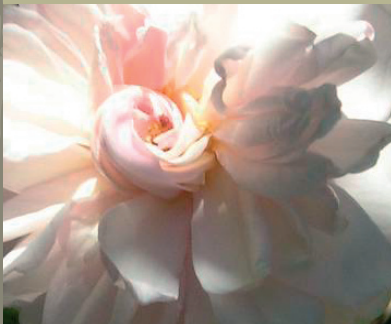





Ku-ring-gai Council

# The Swain Gardens Landscape Masterplan

Adopted 5 February 2008



A large, stylized tree graphic in a light beige color, spanning the right side of the page. The tree has a thick trunk and many branches, each ending in a dense cluster of small, teardrop-shaped leaves. The background is a solid dark grey.

**For further information contact:**

**Ku-ring-gai Council**

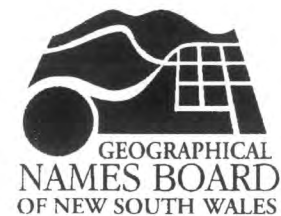
**P:** 02 9424 0000

**F:** 02 9424 0001

**E:** [kmc@kmc.nsw.gov.au](mailto:kmc@kmc.nsw.gov.au)

**W:** [www.kmc.nsw.gov.au](http://www.kmc.nsw.gov.au)

Your Ref: S05919 / 879689  
Our Ref: GNB 5222  
Contact: Jill Williams  
Telephone: 02 63328218  
Fax: 02 63328217



PO Box 143  
Bathurst NSW 2795

Tel (02) 6332 8214  
Fax (02) 6332 8217

gnb@lands.nsw.gov.au  
<http://www.gnb.nsw.gov.au>

The General Manager  
Ku-ring-gai Council  
Locked Bag 1056  
PYMBLE NSW 2073

ATTENTION: Jenny Cronan

Dear Sir

**Re: GNB 5226 – The Swain Gardens**

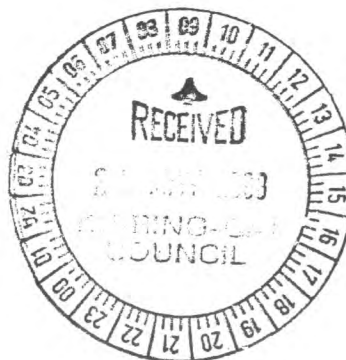
I am pleased to advise that the name *Swain Native Park* has been discontinued and *The Swain Gardens* was assigned as a geographical name on 16 May 2008 under the provisions of the Geographical Names Act, 1966.

I enclose a copy of the NSW Government Gazette notification as confirmation that this naming proposal has now been finalised.

Yours sincerely

Jill Williams  
For Secretary  
Geographical Names Board

19 May 2008



For the period 16 May 2008 – 8 May 2012

Lot 32, DP 1123422

Lot 2, DP 1033849

Approved by Game Council of NSW this 16th day of May 2008.

BRIAN BOYLE,  
Chief Executive Officer

For and on behalf of the Game Council of NSW

#### GAME AND FERAL ANIMAL CONTROL ACT 2002

Notification of suspension of Schedule 1 Conditions of  
NSW Game Hunting Licences

IN pursuance of the Game and Feral Animal Control Regulation 2004 the Game Council of NSW gives notice of the suspension of operations of provisions in Clauses 4, 5, 7, 8 and 9 of Schedule 1 of the Game and Feral Animal Control Regulation 2004 on the following specified land for the control of game and feral animals:

For the period 23 May 2008 – 23 May 2013

All private land within the Port Macquarie-Hastings  
Local Government Area.

Approved by Game Council of NSW this 16th day of May 2008.

BRIAN BOYLE,  
Chief Executive Officer  
for and on behalf of the Game Council of NSW

#### GAS SUPPLY ACT 1996

Market Operations Rules (NSW Gas Supply Continuity  
Scheme) 2008

IN accordance with section 33K (5) of the Gas Supply Act 1996, I, Ian Macdonald MLC, Minister for Energy, give notice of the approval of the Market Operations Rules (NSW Gas Supply Continuity Scheme) 2008 which are to take effect on the date of assent of the Gas Supply Amendment Act 2008 or on the date of the publication of this notice, whichever is the later.

In accordance with section 33K (5) (c), the Market Operations Rules (NSW Gas Supply Continuity Scheme) 2008 are available on the internet site of the Department of Water and Energy at [www.dwe.nsw.gov.au](http://www.dwe.nsw.gov.au).

In accordance with the provisions of the Market Operations Rules (NSW Gas Supply Continuity Scheme) 2008, the Gas Market Company Limited (ABN 72 095 400 258) is appointed as scheme operator to the gas supply continuity scheme.

Dated at Sydney, this 12th day of May 2008.

IAN MACDONALD, M.L.C.,  
Minister for Energy

#### GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES ACT 1966

Erratum

IN the notice referring to the assignment of the name Cumbil, Folio 7488, 19 October 1973. The notice should have read:

Recorded Name	Designation	Geographical Name Assigned
Discontinued	Parish	Cumbil
Cumbill		

This notice corrects that error.

WARWICK WATKINS,  
Chairman

Geographical Names Board,  
PO Box 143, Bathurst NSW 2795

#### GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES ACT 1966

Erratum

IN the notice referring to the assignment of the name Yooloobill, Folio 2093, 27 June 1980. The name was incorrect and should have read Yooloobil. This notice corrects that error.

WARWICK WATKINS,  
Chairman

Geographical Names Board,  
PO Box 143, Bathurst NSW 2795

#### GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES ACT 1966

Erratum

IN the notice referring to the assignment of the name Combadello, Folio 1328, 23 May 1980. The name was incorrect and should have read Combadelo. This notice corrects that error.

WARWICK WATKINS,  
Chairman

Geographical Names Board,  
PO Box 143, Bathurst NSW 2795

#### GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES ACT 1966

Erratum


IN the notice referring to the assignment of the name Merunda, Folio 7646, 16 February 1981. The name was incorrect and should have read Meranda. This notice corrects that error.

WARWICK WATKINS,  
Chairman

Geographical Names Board,  
PO Box 143, Bathurst NSW 2795

#### GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES ACT 1966

PURSUANT to the provisions of section 14 of the Geographical Names Act 1966, the Geographical Names Board hereby notifies that it has this day discontinued the name Swain Native Park.



PURSUANT to the provisions of section 10 of the Geographical Names Act 1966, the Geographical Names Board has this day assigned the geographical names listed hereunder as geographical names.

Assigned Name: Fingal Head Beach  
 Designation: Beach  
 L.G.A.: Tweed Shire Council  
 Parish: Terranora  
 County: Rous  
 L.P.I. Map: Tweed Heads  
 1:100,000 Map: Tweed Heads 9641  
 Reference: GNB 5211  
 Assigned Name: Bill McNamara Park  
 Designation: Reserve  
 L.G.A.: Liverpool Plains Shire Council  
 Parish: Coeypolly  
 County: Buckland  
 L.P.I. Map: Quipolly  
 1:100,000 Map: Tamworth 9035  
 Reference: GNB 5225

Assigned Name: The Swain Gardens  
 Discontinued Name: Swain Native Park  
 Designation: Reserve  
 L.G.A.: Ku-ring-gai Council  
 Parish: Gordon  
 County: Cumberland  
 L.P.I. Map: Parramatta River  
 1:100,000 Map: Sydney 9130  
 Reference: GNB 5226

Assigned Name: Allawah Bushland Reserve  
 Designation: Reserve  
 L.G.A.: Ballina Shire Council  
 Parish: Ballina  
 County: Rous  
 L.P.I. Map: Ballina  
 1:100,000 Map: Ballina 9640  
 Reference: GNB 5221

Assigned Name: Forestpark Reserve  
 Designation: Reserve  
 L.G.A.: Shoalhaven City Council  
 Parish: Numbaa  
 County: St Vincent  
 L.P.I. Map: Nowra  
 1:100,000 Map: Kiama 9028  
 Reference: GNB 5222

The position and the extent for these features are recorded and shown within the Geographical Names Register of New South Wales. This information can be accessed through the Board's Web Site at [www.gnb.nsw.gov.au](http://www.gnb.nsw.gov.au)

WARWICK WATKINS,  
 Chairman

Geographical Names Board,  
 PO Box 143, Bathurst NSW 2795

#### LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1993

Order under Local Government Act 1993

I, the Hon Paul Lynch MP, Minister for Local Government:

- (a) In pursuance of section 506 of the Local Government Act 1993, do by this Order specify that the maximum percentage by which councils' general income (as defined under section 505 (a) of the Act), for the year 1 July 2008 to 30 June 2009 may increase is 3.2%.

- (b) In pursuance of sections 507 and 508 (7) of the Local Government Act 1993, do by this Order specify that no limitation is to apply to the amount that annual charges made by councils for domestic waste management services for the year 1 July 2008 to 30 June 2009 may be varied from their respective amounts of the previous year.

Dated this 7th day of May 2008.

Hon PAUL LYNCH, M.P.,  
 Minister for Local Government

#### LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1993

##### PROCLAMATION

Professor Marie Bashir, A.C., Governor

I, Professor Marie Bashir AC, Governor of the State of New South Wales, with the advice of the Executive Council, and in pursuance of sections 255, 256 and 736 of the Local Government Act 1993, do, by this Proclamation, declare that the Proclamation published in *Government Gazette* No. 25 of 27 February 2008, on page 1249 declaring all civic offices of Port Macquarie-Hastings Council vacant is amended as follows:

1. After clause (d) of said Proclamation and insert:

- (e) notwithstanding paragraph (d), Mr Alan Griffin is appointed the substitute Administrator for the period 14 to 30 May 2008 inclusive."

Signed and sealed at Sydney, this fourteenth day of May 2008.

By Her Excellency's Command,

Hon PAUL LYNCH, M.P.,  
 Minister for Local Government

GOD SAVE THE QUEEN!

#### NSW SERVICE MEDALLION RECIPIENTS

Awarded 1 May 2008

Title, First Name, Surname	Nominating Department
Mr Peter AITCHISON	Public Trustee NSW
Mr Kenneth BARTHO	Department of Housing
Mr Jeffrey BEBB	NSW Police
Mr Ronald BERRINGTON	Department of Commerce
Mr Graham BRICKWOOD	Department of Ageing, Disability & Home Care
Mr Howard BUSHBY	NSW Police
Mr John CAMPBELL	Department of Commerce
Dr Roger CROUCH	South Eastern Sydney and Illawarra Area Health Service
Mr Ralph DAVIES	Department of Commerce
Mr Timothy DUNLOP	Department of Housing
Mr Kevin ELFORD	Roads and Traffic Authority
Mr Warwick FARLEY	Department of Commerce
Mr Trevor GILBY	Roads and Traffic Authority
Mr Graham GILMORE	Public Trustee NSW
Mr Alan GRAHAM	Department of Housing
Mr John GREGORY	Department of Housing
Mr Steven HAYES	Department of Commerce



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## Executive summary

This document provides guidelines for the protection and enhancement of The Swain Gardens and The Swain Reserve.

The Gardens were created during the 1940s to 1960s by Arthur Newling (Mick) Swain, a Sydney bookseller and amateur gardener. Mr Swain created a modernist garden of an extent and design consistency that was rare during the period. The visual and spatial structure of the Gardens is based on a botanical collection of non-indigenous vegetation that is contrasted with the adjoining indigenous vegetation of The Swain Reserve and Wombin Reserve. These natural areas merge into adjoining County Open Space, then Garigal National Park which is within Middle Harbour catchment.

The landscape treatment of the Gardens responds to the sloping topography of the site and results in a number of garden precincts. The hillsides are terraced to form a series of north and east facing garden beds that are contained within sandstone retaining walls and accessed by a tight network of concrete paths. The lower area contains Wombin Creek which is piped underground, but evident to the west where it is lined in sandstone and crossed by two bridges. To the north is the Turpentine forest. The gardens include two buildings: a garage/garden room and an amenity building which is near the old tennis court.

The Swain Reserve contains evidence of its past use as a residential property and this dictates its landscape character. There are four precincts: the entrance road to the Gardens from Stanhope Road which contains Shot Machine Creek and a remnant garden; a 1920s bungalow which is leased-out by Council; an old tennis court that has been redeveloped as a function space; and bushland to the rear.

The juxtaposition of intricately designed and planted Gardens adjoining natural areas along with the close proximity to the national park has created a complex, layered landscape that is unique both culturally and physically. This document is a synthesis of three distinct areas of concern:

1. Heritage/culture
2. Sustainability/ecology
3. Social/economic values

The Local Government Act 1993 targets specific areas that aim to protect and preserve both natural and cultural heritage while guiding development in accordance with community expectations. The framework for this report is based on one part of the NSW Local Government Amendment (Ecologically Sustainable Development) Act, 1997 which aims to “protect, restore and enhance the quality of the environment in New South Wales, having regard to the need to maintain ecologically sustainable development, and to reduce the risks to human health and prevent the degradation of the environment”.

The Act covers four key areas:

- the precautionary principle;
- intergenerational equity;
- biological conservation; and
- economic – valuation, pricing and incentive

However, this report considers precautionary principles as a filter to identify the key issues affecting the companion principles. The precautionary approach seeks to forecast issues that are considered serious or irreversible and put into place strategies to control or prevent these from occurring.

### **1. Intergenerational equity**

This area is concerned with social equity or discrimination - both now and into the future. The Act states that "The present generation should ensure that the health, diversity and productivity of the environment are maintained or enhanced for the benefit of future generations." Protecting the cultural significance of the Gardens as a modernist private garden that has not been compromised by contemporary fashion is critical for us and for future generations. Heritage conservation guidelines are based on the Heritage Act 1997 and the Australia ICOMOS Charter for Places of cultural Significance (The Burra Charter) 2002. The Burra Charter is the widely accepted reference document for heritage conservation standards Australia-wide. It defines the basic principles and procedures to be followed in the conservation of heritage places.

### **2. Biological conservation**

This section considers the ecology of the Gardens within the framework of its significance and the adjoining reserves to ensure recommendations are ecologically sustainable and to improve the biological health of the catchments.

### **3. Economic factors - improved valuation, pricing and incentive mechanisms**

This section of the Act is based on the argument that if social and environmental costs were included in the price of goods and services, then the balance of supply and demand would be more realistic. The Gardens are the only Botanical garden available for the public in Ku-ring-gai. This section discusses ways of enhancing the Gardens for the enjoyment of the casual visitor and developing social programs that will allow the Gardens to be more economically viable.

## **Landscape masterplan**

The report culminates in the masterplan which is thematically arranged and contains the recommendations along with a summary of discussions from previous sections. This identifies the areas of concern where new works are required to revitalise the place and improve visitor experience, and lists the actions required to improve access, facilities and interpretation without compromising heritage values. Recommendations are conceptual and require detailed design work.

**The landscape masterplan section stands alone. The report is designed to be read backwards if required, in which case the previous sections provide the rationale behind the decisions.**

# **PART 1 INTRODUCTION**

## **Background**

In November 2005, Council resolved to implement a program for the development of landscape master plans for Ku-ring-gai's district parks. District parks have features that attract people from outside the immediate neighbourhood such as a unique landscape character, or large areas of open space for active and passive recreation. The Swain Gardens is a private garden with an extensive botanical collection which is available to the public for passive recreation.

## **Landscape Master plan definition**

A landscape master plan designates the intentions and planning criteria that must be met to ensure the inherent characteristics of the place are understood and agreed upon by management and users. The plan determines priorities for maintenance and any improvement works for the next 5 to 10 years.

## **The Study Area**

This report covers The Swain Gardens which is listed on the Geographical Board as one area of parkland but contains two distinctive landscapes: a bushland area of 1.2 ha and a cultivated garden of 0.73ha. It also considers the relationship between the Gardens and adjacent Wombin Reserve.

## **Definitions**

The bushland area is referred to as 'Swain Reserve' and the garden areas as 'The Swain Gardens' to clarify the two distinctive areas of the site.

## **Limitations**

This report does not address indigenous heritage significance.

## **Community input**

The Draft Landscape Master Plan will be placed on public exhibition for a minimum of 28 days with a further 14 days to allow for written submissions to be made to Council. Following any amendments, the final Landscape Master Plan will be adopted.

## PART 2 INTERGENERATIONAL EQUITY

*This section provides an understanding of how the site evolved to determine Mr Swain's vision in order to preserve the integrity of the Gardens for future generations. Mr Swain did not leave an account of his work. Information is derived from interviews with Mr Swain's family, Council documents, existing Master Plan documents, and secondary sources. The information gathered in this section determines the relevance of the existing Statement of Significance.*



## UNDERSTANDING THE PLACE

### Historical overview

The Swain Gardens was created by Arthur Newling (Mick) Swain (1905-1973) (fig 1), a Sydney bookseller who was a keen gardener, bird-watcher and photographer. Mr Swain inherited Swain & Co. Pty. Ltd. Bookshop in Pitt Street, from his father, Henry Charles Swain who founded the company in 1895 (fig 2).

Mr Swain lived at 71 Stanhope Road Killara and, over time acquired 75 Stanhope Road and the rear of 73 Stanhope Road, providing an area of 0.73 hectares behind his home. This area was originally natural bushland and Mr Swain felt that part of the land could be developed as a terraced area and that if it were planted with suitable trees and shrubs it could form a contrast with, yet complement, the adjoining natural bushland (figs. 3 and 4). The site did not have street access until 1950 when Mr Swain purchased a property in Northcote Road and created a right-of-way to the Gardens (the right-of-way is no longer part of the Gardens).

"Adjoining the formal garden is 1.2 ha of bushland situated on the north-east of the property and entered from Stanhope Road ... This area was purchased by the National Trust in 1960 with funds made available by Mr. A. N. Swain. The Swain Natural Reserve Committee was formed, with Mr Swain as a member, and the Reserve was first open for inspection on 17th September 1960."

Upon his death in 1973 Mr Swain bequeathed his garden to the National Trust which held it until 1980 when they transferred the Gardens and adjacent area of bushland to Council and sold 75 Stanhope Road. Mr Swain bequeathed 75 Stanhope Road to the National Trust with the intention that the rent would maintain the Gardens. It is now privately owned.

"The site is named in memory of Mr H. C. Swain, founder of Swain & Co Pty. Ltd."

The transfer of the properties from the National Trust to the Council was spearheaded by the neglected state of the gardens and led by the community, particularly Mary Haynes, with the assistance of Mr R Burrows, Council Director of Parks. During the early years of Council ownership a 530A Committee was formed under the Local Government Act 1919 which allowed community groups to manage Council owned land. Many of the original committee members are still involved through the 'The Friends of Swain Gardens' providing funding and assisting with working bees.

*Reference: Appendix "A Broad Outline of the History of The Swain Gardens"*



*Figure 1. Arthur Newling (Mick) Swain*



*Figure 2. Henry Charles Swain*



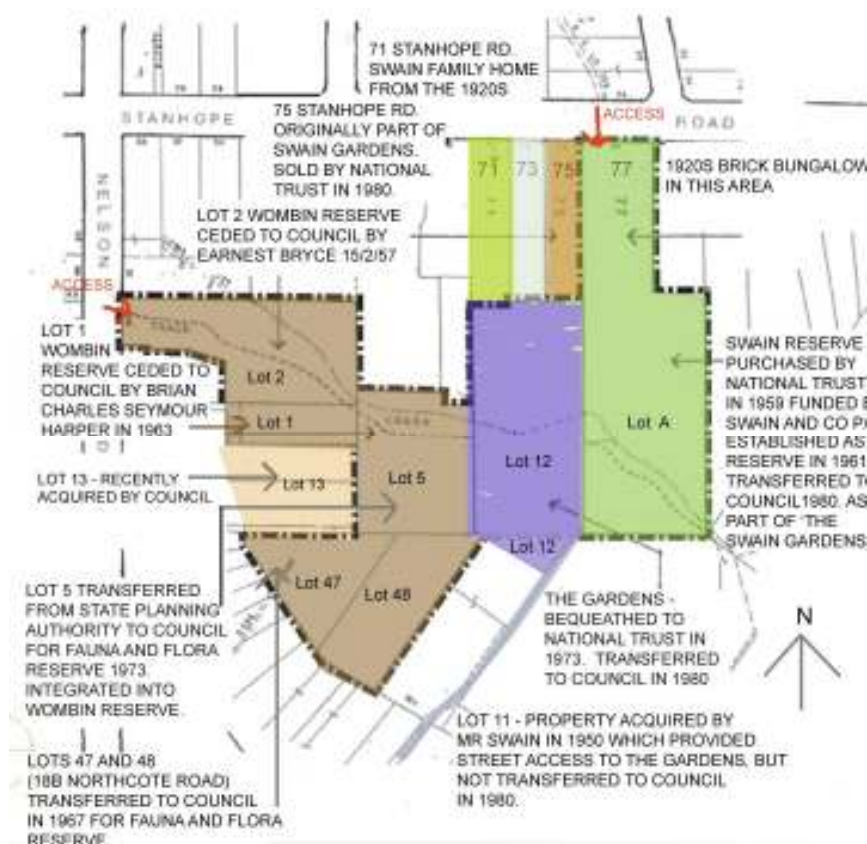


*Figure 3. The endemic vegetation was cleared to create the Garden which contrasted with the bushland setting.  
Source: J L Trezise, 'Swain's Garden, Killara' in Garden Journal December 1985.*



*Figure 4. Mr Swain in his garden. This image demonstrates the planting style of the north facing terraces.*

## Land acquisition and ownership history



### The Swain Gardens - garden areas

Lot 12 DP 601545, 0.7269ha gifted by Swain to the National Trust.

This lot is an amalgamation of Nos. 71, 73 and 75 Stanhope Road which extended to the creek. Mr Swain lived at Lot 71 and purchased Lot 75 and the rear of Lot 73, possibly in the 1940s. He also acquired Lot 11 Northcote Road in 1950 and created a right-of-way.

## The Swain Gardens – Swain Reserve

Lot A DP 386850 1.2ha with residence 'Kingsfold' and an old tennis court.

**Wombin Reserve** - located at 49 Nelson Road and comprising five Lots:

Lot 2 DP 403719 – gift from Mr Ernest Bryce who lived at 47 Nelson Road

Lot 1 DP 507500 – gift from Brian Charles Seymour Harper. Covenant J577130 27/11/63

Lot 5 DP 547142 – transferred to Council by the Department of Planning

Lot 47 DP 5289 – transferred to Council by the Department of Planning

Lot 48 DP 5289 – transferred to Council by the Department of Planning

Lot 13 DP 1012827 – This lot has recently been acquired by the Department of Planning. Negotiations are underway with the Department to transfer the land to Council, subject to Land Transfer Agreement and Order. If successful this will consolidate the Lot into Wombin Reserve and enable it to be governed by Council's Bushland Plan of Management 2006.

*The Swain Gardens (Lots 12 and A) is classified as Community Land, category Parkland and zoned Recreation 6a, although the area where the dwelling is on Lot A is zoned 2b Residential.*

## DEVELOPMENT CHRONOLOGY

### The Swain Gardens - Mr Swain's garden (Lot 12)

1928	Swain family home built at no. 71 Stanhope Road.
1940s -1960s	Mr Swain acquires no. 75, and the rear of no. 73 Stanhope giving him an area of 0.7269 ha behind his residence. He builds the Gardens on this site. The site does not have road access.
1950	An additional block of land is acquired in Northcote Road and a right-of-way is established to provide street access to the Gardens.
1961	A commemorative plaque is installed in the Gardens, dedicated to Annie Wyatt and placed on a seat which is located in the north facing terraces. (The date coincides with the early history of The Swain Reserve).
1972—79	Garden bequeathed to the National Trust. It becomes overgrown and neglected during this time. Refer to reports by Mr R Burrows dated 5/4/77 and May 1977 in the Appendices.
1977	Letter by Council's Mr. R Burrows, Director of Parks, to the NSW Planning and Environment Commission National Trust of Australia (N.S.W.) regarding the neglected state of The Swain Gardens. Refer to Appendix.
1978	National Trust sells residence on allotment no. 75 Stanhope Road
1979	National Trust deeds the Gardens to Council with conditions: Summary of conditions. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The area shall be named 'The Swain Gardens'.</li> <li>2. The Gardens remain in perpetuity for the benefit of the public as a park or reserve.</li> <li>3. The name of the late A. N. Swain; in memory of H. C. Swain is to be permanently and prominently recorded along with The National Trust as the public benefactor of The Swain Gardens in a position open to easy view by the public.</li> </ol> Maintain the Gardens in an order and condition suitable for a reserve or park to which the public has access. Refer to Title Deed in Appendices.
1981	Council resolved that a Section 530A Committee; The Swain Gardens Advisory Committee, be established to care for The Swain Gardens, consisting of three aldermen and nine residents. Refer to 'Restoration of the Swain Gardens' and 'Task of The Swain Gardens 530A Committee' in Appendices.
1982-95	Mary Haynes holds the position of Swain Garden Committee Chairperson.
1983	Site analysis and Plan of Management by 'The Garden Advisory Service.' Refer to 'Initial Site Analysis' in Appendices.
1988	Pergola donated by Lions Club of Ku-ring-gai.
1988-1996	The Swain Garden Committee operates with the following members Arthur Brown, Mary Haynes, Bruce Hutcherson, Heather Pittar, Harry Churchill, John Knight, Trevor Langford-Smith and Harvey Lang.
1988	Japanese tourist opportunities proposed by tour operator as suitable for the Gardens and adjacent Reserves.
1988	First Swain Gardens Open Day which continues to be held annually in September.
1980s	Mr Swain's garden shed made of Cyathea trunks is demolished The stile over the small wall, which provides access to The Swain Reserve from the lower garden area is demolished, but another stile built later on. Old tennis court area is landscaped as a function area.
1989	January. Lions Club plant 50 Rhododendrons to create a 'Rhododendron Walk' in the Turpentine forest area.
1990	The Swain Gardens awarded third place in Ku-ring-gai Council 1990 Spring Garden Competition.
1992	Swain Gardens Plan of Management by Environmental Design Group, State Projects, a Division of NSW Public works Department. Adopted November 1992.
1992	Inspection of trees and a Tree management survey prepared.
1996	Draft Plan of Management by Design Collaborative Pty Ltd. Adopted 1996.

2000-2001	Gardens participate in the Australian Open Garden Scheme 2000/01 Season.
2000	Three wrought iron rose frames installed on uppermost north-facing terrace.
2006	Sculpture "House in the Forest" by Peter Sugden dated 2001 installed in the location of the original garden shed.
2006	<i>Wollemia nobillis</i> (Wollemi Pine) is planted in the Turpentine forest in September, by Mayor Elaine Malicki, to commemorate the centenary of Ku-ring-gai Council.
2007	The Swain Gardens Landscape Masterplan prepared by Council.

## The Swain Gardens – Swain Reserve (Lot A)

1960	<p>Lot A transferred from St Ives Development Pty. Ltd. to the National Trust of Australia (New South Wales). Thereby The Swain Reserve is established by a gift of funds from Swain &amp; Company Pty. Ltd. to the National Trust in honour of its founder Mr. H. C. M. Swain. Transfer No 4569378 dated 2.8.1960.</p> <p>Developments included a 1920s brick bungalow 'Kingsfold', garden and tennis court.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 1922 – Lawn established, stone seating nook and paths created</li> <li>▪ 1923 – Creek partly covered in and lined with stone.</li> <li>▪ 1932 – tennis court built</li> </ul> <p>1927-34 – Stanhope Road built up and giant bamboo planted.</p>
1960-80	'Swain Natural Reserve Committee' established by the National Trust. Members include Baigent, Mowbray, Sommerlad, <b>Swain</b> , Syndham and Wyatt. (Mr Mowbray is the architect who designed the garden room/garage and Mr Wyatt is Annie's husband and president of the National Trust at the time).
1961	Official opening of The Swain Reserve. The minutes of the Committee's meeting May 7, 1961 state that the opening was scheduled for mid September and included afternoon tea by the Women's Committee and possible inspections of certain nearby gardens as well as Mr. Swain's. Refer to National Trust Reserve Killara Use of Native Plants in Appendices.
1961	The 'Swain Natural Reserve Committee' develops a plan for a landscape based on Australian native plants at The Swain Reserve for the area between Stanhope Road and the old tennis court. Refer to National Trust Reserve Killara Use of Native Plants in the Appendices.
1966	Removal of cottage garden plants from the old garden "which are out of keeping at the gateway to a natural reserve".
1980	<p>Landscape Architect Bruce Mackenzie visits the site and recommends (in part):</p> <p>"I consider that the single object of preserving the pocket of bushland is not sufficient in itself. With abundant areas of virgin bushland near at hand and an already leafy environment surrounding the Reserve a further specific attraction or function needs to be introduced sooner or later to justify a continuing maintenance program.</p> <p>As a site for a cultural or recreational development it could hardly be equaled. If the area was located in one of Sydney's depressed suburban environments then pure preservation of bush would be ample reason for effort."</p>
1991	Application by Ku-ring-gai Art Society to lease the bungalow as a 'Gallery in the Gardens' for exhibitions and art classes. Application rejected. Restraints: limited access and parking, security, increased noise, and increased traffic in a residential street. The building is limited in its use due to its design and size.
1998	Property (and adjacent garden areas) transferred from the National Trust NSW to Ku-ring-gai Council. Transfer S192435. Registered 8.12.1980 with covenant to name the site as 'The Swain Gardens'
2000s	Plan for walking tracks through site. Council begins negotiating for public access through County Open Space on private properties to the east in order to connect Shot Machine Track with Two Creeks Track which leads to Roseville Bridge. When achieved this will provide pedestrian access, through local streets, from the railway stations to Echo Point, Middle Harbour.
2002	Outdoor Theatre production 'Beneath Eyes' by Sarah Becker performed at the old tennis court area.

2007	Water harvesting and irrigation project with gazebo.
<b>Wombin Reserve</b>	
1963	January 22. Ernest John Bryce deeds Lot 2 to Council. 'The Wombin Reserve' (No. 49 Nelson Road (Lot 2 DP 403719) with covenants and as a sanctuary for the purpose of the conservation preservation and protection of native fauna and flora.' Refer to Deed between E J Bryce and The Council of the Municipality of Ku-ring-gai in the Appendices.
1968	Lot 1 transferred to Council from Brian Charles Seymour Harper. Covenant J577130 27/11/63.
1972	January 26. State Planning Authority hands over Lots 47 & 48 DP 5289 (known as 18B Northcote Road) to Council.
Probably 1980s	Timber gazebo installed just inside Wombin Reserve, near the south/west corner of the Gardens. It is funded by the Lions Club but destroyed by fire by vandals.
1994	Replacement Gazebo installed on footings of earlier one. DA 3982/94.
1994	November 2. State Planning Authority hands over Lot 5 to Council for use as public park, reserve or recreation area (land between Swain Garden and Mr Bryce's land). Refer to Transfer Lot 5 State Planning Authority to Council in Appendices.
2007	Acquisition of Lot 13

## CONVERSATION WITH DR. JOHN BRYAN SON-IN-LAW OF MR A. N. (MICK) SWAIN

*Text (enlarged and re-arranged) from notes taken on a walk around Swain Reserve and Gardens on Tuesday 11<sup>th</sup> September 1990. Text in brackets is a qualifier by M. Lehany.*

Source: Swain Gardens Plan of Management, 1992

*Mick Swain owned 'Everglades' (at Leura in the Blue Mountains, N.S.W.) and 'gave it' to the National Trust. He acquired it as a house and garden developed by the original owner (Dr Van de Veldt). His principle contribution at Everglades was the development of the Azalea Walk, above the waterfall.*

### Stanhope Road entry - Bungalow area

*Council put the road in. Mick Swain intended the cottage be used as a gardener's residence – with view to oversight the area (security, vandalism etc.)*

*The large Cedar Wattle (Acacia elata) to east of tennis court (thought to have been planted by Mick Swain).*

### Swain Reserve

*Mick Swain acquired the bushland to the east of the garden, at public auction, with a view to saving it from residential development and retaining the bush as a setting for his garden. Occasionally, the bushland was weeded by groups of local boys, being paid for their effort.*

*To reduce the fire risks the bushland either side of the garden was occasionally cleaned out within a band beyond the boundary line. There is an excellent water pressure to the site – copper pipes – good for any bush fire control*

## The Swain Gardens

*At The Swain Gardens, the native rock was excavated and used to create the main fabric of the retaining walls that terrace the site – sandstone from Gosford quarries was used for the capping. A Lebanese 'stonemason' worked at weekends with fellow workmen and later all week, to build the walls, terraces, paths and drive – he also spent some time at 'Everglades', as required to repair the walling etc. The rock spoil at The Swain Gardens was used as a foundation course for the paving and a cement surface was laid over this. (Much of this is now breaking down with some paving on paths and drive being replaced by concrete).*

*I worked in the garden at weekends for several years from 1968 onwards, the main tasks being lawn mowing, most of the eastern terraces being lawn set with cypress trees and spring flowering 'fruit' trees (mainly Prunus species) – the lawn coming right up to the tree trunks – some plants, in places, were placed at the back of the terraces, usually shrubs. The existing top lawn of the eastern side originally had more blossom trees planted in it – possibly on the outer edge. The Eucalyptus up here was planted.*

*The lower garden or creek area originally had a larger lawn area with trees and Camellias planted about it (to the north and west). Mick Swain had a mulcher and clippings were processed, the mulch being laid about the plantings in the areas that could not support lawn (Most of these trees and Camellias survive but a large section of the presumably non-viable lawn has been set to a woodland planting in the post-Swain era). Tree ferns, Camellias, shrubs, herbaceous plantings and bulbs now replace some of the original lawn. The two (quarry faced dry set) sandstone paths (laid in a contained crazy style) are new (post-Swain). Previously a straight path led from the creek (western) end to the outlet (eastern) end.*

*Mick Swain was very keen to properly shape the trees and shrubs so that the general effect was one of deliberately composed plant form where the overgrowth of plants was contained to ensure the satisfactory, even growth of the individual specimen. (This is not to say that planting was not close and in some cases deliberately composed but an image of a certain gardened effect was religiously pursued. This open pruning of trees, especially the Japanese Maples is still clearly evident).*

*All the Crepe Myrtles (in the garden) were heavily pruned back (in the traditional way) and flowered well – the flowering peaches were pruned in a special way to encourage good blossom.*

*The Deodar in the large circle replaces an original pond – the pond was filled-in in 1968 because it leaked and concern for safety with children. The Deodar was planted by Mick Swain.*

*Mick Swain grew Camellias from seed and kept selected worthwhile forms. One notable form he named after his wife – 'Alma Elizabeth' a lightly scented C. japonica in the lower lawn area. (A double light red-pink with prominent stamens). Not known if the form is registered.*

*Lower area was built first – creek covered in – and other areas worked up from this. Rings of bulbs (Scilla sp.) around trees of lower area, were planted by Mick Swain.*

*There was no plan, Mick Swain visualised the work to be done. He was a fairly determined person and had the resources to carry out his ideas – he was a keen garden visitor (to other gardens) and used to discuss his observations of gardens he had seen – he subscribed to 'Your Garden' magazine.*

*A Crab-Apple has gone from the lower area (south-east of the junction of the two random stone paths).*



*The very large old Weeping Willow was a feature of the design, forming a focal point from many parts of the garden. The tree developed a major lean (over the drive) and had to be cut back by Council. (This tree is located directly south-west on the creek bank near the driveway bridge).*

*Tree ferns generally would have not been allowed to develop as they have in the creek area of the lower garden – they have now obscured important views and vistas both from the bridge, built of stone from the Tank Stream, and looking back to the bridge from parts of the lower garden.*

## **Western Garden**

*Top south-east corner was always a rose garden, once with Gardenias. The stonework in the adjacent Wombin Reserve is likely to have been built by (or under the direction of) Mick Swain.*

*The deciduous tree to the top north-east bed is a Golden Elm and the bamboo beyond it was planted as a screen when the site behind became Newington College Preparatory School.*

*The old tree stumps in this bed (between Elm and Bamboo) were Prunus sp.*

*(The legal boundary to the east is represented by the section of straight-line weldmesh gates and fence – this boundary continues through the beds either side of this fence. John Bryan is agreeable in principle to a good looking resolution of this area – no objection to a new pipe and mesh fence following the top edge of the stone retaining walls now within the Bryan property – new planting bed to reduce extent of concrete drive.)*

*Mick Swain had a collection of slides for the garden from the 1950s but this had been mislaid.*

Michael Lehany  
Landscape Architect  
September 1990

## CONVERSATION WITH MRS. JOY BRYAN MR SWAIN'S DAUGHTER

*Notes taken at the Gardens Tuesday 27 March 2007 by J. Cronan*

I don't think my father had a plan for the garden. Being a sloping block, it lends itself to terracing and the garden grew little by little. He was influenced by large country gardens, particularly those belonging to friends from the Blue Mountains including Mt Wilson, and the Southern Highlands such as the Horderns at Milton Park, Bowral, and Everglades at Leura, which he was particularly fond of.

My mother was very supportive of my father's interests and helped him in the garden. People came to visit the Gardens and she made wonderful teas which were held in the garden room.

My father, like his father, was a keen photographer and took a camera and big wooden tripod to photograph gardens; he collected ideas and design details which he incorporated into the next part of his own garden as it evolved. I don't think he was influenced by English gardens in particular, he did not travel there, but having the book shop he had access to a wide variety of gardening books and publications. He liked cold climate trees and Camellias. He had a lot of books on Camellias and would get experts in to help with grafting.

The lower garden area contained many of his Camellia varieties including "Alma Elizabeth", which is named after my mother and has a small flower and mild perfume. It is not a registered variety. In the early years of Council ownership this area was a lawn and used for weddings but the mosquitoes were a problem. Today the Camellias are not getting enough light due to the tree canopies. Members of the Friends of Swain Gardens have labeled the Camellias with a number with the intention of producing a brochure that lists the plant varieties against the number and includes information on the gardens. The Rhododendrons in the lower garden were planted by my father and transplanted from Everglades.

In the early years the garden contained bamboo which was used as screens. The garden around the Deodar was originally a pond containing fish. The tree is growing on bedrock. The garden terraces along the eastern boundary had gardenias. The peach trees in the mid garden were planted by my father and are the variety Lillian Boroughs. The cherry trees growing up near the gazebo were also planted by my father.

My father had a large car and designed the driveway with enough space to accommodate it. He drove very slowly looking carefully at the plantings. Along the west of the drive were Camellias, Azaleas and Daphne.

The Turpentine Forest was not developed as part of the garden. My father possibly intended it as forest or he just ran out of time.

The large Philodendron in the top terrace was probably planted by my father – I remember he had Philodendrons in several areas, but they were always clipped back.

The garden room/garage was designed by the architect Brian Mowbray, who also lived at Stanhope Road, opposite the Reserve. The building is painted the original colours and the furnishings are original, the bench around the sink may have been replaced and the linoleum floor is original and has been resealed. The room that now contains the gent's amenities was a tool room.

My father brought good quality soil. He did not plant lawns, but mowed areas that were not yet planted as gardens. Grassed areas include the viewing area next to the garden room, the lower garden and two of the upper terraces, one with the Golden Elm and the other is the area now used for weddings.

The stone seat dedicated to Annie Wyatt, dated 1962, has always been located where it is today, Annie's husband Ivor was a family friend and past president of the National Trust.

Views within the gardens were very important to my father. He was a keen photographer and liked to take slides, particularly from the lookout and the viewing lawn where he would set up the tripod. The slides were eventually destroyed by fungus.

## Physical evidence

*"The fabric of a place is the most accurate (though often incomplete) document of its history . . . physical evidence tells the story of what actually happened, rather than what someone intended should happen, or believed did happen. It provides data on the sequence of changes and intimate information on human usage and habit".*

*Knowledge of the period and similar places and uses facilitate interpretation of incomplete evidence. (Kerr 2000 p. 7)*

Refer to landscape plans at the back of this section:

- Garden plan showing the original concept.
- Garden plan showing changes to the landscape since Mr Swain's ownership – from 1961 for The Swain Reserve and from 1973 for The Swain Gardens.
- Plan - Camellia species survey.

## Design integrity

The Swain Gardens exist as a remarkably intact garden of its period. The apparent integrity has been compromised during the post-Swain period with few alterations and these are reversible, if sometime in the future they are deemed unnecessary. Elements that have been removed from the Gardens include the garden shed, made with *Cyathea sp.* trunks and the stile or small stone step over the boundary wall to the Reserve. Much of the shrub and groundcovers have died, although many of the trees planted by Mr Swain have survived.

The bushland area (Swain Reserve) has been compromised by the Council access road and utility shed. The Old Tennis Court area has been furnished with seating, barbeque and stage area. The bushland area (Swain Reserve) is not as significant as the garden areas (The Swain Gardens) because it was not owned, or developed by Mr Swain. It plays an important role in providing the bushland setting for the Gardens and is the most suitable location for interventions.

## Landscape setting

Prior to clearing Lot 12 for the Gardens, it was part of the Sydney Turpentine-Ironbark forest that survives in the adjoining bushland areas as an endangered ecological community.

The landscape character of the Gardens relies on the contrast between the man-made, highly engineered landscape of the Gardens with its non-indigenous plants, and the adjacent natural bushland areas with its indigenous plants. Mr Swain highlighted the importance of this by building low stone walls along the east and western boundary lines to encase the Gardens.

The landscape character of the Gardens has evolved over a long period of time in an unplanned manner. The gardens contain many trees such as conifers that come from cold climate regions.

Despite the lack of an overall guiding design, the landscape character of the Gardens relies on a strong sense of order. The Gardens were intensively maintained by Mr Swain and tightly controlled through tree and shrub pruning.

Management problems are arising from tall trees in the adjacent bushland areas overshadowing the Gardens and preventing sunlight from reaching non-indigenous plants in the Gardens.



*Figure 5. Low stonewalls form the east and west boundaries of the Gardens.*

## Views and vistas

The natural topography of the site provides views across the Gardens and Mr Swain's terracing of the slopes was designed to capture the views. He had a large collection of slides, taken from these vantage points, but over time they were destroyed by fungus. As the trees (and tree ferns) have grown their canopies (and fronds) have obscured the views.

The most significant view is from the Garden Room and adjacent lawn where the whole Gardens can be viewed, although the ground detail is obscured by canopies. A purpose-built lookout is located at the top south/west corner of the Gardens, at the interface with Wombin Reserve overlooking the gardens (the post-Swain gazebo is adjacent to this lookout).

Mr Swain considered a willow tree an important garden element; it was located next to the vehicular bridge and could be viewed from various areas in the gardens. "The very large old weeping willow was a feature of the design, forming a focal point from many parts of the garden" (Conversation with Dr. John Bryan). The willow died around 1988 and was replaced with a Peppercorn Tree (*Schinus areira*) due to its similar form, but less invasive characteristics in the Reserve.

Significant elements are located within the Gardens where they can be viewed from a distance. The following views are observed:

- Views over Gardens from the Garden Room and Viewing Lawn
- Views into the Turpentine Forest, particularly at the entrance point to The Swain Gardens and from the Garden Room
- Glimpses into the Gardens, at the entrance point to the Gardens from the access drive

- View into Wombin Reserve from the cross-axis drive
- View from the south/east corner of the garden over The Swain Reserve and County Open Space looking east into the valley
- Potential views of the sandstone vehicular bridge which is currently blocked by tree ferns growing in the creek
- Views across the gardens from the terraces which are obscured by canopies and tree fern fronds



*Figures 6 and 7. The lookout where Mr Swain would set up his tripod to photograph the Gardens.*

## Spatial qualities, access and circulation

The Gardens were conceived as a place without street access. Access was from the Swain family home until 1950 when Mr Swain secured an adjoining property and created a right-of-way to the Gardens from Northcote Road. This gave vehicular access to the garage which is where he parked his car, rather than the Stanhope Road access to the family house.

The current entry to the Gardens is from 77 Stanhope Road, through The Swain Reserve, signposted "Ku-ring-gai Swain Gardens" at the entry ramp. The access does not provide a good first impression and there is no indication of the Garden's cultural significance. The entry is not negotiable for people with special needs, particularly wheelchairs, but vehicular access can be arranged by special permission with a full vehicular circuit of the garden possible. Other access points to the Gardens are pedestrian only, from Wombin Reserve off Nelson Road to the west and potential pedestrian access from the bush track from Roseville Bridge, through Swain Reserve to the east, but currently this trespasses in part through private property.

## Built fabric

### Generally

Mr Swain built the gardens from a limited palette of materials which were readily available: sandstone, concrete and timber. He employed the best available gardeners, stone-masons and tree surgeons and the Gardens were widely known and visited.



## Building and structures

Mr Swain built few structures in the Gardens: three buildings, a swimming pool and pond, (the pool and pond were filled in by Mr Swain), two bridges and one pergola over the swimming pool after it was filled in.

The main building is designed by architect Brian Mowbray (Plates 1-6). It is modernist and organic in design, somewhat like the work of the American architect Frank Lloyd Wright with its stonework and timber panelling. The building is in excellent original condition. It comprises a single garage with garden room above and two bathrooms which contain 1950s fittings. The interior contains the original cupboards and shelving, a pull-out bed, fixtures and fittings. The external timber boarding is painted in earthy-brown tones as chosen by Mr Swain.

The pergola (over the filled in swimming pool) has *Ficus pumila* growing over the stone pillars and a Camphor Laurel is growing behind the structure. A Wisteria is planted in the centre of the northern section. The seat around the edge of the structure was installed in response to recommendations in the Plan of Management, 1992. A barbeque/outdoor fire place is located nearby (Plates 7-10).

The amenities block (Plates 11-12) is located near the Old Tennis Court. It contains separate male and female rooms with original fixtures that are in fair condition and is constructed of brick-sized stone. The roof has copper flashing and timber overhangs suitable for supporting the existing Wisteria vine. The third building is a small garden shed built from *Cyathea sp.* trunks. It was constructed to store poisons and located near the east boundary but was removed by Council staff years ago for reasons unknown.

A fish pond was located in the lower garden where the Deodar is located. Mr Swain filled in the pond because it leaked. The Deodar is planted on bedrock and needs to be monitored for stability.

A sandstone seat with a plaque, dedicated to Annie Wyatt and dated 1962 is located on the lower grass terrace (north facing) (Plate 13). It is unusual for a dedication plaque to be positioned in a private garden, but Mr Swain opened his gardens to the public on special occasions. The dedication is after the official opening of the Swain Reserve in September 1961. The plaque reads:

*Presented by the Ku-ring-gai Tree Lovers Civic League  
In Loving Memory of Our Founder, Mrs I B Wyatt O.B.E. 1962.*

The two bridges are located in the lower garden. One bridge, along the drive has a plaque which reads:

*This bridge is constructed of stone taken from the Tank Stream during excavations  
for Mr Swain's city store.*







*Plates 1-6 The Garden Room/Garage*



*Plates 7 - 8 The viewing lawn.*



*Plates 9-10 The viewing lawn.*



*Plates 11-12 Amenities building in the Gardens and near the Old Tennis Court.*



*Plate 13 Stone seat with plaque to commemorate Annie Wyatt*





*Plates 14 – 16. Bridges*

## Post-Swain structures

The three main structures erected at the Gardens post-Swain are the Council shed, pergola and gazebo (Plates 17- 19). The Council shed probably dates from the 1980s and is located behind the residence, unfortunately in a very prominent position near the entrance to the Gardens.

The pergola is located at the junction of the north-south axis and the drive. It blocks vistas from the bridge and competes with the bridge because it is located too close. It appears awkward because it is too high, being built to allow for maintenance vehicles using the drive. The roots of the wisteria growing over the pergola are damaging the stonework.

The gazebo is located at the top south/west corner of the gardens, just inside Wombin Reserve. This is a high point where there are good views over the gardens, which also means that the gazebo dominates the gardens, being viewed from various areas. The original gazebo was a timber structure, donated by the Lions Club of Ku-ring-gai. It was burnt down by vandals and was replaced with an aluminium gazebo by Council.



*Plates 17-19 Post-Swain structures*

## Stonework

Lebanese stonemasons were engaged to construct the sandstone walls. The sandstone was acquired from various sources although most of the stone was excavated on site. The small quarry area is evident in the lower garden. It is integrated into the garden design in a curved cutting which originally formed a backdrop to Mr Swain's circular pond. Paths tend to be concrete, with sandstone capping, which came from Gosford quarries. The sandstone used in the bridge came from Pitt Street as mentioned earlier.

The sandstone walls are still in good condition: they are not leaning, but cracks are evident in a few places. The sandstone is susceptible to moss growth, particularly around Wombin Creek and on south-facing walls. The two crazy-style sandstone paths in the lower garden are from the period after Mr Swain's ownership. Construction methods range from rubble to dimensioned stone (Plates 20 – 26).



*Plates 20-26 - Stone construction methods.*

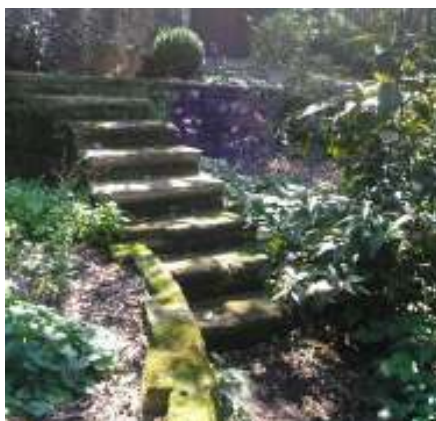
## Stairs

The layout of the Gardens is based on a tight network of paths over sloping terrain and it contains many sets of steps. They are all built from sandstone but of various designs. With so many stairs, the Gardens are not fully accessible for people with disabilities. Handrails have been installed by Council to stairs that are located in places that the public may need to access such as the Garden Room and Wedding Lawn.













*Plates 27 – 44 Examples of stairs built by Mr Swain.*

*Plate 45. Stairs installed by Council in The Swain Reserve*

## Stone detailing

Mr Swain brought back ideas from country gardens, particularly from the Blue Mountains and Southern Highlands. It is unknown what elements inspired him, but his interpretation is evident in the detailing of the Gardens. The long graceful-curves of the sandstone walls are common in large country gardens, such as Everglades (Plates 46 – 49). Mr Swain generally terminated his walls with small-scale garden beds (Plates 50 – 58).

The lookout is constructed entirely of sandstone and located above a cutting (another quarry) for the access drive. The lookout is positioned at this high point to provide views back towards the garden room. Two small garden beds are directly below the lookout and highlight the feature from the driveway.

Little stone walls delineate the east and west boundaries and contain the garden, separating it visually and physically from the surrounding bushland, as discussed under “Landscape Setting”.

Small plinths are another detail that Mr Swain introduced to embellish elements and provide interest. Plinths are located on one of the bridges, beside a set of steps in the lower garden near the bridge and on top of the quarry area (Plates 59 – 62). A section of wall in the north facing terraces has a wide flattened area, and pots have been placed here in response to the Swain Gardens Plan of Management 1992.



*Plates 46 – 49 Curved shapes of the walls*







*Plates 50 – 58. Design details - small areas for specialist planting.*



*Plates 59 – 62 Design details - plinths*

## Concrete

The access drive and most of the paths are concrete, which was an expensive material during the time the gardens were constructed. The concrete is cracked in places, but is not structural.

## Garden taps

The Gardens are locally referred to as the 'Garden of Taps' because Mr Swain installed many taps throughout the Gardens. The taps are generally of high quality copper and many are dated. The plumbing is generally concealed as the taps tend to be built into the retaining walls and thereby provide evidence of when sections of the garden were constructed. Post-Swain plumbing is evident in several places (Plate 63).



Plate 63. This pipe is not in keeping with Mr Swain's high standards.

## Embellishments

The only embellishment that possibly dates from Mr Swain's ownership is the sundial (Plate 64). It has a waisted flagstone column which is typical mid-century design. It is located in the area now known as the Wedding Lawn.

Otherwise, the furniture and ornaments appear to be post-Swain (Plates 64 – 69). The teak benches were recommended in the Plan of Management, 1985 and are catalogue items. They are located throughout the Gardens. The lower area includes a large artificial-stone birdbath with a memorial plaque. Another birdbath on a pedestal and a cast-iron bubbler are located in the small quarry area where the path widens around the deodar. More recent additions are mostly in response to the Plan of Management, 1992 and these include three rose trellises and a series of 1950s style concrete pots. In 2006 a sculpture, "House in the Forest" by Peter Sugden, dated 2001, was installed in the location of the original garden shed.

The Gardens have not been embellished to the extent that they have lost the private garden feel, nor does the landscape feel cluttered with embellishments.





*Plate 64 The sundial installed    Plates 65 – 66 Post-Swain embellishments  
by Mr Swain*



*Plates 67 – 69 Post-Swain embellishments*

## Plant material

### Planting philosophy

Mr Swain did not leave a planting plan for the Gardens and over time the plant material has altered considerably. Swain Gardens Plan of Management 1992 provides the following analysis:

*The original design intention was one of a fairly 'bald' and clearly defined system of concrete paths and drives, terrace walling and lawn to the lower and central beds with Blossom trees, rigorously shaped and other trees and shrubs likewise 'kept in order'. With few exceptions the planting was contained within the lawns, beds, and paths. Plantings since the current planting style has softened this hard effect and may partly be the result of deliberate modification from various gardeners, committee members, management reports etc. The plants selected may represent a 'specialist' interest in the garden.*

Today the gardens are increasingly canopied by large trees and some selective pruning would be beneficial (Plates 70 – 71). Thinning or crown lifting would assist with increasing light which is necessary for flowering plants. Pruning would also increase views as well as displaying the unique forms and textures of individual trees. Shrubs have grown around the trunks of feature trees and the tree ferns have grown tall, blocking views of, and competing with the tree's canopies. Mr Swain removed the tree ferns - the original garden shed was built from their trunks. The species, *Cyathea cooperi* grows up to 12 metres tall and will eventually dominate the canopy area in some areas of the Gardens.

Mr Swain did not plant lawn, but areas were mown until they were planted as garden beds. The lower garden area was lawn in the early years of Council ownership, but because the mature canopies have obscured the light, the lawns failed and this area is now a large garden bed.

Mr Swain's Gardens are masculine: they are dominated by retaining walls and concrete paths, as described by The Garden Advisory Service's report c.1983 (Refer to Appendix Garden Advisory Report). The report describes the landscape "with so many large areas of concrete and stone throughout the garden the visual effect is inclined to be 'hard' . . . The large expanse of concrete used for vehicular access needs softening ... the straight paths laid at right angles to one another give an extremely rigid effect ". The report describes the planting of many cold climate species which is consistent with Mr Swain's admiration for cold-climate gardens of country NSW, and it suggests that their inclusion at the Gardens is possibly due to the topography of the site; particularly the lower garden where the coolness of the creek provides a cooling microclimate in Sydney's warm-temperate climate and this is where Mr Swain transplanted the Rhododendrons from Everglades.

Mr Swain intended the gardens to be best in spring and planted suitable trees such as Magnolias and flowering fruit trees, along with Conifers, Maples, Camellias and Rhododendrons. He grew Camellias from seed and kept selected forms.

The terraces provide a series of walled backdrops to display plant specimens, however much of the original shrub and groundcover plantings appear to have been lost over time.



*Plates 70 – 71*

*The Garden plants were more defined several years ago (left) than today (right).*

## Plant selection

Mr. R. Burrows in Council's 'Report by the Director of Parks' dated 19 May 1977 states that

*Mr Swain was in particular a Camellia, Azalea, Rhododendron, Crab Apple, Maple, Magnolia and Rose fancier and I knew the garden well before its designer passed away. Briefly speaking the Garden's contents and maintenance were of a high order. Mr Swain employed the best available gardeners, stone masons and tree surgeons and the garden was widely known and visited.*

Jane Mundy's article (1989), [see Appendix U] provides the following description:

*Swain removed the native plants from the site and in their place planted Conifers, Magnolias, Maples, flowering fruit trees, Camellias and Rhododendrons. Intending a spring garden, it is at its best when the Prunus species are in flower, Crepe Myrtles and the Crab Apples are blooming, Daffodils and ... are carpeting, the beds and Camellias and Magnolias are in their final flush.*

These early accounts designate the Gardens as a place for showcasing specialist plant species. Many cultivars were difficult to acquire during the post-war years and yet Mr Swain was very selective in his choice of trees, planting these species that were rare at the time. However, the Gardens were originally known for the Camellias and Rhododendron displays having over 50 different camellia varieties. Over 100 additional Rhododendrons have been planted post-Swain, including 50 specimens of *Rhododendron vireya*. Mr Swain created two main Rose beds and a third which contains 'historic' roses using varieties bred over 100 years ago.

Many of the woodland species and perennials were planted post-Swain by Jack Trezise, a former nurseryman and secretary of The Swain Gardens Committee. His influence is evidenced in the Lower Garden where he developed the specialist planting theme based on perennials. (See Appendix X for a list of plantings by Jack Trezise)



## Landscape precincts character and condition assessment

### Swain Reserve

#### Stanhope Road area

The residence 'Kingsford' (also spelt Kingsfold) has an interesting history:  
The plaque on the far left side of the Garden near the creek reads:

*In loving memory of Madge Halliwell  
Previously Pickering (nee Lindfield) 1901-1996  
and the Lindfield family  
Who Built and Lived in 'Kingsford' 77 Stanhope Road at  
at the Entrance to Swain Gardens 1915-1921.*

From 1921 the property was owned by Mr H M Green, author of the 'History of Australian Literature' and librarian at the University of Sydney. The garden was extensive and included the area around the creek where there was perennial woodland, stone seat niche, walls, paths, steps, circular bays for planting and lining of the creek banks. The remnant stonework exists and the paths and steps have the potential to form a section of Shot Machine Track. The garden was 'buried' by landfill in the 1930s when Stanhope Road was built and two clumps of Giant Bamboo were planted to soften the large concrete culvert. Reference Swain Gardens Plan of Management 1992.

The previous intention of Mr Swain and the old National Trust Swain Reserve Committee was to redevelop the garden using 'native' plants (See Appendix M). Currently a water harvesting project is underway which includes a water tank concealed in sandstone foundations and with a timber viewing structure on top (see Sustainability section for more details).

#### South-west boundary of the Reserve

This area of the Reserve has good views over the valley which, although it is private property, is classified as county open space and protected from development. The area in the top south/east corner of the Reserve, behind the school is degraded. The Reserve is divided from the Gardens in this corner by a screen of bamboo that was planted in the Reserve. The bamboo is difficult to contain and is invading the bushland. It extends to the north blocking views from the Gardens into the bushland. Newington School intends to erect a new multi-storey building in this corner of their site. Additional tall plantings are required to screen the new building from the Gardens.

#### Old Tennis Court area

This area has been updated by Council for community use with a flat stage, BBQ and seating. Plays and musical performances have been held in this area.

The area is difficult to maintain because of overshadowing by adjacent trees creating conditions that are not suitable for growing lawn. Also the surface of the old tennis court does not drain properly.

The area has an attractive outlook over bushland to the east.

## The Swain Gardens

### Turpentine Forest

Mr Swain did not develop this area; it is cleared of understorey and therefore is woodland-like in the tradition of the great European gardens. However, there have been various attempts to establish an understorey such as *Hymenosporum flavium* which have been planted and Pittosporums, which have been allowed to self-seed. The Lions Club established a Rhododendron Walk, planting over 50 Rhododendrons, but most have not survived.

### Terraced Areas

The Swain Gardens consists of a series of garden areas linked by a well-defined circulation pattern based on a network of terraces and paths and designed with gracious curves.

The concrete drive provides a wide north-south axis along the western boundary and provides an area for smaller terraced gardens with an easterly aspect, while the north facing terraces are contained within a loop of the road and divided by a north-south axis path, with secondary paths forming cross axes. This spatial arrangement is suited to a 'showcase garden' – to stroll around and admire the plant material. The upper terrace is lawn and used for functions, particularly weddings.

### Viewing Lawn and Garden Room

Next to the Garden Room/Garage is a small lawn, which was the transition point between the Swain family home and the Gardens. It provides an outdoor space adjoining the garden room. It originally included the family swimming pool and barbeque, but the pool was filled in by Mr Swain and transformed into a garden bed with a pergola and surrounding seating. The pergola stonework is covered in *Ficus pumila*. The Mulberry tree was a present from Mrs Swain's parents in the 1920s and is a unique feature today due to its knarled trunk.

The east facing terraces along the western boundary are tightly arranged with small garden beds. Against the western boundary the Cyathea trunk garden shed was once located. More recently the sculpture by Peter Sugden, dated 2001, and titled 'House in the Forest', has been installed.

The south/western corner, near the gazebo, was always a rose bed. The right-of-way no longer exists and the entrance drive has been reduced in width and a new gate installed. Gardenias have been planted in this area as remembered by Dr. John Bryan.

The north facing terraces are located at the rear of the site where the aspect is sunny and the trees provide strong shadow lines. The terraces are asymmetrical, being divided by a north/south axis path, with larger terraces on the east. Original tree plantings included blossom trees and conifers with mixed shrubs. The top terrace, known as the 'Wedding Lawn' is the only grassed space in the Gardens that can accommodate larger groups of people. (The other larger grassed area is the Old Tennis Court in The Swain Reserve). The lowest terrace has retained the lawn as demonstrated in the early photo, figure 4. This area lacks direct access, but a sandstone seat dedicated to Annie Wyatt, sits against the wall.

1950s style planters have been placed at featured wall ends of terraces in response to the 1992 Plan of Management.

## Lower Gardens

The lower level of the garden is where Mr Swain began construction. He piped the creek underground and planted trees underplanting them with Bluebells. As the trees grew this area became shaded and has been planted with perennials. This has been successful, but in some areas plants have become choked by adjacent competitive planting.

The Lower Gardens include a number of important features, such as the large round bed, previously a pond, planted with a Deodar by Mr. Swain. An elaborately detailed set of stairs is carefully placed as part of the north-south axial path, but it is hidden from view except when approaching the north-south axial stairs from the south. A sandstone pedestrian bridge is another feature of this part of the garden. This area contains several decorative items as discussed earlier under 'Embellishments'.

Nearby is a cross axis path (east/west) that leads directly to the amenity building and Old Tennis Court. The path is constrained in this area and narrows as it gets closer to the toilets. Many of these features are obscured by tree ferns.







## CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

*Cultural significance means aesthetic, historic, scientific, social or spiritual value for past, present or future generations. The cultural significance of a place and other issues affecting its future are best understood by a sequence of collecting and analysing information before making decisions. Understanding cultural significance comes first, then development of policy and finally management of the place in accordance with the policy.*

*(The Burra Charter)*





## The Swain Gardens Statement of Significance

The Swain Gardens are culturally significant for the following reasons:

*They are the idiosyncratic creation of an amateur garden designer, who had the private means to construct a garden of an extent and design consistency that is rare for its period in suburban Sydney. The original design, although not of a high order of artistic achievement or of 'high style' for the period is very representative of a now vanishing popular garden style of paths and sandstone terracing, that had its origins in 'accessible' garden literature of the 1920s to 1960s such as 'Your Garden' magazine.*

*The materials and planting in the garden are highly significant of the period and reflect a vision of the 'English Garden', rather than forming the principal focus of a garden of uniquely Australian character.*

*The concept of developing the back block to the original and comparatively modest 1920s family bungalow is characteristically Australian here realised on a grand scale for the period.*

*The whole original complex, comprising no. 71 Stanhope Road (the linear brick bungalow with lawn tennis court behind), the flagstone barbecue area, the Garden Room with its plate glass picture window, the extensive area of (originally) expensive cement paving and sandstone walling, the pond roundel (now Deodar) and sandstone flag sundial, forms a living catalogue of social and philosophical attitudes and tastes, unusual for its survival in a rapidly changing suburban environment.*

*The whole amalgamated site, including the Swain Reserve, Wombin Reserve and associated areas of urban bushland, reflects the public generosity of the original benefactors and is the manifestation, however contradictory of the ongoing popular Australian iconographical romance with 'the bush'. (Often suburban based and notable in the literature, although not contemporary, of Henry Lawson, Banjo Paterson etc.).*

*The subsequent development and evolution of the garden since Council ownership has made a valuable contribution to the cultural significance of the place, especially with the addition of plant species and subtle but complimentary re-interpretation of the 'English Garden' or 'Surrey School' of design.*

*Ku-ring-gai municipality is significant within Sydney as an area of north shore garden suburbs developed originally within a bushland setting. The resulting character is relatively consistent with and reflects the attitudes, aspirations, resources and lifestyle of the people who progressively developed the area.*

*With the opening up of the area following the extension of the northern railway and subsequent sub-division of the bushland ridges beginning from early twentieth century, the area attracted a new type of resident who sought a garden refuge from city life and often had a great empathy with the bushland environment. The increasing status of the area with this unique combination of accessibility to the city and bushland attracted both the well heeled professional and merchant citizen as well as those of more modest means. This is reflected in the wide diversity of properties along Stanhope Road.*

*Swain Gardens provides an outstanding example of a garden which reflects the attitudes, aspirations and of the lifestyle of its creator and demonstrates the influences which formed the municipality as a whole.*

*Swain Gardens Plan of Management November 1992.*

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