

White Hills Botanic Gardens



3-54
(Derived from 'Bendigo & District Street & Tourist Map' (UBD, 4th edit.)

White Hills Botanic Gardens

LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA

City of Bendigo

LOCATION/ADDRESS

Midland Highway, White Hills. Roughly rectangular area bounded by Napoleon Terrace, Scott St, Kennewell St and Hamelin St.

CADASTRAL INFORMATION

Crown Reserve Rs 7271, Parish of Sandhurst, County of Bendigo

TYPE of PLACE

Public Garden and Recreation Reserve

Although the White Hills site was established as a botanic gardens, for the purposes of the assessment within typologies as determined by the AHC, the gardens have been included in the public garden typology for a number of reasons. The defining characteristics of a botanic garden are generally accepted to include certain attributes, the majority of these relate to the curation of a scientific reference collection and exchange of plant material with other botanic gardens or arboreta. It is not clear that the White Hills Botanic Gardens ever carried out this scientific role and as records or other documentation of its development are scarce its exact role remains unclear. Until more evidence is found it is considered appropriate to make comparisons with other public parks rather than other provincial botanic gardens.

SIGNIFICANCE

White Hills Botanic Gardens, dating from 1857 and continuously maintained as a public garden is of regional significance:

- * as a reserve for significant exotic species, particularly those listed on the National Trust Register of Significant Trees;
- * for its role in providing passive and active recreation to citizens of Bendigo and neighbouring areas;
- * for the retention of a number of plants which are evidence of its original role as a botanic garden; mature specimens of note (other than the Significant Trees) include *Ficus macrophylla*, *Cedrus deodara*, *Juniperus virginiana*, *Ulmus procera* and *U.x hollandica*, *Pinus spp.* and *Quercus spp.*
- * for the retention of a number of bird and animal cages which are evidence of its earlier role in the acclimatization of birds and animals within the colony;
- * historically for its early date of development, 1857, as a recreational site with close parallels to the development of the city;
- * for those features which enhance the garden's qualities; these include the lake/lagoon and island, floral bedding, arch (soldiers memorial to WWI), pavilion (c1910?) and mature planting.¹

HISTORY

The Reserve file was not able to be located so the key source is the BCC records as well as the Roper thesis.

1852 Whitehills was one of the first parts of Bendigo to be subdivided and developed. By November 1852, it had been named and marked on Urquhart's map of the Bendigo field²

01.01.57 Botanic Gardens Reserve gazetted for White Hills³

25.11.58 A letter from the Secretary for Lands, Melbourne included a detailed plan of White Hills, highlighting the boundaries of the Botanic Gardens Reserve⁴

01.01.61 Major works commenced at the gardens⁵

1 AHC Criteria A3, A4, B2, D2, E1, F1, G1, H1
2 Roper
3 BCC
4 BCC
5 BCC

03.07.69 A memorandum from M Sullivan, Sandhurst, noted the types of trees and how many of each were suitable for planting in the botanic gardens. The total number was 266 and of this 180 were blue gums¹

05.70 Native trees mainly blue gums dominated the gardens. By May Curator Gadd reported some 600 blue gums had been planted in the gardens along with 443 pine trees of various species and numerous other exotic trees. The gardens were described by a reporter from the Bendigo *Independent*, 28.11.72, who noted the hothouse, rotunda, a collection of over 200 roses, a zoo with monkeys, koalas (native bears) and birds as part of its acclimatization role².

17.05.70 A memorandum (author unknown) listing existing trees, shrubs and plants in the gardens at the time totalling 1,587. A total of 1,117 additions to the gardens were suggested³.

01.09.1871 E Manning, White Hills, applies to mine in botanical gardens reserve in White Hills⁴

07.05.1872 Letter from Baron von Mueller, Melbourne Botanic Gardens - letter of introduction for Mr Homeyer, who studied horticulture in Prussia; Mueller recommended him for the position of curator at White Hills Botanic Gardens⁵

17.11.1873 Report from curator, botanical gardens, White Hills, which describes work done during the previous year - about 520 trees were transplanted and 120 trees newly planted⁶

January 1874 A total of 6,634 people visited the gardens in the month many who would have travelled the two and a half miles from the city centre⁷.

1875 Richard Pope visited the gardens and described a veritable Garden of Eden: " the grand old willows [which] overhang small lakes or ornamental sheets of water in which waterfowl of different kinds seemed quite at home, prominent amongst them being the black and white swans - the flower garden is artistically laid out and is still gay with verbenas, petunias, and a great variety of flowering plants and shrubs. Vines are grown on trellises forming shady avenues of considerable length, bunches of grapes hanging in profusion"⁸.

27.09.1889 Council subcommittee considers the report on the state of the White Hills gardens. Their inspection of the ground revealed it was encrusted with salt which was harming the growth of plants and trees as previously reported by Mr Gadd, the curator. The ground was waterlogged and required a drainage system otherwise the shrubberies and trees would be destroyed⁹.

30.07.1890 Gathering at the Acclimatization Reserve, White Hills, accompanied by Mr. Gadd, the curator, where 100 trees were planted to mark Arbour Day¹⁰.

14.01.1918 Committee visited the gardens and recommended the wood and ironwork on the shelter shed on the island be painted also the handrails of the bridge. The aviary was to be painted and limewashed with all works to be undertaken by the curator. The curator was instructed to prepare a list of 'unsightly' pine trees to be removed.

DESCRIPTION

The White Hills Botanic Gardens are entered by the Memorial Archway flanked by two mature *Cedrus deodara* on the Midland Highway. Annual bedding along the drive is a distinctive horticultural feature leading to the carpark and lawn area. A number of bird cages have been removed to extend the car park. An extensive area of the garden in the northern section adjacent to Scott Street is devoted to playground equipment and barbecues. A large lake/lagoon with central island is located in the centre of the park which effectively divides the animal section from the area of horticultural intensity and earlier plantings. The grounds contain many work sheds and staff facilities and housing all of these modern buildings. The earliest extant building is the pavilion of c1910? on the south western edge of the lagoon. A swimming pool of recent construction is in the south western corner of the gardens, west of the lagoon. A cage for kangaroos is located along the Hamelin Street southern boundary.

Plantings are varied exotic and native with mature exotics such as pines and poplars dominating the landscape. Plantings of interest include *Ficus macrophylla*, *Schinus molle* var. *areira* and *S. terebinthifolius*, *Melia azederach*, *Pinus canariensis*, *P. pinea* and *P. torreyana*.

OWNERSHIP

City of Bendigo

EXISTING DESIGNATIONS

1 BCC
2 Roper
3 BCC, Box 2, Item 62
4 BCC, Box 3, Item 1
5 BCC, Box 7, Item 4
6 BCC, Box 12, Item 47
7 Roper
8 Roper
9 BCSCM
10 BCSCM, p442

Peter Watts Gardens study - not listed.

National Trust of Australia (Victoria) Register of Significant Trees - four trees listed to date which include *Acacia karoo*, *Callistemon brachyandrus*, *Dovyalis caffra*, and *Pinus torreyana*.