

adopting lengthy regulations for conduct in its reserves, during 1909.¹

Much later, an unexpected proposition was put by W.J. McCallum (1960). He described the reserve as 'nothing but a real wilderness.' Footscray Council had no interest in it, he wrote, otherwise it would have been 'beautified' as at least one ornamental entrance to the city. He suggested a caravan park instead.²

This was also the era of C.R.B. road-widening and none of the city's major parks remained untouched. A plan of the old Thames Reserve showed its potentially doomed state: a main road zone swept across its northern flanks, backed by a C.R.B. road-widening reserve along its south side. An S.E.C. transmission line traversed another section (partly on the main road reserve), leaving a mere triangle of 'public open space' in the centre³ which, as some respite, gained permanent reservation status in 1964.⁴

This was also the era of native urban forests and C.E.P. schemes: landscape architect, Dieter Habicht, prepared a comprehensive planting plan to heavily augment the existing 19th Century landscape of Moreton Bay Figs, Palms, Elms and Pepper Trees. Eight years later, of the hundreds of native plants put there by the C.E.P. scheme, ten had survived. The established 19th Century trees, however, prevailed.

This reserve has both gained and lost municipal favour over its 100 year history. The living legacy offered from the 1885 landscape fervor, austere as it might be, survives as does the asphalt paving and basalt edging to pathways. Thames Street, the inadvertent formalization of the old dray track to the punt and wharf, also survives as a pathway, possibly in its 1880s form.

Description

Given the changes brought on by the various road deviations and widenings, the park's reduced area also lacks a perimeter fence (picket?), usually the first sign of serious landscaping in the 19th Century. Thinly disguised as a park on a river bank, the hilly nature of the ground provides for static recreation only along its eastern side. The Moreton Bay Figs and a Canary Island Pines may constitute the earliest planting, followed by the Pepper Trees (Edwardian?), which follow

the stone-edged asphalt path and perimeter boundaries, and probably the final (surviving) layer is the Canary Island Date Palms (c1920-30?), which occur sporadically in Napier Street and along the river. The mature trees have connotations with 'old' gardens, although each has associations with particular periods, the last period being linked with gardener David Matthews' activities elsewhere in the City (ie. Footscray Park, Yarraville Gardens).

Significance

The reserve's siting and present landscape form still express the two major aspects of its history, the first as a wharfside landing and the second as the earliest embodiment of a new-found municipal pride in the river bank. Both factors are significant as *local* historical remnants although the first contributes to Footscray's premier role in metropolitan stone extraction.

Management

Maintain the mature exotic planting (elms, pepper trees, pines, palms), river-side aspect and asphalt pathway where practical. Include interpretative historical information as part of site's future development.

Yarraville Gardens

History

This site was near the city's first intended municipal garden. A 34 acre area bounded by the river, Lyons Street and the Powder Magazine, Whitehall Street and Somerville Road, was among other municipal reserves first requested by Council from the Board of Land and Works, in July 1859. Most reserves were for quarries.⁵

Council considered the area, at 'Magazine Flat,' 'far more eligible' for public gardens than an alternative site, (Western Oval), north of the Sunbury railway. This was much to the surprise of government officers, who could only see swamp at the Yarraville site⁶.

All became much clearer, when it was reported in 1870 that, far from being the botanical pleasure ground foreshadowed in 1859, the reserve was used as a quarry. It was leased by Joseph and Solomon Leek, reputedly on the basis that for each year of quarrying they would plant 100 trees. They paid £50 per annum for

1 loc. cit. 18/2/09
 2 loc. cit. 14/10/1960
 3 loc. cit.
 4 loc. cit. 8/1/64
 5 Rs.1453, 28/7/59
 6 ibid.



3-49 *Yarraville Gardens: mature palms and lawns*



3 - 48 *Yarraville Gardens: rocky edging, remnant *comprosmia* and mature palms.*

this privilege, employing five men on two quarries served by 100 metres of tramway to the river bank and the lighters.¹ Footscray Council, who was then considering renewal of the Leeks' 3-year lease, protested that in order to prepare the reserve for planting, much blasting was needed to loosen the stone. Beset by the expense, they had decided to allow the Leeks to quarry the area, but regretted that no trees had been planted as agreed and previous Council attempts had been eaten by passing cattle because no fences had been provided.² However, planting would be done, wrote the Council, but only along the east side.

Council's view was that the population density and hence the rate-base did not justify substantial landscape areas. Council eventually requested cancellation of all but the southern 19 acres of the reserve in 1874, this being the only filled area of what had apparently become one large quarry.

The balance of the original 34 acres was re-established across Whitehall Street, south of another series of quarry and brickmaking leaseholds. Extending along the western side of Whitehall Street, immediately north of Harris Street, were John Nightingale (CA1, 2/14), Charles Colson (CA3/14, John Orr (CA, 4/14) and C.R. Smith (CA1, 8/14): all brickmakers, complete with drying sheds, engine houses, kilns and pug mills.³ The Yarraville Brick Company was also there in 1889 but with the relocation and eventual extension of part of the reserve, municipal grass eventually replaced the brick makers.

The next threat to the reserve was the deposit of night soil there by a Council contractor. The Footscray Sanitary Association had formed to halt this and took a deputation to the Minister to pressure Council into not renewing the contract. Council remonstrated with government officers, claiming they had always intended to relocate the night soil disposal, accusing the association and their councillor accomplice, Cr. Morris, of sensationalism.⁴ The remaining 15 acres of the old botanical gardens reserve, east of Whitehall Street, was revoked in 1897,⁵ leaving 70% of today's reserve on the west side. The MMBW plan of 1894 shows a

large quarry, sheds, residence and chimney at the north edge of the reserve, comprising the other 30%.⁶

Even in the comparatively enlightened era of the early 20th Century (i.e. Footscray Park's creation), this reserve was still in a neglected state. A government report of 1913 noted a large quarry north-west of the reserve which used the adjoining reserve for stone dumps. The reserve fencing was part post and rail, part picket and part 'hurricane wire': the whole was in 'a disgraceful state of disrepair.'

As a legacy of the old night soil days, a large hole on the east side was currently used as a rubbish tip. On the positive side, Pines, Cypress, Oaks and Pepper Trees had been planted over the years and survived. Despite 'evident neglect,' many were in a healthy state. In fact, the whole reserve had been neglected for some time.⁷ Revocation of the reserve was a probable option.

In response to the threat, Council submitted a 'scheme of improvements' ... 'to beautify the ground for the benefit of the citizens as a pleasure resort.'⁸ The 'pleasure resort' in question materialized as two tennis courts (asphalt and concrete paved) and a weather board clubroom pavilion. Footscray Tennis Club had started in 1894, with a court on the Western Oval:⁹ this was the Yarraville Club. Apart from the courts, some fencing and a 'cinder' pathways were created. A photograph of the park in *Footscray's First Fifty Years* shows a immature but dense tree plantation¹⁰.

Footscray's First One Hundred Years saw the Yarraville Gardens as part of a 'green belt' between industries and homes, noting the bowling greens and croquet courts (north of Harris Street), the sporting arenas, four tennis courts and a turf wicket. 'Spacious lawns, ornamental plantations of trees, shrubs and flowering plants and the ornamental gates' made from local coloured stone were all valued components.¹¹ A 1947 aerial photograph shows that little had changed since then, except for the addition of buildings.

- 1 loc. cit., 11/3/70
- 2 loc. cit., 9/4/70, 27/5/70
- 3 loc. cit., 3/6/84
- 4 loc. cit., 20/9/87
- 5 VGG 9/7/97
- 6 MMBW RP6
- 7 loc. cit., 29/3/13
- 8 loc. cit., 24/6/13
- 9 FFOY, p.201
- 10 FFFY p.47
- 11 FFOY, p.91

As with many of Footscray's parks, a road widening threatened these treasured gateways in 1966 (Hyde Street). It would eliminate the stone fence, gates, privet hedge and seven mature pines and gums. On the opposite side of Hyde Street, a 'monument' was to be relocated. Fortunately most of the palms escaped and the walls were rebuilt.¹

Description

Laid out like many 19th, early 20th, Century suburban parks, the Yarraville Gardens has crossing serpentine asphalt pathways with basalt pitcher kerb and channeling. Records and the 1947 aerial photographs suggest that the pathways may have been once graveled and later cindered. However, their layout is not all that it was with the south-eastern section of the ornamental garden having been disbanded for another playing field.

Vesiculated basalt rockeries and perimeter fencing survive, indicating some reinstatement subsequent to the road-widening and (more important) a similar landscape style practised by Matthews in the resplendent Footscray Park (q.v.). Existing bedding shrubs include the pittosporum, fire bush and coprosma, but it is the palms (Canary Island) which dominate, interspersed with the probable 19th Century core of the garden described in 1913 viz. Hoop, Canary Island and Aleppo Pines, mature Elms, and Pepper Trees. Intrusions to the established character include new red brick planter-walls (see existing rubble stone borders), new toilets, use of basalt pitchers as walling or bubbler-bases, rather than rubble (see perimeter walls) and new playground equipment.

Management

Sympathetic materials and methods can allow new works in the gardens to blend in and necessary but unrelated elements such as play equipment should be screened, using existing plant materials i.e. privet or coprosma hedges. Further encroachment of playing fields into the mature ornamental section should be resisted. New rather than established garden sites should be sought where open fields are needed.

Significance

Seen with the adjacent Hyde Street palm plantation, the reserve is a combination of the dominant 1920-30s pergola and palm character and the residual but mature exotic ornamentals from the late 19th Century, and as such has some of the oldest surviving municipal reserve landscaping in the city (see also Thames Reserve). It is of high local importance and regional interest although it pales in comparison with Footscray Park or Essendon's Queens Park.

Footscray Park

History

Shown in 1910 as a bare expanse (37 acres) of land, bisected by a swamp and lying between Ballarat Road and the river², the prospective park was saved from suburban development in 1908 by a spirited newspaper campaign (the *Advertiser*) and the generosity of the Victorian Racing Club (V.R.C.)³. The V.R.C. had acquired the land to control a prime vantage point overlooking their racing carnivals although one of the lessees of the site had reputedly already charged spectators entry under their ownership. Their major aim, however, was to prevent noxious trades establishing on the river opposite the Colony's premier racecourse.⁴ E.C. Warde, M.L.A., led a deputation, to the Minister of Land & Works in February 1909, putting forward spirited proposals for a magnificent new park (via Councillors, Caldecott and Fielding). This inspired the V.R.C. to put forward their valuer's report on the land with some thought of its acquisition for the purpose. As grazing land it was worth over £6000.⁵

After some disagreement over the land value, the V.R.C., State government and Footscray Council each contributed a third of the required £4800 to buy the land from the V.R.C. and reserve it for recreational purposes. Four years later the Footscray Park 'Citizens' Committee' (Footscray Park Beautification Committee) was formed around two of the major instigators of the concept, James Jamieson (*Advertiser* proprietor, and Henry Michell, the *Advertiser* editor, as chairman and secretary, respectively. As an independent group from Council, they organized carnivals

-
- 1 Rs.1453. 1/3/1966
 - 2 MMBW RP,1910; M1877
 - 3 FFOY p.85f.
 - 4 Rs.810, 17/2/09
 - 5 Rs.810, 17/2/09