



Australia's
Open Garden Scheme

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Promoting the knowledge and pleasure
of gardening throughout Australia

Welcomes you to the garden of:

BISHOPSCOURT

Welcome to Bishopscourt, the home of the Anglican Archbishop of Melbourne.

Bishopscourt is one of the oldest properties in East Melbourne and has been the official residence of the Anglican Bishop, later Archbishop, of Melbourne since 1853. It is the last intact urban estate within the City of Melbourne.

Bishop Perry, the first Bishop of Melbourne, selected the site in 1848. 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 were not developed until the 1860s. The house was designed by the architects Newson and Blackburn. It was finally ready for occupation in January 1853 and was Bishop Perry's home until 1874. The red brick northern wing was designed by the architects Inskip and (Walter) Butler and completed in 1903.

Architect Charles Swyer was engaged in 1854 to lay out the grounds. His job was made easy with the siting of the residence by Newson and Blackburn in its south-eastern corner position east of an ancient River Red Gum (*Eucalyptus camaldulensis*). This eucalypt, often referred to as the Corroboree Tree, survived on the site until the 1990s. The siting gave the garden the wonderful space we appreciate today and it is difficult to imagine what it would be like now had the house been centred on the block. Walter Butler was a talented landscape architect and it is believed that during the 1903 extensions to the house he had some influence on the garden. Indeed, it was at this time that he delivered a seminal paper on landscape design to the Royal Victorian Institute of Architects which included "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."

Each resident Bishop or Archbishop and their families have enjoyed the garden and many have made their own contribution. Bishop James Moorhouse chose the garden to bury his faithful dog in 1884 and the headstone can still be seen with the touching inscription 'In memory of Dear Old Tim, a friend true and tried'. Bishop Lowther Clark and his wife, who took up occupancy in 1904, are reported to have held many garden parties, as did his successor, Archbishop Harrington Lees. The tradition continued and there are numerous reports available of garden parties until the late 1960s. By then it was considered that garden parties were an indulgence and that the money could be better used to help those in need.

Archbishop Woods and his wife, who lived at Bishopscourt from 1957 to 1977, were both keen gardeners and made several changes to the garden. They planted the *Escallonia* hedge to screen the southern garden from the driveway and to provide privacy. Mrs Woods planted several native trees on the eastern boundary of the southern garden, a planting the family named 'the Deanery Screenery', referring to the neighbouring garden then owned by the church and the residence of the Dean of Melbourne. Archbishop Woods' love of figs resulted in several trees being planted in the orchard, which survive today.

Since the 1960s, garden maintenance focussed on a tidy appearance and little, if any, real gardening was done. In 1998 the Church lodged an application to Heritage Victoria to subdivide the land; they wished to excise the south-eastern corner of the site. The Victorian Branch of the Australian Garden History Society (AGHS) was one of the objectors. When the subsequent appeal was made in 1999,

Australia's Open Garden Scheme is a self-funding, not for profit organisation dedicated to promoting the knowledge and pleasure of gardening throughout Australia. All income comes from the entry fee and part of each entry fee is dedicated to funding community garden projects. Since 1987 more than \$550,000 has been given to projects across Australia. Our garden owners also raise funds for charities and more than \$2,000,000 has been given to worthwhile causes. Copies of the Open Garden Scheme Guide are available from ABC Shops or by phoning 9397 8841. For a weekly update on garden openings phone the Information Line 1902 261026 (calls are charged at 83c min).

ABC
RADIO

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the AGHS again objected and appeared along with others at the hearings conducted to resolve the issue. At all times when objecting to the subdivision, the AGHS offered assistance for the maintenance of the garden. It is history now that Heritage Victoria disallowed the subdivision.

Since July 2001, the AGHS have conducted monthly working bees with an average attendance of 15. The many years of neglect had led to plants being lost and many layers of rubbish and ivy and other weeds building up in the shrubberies. The path in the south-western corner of the garden was lost under the mountain of rubbish that had been allowed to accumulate. The working bees have cleared away much and have endeavoured to manage the rubbish by separating chippable material for mulch, bagging green rubbish for council collection and composting suitable material.

Bishopscourt is included on the Victorian Heritage Register and 18 trees are included on the citation. *Ilex f. fujiana*, a fine plant when healthy, has suffered from years of neglect and damage by possums. It is receiving special attention in the hope that it may recover but if it doesn't respond it will need to be replaced. The root zone of the *Ficus rubiginosa* has for many years been covered by heaps of firewood logs and this year was seen to be suffering from extreme stress due to soil compaction. A project co-ordinated by the AGHS using a Hands-on Heritage youth employment program team relocated the wood heap to a less prominent position, opened up another lost path and enabled the tree to receive some much needed attention. It is responding very well and will continue to be a significant tree in the garden.

Heritage Victoria funding enabled the driveway and garden paths to be resurfaced and the pergola, which had been lost, to be reconstructed. Heritage Victoria money also paid for replacement established trees: four *Ulmus x hollandica* (Dutch elm), *Agathis robusta*, *Robinia pseudoacacia* and *Magnolia grandiflora*.

An RACV Foundation grant provided funds for the AGHS to engage professionals to carry out specific tasks, in particular professional gardener Shelley Wood, who is now in charge of the garden and who directs the working bees.

Clive Blazey of Diggers Seeds provided a wide range of heritage vegetable seeds, and the vegetable garden has been reinstated on the land that had been proposed for subdivision.

In August, Alan Soderlund of Total Plant Solutions donated dozens of established trees and shrubs which has propelled the restoration project ahead by a couple of years. These plants were all selected as suitable for this garden and all were available in the nursery trade in Melbourne at the end of the 1800s, the time the garden was established. A list of these recent plantings is available. The *Eucalyptus camaldulensis* west of the front door of the house and considered to be remnant vegetation had to be felled in the 1990s. Total Plant Solutions were able to provide a replacement tree and this was planted in August.

The AGHS is delighted to present this rarely opened property to the public via Australia's Open Garden Scheme as a 'restoration work in progress'. We are proud to report that much has been achieved in the 15 months we have been working here and we look forward to achieving more in the future. Working bees are held on the third Wednesday of each month and anyone is welcome.

The AGHS wishes to thank Archbishop Peter and Margo Watson for trusting our judgement in the restoration of the garden and for the privilege of working in this very special place. We also wish to publicly thank the RACV Foundation, Heritage Victoria, Alan Soderlund of Total Plant Solutions, Clive Blazey of Diggers Seeds, and the very many people who have helped us in a whole range of ways with our Bishopscourt project.

Being involved in Australia's Open Garden Scheme is a rewarding experience and you may like to consider opening your garden through the Scheme. The gardens in the Scheme are chosen to reflect a great diversity of styles and may even challenge the conventional view of what constitutes a garden. While aspects of a garden may not be to your taste, we urge you to celebrate this diversity. Please remember you are visiting a private home and show respect and sensitivity for the owners who have so generously shared their garden with you. For more information please contact the Regional Co-ordinator Mary Klestadt on 9397 8841.