



Williamstown Botanic Gardens

Welcome to the Williamstown Botanic Gardens.

7 January 1856 following agitation amongst local residents to be granted a site for Botanic Garden a meeting was held and a petition with 134 signatures sent to the Government of the Colony requesting they '*grant to the inhabitants of this township such portion of the public lands adjoining the southern portion of the township For the purpose of forming a public park and garden for the benefit and enjoyment of the inhabitants thereof*'. Things moved quickly and the Executive Council set aside 10 acres of land near the foreshore on **29 March 1856**.

Paths and garden laid out based on a design (**1856**) by Edward La Trobe Bateman, implemented by William Bull appointed as Municipal Surveyor in **1856**.

7 October 1859 half yearly report of council 'great progress has been made in laying out and planting the Garden. The paths are all formed and the shell-metalling nearly completed; the plantations are in a forward state, shrubs and flowers are already showing their heads and the tout ensemble is assuming a cheerful and enlivening aspect. Liberal contributions of plants, cuttings, seeds have been received from Dr Mueller (sic) of the Botanic Gardens, ..Mr Bunce of the Geelong Public Gardens.....'

2 January 1860: -Formal opening of the garden – no formal opening ceremony.

18 July 1891: Statue erected of Williamstown MLA, A.T. Clarke – Cararra marble sculpted by Enrico Lucchinelli

1899: Mr. Thake appointed as Curator. Many prominent changes occurred during Mr. Thake's curatorship. **1900** W. Crowe appointed as his assistant.

- **1904**-Ornamental lake completed
- Old curator's cottage at NW corner removed and new curator's lodge built on the Osborne Street boundary in **1907**. (The 1907 curator's lodge was replaced in the 1980s with a contemporary dwelling.)
- **1907**-Cast iron Gates (manufactured in Glasgow) introduced at NW entrance (Entrance realigned) gates from 'Fairlie' corner Acland and Anderson Streets, South Yarra cost £72, they had originally cost £1200. Also in 1907 a drinking fountain was installed to mark the jubilee of the municipality.
- Rock edges introduced

September 1912 Thake resigned to take up a similar position with the Albert Park trust. At his farewell 'The gardens were practically a wilderness when Thake took them over. For their size, there are no better gardens in the metropolitan area, and considering the small staff employed, the extension of the lawns and flower beds, and the institution of an artificial lake shows what hard work has been done.'

1912 – 1920 W. Crowe took over as curator and during his time the central palm avenue was planted 1915 and the planting of the pinetum commenced.

Whilst the Gardens retained much of their original character, the **latter half of the 20th century** saw some decline and changes made to their form. A reduction in

maintenance levels resulted in degradation of the shrubberies. The position of head gardener was dispensed with and following council amalgamation in the 1990s the condition of the Gardens deteriorated further.

In **1985** a Conservation Analysis and Policies was commissioned by the Western Region Commission on behalf of the City of Williamstown and in **1986** a report was completed by Architect and Conservation Consultant, Richard Aitken.

In **1988** the palm avenue was replanted with the assistance of funding from the Australian Bicentennial Authority.

In **1999** the City of Hobsons Bay, led by Williamstown Councillor Angela Altair, set up a Landscape Advisory Group (LAG) made up of local residents either qualified in landscape or horticulture or with a deep interest in landscape issues. One of the first issues that LAG moved on was to recommend to the council that a Master Plan be prepared for the Gardens. John Patrick was commissioned to prepare a Conservation Management Plan and Master Plan. This was completed in **March 2001**.

The Gardens were included on the Victorian Heritage Register in **May 2001**.

Key recommendations from the Master Plan: **Actions since 2001 in bold type**

The appointment of a Head Gardener and suitably qualified staff necessary to the success of the following: **Shelley Wood, Head gardener and assistant Michael Wilkins current garden staff**

- Tree replacement: the phased replacement of senescent trees: **being carried out progressively in main Gardens and Parker Reserve**
- Site unification: Re-creation of the Bateman path system in the Pinetum (Parker Reserve): **path system re-created**
- Up-grade interpretation: **Gardens brochure produced**
- Increasing the scientific role: **start being made on GPC Crinum collection**
- Up-grade the Gardens with special emphasis on the historic elements:
 - Restore and repaint the entry gates to their original colour: **done**
 - Restore and repair statue and re-introduce surrounding fence for the Clarke statue: **done**
- Review planting themes: re-design planting along main palm avenue: **all plantings reviewed and upgraded where necessary, central palm avenue planting designed by Carolyn and Joby Blackman of Vivid Design to capture lattice pattern in the young *Washingtonia robusta* trunks and use of low water requirement plants**
- Curators lodge: review its role: **has been refurbished and now operates as a respite care home under the name of 'Bateman House' honouring the designer of the Gardens, Edward LaTrobe Bateman.**
- Public Involvement:
 - Continue the Williamstown Botanic Gardens Advisory Group: **continues and meets each 2 months**
 - Form a Friends Group: **formed in 2009**
- Inter garden liaison; **head gardener attending BGANZ activities**

With considerable funding support and commitment from the City of Hobsons Bay much progress has been made to date on all the recommendations in the Master Plan and is continuing. Ongoing investigations are going on to determine the most effective way to repair the leak in the ornamental pond and to return it to its glory.

2009 To mark the 150 year anniversary of the Gardens the City of Hobsons Bay have commissioned contemporary gates to be installed at both the Osborne and Giffard St entrances. These have been approved by Heritage Victoria and will be installed by the **February 2010**.