

Australian Garden HISTORY

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People and plants

Cover: *Dryandra tenuifolia* (now *Banksia tenuis*) from the Capturing Flora exhibition at the Art Gallery of Ballarat (see page 28), hand-coloured engraving from *Curtis's Botanical Magazine*, Vol. 63, August 1836, plate 3513 (detail).

Art Gallery of Ballarat (purchased with funds from the Joe White Bequest, 2012)

Right: Looking out from the garden of Dalvui, designed by William Guilfoyle in 1910 for the Palmer family of Terang, in Victoria's Western District: detail from a suite of images by photographer Simon Griffiths recently donated by the AGHS Victorian Branch to the State Library of Victoria in memory of the late Suzanne Hunt (see page 29).

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Engaging with garden history through plants

Mike Evans

August in Vanuatu, a week away from chilly Tasmania: warm

but not hot, and wet from unremitting rain. Disappointed—no—delighted. Reading on the veranda of a coral-walled *fale* with palm-thatched roof and alfresco shower (hot water, cool rain, very refreshing) and surrounded by tropical verdure. Memories flood back of years spent in Micronesia, island-hopping to collect plant specimens for a Flora of Micronesia; intense blue sea and sky, hot coral sand, tiny islands forming huge atolls, drift seeds, WW2 relics, delightful people leading simple lives.

In one sense our memories are our past and the future is just more memories in the making. For plant-lovers (that must include all members of our Society) many of our best memories linger in the gardens and landscapes that surround us every day. It is quite clear that our members love to visit gardens, other peoples gardens—to see what they grow, where, how they succeed, and then to go back home for another look at their own patch with renewed determination to change something. And the delight of gardens and plants is that you can indeed make changes with as much or as little effort as is needed.

A love of plants seems to go hand in hand with curiosity, from the most basic question ‘what is it?’ to ‘where is it from?’, ‘how did it get here?’, on and on. The search might be for basic information about cultivation to the most in-depth scientific queries about taxonomy or genetics. Last year’s Victorian Branch seminar at The University of Melbourne was essentially an enjoyable treatise on taxonomy—it was fascinating and the large audience was enraptured by a series of knowledgeable speakers.

A couple of years ago the Tasmanian Branch spent a day at Port Arthur looking at the beautiful grounds, the re-created Government Gardens, the Memorial Garden, and the surrounding bush land. What was evident is that the *bones* of the historic site are the buildings—old and not so old—that have been salvaged, stabilised, and restored to provide a picture of a short moment in Tasmania’s history. Their conservation is ongoing and its aim is to preserve the picture. The *flesh* of the site is what surrounds the buildings—the gardens, the trees, the hills, and the bay with its own vegetation. These are in a constant state of change: the house gardens manicured, renewed to provide a picturesque setting for the buildings, new features added as information comes to light (the arched pergola at the foot of the Government Garden), and other features reaching maturity then over-maturity like the 1918 Soldiers’ Memorial Avenue—no new stone walls there, perhaps a young avenue to grow for the next hundred years.

In every one of our members there is a wealth of experience. Our Society’s committees are just groups of people who want to help members to share those experiences. Please help them by sharing yours.

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Netscape: Australian Plant Name Index

www.cpbr.gov.au/anpi/

Plants are one of the basic ingredients of garden history and yet they bedevil the researcher by the very complexity of their nomenclature. Modern plant naming harks back to 1753 with the publication of *Species Plantarum* of Swedish botanist Carl Linnaeus, wherein genera and species were first set out in the currently accepted binomial or two-part form.

There are many reference tools to assist the botanist and garden history researcher, but covering all the ground is an insurmountable task for any one person. Even for Australian plants alone, there are numerous books, journals, and websites that could and should be consulted if accurate naming is to be undertaken. But websites seem by their flexibility of input and linkage, supremely well placed to keep up with name changes and other revisions.

In short, there needs to be a concise, up-to-date, and easily accessible point of reference.

One Australian botanist who inspired action was Dr Nancy Burbidge, formerly Senior Principal Research Scientist at the Division of Plant Industry, Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research

Botanist Nancy Burbidge in the field with traditional tools of trade.
Courtesy CSIRO Archives (Image 710.0074)



Organisation. Nancy Burbidge had trained at the University of Western Australia (BSc 1937, MSc 1945, and DSc 1961) with stints at the Royal Botanic Gardens Kew, the Waite Agricultural Research Institute, and from 1946–73, the CSIRO.

Upon her appointment in 1973 as Director of the Flora of Australia project, Dr Burbidge initiated the compilation of plant name lists from literature in herbaria and botanical libraries around the world. Arthur Chapman of the Australian Biological Resources Study compiled the list over a fifteen-year period, published in 1991 as a 4-volume *Australian Plant Name Index* treating over 60,000 names. The underlying database was transferred to the Australian National Botanic Gardens in 1991 as its foundation dataset, and subsequently became an Internet resource hosted for public benefit.

APNI is easy to navigate and has the added benefit for historians of the understanding it can bring to plant exploration, botanical literature, and garden history. We can trace the earliest publication of Australian plant names in the eighteenth century, witness the rise of interest by gardeners outside Australia in ‘New Holland exotics’, and appreciate the rapid spread of botanical journals in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Just as easily we can follow recent debates about renaming, explore plant name synonyms, and search for Australian cultivars. Coupled with the Biodiversity Heritage Library (see our Netscape on BHL in AGH, 21 (4), 2010), which has digitised copies of many of the botanical publications cited, this pair of websites forms a remarkably powerful tool for Australian garden historians.

Nancy Tyson Burbidge died in Canberra on 4 March 1977. She had been born in Yorkshire, England, on 5 August 1912, and throughout her life enjoyed pursuits of kindred interest to systematic botany. She was a founding member of the National Parks Association of the ACT, was prominent in lobbying for the Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve and Namadgi National Park, and an expert of Australian grasses. She died in an analogue age on the cusp of a momentous digital revolution, and surely would weep with joy could she have seen the fruits of her inspiration so widely and generously disseminated.

Richard Aitken



John Dwyer

Garden plants and wildflowers in Hamlet

Shakespeare's plays are grounded in a world of plants. More than one hundred species of wild plants are referred to in his writings. The English writer Frederick Savage discussed hundreds of plants referred to by Shakespeare in a series of articles in the Stratford-upon-Avon *Herald* in the early years of the twentieth century, republished in book form as *The Flora and Folk Lore of Shakespeare* (1923). Savage brought to bear his close acquaintance with Warwickshire ways and farming practices in his analysis of Shakespeare's flora.

In addition to literal usages in which the plants form part of Shakespeare's scenery, as it were, the imagined world which he invites us to enter, there are many uses of plant imagery to add resonance to a point, or embellish a phrase. The

references would have been readily understood by his Elizabethan audiences, but need a little more explanation to an Australian audience today. At the same time, many of the plants have become established in the countries colonised by the English, so that they are familiar to audiences here and in many countries.

There are two memorable passages in Shakespeare's *Hamlet* in which garden plants and wildflowers have an important role. Both concern the tragic figure Ophelia, wooed and then abandoned by Hamlet. The following lines are taken from the scene in which it is made apparent that Ophelia's mind has been overcome with grief at her father Polonius' violent death and the loss of Hamlet as a husband:

John Everett Millais's mid-nineteenth century painting shows in glorious detail plants referred to by Ophelia in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. Many of these are familiar 'volunteer' plants in Australia today, yet the multi-layered meanings they carried for an Elizabethan audience are perhaps less well known.

John Everett Millais (1829–1896), 'Ophelia', oil on canvas, 1851–52.

© Tate, London 2012

Ophelia There's rosemary, that's for remembrance; pray, love, remember: and there is pansies, that's for thoughts.

Laertes A document in madness, thoughts and remembrance fitted

Ophelia There's fennel for you, and columbines; there's rue for you; and here's some for me; we may call it herb of grace o'Sundays. O! you must wear your rue with a difference. There's a daisy; I would give you some violets, but they withered all when my father died...

(*Hamlet* Act IV Scene V)

The plants referred to by Ophelia are a mixture of those we recognise as culinary herbs, rosemary (*Rosmarinus officinalis* L.), rue (*Ruta graveolens* L.), fennel (*Foeniculum vulgare* Gaert.), and those which occur in both the wild and in gardens: columbines (*Aquilegia vulgaris* L.), pansies (*Viola tricolor* L.), daisy (*Bellis perennis* L.), and violets (*Viola odorata* L.). Some had well-known associations, as Shakespeare reminds us. These symbolic associations may be less well-known today, so it is worth setting them out.

The plants referred to by Ophelia are a mixture of those we recognise as culinary herbs... and those which occur in both the wild and in gardens

Sir Thomas More described rosemary as 'sacred to remembrance'. Pansies, one of the oldest favourites in the English garden, have a common name derived from the French *pensees* (thoughts), and other common names, such as heartsease and love-in-idleness which refer to the petals imagined as two faces kissing. Rue, a perennial evergreen shrub with bitter strong-scented leaves, is one of the oldest garden plants in England. It was cultivated for its use medicinally, having, together with other herbs been introduced by the Romans. Grieve's *A Modern Herbal* explained that it was used to sprinkle holy water at High Mass on Sundays, hence the name 'herb of grace o'Sundays'. Brewer's *Dictionary of Phrase and Fable* (1895) confirms this use and says that rue was symbolic of penitence, noting that 'to rue' means to be sorry. Hence the expression 'rue the day'. Fennel was also emblematic of sorrow, as shown by the old English proverb 'They that sow fennel sow sorrow'. The Elizabethans saw columbines as an emblem of worthlessness according to Savage, who quotes the couplet in Chapman's *Comedy of All Fools* (1605):

What's that? A columbine?

No! that thankless flower grows not in my garden.

Grieve also tells us that 'Violets, like Primroses, have been associated with death, especially with the death of the young.'

We are accustomed to finding multiple layers of meaning in Shakespeare, but modern readers may not realise that most of the plants mentioned by Ophelia were widely known and used in Elizabethan England to induce abortions and control fertility. Lucille Newman, in a paper published in *Economic Botany* (1979), has suggested that Ophelia's references to these herbs and flowers should be read as 'a shocking enumeration of well-known abortifacients and emmenagogues' which would have been recognised as such by Elizabethan audiences. (An emmenagogue is a drug or agent that increases menstrual flow.) Newman refers to the two-thousand-year tradition of plants used for fertility regulation, including the common herbs rosemary, fennel, rue, pansies, and violets. She gives examples from sixteenth-century herbals where it was said of rosemary, that it 'bringeth down women's fleurs'; fennel, 'it provoketh flowers'; rue, 'it driveth down floures but it killeth the bryth'; and violet, 'Seede thereof casteth out conception of women'. Of pansy, as John Gerard (1545–1612) wrote in *The Herball or Generall Historie of Plantes* (usually referred to as *Gerard's Herball*), its 'tough and slimie juice' was used against the pox (syphilis). The dramatic point in *Hamlet* could have been to reinforce the fact that Ophelia had lost her innocence, or that her references to plants with sexual associations demonstrated her madness.

The second reference to rue, 'O! You must wear your rue with a difference' has many possible meanings. It could be a (punning) reference to repentance or regret; but *difference* refers both to the heraldic meaning of marks of cadency and to a different medicinal use of the herb rue, to reduce male potency or desire. As Gerard put it, 'The leaves of Rue beaten and drunke with wine, are an antidote or medicine against passion as Plinie teacheth... Rue used very often whether in meate or drinke, quencheth and drieth up the natural seed of generation.' In the sexually charged atmosphere of the Court of King Claudius, Ophelia could be taken as suggesting to the King that he should use 'the chaste herb', as it was called. Savage puts forward the other interpretation, having Ophelia addressing Queen Gertrude, and

pointing 'to the Queen's unchaste action in so quickly returning to the wedded state.' *Difference* he said is a heraldic term for an addition to, or change in, a coat of arms. This is confirmed by Brewer who explains that Ophelia would wear rue as the affianced of Hamlet, son of the late King, and the Queen 'with a difference' as the wife of Claudius his brother and the cadet branch. Shakespeare and his contemporary audiences delighted in such ambiguities and implications.

The second passage is Queen Gertrude's account of Ophelia's death:

There is a willow grows aslant a brook,
That shows his hoar leaves in the glassy stream;
There with fantastic garlands did she come,
Of crow-flowers, nettles daisies, and long
purples,
That liberal shepherds give a grosser name,
But our cold maids do dead men's fingers
call them:
There on the pendent boughs her coronet
weeds
Clambering to hang, an envious sliver broke,
When down her weedy trophies and herself
Fell in the weeping brook. Her clothes
spread wide,
And, mermaid-like, awhile they bore her up;
Which time she chanted snatches of old tunes,
As one incapable of her own distress.

(*Hamlet* Act IV Scene VII)

What plants are the 'coronet weeds' here referred to? Some have thought 'Crow-flowers' to be Crow-foots, *Ranunculus* spp. of the Buttercup family. The *Oxford English Dictionary* gives the meaning 'a popular name for the buttercup' with a reference to this quotation. But Savage presents a strong argument, based on *Gerard's Herball* that it is a mistake to take 'Crow-flowers' as referring to 'Crow-foots', and that the intended reference was to Ragged Robin (*Lychnis flos-cuculi* L.). Gerard wrote of 'Crow-flowers' being used to make garlands: 'they serve for garlands and crowns and to deck up the garden.' Nettles (*Urtica* spp.) and daisies (*Bellis perennis* L.) are straight-forward enough, as plants widely distributed in England in Shakespeare's day (and in Australia today for that matter).

But what are the 'long purples?' Some sources, such as the *Oxford English Dictionary* give Purple Loosestrife (*Lythrum salicaria*) as the plant referred to. The eminent English writer Richard Mabey adopts this view:

Purple loosestrife is one of Britain's most beautiful flowers. John Everett Millais painted its magenta sprays on the riverbank in his picture of the drowning Ophelia.



We should accept that this was the plant Millais depicted. But, despite its beauty, it was not, I think, the plant Shakespeare had in mind. To understand the text we must give meaning to the lines that follow,

That liberal shepherds give a grosser name,
But our cold maids do dead men's fingers
call them:

The Glossary to my Oxford University Press edition of Shakespeare's works gives for 'long purples': 'the purple orchis, *Orchis mascula*'. The usual common name today is Early Purple Orchid. The 'grosser name' may be 'Dogs Stones', from the testicle-like tubers. *Orchis* is the Greek word for testicle, (hence 'orchitis' for inflammation of the testicles, 'orchidectomy' for castration). Nicholas Culpeper wrote in *The Complete Herbal* (1653) of *Orchis*: 'It has almost as many several names attributed to the several sorts of it, as would almost fill a sheet of paper; as dog-stones, goat-stones, fool-stones, fox-stones, satiricon, cullians, together with many others too tedious to rehearse.' One of these 'grosser names' seems to be what Shakespeare meant. Johnson's *Gerard's Herball* (1633) uses 'Dogs stones' as a generic name

English botanist John Gerard (1545–1612) from the frontispiece of his book *The Herball, or Generall Historie of Plantes* (1597): *Gerard's Herball* is the nearest source we have to the botanical knowledge of Shakespeare and his contemporaries of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. State Library of Victoria

for members of the *Orchis* family. His illustrations bring out the testicle-like appearance of the tubers.

That Shakespeare was referring to *Orchis* species is confirmed to some extent by the line that follows, although there is a subtle twist. Grieve gives 'Dead men's Fingers' as a common name for *Orchis maculata* L. (Spotted Orchid), the flowers of which are very similar to those of *O. mascula*. The tubers are divided into two or three finger-like lobes, hence the name. The testicular basis for 'Dogs stones' does not quite fit with 'Dead Men's Fingers', but *Orchis* still looks more likely than *Lythrum salicaria* as the plant referred to by 'long purples'.

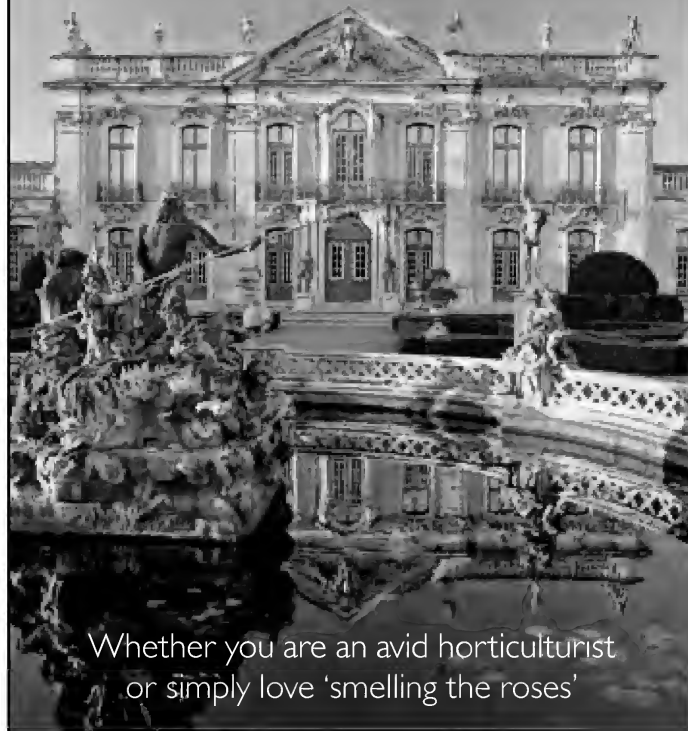
Hamlet was published in 1603, but had been performed many times before publication. When Shakespeare was writing it, herbals (books on plants describing their medicinal properties) were widely available. The best known is *Gerard's Herball* published in 1597. Classical studies included Pliny's *Natural Historie*, an English translation of which, by Philemon Holland, was published in 1601. Paul Turner wrote in the introduction to his selections from Holland's translation (1962) that 'Holland made Pliny, in effect, an Elizabethan author, and as such he has had a considerable influence on English literature. Though Shakespeare seems to have known the 'Natural History' in Latin, he probably read Holland's version when it came out in 1601.' But Shakespeare's knowledge of plants was much more than book based. The repeated references to plants in his writings confirm that his upbringing in rural Warwickshire had given him a countryman's familiarity with wildflowers and cultivated plants and an understanding of their uses in traditional medicine.

As a result of the English colonisation of Australia, most of the plants referred to in these passages are well established here. Daisy, although as the botanical name *Bellis perennis* ('continually beautiful') confirms an attractive plant in its own right, occurs mainly as a volunteer in lawns. Violets are to be found in many gardens, but is often self-sown. Nettle (*Urtica urens*) is a widespread weed of farmland, gardens, and crops. Our cultural heritage includes not only Shakespeare's texts but also the plants to which he made such telling references, and which open his writings to Australians today.

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Dr John Dwyer QC is Chair of the National Management Committee of the Australian Garden History Society.

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Ivan Barko

The French Garden at La Perouse

During a short stay at Botany Bay in early 1788, the French Lapérouse expedition planted a vegetable garden near the area now referred to as Frenchman's Bay—traces were still visible in 1824 but an exact location remains to be determined.

On 26 January 1788 two French ships, *Boussole* and *Astrolabe*, anchored off the future Frenchman's Bay in Botany Bay. Jean-François de Lapérouse, his officers, and his men were exhausted. Only six weeks earlier the natives of Tutuila in Western Samoa—then the Navigator Islands—had massacred several members of the expedition, including *Astrolabe* captain Fleuriot de Langle and scientist Chevalier de Lamanon.

The ships had sailed from the French port of Brest in 1785. Although the expedition was well organised and well endowed, the journey had become strenuous. Scurvy was growing: although

only one died, many suffered its effects. In 1786 expedition astronomer Lepaute Dagelet thought he was dying and Lapérouse, in a confidential note to a friend, confided 'when I return you will take me for a centenarian, I have no teeth and no hair left'.¹

De Langle had believed fresh drinking water was the remedy. His death was due to his attempt to collect fresh water before leaving the Navigator Islands—by which time the French had overstayed their welcome. Lapérouse did not share de Langle's belief that stored drinking water deteriorated and needed frequent replacement. He was convinced that provided water was pure, it would remain so. He considered sauerkraut, malt, and spruce beer the best remedies, but more importantly attributed great value to cleanliness—personal hygiene and uncluttered surroundings, neither easy to implement on the crowded ships of the era. Although James Lind's *Treatise of the Scurvy* had been published in 1753, the theory of citrus treatment was not yet widely known or accepted in Lapérouse's time.

¹'Le Prouse's [sic] Monument Botney [sic] Bay' by Samuel Thomas Gill (1818–1880), from his album of original sketches, 1844–66.

S.T. Gill, Mitchell Library, State Library of NSW – (PXE 722/1839/11)

The recurrent theme of scurvy in Lapérouse's journals concerns the importance of a good diet, quality liquids and solids (such as wine and flour), and fresh produce. In a letter from Botany Bay he praised the benefits of roast beef and steak, tortoises, fish, herbs, and fruit, and as early as September 1787 he had paid tribute to surgeon Rollin on Boussole, who also believed in prevention.

Awareness of the value of a diet including fresh vegetables and fruit explains why gardener Jean Nicolas Collignon was encouraged to plant 'European seeds' wherever the expedition landed. Whether they hoped to derive benefit from these before departing (they left on 10 March 1788, after just six weeks) or considered the plantings an integral part of their civilising mission, Collignon always attempted to grow European plants on stopovers.

After the British First Fleet had transferred to Port Jackson on 26 January 1788—the very day of the French arrival—the site at Botany Bay was left to Lapérouse, except for intermittent objections from Aborigines. A camp was established somewhere between today's Lapérouse monument, the Museum (former Cable Station), Father Receveur's grave, and the Frenchman's Bay beach. Although several contemporary descriptions of the camp by visiting British officers (including future governors King and Hunter) exist, they don't mention the garden explicitly.

Philip Gidley King's account says of Lapérouse:

I found him quite established, having thrown round his Tents a Stoccade, guarded by two small guns in which he is setting up two Long boats which he had in frame. An observatory tent was also fixed here, in which was an Astronomical Quadrant. Clockes &c under the Management of Monsieur Dagelet Astronomer, & one of ye Academie des Sciences at Paris.²

The first (and apparently last) descriptions of the garden we have are by French visitors in 1824, when its traces were still visible and its reputation alive. These were by men on board *Coquille*, under Louis-Isidore Duperrey's command.

Victor Lottin: An enclosure in which Lapérouse had vegetables sown is still there, it has kept the name of the French garden. It is surrounded by a hedge but the inside is almost uncultivated; some vegetables saved by the detachment

perished because of lack of water. We searched in vain for a flower in this plot located at 300 paces' distance from the tower; everything was dry and burnt. We were told that Governor Macquarie had intended to plant a beautiful garden in that place and keep its name.³

René Lesson: As Frenchmen, as travellers, we wished to pay our tribute by visiting the spot on which the illustrious and unfortunate La Perouse wrote the last dispatches which have arrived in Europe, the encampment which he formed at the north point of Botany Bay. There he made a garden in which he sowed plants to be used as remedies for his crew so weakened by sickness. The English have respected this piece of land, which bears the name of French Garden among them, and this garden to-day, partly uncultivated, formed in the sandy scrub, provides some vegetables for the soldiers who are quartered in a small tower built a short distance away on one of the points of the bay. The fruit trees are dead and could not take root here, shaken as they are by the winds from the sea. Quickly growing weeds have taken possession of the greater portion of its surface, like a symbol of the vain toil of man. A wretched wooden fence surrounds this plot, which Governor Macquarie had planned to have enclosed with substantial walls.⁴

Everything we know is in these accounts. And unless some forgotten document suddenly emerges or excavations reveal the remains of the hedge or the surrounding ditch, this is all we are likely to know of the Botany Bay French garden.

Baron Hyacinthe de Bougainville who as leader of the expedition of *Thétys* and *Espérance*, visited Sydney in 1825, left descriptions of the camp, yet without explicitly mentioning the garden. But we can credit him with instigating and funding construction of the Lapérouse monument, for which he obtained the support of Governor Sir Thomas Brisbane, a noble gesture to an ill-fated explorer.

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Born in Hungary in 1930, **Ivan Barko** was Professor of French at Monash University (1968–75) and McCaughey Professor of French at the University of Sydney (1976–90). He is a Fellow of the Australian Academy of the Humanities.



Lesley Garrett

The rural garden at Oakhampton: a century in the making

Oakhampton, near Manilla, north of Tamworth, NSW, sustained by generations of the Nixon family, is a fine example of the large, diversified garden once common in rural Australia.

Some thoughts on rural gardens

It is true that any garden survives only as long as its gardener: if the gardener quits the stage, the garden will soon be reclaimed by nature and revert to a wild state. At some time most readers will have come across a deserted rural homestead where only one chimney remains standing, but been amazed to find that a riot of garden plants flourish close by. These could include japonica, iris, oleander, plumbago, and agaves, as well as the old standbys jonquils, rosemary, snowdrops, fruiting citrus, woody pears, olives, roses gone to briar, Chinese elms, yuccas, violets, bunyas, and date palms. This ability of the planet to return to a natural balance after human intervention is one of its saving graces: without it, the natural world would quickly disappear.

City and country gardeners alike learn by experience that gardens take time to mature and do

not come about in the timeframe much of current reporting would have the hopeful believe.

The rural garden differs from its urban counterpart in many ways, the most obvious being its generous layout. As there are no restrictions on size it will be determined by an individual's store of energy and free time. The garden can expand in any direction so size is irrelevant and no specimen tree need fear for its life while growing to maturity. Plants in the garden will in part be drawn from the surrounding bush and in New England may include such species as *Casuarina*, *Eremophila*, *Pandorea pandorana*, or *Cymbidium canaliculatum* found growing wild in the forks of apple gums along creeks. Some domestic escapees leap the fence in the opposite direction to pastures greener, there to embark on life in the fast lane. Notable amongst these are *Vinca major*, *Agave americana*, and the tiresome olive.

As these gardens are far removed from urban clamour and artificial light, the senses are stirred to recognise a different order, one where nature is alive with the sounds of the natural world. Birdsong, crickets, and croaking frogs strike up overhead, underfoot, and in the waterways. A stroll in the

Oakhampton, nestled into the foothills where the New England tablelands step down to the great western plains.

Photo: Lesley Garrett



Oakhampton in 1939, showing the driveway flanked by formal plantings. Courtesy of the Nixon Family

garden after dark will reveal the wonder of the night sky with its play of moon, stars, and shadow.

As rural gardens are likely to evolve over generations, a dynasty of related gardeners will collectively shape their gardens over a long timeframe. They do not move house every seven years and are eventually rewarded with a delight unknown in the city. Such a gradual evolution allows for a type of person-to-plant history to emerge, one that sees a garden's story woven into the family narrative. And so it has come about that at Oakhampton there is a wedding tree, and over there, the ghost of an apricot tree which—just like the fish that got away—filled untold buckets with apricots in its youth keeping everyone busy for weeks.

Gardeners in rural Australia have traditionally been women

Gardeners in rural Australia have traditionally been women. They made those few garden acres close to the house into their own domain, one at the centre of an outer world dominated by their menfolk. It therefore comes as no surprise that many botanical artists throughout Australia's history have been women, lovingly recording in ink or watercolour plants from their own gardens.

Some of these mementos hang in our national galleries. Others may be hidden in a girl's autograph book compiled in the nineteenth century: there folded away behind the corner of one page may be the astonishingly beautiful depiction of a long lost fuchsia or fern.

While weather governs the availability of water, the lack of it does not seem to prevent country gardens from flourishing or influence their longevity. In fact, it is more likely to promote plant resilience and result in the survival of a wider range of species. Inherent in the DNA of all country gardeners is the knowledge of how to propagate plants and keep them alive. Nor is fashion as likely to dictate plant selection or cause old favourites to be discarded. Cuttings and seeds are often exchanged over morning tea with careful instructions on care and fond memories of the plant's glory days.

This begs two questions: what sort of plants will be found in rural gardens and which built structures are likely to be included? Expect a mix of plants, one made up of romance and longing for the species of the northern hemisphere plus indigenous plants common to the surrounding bushland and food plants such as olives, vines, and fruit trees. All will express the heart's desire; all need to be hardy.



Built structures are likely to include shade houses; extensive paths of crushed bauxite or gravel; rain water tanks covered in passionfruit vines (cool damp root run and head in the sun) with a carpet of violets underneath the stand; a shade house for ferns and orchids; copious birdbaths; arbours, arches, trellises, and pergolas; planters made from truck tyres to wheelbarrows; interesting sheds; and, with luck, a fountain and tennis court.

About Oakhampton

Oakhampton is located near Manilla, where the New England tablelands step down to the great western plains. Originally comprising grassy, white box woodland, the country was largely cleared after European settlement, but some remnant woodland with an intact understory can still be found in the region.

Oakhampton has been under the stewardship of the Nixon family for well over a hundred years, the present owners being descended from Adam Nixon who immigrated to the colony in 1840. His sons George and John established their own families on neighbouring properties called The Pines and Oakhampton. The next four generations developed their enterprises on land well suited to the mixed

farming and grazing pursuits that continue to this day. With country ranging from gentle hills to river flats and enjoying a moderate summer rainfall, the pioneer garden went from strength to strength. It survived recurrent drought, flood, frost, wool crashes, two world wars, the retirement of the horse and sulky, and the Great Depression. Over time it has seen a succession of family gardeners come and go, with countless children playing on its lawns and eating its produce.

Both the house and main gateway are built of the blue brick popular in New England in the 1930s—stepped pylons, their design echoing those of the Sydney Harbour Bridge, flank the main gate on both sides. Historically, landowners of standing bred horses for use in ploughing, riding, and occasionally racing. (Even the squatter's spectacles reflected this; the cheek pieces sprung to curve tightly round the ear and secure them at a full gallop.) Oakhampton is no exception, its' racing past evidenced by the range of loose boxes at its western garden boundary. The rural economy luxuriated in the boom years of the 1950s when wool was 'a pound a pound', but imploded in the eighties with a sharp economic downturn in part caused by drought and falling commodity prices.

Near where the pool is now sited, the faint outline of an earlier rose bed laid out in the thirties and later abandoned can still be seen in a photograph taken from the air some time in the fifties.

Courtesy of the Nixon Family

Sadly, many landowners were forced from their properties at this time but the Nixons were not amongst them.

The present custodian of Oakhampton's garden is Belinda Nixon, and the historian has much to thank her for as certain distinctive garden features created by earlier generations have been carefully retained and refined by her. With one eye for the garden as it was in the generations before her, Belinda has progressively improved its layout, working largely on her own and with some help from her son James. This almost daily endeavour for close on fifty years has resulted in a garden enlarged on all sides. Both house and garden retain vibrant Art Deco design features because Belinda, as their curator, has been at pains to retain them.

A walk through the garden

Typical of rural holdings, the homestead is surrounded on all sides by garden, this one being about one and a half hectares in size. As a working property, the Oakhampton garden can be

Three periods can be clearly identified in the garden, shown here in contrasting colours. The first period, commencing in 1880 places the earliest plantings of olives, grape vines, wisteria, and kurrajongs in the vicinity of the slab barn and concluded with the erection in 1910 of a newer timber homestead. The second period, in the 1930s, saw the building of a larger brick house, with the addition of a fish pool, adjacent oval-tiered flower bed, rose garden, and distinctive entry gate pylons. Finally, the third period, commencing after World War II continued through the fifties to the present.

approached from many directions, the formal front entries being linked by a semicircular driveway.

A first impression on passing through the front gate is of a private botanical garden that over time has developed an arboretum of its own, one where it might be possible to discover plants unheard of for years. Paths and driveways seem to spread out in every direction round wide lawns interspersed with garden beds. On either side of the homestead the side gardens are extensive, made up of scattered beds that in places lead the eye out of the garden to a distant horizon where hills meet sky. No one vantage point reveals the entire garden, so on walking through it there is a sense of being drawn on, around the next corner and to the next surprise. The overall effect is of alternating belts of light, shade, and colour.

The oldest surviving plants in the garden are grouped round the original house. Here several wisterias—now gnarled and leaning, flowering in spring to give way in winter to a thicket of canes—mark out the original path leading to the house. Of the same vintage, and close by, a Muscat grape soldiers on, carefully supported by a timber trellis. On the far side of the back garden kurrajongs transplanted from the paddock shade the northern side of the old house. In summer the scent of countless flowers lives on in the memory.

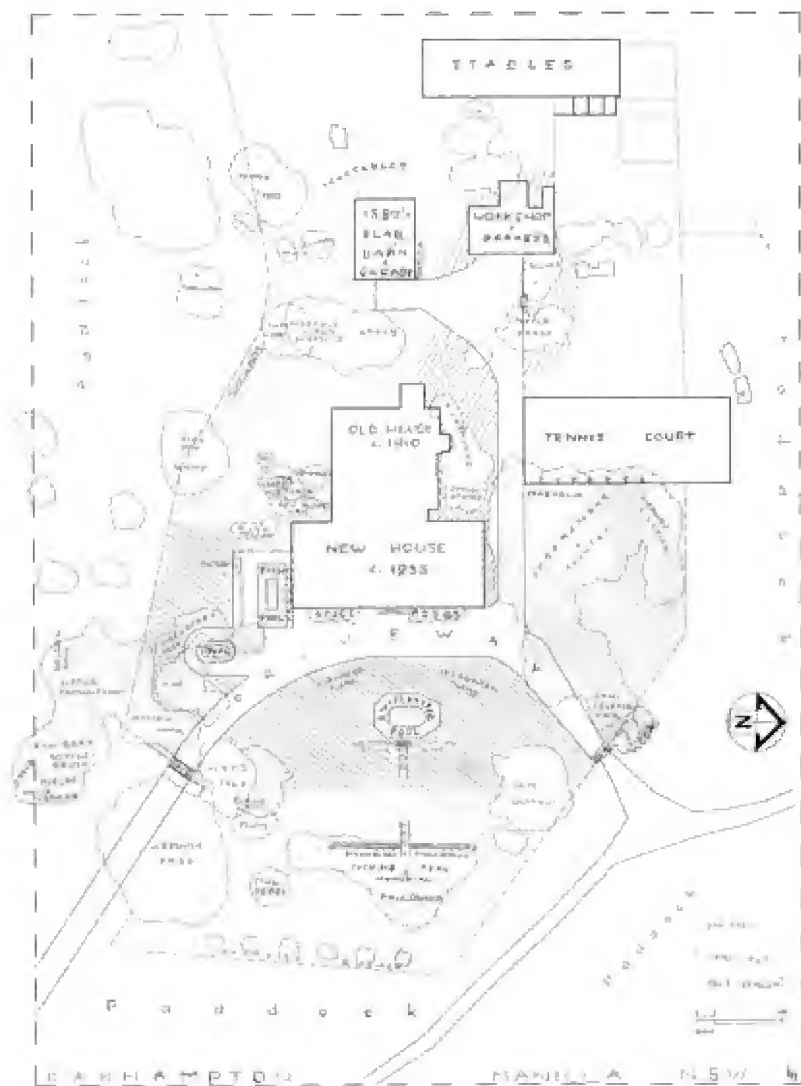
I noted with interest in Robin Walsh's recently published book *In Her Own Words* that Elizabeth Macquarie, en route to Australia in 1809 during a voyage lasting seven months, visited a newly established botanical garden containing in excess of four hundred species. If she could have seen into the future and glimpsed Oakhampton's garden, she would surely have been equally delighted.

Acknowledgements

For assistance with the preparation of this article I wish to thank Belinda and James Nixon, and Narelle Sontar Botanica for mapping and help with plant identification.

In memory of Jenny Watts (*nee* Bright), plantswoman extraordinaire.

Lesley Garrett is an AGHS member with a keen interest in historic gardens and fine arts. She has gardens in both Sydney and rural NSW.





Megan Martin

World War Two: the Commonwealth Vegetable Seeds Committee

The acquisition of the Claude Crowe papers by the Historic Houses Trust's Caroline Simpson Library & Research Collection has kindled interest in the activities of a little-known wartime organisation, the Commonwealth Vegetable Seeds Committee.

Exhortation to 'Dig for Victory' and posters promoting the Victory Garden are the sorts of ideas and images that most of us usually associate with the idea of vegetables and World War Two. In January 1942 Prime Minister John Curtin launched 'Dig for Victory', a publicity campaign urging householders throughout Australia to grow their own vegetables as a contribution to the war effort.

The Dig for Victory campaign was taken up by many organisations including the YWCA, which called for the creation of 'Garden Armies'. These volunteer groups undertook mass plantings on parcels of land made available for the purpose.

So, for example, in July 1942 Melbourne's 'Garden Army' planted 2 acres of onion seed on a Saturday afternoon as part of its campaign to produce 50 tons of onions for the Department of Supply to send to the troops.

The idea wasn't new—citizens had been digging for victory in England for some time—and many Australians had already established Dig for Victory gardens months before the official government campaign.

Seed growers like Arthur Yates & Co. began sounding the alarm about protecting and expanding the seed harvest early in the war. In its 1940 *Annual* the firm declared that the matter of seed supplies was of national importance as the foundation of all horticulture, and that the Australian industry was already having some difficulty in getting stocks of seed from 'overseas non-sterling countries'. Of course, many Australians were already keen home vegetable growers and companies like Yates had always catered to this market.

Pre-war seed packets from Sydney merchants Anderson & Co. Caroline Simpson Library & Research Collection, Historic Houses Trust of NSW

DIG FOR VICTORY

GROW YOUR OWN VEGETABLES

SOW NOW

APRIL

BROAD BEANS	LETTUCE (Imperial B)
CABBAGE (Gothic Beauty)	LEEKS (London Flat)
ONION (Early Golden Wonder)	CAULIFLOWER (Melopole)
SPINACH (Prickly)	TURNIP (White Eye)

PLANT NOW

BRUSSELS SPROUTS	CAULIFLOWER (Pinnacle)
CABBAGE (Early Wonder)	SHALLOTS (French)
LETTUCE (Imperial B)	SILVER BEET
CELERY • GARLIC (French)	LEEKS

NOTE DIG OVER AND LIME ALL VACANT BEDS FOR WINTER AND SPRING PLANTING

FOR FULLER PLANTING LIST & DETAILS - SEE BOOKLET!

Write to the
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE MELBOURNE C2.
FOR A FREE COPY OF THE BOOKLET. "WARTIME GROWING OF VEGETABLES AT HOME"

Victorian Railways poster (c.1942) exhorting commuters to grow vegetables in home gardens and 'Dig for Victory' State Library of Victoria

The Dig for Victory campaign was launched around the same time as a Vegetable Seeds Conference was held in Melbourne (5–7 January 1942). The Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) had called the conference when war broke out with Japan (following the December 1941 attack on Pearl Harbour). Representatives of the CSIR, Department of Commerce, Department of Supply and Development, state departments of agriculture, and seed merchants, attended the conference. The main recommendation of the conference was that the Commonwealth government should appoint a Vegetable Seeds Committee to ensure adequate supplies of vegetable seeds in the event that the usual imports of vegetable seeds from Europe and the United States might not be able to reach Australia.

Another conference one a week later (14–15 January) was called by the Customs Department. This second conference was attended by agricultural officers and seed merchants, and its task was to decide what vegetable seeds should be ordered from the United States for delivery towards the end of 1942 and early 1943. The conference opted to order a full year's supply of the more important vegetables. A review of the seed position had shown that there were practically no reserve stocks of most kinds of seeds and it was thought that, as a safeguard against crop failure and damage by enemy action, Australia needed to produce two years' supply of most kinds of vegetable seeds.

A review of the seed position had shown that there were practically no reserve stocks of most kinds of seeds

The War Committee approved the appointment of a Vegetable Seeds Committee and the first meeting was held in Canberra on 17 February 1942. It was composed of two representatives of the Commonwealth government, two Agricultural officers ('technical men'), two growers (G.W. Peart of Box Hill, Vic., and H.D. Yates from Arthur Yates & Co. Pty Ltd, Sydney), and two representatives from the Australian Federation of Seeds Merchants (K. Field from Field & Co. Pty Ltd, Devonport, Tas., and G.A. Luff from Law, Somner Pty Ltd, Melbourne).

It had been thought originally that seed merchants might be able to arrange for and finance all the production required but this was found to be impossible. They had capacity only for about half the necessary production. The job of the Vegetable Seeds Committee was to organise production of the remainder.

The Committee drew up a list of vegetables that were considered essential. This list included carrot, beetroot, parsnips, swedes, potatoes, onions, leeks, cabbages, cauliflowers, silver beet, lettuce, peas, white turnips, sweet potato, pumpkins (including Hubbard squash), marrow, cucumber, tomatoes, French dwarf beans, broad beans, navy and butter beans, rhubarb, and spinach, plus the herbs thyme, marjoram, and sage. The Committee also identified the varieties required and the target quantity of each seed. Celery and asparagus were regarded as luxury lines—although celery did get a reprieve a couple of months later. And in July 1942 sweet corn was defined as a vegetable and added to the list as

were other later additions such as watermelon and rockmelon.

The committee considered the problem of labour, including the possible use of internee or prisoner-of-war labour and it recommended that the industry be declared essential and people engaged in the industry to be reserved.

The Committee found that 18 merchants accounted for about 90% of Australia's vegetable seed trade but it drew up a list of 23 approved seed merchants who would be entitled to contract for seed production. There were a couple of Sydney firms on this list, headed by Anderson & Co. At the second meeting of the Committee in March 1942 the firm of P.L.C. Shepherd & Son Pty Ltd was added to the list and other merchants were added in subsequent meetings.

Nurseryman Claude Crowe was working at Anderson's when the war began and we know from the Crowe papers that early in 1942 the company began sending men to Berrima in the Southern Highlands to develop vegetable seed production capacity, entering into some sort of arrangement with Paul Sorensen (who had leased the old rectory at Berrima). Crowe himself was sent to Berrima around July 1942.

Claude Crowe resigned from Anderson's in September 1943 and the firm pulled out of their vegetable work at Berrima around this time although Claude and his wife Isobel continued to produce seed for the Vegetable Seeds Committee—under contract to a company called United Seed Growers Pty Ltd, headed by Eric Rumsey. Claude Crowe kept a diary of these early years at Berrima (1943–44) which gives a sense of the hard slog involved in seed production. Consider the entry for 25 April 1944: 'washed 4 barrels of tomato pulp for about 7 or 8 lb seeds'.

Producing tomato seeds was clearly a messy business and questions regarding seed purity and germination standards were issues that the Vegetable Seeds Committee addressed early in their deliberations. There was a concern about the possibility that 'farmer-dressed' vegetable seeds in Australia might be harder to clean up to required standards than normally, owing to lack of experience on the part of Australia's new seed growers. Only eight firms in Australia (and only Yates in NSW) had the full equipment needed for the cleaning of vegetable seeds.

Apart from the problems of cleaning seed, the Committee soon began discussing a scheme for producing 'mother' seed—that is developing



strains of seed most suitable for Australia's market garden requirements. Crops were selected as 'mother' seeds on the basis of their performance in the field. Before a crop was approved for 'mother' seed purposes it had to be examined by a government official at the vegetable and other stages. A government agricultural agency might also grow a crop from the same seed at a central trial ground.

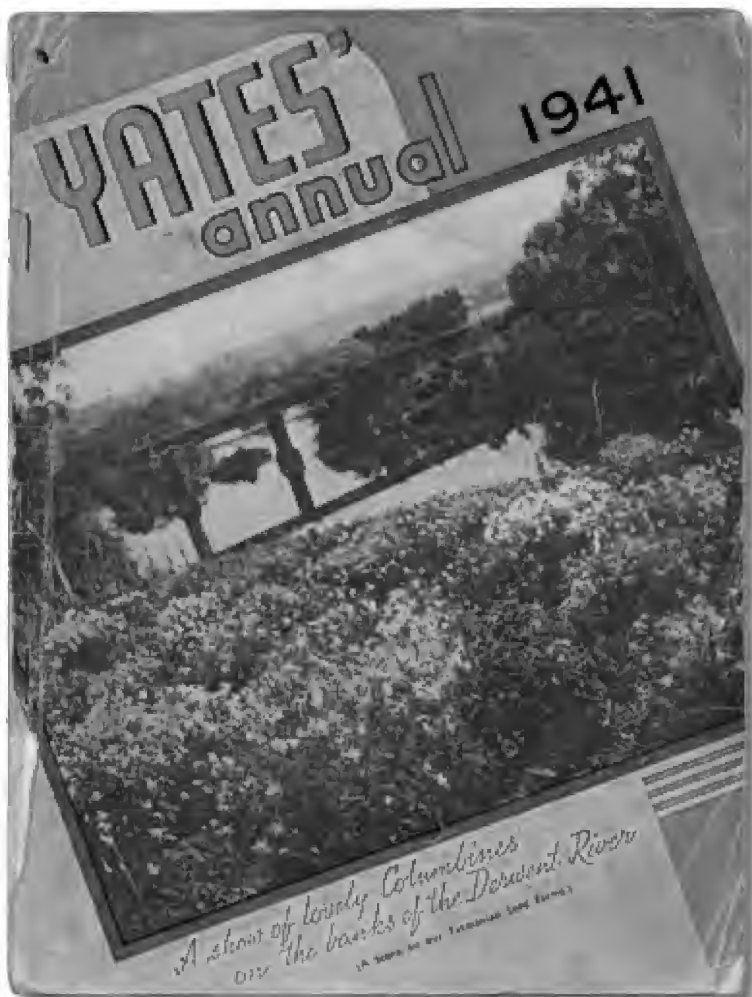
Claude and Isobel Crowe grew 'mother' seed for the United Seed Growers. They had 6 acres available, split into three lots of 2 acres each. Eric Rumsey had suggested that they could grow small lots of various kinds of selected 'mother' seeds for United Seed Growers or they could grow a more limited number of varieties of crop seed. The 'mother' seed crops carried a higher price but they needed almost constant attention. As

Murray Tonkin's humorous novelette (1944) brings a light touch to a serious subject for South Australian readers.

Caroline Simpson Library & Research Collection, Historic Houses Trust of NSW



Extracting seeds from tomato pulp (illustrated in Yates' Annual 1941), a process Claude Crowe found hard going. Caroline Simpson Library & Research Collection, Historic Houses Trust of NSW



well as agreeing to inspections growers had to 'do all reasonable "roguing" of the crops to ensure trueness to type and strain'.

The Claude Crowe papers include several examples of seed growing contracts, each for a specific named variety of vegetable. This material complements the official records of the Vegetable Seeds Committee in the National Archives of Australia. These official records comprise hundreds and hundreds of pages of minutes of meetings, draft regulations, and the like, mostly now digitised and freely available on the NAA's website. They make fairly dry reading.

The composition of the Committee was changed at the beginning of 1943 and representatives of the seed merchants were dropped from membership. By the end of the war the merchants were chafing under what they considered to be excessive bureaucratic interference and control. In July 1945 Eric Rumsey wrote a letter to his local MP about the matter. He outlined the problem:

We have trained men in the science and art of producing satisfactory seed crops and have plans for absorbing others who will shortly be returning from the services. Unfortunately we are in the position where we have a Federal Government Seeds Committee which is not sympathetic to private enterprise and for some reason seems very reluctant to give up any of their wartime controls although Australia's vegetable seed supply position is now secure and there is a surplus of some kinds of seeds in Australia.

I can't tell you the end of the story: my research has not yet embraced this period. When did market forces regain dominance? To what extent did regulations and controls developed under the Vegetable Seeds Committee regime stay in place? Who grew what seeds where? These are questions for another day.

Megan Martin is Head of Collections & Access at the Historic Houses Trust of NSW, responsible for the continuing development of the Caroline Simpson Library & Research Collection. This paper was first presented at the 'Glamour & Grit: new stories for garden history' seminar jointly hosted by the Historic Houses Trust and Australian Garden History Society on 21 July 2012.



Ed McAlister

A slide odyssey: the Noel Lothian collection

The Herculean task of sorting and labelling the 22,000 slides in Noel Lothian's collection has now been completed, but the 9000 images selected for retention now require funding for incorporation into a digital catalogue.

Shortly after hosting a lunch at my home in December 2005 for a group of fellow horticulturists, I was contacted by Thekla Reichstein, a former long-serving employee of the Botanic Gardens of Adelaide who had returned to work as a volunteer. She asked if on my retirement at the end of January, I would be interested in checking and accessioning approximately 7000 of Noel Lothian's slides which had been donated to the library by

his widow, Viv Lothian. As I had worked for Noel when he was Director and knew him well, I agreed with alacrity.

On arriving at the library in 2006 I was informed by Thekla and Tony Kanellos, Manager of Cultural Collections, that actually there 'more like 17,000 slides'! I was not totally surprised because Noel's attitude had been that if one slide was good then obviously two or three were better. Only slightly daunted I began the task.

What I found was a veritable treasure trove of great value, covering the period from approximately 1952 until just a few months before Noel's death in 2004. The slides were not just plant studies and images of botanic gardens around the world, but many had been taken in the field. Some of the

Noel Lothian's slide collection, taken over a wide date span, reflects the interests of a botanic garden director, from plant collecting expeditions to overseas travel and flower show judging.

Noel Lothian Collection, Botanic Gardens of Adelaide



All images courtesy Botanic Gardens of Adelaide

most interesting slides were those taken by Noel during his field trips in the arid zone of Australia in the early 1950s. Having accepted the position of director of the Adelaide Botanic Garden in 1948 Noel was exploring and collecting plants in the arid zone by 1952. These long field trips explored this zone, not only in South Australia but also in Queensland, New South Wales, and the Northern Territory. Legend has it that Noel would not stop for the day until he had collected 100 specimens!

This policy was not always well received by his travelling companions.

There were, of course, many thousands of other slides in addition to plant studies (Australian and exotic, in cultivation and in the wild) and the many botanic gardens he visited during his long career. Others were of significant events in the life of the Botanic Gardens of Adelaide, for example Royal visits, tree plantings, and unveilings of plaques. I smiled on a number of occasions when I would come across a slide which had been taken by Noel in a botanic garden somewhere and I knew that 20 years later I had stood in the same spot and taken the same photograph.

Legend has it that Noel would not stop for the day until he had collected 100 specimens

All the slides had one thing in common: they had all been annotated in Noel's very individual handwriting. Anyone who has seen this idiosyncratic script will know what I mean when I say it is difficult to read and interpret. I came to the conclusion that I had been asked to take on this task, not just because of my BSc in botany and my horticultural background, but because I was one of only four or five people who could read his writing!

I spent many hours looking at maps and gazetteers to check exact locations of the slides. Knowing that a photograph had been taken 4 miles NW of 'squiggle' was of little value. When it



Noel Lothian (1915–2004) in the early years of his long tenure as director of Adelaide Botanic Garden (1948–80). Botanic Gardens of Adelaide



came to plant names I was slightly better off, even though many of the plants endured name changes during the past 50 years. I confess, however, that without a computer program in use in the library I do not believe I could have finished the task. In this particular program I would put in the first letter or letters of the genus, which I could decipher, and then add an asterisk. The result was a list of plant names from which I would make my final selection. The process often had to be repeated with the specific epithet (second part of the binomial).

I set myself a target of completing the task before my seventieth birthday and was pleased to see the number of slide boxes beginning to dwindle to a small number. It was at this point that Tony Kanellos called again, telling me that ‘the Field Naturalists have dropped off another box of Noel’s slides’. In my innocence I envisaged another box of about 250—what I found was an apple crate full of slide boxes containing another 5000 slides.

*Noel Lothian ... was a visionary,
had an incredible work ethic ... and
once determined upon a goal he
would let nothing stand in his way*

By the time I finished in 2010 I had looked at approximately 22,000 slides. I accessioned for the Gardens a total of 9097 slides. Approximately one thousand slides were donated to the State Library of South Australia as they were of great social

history value. Quite a number of a more personal nature was returned to the Lothian family and approximately two thousand slides were discarded because they had deteriorated. What the Gardens did receive will be of great value to many people in the present and in the future.

This task, which I truly enjoyed, confirmed my thoughts about Noel Lothian. He was a visionary, had an incredible work ethic (and expected others around him to share his enthusiasm), and once determined upon a goal he would let nothing stand in his way. The fact that the Botanic Gardens of Adelaide now manage three gardens—Adelaide, Mount Lofty, and Wittunga—rather than the one which Noel ‘inherited’ is but one testament to his vision. Others include his establishment of formal horticulture training in South Australia and his establishment of the State Herbarium under the control of the Board of the Botanic Gardens. Truly this is a record to be envied.

Dr Ed McAlister AO was employed at the Botanic Gardens of Adelaide from February 1979 until July 1991, being Assistant Director for more than a decade. He left to accept the position of CEO of the Royal Zoological Society of South Australia, which he held until January 2006.



John Viska

Heart and mind: linking gardens, plants, and history

John Viska in his Perth garden, August 2012.
Photo: Richard Aitken

Perth-based plant enthusiast John Viska has recently been elected chair of the West Australian Branch and is also chairing the conference committee for the 2014 AGHS WA conference—in this profile he recounts his love of plants, gardening, and history.

I was born on 26 November 1948 on a hot day in Subiaco. My father had migrated from Albania to Western Australia in 1936 at the age of 16 and became a tailor; my mother was from an early Greek migrant family who had arrived around the turn of the twentieth century. When the family house was built at Floreat Park in 1953, this garden suburb consisted of quarter-acre blocks, ample parks, and street trees amidst pockets

of surviving native vegetation. It was a young, developing suburb and Floreat Park Primary School was still surrounded by black sand and bushland. I remember the wildflowers but there was no gardening or natural history club.

My first interest in growing plants was about 1953—I can remember my father planting out poppies and the first roses being put in. Roses were the mainstay of most Perth gardens—the gutless sand was completely dug out and we imported lovely chocolate loam from the hills. But my first memory of growing my own plants was of succulents in tins. Anywhere my parents went—and they were very social—I remember as a young child walking round and ending up in the shade house or wherever the plants were.

My Greek and Albanian grandfathers were not ornamental gardeners, but they were of course vegetable gardeners. My Albanian grandfather grew okra at a time when no one knew what it was. My Greek grandfather, who spent about 16 years in the goldfields, came to Perth around 1916. I was intrigued that he grew plants in olive oil tins amid a garden of figs, pomegranates, olive trees, and grape vines—his grape variety ‘Isabella’ made very good vine rolls.

So when it came to gardens and gardening it was just something I wanted to do. I started off with my succulents in pots, then a rock garden that got bigger and bigger, and one thing led to another. I used to go around the suburbs swapping plants and asking people—little old ladies—‘would you mind?’ or ‘could I?’ I had no money to buy plants and I remember by about second year high school saving up for about a month the pennies left over from lunch money to buy *Your Garden* magazine—I still have the first one dated 1962. Just reading those and being exposed to pictures and garden ideas was really where my learning started.

I went to Hale School for five years and in fifth year I wrote to Perth City Council to ascertain if they had any gardening courses. A letter back from the Director of Parks and Gardens, Ken Hunter, advised they were instituting a horticultural trainee course. I commenced in 1966 but apart from night school botany classes I was just doing hackwork around the nursery.

I thought ‘is this what I really want to do?’ and so I undertook teacher training. I was posted to Esperance in 1969 and then at the end of 1972 came back to Perth.

My new head teacher at Graylands Primary School was very interested in natural history and native plants and so I started doing this with my classes. They were just at the right age and we became involved with the Gould League. Because of this experience, I was asked if I would like to apply for a job in the education centre in Kings Park. I was initially employed in 1980 on a two-year secondment. Probably 5000 students a year came through—I was a one-man band, organising everything from bookings to cranking the old Gestetner running off the activity sheets. I was eventually there for five years and whilst there completed a Bachelor of Education. I wasn’t thrilled at the thought of going back to teach a primary class and luckily a cousin alerted me to a job as lecturer in horticulture at Bentley TAFE College. I was finally offered the job, made permanent in 1988, and lectured for almost 25 years.

One of my great loves has always been libraries and in the 1970s I was exposed to illustrated books on the great gardens of the world. I became aware of the romanticism of older gardens and travelled overseas in 1979—with my interest in the history of gardens I had a mental list of gardens I wanted to see. In the early 1980s I came

My variegated plants light up dark areas and have a wonderful decorative aspect (even though a lot of designers have decreed that such plants are on the nose).



across a copy of the *Australian Garden Journal* with application details to join the Australian Garden History Society. I didn't know anyone who was a member and I just sent off my subscription. There were probably about half a dozen people in Western Australia who subscribed but we were not an organised body and didn't know each other. I got the journal and especially enjoyed reading the historically based articles.

I started my Diploma in Horticulture and one unit was a research unit. Most of the students took some wheat, grew it, measured it, and after six months wrote about it, did all the graphs and that became a research project. I remember telling the tutor 'I don't want to do one of those things; I'm more interested in the history side of something to do with gardens'. He said 'well, if you can give me a topic you can do that'. So I thought OK: horticulture, history, or say a nursery, that was just an idea. I went off to the Batty Library and staff suggested that I look at early directories. In the list was Dawson Harrison, Wilson and Johns, Newman, and then there was Barrett's Wellington Nursery. I used to help out at the National Trust property Woodbridge and by extraordinary luck I met a lady who had an old friend whose grandfather used to have a very old nursery in West Perth. It turned out to be the Wellington Nursery of her great grandfather, an invaluable lead that allowed me to trace its history.

By this time, in the mid-1980s, I was creating my own garden. I had started with a blank canvas in 1977. I had visited Sissinghurst and was tremendously impressed. I didn't try to emulate it but it was more of an idea or inspiration—my garden is really a textural composition of a whole group that are survivor plants, tough plants, plants that work well in Perth. I haven't bought from nurseries—they are ones I have dug up from demolition sites and seen what works. Having been a plant collector from an early age, I have always grown things that I like, so the way I have developed my garden is really as the collection of an enthusiast. I have always particularly liked bulbous and succulent plants, roses, and plants with variegated foliage.

The early newspapers are very good for garden history and now with Trove you can put in a plant name and it will pick up on how to grow certain plants, detail what ornamentals were in the colony, and when they were popular. You can also pick up certain regional features, such as 'summer gardens' (which implied that the location enjoyed sufficient water to grow plants in summer without artificial watering)

and 'vine trellises' (the colonial equivalent of the English pergola, but shaded with grape vines). In and around Perth the marris and jarrahs were predominant indigenous trees; along watercourses flooded gums, which were the equivalent of red river gums in the East. A lot of those eucalypts were left because they were shade trees.

The Cape of Good Hope was the last port of call before ships reached Perth and the early Dutch settlement at the Cape meant that many Mediterranean plants were well established, augmenting the rich local flora. These plants were certainly transplanted to Western Australia, mostly ornamentals interplanted or underneath more productive trees I believe. By summertime most of them would die away—by that time the fruit tree would be in full foliage.

What I have generally gleaned is that there was a need for growing food—the backbone was grape vines, stone fruits, fig trees, citrus fruits, and all the Mediterranean elements, even olives, done in a distinctive style. In fact, I think our ornamental gardens started with these utilitarian origins rather than any grand notions of emulating English landscape gardens. A lot of Perth gardening was piecemeal—it was not documented; there was no one specialising landscape design in the very early days.

I always find that looking at our garden history transports me into an era I don't know. Plants and gardens are like all collecting—when I find something it gives me this magic thrill that transports me back. So in researching, say, the Wellington Nursery and looking back to the written advertisements and at a couple of historic photographs I'm suddenly transported back to early Perth. I always have that thrill of looking at old photographs, trying to identify the plants they depict, visualising the location, and bringing it all together as an experience. And that gives you an inner glow.



Fruits of a collecting expedition in the Viska garden and surrounding neighbourhood.
All garden photos: Richard Aitken

For the bookshelf

Alistair Hay, Monika Gottschalk, & Adolfo Holguin, *Huanduj: Brugmansia*, Florilegium with the Royal Botanic Gardens Kew, Sydney, 2012 (ISBN 9781876314309): hardback, 424pp, RRP \$95

This superb book is beautiful to handle. Huanduj is one of the indigenous South American vernacular names for the genus *Brugmansia*. Known in English-speaking countries as Angel's Trumpets, these poisonous small trees have sumptuous flowers and an extraordinary history. Skilfully written, the three expert authors have put together years of study to create *Huanduj: Brugmansia*. It is outstanding. The images are marvellous and include many ideas for home or public gardens to create a rich, splendid display using *Brugmansias* mixed in delicious contrast with other shrubs and perennials. There is a useful chapter on how to grow them and which species or cultivars will do best in cooler or warmer climates.

Photos of the South American habitats where the seven species in the genus are distributed give insight into their origin. It is interesting to see Huanduj planted in old gardens and on farms in Colombia, Ecuador, and Brazil and realise how these sacred and valued plants are a part of everyday life on that continent. The question of whether or not the genus should be *Brugmansia* or *Datura* is revealed in a fascinating chapter of history that covers almost two centuries of botanical study and hot taxonomic debate. According to the authors, *Brugmansias* are extinct in the wild and only survive within their native range because of their cultural significance to humans.

Recently I had a delightful experience wandering along a woodland garden path that was cut through a mini forest of pink Angel's Trumpets. For me this was an unforgettable pleasure. *Brugmansias* are most certainly an intriguing genus and this book tells their story beautifully. I highly recommend it for bedside reading either to dip in to or for serious study. It is a book for anyone interested in beauty, gardening, history, taxonomy, and culture.

Terry Smyth

Curator, Southern China Collection
Royal Botanic Gardens Melbourne

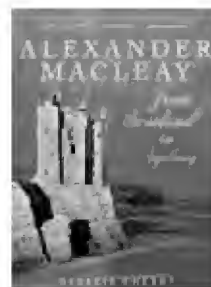
Seamus O'Brien, *In the Footsteps of Augustine Henry and his Chinese plant collectors*, Garden Art Press, Antique Collectors Club, Woodbridge, Suffolk, 2011 (ISBN 9781870673730): hardback, 367pp, RRP £40

Gardeners and foresters have much to remember Augustine Henry for; his career as a plant hunter in China began in 1881 when he entered the British Customs Service as a medical officer at the treaty ports recently established at major commercial centres in China. His hours of work not being too onerous he quickly developed an interest in the flora of China and within a few years moved from his position to become a plant hunter. This book retraces his travels across China exploring for plants. A well organised person he made thorough travel plans, trained native Chinese as plant collectors, made high quality collections of botanical material, and documented almost everything he saw and did so in extensive diaries and collection notes. He also took numerous glass-plate photographs of the plants he saw and of the country and towns through which he passed. By great good fortune most of his material arrived safely at herbaria at Kew and elsewhere. Seamus O'Brien has utilised this archive to retrace Henry's expeditions and write his own journal which compares and contrasts what he found with Henry's observations. The result makes fascinating and informative reading, not only reminding gardeners of the huge gift of Henry's introduction to gardens but also providing numerous insights into conditions today in the environments in which Henry collected. O'Brien's photographs of the Three Gorges on the Yangtze river, for instance, contrast shockingly on the changes there since Henry first photographed them.

Trevor Nottle

Derelie Cherry, *Alexander Macleay: from Scotland to Sydney*, Paradise Publishers, Kulnura, NSW, 2012 (ISBN 9780646557526): hardback, 452pp, RRP \$59.95, AGHS price \$45 plus \$9 postage (www.gardenhistorysociety.org.au)

What pleasure to read this book: the author has done Australia a service. The author undertook a doctoral thesis on Macleay under supervisor Dr Brian Fletcher of Sydney University and the graft into book form loses nothing in translation





into a highly readable, thoroughly researched, and fluidly-written tome. That it is long and heavy is apt, given the multitudinous interests of this ‘Renaissance Man’.

Readers might know Elizabeth Bay House and its lost garden—once ‘the finest in the colony’ and even in today’s fragments, still intriguing and rather grand. I declare an interest: I’ve long been musing. I live in a flat built on part of his former ‘Orangery’ and (kitchen) ‘Garden’, part of a former 55-acre estate. Every day I stroll up Ithaca (note the Greek reference, no coincidence) and Elizabeth Bay Roads, following Macleay’s carriage drive, past the site of his stables, through Fitzroy Gardens where his gates once stood, and along Macleay Street atop Woolloomooloo Hill. I hang my washing out on a 10th floor rooftop gazing at the sandstone canyon cradling the bay, at a sharper angle than he saw it, but the same prospect.

Anyone who could go bust from gardening gets my vote! Even Brownlow Hill, one family farm in which he partly spent his dotage, is evocative, hinting at his learning, global connections, curiosity, and taste. How much more there was than gardening. Anyone who has enjoyed the Macleay Museum collections at the University of Sydney owes him a debt; or the State Library, Australian Museum, and democracy in New South Wales (he was first Speaker in the first Parliament in the colony and thus, Australia). Or visited or learnt from Sydney Botanic Gardens, the Australian Club, and the other institutions he helped form, shape, and grow.

Macleay’s origins, family, and banking connections; gentlemen and scientific circles; large family (including many daughters); and shortage of money are outlined patiently. Insights from eloquent letters of eldest daughter ‘Fanny’ and son William pepper the text. His at times testy relations with players—his sons included—in a changing empire and colony are telling. William Sharp Macleay basically kicked his parents out of Elizabeth Bay House (to pay off their debts) causing a rift that never really healed. Alexander’s erudition

and generosity of spirit led to benefits such as Thomas Shepherd’s praise in our first published garden design book and employment for Robert Henderson, one of our earliest trained gardeners. Macleay donated many unusual plants to the Botanic Gardens, Shepherd’s Darling Nursery, and Camden Park, and thus to our nursery industry—the jacaranda, wisteria, and many more imports derive from him. Thoroughly recommended.

Stuart Read

Laura Meyer, *Capability Brown and the English Landscape Garden*, Shire Publications, Botley, Oxford, 2011 (ISBN 9780747800490): 64pp, paperback, RRP \$15; Twigs Way, *The Cottage Garden*, Shire Publications, Botley, Oxford, 2011 (ISBN 9780747808183): 64pp, paperback, RRP \$15

Shire Books have received quite a spruce up in the last few years. Forget the homely layouts, simple typesetting, and black & white reproductions. Instead think crisp design and high-quality colour images. Unchanged though is the inherent quality of the information, usually distilled by an expert in his or her field, of modest compass, easily read, and accurately referenced.

Way’s *Cottage Garden* traverses safe Shire ground. Although quintessentially British in coverage, there is nevertheless much social comment here that has wider relevance, and the planting palette she describes was one eagerly emulated in many Australian cottage gardens. The author’s other Shire titles—*Topiary*, *Allotments*, *Garden Gnomes*, and *Gertrude Jekyll*—are indicative of her fields of interest, as is her recent book (with Mike Brown), *Digging for Victory: gardens and gardening in wartime Britain* (Sabrestorm, 2010).

Meyer’s book is perhaps the richer of the pair. Building on the considerable scholarship of those who have gone before—Clark, Stroud, and Woodbridge, to name some of the pioneers—and her own detailed researches, we see Brown’s work and those of his contemporaries placed within the context of the eighteenth century landscape garden, its patrons and proponents. Laura Meyer is one of the new faces of garden history, and if this synthesis is representative, we look forward to more from her pen.

Richard Aitken

This year marks the 125th anniversary of the Yates seed company in Australia, commemorated by a revised *Yates Garden Guide* (with historical introduction) and this limited-edition tin of seeds (\$22 from selected outlets).



Recent releases

Andrea Gaynor & Jane Davis (eds), 'Environmental Exchanges', special issue of *Studies in Western Australian History*, 27, 2011 (ISBN 9781740522267): paperback, 252pp, RRP \$25 (\$20 for students) plus postage—contact details at www.cwah.uwa.edu.au

The dozen essays that comprise this volume form a virtual environmental history of Western Australia during the twentieth century. From nature protection and wildflower legislation to water scarcity, forest protest, and late-century city planning, a compelling picture emerges of Australian western third in a time of rapid change. Particularly welcome is Geoffrey Bolton's overview of environmental history in WA for his deeply personal and thoughtful insights. An excellent selection of book reviews (eighteen in total!) rounds out this special issue of *Studies*.

Alex George, *A Banksia Album: two hundred years of botanical art*, National Library of Australia, Canberra, 2011 (ISBN 9780642277398): 132pp, RRP \$34.95

Alex George is amongst our most knowledgeable and prolific authors on Australian botanical history and in *A Banksia Album* he turns his hand to a genus long cherished by gardeners. The informative introduction on 'The art of Banksias' is followed by a lengthy illustrated section with notes, arranged alphabetically by species (what else would you expect from a botanist?) and illustrated with splendid works of botanical art from historical to contemporary.

Linda Groom, *A Steady Hand: Governor Hunter & his First Fleet sketchbook*, National Library of Australia, Canberra, 2012 (ISBN 9780642277077): hardback, 236pp, RRP \$49.95

This is a major new monograph on the art of John Hunter, captain of the First Fleet flagship *Sirius*, explorer, and second governor of New South Wales. Comparatively little known, Hunter's paintings are amongst the earliest of the colony's flora, covering the Sydney region and Norfolk and Lord Howe Islands. The author, a former Curator of Pictures at the National Library, has used that institution's collections and resources to the fullest, resulting in a substantial, beautiful, and fascinating publication on the early natural and human history of New South Wales.

Maria Hitchcock, *A Celebration of Wattle: Australia's national floral emblem*, Rosenberg, Dural, NSW, 2012 (ISBN 9781921719561): paperback, 304pp, RRP \$29.95

With Wattle Day just passed, this substantially revised edition of Maria Hitchcock's celebration of wattle is more than welcome. Combining history, lore, and horticulture this is a passionate advocacy of the wattle as Australia's national floral emblem by one of its greatest supporters.

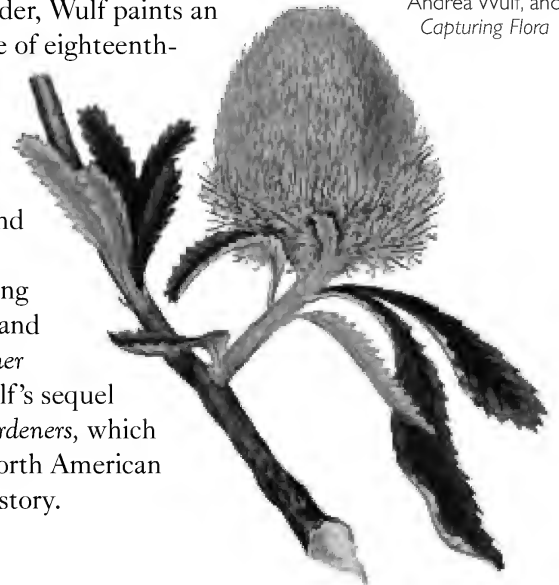
Trea Martyn, *Queen Elizabeth in the Garden: a story of love, rivalry, and spectacular gardens*, BlueBridge, New York, 2012 (ISBN 9781933346366): hardback, 336pp, RRP US\$22.95

First published in England under the title *Elizabeth in the Garden* (Faber and Faber Ltd, 2008), this edition has been released for an American market. Martyn has drawn on a rich cache of sources (including various household papers, inventories, handwritten plans, domestic and foreign state papers, memorials for royal visits, diaries, letters, *Gerard's Herball*, and sixteenth and seventeenth century visitors' accounts), to create a lively read, full of richly textured details emphasising the centrality of the garden in the court of Elizabeth I.

Andrea Wulf, *The Brother Gardeners: botany, empire and the birth of an obsession*, Windmill Books, London, 2009 (ISBN 9780099502371): paperback, 376pp, RRP \$27.95

First published in hardback by Heinemann in 2008, we notice this eminently readable book here rather belatedly. Interweaving the voices of Collinson, Bartram, Miller, Linnaeus, Banks, and Solander, Wulf paints an engrossing picture of eighteenth-century botany, plant collecting, horticulture, and garden making. Perfect background for those visiting Ballarat's Capturing Flora exhibition, and if you enjoy *Brother Gardeners* try Wulf's sequel *The Founding Gardeners*, which fleshes out the North American dimension of her story.

Banksia serrata (from Andrews' *Botanist's Repository*, 1800) featured in books by Alex George and Andrea Wulf, and in *Capturing Flora*



Ballarat's Capturing Flora exhibition

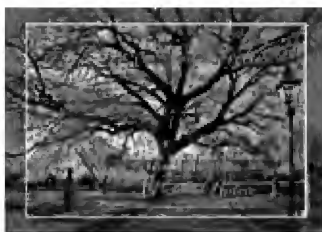


'Capturing Flora: 300 years of Australian botanical art' is a major new exhibition at the Art Gallery of Ballarat. Running from 25 September until 2 December 2012 (9am–5pm: entry \$12/\$8), the show includes over 300 works of Australian botanical art from the very early eighteenth century until the present. Accompanied by a varied programme of talks, concerts, and workshops, a lasting memento of the show will be a lavish 280 page hardback book, profusely illustrated, with five essays.

The exhibition is exclusive to Ballarat, so don't miss this rare opportunity to see an unparalleled thematic retrospective.

www.capturingflora.com.au

Ballarat Botanic Gardens history



A new illustrated history of Ballarat Botanic Gardens is to be launched later this year. Prepared by members of the Gardens' Friends group, the publication traces the history of this highly significant garden from its inception in the 1850s to the present with text, reproductions of early plans, and many other historic images. Why not combine a viewing of Ballarat's Capturing Flora exhibition with a visit to the Botanic Gardens and Lake Wendouree precinct (armed with new-found historical insight gained from this publication)?

www.fbbg.org.au

Australian Network for Plant Conservation conference

The Australian Network for Plant Conservation Inc. turns twenty-one this year. Their ninth national conference, 'Plant Conservation in Australia: achievements and future directions', held in Canberra from 29 October–2 November 2012, will provide a forum for reflecting on the ANPC's history and successes, their long collaboration with the Australian National Botanic Gardens, highlight current issues for plant conservation, and identify directions for the next two decades.

www.anpc.asn.au

Saundridge owner mourned

Stuart Read and Gwenda Sheridan have both drawn our attention to the recent death of Rod Thirkell-Johnston, aged 72, of Macquarie Hills and Saundridge at Cressy in the Tasmanian Midlands. Although closely involved with the Australian wool industry, the trees and designed landscapes of the Midlands were amongst his abiding interests. AGHS delegates visited the historic estate Saundridge—with its marvellous sweeping drive and richly stocked arboretum—as part of the 1986 annual national conference.

Dr David Symon (1920–2011)

The Australian Systematic Botany Society newsletter (June 2012) includes two generous tributes to David Symon, a venerable contributor to Australian botanical history, still working (voluntarily) at the State Herbarium in Adelaide until not long before his death. Of wide interests, history and poetry were two that captured David's imagination. His widely praised book on the Sturt Pea (jointly authored with Manfred Jusaitis) was reviewed in *AGH* (19 (3), 2007–08).

www.anbg.gov.au/asbs

Guilfoyle in cyberspace

Stuart Read's article 'Before Victoria: William Guilfoyle in New South Wales' in our last issue created a storm of interest in cyberspace. The flurry of email correspondence brought to light fresh evidence relating to the provenance of the Principal's garden at Hawkesbury Agricultural College. We hope to furnish readers with more about this in a future issue as further information comes to light.

'Gardens by the Bay'

A quick travel advisory from Max Bourke: 'Just back after 2 months away, a lot of time spent in new and old gardens in France, Scotland, Switzerland, and most spectacularly Singapore. We were enormously impressed to spend half a day in the very newly opened 'Gardens by the Bay' in Singapore. Wow! A billion dollars buys a lot to think about. Somewhere between Disneyland with plants and the best didactic systems/materials/technology I have ever seen re biodiversity, plant growth, and relationships with humans, climate change, and impacts. The two domes 'East of Eden' (a pun on the UK Eden project) are truly mind blowing. It is now a crucial place to visit for anyone interested in plants or gardens.'

The Garden of Ideas

This AGHS national touring exhibition is on display at the Red Box Gallery of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Sydney, until 30 November. A highly successful seminar, 'Glamour & Grit: new stories for garden history', jointly hosted by the AGHS Sydney & Northern NSW Branch and the Historic Houses Trust of NSW, was held in Sydney on 21 July in conjunction with The Garden of Ideas launch. Seven speakers spoke passionately about their interest in twentieth century gardens—Megan Martin's paper appears elsewhere in this issue and we have previously published the substance of Chris and Charlotte Webb's work on the Berrima Bridge Nurseries—and in the eloquent summation of co-convenor Stuart Read 'the day was a bit of a smash'.

This is also a timely reminder that the National Trust of Australia (NSW) still has limited stock available of *Interwar Gardens: a guide to the history, conservation and management of gardens of 1915–1940*, produced by its Parks and Gardens Conservation Committee some years ago (\$25; order online at shop.nationaltrust.com.au or phone 02 9258 0128).

Studies in Australian Garden History

The third volume of *Studies in Australian Garden History* which explores issues of managing change in historical landscapes is now available. *Studies* (vol. 3) can be purchased directly from the Australian Garden History Society for \$25 (or \$20 for AGHS members) plus postage and packaging.

Rose breeder Frank Riethmuller

The life and work of Australia's 'second-best-known rose breeder', Frank Riethmuller (1884–1965), are celebrated in a forthcoming publication by AGHS member Eric Timewell. *Frank Riethmuller: life and roses* will be available through Florilegium from November 2012, after its launch at the November conference of Heritage Roses in Australia.

www.frankriethmuller.com



Gardening at 4,000 feet above sea-level and with a wide-variety of climatic extremes—recurring droughts, winter frosts, heavy rains, and everything in between, is not for the faint hearted.

Gostwyck Station, late nineteenth century, University of New England & Regional Archives

Gardens with altitude: 'the high lean country' of New England

The Northern NSW sub-branch invites you to attend the 34th AGHS Annual National Conference to be based in Armidale from 18–21 October 2013. For over 150 years, and sometimes through many generations, old and new gardeners in the New England region have dreamed of and developed pleasure gardens, large homestead gardens, and small town gardens, and continue to triumph over weather patterns, old and new, as well as embracing the distinctive local landscape. We invite you to see the results, as well as hear outstanding speakers explaining how these gardens have been developed and maintained. There will also be many opportunities to enjoy the natural landscape, cuisine, wines, crafts, and art of the region. Watch the website and our next journal for more details.

Dalvui

To honor the memory of the late Suzanne Hunt, the AGHS Victorian Branch has commissioned well-known garden photographer Simon Griffiths to capture the Western District garden Dalvui in a suite of high-resolution digital images, presented to the State Library of Victoria (see page 2). Suzanne was instrumental in promoting the State Library as a repository for Australian garden history and this thoughtful gesture recalls her passion for garden history, marks the centenary of Dalvui's designer William Guilfoyle, and embraces the collecting policies of the State Library.



Dame Elisabeth Murdoch, Suzanne Hunt, and Anne-Marie Schwirtlich pictured at the State Library of Victoria's Gardenesque book and exhibition launch in 2004.

State Library of Victoria

A parting gift *by Jackie Courmadias*

Members bid farewell to our much-loved Executive Officer Jackie Courmadias in the Red Rotunda of the State Library of Victoria on 30 August 2012—this is the text of Jackie’s speech.

When John Dwyer suggested a cocktail party I envisaged a small gathering in someone’s house. Little did I expect so many people in such grand surroundings! Thank you all so much for coming, especially those who have come such a long way, and thank you so much Kathy, Pam, Shirley, and Phoebe for organising this event.

I am sure you have noticed over the years that I don’t much like standing up in front of a crowd but I can’t let this occasion pass without taking the opportunity to thank the very many people who have made my years at the AGHS such happy and productive ones.

On my very first day of work at the AGHS office in the Astronomers’ Residence in 1992 I was introduced to a building that had a lingering smell of dead rats, an office the size of a cupboard, and outside the back door, a huge mound of steaming manure delivered regularly from the nearby police stables. The rat problem was temporary, thank goodness, but the manure, used in the gardens, remained almost until the time Observatory Gate site was renovated and the office relocated.

*It is hard to believe that
20 years has slipped by*

That all aside, I found myself in an office set in the Botanic Gardens, working with a subject I was intensely interested in, and all the while interacting with intelligent and gracious individuals. I was then and still am so grateful to the interview panel of the then chairman Margaret Darling, Sue Keon-Cohen, and Richard Aitken for selecting me. Since then I have had the privilege of working with some of the finest minds in garden history as well as some of the most committed and enthusiastic, and visited gardens and landscapes throughout the country. It is hard to believe that 20 years has slipped by. I’m not sure the size of the office has changed much but its situation is certainly a great deal nicer!

In all the years I have worked for the Society I’ve been surrounded by hard working and inspiring people who have given their expertise and energy so willingly and who have been crucial to the

running and development of the Society into what it is today; patrons, national committees, branch committees, conference committees, editors, tour leaders, volunteers, and in more recent years a wonderful assistant in Janet Armstrong.

And all along the way I have met so many marvellous and interesting people through the general membership, some of who have made enormous contributions to the discipline of garden history in Australia through their research and writing, and many more who by virtue of just being members have helped the Society to grow and prosper—because let’s be frank—members are without doubt the lifeblood of this organisation. Without funds from membership subscriptions the Society would not be able to employ staff, publish the journal, or fund projects. What good too would conferences be without delegates, tours without participants, or lectures without audiences?

Those who have had the most profound influence on my work have been the National Chairs: the late Margaret Darling, Peter Watts, Colleen Morris, John Dwyer, and for a short time, Jan Gluskie. Each has brought his or her considerable professional skills and personal qualities to the task. Few I think amongst members would appreciate what a huge commitment it is to be the Chair of this organisation. Their advice and guidance and support have been pivotal to my work and I could never thank them enough.

The Treasurers too—Robyn Lewarne, the late Elizabeth Walker, Mal Faul, and Kathy Wright—worked congenially with me to ensure the Society was kept on a sound financial footing. Again these four have made a huge commitment in time and expertise.

I have worked with many National Management Committees over the years, many different combinations of people, with amazing skills, committed to improving the way the Society achieves its objects, whilst keeping it relevant and exciting. They have needed vision and pragmatism in equal measure and it is a great credit to all of them that this organisation has grown in stature and complexity. NMC members have almost without exception always been so loyal and considerate to me and this has had a huge impact on my work.

I’ve always been astounded by the exciting array of events branch committees organise, advocacy

work they undertake, and projects they pursue. Be they small or large these committees are crucial to members, providing them with tangible reasons for being part of the Society. What is astounding is the way these branches take on the organisation of the annual national conference. Often no one on these committees has ever put on such a large event before and to such exacting standards, but every year without fail these conferences are every bit as professional as any organised by specialists, and bring together the best of speakers and the most wonderful gardens and landscapes to visit. I would like to pay special tribute here to all those branch committees I have had the pleasure to work with.

When I first starting working for the AGHS I saw Richard Aitken as very much my mentor. I'm sure he wasn't aware of it but he helped me get to know the history of the Society and through his editorship of the journal (he was co-editing with Georgina Whitehead at the time) to appreciate the standards the Society aspired to, and the journal in the ensuing years, edited primarily by Trisha Burkitt, the late wonderful Nina Crone, and now Richard and Christina Dyson, has continued to reflect these very exacting standards. The importance of the journal to members is a testament to this.

Anyone who has been on Trisha's tours knows how wonderful they are. Trisha shares with others her passion for the subject matter and teaches through stories and sheer exuberance a deeper way to look at gardens and the landscapes they inhabit. It has been a special pleasure of mine to have the chance to work with her on just a few of these.

The AGHS office is a very busy place with the equivalent of just one full-time staff member. It is easy to appreciate then how heavily I have relied on volunteers to assist me on a weekly, fortnightly, or monthly basis. I would like to express my sincerest appreciation to those who have assisted me at different times over the years, in particular Laura Lewis, Kathy Wright, John and Beverley Joyce, the sadly missed Bronwen Merrett, Ann Rayment, Cate McKern, and Helen Page. And I thank too the journal packing volunteers who so willingly responded to my regular call for help. Lachlan Garland too has been a stalwart volunteer in keeping the website up to date despite my often scant and poorly timed instructions.

I wish also to pay tribute to Janet Armstrong who continues to bring her considerable skills to

the job of Administrative Assistant. I was very fortunate to have had such an amenable and hard working colleague.

As always, there are challenges ahead for the Society; but with a strong NMC, active branches, superb editors, wonderful staff, and a solid membership I believe that the Society is well equipped to tackle these challenges. If I may be forgiven for making one parting request it is that members actively firm up the Society's future by helping to broaden the membership base—a gift membership or a positive word to a friend would go a long way in doing this.

My last words are to welcome my replacement Phoebe LaGerche-Wijsman. I believe the NMC has made a wonderful choice in Phoebe and I have no doubt that you will welcome her as the new face of the Society.

I wish to sincerely thank the NMC for such a lovely farewell function, the Patron, John Dwyer and Colleen Morris for their kind words, the bestowing on me of honorary life membership to the Society—an honour I am extremely touched by, the gorgeous flowers, and the most beautiful gift of a Georg Jensen bracelet. Simply overwhelming! Thank you also to all who attended and those who over the last few months have so kindly sent cards and emails thanking me and wishing me well.



Jackie Courmadias and former AGHS National Chair Colleen Morris at a recent annual national conference.

Photo: Trisha Burkitt

Profile: Phoebe LaGerche-Wijsman



Executive Officer Phoebe LaGerche-Wijsman brings a rich and complementary suite of skills to the AGHS as well as a background with roots in Australian garden history itself.

I have the garden of a girl who can't say 'no' due to my constant curiosity and love for plants. All plants offered from friends and family or found wanting a new home are always welcome; it's just hard to keep finding places for them in an

inner-city terrace! The cultivation of this tendency I attribute to my grandmother as I spent many hours as a child in her large East Ivanhoe garden; gardening, weeding, pruning, and burning-off! 'Just gathering a bit of seed, dear' or 'Taking a little cutting' and 'doing a bit of light pruning', were familiar refrains accompanying the popping into her pocket a little something gleaned from another's garden as we passed by. My mother, who grew up in Heidelberg when it was mostly farms along the Yarra, was also always encouraged to garden from a young age with a plot of her own to garden in. I too was given a plot of my own when I was little. She recently bought a garden (the house was secondary) near Ballarat to retire to.

The La Gerche and Robinson (my grandmother's side of the family) genes are strong in our family, in particular the preservation of our natural and built history. I have many family members interested and involved in architecture, horticulture, archaeology, art, and history. We're all very keen gardeners and generous providers of cuttings.

I have taken part in revegetation projects on public and private lands, where I've planted saplings that I've grown from seed and cuttings. I find there can be almost nothing more inspiring than watching a eucalypt grow from seed.

I'm also a keen letter writer, and am pleased advocacy is a prominent aspect of the AGHS's concerns. Two of my recent pet projects have been lobbying for the protection of the Bacchus Marsh Avenue of Honour and, on a more personal note, saving 100 Collins Street. Also known as Gilbert Court, this building was designed in

the early-fifties and is recognised as Australia's first glass curtain wall 'skyscraper' and one of the buildings responsible for ushering in the international Modern aesthetic to Melbourne in the prelude to the 1956 Olympic Games. It's listed by the National Trust and was designed by my grandfather, architect John Alfred La Gerche. His sister Eugenie La Gerche, my great aunt, was a botanical illustrator and a very passionate and precise gardener.

My great grandfather was also an architect, Alfred Romeo La Gerche. He designed the Old Arts building at The University of Melbourne and was chief architect for the Victorian State Electricity Commission, for whom he designed the Yallourn township and buildings, modelled on the English 'Garden City'. My great great grandfather, John La Gerche, was a forester and known for his revegetation work at Creswick after the gold rush.

My own formal efforts with plants began with the establishment of my own floristry business. This proved to be rather successful and after a few years, keen to apply my craft at a larger scale, I was accepted into the landscape architecture course at RMIT. Here, Jane Shepherd made the strongest impression with her passion and talent for intertwining plants and design, much like the practice of landscape architect, plantsperson, and AGHS member, Paul Thompson, whom I also greatly admire.

Serendipity led me into the media side of design and gardens. After a period with the Australian Institute of Landscape Architects and Australian Institute of Architects (Victorian Chapters), and then as a communications coordinator for a large architecture and design firm, I worked as a researcher and writer for the ABC program *Gardening Australia*. One of the great rewards of this type of work, having found a suitable media-worthy garden, was getting to know the people, the gardeners connected with it, and discovering their depth of knowledge and affection for the plants that they grew and nurtured.

Now I'm here, where I have been reacquainting myself with the Royal Botanic Gardens which are right at the door of AGHS HQ. Sharing Gate Lodge with the Friends of the Royal Botanic Gardens Melbourne is a constant delight, and I'm very much looking forward to meeting more of the wider AGHS community soon.

Diary dates

OCTOBER 2012

Thursday 4 Managing change in Sydney's RBG SYDNEY

Talk by Stuart Read entitled 'Managing change in the Royal Botanic Garden, Sydney'. This is a joint event with the Royal Botanic Garden, Sydney, 5.30–7.30pm, Maiden Theatre, Royal Botanic Garden. Cost: \$30 AGHS members/RBG Friends, \$40 guests. Bookings essential. Bookings taken by the RBG Friends on (02) 9231 8182 or email friends@rbgsyd.nsw.gov.au

Sunday 7 Walking in historic Kangaroo Point QUEENSLAND

Historic walk through Yungaba, from 1887 the Kangaroo Point Immigration Depot, historic Captain Burke and CT White parks, old Kangaroo Point Gaol, to St Mary's Anglican church, and afternoon tea in Kangaroo Point Park caf . 10am, 'Garnish' for brunch, cnr Rotherham and Goodwin Streets, Kangaroo Point (Refidex Map 23 E 1), or 11.30am, Yungaba, riverside walkway (Map 19 E 19). Cost: \$10 members, \$15 visitors. Please RSVP to Elizabeth Teed, geteed@bigpond.com or (07) 3851 0568

Sunday 7 Camden Park SYDNEY

Self-drive private visit to Camden Park house, garden, and nursery. 2–4pm, meeting place TBC when booking. Cost: \$20 members, \$30 guests, includes light afternoon tea. Bookings essential. Bookings and enquiries to Jeanne Villani on (02) 9997 5995 or Jeanne@Villani.com

Monday 15 George Chapman's Angas Street garden SOUTH AUSTRALIA

Betsy Taylor of NSW won the AGHS SA Branch Essay Prize 2011, for a paper on her grandfather George Chapman's garden on Angas Street near East Terrace. 7pm, Barr Smith Library, University of Adelaide. RSVP to Ray Choate, (08) 8267 3106 or ray.choate@adelaide.edu.au

Saturday 20 Illawarra orchard, Karragullen WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Further details to be advised in the forthcoming Branch newsletter.

Sunday 21 Armidale gardens NORTHERN NSW

Bus tour of gardens north of Armidale including Balaclava, Ollera, Glen Legh, and Rosecroft; these are some of the gardens being considered for the AGHS 2013 Conference Optional Day Tour. For information contact Bill Oates on woates@une.edu.au or Helen Nancarrow on helennancarrow@bigpond.com

Friday 26 Self-drive tour: Bungendore and Lake Bathurst area
SOUTHERN HIGHLANDS & ACT/RIVERINA/MONARO

A joint event, exploring three country gardens in the Lake Bathurst district; Palerang, Bongalabi, and Terry Hie. Morning tea will be provided by the committee. Enquiries to Lynette Esdaile on (02) 4887 7122 or garlynar@bigpond.com

NOVEMBER 2012

Thursday 1 The 'Ornate Effects' of Monsieur Marot SYDNEY

Robert Nash will present an illustrated talk entitled 'The man who did everything: the "Ornate Effects" of the amazing Monsieur Marot'. 6pm for 7–8.30pm, Annie Wyatt Room, National Trust Centre, Observatory Hill. Cost: \$20 members, \$30 guests, includes light refreshments. Bookings essential. Bookings and enquiries to Jeanne Villani on (02) 9997 5995 or Jeanne@Villani.com

Sunday 4 Visit to Markree TASMANIA

Morning lectures and lunch at the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery followed by a guided tour of the Markree house and garden, 145 Hampden Road, Hobart. For further details email Elizabeth Kerry at liz.kerry@keypoint.com.au or Mike Evans at wilmotarms@bigpond.com

Friday 9–Sunday 11 AGHS Annual National Conference, Ballarat, Victoria

The Australian Garden History Society's 33rd Annual National Conference will be held in Ballarat in late Spring, 9–11 November 2012.

Sunday 25**Christmas get-together**

NORTHERN NSW

Christmas get-together at Richard Bird and Lynne Walker's home, Heatherbrae. For details and information contact Bill Oates on woates@une.edu.au or Helen Nancarrow on helennancarrow@bigpond.com

DECEMBER 2012**Sunday 2****Christmas party**

TASMANIA

Please note that the venue has been changed due to unforeseen circumstances. Details of a new venue are being finalised. Email Elizabeth Kerry at liz.kerry@keypoint.com.au or Mike Evans at wilmotarms@bigpond.com for further details.

Sunday 2**End of year celebration**

QUEENSLAND

Relax on the deck at John Taylor's house, and enjoy the company of fellow members, talk about gardens seen this year, and what we may see in 2013. 5.30–8pm, 11 Joynt Street, Hamilton (Refidex Map 140 H 16). Cost: no charge, finger food will be provided. Please RSVP to Elizabeth Teed, geteed@bigpond.com or (07) 3851 0568.

Thursday 6**The coming of the Kauris**

SYDNEY

Talk by Professor David Mabberley entitled 'The coming of the Kauris: Agathis and after'. This is a joint event with the Royal Botanic Garden, Sydney. 5.30–7.30pm, Maiden Theatre, Royal Botanic Garden. Cost: \$30 AGHS members/RBG Friends, \$40 guests. Bookings essential. Bookings taken by the RBG Friends on (02) 9231 8182 or email friends@rbgsyd.nsw.gov.au

Thursday 6**Christmas party**

SOUTHERN HIGHLANDS

Christmas drinks at Hill View, the former Governor's residence, Sutton Forest. Enquiries to Lynette Esdaile on (02) 4887 7122 or garlynar@bigpond.com

Sunday 9**Christmas get-together**

SYDNEY

4.30–8pm, Eryldene Historic House & Garden, Gordon. Cost: \$20 members, \$30 guests, includes light refreshments. Bookings essential. Bookings and enquiries to Jeanne Villani on (02) 9997 5995 or Jeanne@Villani.com

John Dwyer, 'Garden plants and wildflowers in Hamlet' (from page 8)

References

- E. Cobham Brewer, *Dictionary of Phrase and Fable*, Cassell, London, 1895.
- Nicholas Culpeper, *The Complete Herbal* (1653), Thomas Kelly, London, 1850.
- John Gerard; Thomas Johnson (ed.), *The Herball or General Historie of Plantes*, A. Islip, J. Norton, and R. Whitakers, London, 1633.
- M. Grieve; Mrs C.F. (Hilda) Leyel (ed.), *A Modern Herbal* (1931), Tiger Books International, London, 1998.
- Richard Mabey, *Weeds*, Profile Books, London, 2010.
- Lucille Newman, 'Ophelia's herbal', *Economic Botany*, 33 (2), 1979, pp.227–32.
- F.G. Savage, *The Flora and Folk Lore of Shakespeare*, Ed. J. Burrow & Co. Ltd, Cheltenham & London, 1923.
- Paul Turner (ed.), *Pliny's Natural History*, Centaur Press, London, 1962.

Ivan Barko, 'The French Garden at La Perouse' (from page 10)

Notes

- Both the forms 'Lap rouse' and 'La P rouse' were used in the navigator's lifetime, but he signed 'Lap rouse' in one word. The correct spelling for the area in the Randwick Municipality is La Perouse.
- 1 Letter to Lecoulteux de la Noraye, 7 February 1788, translated by John Dunmore, in *Where Fate Beckons: the life of Jean-François de La P rouse*, ABC Books, Sydney, 2006, pp.248, 275.
 - 2 Philip Gidley King, Private Journal, Vol. 1, p.95 (27 January – 1 February 1788), State Library of New South Wales, Manuscript (Safe 1/16).
 - 3 Victor Lottin (translated by Ivan Barko), quoted in François Bellec, *Les Esprits de Vanikoro: le myst re Lap rouse*, Gallimard, Paris, 2006, pp.37–38.
 - 4 Ren Primev re Lesson, *Voyage autour du monde: entrepris par ordre du gouvernement sur la corvette La Coquille*, P. Pourrat Fr res, Paris, 1838–39; translated by Henry Selkirk in 'La Perouse and the French monuments at Botany Bay', *The Royal Australian Historical Society – Journal and Proceedings*, 1918, Vol. IV, Part VII, pp.349–50.

In praise of working bees

Fran Faul & Malcolm Faul

A house can survive neglect for some years and look little different. But a garden is a fragile thing—if there is no work on a garden for just one year, it becomes an impenetrable wilderness of weeds, creepers and foliage. Leave it for 10 years and it is all but irretrievable. All gardeners know this.

So to find an historic garden in private hands and well maintained is to find a true miracle, for it has come through several generations, with each generation caring for the garden and retaining the essence of its character. If just one of those generations has other priorities, either by choice or necessity, the historic garden is lost.

Moreover, a historic home is immeasurably diminished if it does not have a surrounding landscape complementary to the period of the house. It is even better to have the original design, which willing workers may discover by some simple archaeology—shapes of beds and paths may be found by a little investigating and a lot of cutting back. Even better, when knowledgeable participants can offer advice on plants available in the period, rather than defaulting to modern cultivars.

We all have an interest in culturally significant gardens. And, if we are honest, it is the grand gardens that

we like to enjoy. But without generations of owners lavishing labour and love of those gardens, we have nothing to enjoy. The National Trust was born out of a desire to save significant buildings and to encourage the wider community to value, maintain and conserve these assets. The Australian Garden History Society is in part a child of the National Trust: from its outset, it has had a major objective of encouraging the conservation of our stock of historic gardens, both public and private.

Working bees should be a major tool for the Society to work towards this objective. Consider the scenario of a fourth-generation farmer inheriting a nineteenth-century house and large garden. Farm prices have deteriorated over many years. Perhaps some of the land has been sold off. Suddenly the new owner is confronted with difficult choices—a farm always needs investment in maintenance or equipment. The garden may originally have had several gardeners; now there are none. The house itself needs major maintenance and updating. It is so easy to lose a garden in the face of these competing pressures.

A working bee is a way to say to an owner or custodian that they manage a significant asset, one that it is worth conserving, and that the Society—and hopefully the wider community—values this asset. Hopefully, a working bee goes some way towards tipping the

A typical working bee team (at Turkeith) with young apprentice gardeners.





Shirley Goldsworthy, Sally Randal, and Pamela Jellie planting at Glenara.

owner's competing priorities in favour of the garden. Testimonials of appreciation from owners seem to bear this out.

But a working bee is more than a mark of appreciation. There are benefits for the workers. It is always more fun working in a group than alone. There is information to be shared, plants to be exchanged, major tasks to be made less onerous. Sometimes we discuss ways to make a garden more manageable. There is always a sense of achievement. Benefits always flow both ways. Workers benefit from such joys as a day in the country, leisurely chats with other participants, and an exchange of knowledge and expertise. Sometimes there is special interest; such as working with a professional dry stone waller to reconstruct a languishing entrance to the garden at Turkeith (Birregurra, Vic.) and finding on the

next visit that the owners had been inspired to restore the full length of the wall.

Working bees should be a significant part of our activities: is there a better way to fulfil the AGHS mission of 'concern for and conservation of significant landscapes and historic gardens'? All expertise is welcome. But no specific expertise is required for volunteers—sign up now for a very special and rewarding experience. It is one thing to visit and admire a garden with a busload of others. It is quite another to work alongside the owner with no one else in sight and begin to feel a love of the place. All it needs is you!

Fran Faul coordinates working bees for the Victorian Branch of the Australian Garden History Society; **Malcolm Faul** is a former treasurer of the Society.



Mission Statement

The Australian Garden History Society is the leader in concern for and conservation of significant cultural landscapes and historic gardens through committed, relevant and sustainable action.