



REGISTER OF HERITAGE PLACES - ASSESSMENT DOCUMENTATION

11. ASSESSMENT OF CULTURAL HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

The criteria adopted by the Heritage Council in November, 1996 have been used to determine the cultural heritage significance of the place.

11.1 AESTHETIC VALUE*

Hyde Park is significant in displaying aesthetic qualities of the Acadian style of landscape design on the scale of a large public park. (Criterion 1.1)

The landform and mature planting's of *Hyde Park* provide a rich variety of landscape experiences, spatial qualities and micro-environments for the enjoyment of its users. (Criterion 1.2)

Hyde Park makes a significant contribution to the surrounding residential area through the presence of tall, mature trees which dominate the streetscape and the attractive views into the Park which are enjoyed from the surrounding houses and by passing traffic. (Criterion 1.3 & 1.4)

11.2. HISTORIC VALUE

Hyde Park is significant for its former uses as a camping ground by Aboriginal tribes, as a camping ground for miners *en-route* to the Kalgoorlie Goldfields and for its development as a public park in the late 1800s in consequence of a growing awareness of the desirability of providing developed gardens for public use. (Criterion 2.1 & 2.2)

The development of Hyde Park as public gardens reflects the period of prosperity brought about by the gold boom of the late 1800s and early 1900s. (Criterion 2.2)

Hyde Park is significant for its association with the former Town Clerk of the City of Perth, William Bold. (Criterion 2.3)

11.3. SCIENTIFIC VALUE

Hyde Park is valuable as a research site and type locality for demonstrating the modification and management of the chain of wetlands that formerly covered extensive areas north of Perth. *Hyde Park* contains remnant natural flora and

* 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 & Robertson, North Ryde, 1989.

fauna and old and unusual introduced trees which are of value for research and reference purposes. These include Plane Trees (*Planatus acerifolia*), encircling the lakes, the Moreton Bay Figs (*Ficus macrophylla*) and Port Jackson Figs (*Ficus rubiginosa*) in the lawn areas, the Pines (*Pinus*) around the boundaries and the Jacarandas in the south-east corner. The more unusual species include the Swamp Cypress (*Taxodium distichum*), Red Cedar (*Toona australis*) and Bunya Pine (*Araucaria bidiwillii*) and remnant indigenous flora (*Eucalyptus* and *Melaleuca*). (Criterion 3.1)

11. 4. SOCIAL VALUE

Hyde Park is highly valued by the local and regional community as a place for passive recreation and play, as a meeting place, as a venue for fairs, festivals, public and private ceremonies. (Criterion 4.1)

Hyde Park is widely recognised by the local and regional community as a public park and is a major landscape feature of the surrounding area. (Criterion 4.2)

12. DEGREE OF SIGNIFICANCE

12. 1. RARITY

Hyde Park is a comparatively rare example of the Arcadian landscape style used in large public parks, and contains mature examples of unusual trees. (Criterion 5.2).

Elements of its construction, including the promenade pathway system, are associated with social customs no longer practised in their original form. (Criterion 5.2)

12. 2 REPRESENTATIVENESS

Hyde Park is characteristic of the Arcadian landscape style as applied to a large public park. (Criterion 6.2)

Hyde Park is representative of the growing concern with the provision of public parks, gardens and recreation facilities in the inner city of Perth at the end of nineteenth century, and the provision of 'adventure' type children's play equipment in the 1960s and 1970s. (Criterion 6.2)

12. 3 CONDITION

The landscape elements of *Hyde Park* are in generally good condition. Some of the earlier planted trees have reached or are approaching the end of their lifespan and have been replaced or require special management and/or replacement in the near future. Areas of overshadowed grass are being replaced with appropriate alternative treatments. Water quality in the lakes is visually poor and the vegetation of the western island is dead and dying in places.

Overall management of the Park has been, and continues to be of a good standard which has generally maintained the original landscape while accommodating changes in the environment and usage of the place over time. A management plan is in place to guide its future care and development.

Some of the smaller scale works carried out in the 1990s detract from the heritage values of the place. The original landscape style is broad in scale and simple in execution. Recently constructed, small scale shrub beds, and brick paving are out of context with this style

12. 4 INTEGRITY

The original design intention of providing a generously scaled public garden remains intact and *Hyde Park* continues to be used for the purpose for which it was originally intended.

The current management plan is in general likely to ensure the long term viability of the Park's identified values; however, greater attention is required to the design of new works to ensure that they are compatible with the overall style and ambience of the place. Works from the 1990s are small in scale and are reversible.

Hyde Park therefore has a high level of integrity.

12. 5 AUTHENTICITY

The majority of the original large scale fabric of the Park is intact, including its landform, overall layout, lakes, pathway system and many of its large trees. Some original elements, such as boundary fences and planting have been lost or diminished in extent.

Hyde Park is therefore of moderate authenticity

13. SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

The documentary and physical evidence has been compiled by Philip Palmer, Landscape Architect.

13.1 DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

Hyde Park, formerly known as Third Swamp, is an area of public open space bounded by Vincent Street, Glendower Street, William Street and Throssell Street, Highgate. It is a public park in the Arcadian landscape style,¹ the landscape development of which commenced in 1897.

The site now occupied by Hyde Park was part of a series of natural wetlands which once covered extensive areas north of the Perth townsite. Prior to and during the early part of European settlement it was an Aboriginal camping ground. The swamp, its vegetation and the wildlife it supported provided water, shelter and food for the Aborigines. European settlers were attracted to Third Swamp, as it was originally known, for the same reasons.²

In winter, the rising water table contributed to extensive flooding of the area north of Perth. Draining of the swamp to alleviate this was considered after the floods of 1845, but did not commence until 1873. Drainage stopped after nearby wells began to dry up. As a result of the flooding and the drainage issues, most of the area around Third Swamp was set aside as a reserve in 1873. Prior to that it had been intended for residential use.³

Third Swamp was used as a camping ground by travellers, particularly during the gold rush and during the 1890s when the Perth City Council charged a small fee for miners to camp there.⁴

In 1896, largely through the efforts of Lyall Hall, a city auctioneer and land agent, the Executive Council recommended to the Governor that Third Swamp Reserve be made into public gardens and Third Swamp was gazetted as a Public Reserve for the purposes of Public Gardens on 30 September 1897.⁵ This coincides with the influence of town and social planning ideals from overseas, increased prosperity and a civic desire to emulate the more established cities of other states, all of which encouraged the development of public parks, gardens and recreation reserves close to the city.⁶

Development of public gardens began in earnest in 1898 with the construction roads to define the southern and western boundaries of the site. Prior to this, only Vincent Street and Clifton Street (now William Street) were in place. A picket fence was erected along the boundaries, mainly to stop cattle and

¹ Ramsay, J. *Parks, Gardens and Special Trees* Australian Heritage Technical Publications Series No. 2 Canberra, Australian Government Publishing Service 1991, p.14.

² Moussa, Natasha, *An Historical Overview of Hyde Park for the Hyde Park Centennial Celebrations* Report for the Town of Vincent, 1997, p.1.

³ *ibid*, pp. 1 & 2.

⁴ *ibid*, pp. 1 & 2.

⁵ *Government Gazette*, WA 8 October 1897, p.2053.

⁶ Richards, O.A. 'fairer Athens and a freer Rome: historic public gardens in Perth, WA' in *Heritage Australia* ACT, Australia Council of National Trusts, Winter 1982, Vol 1 No. 1, 1982, pp. 66-69.

horses from entering the reserve. A grant of one thousand pounds was made to the Perth City Council for improvements and during 1899, 600 new trees were planted, rushes were removed from the swamp and a single lake formed.⁷

On 31 July, 1899 Third Swamp was renamed *Hyde Park*, after Hyde Park in London. Photographic evidence dating from 1889 reveals rapid change and development of the Park up to the 1920s. The 1889 photograph of members of the General Purpose Committee of the Perth City Council shows a semi-natural landscape of gently sloping, rough grass leading down to an open body of water with scattered, large Paperbark trees (*Melaleuca preissiana*). By c1910, the lake has been edged, mown lawns and pathways are in place and introduced trees, including the Planes around the lake and the Pines around the boundaries show advanced growth. By the 1920s, the trees have grown to semi-mature form, with linked canopies providing shade and enclosure and an overall arrangement of landscape elements that has not changed fundamentally to the present.

An ornate fountain, donated by Mr W.G. Brookman, Councillor and future Mayor, was installed near the intersection of Glendower and Lake Streets in 1901. A cricket practice pitch was constructed in 1906 and perimeter planting of Pine Trees was done in 1912. Also in this year the lake dried up. As a consequence it was dredged in 1913 and the spoil used to create two islands. A roadway through the Park was commenced in 1913, but as a result of public opposition was modified to become a walkway separating the lake into two halves. The original picket fence was replaced between 1914 and 1915 with one of concrete posts and iron railing. A bandstand rotunda was also built at this time. Jacaranda trees were planted in the south-west corner in 1921 and in 1923, the Park was extended to encompass additional land along Vincent Street. During the 1920s, the Park was a popular place for promenading, picnics, fetes, concerts, and children's play. The lakes were edged with stone retaining walls in 1936 and 1937.⁸

William Bold, who was the Town Clerk of the City of Perth from 1901 to 1944, influenced much of the early development of Hyde Park.

From the 1940s to the 1960s, work on Hyde Park was mainly limited to maintenance and refurbishment of existing facilities. By the 1960s the Park had become rather neglected and Council embarked on a redevelopment program which saw the installation of new play equipment, the water playground, barbecues, picnic areas, improved lavatory facilities, lighting, upgraded pathways and general renovation of the planting. These improvements lead to a resurgence in the popularity of the Park as a recreation venue and meeting place. The first Hyde Park Festival was held in 1968 and although discontinued in 1985, fairs and other community events continue to be held regularly in the Park. Hyde Park is also a popular venue for large social gatherings, weddings and other community and private ceremonies. The park, Perth Town Lot Y228, was granted by the Crown to the City of Perth as an estate in fee simple (ie. freehold) on 6 January 1977, 'to be used and held solely for recreation purposes.' It was transferred to the

⁷ Moussa, Natasha, op cit, p.3.

⁸ ibid, pp. 3-5.

Town of Vincent under the same conditions on 11 April 1995.⁹ A group known as the Patrons of Hyde Park was established in 1990 and together with Council staff advise on the management of future development of the Park. The *Hyde Park Plan of Management* prepared by City of Perth's Department of Parks, Gardens and Landscapes in consultation with the Patrons of Hyde Park is the guiding document for the Park today.¹⁰

13.2 PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

Hyde Park is a public park located in Highgate and bounded by Vincent, Glendower, William and Throssell streets. It occupies a hollow depression in the landform with a high point and localised ridge line running east-west near the north end of the site. The park is surrounded by residential development, comprising imposing, mainly Federation style houses and some blocks of flats along Vincent Street; more recent home units and some older homes along Glendower Street; recent home units and modest older houses along William Street; and large Federation style houses along Throssell Street. There is a delicatessen midway along William Street. A large, high block of flats at the intersection of Vincent and William streets dominates the streetscape at that location; elsewhere buildings are all of consistently domestic scale. There is little verge planting on the sides opposite the Park and, while many of the residences have well tended front gardens, it is the building frontages which define the outer edge of the surrounding streetscape.

Hyde Park is laid out in the Arcadian style with its generously scaled, relaxed combination of regular and irregular elements.¹¹ The two lakes, encircled by pathways, sit naturally in the hollow of the landform while parkland landscape of trees, grass and shrubbery flows around them. The original boundary planting of Pines (*Pinus*) is partially evident along Glendower and William Streets, although recently planted Illawarra Flame Trees (*Brachychiton acerifolium*) and Jacaranda (*Jacaranda mimosifolia*) along Vincent Street will eventually restore spatial definition to this edge. The pair of Norfolk Island Pines (*Araucaria heterophylla*) and avenue of Jacarandas (*Jacaranda mimosifolia*) at the south-east corner of the site are a strong, formal design element and, while a variety of different species has been planted alongside paths at the north-east corner of the park, their density and proximity to the paths establishes a strongly directional effect.

Elsewhere, tree planting consists of groups and specimens in an irregular layout. Floral display beds are located along Vincent Street and in sunny areas to the south and east ends of the Park. A large, curvilinear shrubbery is situated in the north-east corner. Other shrubberies are located at the ends of the pathway separating the lakes. These beds are of recent origin and have

⁹ Certificate of Title Vol. 1454, Fol. 634, Courtesy DOLA.

¹⁰ Moussa, Natasha, op cit, pp. 10-15.

¹¹ The Arcadian style is an Australian derivative of the English Landscape Garden style, which is a mixture of rural landscape elements on a generous scale. Principal features include gently undulating landforms covered by pasture (or in Australia, more usually irrigated, mown grass) and irregular groups and clumps of large trees, winding pathways, irregularly shaped shrubberies and natural water bodies. Open spaces flow uninterrupted by walls and fences and there is an absence of 'feature' planting and floral display. Ramsay, op. cit., passim.

limestone retaining walls which cross the former path alignment and split the flow of traffic around them. The northern bed has been planted in ornate parterre fashion. On the low side of both beds, there is a seat and ornamental brick paving set into the former bitumen pathway.

The lawns follow the undulating landform which slopes down to the lakes. In sunny areas the lawn is thick and green; under the extensive shade cast by the trees the lawn becomes sparse and is progressively being replaced with mulch, shade tolerant herbaceous plants and sawdust pathways.

A network of bitumen and asphalt surfaced paths provides access through the Park and includes the circuit around the lakes; straight paths leading to it diagonally from north-east and south-east corners of the site; a series of paths approximately linking Ethel Street, Norfolk Street and Hyde Street to the north with Palmerston Street, Lake Street and William Street to the south. The Norfolk-Palmerston path is a major route which bisects the lakes on the line of the former proposed roadway. There is no fencing around the park, lawns and paths flowing unimpeded up to the kerbs of surrounding roads.

Public lavatories and various service buildings and yards are located at the eastern and western ends of the Park approximately midway between Vincent Street and Glendower Street. Gazebos are located near the water playground off Vincent Street and on the northern sloping lawn overlooking the lakes. The former is of simple open contemporary style and the latter of a more ornate, older style. The water playgrounds consist of shallow concrete basins into which central fountains spray. There are a series of sandpits with brightly coloured, contemporary children's play equipment along the southern side of the Park. Bins, barbecues, lights, seats and signs in a variety of styles are located throughout the Park. Some of the seats have recently installed brick paving beneath them.

The lakes are edged with gently curving stone walls and each has an island. The island of the western lake has a dense cover of trees, shrubs and reeds, while that of the western lake is more open and many of the Weeping Willow trees (*Salix babylonica*) on it are dying back. A large number of water birds occupy the lakes, islands and surrounds. There are fountain jets in both lakes and the water appears a greenish-brown. Water quality in the lakes is poor as a result of build up over the years of pollutants from stormwater which enters the lakes from the surrounding road system, and eutrophication from leaves and bird droppings entering from within the Park. A study commissioned by the City of Perth in 1991 recommended deepening of the lakes to improve water quality. The western lake was dredged but this resulted in the island sinking to water level which in turn has adversely affected the trees growing on it. The eastern lake has not been deepened and the Town of Vincent is currently considering reinstatement of the western island. Water quality is monitored by the Town of Vincent.¹²

For identification of tree species, refer to the plan from *The Trees of Hyde Park 1897-1997*.

¹² Conversation by Philip Palmer with Jeremy Van Den Bok of Town of Vincent. (Memo, HCWA file P4634, 12 February 1998)

Although this is a large park, the landform, density and size of the trees provide spatial enclosure and a human scale within it. The large trees are a dominant element of the surrounding streetscape, but the absence of perimeter fencing and shrubbery allows views of varying degree into the Park from the outside.

The wide variety of trees results in a visually rich landscape in which broad, rounded canopies are contrasted with more slender, vertical forms. The atmosphere ranges from dark shade through dappled light to full sunshine.

While the lakes, pathway system and avenues of trees provide orderliness and structure, Hyde Park has a relaxed, informal ambience.

The overall simplicity of its layout contributes to this quality; however, some elements introduced in the 1990s for practical and functional purposes, such as limestone walled planter beds, small areas of brick paving and a variety of signs and other furniture detract from it.

Hyde Park retains its use as a public park and it is the expressed intention of the community and local authority that it should continue to do so.

13. 3 REFERENCES

Bouma, G. and Powe, A. *Hyde Park Plan of Management Final Report September 1993*, City of Perth and Patrons of Hyde Park, Perth, 1993.

Moussa, Natasha, *An Historical Overview of Hyde Park for the Hyde Park Centennial Celebrations* Town of Vincent, Perth c. 1977.

Town of Vincent, *The Trees of Hyde Park 1897-1997* Town of Vincent, 1997.

13. 4 FURTHER RESEARCH
