

Victorian War Heritage Database Place Details - 19/8/2025

Burnham Beeches



Location:

1 Sherbrooke Road, Sherbrooke VIC 3789 - Property No 58672

Heritage Inventory (HI) Number:

Listing Authority: HI

Description:

Built in 1939 by A.M. Nicholas in Art Deco style. Extensive gardens of 13 acres were professionally landscaped. Planning Scheme Am. L94 recently approved for a major accommodation development and restaurant.

The main drive is approached through an impressive entry with wrought iron gates (bearing a pair of leaping deer) suspended from large stone pillars. To the left of the entry drive the planting consists of towering indigenous EUCALYPTUS REGNANS (mountain ash) interplanted with CRYPTOMERIA JAPONICA, ULMUS XHOLLANDICA PURPURESCENS, ACER SACCHARINUM, PITTOSPORUM EUGENIOIDES var, FAGUS SYLVATICA, ACER PSEUDOPLATANUS, ULMUS GLABRA LUTESCENS, PICEA SITCHENSIS, THUJA PLICATA, THUJOPSIS DOLABRATA var, ACER NEGUNDO and CEDRUS DEODARA. These trees have an understorey of kalmia, rhododendron and azalea. To the east of the drive, the construction of the new depot and creation of a lawn and garden have greatly opened the area. (RNE, 100526)

Closer to the residence, ornamental ponds are located on either side of the drive and a new link now connects the entry drive to the main lake drive. Stone paved paths encircle the ponds and small bridges cross the water. The smaller of the two pools (on the west of the drive) is sited beneath huge EUCALYPTUS REGNANS and several exotic trees, ACER PALMATUM and ACER PSEUDOPLATANUS, THUJOPSIS DOLABRATA var and CHAMAECYPARIS LAWSONIANA. A middle layer of planting comprises DICKSONIA ANTARCTICA (soft tree fern), RHODODENDRON ARBOREUM, AZALEA, FATSIA JAPONICA, EUONYMUS EUROPAEA and ACUBA JAPONICA. (RNE, 100526)

The dividing line between the Alfred Nicholas Memorial Gardens and Burnham Beeches is marked by a cyclone wire fence. The original flight of steps runs perpendicular to the terraces. The terraces on the east side of the fence are now dominated by trees rather than low plants. A stone retaining wall divides the terraces from the main drive to the lake and within the terraces rockwork is included to create planting pockets. The main drive to the lake follows the contours with a sharp bend at the western extremity of the site. The main drive is

augmented by two secondary tracks: one runs directly from the horseshoe bend to the north end of the lake and another bisects the main woodland area and doubles back to rejoin the main drive above the waterfall. Pedestrian paths also cross the area and permit a wide variety of routes to the lake to be chosen by the visitor. Numerous red brick structures dot the area and it is assumed that these were early compost bins. (RNE, 100526)

The dominant tree planting of this area is *EUCALYPTUS REGNANS* and *ACACIA MELANOXYLON* with specimens of *SEQUOIA SEMPERVIRENS*, *ACACIA ELATA* and *ACACIA DEALBATA*, *CRYPTOMERIA JAPONICA ELEGANS*, *PRUNUS SERRULATA*, *PICEA SMITHIANA*, *CATALPA BIGNONIOIDES*, *PITTOSPORUM EUGENIOIDES*, *PITTOSPORUM EUGENIOIDES* var, *ULMUS GLABRA CAMPERDOWNII*, *PSEUDOTSUGA MENZIESII*, *CUPRESSUS MACROCARPA*, *FAGUS SYLVATICA* and *CORYNOCARPUS LAEVIGATUS* var. Under the trees are *RHODODENDRON*, *DICKSONIA ANTARCTICA*, *CORNUS* sp (dogwoods), *ACER PALMATUM*, *HYDRANGEA* cvs, *KALMIA LATIFOLIA*, *LIGUSTRUM* sp, *COTONEASTER PANNOSUS*, sycamore seedlings, camellia, euonymus, viburnum and acer species. (RNE, 100526)

The lake is currently the best maintained area of the garden and forms a focus for the design. To the west is a terraced garden with some of the most consistent rock walling currently found in the garden, to the south-east is a waterfall (over which the first glimpse of the lake is obtained), to the south are public toilets (erected c 1965) and to the east is a section of cleared bushland. The main trees around the lake are *ACER PALMATUM*, *CARPINUS BETULUS*, *GINGKO BILOBA*, *SALIX BABYLONICA*, *BETULA* sp, *SCIADOPITYS VERTICILLATA*, *MICHELIA FIGO*, *CHAMAECYPARIS OBTUSA* and *CHAMAECYPARIS OBTUSA* var among terrace planting of *CLIVIA* sp, *CHAMAECYPARIS LAWSONIANA* (a pair either side of south-eastern entrance to lake), *ULMUS GLABRA LUTESCENS*, *LIQUIDAMBAR FORMOSANA* (rare), *NOTHOFAGUS FUSCA*, *METASEQUOIA GLYPTOSTROBOIDES*, *CORNUS*, *SORBUS* and *POPULUS* species. Peripheral planting amongst these trees includes *KALMIA LATIFOLIA*, *RHODODENDRON*, *PHOTINIA* and *CORNUS*. The islands are planted with *GINGKO BILOBA*, *PRUNUS SERRULATA* CULTIVARS and the bridges are festooned with *WISTERIA CINENSIS*. (RNE, 100526)

The Blackfish Pond is located approximately 50m north of the main lake. It is fed by a small creek which runs along the northern boundary of the property. The centre of the lake has a large circular inlet which acts as an overflow outlet and water is conveyed under the roadway via a pipe. A timber jetty extends from the south-eastern edge of the pond to the centre. The pond is surrounded by *DICKSONIA ANTARCTICA*, *PHYLLOSTACHYS AUREA* (fishpole bamboo), *ACER PALMATUM*, *CORNUS* sp, *HOHERIA POPULNEA*, *RHODODENDRON*, *PITTOSPORUM EUGENIOIDES* var. (RNE, 100526)

A long triangular area bounded on the north and west by the property boundary and to the south by a small creek, a tributary of the Sassafras Creek, is densely covered with *EUCALYPTUS REGNANS* (mountain ash), *ACACIA MELANOXYLON* (blackwood), *ACACIA DEALBATA* (silver wattle), with a dense understorey of *DICKSONIA ANTARCTICA* (soft tree fern) and the ground fern *POLYSTICHUM PROLIFERUM* (mother shield fern). To the east of the gardens is a large cleared triangular space sloping from south to north.

The approach to Alfred Nicholas Memorial Gardens passes to the north of the Sherbrooke Forest and this native bush forms a dense barrier when looking out of the garden and Burnham Beeches property. Two large *FAGUS SYLVATICA* (beech) flank the main entry to Alfred Nicholas Memorial Gardens while smaller specimens (*FAGUS SYLVATICA* and *FAGUS SYLVATICA LIVERSII*) form a row on the road verge. The road adjacent to the Burnham Beeches estate is planted with *CUPRESSUS MACROCARPA* (Monterey cypress) and *PSEUDOTSUGA MENZIESII* (Douglas fir), planted in two rows, with remnant mountain ash, silver wattle and pomaderris complementing the mature tree canopy. (RNE, 100526)