



ACT Heritage Council

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

CITY RAILWAY REMNANTS

Block 12 (part) Section 33, Reid; and The Causeway, Kingston.

Canberra as a planned city had, from the outset, embraced the idea of an integrated system of rail and trams for communication to and from and within the city. The accepted design of Walter Burley Griffin provided a rail route on the eastern side of the city that connected Canberra with Yass and Goulburn. The railway, although planned for with easements set aside for its future construction until 1950, was never built. In 1921 a temporary construction railway was extended from the existing line at what is now Kingston, crossing the Molonglo River with a temporary bridge and then into the city approximately along this route. The bridge was washed away in the 1922 flood and never reinstated so the line became redundant. The history of the proposed railway is intimately linked with Walter Burley Griffin and evidence of his design for the city can still be seen at select points along what would have been its route.

Important dates in the history of the City Railway Remnants

30 April 1911	Competition for the design of the federal capital city of the Commonwealth of Australia announced.
23 May 1912	Walter Burley Griffin (entry no.29) announced as the winner of the competition.
15 October 1913	Griffin appointed Director of Design and Construction.
1918	Plan 103C – Griffin's last full design of the city of Canberra.
December 1920	Work begins on Griffin's temporary construction railway.
27 January 1921	Griffin leaves the position of Director of Design and Construction.
15 June 1921	Temporary construction railway opened.
27 July 1922	Flooding destroys the temporary construction railway bridge over the Molonglo River.
19 November 1925	First gazetted publication of the plan of the lay-out of the city of Canberra and its environs.
1940s	Railway easements planted with trees.
23 March 1950	Railway easement removed from the gazetted plan.

Planning and design

A competition for the design of the federal capital city of the Commonwealth of Australia, i.e. Canberra, was officially announced on 30 April 1911. The invitation to competitors was contained within a pack containing maps, information on the land and other requirements; it was titled *Information, Conditions And Particulars For Guidance In The Preparation Of Competitive Designs For The Federal Capital City Of The Commonwealth Of Australia* (NAA: A811, 1/1). Requirements of the competition to design the federal capital of Australia stated that a central railway station and marshalling yards were to be included in any submissions. It also noted requirements for:

"4. *Railway.* – The proposed route shown on Contour Plans...while occupying the best position, having regard only to gradients, curves, and cost of construction, is subject to modifications both as regards location and formation-levels in order to minimize the ill effect due to severance, provide the freest access, and secure harmony with the general city Design."

And:

"5. *Tramways.* – Designers should bear in mind the necessity for providing inter-communication between distant parts of the city by means of tramways."

BACKGROUND INFORMATION – CITY RAILWAY REMNANTS

The entry from Walter Burley (known as Entry no.29 – see Figure 1) for the city included the proposed railway being located parallel with the main avenues of Northbourne Avenue (along what is now Lonsdale Street) and Constitution Avenue (what is now Amaro Street) and bypassing the government area altogether. The government-supplied proposed railway marked out on the design competition conditions and descriptive material Map of Contour Survey of the site for Federal Capital of Australia (NAA: A811, 1/3 PART 1-4; it can also still be seen in Figure 1) ran across Acton Peninsula, through the area around what would later become King George Terrace and then between what would become Kingston and Narrabundah on to Queanbeyan and parts beyond. Most of the entries in the competition kept the proposed railway with very little alteration, but the first and second premiated designs (no. 29 by Griffin and no.18 by Eliel Saarinen) shifted it to the east side of the city (as did other entries such as no.7 by Magonigle; no.41 by Comey; no.35 by Schonfelberg, Thees & Gummer; and no.81 by Gellerstedt – the designs can all be accessed via Trove <http://trove.nla.gov.au/work/30690280>).

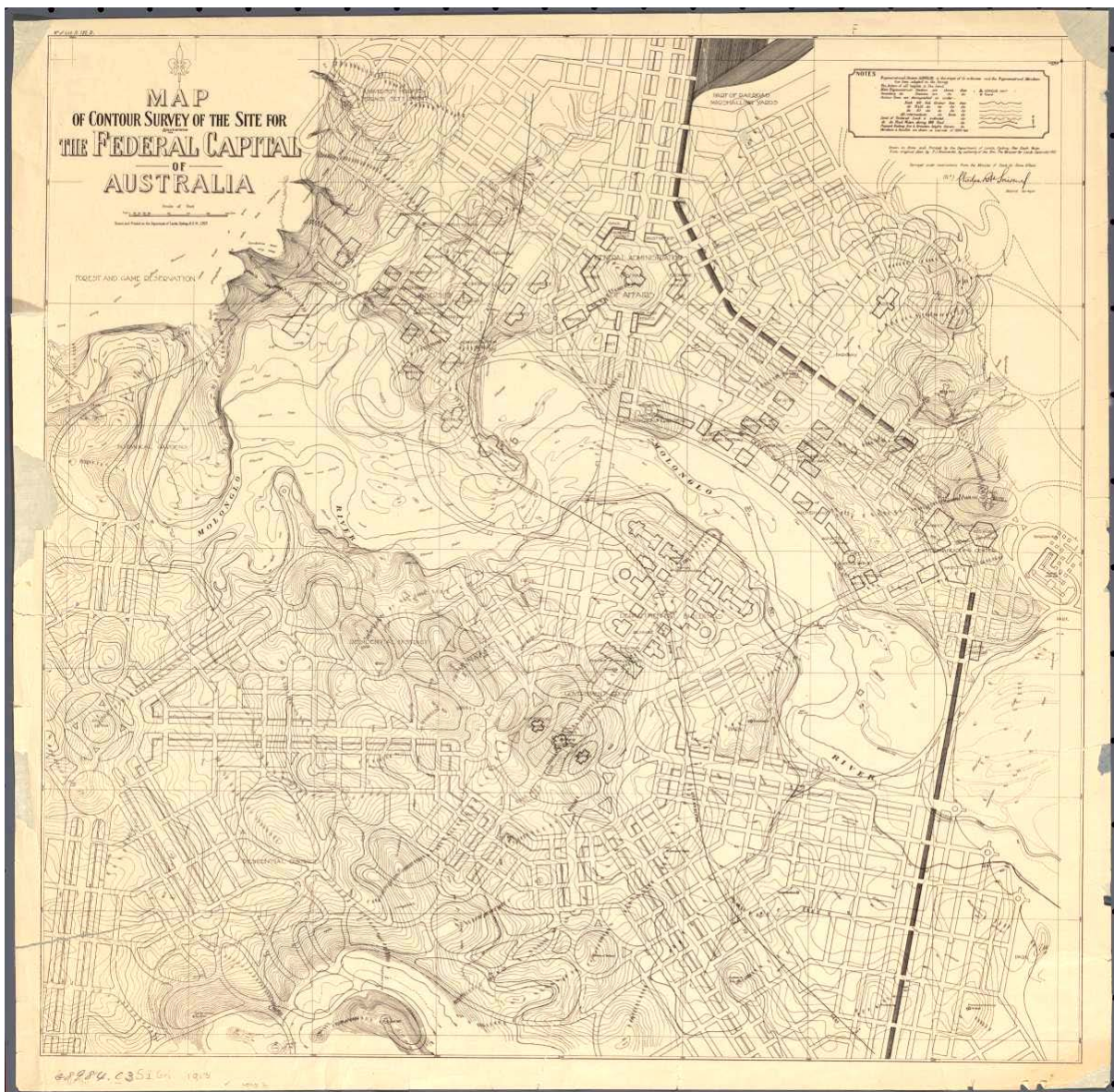


Figure 1 Entry No.29 by W. B. Griffin. The heavy black line of Griffin's railway route is placed over the supplied topographic map from the competition. The railway travels underground at Russell Hill on the middle right. The government's suggested rail route can be seen as a thin curving line.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION – CITY RAILWAY REMNANTS

Griffin's railway was to be located adjacent to, but separate from, the major avenues being located a block and a half away from the roads that became Northbourne Avenue and Constitution Avenue with instructions that it would be located in a cutting 12 foot deep and built up 6 foot on either side to remove the visual and noise pollution as well as to allow roads to pass safely and easily over the railway (*Engineering News* 1912:23). The route also meant that the railway would be separate from the "deliberative and quiet area of government" (Reid, 2002: 80). The railway would be used for travel to and from the city, but internal movement would involve changing to a tram. The rail design (Figure 2) allowed for tramways to be included along the centre of major avenues which would provide a link between the railway and the government center [sic] as well as the more distant parts of the city.

The opportunity for Griffin's tramways remain as they were integrated into the design and layout of the 60 metre (200 foot) main avenues. (see Figure 3) The space for the proposed railway proved to be more difficult to conserve.

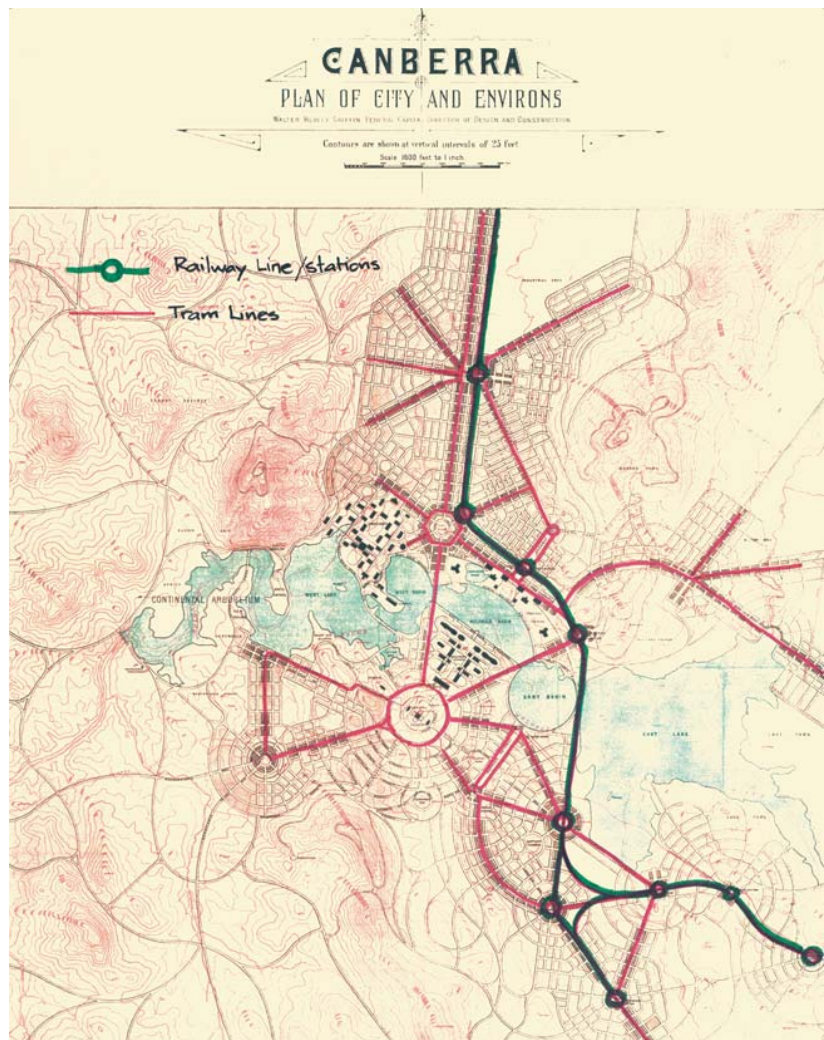


Figure 2 Griffin's detailed rail and tram network on the 1918 plan – an analytical study from the National Capital Authority in 2004 (NCA 2004:71)

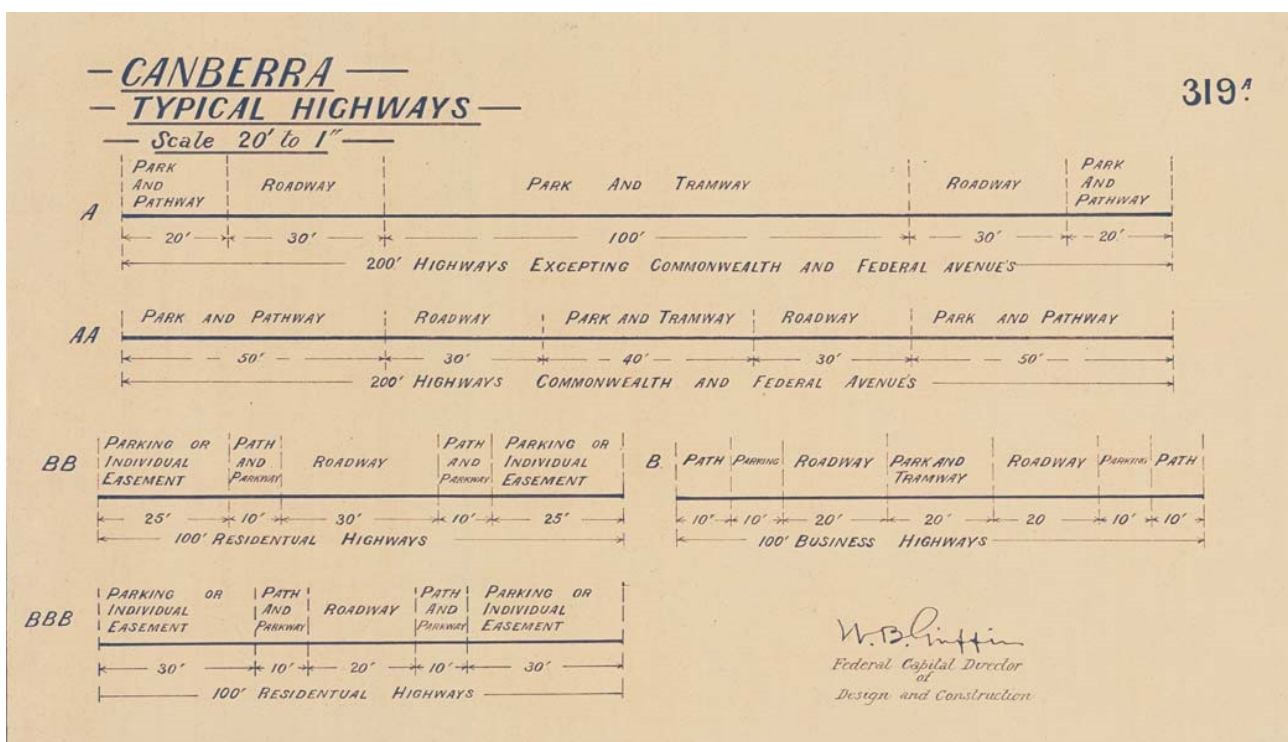


Figure 3 Griffins typical road planning sections (NCA, 2004:71)

BACKGROUND INFORMATION – CITY RAILWAY REMNANTS

Aerial photos from November 1950 show that the railway route shown on the 1925 gazetted plan (Figure 3) had been planted out between Anzac Parade to Binara Street, then from Scotts Crossing/Garema Place to Cooyong Street, then from Haig Park to the northern extent of Ijong Street; as well as in the middle of The Causeway in Kingston. This was considered standard practice at the time to avoid barren ground on reserved spaces within the city, reduce wind and minimise dust. The planned railway was removed from the gazetted plan by a variation published on 23 March 1950 in the *Commonwealth Gazette* No.16 p.672. At the start of 1950 the entire extent of the planned route was still vacant, but by 1952 development of several buildings had occurred along the proposed route between Cooyong Street and Girrahween Street, with this area being fully built over by 1958. The curved section of the railway between Reid and the City was gradually built over during the 1960s and 1970s. Today, the 290m long Reid Railway Easement and the 500m of The Causeway in Kingston are the only remnant easements of the ~15km proposed in the 1925 Gazetted plan (~70km when considering the full length required between Yass and Queanbeyan).

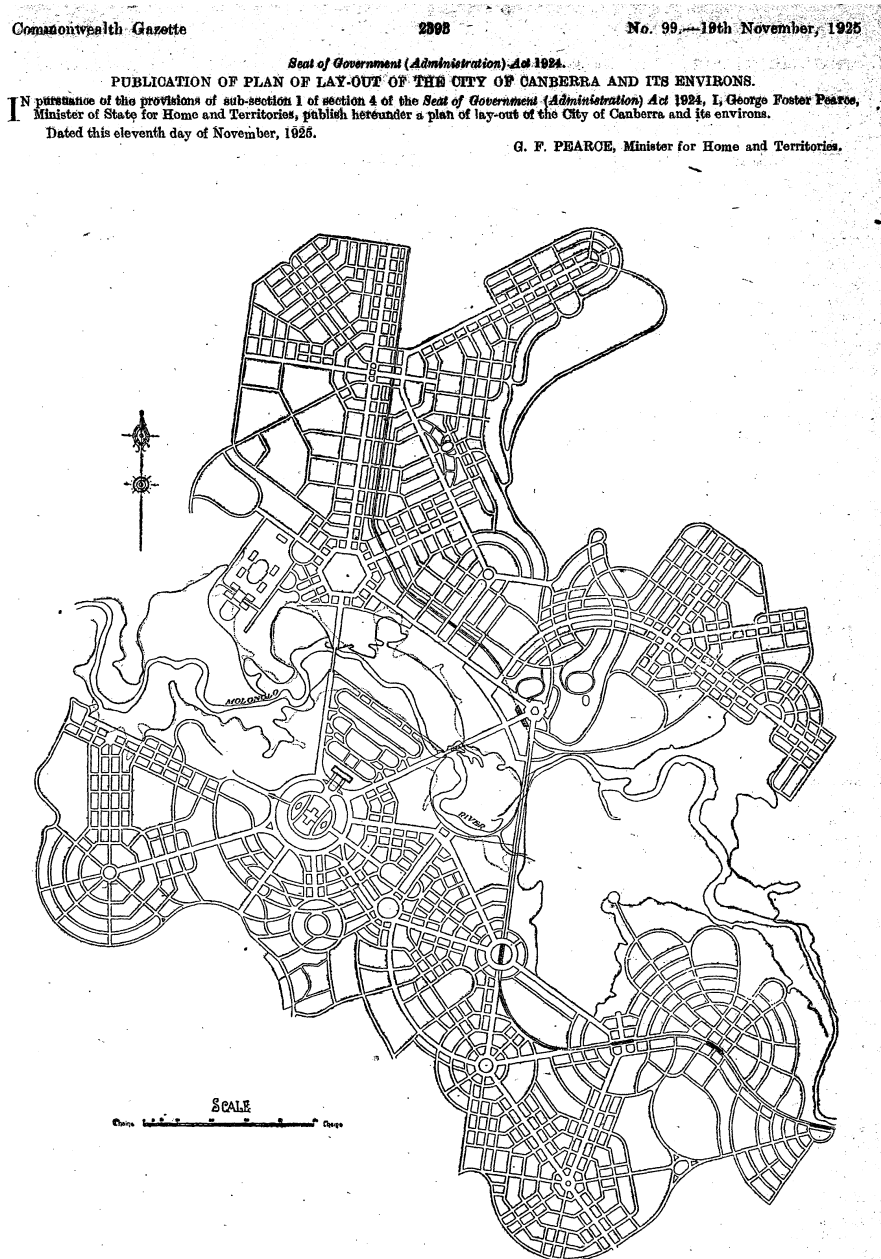


Figure 4 1925 Gazetted Plan of Canberra – the proposed railway is shown as a thick black line.

The perceived importance of the railway was highlighted several times early on in the design process (Reid, 2002: 139-141), and it was noted that it would be important in determining the growth of the city in the years to come. However, it never eventuated and, as such, it has never factored into the growth of the city as originally intended. Reid (2002:141) also noted that since 1911 the Melbourne-Sydney train route accommodates Canberra via a line from Goulburn to its current stop at the Kingston station. Rail travellers from Melbourne were required to catch a bus from Yass Railway Station into Canberra.

The idea of a railway to service the city and completing a connection between Melbourne and Sydney occasionally resurfaces, such as in 1966 when the Department of the Interior developed plans, including a surveyed route, for a proposed Canberra to Yass Railway that would have run from Fyshwick with a station at Pialligo after which it would head to the east of Mount Ainslie and Mount Majura and east of Gungahlin before passing the border on its way to Yass (Department of the Interior Drawing Rly23A June 1966; *The Canberra Times* 12 May 1966:4). Although the route had been planned, it was not publicly announced as there had been no decision on whether or not it would actually be built (*The Canberra Times* 31 March 1967:4) and by the early 1970s the plan had been shelved (*The Canberra Times* 2 February 1972:3).

Construction of the Temporary Construction Railway

The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works considered in 1916 that a permanent line was not yet needed, but recommended a temporary line be built to carry construction materials to Civic, in general along the route suggested by Griffin. Although approval to construct the temporary railway was granted in 1916, it appears that work only commenced in December 1920, using the left-over materials from the Queanbeyan-Canberra (Eastlake) line, however there is some evidence that construction may have started as early as 1918 (Mark Butz, Pers. Comm. 2017). (Shellshear, 1983: 55).

Work commenced under the direction of Sub-Foreman J. Doyle of the NSW Railway and Tramway Department, costing £5,370 to build. On 15 June 1921 the line was opened for goods traffic (Shellshear, 1983: 57). The route ran from the Power House in Kingston on a raised embankment north of the Causeway settlement to the temporary timber trestle bridge across the Molonglo River. After the river there was a siding that served the workers' camp at Russell Hill, the track then turned north-west and straightened out to follow what would later become Amaroo Street in Reid. After this is bent to the north to follow Northbourne Avenue on what is now Lonsdale Street, having passed a short platform located around the location of Garema Place, until terminating near Eloura Street in Braddon (Shellshear, 1983: 57-8).

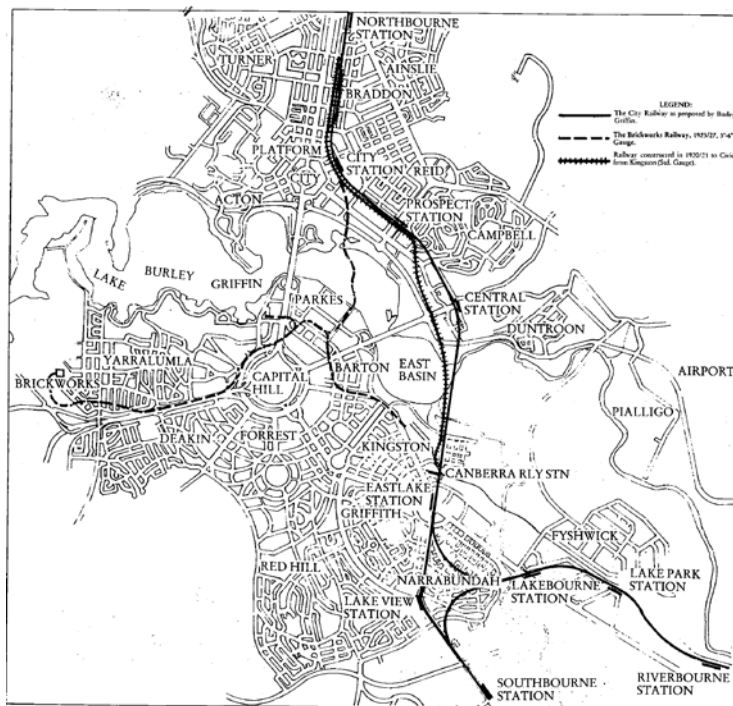


Fig. 2.16: Griffin's proposed City Railway of 1912 plotted onto a current Canberra street map, together with the brickworks railway and the Kingston to Civic construction railway.

Figure 5 Planned and built rail infrastructure (Shellshear, 1983: 60)

Canberra in the early 1920s

The Kingston-Civic Railway Line was used to transport materials to construction sites in Civic and surrounding areas. Prior to 1916, construction and works projects in the capital included the Power House, the Cotter Dam, a sewer tunnel, and the gravel paving of around 140 kilometers of roads. 'Since 1916 (till 1921) nothing had been built but a bridge over the Molonglo, the construction tramway to Civic Centre and some roads' (Gibbney, 1988: 64).

After the creation of the Federal Capital Advisory Committee (FCAC) in 1921, work on roads continued. A decision was taken to disperse settlement on both the north and south sides of the Molonglo River and create twin settlements. The physical progress of the FCAC on the construction of the capital between 1921-23 was slow. 'An indignation meeting in January 1922 protested at the delay in resuming work in Canberra and the injustice perpetrated thereby on the unemployed' (Gibbney, 1988: 72).

In 1921, unskilled men were put to work on the roads around Civic Centre and, concurrently, the city railway from

BACKGROUND INFORMATION – CITY RAILWAY REMNANTS

Kingston-Civic (Gibbney, 1988: 83). By April 1921, the engineer in charge of the Canberra works office 'employed 206 men, of whom 100 worked in building cottages at Civic Centre and at the Power House,' (Gibbney, 1988: 83).

Gibbney (1988: 66) states that by 1922 'none of the major engineering and architectural works had even been started although there had been some progress with the infrastructure'.

By 1922, the workers on the north side of the river had 'one shopping centre, one hostel and one primary school to serve the cottages in Reid and Ainslie' (Reid, 2002: 157). It was not until 12 December 1924 that the first commercial and residential leases were offered for sale. The first permanent commercial buildings in the Civic Centre, the Melbourne and Sydney Buildings, were commenced in 1926-27, with the final phase constructed in 1941-46.

It is unclear exactly what was transported on the Kingston-Civic railway during the one short year of its operation and to which construction sites. However, given the development of the City Centre at the time, it is likely that the railway was used to assist with the transportation of material for road-works and cottages constructed in Ainslie and Reid. There was little else that was undertaken by the FCAC during 1921-1922 in the Civic Centre.

Bridge collapse

The Kingston-Civic temporary construction line was in service for a short period from its opening in June 1921 until a flood washed away the supports on the trestle bridge spanning the Molonglo River in July 1922. The bridge was never reconstructed.



Figure 6 Railway bridge over Molonglo River showing flood damage after July 1922 floods (NLA: A3560, 228)

Calls for reconstruction

The idea of a permanent city railway continued to be a point of interest and hope for the young community. Three alternative routes were investigated for a line to connect Canberra to Yass. In 1929 all routes were rejected by Sir John Butters in favour of a route recommended by the Parliamentary Standing Committee in 1915-16 which basically followed Griffin's route with a modification near Russell Hill to avoid extensive tunneling. Following the abolition of the Federal Capital Commission in 1930, the idea was left unresolved (Shellshear, 1983: 61).

The rails on the Civic line were finally removed in 1940 and nearly all traces of the formation were obliterated by building and landscaping during the 1950s and 1960s (Butz, 2016; *The Canberra Times* 26 October 1959; and Shellshear, 1983). The line to Yass was never constructed.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION – CITY RAILWAY REMNANTS

Reid Railway Easement plantings

Rows of blue gums (*Eucalyptus bicostata*), red spotted gum (*Eucalyptus mannifera*), cedar trees (*Cedrus deodar*) and an extensive shrubbery of *Photinia*, were planted in the 1940s along the proposed railway route in Reid. The bend at the northwestern end of the rows clearly follows the 1925 route rather than the route of the earlier temporary construction rail route.

Photographs from 1926 (Figure 6) and 1928 (Figure 7) indicate that the plantings adjacent to Amaroo Street, defining the alignment of the former railway, had not yet been planted. They are thus not contemporaneous with the construction and use of the temporary construction railway, but were planted at some later time.

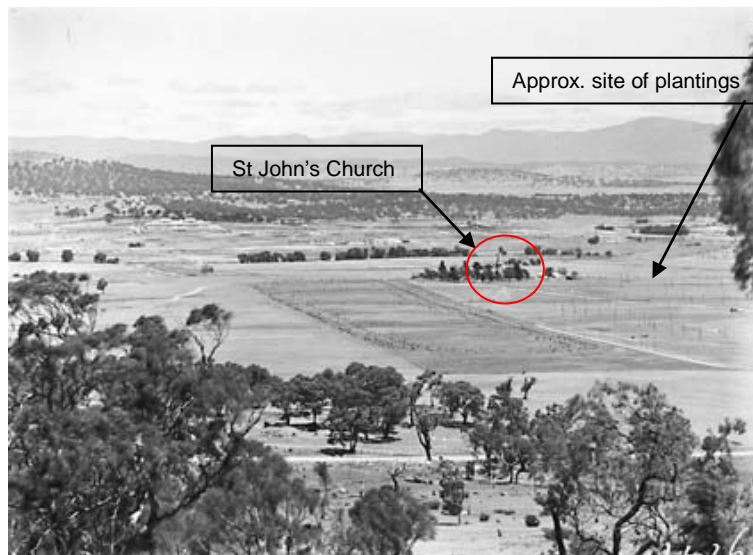


Figure 7 View from Mt Ainslie 1926 (NAA Image no. : A3560, 1802)

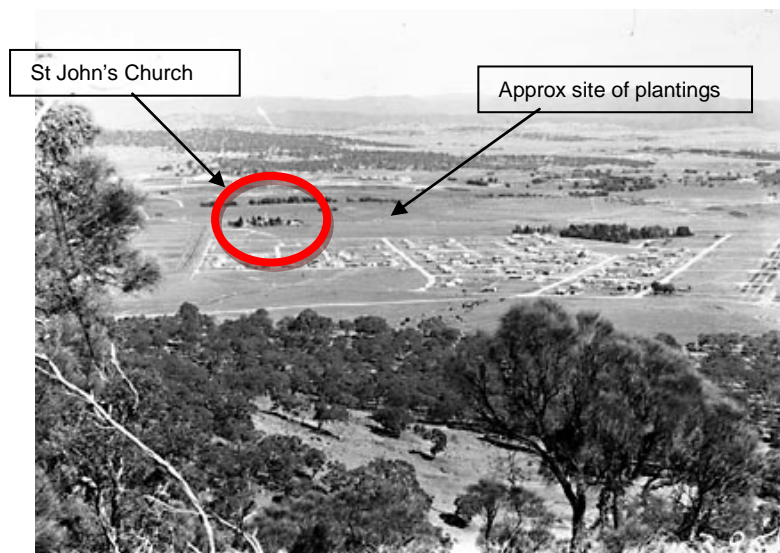


Figure 8 View from Mt. Ainslie looking towards St John's and Reid, 1928 (NAA Image no. : A3560, 3955)

In the minutes on 20 February 1950 from the Parks & Gardens Consultative Committee file 1938-51 (National Archives Reference A431, 1951/572) Lindsay Pryor reported on removal of pines 'from the former Railway Reserve at Braddon' as part of the substantial replanting he was planning on Northbourne Ave and in Reid and Braddon, where many natives replaced earlier exotics.

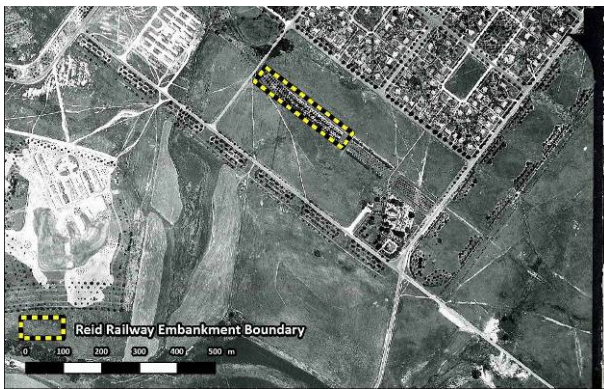


Figure 9 Aerial imagery, showing the tree plantings of the Reid Rail Easement in 1950 (1950-11-29 Run 5 Print 5198)

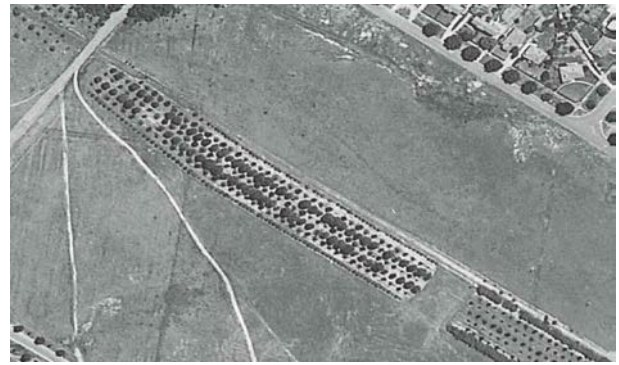


Figure 10 Detail of aerial imagery, showing the tree plantings of the Reid Rail Easement in 1950 (1950-11-29 Run 5 Print 5198)

Figure 9 and Figure 10 from 1950 show the line of plantings extending from St John's Church along Amaroo Street and turning towards Civic at the intersection of the modern day Amaroo Street and Coranderk Street. The remnants of the temporary line can be seen on the Figure 9 immediately to the north of the plantings without the turn in Griffin's route.

This image illustrates two rows of more mature trees (*Eucalyptus*), with additional rows of smaller plantings in the middle, and to either side to the south of the temporary line. As the plan for the main railway was for a recessed line with embankments it is unlikely that these trees were to form a corridor for the rail. Rather they were planted to acknowledge the place as well as reduce wind and minimize dust.

Kingston Railway Easement plantings

Less information could be found about the railway easement in Kingston, but it can be assumed that it followed much of the same planting history as the section in Reid. Figure 12 shows the planted out central avenue of The Causeway in Kingston in 1950. The Causeway had only been constructed between Eyre Street and Cunningham Street while all of the designs for the city had planned for it to continue through to "Eastview Avenue", now Sturt Avenue. (Figure 11) The plantings south of Cunningham Street are no longer there and the rest of the trees have thinned out considerably and are no longer recognizable as an avenue of trees.

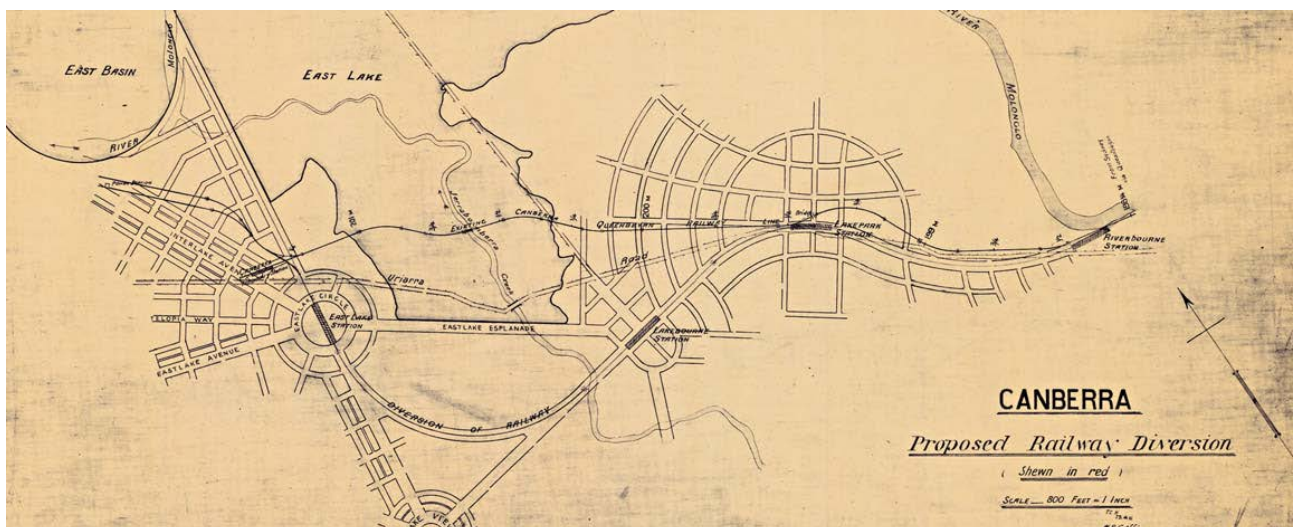


Figure 11 Detailed section of Griffin's rail plan for Kingston (NCA, 2004:75)

DESCRIPTION

The Reid Rail Easement consists of a landscaped section of land, 290x48m, with two rows of mature *Eucalyptus* (mixed blue gums and red spotted gums) that define a central linear landscaped space surrounded by cedar trees that curves gently at the northwest end, near Coranderrk Street. They extend for the full 290m length of the remnant easement, and are spaced roughly 33m apart, running parallel with Amaroo Street from Euree Street through to Coranderrk Street.

The Causeway in Kingston shows the configuration of a Griffin 60 metre avenue comprising two parallel roadways and a central median 27m wide. (Figure 3)

The west side of the road runs for three blocks (~530m), while the east road runs for two blocks (~350m), half of which is not used and is in poor condition. The avenue with its central median runs for two blocks, is grassed and is planted with trees that do not appear to be thriving; there is very little left of the two rows of eucalypts that were visible in the 1950 aerial photos of the area. The northern part of The Causeway, where only one side of the avenue exists, does not have a central median, but it does have a substantial embankment that was created by recent earthworks in the area and has no relation to the railway. Although this was a standard configuration for Griffin's main avenues for trams, here it was proposed to take the rail line across the Causeway dam and north towards Russell Hill.



Figure 12 The Causeway in Kingston in 1950 with 2016 cadastral overlay

Physical condition and integrity

The temporary built line in Reid, following the Griffins' proposed railway route, was located to the north of the rows of the trees, adjacent to Amaroo Street. No remains of the railway are evident. There is no physical fabric, nor any visible cuttings or embankments.

The full extent of the proposed railway was to run offset from Northbourne Avenue (coming from Yass) then Constitution Avenue before crossing to the south of Canberra on a causeway dam holding back a large lake at a higher level from the formal lower level lake system (NCA, 2004:77). The higher level East Lake was never built and part of it now forms Jerrabomberra Wetlands. The railway was then to pass through what is now Narrabundah before joining the existing rail line connected to Queanbeyan. (see Figure 11)

The total length of the proposed line in the 103c Griffin plan and the 1925 gazetted plan was about 15km, although the total length extending to Yass would have been closer to 70km. The length of the nominated area is 290m, or 2% of the planned route shown in the 1925 gazetted plan (or 0.4% of the total line from Yass to Queanbeyan).

The 1925 gazetted route can be interpreted by the lines of trees and the curve at the northwest end of the row of trees in the Reid section. The thin, long strip of undeveloped land (290x48m) is evidence of land being reserved for the future development of the proposed railway.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION – CITY RAILWAY REMNANTS

Some *prunus* trees have been integrated with the *Eucalyptus* plantings. Two lines of more recent exotic species, possibly *cedrus*, have been planted down the centreline of the *Eucalyptus*, and a line of shrubs (*photinia*) defines the border with Amaroo Street. Some of the exotic trees have failed to thrive beneath the *Eucalypts*, and have been removed over the years.

Additionally, the wide easement (520x60m) and large central planted area (26m wide) in The Causeway in Kingston is also evidence of land being set aside for the railway easement.

SITE PLAN

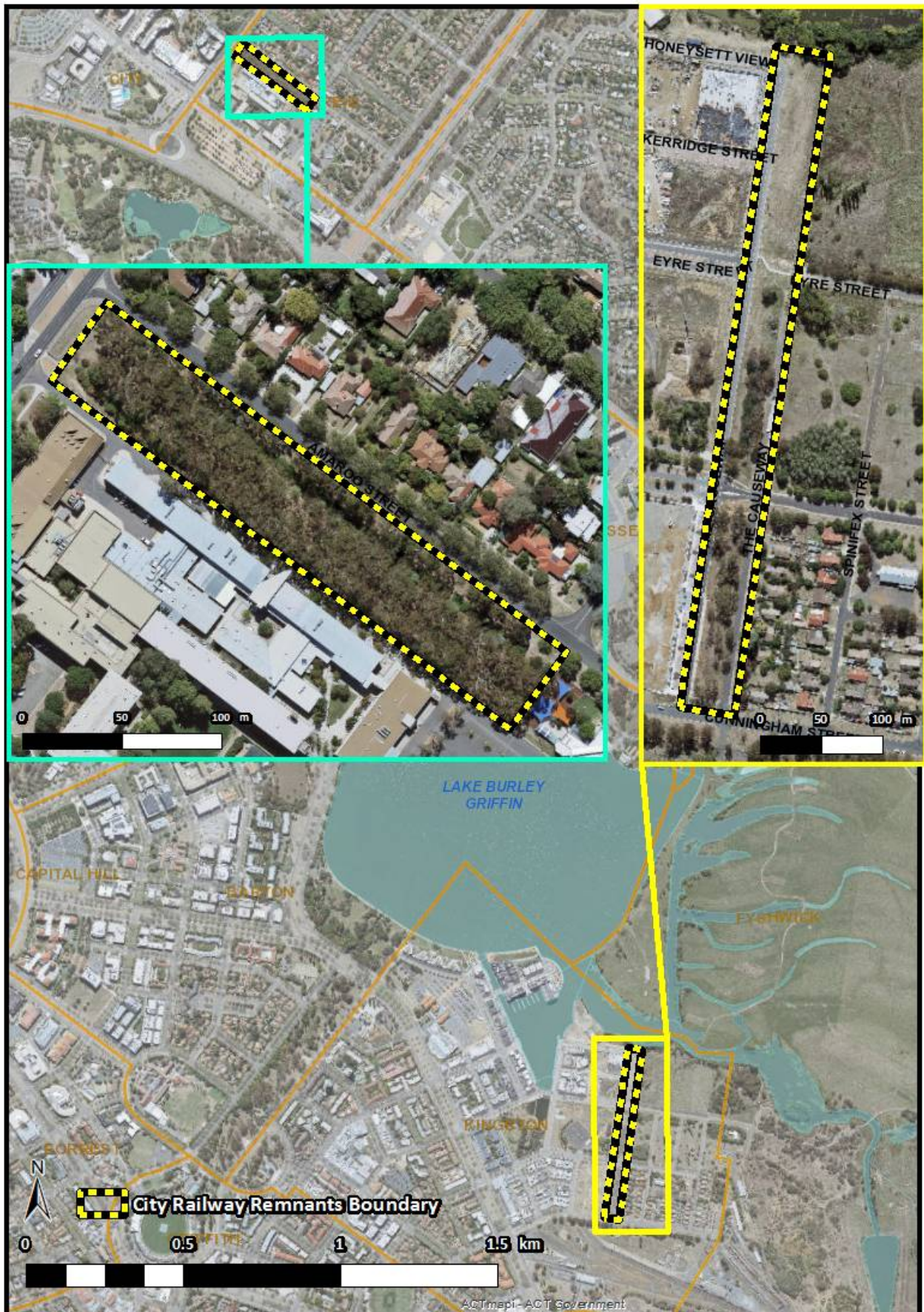


Figure 13 City Railway Remnants boundary.

IMAGES



Figure 14 Northern end of the Reid Railway Easement area looking northwest (ACT Heritage, 2016)



Figure 16 The Causeway facing south from Sandalwood Street towards the railyards. (ACT Heritage, 2016)



Figure 15 Northwestern end of the Reid Railway Easement facing northwest where the tree alignment starts to bend more to the north (ACT Heritage, 2016).

REFERENCES

Butz, M. 2016. *Railway Remnants, Cunningham St, Kingston*.

Butz, M. 2017. Personal Communication – submission received during public consultation.

Engineering News. 1912. Design for the new capital city of Australia. McGraw-Hill Pub. Co, New York. Vol.68(1) pp.20-24.

Gibbney, J. 1988. *Canberra 1913-1953*, Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra.

Griffin, W. B. (1913). Federal Capital Design Competition premiated designs. Competitor no. 29, Walter Burley Griffin: [on base map] Map of contour survey of the site for the Federal Capital of Australia. Dept. of Lands, Sydney

National Capital Authority (NCA). 2004. *The Griffin Legacy: Canberra, the nation's capital in the 21st century*. National Capital Authority, Canberra.

Reid, P. 2002. *Canberra Following Griffin; A Design History of Australia's National Capital*, National Archives of Australia, Canberra.

Shellshear, Walter M, 'Railways', Chapter 2 in Fitzgerald, A (ed.). 1983. *Canberra's Engineering Heritage*, The Institution of Engineers, Canberra, pp 47-71.