

MAIN ENTRANCE

STATUE

CRAB APPLE WALK

DAFFODIL WALK

PLANT FAIR
LAWN

WESTERN
LAWN

NYSSA LAWN

CROQUET
LAWN

NORTH ORCHARD

POPLAR WALK

SOUTH ORCHARD

DAM

SHED AREA

GARAGE

OAK
LAWN

ROSE
GARDEN
LAWN

POOL
LAWN

PARK

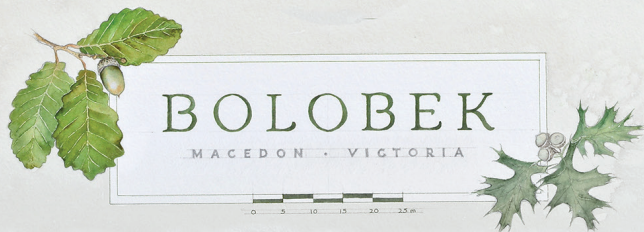
THE COTTAGE

VEGETABLE GARDEN

RILL

ROSE GARDEN

CHESTNUT LAWN



'Bolobek' is an Aboriginal word meaning undulating. On old maps of the district, there is an area clearly marked as the Bolobek Swamp. The swamp provided a significant source of food for the local Aboriginal people until it was drained in the 19th century. Bolobek is the site of an axe-grinding rock used by members of the Wurundjeri people.

The Symes

The property known as Bolobek was created when Oswald Syme, the youngest son of David Syme, founder of the Melbourne Age, purchased adjoining pastoral runs, Turitable and Woolling between 1910 and 1914. On the Woolling site, there are surviving pear trees that we estimate to be over 130 years old.

It is understood that the Symes moved into the newly completed house at Bolobek on 13 January 1911. Oswald's wife, Mildred was by all accounts a very keen gardener and is believed to be responsible for the layout of the original garden. Many trees and shrubs that were planted during her tenure survive today, as does what is believed to be her original planting plan.

The Syme family owned Bolobek for almost 60 years running beef and dairy cattle and sheep on the property. They provided employment for many local families and by all accounts were generous and kind employers. The Syme children and grandchildren and their friends enjoyed many holidays at Bolobek. The Symes were well known for their numerous charity events, and tennis and garden parties.

The Law-Smiths

Robert and Joan Law-Smith purchased Bolobek in 1969. The Law-Smiths demolished the old house and many of the outbuildings, siting the new, much smaller house in almost exactly the same position as the original Edwardian home.

The new house, designed by Phyllis and John Murphy, has large windows that open directly onto the garden, bringing it right up and almost into the house.

The Law-Smiths continued to maintain the property as an agricultural enterprise. Joan Law-Smith was a talented gardener, artist and writer. She had exceptional taste, admirable restraint and a preference for pastel colour schemes, which were reflected in her choice of plants.

Under the stewardship of Joan Law-Smith, the garden at Bolobek became an inspiration to those who visited including royalty and many international dignitaries. Lady Law-Smith's plantings were restrained, predominantly white in colour and were imbued with a sophistication and subtlety.

The Egbertons

The Law-Smiths sold Bolobek in the early 1990s. It then had two owners in quick succession prior to Greville and Jill Egberton purchasing the property in 2002. The Egbertons began a rescue operation of the garden which had been seriously neglected immediately prior to their ownership.

The Robertsons

We (Brigid and Hugh Robertson) arrived at Bolobek in 2006. The first two years were spent largely observing the garden. In 2008, at the peak of a long drought, the garden was opened for the first time in two decades for Open Gardens Australia, and over 6000 people came to visit.

Since 2008, many restoration works have been undertaken including much arboreal work, a new irrigation system and the replacement of the Crab Apple and Poplar Walks.

Many new works have been completed: the design and installation of the extensive picking and vegetable garden immediately adjacent to the site of the original Syme vegetable garden; the removal of the old swimming pool and the decrepit cypress hedge that surrounded it; the replanting and extension of the old orchard and the replanting of the Rose Garden.

The garden is as most gardens are, a work in progress. Works currently under consideration include restoration of the rill under the big oak trees and a redesign of the perennial borders/shrubberies adjacent to the beech lawn.

Thousands of trees have been planted on the property, and a significant project involving the clean-up, fencing and planting out of the waterways has been undertaken in conjunction with Melbourne Water.

Hugh and Brigid both grew up on farms in the Macedon Ranges. The agricultural enterprise they run at Bolobek is a beef and sheep meat operation. There is also a two bedroom, self-contained Cottage that is available to guests through the Bolobek website.

In 2013, we were approached by the Mt Macedon and District Horticultural Society to host their Garden Lover's Fair. The Fair is now an annual event held on the first weekend of October, with stallholders selling everything from rare plants to garden tools and other garden-related items.

The garden is open during the Garden Lover's Fair and by appointment only during the year.