

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

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CHAIRMAN'S REPORT 1990

This report was delivered at the Tenth Annual General Meeting of the Australian Garden History Society, held on 14 October 1990 at the Lake Hume Resort, Albury, New South Wales

March 1990 marked the tenth anniversary of the Australian Garden History Society. At the time of the Society's inception, Australia's heritage of historic gardens was scarcely thought of except by a handful of people.

In the mid 1970s, the State and Federal Governments were persuaded to commit funds to conduct garden surveys in every state to determine the extent of historic gardens in Australia. Those who conducted these surveys felt that they had discovered many 'treasures' that very few people knew about. Many of these 'treasures' of historic gardens were vanishing and out of this came the suggestion that a garden history society be formed, and a conference was held in Melbourne in March 1980 at which the AGHS was formed.

A succession of annual conferences enabled a growing

body of members to view many historic gardens and begin to appreciate the extent of our garden heritage. State branches were then formed and activities such as lectures, garden visits and seminars began at a local and regional level.

It is at this level where most of our members participate in the Society's activities and have contact with other members; for those of us fortunate enough to be able to attend our annual conferences, the opportunity to meet and discuss issues with members from interstate and country areas is always informative and enjoyable.

In 1983 guidelines for historic garden conservation were published by the Society and the practice of bringing out expert overseas lecturers every other year was begun. We also began to award research grants to tertiary students working on topics relevant to Australian garden history.

A huge amount of work went into our submission to the Australian Heritage Commission where we submitted

A visit to Bontharambo, Wangaratta was a highlight of the 1990 conference. The park-like setting with its predominant use of indigenous trees was a perfect example of the conference theme—Australian plants in the designed landscape



a list of gardens from every state in Australia considered worthy of preserving: the list included many types of gardens, some large, some small, some grand and some humble. Earlier this year gardens were listed on the Register of the National Estate, finally recognising that gardens are an important part of our National Estate along with forests, Aboriginal sites, buildings of architectural significance, the Great Barrier Reef and similar sites.

From the beginning, the Society has had a journal. The first one was produced in Tasmania, then the magazine *Australian Garden Journal* became our official journal and now we are producing our own *Australian Garden History* journal.

Apart from the serious articles, garden profiles, feature articles, editorials and book reviews, the journal informs members of activities in the branches and of National Management Committee news, enabling members to keep in touch with what is happening in the Society all over Australia.

There are many people who have been instrumental in the formation of the Society and who have supported us ever since. I hesitate to mention them all for fear of omitting some! However there is one person who has staunchly supported us from the very beginning and that is our former Patron, Dame Elisabeth Murdoch. Dame Elisabeth has attended most annual conferences, and many functions in Victoria and I believe she attended a function whilst visiting New South Wales recently. The Society is very appreciative of her support over the years.

Fortunately we have been able to remain an Australian rather than regional society. This has been made more feasible by paying one airfare per year to our far-flung National Management Committee members to enable them to attend meetings. While this practice has had to be stopped over the last year, we hope that it will be reinstated as soon as it is practical.

Over recent years interest in horticulture generally has increased enormously and there is no doubt that the Australian Garden History Society has contributed to this surge of interest as well as a great deal to an awareness in the community of Australia's garden heritage.

The existence of the Society has encouraged an interest in fine gardening and has helped people with important gardens recognise these and perhaps devote more resources to them. It has created a forum where students, practitioners, horticulturists and academics can meet, and has encouraged debate about the issues which surround the conservation of historic gardens. It has also brought owners of historic gardens together which has enabled them to discuss issues amongst themselves and assist each other.

There has also been a growth in the amount of research done into many aspects of garden history, and a massive growth in professional interest and professional expertise, and a huge interest generated amongst government agencies.

In last year's report, I said that I hoped to be able to present to you a much better report about the affairs of the Society this year, and I am delighted to be able to do so.

The Society has stabilised in both an organisational and

financial sense over the last year. The new office in Melbourne is now running smoothly with an administrative assistant employed on a part-time basis. A message: machine takes messages when the office is not attended.

At present our membership records are kept by our Treasurer on her personal computer. Obviously this must be a temporary arrangement and ideally we would like to have our own computer. Discussions have taken place with Friends of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Melbourne, who also have an office in the Astronomer's Residence, about sharing a computer with them, but as yet there has been no action on this.

The Treasurer will give you a detailed report on our membership numbers, but I can tell you that they have dropped away. The National Management Committee has estimated that to administer the Society efficiently and to produce a quality journal, it is desirable to have 2,000 members. We will be asking branches and our membership to spend time over the next year in helping to increase our membership.

I think we should all be proud of our present journal; the current editors Richard Aitken and Georgina Whitehead are producing an excellent magazine which contains serious articles as well as news and contacts to keep our members in touch with activities happening all around the country. The National Management Committee wishes to acknowledge the large amount of work that Richard and Georgina put in to each issue and thank them very much for their efforts.

The National Management Committee has organised one tour for members in the past year, and that was a most successful tour to Tasmania. Most branches have held weekend tours which are generally popular with members. Now that the affairs of the Society are running more smoothly we are contemplating a number of tours in the coming year. The major one is to be a two week tour of New Zealand gardens to take place in mid-April. Other possibilities are a re-run of the 'Bulbs and Blossoms' tour to the Western District of Victoria which was booked out last year, and a tour from Toowoomba to Sydney, driving through New England in early September, for which the groundwork was done for the aborted Toowoomba Conference last year.

It has been decided that the 1991 Annual Conference will be held at Goulburn, New South Wales on the tentative dates of 18-20 October. We aim to look at some of the new gardens that are being designed in the area (as well as some old ones!) with the general theme of 'Today's new gardens—tomorrow's heritage'.

There are three people retiring from the National Management Committee this year and I would like to say something about each of them.

Alethea Russell has been on the National Management Committee since the inception of the Society (with the exception of one year) and was our first Treasurer, and Membership Secretary. There is no doubt that she has been a mainstay of the Society over the years and has been able to represent the views of garden owners on the committee. She has worked very hard on various projects and we thank her and wish her well.

Caroline Simpson has been on the committee for three years and is retiring to concentrate her energies for the National Trust of New South Wales.

Tony Whitehill is another committee member retiring this year who has been involved with the Society since its first year and also has made an enormous contribution over the years. He will remain involved with the South Australian Branch Committee, and so we will not be losing his expertise and advice.

This year brings in the new system of the make-up of the National Management Committee i.e. State representatives elected by their States, plus eight members to be elected by the general membership.

The branch representatives elected to the committee for the next year are Sue Keon-Cohen (Victoria), Anne Cripps (Tasmania), Victor Crittendon (ACT), Michael Bligh (NSW), Audrey Abbey (SA) and John Viska (WA).

A warm welcome to all of you to the National Management Committee. I am retiring from the Chair of the Society this year but will stay on the National Management Committee for one more year. The Committee will meet to elect new office bearers immediately after this meeting and the results will be announced to you.

Perhaps now is a good time to look at the future for the Society. We probably need to concentrate on consolidating and working out what we wish to achieve, and what our priorities are.

The primary interests of the Society have been the conservation of gardens and the encouragement of fine garden design. We need to think carefully about what

activities we wish to be involved in to reflect these interests and ways and means of assisting garden owners. Indeed if there are other areas where it would be appropriate or useful for the Society to involve itself in (and I know there are members who have ideas about this), a debate now would be a healthy thing.

Should we be recording gardens, particularly those in danger of disappearing? I believe we should. Should we be concerning ourselves with the greening of Australia's cities, an excellent example of which we have seen in Sue Campbell's work? What can we do to help garden owners? And so on. We have a wealth of talent and expertise in this Society and we are not really using it. It is time to evaluate what we are doing and what we want to achieve over the next ten years.

I would like to thank the Victorian Branch Committee and members for their help in the past year in getting the Melbourne office running and especially the lengthy and tedious job of mailing out the journal. We could not have managed without them.

Finally, thank you to all members of the National Management Committee for their hard work and support over the past year. Our Treasurer in particular has put in a huge amount of work and we owe her very special thanks for her expertise and assistance. Thank you also to the members of the Society for their support and friendship during the years I have been in the Chair. For me, the past six years as Chairman may have had its ups and downs, but for the most part, it has been a privilege and a pleasure to be associated with the Society. Thank you.

Jocelyn Mitchell

TENTH ANNUAL CONFERENCE, ALBURY

Australian Plants in the Designed Landscape

The Tenth Annual Conference of the Australian Garden History Society was held on 12–14 October 1990 at the Lake Hume Resort, east of Albury, New South Wales. Friday, 12 October was taken up with a series of papers, all well presented and most illustrated with superb slides. We are pleased to offer the text of these papers in *Australian Garden History* and thank all the speakers for providing us with the text of their talks. Due to the large number of speakers we are only able to bring you the pre-lunch offerings—in the next issue we will publish the contributions of John Foster, Rodger Elliot, John Patrick and Sue Campbell along with Julie Ramsay's address, given following the Annual General Meeting. In addition to the papers we have a report on the day of lectures by Anne Latreille and descriptive comments from Andrea Macdonald of the day of garden visits held on Saturday, 13 October 1990.

One notable event at the conference was the launching, by retiring Chairman Jocelyn Mitchell, of the published proceedings of the Ninth Annual AGHS conference, held in Melbourne. This book, *Open to View:*

Historic gardens and the public, reprints the text and many illustrations of the conference speakers. The book has been distributed free to all Melbourne conference delegates and some copies are still available from the AGHS office (\$12 plus \$2 to cover postage). We urge all interested members to order their copy without delay.

Richard Aitken and Georgina Whitehead

Conference Report

The versatility of Australian plants in gardens—and the way Australian gardeners have ignored them—was demonstrated at the tenth annual conference of the Australian Garden History Society. Delegates were dazzled by the array of plants shown by speakers like Dr Jim Willis and Rodger Elliot. Colour, form, detail and seasonal variety were illustrated, from the noisy brilliance of Sturt's desert pea to the quiet elegance of tiny snow daisies and flannel flowers. 'There's an Australian plant for any purpose in your garden', said Rodger Elliot. Slides of chocolate, tinsel and vanilla lilies, of boronia and native iris, of plants like *Crowea* and *Thomasia*, were greeted with appreciative—and sometimes rather

surprised—applause.

Our native plants were seen as 'garden-worthy' in other parts of the world, several speakers pointed out. Designer John Patrick quoted the noted English expert, Christopher Lloyd, who in his garden, Great Dixter, espaliers eucalypts against brick walls, treats *Grevillea robusta* (the silky oak) as an annual, and uses Tasmanian blue gums as biennials for bedding displays, regularly cutting them to the ground to produce great crops of blue-grey juvenile leaves.

'Gardeners in England have investigated the potential of our flora more extensively than we have', John Patrick said. 'The range of Australian plants available to them is rather limited but they apply a range of horticultural techniques to gain maximum effect. We seem to spend our time trying to cultivate a wider range of plants without looking at their potential under different maintenance regimes.'

The conference put Australian plants in their historic context and showed that we have always under-estimated them. Tony Cavanagh, of Deakin University, explained how Australian plants were being propagated and sold in England even before first settlement in 1788, and that by 1800 they had been sent also to Germany, France (at the *Jardin des Plantes* and in the Empress Josephine's garden at Malmaison) and in Russia. (In 1810 at Malmaison, Josephine engaged the artist, Redouté, to paint her specimens of *Banksia repens*, *Eucalyptus globulus* and *E. cornuta*, and a kangaroo paw).

The discovery of our flora coincided with a period of rising enthusiasm for collecting among the English upper classes, Mr Cavanagh said. English nurserymen and wealthy collectors vied with each other; ships returned from Australia laden with plants and seed, in wine-casks on the quarterdeck and even in the captain's cabin. Selection was random—plants sent back ranged from the fire-wheel tree to the Gympie stinging nettle. Many of those which survived the journey outgrew their glass-houses in England so that extended roofs had to be built. The use of Australian plants in Europe extended as far south as Sicily, where monstrous Moreton bay figs, silky oaks and eucalypts remain a dominant landscape feature today.

While in Europe their rarity was a compelling factor, back home they were first used out of expediency, according to historian Dr John Foster. Early texts tell gardeners in Victoria how to take plants from the bush and how to substitute them for exotics not readily available (pittosporum for Portuguese laurel, native myrtle for box hedging). Nationalistic fervor and interest in nature study came into play early in the 20th century; but at the height of the Victorian era, Dr Foster said, native plants were used as an element of mixed borders, chosen for the way they fitted into an overall picture.

This is the type of use advocated today by John Patrick, who suggested a three-zone approach to the domestic garden. Treasured plants or those needing plentiful irrigation would be planted close to the house, while a second zone, further out, would receive no supplementary water except for water which could be diverted there (roof run-off, for instance.) Here could be grown coppiced eucalypts—a technique suggested not only today by

Christopher Lloyd but in Melbourne in 1856, by James Sinclair—and a combination of native plants and hardy exotics, like the stunning silver-leafed *Calocephalus brownii* with various lavenders. On the perimeter the third zone would comprise only plants indigenous to the area, which would have to survive on their own.

The conference heard from Susan Campbell, former landscape architect with the Albury-Wodonga Development Corporation, that the 1.7 million trees and shrubs planted in Albury-Wodonga since 1977 were almost totally native species, with 98 per cent of these indigenous. 'Generally the indigenous species have been found to be the most vigorous growers', she said.

Rodger Elliot stressed that anyone trying to garden with Australian plants must acquire 'at least an inkling' of the conditions in which they occur naturally. He illustrated the beautiful small shrub, *Bauera sessiliflora*, thriving in drifts in a sheltered pocket of the Grampians, then commented how he often saw Melbourne gardeners trying to make it grow as an individual specimen in full sun.

For almost all species, good drainage was important, he said. Soil conditions were not over-important since harsh soils were so common in Australia, nor was too much water or fertiliser. 'Sometimes we try to look after them too well.' The glamorous and dramatic Western Australian plants could be a problem in Victoria. 'There are lots we try here that we simply shouldn't try.' Regular clipping and pruning was important, and this should be started early on.

John Patrick echoed this suggestion. Australian plants offered great opportunities for formal gardening, he said. It was surprising that while all gardeners accepted the need to prune roses to achieve the best blooms, they looked askance at the idea of pruning natives. The 1970s fashion, when the objective was to create 'a sort of maintenance-free backyard bush with plants chosen on the advice of an often poorly-informed nurseryman' was long past. The aim now was to design landscapes in today's idiom but using Australian plants.

Rodger Elliot agreed. He suggested that Australian designers might use our plants to develop a national style in the same way as Thomas Church promoted an American landscape 'look' in the 1940s and 50s.

Anne Latreille

Garden Visits, 13 October 1990

First of four garden visits was Bontharambo, settled in 1838 and still owned by the Docker family. The entrance to Bontharambo is a 2.4 km avenue of exotic elms, ash, camphor laurel and native kurrajong, planted as a substitute perhaps, which opens out through a curved brick and iron gateway to a broad park-like arboretum. Terminating the view, majestically framed by mature trees and reflected in a large pool, stands the gracious towered Italianate mansion, built in 1858–60. Its immediate surrounds are open plains, a balustraded terrace leading down steps to an orange grove, reinforcing the Italian theme. To the north a formal garden provides an intimate domestic scale, with the hardy remnants of exotic garden



Inspection of Bontharambo cemetery by Sydney Branch members

favourites—lilacs, wisteria and climbing roses—rambling in a loosely formal layout, a sweep of lawn edged with shrub beds. A longer vista extends past a sundial fringed with agapanthas. In a corner a flowering viburnum arches over a white garden seat.

The real interest at Bontharambo lies in the trees, working farm buildings and cemetery. There are indigenous yellow box (substitutes for oak, perhaps), with conifers, kurrajong and a Holm oak, the gateway marked by two giant araucarias, and the edges screened by olive groves, making an enclosed landscape. From the original slab cottage site, with glimpses of the river, framed by a stand of mature *Robinia pseudoacacia*, we wandered past briar roses entangled under lichen-covered oaks and osage orange hedges, past the stables and blacksmith's shop to emerge in the familiar indigenous river landscape of magnificent *Eucalyptus camaldulensis*. Discreetly apart is the picket-fenced cemetery with an overgrown hedge of *Viburnum tinus* concealing tall carved marble headstones among waist-high hedges of rosemary. Formality in informality: exotics amongst indigenous natives. Perhaps the overgrown state of it all helps reduce the differences: at Bontharambo the designed landscape has now relaxed (if unintentionally) into the indigenous landscape.

At Beaumaris, essentially a fenced plot, the boundaries of the extended cottage garden surrounding a renovated miner's cottage are clearly defined by a timber picket fence: house and garden versus the rural landscape beyond. Recent plantings of oak, maples, fruit and nut trees in the paddocks may provide some integration in future, but the focus is still uncompromisingly exotic. Working within the framework of the mature original exotic trees—pear, mulberry, photinia, loquat and a huge cherry laurel, the layout of paths, grading and rockwork provide for the flourishing vigour of new exotic plantings. The result is all the more remarkable when told of the previous 'native' garden, of which only a

Banksia ericifolia and a small eucalypt remain.

Back through eucalypt-clad hills to Beechworth and Mayday Hills Hospital, built in 1864–7, also in the Italianate style, in the glow of the gold rush. The siting and layout, overlain by layers of institutional adaptations, demonstrate the grand-scale parkland concept typical of such institutions built on hilltops all over Victoria. The open arboretum of now mature exotic trees, including conifers, beech, cedars and sequoiadendrons, originally contained by the so-called 'ha-ha' walls, is reached through grand avenues of oak or beech, and allows views to the fringe areas only, where remnant stands of the statuesque *Eucalyptus maculosa*, the red spotted gum, contrast dramatically with the dark rough barked trees.

The Diggings near Yackandandah is set in a more intimate small-scale indigenous landscape. This garden demonstrates a conscious decision to establish a complex botanical collection in a sheltered creek valley surrounded by rolling paddocks, scattered eucalypts, clusters of mature exotics around old farm settlements and views to distant forest-clad hills. Indigenous planting has been retained along the creek bed—broad-leaved peppermint, blackwood, black wattle and titree flank the gushing water. Eucalypts and casuarinas have been used scientifically to create shelterbelts of shade and wind protection for the exotics planted densely on the slopes beneath them: the Australian plants have done the hard work in a relatively short time. Sloping terraces are filled with a profusion of flourishing dogwoods, camellias, magnolias, spiraeas, azaleas, Japanese maples, ferns and flax.

Referring back to the theme of this year's conference, in these four gardens we saw Australian plants in the designed landscape used as substitutions for exotics, their characteristics being similar to the preferred exotics; because they were there; as token garden specimens; in definitive exclusion; and for their performance characteristics.

Andrea Macdonald

THE DISCOVERY OF AUSTRALIAN PLANTS

This title is perhaps misleading, because in a short space it is quite impossible to mention the multitude of people who found *all* of this continent's 25,000 different flowering plants—let alone the vast number of our ferns, mosses, liverworts, fungi, lichens and algae! So, I have chosen five of the earliest pioneers and more significant discoverers; men who operated during the 120 years from 1699 to 1820.

First in the field was a former buccaneer, the adventurous Captain William Dampier. In August 1699 he made a collection along the north-west coast of Western Australia between Shark and Roebuck Bays, including the Dampier Archipelago. In 1703 Dampier published his *Voyage to New Holland in 1699*—a first account of Australia's remarkable plant and animal life; his vivid description of the shingle-back or stumpy tailed lizard (*Trachydosaurus rugosus*) remains a masterpiece of natural history writing. Dampier's actual plant specimens, embracing 23 Australian species, survived shipwreck off Ascension Island (22 February 1701) and are still part of the Sherardian Herbarium at Oxford University; after almost 300 years, his example of Sturt's desert pea has retained its red colour. None of the specimens became nomenclatural types, and the respective species were not formally described until more than a century later. It is unfortunate that the epithet in *Cliantbus dampieri* (now referable to *Suainsona formosus*)—the magnificent floral emblem of South Australia—had to be changed on the grounds of priority; but our doughty seafarer's name will always be recognised in that of the beautiful blue flowered genus *Dampiera*.

During the 80 years before Dampier, various Dutch voyagers en route to Java had landed at a few, mostly inhospitable spots along the West Australian coast; their reports were rather scanty, and only two plant specimens appear to have survived—currently in the herbarium of Geneva Botanic Garden.

Of great importance was Captain James Cook's *Endeavour* voyage of 1768–1771, providing initial information about Australia's eastern coast line. Between April and August 1770 Cook made landings at eleven sites, his two longest sojourns being at Botany Bay (Sydney) for a week and the Endeavour River (Cooktown) for 6½ weeks. Botanists Joseph Banks and Daniel Solander were kept very busy on these occasions, as was talented artist Sydney Parkinson who had made 950 drawings when he died of fever soon after sailing from Java, at the early age of 25. They had sampled the east Australian flora during autumn and winter with little in bloom, but a sortie in the springtime could have been almost overwhelming. As it was, their hundreds of specimens included many showy members of the protea, wattle, pea, rue and myrtle families, lilies and orchids—all so different from the familiar plants of western Europe. The widespread, popular genus *Banksia* commemorates Sir Joseph Banks, 'father of Australian botany'.

A French expedition under Bruni d'Entrecasteaux spent five weeks south from Hobart, Tasmania in April/May 1792, five days at Esperance, Western Australia in

December 1792 and another five weeks in the Hobart area during December to January 1793. This expedition was unique in having circumnavigated Australia almost twice, yet with landfalls at *only two* localities (Hobart and Esperance). J.J.H. de La Billardière was the competent botanist who collected copiously (embracing original material of Tasmanian blue-gum, common heath and red kangaroo paw) and who, 12 years later, wrote his monumental two volume *Novae Hollandiae Plantarum Specimen* (1805–06). This publication portrayed the first fungus ever to be recorded for Australia, viz. *Aseroë rubra* (red starfish fungus) from Recherche Bay, far south-east Tasmania. La Billardière's name is perpetuated in that of a genus of charming climbers, *Billardiera*.

Robert Brown accompanied Captain Matthew Flinders in his circumnavigation of the continent by the *Investigator*, December 1801 to July 1803. A month was spent in the botanically rich Esperance area and large collections gleaned by Brown—'*facile princeps botanicorum*' (easily the prince of botanists). He stayed on in Australia until 1805, botanising around Port Jackson, Hobart (including several ascents of Mt Wellington), Bass Strait islands and southern Port Phillip Bay. In his classic *Prodromus Florae Novae Hollandiae* (1810) 4,200 species of Australian plants are briefly described—most of them new. Brown is honoured in the genus *Brunonia* (blue pincushion), a latinisation of his name.

All four botanists already mentioned were virtually coastal visitors whose collections went back to Europe; but in 1817 Allan Cunningham penetrated to the interior of New South Wales with Oxley's survey party; he made collections as far inland as the Cocoparra Range near modern Griffith. Later on, he also explored the north-west Kimberley coast (under P.P. King), the Barrier Reef, Tasmania, the New England ranges and regions between Toowoomba and Moreton Bay, as well as northern New Zealand. He died in Sydney, from tuberculosis, in June 1839 and in 1901 his remains were placed in an obelisk to his memory at Sydney Botanic Gardens where he had been Colonial Botanist for a short time in 1837. Perhaps Allan Cunningham's greatest contribution to horticulture was his discovery of the silky oak tree (*Grevillea robusta*) in the Brisbane area (1828); other trophies were colourful mint bushes—purple *Prostanthera ovalifolia* and scarlet *P. aspalathoides* on and near the Cocoparra range, New South Wales. His christian name (mis-spelt) appears in that of the monotypic genus *Alania*, a small endemic lily that he had found in the Blue Mountains, New South Wales.

Since Cunningham's day the discoveries of new Australian plants have been legion—Ferdinand Mueller is credited with about 2,000 new species; but that is another story, the telling of which would need many hours.

Jim Willis

NEW HOLLAND EXOTICS

Australian Plants Cultivated in England and Europe from 1771

On 29 December 1696, the Dutch ship *Geelvinck* under Wilhelm de Vlamingh anchored off what is now known as Rottnest Island in Western Australia. Several weeks were spent in exploring the island and the adjacent mainland with de Vlamingh and some of his crew rowing nearly fifteen kilometres up the Swan River. It was here in mid January that the first collection of Australian plants was made. They were two shrubs, the wattle *Acacia truncata* and *Synaphea spinulosa*, a small member of the Proteaceae or banksia family. The dried specimens were taken to Batavia in Java and were later to be described as ferns by the Dutch botanist Burmann who thought they came from Java. Only in recent years have they been positively identified and now assume an important place in Australian botanical history.

I mention these plants for two reasons—firstly they show that knowledge of Australian plants, although sketchy, existed before Cook's voyage of 1770; and secondly, they were the forerunners of many thousands of plant specimens, seeds and live plants that were taken to Europe in the 18th and 19th centuries. Many Australian native plants were first described and named by British, French, German, Spanish, Czech and even Russian botanists and the type specimens are held in herbaria in European countries. Indeed, our plants were grown in the botanic and private gardens of these countries from 1771 when Cook returned to England. By 1800, more than 170 species had been introduced to Great Britain alone and the trickle of these early years was to become a flood in the first half of the 19th century when perhaps as many as 2,000 to 3,000 species were grown—probably more than are currently in cultivation in Australia.

In this paper, I want to concentrate on just a few facets of the trade in Australian plants with Europe—the collectors, especially in the first 20 years, the method of transportation, and the plants themselves and their cultivation. Australian plants became less popular after 1835 but some species continued to be grown in glasshouses in both England and Europe until well into the 1870s.

The Early Years

Following de Vlamingh, the English buccaneer and adventurer William Dampier visited Australia twice—in 1688 and 1699. On the latter occasion he collected specimens of some 40 species from Shark Bay and the Dampier Archipelago which can still be seen in the Sherardian Herbarium at Oxford University. Some writers have claimed that Dampier introduced the Sturt's desert pea and other plants into cultivation in Europe. Romantic though this sounds, Dampier was wrecked on the trip home and was lucky to save his dried specimens. Given the number of Dutch ships which visited our shores before 1700 (they had mapped more than 60% of the coast by 1645 and produced the first map of Australia in 1648), it is likely that other plants were collected before Cook's voyage but no record of them has survived.

Lieutenant Cook's exploration of the east coast of Australia between May and August 1770 virtually completed the mapping of Australia. But more importantly, for the first time, a detailed collection of plants was made by professional botanists, Joseph Banks and Daniel Solander, and plants and animals were painted by professional artists such as Sydney Parkinson. About 400 plant specimens, many of them new to science, were taken from Australia but importantly, seeds of a number were gathered and were cultivated in the Royal Gardens at Kew (where Banks was later to become Director), in Banks' own garden and in the garden of the nurseryman Lewis Kennedy. Cook was to make two further voyages to the Pacific, in 1772–1775 and 1776–1779, but in neither did he visit Australia. However, in each expedition there was a second ship which called at Adventure Bay on the south-east coast of Tasmania. On both occasions, seeds were collected and plants were subsequently raised at Kew. All told, before Australia was settled in 1788, nine plants had been grown in glasshouses in England and six had flowered (Table 1). What is probably more astonishing is that Australian plants were being sold in English nurseries by 1774 when the Tasmanian eucalypt *E. obliqua* (which is also common in Victoria) was sold to the Earl of Coventry.

After Australia was colonised in 1788, vast quantities of the country's curiosities were sent back on the returning ships. However, there were two other important

Table 1: Plants Grown in England Before 1788

<i>Abroma fastuosa</i> (N. Qld)	1771	Banks	North Queensland shrub
<i>Eucalyptus gummifera</i> (NSW)	1771	Banks	Grown by James Lee before 1777, flowered before 1778
<i>Allocasuarina torulosa</i> (<i>Casuarina torulosa</i>) (NSW)	1771	Banks	Flowered before 1778
<i>Allocasuarina verticillata</i> (<i>Casuarina stricta</i>) (NSW)	1771	Banks	Flowered before 1778
<i>Pouteria sericea</i> (N. Qld)	1771	Banks	Flowered before 1778
<i>Cajanus reticulatus</i> (N. Qld)	1771	Banks	Creeper from North Australia
<i>Eucalyptus obliqua</i> (Tas.)	1774	Tobias Furneaux	Flowered before 1778
<i>Leptospermum lanigerum</i> (Tas.)	1774	Tobias Furneaux	Flowered before 1778
<i>Acacia verticillata</i> (Tas.)	1780	D. Nelson W. Anderson	The first Australian plant illustrated in colour—1790

expeditions before 1800 which involved the gathering of seed and the introduction of plants into English and European gardens. Firstly, there was the Vancouver expedition to the South Seas and North America which called at King George Sound in 1791. The surgeon-botanist Archibald Menzies was credited with sending to Banks seeds of four western Australian banksias, several hakeas and jarrah (*Eucalyptus marginata*). Then in 1792, a French expedition with the botanist La Billardière visited the Esperance area of Western Australia and Tasmania and gathered several hundred plants and seed, including specimens of the first kangaroo paw and the first dryandra. He is commemorated by the attractive group of climbers known as *Billardiera*. His seeds and plants were grown in the *Jardin des Plantes* in Paris and at Josephine Bonaparte's garden at Malmaison so that it is quite likely that a number of Australian plants were cultivated in France before they were grown in England.

Indeed, exotic plants were just as fashionable on the continent as in England. Ventenat's famous book *Jardin de la Malmaison*, published between 1803 and 1805, listed 46 Australian species growing in Josephine Bonaparte's garden. Many were illustrated by beautiful colour plates indicating they had been flowered successfully—*Bauera rubioides*, the delightful pink *Boronia pinnata* from New South Wales, several acacias, *Correa alba*, *Crowea saligna*, *Indigofera australis*, and *Hakea sericea*, to name just some. Both Banks at Kew and the London nursery firm of Lee and Kennedy supplied plants to continental Europe even during the Napoleonic wars. *Pandorea pandorana*, originally from Norfolk Island, was donated to Josephine Bonaparte by Lewis Kennedy; in 1795, the Grand Duchess of Russia was sent banksias by Kew. More than 50 plants including some Australian ones were despatched to Spain in 1796, while *Telopea speciosissima* (the waratah), probably Australia's most famous export and an almost priceless gift, was sent to Her Sicilian Majesty in 1800. Australian plants continued to be exchanged and to attract attention until the 1870s.

Undoubtedly the biggest boost to the availability of our plants in England was the arrival of the First Fleet in January 1788. Yet even though Joseph Banks had been actively involved with the selection of Botany Bay for the convict settlement, he had not arranged for a botanist or even a gardener to be sent. Hence most natural history observations and collections were made by amateurs and surprisingly there were at least 19 of them ranging from Governor Phillip down to the convicts. In fact, some of the convicts seem to have made it a full time job for the Judge-Advocate, David Collins, was later to complain of

convicts 'everywhere straggling about collecting animals and gum to sell to the people of the transports'. In later years, convicts with botanical or artistic knowledge were used as seed and plant collectors and some such as Thomas Watling produced many paintings of the flora and fauna.

The first of the returning ships reached England in March 1789, the last in August, and each had its quota of seed, plant specimens, animal skins, and stuffed and preserved animals. Nearly all of this material went to Banks at Kew but some found its way to private nurserymen, most notably Lee and Kennedy of Hammersmith who were soon advertising 'the first plants from Botany Bay' (Table 2). By the end of 1789, 32 Australian plants were in cultivation in England from the First Fleet, and over the next ten years another 130 or so were to be introduced.

It may be of interest to examine what might be called the First Fleet plants. Many are well-known garden plants of today—six banksias, (*B. ericifolia*, *integrifolia*, *asplenifolia*, *serrata*, *aemula* and *B. spinulosa*), several callistemons including the beautiful *Callistemon citrinus*, three tea-trees, two wattles, two melaleucas (including the widely-grown *Melaleuca armillaris*), three pulteneas and even at this stage, the waratah, *Telopea speciosissima*. Trees were not neglected either—*Angophora bispida*, *Tristaniopsis laurina*, the Port Jackson fig *Ficus rubiginosa*, the pest plant *Pittosporum undulatum*, as well as two common Sydney eucalypts, *E. piperita* and *E. resinifera*—and one wonders how the gardeners coped with them in the confines of a glasshouse. Illustrations in horticultural magazines were later to show that some of these unlikely species were actually flowered. There were some uncommon plants as well—the mountain devil *Lambertia formosa*, the flax lily *Dianella caerulea* and the woody pear *Xylomelum pyriforme*. Apart from being found close to the Port Jackson settlement, nearly all of these have the same characteristic, their seed vessels are a legume or a hard woody capsule or nut which was easy to collect and which would give some protection to the seeds on the return voyage. Plants which shed their seeds such as grevillea were less prominent in the lists, with only three grevilleas being collected to 1800, out of 170 species. The full list for this period is available in Short (1990).

It is perhaps a little puzzling as to why there was such a fascination with our plants but there really is no mystery. The settlement of Australia coincided with a period of rising enthusiasm for collecting among the English upper class. The atmosphere in Georgian England was recently portrayed as follows: 'culturally, it

Table 2: First Australian Plants to be Offered for Sale in England

Species	When Sold	Notes
<i>Eucalyptus obliqua</i>	1774	Sold by William Malcolm to the Earl of Coventry Advertised for sale by the nursery firm Lee and Kennedy of Hammersmith, London as 'The first plants from Botany Bay'
<i>Banksia serrata</i>	1789	
<i>Banksia oblongifolia</i>	1789	
<i>Lambertia formosa</i>	1789	
<i>Leptospermum laevigatum</i>	1789	
<i>Melaleuca armillaris</i>	1789	

was one of the most memorable in English history. In this age of restrained elegance, the arts flourished while an interest in science gathered momentum...Horticulture and landscape design also burgeoned, as did the collecting craze which reached frenzied proportions though it mattered little whether the collectables were fabricated or natural history specimens. As regards the latter, [King] George III had set a shining example at Kew where his collection of Cape plants (and those from Botany Bay) fast established itself as a new vogue among the sovereign's more affluent, fashion-conscious subjects'.

Cultivation Requirements

The growing of New Holland plants was largely the reserve of the botanic gardens and the rich and nearly everything was grown in tubs and pots in glasshouses. Initially small and primitive affairs, some glasshouses later attained massive size, containing hundreds or even thousands of pots, with the repeal of the glass tax in 1845 and consequent availability of cheaper glass, and the advent of hot water heating some 15 years earlier. The gardeners were highly skilled but it took some time for them to adjust to the needs of New Holland plants—perfect drainage was required by both Australian and South African *Proteaceae* and was usually achieved by mixing sharp sand with chopped turf soil. As the plants grew larger, the pots containing them also increased in size so that they became too heavy to move. For this reason, many glasshouses had removeable roofs to allow natural lighting and watering over the spring and summer when many of the smaller pots were taken outside. Plants were repotted and pruned and taken back inside in the autumn. The annual repotting must have been a mammoth task on some estates—for example, that of the Duke of Bedford at Woburn Abbey who had more than 6,000 species, many of them Australian with considerable number in pots.

Thus in England at this time, there was an eager clientele for strange and exotic plants and more importantly, a number of major nurseries to supply their requirements (Table 3). The nurseries were already familiar with the strange and difficult flora from South Africa and they thought nothing of raising plants from seed (which was the easiest means of obtaining viable plant material) which to-day we regard as very difficult and would usually raise from cuttings. Some examples include *Epacris*, *Correa*, *Pimelea* and even *Grevillea*. In fact, there was virtually nothing these early gardeners would not attempt. The 170 species grown to 1,800 cover 84 genera and include 16 acacias, 11 banksias, 6 eucalypts, 7 hakeas, 7 leptospermums and 11 melaleucas. Up to 1900, 40 banksia species, 25 dryandras and 50 grevilleas had been tried in the United Kingdom alone and it is rather chastening to realise that it is only in the last ten to fifteen years that such numbers would have been achieved in cultivation in Australia with these genera. The gardening periodicals of the time with their full page illustrations of flowering specimens from cultivated plants reveal the full range of these introductions and helped foster the image of New Holland as a place of 'immense botanical treasures'. Yet

**Table 3: Nurseries
Specialising in Australian Plants**

Lee and Kennedy, Hammersmith
Loddiges and Sons, Hackney
Colville and Sons, Chelsea
Wm. Salisbury, Brampton
Napier and Chandler, Wandsworth Rd.
Grimwood and Wykes, Kensington
G. Knight, Chelsea
Thomas Barr, Islington.
Whitney and Brame, Old Brampton
William Curtis, Brampton

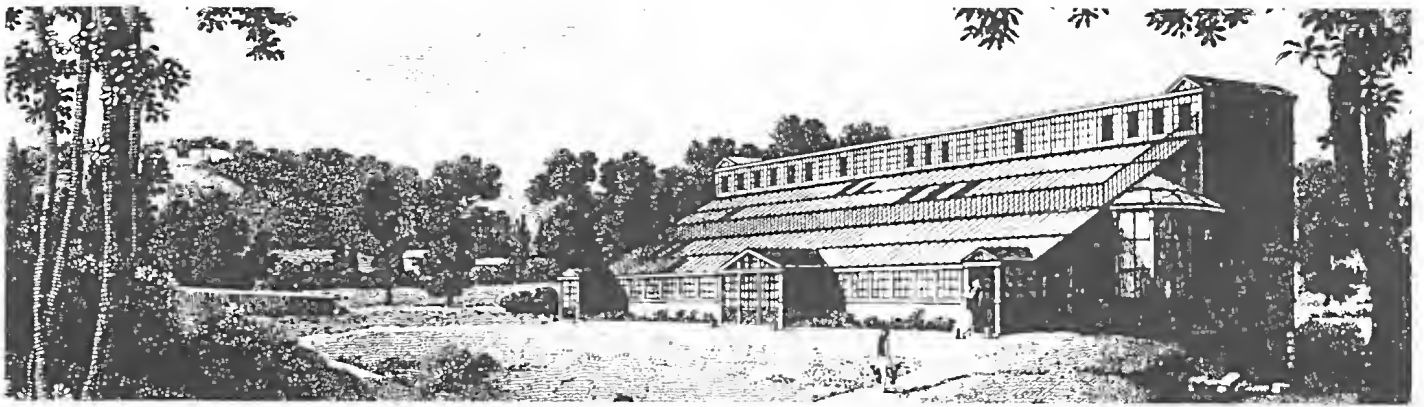
in reality, some quite nondescript plants were grown—their only criteria being that they had come from New Holland. Thus we find accounts of the Gympie stinging nettle being cultivated with a cautionary note about avoiding touching the leaves!

In the 1790s, live plants were shipped in tubs, especially the fabulous waratah of which the first tub reached England in 1791 although flowering was not achieved until 1807. Perhaps some idea of the immensity of the trade can be given by looking at the cargo of the warship *Gorgon* which landed a large quantity of stores in Sydney in August 1791 and sailed in December. Besides a collection of live and stuffed birds, kangaroos, possums and dingos, the comments of Lieutenant Gardner, an officer on the ship, make interesting reading: 'Green houses had been made on the Qr. deck whilst in Pt Jackson for the reception of plants which were now on board about 100 tubs, besides a room full on the main deck'. sixty of the tubs containing over 220 plants were destined for Kew, the rest were for private nurserymen.

Problems with Transportation

We know from other sources that the mortality rate for transported plants was extremely high—perhaps only one in a hundred reached England alive. Even seed, subject as it was to damp conditions, the ravages of vermin and cockroaches and all too often an indifferent crew, fared little better. Sometimes they were sealed in containers or embedded in beeswax, resin or sand, or hung from the cabin roof in bags. But a voyage from Sydney to England lasted from five to eight months, often in a wet and leaky ship, ample time for seed to deteriorate.

Transporting living plants was even more difficult. Unless elaborate precautions were made to protect them from heat and cold and from salt spray, they died of overheating or rotting, or salt poisoning or drying out when fresh water supplies ran short. All too often, the plants were ill-prepared for a long sea voyage and were potted too recently or in unsuitable soil. To the captain, plants were a major nuisance as he was often forced to share his cabin and take responsibility for plants sent by the Governor as gifts to the King or Joseph Banks. Enthusiasts like William Bligh achieved high success rates because of their interest and often the presence of a gardener on board whose main job was to ensure that the plants were adequately watered and that salt was washed off their leaves. Banks designed elaborate plant cabins on several occasions but they were much disliked



In glasshouses such as these, early gardeners grew and flowered many Australian plants

by captains who claimed that their weight (about three tons) and position (generally on the quarter deck) upset the stability of the ship. It was not until Nathaniel Ward developed the Wardian case in the 1830s (in reality, the forerunner of the terrarium), that spectacular success was achieved with safe transportation of plants from all over the world.

Collectors in Later Years

A young superintendent of convicts, David Burton, was responsible for the *Gorgon* cargo, Arthur Phillip the Governor was another prolific supplier to various people in Government, while an officer in the New South Wales Corps, Captain William Paterson sent back the first specimens and seed from Norfolk Island, as well as from Sydney and Tasmania. It was not until 1800 that the first official Banksian collector arrived, the difficult but energetic George Caley, to be followed in later years by the Cunningham brothers, Allan and Richard and the botanising soldier, Charles Fraser who laid out the Brisbane Botanic Gardens and set the Sydney Gardens on a firm footing. All of these supplied seeds and plant specimens to Banks and the private nurserymen but they were just part of a veritable flood of naturalists and botanists who visited Australia in the first thirty years of the nineteenth century—Robert Brown with the gardener Peter Good on the Matthew Flinders circumnavigation in the *Investigator* in 1801–1802, the French Baudin Expedition of 1802 and the later Freycinet Expedition in 1815, even several Russian expeditions in the 1820s, among others. They explored the coast while Cunningham, Oxley, Fraser, and the later James Drummond and Ludwig Preiss made many important botanical discoveries in the interior. Private collectors such as John Gordon and William Baxter were to find seed collecting very profitable, Baxter receiving over £1500 for the material he eventually took to England in the 1820s.

The Demise of Australian Plants

By 1835, the collecting craze for Australian plants was largely over, in England at least, although they continued to be grown in botanic and private gardens in both England and the continent until the 1880s. But fashions changed and by the middle of the century, fancy floral beds containing hardy plants which flowered profusely out of doors were in vogue. Hot water heating and

improved glasshouse construction allowed orchids, ferns and weird and fascinating tropical plants to be grown, which, along with Himalayan rhododendrons, and azaleas and camellias from China and Japan, stole pride of place. In the latter half of the century, the traditional glasshouse gave way to the conservatory and the day of the fascinating but fussy plants from Australia was all but gone.

Australian plants might have been out of favour, yet the gardeners of this era were carrying on the proud tradition of experimenting with growing difficult plants which had begun centuries before the eighteenth century gardeners struggled to propagate the first seeds they received from Botany Bay. The success they achieved with our plants by growing them in pots in glasshouses may point the way to alternative means of cultivation for rare and difficult plants in Australia today.

Tony Cavanagh

Acknowledgements

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LANDSCAPES OF SICILY AND SOUTHERN ITALY

Links with Australia

Sicily offers a landscape of dramatic contrasts, whether abrupt limestone mountains and fertile crescent-shaped valleys, or barren open terrain and lush stone-walled gardens. From time to time modern Sicily intrudes: the limestone feeds an astonishing number of cement factories, the larger cities are overwhelmed by cars, and occasional petro-chemical works blight the horizon.

Observing the landscape of Sicily from a boat off Palermo in 1921, D.H. Lawrence commented:

Monte Pellegrino, a huge inordinate mass of pinkish rock, hardly crisped with the faintest vegetation, loom[s] up to heaven from the sea. Strangely large in mass and bulk Monte Pellegrino looks: and bare, like a Sahara in heaven: and old looking. These coasts of Sicily are very imposing, terrific, fortifying the interior. And one gets the feeling that age has worn them bare: as if old, old civilisations had worn away and exhausted the soil, leaving a terrifying bleakness of rock, as at Syracuse in plateaus, and here in great mass.

Sicily has long been a destination for serious travellers, for example: French architect Eugène Viollet-le-Duc in 1836, the English illustrator Edward Lear in 1847 and D.H. and Frieda Lawrence in 1921.

In ancient times Homer called Sicily 'the island in the sun'. Later, in the eighteenth century, the German writer Goëthe stated 'it is impossible to have an idea of Italy without seeing Sicily—the key to everything is in Sicily'.

Sicily, being at the heart of the Mediterranean, has long been at the crossroads of civilisation. It was colonised by the ancient Greeks who adorned its landscapes with impressive temples and theatres; later the Romans built vast colonnaded villas set around fountain courts and terraces formed of mosaic murals. Following Roman times, a sophisticated Moorish period ensued, eventually conquered by Norman crusaders in the eleventh century, who, under King Roger II (1095–1154) fused Moorish and Christian cultures during a benign and brilliant reign.

The Norman churches incorporated Moorish arched pendentives and domes, and encrusted the interior walls with jewel-like mosaics. The gardens of the Norman capital, Palermo, were based on Arab and Roman models, and were described in 1305 as featuring:

a rectangular pool or bath in a central courtyard, pergolas and trellises of vines, groves of trees, flowering shrubs such as myrtles and oleanders, fishponds and aviaries, and flowers: roses, lilies, violets.

From the 13th century onwards Sicily was ruled from Spain, until it was united with Naples in 1735, and became part of an independent kingdom (of the Two Sicilies) under the Bourbons. During the 17th and the 18th centuries Sicilian Baroque provided an exaggerated architectural and landscape style, even where tempered with later notions of Neo-Classicism and the Picturesque.

This society was effectively overthrown, or 're-arranged', by the events of 1860, when Garibaldi invaded

The baroque centres of Ragusa and Ragusa Ibla:

the powerful terrain and general barrenness of landscape can be seen in the background





The Classical landscape of Sicily: the Greek-derived temple of Segesta, in its mountain setting

The cloisters to the famous Norman Cathedral at Monreale; the exotic plantings of agave and cycas date from the 19th century



AUSTRALIAN GARDEN HISTORY SOCIETY

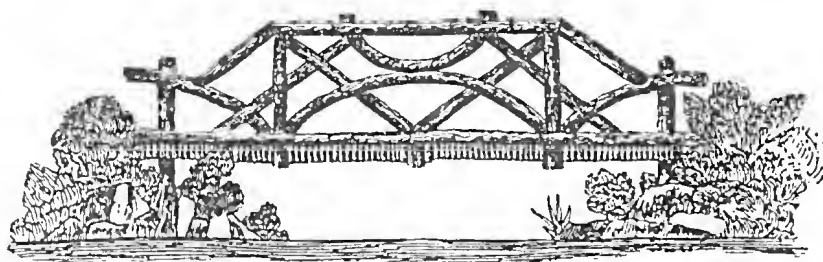
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The Society was formed in 1980 with a view to bringing together all those with an interest in the various aspects of garden history — horticulture, landscape design, architecture, and related subjects.

It's primary concern is to promote interest in and research into historic gardens, as a major component of the National Estate. It is also concerned, through a study of garden history, with the promotion of proper standards of design and maintenance that will be relative to the needs of today, and with the conservation of valuable plants that are in danger of being lost to cultivation. It aims to look at garden making in its wide historic, literary, artistic and scientific context.

The benefits of membership include:

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2. An opportunity to participate on regular tours.
3. An opportunity to attend seminars, lectures, social functions, hands-on garden restoration days, a variety of garden visits, weekend conferences and other activities organised at a State level.
4. An opportunity to attend the Annual Conference, held in a different centre every year, combining visits to important public and private gardens with a variety of interesting speakers.
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AUSTRALIAN GARDEN HISTORY SOCIETY

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If you would like to participate in any of the AGHS activities detailed in the Calendar of Events in this Journal please complete one of the forms below for *each* activity you wish to attend and forward it to the appropriate Branch Secretary (listed under Branch Contacts in this Journal) or as directed in the Calendar.

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1. Refunds will only be allowed where one weeks' notice is given and tickets (if issued) returned for resale. A cancellation fee may be charged in some instances. Please advise of cancellations as early as possible in case there is a waiting list.
 2. Please enclose a stamped self addressed envelope where appropriate.
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Sicily to ensure its incorporation into a unified Italy.

This last period is the subject of Giuseppe di Lampedusa's classic novel *The Leopard* (and the pictorially superb film of the novel) in which he conveys the qualities and character of traditional Sicily. He describes the faded glories of the great Bourbon palaces and gardens, which can still be seen today:

[an interior] all golden; smoothed on cornices, stippled on door-frames, damascened pale, almost silvery, over darker gold on door panels and on the shutters which covered and annulled the windows, conferring on the room the look of some superb jewel-case shut off from an unworthy world. It was not the flashy gilding which decorators slap on nowadays, but a faded gold, pale as the hair of certain Nordic children, determinedly hiding its value under the muted use of a precious metal intended to let beauty be seen and cost forgotten. Here and there on the panels were knots of rococo flowers in a colour so faint as to seem just an ephemeral pink reflection from the chandeliers...he went down the short flight of steps into the garden. Enclosed between three walls and a side of the house, its seclusion gave it the air of a cemetery, accentuated by the parallel little mounds bounding the irrigation canals and looking like the graves of very tall, very thin giants. Plants were growing in thick disorder on the reddish clay; flowers sprouted in all directions; and the myrtle hedges seemed put there to prevent movement

Bougainvillea, *Cycas revoluta* (sago palm) and *Araucaria heterophylla* (Norfolk Island pine) are all 19th century imports into Sicily: here seen in the grounds of the San Domenico Palace Hotel in Taormina



A stand of eucalyptus at Taormina, overlooking the Straits of Messina

rather than guide it. At the end a statue of Flora speckled with yellow-black lichen exhibited her centuries-old charms with an air of resignation; on each side were benches holding quilted cushions, also of gray marble; and in a corner the gold of an acacia tree introduced a sudden note of gaiety. Every sod seemed to exude a yearning for beauty soon muted by languor....But the garden, hemmed and almost squashed between these barriers, was exhaling scents that were cloying, fleshy and slightly putrid, like aromatic liquids distilled from the relics of certain saints; the carnations superimposed their pungence on the formal fragrance of roses and the oily emanations of magnolias drooping in corners; and somewhere beneath it all was a faint smell of mint mingling with a nursery whiff of acacia and a jammy one of myrtle; from a grove beyond the wall came an erotic waft of early orange-blossoms...It was a garden for the blind: a constant offence to the eyes, a pleasure strong if somewhat crude to the nose. The *Paul Neyron* roses whose cuttings he had himself bought in Paris, had degenerated; first stimulated and then enfeebled by the strong if languid pull of the Sicilian earth, burnt by apocalyptic Julys, they had changed into objects like flesh-coloured cabbages, obscene and distilling a dense almost indecent scent which no French horticulturist would have dared hope for.

At the turn of the 19th century, Sicily, like the rest of the world, witnessed a growth of interest in all the sciences, the culmination of the gentleman scientist, and the related study of botany, and its logical outcome, the



Hibiscus and Norfolk Island pines in the grounds of the San Domenico Palace Hotel (a former monastery) at Taormina

A public park immediately adjoining Monreale Cathedral and overlooking Palermo, with Moreton Bay Fig and Illawarra Flame



formation of botanic gardens.

The Botanic Garden at Palermo (the capital of Sicily) was opened in 1795, with a fine neo-Classical pavilion terminating a formal vista, flanked by squared beds with plantings, based on the Linnean system. The garden was established to 'encourage the progress of Botany, especially in the field of Medicine, and to be useful to Agriculture'.

Recognising the attributes of Palermo's climate, an emphasis was given to plants from tropical and sub-tropical areas. The original wooden conservatory donated by Queen Maria Carolina was replaced during the second half of the nineteenth century by a structure of cast iron and glass.

In 1834 the great encyclopaediarist John Claudius Loudon wrote in his *Encyclopaedia of Gardening*: 'At Palermo there is a good botanic garden, in which the sugar cane, the papyrus, the banana and the date palm can be found growing in the open air.' Other reports of this period show the gardens of Palermo featuring mulberry trees, evergreen oleanders, oranges, and hedges of lemon trees.

By the mid-century the botanical collections at Palermo had begun to change, as the various plant discoveries of the Pacific and other far-flung regions became available.

Count Lucio Tasca, an enlightened innovator in the development of Sicilian agriculture, altered his wife's Palermo estate, the Villa Camastra, in 1855. He transformed its geometric parterres, introducing an enormous variety of rare semi-tropical plants. The result was not so much a romantic garden as an exotic botanical collection: towering *Araucaria bidwillii* and *Cunninghamia* blended with *Livistona chinensis* and *Corippa australis*. A vast *Ficus macrophylla* is further testimony to the influence of plants gathered from the Moreton Bay district.

At the same time *Araucaria cookii* (from New Caledonia), and *Ficus macrophylla* (locally called the magnolia fig) and eucalypts were introduced in the Palermo Botanic Gardens, along with palms and botanical curiosities such as *Dracaena draco* (the dragon tree), *Chorisia insignis* (the kapok tree) and *Cycas revoluta* (the sago palm).

The parks of Palermo feature huge specimens of *Ficus macrophylla* (Moreton Bay fig), all well over a century old, with vast snaking root systems and buttress-like aerial roots. At Monreale, in the environs of the great Norman church, *Araucaria cunninghamii*, *Ficus macrophylla* and *Brachybiton acerifolius* (Illawarra flame) frame the outlook to the sea.

At Noto, *Araucaria heterophylla* (Norfolk Island pines) frame the vista to a Baroque church, while a variety of *Ficus microcarpa* v. *Hillii* (Hill's fig) have been clipped into formal curving arbours. At Taormina, monastery gardens are punctuated by Norfolk Island pines and the public gardens feature *Grevillea robusta* (silky oak). Across the Straits of Messina at Reggio Calabria, the waterfront is lined by *Casuarina glauca* (she-oak). And almost everywhere in Sicily are gardens hedged in *Pittosporum crassifolium* (from New Zealand) and roads and *autostrade* lined by stands of eucalypts.

All of which immediately begs the question: how did all this Australasian plant material get to Sicily?

One possibility is via Kew, and possibly Malta, by then a British protectorate, or through the English-derived Whitaker family, who had large estates in Palermo during the 19th century, and ships that traded with Australia.

Another more likely early avenue is via French botanical collections in Paris, Malmaison and Toulon, the latter the site of the famous naval base on the Mediterranean.

The *Jardin des Plantes* in Paris had obtained a range of Australian plants from Baudin and de Freycinet's voyage and a selection of these were established by 1810 at Malmaison where the Empress Josephine sought to create a special botanical collection. Several books were published to illustrate the plants grown at Malmaison, and P.J. Redouté's plates of *Banksia repens*, *Eucalyptus globulus*, *E. cornuta* and *Anigozanthos rufa* (red kangaroo paw) are well known. A number of these plants were transferred to Toulon to take advantage of the warmer climate.

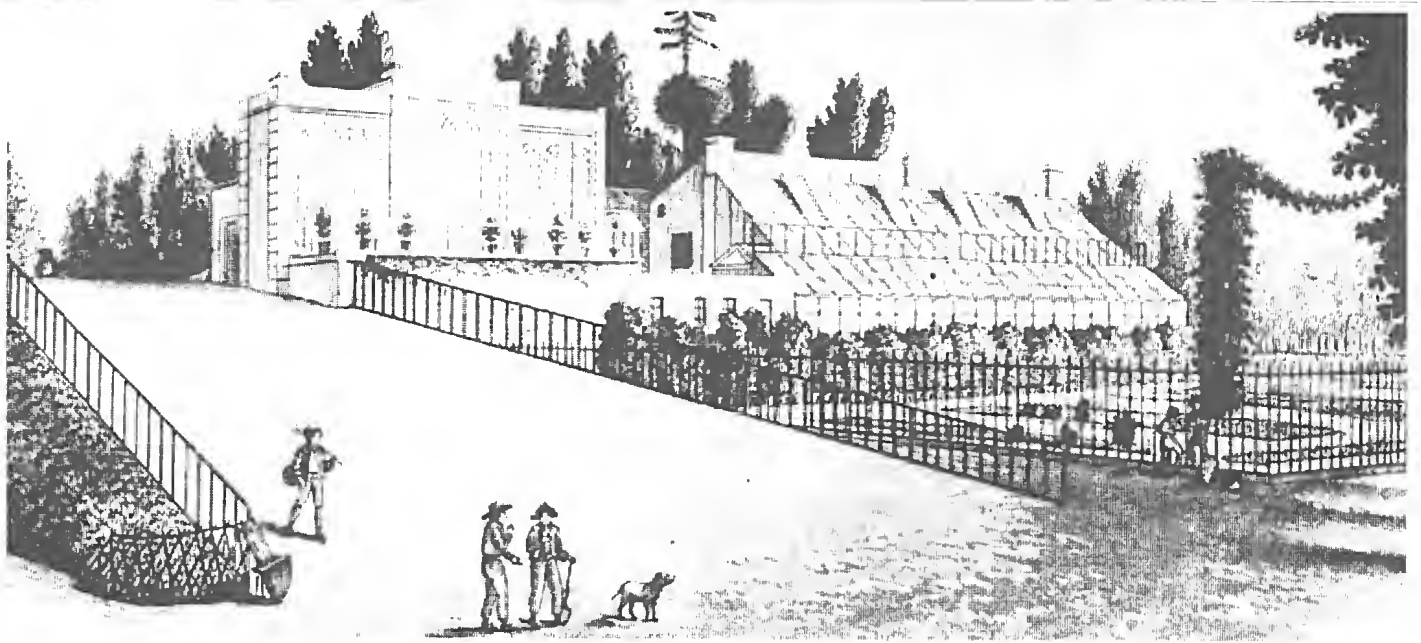
The naval botanical garden in Toulon, intended to supply doctors with medicinal plants, proved a most satisfactory locale for the acclimatisation of seeds and plants from warmer climes. Eucalypts 7.5 metres high were in existence at Toulon in 1810, and by 1820 Toulon's *Jardin de Flore* included an *Acacia melanoxylon* in its collection.

In 1804 the Empress Josephine had several plants indigenous to New Holland sent from her greenhouses at Malmaison to the administrator of the Nice gardens, asking that he assist 'in her plan to naturalise a multitude of exotic plants in French soil'.

By 1834, the British had 'discovered' Cannes, led by Lord Brougham, and large mansions surrounded by English style parks were constructed featuring araucarias, and in one instance a large example of *Acacia baileyana* (Villa Vallomrosa, Cannes, 1858). Plants from Australia, New Zealand and the Cape of Good Hope were favoured, 'for the climate and soil type more or less corresponded to their native environment'.

While the transfer of plants from Toulon and Nice to Naples and Palermo is quite likely in this period, the third and proven thesis is the involvement of Ferdinand von Mueller, the German-born Victorian Government Botanist.

A French Society of Acclimatisation (of exotic plants) had been founded in 1854, and by 1862 had established its famous experimental centre at the Villa Thuret, at Antibes on the Mediterranean. In the foundation year of the Society, one of its members Prosper Ramel visited the infant Melbourne Botanical Gardens. He was most impressed with the Tasmanian blue gum (*E. globulus*) and sought to import it into Europe, for he saw it 'covering the mountains of Algeria, making marshes salubrious, and chasing away fever'. He was given every assistance by Mueller between 1855-57. Mueller was also involved in supplying seeds to Jerusalem in 1860 to 'improve the vegetation of the area' and with the Howitt family enabled vast quantities of eucalypts to be propagated around Rome and in Algeria on the theory that they could counter the worst effects of marshy



Jardin des Plantes, Paris, pictured in the early nineteenth century. During this period European voyages were returning with Australian plants

malarial ground. (A full account of this endeavour is given in Robert Zacharin's book, *Emigrant Eucalypts*.)

While the exact details of Mueller's botanical exchanges with Sicily are unclear, the connection is well established, for on 27 March 1863 he was awarded a certificate of honorary membership by the Acclimatisation and Agricultural Society of Sicily.

In parallel, significant Italian botanic collections were beginning to feature Australian plants: in 1818 several eucalypts were growing in the Maquis Cosimo Rodolfo's estate outside of Florence, and by 1829–30 the Count of Camaldi's garden in the hills behind Naples featured three species of eucalypts: *E. Globulus* (Tasmanian blue gum), *E. amygdalina* (peppermint gum) and *E. rostrata* (river gum) better known as *E. camaldulensis*.

Seed from all of these were provided to the Botanic Garden at Naples, which given the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies, had close links with Palermo.

By this century the large numbers of eucalypts growing in southern Italy were clearly despised by Norman Douglas in his book *In Old Calabria*, and the anti-malarial, anti-swamp theories questioned.

A wider appreciation of plants suitable for use in the fashionable gardens of the Riviera did ensue during the early years of the twentieth century and is reflected in the many species of acacia, callistemon, eucalyptus, melaleuca and so forth available from nurseries such as Charles Huber and Cie at Hyeres, and Nabonnand at Golfe Juan. Mrs. Philip Martineau in her book *Gardening in Sunny Lands: The Riviera, California and Australia* (1924) was an avid advocate of Australian plants in Mediterranean gardens—*Hardenbergia*, *Banksia*, *Cro-wea*, Swan River daisy (*Brachycome iberidifolia*), *Grevillea eriostachya*, *Hibbertia*, to name but a few.

Accordingly the new gardens created on the French Riviera, in southern Italy, at Capri and in Palermo in this century bear witness to the interest in the plants of the Antipodes.

Howard Tanner

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All photographs by Howard Tanner

PLANTS FROM OLD NURSERY CATALOGUES

Availability of Australian Plants in the Nursery Trade in Victoria during the Nineteenth Century

Since January this year a project has been underway at the Royal Botanic Gardens in conjunction with the Ornamental Plants Collections Association, bearing the catchy working title 'Plants from Old Nursery Catalogues'. The project is being funded by a grant from Victoria's Gardens Scheme, and the aim is to produce a booklet which lists both alphabetically and under 'form' headings all ornamental plants found in catalogues from Victorian establishments in the period up to 1890. The earliest catalogue we have had access to is dated 1855, and within our time parameters we are including information from 25 catalogues from 15 companies. Most of the catalogues are from the Melbourne area, with several from Ballarat, Geelong and Colac.

The purpose of this introduction is not to give an advertising spiel for that project (which should be completed later this year and be available through all worthy outlets at a moderate cost!), but it is important to establish that the information on availability of plants for this research project is derived solely from commercial nursery lists. While this may not give a precise date for the introductions of various stock to Victorian and other Australian gardens, it certainly gives an indication of the period when the various plants became readily available to the gardening public, and it traces the rise and decline in popularity of various groups of plants.

The nomenclature of early nursery stock presents some problems. Many Australian genera were still very much in the discovery and development phase taxonomically and horticulturally (some would argue that they still are). Staff of the Melbourne Royal Botanic Gardens and volunteers have spent many hours tracing the names through the literature, with the aim of presenting valid names and synonyms where possible. Unfortunately records do not always show where valid names have been misapplied to plants, so some degree of educated guesswork is necessary.

Cavanagh has provided an impressive list of Australian plants introduced to England, and cultivated there between 1771 and 1800, comprising 170 species from 84 genera and 39 families. Some of our major genera are well represented—there are 6 eucalypts, 16 acacias, 11 banksias, 5 callistemons, 7 hakeas, 7 tea-trees and 10 melaleucas. The period from 1789 to 1800 saw vigorous introduction of Australian plants to England, and a number of English nurseries specialised in Australian plants.

The earliest catalogue to which we have access falls outside the boundaries of our research, as it is from a business in Van Diemen's Land (Tasmania). No doubt, however, a proportion of the early nursery stock available in Victoria originated in other parts of Australia, so it does bear examination in the context of this paper. The catalogue is dated 1845, and lists the stock available from the business of James Dickinson, of Hobart Town. It includes only 7 genera of plants of probable Australian

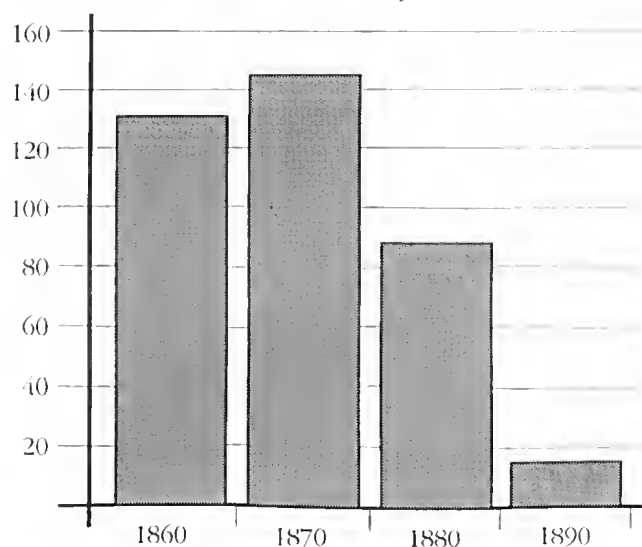
origin. *Acacia* spp. were available, but not specified, and no eucalypts were mentioned. Other Australian stock included *Doryanthes excelsa*, *Hoya carnosa*, *Indigofera australis*, *Melaleuca fulgens*, *Drosera linguiforme* and *Metrosideros speciosa* (= *Callistemon* sp.). In a sense the lack of our ubiquitous eucalypts is quite explicable—the settlers were working hard to clear land for farming and grazing, replanting gardens with the very trees they were removing may therefore have seemed senseless.

The first Victorian catalogue in the Royal Botanic Gardens' collection is from J. & J. Rule's establishment in Richmond (a suburb of Melbourne) and is dated 1855. It also offered no eucalypts, but gave a selection of 4 other Australian trees, including *Callitris cupressiformis* (= *C. rhomboidea*), *Ficus macrophylla* (described in Adamson's *Australian Gardener* as forming a 'lumpish tree or bush', and by James (1892) as 'not a desirable tree to cultivate in any garden'), *Lophostemon australis* and *Pittosporum undulatum*; and five Australian shrubs: *Grevillea rosmarinifolia*, *Verticordia brownii*, *Indigofera australis*, *Ceratopetalum gummiferum* and a *Callistemon* species. Although not a native of Australia, but rather of New Zealand, the palm-like perennial *Cordyline australis*, which became so characteristic of gardens of the late 1800's was also listed in the 1855 catalogue. The total of 16 plants of Australian origin offered by J. & J. Rule formed a very small proportion of the total list of 866 ornamental plants (1.8%).

By 1857 Rule's had extended their ornamental stock to 1,455 taxa, of which 84 were of Australian origin (5.8%), and by 1860, 59 more Australian plants were added out of a total of 1,928 taxa, which raised the native portion to 7.4%.

The change in numbers of Australian taxa offered for sale in the catalogues in the Royal Botanic Gardens collection is shown in Figure 1. The totals represent numbers of plants not previously available, in other words, new introductions of Australian plants to the nursery trade, in ten-year blocks. The general trend shows the mid to late 1860s was the time of greatest

Figure 1: Australian plants added (new introductions to the industry) 1855–89



introduction of new Australian stock within our study period.

The mid-1860s saw the beginnings of some keen Melbourne/Sydney rivalry. Joseph Harris, in the introduction to his 1865 South Yarra Nurseries catalogue launched a vitriolic attack on those unscrupulous plant dealers from north of the Murray River:

Of evergreen and deciduous shrubs, conifers, etc., I have the largest pot-grown stock in Victoria—good sized plants, and grown somewhat differently to those half-starved pot-bound things annually sent here from Sydney, which seldom give satisfaction to the planter, dying outright in many cases, and generally leading a lingering life for a few years, the result of the roots being cramped in too small pots, and of being stifled in a close Auction-room for mayhap months together.

I am assured this sort of rivalry between states and nurserymen no longer exists!

The reasons for the gradual decrease in totals of new stock in the mid to late 1870s and 1880s could be severalfold. The criteria for the selection and promotion of Australian plants seems (from the early lists) to have been based mainly on colour or boldness of inflorescence, or on economic value (for timber usually). Therefore genera such as *Acacia*, *Bauksia*, *Callistemon*, *Grevillea*, *Hardenbergia*, *Helicbrysum*, *Kennedia* and *Prostanthera* were well represented. Statuesque specimen trees such as *Araucaria bidwillii* and *A. cunninghamii* appeared in the 1857 catalogue, and thereafter obviously blossomed in popularity, for in 1892 H.A. James (in his *Handbook of Australian Horticulture*) described them as 'being too well known to need any recommendations'. *Stenocarpus sinuatus*, the fire-wheel tree, dubbed by James as 'a tree worthy of being introduced into the choicest of gardens' and *Telopea speciosissima*, the New South Wales waratah, were also popular amongst the nurserymen and their clientele.

Grevillea robusta (silky oak) was the most widely carried species of that genus, and after appearing in J. Rule's catalogue of 1857, it remained popular for the period of our study. This catalogue also listed *Lagunaria patersonia* (pyramid tree), which also maintained popularity for a number of decades. J. Rule was an early carrier of *Brachybiton acerifolius* (Illawarra flame tree). This showy specimen tree was carried in 1860, and became quite widespread in other nurseries in following years.

Agonis flexuosa (willow-myrtle) was a comparatively late arrival on the scene in Victoria; it wasn't widely stocked until the 1880s.

By the late 1880s and 1890s two things had probably happened. Most of the 'easy pickings'—those plants which were easy to propagate, provided a good colour display and were tolerant of adverse conditions had already been introduced to the trade. The new stock available each year therefore began to decline. The 1880s and early 1890s were also perhaps a period of change of direction in garden styles of temperate south-eastern Australia, and one could anticipate an increase in introductions of plants grown for their architectural qualities in the 1890s and early 1900s, such as palms, sedges and succulents.

E.B. Heyne used the following description in 1886 for the fashion for use of plants of architectural form and habit:

In modern gardening a new feature has been introduced by adding to the plants cultivated formerly, comprising only such which had more or less ornamental flowers, others which excel by the beauty of form or colour of their leaves, or their general habit.

The decline of new introductions into the trade of Australian taxa (particularly shrubs and trees) in the 1870s–80s was possibly indicative of the changing of styles, as a lack of familiarity with Australian plants with the required qualities (with several notable exceptions such as *Doryanthes excelsa* and *Cordyline stricta*).

Numbers of species available within genera reflected varied uses and demand for different attributes. Analysis of our data for selected genera shows an increase in Australian taxa carried to the early 1870s, and then either no substantial further increase (e.g. *Banksia*, *Melaleuca*) or a decline in numbers (*Acacia*, *Hardenbergia*, *Kennedia*). There are some exceptions to the general trend. Genera of economic value (e.g. *Callitris*) were represented by consistent numbers of species over the whole period (1855–1889). The value of the white-ant resistant timber was recognised by early settlers, and some outstanding examples of their work remain today. Another exception to the trend are the grevilleas, which expand in numbers from three species available during 1875–1879, and four species during 1880–1884 to 14 species on the market in the period 1885–1889. This may have been because of accelerated introduction of stock from other parts of the country (e.g. West Australia), and improved propagation techniques.

The eucalypts seem to have been promoted initially for their general economic and ameliorative benefits (wind breaks etc.) rather than as ornamentals. Even as late as 1892 H.A. James claims 'very few of the [*Eucalyptus*] species have any horticultural value'. He granted that *E. ficifolia* and *E. calophylla* showed some potential, though the habit of both was 'somewhat straggling'.

Those who did purchase eucalypts for their gardens would rarely have bought stock from local populations. Many of the species available in Victoria from the 1860s to the 1880s were introduced from the Sydney region, Tasmania and south-west Western Australia.

Eucalyptus globulus (the Tasmanian blue gum) was the first eucalypt species named in the catalogues in our collection (George Brunning's St. Kilda Nurseries, 1863). Its rapid growth was an advantage for windbreak plantations, and the interesting juvenile foliage attracted the attention of early gardeners. William Adamson's catalogue of 1880 gives *Eucalyptus globulus* a glowing report card, not so much for its ornamental value, but for its medicinal benefits:

In the once despised Blue Gum tree it has been discovered that qualities exist which place it transcendently above many other plants, if not above all other plants, in hygienic importance.

He proceeds to speak highly of the powers of the blue gum for cleansing whole areas of malaria:

Already has the malaria destroying exhalations of the

Eucalyptus globulus been practically proved beyond doubt in Europe, Africa and America. It is confidently stated that in the fatal Roman Pontine Marshes, and the no less fatal swamps of Lombardy, and other parts of Italy, the *E. globulus* has rendered healthy localities in which to sleep a single night was all but certain death.

Adamson continues to predict that within a few years millions of malarious acres will be planted with blue gums, and notes that in some areas, it has already become known as the 'Fever Tree'. He notes that so great has become the demand from Europe and America for seed that the forests of Tasmania are threatened with annihilation, and mentions that he has a fine stock, and can 'quote at moderate prices for large parcels'. A little annihilation for the sake of honest profit seemed perfectly reasonable for the forests of Tasmania in 1880, as indeed it was in 1980.

Ferdinand von Mueller apparently went through a phase of recommending this tree for almost all situations, and this earned him the nickname 'blue gum'. Unfortunately many of these plantings were in unsuitable local climates, and others failed after the initial quick growth, hence the ultimate unpopularity of the tree.

Maiden recognised in *The Useful Native Plants of Australia* (1889) the early symptoms of a national trait that is now having dire consequences for much of our rural land:

En parenthese, it may be remarked that while we in Australia are very prone to recommend *Eucalyptus* planting to dwellers in other countries for sanitary purposes, we do not follow our own precepts.

It is also a fact that the orthodox method of improving land is to fell the trees (generally eucalypts) which grow upon it. In preparing suburban land for the purposes of sale it is usually the object to eradicate every trace of vegetable growth, and the idea of leaving say one eucalypt to each allotment for the purpose of desiccating the ground seems never to be thought of.

The turpentine tree (*Syncarpia glomulifera*) was only slightly more fortunate in its fate. As James (1892) commented:

Although, unfortunately, it is the practice for purchasers of large areas of suburban lands to at once cut down or destroy every vestige of native flora, the Turpentine Tree meets with the greatest consideration, and is usually the last to disappear.

The remark made by Maiden (1889) that 'the wood is difficult to burn, and will only char' may have had more to do with its prolonged existence in the wild than appreciation of its ornamental value.

Annihilation of the Australian flora was a subject close to the heart of H.A. James in his *Australian Horticulture* (1892), but from another group of marauders. He describes the scourge:

Of late years certain customs have been established that bid fair to completely destroy a majority of the rare and choice plants that are found growing in the bushlands near Sydney.... As we stroll through the bush, intent upon its pleasures, and tenderly gather with a sharp pair of scissors the choicest blooms from the mother plants, we are suddenly awakened to the unpleasant fact that the present month (September) is a period of the year selected for a mighty slaughter of the innocents by those

well-intending, but misguided promoters of wild flower shows...It seems a pity that our native plants are not brought more prominently under the notice of the gardening public, not through the medium of Wild Flower Shows, for they are a means of destroying them, but by the aid of the numerous Horticultural Societies.

The ornamental potential of some of the Australian ferns and fern allies was recognised quite early. At the height of the 'fern craze' in Victorian England during the 1850s and 1860s, ferns were enjoying unprecedented popularity. Their form and texture echoed the general sombreness of the Victorian mood, and Wardian cases and fern-houses were common (Allen, 1969). Australian ferns also enjoyed popularity from the 1860's onwards. This is evident from the number of ferneries and conservatories built which are depicted in the Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works plans of c.1890-1910.

Doodia caudata (the small rasp-fern) appeared in Rule's 1857 catalogue, and *Asplenium nidus* (or *A. australasicum*, the birdsnest fern), *Cyathea australis* (the rough treefern, mentioned in Maiden (1889) as having a whitish substance found in the middle of the tree which when boiled tastes like a bad turnip, and is fed on greedily by pigs) and an Australian *Blechnum* sp. (fishbone fern) were all introduced to Victorian nurseries in 1860. Further introductions to the industry appeared in the 1870s and 1880s, but the native component was comparatively small. Perhaps the most extensive list of ferns and fern allies is from George Smith's Royal Exotic Nurseries in Ballarat (1886), with a total of 98. Of these only nine are Australian (9.2%).

A few native plants were recommended for hedges by Heyne in 1886 (e.g. *Hakea eucalyptoides*, *Pittosporum undulatum*, *Eugenia myrtifolia*, and *Acacia* spp.), but he comments that 'many of the native plants of Australia deserve more attention'.

It seems this attention to the Australian native flora was not forthcoming from the majority of horticulturists for some time. James (1892) commented that:

Although the indigenous flora of Australia is, perhaps, unsurpassed in any other part of the world ... few native plants are represented in our private gardens and plant houses. There can be no doubt that the principal cause of their absence is a want of familiarity with a number of the choice plants with which the colonies abound, and a knowledge whereby they can be successfully cultivated.

Although the scope of our project does not include the turn of the century and early 1900s catalogues, it is probably accurate to surmise that Australian flora did not receive a great boost in popularity until much later this century (though a seed list from F.H. Brunning dated 1912 named 48 available varieties of eucalypt seed). Currently our database contains 14,600 plant names, and of these only 490 are Australian natives (3.3%). It has really only been in the last 30 years that the necessary familiarity and knowledge of cultivation have coincided with the suitable fashion in garden planting and design and building architecture. This became the case particularly in the 1960s and early 1970s.

Richard Barley

Tenth Annual General Meeting: 14 October 1990

Margaret Darling was elected to the National Management Committee and appointed Chairman for 1990–91. Howard Tanner and Robin Lewarne were reappointed Secretary and Treasurer, respectively. The National Management Committee now comprises the following elected members: Jocelyn Mitchell, Howard Tanner, John Brine, Margaret Darling, David Perkins, Fairie Nielson, Robin Lewarne and Richard Aitken. Nominations from the branches are:

Anne Cripps *Tasmania*

Sue Keon-Cohen *Victoria*

Victor Crittenden *Australian Capital Territory*

Michael Bligh *New South Wales*

John Viska *West Australia*

Audrey Abbey *South Australia*.

No nomination was received from Queensland, and a formal election was not required.

Alethea Russell's nine years of service was noted with appreciation, and a special presentation was made by Senator Jocelyn Newman to Jocelyn Mitchell thanking her for her major contribution as chairman of the AGHS over the past five years.

The treasurer outlined measures that had been taken to correct the Society's financial position over the last year, and outlined the urgent need for the AGHS to make representations to the Australian Tax Office about the Society's role and status. In parallel it was essential that a full profile of the AGHS be developed as a matter of priority to aid this submission and other public issues in the foreseeable future. Victorian Branch committee member Liz McDonald has agreed to assist the AGHS in public relations matters during 1990–91.

Dr Norman Wettenhall's suggestion that professional guidance be sought to examine the Society's aims, growth and public image was accepted on the basis that external funding could be obtained.

1991 Conference and Annual General Meeting

The 1991 conference is being planned for 18–20 October 1991 to be held in the Goulburn-Mittagong region. The theme of the conference will be 'today's new gardens—tomorrow's heritage' and will focus on the creation of new gardens and the work of leading landscape designers.

Meeting with Branch Representatives

At a meeting during the Albury conference it was stressed that the relationship between the National Management Committee and the Branches required a clear framework within which to work, and that while the National Management Committee wished to encourage the growth and activity of the branches in every way, it had to be kept fully acquainted with their management and activities. Through information on Branch activities in the Journal it was hoped that all members could take advantage of the activities offered throughout Australia. It was agreed that the 'Instrument of Delegation' for the formation of branches and the 'Rules for Branches' would be re-examined by the National Committee and issued to all Branches for comment.

Special AGHS Tours for 1991

John Morris, a former Director of the National Trust of New South Wales and an experienced tour leader is making arrangements for tours to New Zealand (April 1991) and Southern Queensland (September 1991) on behalf of the AGHS. While full details will be provided in the next journal, John Morris can be contacted directly at:

13 Simmons Street, East Balmain NSW 2041

Telephone: (02) 810 2565. Facsimile: (02) 818 1206

Members and friends wishing to take advantage of these special tours are urged to register their interest with John Morris without delay.

Help from Victorian Branch

Thank you to the following members of the AGHS (Vic Branch) who helped mail out the previous issue of the journal: Margaret Brookes, Diana Ellerton, John Hawker, Sue Keon-Cohen, Helen Page, Libby Peck, Mimi Ramsay, Robyn Russell, Georgina Whitehead, and to Liz McDonald for editorial assistance with this issue of the journal.

Computer sought for office

The AGHS wishes to acquire by donation or purchase a personal computer for use in processing mailing lists and membership records. The office requires an IBM-compatible AT 286 (or better) with a 1.2 Mb disk drive, 10 Mb hard disk (or better), monitor and line printer with provision for continuous feed. If any member is currently trading up to a more sophisticated computer and believes the AGHS may be interested in acquiring their old computer please contact Robin Lewarne (02) 953 1916 or leave a message at the national office (03) 650 5043.

Filing cabinet needed

The office in the Astronomer's Residence has recently been reorganised following repainting. Much-needed storage of AGHS archival files has also been undertaken and the office storage space is now fully utilised. If any member has a spare four drawer filing cabinet which they would be prepared to donate, Margaret Brookes would be pleased to answer your call. Please telephone (03) 650 5043.

Open to View: Historic gardens and the public

This book, which reprints the papers from the Melbourne conference, is now available. Copies have been distributed free to all conference delegates and a number of spare copies are available for sale. Authors include John Sales, Chief Gardens Advisor to the English National Trust, Paul Fox, Peter Watts, James Hitchmough and John Foster. This 56 page publication is well illustrated and should be on the bookshelves of all interested members. Copies are available from AGHS, C/- Royal Botanic Gardens, Birdwood Avenue, Victoria, 3141 at a cost of \$12 plus \$2 postage.

The AGHS wishes to thank the Urban Design Branch of the Melbourne City Council for use of their word processing facilities to publish this issue of the journal.

STATE NEWS

SOUTHERN HIGHLANDS/SOUTHERN NSW BRANCH

Gardens of the 'Gib' in Early Spring— 9 September 1990

A very successful day was spent visiting three diverse gardens on the 'Gib' (Mt Gibraltar) at Bowral in early spring. About 50 people gathered at Redlands, courtesy of Mr and Mrs J Schiffer, a garden planned by the well known landscape designer Paul Sorensen. Redlands boasts a wonderful selection of mature trees growing in deep basalt soil on the sheltered north-easterly slopes of the 'Gib'. We were delighted by the garden's gentle glades which were outlined by the bare branches of the deciduous trees and emphasised by pathways and retaining walls of local stone.

After we had enjoyed Redlands our chairman, Michael Bligh, guided us down a laneway to the entrance of our second garden, Tintagel. At this stage Michael was showing some signs of excitement as he told us of his involvement in the design of the recent extensions to the garden and the creation of a swimming pool area and tumbling stream. Tintagel was opened for us by Mr and Mrs G. Cousins and our interest grew as Michael led us through an area of natural bushland along winding bark covered pathways upward ever upward! Finally we emerged to see a wonderful house of stone and timber with a shingle roof and vine covered walls. There seemed to be elements of Edna Walling's influence in the use of the building materials and it certainly looked much older than its ten years.

Tintagel is set on a steep slope which has been used to great advantage to add variety to the garden's design. A tumbling stream about 150 metres long has been created from a bare slope by placing local stone over winding concrete boxes stepped down the hillside. Extensive plantings of shrubs, perennials and water loving plants have completely disguised a manmade structure. Thirty litres of water per second are pumped through a circulating water system and Michael was delighted when someone asked him if the stream was naturally occurring. It certainly gave that impression.

The use of rock and native plants in the recently constructed swimming pool area helped to blend the main garden into the natural bushland below and a sculpture park displaying specially commissioned works from eight of Australia's leading sculptors creates yet another interesting element to this surprising garden. A gazebo at the top of the garden has been strategically placed to draw people up to where they can see views to Sydney, and an enormous ribbon gum below the house has been surrounded by stone paving and low stone walls to create an area where bush furniture sits happily in the shade.

We enjoyed a boxed lunch provided by the committee on the wide lawns at Tintagel before moving on to Taliesen—a garden of complete contrast in an old walnut orchard. Taliesen was kindly opened for us by Mr and Mrs G Pearson. It has a unique charm provided by the simplicity of planting; the neat rows of walnut trees give a feeling of restraint and their bare branches were

repeated in glimpses over the surrounding *Cotoneaster* and *Photinia* hedging into the orchard beyond. Low *Buxus* hedges emphasise the linear formality of the house and garden.

The committee extends their very sincere thanks to the garden owners for their kind generosity and hospitality.

Elizabeth Webster

ACT/MONARO/RIVERINA BRANCH

Braidwood gardens visit, 24–25 November 1990

A visit to 11 historic gardens in the Braidwood district in southern New South Wales has been arranged by Mrs Royds, a local AGHS member. The weekend promises to be a gardener's delight with a variety of spring gardens to be visited ranging from small cottage gardens in the historic township of Braidwood to large homestead gardens nearby.

Saturday, 24 November 1990, 10.00am–11.45am, Manar (Mr and Mrs Gordon). This country garden was originally designed and planted in 1841. Original specimens of Aleppo pines, elms and a mixed shrubbery still remain. (Morning tea will be served.)

11.15–12.30pm, Deloraine (Richard and Sue Murray). The house was built in the 1880s, on a hilltop with beautiful views of the rural landscape and the township of Braidwood. Remnants of the original garden include old roses, lilacs, pines, cypresses and an orchard.

12.00pm–2.00pm, Chaleix Farm (Mr and Mrs Hagen). Built late last century, the homestead is surrounded by a windbreak of conifers and tall deciduous trees. (Lunch will be served in the garden.)

2.00–3.30pm, St Omer (John Bunn). Original work on the garden began in 1852, and there has been very little change to the basic layout over the past 140 years. Members of the AGHS are surveying and drawing up a garden plan to help the owner in rejuvenating this garden.

3.30–4.30pm, Brightside Gardens (Mr and Mrs Shoobridge). William McDowell first occupied the land of Brightside in 1860. At the turn of the century he built a house to replace the slab dwelling, though the garden was probably established some thirty years later. Today the garden occupies about 2 acres with massed plantings of rhododendrons, azaleas, roses, daffodils, lilies, dahlias and chrysanthemums. Sunday 25 November 1990, 9.30am–10.30am, Mrs Younger's garden. This delightful small garden in the centre of Braidwood features azaleas, fushias and miniature roses.

10.00–11.30am, Pine Lodge (Mr and Mrs McAuliffe). This is an old established garden, but over the past 30 years many trees, shrubs, roses and perennials have been planted. (Morning tea will be served)

11.00–12.30pm, Glendaruel (Mr and Mrs Hassall). Since 1914 three generations have influenced the garden design which in earlier years featured neatly trimmed hedges and extensive flower beds.

12.30–2.00pm, Durham Hall (Royds). Mrs William Henry Roberts began planting in the early 1840s and a wisteria and symmetrically patterned box hedging can be

seen from that time.

2.00–3.30pm, Mona (Mr and Mrs Mackay). There has been a garden at Mona since 1836. Dr Braidwood Wilson, as an interested botanist and gardener, planted many European trees and shrubs—elms and robinias still survive from those times.

3.30–4.30pm, Bedervale (Mr and Mrs T.R. Royds). Bedervale dates from 1836. There were no formal gardens until early this century when pines, cedars and cypresses were planted to enclose a garden of flower beds and a vegetable patch. The garden now contains many different exotic trees and shrubs. Mixed plantings of native species in the paddocks and near the dam have created wildlife habitat.

SYDNEY AND NORTHERN NSW BRANCH

Woollahra Gardens Visit and Lecture— 30 September 1990

On the last day of September members were privileged to be given the opportunity to visit the gardens of historic Rosemont (c1857) and Hawthornden (c1858) in Sydney's eastern suburbs.

Rosemont was once many acres in extent with elaborate, highly structured gardens. Its most recent subdivision occurred about 1980 when apartments were constructed along the former drive. Sir Raymond and Lady Burrell, guided initially by architect Espie Dods and landscape consultant Gai Stanton, have since that date rearranged the house and garden with revised entry through a southern courtyard, given formal emphasis by parterres and trellises. The main rooms have a northern outlook now enhanced by an understated sequence: grass terrace, stone steps, tennis court and swimming pool. Old trees and new perimeter planting provide a sense of privacy and enclosure while lushly planted 'secret' pathways provide detail and interest.

The extensive grounds of Hawthornden have been extensively reworked over the last decade by AGHS member, Sue Gazal, to provide a series of elegant borders filled with iris, exotic poppies, old fashioned roses, even pale yellow *Clivia*. The bones of the old garden remain, reinforced by a new grove of palms and a series of garden 'rooms'. A woodland garden, a massed bank of white rugosa roses, and a grey composition of *Echium fastuosum* flanked by *Cynara cardunculus* (cardoon) are highlights.

Our visits concluded with an excellent illustrated talk by Jenny Churchill of Killoren, Crookwell, regarding her approach to the design of large scale planting, especially borders, in her work at Killoren and with Michael Bligh and Associates.

Howard Tanner

VICTORIAN BRANCH

Annual General Meeting

The Victorian Branch AGM was held at the Herbarium on Wednesday, 29 August 1990. True to form, this turned out to be a typical wet and blustery evening, but members

were warmed and welcomed by the delicious Gluhwein prepared by Di Renou. The retiring President, Marian Brookes, reported on the many activities members had enjoyed during the year. Highlights included two weekend tours to country areas which, apart from providing us all with a unique opportunity to view notable gardens, also provided country members with a chance to join the Melbourne 'crew' and share their gardens and the associated talks with us. Following the evening's formalities, Anne Latreille spoke about the life and work of the late Ellis Stones. His early work and love of rocks and natural gardens was seen and appreciated by Edna Walling, with whom he subsequently collaborated. Slides and photographs of some of his work were shown as well as his later work with Merchant Builders. The housing development of Elliston in Rosanna was named after him. Here the siting of the houses and the landscape surrounding them truly represent his landscape philosophy that existing trees be retained wherever possible and that 'the landscape must be strong and simple with one continuous flowing feeling'. Anne has recently completed her book *The Natural Garden, Ellis Stones: His life and work*, published by Viking O'Neil, due to be released in November. At the conclusion of the evening, members present expressed their thanks to Marian Brookes for her dedicated and untiring leadership as President of the Victorian Branch for the past two years.

Ashley Russell

Conservation of Garden Structures— September Seminar

Within the constraints of Western District early spring weather, the sun mostly shone on our weekend when about 40 of us gathered at the splendid campus of VCAH Glenormiston on 15 and 16 September to study the conservation of old garden structures.

On the first day we heard a panel of experts—conservation architects and skilled tradesmen—speak to us about the art and science of dealing with old garden structures according to their merits. Useful guidelines were given about the appropriateness of decisions to conserve, restore, repair, adapt or demolish. It was pointed out, quite properly, that we should be wary in our domestic settings of not overdoing things in a frenzy to reconstruct our past! The hands-on information from our stone mason and metallurgist was refreshingly interesting.

Congenial drinks and dinner ended our day, and next morning off we set to see what we had all been waiting for—some real gardens. With wits well sharpened from Saturday's instruction we were ready to seek out, evaluate, admire and protect any old garden structure that came our way. Our expectation was well-rewarded by visits to Dalvui, Titanga, Renny Hill and Wuurong.

The approach to Dalvui (1898) is elegantly understated with its old well-tended silver poplars, and nearer the house flowers were opening to the early spring under the silver birches. William Guilfoyle's influence is still here, and the garden is developing magnificently in the devoted hands of Ray Williams, its present guardian.

BRANCHES

At Titanga (1872) the Lang family have cared for the property for many years. The fine arboretum flanking the drive is a tribute to the foresight of Dr P Lang—beginning in 1909. And beyond the grand old bluestone homestead the enduring cottage garden allowed us to stroll through history. The *Muscari*, *Sparaxis*, daffodils, snowdrops and all, left to grow free, added to the romance of this place.

But even garden historians get hungry, so we were glad to picnic in the Camperdown Botanic Gardens high above the town. Inspired by Mueller and later influenced by Guilfoyle, the gardens have had a chequered history. We sat on the bluestone base of the rotunda, demolished c1960, close by the hapless, hatless statue of Robbie Burns, and learned something of the rejuvenation program begun in 1984.

There were still two treats for us. Renny Hill (1876) is a remarkable old property owned by Mrs M Coverdale. It is sited high, but nestles in protective shrubbery. In among the laurels, privets, *Arbutus* (and did I see a Holm oak?), were some treasures. There was an old wrought iron farm fence separating field from shrubbery; also some carved, metal capped red gum gateposts—and some old wooden pickets (which I have counted!). At the back of the bluestone homestead were two fine rainwater heads, cast iron downpipes, and a quaint timber framed conservatory. William Guilfoyle's curves and contours provide the wonderful sweeping rhythm which this garden still has.

Wuurong was our final treat. The bluestone house (1857) is set high above a volcanic lake, and the property is beautifully maintained by Dr and Mrs John Menzies. Recently a tankstand has been converted into a two-storey tennis pavilion sympathetically designed to suit its environment. The farmyard creatures and aviary add to the richness of the scene. Local rock has been used in landscaping, which includes some stone garden walls and topknot pillars. Especially lovely is a low curved stone wall by a huge oak. The ground nearby was thick with daffodils. Could it look lovelier when the planting of the rose 'Freesia' is out around the curve?

We thank our gracious hosts and hostesses, the speakers and organizers, for a memorable weekend.

Lorrie Lawrence

Regional Representatives

The Victorian Branch is keen to promote the involvement of its country members in the Society's activities. To gauge the level of interest in regional activities, the Properties Sub-Committee has contacted several members who have agreed to act as 'contact people', and anyone interested in pursuing activities in these regions is encouraged to call the appropriate member (listed below). Any suggestions for activities or additional regional representation will be welcomed.

Contact people

Gippsland	Patricia Crooke	(051) 49 2366
Central Highlands	Catherine Drew	(057) 78 7277
Central Goldfields	Kevin Walsh	(054) 72 1382
South-West	Jenny Whitehead	(055) 76 6257

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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

NOVEMBER 1990

Tasmanian Branch

- Sunday 11 November (not 18 November as previously advertised)

Visit to Beaufront, Ross, by courtesy of Mr and Mrs K von Bibra; then to Wetmore, kindly opened by Mr and Mrs Melrose. BYO lunch and trade table.

Time: 11.00 am

Cost: \$2.50 to be collected on the day

Information: Fairie Nielsen (004) 330077

Southern Highlands/Southern NSW Branch

- Wednesday 21 November

Summer luncheon at Longfield with Robin Jeffcoat, a well known and very talented textile craftswoman, who shall describe her beautiful work made on the property and inspired by the garden. There is unprotected deep water in the garden so it is requested that children not attend.

Booking slip to be sent to the branch secretary

Time: 12.00 noon

Location: Longfield, Lemmons Road, Robertson

Cost: \$15.00 members, \$18.00 non-members

Information: Robin Jeffcoat (048) 85 1534

ACT/Monaro/Riverina Branch

- Saturday 24 and Sunday 25 November

Braidwood gardens visit, see description of gardens in State News.

Cost: \$50 (members) and \$60 (non members) for all visits; Saturday evening dinner, \$10 per person; garden visits Saturday only, \$35 (members), \$40 (non members); Saturday evening dinner \$10 per person; garden visits Sunday only, \$35 (members), \$40 (non members). The price includes morning tea and lunch on both days and simple garden notes. Limited accommodation is available in Braidwood and people are advised to make their own accommodation bookings as soon as possible.

Bookings: Please send a stamped self addressed envelope with payment and requirements to AGHS (ACT/Monaro/Riverina Branch), GPO Box 1630 Canberra ACT 2601 by 16 November 1990. A receipt and directions of how to reach the gardens will be sent out to you.

Information: contact Olive Royds (Braidwood) (048) 461 117 or Astrida Uptis (Canberra) (06) 247 0665.

South Australian Branch

- Sunday 25 November

Picnic meeting at Martinsell, the home of Mary Lady Downer, Williamstown. BYO picnic, no dogs.

Time: 11.30 am

Cost: \$10 per car (\$7 donation to AGHS fund, \$3 to Children's Hospital)

Further information in local newsletter

Victorian Branch

- Thursday 29 November

Christmas Party in the Botanic Gardens. BYO picnic on the Western Lawn followed by a talk in the Herbarium to be given by Mike Calnan on his work with the English National Trust.

Time: 5.30 pm—meet on Western Lawn, Royal Botanic

Gardens; 8.00 pm—Mike Calnan

Location: Herbarium, Birdwood Avenue, South Yarra

Cost: Free

DECEMBER 1990

West Australian Branch

- Sunday 2 December

Christmas function and visit to a private Perth garden.

South Australian Branch

- Wednesday 5 December

Christmas drinks in the grounds of Carrick Hill, Fullarton. The house will be open.

Time: 5.30–7.30 pm

Cost: Small charge for drinks and a light supper

Further details in local newsletter

Sydney and Northern NSW Branch

- Tuesday 11 December

Christmas Cocktail Party and Talk at the home of Philip and Caroline Simpson. Mike Calnan will give an illustrated talk about his personal involvement with the National Trust in England and the future design and management of historic gardens. Please apply promptly as numbers are limited.

Time: 7.00 pm

Location: 56 Fairfax Road, Bellevue Hill 2023

Cost: \$25.00 members, \$27.00 non-members

Tickets: Robin Lewarne, 60a Shell Cove Road, Neutral Bay 2089, please enclose SAE

Information: Robin Lewarne (02) 953 1916 or Caroline Simpson (02) 327 5976

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

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

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