



**HERITAGE
COUNCIL**
OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

REGISTER OF HERITAGE PLACES

Assessment Documentation

11. ASSESSMENT OF CULTURAL HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

Cultural heritage significance means aesthetic, historic, scientific, social or spiritual value for individuals or groups within Western Australia.

In determining cultural heritage significance, the Heritage Council has had regard to the factors in the *Heritage Act 2018* and the indicators adopted on 14 June 2019.

PRINCIPAL AUSTRALIAN HISTORIC THEME(S)

- 1.3 Assessing scientifically diverse environments
- 3.11 Altering the environment
- 3.11.3 Irrigating land
- 7.6.12 Conserving Australia's heritage

HERITAGE COUNCIL OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA THEME(S)

- 409 Environmental awareness
- 604 Innovators

11(a) Importance in demonstrating the evolution or pattern of Western Australia's history

Wirra Willa Gardens, Armadale had the first restrictive covenant placed on a garden in Western Australia. At a time of increasing awareness of the value of conservation of heritage and the environment, the covenant was an attempt to plan for the long-term future of the place in the face of increasing urbanisation and subdivision in the area.

11(b) Importance in demonstrating rare, uncommon or endangered aspects of Western Australia's heritage

The unique topography of *Wirra Willa Gardens, Armadale*, together with appropriate soil types and the dense canopy, creates a rare micro-climate suitable for the cultivation of plant types not commonly found in Western Australia.

Wirra Willa Gardens, Armadale is a rare example of the Paradise style applied to a residential garden.

Changes to urban planning and housing densities in the 20th and 21st centuries mean that opportunities for creating extensive gardens, like *Wirra Willa Gardens, Armadale*, are becoming increasingly rare.

11(c) Potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of Western Australia's history;

Wirra Willa Gardens, Armadale contains rare mature specimens of many exotic plants that illustrate their potential growth patterns and horticultural requirements.

Wirra Willa Gardens, Armadale has been a valuable source of propagation material from exotic plants for Western Australian nurseries, and may contain rare or unusual examples no longer widely available.

11(d) Its importance in demonstrating the characteristics of a broader class of places;

Wirra Willa Gardens, Armadale demonstrates the key features of the Paradise style of garden design, including the successful use of tropical and exotic plants, especially those from temperate regions, in natural looking arrangements. From inside the garden the outside world is largely not visible, creating a feeling of isolation and 'paradise'.

Wirra Willa Gardens, Armadale represents the ethos of amateur horticulturalists applying their interest and talents to creating highly personalised and individual gardens, which nevertheless fit within broader trends in garden design.

Wirra Willa Gardens, Armadale demonstrates the increasing involvement of women in amateur horticulture and garden design, and the associated shift in garden design philosophy that occurred after the First World War.

11(e) Any strong or special meaning it may have for any group or community because of social, cultural or spiritual associations;

Wirra Willa Gardens, Armadale is highly valued by members of the Garden History Society, who met regularly at the garden during the time it was owned by the Hargreaves, and by Camellia Society members who visited while the Barrett's owned the property.

Wirra Willa Gardens, Armadale value to the community is evidenced by its inclusion in the Local Heritage Survey and Register of the National Estate, and nomination to the National Trust (WA Branch). Its public profile has been maintained through its inclusion in several publications.

11(f)¹ Its importance in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics valued by any group or community;

Wirra Willa Gardens, Armadale contains an excellent example of an evolved Paradise style garden laid out on a steeply sloping site characterised by a canopy of mature exotic and native trees with areas of dense under-planting dominated by Camellias (*Camelia spp*), Magnolias (*Magnolia spp*) and Azaleas (*Azalea spp*) that enclose smaller sometimes grassed spaces.

Successive past owners of *Wirra Willa Gardens, Armadale* planted to ensure there would be colour in the garden all year round, and to create distinctive combinations, such as the adjacent planting of purple flowering Jacaranda (*Jacaranda mimosifolia*) and pink Cape Chestnut (*Calodendrum capense*), which flower simultaneously.

The dense tree canopy of *Wirra Willa Gardens, Armadale* make it a distinct landmark, visible from the adjacent major roads and from the nearby Armadale's historic precinct.

11(g) Any special association it may have with the life or work of a person, group or organisation of importance in Western Australia's history;

Wirra Willa Gardens, Armadale is associated with Mary Hargreaves, a keen amateur horticulturalist who while owner of the property was responsible for placing a restrictive covenant on the site with the National Trust of Western Australia. Hargreaves was also a Country Women's Association (CWA) President, and was instrumental in saving the Araluen gardens with the creation of the Araluen Botanic Park in 1990.

11(h) Its importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement;

Wirra Willa Gardens, Armadale demonstrates the technical achievement of successive owners in establishing and maintaining a collection of diverse plants, many of which were rare or difficult to source in Western Australia.

12. DEGREE OF SIGNIFICANCE

12.1 CONDITION

Overall, the garden at *Wirra Willa Gardens, Armadale* is in fair condition. Previous regular maintenance has ensured that a significant majority of the plants are healthy. Thinning the canopy may be required in some areas to allow more light to plants in the understorey. Many of the paths have become uneven and require

¹ For consistency, all references to architectural style are taken from Apperly, R., Irving, R., Reynolds, P. *A Pictorial Guide to Identifying Australian Architecture. Styles and Terms from 1788 to the Present*, Angus and Robertson, North Ryde, 1989.

For consistency, all references to garden and landscape types and styles are taken from Ramsay, J. *Parks, Gardens and Special Trees: A Classification and Assessment Method for the Register of the National Estate*, Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra, 1991, with additional reference to Richards, O. *Theoretical Framework for Designed Landscapes in WA*, unpublished report, 1997.

relaying. The lower sections of the gardens including the banks of Neeregin Brook need weeding of invasive species such as Castor Oil plants (*Ricinus communis*) and South African Cornflag (*Chasmanthe floribunda*) to avoid these plants spreading. The garden is displaying signs of significantly reduced levels of maintenance as typified by exuberant overgrowth of many plants such as the Parrot Lily (*Alstroemeria pulchella*) and a number of standing dead and senescent trees.

12.2 INTEGRITY

This section explains the extent to which the fabric is in its original state.

While the planting in the Paradise garden at *Wirra Willa Gardens, Armadale* has been constantly added to, the underlying philosophy of creating a densely planted exotic garden under a storey of mature trees has been largely kept intact. It is apparent that there has been reduced maintenance over recent years, yet the structure planting of the garden remains largely in place. As a consequence of the remnant structure planting the garden therefore has high authenticity.

The Bushland to the north of the site is also a highly interesting and unusual space, as it has been allowed to remain somewhat free of exotic plants although a number of garden escapes have now established in this section. As self-propagated plants growing naturally in the bush, the establishment of these exotic plants from the garden provides an unusual 'wild' garden as typified by the juvenile self-seeded Jacaranda (*Jacaranda mimosifolia*) growing out of the granite rockface.

The House has low integrity. It has been highly modified both internally and externally, and it is now impossible to determine the extent of the original cottage.

12.3 AUTHENTICITY

This section explains the extent to which the original intention is evident, and the compatibility of current use.

Wirra Willa Gardens, Armadale has high authenticity. Until 2006, the gardens were maintained and developed as part of a residential property by successive female, amateur horticulturalists. The house, while of little significance, has high integrity on account of its ongoing capacity to be used as a residence.

13. SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

The documentation for this place is based on the heritage assessment completed by Departmental Officers Penny O'Connor and Helena Waldmann in 2006 with amendments and/or additions by the Heritage Council and the Department. The assessment was updated in November 2020 by Registered Landscape Architects Peter Woodward and Caine Holdsworth.

13.1 DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

Wirra Willa Gardens, Armadale comprises an extensive Paradise style garden laid out on a steeply sloping site from the 1930s onwards beside the Neerigen Brook with a canopy of mature native and exotic trees with dense areas of exotic under-planting dominated by camellias (*Camellia spp.*) interspersed with open areas of lawn, narrow, sinuous paths and driveways in a variety of materials, rock walls, a geometric rose garden (c. 1980s), and containing a weatherboard, masonry and iron house (1930s onwards), garages (1980s) and outbuildings, and an area behind of native bush characterised by Wandoo and Grass Trees.

The Armadale area is located within the Aboriginal cultural region of Whadjuk. There are a range of significant Noongar sites within the Whadjuk region located close to Armadale, including Gargangara north of Armadale, and Goolamrup being the area later known as Kelmscott.² With the establishment of the Swan River Colony in 1829, non-Aboriginal settlement spread across Western Australia, disrupting the Aboriginal way-of-life and displacing communities from their traditional lands.

Wirra Willa Gardens, Armadale is located on 3.25 acres of the original land grant allocated to John Adams in December 1838. The grant, Canning Location 31, comprised 8000 acres, and it covered much of the present day Armadale-Kelmscott.³ In 1853 Thomas Middleton built a house within Canning Location 31, at the junction of the Perth to Albany Road, offering refreshment for travellers. This later became the P92 *Ye Olde Narrogin Inne* (RHP) and the licensee was Thomas Saw. Adams sold Canning Location 31 to Henry Vincent, a warden who supervised the work of the convicts constructing the Perth to Albany Road. In 1866 Vincent sold a portion of Canning Location 31, including the site of the Narrogin Inne to Saw.⁴

The property was owned by Samuel Richard Hamersely from May 1886, but returned to the Saw family in February 1906. It was retained by various members of the Saw family until January 1927.⁵ At this time the portion of Canning Location 31 being Lots 189, 192, 193, 194 and part of Lot 186 on plan 4587 were transferred to Arthur Harcourt Mack, Farmer, of Armadale.⁶

² 'About the Whadjuk Region', Kaartdijin Noongar Sharing Noongar Culture website, sourced from <https://www.noongarculture.org.au/whadjuk/> Accessed on 29 March 2021.

³ Freehold Title Grant E137 Canning Location 31.

⁴ HCWA Assessment documentation, P00092 *Ye Olde Narrogin Inne*. These title exchanges occurred within the Memorial Deeds system and have not been verified as part of this assessment.

⁵ Certificate of Title Folio 85 (illegible); Certificate of Title Volume 488, Folio 23; Certificate of Title Volume 649, Folio 2; Certificate of Title Volume 781, Folio 76;

⁶ Certificate of Title Volume 946, Folio 136

The Armadale Quarries Limited owned the portion of Canning Location 31, being parts of each of Lots 189, 192 and 193 on plan 4587 from 7 March 1934,⁷ and on 27 October 1936 Rhoda Matilda Billing of Armadale, Married Woman, became the sole proprietor of the portion of Canning Location 31 being part of Lot 192 on plan 4587.⁸

1935-1954 Broadley and Whitehead

On 30 May 1940 the portion of Canning Location 31 being Lot 7 of Diagram 10028 was transferred to Leah Barbara Whitehead, Civil Servant, and Evelyn Mabel Broadley, Nurse, both of Armadale, Spinsters, as tenants in common.⁹ It is understood the women leased the land for about five years before purchasing it, and it was they who were responsible for the original plantings.

The original garden was designed in 1935 by Misses Barbara Whitehead and Evelyn Broadley, who carried out the early planting, which included Pink Flowering Cape Chestnut (*Calodendrum capensis*); Jacaranda (*Jacaranda mimosifolia*); Japanese Maple (*Acer palmatum*); Variagated Maple (*Acer Negundo variegata*); and N.S.W. Christmas Tree (*Ceratopetalum gummifera*). The property was then called "Catamara" (the place on the hill).¹⁰

At this time the site was still dominated by species indigenous to the area; near Neerigen Brook these were Marri (*Corymbia calophylla*), Jarrah (*Eucalyptus marginata*) and Flooded Gum (*E. rudis*), while higher on the ridge there was Wandoo (*E. wandoo*), Smokebush (*Conospermum* sp.) and Grass Trees (*Xanthorrhoea* sp.). The women planted the garden on a grand scale, although not to a particular plan and, in the absence of reticulation, the area adjacent to the creek was the first to be planted. As with earlier (and later) gardens established in Western Australia, the requirement for a reliable water source was integral to the siting of *Wirra Willa Gardens, Armadale* at this location.¹¹ Their early plantings, and the retention of the natural woodland area to the northern end of the site, established the style and scale of the garden as can still be seen today.

The women imported plants from interstate nurseries, including the Hazelwood Brothers nursery in Epping, NSW and they favoured exotic varieties that did well under the established canopy of native plants. Other specimens planted at this time include Camphor Laurel (*Cinnamomum camphora*), Lemon-scented Gums (*Eucalyptus citriodora*),¹² Macadamia (*Macadamia tetraphylla*) and Liquidamber (*Liquidambar styraciflua*).¹³ Misses Whitehead and Broadley may also have

⁷ Certificate of Title, Volume 1037, Folio 407

⁸ Certificate of Title Volume 1050, Folio 966

⁹ Certificate of Title Volume 1071, Folio 27. Wise's Post Office Directory Trades Section (1940, p842) also show Evelyn Broadley as a nurse.

¹⁰ Oldham (1964) Typed document describing site inspection of Wirra Willa Gardens . Attached to correspondence from Mary Hargreaves to the National Trust of Australia (WA), 12/08/1974.

¹¹ Viska, John., *A Guide to Conserving and Interpreting Gardens in Western Australia* (2007), p. 10.

¹² Patrick, J. (1989) *The Australian garden: designs and plants for today*. Nelson, Melbourne, pp151-155. Garden History Society (n.d) *Wirra Willa Place of green trees*. Typescript, circulated at a meeting of the society c. 1989. Author not known, but understood to be based on discussions with Mary Hargreaves.

¹³ Site visit by Department staff and John Viska, friend of Mary Hargreaves and Garden Historian who visited the gardens several times during the 1980s, 28 August 2006.

planted a Copper Beech (*Fagus sylvatica 'Purpurea'*), which is rarely seen in Western Australia.¹⁴

The rural character of the surrounding area, with its vineyards and orchards, made it a popular destination for weekend drives, and the ladies sold cut flowers and teas from the place.¹⁵

Little is known about the origins and construction of the small timber cottage on the hillside. Anecdotal evidence, based on photographs, cites the house as being a four-room Bungalow style kit home made by Bunnings constructed c. 1925,¹⁶ however this cannot be confirmed as no planning applications for *Wirra Willa Gardens, Armadale* are held by the City of Armadale prior to the 1980s. Living conditions in the cottage in the early years have been described as "simple...with kerosene [sic] lamps and all the water for the garden carried in buckets from the creek."¹⁷ At some stage, Barbara Whitehead operated the Armadale Public Library from the house.¹⁸

On 27 March 1953 the property was transferred to Leah Barbara Whitehead of Armadale, Civil Servant, Spinster and May Violet Lewis of 11 Lumeah Road Caulfield in the State of Victoria, Married Woman, as tenants in common.¹⁹ The circumstances of the transfer are not known.

1954-1961 Marshes

On 18 October 1954 the place was transferred to William Gilbert Marsh, Clark, and Jeanette Constance Marsh, his wife both of 65 Watkins Road Claremont as joint tenants.²⁰ On 26 of January 1961 William Gilbert Marsh died and Jeanette Marsh became the sole proprietor of the land later that year. Little is known about this period, except that the Marshes continued the planting the women had begun, introduced a large number of bulbs and built a barbeque area on the slope above the house.²¹

1961-1977: the Hargreaves

On 13 October 1961 the place was transferred to James Douglas Hargreaves, Farmer and Mary Hargreaves, his wife, both of Coolup, as joint tenants.²² In the 1950s and 60s, Mary Hargreaves was a founding member of a group of wildflower enthusiasts, that would later become the Wildflower Society of Western Australia.

¹⁴ Wilcox, A. (1992) 'Mary Hargreaves garden visit' in Australian Garden History, Journal of the Australian Garden History Society, May/June 1992, p.14. The article describes the Copper Beech as a "huge tree", and in conversations between Department staff and those who have visited the garden, the specimen has consistently referred to for being unique. However only a small specimen can was located on site visits by Department staff in August 2006, so it is assumed the earlier tree has been removed.

¹⁵ Garden History Society (n.d) *Wirra Willa Place of green trees*. Typescript, circulated at a meeting of the society c. 1989.

¹⁶ Site visit by Department staff and Ron Barrett, 4 July 2006

¹⁷ Garden History Society (n.d) *Wirra Willa Place of green trees*. Typescript, circulated at a meeting of the society c. 1989.

¹⁸ City of Armadale (1995) Municipal Heritage Inventory. Place number A34. This could not be confirmed with the City of Armadale and the source of this information is not known.

¹⁹ Certificate of Title Volume 1071, Folio 27

²⁰ Certificate of Title Volume 1071, Folio 27

²¹ Garden History Society (n.d) *Wirra Willa Place of green trees*. Typescript, circulated at a meeting of the society c. 1989

²² Certificate of Title Volume 1071, Folio 27

She was also a member of the Rose and Camellia Societies, and, the Royal Horticultural Society (UK).²³

The Hargreaves gave the place its current name "Wirra Willa Gardens", understanding it to mean "place of green trees". In the mid-1960s the alignment of Albany Highway was altered and the entrance to the property was moved from the south to the south west.²⁴

Mrs Oldham visited the gardens in 1964 and reported that the Hargreaves had already considerably "extended the area under cultivation, the garden now continuing down to the banks of the Neerigen Brook". She noted:

"They have developed a new section for Australian native plants, and with the help of Mr. Alf Gray, over 200 trees and shrubs - many of them natives of Western Australia - have already been planted, and are being constantly added to... In the design of the garden, plantings have been made to give interest throughout the whole year. In autumn, the Golden Ash (*Fraxinus excelsior aurea*), Rhus and Persimmons make a delightful blaze of colour. A winter-flowering shrub of outstanding beauty is *Lucalia gratissima*; there are also large numbers of Azaleas, Rhododendrum and *Magnolia soulangeana* which thrive in this Hills environment in a manner rare in the Metropolitan region around Perth. There are approximately 100 rose bushes; 60 Hydrangeas; and thousands of bulbs including daffodils, snowflakes, acillas, vellotas, nerines, Autumn Crocus, Day Lillies and *Agapanthus*. Some of the rarer shrubs which have been planted this year include *Kalmia latifolia*; *Magnolia stellata*; Blue Cedar (*Dedrus atlantica glauca*); and Blue Spruce (*Pisca pungens glauca*)."²⁵

Other specimen trees and shrubs planted by the Hargreaves were Pin Oak (*Quercus palustris*), Swamp Cyprus (*Taxodium distichum*), white fruiting Lilly Pilly (*Acmena smithii*), Port Wine Magnolia (*Michelia figo*), Snowdrop Tree (*Halesia carolina*), Purple Butterfly Tree (*Bauhinia purpurea*), Chinese Cedar (*Toona sinensis*), Chinese Tallow (*Sapium sebiferum*), Chinese Hat (*Holmskiolda sanguinea*) and Dove tree (*Davidia involucrata*)²⁶. The latter two of these experimental plantings had not survived through to 2006.

The Hargreaves continued the tradition established by Whitehead and Broadley of selecting plants uncommon to standard West Australian gardens, taking advantage of the unique environmental conditions in the garden and Mary bought many of her plants from the same Hazelwood Brothers nursery that Whitehead and Broadley had. Mary was a "plants" person, not a garden designer, and she planted according to where she thought things would grow best, with some consideration to the aesthetics of seasonal variation and the selection of plants that would suit each other. She was a "collector" of plants, and the garden was a repository for them.²⁷

23 Telephone conversation between Department staff and Noelene Drage, Mary's friend, 21/08/2006.

24 Site visit with Department staff and Joy and Ron Barrett 31/08/2006. A post from the old gate remains at the site of the former entrance.

25 Oldham (1964) Typed document describing site inspection of Wirra Willa Gardens Gardens. Attached to correspondence from Mary Hargreaves to the National Trust of Australia (WA), 12/08/1974. All correspondence is available on the National Trust of Australia (WA) file no. ARM10.

26 Wilcox, A. (1992) 'Mary Hargreaves garden visit' in Australian Garden History, Journal of the Australian Garden History Society, May/June 1992, p.14 and site visit by Department staff and John Viska, 28 August 2006.

27 Conversations between Department staff and Grant Nixon, Gardens Manager, Araluen Botanic Park, 21/08/2006; and site visit by Department staff and John Viska, 28 August 2006.

During their time at the place, the Hargreaves worked with Alf Gray, owner of one of the first native nurseries in Western Australia. Although she did not cultivate the woodland section above the house with the same flair as the remainder, she did attempt to regenerate the native species and planted native wildflowers.²⁸ In the 1960s planting native species was not yet popular, and the varieties available were restricted.

Mary Hargreaves also planted many roses during the time she and her husband owned *Wirra Willa Gardens, Armadale*, and was particularly interested in the rare, older varieties. To the south west of the house a wooden pergola was built and planted with the vigorous bright yellow climbing rose 'Mermaid' (*Rosa* 'Mermaid'). A rose garden was established in the grassed area at the front of the site surrounded by a border of the orange-red floribunda rose 'Spartan' (*Rosa* 'Spartan'), and the pink rambling rose 'Dorothy Perkins' (*Rosa* 'Dorothy Perkins') was grown over the nearby boundary fence. The area immediately adjacent to the west of the house was also planted out as a rose garden. A notable feature of this area was a large specimen of the winter flowering pink tea rose 'Jean Ducher' (*Rosa* 'Jean Ducher'), that had climbed into a large Flooded Gum. East of the house, specimens of 'Sea Foam' (*Rosa* 'Sea Foam') were planted to cascade over exposed boulders and down the steep embankment. Other roses known to have been planted at *Wirra Willa Gardens, Armadale* include the old China roses 'Parson's Pink' (*Rosa* 'Parson's Pink'), 'Hermosa' (*Rosa* 'Hermosa') the unusual multi-coloured *Rosa mutabilis*, and the Gallic Rose (*Rosa gallica*). Mary also grew specimens of newer varieties, such as the highly fragrant pink tea rose 'Eiffel Tower' (*Rosa* 'Eiffel Tower'), which only came on the market in 1963. In her selection of roses for *Wirra Willa Gardens, Armadale*, Mary is known to have referred to Nancy Steen's *The Charm of Old Roses* published in 1966.²⁹ Mary sourced many of her roses from Ross Roses in South Australia. As *Wirra Willa Gardens, Armadale* was often one of the only places in Western Australia where some varieties were being grown, Mary allowed local nurserymen to take buds from her roses and graft them on to Fortuniana rootstock suited for local conditions.³⁰

The other species that Mary planted extensively were Camellias. She was particularly fond of the original *reticulata* variety, which was still comparatively rare in Australia at the time that *Wirra Willa Gardens, Armadale* was being established. These Camellias have the largest and showiest flowers of the species and can grow up to 8m tall. Mary was also interested in the early named Camellias and is known to have planted specimens of 'Lady Lock' (*Camellia japonica* 'Lady Loch'), 'Great Eastern' (*Camellia japonica* 'Great Eastern'), 'Debutante' (*Camellia japonica* 'Debutante'), 'Frau Minna Seidel' (*Camellia japonica* 'Frau Minna Seidel'), and 'CM Wilson' (*Camellia japonica* 'CM Wilson'), and hybrids such as 'Donation' (*Camellia x williamsii* 'Donation').

In the White Garden to the rear (north) of the house Mary deviated from her traditional approach towards grouping and planted thematically by colour. Species here included White Tree Gardenia (*Gardenia thunbergia*), Lesser Snow Drop or Spring Snowflake (*Leucojum vernum*), Arum Lily (*Zantedeschia aethiopica*), the

²⁸ Garden History Society (n.d) *Wirra Willa Place of green trees*. Typescript, circulated at a meeting of the society c. 1989

²⁹ Site visit by Department staff and John Viska, 28 August 2006.

³⁰ Site visit by Department staff and John Viska, 28 August 2006.

white floribunda Iceberg Rose (*Rosa* 'Iceberg'), Australian Native Violet (*Viola hederacea*), White Agapanthus (*Agapanthus praecox* var.) and Shasta Daisy (*Chrysanthemum maximum*).

Eleven years after purchasing the property, thinking ahead to a time when they may have to sell it, the Hargreaves wrote to the National Trust of Australia (WA) regarding the prospect of a restrictive covenant being placed over the gardens.

"We are writing to ask if the National Trust would be interested in accepting a covenant over our property "Wirra Willa Gardens". We do not like to think that the garden (3½ acres) may be subdivided at some time in the future, and feel this may be a way to give it protection. If the Trust is interested in the proposition, we would be glad to discuss the matter with you."³¹

The National Trust's Council agreed to the covenant and it was duly prepared by the National Trust's solicitor, Robinson Cox and Associates. It was signed on the 18th December 1972 and lodged at the Titles Office. The covenant imposed eight restrictive stipulations on the whole of land comprised in Volume 1071 Folio 27 "...to bind so far as practicable the restricted land into whosoever hands the same may come...". The restrictions prevented the disruption of the soil, rocks, trees, shrubs and the creek; and also prohibited subdivision of the block, the use of it as a commercial premise and the construction of any building that occupied a greater area of the land greater than those already present.³² It was the first restrictive covenant placed on a garden in Western Australia, and only the second restrictive covenant in Western Australia.³³

Almost 18 months later, in April 1974, the Hargreaves wrote to the National Trust, advising, "We feel we cannot cope with our garden for much longer, and that we should endeavour to sell up before next summer."³⁴ They wrote to their local Member of Parliament, Mr C. Rushton, suggesting the State government purchase the property. According to Mrs Hargreaves' correspondence, Mr Rushton forwarded her query to the Premier, Mr Tonkin, however a change of government left them without a definite answer. Mr Rushton later became the Minister for Local Government and advised her he thought the local Shire or the National Trust would be the "appropriate body to have control of the property."³⁵

The Hargreaves wrote to the National Trust suggesting they obtain funds through the National Estate Grants program to purchase the place, under the condition the Hargreaves be permitted to live there and carry out their work on the gardens. In return the Hargreaves would leave the Trust funds for the ongoing upkeep of the gardens after their death.³⁶ The Trust applied for \$50 000 in the 1974/75 grant round for the acquisition of the property they described as containing one of the most "outstanding" gardens in Perth, to secure it "for the use and enjoyment of the people of Western Australia".³⁷ Several days later the Trust wrote to the committee

31 Correspondence, 31/01/1972, M & J Hargreaves to the National Trust of Australia (WA).

32 Deed of Covenant, dated 18th December 1972, between James Douglas Hargreaves and Mary Hargreaves, and the National Trust of Australia (WA).

33 National Trust of Australia (WA) undated typescript accompanying photographs, verified by NTWA staff 24/08/2006. The first NTWA restrictive covenant was put in place in 1971 over a section of bushland on a farm in Narambeen.

34 Correspondence, 21/04/1974, Mary Hargreaves to the National Trust of Australia (WA).

35 Correspondence, 21/04/1974, Mary Hargreaves to the National Trust of Australia (WA)

36 Correspondence, Mary Hargreaves to the National Trust of Australia (WA), 12/08/1974.

37 Application for funds, N.J. Armitage, Administrator, 8/10/1974.

of the National Estate, acknowledging the unlikelihood of receiving the grant for acquisition, and altering the amount requested to \$4300 for maintenance. They were granted \$4000 early next year, and the Hargreaves were delighted. Mary drafted suggestions to the Trust, as to how to spend the funds.³⁸

The National Trust requested the services of Mrs Marion Blackwell as the supervising landscape architect to oversee the administration of funds. In her acceptance of the role, she advised a garden should be "put into order" before constructive maintenance programs could be carried out. She recommended a rationalisation of the garden bed shapes, lawn areas and movement patterns within the site; the creation of a planting program that replaced like species with like; and getting the garden in to a "manageable order" through weeding, mowing, mulching and pruning.³⁹ The Hargreaves replied:

"We feel that over the years privately owned gardens develop an individuality, and some a charm of their own. It would not be our wish, nor we hope of Mrs. Blackwell's, to have it made into a "tidy" landscaped park. Rather than have this happen we would put the property up for sale."

The Hargreaves believed they had put the funds to good use, even noting that the prior owners Misses Whitehead and Broadley approved of the plantings on their frequent visits to the property.⁴⁰

The Hargreaves had spent the funds as Mary had previously proposed, but had underestimated labour costs, and thus requested a further \$200. The Trust replied that it was not able to approve the payments, and that no further expenditure was to occur until the situation of approving proposed works was clarified.⁴¹ Mrs Blackwell advised that while she was able to approve works in principal, she did not think sufficient competitive quotes had been obtained and not enough detail was provided for the proposed works.⁴² In July 1975 the Trust advised the Hargreaves that it would not apply again to purchase the property from them, and also that "...regretfully, the Trust has not felt itself able to apply for a further grant for the upkeep of the Wirra Willa Gardens Garden".⁴³

In the same correspondence, the Trust advised it was willing to lift the covenant from the place to avoid the "adverse effect" it would have on the market value of the property.⁴⁴ The Hargreaves did not want to lift the covenant, nor did they want anyone else but the Trust to purchase the place, noting "We have always felt that situated as it is, our garden could become a unique feature in what will probably be a crowded built up area in the future".⁴⁵ The Trust requested the Minister for Local Government, Urban Development and Planning, E.C. Rushton MLA to encourage the Department of Conservation and Environment to purchase the property for use as a botanic park, but following an inspection by officers of the Department, the

38 Correspondence N.J. Armitage, Administrator to Mr L.C. Lauder, WA Representative of the Interim Committee of the National Estate, 8/11/74. Correspondence, N.J. Armitage to Mary Hargreaves, 28/02/1975. Correspondence, Mary Hargreaves to the National Trust of Australia (WA), 10/03/1975.

39 Correspondence, M.I. Blackwell, Blackwell and Cala Landscape Architects, to the National Trust of Australia (WA), 18/04/1975.

40 Correspondence, Mary Hargreaves to National Trust of Australia (WA), 22/05/1975.

41 Correspondence, N.J. Armitage, Administrator to Mary Hargreaves, 23/05/1975.

42 Correspondence Blackwell to Trust 10/06/1975

43 Correspondence, R.H. Clement, Chief Executive Officer to Mr and Mrs Hargreaves, 22/07/1975.

44 Correspondence, R.H. Clement, Chief Executive Officer to Mr and Mrs Hargreaves, 22/07/1975.

45 Correspondence Hargreaves to Clement 28/7/1975.

Minister for Conservation and Environment, P.V. Jones, advised he did not support such a proposal as the place was not suitable for that use.⁴⁶

The Hargreaves requested that some clauses of the covenant be altered to facilitate an easier sale, but they were declined, and finally in February 1977 they requested the covenant be removed altogether.⁴⁷ It was discharged on 5 April 1977 and the place sold four months later.⁴⁸ It is the only occasion that the owner of a property with a National Trust restrictive covenant on it has requested to have it discharged and been successful.⁴⁹

During her time at *Wirra Willa Gardens, Armadale*, Mary Hargreaves, who grew up on a farm in Northam and originally trained as a nurse, was very proud of the garden. She would always take guests on tours of her favourite specimens, happily displaying those that had grown, were new or were in flower. She was a great cook, and frequently had guests to stay, especially if people were ill or required respite after a stay in hospital. James Hargreaves was a keen photographer, and together they entertained other horticulturalists, bird-watchers and artists at *Wirra Willa Gardens, Armadale*.

Mary was a self-taught and highly intuitive gardener. She insisted on buying the best of each variety of plant that was available and she deliberately planted for visual appeal, selecting those that would flower well together, considering all storeys from the ground cover upwards. She planted with the knowledge of how plants would grow and fill-in spaces, but did not aspire to recreate any style of garden in particular. She loved delicate and exotic plants, and liked to see swathes of bulbs cascading down hillsides. Some of her other favourite plants included Magnolias, Clerodendrons, Camellias (especially the *reticulata* varieties), Peonies and Lilacs. She had extensive correspondence with other horticulturalists across the world, and along with her friend Noelene Drage and others, was instrumental in campaigning the State Government to purchase 'Araluen' in 1990 and create the Araluen Botanic Park. A former CWA President, Mary served on the Araluen Foundation from its creation to her death in 2003 and was a member of the National Trust of Australia (WA) for 28 years - a considerable contribution to the community of Western Australia.⁵⁰ A pergola dedicated to her was constructed at Araluen Botanical Park in 2006.

1977-2005 Barretts

On 1 August 1977 the place was transferred to Chatham Nominees of South Perth.⁵¹ The new owners were Ron and Joy Barrett, who lived there with their two teenage children. The Barretts had a different style of gardening to the Hargreaves, and undertook more intensive planting, and with greater variety. The Barretts note that when they first arrived there was no middle-storey and Albany Highway was visible. As at 2006, this is no longer the case.

46 Correspondence, Minister for Conservation and Environment to Minister for Local Government, Urban Development and Town Planning, 18/08/1976.

47 Correspondence, Hargreaves to National Trust of Australia (WA), 24/1/1977 and 15/02/1977.

48 Certificate of Title, Volume 1071, Folio 27.

49 Verified by National Trust of Australia (WA) staff, 24/08/2006.

50 Conversations between Department staff and Noelene Drage, Mary's friend and Grant Nixon, Garden Development Manager of Araluen, 21/08/2006. Email from National Trust of Australia (WA) staff 04/09/2006.

51 Record of Certificate of Title for Lot 7 on Diagram 10028; Volume 1071, Folio 27.

In a matter of months after moving in, there was a fire to the rear of the block that destroyed much of the native Smokebush (*Conospermum sp.*). The fire was caused by a routine burn-off by the local fire brigade that was left to smoulder. As with previous owners, the Barretts did not plant much in this section and it was left in a relatively native state.

Joy Barrett studied to receive a diploma in horticulture, and set out to formalise the garden with a series of "rooms". Sinuous paved pathways were laid over what had previously been narrow, informal tracks, garden edging was installed, low retaining walls were built, and various garden structures were erected. The main driveway was also realigned to have more of a curve and was sealed.

The Barretts planted over 300 camellias, and thousands of dollars worth of bulbs, including bluebells, snowdrops, narcissus, jonquils, tulips, clivias and crinum. Of particular note are the rare Yellow Camellias (*Camellia nitidissima*), which they established in several parts of the garden. The Barretts imported plants of interest from specialist nurseries in the eastern states, particularly azaleas and camellias, and planted deliberately to ensure there was colour present all year round. Examples include the Pride of Bolivia (*Tipuana tipu*), the extensive stands of different varieties of bamboo. Other features planted at this time were the Jacarandas (*Jacaranda mimosifolia*) lining the main driveway.

The Barretts also maintained Mary Hargreaves' white garden for its 'historic interest', adding Mock Orange (*Philadelphus sp.*) and May (*Spiraea sp.*).⁵²

As development upstream reduced the water flow in the brook, the irrigation system was upgraded, with a pump house on the creek bank and a 20,000-litre tank on the hill that stored creek water. A bore was also installed but the high iron content of the water was not appropriate to use on many plants.

Significant modifications were made to the house by the Barretts, who did most of the work themselves.⁵³ The garage underneath was converted to a den and a large carport built. The entry was changed from the south east side to the south west by means of the addition of a two-storey vestibule constructed adjacent to the carport. The kitchen fittings were replaced, aside from the Metters stove and the roof replaced with pre-painted corrugated galvanized steel. The small balcony on the south east side was constructed, with recycled leadlights installed in the doors that open to it. The bricks of the chimney in the lounge room were replaced and a new mantelpiece installed.⁵⁴

In June 1980 *Wirra Willa Gardens, Armadale* was recommended for entry to the Register of the National Estate through the National Trust of Australia (WA)'s Historic Gardens Study, which noted the place was rare in the metropolitan region and in good condition.⁵⁵ It was entered in to the Register on 21 October 1980. This listing observes the garden is significant for utilising "... existing native trees and meandering creek as part of the garden design; the enhancement of the

⁵² Garden History Society (n.d) *Wirra Willa Place of green trees*. Typescript, circulated at a meeting of the society c. 1989.

⁵³ There are no records at the City of Armadale of the changes that took place to the house, aside from an application to construct a separate garage in 1990.

⁵⁴ Conversations between Department staff and Ron and Joy Barrett, 31/08/2006.

⁵⁵ Richards, D. and Richards, O. (1980) *The National Trust of Australia (WA) historic gardens study (WA), final report, volume 1*. Unpublished, p44.

microclimate to create an image of the ideal; and the use of an informal garden layout with simple structural elements to create effect" and for creating "a green haven in an urban environment". The entry also notes the diversity of flora, including those which are uncommon in Perth.⁵⁶

An extreme '100 year' flood in 1983 washed away all the plantings near the creek bed. The Barretts re-landscaped this section, including lining either side of the creek bed with rocks. The land to the other side of the creek is not part of the property but the City of Armadale did not object to the Barretts planting there and erecting fences. At about this time, the arbour to the south west of the house was removed and a garage/shed erected. The adjacent rose garden was also replaced by more informal woodland style planting and the large Flooded Gum in this area was removed along with any remains of the 'Jean Ducher' rose (*Rosa* 'Jean Ducher').

In April 1990 the City of Armadale approved plans for the garage building, a separate two-storey structure the Barretts thought they might use for a live-in caretaker or as a centre for gardening classes. In about 1993, the rose garden was formalised and extended and planted with over 100 new tea rose bushes.

Wirra Willa Gardens, Armadale has been featured in several publications. A short paragraph and a picture of the garden were included in "*Heritage of Australia – The Illustrated Register of the National Estate*" (1981) and the subsequent 1989 edition that just covered Western Australia. Also in 1989, an illustrated chapter on the gardens, which included a plan, featured in John Patrick's book "*Australian Garden Designs*". In 1992, the Journal of the Australian Garden History Society, "*Australian Garden History*," included an article on a visit to the garden by the Society's Western Australian branch.

On 21 August 1995, *Wirra Willa Gardens, Armadale* was adopted to the City of Armadale's Municipal Inventory (now Local Heritage Survey).

In the late 1990s the Barretts made a conservatorium style extension to the rear of the house, including an additional toilet, which they planned to use as a café. Power to the place was installed underground c. 1998.

In December 2005, the City of Armadale Town Planning Scheme No. 4 identified *Wirra Willa Gardens, Armadale* as an area where additional uses could be permitted, including restaurant, café, reception or garden centre or tourism related uses. The associated conditions stipulate a maximum residential density for the site of R40.⁵⁷

Maintaining the garden took an enormous amount of time, energy and money for the Barretts and although they had planned to stay, Ron's ill health eventually contributed to the decision to reluctantly put the property on the market. Members of the Armadale community were concerned that the property could be subdivided for development, nominated the place to the National Trust of WA.⁵⁸

⁵⁶ Australian Government, Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment, Australian Heritage Database, entry for 'Wirra Willa Gardens', sourced from [Australian Heritage Database \(environment.gov.au\)](http://australianheritage.gov.au)

⁵⁷ 'Schedule 2', *City of Armadale Town Planning Scheme No. 4 (District Zoning Scheme)*, p. 123.

⁵⁸ National Trust File, Armadale 10.

On 26 June 2006 the place was transferred to Bobsyouruncle Pty Ltd of South Perth.⁵⁹ A number of residential developments have been explored for the site since this time. It is currently (February 2021) advertised as a site for a potential apartment complex set in heritage gardens.⁶⁰

The following elements in the place have been lost since 2006:

- In the area in front of the house a long timber pergola was damaged by white ants and removed. It comprised pairs of upright posts that supported tapered cross beams with chamfering giving a somewhat Oriental effect. It had been covered by an unknown variety of rose (*Rosa sp.*) The stretcher bond brick path running the length of the pergola remains in situ.
- In the woodland garden to the south east of the house a number of mature Tree Ferns (probably *Dicksonia antarctica*) have died.
- In 2020, a mature tree fell on a timber and iron garage/car port, largely destroying the structure.

On 29 September 2020, the City of Armadale included *Wirra Willa Gardens, Armadale* in the Heritage List attached to its *Town Planning Scheme No.4*.⁶¹

13.2 PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

Wirra Willa Gardens, Armadale comprises an extensive Paradise style garden laid out on a steeply sloping site from the 1930s onwards beside the Neerigen Brook with a canopy of mature native and exotic trees with dense areas of exotic under-planting dominated by camellias (*Camellia spp.*) interspersed with small areas of lawn, narrow, sinuous paths and driveways in a variety of materials, rock walls, a geometric rose garden (c. 1980s), and containing a weatherboard, masonry and iron house (1930s onwards), garages (1980s) and outbuildings, and an area behind of predominantly native bush characterised by Wandoo (*Eucalyptus wandoo*) and Grass Trees (*Xanthorrhoea preissii*).

The site is located just off Albany Highway, adjacent to the major junction of South West Highway. The site slopes steeply down from the hill to a flat area running along the Neerigen Brook. A walk path has been developed between the garden and Albany Highway, but otherwise the site is largely secluded.

The house is located in the middle of the site. To the south, east and west of the house there is dense planting in what has evolved into a Paradise style garden with small areas of open grass. To the north the planting becomes increasingly sparse as the garden progresses up the hill. There is a zone at which the exotic planting has become less dominant and the remainder of the northern corner of the site is dominated by native species with spreading exotic garden escape plants.

The Garden

Wirra Willa Gardens, Armadale is entered through a wide opening in the weathered random rubble limestone walls. The opening is flanked by square piers and two

⁵⁹ Record of Certificate of Title for Lot 7 on Diagram 10028; Volume 1071, Folio 27

⁶⁰ "Wirra Willa Apartments, Mount Nasura", Strobos Group, downloaded on 3 February 2021 from <http://www.strobos.com.au/project/mount-nasura/>

⁶¹ "Minutes – Ordinary Meeting of Council, 29 September 2020," *City of Armadale*, downloaded on 3 February 2021, from https://www.armadale.wa.gov.au/sites/default/files/assets/documents/councildocs/minutes_-_ordinary_council_meeting_-_29_september_2020.pdf

large Chinese Tallows (*Sapium sebifeum*) with a line of Coral Trees (*Erythrina indica*) running up the slope. The previously sealed and currently degraded driveway divides soon after entering. The northern drive leads steeply up the hill to the 1990s garage. The main drive which has been significantly encroached by shrub planting on either side curves gently to the house and is lined to the south by Camellias (*Camellia spp.*), and then specimens of Prunus (*Prunus spp.*) and Jacarandas (*Jacaranda mimosifolia*), low circular Box (*Buxus sp.*) hedges, and to the north by a small greensward framed by Atlas Cedar (*Cedrus atlantica* 'Glauc') and Pin Oak (*Quercus palustris*).

The garden to the north of the drive, up to the house, can best be described as a simple overgrown woodland garden cut through with rustic paths and low retaining walls. The area closest to the house is somewhat more formal with brick paths and stairs, and a standard lamp. Near the stairs is the stump of a large Flooded Gum (*E. rudis*). Overall, the planting is dominated by a mature canopy of mixed species including a specimen Golden Ash (*Fraxinus excelsior* 'Aurea') and numerous Cocos Palms, under-planted with low herbaceous plants and the area is more open than the garden to the south of the house and drive. It also contains a small, open-sided iron gazebo.

The garden to the south of the drive at the front is a comparatively open area of lawn with peripheral plantings of mature trees and overgrown shrubs. The lawn is planted with bulbs. There is evidence of a former geometric rose garden planted with tea roses. On the western side, a wide limestone step flanked by small urns leads down to the garden. The beds either side are under-planted with Agapanthus (*Agapanthus sp.*). The beds are edged with low concrete borders and form a square within a square. In the centre, there is a small decorative circular iron arbour with an open dome, which has been trained with climbing roses. A variety of materials, including timber post and rail and wire mesh, form the boundary fence to the south, between the garden and the public walk path next to Neerigen Brook. Plants have been trained along the fence in some places including Chinese Wisteria (*Wisteria sinensis*), some shrubs such as Figs (*Ficus carica*) have overgrown and contain dead fallen limbs allowing views out of the garden.. Mature trees along the fence line include Liquidamber (*Liquidambar styraciflua*), Swamp Cypress (*Taxodium distichum*), and Flowering Plum (*Prunus blireana*). In the boundary fence, next to the Swamp Cypress, is the gate post of the original entry into *Wirra Willa Gardens, Armadale*. Closer to the drive there is a large Rhus (*Toxicodendron succedaneana*). Many of the trees in this lower and damper part of the garden are exceptionally tall specimens and familiar exotic species such as Chinese Elms (*Ulmus parvifolia*) and Liquidambers (*Liquidambar styraciflua*) have been allowed to grow freely.

The rose garden and lawn are separated from the adjacent area of dense planting by an overgrown formally planted Box hedge (*Buxus sp.*) that returns to form a wide grassed pathway that is brick paved in a herringbone pattern. The canopy of this dense area of planting is formed by a mature Camphor Laurel (*Cinnamomum camphora*), which has been allowed to grow in its natural form, a Macadamia (*Macadamia tetraphylla*), a white fruiting Lilly Pilly (*Acmena smithii*). These have been under-planted with Camellias (*Camellia sasanqua* var. and *Camellia sp.*), some of which have matured into small open trees, Azaleas (*Rhododendron tsutsus* var.), Agapanthus (*Agapanthus sp.*), Australian Native Violets (*Viola hederacea*), and a variety of other herbaceous plants. Some of the beds in this

area are defined by borders of roughly squared stones set just above grass height. Along the drive are a Pink Flowering Cape Chestnut (*Calodendrum capense*) and a mature Jacaranda (*Jacaranda mimosifolia*). The density of the overhead foliage in this part of the garden and the competition for light combined with limited maintenance, has led to many of the under-plantings bolting into sparse leggy forms. It is assumed that much of the ground cover planting has failed to survive in the longer term with significant bare earth and mulch areas.

The dense area of planting opens into two small clearings. The one to the south contains a large specimen palm set in lawn, while the area to the north east formerly contained a long timber pergola and a stretcher bond brick path. The surrounding garden contains a variety of species including various palms (including Jelly Palm (*Butea capitata*), Pin Oak (*Quercus palustris*), Lombardy Poplar (*Populus nigra*), Horse Chestnut (*Aesculus hippocastanum*), and Chinese Cedar (*Toona sinensis*) and is under-planted with Camellias (*Camellia* sp.), large clumps of Agapanthus (*Agapanthus* sp.), and Australian Native Violets (*Viola hederacea*).

A large timber and iron large car port with lattice sides extends into the garden to from the house. There is a large Lemon-scented Gum (*Eucalyptus citriodora*) with evidence of significant limb drop at the western corner of the car port, where it meets the main drive. On the south east side, there is an unidentified, multi-trunked tree with snake-like bark and a Yellow Camellia (*Camellia nitidissima*).

Immediately south of the garage is a small raised brick patio in a small, grassed clearing. The area beyond this to the south and south east, down to the Neerigen Brook, has a canopy of European Elm (*Ulmus* sp.), Copper Beech (*Fagus sylvatica* 'Purpurea') and Liquidamber (*Liquidambar styraciflua*) and is densely under-planted with Camellias (*Camellia japonica* and other varieties). A small pump house is located in the planting, and steps lead down at various points to the brook the sides of which have been reinforced with stones and planted with ferns and Monstera Swiss Cheese Plant (*Monstera deliciosa*). In places the Monstera has climbed the full canopy height of large trees such as the very tall Liquidamber (*Liquidambar styraciflua*) adjacent to the brook.

A sloping lawn leads from the densely planted area, north up to the house. It is bordered by Magnolias (*Magnolia* sp.) including a large Port Wine Magnolia (*Michelia figo*). The south east wall of the house is planted with hybrid Camellia 'Donation' (*Camellia x williamsii* 'Donation'). A brick path leads up the side of the house.

The woodland garden to the south east of the house runs from the Neerigen Brook up to the ridge to the native area in the north east of the site. Its canopy consists primarily of remnant native species: Marri (*Corymbia calophylla*), Jarrah (*E. marginata*) and Flooded Gum (*E. rudis*). The woodland garden has been under-planted with Rhododendrons (*Rhododendron* spp.), Azaleas (*Rhododendron tsutsus* var.), Camellias (various sp.) and various ferns including the Birds Nest Fern (*Asplenium nidus*). It is cut through by several sinuous paths laid in a variety of materials, but mostly brick laid in different patterns. Low retaining laterite walls in random rubble have been constructed at various points to help stabilise the slope and direct water. The earlier walls are dry stone, while those constructed later are mortared.

At the south east end of the woodland garden, shallow steps rise up the hillside to a path that winds along the boundary between the planted and native areas. This allows views into the canopy of the woodland garden. Plants along this area include Wandoo (*Eucalyptus wandoo*), a Pride of Bolivia (*Tipuana tipu*) and Paulownia (*Paulownia tomentosa*). To the north of the path, the garden is characterised by open grassland dotted with Grass Trees (*Xanthorrhoea preissii*) and the occasional native tree. A very large tank for storing bore water is prominent along the north west boundary of the property.

The garden to the rear of the house contains sheds and a barbeque area. Plants in this area include a large Flooded Gum (*E. rudis*) and dense stands of different types of Bamboo (*Phyllostachys* spp.), including Black Bamboo (*Phyllostachys nigra*).

The White Garden at the rear (north east) of the house contains White Tree Gardenia (*Gardenia thunbergia*), White Agapanthus (*Agapanthus praecox* var.), Mock Orange (*Philadelphus* sp.) and May (*Spiraea* sp.).

The secondary drive runs north east up the slope of the block to an area containing a variety of relatively young fruit trees and the two storey garage/studio building. Adjacent to this are the remains of an aviary, and an area of gravel that was used for propagating.

House and Other Garden Buildings and Features

The House at *Wirra Willa Gardens, Armadale* is an Inter War Bungalow style weatherboard and iron cottage with several extensions in weatherboard, brick and iron. It has not been possible to establish the early sequence of development of the house as no building plans or licences are held by the City of Armadale.

The house is built on a sloping site. At the front (south east), the garage space under the house, has been excavated to create a large room, while at the rear (north west), the large brick extension is partially set into the hill. To the west, a large verandah has been added. The timber supports for the house have been enclosed with various materials including limestone, lattice and brick.

Externally the walls to the east, south and west are clad with dark stained weatherboards, while the north elevation consists of the brick extension. In the middle of the house, the roof has been extended upwards to create additional living spaces, creating a complex roofscape of intersecting gables and ridges.

Internally, the house has been extensively modified. Ceilings have been removed, verandahs enclosed, walls removed and windows replaced. A narrow staircase has been inserted in what was once the original living room to access additional mezzanine and basement rooms. Original fabric appears to be limited to the Metters stove in the kitchen and the original front door and hopper light, now an internal door to a living room. The fireplace in this living room may also be original.

There are two brick and iron garages at *Wirra Willa Gardens, Armadale*: a single store one to the north of the main drive (ud) and a two-storey garage/studio in poor state of repair at the end of the secondary drive (1990).

13.3 COMPARATIVE INFORMATION

Paradise Style and Residential Gardens

There are very few private gardens identified in the historic heritage places database. While many places may have gardens that form part of the significance of a whole place, few are noted for the garden alone.

Paradise gardens or gardens with Paradise elements in the database include:

- P4241 *Harold Boas Gardens*, Perth (RHP) is a good example of the Paradise style, dating from the 1970s. The park contains some original plantings from the original Victorian style garden laid out in the late 1890s, but was transformed into the Paradise style in 1974 to a design by Blackwell and Cala Landscape Architects. Located in the Perth central business district and set amongst medium rise office buildings, *Harold Boas Gardens* features large expanses of grass, lakes, a waterfall and dense plantings of exotic species. From within the garden the outside world is not visible, creating a feeling of isolation.
- P3850 *Esplanade Reserve*, Perth (RHP) was originally planted in the Paradise style when it was opened for recreational use in 1881. Since the 1970s its function and form has been modified considerably. Before the redevelopment of the place to create Elizabeth Quay and surrounding residential and commercial development, it was closer to the Plantsman's style of garden, although the Paradise style was still evident in some plantings. Replacement planting of some exotic species has occurred, but many native species had been established for their increased water tolerance and greater suitability to the climate. In 2015 the place was heavily modified with the development of Elizabeth Quay, and no longer exhibits parkland characteristics.
- P2093 *Bishop's House*, Perth (RHP) has extensive grounds comprising lawns and gardens with many mature trees. Established on a sloping site by Bishop Hale in 1859 around a spring and creek, the garden developed incrementally incorporating a number of stylistic elements,⁶² but has evolved to have a Paradise style with dense planting and open grassed clearings.
- P4484 University of Western Australia Campus Gardens, (Heritage Council Assessment Program as part of P13702 University of Western Australia-Crawley Campus), comprises several styles of landscape design. Of these, the Great Court is in the Paradise style, and is noted for its "informal arrangement of plants, heavy use of native plants, scattered plantings of exotic trees and shrubs". The gardens were planned from the beginnings of the University and are carefully maintained with the guidance of a master plan.⁶³

Other publicly accessible gardens on the historic heritage places database are generally memorial parks and are not known to be in the Paradise style.

⁶² "Bishop's House", Heritage Council Assessment Documentation, 1991

⁶³ Gardens of University of Western Australia, Mounts Bay Road, Crawley. Register of the National Estate entry, from the Department of Environment and Heritage website. Available at: <http://www.deh.gov.au/heritage/>

Mature plantings of camellias are known to exist at P3084 *Hamel Nursery* (RHP) dating from the late 19th or early 20th century, and possibly also at P1760 Pinjarra Park⁶⁴ (Heritage Council Assessment Program), dating from the mid 19th century, although neither place is comparable to *Wirra Willa Gardens, Armadale* in terms of design.

There are no places on the historic heritage places database directly comparable to *Wirra Willa Gardens, Armadale*. While it shares many of the features of the Paradise style with other places, such as the presence of running water, lush and exotic plantings, and a sense of isolation from the outside world, it is unique for the application of this style to a private garden from the inter-war period.

Women in Horticulture and Garden Design

After the World War One, horticulture and garden design became increasingly popular pursuits for women, whom undertook these activities in an amateur capacity and as an extension of their home making duties. Women's magazines, such as 'Good Housekeeping', popularised this activity and also featured notable gardens.

The popularity of horticulture and garden design in this period built on the professional activities of highly influential professional garden designer Gertrude Jekyll, who designed over 400 gardens in Britain and other countries, and wrote numerous books and articles on the subject right up until her death in 1932. Her design style was influenced by the Arts and Crafts movement and broke from the more formal tradition of design that characterised gardens from the earlier Victorian period. Her designs used several principles relevant to *Wirra Willa Gardens, Armadale* including the creation of quiet lawn spaces, the grouping of plants in sequence for good colour, and thinking about how to join houses to gardens, and gardens to woodland.⁶⁵

One of the most well-known amateur female gardeners of the inter-war period was the English author, Vita Sackville-West, who developed the famous gardens at Sissinghurst Castle, Kent and wrote regularly in newspapers on the subject. Her philosophy of gardening included allowing plants to self-seed, allowing wild flowers to mix with cultivated plants and planting to ensure colour throughout the seasons.⁶⁶

In Australia, Edna Walling gained prominence as a professional garden designer from the 1930s and published several books on the subject. Of possible relevance to the establishment of *Wirra Willa Gardens, Armadale* are "Gardens in Australia: Their Design and Care" published in 1943 and "Cottage and Garden in Australia", published in 1947. While it is not known if Edna Walling's works were referenced by any of the women who developed *Wirra Willa Gardens, Armadale*, many of her philosophies are evident in the Paradise garden area, including working with the existing landscape and features including rocks, slopes and trees; sculpting rather than levelling the land; softening the underlying architectural structure of the

⁶⁴ Telephone conversation between Department staff and Jean Evans, President, Camellia Society (WA), 2 August 2006.

⁶⁵ "Gertrude Jekyll", *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (2004) download on 3 February 2021 from <https://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-37597>

⁶⁶ 'Great British Gardens- Great Garden Designers: Vita Sackville-West 1892-1962', by Sarah Topp at [://www.greatbritishgardens.co.uk/Vita_Sackville_West.htm](http://www.greatbritishgardens.co.uk/Vita_Sackville_West.htm), accessed 20 September 2006.

garden with dense planting; and designing to keep garden maintenance to a minimum.⁶⁷

These philosophies of garden design contrasted with other more geometric styles where plants were displayed in more structured settings or arranged more formally.

Wirra Willa Gardens, Armadale demonstrates the increasing involvement of women in amateur horticulture and garden design, and the associated shift in garden design philosophy that occurred after World War One.

13.4 KEY REFERENCES

No key references.

13.5 FURTHER RESEARCH

The City of Armadale does not have any record of the construction or changes made to the place, aside from the application for the addition of the separate garage in 1990. Further research could reveal greater detail about the history of the house.

Further research may be able to provide information about the theme of Western Australians modifying the natural environment to create more 'home like' garden spaces.

⁶⁷ 'Edna Walling - Designer' at <http://www.abc.net.au/walling/designer/default.htm>, Produced with the assistance of the ABC and Cinemedia Multimedia Production Accord in association with the State Library of Victoria.