

9 March 2015

Ms Rochelle Johnston, Manager of the Conservation Team
Heritage Division
Department of Environment and Heritage
Locked Bag 5020
Parramatta NSW 2124

Attention: Mr Stuart Read

Dear Stuart,

RE: Abbotsford, Picton, Replanting of the Driveway's Formal Avenue

I write to explain the proposed additional planting of the formal avenue of trees on the east side of the ruins of the former homestead of Abbotsford. The ruins of Abbotsford are listed on the State Heritage Register (SHR00073), but the avenue of trees is located outside of the SHR curtilage. An application for an exemption from further approval for stabilisation works to the ruins is being made, and the replanting of the avenue will form part of this program of works.

Description

The avenue of trees stretches discontinuously for 600m from the front gate adjacent to Abbotsford Road near Stonequarry Creek, westwards to the summit of the hill containing the ruins of Abbotsford about half-way up the hill. There are seven trees remaining that could be said to be part of this avenue, as listed below.

Documentary Evidence

George Harper was a noted natural history collector who built Abbotsford c1828 and lived there with his family until his death in 1841. He seems a likely character to have planted the avenue of trees, although the documentary evidence does not prove this. After Harper's death, Abbotsford was leased to various farmers until its sale by Harper's heirs in December 1865 to William Redfern Antill. The documentary evidence known provides no indicators that occupants after Harper had the interests likely to have led to them planting a botanical avenue.

The documentary evidence available to date can only identify one additional species in the avenue, the hoop pine seen in the c1996 photograph published by the Department of Urban Affairs and Planning in 'Heritage Curtilages'. The stump and long dead parts of this tree's trunk are piled where it stood. The 1949 aerial photograph of Abbotsford shows approximately 16 trees, and the shadows give an indication of each tree's profile.

Design Approach

In its twentieth-century state, the avenue made a formal statement due to its long length and possible geometric themes. The intention is to replant the avenue using a regular distribution of trees exotic to Picton. A grid of pairs of different araucarias separated by five pairs of other trees is a sub-theme of this scheme.

The concept of a house on a midrise, looking along a vista to a peak through an avenue of trees was a culturally familiar to Europeans since the construction of the Villa Lante in the late Sixteenth Century. To an Englishman in NSW in the early Nineteenth Century, there would have been a familiarity with the formalised parklands of 1650s–1720s. Aristocratic landscapes in England from period often had formal elements added to the deer hunting park around the new country house. Ornamental landscape ideas from the Continent would have a strong degree of formality and geometry, often featuring the following elements:

- Avenues of trees, often aligned on a focal point (Abbotsford looks east to another settled hill);
- Main approach drive of hard-surfaced hoggin or local gravel (Abbotsford's drive is grassed over and not distinct)
- Formal gardens around the principal building with geometry often linked to the parkland planting (Abbotsford had a circular garden at the top of the driveway in front of the house in the late Nineteenth century);
- Plantations, usually geometrical in outline and sometimes laid out in quasi-military formations (Abbotsford had planting of thorn trees along grazing lines and English oaks near the croquet lawn);
- Dominant linear views down the avenues plus lateral views over the estate (whether parkland or farmland, grazed or arable) which would also have been an important part of their enjoyment.

Methodology

If the avenue of trees was planted by George Harper, then it was planted by 1841 using species available in the Colony at the time. The Historic Houses Trust Colonial Plants database unites many documentary sources listing plants species available in Sydney at particular times. While early lists of exotic plants arriving on ships suggests that such species might not have been available before such dates, early lists of plants available at specified nurseries do not prove that such plants had not been available for years before. Some of the Australian plant species in the avenue that are not indigenous to the area, appear not to be mentioned in lists of available plants until long after Harper died. Australian plants such as the araucarias and the kurrajong are likely to have been available in earlier years than those listed here.

Tree Name	Notes	Available in Sydney:
Aleurites triloba	15-20m, tropical, flower	1827
Araucaria cunninghamii Hoop pine,	Tall, Australian	1843
<i>Araucaria araucana</i> Monkey Puzzle tree	Tall, South American	1843
<i>Araucaria heterophylla</i>	Tall, Australasian	1828

Norfolk Island pine <i>Araucaria Bidwilliana</i> Bunya pine	Tall, Australian	1851
<i>Callitris macleayana</i>	20-39m pine indigenous Hunter Valley to Qld	1843
<i>Arbutus unedo</i>	5-10m flowers fruit	1823
<i>Casuarina indica</i>	Unknown casuarina	1827
<i>Corynocarpus laevigatus</i> Karaka, New Zealand Laurel	15m, orange fruit	1827
<i>Cupressus juniperoides</i> <i>Juniperus communis</i>	10m	1827
<i>Cupressus lusitanica</i> Mexican White cypress	40m, oval shape	1827
<i>Cupressus sempervirens</i> Italian cypress	35m,	1827
<i>Cupressus sempervirens</i> cv. <i>Stricta</i> Italian cypress	pencil shaped	1827
<i>Fraxinus excelsior</i> Common Ash, European Ash	20-35m deciduous, rounded	1827
<i>Gleditsia triacanthos</i> Honey Locut, Sweet Locust,	Considered a weed now	1827
<i>Leucadendron argenteum</i> Silver tree	5-7m silver evergreen, oval shape	1827
<i>Larix decidua</i> European larch	10-20m deciduous, artic origin, cone shaped tree	1827
<i>Pinus taeda</i> Loblolly pine, Frankincense pine, Old-field pine	30-35m cone shaped tree	1827
<i>Quercus cerris</i> Turkey oak	25-40m deciduous, broad shape	1827
<i>Quercus ilex</i> Holm oak, Holly oak, Evergreen oak	20-27m evergreen	1827
<i>Quercus robur</i> English oak, Common oak,	20m deciduous	1827
<i>Quercus suber</i> cork	20m evergreen	1817
<i>Tectona grandis</i> Teak.	40m, tropical	1827
<i>Toona Australis</i> substitute		1828
<i>Tilia x europaea</i> [<i>Tilia x vulgaris</i>] Lime, Common lime, European linden	30-50m deciduous	1827
<i>Ulmus minor</i> Field Elm	30m deciduous	
<i>Ulmus laevis</i> European White Elm	30m deciduous, buttress elms	1828
<i>Magnolia figo</i> Port Wine Magnolia	3-4m scent, flowers	1839
<i>Magnolia denudata</i>	9m, flowers	1840
<i>Magnolia acuminata</i>	15-20m Insignif flowers	1828
<i>Acer pseudoplatanus</i>	20-35m deciduous	1843

Sycamore, Great maple

<i>Magnolia liliiflora</i>	5m flowers	1840
Taxodium distichum bald cypress	25-40m swampy preferences	1836
<i>Catalpa bignonioides</i> Indian bean tree	15-18m, 12m wide flowers, sub-tropical appearance from east USA	1823
<i>Ulmus</i> sp	List of plants remaining alive on board the <i>Lord Eldon</i>	1817

Trees on site in the avenue:	Notes	Available in Sydney:
<i>Araucaria heterophylla</i> Norfolk Island pine	Sickly specimen located further west on crown of hill	1828
Camphor laurel	used in commerce, weed sp	1827
<i>Cupressus sempervirens</i> Italian cypress	pencil shaped	1827
bunya pine		
<i>Brachychiton populneus</i> Kurrajong		1851
<i>Ulmus minor</i> Field Elm		Likely 1820s
<i>Cupressus funebris</i> Chinese funeral cypress		Not known
Hoop pine stump		1843
<i>Populus alba</i> silver poplar	16-27m, Morocco	1836

Yours faithfully,
NBRS+PARTNERS



Brad Vale
Heritage Consultant

Planting Schedule of Trees

Tree Name	Common Name	Quantity
<i>Araucaria cunninghamii</i>	Hoop pine	2
<i>Araucaria araucana</i>	Monkey Puzzle tree	1
<i>Araucaria heterophylla</i>	Norfolk Island pine	2
<i>Arbutus unedo</i>	Strawberry tree	2
<i>Acer capestre</i>	Field maple	1
<i>Brachychiton populensis</i>	Kurrajong	1
<i>Catalpa bignonioides</i>	Indian bean tree	1
<i>Callitris glauca</i>	White Cypress	2
<i>Cassine australis</i> OR <i>Elaeodendron australe</i>	Red Olive Berry or Cassine	1
<i>Cupressus juniperoides</i> OR <i>Widdringtonia nodiflora</i>	Mountain Cypress	1
<i>Cupressus funebris</i>	Chinese Weeping Cypress	1
<i>Cupressus sempervirens</i>	Italian cypress	1
<i>Cupressus lusitanica</i>	Mexican White cypress	1
<i>Fraxinus excelsior</i>	Common ash	1
<i>Leucadendron argenteum</i>	Silver tree	2
<i>Magnolia denudata</i>	Magnolia	2
<i>Michelia figo</i>	Port Wine Magnolia	2
<i>Quercus cerris</i>	Turkey oak	1
<i>Quercus ilex</i>	Holm oak, Holly oak, Evergreen oak	2
<i>Quercus robur</i>	English oak, Common oak	2
<i>Quercus suber</i>	cork	1
<i>Toona Australis</i>	Native cedar	2
<i>Ulmus minor</i>	Field Elm	2
<i>Ulmus laevis</i>	White elm	1