



## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

### OAKS ESTATE SUBDIVISION AND ENVIRONS

#### (All Blocks within Sections 2, 3, 5-8, and 10-15 Oaks Estate)

At its meeting of 6 April 2017, the ACT Heritage Council decided that the Oaks Estate Subdivision and Environs was not eligible for provisional registration.

The information contained in this report was considered by the ACT Heritage Council in assessing various nominations in relation to Oaks Estate and its Environs against the heritage significance criteria outlined in s10 of the *Heritage Act 2004*.

## History

\*\*\*For detailed descriptions of blocks and historic background of the nomination area refer to Karen Williams (1997) *Oaks Estate: No Man's Land* and Philip Leeson Architects (2013) *Heritage Assessment Oaks Estate, ACT*.\*\*\*

The history of Oaks Estate reflects several phases in ACT history including Aboriginal connection to the area through to the development of the Limestone Plains pastoral district, the establishment of the Federal Capital Territory and the subsequent development of the national capital as a new city and a community.

## Aboriginal Heritage

The Ngunnawal people are traditionally affiliated with the lands within the Canberra region. In this citation, 'Aboriginal community' refers to the Ngunnawal people and other Aboriginal groups within the ACT who draw significance from the place. Whilst the term 'Aboriginal community' acknowledges these groups in the ACT, it is recognised that their traditional territories extend outside contemporary borders. These places attest to a rich history of Aboriginal connection to the area. Ethnographic and historical information locates Aboriginal people within the region from the time of early European occupation through to the 1870s and 1880s. Traditional Aboriginal society in Canberra during the nineteenth century suffered from dramatic depopulation and alienation from traditional land based resources, although some important social institutions like intertribal gatherings and corroborees were retained to a degree at least until the 1860s.

The Aboriginal history of the ACT extends from the present day back many thousands of years, and is evidenced by both the tangible and intangible aspects of Aboriginal culture and history. The earliest evidence of Aboriginal people in the region comes from Birrigai Rock Shelter in Tidbinbilla, dating back to over 25,000 years ago (Flood, 1995:116; and Theden-Ringl, 2016:26). Occupation at Birrigai has been linked to seasonal gatherings of local and regional Aboriginal people who would come together along Aboriginal pathways, and participate in a series of meetings and ceremonies along the way.

The area around Oaks Estate was a focus of this activity where tribal groups from the lower Lachlan and Murrumbidgee Rivers and neighbouring regions in between gathered to feast on Bogong moths. During this period, these groups would gather in the alpine regions south and southwest of the ACT to feast on the plentiful supply of Bogong moths as they aestivated over summer (Flood, 1980; Flood, 1995:239-240; Gale 1991:57-58; Kabaila, 2005:28-31). One of these pathways follows the Molonglo River and includes a camping ground and meeting place at its junction with the Queanbeyan River, now the area around Oaks Estate, although the exact location would have changed to select the best location for the conditions at the particular time of year or the activity involved (Flood,

1980: 162-168). The area was visited by Aboriginal groups using the established pathway to pass through the land of the local Aboriginal people who continually occupied the entire area over successive generations as evidenced by the scattered stone artefacts that can be found in the area as well as early European accounts.

European accounts (Figure 1) show that the area at the junction of the rivers was still being used as a pathway and camping ground in 1862 when several tribes from Braidwood, Yass and Bland Plains gathered for a corroboree at a location within sight of the Oaks. The description reads "...the blacks were encamped on the bank of the Queanbeyan River, opposite the Oaks, the residence of Dr. Hayley, from which place the inmates saw the camp fires and heard noises as of quarrelling...". This significant ethnographic account allows the location of a corroboree, killing and burial to be determined with relative accuracy and provides information on traditional burial practices. It also provides evidence of the callously inquisitive way in which Aboriginal burials were interfered with.

Pathways are a vital element in the Aboriginal landscape as access to resources and as trade routes. They played an important role in social interaction between groups as well as in ceremonial and religious occasions. They are intrinsic to the Aboriginal cultural experience not only as physical ways of moving between places but as knowledge of how places are interconnected which was passed on in rich and varied forms of cultural representation (Kabaila, 2005:27-28). The Molonglo River has been noted as an important pathway by Flood (1980: 162-168) and upstream from Oaks Estate has other important functions known to the Ngunnawal including important cultural sites in and near Molonglo Gorge as well as being a boundary region between groups as identified in maps by Tindale (1974) and Horton (1996).

## Pastoral settlement - colonial expansion by road

Like Aboriginal people, European colonisers sought food, water and shelter – and the means of reaching them. In many cases the settlers found or were shown the pathways that Aboriginal people already used through their use of country. In 1820, with the help of Aboriginal guides, Charles Throsby and his exploration party were the first Europeans to see the Limestone Plains. Further excursions extended Throsby's recording of the area. Under his instructions, James Vaughan (a constable) and Charles Throsby Smith (Charles Throsby's nephew) followed the Molonglo River to the junction with the Queanbeyan River, the future site of Oaks Estate. Their reports of fertile plains and well supplied rivers soon attracted settlers to the area. (Brown, 2014: 10-11; Watson, 1927; and Australian Bureau of Statistics, 1931)

The first European settlers in the region were the employees of John Joshua Moore, who set up a large stock grazing station in what is now the suburb of Acton. Soon to follow and acquire most of the land that now comprises the ACT were Robert Campbell, James Ainslie (Campbell's overseer), George Thomas Palmer, John Macpherson, Thomas Walker and Terence Aubrey Murray. These landholdings were primarily used for grazing of stock by overseers. Apart from Macpherson, it was not until the mid- to late-1830s that many of the landowners actually lived on their holdings and began to form a community.

The earliest settler in the immediate area of Oaks Estate was Timothy Beard who squatted in the area in the early 1820s. Beard was a pardoned convict, and former Innkeeper from Campbelltown, NSW. His station huts were located between what was later the Queanbeyan-Cooma Railway line and the Molonglo River, a little over 2kms downstream from the Molonglo/Queanbeyan River confluence where Oaks Estate was created in the late 1880s. Beard's station was called 'Queenbeeann' on Robert Hoddle's 1832 survey of the Limestone Plains, but it and the origins of the name of today's city of Queanbeyan has variously been spelled "Quinbean", "Queenbeeann", "Queenbeeann", "Queenbein", or other variations according to various sources. By 1829 it was bordered by 'Jerrabomberra' to the south and by

**SHOCKING MURDER OF A BLACKFELLOW. —** During the last eight or ten days two or three tribes of blackfellows from Braidwood, Yass, and Bland Plains, have visited this town, giving us a display of their deep degradation, in wandering the streets by day, drunk and quarrelsome, and assembling nightly for "corrobores." Yesterday afternoon a report reached us that the body of one of these blacks, supposed to be Billy the Ram, was found dead on the bank of the river, near Dr. Hayley's residence. Later in the day, Dr. Morton, the Coroner, furnished us with the following particulars gathered from the depositions taken at the inquest. Last Tuesday night the blacks were encamped on the bank of the Queanbeyan river, opposite the Oaks, the residence of Dr. Hayley, from which place the inmates saw the camp fires and heard noises as of quarrelling amongst the blackfellows and their gins. The next day a son of Dr. Hayley's saw three or four blacks digging a hole a little distance from their camp, and near the camp something wrapped in a blanket, like a dead body. Information was given to the police, and Senior Constable Reilly proceeded to the spot, and disinterred the body, which was rolled up in a blanket, doubled, and tied up. At the bottom of the grave there were a tin pot, necklace, and several articles of attire. The body was that of a male, about forty years of age; decomposition had set in; the cuticle was partly pulled off; there was a wound just below the right shoulder, penetrating the muscles to the bone, made apparently by a tomahawk or spear; the right wrist was dislocated, and the left arm nearly severed a little below the shoulder, the bone being broken through; the head had undergone considerable injuries from contusions, the face was much disfigured, the front teeth loosened, and the left eye knocked out, and a fracture of the skull. The jury found a verdict, "that the deceased was murdered by certain aboriginals unknown, by various wounds having been inflicted upon him by means of tomahawks or other implements."

**Figure 1** Excerpt from the Queanbeyan Age 5 April 1862.

**PROSPECTUS**  
OF THE  
**Queanbeyan Wool-Scouring, Meat-Freezing,  
& Tannery Company, Limited.**

(TO BE REGISTERED UNDER THE COMPANIES ACT.)

**Capital £16,000 in 16,000 Shares of £1 each.**

**TERMS—**  
On Application, 5s. on Allotment, and Balance if required, in calls of 2s. 6d. per share.

**PROVISIONAL DIRECTORS—**  
**GEORGE HARCOURT Esq., J.P. Ginderra.**  
**A. M. DULHUNTY Esq., J.P. Queanbeyan.**  
**W. PRICE Esq., J.P. "**  
**GEO. TOMPSITT Esq., J.F. "**  
**H. J. DIXIE Esq. "**  
**DANIEL LEAHY Esq., Bungendore. "**  
**CHARLES ROSS Esq. "**

**BANKERS—**  
**BANK OF NEW SOUTH WALES.**

**SOLICITORS—**  
**MESSRS. CREAGH & WILLIAMS, Sydney.**  
**THOS. PARR Esq., Queanbeyan.**

**OFFICES—**  
**HAZELBROOK, Queanbeyan.**

**OBJECTS OF THE COMPANY—**  
To acquire, for the sum of £1,500, the estate known as "Hazelbrook, Queanbeyan," and to carry on thereat the business of Wool Dyeing and Scouring, Felting, Tanning, and other matters incidental thereto; the purchase of Cattle and live Stock, Meat-Freezing for the Sydney and other markets, and to establish a Shoe Factory.

The Hazelbrook Wool Scouring Works are situated on 12½ acres of land, having an area of 1,500 feet to the Queanbeyan and Molonglo Rivers, and are within ½ of a mile of Queanbeyan Railway Station. The buildings, offices, workmen's cottages, etc., are all of construction. The Plant consists of a 20 h.p. Cornish Boiler, 12 h.p. "Caledonian" Inch Centrifugal Pump, Circular Saws and Bench, Bark Mill, Lumber Bolters, etc., &c. These together with the good will and all the Tools, Rolling Stock, Shipping-Machines, etc., employed in the carrying on of this well-known and now, are included in the purchase.

The intention of the Directors to erect Refrigerating Plant and Freezing Works at Hazelbrook, sufficient steam power being already there to drive the necessary machinery.

Provisional Directors also intend leasing a paddock of about 800 acres of land situated within 1½ miles of Hazelbrook, for the reception of Fat Cattle and sheep, and to establish a Piggery and Poultry Farm; the lease can be conveyed in a few minutes to the Freezing Chambers at Hazelbrook, conditions are favourable to the raising of pigs and poultry, on a more economical basis.

To attract the despatch of business and to reduce the cost of carriage, the Directors contemplate the construction of a siding, connecting Hazelbrook with the Goulburn Main Line—the cost of so connecting will be trifling, the Works being within 30 of the railway station and within 10 chains of the nearest point of the Line, the intervening ground being so obstructed whatever.

In prosecuting this venture, the Directors would call attention to the fact that the Hazelbrook Works being a good going concern, in full working order. The premises having for the past two years cleared over 30 per cent on the Capital employed, the Meat-Freezing business is certain to be very profitable (the Company being able to sell Hides and Skins to the greatest advantage) a good dividend is assured.

So satisfied is the vendor of the prospects of the Company that he has agreed to pay 5,000 Contributing Share or more than the purchase money to be paid for his interest in the business.

As more than half the total number of Shares have already been applied for, early action is necessary for the balance.

The Directors are desirous of commencing operations as soon as possible. Applications for Shares, accompanied by Cheque to be addressed to  
**A. M. DULHUNTY & CO., Queanbeyan,**  
or to, **H. J. DIXIE, Hazelbrook, Queanbeyan.**

**TO THE  
PROVISIONAL DIRECTORS  
OF THE  
Queanbeyan Wool-Scouring, Meat-Freezing  
& Tannery Company, (Ltd.)**

Gentlemen,

I beg to request you to allot me \_\_\_\_\_ Shares of the above named Company, for which I forward the sum of \_\_\_\_\_ and I hereby agree to accept same, or any less number than the above, and pay the amounts as provided by the Company, and I authorise you to Register me as the holder of said Shares.

Name in full \_\_\_\_\_  
Postal Address \_\_\_\_\_  
Occupation \_\_\_\_\_  
Usual Signature \_\_\_\_\_  
Dated this \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_ 1887.

Robert Campbell's property on the Molonglo River at Pialligo to the north (Navin Officer 2004).

Campbell was one of the most significant landholders on the Limestone Plains. He was a respected merchant, pastoralist and philanthropist. After arriving in Australia in 1800, he became involved in public administration and developed an 'intimate knowledge of the colonial economy' (Newman, 1961; and Steven, 1965). During the course of his life, he held such distinguished appointments as magistrate and naval officer. He was also a member of the NSW Legislative Council from 1825 until 1843 (Newman, 1961; and Steven, 1965). Campbell named his property 'Duntroon' after Duntrune castle, the ancestral home of the Campbell clan in Argyll, Western Scotland (Gillespie 1991). It consisted of approximately 17,000 acres and extended from the Molonglo to the Hume Valley (Navin Officer, 2004). His main residence was Duntroon House, today part of the Royal Military Academy College also known as 'Duntroon'.

In 1837 Robert Campbell was granted an extra 1,040 acres of land south of the Molonglo River adjacent to his Duntroon holdings. This land extended to the area gazetted for the town of Queanbeyan which at this time offered little more than a post office (Lea Scarlett, 1968: 25-29). Over the next few years, the town developed as the administrative centre for the growing pastoral district. Close to the township-to-be, in the area that is now the suburb of Oaks Estate, Campbell built a large stone cottage, The Oaks, in a style similar to the original Duntroon House.

In keeping with Campbell's astute knowledge of colonial economy, The Oaks was built in an ideal location on the southern side of the Molonglo River with access to water and several shallow crossing points which enabled easy access to the north by road. One of these crossings later joined the Queanbeyan-Yass Road and became known as the River Street Ford (at other times it has been known as "Chinamens Crossing" and "Robertsons Crossing"). It was used into the late 1940s when the low-level bridge was established 1km downstream, but continued to see use into the late 1980s and the remnant track on the northern side leading to the road to Yass is visible from today's River Street. The road that later became known as River Street and the track extending north across the river to the main Yass-Queanbeyan road was surveyed in December of 1886, transferred to the Surveyor General in May 1887, preliminarily notified in December 1887, confirmed in March 1887, before being officially opened in the NSW Government Gazette in November 1887, three months after the rail station had opened. The first significant bridge over Queanbeyan River was the Queen's Bridge which opened in 1858, replacing the earlier unreliable footbridge which was prone to flooding and unsuitable for heavy traffic.

When the relatives for whom The Oaks was built did not migrate to Australia, Campbell leased the house and property to William Hunt and Joseph Kaye. In 1838, in the absence of development in the

**Figure 2** Hazelbrook Wool Scouring Co Prospectus. Queanbeyan Age 1 October 1887 p3.

newly surveyed town of Queanbeyan, (Lea Scarlett, 1968: 25-29) Hunt and Kaye obtained an inn license and the house became known as the Elmsall Inn. The Elmsall was the first licensed inn in the region. A store was built adjacent to the house and paddocks on its east were used as an unofficial cemetery for a number of years.

In 1841, when Queanbeyan had begun to take shape, Hunt and Kaye moved the Elmsall into town (Lea Scarlett, 1968). The unofficial cemetery continued to be used as a de facto burial ground until 1846 when the Queanbeyan Riverside

Cemetery was declared. The last recorded burial at The Oaks cemetery, of an unknown Indian juggler who had been found murdered not far away, took place in 1863. There were 44 recorded burials at Oaks Estate (Claoué-Long, 2006:28) which now lies under Florence Street and nearby houses in Oaks Estate. In 1991 the burial ground was rediscovered during excavation for a storm water drain and seven bodies were recovered and subsequently reburied in the Gungahlin Cemetery. This leaves the remains of at least 35 people still buried in the area. The last recorded burial suggests the possible 'outsider' status of those buried there after 1846. The proximity of the cemetery to an Aboriginal gathering place also suggests the possibility of unrecorded Aboriginal graves.

In the early colonial period, the movement of people, stock and goods took place by road. Horse drawn coaches were a vital part of the growing economy as were roadside inns. In providing roadside accommodation, a supply store and burial ground before they were available in Queanbeyan, The Oaks property records initial stages of the business and civic development of the Limestone Plains pastoral district.

In 1840, The Oaks and an area of 100 acres, slightly larger than the current area of Oaks Estate, was transferred to Charles Campbell who later leased the property to Dr William Foxton Hayley, the region's first doctor. During Hayley's time The Oaks again played an important role in supporting pastoral settlement - this time as a hospital until a dedicated modern hospital opened in Queanbeyan in 1861. Dr Hayley lived at The Oaks until 1868 after which it became the residence for a series of medical professionals into the 1880s, including Doctors Prowd-Lambert, Newton, Johnson and McQueen.

**THURSDAY, DECEMBER 15.**  
**QUEANBEYAN RAILWAY STATION.**

## Oaks Estate Subdivision.

**300 CHOICE BUILDING ALLOTMENTS.**  
**THE MOST PROFITABLE INVESTMENT EVER**  
**OFFERED IN THE SOUTHERN DISTRICT.**  
**TERMS LIBERAL. CASH DEPOSIT ALMOST**  
**NOMINAL.**

The roads, or main stock and produce arteries from Canberra, Gungahlin, Sutton, Gundaroo, Yass, and Gunning, to the trucking yards, goods shed, and the railway station run through the subdivision, and every allotment has access thereto.

**DULHUNTY and CO.** have received instructions from the owners to sell by public auction, at the Temperance Hall, Queanbeyan, on

**THURSDAY, DECEMBER 15, 1887,**  
at 11 o'clock.

**300 very choice BUILDING ALLOTMENTS,** being a subdivision of the Oaks Estate, and lying all round the Queanbeyan Railway Station trucking yards, and goods shed, with abundant and easy access to the Queanbeyan River for watering purposes.

**THIS SUBDIVISION,** from its proximity to the station yards, and being intersected by all the important thoroughfares leading thereto, is the most valuable for business and private building purposes ever offered to the Queanbeyan public.

**THE PRESENT VALUE OF THE ALLOTMENTS** to be submitted to the public is very great, but the position and symmetry of design which harmonised with the surrounding Crown and other subdivisions are such as to ensure an enormous and rapid increase in their value, as the town must eventually grow in the direction of the station.

**EVERY MAN** who can put together 4s in the £ should invest in an allotment and reap the benefit of the increment.

**THE ALLOTMENTS** fronting the Queanbeyan River specially commend themselves to persons desirous of securing sites for healthy villa residences, the soil being rich alluvial, admirably suited for horticulture, and well above the reach of all flood water.

**TO THE WORKING CLASSES** and men of small means this sale offers special inducements to become Freeholders. The terms, being so easy, will enable every one to obtain a piece of ground of their own.

**THE SURVEY** is now completed, and lithographs are ready for distribution, and intending purchasers are invited to inspect previous to sale.

**THE TERMS**

Are most liberal, viz. 1-4s in the £ deposit, and balance at 4, 12, 18, and 24 months, with only 6 per cent. interest added.  
Sumptuous Luncheon provided at 1 o'clock in the Salerooms.  
For farther information, apply to the auctioneers,  
**A. M. DULHUNTY and CO.,**  
Queanbeyan.

Figure 3 - First auction of the Oaks Estate subdivision. Queanbeyan Age 3 December, 1887 p.3.

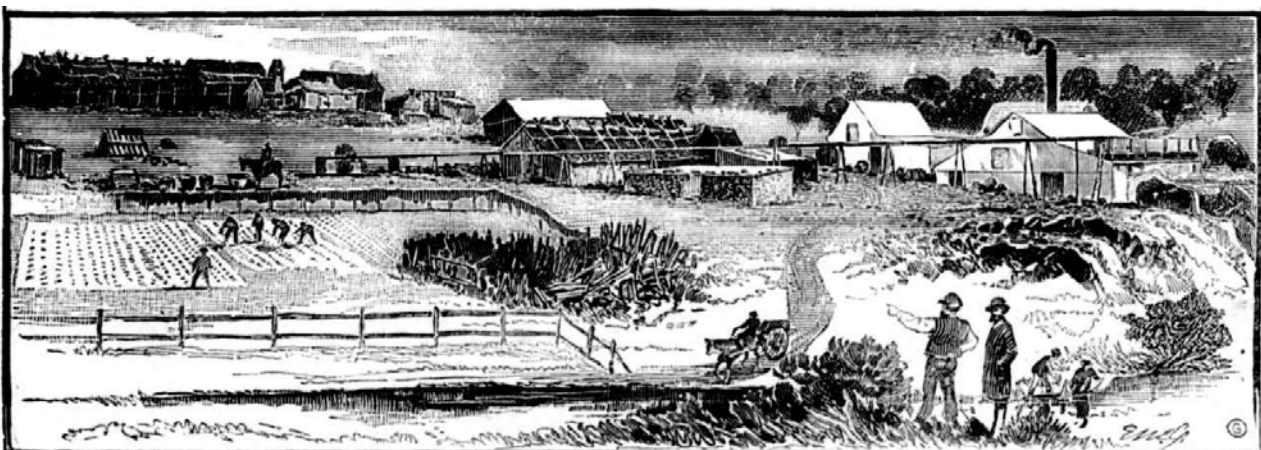


Figure 4 – The Oaks Wool-scouring and Fellmongery Establishment (Australian Town and Country Journal 19 September 1885:599)



## Late 19<sup>th</sup> century rural development – the railway

In 1877, Charles Campbell sold The Oaks, and the 100 acres of land the property now included, to John Bull. In 1880, Bull sold the house block and a separate 12 acres of land, where The Oaks Wool-scouring and Fellmongery business had been established on what is today the Hazelbrook property as well as a right of passage between the two locations, to George Tomsitt. The rest of the 100 acres was sold to William Price in 1885. Price brought the land under the *Real Property Act 1862* which facilitated the sub-division of the land as Oaks Estate several years later.

The Oaks Wool-scouring and Fellmongery Establishment developed into a large enterprise with 24 men employed in various parts of the business with extra teams employed for hauling wool during the season. The complex had two engines running various machines, a large iron building for woolscouring, sweat-houses, pulling-sheds, soak-pits, drying greens, the tannery and fellmongery, curriers, beamsmen, and bark sheds, barkmill, workmen's huts and cottages, a large storehouse (*Australian Town and Country Journal* 19 September 1885:599-600; illustrated in Figure 4).

These property developments took place in the context of the growth of Queanbeyan as an administrative and business centre of a pastoral district, and the south-west extension of the Sydney-Goulburn railway. During the later 19<sup>th</sup> century rail transport made a huge impact on colonial expansion and settlement. It enabled greater mobility, opened up markets for pastoral and mining industries and made significant changes to the colonial landscape. Coach businesses and roadside inns declined. A significant example of this in the ACT is the Hibernian Inn (see *Heritage (Decision about Registration of the Hibernian Hotel Site, Kowen) Notice 2014 Notifiable Instrument NI2014—353* for more details).

Unlike the case of the Hibernian, 50 years after The Oaks' days as the Elmsall Inn, its owners were in a position to respond to the opportunities presented by the new form of colonial transport.

When the railway reached Queanbeyan in the late 1880s, the Queanbeyan railway station was built southeast of The Oaks house within the 100 acres that Campbell had sold to Bull. The station was opened in September 1887. From 1886-7, during the construction period, Matthew McAlister ran the Oaks as an inn. A month after the opening of the station, Tomsitt expanded the wool washing and fellmongery business that he had acquired from Bull with the creation of the Queanbeyan Wool-Scouring, Meat-Freezing & Tannery Company (formed with the provisional directors of Tomsitt and Price along with A. M. Dulhunty, George Harcourt, H. J. Dixie, Daniel Leahy, and Charles Ross) with a prospectus looking for £16,000 to expand upon the existing business, including connecting it to the railway via a siding and buying around 800 acres of surrounding land (Figure 3).

Even more ambitiously in December 1887 Tomsitt, Bull and Price sought to further capitalise on the railway by creating the subdivision of Oaks Estate. The 247 allotments (advertised as 300) (as shown in Figure 5 Deposited Plan 2207 from 1888) were marketed for residential use as well as for business and light industry associated with the railway, with a direct appeal to the 'the man of small means'. The auction was run by Dulhunty & Co and failed to sell all of the available blocks. Most of the bidding focused on the lots around the railway station (which remained in NSW after the creation of the ACT). The lacklustre bidding of lots north of the railway meant that several people were able to secure several blocks as large parcels of land with several blocks left over that did not sell. With the onset of the 1890s economic depression, sales did not improve. Another round of auctions at no reserve was held at the start of 1892 to sell the remainder of the blocks in order to wind up the partnership after the death of Tomsitt. The advertising for the auctions (Figure 4) emphasizes the proximity of the railway station and the business opportunities that it presented, noting that it was, "...most valuable for business and private building purposes ever afforded to the Queanbeyan public." It also speculated on the expansion of Queanbeyan towards the station and Oaks Estate, saying that of the blocks, "...the position and symmetry of design which harmonised with the surrounding Crown and other

**Oaks Estate**  
**SUBDIVISION.**

**200 ALLOTMENTS.**

TEMPERANCE HALL, QUEANBEYAN.

**MONDAY, JANUARY 18, 1892.**

**DULHUNTY AND CO.**  
have received instructions from the  
Syndicate of the above Estate to  
**SELL ALL THE UNSOLD LAND** round the  
Railway Station, River Flour Mill,  
Goods Shed, Trucking Yards,  
and Wool Works,  
**FOR WITHOUT RESERVE,** to  
Wind up the partnership.

**THE MOST LIBERAL TERMS WILL BE GIVEN,**  
so that the **POOREST MAN** in the community  
will be able to  
**SECURE AN ALLOTMENT**  
for  
**A FEW SHILLINGS' DEPOSIT.**

**THE PLAN OF THE SUBDIVISION**  
can be seen at our Office.

The above land is so well known that we are disinclined to waste money by what is known as puffing; but we think it will be to the interest of every man, woman and child in Queanbeyan and District to be at the Temperance Hall at 12 o'clock sharp on the day named, and all must feel that we are on the eve of a Local Government Bill, the same being promised by both sides of the House, and the passing of such a Bill means a large influx of new population, who will naturally come to get their share of the large revenue that will be expended in our midst, and such an increase of bona fide residents that the town must extend and the Oaks Subdivision is the only available land. This backed up by the beautiful climate and magnificent land must make us one of the largest centres in the South, and independent of any prospective value, all must see that this Subdivision is the most valuable Land now in Queanbeyan, with the main artery, viz., the road from Gindimarra, Canberra, and Majura, our Agricultural districts, running through the centre; and before another year our business people of all classes will find it to their interests to have branch establishments round the Railway Station.

**TERMS IN FUTURE ISSUES.**

**Figure 5** No reserve auction of remaining Oaks Estate subdivision. Queanbeyan Age 2 January, 1892 p.3.

subdivisions are such as to ensure an enormous and rapid increase in their value, as the town must eventually grow in the direction of the station.” Despite promising terms to enable the ‘poorest man in the community’ to buy, ~40 acres of unsold blocks remained the property of Price until 1900 when they were transferred to the Bull family. These were sold over the years, culminating in 1926 when Clara Annie and Florence Louisa Bull sold the bulk of the remaining blocks, some 11 acres, to George Dovers.

The people who bought the blocks in the 1880s and 90s were a mix of farm labourers and farming families of Canberra/Queanbeyan, Queanbeyan businessmen, teamsters and railway workers. The first to begin living in the area were associated with the Robertson, Gillespie, Bambridge, Blundell, Waters, Parkes and Nugent families (Williams, 1997: 24). The association between Queanbeyan and Oaks Estate was strengthened when the Estate was incorporated into the municipality of Queanbeyan in the 1890s with the result that roads were graded and lights supplied at the bridge along River Street.

## Incorporation of Oaks Estate within the Federal Capital Territory

In 1901 the six Australian colonies formed a federation as the Commonwealth of Australia. In this new era a national capital was planned. The location of the capital was declared in the 1908 *Seat of Government (Yass-Canberra) Act* however the border was not fixed until the *New South Wales Seat of Government Surrender Act 1909* and the *Commonwealth Seat of Government Acceptance Act 1910* came into effect on 1 January 1911. At first it was proposed to include all of Queanbeyan and Captains Flat in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) but with Queanbeyan’s decision not to be included, the border was drawn along the Queanbeyan railway line. This meant that the northern blocks of the Oaks Estate subdivision and The Oaks house, roughly 40ha of land, became part of the Territory while the railway line and the southern blocks, roughly 15ha of land, remained in NSW where they were absorbed into Queanbeyan and developed as part of the municipality (refer to Figure 5). Within the Territory, northern Oaks Estate retained its name and developed very differently.

Although it was administratively within the FCT, Oaks Estate developed differently from other parts of Canberra. In the first place, it was geographically isolated from Canberra while only a railway line and a few metres separated it from Queanbeyan. In the second, successive ACT authorities and community bodies had difficulty in accommodating Oaks Estate’s light industry, unregulated residential form and self-sufficient lifestyle within the plans for the capital. Service provision was expensive and there was often a reluctance to pursue it. From time to time, despite legislative difficulties, the ACT Advisory Council discussed the reincorporation of Oaks Estate into Queanbeyan. In his role as Secretary of the Federal Capital Commission and later Civic Administrator for the Federal Capital Territory, Charles Daley consistently highlighted the problem of Oaks Estate, initially calling for the acquisition and demolition of all Oaks Estate properties, and later seeking its excision from the ACT (eg *The Canberra Times* 11 October 1932, p.3; 22 December 1936, p.2). Others on the Advisory Council pressed for Government attention to the poor service provision at Oaks Estate, with Dr Nott declaring the Estate ‘the Cinderella of the Territory’ (*The Canberra Times* 2 September, 1937, p.5). Minister for the Interior, John McEwen’s support for Oaks Estate’s connection to a better water supply than the railway water tank, brought an end to Council discussions about the cost of water supply, but in 1950, after an inspection of the site, members returned to the idea of reincorporation with Queanbeyan. Again Charles Daley referred to his original advice to the Federal Capital Commission, calling Oaks Estate a “continuing embarrassment” (*The Canberra Times* 28 March 1950, p.2). However, his position did not prevail against the calls for planning and regulation of the Estate. After the National Capital Development Commission (NCDC) was established a 1962 study into providing ‘city services’ to Oaks Estate, as well as Hall and Tharwa, concluded that the density of development at Oaks Estate and the other sites was not high enough to justify the expense of providing the services and that increasing the density would ruin their rural character. As reported in *The Canberra Times* “...the character of the villages rested on large sites and limited building covenants, and land rent was low.” (*The Canberra Times* 30 August 1962 p8).

A key regulation concerned land tenure in the Territory. The *Seat of Government (Administration) Act 1910* provided for the Commonwealth acquisition of the land within its borders. It stated that no land could be held by freehold and froze the price of land for government procurement. Many of the farmlands in the area were already under a leasehold system. Those under freehold could be compulsorily acquired by the Government and converted to leasehold until required for Commonwealth use. As it was not feasible to acquire all the land at once, this took place over a long period. Oaks Estate’s freehold land tenure was retained until 1974.

When the land was resumed in Oaks Estate, many residents decided to take the money for their properties and leave without taking up a lease on land they used to own. This was the case with most of the recently developed blocks of flats, which resulted in the Commonwealth acquisition of Hayley Court, Dover Court, Elmsall Court and Carla Court; adding 77 flats to the Government housing pool. Applications for developing flats in Oaks Estate starting coming in to the NCDC in 1972 at much the same time as the government had announced its intention to acquire the remaining freehold land in the ACT. At least ten applications for medium density and flats development were received between 1972 and 1974, although only six were built with one small block of flats in Section 6 being partially built when it was acquired but then demolished after several years of being exposed to the elements during this process.

It took many years for the land acquisitions to be completed, leaving many owners in a kind of limbo where they could not sell their properties or risk investing in them without knowing the outcome. Many houses were simply left vacant. Bede Tongs wrote to the Member for Canberra, John Haslam, in June 1979 (NCDC file 74-668 pt.2) noting several issues that had arisen in Oaks Estate since acquisition, particularly several derelict buildings that were of concern to residents as they were attracting undesirables into the area.

In the context of Oaks Estate's geographical, administrative and social isolation, including its long freehold land tenure, Oaks Estate's development until 1974 was largely organic and independent, driven by its residents. Most significantly, it was also shaped by work opportunities for residents and newcomers provided by the construction of the capital.

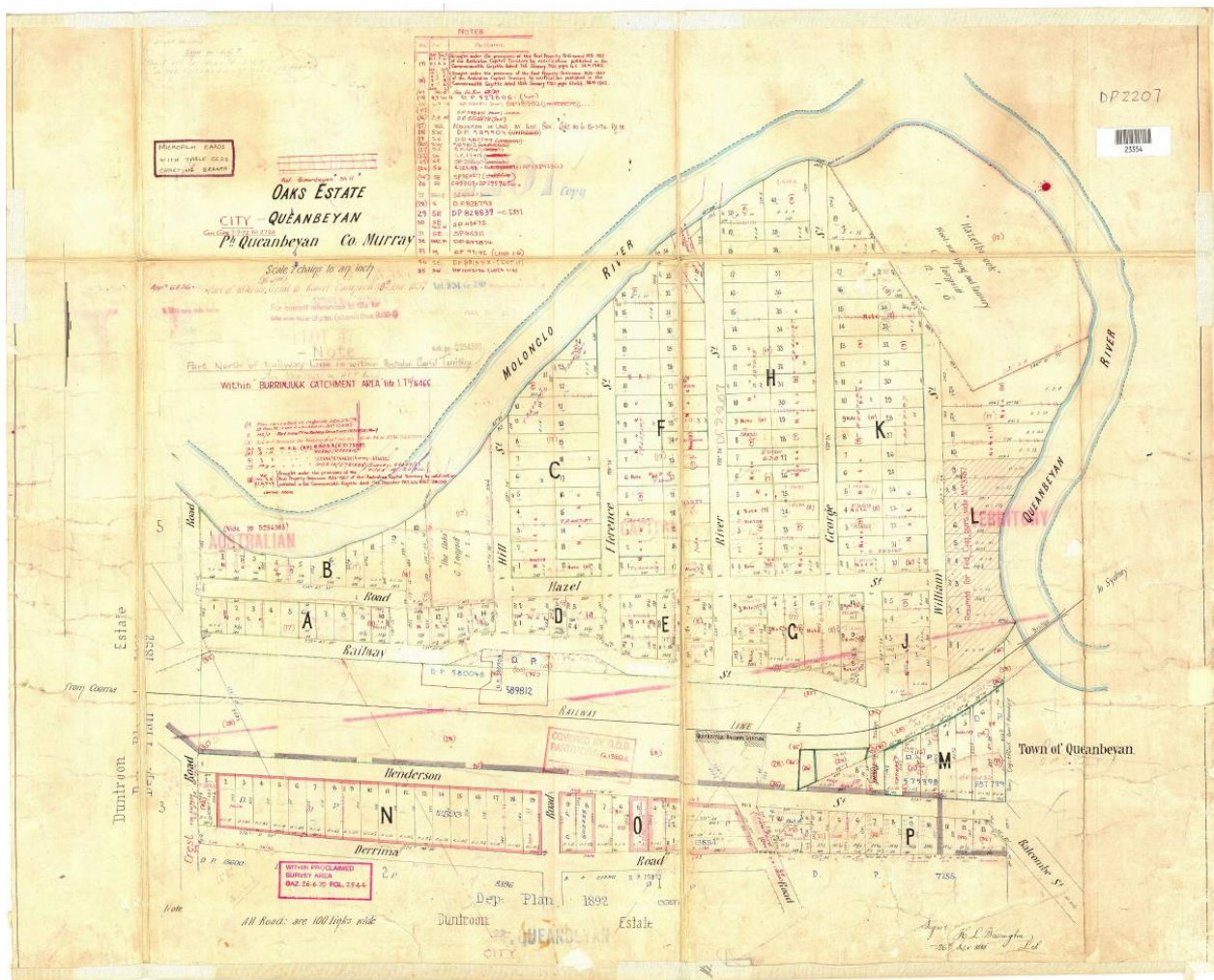


Figure 6 Deposited Plan 2207 of the 1888 Oaks Estate subdivision (NSW Department of Lands).



## A Canberra construction workers' community

In the context of the construction of Canberra after the establishment of the FCT, the identity of Oaks Estate as a railway subdivision community, consisting predominantly of tradespeople and labourers working on their own behalf and in local light industry, evolved as a Canberra construction workers community. As well as providing work for residents, the construction of the city also attracted new residents to Oaks Estate.

In the first period of its development, Canberra was a collection of settlements associated with its initial construction and administration (Brown, 2014: 73). Construction workers' accommodation included timber cottages provided in the planned workers' suburb of Ainslie, a large number of single men's camps and 'messes' near work sites, and 'family tenements' (Brown, 2014: 69; 73-76). Apart from Ainslie which continued to grow as a planned suburb with a mix of residential housing types, workers' accommodation was generally regarded as temporary and dismantled when work was completed. There were exceptions to this rule, particularly in the case of the basic timber and timber prefab cottages with water and sewerage connected provided for families at Westlake (1923) and the Causeway (1925) which encouraged residents 'to put down roots' (Brown, 2014:75-76). Similarly Oaks Estate offered family friendly accommodation with the added advantages of freehold land and the proximity of town amenities in Queanbeyan. Importantly, it also fulfilled the eligibility requirement for gaining work in Canberra by being within the ACT. The number of new houses and businesses established at Oaks Estate increased during the time Parliament House was built.

The Robertson family played an important role in the building trade in Oaks Estate during the FCT period and through the Depression. The heritage registered Robertsons' House (1915) is typical of the vernacular style of the period which included make-shift materials, weatherboard and fibro, and hand-made cement blocks made from sand from Oaks Estate backyards. Various members of the family were known to help build other houses in Oaks Estate as well as manufacture cement bricks (there being a shortage of fired bricks at the time) and assist using recycled materials or even moving whole houses to create peoples' homes in Oaks Estate. (Williams, 1997)

A key issue for the Oaks Estate community from the early years of Canberra construction, unlike the new suburbs that were being built in Canberra, was the provision of basic services. In 1926, when the Federal Capital Commission (FCC) was encouraging the formation of suburban progress associations to work for social amenities such as tennis courts and community halls, Oaks Estate residents formed their own progress association and approached the FCC to have

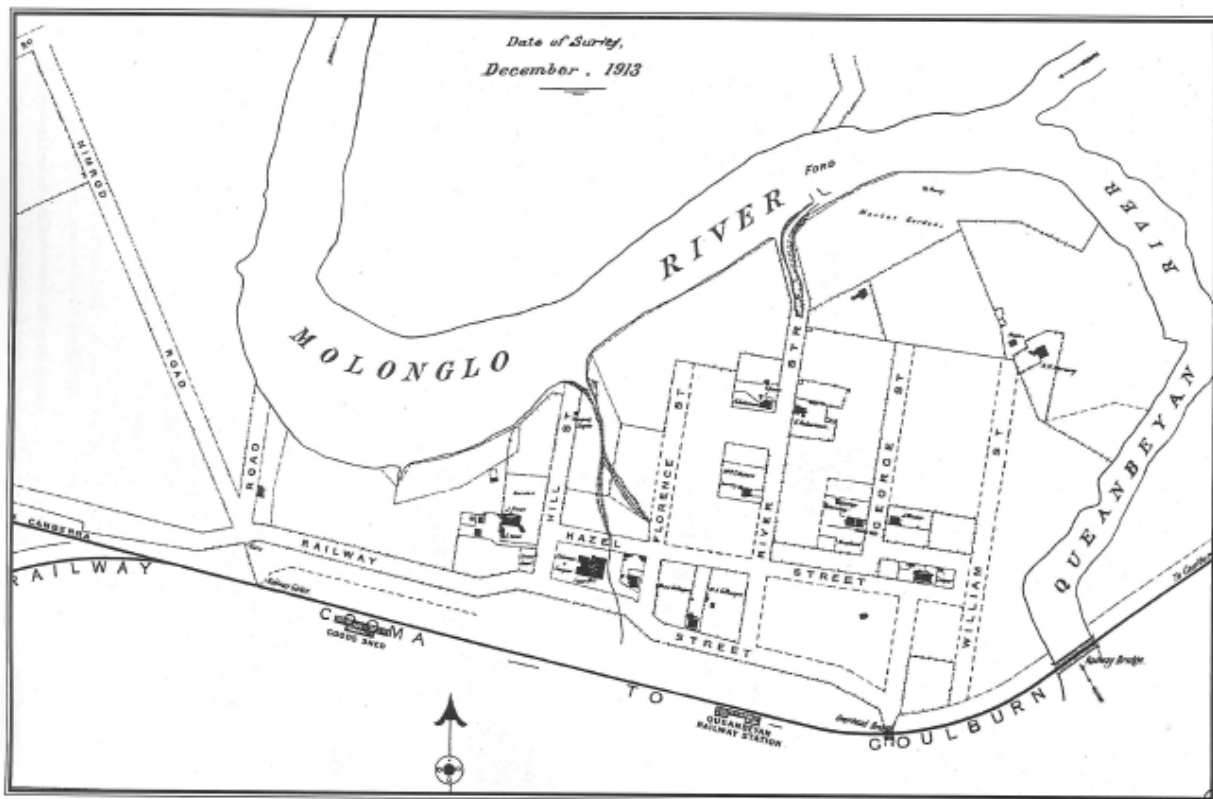


Figure 7 Survey map of Oaks Estate in 1913 (National Library of Australia Map G8981.G46 1915 s63).



mains water connected. The FCC considered it too expensive to connect Oaks Estate to the city services due to the distance involved, but had no objection to them connecting to Queanbeyan services. The Queanbeyan Municipal Council (QMC) agreed on the basis that they would provide the infrastructure. Over the next 12 years FCC and QMC debated costs and responsibilities and it was not until after the Depression in 1938 that water and sanitary services were installed with the support of the then Minister for the Interior, John McEwen (*The Canberra Times* 8 March 1938, page 3). Electricity was connected in 1940 and sewerage in 1968. Sealing of roads and footpaths took many years and work started on the last unsealed roads in 1970.

Bus and mail services, firefighting equipment and a community hall were other amenities that the Progress Association fought for over a number of years. A fire shed, cart and hose were supplied in the 1940s. A bus service and bus shelter were provided in 1955. Remnants of these hard won amenities remain in the form of the sign 'fire hose post' which can still be read on the shed now on a private block and the replica 1955 bus shelter which was rebuilt incorporating original material in 2003 after damage by an explosion. The Oaks Estate community hall was opened in 1953. The building was recycled from the 1920s Eastlake Workers' Hostel and erected on land donated by Oaks Estate resident, Bede Tongs. Bede Tongs OAM MM was a long term Oaks Estate resident who had worked as a carpenter in Canberra for the Department of the Interior and had a distinguished record as a soldier in the Second World War and Korean War (*Queanbeyan Chronicle* 27 January 2015:9). The original workers' hostel building has been modified to suit community purposes over the years but like the other remnants tells the a unique Canberra story of access to community amenities and the work of the Oaks Estate Progress Association's to achieve it.

<b>Oaks Estate – Important Events and Dates</b>	
<b>1837</b>	Robert Campbell granted an extra 1,040 acres of land south of the Molonglo River
<b>1838</b>	The Oaks built and leased to William Hunt and Joseph Kaye who established it as the first inn for the region - The Elmsall
<b>1840</b>	The Oaks and an area of ~100 acres transferred to Charles Campbell, roughly establishing what would become the border of the Oaks Estate subdivision
<b>1848-</b>	The Oaks leased to Dr William Foxton Hayley
<b>1858</b>	Queens Bridge opens and makes transport to and from Queanbeyan easier
<b>1863</b>	Last burial at The Oaks
<b>1877</b>	Charles Campbell sold The Oaks and the 100 acres of land to John Bull
<b>1880</b>	Bull sold The Oaks and 12 acres of land to George Tomsitt, including the wool washing and fellmongery business
<b>1885</b>	The remaining ~88 acres was sold to William Price who then brought the land under the <i>Real Property Act 1862</i>
<b>1887</b>	The Queanbeyan Wool-Scouring, Meat-Freezing & Tannery Company formed
<b>1887</b>	Railway reaches Queanbeyan with the station located in Oaks Estate
<b>1887</b>	Oaks Estate sub-divided into 247 blocks
<b>1891</b>	Major flood washes away several houses
<b>1892</b>	Tomsitt dies prompting the sale of all remaining blocks in Oaks Estate to wind up the partnership
<b>1908</b>	<i>Seat of Government (Yass-Canberra) Act</i>
<b>1909</b>	<i>New South Wales Seat of Government Surrender Act 1909</i>
<b>1910</b>	<i>Commonwealth Seat of Government Acceptance Act 1910</i>
<b>1910</b>	April – <i>Seat of Government (Administration) Act 1910</i>
<b>1911</b>	1 January – <i>Seat of Government (Administration) Act 1910</i> takes effect
<b>1923</b>	Construction of Parliament House commences
<b>1925</b>	Major flood washes away several houses, the Chinese market gardens and destroys the railway bridge
<b>1926</b>	Oaks Estate Progress Association formed
<b>1938</b>	Reticulated water provided to Oaks Estate
<b>1940</b>	Electricity supplied
<b>1953</b>	Community Hall opens
<b>1968</b>	Sewerage connected
<b>1970</b>	Sealing of the remaining roads starts
<b>1974</b>	All remaining freehold land in Oaks Estate acquired by the Commonwealth

**Table 1** Oaks Estate timeline of events directly related to formation of the precinct.

Access to services and amenities was part of the continuing evolution of Oaks Estate as a community and a place in the post-war period. With the resumption of Canberra construction and an acute housing shortage there was again a mini housing boom at Oaks Estate. At this time new residents and builders included post war European migrants who contributed to building enterprise in the area. For example in 1947 the Corsini family bought one of the original subdivision houses.

In the post-war years Oaks Estate also offered an alternative residence to Canberra for a more middle class population attracted by its lack of regulated development and rural landscape, such as Professor Jaegger and family moving into the Oaks and Verity Hewitt and Laurie Fitzhardinge moving into nearby Riverview.

Oaks Estate developed a poor reputation in the 1970s when the financial downturn had a strong impact on Canberra generally. Squatters took up abandoned houses and flats converted to public housing brought residents with different needs and concern from the established Oaks Estate population. At the same time, white collar public servants also found Oaks Estate a less expensive and more interesting place to live than suburban Canberra. The poor public perception was not borne out on the ground. Several new family houses were built, business development increased, crime rates were lower than average and a strong sense of community prevailed. By the 1990s, community attention was turning to the Estate's unusual history in Canberra. Oral histories were collected with long term residents and more recent resident, Karen Williams, began work on *No Man's Land* (Williams, 1997). Protecting and interpreting the heritage of Oaks Estate became a new theme for the continuing Oaks Estate Progress Association. Through open days and other activities a wider group of Canberrans has become interested in the Estate's past.

Although Oaks Estate came in to line with Canberra planning and building regulations in 1974, its long identity as a Canberra construction workers community, remains visible in the built environment. It is distinguished as one of only two other such communities which survived beyond the Second World War. Both of these, the Causeway and Westlake were created by the Commonwealth and intended as temporary. At Westlake, original structures from workers camps established in the 1920s were maintained and improved by a close-knit community until they were finally demolished in the 1950s, but remnants of the layout of blocks and houses remain (<http://www.canberrahistoryweb.com/stirlingpktimeline.htm>). The original Causeway houses were demolished in the 1970s and replaced. The Causeway community hall, built by the community with the support of the Social Services Branch of the Federal Capital Commission in the 1920s, remains and is heritage registered. The story of resident initiative reflected in the histories of Westlake and The Causeway is also part of Oaks Estate's development as a construction workers community and is visible in the remaining evidence of hard-won services.

Despite its 'cinderella' status Oaks Estate survived within the ACT, retaining elements of Aboriginal occupation and early colonial history as well as the form of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century subdivision and hallmarks of its 20<sup>th</sup> century social identity.

### Development of the region as represented by Oaks Estate

Oaks Estate has been continually developing its built form for over 170 years from an extension of the Duntroon estate in 1837 to a rural industrial area, to a semi-rural suburb of Queanbeyan and then an outer suburb of the ACT, to a riverside community interspersed with light industrial businesses. The development of Oaks Estate can be placed into five broad categories:

1. **Early Colonial Era** – the initial development of Oaks Estate started with the establishment in 1837 of The Oaks house in a strategic location next to the gazetted town of Queanbeyan and opposite a shallow ford allowing road access to the north. The house and surrounding property was used as an inn and burial ground, then as a hospital and towards the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century was split between private property and the Hazelbrook wool-washing and fellmongery business. The Oaks house (NI2015-74 *Heritage (Decision about Registration of The Oaks, Oaks Estate) Notice 2015*), the remains of the burial ground and the remnant track opposite River Street on the northern side of the Molonglo River represent this era
2. **Oaks Estate Subdivision** – the subdivision of the land in 1888 was the most significant formative event for Oaks Estate as it established the blocks and roads in the layout that has remained relatively unchanged, but interestingly aerial photos show that the intended density was only realised much later. This was not achieved earlier because of the initial slow sales and economic depression which led to multiple blocks being bought as single large parcels. This development was the result of

Queanbeyan being linked to Goulburn and Sydney via the railway, highlighting its importance as a regional centre. Development on the 247 blocks was quite slow. The large parcels of land allowed for self-sufficiency and backyard industry to be established. The grid layout of the subdivision remains and represents this era and the view to the Queanbeyan Railway Station from River Street remains as a reminder of the past connections. There are also seven remaining places spread throughout the suburb: Block 21 Section 2, Block 25 Section 3 (possible remains of the roller flour mill), Block 20 Section 6, Block 9 Section 8, Blocks 1+20 Section 11 (semi-detached house across two blocks), Block 4 Section 11 and Blocks 11+12 Section 7 (Robertson House).

3. **Federal Capital Territory (FCT)** – the establishment of the border of the FCT in 1911 set up an administrative boundary that separated Oaks Estate from Queanbeyan along the railway line and made further civic development in the suburb difficult. However, it also made Oaks Estate an attractive location for those wanting to work in the ACT. There are 24 features representing this period concentrated in the centre of Oaks Estate, at the southern end of Section 8. They are located on Blocks 1+17+19+24-26 Section 6, Blocks 1-5+7-8+21+24-26+29 Section 8, Blocks 5+39 Section 11, Block 10 Section 7, Block 5 Section 10, and Blocks 5+6 Section 13 (possible remains of the market gardens). In addition, as a part of the original subdivision layout, Railway Street follows the railway, which today serves to highlight the separation of Oaks Estate from NSW and its incorporation into the FCT as a result of the Territory border.
4. **Post-War Development** – the period after World War II saw considerable development across the country, but it was particularly marked in the ACT from the late-1950s as the Commonwealth Government intensified its transfer to capital. This increased demand for light industry and workers who found it advantageous to locate themselves in Oaks Estate, leading to a sharp increase in the number of houses and developed blocks in the suburb. There are 18 features representing this period located on Blocks 13+16 Section 3, Blocks 4+6+18+23+27 Section 6, Block 13 Section 7, Blocks 22+27-28 Section 8, Block 4 Section 10 (the Romney Hut housing the liquor store), Blocks 23-26+31-32+37 Section 11, and Block 20 Section 12. The post-war features are located around the FCT era sites with the highest concentration along William Street. The community hall and the land donated by Bede Tongs (Block 4 Section 15 (the FCT workers accommodation transferred from Eastlake in the 1950s is a feature of post war development – the achievement of a community hall by the progress association).
5. **Post-1974** – in 1974 the remaining blocks of freehold land in Oaks Estate were acquired by the Commonwealth and the area which had previously had no controls on the type of development came under leasehold arrangements and greater government control over the activities that could take place in the suburb. A consequence of this was a reduction in the backyard industries and many owners not resuming the leased land, leaving the government with several properties, many of which were then used for public housing or sold. This period also incorporates several features built immediately prior to acquisition, such as the blocks of flats, as these were quickly developed after, and presumably as a result of, the announcement in 1972 of plans to acquire all remaining freehold land in the ACT. There are 31 features representing this period located on Block 20 Section 2 (wholesale flower business), Blocks 14+15 Section 3, Blocks 4-7 Section 5 (Gillespie Park), Blocks 2+3+5+21-22 Section 6, Block 4 Section 7, Blocks 6+10-13+23+30+32-33 Section 8, Blocks 1-3 Section 10, Blocks 6-13+27-30 Section 11 and Blocks 21-22 Section 12. These features are generally found on the outer parts of Oaks Estate as well as filling in small gaps in the centre.

These broad categories are based on a very generous interpretation of what evidence may be found in each block. For instance the Oaks Estate Subdivision features on Block 25 Section 3 are based on the likelihood of finding archaeological evidence of the flour mill even though it had been demolished and subsequently built over by the fuel depot which was also demolished; while other examples are based on original features of buildings which may no longer be readily evident as they have been modified and extended over time – they are categories based on the earliest evidence that may be found on each block regardless of integrity or later additions. Using these categories, it becomes clear that Oaks Estate has the ability to demonstrate the evolution of occupation of the ACT from the initial colonial occupation, to the rising importance of Queanbeyan as a regional centre supporting the surrounding farming districts, to the establishment of the FCT and its later periods of growth. Other places in the ACT, such as Lanyon Homestead, have been used and developed throughout these periods, but as single places they tend to have a unity of style and use over time so that each period in time is not distinct and easily interpreted. Only Oaks Estate has all of these developmental periods so clearly demonstrated in the one area. However, with each new addition or improvement made the suburb as a whole has also been modified which brings it more into line with the rest of the ACT, lessening its individuality. With the introduction of the leasehold system in 1974 and the planning controls that came with it, Oaks Estate lost its ability to grow organically as it had done for the previous century.

## DESCRIPTION

Oaks Estate sits between the ACT/NSW border and the Molonglo River on gently sloping ground, rising up to its highest point at McEwan Avenue, almost 20m higher than the river. There are two streets running in a general east-west direction, Railway Street and Hazel Street; there are also six streets running in a north-south direction, Hill Street, Florence Street, River Street, George Street, Williams Street, and McEwan Av. All of the streets are paved and include guttering and drainage, with the exception of Hill Street which is a dirt track that provides access to The Oaks and the rear of several properties along Florence Street; also, the southern side of Railway Street, which is sealed, does not have guttering and has no guttering on its northern side west of Hill Street. Additionally, the southern tip of William Street does not have guttering. Footpaths are provided on Railway Street, Hazel Street, McEwan Av, and George Street

The location of the former mill and the later fuel depot, Section 3 Block 25, has been cleared and remains undeveloped. Other blocks that are currently undeveloped include Section 3 Blocks 2-4, Section 5 Blocks 1-3, Section 7 Blocks 1-3 and 5-6 and 9, Section 8 Block 31, Section 11 Blocks 14-15, and Section 15 Block 1. Additionally all of the original historic blocks along the river flats do not contain houses as they would be at risk of flooding and have been amalgamated into larger rural or river corridor blocks.

Section 5 Blocks 4-7 have been converted into a park, Gillespie Park, and are registered as PRZ1 Urban Open Space in *The Territory Plan*, Blocks 1-3 are still registered as RZ1 Suburban areas. Section 7 Blocks 1-3 are also listed as PRZ1.

The southeastern corner of Oaks Estate, comprising Sections 7 and 10, are registered as CZ5 Mixed Use areas that are currently being used for residential, commercial and light industrial purposes.

Areas along the river flats (generally lower than the 100-year flood level at roughly the 570m contour), are mixed NUZ2 Rural and NUZ4 River Corridor areas that are used by commercial nurseries or are open green space used recreationally by residents. Also the original property of the area, The Oaks, sits just above the 100-year flood level and is also on a Rural and River Corridor registered block.

The boundary for the precinct generally follows that of the suburb boundary. This is the historic boundary of the suburb and there are no identified significant heritage features outside of this boundary that are related to the Precinct, with the exception of the northern extension of River Street across the ford and the location of the Aboriginal meeting/corroboree ground along the river. The historical southern end of Oaks Estate now lies within NSW and is outside of the consideration of the *Heritage Act 2004*.

## INDIVIDUAL ELEMENTS

### The Oaks Blocks 15-16+19 Section 2

The Oaks is a substantial colonial-era stone cottage that, during the last 170 years, has been home to the region's first inn and then first hospital and later played host to the 11<sup>th</sup> Battalion during WWII as well as being the family home to pioneers of the region.

The Oaks was built by Robert Campbell for family who were expected emigrate to Australia but failed to arrive. It was leased to William Hunt and Joseph Kaye who used it to open the region's first licensed inn, making it a hub of local social life. From 1848 the place was leased by Dr Hayley to become the region's first hospital.



Figure 8 The Oaks north facade (ACT Heritage, 2014)

The Oaks was the first building in Oaks Estate and its namesake. The property originally covered 1,040 acres, but was reduced to just over 100 acres surrounding the house which was again reduced to 2.5 acres in the subdivision of 1888, but the poor sales of blocks resulted in the current size of the block of just under 5 acres.



The Oaks is an early substantial stone cottage built c.1837 from roughly worked local stone. It is a large building for the time and is of a very high quality, both factors that have resulted in it remaining relatively unchanged, despite being used for many diverse purposes during its more than 170 years.

The Oaks has been assessed as an individual place by the ACT Heritage Council.

#### **Robertson House Blocks 11-12 Section 7**

The Robertson House is a vernacular building that was constructed by its owner from locally found and recycled materials. Its design is free from government control and building regulations and has developed gradually over many decades in an organic fashion, depending on the needs of the occupants and what materials were available.

It is constructed from various locally sourced materials that shed light on products and raw materials available at the time, such as flattened kerosene tins, bush poles, handmade concrete bricks and off cuts from building sites in the city. The materials and construction methods employed in the house demonstrate a lifestyle that is very different to today and shows how builders overcame housing and materials shortages during the early construction of the ACT.



**Figure 9** Robertsons House south facade (ACT Heritage, 2014)

The Robertson House has been assessed as an individual place by the ACT Heritage Council.

#### **Hazelbrook Blocks 3-4 Section 14**

This was the first part of The Oaks to be subdivided in order to incorporate a wool-washing works and fellmongery which was established by John Bull in 1877. The actual subdivision is likely to have occurred around 1885 when Bull sold Hazelbrook and The Oaks to George Tompsitt. Some of the remains of the industrial complex were revealed in 1989 under two metres of surface deposit during earthworks which saw some of the remains destroyed while other areas were reburied and possibly still more has yet to be discovered. The only standing evidence remaining from this time is the Hazelbrook house on Block 3 Section 14, which is today a private residence that has been substantially extended and renovated over the years. The rest of the area has been built over as a wholesale nursery established in 1982. Due to the large amounts of alluvial deposit that had been covering the remains found in 1989, it is quite likely that intact archaeological material still exists below the modern day structures.



**Figure 10** Hazelbrook Blocks 3-4 Section 14 (ACT Heritage, 2014)

#### **Market Gardens Section 13 and 14 (part)**

When the Chinese market gardens started is unclear. Some reports note they were there before 1890 with Peter Freeman & Associates (1988) noting that some oral sources date it back to the 1840s, but this conflicts with the subdivision layout which seems not to take the existing business into account and the report of Chinese workers at the wool-washing and fellmongery complex that doesn't mention them working market gardens as well, also the first house belonging to the Robertson family was located in this area from 1888 to 1891 (historical Block 40 Section H). While it may be that the gardens were in place before 1890, the first definitive evidence



**Figure 11** Block 5 Section 13, site of the former market gardens (ACT Heritage, 2014).

of them existing is a lease from 1914. The Chinese gardeners left in 1937, after which the area continued to be used as market gardens by various European operators. There is no definitive evidence left to identify the gardens as any earthworks are obscured by covering vegetation and decades of disturbance. Aerial photography shows that the market gardens retained evidence of lines of plantings into the late 1980s, but by the mid-1990s the features were barely discernible. There is the remains of a pump house and machinery near the river and pipes extending southwards to where the gardens would have been, although it is not clear if this is associated with the Chinese use of the area or the later European market gardens. Although there are some plant species present in the area, such as dill, which may be linked with Chinese market gardens, it is not clear if these are in-situ or spreading weeds from other historic Chinese market gardens known to have existed up-river. Many of the exotic plant species were removed from this area c.2012.

### Oaks Estate Community Hall

The Community Hall was transported to Oaks Estate from the Eastlake Hostel group in 1953 after the Department of the Interior approved the application in 1951 for a community hall by the Oaks Estate Progress Association. The internal layout and finishes have been significantly altered and the building extended.



**Figure 12** Oaks Estate Community Hall (ACT Heritage, 2014).

### Water tanks

The 100,000 gallon concrete water reservoir was built in 1926 for the railway. Water was drawn from the Queanbeyan river to a well in the pump house and then into the water reservoir. The tunnel that led to the pump house from the river can still be seen, but the pump house burnt down in 1981 and is no longer extant. Residents could access the tank water via a tap, but there was no connection to houses. The smaller 30,000 gallon raised tank was installed c.1938 as a part of the Oaks Estate water reticulation scheme. The larger ground-level tank has been subject to graffiti and the bulk of it is located in NSW. The smaller raised tank is in good condition with some paint flaking and some rust spots.



**Figure 13** Water tanks at McEwan Street (ACT Heritage, 2014).

### Romney hut Block 4 Section 10

The Local Liquor store is a World War II surplus Romney hut (often mistaken for a Nissen hut) based on its 35ft width and 120ft length making it  $\frac{1}{4}$  longer than standard (96ft made from 8ft segments). These buildings, as well as the more common Nissen hut, were brought into Australia after WWII as a quick and cheap way of erecting housing or other buildings during a time of material shortages (Stuart, 2005). Previously the National Library was housed in similar huts until it moved into its permanent purpose-built building in 1968, with the National Archives retaining use of Romney huts into the 1980s. There may be heritage values associated with Romney huts in general, however this has yet to be confirmed as a comparative analysis would need to establish how many of each type of hut there is (i.e. Romney, Nissen, Quonset, SAAR, and several other variations) and their level of intactness, which would be difficult as there were large numbers imported into Australia after WWII and their ability to be easily moved and modified is compounded by them being considered to be temporary or low-value structures (Mornement & Holloway, 2007; Stuart, 2005). The Romney hut was erected by the Kalivoda family around the 1960s and they ran their



**Figure 14** Romney hut Block 4 Section 10 (ACT Heritage, 2014).



wine merchant business (first wholesale, now retail) from there ever since (Williams, 1997). NDC files show that there were plans to replace the hut with a fairly substantial Mediterranean style building in 1972, but difficulties arising from the acquisition of the freehold land were not settled until 1982 and the building was never constructed.

#### **The bus shelter Hazel Street**

The bus shelter on Hazel Street was erected in 1955 following lobbying by the Oaks Estate Progress Association. It is representative of the bus shelter designs of the period, but unusually is a double width shelter (there are no others extant in the ACT). The shelter was badly damaged by an explosion (presumed to be a large illegal firework) in 2003 and has since been rebuilt, replacing significant amounts of original material. In its original condition the shelter was likely to have had significant heritage values, but due to the loss of original material these values have been greatly diminished.



**Figure 15** The Bus Shelter on Hazel Street (ACT Heritage, 2014).

#### **The “Fire Hose Post” shed Block 21 Section 8 (part)**

Fire fighting equipment and training for locals was provided in the early 1940s. It was thought that the local fire fighting volunteers would be able to keep a fire in check until the fire brigade arrived, which at the time could take over 20 minutes. The fire fighting cart was retired and removed in 1976. It is currently used by the owners of the block and has had some unsympathetic replacement of materials. The original paint is flaking, but the sign painted on the door, “FIRE HOSE POST” can still be read. Whilst the shed is a reminder of a custom no longer practised, without the fire fighting equipment to go with it and its poor condition, the heritage values of the shed are severely diminished.



**Figure 16** Fire Hose Post on Block 21 Section 8 (ACT Heritage, 2014).

#### **Slab shed Section 8, Block 24 (part)**

The remains of a workshop shown on the 1915 survey still survives at the rear of the block. The shed has a galvanised iron roof and wooden slab sides as well as a chimney. It is possible that it was used as housing during the depression. The shed cannot be seen from the public realm, so its current condition is unknown.

## Block and Section Descriptions

The following descriptions are based on information found in Karen Williams' 1997 *Oaks Estate: No Man's Land*, Philip Leeson Architects' 2013 *Heritage Assessment: Oaks Estate, ACT* and Peter Freeman & Partners 1988 *Oaks Estate Heritage Survey*. The descriptions focus on extant features that can be seen from the public realm and have been updated by site inspections of the suburb by ACT Heritage in July and August 2014. These descriptions should be considered indicative rather than definitive and may be updated in the future.

- **Section 2** is the western tip of Oaks Estate and contains only three properties, including The Oaks described above:
  - Block 20 – Capital Flowers wholesale nursery. A large block that was originally supposed to be 17 smaller blocks and a road, but was not developed in the early subdivision. The Molonglo River's original course ran through the northern section of this block but has since shifted ~80m northwards as a result of sand mining on the northern bank.



**Figure 17** Block 20 Section 2 (ACT Heritage, 2014)

- Block 21 – A weatherboard building with Colorbond roof and another clad in treated pine logs. Locally known as Carroll's Hill from one of the early families who lived there and have since kept it in the family. The original, now demolished, weatherboard house was said to have been built by one of the Campbells of Duntroon as a camp for teamsters travelling to outlying stations in the mid-1880s.



**Figure 18** Block 21 Section 2 southern building (ACT Heritage, 2014)



**Section 3** sits between Hill Street and Florence Street. The site of the former mill may contain some evidence of the earlier development of Oaks Estate, but the rest of the blocks in the section have evidence of later development:

- Blocks 2-3 – Vacant. In 1972 Ashford Insurance Brokers Pty Ltd put in an application to develop three 3-storey blocks of flats, which were amended and accepted “in principle” by the NCDC in January 1973. By November 1973 the NCDC were deep in negotiations to acquire the land and had suggested that no building be allowed until they had a plan for Oaks Estate. In April 1974 the NCDC had confirmed that it would not be offering the previous owners a lease over the land, leading the previous owners to apply for compensation in the Supreme Court.
- Block 13 (9 Florence Street) –1950s-era Hardiplank clad cottage built by Ron and Lillian Mary Squire; it has a double gable, timber frame, pitched concrete tile roof, aluminium windows, a concrete retaining wall and chain fence. There are mature cypress trees in front southwest corner. The remains of at least 7 burials from the burial ground were found on this block.
- Block 14 (11 Florence Street) – There are mature trees on the eastern side of the block. There is a large structure along the rear/Western boundary and a caravan and a lean-to towards the front.
- Block 15 (13 Florence Street) – Two Hardiplank timber framed linked buildings with low pitched gable rooves clad in corrugated iron, and aluminium windows. Informants note that an old hut (now demolished) linked to development in the 1890s was associated with the four mature Monterey pines across the front of the property.
- Block 16 (15 Florence Street) –the original house had been demolished in 1975 and a different weatherboard house was built in its place. It is a cottage with red-brick chimneys, an altered form and cladding with aluminium windows. A Colorbond bullnose verandah was added to front and a Colorbond garage built. There is an older fibro and galvanised iron building with a lean-to in the rear of the property.
- Block 25 (part) (7 Florence Street, historic Block 12 Section C) – 1950s cement block house built by Cecil Hamilton with rendered walls, pitched concrete tile roof, timber windows, low rendered brick boundary wall, and mature Cyprus trees. The house was not occupied for many years and was in a derelict condition before demolition in late 2015.
- Block 25 – The site of the former Queanbeyan Roller Flour Mill and in 1963 the Mobil fuel depot, now demolished. It was also in 1963 that Block 25 was formed amalgamating Section D and Blocks 1 and 2 Section C, as well as the western tip of Hazel Street. There is some evidence of previous buildings on the site, but it is likely that the later fuel depot, also demolished, had previously destroyed the evidence of the mill.



**Figure 19** 9 Florence Street (Section 3 Block 13) (ACT Heritage, 2014).



**Figure 20** 11 Florence Street (Section 3 Block 14) (ACT Heritage, 2014).



**Figure 21** 13 Florence Street (Section 3 Block 15) (ACT Heritage, 2014).



**Figure 23** 7 Florence Street now non-extant (part-Block 25, historic Block 12 Section C) (ACT Heritage, 2014)



**Figure 22** 15 Florence Street (Section 3 Block 16) (ACT Heritage, 2014).



**Figure 24** Block 25 Section 3 - former mill and fuel depot site (ACT Heritage, 2014).

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- **Section 5** is bounded by roads on all four sides with Railway Street to the south, River Street to the east, Hazel Street to the north and Florence Street to the west. This section has never seen much development and was essentially a single property before the house was demolished and it became a park:
    - Blocks 1-3 – vacant
    - Blocks 4-7 – Gillespie Park – 18 Railway Street Community vegetable garden covering entire block. 1913 contained the Gillespie house which was Oregon frame clad in weatherboard. There are several mature trees planted as a part of the original house garden on the block.





**Figure 25** Blocks 1-3 Section 5 - vacant blocks (ACT Heritage, 2014)



**Figure 26** Blocks 4-7 – Gillespie Park – 18 Railway Street (ACT Heritage, 2014).

- **Section 6** is bounded by Florence Street to the west, Hazel Street to the south and River Street to the east. The earlier features can be found along River Street which was one of the main access roads of early Oaks Estate:
  - Block 1 – dual occupancy block consisting of:
    - (16a Hazel Street - eastern part of block) 1980s timber framed weatherboard house; and
    - (16b Hazel Street western part of block) 1930s weatherboard cottage, galvanised iron roof, timber windows, original brick front fence and gate (more recently added wood palings).
  - Block 2 (12 Florence Street) – 1978 brick veneer house with aluminium windows and new Colorbond roof and garage. Blocks 2-5 were previously combined and Evlogi Todoroff Staneff operated a cement brick works out of a shed on Block 3 using sand found on the blocks. There is a mature Cyprus at the front. After the NCDC had acquired the freehold title of the land, it was noted in June 1974 that the partially completed block of four flats were not consistent with the approved plans and construction was halted for several months. What happened after that is unclear, but the partially constructed building must have been demolished as the current house was built in 1978 in a different part of the block.
  - Block 3 (14 Florence Street) – 1970s-80s brick veneer with aluminium windows and pitched concrete tiled roof and attached garage. Blocks 2-5 were combined and Evlogi Todoroff Staneff operated a cement brick works out of a shed on Block 3 using sand found on the blocks.
  - Block 4 (16 Florence Street) –1940s timber cottage significantly altered with most materials replaced by modern. There are modern additions in concrete blocks. The original building came from WWII Air Training Corps accommodation stock that were used in the Eastlake Workers Camp in Kingston and the 2nd School of Technical Training (2STT) in Kingston, before finally being transferred to its current place in two sections during the 1960s by Walter Cooper.
  - Block 5 (18 Florence Street) –1980s brick veneer house with a concrete tile roof, aluminium windows, and a lower level garage.
  - Block 6 (20 Florence Street) – 1950s rendered brick house with recent Colorbond roof and timber windows. Additional features include a 1980s concrete block front retaining wall, and a detached laundry and toilet at the rear. Williams (1997) notes that the "house [was] built of handmade cement blocks by the owner between 1946 and 1953. Canberra bricks were used in the back part of the house. Second house at the back of the block housed another family for some time during the 1950s." – Blocks 22 and 6 were a single parcel until block 6 separated in 1948. Ron Squire built the house from handmade cement blocks as cement was the only material he could readily put his hands on during the shortages following WWII. Research by the AIA suggests that the house was designed by Kenneth Oliphant for Squire.
  - Block 17 (9 River Street) –1930s weatherboard cottage with a galvanised iron roof, double-

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hung timber windows, red brick chimney and bricked-in front verandah. There are modern additions at rear. In 1937 a house was built by Daniel John McKenzie and extended in 1944 by new owner William Henry Bradley (after a previous transfer).

- Block 18 (11 River Street) – Late 1950s workers cottage from Acton was brought over in two pieces and erected at the front of the block. Previously, c.1946, a small concrete brick building was built at the rear of the block while waiting for larger house at front.
- Block 19 (13 River Street) – 1940s concrete block cottage with a galvanised iron roof, red brick chimneys, timber door and windows, matching double garage and fence with chain and gate. Galvanised iron shed in back garden. The house was completed in 1943 and named "Oakville" by Harold Thomas (Tom) Robertson from local bricks and handmade cement.
- Block 20 (15 River Street) – 1900s timber cottage with brick chimneys with significant alterations in the 1980s that make original form hard to determine. A house had been built by 1892 and said to be clad in tin, but later was clad in fibro and extended to several more rooms, possibly post WWII. One of the owners who did most of the extensions worked at the Canberra Brickworks.
- Blocks 21-22 (17 & 19 River Street) – Hayley Court, early 1970s three storey walk-up flats in face brick.
- Block 23 (21 River Street) – 1940s timber frame house, possibly relocated Narrabundah Prefab, with a corrugated asbestos sheet roof. The house has a modern brick veneer and small timber windows (likely original).
- Block 24 (23 River Street) – 1980s brick veneer house with crimped metal roof (faux-tile look), and timber windows. There are several mature trees at the front.
- Block 25 (25 River Street) – 1980s brick veneer house with tiled roof and aluminium windows.
- Block 26 (27 River Street) – 1920s fibro cottage of two rooms with a 1950s front gable and rear skillion, 1960s stone fence, and a steel garage at rear.
- Block 27 (29 River Street) – Weatherboard cottage with numerous renovations (roof, cladding, windows, verandah) and a modern addition at rear. Blocks 25-27 were transferred to a Queanbeyan storekeeper in 1912 with a house on block 25. The three blocks transferred to a Queanbeyan labourer in 1920, who sold blocks 26 and 27 to a Queanbeyan plumber in 1925. The initial weatherboard house was erected sometime after 1925 and in 1941 a second house (2-bed fibro at rear) was added.



**Figure 27** 16a Hazel Street - eastern part of Block 1 Section 6 (ACT Heritage, 2014).



**Figure 28** 16b Hazel Street - western part of Block 1 Section 6 (ACT Heritage, 2014).



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**Figure 29** 12 Florence St - Block 2 Section 6 (ACT Heritage, 2014).



**Figure 32** 18 Florence St - Block 5 Section 6 (ACT Heritage, 2014).



**Figure 30** 14 Florence St - Block 3 Section 6 (ACT Heritage, 2014).



**Figure 33** 20 Florence St - Block 6 Section 6 (ACT Heritage, 2014).



**Figure 31** 16 Florence St - Block 4 Section 6 (ACT Heritage, 2014).



**Figure 34** 9 River Street - Block 17 Section 6 (ACT Heritage, 2014).





**Figure 35** 11 River Street - Block 18 Section 6 (ACT Heritage, 2014).



**Figure 38** 17-19 River Street - Hayley Court - Blocks 21-22 Section 6 (ACT Heritage, 2014).



**Figure 36** 13 River Street - Oakville - Block 19 Section 6 (ACT Heritage, 2014).



**Figure 39** 21 River Street - Block 23 Section 6 (ACT Heritage, 2014).



**Figure 37** 15 River Street - Block 20 Section 6 (ACT Heritage, 2014).



**Figure 40** 23 River Street - Block 24 Section 6 (ACT Heritage, 2014).



**Figure 41** 25 River Street - Block 25 Section 6 (ACT Heritage, 2014).



**Figure 43** 29 River Street - Block 27 Section 6 (ACT Heritage, 2014).



**Figure 42** 27 River Street - Block 26 Section 6 (ACT Heritage, 2014).

- **Section 7** is bounded by Railway Street to the south, McEwan Av to the east, Hazel Street to the north and River Street to the west. While sparsely developed now, it was previously the location for several industrial manufacturing businesses surrounded by several houses, including the Robertson House as previously described:
  - Blocks 1-3, 5-6, and 9 – vacant, Blocks 1 and 3 previously had houses while 5 and 6 had industrial sites, all of which were considered to be derelict by the NCDC in 1980 and were demolished.
  - Block 4 (15 Hazel Street) – a late 1970s light industrial face brick building with entrances from both ends. There were numerous attempts by past owners to repurpose the factory into shops, bar, restaurant, accommodation and community facilities, but the NCDC rejected them all as they had planned to keep the section a light industrial zone.
  - Block 10 (5 McEwan Avenue) – Hazel Cottage, a 1920s cottage made from local cement blocks built by Charles McKeahnie with a short length galvanised iron roof, it is masonry clad and rendered, a small addition at rear, modern verandah columns and aluminium windows. There is a mix of fencing types and dates.
  - Block 13 (2 Railway Street) – Light industrial complex. Large shed in Colorbond with brick addition with timber gable. Newer shed in painted concrete blocks and Colorbond.
  - Block 14 – Foodland corner store in a basic painted concrete block construction.





**Figure 44** 15 Hazel Street - Block 4 Section 7 (ACT Heritage, 2014).



**Figure 46** 2 Railway Street - Block 13 Section 7 (ACT Heritage, 2014).



**Figure 45** 5 McEwan Avenue - Block 10 Section 7 (ACT Heritage, 2014).



**Figure 47** Corner of Railway Street and McEwan Avenue - Block 14 Section 7 (ACT Heritage, 2014).

- **Section 8** is bounded by Hazel Street to the south, George Street to the east, and River Street to the west. Section 8 is the conceptual centre of the residential areas of Oaks Estate, located along one of the main roads through the suburb, and centrally located on the high ground. Concentrated in the southern end of this section are the post-FCT features:
  - Block 1 (10 River Street) – 1920s cottage in a Californian bungalow style, brick chimney, new Colorbond roof, reclaimed windows of metal and timber. Large hardiplank and gal roofed double garage at rear. The building is a Hudson's Ready Cut Cottage Bungalow Number 403.
  - Block 2 (12 River Street) – Named "Roslyn". A weatherboard cottage, verandah enclosed with Hardiplank, various sheds added over time and red brick boundary fence with 1920s chainmesh gates. The houses on Blocks 2-4 were built to the same design (4 bedroom house with verandah) for Sydney Ryan (who was using them as an investment, buying them, building on them and quickly selling them off) by O'Rourke Carpenters of Queanbeyan in 1924.
  - Block 3 (14 River Street) – Named "Delora". A weatherboard cottage with a bullnose verandah enclosed with Hardiplank, various sheds added over time, new Colorbond roof and verandah enclosed. The houses on Blocks 2-4 were built to the same design (4 bedroom house with verandah) for Sydney Ryan (who was using them as an investment, buying them, building on them and quickly selling them off) by O'Rourke Carpenters of Queanbeyan in 1924.
  - Block 4 (16 River Street) – A weatherboard cottage, verandah enclosed, detached garage of salvaged materials. The houses on Blocks 2-4 were built to the same design (4 bedroom