



## ACT Heritage Council

### BACKGROUND INFORMATION

#### CANBERRA SERVICES CLUB

(Block 1 Section 15, Griffith)

At its meeting of 9 April 2015 the ACT Heritage Council (the Council) decided that the Canberra Services Club was no longer eligible for inclusion to the ACT Heritage Register (the Register). The information contained in this report was considered by the Council in assessing the registration of the Canberra Services Club against the heritage significance criteria outlined in s10 of the *Heritage Act 2004* (the Act).

### HISTORY

Information contained in this section has been directly drawn from the Canberra Services Club website (see references).

In October 1939, following the outbreak of the Second World War, the Canberra Volunteers' (later Services) Welfare Association was formed. It quickly set out to provide comforts for local service personnel. The provision of comforts and hospitality to service men and women was a feature of the home front during both world wars.

In July 1940 the Association proposed that a rest hut be constructed in Canberra for the use of people in the forces at a cost of approx 1000 pounds. Lady Gowrie, wife of [then] Governor General Lord Gowrie, supported the project and played a major role in raising funds for the hut to be built, particularly at a garden fete in the grounds of Government House. The fete saw money raised from a variety of sources, including the sale of 2000 cakes made by Canberrans. Some of Lady Gowrie's personal belongings were also sold and funds were raised by Canberrans through raffles, direct gifts and stalls. Furnishings were in many instances donated by members of the public. Construction proceeded and the building, known as the Lady Gowrie Services Club (colloquially as 'The Hut'), opened on 13 March 1941.

The club provided hospitality to service personnel providing a place where they could relax, have meals, enjoy billiards, dances (twice weekly), concerts and other social functions and have reading facilities. This was the club's role for the rest of the war and it has been estimated that over one million meals were served at the club during the war years. The club was staffed with volunteers from the Canberra community and over 500 women, in total, from Canberra and the region assisted.

Initially the local units included personnel of the 3rd Battalion, the 7th Light Horse and Canberra men in the 6th Division but as hostilities continued hospitality was provided to anyone in uniform. This included United States armed forces. Personnel from local stations, eg RAAF Fairburn, were also included. Lady Gowrie was president of the club until 1944. The dance hall section (the main rear wing of the building) may have been added in 1942. Other organisations, eg YMCA, YWCA, at other venues also helped military personnel during the war.

At war's end there was uncertainty about the building's future as it had been built as a temporary structure and in fact had been sited on part of a gazetted public road. However the need for a permanent club was recognised as social opportunities for ex-service personnel were limited in Canberra at the time. Consequently in 1946 the Lady Gowrie Services Club Council was formed as lessee of the building and in 1947 it commenced sub-leasing most of the structure to the Canberra Services Club (CSC) which was formed in October of that year. Alterations and minor extensions, designed by Ken Oliphant, were carried out and the building was officially opened as the Canberra Services Club in April 1948.

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The Council sub-leased the dance hall section to the RSL and with the rent paid by both the CSC and the RSL the Council paid its expenses and used the balance to make grants almost every year to the Red Cross, Legacy, RSL Distress Fund and the War Veterans Home.

During the 1950's the CSC wanted to assume the head lease however this was resisted. Relations between the CSC and the Council were for the most part cordial. Finally in 1984 the CSC was given the head lease and the Council was dissolved. Documents indicate the CSC continued the Council's policy of donating funds to ex-service related organisations as noted above. Activities at the club through the years included billiard and snooker competitions, children's Christmas parties, social evenings and dances. A liquor license was granted to the CSC in November 1947 and gaming machines were installed from 1978.

Further alterations and minor extensions were carried out in 1957 (architect Robert Warren).

From the late 1950s through to 1985 the Club underwent a series of additions and internal modifications to provide comfortable accommodation for the members, including the roof repairs, improvements made to the bar area, new liquor storerooms and ceiling insulation and wall heaters installed. The front porch was enclosed during the early 1960s. In the 1970s further improvements were made to the Lounge and bar area, probably due to the introduction of Poker Machines.

In 1985 the Managers Office was extended and interior alterations made to provide better facilities for members. The Club now consisted of updated bar facilities, improved toilets, one lounge, an extended Billiard Room and wood panelling of the interior.

Two additions were made to the Club grounds in the 1980s. In 1981 a Bofors 40mm Anti-Aircraft Gun obtained from the then Department of Administration Services was installed, donated by RMC Duntroon. In 1983 the Kingston Narrabundah RSL Sub-branch donated a sculpture titled 'Kokoda Memorial'. The sculpture depicts a 'Fuzzy Wuzzy Angel' helping an Australian soldier and was designed by Helena Anderson in 1981.

In 2009 the Australian Government donated a decommissioned Leopard Main battle tank to the Canberra Services Club. The tank was delivered and installed in the grounds of the Club in November 2010 and a viewing afternoon organised for Members and friends on Armistice Day 11 November 2011.

In April 2011 the Canberra Services Club building was totally destroyed by fire. The chimneys and parts of the entrance were saved when the building was demolished. Bricks from the chimneys were cleaned and have been stored until they can be incorporated in the new building.

### **DESCRIPTION**

#### **Physical condition and integrity**

The Club was significantly destroyed by fire in April 2011. The remains of the original building were demolished in July-August 2011 following an assessment of the remaining materials which found them to be unsound and unable to be salvaged. Some joinery was salvaged and stored off-site and two chimneys remained in-situ until March 2012 when they were also demolished. The integrity of the heritage significance of the place has been significantly lost.

#### **Pre-2011 fire**

The Club was a fine example of Inter-war Georgian Revival architecture. The original 1941 building was a single storey, white weatherboard structure with green timber trims and a green tiled hipped roof. Significant features included:

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- twelve-pane, double-hung sash windows (to the facades of Canberra Ave and Manuka Oval);
- green shutters;
- corbelled brick chimneys; and
- partly glassed portico.

The original building, with its various extensions, was essentially 'L' shaped comprising two wings which address the respective street frontages. Each wing had a main entrance to the street facade and service rooms were constructed to the rear of the building. The extensions, including service areas and the Billiard Room, had skillion roofs.

The building was set back from the street frontages with mature gardens comprising trees, lawns and low shrubs. Within the grounds were concrete footpaths, a memorial, a flagpole and an Anti-aircraft gun. The memorial is dedicated to the Kokoda campaign and Papua New Guineans who helped Australian servicemen. The statues were sculpted by Helena J. Anderson and the memorial was unveiled on 25 April 1970, at the Kingston-Narrabundah RSL, which subsequently donated it to the Canberra Services Club in 1983. The gun is a Bofors 40mm anti-aircraft gun donated by RMC Duntroon to the Canberra Services Club in 1981.

A white lattice fence encircled the majority of the perimeter.

### **Post-2011 fire**

The area formerly occupied by the building is now graded earth. Remaining evidence of the Canberra Services Club's presence on the site include:

- the corbelled brick chimneys and fireplaces (removed at a later unknown date);
- the entry porticos and some windows (salvaged after fire);
- the entry portico concrete slabs;
- the flagpole;
- the Kokoda memorial;
- the Tank, including its concrete slab and associated interpretive sign;
- the Bofors anti aircraft gun; and
- concrete pathways.

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SITE PLAN

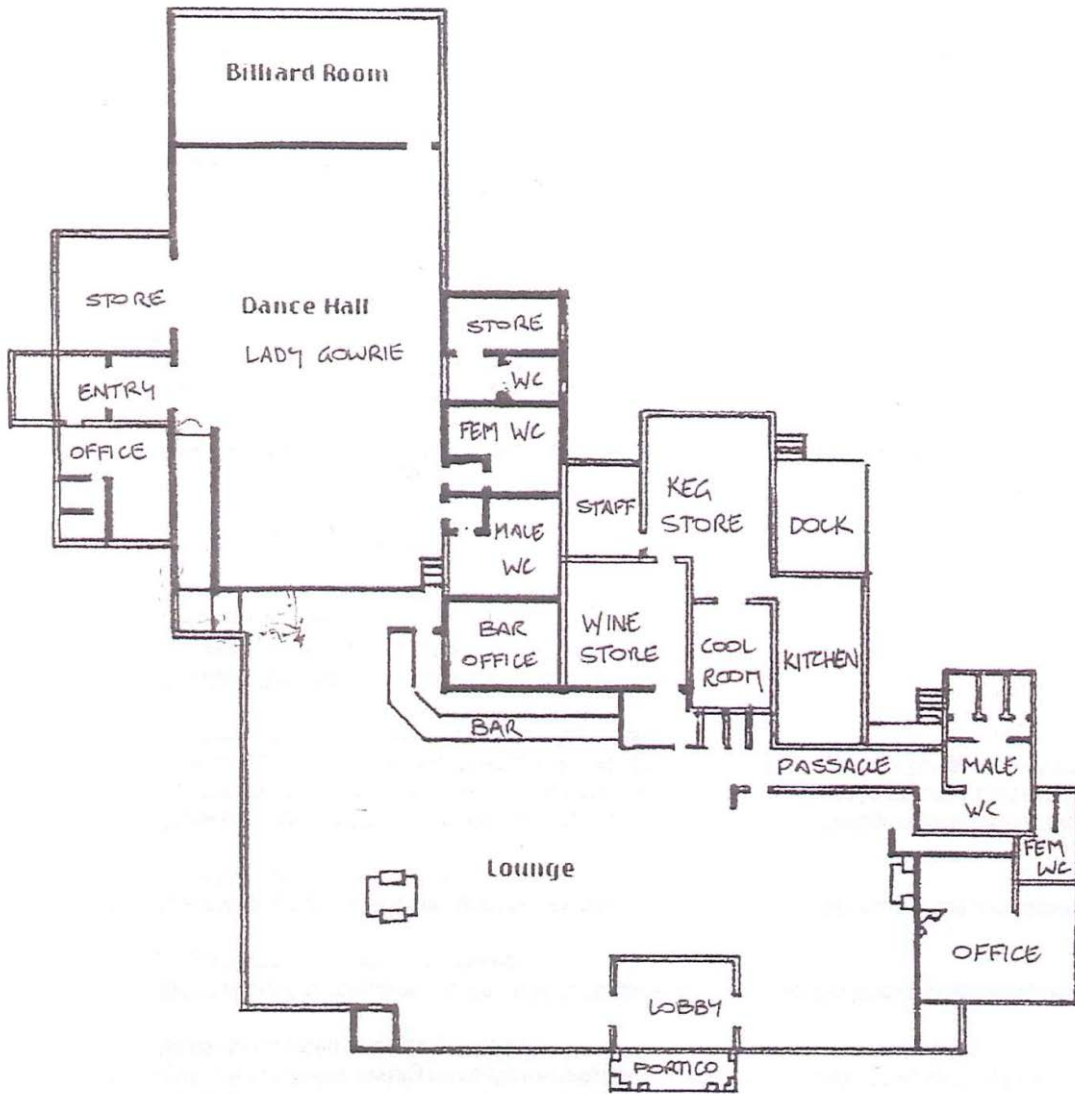


**Image 1.** Aerial Imagery 2009  
(Source: [www.actmapi.act.gov.au](http://www.actmapi.act.gov.au))



**Image 2.** Aerial Imagery 2014  
(Source: [www.actmapi.act.gov.au](http://www.actmapi.act.gov.au))

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**Image 3.** Floor Plan, Canberra Services Club, 2004  
(Source: Eric Martin and Associates, 2006)



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IMAGES



National Library of Australia nla.pic-vn4551863-v

**Image 4.** The Lady Gowrie Services Club, c1941  
(Source: NLA, pic-vn4551863)



National Library of Australia nla.pic-vn4551937-v

**Image 7.** Women in white uniforms standing outside the Lady Gowrie Services Club, c1940s (Source: NLA, pic-vn4551937)



National Library of Australia nla.pic-vn4551884-v

**Image 5.** The Lady Gowrie Services Club, c1941  
(Source: NLA, pic-vn4551884)



National Library of Australia nla.pic-an23491104-v

**Image 8.** Lady Gowrie Services Recreation Centre, 1944 (Source: NLA, pic-an23491104)



National Library of Australia nla.pic-vn4551838-v

**Image 6.** Women working in the Lady Gowrie Services Club kitchen, c1941  
(Source: NLA, pic-vn4551838)



National Library of Australia nla.pic-vn4551823-v

**Image 9.** Diners and staff in the Lady Gowrie Services Club dining room, c1941  
(Source: NLA, pic-vn4551823)



**Image 10.** Remnant chimney stacks, date unknown.  
(Source: <http://www.canberraservicesclub.com.au/History.html>)



**Image 11.** Entry, Canberra Services Club, date unknown  
(Source: <http://www.canberraservicesclub.com.au/History.html>)

**REFERENCES**

ACT Heritage File 97/12750

ACT Heritage File 02/12678

Canberra Services Club, *Club History*, <http://www.canberraservicesclub.com.au/History.html>, accessed 6 May 2014.

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Peter Freeman Pty Ltd (2000), *Canberra Services Club Manuka Circle Conservation Management Plan*, a report prepared by Peter Freeman Pty Ltd in association with Dr Robert Boden and Mr Pip Giovanelli for the Canberra Services Club Limited.