

THE PAST AND FUTURE OF THE ADELAIDE PARKLAND OLIVES

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Introduction

Olives have been cultivated in the Adelaide Parklands and associated city squares from as early as 1837. Perhaps as many as six olive trees that Governor John Hindmarsh had brought out on *HMS Buffalo* in 1836 were planted out in his original garden in what is now Elder Park in the autumn of 1837. ‘His Excellency the Governor,’ George Stevenson reported in August 1837, ‘has some orange, olive and fig trees that have stood out in the open air all winter, and look remarkably healthy.’¹ The olives did not, however, remain long at this temporary vice-regal location—there is some circumstantial evidence that, with Hindmarsh’s departure in 1838, Stevenson transplanted these first olives to his own garden in North Adelaide.² Nevertheless, with such antecedents, olive cultivation in the Adelaide Parklands can claim a history as long as the parklands themselves. Moreover, from such a tentative beginning in 1837 to at least the late 1880s, colonial and municipal governments systematically cultivated large numbers of olives in the parklands—in June 1875 a correspondent for *The South Australian Register* estimated that ‘altogether the Adelaide Corporation, having a due appreciation of the value of the olive, have had about 30,000 trees planted on the Park Lands surrounding the city,’³ almost certainly a typographic error,⁴ but still implying such numbers that, concentrated in groves and belts, cultivated olive trees were and remain one of the more visible and defining features of the parklands.

Until the gentrification of Adelaide’s parks under the direction of John Brown in the 1880s and the waning of municipal interest in olive cultivation from about the same period, the number and distribution of olives trees in the parklands and Adelaide’s squares were significant. The following table summarises the number of olives planted in the parklands between 1860 and 1884.

<i>Year</i>	<i>Olives planted</i>	<i>Olives in ‘nursery’</i>	<i>Total trees planted in year</i>	<i>% olives of total trees planted</i>	<i>Est total olives in parklands</i>	<i>Est total trees in parklands</i>
1860 ⁵					1127	
1864 ⁶	350		12,407	3		
1873 ⁷	1536		4998	31		
1875 ⁸					3000	
1876 ⁹	800	2700	3951	20		30,100
1877 ¹⁰	555		3710	15		33,264
1879–80 ¹¹		3000	3128			38,796
1880–81 ¹²			11,914			50,710
1881 ¹³					6000?	
1882–83 ¹⁴			11,309			
1883–84 ¹⁵		4000			6679	

On average between 1860 and the mid 1880s, olives represented almost 13% of the trees and shrubs planted by the Council and approximately 10% of the estimated total number of trees in the parklands. Adelaide's olives were distributed, either in plantations or belts, across the parklands, on adjoining roads and in most of Adelaide's squares.

Some of these olive trees have fallen victim to periodic redevelopment of Adelaide's squares and parklands. Many, however, survive as living evidence of the rich horticultural, social and cultural heritage of the parklands, of Adelaide, and of white settlement of South Australia.

The first part of this paper will summarise the history of the Adelaide Parkland olives, from their introduction at the very beginning of the white settlement of South Australia to the early 20th century since when, and until recently, the olives have benefited from an official indifference that ironically has ensured their survival.¹⁶ The theme that underlies this historic account is that the Adelaide olives are an integral part of a history of the parklands in which Nature, Art and Industry have not always been seen as mutually exclusive points of view and which owes as much to pragmatism and necessity as to vision. As a material representation of this history and to the same extent as the parklands themselves, therefore, the parkland olives should not only be preserved but commemorated as icons of our cultural heritage. A second, brief part of the paper explores this second theme and proposes a strategy for protecting and celebrating the parkland olives.

The introduction of the olive into the parklands, 1836–1856

Olive culture in 19th century South Australia was rooted in a fertile mixture of informal horticultural experiment and the more systematic acclimatisation movement, the social dynamics and economic imperatives of the colony, the disproportionate influence of a handful of olive advocates, and even their Nonconformist religious conviction that, as Samuel Davenport exhorted, 'A few and favoured parts only of the globe can grow the olive ... those parts that *can should* grow the olive. South Australia *can*, therefore South Australia *should* grow it.'¹⁷

The first olive tree(s) in South Australia were planted on Kangaroo Island in the spring of 1836 by the advance party of the South Australian Company.¹⁸ Over the next decade, others introduced new olive stock: John Hindmarsh and George Stevenson in 1836, George Everard in 1837, John Bailey in 1839, John Morphett probably during the 1840s, and, notably, the South Australian Company in 1845. At this time, the number of olive trees in the colony probably totalled less than a hundred. Until the economic benefits of olive cultivation were materially demonstrated by successful but limited attempts to extract oil from 1849 and the establishment of local olive presses from the 1860s, olives remained an interesting but essentially experimental curiosity. As George Stevenson observed, olives were 'a tree that we can only plant for our children to gather fruit from.'¹⁹ This is the context in which colonial and municipal governments introduced olives into the Adelaide Parklands and associated city squares from the mid 1850s.

Although olive advocates' arguments were mostly economic—long-term profitability, supplementary income, risk mitigation, agricultural diversification and so on—the

primary reason why the government planted the first olives in Adelaide's parks was beautification of the town by fencing and planting the urban squares that are administratively associated with the parklands. In April 1854 the colonial Legislative Council requested from the City Council a proposal to fence, layout and plant Victoria Square. The plan focused mostly on Victoria Square and mostly on fencing, borders, hedges and paths; however, it extended to all the town squares and also specified the trees, shrubs and other plants to be used—acacia, almond, olive, gum tree, poplar, cypress and others²⁰—possibly reflecting more the availability of inexpensive stock at nurseries such as Bailey's 'Hackney Garden' than any sense of formal design. Ultimately, there seems to have been only one response to the subsequent tender to layout and plant the squares, that of George Francis, F.H.S. and, from 1855, first Superintendent and Director of the Botanic Gardens.²¹

Francis' 'Tender for the Laying out and Planting the Public Squares &c of the City of Adelaide', submitted on 18 May 1854, excluded the fencing and trenching but otherwise conformed to the Council's specifications, covering all of the squares and with the prescribed number and type of trees, shrubs and other plants.²² This plan and the inclusion of olives was reported in *The South Australian Register* in early June: 'We understand that Mr Francis intends to plant not only forest trees, such as Gum, She-Oak, etc., but Oleanders, Olives, Roses, Native Cherry, Cypresses, Broom-trees and others.'²³ On 11 September 1854, Francis reported that the planting of Palmer Place, the last of the squares to be finished, was all but completed.²⁴ All of the squares planted by Francis boasted olive trees. In February 1886 Paolo Villanis, a Piedmontese horticulturist contracted by the Council to oversee the rehabilitation of the parkland olives, detailed the number of *fruit-bearing* olive trees in the various squares:²⁵

Brougham Place	29
Palmer Place	5
Wellington Square	19
Hindmarsh Square	8
Light Square	14
Whitmore Square	6

With the biennial fruiting of the olive and natural attrition, the total number of trees in 1886 and, therefore, of those planted in 1854, could have been considerably more than this.

Given that he complied with, even exceeded, all of the City Surveyor's specifications, it is certain, therefore, that the first permanent 'parklands' olives were planted on behalf of the City Council by Francis between June and September 1854; many remain, among the oldest trees in Adelaide's public parks, living memorials to George Francis and the experimental horticulture of early colonial South Australia.

From 1855 the Council's focus shifted to the parklands proper, not only to beautify the parklands but also to define them, or more precisely, to define the roadways that effectively delimited their boundaries. 'The Park Lands will never be other than a quagmire in winter, and a desert of blinding, suffocating dust in summer', wrote the editor of *The South Australian Register*,

unless properly fenced roads are constructed through them ... With such roads as now disgrace the Park Lands there is no alternative for vehicles but to deviate in all directions from the track, thus cutting up acres of pasturage on every side and rendering it utterly useless.²⁶

In July 1855 the Governor proposed to the City Corporation that something should be done to improve the present very unsightly appearance of most of the Park Lands near the Town; which he thinks might be effected by the judicious planting of clumps of trees on half acres or even quarter acres in suitable positions; care being taken to fence such clumps with strong but neat fencing.²⁷

Because of changes to both colonial and municipal government in 1855, the initial scheme lapsed. However, the process produced a plan with a sketch 'on the subject of planting a Public Square', with the Governor's opinion that 'the writer of the memorandum has indicated some most sensible and just views of Landscape Gardening...';²⁸ the unidentified author of the plan—probably George Francis—instructed that 'in a climate like South Australia's and to avoid the inconvenience of having to wait years for effect, clumps should be formed of the Olive, the Wattle and Gum-tree'.²⁹ Although it was shelved, this scheme linked landscaping the parklands with colonial Government funding, and that to John Bailey, first Colonial Botanist, well-known and influential 'practical botanist', and proprietor of the celebrated Hackney Nursery.³⁰ And that to olives.

Bailey's affiliation with olive cultivation and propagation dates from at least his arrival in South Australia in 1839. Trained, like Francis, at the famous Loddiges Nursery, which specialised in the international trade in plant specimens,³¹ Bailey, also like Francis, was interested in acclimatisation, the introduction of plants (and animals) to test their adaptation to South Australian conditions. According to the reminiscences of his son, the plant collection that Bailey brought out included six kinds of olives.³² On 3 May 1845 Bailey announced the opening of the Hackney Nursery, 'Patronised by his Excellency the Governor' and, until its closure in 1858, the horticultural show-piece of the colony; the first catalogue of plants included six varieties of olives,³³ apparently propagated from the original specimens.³⁴ 'Bailey's Garden' was on land leased from the South Australian Company, and immediately adjacent to the Company's own horticultural nursery, 'Park Farm'.³⁵ Encouraged by George Stevenson and influenced by glowing reports of olives exhibited at the Agricultural and Horticultural Show in 1844,³⁶ in April 1845 the South Australian Company shipped fifty olive truncheons to Adelaide;³⁷ these arrived 'in excellent condition' in July and were planted out by Bailey on Park Farm,³⁸ which Bailey leased in October 1845 and, in 1853, purchased outright.³⁹ From 1845 to the mid 1850s, Bailey was able to propagate large numbers of olive trees, both as trees and as seedlings for grafting stock. As some indication of the number of olive trees that Bailey stocked in the 1850s, the catalogues prepared for the sale of stock of Hackney Garden when Bailey left in 1858 listed 17,285 olives.⁴⁰ Not all of these were sold and many remained intact until Bailey's Garden eventually succumbed to redevelopment in the 1870s. From the mid 1850s there was, therefore, an abundant supply of cheap olive trees.

In 1856 Bailey contracted with the colonial government to landscape and plant the area around Pennington Terrace and the approaches to the newly constructed City

Bridge.⁴¹ He almost certainly planted olives—the first in the parklands proper—although there is only circumstantial and little archaeological evidence for this. For example, the Duryea panorama of 1865 shows relatively mature plantations along King William Road on both sides of the Torrens but these were not necessarily olives nor planted by Bailey in 1856.⁴² However, in 1875 an anonymous correspondent of *The Register* referred to ‘the olives in the enclosures between the City Bridge and North-terrace’;⁴³ the trees were ‘properly formed’, mature and fruit-bearing, suggesting that they were at least ten years old and, therefore, very likely those depicted in the Duryea panorama. A decade later, in 1886, Villanis counted 119 fruit-bearing olive trees at Torrens Lake, opposite the Oval.⁴⁴ Except perhaps for a single olive tree, all traces of this plantation have been eradicated by subsequent development.

About the same time as the City Bridge planting, the 1855 plan to improve the parklands was revived more or less as it had lain dormant from the previous year. On 9 July 1856, the Corporation accepted the Governor’s offer⁴⁵ to fund the enclosure and planting of part of the North Parklands, incorporating what is now the Mann Terrace olive grove, on the terms agreed the previous year⁴⁶, including Bailey’s involvement and Francis’ plan and olives, wattle and gums. Preparation of the North Parklands enclosure started immediately in time for planting of the trees in the late winter and early spring. As with the City Bridge and Pennington Gardens, the work was contracted, apparently without the usual tender process, to John Bailey.

Again there is no direct evidence that Bailey planted olives in the North Parklands enclosure at Mann Terrace. However, as a State Heritage document explains, it would not be unreasonable to assume that Bailey may well have transplanted young olive trees into the area he planted for the Council ... the connection would seem to be strongly inferred.⁴⁷

At the same time, there appears to be little evidence that the olive trees on Mann Terrace were planted, in 1856 or subsequently, by anyone else or in different circumstances (there is some evidence, however, that the plantation was extended or redeveloped around 1873). Bailey tendered his account to the Chief Secretary in November 1856, implying that the ‘planting of the North Adelaide Parklands’ was completed,⁴⁸ and in February 1857 the Chief Secretary advised that ‘the North Adelaide Park Lands may now be considered as under the charge of the Corporation of Adelaide’.⁴⁹ After some disagreement about responsibility for dead, dying and stolen trees, the Council contracted Bailey to undertake the replacement of these and in June 1857 he advised the Council that he had finished this work.⁵⁰ From this time, Bailey was no longer directly involved in further planting in the parklands. Suffering from the advanced symptoms of Bright’s Disease and with his two now-adult sons pursuing their own careers elsewhere, he leased the Hackney Nursery in 1858 and it was finally sold in 1871; he died in 1864. Successive occupants of the residual nursery continued to supply olive trees, both seedlings as stock and cuttings as grafts, until about 1878.

The growth of the parkland olives, 1862–1880s

With the success of early attempts to extract oil, in the 1860s olive culture progressed from the experimental and horticultural to an embryonic but viable industry, in which the parkland olives had a pivotal role. As early as 1849 Frederick Faulding produced a

sample of olive oil from the South Australian Company's olives at the Hackney Nursery; 'it promises well', predicted the *South Australian*, 'for the future supply of a valuable export',⁵¹ although, at that stage it was still considerably more economic to import olive oil for pharmaceutical purposes. More importantly for the development of the colonial olive industry, in 1850

several bottles of olive oil from the fruit of the trees grown in the nursery garden of the South Australian Company [were] prepared, by direction of Mr Giles ... for the Exhibition of 1851 ... The oil is pure, and altogether free from rancidity and from the peculiar flavour of some of the Greek and Italian oils. Indeed, there is every probability that the present sample of our product will be so favourably received at Head Quarters as to encourage the more extended cultivation of the olives.⁵²

The oil, extracted by George Francis, won an honourable mention at the Exhibition.⁵³ Encouraged by this, and sourcing their trees mainly from Bailey's, a growing number of colonists established relatively large olive plantations around Adelaide. Olive trees became so ubiquitous that in 1874 a visiting Victorian journalist reported that 'the olive has been established in South Australia for many years. In almost every one of the numerous gardens and orchards surrounding the city it can be seen flourishing.'⁵⁴ In June 1864 Messrs Sinnett and Tocchi opened the first, although short-lived, commercial olive oil press in South Australia, producing oil 'far superior to any that is usually imported'.⁵⁵ Olive culture also found influential and persuasive advocates. Foremost amongst these were Samuel Davenport, Secretary of the local Exhibition Committee, City Commissioner in the 1850s and Member of the Legislative Council, 1851 and 1857–66,⁵⁶ and Luther Scammell, partner and Managing Director of F.H. Faulding and Co. Under the pseudonym 'S', Scammell wrote in 1864,

It was recently stated that our City Council had planted 100,000 gum-trees on the Park Lands. I would suggest that they supplement this by now planting 100,000 olives ... Were this done it would give a stimulus to the planting of olives throughout the province, would beautify the city, and remain for centuries a monument of forethought and a source of revenue. We build for the future, ought we not also to plant for the future? ... The suggestion to the City Council, if acted upon, would I am sure meet with the approval of the public and make our dry and dusty Adelaide by-and-by the 'Australian City of Olives.'⁵⁷

Not all agreed—'E.M.W', possibly Edmund Wright, likened an olive grove to a 'horticultural cemetery'.⁵⁸ Nevertheless, public opinion as reflected in the press was gratified by the beautification of the parklands and encouraged the Council to continue this scheme, especially along the Torrens, on East Terrace, at the Racecourse and in the South Parklands.⁵⁹ The City Bridge and North Parklands olive plantations provided a convenient and inexpensive model and, from 1860 to the end of the 1870s, municipal planting of olives increased in scale and number.

The next major olive plantation was in the West Parklands, near the Adelaide Gaol, the initiative of William Boothby,⁶⁰ Sheriff of Adelaide and Superintendent of the Gaol. As a prison reformer, Boothby sought activities to occupy and rehabilitate short-term prisoners by employing them on projects such as road making, damming the Torrens and planting trees.⁶¹ In 1862, recalled the *Adelaide Observer* in 1868,

the Sheriff, Mr W. R. Boothby, found a difficulty in providing for the light-sentenced prisoners detained in the Adelaide Gaol employment of a suitable character. The Park Lands adjoining—bare and uninviting—offered an excellent field for experiment and, with the concurrence of the Corporation, gangs were engaged in trenching and preparing it for some more useful purpose than it had served. Six or seven acres were thus turned into strips, leaving ample walks in all directions ... On the trenched strips young olive-trees, chiefly supplied by Captain Simpson and obtained by Mr Lawrence, Keeper of the Gaol, were planted ... [I]n point of appearance the tree is well adapted for public reserves; it is superior to ordinary garden trees as it offers little temptation to loungers; and, what is more, its fruit may be turned to good account. It is not a little surprising that more systematic attempts have not been made to make the best of a product which is yielded here so readily, and in return for exertions so comparatively trifling.⁶²

At the end of 1864 the Mayor reported that

‘the planting around the Gaol has been carried on with great success by the prisoners, under the kind supervision of the Sheriff and Mr Lawrence, and is beginning to assume a pleasing appearance.’⁶³

With municipal approval and support, by 1870 Boothby had expanded the grove to approximately 22–25 acres (about 10 hectares) in which were planted between 4000 and 5000 olive trees.⁶⁴ Moreover, according to the visiting Victorian, ‘it is intended to go on with new planting yearly upon adjoining park lands of the corporation.’⁶⁵ Although the initial five-acre plantation was on the Gaol Reserve, by 1877 George Kingston complained in Parliament that ‘the Sheriff was year by year enclosing new portions of the Park Lands’.⁶⁶ The construction of the Nairne (Melbourne) Railway through the parklands in 1878–9 bisected the grove; 364 trees had to be transplanted; however, the new plantation was extended to 30 acres (over 12 hectares) with 3020 productive trees,⁶⁷ many of them imported from Italy by Boothby himself in 1877,⁶⁸ and transplanted from the Botanic Gardens’ Experimental Orchard in 1879.⁶⁹ By the end of the 1880s, at its greatest extent, the plantation extended from almost the Morphett Street railway crossing and bridge to the Thebarton corner of Port Road, from the Torrens to North Terrace and Port Road. Alienation of sections of the North-West Parklands for railway yards (1880, 1913⁷⁰) and the Thebarton Police Barracks (1913, 1917⁷¹) reduced the number of trees significantly. The declining economic value of the Gaol plantation olives and objections to the Gaol’s commercial activities (especially after the ‘Olive Oil Rumpus’ of 1909⁷²) meant that the reduction in size of the Gaol plantation from the turn of the century met with municipal and popular indifference.

Not only did Boothby develop the largest olive plantation in colonial South Australia, possibly in Australia, in the 1860s, he also took the critical step of establishing an olive press. With the demise of the Sinnett olive mill and press in 1865, Boothby recommended

that a central manufactory should be established, and that each contributor of produce should be entitled to a pro rata return of oil and, there seem[ed] to be no great obstacle to the adoption of this plan.⁷³

In September 1870, therefore, Boothby set up a primitive but effective mill and lever press in the Gaol,⁷⁴ the only publicly accessible press in the colony. With the advent of other private oil presses from 1876, Boothby's success

began to attract attention in other quarters, and some jealousy was manifested in regard to the Sheriff's operation, which resulted in his being prohibited for the future from pressing any fruit for private persons,⁷⁵

the first in a series of restrictions on Boothby's operation. From about 1896 the Gaol oil was sold only by tender to other manufacturers or wholesalers, often unsuccessfully,⁷⁶ and generally below market price for locally produced oil. By 1909 and the 'Olive Oil Rumpus',⁷⁷ the Gaol press had fallen into terminal disrepair and, although it was the only olive oil manufactory that emerged completely unscathed from the adulteration scandal of 1910,⁷⁸ it closed shortly after and the Gaol olive harvest was leased to other oil manufacturers.

Boothby's advocacy of olive plantations in the parklands in the late 1860s and early 1870s and the general enthusiasm for olive culture apparently resonated with a cash-strapped Council. From 1870 to about 1875, the Council planted olives in the parklands, mostly to beautify them but also to supplement the olive harvest from the Gaol plantation.

For example, the two East Terrace plantations—North Terrace to Wakefield Street and Wakefield Street to Halifax Street—were almost certainly planted in 1870. In 1871 George McEwin, Stevenson's gardener in the 1840s and founder of the Glen Ewin Jam factory, urged the Council to graft 'the large number of [olive] trees on the East Park Lands', implying that the seedlings were planted the previous year, or earlier;⁷⁹ the Council conceded, engaging A. Smith, the owner of Bailey's Garden, to graft, prune and train the East Parklands olives.⁸⁰ Three years later Pengilly recommended that 'the east park land upasite Flinders & Wakefield St' be thinned by transplanting 240 olive trees to 'the Paddock south of Bertels Road', the 'old trees to be pruned in season' and the ground between rows be trenched there and in the 'olive plantation opposite from Wakefield St to Angas Streets',⁸¹ implying a sizeable and continuous grove along most of East Terrace. The East Parklands grove included trees planted at least intermittently along North Terrace opposite the Botanic Gardens, Bartels Road and Dequetteville Terrace.

Other plantations are not as well documented. Precise location, size and dating of these groves is often speculative, although many, of course, enjoy at least some surviving trees. The most elusive plantation is in the North-eastern Parklands. In May 1873 Messrs Shaw and Denton noted with satisfaction that 'great improvements are about to be made in the way of planting the North Park Lands opposite [Gilberton]'.⁸² And, presumably referring to the same area, in June 1880 Alfred Smith offered to 'graft the seedling olives now growing on the two blocks of the Park Lands abutting on the Gilbert Town Road near Walkerville', adding that there were 'about six or seven hundred trees' and 'these trees have been planted about four years',⁸³ that is in 1876. One possibility, of course, is that the Gilberton grove is the current Mann Terrace plantation. More plausible is that the Gilberton groves either extended or even replaced the original grove planted by Bailey. Or perhaps they were completely separate. Similarly, the location of the plantations on North and West Terrace and the Bay Road (Anzac Highway) remain unclear.

The extent and distribution of the parkland plantations can be appreciated in various reports to the Council in the 1870s and 1880s. On two occasions in 1872, for example, the City Gardener, William Pengilly, planted olives in Light Square (70), the North Adelaide Plantations [Mann Terrace and Elder Park?] (1255+210), Bay Road [now Anzac Highway] (450), West Terrace (350+350), North Terrace (92) and the Racecourse [Wakefield Street] (140).⁸⁴ Ten years later Villanis' reported on substantial groves 'between the Port and Slaughterhouse Roads and Sheep Market', West Terrace, 'both sides of Unley Road', 'East Park lands, between the Botanic Gardens and the Old Race Course', and 'two plantations between Walkerville and River Torrens'.⁸⁵ And in February 1886 Villanis listed 'the number of olive trees presently bearing fruit in the Town Corporation ground',⁸⁶ detailing the areas in which the Council had planted olives in the parklands and city squares, not including the Gaol enclosures:

	<i>Number of trees bearing fruit</i>
Mann Terrace	27
Brougham Place	29
Palmer Place	5
Wellington Square	19
Torrens Lake [Elder Park?]	119
Strangways Terrace	7
Mitcham Road [Unley Road]	84
Plantation bordering the Old Race Course	272
South-East Park Lands (Old Race Course)	105
Dequetteville Park	30
East Park Lands (between Old Race Course and North Terrace)	26
Hindmarsh Square	8
Light Square	14
Whitmore Square	6
West Terrace	112
Total	873

For the Council, the parkland olives were not without their problems. The Town Clerk's correspondence abounds with complaints or requests, too many to detail, ranging from school children damaging the trees, theft and unauthorised removal of trees and olives, to the need for fencing to protect young groves from wandering stock and the lack of surveillance. From the Gaol, Boothby and Howell, the gaol-keeper, protested regularly about the tardiness and incompetence of the parkland gardener but mostly about the inefficient depositing of night-soil in or near the olive groves, not only because of the stench or threat of disease, but also because the night-carters were wasting valuable manure. In turn, the gardener Pengilly complained about his declining authority over the municipal groves, his salary, his dismissal, and the incompetence of private contractors employed to graft olive seedlings. These are the trivia that colour the history of the parklands and its olives. By comparison, the single

consistent challenge for the Councils was—and remains—the proper maintenance of the groves. After the planting frenzy of the 1860s and 1870s, excepting the Gaol plantations, the Council neglected the parkland olives. From exhibiting a ‘thriving condition’ in 1877,⁸⁷ by 1882, reported the Mayor, ‘the olive trees on the Park Lands, except the Plantations near the Gaol, have had little care or attention paid to them since they were first planted’:

They have been subject to fires year by year and to daily depredations by boys and men, much to their injury and disfigurement. As a result they have grown up wild in foliage and rough in form, and, although the sorts of trees there planted are of the best kinds, very little revenue has been obtained from the produce which has been gathered from them in the past. In the autumn of the present year [1883], at the suggestion of Mr. S. Davenport, the Council engaged Mons. Villanis to undertake the care and management of these valuable trees, and under his directions their faulty and unhealthy growth has been cut out, and the trees brought into form and order.⁸⁸

Villanis concurred: ‘The olive groves under the charge of the Adelaide Corporation had been neglected from the time they were planted’, he reported in 1884.⁸⁹ With often extreme pruning over the following three years, and measures to combat curculio beetle infection in some groves, he left the plantations in good and promising condition, requiring minimal regular maintenance⁹⁰. Fortunately, Villanis also left both experienced olive pruners and a collection of articles from *Garden and Field*, published as *The Cultivation of the Olive and the Methods of Making Olive Oil*,⁹¹ that offered practical advice on olive horticulture, including the continuing maintenance of olives. By the time that the olives needed more serious remedial attention in order to maintain productivity, the Council had lost interest in olive culture, the profitability of the Gaol press was declining, and influential private producers opposed active government involvement in an industry that was already suffering from competition from cheap imported oil and inexpensive alternatives.

A future for the parkland olives

By any standard, the Adelaide Parklands olives are as distinctive as the parklands of which they form an integral ‘historic’ part. With the minor exceptions of remnants of Spanish monastic groves in California,⁹² and small stands of trees that have survived the encroachment of urban development around the cities of Mediterranean Europe, the Adelaide Parklands olives are unique on a global scale. Nowhere else, as far as I can determine, were olives cultivated for whatever reason on public or community ground. For the same reasons that the parklands themselves and Adelaide’s squares are ‘culturally significant’, so too are Adelaide’s olives. As Peter Donovan concludes in his study of the cultural significance of the parklands and repeated in the more recent *Parklands Management Strategy*,⁹³ ‘the parklands include places of immense heritage significance because of their identification with major developments associated with the history of the city and the state from colonisation to the present.’⁹⁴ In general, the parkland olives are closely associated with such major developments as colonial horticulture and early industrial development, with such important historical figures as George Francis and Richard Schomburgk, John Bailey, Samuel Davenport and William Boothby, and with antecedents that can be traced to the foundation of the colony. More specifically, the parkland olives are the only remaining visible evidence and the least offensive symbol of a period in which the

parklands were used for quarrying stone, brick making, depasturing cattle and goats as well as for dumping rubbish, industrial waste and human sewerage. To remove parkland olive trees is to diminish the cultural significance of the parklands themselves. It is imperative, therefore, to preserve intact, by all available means, the remaining parkland olives.

For some, this policy could be problematic. For some environmentalists, all olives are generically obnoxious weeds that should be eradicated, ironically in the interests of biodiversity. While the parklands should, I concede, be subject to the Animal and Plant Control Commission's policy on new olive groves,⁹⁵ it is unlikely that the parkland olives are now or in future will be a source of feral invasion, and their removal could be more environmentally damaging than simply letting them age gracefully to provide food and habitat to a wide range of indigenous fauna. For the managers of the parklands, preservation of the parkland olives means changing management strategies from passive maintenance and selective removal to preservation, remediation and active maintenance in such plans as the Council's 'Parkland Olive Management Plan',⁹⁶ the series of the Council's 'Community Land Management Plans' for each of the parks,⁹⁷ and, of course, the proposed major redevelopment of the Racecourse that, from the publicly available plan,⁹⁸ appears to include the unnecessary removal of the Wakefield Street olive plantation. And for policy makers there remains the perennial question of what to do with—and how to fund—this unique resource.

The parkland olives also present unique opportunities, one of which is for Adelaide to reclaim its well-deserved title of the 'olive capital of Australia', using the olive groves to focus public attention on the parklands and its history, increasing active community involvement and sense of 'ownership', and possibly generating modest funds that could be used to rehabilitate the groves. Something like an 'Olive Harvest Festival' might include:

- an invitation for the public to pick olives (under supervision) for some fee, with the olives pressed 'communally', packaged and returned to the pickers in proportion to their pick;
- olive and oil tastings, olive-related food demonstrations, producers' markets in one or more of the groves, etc.;
- presentations on the history of the parklands, parklands-related historical figures, olive technology and science, etc.;
- walking tours of the parkland olive sites;⁹⁹
- reconstruction of the Adelaide Gaol press room, including Boothby's mill and lever press, with demonstrations, and so on.

In such ways, not only the parkland olives but the parklands themselves would be celebrated.

¹ *South Australian Gazette and Colonial Register*, [*South Australian Register*], 12 August, 1837, p.2.

² George McEwin, 'Catalogue of plants introduced into South Australia by George Stevenson, Esq. and grown at Melbourne Cottage, North Adelaide, 1843'; State Records of South Australia (SRSA) GRG24/4 lists four varieties of olives growing in Stevenson's garden in the early 1840s although in 1836 Stevenson himself introduced no more than a single olive seedling.

- ³ ‘The production of olive oil in South Australia’, *South Australian Register*, 17 June 1875, p.7.
- ⁴ In 1877 the Mayor reported that ‘there are now [a total of] 33,264 trees growing in the plantations on the park lands, and in the squares’, Mayor’s Report, 1877, p.11, Adelaide City Council Archives (ACC Archives); in 1881 George Barnard estimated that the City Corporation had 3,000 olive trees (although this would not have included the Gaol olives, which numbered about as many), *Adelaide Observer*, 1 October 1881, p.11.
- ⁵ Peter Morton, ‘Sons of Light: a History’ from *Adelaide and its Council, 1878–1928*, unpublished mss, 1992, p.123, ACC Archives; also attached research notes.
- ⁶ Mayor’s Report, December 1864, ACC Archives.
- ⁷ Mayor’s Report, 1873, p.3, ACC Archives.
- ⁸ *South Australian Register*, 17 June 1875, p.7; assumes ‘30,000’ is a typographic error.
- ⁹ Mayor’s Report, 1876, p.4, ACC Archives.
- ¹⁰ Mayor’s Report, 1877, p.11, ACC Archives.
- ¹¹ Mayor’s Report, 1879, pp.103–104, ACC Archives.
- ¹² Mayor’s Report, 1880, pp.108–109, ACC Archives.
- ¹³ *Adelaide Observer*, 1 October 1881, p.11.
- ¹⁴ Mayor’s Report, 1882, p.32, ACC Archives.
- ¹⁵ Mayor’s Report, 1883, p.59, ACC Archives.
- ¹⁶ For those interested, this history is chronicled in more detail elsewhere in Craig Hill, ‘The Adelaide Parkland olives’, <http://www.users.on.net/~craighill/Research>, 2006.
- ¹⁷ *South Australian Register*, 20 July 1875, p.5.
- ¹⁸ Arthur J. Perkins, *South Australia, an agricultural and pastoral state in the making, first decade 1836–46*, Government Printer, Adelaide, 1936, p. 29.
- ¹⁹ *South Australian Register*, 10 December 1839, p.5; reprinted in *The Royal South Australian Almanack ... for 1840*, Robert Thomas and Co, Adelaide, 1840, pp.40–41.
- ²⁰ Specification for Planting the Squares, 12 April 1854, SQ18540504, ACC Archives.
- ²¹ On Francis, see Barbara Best, *George William Francis*, B. Best, Adelaide, 1986; G.E. Loyau, *The Representative Men of South Australia*, George Howell, Adelaide, 1883, p.112; R.H. Pulleine, ‘The botanical colonisation of the Adelaide Plains’, *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society of Australasia, South Australian Branch*, Vol 35, 1933–34, p.45.
- ²² George Francis, Tender for the Laying out and Planting the Public Squares &c of the City of Adelaide, 18 May 1854, SQ18540518, ACC Archives.
- ²³ *South Australian Register*, 6 June 1855, p.2.
- ²⁴ George Francis to City Council, Report on Palmer Place Improvement, 11 September 1854, ECR/0066BD4:01, ACC Archives.
- ²⁵ Paolo Villanis to Town Clerk, Report re Olive Plantations, 22 February 1886, TC 1886/465, ACC Archives.
- ²⁶ *South Australian Register*, 8 July 1857, p.2.
- ²⁷ Colonial Secretary to Town Clerk, Adelaide City Council, 7 July 1855, GRG 24/6/1381, SRSA.
- ²⁸ Colonial Secretary to Town Clerk, Adelaide City Council, 2 August 1855, GRG 24/6/2129, SRSA.
- ²⁹ Colonial Secretary to Town Clerk, Adelaide City Council, 2 August 1855, GRG 24/6/3289, SRSA.
- ³⁰ Colonial Secretary to Town Clerk, Adelaide City Council, 20 August 1855, GRG 24/6/1740, SRSA.
- ³¹ David Solman, *Loddiges of Hackney*, Hackney Society, London, 1995.
- ³² ‘Memories of 1839, Mr F.M. Bailey’s Story’, *Advertiser*, 7 July 1913, p.5; *Adelaide Observer*, 14 March 1915, p.31.
- ³³ *Adelaide Observer*, 3 May 1845, pp.1–2.
- ³⁴ Advertisement for Green and Wadham’s auction of Bailey’s Garden, 22 February 1861, St Peters Library, Elizabeth Warburton Collection.
- ³⁵ Colonial Manager [William Giles] to John Bailey, 24 June 1843, BRG 42/28/579, State Library of South Australia (SLSA).
- ³⁶ London Manager [David McLaren] to Colonial Manager [William Giles], 8 August 1844, BRG 42/27/83, SLSA.
- ³⁷ McLaren to Giles, 2 April 1845, BRG 42/27/92, SLSA.
- ³⁸ Colonial Manager [Joseph Watts, per William Giles] to McLaren, 2 August 1845, BRG 42/9/74, SLSA.
- ³⁹ Watts to McLaren, as amended; St Peters Library, Elizabeth Warburton Collection, ‘Hackney Nursery’, cites GRO 5:360; Register of Company Land, Section 256, Hackney, BRG 42/10, SLSA.
- ⁴⁰ ‘Catalogue of Rare and Valuable Plants, Shrubs &c for Sale by Auction...’, 12 May 1858, 16 May 1858, 9 June 1858, 23 June 1858, 8 July 1858, 21 July 1858, 11 August 1858.

- ⁴¹ John Bailey to Colonial Secretary, 26 July 1856, GRG 24/6/2436 and 18 August 1856, GRG 24/6/2701, SRSA; Thomas Worsnop, *History of the City of Adelaide*, facs. Williams, Adelaide, 1878, pp.135–136.
- ⁴² Townsend Duryea, 'Panorama of Adelaide', 1865, B 5099, SLISA. An interactive, on-line reproduction of the Duryea Panorama is at <http://www.fusion.com.au/duryea/>; it claims that the plantations were gums.
- ⁴³ *South Australian Register*, 17 June 1875, p.7.
- ⁴⁴ Villanis to Town Clerk, 22 February 1886, TC 1886/465; 22 June 1885, TC 1885/1585, ACC Archives.
- ⁴⁵ Colonial Secretary to Council, 1 July 1856, GRG 24/90/803, SRSA; Colonial Secretary to Town Clerk, 1 July 1856, TC 1856/282, ACC Archives.
- ⁴⁶ Town Clerk to Colonial Secretary, 9 July 1856, GRG 24/6/2231, SRSA.
- ⁴⁷ Department for Environment and Heritage, 'Mann Terrace Development', unpublished paper, undated, 6628-10960, pp.1–2.
- ⁴⁸ Chief Secretary to Bailey, 18 November 1856, TC 1857/243, ACC Archives.
- ⁴⁹ Chief Secretary to Council, 14 February 1857, TC 1857/480, ACC Archives.
- ⁵⁰ Bailey to Town Clerk, 22 June 1857, TC 1857/652; 23 June 1857, TC 1857/665, ACC Archives.
- ⁵¹ *South Australian*, 6 July 1849, p.2.
- ⁵² *South Australian Gazette and Mining Journal*, 24 August 1850, p.3.
- ⁵³ *South Australian Register*, 20 July 1870, p.6; 17 June 1875, p.6; Best, pp.31–32.
- ⁵⁴ J.L. Dow, *Agriculture in South Australia*, E & D Syme, Melbourne, 1874, p.10.
- ⁵⁵ *South Australian Register*, 11 June 1864, p.2; 6 September 1864, p.2.
- ⁵⁶ On Davenport, see Loyau, pp.86–88; Beverley A. Nicks, 'Davenport, Sir Samuel', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Vol.4, Melbourne University Press, Carleton, 1972, pp.25–26; for Davenport as a promoter of olive cultivation in the 1860s, see Samuel Davenport, *Some New Industries for South Australia*, Rigby, Adelaide, 1864.
- ⁵⁷ *South Australian Register*, 13 September 1864, p.3.
- ⁵⁸ *South Australian Register*, 1 June 1873, p.3.
- ⁵⁹ *South Australian Register*, 3 July 1856, p.2; 13 August 1856, p.2; 19 September 1856, p.2.
- ⁶⁰ On Boothby, see Loyau, p.65; G.N. Hawker, 'Boothby, William Robinson', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Vol. 3, Melbourne University Press, Carleton, 1969, pp.196–197.
- ⁶¹ Mayor's Report, December 1863, December 1864; William Boothby to Town Clerk, 16 November 1863, TC 1863/319; 27 May 1867, TC 867/190; 9 February 1869, TC 1869/52, ACC Archives.
- ⁶² *Adelaide Observer*, 13 June 1868, p.9.
- ⁶³ Mayor's Report, December 1864, ACC Archives.
- ⁶⁴ *South Australian Register*, 20 July 1870, p.6; *Adelaide Observer*, 23 July 1870, p.9; *South Australian Register*, 20 September 1870, p.5.
- ⁶⁵ Dow, p.12.
- ⁶⁶ *South Australian Parliamentary Debates*, 13 November 1877, p.1563.
- ⁶⁷ Mayor's Report, December 1879, p.104, ACC Archives.
- ⁶⁸ William Boothby, *The Olive: Its Culture and Products in the South of France and Italy*, W.C. Cox, Government Printer, Adelaide, 1878, p.36.
- ⁶⁹ William Boothby to Town Clerk, 4 June 1880, TC 1880/1567, ACC Archives.
- ⁷⁰ Jim Daly, *Decisions and Disasters: alienation of the Adelaide Parklands*, Bland House, Adelaide, 1987, pp.107–111.
- ⁷¹ Daly, p.107.
- ⁷² J. Martindale, 'The Olive Oil Rumpus', in *Our South Australian Past*, n.p., Adelaide, 1958(?), Book 1; H.T. Burgess (ed.), *The Cyclopedia of South Australia*, Vol 2, Cyclopedia Co., Adelaide, 1907–1909, p 121.
- ⁷³ *Adelaide Observer*, 23 July 1870, p.9.
- ⁷⁴ *South Australian Register*, 20 September 1870, p.5; 17 June 1875, p.7.
- ⁷⁵ *South Australian Register*, 17 June 1875, p.7.
- ⁷⁶ *South Australian Register*, 17 June 1875, p.7.
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- ⁷⁸ *Daily Herald*, 8 October 1910, p.13; 11 October 1910, p.3.
- ⁷⁹ *South Australian Register*, 6 June 1871, p.5
- ⁸⁰ A. Smith to Town Clerk, 18 August 1872, TC 1872/563; 18 September 1872, TC 1872/657, ACC Archives.
- ⁸¹ William Pengilly to Town Clerk, 28 July 1874, TC 1874/639, ACC Archives.

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- ⁸² Shaw and Denton to Town Clerk, 5 May 1873, TC 1873 /401, ACC Archives.
- ⁸³ Smith to Town Clerk, 14 June 1880, TC 1880/1663; 9 July 1880, TC 1880/1956, ACC Archives.
- ⁸⁴ William Pengilly to Town Clerk, 16 July 1872, TC 1872/519; 4 September 1872, TC 1872/622, ACC Archives.
- ⁸⁵ Villanis to Town Clerk, 13 July 1883, TC 1883/2224, ACC Archives; *South Australian Register*, 24 July 1883, p.6.
- ⁸⁶ Villanis to Town Clerk, 22 February 1886, TC 1886/465.
- ⁸⁷ Mayor's Report, 1877, p.10, ACC Archives.
- ⁸⁸ Mayor's Report, 1882, p.34, ACC Archives.
- ⁸⁹ *Adelaide Observer*, 28 June 1884, p.10.
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