



Friends of Manuka Pool

July 2021

Welcome to Newsletter #7

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1. President's report

Welcome to the FoMP winter newsletter. For many of our members and friends the countdown is on for 31 October and the first swim of the season. Next season may well operate under 'COVID -normal' but it will be a small price to pay.

For a couple of years, FoMP has been proposing a replacement fence for the pool. The ACT government has decided that a new fence similar to the one around Manuka Oval will be installed along the front side of the pool and will include an improved access gate for wheelchairs and prams. Installation is expected this year.

We are advised that a Statement of Heritage Effect and plans for the fence are being developed and, once they are ready, ACT Property Group will meet with Friends of Manuka Pool to discuss.

Opened in 1931, Manuka Pool is still celebrating its 90th year and we look forward to continuing our celebrations of the pool and its place in Canberra's architectural, political, sporting and social story. We will keep you informed of events as they evolve.

As part of the year-long celebrations we hosted two excellent talks in March, one on the history of the Honour Board by local historian Frances McGee and the other on the heritage and architecture of the pool by David Hobbes of Philip Leeson Architects.

Also in March, *Canberra Times* journalist Sarah Lansdown and photographer Elesa Kurtz ran a great story about Manuka Pool and vintage swimsuits. It was a story of fashion, community and social history using a vintage swimming costume collection to share the stories of four women connected to the pool through family, work, lap swimming and a love of art deco.



Can you spot FoMP's President and Treasurer?

Photo by Elesa Kurtz

All four women have unique experiences of Manuka Pool yet share the same feelings about what a wonderful space it is and its ongoing part of Canberra's story.

I hope you enjoy the newsletter.

Rebecca Scouller
President

2. Why memorial swimming pools

Our last newsletter included an article on the proliferation of 'memorial pools' after World War II. Although Manuka Pool is not a memorial pool, we noted memorial pools in Braidwood, Moruya and Gundagai.

The article concluded by asking why swimming pools have become linked in the national psyche to war service.

The answer can be found in Ken Inglis's book, *Sacred Places: War Memorials in the Australian Landscape*. Many memorial swimming pools along with memorial halls and other community facilities were constructed after World War II.



Queanbeyan War Memorial Swimming Pool,
opened in 1961

After World War I (1914-18), towns and cities around Australia raised funds for memorials, often obelisks or statues, many listing the names of those who fought, with an asterisk denoting those who died. These memorials and statues across the country became the sites of mourning and memory for the families and communities.

In commemorating the sacrifices of World War II (1939-45), Australia followed a trend across the English-speaking world for utilitarian memorials.

In 1944 the newly established Gallup Poll asked a sample of the population 'What kind of war memorial do you favour?' Ninety per cent favoured 'Hospitals, schools, halls, parks, anything useful'. In 1945 the RSL announced it was 'against statues and such like.'

The Federal government supported this trend and offered tax relief for war memorial halls, libraries, swimming pools and similar projects.



Yass and District War Memorial Pool,
opened in 1965

It made sense. In post-war Australia there was a need for more facilities following the population boom from increased immigration and a high birth rate. Local councils were eager to avoid any economic downturn after the war so construction of

public facilities that were combined with war memorials became part of town improvement plans in the 1950s and early 1960s.

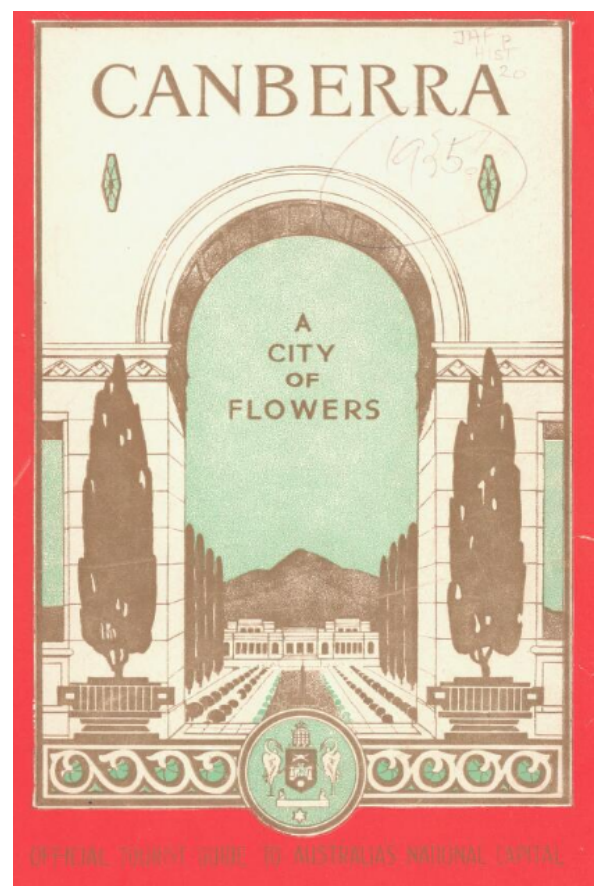
In Braidwood, the names of those who died in World War II were added to the pedestal of the World War I memorial soldier standing in sight of the War Memorial Pool. There is also an honour roll in the Servicemen's Club.

The NSW Government register for war memorials currently lists 236 war memorial swimming pools across the state. These include the nearby Queanbeyan Pool, and pools in Yass and Harden Murrumburrah.

Rosemary Hollow

3. Canberra, a sylvan fairyland

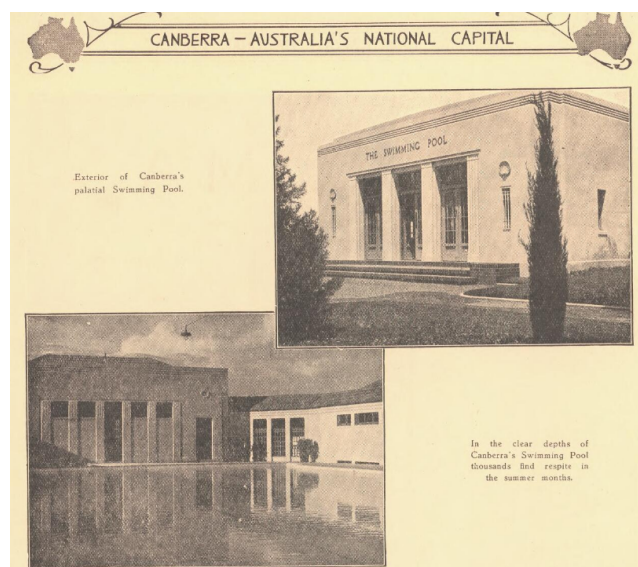
As early as 1935, four years after its opening, The Swimming Pool, as Manuka Pool was then known, featured prominently in a Canberra Tourist brochure produced by the Federal Department of the Interior (and dug up up by Rosemary Hollow).



Shunning the common conception of Canberra as a handful of buildings rising from sheep paddocks on limestone planes, the copy-writer did not hold back in extolling the wonders of the 'City of Flowers'.

... if the splendour of vivid sunsets, rivalling in magic those of the Sahara—the while deepening in mystery the purple-blue mists brooding at dusk over the enfolding hills—stirs in you an appreciation of nature's artistry, then you will come to Canberra!

The purple-blue prose was applied to 'Canberra's palatial Swimming Pool' where 'thousands find respite in the summer months'. (She didn't add 'often at the same time'.)



The pool is described as 'one of the most modern white-tiled public swimming baths in Australia', noting that 'costumes may be hired'.

And which long-term Canberran has not idled away the hours at Manuka Pool having thoughts like this one?

To glory for a while in the blue-goldness of its mellow sunshine, and to marvel, at night, at the star-lit stillness ... until soft winds arise and whisper hauntingly among trees on the mountain tops of the growing enchantment of the city beneath—typically Australian in its setting, yet, seemingly, a sylvan fairyland.

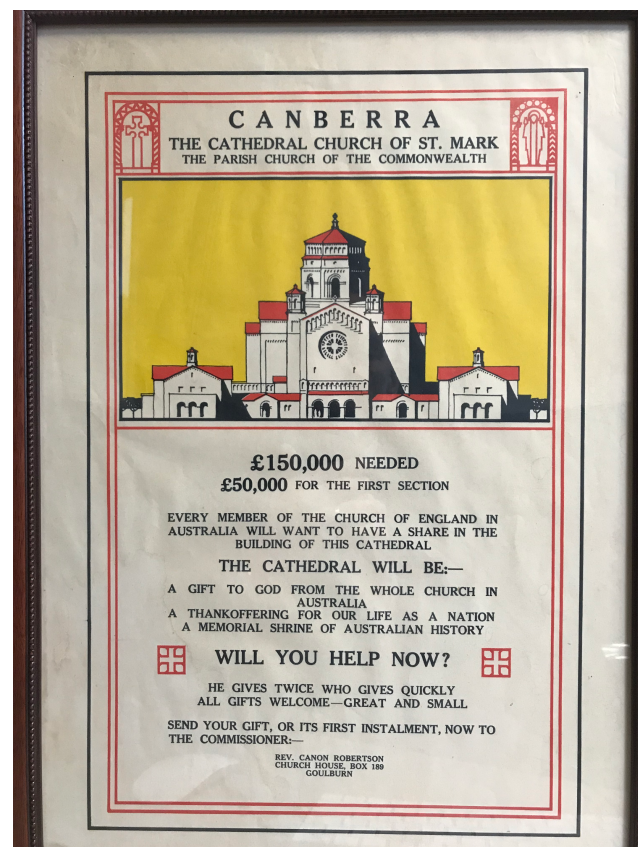
4. The Cathedral by the lake

While on the subject of early Canberra history, imagine the monolith shown in the poster sitting on the rise across King's Avenue from the National Gallery of Australia.

The poster was part of an appeal in the 1940s, initiated by Anglican Bishop Ernest Burgmann, to raise £150,000 to build the Cathedral Church of St.

Mark on the site now occupied by the modest St Mark's Theological College.

The site, now Charles Sturt University's theological campus, was ceded by Canberra's planners to the Church of England for just such a cathedral, which would have been grander than the Catholic one in Manuka.



More precisely, the cathedral would have been built on a site now protected as remnant natural temperate grassland. Dominated by Kangaroo Grass, it also features endangered species like the Button Wrinklewort.



Button Wrinklewort

Luckily, the burghers of the Anglican Church were not willing to stump up the funds. So now, in the words of Stephen Pickard, director of the Australian Centre for Christianity and Culture, “we ended up with a different kind of cathedral, low to the ground, encompassing the land and indigenous ethos, ecumenical and culturally engaged – like an Australian version of Westminster Abbey!”

5. Treasurer's report

Memberships

Thank you all for your memberships, which keep FoMP going. We hope you'll continue your support.

In late May, I emailed renewal notices to those whose memberships expire on 30 June 2021. Thanks to those who have responded. For those who have not yet renewed, please consider doing so. If you do not wish to renew, please let me know so that I can update our membership list.

Many members are fully covered until 30 June 2022 and some to 30 June 2023 due to having 3-year memberships. A few members have asked about lifetime memberships. We introduced this a couple of years ago, setting the fee at \$200/person. (Very cheap, for a ten-year old.) Obviously, a life membership serves as a very helpful contribution to our work.

Please email friendsofmanukapool@gmail.com to find out when your membership expires and indicate whether you would like to sign up for life!

Of course, **new members are always welcome**, and a membership form was emailed out to everyone to pass onto a friend.



Merchandise

The heritage pool tile with artwork decal has proved so popular that more decal sheets and inkjet printer ink needed purchasing for me to complete my artistic duties! Unfortunately, I have no tiles left at home to create this wonderful memento and will need to wait until the pool reopens to get more tiles from Bryan the pool manager.

The A3 artwork by Mick Ashley has also sold out. If there is enough interest, FoMP could have another 10 prints made. There are attractively priced at \$60.

We have blue and white FoMP swim caps and some 90th birthday celebrations caps still available at \$15 each.

All enquiries to friendsofmanukapool@gmail.com.

Caroline Luke-Evered



31 Days In, an image inspired by our very own Rebecca Scouller

Like to become a member of
Friends of Manuka Pool?

Contact us at friendsofmanukapool@gmail.com
or pick up a form at the Pool entrance
