

HERITAGE SURVEYS BY JOHN HAWKER

Smith's Nursery site, Riddles Creek
Surveyed on Friday 22 November 2002

file 2002/000056

Linda Levick, daughter of the owner (Strack), Di Jenkins, (Greening of Riddle), John Testro and Nick Wong (part) (both arborists), Roger Spencer, (Botanist, Royal Botanic Gardens Melbourne), and John Hawker.

The former Smith's Nursery Site comprises a tree lined driveway edged with a line of stones, now overgrown and unused, house and garden, (unoccupied and in poor condition), and to the north east in the paddock a cutting made into the hill side which may have been the site of a glasshouse. To the north along the south side of Riddles Creek, are the remains of the nursery, brick and concrete base of a glasshouse about half remaining and the outline of the original footings, and ornamental planting with pond. North west of this site are the remains of a stone building now being impacted upon by trees.

Assessment:

The house, driveway and associated planting is neglected and in fair to poor condition. There is little evidence that this was the home of the notable nineteenth century nurserymen, John Smith and later his son William. The range of exotic plants and maturity of the trees is perhaps the best indication but it is not outstanding example of design or of important horticultural value. The cutting into the bank, which may have been the site of a glasshouse shows no evidence of any structure.

The former nursery area features both ornamental (display) planting and raised nursery rows and the remains of a few rows of trees. There was an ornamental lily pond and island with an earth bank on the Riddles Creek side (north), now mostly silted up. There are the remains of a glasshouse/propagating house. This brick and rendered structure retains its original footprint and a bench on the north side. Closer to the Creek are the remnants of a stone building, now being impacted upon by trees.

The nursery operated from 1860 (or 1863), as John Smith & Sons, and after his death in 1886 by his sons Thomas and Walter, and was owned by descendants until 1945. The nursery was largely washed away in the flood of 1906.

Significant remnants of the nursery and display planting are the oaks, including an exceptionally large *Quercus aff. alba*, near the pond, a stand of 3 *Q. suber*, a large *Arbutus unedo*, 2 fine *Fraxinus excelsior* 'Aurea Pendula', *Phoenix canariensis* and several *Trachycarpus fortunei* near the glasshouse, an uncommon planting of the native *Livistona australis* palm, a large *Araucaria bidwillii*, and *Tilia platyphyllos*.

Comparative Nurseries

1860/1863	John Smith & Sons, Riddles Creek (oldest surviving nursery site in Vic.?)
1851	Thomas Adcock, Geelong
1852	Smith & Adamson, Melbourne [management of John Smith (Riddle's Creek)]
1860	George Brunning, St Kilda
1880	Richard Cheeseman, Brighton
1840s, 1850, 1860	John C Cole, Richmond, and Belgrave (Glen Harrow)
c1860	Joseph Harris, South Yarra
1858 (seed), 1865 (nursery),	Thomas Lang & Co, Richmond and Ballarat
1850	William Law, Melbourne, and Somner Law & Co, Melbourne and Richmond
1850	John Rule, Melbourne and Richmond
?1860	George Marriner, Colac
c1865	George Moss, Buninyong, 1880s Leongatha (Mossvale Park) now Monbulk
1880	Carl Nobelius, Emerald
1873	Taylor and Sangster, Mt Macedon

Plant Survey:

Along the south property boundary on the Gisborne – Kilmore Road are about 5 Osage Orange (*Maclura pomifera*), which may have been part of a hedge.

Driveway plants

Buxus sempervirens 'Marginata' (east of gate)	
Arbutus unedo	Irish Strawberry tree
Iris x germanica	Flag Iris
Kniphofia uvaria	Red-hot Poker
Photinia serratifolia	Chinese Hawthorn
Ceratonia siliqua	Carob
Agapanthus praecox subsp. orientalis	Blue Agapanthus
Viburnum tinus	Laurustinus
Cedrus deodara	Himalayan Cedar
Cedrus atlantica f. glauca	Blue Cedar
Araucaria bidwillii	Bunya Bunya Pine
Osmanthus x fortunei	
Euonymus japonicus	Japanese Spindlewood
Fraxinus angustifolia subsp. angustifolia	Narrow-leaf Ash
Lagunaria patersonii	Norfolk Island Hibiscus
Syringa vulgaris	Lilac
Araucaria cunninghamii	Hoop Pine
Schinus molle	Pepper Tree
Pinus pinaster	Stone Pine
Pinus canariensis	Canary Island Pine
Pittosporum undulatum	Sweet Pittosporum
Cupressus torulosa	Bhutan Cypress
Pinus radiata	Monterey Pine

House

Quercus canariensis (large tree N side)	Algerian Oak
Cupressus macrocarpa	Monterey Cypress
Cotoneaster pannosus	Wrinkled leaf Cotoneaster
Buxus sempervirens 'Rotundifolia'	
Camellia japonica	

South of House

Myoporum laetifolium	Boobialla
Corymbia citriodora (syn. Eucalyptus)	Lemon-scented Gum
Eucalyptus sp.	
Ulmus x hollandica	Dutch Elm

Paddock

Quercus ?canariensis	
Tamarix ?parviflora (east side, large old tree)	
Prunus cerasifera (row)	Cherry Plum

Nursery site

Quercus aff. alba (very large tree on N edge of dry pond)	
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(from east to west boundary)

Platanus x acerifolia	London Plane
Acer platanoides	Norway Maple

Araucaria bidwillii
Exocorda racemosa
Spartium junceum
Ilex aquifolium
Quercus suber
Laurus nobilis
Hypericum calycinum
Quercus cerris
Quercus castaneifolia
Arbutus unedo
Fraxinus excelsior 'Aurea Pendula' x2
Trachycarpus fortunei (several)
Livistona australis
Phoenix canariensis
Populus alba
Pinus radiata
Osmanthus x fortunei
Osmanthus heterophyllus
Tilia platyphyllos
Araucaria cunninghamii
Quercus rubra
Quercus canariensis
Ilex aquifolium
Narcissus cv. (numerous bulbs)
Quercus acutissima
Quercus palustris
Aesculus hippocastanum
Acer saccharinum
Acer pseudoplatanus 'Purpurea'
Acer pseudoplatanus
Populus alba 'Pyramidalis'
Viburnum tinus
Cedrus atlantica f. *glauca*
Quercus agrifolia (need acorns)
Picea smithiana
Cedrus deodara
Fraxinus excelsior
Quercus cerris 'Lanciata'
Abies nordmanniana
Pinus canariensis

Bunya Bunya Pine
 Pealbrush
 Spanish Broom
 English Holly
 Cork Oak
 Arbutus unedo
 Rose of Sharon
 Turkey Oak
 Chestnut-leaved Oak
 Irish Strawberry Tree
 Weeping Golden Ash
 Chinese Windmill Palm
 Cabbage Palm
 Canary Island Date Palm
 Silver Poplar
 Monterey Pine

Large-leaved Linden
 Hoop Pine
 Northern Red Oak
 Algerian Oak
 English Holly

Japanese Chestnut Oak
 Pin Oak
 Horse Chestnut
 Silver Maple
 Purple Sycamore
 Sycamore
 Upright Silver Poplar
 Laurustinus
 Blue Cedar

West Himalayan Spruce
 Himalayan Cedar
 English Ash
 Cut-leaf Turkey Oak
 Caucasian Fir
 Canary Island Pine



Note: There are numerous hybrid oaks, involving *Q. castaneifolia* and *Q. cerris*, and *Q. canariensis* and *Q. robur*, and other species. Many of the oaks are the result of natural regeneration. There is evidence of raised nursery rows of oaks and conifers, and a central track and pipe bridge.

Adjoining creek reserve to the east and near Church

Unknown *Rhamnaceae*, perhaps a *Rhamnus*

Note that this tree is very rare

Stump regrowth. The tree was cut to a stump in the late 1980s, just prior to my visit with John Ball (?1987).

Pinus roxburghii, x2

Pinus canariensis

Quercus canariensis Algerian oak

Quercus acutissima

Quercus robur

Quercus cerris Turkey oak

Quercus suber (very large tree, spreading crown, outstanding form) - Cork oak

There are also oak hybrids of the above species, and many recent seedlings have become established and should be removed.

Near Creek

Quercus robur 'Concordia', Golden English Oak.

This tree is unusually grafted about 1m above ground level

This tree is of interest as Smith is reported to have been responsible for the introduction of Golden Oak in Australia (see Polya, 1981, p66), and there are few trees in Victoria.



J Smith Reserve

I did a survey of this Reserve in the late 1980s with John Ball

A few additions/correction include;

Cupressus sempervirens

Cupressus sempervirens 'Stricta' near entrance

Cupressus lusitanica var. *benthamii* SW of entrance

The fine and rare *Cupressus macnabiana*, listed on the National Trust Significant Tree Register, S of the lake continues to grow well.

East of this tree is an old leaning *Juniperus virginiana* (SE of Lake).

A very significant tree is a rare example of *Ulmus minor* 'Sarniensis', Jersey Elm, NE corner of the Park.

This tree is the largest known in Victoria and has unfortunately suffered severe dieback, probably due to the very dry conditions. The condition of the tree would be improved by irrigation and mulched beneath the canopy for a distance of about 2-3 m beyond the canopy edge and 10-15 thick. Light cultivation of the soil prior to application is recommended. A regular watering program during summer is required.

To the south west of this tree is a commemorative oak planting in a picket fence enclosure that also requires urgent maintenance. The oak requires dead wooding, formative pruning to establish a straight trunk and good branch structure, weed removal and application of a layer of mulch, 100-150mm thick to the edge of the enclosure.

**Compiled by John Hawker
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