

THE GARDENS' STATUE OF LEDA.- a displaced queen.

Leda is one of the Stoddart statues erected in the Gardens in 1884. In Greek mythology she holds an important place producing two eggs having being impregnated by the god Zeus in the form of a swan and by her husband Tyndareus, King of Sparta on the same night. One of the eggs produced the twins, Castor and Clytemnestra, and the other Polydeuces and Helen (of Troy). Our statue features a rather pathetic swan involved in the seduction compared with the depictions by Michelangelo, Leonardo, Correggio and others.

When originally erected she was placed in a commanding position inside what is now the Morey Gates entrance to the Gardens. It was in 1888 that Mr Stoddart received a letter from the Town clerk stating that the trustees of the Thomson bequest had determined a site for the newly completed statue of Wallace and requesting his permission to move Leda to a different site of his choosing. This he did and she is now situated at the southern end of the Wellingtonia Avenue. Her attitude could be interpreted as being somewhat dispirited which is not surprising having been displaced from her position of eminence to the periphery of the central garden, albeit by a Scottish hero.

(A bit like a deposed Prime minister being relegated to the back bench. jg)

THE LYCH GATE.

Walking from the North Gardens into the fernery area one passes through the Lych Gate. This was erected in the Gardens in 1997 as a joint project by the City of Ballarat and the then Y's Men's Club of Ballarat to celebrate the 75th anniversary of the establishment of the Y's men's International in Toledo. The sign on the side wall was presented by the Ballarat Y's Menettes Club in 1999.

It is essentially an entrance gate to the central area of the Gardens. The Gordon cottage, just inside, had previously been refurbished by the School of Mines Building section with the support of the Y's Men's Club. It resembles the old Lych Gates seen in the village churches of England and many in Australia.

"Lych" is the ancient English name for "corpse" and it was to the Lych Gate that corpses were taken prior to their internment maybe several days later. Originally the corpses were contained in a shroud then later in coffins. It might lie for one or two days inside the gate before the burial took place and then carried up to the church with the clergyman. There were seats in many for the friends and relatives to keep an eye on the coffins, particularly so when bodies were sought after for dissection in the 18th and early 19th centuries. In some a raised stone was placed on which to rest the deceased.

Our Lych Gate was built by the School of Mines and presumably named as such being an interpretation of the old design but without seats. Fortunately, it has not been used in the same way as its predecessors. Apart from the ashes of Tom Toop there has been no history of internments in the Gardens.

It is interesting that the Melbourne Botanical Gardens also have a Lych Gate. When we next have a visit from our patron, Prof. Tim Entwisle, he may be able to tell us how many bodies he has in his bailiwick.

(Thanks to Lee Ditchfield for his input re. the Y's Men's Club. Jg 11/19)