

# Lindsay Napier architect

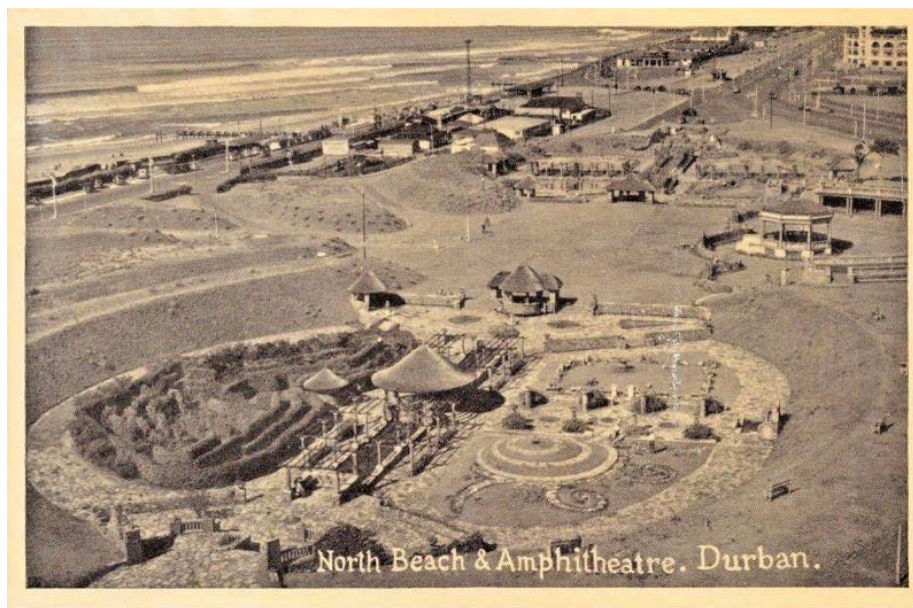
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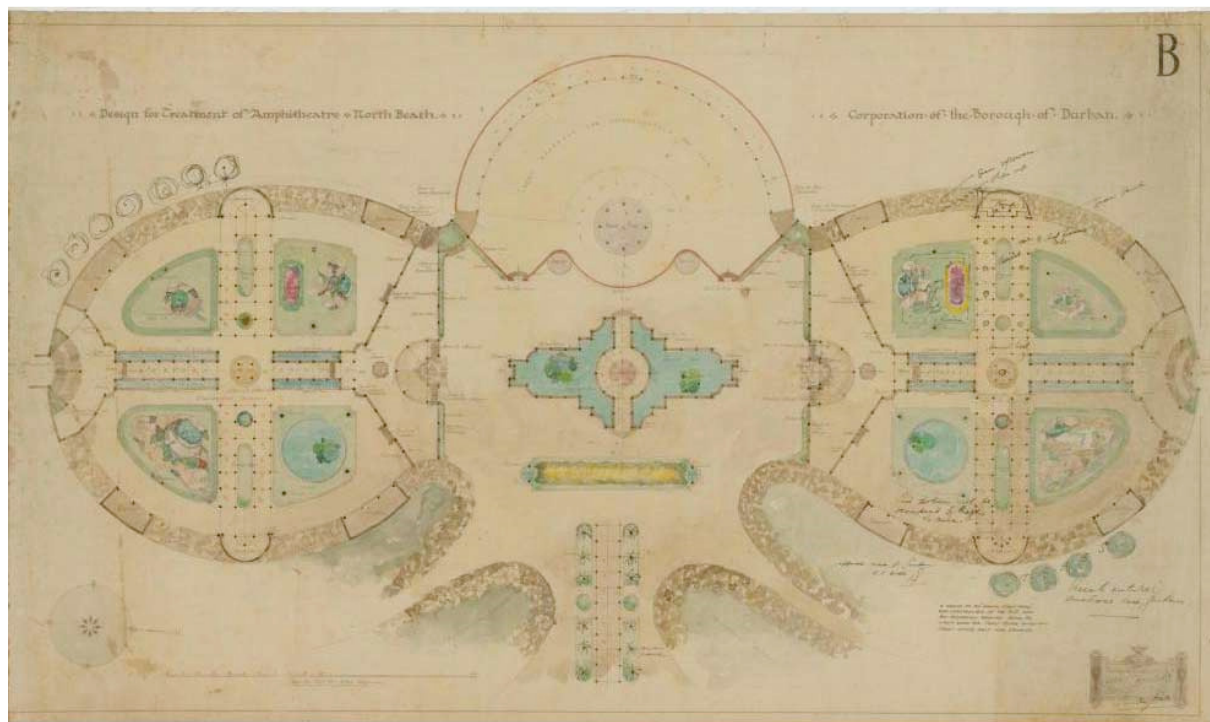
20 February 2023

## **CONTRACT : 1X-45513- DURBAN CENTRAL BEACHFRONT CONSULTING SERVICES FOR REINSTATEMENT OF INFRASTRUCTURE @ DURBAN SUNKEN GARDENS BAY OF PLENTY AMPHITHEATRE**

### **Amafa Application for restoration and repair**

#### HERITAGE ASSESSMENT AND SUMMARY





The gardens were designed by William Murray-Jones in 1931. Murray-Jones worked for the Brazilian Government as well as in London and Spain before coming to SA in 1924. He was appointed Chief architect of the Durban Corporation in 1929. He designed the Natal Command Headquarters on Snell Parade, Dbn Traffic Depot, Warriors Gate, The port Natal Administration Board offices and the KwaMuhle Museum.

The project was an initiative by the Durban Corporation (Dbn City Council) to create work for the residents of Durban. The Great Depression had hit the residents hard and many were out of work. An area of dunes and grass on the beachfront of North Beach was envisaged as a recreation area with a formal English garden, a music pavilion and an amphitheatre. The materials were supplied by the Durban Corporation and the labour were the unemployed residents of Durban.

Memories recounted by the older generation recall how the initiative was appreciated and tackled with enthusiasm by men and women from all walks of life. Other accounts are of the many hours of enjoyment using the amphitheatre for roller skating, for ballroom dancing and enjoying music concerts performed from the pavilion.

The gardens feature in numerous family photo albums as they became the favourite backdrop for family photographs of toddlers, weddings, girlfriends and others. They also were a favourite place for walking with children, the gardens providing interest at every corner. Water, flowers, trees, birds, butterflies, rocks... the combination could not go wrong.

The gardens continue to offer “Instagram” backdrops and interesting walks in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

The original landscaping plan prepared by Jones bears many site notes, indicating that the design was fairly fluid. The resultant layout was not necessarily exactly as Jones had drawn it. A major change was the introduction of a Maze on the North-Eastern semi-circle, this can be seen in an early postcard. It is unknown when the maze was removed and why it was removed.

Photographs and postcards through the years show many changes to the landscaping, both paths and plants. The resemblance of the gardens to the earliest postcard is minimal with the outer shape, location and size being the key point of identification.

Slight changes are noticeable in the landscaping and the organisation of the gardens between 1932 and 1960.

Major changes were in the 1960's and in 2010. The gazebos that were originally roofed with thatch were replaced with machined timber rafters and timber slats with malthoid membrane coverings. Estimated date of change is between 1960 and 1970.

The pavilion and the central ponds were demolished at some stage before the 1980's.

The Beachfront upgrade implemented in 2010 impacted the gardens and amphitheatre greatly.

Ground levels were changed and trees removed. Large areas of paving replaced planted areas, leaving a barren landscape. Fortunately, the retention of some original fig trees and the planting of indigenous plants has reestablished the gardens.

