

Victorian Heritage Database Report

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HAMILTON BOTANIC GARDENS



H2185 Hamilton B G Thompson St northern gates



H2185 Hamilton B G Kennedy St western gates



H2185 Hamilton B G Thompson memorial fountain



H2185 Hamilton B G bandstand



H2185 Hamilton B G lawn and shrubbery



H2185 Hamilton Botanic Gardens Plan August 2008 mz

Location

KENNEDY STREET and MARTIN STREET and FRENCH STREET and THOMPSON STREET HAMILTON,

SOUTHERN GRAMPIANS SHIRE

Municipality

SOUTHERN GRAMPIANS SHIRE

Level of significance

Registered

Victorian Heritage Register (VHR) Number

H2185

Heritage Overlay Numbers

HO268

VHR Registration

December 11, 2008

Heritage Listing

Victorian Heritage Register

Statement of Significance

Last updated on - January 31, 1997

What is significant?

The Hamilton Botanic Gardens are one of the earliest regional botanic gardens in Victoria. Hamilton was first surveyed in 1850 with land set aside for a public garden in 1853, and was gazetted in 1870. The undulating site maintains the original reservation of 10 acres (4 hectares) and is located one block south of the commercial centre of Hamilton. The first plantings were undertaken by William Ferguson in 1870, and from 1881 developed in accordance with a plan by William Guilfoyle, which survives along with the accompanying letter.

The ground gently slopes from the north and west to the lowest point in the east where a lake was constructed by late 1883. Lake restoration work in 1995 included the construction of the fourth bridge on this site with the first known reference to a bridge being in 1908. The site is enclosed by a decorative timber post and iron fence with elaborate gates funded by the community being erected by 1893 at the northern corner main entrance at the intersection of Thompson and French Streets, and later in 1907-09 at Kennedy Street. The Gardens have an encircling path with shrubberies and trees planted around the perimeter. A network of curved asphalt and gravel paths divide the centre of the garden, defining large sweeping lawns dotted with mature specimen trees and irregular shrubberies. These include a mature collection of oaks, conifers and elms as well as a number of rare specimens.

Important buildings and structures are the cottage, erected in 1877 and relocated in 1908 as both a residence for the curator and an ornamental attraction, the cannon from HMVS Nelson first placed in the garden in 1893 displaying the fashion for ordnance as war trophies in public gardens, the Thomson Memorial Fountain constructed c.1921, a bandstand, initially constructed in 1904 and relocated from nearby Melville Oval in 1998, the Australian Natives' Association (ANA) Fountain built in 1909, the Kennedy Street (western) Gates opened in 1909, and the Glass house donated by the County Women's Association (CWA) in 1934, and a King George V memorial bust 1937, the Peacock (eastern) Gates erected in 1965, a rare iron lattice arch and some traditional garden seats.

Zoological elements have been a feature of the Gardens since 1885 and illustrate the nineteenth century fashion for menageries and acclimatisation with the first flight aviary dating back to 1904. The Gardens retain a large flight aviary, a smaller aviary and an animal enclosure.

How is it significant?

The Hamilton Botanic Gardens are of historical, scientific (botanical) and aesthetic significance to the State of Victoria.

Why is it significant?

The Hamilton Botanic Gardens, established in 1853, are historically significant as one of the earliest provincial botanic gardens, being the fourth oldest in Victoria. Botanic Gardens had been established in Melbourne in 1846, and Portland and Geelong in 1851. The Hamilton Botanic Gardens have a special association with the work of William Guilfoyle as an early example of his design exemplifying his ideas about planting, which were being actively implemented in his sweeping redevelopment of Mueller's design of the Melbourne Botanic Gardens from 1873 to 1909 and at Warrnambool from 1877. Guilfoyle is regarded as one of Australia's greatest garden designers. The rare 1881 plan and accompanying letter are held in the collection of the Hamilton Art Gallery.

The Hamilton Botanic Gardens are of scientific (botanical) significance for the collection of plants characteristic of nineteenth and early twentieth century Victorian gardens and representative of more specialised plant groups befitting the scientific role of botanic gardens. These include the State's only known *Gymnocladus dioica*, (Kentucky Coffee Tree), two rare *Quercus leucotrichophora* (Himalayan Oaks), and the largest known *Chamaecyparis funebris* (Funeral Cypress). Other significant trees include a very large *Quercus robur* (English Oak), two rare *Quercus agrifolia* (Californian Live Oak), an outstanding *Pinus nigra* var. *corsicana* (Corsican Pine), *Pinus torreyana* (Soledad Pine) and *Pinus sabiniana* (Digger Pine). The scientific importance of the Gardens continues to be developed with the National Collection of Abutilon for the Ornamental Plant Collections Association of Australia being held there since 1986. It is also one of only two botanic gardens, the other being White Hills Botanic Gardens, which still retains zoological elements demonstrating the nineteenth century tradition of animal and plant acclimatisation.

The Hamilton Botanic Gardens are of aesthetic significance as one of the most intact examples in Victoria of a nineteenth century regional botanic garden, characterised by curved paths, sweeping lawns, perimeter plantings of conifers, specimen trees, shrubberies, areas of intensive horticultural interest and a lake. It retains its important garden structures and buildings, most notably the Thomson Memorial Fountain, ANA Fountain, decorative fence and entrance gates, cannon, George V memorial bust, iron lattice arch, seats, cottage and a relocated bandstand. The Gardens and surrounding streetscape combine to produce a significant late nineteenth century and early twentieth century precinct which includes important contributory views from, and vistas within, the Gardens. The 'spires' of conifers in the Gardens and the spires of local churches pierce the skyline and make a significant contribution to the Hamilton landscape.

Permit Exemptions

General Conditions: 1. All exempted alterations are to be planned and carried out in a manner which prevents damage to the fabric of the registered place or object.

General Conditions: 2. Should it become apparent during further inspection or the carrying out of alterations that original or previously hidden or inaccessible details of the place or object are revealed which relate to the significance of the place or object, then the exemption covering such alteration shall cease and the Executive Director shall be notified as soon as possible.

General Conditions: 3. If there is a conservation policy and plan approved by the Executive Director, all works

shall be in accordance with it

General Conditions: 4. Nothing in this declaration prevents the Executive Director from amending or rescinding all or any of the permit exemptions.

General Conditions: 5. Nothing in this declaration exempts owners or their agents from the responsibility to seek relevant planning or building permits from the responsible authority where applicable.

Building Exterior:

- * Minor repairs and maintenance which replace like with like.
- * Painting of previously painted surfaces (but not signs), walls, posts, and roofing in the same colour.
- * Treatments to stabilise and protect timber, masonry and metal structures.

Building Interior:

- * Painting of previously painted walls and ceilings provided that preparation or painting does not remove evidence of the original paint or other decorative scheme.
- * Removal of paint from originally unpainted masonry.
- * Refurbishment of toilets including removal, installation or replacement of fixtures and fittings.

Landscape:

- * The process of gardening, mowing, hedge clipping, bedding displays, removal of dead plants, disease and weed control, emergency and safety works and landscaping in accordance with the original concept.
- * The replanting of plant species to conserve the landscape character, conifer, elm, oak, poplar, and shrub plantings.
- * Management of trees in accordance with Australian Standard; Pruning of amenity trees AS 4373.
- * Vegetation protection and management of the possum population.
- * Removal of plants listed as Prohibited and Controlled Weeds in the Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994.
- * Repairs, conservation and maintenance to hard landscape elements, memorial plaques, asphalt and gravel paths and roadways, stone and concrete edging, fences and gates.
- * Installation, removal or replacement of garden watering and drainage systems beyond the canopy edge of listed trees.

Objects:

The temporary relocation, movement or external loan of a registered heritage object does not require permit approval by the Executive Director pursuant to the *Heritage Act 1995* where the activity is performed in accordance with the accepted standards, policies and procedures of the organisation concerned.

The conservation, research or analysis of a registered heritage object does not require approval by the Executive Director pursuant to the *Heritage Act 1995*, where the activity is performed in accordance with the accepted standards, policies and procedures of the organisation concerned.

Minor Works : Note: Any Minor Works that in the opinion of the Executive Director will not adversely affect the heritage significance of the place may be exempt from the permit requirements of the Heritage Act. A person proposing to undertake minor works may submit a proposal to the Executive Director. If the Executive Director is satisfied that the proposed works will not adversely affect the heritage values of the site, the applicant may be exempted from the requirement to obtain a heritage permit. If an applicant is uncertain whether a heritage

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| Heritage Act Categories | Heritage place, Heritage object/s, |
| Other Names | HAMILTON BOTANICAL GARDENS, |
| Hermes Number | 1871 |
| Property Number | |

History

HISTORY:

Sources:

Nigel Lewis Richard Aitken Pty Ltd in association with Francine Gilfedder and Associates, *Hamilton Botanic Gardens Conservation Analysis*, August 1993.

Francine Gilfedder and Associates in association with Nigel Lewis Richard Aitken Pty Ltd, *Hamilton Botanic Gardens Conservation Policy and Strategy for Implementation*, 1994.

National Trust classification 'Hamilton Botanic Gardens' G13112 prepared by R Aitken Jun 1990.

City of Hamilton Conservation Study Volumes 1 & 2, by Timothy Hubbard Pty Ltd, in conjunction with Carlotta Kellaway and Michael Looker, June 1991.

CONTEXTUAL HISTORY

From the mid nineteenth century, fuelled by the gold rush and colonial government policies, Victoria developed a tradition of municipal botanic gardens in many country town of considerable size. This resulted in Victoria having the finest collection of provincial botanical gardens of all Australian states. Hamilton Botanic Gardens was one of four early botanic gardens set aside in the Port Phillip District of New South Wales, the others being located in Melbourne, Geelong and Portland.

Most of the regional botanic gardens developed as landscaped gardens, although there was a sharp contrast between these sites and the various municipal parks and gardens where an emphasis on floral displays and ornamentation tended to dominate, especially in the twentieth century.

HISTORY OF PLACE

The township of Hamilton, (then known as Grange), was surveyed in 1850, and in May 1851 the plans were approved by the authorities in Sydney and the township site gazetted. Section 10, the current site of the Botanic Gardens, was included in the 1850 survey and despite being marked into 20 small allotments, was not included in the early land sales. The first known reference to a garden on this site was in September 1853, but it was not until 25 January 1870, that the 10 acre (4 hectare) rectangular site bounded by French, Thomson, Martin and Kennedy Streets was temporarily reserved by an Order in Council. On 28 January 1870, it was gazetted for public garden purposes.

Plants were supplied by the Melbourne Botanic Gardens with initial planting and layout undertaken by William Ferguson, who was Inspector of State Forests and also working at the Melbourne Botanic Gardens in the interim between Mueller's dismissal as Director and William Guilfoyle's appointment as Director in 1873. An early work was the construction of a pavilion or bandstand on a high point towards Thompson Street, although it was later demolished in c.1924-30 after it fell into disrepair. By 1878, the unsatisfactory state of the reserve resulted in the appointment of Peter McKinnon as gardener, who was soon followed by James Bailie (1878-82). A turning point in the history of the Hamilton Botanic Gardens occurred in 1881 when the Council obtained the services of William Guilfoyle, Director of the Melbourne Botanic Gardens, who had previously prepared designs for the Warrnambool Botanic Gardens in 1877, and the Koroit and Horsham Botanic Gardens in 1880. His new design, dated 18 October 1881, was progressively implemented over the following decades and, according to a report in the *Hamilton Spectator* on 7 January 1882:

'the lawns, gravelled walks, clumps of trees, flower beds, summerhouses etc, are all charted out, even the particular kinds of trees or shrubs intended to occupy every position, has been selected with a view to produce the best landscape effect and harmony of colours.'

The first items to be implemented were the series of new 'walks' or paths. These included sections of the main encircling promenade which, for a time, created a confusing mix of Ferguson's existing layout and new Guilfoyle-inspired paths. By late 1883 the lake and its fountain (demolished in the late 1950s) as well as a reticulated water supply for the Gardens had been installed. Goldfish and swans were introduced in 1885 as forerunners of the present zoological section of the gardens. In 1887 seats were provided and a large lawn, presumably the present central lawn was laid out. The curators responsible for the early implementation of the Guilfoyle plan were John G Wilson (1882-85), Isaac Thomason (1885-88) and J Upham (1888-89). HS James was appointed curator in 1889 and stayed until 1903, ushering in a long period of stability in the management of the Gardens.

During the 1880s and 1890s many new plants were obtained from prominent nurserymen and garden beds and shrubberies created. In 1893 a cannon was placed in the gardens and large cast iron gates erected at the Thompson Street (northern) entrance. By the end of the century, the Gardens were described in the Weekly Times (4 May 1894), as a 'source of wonder' as the trees, especially the conifers planted by Ferguson, and the garden beds were maturing.

Randolph Hughan commenced as curator in 1903 the same year that the Council was appointed Committee of Management for the Gardens. With Hughan staying for the next 42 years in the job, this period of stability was complemented by consistent funding by the Council and a high level of public interest in the gardens. In 1903 a fernery was constructed near the French Street (western) entrance, and was most likely relocated by 1930s to a site near the court house gate, (but was also demolished by 1961). In 1908 the curator's cottage was relocated from French Street to its present site which perhaps signalled the creation of the works depot on its current site. By this date the gardens were lit by electricity. Major capital works occurred in 1908-9 with the erection of an iron and timber perimeter fence, gates, a fountain (dedicated to the Australian Natives Association), a fernery and grotto complete with an arch of whale bones and a stump set in concrete and coved by a pagoda - the artefact said to be a relic of Mitchell's travels (removed in 1984). A large ornamental fountain was erected in 1918-21 to commemorate the Hon John Thompson MLA (d.1917) for 22 years the Member for Dundas.

Most developments during the inter-war period were piecemeal namely commemorative objects and planting placed in the gardens. By the 1960s a children's playground, wishing well and paddling pool had been added.

In 1984 - 85 a rejuvenation program commenced with additional funding provided to mark Victoria's Sesquicentenary. Works included the identification and labelling of plants, tree surgery and repairs on the Thompson fountain as well as the addition of some advanced exotic tree species. In the early 1990s, works included the painting of the entrance gates and restoration and construction of sections of the perimeter fencing and landscaping inside the entrance gates. Major works undertaken in 1989-90 included the relocation of the bandstand from Melville Oval, restoration of the Thompson fountain, refurbishment of the cannon with a new base and the removal of the 1960s sound shell. In addition, the Garden State Committee provided funds to light the fountain and bandstand and to establish the Abutilon Collection.

The Friends of the Hamilton Botanic Gardens Inc were formed in 1987 and still remains very active. They funded and designed a sensory garden in 2006 and use the cottage for meetings and displays. In 2000 the Southern Grampians Shire Council set up the Hamilton Botanic Gardens Advisory Committee to oversee the day to day operations of the Gardens.

Assessment Against Criteria

a. Importance to the course, or pattern, of Victoria's cultural history

The Hamilton Botanic Gardens are one of the earliest nineteenth century regional botanic gardens in Victoria. First surveyed in 1850-51 the land was set aside as a public garden in 1853, but was not gazetted until 1870.

b. Possession of uncommon, rare or endangered aspects of Victoria's cultural history.

c. Potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of Victoria's cultural history.

The Hamilton Botanic Gardens are important for the collection of plants characteristic of nineteenth and early twentieth century Victorian gardens, as well as representative of more specialised plant groups befitting the scientific role of a botanic garden. The planting includes many rare and uncommon specimens now often only found in botanic gardens or historic landscapes.

d. Importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of cultural places or environments.

The Hamilton Botanic Gardens are historically important as one of the most intact examples of a nineteenth century provincial botanic garden in Victoria. They are an early example of William Guilfoyle's design exemplify his ideas about planting as shown by the rare 1881 plan and accompanying letter held in the collection of the Hamilton Art Gallery.

e. Importance in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics.

The Hamilton Botanic Gardens have important aesthetic characteristics as a nineteenth century provincial botanic garden, characterised by a lake, curved paths, perimeter plantings of conifers, plantings of specimen trees and shrubberies. The 'spires' of conifers in the Gardens and the spires of local churches pierce the skyline and make a significant contribution to the Hamilton urban landscape.

f. Importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement at a particular period.

g. Strong or special association with a particular community or cultural group for social, cultural or spiritual reasons. This includes the significance of a place to Indigenous peoples as part of their continuing and developing cultural traditions.

h. Special association with the life or works of a person, or group of persons, of importance in Victoria's history.

Plaque Citation

Established in 1853 and designed in 1881 by William Guilfoyle, these Gardens are one of the earliest and most intact regional botanic gardens in Victoria with several significant garden structures and rare plants.

Extent of Registration

1. All the buildings marked as follows on Diagram 2185 held by the Executive Director,

B1 Cottage

B2 Bandstand

B3 Glasshouse

2. All the features marked as follows on Diagram 2185 held by the Executive Director.

F1 Lake and island

F2 Thompson Street Gates

F3 Kennedy Street Gates

F4 Fence and gate

F5 Peacock Gates

F6 Thompson Memorial Fountain

F7 ANA Fountain

F8 ANA flight aviary

F9 Cannon

F10 Iron lattice arch

F11 King George V memorial bust

4. All the asphalt and gravel paths marked P1 on Diagram 2185 held by the Executive Director.

5. All of the land shown as L1 on Diagram 2185 held by the Executive Director being all of the land described as Crown Allotment 1, Section 10 in the Township of Hamilton, Parish of Hamilton North.

6. All of the objects held in the Hamilton Art Gallery relating to the:

O1 Guilfoyle plan 1881

O2 Guilfoyle letter to William Smith Town Clerk 18 October 1881

This place/object may be included in the Victorian Heritage Register pursuant to the Heritage Act 1995. Check the Victorian Heritage Database, selecting 'Heritage Victoria' as the place data owner.

For further details about Heritage Overlay places, contact the relevant local council or go to Planning Schemes Online <http://planningschemes.dpcd.vic.gov.au/>