

NATIONAL TRUST REGISTER OF SIGNIFICANT PLACES

CITATION

NAME OF PLACE: GORMAN HOUSE

LOCATION OF PLACE:

Section 53, Braddon. Bounded by Ainslie Avenue, Currong Street, Batman Street & Doonkuna Street.

FEATURES INTRINSIC TO THE HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PLACE:

The features intrinsic to the heritage significance of the place are:

The central building and its interior
The associated pavilions and courtyards
The landscaped setting

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE:

Gorman House (Hostel No.3) reflects the social and economic climate that many people experienced during the early days of Canberra's development. As the place of first contact for so many Canberrans, Gorman House featured strongly in the social history of Canberra, particularly during the city's early development as the Federal Capital of Australia. Many hundreds of people lived at Gorman House during its 48 years as a hostel. It represents the shared experiences and the community spirit which developed as a result of communal living. As a result it is imbued with considerable value, evidenced by its place in local historic and social documentation and its continuing role in Canberra's social fabric.

Gorman House is one of a number of buildings designed by the Commonwealth Architect John Smith Murdoch in the Garden-Pavilion style particularly for Canberra.

It exemplifies the design attributes of the Federal Capital, particularly the application of the garden city concept by Walter Burley Griffin, and is important for its contribution to an understanding of early Canberra Architecture. Although not spectacular individually, the group of eight buildings with the landscaped areas in and around them make a very positive architectural statement. When compared to the Hotel Canberra (Hostel No.1) and the Hotel Kurrajong (Hostel No.2) Gorman House represents the more modest application of Murdoch's Garden-Pavilion style of early Canberra architecture.

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:

The building and the landscaped setting should be conserved with regard to its original design.

NB Gorman House was classified by the ACT
National Trust in April 1998
Cg.

Any action relating to these requirements is development for the purposes of the Act and will require approval prior to undertaking the activity. To undertake development without such approval may be an offence.

1. Requirements relating to the Building

- 1.1 External and internal alterations and additions to the existing building shall reflect and complement its original architectural style.
- 1.2 No additional buildings or structures shall be erected within the precinct unless the proposed works will not adversely affect the significance of the place.
- 1.3 Demolition shall not be permitted, other than in exceptional circumstances, such as those in which buildings and structures are structurally unsound and beyond economic repair, or where there are significant health and safety reasons to warrant demolition. Demolition shall not be permitted unless it can be demonstrated that there is no prudent and feasible alternative. Partial demolition of the original fabric of the place shall not be permitted unless it can be demonstrated that it is to reveal fabric of greater significance.

2. Requirements relating to the Setting

- 2.1 The landscaped setting of the Hotel be appropriately conserved with regard to its original design and the Garden Conservation Plan.

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.

- 1. Gorman House continues to operate as a community arts centre and a market venue for arts and craft.**

DOCUMENT HISTORY

1. (date) Draft citation considered by ACT Heritage Council Meeting (number)
2. (date) Draft citation released for public comment.
3. (date) Revised citation for ACT Heritage Council Meeting (number)
4. (date) Gazetted in an interim Heritage Places Register

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

1. DESCRIPTION OF PLACE:

Gorman House (Hostel No.3) was constructed between the years 1924-1925. The buildings were constructed by day labour with a budget of £25,000 and were completed, with the exception of special fittings, by the end of 1924. Day labour was used in order to save time necessary for the preparation of detailed drawings, specification, and tender procedures.

It was designed by the Federal Architect John Smith Murdoch in the Garden-Pavilion style drawing strong influences from American Prairie, Californian Bungalow and Australian Colonial styles. The design was selected to blend in with Walter Burley Griffin's landscape concept of Canberra as a Garden City. Griffin's intention was to shun high multi-storied buildings for more open horizontal structures giving 'more and better sunlight, verdure and beauty'.

Gorman House was built on a deliberately less pretentious scale than the other two hostels, Hotel Canberra (Hostel No.1) and Hotel Kurrajong (Hostel No.2) of the Garden Pavilion style. The buildings were originally designed to accommodate 80 people but later increased to 122. The complex of eight buildings has a central core for dining and other public rooms, and living accommodation in seven detached pavilions originally single storey, ranged symmetrically around the core. † The pavilions are connected by covered walk ways surrounding two garden courtyards. The buildings are roughcast rendered brick, with hipped tiled roofs. There are now both single and two storied pavilions. The latter were designed by Murdoch and added in 1927 to increase the accommodation space. The dining section is timber, with exposed timber Queen post trusses giving the room a strong character reflecting the interior design of hostels of the period.

The courtyards are strong elements of Gorman House. They give the appearance of open space within the confines of the building. They are grassed with open pathways and gardens. In the centre of each stand mature and well-developed Mexican hawthorns (*Crataegus acerfolia*) providing shade and making the courtyards peaceful environments. The covered ways surrounding the courtyards are planted with vines adding to the floral nature of the courtyards. Neither the buildings nor the open spaces dominate resulting in the courtyards becoming pleasant and relaxing areas. Other plantings include wisterias along the walkways and Chinese elms forming a streetscape boundary to the pavilions. Various shrubs and hedges are within the internal open spaces. A recent planting proposal has been developed to compliment the period architecture of Gorman House and the concept of a garden setting. The scheme is simple and based on symmetry and formality in keeping with the original garden design and aimed at a return to the character the grounds would have had in the 1930s. Little of this work has so far been done apart from re-grassing the courtyards, some minor replanting with appropriate varieties, edging, drainage and removal of seedling trees.

In 1981 major alterations were completed turning the complex from its original hostel form into a centre for arts performances and administration. The majority of changes were to the internal fabric of the buildings. Internal walls were altered or removed from most of the pavilions creating areas of open space in what were previously rooms. Included in the changes were the creation of several performing arts theatres, studios and galleries as well as office space for arts organisations. Internal ceilings were removed in two pavilion areas to create more vertical space for performances. Additions to the exterior included the necessity for external fire-escapes from the upper floors of the two storey (blocks E & B) buildings and electrical conduit running along the ceiling of the enclosed walkways. The latter alterations were not done with consideration for the appearance of the courtyard areas and are at odds with the original design concept. White latticed wooden gates to entrances off Batman Street have been erected for security purposes but impair the visual aspect of the buildings. In spite of these, however, the general external integrity of the group is of a high order. The buildings have been reasonably well maintained and appear structurally sound.

2. STATUS OF PLACE AT NOMINATION DATE:

- Classified by National Trust of Australia (ACT) 1981

- Register of the National Estate (Database No. 013276, File No. 8/01/000/0016
- Listed by (former) National Capital Development Commission, *Sites of Significance in the ACT*, Site No. NC 14.

3. BACKGROUND

Gorman House was built to provide living accommodation for junior administrative staff on moderate salaries who were transferred to Canberra. It was known as Hostel No.3. Hostel No.1 (Hotel Canberra) and Hostel No.2 (Kurrajong Hotel) were built in a more extravagant style to house politicians and senior administrative staff, higher on Canberra's developing social scale. Gorman House sought to create a comfortable and controlled domestic environment for its residents while providing a social and recreational background separate from the more senior residents of the other hostels.

Gorman House was originally named Hotel Ainslie. The name was changed to Gorman House in honour of Clarence Gorman, one of the Federal Capital Commissioners who died unexpectedly in Sydney on 24 January 1927.¹ A new hostel being constructed further up Ainslie Avenue, on the corner of Limestone Avenue, then received the name of Hotel Ainslie. Gorman's widow, who had taken an interest in the welfare of the female residents, was entertained at an afternoon tea by the women of the newly named Gorman House on Saturday 21 July 1927.²

From 1927 to 1945 Gorman House was used as a residence for single females.³ The electoral roll for 1928 shows 64 females living in the Hostel together with one married couple and one single male. The latter were most likely staff. The majority of the females had their occupations listed as 'typiste' (typists); seven were listed as 'home duties', four as 'stenographer', seven as 'home duties', and one 'private secretary; and one 'civil servant'.⁴ Along with Beauchamp House, Gorman House was to remain primarily a resident for young women for a considerable time and became known colloquially as "The Hen Coop". It inevitably became a place where young bachelors desired to visit. During the war years an incident caused concern among the management of the Hostel. In 1942 the 8th Pursuit Squadron of the United States Army Air Corps was stationed at Fairbairn Air Base. Although the squadron did not stay long in Canberra some young male fliers were found late at night in the women's bedrooms. As a result the regulations concerning visitors to Gorman House were reviewed and severely tightened to 'puritanical' levels.⁵

Nevertheless, Gorman House provided a strong social background to its residents who often became strongly identified with and within the Hostel. This attachment to place can be seen in the naming of the pavilions and their residents, which by 1927 were known colloquially as: *The Savages*, *The Morgue*, *The Incubator*, *Married Peoples (Love's Arbor)*, *Sleepy Hollow*, *The Ennery*, and *The Dead Marines*.

From 1945, after the war years, Gorman House was open to both male and female residents. The end of World War II also saw European migrants arriving in Canberra and many were accommodated in Gorman House.

In the 1960s new hostels such as Macquarie and Gowrie were built to accommodate the new generation of Commonwealth Public Servants coming to Canberra. Many preferred the more modern conditions they had to offer. And while some preferred the more intimate character of Gorman House, a decision was made to close Gorman House in October 1972. The decision to close was influenced by the reducing rate of occupancy and the cost of maintaining the small hostel which was, by now, in need of substantial repairs.

No major repair work was done for some time even though Gorman House was to accommodate the Australian Government Retirement Benefits Office in Block B during the mid-1970s. In 1976 it became the Commonwealth Police Training Academy. Members of the current Federal Police force

¹ Gibbney, J. *Canberra 1913-1953*, p.150.

² Gugler, A. *The Builders of Canberra 1909-1929*. p.303.

³ Freeman, P. *The Early Canberra House. Living in Canberra 1911-1933*, p.84

⁴ *ibid* pp. 304-5.

⁵ Gibbney *op. cit.* p.217.

have memories of putting their feet through the rotting floor boards. In 1979 the Police Academy moved to new premises, and Gorman House was left empty again.⁶

In 1980, several arts and community groups needed office and performance space and lobbied for the use of Gorman House as a Community Arts Centre. As a result, the architects Clem Cummings and Associates were asked by the National Capital Development Commission to prepare a structural feasibility report on the buildings. Several proposals regarding internal rebuilding were considered and the Cummings recommendations were adopted for developing Gorman House as a centre for arts groups and individual artists in Canberra. A six stage program of internal rebuilding and external maintenance was completed in 1981. Particular consideration was given to the main features of the original Garden-Pavilion style of Murdoch's and the exterior, the central dining room and the courtyards were preserved. In September of that year Gorman House reopened again as a Community Arts Centre. The official opening was performed by Mrs Tammie Fraser, wife of the current Prime Minister.

Today Gorman House acts as an arts centre serving artists, arts organisations and community groups. The centre is well utilised by the public and operates an art and craft market in its courtyards each Sunday, a cafe and art retail shop.

Gorman House is perhaps one of the better known of the early hostels in Canberra and still evokes images of its hostel past. An account by a former resident typifies the strong feeling towards Gorman House by those Canberra residents who lived there:

I've got very fond memories of Gorman and I can go back there now... I was fascinated to go back one Saturday afternoon with my daughter. She wanted to do a dance class... and so... I sat outside under the tree and glanced through the window which of course didn't please her, but she was dancing where my bedroom was.⁷

4. RELEVANT PRINCIPLE NATIONAL HISTORIC THEMES:

4. Building settlements, towns and cities

4.1 Planning urban settlement

4.6 Remembering significant phases in the development of towns and suburbs.

Gorman House (Hostel No. 3), originally named the Hotel Ainslie, represents an era of Canberra's development when government officers were required to live in the new capital of Canberra where accommodation was scarce. Gorman House, along with the other government hostels of the 1920s, was significant in both the geography and the social life of the growing city for its first fifty years.

Gorman House played a significant role in the Federal Capital Commission's (FCC) building programme providing a modest style of accommodation for the administrative staff (both married and unmarried) who were transferred to Canberra for the 1927 opening of Parliament in the newly completed provisional Parliament House. Hostels were also necessary to provide suitable accommodation for Government officials, Parliamentarians and other shorter term visitors to Canberra who required temporary accommodation rather than permanent homes.

The intention behind the hostel scheme was that politicians, public servants and those in private occupations could live both well and economically in boarding houses with communal catering facilities, rather than in family cottages. Besides this economic rationale there was an acute shortage of both private and government housing in Canberra. Gorman House, was the third of the hostels built in the early 1920s. The Hotel Canberra was Hostel No. 1, Hotel Kurrajong was Hostel No. 2, and Hotel Acton (now housing the Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies) was Hostel No.4. The provision of these, and other boarding houses, in Canberra developed into a system of hostels for different categories of public service personnel and Parliamentarians which were scaled in quality, if not in official terms, at least in the consciousness of many Canberra residents. Gorman House was considered to be of modest accommodation for those public servants on modest wages. The Hotel Canberra was considered superior accommodation for Parliamentarians and senior government

⁶ Green, S. n.d. "The Most Reasonable Place in Canberra", pp 9-10.

⁷ cited in Legge, K & Wheeler B. 'Remembering the early Hostels' in Freeman, P. *Op cit.* p. 84.

officials. This social scale was followed by the Hotel Kurrajong which was of a high standard but less than that of the Hotel Canberra. Hotel Acton, lower on this socio-economic scale was for new arrivals. Brassey House, Beauchamp House were considered similar in standing while Gorman House became the residence for unmarried women (and nicknamed "the Hen Coop"). The Bachelors' quarters in Acton was at the bottom of the perceived hostel social scale.

The advent of the Depression resulted in reduced spending on the growth of Canberra. The city's hostels and hotels were found to be uneconomic⁸ because of the need to reserve space and provide extra services which were used only in the parliamentary session. Indeed, the only time some of the hostels' books showed a profit was during the sittings of Parliament when they often reached their occupation capacity. The Hotels Ainslie and Wellington were put out to private management after 1929, followed by the closure of the Hotel Acton which was reserved for offices.

Despite intermittent use as commercial private boarding houses, government offices or even being left vacant, Canberra's hostels survived the Depression to be put to residential use again in the forties. Between the 1947 census and 1951 the population of Canberra grew by 8,000 to 24,000 of whom just over 5,000 (21%) lived in hostels. The 1950s in Canberra were again plagued by shortages of private housing, both newly built and available for rent or purchase while potential tenants always exceeded vacancies for government houses.

5. Working

5.2 Organising workers and workplaces

8. Developing cultural institutions and ways of life

8.1 Organising recreation

8.12 Living in and around Australian homes

9. Marking the phases of life

9.4 Forming families and partnerships

Many people lived in Canberra's hostels, for this was the 'hostel era' of the new capital. Few public servants who moved to jobs in Canberra escaped some period of internship in one of the hostels. Some found the life trying, especially young single men who, were often driven to drink by the weather and boredom. Single women often wondered if they would ever leave the hostels since flats seemed to go only to married couples. 'Why cannot I', mourned one of them, 'have the freedom of choosing my own colour schemes and furniture, food and meal hours, and friends and extra-mural associates?' Sometimes the shortage of hostel accommodation for married couples forced their segregation into one-sex establishments. A former hostel resident recalled a young couple in this plight who used to sleep together in the husband's hostel bedroom until ordered not to do so by the hostel manager!⁹

Living in a hostel environment could extend over several years. People built personal sanctuaries in their rooms and developed routines which became hallowed by usage. Management changes to the house rules (sometimes petty and insensitive) could meet with fierce resistance. Petitions were signed against such regulations as insisting men wear ties to meals, banning women from wearing strapless gowns, sun-frocks and jeans to the dining room, and insisting that furniture in guests' rooms had to conform to a regulation pattern. At one Hostel guests became hostile when the Department of Interior proposed to omit fruit juices from evening meals at a time when expectant mothers and young children were staying there.

But on the whole, the hostel system functioned relatively well and most people were able to adapt to it, pending an offer of a government home, in the near future and to find ways of alleviating the monotony. Most hostels had social clubs which organised outings as well as table tennis, carpet bowls and chess. Films were shown in some hostels on Sunday evenings. Despite the personal restrictions, Canberra's hostel life had much to recommend it. Guests had good accommodation and prepared meals (although not always appreciated). They were served at table, even given sandwiches to take to work. And the cost of their stay was generally reasonable and substantially subsidised by the government.

⁸ Appendix B

⁹ Sparke, E *Canberra 1954-1980*, p.25.

The story of Gorman House is typical of many of the Canberra hostels built in the 1920s, having a varied history of uses as both residential an/or office accommodation.

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;**

Gorman House is a good example of the few former Government Hostels in Canberra in the Garden-Pavilion style designed by the Commonwealth Architect J.S. Murdoch. Although on a more modest scale the design of Gorman House is consistent with the other early hostels (the Kurrajong Hotel, Hotel Acton, and Hotel Canberra). The Garden-pavilion style was developed for Canberra to blend in to the environment and to conform with Walter Burley Griffin's concept of a garden city as the new capital. Griffin's intention was to shun high multi-storied buildings for more open horizontal structures giving better sunlight and beauty.

Although of the same architectural style as the Hotel Canberra and Hotel Kurrajong, Gorman House is an example of the adaptability of the Garden-Pavilion style of architecture to a more modest hotel building.

Since its construction the building has gone through several phases of use and a major renovation and additions. However, its integrity remains high with much of the original characteristics of the Garden Pavilion style remaining.

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

Gorman House represents an early phase in Canberra's developing social and cultural history. This phase has come to be known locally as the "Hostel Era". Originally name Hostel No. 3 and Ainslie Hotel, it was one of the first hostels built during the early years of Canberra. Unlike the more impressive Hotel Canberra and Hotel Kurrajong which were designed to accommodate senior public servants and members of parliament, Gorman House was designed to provide suitable accommodation for Canberra's junior public servants on modest wages. As such, it reflects one of the various levels of the socio-economic system that developed in Canberra during its early years. . There are many Canberra residents who consider Gorman House their first home in Canberra.

For many young people who came to work in Canberra in the 1920s, 30s, and 40s, the Commonwealth Government Hostels were central to life in Canberra. Until after World War II, there was little formal social activity in Canberra; the cinema and weekly dances being the main events. Most Gorman House residents were young, earned little and came from places as far away as Brisbane, Hobart and Perth. Gorman House, therefore, provided a home, a family, friends and entertainment, as well as an adventure into adulthood and independence. In recollecting their time at Gorman House many ex-residents comment, "We made our own fun".

- (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;**
Today Gorman House is a popular venue for the promotion of the arts and is also a valued local cultural centre. It is used extensively by Canberra's population as a central art and craft market place.

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

- (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;
- (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;
- (viii) a place which represents the evolution of a natural landscape, including significant geological features, landforms, biota or natural processes;
- (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;
- (x) a place which exhibits unusual richness, diversity or significant transitions of flora, fauna or natural landscapes and their elements; or
- (xi) 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.

6. **REFERENCES:**

Author Title date publication

Australian Heritage Commission Gorman House citation, Register of the National Estate database no. 013276, File No. 8/01/000/0016.

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Freeman, P. 1996 *The Early Canberra House. Living in Canberra 1911-1933*, The Federal Capital Federal Press of Australia, Canberra.

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National Trust of Australia (ACT) Files relating to classification of Gorman House

Sparke, E. 1988 *Canberra 1954-1980*, Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra.

Prepared by Dr Peter Dowling
for National Trust of Australia (ACT)
4-2-98

Appendix a

Extract from Federal Capital Commission Memorandum on Hotels and Boarding Houses 6 November 1929

Gorman House

Accommodation for 124 persons, consisting of -

Single rooms - 84
Double rooms - 20

Tariff

Single room	30/- per week
Double room	30/- per week

Is maintained exclusively as a Boarding House for lady officers of the Public Service and Commission Staffs.

Average accommodation occupied for 12 months - 75%

Appendix b

Extract from Federal Capital Commission Statement, Hotels and Boarding Establishments, 1930-31, Australian Archives, A1/1 34/9419

**Canberra Hostels
Financial Results for 1930-31**

Hostel	Average No. of staff per day	Wages Cost for year	Average No. of guests per day	Cost of staff per guest per week
Hotel Canberra	42	£7,666	38	£3.19.1
Hotel Kurrajong	34	£5,607	47	£2.6.10
Gorman House	20	£2,821	90	£0.12.3

Item	Hotel Canberra	Hotel Kurrajong	Gorman House
Salaries & wages	£7,666	£5,607	£2,821
Provisions	£6,000	£4,057	£2884
Freight, Transport & Incidentals	£299	£215	£131
Laundry	£1,197	£620	£377
Fuel	£673	£589	£380
Light & Power	£1,465	£826	£394
Telephone	£223	£4	£35
Household Expenses	£174	£155	£132
Sundries	£259	£178	£221
Overhead	£594	£428	£252
Total	£18,550	£12,679	£7,627

Item	Hotel Canberra	Hotel Kurrajong	Gorman House
Working Expenses	£18,550	£12,679	£7,627
Cash Maintenance	£1,617	£528	£433
Total	£20,167	£13,207	£8,060
Revenue	£15,485	£11,398	£7,172
Cash Loss	£4,682	£1,809	£888
Cash Loss per guest per week	£2. 7. 11	£0. 15. 1	£0. 3. 10

Appendix c

Recollections of Gorman House and Canberra

by

Shelia Wise (nee Thomas)

[Shelia Wise arrived in Canberra from Perth in late 1933 as a government employee posted to the Centre for Scientific and Industrial Research (later CSIRO). She was 18 years old when she took accommodation at Gorman House. She left Canberra for Sydney in 1937.]

Despite the fact that it was a boarding house, Gorman House was, to my way of thinking, not unpleasant. When I took up residence there, it was for girls only which, in those days, was accepted without question. There were roughly between 70 and 100 girls living there and, with the exception of a few double rooms, it was, for the most part, single accommodation. I don't know whether residence was restricted to public servants. While all my friends were in the P.S., with such a large establishment, there were many girls living there whom I never knew and never saw except at meal times. So I had no idea where they worked.

We had to clean our own rooms but we were not required to launder our sheets and towels - these were issued every Monday. There were laundry facilities for personal washing and a drying yard with clotheslines.

The meals were reasonable, typical boarding house fare - no cordon bleu cooking - with menus and waitresses at table. Meals were announced by the ringing of a loud hand bell. Cut lunches were supplied, at no extra charge, to those who wished it. Some girls went back to Gorman for lunch if they worked within a reasonable distance.

The single rooms, while not large, were adequate for one person. The furniture consisted of a bed, dressing table, built in wardrobe - each room was fitted with a wash basin. We also had a power point which is by no means earth shattering except that our power points had meters attached so that whenever we used an iron, radiator etc the power units registered on the meter and the cost was deducted from our pay. The floors were covered with linoleum which was rather chilly in the winter time. Many of the girls had small radiators which made things more comfortable - and expensive as they clocked up units of power on the meters. Of course there was always an open fire in the lounge room. Some of the girls had their own "extras" like electric jugs for making morning and afternoon tea which were not provided by the establishment.

The tariff at Gorman House was thirty shillings a week, but of that, five shillings "Canberra Allowance" was deducted bringing the weekly board down to twenty five shillings. This was extremely reasonable except that for young girls of my age (18 years) it was quite a bit out of the pay packet. The older girls, on higher salaries, were much better off financially.

Although Gorman House was controlled by the Department of the Interior, the running of the place was in the hands of a Mrs Hicks whom I could only describe as "uncompromising". I recall that once, on Anzac Day, I had been on a walk with some friends. It was a freezing day and when we returned we went into the lounge where the fire was laid. So I put a match to it. Suddenly, Mrs Hicks stormed in demanding to know who lit the fire. I confessed to being the guilty party whereupon she roared, "You will be fined for this. No fires are permitted before 1st May." She was as good as her word. A fine of five shillings appeared against my name on the return from Gorman House for that period. The Officer in Charge of the section very understandingly deleted it.

A few months prior to my departure for Sydney, Gorman House became "Co-educational" ie men were permitted to take up residence - a few young fellows appeared

on the scene. As none were domiciled in rooms where I was, I do not know how the bathroom and toilet facilities were negotiated. However, there were no repercussions as far as I was aware, so I gather that the change was quite smooth.

The bus services in Canberra were simple - there were only two - No1 and No2. As I recall, they both plied between Ainslie and Kingston and return. The difference was that, while both ran through Civic and Acton and proceeded along Commonwealth Avenue, No1 would continue - turn at the P.M.'s lodge but No2 would veer off to the left and run past Government Offices, old Parliament House to the Hotel Kurrajong, Brassey House and Hotel Wellington. Both would end up at Kingston. Although there might have been variations, basically these were the routes and areas serviced.

At that time, these were the only routes. Consequently, when I was working at the C.S.-I.R. [CSIRO] I had no option but to walk. It was a long trek across a paddock from Gorman to Civic, then hike along a gravel road to Black Mountain. I don't know whether the road had a name, it did, I was not aware of it.

With regard to sports and recreational interests, football was played at Northbourne Oval - probably other venues. I played hockey for a season and a number of girls played tennis at the Northbourne tennis courts - now extinct. One or two played golf. there was really not a great deal to do in Canberra apart from walks - up Mt. Ainslie of course - and outings with the hikers' Club. There was also the cinema on Saturday nights. I cannot recall whether the cinema functioned on week nights. It did, I never went. The only cinema was the Capital at Manuka. In due course, the Civic Theatre at Civic Centre was built which made cinema going more convenient - for Gorman House girls at any rate. Also there were very occasional recitals at the Albert Hall. On the whole, as far as I can recall, there was very little of interest taking place generally. You "made your own fun", such as it was. Gorman House girls were somewhat restricted in this regard. The girls whose homes were in Canberra had an advantage in that they were able to invite friends to their homes.

Some girls at Gorman (like me) were extremely fortunate to have a friend who took an interest in one's welfare. In my case, my friend's home was open to me at all times and I invariably strolled around there on Saturday or Sunday afternoons. It was a relief to be able to escape the boarding house atmosphere even for a brief period. She was almost like a surrogate mother to me. I was able to reciprocate by always being available to baby sit for her when required.

(Courtesy of Ann Gugler)

**Shelia Thomas (standing on right) & friends
Gorman House
1937**

