

NATIONAL TRUST REGISTER LISTING REPORT

CITY/SUBURB/TOWN COWRA	NAME OR IDENTIFICATION COWRA JAPANESE GARDEN AND CULTURAL CENTRE	ADDRESS OR LOCATION Binni Creek Road
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LGA:	COWRA	ABORIGINAL NATION:	Wiradjuri
POSTCODE:	2794	LOT/DP:	Pt Lot 7 DP 1173223 Pt Lots 1 & 6 DP 1173223
COMMITTEE:	Landscape Heritage Conservation	GRID:	Lat: -33.82 Long: 148.70
AUTHOR:	Graham Quint	LISTING DATE:	

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE:

The Cowra Japanese Garden at Binni Creek Road, designed in 1977 and opened in 1979 is an authentic Japanese Garden, the largest in the Southern Hemisphere. It was designed by renowned Japanese Garden Designer Ken Nakajima (1914-2000) who also designed the Montreal Botanical Garden (1988), the Moscow Botanical Garden (1983-1987), the Japanese Garden, Hermann Park, Houston (1992) and the San Diego Japanese Friendship Garden (1985). The Cowra Gardens are the earliest of these five major Japanese Gardens by Nakajima.

The Japanese Garden and Cultural Centre has historic significance as it was established to recognize and develop the relationship between the people of Cowra Shire and the people of Japan, a relationship that has its origins in the Prisoner of War Camp that housed the Japanese P.O.W.'s during World War II and the decision in 1960 by the Japanese Government to bring all their war dead from other parts of Australia to be re-buried at Cowra. The Garden is located on the site of the World War Two Japanese prisoner of war camp and the site of the infamous Cowra break out in 1944 - a story of great courage, spirit and futility.

The Japanese buildings throughout the garden were designed by world renowned Japanese architects Takeo Adachi and Tatsushi Aono.

The Garden has high aesthetic significance displaying what is intended to be the range of Japanese landscapes in miniature and hosting temporary exhibitions of major artworks such as Suton Stone by eminent sculptor Takehiro Terada.

The Japanese Garden and Cultural Centre has social and spiritual significance for the relatives and descendants of the Japanese prisoner of war camp and for Japanese visitors generally. The garden was built to commemorate the Japanese prisoners of war who died at the Cowra breakout. Ken Nakajima, the designer of the garden could see the Avenue of Cherry Trees as a symbolic avenue, lighting the way for the spirits of the dead Japanese from the cemetery to live in peace in the garden.

DESCRIPTION:

The design of the garden is a copy of the first Japanese landscape garden (Strolling garden) built by the first Japanese Shogun Tokugawa Ieyasu. The Tokugawa Shogun ruled from Edo Castle from 1600 until 1868, when it was abolished during the Meiji Restoration.

This period is known as the Edo period and gets its name from the capital city, Edo, which is now called Tokyo, after the name was changed in 1868

The Shogun captured two hundred and fifty of the warlords' families and took them hostage in order to retain control and allowed the Warlords to return to visit their relatives every four years. They were ordered to draw detailed maps of their travels, the combination of these forty nine maps formed the first geographical map of the landscape of Japan.

From these maps the Shogun ordered a garden to be constructed to replicate Japan's landscape in miniature.

The Binni Creek Road site was chosen for the garden as the geographical formation of the terrain and the rocks made it ideal to replicate the landscape of Japan, in particular the existence of two rocks at the top of the hill, these large rocks are called Yogoseike and Shugoseike.

The design of the Cowra Japanese Garden and the landscape incorporates six elements in the design: - mountain, rocks, mountain waterfalls, mountain lakes, rivers turning into oceans and pine trees.

The shape and texture of the plants - more than 120 species - were carefully considered, and while there are vibrant splashes of azaleas and camellias there are no riots of bright colour. Nakajima sought quiet hues - the blue of wisteria, the yellow and white of irises - to give the garden a harmonious serenity.

Visitors experience and gain a greater understanding and appreciation of the Japanese garden and landscape design of the Edo period by walking the three kilometres of pathways designed to carry the visitor through the mountains of Japan, past the waterfalls in the mountains that flow into the mountain lakes and from there follow the water as it flows into the river and then the ocean.

Hedges are pruned and shaped to represent the rolling hills of Japan. The landscape design includes trimmed hedges and pine trees which are symbolic of the hills, reaching from the mountains to the ocean.

The Australian casualties of the Cowra breakout are also not forgotten within the Cowra Japanese Garden. Ken Nakijima deliberately left gum trees standing in the design of the garden. The grove of gum trees at the top of the hill in the garden represents the Australian soldiers who were killed, allowing both the spirits of the Australians and the Japanese to live there.

Rocks formed an integral part of the first Japanese Landscape Garden and are featured in the Cowra Japanese Gardens

Incorporated in the garden are examples of Japanese built form design. All built form found in the garden was designed in Japan by renowned Japanese architects Takeo Adachi and Tatsushi Aono.

The buildings are designed without gutters to prevent the buildup of snow on their roofs.

White raked stones are used in a Japanese rock garden (karesansui) or "dry landscape" garden, often called a Zen garden. This involves the creation of a miniature stylized landscape through carefully composed arrangements of rocks and uses gravel that is raked to represent ripples in water.

These Zen gardens existed in Japan at least since the Heian Period (784-1185).

There are 300 movable cultural heritage items in the Cultural Centre which are maintained by the staff.

In 1977 world renowned architect Ken Nakajima was commissioned to design the garden. Mr. Nakajima was selected because of his work throughout the world designing Japanese gardens in Montreal, San Diego, Moscow and Houston. His company, Consolidated Garden Research Inc. of Japan had a reputation second to none in all corners of the globe. The design of the garden is a copy of the first Japanese landscape garden (strolling garden) built by the first Shogun, Tokugawa Ieyasu in the 16th century A.D, the Edo period of Japan in what is now called Tokyo (Edo).

The Cowra Japanese Garden was created with imagination and designed to display nature's beauty in all seasons.

Spring is the time for fresh greenery and subtle blossoms. Cherry blossoms appear in late September/Early October, while late spring flowers include azalea, camellia, and wisteria.

Summer's sunlit shades of green yield an unbroken, calming visual experience.

The vibrant colors of autumn are a popular visiting time. Autumn is a celebration of nature's gift of life in the past year, and a transition to the peacefulness of winter.

Winter reveals the pure essence of the garden, when all has been stripped away to expose its fundamental structure, spirit, and quiet beauty.

The Japanese buildings throughout the garden were designed by world renowned Japanese architects Takeo Adachi and Tatsushi Aono.

The Cultural Centre

The design of the Cultural Centre reflects the Edo period of Japanese architecture with the roof the most visually impressive component. The slightly curved eaves extend far beyond the walls and cover the verandas. The oversize eaves give the interior a characteristic dimness, which contributes to the building's atmosphere. The roofing is kiln dried hardwood shingles.

All of the buildings follow the Edo period of Architecture and a significant feature is the rubble drains that surround the circumference of the buildings to control rainwater acting in place of roofing gutters and to prevent the buildup of snow on the roof.

The Cultural centre covers an area of approximately two hundred and fifty square metres.

The Arbor

The Arbor is a feature of the Japanese landscape of Japan and was traditionally used as a resting places or a place to contemplate. The general structure is posts and lintels which support a gently curved roof. The arbor is incorporated into the design of the garden and is located on the southern side of the garden. It is approximately sixteen square metres and reflects the Japanese design of the Edo Period.

Edo Cottage

This is a typical cottage of the Edo period and replicates the design features found in the Edo Period. The design of the cottage includes a tatami room which encompasses the traditional design features of a low ceiling, futons or cushions for furniture and rice paper blinds. Thin privacy screens called shoji are used instead of walls.

A tatami room was a place of relaxation and peace of mind in traditional Japanese culture. A tatami room often served to entertain visitors, conduct tea ceremonies, or house a religious altar. The room's airy design, straw mats and simple décor also helped alleviate the humid Japanese summers.

The tatami room at the cottage also incorporates a tokonoma which is a raised alcove designed so that items of artistic appreciation such as calligraphic and/or pictorial scrolls and an arrangement of flowers (ikebana) may be displayed.

Bonsai and kimono are also sometimes displayed there, although traditionally, bonsai were considered to be dirty for such a highly respected place. The tokonoma together with its contents is an essential design element of a traditional Japanese cottage.

The bathroom in the cottage has a typical hip bath (furo) made of granite; Japanese usually use the bath for soaking and prefer to shower before and after using the hip bath. Furo are part of the Japanese ritual of bathing, not meant for washing but rather for relaxing and warming oneself. Washing is carried out separately outside the yubune (bath tub). The bather should enter the water only after rinsing or lightly showering. Generally Japanese bathrooms are quite small compared to western standards, so the bathroom is set up much like a walk-in shower area but containing the furo. The water is hot, usually approximately 38 to 42 degrees Celsius.

The Education Centre

This building also follows the Edo period of Japanese Architecture and is interesting from the point of view of demonstrating the use of raw timber both internally and externally and the way in which the roof is constructed internally.

The Education Centre is used for lectures for University students and on three or more occasions each year is used to hold short general lectures for the public on the History of Cowra - Japan relations and The Cowra Japanese Garden and Cultural Centre.

The Cowra Japanese Garden and Cultural Centre is the home of the Cowra Japan Society of Australia and the Cowra Association of Chado Urasenke Tankokai (Japanese Tea Ceremony) and is used by both these organisations for meetings, lectures and demonstrations.

Open Teahouse

The design of the open tea house and its positioning within the overall design of the garden showcases the Japanese architectural design of a traditional open tea house, known as *chashitsu*, created for aesthetic and intellectual fulfillment.

Positioned on an island between two waterfalls overlooking the mountain lake, the tea house is operational and regularly holds traditional tea ceremonies which are performed as part of educational and promotional programs. The teahouse has been designed to capture the mountain waterfall when viewed from the interior seating.

Bonsho Bell

In the Garden there is a “bonsho (梵鐘),” or temple bell, a hung bell used in temples in East Asia in Buddhist rituals. Its unique characteristic is the loud reverberations made after striking it with the wooden bell hammer. On New Year’s Eve the temple bell is traditionally rung 108 times. Cowra was the site chosen for the Peace Bell by the Australian Government in consultation with the Peace Bell Association in Japan. The Cowra World Peace Bell was installed in the Cowra Civic Square in a specially designed pavilion and was dedicated on 15 September, 1972

Movable Heritage

Another of the principal objects and purposes of the Cowra Japanese Garden and Cultural Centre is the promotion of Japanese movable cultural heritage. There are over three hundred items of Japanese movable cultural heritage on display at various times of the year.

Ninety percent of the items on exhibition have been donated by Japanese individuals and Japanese Companies. Each of the nine power companies of Japan has donated an item of movable cultural heritage which represents their particular area of Japan.

These items are regularly promoted by the Japanese Garden and Cultural Centre which holds events such as Japanese cultural days aimed at the promotion of the Japanese movable cultural heritage.

These events coincide with Japanese cultural days such as boy’s day represented by Carp, girl’s day represented by hina matsuri (dolls festival) dolls display and ancestors’ day represented by stories of Japanese history etc.

The collections of Japanese ceramics are of world class with the standouts being a Somenishiki vase 1.4 metres high which has a twin at the Japanese Imperial Palace and a Japanese scroll produced in 1580.

The Japanese Gardens host temporary exhibitions of major artworks. The sculpture, 'Suton Stone', by Japanese artist, Takehiro Terada, can be found in a quiet corner of the garden.

This sculpture featured in the high-profile 'Sculpture by the Sea' exhibition in Sydney in 2009. It is carved from Japanese pink granite and stands more than 2 metres tall.

Born in Oita, Japan in 1933 Takehiro began his career as a painter before moving into wood-carving. In the 1970s, he changed his medium to granite. Takehiro has a long history of creating large-scale granite works, some up to 1,000 tonnes.

He has won many prizes at the highest level in Japan and has completed a large number of public commissions. Takehiro is an inspirational and important teacher of stone carving and, in particular, has been a mentor to the internationally recognised sculptor, Keizo Ushio. Takehiro has had a huge influence on the artistic career of Keizo, who greatly admires Takehiro's unique way of working in granite.

HISTORY:

Cowra Japanese Garden and Cultural Centre was established to recognize and develop the relationship between the people of Cowra Shire and the people of Japan, a relationship that has its origins in the Prisoner of War Camp that housed the Japanese P.O.W.’s during World War II.

In 1960 the Japanese Government decided to bring all their war dead from other parts of Australia to be re-buried at Cowra.

The Garden is located on the site of the World War Two Japanese prisoner of war camp and the site of the infamous Cowra break out in 1944 - a story of great courage, spirit and futility.

The garden was built to commemorate the Japanese prisoners of war who died at the breakout. The Japanese believe that when you die you must return to your place of birth for burial. But sadly those soldiers were never given that honour. Long time Cowra resident, Don Kibbler was so moved by the breakout story that he proposed the garden so the soldiers' souls could rest in peace.

In 1973 Mr. Kibbler put forward the idea to build a Japanese Garden and Cultural Centre in Cowra reflecting upon Cowra's history with the Japanese POW Camp.

From 1972 to the present Mr. Kibbler has been deeply involved with Cowra Japan relations and has been instrumental in raising around \$5m for the Cowra Japanese Garden and Cultural Centre and other Japan related projects in Cowra and NSW.

Mr. Kibbler worked full time as project manager from 1984-1986 constructing the Cowra Japanese Garden and Cultural Centre from the design by Ken Nakajima of the garden and design of the buildings by Takeo Adachi and Tatsushi Aono.

In 1988 Mr. Kibbler was appointed by Consolidated Garden Research of Japan (Ken Nakajima) to represent the Company on the ongoing maintenance and development of the Garden and the built form within the complex.

Over the past three decades Mr. Kibbler visited Japan over ninety times and studied Japanese architecture, Japanese garden landscape design and Japanese movable cultural heritage and in particular Japanese ceramics. On three visits Cowra Japanese garden and Cultural Centre staff accompanied Mr. Kibbler in order to learn more about Japanese landscape design, built form design and movable cultural heritage.

In 1988 Mr. Kibbler was made a Member of the Order of Australia for his contribution to Australia - Japan Relations.

Mr. Kibbler is currently the Chairman of the Cowra Japanese Garden and Cultural Centre, Chairman of Cowra Japanese Garden and Cultural Centre Maintenance Foundation, Chairman of Cowra Japan Society of Australia, Chairman of Chado Urasenke Tankokai and Director and founder of the Saburo Nagakura Foundation of Japan.

In 1977 world renowned architect Ken Nakajima was commissioned to design the garden. Mr. Nakajima was selected because of his work throughout the world designing Japanese gardens in Montreal, San Diego, Moscow and Houston. His company Consolidated Garden Research Inc. of Japan had a reputation second to none in all corners of the globe. The design of the garden is a copy of the first Japanese landscape garden (Strolling garden) built by the first Shogun Tokugawa in the 16th century A.D, the Edo period of Japan in what is now called Tokyo (Edo).

The Shogun had the garden constructed from drawings he commanded of Japanese geography from every corner of Japan and thus the garden became a landscape of Japan in miniature.

Ken Nakajima, the master of the visual art of Japanese landscape design, followed the principle aspects of Japanese landscape design meticulously and as a result the Cowra Japanese garden itself, as part of the overall complex of the Cowra Japanese Garden and Cultural Centre, is now a replica in miniature of the landscapes of Japan.

The main features of the design incorporate the mountains of Japan, the waterfalls from the mountains that flow into the mountain lakes and from there the water flows into the rivers then the ocean, the hills from the mountains to the ocean are represented by trimmed hedges and

the pine trees of Japan are represented throughout the perimeter of the landscape. It truly has become a visual representation of Japanese landscape design.

The Garden and Cultural Centre was developed in stages.

The idea was first put forward in April 1973 and a feasibility study carried out and a model of a Japanese Garden and Cultural Centre constructed.

The first construction stage was from 1978 to 1979 and was funded by donations from the Australian Government, the New South Wales Government. The Japanese Chamber of Commerce, Expo 70 Osaka and various individuals.

The more significant second stage of construction was from 1984 to 1986. It was funded by donations from the Tokyo Metropolitan Government, New South Wales Government, Lachlan Industries and Expo 70 Osaka and was supported with significant voluntary labour.

The ongoing development and maintenance of the Garden is provided for by a further donation made by the Tokyo Metropolitan Government in 1989 which saw the establishment of the Cowra Japanese Garden Maintenance Foundation as trustee for the Cowra Japanese Garden Trust.

The principal object and purpose of the Cowra Japanese Garden and Cultural centre is the promotion of Japanese Design (including landscape, garden and built form design).

The Garden and Cultural Centre is intended to support and advance the cultural relations between the people of Cowra Shire in New South Wales and the people of Japan.

The Cowra Japanese Garden and Cultural Centre organises a number of activities at relevant times throughout the year to promote its principal objects.

Invited Guest speakers regularly recount the story of the 1st Shogun, Tokugawa Ieyasu and the history of the first Japanese landscape garden built by Shogun Ieyasu and explain the design features incorporated into the Cowra Japanese Garden, which replicates a traditional strolling garden from the Edo Period in its design.

Guided tours are conducted through the Garden discovering and exploring the many aspects of Japanese landscape, garden and built form design, incorporated into the Garden.

Traditional Japanese ceremonies are conducted in the Arbor, the Tea House and the Edo Cottage, which have all been constructed to replicate traditional Japanese built form design.

Japanese ceremonies such as a traditional tea ceremony feature relevant items of Japanese movable cultural heritage.

Exhibitions feature numerous pieces of Japanese movable cultural heritage including a Somenishiki vase standing 1.4 metres high which has a twin at the Japanese Imperial Palace in Japan and a Japanese scroll produced in 1580.

Demonstrations are given by experts in traditional Japanese crafts such as calligraphy, origami and ikebana (Japanese flower arrangement);

Japanese craft workshops are held for juniors and school groups.

Informative talks and guided tours are conducted by the Centre's Education Staff for school groups and other group visitors to the Garden.

In 1981 there was a severe drought in Cowra and the garden was suffering and had very low visitation. Financially there were serious problems. A watering team was formed and groups of people went to the Japanese Garden twice a week to water trees and shrubs.

The people on that team were Don Kibbler and Harry Hutchison, Brian Smith, Geoff Dernee and Tony Mooney. This continued until the drought broke in May 1983.

During that period The Cowra Breakout television mini series was being planned, produced by Phil Noyce, and was released in 1984. This provided great publicity to Cowra and to the Japanese Gardens and the visitation climbed from a very low level to 70,000 people.

The movie promoted Cowra and the garden and .because of this, the garden became financially viable and, for the first time, had substantial financial reserves.

In 1984 Don Kibbler, Tony Mooney and Jim Davidson travelled to Japan for three weeks. At the conclusion of the trip they were invited to a meeting with the Tokyo Metropolitan Government. At this meeting the Government offered to provide funding for stage two of the Japanese Gardens, a total of approximately \$1 million, and also funding for ongoing maintenance.

The visit to Japan was timely in that the Tokyo Government and New South Wales Government were looking to form a sister State relationship. The Tokyo Government representatives had read in their Nihon Keizai Shinbun Newspaper the story of the Japanese Garden and the difficulties with the drought, and they wanted to do something positive for the sister State relationship.

They decided to make the Japanese Garden at Cowra the focal point of that relationship.

Planning for the second stage of the garden work had started in 1984 but construction didn't start until 1985 when Ken Nakajima, the garden's designer, came out to Australia. It was this funding from the Tokyo Government that enabled stage two to go ahead.

It funded the construction of the Japanese style house, the Bonsai House, landscaping and part of the extensions.

There were also other donors. The New South Wales Government and Pioneer Concrete provided funding.

Funding was used from the Japanese Cultural Centre and Garden Trust, which had been given \$100,000 by Lachlan Industries, based in Cowra.

In May of 1988 Tony Mooney travelled to Japan to visit Naoetsu for the commemoration service but while he was in Tokyo he contacted Mr Yoshida of the World Peace Bell Association and arranged a meeting, which was in the New South Wales Government Office and Geoff Walker, who was a Commissioner at the time, acted as interpreter.

Mr Yoshida was quite adamant that he wanted the Peace Bell to be sited in Martin Place in Sydney. It was put it to him that this would be quite difficult to achieve and that Cowra was an appropriate place for the Peace Bell.

But Tony Mooney was aware that the Peace Bell Association had offered the bell to the Australian Government and the Australian Government had made the decision that Cowra was the best place the bell. Tony Mooney felt at the time that Mr Yoshida had wanted him to say that Cowra did not want the bell, which would then have allowed him to pursue his quest for Martin Place.

The idea of a Peace Bell was first mentioned in Cowra when a representative from the Department of Foreign Affairs in Canberra visited the Japanese Garden. It was indicated to a

staff member that the Peace Bell had been offered to Australia and the feeling was that the Government would like it to be placed in Cowra and this information was relayed to Rod Blume who later became the Mayor of Cowra. He pursued it. He wrote a number of letters to the Australian Government and to the Peace Bell Association in Japan and when Tony Mooney was going to Japan in 1988 he had said to Rod that Tony could make contact with the Peace Bell Association.

He thought that was an excellent idea and gave Tony Mooney a letter introducing himself. Consequently, after meeting with Mr Yoshida, Tony Mooney rang Rod Blume in his office at the time – he was a solicitor in Cowra – and informed him of the meeting and the difficulties in regard to the Peace Bell and its siting. Rod said “Well, we’ll let it go then. We won’t bother.” I said “No, no, we’ll just dig our heels in and keep working on it.” Rod did that and it was really the work of Rod Blume that initially brought the Peace Bell to Cowra.

Mr Yoshida came around to the point of view that Cowra was the right place for the Peace Bell. prior to that he wouldn’t have known much about Cowra.

In 1993, the Japanese Garden appointed its first full-time manager. The entire operation of the garden was revamped, to upgrade the landscaping, the maintenance on the buildings and promotion.

The garden was transformed and visitation was brought back up to the 70,000 level from an earlier drop to 45,000. It was also in 1993 that the Garden took over from the Visitors Centre the Sakura Matsuri and the Cherry Blossom Festival.

The Pottery Building in the Garden was named after and opened by Saburo Nagakura, the Chairman of Kyushu Power Electric Company in Japan.

The Cherry Blossom Avenue, which is very extensive, has the name of Nagakura and part way along the Avenue there is Nagakura Park.

Saburo Nagakura was a very influential person. He came to Cowra originally with Jim Millner. Jim Millner was the Chairman of Queensland Mines and Soul Pattinsons and they had interests in uranium mining and coal mining. Jim Millner had a brother on a property at Cowra.

Mr Nagakura and Mr Millner had been negotiating in Sydney over a contract for uranium and possibly coal. They had not been able to conclude that contract and Mr Millner offered to bring Mr Nagakura to Cowra, for a break.

Over that weekend, Mr Nagakura was taken to the War Cemetery, to the Japanese and the Australian sections. Mr Nagakura was a former army officer based in Singapore during the war.

He was so impressed with the care of the graves of the Australians and the Japanese he became particularly interested in Cowra and he wanted to assist in any way that he could.

When the Japanese Garden was built he provided an Imari urn, a magnificent piece of pottery. He was also involved with the Japanese Chamber of Commerce and the Keidanren (the Japan Business Federation).

Mr Nagano, who at the time was the Chairman of Nippon Steel, officially opened the Japanese Garden in 1979.

Before Mr Nagakura’s death he provided funding and set up the foundation, which now continues chaired by his son, Seiji Nagakura.

Kyushu Power Company provided substantial funding as well, and the foundation now commemorates the life of Saburo Nagakura. The Foundation provided the funding for Nagakura

Park, which is a small picnic area park along the Cherry Tree Avenue. The foundation also provided the funding for the cherry trees from the park down to the intersection with Evans Street. It is called Nagakura Walk, a distance of about half a kilometre.

The foundation has a number of very prominent directors in Japan and in Australia and it is ongoing, looking at other projects.

The original idea for an avenue of cherry trees came from a Japanese living in Sydney, Mr Ken Takura. Ken's idea was that the trees would lead from the cemetery to the Japanese Garden.

Ken Nakajima, the designer of the garden could see that avenue of cherry trees lighting the way for the spirits of the dead Japanese from the cemetery to live in peace in the garden. It would be a symbolic avenue.

Cherry Tree Avenue came first with the tree planting began in 1988. It was an Australian Bicentennial project. In 1990 a Sakura Matsuri Cherry Blossom Festival was organised by the Visitors Centre. It was, at that time, on a small scale.

Ken Takura was involved in that first festival, and Tony Mooney and other directors of the Cowra Tourism Development Corporation. By 1993 there was a need to upgrade. Japanese people, not only from Sydney but from Japan, were coming to the festival.

With the appointment of the first Manager of the Japanese Garden in that year the Garden was able to take over the Sakura Matsuri and develop a whole new programme.

It was so successful that there were 2,000 people over that weekend, whereas in the past there had only been hundreds.

Five Japanese groups from Sydney came and it built into a tremendous event. But, it also gave an opportunity to get close and form Japanese friendships. There were formal dinners and also a Sunday luncheon which was informal, in a marquee at the Japanese Gardens.

There were many activities including a steam train ride to Woodstock (18 km north-east of Cowra). The Japanese people would leave Sydney early on Saturday morning just to be at Cowra in time to get the steam train to Woodstock, have lunch on the train and go to the Woodstock Pub. Woodstock is a typical little Australian town, a very small country town. The festival built up from 1993 and was very successful.

During this period very close ties were established with the Japanese Embassy in Canberra, with the Consulate in Sydney and with the Japanese business people based in Sydney. Consequently, if assistance were required with support for particular projects, then it was forthcoming, because a degree of trust and friendship had been built up. This resulted largely from the Sakura Matsuri.

The Japanese War Cemetery in Cowra was designed by Shigeru Yura and constructed in 1964. In 2001 Mr Yura wrote to Tony Mooney saying that he intended to visit Cowra. It was suggested that he come at the time of the reburial of Japanese remains at the War Cemetery. Mr Yura brought with him the original plans and other information in regard to his work on the War Cemetery.

He entrusted those plans to Tony Mooney. Some of the plans were in draft format and there was a more formal plan and some press clippings from the day, from both Australian and Japanese newspapers. It was intended that these documents be presented to Cowra Shire Council for appropriate display.

Naoetsu Prisoner of War Camp

Tony Mooney was involved in the development of a tree planting programme at Naoetsu in Japan, now incorporated in the city of Jōetsu. This was the site of a Japanese prisoner-of-war camp during the Second World War, in which there were Australians.

In 1986–1987 Jim Newling gave Tony Mooney a copy of an American Military Museum magazine. In that magazine was a story written by a Cowra man, Matt Clift. Matt Clift told of his imprisonment in Naoetsu prisoner-of-war camp during the Second World War.

Tony Mooney was fascinated by the story. Clift went on to write about an American aircraft that flew over the camp towards the end of the war and which dropped a message saying “We’ll be back tomorrow with provisions.”

The message was written on a small piece of parachute. Matt Clift had kept that message for all those years. Then, by chance, in the 1970s/80s, a former American military officer was visiting Cowra and Matt related the story to him and, when he returned to America he located the pilot of the American aircraft. The former pilot was now a Director of a military museum and this explained the article in the magazine.

Tony Mooney asked Jim Newling could he arrange for Tony to meet with Matt Clift. Matt was, in fact, an uncle of Jim’s wife. Tony went to see Matt in Weeroona, the local nursing home, and Matt was keen to talk about his experiences.

He put Tony in touch with another Australian ex-prisoner of war in Sydney, Frank Hole. Tony went to Sydney to meet with Frank and discussed his idea for a memorial to the sixty Australians who died in Naoetsu Camp. Included in the sixty was a man from Cowra, Alan Healey.

On Tony’s next visit to Japan he stayed in Nara with Father Tony Glynn, an Australian Marist Priest who had been in Japan since the early 1950s.

He spoke with Tony about the idea of a commemorative service and planting of Australian gum trees. Tony Glynn didn’t say a lot at the time but when Tony Mooney arrived back in Australia he wrote to him saying that he supported the idea “110 per cent.”

Tony Mooney returned to Japan in February 1988, with Don Kibbler. Don at that time was working on the Cherry Tree Avenue project. Don and Tony went to Naoetsu. Tony had previously written to the Mayor, Mr Yueki, and Mr Yueki wrote back most enthusiastic about the proposal.

They stayed overnight and met with the Mayor. They looked around the town and went to the campsite. The Mayor said that they wouldn’t be able to plant any trees on the campsite because it was privately owned land and, in fact, had been used as a coal dump sited next to the river.

When Tony returned to Australia he met with Frank Hole again and arranged to take Frank back to Japan in May and Father Tony Glynn was to conduct the commemoration service. They met with Tony Glynn at the Yokohama Commonwealth War Cemetery. Father Glynn had organised a group of Buddhist priests from Nara. There were probably altogether thirty people at the War Cemetery in Yokohama.

There was also Bishop Shinjun Fuji who had visited Cowra and was very interested in what had occurred here. There were also former Japanese prisoners of war. They then travelled by train to Naoetsu and conducted the ceremony adjacent to the campsite. They planted gum trees in front of the City Hall and presented a bronze plaque to the Mayor. The plaque commemorated the officer commanding the Australian prisoners of war in the camp – Lieutenant Colonel Robertson.

There was a great deal of publicity in Japan about the visit – both on television and in the newspapers. Tony returned to Australia and received another letter from the Mayor, Mr Yueki. In his own words he said that he would find a place to “concretely place” the memorial plaque to Lieutenant Colonel Robertson. Apparently it was difficult to find somewhere suitable.

Meanwhile, the local people had been prompted by the visit and the interest in it to form their own committee. It was a commemoration committee. They looked at ways and means of continuing the association with Australia and with Cowra.

After a number of years the council was, in fact, able to purchase the site of the camp and a substantial sum of money was spent on building a park to commemorate those sixty Australians.

Tony returned to Naoetsu to find a very impressive memorial. There were, in fact, angels on stainless steel poles, probably sixty feet in the air.

Since that time Cowra has formed an association with Naoetsu. Naoetsu has formed a Japan-Australia Society. They also have an association with St Raphael's School in Cowra and students from Joetsu regularly visit and learn the history of the Cowra – Japan relationship.

Tony Mooney was invited by the Mayor of Joetsu and by the Ex-POW Association in Sydney to attend the opening of the memorial in Naoetsu, but it clashed with the Cowra Sakura Matsuri. At that time Tony was adviser to the Japanese Gardens and had the main role in organising Sakura Matsuri.

School Exchange Programme, Youth Forum and National Conference of Australia – Japan Societies in Cowra

As well as the link between the students in Joetsu and Cowra there was also another long term exchange programme between the Cowra High School and Seikei School in Japan. The Seikei School parents were very supportive of the garden project. When they heard about the drought in Cowra in the 1980s they made a donation to the garden.

Tony Mooney and Don Kibbler had a meeting with Mr Yasuhiro Nakasone, a former Japanese Prime Minister. Tony commented to Mr Nakasone that “The future lies with the young people and we must educate those young people, both Australian and Japanese, to understand what happened in the war, the Second World War, so that history cannot repeat itself.”

Mr Nakasone agreed. Tony Mooney indicated that Mr Nakasone had an understanding that the Cowra people had looked after the graves of the Japanese and also he knew the story of the Japanese sailors whose remains had been returned after the raid on Sydney Harbour. So, he was well disposed towards Australia. At the time Mr Nakasone's daughter was living in Melbourne.

Tony subsequently met Mr Nakasone after he stood down as Prime Minister and Mr Nakasone assisted with the Cherry Tree Avenue. He made a substantial donation and continued his support of that project.

So, the idea stayed in Tony's mind until the opportunity came in 1995. By this time the Japanese Gardens had a full-time Manager. The garden was, in fact, run from the office in the garden itself, not ad hoc from the Visitors Centre.

Tony put forward to the Garden Manager the idea of a Youth Forum and also that the Youth Forum would be a tribute to Father Tony Glynn, who had died not long before.

A Youth Forum was held in 1995 on the 50th anniversary of the end of the Second World War.

Tony wrote to many people in Japan and the Manager of the Japanese Garden wrote to the schools throughout New South Wales and over 300 students attended on the day. There was a second Youth Forum in 1996.

Tony Mooney spoke on his work: –

“One most important things was the opportunity to understand another culture. We live in a small country town which, at times, can be constricting – local politics and other issues – the thinking of other people can make your life a little bit narrow if you’re not careful. I just saw an opportunity to do something worthwhile, something that I was fascinated by, the opportunity to learn and understand the Japanese Garden and the reason behind the building of the Japanese Gardens, the opportunity to work with Ken Nakajima, the designer of the Cowra Japanese Gardens, meeting with prime ministers – or the Prime Minister at the time – of the second greatest economy in the world. Each event led to more dedication.”

Tony Mooney subsequently met Mr Nakasone after he stood down as Prime Minister and he assisted with the Cherry Tree Avenue. He made quite a substantial donation and continued his support of that project.

In 2001 Tony Mooney went on to organize the National Conference of Australia – Japan Societies in Cowra. That brought people involved in Australia – Japan societies from all States and Territories and also a number from Japan.

The Conference on 5 August 2001 coincided with the 47th anniversary of the Cowra breakout. Cowra Shire Council paid for the secretarial work for the Conference and arranged a welcoming function in the new Council Art Gallery. The Conference guest speaker was General Peter Phillips, the National President of the RSL.

In 2004 Don Kibbler and Tony Mooney were honoured by His Majesty the Emperor of Japan, both receiving the Order of The Rising Sun with Gold and Silver Rays, for their contributions to Japanese Culture and Japan - Australia relations.

Cowra Japanese Garden Maintenance Foundation

The Cowra Japanese Garden Maintenance Foundation was set up formalizing the sister relationship between the NSW Government and the Tokyo Metropolitan Government and providing for the ongoing maintenance and development of the Garden.

The Foundation holds in trust a ¥50 million donation made in 1989 by the Tokyo Metropolitan Government for the maintenance of the Cowra Japanese Garden and Cultural Centre following the completion of Stage 2 in 1986.

Since 1989 the Foundation has contributed over \$1.4 million dollars towards the construction, and ongoing management, repair and development of the garden and the cultural centre.

The governing rules of the Foundation require that the Board of the Cowra Japanese Garden Maintenance Foundation must obtain a report from Consolidated Garden Research Inc. (Ken Nakajima) or its nominee [Mr. Don Kibbler AM] before funding is provided for any development or significant maintenance activities.

The members of the foundation are the New South Wales Government, Cowra Shire Council, Cowra Tourism Corporation and William Donald Kibbler AM.

ACTIVITIES

The Sakura Matsuri (Cherry Blossom Festival) continues to be the main annual event at the Gardens. This is the main festival of the year and is attended by over 3000 people and includes Japanese music, traditional dancing (Bon Odori) performances of the Japanese Koto and Shakuhachi, displays of Japanese movable cultural heritage Ceramics and art, Kimono displays, traditional Tea Ceremony and many features of Japanese heritage.

BIBLIOGRAPHY:

Cowra Japanese Garden & Cultural Centre, Australia, Website, <http://cowragarden.com.au/>

In a Japanese Country Garden, The Australian Newspaper Travel, 8 December, 2012

Cowra – Japan Conversations, Australia – Japan Research Project, Australian War Memorial, 18 March, 2003

This is Japan's Gallipoli - Cowra Japanese Garden, Jess Perriam, ABC Central West Radio, 24 September, 2007

BOUNDARY OF LISTING:

The boundary of the listing includes the fenced area of the garden plus the stone lantern and its plinth at the entrance to the garden mainly within Lot 7 DP 1173223 and also partly within Lots 1 and 6 DP 1173223.

LOCATION MAP:



SITE PLAN



PHOTOGRAPHS:





The Cowra Japanese Garden





The two rocks at the top of the hill called Yogoseike and Shugoseike





The Bonsho Bell



The Stone Lantern at the entrance to the Gardens



The Cultural Centre and Imari urn



The Cultural Centre



Doll Collection donated to the Japanese Garden Cultural Centre



Karesansui – Dry Landscape Zen Garden





The Tea House



The Edo Cottage



Furo (Japanese Bath) in the Edo Period Cottage



Suton Stone Sculpture by Japanese artist, Takehiro Terada



Autumn in the Garden