

ZOO BUILDINGS

Ballarat Botanic Gardens (north-west corner)

erected 1908 (Parrot cage); 1914 ? (concrete enclosures)



Ballarat Zoological Gardens, c.1919

RECOMMENDATIONS:

It is recommended that the surviving zoo buildings and the area which formerly comprised the zoological gardens be added to the Register of the National Estate and be specified using the provisions of clauses 8 and 8B of the *Town and Country Planning Act 1961* (Third Schedule).

BUILDING HISTORY AND ANALYSIS :

The Ballarat Zoological Gardens had their origins in the mid 1870's when a pair of deer and several native birds and animals were donated to the City, forcing George Longley, curator of the Ballarat Botanic Gardens to start a rudimentary zoo. Sutherland mentioned in 1888 that the gardens possessed an aviary and by 1900, the annual Mayor's Report could state that a new path had been formed from the bird cages to the fernery.

The site of the zoo was at the north west corner of the gardens and in 1914 Ballarat City Council sought advice from Mr. Dudley Le Soeuf, director of the Melbourne Zoological Gardens. He suggested that Ballarat could house a collection of animals, especially including examples of Australian fauna, and council responded by commencing the erection of suitable accommodation, layout of paths, fences and planting (using native trees as much as possible) ! The accommodation for the animals presumably augmented existing buildings such as the parrot cage of 1908 (still extant). It is probable that the extant reinforced concrete shelters date from this 1914 period of construction. The Australian Native Association took a keen interest in progress of the new zoological gardens, applauding the decision to include as many native animals and plants as possible, and the local ANA branch promised its co-operation.

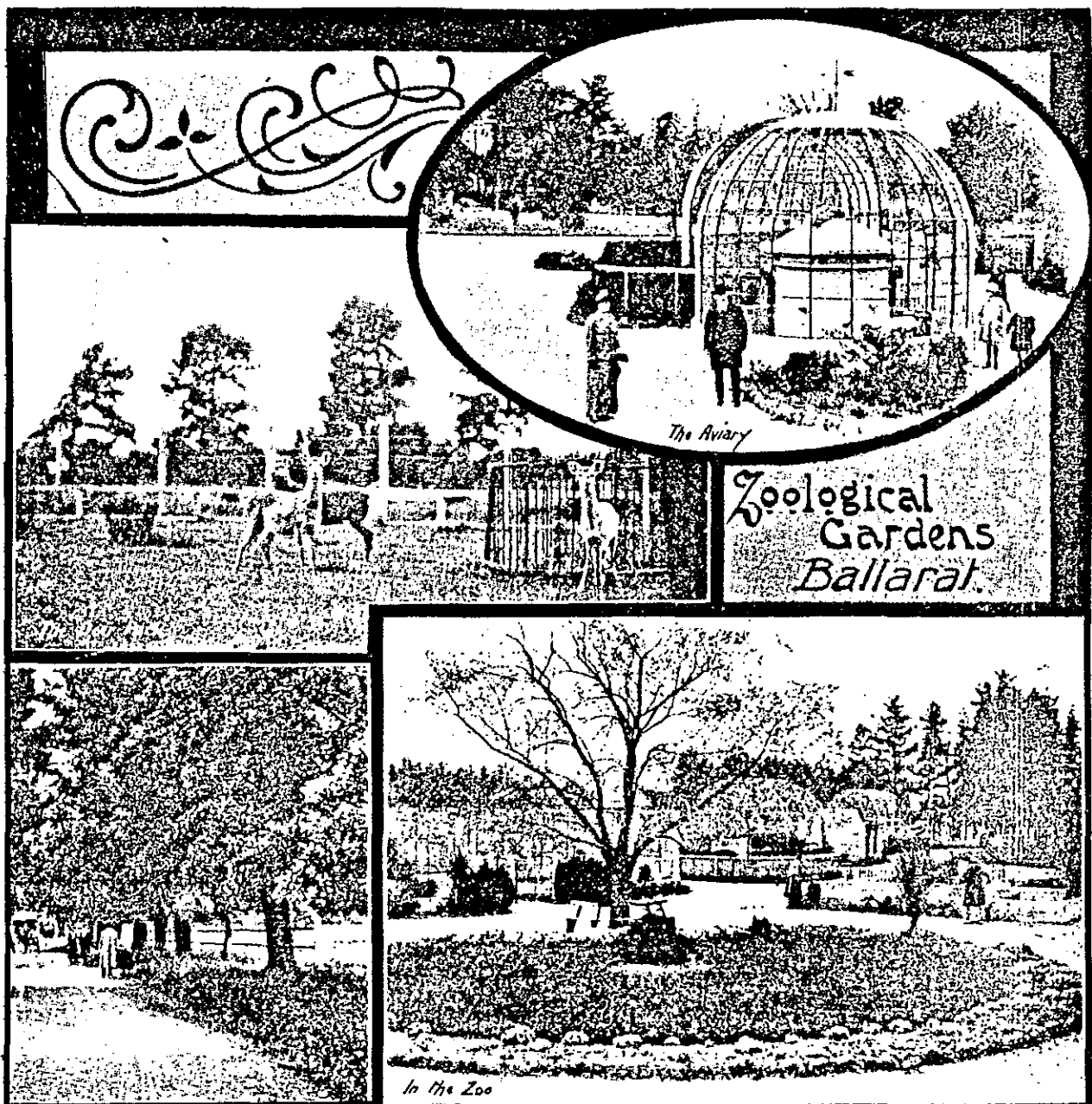
An entrance gate was funded through the Henry Ben Jahn Bequest and on 4 April 1917, the Chief Secretary, the Hon. D. McLeod MLA, officially opened the new zoological gardens.

1. Weston Bate, *Lucky City*, MUP, 1978, p.224
2. *Mayor's Report*, City of Ballarat, 1914.
3. *Mayor's Report*, City of Ballarat, 1908, p.25 : "A new parrot cage, 20 feet wide and 14 feet high, of circular shape, with dome roof has been added to the attractions of the Gardens ..."

The new attraction in the gardens flourished for a time, and by the time of the Second World War still remained largely intact.⁵ It is probable that the 1950's saw the demise of much of the zoological gardens and its structures. Today a number of reinforced concrete enclosures, the 1908 parrot cage, an aviary and the caretakers residence remain extant. A few fan palms mark the site and further detailed investigation would no doubt reveal other relics.

The reinforced concrete enclosures are similar to those existing in a defunct zoo at Mt. Victoria (NSW) although would appear to be slightly earlier. Some early enclosures at the Royal Melbourne Zoo survive⁶ and together with those the Ballarat examples form an important reminder of the early style of local zoos.

5. As indicated by a plan of the layout, dated 11 April 1947 (almost exactly thirty years after the official opening).
6. For details see Jacobs Lewis Vines, "Parkville Historic Area Study" 1979, pp. 213-16.



Ballarat Zoological Gardens, c.1919 (Illustration from *Ballarat Illustrated*)