

# Heritage (Decision about Registration of Woden Cemetery, Phillip) Notice 2008 (No 1)

Notifiable Instrument NI 2008 - 484

made under the

*Heritage Act 2004* section 34 Notice of decision about registration

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**1. Revocation**

This instrument replaces NI2008 – 279

**2. Name of instrument**

This instrument is the Heritage (Decision about Registration of the Woden Cemetery, Phillip) Notice 2008 (No 1).

**3. Registration details of the place**

Registration details of the place are at Attachment A: Register entry for: Woden Cemetery, Phillip.

**4. Reason for decision**

The ACT Heritage Council has decided that the Woden Cemetery, Phillip meets one or more of the heritage significance criteria at s 10 of the Heritage Act 2004. The register entry is at Attachment A.

**5. Date of Registration**

14 October 2008.

The Secretary  
ACT Heritage Council  
GPO Box 158  
CANBERRA ACT 2602

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**Gerhard Zatschler**  
**Secretary ACT Heritage Council**  
**GPO Box 158, Canberra ACT 2602**

**14 October 2008**



ACT Heritage Council

**AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY**

**HERITAGE REGISTER  
(Provisional Registration Details)**

**Place**

For the purposes of s. 33 of the *Heritage Act 2004*, an entry to the heritage register has been prepared by the ACT Heritage Council for the following place:

- **WODEN CEMETERY at Phillip**

**DATE OF REGISTRATION**

Notified: 17 October 2008 Notifiable Instrument: NI2008-484

Copies of the Register Entry are available for inspection at the ACT Heritage Unit. For further information please contact:

The Secretary  
ACT Heritage Council  
GPO Box 158, Canberra, ACT 2601

Telephone: 132281 Facsimile: (02) 6207 2229

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## IDENTIFICATION OF THE PLACE

- Woden Cemetery, Justinian Street, Sections 109 and 113, Suburb of Phillip, ACT
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## HISTORY OF THE PLACE

The Canberra Cemeteries Ordinance, gazetted on 23 November 1933, provided for a public cemetery and the appointment of public trustees. The location of the cemetery, described as '3 kilometres south of the suburb of Deakin was proclaimed on 5 April 1934. Woden Cemetery, formerly known as Canberra General or Canberra Public Cemetery was then divided into portions as gazetted on 17 April 1935 (Ray & Thom 1977). Its history, however, dates well before this and can be traced back to the Seat of Government Acceptance Act 1909. It wasn't long after this that a suitable place for burials in the new federal capital was investigated. The earliest references to the site date to c1913 (NAA A431, 1956/594). At this time there were four sites under consideration: Gungahlin, Weetangara, Green Hills (Black Mountain) and the Narrabundah (Woden) site. While all of these sites were investigated for soil content, location and suitability, only two sites remained under consideration by 1927. One was located in the north of the City, the other in the south. The southside location was referred to as Yarralumla Creek and the north as Ainslie (refer to map - Appendix B 1 & 2). Following a report by the Development Committee on Cemetery Sites, a resolution was adopted to 'select and develop site A in the south-east of the City and to reserve site B'. The descriptions of the locations on a plan of the Federal Capital Territory dated May 1928 are as follows:

*Site A, the current cemetery site, is located at Yarralumla Creek situated between Red Hill and Mugga Mugga; Site B was located beneath Mt Majura (NAA A431, 1956/594).*

These sites were considered as they were far enough away from the centre of the City, a typical consideration for burial grounds. Pressure to make the grounds ready for burials was mounting as Canberra began to develop in the late 1920s/early 1930s. A memo dated May 1928 stated that 'the recent death of a wife of a public servant brought to attention that there was no place to bury her as a Roman Catholic' (NAA A431, 1956/594). The only choice at that time was St John's the Baptist churchyard or the cemetery at Hall. Even in 1930 discussion was taking place as to when the burial ground would be completed, but until legislation was passed and further work was prepared. The Cemetery in the District of Woden was still unavailable. This, in spite of the fact that plans had been made, sections laid-out and fenced and some trees planted.

*The design, so far as general layout, including drives, is concerned, has been approved and the first ring of burial areas has been enclosed by fencing. The drives within and surrounding the first ring have been planted but no action has been taken respecting the allotment of burial areas to the various denominations. (Memo, 10/12/1930 in NAA A431, 1956/594).*

Prior to the setting aside of the burial ground at Yarralumla Creek, the area was used for farming and grazing. Consisting of about 33 acres, it was situated within Block 28A Stromlo and Woden which at the time of its selection in 1927 was leased to Mr Eddison (Memo, 22/7/1927 in NAA A431, 1956/594). The Eddison family's property known as 'Yamba' was part of the allocation of leases to returned servicemen after World War I (Douglas, 1996). Captain Walter Eddison (died 14/4/1966) is one of the returned soldiers' grave-markers in Portion 5 of Woden Cemetery. The adjacent Eddison Park's (named in honour of this local family in 1988), layout and design follows the symmetry of the Cemetery including a central focus point and radial design.

By 1930 the selection of plantings and trees were a high priority. The then Superintendent of Parks and Gardens within the Department of Home Affairs, Mr Alex Bruce, noted that he was in the process of consulting Mr T C Weston (Officer in Charge of Afforestation until 1926) on the relevant species required. He made special reference to the importance of these plantings when he said that 'the selection of trees

for such plantings is considered to be of second importance only to that of Parliament House Grounds and it is most desirable that no mistake or lack of foresight should mar the ultimate result' (Memo, 3/6/1930 in NAA A431, 1956/594). The number of trees in the planting schedule numbered between 1700 and 1800 and included a range of coniferous and deciduous species.. Of particular note is the rare example of the weeping form of *Cedrus atlantica* 'Glauca Pendula' (Pryor & Banks 1991)

The responsibility for the layout and design of the Cemetery was placed in the hands of the 'Principal Designing Architect' within the Works and Services Branch of the Commonwealth Department of the Interior. While the formal layout and plantings had been considered by c1930, it was not until 1932 that further consideration was given to the arrangement of burial allotments and the erection of 'waiting shed, office and tool store' (Memo, 19/1/1932 in NAA A431, 1956/594). The design of the original buildings, including the waiting room/office, and the entrance fence and gates are in keeping with the style of John Smith Murdoch, Government Architect from 1914 to 1929 (ADB, v10). The circular ornamentation on the ironwork of the fence is the same as the decoration on the ironwork of the East Block building (now National Film and Sound Archives). This and other buildings constructed at this initial phase of planning and development of Canberra, including West Block, Parliament House, Hotel Canberra, Gorman House, etc. bear Murdoch's signature.

The proclamation of division of the Cemetery took place in 1935 and resulted in 9 portions covering general, denominational, including Anglican, Roman Catholic, Presbyterian, Congregational, Methodist, Baptist, Salvation Army, and Returned Servicemen. The original 9 were added to over the years to include Jewish, Lutheran, Churches of Christ and Seventh Day Adventists. The first burial took place in January 1936.

With the development of the Woden Town Centre and the surrounding area as one of Canberra's residential and commercial hubs in the early 1960s, the Cemetery became known as Woden Cemetery located in the suburb of Phillip.

In August 1979 the Cemetery closed for reservations of graves as the Gungahlin Cemetery opened in September 1979 (Trustees A/R 1989-90). Burials continued at Woden Cemetery after 1979, but only for those graves which held reservations. In June 1992 it was recorded that 10,381 burials had taken place and that 'approximately 1,600 reservations of allotments are held' (Trustees, 1993). In 1992 the Memorial Gardens were opened to allow for the interment of cremated remains.

The reopening of Woden Cemetery in the ensuing years was the topic of many reviews and public discussions. Due to the growing population of Canberra and the ACT and the need to provide, once again, a southside burial ground, Woden Cemetery reopened in March 1999. A mausoleum for burial in above ground vaults was completed in 2001, causing much debate around the erection of a large-scale structure in the landscape setting of the Cemetery

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## DESCRIPTION OF THE PLACE

Woden Cemetery is located in Phillip, forming a large open space with the more recent Eddison Park to the north, Woden Town Park to the west and adjacent to the Woden Town Centre.

With access from the north, the original buildings and the entrance fence were designed by the 'principal designing architect' of the Commonwealth Department of the Interior, Works and Services Branch between 1935 and 1936. It is worth noting that the ironwork feature in the cemetery fence is the same design as featured on the current National Archives building in Parkes (the former Secretariat Building No 1, East Block). This building was one of many designed by the Government Architect John Smith Murdoch. The waiting room/office is of similar design and was constructed to coincide with the opening of the Cemetery in 1936.

The circular and symmetrical plan layout of the cemetery, c1930, has a distinct north-south east-west cruciform pattern defined by avenues of trees, the centre of which is a circular ceremonial park space. Coniferous and deciduous trees predominate. Four radial avenues provide access to the edge of the site

with the two southern radials ending with a circular park detail. Additional tree-lined radials define the boundaries of burial sections and plantations ring the site. The character of the site is formal, adding to the ceremonial aspects of the cemetery as well as serene, thereby enhancing its appeal as a place of contemplation and rest. ,

Denominational areas were laid out at the initial stages, with varying religious groupings being added over the years or as required. The returned soldiers section, of major significance, was incorporated into the original design. A number of prominent local people are identified within this area, in particular, Captain Walter Eddison (original soldier-settler lessee of the property 'Yamba', including the area now the cemetery) and Lieut-Colonel John L Treloar, first director of the Australian War Memorial.

A mausoleum added in 2001 for burial in above-ground vaults, whilst large and imposing, is in keeping with the architectural character of the original cemetery buildings. In particular the ornamental ironwork mirrors the circular pattern of the entrance fence and gate.

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### STATEMENT ABOUT THE HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PLACE

Woden Cemetery is significant as part of the early planning and development of Canberra as the national capital. While the Cemetery was closed in 1979, it reopened in 1999, providing a continuity of this important public function as a burial ground for Canberra and the ACT.

The formal circular and symmetrical plan are of high aesthetic quality comprising a dominant north-south east-west cruciform design layout and avenues radiating from a central hub defining burial areas, as well as an abundance of ornamental deciduous and coniferous enclosing trees. The cemetery's landscape character provides a simple yet elegant atmosphere appropriate for burial ceremonies, restful and contemplative visits.

The original plantings are significant, representing the priority given to the design of the cemetery landscape, as are the entrance fence and gates and office/waiting room portray the design style John Smith Murdoch prevalent in 1930s Canberra.

The Returned Servicemen's portion is of particular significance in that it forms a prominent and ceremonial aspect to the Cemetery's formal layout and design. A number of prominent local people are identified within this portion, and it a significant part in the understanding of not only local but also national history in relation to war service and Australia's participation in world wars. The memorials and gravestones are an important research resource on individuals or families who buried there.

The cemetery's physical relationship to Eddison Park, which continues one of the Cemetery's original radial avenues, offers strong historical links to the area's local history and story of resettlement and land-use development.

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### ASSESSMENT AGAINST THE HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE CRITERIA

Pursuant to s.10 of the *Heritage Act 2004*, a place or object has heritage significance if it satisfies one or more of the following criteria:

- (a) it demonstrates a high degree of technical or creative achievement (or both), by showing qualities of innovation, discovery, invention or an exceptionally fine level of application of existing techniques or approaches;**

This place does not meet this criterion.

**(b) it exhibits outstanding design or aesthetic qualities valued by the community or a cultural group;**

The aesthetic appeal of Woden Cemetery arises from the combination of landscape design, memorials, setting and plantings. The Cemetery's distinct cruciform design and geometric radial layout with its enclosing landscape presents a highly decorative and symbolic statement. The mixed evergreen and deciduous plantings are highly visible and further enhance the character of the place providing a strong sense of piety and tranquillity. The number of plantings determined in the original plan for the cemetery, particularly the rare example of the weeping form of *Cedrus atlantica*, add further to aesthetic qualities of the Cemetery and exemplify Canberra's historic planting philosophy.

**(c) it is important as evidence of a distinctive way of life, taste, tradition, religion, land use, custom, process, design or function that is no longer practised, is in danger of being lost or is of exceptional interest;**

Woden Cemetery demonstrates a formal cemetery layout of the 1920s-30s. Its ceremonial avenues radiating out from a central point provide an appropriate setting for burials and contemplative visits.

Key aspects of the Cemetery demonstrate distinctive early Canberra design, notably the waiting room/office is of similar design to the current National Archives building in Parkes (the former Secretariat Building No 1, East Block) by the Government Architect John Smith Murdoch, and the ironwork feature in the cemetery fence and gates is the same design as at that building.

The memorials document the lives of many of the people, rich or poor, prominent or humble, of the region and the growing city of Canberra. They reflect the times and particular periods of development and change which these people lived through and contributed to.

**(d) it is highly valued by the community or a cultural group for reasons of strong or special religious, spiritual, cultural, educational or social associations;**

As a burial place for many communities within a larger ACT community, Woden Cemetery is much valued and appreciated. At special occasions and celebratory times throughout the year the Cemetery is the focus of many religious, social and cultural events. Its aesthetic and tranquil setting serves as a recreational place for people who enjoy the facilities of a park-like landscape.

The cemetery also provides strong local historical links and providing an important research resource for the community. The cemetery demonstrates the customs and tastes of its period and is a record of the particular social mores of the time.

**(e) it is significant to the ACT because of its importance as part of local Aboriginal tradition**

This criterion is not applicable.

**(f) it is a rare or unique example of its kind, or is rare or unique in its comparative intactness**

This place does not meet this criterion.

**(g) it is a notable example of a kind of place or object and demonstrates the main characteristics of that kind**

This place does not meet this criterion.

**(h) it has strong or special associations with a person, group, event, development or cultural phase in local or national history**

The Returned Services portion of the Cemetery is an important addition to a town cemetery. Its existence plays a significant part in the understanding of not only local but also national history in relation to war service and Australia's participation in world wars. A number of prominent local people are identified within this portion, in particular, Captain Walter Eddison (original soldier-settler lessee of the property 'Yamba', including the area now the cemetery) and Lieut-Colonel John L Treloar, first director of the Australian War Memorial.

The original buildings located within the grounds of the Cemetery are in keeping with the early phase of Canberra's developmental history and demonstrate a significant aspect of Canberra's architectural history dating to the 1920s and 1930s.

- (i) it is significant for understanding the evolution of natural landscapes, including significant geological features, landforms, biota or natural processes**

This criterion is not applicable.

- (j) it has provided, or is likely to provide, information that will contribute significantly to a wider understanding of the natural or cultural history of the ACT because of its use or potential use as a research site or object, teaching site or object, type locality or benchmark site**

The memorials and gravestones are an important research resource on individuals or families who buried there. They enable people to conduct genealogical research and historians to interpret the social and economic development of the region. Woden Cemetery is a tangible and personal document of the people who once lived in the region. It contains information not able to be found in written records which may be absent, lost or destroyed. The headstones reveal early family's names, trends in Christian names, occupations, circumstances of death, life expectancy, geographical origins, achievements and a wide range of religious values and emotional reactions.

- (k) for a place—it exhibits unusual richness, diversity or significant transitions of flora, fauna or natural landscapes and their elements**

This criterion is not applicable.

- (l) for a place—it is a significant ecological community, habitat or locality for any of the following:**
- (i) the life cycle of native species;**
  - (ii) rare, threatened or uncommon species;**
  - (iii) species at the limits of their natural range;**
  - (iv) distinct occurrences of species.**

This criterion is not applicable.

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## FEATURES INTRINSIC TO HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

The physical features of the Woden Cemetery that particularly reflect its heritage significance are:

- The Cemetery design and layout, and the headstones and memorials
- Office/waiting room
- Entrance Fence and Gates
- The Landscaping elements

Intangible aspects that reflect its heritage significance are:

- Its historic association with the community for religious, social and cultural meanings
  - Its aesthetic and tranquil setting
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## REASON FOR REGISTRATION

*Woden Cemetery, Phillip, has been assessed against the heritage significance criteria and been found to have heritage significance against 5 of the heritage criteria under the ACT Heritage Act.*

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## APPLICABLE HERITAGE GUIDELINES

The Heritage Guidelines adopted under s27 of the *Heritage Act* 2004 are applicable to the conservation of Woden Cemetery, Phillip.

The guiding conservation objective is that Woden Cemetery, Phillip, shall be conserved and appropriately managed in a manner respecting its heritage significance and the features intrinsic to that heritage significance, and consistent with a sympathetic and viable use or uses. A conservation management plan (CMP) would help to guide conservation and future use. Any works that have a potential impact on significant fabric (and/or other heritage values) which are necessary prior to the development of a CMP shall be guided by a professionally documented interim assessment and conservation policy relevant to that area or component (i.e. a Statement of Heritage Effects - SHE).

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## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

### 1. CONSULTATION WITH STAKEHOLDERS

Draft provisional registration entry was released for public comment on 17 July 2008 and period for public comment closes on 14 August 2008.

### 2. REFERENCES

ACT Heritage Library Map and Plan Collection: C7AA17, c1930 concept plan for design of Southern General Cemetery, Canberra, Woden District.

ACT Heritage Unit File no 97/01709 on Woden Cemetery, including Draft Discussion Paper on Future Management of ACT Cemeteries - options for re-opening Woden Cemetery, 1996.

ACT Legislative Assembly, Hansard, 10 April 1997, on future operation of Woden Cemetery.

*Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Volume 10, University of Melbourne Press, 1996.

Canberra Public Cemeteries Trust Annual Reports - 1986-87, 1989-90, 1990-91.

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Canberra Public Cemeteries Trust 1995 *Woden Cemetery Redevelopment Study*.

Douglas, F 1996 *Not without my corsets! Oral histories of the families who farmed soldier settler blocks in the Woden Valley from 1920 to 1963.*

Eddison Park and Woden Cemetery, ACT Government website.

Charlton, K, R Garnett and S Dutta 2001 *Federal Capital Architecture: Canberra 1911-1939*, for National Trust of Australia (ACT).

*Journal of the Office of Australian War Graves* 2002.

National Archives of Australia: A1, 1936/1132, file on Canberra cemetery site - layout for trustees.

National Archives of Australia: A1, 1938/10867, file on Canberra cemetery - agistment for groundsmen.

National Archives of Australia: A431, 1956/594, file on Canberra cemetery site.  
*Woden Cemetery Redevelopment Study 1995*, Canberra Public Cemeteries Trust, Canberra.

National Archives of Australia: A1615, 123/5619, Canberra Cemetery proposed waiting room, 1935.

National Archives of Australia: A1615, 123/6372, Canberra Cemetery boundary wall and entrance gates, 1934.

National Archives of Australia, Fact Sheet 174 – *East Block Building, Canberra*, updated July 2000.

Pryor, L D, and J C G Banks 1991 *Trees and Shrubs in Canberra*, Little Hills Press in assoc. with ACT Government, Canberra.

Ray, P, and G Thom 1977 *Monumental Inscriptions, Australian Capital Territory and Jervis Bay*, Heraldry and Genealogy Society of Canberra.

Sagazio, C 1992 *Cemeteries: Our Heritage*, National Trust of Australia (Victoria), Melbourne.

### 3. PHOTOGRAPHS AND PLANS



Figure 1. Woden Cemetery Entrance  
(Truscott 11/4/08)



Figure 2. Woden Cemetery Waiting Room  
(Truscott 11/4/08)



Figure 3. Woden Cemetery Railing (Truscott 11/4/08)



Figure 4. Woden Cemetery (Truscott 11/4/08)



Figure 5. Woden Cemetery (Truscott 11/4/08)



Figure 6. Woden Cemetery Mausoleum, 2001 (Truscott 11/4/08)