

HERITAGE PLACE

NAME OF PLACE: PENSURST BOTANIC GARDENS

ADDRESS/LOCATION OF PLACE: Hamilton Highway PENSURST

STUDY NUMBER: 082

HERITAGE OVERLAY NUMBER:

PRECINCT: Penshurst

LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA: Southern Grampians Shire

PARISH: PARISH OF BORAMBORAM

ACCESS DESCRIPTION:

CFA 475 J C-D10; VicRoads 223 P10; located at the centre of the township of Penshurst and bounded by Hamilton Highway, extension of Macarthur/Penshurst Road, Chesswass Street and French Street.



Penshurst Botanic Gardens, looking north towards the never fail spring.

Image Date: 13/02/02

EXTENT OF LISTING:

To the extent of: 1. All of the reserve and including the major plantings, the pump building, the bowling club, the swimming pool, and the road works.

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PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION:

The Penshurst Botanic Gardens is located in the centre of the township of Penshurst. It is a large reserve of approximately 13 acres bounded by Chesswass, French, Cox and Martin Street. The reserve incorporates several different facilities and recreational areas. In the center of the reserve there are a number of built structures, including a 25 metre concrete public swimming pool, a bowling green and associated clubrooms, a cream brick public toilet, three disused tennis courts with a brick tennis pavilion. Some ten metres from the western boundary, there is a natural spring, which has been beautified, in recent years. Colloquially known as the "never-fail spring", it is said to be one of the main reasons that Penshurst was sited in its current location. The spring has been surrounded with loose bluestone boulders, creating a circular pool above the spring. The spring has an overflow of three concrete slabs that have been arranged to form a waterfall which the overflow cascades over into pondage, which has been constructed to form a lagoon, and artificial creek, which runs through the gardens. A small brick pump house, dating from the 1920s stands to the immediate north of the 'never fail' spring.

The reserve has three distinct botanical collections. The most recent is the 'botanic wetlands' area, which is towards the north of the site. The area consists of a number of artificial lakes, streams, waterfalls and a weir, in and around which a wide variety of trees, shrubs, rushes, grasses and sedges which are specific to wetlands around the world have been planted. Some of the more important plantings in this area include 23 semi-mature American Swamp Cypress (*Taxodium distichum*) which have been partly submerged within the artificial lake; Pin Oak (*Quercus palustris*), Western Red Cedar (*Thuja plicata*), Himalayan Spruce (*Picea smithiana*), Red Maple (*Acer rubra*), American Spruce (*Picea mariana*), White swamp oak (*Quercus bicolor*) and tupelo (*Nyssa sylvatica*). The area was developed and opened in 1995.

Located to the north west of the gardens, several beds of native and indigenous plants have been laid out along side an artificial stream which travels from the never fail spring to the botanic wetlands area. Within this planting, several memorial trees have been planted, dedicated to the early pioneer settlers of the Penshurst area. These trees were planted in 1995. Three Ornamental Pear (*Pyrus sp.*) trees have been planted as memorials to the Whitehead family. Each tree has a simple bronze memorial plaque set in volcanic stone located at the base of each tree. The Whitehead family memorials are as follows: Whitehead/ James 1864-1953 / Mary 1888 - 1969 / A tribute to our parents; Whitehead / to the memory of / John 1915-1995 / James 1913-1945/ Service to Australia / 1939-1945. A Linden Tree (*Tilia grandiflora*) is located nearby, dedicated by the Albert Family descendants. The memorial plaque is of simple bronze mounted on local volcanic stone. It reads: In grateful memory of / Andreas and Agnetta Albert / migrated from Saxony, Germany/ to South Australia in 1848. / From there they travelled to settle / in Gnadenthal - Penshurst in 1852. / This memorial linden tree was planted / by the Albert family descendants in 1994.

The oldest part of the gardens, other than the natural spring is the collection of European trees located to the east of the gardens. The majority of these trees appear to be English Oak (*Quercus robur*), Algerian Oak (*Quercus canariensis*) and a number of hybrids between the English Oak and the Algerian Oak. There are also specimens of Arizona Cypress (*Cupressus arizonica*), Himalayan Cedar (*Cedrus deodara*), Sycamore (*Acer pseudo-platanus*), Peppercorn (*Shinus molle*), White Poplar (*Populus alba*), Golden Willow (*Salix alba*) and weeping Willow (*Salix babylonica*). It is thought that these largely deciduous trees were planted in the 1920s to replace an earlier collection of pines.

HISTORY:

The land on which the Penshurst Botanic Gardens now stands was important from earliest pre-European settlement times for the consistent fresh water which the spring supplied to indigenous people of the area.

The first European to take up the land around Penshurst was John Cox (1813-1853). John Cox's run, Mount Rouse, was taken up in 1839, and included the land on which the Penshurst Botanic Gardens now stands. Cox was the son of James Cox of Clarendon near Evandale on the River Nile. John Cox had whaling and mercantile

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interests at Port Fairy prior to arriving in the area (Billis & Kenyon, 51). He was ejected from the Mount Rouse run in April 1842, as the land was required to form an Aboriginal Protectorate under the Chief Protector of Aborigines, George Augustus Robinson. The buildings of the Protectorate were located in a compound at the bottom of Mount Rouse, near the later intersection of Cox and Martin Streets, where the spring is located. It is very likely that many of the buildings were located on and around the area, which now forms the Penshurst Botanic Gardens. By 1850, the Argus newspaper reported "...the Government Surveyor is busy laying out the Mount Rouse Reserve, into allotments suitable for farming purposes. A Township is to be in the centre" (Argus, 31/08/1850). By 1851, it was formally announced that the Protectorate had failed, and Mount Rouse run grazing rights were open to tender. C.C Howell surveyed the township in that same year, apparently naming it Penshurst after the birthplace of the (unknown) hotel owner he had stayed with while surveying the land (Specialist Garden Developments Pty. Ltd, 35). The surveyed land did not cover the lands where the spring and structures associated with the Protectorate had stood, but extended south towards Mount Rouse, in a standard four by five section block (Surveyor General's Office, 1855).

The two main roads that intersected Penshurst in the 1864 Township of Penshurst plan are the Hamilton Road and the Caramut Road, which intersect at the site of the never-fail spring to become Martin Street (Office of Lands & Survey Melbourne, 1864). This map shows that there was no surveyed land, or built structures between these roads, where the Penshurst Botanic Gardens now stands. It is likely that this area was left as the natural spring was the primary source of fresh water for the township in its earliest days.

The area around the spring was left undeveloped until October 1876, when the Shire of Mount Rouse Minutes record that the a Public Gardens Reserve had been gazetted, and that the reserve would include three chains of road which would need to be cancelled. The road that this refers to was the original Caramut Road, which has been re-directed (Shire of Mount Rouse Minutes, 1876). The minutes also records that trees had been received from the State Nursery, and that they should be planted at once. In 1872 the Victoria Government established a State nursery at Macedon. This was partly in response to encourage replanting of the Macedon ranges (which had been denuded by the timber industry) and also to supply seedlings to all parts of Victoria. "William Ferguson, Inspector of State Forests, oversaw the development of the nursery and an area of 41 acres was fenced and planted with many kinds of trees. In 1875, 8 acres of land was stocked with young trees. In 1888, 40,000 trees were distributed and between 1889 and 1895, some 350,000 plants were issued free of charge" (Hawker, in 'The Botanic Garden'). A great number of the trees that were propagated at the nursery were of the English varieties with which the landowners were familiar. It seems likely that the trees, which were received, were part of the State Nursery Scheme to donate trees (particularly those which were considered to be useful for timber production) to Local Governments. It is thought that the donated trees were of an as yet unknown Pinus species and that they were planted throughout the reserve.

In 1922, a donation of 75 trees was received from the State Nurseries. The Shire of Mount Rouse Minutes (13/09/1922) described them as 'ornamental trees....planted in Penshurst Park to replace old pines removed' (Shire of Mount Rouse Minutes, 1922). What remains of these trees are those, which form the Oak, dominated exotic planting on the eastern part of the reserve.

Although a suggestion was made in 1919 to erect a memorial bowling green to those who had served in World War One, the suggestion was dismissed, and a bowling green was not created until the middle of the twentieth century. The exact date for the construction of the green, clubrooms and associated facilities is not known.

The Township of Penshurst Map, dated 1957 shows that part of the Public Garden Reserve (now the Penshurst Botanic Gardens) had been gazetted for a swimming pool (Department of Lands and Survey, 1957). It is not known whether the swimming pool was constructed prior to 1957, but the structures which are associated with the pool (kiosk, change rooms, toilets) appear to date from the late 1950s or early 1960s. Similarly, it is not known when the three tennis courts were constructed, but the tennis pavilion appears to date from later than the courts (about 1970).

The 'Master Plan for Redevelopment of The Penshurst Botanic Gardens' (SGD Collaborative, 42) states that

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"The croquet lawn became a bowling green", which indicates that at some point in the history of the reserve, a croquet lawn existed. It is not known when this was created, or when the croquet lawn became a bowling green.

In 1994, a Master plan for the site was developed, and as a result, a new Botanical Gardens Wetland area was created. This wetland houses a variety of wetland plants from around the world, including trees, shrubs, grasses, algae, sedges and reeds. At this time, several beds of native plants were laid out, and artificial lakes, streams and waterfalls were created to 'beautify' the area. The spring was also re-modelled and defined with bluestone boulders piled up around it, and an overflow cascade constructed.

The Penshurst Botanic Gardens continue to be used for active and passive recreation in their different areas.

THEMATIC CONTEXT:

Theme 4. Building settlements, towns and cities

4.1.1 Selecting township sites

4.5 Making settlements to serve rural Australia

Theme 8. Developing Australia's Cultural life

8.1 Organising recreation

8.1.1 Playing and watching organised sports

8.1.3 Developing public parks and gardens

8.1.4 Enjoying the natural environment

8.7 Honouring achievement

8.8 Remembering the fallen

CONDITION:

The collection of Oaks is in fair condition, the buildings within the reserve are also in fair condition, the newer landscaped area is in excellent condition.

INTEGRITY:

The gardens have a relatively low degree of integrity, since the later 19th century plantings have been removed and a range of mid 20th C recreational facilities have been introduced.

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE:

What is significant? How is it significant? Why is it significant?

COMPARISON:

No other Botanic gardens have been located as comparative examples in the study area. As a public reserve it can be compared to:

016 Queens Park, Coleraine.

ASSESSED BY: acn

ASSESSMENT DATE:

31-Oct-01

EXISTING LISTINGS:

HERITAGE STUDY RECOMMENDATIONS:

Include in VHR Include in RNE Include in Local Planning Scheme

No Recommendations for Inclusions

REFERENCES:

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Author	Title	Year	Page
	" Wetlands 'history in the making', opens tomorrow" in Hamilton Spectator 18/11/1995	1995	5
	Victoria and the Riverina, Part 1	1933	233-4
	Cyclopaedia of Victoria	1903	531
	The Argus Newspaper - 31/08/1851	1851	
Department of Lands and Survey	Township of Penshurst, Parishes of Boram Boram and Yalimba, County of Villiers	1927	
Department of Lands and Survey	Township of Penshurst, Parishes of Boram Boram and Yalimba, County of Villiers	1957	
John Hawker	'Cork Oak's in Australia' in "The Botanic Garden: an online newsletter for Botanic Gardens of Australia & New Zealand" Number 5, April 2003	2003	
Mount Rouse Shire Council	Shire of Mount Rouse - Minutes 1822	1922	
Mount Rouse Shire Council	Shire of Mount Rouse - Minutes 1876	1876	
Office of Lands and Survey	Township of Penshurst	1864	
Paul de Serville	Pounds and Pedigrees	1991	171, 520
R V Billis and A S Kenyon	Pastoral Pioneers of Port Phillip	1974	var.
Specialist Garden Developments Pty. Ltd	Penshurst Botanic Gardens Masterplan 1994	1994	var.
Surveyor General's Office	Suburban & Country Lands & Township of Penshurst near Mount Rouse in the Parishes of Yalimba and BoramBoram, County of Villiers	1855	