

NATIONAL TRUST REGISTER OF SIGNIFICANT PLACES

CITATION

NAME OF PLACE: CANBERRA SERVICES CLUB

LOCATION OF PLACE:

Section and Block Suburb: Block 1, Section 15, GRIFFITH, ACT

Area bounded by:

FEATURES INTRINSIC TO THE HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PLACE:

The place comprises:

The exterior of the building (excluding outbuildings) together with the land enclosed by the property fences.

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE:

Canberra Services Club, dating from 1941 and understood to be Canberra's only surviving purpose-built wartime services recreation facility, is historically significant for its association with the provision of hospitality to service personnel by Canberra volunteers during the Second World War. The building is also directly associated with the then Governor General's wife, Lady Gowrie, who played a major role in raising finance for construction in the early 1940s.

Reflecting the characteristics of Inter-war Georgian Revival architecture, the building with its surrounding plantings is an important element of the Canberra Avenue streetscape in Manuka.

Having provided a recreational venue for the ex-service community for over fifty years, the Club is socially important to that group.

SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS:

The following requirements are identified as essential to the conservation of the heritage significance of this place. These requirements are prepared to implement the following conservation policy for the place:

1. Requirements Relating to the Building

1.1 The exterior of the building and its setting be conserved.

- 2. **Requirements Relating to the Setting**
 - 2.1
 - 2.2
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MANAGEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS:

In assessing this place for the interim Heritage Places Register, the Trust recommends that the following actions and activities should be undertaken which will enhance the heritage values of the place:

- That a conservation plan for the place be prepared.
 - That the services club function be retained on the site.
 - That the building continue to be maintained in good condition.
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DOCUMENT HISTORY

- 1. date Draft citation considered by Council at Meeting (number)
- 2. May '97 Revised citation for Council Meeting (number).....**APPROVED**
- 3. date Submitted for inclusion in interim Heritage Places Register

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

1. DESCRIPTION OF PLACE:

The building is a white-painted weatherboard structure, with a hipped roof clad with green tiles. Several extensions have flat roofs clad with metal. The building has a number of wings. Windows to the front (Canberra Ave) facade are twelve-pane, double-hung sashes, with green-painted shutters. Windows to the Manuka Circle elevation are also twelve-pane, double-hung sashes. The elevation facing the lane beside Manuka Oval has small slanted windows, and windows to the rear elevation are a combination of types. There are two brick chimneys, both corbelled. Several air-conditioning units protrude through the roof. At the front entrance there is a pedimented portico, partly glassed in. The front door is of frosted glass with 'Canberra Services Club est'd 1947', together with logo, printed on the glass. A flat-roofed section fronting Manuka Circle has 'The Lady Gowrie Services Hall' painted above the doorway. The doorway is part of a projecting entrance framed by paired timber pilasters, and the two doors have multiple panes of glass in their upper sections.

There are various exotic plantings in the grounds, including two very large mature trees in the front yard and several to the rear. Garden beds are also present. To the front of the building there is a memorial, a flagpole and a gun. The memorial is dedicated to the Kokoda campaign and Papua New Guineans (particularly Raphael Oimbari) who helped Australian servicemen. The statues were sculpted by Helena J. Anderson and the memorial was unveiled on 25 April 1970; the memorial was then with the Kingston-Narrabundah RSL which donated it to the Club in 1983. The gun is a Bofors 40mm anti-aircraft gun donated by RMC Duntroon and installed in February 1981. In the rear corner of the block is a pergola with seating, and just to the rear of the Club there is another pergola and barbecue. A lattice fence encircles most of the perimeter (front, rear and Manuka Circle), and there is a paling fence along the laneway.

The well-proportioned building is designed in the Inter-war Georgian Revival style, as is indicated by its proportions, massing, roof and fenestration. It is one of a number of weatherboard buildings in Canberra that helps to represent this architectural style.

The interior has seen considerable change and is no longer original. There are bar and seating areas, poker machines, toilets, a dance floor, a billiard room with two tables, etc. The walls are mainly timber-panelled and there are two fireplaces.

2. STATUS OF PLACE AT NOMINATION DATE:

Recorded by the National Trust of Australia (ACT)

3. BACKGROUND:

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 around 1000 pounds.

Lady Gowrie, wife of 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 and also some of Lady Gowrie's personal belongings were sold. Funds were also 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 men (and women, it appears); it was 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 by volunteers from the Canberra community and over 500 women of Canberra and the region assisted in total. Initially in the war 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 rendered to anyone in uniform following the club's formation, and this included United States forces. Naturally, personnel from local stations, like RAAF Fairbairn, were among those catered for by the club. 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. Meanwhile other organisations at other venues in Canberra (eg the YMCA and YWCA) also helped service personnel during the war.

At the end of the war there was uncertainty about the building's future for it had been built as a temporary structure (and in fact had been sited on part of a gazetted public road). But the need for a permanent club was recognised, for social opportunities for ex-service men and women 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 that year. After alterations and minor extensions (designed by Ken Oliphant) the building was officially opened as the Canberra Services Club in April 1948. The Council sub-leased the dance hall section to the RSL. With the income from the rent paid by the CSC and the RSL, the Council paid its expenses and used the rest of the money to make grants almost every year to Red Cross, Legacy, the RSL Distress Fund and the War Veterans Home. In the 1950s the CSC wanted to have the head lease itself, 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 dissolved; documents indicate the CSC continued the Council's policy of donating funds to ex-service related organisations as above. Activities at the Club through the years included billiard and snooker competitions, children's Christmas parties, ladies' social evenings, and dances. A liquor licence was granted to the CSC in November 1947; poker machines were installed from 1978. There were further alterations and minor extensions in 1957 (architect Robert Warren).

The place continues to operate as a club for returned service personnel and guests (non-service people are allowed to join today as associate members). It is probably the only purpose-built wartime services recreational venue surviving in Canberra.

4. RELEVANT PRINCIPAL NATIONAL HISTORIC THEMES:

Theme 7.5.2.2: Going to war.

5 ANALYSIS AGAINST THE CRITERIA SPECIFIED IN SCHEDULE 2 OF THE LAND (PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENT) ACT 1991

Under Section 56 the criteria for the assessment of the heritage significance of places are:

- (i) a place which demonstrates a high degree of technical and/or creative achievement, by showing qualities of innovation or departure, or representing a new achievement of its time;**

Not relevant

- (ii): a place which exhibits outstanding design or aesthetic qualities valued by the community or a cultural group;**

The Club, with its distinctive Inter-war Georgian Revival styling, its weatherboard cladding and surrounding mature plantings, and its location on the major thoroughfare Canberra Avenue, makes a significant contribution to the streetscape of Manuka.

- (iii) **a place which demonstrates a distinctive way of life, taste, tradition, religion, land use, custom, process, design or function which is no longer practised, is in danger of being lost, or is of exceptional interest;**

The Club reflects the provision of hospitality to service personnel during wartime. This custom was seen during both world wars and is an intrinsic part of the Australian home-front experience of war.

- (iv): **a place which is highly valued by the community or a cultural group for reasons of strong or special religious, spiritual, cultural, educational or social associations;**

The Canberra Services Club is highly valued by the ex-service community for its long association with recreation for members of that community, both in wartime and in peace.

- (v) **a place which is the only known or only comparatively intact example of its type;**

The Club appears to be the only purpose-built, wartime, services recreational venue surviving in Canberra today.

- (vi) **a place which is a notable example of a class of natural or cultural places or landscapes and which demonstrates the principal characteristics of that class;**

The Club, in its proportions, massing, roof and window design reflects well the characteristics of Inter-war Georgian Revival architectural styling.

- (vii): **a place which has strong or special associations with a person, group, event, development or cultural phase which played a significant part in local or national history;**

The Canberra Services Club is historically significant for its direct associations with wartime Canberra. Built to provide hospitality to service personnel in the capital during the Second World War, the building played an important role during the war years. Further, the place has a strong association with Lady Gowrie (wife of the then Governor General) who played a central role in financing and leading the institution in the early 1940s.

- (viii) **a place which represents the evolution of a natural landscape, including significant geological features, landforms, biota or natural processes;**

Not relevant.

- (ix) **a place which is a significant habitat or locality for the life cycle of native species; for rare, endangered or uncommon species; for species at the limits of their natural range; or for district occurrences of species;**

Not relevant

- (x) **a place which exhibits unusual richness, diversity or significant transitions of flora, fauna or natural landscapes and their elements; or**

Not relevant

- (ix) **a place which demonstrates a likelihood of providing information which will contribute significantly to a wider understanding of natural or cultural history, by virtue of its use as a research site, teaching site, type locality or benchmark site**

Not relevant.

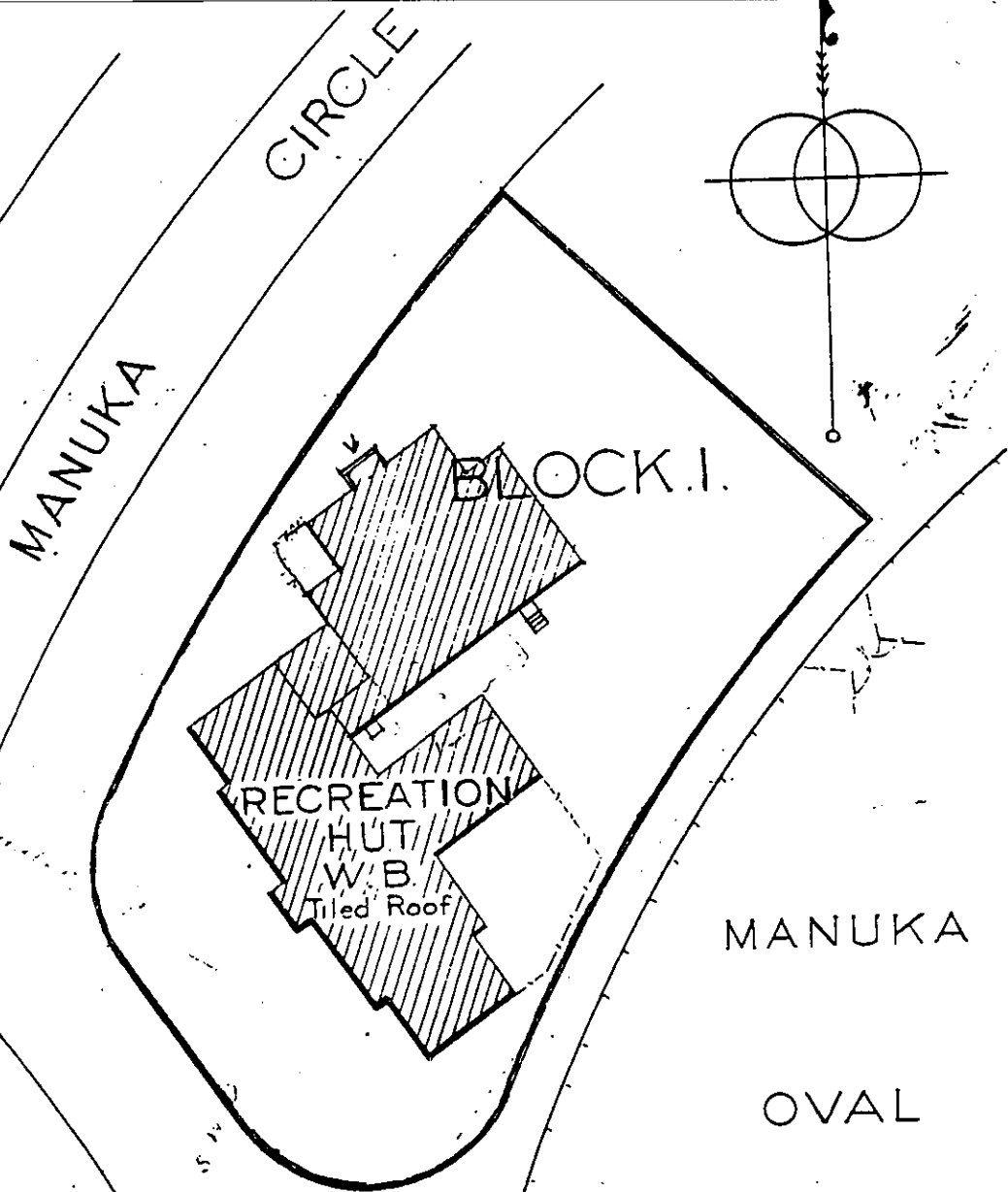
6. REFERENCES:

Author Title date publication

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Series A2421/T1, item G1314.

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 - ❖ Campbell, Nan (Mrs George). *Personal communication*, 1997.
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 - ❖ Garnett, Rodney, and Hyndes, Danielle. *The Heritage of the Australian Capital Territory*. Canberra: National Trust of Australia (ACT) et al, 1992.
 - ❖ Gibbney, Jim. *Canberra 1913-1953*. Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, 1988.
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Initial research by Sarah Crozier, volunteer; citation prepared by Matthew Higgins, acting Classification Officer, April 1997.



Block I is
 approx.
 120' x 208'
 = 25,000 sqft!

Drawn by _____ Traced by <i>J</i> Exam'd by <i>JM</i>	Date	BLOCK I MANUKA CIRCLE GRIFFITH Australian Capital Territory Scale 40 Feet to an Inch	Surveyed by _____
	<i>5.2.41</i>		Date of Survey _____
	<i>5.2.41</i>		Azimuth _____
			Comput. Sheet _____
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