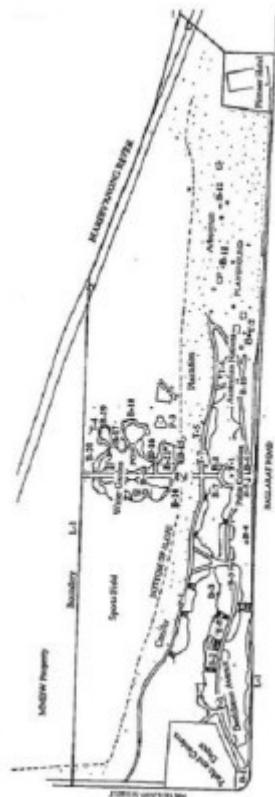


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# Footscray Park War Memorial



FOOTSCRAY PARK SOHE  
2008



h01220 plan h1220

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## Location

BALLARAT ROAD FOOTSCRAY, Maribyrnong City

## Municipality

MARIBYRNONG CITY

## Level of significance

### Victorian Heritage Register (VHR) Number

H1220

### Heritage Overlay Numbers

HO20

### Heritage Listing

Vic. War Heritage Inventory

## Statement of Significance

Last updated on - May 11, 1999

The entrance to Footscray Park on Ballarat Road features stone walls and wrought iron grates which incorporate the wording "Footscray Park". A World War I memorial which was unveiled in 1922 stands at the entranceway. It features an Italian-sculpted marble statue of Victory on a granite base.

Footscray Park of 15 hectares (37 acres) was permanently reserved in 1911 as a site for a Public Park and Recreation purposes. The park's creation was largely due to the efforts of the citizens of Footscray who successfully lobbied the State Government and the Victorian Racing Club for the reservation of the park, and then contributed to its development through donations of labour and plants, with the local technical school building the lookout shelter.

Footscray Park is of historic, aesthetic, scientific (horticultural) and social significance to the State of Victoria. It is historically important as an important Edwardian styled garden from the early twentieth century in Victoria. Designed in 1911 by the prominent architect Rodney Alsop, the majority of the layout and landscape features occurred under the direction of David Mathews from 1916 until about 1940. Mathews continued to develop and care for the Park until his retirement in 1964. The Park is important for its fine collection of garden structures, ornamental ponds, formal and informal path layout, and a rich plant collection.

Architect/Designer      Alsop, Rodney H,

Heritage Act Categories      Registered place,

Hermes Number      125231

Property Number

## Physical Description 1

Date Started 1911; Date Finished ; Storeys 0; Desc PARK;

The main entrance to Footscray Park is through a stone rubble and iron gates erected after 1964 and modelled on a design prepared by David Mathews at the corner of Nicholson Street and Ballarat Road. A sweeping path,

Jamieson Walk, leads along the contour past the Technical School shelter and lookout. The gravel path is framed with London Planes and Poplars near the Moore Street entrance. The path curves around the Australian native beds and asphalt path runs along a lower contour with high stone walling and dense shrubbery planting on the south side. The section of path and bluestone steps to the main gate has been removed.

At the end of Moore Street is a straight northerly path, the T. B. Drew Memorial Walk which descends down the slope by a series of wide steps marked by the four Launder urns around a circular lawn with a central palm, the rare Blue Hesper Palm. The asphalt path extends to the Thompson Water Garden and is framed by a large stone and timber (recently renewed) Wisteria pergola with its distinctive central dome. The lily ponds are attractively landscaped, with water plants, colourful shrubs and larger specimen trees, and to the east is a clover shaped flower bed. In one of the ponds is a stone fountain (not working), the pedestal supported by two carved platypus. Access between the ponds is by a series of stone and timber bridges and arbours. Amongst the planting are timber arbours and "antique" seats, which have replaced Monier seats. Only part of the west bridge and stone arbour remains, and the waterfall section has been filled in. This structure was the same as the surviving structures on the east side.

The paths are edged with rock and in step sections dry stone walling occurs. Access between the lawn terraces is gained by wide bluestone or concrete steps. The lawns are surrounded by shrubberies and specimen trees, conifers deciduous and evergreen, and palms are randomly planted on the lawns and amongst the shrubberies. Many of the beds are edged with basalt field stone and stone walls to a metre high are constructed to form the lawn terraces.

Footscray Park has a fine collection of palms including the rare *Brahea armata*, and *Butia capitata*, *Livistona australis*, *Arecastum romanzoffianum* (one specimen of each), *Chamaerops humilis* clumps, and many specimens of *Phoenix canariensis*, *Washington filifera* and *W. robusta*. The planting includes a rich collection of tree and shrub species including; *Brunfelsia* ? *pauciflora* var. *calycina*, *Cupressus macrocarpa* 'Hodginsii', *Vitex agnus-castus*, *Ficus microcarpa* var. *hillii*, *Angophora hispida*, *Ulmus glabra* 'Exoniensis', two large *Macrozamia communis*, *Juniperus virginiana* and cultivars, *J. chinensis* and cultivars, and *J. oxycedrus*.

Planting around the pond includes, *Taxus baccata*, *Ginkgo biloba*, *Noltea africana*, *Greyia radikoferi*, *Cupressus torulosa*, *Crataegus* species and cultivars and *Taxodium distichum*. On the lower slope are conifer plantings of *Pinus radiata*, *Cupressus macrocarpa*, and *C. macrocarpa* 'Horizontalis Aurea'. The Australian native beds include, *Casuarina cunninghamiana*, *Banksia integrifolia*, and *Podocarpus elata*. The arboretum at the eastern end has a fine collection of eucalypts including, *Eucalyptus leucoxylon* 'Rosea', *E. cladocalyx*, *E. botryoides*, *E. cornuta*, and other trees include, *Cupressus macrocarpa*, *Quercus canariensis*, *Quercus* sp. and *Acer* ?*obsutatum*.

Recent additions to the Park includes a flat roof sound shell, bluestone toilet block, new play equipment, bluestone barbecue and treated pine bollards between the Park and sports fields. In 1988 a cast aluminium Bicentennial drinking fountain, sponsored by Caltex Oil was installed in the playground. The depot includes a group cream brick buildings and iron structures erected around 1960-70. The adjacent timber curators residence (c1930), was sold and removed from the site in 1993. In 1994 two mature *Washingtonia robusta*, were transplanted from Whitten Oval and planted at the end of Drew Walk.

## COMPARISON:

Gardens developed in the early twentieth century corresponded with the suburbs of Kew (Alexandra Gardens), Camberwell (Maranoa Gardens and Becket Park), Box Hill (Wattle Park), Malvern (Central Park and Hedley Dene), Essendon (Queens Park), Coburg (Coburg Lake), Reservoir (Edwardes Lake) and St Kilda (Catani Gardens). The Queen Victoria and Alexandra Gardens along St Kilda Road, Melbourne were also developed during this period. While in Geelong, the Eastern Beach facility was constructed and landscaped.

In the City of Footscray, the Superintendent of Parks and Gardens Mr David Mathews took a keen interest in not only the development of Footscray Park, but also the Yarraville Gardens, Hansen Reserve, Simpson Street Reserve, Edwards Reserve (1947), playgrounds and recreation reserves. These plans show the layout and a few

of the plans also include drawings of gateways and structures in an Edwardian style.

David Mathews spent 48 years developing Footscray Park and other parks and sports fields in Footscray. This would be one of the longest periods for any curator in Victoria. In association with William Nicholls who commenced in 1925, they established an outstanding park and garden collection. As members of the Field Naturalists Club they had the opportunity to visit other gardens and mix with naturalists, botanists and horticulturists. In 1939 Mathews prepared a plan for the redevelopment of the garden at Coolart, Somers. This plan included a small pond and arbours built from stone and wood, and are built in a similar style, although smaller, to the structures at Footscray Park. In 1941 he prepared a planting plan for an arboretum and both these plans were partially implemented by the owner, Thomas Luxton. His work at Coolart is reported to have occurred due to Mathews involvement with youth groups at Lord Somers Camp, an adjoining property.

Footscray Park is the only confirmed work of the noted Architect, Rodney Alsop in a public park. He is reputed to have designed the Pioneer Womens Peace Memorial in the Domain in c1934, however he had died in 1932. He undertook a number of private commissions including the design of a sunken garden and fountain at Aberfeldie, Toorak, which was used as a model for the Pioneer Womens Peace Memorial. Alsop also designed Winster, Toorak, his own residence in 1925 and a semi-circular pond is a feature of the garden. Other well known residences include, Glyn (1908), Toorak; Edrington (1906-07), Berwick; Wombat Park (1910-12), Daylesford; and Mawallok (1909), Beaufort.

None of the above parks and gardens include the range of buildings and structures, or the richness of planting exhibited at Footscray Park. The closest comparison is Maronoa Gardens and Beckett Park which includes a stone entrance gateway and a straight path to a stone lookout constructed in 1937. Maronoa Garden specialises in Australian natives and holds a significant plant collection.

The remarkable path layout of both formal and informal design placed on a step and flat site is unmatched in Victoria. The water garden of ponds, bridges and arbours, and the Wisteria Pergola with a central dome is not represented in any other garden or public park in Victoria. A smaller and simpler designed pergola exists in Victoria Gardens, Prahran and dates from the late 1930s. The platypus fountain is the only known example of an "Australiana" theme used for a fountain in Victoria.

Footscray Park holds an impressive palm collection and the only more important collection is at the Royal Botanic Gardens, Melbourne, and is similar to the St Kilda Botanical Gardens collection. The diversity of the planting is equivalent to Botanic Gardens at Williamstown and St Kilda, and is greater than some of the provincial botanic gardens, Castlemaine, Malmsbury and Koroit.

The planting includes a number of outstanding, rare and uncommon plants.

The *Brahea armata*, a native of California is the largest and finest example known in Victoria. The only other examples are four palms in the Royal Botanic Gardens, Melbourne. This palm is a significant landscape planting, occupying the centre of the T. B. Drew Walk and a major vista.

The *Angophora hispida*, a native of New South Wales is the largest and best formed example known in Victoria. The only comparative tree is in the Renfrey Gardens, St Kilda. The tree is notable for its spectacular display of white flowers in summer.

The *Vitex agnus-castus* is rarely grown in Victoria and this tree is the largest known. There are four tree in the Royal Botanic Gardens, Melbourne and is not recorded in any provincial botanic garden.

The *Ficus microcarpa* var. *hillii* is an outstanding example of the species and the largest known in Victoria. A smaller tree occurs in St Vincent Gardens, South Melbourne. The species has become a popular tree in modern landscapes, eg. High Street, Armadale.

The *Cupressus macrocarpa* 'Hodginsii' is of horticultural interest as it is a cultivar raised in Victoria by Hodgins Nursery, Essendon and was available from the 1890s. The only known examples are at Seawinds, McCrea; Boulters Nursery, Olinda; and a private residence at Olinda.

The *Brunfelsia* ?*pauciflora* var. *calycina* is yet to be positively identified, as flowers are required. This species is represented by only one tree in the Royal Botanic Gardens. Brunfelsia are rarely grown in Victoria except for the

small bush, *B. latifolia*. This tree is the only example known in any public park or private garden in Victoria. There is a young specimen beside the Ballarat Road wall south of the barbecue.

The *Ulmus glabra 'Exoniensis'* is rarely grown in Victoria, and the State's finest tree is in the Ballarat Botanical Gardens and there are six street trees in Buninyong.

## **Usage/Former Usage**

1906 ; recreational ;

## **Physical Conditions**

State of the Historic Environment survey report - Condition: Fair. See Events.

## **Veterans Description for Public**

The entrance to Footscray Park on Ballarat Road features stone walls and wrought iron grates which incorporate the wording "Footscray Park". A First World War memorial, unveiled on November 12th 1922, stands at the entranceway. It features an Italian-sculpted marble statue of Victory on a granite base. The site also commemorates individuals who served in the Second World War.

## **Extent of Registration**

1. All the land known as Crown Reserve RS 810 permanently reserved for Public Park and Recreation Purposes within the dotted line marked L1 shown on Diagram 600968 held by the Executive Director, being part Crown Allotment 5, Section 15, Parish of Cut-Paw-Paw.

2. All the buildings and structures marked as follows on Diagram 600968 held by the Executive Director:  
B1 entrance gate;  
B2 technical school shelter and stone wall;  
B3 Henry Lawson memorial;  
B4 war memorial;  
B5, B6, B7 and B8 launder urns and stone pedestals;  
B8, B9, B10 and B11 stone drinking fountains;  
B12 wisteria pergola;  
B13, B14, B15 and B16 bridges and arbours;  
B17, B18 and B19 seat shelters;  
B20 platypus fountain.

3. All the paths, stone steps, garden edges and walls marked as follows on Diagram 600968 held by the Executive Director:

P1 Jamieson Walk;  
P2 Drew Walk;  
P3 and P4 clover-shaped flower beds;

4. The trees marked as follows on Diagram 600968 held by the Executive Director:

T1 *Brahea armata* (Blue Hesper Palm);  
T2 *Angophora hispida* (Dwarf apple);  
T3 *Vitex agnus-castus* (Chaste Tree);  
T4 *Ficus microcarpa* var. *hillii* (Hill's Fig);  
T5 *Cupressus macrocarpa* 'Hodginsii';  
T6 *Brunsfelsia pauciflora* var. *calycina*;  
T7 *Ulmus glabra 'Exoniensis'* (Exeter Elm).

*This place/object may be included in the Victorian Heritage Register pursuant to the Heritage Act 2017. Check the Victorian Heritage Database, selecting 'Heritage Victoria' as the place source.*

*For further details about Heritage Overlay places, contact the relevant local council or go to Planning Schemes Online <http://planningschemes.dpcd.vic.gov.au/>*