

Section 5.0

ASSESSMENT OF CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE



Figure 5.1 Photograph of Piccadilly Valley from the vicinity of the Lothian Lookout by Noel Lothian in 1977. Source: Noel Lothian.

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5.1 Kaurna / Peramangk Aboriginal values

In terms of Kaurna, Peramangk and Aboriginal cultural significance to the place, there is no direct evidence as to occupation or spiritual associations. Meanings and value exist in the topographical features of the Mount Lofty Ranges to the west. There may be journey-line associations through this landscape but little evidence or stories attest to this role and relationship.

Key points from this analysis are that:

- The landscape of Mount Lofty Botanic Garden has no clear Aboriginal associations
- However the landscape setting provides an important viewing and interpretative platform to discuss the overall importance of the Mount Lofty Ranges to the Kaurna / Peramangk clans.

5.2 Aesthetic values

Aesthetic significance is one of the major values of Mount Lofty Botanic Garden. It has a dramatic visual setting and outlook. These qualities were recognised in the original site selection and acquisition. These qualities were captured and exploited in the Master Plan for the Garden. Thus setting, viewpoints, vistas, and backdrops are important elements in the landscape that have been woven into the Master Plan.

Key points from this analysis are that:

- The natural landscape of the upper reaches of Piccadilly Valley provide a visually dramatic setting and outlook across the Valley and upwards to the Mount Lofty Ranges and the few cultural structures that occupy this ridgeline.
- Aesthetic qualities were keenly recognised in site selection and master plan formulation.
- The Master Plan sought to exploit these aesthetic qualities, enhance and harness them in the visitation experience, the water system design, and in the circulation system design.

5.3 Historic values

There is a dearth of evidence of the pre-Garden cultural activities extant on the Garden landholdings. In contrast, the dramatic patchwork woven Piccadilly Valley landscape provides a tapestry of the vernacular landscape of the inner valleys of the Adelaide Hills.

Within the Garden there is little specific historical value associated with the Garden and its development. Most original nursery and propagation facilities have disappeared and it is difficult to discern original planting areas.

The main historical importance of the Garden lies in its landscape design. The design provides the guiding philosophy for the Garden, it is well documented in a rigorously prepared document with maps, and it still today possesses the essential ingredients that characterise the spatial, planting and aesthetic qualities and experiences of the Garden.

Associative is the importance of two personalities. Noel Lothian, as director of the Adelaide Botanic Garden, who envisioned the Garden and enabled its creation, and Allan Dale Correy who articulated the vision into a plan that enabled its substantive creation.

Key points from this analysis are that:

- The historic values of the Garden lie in the landscape design itself and its substantive execution
- The *Report on the Proposed Development for Mount Lofty Botanic Garden* (1965), and its original plastic mapping sheets, represents a significant historical document
- The Garden carries direct historical associations and meanings to the endeavour's of Noel Lothian and Allan Correy

5.4 Social and spiritual values

There is little evidence of social or spiritual values associated with the Garden. Progressively the Garden has become an integral part of the Mount Lofty Ranges open space system, but there are no significance events associated with its existence.

Key points from this analysis are that:

- There are no known significant social or spiritual values associated with the Mount Lofty Botanic Garden

5.5 Scientific values

The Garden provides a venue for a significant living collection. It is a repository as well as a venue to enable the study and continued longevity of a wide collection of species. Importantly in Australia, it has the largest collections of ferns, and very large collections of *Acer* ssp, *Magnoliaceae* ssp, and *Rhododendron* cv. These are supplemented by large collections of heritage *Rosa* ssp, and a substantive wet and dry sclerophyll forest representative of the Mount Lofty Ranges environment. In all a significant cool temperate botanic collection which was the original imperative behind the establishment of the Garden.

Tabulations of ferns, *Acer* ssp., *Magnoliaceae* ssp, *Rhododendron* cv collections are detailed in the Appendix against documented collections in the Mount Annan, Mount Tomah, Melbourne, Sydney botanic gardens, and the Pirianda Garden, National Rhododendron Garden, and the Emu Valley Garden. These tabulations demonstrate the comparative scope and size of these collections to the Garden, demonstrate the over-arching geographical strength of the Garden as a venue for cool temperate species overall, and thereby the national significance of the living collections for south-eastern Australia.

Key points from this analysis are that:

- The Garden possesses significant collections of ferns, *Acer* ssp, *Rhododendron* cv, *Magnoliaceae* ssp, and heritage *Rosa* ssp
- The Garden overall is a nationally significant venue for cool temperate plants in Australia

5.6 Statement of Cultural Significance

Mount Lofty Botanic Garden is not included in the recently established National Heritage List as administered by the Commonwealth Minister for the Environment & Heritage and the Australian Heritage Council.

'Mount Lofty Botanic Garden' is listed (21/10/1980) on former the Register of the National Estate as item 006574 (Place File No 3/03/025/0008) with the following statement of significance:

The area is of great aesthetic and scientific importance not only through the permanent preservation of natural stands of forest, supporting vegetation and associated birds and animals, but also the unique collections of exotic and ornamental trees, shrubs, and other plants established in a landscape setting. One of the gullies of native bushland retained in a pristine state contains the rare coral fern (Gleichenia). Unique in South Australia in displaying alpine and subalpine flora. (www.heritage.gov.au/ahpi/search.html 12/05/2003)

The citation includes the following description of the place:

The area in the form of a crescent and high ridge from which descend eight ridges with associated creeks emptying onto comparatively flat country. The altitudinal range is from approximately 200ft to 1,500ft at the base. The closed forest comprises the ridges and the top of the crescent. Being developed as Mount Lofty Botanic Garden, at the same time retaining half in closed forest for conservation and preservation purposes. Plant collections being established include alpine, sub-alpine and woody material from cool north and south temperate regions of the world, together with examples of high rainfall woody plants from eastern Australia. Plantings is approximately half completed. Additional plantings are made as material becomes available. (www.heritage.gov.au/ahpi/search.html 12/05/2003)

This citation recognises the general importance of the living collections extant at Mount Lofty Botanic Garden but lacks incorporation of any credit to the significance of the Master Plan and its structuring of the landscape to support and spatially orchestrate the exotic living collections.

Key conclusions therefore are:

- The Garden overall is a *place* of national significance in terms of its scientific value and its living collections
- The Garden overall is a *place* of state significance in terms of landscape design and its original documentation
- that all heritage registrations for the *place* should be revised to better reflect the cultural significance of the Garden and its relevant position in the overall heritage significance of the *place*.

The following statement is proposed as a statement of cultural significance for Mount Lofty Botanic Garden:

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 and developed 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, Magnoliceae, and heritage Rosa ssp exist in the Garden together with the rare coral fern (Gleichenia microphylla) and Blechnum spp.