches and
accommodation from hostels to luxury
hotels and motels.**

Braddon

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