

GARDEN NOTES

ROKEBY

Rokeby was settled in 1837 by Joseph Hawdon as part of the 'Tallarook Run' which spread some 27,000 acres from Sunday Creek to King Parrot Creek with the Goulburn River as its northern boundary. Parts of the boundaries were unfenced and simply defined by trees marked with an axe or by the watershed of the Tallarook ranges.

The current homestead dates from the 1870's. The Victorian homestead has been extended over the years and its look today was the result of a major renovation in the 1920's. The cottage to the east of the homestead is the original home and parts of it are made from handmade bricks with the original shingle roof remaining under the corrugated iron roof.

For much of its time, Rokeby was operated as a sheep station. The two stand shearing shed is located to the east of the homestead.

During World War II Rokeby was leased by the Australian Army for the 2/22 battalion and became a tented city for thousands of Australian and later, American troops. Remnants of the army's kitchen and ablution blocks remain on the property dotted along the Rokeby Creek. The army officers resided in the main homestead.

The climate at Rokeby is Mediterranean and we receive just over 560mm of rainfall in an average year and in winter we suffer more than our fair share of frosts!

When we purchased Rokeby in July 2008, the garden was smaller and rundown. We set out to create a country garden utilising the existing framework and microclimates provided by some mature trees. We had a vision of creating a Victorian 'Gardenesque' garden that would complement the charm of the homestead.

In designing the garden, we knew we had to 'think big', believing that country gardens need water features, mass plantings, broad terraces and strong design elements.

The only exotic trees of any consequence were the large *Cupressus macrocarpa* near the garage, the *Sequoia sempervirens* near the front gate and the *Liquidamber styraciflua* and *Catalpa bignonioides*, half way up the front driveway.

Some old eucalypts remained, the most notable being a 'ring tree' created by the Taurungurung people hundreds of years ago by grafting together branches of the tree to form rings. The 'ring tree' is an old *Eucalyptus melliodora* specimen and much of its contorted trunk lies on the ground.

The garden is dissected by a massive granite / ironstone interface. It is likely that the 'ring tree' was created to mark this interface, as on one side of the 'ring tree' is ironstone-based soil and on the other is granitic soil. The native vegetation would have varied accordingly. Apart from the 'ring tree' there are over 1500 different species growing in the garden. We hope you enjoy them all on your visit.

Mark Plaisted and Jason Ronald OAM

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Rokeby is located on the lands of the Taungurung people. Open Gardens Victoria wishes to acknowledge the Traditional custodians and we pay respect to their Elders, past, present and emerging.

These notes can be downloaded from the Open Gardens Victoria website:
www.opengardensvictoria.org.au