GOVERNMENT GARDENS / STIRLING GARDENS

Perth's first public garden seen from the Town Hall's clock tower

ABOVE: Almost immediately after the foundation of Perth in August 1829, the Scottish-born naturalist James Drummond set up a 'naturalisation garden' within what would become Stirling Gardens. Here Drummond planted the seeds of various food crops brought with him from England in order to discover what would and would not grow successfully in this unknown climate. In addition to the vegetable and fruit varieties Drummond propagated, he also planted some acorns from which two oak trees, still to be seen in the garden, grew. The garden was gazetted as a botanical garden in 1845, becoming Perth's first public garden. A year later it was leased to Henry Cole, before returning to government control in 1856. The Governor's jetty can be clearly seen on the left side of the photograph. In the foreground are the early sections of Central Government Offices and beyond the gardens are the Court House (left) and the Commissariat Stores (right).
The park continued to be the city's botanic gardens until 1962 when the nearby Kings Park Botanic Gardens were officially established. Government Gardens (renamed Stirling Gardens in 1979) were redesigned in 1965 by the City of Perth Parks and Gardens Department, using Toodyay stone for retaining walls and shallow pools, one of which has a much photographed group of bronze kangaroos at the water's edge. The garden also features other sculptures such as the statue of Alexander Forrest (1849–1901), a prominent Western Australian explorer, politician and Mayor of Perth. Other features include the Holocaust Memorial and (visible behind the lamp-post on the left) Harmony of Minerals, an obelisk erected in 1971. The obelisk consists of a 14-metre (46-foot) oil drill pipe on which have been threaded 15 different Western Australian ores representing the natural wealth of the state. On the left of the photograph is the corner of the 1963 Council House office block, while over the roof of the Central Government Offices, by the river, is the glass spire of the Bell Tower (also known as Swan Bells), which opened in 2000 as part of Western Australia's millennium celebrations. Drummond's original oak trees can still be found among the central block of trees in this picture.