

# Adelaide Botanic Garden: State Heritage Places



Boy and Serpent Fountain



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W.E. Harcus in 1876 wrote:

“The glory of Adelaide, and the pride of her citizens, is our beautiful Botanic Garden, which under the magic wand of Dr Richard Schomburgk, has grown into a thing of beauty which will be a joy for ever . . .”

Adelaide Botanic Garden, Wittunga Botanic Garden, the State Herbarium and Botanic Park are situated on traditional lands of the Kurna People of the Adelaide Plains. In addition, part of Mount Lofty Botanic Garden lies on the Country of the Peramangk People.

## Short history of Adelaide Botanic Garden

The importance of botanic gardens in South Australian society was acknowledged in 1837, when Colonel William Light included an area for a botanic garden in his plan for the city of Adelaide. From this vision, three botanic gardens and the State Herbarium have developed over the past 180 years to create what is now South Australia's Botanic Gardens and State Herbarium.

Established in 1855, Adelaide Botanic Garden has developed with the city, providing a rich array of leisure, tourism, cultural and scientific opportunities for the community and visitors. The Garden has significant cultural heritage values and is one of the CBD's most loved and visited cultural and scientific institutions.

As an institution, the Botanic Gardens and State Herbarium has a rich history and has developed to be a part of the cultural and scientific fabric of Adelaide. It provides a diversity of experiences, services and expertise to a wide community at a local, national and international level. The institution is part of a global community of botanical institutions that cultivate and curate plants and landscapes, and undertake botanical research to inspire and advance people's understanding of plants.

There have been countless changes to Adelaide Botanic Garden since it opened to the public on 4 October 1857, but one thing that has never changed is the Garden's commitment to connecting plants, people and culture. Discover some key dates in Adelaide Botanic Garden's history with the timeline below:

- 1836: Kurna and Peramangk occupancy of the country
- 1836: Colony of South Australia established
- 1854: Adelaide Botanic Garden's fifth and existing site selected
- 1855: George Francis (1800-1865) appointed inaugural superintendent (and later, director) of Adelaide Botanic Garden, with rapid progress made in garden design and layout
- 1857: Garden opened to the public (4 October) with 634 people in attendance
- 1865: Richard Schomburgk (1811-1891) appointed director
- 1868: Victoria House – Adelaide Botanic Garden's original home for the *Victoria amazonica* waterlily – erected, with first successful flowering of the remarkable plant; Araucaria Avenue planted
- 1873: Botanic Park established and planted over ensuing years
- 1877: Palm House officially opened
- 1881: Museum of Economic Botany officially opened
- 1891: Maurice Holtze (1840-1923) appointed director
- 1906: Simpson Kiosk erected to provide enhanced refreshment facilities in the Garden

1909: Tram Depot (now State Herbarium) and Goodman Building (now Botanic Gardens admin building) opened on Hackney Road

1917: John Bailey (1866-1938) appointed director

1919: Simpson Shadehouse opened

1932: Harold Greaves (1882-1959) appointed curator (and later director) of Garden

1939: Sunken Garden established

1948: Noel Lothian (1915-2004) appointed director

1958: Land purchased in Mount Lofty Ranges to create a cool-climate annexe (Mount Lofty Botanic Garden opened in 1977)

1975: Wittunga Botanic Garden opened at Blackwood after it was bequeathed to Botanic Gardens of South Australia

1981: Brian Morley appointed director

1988: Bicentennial Conservatory opened to the public

1995: Extensive restoration of Palm House completed

1999: Refurbished tramway buildings opened for use as administration (Goodman Building) and Plant Biodiversity Centre (now State Herbarium)

2000: International Rose Garden opened; old rose garden re-established as Economic Garden

2001: Stephen Forbes appointed director

2006: Schomburgk Pavilion opened to the public

2007: Amazon Waterlily Pavilion opened; Garden celebrates 150 years

2009: Santos Museum of Economic Botany reopened to the public after a year-long restoration

2011: Garden of Health opened to the public

2013: First Creek Wetland launched in Garden's south-east corner

2015: Little Sprouts Kitchen Garden opened for classes

2016: Dr Lucy Sutherland appointed director

2017-18: Goodman Plaza redeveloped and new Flinders Ranges flora collection installed

2018: Restoration of the Boy and Serpent Fountain (Coalbrookdale Fountain) completed

2018: Major restoration works of the Palm House undertaken (re-opening late 2018)

2020: Simpson Shadehouse reopened after major restoration (December 2020)

2021: Michael Harvey appointed director

# Former Municipal Tramways Trust (MTT) Hackney Tram (later Bus) Depot, including the Goodman Building & Tram Barn

The Municipal Tramways Trust (MTT) was established by an act of parliament of 1906 as a means of co-ordinating and upgrading the many hitherto privately owned transport routes. Erected in 1908 at the central depot on Hackney Road the administration building is historically significant for its identification with the Municipal Tramways Trust.

The building is of considerable architectural interest with a distinctly residential appearance, characterised by bold massing and a complex roof form. The pronounced use of gables, blank end walls, and simple stuccoed strings give the building a singular appearance. The windows with transoms and mullions are contrasted with the main entrance and the veranda/balcony of classical origin. The whole is reminiscent of influences from the Arts and Crafts Movement. It is also representative of Edwardian confidence and civic pride.

The State Herbarium and the Botanic Gardens Library are now housed in the old Tram Barn A.



Photo by David Bills. Tram Barn in foreground and Bicentennial Conservatory in the background

## Morgue - former Dead House Dwelling

Built 1882-3. Historically, a surviving relic associated with the Lunatic Asylum established in 1852.

Now used as a toolshed for the Botanic Garden. Architecturally, a simple coursed cut bluestone rectangular building. This structure together with Yarrabee House, East Lodge and some stone walling are all that remains of the Asylum that operated for forty years.



Image: Morgue, Adelaide Botanic Garden. Source: Keith Conlon

# Palm House

The Adelaide Botanic Garden Palm House is a rare example of the larger iron and glass botanical houses of the mid-late 19th Century, made possible by the technological developments of the Industrial Revolution. It is an excellent example of a sophisticated tensile structure, and its design, by the German architect Gustav Runge, displays the skilled application of new and developing structural technologies to produce a building that is light, robust, simple and elegant. The high integration of successful structural logic with sophisticated architectural form and detailing, the almost indistinguishable interrelationships between form and function, and the absence of any similar example of the style or type of glasshouse in Australia or worldwide, gives the Palm House a high architectural significance.

The Palm House also has high historical significance for its close association with Dr R M Schomburgk, the highly regarded second Director of the Adelaide Botanic Garden, who was almost solely responsible for its existence, and who personally designed its interior. [Adapted from: Bruce Harry & Associates 'The Palm House, Adelaide Botanic Gardens Conservation Plan' (Draft) 1991].

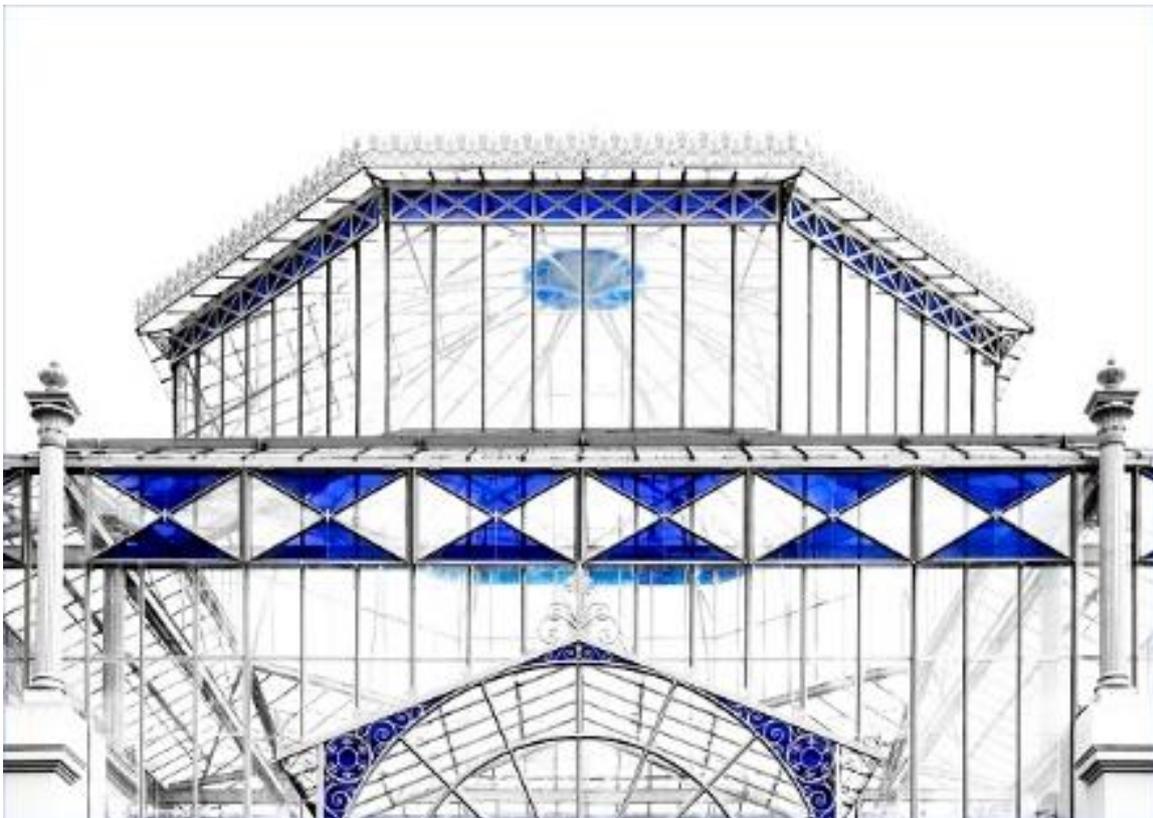


Photo by Colin Haigh.

# Simpson Kiosk

This building provided for by A.M. Simpson was designed by the architectural practice of E.J. Woods. It has been recently extended and sympathetically altered.



Image Source: DEW files.

# Museum of Economic Botany

Opened in 1881 and designed by Edward J Woods, this is a good example of the Greek Revival style.

In the mid-1870s Dr Schomburgk announced the necessity of a new building for the existing herbarium and economic collection. The collection which was stowed away in a 'little room in the backyard' was being slowly destroyed by damp and white ants.

Grants were sanctioned by parliament in 1877-79. Plans were drawn up by colonial architect in-chief E.J. Woods for a new museum ' . . . in the Greek style and the first of its kind in South Australia'. It was erected under Woods' supervision and built by James Anderson.

The chief glory of this building is its finely decorated ceiling, which was painted in a Greek design by W.J. Williams. The overall design of the museum was reviewed by Schomburgk as 'chaste and tasteful'.

Built of random masonry and then rendered in thick cement to imitate ashlar, the museum has little decoration to its front. There is a rolled metal truncated-hip roof with cast-iron lacework along the ridge.

The museum is located centrally in the gardens looking out over a large open lawn planted with conifers.

Source: Heritage of the City of Adelaide: *An Illustrated Guide* (1996).



Images: Source DEW files.

# Bicentennial Conservatory

The 1989 South Australian Bicentennial Conservatory located in the Adelaide Botanic Garden demonstrates a high degree of creative and technical accomplishment, as a well-executed South Australian example of a glass house of the 'Late Twentieth Century Structuralist' style architecture.

The Bicentennial Conservatory stands as an exemplar work of the celebrated local architect Guy Maron, who produced a creative and technically excellent contemporary design solution responding to the problems of designing a tropical glasshouse within a dry, temperate climate.



Image by Kaylee Clancy

## Stone Wall

This is a masonry wall along the southern boundary of Adelaide Botanic Garden and part southeast boundary of National Wine Centre following Botanic Road. The wall returns to northwest at northeast end terminating within grounds of National Wine Centre.

The wall was constructed in the period between 1855-65 with the west section to garden incorporating retaining wall for roadway and east section forming part of former Adelaide Lunatic Asylum. The wall is interrupted near the west end by main North Terrace Gates to Garden and incorporates East Lodge gates and various other openings.

## Boy and Serpent Fountain

The Boy and Serpent Fountain is of high historical and social significance as an illustration of the development and evolution of one of South Australia's most important cultural and scientific institutions – Adelaide Botanic Garden.

Imported from Coalbrookdale, England, which was notable for the manufacture of cast iron items. Donated by Robert Barr Smith and erected in the Botanic Garden in 1908, the fountain provided the central focus in a formal rose garden. In 2000 the Rose garden transferred to a new site and the fountain is now in what is called the Economic Garden.

Its significance is enhanced by its rarity, being one of only two known surviving examples of this work by a major English foundry, and by association with its donor Robert Barr Smith, one of South Australia's most prominent citizens and arguably its greatest philanthropist.

Aesthetically and technically, the Boy and Serpent Fountain, illustrates the technical possibilities of late 19th century English cast iron manufacturing processes – including mass production and prefabrication.

It is a notable example of the Colebrookdale Company's work and was featured in the Company's celebrated two volume catalogue of 1875.

The decorative elements and features of the Fountain are refined and finely detailed in form, reflecting innovation in cast iron manufacturing processes and methods of the period. In addition, the surrounding pond is of note, as the centrepiece of the original Class-ground - established by the Garden's second Director, Dr Schomburgk by 1874.

*See image on front cover of this document.*

## East Lodge

Built 1865 as part of the Lunatic Asylum that was established in 1852. East Lodge is thought to be designed by William Hanson and/or George T Light.

Constructed of stone with brick quoins, reminiscent of residences on an English country estate. Now part of the Botanic Garden complex. This structure, together with Yarrabee House, the morgue and some stone walling, are all that remain of the Asylum that operated for forty years.



Image: East Lodge. Source: Ashley Walsh, ABC.

# Main Entrance Gates

The imposing entrance gates to the Botanic Gardens on North Terrace were erected because the wooden one was constantly under repair.

The iron gates, two wicket gates and railing were chosen from the price book of Messrs Turner and Allen, iron founders in London. Costing 215 pounds and freight, duty and cartage from Port Adelaide cost a further 43 pounds.

Dr. Schomburgk described the new gates "of exquisite taste, and in conformity with the garden." (Annual Report Botanic Gardens 1879, page 10).

The large central gates, the wicket gates either side, flanked on each side with a curved sweep of handsome railing, were erected in June 1880. The railing stands upon a low wall of brick, surmounted with dressed sandstone. The gates are a fine example of cast and wrought iron of their period.

Source: Patricia Sumerling, Department of City Planning, 1986.



# North Lodge

Tenders for this structure was advertised in March 1866. It was erected as the Head Gardener's cottage, it is important for its asymmetrical composition and original picturesque appearance. It was constructed by Nimmo & McGee at a cost of 305 pounds.



## More information

<https://www.botanicgardens.sa.gov.au/>

<https://www.environment.sa.gov.au/topics/heritage>

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