

GEELONG CITY 'C' CITATIONS

Site Name: Botanic Gardens

Project File No: 0880

Address: Botanic Gardens Geelong 3220

Approx. Date: 1850-51

Integrity: Moderate-High

Significance Level: State

Photograph No: 11a.04 - 11a.21

Survey Date: March 2002



History

History taken from 'Geelong Botanic Gardens & Eastern Park, Geelong East', Register of the National Estate Database online, 27 July 2002, database no. 101106, file no. 2/01/064/0051

Geelong was declared a town in 1838 fourteen years after the discovery of the area by Hume and Hovell. The choice of the site for the Melbourne Botanic Gardens in 1846 by Superintendent La Trobe resulted in the selection in 1848 of a site in Western Gully for a public park. This was subsequently considered as a site for the Botanic Gardens but in 1850 the Corporation of the Town of Geelong sent a deputation to Governor La Trobe to begin a botanic garden. In the same year a Select Committee were unanimous in recommending Lime Burners Point in preference to Western Gully. On 5 September 1850 the Mayor of Geelong wrote to La Trobe applying for a grant or reserve of 200 acres at Lime Burners Point as Public Parks and Gardens. Eastern Hill, now Eastern Park, was selected as the best ground for Public Gardens (Botanic Gardens) with the area secured by the following April. By August 1851 the site had been surveyed. In July 1853 fifteen hundred pounds was allocated by the Legislative Assembly to develop the gardens. A brick cottage was erected in 1855 for the future Curator of the Gardens. Drives had been surveyed through the gardens by Henry Byron Moore in 1854. In 1856 the gardens were

GEELONG CITY 'C' CITATIONS

still without a 'Public Gardens-Working Bailiff' although the fencing was nearing completion and the nursery was beginning to receive plants and seeds. In February 1857 Daniel Bunce was appointed Curator of Geelong Botanic Gardens.

During the late 1830s Bunce, who had arrived in Hobart from England as an accomplished botanist and horticulturist, became consultant botanist to the colonial government in Tasmania. In 1845 Bunce joined Ludwig Leichardt's expedition into the Sturt Desert, collecting a thousand indigenous plant species. In 1846 he failed to win the position of superintendent of the Melbourne Botanic Gardens becoming a freelance gardener, designer and writer. It was not until 1857 that he was appointed to Geelong Botanic Gardens as Curator.

In August 1858 the Town Surveyor reported that the Gardens were fenced, laid out and fitted with handsome gates. In November 1858 a grant of 2,000 pounds was made by the Legislative Assembly; five men were employed to develop and plant the gardens. Eight thousand stock plants were rooted in the nursery and belts of trees, four deep, planted in the parkland. Bunce sent plants to the gardens in Melbourne and Sydney after 1859 as well as receiving stock. Plantings included Ginko biloba from China. In 1859 a heated conservatory and greenhouse designed by Christopher Porter was open to the public. Five years later in 1864 an aviary was erected in the gardens.

In 1868 he was asked to lay out the Botanic Gardens in Colac. Bunce was responsible for the planting of many street trees, blue gums, in the town and in the gardens in addition to oak trees and chestnut trees in the Botanic Gardens. In 1867 the Duke of Edinburgh planted a Sequoiadendron giganteum near the entrance. In 1868 a great avenue of trees was planted along the length of the gardens; the back row of Cupressus macrocarpa the front rows of dwarf pines and evergreens. Bunce died in 1872 and was succeeded by John Raddenberry, a gardener, also from England.

In 1873 the Governor of Victoria Sir George Ferguson Bowen planted a Sequoiadendron giganteum in the gardens, which still survives. The 'Town Gardens' were taken over by the 'Town Council' in 1874. In 1875 the Blue Gums were thinned out by Raddenberry and replaced with English trees, making it look more like a park. During the 1870s the nursery was renovated, water laid on, an octagonal rotunda (torus pavilion) constructed to a design by Robert Balding, Town surveyor and a new conservatory built. In 1876 Eastern Park was declared public land. A Thatched Summerhouse and fernery were constructed in the late 1880s in addition to the use of the Old Customs House as an office. Raddenberry resigned in 1896 to be replaced by his foreman James Phillip Day. Under the new management a maze, planted with boxthorn, was opened in 1896 in front of the curator's residence. By 1902 privet and white thorn had been mixed with the existing boxthorn.

In 1912 the Hitchcock and Traill fountains were removed from Geelong market square to the Botanic Gardens and the statue of Queen Victoria relocated to Eastern Park. During the decade 1910-1920 large numbers of trees were removed from the Botanic Gardens and Eastern Park with some replaced by new plantings. During the 1920s a number of changes were made including; new plantings of pine trees along the main drive; the lake in the south east section of the park was filled in; a bandstand known as the Ladies Kiosk, removed from Market Square to Eastern Park; and the cabman's shelter moved to the Gardens Depot in Eastern Park. In 1942 the original curator's cottage was demolished and replaced by the present residence. By 1959 the last wooden section of Raddenberry's fernery and the rotunda had been demolished. During the 1960s and 1970s detail changes were made to many areas of the gardens and new gates erected following major extensions to the Botanic Gardens to the north west. In 1975 the First Customs House in Geelong was restored and put on public display near Botanic Drive. During the period 1984-1986 all pathways were asphalted, the fountains restored and the Raddenberry gazebo demolished and rebuilt. The gardens as of 1996 have been subject to a Master

GEELONG CITY 'C' CITATIONS

Plan. The Cabman's Shelter was relocated into the Garden and conservation completed in 1998 with funding provided by the Friends and the DNRE.

Description

Description taken from 'Geelong Botanic Gardens & Eastern Park, Geelong East', Register of the National Estate Database online, 27 July 2002, database no. 101106, file no. 2/01/064/0051

Today the Botanic Gardens comprise some 6 hectares, including Bunce's original nursery areas, set in 15 hectares of botanic parkland, part of the contiguous Eastern Park.

The Geelong Botanic Gardens are situated in the original botanical nursery oblong, set in the middle of curving avenues lined with *Cupressus macrocarpa*, *Pinus radiata*, *Phoenix canariensis* amid the conifer and eucalypt parkland of Eastern Park. On the southern side is the longest row of Bunya Bunya pines in Victoria. All these specimens were planted by Daniel Bunce. The dominant north-west/south-east alignment of the gardens is defined by the axes of Raddenberry's fern house of the 1880s which dominated the central portion of the area described in 1885 as the 'nursery'; Daniel Bunce's original 5.25 acres. During the 1960s this area was extended to the north west by some 50% to include Australian Plants, a conservatory, a rose garden (replanted in 1996), new entrances, a conifer area and a fern garden. In contrast to the earlier section these were planted in groups according to their families. Early plantings in the Gardens were for landscape effect. The original entrance to the Gardens is clearly designated by the plantings, including a pair of Irish Yews, *Taxus baccata*. The fountains and statuary relocated in 1912 punctuate the main axis of the garden. The extensions of the 1960s are balanced at the opposite end of the Gardens by an area dedicated to nursery, glass house and shade house. The southern edge of the older nursery section is bounded by rhododendrons, azaleas and camellias. A geranium conservatory truncates the central axis at its transition from formal beds to nursery and glasshouses and houses the State's *Pelargonium* Collection.

The Gardens include a number of significant plantings; a *Ginkgo biloba* believed to be the largest and oldest specimen in Victoria, possibly Australia; and various examples of introduced species which illustrate the Victorian passion for horticulture and the Australian interest in the 'naturalisation' of introduced species. The Jubaea, or Chilean wine palm, is rare in Victoria. Some 24 trees are listed by the National Trust as of State significance. Many of these significant trees were probably planted by Daniel Bunce.

Structures which illustrate the development of the gardens include a sunken glasshouse built in the 1860s, a glasshouse built in the 1870s (rebuilt in 1957), the thatched summerhouse erected under Raddenberry in the 1870s or 1880s, a glasshouse built in the 1890s and a fountain relocated to the gardens in 1912. The Eastern Park Rotunda of 1916 also remains in place. The thatched summerhouse is of particular interest as an example of the Victorian picturesque tradition in garden design. This hexagonal structure is situated strategically at the end of a vista and features diagonal lattice work infill to timber framed walls below an almost conical thatched roof.

Changes to the use of Eastern Park include a greater presence for the associated recreational facilities including soccer which has been accommodated in the southern section of Bunce's layout defined by driveways established by him.

The First Customs House (separately listed at File No. 2/01/064/0007 on the RNE) is claimed to be the oldest authenticated building in Victoria. The picturesque Gothic pavilion dates from the first four years of settlement at Port Phillip. The structure is reputed to have been fabricated in Sydney c.1838 and shipped to Geelong. The square timber structure

GEELONG CITY 'C' CITATIONS

was built on timber studs clad with quirk bead weatherboards and a thatch roof (replaced by shingles in 1854).

Statement of Cultural Significance

The Statement of Significance has been partly taken from 'Geelong Botanic Gardens & Eastern Park, Geelong East', Register of the National Estate Database online, 27 July 2002, database no. 101106, file no. 2/01/064/005.

The Geelong Botanic Gardens, have significance as an early and critically important cultural landscape for the Geelong community. Originally surveyed in 1851, the gardens contain a unique collection of flora from around the world with a number of the larger trees registered with the National Trust of Victoria on the Significant Tree Register.

The Geelong Botanic Gardens are aesthetically significant at a STATE level. The design and layout effected by Daniel Bunce was altered by Raddenberry between 1872 and 1899. Raddenberry eliminated many of the paths and walks in the outer part of the Gardens-Eastern Park- and thinned out Bunce's plantings of blue gums. Nevertheless the design intention remains to some extent overlaid by Raddenberry's influences which include the dominant alignments of the Botanic Gardens dictated by his central fernery. The Gardens have lost a number of nineteenth century structures which characterised the Victorian approach to such places; these include the fernery, the curators house and one of the the original glasshouses. Similarly the office building of 1900 has been rebuilt. The pathways have also been asphalted. Changes to the use of Eastern Park include a greater presence for the associated recreational facilities including 'active sports' which have been accommodated in the southern section of Bunces layout defined by driveways established by him. Additional features in this area include an 'active' sports areas.

The Geelong Botanic Gardens are historically significant at a STATE level. They are associated with the development of an important cultural landscape and public recreational park in Geelong from the early 1850s. In particular, the Gardens have associations with Daniel Bunce, Curator of the Geelong Botanic Gardens from 1857, and he organised the fencing, laying out and planting of the original gardens. They also have associations with several prominent figures who have planted specimens since the 19th century, including: the Duke of Edinburgh (1867), and the Governor of Victoria Sir George Bowen (1873). The Gardens have further associations with John Raddenberry, a gardener from England who became the second curator upon Bunce's death in 1872.

The Geelong Botanic Gardens are socially significant at a LOCAL level. They are recognised and highly valued by the Geelong community for their cultural importance, and landscape, horticultural and recreational qualities to the city.

Overall, the Geelong Botanic Gardens are of STATE significance.

References

'Geelong Botanic Gardens & Eastern Park, Geelong East', Register of the National Estate Database online, 27 July 2002, database no. 101106, file no. 2/01/064/005.
Chris Dance Land Design Pty Ltd, in association with G. Whitehead, M. Looker, Andrew O'Grien & Associates, Connell Wagner & L. Honman, 'Geelong Botanic Gardens & Eastern Park Conservation & Management', n.d.

GEELONG CITY 'C' CITATIONS

