Joint heritage nomination lodged 15 June 2020 by the National Trust of Australia (ACT) and No. 3 Squadron RAAF Association

Canberra's original aerodrome and first air crash

Dickson's heritage of the air

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PATRON: The Hon Margaret Reid AO

Mr David Flannery
Chair
ACT Heritage Council
PO Box 158
Canberra ACT 2601
Via email heritage@act.gov.au

cc

North Canberra Community Council	Ms Yvette Berry MLA
ACT Chief Minister	Mr Shane Rattenbury MLA
ACT Planning Minister	Mr Chris Steel MLA
Director-General EPSDD	Ms Rachel Stephen-Smith MLA
ACT Government Architect	Ms Candice Burch MLA
Housing ACT Renewal	Ms Elizabeth Lee MLA

HERITAGE NOMINATION – ORIGINAL CANBERRA AERODROME REMNANTS AT DICKSON

Dear Mr Flannery

Please find enclosed our joint nomination with the No. 3 Squadron Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) Association for the original Canberra Aerodrome remnants at Dickson.

This aerodrome was first shown on Walter Burley Griffin's final plan and blueprint, drawn in 1918 and published in 1922. It was operational for almost 3 years and located on Edward Shumack's soldier settlement block. The southern boundary of the aerodrome was Majura Avenue.

Members of our two organisations have carried out intensive research over several years, and we believe the former aerodrome at Dickson, the first in the Territory, contains significant archaeological remains that date back to the dawn of aviation in Australia. The nomination is strongly supported by Engineers Australia and the Canberra and District Historical Society.

The central whitewashed concrete ring at Blocks 25-26 Section 72 Dickson and two of the four original concrete lockspit boundary markers are believed to be the last tangible remnants of the landing ground. They form the historic link to the site's use by the Federal Capital Commission (FCC) in the mid-1920s for the early planning of

Canberra using the most modern technology available. That involved working closely with the RAAF to carry out aerial photography.

In order to establish with confidence that the key remnants below ground still exist, provisional registration is necessary to ensure heritage protection measures are adopted within the immediate vicinity of the central concrete ring that marked the landing ground. The central ring's location is known from the FCC's historic 1926 survey plus aerial photography in 1950-58. Fragments found scattered nearby, a portion of concrete on the surface at Dickson Wetlands, together with the history of development and land use in this area, give us cause to believe that their continued existence is plausible.

Provisional registration will make it possible for further research and archaeological investigations to be conducted using ground penetrating radar, so as to accurately determine the current extent of archaeological remains.

Development of the aerodrome was important to the early planning of Canberra, as well as to the nascent aviation industry in the Territory:

- the aerodrome was the first official aviation facility in the ACT planned, leased and developed for the purpose
- the aerodrome hosted both civilian and military aircraft
- early planning of Canberra relied heavily on aerial photography missions flying from this aerodrome, especially the No. 3 Squadron of the Royal Australian Air Force
- the capital's first fatal air crash took place on site while No. 3 Squadron was performing an aerial photography mission for the FCC
- the capital's first fatal air crash was documented shortly after the event as part of the photographic legacy of William James (Jack) Mildenhall, working for the FCC
- the two Air Force members killed in this air crash were both buried in the Canberra region
- the farm worker Walter Johnson who attempted to save their lives, and was subsequently recognised for his heroic efforts, has close relatives living in the Canberra region
- the aerodrome served as an emergency landing site on the Adelaide-Sydney service commenced by the Australian Aerial Service in 1924
- the aerodrome was the entry point to Canberra for visiting dignitaries
- Engineers Australia has recognised the aerodrome as significant in the development of aviation in the ACT and published its engineering history
- Canberra and District Historical Society has recognised the aerodrome as significant in the history of Canberra and published recent research
- remains of the central concrete ring are believed to be the only surviving example in Australia of the very earliest method for marking aerodromes
- the site demonstrates the transition from a rural outer area through multiple stages of land use and development to shape the national capital.

The tragic loss of two serving Air Force members in the capital's first fatal air crash, which took place on this aerodrome, also deserves to be properly commemorated. The act of telling these stories and honouring our shared past endeavours plays an important role in community-building and placemaking.

Recognising the historic place, and telling the story of the Territory's earliest aviation heritage for generations to come, represents an exciting opportunity and an investment in the future.

Yours sincerely

Gary Kent
President

15 June 2020

ACT HERITAGE REGISTER
AF2014-101

For ACT Heritage Use Only	
Date received	
File No.	
Database ID	
Date to Council	
Decision date	
Accepted?	

ACT HERITAGE REGISTER—
NOMINATION APPLICATION
Heritage Act 2004, s28

The ACT Heritage Register contains details of places and objects of significance to the ACT.

This nomination application form is used to nominate a place or object to the ACT Heritage Register. Any person can make a nomination. In making this application, you are asked to identify the potential heritage significance of the place or object and provide supporting evidence.

In preparing a nomination, you are asked to provide as much information about any matters relevant to the heritage significance of the place or object as you can. The fields in the nomination form will guide you with this.

The ACT Heritage Council will notify you as soon as possible about its acceptance or dismissal of this nomination application, and progress of assessment and decisions about registration, where appropriate. The Council may dismiss the application if the Council is satisfied on reasonable grounds that the application is frivolous, vexatious, misconceived, lacking in substance or not made honestly; or the Council has previously decided not to register the place or object and is satisfied that the application shows no substantial new ground for registration.

No fee is payable for making a nomination.

DO YOU REQUIRE MORE INFORMATION OR NEED HELP?

If you need help completing this form, contact ACT Heritage on 13 22 81 or email **heritage@act.gov.au**. Incomplete or inadequate forms will be returned with feedback.

More information about the ACT Heritage Council, the Heritage Register and the heritage registration process is available on the ACT Heritage website at **www.environment.act.gov.au/heritage** or by contacting ACT Heritage on 13 22 81 or by email at **heritage@act.gov.au.**

LODGING YOUR FORM

Please send this form

- **by mail to:** The ACT Heritage Council, PO Box 158, Canberra ACT 2601;
- **by hand to:** ACT Heritage, Dame Pattie Menzies House, 16 Challis Street, Dickson ACT
- **by email to:** heritage@act.gov.au

A nomination application will not be accepted unless signed and dated.

01 DETAILS OF PLACE OR OBJECT

Place

Type: Historic

Name of place/object: Original Canberra Aerodrome remnants at Dickson

Other names: Concrete centre ring (*ring*) & concrete lockspit boundary marker (*lockspit*) remnants

Location: **8 Hawdon Place; Dutton Street; Antill Street** **Dickson**
Address *Suburb*

Blocks 25-26 Section 72; Block 33 Section 73; Block 6 Section 76 Dickson
Block/Section/District/Division (If multiple addresses or blocks and sections, list all)

The aerodrome's boundary is shown in ACTmapi Historic Plans and Attachment 1. The *ring*'s centroid is estimated to be Lat 35.25031°S Lon 149.14557°E The originally whitewashed *ring* was approximately 60 feet (18.3 metres) in diameter.

The original Canberra Aerodrome (aerodrome) comprised 173 acres in what later became the suburbs of Dickson and Downer. The *ring* is believed to be located as an archaeological deposit across the southern boundary of Block 25 Section 72 Dickson, and its shared common boundary with Block 26, a block of publicly accessible unleased ACT land parallel to the concrete-lined Dickson stormwater channel.

Two surviving concrete lockspit boundary markers (*lockspits*) of the aerodrome's landing ground are believed to be located as archaeological deposits below ground level within the parkland next to Dickson Wetlands (Block 33 Section 73) and Dickson Playing Fields adjoining Antill Street (Block 6 Section 76 Dickson. Their coordinates are believed to be:

Lockspit A (SE corner, partially visible): Lat 35.25221°S Lon 149.14904°E
Lockspit B (NE corner)**:** Lat 35.24861°S Lon 149.14878°E
Description of place's boundary or objects components

02 YOUR DETAILS

Name: **Mr** **Gary** **Kent**
Title *First Name* *Surname*
Mr **James** **Oglethorpe**
Title *First Name* *Surname*

Organisation: **National Trust of Australia (ACT** **President**
Organisation Name (if the organisation is the nominator) *Position*
No. 3 Squadron Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) Association **Treasurer**
Organisation Name (if the organisation is the nominator) *Position*

Postal Address: **PO Box 1144 Civic Square** **ACT** **2608**
Postal Address *State* *Postcode*

Telephone: **(02) 6230 0533**
Business Hours *After Hours* *Mobile*

info@nationaltrustact.org.au
Email

Do you have any personal association with the place or object? Yes

If **yes**, how would describe yourself:

The Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF), in particular No. 3 Squadron, has a strong association with the aerodrome and its remnants. They mark the site of the Squadron's earliest substantial "civil service" endeavour – the aerial photographic survey of the Federal Capital Territory. In addition, some of the finest early photographs depicting the operation of the Squadron by renowned Canberra photographer William James (Jack) Mildenhall were taken on the aerodrome site.

The tragic loss of two No. 3 Squadron serving members, in the ACT's first fatal aviation accident on 11 February 1926, was also No. 3 Squadron's first fatal accident, following the Squadron's formation at Richmond in July 1925. The entire Air Force had only suffered two previous fatal crashes since its inception in 1921, and the 1926 Canberra crash was an event of substantial national news interest. The high regard for the site and its association with No. 3 Squadron is demonstrated by the ceremonial installation in 2016 of commemorative plaques at the RAAF Memorial Grove on the Federal Highway, at the northern entrance to the ACT, on the 90th anniversary of the fatal air crash. This event was accompanied by a military fly-over of F-18 jets at the precise time of the crash, 10:30am.

03 DETERMINING HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

For each of the heritage significance criteria, please indicate how you would rate this place or object. Ratings against each are:

- **High** = meets to a high degree: excellent example, with strong evidence provided.
- **Meets** = meets to a lesser degree: one of a number, demonstrated some features, and/or has limited supporting evidence e.g. documentation is limited.
- **Not Met / NA** = does not have supporting evidence to demonstrate it meets this criteria or is not applicable.

For a place or an object to be determined as having **heritage significance** it must satisfy one or more of these criteria:

(a) importance to the course or pattern of the ACT's cultural or natural history	**High**
(b) has uncommon, rare or endangered aspects of the ACT's cultural or natural history	**High**
(c) potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of the ACT's cultural or natural history	**NA**
(d) importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of cultural or natural places or objects	**NA**
(e) importance in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics valued by the ACT community or a cultural group in the ACT	**NA**
(f) importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement for a particular period	**NA**
(g) has a strong or special association with the ACT community or a cultural group in the ACT for social, cultural or spiritual reasons	**Meets**
(h) has a special association with the life or work of a person, or people, important to the history of the ACT	**Meets**

04 YOUR STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

What is it that is significant? (e.g. why is it unique or the best example of its type)

The *ring* and *lockspit* remnants are the last tangible remnants that form the historic link to the aerodrome site and its use in the mid 1920s for the early planning of Canberra, and were an important and integral part of the aerodrome's operation (see Attachment 2).

The national capital's first aerodrome, identified on Griffin's final plan and blueprint and made operational less than six years later, was the first official aviation facility planned, leased and developed for the purpose. It was regularly used for aerial photographic surveys commissioned by the Federal Capital Commission (FCC) in the mid 1920s for the early planning of the new federal capital, specifically in the years 1925 and 1926 (see Attachment 3).

Aerial photography, a new technology at that time, was significant for planning, surveying and mapping Canberra's layout and infrastructure and played a noteworthy part in early aviation in the ACT. Early aviation records researched by No. 3 Squadron RAAF Association show at least 34 flights to the aerodrome in the second half of 1925 alone. No. 3 Squadron RAAF based at Richmond was the heaviest user of the aerodrome in the years 1925-26 and was tasked by the FCC with aerial photographic surveys of Canberra and its environs.

The aerodrome was the location of the first fatal air crash in the history of the ACT, resulting in the death of two No. 3 Squadron RAAF personnel who lost their lives in the course of an aerial photography mission for the FCC intended to photograph the Murrumbidgee Valley.

To whom is it likely or known to be significant? (e.g. a region or group within the ACT, the whole of the ACT, a specific community)

Heritage walks, research, presentations and exhibitions organised by Dickson Residents Group in recent years with the support of North Canberra Community Council and Downer Community Association indicate a very high level of interest by the wider ACT community in this cultural heritage. The article by Tim the Yowie Man (*Canberra Times*, 04/01/2020) suggests a broad level of interest in the history of the aerodrome and its role in the history of Canberra.

The aerodrome and its last tangible remnants are particularly significant to the 443 members of the No. 3 Squadron RAAF Association. The Association's members include the current *Air Commander Australia* - Air Vice Marshal Joe Iervasi AM (based in Canberra), former *Chief of Air Force* - Air Marshal (Ret.) Geoff Brown AO (resident in Canberra), and former *Chief of Air Staff* Air Marshal (Ret.) Jake Newham AC.

The Association has documented aspects of the history of the aerodrome and the circumstances of the fatal aircraft accident on 11 February 1926 on its webpage titled: *Sacrifice during the Survey of Canberra – 11 February 1926.* **http://www.3squadron.org.au/subpages/Canberra_Survey_%20Sacrifice.htm**

The aerodrome and its remnants, particularly the *ring*, are likely to be highly significant to the descendants of family members of Flying Officer Philip Mackenzie Pitt, and his Observer/ Photographer Aircraftsman AC1 William Edward Callander, both attached to No.3 Squadron at Richmond NSW, who lost their lives as a direct result of the air crash at the aerodrome. The aerodrome is also likely to be significant to the descendants of the Shumack and Johnson families, some of whom live in the Canberra-Queanbeyan area.

The aerodrome and its role in the planning and development of the new national capital is significant to members of Engineering Heritage, Engineers Australia, Canberra Division, and the Canberra & District Historical Society (CDHS) who have recorded the history of the establishment of the aerodrome and operations in their publications *Canberra's Engineering Heritage* (1983), *A Century of Canberra Engineering* (2013) and in the monthly newsletter and periodical journal of the CDHS: *Canberra & District Historical Society Inc. – Edition No. 469 – December 2018 (see article: "Monthly Meeting: 9*

October 2018: Dickson-Downer Heritage: A Century of Hopes and Battlefields with Jane Goffman"). **http://canberrahistory.org.au/Canberra_History_e-News_Dec_2018_-_yLPC7v9U.pdf** and *Canberra Historical Journal* No. 84 (March 2020) "Canberra's Original Aerodrome and First Air Crash".

The aerodrome and its role in the planning and development of the new national capital is also significant to historians, planners, surveyors and many members of the National Trust of Australia (ACT). Residents of North Canberra and surrounding districts have demonstrated a high level of interest and positive feedback through their attendance at heritage walks, talks, and exhibitions featuring the aerodrome. The original Canberra Aerodrome and first fatal air crash was the subject of a presentation to the November 2019 ICOMOS conference, Heritage of the Air, and signals a growing level of interest in new research. The ANU's Centre for Heritage and Museum Studies shared a video recording of the presentation online to their students during March.

Letters of support for this nomination from the Canberra & District Historical Society (CDHS) and Engineers Australia, Canberra Division are at Attachment 4.

How and why is it significant? (including an explanation for each criterion rated as High or Meets)

(a) importance to the course or pattern of the ACT's cultural or natural history (HIGH)

The aerodrome played a significant role in the early planning and development of Canberra, providing essential aerial mapping and photographic information for the Federal Capital Commission (FCC) from July 1925, when the RAAF No. 3 Squadron were first formed at Richmond. This information assisted and informed key decisions about the planning and development of Canberra's suburban design, layout and infrastructure.

Its surviving remnants are the only tangible link to the historic use of the aerodrome site during the first years of the FCC.

The national capital's first aerodrome, identified on Griffin's final plan and blueprint and made operational less than six years later, was the first official aviation facility planned, leased and developed for the purpose. It was regularly used for aerial photographic surveys commissioned by the FCC in the mid 1920s for the early planning of the new federal capital, specifically in the years 1925 and 1926. The *ring* and *lockspits* are the last tangible remnants that form the historic link to the aerodrome site and its use for the early planning of Canberra, and were an important and integral part of the aerodrome's operation.

Aerial photography, a new technology, was a valuable tool for planning, surveying and mapping Canberra's layout and infrastructure. It coincided with early aviation in the ACT. Early aviation records show that there were at least 34 flights to the aerodrome during the second half of 1925 alone. No. 3 Squadron RAAF was the heaviest user of the aerodrome in the years 1925-26 and was tasked by the FCC with aerial photographic surveys of Canberra and its environs. The ACT's first air crash fatalities occurred at the aerodrome in February 1926 and were directly associated with an aerial photographic assignment for the FCC, to photograph the Murrumbidgee Valley.

(b) has uncommon, rare or endangered aspects of the ACT's cultural or natural history (HIGH)

Part or all of the original *ring* and two of four *lockspits* are believed to be the only surviving remnants of the aerodrome. The *ring* remnants are the only surviving example of the first (1923-24) *ring* in the ACT, and are also likely to be the only surviving example in Australia.

The originally whitewashed *ring* was approximately 60 feet (18.3m) in diameter and was a substantial structure for its time.

Research conducted by No. 3 Squadron RAAF Association has not found any other 1920s aerodrome centre circle markings surviving in Australia. These historic aerodrome landing ground

aids, whose design was borrowed from the earliest Royal Air Force aerodromes in the UK, are believed to be unique in the ACT and date from the dawn of Australian civil aviation. Drawings of the various types of marker rings are reproduced in Attachment 5. The *ring* constructed at this aerodrome was 20% larger in diameter than the 50 foot size that became standard by 1928.

Two of four originally whitewashed *lockspits* are also believed to lie on parkland next to Dickson Wetlands and below the surface of Dickson Playing Fields. The *lockspits* are unique in the ACT because this aerodrome and landing ground was the first purpose-built aviation facility.

(g) has a strong or special association with the ACT community or a cultural group in the ACT for social, cultural or spiritual reasons (MEETS)

The aerodrome has special significance for No. 3 Squadron RAAF Association and its 443 members. They are co-nominators for the heritage listing of the site. It also has special significance for residents of Dickson and members of the North Canberra community, many of whom hold the Air Force and Duntroon in high regard and feel pride that the aerodrome and early aviation are associated with the places where they live, play and work.

The Royal Australian Air Force, in particular No.3 Squadron, has a strong association with the aerodrome and its remnants. They mark the site of the Squadron's earliest substantial "civil service" endeavour – the aerial photographic survey of the Canberra region. In addition, some of the finest early photographs depicting the operation of the Squadron (by Canberra photographer William James (Jack) Mildenhall) were taken on this site. The tragic loss of two 3 Squadron serving members, in the ACT's first fatal aviation accident on 11 February 1926, was also 3 Squadron RAAF's first fatal accident, following the Squadron's formation at Richmond in July 1925. The entire Air Force had only suffered two previous fatal crashes since its inception in 1921 and the 1926 Canberra crash was an event of substantial national news interest.

The importance of the site to the No. 3 Squadron is demonstrated by their work in researching the aerodrome and its role in the development of the new national capital and the circumstances of the fatal accident which took the lives of two of the Squadron's serving members in the ACT's first aviation accident. It has publicised the history of the aerodrome and the aircraft accident through the Association's website for its members and has made conference and other presentations on these themes. It, like the National Trust (ACT), wishes to see the aerodrome and its surviving remnants recognised, protected, conserved and appropriately marked through one or more commemorative plaques and interpretive signage.

(h) has a special association with the life or work of a person, or people, important to the history of the ACT (MEETS)

The aerodrome was associated with many prominent figures in the history of the ACT, namely Walter Burley Griffin, Charles Studdy Daley, Surveyor-General John T H Goodwin, and Sir John Butters. However it had a special association with Colonel Percy Thomas Owen and members of the Federal Capital Commission and its predecessor the Federal Capital Advisory Committee, who advocated this particular site, acted to secure its lease, organised for photographs to be taken by W J Mildenhall during its use, arranged for the RAAF to undertake numerous aerial survey missions for planning purposes and five months after the fatal crash organised and undertook a detailed contour survey (in August 1926) and arranged to have that survey finalised in September 1926 and printed, showing sites for new facilities to the east.

The aerodrome also had a special association with two local people who played important roles in the history of the ACT:

- Mr Edward (Ted) Shumack a WWI veteran and member of one of Canberra's earliest settler families, whose Soldier Settlement block 98i became the site of the original aerodrome
- Mr William James (Jack) Mildenhall, a clerk and accomplished amateur photographer who became the FCC's Information Officer – Mildenhall's photographic collection includes numerous photographs of the aerodrome and is a valuable resource for researching the early years of the ACT. Mildenhall later went on to train to be a pilot.

All deserve to have their special association with the aerodrome formally recognised in the ACT's Heritage Register as well as their part in its relatively short but eventful history, through its remnants.

The most prominent figures associated with the aerodrome were:

- Walter Burley Griffin whose final 1918 plan and blueprint included the initial outline of this aerodrome;
- Colonel Percy Thomas Owen who in February 1923 recommended this site be selected in preference to the alternative site in Majura Valley (where the second aerodrome was later located and from which the current airport has grown);
- Charles Studdy Daley who negotiated and finalised the boundaries for the Federal Capital Advisory Committee (FCAC) in May 1923;
- William James (Jack) Mildenhall who photographed various military and civilian aircraft visiting the aerodrome and the wreckage of the air crash;
- Sir John Butters who opposed a long term 99 year lease for the aerodrome and precipitated its relocation to the Majura Valley; and
- Surveyor-General Colonel John T H Goodwin whose 1927 map of Canberra included the aerodrome.

Other eminent figures associated with the aerodrome include Colonel Brinsmead, Controller of Civil Aviation; and Wing Commander Richard Williams, Chief of the Air Staff, RAAF and later Director-General of Civil Aviation.

The 1926 air crash at the aerodrome figured heavily in the lives of four citizens, two of whom are buried in the district:

- Mr Edward (Ted) Shumack a WW1 veteran and member of one of Canberra's earliest settler families, whose soldier settlement block was commandeered in part for the aerodrome;
- the No. 3 Squadron RAAF pilot and Duntroon graduate, Flying Officer Philip Mackenzie Pitt, originally from Queensland buried at Queanbeyan's Riverside cemetery;
- his Observer/photographer Aircraftsman AC1 William Edward Callander, originally from Melbourne buried at St John's Church in Reid; and
- the local farm worker Walter Ernest Johnson whose heroic rescue efforts were recognised later that year with a Bravery certificate and medal, and who then went to work for the prominent Lees family at their rural property Everton outside Gundaroo, and formed a close association for over 40 years with that family.

05 FURTHER SUPPORTING INFORMATION, IF KNOWN

Additional attachments can also be provided

Approximately half of the *ring* was still visible on the ground in a 1958 aerial photograph produced by the ACT Office of the Surveyor-General (supplied in an appendix to the preliminary site investigation by Lotsearch published in connection with the Common Ground site rezoning, Draft Variation 367, at Block 25 Section 72 Dickson.) The stormwater channel's construction during 1958-59 involved modification of ground levels and use of spoil from excavation to fill soil depressions and create an embankment at the western end of the Dickson Playing Fields. Attachment 2 provides recent photographs taken 9 June 2020 showing that a portion of *lockspit A* remains visible at ground level.

Provide any known details for the owner/s, unless same as nominator

Is the owner/s aware of the nomination? Yes.

The impending nomination and likely heritage significance of Blocks 25 & 26 Section 72 Dickson have been advised in submissions to EPSDD regarding DV367 and DA201936662. A copy of the Heritage nomination has been provided to EPSDD.

Does the owner/s support this nomination? Unknown.

Does the owner consent to you providing their personal information? Not applicable.
If yes, fill in the information below. If no, proceed to the next section.

Current owner: Suburban Land Agency / ACT Community Services Directorate / Housing ACT
Name (attach additional details if multiple owners)

Address: GPO Box 158 Canberra ACT 2601
Postal or Street Address State Postcode

Telephone: 13 34 27
Business Hours After Hours Mobile
housingactrenewal@act.gov.au
Email

Designer or architect (if known): Walter Burley Griffin (1918), Federal Capital Advisory Committee (1923)

Creator or builder (if known): Federal Department of Works

Date built/made: Year started: 1923-24 Year finished: 1924

Brief history: include key dates and any major changes such as changes of use or ownership.

The earliest evidence of the consideration of sites within the ACT suitable for use by aircraft was in a report by Captain Watt of 9 March 1912 for the establishment of a Central Flying School. The location favoured as ideal for flying was the Duntroon plain or Majura. The Director of Commonwealth Lands and Surveys, Charles Scrivener, opposed this view. The Administrator of the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) requested the Chief of General Staff to make a 'technical examination' of the sites in the FCT. Captain Henri Petre, who became Australia's first military aviator, undertook this task in early 1913. He reported on five sites in February 1913, considering a site in Majura Valley (near the present Canberra Airport at Fairbairn) to be "a very good site", and the site in modern-day Dickson and Downer near the Dickson playing fields, to be "very little inferior". Ultimately, the site chosen for the Central Flying School was Altona Bay (Point Cook).

An aerodrome site for Canberra was shown on Walter Burley Griffin's final 1918 Plan and the 1922 *Canberra: Plan of City and Environs* blueprint (NLA obj-232881073), very close to the site ultimately selected. It was adjacent to and north of the proposed Northbourne railway station, and lay between the surveyed railway line to Yass, and Griffin's Majura Avenue.

The first recorded landing of an aircraft in the ACT was at Duntroon in July 1920. The need to provide an aerodrome for Canberra was again raised in October 1921 when the Department of Defence advised the Secretary, Home and Territories, that provision should be made for commercial aircraft. In July 1922, the Secretary, Federal Capital Advisory Committee (FCAC), confirmed arrangements for the Director-General of Works to consult with Colonel Brinsmead, Controller of Civil Aviation, and Wing Commander R Williams, Director Intelligence and Organisation, RAAF, regarding the location of an airport and on "size, shape, and other essential factors".

In May 1923 a slightly larger site was agreed, on the soldier settlement block (Block 98i) granted to Mr Edward (Ted) Shumack in 1919 and used for sheep grazing, after inspection by Colonel Percy Thomas Owen representing the Controller of Civil Aviation, and members of the FCAC. The site was about 170 acres in area in present-day Dickson and Downer and was bounded approximately by Cowper Street to the west, Antill Street to the north, Majura Avenue to the south and Dutton Street to the east. In December 1923 Squadron Leader H N Wrigley flew to Canberra to take aerial survey photographs of the aerodrome site.

The Canberra Aerodrome (not the 'Northbourne Aviation Ground', a term adopted much later that came into general usage in the 1980s), became operational on 4 March 1924, after a visit by Captain E C Johnston, Superintendent of Aerodromes. The aerodrome was operational until late October

1926 – roughly two and three quarter years. The aerodrome was essentially a grassed paddock used for sheep grazing, but it was fenced, had two gates, a windsock, and the landing ground was designated by four whitewashed concrete lockspit boundary markers, and a whitewashed concrete ring central marker, 60 feet in diameter, which was the only visual aid to guide landing aircraft at the aerodrome. The cost to bring it to operational standard was reportedly a total of £17.12.2.

On 1 January 1925, the Federal Capital Commission (FCC) assumed control of Canberra's development, with very wide powers in regard to actual construction and development. Use of the aerodrome varied. No. 3 Squadron RAAF was the heaviest user of the aerodrome in the years 1925-26 as the Squadron was based in Richmond, NSW and was often tasked by the FCC with aerial photographic surveys of Canberra and environs. During the second half of 1925, there are records of 34 flights to the aerodrome from Richmond NSW. Aerial survey, including aerial contour survey, was in itself a very important and relatively new technology in the establishment and construction of key infrastructure in the newly created ACT. The aerodrome was the subject of a highly detailed contour survey by the FCC in August 1926. Comprehensive research on the aerial survey and other photographic work undertaken on behalf of the FCC has yet to be undertaken.

It was in connection with planned aerial survey work that Canberra's first fatal air crash occurred on the morning of Thursday 11 February 1926. The De Havilland DH9 Serial A6-28 aircraft had left Richmond aerodrome at 8.30am to fly to Canberra to undertake aerial surveys for the Federal Capital Commission. Flying at an altitude of about 100 to 150 feet, the plane was about to land at the aerodrome in Dickson, when it nose-dived and crashed to the ground inside the NW perimeter of the aerodrome. Flying Officer Philip Mackenzie Pitt, and his Observer/Photographer Aircraftsman AC1 William Edward Callander, both attached to No.3 Richmond Squadron, lost their lives.

The aerodrome also served as an emergency landing site on the Adelaide-Sydney service commenced by the Australian Aerial Service on 6 June 1924, and as a landing ground for visiting dignitaries.

Late in 1926 Captain Johnston approached the FCC about an extended lease tenure to the aerodrome. The FCC was unwilling to grant a lease for more than 25 years out of concern for future northern development of the city. As a result Captain Johnston recommended to Colonel Brinsmead, Controller of Civil Aviation, on 8 October 1926 that an alternative site for Canberra's aerodrome be chosen at the junction of Majura Lane, Queanbeyan Road and Yass Road. Following a visit to Canberra by Colonel Brinsmead in November 1926 the selection of the site at the western end of the present Fairbairn Airport was confirmed. Thus, some 13 years after Captain Henri Petre had chosen the Dickson site for Canberra's first aerodrome, its function came to an end.

Key significant (**or intrinsic) features:** (e.g. interiors, exterior elements, archaeological, landscape or natural features, for objects give number and dimension/s)

The aerodrome was the subject of a highly detailed contour survey by FCC surveyors Sheaffe and Mouat in August 1926 and comprised some 173 acres in what was gazetted in September 1928 as the Division of Dickson. By March 1924 the aerodrome was fenced with two gates. The landing ground was marked out with four whitewashed lockspits, two of which are believed to either have been removed, demolished or buried during road construction. A wind indicator was situated adjacent to the southwest lockspit.

The two remaining *lockspits* are believed to be located immediately below the surface of parkland next to Dickson Wetlands, where a small 80cm x 60cm area is visible at ground level, and below the surface of Dickson Playing Fields near Antill Street.

The whitewashed *ring*, approximately 60 feet (18.3 metres) in diameter, was the sole aerial landing aid for the aerodrome and its remnant is believed to be the most likely surviving tangible link to its historic use in the mid 1920s for the early planning of Canberra and the ACT. Aerial photographs and survey marks confirm that the *ring* was located on both sides of the southern boundary of Block 25 Section 72 Dickson. Concrete fragments can still be found scattered on the ground surface outside the temporary boundary fence of Block 25 Section 72 Dickson.

Current physical condition: (covering key features and attach photographs)

Unknown. There is currently little or no physical evidence of the aerodrome, apart from scattered surface fragments of the originally whitewashed *ring* that correspond to its location on the FCC's aerodrome survey, and a small portion of *lockspit* A that remains visible on the ground.

The fencing, wind indicator and at least two of the four lockspits are believed to have disappeared with the first wave of urbanisation in this area dating from 1958-60. Concrete fragments believed to be from the *ring* can be found on the ground surface along the boundary fence of Block 25 Section 72 Dickson and among the cork trees planted on Block 26 Section 72 Dickson.

Archaeological investigation using ground-penetrating radar is required to precisely determine the extent and condition of the surviving remnants of the ring and the location and condition of the *lockspits*.

Aerial photographs as late as 1958 show that at least half of the 60 foot diameter *ring* was intact and visible from high altitude. Level changes to the ground in connection with urbanisation and construction of the concrete-lined stormwater channel in Dickson are believed to have covered most of the previously visible remnant of the *ring*. However, fragments of a coarse and sandy concrete mortar with small aggregate can still be found scattered along the southern boundary of Block 25 Section 72 Dickson. Also, an electricity easement now runs inside Block 25 Section 72 Dickson. Works within this easement may have adversely impacted the remnant of the *ring*, but this southern band of Block 25 has not been built on or paved over so damage is likely to be minimal.

Imminent threats to its significance:

Surviving physical remnants of the aerodrome are very few and indistinct and are in danger of being lost forever.

The current Dickson Precinct Code, incorporating Territory Plan Variation 367, requires a minimum 13m southern setback for the Common Ground Dickson housing project at 8 Hawdon Place, Dickson (Block 25 Section 72 Dickson – current DA201936662).

However, lack of formal recognition of the heritage values of the site will mean that construction work is necessary immediately on top of and either side of the ring in order to relocate the existing electricity substation and two power poles, and underground those services. Groundwork, excavation for the foundations, and construction of the basement level directly threaten the ring.

Conditions of approval that adequately protect the *ring* during the construction phase with an appropriate buffer and archaeological find management protocols would allow the Common Ground proposal to proceed with minimal interference.

Statutory lists

National Heritage List Commonwealth Heritage List

Non-statutory lists

National Trust of Australia Australian Institute of Architects

Other/s _____

Supporting Documentation: Please list any further documentation that will support this nomination, e.g. historic documents, maps or photos, written histories, oral histories, heritage assessment reports (include author, date and name), site recording forms for Aboriginal places/objects (contact ACT Heritage for blank forms).

Author/s or Source	Title/Description	Date
Goffman, Jane	*Canberra Historical Journal* No. 84 "Canberra's Original Aerodrome and First Air Crash: Dickson's Heritage of the Air"	March 2020

Cooke, T H	*Canberra's Engineering Heritage* (1st and 2nd editions), Chapter 11: Aviation	1983 & 1990
Baker, Keith	*A Century of Canberra Engineering*	May 2013

List all attachments enclosed:
Attachment 1 - Location and major background references
Attachment 2 - Ring and lockspits
Attachment 3 - Canberra Historical Journal No. 84 March 2020 article (pp. 26-33)
Attachment 4 - Letters of support
Attachment 5 - Aerodrome ground markings 1928
Attachment 6 - List of further supporting documentation

06 AUTHORISATION

I wish to nominate this place or object to the ACT Heritage Register in accordance with the *Heritage Act 2004*.

The information provided here is accurate to the best of my knowledge and may be made publicly available for the purpose of registering this place or object unless otherwise indicated.

I understand that giving false or misleading information is a serious offence under the *Criminal Code 2002*.

07 PERSONAL INFORMATION DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

The personal information on this form is provided to the ACT Heritage Council and ACT Environment Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate for the purpose of processing your nomination to the ACT Heritage Register. If you do not provide your contact details, the Heritage Council will not be able to process your nomination. EPSDD's Information Privacy Policy contains information about how you may access or seek to correct your personal information held by EPSDD, and how you may complain about an alleged breach of the Territory Privacy Principles. The EPSDD Information Privacy Policy can be found at www.act.gov.au/epd/information_privacy

☑ By ticking this box I give my consent for my name/organisation to be disclosed as the nominator.'

Signed: Cory Kent **Date:** **14 June 2020**

Signed: James Oglethorpe TREAS 35QN ASSN. NSW. Digitally Signed 12 JUN 2020 **Date:** **12 June 2020**

Request for urgent provisional registration
Anyone may make an urgent provisional registration application requesting that the Council urgently decide whether to provisionally register a nominated place or object. A fee is required for this service.

A separate form is available to request an urgent decision on provisional registration, available on the ACT Heritage website at www.environment.act.gov.au/heritage.

CRASH SITE
Downer oval
Suburb of Downer
Antill St
DICKSON COLLEGE
Northbourne Ave
DICKSON LIBRARY
DICKSON POOL
LANDING GROUND
Centre marked by whitewashed concrete ring
Concrete lockspits at all four corners
WINDSOCK
CANBERRA AERODROME SITE
DARAMALAN COLLEGE
Suburb of Ainslie
Suburb of Dickson
Majura Ave
NORTH AINSLIE PRIMARY