

ROBERTSON PARK AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES, PERTH



PLACE INFORMATION

Place name	Robertson Park and Archaeological Sites
Other names	Lake Henderson
Place type	Urban Park

HERITAGE LISTING

inHerit ID:	8705
State Heritage Register:	8 May 2007
Other Listing:	Municipal Inventory Adopted 13 Nov 1995

SITE LOCATION

Street address	176 Fitzgerald St, Randell, Palmerston & Stuart Sts
Locality	Perth
Survey	
Vol/folio	
Reserve	—

SIGNIFICANCE

Level of significance	Exceptional Essential to the heritage of the area. Rare or outstanding example. Consider for nomination for State Register of Heritage Places if not already included.
Management category	Category 1 The place should be retained and conserved. Any alterations or extensions should reinforce the significance of the place and be in accordance with a Conservation Plan if one is in place.
Statement of significance	<p>The place is a good example of a visually attractive urban park laid out mainly in the Inter-War City Beautiful style, with fine mature and adolescent trees scattered over most of the park's area.</p> <p>The mature Norfolk Island Pines and, to a lesser extent, the Port Jackson Fig Trees and Moreton Bay Fig Trees at the place are notable in the urban context and are a local landmark.</p> <p>The place is recognized as a site containing potential archaeological evidence relating to a complex and diverse range of activities including Indigenous occupation prior to European settlement, construction of a convict-built drain in the 1870s, and British and later Chinese farming and market gardening from the 1870s to the 1920s.</p> <p>The place has importance for the density and diversity of its cultural features, illustrating the human occupation and evolution of the area from its use by Noongar people prior to 1829 European settlement through to the present.</p> <p>The place is valued by the Perth community as a recreation area and community asset, including the tennis courts and the AIDS Memorial, the first such memorial in Perth.</p>

PLACE USE	
Original use	Farming/Pastoral: Other Park/Reserve
Current use	Park/Reserve
Other use	Governmental: Other Social/Recreational: Other Educational: Library

CONSTRUCTION DETAILS	
Construction date	1913; 1926; 1940; 1970; 2003
Walls	N/A
Roof	N/A
Architectural Style	N/A
Physical description	<p>Refer to the assessment documentation for P8705 Robertson Park and Archaeological Sites for a detailed description of this site.</p> <p>Robertson Park and Archaeological Sites comprises a filled in lake, a tennis club with all weather and grass courts, children's play areas, Lee Hop's Cottage, former Bottle Yard, Halvorsen Hall, AIDS memorial, open grassed areas and groups of tree plantings representing an extensive period of the park's history. The park contains evidence of activity since before European settlement to the present.</p> <p>Robertson Park is not a uniform landscape, but rather comprises a number of separate areas with a range of different characters relating to a range of distinct uses, as noted above. Open grassed ground and the tennis club take up by far the largest area.</p>
Condition	Good
Integrity	Moderate
Authenticity	Moderate

HISTORICAL INFORMATION

Refer to the assessment documentation for P8705 Robertson Park and Archaeological Sites for further detail of the history of this site.

Robertson Park was established on the reclaimed area of Lake Henderson in the 1920s. Market gardening and farming activities were carried out on the area after the Lake was first drained in 1852 for this purpose. European market gardener James Fox, an ex-convict, worked the land there and by 1893, when it was sold to John Chipper, several farm buildings had been erected. It was sold to Dr Daniel Kenny in the 1890s, who built a four-roomed brick and iron cottage there in 1903.

The European gardeners were followed by Chinese market gardeners, who worked the area from about 1895 to 1928. Altogether around six Chinese men worked the 18 acres of market garden, some of them occupying the house built for Dr Kenny for their use and which became known as Lee Hop's Cottage.

Later residents of the cottage included the park's first caretaker, James Imray. In 1900, the Perth City Parks and Gardens Committee was set up to beautify the city. W. E. Bold, appointed Town Clerk in 1901, was a major advocate of the 'City Beautiful'. He convinced Perth City Council to purchase various Chinese market gardens for conversion into public parks and gardens.

The Lake Henderson area was one of the former lakes that were purchased. Apart from Lot Y232, which had been obtained by the City of Perth in 1873 for a drainage reserve and was gazetted part of Reserve 21, Robertson Park itself was not gazetted a Reserve but was vested in the City of Perth for municipal purposes.

Robertson Park was established as a Council reserve in 1913 and development of the park began in the 1920s with the filling of the lake basin. In 1926, the first six lawn tennis courts, of a planned thirty four, were opened. They were situated at the Randell Street end of the Park. A tennis pavilion was also constructed in 1929 and regular tennis parties were held there.

HISTORICAL INFORMATION

Local residents Reg Axford and Harold Mundy recalled sitting on the outside of the fence as young boys waiting for discarded cool drink bottles so that they could return them to the shop across the road and collect the refund. A recycling bottle factory operated on the south-eastern corner of the park and during an archaeological dig around the year 2000 a number of early bottles were recovered. As the basin was filled, gardens and a children's playground were established on the Fitzgerald Street frontage, and a women's playing field. Although the main part of the lake basin was filled, the slope of the land around the outskirts of Robertson Park still attests to its origins as a lake. By 1937, City of Perth had acquired all the land fronting Fitzgerald Street, which left only the land on Palmerston Street in private hands.

In 1940, a children's library was established in the house on the corner of Stuart and Fitzgerald streets. Another of the buildings on the Stuart Street frontage was used by the City of Perth Band. On 28 November 1970, a specially built facility for the Band, known as Halvorsen Hall, was opened by Premier Sir Charles Court and Lord Mayor Sir Thomas Wardle. The hall was situated on the Fitzgerald Street frontage of the Park. The Band occupied the premises until December 1999, when they relocated to Queen's Gardens. In more recent times the hall has been occupied by a group of craftspeople.

Robertson Park was increased in size between 1965 and 1987, with the acquisition of the Palmerston House site, Perth Jewish Association site, and the bottle yard. The buildings on the bottle yard have recently been demolished.

In 1990 and again in 2004 there were extensive upgrades to the tennis facilities, which now attract players from a wide area and in 2006 an international seniors' competition was held there. Conservation works on the Lee Hop's cottage were completed in 2003 by Central TAFE students from Aboriginal Programs Centre. Following this it was leased by the Town of Vincent to Great Mates WA, an organisation which assists disadvantaged and at risk youth.

HISTORICAL INFORMATION

In 1998, the Hyde Park Precinct Group put forward an improvement plan for Robertson Park, and the Lee Hop's Cottage and Halvorsen Hall were the subject of a conservation plan in 2000. Conservation work and recreation of the wetland areas began in 2005 and following that it became part of a Town of Vincent Wetlands Trail which links seven wetland areas in the region from Smith's Lake to Banks Reserve on the river in East Perth.

Aerial photographs from the mid 20th century onwards show the aforementioned conservation work in the early 2000s. There had been little change to the subject place before then. With the conservation work also came the increase in size of the buildings in the park, including the tennis areas, and additions of paths through the park. The park has changed little since that time.

Historic theme	Peopling WA: Demographic Development Governing: Government and Politics Cultural Life: Recreation - Arts, Culture and Entertainment Cultural Life: Recreation - Sport Infrastructure: Development of Settlements and Services	
Associations	James Fox John Chipper	Owner and gardener Owner
Sources	Municipal Heritage Inventory 2006 Landgate Aerial photographs 1953-2024. P8705 Robertson Park and Archaeological Sites, Assessment Documentation, DPLH, 2007.	

ADDITIONAL PHOTOGRAPHS



ARCHIVAL IMAGERY



Commencement of works, 1926. Courtesy City of Vincent Local History Collection, Acc No PH00397, image 103794