

## 5.0 SURVEY AND ASSESSMENT OF CONSERVATION AREAS

### 5.1 Introduction

The whole of Hamilton has been surveyed. Many areas were considered as potential Conservation Areas. Some of these have been dismissed on a comparative basis but may deserve closer attention in years to come (See Section 3.3). It is recommended that the Study be reviewed after five and ten years (See Section 3.2). Six Conservation Areas (Built Form) were identified. Their individual assessments follow.

Area conservation is concerned with protecting collections of buildings. Complete collections of buildings in an area or along a street frontage may have an importance over and above the significance of the buildings considered individually. Therefore each Conservation Area has been graded for its streetscape significance on a scale from 1 to 3. (274)

**Level 1** areas are collections of buildings outstanding either because they are a particularly well preserved group from a similar period or style, or because they are highly significant buildings in their own right. No Level 1 areas were found in Hamilton.

**Level 2** areas are of significance either because they still retain the predominant character and scale of a similar period or style, or because they contain individually significant buildings.

**Level 3** areas may contain significant buildings, but they will be from diverse periods or styles, and of low individual significance or integrity.

### 5.2 Conservation Areas (Built Form)

The following text for each Conservation Area should be read rather like the data sheets for individual buildings. The history and description identify the area and its characteristics and lead to the statement of significance and recommendations.

274 Based on system outlined in *Urban Conservation in the City of Melbourne*, pp 26-28.

### 5.2.1 UC1 Area A Church Hill (Level 2)

#### Description

The two churches, St Andrew's and Christ Church, which give this area its name and particularly their spires are Hamilton's most important landmarks. They stand at the top of the highest land in the district which was chosen for that reason by design or, more likely, by market forces as the premier residential area in Hamilton. The land falls away to the Grange Burn on two sides and the saddle which forms the commercial centre of Hamilton. On the north west side the land was flat and swampy. This preference for the high ground was characteristic of all nineteenth century development and was based for a long time on the belief in the Miasmatic theory for the spread of disease.

The regular street grid dominates the Church Hill area. It is bisected by Gray Street and McIntyre Street which keep to the highest ground and intersect at the highest point. The grid is unified by established street tree planting some of which has been removed over the years. The trees are varied but consist mostly of *Ulmus X hollandica*, elms, and the best avenue of these is in McIntyre Street. They are possibly oldest street trees in Hamilton but drastic pruning over the years prevents a conclusive dating. Other candidates would be the *Crataegus laevigata*, the English Hawthorn (now declared to be a noxious weed!), in French Street between McIntyre and Carmichael Streets. Also important are the *Brachychiton populneus*, Kurrajongs, and *Eucalyptus ficifolia*, Red Flowering Gum, as examples of native species used as late nineteenth century street trees. In Gray Street there are *Platanus X acerifolius*, Planes, which from their size, condition and documentary evidence date from the early twentieth century. Post World War 2 there were plantings of much smaller trees of quite different species. For a detailed list of trees see Appendix 8.6.

The foot paths are all paved with concrete and usually only on one side of the street. The further reaches of the cross streets, when they dip down to the Grange Burn, are not paved. The grass nature strips vary in width from one to five metres. Typically for residential areas of mostly twentieth century construction the footpaths are crossed by driveways most of which are concrete. The

gutters are also mostly concrete but some of bluestone cobbles survive. The best examples of the latter are, of course, in the older parts such as McIntyre Street between Gray and Griffin Streets. The streets are happily empty of much of the paraphernalia found in metropolitan suburbs. For a detailed list of materials see Appendix 8.7.

The most common building type is the free standing house, either early twentieth century villas or interwar bungalows. Some older houses and cottages survive either relatively intact or else substantially altered, so much so that their early date is hard to distinguish. There is a wide variety of styles from all periods. There is a wide variety of size with the largest and most impressive houses clustered around the churches and in the two main streets. That is not to say that there are no houses of interest in the other streets. In fact the uniformly distributed significant buildings focused on the church complexes make this an area of real importance to the City of Hamilton. Lyndhurst at 4 McIntyre Street plays a similar role for the southern end of the area.

The Church Hill area leads on to the Gray Street Commercial Area. Certain buildings line its phalanx and play a critical role in defining the edge. The most important of these is the group around the former Temperance Hall in Kennedy Street. Further south it melds with the Botanic Gardens area. The views out of the Church Hill area which are generated by the grid, are critical to its character. From McIntyre Street, at about the intersection of French Street, there is a view to the south-east of machinery sheds, dumped cars and poor quality development across the Grange Burn on the hill opposite. Power lines also intrude on the view. From Skene Street and from Clarke Street there are views to the south-west of the Council Depot and the Abattoirs. The City of Hamilton should encourage good planting on these sites and, if it owns the land, should do screen planting itself. The best species for this would be indigenous flora collected from the area. One good view is to the south-west from Gray Street which has open fields and rows of trees on the horizon.

## History

As in other Victoria country towns, church organisations (beginning with the Anglicans and the Presbyterians) were formed in Hamilton at an early date and had a profound effect on the community life of the region. The fine

buildings with their spires and towers constructed for these congregations have made a great impact architecturally and aesthetically and have led to the whole area being designated as Church Hill. (275) It is one of the most prestigious locations in Hamilton and an important component of its heritage.

Ecclesiastical buildings on Church Hill include Christ Church Co-Cathedral, commenced in 1878 by the Ballarat architect, H.R. Caselli (276), and the nearby manse (1897-8) at 26 Gray Street. (277) The architects Clegg and Miller designed St Andrew's Presbyterian Church in 1909, which stands at 20 Gray Street. (278) A third congregation, the Wesleyan Methodists, dissatisfied with an original grant of land, purchased a more prestigious Church Hill site at 41 McIntyre Street, where they built an early church in 1862 designed by the Melbourne architects, Crouch and Wilson. In 1913, this building was sold and converted into a private residence. (279)

Church Hill became the focus for Hamilton's leading business and professional men, anxious to build elegant homes on elevated sites. There are a number of surviving Edwardian residences which exemplify this trend, including the home of F F L Gummow, auctioneer, at 18 McIntyre Street (1904) and the solicitor, Saxon H Palmer's residence at 4 McIntyre Street (1902) (280)

It is hardly surprising that Church Hill was chosen for the prestigious Hamilton Club, built in 1879 from the designs of Smith and Johnson for leading townsmen and Western District pastoralists and graziers at 41 Gray Street. (281)

### Statement of Significance

The Church Hill Area is of regional significance as a precinct where major Hamilton religious buildings were located, most notably Christ Church Co Cathedral and its manse, and St Andrew's Presbyterian Church. It has also been regarded as the most prestigious residential part of

- 275 *Argus*, 28 March 1885.
- 276 *Garden*, p 82.
- 277 *BEMJ*, 20 February 1897.
- 278 *Garden*, p 170.
- 279 *Garden*, *passim*.
- 280 *Ibid.*, p 172.
- 281 *Ibid.*, p 84.

the town and contains a number of examples of elegant residences built for leading business and professional men, as well as retired squatters. The residential character is reinforced by gardens, several notable trees and important street tree planting. It is the social focus for prominent townsmen and Western District pastoralists and graziers.

### Recommendations

To conserve and enhance the special character of the Church Hill area it is recommended that:

- i the existing street plantings which date from before the Second world War be retained and extended in a comparable manner,
- ii traditional paving and guttering continue to be used including the absence of footpaths in some streets,
- iii a strict policy of minimal signage be followed,
- iv no non-residential uses should be allowed to compromise the essentially residential character of the area,
- v wherever possible the intrusion of powerlines should be minimised if they cannot be removed,
- vi the views out of the area should be enhanced by appropriate planting.

#### **5.2.2 UC1 Area B Botanic Gardens (Level 2)**

### Description

The Botanic Gardens is the focus of this area which is also dominated by the regularity of the street grid. It is surrounded by mostly residential buildings and their gardens acting in support and as a buffer from the rest of the city. The major exception is the group of public buildings, especially the Court House, and the Evangelical Lutheran Church complex. Certain residential buildings stand out, specifically the former Police Magistrate's house at 24 Thompson Street, Kilora, the Napier Club, and The Gables. The latter two being two-storied are particularly dominant but they are still subservient to the fully mature trees of the Gardens.

The Botanical Motel is located on a key site and while not intruding on the Gardens makes no real contribution to the area.

There is a considerable fall in the land away from Church Hill towards the Lutheran Church. This is critical for the views out of the Botanic Gardens. Hamilton is very lucky that there has been no serious intrusion by surrounding development and no compromise of the distant skyline, the great and irretrievable loss of the Royal Botanic Gardens in Melbourne.

Except on the Thompson Street side and for one third of the Martin Street side there are no made footpaths around the Gardens. There is a variety of fences and hedges the most important of which is in French Street. There are street trees, *Sorbus aucuparia*, European Ash, in Kennedy Street between the Botanic Gardens Depot and French Street. They have been heavily pruned and detract from the Gardens. In Martin Street there are some *Prunus serrulata* cvs., Flowering Cherry, which are trivial compared with the mature plantings of the Gardens. The worst intrusion are the powerlines.

On the other side of the road from the Gardens all of the streets have plantings except for French Street. In Kennedy Street there are *Sorbus aucuparia*, European Ash, which are appropriate and in good condition. In Martin Street there are *Prunus serrulata*, Flowering Cherry, which are in good condition but are not as appropriate as a larger tree would be. The idiosyncratic bush roses - in concrete rings - outside the State Offices are too eccentric to lose. In Thompson Street there are more *Prunus serrulata*, Flowering Cherry, but in poor condition with gaps.

The most definite entrance to the Gardens, and the one which should remain so, is the set of cast iron gates at the corner of Thompson and French Streets. The second most important is at the corner of French and Kennedy Streets. The third, which is rivalled by the entrance near the toilets, is opposite the Lutheran Church. A much stronger link should be created between the Botanic Gardens and the Ornamental Tree Planting Reserve, now known as Victoria Park, in Martin Street and to a lesser extent with Kennedy Oval.

On one of the power poles in Thompson Street opposite the toilets in the Gardens there is a sign commemorating the

"Jaycee Yulunga Streets and Garden Competition Winner South Zone". Also in Thompson Street on the other side of the road from the Gardens, there is the best example of bluestone guttering and crossovers in this area and possibly anywhere in Hamilton. The view out of the area from Thompson Street to the south is well terminated by distant planting. All the streets are happily empty of much of the paraphernalia found in metropolitan suburbs. For a detailed list of materials see Appendix 8.7.

## History

In some ways this part of Hamilton, because of the Police Camp which became the government office area, can claim to be one of the oldest in the region. It is only rivalled by the site of the original inn on the Grange Burn to the north-west of the city.

The Hamilton Botanical Gardens is one of many municipal Botanical Gardens, which were established in Victoria in the mid to late 19th century. A Botanical Gardens was planned for Hamilton at least from the 1860s. A large recreation reserve set aside in the original township plan became the site of the present Botanical Gardens. (282) William Ferguson, Victorian Inspector of Forests, is said to have prepared a plan in the 1870s. However the Botanical Gardens were not laid out and planted until the early 1880s when William Guilfoyle, Curator of the Royal Botanical Gardens of Melbourne and a dominant figure in garden design, was asked to draw up a new plan for Hamilton. (283) In 1883 an artificial lake was created (284) and, by 1895, the Botanical Gardens precinct was described as 'one of the beauty spots of the colony' (285)

The area around the Botanical Gardens became a prestigious residential area and many prominent townsmen chose to build their homes there, including J P Hamilton, Police Magistrate, at 24 Thompson Street (1873) and Dr David Laidlaw, Medical Superintendent at the Hamilton Hospital, whose residence, Eildon, built from the designs of Ussher and Kemp, at 34 Thompson Street, was acquired in 1939 by the Napier Club, a Hamilton women's social

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282 *Plan of the Town of Hamilton*, 1850, Featr. 5U, C.P.O., Melbourne.

283 Watts, p 54.

284 *Ibid.*, pp 43, 126; *Hamilton Spectator*, 8 December 1883.

285 *Weekly Times*, 4 May 1895.

club. (286) Kilora in Kennedy Street was built for the editor of the Hamilton Spectator.

The town's earliest and most notable state school, Hamilton State School No. 295, built in 1876 on the site of an earlier timber national school (the earliest school in Hamilton) also stands within the Botanical Gardens precinct at 42 Gray Street. (287)

### Statement of Significance

This area has regional significance because of its associations with the Hamilton Botanical Gardens, regarded during the last century as 'one of the beauty spots of the colony'. In a sense Hamilton started officially with the Police Camp in what was to become Martin Street. Like Church Hill, this became a prestigious residential area and was a focus for many prominent business and professional men who built fine residences there. It is the site, too, of the town's earliest state school, which replaced an earlier timber national school, the town's first school building.

### Recommendations

To conserve and enhance the special character of the Botanic Gardens area it is recommended that:

- i nothing should be allowed to intrude on the Botanic Gardens nor dominate the existing planting,
- ii nothing should compromise the views out of the Botanic Gardens including the existing skyline,
- iii no new buildings should be taller than one storey in the streets surrounding the Botanic Gardens,
- iv the variety of fences and hedges around the Botanic Gardens should be maintained and there should be no new footpaths adjacent to the Botanic Gardens,
- v adjacent to the Botanic Gardens, the row of *Sorbus aucuparia*, European Ash, in Kennedy Street and the *Prunus serrulata* cvs., Flowering Cherry,

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286 Garden, p 223.

287 Australasian Sketcher, 28 October 1876.



in Martin Street should be removed and there should be no street trees planted adjacent to the Gardens,

- vi on the other side of the road from the Gardens, the row of *Sorbus aucuparia*, European Ash, in Kennedy Street should be retained and should be the model for street tree planting in the other streets,
- vii traditional paving and guttering should continue to be used,
- ix a strict policy of minimal signage be followed,
- ix no non-residential uses should be allowed to compromise the essentially residential character of the area,
- x wherever possible the intrusion of powerlines should be minimised if they cannot be removed,
- xi the views out of the area should be enhanced by appropriate planting.

### 5.2.3 UC1 Area C Gray Street Commercial (Level 2)

#### Description

The character of the Gray Street Commercial area is dominated by the strict street grid. Its main axis is Gray Street which soon took precedence in a commercial sense over the lower lying Lonsdale Street. It has remained the centre of Hamilton ever since. It had been almost completely built up by the 1900s, certainly to the street frontages but was not nearly so developed at the rear of the sites, access from the main streets being limited. This means that even now there are large areas, mostly devoted to carparking, behind the facades in Gray, Thompson, Lonsdale, Brown and Cox Streets.

Since the 1900s there has been steady redevelopment with a particularly important legacy surviving in the buildings from the 1930s. The most important change was prompted by the Council in the 1960s and is now generally regretted by everyone. The Council adopted a policy of removing post-supported verandahs. The early views of Hamilton which survive in photographs show clearly how important they were in creating the character of the commercial streets. It is important to distinguish

between the original post-supported verandahs in front of buildings constructed before the First World War and the "authentic" cantilevered verandahs of the building constructed in the thirties and later.

The next phase of re-development was the cladding of the 1980s. There are many buildings surviving, probably quite intact, behind new parapets and first floors faced with sheet steel used as a cheap way to modernise them. The other important change to have occurred over the years is the modernization of shop fronts. Each of the streets still enjoys a healthy variety of periods and therefore styles but many of the original shopfronts have been replaced by inappropriate alternatives. There are other superficial changes to buildings all of which can be attributed to the desire to modernize.

The early photographs show that there were no trees in Gray and Thompson Streets originally. The streets then were unmade and either dusty or muddy depending on the season. The gutters were wide spoon drains and were built up with bluestone pitchers. Paving seems to have varied but one photograph taken outside the Victoria Hotel shows bluestone flags on the gutter half of the footpath area. The other half beside the buildings must have been unsealed. It has been said that concrete flags were laid at one time. Asphalt would have been used at a later stage and was probably the material which was replaced by the present brick paving.

The new brick paving is now everywhere in the Gray Street Commercial area. It serves to unify the area. While its advantages were clear when it was first laid down some of its disadvantages are now revealing themselves especially the bad wear-and-tear. The paving is matched by brick planter boxes in Gray Street which are filled with low shrubs. These are generally well maintained and successful. There are *Platinus X acerifolius*, Planes, in the roadway which are in good condition and contribute significantly to the quality of the streetscape. They provide much needed shade, a restful atmosphere and a sense of scale. They continue the traditional planting of the residential parts of Gray Street. Elsewhere in the Gray Street Commercial area the plantings, *Pittosporum eugenoides* 'Variegata', are in tubs and are not successful.

More than any other area in Hamilton the Gray Street Commercial area is filled with street furniture. Much of it seems necessary for our late twentieth century

lifestyle centred, as it is, on the motor car. Even though there is a fashion to remove cars and pedestrianise commercial areas, their presence does provide not just access but also a sense of vitality and even competition with the pedestrians. The key is to establish a balance or an equal chance - usually by handicapping the car.

The municipal buildings form a small sub-group within the area. The street is planted with *Platanus X acerfolius*, Planes, which create a special atmosphere with their dappled light. One of the most serious losses to the Gray Street Commercial area was the demolition, more or less without real reason, of the first Town Hall in Gray Street next door to the Post Office. This left a gap in the streetscape which must be filled. It is rarely appropriate to reconstruct buildings but in this case, considering the sensitivity of the adjacent buildings and the excellent records which survive, reconstruction is a valid option. (288) Such a reconstruction could be flexible in its internal disposition.

## History

Hamilton was the first inland town in the Western District to hold land sales. Soon after the drawing-up of a first 1850 Township plan (289), land in what is now Hamilton's main commercial area, was subdivided and sold. Blocks along Lonsdale, Kennedy, Cox and Thompson Streets were sold in 1851 and along Gray and Brown Streets were sold in 1852. (290) Hamilton developed as the main service centre for the agricultural and pastoral industries of the Western District region and, from an early date, a commercial centre was formed, clustered around Gray Street. In 1859 there were already some stores, a local newspaper (forerunner to the *Hamilton Spectator*), saddlers, watchmakers, bakers, butchers, plumbers, blacksmiths, a wood yard, an auctioneer and several hotels. (291) There were also three doctors, two solicitors and a chemist, Dr William Stevenson, whose 1866 or earlier house, 'Lynwood' survives at 30 Gray Street. (292)

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288 The original drawings are held by the Hamilton Historical Society and many photographs show the building.

289 *Plan of the Town of Hamilton, 1850* Featr 5U, C.P.O. Melbourne.

290 Garden, p 39.

291 Ibid., p 58.

292 Ibid.

The area became the location of many shops and offices, of some notable banks, municipal government offices, a 1961 Regional Library and Art Gallery, and of an early church, the Free Presbyterian Church (1857) in Brown Street

Surviving examples of 19th century commercial buildings in the area include the 1876 Post Office at 57 Gray Street; George Gill's chemist's shop at 152 Gray Street, which forms a striking contrast with the Moderne style Robson's Pharmacy at 160 Grey Street. Nearby, at 138 Gray Street, stands the former Thompson's Stores, a two-storey bluestone building constructed c1872 on the site of the famous Thomson's Iron Store. The National Australia Bank at 131 Gray Street (the former C.B.C) constructed in 1867, one of Hamilton's most notable commercial buildings, is a splendid example of the work of A.L. Smith, whose office designed a number of buildings for the Colonial Bank and the Bank of Victoria. (293)

Important 20th century buildings in Hamilton's commercial centre include the former Miller's Department Store at 121 Gray Street, a skilful remodelling of an earlier structure by the firm Seabrooke and Fildes, and the Regional Library and Art Gallery (1961) in Brown Street, the latter housing one of the richest and most unusual collections for a provincial Victorian gallery.

### Statement of Significance

The Gray Street Commercial area is of regional significance both for its architecture and its historical association. It has almost always been the centre of Hamilton and therefore the Hamilton district. It has seen all the changes the City has been through in its history. The streets, and especially Gray Street, have a remarkable collection of buildings from the later nineteenth century and the 1930s.

## Recommendations

To conserve and enhance the special character of the Gray Street Commercial area it is recommended that:

- i post-supported verandahs be reinstated according to the age of the building and based on the photographic evidence available,
- ii the cladding which disguises the original facades be removed,
- iii replace, in the long term, brick paving with either bluestone flags, concrete flags or asphalt (hot mix),
- iv extend the street tree planting of Gray Street into neighbouring streets,
- v review the emphasis placed on access to Gray Street by car from the rear of the shopping centre and refocus the vitality of the area,
- vi review the pedestrian links between Gray Street and the car parks,
- vii reconstruct the original Town Hall.

### **5.2.4 UC1 Area D Hospital Hill (Level 3)**

#### Description

The other hill in Hamilton, this area focuses on the Hamilton Hospital at its crest and on the Catholic Church, the Uniting Church and the Masonic Temple where it joins the Melville Oval area. The area is roughly triangular. Its main axis is Lonsdale Street. The area includes Bree Park. The western boundary is Alexandra Parade and the eastern boundary is the railway line.

Generally the quality of the housing stock is less than that of Church Hill but still good with some very good individual buildings, the best typically being on the brow of the hill. The Federation house at 138 Lonsdale Street is the most distinctive in the area and its tower acts as a landmark. The fully planted garden consists of a range of mature woody shrubs. The garden at St Mary's Convent at 23 Dinwoodie Street is typical of the post Second World War Period with a special formality which

reflects the building's style. There was little of special interest in the other private gardens of Hospital Hill, the gardens being typical of their period and true to the style of the houses. No notable trees were identified in private gardens. There is an avenue of *Picea abies*, Norway Spruce, in Dinwoodie Street near Sedgewick Street which is an unusual species to find in Hamilton let alone to find it used as a street tree.

The most important trees in the Hospital Hill area are in two avenues adjacent to the Uniting Church complex. The *Washingtonia robusta*, Mexican or Washington Palms, are already included on the Significant Trees Register. They must be seen in association with the palms in Melville Oval and in the garden at 6 Dryden Street. The unusual avenue of interplanted *Ulmus X hollandica*, Dutch Elms and *Eucalyptus citriodora*, Lemon Scented Gums, create a strong sense of axis along Lonsdale Street and link the Melville Oval area with the Hamilton Hospital.

Bree Park differs from other reserves in Hamilton in being largely planted with natives. The most dominant native species is *Eucalyptus ficifolia*, Red Flowering Gum planted in an avenue from one corner to the other. The most important single native is the *Acacia elata*, Cedar Wattle, a tree of large proportions but in poor condition. Other native trees noted were *Eucalyptus botryoides*, Bangalay Gum, *Grevillea robusta*, Silky Oak and *Acacia baileyana*, Cootamundra Wattle. The park had been substantially planted with *Acacia baileyana*, Cootamundra Wattle, but these were taken out due to poor health in the 1940s. The most dominant exotic species is *Pinus radiata*, Monterey Pine which is in an avenue near the Hamilton Hospital. Other exotic trees noted were *Quercus robur*, English Oak, *Cupressus macrocarpa*, Monterey Cypress, and *Acer pseudoplatanus*, Sycamore.

While there are patterns in the planting, no overall design can be determined. The character of the park is open and informal. The grass is rough, in contrast to the manicured lawns of the Botanic Gardens, but in poor condition. The paths are gravel and are also in poor condition. A simple, traditional post and rail fence delineates the boundaries. Play equipment, possibly for the use of people visiting the hospital, is located on the Foster Street side.

Cox Street requires special mention for its very low streetscape amenity. It suffers from the same blight as Lonsdale Street, being on the major through route for

traffic. There is no planting and the quality of the building stock, apart from a few houses, is poor. This must create a bad impression on people passing through Hamilton.

Generally views are not generated in the same way as those generated by the street grid in the Church Hill area. There are some dramatic views out of the Hospital Hill area especially towards the Grampians. The view over Hamilton Lake is less dramatic and is compromised by the railway line. The worst view is along Foster Street towards the railway line which is terminated by a large industrial building with oversized lettering.

### History

The land east of Brown Street was sold in stages in the 1850s, in the 1860s and even in the 1880s. Those parts of the Hospital Hill which lie close to the centre of Hamilton were developed early but the further reaches only saw the Hamilton Hospital for many years on one rise and the Hamilton and Western District College on the next. The area was always predominantly domestic but was graced by some religious buildings, such as St Mary's which was started in the mid-1860s and the former Wesleyan Church which dates from 1907. St Mary's has been extended twice and altered at other times. The Freemasons' Temple was also built early in the twentieth century to the design of Worshipful Brother Frank Hammond. The foundation stone was laid in 1915. (294)

The Hamilton Hospital started in the early 1860s and has continued to develop ever since adding a new main building on the foundations of the old in 1890, a fever ward in 1897, an extension to the main building for the new female nurses early in the 1900s which was also designed by Hammond and several other major buildings throughout the twentieth century. The hospital played a key role in the eradication of tuberculosis with its TB Chalet built in 1947. The specially designed building was one of several sanatoria around the state of a similar design and appears to have been the first built. The Hamilton Hospital has also had a major influence on the street layout by assuming some road reservation for hospital purposes.

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294 Foundation stone.

Much of the Hospital Hill area was developed during the interwar period with typical bungalows. These were the homes of the children who filled the nearby private and public schools especially after the Second World War. The area is now a consolidated suburb of Hamilton representing its middle class values.

### Statement of Significance

The Hospital Hill area is of local significance for the collection of important buildings, including several landmarks, and for Bree Park. The spire of St Mary's rivals the spires of Church Hill. Like Church Hill, this area is another important residential part of Hamilton. It includes the home of Reg Ansett, a modest Californian bungalow at 12 Learmonth Street, and reflects his relatively humble beginnings. The Hamilton Hospital includes a wide range of purpose built buildings from different periods, the most dominant of which is the multi storey Princess Margaret Nurses Home. It is the tallest building in Hamilton.

### Recommendations

To conserve and enhance the special character of the Hospital Hill Area it is recommended that:

- i the existing street plantings which date from before the Second world War be retained and extended in a comparable manner,
- ii traditional paving and guttering continue to be used including the absence of footpaths in some streets,
- iii a strict policy of minimal signage be followed,
- iv no non-residential uses should be allowed to compromise the essentially residential character of the area,
- v wherever possible the intrusion of powerlines should be minimised if they cannot be removed,
- vi the views out of the area should be enhanced by appropriate planting,
- vii the landscaping of Bree Park should be continued and consolidated,



- iix Cox Street should be given special attention to improve its streetscape to better reflect the character of Hamilton and its importance as a through route.

#### 5.2.5 UC1 Area A Melville Oval (Level 3)

##### Description

The focus for this Conservation Area is obviously the oval. The land, originally reserved for market purposes, was too swampy. About the turn of the century there were moves to improve the area. The beautification scheme included ground works, extensive planting and the construction of buildings, gates and a fence. The beautification scheme has been eroded over the years by ad hoc "improvements" most of which were the removal of plantings and to accommodate increased traffic.

Within the oval's grounds there are several notable trees. The most striking are the *Washingtonia robusta*, Mexican or Washington palms. These trees are landmarks and relate to the significant avenue of *Washingtonia robusta*, Mexican or Washington Palm, in Alexandra Avenue, one in the garden of The Bungalow, 8 Dryden Street, and to others elsewhere in the town. There are various other trees some of which are in very poor health, particularly the *Calodendrum capense*, Cape Chestnut, the only example found in Hamilton. On the other hand the *Waterhousea floribunda*, Weeping Myrtle, which is next to the Brown Street fence, is in good condition and could be used as a species for further planting. There are also two *Quercus robur*, English Oaks, which are reasonable. Improved planting along this side of the oval would benefit the streetscape. Because of the overhead powerlines the planting should be inside the Oval fence.

On the other side of the Oval, there is a drinking water fountain erected by the Caledonian Society in 1910 for children, no doubt prompted by the beautification scheme. It is surrounded by several trees; *Quercus palustris*, Pin Oak; *Prunus cerasifera* 'Nigra', Purple Cherry Plum and *Aesculus hippocastanum*, Horse Chestnut, the most notable tree in this part of the Oval. Other trees which are notable are a *Eucalyptus ficifolia*, Red Flowering Gum; the *Acmena smithii*, Lilly Pilly and *Arbutus unedo*, Strawberry Tree, either side of the Thompson Street memorial entrance gates.

The trees mentioned above almost certainly date from the beautification scheme at the beginning of this century. They have a considerable collective significance. Their conditions are almost all good. Their retention is paramount.

In a sense the oval is based on Lonsdale Street which seems to have been narrowed for the sake of the oval. This flat area is now used for fire training and hose drying. There is an avenue of *Ulmus X hollandica*, Dutch elms, outside the fence with angle parking in between them. See the schedule of street trees for comments on their size and condition and for recommendations on their management. The cream brick public toilets are now the major feature of this section of the park. There is no street tree planting on the opposite side of the road which has become something of a take-away food "strip".

Avenues of trees in Lonsdale Street stretch away from the oval in both directions. On the east the elms continue and are interplanted with *Eucalyptus citriodora*, Lemon Scented Gums. To the west there is a significant tree, a *Eucalyptus globulus* subsp. *bicostata*, Eurabbie. (295) This tree which is extremely old and the only one left of an avenue which stretched as far as Kennedy Street may have been sent to Hamilton by Baron Ferdinand von Mueller from the Botanic Gardens in Melbourne. Close by there are four *Phoenix canariensis*, Canary Island Palms, which would date from early this century and are likely to be part of the beautification of Melville oval.

Traffic is a major issue in this part of Lonsdale Street being between two roundabouts and on the through route from east to west of the town. Its improvement as an avenue would ameliorate the blight caused by the traffic. The roundabouts, if they are to be permanent, could be better designed. This part of the city does not show off Hamilton to its best advantage which is all the more ironic since the Tourist information Bureau is located under one of Hamilton's most significant trees.

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295 The precise identification of this specimen is uncertain until more material can be examined. It is most likely subspecies *bicostata* but this subspecies intergrades with subspecies *pseudoglobulus*, Victorian Eurabbie, within which this specimen might fall. It is not *E. globulus* subsp. *globulus*, Tasmanian Blue Gum.

The land rises away from the oval towards the Shire Hall in Market Place and St Ronan's at 5 Dryden Street. The Manor House, also in Dryden Street, has enjoyed the view down and across the town since 1862. The most dominant building in this Conservation Area is the former Alexandra Ladies College. Its curtilage has been seriously compromised by the construction only a few years ago of several two storey units. The units could not be described as good infill architecture. Two memorials, one to Major Mitchell and one to the soldiers who fell in the Boer War complete the picture. The latter is associated with two *Quercus robur*, English Oak. (296) This whole residential area now forms a backdrop to the Melville Oval Conservation Area. The radial pattern of streets is an important characteristic of the area which distinguishes it from the rest of Hamilton. The planting in these streets is mediocre and does not date from the beautification scheme. Bluestone gutters survive.

## History

This area takes its name from the sporting precinct which became the chief recreational reserve of the town and was described in 1929 as 'one of the best outside the metropolis'. (297) It was planned originally as a Market Square but was never used for that purpose. (298) The Hamilton Grandstand and Band Rotunda (since relocated to the Botanic gardens) at the Melville Oval are examples of a Federation era recreation complex and illustrate the importance of sport and recreation in this typical Victorian country town. The name of the oval has historical associations with its developer, W H Melville, barrister, pastoralist, sportsman, and well known Hamilton Councillor and townsman. (299)

Notable buildings in the area include the Shire of Dundas offices, a reminder of Hamilton's earliest days when the town was a member of the Dundas Road District prior to the formation of the municipality. It is the site, also, of the former Alexandra College for Ladies in Milton Street, opened in 1874 from the designs of W H Ellerker,

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296 This was a popular view in early twentieth century postcards held both at the Hamilton Historical Society and in the Picture Collection at the State Library of Victoria.

297 Garden, p 183, 221, 223.

298 Ibid.

299 Ibid., pp 122-3.

who also designed Hamilton Boys' College. (300) Alexandra College, guaranteed to 'turn out gentlewomen' (301) was taken over the Presbyterian Church in 1954 and in 1962 amalgamated with Hamilton College. In 1972 it became the Alexandra House Reception Rooms. (302) In Brown Street there is a memorial to Major Mitchell, the first white man to pass through the future site of Hamilton. There is also a Boer War Memorial.

### Statement of Significance

The Melville Oval has local significance because of its historical associations as Hamilton's chief recreational reserve, planned originally as a Market Square but never used for that purpose. The early twentieth century beatification scheme was a major municipal achievement and commemorates one of Hamilton's most distinguished servants and citizens, William H Melville. The Edwardian grandstand adds grace and dignity to the reserve.

The Oval illustrates the importance of sport and recreation in this typical Victorian country town. Notable buildings in the area include the Shire of Dundas offices and the former Alexandra College, a companion girls' school to Hamilton and Western District College for Boys, with which it was amalgamated in 1862. Nearby plantings support the wide range of notable trees within the Oval reserve.

### Recommendations

To conserve and enhance the special character of the Botanic gardens Area it is recommended that:

- i the existing original planting within Melville Oval should be retained, any missing trees replanted and its theme extended,
- ii the various monuments and memorials within Melville Oval should be retained and properly conserved,
- ii the various monuments and memorials outside Melville Oval should be retained and properly conserved with their associated planting,

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300 Ibid., pp 89, 224, 238.

301 Argus, 28 March 1885.

302 Garden, p 238.

- iv the variety of fences around Melville Oval should be reduced and any new fence should be either a reconstruction of the original c1910 type or either a high or low level capped corrugated iron fence,
- v where security is need a high fence should be used or a low fence with a wire fence behind it disguised by hedges,
- vi adjacent to Melville Oval, the row of *Ulmus X hollandica*, Dutch Elms in Lonsdale Street should be retained and there should be similar street trees planted on the other side of the road,
- vii street trees around Melville Oval should be traditional,
- lix traditional paving and guttering should continue to be used,
- ix a strict policy of minimal signage be followed,

#### 5.2.6 UC1 Area F St Ronan's (Level 3)

##### Description

The focus for the St Ronan's area is the house of that name at 5 Dryden Street. The large house has brooded over the town since the 1860s and once enjoyed a much larger garden. It sits on the rise above the Shire Hall and Offices. There are several other notable houses and the character of the area is predominantly domestic. The gardens of the houses, while typical of their various periods, are of a high standard. The best garden which still enjoys its original layout and probably some of the first plantings is The Bungalow, 6 Dryden Street. (303) It has the notable *Washingtonia robusta*, Mexican or Washington Palm, the highest in Hamilton.

The three other notable trees in the St Ronan's area are the *Magnolia grandiflora*, Bull Bay, at the Manor House, 4 Dryden Street; the *Waterhousea floribunda*, Weeping

303 The present owners hold a photograph of the house which must have been taken soon after its construction and which shows the original garden being laid out.

Myrtle, at St Ronan's, 5 Dryden Street; and the *Crataegus X lavalleyi*, French Hawthorn, at 7 Dryden Street in the rear garden.

The early garden at 32 Collins Street was once well developed and maximised the slope behind the house. Several old *Quercus robur*, English Oaks, close the view at the rear. There are the remnants of an orchard at one side and there may have a vegetable garden on the other side. The gardens associated with the other early buildings in the St Ronan's area have been mostly lost.

The most important road through this area is Pope Street, the main road to the west. It is now a divided highway with plantings typical of the late 1960s reflecting the fashion for natives at that time. Dryden Street is the principle residential street and is planted *Lagunaria pattersonia*, Cow Itch Tree on the north side and *Prunus serrulata*, Flowering Cherry on the south side. The former is a traditional street tree but the latter reflects the push to make Hamilton the "Floral Town" in the post Second World War period. They are out of scale and out of period. Collins Street is planted with *Photinia serrulata*, Chinese Hawthorn, and *Crataegus laevigata*, English Hawthorn, both of which are small trees but these are well formed and, if a small street tree is required, the *Photinia* provides a good model.

Throughout the area the footpaths and gutters are concrete dating from the post Second World War period. There are narrow nature strips. The most important view from the St Ronan's area is across the former Market Reserve which is now the Melville Oval. The view east along Collins Street is soon terminated but the view west is good and looks out across the valley of the Grange Burn and over agricultural land to windbreak trees on the horizon.

## History

The St Ronan's area is one of the oldest and most important parts of Hamilton, dating from its origin as the Dundas Roads Board and because of its position at the western entrance to the town. Several key buildings add distinction to the area. Firstly there is St Ronan's which was formerly a post office in Gray Street. The materials were purchased and it was rebuilt in 1876 by Sigismund Jacoby, a leading draper and one-time mayor of

Hamilton. (304) The building had a succession of owners and uses, all important to Hamilton's history. Nearby is the Manor House which was built in 1862 and possibly designed by its first owner, the Shire Engineer. Both these houses had strong medical connections.

Also dating from the Victorian period but rather later are The Academy, a Catholic girls school, and the Baptist Church which are both in Collins Street. The Academy is interesting for both its architecture, again domestic in character, and its history. The Church is a simple example of the Gothic revival which is an unusual choice for this denomination.

The area would have benefitted from the beautification of the nearby Melville Oval before the First World War. It enjoyed some redevelopment in the interwar period including the construction of Mourilyan, at 22 Pope Street, a building which dominates the entrance to the old township because of its size and location. There has been little development since then until a certain amount of renovation on the early cottages, some of which is of dubious quality.

### **Statement of Significance**

The St Ronan's area is of local significance for both its architecture and its historic associations. It includes an important collection of buildings ranging in date from the earliest period of Hamilton's settlement to the interwar period and gardens which compliment the significance of the individual buildings. The planting and domestic scale of the St Ronan's area are critical and promote, with the topography, an important view to and from the centre of Hamilton.

### **Recommendations**

To conserve and enhance the special character of the St Ronan's area it is recommended that:

- i the existing street plantings which date from before the Second World War be retained and extended in a comparable manner,

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304 Ibid, p 86-7.

- ii traditional paving and guttering continue to be used including the absence of footpaths in some streets,
- iii a strict policy of minimal signage be followed,
- iv no non-residential uses should be allowed to compromise the essentially residential character of the area,
- v wherever possible the intrusion of powerlines should be minimised if they cannot be removed,
- vi the views out of the area should be enhanced by appropriate planting.

### **5.3 Conservation Areas (Natural)**

#### **5.3.1 UC2 Area G Grange Burn**

##### **Description**

The Grange Burn meanders around the town in a large arc from the north-east to the west after turning south and then north. It is never more than a small stream although it has now been dammed and forms Lake Hamilton. The banks vary from open and flat floodplains to quite steep cliffs especially at the southern end of the original township. The Grange Burn area has two characters; the one which is more natural or informal and the other which has been laid out to some design. The latter are reserves which are for deliberate recreation purposes and include Lake Hamilton, the Apex Park, Kennedy Park and Victoria Park. The rest of the creek seems to be left more or less to fend for itself.

It is not possible to say within the scope of this study how much of the existing vegetation along the Grange Burn is remnant and indeed likewise throughout Hamilton. However, there are considerable sections which are overgrown with thickets of elm suckers and other weeds. The formal reserves have quite elaborate plantings. These have now deteriorated but not irretrievably. The relationship between Victoria Park and the Botanic Gardens deserves to be explored in detail.

The most important formal area along the Grange Burn is Victoria Park. High ground on the Martin Street side



falls away to the floodplain by the creek. The cliff still shows the scar of the early quarry. The park is edged on the Martin Street side with avenue plantings of alternating *Ulmus X hollandica*, Dutch Elm and *Quercus robur*, English Oak. A path from the top of the hill traverses the Park diagonally down the cliff face. It is planted with *Crataegus laevigata*, English Hawthorn and *Fraxinus excelsior*, English Ash. Other trees include: *Ulmus X hollandica*, Dutch Elm; *Quercus robur*, English Oak; *Acer platinoides*, Norway Maple; *Brachychiton acerifolius*, Illawarra Flame Tree; *Fraxinus excelsior* 'Pendula'; and what must be remnant vegetation in *Eucalyptus camaldulensis*, River Red Gum. The most notable exotic is the impressive *Ulmus X hollandica* 'Vegeta', Huntingdon Elm at the base of the slope. The Park is in a run-down condition and considerable sensitive tree work is required. The park has also been used to store Council equipment, mostly abandoned, and for the grazing of sheep to keep down the grass.

### History

The original reason for the settlement at Hamilton, the Grange Burn has played a key role throughout the City's history. It was discovered and named by Major Mitchell who passed through the region in 1836 and probably camped on its banks. (305) The Grange Inn overlooked the creek where it was easiest to cross from the west. It watered the out stations of the two main squatting runs in the district. It was the water supply for the Police Camp, the first stable European settlement in the area.

The town used the Grange Burn for its drinking water sometimes with dire consequences. Illness and particularly the outbreak of epidemics was always a frightening possibility. The banks of the Grange Burn were used in the 1870s for the disposal of night soil and other nuisances. A pit on the banks was filled with "several dead horses in varying stages of decay". (306) The story of the town's water supply is a long one. Finally about 1900 it was brought in from the Grampians and the pressure was taken off the Grange Burn.

The vacant land along the banks has enjoyed many other uses but mostly it was used for passive recreation. The creek was important in its further reaches for

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305 Garden, p 7-9.

306 Ibid, p 113.

agriculture during the nineteenth century. (307) There seems no evidence of market gardening along the banks close to the town. In 1906 land which had been used as a quarry and a temporary tip was finally reserved as an Ornamental Tree Reserve, to be a "beauty spot" according to Frank Hammond, the Town Clerk and Engineer. (308) Kennedy Oval was reserved at about the same time.

The creek has been dammed at different times. Lake Hamilton, the largest, is now a major element in the City and is a centre for both passive and active recreation. A small park has been developed near the Ballarat Road by Apex with playing facilities and includes the ubiquitous steam engine. For much of its length the Grange Burn still meanders placidly around the town.

### Statement of Significance

The Grange Burn is of regional significance for its historical associations and for its landscape value. The creek has played a key role throughout the district's history and has seen some of its most important events. Parts have been beautified and Victoria park has special significance for its design and planting. It is also of significance as a repository and nursery for a full range of remnant vegetation and this is important for other areas in Hamilton.

### Recommendations

To conserve and enhance the special character of the St Ronan's area it is recommended that:

- i that Victoria Park be restored,
- ii that further, more detailed study be done to identify remnant vegetation and important exotic plantings,
- iii that there should always be a balance between and probably a mixture of native and exotic species,

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307 Ibid, p 109.

308 Correspondence in 'Victoria Park' Reserve File held at State Offices, Hamilton.

- iv that the Grange Burn be fostered as a repository and nursery for the regeneration of remnant vegetation along the creek and throughout Hamilton,
- v that no development should occur which compromises the landscape value of the Grange Burn area, views to and from it and its use for passive recreation.

#### 5.4 Other Areas of Landscape Interest

There are other areas within the city which deserve to be monitored for their landscape interest if not significance. Several of these were considered as possible Conservation Areas (Natural) but, for the time being, are not recommended.

First of these is the cemetery. There can be no doubting its historical associations and there is architectural interest in some of the graves. The absence of any landscaping whatsoever is a remarkable characteristic. It would be a positive step to introduce planting to improve the cemetery's appearance. The planting should be traditional in its selection of species, formal in its design and easy to maintain for obvious practical reasons. A good guide to sombre, dark leaved and weeping species and how to them plant is the *Beechworth Cemetery: A Landscape Study*, by R D Spencer, J Dyke and W Warboys of the Royal Botanic Gardens.

Alexandra Parade is another area which could be considered as a Conservation Area at a later stage. The full potential of this broad street seems to have been compromised in the past but not so much that it could not be rehabilitated. Strong avenue planting of exotics to reinforce and continue the present scheme would be appropriate. Patterson Park should be similarly treated.