

Attachment to Nomination

Extent of Nomination

The land shall include a buffer zone each side of Main Drive extending from Princess Street to the intersection with Boundary Road in the west, at the south-eastern corner of the Willsmere development. The northern boundary of the buffer zone shall be ten metres north of the centre-line of the outer northern row of trees. The southern boundary of the buffer zone shall be formed by the rear of properties facing Wills Street, or ten metres from the centre-line of the southern row of trees.

Description

Refer to attached photographs and site plan.

The Main Drive is framed for more than half its length by an avenue of four rows of deciduous oaks and elms, with inter-planting of evergreen Moreton Bay figs and Bhutan cypress. This road provided the main access to the former Kew (Willsmere) Mental Hospital. The drive is described in the National Trust's Statement of Significance for Willsmere as "*a rare double avenue of trees culminating in an elliptical carriage sweep*". The western end of the drive has unfortunately been destroyed by the Willsmere residential development. The trees lining the drive are amongst the oldest plantings on the site, with the size of some suggesting an age of between 80 to 100 years.

The first section of the Main Drive from Princess Street to the intersection with the Lower Drive is lined with a single avenue of Algerian oaks (*Quercus canariensis*). There is a variety of evergreen and deciduous trees to the northern side, including a good specimen of Holly-leaved Cherry (*Prunus ilicifolia*).

The main length of the drive from the Lower Drive intersection to the Oak walk contains four rows of trees with an additional intermediate row to the northern side. The land initially slopes steeply to the north from the back of kerb. The two inner rows against the road are English elms (*Ulmus procera*), while the two outer rows are Algerian oaks (*Quercus canariensis*). The planting is more intact to the southern side of the road, where the oaks are spaced at 11 metres apart along the rows and the elms at 22 metres. The rows of oaks and elms are 9.6m apart. There is an asphalt pathway between the rows, with fluted concrete light poles and timber seats at intervals. There are 29 oaks in the outer row against the southern fence; gaps indicate that 9 trees are missing. There are 24 elms remaining to the southern side of the road. The outer branches have been pruned to give the trees an upright form. Trees to the northern side of the road are planted in the same pattern, except that there is an additional middle row of cypresses. The two outer rows are planted 10m apart. The rows of trees to this side of the road are more disjointed with many gaps. There are only 6 surviving elms to the roadside inter-planted with 11 Moreton Bay figs. The outer northern row of oaks is more intact with 21 trees remaining. The intermediate row includes 7 Bhutan cypresses (*Cupressus torulosa*), with an upright growth habit, and two wide-spreading Monterey cypresses (*C. macrocarpa*).

Tree planting to the western end of the road contains less formal planting, with an alternating row of deciduous elms and evergreen figs only to the southern side. The southern row of Algerian oaks is terminated where the boundary fence of Wills Street properties steps north towards the road. The trees include ten Moreton Bay figs (*Ficus macrophylla*) inter-planted between English elms, suggesting that the former species was once planted alternately with the elms for the full length of the drive; this may explain the 22m spacing between the elms compared to 11 metres for the oaks. Some of the figs are smaller and are later plantings, either to replace dead fig trees, or to replace earlier fig trees that may have grown too large. The northern side of the road at the western end contains a variety of trees including Canary Island pines (*Pinus canariensis*), Bunya Bunya pines (*Araucaria bidwillii*) and Hoop pines (*A. cunninghamii*). Further north of these trees, an avenue of Algerian oaks lines a narrow pathway (the Oak Walk), that provides a short cut across the end of the curved drive.

An unusual aspect of the Algerian oaks is that they have all been grafted and exhibit graft bulges on the trunk. The grafts are at low levels on the Main Drive trees and higher up the trunks in the Oak Walk trees.

Average tree sizes are listed in the following table. The dimensions of the oaks and elms were taken from trees on the southern side of the road while the other trees were on the northern side.

Botanical name	Circumference at 1.4m	Height	Spread – east/west	Spread – north/south
Cupressus torulosa	1.7m	17.5m	5m	6m
Ficus macrophylla	1.4m	12m	10m	12m
Quercus canariensis	2.4m	16m	11m	14m
Ulmus procera	2.64m	20m	12m	14m

Condition, Intactness and Integrity

Condition of the avenue trees generally varies from good to fair. The majority of the oaks and elms appear to be of a similar age. By contrast, the figs vary considerably in both size and age.

The overall level of intactness of the avenue planting is good, with the least intact feature being the five or more missing elms from the middle section to the northern side of the road. The extent of missing Moreton Bay figs from between the elms is difficult to determine. Some trees may have been removed to allow for new access roads into Kew Cottages.

As both the initial design intent, or the extent of any work by Hugh Linaker, is unknown (see History below), the degree of integrity is difficult to ascertain.

History

Kew Lunatic Asylum, later known as the Willsmere Mental Hospital, was constructed between 1868 and 1872, to replace the overcrowded Yarra Bend Asylum. The principal access to the complex was via a drive from Princess Street culminating in an elliptical carriage sweep in front of the south-western façade of the main building. In 1887, the Idiot Colony, later known as Kew Cottages, was established in spacious grounds to the east of Kew Mental Asylum and to the north of the main drive. This was a mini-institution intended to provide training for mentally handicapped children in separate cottage accommodation. The date for planting of the drive is unknown but it was possibly planted with conifers, such as Monterey cypress, to coincide with the construction of the cottages. Hugh Linaker, landscape gardener for the State Lunacy Department from 1913, and State Superintendent of Parks and Gardens from 1933, would certainly have influenced any later tree planting works and is assumed to be responsible for the double avenue. The avenue trees were partially affected by adjacent building works at Kew Cottages, particularly in the 1960s. At this time, the City of Kew Parks and Gardens staff laid out the gardens at Kew Cottages. The southern boundary was modified by the sale of property fronting Wills Street in the 1990s. The loop to the western end of the drive was severed by the Willsmere residential development in the late 1990s.

Sources: A. Lloyd, *Payment by Results – Kew Cottages, First 100 Years 1887-1987*, Kew Cottages & St Nicholas Parents' Association, 1987;
 R Aitken, "Hugh Linaker" in *The Oxford Companion to Australian Gardens*, Eds Aitken R & Looker M, Oxford, 2002;
 National Trust of Australia (Victoria) Statement of Significance for Willsmere, updated 1998.

Comparison

Avenues consisting of a double row of trees with roughly equal spacing were established throughout Victoria from the second half of the nineteenth century. Avenues were used in street planting, to line walkways in public gardens, for formal commemorative planting, or in carriage driveways to express the importance of entrances. Examples in rural towns include the Finlay Avenue of elms in Camperdown (1876) and the Ballarat Avenue of Honour (1917). In Melbourne, examples include the towering elm walks of the Fitzroy gardens, the London plane avenue in Carlton gardens leading to the Exhibition Building and the boulevards such as Royal Parade, Parkville and Victoria Parade, East Melbourne. Avenue planting in the 1860s to 1870s favoured the use of evergreen conifers including Monterey cypress, Monterey pines, cedars and Norfolk Island pines. These species were replaced in popularity by deciduous oaks, elms, planes and poplars from the 1880s. Moreton Bay figs appear to have been planted around the turn of the century. The use of mixed species in avenues was not uncommon. For example, the mixed planting of Moreton Bay figs and planes of Birdwood Avenue in the Domain, or figs and cedars in the Treasury Gardens.

The Kew Lunatic Asylum (later known as Willsmere mental Hospital) was the major Victorian mental institution in a group which included Mayday Hills at Beechworth, Aradale at Ararat and later, Caloola at Sunbury, the latter three all being smaller scale versions of Kew. The buildings were all designed in the 1860s and were constructed on the outskirts of towns where land was available for laying out spacious grounds. The prevailing design theory for lunatic asylums was that hilltop sites were preferred, giving 360-degree views of surrounding country and considered to be beneficial for the health of the inmates. The relative isolation of the asylums required long access driveways from the nearest public roads. A common landscape link was forged between these institutions with the appointment of Linaker as landscape gardener to the Lunacy Department in 1913. Linaker was an important landscape designer in the early twentieth century whose work covered a wide range of projects, both public and private. He was appointed State Superintendent of Parks and Gardens from 1933. Conifers remain from early planting at Ararat and Sunbury driveways although the trees are senescent and the avenues are no longer intact. A fine curving avenue of English oaks (*Quercus robur*) was planted by Linaker to the Beechworth driveway and survives in good condition. Linaker is certain to have been involved in the planting or enhancement of the Kew main drive. It is possible that the two large Monterey cypresses are remnants from an earlier avenue and have been incorporated into the planting scheme.

The use of four rows of trees in the Kew drive is unusual, although precedents existed such as the planting to Alexandra Avenue, South Yarra; this was laid out in 1896 as an imitation of Rotten Row in Hyde Park London, but has been degraded due to road widening works. A more formal example of an avenue with four rows of trees is the northern approach to the Shrine of Remembrance from St Kilda Road. Linaker was involved in planning the layout in 1933 but it was later modified in the early 1950s when the inner rows of Bhutan cypress (*Cupressus torulosa*) were planted between the existing rows of English elms. Melbourne's boulevards, such as St Kilda Road, also contained four rows of trees but were on a much grander scale, consisting of a central carriageway with two service roads separating the outer rows. The Willsmere Main Drive is only 33m wide in comparison to the 60m of the boulevards and provides a more intimate scale with canopies meeting overhead.

There appear to have been at least three tree species used in the Kew drive: two inner rows of English elms alternating with Moreton Bay figs and two outer rows of Algerian oaks. The use of Bhutan cypress between rows on the steeper northern side may also be a later addition, linking with the two Monterey cypresses and balancing the pathway between trees to the southern side. The Bhutan cypresses add a vertical contrast to the horizontally spreading canopies of the oaks, elms and figs.

Public institutions established in the nineteenth century included Melbourne University, Royal Melbourne (converted to the Queen Victoria Hospital) and the Alfred Hospitals. These sites have been developed extensively with buildings and drives have been modified or removed. Those that remain with tree-lined drives include the Royal Victorian Institute for the Blind and the Victorian School for Deaf Children, both set back off St Kilda Road in spacious grounds.

These have curving entry drives with elm avenues, but are quite short in comparison to the Willsmere Main Drive.

Willsmere Main Drive not only remains the most impressive survivor of the four mental institution driveways, but one of the few public institution sites where an avenue still exists. Unfortunately, the conversion of the hospital into a private residential development has resulted in termination of the western end of the driveway. The four rows of trees provide a closed canopy to the curving drive and create a special arrival experience for one of the most prominently sited nineteenth century buildings in Melbourne. The double avenue has also become an integral part of the Kew Cottages landscape.

Assessment against Criteria

Criterion A: The historical importance, association with, or relationship to Victoria's history of the place or object.

Willsmere Main Drive was the original access to Victoria's foremost mental institution of the nineteenth century, Kew Lunatic Asylum. It forms the southern boundary and part of the landscape of Kew Cottages, established in 1887 in the grounds of the Asylum to provide a better living environment for mentally handicapped children. The planting of the double avenue is associated with Hugh Linaker, landscape gardener for the State Lunacy Department from 1913, State Superintendent of Parks and Gardens from 1933 and an important landscape designer of the early twentieth century.

Criterion B: The importance of a place or object in demonstrating rarity or uniqueness.

The double avenue lining the Willsmere Main Drive is the most outstanding remaining example of an entry drive for any of Victoria's former mental hospitals. This landscape element is also highly unusual for any public institution, where any remaining drives have only single row avenues.

Criterion E: The importance of the place or object in exhibiting good design or aesthetic characteristics and/or in exhibiting a richness, diversity or unusual integration of features.

The double avenue of trees, with canopies meeting overhead, provides a dramatic landscape treatment for the Main Drive and a backdrop to Kew Cottages. The mix of deciduous and evergreen species and the contrasting forms of oak, elm and cypress adds interest and richness to the experience when moving along the avenue. The rows of trees to the southern side provide an attractive setting for the pedestrian pathway.

Statement of Significance

What is Significant?

Willsmere Main Drive was constructed between 1868 and 1872. It originally served as the main access to the Kew Lunatic Asylum from Princess Street, Kew, terminating in an elliptical carriage loop at the south-western façade of the building complex. It now serves as part of a perimeter circulation route and the southern boundary of Kew Cottages, constructed to the east of the Asylum in 1887. The drive is 700 metres long between the Princess Street roundabout in the east and Boundary Road in the west. The drive is planted with an avenue consisting of four main rows of trees, the two inner rows being English elms, alternating in part with Moreton Bay figs, and two outer rows of Algerian oaks. An intermediate row of Bhutan cypresses is planted between the rows to the steep embankment on the northern side of the road. The two outer rows of trees are spaced 33 metres apart. A pedestrian path runs between the rows to the southern side of the road. A second pathway lined with Algerian oaks cuts across the curving north-western end. The planting date of the existing trees is unknown, but the avenue is believed to have been implemented by Hugh Linaker after 1913. The trees are 80 to 100 years old.

How is it Significant?

Willsmere Main Drive avenue is of historic, scientific (horticultural) and aesthetic significance to the State of Victoria.

Why is it significant?

Willsmere Main Drive avenue is of historic significance for its association with Victoria's largest nineteenth century mental institution and for its proximity to Kew Cottages. It is also significant for its association with Hugh Linaker, landscape gardener for the State Lunacy Department from 1913 and State Superintendent of Parks and Gardens from 1933.

Willsmere Main Drive avenue is of scientific (horticultural) significance as a rare surviving example of an institutional access drive planted with four rows of trees.

Willsmere Main Drive is of aesthetic significance for its curving double avenue of mixed species of trees. The avenue provided an impressive formal approach to the former mental hospital while creating a backdrop to Kew Cottages. The mix of species includes horizontally spreading and vertical tree forms that adds interest, while the arching canopies meet overhead and further enhance the arrival experience.

View of Main Drive looking west near intersection with Lower Drive. The first tree to the right of the road is a Moreton Bay fig. One of two Monterey cypresses is to its right between the fig/English elm row and the Algerian oaks.

View looking west of the southern side of the avenue showing the pathway between the Algerian oaks to the left and English elms to the right. The graft bulges of the oaks can be seen near ground level.

View of Main Drive looking east near the intersection with the Oak Walk. The trees to the right of the road are alternating Moreton Bay figs and English elms.

View looking east near the centre of the drive showing where English elms are missing to the north side. The upright trees are Bhutan cypress.

View looking east of the pathway to the southern side of the road, showing concrete light columns and seats in dappled sunlight.

View looking west of the Oak Walk set between sloping banks.