



Hall Heritage Centre (HHC) is a Special Interest Group
in the Village of Hall and District Progress Association Inc

ANNUAL REPORT 2025 – 2026

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We acknowledge all the traditional custodians of the ACT.

*We acknowledge and respect their continuing culture and the contribution they make to the life of this city
and this region.*

1 : PUBLIC ACCESS

Group Visits

We recorded sixteen visiting groups during the year amounting to a total of 335 people. The groups are very diverse – a Chevy car club, ANU archaeology students, Goodwin Homes, and the RMC Graduates Class of 1979 for example [Appendix B]. Characteristically such groups are offered an orientation presentation, a guided tour, and refreshments. Schools' groups visited as well, the Centre recording 468 students, teachers and parents from 10 school visits.

In addition to these organised groups, large numbers of visitors (estimated 370+) came to the Centre for major events such as the Centre's Annual Address, the Progress Association AGM, the launch of our *Palmerville* exhibition (by National Trust (ACT) President Linda Roberts), and the annual Band Concert '*Brass on the Grass*'. The overall total of individual visitors was a little over 1000. This figure excludes virtual visits to our website, which numbered 813,300 in the twelve months to August 2026 - an increase of 200,160 over the previous year.

***Palmerville* bicentenary**

Our main exhibition endeavour for the year and the focus for our 2026 ACT Heritage Festival contribution was a commemoration of the bicentenary of the settlement at *Palmerville*. In 1826 George Thomas Palmer sent a superintendent and a motley collection of convicts and exiles to establish a sheep station on Ginninderry Creek. The exhibition tells the story of that beginning and subsequent development of the site into a very large and successful sheep station.

The main features of the exhibition include:

- a visualisation of Sunday dinner on 23 January 1848, when the local large landowner families – the Palmers, the Campbells and the Murrays got together.
- an audio-visual presentation tracing the early history of *Palmerville* from 1828 until the Palmer connection was tragically severed in 1876.
- storyboards and exhibits illustrating pre-colonial settlement and station development from the time of convict labour to the coming of free immigrants and on to the era of free selection.

The exhibition has been a great success, with many visitors attending during the Heritage Festival. It will stay open until later in the year. The exhibition has been entered in the National Trust ACT Heritage Awards program.

Voices from the Schoolhouse

In December 2025 we were approached by the ANU's Centre for Heritage and Museum Studies to participate in a joint project with students in a postgraduate course on *Exhibition Design & Delivery*, which focuses on the process of exhibition design within the context of museums, cultural collecting institutions and heritage agencies.

Students met several times with HHC volunteers resulting in the exhibition *Voices from the Schoolhouse – Fighting for the Future of Our Past*. They concluded that the volunteers at HHC are not passive historians – rather, they are activists for history and heritage, and their knowledge of the collection is inseparable from the relationship to the place it represents. The local heritage of Hall survives because its community has chosen to stand up for it. The exhibition at the ANU was open for a month and will next be mounted at the HHC.

RCS100 (Royal Canberra Show Centenary exhibition)

A second major collaborative project is under way with the Royal National Capital Agricultural Society (RNCAS), which will celebrate the centenary of the Royal Canberra Show in February 2027. The 1927 event is officially recognised by the RNCAS as the inaugural Canberra Show, although it can trace its beginnings back to 1908 when the Ginninderra Farmers' Union organised a show at Ginninderra. A Centenary Working Group of nine enthusiastic volunteers was formed, and the HHC representative is Jane Southwell. The HHC has been tasked with covering the early history and development of the Show as it was conducted at the Hall Showgrounds from 1926 to 1963, before it was re-located to the large site at EPIC in north Canberra.

Members of the Working Group have visited Hall on several occasions, including an initial introduction to the facilities at Hall and discussions with HHC managers. Volunteers from the HHC have visited the RNCAS

Archives store and sorted through material relating to the history of the Show and relevant material was moved to Hall for further research and cataloguing. It is hoped that the former Hall Pre-School will be available for the storage and preparation of material for the exhibition. There will be a special Show centenary exhibition at the HHC in January 2027.

Pop-Up displays

Continuing from last year we have maintained the offering of more 'Pop-Up' displays - small-scale, temporary, and portable. Recent examples include:

- *The Royal Canberra Show Centenary.* A pop-up display and information desk was mounted at the February 2026 Canberra Show to promote the centenary. It was later presented at the Canberra and Region Heritage Festival opening at Gungahlin Homestead. This pop-up was a step toward the centenary exhibition of the Show in early 2027.
- *Clyde Hollingsworth, an ANZAC honoured* – featuring Hall enlistee Clyde Hollingsworth, who enlisted in the AIF in February 1916. The following year his mother Susan, a prominent Hall village resident, received the tragic news that he had been killed by a piece of shell near Bullecourt on the Western Front in France on 11 May 1917.

Outreach

'Off-campus' exhibitions extend our reach and add to our profile and are part of our plan to work with partners, spreading the word about what we do and who we are:

- With the kind cooperation of Family History ACT, the main hallway at their Cook premises has become a very valuable location for extending the life of our heritage displays. The latest exhibition mounted there - *Along Weetangera Road - district life in the 19th Century* - which tells the stories of early settler's lives in the Weetangera district, has recently been removed after twelve months.
- Marking the beginning of the 2025 ACT Heritage Festival, the National Trust (ACT) Open Day was hosted at the Gungahlin Homestead. The HHC was represented with an information display and a collection of unusual artefacts which passers-by were challenged to identify. The RCS100 pop-up display and a timeline quiz related to the settlement at *Palmerville* also featured on the day.
- The Wee Jasper Heritage Fair (April 25-26th) provided an additional opportunity to highlight the RCS100 project, with participants encouraged to offer relevant artefacts on loan for the 2027 exhibition.

Display maintenance

The HHC now houses a large store of display material from past projects. These enduring displays are managed by volunteers assigned to curate each display, in conjunction with the original project curator. Displays are kept clean, updated and refreshed. Additionally, display managers have been stocktaking, linking with the centre's collection management team to verify the location of artefacts recorded on our artefact database Dadabik. This is an ongoing project.

2 : EDUCATION PROGRAM

The education program has now been operating very successfully for ten years. It focuses on primary school students from Years 1 and 2 - seven to nine year olds. Initially the student activities were structured and closely linked to the Humanities and Social Sciences (HASS) national curriculum outcomes. This was in part to provide volunteers with limited teaching experience a practical 'map' to guide their interactions with the visiting students. To some degree our volunteers were learning, along with the students. With volunteer skills and experience developing, improvements have been made to the layout of each display space to accommodate a more interactive and student-based approach to learning. Volunteers are now more comfortable with varying their presentations to respond to the needs of each distinct group, more confident to invite students to inquire about what they see and touch, and to offer suggestions as to how our lives have been transformed over time and with changes to technology.

Participating teachers are asked to evaluate the program. They overwhelmingly identify the authenticity of our learning areas and the ability of students to physically engage with the artefacts on display as the most valuable aspect of their visit. Teachers are encouraged to photograph items for further discussion on return to their own classrooms.

For the first time since the program began, not all requests from schools to visit the campus in 2025 could be serviced. Volunteer availability, especially during the most popular visiting period of late autumn and winter, was severely reduced. Following discussion, changes have been made to the program, to ensure that it could continue to be offered, but at a reduced frequency. On-campus visits have been limited to Year 2 students during terms two and three and Year 1 students will be accommodated in term 3 only. Accordingly, student and teacher numbers have declined. Seven schools visited the campus – a total of 431 students and 37 teachers. [Appendix C]

Our related *Heritage in a Suitcase* program remains popular with teachers, especially for the Year 1 cohort, who are often deemed too young to participate in excursions. With two sets of suitcase materials now available, requests from schools have always been met. Approximately 590 students from 7 schools across the ACT experienced the program which assists teachers to implement their unit of work about how people lived 'Then and Now' within their own classroom.

In September 2025, the Rotary Club of Hall made a generous \$3,000 grant to the education program - a vote of confidence. Team members decided that the funds should be used to support the creation of two more sets of *Heritage in a Suitcase* resources, so that Year 1 teachers could be encouraged to use these as an alternative to participating in the on-campus activities. The new resources will be available for use by teachers at the beginning of term 3, 2026.

3 : FAMILY AND LOCAL HISTORY PROGRAM

The continuing aim of the Family and Local History Program (FLHP) is to foster awareness and understanding of the history of 'old' Ginninderra and surrounding district, including through our website, library / resources centre and tours.

The FLHP continues to have a steady volume of requests from personal and on-line visitors and continues to assist family researchers, journalists and other heritage related organisations with information and photographs, including from our Gillespie records and extensive photograph gallery. Research has been undertaken, for example, for Family History ACT, Tim the Yowie Man, private Heritage consultants and others. Another interesting project was to help select photographs to be used for historic photo displays on ACT Infrastructure at local sports ovals. We also assisted Canberra Region Heritage Researchers to identify an unmarked grave at the Weetangera Cemetery so that a plaque could be placed.

The FLHP was very heavily involved in research for the Centre's current *Palmerville* bicentenary exhibition, and organised another successful off-site Annual Heritage Festival display, this year at the historic Gungahlin Homestead.

Welcoming and addressing visiting groups is another enjoyable task, often leading to some interesting information being fed back.

The FLHP continues to document the residents of the Hall Cemetery in a directory, and any assistance to help complete missing family stories would be appreciated. The FLHP also manages the on-site sales of a selection of local history books, which are available during opening hours, and oversees a small, specialised library / resource centre.

New volunteers will always be welcome, and those who are able to contribute copies of unpublished family histories or stories that can be placed in the library.

4. COLLECTION MANAGEMENT

Collection management is the Centre's 'back room', the crucial under-pinning for almost everything else we do. Good headway has been made thus year thanks particularly to the work of our cataloguing assistant. A significant quantity of material stored in archive boxes has now been scanned and photographed.

The next project was to conduct physical stocktakes of the objects listed in the various locations in the database. This proved problematic as many items were not found in the locations listed on the database having been moved since their original cataloguing. Also, many additional objects were discovered in locations where they were not listed. This demonstrated a problem in the movement of objects not being reported accurately to the collection management team. A Movement Register has since been introduced.

Database manager Graham Wilson continued his development of the *Dadabik* cataloguing system including a simplified stocktake and acquisition process. Testing has begun on these processes to make the cataloguing and collection tasks easier to manage.

As cataloguing is so basic to our operations the Centre has funded a cataloguing assistant position, which is occupied by Kseniia Maximova. Her work has made such a significant contribution to the collection management task that we are hoping to find further funding options for the position. Additional support will be needed to carry out the digitisation and cataloguing of objects, documents and photographs being collected for the Centenary of the Royal Canberra Show.

Gillespie Collection

Volunteers in the Gillespie Room have continued to improve the inventory of the collection. Most importantly, a collaboration with the Collections Management Team has made the collection's inventory accessible and manageable through the Centre's online database. The project to digitise the complete card index collection of Lyall Gillespie continues apace.

The support of the *2022 Community Heritage Grants Program* grant in conservation materials and training continues to allow volunteers to improve the closed storage of items in the collection. A very large proportion is now housed in prefabricated or custom-made archival boxes.

An unsuccessful grant application was made to the *ACT Heritage Grants Program 2025-2026* for a project to bring unused spaces at the ends of the Gillespie Building up to standard for displays, including an Aboriginal heritage welcoming area. The Centre thanks the Representative Aboriginal Organisations who were consulted about this idea. The concept will be pursued and recently, new custom-fitted covers have been crafted for display cases in the areas. In the meantime, the Gillespie Exhibition of 2024, *The Journey of local historian Lyall L. Gillespie (1919-2006)*, which shows the diversity of Lyall's collection has remained popular with visitors through 2025 and 2026. It will be largely replaced by a new display in late 2026 but the popular reprint of Lyall's *Ginninderra*, and his biography, produced by the Centre with support of the *ACT Heritage Grants Program 2024-2025*, are still available.

A major task of late 2025 and early 2026 was the refresh of the foyer exhibition, *10,000 years on Hall's Creek*, and the addition of a display about the Aboriginal archaeology of Ginninderra Creek, including artefacts collected there by Lyall Gillespie. The Ginninderra Creek display forms the first element of the bicentennial exhibition about the *Palmerville* estate that was occupied on that watercourse in 1826.

In addition, objects collected at Palmerville, and archaeologically excavated objects from two homesteads established by freed Irish convicts were included in the *Palmerville* Exhibition. The latter items were from the homes of John Butler and John Crinigan on an arm of the Ginninderra Creek, excavated in the 1990s with help from volunteers of the Canberra Archaeological Society. (Butler's Cottage 'Malton' and Crinigan's Stone Hut). These exemplify a key aspect of the early British colonial model in Australia, in which a large amount of Aboriginal land was given to notable people, and convicts provided free labour to work it. We are especially grateful to Marilyn Folger for the kind loan of wonderful 19th century household artefacts from the homestead of her ancestors, John and Maria Crinigan.

A group of archaeology students from the Australian National University visited the Aboriginal heritage exhibitions at the Centre on 11 March 2026, accompanied by their lecturer, Duncan Wright, and Nggunawal elder Mr Wally Bell. An additional benefit of the visit was the decision of one of the students to undertake a formal period of volunteering with Centre, working on Aboriginal heritage objects, conservation storage and heritage-in-a-suitcase preparations.

Bush Schools Collection

The bush schools team has been somewhat undermanned. All story boards, files and items have now been catalogued and numbered, and consideration is being given to simplifying access to these records via the on-line bush schools database.

Funding has been agreed for a basic public access computer to be located with the collection so that visitors can explore the holdings for schools in which they are interested – photos, teachers, school histories – ‘on the spot’. The database has entries for 90 Canberra district schools and over 600 teachers from the 100 years 1850 – 1950. Further means of promoting the collection and enhancing access to it are under consideration.

Southwell Family Collection

Work continues on the Southwell Family Archive to digitize and catalogue family material. Various documents, photos, and objects continue to be received and it is clear that this recording process will continue well into the future. We encourage any family members with family history material to make it available so that it can be recorded for future reference and research.

A genealogy software package has now been installed and the genealogy data in the 2019 book has been uploaded to provide a baseline. The Southwell Family Society website (southwellfamilysociety.org.au) is still active and any updates of genealogy can be notified through the contact details on this website. A number of inquiries from family members relating to genealogy and other matters have again been received and responded to over the course of the year.

3. MANAGEMENT AND ORGANISATION-BUILDING

Information Technology – Our Network

All the IT equipment purchased using funds available from the ACT Government’s Technology Upgrade Grant awarded three years ago continues to perform well. Regular updates to the computer operating systems are carried out to maintain on-line security.

The HHC’s Network Accessible Storage (NAS) continues to operate reliably after more than 5 years continuous operation. In accordance with accepted industry practice and in the interests of reliability the two mechanical hard drives in the NAS will need to be replaced within the next three months or so.

The internal memory of the NAS has been increased by the addition of a 4GB RAM module to improve performance when it is being accessed simultaneously by multiple users.

Two low-cost Raspberry Pi microcomputers on loan from one of our members are being trialled to run an audio-visual display on an older (non-smart) TV and for displaying the outputs of the surveillance cameras on a monitor in the main kitchen. The results so far have been favourable and may lead to the purchase of two such computers to replace those on loan within the next twelve months.

The reliability of the Centre’s connection to the internet has been improved by switching over to the FTTP (Fibre to the Premises) facility which became available following the closure of the pre-school formerly operated by Gold Creek School. The new FTTP connection will allow higher download speed than the outgoing FTTN (Fibre to the Node) connection which may be implemented as demand grows in the future.

Volunteers

It is a remarkable feature of the Centre that a core group of around 30 volunteers has been maintained for many years. Contributions differ enormously in kind and size of course, and it is well understood and respected that volunteers give as they are able. The aging of our volunteer force is an issue nevertheless! [Appendix E]

Many volunteers regularly joined the Hall Men's Shed members for their monthly BBQ and the two groups as usual came together for an annual Christmas lunch. Both groups (together with the Progress Association) are also involved from time to time in maintenance and repair projects on the site we share, as well as mutual aid with such ventures as the annual brass band concert.

Our volunteers and helpers from the Men's Shed are vital to the success of this major annual fundraiser '*Brass In the Grass*' – a brass band concert with the Canberra Brass.

Volunteers participate formally in the management of the Centre through monthly general meetings.

Long serving volunteer Heather Wilford was farewelled at a funeral service on January 8th, 2026. We congratulate another stalwart, Tony Morris, who was recognised in the 2026 Australia Day Honours list with an Order of Australia Medal. We welcomed ANU student Ms Chi Lou who will be undertaking 60 hours of volunteering with us through the 'ANU +' program

Buildings and Grounds

While ACT Government takes care of major repairs and building maintenance, the site users – including the Hall Heritage Centre – contribute significantly to cleaning, gardening and minor works. One of the volunteers has taken responsibility for grounds close to the Centre, including the Val Wiseman memorial garden. Disused sand from the former pre-school has been used to level the sports field, the neglected pre-school grounds have been cleared, and two garden sheds there have been re-purposed.

The biggest project has been reconstruction of the main entrance off Palmer Street, for which the Centre was successful in getting funds (\$14,000) from the Government. The new disability-friendly entrance ramp is almost complete after many frustrating delays.

Internally, volunteers have taken on cleaning, painting and decorating, bushfire preparedness, and taking in surplus display cases and storage units from Canberra Museum and Gallery (CMAG – display cases) and Yass Public Library (including bookcases and shelving). As a result of such activities the Centre's buildings and grounds are in an attractive and respectable condition.

Appendix A

Balance Sheet 1 July 2025 – 30 June 2026

		\$
ASSETS	Bank accounts: CBA Society Cheque Account 062915 10177845 CBA Online Saver 062915 10215688	1,763.87 <u>35,135.15</u>
		36,899.02
LIABILITIES		<u>0</u>
	@ 30 June 2026	<u>36,899.02</u>

Statement of Cash Flow and Bank Reconciliation

			\$
Cheque Account	Balance reported at 1 July 2025		278.66
Online Saver	Balance reported at 1 July 2025		<u>59,145.00</u>
			59,423.66
	Plus income - administration	(1)	10,292.35
	- grants/projects	(2)	<u>9,504.80</u>
			79,220.81
	Less expenditure - administration	(3)	(9,892.43)
	- grants/projects	(4)	<u>(32,429.36)</u>
	Balance as per cash book 30/6/2026		<u>36,899.02</u>
	Society Account Balance as per bank statement 30/6/2026		1,763.87
	Online Saver Balance as per bank statement 30/6/2026		<u>35,135.15</u>
	Total as per bank statements 30/6/2026		<u>36,899.02</u>

Statement of Income and Expenditure

Administration		\$	\$
Income	Interest	90.15	
	Membership	520.00	
	Donations	1,470.76	
	Sales (trading table, recycling, books net)	1,822.73	
	Fund-raising events	2,323.03	
	Group visits	1,992.68	
	Items on loan	300.00	
	Education Program	<u>1,773.00</u>	10,292.35 (1)
Expenditure	Stationery supplies	534.16	
	Information technology	1,261.44	
	Kitchen, catering, cleaning	1,985.83	
	Promotion, printing, sundry	204.15	
	Repairs and maintenance	246.62	
	Furniture, equipment	119.85	
	Exhibitions – Palmerville, ANU Exhibition	1,687.80	
	Carpet cleaning, test & tag equipment	2,868.55	
	Collection Management	462.18	
	Managers' budgets	<u>521.85</u>	9,892.43 (3)
Grants, Projects			
Income	Rotary Club of Hall Grant	3,000.00	
	ACT Heritage – access path + overrun	<u>6,504.80</u>	9,504.80 (2)
Expenditure	Rotary Club of Hall Grant	2,226.19	
	ACT Heritage – access path	13,954.80	
	Cataloguing/Archivist current year expense	10,476.00	
	Specified items	<u>5,772.37</u>	32,429.36 (4)

APPENDIX B : Visiting Groups

DATE	GROUP	NUMBERS
2025		
4 Sept	Erindale Community Group	14
28 Sept	Chev 4	47
12 Oct	National Trust (ACT)	28
31 Oct	RMC Graduate Cadets Class of 1979	13
30 Nov	Canberra Show team	5
2026		
2 Mar	CWA Gungahlin	8
3 Mar	Rotary Club of Hall	15
11 Mar	ANU Archaeology Students	20
16 Mar	ANU students Exhibition group	7
26 Mar	Yass U3A Australian History Group	19
31 Mar	Goodwin Homes Monash	22
19 Apr	Chinese Ambassador's group	100+
3 May	Gold Creek Station group	18
3 May	Kaleen Probus	29
24 June	LGA Partner Tour	20
29 June	Goodwin Homes Monash	7
	Total	372

Appendix C : Education Program

a) On campus excursions:

Date	School	Students	Teachers/parents
2025			
11 August	Holy Spirit Nicholls	54	4
15 August	Holy Spirit Nicholls	55	4
26 August	Holy Family Gowrie	50	4
27 August	Holy Family Gowrie	50	4
8 September	Turner Primary	39	3
9 September	Turner Primary	38	3
15 September	Latham Primary	35	4
17 September	Farrer Primary	40	4
2026			
13 May	Gowrie Primary	33	3
23 June	St Matthews Page	37	4
TOTAL:		431	37

b) 'Heritage in a Suitcase' resources – loans

Date	School	Students (approx.)
2025		
21 st July - 15 th August	Palmerston Primary	120
11 th - 22 nd August	Holy Family Gowrie	85
15 th August – 5 th Sept	Farrer Primary	65
2026		
18 th - 22 nd May	Aranda Primary	60
1 st – 12 th June	Holy Family Gowrie	85
18 th May – 1 st June	St Matthews Page	55
25 th May – 5 th June	Red Hill Primary	120
TOTAL: 590		

Appendix D: Steering group and general meetings

2025	
Steering Group Meetings	General meetings
24 July	31 July
21 August	28 August
28 August	Annual meeting
18 September	25 September
23 October	30 October
20 November	27 November
2026	
23 January	30 January
19 February	26 February
19 March	26 March
23 April	30 April
21 May	28 May
18 June	25 June

Appendix E: Volunteers 2025-2026

Alastair Crombie
 Alf Wilford
 Alison Reynolds
 Allen Mawer
 Anne Lomax
 Caroline O'Clery
 Eileen Wignall
 Graham Wilson
 Jan Dunnett
 Jan Peelgrane
 Jane Southwell

Jenny Holcombe
 Jillian Haggan
 Joan Christie
 Judy Brooks
 Judy Roberts
 Karen Moore
 Ken Heffernan
 Kim Wells
 Kingsley Southwell
 Mardie Troth
 Margaret Foley

Marion Banyard
 Olga Minion
 Paul Howarth
 Peter Browning
 Phil Robson
 Ralph Southwell
 Robin Astbury
 Rosemary Blemings
 Tony & Margaret Morris
 Wendy Duke