

HISTORY 3.0



3.1 Adelaide Botanic Garden and Botanic Park

The material contained in this section of this document is substantially taken from the Adelaide Botanic Garden Conservation Study, a concurrent independent study to this Master Plan commissioned by the Botanic Gardens of Adelaide and written by Richard Aitken, David Jones and Colleen Morris. For a more complete history of the Adelaide Botanic Garden, refer to the Conservation Study.

PRE-EUROPEAN HISTORY

The draft Adelaide Botanic Garden Conservation Study reports that there is one traditional Kurna placename associated with the current site of the Adelaide Botanic Garden: a Kurna elder, *Ivaritji* (also known as Amelia Taylor) believed to be the last person of full Kurna ancestry, stated in the 1930's that 'the waterhole in the botanical gardens' was identified as *Kainka Wirra*, meaning 'eucalypt forest', and was of special significance to her father, the tribal leader *Parnataty*, or King Rodney (*Ityamaipinna*).

The Conservation Study concludes that it is likely that the current Main Lake in the Gardens is an enlargement of a previously existing waterhole. Also noted in the study is the existence of a hollowed trunk of a River Red Gum, which was almost certainly burnt out and used by Kurna people as a shelter, or *wattowadli*.

Post contact, the establishment of the European settlement of Adelaide began a process of dispossession of land from the Kurna. As vegetation was removed and the city took shape, according to the city plan developed by Colonel William Light, the Kurna, and other indigenous people attracted to the growing settlement, were forced to live in locations where shelter, firewood and food sources remained. Locations within the ring of Park Lands around the city centre (as proposed in Light's plan) became popular campsites, particularly near the River Torrens. The

Conservation Study states that areas around and within the present Botanic Garden, Botanic Park and Zoo were sites for camps, 'corroborees' (*Palti* or *Kuri*), ceremonies, burials and other activities, but notes that it is uncertain whether any of these locations were used prior to settlement.

Historian Tom Gara has noted that Botanic Park specifically was an important camping venue for indigenous people from the 1840's through to the late nineteenth century, as the area retained much of its original vegetation. The Conservation Study also reports that contemporary adaptations of 'corroborees' were performed for the public on the old Exhibition Grounds site on Frome Road, and that during these visits the performers camped in Botanic Park.

SITE BOUNDARIES

The boundaries of the Adelaide Botanic Garden and Botanic Park have shifted on a number of occasions since the Garden was first established, within twenty years of settlement, in 1855. Originally planted on a forty acre site with a main entry at the existing North Terrace gates and a central spine running north-south, the Garden grew substantially in 1873 when the Board was vested with the care and control of a contiguous site to the north to be used as an arboretum and to be known as Botanic Park.

A further six acres was added to the Garden site in the early 1950's as part of a complex land swap negotiated earlier in 1937, in which the State Government excised a strip of land west of the Main Walk for the expanding Hospital in exchange for the Garden receiving the former Lunatic Asylum site to the east, south of First Creek to Hackney Road.

The remainder of the land along Hackney Road, north of First Creek, previously the State Transport Authority depot, came to the Gardens in sections: first the Bicentennial Conservatory site was handed over in order to complete the construction of the Conservatory in the bicentennial year 1988, then nine years later the Board took control of the remainder of the depot site for Garden use. In 1999, the Garden lost control of its own former depot site in the southeastern corner of the Garden to make way for the construction of the National Wine Centre.

GEORGE FRANCIS

George Francis, the Garden's first Director, began the new colony's botanic garden at a time of great prosperity. Good seasonal rainfall meant excellent grazing, high wheat yields and a doubling of the colony's population during the 1850's. The combination of a newly acquired civic pride with an enthusiasm for research into scientific agriculture and general horticulture under South Australian conditions, lead to favourable circumstances for the funding of a new botanic garden.

Francis began work immediately and by October 1855 had produced a rough plan illustrating a formal layout based on the north-south axis from the North Terrace gates and locating the Gardens first building, the Director's residence, near the western boundary with the Hospital. Francis formalised both Top Lake and Main Lake and over the next ten years intensely developed the Garden between North Terrace and Main Lake, the work culminating in the so-called Francis Plan of 1864. In practical terms, the Plan responded to the major natural determinants of the site in its two creeklines and a natural rise between them. It also used the imposing form of

the Lunatic Asylum at the top of the ridge as both a prominent backdrop and as a major generator of the garden design. However, Francis' Plan went much further than this. Stylistically, the Plan used a complex and sophisticated arrangement of strong axes with geometric arrays of planting beds based on circles, ovals and teardrop forms. Described by the draft Adelaide Botanic Garden Conservation Study as 'formal rococo' in design, the Plan is a rare example of this garden type in Australia.

The Study rates the Francis Plan as having exceptional cultural significance for its unique translation of early to mid nineteenth century British and European garden design influences (particularly the rococo and Gardenesque styles) to an Australian context.

The Francis Plan was ideal for the acquisition and display of exotic and unusual plants. The Conservation Study records that Francis arranged the plant collections according to their country of origin, displaying an unusually developed appreciation for the relationship between the plants of Australia and those of its neighbours New Zealand, the Pacific Islands, and South Africa. These Australasian, or Gondwanan plants, were surrounded by 'the plants of the Cape of Good Hope, the plants of Europe and of America and the Amaryllis tribe, medicinal plants etc. and the general scientific arrangement'.

DR RICHARD SCHOMBURGK

Following Francis' death in 1865, Dr Richard Schomburgk was appointed Director of the Garden. In time, Schomburgk like Francis found himself in control of the fledgling Garden at a time of economic prosperity. The 1870's were a boom time in South Australia, with the return of good rainfall resulting in the best wheat harvests in the colony's history. Schomburgk successfully exploited the happy circumstances to secure Government funding to further develop the Garden.

Building on Francis' designs, he expanded the extent of the Garden to develop the land north of the Main Lake, beyond the existing developed part of the Garden. His bold plans for expansion of the Gardens were illustrated in the Schomburgk Plan of 1874, which clearly reflect the overwhelming confidence shown by both Government and the public in the Garden as an institution.

Securing the site of Botanic Park, and Schomburgk's ambitious landscape plan for the arboretum in the Park, are signs of a great victory for the Gardens' Board to promote the importance of the Garden to the colony then and into the future. It was under Schomburgk's directorship that many of the Garden's most popular and memorable assets were developed. His early projects such as the Fig Tree Avenue, on axis with Francis' Main Walk, the experimental garden, the rosary and an earlier arboretum of Australian trees all appear on the 1864 Plan.

However, with the development of the Victoria House in 1868, Schomburgk was able to realise the first of his plans for a series of new landmark horticultural buildings within the Garden. Following the success of the Victoria House project, and its extremely popular display of the Giant Amazon Waterlily to which Schomburgk had a personal association with its collection, he confidently undertook two further building projects in the development of the Palm House in 1877 and the Museum of Economic Botany in 1879.

The final relocation of the animal enclosures to the newly established Zoological Gardens in the northwest sections of Botanic Park created new opportunities for Schomburgk to consolidate his designs. As noted in the Conservation Study, when Schomburgk drew a plan indicating the progress of the Garden in 1886, he wrote that 'although the garden itself does not now admit extension, the constant additions and small alterations that are made to and in the portions of the area which are already occupied show that the work of improvement and ornamentation is increasing'.

THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

Over the next hundred years, the directorships of Maurice Holtze, John Bailey and Harold Greaves collectively saw the construction of an axial bridge over Main Lake, the nearby Simpson Kiosk, the western Wisteria arbour, the Simpson Shadehouse and the Sunken Garden.

Development of the Garden in this time was severely hampered by economic decline and recessionary periods. In fact it was during this period that much of the intricate and ornate aspects of the Garden's layout were substantially removed due to a combination of modest budgets and a heightened public need for low cost recreational spaces that had necessitated a rationalisation of the Garden's design and maintenance requirements.

Noel Lothian's appointment as Director coincided with the national postwar reconstruction efforts. A man in his thirties at the time of his appointment, he invigorated the Garden with an enthusiasm to revaluating the importance of botany as a science and the Garden as a scientific institution.

He did this through actions such as the re-establishment of the Garden's Herbarium and Library, the re-establishment of international seed exchange programs, as well as landscaping improvements and exploration into a new annex for the Gardens, and a general increase in the overall public profile of the Garden.

Finalisation of the long planned land swap with the Hospital became a reality under Lothian. The loss of land west of Main Walk also involved the demolition of the Director's residence and a number of glasshouses. New glasshouses were constructed adjacent the rebuilt Victoria House

as part of an overall restoration works program across the Gardens. This alteration to the Gardens boundaries prompted the preparation in 1953 of a new Garden plan, just ahead of the Garden's centenary in 1955. The Plan shows the new Mallee Section developed under Lothian as a display planting for both home gardeners and designers of public gardens to demonstrate the potential of these species.

Perhaps Lothian's greatest contribution as Director though was his pursuit of new garden sites. Despite a protracted process starting in 1949, Lothian oversaw the addition of two new gardens into the control of the Botanic Gardens Board during his thirty-two years as director: the Wittunga Botanic Garden, officially opened in 1976, and the Mount Lofty Botanic Garden, opened in 1977.

In regard to the directorship of Brian Morley that followed Lothian's retirement in 1980, the draft Adelaide Botanic Garden Conservation Study describes the term as a roller coaster ride that saw one of the most turbulent periods of change in the Garden's history. Beginning his term in a period of economic affluence, Morley undertook a program of 'cultural' change in two ways.

In terms of the culture of management, he took the Garden from an organisation with a short-term pragmatic view of its own upkeep to an institution with a distinctive identity and public pride. Under Morley's leadership, the Garden was greatly refurbished, most notably in the highly regarded restoration of the dilapidated Palm House, but also in the upgrading of the Simpson Kiosk into a high quality restaurant, and the restoration of the North Lodge, the North Terrace gates and various fountains, footbridges, and pavements. Morley was also responsible for

another cultural shift at the Garden that saw it play host to an unprecedented range of social and cultural activities, particularly in association with the Adelaide Festival of Arts.

In conjunction with the restoration projects, the Garden undertook a major new building project: a new Tropical Conservatory, timed to coincide with the nation's bicentennial celebrations. After abandoning an earlier preferred site within Botanic Park, the Government transferred a strip of land from the former STA depot along the Garden's eastern boundary to the control of the Gardens Board, and construction works during the bicentennial year saw the project completed a year later.

The iconic building proved to be a popular addition to the Garden, continuing an established tradition of glasshouse horticulture, and received a national architecture award in 1991.

The construction of the Conservatory had important flow-on effects. The relocation of the tropical palms to the Conservatory allowed the restoration work to commence on the Palm House, and the establishment of an entirely new collection there. An exotic collection of arid climate plants of Madagascar required a dry microclimate, substantially less damaging to the structure than the artificial humid conditions required for the palms.

Secondly, the new Conservatory brought new impetus to the handover of the remaining portion of the STA depot site to Garden control, and with it, two substantial heritage buildings. The relocation of the Herbarium to the so-called 'Trambarn A' building and the refurbishment of the Goodman Building to become the Garden's new administrative headquarters brought about a radical shift in the Garden's operation, and almost by default created a new face to the Garden on its new Hackney Road frontage and an alternative public entry to the Garden proper.

The economic stringency of the 1990's unfortunately meant that on completion of these large building projects, little funding was left over to enhance the large areas of open space suddenly available to the Garden.

Similar circumstances for Lothian and Morley at the time when the Garden acquired the former Lunatic Asylum site has meant that the eastern precincts of the Garden remain to this day the most undeveloped parts of the Garden, lacking the strong character of the older Garden sites. The exception is the International Rose Garden, developed in the final years of the Morley directorship, but as a project largely outside the control of the Garden.

An initiative of the State Government, and linked to the development of the Garden's former depot compound into the new National Wine Centre complex, the Rose Garden is a large and highly designed garden room, which is yet to prove to be the popular drawcard envisaged.

CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE ADELAIDE BOTANIC GARDEN AND BOTANIC PARK

The Adelaide Botanic Garden Conservation Study ranks the Garden as having exceptional cultural significance. By definition, the Garden contributes in a fundamental way to the overall understanding of Australian cultural institutions and is therefore a significant cultural place on a national level. The main determinants for this ranking are the Garden's significant commitment to the planting of Australian flora, the Francis plan and its mid-nineteenth century European influences, the Schomburgk master plan for its creation of discrete compartments and formal key buildings within the Garden, the retention of the gardenesque qualities originating from these earlier eras, the tradition of gardening under glass, and the tradition of ornamentation and a decorous style.

The Adelaide Botanic Garden Conservation Study ranks Botanic Park as having high cultural significance. By definition, the Park is a significant cultural place on a state-wide level.

The 'high' ranking responds to the Park being an important example of a nineteenth century public domain. However it is noted that very little of the built fabric from Schomburgk's original park layout survives today, the main exception being the original carriageways, now forming the alignments of Plane Tree Drive and Botanic Drive.

3.2 Mount Lofty Botanic Garden

The material contained in this section of this document is substantially taken from the Mount Lofty Botanic Garden Conservation Study, a concurrent independent study to this Master Plan commissioned by the Botanic Gardens of Adelaide and written by David Jones, Richard Aitken and Colleen Morris. For a more complete history of the Mount Lofty Botanic Garden, refer to the Conservation Study.

PRE-EUROPEAN HISTORY

Two Aboriginal tribes are known to have inhabited parts of the Mount Lofty Ranges prior to European arrival in South Australia. It is believed the Kurna people of the Adelaide Plains were custodians of the western slopes of the Ranges, while the country of the Peramangk people included the eastern slopes of the Ranges and extended east toward Callington.

The draft Mount Lofty Botanic Garden Conservation Study records that there is no known physical evidence of Kurna or Peramangk occupancy of the Piccadilly Valley and no known cultural sites within the Mount Lofty Botanic Garden. The Kurna believe the body of the Kurna ancestral being Nganno, who lay down to die following a battle, forms the Mount Lofty Ranges. The two peaks of Mount Lofty and Mount Bonython are identified as the 'two ears' of *Nganno*.

GARDEN DEVELOPMENT

The sixth director of the Adelaide Botanic Garden, Noel Lothian, first proposed the concept of a hills botanic garden soon after his appointment in 1948. He argued strongly for the new garden on the basis that as metropolitan Adelaide encompassed an area with two or three climatic zones and at least three distinct soil zones, additional garden sites would allow for a greater variety of plant material to be cultivated.

He further argued that a new garden would be an appropriate means of celebrating the Garden's upcoming centenary.

The Board of the Botanic Garden endorsed Lothian's proposal that an area of land within the high rainfall regions of the Mount Lofty Ranges should be acquired for a new botanic garden specialising in the display of cool temperate plant species. By the end of 1951, feasibility studies had concluded that no suitable Crown land properties existed with the desirable soil and rainfall conditions.

The estate of Thomas S Backhouse was listed for public auction on 30th September 1952. The land was located on the eastern slopes of the Ranges, immediately below Mount Lofty House, and was extensively covered in regrowth Stringybark forest, a Radiata Pine plantation and open areas, all over acid soils and in the centre of one of the highest rainfall regions in the State.

The Board acted quickly to acquire the Backhouse land, totalling just over one hundred acres. A permanent management team was not established on the site until 1959, following early surveying work, which included investigations of the site's former mines, and tree clearing to establish firebreaks. With staff on site, many being local Hills residents, planting of the new botanic garden commenced, with the area now known as Rhododendron Gully receiving early attention.

Soon Lothian and the Board determined that the development of the Garden had become a major undertaking and engaged the landscape architect, Allan Correy, to prepare a master plan for the 'Mount Lofty Annex' in 1961.

Correy completed the Master Plan for the development of the Mount Lofty Botanic Garden in 1965. In the report, under the section 'Proposed Planting Zones' Correy suggested that "all major planting be carried out on an ecological basis within a framework of broad geographical regions". It was also suggested that while the bulk of the planting would be of flora from cool temperature regions, there would also be scope to cover alpine, sub-alpine and some warm temperate plants.

The establishment works progressed through into the 1970's, and in time pressure was put on Lothian and the Board to open the Garden to the public. Following their initial resistance, in order to ensure adequate foundational plantings were provided, the State Government determined that the Garden was to open to the public in November 1977.

The decision had the effect of hastening funding to complete visitor facilities ahead of garden establishment, and the twelve months prior to opening the Garden saw a flurry of public facility works that included surfacing of both the upper and lower car parks, erection of a viewing platform (later to become the Lothian Lookout), construction of additional toilet facilities and surfacing of internal roads. In addition, the access routes to the car parks were formalised into the two-way roadways of Mawson Drive and Lampert Road.

A key feature of the Garden is the main lake, which was constructed in 1978. The original farm dam was demolished and a new clay core earthen bank was built.

As noted in the draft Mount Lofty Botanic Garden Conservation Study, the lake accorded with the intent of the Correy Master Plan, but varied considerably in its spatial configuration. Intended as an ornamental feature of the Garden, the lake is also used for water storage and fire control purposes.

RECENT HISTORY

The two 'Ash Wednesday' bushfires of the 1980's have made fire protection for both the public and the collections a focal point for garden development in the last two decades. The second 'Ash Wednesday' fires in 1983 burnt more than fifty percent of the Garden, severely damaging much of the Garden's upper reaches including the Rhododendron, Syringa and Viburnum Gullies.

The Stringybark forest 'fingers' also suffered damage in the fires and thinning and replanting around the forest sought to isolate it and reduce the chance of reoccurrence of the devastation of 1983. A state Government grant of \$1 million greatly assisted in the reconstruction process and in upgrading the public access and water storage systems.

CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE MOUNT LOFTY BOTANIC GARDEN

The Mount Lofty Botanic Garden Conservation Study ranks the Garden as having high cultural significance. By definition, the Garden is a significant cultural place on a state-wide level. The following is a proposed Statement of Cultural Significance from the Conservation Study:

- The area is of great aesthetic and scientific importance not only through the permanent preservation of natural stands of wet and dry

sclerophyll forest, supporting vegetation and associated birds and animals, but also the significant collections of exotic and ornamental trees, shrubs and other plants of cool temperate, alpine and sub-alpine associations established in a landscape setting envisaged by director Noel Lothian and conceptualised in a landscape design plan prepared by Allan Correy resulting in a significant designed landscape.

- Significant collections of ferns, *Rhododendron*, *Acer*, *Magnoliaceae*, and heritage *Rosa* ssp. exist in the Garden together with the rare coral fern (*Gleichenia microphylla*) and *Blechnum* spp.



