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Brachyichiton acerifolius by
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GUEST EDITORIAL

by Katie Holmes

In 1900 the journal *Australian Women's Sphere* published an article which called upon Australian women to take up horticulture as an occupation. Landscape gardening in particular, the *Sphere* believed, was especially suitable for women, who were naturally more artistic than men, and better

administrators. These skills should be put to use 'in designing and maintaining parks and gardens, and making artistic oases in the deserts of crowded cities and suburbs.'

One hundred years later we are in a position to assess the significance of some of the contributions the women who took up horticulture have made to the history of gardening in Australia. This special edition of *Australian Garden History* looks at a number of women gardeners and designers — some well known others less well recognised — and highlights the range of their skills, the often difficult nature of their working conditions, and the importance of their legacy.

One of the striking themes to emerge from the lives of the women discussed here, is the extent to which they recognised the beauty of the Australian native flora and gardened with it. Ivec Strazzabosco created her Nirvana Park in Victoria's Gippsland, with a mixture of natives and exotics; Olive Mellor was using native plants in her designs as early as November 1938 and was a foundation member of the Society for Growing Native Plants. As Joy Rayner writes, however, finding information about the propagation and cultivation of Australian natives even in the late 1950s was difficult. It would be many years before the general public recognised the beauty and value of our own indigenous plants.

Other themes emerge from these narratives. Olive Mellor was one of the first women graduates from Burnley Horticultural College, and the first to work there as an instructor. We can see from her experiences that while gardening or Landscape Design may have been seen as suitable work for women, that did not mean their entry into the horticultural professions was uncontested. We might also note that balancing the demands of work and family, especially as a widow and single mother, was stressful. Lilian Fraser's solution to the demands of a busy life was the creation of a garden which was self sustaining and self preserving. Her garden is now being maintained by the Friends of the Fraser Garden, and offers a haven from the roar of traffic and the urban sprawl of Sydney's Pennant Hills.

For the handful of women gardeners discussed here, there were thousands of others for whom the garden offered a chance to escape from the demands of childcare, housework or paid work and an opportunity to express their creativity. As one garden writer for *Australian Home Beautiful* noted in 1928, she sought to create a 'secret garden', a place where she could 'sit and read, or dream, or work by myself, not seen by everyone who comes in the gate'. Whatever the motivations behind women's gardening and designing, we know that women have played a significant part in transforming barren urban landscapes, and bringing to rural properties oases of fertility and beauty. In doing so, they have had to adapt to their environments, making do with shortages of water, extremes of climate, and the vagaries of specific local conditions. For many women, the garden has played a crucial part in an on-going accommodation with the land, a means by which they established a sense of permanence and belonging. Women too were settlers, and colonisers, and through their gardening and designing we see them working with their surroundings, planting and tending, leaving their own marks upon the land. In creating and claiming a space for themselves, they in turn helped shape and create an Australian sense of place.

As we tend our gardens, we follow their legacy.

Katie Holmes became interested in women's gardens during her research on women's diaries. Since then she has been looking at women and gardens in twentieth century Australia, and is also working, with her colleague Sue Martin, on a project titled *The Culture of Gardens: public and private gardens in nineteenth and twentieth century Australia*. Katie teaches History and Women's Studies at LaTrobe University and is author of *Spaces in Her Day: Australian Women's Diaries of the 1920s and 1930s* (Allen & Unwin 1995).

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Thanks to Nina Crone, Di Ellerton, Elizabeth Wright, Georgina Whitehead, Cate McKem, John and Beverley Joyce, Laura Lewis, Beryl Black, Kaye and Mike Stokes and Jackie Courmadias for packing the last issue of the Journal.

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NIRVANA PARK

a *Special Place* for people



Nirvana Park. c.1980

by **Nina Crone**

AMONG LITTLE KNOWN WOMEN garden makers are those who simply work in a garden for the joy of it.

They often develop a garden whose individual character owes nothing to the tastes and trends of its time. Rarely does the garden maker articulate a design, rationale or inspiration for her work. Ivec Strazzabosco, *née* Mentha (1907-1993) was such a gardener.

Dr Mary Ellis considers Nirvana Park at Koonwarra, 130 kilometres south-east of Melbourne 'the expression of one woman's pleasure in a beautiful environment'.¹ That environment is the forest of South Gippsland although, since Ivec first came to the area in 1915, much of the forest has been cleared for grazing. However there remains enough to conjure up the impression it made on an desperately poor eight-year-old girl from the city.

Ivec's father, Frank Mentha was born in Talbot, Victoria, in 1879. His family appears to have been part of that Swiss/Italian migration to Victoria following the goldrushes. He married Ethel Keir, an Irish girl in 1908. Life in the city was precarious for the couple and their three children so Frank sought a wood-cutting job at Koonwarra in South Gippsland in 1915.

To the young Ivec the dray journey from Koonwarra railway station was 'such an adventure, especially when we got bogged'.² Their accommodation turned out to be an old shed but Frank set to building a 'tent house' and Ivec described her new home as 'wonderful and happy in a beautiful, peaceful setting among tall timber. Gum trees, blackwoods, wattles, old man ferns and other native shrubs made an ideal sanctuary for the large population of birds and animals which frequented it'.³

Ethel Mentha's deteriorating health necessitated a return to Melbourne for surgery and the luckless family suffered more setbacks



before Ethel died in 1919. A year later Frank Mentha was offered a job at the Koonwarra brickworks so he returned and the children knew a more settled life and some schooling.

Ivee left school at 14. A solitary and thoughtful child, 'more alone than lonely'⁴ she roamed the bush revelling in its beauty and wrote to penfriends in Australia and overseas.

Then the brickworks closed, the boys left home for farm work and Ivee and her father scraped a meagre existence from rabbit trapping. They tried share-farming onions but it returned less than the rabbiting.

As funds no longer met the rent, Ivee and Frank set up another tent house opposite where Nirvana Park now stands.

In the mid 1930s when the Great Depression was at its worst, Ivee and her father moved to Echuca to the farm of Ivee's last penfriend. She had given up writing to the others because she could not afford the stamps. She found the landscape alien and spoke of 'a seemingly endless barren land – a desolation devoid of the beautiful gum trees and hills of South Gippsland.'⁵

In 1939 Ivee married Martin Strazzabosco. He brought her and her father back to Leongatha and gave Ivee a seven acre block of land at Koonwarra. Here, throughout the 1940s, the battlers worked assiduously digging out stumps, tussocks and beginning to plant trees and shrubs.

The dream house was never built. Frank Mentha died in 1951. Martin Strazzabosco died in 1963. Ivee continued planting and caring for her little paradise. In 1966 the garden was opened to the public and the local shire asked Ivee to suggest two names. Nirvana was the one chosen.

To-day in the park there are remnants of the native vegetation - Messmates, Swamp Gums and Narrow-leafed Peppermints, (*Eucalyptus obliqua*, *E. ovata* and *E. radiata*) but most of the understorey has been replaced by Banksia, Callistemon, Casuarina, Grevillea, Hakea, Lagunaria, Melaleuca and Tristania species.

There is a selection of conifers – the Dawn Redwood, *Metasequoia glyptostroboides*, Bhutan, Italian and Monterey Cypress, *Cupressus torulosa*, *C. sempervirens* and *C. macrocarpa*, White and Slender Cypress Pine, *Callitris columellaris* and *C. preisii*, Indian Cedar, *Cedrus deodara*, Junipers, *Juniperus communis*, Mountain Plum Pine, *Podocarpus lawrencei* and Norfolk Island and Bunya Pines, *Anaucaria heterophylla* and *A. bidwillii*.

Deciduous trees include Silver birch, *Betula pendula*, a Flame Tree, *Brachychiton acerifolius*, Lombardy poplar, *Populus nigra*, Rhus, *Rhus succedanea* and Willows, *Salix babylonica* as well as several fruit trees (Ivee had planned an orchard around her house). Other interesting plantings are the Spear Lily, *Doryanthes excelsa*, Cordylines, New Zealand Flax, a Yucca and a Chinese Fan Palm.

In November 1985 Ivee Scrazzabosco received a Shire Council award for her outstanding work in the restoration and beautification of Nirvana Park. The Shire President assured her the Park would always be preserved – 'that the area is beyond price and must be retained for future generations.'⁶

By 1990 the park was subject to vandalism. The adobe shelter built under a Community Employment Scheme at the height of the 1980s recession was smashed, shrubs were uprooted and 'statues' were broken. Ivee complained 'It seems like no-one cares whether the park is there or not. I've tried to create a special place for people and animals.'⁷

On January 29, 1993, Ivee died in Nirvana Park, 'the haven she created with 40 years of love – every tree a monument of love to her memory'.⁸ The following year the local newspaper reported that 'Woorayl Shire is about to appoint a committee of management for Nirvana Park'.⁹

Ivee's son Peter, a resident of Queensland, visited the park in early April 1996. He was appalled at its deterioration describing it as '..... a mess, a fire hazard (needing) urgent maintenance.'¹⁰ The newly formed shire of

above left: Ivee, with a new 'Statue', on the block. 1962.

above: Alan Mentha (Ivee's brother) with Ivee's children (Peter and Gloria) and husband Marty Strazzabosco. 'The First Start'. 1947.

FOOTNOTES

1. Ellis, Mary - Nirvana Park *The Australian Garden Journal* Vol. 10, No. 3 Feb/Mar 1991 pp 119-121
2. Scarrabosco, Ivee - Reminiscences of Life at Koonwarra 1915-1940 *Gippsland Heritage Journal* No.7
3. Ibid
4. Ibid
5. Ellis, Mary: Op. Cit p 121
6. *The Star*, Leongatha, November 12 1985.
7. *The Star*, May 22 1990.
8. *The Star*, February 2 1993.
9. *The Star*, November 18 1994.
10. *The Star*, April 7 1996.

NOTE

All Photographs from the Nirvana Park Collection, courtesy of The Leongatha and District Historical Society, Victoria.



above: Ivee Strazzabosco at Nirvana Park. 1979.

right: Ivee Strazzabosco at Nirvana Park. 1964.



Nina Crone graduated in History, French and Education and is an accredited freelance journalist. She worked for ten years as a producer and director in radio and television at the ABC before becoming Principal of Melbourne Girls Grammar School. Nina now lives in South Gippsland and is endeavouring to research as many of the old South Gippsland gardens as possible. Nina 'chanced' upon Nirvana Park one day as she drove to Leongatha and later included the Park in the Gippsland Discovery Weekend at the end of March. Its rather neglected state Nina believes highlights the problem of small public parks in large rural shires.

South Gippsland (an amalgamation of five former shires) commissioned a Management Plan (1996-2001) from consultant Andrew Paget. However, it has been difficult for the small group of volunteers to maintain management particularly during the past three years of severe local drought.

Victorian Australian Garden History Society members visited Nirvana Park in March 2000 and were impressed with the variety of planting. They were moved by the remnants of Ivee's embellishments – a rusting water-pump, a languishing planter decorated with broken crockery mosaic work, and two chipped bird 'statues'.

This patch of endeavour by a true Aussie battler deserves greater care and attention.

Olive Mellor

by Sandi Pullman

OLIVE MELLOR (1891-1978) made an important contribution to the developing role of women in horticulture in the first half of the twentieth century.

Olive Mellor graduated from the School of Horticulture at Burnley College in 1915 and went on to succeed in many areas of horticulture that were not previously open to women. She also pioneered new areas of horticulture that had not been used before such as the popular press of the day. She wrote extensively for *The Australian Home Beautiful*. This magazine had enormous influence on its readers, especially after the Second World War. She also contributed to three gardening books and had her own gardening radio program that specialised in giving practical advice to her listeners. Her considerable achievements should be better recognised as she created new and exciting opportunities in horticulture.

Olive was born on March 14, 1891, in the village of Linton near Cambridge, England, to Richard and Mary-Ellen Holttum nee Fenton. Richard moved to Linton, when his brother Thomas left the family grocer/hardware and drapery village store. Olive had two sisters Eva Elizabeth (who died of consumption in 1911) and Marjorie. Olive's mother Mary-Ellen died in 1891, just after Olive was born. Her father re-married a friend of Mary-Ellen's, Florence Bradley, in 1894. They had three children, Richard Eric, known as Eric, who was the Director of the Singapore Botanic Garden from 1925-1942, Harold Bradley and Dorothy. Florence was a keen amateur botanist and organised family walks in the country, where flowers were meticulously identified. Eric and Olive acquired their love of gardening from Florence and the family gardener.¹

The three Holttum sisters went to school in Birmingham where their stepmother's sister Hannah had a day and boarding school. Apparently Olive taught at the school before she came to Australia. In October 1909, Olive was sent to Australia as a governess because Eva had consumption. She came out on the ship *SS Runic* and stayed with Mrs. Annie Preston in Melbourne.² She liked Australia so much that she stayed and enrolled at the Burnley School of Horticulture.



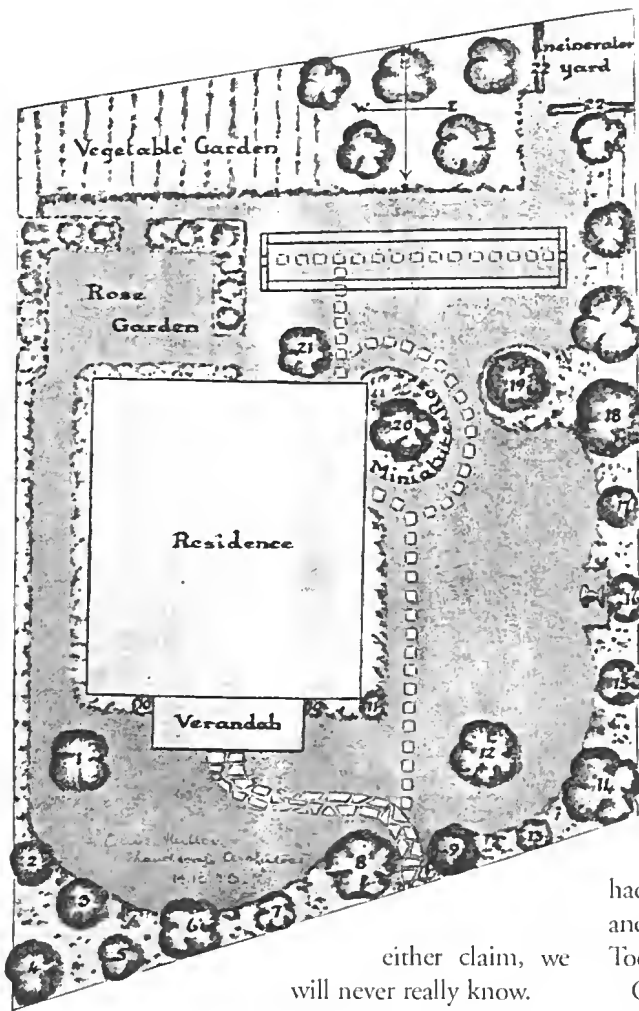
Olive relaxing in the garden with her dog.

Olive Mellor was a notable landscape architect: it is claimed that she paved the way for women to study full-time at Burnley College. In 1912 Olive enrolled at the School of Horticulture and was awarded the Certificate of Competency in 1913 receiving an overall mark of 90%.³ According to Olive, women were only able to attend lectures and weren't allowed to do the practical side of the course, though there seems to be some confusion on this point.⁴ The official Burnley College history *How Green Grows Our Garden*, by A.P. Winzenried states that women were studying full-time by 1903-04 and there is photographic evidence that women were participating in practical work. As there are no records available from the Burnley College Archives to substantiate

FOOTNOTES

1. *Old Scholar's Association Annual Report*, 1990, Richard Eric Holttum and Harold Bradley Holttum, Friends School, Saffron, Walden
2. Hicks, P., 2000, *Notes re The Early Years of the Holttum Family*
3. Institute of Land and Food Resources, Burnley College Archives, *Certificate Book*
4. *The Australian Home Beautiful*, November 1970

A Garden on the Murray River, published in *The Australian Home Beautiful* November 2, 1936



either claim, we will never really know.

Olive was determined to complete the full certificate of Competency, but to do this she needed permission from the Minister for Agriculture. The story goes that she heard that the Minister of Agriculture, Mr. W. Hutchison was going on holidays, so she bailed him up at Spencer Street Station in Melbourne and demanded to be allowed to study full-time. He was so taken aback that he gave his permission and said 'Go away and dig'. When she returned to Burnley and told the staff, they said 'Very well then' and without much interest gave her a wheelbarrow full of tools, a plot of land and left her to it.⁵

Olive went onto complete the Diploma of Horticulture, which was an extra two years study. In *How Green Grows our Garden*, A.P. Winzenried states that the regulations were waived in Olive's favour, but it is not clear what regulations he is referring to. Perhaps he is referring to Olive being the first woman allowed to study the Diploma or perhaps he is referring to the fact that she was allowed to study full-time. Olive was one of the first students and probably the first woman to gain the Diploma of Horticulture. She graduated in 1915, but at the time there weren't any certificates available, so the principal E.E. Pescott signed the back of her Certificate of Competency.⁶

After Olive graduated, she returned as the first female instructress in 1917, when women were officially admitted to full-time study.⁷ This was a

major achievement at a time when very few women were professionally employed.

Olive stopped teaching in 1919, when she married Alan Robert Mellor, who was an orchardist in Wandin. Olive met Alan when she was visiting a sick friend, who told her to go next door and ask 'His Royal Highness' to come over and help with the horses.

Alan and Olive had one child, a daughter, Margaret Holttum Mellor, born on August 5, 1920. Sadly, Alan suddenly died of a heart attack just before Margaret was born, leaving Olive a widow and single mother.

In the early 1920s Olive worked as a Matron at a convalescent home in Cheltenham. It seems that the grief of losing Alan and strain of being a single mother became too much and she had a breakdown. In 1922, Olive returned to England, but did not stay long, returning to Australia by 1923. By the mid 1920s, Olive had started her own garden maintenance business and by the late 1920s was head gardener at a large Toorak home.⁸

Olive's design career began in the 1930s from her contact with a nurseryman from Ormond Plant Farm who suggested she sell plants on commission. Olive's clients were mostly domestic gardeners and her business gradually evolved as they asked her 'for a bit of a layout'. She began supplying them with plants and by the end of the 1930s, Olive was established as a design/contractor, employing a team of workmen.⁹

Olive's garden designs always included a formal front garden, driveway, tradesmen's entrance and patio/outdoor living area where she believed the family 'seeks its privacy and enjoyment'. The rear of the house contained a lawn area, rose garden, perennial bed and the utilities area, which consisted of the clothesline, vegetable patch, incinerator and orchard.

Some of Olive's favourite exotic plants were *Jacaranda mimosifolia*, *Cupressus torulosa*, *Phlox decussata*, *Lavandula nana atropurpurea*, *Lagerstroemia eavesii* and *Crataegus pubescens* syn. *C. mexicana*.

Olive began writing for *The Australian Home Beautiful* in 1934 - an association that was to last 36 years. Peter Watts states in his book *Edna Walling and Her Gardens* that Olive Mellor was employed because the editor of *The Australian Home Beautiful* could no longer stand Edna's eccentricities.¹⁰ *The Australian Home Beautiful* was a modern magazine for the new home owner with the latest ideas on building, gardening, furniture and cooking. Olive's practical style

FOOTNOTES

4. *The Australian Home Beautiful*, November 1970
5. Personal communication with Margaret Watson
6. Winzenried, A.P., 1991, *Green Grows our Garden*, Hyland House Publishing Pty. Ltd., South Yarra, Melbourne
7. Mellor, O. 1970, *The Australian Home Beautiful*
8. Shepherd, J. 1988, *Six Landscape Designers, all Women*, Final Project for the Bachelor of Applied Science in Landscape Architecture, Faculty of Environmental Design and Construction, Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology, Swanston Street, Melbourne
9. Shepherd 1988, *Six Landscape Designers, all Women*, Final Project for the Bachelor of Applied Science in Landscape Architecture, Faculty of Environmental Design and Construction, Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology, Swanston Street, Melbourne
10. Watts P. *Edna Walling and Her Gardens*, Second Edition, 1991, Florilegium, Balmain
11. 1942, Australian Women's Land Army 22nd June 1942 - 21st December 1945, Margaret Mellor's Private Collection, Newspaper Cuttings and photo's of Australian Women's Land Army. In Private Possession of Margaret Watson
12. Shepherd, J., 1988, *Six Melbourne Landscape Designers, All Women*, Final Project for the Bachelor of applied Science in Landscape Architecture, Faculty of Environmental Design and Construction, Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology, Swanston Street, Melbourne

suiting the new 'How to do it' philosophy of the magazine. This applied even more so after the Second World War when there was a huge shortage of labour and materials. Her first articles were 'Remodelling an Old Garden' April 1934, 'Lawns and their Management' October 1934 and 'The Garden for the Small House' December 1934. At first her articles were irregular but by the late 1930s Olive was a regular contributor.

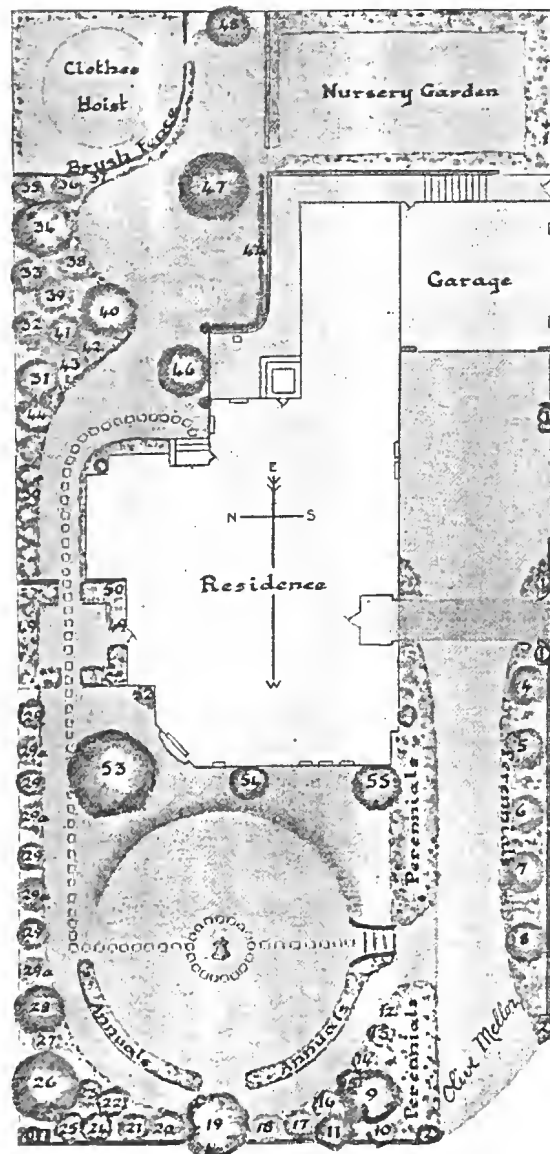
During the 1930s and 1940s, Olive wrote many articles on garden design, using reader's gardens as examples. For example, Mr. and Mrs Allan Hailes's country property in Marysville was featured in February 1937. She designed gardens in many parts of Australia, such as Queensland, South Australia, in country areas of New South Wales along the Murray River and in Geelong and Mt. Martha in Victoria. In 1948 she went to New Zealand and wrote about her trip in the February issue. She visited Mr. Douglas Chitty's home in Epsom, Auckland and described the climate as similar to Melbourne. By the 1960s she very rarely wrote about garden design. Instead she concentrated on all practical aspects of horticulture such as pruning, spraying, propagation, annuals, roses, looking after native plants and many other topics.

Olive always promoted native plants where she could. She wrote about and designed native gardens as early as November 1938. She believed we had a wonderful field to draw upon and using natives was only limited by their availability. It was not profitable to grow natives because the public did not demand them, so the nurserymen did not produce them.

Slowly Australian indigenous plants became more popular. A botanist friend, Arthur Swaly organised and formed the Society for Growing Australian Plants in 1957. Olive was a foundation member and she and Arthur would go on enjoyable field trips collecting seeds that they later propagated. Some of her favourites were *Callistemon lanceolatus*, *Eugenia smithii*, *Corymbia ficifolia* syn. *Eucalyptus ficifolia* and *Acacia alata*.

Olive was also involved in the publication of three books. The first book *The Garden Lovers' Log* was written during the Second World War to raise money for the Red Cross. The log was organised and inspired by Mrs. Joseph Levi and the book was dedicated to the men of the A.I.F. of 1914 and 1940.

The book was aimed at the amateur gardener and designed as a diary. At the end of each week there was a helpful hint by people such as



Miss Hilda Kirkhope, Instructress of Horticulture, School of Horticulture, Burnley or Olive Mellor. It was so popular that a second edition was printed.

Her next involvement with publishing was a book called *Australian Gardening of Today Illustrated* published sometime in the 1940s by *The Sun News Pictorial*. It was written by leading authorities of the day and arranged and edited by the editor of *The Australian Home Beautiful* A.B. Shum. It was divided into two sections, the first consisting of articles by leading horticulturists such as Professor E.G. Waterhouse, Edna Walling, J.L. Provan, Olive Mellor, R.T.M. Pescott, E.E. Pescott and many others. The second section was a Garden Encyclopaedia originally prepared under the direction of Mr. Richard Sudell, R.R.H.S., London for English conditions. Olive Mellor edited it for Australian conditions. It covered a broad range of plants and their descriptions.

Her third and more important publication, *The Complete Australian Gardener* was published

Olive Mellor plan for a country garden for Mr and Mrs Allan Hailes, Marysville, published in *The Australian Home Beautiful* February 1937.

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- Personal Communication with Margaret Watson from Tenby Point, Victoria;
- Peter Shepherd from Burnley College, Richmond; Lindsay Sine from North Balwyn, Melbourne; Peggy Hicks from Kings Heath, Birmingham, England;
- Karen Owens from Toorak, Melbourne; Thomas Kneen, Principal of Burnley School of Horticulture 1946-1967;
- Eric Littlejohn, Principal of Burnley School of Horticulture 1967-1977 and Gillian Chambers, St. Andrew's Church of England, Rosanna, Melbourne.

right: Olive Mellor at the 75th Anniversary of Burnley College in 1966.

below: The steps in the Toorak garden of Karen Owens featured in the March 1968 issue of *The Australian Home Beautiful*.



Sandi Pullman runs her own horticultural business in Melbourne and is returning to Burnley College to study the Bachelor of Applied Science (Hort). Sandra has always been interested in history and began researching Olive Mellor, when ask to write an article for *Australian Garden History*.

in 1952. This book, written entirely by Olive, covered all aspects of gardening from laying out a new garden to cacti care. Some of her early articles from *The Australian Home Beautiful* were reprinted in this book.

During the Second World War, Olive and her daughter Margaret joined the Australian Women's Land Army, yet still managed to contribute to *The Australian Home Beautiful*. Olive recognised the shortage of labour and even before the AWLA was formed, Olive took a group of girls to Riddells Creek to work in the flax fields. Olive was the first volunteer in the land army and supervisor of the 1st School, No. 1 Instructional Depot, Mont Park, Victoria. The AWLA was formed to fill labour shortages and give the women the skills they needed to perform agricultural work. The women learnt how to milk cows, harvest crops, harness horses for ploughing and read a vaporimeter at the Werribee Research Farm.¹¹ After the war, Olive stayed on at Mont Park as a nursery worker for a few years and continued writing for *The Australian Home Beautiful*.

Olive's career in radio on 3DB began sometime in the 1950s or 60s when she started the first radio gardening program in Australia. This helped her achieve her goal of making gardening accessible to everyone. Her format was to start the program with a talk about a particular topic and follow with answering listener's queries from letters they had written to the program.

Analysing Olive's work is a complex issue. There is so little material available and her work has always been totally overshadowed by Edna Walling. Olive's designs were simpler and her garden plans were not as detailed. When Olive began writing for *The Australian Home Beautiful* she used simple planting plans, however by the 1940s had altered her style to perspective plans. Unfortunately these perspective drawings had a cartoon-like quality to

them and did her an injustice, as in reality she had a great skill in placing the plants in the right position. Comparison of drawing style between Edna and Olive may have resulted in Olive being taken less seriously than other designers.

The only surviving known work of Olive's is the garden of St. Andrew's Church of England, Rosanna and Karen Owens's garden steps in Toorak. The suggested Garden Planting Scheme for St. Andrew's Church shows her position of the Smoke Bush, *Cotinus cogggyria* syn. *Rhus cotinus* to be cleverly positioned near the entrance to the church to hide the unsightly metal railing. The *Cotinus cogggyria* flowers in November, close to St. Andrew's Day, a special day for the church.

From surviving plans, it seems Edna designed large gardens for wealthy clients, creating areas of space by using trees. Olive used space in a simpler manner, clothing the boundaries with trees and shrubs, creating smaller garden rooms. Olive's designs were most effective and particularly suitable for the home gardener on the average size suburban block, in the new suburbs that were springing up after the war.

Olive's significant contribution to horticulture have been largely overlooked. A trailblazer throughout her horticultural career, she paved the way for women to work towards higher education, full-time study and satisfying full-time employment at a time when attitudes towards working women were difficult and looked down upon. Olive created new avenues for horticulture through the popular press of the day, making horticulture accessible to everyone. Magazines like *The Australian Home Beautiful* reached a wide audience and had an enormous influence on the trends of the day. Her early radio gardening shows on 3DB pioneered the way for today's home/garden/lifestyle television and radio programs. Olive was generous in spirit and liked to help people build their own garden. She is quoted as saying she wasn't in it for the money.¹²

It is a pity there is so little of Olive's work left, as it makes it hard to assess her contribution to the emergence of Australia's horticultural industry. Sadly, the work of many earlier designers has been lost, and without the preservation of such work, it is not possible to assess a true reflection of the gardens from the 1930s to the 1960s.



The LADIES COMPANION

by Joy Rayner



1. *Saxifraga Loudoniana* 2. *Adiantum Loudoniana* .
3. *Asplenium Loudonii* 4. *Loudonia aurea*

WHEN WE CAME TO AUSTRALIA IN 1957 I was amazed by the Australian flora. All my life I had been interested in England's wild flowers and I was fortunate to have been brought up in a family where if you did not know the name of a plant you automatically looked it up in either Gaston Bonnier's *Name This Flower* or Sowerby's *English Botany*. Both books had good illustrations so identification was easy.

Frontispiece from Jane Loudon's
*Ladies Companion to the
Flower Garden*

Here in Australia I could not place plants in their Family, let alone find out their name. We lived first in Orange in Central New South Wales and I met no one who was interested in Australian plants. There were lovely gardens of exotics, but to me, the wonderful Australian flora seemed to be ignored. I found Edna Walling's *The Australian Roadside* and a secondhand copy of Thistle Harris's *Wild Flowers of Australia*, but there seemed nothing about growing the plants.

After a few months we moved to Scottsdale in Northeast Tasmania, and have lived in the area for the last forty years. Again, really good gardens of exotics but no one interested in growing the

incredibly beautiful local wild flowers.

In the late 1950s, Australian plants were not available in the plant nurseries and there seemed to be no information on how to propagate these plants. To my surprise and delight I found I did have the information needed in a

dilapidated old gardening book, bought for sixpence during the war, Jane Loudon's *Ladies' Companion to the Flower Garden*, 3rd ed. 1844. The first edition of this very popular book appeared in 1841 and the 9th and last edition in 1879. In all, over twenty thousand copies were sold, a large number in those days. Originally it was for sale at six shillings.

This small volume of 340 pages, in tiny print and double column, contained the information needed, not only on the type of soil the plant liked, but actual advice on propagation.

In the preface the author says 'it occurred to me that a dictionary of the English and botanic names of the most popular flowers would be most useful; and the result is the present volume. A large number of the plants were grown in the heated nineteenth century conservatories'.

A list of some of the Australian plants in the book shows the incredible range available in England in 1840: Ammobium, Anigozanthos, Banksia, Beaufortia, Billardiera, Blandfordia, Boronia, Bossiaea, Brachysema, Burtonia, Callistemon, Chorizema, Correa, Crowea, Daviesia, Drosera, Epacris, Eucalyptus, Gompholobium, Grevillea, Hakea, Hardenbergia, Helichrysum, Hibbertia, Hovea, Hypocalymma, Isopogon, Jacksonia, Kennedyia, Lasiopetalum, Lechnaultia, Leucopogon, Loudonia, Patersonia, Pimelea,

Podolepis, Pomaderris, Sollya, Styliidium, Telopea, Thomasia, Thysanotus, Torenia, Trachymene, Tristania (spelling as in Companion - Loudonia now called Glischrocaryon!).

Jane Loudon was a remarkable woman. When she was twenty and still single she had to earn her own living. She decided not to become a companion or a governess but to become an author. The resulting novel in three volumes was called *The Mummy* and was set in the 22nd Century with many interesting predictions of the future including ploughing using steam engines instead of horses.

John Loudon, landscape designer and horticultural writer, then forty five years old, reviewed the book and commended it to his readers in *The Gardening Magazine*. He supposed the author was a man. They met at a dinner party and despite the difference in ages were married six months later.

John Loudon not only designed gardens but considered it his mission to record and review, in his many publication, all the large gardens in the British Isles. He admired and criticised the landowners, bringing to their notice any dereliction of their duties either to the gardens or to their staff. Jane was a great help to her husband, acting as secretary on many of his journeys all over Great Britain.

There was a fascinating book produced in 1987 called *In Search of English Gardens: Travels of John Claudius Loudon and his wife Jane* edited by Priscilla Boniface. This is a most enjoyable book, and is well worth the search needed to find a copy.

When Jane's husband died she continued with his publishing business and also produced new editions of her husband's gardening encyclopaedias. She was a good artist and her paintings of groups of flowers are still produced as flower prints and table mats etc. Wilfred Blunt in *The Art of Botanical Illustration* says that in the reissues of her books the lithograph plates have been coarsened and joyless. This is obvious in the frontispiece of my copy of

The Ladies' Companion to the Flower Garden - being an alphabetical arrangement of all the ornamental plants usually grown in gardens and shrubberies with full directions for their culture - by Mrs Loudon,

to give the book its full title page. My copy deserves it, for over the last fifty years it has been one of my most frequently consulted gardening books.

One further quotation will give a little more of the flavour of the book:

...it is a maxim in gardening which should never be forgotten, that what can not be grown well, ought not to be grown at all.



Joy Rayner is a retired librarian living in Bridport, Tasmania. She has had a life long interest in books, native flora and gardens.



The Garden *of* Dr Lilian Fraser

— scientist

by Christine Lees

IN 1987 THE HORNSBY SHIRE COUNCIL became the beneficiary of an interesting garden situated on the corner of Bellamy Street and Laurence Street, Pennant Hills, New South Wales.

The will of the late Dr Lilian Ross Fraser specifically gave her residence and land 'to be used and maintained as a public garden and park'. This residue of an historic area of 260 hectares (640 acres) was first granted to George Henry Thorn on April 15, 1840. Chief Constable Thorn of Parramatta obtained the land as a reward for capturing two bushrangers in 1830. He subsequently sold the land to James and Hannah Bellamy in 1856 and it was subdivided among members of their family in 1873. (Patrick 1994). Further transfers of ownership and divisions of the acres culminated in Dr Fraser becoming the sole owner of .34 hectare (one acre) after the death of her father in 1941.

Who was Dr Fraser?

Lilian Fraser became a Doctor of Science in 1937. She was the first woman botanist and was one of only three women in NSW to have gained the D.Sc. up to that time. A biography of Dr Lilian Fraser written by Dr Fred Butler in 1997 describes her career in great detail and provides a fascinating profile of an independent and forthright woman with ideas and attitude many years ahead of her time. She never married but dedicated her life to the pursuit of knowledge and the publication of her research for the benefit of all.

Her most significant research was into *phytophthora* root rot and virus diseases of citrus plants. In the Murrumbidgee Irrigation Area between 1935 and 1942, almost 50% of citrus trees were lost with little hope for the remainder. Dr Fraser's research revealed a solution to this crisis and as a result *Poncirus trifoliata* rootstock, which was highly resistant to the causal fungus, has been used almost exclusively ever since. News of her discoveries spread across the world and she was invited to speak at international conferences as well as acting in an advisory capacity on the dieback of citrus on the Colombo Plain in India.



Why her Garden?
– the personal side of Lilian Fraser

Lilian's botanical science background emerged from her childhood as she was immersed from an early age in an idyllic 'sylvan bushland and suburban farm environment'. The property, known as 'Hopetoun' was bought by her parents, Charles and Jean Fraser, and was originally a poultry farm and orchard. The garden evolved into a kaleidoscope of fruit and flowering blossom trees, huge native shade trees, profuse sweet smelling creepers and country garden perennials. As Lilian grew older, her interest in botany developed and as a consequence of her travels she brought back to the garden an amazing collection of plants which are now recognised as museum pieces.

In spite of her meticulous scientific research techniques, she had a completely different approach to her own plot of land. Her philosophy of gardening was to wander about with a plant in one hand and a spade in the other and choose a spot which appealed to her. The result is a fascinating array of beds which have their own individual identity.

History and hybrid nature

Before the arrival of the white settlers, the area of Pennant Hills was temperate rainforest of which a remnant still stands as the Cumberland State Forest. After the trees were felled (for railway sleepers and ships masts) and the remainder cleared for orchards and a poultry

farm, the soil of Hopetoun was described as 'a sandy loam over shale ... its inherent richness enhanced by applied manure' and this provided an excellent basis for Lilian's garden.

Although there are many rare and interesting plants in the garden, it is difficult to record the details of their arrival. During her travels across Australia and overseas she acquired, before any quarantine restrictions, many unusual saplings, cuttings and seeds. Unfortunately, no one is now able to remember or distinguish which plant came from where but the result of her labours now provides the visitor with a delightful medley of tall trees, flowering and distinctive shrubs and countless varieties of bulbs, roses and ground covers. Many of the varieties are no longer available for purchase and some of them are in fact hybridised by Dr Fraser herself.

Lilian's bequest, growth and change

We do not know how Lilian Fraser envisaged the garden would be used after her death, but Hornsby Council felt obliged to perpetuate her wish that it be used for the enjoyment of the community. A Management Committee (Section 377) comprising volunteer members of the local area was appointed with the bonus of funding for maintenance being provided by the rental of her cottage.

It was an exciting and challenging time in 1992 for the committee to start an enterprise with no precedent in the Council. The members did not know each other as they came from different points of contact with Lilian Fraser and they had to consider the aspects of preservation, restoration and enhancement for both a discerning public and the overarching Council authority. The article in *Australian Garden History* 'Dealing with Mature and Senescent Landscapes' by Mark Brandon (Vol 9 No. 2 Sept/Oct 1997) reflects the condition of the Fraser Garden when it was first handed over to the committee. Meetings were arranged at fortnightly intervals or as needed to address urgent issues as soon as possible.

With a support group of Friends of the Fraser Garden tirelessly weeding, pruning and cultivating at monthly Working Bees, the employing of a part time professional gardener and a lawn-mowing assistant both of whom are deeply attached to the garden, there is now a noticeable difference in its appearance.

As the Lilian Fraser Garden is open every day it has become well known to the public and the committee has needed to address other aspects of its management apart from maintenance. Private functions in public places require booking officers, financial transactions, rules, procedures and foresight. The decision to join the Australian



left: Lilian Fraser in her garden, 1923.

middle: Dr Lilian Ross Fraser, 1968 - on appointment as Chief Research Scientist Dept of Agriculture.

above: Lilian Fraser featured in *Friends of The Lilian Fraser Garden* flyer.

Open Garden Scheme created a focus point and deadline for a number of plans and projects. Other functions organised by the management committee have also introduced complex issues requiring discussion and debate. There is the continual tension between the purist approach and the need to consider the community feeling for the garden which requires flexibility and tolerance amongst those involved in implementation. Fortunately, there has been an amazing cohesion and balance of ideas between committee members over the last six years.

It is hoped that this Garden will become recognised in Australia in a fourfold way with its unique plants, its self-sustaining ecosystem, the opportunities for learning, and its role of conservation in an urban environment.

In 1997, an attempt was made to categorise the plants in the Lilian Fraser Garden. This is proving to be a daunting task as not only is there a continuously changing environment with the four seasons of the year and the arrival and disappearance of small plants but also the problem of identification. Just as a doctor can be uncertain when he sees patients with rare illnesses, so the gardening professionals are unsure of some of the species or varieties of some of the trees and shrubs because they are not familiar with plants which are no longer available in nurseries. Many visitors who are garden enthusiasts are overjoyed to see a particular variety of plant which they have not seen for years. Amongst these are an *Alnaphyllum pteryspermum*; *chionanthus*, fringe tree; smokebush, a special variety of *brunfelsia* and some dogwoods.

A garden plan listing fifty of the most significant individual species and an index of multiple plantings has now been created but it already needs to be amended since the discovery of a hitherto unknown variation of crocospma which appears to have hybridised in the garden.

The Friends of the Lilian Fraser Garden have many reasons for their affiliation but a common cause is to ensure the conservation of a rare oasis surrounded by the ever expanding suburbs of Sydney. From the rural peace of 1912 to the

present day roar of traffic through Pennant Hills there has been a tremendous change in lifestyle, demands and expectations of the community. The Garden is open every day for visitors to come and sit under the majestic trees and appreciate nature in their own way. It is used by young families who gaze into the pond or chase butterflies. It is visited by groups from nursing homes who can appreciate the perfumes and enjoy the shady meandering paths. It is also booked for painting and craft groups and is recorded for posterity in the photographs of weddings and other family functions.

It is the intention of the Management Committee that the Garden be used as a learning centre. The plants which Lilian Fraser grew with such care can be observed, studied and propagated. Soil health, groundcovers, the use of fertilisers and mulch and the irrigation system are some of the aspects of the Garden which need thought, trial and research for optimum effect and, since the inception of the committee, an enormous amount of discussion and learning has taken place.

During Lilian's busy working life there was little time for tedious or time consuming maintenance and she endeavoured to create a natural self sustaining and self preserving garden. It is in the interest of those involved in the garden now to continue this philosophy. The Committee and working bee supporters have their own gardens to maintain and the vagaries of the Australian climate can wreak havoc with droughts, torrential rains and cruel winds. Finding the balance between an 'easy care' garden and a place to enchant visitors is a challenge which is facing the Committee and the Council.

One aim which forces some change to the layout of the Garden is to make it accessible to as many as possible. Wider paths have been constructed with a more appropriate surface for wheels. A ramp gives access to the community room, fondly know as 'The Shed'. However there is still a need for further development and this will continue, knowing that it fulfils the wishes of Dr. Lilian Ross Fraser, scientist and garden lover.

Christine Lees is the current president of the Lilian Fraser Management Committee. She has been involved with the development of the garden since it became part of the Hornsby Shire Council property.

How i became an EDNA WALLING pubLisher

by Victor Crittenden



East Point

I FIRST CAME ACROSS EDNA WALLING'S BOOKS when browsing in the Public Library in Armidale in Northern New South Wales. I borrowed the books and was so entranced with their views on gardening that I wanted to own copies of them.

East Point, illustration from the book *On the Trail of Australian Wildflowers*

I can understand the temptation of Library users to keep the desirable books they borrow and the almost uncontrollable desire of the same temptation which takes hold of those who borrow beautiful and exciting books from friends. Being myself a Librarian as well as a book lover I resisted the temptation and duly returned the Edna Walling books (a couple of days late and as a result was fined). I then went searching, successfully eventually, for copies for my own personal library. At about this time I bought a copy of Beverley Nichols *Merry Hall* which I also enjoyed. In his writing, Nichols said that the only way to really become a gardener is to own your own garden, not renting or borrowing someone's land but to really own the land you are to make your garden. I had always had some patch of garden from childhood but as I at this time lived in a flat I set out looking for a place to buy in order to become a real gardener. I found an old house in a run down condition and a large double block of weed ridden wilderness in a great need of restoration. This

was to become my first real garden and the house was eventually restored to something like its original beauty. All this due to both Edna Walling and Beverley Nichols.

Edna Walling's famous books of which I managed to secure copies were published by Oxford University Press in the 1940s. *Cottage and Garden in Australia*, *Gardens in Australia*, *A Gardener's Log* and *The Australian Roadside* have all become rare books and are now often quite expensive to purchase. These works are regarded as Edna Walling's four famous books, all of them imparting a particular view of gardens and landscape in this country. Less well known is the fact that Edna Walling wrote another book in the 1940s which was not published. Oxford University Press and Angus and Robertson, among others, all rejected it.

Thus begins my story. I had published a few small books about gardens from my personal publishing house called The Mulini Press. One day I received an order for one of these books from Jean Galbraith. I wrote a note with the book saying how nice it was to receive an order from such a renowned garden writer. That began a correspondence about gardens and gardening and in one letter I asked Jean if by any chance she had an unpublished manuscript in 'her bottom



left: A path through the *Thyptomene*.

below: Front cover

drawer' which I might publish. She replied that she had nothing of her own unpublished but that she had an old manuscript by Edna Walling which I might to look at. Edna Walling had died some years earlier. You can imagine my excitement at such an answer.

The manuscript arrived in a brown bundle and I quickly opened and settled down to read the old browning pages of typescript with ink corrections and additions. The manuscript was headed *On the Trail of Australian Wildflowers* and there was a bundle of large black and white photographs of wildflowers. The whole thing looked rather a mess with an abrupt ending to the manuscript and although I enjoyed the descriptions of building and making a native garden at her country retreat on the Great Ocean Road, I could understand why the earlier publishers had refused the manuscript. A commercial publisher today, receiving such a submission would immediately return it unread. Publishers today demand a perfectly presented manuscript.

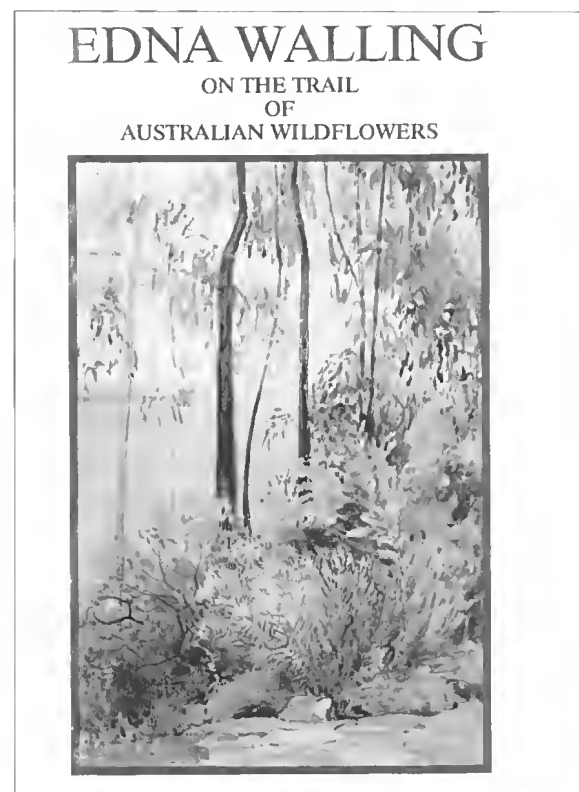
I put the manuscript aside and went outside to do some gardening. However, phrases kept recurring in my thoughts...

Scrubby looking gum trees and bare stony ground should never deceive one in Australia. We were hurrying along the road to be in time for dinner at a favourite haunt when a bright green and gold patch on the side of the road caught my eye. It was a solitary bush of the Matted Bush pea. How tightly it hugged the ground and how smothered it was with its tiny pea shaped flowers! Not far away the evening light was perfect on the pale yellow flowers of the Trailing Goodinia, then, 'Come and look at this orchid!' meant still more time to 'look' and be captivated for the light still lasted. now it failed, and putting the camera away we pressed towards the mountains.

That night I sat down and reread the manuscript and gradually began to picture in my mind how certain parts could be divided up into chapters and with some rearranging might become a more coherent story. Headings like 'A Log Cabin in the Grampians' and 'A Summer Camp' came to mind. As I read on the book began to take on its own feeling of life - I felt it had to be given to Edna's enthusiastic followers. I therefore decided I would publish Edna Walling's fifth book.

The work began, with Jean Galbraith being most helpful in the editing and checking of many names of native flowers, many of which had changed over the years since the book was written. Correspondence flowed back and forth and things began to settle down into a successful pattern. I was still not happy with the abrupt ending and asked Jean Galbraith if she knew the address of Moira Pye (if still living) who had written some delightful verses which Edna had used in her manuscript. Jean replied supplying the requested address. I then wrote to Moira Pye asking if she had a verse which would successfully round off the book. No, she said, she didn't but she would write one and then sent me the new verse which was just what I had hoped she would produce. Her alliterative use of Australian animals and flowers was just the right ending for the book.

*...Mallee nights are keen and frosty,
Dew condensing from the leaves
of the slender eucalypts,
searing drought of day relieves.
Little starlit songs are heard.
Insect, frog or wakeful bird.*





above: Golden Everlastings
(*Helipterum bracteatum*)

right: On the way up
Mount Kosciusko

below right: Edna at work
on the driveway



This was not all - Miss Pye said she also had a watercolour painting of East Point, Edna Walling's country retreat, which I might like to use in the book. The painting arrived and was just what was needed for the dust jacket of the book and it was also added as a frontispiece, the only coloured illustration. Edna Walling did not like coloured photography and all the illustrations of wildflowers were in black and white. In fact, they were eventually published in sepia. Moira Pye also sent some little sketches of Edna at work and relaxing in the garden and bush at East Point. The form of the book was complete or would be, with the listing of wildflowers by Jean Galbraith.

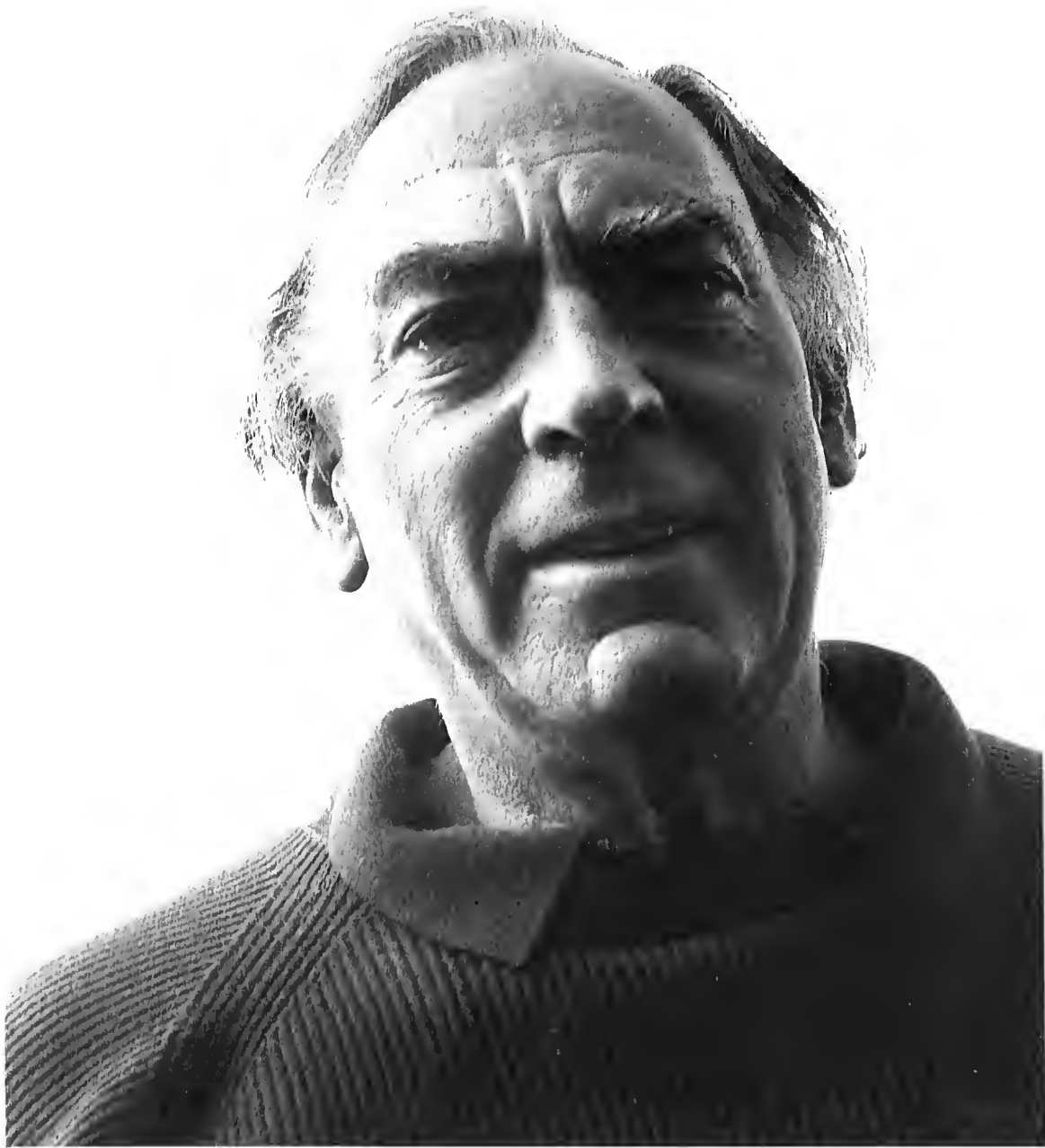
Having put the manuscript in order, I had to find a printer, discuss the typeface, the paper and the ink. Some publishers do their own printing, setting their type by hand and operating a printing machine, but I did not undertake this time consuming business.

Proofs were sent to Tyers in Victoria for Jean Galbraith to check. Discussion on how to print the old photographs took much time and various experiments were tried for they were sometimes in poor condition. I wanted to print them in brown ink similar to one of Edna's earlier books, and I wanted to have a similar shaped book. Finally we decided on a printing method called duotone, a two colour process of lack and brown ink and printing of both photographs and text were in this dark brown colour. The result was very pleasing and Mrs Barbara Barnes, Edna Walling's niece who gave permission was very pleased with the result and I am sure Edna Walling would not have been ashamed of her fifth book.

Last minute panic from the binders... the colour of the cloth for the binding suddenly was unavailable (I had chosen a pale cream) and a new cream had to be substituted and brown end papers - nothing too fancy as fitting for Edna's concept of her work. The launch of the book took place at the Bookshop of Margareta Webber in Melbourne and Jean Galbraith undertook the task. Edna Walling, Jean Galbraith and Moira Pye had all been friends of Margareta Webber. This I felt was a satisfactory climax to the publication of an 'almost lost' book by Edna Walling. That is how after having first found her works in a public library I ended up as the publisher of the fifth one of her books. *On the Trail of Australian Wildflowers*, like Edna Walling's other books, is now out of print and second hand copies are slowly rising in price.



Victor Crittenden is an author and publisher who lives in Canberra. Past chairman of the ACT, Monaro and Riverina branch of the Australian Garden History Society, Victor founded Mulini Press in 1965.



RAINMAKER

— JOHN STEVENS

IN 1988 A BENALLA BEEKEEPER'S SON became the first landscape architect to receive the Order of Australia. John Steven's distinguished career spans a life time of sensitive creativity within the landscape. He was a pioneer of some of the most notable landscape architectural works in Australia.

by **Margaret Hendry**

Many people recognised John's talents – a skilled designer and artist, he also had an inherent love for plants. Professor Turner, from the University of Melbourne, encouraged him to become a landscape designer. After graduating, the much admired designer, Emily Gibson also encouraged him, and he worked with her on some of the larger industrial undertakings including the Vacuum Oil Refinery in Altona and the Shell Oil Refinery in Geelong. Encouragement from others became the pattern of John's progress into landscape design.

Following a tradition set by some of the early 20th century designers and authors including Emily Gibson and Edna Walling, John wrote under the name 'John Sunnyman'. He described his design philosophy and plant selection in articles published during the fifties in *Stock and Land* and the *Sun Pictorial*. Later he featured in television programmes.

From his earliest reminiscences, John wanted to design gardens, so it is not surprising his first job after graduating from Burnley Horticultural College in 1938 was with a firm of landscape contractors. This later helped him to understand the importance of sound construction procedures.

After five years in the Army, John studied at the University of Melbourne graduating in 1949 with a Bachelor of Agricultural Science. This gave him an understanding of the importance of climatic and soil conditions, both major influences on plant growth. Continuing on for the next three years, John worked as Professor Wadham's assistant.

All these experiences helped him to set up his own practice, first in an office in an old Victorian villa in Malvern, then, to be nearer to his architectural colleagues, in a unit in St Kilda Road. This was the first professional landscape architectural office in Melbourne. His clients included the leading architects of the time: Robin Boyd, Roy Grounds, Stevenson & Turner, Bates Smart & McCutcheon and Geoffrey Spowers. Amongst Town Planners and Architects, particularly those who travelled in Europe, there was a general recognition of the importance of good landscape design.

John's ability to recognise this growing trend and his skills to interpret these needs led him to participate in many of Melbourne's major developments, such as the Royal Children's Hospital, I.C.I. House, Mobil House, the Memorial Park Crematorium at Altona North, Monash University Campus, Wilson Hall at the University of Melbourne, Norwood Park at Gungahlin in Canberra, the Australian National University Campus and Stream Valley in Commonwealth Park with Richard Clough from

the National Capital Development Commission.

During this period, John acted as an advocate to extend the vision of landscape design. He spoke out about the need to conserve our heritage, to actively engage in conservation and to establish a framework for reserving public open space. He was instrumental in helping to save both Como and Rippon Lea. His vision set the scene for the preservation of parkland on either side of the major waterways in Melbourne, and the retention of two significant gardens.

In 1954, Melbourne University invited John to become a visiting lecturer in landscape design to the architectural and town planning students. For the next ten years he shared his enthusiasm and vision for the landscape, setting the pattern for other courses to follow. This was a period of increasing awareness of the value of landscape architecture. John aptly described this as 'Landscape' and the 'Visual Scape' of the City.

John arrived in Canberra in 1964 to take up a post as the landscape architect for the Australian National University Campus; the same time as Lake Burley Griffin filled. Hence the term 'Rainmaker - Stevens'. For the next 13 years he transformed a disjointed collection of buildings into a beautifully landscaped campus. He set out to develop a sense of place and to create a series of co-ordinated planting using the local Eucalypts and related vegetation.

During this period, John served on the Architecture and Design Panel which recommended the establishment of the Design Board as part of the Australia Council.

Following Black Friday in 1983, John returned to private practice in Melbourne and undertook many commissions. He worked with people whose Mt. Macedon gardens had been damaged by fire. The School of Landscape Architecture from the University of Melbourne continued this project for some time.

As one of the founding members of the Australian Institute of Landscape Architects, John set the scene for the profession to develop and to flourish.

As a landscape architect for over forty years, Margaret Hendry has followed John's career from the mid fifties until his retirement. Completing a course conducted by Brian Hackett at King's College, Durham University in 1957, she worked under Dame Sylvia Crowe at Basildon Development Corporation in Essex for four years. On her return with a fellow student, Mervyn Davis, Margaret helped found the Australian Institute of Landscape Architects and continued from the initial informal meeting in 1963. First, as the secretary of the Provisional Committee set up to establish the Institute, then as its inaugural honorary secretary. During this time, John became one of the Institute's early supporters and a member

BOTANICAL illustration



Mary Gregory

The front colour illustration of *Brachybiton acerifolius* by Mary Gregory is part of an exhibition at Benalla Art Gallery entitled *Town and Country: an exhibition of botanical illustration*, on display until July 16. Mary's interest in botanical illustration followed a chance meeting with Celia Rosser in 1987 after retiring from a Social Work position. 'At the age of sixty, I was determined to follow my long standing interest in art, especially drawing, and the meticulous nature of botanical art, combined with my increasing interest in gardening, seemed an ideal choice.'

Celia told Mary of the classes given by Anita Barley who was Botanical Illustrator at the Herbarium in

Melbourne. Two of Mary's painting were later chosen for the State Collection which is held at the Herbarium. Following the example of Jenny Phillips and others, Mary exhibited successfully at one of the Royal Horticultural Society's exhibitions in London.

From Anita Barley's lessons, a group of keen students decided to meet regularly, as friends and artists, and from these meetings grew the Botanical Illustrators Group associated with the Friends of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Melbourne. Exhibitions are held every second year and this year it is to be held from October 26 to November 12. Interstate artists are welcome to offer their work for selection.

CALL FOR Papers

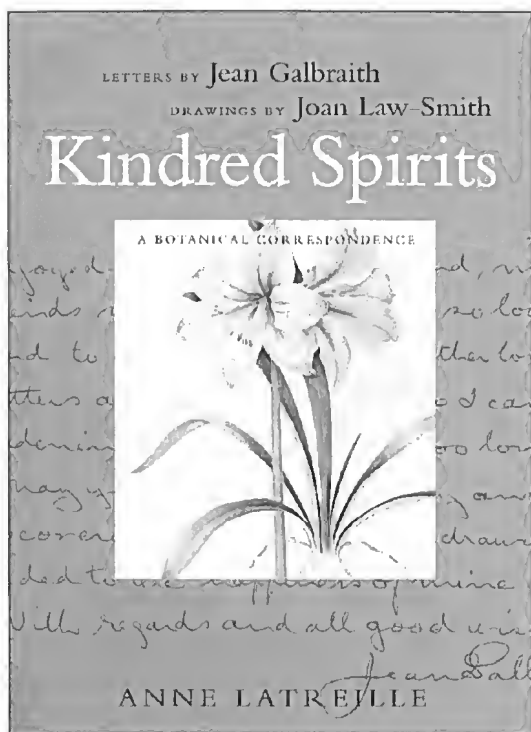
NATIONAL CONFERENCE MELBOURNE
October 2001:
Australia's Gardens and Landscapes
1890 - 1914

The conference will focus on the public manifestation of gardens and landscapes throughout the nation during the Federation period. Suggested themes, many of which are interrelated, include:

Public parks and gardens, botanic gardens, private gardens through their public representation, the broader landscape, landscape design and designers, botanists, gardeners,

nurseries and nurserymen, botanical and horticultural developments, fashion, use of indigenous plants, technology, City Beautiful movement, publications and their influence, postcards and botanical art.

Please send expressions of interest with a brief description of your topic to Conference Convener: Georgina Whitehead, 50 Emo Road, East Malvern, Victoria 3145 Telephone/Fax: (03) 9572 1225 Email: georginawhitehead@bigpond.com



KINDRED SPIRITS

Kindred Spirits is the story of a botanical correspondence, between the flower painter Joan Law-Smith and the naturalist and writer Jean Galbraith. It has at its core a 'college of one', conducted by correspondence - Jean's letters and botany lessons, Joan's drawings in response. What followed was a meeting of minds far beyond the original lessons, with a wealth of riches in their shared beliefs, attitudes and life experiences.

Writer Anne Latreille's biographical text outlines both women's full and challenging lives before they met, and their considerable achievements since. This is a delightful, personal picture of two talented, original women whose contribution to Australian garden history is immense.

Published by
THE AUSTRALIAN GARDEN HISTORY SOCIETY
Available for \$66 (inclusive of GST and postage free) from the AGHS c/- Royal Botanic Gardens, Birdwood Avenue, South Yarra, Victoria 3141 Phone (03) 9650 5043
Cheque or credit card facilities available.



EDITOR

AFTER 6 YEARS EDITING THE SOCIETY'S BI-MONTHLY JOURNAL, AUSTRALIAN GARDEN HISTORY, TRISHA DIXON HAS ANNOUNCED THAT SHE WISHES TO HAND OVER THE REINS TO A NEW EDITOR AT THE BEGINNING OF 2001.

The Society is therefore seeking a new Editor to be appointed for a three year term. The Editor will be responsible to the National Management Committee for the content of the journal, its design and production. The ideal applicants should have:

- a knowledge of and enthusiasm for Australian garden history
- a good existing network or the ability to develop one quickly
- some editorial/writing experience
- good computer skills and access to email, telephone and fax
- good organisational skills and the ability to meet strict deadlines

Because of the high profile of the journal, and its importance to the Society, the National Management Committee has agreed to a modest increase in the fee paid to the Editor. It also intends to appoint an Editorial Advisory Panel to advise the Editor.

Further information about the role and time commitment can be discussed with Trisha Dixon on tel 02 6453 5578. Other information can be obtained from the Chairman, Peter Watts, on fax 02 9660 1426 or the Executive Officer, Jackie Courmadias, on phone 03 9650 5043 or fax 03 9650 8470. Any member who is interested in this position should send an Expression of Interest to the AGHS office by Friday 28 July 2000.

richness IN DIVERSITY

FROM GRASSLANDS TO RAINFOREST FROM STONEWALLS TO POTAGERS

AUSTRALIAN GARDEN HISTORY SOCIETY ANNUAL NATIONAL CONFERENCE

BOWRAL NSW NOVEMBER 3 – 5 2000

Early bird bookings before August 2 Closing date October 3

BOOKINGS AND ENQUIRIES Jackie Courmadias (03) 9650 5043

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The Society is affiliated with the Australian Council of National Trusts and is thereby able to benefit from the Trusts' tax deductible status.

*Donations are welcome and should be payable to the National Trust of Australia (Victoria) and forwarded to the AGHS.

Membership benefits: subscription to the Society's official journal, Australian Garden History, six times a year; garden related seminars, lectures, garden visits and specialist tours; opportunity to attend annual conference and conference tour; contributing to the preservation of historic gardens for prosperity.

AGHS Office, Royal Botanic Gardens, Birdwood Avenue, South Yarra, Vic. 3141

Phone (03) 9650 5043 Toll Free 1800 678 446 Fax (03) 9650 8470

THIS FORM CAN BE PHOTOCOPIED SO THAT THE JOURNAL CAN BE RETAINED INTACT

CALENDAR of EVENTS

JULY

WEDNESDAY 12

SA Adelaide — Evening Lecture by Ian Barwick: Spanish, Italian and Japanese gardens – travelling through gardens from west to east. *Venue* Gartrell Memorial Church Hall, Rose Park *Time* 7.30 pm *Cost* \$3 (\$5 non members) includes tea and coffee *Enquiries* Miriam Hansman (08) 83330043

SATURDAY 15 – SUNDAY 16

NSW Wagga Wagga — Weekend Winter Seminar – visit historic Pulletop Station, Big Springs Station and Burnbank and enjoy talks and discussions on olive growing, the ornamental plant collection, environmental issues and the diversity of Australia's botanic gardens. Numbers strictly limited to 100 people. *Cost* \$80 members (\$100 non-members) includes lunches and dinner on Saturday evening. *Bookings* Wagga Wagga Weekend, AGHS, GPO Box 1630, CANBERRA, ACT, 2601 by July 7. *Enquiries* Virginia Berger (02) 6295 2330

WEDNESDAY 19

NSW Sydney — Exploring the Sources with Peter Watts, Dr James Broadbent and Megan Martin at Historic Houses Trust Office, Lyndhurst in Glebe. The Library at Lyndhurst houses a collection of great value to researchers into garden history. Dr James Broadbent and Megan Martin, librarian at Lyndhurst, will discuss the resources available at the center. This is also an opportunity to meet informally with National Chairman Peter Watts. *Time* 6 pm *Venue* Lyndhurst, 61 Darghan Street, Glebe.

PLEASE NOTE DATE

(incorrect date entered in last Journal)

SATURDAY 22

Vic Melbourne — Weekend Winter Seminar 'With Seeds In Their Pockets – the Influence of Immigration on our Gardens'. Interstate members welcome. Booking form available. *Venue* Village Roadshow Theatre at the State Library of Victoria *Time* 9am to 5pm *Cost* \$65 *Enquiries* Suzanne Hunt (03) 9827 8073

SUNDAY 23

Tas Hobart — Working bee at Astley Banks *Venue* 20 Byron Street, Sandy Bay, Hobart *Time* 1 pm – 4 pm *RSVP* Deirdre Pearson 6225 3084

SATURDAY 29

Vic Beaufort — Working bee Belmont *Enquiries* (03) 9397 2260.

SUNDAY 30

Tas Ross — Illustrated lecture: Sue Wells 'Garden History as seen by my camera', AGM and lunch *Venue* Somercotes, Ross *Time* commences 10.45 am *Cost* \$15 includes lunch and morning tea *RSVP* Jill Taylor by July 21 6257 8134

AUGUST

TUESDAY 1

NSW Sydney — Annual General Meeting Guest speaker Dr Peter Valder *Venue* History House Macquarie Street, Sydney *Bookings* Please phone Colleen Morris (02) 9660 0573

THURSDAY 10

SA Adelaide — Dinner, AGM and talk by Kate Hislop: Pyrenees Adventure – the Pilgrim's Way *Venue* The Feathers Hotel, 516 Glynburn Rd, Burnside *Time* 7 pm *Cost* \$33 (\$35 non members) includes three course meal and pre-dinner drink. *Bookings* by August 3 to Miriam Hansman, 66 Alexandra Avenue, Rose Park, SA 5067

FRIDAY 11

ACT Canberra — Talk by Peter Watts, AGHS National President and AGM *Venue* C.C.E.G.G.S. Aquatic Centre, Yarralumla *Time* 6 pm *Cost* \$8 (\$10 non-members)

MONDAY 14

Vic Melbourne — AGM 7.30pm followed by Winter Lecture 3 'What Finer Prospect - or why we like views' - Peter Timms Editor of *The Nature of Gardens* *Venue* Mueller Hall, Birdwood Avenue, South Yarra *Time* 8pm *Cost* \$10 (\$12 non-members) *Enquiries* (03) 9397 2260

SEPTEMBER

SUNDAY 17

Vic Churchill Island — Garden Photography Workshop *Enquiries* Nina Crone (03) 5663 2381

SATURDAY 23

SA Adelaide — Working bee at The Cedars *Time* 10 am – 3 pm

OCTOBER

SUNDAY 15

NSW Yass — 'Yonder to Yass' - a walk around the country town of Yass. *Cost* \$10 (\$12 non-members) includes afternoon tea.

NOVEMBER

THURSDAY 2

NSW Southern Highlands — 21st Annual National Conference Registration *Time* 2 - 5 pm *Venue* Bowral Memorial Hall, Bendooley Street, Bowral.

FRIDAY 3 - SUNDAY 5

NSW Southern Highlands — 21st Annual National Conference: Richness in Diversity - From Grassland to Rainforest - From Stone Walls to Potagers. Speakers include Dr Judyth McLeod, Dr David Tranter, Ray Nolan, Greg Stone, John Hawkins and eight passionate gardeners: Michelle Scamps, Geoffrey Cousins, Marylyn Abbott, Geoff Duxfield, Robyn Mayo, Nicholas Bray, Jane Lemann and Sarah Cains. *Enquiries and bookings* Jackie Courmadias (03) 9650 5043.

MONDAY 6

NSW Southern Highlands — Optional Conference Day visiting five landmark gardens including Kennerton Green, Whitley and Buskers End.

TUESDAY 7 - THURSDAY 9

NSW Southern Highlands — Post Conference Tour: Off the Beaten Track. Three days exploring some of the regions most historic buildings, landscapes and gardens in the Berrima, Marulan, Bungonia and Goulburn area including Glenrock, Lockyersleigh, Longreach, Oldbury Farm, Throsby Park, Hillview, Wingello Park, The Old Rectory, Reevesdale, The Parsonage and Spring Ponds. Accommodation at The Briars, Bowral. *Cost* \$480.00 Single supplement \$180.00 *Bookings* AGHS Office (03) 9650 5043.

DECEMBER

ACT Canberra — Christmas Party

SPECULATIVE BOTANY

THE BACK PAGE

by **Mary Eagle**

Mary Eagle is a Visiting Fellow at the Australian National University's Centre for Cross Cultural Research and author of fourteen books on art. Mary is an art historian, curator and art critic.

Section from Robert Dale
Panoramic View of King
Georges Sound, Part of the
Colony of Swan River 1834.
By permission of The National
Library of Australia.



The soil in the neighbourhood is, with a few exceptions, sandy, but the climate gives great luxuriance to the vegetable productions of the gardens and surrounding country, wrote Robert Dale in the Descriptive Account accompanying this panoramic print. He was attempting, cautiously, to give a favourable impression to prospective settlers who would scan the scene for indications of whether the country (recently opened for settlement) would be suitable for agriculture. Thus, he wrote, the tobacco plant, which grows wild, has been cultivated with success; and, as many English and tropical plants have lately been introduced, the colonists have every prospect of enjoying, in the course of a few years, the fruits and productions of almost every climate.

The British military who formed an outstation at remote King Georges Sound several years before 1834, were instructed by the Colonial Office to test its potential through tilling the soil and planting gardens. The gardener's isolated hut, and a portion of one of the garrison's scattered gardens, is to be seen on the right side of the detail reproduced on this page. On the whole, the newcomers had more success with green vegetables than cereals and slow-growing crops. Squash grew to enormous size. One ship's captain, calling into the Sound in the spring of 1828, took grateful pleasure in a dinner of fresh peas and wild duck.

However the 'garden' in Dale's *Panoramic View* is more truly nature's garden. Botanically, this region has proved to be one of the world's most diverse, with over 3000 species. By 1834 - when the print was published - no less than seven collections had been made, beginning with Archibald Menzies, botanist for Vancouver's founding expedition in 1792, and this small region in the south west of Australia had already become renowned for an insect-eating pitcher plant. Great care has been taken to show the extraordinary variety of the local vegetation and its weird, antipodean character. On the left of Dale's image is the *Kingia*, named after the explorer Phillip Parker King, whose published account of the Sound had included an illustrated essay devoted to the appearance and habit of this unusual tree.

Tall and tufted, banded with bleached foliage on the upper trunk, and with a fruit/flower corona like a golden star, the *Kingia* appears several times across the panorama, as does the flowering *Xanthorrhoea*, described by Dale as that 'small-tufted tree, with the spear springing from the centre'. Near the bark huts of the local Minang people is a broken trunk of *Xanthorrhoea* which in section resembles the pineapple. Its positioning near the camp is not accidental. Dale referred to the Minang utilizing the resin of the *Xanthorrhoea* 'in fastening the barbs of their spears', 'fixing the sharp quartz blades into the wooden hafts of their knives', 'cementing the stone heads of their hammers', and making 'a cheerful fire'. In the vicinity are large-leaved banksias ('the natives gather the flowers, from which they extract a sweet juice resembling honey') and *Melaleuca* bushes ('termed in the colony, the tea tree'), the paper-like bark of which was used by the Minang as 'a covering for their wigwams'. These shrubby trees, and mahogany (jarrah) grew in thickets on the plains and there were stands of karri on the hills on the horizon, forty miles from the high hill (Mount Clarence) where young Robert Dale made drawings of the 360 degree panorama.

In my view, however, the most extraordinary feature of the print is the copious representation of native plants across the foreground. The panorama is hemmed along its full, nine-foot, length with specimen of native plants. Some that are identifiable are the kangaroo paw, Christmas tree, *Macrozamia* palm, pigface, species of *Leschenaultia*, the climbing *Canavalia rosea*, and Fringe lily. The plants are mostly *not* shown in their natural form, rather the artist has made drawings of sprigs and flower stems, planting them in the landscape as if they were complete plants. The source of the botanical drawings is one of the mysteries relating to how and by whom the panorama was completed: whether by Dale, a military ensign, or a professional artist employed by the London publisher of the print? The probable explanation is that someone was sent from Havell's office to Kew Gardens to make drawings of the specimens housed there.