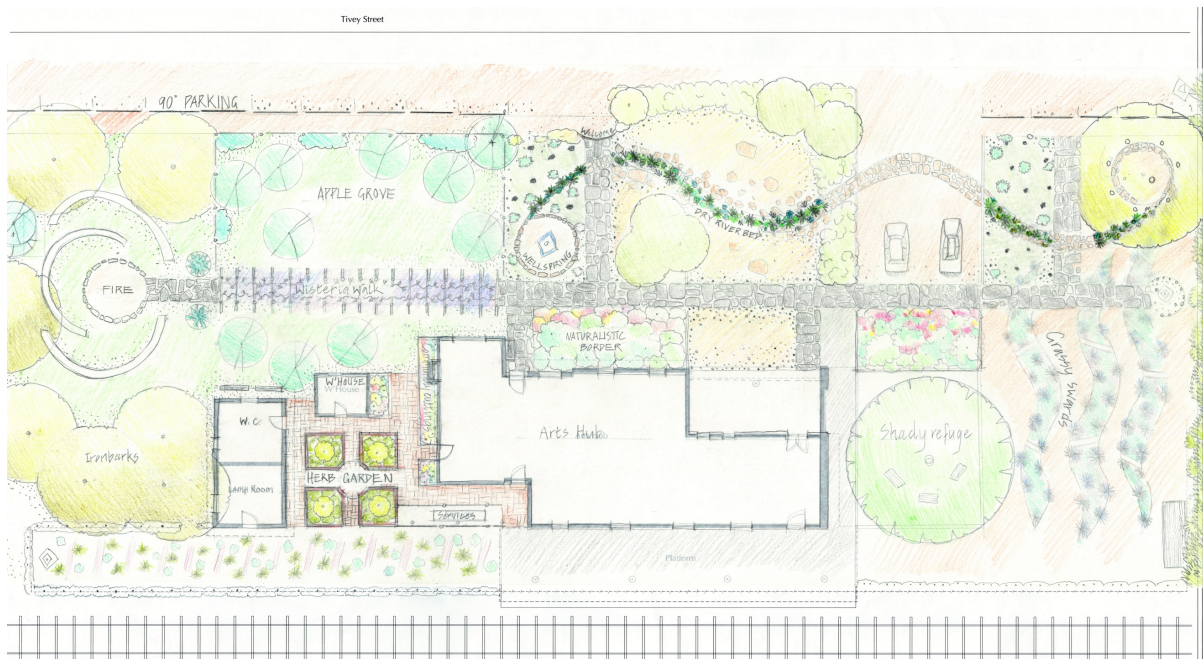


Garden design concept for Newstead Railway Arts Hub

A. & C. Read, Emerging Landscapes, 16th November 2017

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Rough sketch of design concept for NRAH garden, by C. & A. Read (see attached document for high resolution, annotated version).

Design Intent

This welcoming and beautiful garden will ease a transition into the Arts Hub and offer spaces for community celebration and quiet reflection. The design and plant selection honour the layers of history and link the garden to the Loddon River and the historic township of Newstead. Providing refuge and feeding the senses, the garden will nurture artists and the arts. Ever-evolving, wildlife friendly and resilient, it will be a joy for all.

The overall design has four distinct zones, lending itself to staging of construction as funding becomes available. These broad zones are: 1) Welcome entry and transition to an arts space; 2) Grassy swards and indigenous crops; 3) Community celebration and shady refuge; and 4) Fire circle and Ironbark stand. The design concept for each of these zones is detailed below.

Welcoming entry and easing a transition

- The main entrance is signified by a **welcoming overhead sign** (in rusted steel). Plantings along the front boundary will create a low screen and direct visitors towards entry points.



• Photo 1: Inspiration from Taradale sign (not the fence)

- The main entry is offset from the front door to slow people as they approach the hub.
- The main entry will approach a **vibrant garden of dry tolerant perennials** providing interest in all seasons. This planting is repeated in the garden bed at the front of the disabled parking bay.
- Beside the main entry path a **'Wellspring'** sculpture/water-feature will be installed. The Wellspring will be designed and created by a local artist.
- Symbolic and striking **'Midden gardens'** beside both entry points will be a reminder of traditional owners and the original landscape. The middens will have a shell grit surface (from salvaged, crushed oyster shells) and ~5 vertical, blackened, natural timber poles will be positioned in each midden garden. These poles will stand like a welcoming community at the entry gate and provide a symbolic acknowledgement of fire, history and landscape change. Poles will be made from smoothed and charred branches/trunks. Indigenous succulent ground covers, such as Inland Pigface and prostrate Ruby Saltbush, will soften the shell and posts. The vertical posts contrast with the many horizontals of the overall garden design and repeat the forms of the ironbark stand on the north-west side.
- A **Dry river bed** will wind across the front of the Arts Hub and create a symbolic link to the Loddon River. The river bed will start at the Wellspring and end at a River Red Gum.

Surrounding hard surfaces will slope towards the river bed to feed water into it during rainfall events. Overflow will be directed to storm water. The shallow bed will be planted with green, perennial tussocks to create a vivid, green band. Loose stones of warm coloured slate will edge the river bed. Where the river bed crosses pathways it will be paved in the same manner as the path, but the slate colour of the river will contrast with the dark slate paving of the pathways. Where the river crosses the parking area it will be paved with a solid, load-bearing mortar base. The sweeping shape of the river will create continuity and movement across the NRAH landscape.

Grassy Swards and indigenous crops

- Djadja Warrung and the original landscape will be honoured by curved grassy swards of indigenous grains and tuber crops (Kangaroo Grass, Weeping grass, Native Millet, Yam daisy, Chocolate Lily, Bulbine Lily, Native Flax). These beautiful swards will create an experimental learning space, to develop local knowledge about attributes of different crop varieties and harvest practices. It is hoped these swards will be developed as a project with involvement of the Myrnong Mamas, Aunty Julie, Djadja Warrung and interested members of the Newstead Community. The swards will be defined by a low edging of curved Corten-Steel (with a rusted finish).



- Inspiration from grassy swards at Scampston Hall, Yorkshire (Image from Kingsbury and Oudolf, 2013)

Community lawn and shady refuge

A simple grove of apple trees will shade a Community lawn, where tables and chairs can be arranged during community events. The apple grove is a nod to the last remaining trees from the Station masters garden. Cuttings have been taken from the old apple that is dying and will have to be removed. These cuttings, along with several varieties of apple that grow successfully in the goldfields region, will create a shady, beautiful community space. Apples

have been chosen for this grove as they are deciduous, they look festive and they are well adapted to the goldfields climate. Apples will require some supplementary watering.

- The community lawn will be screened from the road by rusted, laser-cut steel sheets, positioned between the existing posts of rail. The screens can either be made from recycled sheets (from Ballarat screens) or cut with a design, such as the curving lines of the Loddon River (copied from a satellite image).



- Rusted screens, laser-cut with a motif (Image from <https://i.pinimg.com>)



Curving lines of the Loddon could form a motif for laser-cut screens (Image from Google Earth)

- A long pergola of Chinese Wisteria will shade the pathway, where it runs through the Apple grove. The pergola will provide a sheltered place for people restricted to paved surfaces. Chinese Wisteria (*Wisteria sinensis*) is chosen to honour the 3,000 Chinese Diggers who lived and worked in Newstead during the gold rush, and ties in to the charming, flower gardens of the Newstead township.
- A formal herb garden between the Arts Hub and the Lamp room will replace the dying apple tree and will acknowledge the formal gardens of the Victorian era when the station was built. This herb garden will supplement catering at Arts Hub events so will need to be isolated from the potentially contaminated soils of the railway station by wicking beds.

Fireside stories among the Ironbarks

- A fire pit, surrounded by three curved wall-seats (a total of 30 m in length) will be the epicentre for winter gatherings at the hub. The wall-seats will be made from poured concrete, seeded with quartz aggregate, like the walls of the nearby butter factory.

The only planting in this zone will be two stands of Ironbark (*Eucalyptus tricarpa*). The dark, vertical trunks will provide a striking effect and the simplicity of this planting is intended to ensure easy management and to maintain the feeling of a rural landscape.



- Walls of the local Butter Factory, made with poured concrete and seeded with pebble from the Loddon River.

Community Cuttings

- Several small garden beds near the herb garden will display an assortment of flowers from the gardens of the local Newstead community, providing a link between the community and the hub garden.

Wildlife habitat

- Shrubs of Sweet Bursaria and Tree Violet will be planted along the north-eastern and south-western boundaries of the site to provide habitat for local bush birds. Tussocks, stones and a shallow depression in the dry river bed will provide a refuge for frogs and lizards. The grassy swards with indigenous lilies will provide food and habitat for butterflies and their larvae. Perennial flowers at the entry will provide nectar and pollen for insect pollinators. A stand of Ironbarks, dwarf Yellow Gums and a River Red Gum will provide food and habitat to host a range of native wildlife.

Nurturing artists and the arts

- The garden design will encourage exploration and walking; providing opportunities for artists to engage with art, nature, history and culture as well as spaces for quiet conversation and community celebration of artistic achievements.
- This garden is designed to support exhibitions of permanent and temporary artworks. The open gravel area between the front entrance of the Hub and Tivey Street is a versatile, inspiring space for display of temporary sculpture, as are the grassy swards. There are 3-4 places identified for permanent sculptures: the eastern end of the stone pavement, the western arm of the platform, the eastern end of the front entry path

(that runs parallel to the road) and the Wellspring. The charred poles in the Midden gardens have potential to attach to them playful objet d'art.

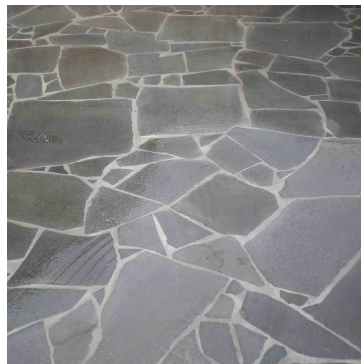
- Quiet spaces are provided for reflection during arts hub events. These include rustic bench seating on a raised plinth under the old peppercorn tree (provided lower branches are pruned to a suitable height and the Cotoneaster is removed), and at the back of the Lamp Room, beside the apple grove. The wall-seating in the Ironbark stand will be an inviting place to sit and chat as will the stump seats under the River Red Gum.

Parking

- 90° parking will extend along the southern side of Tivey Street, with fixed railway sleepers identifying each parking bay and protecting pedestrians from traffic.
- 2 disabled parks close to front entry of building can also be used for bumping of shows.

Pathways

- Dark grey slate random stone paving on a sand and mortar base, will provide a solid, stable surface with all ability access. The slate colour ties to the slate roofing on the old woodhouse.



Example of random, grey slate paving.

Water and maintenance

- Overall the garden will be low water-use, with plants chosen for being adapted to local conditions. But, several areas will require regular watering during hot and dry periods to ensure spectacular flowering and a shady green refuge. These are the perennial flower beds, the apple trees, the formal herb garden, the grassy swards and the community cuttings beds.
- Most of the garden will be maintainable through four community working bees a year plus regular lawn maintenance by community service groups. However, occasionally some extra care may be needed for the perennial flower beds, the grassy swards, the community cuttings beds and the herb garden. Hopefully, interested members of the community will step forward to be involved in these distinctive parts of the garden.