

# Wellington Botanic Garden

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An introduction to the history of the  
garden over the last 150 years

Not a total history,  
just the notable features

Philip C Tomlinson Version 3.8 8.2020

**It may be the Gardens 150th  
Anniversary**

**BUT THE GARDEN WAS  
FIRST PROPOSED 29  
YEARS EARLIER,  
IN 1839,  
before Wellington founded**

## EXTRACT

From the Instructions of the Board of Directors of the New Zealand Land Company, to Lieut. William Mein Smith, Royal Artillery, the Company's Surveyor-General, as contained in a Letter from the Secretary, dated Aug. 1, 1839.

Your surveying operations should at first be entirely confined to the site of the town.

In laying out the plan of the town, you must as closely as possible adhere to the conditions on which the land orders have been sold, as expressed by the enclosed copy of the terms of purchase,—providing, at all events, that every holder of a land order obtains one full acre of land within the town.

The directors wish that, in forming the plan of the town, you should make ample reserves for all public purposes; such as a cemetery, a market-place, wharfage, and probable public buildings, a botanical garden, a park, and extensive boulevards. It is, indeed, desirable that the whole outside of the town, inland, should be separated from the country sections by a broad belt of land which you will declare that the company intends to be public property, on condition that no buildings be ever erected upon it.

## AGENCY.

UNSCRIBERS having formed partnership, propose proceeding with success on the 21st of August to New Zealand, and will establish themselves, the present opportunity to offer their services and others as Agents for the sale of Land, and the Navigation, Shipping and other Agency Business, in London are Messrs. DUNN, J. L. and BIDDISFORD.

August 19, 1839.

## OF NEW ZEALAND AGENCY.

THEMAN of active business, possessing a practical knowledge of Surveying, and being well acquainted with the Land, is desirous to establish himself in New Zealand, and would be willing to be the local management of an Estate or business who has invested Capital in the Land there, and who may require a

The New Zealand Gazette.  
21<sup>st</sup> August 1839

Printed in London by The New Zealand Company, The Gazette was the first newspaper in New Zealand.

Instructions from the Board of Governors to Chief Surveyor, William Mein-Smith, are given for a Botanical Garden to be included in the new town at Cook's Strait.

of Colonial Report Company,  
Waterloo street.  
T. HORTON JAMES,  
Resident Manager.

MSAY, Agent to the New Zealand Land Company for the Sale of

one of the earliest advocates in the Colonies, has been induced, at the request of various friends (persons of that position), to open an Office in the immediate neighbourhood of the New Zealand Land Company's premises, who may wish to purchase shares who think of emigrating, may be in the possession, and all the public Company relative to the Colonization

land. He is prepared to contract with the supply of Potable Cattle, to be sold on his own premises under the supervision of any Gentlemen who may wish to purchase, and for the guarantee, the best qualified information, and a skilled and intelligent mechanic and that department.

He having opened a branch upon the same with the principal manufacturers of iron, Birmingham, Manchester, &c., will undertake to supply every article of goods, furniture, and stores, to any order for the Colonies or Settlements, at the lowest prices, on the lowest possible

prices in general regulations, with the best, will be furnished in a few days.

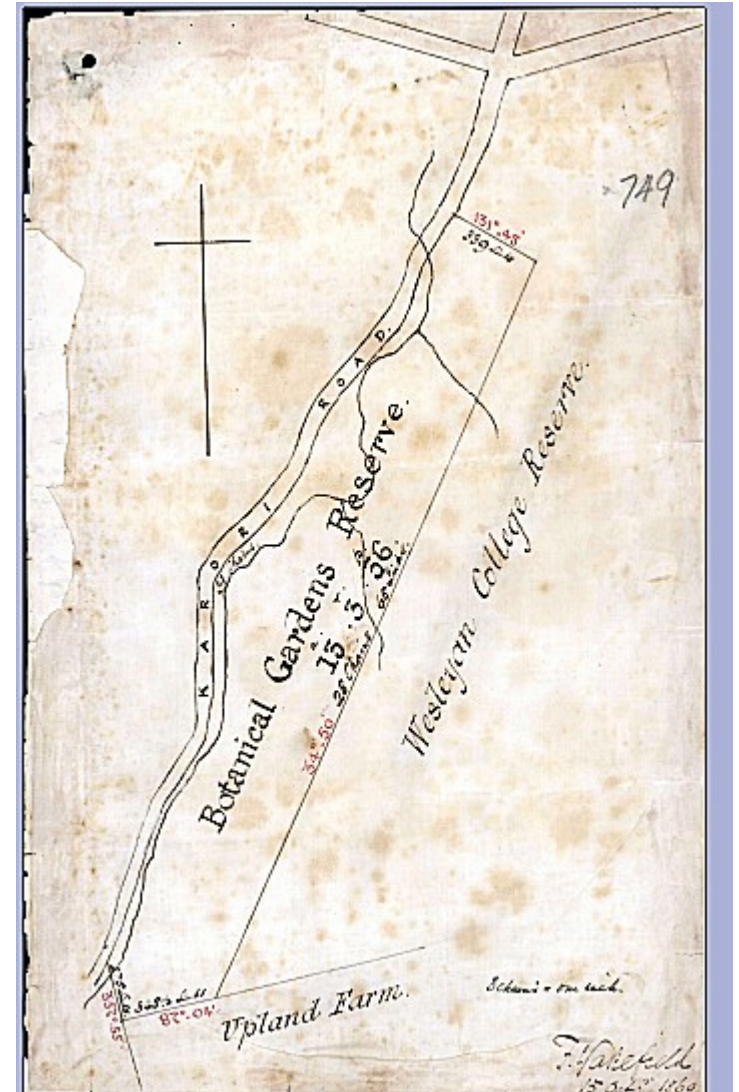


# THE START

- London 1839 NZ Company instructed to provide botanic garden in perpetuity in new colony
- 1844 area identifying proposed garden
- Little action until 1865
- Squatters, removal timber/firewood, stock grazed on site, establishing homes and businesses, earthquake 1855, Maori issues

# GOVERNMENT TO WELLINGTON 1865

- Appointment of James Hector as government consultant
- Reports favourably on garden site 1867
- Map of garden 1869



# Why a botanic garden?

## ♦ Three reasons

- Scientific studies, research and education
- Trial native and imported plants for suitability for use in this country. Advise utility and use of native flora
- Recreation

# ESTABLISHMENT

**20th October 1868**

- Transfer from Public Reserve to Crown Reserve by Act of Parliament, Governor administrator
- Named '*Wellington Botanic Garden*'
- 10 days later James Hector given administrative responsibility for garden
- **Had control, but could not act as found funds could only be through recognised organisation**



# ESTABLISHMENT

- Many of those involved in setting up the garden were also involved in the establishment of the New Zealand Institute – now known as the Royal Society of NZ
- Resolved that NZ Institute, established 1867, was suitable to access and administer public funds
- Funding issue overlooked by those initially involved

# ESTABLISHMENT

- September 3 1869 Act to provide ongoing management and financing passed
- November 22 1869 delegated management authority to Hector withdrawn, and given to NZ Institute Board
- **1869 OFTEN TAKEN AS ESTABLISHMENT DATE, but land identified and named '*Wellington Botanic Garden*' and James Hector had control from 1868 Act**
- City council took control 1891

# Before garden created



1843-5. View of Tinakori Road and Botanic Garden from Hawkstone Street. (Wesleyan Reserve) [Brees, Samuel Charles] 1810-1865

1844



# Before garden created



1855 Glenmore Street J Pearce



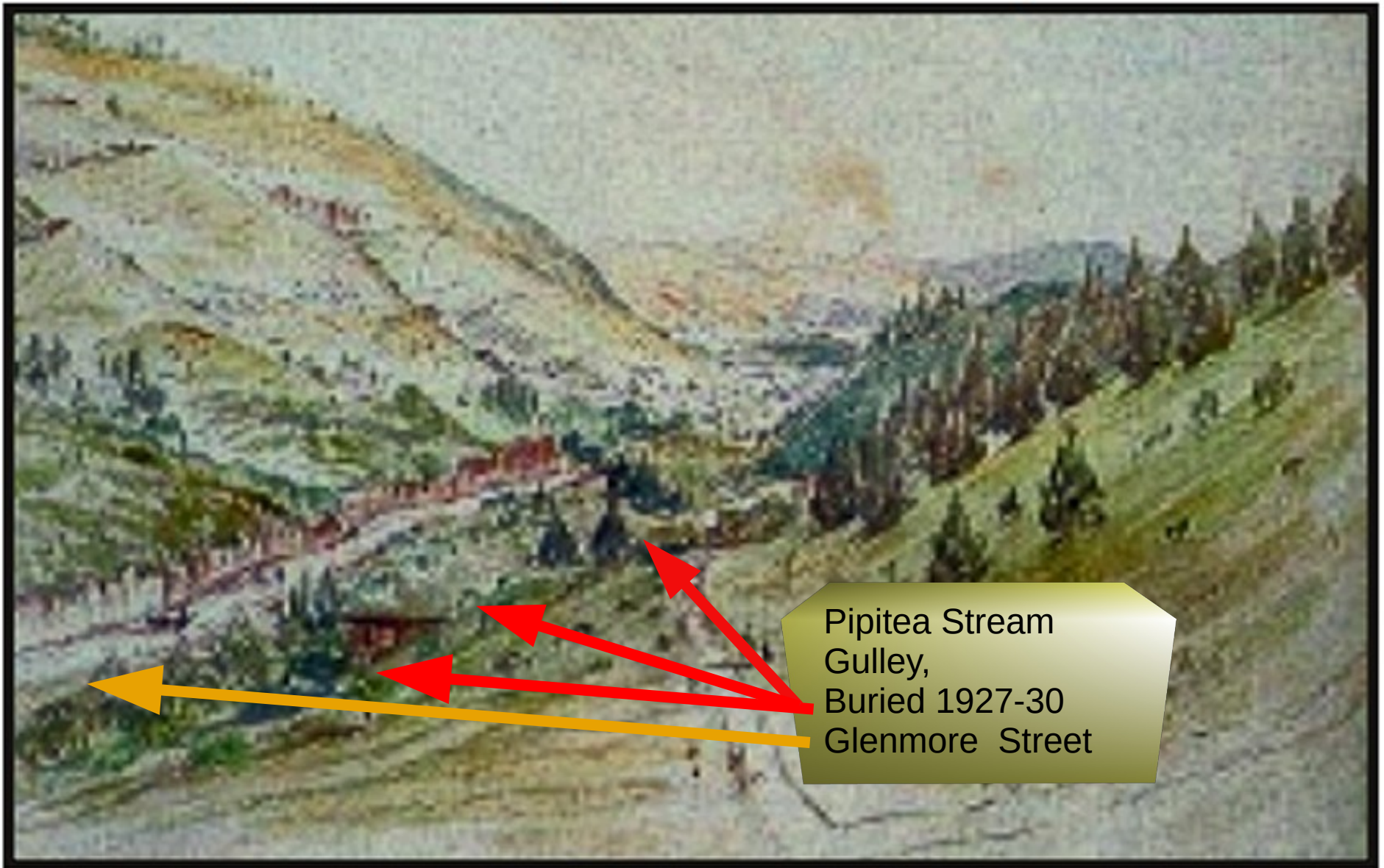
# Before garden created

Tinakori Road, towards Main Entrance 1863

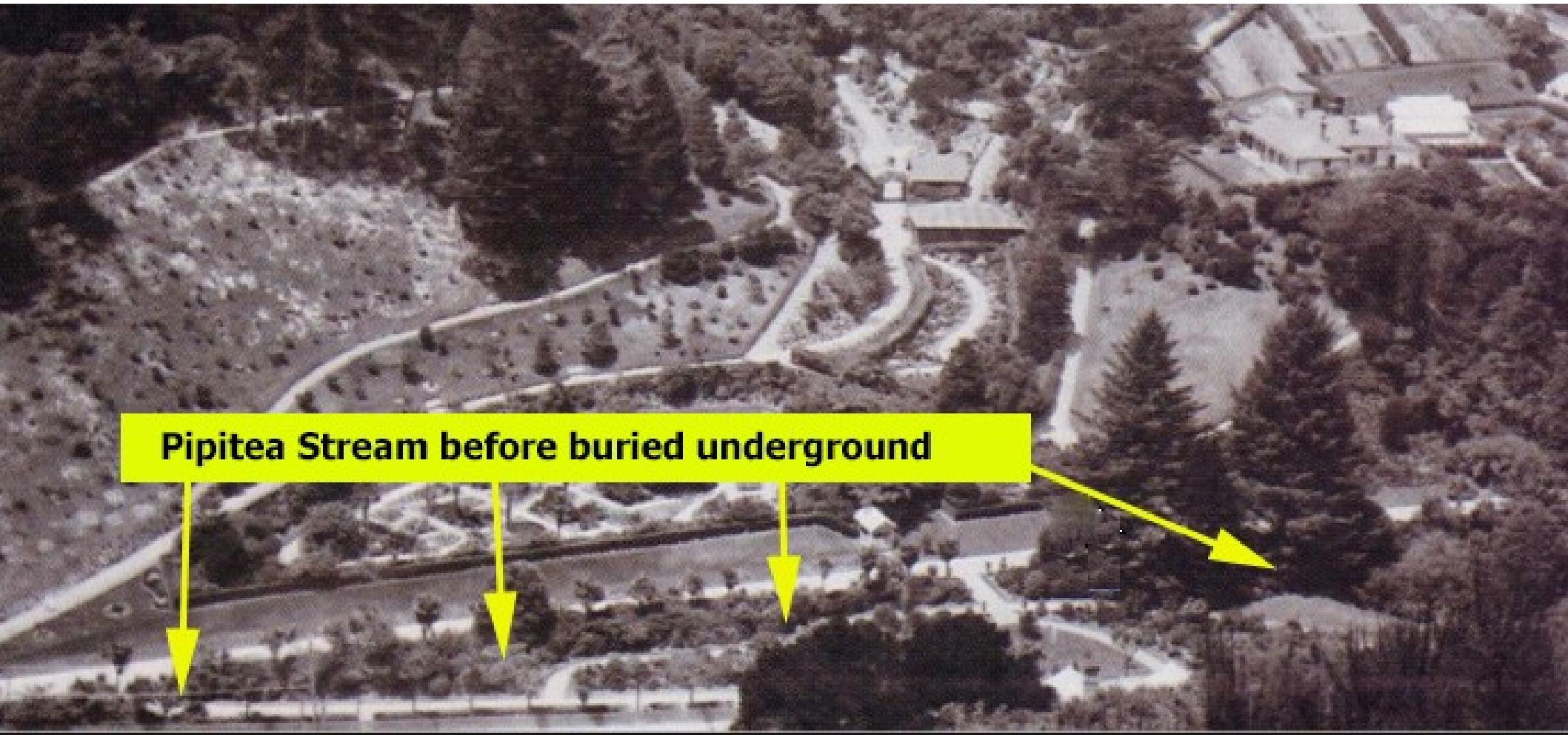


# Before garden created

View from Rock Way looking north 1881



# Before garden created



Running alongside the Main Drive, the Pipitea Stream gulley was a major obstacle until buried underground 1927-30 Photo 1920



# Before garden created



- **Pipitea Stream Gulley**
- What is probably a more normal view.
- Steep banks
- Deep
- Heavily vegetated



## ***Bridges and drains***

Water has had a major impact on this garden in the past, the many streams and associated gullies have had a major impact on the workability of the area. The flat areas in the Garden have also required extensive drainage, mentioned in a number of the early Board reports. In the Board Annual Report of 1876 the following appeared.

The bridges and roads in the old portion of the Garden, which have now been in use six years, have also required extra outlay for their repair, and the substitution of 9-inch culverts in place of surface drains, which formerly led to considerable damage during heavy rain, was also found to be necessary.

The nursery grounds have been greatly improved by the erection of additional screens and more thorough drainage.

A number of bridges had been erected in 1870. The bridge over the



West Way bridge 1881  
Probably replaced with culvert  
when Pipitea Stream filled in at  
that time

Pipitea Stream by the Duck Pond was an early one, updated to the current stone bridge in 1956. A bridge over the stream at the West Entrance allowed Glenmore and Karori residents easier access to the city and garden. Culverts were used for the drains crossing paths, and larger ones were later installed for the streams, providing more permanent and cost effective bridging, most of which remain today.



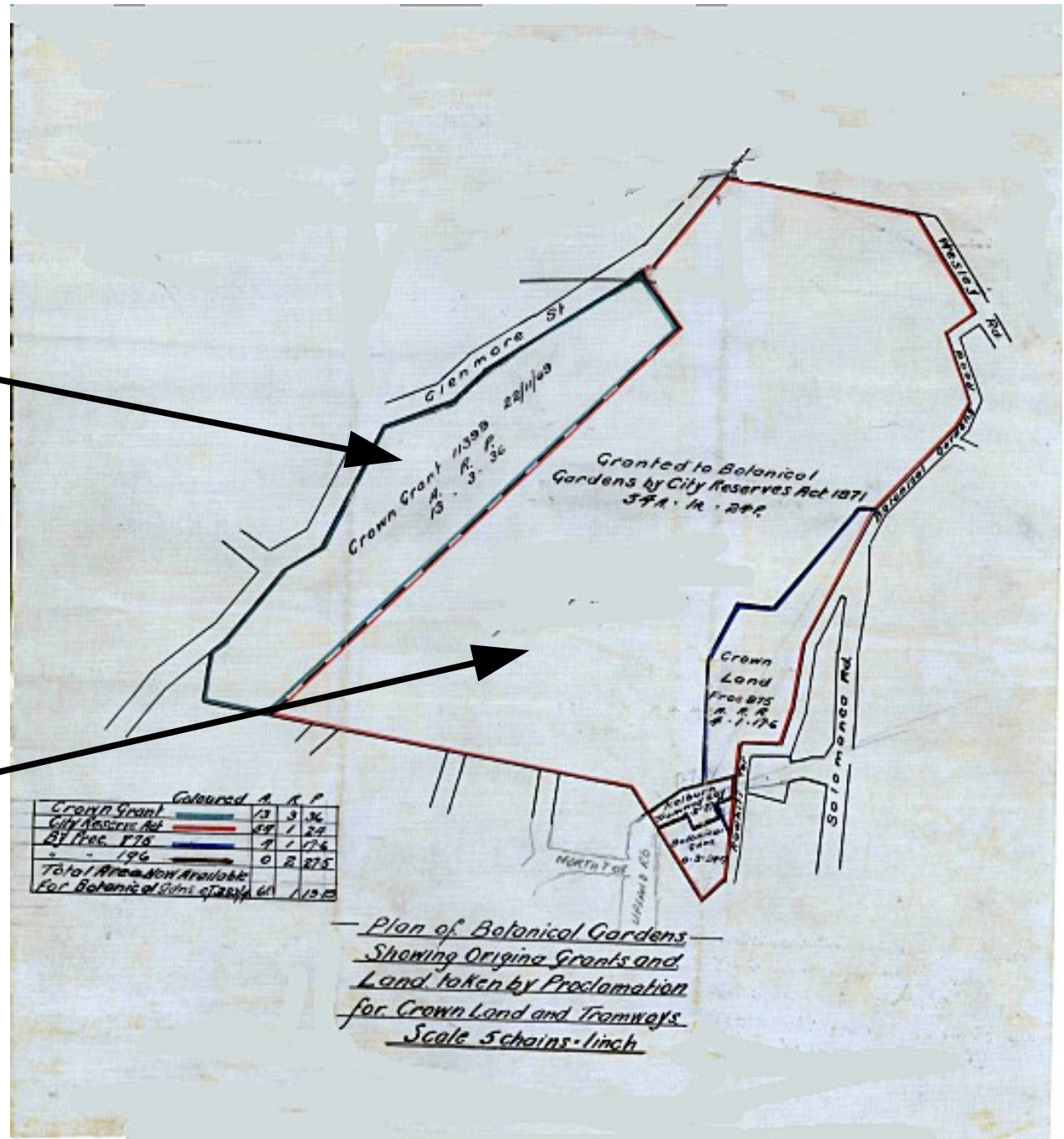


**The Main Drive, now William Bramley Drive, was developed in 1874**

**When this was done a significant bridge was constructed over the Pipitea Stream, replaced in 1956**

# Garden areas

- From 1868 Main Garden only
- From 1874 Wesleyan Reserve added





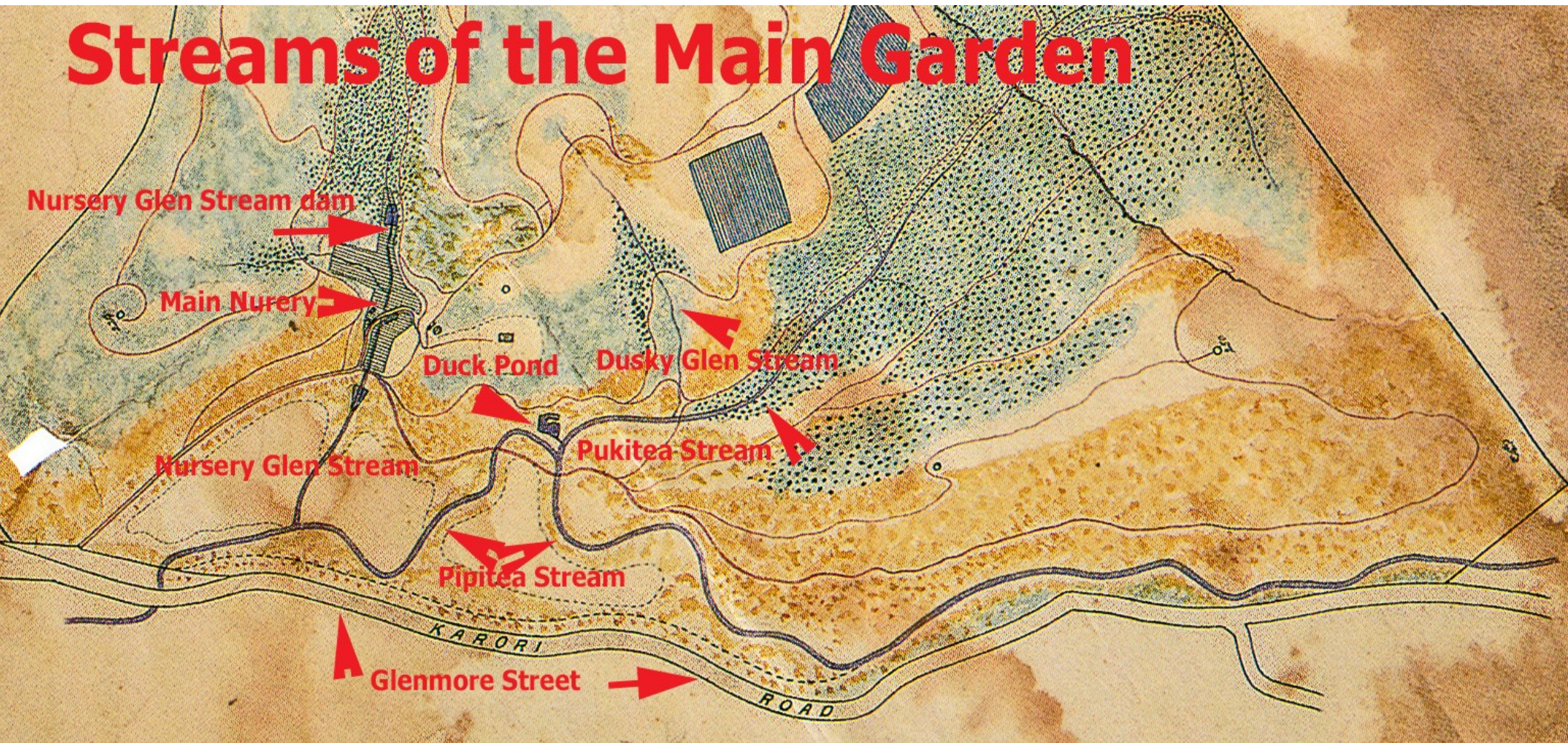
# Major modifications

- Nursery Glen Stream 1871
- Sound Shell lawn 1884
- Anderson Park 1906
- Mariri Road entrance 1907
- Pipitea Stream (Main Garden) 1928
- Waipiro Stream 1933
- Salamanca Slope 1951
- Children's (Discovery) Garden 2016



# WATER IN THE MAIN GARDEN

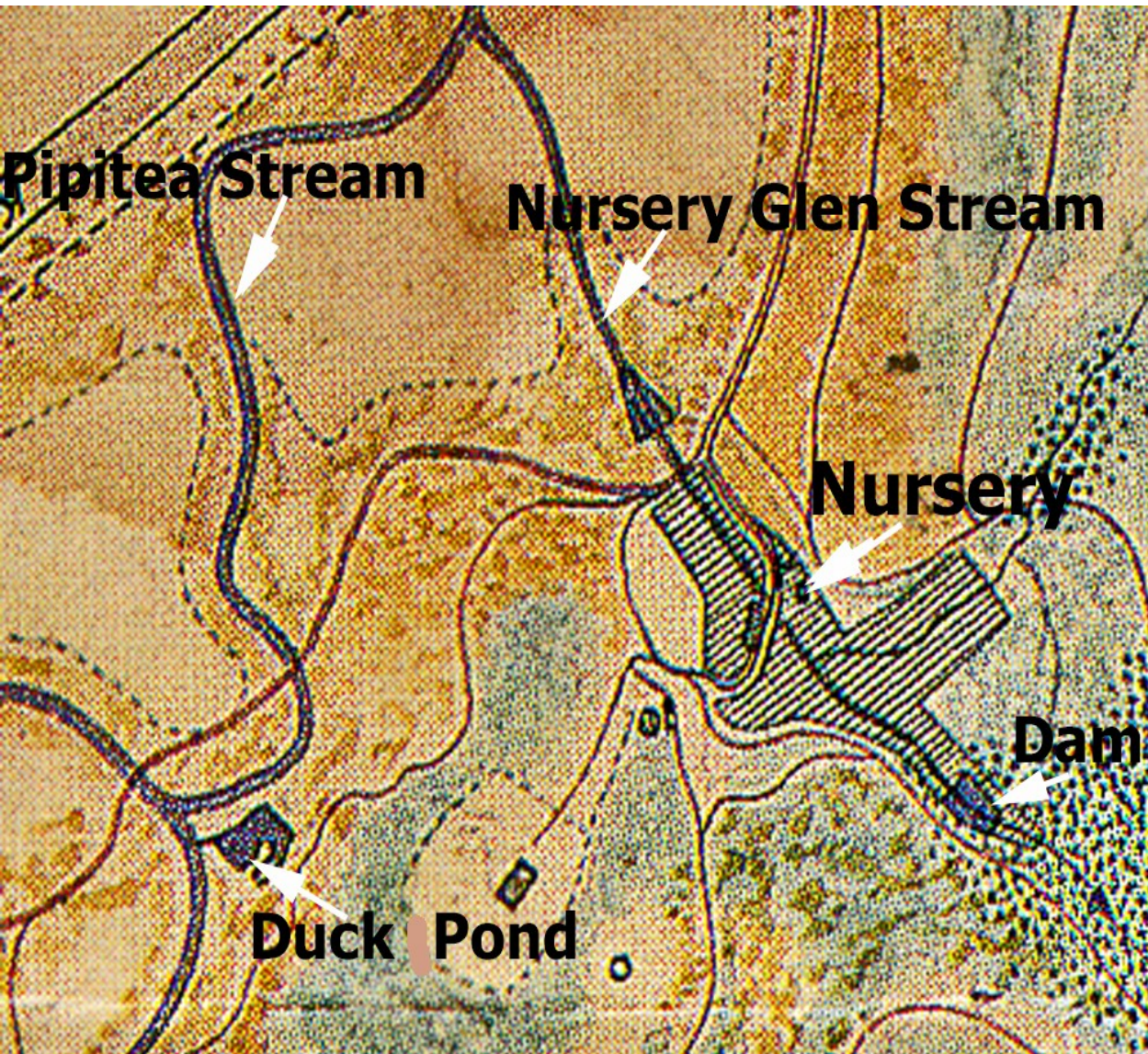
## Streams of the Main Garden



Water, or the streams formed by water, have had a major impact on the garden, not only the Main Garden, but also the Anderson Park/rose garden area. Major efforts were involved in successfully piping the streams underground, with the result their existence is now no longer obvious.



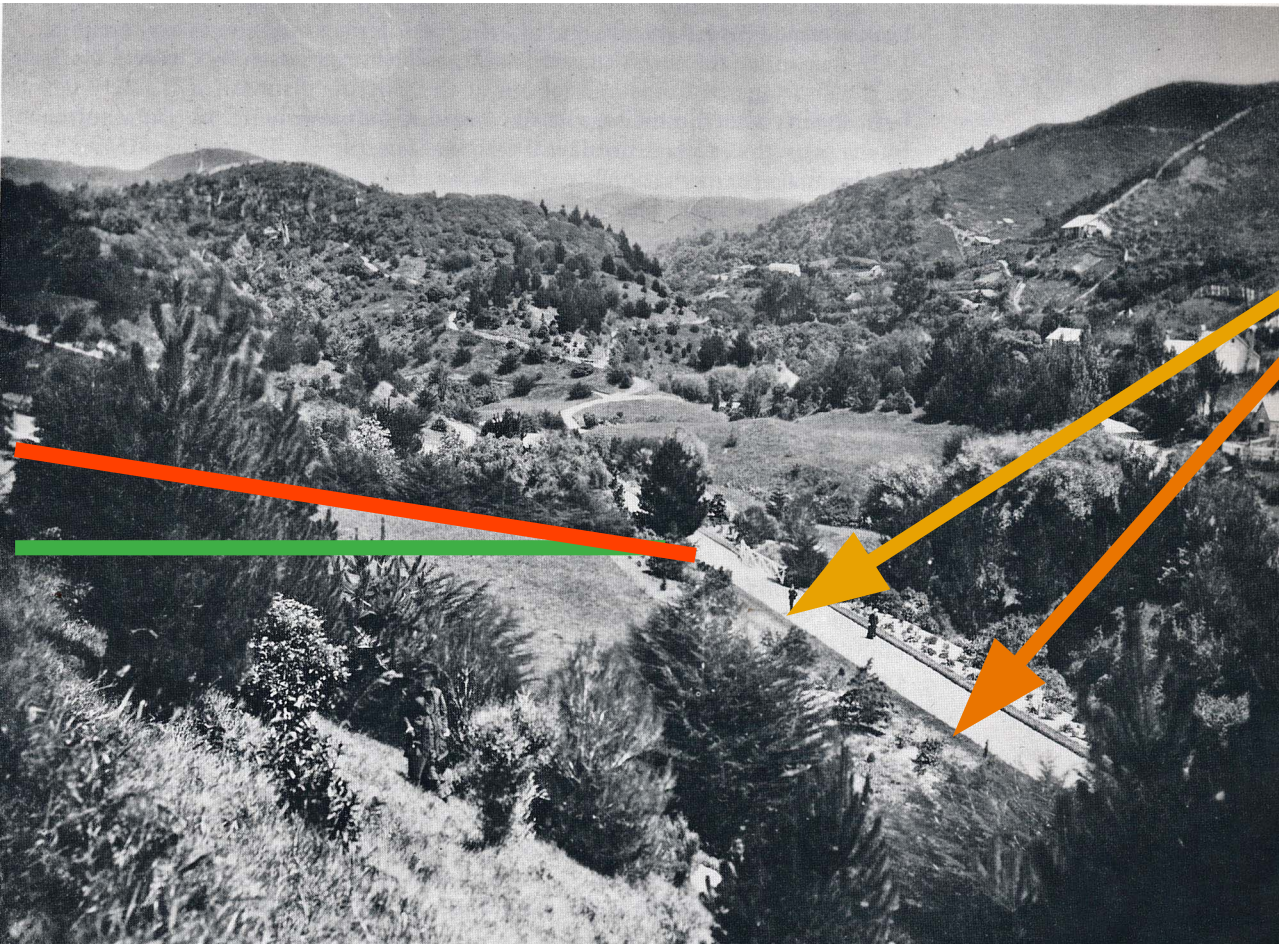
# NURSERY GLEN STREAM



The 1870 nursery covered the original Nursery Glen water course. Because of the importance of this propagating nursery, to avoid a flooding risk, the stream was enclosed in a box drain, as discussed in 1871. A dam in the stream provided a source of irrigation water for the main nursery



# Sound Shell Lawn



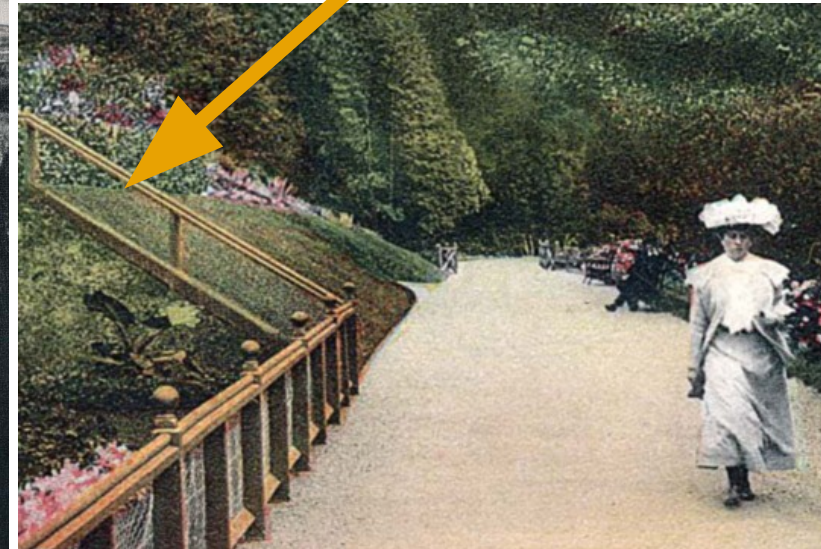
**1880 image**

Enclosed Garden – Sound Shell Lawn - before levelling',

no bank along Main Drive

**BELOW 1890**

Formed bank after levelling of lawn

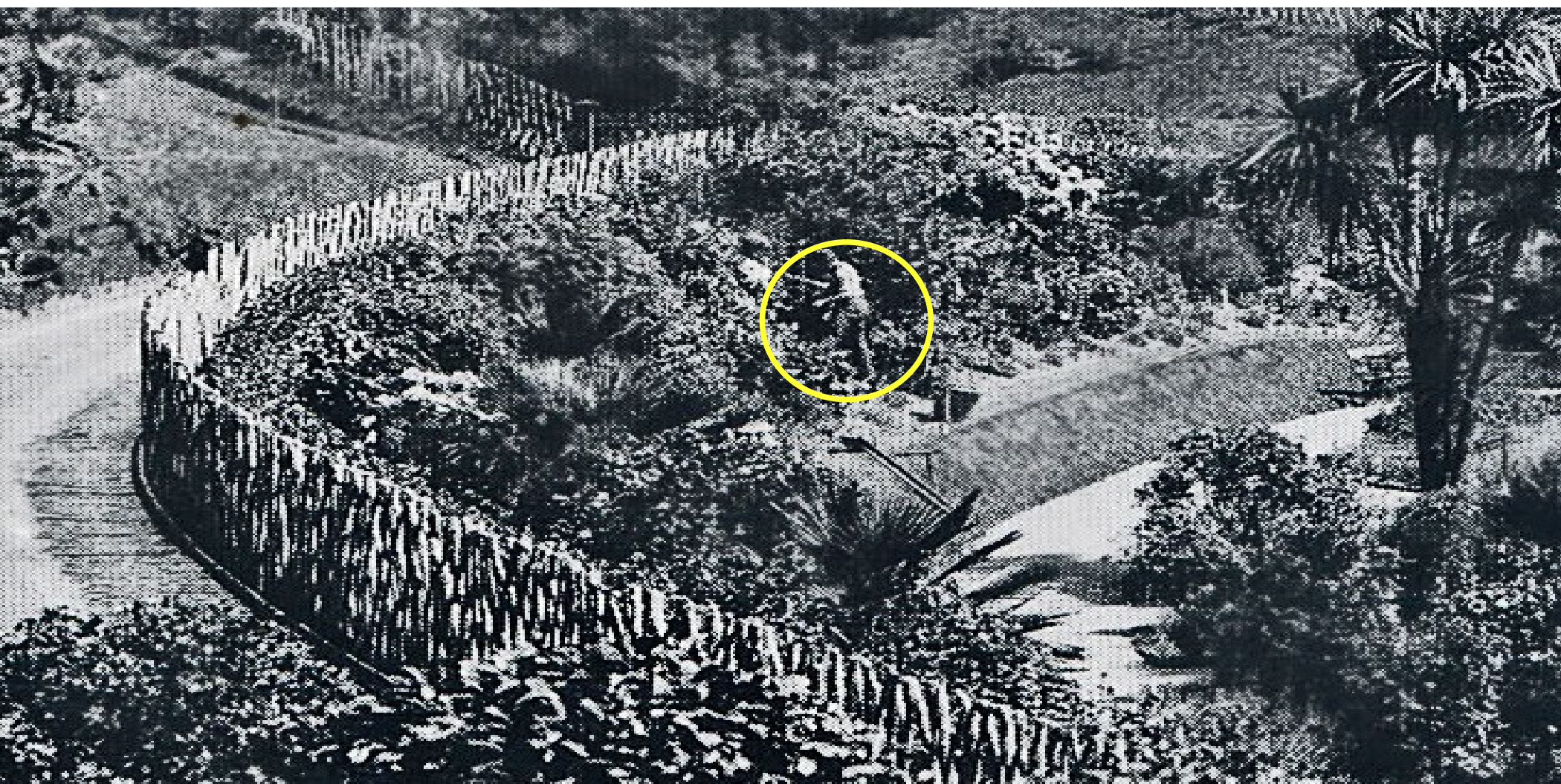


**Enclosed Garden (Sound Shell Lawn) before levelling in 1883**

**Note slope down to Main Drive, no bank along Main Drive**



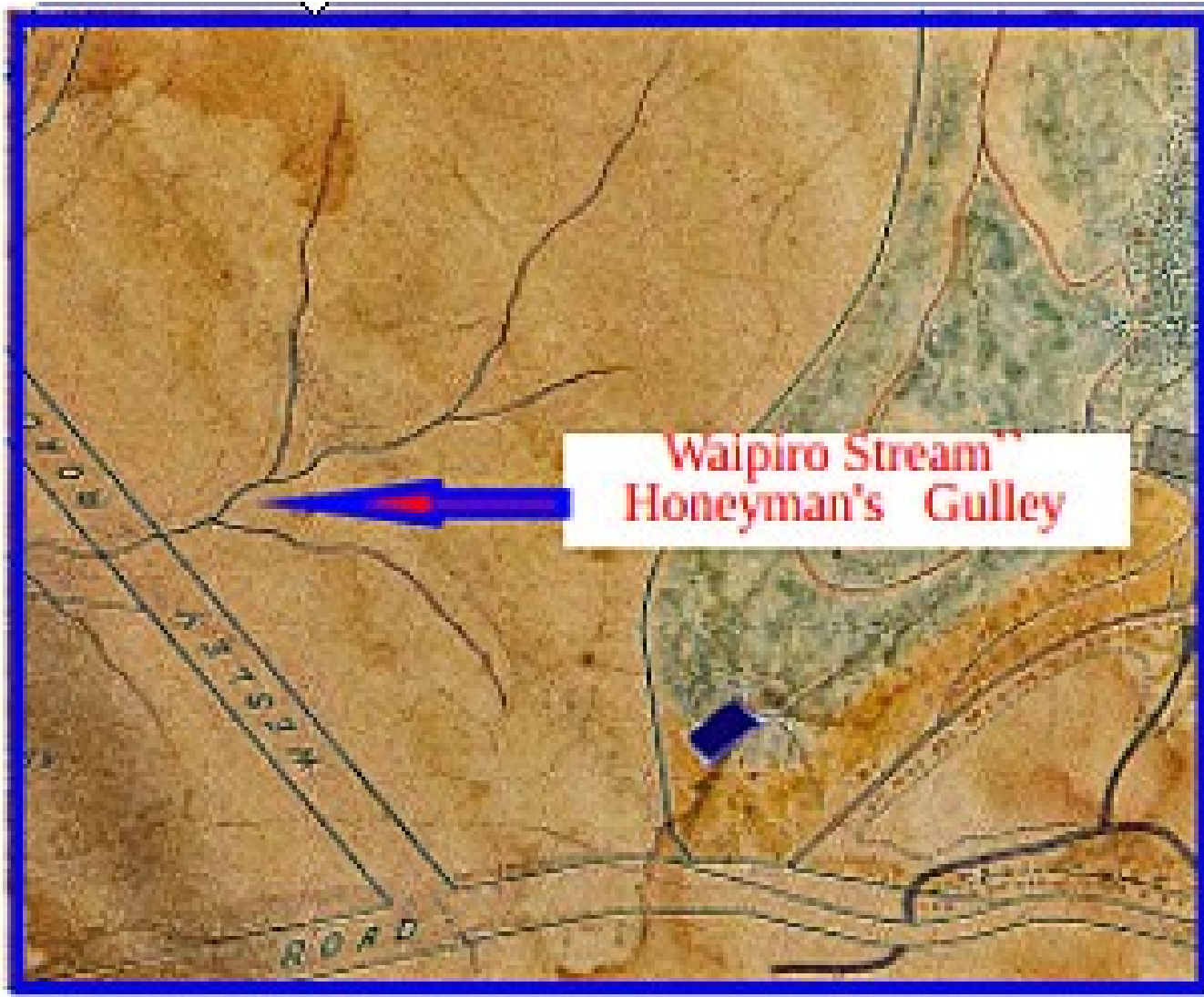
# Sound Shell Lawn



Enclosed Garden (Sound Shell Lawn) showing cut bank below Dray Road (Buchanan Way). Note gardener on bank for scale and elaborate fencing, a feature of the 1890's



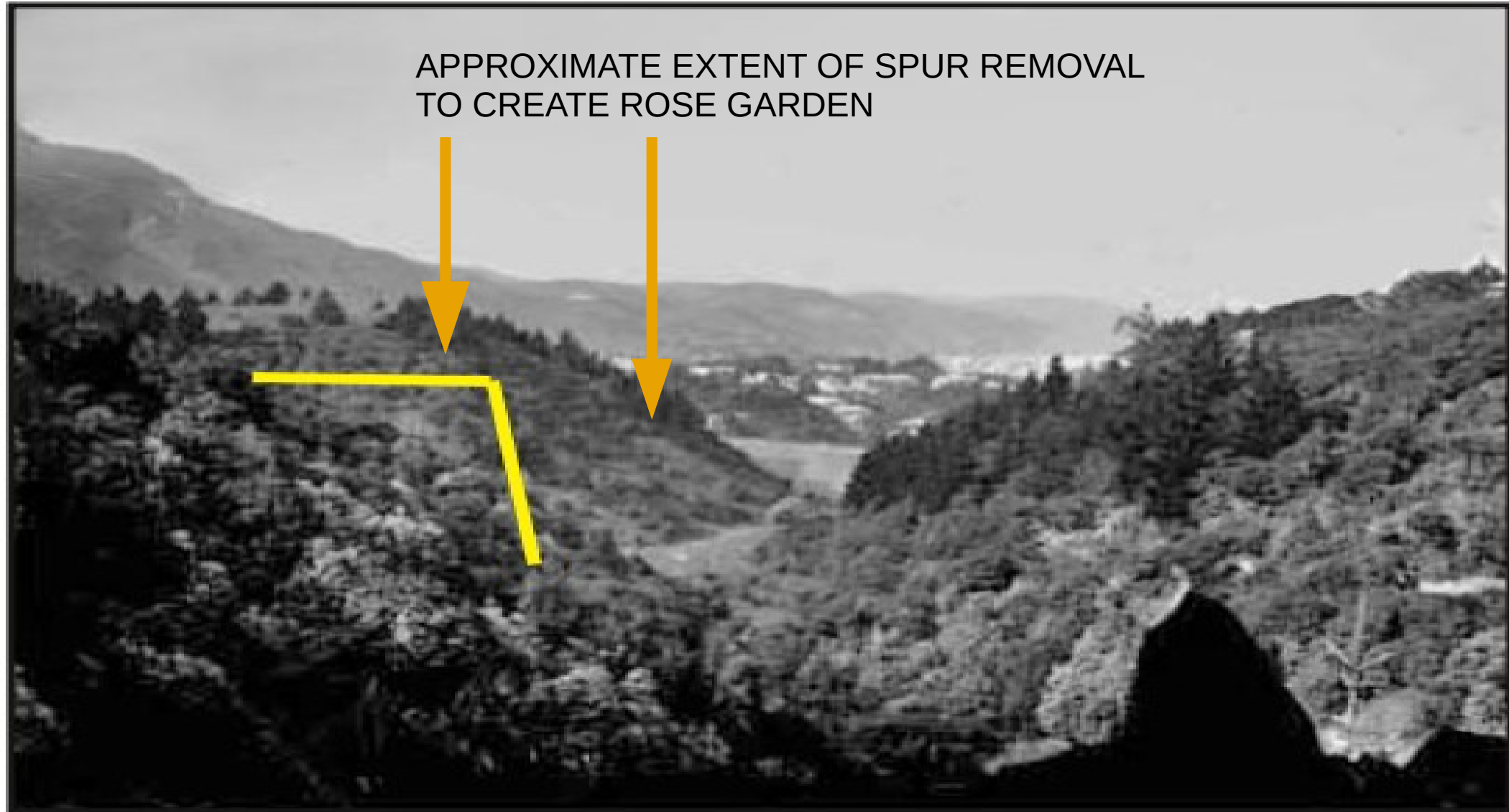
# View northern part Anderson Park, Rose Garden



Waipiro (Stinking Water) Stream Gulley, running in Honeyman's Gulley, was one of the largest gullies in the Garden, filled in 1906-10 (Anderson Park) and 1931-34 (Rose Garden).

# View northern part 1890 Anderson Park, Rose Garden

APPROXIMATE EXTENT OF SPUR REMOVAL  
TO CREATE ROSE GARDEN



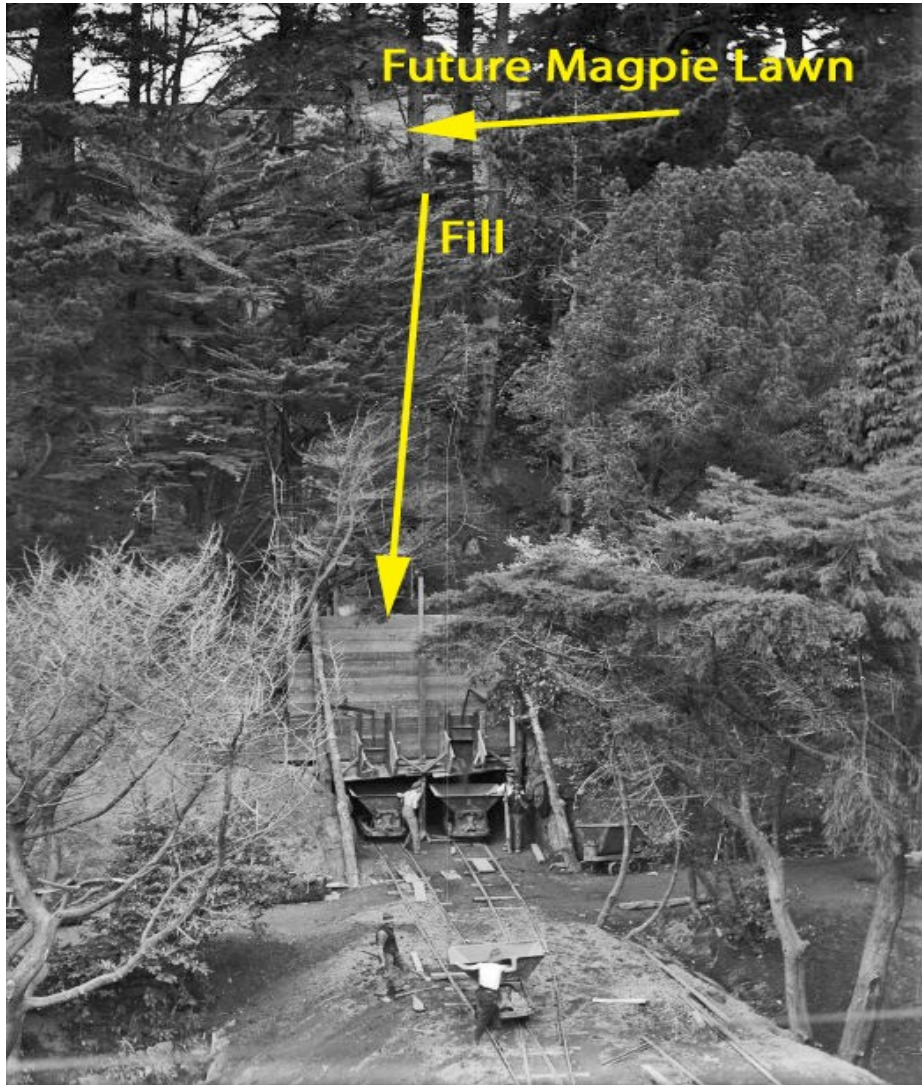
1890 view of Honeyman's Gully, and future rose garden area, before development



Honeymans Gulley (Waipiro Stream) in 1906. Salamaca Slope to right, the stream gulley under that. A path is shown in the gulley. Note the limited flat land, subsequently created by the partial removal of the ridge to the left.



# PIPITEA STREAM GULLEY 1928



- Material to fill stream gully obtained from Glenmore Ridge, forming the future Magpie Lawn
- Work here and Waipiro Stream possible because of availability of work relief scheme subsidies offered by Government



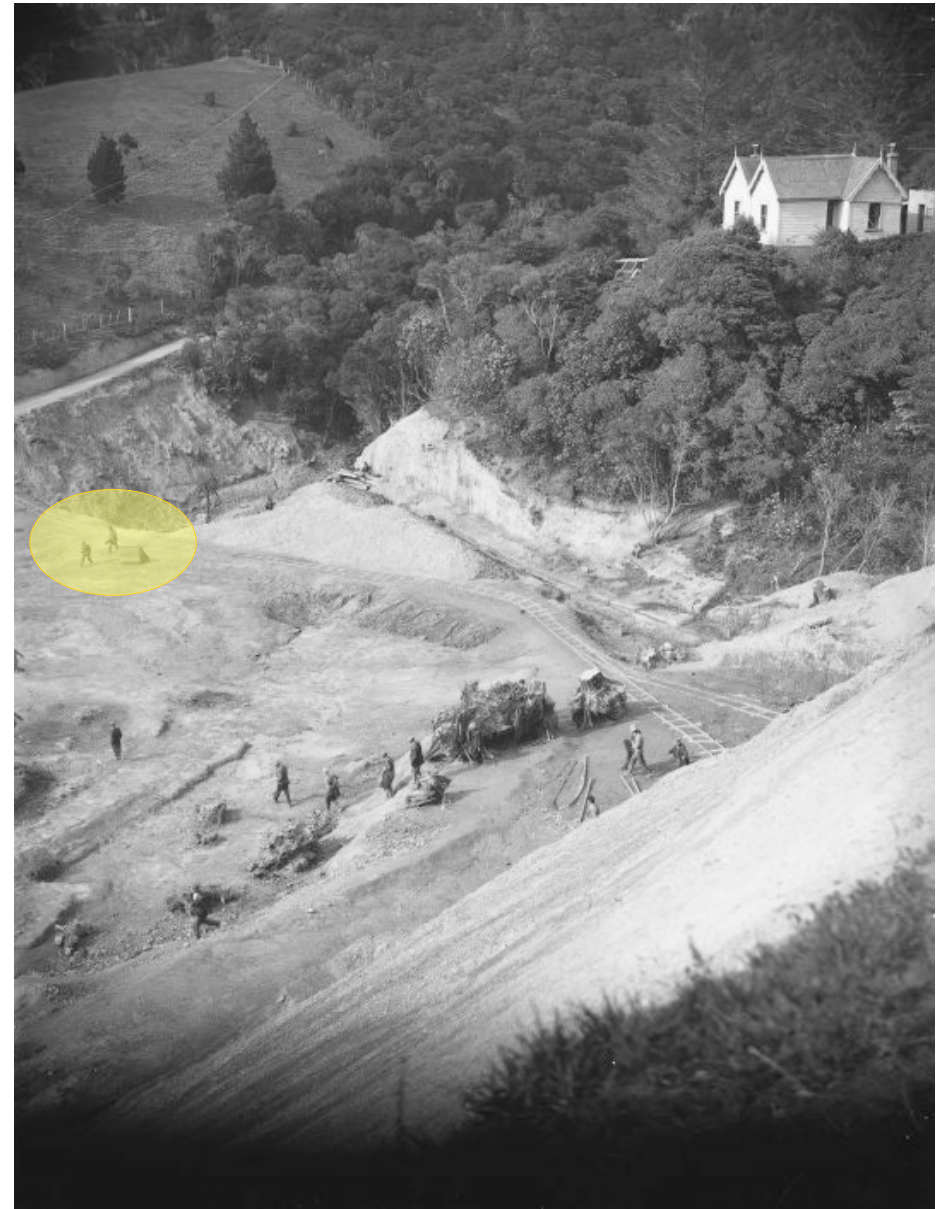
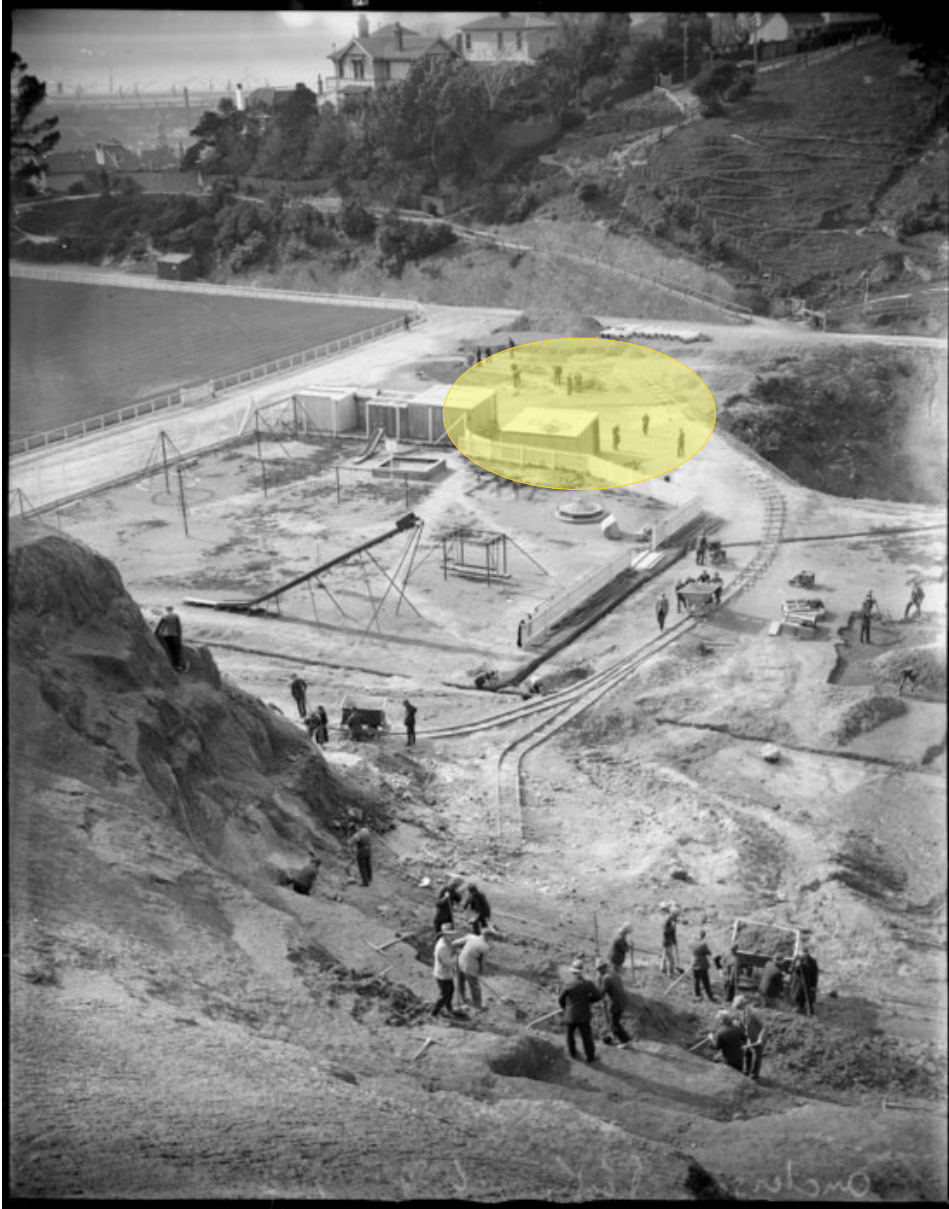
# WAIPIRO STREAM



- Filling in of Waipiro Stream 1932
- Note substantial depth of gully
- Major excavation of western ridge



# WAIPIRO STREAM



Waipiro Stream (rose garden) development 1931-34



# HORSES



Housing for 1 or 2 horses was always an issue, right from 1870

The small brick building is believed to be the oldest building in the garden, probably erected in 1881 after

fire through area destroyed buildings, located behind the existing stable building which was erected 1915.

This building was later made the first male toilet in the Garden in 1915, now a dangerous good store.

# HISTORIC TREES

- A significant feature of the garden is the range of mature and different trees
- Most of of the larger and old ones were planted in the 1870's
- Many were imported as seed, (*Pinus radiata* 25.5 kg propagated some 500,000 over 10 years) mostly grown in the early nurseries
- Some considered important were introduced from overseas as small plants in Wardian Cases
- Most grow too large for the home gardens on the typically small house sections, and the garden therefore provides the opportunity to see them

# HISTORIC TREES

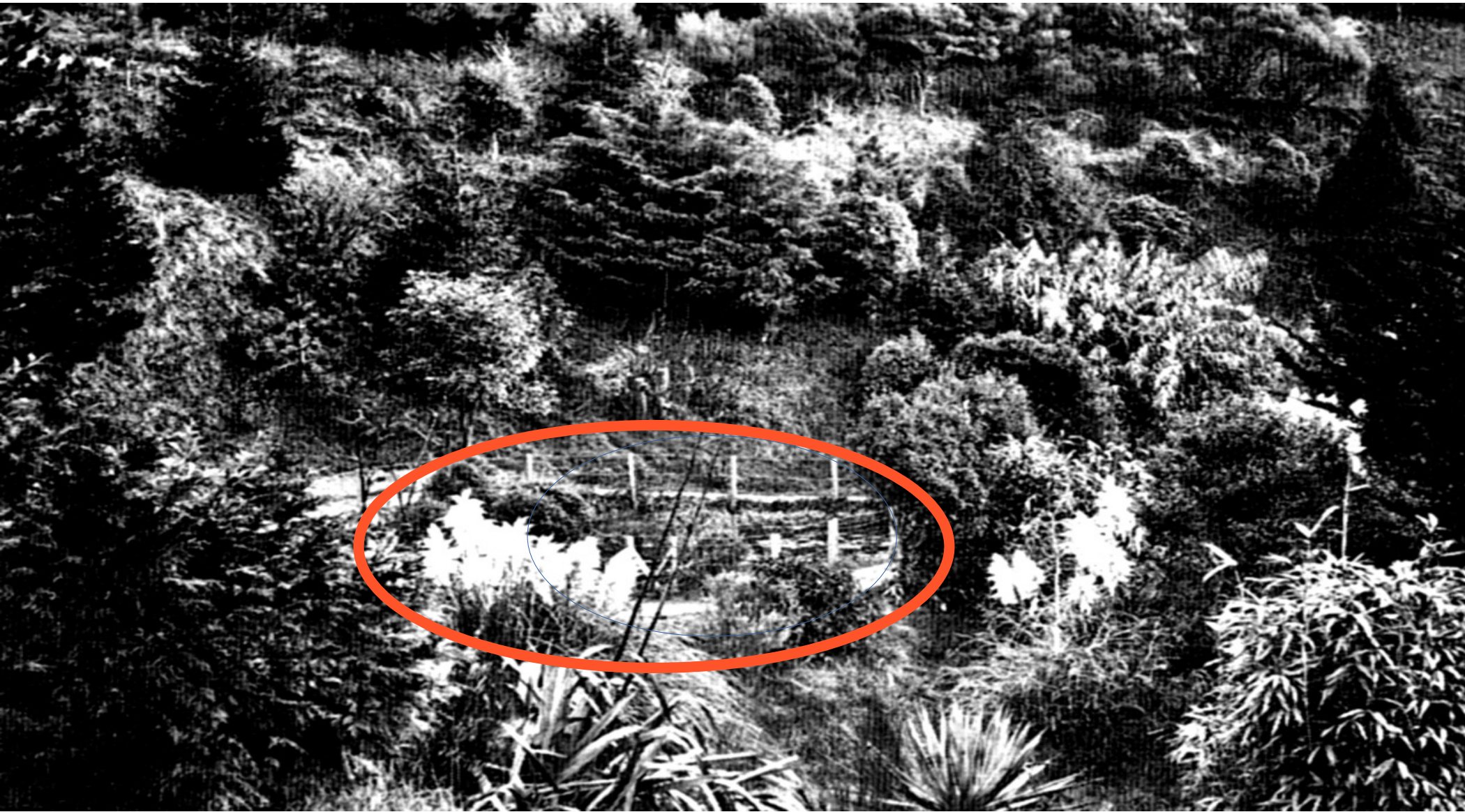
- *Pinus radiata* was introduced into the garden from the earliest days, from wild collected seed from its natural habitat in California. Timber value not recognised until the 1920's
- Trees in the garden are the parents of the NZ *Pinus radiata* timber industry, although were originally only imported for shelter and firewood
- *Macrocarpas* were also introduced early, to provide essential shelter and firewood for the developing colony, especially in tussock grassland areas such as Canterbury, Otago



# DUCK POND

- One of the most popular attractions in the Garden
- Originally just a water filled depression, not part of the stream systems
- Major extensions completed in 1910, 1920's and 1996
- Swans present from around 1910, still there in the 1960's. Now home for ducks

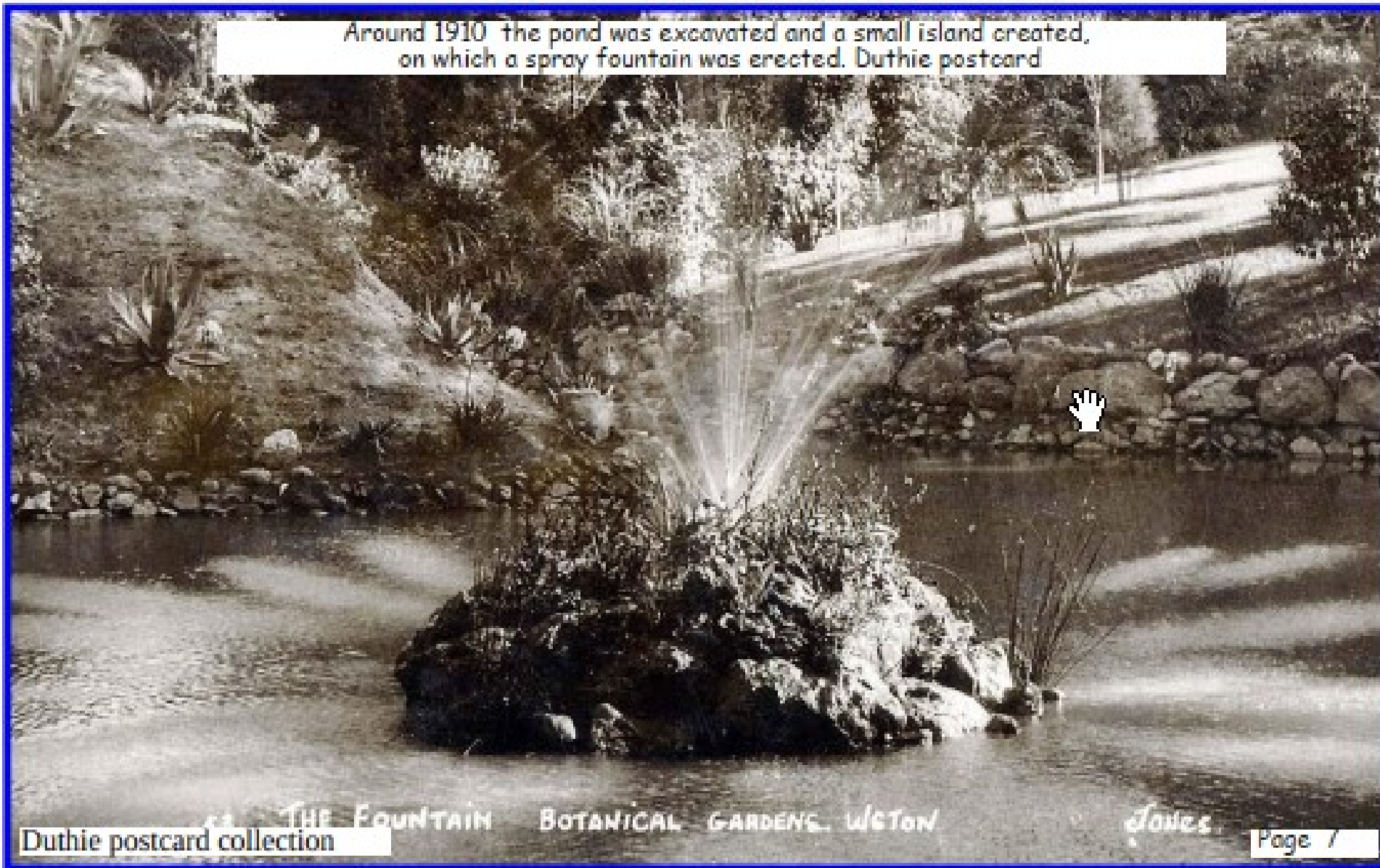
# DUCK POND



The Duck Pond just a water filled depression 1890's  
A haven for small boys looking for frogs – FROG POND

# DUCK POND

Around 1910 the pond was excavated and a small island created, on which a spray fountain was erected. Duthie postcard





# DUCK POND

Duthie postcard collection



In the 1920's a high stone wall, built in association with the dam, raised the water level and made a better viewing area for the many visitors to the area.

The macrocarpas, a long term feature, can be seen.

# DUCK POND



It is not just the children, swans and ducks that enjoy a swim in our water features!!  
The ducks don't seem to mind and are keeping their distance, but I do not know where HE came from!!  
Perhaps a gardener's pet?



# DUCK POND



Duck Pond visitors feeding the ducks.

# DUCK POND autumn



- Always an interesting area - 1996 opened
- Has been called frog, swan and duck pond
- We do get some autumn colours

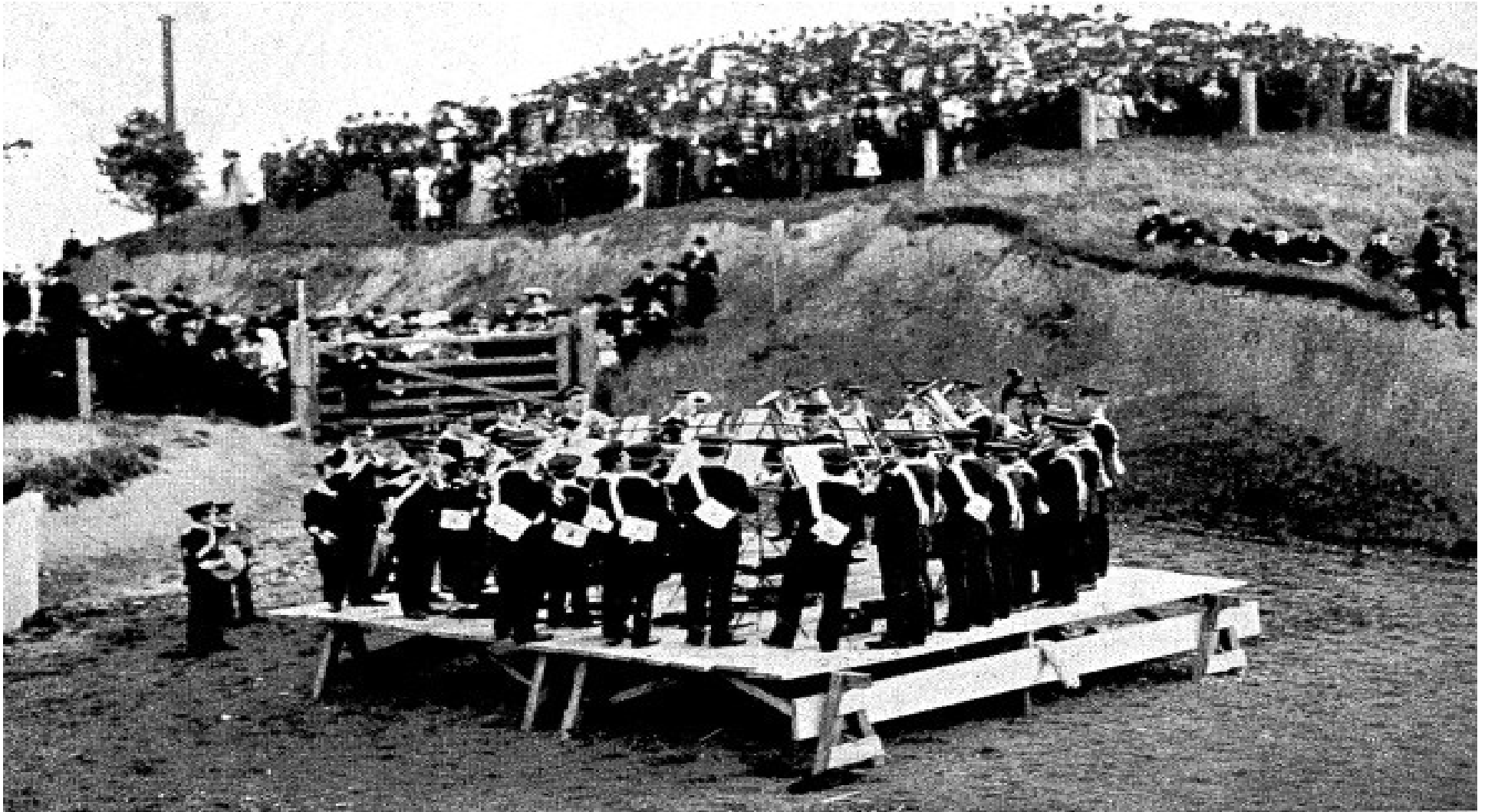


# ENTERTAINMENT

Various forms of entertainment offered in the garden over the years

- Open air concerts some at Cable Car Entrance
- Music, Puriri Lawn Band Rotunda
- Music, dancing, concerts Sound Shell
- Light and Sound Festival
- Rose Garden pergola 1961, lights 1968, drama and music events for some 10 years
- Summer City entertainment
- Dell events
- Bedding displays

# ENTERTAINMENT



Wellington Cadet Band in Botanic Garden  
22 August 1905 Photo NZ Mail 6 Sept 1905



# ENTERTAINMENT



1907 band rotunda on Puriri Lawn - audience



# ENTERTAINMENT



Ballet dancers Sound Shell 1955



# ENTERTAINMENT



Modern Sound Shell concert



# MAIN GARDEN BEDDING DISPLAYS

- Bulbs; annual feature of garden, and have been for many years. Date first introduction unknown – hyacinths tulips, daffodils (narcissi)
- Newspaper reports record extensive displays 1920s & 1930's but may date to early 1900's
- Mayor expansion of displays from gift of bulbs from Netherlands Government 1948 recognising hospitality extended to war refugees from Dutch Java during World War II – annual Tulip Sunday
- During 1950's and 1960's up to 100,000 tulips planted, although now numbers reduced.



Tulip Sunday 1970



# MAIN GARDEN BEDDING DISPLAYS



Spring tulip display is a popular annual feature



# MAIN GARDEN BEDDING DISPLAYS



Summer bedding displays are a popular annual feature



# LIGHT AND SOUND FESTIVAL





# DELL EVENTS

- The Teddy Bears Picnic is a typical event held in the Dell, but is only one of the events arranged each year.
- A summer Shakespeare festival is another
- A quiet cool corner, often used for a picnic





# CHILDREN'S PLAYGROUND

- A comprehensive children's playground (1905) available at the end of Grass Way with a collection of activities, toilets.
- Early first supervised playground in NZ after First World War by Director with large family! (eg Mac Mackenzie had 10 children)
- The Discovery Garden (2017) available for organised groups, and may be visited when not in school use
- The Duck Pond, Joy Fountain and Rose Garden fountain are also popular with younger visitors

# ORIGINAL ROSE GARDEN

- The first rose garden was on what is now the Sound Shell Lawn (Enclosed Garden) although roses grown from the early 1880's. Image 1925
- Gradually developed over a number of years, it was finally called the 'Rosary' in 1917

Rose Garden on  
original Main Garden  
site

1929

Evening Post image





# LADY NORWOOD ROSE GARDEN



Anderson Park military transit camp, 1944. Photo – William Hall Raine. Detail of Alexander Turnbull Library reference ½-100724.

Anderson Park, Rose Garden area, as a US Marine camp during World War II

# LADY NORWOOD ROSE GARDEN

- The rose garden and begonia house is the most visited facility in the garden, and should not be missed.
- Has some 3,000 roses
- Established in 1953
- The Norwood family funded the spray fountain in 1955 and its replacement 1977
- The Picnic Cafe provides drinks and a range of food



# LADY NORWOOD ROSE GARDEN



**Rose Garden 1958 With Spray fountain (1955)**  
**Note Salamanca Slope being modified**

# LADY NORWOOD ROSE GARDEN 1966

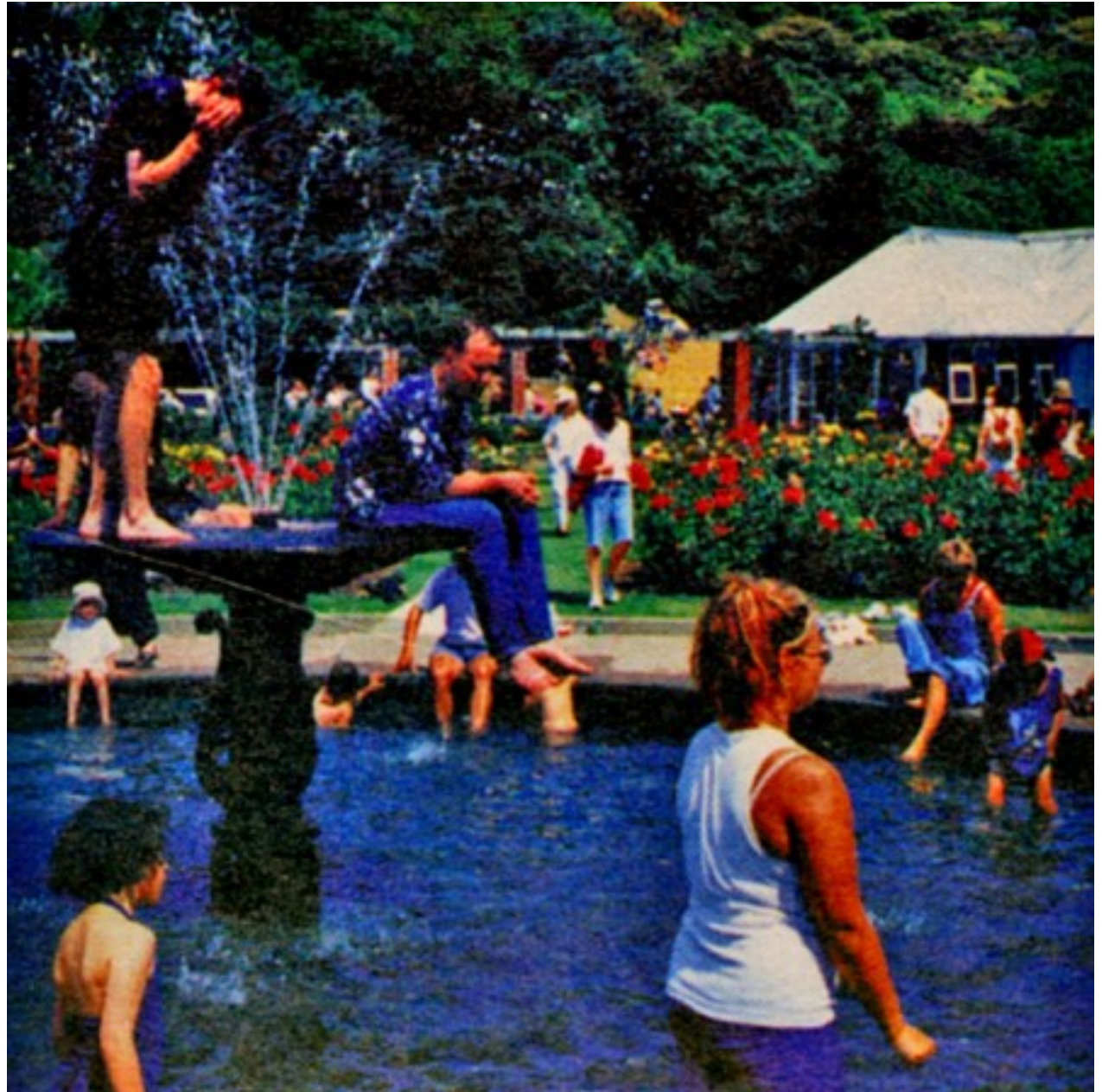


Begonia House 1966 with original shower fountain donated by Lady Norwood. Replaced by the present one in 1977, also donated by the Norwood family. The Rose Garden and Begonia House were both named in her honour, recognising the support she and her husband, Sir Walter Norwood have given to the Garden over many years.



# LADY NORWOOD ROSE GARDEN

- New Fountain 1977
- On a hot day, visitors using the pool to cool off 1999



# BEGONIAS

- Begonias became a feature when Director George Glen appointed in 1901
- He was said to have the best collection in the Southern Hemisphere
- Every year he purchased seed from a leading nursery in the United Kingdom
- First begonia house in nursery.
- Small, difficult access, open for limited time
- Larger house erected 1928



# BEGONIAS

- Nursery Begonia House
- Erected 1928
- Top image 1944,  
lower 1937
- Begonias displayed  
September to Easter,  
then used as  
propagating house for  
remainder of year
- Some 5,000 plants of  
many types usually on  
display



# Popular begonias

- Crowds waiting to enter Nursery Begonia House
- Evening Post image
- 22 January 1932
- Historic potting shed on right of crowd





# BEGONIAS AND THE NORWOOD FAMILY

- The Norwoods first offered to improve the original Begonia House in 1939
- In 1945 again offered, but both offers not accepted by Council
- In 1960 they formally offered \$40,000, which was accepted, building opened 22 December 1960.
- In 1981 cafe-teahouse added
- In 1989 Lilly House added
- 2012 Shop space and utilities room added
- 2014 earthquake strengthening completed

**BOLD** Significant Norwood Family offers/donations

# LADY NORWOOD BEGONIA HOUSE



Interior, retail area to right



# LADY NORWOOD ROSE GARDEN AND BEGONIA HOUSE



Receives some 1.25 million visitors annually  
Most visited area of the garden



# PEACE GARDEN

- ‘*Garden of Remembrance*’ conceived for ridge above rose garden 1948; but too expensive
- 1958 revised proposal; planting of trees and plants from those countries involved with allied forces
- Lack of water and overshadowing by trees resulted in loss of plants.
- Ridge renamed ‘*Remembrance Ridge*’ following loss of garden



# PEACE GARDEN

- 1973 waterfall, shelter and pond created (Norwoods gift), the Peace Garden as now located
- Gift of lantern by Japanese Society, proposed 1968, placed near Duck Pond 1978, but security concerns arose.
- In 1994 the lantern was moved to the Peace Garden, and memorial flame installed with Hiroshima stone, plaques
- Camphor tree, propagated from a survivor of the 1945 bombing of Nagasaki, planted near the Peace Garden 2005

# PEACE GARDEN



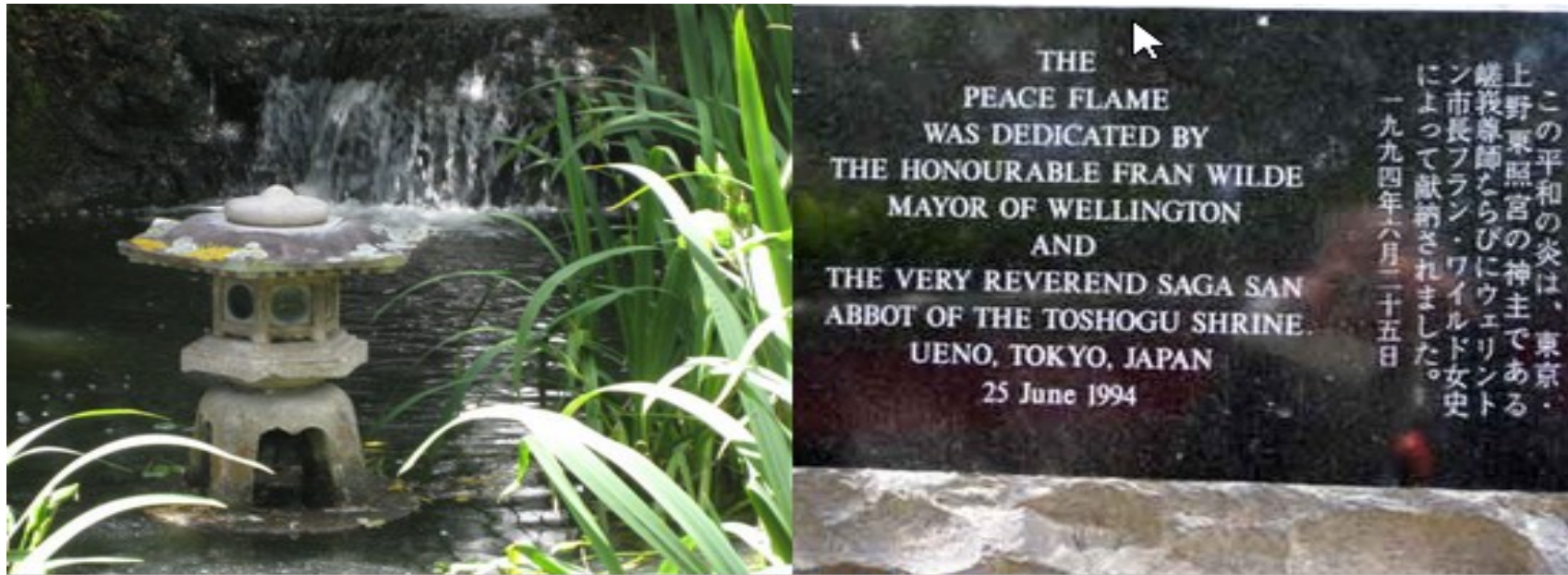
Lighting the Hiroshima Peace flame  
(from left) Mamoru Niwa (Shinto Priest). Fran  
Wilde (Mayor of Wellington). Peter Kundycki  
(landscape architect, Wellington City Council).  
25 June 1994.



1971 Waterfall



# PEACE GARDEN



Peace Flame and plaque



# HERB GARDEN

- Above the Rose Garden is the Herb Garden, with a selection of culinary and medicinal herbs
- It provides a great view of the rose garden begonia house, Henry Moore sculpture, with other sculptures



Group visiting Herb Garden on guided walk



# Treehouse Visitors Centre

- Administrative centre for the Garden 1991
- Opened by Sir David Attenborough  
April 30 1991
- Reception and offices
- Exhibition space for relevant displays
- Seminar room
- Attractive balcony view of Main Garden  
and duck pond
- Toilets
- Information, brochures etc.

# LIVING HISTORY

- The Garden contains an extensive collection of seasonal flowers and both endemic and exotic trees
- Some of the trees were planted in the 1870's, and provide a spectacular display all year
- Flowers and trees show seasonal changes, so there is always something different to see all year
- It is a garden to explore by both young and old, providing new sights at every turn



# HISTORY PUBLICATIONS

## Wellington Botanic Garden

- A number of e.books have been produced for the 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the garden
- These books are FREE
- Download from <http://friendswbg.org.nz/books/books.html>

- |                        |   |
|------------------------|---|
| → Directors Legacy     | Overall garden history  |
| → 13 acre reserve      | Main Garden   |
| → Northern Development | Herb garden, rose garden, begonia house, peace garden   |
| → Greetings            | Historic postcard 100 years of illustrations  |
| → News                 | Newspaper clippings 1848 - 2000   |
| → Water features       | A photo essay on the various impact of water on the garden                                    |
| → Posted               | Details of a fete held 1910 and unique garden postcard, franked in special garden post office |
| → Maps                 | Reproduction copies 1865 to modern  |
| → History              | pdf copy of this presentation   |

# Chronology of buildings in the Wellington Botanic Garden

c. = approximately

BUILDING	BUILT	CHANGES/COMMENTS	DEMOLISHED
Dalton house	1852	House upgraded 1860, converted potting shed unknown date	1924
Randall House	1860	Dalton House purchased by Randall, extended/rebuilt	1924
Randall House	1865	Purchased by garden, Hall occupied leased, acting as caretaker	1924
Randall House purchased	1870	Garden purchased house for William Bramley, first director	1924
First shade house	1871	Nursery Glen. Probably erected 1871-2; extended 1880s	?
Museum cottage	1875	Moved from museum site as storage/tool shed	1887
Constables cottage	1876	Tenders called for erection of house	
Constables cottage	1880	Above future rose garden	
First batten house	1878	Later may have been extended 1880s	?
	1887	Fire through Nursery Glen destroyed buildings, tools etc	
Stable (Ugly Brick Building)	C 1888	May have been built after fire 1887. Oldest structure in garden still used	
Directors House	1892	By modern nursery, now renovated Annex	
Glass purchased for glasshouse	1898	Known as Lower Glasshouse, for plant propagation	
First propagating house	1904	Later called No 4. Erected under George Glen	1972
Fernery	1906	Purchased (donated?) from Walter Mantell; . Partly burnt 1907	1972
Band rotunda	1907	By Puriri Lawn	1960
Ladies toilet	1910	Site lower Garage	?
Summer house - gazebo	1914		
Stables	1914	Demolition of part Ugly Brick Building, conversion remainder to male toilet	

New stables, tool shed erected	1915	Nursery Glen	
Nursery Glen		Aggregation of old tool houses etc. demolished	1915
Fernery opened	1915		1972
Lower Mess Room	C 1917	Planned with stables 1911 but appears to have been built later	
Office. 'library'	1918	Office for Mackenzie, bunk room for his boys later	C 1976
Adjoining garage/utility room	C 1950	Later converted to kitchen, locker room c1990	
Dalton/Randal building		Site to be used for new potting brick shed	1924
No 5 glasshouse	1925	Erected under Mac Mackenzie; renamed No 4 1968	2010
Brick potting shed	1925		
Main Propagating House	1928	Extended and new coke fired boiler	1976
Playground rest room	C 1930	chemical toilets 1948; modern toilets 1968	
Ladies brick toilet	1929	Bramley Drive, replacing 1910 block, later unisex upgrade	
Foreman's House,	1948	Built using recovered material from Marine Camp	C 1970
Wooden potting shed	C 1947	Date built uncertain, but post WW2 appears most probable	1970
Sound Shell	1953	Memorial sound shell in Main Garden	
No 8	1959		2010
No 1,2,3 glasshouses	1960		2010
Lady Norwood Begonia House	1960	Later cafe, lilly house and shop added	
Bulb store, tool sheds	C 1950	Built around mid late 1950	
New No 5	1971		2010
No 6	C 1960	Built early 1960s on site of first glasshouse	2010
No 7	1971	On site of the first glasshouse of 1898	2010
No 9 - Old No 8	C 1950	Built in the late 1950s, shade house added later	
Shade house adjoining No 9	C 1980s	Built in the late c 1986-90	
Modern mess utility room	1990	Potting shed reverted to the 1925 brick building	
Brick potting shed	1970	Revamped 1924 building internal walls removed, sliding door	
Cafe Begonia House	1981		
Toilet staff amenities	1982	Lady Norwood Begonia House, public toilets, staff amenities block added	
Lilly House begonia house	1989		
Utility room, by bulb store	C 1990	Eastern end of bulb store, tool shed building	
Treehouse Visitors centre	1990		
Begonia House shop, kitchen	2003 August		

Minor buildings are not included as the location and nature of these are not generally recorded

15/02/20