

Conservation Assessment for

VICTORIA PARK,
City Road, Camperdown, NSW

FINAL REPORT

January 2009



One of Victoria Park's surviving 1860s? plantings of Moreton Bay Fig Tree (*Ficus macrophylla*) along the grand avenue to ET Blacket's Main Building of the University of Sydney (GB 2007)

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Environmental Design Installations Heritage Conservation Landscape Resource Assessment

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I Introduction

I.1 Background

This report was commissioned by the City of Sydney for the purpose of providing a better understanding of the current heritage significance of Victoria Park. It is in the context of over 150 years of site development from its former pastoral uses in the 19th century through to its readily identifiable image as a well-frequented and multi-layered public space.

At least two significant phases of landscape development can be traced for the site after the fledgling University of Sydney Main Building was completed. The first was the implementation of a major approach space, possibly from the early 1860s (if not earlier), that linked what is now City Road with the impressive tower of ET Blacket's Gothic-revival masterpiece by way of a grand triple avenue. An obligatory bridged water crossing was an integral part of this sequential landscape theatre.

The second major event for the remainder of the site was its transformation from large, smoothly contoured paddocks to a richly planted Victorian Gardenesque landscape design. This later episode, implemented from the 1880s, sought to unify the whole area of open space between the early University buildings and the former Newtown Road. Like the grand avenue it featured large umbrageous fig trees – a known favourite of Royal Botanic Gardens Director Charles Moore – as well as a large variety of conifers, broad-leafed trees and generous, fenced mixed shrubberies. Two sandstone Gothic-revival gate lodges near City Road completed the entry ensemble.

Hand-coloured postcard views of the University's northern section from 1900 reveal a stunningly presented Park landscape that any University or Council public relations department would die for. Yet, the first of a series of substantial incursions had already begun by the early 20th century with the construction of a bowling club and greens crammed in behind the former Messenger's Gatehouse.

A fateful land swap in the 1920s between the University and Council removed the western quarter of the Park's total area. Then by the mid-20th century several major changes had left the Park with only about two thirds of its original area as open parkland. From the 1960s the substantial area of the Park's former western ridgeline had been covered with a series of large-plate buildings as part of a major phase of campus expansion while the southern-most of the two flanking gatehouses was removed in the late 1930s.

The new Modernist-inspired University buildings began to screen out the earlier relationship the Park had with its picturesque ensemble of Gothic buildings across the ridgeline. It was as if the Modernist era contributions had no time or regard for the surrounding legacy of earlier periods, and certainly little regard for Victoria Park – the Carslaw Building features large blank walls to the Park.

After various phases of smaller modifications the ornamental lake had been rebuilt as a formal pond by the 1950s. At the same time the current swimming pool – again, another Modernist-inspired structure – had subsumed a substantial part of the central part of the Park and strayed across part of the former triple avenue.

By 2008 much work has recently gone into reinstating the grand entry avenue and entry piers, restoring the remaining gatehouse and creating a major entry point addressing City Road. New plantings attempt to recreate the earlier triple avenue leading to the Main Building of the

University. Meanwhile, adjoining the western edge of the Park, a new Law Faculty building is currently under construction next to the Fisher Library. While the new building has an important address to the Park and attempts to, once again, visually reunite the Park and the Anderson Stuart Building, the sheer scale of the new façade introduces yet another divisive wall at the edge of the Park.

Despite the considerable cumulative effects of all of the earlier incursions and excisions, there is still evident in Victoria Park the bones of a major 1880s landscape design along with evidence of even earlier landscape projects. With the current need to review the existing children's playground and various discussions for further modifications and uses within the Park, it is timely to review what remains of these important vestiges and consider their conservation implications.

Much useful work has already been accomplished on research and conservation analysis for the site and the present study builds on this information and concentrates on discussing the significance of the Park's heritage resources and how to best manage them. However, the present study is not a conservation management plan though it does, to an extent, follow the normal pattern of a CMP and largely reflects the form advocated by the Heritage Branch of the Department of Planning and Australia ICOMOS.

Very little, if anything obvious, appears to remain of the pre-European flora within Victoria Park. The principal former vegetation alliance is presumed to be the Turpentine-Ironbark Forest typical of this part of the inner western Sydney area though the drainage areas that once fed Blackwattle Creek may have also featured freshwater riparian species.

1.2 Heritage Reviews & Status

To date the only comprehensive conservation study undertaken of Victoria Park as a whole is the History and Conservation Plan of 1990 by Helen Proudfoot. This report concluded with a number of important recommendations – including the reinstatement of the main approach axis to the University, the axis gates and perimeter plantings – and many of these have since been implemented.

At the time of the Proudfoot report the main approach avenue was neglected, a playground was situated across the avenue, the northern end of the swimming pool complex also straddled part of the old triple avenue, the bowling club was still operating and the avenue was without its original eastern terminating gates. The report reviewed desirelines, structures – both historic and intrusive – plantings and views. It also reviewed the cultural significance of the park.

In the same year Tropman & Tropman, architects produced an insightful conservation report for the remaining gate lodge that, along with the restoration of the Gardener's Gatehouse, also advocated the rebuilding and replanting of the main access approach, a new bridge and an interpretation of the missing Messenger's Gatehouse. Both of these timely studies provided an excellent basis for important decisions about the Park's character and future.

Victoria Park was also included in the 1994 South Sydney Heritage Study by Tropman & Tropman that resulted in the Park and the surviving Gate Lodge (Inventory No. 8.31/2) being listed on the South Sydney LEP, 1998 as part of a group heritage item¹. The Park and the surviving Lodge are listed as Item No. 851 in Schedule 2 and described as "Victoria Park Group, including single storey sandstone Victorian Gothic style gatehouse and site (with landscaping)".

The same group listing is included on the NSW Heritage Inventory (Database No. 2421116) held by the Heritage Branch of the Department of Planning though the relevant Local Environmental Plan is cited as South Sydney Amending LEP 2000.

¹ Noted as such on the City of Sydney website as at September 2007.

1.3 Study Approach

As well as being outside the scope of this review an account of the history of Victoria Park is not included since an adequate historical narrative is already provided in Helen Proudfoot's 1990 History and Conservation Plan. However, a basic chronology is included in **Section 2** in order to provide some context for the subsequent discussion of park origins, components and interventions.

A customary review of archival and physical evidence follows along with a consideration of significance. Implications arising from the stated cultural significance of the Park are discussed before a series of recommendations are stated.

The archival resource has been provided mostly by the Council of the City of Sydney and the University of Sydney with various images also being sourced from the Council's website archives.

1.4 Limitations

This review is restricted to an investigation of the existing Park-related fabric and does not extend to a detailed review of the pre-Park Aboriginal landscape or potential archaeological resources. Also no community consultations were carried out as part of this investigation to test social value as this was beyond the terms of the consultant Brief.

1.5 Acknowledgements

The assistance of Susan Lymbery, Tree Management Coordinator and Elizabeth May, Design Manager from the City of Sydney and Julia Mant, Reference Archivist from the University of Sydney's Archives and Records Management Services is gratefully acknowledged. The author also benefited from a discussion with John Tropman. Assistance has been gratefully received from horticultural botanists Tony Rodd and Dr Ben Wallace.

2 General Historical Chronology of Victoria Park

The following basic outline of the development of Victoria Park is derived mostly from Helen Proudfoot's report of 1990. Apart from recording key milestones in the Park's history the chronology serves as a context against which to measure the relative age of surviving elements and assist in informing a consideration of cultural significance. It is not purported to be a comprehensive record.

- 1850 The Legislative Council of NSW passed an act enabling the formation of the University of Sydney.
- 1855 126 acres of the former Grose Farm granted together with an allowance for the "formation of a park and garden in connection therewith". Edmund Blacket, in his former role as Colonial Architect, had played an active role in choosing the site².
- 1863 8 acres of the park, along Parramatta Road, was dedicated as an "Approach Reserve" leading to the main University building and on axis with the central tower. Possible planting out of the triple avenue if not earlier.
- 1864 Despatch entry for August 22 from the Royal Botanic Gardens, Sydney to the University of Sydney for a large list of plants (RBG Plant Despatches 1852 to 1870, RBG Library). Species included on the list are known from archival photographs to have been planted in the Approach Reserve. Some of such species on this 1864 despatch list may have been replacement plantings for failed individual trees.
- 1865 Despatch entry for June 22 from the Royal Botanic Gardens, Sydney to the University of Sydney for a large list of plants (RBG Plant Despatches 1852 to 1870, RBG Library). Species included on the list are known from archival photographs to have been planted in the Approach Reserve.
- 1866 The Approach Reserve was granted to the University of Sydney. Despatch entry for May 29 from the Royal Botanic Gardens, Sydney to the University of Sydney for a large list of plants (RBG Plant Despatches 1852 to 1870, RBG Library). Species included on the list are known from archival photographs to have been planted in the Approach Reserve.
- 1867 Despatch entry for February 15 from the Royal Botanic Gardens, Sydney to the University of Sydney for a large list of plants (RBG Plant Despatches 1852 to 1870, RBG Library). Species included on the list are known from archival photographs to have been planted in the Approach Reserve.
- 1870 Victoria Park – 23 acres, 3 roods and 16 perches – named, dedicated and gazetted and seven trustees appointed to manage it. The trustees included the former Colonial Secretary, Edward Deas Thomson and PLC Shepherd (son of Thomas Shepherd of the famous Darling Nursery, Chippendale). An advisor to the trustees was Charles Moore, Director of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Sydney from 1848 to 1896. An 1870 photograph (No. 0943) from the University of Sydney Archives shows the Approach Reserve already planted out as a very substantial triple avenue from the bridge crossing up to the levelled terrace in front of the Main Building. The majority of the outer lines were Stone Pines (*Pinus pinea*), the trees closest to the Horse Pond were Moreton Bay Fig Trees (*Ficus macrophylla*) and the remainder may have been another fig species (Port Jackson?). Most of the plantings were clearly in place during the 1860s and

² Kerr, Joan, *Our Great Victorian Architect Edmund T Blacket (1817-1883)*, The National Trust of Australia (NSW), Sydney, 1983 p.105

accords with when Charles Moore was ensuring similar species were being planted in the Phillip Precinct of The Domain (along Hospital Road for example) and elsewhere.

- 1872 Despatch entry for May 14 from the Royal Botanic Gardens, Sydney to the University of Sydney for a large list of plants (RBG Plant Despatches 1870 to 1879, AO). Species included on the list are known from archival photographs to have been planted in the Approach Reserve.
- 1873 Despatch entry for August 15 from the Royal Botanic Gardens, Sydney to the University of Sydney for another large list of plants (RBG Plant Despatches 1870 to 1879, AO). Species included on the list are known from archival photographs to have been planted in the Approach Reserve.
- 1880 Letter of 4.9.1880 in the Baptist Papers (ML Box 13, No.483) links Charles Moore with the donation, by John Baptist of Redfern, of willows for the park.
- 1881 Plant despatches to Victoria Park from the Botanic Gardens on July 4 and August 4.
- 1884 University Medical School (Anderson Stuart Building) commenced. Note in James Jones' Diary³ re tree planting guards being installed within Victoria Park. Jones was Head Gardener at the RBG, Sydney and Overseer of the RBG and Domains (1884-1913).
- 1885 First formal design plan of the Park – possibly by James Jones⁴, The two flanking gate lodges are shown on a Water Board survey plan of 1885.
- 1886 July 21 despatch of 24 “miscellaneous” plants to Victoria Park from the Botanic Gardens.
- 1887 Victoria Park re-dedicated under the new Public Parks Act of 1884.
- 1889 August 26 despatch of 40 trees to Victoria Park from the Botanic Gardens.
- 1892 Minister of Lands approves a lease for a local bowling club to be built within the Park. A small verandahed clubhouse was added by 1912. University Medical School completed. Trustees commission a three-tiered scagliola fountain from nearby modellers Grant & Cocks. It is assumed that the fountain was installed at about this time though the location is uncertain - possibly about midway along the southern of the two axial east-west paths through the Park (near the southeastern end of the present swimming pool).
- 1898 A third gatehouse was constructed for the University beyond the extreme southern end of the Park.
- 1900-1912 Numerous despatches of trees and shrubs to the University of Sydney from the Botanic Gardens though it would be difficult to differentiate between those used for the main campus grounds and those within the northern Approach Reserve.
- 1909 Proposal to widen Parramatta Road by 20 feet agreed to by the University.
- 1911 Sydney City Council agrees to take over the management of the park and the Body of Trustees abolished.

³ Diary of Head Gardener, Botanic Gardens, James Jones, 1884-1889, AO 2/8558

⁴ Morris, Colleen, James Jones entry in *The Oxford Companion to Australian Gardens*, Ed. Aitken and Looker, OUP, 1st Edition, 2002, p.340

- 1912 Children's playground built about halfway along City Road (demolished in the 1940s but the concrete paving and steps from City Road are still visible).
- 1914- Pathways in the Park were resurfaced with asphalt and the edges formed in brick.
- 1919 Equipment for the first children's playground was installed and water was provided in the park and repairs were carried out on the 1892 fountain (Council Minutes on capital works for parks).
- 1919 The University Senate votes to begin negotiations with the Sydney City Council for an exchange of land whereby the Approach Reserve would be given to Council for an equal amount of land along the ridge to the south of the medical school.
- 1924 The University and College Lands and Victoria Park Bill – concerning the land swap - discussed in Parliament.
- 1925 Council acts on plans to widen Parramatta Road necessitating the loss of part of the Park and the removal of many of the mature trees along the northern edges of the former Approach Reserve. This action was met with widespread protest.
- 1927 Council officially becomes the proprietor of the Approach Reserve land with a right-of-way retained to the University.
- 1929 An earlier proposal to construct a road through the Park linking Cleveland Street with Parramatta Road is reconsidered. There was widespread public resistance and the matter was dropped.
- 1930 Victoria Park advisory committee formed by Professor EG Waterhouse, the Town Clerk and the City Engineer.
- 1932 Employment (Depression) Relief labour was used to clean out the Horse Pond.
- 1933 The University boundary fence was commenced. The area near the corner of City Road and Parramatta Road was regraded and 38,000 square feet turfed with couch grass. Paths were formed, the pond edge was paved up to the high water mark, the outlet reconstructed and new trees and shrubs planted.
- 1936 The former Gardener's Lodge was converted to public toilets.
- 1937 The park's water supply was extended and the small pond south of the main pond was filled in (this is where the present swimming pool is positioned). The small pond was possibly also the location of the 1898 fountain and, with the removal of the pond, the fountain was presumably removed also though its whereabouts was unknown in 1990.
- 1938 The first of several park remodelling schemes is drawn up but not implemented.
- 1939 Yeoman Bedell gate lodge for Parramatta Road (at the northwest corner of the Park) designed by Leslie Wilkinson. Former Messenger's Gate lodge demolished near City Road. The sandstone gate piers marking the eastern end of the Approach Reserve avenue were relocated to the University entry off City Road further to the south adjacent Butlin Street.
- 1940 Yeoman Bedell gate lodge built using stone salvaged from the demolished Messenger's Gate lodge.

- 1946 With the cessation of wartime exigencies, new remodelling schemes were now being considered – one of which included a small open-air swimming pool in the middle of the Park along with heavy 4-row tree plantings along the park periphery. By the end of this year the pool concept had grown to a full-size pool with generous amenities and facilities.
- 1955 The enlarged pool was completed and passed to the control of the Parks Department the following year. Also in 1955 the Horse Pond was substantially remodelled with a reduced area, an awkward shape, the bridge demolished and an unrelated sculpture added to commemorate Alderman Northam's participation in an Olympic Games with, when work was completed in 1961, the new pond renamed Lake Northam.
- 1963 The Fisher Library undergraduate Stage 1 building is opened though the building exacerbated the process of closing off the Park from the University campus.
- 1964 A Totem pole was installed near the Gate Lodge and floodlighting was installed. The Totem pole has since been moved to near the Cleveland Street entry junction.
- 1965 Completion of Stafford Moor and Farrington's Carslaw Building in the University adds another massive dividing wall between the campus and Victoria Park.
- 1967 By this date the 9-storey Fisher Library stack (Stage 2) had closed in an important part of the Park's traditional connexion with the earlier Gothic buildings. Though, remarkably, one old fig tree from the former western boundary of the Park remains to the immediate west of the tall slab block.
- 1990 Tropman & Tropman, architects engaged to provide a conservation plan for the Gatehouse and Helen Proudfoot engaged for a similar exercise for the whole Park.
- 1992 Draft Plan of Management prepared for Victoria Park (for South Sydney Council) by Environmental Partnership P/L – revised 1993.
- 1994 Victoria Park and the remaining Gatehouse recommended for listing as a heritage item on the South Sydney LEP by Tropman & Tropman, architects. By 1994 Lake Northam had been extended to the south though not with the elegant form it once had prior to the 1955 remodelling.
- 1998 South Sydney LEP includes Victoria Park and the remaining Gatehouse as a heritage item in its Heritage Schedule. New bridge constructed over Lake Northam and the old University axis formalised with new paths. By 1998 the bowling club buildings had been demolished though a car park remained well into the Park.
- 2003 By 2003 the University had completed the formal steps on axis with the old double avenue, the bowling greens had been removed and the area regraded and turfed.
- 2006 Master Plan Study was undertaken of Victoria Park for the City of Sydney by POD Landscape consultants. JMD Design commissioned to plan and design a new children's playground within the Park.
- 2007 Original sandstone gate piers marking the eastern end of the Approach Reserve avenue were reinstated next to the Gardener's Lodge near City Road.
- 2009 Anticipated completion of the new Law Faculty of the University of Sydney.

This basic chronology already establishes a number of pertinent attributes for the Park with implications for gauging its cultural significance. These are recounted in point form below:

- * A park (with gardens) was originally planned as an appropriate and integral setting for the proposed university. Victoria Park was conceived as part of the campus continuum from City Road to Missenden Road (ie, part of the original campus allocation from the Grose Farm grant). Its forced separation from the University campus in the 1930s was contrary to the intentions and spirit of its conception as an urban park. To an extent this artificial separation has been redressed with the reinstatement of the grand avenue linking City Road with the Main Building.
- * The Approach Reserve, including the grand avenue on axis to the Main Building of the University, was an early and integral part of the original university campus layout.
- * In his capacity as the Colonial Architect, Edmund Blacket is known to have been involved in the selection of the University land – even before his involvement with its first building – and it is probable he was involved with the layout of the campus entry that focussed on his building.
- * Council has officially been in control of the Park since 1911 – nearly 100 years – and the Approach Reserve since 1927.
- * The first children's playground was installed in 1912 indicating that this land use has had a continuous presence in the Park for almost 100 years.

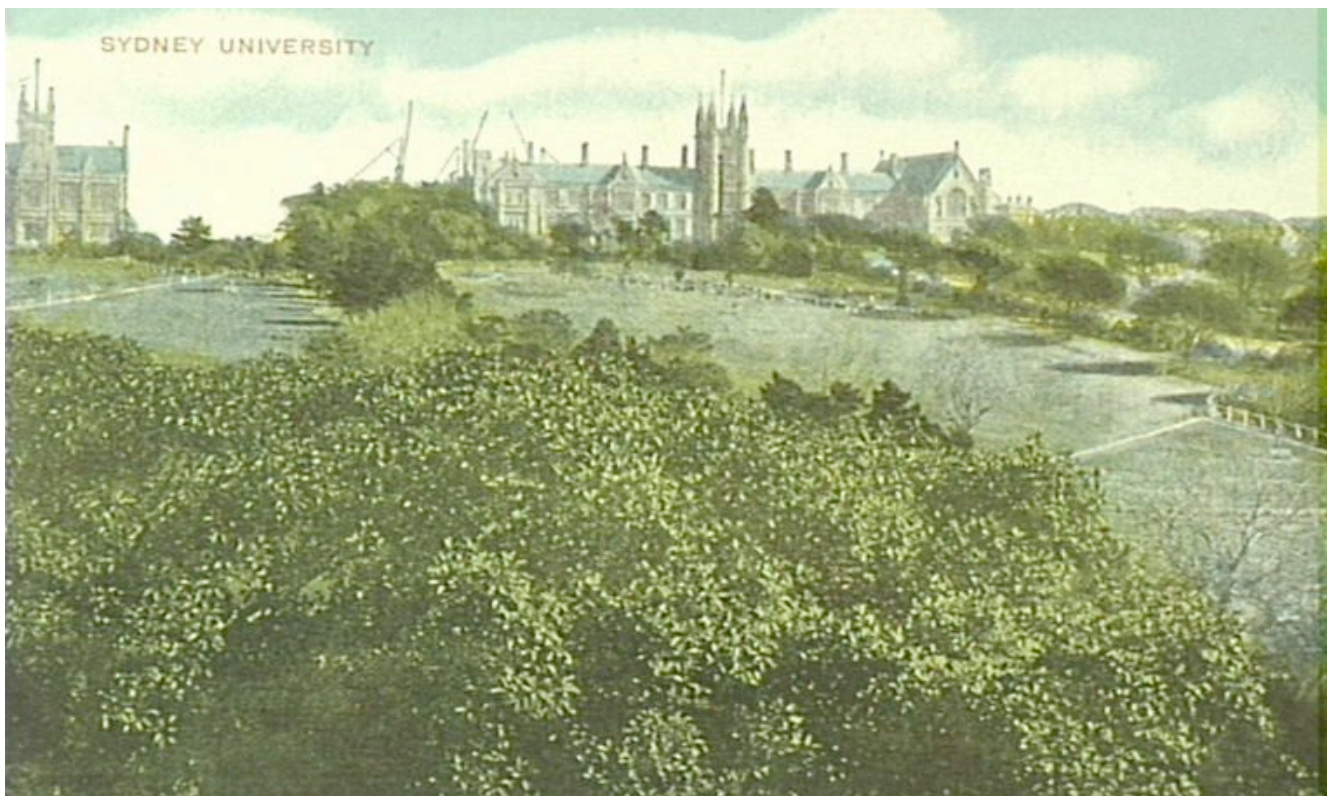


Figure 1 View over Victoria Park from the early 1900s when the MacLaurin Hall (original Fisher Library) was under construction. The view clearly shows the outer lines of Stone Pines along the grand avenue as maturing trees of about 40 to 50 years old though the original plantings for the inner lines have been removed and replaced with hedges. The enclosure at the extreme right marks a large central plantation as well as a small pond now occupied by the swimming pool. The canopy in the foreground is of a fig tree along City Road and, just beyond this, other plantations can be seen that defined the main path from Cleveland Street to the site of the current Fisher Library. Amazingly one old fig tree, as part of this early path axis, still survives to the immediate west of the Library stack building. (CoS ArchivePix SRC 9615)

3 Conservation Assessment

3.1 Review of Archival Material

3.1.1 1879 Birds-eye View, Gibbs, Shallard & Coy, *Illustrated Sydney News*

The original aerial perspective view – from which the following detail is taken - ambitiously included the whole of central Sydney with Victoria Park within the right-hand side background. According to the artist Victoria Park was still a series of fenced paddocks with dams or ponds along the central creekline. To the right of the park area, along the ridge, is Edmund Blacket's 1854 Main Building for the fledgling University of Sydney campus. The creek was once a tributary of Blackwattle Creek, further to the east, that drained into Black Wattle Bay.

Interestingly the image indicates that the entire length of City Road (at one time known as Cook's River Road then, later, as Newtown Road), up to the University's main southern entry, was planted out with either trees or a tall hedge. Note that the gap in this hedge (with that for St Paul's College) allows the extrapolated longitudinal axis of Blacket's range to be directed to the Institute Building composition and for the latter building to borrow the campus as its setting – a relationship that is no longer possible.

Lines drawn across the park area from near the junctions with Myrtle and Cleveland Streets could be either fencelines or pathways or both. They were soon to be translated into formalised paths as part of the 1880s landscape design for Victoria Park. However, some faint lines already appear to mark out the grand avenue to Blacket's building.

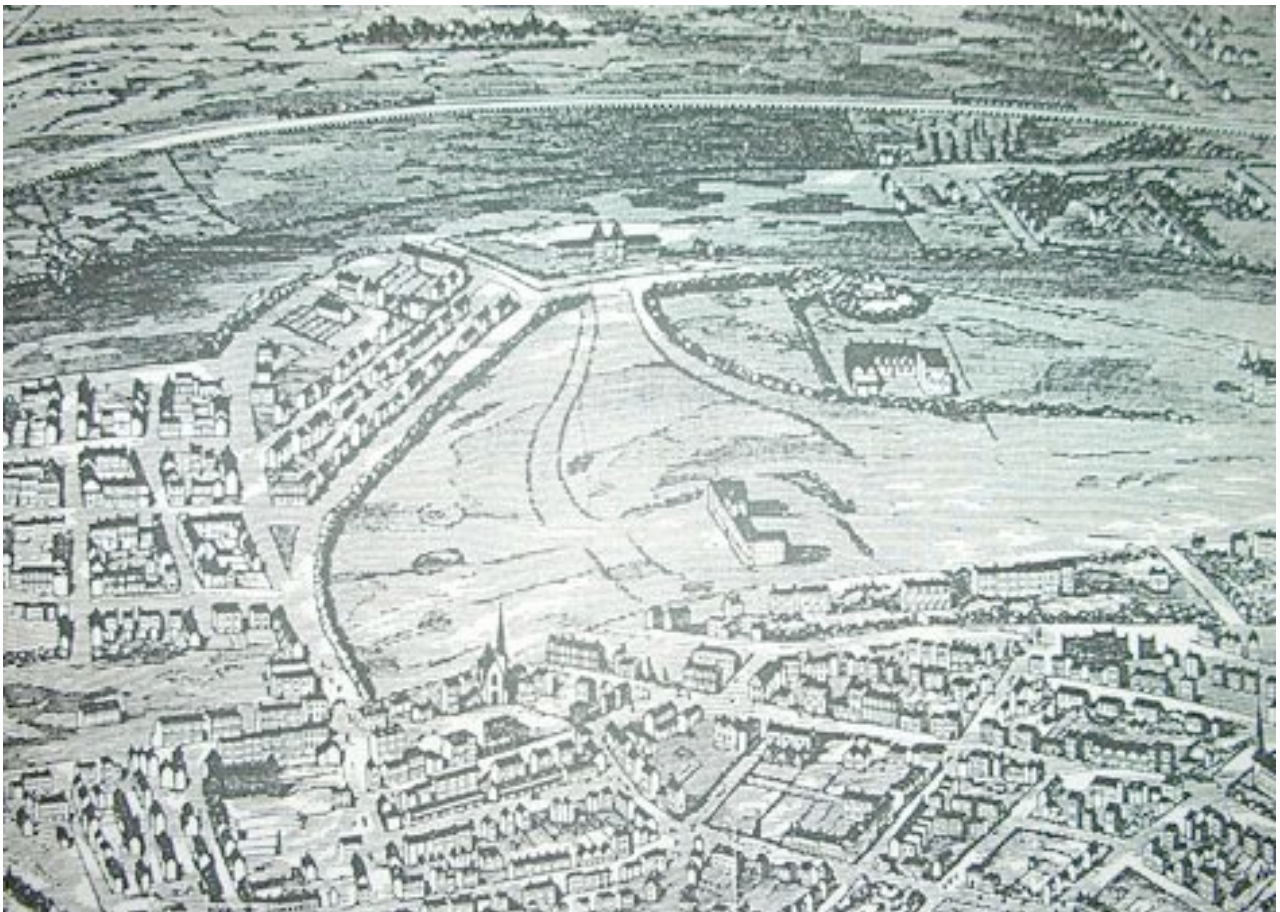


Figure 2 Detail enlargement from Sydney Birds-eye View, *Illustrated Sydney News*, 1879

3.1.2 1885 Site Plan

Helen Proudfoot's 1990 report compared the 1885 site plan with one of Charles Moore's plans for the reclaimed central foreshore area of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Sydney. This was a reasonable thing to do as it has been documented that Moore was certainly involved with Victoria Park, to some extent at least, as an advisor. There are also obvious stylistic and functional similarities between the two plans.

Moore is also linked with a wonderful Gardenesque scheme for parts of Rookwood Necropolis from the late 1860s as well as the 1880s planning and design of Centennial Park where there are further stylistic and functional similarities.

However this need not necessarily mean that Moore was the author of the 1880s Victoria Park plan. In many respects all of these schemes reflect the concerns and devices of typical estate park planning espoused by John Claudius Loudon who was one of the leading voices on landscape design and taste in the 19th century – perhaps, for a time, **the** voice of early Victorian gardening. Moore, together with at least two other capable and senior Botanic Gardens employees, would have been aware of these contemporary landscape planning trends.

George Harwood, as Overseer of the Botanic Gardens, and James Jones, as Overseer of the Government Domains, were both schooled and skilled in furnishing appropriate landscape designs when required. It is documented (in his Diary) that Jones, for example, provided designs for a Public Park in West Maitland in 1885 as well as designs for Rushcutters Bay and Garden Island in 1886. Indeed it was Jones who was engaged, virtually full-time from 1887, to oversee work at Centennial Park to ensure the place was ready for the official opening in 1888.

Of the two overseers, Jones, because of his wider geographic responsibilities, is more likely to have been involved with Victoria Park and is, in fact, directly linked to the Park through an entry in his Diary. Although this link is for a relatively minor matter (organising the distinctive tree guards that appear in archival photographs) he may have been asked to prepare the overall plan to guide future work in the Park.

So while the author of this engaging Victorian landscape design remains uncertain there is enough evidence to suggest a possible attribution to Jones or, possibly, a combination of Jones and Moore given their combined Governmental responsibilities and that they typically worked closely with one another on more prominent projects. However, there is also embodied in this plan an earlier design element – implemented at least by the early 1860s - that is known to have predated Jones's arrival in Australia.

This is the grand triple avenue from City Road to the eastern terraces of the University's principal range. As previously suggested there is much circumstantial evidence to seriously consider Edmund Blacket as the author of the formal axial composition that focussed attention on the University's first building. Of course, Charles Moore was very much active at this time also though his input in this case may have been restricted to providing advice on suitable tree species for the avenue.

Blacket (who died in 1883 at the age of 66) had many reasons to be the designer of the grand avenue – he had been actively involved with the selection of the Grose Farm site to start with and, presumably, the Approach Reserve as an integral part of the campus, had selected the main ridge for the initial landmark building and designed the same as well as having been attributed with the design of the two gate lodges at the eastern end of the avenue.

The whole of the approach sequence (including the mandatory bridge crossing over the old dam) is so closely connected with the experience of arriving at the Main Building and its auspicious tower that it would be surprising for another hand to have devised it. The long and

impressive axis seems logically to go hand in hand with the formal planning, and calculated showing off, of the University's initial range. While this suggestion is only just that, it is nevertheless an important one, since, if it is true then this would become a rare and substantial landscape design from one of Australia's great Victorian architects.

In her conservation analysis of the overall 1885 plan, Helen Proudfoot found the Park's landscape design inadequate as a response to exploiting views to the University buildings as well as city panoramas. She also suggested that the Park's design failed to unify the two broadly disparate parts of the Park – its formal, processional northern part (the old University approach section) and the informal, Gardenesque Park remainder.

After a careful analysis of archival photography – particularly from the latter part of the 19th century - this earlier assessment appears to be a somewhat harsh and, upon reflection, misleading analysis. The design did, in fact, have many subtleties in its original form that showed off the various Gothic structures along the ridge just as a 19th century park plan was required to.

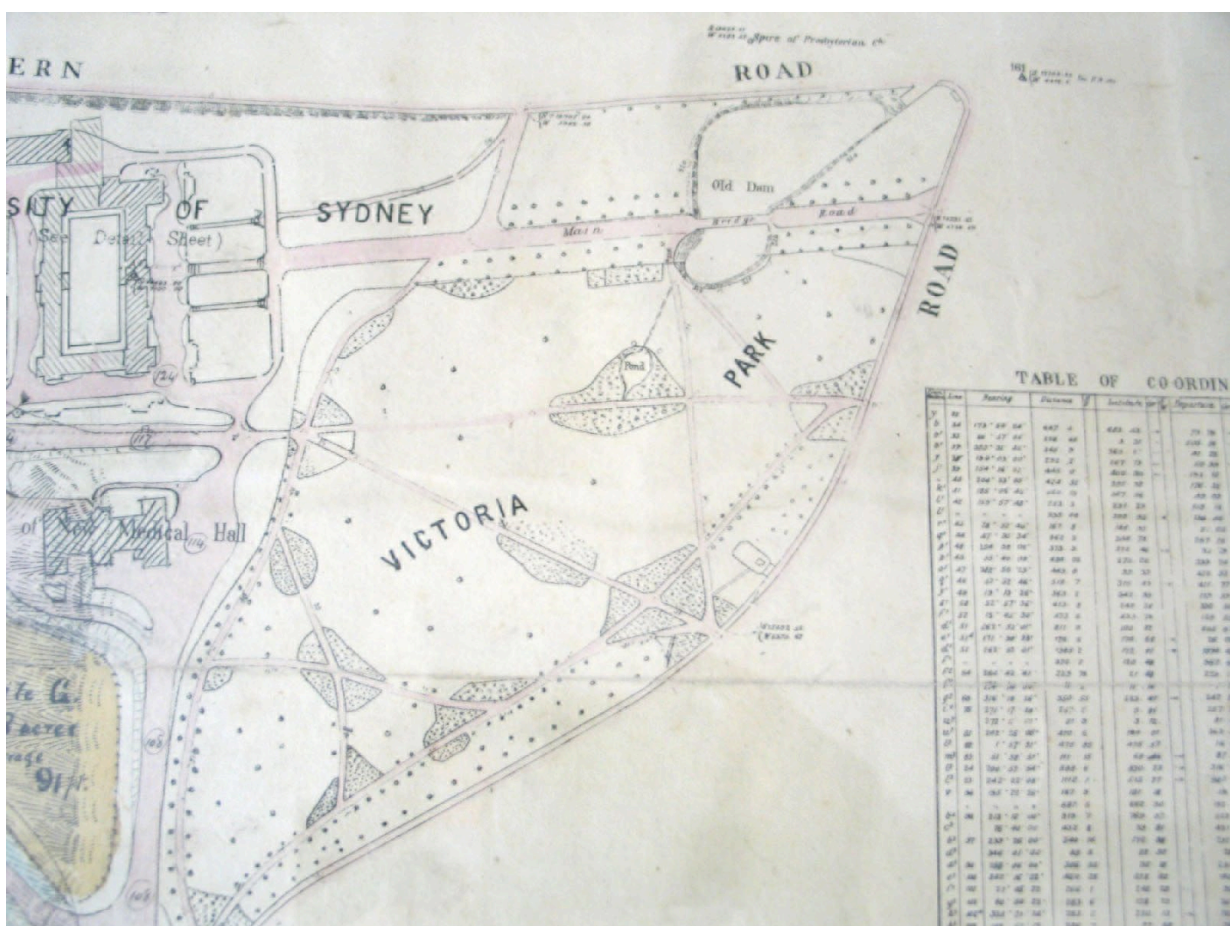


Figure 3 Victoria Park master plan dated 1885 (Courtesy of the University of Sydney's Archives and Records Management Services)

The plan provided for generous shrubberies along key pathways and at path junctions to make the experience of approaching (or leaving) the University a visually stimulating one. There is also evident in the design a calculated enclosure of space where the pedestrian is more aware of rich horticultural variety, then an opening up of space when emerging from the shrubbery into the broad grassed areas. The shrubberies also provided a sense of enclosure and definition to the broad grassed spaces.

This classic landscape design device also respectively withheld views then framed and opened up views of the Park generally and the picturesque Gothic buildings within this landscaped setting. The successive enclosing and emerging again would have provided a satisfying serial experience as it would even today. Similar experiences are still possible in intact parts of the Botanic Gardens.

The slightly earlier grand processional approach avenue provides a different kind of serial experience. This walk was clearly calculated to engender a sense of impressiveness and instil an appropriate gravitas to the new University as a place of special privilege, superior knowledge and, closely related, power. That the natural drainage line and former dam could be enlarged and dramatically employed in this landscape theatre only added to the brilliance of the design.

In view of the considerable merits and subtleties inherent in this 1885 site master plan it is difficult to see how the derogatory opinion of 1990 can be reasonably sustained. Rather, there is embodied in this masterful plan an imaginative, skilful, interesting yet sensibly practical landscape design that represents an excellent example of insightful Victorian park planning in Sydney.

3.1.3 1912 Survey Plan of Victoria Park

By 1912 (**Figure 4**) a Bowling Clubhouse, Green and Tennis Court had been squeezed into the area behind the former Messenger's Gate Lodge and aligned parallel with City Road. A triangular area of grass remained to the west of these facilities. This configuration appeared to persist until very recently when the Bowling Club (which had subsumed the earlier tennis court) was removed.

This plan also confirms that the Park edge adjoining City Road was, or at least certainly intended to be, endowed with a plantation to form a substantial vegetative transition between the roadway and the Park. The plantation is abruptly curtailed at the Bowling Club/Tennis Court where shaded patterns across playing areas were obviously not tolerated.



The survey plan also records and preserves an important historical change of ownership with profound implications for the original design of Victoria Park. The bolder line running from Parramatta Road then across the approach avenue and through the Park near the western side shows what was to become the new boundary of the Park. Land on the western side of this line was to become the site of the University's post-war expansion program.

Figure 4 1912 survey detail

3.1.4 Archival Photography



Figure 5 1870 view along the Approach avenue to the University of Sydney's first building. Note that, apart from dense plantings at Parramatta Road, few other early plantings are evident. (Courtesy of the University of Sydney's Archives and Records Management Services, Image 0943)



Figure 6 1887 view across Victoria Park to the University's Main Building showing the various phases of development up to this time. The Stone Pines (*Pinus pinea*) of the outer line of the approach avenue are maturing well with the University's own campus planting providing a generous setting next to the building. The paling fence-enclosed plantations of the Park appear to be the most recent introductions. Note also the tree enclosures referred to by James Jones in his Diary entry. (Courtesy of the University of Sydney's Archives and Records Management Services, Image 0212)



Figure 7 c. 1890 view across Victoria Park showing the Main Building and the new Anderson Stuart Building Medical School on the left. The plantation in the middle straddles the old central drainage line with the extreme right-hand side enveloping the former small pond shown on the 1885 site plan. Note the maturing Stone Pines along the Approach Reserve though now without the inner line of fig trees. In this photograph and the preceding one, the paths and plantations conform exactly with the 1885 plan. (Courtesy of the University of Sydney's Archives and Records Management Services, Image 0026)



Figure 8 A c.1900 Christmas and New Year postcard view of ET Blacket's Main Building showing the maturing Park and University plantings. Note the rich mixture of conifers, evergreen broadleaf and deciduous broadleaf species. (Courtesy of the University of Sydney's Archives and Records Management Services, Image 0805)



Figure 9 A picturesque 1900s postcard view of “The Lake, University Park, Sydney” featuring a willow-clad island and early pedestrian bridge along the Approach avenue to the University. This, and the following, view illustrates how important the Park was as a favourable advertisement for the University and the City. (City of Sydney ArchivePix SRC 9617)



Figure 10 This superb image of the Park and University from c.1900 indicates something of what was intended by the original designs for the site. It brilliantly shows off the early grand avenue and original lake form with its associated composition of plantings. It would be highly desirable to aim to recapture such a high quality setting for Victoria Park. (City of Sydney ArchivePix SRC 9616)



Figure 11 This 1910 view along Parramatta Road towards the University shows the earlier dense perimeter plantation of fig trees before repeated road widening incursions. Note the Stone Pine avenue leading up to the Main Building along with the pedestrian bridge and distant pathway. A plantation along the ridge is also starting to define the edge of the Park. (Courtesy of the University of Sydney's Archives and Records Management Services, Image 0556)



Figure 12 An excellent undated view from the Main Building across Victoria Park to Chippendale. Note the tower and spire of AWN Pugin's St Benedict's, Broadway along the axis of the grand avenue. The southern line of Stone Pines also appears to have gone. (Courtesy of the University of Sydney's Archives and Records Management Services, Image 0049)



Figure 13 An undated view across the former ornamental lake to the Gardener's Gate Lodge and pedestrian bridge. (Courtesy of the University of Sydney's Archives and Records Management Services, Image 0030)

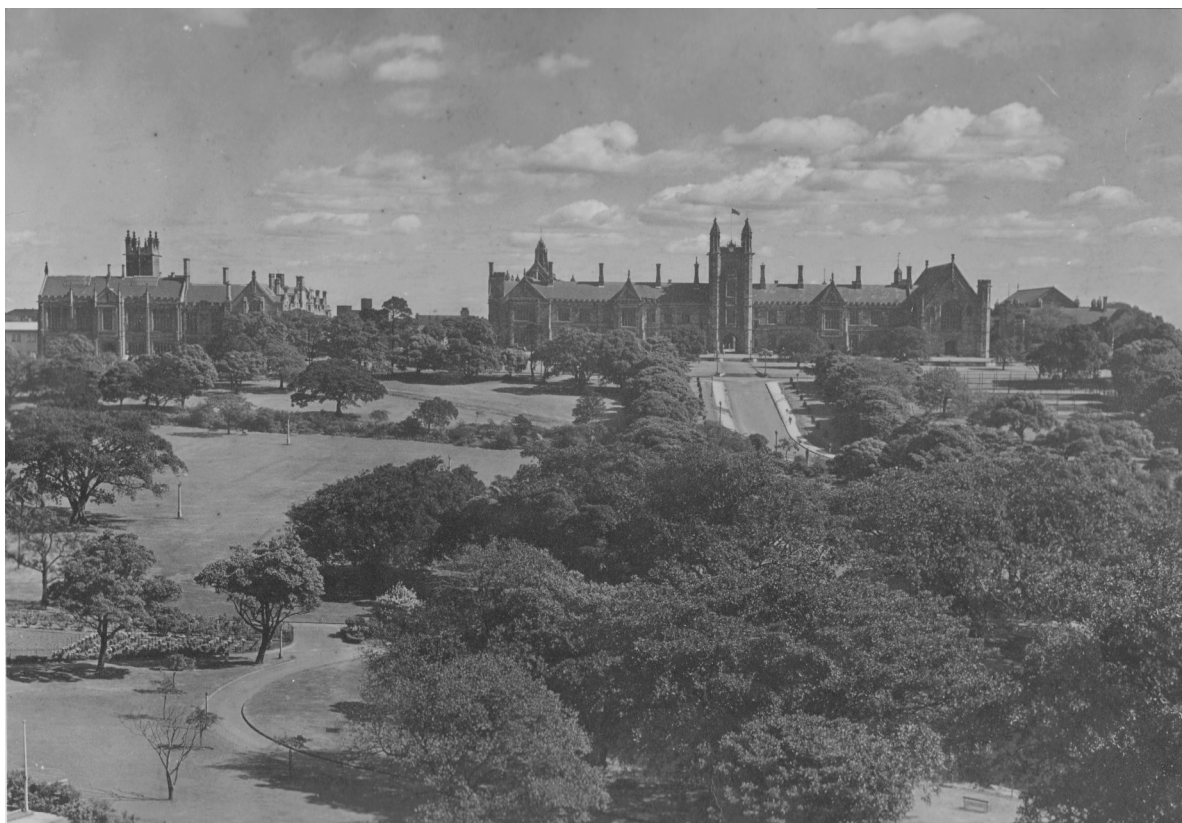


Figure 14 A fine c.1928 view from the vicinity of City Road towards the University showing the mass of fig trees around the lake with a line of new plantings across the middle distance indicating the new boundary between the University and the Park. (Courtesy of the University of Sydney's Archives and Records Management Services, Image 0027)



Figure 15 A 1931 view of the ornamental lake with vestiges of earlier plantings – including willows that may have their provenance to the Baptist Nursey in Redfern from the 1880 donation cited by Charles Moore. (City of Sydney ArchivePix SRC 9650)



Figure 16 A 1930s image of a Moreton Bay Fig Tree along Parramatta Road being removed. Note the iron palisade fencing that formerly defined the edge of the Park and provided a formal street address. (City of Sydney ArchivePix SRC 9679)



Figure 17 An undated view (c.1940s?) of the lake with the appropriately Mediaeval Gothic form of the University's Main Building behind. Compare this image with **Figure 10**. (City of Sydney ArchivePix SRC 9564)



Figure 18 View in May 1954 of the swimming pool under construction with an unknown structure in the background near the existing playground. (City of Sydney ArchivePix NSCA CRS 47/487)



Figure 19 Another May 1954 view (though the image is reversed) of the pool under construction. (City of Sydney ArchivePix NSCA CRS 47/492)



Figure 20 The lake in c.1964 after major reshaping and edging. The bland and sterile result provides an interesting comparison with **Figures 10** and **15**. (City of Sydney ArchivePix SRC 9614)



Figure 21 A mid-1970s view of the area around the lake used for massed seating – the Park should retain its capacity to function well as an informal venue for community events. (City of Sydney ArchivePix SRC 9703)

3.1.5 Aerial Photography



Figure 22 1949 photography showing the Park at a critical time. It provides an excellent record of the state of the Park since the latter part of the 19th century as well as the new boundary where the western third of the Park was lost to the University's post-war expansion program. It also shows the Park just prior to the destructive 1950s phase of development where the swimming pool was built and the lake's form and character modified for the worse. Nevertheless the Park's 19th century features, such as plantings and layout, are clearly evident here and many of these important attributes remain in 2008. (City of Sydney ArchivePix SRC 2079)



Figure 23 This revealing oblique aerial view from 1961 shows the impact of the Modernist post-war construction ethos on an otherwise remarkably consistent small-grained Victorian built environment and the Victorian-era Park character. The pool and lake, together with the earlier bowling greens, have effectively sterilised a substantial amount of the remains of the old Park. At this time there was an awkward pretense that the grand avenue didn't exist – despite the majestic evidence to the contrary. To the Council's and University's credit this part of the Park has been rectified.

3.1.6 Documentary Sources

* *Botanic Gardens Plant Despatches*

From the latter part of the 19th century through to the early 20th century the Botanic Gardens despatched many plants to both Sydney University and Victoria Park. In her 1990 report, Helen Proudfoot notes a number of such despatches to Sydney University in the 1860s and suggests that these may well have been intended for the Approach Reserve (which was, at that time, part of the University grounds). This is certainly possible given that species on the lists coincide with species either known to have been planted in the Reserve (Stone Pine) or still present there (Moreton Bay Fig Trees).

From 1881 there were several plant despatches to Victoria Park and one entry actually records the species is a very large consignment from July 4. The following list attempts to transcribe the

original handwriting in the Botanic Gardens ledger though the unusual compressed calligraphy makes it extremely difficult to read and is compounded by the use of earlier taxa that have now had the benefit of a century of taxonomic revision.

Many of these species are readily recognisable – even despite the earlier nomenclature – and, very significantly, old representatives of some of these species remain on site (eg. *Phoenix reclinata*, *Pinus roxburghii* [formerly known as *P. longifolia*] and *Cinnamomum camphora* [formerly known as *Laurus camphora*]).

Also of interest is the large number of Oak species, Eucalypts, Pittosporum species, Pine species and coniferous genera generally (very typical of the 19th century). Of particular interest is the number of indigenous rainforest species such as Red Cedar, Coachwood, fig trees, Lillipillis, Rosewood, Corkwood, Ash, Laurel, Burdekin Plum and Kentia Palm. Even the traditional academic stimulants – coffee and tea – are included!

Within the list are a number of species that can be linked back directly with Charles Moore. The International Plant Names Index notes that Moore described *Flindersia greavesii* and *Ficus macrophylla* subsp. *columnaris* though other plants may have also been the subject of Moore's botanical scrutiny. This evidence closely suggests that Moore was directly involved with the choice of species to be sent to Victoria Park.

The original plant names are retained in the following list as updating them entails a time-consuming process of checking various botanical references. Current names that are readily known are included in brackets. 1881 plant despatch to Victoria Park, Newtown, July 4:

Dracaena draco
Ceratopetalum apetalum
Cedrela australis [Now *Toona ciliata*]
Batonia tenax
Cryptocarya australis
Wellingtonia gigantea [Now *Sequoiadendron giganteum*]
Tetranthera ferruginea
Quercus sp.? Japan [possibly *Q. acutissima* that still exists on site]
Ficus columnaris (2 plants) [*Ficus macrophylla* subsp. *columnaris*]
Azalea Dunbarii? [species difficult to read]
Azalea Mortii
Abies [species difficult to read] (2 plants)
Pinus longifolia (2 plants) [Now *P. roxburghii*]
Pinus pungens
Pinus ponderosa (2 plants)
Pinus insignis [Now *P. radiata*]
Thuja Menziesii
Podocarpus spinulosus (2 plants)
Quercus virens (2 plants) [Now *Q. virginiana*]
Stenocarpus sinuatus (2 plants)
Araucaria excelsa (6 plants) [Now *Araucaria heterophylla*]
Eugenia sisyrthifolia (2 plants)
Eugenia parvifolia (2 plants) [Now *Myrceugenia parvifolia*]
Quercus ballota
Quercus glabra
Quercus salicina
Quercus sp. India
[Genus difficult to read] c—dsiformis?
Syzygium Moorei
Abies Jezoensis (2 plants)

Pinus patula
 Pinus canariensis
 Pinus Jeffreyi
 Pinus Coulteri
 Laurus camphora (2 plants) [Now *Cinnamomum camphora*]
 Bradelia australis (2 plants)
 Eucalyptus siderophloia (2 plants)
 Eucalyptus tereticornis
 Eucalyptus sp.? Cabramatta
 Eucalyptus cinerea
 Eucalyptus cornuta
 Eucalyptus calophylla
 Quercus bicolor
 Quercus tinctoria (2 plants) [Now *Q. velutina*]
 Quercus palustris (2 plants)
 Taxodium distichum
 Sterculia bursida? [species difficult to read] (2 plants) [*Brachychiton* sp.?]
 Pittosporum eugenioides (2 plants)
 Pittosporum Ralphii (2 plants)
 Pittosporum species nova? (2 plants)
 Pittosporum Colensoi (2 plants)
 Pittosporum crassifolium
 Ficus Muellieri [*Ficus superba* var. *muelleri*]
 Duboisia myoporoides
 Vitex littoralis [Now *V. lucens*]
 Flindersia Greavesii
 Actinidia australis
 Plant from Richmond River
 Melaleuca styphelioides
 Native Plum, Burdekin River [*Pleiogynium timorense*]
 Dysoxylum Fraserianum
 Baloghia lucida
 Crataegus spathulata
 Cocos plumosus
 Kentia Forsteriana [Now *Howea forsteriana*]
 Corypha australis [Now *Livistona australis*]
 Phoenix reclinata
 Thea assamica [*Camellia* sp.?]
 Coffea arabica
 Dracaena sp.? New Zealand (2 plants)
 Abersia? Caffra (2 plants)
 Nephelium tomentosum [Now *Alectryon tomentosus*]
 Cupania serrata
 Cotton Tree, Kro?? Island
 Rhus succedanea (2 plants)
 Magnolia grandiflora

*** Baptist Nursery, Redfern Plant Donation, 1880**

Not all of the Park's plantings were derived from the Botanic Gardens collections. Some came by way of, at least one of, the local Sydney nurseries. The Proudfoot report notes an 1880 letter linking Charles Moore with a donation by nurseryman John Baptist of Redfern of *Salix babylonica* for the pond at Victoria Park. There remains a Weeping Willow on one of the islands of Lake Northam though it is uncertain if it relates to the 1880 material.

* *James Jones Diary*

As part of his normal duties of Overseer of the Government Domains, James Jones is known to have had a direct connexion with the Park in 1884 as an entry in his works Diary records:-

“Squares for trees at Victoria Park as erected by Pickering and Sons, with 4 posts, 5ft out of ground & leaning outwards and 5 horizontal H.W. [hardwood] battens nailed on. Cost per square 1 pound each. They answered the purpose but were not very sightly.”⁵

These tree guards are clearly evident in the photographs at **Figures 6** and **7**. Unfortunately Jones' Diary doesn't indicate that he drew up the 1880s site plan, though he was perfectly capable of devising such a plan. Other documents – one a letter Jones wrote in 1919 to his previous Guernsey Island employer and a 1932 biographical account of Jones in the RAHS Journal – also mention his part in the design and upkeep of various parks but do not specifically mention Victoria Park.

A further source of information about Jones' responsibilities is included in Henry Joseph Maiden's magnanimous support of his Government Domains Overseer. In a letter to the Under Secretary⁶, Maiden said of Jones that his “title of Overseer of Domains is imperfect and even misleading. He prepares the plans, estimates, etc. for most of the gardening work required by other Departments of the Government, such as Railways, Police, Government Architect, and also for Municipal Parks. He often supervises the work referred to.”

Again there is the tantalising suggestion that Jones did more at Victoria Park than his Diary reveals and yet without the specific link it is presumptuous to make any more than a possible attribution to Jones of the 1880s layout plan for the Park.

3.2 Site Review

3.2.1 Site Layout & Relationship with the University

A review of Victoria Park shows that, while the University has subsumed a substantial part of the Park's former western edge, a considerable amount of the early park layout is still easily recognisable. Older plantings reveal the early grand avenue to the University and other earlier plantings reveal the paths that appear on the 1880s site plan. In many cases these original paths are still surfaced and used on a regular basis.

Parts of the northern edge of the Park have been lost to incursions from the widening of Parramatta Road although the edge along City Road appears to be largely intact. The pond has been dramatically reconfigured and, compared with the earlier version, not with particularly convincing results.

An early campus planning principle was for the University buildings to sit along the north-south trending ridgeline with an address to the Park and through which many students, lecturers and staff were meant to pass *en route* to the campus. This series of sandstone structures, modelled mostly on the favourite Academic or Perpendicular Gothic style, remains probably one of the most brilliant and significant examples of such a group in Australia with major contributions from a virtual who's who of architects such as Blacket, Barnet, Sulman, Vernon and Wilkinson.

The elevated, sculptural profiles of the Gothic structures originally provided an evocative and lively skyline complement to the varied plantings below. This powerful and extraordinary

⁵ Diary of James Jones, Head Gardener of the Botanic Gardens, 1 Vol. 1884-1889, AO 2/8558, p.21

⁶ JH Maiden to Under Secretary, 20 Dec. 1907 quoted in Gilbert, Lionel, *The Little Giant: The Life & Work of JH Maiden*, Kardoorair Press, Armidale, 2001, p. 206

combination – beautifully exploited in the early views of the ensemble (Figures 1, 7, 8, 10, 14 etc.) – was effectively lost in the mid-20th century with the imposition of the wall of Modernist slab blocks along the Park's western boundary.

Some sense of respite could perhaps be provided in this fateful post-war phase if these newer buildings actively engaged with the Park but the reality is that, apart from the first stage building of the current Fisher Library, each of the 1950s and 1960s buildings adjoining the Park simply ignored it and provided no meaningful apertures to address the park or attempt to claim it as part of its setting. This unfortunate mode of planning then led to a similar response from within the Park where many new plantings were added along the western boundary to try to screen out the offending buildings.

Together these events have led to compromise and confusion in relation to the earlier sympathetic relationship between the University campus and the Park. More positively, the new Law Faculty building, on the site of the former Edgeworth David and Stephen Roberts buildings, seeks to improve this relationship by introducing some active engagement between the campus and its traditional parkland setting.

3.2.2 Existing Facilities & Structures

The original Gardener's Gate Lodge is the only surviving structure of substance from the 19th century to remain intact in its original position. Apart from some pathways, sections of fencing plinth and palisading the Gate Lodge remains the only surviving purpose-built structure from the 1880s Park layout. With the exception of these elements and the recently reconstructed pedestrian bridge all other structures within the Park are largely independent of the Park and have little relevance to it.

Chief among these latter elements are the swimming pool and its hedging, the Totem Pole & the former Alderman Northam's yacht sculpture. Even the pond edging treatment and form sits awkwardly within the Park. The recent car park – located over the site of the former bowling club area – also carries a certain sense of self-consciousness within the context of the Park.

Perhaps because of their smaller scale or open, skeletal form, the playground structures seem somewhat neutral compared with the major intrusive elements mentioned above. Near the western fence – towards the new Law Faculty building – there is a small memorial to the unofficial Aboriginal tent embassy from 1988 as a protest to the official Australian Bicentenary program. A number of Eucalypt saplings are associated with the memorial.

3.2.3 Existing Vegetation

Victoria Park remains well endowed with a considerable number (about 300), and broad range, of introduced plantings – many of them dating to over 100 years old. Almost all of these plantings are noted on Council's Tree Health and Conditional Assessment Schedule and Tree Works Plan.

Of special interest are those plantings that represent the following:-

- * Plantings from the 19th century – either the earliest surviving plantings (these are represented chiefly in the veteran Moreton Bay Fig Trees either side of the lake and along the grand avenue as survivors of the original c. 1860s site development) or those undertaken as part of the 1880s site development;

- * Plantings that can be linked to known plant consignments from the Botanic Gardens or private nurseries and those with direct links to Charles Moore (these include such species as the previous fig trees as well as *Ficus macrophylla* subsp. *columnaris*, *Quercus acutissima*, *Pinus*

roxburghii, *Stenocarpus sinuatus*, *Araucaria heterophylla*, *Cinnamomum camphora*, *Ficus superba* var. *Muelleri*, *Livistona australis*, *Phoenix reclinata*, *Agathis robusta*, *Quercus palustris*, *Magnolia grandiflora*, *Salix babylonica* and *Lophostemon confertus*);

* Old plantings that, as yet, are not able to be linked to known suppliers or sources such as those above (these include the *Citharexylon spinulosum*, *Olea europaea* var. *africana*, *Quercus ilex*, *Q. suber*, *Brachychiton acerifolius*, *Phoenix canariensis*, *Waterhousea floribunda*, *Podocarpus falcatus*, *Cordyline terminalis* and *Cedrus deodara*); and

* Rare plantings in cultivation in Sydney and of interest to horticultural botany (this would certainly include the examples of *Combretum erythrophyllum* as well as the *Ficus superba* var. *Muelleri* and, possibly, *Ficus macrophylla* subsp. *columnaris* and *Quercus acutissima*).

The two surviving plantings of *Combretum erythrophyllum* are, at this size and age, rare in Sydney (and possibly well beyond) with another large example known to be in the Royal Botanic Gardens, Sydney (**Figures 24 and 25**). *Quercus acutissima* is also interesting as other large examples known to the author are at Mount Tomah Botanic Garden where they probably thrive better in the cooler climatic conditions.

None of the earlier indigenous site vegetation appears to have survived. From a review of the Benson and Howell conjectural reconstruction of the Cumberland Plain and Coastal flora⁷, the principal former vegetation alliance for Victoria Park is presumed to be Turpentine-Ironbark Forest though the drainage areas that once fed Blackwattle Creek may have also featured freshwater riparian species. It is also possible that the eponymous plant of the former creek, *Callicoma serratifolia*, may have also been found on the site originally.



Figure 24 An established *Combretum erythrophyllum* in the Lower Gardens of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Sydney

⁷ Benson, Doug and Jocelyn Howell, *Taken for Granted: The Bushland of Sydney and its Suburbs*, The Royal Botanic Gardens, Sydney, 1990



Figure 25 The information sign details under the same RBG tree.

3.3 Reconciliation of 19th Century Layout with Physical Evidence

Equipped with a review of the archival record it is possible to retrace substantial parts of the earlier 19th century site development phases in relation to the current fabric and layout. There remain important representatives of both the main 19th century phases of grounds layout.

The earliest site elements that can still be appreciated are the basic site topography (though with a number of exceptions that are explored below), a water element of some kind (dam, pond, lake) in the northeast corner of the site and the original townscape context of Parramatta Road to the north, City Road to the east and the University campus to the west.

The next major feature of the Park was the development of the grand avenue linking the eastern edge with the Main Building. The basic space has always been apparent since its formation some time shortly after the mid-1850s despite a period of neglect and indifference during the mid-20th century. The more recent reconstruction of parts of this important feature has essentially served to reactivate this bold spatial landscape.

Most of the remaining paths within the Park stem from the 1880s site development phase where all of the elements shown on the 1885 site plan were actually implemented. A percentage of these disappeared with the excision of the western part of the Park to the University and the pool later accounted for the demise of the central part of another axial path.

However, beyond these modifications a remarkable amount of the 19th century parkland remains.

In relation to the site topography the pool, and its associated clearing and levelling, caused a cut into the sloping western ground that lead to the present bank on the western side of the pool.

A result of this has been the need to use steps along the grand avenue in order to maintain access to the University.

Some further modifications to natural levels occurred earlier to this in the areas around the lake and towards the corner of Parramatta and City Roads. Since the interwar construction of the boundary between the University and the Park there have been some changes to levels on the University side stemming from the various episodes of construction work during the 1950s and 1960s.

In relation to plantings the main concentrations of trees remain along the old site boundaries (City Road and Parramatta Road) and along the earlier accessways (including the grand avenue). Beyond these there are a number of older drifts of trees out into the broad grassed spaces – some of which may have had the benefit of the tree guards James Jones referred to in his Diary.

Some of the fig trees comprising the Park-edge definition remain within the University grounds to the south along the southern side of the Carlaw Building and either side of the new pedestrian bridge over City Road.



Figure 26 An 1880s avenue preserved by the Brush Box plantings. Evidence of an earlier pathway likely remains under the grass.



Figure 27 Another 1880s avenue preserved by the flanking fig tree plantings. This important vestige of the 19th century Park layout could be reactivated as an entry to the new Law Faculty precinct of the University campus.



Figure 28 This *Phoenix reclinata* is likely a survivor of the 1880s plantings throughout Victoria Park. This plant and the two old clumps of *Cordyline terminalis* nearby would have been part of the plantations that once framed the Cleveland Street entry to the Park.

4 Consideration of Significance

4.1 Outline of Aspects of Value

On the basis of the above review of documentary material and a review of the site context the following discussion considers what is it that remains of value for Victoria Park before summarising these in a concise statement. A further section then extracts basic conservation management implications that arise from these aspects of significance before the final section provides policy recommendations.

4.1.1 As an Approach Space to, and setting for, the University of Sydney

It is likely that the first structured development of the site was shortly after, and in close conjunction with, the mid-1850s completion of Edmund Blacket's main University range. Certainly by the early 1860s the triple avenue was planted and fenced with a bridge over the old cattle dam and horse pond that became a poetic lake.

It is probable that the grand triple avenue within the Approach Reserve was also part of Blacket's design for the University campus. The Main Building with its central tower – to which the approach axis is strongly linked – represents one of Blacket's widely-acknowledged masterpieces and the two gate lodges have also been attributed to him.

It is also known that Blacket was directly involved with the selection of this land for the campus while he was still the Colonial Architect, then the choice of the ridgeline for the first buildings so it would seem logical to attribute the grand avenue to him as it was obviously considered an integral part of the early University layout.

Such a revelation would mean that this major Park element, along with the broad terraces in front of the Main Building, represents a rare example of an ET Blacket foray into landscape design.

An analysis of the 1949 aerial photography (**Figure 22**) also suggests that subsidiary axes – parallel to the main central axis but either side – aligning with the mid-range porches of the Main Building projected down the hill along the spaces between each outer double row of avenue trees. Such a strong connexion further indicates a line of planning that hints at Blacket designing the avenue as part of the initial campus plan.

So despite the new change of level along the main access and losses to the outer avenue plantings the northern part of Victoria Park (as an original adjunct to the University campus) remains as an important early approach landscape and setting to the University – especially the Main Building. Another aspect of significance is in the reasonable attribution of the plan of the grand avenue to Edmund Blacket as part of the initial campus plan.

The design and scale of the triple avenue is also of particular interest in that it appears to be the first such substantial Victorian landscape feature in the State. Other, earlier, avenues were usually only a double row of trees (such as the avenue of Norfolk Island Pines to Annandale House and Charles Moore's former fig tree avenue along what is now the Cahill Expressway between the Botanic Gardens and The Domain).

Later multiple avenues appeared at the end of the 19th century such as the Grand Drive linking Anzac Parade with Centennial Park and along the Moore Park section of Anzac Parade.

4.1.2 Victoria Park as Evidence of a Major 19th Century Landscape Design

The second major phase of development – this time for the remainder of the Park – was the 1880s implementation of the layout and plantings shown on the 1885 site plan. Substantial amounts of this design remain in the form of paths, plantings and, potentially, landscape archaeology despite losses of area to the University and the swimming pool.

While the author of the plan remains unknown, and a possible attribution may be tendered for James Jones as Charles Moore's assistant for such places, the remnant plan still stands as a significant and impressive Victorian landscape design. It skilfully incorporated the earlier pond, enlarging it as a water feature as well as allowing the natural topographic character to remain legible.

Victoria Park also remains as one of a series of important 19th century parks within the inner Sydney area. They include Wentworth Park (formerly James Jones's earlier responsibility before joining the Botanic Gardens), Jubilee Park, Prince Alfred Park (purportedly to a design of architect Benjamin Backhouse), Redfern Park, Belmore Park, Moore Park, Hyde Park and Rushcutter's Bay Park (also having documented involvement from James Jones).

Of this ring of parks around the CBD only Victoria Park and Moore Park have associated ornamental water bodies (if concreted drainage channels are excluded) and only Victoria Park is associated with a university campus. Further, the interrelationship between the University campus and the Park was no mere accident, it was intentionally planned as a close and mutually beneficial one.

Many of these other urban parks have also sustained substantial later modifications (eg. Hyde Park and Wentworth Park) or been developed at a later date (eg. Redfern Park) or remain with even less layout and fabric intact (eg. Prince Alfred Park and Rushcutter's Bay Park). Within the City of Sydney, Victoria Park is unique within New South Wales as a contemporarily planned setting for a major 19th century university campus.

4.1.3 Townscape Value

The Park also 'reads' as a major, iconic element within the local townscape as well as part of the traditional setting for the University campus. Victoria Park has been long recognised as a major open space within the local area. Even from before the Park's formation the site was a well-known open landscape at the junction of Parramatta Road (originally Sydney Road) and City Road (formerly the Newtown Road).

4.1.4 Social Value

Victoria Park likely holds considerable value for the present community for a number of reasons - regular involvement with park-based recreational activities (including the swimming pool), access to the University or other destinations, University orientation venue, lunchtime and weekend venue, family associations, childhood links, focus for social activities or as part of the local neighbourhood setting. For a time it was even an unofficial Aboriginal tent embassy attracting considerable press attention during the 1988 Bicentennial events.

Given its prominent position in the Broadway, Chippendale and Camperdown areas it may well also register strongly in the 'mental mapping' of many people – local residents and visitors - as an important travel reference point.

A children's playground has been part of the Park infrastructure since 1912 and indeed children are shown using the Park in the late 19th century (**Figure 7**) as well as in the 1940s (**Figure 17**). The point here is not so much the actual play equipment as the focus of significance as the

organised activity or focus of children's play within the Park. For over 120 years children – likely mostly those from the local neighbourhoods - have used Victoria Park as a place of play.

More recently, the swimming pool has become a focus of water-based recreational activity within the Park and likely holds value for this reason though it is not known to what extent this is linked to the Park as a setting for the pool as opposed to the general location.

4.1.5 Individual Elements

Many elements within the Park also hold cultural value individually as well as collectively. These include the following:-

- * Original Gardener's Gate Lodge;
- * Gate piers & gates;
- * Surviving plantings from the original 1860s layout (Moreton Bay Fig Trees);
- * Surviving plantings based on the 1880s layout - older trees within the Park – particularly those of direct relevance to the 1880s landscape design such as fig trees, Kauri Pine and other old conifers, Sawtooth Oak, Holm Oak, Date Palm clump and *Cordyline terminalis*;
- * *Combretum erythrophyllum* (as a rare species at this age in cultivation in Sydney, likely of interesting provenance and of interest to horticultural botany);
- * Evidence of earliest playground near City Road; and
- * Perimeter palisade fencing and sandstone plinth.

4.1.6 Associational Value

Victoria Park carries historical associational value as a site that is able to demonstrate the direct involvement of one of Australia's leading Victorian architects, Edmund Thomas Blacket, as well as Charles Moore in its formative planning and design. It is also closely associated with former Colonial Secretary, Edward Deas Thomson (as a founding Park Trustee) as well as Professor EG Waterhouse (as part of tripartite committee to advise on the Park) during the 1930s.

4.2 Other Considerations

As well as considering those elements that positively contribute to the cultural value of the Park it is also necessary to consider those elements that conflict with principal attributes or have low or negligible value in relation to the Park's principal attributes.

4.2.1 Intrusive Elements

In the context of the Park retaining substantial components of its 19th century form and character, the following more recent interventions much be regarded as negative or intrusive elements within the Park. Another way of putting this is to ask how well these new structures and forms reflect the otherwise strongly Victorian landscape character and historical origins of Victoria Park.

The following three interventions are listed under this category for being representative examples of 1950s Modernist-inspired design but with little demonstrable sympathy to their historical context.

- * Swimming Pool – including the service areas that confront the Park centre and the cut embankment to the west of the pool complex;
- * Form of the lake and formalised island – these are awkward, simplistic forms that have little convincing resonance with their Park setting and, compared with the earlier lake form shown on the 1885 plan, represent a retrogressive development;

* Northam yacht sculpture – while this may be a worthy example of 1950s design and is, in itself, an almost neutral feature, its association, and combination, with the naïve lake design renders the sculpture out of place in the context of a Victorian park landscape. The other aspect to the fountain is that the earlier water form was of a quiet and placid character (**Figures 9 and 10**) and never had a fountain associated with it. The Park did have a fountain but this was located some distance away and had a very different context.

4.2.2 Neutral Elements

The following elements within the Park do not carry high, or even moderate, value individually and could be regarded as being of a neutral nature – neither greatly positive nor greatly negative.

- * Existing Children's Playground (equipment) – this should not be confused with a playground as a deliberate focus of child-centred activity which is an attribute of much higher significance;
- * Existing pedestrian bridge (as a recent [conjectural?] reconstruction of earlier examples);
- * Totem Pole – this may have cultural value individually but has no relevance to Victoria Park.

4.3 Statement of Significance

Victoria Park is of considerable value to the State of NSW, the City of Sydney, the University of Sydney and the local neighbourhood for the following reasons:-

- * It retains substantial components – including fabric, spaces, layout and Victorian character - of its formative 19th century planning and design;
- * One of these components – the long axis and grand triple avenue linking City Road (and the remaining original gate lodge) to ET Blacket's Main Building tower - was a key design feature of the earliest University campus planning and was likely already implemented by the early 1860s;
- * This feature has a strong attribution to Edmund Blacket as the initial campus designer and would represent a rare and spectacular example of a Blacket landscape design while probably also being the first such triple avenue in the State;
- * Despite land excisions and the imposition of the intrusive swimming pool, the remnant Victoria Park is probably one of Sydney's more intact Victorian landscape designs and still conveys a sense of the skill with which it exploited the natural drainage system and topography;
- * The Park remains closely linked with the University of Sydney and continues, or has the potential, to form an important part of the campus setting as originally intended;
- * It continues to make a major contribution to the local townscape and remains an area of open space that forms a key reference point for the Chippendale/Broadway precinct;
- * It has direct associations with major figures of the 19th and early 20th century including one of Australia's outstanding Victorian architects, ET Blacket, the first (and longest-serving) Director of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Sydney, Charles Moore, the former Colonial Secretary, Edward Deas Thomson (as a founding Park Trustee) as well as Professor EG Waterhouse during the 1930s;
- * It likely holds considerable value to the present community for many reasons;
- * Children's playgrounds have been an element of the Park for about 100 years.

4.4 Implications Arising from Significance

Each of the aspects of cultural value given in **Section 4.3** carry implications for the future management of the Park. These implications are briefly outlined.

- * The substantial components of Victoria Park's formative 19th century planning and design – including its fabric, spaces, layout and Victorian character – should be conserved which includes interpreting it.
- * The long axis and remnant grand triple avenue linking City Road to ET Blacket's Main Building tower should be conserved and, where lines or plantings are missing, replanted where possible and, to enhance and interpret the original design intentions and as a complement to the remaining gate lodge, a new appropriate and sympathetic structure should be commissioned to replace the missing Messenger's Gate Lodge.
- * There should be no further land excisions or large new structures built within the Park that compromise its significant landscape design.
- * Where possible, consider reconstructing major components of the Victorian landscape design such as the central lake in order to achieve a more sympathetic outcome for the Park and a more generous grassed area for the community and University.
- * Ensure the Park and the University continue to demonstrate close links and, where possible, seek ways of meaningfully re-engaging the campus with the Park as originally intended.
- * Ensure the Park remains a major townscape element within the local precinct.
- * Interpret the Park's significant historical associations.
- * Ensure the Park continues to serve the community and social value is respected.
- * Ensure the Park continues to cater for the needs of children while respecting the Park's status as a valuable surviving example of a major Victorian landscape design.

5 Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Discussion

The following discussion and recommendations directly stem from the previous section on cultural significance. Many of the recommendations are of a basic nature and can immediately be used to assist with ongoing maintenance and management of the Park. There are other conclusions and resultant recommendations that are more dramatic in their consequences and would require a much longer timeframe to consider and debate let alone implement.

Some of these latter recommendations are certainly more difficult and may never be able to be implemented. However the logic of the review of evidence through to the stating of the Park's cultural value demands that even the hard conclusions need to be raised for consideration. The Park is recognised, in this report, as an important cultural landscape within the City of Sydney and having State value. In this context it is important that all recommendations with a sound basis in evidence and analysis should be properly considered.

Victoria Park's integrity has suffered through the loss of land, the introduction of the bowling greens and the swimming centre and a gradual erosion of its plantations and spaces however through documentary evidence many missing components of its original design could be reinstated or recovered. (The recent reconstruction of parts of the grand avenue is a highly commendable example of one of these elements.)

The majority of the issues arising from this report concern the maintenance of the significant 19th century layout and design that exists while recovering as much of the integrity of the remnant Park as possible. Considerations arising from the latter issues include enabling the Park and the University to engage more directly and meaningfully, reconsidering the place of the swimming pool within the Park and otherwise removing intrusive or thematically irrelevant elements from the Park. By far, however, the pool is the most difficult issue.

It is clear from a review of the Park's history that its 19th century origins were so undervalued by the middle of the 20th century as to have been effectively ignored. This is especially apparent with the positioning of the swimming pool complex across the Park's earliest and most notable design feature – the triple avenue leading to Blacket's tower. The process of neglect for this feature was further reinforced with the demolition of the earlier bridge crossing and placement of a playground within the old axis.

Of course part of the rationale for the demise of the avenue during the mid-20th century was the enforcement of new legal and administrative boundaries across the original site. Yet, the swimming pool has been consistently recognised as a mixed blessing. While it provides a desirable facility at a reasonable cost and has been progressively improved it does, nevertheless, retain its most basic problem – it does not fit well with the Park landscape.

The pool complex began as an awkward element and, despite its present low-profile elevation, it continues to be perceived as a large, unrelated and dominating form within the Park. Worse still, no matter what is done to improve the situation the result will still be out of place within a Victorian park setting. The very nature of a Modernist design is that it must remain true to its own bold, stripped back ethos. It will never fit sympathetically within the Park.

Part of the problem with the pool's lack of effective integration within the Park is that it is an entirely independent entity – it could just as well be anywhere. The pool complex is a repetition of the bowling club and greens – consuming valuable urban landscape with totally unrelated structures that could just as effectively be located elsewhere.

Even within the pool area, the Park assumes a minor role, the Park's picturesque qualities are not exploited or even evoked within the pool complex's spaces. Pool patrons are not necessarily aware of the park setting nor likely go there because of the Park setting. Those using the nearby children's playground facilities are much more likely to engage with the surrounding Park than those within the pool complex.

Any review of the pool should be undertaken in the context of three pools in relative close proximity - new aquatic centre in Ultimo, a planned new aquatic centre just minutes away along Cleveland Street at Prince Alfred Park and the University pool only minutes away across City Road.

As long as the pool complex remains, the Park will continue to be a largely divided and compromised landscape. And given that Victoria Park can now be recognised as a highly significant remnant Victorian landscape design with important associations and a status of, at least, State level, it is a great loss to retain within the Park such clearly incongruous elements that need not actually be there.

This is especially so where the pool precludes the desirable restoration/reconstruction of a larger lake area as an appropriate focus for the Park. An extended lake and additional grassed areas would be of considerable benefit to the community and the University. Such a model (of lake and grassed banks) is already known to be a very successful combination from Centennial Park and various botanic gardens.

Other concerns with respect to the pool include that it, and its intrusive western embankment, effectively divorce the western grounds of the Park (and campus) and interrupt the natural (and perceived) flow of the land to the original central drainage point.

The original pond area has also been compromised several times over since the 1950s. Despite the recent extension of the lake to reactivate the desirable pedestrian bridge the lake is left with a somewhat curtailed, awkward and bland legacy from the immediate post-war period. The insensitive application of yet another Modernist design remains very much out of place in the context of the Victorian Park character. The earlier form and extent of the pond – a modification of the earlier horse and cattle dam – was far superior in effect to the present stultified example.

Public parks, generally, have had a tendency to be used as a place for locating memorials, indicators, curiosities, artillery, aircraft, objects and structures. These are often of little, or no, relevance whatsoever to the actual place. While not qualifying with all of these mementoes, Victoria Park has had its share of unrelated additions.

The most conspicuous example being the Totem Pole now near the Cleveland Street entry though the more recent plantings of Australian trees near the western boundary also fit the crime – as probably does the Northam yacht sculpture. The propensity to introduce such irrelevant or unsympathetic material to the site should be strongly resisted.

5.2 Recommendations

Conserving the 19th century Planning/Design of Victoria Park

* Review the current listing of Victoria Park on the LEP and revise the citation to emphasise the Park as containing the important mid-19th century triple avenue as an integral link between the remaining Gate Lodge and University's Main Building as well as containing an important remnant 1880s landscape design. This emphasis goes beyond the Park simply being a background to the Gate Lodge.

- * In addition to refining and reinforcing the Council's heritage listing citation for Victoria Park, the place should also be listed on the State Heritage Register as it clearly meets the criteria for such listing especially given the important early link with ET Blacket.
- * Ensure the conservation of all components of Victoria Park's formative 19th century planning and design – including its fabric, spaces, layout and Victorian character.
- * In particular, continue to ensure the restoration/reconstruction of the mid-19th century grand avenue including, where possible, the reinstatement of the full triple avenues using physical evidence (existing remnant old trees and limited landscape archaeology) to resurvey the former lines. As the inner lines have been largely removed – especially within the campus where hedging replacements were introduced in the early 20th century – consider using an open plant form (such as *Washingtonia robusta*) to interpret and reinforce the inner avenue lines. Relocating some existing plantings may be necessary as part of the reconstruction and reinforcement of the triple avenues.
- * As part of the conservation of the grand avenue consider replacing the missing Messenger's Lodge (ideally through a competition) with an appropriate and sympathetic contemporary structure to complete the original ensemble.
- * Ensure there are no further land excisions or large new structures built within the Park that compromise its significant landscape design.
- * Continue to manage the conservation of older trees within the Park – particularly those of direct relevance to the 1880s landscape design such as those listed on the RBG despatch ledgers and the *Combretum erythrophyllum*. As these are very valuable species and horticultural representatives as well as forming a valuable collection it is essential that individual plants are nurtured as long as possible before removal. When public safety finally requires the removal of senescent trees, replacements propagated off this material should be replanted in the vicinity. In most of these cases the maintenance of the original stock as historic material is of greatest importance rather than whether the specimen demonstrates perfect form or growth habit.
- * As part of the essential conservation of the Park's formative layout, retain existing pathways that conform to the 1880s design and maintain and, where necessary, reinforce avenues and plantations where they exist and where known from archival evidence.
- * Plan to replace senescent vegetation with similar species (ideally propagated off existing species to maintain genetic continuity) in similar alignments and designs (ie. avenues, old shrubbery areas and perimeter plantings where they occur as such and individual drifts of trees into spaces) in order to maintain the basic design intent as shown on the 1885 site plan. Ensure spaces do not become cluttered.
- * All major plantings and most lower storey plantings should use species typical of the late 19th or early 20th century and ensure that major trees are configured in a way that is consistent with the character and layout of typical late Victorian landscape designs.
- * Reinforce the existing date palm (*Phoenix canariensis*) avenue along the east-west path from the car park entry to the swimming pool.
- * Consider using palms along the north-south path to the east of the pool to subtly define this pathway and reinforce it as part of the old layout while maintaining the existing open character. Suitable species would include various cabbage palms (*Livistona australis*, *L. decipiens* and *L. chinensis*) all of which have been used to great effect over 100 years earlier in other important parks in Sydney.

* Consider undertaking a park master plan that coordinates an approach to conserving and interpreting the 1885 concept plan by evoking the earlier bedding areas that formed important elements of enclosure and enframement of views. Any commitment to replicating maintenance-intensive shrubberies should be avoided. Rather, treatments should be explored that recreate the ideas or effects of the shrubberies. These may include trees of differing scale and form and/or dense groundcover bedding where there is dense shade.

* A component of such as a landscape master plan would be the planning for replacements and new plantings throughout the park – while ensuring the integrity of existing broad spaces – using typical Victorian species such as those known from the RBG plant despatch lists. These include a large number of Australian rainforest species that are appropriate both for their sympathetic Victorian character and also as interpretive of the Colonial, Victorian and Edwardian periods of discovery and botanical and horticultural interest in such species. For example JH Maiden sent *Argyrodendron trifoliolatum*, *Planchonella australis* and *Alectryon subcinereus* to Gladesville Hospital, *Harpullia pendula* and other indigenous rainforest species to Cumberland Hospital and several species of the genus *Flindersia* to The Meeting Place, Kurnell.

* Plan for the interpretation of the Park's rich history and significant historical associations.

University/Park Interface

* In ensuring the Park and the University continue to demonstrate close links and, ideally, re-engage consider removing the entire line of 1930s boundary fence (along with the concrete plinth and foundation) separating the eastern side of the University campus and the Park. This may require some further detailed consideration taking into account changes of level and desire-line implications. A result of this would be to open the Park for students as well as emphasise the integral position the Park and University have held historically.

* After removal of the fence from the University boundary, reinstate recovered palisading (after conservation treatment) to the remnant sandstone plinth along the outer edge of the Park (along City Road and Parramatta Road). Maintain this formal Park edge and street address in the way similar fencing is for Centennial Park.

* Plan for, and design, a pedestrian (only) path around the current western edge of the Park. This would interpret part of the earlier layout where a path originally marked out the former western boundary and provide a practical access where wear patterns have already developed.

* Consider the use of a discrete band of paving as a means of indicating the actual Park boundary as well as interpreting the existing divisive interwar fencing project.

* Consider setting up a formal ongoing mechanism to facilitate cooperative dialogue between Council and the University on the joint management of common issues between the campus and the Park.

Other Management Issues

* Avoid introducing permanent monuments, memorials or artworks within Victoria Park that have no direct and compelling relevance to the place.

* Consider the relocation from the Park of those existing structures that have no direct and compelling relevance to Victoria Park such as the Totem Pole and recent plantings that are inconsistent with the species, character, design and function of those shown on the 1885 site plan.

* Ensure the Park continues to cater for the needs of children while respecting the Park's status as a valuable surviving example of a major Victorian landscape design. This includes retaining and interpreting the 1912 playground site off City Road.

* Consider removing the swimming pool from the Park as it is a major intrusive element that has never fitted well into the Park and nor will it ever be capable of such. There are, or soon will be, other new pool facilities nearby at Prince Alfred Park, Ultimo and the University's own pool. The recent removal of the bowling club has set a sensible and appropriate precedent of dispensing with intrusive and superfluous elements within the Park. The removal of the swimming pool would allow the reconstruction of a larger central lake in order to achieve a more sympathetic outcome for the Victorian character of the Park and a more generous grassed area for the community and University. A design that recreated something of the landscape of the 1900s postcards (**Figures 9 and 10**) would be highly desirable.