



Bishopscourt from the south-western corner of the property, 2001
Photo: Robin Page

Bishopscourt

East Melbourne

By Wendy Dwyer

Bishopscourt is one of the oldest properties in East Melbourne and has been the residence of the Anglican Bishop, later Archbishop, of Melbourne since 1853. Although the garden has been in decline for some time, the two-acre site has been only slightly altered and a number of the original plants remain. It is the last intact urban estate within the City of Melbourne.

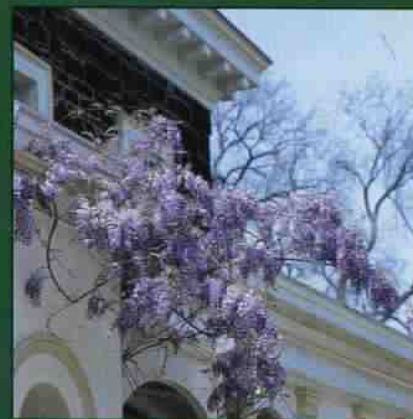
Early Days

Bishop Perry, the first Bishop of Melbourne, selected the site in 1848 and the grant was issued on 18 February 1851. From his arrival in the colony Perry had rented a cottage at Jolimont, on Governor La Trobe's land, just a short distance away.¹ Thus he knew the local area well. He had rejected larger sites, further from Melbourne, as he wanted to be within walking distance of his parishioners.

A prime site in East Melbourne, its main views at the time were south across Jolimont and Richmond Paddock, (later Yarra Park), to the Yarra River Flats and the Domain beyond. The Fitzroy Gardens to the west of the site were not developed until the 1860s. Many speculators, who had done well out of the gold rush, and professional people such as lawyers, members of parliament and government officials, were keen to purchase land in East Melbourne. Attracted by its convenient location they also believed that the presence of the Bishop's residence would ensure a good neighbourhood.

The House

The architects, Newson and Blackburn, called for tenders in 1849. James Blackburn was a pardoned convict who had been transported to Van Diemen's Land for forgery. He is best remembered as the designer of Melbourne's Yan Yean water supply system although he also designed St Mark's Church in Fitzroy.



Wisteria on original bluestone building, 2001
Photo: Robin Page

Bishopscourt is located on an elevated site at 120 Clarendon Street, East Melbourne, opposite the Fitzroy Gardens, with views to the west of the Melbourne Central Business District. The site also has frontages to Gipps and Hotham Streets. The latitude of Melbourne is 37° 48' 52" S and its longitude is 144° 58' 58" E. The average annual rainfall for the area is 657.3mm with readings of 48.4mm for January and 50.0mm for June. The average temperature for January is 20° C and for June is 10.4° C. Soil type is sandy loam.



North-west corner of Bishopscourt in 1892 showing cordylines and cypresses
Photo: Charles Rudd, courtesy of Melbourne Diocesan Archives

The site was partly cleared and construction began, but in 1851 work was delayed due to the extensive Black Thursday bushfires that disrupted business and society. The start of the Gold Rush in August of the same year also caused labour shortages. These events resulted in the initial contract being broken, and the architects Russell and Thomas calling for tenders to complete the construction. Costing double its original estimate, Bishopscourt was finally ready for occupation in January 1853.

One of the earliest descriptions of the house and garden was that of the Reverend George Goodman, newly arrived from England, who visited on 15 December, 1853. He wrote in his diary

It is a small clustered mansion, with Italian tower over the entrance, a verandah runs along the front, corresponding to the three west windows of the drawing room, a large bay window constituting its southern look out. The lawn is like certain grounds familiar to myself near Birmingham. At present, a large portion is given to a kitchen garden, on which there is growing a plentiful crop of potatoes. The entrance to the grounds is by a gateway of the rudest majestic proportions, whilst a very respectable mulberry forms a nucleus of a pleasing shrubbery. The house is roomy and comfortable inside and, what is of chief importance in this scorching Christmas weather, is delightfully cool.²

The Grounds

Architect Charles Swyer was engaged in 1854 to lay out the grounds although few details of this work are known. This connection came about when Bishop Perry appointed Swyer's minister in England, the Reverend David Seddon, to a new parish in St Kilda in 1852. Swyer volunteered to follow him to Australia to design the new church, including its landscaping. This work greatly impressed the Bishop.³ Swyer's early experience had been with the Manchester and Leeds Railway Company where he appears to have developed a greater interest in landscape design than architecture.

At this time in England the picturesque style of garden design, where designers attempted to imitate nature by creating landscapes in the manner of pictures, was giving way to the gardenesque style. This style represented a more

deliberately contrived approach in order to display the individual beauty of plant materials and the art of the gardener, often blending into a natural or wild garden beyond. It may be seen in one of Swyer's most famous works at Glenara, Bulla, designed during the period he was in partnership with Albert Purchas (1855-1861). Depicted by the renowned landscape painter, Eugene von Guerard, Glenara is considered a notable example of the gardenesque style in post-gold rush Victoria.⁴ A much larger site than Bishopscourt, formal planting was used around the house, gradually giving way to the natural landscape beyond. This is the design that was used at Bishopscourt.

Besides being commissioned to work on Bishopscourt, Swyer went on to become Diocesan Architect, and later private architect to Bishop Perry. A testimonial written by Perry for Swyer states that

...when I was first acquainted with him he held an important office, and whilst, holding it, he very kindly undertook (without any remuneration) to lay out the grounds at Bishopscourt. This work he executed with great taste, and I was led from it to form a very high opinion of his ability.⁵



Western façade Bishopscourt in 1892 showing Corroboree Tree on right
Photo: Charles Rudd, courtesy Melbourne Diocesan Archives

There are only two known references relating to the specific work undertaken by Swyer in relation to the Bishopscourt garden. In a letter to Bishop Perry dated 11 December 1854, Swyer notes

I have given instructions to Messrs McArthur and Westgarth to deliver to Bishopscourt, 612 flags [flagstones], 22 inches square. I have managed to get the flags 3d cheaper than they first mentioned to me, and they are to cart them to Bishopscourt.⁶

These flagstones were used to construct a terrace around the southern and eastern sides of the house, helping to link the house and garden. This was considered to be very English as the use of the verandahs was the common design used in warmer colonies.⁷

The second reference is an entry in Swyer's letter-book, dated 20 June 1856, which records an order for 'carting and supplying broken bluestone metal to the Bishop's Palace'.⁸ It is likely that this was used for the garden paths and carriageway.

While there is documentary evidence to support Swyer's involvement in the hard landscaping of Bishopscourt, it appears that the design of the house and garden and their relationship was determined by the architects Blackburn and Newton.⁹ They carefully set the house in the north-east quadrant of the site, adjacent to an ancient *Eucalyptus camaldulensis* (River Red Gum) thus allowing for a large garden aspect to the west and south.

Bishopscourt in the Nineteenth Century

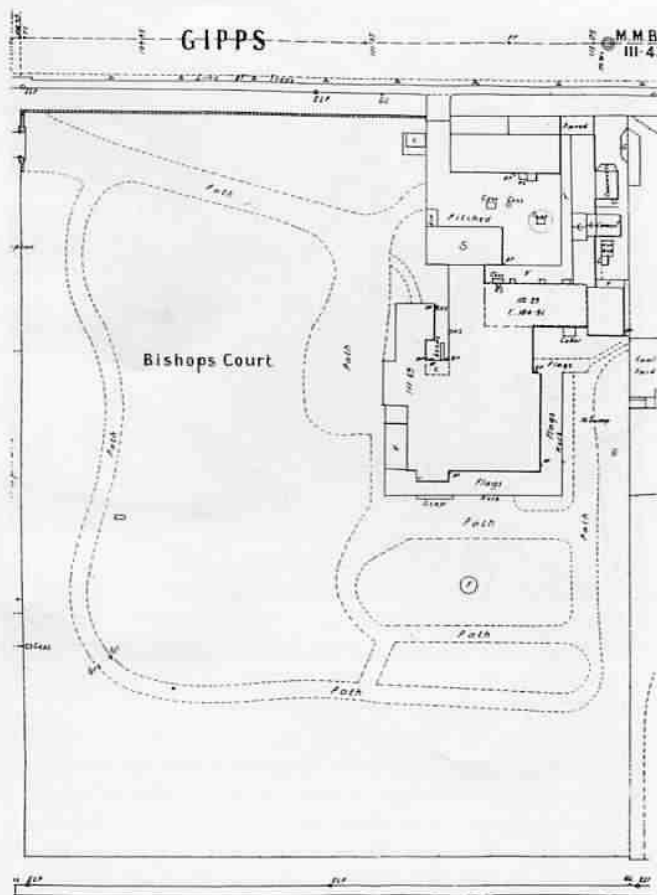
James Sinclair, later curator of the Fitzroy Gardens provides an early description of the garden at Bishopscourt in 1856. He found that

*The contrast is most pleasing, between the dark foliage of the Australian trees, the stone walls of the substantial buildings and the tower attached to the body of the principal one, all being high, and healthily placed. Among other fine spreading trees, there are now some acacia and other pinnate-leaved [sic] plants now in the evening, going to sleep as the golden sun of Australia on one side is sinking beneath the hills, and the blue sea and the silver moon is lighting up the horizon on the other.*¹⁰

There has been some debate on whether William Guilfoyle did any work at Bishopscourt. In his 1875 annual report on the Melbourne Botanic Gardens, Guilfoyle noted that he had removed from Bishopscourt 1,093 plants which had been purchased by his department, and re-planted them at the Botanic Gardens. Given that Guilfoyle had recently taken up his new role as Director of the Botanic Gardens, and was a Roman Catholic, it seems unlikely that he had any input into the garden designs at Bishopscourt. There is no additional documentary evidence to support Guilfoyle's further involvement.¹¹

The 1899 MMBW Plan is the most comprehensive early plan available of the site, and it shows that the house was originally surrounded by garden on three sides. By siting the main entrance in the north-west corner, a visitor's first impression was of a sweeping vista across the expansive lawn, edged with garden beds giving an illusion of spaciousness and of much larger grounds than actually exist. The design continued the grand proportions of the adjacent Fitzroy Gardens. The gravelled serpentine driveway, which widened in front of the house to allow carriages to turn, offered views of the western and southern lawn and garden as the house was approached. It then linked into the formal garden paths south of the house and around the perimeter of the main lawn. The original view, looking out from inside the house through the bay window onto the immediate garden, the Cathedral Reserve, Richmond Paddock (Yarra Park) and the river beyond, would have been very attractive.¹²

Photographic evidence records that the layout of the garden was well-established in the gardenesque fashion by the end of the nineteenth century. Two photographs of the western aspect of the house and garden, taken in 1892 by Charles Rudd, show that the lawn with a bed of mixed planting was dominated by a large *Eucalyptus camaldulensis*, often referred to as the Corroboree Tree. Thought to be approximately 500 years old, the story is told that when Baron von Mueller inspected it, he suggested that it was probably a sapling when Cranmer wrote the Prayer Book in 1549.



MMBW Survey Plan of Bishopscourt, 1899

Adjacent to the house was a mixed shrubbery of carefully placed and cultivated specimen plants reflecting the gardenesque approach. These included *Cordyline australis* (New Zealand Cabbage Tree), *Cupressus torulosa* (Bhutan cypress) and other trees, edged with annual bedding plants. A similar planting style was also evident in the formal garden south of the house where curved gravel paths with borders enclosed the lawns. Focal points of interest were the fountain and sundial that can still be seen today. Originally surrounded by carefully cultivated planting, these elements were typical of the gardenesque style.



The new red-brick wing, added in 1903.
Photo: Courtesy Melbourne, Diocesan Archives.



Other photographs show that the south-eastern corner of the main lawn was occupied by a large island bed including *Callitris* spp. (Cypress pines) and variegated shrubs. A juvenile elm, now mature, may also be identified in the southern bed, adjacent to the gravel path.

After Bishop Perry left in 1874 to go back to England to select a bishop for a new diocese based in Ballarat, Bishops court temporarily became Victoria's Government House until 1876 when the building of the new Government House was completed. During this period, the governor, Sir George Ferguson Bowen and Lady Bowen resided at Bishops court, as did the Chief Justice Sir William Stawell who was Acting-Governor while the Bowens were in Europe on leave.

The next resident of Bishops court, Bishop James Moorhouse, is reported to have enjoyed the large, old River Red Gum often sitting 'under its branching shade... [to] think out his notable sermons and addresses, his faithful dog Tim lying tirelessly on the ground beside him.'¹³ His affinity for this particular spot was evident in 1884 when he chose to bury the white bulldog near the old gum tree, marking the grave with a bluestone slab bearing the inscription 'In Memory of Dear Old Tim, a friend true and tried.'¹⁴ Archbishop Harrington Lees, who occupied Bishops court from 1920-1929, continued this tradition. He buried his terrier in the garden next to Tim. Although the gravestones have since disappeared, they are often mentioned in commentaries on the garden.

Bishops court in the Twentieth Century

On 4 October 1902, after Bishop Field Flowers Goe had vacated Bishops court, *The Australasian* reported that the residence had been described as 'out of date, out of repair and in an insanitary state'. Further, it was 'recommended by a committee of the Diocese to be demolished', and this was 'viewed with regret by members of the Anglican Church and by old colonists of every creed.'¹⁵

After much deliberation a compromise was reached. The northern bluestone wing was demolished. A red brick wing with a tiled roof, in Federation Queen Anne Domestic style, replaced it. The small chapel on the eastern side of the wing was a feature of the new building. These renovations, designed by architects Inskip and Butler, and built by Frank Nixon, included some minor alterations to the garden and



cost £3,000. Walter Butler was a talented landscape architect. In England he had worked for a time with William Morris, pioneer of the English Arts and Crafts Movement. Butler shared Morris's beliefs in the advantages of architects designing gardens, and he favoured formality in garden design complemented by naturally flowing plantings. While he was working at Bishops court, Butler expressed these views in a paper delivered to the Royal Victorian Institute of Architects in June 1903.

If a garden is as much a work of man's art as his house is, it is – owing to their oneness, and inseparableness – as much the architect's business to design the garden as to design the house.¹⁶

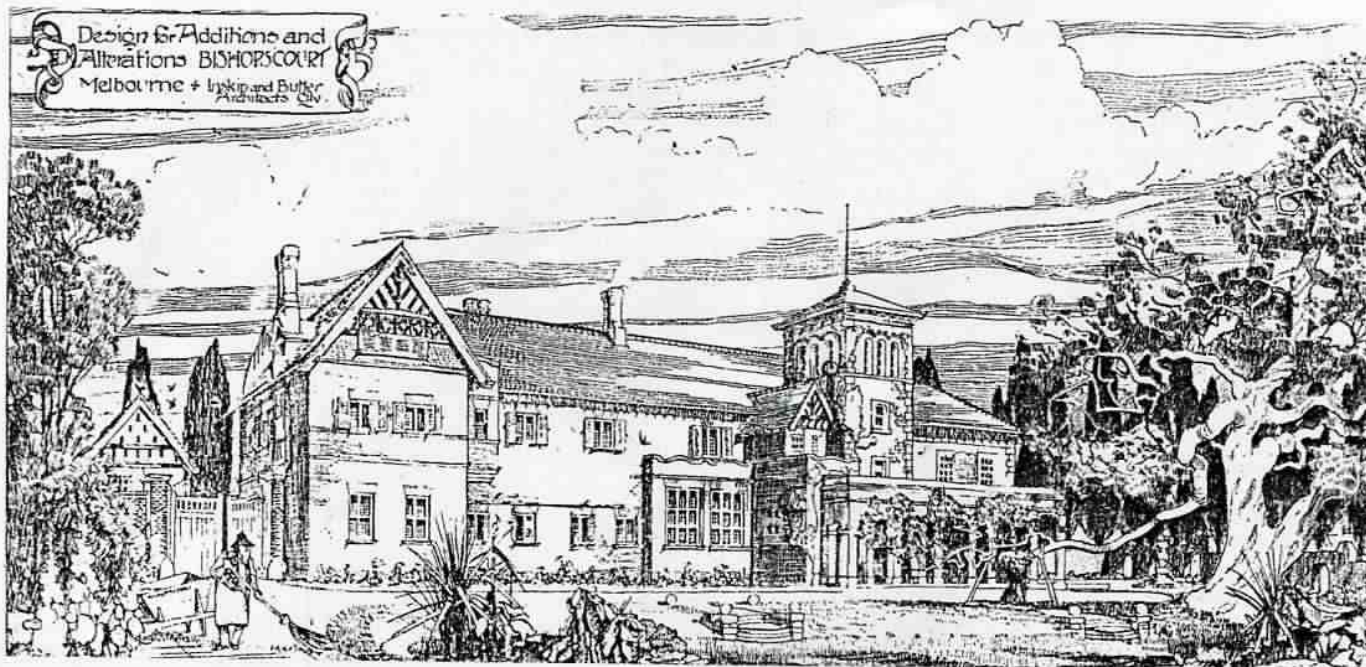
At Bishops court it was recorded that 'the grounds are being re-arranged and laid out, and will form pleasant surroundings to the buildings.'¹⁷ Inskip and Butler's intention was to maintain the open lawn aspect to the south and to the west in order to integrate house and garden. The two sets of shallow steps, which suggest a change in levels from the carriage way to the western lawn, were never constructed.



Top left:
The Butler extension to Bishops court added in 1903
Photo: Nina Crone

Top right:
The foundation stone of the 1903 extension. The inscription translates 'Except the Lord build a house, they labour in vain that build it'
Photo: Nina Crone

Bottom right:
The eastern façade of Bishops court showing the red-brick chapel added in 1902
Photo: Robin Page



'Inskip and Butler: Sketch of Additions to Bishopscourt (1903)' from the *Building, Engineering & Mining Journal*, 13 October 1903

After these renovations Archbishop Lowther Clarke and his family lived at Bishopscourt from 1904 to 1920. Prior to the next Archbishop's appointment, it was reported that 'several hundred pounds will be expended in renovating the interior and making alterations to the grounds.'¹⁸ While the actual changes made to the garden are not documented, it is likely that they involved re-shaping and widening the serpentine carriage-way to form a simplified, curved pathway around the main oval lawn. This also impacted on the paths within the formal garden south of the house by severing links with the driveway. These changes, necessary to accommodate the increase in motor vehicles, still exist today. Representing the first significant modification to the 19th century garden design, they maintained the original design intent of integrating the landscape with the design and siting of the house.¹⁹

In the 1960s the architects Mockridge, Stahle & Mitchell undertook substantial renovations that included a two-storey extension to the rear of the house and a garage built on the northern boundary of the site, between the driveway and Gipps Street. Fortunately its siting did not impact on views across the garden from the house. The proposed construction of a 7ft high garden wall, to connect the garage to the house and create a private garden, never eventuated. Beryl Mann, a well-known landscape architect at the time, is reported as working on the planting around the new garage and advising on eucalypts that were shedding branches.²⁰

Prior to occupation by Archbishop Dann and his family in 1978, architects John and Phyllis Murphy, who had worked on the restoration of many National Trust properties, undertook some renovations to the house. At the time the Society of Clerical Gardeners proposed that the garden at Bishopscourt should be restored to its original form. However, this never occurred due to lack of information about the original garden design.²¹

Garden Parties, Fêtes, Fairs and Receptions

From the time of Bishop Perry, the Bishopscourt garden has been used as more than a private family garden. It has often been a setting for garden parties, for occasional fund-raising, and for community events such as fêtes, carnivals and open days.

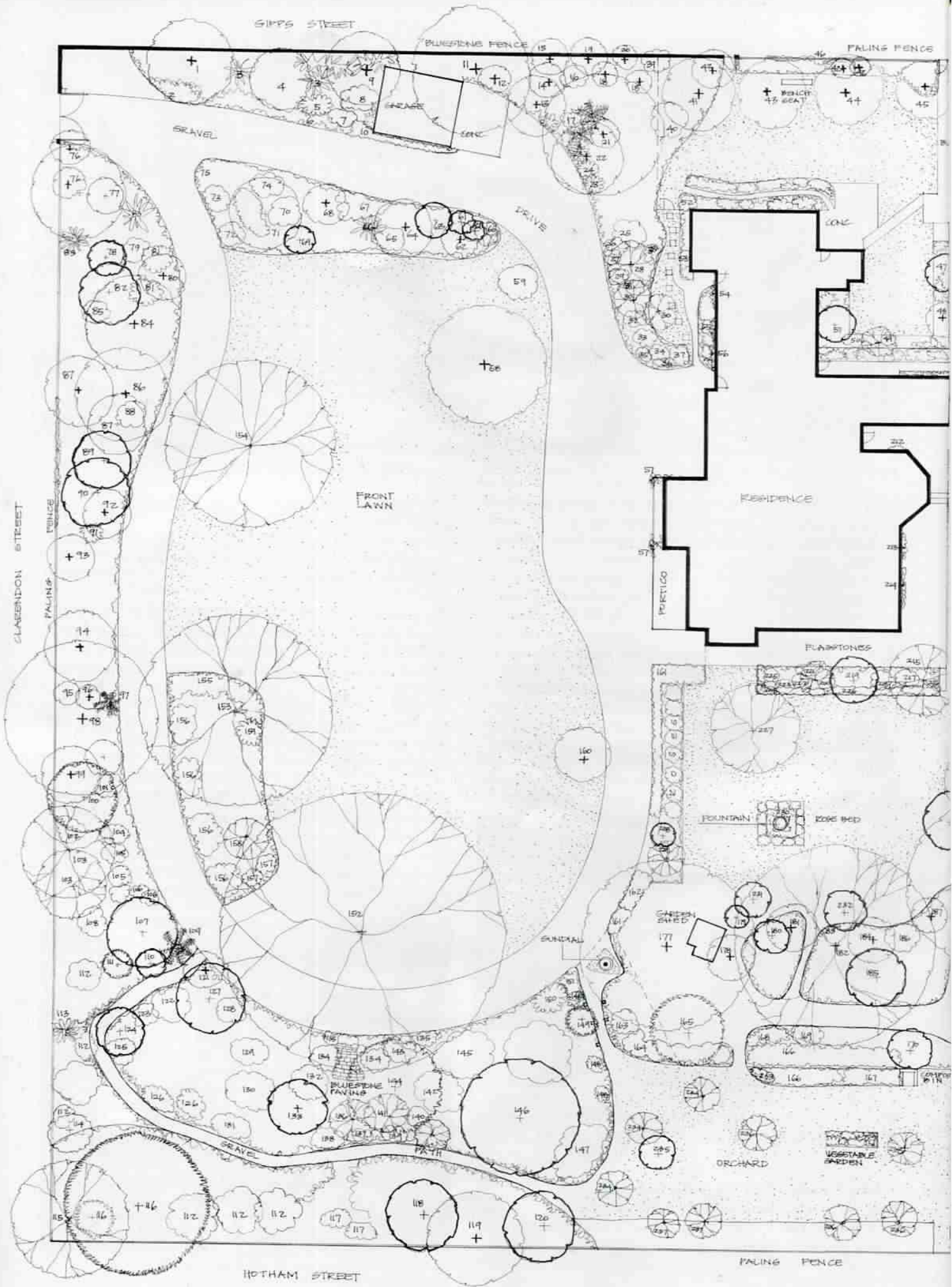
After the construction of the new red-brick wing, reports on garden parties became more common. Bishop Lowther Clark and his wife, who took up residency in 1904, are reported to have held many garden parties, as did his successor Archbishop Harrington Lees.

The tradition developed for garden parties to be held during Synod, on the first Thursday in October each year, when the garden was at its best. Marquees were set up on the lawn. Cups of tea, together with sandwiches and cakes, prepared earlier by willing helpers, were passed through the window of the small office located between the two drawing rooms. The day was an important social occasion, always reported in the press with detailed descriptions given of the new hats and outfits worn by the ladies.

A fête, complete with 'various stalls distributed throughout the grounds [and] other attractions in the form of motor-rides, side-shows and croquet',²² was held in the gardens in 1905 to raise funds for the Girls' Friendly Society. In May 1909 the *Weekly Times* carried photographs of a fair at Bishopscourt in aid of the House of Mercy at Cheltenham.²³



The original bluestone western façade of Bishopscourt
Photo courtesy Melbourne Diocesan Archives



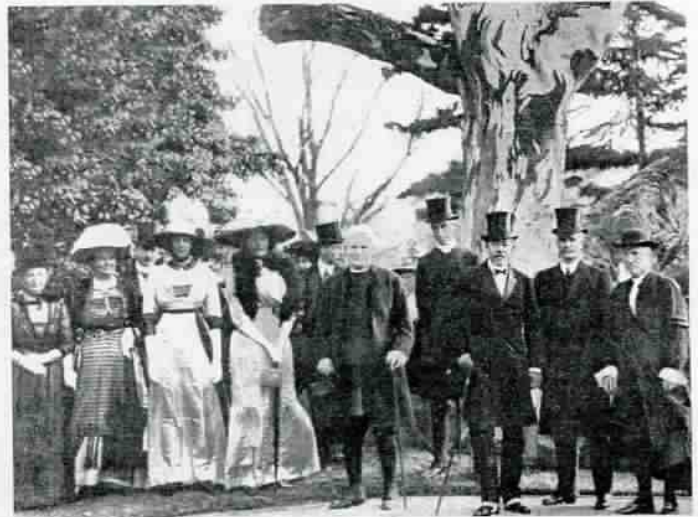
BISHOPSCOURT PLANT LIST

Compiled by John Hawker 7 August 2001

- 
1. *Pittosporum undulatum* (Sweet Pittosporum)
 2. *Crassula ovata* (Silver Jade Plant)
 3. *Cordylina stricta* (Slender Palm Lily)
 4. *Nerium oleander* (Oleander)
 5. *Strelitzia reginae* (Bird of Paradise)
 6. *Agapanthus praecox* subsp. *orientalis* (Blue Agapanthus)
 7. *Euphorbia characias* subsp. *wulfenii*
 8. *Chaenomeles speciosa* (Japanese Flowering Quince)
 9. *Pittosporum undulatum* (Sweet Pittosporum)
 10. *Jasminum polyanthum* (Pink Jasmine)
 11. *Grevillea robusta* (Silky Oak)
 12. *Acmena smithii* (Lilly Pilly)
 13. *Syzygium paniculatum* (Brush Cherry)
 14. *Corymbia citriodora* (Lemon-scented Gum)
 15. *Pittosporum undulatum* (Sweet Pittosporum)
 16. *Lochroma cyaneum* (2) (Violet Tube Flower)
 17. *Ligustrum ovalifolium* (Californian Privet)
 18. *Corymbia citriodora* (Lemon-scented Gum)
 19. *Acmena smithii* (Lilly Pilly)
 20. *Syzygium paniculatum* (Brush Cherry)
 21. *Grevillea robusta* (Silky Oak)
 22. *Melaleuca linariifolia* (Flaxleaf Paperbark)
 23. *Strelitzia reginae* (3) (Bird of Paradise)
 24. *Phormium tenax* (New Zealand Flax)
 25. *Rhododendron* cv.
 26. *Nandina domestica* (Japanese Sacred Bamboo)
 27. *Buxus sempervirens* 'Angustifolia'
 28. *Malus x purpurea* (Purple Crabapple)
 29. *Chamaelium uncinatum* (Geraldton Waxflower)
 30. *Betula pendula* (2) (Silver Birch)
 31. *Euryops pectinatus* (Grey-leaved Euryops)
 32. *Spiraea cantoniensis* 'Lanceata' (Double Spiraea)
 33. *Thryptomene saxicola* 'F.C. Payne'
 34. *Syringa vulgaris* (Lilac)
 35. *Euphorbia characias* subsp. *wulfenii*
 36. *Crassula ovata* (Silver Jade Plant)
 37. *Thryptomene baeckeaceae*
 38. *Philodendrum selloum*
 39. *Jasminum humile* (Italian Jasmine)
 40. *Acanthus mollis* (Oyster Plant)
 41. *Melaleuca linariifolia* (Flaxleaf Paperbark)
 42. *Agonis flexuosa* (2) (Willow Myrtle)
 43. *Corymbia maculata* (Spotted Gum)
 44. *Eucalyptus sideroxylon* (Red Ironbark)
 45. *Agonis flexuosa* (Willow Myrtle)
 46. *Wisteria sinensis* (Chinese Wisteria)
 47. *Citrus x limon* cv. (Lemon)
 48. *Callistemon citrinus* (Crimson Bottlebrush)
 49. *Lagerstroemia indica* (Crepe Myrtle)
 50. *Weigela florida*
 51. *Citrus reticulata* (Mandarin)
 52. *Protea* sp.
 53. *Coprosma* 'Coppershine'
 54. *Hardenbergia violacea* 'Happy Wanderer'
 55. *Correa reflexa* (Native Fuchsia)
 56. *Ficus pumila* (Creeping Fig)
 57. *Wisteria sinensis* (2) (Chinese Wisteria)
 58. *Eucalyptus melliodora* (Yellow Box)
 59. *Chaenomeles speciosa* 'Nivalis'
 60. *Cotinus coggygria* (Smoke Bush)
 61. *Photinia serratifolia* (2) (Chinese Hawthorn)
 62. *Acacia floribunda* (White Sallow Wattle)
 63. *Pittosporum eugenioides* 'Variegatum' (Variegated Lemonwood)
 64. *Acacia baileyana* (Cootamundra Wattle)
 65. *Nerium oleander* (Oleander)
 66. *Cordylina stricta* (Slender Palm Lily)
 67. *Lantana camara* (Lantana)
 68. *Eucalyptus polyanthemus* (Red Box)
 69. *Pittosporum tenuifolium* 'Purpureum' (Purple Kohuhu)
 70. *Camellia japonica*
 71. *Agapanthus praecox* subsp. *orientalis* (Blue Agapanthus)
 72. *Spiraea cantoniensis* 'Lanceata' (Double Spiraea)
 73. *Teucrium fruticans* (Bush Germander)
 74. *Streptosolen jamesonii* (Marmalade Bush)
 75. *Convolvulus sabatius* (Moroccan Glory Vine)
 76. *Pittosporum undulatum* (2) (Sweet Pittosporum)
 77. *Acca sellowiana* (Feijoa)
 78. *Laurus nobilis* (Bay Laurel)
 79. *Mackaya bella* (Natal Glory Bush)
 80. *Eucalyptus botryoides* (Southern Mahogany)
 81. *Strelitzia reginae* (Bird of Paradise)
 82. *Philadelphus mexicanus* (Mexican Mock Orange)
 83. *Cordylina stricta* (Slender Palm Lily)
 84. *Syzygium paniculatum* (Brush Cherry)
 85. *Spiraea cantoniensis* 'Lanceata' (Double Spiraea)
 86. *Grevillea robusta* (Silky Oak)
 87. *Pittosporum undulatum* (Sweet Pittosporum)
 88. *Chaenomeles speciosa* (Japanese Flowering Quince)
 89. *Photinia serratifolia* (Chinese Hawthorn)
 90. *Buxus sempervirens* (English Box)
 91. *Jasminum humile* (Italian Jasmine)
 92. *Corymbia ficifolia* (Flowering Gum)
 93. *Lophostemon confertus* (Queensland Box)
 94. *Pittosporum undulatum* (Sweet Pittosporum)
 95. *Coprosma repens* (Mirror Bush)
 96. *Callistemon viminalis* (Weeping Bottlebrush)
 97. *Trachycarpus fortunei* (Chinese Windmill Palm)
 98. *Eucalyptus camaldulensis* (River Red Gum)
 99. *Pittosporum undulatum* (Sweet Pittosporum)
 100. *Cupressus macrocarpa* (Monterey Cypress)
 101. *Viburnum tinus* (Laurustinus)
 102. *Lochroma cyaneum* (Violet Tube Flower)
 103. *Ulmus x hollandica* (2) (Dutch Elm)
 104. *Buxus sempervirens* (2) (English Box)
 105. *Genista monspessulana* (Broom)
 106. *Buxus sempervirens* (English Box)
 107. *Laurus nobilis* (Bay Laurel)
 108. *Viburnum tinus* (Laurustinus)
 109. *Phoenix canariensis* (Canary Island Date Palm)
 110. *Corynocarpus laevigatus* (Karaka)
 111. *Calocedrus decurrens* (Incense Cedar)
 112. *Euonymus japonica* (7) (Japanese Spindle Bush)
 113. *Cordylina stricta* (Slender Palm Lily)
 114. *Schinus areira* (Pepper Tree)
 115. *Populus x canadensis* 'Aurea' (Golden Poplar)
 116. *Cupressus macrocarpa* (Monterey Cypress)
 117. *Coprosma repens* (Mirror Bush)
 118. *Macadamia tetraphylla* (Macadamia Nut)
 119. *Pittosporum undulatum* (Sweet Pittosporum)
 120. *Pittosporum tenuifolium* (Kohuhu)
 121. *Syzygium paniculatum* (Brush Cherry)
 122. *Nerium oleander* (Oleander)
 123. *Euonymus japonica* (Japanese Spindle Bush)
 124. *Arbutus unedo* (Irish Strawberry Tree)
 125. *Viburnum tinus* (Laurustinus)
 126. *Jasminum humile* (2) (Italian Jasmine)
 127. *Coprosma repens* (Mirror Bush)
 128. *Philadelphus coronarius* (Mock Orange)
 129. *Spiraea cantoniensis* 'Lanceata' (Double Spiraea)
 130. *Ilex aff. kingiana*
 131. *Euonymus japonica* (Japanese Spindle Bush)
 132. *Ligustrum ovalifolium* (Californian Privet)
 133. *Photinia serratifolia* (Chinese Hawthorn)
 134. *Nerium oleander* (2) (Oleander)
 135. *Salvia greggii* (Autumn Sage)
 136. *Punica granatum* (Pomegranate)
 137. *Ligustrum vulgare* (Privet)
 138. *Ligustrum ovalifolium* (Californian Privet)
 139. *Coprosma repens* (Mirror Bush)
 140. *Ligustrum lucidum* 'Tricolor'
 141. *Fraxinus ornus* (Flowering Ash)
 142. *Coprosma repens* (Mirror Bush)
 143. *Euonymus japonica* (Japanese Spindle Bush)
 144. *Cupressus macrocarpa* (Monterey Cypress)
 145. *Euonymus japonica* (Japanese Spindle Bush)
 146. *Photinia serratifolia* (Chinese Hawthorn)
 147. *Plumbago auriculata* (Cape Leadwort)
 148. *Crinum moorei* (4) (Moore's Crinum)
 149. *Cupressus macrocarpa* 'Fastigiata' (Fastigiata Monterey Cypress)
 150. *Strelitzia reginae* (Bird of Paradise)
 151. *Bougainvillea glabra* (Bougainvillea)
 152. *Ulmus procera* (English Elm)
 153. *Ulmus procera* (English Elm)
 154. *Ulmus procera* (English Elm)
 155. *Agapanthus praecox* subsp. *orientalis* (Blue Agapanthus)
 156. *Viburnum tinus* (4) (Laurustinus)
 157. *Rosmarinus officinalis* (Rosemary)
 158. *Prunus cerasifera* (Cherry Plum)
 159. *Strelitzia reginae* (Bird of Paradise)
 160. *Corymbia ficifolia* (Flowering Gum)
 161. *Escallonia rubra* var. *macrantha*
 162. *Lonicera fragrantissima* (Winter Honeysuckle)
 163. *Euonymus japonica* (Japanese Spindle Tree)

Continued overleaf

164. *Coprosma repens* (Mirror Bush)
165. *Cupressus sempervirens* (Italian Cypress)
166. *Tecomaria capensis* (Cape Honeysuckle)
167. *Hedra helix* (English Ivy)
168. *Jasminum humile* (Italian Jasmine)
169. *Abelia x grandiflora* (Glossy Abelia)
170. *Pittosporum tenuifolium* (Kohuhu)
171. *Pittosporum undulatum* (2) (Sweet Pittosporum)
172. *Coprosma repens* (Mirror Bush)
173. *Ulmus x hollandica* (Dutch Elm)
174. *Coprosma repens* (Mirror Bush)
175. *Ulmus x hollandica* (4) (Dutch Elm)
176. *Schinus areira* (Pepper Tree)
177. *Ficus rubiginosa* (Port Jackson Fig)
178. *Lophostemon confertus* (Queensland Box)
179. *Citrus* cv.
180. *Pittosporum tenuifolium* (Kohuhu)
181. *Acmena smithii* (Lilly Pilly)
182. *Ulmus x hollandica* (Dutch Elm)
183. *Rosmarinus officinalis* (Rosemary)
184. *Pittosporum undulatum* (Sweet Pittosporum)
185. *Eriobotrya japonica* (Loquat)
186. *Camellia japonica*
187. *Pittosporum undulatum* (Sweet Pittosporum)
188. *Acer palmatum* (Japanese Maple)
189. *Corymbia maculata* (Spotted Gum)
190. *Cupressus sempervirens* (Italian Cypress)
191. *Magnolia grandiflora* (Southern Magnolia)
192. *Sophora microphylla* (Kowhai)
193. *Agonis flexuosa* (Willow Myrtle)
194. *Omalanthus populifolius* (Bleeding Heart Tree)
195. *Cotoneaster glaucophyllus* f. *serotinus* (Late Cotoneaster)
196. *Nerium oleander* (Oleander)
197. *Westringia fruticosa* (Coast Rosemary)
198. *x Cupressocyparis leylandii* (Leyland Cypress)
199. *Citrus* 'Meyer' (Meyer Lemon)
200. *Pittosporum undulatum* (Sweet Pittosporum)
201. *Callistemon citrinus* (Crimson Bottlebrush)
202. *Abelia x grandiflora* (Glossy Abelia)
203. *Daphne odora* (Daphne)
204. *Gardenia jasminoides* (Gardenia)
205. *Rosmarinus officinalis* (Rosemary)
206. *Eriobotrya japonica* (Loquat)
207. *Choisya ternata* (Mexican Orange)
208. *Viburnum opulus* 'Sterile' (Snowball Tree)
209. *Viburnum odorantissimum* (Sweet Viburnum)
210. *Kolkwitzia amabilis* (Chinese Beauty Bush)
211. *Coprosma repens* (Mirror Bush)
212. *Euphorbia pulcherrima* (Poinsettia)
213. *Rosa* cv. (Rose)
214. *Hardenbergia violacea* 'Happy Wanderer'
215. *Cydonia oblonga* (Quince)
216. *Nandina domestica* (Japanese Sacred Bamboo)
217. *Camellia sasanqua*
218. *Camellia japonica*
219. *Persea americana* (Avocado)
220. *Magnolia liliiflora* 'Nigra'
221. *Rhododendron* cv.
222. *Abelia x grandiflora* (Glossy Abelia)
223. *Rhododendron* cv.
224. *Forsythia viridissima* (Forsythia)
225. *Viburnum x carcephalum* (Fragrant Viburnum)
226. *Buxus sempervirens* (English Box)
227. *Prunus* cv. (sato-zakura group) (Japanese Cherry)
228. *Pittosporum tenuifolium* (Kohuhu)
229. *Pyrus communis* (Pear)
230. *Buxus sempervirens* (English Box)
231. *Citrus x limon* (Lemon)
232. *Citrus x aurantium* cv. (Grapefruit)
233. *Rosmarinus officinalis* (Rosemary)
234. *Ficus carica* (3) (Fig)
235. *Citrus x aurantium* cv. (Grapefruit)
236. *Prunus* cv. (Peach)
237. *Malus* cv. (Apple)
238. *Prunus* 'Trevatt' (Apricot)
239. *Laurus nobilis* (Bay Laurel)



Guests at the Garden Party at Bishops court in October 1912
Photo: *The Australasian*, 12 October 1912, courtesy Melbourne Diocesan Archives

More than 1,000 guests, representing 'every phase of church and civic life', attended the garden party in 1939 with 'the spacious grounds... with their old, white gums, spreading elm trees and green, sloping lawns' providing the backdrop.²⁴ In 1951, at the garden party held by Archbishop Booth, it was reported that the crowd was so large that there was a queue from the Bishops court gates almost as far as Wellington Parade to get in.²⁵

Archbishop Woods' first garden party, on 3 October 1958, attracted a crowd of 1,500 people including parliamentary and civic representatives, heads of services and the clergy of the Diocese. The press reported that:

*The somewhat unusually summery, garden-party weather (so often it had rained for this event), the sloping green lawns and the first trails of wisteria curving around the lovely old bluestone set the atmosphere for the afternoon. A slim-skirted frock and matching jacket of light black wool was worn by Mrs Woods and she added a small cap composed of white faille leaves and a spray of white camellias.*²⁶

A regular visitor to Bishops court during the residency of the Woods family recalls a large garden reception, organised by the Mothers' Union in the early 1960s, in honour of a visit from England by the Central President, Susan Varah.²⁷ It was preceded by a service at St Paul's Cathedral, filled to capacity. Trams were chartered to bring the ladies to Clarendon Street, while at Bishops court marquees had been set up on the lawn and the tea and sandwiches were prepared in the neighbouring Deanery. The event is still talked about today.

The last garden party was held in the late 1960s when concern was expressed that the money could be better used to help those in need. This view was reinforced following a resolution at the 1968 Lambeth Conference (the meeting of the world's Anglican bishops) that bishops should live 'in a style closer to the ordinary conditions of the people' rather than in large houses with vast gardens.²⁸ Thereafter, the use of the garden at Bishops court for entertaining and fund-raising dwindled.

Personal Contributions to the Garden

With each Archbishop and his family able to maintain the Bishops court garden according to their own tastes, abilities and available funds, there are very few records of gardening activity.



Path in the 'wilderness garden' on the south-western corner of the property in 2001
Photo: Robin Page

The residing family usually employed a 'gardener' but, as he was also expected to do the handyman jobs that were numerous due to the age of the house, time spent on the garden was minimal.

Archbishop Woods and his wife, who knew all the botanical names of plants, were both keen gardeners. They lived at Bishops court for 20 years (1957-1977) making them the longest residents after Bishop Perry. They made several changes to the garden. Keen to get more family use from the southern garden, they erected a trellis and planted a hedge of *Escallonia rubra* var. *macrantha* along the western boundary to screen it from the adjacent driveway, providing privacy from the street and from the numerous visitors to Bishops court. Mrs Woods planted several native trees on the eastern boundary of the southern garden. The family called this planting 'the Deanery Screenery'. At this time the fence around the perimeter of the property was made of wire strands so permission was sought to erect a timber-paling fence to keep out the undesirable characters who frequently wandered into the garden.

The Woods family also made use of the main lawn on the long summer evenings by erecting a tennis net and marking out court lines. The Archbishop, a keen sportsman, would sometimes hit a hockey ball around this area with his daughters, or set up croquet hoops on the southern lawn.

Archbishop Woods' love of figs resulted in several of these trees being planted in the orchard, along with cumquats and quinces. The vegetable garden is also remembered to have had sweet corn taller than the fence, and wonderful scarecrows.²⁹

Archbishop Dann found his relaxation in the vegetable and flower garden, promising his wife, when they moved into Bishops court, that he would provide her with flowers.³⁰ He was also reported



Border planting along the carriage drive at Bishops court in 2001
Photo: Robin Page



Iris in the 'wilderness garden'
Photo: Robin Page

responsible for several of the new plantings, and for removing some of the eucalypts planted by previous owners as he thought them inappropriate to the formal design of the garden.³¹ Archbishop Penman, who took up residency in 1984, relocated the bench from the main western lawn to the private garden south of the house. His wife planted a vegetable garden behind the hedge bordering the southern garden.³²

Several of the archbishops consulted tree surgeons in relation to the Corroboree Tree that had been suffering from a degenerative disease for many years. During Archbishop Woods' residency, when one of the tree's main horizontal branches on the northern side eventually succumbed to gravity, it was left on the ground for many years, becoming covered in ivy and making quite a decorative feature.³³ Classified by the National Trust as a significant tree, due to its age and history, the Corroboree Tree did not survive. It had to be removed in the late 1990s by Archbishop Rayner.

The Garden Today

The garden today is still divided into several areas of both open and closed spaces. The front lawn enclosed by the driveway to the west of the house maintains the original sense of space. Due to the loss of the Corroboree Tree that dominated the eastern side of the lawn, this space is now even greater than originally designed. The only plantings retained are to the north of the lawn, on both sides of the driveway and adjacent to the garage. They help to screen out the neighbouring hospital. There is also a bed of shrubs on the south-western section of the lawn around a large *Ulmus procera* (English Elm).

The western bed, between the driveway and the fence running along Clarendon Street, contains many mature trees such as *Lophostemon confertus* (Brush Box), *Photinia serrulata* (Chinese Hawthorn) and *Cupressus macrocarpa* (Monterey Cypress).



Looking across the southern garden with its paved terrace and escallonia hedge, 2001

Photo: Robin Page

However, it has become dominated by many 'weedy' species such as *Pittosporum undulatum* (Sweet Pittosporum), *Coprosma repens* (Mirror Bush), *Hedera helix* (Common Ivy) and *Agapanthus praecox* ssp. *orientalis* (Agapanthus). Of interest is an excellent specimen of the relatively uncommon *Jasminum humile* (Italian Yellow Jasmine) which is also found in the northern and southern beds.

The formal garden, south of the house, remains an enclosed lawn with a central fountain. The hedge of *Escallonia rubra* var. *macrantha* screens off the main garden to the west. The house and a long mixed border screen the north, while the eastern boundary is planted with a mix of exotic and native trees. To the south, a number of mature trees standing in remnant beds, together with a hedge of *Coprosma repens* (Mirror Bush) and *Tecomaria capensis* (Cape Fire-Flower), provide a dense screen.

Behind the southern hedge are the old vegetable garden and orchard containing a few mixed fruit trees. Adjacent to the 'wilderness' that runs east along Hotham Street from the Clarendon Street corner, this wild area maintains the original design intent and is a marked contrast to the rest of the garden. Today it contains mature trees and 'weedy' species similar to the western driveway bed. A path runs from the south-western driveway loop to the south-eastern corner where there are the remains of an old timber pergola and the original sundial.

Maintenance

The costs associated with maintaining the large garden at Bishops court have always been an issue. Up until the 1940s, the archbishop's wife managed garden maintenance and the associated costs came out of the archbishop's stipend. After that time the stipend was found to be insufficient to include such costs, so the Diocesan Office became involved. Additional money for the garden has always been difficult to find in the face of other concerns such as the funding and founding of new parishes in the growth corridors of metropolitan Melbourne.

This lack of funding, and the archbishop's limited time, due to work commitments, have meant that the garden has never enjoyed a high priority, even with those archbishops who were keen gardeners. This fact largely accounts for the few changes to the garden over the years. In recent time, garden maintenance has focused on a tidy appearance rather than nurturing existing plants or attempting to maintain any original design intent.

The Future

The importance of Bishops court is reflected in its heritage listings. Heritage Victoria has listed both the house and garden. The National Trust classified the original bluestone building but excluded the 1903 brick wing and the garden. The Australian Heritage Commission includes both the original bluestone building and the 1903 brick wing on the Register of the National Estate, but excludes the garden.

The garden at Bishops court is considered of social significance as it has been the venue for official hospitality, garden parties, fêtes, and carnivals over many years. It also has landscape and scientific significance due to its collection of mature plants. Eighteen trees are noted on the Victorian Heritage Register with the *Ficus rubiginosa* (Port Jackson Fig) and the *Ilex f. kingiana* (Holly), both located in the southern section of the site, considered to be of scientific significance. The latter specimen is in very poor condition. Other trees considered significant are those characteristic of 19th century planting such as the large *Ulmus x hollandica* (Dutch Elm), several *U. procera* (English Elm), a *Schinus molle* (Peppercorn) and some *Grevillea robusta* (Silky Oak).

Throughout its history the location and size of Bishops court have made it an attractive re-development proposal. In 1874 the Governor of Victoria granted the right of disposition of the property permitting the Bishop to sell all or part of the property as he determined, providing the proceeds were



Terrace in front of original dining room window, showing magnolia
 Photo: *The Australasian*, 4 October 1902, courtesy Melbourne Diocesan Archives

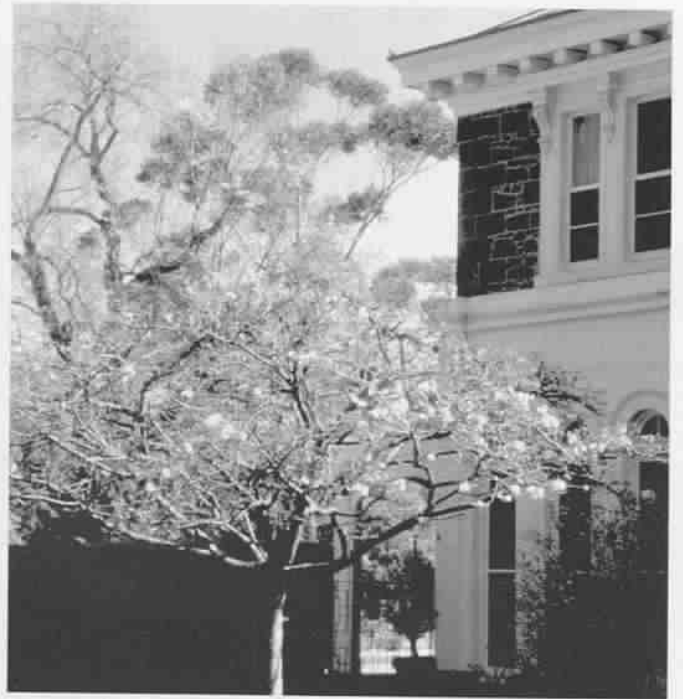
invested appropriately. There have been several attempts to dispose of the property. The first was in 1903 when the possibility of demolishing the mansion and building new houses on the site, as a means of raising revenue for the Church, was considered. Other development proposals arose in the 1960s and early 1970s, but parishioner and community opposition defeated them. Then in 1998, a proposal to subdivide the Hotham Street frontage was the subject of a permit application before Heritage Victoria. The application was refused.³⁴

Much work is needed to preserve the garden. The Victorian Branch of the Australian Garden History Society has proposed the following program for the garden to be overseen by the Society

- The preparation of a Management Plan
- Working bees to be conducted on the 3rd Wednesday of every second month beginning on 18 July 2001
- The inclusion of the garden in the 2002/2003 program of the Australian Open Garden Scheme with proceeds from gate receipts being put back into the garden
- Appropriate applications for grant funding to be made

The Australian Garden History Society has sought support from members of the East Melbourne Garden Club, the East Melbourne Group, and the East Melbourne Historical Society in preserving this important 19th century Australian garden.

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Japanese cherry in southern garden, spring 2001
 Photo: Robin Page



Unidentified rose, spring 2001
 Photo: Robin Page



Southern Garden showing paved terrace, fountain and Corroboree Tree.
 Photo: Courtesy Melbourne Diocesan Archives



Japanese cherry and escallonia hedge in southern garden, 2001
Photo: Robin Page



In the 'wilderness', 2001
Photo: Robin Page

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- 2 From the Reverend George Goodman's diary, quoted in *The Church of England Messenger*, 1 October, 1903.
- 3 Allom Lovell & Associates, *Bishopscourt Garden*, January 1999, p. 7.
- 4 *ibid.* pp. 7-8
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- 6 Letter, Charles Swyer to Bishop Perry, 11 December, 1854. Collection of Joan Glover, Camberwell, Cited in Allom Lovell & Associates *Bishopscourt Garden*, January 1999, p. 9.
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- 32 Allom Lovell, *op. cit.*, p.13
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Garden party talk,
October 1912

Photo: *The Australasian*,
12 October 1912, courtesy
Melbourne Diocesan
Archives

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