

A U S T R A L I A N G A R D E N H I S T O R Y

JOURNAL OF THE AUSTRALIAN GARDEN HISTORY SOCIETY

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CHAIRMAN'S REPORT 1989

(This is a condensed version of the Chairman's Report, presented at the A.G.M. in Canberra on 18 November, 1989).

As all of you must be aware, this past year has been an extremely difficult one and has seen many changes.

I wrote to all members in April to inform them that the *Australian Garden Journal* and the AGHS had decided that they must go their separate ways. In past years I have gone on record in my report strongly supporting the continuance of the relationship between the AGHS and the AGJ. However, the new terms laid down by the AGJ were felt to be unreasonable by the National Committee and, as the AGJ wished to pursue a course not wholly in accordance with the aims of our Society, reluctantly, and after many unsuccessful attempts to negotiate a more acceptable arrangement with the AGJ, all links were severed after the issue of the June Journal.

I would like to note here that, the National Committee offered to continue our previous arrangement with the Journal until December 1989. That extra six months "breathing space" may possibly have given both parties time to work something out. Unfortunately, this offer was rejected by the AGJ and so our association was ended.

Although this separation has created a host of problems, both administrative and financial, I now believe it was inevitable since the two parties have had, for some time now, increasingly different aims and objectives.

There has often been confusion in member's minds about the two organisations, particularly amongst those members who joined us after we began our association with the AGJ. There is evidence that this confusion still exists. We must now work hard to establish our own identity and to get on with the work for which the Society was formed to do.

Our present situation is, to be frank, precarious. Whilst a drop in membership numbers was anticipated with the break from the AGJ, the drop has been substantially larger than estimated. This loss of membership has been compounded by several other factors. In the past, 72% (i.e. \$18 out of \$25) of our subscription income was paid to the Journal. However, the arrangement that had existed for many years whereby the Society paid for the Journal issue by issue greatly ameliorated this cash drain. In September 1988, the AGJ requested that, because of financial hardship, all money be paid a year in advance. This had the immediate effect of draining our capital and any income from interest ceased.

Our other major source of income was from annual conferences. As you all know this year's conference had to be cancelled but only after substantial costs were incurred

and much of the organisation already completed.

In view of our financial constraints and the smaller membership, it is not now possible to continue to employ an Executive Officer. I would like to place on record our thanks and appreciation to our Executive Officer, Diana Forrester, for her dedication and enthusiasm.

It has been decided by your National Committee that the AGHS office will be relocated in Melbourne. The Botanic Gardens have offered us a room in the Astronomers Residence adjacent to the Herbarium for virtually no rent. The office will initially be manned on a voluntary basis and we understand the Melbourne members are willing to assist.

I would like to say how grateful the National Committee is to Peter Watts who so quickly took up the task of producing our new Journal, *Australian Garden History* and for doing it so well. Peter is now retiring as editor and I am very happy to announce that Richard Aitken and Georgina Whitehead from Melbourne will be our new editors. I am sure that they will continue to produce a magazine of growing quality and interest.

Two sections of our new Journal give a very good indication of the work and activities taking place in our Branches, i.e., the *State News* and the *Calendar of Events*. The aim of these sections in the Journal is to give members an idea of what is happening in other States and an opportunity to participate in activities when visiting interstate. I would like to thank the State Committees for the work they do in organising activities for members and in other ways pursuing the aims of the Society.

During the year, Dame Elisabeth Murdoch wrote that she was reducing her obligations and that she wished to step down as Patron of the Society. As founding Chairman and later Patron, Dame Elisabeth has always supported and shown great interest in the progress of the Society and I am sure I speak for all members when I say thank you to her for all she has done. While we may be sad to say goodbye to Dame Elisabeth, I am delighted to announce that Lady Law-Smith has agreed to be our new Patron. Lady Law-Smith has been a member and strong supporter of the AGHS since its inception. Creator of one of the most beautiful gardens in Australia, and a superb botanical artist, we are honoured that she has agreed to become our Patron and I welcome her to that position.

As a result of suggestions from members at our last AGM, a legal sub-committee was set up to enquire into the composition of the National Committee, to consider postal voting, and to create a category of Life Membership.

This sub-committee recommended that each Branch Committee should nominate a representative to the National Committee and that the remaining positions should be elected by the general membership. Postal voting was also recommended so that all members have the opportunity to vote.

You are asked today to vote on these changes to the Society's rules. I must express our gratitude to Tony Darvall, our honorary solicitor and his associate James Syme for their assistance in these and other matters.

Because of the amount of time spent by the Committee on re-organising the affairs of the Society and our tight financial situation, our other projects have been shelved for the moment. I refer to the Book Project and the Museum Project.

We are considering holding our 1990 Conference in Albury/Wodonga, visiting gardens in Southern N.S.W. and North Eastern Victoria. The Committee felt that the expense of travelling to Toowoomba would deter many members from attending. However a tour will be arranged to visit the Toowoomba gardens that we missed this year. Members will be notified about both events as soon as arrangements are finalised.

Two tours conducted by the Society this year, one to South Australia and one to the Western District of Victoria were most successful and a tour to Tasmania in February is already booked out. It appears that our members enjoy these tours so we shall continue to organise them.

Three of our committee members resigned during this year, Senator Jocelyn Newman, John Patrick and Tim North. I would like to thank them for their contribution to the Society and wish them well in their very busy lives. Two more members are retiring at this AGM. They are Oline Richards and Richard Ratcliffe. Both have served on the Committee for many years and have been active contributors to the Society. I know they will both continue to be involved in the Society's affairs, and I thank them for their work and support.

The Committee has had an extremely difficult year and its members have put in hundreds of hours of work for the Society. I extend my thanks to them for their support and service. Also to the many members of the Society who have offered support, advice and encouragement during the past year. With your continued support the Society will grow and prosper in the year ahead.

Our objectives for the year ahead are:

1. To restore the financial health of the AGHS. This involves reducing costs and consolidating and rebuilding our membership.
2. To continue the establishment and broader acceptance of our new Journal.
3. To establish better communication and work very closely with our Branches — where the strength of our membership lies.

In conclusion I must say something about my position. I have been Chairman of the Society for five years and indicated to the Committee some time ago that I would step down at this meeting. The last year has been less than pleasant and I feel that perhaps a fresh approach with a new Chairman would be best for the Society. However, the

Committee has asked me to remain for one more year and I have now decided to do so in the hope I will be able to give you a very much better report next year.

Jocelyn Mitchell

Note from the Editor

My apologies for this briefer than usual Journal. The problems outlined in the Chairman's report including the Society's move to Melbourne, and financial restraints, have made this condensed Journal necessary. With new editors Richard Aitken and Georgina Whitehead we hope to return to our usual format for the next issue.

Peter Watts

NATIONAL NEWS

New National Management Committee

At the A.G.M. in Canberra on 18 November six committee members were elected. The National Committee now consists of:

Mrs Jocelyn Mitchell (Vic) Chairman
Mr Howard Tanner (NSW) Secretary
Mrs Robin Lewarne (NSW) Treasurer
Mr David Perkins (Qld)
Mr Michael Bligh (NSW)
Mr Victor Crittenden (ACT)
Mr John Viska (W.A.)
Mr Richard Aitken (Vic)
Mrs Fairie Nielson (Tas)
Mrs Caroline Simpson (NSW)
Mr John Brine (SA)
Mrs Alethea Russell (Vic)
Mr Peter Watts (NSW)

The committee will co-opt two members to fill vacancies on the committee.

New Address for Society

The Society has moved its office from Bowral to Melbourne. The new address is:

Australian Garden History Society
C/- Royal Botanic Gardens
Birdwood Avenue
South Yarra, Victoria 3141

Tasmanian Tour

The tour of Tasmania, planned for February 1990, is fully booked and a full report will be published after the event. We wish the lucky members who secured places a very happy trip! The Society plans to hold tours again in 1990 possibly including a trip to New Zealand. Look for details in the next issue of this Journal!

Cancellation of AGM in Queensland

Unfortunately the AGM scheduled for Toowoomba in late October had to be cancelled owing to the pilots dispute. Plans are now underway for the next AGM and garden visits in the Albury area to be held on 12, 13 and 14 October 1990. Make a note now in your diary.

STATE NEWS

NEW SOUTH WALES

On a glorious last day of spring members and friends were treated to a memorable day at Pejar Park Woodhouselee, a beautiful garden created by the late Beatrice Bligh and now cherished by her sons Michael and Hugh. A delicious al fresco lunch was prepared by Michael's wife Annie and served in the garden, and an informative illustrated lecture on landscape and garden design was given by Michael, a well known landscape architect of the Southern Tablelands district.

122 people attended from Sydney, Southern Highlands, Cooma and Goulburn districts and were entertained by a string quartet from the Canberra School of Music. About \$2,000 was raised for the Garden History Society.

Helen Andersson

SYDNEY BRANCH

The Sydney Committee's Macquarie Street Walk was held on a warm spring day, 23 September. It commenced with a guided tour of Government House gardens which are on a wonderful site above the Opera House looking over the Botanic Gardens to the harbour, with Fort Denison as a focal point. Outside Government House Professor Carrick Chambers, Director of the Botanic Gardens, spoke to the group on the Botanic Gardens' newly planted rose garden. This talk was received with great interest and added to members' enjoyment when they visited the rose garden later in the day. The Spring in the Gardens Festival of the Botanic Gardens with its exhibitions of orchids and Australian native plants was excellent. At the Palace Gates Mr Bernard Connell of the N.S.W. Department of Public Works addressed us on the history of Macquarie Street and the rationale for the recent plantings of palm trees and how the city planners saw the future of Macquarie Street as a great boulevard.

At the Public Library steps he told us of the various courtyard gardens in that building, the plantings in front of Parliament House, Sydney Hospital with its wonderful courtyard and Victorian fountain, and those in front of the Mint Building.



Parliament House Roof Garden

Our last inspection, the roof garden on top of Parliament House was admired as being well planned, planted, and maintained. On the way out we were shown the House of Assembly and the Library where Mr Mervyn Sheather, the Serjeant-at-Arms, explained the historical meanings of furniture in those rooms.

Although like most Sydney people we are very familiar with Macquarie Street, the 'walk' revealed new aspects to us.

VICTORIA

'Belmont' Working-bee

On Saturday, 21 October, members travelled by bus to 'Belmont' near Beaufort, for a working-bee. This important property is classified by the National Trust and listed onto the Register of Historic Buildings and the National Estate.

A study of the garden, funded by a National Estate Grant awarded to AGHS (Victoria), has recently been undertaken by Andrea Bathie. The present garden layout is relatively unchanged from 1887 and is entered through an unusual lych gate.

Members spent the day weeding the cottage garden, replanting bulbs and perennials, removing deadwood and shaping shrubs. Tree surgeon, Glen Knight, undertook remedial tree work to remove broken and dead limbs, ivy and encroaching tree seedlings and noxious weeds.

A project initiated by Andrea Bathie while a student at VCAH-Burnley, has been the propagation of old fruit cultivars. These have now been planted-out near the original drive. Funding from the National Estate Grant will be used to install a trickle irrigation system.

The Victorian Branch would like to hear from members who would be interested in forming a 'Belmont' support group. Further details can be obtained from John Hawker, phone (03) 650 9424 (B).

The Australian Garden History Society was formed in 1980 to bring together those with an interest in the various aspects of garden history — horticulture, landscape design, architecture and related subjects. Its prime concern is to promote interest and research into historic gardens as a major component of the National Estate. It aims to look at garden making in its wide historic, literary, artistic and scientific context.

The editorial content of articles, or the products and services advertised in this Journal, do not necessarily imply their endorsement by the Australian Garden History Society.

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South Yarra, Victoria 3141

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

February 1990

Tasmania

Saturday 17 and Sunday 18.

Garden visits at Fern Tree on Saturday and at Ranelagh on Sunday morning can be followed by visits to local nurseries on Sunday afternoon.

Location: Saturday 17 February 1990: 10.00am sharp.

Bus from the Cascade Brewery Carpark to the Gardens of Mr Dennis Morris & Mrs R.H. Ryland, B.Y.O. lunch in the Hobart City Council Cascade Park before a tour of the Cascade Brewery.

Sunday 18 February 1990: 10.30am

Own transport to the garden of Mrs Jan Francombe in Helen Street, Ranelagh. B.Y.O. picnic lunch in the garden.

Cost: \$2.50 per garden plus bus fares payable in advance to Mrs Sandra Henning. Limit 60 people.

Information: Mrs Sandra Henning (002) 68 1165.

Victoria

Thursday 22, 5.30pm for 6.00pm.

Talk and viewing of Willsmere. The best way to visit the vast stretches of walled gardens, stunning courtyards, rustic shelters and exquisite Ha Has of Willsmere is by bicycle! This may be your last chance to visit this unique property before it is sold and redeveloped. Nigel Lewis will give an introductory talk over wine and cheese. Then cycle or walk around. BYO cycle and mosquito repellent.

Cost: Members \$5.00. Non-members \$6.00.

R.S.V.P.: Booking slip to Branch Secretary by February 10.

Information: Mrs Diana Renou (03) 417 3734.

March 1990

Victoria

Saturday 24 and Sunday 25. Commences 8.30am in Traralgon. Garden visits in central Gippsland including Jean Galbraith's *Garden in a Valley*. Tour based in Traralgon.

Cost: Members \$125.00. Non-members \$155.00

R.S.V.P.: Booking slip to Branch Secretary by Feb 20.

Information: Mrs Diana Renou (03) 417 3734.

April 1990

Tasmania

Sunday 1 and Monday 2 (Optional dates: April 8 and 9).

Two one-day courses learning how to grow, preserve and cook with herbs including handy home remedies and ideas for gift making. An enjoyable learning experience. Wander around the extensive herb garden, sample a gourmet herbal luncheon, morning tea and perhaps a chance to take home some cuttings and seeds.

Location: The Herb Garden, 5 Coorang Place, Legana.

Cost: Members \$22.00. Limit 16 people per session.

Time: To be advised.

Send booking slip to Branch Secretary.

Information: Mrs Pip Tatchell (003) 84 2242.

Advertising bookings and inquiries

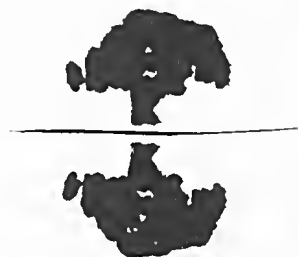
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AUSTRALIAN
SCHOOL OF
GARDEN DESIGN

GARDEN TOUR OF ITALY AND FRANCE MAY - JUNE 1990

A tour of private gardens in Tuscany and southern France looking at the harmony between these gardens and their landscape. Included are gardens of the Italian renaissance and the work of influential designers of this century. The history of painting and architecture are inseparable from this study. Equally inseparable are some of the simple pleasures of these cultures.

The tour is led by the school director, Anthony Mugg, with special guest lecturers appearing during the tour.

Departure for Rome is with Qantas on 9th May 1990. The cost of \$7800 includes all air travel, land transport, accommodation and most meals. Those who wish to stay on in Europe may do so without affecting the cost of their air fare. Time is divided between Rome, Florence and the historic chateau of la Napoule near Cannes, France, so that accommodation changes are few.

Further information can be obtained from the Australian School of Garden Design 15 Curran Street North Melbourne Victoria 3051. Telephone (03) 329 9938.