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Celebrating Canberra's centenary

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Cover and below: 'wide brown land' is a public artwork commissioned by the ACT Government for the National Arboretum Canberra. It sits on the crest of a hill adjacent to the existing Himalayan Cedar Forest. The work was conceived by an artistic collaboration headed by Futago. Writer Chris Viney and sculptor Marcus Tatton were invited to develop ideas originally on a much smaller scale for Garran shops. The work was scaled up at the request of Arts ACT for its current lofty position.

Photo: Sarah Rowlands

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AUSTRALIAN GARDEN HISTORY SOCIETY

Inviting gestures: scholarship, heritage, and advocacy

Christina Dyson & Richard Aitken

This issue of *Australian Garden History* celebrates the centenary of our national capital's naming, but—like each issue—it is also an ongoing celebration of the Australian Garden History Society and its myriad activities and achievements.

Canberra forms the cornerstone of one of the Society's most active branches, embracing the Australian Capital Territory, Monaro, and Riverina. This Branch has drawn together an astonishing range of speakers, tours, and activities to celebrate Canberra's centennial year, and taken together, this is surely one of the most ambitious such programmes in the Society's history. Read about these events on the Society's website and in our Diary Dates—and plan your trip now!

Elsewhere we read of a major project coordinated by the Branch, to digitise and interpret the records of the Yarralumla Nursery. It was from this facility that Canberra sourced the raw material that created its widely praised garden city character on the bones provided by Walter Burley Griffin and Marion Mahony Griffin in their award-winning plan. The people who ran this nursery, and did so much to embellish the city with its stock—such as Charles Weston and Lindsay Pryor—are celebrated, as are those such as John Gray who kept this tradition alive during a period of consolidation and change.

The Branch has also had a fine tradition of publishing, and Rob Freestone's magisterial overview of Canberra and its designed landscape historiography highlights a literature that is perhaps as rich per capita as any part of Australia. Amongst this bibliography we find publications such as *Early Ainslie Gardens*, published almost a decade ago as a direct result of branch-level initiatives within the AGHS.

In past issues we have also reported on conservation advocacy emanating from the ACT Branch concerning Lake Burley Griffin. Our cover and associated article in this issue by Max Bourke look forward to the continuing contribution that gardens and the designed landscape—in this case the new National Arboretum—are making for the capital and for the nation. This embodies a creative spirit we must encourage and forms a heritage that we must safeguard.

Achievements such as this are hard won. They are based on a combination of creative spirit and enterprise. In such matters the AGHS can play a leading role. We are all familiar with the individual words that constitute the Society's name—Australian Garden History Society—and each stands for a significant part of our mission: our geographical focus, our field of interest, our thematic approach, and the basis of our organisation. But what else might these letters stand for, and what sort of Society do members want? Among many facets of interest we see Advocacy, Gesture, Heritage, and Scholarship as leading qualities.

As editors we are in a privileged position to see the AGHS from a national perspective, admiring the cumulative dedication of its constituent branches, responsive to its National Management Committee, setting the agenda for its journal. In all we do, we aim to reflect the Society's mission by showcasing the tangible and often intangible spirit of our organisation.

Contents

Scholarship must underpin everything we do. Without sound research—combining documentary sources, site surveys, understandings of context and comparative examples, and succinct analysis—we are ill-prepared to comprehend, interpret, and defend Australia's garden heritage. We need comprehensive data not only on individual places, but thematic studies of different types and styles of gardens, plants and the horticultural techniques that nurtured their garden use, garden buildings and structures, cultural contexts in which garden making took place—in fact, we have barely scratched the surface of the necessary scholarship, especially when the continuing digitisation of Australian newspapers has in recent years yielded the potential to unearth a remarkably exciting and finely nuanced understanding of our garden heritage.

And what of this word 'heritage'? It seems to have come into vogue in the 1970s, with that great wave of enthusiasm for environmental and cultural conservation. The dictionary provides many meanings, but the sense of 'things we want to keep' and the concept of 'the national estate'—phrases that paralleled the formation in 1975 of the Australian Heritage Commission—convey its essence in simple terms. The French word *patrimoine* is also richly expressive in this context. Australia's culturally significant gardens and designed landscapes form an often overlooked yet significant part of Australia's rich cultural heritage—for the insights they can offer onto social and cultural history, attitudes to environment, changing tastes, reminding us how our relationship to landscape has changed and evolved. And to safeguard this heritage, we must have easy access to the data that scholarship has yielded and which forms its vital underpinning.

Advocacy is a continuing strength and emphasis of the Australian Garden History Society, for what use is scholarship without equal efforts towards conservation through advocacy for protecting the vulnerable heritage that we regard so fondly. The Society has and will continue to rally against unsympathetic developments that would adversely impact upon significant historic gardens and other designed landscapes. But, as our former chairman John Dwyer noted in a recent issue of this journal, this requires ongoing vigilance. For an organisation such as the AGHS—with limited resources—it also requires careful targeting to ensure that we can make a difference. Cooperation with kindred organisations, is a key to effective use of limited resources. So too, is the careful prioritisation of places on which we necessarily wish to concentrate our efforts and the National Management Committee has been grappling with this issue in recent times in a series of initiatives (that we intend to profile in coming issues of the journal).

Gesture is very much of the moment. We all use it with smart phones, tablets, and laptop computers. In academic terms, gesture is in the ascendant. It is expressive, signals emphasis and intent, values social action. And yet it has its pitfalls—it relies on clarity to convey its full meaning and to avoid misunderstandings. In a membership-based Society such as ours, gesture is crucial. One of the factors underpinning the Society's success over the decades has been a spirit of generosity among and between members, and between members, branches, and national committees. As well, the position of executive officer has been a crucial linchpin in this delicate balance and we have been extremely fortunate in our incumbents.

People being treated on an equal level and with a generous spirit has characterised many successful ventures that suffuse Australia's garden history, in particular those amateur enthusiasts and professionals who sought to expand our knowledge about Australian plants. Think of the spirit that has underpinned our natural history endeavours, with the long and rich tradition of field naturalist societies, and also of the collaborative spirit that has underpinned this country's horticultural enterprise. Perhaps this is characteristic of gardeners generally, of people happy to get their hands dirty. Such a spirit was exemplified in the Society's founding chair and patron, Dame Elisabeth Murdoch. In some ways this might seem to reflect old fashioned values, an unfashionable modus operandi, but it is a model we hope will continue to be fostered and encouraged as the Society maintains its premier role as a relevant voice in scholarship, heritage, and advocacy. No one person can undertake all of this single-handedly. We must co-operate. Our gestures must be inviting, inclusive, and transparent.

Robert Freestone

Canberra's gardens, parks, and landscape: a bibliographical essay

Canberra has a rich historical literature—much of it unavoidably touching on the designed landscape—highlighted here in bibliographical form as a guide to further reading and research.

Canberra's centenary year of 2013 celebrates the official naming of the Australian capital. But European settlement of the Limestone Plains dates from the 1820s. And of course the traditional owners, the displaced Ngambri people and other linguistic tribes, had lived here for many thousands of years. The key elements of the environmental matrix—to which settlement adapted—stretch back to antiquity. With a combination of grazing and demanding physical geography contributing to the area's treeless character, the making of Canberra's modern landscape is in large measure a history of regeneration.

The character of all Australian capital cities is defined by their environmental settings. But with Canberra it is patently and palpably in the DNA of the place, expressed across different experiential scales of garden, street, park, precinct, bushland, hillside, and vista. While natural and designed settings of other cities are governed through complex environmental statutes, mostly dating from the late 1960s, Canberra has micro-

Oil painting of Duntroon House, Canberra, painted by Fearnleigh L. Montagu, *c.* 1870.

National Library of Australia: nla.pic-an3291168

Marion Mahony Griffin's rendering of the view from the summit of Mount Ainslie, which formed part of the winning competition entry by competitor number 29 (a.k.a. Walter Burley Griffin).

Courtesy of National Archives of Australia: A710, 48

managed its visible habitat intensively through countless policies, regulations, plans, inquiries, and committees since the foundation of the city. Which other Australian city, for instance, could embed with such deep meaning in its developmental timeline trees gifted by governments and ceremoniously planted by dignitaries?

Through all the early debate on the siting of the federal capital from Federation, there was at least consensus on the need for a beautiful city, respectful of and enhancing its site and situation—a city of gardens, lawns, lakes, parks, and human embellishments. C. Bogue Luffman (1901) told the first federal capital congress in Melbourne in 1901 that the city locality should 'create the feeling that something real and important lies beyond every horizon'.

Canberra has attracted a considerable body of historical writing unavoidably touching on the physical character of the place. Johnson's (1980) bibliography is one convenient starting place but has never been comprehensively updated. The story of the city has been told through different lenses, such as planning (Fischer 1984, 2013), urban design (Reid 2002), imagery (National Capital Development Commission 1985), politics and symbols (Headon 2003), land tenure (Brennan 1971), and social institutions (Gibbney 1988; Sparke 1988; Gillespie 1991). Although a definitive environmental, garden, or landscape history remains to be written and much of value is locked away in unpublished or undigitised conservation management plans and heritage assessment reports, there are rich resources upon which to draw.

Official buildings in the Federal Capital, April 1910, as recorded in the 1913 annual report of the Lands and Survey Branch, Department of Home Affairs. Pictured are the first building used as the Lands and Survey office, and part of the Survey Camp.

The bird's eye view narrative by Murphy (1979) was one of the first specialised historical essays, being framed within the broader philosophical terrain of the garden city movement and driven by a chronological account of the practical labours of the legendary parks and gardens superintendent Charles Weston. Firth (1997) recounts a tale of purposeful action involving growing enlightenment and achievement until the history reaches the most recent era of self-government when it expresses concern for the 'future integrity of the Canberra landscape'. The concise landscape history of Vernon (2006) spans from Charles Coulter's famous rendering of a waterside capital to the new millennium offerings of Reconciliation and Commonwealth Place, and the triumph of 'the pictureseque'.

Recent national histories of planned landscapes (Freestone 2010) and the landscape architecture profession (Saniga 2012) conspicuously weave Canberra into their narratives. From the early 1950s Peter Harrison (1995) had been one of the first to convey a critical appreciation of Canberra as an urban landscape. Hendry (1979) articulated it vigorously in the 1970s: 'The significance of Canberra as the National Capital is not so much its political aspirations but rather the created landscape which links all its parts together in space and time'. Ken Taylor's *Canberra: city in the landscape* (2006) is the most definitive overview from this standpoint and importantly leavens the Griffin-centricity of much Canberra literature. Drilling deeper and authoritatively across a potpourri of Canberra parks and gardens topics is Aitken and Looker (2002).

The international competition for the federal capital in 1911–12 produced over 100 entries. This was a showcase for the major planning movements of the

day including the British garden city movement with its accent on the spacious informality of planned residential communities as well as the more mannered geometry of the Euro-inspired American city beautiful movement expressed in stately boulevards and handsome town parks. The great majority of competitors acknowledged tacitly what the emergent town planning movement stood for above all else and across all cultures: space, light, and open space as pillars of healthiness, social efficiency, and general quality of life. John Reps (1997) provides the definitive compendium of extant competition documentation.

The winning design by Walter Burley Griffin and Marion Mahony Griffin (married in 1911) represented a skilful fitting of competition building and land use requirements into the topographic constraints and opportunities presented by the Limestone Plains site. The pair infused the resultant ensemble with an idealistically radiant democratic sensibility. Environmental conditions drove their response and the text of their reporting is littered with empathetic references to the 'theatrical whole' of the site; the prospect of buildings 'silhouetted against the dark forested hills'; 'great garden and water vistas'; and protecting what 'primeval luxuriance' remained. Parks, parkways, and park-like settings were everywhere, especially in residential precincts. These were to feature 'fore-garden embellishment' but the Griffins left open just how these areas would be treated, announcing a spectrum of possibilities 'for private development or small-community initiative to evolve pretty schemes of driveway subdivision, recessed courts, closes, quadrangles, terraces, common gardens, irregular hill garden subdivisions, and a host of similar possibilities, adding incident and variety to a consistent whole' (Canberra 1913). Wide appreciation of the artistic genius of their work in and outside Canberra is now evident and the literature is substantial and growing (Turnbull & Navaretti 1998; Watson 1998; Griffin 2008, McGregor 2009).

After the Griffins' unceremonious exit from Canberra in 1921, authorities buckled down to developing the national capital as a small garden town. The *First General Report of the Federal Capital Advisory Committee*, chaired by John Sulman in July 1921, restated the vision as a place of 'simple, pleasing, but unpretentious buildings' in which 'the planting of trees for the beautification of avenues and streets, and the provision of park areas' would be essential. The Committee's final report in May 1926 documented extensive plantings for shelter, windbreaks, and ornamentation with front hedges in residential area, screening of unsightly works, and creepers to beautify road cuttings. Street plantings were to be formal, with informality in parks. The intention was to concentrate on native flora in the central area although a pragmatic preference for hardy northern hemisphere stock such as cedars and elms became evident (Freestone 1989, Taylor 2006).

All the while, the ground was being prepared for the repopulation of the Limestone Plains. While the workers made do in makeshift camps, and single public servants were confined to hostels, new married immigrants enjoyed single-family dwellings. While Wigmore (1963) provided the first modern history of the city, Denning (1944) had earlier captured the challenges confronting the pioneers. They had left the comfortable civilisation of Melbourne, for the most part, and arrived to find 'a silent valley mocking the efforts of men', a rural setting, with 'raw contours waiting to be

Hotel Canberra and the initial stages of a formal landscape setting under construction, c.1926.
Private collection

The revised and enlarged second edition of *Canberra's first hundred years and after*, by Frederick W. Robinson (1927), records 'Canberra in Flood, seen from Mount Pleasant, July 1922. The Floods give a very accurate impression of the proposed lakes. The church appears as an island of trees, above the bush on the extreme right.'

clothed with verdant trees' and 'bare dwellings ... sound and attractive enough architecturally, but which jutted churlishly out of the red, raw earth, where straggling trees and clumps of ragged grass struggled to survive, and sheep-dung told only too eloquently of a prior tenancy'. Gardening in the 1920s was one means for married civil servants to adapt to the shock of relocation while also inculcating a sense of community resilience to the isolation and omnipresence of the unelected Federal Capital Commission. Harshness slowly softened by the late 1920s as 'gardens and lawns were beginning to flourish' despite the tribulations of summer grasshoppers and winter frosts. The recent turn to oral history has recovered marvellous stories of daily life in early Canberra (Canberra Stories Group 1994).

Two key figures in Canberra's planting were Charles Weston and Lindsay Pryor: Weston in charge from 1913–27; Pryor, Parks and Garden Superintendent from the mid-1940s. Both have attracted substantive biographical studies (Gray 1999; Hince 1994). Weston's legacy was his landscape; Pryor's writings remain accessible and key resources in their own right. In his paper to the first post-war Australian planning conference, held in Canberra's Albert Hall in 1951 and marking formation of what is now the Planning Institute of Australia, Pryor (1951) noted 'The immediate environment of Canberra ... is a rather difficult one for tree growing'. In its suburban setting, the elimination of overhead wires permitted 'a much wider variety of street trees ... than would otherwise be the case', while he looked toward enhanced use of native species in gardening. Pryor contributed two chapters to the impressive volume assembled by Commonwealth Librarian Harold White for the 1954 Meeting of the Australian and New Zealand Association for the Advancement of Science: one on original plant communities and the other summarising the nature and species selection in re-greening of the largely treeless Limestone Plains (Pryor 1954). His *Trees in Canberra* first published in 1962, was a stocktake after forty-five years of planting on a largely treeless plain with an estimated three million trees and shrubs planted. Canberra's challenging continental microclimate was hostile to many trees successful elsewhere, such as jacarandas and red-flowering gums (Pryor 1962).

If there is a ground zero in the greening of Canberra it is the Yarralumla Nursery. Coltheart (2011) memorably describes it in her monograph, spinning off the records digitisation project undertaken in 2011 by the ACT, Monaro & Riverina Branch of the Australian Garden History Society. The Nursery 'made the national capital a garden city and also put the bush in the "bush capital"'. Coltheart highlights the contributions of the Weston and Pryor eras, as well as those who served later including David Shoobridge and Robert Boden (who wrote *Favourite Canberra Trees* in 1993). Calthorpe's house and garden remains as a showpiece cultural institution of this era and Canberra's legacy of garden suburbs provides a remarkable outdoor museum of interwar town planning 'on garden city lines' (Freestone 1989) with generous sites for single-family detached houses, staggered setbacks, mannered hedges, nestled in tree lined streets. Andrew Ward's report (2000) consolidated the cultural significance of these suburbs, such as Reid and Barton, and outlined a prescriptive set of conservation guidelines that have been substantially put into effect.

Attitudes to these environments in the early 1950s were not all favourable with a mood emerging in the early 1950s that Canberra needed to re-urbanise. Visiting Canadian academic Benjamin Higgins (1951) writing in the *Community Planning Review*, saw Canberra as a scattered, inconvenient place, 'a garden without a city'. Attention to its 'look' was given more weight than its daily functioning, a sentiment echoed by A.J. Brown (1952) who wrote—and he was being harshly critical—in the *Town Planning Review* of 'an overgrown garden city, with emphasis on

the garden'. We hear such views in testimony to the 1955 Senate Select Committee, which recommended nevertheless that the 'pastoral' or 'garden' atmosphere of Canberra be perpetuated.

The National Capital Development Commission (NCDC), established in 1958, endorsed this viewpoint. The NCDC's first 5-year plan in 1959 was underpinned by four main considerations, including employment growth and safe, efficient transport. Remarkably, at least by today's standards, the two principal ones were environmentally driven—the desire for a 'large, parklike landscape' particularly in central areas, and to maintain the 'peculiarly Australian' commitment to garden city residential standards.

The Commission sustained a remarkable commitment to a park-like landscape and garden city. Within the residential areas, the NCDC stage-managed the garden city setting. Its early 1960s pamphlet *Your Garden City* carried information to help establish private gardens, on coping with seasonal conditions, on ideal grasses, and on the annual issue of trees and shrubs from the government's Parks and Gardens Department. It commended *The Canberra Gardener* (Horticultural Society of Canberra 1948) as a source of practical advice. Gardening in Canberra became less discretionary and more a national obligation: 'Your home is an important unit in [the Garden City] pattern, and everything that you do to surround your home with lawns and flowers, shrubs and trees, will be a particular contribution to making this city a colourful and graceful place to live in'. Garden design and plantings were evolving with the times, from the crisp decorum of the interwar years to a growing practical informality, albeit with eye-catching statements along the way that matched the modernity of new architect-designed homes (Cameron 2012).

The NCDC was one of the first major Australian government planning and development agencies to incorporate a landscape planning unit. Notable figures worked in it including Harry Oakman, Richard Clough, Margaret Hendry, and Richard Gray. Key projects were outsourced. In 1965, for instance, eminent British landscape architect Dame Sylvia Crowe designed and master planned the Commonwealth Gardens as a kaleidoscope of mannered gardens, bush walks, water features, and precincts for play. Working with the British planning consultant of choice during those years, William Holford and Partners, these gardens formed the main city approach to Lake Burley Griffin—a major landscape achievement of the NCDC era. Firth (2000) provides the most authoritative account. This realised the dream of the 'ornamental waters' in early federal capital dreams and while named after Griffin, its configuration and foreshore treatment were departures from his conception and were instead a mix of picturesqueness and 'benign modernism' channelled via Holford (Vernon 2005).

Lord Holford's 1961 recommendations set the scene for Canberra's modern landscape development. His later report on *The Growth of Canberra* (Holford 1965), published after the NCDC's *The Future Canberra*, argued the case for appreciating growth and open space needs at a larger scale—integrating 'the metropolitan city' with a 'national park system'. The importance here relates to thinking about landscape regionally, with Canberra well placed in its own territory to integrate urban and environmental planning. Landscape considerations were conspicuously factored into the 'territorial planning' of the suburban new towns like Tuggeranong (McCoy 1976). A report by George Seddon (1977) provided the foundation for an integrated open space system.

Masterplan for the Canberra Lake and Foreshore Development (1962), prepared by the National Capital Development Commission, appended to 'A report on the development of Canberra for the five year period July 1962–June 1967'.

This was no ordinary 'technical paper', exploring the natural setting and symbolism of landscape with insight and inspiration, yet in a grounded, practical way. Interconnecting park, garden, and bush have come to be seen as intrinsic to the *genius loci* of the place. A recent review of the National Capital Open Space System (NCOSS), now covering over two thirds of the land area of the Australian Capital Territory, underlines the visual and environmental (specifically biodiversity importance) management challenges faced.

The public landscape of Canberra today, with its best faces forward, is rich and variegated with numerous interlocking elements including the street picture of front gardens and street trees, showpiece official residences, inter-town parkways, the processional way of Anzac Parade, Commonwealth Park (host to the annual spring flower festival of Floriade), countless other formal parks and unnamed reserves, the lake and inner hills, and Canberra Nature Park. Other major planned precincts include the Australian National Botanic Gardens, National Arboretum, and Old Parliament House Gardens. All of these have their own literature, for instance, the public landscape of the national area (Firth 2001) and even the Garden of Australian Dreams, the challenging post-modern designed space incorporating various suburban referents (Weller 2001).

Canberra has long had its critics—suburbia-writ-large critiques, the apotheosis of dull and wasteful Australian low-density living. James (before he became Jan) Morris wrote in 1963 of a city of 'half-cock splendours', 'hideous bungalows', 'interminable avenues' and 'rectilinear egalitarian monotony'. Morris did at least get something right—still ringing true—that 'space is the very structure of Canberra'.

Governments, particularly recent ones, have not always understood Canberra's DNA. They have privileged development objectives variously for job growth, higher density housing, or creation of a more urban, less suburban feel in the supposed interests of sustainable planning. Space standards have shrunk in new greenfield development and many observers feel that recent urban regeneration has compromised the spatial quality critical to Canberra's sense of place. This has spurred battles between state and community to conserve landscape features and character, and called for interventions by citizens and environmental groups like the Walter Burley Griffin Society, fighting to recover the essence of the city of Walter and Marion, and indeed the Australian Garden History Society, which has directly and indirectly documented and lobbied for the historic importance of the Canberra environment over several decades (Tanner 1986; Australian Garden History Society 1997; Somers 2004).

The interdependence of garden, park, and landscape unequivocally makes Canberra what it is today. Andrew MacKenzie (2012) nicely captures this in a recent conference paper. Canberra people, he argues, 'don't distinguish between the suburban streetscapes and the urban bush when referring to the character of the city'. Their relationship to the landscape, he continues, is 'far more nuanced and subjectively constructed in and through interactions with residents and visitors habits, rituals and daily life experiences of walking and driving through the city and domestic activities to do with home'.

The qualities of Canberra as a garden environment are manifold and interlocking, defying easy categorisation, yet very human and far from abstract. Their combination helps underpin aspirations for recognition of the city, or at least its central core, as a place of national heritage status. It is definitely a place with a fertile foundation for research, reflection, engagement, and vigilance over the next 100 years.

Robert Freestone is Professor of Planning at the University of New South Wales. His most recent book is *Urban Nation: Australia's planning heritage* (2010).

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Lenore Coltheart

Planting a vision: Canberra's Yarralumla Nursery records

Plantation at the temporary nursery at Acton (1921), where work continued for many years after the establishment of the permanent nursery at Yarralumla in 1914.

National Archives of Australia: A3560, 484

With Australian Garden History Society assistance, the records of Canberra's Yarralumla Nursery have now been conserved, digitised, and interpreted for the benefit of future generations.

A precious legacy

For one hundred years the garden city of Canberra has been nourished and shaped by Yarralumla Nursery. The Nursery's records reveal it all, from the first forestry work to the landscaping of parks, public works, and streets, and from the initial testing of grains and fodder crops to the blooming of suburban gardens. Prime among these records are the systems started by the two towering figures in the planting of Canberra, Charles Weston, in charge from 1913–27 and Lindsay Pryor, from 1944–58. The scientific and historical evidence contained in Weston's plant cards and Pryor's ledgers is now accessible worldwide, thanks to the work of the ACT, Monaro & Riverina branch of the Australian Garden History Society and the website established by the ACT Government Archives. The meticulous digitisation of these records—the originals still operational and until 2011 housed in the Nursery's original corrugated iron office—is a great gift for the centenary of the national capital. As vulnerable as they are valuable, these irreplaceable records of the planting of Canberra can now be conserved in archival care.

On 5 May 1913 when Weston took up his post as the man who would create the garden for the newly designed garden city, he wrote out the first plant cards recording the seeds he had brought with him on the long journey by rail and road from Sydney. For the next thirty years the handwritten plant cards recorded the source of every batch of seed acquired. The ledgers are those where, from the 1940s, Pryor began recording the seeds he collected from around the world, as well as those he foraged from the streets and parks Weston had planted.

Until Weston retired in 1927, the plant cards were a careful account of the propagation, cultivation, location, and trial results of the trees, shrubs, flowers, and even pasture grasses the Nursery supplied to the city and its countryside. They even show the planting destinations—and thereby hang many Nursery tales.

Art and science

Perhaps the most compelling aspect of these extraordinary records is their evidence of the role science played in realising the artistic intent of Walter Burley Griffin's design, shaping Canberra as both garden city and bush capital. They are scientific treasure but they are also a rich cultural artefact, tracing the realisation of an imagined civic landscape.

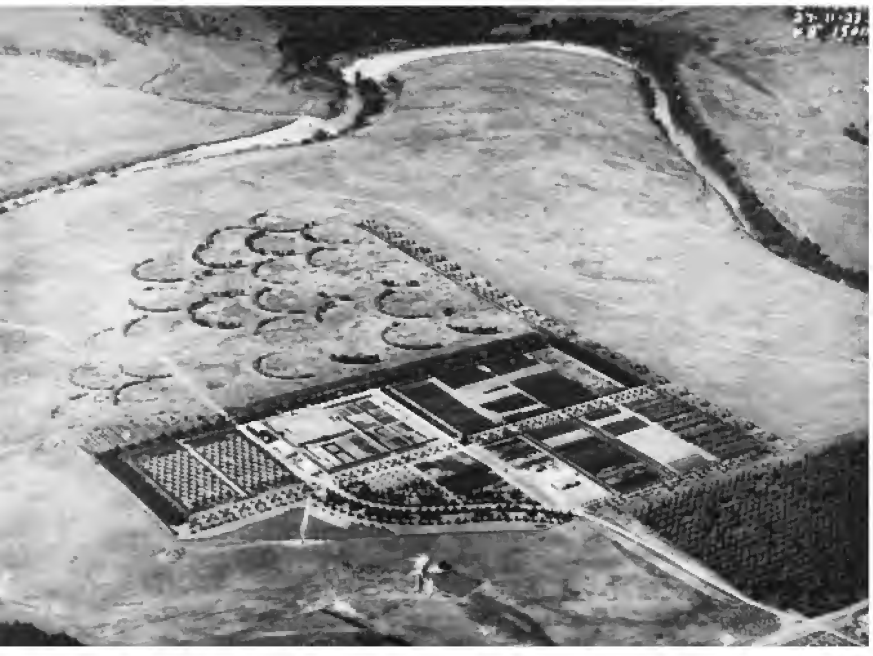
The purpose of the records maintained by Weston from 1913 and by Pryor and his team from 1944 was scientific and operational. The careful recording of data on experimentation and propagation in these two periods retains its importance to botanical research and to forestry and horticulture.

The faded cards in their old wooden drawers and the well-thumbed ledgers are plain workaday records. They are a far remove from Marion Mahony Griffin's magnificent renderings of the winning design for the national capital, their aesthetic appeal signalling their unique historical value. Those drawings—the originals now heart-stoppingly presented in the major Design 29 exhibition at the National Archives of Australia in Canberra—are rightly considered among our national treasures. They remain a potent and beautiful expression of the Griffins' ideals for a city to foster a civic democracy and lead a nation.

The records at Yarralumla Nursery may appear unprepossessing, but with their associated planting plans and records of experimentation they are the essential complement to these drawings. Considered together, the plant records and design drawings suggest the marriage of art and science that was the essence of the Griffins' approach to their greatest work, the plan for the 'Federal City' of Australia. Together they enable us better to grasp the Griffins' intention that this would be a city not only in but of its landscape. It is an extraordinary idea to grasp—that the layout and buildings and all the life of the city would somehow flow from and through the topography and flora of the site and the climate of the region, and express the geographical and geopolitical relations of the place to the world.

From the first, Weston gleaned seed from the local region and interstate, as well as ordering huge quantities from commercial nurseries around the

Data on experimentation and propagation were carefully recorded on cards (by Weston) and in now well-thumbed ledgers (by Pryor and team from 1944). Also shown are seed collections, gathered locally and interstate since 1913.
Courtesy ACT Government, Yarralumla Nursery



Aerial view of Yarralumla Nursery in the 1920s, photographed by William James Mildenhall (1891–1962).
National Library of Australia: nla.pic-an11030057-79

world. Those passionate botanical expeditionists Walter and Marion Griffin were also keen collectors, exploring the outskirts of Sydney and Melbourne as well as each state botanical garden. In the Canberra region Weston collected both indigenous species and the many exotics available from a century of pastoral occupation. Intensive experimentation by Weston's small group until 1927 and then by Lindsay Pryor and his talented team in 1944–58 trialled species for successful adaptation to the site. Today Australia's national capital is a unique biota, where species selected from all over the planet have adapted to take their place.

Yarralumla Nursery's plant cards and ledgers show how this happened, through collection, gifts, exchanges, and experimentation which link Australia to a century of world botany, the results of considerable biodiversity significance. The website publication of these records and of the Griffins' work is the first time in their hundred years that they can be experienced together as a partnership of art and science, as the expression and interpretation of an ideal city, and of the deep connections of nature and culture.

Nursery tales

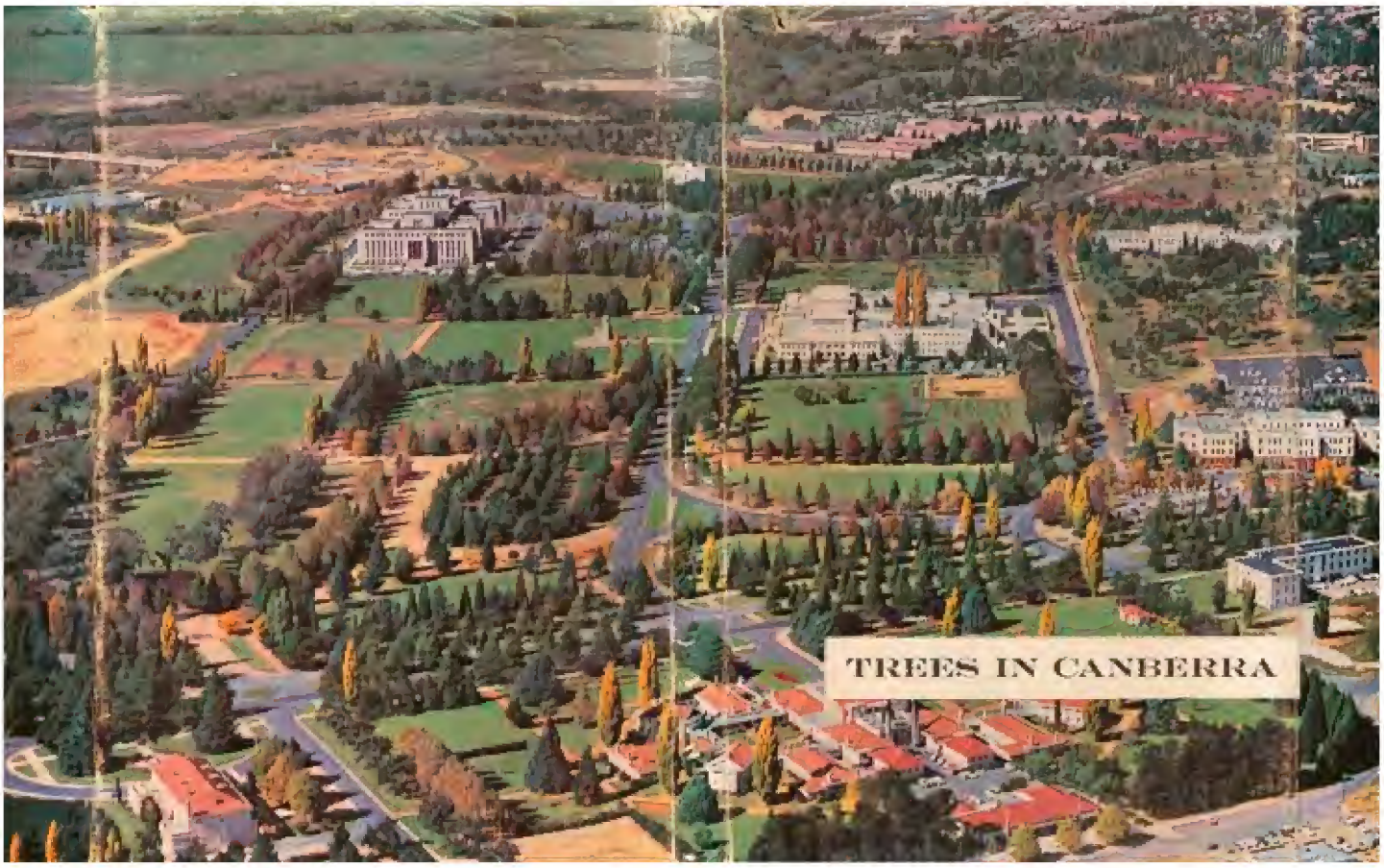
Garden historians know what fascinating gems can be unearthed in the layers of history that shape Australian landscapes. Where trails lead back to Canberra's founding era, the detail on Weston's plant cards makes this pursuit particularly fruitful. As well as their clues to the city's past, present, and future, there are stories to arrest attention across Australia. For instance, Weston's plant cards show how Canberra's famous free plant issue scheme grew, Topsy-like, from the first exchanges between the Nursery, its neighbourhood, and the nation. In the custom of gardeners everywhere, Yarralumla Nursery was engaged in giving as well as getting and growing. The early plant cards are full of tales to tell.

For instance, a little detective work will tell if your electorate was among the many to receive plants from Yarralumla Nursery in the 1920s, when these were often supplied to members of parliament. Are any of the 36 trees and plants sent to the new MHR for Kooyong John Latham in July 1923 flourishing in Melbourne today? Or the 31 trees and plants sent across the continent to Western Australian Senator Edmund Drake-Brockman? Whether through gifts to parliamentarians or their constituencies, these leafy ambassadors promoted the Herculean national work of creating a seat of government on the windy and remote Limestone Plains.

And what of the huge and continual consignments to Prime Minister Billy Hughes? On 3 August 1922 alone, pairs of Atlas cedar, cork oak, kurrajong, buttonwood, and Irish strawberry tree, and trios of Chinese elm and western yellow pine were despatched to him. Perhaps this small forest was planted out in his electorate of Bendigo—or perhaps not. Hughes cannily changed his electorate back to North Sydney before the federal election that year and the family had bought a brand new house in the Sydney suburb of Lindfield. In February 1923, after Hughes was succeeded as prime minister by Stanley Melbourne Bruce, his Yarralumla Nursery consignments continued. A glimpse today at the Hughes' Nelson Road place shows the destination of some of the trees and perhaps there are families in both electorates who can trace their trees too.

Yarralumla Nursery's plant cards and ledgers ... link Australia to a century of world botany

As the Depression closed in, so did the national plant largesse. When Labor Opposition MHR Frank Forde applied in 1932 for five dozen tulip bulbs, presumably for his Capricornia electorate rather than his Rockhampton home, he was denied. So was the new Teachers College at Armidale, NSW, seeking trees for their bare grounds in February 1934, and MHR J.A. Lawson a month later when he asked for 1000 trees to distribute in his Blue Mountains electorate. The Goulburn Orphanage was more fortunate, its original appeal for tulip bulbs to Prime Minister Lyons shown to have been mislaid before the policy cutback.



Dust jacket of the 1962 edition of Lindsay Pryor's *Trees in Canberra*.

Gympie's town hall was also squeezed in when the council advised its request—twelve months before the ban—had been ignored and three almonds, two flowering plums, and an Arizona cypress were despatched to Queensland in July 1934. Bathurst Council was also fortunate, the city's Memory Drive deemed within the new rules in April 1934. When the Armidale arboretum was turned down the next month, the local MHR vehemently protested that Yarralumla Nursery plants were 'one of the few advantages which the suffering taxpayers can get from Canberra'.

Now officially as well as popularly recognised as drawn from Canberra's 'Garden City' ideal, from the 1930s Yarralumla Nursery's plant issue scheme has applied only to new homes in Canberra. From 1971 these also included flats and townhouses, proliferating in the construction of medium and high density housing under the National Capital Development Commission. Canberra's plant issue scheme might be unique and is certainly rare, as was pointed out by the New York State architect and planner who sought to establish a similar scheme and could find no US precedent.

A century after Weston provided those first free plants the householders in Canberra's newest suburbs are no less part of the history of the Nursery than the very first recipients. But many a tale is still to be told of where all those stripling trees are today. With the help of those online plant cards, Australians everywhere can share in the forensic fun of finding clues to the fate of their garden city trees.

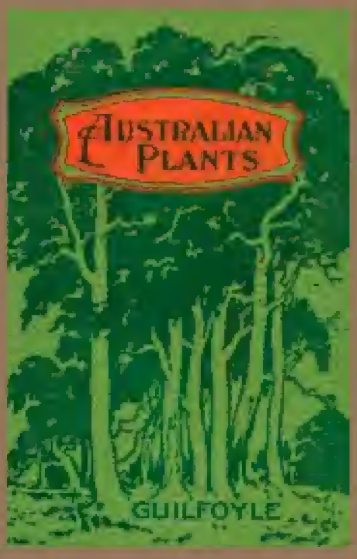
For so long, an understanding of the value of the Yarralumla Nursery records has depended on an appreciation of their horticultural amenity and scientific value. Now they are at our fingertips their stories can be ours, and their value in understanding the ideals that founded our nation and its capital can at last be explored.

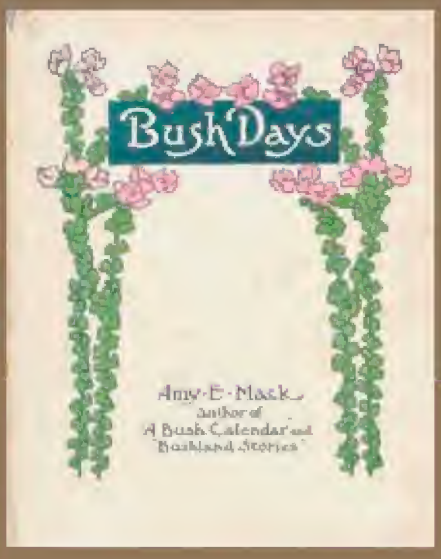
Lenore Coltheart is a Canberra-based historian. This article is based on her report *Nursery Tales for a Garden City*, prepared for the Australian Garden History Society (ACT, Monaro & Riverina Branch), December 2011.

The digitised records of the Yarralumla Nursery are available through the ACT government archives at **www.archives.act.gov.au/home/yarralumla_nursery_records**

Design 29: creating a capital is on at the National Archives of Australia, March–September 2013

http://design29.naa.gov.au/





Jeff Turnbull

Some garden references in the Sydney office library of Walter Burley Griffin and Marion Mahony Griffin

These four books published in the five years leading up to World War One were all popular titles aimed at promoting appreciation and garden use of Australian plants and each was held in the Griffins' library.

A collection of books, principally from the Sydney office library of Walter Burley Griffin and Marion Mahony Griffin, tells much about the design practice and interest in Australian flora of this influential couple.

Walter Burley Griffin (1876–1937) and Marion Mahony Griffin (1871–1961) settled in Australia during May 1914. They rented a house at Greenwich in Sydney, but as the newly appointed Federal Director of Design and Construction, Walter's office for his Canberra responsibilities was located in Melbourne. To be with Marion he commuted by overnight train.

Griffin as Director had the right to private practice. The Griffins soon had private practice rooms in both Sydney and Melbourne, with Marion, Roy Lippincott, and Roy's wife Genevieve (Walter's sister) working in the Sydney premises, and Walter and George Elgh in the Melbourne chambers. Marion and the Lippincotts moved to Melbourne during 1917. Marion moved back to Sydney in 1921, to Castlecrag on Middle Harbour, where Walter join her in 1925.

The Griffins' stamp declared that Walter Burley Griffin had architecture and landscape architecture practices in Sydney, Chicago, and Melbourne. This banner was stamped as a letterhead on their stationary, and was also used to mark the flyleaf of all office reference books. Many of these books travelled with them from Chicago, including a textbook from Walter's high school days and books acquired during his university days at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

Some books from the Sydney office library survive in the care of the Eric Nicholls Collection. In 1921, Eric Nicholls (1902–1965) joined the Melbourne office of Walter Burley Griffin, Architect and Landscape Architect, and quickly became an invaluable associate, such that by 1930 the Griffins' municipal incinerator projects were accredited to the partnership of Griffin & Nicholls. The titles of the Melbourne office library—if it indeed ever existed—were dispersed long ago. However, books with the Griffin office stamp do appear from time to time in the market place, or are already in various public or private library collections.

Amongst the surviving forty-six books of the Eric Nicholls Collection, landscape architecture titles for America, Europe, and Asia occur. And as well as botany and horticultural books there were books on architectural history (especially during the mediaeval period), travel books, town planning in Australia and China, anthropology and zoology, legends, nursery rhymes, and fairy stories.

Sadly, few references on Australian flora remain. Evidence suggests that the Griffins greatly enlarged their knowledge of Australian flora through fieldwork, so much so that during 1916 a landscape design for an Australian Botanic Garden was drawn up for Newman College in Melbourne. This garden, if implemented, was to have a dozen species of Australian ground cover plants, and flowering trees and shrubs grouped to reveal the sequence of the colours of the rainbow. Unfortunately nursery companies of the day were unable to supply the Australian plants that the Griffins had chosen. Marion provided a later scheme that was implemented, its straight pathways and roundabouts still visible and much used.

An example of a book in private hands with the Griffins' stamp on the flyleaf is a hardbound copy R.H. Cambage's 'Notes on the botany of the interior of New South Wales', from the *Proceedings of the Linnean Society of New South Wales* (1909). In this substantial work, Cambage explains that: 'In following my duties as a Mining Surveyor in the Western District, opportunities have been afforded of observing the flora in certain parts of the interior of New South Wales. I do not claim to have made a complete botanical survey, but have only noted the principal trees in passing along.' So this really constitutes an early flora of semi-arid New South Wales, written by a botanist who worked at the Sydney Botanic Gardens and so is presumably seeing the trees from a cultural and aesthetic as well as a scientific perspective.

The National Library of Australia in Canberra has in its collection two books with the Griffins' stamp on the flyleaves. In addition, the original handwritten lettering 'Walter B Griffin, U of I' appears in George William Jones, *A Drill-Book in Trigonometry* (New York, 1896). 'WB Griffin, U of I' and Griffin's lodging address in Champaign appears in Nathan Clifford Ricker, *Elementary Graphic Statics and the Construction of Trussed Roofs* (4th ed., New York, 1897). These two were textbooks during Griffin's time at Engineering Hall from 1895 to 1899 and Ricker was Walter's highly respected and greatly admired Professor of Architecture.

While at the University of Illinois Walter took on two extra elective subjects in horticulture. Relevant to that career, Asa Gray's *The Elements of Botany for Beginners and Schools* (New York, 1887) has the Griffins' office stamp as well as 'Walter Burley Griffin, OPHS [i.e. Oak Park High School], Elmhurst High School' lettered in a teenage hand. So this textbook was at the forefront of Griffin's love for nature and for gardening.

Asa Gray (1810–1888) was the Professor of Botany at Harvard University. Previously in 1876 he had published essays on Darwinism. Liberty Hyde Bailey (1858–1954) became an important assistant to Gray, and published significant cyclopedias on American horticulture. In the 'Magic of America (1940–49)—Marion's themed reverie on their lives together—she noted that Walter had a superb encyclopaedic memory. During walks in the bush, she claimed, Walter could identify Australian native species from recall of Bailey's cyclopedia, plants that they may have never before encountered. The strongly drawn black line drawings of species in Gray and in Bailey presumably enhanced Walter's phenomenal feats of memory.

The office libraries also had a role in the development of their architectural and landscape designs. In addition they maintained photo folders on a range of subjects, each containing cuttings, postcards, photos, magazine overruns, and so on, appropriate to the photo folder file subject heading. In her memoirs Marion observed that Walter would 'as usual' produce a diagram on the back of a small envelope that he would present to her for development. The line diagram would be a layering of underlying compositional structures, the patterns drawn from the *parti* of precedents relevant to the functional and symbolic programme on hand. Together they would develop the whole design from this beginning.

Marion and Walter admired the earlier architecture of Henry Hobson Richardson (1838–1886), who also had a similar design method. It can be strongly supposed that the Griffins were familiar with Mariana Griswold Van Rensselaer, *Henry Hobson Richardson and His Works* (New York, 1888). Indeed, the centrefold of this book illustrates significant motifs Griffin emulated in the design of the Newman College building during 1915–18. Van Rensselaer described Richardson producing diagrams no bigger than the palm of the hand. He would present such a diagram to 'his executive', with advice about the office book and photo folder references. Richardson then guided the teamwork.

As an example of a significant source for the Griffins, Marion in 'Magic' praises Thomas Jefferson (1743–1826) in her very first paragraph. A number of monographs on Jefferson were published in America during the last decade of the nineteenth century, for example, the Funk & Wagnall, John P. Foley, *The Jeffersonian Cyclopedia* (New York, 1900). Indeed, Walter's architectural *oeuvre* also featured motifs he deliberately derived from Jefferson's architecture

and ideas at his house Monticello and at the University of Virginia. It is interesting to see that in Jefferson's scheme for the garden at Monticello paths were laid out along the descending contours of the little hill, the planting species sketched and named in location, with a listing of all the plants down one side of the drawing. The Griffins adapted this kind of layout for their many schemes for residential gardens in America and Australia.

The Griffins' enthusiasm for learning about Australian plants and gardens was soon shown when they first came to Melbourne together in June 1914. The *Melbourne Punch* gossip columnist recorded that the Griffins stayed at the Oriental Hotel. But because little progress on Canberra was being made at the bureaucratic level, the Griffins instead visited the Melbourne Botanic Gardens every day, to observe, sketch, and note Australian species. William Guilfoyle (1840–1912) was the acknowledged designer of these Gardens and author of *Australian Plants: suitable for gardens, parks, timber reserves, etc.* (Melbourne, 1911), a title held in the Griffins' Sydney office library.

In another instance Marion wrote that Walter befriended an Indigenous elder whom he accompanied on excursions into the bush to examine plant life. Marion, during the years in Castlecrag, drew the native trees, and also journeyed a number of times to Tasmania, and left the world with exquisite portraits of Australian forest species.

The Griffins' landscaping legacy resonates with the work of earlier great Australian landscapists, such as Guilfoyle. Australian species provide wonderful garden materials that inspire our confidence in the characteristics of diverse Australian landscapes.

Dr Jeffrey Turnbull is a Senior Fellow of the Faculty of Architecture, Building and Planning at The University of Melbourne where he completed his PhD thesis 'The Architecture of Newman College' (2004). With Peter Y. Navaretti he published *The Griffins in Australia and India: the complete works and projects of Walter Burley Griffin and Marion Mahony Griffin* (1998).

Books from the Sydney office library of Walter Burley Griffin and Marion Mahony Griffin

This bibliography on botanical and horticultural topics has been selected from forty-six books once part of the Griffin & Nicholls' Sydney office, from the collection held by Marie Nicholls. Other books (not listed here) range across architectural histories by James Fergusson, on planning in Chicago and Canberra, on architecture in Japan, on cities in China, on European mediaeval architecture by Henry Adams and W. Eden Nesfield amongst others.

Australian botanical and horticultural books

Effie F. Baker, *Australian Wild Flowers*, T. & H. Hunter, Melbourne, [1914].

William Robert Guilfoyle, *Australian Plants Suitable for Gardens, Parks, Timber Reserves, etc.*, Whitcombe & Tombs Limited, Melbourne, [1911].

Amy E. Mack, *A Bush Calender*, Angus & Robertson, Sydney, 1911.

Edward Edgar Pescott, *The Native Flowers of Victoria*, George Robertson & Company Pty Ltd, Melbourne, [1914].

American botanical and horticultural books

Nathaniel Lord Britton & Addison Brown, *An Illustrated Flora of the Northern United States, Canada and the British Possessions from Newfoundland to the parallel of the southern boundary of Virginia, and from the Atlantic Ocean westward to the 102nd Meridian, in three volumes. Vol. III 'Apocynaceae to Compositae – Dogbark to Thistle'*, Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1898.

Thomas C. Chamberlin & Rollin D. Salisbury, *A College Textbook of Geology*, Henry Holt & Company, New York, 1909.

Asa Gray, *The Elements of Botany for Beginners and Schools*, American Book Company, New York, 1887.

Asa Gray, *Manual of the Botany of the Northern United States*, American Book Company, New York, 1889.

Harriet L. Keeler, *Our Northern Shrubs and How to Identify Them: a handbook for the nature-lover*, Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1903.

Gifford Pinchot, *A Primer of Forestry*, US Department of Agriculture 'Farmer's Bulletin No. 173', Government Printing Office, Washington, DC, 1909.

Rogers, Julia Ellen E., *The Tree Book, a popular guide to knowledge of the trees of North America and the their uses and cultivation; with sixteen plates in color and one hundred and sixty in black and white from photographs by A. Radclyffe Dugmore*, Doubleday Page & Company, New York, 1905.

Mabel Cabot Sedgwick, assisted by Robert Cameron, *The Garden Month by Month: describing the appearance, color, dates of bloom, height and cultivation of all desirable hardy herbaceous perennials for the formal or wild garden, with additional lists of aquatics, vines, ferns, etc.*, Frederick A. Stokes Company, New York, 1907.

H.J. Wheeler, *The Liming of Soils*, US Department of Agriculture 'Farmer's Bulletin No 77', Government Printing Office, Washington DC, 1905.

European botanical and horticultural books

Charles Holmes (ed.), *The Gardens of England in the Midland and Eastern Counties*. The Studio, London, 1908.

W. Robinson, *The English Flower Garden and Home Grounds*, John Murray, London, 1902.

Walter P. Wright, *An Illustrated Encyclopaedia of Gardening*, J.M. Dent & Sons, London, 1913.

Asian botanical and horticultural books

Ernst Boerschmann, *Picturesque China: architecture and landscape, a journey through twelve provinces*, T. Fisher Unwin, London, n.d. [c.1909]

Glenn Brown, *European and Japanese Gardens: papers read before the American Institute of Architects*, Henry T. Coates & Company, Philadelphia, 1902.

Josiah Conder, *Landscape Gardening in Japan*, Kelly & Walsh, Tokio, 1893.

Edward S. Morse, *Japanese Homes and their Surroundings*, Ticknor & Company, Boston, 1886.

John Gray

Looking for Charles Weston

Working with Canberra's designed landscape prompted John Gray to investigate the foundational plantings of Charles Weston and to promote their significance.

British-trained horticulturist and arboriculturist Thomas Charles George Weston (1866–1935) was one of Canberra's pioneers. His work was integral to the building of the national capital. Weston pioneered the city's landscape development under very difficult circumstances and his work was fundamental to the success of the celebrated plan for the city by Walter Burley Griffin and Marion Mahony Griffin.

I worked in Canberra for many years and during the period from the mid-1970s working for the National Capital Development Commission, Walter Burley Griffin was the key figure for a lot of the NCDC staff. Quite a few believed Griffin had been responsible for all that had been achieved. I would listen and think: 'they are forgetting the work that was achieved in the first place and they are forgetting the work that Weston did'. That prompted me to take an interest in Weston. I felt it was time for Weston (and others) to have due recognition.

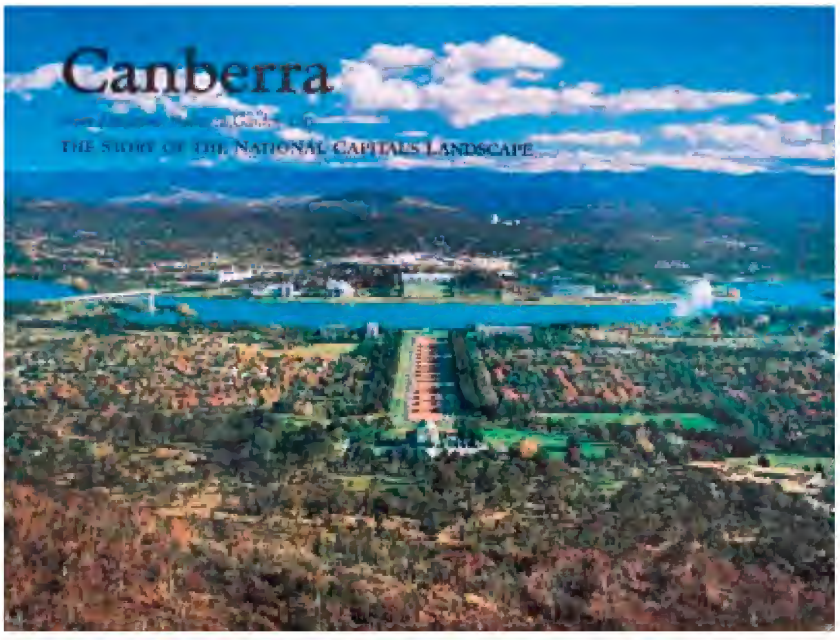
When I was appointed Director of Landscape Architecture at the NCDC (1980–88), I decided I would give the staff of the Commission a bit of a belting about Weston. One of the things I did was compile some of the early photos of Weston's original plantings from a few years after they were planted, then asked my staff to go out and photograph those same places in the present day. We put the images together in an exhibition and (with the addition of some wine and cheese) they all thought that was wonderful. Coming out of the staff exhibition was the publication *Canberra, from Limestone Plains to Garden City: the story of the National Capital's landscape* (1985).

Left: John Gray in his Canberra study holding a photographic portrait of horticulturist and arboriculturist Thomas Charles George Weston (1866–1935).

Photo: Christina Dyson

Right: Portrait of Weston at his retirement in 1927.

Courtesy John Gray



Canberra, from Limestone Plains to Garden City (1985) by the National Capital Development Commission was one of the results of Gray's enthusiastic promotion of research into key players (other than Walter Burley Griffin) in the development of Canberra. Another outcome was detailed research on the work of forester and botanist Lindsay Dixon Pryor (1915–1998) as Superintendent of the Parks and Gardens section, Department of the Interior, by Bernadette Hince: *A Pryor Commitment: Canberra's public landscape 1944–1958*, (1994).

The book talks about Weston, about Lindsay Pryor (a forester), and Griffin, and achieved a greater recognition of Weston's contribution.

Also important was Weston's research and experimentation. Everyone since Weston has been able to build on that research and make good decisions. That is what Griffin really didn't understand about Weston, who was following a traditional horticultural route, saying: 'I am going out to test these plants in this soil and climatic conditions and whatever comes out best I will use'. Griffin didn't seem to understand that.

Weston was trialling everything from an early stage, including local eucalypts and other local vegetation. The Westbourne Woods Arboretum is one example of his research and experimentation, and is divided into distinct areas (including northern hemisphere hardwoods, deciduous trees, coniferous species, and an area for trees native to Australia). Though Weston was testing a large amount of native plant material he had reservations about this, and even today there are problems with its use, particularly trees.

When I retired I decided to do something more about recognition of Weston's work in Canberra. I knew about Weston's papers from Canberra-based historian Greg Murphy, who had found them in an old shed down at Acton and had them transferred into the National Archives. Murphy had written a few papers about Weston but they were largely technical articles in which the context was not well explained. So I set to and began my quest to find out more about Weston.

Most of the archival research I did in Australia. Beyond Weston's papers in the National Archives and other Australian collections, my research also took me to the British Library, the Royal Horticultural Society's Lindley Library, and other national monuments and records centres in England and Scotland. I did a fair amount of research on properties at which Weston worked.

Weston had been born and grew up at Poyle (near Slough, just west of today's Heathrow Airport) and went to school in nearby Colnbrook. He was only about 13 or 14 when he began his apprenticeship at Poyle Manor, but unfortunately the garden has long since gone. From there I tracked Weston to another garden, Ditton Park in Buckinghamshire, close to Windsor Castle. It is a wonderful old building and it was, in Weston's time, the residence of the Dowager Duchess of Buccleuch. Almost nothing is known of the seven years of Weston's life at Ditton Park. From there I traced Weston up to Scotland, to Drumlanrig Castle, Dunfriesshire, a seat of the Duke of Buccleuch. From Drumlanrig he came to Sydney in 1896.

Drumlanrig Castle was where Weston was best exposed to landscape from the grand scale of forestry down to bedding plants. He was promoted there and became a foreman working under David Thomson, one of the great Victorian-era horticulturists. Forestry was being pursued at Drumlanrig and in that district, which I believe was Weston's first exposure to large-scale forestry. There was a great deal of detailed horticulture going on there as well—extensive bedding displays where he was developing his great horticulture skills.

that was why Weston was successful in Canberra—because he knew horticulture, he understood soils, the interrelationship between soils and plants, and how to propagate

Looking in detail at Drumlanrig, I think it was mostly the wooded areas that were an influence. However, the actual bedding displays were really important to Weston's development as a horticulturist, and that was why he was successful in Canberra—because he knew horticulture, he

John Gray recalls his own career

I was born in Sydney, on 7 May 1930. A significant influence on my life was my family's move to Lindfield on Sydney's North Shore when I was still at primary school. Our house was on the edge of a large area of natural bushland—the Davidson State Recreation area. I would get home from school and, attracted to the outdoors, would immediately be out there.

I went to Sydney University in 1948, only a few years after the war. The forests of NSW had been over-cut during World War II and there had been very little attention to sustainable management. A reaction to that was to train a lot of young people to become foresters to manage in the future the forests in a more sustainable way. That was how I went into forestry and that led into landscape architecture, which was a bit of an accidental thing. I was working in NSW and then I came to Canberra where I was working in forestry research. When a job came up in the Parks and Gardens section of the Department of the Interior I thought it seemed rather interesting, so I applied for and got the job. Dr Lindsay Pryor had been the Superintendent of Parks and Gardens. I didn't however work for Lindsay, I worked for David Shoobridge (1913–2000) who was also a forester. At this time the NCDC was just starting off and they used the Parks and Gardens Section as their landscape construction agent, which began to give me a feel for landscape architecture and design. My first major project was the landscaping of the foreshores of Lake Burley Griffin. This prompted me to go to California to pursue a Masters in landscape architecture, supported by a Commonwealth Public Service Scholarship. Apparently I mounted a very good argument to get this.

I returned from California to teach at the Canberra College of Advanced Education (now University of Canberra) for a few years and was, in 1974, tempted to join the NCDC. I was already very familiar with the work they were doing and there were a lot of interesting challenges there at the time, particularly in the rural areas of the ACT where the NCDC was starting to invest money—in recreation areas, picnic areas, and so on. The NCDC lasted for 30 years and had a big influence over the landscape development of Canberra in that period when the government wanted to transfer public servants to Canberra and expand its population. The 1970s–80s was quite an exciting period, when a tremendous proportion of the infrastructure of Canberra was built. I retired from the NCDC on 11 November in 1988.

understood soils, the interrelationship between soils and plants, and how to propagate. This knowledge all proved to be of great value in Canberra.

Weston first visited the federal capital site in 1911 and 1912. At the time he was Head Gardener at Federal Government House in Sydney, a position he had held since 1908, working under Joseph Maiden, one of Australia's most respected botanists. The Commonwealth Government took possession of the Federal Capital Territory on 1 January 1911. Cabinet had approved several things that would be done in 1911 and one was to construct a nursery.

That is how Weston found his way to Canberra, finally officially transferring there from Sydney in 1913, to take up the position of Officer-in-Charge, Afforestation Branch, Federal Capital Territory. It was a very significant event and the nursery responded to an initial desire for conservation, rather than landscaping the Federal Capital. Prior to deciding on this nursery the Commonwealth had determined that a hills surrounding the proposed city site, partially stripped by settlers, would have to be revegetated. So the first step was really about reforestation. This really was significant because throughout the history of Canberra the surrounding hills and broad scale landscape formed an important setting for the national capital, which is what the Griffins were proposing from the other side of the world.

Drumlanrig Castle, Dumfriesshire, where Weston was exposed to forestry and horticulture on a grand scale, and where Weston made the decision to emigrate to Australia. It was Drumlanrig that gave John Gray a sense of the themes that influenced Weston in Canberra.

Weston's next projects were the amenity plantings within the city in 1921. There had been hardly anything going on towards building the city until after the First World War. There were rows between the government officials and Griffin that

During the period of Weston's initial visits to Canberra, new Administrative Offices for the Home Affairs Department, Canberra were completed and occupied (by August 1912), following a period of drawing and clerical work being conducted in calico tents.

Commonwealth of Australia, Department of Home Affairs, *Annual Report of Lands and Survey Branch*, 1913.

Above right: Thomas and Minimia Weston (centre) with their three daughters (front and in car) and John Hobday (standing behind Weston), Yarralumla Nursery office, c.1923

Courtesy ACT Government, Yarralumla Nursery

led in turn to a Royal Commission in 1916. In 1921 the Federal Government created a Federal Capital Advisory Committee and one of the first tasks carried out when they first met in January 1921 was the commencement of urban planting by Weston. The Griffin plan was already in place, and Weston was picking up on that, undertaking street tree plantings on streets that were part of the Griffins' plan. By then Weston knew a lot about the site. He understood more about the soils, the problems of wind, the frost, and so on. And it was in 1921 that City Hill and a large shelter-belt called Haig Park were planted. Haig Park and also Commonwealth Avenue were his reaction to the problem of wind at the federal capital site—he lived in a two-roomed hut in Acton that was exposed to the prevailing winds.

What made Weston so interesting as a subject of research? I take an interest in people who are the quiet achievers and whose work has tended to be forgotten. This attracted me to Weston. A lot of people had tried to downplay Weston, Griffin included. I feel that when people have made such an outstanding contribution—as Weston did—that this should be well recognised.

My interest in Weston was a reaction to the tendency in the NCDC for the people to think Walter Burley Griffin had done it at all. Griffin on the other hand—from the research that I did—was very unsuccessful in achieving anything in Canberra in terms of horticulture and, generally, in terms of getting development going. One of my criticisms of Griffin, which I explain in my doctoral thesis, was that he failed to develop a good relationship with Weston. Any landscape architect knows that if you are going to be successful as a designer you have to understand the plants you are going to use. Griffin was not doing that with Weston. Weston had a tremendous horticultural background and he had built up a great knowledge of horticulture. The role of the landscape architect was to try and tap that information and Griffin wasn't doing that.

While the Griffins' plan is iconic, Weston's work contributes very strongly to Canberra's sense of place. Weston's work in the 1910s, which was related more to reforestation, has had a very big impact on Canberra. It has affected the way in which people live in this city. Walking groups, conservation groups—all of those activities are going on close to the city and are a part of living in Canberra today because a 'natural' landscape exists in such close proximity. That was the beginning of Weston's work. It is an achievement.

Weston's contribution—made under very difficult circumstances—was absolutely amazing

I still admire Weston's work, having worked and lived with it closely for many years. Some of his plantings, like those in the Parliamentary Triangle, remain wonderful parts of Canberra. Weston's contribution—made under very difficult circumstances—was absolutely amazing.

John Gray is a retired landscape architect and academic. He continues to promote the contribution of Charles Weston to Canberra's designed landscape.

John Gray's doctoral thesis is 'T.C.G. Weston (1866–1935), horticulturist and arboriculturist: a critical review of his contribution to the establishment of the landscape foundations of Australia's National Capital', University of Canberra, 1999.

The National Library of Australia has interviewed John Gray for its oral history collection (interviewer Margaret Park, 2011). The interview and a transcript are available online, **http://nla.gov.au/nla.oh-vn5598847**

Max Bourke

The National Arboretum Canberra: an historic concept with an Australian twist

The opening of the National Arboretum Canberra on 1 February 2013 represented a magnificent revival of an older concept in gardening, with its 250-hectare site fulfilling—in part—the Griffins' objective to have an international arboretum near this site in their original plan.

The concept of an arboretum is itself 180 years old. But its roots are tangled with those of botanic gardens, public parks, and forestry research stations. And to continue the tree metaphor, its trunk and branches relate to public amenity, personal vanity, and simple curiosity.

A form of mania to own and grow—and boast about—one's collections of 'exoticks' began roughly in the middle of the eighteenth century and accelerated into the nineteenth century. Initially this was often for the curiosity value of flowering plants, but as 'big' men with big estates became more involved in the race it included big trees. The idea collided with the beginnings of concepts embodying city amenity, parks and tree-lined streets, quite novel ideas until the late eighteenth century. By the end of the nineteenth century arboreta as forms of research stations, were embraced by the newly developing professional scientific foresters.

The word 'arboretum', though derived from the Latin *arbor* for tree, is only relatively recent. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary* the first usage was in 1833, by John Claudius Loudon in his *Gardener's Magazine* meaning generally 'a place grown with trees', but more specifically 'a place devoted to the cultivation and exhibition of rare trees; a botanical tree garden'.

Early botanical gardens, as we know them today, emerged from the concept of 'physick' or medicinal plant gardens usually associated from the twelfth to fifteenth centuries with European universities or monasteries. In an attempt to make ordered collections of all known plants,

Cork oak plantation at the National Arboretum Canberra showing signs of having been harvested for a number of uses since the early 1920s.
Photo: Linda Muldoon

View across the National Arboretum Canberra.
Photo: Linda Muldoon

during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries 'systematic gardens' were developed by those studying plants. The idea of public botanical gardens really only emerged in the late eighteenth century and especially during the early nineteenth century. Private gardens with specialised garden compartments were popularised by British garden designer Humphry Repton, who in 1815 for example, designed gardens for Ashridge Park, Hertfordshire, including a 'pomarium' (apples) and 'rosarium' (roses). In 1838 Loudon published his eight-volume *Arboretum et Fruticetum Britannicum*, which included four volumes of plates depicting specimen trees.

The Derby Arboretum, designed by J.C. Loudon and illustrated here in his *Gardener's Magazine* (October 1840).

The concept of a pleasure ground or a park for recreation by ordinary people became conceivable for the non-aristocratic classes, when they in fact had leisure time. The industrialist Joseph Strutt wished to create a public park for the people of Derby and in 1840 the Derby Arboretum, commissioned from Loudon, was opened to the public. This small site (14 acres or just under 6 ha) had a major impact on the concept of public parks not only in Britain but around the Western world. Frederick Law Olmsted for instance, the designer of New York's Central Park, visited it in 1859 before creating his grand works. In correspondence between Loudon and Strutt during the design, Loudon suggested that an arboretum (of trees only) would be easier to maintain and more beneficial than a garden with many bedding plants.

Arboretums (or arboreta) found ready acceptance in both private and public domains during the nineteenth century. Their widespread creation coincided with a great age of plant exploration when plant hunters roamed the remote regions of North America and Asia sending enormous cargoes of new plants (new to them at least) back to nurseries like Loddiges and Veitches in London, but also to major nurseries in Australia. It became highly fashionable for wealthy owners to collect trees and plant not only outdoors, with specialised collections such as

pinetums, but also in sheltered environments for plant groups such as palms (palmetums).

But by the end of the nineteenth century, as forestry went from a trade to a scientific-based profession, the idea of arboreta moved into a new phase. Arboreta became research stations for public and private forestry enterprises. In 1925 this concept became codified when Dr Thomas Chipp, Deputy Director of the Royal Botanic Garden Kew and Secretary to the British Empire Forestry Conference, published a manual for this purpose. Chipp emphasised that arboreta were places where tree research should take place. Later the International Union of Forest Research Organisations attempted to develop a standard format for trials in arboreta.

Many Australian arboreta were created for these purposes. Among the oldest was that created in 1875 in the dry country of central South Australia, near Jamestown, to test suitable tree species. Australian species such as *Eucalyptus* were trialled at Bundaleer Forest alongside exotic ashes, oaks, sycamores, elms, walnuts, poplars, and willows. Most colonial and later state forestry departments and commissions created arboreta around Australia—some still exist though most have become amenity spaces rather than trial grounds. Around Australia many private and public arboreta thrive.

Walter Burley Griffin and Marion Mahony Griffin's winning design for Canberra included an arboretum, very close to that now opened, at the foot of Black Mountain. Walter Burley Griffin had attended a major science congress at which the concept of Gondwana was discussed and so the layout of his arboretum was to reflect that idea. Meanwhile Charles Weston, who had been appointed Afforestation Officer, had begun to plant out an arboretum to assist him in species selection for the new plantings for Canberra. The two argued at some length about Australian versus introduced species. Weston's central arboretum is now Westbourne Woods (leased by Royal Canberra Golf Club) and one hundred years on still reflects the character of its early plantings. As well as Weston, his successors up to Lindsay Pryor's time in the 1940s and 1950s, created a number of specific 'species plots' and minor arboreta, in their search for useful trees for public and private spaces in and around Canberra. Some of those still survive like the Californian redwoods (*Sequoia sempervirens*) at Pialligo near Fairbairn Airport.

Another interesting example is the cork oak (*Quercus suber*) plantation which Griffin urged Weston to plant. Early seed sources were from the Melbourne Botanic Gardens and the University of Melbourne. Between 1917 and 1921 different consignments (one lost through torpedo attack during World War I) were planted at the northern end of what is now the National Arboretum. They have been harvested for a number of different uses since that time, a story well told elsewhere by Susan Parsons.

Beginning in the 1920s, the Commonwealth Government, through the Australian Forestry School and the Forestry and Timber Bureau, also created 23 arboreta. All of the Australian Capital Territory sites except Bendora were destroyed in the 2003 fires. After these horrific fires there was much discussion about the future use of the 250-hectare site between Black Mountain

and Mount Strmolo, a former pine plantation destroyed in the fires of 2001 and damaged again in 2003. Eventually the Chief Minister, picking up on suggestions from the Committee established to shape Canberra after the fires, adopted the idea of developing an arboretum on this site. An international competition led in 2005 to the winning entry '100 Forests 100 Gardens' by the Melbourne landscape architects Taylor Cullity Lethlean (TLC) in association with the Sydney architects Tonkin Zulaikha Greer. TCL is well known for its garden design work at the Royal Botanic Gardens Cranbourne among other major projects. The design features a large Visitor Centre with interactive displays designed by the creative team Thylacine of Queanbeyan, who have done many museum displays.

Following the selection of designers, experienced forestry advisers sorted through many species that might grow in this relatively dry (and drying) climate of 600+ mm annual rainfall, on these soil types (which vary from old volcanics and limestone ridges to granites), and with these differing aspects (hill slopes facing all points of the compass).

The site is a spectacular lookout over the long axis of Griffin's design, above the Lake and looking down on Government House and the Westbourne Woods Arboretum

The site itself is a spectacular lookout over the long axis of Griffin's design, above the Lake and looking down on Government House and the Westbourne Woods Arboretum. It is six minutes from the centre of Canberra and continues the green open space from Black Mountain south to Mount Stromlo.

The National Arboretum Canberra continues the core concepts of such institutions with public amenity and enjoyment, education and scientific research all part of the mix of uses. The design of the arboretum allows for around 100 tree species (the number will be slightly flexible) to be planted out. They have been selected on the basis that they will probably thrive on the site (but this is to be tested of course) and other selection criteria include conservation status (endangered in the wild), their iconic status (to various nations), and for simple beauty and colour at different times of the year. Of the 104 species so far selected, 66 are

Chinese evergreen magnolia (*Magnolia delavayi*), flowering here for the first time.

Opposite (clockwise from top left): Wollemi pine (*Wollemia nobilis*), giant sequoia (*Sequoiadendron giganteum*), Chinese tulip tree (*Liriodendron chinense*), monkey puzzle tree (*Araucaria araucana*), weeping snow gum (*Eucalyptus lacrimans*), and Californian fan palm (*Washingtonia filifera*).

Photos: Linda Muldoon

rare or threatened and on the Southern Tablelands Ecosystem Park site (a forest within the arboretum) is a representation of an endangered ecosystem.

The Fenner School of Environment & Society at Australian National University is conducting a major experiment on site while citizen science, led by professionals, is providing well-documented studies of tree growth, and bird and frog populations. Educational programs are being programmed into the Arboretum's daily running along with guided walks and the site is already performing a major amenity function for horse and bike riders, joggers, and walkers. A major project of this nature, for the centenary of Canberra, seems wholly appropriate in this garden city.

Further reading

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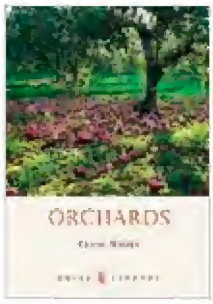
Paul Elliott, Charles Watkins, & Stephen Daniels, '"Combining science with recreation and pleasure": cultural geographies of nineteenth-century arboretums', *Garden History*, 35 (Suppl. 2), 2007, pp.6–27.

Henry W. Lawrence, *City Trees: a historical geography from the Renaissance through the nineteenth century*. University of Virginia Press, Charlottesville, VA, 2006.

Susan Parsons, 'On the story of the cork oaks' **http://www.nationalarboretum.act.gov.au/resources/tree_stories/cork_oaks**, accessed 4 March 2013.

Max Bourke is a member of Friends of the National Arboretum Canberra.

For the bookshelf



Andrew Saniga, *Making Landscape Architecture in Australia,* Murdoch Books, Milson's Point, NSW, 2012 (ISBN 9781742660943): hardback, 296pp, RRP $70

Landscapes may be difficult to define, but the landscapes that infuse our cities, suburbs, and regions in Australia are the product not only of design but also of planning, politics, bureaucracy, community, and more. This book is about those who design these private and public landscapes, particularly landscape architects, their evolution into a professional body represented by the Australian Institute of Landscape Architects (AILA), and their continuing role into the twenty-first century.

Saniga introduces the book by providing a twentieth century Australian context and an example demonstrating the human imperative to create public space despite overwhelming odds. Thereafter the story follows a chapter structure that is basically chronological and thematic. Colonial ideas strongly influenced practice in the early part of the twentieth century. Saniga comments on the contribution of Walter Burley Griffin and Marion Mahony Griffin in the early decades of the twentieth century who used the title 'landscape architect' and came to Australia from Chicago, USA, to oversee the design and development of Canberra. Through this role and their independent practice in Melbourne and Sydney their influence was extensive.

The boom growth of Australia after World War II became the catalyst for large scale public works through which many of the pioneers of the Australian landscape architecture profession began to emerge and give substance to the ambitions of a landscape profession. Suburban expansion, new town planning, the 1956 Olympics, large-scale land reclamation, and the formation of the National Capital Development Commission (NCDC) in 1958 to design and develop Canberra, required the collaboration of many disciplines. Architects, engineers, and planners already had their own professional organisations. Saniga names and contextualises many key individuals through such projects. Although nascent for many years the first steps towards a professional landscape organisation began in the 1960s and in 1966 the AILA was officially founded. Landscape architecture was finally recognised as a profession.

Education is at the foundation of the profession. In the early years many practitioners studied overseas, at Burnley School of Horticulture (1891) and at Sydney Technical College (1938) which became Ryde School of Horticulture (1948). In 1964 the University of NSW introduced the two-year graduate diploma in landscape design. Now undergraduate and graduate degrees in landscape architecture are delivered at universities across Australia. Landscape publications have played a major role in communicating to a wider public. Saniga traces the role of early publications through to the publication of landscape architecture's professional journal *Landscape Australia*, now *Landscape Architecture Australia*.

Initially the potential for collaboration between the professions of landscape architecture, architecture, engineering and planning was demonstrated through the work of the NCDC in Canberra. In the final chapter Saniga acknowledges the reality of ongoing tensions both within the landscape profession, such as issues of symbolism and representation as exemplified in the native versus exotic debate, between professions, and the ongoing nature of change. Of particular note are the contested professional claims for the design of urban spaces.

This book provides valuable insights into Australian urban culture, landscape values, landscape representation, and environmental stewardship over the twentieth century and into the twenty-first century. It also provides insights into the changing nature of urban environments and the challenge to landscape architects in maintaining a critical voice.

Dr Dianne Firth
University of Canberra

Claire Massett, *Orchards,* Shire Publications, Botley, Oxford, 2012 (ISBN 9780747808381): paperback, 56pp, £ 6.99

Having grown up in rural England during the 1950s I related easily to this splendid volume on that most bounteous of all garden features—the fruit orchard. Sadly this informative book tells us that over two thirds of English orchards have been lost since I went 'scrumping' for apples in the mid-twentieth century (i.e. pinching the remaining fruit from the trees after harvesting ceases).

Beautifully captioned images illustrate the text on every page enhancing the five chapters covering origins, flora and fauna, pastimes and practices, and 'a fruitful future'. This Shire publication is a valuable repository of plant growing and social history with over fifty pages of full colour printing on beautiful stock. In an era when supermarkets can dictate what species growers must produce, it is refreshing to read about the history and diversity of orchard crops including the cultivation of cherries, apples, pears, nuts, and stone fruits.

Of course what particularly appealed to me was spotting in the illustrations the tools and implements used in the cultivation and harvesting of fruit. Ladders and baskets of all sizes, pouched aprons, cider presses, spraying equipment, and the ubiquitous deck chair in which to receive your orchard tea. Last year I was in Granchester, near Cambridge, ready to take my cream tea in the orchard made famous by poet Rupert Brook. But alas! unlike the sunny orchard with dappled shade depicted in the book it was pouring with rain as well as dripping with fruit!

Australia has great stories about orchards and fruit cultivation but I wish we did more to encourage the interpretation of this heritage. Certainly this is one of the aims that the Australian Museum of Gardening has set itself at Carrick Hill and this Shire publication shows us how well it can be done.

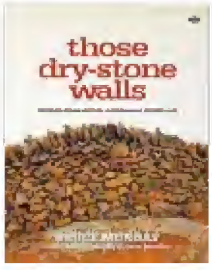
Richard Heathcote
Director, Carrick Hill

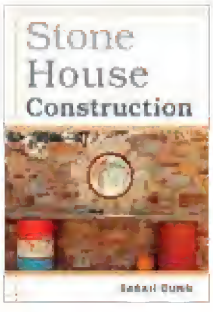
Sarah Gunn, *Stone House Construction,* CSIRO Publishing, Collingwood, Vic., 2012 (ISBN 9780643096370): paperback, 232pp, RRP $69.95

Bruce Munday with photographs by Kristin Munday, *Those Dry-stone Walls: stories from South Australia's stone age,* Wakefield Press, Kent Town, SA, 2012 (ISBN 9781743051252): paperback, 192pp, RRP $39.95

Vernacular building in stone is the shared subject matter of these two books. In many other aspects they differ widely, reflecting the backgrounds of the authors and the end results of two quite separate impulses. Gunn is an architect and the premise for *Stone House Construction* was established when she set out to construct a stone house and could not find the comprehensive guide she desired. Gunn's is thus a source book of construction methods, techniques, and specifications. Buildings are the book's strength but a chapter, 'Stone in the landscape' includes an impressive array of sketches and photographs of traditional and historical ways of using stone in landscape design, drawing on international and local examples. Gunn also captures the romance of traditional stone buildings and their construction through her interwoven theme of historic stone buildings and structures, with examples patiently gathered from around Australia—though Victoria predominates. *Those Dry-stone Walls* tells a thematic environmental and social history of rural South Australia through the framework of dry-stone walling. It is by and about people with a long-held passion for stone walls and its outlook is infinitely more romantic. Where Gunn explains how you might excavate a stone quarry, what kind of stone to look for, how to reserve topsoil, how to backfill, which stones to reserve for building, and which would be better deployed for landscaping, Munday explores how many millions of years the stone has taken to form, when and by whom it was excavated, then presents local examples and makers. Munday's fondness for the age-old craft and the qualities dry-stone walls impart to the landscape is reflected in the book's more personal and idiosyncratic style. The focus of *Those Dry-stone Walls* is South Australia. However, practical advice is sprinkled throughout (from the authors' direct experience as well as reproduced from historical documents) and forms the basis of the final chapter, 'So, you want to build a wall', which should make this book appealing to readers and would-be stone wallers from a much wider pool.

Christina Dyson





Recent releases

Milton Cameron, *Experiments in Modern Living: scientists' houses in Canberra 1950–1970,* ANU E Press, Canberra, 2012 (ISBN 9781921862700 online; 9781921862694 print version): RRP online free; print version $29.95

Available in four digital formats (PDF, View online, ePub, and mobi) as well as a print-on-demand, this is an intriguing study of houses commissioned by the 'highly educated, cultured and well-travelled intelligentsia' who comprised Canberra's mid-century scientific community. Based on a thorough physical and historical survey as well as oral histories, Cameron focuses on five case studies, including the 28-year-old CSIRO plant physiologist John Zwar who commissioned well-known Sydney architect Harry Seidler in 1955 to build a house for £5000. In a city renowned for experimentation, 'scientists were responsible for commissioning the most highly acclaimed houses in Canberra'. In each case study the worlds of science and design meet, and although gardens are not the author's specific remit, the scientific background of the clients and their modernist preferences have inescapably influenced attitudes to site, function, planting, and unity of design.

http://epress.anu.edu.au?p=1825891

Ellen Hickman & John Ryan, *Two with Nature,* Fremantle Press, Fremantle, WA, 2012 (ISBN 9781922089120): hardback, 104pp, RRP $35

There is something for everyone here with a combination of text and images, in this case botanically inspired poetry, and art with a focus on the West and its distinctive plants and places. This should be an appetiser for those contemplating a visit to Western Australia's south-western corner as part of the 2014 AGHS Albany conference. John Ryan's major new book *Green Sense: the aesthetics of plants, place and language* (TrueHeart Press, Oxford, 2012) will be reviewed in our next issue.

Dianne Lawrence, *Genteel Women: empire and domestic material culture, 1840–1910,* Manchester University Press, Manchester, 2012 (ISBN 9780719088032): hardback, 290pp, RRP £65

When the opening sentence misnames the well-known West Australian settler and botanical collector Georgiana Molloy as 'Georgina Malloy' one's heart sinks. And yet, there is much of interest in Lawrence's wide-ranging analysis of 'gentility and the performance of self' as it moves from dress ('appearance management') through the living room, into the garden, and back to the dining table. Although written with all the subtlety and charm of a doctoral thesis, the chapter on gardens (a meaty 50 pages) brings together a wide range of material, placing Australian experience alongside imperial contexts of West Africa, India, and New Zealand. Conclusions are occasionally drawn from unsettlingly small numbers of cases studies spread across improbably wide time periods, but a major conclusion of this book is that gardening formed a crucial marker of female gentility in the British colonial empire.

Michael Symes, *The Picturesque and the Later Georgian Garden,* Redcliffe Press, Bristol, 2012 (ISBN 9781908326096): paperback, 196pp, RRP £18.50 (plus postage)

This is very rich fare and the degustation is best taken with matched wines over a couple of sittings. The Picturesque has been much analysed—and Symes is generous in his acknowledgement of past authors—but what sets this book apart is its focus on The Picturesque and gardens, what he refers to '*applied* Picturesque'. The Picturesque is placed in context with the Sublime and the Beautiful, and in relationship to Romanticism. This book is essential for anyone interested in the background to early colonial garden making in Australia and contemporary attitudes to scenery. A coda takes the time period to about 1820—those looking to the 'picturesque' gardens championed by mid-nineteenth-century authors Kemp and Glenny will still need to consult Brent Elliot's masterly *Victorian Gardens* (1986) but the pairing of Elliot and Symes make wonderful companions.

Croquet on the lawn against the colonnaded porte-cochere ('ideally high enough for an elephant to pass under')—from Eugenia Herbert's fascinating *Flora's Empire: British gardens in India* (University of Philadelphia Press), to be reviewed in our next issue.

Dialogue

Australia Day honours

Announced just days after our last issue went to press, the 2013 Australia Day Honours List recognised the service of many Australian citizens from all walks of life. Of special note was the honouring of Dr Philip James Moors, recently retired Director of the Royal Melbourne Botanic Gardens, with the award of Officer (AO) in the General Division of the Order of Australia: 'For distinguished service to conservation and the environment through contributions to the botanical and scientific community and the promotion of Australian flora' and of plant collector and Australian Plant Society stalwart, Tasmanian-based Richard Alfred Burns OAM, for 'For service to botany, as an author and conservationist'.

Vale Colin Mills

Stuart Read eulogises in the latest Sydney and Northern NSW branch newsletter on the achievements of the late Colin Mills, 'a dynamo behind much research, writing, propagation and restoration at the core of the Camden Park estate'. Perhaps of the most lasting interest to garden historians is the 'Hortus Camdenensis', an online illustrated catalogue of plants grown in the celebrated Camden Park garden and nursery in the period c.1820–61, on which Colin lavished much time and research.

www.hortuscamden.com

'The Dream of a Century'

Marie Nicholls, whose father Eric Nicholls worked with Walter Burley Griffin, attended the opening of the new Griffin show 'The Dream of a Century', curated by Christopher Vernon, and writes: 'The exhibition in Canberra at the National Library of Australia is excellent, and I know you would be fascinated with the catalogues assembled by Marion Mahony Griffin of native species all coded for many facets, as she could find nothing here to compare. These catalogues are in the Eric Milton Nicholls collection and are now owned by the NLA. They are beautifully assembled in hand-crafted Japanese-style covers'.

nla.gov.au/exhibitions#

Wombat Hills Botanic Gardens 150th celebrations

This marvellous botanic garden, atop Wombat Hill in Victoria's picturesque township of Daylesford, is celebrating its 150th anniversary with a special community celebration. Established in 1863, the garden is famed for its magnificent mature conifers and rare trees. Join local friends at a celebration on 11 May 2013, or visit anytime to enjoy this spectacular historic garden.

www.wombathill.org.au

ICOMOS Conference October 2013

The Australia ICOMOS 2013 national conference, 'Imagined pasts: imagined futures', will be held in Canberra from Thursday 31 October to Sunday 3 November 2013. The conference will be preceded by a week's symposium on cultural landscapes and cultural routes in the twenty-first century (Sunday 27–Thursday 31 October), hosted by the Australian members of the ICOMOS International Scientific Committees on Cultural Landscapes (ISCCL) and Cultural Routes (CIIC). The Australian Garden History Society is pleased to have contributed a sponsorship donation to the ISCCL for the symposium.

www.aicomos.com/2013-canberra-centenary/

australia.icomos.org/wp-content/uploads/ISCCL-CIIC-Symposium.pdf

12th Australasian Urban History/ Planning History Conference 2014

This conference, to be hosted by Victoria University in Wellington, New Zealand, will take as its theme 'Landscapes and Ecologies of Urban and Planning History'. Running from 2–5 February 2014, the conference will explore urbanisation as a dynamic flux of social histories and natural ecologies woven together across time; an interaction between settlement and landscape told through conflict, discovery, heroism, failure, imagination, and policy at different scales, all presenting a rich lode for histories informed by an environmental perspective. Abstracts are now due and inquiries should be directed to Morten Gjerde.

morten.gjerde@vuw.ac.nz

Tree lucerne and the benefits of botanical Latin

The lucerne trees remembered by Peter Freeman in 'Three Cottage Landscapes' (*AGH,* 24 (3), pp.13-16) as a distinctive feature of the eastern Riverina region of New South Wales have inadvertently underlined the potential for confusion caused by the use of common names and the value of botanical Latin and Linnaeus's binomial system. It seems two species from the Fabaceae family share the common name Tree Lucerne, and synonym Tagasaste. Both originate in the Mediterranean (Canary Islands). Max Bourke writes clarifying one of these, *Chamaecytisus proliferus*, and its introduction to Australia: 'Tree Lucerne, usually in agricultural circles known as Tagasaste, is a Mediterranean plant. It was introduced to Australia by my old Division of Plant Industry at CSIRO and promoted for grazing uses with some success, though it is weedy in some circumstances, and non-pregnant goats are recommended for its control.' *Chamaecytisus palmensis* is also known as Tree Lucerne, or Tagasaste, and NSW Agriculture provides historical notes for this species: 'Tagasaste has been grown in Australia since at least 1879, when seeds were sent from the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, in England, and grown at the Adelaide Botanic Gardens, whose director reported favourably on it as a drought-resistant fodder plant. In 1896, G. Valder commented in the *Agricultural Gazette* of N.S.W. on tagasaste's value in drought. J. H. Maiden, Government Botanist, also commented in the *Agricultural Gazette*, in 1899, 1908, and 1915—the latter issue containing a particularly enthusiastic review of tagasaste.'

South Wales is not England (and Curley Flat is not Curly Flat)

Our apologies for misattributing Ian Telford's institution in the last issue of *AGH* (p.11): the NCW Beadle Herbarium is at the University of New England and not the University of New South Wales as inadvertently stated. In the same issue a spelling mistake rendered Curly Flat as 'Curley Flat' (p.17): our apologies to Lionel Gilbert and Mr Curly.

www.curlyflat.net

AGHS News

Buda hedge replanted

The great hedge at Buda, in the historic Victorian goldfields' township of Castlemaine, has now been replanted with financial assistance of the Australian Garden History Society (see *AGH*, 24 (1), 2012, pp.18–20). Good early autumn rains have given the new plants a great start.

www.budacastlemaine.org

Mike Smith Prize 2013

Congratulations to co-editor Christina Dyson on winning the prestigious Mike Smith Prize, awarded bi-annually by the National Museum of Australia, in partnership with the Australian Academy of Science, for an essay based on original research in the fields of environmental history or the history of science in Australia. Christina's essay 'Living fossils and mouth-watering stones: manipulating history in the post-WWII natural Australian plant garden' traces how, between the mid-1940s and the early 1970s, changing perceptions of Australia's natural landscape, and particularly its ancient character, intersected with a new focus on national identity to foster the idea of the native or 'bush' garden.

Richard Aitken

www.nma.gov.au/history/research

Assistance with the journal

The AGHS extends its thanks to the following members who have assisted with the packing of this volume of the journal: Sharon Beaman, Beryl Black, Helen Botham, Mary Chapman, Wendy Dwyer, Di Ellerton, Mal Faul, Tim Gatehouse, Margaret Ingles, Jane Johnson, Beverley and John Joyce, Rosemary Kiellerup, Laura Lewis, Anna Long, Ann Miller, Ann Rayment, Susan Reidy, Kate Sonogan, Kaye Stokes, John and Sandra Torpey, Marie Walpole, Pera Wells, Ginny Wingett, Georgina Whitehead, Kathy Wright, and Anne Woodside. This is a congenial and very practical way to assist your Society and our executive officer welcomes contact from new volunteers. Please contact the AGHS office if you would like to help with the packaging of future issues.

Diary dates

APRIL 2013

Saturday 13 — Australian Garden, Royal Botanic Gardens Cranbourne — VICTORIA

Self-drive, guided tour of the Australian Garden Stage 2 by landscape architect and planting designer of this garden Paul Thompson with Australian plant experts Gwen Elliot and Rodger Elliott. For more details and to register visit the Branch webpage **www.gardenhistorysociety.org.au/branches/victoria/**. Enquiries to Anna Long on (03) 9820 8828 or **chris.long@internode.on.net**

Saturday 13–Sunday 14 — Chudleigh/Deloraine area — TASMANIA

We'll have a chance to see the new conservatory at Robyn and John Hawkins' home Bentley and to visit other gardens in the area. There are also plans for lectures on landscape and a visit to Lynne and Rod Paul's home in Deloraine. Email Elizabeth Kerry at **liz.kerry@keypoint.com.au** or Mike Evans at **wilmotarms@bigpond.com** for further details.

Sunday 14 — Heritage gardens in Wingecarribee Shire — SOUTHERN HIGHLANDS

A self-drive activity for members and friends visiting Wingecarribee and The Rift as part of the Sesquicentenary of Bowral and Moss Vale celebrations, and the Wingecarribee Heritage Festival. For more information contact Laurel Cheetham on (02) 4861 7132 or **l.cheetham@bigpond.com**

Sunday 14 — Buderim gardens — QUEENSLAND

Trafalgar House was built in 1912 as a farmhouse and still has a large old garden which has been adapted to its suburban setting. Three other residential gardens will be visited including the Lamonds'. Further details to be advised.

Sunday 21 — Historical parks, Armidale — NORTHERN NSW

A stroll through some Armidale historic parks, with Graham Wilson. 10.30am, Central Park at the Rotunda. Bring your picnic lunch.

Sunday 28 — Paddington, old and new — SYDNEY

Walk with Julie Mackenzie of Tonkin Zulaikha Greer at Paddington Reservoir and The Barracks. 2–4.30pm, meeting place to be confirmed when booking. Cost: $15 AGHS members, $25 non-members, includes light refreshments. Bookings essential. Bookings for this event close on 20 April, as The Barracks must be advised of those attending one week prior to event. Bookings and enquiries to Jeanne Villani on (02) 9997 5995 or **Jeanne@Villani.com**

MAY 2013

Saturday 4 — An early Canberra garden — ACT/MONARO/RIVERINA

Calthorpe's House (built 1927) is a treasure of domestic and garden history. 2.30–3.30pm, Calthorpe's House, Mugga Way, Red Hill, followed by afternoon tea. Cost: $10 members, $15 non-members. For more details see the Branch webpage at **gardenhistorysociety.org.au**

Saturday 4 — Managing gardens with history — VICTORIA

Details and cost to be advised on the Branch webpage and in the newsletter. Mueller Hall. Enquiries to Lisa Tuck on 0418 590 891 or **lisatuck1@bigpond.com**

Friday 10 Tree forum — WESTERN AUSTRALIA

A tree forum, to be held in conjunction with the University of Western Australia at the University Club, is in the planning stages. (See article in this issue of *AGH*, 24(4), on pages 35–36.)

Wednesday 29 Trivia night — SYDNEY

With quiz master Silas Clifford Smith. 6pm for 7–8.30pm, Annie Wyatt Room, National Trust Centre, Observatory Hill. Cost: $20 members, $30 non-members, includes light refreshments. Bookings essential. Bookings and enquiries to Jeanne Villani on (02) 9997 5995 or **Jeanne@Villani.com**

JUNE 2013

Sunday 2 Winter seminar — SOUTHERN HIGHLANDS

Guest speaker, garden historian Colleen Morris on the history of fruit and vegetable growing in Australia; lost varieties and cultivars. Enquiries to Lyn Esdaile on (02) 4887 7122 or **garlynar@bigpond.com**

Wednesday 5 1963: Landscaping the Lake — ACT/RIVERINA/MONARO

Presentation by Dr Dianne Firth on the filling of Lake Burley Griffin and the planting of its surrounds. Joint event with Friends of the National Library of Australia. 6pm at the National Library of Australia.

Wednesday 12 Winter lecture series: Memories of Burnley — VICTORIA

Our winter lecture series will be celebrating the 150th anniversary of Burnley Gardens. 6 for 6.30pm, Auditorium, Burnley Gardens (in conjunction with Friends of the Burnley Gardens). For more details go to **www.gardenhistorysociety.org.au/branches/victoria/**. Enquiries to Lisa Tuck on 0418 590 891 or **lisatuck1@bigpond.com**

JULY 2013

Wednesday 10 Cultural landscape of Lord Howe Island — SYDNEY

Illustrated talk by Chris and Margaret Betteridge, 'Cultural landscape of Lord Howe Island'. 6pm for 7–8.30pm, Annie Wyatt Room, National Trust Centre, Observatory Hill. Cost: $20 members, $30 non-members, includes light refreshments. Bookings essential. Bookings and enquiries to Jeanne Villani on (02) 9997 5995 or **Jeanne@Villani.com**

Saturday 20 Burnley Gardens walk and talk — VICTORIA

Guided tour by the Friends of Burnley Gardens followed by a panel discussion and supper. Burnley Gardens. See website and newsletter for details, **www.gardenhistorysociety.org.au/branches/victoria/**. Enquiries to Lisa Tuck on 0418 590 891

Friday 18–Sunday 21 October AGHS Annual National Conference, Armidale, NSW

The Australian Garden History Society's 34th Annual National Conference will be held in Armidale, 18–21 October 2013. Full details on the Society's website www.gardenhistorysociety.org.au

Caroline Grant

The Urban Forest: trees in our backyard and beyond

Following its successful Landscape Forum in 2011, the West Australian Branch of the Australian Garden History Society, in association with the Faculty of Architecture, Landscape and Visual Arts of the University of Western Australia, will hold a Tree Forum in May 2013 to address the importance of trees in Perth and beyond.

It seems that in every century there has to be a concerted plea and an effort to conserve trees. Although human and other life depends on plants for oxygen—and particularly on the big plants we denominate as trees—they yield many additional benefits and sometimes we forget how critical they are to human existence. For millennia, groups of humans have cut down too many trees in proximity to their settlements, causing problems including habitat loss for animals (upon which humans may depend for food, fuel, and shelter), erosion, salinity, rainfall loss, and often desertification. Now that the bulk of the world's human population chooses or aspires to live in cities, the urban forest has emerged as a critical concept, with many individuals and organisations addressing questions posed by their management.

As Perth grows rapidly in response to mining boom projects, hundreds if not thousands of kilometres away trees are rapidly being cut down to provide timber for new development, and to make way for housing and other infrastructure including roads and large buildings. This seems to be taking place without much consideration for the effects trees have on mitigating Heat Island Effect, or the ecosystem services that trees provide in cleaning the air of pollutants, providing habitat for birds and other animals, binding the soil, and cleaning water and soil by absorbing or changing contaminants into forms less harmful to humans.

Perhaps most importantly in an urban context, trees are extremely important in providing shade and beauty as part of the setting in which we live. Try to imagine Peppermint Grove or many of the older suburbs without the peppermint trees and the tall storey of eucalypts towering above them on the horizon. Removing one or two of these tall eucalypts from private gardens is hardly noticed, but removing a sizeable proportion of them can

Regrowth karri forest near Margaret River; boab in Kings Park recently transplanted from Warmun (East Kimberley); avenue of lemon-scented gums in Kings Park.
Photos: Caroline Grant

Mature Moreton Bay fig trees in an institutional setting at the Old Perth Observatory (now headquarters of the National Trust) atop Perth's Mount Eliza

dramatically change how a suburb looks and sounds: the canopy is suddenly lessened and bird calls can change if there are no high branches for larger birds to rest in. Consider how much more welcoming a new housing subdivision appears when remnant vegetation is retained and its street trees become established. It is not so noticeable when a few trees are removed here and there, but cumulatively the removal of trees in a city can result in islands of concrete radiating heat at the end of a hot day, with no refuge for humans except inside the concrete or brick boxes with air conditioning running. With the demand for electricity increasing and its price soaring, that is a bleak prospect.

The aims of the forthcoming Tree Forum will include the following:

- to raise awareness of the importance of trees so that they might be widely considered a valuable asset;
- to consider criteria for 'What makes a tree significant?';
- to reduce bifurcation of concern for native and exotic trees—both can deliver substantial benefits to our cities and communities, and it is a matter of conducting research on biodiversity and choosing appropriate tree and shrub species;
- to instigate some research into Heat Island Effect and other climatic effects in Perth; and
- to commence work on a manual of suitable trees for streets, parks, and gardens in Perth.

Our speakers, many of whom are AGHS members, will include Dr Greg Moore of the University of Melbourne (urban forest and tree disease expert), Craig Burton (landscape architect specialising in conservation), Dr Jane Lennon (speaking on trees as markers in cultural landscapes), and Stuart Read (speaking about successful tree conservation strategies in New South Wales and lessons which might be learned from this experience).

The Tree Forum will be advertised via the AGHS, National Trust, Australian Institute of Landscape Architects, Wildflower Society, Australian Institute of Architects, and other organisations with an interest in trees. We hope that students from UWA, including science, engineering, and planning students will attend and other tertiary students, particularly in horticulture and arboriculture, would also be very welcome. It is hoped that we will also have an introductory lecture on the evening of Thursday, 9 May, so that people who cannot attend during the day on Friday may still participate. More details will be posted on the AGHS website.

Caroline Grant is a member of the AGHS National Management Committee and is currently enrolled in a PhD in cultural landscapes at The University of Western Australia.

The Urban Forest: trees in our backyard and beyond

Friday, 10 May 2013, 8am–5.30pm University Club of Western Australia, University of Western Australia, Hackett Drive, Crawley, Western Australia

For bookings and enquiries, contact Caroline Grant
chhgrant@yahoo.com

AUSTRALIAN GARDEN HISTORY SOCIETY

Mission Statement

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