

NAME: 'Almond Grove', Giles Road, WILLUNGA

CURRENT USE: Avenue of Almond trees

FORMER USE: Almond grove

DATE(S) OF CONSTRUCTION: Planted in c.1898

LOCATION: Giles Road (corner of Aldinga Road to 16 Giles Road), WILLUNGA

LAND DESCRIPTION: Section 256, Hundred of Willunga

OWNER: City of Onkaparinga

RECOMMENDATION: Local Heritage Place



'Almond Grove', Giles Road, Willunga (GGA, 2021)

NAME: 'Almond Grove', Giles Road, WILLUNGA

DESCRIPTION:

Approximately 50 'Brown Brandis' almond trees, planted by Spencer Alan Hall in c.1898; forming the surviving remnant of the earliest identified commercial almond grove for the Willunga district.

It is recommended that 'Almond Grove', Giles Road, Willunga be included on the South Australian Heritage Register as a Local Heritage place.

A delineation of significant historic fabric is provided in the Extent of Listing.

STATEMENT OF HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE:

'Almond Grove', Giles Road, Willunga is of significance as the surviving remnant of Willunga's earliest identified commercial almond grove, planted by Spencer Alan Hall in c.1898. 'Almond Grove' is also strongly associated with the Hall family, who were prominent figures in the development of almond production in Willunga during the 20th century.

RELEVANT CRITERIA (As defined in Section 67(1) of the PDI Act 2016):

- a) it displays historical, economic or social themes that are of importance to the local area; being identified as the earliest commercial almond grove planting in Willunga, planted by Spencer Alan Hall in approximately 1898. In the mid-20th century, almond production would become an important local commercial enterprise.
 - b) it represents customs or ways of life that are characteristic of the local area; being the earliest identified surviving example of Willunga's almond production commercial enterprise in the 20th century.
 - e) it is associated with a notable local personality or event; being strongly associated with the Hall family who were responsible for planting in c.1898 and who retained a long association with almond production in Willunga during the 20th century.
 - g) in the case of a tree, it is of special historical or social significance or importance within the local area; being the earliest identified and surviving examples of almond grove planting in Willunga; documented as having been planted by Spencer Alan Hall in c.1898.
-

RELEVANT HISTORIC THEMES:

Theme 2: Regional Life in the Southern Vales

2.8 Significant local trees and plantings

Theme 5: Food Production in the Southern Vales

5.5 Horticulture

BRIEF HISTORICAL BACKGROUND:

The heritage values of 'Almond Grove', Giles Road Willunga do not appear to have been identified or assessed as part of any previous heritage survey.

The website 'Willunga Now and Then' records a detailed historical description of the row of Almond Trees on Giles Road, Willunga; provided as follows:

This row of about 50 Brown Brandis almond trees are all that remain from 10 acres planted by Alan (Spencer Alan) Hall in 1901 on what was formerly a vineyard. The varieties planted were Brandis, Hatch's Nonpareil and California Paper shells. Alan was the son of local bank manager Spencer Atkinson Hall and was consecutively a vigneron, almond-grower and dairy farmer at Willunga. Hall Road is named after his family.

These very old trees now mark the boundary of Willunga's first almond grove on Section 256. This was the earliest known commercial planting of almonds in the district. Prior to that, almonds were grown with fruit trees in home gardens. Then the practice developed of growing them as 'bonus' crops on the boundaries of land used for other purposes. Thomas Atkinson of Ashley Farm was another pioneer almond grower. Then in 1909, Richard Strout planted 30 acres with Johnston and Californian Paper Shell varieties together with the Strout variety which he evolved specifically for Willunga conditions. Another 50 acres followed. Walter Brown began planting almonds in 1927. In 1934 the newly-formed Almond Groves Company purchased Ashley Farm and planted its 240-acres to almonds.

During the 1930s commercial plantings continued on an even larger scale, using the increasingly popular Chellaston variety. The Giles family began planting almonds in 1946. Almonds were initially grown contrary to horticultural advice which suggested that the land was too near the sea for adequate growth and also that the crops would be destroyed by the prevalent white cockatoos. Nevertheless, a thriving industry developed to the stage where in the 1970s over 2000 hectares of land in the district were planted to almonds. New varieties were developed to suit local conditions and Willunga was the centre of the State's almond production until the emphasis shifted to the Riverland in the late 1970s.

The Annual Almond Blossom Festival celebrates the importance of the almond growing industry which provided a solid economic base for Willunga from the 1930s to the 1970s.

Giles Road commemorates the Giles family who settled in Willunga in the 1930s; they were among the pioneers of commercial almond growing in the district.

('Almond trees, Giles Road'; https://willunga.nowandthen.net.au/Almond_trees,_Giles_Rd, accessed 9/2/2022).

While limited historical information is available, it would appear that current research supports the findings of the above biography. Lands Title records relating to the site date to October 1875 when the site, comprising a portion of Section 256 of the Hundred of Willunga, was acquired by John Bastian of Willunga, farmer. The land was transferred to Spencer Atkinson Hall, father of Spencer Alan Hall, in April 1888; Spencer Alan Hall would later inherit the property in 1919. A 1983 newspaper article also records that "At the turn of the century, 500 trees were planted for Willunga's bank manager, Mr. Spencer Hall." (Almond origins in a nutshell, 1983, p.31). The National Trust of SA's biography notes that the Giles Road specimens were planted in 1898 with plantings to Aldinga Road following in c.1901. Subsequent owners include the Jacobs family (1929-1969) and the King family (1969-1987). In 1987 the site was transferred to Willunga Estates Pty. Ltd who subdivided the Giles Road residential allotments at this time.

No evidence of any earlier commercial almond groves have been identified, suggestive that the Hall family's c.1898 almond grove, including 'Almond Grove', Giles Road, Willunga, is indeed

Willunga's earliest identified commercial almond grove. The 1983 article also identifies that "Mr Hall's (Spencer Atkinson Hall) grandson, Mr. Ken Hall, has continued in the family tradition, and has a mixed farm in the Willunga area, including his own 500 almond trees;" demonstrating the Hall family's long association with almond production in the Willunga district.

EXTENT OF LISTING:

The form and materials of all surviving 'Brown Brandis' almond tree examples on Giles Road, Willunga, located between the corner of Aldinga Road and the southern boundary of 16 Giles Road, Willunga, are included in the listing.

It should be noted that all 'Brown Brandis' almond tree specimens are located on Council land immediately east of the cadastral boundaries of residential sites along Giles Road. As such, the heritage listing of these items will not result in heritage legislation applied to these residential properties. Owners of these residential sites should be made aware however of the heritage significance of the Giles Road almond trees and their siting on Council property to avoid any potential damage or removal of these heritage items.

REFERENCES:

CTs 214/22; 4031/987; 4289/744; 4323/656; etc.

https://willunga.nowandthen.net.au/Almond_trees_Giles_Rd, accessed 9/2/2022.

[National Trust - Almond \(Prunus dulcis syn. P. amygdalus\) \(trusttrees.org.au\)](http://trusttrees.org.au), accessed 9/2/2020.

Almond origins in a nutshell, Victor Harbour Times, Wed 10 Aug 1983, p.31.

SITE MAPPING:



Site of 'Almond Grove', Giles Road, Willunga: red hatch denotes location of almond trees from the corner of Aldinga Road to the southern boundary of 16 Giles Road, Willunga (Planning SA SAPP A)

HISTORICAL IMAGES:



Almond blossom time in Willunga, c.1942 (SLSA PRG 1752/2/35).



Almond trees in blossom on Giles Road, Willunga in c.2000

(<https://www.flickr.com/photos/willunganowandthen/26310151982/>, accessed 9/2/2022)

OTHER IMAGES:



c.1898 'Brown Brandis' almond trees immediately east of 4 Giles Road, Willunga (GGA, 2021)