

MEET WILLIAM CHAMP

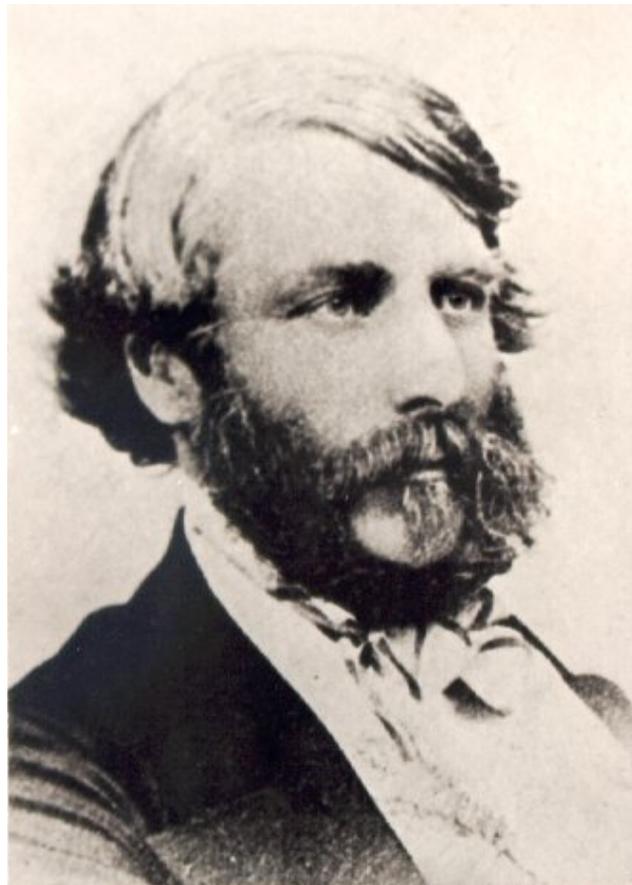
“Something of this kind was much needed for the ladies of the settlement.”

Plants and gardens were Commandant William Champ's lifelong passion. He even preferred them to beer!

Champ's predecessor, Charles O'Hara Booth, had already established a thriving and productive garden at the Commandant's official residence. It was 'filled with fruit trees, gooseberries, currants and almost every plant to be found in English gardens'. He was particularly proud of his strawberries. But Champ also wished to make his mark. He wrote to his mother, asking her to send him 'the plants of Old England'. She selected camellias and carnations from her own garden and gathered wild flowers, crab apples and blackberries while walking in the woods near her home. These she dutifully dispatched to her green-fingered son.

Having poured his enthusiasm into his own garden, he looked around for further opportunities. His eye lighted on the hop fields in front of Government Cottage. The hops, which had been well-established and profitable, were suddenly removed and, under Champ's direction, an ambitious pleasure garden began to take shape. It was to be a private refuge for the ladies of the settlement to walk in, with shady paths, a fountain fed by an ingenious canal, a shady arbour and a summer house affording a fine view over the cove.

The willow which shaded the summer house was said to be from a cutting from the willow overhanging Napoleon's tomb on St Helena. Many other plants were collected from the exotic ports through which travellers to Van Diemen's Land had passed. Unusually for his day, Champ was also



*William Champ circa 1856.
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interested in native plants and included them in both his private and public gardens.

Port Arthur's gardens are one of its most appealing features and a highlight of their visit for many people. From cottage gardens that were reminders of 'home' to productive vegetable patches and orchards, to avenues of oaks and elms, it is a landscape rich in history.

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