

PROJECT: EASTWOODHILL ABORETUM: Memorial to HB & E Williams



CLIENT: Williams Family & Eastwoodhill Arboretum

STATUS: Constructed 2009.

SITE PHOTO: Proposed site



View towards the petanque court – location of the proposed site

The site selected for the Williams memorial is close to the Visitor Centre and is accessible to wheel chairs. The design of a focal point within the arboretum fulfills the wish of the Eastwoodhill Board to create several nodes of educational interest within the arboretum that will act as 'destinations' within the wider site.

The existing landscape of the selected site comprises a small knoll within the arboretum that had been flattened on the top for the introduction of a petanque court that is no longer used. At the southern margin of the spur there is a crescent of cypresses which form the backdrop to the site. To the north there is a beautiful vista up the hill towards an open grassed area and the trees beyond. This view is framed by two existing maple trees. A farm-type fence and gate enclosing the area has been removed. The knoll drops away to the west to a lovely small valley over which there are expansive views now that immediate shrubs obstructing the view have been cleared. Once again this valley view takes in a range of stunning trees.

The overall effect desired with the design of the site is to give the appearance of the knoll being restored to a gently curved top into which the stone spiral wall is cut, creating a gathering space where groups of visitors, school children and families may come, sit, enjoy the floating marble sphere and take in the view.

EELA DESIGN PROCESS:

EELA was charged with a dual brief for this project: firstly to design a contemplative water feature that would be a suitable memorial to the arboretum's benefactors: Bill and Elizabeth

Williams; and secondly to fulfill the wishes of the Board to provide an educational and gathering destination within the arboretum that would meet the needs of visitors, tourists and groups of school children. It was hoped that a new site would also provide opportunities for the staging of public events and concerts.

EELA provided advice to the Williams family regarding several potential sites for the memorial and a preliminary concept was prepared for an earlier site. After some time the present site was chosen for its proximity to the Visitor Centre and its accessibility by wheelchair along paths with good gradients and width.

The design emerged from conceptual sketches prepared by EELA and comprises two simple but striking elements set within a beautiful amphitheatre within the arboretum:

- The floating granite sphere
- The Fibonacci spiral stone wall

The Floating Sphere

The floating granite sphere was advocated for passionately by Marcus Williams and was purchased from China. Made of black marble, the ball has a girth of 800mm, the base 900mm and together they stand at a finished height of a metre. Collectively they weigh 750 kilograms.

The Fibonacci spiral stone wall

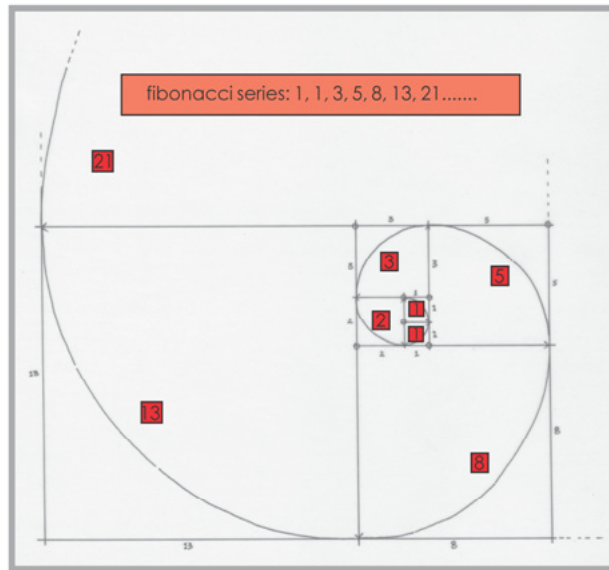
The Fibonacci spiral is similar to many spirals that occur in nature (the patterns of a seed head of a sunflower, the curve of certain sea shells). It is based on a mathematical series and is relatively simple to draw. Each number in the sequence is the sum of the previous two numbers. The spiral is interpreted on site as a low stone wall that emerges from the woodland as a dry stone wall built in local limestone. This material echoes the dry stone walls used nearby in the arboretum alongside paths.

Near the entrance to the central space, the wall gradually morphs into a mortared wall built from Rainbow Mountain andesite. It encloses the space where the floating sphere sits providing natural seating opportunities and a space for contemplative meditation or gathering. The sloping top of the wall and the re-contoured land behind it are designed to create the illusion of a restored curved knoll in the wider landscape.

On the ground the squares of the Fibonacci sequence are outlined with cobbles and a grassed koru wraps towards the centre of the sphere.

SITE USE

The site is proving very popular with visitors and schools alike. Evening concert events are held annually and the teddy bear's picnic is popular with families.



Fibonacci spiral: mathematical sequence
 The Fibonacci squares laid in cobbles on the ground replicate the mathematical sequence



Fibonacci spiral wall, Eastwoodhill

