



- A. The Fountain. A revolving fountain once sat atop a mound of rocks; this featured prominently in many early photographs. The sprinkler, along with most of the rocks, has been removed, but its base can be seen when the water level is low.
- B. The Landing. Boats were once able to be hired for trips around the lake. The landing point is still visible, with wooden piles running parallel to the shore.
- C. The Island. This was not part of the original plan for the Lake, and was added in 1895, no doubt with some considerable feats of engineering. Photographs showed that it once contained weeping willows,

- D. The Boat House. This was built at the far eastern end of the lake in 1889. All that remains now is a rectangle of grass jutting out into the lake when the level is low.
- E. The Waterfall. This feature, at the top of the escarpment, was fed by piped water.
- F. The Fernery. One of the main features created in the gardens was the fernery, completed early in 1900. A series of open rustic timber rooves shaded figure-of-eight paths leading down the escarpment. Tree ferns were planted under it. A pool of water at the top led into fountains further down. The timber structure

rotted and fell down in the mid-20th century. Tree ferns have recently been re-planted, but without the original shading structure, while the pool and one fountain can still be seen. A *Magnolia grandiflora*, seen on photographs from the 1920's, is still alive at the top, while a Chusan palm remains near the lake edge.

- G. The Rotunda. This structure was completed in early 1900 on untreated timber poles. It was repaired extensively in 2003/4, but apart perhaps from the lack railings around the sides, it remains largely as it was when first built.
- H. The House. An early lithograph from 1855 shows a house in the Police Paddock, used to house the local constabulary. Although the land was first reserved as a gardens in 1861, it took some years to reach a settlement with the incumbent, resulting in a payment for improvements. The building was replaced in the 1920's. However, it may have claim to be the oldest dwelling in the town. It is currently used by a community group.
- I. Eucalypts. Although many of the trees planted were exotics, the original plans indicate that many eucalypts were intended. There remain several mature gums at the eastern end of the gardens that have survived the 1977 fire and which are not endemic to the area. There is no clear path to these trees, so you may have to push through the wattle understorey to reach them.
- J. Bishop Pines. There were many species of conifer planted, including the now weedy *Pinus radiata*, but the park is notable for its number of *Pinus muricata* (Bishop's Pine).

Park Lake Reserve

Creswick

(features continued)

This is characterised by its somewhat prickly cones, held tightly along the horizontal branches. Several of these trees can be seen near the park entrance, as well as above the fernery.

K. The Escarpment. Paths were formed along the bank which looks out over the lake, and these provided vantage points for watching the water activities. Many trees, particularly conifers, were planted along it. While the aggressive *Cupressus macrocarpa* have shaded out some of the less vigorous species, the escarpment is the richest part of the reserve for tree species.

L. Monterey cypress (*Cupressus macrocarpa*). These were planted throughout the park. The plans for the sports oval show that it was to be bordered on three sides with avenues of this species. Sections of two of these avenues still exist.

M. The Garden Bed Area. In Park Lake's hey-day, there were formal garden beds between the oval and the escarpment (in a cleared area now delimited by the eastern end of the toilets and the top of the Fernery). The maintenance required for these resulted in their early demise.

N. Facilities. Toilets are located close to the rotunda and at the bottom of the hill. There are several barbecues (wood is usually available) near the rotunda.

Creswick is 130 km northwest of Melbourne and 18 km north of Ballarat. It is a small town, with numerous old buildings and is surrounded by forests (both native and exotic). Its early prosperity was founded on gold. A number of buildings date from that era, including the Municipal Chambers, Hospital, Post Office and Mechanics Institute. Creswick is also significant as the birth-place or home of several important Australian figures, including Prime Minister John Curtin, the artist Norman Lindsay and trades unionist W.G.Spence. More recently, it has become a national centre for forestry research and training, being the site of The University of Melbourne's School of Forest and Ecosystem Science.

More information about the town can be obtained from the Information Centre on Raglan Street and the Museum (open 1.30-4.30 on Sundays and Holidays).

Park Lake Reserve is of considerable historical significance. The 15 hectare (37 acre) site was gazetted in 1860 and was referred to locally as the "botanic gardens". A detailed plan was produced in 1888 by George Perrin, but only parts, particularly the south-west corner, were ever completed. At its peak, it was one of the focal points of town life. From about the 1930's, however, the gardens could not be maintained. They became overgrown and structures fell down. Although renovation work is now taking place, what we see today are just the remnants of a once thriving site of great beauty. It is the very fact that these are "forgotten gardens", that makes Park Lake so fascinating to explore.

There are numerous trees from the original plantings, as well as buildings and pathways. The most significant feature is the lake, once used for boating, swimming and fishing, although it is rapidly becoming silted over. Other important features are the rotunda, completed in 1900, and the site of the fernery, which was once one of the largest in the country.

This brochure should help you on your expedition of discovery.