

Bolobek



Bolobek is listed on the Victorian Heritage Register for its importance aesthetically, historically, architecturally, and above all for its garden. The first garden here was created by Oswald Syme, son of David Syme, the owner and editor of *The Age* newspaper. He bought the property in 1911, named it Bolobek and built a three storey Edwardian mansion surrounded by a magnificent 5-acre garden, a 9-hole golf course, croquet lawn, tennis court and swimming pool. The oldest trees in the garden, the pines, cypress, elms, poplars, oaks and linden trees, were planted by the Syme family.

Robert (later Sir Robert) and Joan Law-Smith bought Bolobek in 1969, demolished the Edwardian brick mansion, and in 1970 built a single storey house in the 'modern' style, designed by John and Phyllis Murphy. It is designed to reflect the symmetry of the garden and to maximise views of the garden from the house. Joan Law-Smith was a gifted plants-woman and garden designer, writer and artist. She created the garden we see today on the foundation of the Symes' garden. After the Law-Smiths sold the property in 1990 it changed hands several times and by the early 2000s it had deteriorated. New owners in 2003, and later the current owners, have worked to restore the garden.

Bolobek is in the English 20th century tradition of gardens of a modern, formal style, incorporating geometrically-shaped compartments with three main axial paths radiating at right angles from a central rectangular lawn next to the house. The garden is of outstanding aesthetic importance for the quality of its design, artistry and plantings, the creation of garden spaces and views, and the combination of plant forms with an emphasis on attractive bark, soft green foliage and white flowers.

What is the most distinctive feature of the garden? For many it is the trees, the avenue of Lombardy Poplars framing Mount Robertson, the crab-apple (*Malus x zumi* "Golden Hornet") walk, the rows of Silver Birch, the row of Small-leaved Linden (*Tilia cordata*) and the Bhutan Cypress and Viburnum hedges. For others it may be the garden design with its walled rose garden, stone walls and paths. For most, though, it is the abundance and combination of delicate plants, flowering shrubs, climbing plants, and woodland-style plantings of bulbs, columbines, hellebores and Solomon's seal (*Polygatum multiflorum*).

“...the formal approach gives the landscape gardener an opportunity to create walks and vistas and areas where it is possible to have a sense of privacy.”

Joan Law-Smith, *The Garden Within*, Melbourne, National Trust, Victoria, 1991, p. 47.



The Poplar Walk, looking west to the house

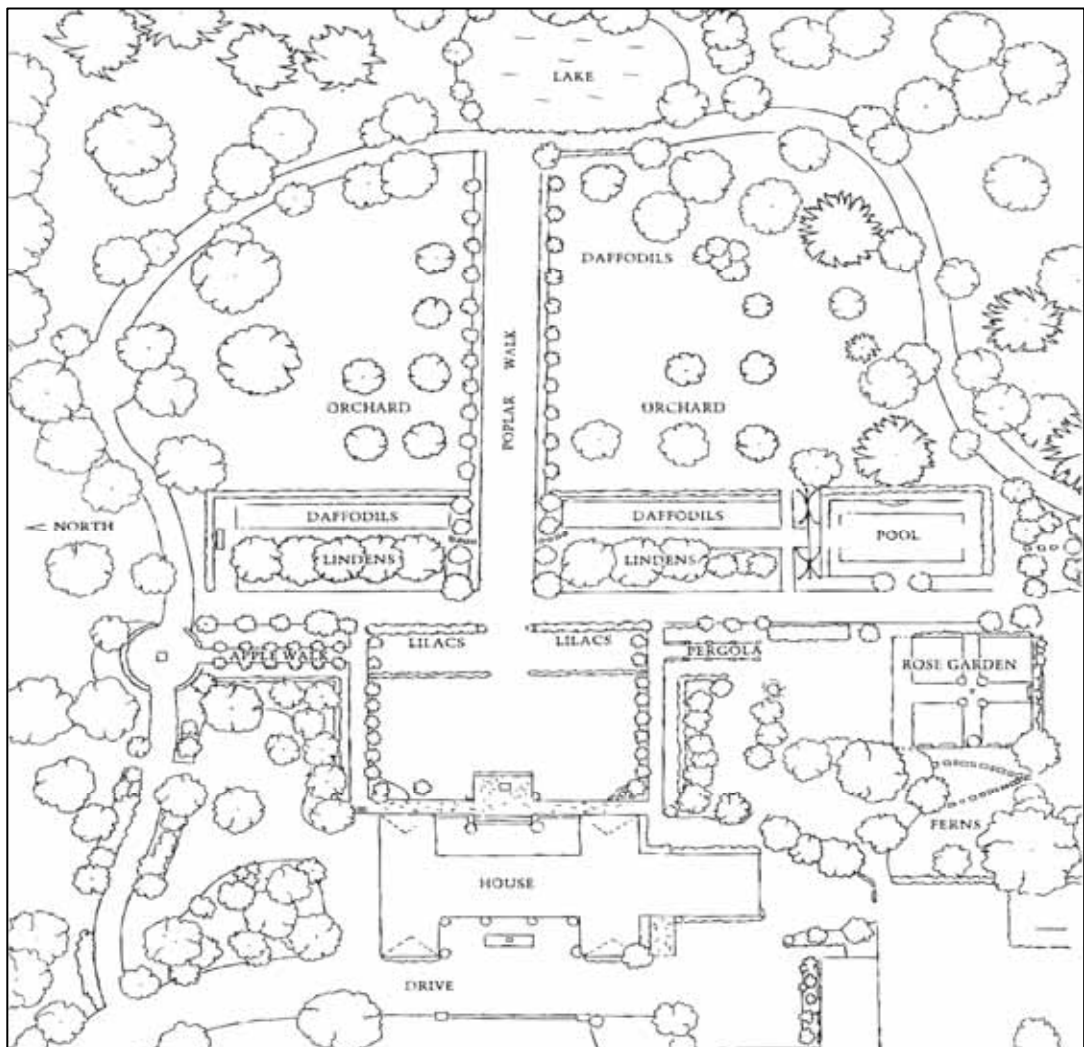
Victorian Heritage Register

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The Heritage Council of Victoria decides which places go on the Register, based on established criteria for heritage values.

Over 2,000 places and objects are now on the Victorian Heritage Register.

For more information, see the website at www.heritage.vic.gov.au



The map above comes from Joan Law-Smith's *The Garden Within*, Melbourne, National Trust, Victoria, 1991, p.18

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