



Parramatta Park celebrated 150 years on 6 August 2008 when the community gathered around the original 1858 boundaries then moved to form this '150' symbol in the park. Photo: David Wallace; below: Old Government House.

Parramatta Park: a national icon

by Christopher Levins, Director Parramatta Park Trust

On 22 May 1856, the bicameral NSW Parliament opened and sat for the first time. Less than one year later on 18 March 1857 a decision was made by Government Proclamation to set aside at least 200 acres from the Governor's Parramatta Domain "for the health and well being of the people of Parramatta".

In the following year the boundaries of this new park – Parramatta Park – were surveyed and on 6 August 1858 a proclamation appeared in the Government Gazette appointing five people as trustees representing government, business and community interests of the people of Parramatta. They were: James Byrnes, MP; William Goodin; George Oakes, MP; Nathaniel Payten, Sen.; and John Purchase.

Since 1858 Parramatta Park has been managed by a trust on behalf of the people of NSW. In the late 20th century Parramatta City Council and the National Parks and Wildlife Service undertook separate terms as the primary estate managers, with the assistance of an appointed trust. When the NSW government passed the Parramatta Park Trust Act 2001 it established the current trust with broader functions and with a primary role to care for and conserve the natural and cultural heritage of Parramatta Park.

Parramatta Park is a nationally significant cultural landscape closely associated with early colonial government, with the beginnings of rural settlement in Australia and with the exploration and expansion of colonisation. The Park represents one of Australia's oldest areas set aside and developed for public recreation and has had continuous use for 150 years as a public park.

Over the years its significance has been recognised by statutory and non-statutory authorities such as the State Heritage Register, the National Trust, the Register of the National Estate and on local heritage schedules. In August 2007 a large area of the park estate was listed together with Old Government House on the National Heritage List and in January 2008 the estate was nominated

under the name of Old Government House and Domain (Parramatta) for World Heritage Listing as part of the Australian Convict Sites serial listing nomination by the Australian Government.

Parramatta Park is acknowledged by Parramatta Park Trust in its landscape master plan as 'a palimpsest of different cultures occupying the same place': Aboriginal occupation as the core territory of the Burramatta clan of the Darug Aboriginal people; the vice-regal domain in the colony of NSW from 1788 to 1857, and an early and major public park. It is the depth and layering of cultural values and evidence that makes the place such a rich resource for the community.



The landform including important communities of remnant Cumberland Plain woodland vegetation and archaeological sites are witness to Aboriginal occupation. The Vice-Regal period has left a wealth of primary source material and the park landscape has been shaped by a variety of Governors leaving a legacy of important features. Together with Old Government House dating to the late 18th century and its associated outbuildings other features include Governor Brisbane's 1822 observatory site and the Dairy Cottage, which contains one of the oldest buildings in Australia.

The landscape, including significant views, demonstrates the evolution of agriculture and development of the first successful farm and the early colony of Rose Hill. An unusual and important Boer War Memorial, a range of six 19th and 20th century gatehouses, remnant exotic plantings and a memorial to pioneering aviator

William (Billy) Hart relate to the park era of the site. The Parramatta Park Landscape Master Plan has identified 46 landscape actions using the underlying historical structure of the park and its heritage values as the basis for uses and interpretation of the heritage significance. Significantly, one aim of the masterplan is to link Old Government House with its domain and interpret the role of the domain. For example a new pathway connecting Old Government House to improved and appropriate parking was constructed in 2007 by Parramatta Park Trust using the alignment of Governor Phillip's carriageway. The design conserved in situ evidence and interpreted the site of Macquarie's dovecote.

Listing on the National Heritage List and nomination for World Heritage Listing are exciting developments for Parramatta Park Trust and Old Government House. Studies have shown that World Heritage listings generate economic benefits, especially increased tourism. World Heritage sites in Australia have recorded increases in visitation rates after listing of between 17% and 50% and it is anticipated that a successful inscription on the World Heritage List will improve visitation to Parramatta Park and Old Government House. A tourism strategy linking the eleven convict sites across Australia as a 'convict trail' has been discussed with site managers at the national level. The Parramatta Park Trust is working closely with the NSW National Trust in areas such as education, tourism development and marketing.

Parramatta Park has been an important gathering place for people to relax, enjoy social occasions and to celebrate and commemorate important events. The creation of Parramatta Park was an important decision which has helped to conserve the cultural heritage of this remarkable landscape.

Further information: www.ppt.nsw.gov.au and www.heritage.gov.au

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