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# Mont Park

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## Location

Off Waiora Road (Macleod), MACLEOD VIC 3085 - Property No G13120

## Municipality

BANYULE CITY

## Level of significance

Regional

## Victorian Heritage Register (VHR) Number

H1872

## Heritage Listing

National Trust

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## Statement of Significance

Last updated on - September 5, 2007

Mont Park, acquired by the state government in 1909 and subsequently developed as a major hospital complex, the grounds landscaped c.1910-30 to the design of Hugh Linaker and the site still in institutional use, is of Regional significance: - for its indigenous and exotic vegetation in a designed landscape; - for its fine mature specimens (especially River Red Gums) and rare trees such as a *Schinus lentiscifolius*; - for its parkland, the central feature of the site, but now marred in part by the inappropriate siting of the nurses' quarters; - historically, for the central role of the Mont Park Nursery and its Superintendent in the landscaping of asylums and other government institutions across Victoria; - as a fine example of the work of pioneering landscape designer, Hugh Linaker; amongst Victorian asylum grounds it is comparable with Beechworth in terms of landscaping; - for its remains of farm activity; including remnants of the early tram system; - aesthetically, for the qualities of its parkland and contiguous bush and especially vistas within the grounds; - for its retention of a variety of buildings dating from the period c.1910-50 which illustrates a typical Edwardian and inter-war psychiatric hospital. (The level of significance may be reviewed in light of further assessment by other Trust expert committees.)

DESCRIPTION The area known as Mont Park comprises several largely independent institutions including Larundel, Kingsbury, Gresswell, Plenty and Mont Park Hospitals and at present these have divided garden management with the first two institutions forming one management unit and the latter three forming another. This division is reflected in the two main points of entry: Mont Park is approached from Waiora Road and Kingsbury is approached from Plenty Road. The Mont Park site can be divided into three major components. The buildings form the first major component and these are spread in groups across the site. They include the former farm workers' block (now Kingsbury), Larundel, male and female wards (Mont Park), Spanish Mission style

chapel, neuropsychiatric wards, hospital, early administration buildings/stores and residences. Planting around all the buildings generally comprises low shrubs and scattered mature trees. These trees include remnant River Red Gums and near the Waiora Road entrance is a rare example of *Schinus lentiscifolius*. North of the male and female wards is an expansive parkland encircled (and now regrettably bisected) by a drive. This area is roughly grassed and supports many remnant River Red Gums; recent horticultural management has permitted areas of regeneration. The parkland also has many mature exotic trees including *Cupressus macrocarpa*, *C. macrocarpa* 'Horizontalis Aurea', *C. torulosa*, *C. sempervirens*, *Populus alba*, *Eucalyptus botryoides* and *Phoenix canariensis*. Apart from the new bisecting road this area has also been used as the site for a nurses' training school (on the central western portion) and administrative building (on the south-western portion). The boundary of the site has a number of horticultural treatments, the most striking of which are belts of *Pinus radiata* (at the rear of the male and female wards), and along Cherry Street an avenue of *Pinus radiata* and also a row of *Eucalyptus cladocalyx* which forms an avenue of honour planted in 1919. The Plenty Road entrance is still marked by the original head gardener's residence, occupied for many years by Hugh Linaker. At the Waiora Road entrance is the site of the superintendent's residence (now demolished). This area is documented in a surviving plan by Hugh Linaker and the surviving remnants of landscaping conforms to his scheme. The Mont Park site also includes several forested areas, most notably Gresswell Hill and the contiguous Gresswell Forest Wildlife Reserve. The former Mont Park cricket oval is now within the grounds of Latrobe University and the area is a wildlife reserve and current horticultural management is allowing this area to regenerate. Another large triangular area north of Cherry Street is also being regenerated with native species. This triangular area is bounded on the north-east by the formation of a disused spur railway line which ran north-west to the hospital store (which still retains a railway platform). The former farm areas of Mont Park fall into two major components: the southern area has now been developed as the site for Latrobe University and the northern area is occupied by Larundel, a golf course and a large section of open paddock.

**ANALYSIS** The Mont Park site was largely undeveloped farmland and wooded hills at the date of its acquisition by the government (1909) and was beyond the edge of urban development of Melbourne. A major feature of the landscape is the mix of remnant indigenous vegetation and exotic species. Remnant *Eucalyptus camaldulensis* were carefully retained and interplanted, largely with conifers. Along the driveway and boundaries, rows of trees were planted and close to major buildings intensively landscaped areas were created. Many landscape and site planning features typical of asylums were incorporated including airing courts with high hooped iron fencing, 'sunshades' (or outdoor pavilions within the airing courts), a farm area (worked by patients) with associated tramway system, convenient rail access, an independent water supply and division of the ward groups according to category of patient. The airing court fences and sunshades have now been removed although the tram line is still retained behind the male and female wards. Mont Park is the only Victorian asylum to incorporate a large central park perhaps due to the large size of its site and its comparatively late date of development in a period where wards were grouped according to category of patient which allowed large ranges of building to be sited in different parts of the grounds. Hugh Linaker is named by annual reports as the landscape designer of Mont Park and the tone of the reports leaves no doubt that he was responsible for the overall development and planting of the site. Linaker's original plan has not been located (if indeed one ever existed) although a smaller plan by him showing detailed landscaping for an individual residence within the site survives in the Public Works Department Drawing Collection. References in annual reports are quite general and it is therefore difficult to accurately date components of the landscaping. Using early aerial photographs and knowledge about the growth of trees, it appears that the following features at Mont Park date from the period c.1910-30: the road system, formation and planting of the central park, the airing courts, boundary plantings of pines, and the row of *Cupressus sempervirens* along the southern section of the encircling drive.

Hugh Linaker was born in the late nineteenth century and the first known reference to his career indicates he was working at Ballarat. Linaker was appointed Curator of Parks and Gardens for the municipality of Ararat in August 1901 and set about landscaping the area later known as Alexandra Park. Linaker's chance for promotion came in January 1912 when the Victorian government advertised for an 'Ornamental Gardener' for the Mont Park Hospital for the Insane. Hugh Linaker was appointed 'landscape gardener, Hospital for the Insane, on probation for twelve months' in April 1912. Linaker's new position with the Lunacy Department (of which he was the first incumbent) attracted a salary of up to £180 per annum with a cottage and allowance. Importantly the position required Linaker 'to give his expert advice at any of the other Hospitals for the Insane should he be required to do so'. The other institutions under the care of the Department at the time of Linaker's appointment included Hospitals for the Insane at Yarra Bend, Kew, Ararat, Beechworth, Sunbury, Ballarat and Royal Park as well as the 'Kew Idiot Asylum'. This roving commission was noted by the Ararat Gardens Improvement Committee and the Chairman of his farewell had 'no doubt they would often see him and have the advantage of his advice'. Linaker appears to have interpreted his brief very widely and his name has been linked with several important landscaping schemes. These included landscaping of the Shrine of Remembrance, Buchan Caves, Yarra Bend National Park and the garden of Alfred Nicholas at Burnham Beeches. Little else is known of his career and at present his reputation rests upon a relatively small number of documented works. Linaker's main hallmark was his bold landscape

schemes and his contribution to Victorian history is as a pioneering landscape architect in a period before that profession was given due regard.

Linaker lived at Mont Park from his date of appointment (1912) and until abolition of the Superintendent's position in 1988, control of landscaping at all of Victoria's asylums was directed from Mont Park. The extensive nursery at Mont Park also acted as a central nursery for all of Victoria's asylums. In landscaping terms, therefore, Mont Park assumed a primacy amongst Victorian asylums and Linaker's original residence still survives. There is documented evidence of Linaker's involvement with asylums at Ararat, Ballarat, Beechworth, Kew, Royal Park and Sunbury. REFERENCES (1) Annual Report of the Inspector-General for the Insane, 1932, p.25. (2) *ibid.*, 1911, p.46; Len Kenna, *In the Beginning there was only the Land*, Lions Club of Bundoora, Bundoora, 1988, p.109. (3) Victoria Government Gazette, 30 December 1910. (4) Nigel Lewis Richard Aitken Pty Ltd, Alfred Nicholas Memorial Gardens Conservation Analysis and Conservation Policies, Department of Conservation & Environment, 1991. (5) Annual Report of the Inspector-General for the Insane, 1912, p.44. (6) *ibid.*, 1913, p.47. (7) *ibid.*, 1914, p.48. (8) *ibid.*, *op.cit.*, pp.47-48. (9) *ibid.*, 1915, p.29; 1916, p.28; 1927, p.28. (10) *ibid.*, 1916, p.29. (11) *ibid.*, 1917, p.30. (12) *ibid.*, 1922, p.18; 1923, p.23; 1926, p.26. (13) *ibid.*, 1925, p.25. (14) *ibid.*, 1950, p.25. EXISTING DESIGNATIONS National Trust of Australia (Victoria): Listed on the Register of Significant Trees of Victoria is *Schinus lentiscifolius* (near Women's Hostel) Mont Park - classified 16/12/92 The significance of the buildings has not yet been assessed.

Other Names Crown Reserve Rs 1436, Parish Of Keelbundora, County Of Bourke.,

Hermes Number 70193

Property Number

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