

# HERITAGE CITATION REPORT

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**name:** Horsham Botanic Gardens  
**Address:** 182-184 Firebrace Street HORSHAM  
**Place Type:** Park or Garden Precinct,Garden Residential  
**Citation Date:** 2022



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**Recommended  
Heritage Protection**      **VHR -**  
  
   **HI -**  
  
   **PS**  
   Yes

## Integrity

Part of Guilfoyle plan extant - approx 1/3 of the original scheme. Remainder of garden now re-planned for recreational use.

## History and Historical Context

This site on the north bank of the Wimmera River, at the southern end of the Township of Horsham, is part of a larger area that had long been used and occupied by the Jadawadjali. Evidence of their occupation can be seen in the surviving scar trees. The site has been described as open woodland, and 'dominated by Sheoak and Black Box, with River Red Gums along the river and Grey Box further inland'. [1] When the township plan for Horsham was drawn up in c.1850, a large reserve at the southern end of the township survey, bordering on the Wimmera River, was used as a police paddock to graze and water the police horses. An extensive site of 40 acres and 27 perches was temporarily reserved for police purposes in 1874, but this was later forgone. [2] The same site, measuring 40 acres and 27 perches, was again temporarily reserved in 1878 - this time for the purpose of 'botanical gardens'. [3] Trustees were appointed in 1878. The development of the Botanic Gardens in the late 1870s coincided with the arrival of the railway - a time when the town experienced significant growth and when there was no doubt a conscious effort to improve the attractiveness of the town for the anticipated increase in visitor numbers.

There was possibly some development of the site as a public or botanic garden by the late 1870s; at least one tree is reputed to have been donated by the former Director of the Melbourne Botanic Gardens, Ferdinand Mueller: the Norfolk Island Pine (*Araucaria bidwillii*) that stood at the entrance before its removal in 2006. As the

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tree stood outside the gates, it is possible that the tree was planted before the first entrance gates were installed in the 1880s. The possibility of the tree being planted here when the site was still a police paddock (i.e. before 1878) would seem remote, but it is possible the seed / seedling was planted between 1878 and 1883 when the first entrance gates were installed.

The eminent landscape designer William Guilfoyle - Mueller's successor as Director of the Melbourne Botanic Gardens - first visited Horsham in c1880 to prepare a landscape plan for the Horsham Hospital Gardens. The commission for the Horsham Botanic Gardens most likely sprung from this work. Guilfoyle had carried out a number of commissions across western Victoria, both for local municipalities and private clients.

In his 1880 plan for Horsham Botanic Gardens, Guilfoyle employed his characteristic style of serpentine pathways and groups of exotic specimen trees. He embraced the natural setting of riverbank and mature indigenous trees and added a lake. The plan was drafted by Robert Percy Whitworth, who assisted Guilfoyle with a number of botanic gardens plans, including the Koroit Botanic Gardens (1880) [VHR HO118], the Stawell Hospital Gardens, and the Horsham Hospital Gardens (now lost). A staged plan was possibly enacted, with actions to be followed year by year as funds permitted, as a way of spreading over time the cost of establishing the gardens. Local fund-raising events for the gardens' development were a regular occurrence through the 1880s.

In 1883, a request was made for tennis to be permitted to be played in the gardens and soon after the Horsham Borough Council applied to take over the management of the site so that it would be in a position to permit such uses. [4] The Horsham Borough Council, as committee of management, routinely applied to the Victorian Government for a grant-in-aid to help with the cost of improvements, such as fencing, etc. In 1907, for example, the Horsham Council was successful in obtaining a government grant for the 'proposed improvements' to the gardens. [5]

The Botanic Gardens developed over the next few decades; trees were planted and flower beds established. The Council appointed a curator to oversee planting and maintenance, and erected a timber cottage in the gardens to serve as a curator's residence. Within just a few years, the gardens were commended:

*The Horsham Botanical Gardens are presenting a very gay appearance just now, and reflect great credit on the curator for keeping them in such good condition after the long period of dryness experienced. The various coloured chrysanthemums, the geraniums, and the cock-combs at present are the chief flowers in bloom.* [6]

The local paper reported large numbers of people visiting the gardens and praised the work of Mr J. Venus, the curator, in making the gardens 'a pleasurable resort'. [7] By 1888, a 'portion' of the reserve had been laid out as an ornamental garden; this was described at the time as 'a considerable portion . Planted with trees, shrubs, &c. tastefully laid out by William Guilfoyle'. [8] A fernery was established by 1900. Trees were provided by fellow botanic gardens, by private donation, and by the Macedon State Nursery; in 1896, for example, the borough council received 400 trees from the State Nursery suitable for planting in the botanic gardens. [9]

The gardens suffered during periods of extreme weather, such as droughts, floods and extreme winds. The botanic gardens were laid out on a flood plain of the Wimmera River so parts would have been inundated at times. Considerable damage was done to the botanic gardens in 1886 when a 'whirlwind' was reported to have struck the town and the calico roof was torn off the greenhouse.[10] Another severe storm hit Horsham in 1897. The Gardens also suffered as a result of the prolonged drought of the early 1900s. The Gardens were criticised as appearing neglected in 1903, but the Borough Council defended the curator for being busy maintaining the town's collection of street trees during that time.[11]

The gardens were embellished with a diverse range of features and structures through the late nineteenth and

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early twentieth centuries, including an ornamental lake (as designated in the original plan), a fernery, a collection of caged animals and birds (known as the Horsham zoo), a rotunda, a fountain, and a children's playground area with timber play equipment.[12] There was also a rough-built 'bush hut' or 'mia mia' built on the site with a bark-roof, which later became a 'summer house'.[13] A publication of 1903 described the gardens as 'picturesquely laid out, and in addition to the natural attractions of flowers and variegated shrubs there are tennis courts, pleasure boats, and a pretty and artistically arranged fernery and summer house'.[14] The site was now reduced to 30 acres, and the river at this point, running alongside, had been widened into a lake to accommodate the weir built by the Borough Water Trust.[15]

The attractive and amenable qualities of the riverside site of the gardens led to conflicting uses. Despite the Crown reservation of 'Botanic Gardens', the Council, as committee of management, sought to develop the gardens site for more general recreational uses. It permitted the creation of tennis courts in 1883, and this was followed by a bowling green; a croquet lawn and club house; a children's playground in the 1920s (a maypole is shown in a photograph of the gardens dated c.1920s); and a natural 'swimming pool' built on the riverbank. A menagerie of native animals, including emus and kangaroos, were accommodated in an enclosure at the gardens from the 1880s.

Probably to satisfy local needs of the public the site was becoming as much a pleasure ground as a botanic gardens. As a further incursion in the 1930s, part of the site was turned over to holiday campers. By 1938, there was a motor car entrance off Baker Street, presumably to serve the needs of motoring campers.[16]

An avenue of sugar gums (*Eucalyptus cladocalyx*) remains as a remnant of the former "Millar Avenue". The trees were donated by James Millar, a local businessman and councillor, and the avenue was planted c1892-1907 diagonally across the gardens, cutting across one of Guilfoyle's intended long vistas across an open lawn.

Thomas Brown served a long period as curator from the 1890s until the mid-1930s. Following Brown, the botanic gardens underwent a significant rejuvenation under the direction of the energetic Ernest E. Lord, who held the position of Curator of Parks and Gardens at Horsham from 1935 until 1942.[17] During his term of office, Lord implemented more of Guilfoyle's original plan and also designed new elements in the layout of the site. Lord continued to maintain the established beds and the exotic stock of trees. Exotics introduced in the 1930s, for example, included a Claret Ash in front of the Caretaker's House; a Liquid Amber; and a Rowan tree near Baker Street.[18] But in a departure from the work of previous curators, Lord was an important early figure in the movement for growing native Australian plants, and earned considerable praise for his efforts in rejuvenating the gardens through his use of Indigenous species.[19] In January 1941 Lord led members of the Australian Natives' Association (ANA), who were strong advocates of native plants, on a tour of inspection of the gardens, which were 'now well laid out' with 'new sections [that] had recently been added'.[20] Lord had established a special bed for 120 types of smaller native shrubs and also developed the north-west section of the gardens with many species of larger Australian trees and plants.[21] Keeping with the nationalist theme, Lord also established an ornamental pond designed in the shape of mainland Australia (c.1940), furnished with water lillies. The pond survives as do some large indigenous specimen trees from Lord's period of management, including a Lemon scented Gum (*Corymbia citriodora*) and an Illawarra flame tree (*Brachychiton acerifolius*).[22]

Lord went on to develop and promote his interest in Australian native trees and shrubs, through his work as a gardener, as founding editor of the garden magazine *Your Garden* (1947-49), and through the publication of the significant and popular work *Shrubs and Trees for Australian Gardens* in 1948.[23] In this book, he made note of a 'fine specimen' of Black Wattle (*Acacia mearnsii*) standing in the Horsham Botanic Gardens.[24]

Camping at the Horsham Botanic Gardens continued to be popular through the 1940s and the Borough Council encouraged this use, being both a boon for visitors to the town and a source of municipal revenue. In 1948, the Council moved to have this popular local beauty spot re-reserved for 'Botanic Gardens, Public Recreation and Camping Purposes' and soon after established a municipal caravan park within the gardens. This radical step

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was also taken by other regional botanic gardens in Victoria, including those at Colac, Camperdown, Koroit and most intrusively, at Port Fairy. By 1950, new children's playground equipment had been installed at the Horsham Gardens.[25]

Ernest Lord had been succeeded by Mr A. Elbourne as curator. To satisfy public tastes, Elbourne prepared brilliant massed displays of colour for the gardens at different time of the year, which included plantings of Dahlias and Chrysanthemums for the autumn, and various flowering bulbs for the spring. In 1950, Elbourne planted 2000 Ranunculi bulbs and 1000 Anemone bulbs in preparation for the annual springtime riot of colour in the gardens. Despite the encroachment of camping, the gardens continued to draw praise from visitors.[26] It was also a popular site for passive recreation activities, such as picnics, walking, and musical events. The 1951 corner entry gates and flanking pillars replaced the original 1883 gates.

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[1] Roger Cousens, 'Horsham Botanic Gardens' website: <http://archive.is/0z6u>

[2] VGG, 6 March 1874

[3] VGG, 6 December 1878, p. 3052; see also 1881 reservations, Rs file 4161 (not cited)

[4] *Horsham Times*, 27 April 1883; VGG, 15 June 1883

[5] *Horsham Times*, 13 December 1907

[6] *Horsham Times*, 4 May 1883

[7] *Horsham Times*, 18 May 1883

[8] Alexander Sutherland, *Victoria and Its Metropolis*, Melbourne, 1888, p. 94; *Victorian Municipal Directory*, 1898, p. 233; *Victorian Municipal Directory*, c.1889, p. 173

[9] *Horsham Times*, 5 June 1896

[10] *Horsham Times*, 11 June 1886.

[11] *Horsham Times*, 30 June 1903.

[12] Brooke and Finch, *A Story of Horsham*, 1982. The playground is shown in an early postcard, c.1910s (source: flickr 2012).

[13] See Cassell's, 1890. In 1925 the building survived - see Museum of Victoria Picture Collection.

[14] James Smith (ed.), *Cyclopaedia of Victoria*, vol. 1, 1903, p. 207.

[15] James Smith (ed.), *Cyclopaedia of Victoria*, vol. 1, 1903, p. 207.

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[16] *Horsham Times*, 1938.

[17] *Horsham Times*, 24 February 1942.

[18] *Horsham Times*, 20 May 1938.

[19] Richard Aitken, 'Lord, Ernest Edward (1899-1970)' in Aitken and Looker (eds), *Oxford Companion to Australian Gardens*, 2000, p. 377; Layout dated 1936, cited in Roger Cousins, 'Horsham Botanic Gardens' website 'Map Library' <http://archive.is/0z6u>; Andrew Saniga, *Making Landscape Architecture in Architecture*, New South Publishing, Sydney, 2012, p.??

[20] *Horsham Times*, 17 January 1941.

[21] *Horsham Times*, 4 April 1941.

[22] VHR decision, 2011.

[23] Aitken, 'Lord, Ernest Edward (1899-1970)' in Aitken and Looker (eds), *Oxford Companion to Australian Gardens*, 2000, p. 376-77.

[24] Ernest E. Lord, *Shrubs and Trees for Australian Gardens*, 1964 edition (first published 1948), p. 52.

[25] Roger Cousens, 'Horsham Botanic Gardens', <http://archive.is/0z6u>; Coulson, *Horsham Centenary*, 1950, p. 49.

[26] See for example, *Horsham Times*, 1946.

## Description

### Physical Description

Open space parkland adjacent Wimmera River, at the south end of town. Botanic Garden is laid out based upon the design concept of William Guilfoyle - 1880s Director at Melbourne Botanic Garden. The Garden is one of several designed by Guilfoyle in regional Victoria. Park comprises 1951 iron entrance gates and masonry pillars off Firebrace St. A plaque on the gates states: 'To the memory of Miriam Cameron who died 28th Jan. 1951 / In recognition of her great contribution to music. Paths sweep through the site, with a later shade house erected in the central lawn area. Paths are defined by drystone wall edging. Rockery features near the toilet building are of note. A timber plank clad dwelling is located within the park. Further site management shedding is located south of the residence. Garden features such as a stone/ garden wishing well and a carved sculpture of a gardener are of minor interest. Trees of note include over 10 x Canary Island Palms (dated 1916-20), a Cyprus Pine tree and a Radiata Pine tree feature at the southern end. A stand of English Oaks (at least 10, dating from 1883+) are located at the northern end of the Park.

### Physical Condition

Good planting condition. Integrity of NE & NW sections of Gardens reflects (generally) layout of Guilfoyle's scheme (about 1/3 of Garden area). Parts of this area also contain plantings and landscaping by Lord.

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## Australian Heritage Commission Criteria

Relevant HERCON Criteria

*Criterion E:* Importance in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics.(aesthetic value of Guilfoyle's original layout, still readable in NE section of Garden)

*Criterion G:* Strong or special association with a particular community or cultural group for social,cultural or spiritual reasons. ... (Botanic Garden is of some local social value to the Horsham community, as a place of rest, recreation and sporting enjoyment. Substantial past and present facilities on the site - croquet, tennis, playgrounds, camping, picnic areas and recreation activities associated with the Wimmera banks (fishing, swimming, rowing, walking) illustrate the recreational value of the place to the city.)

*Criterion H:* Special association with the life or works of a person, or group of persons, of importance in our history. (association with Guilfoyle and his (local) design concept - but only limited to north-east corner of site - and association with Lord - minor given the number of native species extant in the Garden - but limited to planted sections of Garden)

## Comparative Analysis

Although compromised with the loss of much of the original extent and disconnect between the plan of 1880 and the extant of the plantings and layout, the site is nevertheless important locally as a surviving garden of William Guilfoyle and one of several collaborative efforts between Guilfoyle and Whitworth, who worked together in preparing landscape plans for several Western District gardens, including the Koroit Botanic Gardens and the Horsham Hospital Gardens.

The Horsham Botanic Gardens are unusual for their significant planting and design elements (e.g. pond in shape of Australia; rock-edged paths) favouring Australian native plants from the late 1930s/early 1940s. Other nineteenth century regional botanic gardens in Victoria tended to retain their original planting palette and layout, and generally did not embrace the native plants movement to any large extent. Horsham Botanic Gardens was amongst the earliest public gardens in Victoria to embrace this new appreciation of Australian indigenous vegetation and could be compared in this respect with Maranoa Gardens in Balwyn, which are a much larger fully developed native garden in which Ernest Lord was also involved.

*Horsham Hospital Gardens, now lost*

*Koroit Botanic Gardens, High Street Koroit, Hermes no. 1876: intact regional town garden*

*Warrnambool Botanic Gardens, Botanic Rd, Warrnambool, Hermes no. 1877: intact regional town garden*

*Hamilton Botanic Gardens, Hamilton, Hermes no. 1871: intact regional town garden*

*Maranoa Gardens, Kireep Rd, Balwyn, Hermes no. 1786: significant native garden*

## Statement of Significance

What is significant?

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The elements of heritage value of the Horsham Botanical Gardens, at 182-184 Firebrace Street, laid out by 1880, include:

- . North east sector of current Garden only, between croquet green and Firebrace & Baker Sts
- . Location of paths and garden beds, as per Guilfoyle and Lord plans
- . Mature Sugar gums, 1880s Elm and Oak trees, 1916-20s Canary Island Palm trees
- . 'Australia' pond structure and rockery surrounds

## How is it significant?

The Horsham Botanic Gardens, established by 1880, is historically and aesthetically significant to Horsham Rural City.

## Why is it significant?

The Horsham Botanic Gardens, established in 1880, is:

. of local historic and aesthetic significance, as one of several regional botanic gardens established in rapidly growing Victorian regional towns during the late 19thC, designed by the master landscape designer and director of the Melbourne Botanic Gardens, William Guilfoyle. Evidence of the original layout of serpentine paths and remnant plantings reflect this and remain in the north-east corner of the site. A secondary layer of significance relates to the period of Ernest E. Lord, an early and important figure in the movement for growing Australian plants. Lord developed a large area of the Garden with native plantings and remodelled the site with the addition of pathways and an ornamental pond in the late 1930s and early 1940s. (Criteria A and E)

## Recommendations 2022

<b>External Paint Controls</b>	No
<b>Internal Alteration Controls</b>	No
<b>Tree Controls</b>	Yes
<b>Fences &amp; Outbuildings</b>	No
<b>Prohibited uses may be permitted</b>	No
<b>Incorporated Plan</b>	-
<b>Aboriginal Heritage Place</b>	No

## References

**Literature title:** Oxford Companion to Australian Gardens

**Literature type:** General Reference

**Literature author:** "Aitken, Richard and Michael Looker (eds)"

**Literature publisher:** OUP, Melbourne

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**Literature year:** 2002

**Literature title:** A story of Horsham : a municipal century

**Literature type:** General Reference

**Literature author:** Brooke, Brian. & Finch, Alan

**Literature publisher:** City of Horsham

**Literature year:** 1982

**Literature title:** Horsham centenary souvenir booklet : one hundred years of progress

**Literature type:** General Reference

**Literature author:** Coulson, Helen & Executive Council of the Centenary Celebrations

**Literature publisher:** Executive Council of the Centenary Celebrations, Horsham

**Literature year:** 1950

**Literature title:** Horsham Botanic Gardens

**Literature type:** General Reference

**Literature author:** Cousens, Roger.

**Literature publisher:**

**Literature year:**

**Literature title:** 'Victoria's Provincial Botanic Gardens', in Victorian Historical Journal

**Literature type:** General Reference

**Literature author:** Gilfedder, Francine

**Literature publisher:** Royal Historical Society of Victoria

**Literature year:** 1996

**Literature title:** Horsham in focus: 1849-1999

**Literature type:** General Reference

**Literature author:** Foley, Marie. & Jenkinson, Noelene M. & Horsham Historical Society

**Literature publisher:** Horsham Historical Society Horsham, Vic

**Literature year:** 1999

**Literature title:** Horsham Illustrated, c.1920s

**Literature type:** General Reference

**Literature author:**

**Literature publisher:** Horsham

**Literature year:** 1920

**Literature title:** Home to Horsham 1929

**Literature type:** General Reference

**Literature author:**

**Literature publisher:**

**Literature year:**



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**Literature title:** Horsham Times Newspaper

**Literature type:** General Reference

**Literature author:**

**Literature publisher:**

**Literature year:**

**Literature title:** 'Plan of Horsham Botanic Gardens' (original held by Horsham Historical Society).

**Literature type:** General Reference

**Literature author:** Guilfoyle, William (with assistance from R.P. Whitworth),

**Literature publisher:**

**Literature year:**

**Literature title:** 'Horsham Botanic Gardens Masterplan'

**Literature type:** General Reference

**Literature author:** Orr-Young, Jill

**Literature publisher:**

**Literature year:** 2003

**Literature title:** Postcard showing the ornamental bark hut amidst mature plantings, Horsham Botanic Gardens, c.1925 (State Library of Victoria Picture Collection - online).

**Literature type:** General Reference

**Literature author:**

**Literature publisher:**

**Literature year:**

**Literature title:** Postcard showing avenue of Canary Island Date Palms (*Phoenix canariensis*), Horsham Botanic Gardens, [n.d.], c. 1930s (State Library of Victoria Picture Collection online).

**Literature type:** General Reference

**Literature author:**

**Literature publisher:**

**Literature year:**

**Literature title:** Cyclopedia of Victoria, vol. 1

**Literature type:** General Reference

**Literature author:** Smith, James (ed.),

**Literature publisher:** Melbourne : Cyclopedia Co

**Literature year:** 1903

**Literature title:** Victoria and its Metropolis.

**Literature type:** General Reference

**Literature author:** "Sutherland, Alexander"

**Literature publisher:**

**Literature year:** 1888

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**Literature title:** 'The River and the Town' in Marc Brodie and Graeme Davison (eds), *Struggle Country: The rural ideal in twentieth century Australia*

**Literature type:** General Reference

**Literature author:** Tacon, Jill.

**Literature publisher:** Monash University ePress Clayton

**Literature year:** 2005

**Literature title:** Nomination of Horsham Botanic Gardens to the VHR - hearing, 2011. Victorian Heritage Council.

**Literature type:** General Reference

**Literature author:**

**Literature publisher:**

**Literature year:**

**Literature title:** Victorian Government Gazette

**Literature type:** General Reference

**Literature author:**

**Literature publisher:**

**Literature year:**

**Literature title:** Bailliere's Gazetteer for 1879

**Literature type:** General Reference

**Literature author:** Whitworth, Robert P.

**Literature publisher:** Melbourne

**Literature year:** 1879

**Literature title:** Guide to Melbourne and Victoria

**Literature type:** Archaeological Report

**Literature author:** Whitworth, Robert P.

**Literature publisher:**

**Literature year:** 1880

**This information is provided for guidance only and does not supersede official documents, particularly the planning scheme. Planning controls should be verified by checking the relevant municipal planning scheme.**