

## NATIONAL TRUST OF AUSTRALIA (VICTORIA)

### CLASSIFICATION REPORT

#### NAME :

Family: Rosaceae

Botanical Name: *Prunus ilicifolia*

Common name: Holly-leaved Cherry

#### LOCATION:

Address & Locality: Kew Residential Services, Princess Street, Kew. The tree is located 15m from the northern side of Main Drive, east of the junction with Lower Drive, and 44m west of Princess Street.

Municipality (Shire/Council): City of Boroondara

Melway / Vicroads Reference: Map 45 C4

#### STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE:

##### What is significant?

Kew Lunatic Asylum, later known as Willsmere Mental Hospital, was constructed in spacious grounds on a hilltop overlooking the Yarra River in 1868-1872. The entry gates and lodge were constructed in 1873. It is believed that the avenues lining the drives were planted after this time. Kew Cottages was established to the east of the asylum in 1887 between the Main Drive and the Lower Drive.

The specimen of *Prunus ilicifolia* (Holly-leaved Cherry) forms part of a group of trees to the Main Drive, near the original entry off Princess Street. The small evergreen tree is 8.2m high with a canopy spread of 11m. The tree has distinctive green, leathery leaves with spiny margins.

##### How is it significant?

The tree is significant for:

#### CATEGORIES:

1. Any tree which occurs in a unique location or context and so provides a contribution to the landscape, including remnant native vegetation, important landmarks, and trees which form part of an historic garden, park or town.
2. Any tree of a species or variety that is rare or of very localised distribution.

at a **State** level.

## SIGNIFICANT TREES : CATEGORIES AND SUB-CATEGORIES

### Category 1 : Horticultural Value

1-Blank

### **Category 2 : Location or Context**

1-Blank

**2–Historic Garden or Park**

3-Historic Cemetery

4-Important Landmark

5-Remnant Native Vegetation

6-End of Natural Range

7-Contribution to Landscape

8-Historic Town

9-Historic Planting Style

### **Category 3 : Rare or localised**

1-Blank

2-Only Known Specimen

**3–1 to 10 Known Specimens**

4-10 to 50 Known Specimens

5-In the Wild

6-End of Natural Range

7-Disjunct Community

### Category 4 : Particularly Old

1-Blank

### Category 5 : Outstanding Size

1-Blank

2-Height

3-Circumference

4-Canopy Spread

5-Height x Circumference

6-Spread x Circumference

7-Height x Circumference x Spread

### Category 6 : Aesthetic Value

1-Blank

### Category 7 : Curious Growth Form

1-Blank

2-Abnormal Outgrowths

3- Fusion of Branches

4-Unusually Pruned

5-Unusually Damaged

### Category 8 : Historical Value

1-Blank

2-Cultural Group

3-Public Feature

4-World War 1

5-World War 11

6-British Royalty

7-Non-British Royalty

8-Visiting Dignitary

9-Australian Public Figure

10-Victorian Public Figure

### Category 9 : Aboriginal Culture

1-Scarred Tree

2-Corroboree Tree

### Category 10 : Outstanding Example of Species

1-Blank

## Why is it significant?

The specimen of *Prunus ilicifolia* (Holly-leaved Cherry) is historically important as part of the planting within the grounds of Victoria's pre-eminent nineteenth century mental institution.

The *Prunus ilicifolia* is also of significance due to its rarity; it is one of less than ten known specimens in the State of Victoria.

## EXTENT:

Access: Unrestricted

## FILE NO:

CATEGORY: N/A

## HISTORY:

### CONTEXTUAL HISTORY

The Kew Lunatic Asylum (later known as Willsmere Mental Hospital) was the major nineteenth century 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 theory for the location of mental asylums was to obtain hilltop sites where 360-degree views of surrounding country could be obtained; this was 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 Hugh 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.

### HISTORY OF PLACE

Kew Lunatic Asylum 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, between the Main Drive and Lower Drive. This was a mini-institution intended to provide training for mentally handicapped children in separate cottage accommodation. The date for planting of the avenue to the drive is unknown but it was possibly implemented after construction of the entry gates and lodge in 1873. The *Prunus ilicifolia* was planted to the north of the Main Drive trees, not far from the gate lodge. Other trees in the immediate area, to the rear of the avenue of *Quercus canariensis* (Algerian Oak), include *Schinus molle* (Pepper Tree), *Cedrus deodara* (Deodar), *Quercus robur* English Oak), *Arbutus unedo* (Irish Strawberry Tree) and *Lagunaria patersonii* (Norfolk Island Hibiscus). Hugh Linaker may have been responsible for planting the smaller trees, including the *Prunus ilicifolia*. The lodge was demolished in the 1930s and the gates re-located to Victoria Park, Kew.

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.

## DESCRIPTION:

Refer to attached photographs. The tree has three trunks branching at ground level. The base of the trunks contains rot and some hollows. Minor dead-wooding is required. The canopy is in good condition.

## MEASUREMENTS

Circumference (of trunk at 1.4 metres above ground level): Impossible to measure at 1.4m due to trunks branching at ground level. Circumference of largest trunk is 1.3m.

Spread N-S: 11.5m

Spread E-W: 11m

Height: 8.2m

Date Measured: 28/02/2004

Measured With: Clinometer

Measured By: B Gallacher

Estimated Age: 80-100 years.

Is the specimen: Wild / Cultivated? Cultivated.

Planted by whom: Unknown.

Identified by / Reference: B Gallacher (Reference: Spencer R, *Horticultural Flora of South-eastern Australia Vol 3 – Flowering Plants: Dicotyledons Part 2*, UNSW Press, 2002)

## CONTEXT

Surrounding development: Grounds / parkland of Kew Residential Services.

## CONDITION:

Fair

## COMPARISON:

*Prunus ilicifolia* is a small evergreen tree to 15m with short trunk, a dense crown of stout, spreading branches, leathery leaves ovate to rounded with spiny-toothed margins, white flowers in racemes and red cherries. It is often a multi-trunked, large shrub. It is native to the Pacific coast of California and Mexico and grows on dry slopes and in moist soils along streams. (Reference: Whitney S, *Western Forests*, Chanticleer Press 1985) The species was listed in J Harris' South Yarra Nursery catalogue as early as 1865. This species has been rarely cultivated in Victoria, with

less than 10 known remaining specimens. Trees removed in recent times include one from the courtyard of Willsmere at Kew, (previously on the National Trust Significant Trees Register, File No. T11754), Rosalind Park – Bendigo and Beechworth Town Hall Gardens (J. Hawker, personal communication).

The following table lists known dimensions of surviving trees.

| <b>Location</b>                   | <b>Height</b> | <b>Spread:<br/>east/west</b> | <b>Spread:<br/>N/S</b> | <b>Girth 1.4m<br/>above G.L.</b> |
|-----------------------------------|---------------|------------------------------|------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Caulfield Park, south-west corner | 11m           | 12-13m                       |                        | 1.73m                            |
| Royal Botanic Gardens, Melbourne  | 10-11m        | 11m                          | 8m                     | 1.1m                             |
| Carnegie Railway Station          | 6m            | 6m                           | 6m                     | 0.94m                            |
| Beechworth Town Hall Gardens      | 10m           | 6m                           | 6m                     | ?                                |
| Kew Cottages – east of Chapel     | 5m            | 6m                           | 6m                     | ?                                |
| <b>Kew Cottages – near entry</b>  | <b>8.2m</b>   | <b>11.5m</b>                 | <b>11m</b>             | <b>1.3m*</b>                     |

\*Girth is difficult to determine. Measurement at ground is 2.55m.

The largest of the known remaining specimens is in Caulfield Park (south-west corner east of small toilet on Balaclava Road). This is the only surviving tree on the National Trust Significant Tree Register (File No. T11479). The tree has a single trunk with considerable sucker growth from the base. A tree in the Royal Botanic Gardens (north-east of the Central Lawn) is of similar height, but has poor form, with an asymmetrical canopy and a low branch extending to the west. A smaller example of Holly-leaved Cherry survives in the tree reserve on the northern side of Carnegie Railway Station (30m from Koornang Road). This tree is in fair to poor condition, having basal sucker growth and trunk rot. The remaining specimen in Beechworth Town Hall Gardens (near the south-eastern entrance) is a small, low-branching tree in good to fair condition, but crowded by the adjacent large *Cedrus atlantica f. glauca*. Two trees remain in the grounds of Kew Cottages. A tree east of the Chapel is a poor specimen consisting of regrowth from a broken / rotted stump. The nominated specimen (off the Main Drive near Princess Street) is a wide-spreading, low-branching tree with three trunks. It is in fair condition but in terms of overall form, it is one of the better surviving specimens of *Prunus ilicifolia* in the State.

## **APPENDICES:**

Plans, maps, illustrations, photographs. Refer to attachments.

## **ASSESSMENT AGAINST CRITERIA:**

Category 2: Location or Context – (Historic Garden or Park)

*Any tree which occurs in a unique location or context and so provides a contribution to the landscape, including remnant native vegetation, important landmarks, and trees which form part of an historic garden, park or town.*

The *Prunus ilicifolia* is located in the grounds of the Kew Lunatic Asylum and Kew Cottages, institutions that were established in the nineteenth century based on prevailing treatment for the insane and mentally

handicapped. The tree formed part of the background planting to the avenue lining the Main Drive and near the site of the original lodge and gateway.

Category 3: Rare or Localised - (1 to 10 Known Specimens)

*Any tree of a species or variety that is rare or of very localised distribution.*

*Prunus ilicifolia* has rarely been used in cultivation in Victoria, although it was available in nurseries from 1865. The nominated tree is one of less than 10 known specimens remaining.



**Figure 1:** View of *Prunus ilicifolia* from west, looking towards Princess Street.

Put this section on a separate page.

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**FOR INTERNAL PURPOSES ONLY**

**OWNERSHIP / CONTROLLING AUTHORITY (CONFIDENTIAL)**

(name, address, phone number)

Also lessee/occupier/manager if relevant.

Kew Residential Services, Department of Human Services,  
State Government of Victoria

**LOCATION OF PLACE**

See page 1.

**MANAGEMENT ISSUES/THREATS**

e.g. over-maturity; incorrect maintenance; fungal or insect attack; destruction

The tree is under threat due to the proposed closure of the institution and sale of the land by the State Government, for medium density housing development

**DATE OF SUBMISSION**

1 March 2004

**PHOTOGRAPHS (Include dates if known.)**

11/01/2004, 28/02/2004

**NAMES & ADDRESSES OF SENDER/RESEARCHERS/COMPILERS/CONTRIBUTORS**

Barrie Gallacher, 7 Quinton Road, Camberwell, 3124; tel 9696 4957 (W);

National Trust Membership no. 106737.

**DATE AND EXTENT OF LAST INSPECTION**

28/02/2004, measurements, inspection for disease, dead-wooding.

**NAMES OF PEOPLE MAKING INSPECTIONS**

Barrie Gallacher

**DATES OF SUBMISSIONS & APPEALS**

**EXISTING DESIGNATIONS**

VHR No.

Register of the National Estate

Local Overlay Control: Boroondara Planning Scheme Amendment C53 (11/11/2003),

Vegetation Protection Overlay-Schedule 2

Local Conservation Study Level

**LEVEL/GRADING**

State

**OFFICE USE ONLY:**

FILE NO.:

D.BASE NO.:

CLASSIFIED: (DATE)

STC:

CSC:

COUNCIL:

NEW CLASS. SHEET

COMPLETED: Y / N