

Walking Tour of Adelaide's Historic Olive Groves: 2

North Adelaide and the Old Adelaide Gaol

Although olives were introduced earlier into other colonies, South Australia and especially Adelaide can lay claim to be the historic centre of the Australian olive industry. Less than 50 years after its foundation, the City of Adelaide (and neighbouring Hackney) boasted more than 7000 — possibly as many as 30,000! — olive trees, planted mostly by the Corporation in the city's parks and squares. This walk connects many of the surviving olive trees on the northern side of Adelaide. It is unstructured; start and finish anywhere. It will take you close to the River Torrens, Adelaide Oval and the cafés of O'Connell, Melbourne and Hindley Streets.

George Francis and Adelaide's Parks and Squares

George Francis (1799–1865) was an experienced botanist, eventually becoming the first Superintendent and Director of the Botanic Garden (1855). In 1854 he won several tenders from the Adelaide City Council to design and plant the major squares and parks around the city, including the five City squares, Brougham Gardens (1a) and Palmer Place (1b); these plans incorporated olive trees, probably as ornamentals and for their shade. Later, as Director of the Botanic Garden, Francis was also responsible for planting other ornamental olive trees, for example in the grounds of Government House.



In 1850 Francis pressed the first, small quantity of olive oil from the South Australia Company's olive trees at Bailey's Gardens; this was displayed at the Great Exhibition of Nations in London in 1851 where it won an honourable mention for its clarity, colour and flavour. Despite such an encouraging start, however, and despite several attempts, olive oil was not pressed in commercial quantities for another 20 years.

1836 – 1856

George Stevenson introduced the first successful olive trees into South Australia (A, 1836). He was an early advocate of olive cultivation, in 1844 recommending that the South Australia Company import olive stock; these were planted in the nursery of Stevenson's associate, John Bailey. In 1855 the Adelaide City Council contracted Bailey to revegetate sections of the North Parklands (B), some of which he planted with olives.

For more information see the Walking Tour of Adelaide's historic olive groves: 1

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William Boothby and the Adelaide Gaol

In 1862 the Adelaide City Council planted about 2 hectares of olive trees near the Adelaide Gaol as part of its revegetation of the Parklands. "With a view to provide means of useful employment to the short sentenced prisoners", the Superintendent of the Gaol, William Boothby (1829–1903), developed the grove as a commercial operation, adding over 50 hectares of trees in the 1870s. In 1870 he established an oil press, probably the first commercial press in Australia. Its success attracted criticism from other influential oil producers and it ceased production after the First World War

Boothby became an authority on olive cultivation and oil production, travelling to Europe to study olive culture in 1876–77 and publishing *The Olive, its Culture and Products...* in 1878. In the same year he also imported "Boothby's Lucca" [in fact "Frantoiana"] from Italy. Contemporaries recognised that Boothby was "the first to take substantial steps to demonstrating [the value of oil manufacture in its commercial aspect]."



Aerial view of the Central Parklands, looking West (from approximately 2a, with the Old Adelaide Gaol plantation in the foreground, in the late 1930s, showing the extent of the groves and the loss of trees to the Police Barracks (A) and the railways (B, C). Courtesy SLSA