

THEMATIC HISTORY

This thematic history uses themes recommended by the NSW Heritage Council and adopted June 2001. An historical theme is broadly based and describes a process that has contributed to the history of a place or community (see Volume 3, Appendix E for Heritage Office State Themes). Themes provide a context for heritage assessment and comparison and aim to ensure that all areas of heritage are covered. The order of the themes does not correspond to their relative importance.

Note: All photographs were taken by Conybeare Morrison & Partners in 2001 unless otherwise indicated.

Australian Theme - Tracing the Natural Evolution of Australia

NSW Theme - Environment – naturally evolved

Geology

For an outline of the geological timescale relating to the Parklands, refer to Attachment B and the Executive Summary.

- Centennial Parklands is located in the geological area known as the Botany Sands, the northern edge of the Botany Basin.
- The geology of Centennial Parklands comprises a complex of aeolian sand dunes, with an underlying layer of interbedded clays, peats and sands. The landform is of rounded sand dunes, with local depressions and exposed water tables of ponds and marshes.
- The outcrops of Hawkesbury sandstone at the north-eastern corner of Centennial Parklands form a ridge and define the head of the Botany Bay catchment.
- Underlying rock and sediments located on Federation Way adjacent to the intersection of Lang Road and Errol Flynn Boulevard show evidence of this area being once part of an ancient shoreline of Botany Bay.¹
- Natural drainage seeps through the jointed stone and acts as a natural aquifer in the Botany Bay catchment.

Topography

- Despite the topography being altered by European occupation, sand dunes, sandstone and erosion by water drainage still dominate.
- Aeolian sand dunes are located around the periphery of the Parklands' open space. Other steep slopes are related to engineering works such as pond embankments and water storage reservoirs.
- A narrow plateau is formed by the natural sandstone ridgeline in northern Centennial Park and northeastern Queen's Park.
- Sandstone slopes provide broken terraces. Isolated sandstone knolls are also present.
- The three major gullies in the centre of Centennial Parklands represent the former swamplands.
- There is a wide range of contour heights within Centennial Parklands.

Climate

- The climate is typical of eastern Sydney. Prevailing southerly and westerly winds have made planting works problematic. Areas

¹ Peter M. Martin & Associates (1998). Preliminary Tree Assessment of Old Grand Drive.

protected from these winds have had greater success because of favourable microclimates and the accessibility of water.

Drainage and landform

- Even following 19th Century modification of the vast wetlands called Lachlan Swamps, natural seepage has occurred through the sandstone slopes and upslope water drained to the Ponds system in Centennial Parklands.
- This natural drainage has long provided a fresh water source, including for the early colony and grazing land.
- Reservoirs and ponds fed by sandstone and concrete lined channels, have largely replaced the natural local drainage system. However the natural spring in Lachlan Swamp remains and Centennial Parklands retains its hydrological function as the head of the Botany Bay catchment area.

Soils

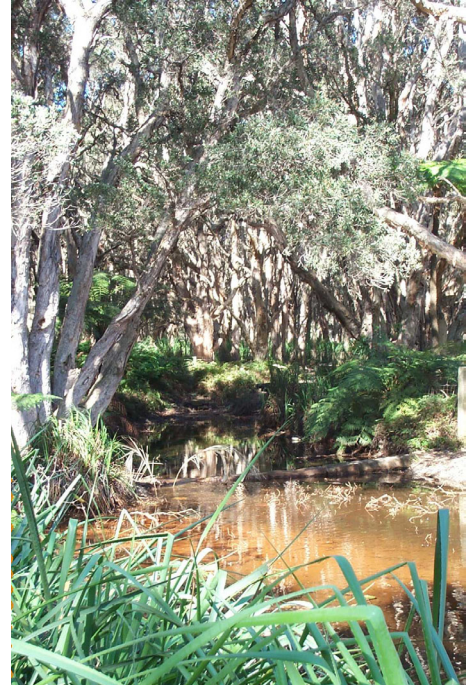
- Natural soils include sandstone, Aeolian sand dunes, inter-bedded clays and peat.
- Intervention to soil has contributed to problems of soil stability and nutrient levels.
- Nutrients leached from the soil have effected the survival of some plant species.
- Soil compaction and erosion associated with increased usage of various areas has become a problem.

Vegetation

- Prior to 19th Century modification, there was a predominance of Eastern Suburbs Banksia Scrub vegetation due to sandy soil throughout the Parklands (extends to Botany Bay)
- Sedges would have dominated the wetlands and water-lilies found in the open water.
- Ridges and knolls of Hawkesbury sandstone in the higher parts of Centennial Parklands would have supported open heath vegetation with occasional tree cover.

Fauna

- Animal species that inhabited the area prior to European contact and were hunted by Indigenous people include kangaroos, wallabies, possums, gliders, echidnas, bandicoots and fruit bats (grey-headed flying foxes).
- Emus, a large number of bird species, snakes, goannas and other lizards would have also been present.
- Water birds and their eggs, turtles, frogs, freshwater fish, eels and possibly freshwater mussels are also associated with Indigenous use of the fresh water swamps of Centennial Parklands as a resource.
- Dugong remains from excavations at Sheas Creek (now Alexandra Canal, Waterloo), which date to 6000 B.P, suggest that other animals once frequented the eastern Sydney area. Further research is required.
- Animals, plants and humans are inter-dependent in the Indigenous worldview and traditional totemic kinship systems.
- The indigenous fauna remaining in Centennial Parklands today is predominantly avifauna, including migratory waders.



Lachlan Swamp – natural spring. Source: Centennial Parklands



Eastern Suburbs Banksia Scrub. Source: Centennial Parklands



Waterhen in Lily Pond. Source: Centennial Parklands

- Centennial Parklands contributes to the conservation of biodiversity within remnants of Eastern Suburbs Banksia Scrub and within the wetland environment.
- The plantings of indigenous and introduced species within Centennial Parklands also provide habitat for indigenous fauna species, particularly birds and bats.
- Centennial Parklands also provides habitat for fauna species listed in schedules of the Threatened Species Conservation Act 1995: the Eastern Freetail-Bat and the Mary River Turtle (introduced from Queensland).
- Introduced species in Centennial Parklands tend to compete with indigenous species for habitat and food.

Australian Theme - Peopling Australia

NSW Theme – Indigenous cultures and interactions with other cultures

Indigenous pathways

- A complex network of pathways across the Sydney peninsula and beyond was used for Indigenous hunting trips, food and resource collection, trade, and social and ceremonial visits. This movement implies frequent travel through and around the study area.
- News of the arrival of the First Fleet in Botany Bay (*Kamay*) would have spread via these pathways and arrivals possibly viewed from strategic vantage points along coastal cliffs and lookouts such as those in Centennial Parklands.
- Tracks to Botany Bay, referred to in early colonial diaries, possibly form some of the current boundaries of Centennial Parklands². The name of the suburb Maroubra is said to mean “belonging to the pathway country”, the pathway being a track which ran from Port Jackson through Maroubra to Botany Bay³.
- In the early days of the colony, pathways connected camps at Botany Bay, Bennelong Point (Tu-bow-gule), Sydney Cove (Warrane), South Head (Tarralbe) and coastal camp-sites.
- It is likely that many Indigenous pathways, including Oxford Street, became colonial roads.
- Gatherings for Indigenous ceremonies such as burials or initiations were reported in early colonial writings. Indigenous groups often travelled long distances to attend and officiate.
- The quickest walking route between ceremonial grounds at Farm Cove (Yurong) and Botany Bay would have been close to Centennial Parklands. Colonial writings report regular movement of Indigenous people between permanent camps throughout the 1800s, until their forced dispersal and eventual segregation on missions and reserves.
- Initiations and other ceremonies were still being performed around Sydney into the 1840s⁴. Visitors sometimes travelled from beyond the Sydney Basin to participate in these ceremonies.
- During the 1840s authorities began evicting Indigenous people from the Circular Quay boatsheds. They were finally closed in 1881⁵. Actions such as these disrupted traditional ways of life and prevented access to formal and informal social and ritual gathering places. During this period a Mission was established at La Perouse. Some people from the

² Oral evidence indicates this is the case, however further research into the location of these pathways is needed.

³ Kohen, 1993, p.10

⁴ Kohen, 1993, p.75

⁵ Hinckson & Harris, 2001, p.107.

Circular Quay boatsheds camp are believed to have permanently moved to the La Perouse Mission at this time.

- Carvings along the Sydney peninsula coast, at places like South Head and Bondi, indicate connections with other parts of Sydney.
- Stories told by elders today are evidence of maintenance of cultural traditions and country. A central theme is associated with walking trips to places that are important to families, women and men. In the past stories linking these places through an ancient system of pathways, visible and invisible, would have recalled the travels of the dreaming ancestors who created the features of the landscape and were responsible for giving law and meaning to Indigenous lives.

Historical events around Centennial Parklands

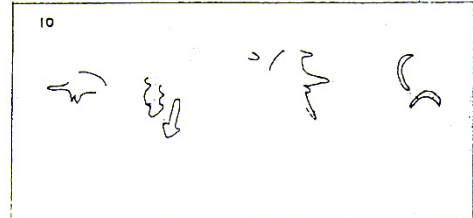
- Around 40,000 years ago, humans were living in the Sydney basin and fire stick farming was common.
- Colonial documents describe escalating tension and territorial disputes between the Gadigal clan and early settlers.
- For example, 1.5km south of the Sydney Cove settlements and in close proximity to Moore Park and Centennial Park, stones were thrown at convicts working at the Brick Fields (26 March 1788).
- Against the orders of Governor Phillip, sailors, convicts and others began stealing Indigenous weapons, fishing tackle and implements, possibly for curios with potential for sale to collectors in Europe ⁶. A series of payback killings were soon occurring.
- From 1789 smallpox (*galgala*) and other diseases struck the Sydney clans, particularly the Gadigal, and others close to Port Jackson.
- Further evidence of increasing tensions was seen in 1790 with the spearing (and killing) of the Governor's gamekeeper, McIntyre, on the track to Botany Bay.

Stories

- The documented story of Jenny Swift has her moving between the Circular Quay Boatsheds, the camp at Botany Bay and the Sydney homes where she was employed as a domestic. Jenny was a descendant of Gomeberee, one of the Boorooberongal warriors who presented Governor Phillip with a gift of two stone axes and two spears in 1791 on the banks of the Hawkesbury River.
- Stories told by elders of the La Perouse Indigenous community include personal experiences of camping and collecting food in Centennial Park in the 1930s, the permanent fresh water supply there being the focus of much activity.

Missions and reserves

- Growth of missionary societies in the colonies was a consequence of the abolition of the slave trade (1789).
- In 1883 the Aborigines Protection Board was established. The government felt morally obliged to act in response to the growing persecution of Indigenous Australians by many settlers. Successive governments attempted to control Indigenous lives.
- By the 1940's mission managers had the right to evict, remove children from families and issue licenses for people to move around outside the mission. Family members were separated.
- Large numbers of displaced Indigenous people from the South Coast and Illawarra regions moved to the La Perouse mission. There was significant and sustained movement between the La Perouse mission



Preliminary research has revealed this site, originally in the vicinity of Moore Park. The group comprises two boomerangs, portions of a kangaroo or wallaby, a waddy or a stone tomahawk

Engraved images, Darvall Street Centennial Park. NPWS Site No.45-6 in Attenbrow (2002), report for Centennial Parklands.

⁶ Tench, 1793, p.4

and other missions around Sydney and beyond. Indigenous people tried to maintain traditional family ties and connections with each other throughout these difficult times.

Federation

The Federation of Australia had a negative impact on Indigenous people. Acts were created which excluded Indigenous Australians from the rights of Australian citizenship:

The Parliament shall, subject to this Constitution, have power to make laws for the peace, order, and good government of the Commonwealth with respect to: ... (xxvi) The people of any race, other than the aboriginal race in any State, for whom it is necessary to make special laws. (Commonwealth Constitution, Section 51)

Indigenous people were disenfranchised:

No Aboriginal native of Australia, Asia, Africa or the Islands of the Pacific, except New Zealand, shall be entitled to have his name placed on the electoral roll, unless so entitled under Section 41 of the Constitution. (Commonwealth Franchise Act 1902)

The Indigenous people of Sydney living on reserves were unable to attend celebrations that marked Federation, including those held at Centennial Park⁷. However, Indigenous men from Queensland were brought to Sydney to re-enact the landing of Captain Cook in the Endeavour at Kurnell.

Indigenous sporting associations with Centennial Parklands

Through participation in sports, Indigenous people have gained status and privileges otherwise denied or unattainable.

Cricket

- Jack Marsh (1874-1916), whose throwing skills were discovered when selectors saw him throwing boomerangs at La Perouse, played in 6 test matches for NSW. He was considered the best Australian bowler of his time. While he *played* many matches at the SCG he was unable to *practise* there because of the White Australia Policy⁸. It is possible that he practised on some of the many pitches present in the adjacent Parklands at the time.
- Edna Crouch and her cousin Mabel Campbell gained state selection for women's cricket. They represented Queensland between 1934 and 1938 and played at the SCG, including matches against England⁹. Again it is possible that these women practised in the adjacent Parklands.

Tent boxing

- Tent boxing was a popular sport, with Jimmy Sharman's boxing tent at Sydney's Royal Easter Show, which was held at the Royal Agricultural Society Showground, now part of the land owned by the Centennial Park and Moore Park Trust.
- The sport drew excellent Indigenous sportsmen including Harry Johns and Billy Leach. The troupes appeared at Sydney's Royal Easter Show¹⁰ for more than 50 years, up until the 1960s.
- Tent boxing provided Indigenous men with an avenue for paid employment and an opportunity to gain community recognition. Prominent former tent boxers included Pastor Sir Doug Nicholls (a



Trainees at the launch of Lachlan Swamp interpretive trail.

Source: John Lennis.

⁷ Brook 1999 p.43

⁸ Pollard J 1988 p.11

⁹ Tatz & Tatz 2000 p.65,69

¹⁰ www.museum.vic.gov.au/hidden_histories/histories/bruce.htm

football player for Northcote and Fitzroy and later Premier of South Australia), George Sibley (Cathy Freeman's grandfather), Geoff Clarke (now Chair of ATSIC¹¹).

Wood chopping

- Wood chopping was a popular event at the Sydney Royal Easter Show and an area in which many Indigenous people have excelled.
- Indigenous entrants were often forced to hide their identity. Leo Appo, who won the Commonwealth title at the Sydney Royal Easter Show in 1928, held world records for tree-felling and for the 15 inch underhand event. He was active in the sport until 1948¹².
- In 1980 Greg Lovel broke four world records at the Sydney Easter Show and Ted McBride was awarded an OAM for his services to the sport of wood-chopping.

Easter show cattlemen, rough riders and grooms

- In the 1930s rough-riding was introduced to the Sydney Royal Easter Show. Indigenous cousins, Alec Hayden and Jimmy Williams, from Queensland, competed against the United States and Canada¹³. It is possible that Indigenous grooms and other show workers also exercised horses in Centennial Park.

Indigenous partnerships and Reconciliation

- During the 1800's King Billy Timbery, resident of La Perouse, worked a tollgate to allow sheep and cattle to graze in the Lachlan Reserve¹⁴. He is believed to be the first Indigenous person to be officially employed on the land that is now Centennial Parklands.
- In 1998 the Guriwal Aboriginal Corporation from La Perouse commenced a skills development project which included horticultural and bush regeneration. Trainees were employed in the construction of interpretive trails through the Ash Paddock and the Lachlan Swamp in Centennial Park.

Indigenous Defence Force Recruits

- A number of Indigenous soldiers enlisted in the Imperial and Australian Defence Forces at Victoria Barracks from the Boer War onwards. This was despite discriminatory policies that resulted in a number of Indigenous men being rejected on the basis of their race. Indigenous soldiers are believed to have participated in military activities associated with wartime in Centennial Parklands since this time.

NSW Theme – Convict

Convict work

- Convicts were involved in early construction projects in the Sydney Common including the Lachlan Water Tunnel (known as Busby's Bore) which supplied fresh water from the Lachlan Swamps to Hyde Park. A map in Attachment A shows the route of the tunnel.
- Although an impressive engineering feat, lack of direct supervision by the engineer, John Busby, resulted in problems with quality of workmanship.
- The Military Barracks (Victoria Barracks), built between 1841 and 1848, used both convict and free labour and was an impressive example of

¹¹ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission

¹² Tatz & Tatz 2000:254

¹³ Tatz & Tatz 2000:23

¹⁴ Interview Mrs Iris Williams, May 2001.

colonial engineering. The sandstone used in the construction was quarried from the local Hawkesbury sandstone outcrops. Throughout construction the convicts were housed in a wooden stockade located to the south of the site.

NSW Theme – Migration

The 19th Century saw increased population around the area of Centennial Parklands through migration.

In the post-World War II period there was another influx of migrants, particularly Greeks, Italians, Portuguese and Lebanese, who settled in the inner city and suburbs surrounding Centennial Parklands. A new vibrancy in the area, together with the retention and upgrade of inner city housing stock, contributed to the regeneration and character of the areas¹⁵.

Australian Theme - Developing local, regional and national economies

NSW Theme – Commerce

In 1837 John Baptist's commercial plant nursery was established in Surry Hills. The nursery, known as "Baptist's Gardens", occupied 36 acres (from modern-day Bourke Street to Phillip Street). It was a major supplier of plants in Sydney, particularly advanced specimens of Norfolk Island pines. The mature Norfolk Island pines once dominated the Surry Hills' landscape.

Hawkers were an informal commercial enterprise throughout Centennial Parklands. Reflective of their itinerant lifestyle, they left no physical evidence in the Parklands, but photographs give us an insight into their trade.

NSW Theme - Environment – cultural landscapes

Cultural Landscape

In 1811 the study area was set-aside as the Sydney Common. As a cultural landscape it evolved from being part of the original clan territories of the Gadi people. In 1820 Governor Macquarie established the Lachlan Swamps as a Water Reserve and connected to the city by Busby's Bore. Lachlan Swamps served as Sydney's sole water supply from 1837-1858. Portions of the Swamp were dammed in 1872 with the construction of a series of seven dams. Part of the Common along South Head Road was allotted to the military. Military Barracks were constructed between 1838-1848. The first sporting venue associated with the Common appears to have been the Military Cricket Ground, established in 1852, just south of the Barracks.

Centennial Park

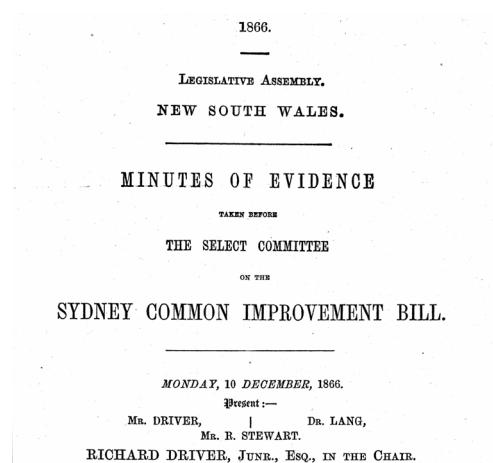
Centennial Park was established under the Centennial Celebrations Act in 1887 and, like Queens Park, was reclaimed from the extensive swampland in the Lachlan Reserve.

Moore Park

In 1866, Sydney Council dedicated 378 acres of the Sydney Common for recreation land. At the time of dedication Lachlan Estate and Randwick Racecourse formed the southern boundary. It was bound to the west by Dowling Street, to the north by Old South Head Road, and to the east by the Lachlan Water Reserve. A road lined with stone pines marked the eastern boundary of the park and the western boundary of the water reserve. Two other roads crossed Moore Park prior to 1866: Old Botany Road (used by



Opening of Centennial Park. Source: Centennial Park Heritage Study.



Act dedicating land to Moore Park. Source: Government Records, NSW Archive

¹⁵ Refer to Indigenous History and the migration of Indigenous people.

hunters and fisherman and pleasure seekers traveling to Coogee and Botany) and a western entrance to a cemetery located off South Dowling Street. The dedicated land encompassed the Tunnel Reserve (1827-1838), the Military Barracks and the Military Cricket Ground

Queens Park

Queens Park was established in 1887 under the Centennial Celebrations Act. Like Centennial Park, Queens Park was reclaimed from the extensive swamp in Lachlan Reserve. A dam occupied the low-lying areas in Queens Park for most of the 1800s. A golf course was located on the site until it was relocated to Botany in 1899.

The earliest phase of tree planting in Queens Park occurred in the late 1880s and early 1890s with open woodland of Moreton Bay Fig, Port Jackson Figs, Monterey Pine, Araucarias and Holm Oak established on the higher ground. The coral trees and Melaleuca lining the southern and western edges of the park were planted in 1923, replacing original plantings of alternating Brush Box and Maples. The dates of other plantings, such as the paperbarks along Darley Street, and the rows of Hills figs between the terraced fields have not been identified. The dominant tree species are consistent with Centennial Park and provide visual continuity between the two parks.

The former swamp in Queens Park was filled and transformed into a terraced expanse of playing fields. This was undertaken in the 1930s by relief Depression labour, and later as part of a State and Federal Government initiative to improve national fitness by encouraging sporting activities. Aerial photographs from the 1930s indicate a natural drainage line running from the northeast to the southwest and a dam wall. A number of cricket pitches were also identified.

Since the 1930s, Queens Park has mainly served as a venue for team sports. The Christian Brothers College in Waverley has their football fields in the southeastern part of the park. Queens Park contains pockets of smaller scale activity, including a playground and a fig dominated woodland popular for walking dogs.

Landforms

Centennial Park

- Steep slopes located on the west, north and east edges contain the Park.
- Cut-and-fill along slopes undertaken to build park roads.
- Sloping rims of park punctuated by plateaus and gullies (natural landform)
- Plateaux along Oxford Street are the roofs of the underground reservoirs carved into the sandstone ridge.
- A series of level expanses of grassy fields (used for recreation) and wide ponds form the centre of the basin.

Moore Park

- Gently rolling hills, 3 waterbodies, varied scrub vegetation.
- In mid-19th century land degraded and barren due to timber getting, pillaging and dumping, leading to erosion problems.
- In 1860, Alderman Charles Moore and Charles Moore (Director Sydney Botanic Gardens) collaborated and used planting of indigenous shrubs and couch grass to stabilize soils, with the later working.
- When Common transformed into Parkland the following 4 sand hills were transformed: Mount Steele (least transformed), Mount Rennie in 1926 reconfigured as platform for golf clubhouse, Mount Lang initially terraced and ramped; and Constitution Hills fate not clear.



Fairway for Moore Park Golf Course



Sandstone Outcrop



Kippax Lake perimeter planting



Canary Island Palms lining Gregory Avenue

- Fairway for Moore Park Golf Course modified the topography
- Historic topography and small mounds were incorporated into the playing fields of landscape design of Sydney Boys' and Girls' High Schools.
- Establishment of the zoological society gardens in 1879 resulted in the conversion of the natural waterhole at the corner of Cleveland Street and Anzac Parade into an ornamental pond.
- 1888 Lake Kippax, natural water body, named in honour of William Kippax.
- Moreton Bay Figs mostly planted around the periphery of the pond with few surviving by 1901.
- Avenue of Port Jackson figs instituted by J.H. Maiden to south west of Lake Kippax with later additions of sculptures, sandstone edging and plantings.
- Third body of water was filled in to help form the Cleveland Street Gates and entry into the Grand Drive.

Roadways and Plantings

Moore Park

- 1866-1880 avenue and row plantings along roadways and enclosing playing fields established distinct park character. Species have changed over the years but plantings that define the quality remain.
- 1868 Botany Road, renamed Randwick Road: planted with a double row of Norfolk Island Pines with outer row of alternating Moreton Bay Figs and Monterey Pines (extending around the northern periphery of the Park)
- In 1917, road widened and failed Monterey Pines replaced with Port Jackson figs.
- After WWI, change of Randwick Road's name to Anzac Parade, as Sydney's most important boulevard, to commemorate the Anzac troops: marked by erection of obelisk, removal of entrance gates and centre planting bed installed.
- Pedestrian path configured and lined with sandstone kerb and gutter details. Work initiated by J.H. Maiden.
- Lombardy poplars planted after WWII.
- Moore Park Road built in 1868 to reduce trampling along the north edge of the Park and planted with double row of 16 Moreton Bay Figs.
- 1879 Cleveland Street extended as far as Randwick Road with planting of Moreton Bay figs in triangulated pattern.
- 1880-1882 MacArthur Avenue was constructed to provide a main entrance to the newly established Agricultural Showgrounds.
- Canary Island Palms lining MacArthur and Gregory Avenues are thought to date to 1909¹⁶. When the pines and deciduous trees suffered from drought in the 1890s, they were replaced with Port Jackson figs and Holm oaks in 1896¹⁷.
- In 1887 Grand Drive was constructed as the main entrance to Centennial Park, intended to link the new park with the city. Southern edges of this drive defined by sandstone wall with iron palisade.
- In 1890's Driver Avenue constructed to support the major sporting venues in Moore Park (name refers to Richard Driver who helped secure the Cricket Grounds) The Hills figs lining Driver Avenue were

¹⁶ Draft Environmental Plan, p17

¹⁷ Draft Plan of Management, p14

planted in the 1920s¹⁸. The distinct character of these trees, combined with Norfolk Island pines, distinguishes Moore from Centennial Park. Other Hills figs roadway plantings include Driver and Dacey Avenues and the western and eastern edges of the Robertson Road fields.

- By 1938 Dacey Avenue was built across the southern part of the park and was planted with an avenue of Hill's figs circa 1940/1950.
- Late 19th century, two groves of figs were planted; one at the crest of Mount Steele, and the other at Drivers Triangle.
- Edges of zoo grounds, previously surrounded by a paling fence was planted with alternating Monterey pines and 19th Century plants
- Extant ornamental plantings and topographical features currently contained within the Sydney Girls' and Boys' High Schools campus were planted in 1921 and 1928 respectively.
- From the late 1960s, a concern for protecting and promoting indigenous flora influenced several plantings in Moore Park: groves of eucalypts in the Bat and Ball Field, and Kippax Field; mixed plantings of grevillea and eucalypt in Roberston Field; urban forest on Mount Steele; and acacia windbreaks on the golf course and around the tennis courts.
- Since the 1960s belt planting on Moore Park Golf Course has occurred along sand ridges and defining fairways. Three groves of palms predate the golf course planting: Canary Island Palms at the Club House, and two groves of palms along South Dowling Street

Centennial Park

- 640 acres of sandy indigenous scrub converted into a Grand Victorian Park by Charles Moore.
- Original designs for the Park were not used. However, concepts developed in these designs, influenced and were incorporated into the park design. Elements from Sir Joseph Paxton's Birkenhead Park and the Crystal Palace grounds at Sydenham influenced the design.
- In 1880 there was a world wide boom in Park creation. This coincided with Moore's influence on plantings and layout and a preference for Moreton Bay Figs.
- From 1887-1892 James Jones assisted Moore as overseer of Park (head gardner of Botanic Gardens)
- Indigenous vegetation, trenches blasted in sandstone for tree planting, landform altered, grooming slopes, creating open spaces and constructing the Grand Drive and subsidiary roads, within the brief period prior to the opening of the park.
- Grand Drive was one of the earliest constructed elements. In 1889 the Drive was planted with a range of species: figs, elms, poplars and pines.
- Horticultural development of the Park was influenced by William Forsyth (overseer from 1892), who introduced new plantings, specifically drought and storm resistant ones, and advocated for the protection of remnant indigenous vegetation and experimentation.
- Success of first planting of 88 Paperbarks in 1896 at toe of Busby Pond Embankment and grove adjacent to Lily Pond led to continued use.
- In 1899 water course below Paddington Gates lined with plantings.
- In 1901 263 Eucalypts planted
- In 1905 turpentines were planted between the Kiosk and Bird Sanctuary
- Forsyth and Maiden experimented with acacias and casuarinas, planting 289 seedlings in 1896/97. Acacias were recognized as valuable for their colour, and short term planting.



The site chosen for Centennial Park, 1887, with Charles Moore. Source: National Library of Australia



Paperbarks. Source: Centennial Parklands

¹⁸ Draft Plan of Management, p19

- Modifications, by Forsyth, to trees planted along Grand Drive by Moore and Jones in 1889.
- From 1897 Forsyth removed elms, poplars and pines, and replaced them with a complex formal arrangement of predominantly Port Jackson figs, with Holm oak and Norfolk Island pine. This diagonal planting pattern this created a strong landscape character in the Victorian Gardenesque tradition. This combination set the pattern for subsequent plantings in the park, particularly along roads.
- In the 1890s Carrington Drive was lined with a discontinuous avenue of Port Jackson Fig, and Loch Avenue was planted with belt planting of predominantly Port Jackson Figs and Norfolk Island Pines to hide the Waverley tram sheds.
- In 1900, figs were planted along Jervois avenue and Parkes Drive North was planted with a row of Port Jackson Figs.
- In 1901 Palms were introduced in Frog Hollow and the southern part of Frog Hollow was developed as a focus for floral displays and included the Rosarium, Native Plant and Flower Garden and numerous circular floral beds on the three small promontories that jut into Busby's Pond. These expressed the Gardenesque tradition and the influence of the Federation period.
- From 1902, Maiden and Forsyth introduced palms and coral trees throughout the park as linear plantings.
- Maiden planted an avenue of alternating Queen Palm and Cocos Palm along the Busby's Pond embankment.
- Avenue of coral trees in Loch Avenue was mixed with remnants of earlier and poorly performing plantings of Port Jackson Figs and Holm Oaks.
- Between 1908 and 1910 Parkes Drive was planted with rows of Canary Island Palms. This is the earliest known formal avenue of Canary Island Palms in Sydney and led to the widespread use of this palm throughout New South Wales.
- Palms were planted extensively throughout Centennial Park and Moore Park. Plantings reinforced the successful 1908 palm avenue along Parkes Drive. Palms were also used as a replacement species for earlier avenue plantings.
- Woodland plantings on the Lang Road Slopes and the York Road Slopes provided a transparent enclosure for the park.
- Dense planting along York Road in 1911 was undertaken to screen the Tram works.
- Development within the park slowed considerably following James Dawes death in 1923 (Superintendent from 1912) and the retirement of Maiden in 1924.
- The Department of Agriculture took over administration of the Park from Sydney Botanic Gardens. Reduced budgets resulted in relative inactivity. There was also a general lack of documentation for works done.
- In 1934 a large grant was provided for unemployment relief. There is little evidence of tree planting during the 1930s.
- The Musgrave Precinct, at the eastern end of the Park, was planted with deciduous trees including Swamp Cypress, Cottonwood, and Weeping Willow.
- Other mid-twentieth century plantings were the extension of the belts of pines and paper-barks originally planted by Maiden, along the drainage lines and boundaries surrounding the Mackay Oval and the equestrian grounds.

- In the early post-World War II period works in the Park were mainly remedial. Extensive new plantings were carried out, to replace those specimens that had been removed.
- The unusually wet summer of 1955/56 resulted in the death of numerous evergreen oaks.
- From the 1960s through to the 1970s, there was a renewed interest in tree planting in Centennial Park. Several large stands of pines, including the pine plantation on the Mission Fields, was established c1960s as boundary planting and a windbreak for the equestrian grounds
- Post 1960s plantings include a grove of *Eucalyptus maculata* (Spotted Gum) near the Woollahra Gates. This represents the revival of experimentation with indigenous species under the influence of Ron Salkeld. Clumps of mainly Scribbly Gum were planted on the sandstone outcrops from the 1960s. These Scribbly Gums provide a picturesque effect and contrast with the more formal plantings that dominate the avenues.
- Three hundred Flooded Gum trees were planted out on the hillside to the south of Broom Avenue.
- In 1969 dry weather restricted large-scale planting of trees however, a mix of fifty Liquidambar, Casuarina and Hills figs were planted in the Musgrave precinct.
- In the 1970s *Platanus* sp. (Plane Trees) were planted in the children's playground area near the Paddington Gates. These have recently been supplemented with the evergreen native, *Cupaniopsis anacardioides* (Tuckeroo). The paperbarks planted as a grove in the 1970s, in the area between Parkes Drive and the Randwick Pond, demonstrate a continuation of the use of *Melaleuca quinquenervia* commenced in the Maiden era.

Ponds and Drainage

Centennial Park

- Centennial Park contains one of the most extensive wetlands in the Botany Basin and as such has great cultural value for present day Indigenous people.
- The Park contains three reservoirs, twelve ponds, and seven open channels or rills. The ponds and channels show the importance of this park as a drainage basin.
- In 1888 the Water Reserve was transformed into park after being made redundant. The dams were incorporated into the plan of the park, deepened and reconfigured to become the ornamental ponds.
- Pond embankments were incorporated as paths, and islands were established in the ponds to enhance the picturesque effect.
- Ponds have been modified through reconfiguration, containment and silt removal.
- Between 1938 and 1960s swampy land was filled to form MacKay Oval and the Learners Cycleway. Indigenous wetland plantings were introduced to Model Yacht Pond, as well as extensive drainage and flood remediation work. Edge treatment to the Duck, Fly Casting and Willow Ponds (1999) by Context Landscape Design interpreted natural values.
- Reservoirs, including the Woollahra Reservoir erected in 1879, have played an important role in the history of the park.

Structures

Centennial Park

- Perimeter fence to Centennial Park contains eleven vehicular and eight pedestrian gates. Built between 1892 and 1897 the perimeter fence was installed, comprising sandstone plinth with cast iron pickets.
- The Paddington and Woollahra gates were built in 1888.
- The office of Colonial Architect, Walter Liberty Vernon, designed and constructed all major gates.
- Later gates include the Robertson and Lang Road gates, built in c.1952, and a gate/entrance constructed in 1999.
- Centennial Park contains a number of fenced enclosures. These include the ornate cast iron fence and gates around Reservoir 2 (1897), the Brolga Gate to the Bird Sanctuary (1938), the timber aris rail fences around the equestrian track and along Oxford Street and the tubular metal fence along the Alison Road (reconstructed 1960s).
- Two sandstone bridges, a timber bridge and a sandstone and timber pergola were built between 1890 and 1915 around Frog Hollow and the Lily Pond.
- Sandstone drains, a channel and headwalls were built extending from Oxford Street through Frog Hollow into Busby's Bore.
- Over the years various timber bridges, concrete drains, culverts and headwalls have been added to the park.
- In 1998/9 sandstone terraces and steps at the Duck Pond and Willow Pond, and two steel and timber viewing platforms at Fly Casting Pond were constructed (designed by Context Landscape Design).

Infrastructure

Queens Park

- Urban infrastructure has encroached on the former Sydney Common.
- Between 1881 and 1960 tramways provided public transport to and through Centennial Parklands. Bus laneways trace some of the tram routes.
- In 2000, the Eastern Distributor was incorporated into the South Dowling Street corridor and has both reduced the size of Centennial Parklands and reconfigured its western edge. New planting along this edge include rows of figs south of the pedestrian bridge, and a woodland arrangement of figs between Cleveland Street and Driver Triangle.
- Other plantings associated with the Eastern Distributor, include new rows of figs on the outside edges of Anzac Parade, and a new bus terminal and access road constructed outside the NSW Cricket Ground.
- Other associated plantings include replacement of Canary Island palms along MacArthur and Gregory Avenues, and woodland planting near the bus shelter.