THE MODERN MOVEMENT IN NEW SOUTH WALES
A THEMATIC STUDY AND SURVEY OF PLACES

Commissioned by
Heritage Council of New South Wales

Prepared by
HeriCon Consulting in association with
Colleen Morris and Peter Spearritt

Final Issue: August 2013

Part 7
DISCLAIMER: This report was prepared by HeriCon Consulting in association with Colleen Morris and Peter Spearritt in good faith exercising all due care and attention, but no representation or warranty, express or implied, is made as to the relevance, accuracy, completeness or fitness for purpose of this document in respect of any particular user's circumstances. Users of this document should satisfy themselves concerning its application to, and where necessary seek expert advice in respect of, their situation. The views expressed within are not necessarily the views of the Office of Environment and Heritage (OEH) and may not represent OEH policy.

(c) Copyright State of NSW and the Office of Environment and Heritage

ISBN 978 1 74359 739 2
MODERN MOVEMENT LANDSCAPE IN NSW
Colleen Morris

The Griffins, the Bauhaus and a new aesthetic.

The Modern Movement was, essentially, breaking the old ways of thinking. The first hint of it in the Australian landscape came to Sydney with the arrival of Walter Burley and Marion Griffin, best known for their design of Canberra. From Chicago they brought with them the ‘organic’ modern ideas of designing houses, landscapes and communities where they aspired to equity for all. With Griffin, houses became part of the landscape, the rocks, and the native flora. Professor Richard Clough (b.1921), architect and landscape architect was educated at the University of Sydney from 1939. As students they were taken to Castlecrag and went into the houses Griffin had designed. At the time ‘what the Griffins did do was tremendous– building into the landscape was THE most revolutionary thing.’ Griffin’s designs for planned communities, especially Castlecrag, with houses set in a re-created harbour landscape with walkways and internal reserves that are effectively pocket parks are exceptionally important in comparison with the types of housing and suburbs being created elsewhere in the 1920s.

As a concept Castlecrag paralleled ideas emerging from Europe that architecture and planning could form the basis for an ideal community – design was the ‘great improver.’ From Australia it must have been difficult to see the commonality between Griffin’s ideas and those coming from Le Corbusier and the European Bauhaus. Le Corbusier designed white geometric buildings that floated above the landscape. Framed views from terraces looked across an idyllic natural world or productive agricultural fields. For Le Corbusier ‘Nature’ was the saviour of societies disrupted by industrialisation.
Inter-war Modern Movement in Gardens in NSW

By the late 1920s in Sydney the modern movement in art sought to reduce landscape to its fundamental geometric forms, much to the puzzlement of the bulk of the community. The work of garden designer Gabriel Guevrekian particularly his avant-garde triangular garden designed in 1927 for the Villa Noailles, France, was well documented and captured attention in Australian architectural circles. Smart gardeners in Sydney who bought the English annual Gardens and Gardening for 1934 would have seen photographs of it. However, despite the flow of modern ideas to art and architecture in the late 1920s-1930s, landscape architecture was more conservative and garden design derived from the Arts and Crafts movement prevailed, even around modern buildings. A nod to the new lines in architecture came with the use of narrow vertical fastigiated conifers or poplars. Modernism was motif rather than all-embracing philosophy. Still there was an increasing appreciation of eucalypts as sculptural elements, an emerging desire for a garden that was Australian in character and growing concerns for the conservation of native plants.

The outstanding exceptions to the general mode of garden design in New South Wales were two gardens developed by garden designer Paul Sorensen working with the one client, Henri van de Velde–Everglades at Leura – in particular what is now called the ‘Studio’ Terrace, commenced in 1933 and completed by 1938– and the roof garden of Feltex House (1939). Stairs, flat planar terraces and paving and other architectural devices such as the frames for the vista from the Studio Terrace at Everglades aid in the identification of the design as ‘modern.’ The original design comprising the main terraces of Everglades with the natural landscape as a foil, is of national importance as an example of interwar garden design informed by modernist principles. It was the prime instance where the function of the garden terrace, encompassing squash court, swimming pool and sunbathing, underpinned an outstanding design.

The single remnant eucalypt on the Studio terrace at Everglades became a sculptural object. In this photograph the squash court pavilion (left) echoes the principles set by Le Corbusier. (Alan Evans photo Caroline Simpson Library and Research Collection, HHT). The Studio terrace at Everglades (right) in the late 1930s (Olga Sharp photo for E Mitchell, Australian Treescapes).
The roof garden at Feltex House, removed in 1954, seems to have been mainly used by the executives of the company but during the 1920s-30s the provision for the welfare of all workers was increasingly considered to be an essential part of good business practice. An article by a British landscape architect referred to the new innovation of 'The Factory Garden.' Enlightened industrialists in NSW included gardens for their workers in new factories, among the most prominent the Davis Gelatine Factory at Botany. Others included AWA, Ashfield; BHP, Newcastle (1923), Edgell, Bathurst (1933) and Cowra (1943), Sweetacres, Roseberry (1924) and the Berlei Ltd Factory, Wollongong (1945). Despite the modern thinking, the garden designs were often traditional. Today few examples survive and where they do, we don’t recognise how important they were to factory workers in the 1930s and 40s.

Prior to World War II articles on modern gardens in Sydney-based newspapers were almost non-existent, in contrast with a slow increase in frequency in Victoria, in Queensland, and South Australia in particular. Books though were sold by major booksellers. For landscape designers Gardens in the Modern Landscape (1938), in which Christopher Tunnard criticised the approach of Le Corbusier as an extreme example of the natural garden and instead presented his functional approach, was seminal. He argued that the landscapes associated with houses required organisation or functional planning. Asymmetry, the appreciation of the sculptural quality of plants and an economy of management were among the attributes of the modern functional garden.

New technology in glass making enabled greater connection between the house and the garden. Everglades at Leura included large windows that merged interiors with the garden beyond. Walter Burley Griffin’s innovation of an enormous picture window that enabled people to sit in doors and appreciate the garden and the activity on the tennis court at the Cameron House ‘Inverness’ at Killara was considered unusual in 1935.

Architect Arthur Baldwinson, who returned from experience with the British and European architects of the Bauhaus in 1937, demonstrated an understanding of the integration of building with landscape using Modern Movement principles far in advance of the majority of his Australian colleagues. His use of asymmetric rock retaining walls for terraces that projected into naturalistic landscapes married the geometry of his houses with the inherently organic forms of the Australian landscape.
A modern terrace is softened with planter boxes, integrating an outside living space with the house, in this perspective of a house for J. Monahan, 5 Falls Road Willoughby, 1938 by Arthur Baldwinson (SLNSW PXD356/ff.1337-1339 a977007)

Arthur Baldwinson’s entry in the Timber Homes competition 1938 shows a well-considered landscape plan that was functional and asymmetric. Out-reaching walls and terraces married the house with the landscape. (SLNSW PXAvol6)
By the early 1940s a real change in attitude as to how a garden should be used and the connection between indoors and outdoors was being felt—large glass windows brought in sunlight and opened up the view and outdoor living on sheltered terraces was noted as the latest trend. For New South Wales, however, the modern movement did not emerge in the landscape until after World War II had abated.

**Post-War Modern Movement in the Landscape**

The modern movement arrived in the Australian garden as émigré architects and landscape architects came. This was bolstered with a new breed of young Australian architects departing Australia and returning with international experience and qualifications in landscape architecture: Richard Clough, Bruce Rickard, Peter Spooner and Allan Correy among them. Among the practitioners whose training was in horticulture there were a few exceptions that embraced modern ideas. Rex Hazlewood (1886-1968) who was originally a photographer but from a family of nurserymen, was ‘modern’ in the sense that he used plant material—especially native plants—that wasn’t used previously. In the 1950s Hazlewood, who advised a number of local councils, planted groves of spotted gums, turpentsines and other native trees in parks in the Willoughby municipality.

Clarrie Garth, an architect who was Director of the Parks and Gardens Division of the Sydney City Council oversaw the re-working of numerous public spaces in Sydney. These designs benefited from the experience of Ilmar Berzins (1921-1993), the first qualified landscape architect to be employed by any local government authority in Australia, who brought Modernist European ideas to a city that desperately needed innovative civic design. Berzins’ most important designs from the 1950s and 1960s include Sandringham Gardens, Hyde Park; Fitzroy Gardens, Kings Cross and Arthur McElhone Reserve, Elizabeth Bay.
The strong geometry of the Fitzroy Gardens remodelling complementing the El Alamein Fountain can be seen in this plan from 1978. The hexagon, one of nature’s most efficient structural shapes in terms of the use of space and building materials, emerged as common device during the 1960s-70s (CSA - part of plan P242-69. Image reproduced courtesy City of Sydney Archives).

Innovative fountain design came to the fore in civic works. Sculptor Lyndon Dadswell and architect Dr Henry Epstein gave Australia it’s most modern memorial to King George V and King George VI in the Sandringham Gardens– an ornate set of gates and a fountain of 25 jets in a pond tiled in a mosaic based on stylised Aboriginal motifs. Robert Woodward designed the El Alamein fountain for Fitzroy Gardens bringing Woodward’s experience with renowned Finnish architect Alvar Aalto to life with a burst of genius. An abstract fountain by Gerald Lewers was introduced into Macquarie Place, one of Sydney’s earliest public spaces and artist and sculptor Margel Hinder produced a modern bronze form interplayed with water and space for Civic Park, Newcastle. The James Cook Memorial Fountain is Hinder’s acknowledged masterwork.
Tourists from NSW took day trips to Canberra to see Australia’s modern capital as the National Capital Development Authority orchestrated the construction of the Lake of Griffin’s vision and developed Commonwealth Park on its edge. Canberra was where the Modern aesthetic dominated and new ideas could be tried as suburban expansion unfolded.
Architect’s Gardens for Modern Homes

In the mid-twentieth architectural debate revolved around the ‘organic’ versus ‘geometric’ in house design but there was little difference when it came to debating the style of gardens in which their houses stood - almost all modern architects preferred a naturalistic setting. The debate was more concerned with how the architecture related directly to the ground on which it stood and its immediate surroundings - its sense of place.

As stated elsewhere, Harry Seidler arrived in Australia in 1948 to build a house for his parents, now called Rose Seidler House, and two others in a small planned family community – the project that set his career on an upward trajectory. Seidler revealed his approach to the landscape in conversation many years later:

... modern architecture is a crystallic man-made thing in, as it were, visual contradiction to the natural landscape. It is a proud man made object that is put into nature and the diametrically opposite visual impact of that is what one seeks ... not trying to make, you know, force nature into a preconceived man made pattern or form in any way and that's why nature is doing a great job ... just help it to be itself as it were... 101

Harry Seidler brought nature into his houses by using potted plants such as *Monstera deliciosa* or *Ficus elastica*.

Although better known for his work as an architect, Arthur Baldwinson integrated house with landscape in his designs. The Dobell House, designed in 1947 is a plan for a house with terraces, swimming pool and pergola. The house built for the Morrisons at Roseville (1950) was designed around a brick paved outdoor terrace, considered unusual at the time and large windows framed views of slender eucalypts and a leafy gully.

When Sydney Ancher built his white washed international style houses in naturalistic landscape settings single trees became living sculptures. Slender eucalypts or twisted banksias were retained on bush sites, houses were planned around courtyards, flowerbeds were banished or kept to a minimum and vine covered trellis or pergolas shaded large windows in summer. These were modest, responsible houses with a well-designed use of space in simple gardens.

A 1953 article on a house in Eastern Rd, Wahroonga for Mr and Mrs Peter Laverty designed by Sydney Ancher describes a tall wattle tree in the centre of a completely private courtyard, around which the entire house centred. From the courtyard were views over an orchard and green paddocks, with all rooms opening onto the courtyard. The notion of indoor/outdoor living with large glass windows and doors and the use indigenous trees are the most consistent aspect of articles concerning modern houses during the 1950s. When artist Douglas Annand’s home designed by Arthur Baldwinson was photographed, the foreground of the low white house with a grey slate roof was described as having two old banksia trees dominating the rock garden. This house was centred on a large courtyard screened by a trellis of vines.

The clients that gravitated to architects like Baldwinson also sought a new aesthetic that conserved as much of the environment as possible during the design and building process. Baldwinson had to preserve as many gums and native shrubs as possible when he designed a house in Boundary Road, Wahroonga. The resulting home, with its indoor and outdoor living knit as closely as possible, was given a double-page spread in the *Australian Home Beautiful* in 1956. Vines over a pergola were designed to provide shade for the glassed in dining room on hot days.
An Emerging Sense of Place

By the early 1960s the retention of native trees while building had become a more widely accepted practice. Teacher, activist and author Thistle Harris (Stead) had long advocated growing native plants in domestic gardens in her books and from 1962 Harris was establishing Wirrimbirra Sanctuary at Bargo. Passionate advocates in western NSW, George and Peter Althofer began Burrendong Arboretum near Wellington in 1964. When Betty Maloney and Jean Walker published *Designing Australian Bush Gardens* in 1966, there was an audience eager for change and for a new way of gardening. Betty Maloney’s beautiful black and white illustrations show clear indications that the principles of modernism had been absorbed into their philosophy.

Maloney’s illustration in *Designing Bush Gardens* for a ‘sea-spray garden’ shows the roof of a cottage and the slipway for a boat in a deceptively simple garden (Image reproduced courtesy of Jean Walker).
California Dreaming

In 1950 Garrett Eckbo’s now well-known book Landscape for Living was published. In it Eckbo presented six clear axioms of modern landscape design:

- a denial of historical styles,
- concern for space rather than pattern,
- landscapes for people, destruction of the axis,
- plants as entities and sculpture,
- integration of house and garden.

Five years later Thomas Church's Gardens are for People reinforced a new way of living and garden making in California. The inclusion of images of Church’s amoeba–shaped pool of the Donnell garden, Sonoma (1948) and Martin garden, Aptos (1948) brought an aesthetic for fluid shapes to a wider audience inspiring Australian imitations of Church’s iconic pool. In 1956 Eckbo published a book of practical advice for the ‘average’ person, The Art of Home Landscaping. It explained functional planning, a design vocabulary of circular forms, arc and tangent, rectangular patterns, the free curve and angles. Case studies included paving in concrete patterns of large circles, paved areas with rectangular or square planter boxes and artistically pierced panels for courtyard screens, and despite the recent war with Japan, a Japanese rock garden. Landscapes were for people above all, houses and gardens were integrated, space was more important than pattern, formal axial planning was banished- formal planting symmetrically placed each side of the path to the front door disappeared. Like Christopher Tunnard before him, Eckbo’s inclusion of a chapter on art in the garden indicates the importance placed on sculpture, art and murals in the modern garden. Plants too, could be sculptural.

It was the integration of house and garden that captured the general public’s imagination. ‘Planning for Outdoor Living’ was the title of a talk by architect and lecturer at the University of Technology, Peter Spooner at David Jones store in 1954. It was part of a series and Spooner joined Harry Seidler, Walter Bunning and Peter Muller in attracting big audiences to hear about new ideas. Magazines included articles on how new ideas could be incorporated into pre-existing homes ‘What is the terrace potential of your home?’ asked The Australian Home Beautiful in 1956, with helpful diagrams showing six ideas from the Small Homes Service (NSW).

By the late 1950s Australians, following the American west coast example, were increasingly captivated by the barbeque. Sunset Books Landscaping for Modern Living translated the ideas of leading practitioners Garret Eckbo and Thomas Church and brought practical advice to the ordinary suburban household. This was, wrote the editor, a new approach to landscaping that grew out of the search for new experiences in living, an approach that put people –their activities, their comfort and their sensory experiences in the garden– first. Functionalism had become the accepted norm. Concrete blocks and paving squares, pebbles, wooden rounds as stepping stones, besser or breeze block screens and slatted screens and fences, ‘egg-crate’ pergolas over patios, raised beds and low walls became common elements in garden making.
Art in the Garden - Gerald and Margo Lewers

There was no other mid-twentieth century garden in NSW where art played such an important role in the making of a modern garden than that of Gerald and Margo Lewers near the Nepean River at Penrith. Large weatherworn rocks formed a stream in which Margo’s creative planting and Gerald’s sculptures merged into garden art around the old house they had purchased in 1941. In 1956 their garden, a departure from the usual competition offerings, won the *Sydney Morning Herald* Gardening Competition and sculpture and garden commissions for the MLC Centre North Sydney (1957), ICI House Circular Quay and ICI House Melbourne (1958) ensued. Of those only the Melbourne example remains.

Margo Lewers created a special garden around the original house integrating it with a 1960s building by architect Sydney Ancher. She used a personal approach to modernism in her artwork, knowledge of plants and artistic vision to create an exceptional place.

A March 1982 photograph of the Lewers Bequest Gallery which opened in 1981 following Margo’s death in 1978 (SLNSW GPO4-04273 8.3.82).

Shaping the Expressway to the Future

In the 1960s landscape architect Peter Spooner (b.1919) worked as landscape consultant for the Department of Main Roads (1960-69) and the Metropolitan Water Sewerage and Drainage Board (1964-76). His were landscape works writ large- enhancing the sculptural qualities of enormous rock cuttings and preserving and re-planting natural vegetation by the roadside; works now taken for granted, pioneering at the time. As well as his impressive role in shaping the new expressway Spooner provided a master plan for Wollongong Botanic Garden in 1963, was appointed to the architecture department at University of NSW where he started a postgraduate Diploma of Landscape Design in 1964, and then, as the first Professor of Landscape Architecture, instigated the first undergraduate course in landscape architecture in Australia in 1974. Spooner shaped not only the timeless sandstone of the east coast but also the future of landscape architecture.
Bringing the Bush to the ‘burbs’ – the Sydney School

The desire for functional landscapes combined with an increasing appreciation of the bush and ideas based on an ecological approach to design meant that a number of landscape practitioners developed an emphasis on the experiential qualities of landscape, a whole appreciation of environmental design, rather than the merely decorative. Later called the Sydney School, they turned from the Bauhaus, adopting a more Wrightian approach, a distant echo of Walter Burley Griffin’s response to the Sydney landscape.

From 1969-1977 the fervour for shaping this modern, ecological approach to landscape design centred on an office building at 7 Ridge Street, North Sydney, a Modern Movement design by architect Ian McKay. It was a movement was shaped by environmentalism, a design ethos that grew out of a distinctly non-horticultural approach to planting and a dismissal of modernist featurism. The main protagonists were Harry Howard (1930-2000), Bruce Mackenzie (b.1932) and Bruce Rickard who ran individual practices in the Ridge Street offices and Allan Correy, who from 1967-70 headed the Landscape Section of the Public Works Department of NSW and re-designed Taronga Park Zoo (1967-1970) and Brickfield Place, Liverpool Street, Sydney (1968-1970)). Architect Ian McKay was in the same building and other architects including Rick Leplastrier gravitated to the group. They were ‘heady’ times and a ‘feeling of intense optimism, experimentation, nationalism and environmental awareness illuminated the work of the Sydney Bush School.’

The Sydney School’s early work centred on homes and landscape design for their own families, the most prominent being the houses Rickard built for his family in Warrawee (1959) and Wahroonga (1962).
Design became the ethos envisaged by the early modernists, a way of life – buildings merged with landscape, brick floors inside flowed to brick terraces outside and the sensory experience of dappled light and trees above assumed an importance that represented a major shift in thinking about what constituted a modern Australian home and garden. It was a shift in modern architectural thinking that occurred at the precisely the same time as conservationists were pushing for a new way of gardening – the bush-garden. While the two movements had different roots, there was a common ground.

The Modern Movement’s evolving quest for universal truths had essentially brought a return to nature and the natural landscape and by the late 1960s in New South Wales environmental design and the modern movement in landscape architecture were intrinsically linked. In 1966 Howard designed an amphitheatre for ‘The Bush School’ in Wahroonga. The design, published in Building Ideas in 1973 was deceptively simple with twelve arcs of timber seating and took full advantage of the superb setting with its remnants of Blue Gum High Forest.

At Lane Cove Harry Howard’s response to the spread of medium density development in the form of home units, was to produce a network of parks and street enclosures that brought ‘the bush’ back to Lane Cove. It was revolutionary and it worked. Howard worked for Lane Cove Council for over two decades (1969-1993) and although Howard’s finest work, with Barbara Buchanan, is considered to be the Sculpture garden at the National Gallery in Canberra, in New South Wales it was his sensitive handling of the environment in Lane Cove that is a lasting legacy. Of this work, the most impressive and arguably that which had the greatest impact, is his work at Lane Cove North (1969–1977), including the Helen Street Reserve (1974).

At Lane Cove North Harry Howard encouraged residents to plant local trees and was instrumental in using local species for street tree planting (left). The Helen Street Reserve was a soulless expanse of grass prior to the design of the reserve. (Colleen Morris photographs).

Times were changing in the late 1960s and Architect and planner Nigel Ashton (1911-2008) and Lindsay Robertson of the State Planning Authority played a critical role in acquiring a number of sites for harbourside parks, including Peacock Point at Balmain. In 1968 the decision to transform an abandoned industrial waterfront site, the former MSB timber yard, at Peacock Point, Balmain to a public park – reclaiming land for public open space – was radical.
Bruce Mackenzie sensitively transformed Peacock Point (Stage 1, 1970 Stage 2, 1981), renamed Illoura Reserve in 1976 and later another derelict site, Yurulbin Reserve, Long Nose Point Birchgrove (1973-76). These parks challenged notions of conventional inner city parks and became icons of modern park design. Their designs brought nature back to harbour sites while making places for people to enjoy. They were unusual for the early 1970s, for the use recycled building stone, wharf piles and discarded telephone poles. The parks became homage to the seawalls and wharves of the ‘old’ Sydney Harbour but were modern landscapes that were informal and functional; they were socially aware and aesthetically pleasing. They were landscapes for people.

Bruce Mackenzie was essentially self-taught with an approach that had initially evolved in the same way as those in the ‘bush-garden’ movement. His practical work as a landscape contractor and an appreciation of ecology was meshed with the ideas of architects to good effect. Commodore Heights lookout at West Head, Ku-ring-gai Chase National Park (1964) designed with Russell Smith was an early work where Mackenzie’s love of the Sydney sandstone landscape came to the fore.

Mackenzie designed the garden for Harry and Penelope Seidler’s house in Killara in 1967. A roof garden for Reader’s Digest House constructed in the same year was the most adventurous development in gardens for office buildings since the Feltex House garden of almost thirty years prior. Large amoebic-like mounds supported casuarinas and melaleucas with a luxuriance of understorey plantings. Building on his early experience Mackenzie strengthened his ethos based on ecological principles to have a long a fruitful career – the Sir Joseph Banks Reserve for example, designed from the early 1980s transformed a sand dune fronting an industrial area to a park encompassing ponds, woodland and heathland.

The deck structure at Illoura Reserve, constructed from recovered wharf piles and new hardwood timbers echoed the area’s industrial past and provided a lookout point to the harbour (left). The site responsive design of Illoura Reserve meant that informal walls and paths followed the terrain. For Bruce Mackenzie, this was an early and important landmark project in a long and distinguished career (Colleen Morris photographs).
The Master Plan for Yurulbin Reserve at Long Nose Point transformed the former site of Morrison and Sinclair Shipbuilding Works to a park that echoed the vegetation of Ball’s Head Reserve across the Harbour nearby (Bruce Mackenzie, *Design with Landscape*, p55. Image reproduced courtesy Bruce Mackenzie).

**Campus Design**

Although the modern movement had a somewhat limited effect on residential gardens, the area where the greatest impact was felt is that of campus design for colleges and universities. Wollongong, Newcastle and Macquarie Universities and Ku-ring-gai College (formerly the William Balmain Teachers College, Lindfield) are set in beautiful, largely informal landscapes. Their planning came at a time when the modern movement in landscape design and landscape planning in Australia was fully developed. It was precisely the time that there was a concern for space rather than pattern, they were functionalist landscapes for people, there was an emerging ecological approach to design and groups of trees were planted in such a way that they became sculptural. They are among Australia’s most successful modern landscapes.

At Macquarie University architect and planner Wally Abraham approached Richard Clough, then Assistant Commissioner (Landscape) at the National Capital Development Commission, to become involved in 1966. Abrahams and Clough transformed market gardens, orchards and poultry farms and manipulated landforms. They utilised both the native vegetation and exotic plantings already there and chose a mixture of exotic and native trees. The design incorporated formal plantings in direct relationship with buildings and roads and informal plantings elsewhere.
To create a central focus for the academic area, echoing the tradition of a central ‘quadrangle’ Clough proposed a formal planting of 120 gums in green lawn to anchor the space in a ring of hard paving. Later a fountain was set to one end of the courtyard. This central courtyard with its grid planting of lemon scented gums, and considered brilliant for its modernist simplicity and strength provides a focus for the University. Although recent intrusions have diminished its aesthetic quality it remains an exceptional example of modern Australian landscape design.

The sketch plan for the central courtyard published in the staff ‘University News’ April 1968 (left) and Macquarie University Courtyard, March 2013 (Roy Lumby photograph)
The plan for Macquarie University published 1969. By 1975 only the southern block of academic buildings was built. Abrahams and Clough used formal plantings along the main walks and in direct relationship with buildings and informal plantings elsewhere.
Work on what became the University of Newcastle began in 1964 and Laurie & Heath, an architectural practice from Sydney, drew the original master plan for the site. In 1965, Eric Parker, who had been appointed the first full-time teacher in architecture in Newcastle in 1957, became the first university planner. The objective in planning the site was to retain as many of the native trees, predominantly spotted gum (*Corymbia maculata*) as possible. Successive University architects held to a love of the Australian native landscape but more recently a taste for manicured lawns threatens to erode their vision.

Relationship of landscaping and early architecture at the University of Newcastle (Roy Lumby photographs).

Bruce Mackenzie was involved in the planning and design stages of Ku-ring-gai College (Lindfield) from 1967. At Lindfield Mackenzie carefully preserved and augmented the Sydney sandstone vegetation and created roof gardens. Mackenzie writes about one of the advantages of the design of this complex’s layout: “Conflict between people and landscape was not a factor and yet the landscape was always there, close, touchable, aromatic, vigorous.”

At the Lindfield campus (Ku-ring-gai College) the inclusion of roof gardens melded the architecture with the carefully retained and manipulated local vegetation beyond (Bruce Mackenzie *Design with Landscape*. Image reproduced courtesy Bruce Mackenzie).
At a time when car parks were fields of baking asphalt, Mackenzie’s careful designs for shade and attractiveness were enlightening. At Ku-ring-gai College car parks were contained to fit within steep vegetated slopes. At Wollongong University where Mackenzie was involved from the early 1970s, good landscape design for the car parks assisted in transforming a treeless site to a shady, forested environment.

The University of Wollongong was cleared farming land, which was re-shaped with water bodies, free-form spaces and treed car parks. It is now an idealised Australian environment that visually merges with the Illawarra escarpment vegetation beyond. Good site management and an attention to maintaining the detail and design intentions of the original landscape plan, is the essential factor in maintaining the quality of the landscape.

The Central Square with a generous asymmetrical pond, paved surrounds and clean lined detailing to seating and steps is a fine example of an Australian modern landscape design (left). Since the Development Plan, including Landscape Principles for Wollongong University, was completed in 1987, new plantings have adhered to the desired aesthetic. Sculptural bronze wallabies graze amid slender eucalypts at Wollongong University in 2013 (Colleen Morris photographs).