

**HISTORY**

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Cover: An artist’s eye for colour is apparent in the garden that surrounds Mary Duke’s ‘Lett Art Gallery’ at Anson Bay, Norfolk Island. Photo: Nina Crone

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Richard Clough

On collecting books

I bought books, new books, because I was interested in reading them. I always admired books in libraries. I was lucky when I was a student to be able to go into the stacks in Fisher. I had a stack pass. I could spend as long as I liked, going around the stacks taking the books out, looking at them, putting them back. I was fond of books before I ever started collecting them.

Inspiration

I began collecting in England when I was studying at University College. I was inspired to collect by the teacher I had, Peter Youngman – Professor Peter Youngman he is now – and he’s still alive as far as I know, and he was a book collector. He used to tell us about various things he had managed to acquire. The one book that really inspired me to collect was Christopher Tunnard’s *Gardens in the Modern Landscape* which had the various things of Loudon in it. It was one of the seminal books of the time really.

The first second-hand books I ever bought were three of Loudon’s – his *Encyclopedia of Gardening*, *The Villa Gardener* and *The Suburban Gardener and Villa Companion*. I paid 2/6 for the encyclopedia and 1/- each for the other two. That was the beginning. I collected for my own education at that time. I wanted to learn, to be able to read and study whenever I wanted to, so I bought all sorts of books on all aspects of landscape and garden design and history and I brought them back to Australia when I returned and I continued to collect here. Then I gave, or rather I sold them, at a nominal price, $4000 or pounds - I can’t remember what it was - to what is now the University of Canberra. But I kept some and I kept collecting.

Focus

When I was appointed to the University of New South Wales I found the staff teaching various ideas which I thought were not supportable, things about Australian gardening and Australian attitudes to gardening which seemed to me to be questionable at least. I wasn’t prepared to say they were wrong but I didn’t believe they were supported by evidence, so I started trying to make a collection that would give a proper historic background to Australian landscaping. That was the basis of my collection.

One of the things I wanted to do was to collect as many books published in Australia on gardening that I could find, up to a certain point in time. My cut-off date was 1975 because I thought that the publications from...
that date on became excessive and they did not seem to me to be longer so important.
It became very easy to publish after that time: I think that is the difference. Before that time it was difficult to publish a book and what was published was important. After that time books tended to be illustrative and the text that went with them was just to fill the spaces between the pictures.

I suppose I’ve always been a believer in history, not just interested in it. I believe it’s important. I believe it’s important for any profession, whether it’s architecture, or any one of the visual arts, painting, sculpture, or whether it’s something like archeology, or medicine. People over-exaggerate the importance of what they are doing at the time. Every generation has rediscovered Australian plants. Students and people in practice over-estimate the significance of what they are doing and don’t see that it’s only a passing phase in the development and that people will come along after them and change and alter what they are doing. I’ve always been a believer in the value of history.

Plant catalogues and glasshouses
For instance I began to collect plant catalogues because it seemed to me that was really evidence of what people were growing, of what they thought was important, of what they were interested in at a particular time. As you went through the catalogues you could see the rise and fall of plants so to speak. It seemed to me that nobody had really looked at plants. That’s not true. Somebody had – Professor Waterhouse. But mostly people didn’t think about the history of plants in gardens – what was grown when, and why, and how the composition of gardens changed.

Earlier on, when I was a young student, I was just interested in the world view, but when I came to the University it seemed to me that here was an opportunity to educate people in Australia. I had to go overseas to get my education but now people don’t have to do that. But people haven’t made a real study of what was done in the past in Australia, or they have made assumptions that I think are very questionable.

It was trying to establish some sort of chronology of plant use in Australia that led me to go back to some books I had owned in the past – Hortus veitchii for the plants that the Veitches introduced from Australia, or the Baptist papers for the Australian plants that Baptist sold, and why, and how. And of course he had direct dealings with Veitch, he went and stayed with him in England.

Then I began to see the real collections of Australian plants were in Europe, the real early collectors, the first enthusiasts for growing Australian plants – not collecting them for botanical purposes but for horticultural purposes – were people in England and probably in other parts of Europe too, but I know less about that. And the history of collecting and growing Australian plants in Europe where they were mainly grown in glasshouses led to an interest in the subject of greenhouses and I acquired Nathaniel Ward’s On the Growth of Plants in Closely Glazed Cases (London 1842).

Illustrations, bindings and rescues
And I haven’t yet talked of illustrations. I suppose I’ve always been interested in illustrations. When Professor Waterhouse’s two beautiful books came out, I bought them at the time they were published, so I’ve always had some sort of background to illustrative material, whether it’s botanical or horticultural. I also regard such books as historical material. People won’t illustrate plants they’re not really interested in. Hardly anyone would go to the trouble of illustrating hundreds of different ferns now whereas when ferns were ‘the thing’ that’s when all those illustrations were made.

I acquired The Railway Guide of New South Wales: for the Use of Tourists, Excursionists, and others [1886, 3rd Edition, Sydney, Charles Potter, Government Printer] because of the illustrations in it. They were done by the Scott sisters. I knew that they were there before I ever saw it, so I looked out for it. It’s an interesting book, and it’s an interesting piece of binding. Again I’ve never bought books because of their binding but occasionally you find something which has been specially bound and it’s nice. I’ve got one about the Paris Exhibition [Catalogue of the Natural and Industrial Products of New South Wales forwarded to the Paris Universal Exhibition of
i86y, by the New South Wales Exhibition Commissioners, Sydney, Thomas Richards, Government Printer 1867] which has a really fine piece of binding. And one of Maiden’s books has got a special binding. But they’re just the pleasures one gets from one’s books, aren’t they?

One of my passions has been to rescue things. If I see a damaged copy of something, to be able to restore it gives me great pleasure. I feel I’ve achieved something. I’ve frequently bought poor copies of things and I’ve had them rebound and restored. That’s always given me pleasure – to rescue something. Examples that come to mind – John White, *Journal of a Voyage to New South Wales* [1790], and Joseph Hooker, *The Botany of the Antarctic Voyage of HM Discovery Ships Erebus and Terror in the Years 1839-1843 Part 3 Flora Tasmania*, Volume 1 and 2, London, Lovell Reeve [1860].

**Megan Martin**

*On garden history at the Historic Houses Trust*

Garden history is one of the principal interests of the Historic Houses Trust of New South Wales, a statutory authority established by legislation in 1980 and charged with the care of key historic buildings and sites in the state, including houses, gardens and public buildings. When, for example, in 1983-84 the HHT reconstructed the garden of Elizabeth Farm, the Parramatta house built by John and Elizabeth Macarthur in 1793, we studied the remnants of the original Macarthur plantings, used archival sources, including Macarthur letters and accounts and contemporary paintings and sketches, and drew from our reading of garden writers like J C Loudon (*The suburban gardener and villa companion*, 1838) to recreate the atmosphere of a nineteenth century garden.

We followed the same approach at Vaucluse House, one of the few nineteenth century houses in Sydney to retain a significant part of its original setting. In recreating the nineteenth pleasure garden we restored original detailing, including gravel paths with brick-edged drains, based on archaeological evidence. More recently the Trust has undertaken a partial reconstruction of the Vaucluse House kitchen garden drawing on physical and documentary research. A description of this project was published in this journal in March-April 2000.

**The Caroline Simpson Library and Research Collection**

The Trust’s library, named the Caroline Simpson Library & Research Collection, supports the Trust’s work of interpreting and managing places of cultural significance and provides a specialist research resource for scholars, open to anyone with an interest in the history of house and garden design and interior furnishing in New South Wales.

It includes material across a wide range of formats: architectural pattern books, architectural fragments, wall coverings, floor coverings, manufacturers’ sample books, nursery catalogues, garden ornament, fittings (including curtain and blind hardware, door and window furniture), soft furnishings and trimmings, personal papers and manuscripts, pictures, photographs, books and periodicals. The scope of the collection is broad, covering houses and gardens of all kinds and ranging from the 19th century to the present day. We sometimes record significant houses, interiors and gardens *in situ*, usually on the point of change, through photographic survey, and sometimes through oral history.

**Australian and otherwise**

Although our focus is the history of Australian houses and gardens, our collecting scope encompasses both Australian and overseas publications, particularly in relation to nineteenth century material. This is an acknowledgement of the reality of the sources for house and garden design in a settler society like Australia and a recognition as well that the suppliers of plant material to Australian gardeners – like the suppliers and manufacturers of building materials, interior and garden ornament and furnishings – have always been both local and international.

Starting from history provides us with a strong framework for collection development but for a relatively young institution like the HHT it also
Richard Clough visits Mount Penang Gardens designed by Anton James, one of his former students.

makes for some difficult challenges. How can we hope to build a comprehensive collection in our specialist area when we have started so late in the day?

The Clough collection

We began by giving priority to the purchase of rare and out of print material, and that continues to be our emphasis. However, the opportunity to acquire a major ‘formed’ collection has shifted the collecting terrain dramatically. With the Clough gift we now have a collection of Australian garden history with both depth and breadth, the strengths of which will become increasingly apparent as we work through the task of cataloguing the material onto the library’s web-based catalogue.

Already we can rejoice in the acquisition of such treasures as James Edward Smith’s *A specimen of the botany of New Holland* (1793-95) with plates by James Sowerby, including one of the earliest depictions of the waratah. Then there is John Cushing’s *Exotic gardener*, published in Dublin in 1811 and among the earliest books to deal with the subject of growing ‘New Holland exotics’ in the Northern Hemisphere, or Robert Sweet’s *Flora Australasica* (1827-8), with many beautiful hand-coloured plates of the “choicest species” of Australian plants.

These rare books with fine bindings are balanced by runs of popular garden handbooks or the more specialist publications of flower societies like the *Australian sweet-pea annual*, official organ of the Carnation and Sweet Pea Society of South Australia. There are also such ephemeral delights as *My Victory garden: simple rules for growing your own vegetables*, published in Perth during the Second World War. Even more ephemeral is *The Goodyear gardening guide* from 1933, published, of course, by Goodyear, makers of five different types of Goodyear Braided Moulded Garden Hose “to meet all hosing needs”. The significance of this range of rare books, everyday gardening manuals and quirky garden ephemera has recently been surveyed by Richard Aitken in *Gardenesque: a celebration of Australian gardening* (2004).

In bibliographical terms, *Gardenesque*, following so soon after the landmark publication of *The Oxford companion to Australian gardens* (2002) does much to add flesh (no, make that foliage!) to Victor Crittenden’s pioneering history and bibliography of Australian gardening books. These books are also important contributions to the historiography of gardening in Australia, along with another recent publication, Paul Fox’s *Clearings: six colonial gardeners and*
their landscapes (2004) – not to mention the very considerable achievements of the Australian Garden History Society. And it is for historiographical reasons that the HHT has chosen to keep the Clough collection together, as a separate sequence from our existing general and rare books collections, believing that the very structure of a collection formed with such regard to history will offer a number of avenues for future historical research.

Provenances

Our interest in the history of gardening in Australia has also driven our long-term interest in the acquisition of books with a significant provenance, or, to use the terminology of the book trade, association copies. We know something about which nineteenth century garden books were brought to Australia by English or Scottish settlers, for example, but we are always looking for more specific information. We assume that Edward Kemp’s influential *How to lay out a garden* (three editions, 1850-1864) was well known in the Australian colonies but take particular satisfaction in noting from a fly-leaf inscription that a copy of the third edition of this book was held in the library of Edward Cox at Burrundulla near Mudgee in New South Wales. We are pleased to find a copy of Glenny’s *manual of practical gardening* inscribed with the name of Edward Henty, pioneering pastoralist and horticulturist of Portland in Victoria. Sometimes material is acquired solely on the strength of the association. This was the case for a long run of the French language journal, *L’Illustration horticole*, published in Belgium from 1854-1896 and at face value perhaps an unlikely contender for a place in a collection focused on Australian garden history – that is, until you open each volume and find the bookplate of William Macarthur of Camden Park.

Such discoveries are one of the great pleasures of building a garden history collection at the Trust, matched only by the relationship with our readers: scholars who use the collection, share their own discoveries, and make suggestions about further acquisitions. We believe that the Clough collection has found a very good home. And we are sure that garden historians will reap the benefits.

Richard Clough worked with Sylvia Crowe on the landscape of Basildon New Town, in England, before appointment as the first landscape architect employed by the National Capital Development Commission (1959-1981). From 1981 until his retirement in 1986 he was Professor of Landscape Architecture at the University of New South Wales.

Megan Martin spent her childhood in western and far northern Queensland before taking a degree in Old Norse and Old English at James Cook University. Work in Tasmania and London followed in the 1970s, then a M.Litt. at Sydney University. Megan has worked for the Historic Houses Trust since 1997.
William Paterson was born 17 August 1755 in Montrose, Scotland. As a boy he was keenly interested in botany. He trained in horticulture at Syon in London and at the age of 22, through the patronage of Lady Strathmore, he was sent to southern Africa where he spent three years collecting botanical specimens. When he returned to Montrose in 1780 he occupied his time in preparing an account of his experiences entitled ‘Narrative of Four Journeys into the Country of the Hottentots and Caffraria’. This was not published until 1789 and he dedicated it to Sir Joseph Banks.

In 1781, at the age of 24, he obtained a commission in the 98th Regiment and so spent four years in India in the army. Throughout this time he kept in touch with Sir Joseph Banks, sending him botanical bits and pieces when not on military duties. When his regiment was disbanded he returned to England and transferred to another regiment. Finally in June 1789 he was gazetted Captain in the New South Wales Corps, probably at Banks’ instigation, and he sailed for Sydney with his wife Elizabeth (nee Driver) whom he had married in 1787.

New South Wales and Norfolk Island

The voyage from England to NSW was in convoy with the 3rd Fleet of convict transports. At the port of St. Jago they fell in with four other ships in convoy and thus the Patersons met up with two people whose lives were for many years woven closely with theirs, Captain Phillip Gidley King and his bride Anna Josepha.

On arrival in Sydney in October 1791 Paterson was immediately sent to Norfolk Island in command of the detachment here. They and the Kings also, sailed on the Atlantic to Norfolk Island. Elizabeth Paterson became Anna’s sole woman companion and when the Patersons left after fifteen months Anna would have missed Elizabeth very much as they would have spent many pleasant hours together.

We have a description of Elizabeth and Anna on their arrival here. It is found in Ralph Clark’s journal. He says, ‘Captain King and lady, with Captain Paterson and lady came on shore. Mrs. King appears to be a genteel woman, not very pretty and Mrs. Paterson a good cosy Scotch lass and fit for a soldier’s wife.’ On the same ship was the Reverend Johnson who, during the few days here, married about 100 couples and baptized dozens of children.

Scientific ambition

Paterson had been very keen to become a member of the Royal Society before leaving England but Banks advised him to postpone his application until he had been able to ‘advance natural history’, suggesting that NSW would provide him with a good scope for discoveries. Not only did Paterson collect natural history for Banks but he also provided seed to the Lee & Kennedy and Colvill nurseries.

On his arrival at Sydney he was immediately given command of the detachment for Norfolk Island and served here from November 1791 to March 1793. While here he collected and sent home botanical, geological and insect specimens. He compiled an account of the flora and entrusted this to Banks. The manuscript is believed to be in the Dixon Library in Sydney. While it was undoubtedly useful at the time, it reveals that Paterson had only a limited knowledge of botany.
On the basis of his botanising on Norfolk, Paterson asked for membership of the Royal Society. He wrote to Banks:

_In a letter to Governor King you are so good as to offer me your assistance in publishing a book about the natural history of Norfolk Island but my return from that place put it out of my power to finish what I first intended, namely, the birds and fishes, however with drawings etc that accompany this you will be in possession of the Botanical part, and from the few specimens of strata which were sent before, you will be able to judge the formation of the island._

_Should you think the memorandum worth publishing or if it could be done by offering them to the Royal Society I would consider the honour greater, at the same time I beg to solicit your interest of becoming a Fellow of the Society and hope by my attention to Natural History you will think me deserving of that honour._

Banks declined to nominate Paterson for membership of the Society until his return to England. It was to be 1797 before Paterson was elected a Fellow.

Paterson was on Norfolk at exactly the same time (4/11/1791 to 9/3/1793) that super botanist John Doody was collecting his specimens, and one wonders how they regarded each other on the inevitable meetings that they must have had. It is interesting to note that our white oak is named _Lagunaria Patersonia._

To and fro to New South Wales

The Patersons left the island for Sydney in March 1793 and in September of that year Paterson led an expedition to find a route through the Blue Mountains, he failed but discovered and named the Grose River and several new plants. He became second in command of the NSW Corps at the same time and when Major Grose left the colony in December 1794 Paterson acted as an administrator until Governor Hunter arrived nine months later. During his term Paterson granted 4,965 acres of land and made no attempt either then, or after Hunter assumed office, to check or to control the trading and farming activities of his officers or the propensity of the troops under his command to take the law into their hands when they felt aggrieved.

In 1796, with the rank of Major he went home to England on sick leave. While in England he advised Banks on plants and trees for the colony and in 1798 was gazetted Lieutenant-Colonel and finally was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society. He returned to New South Wales in 1799.

Troubles in the colony

In 1801 King and family arrived from England, he having been given the position of Governor of NSW. He had the unpleasant task of bringing Governor Hunter his notice of termination of governorship so that King could take up the position. Hunter was in no hurry to give up either his position of Governor of NSW or his residence in Government House. The Kings had nowhere to stay but were invited to
Originally built in 1840 as the Royal Engineer's Quarters, occupied by the Pitcairners in 1856 and now restored, No. 9 Quality Row is where the Norfolk Island Historical Society holds its meetings.

Nan Smith, the current President of the Norfolk Island Historical Society, was born in Auckland, New Zealand and educated at St Cuthbert's College. During the war Nan's father purchased, sight unseen, an old island home and 13 acres of land on Taylors Road, Norfolk Island. In May 1945 with World War II still being waged in the Pacific, he managed to secure a place for Nan and himself on an Air Force transport plane to Norfolk. It was this visit that seeded Nan's enduring interest in the island's history. Shortly after this visit Nan purchased, at great expense for the day, a couple of second hand books that were to become the beginnings of her research material. In the intervening years she has accessed records from the Public Records Office London, the Mitchell Library and the Archives Office in Sydney to name a few. In 1986 Nan and her husband retired from Sydney to the house her father had purchased on Norfolk Island. She has written one book about the convict era and contributed to a number of other historical books about Norfolk Island.

‘bunk in’ with their old friends William and Elizabeth Paterson. It took five months for Hunter to move. As soon as he did King made Paterson Lieutenant-Governor of NSW.

The troubles that arose in King's governorship with Macarthur and others caused a rift in the, until then, steady friendship between the two families. Elizabeth and Anna both played a prominent part in the founding of the Orphans' School and Elizabeth served on the committee of the Female Orphans' Institution in 1803. In 1809, according to John Oxley, she did her best to restore unanimity in the settlement after the arrest of Governor Bligh. Foveaux granted her 2000 acres in Van Diemens Land in 1808, and this was confirmed by Macquarie in 1810.

As Governor Macquarie reported later, Paterson was ‘such an easy, good-natured, thoughtless man, that [he] latterly granted lands to almost every person who asked, without regard to their merits or pretensions.’ In this way 67,000 acres were disposed of - more than Governor King had granted in 6 years. Paterson was quite unsuitable for such a position in so difficult a time.

Departure

After Macquarie arrived, the Patersons sailed with the NSW Corps in the Dromedary on 12th May 1810, but Paterson died at sea off Cape Horn on 21st June.

William and Elizabeth had no children of their own, but he is reported to have sired 'six fine bastards', three in England and three in Australia. One wonders if this gave Elizabeth the impetus to take such an interest in the Orphans' School. After William's death, Elizabeth was refused a pension and was ordered to repay some 200 pounds that her husband had paid in public salaries without authority. In 1814 she married Grose and took up residence in Bath but he died two months after the marriage. She lived on in Bath and died there in 1825.
On the Move

In any year the total number of kilometres travelled by members of AGHS as they participate in local garden visits, weekend excursions, post-conference optional days and overseas garden tours defies calculation. Not to mention the number of images taken on cameras! For the record here are a few of the gardens and places visited in the past year.

Sydney conference
Saturday, 16 October 2004

Bronte House. completed in 1845, is one of the few surviving colonial houses in NSW that overlooks the sea. The garden had a complete overhaul during Leo Schofield’s term as lessee, but is now managed by the owner Waverley Council, and many further improvements have been made. Unfortunately Bronte House is only open to the public on a few days each year.

The emphasis has been on interesting plants that are capable of surviving the salt-laden wind. Trees in the garden include Norfolk Island pine, Canary Island date palm and pygmy date palm. A raised bed at the southern end of the front lawn has been planted with alstromerias, mauve lantana, echiums and even bronze castor oil plants, with canna in the bed behind. A pathway down the steep slope at the edge of the lawn runs through an interesting rockery planted with succulents including agaves, yucca, cacti and a dragon’s blood tree (Dracaena draco).

Thunbergia mysoriiensis, an evergreen woody climber that produces racemes of brownish red flowers with a pale yellow throat, is well established on the northern wall at the front of the house. Recently planted nearby are specimens of the native Fraser Island creeper (Teomanthe hillii) that bears attractive racemes of pink-purple flowers. Several thousand clivias, including some cream-flowered cultivars, are grown in the shaded and protected gully on the northern edge of the property.

Post-conference tour
Thursday 21 October, 2004

Ellensville. originally the garden of Mrs Rolf Boldrewood, was the first garden for the day. An oval lawn at the end of the main drive was dominated by a mature multi-branched specimen of a juniper. The garden was a mixture of plants ranging from roses, shrubs, specimen trees and cacti with a venerable pair of jade plants Portulacaria afra flanking the entrance to the verandah.

Next, Denham Court where the planting was mainly of mature trees with some interesting specimens such as a large Norfolk Island hibiscus and an olive look-alike named Picconia. A guided tour of the house proved to be a highlight at this property as members were privileged to view a superb collection of Australian colonial furniture.

The final destination was Horsley which was approached through an impressive avenue of bunyas following the ridge to an ochre coloured house on the crest. Many mature specimens from earlier plantings were extant such as the crepe myrtle and Cape gardenia (Carissa bispinoso) in the middle of the original carriage loop that terminated the driveway while branches from large aged specimens of the white and yellow banksian roses festooned the air throughout the garden.

On departing one could not help but ponder how much longer these historic houses and gardens can resist the onslaught of land subdivision and new dwellings.

Keith Jorgensen, Queensland

John Viska, Western Australia

What trips are you planning for the next year?

Check the Website www.gardenhistorysociety.org.au to see what will be on offer at the Perth Conference, in your state, in other states.
Essentially this was a cultural landscape tour encompassing a settlement (although not continuous) as old as that of Sydney. In five days we covered the first settlement (1788-1814) which provided food and naval supplies for the struggling colony at Port Jackson, the second settlement (1825-1855) which served as a place of secondary punishment for convicts from Australia, and the third settlement by Pitcairn Islanders in 1856.

Twenty AGHS members from all states except South Australia visited the restored Georgian buildings of the Kingston and Arthur’s Vale area, the grim remnants of the whaling station at Cascade, the Chapel of St Barnabas, (the superb Arts and Crafts style church of the Melanesian mission with its William Morris and Co. stained glass), Government House, the ruins of the new prison where the tidal ebb and flow was effectively used to clear sewage, and the small lime kiln and salt house at Emily Bay.

As yet there is no ‘garden history’ group in the island but the gardens we visited clearly show there is potential for the future - in the old Bailey home and garden at the Pitcairn Settlers Village, in the Branka House site, and in the unique island gardens like those of Paulette Eastwood, Wayne Boniface and Mary Duke. We will also follow with interest the future development of Matt Bigg’s market garden, Farmer Lou’s piggery, the Kentia palm (Howea forsteriana) nursery and the vineyard of Rod and Noelene McAlpine.

Meeting members of the NI Garden Club, the NI Historical Society, and the cast of The Trial
of the Fifteen, thoroughly perusing the Norfolk Islander and being entertained by local personalities – Diddles, Truck, and Lettuce Leaf – enabled us to become acquainted with the soul of the island.

For everyone the most impressive aspect of the tour was the natural landscape – the stands of Norfolk pines (Auricaria cunninghamii), the Moreton Bay fig trees (Ficus macrophylla) in Headstone Road, the thirst-quenching wild red guavas (Psidium cattleianum), the gamut of bananas always within reach, the glossy leaves of Meryta, the graceful whiteoaks (Patersonia lagunaria), the spectacular seascapes of Point Howe, Anson and Duncombe Bays, the panorama of Phillip and Nepean Islands from Mt Pitt and the spectacular rocks seen from the Cook Memorial.

Undisputed highlights were the wonderful walks through the Norfolk Island Botanic Gardens and the National Park with the knowledgeable and enthusiastic leadership of Margaret Christian, whose energy, drive and devotion lie behind the establishment of these sites and whose wisdom and personality in interpreting them will be long remembered. For us she will always be the spirit of a unique place.

And of course we thoroughly appreciated the splendid job Timothy Hubbard and Roger Borrell did in arranging, leading and chauffeuring a memorable tour along roads where cows and ducks have right of way. May many other AGHS members enjoy a visit to Norfolk Island.

Nina Crone, Victoria
IN NOVEMBER THE VICTORIAN BRANCH IS ORGANIZING A WEEKEND TRIP TO THE GIPPSLAND LAKES AREA OF VICTORIA. THIS WILL INCLUDE A VISIT TO STRATHFIELDSAYE ESTATE WHICH HAS RECENTLY PASSED FROM THE CARE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE TO THAT OF THE AUSTRALIAN LANDSCAPE TRUST.

JOHN HAWKER, HORTICULTURIST WITH HERITAGE VICTORIA EXPLAINS THE IMPORTANCE OF THIS PROPERTY IN HERITAGE TERMS.

Why Strathfieldsaye is significant

Strathfieldsaye homestead is historically significant as the oldest continuously inhabited house in Gippsland. The farm remains essentially as it was in 1879, and the house remains as the Disher family left it after 110 years of occupation. The contents of the house illustrate this continuous period of ownership.

The extensive complex of farm buildings, including Heinrich Hartwicke’s hut of mud and slab, are architecturally significant as a superb group of nineteenth century farm buildings that illustrate changing vernacular building traditions over a long period. Although the extent of the land holding has been reduced, many of the buildings constructed in the nineteenth century survive. The buildings and their contents are evidence of a diversified agricultural farm that emerged in the 1870s from an unsophisticated cattle and sheep station.

The landscape and garden are aesthetically and historically significant as evidence of mature exotic plantings at a remote pastoral station. The squared layout of the garden reflects the utilitarian needs of early settlement in contrast to later, more ornamental styles. This form is unusually intact and rare in eastern Victoria. The driveway plantings mark the entrance to the property and the species are typical of the nineteenth century. The shoreline plantings play a strong role in the views to the lake. The trees in the paddock are associated with closer cultivation and delineate boundary lines in these areas.

The remnant pear orchard trees at Hartwicke’s Hut are of scientific (horticultural) significance as a nineteenth century cultivar. They are evidence of more extensive orchards planted by selectors in this area during the latter part of the nineteenth century.

Strathfieldsaye is historically significant for demonstrating the changing patterns of land acquisition on a large pastoral run. The pre-emptive right of 320 acres was an unusual quantity of land to purchase, as most squatters took advantage of the 640 acres they were entitled to. The pre-emptive right was the nucleus of the run and the first part to be acquired as freehold. Its scale is in contrast to the much smaller sections available to and affordable by selectors on the Strathfieldsaye run during the 1870s and 1880s as a result of the various Land Acts. Hartwicke’s Hut is evidence of one selector’s purchase on the run, a section that Disher took the opportunity to acquire as freehold for his farm when the selector died in 1898.
If you enter the Royal Botanic Gardens Melbourne through 'A' Gate, on Alexandra Avenue at the bottom of Anderson Street, and then turn right at the grotto sheltering a giant clamshell drinking fountain, you skirt around a narrow lawn area overlooking the ornamental lake and pass into a shady tunnel of deep green comprising such species as Moreton Bay Fig, Pittosporum undulatum, Pinus radiata, Acanthus mollis and rampant, smothering ivy.

Suddenly, you emerge into a small clearing with views across the lake. Here there is a large ‘roundabout’ where the path splits in two – one path heading over the bridge to Long Island, the other skirting the lake. In the middle of the roundabout is an incongruous pavilion built in 1972.

Although known as the Clematis Shelter, the structure is covered by several specimens of Wisteria sinensis. Alongside is an exceptionally large, old elm tree. Look up into the tree to see evidence of a once gaping wound, now two-thirds calloused over. This scar marks the location of the large branch which, in 1969, fell and destroyed one of the Botanic Gardens’ most attractive and picturesque features – the Bougainvillea Rest House. Once a cool and sheltered retreat for hot and tired visitors, it is now only a distant memory to middle-aged and elderly Melburnians, and a tantalizing vision to collectors like myself of old post cards and guidebooks.

The rest houses

William Guilfoyle replaced Ferdinand von Mueller as Director of the Melbourne Botanic Garden in 1873 and spent the next 35 years totally re-organising their character and appearance. He created a series of outdoor rooms, separated by masses of dense vegetation and linked by an artfully designed path system. This created carefully controlled visual experiences through a continually unfolding sequence of hidden and then dramatically revealed views, with a succession of points of interest along the way.

There were two very important elements in Guilfoyle’s design. First, was the series of over one dozen structures – pavilions, summer houses, rotundas and ‘temples’ – each with its own distinctive character, but all having a familial resemblance to create a diversified but unified whole. These structures were generally located at junctions along the path system and took advantage of an attractive view. They were also practical buildings providing much needed shelter from Melbourne’s hot summer sun and unpredictable rain. One – the Rose Pavilion – was used for band recitals in summer.

They added a picturesque charm to the landscape of the gardens, highlighting points of visual interest along the trail of the paths and serving a role not dissimilar to the grottos, classical temples, follies, hermitages and pagodas along the circuit walks of the classic ‘English Landscape School’ gardens such as Stourhead.

Most of the structures appear to have been designed by Guilfoyle himself although the specific plans no longer exist for those in the RBG Melbourne, but his plan for an arch at Mooleric still survives. Most of the structures also still remain, albeit with extensive remodeling and/or restoration, and one, the William Tell Rest House was totally rebuilt in 1994 after the newly restored building was torched by vandals.

The arches

The second notable element of Guilfoyle’s design was a series of large iron archways used...
to highlight entry to the rest houses and to mark points of transition. They served to create 'doorways' between one outdoor room and the next. When seen from a distance they created a sense of anticipation and expectation in the minds of visitors walking along the paths. Further the archways also served to frame the initial view and support climbing plants that created foreground interest in a picturesque scene.

The importance which Guilfoyle attached to these archways is emphasized by the frequency with which they are referred to in his *Descriptive Guide* (c.1908) to the Gardens. In his description of the route traversing the Northern Lawn towards the Lake Brink Walk he writes that:

Continuing our journey, we pass under one of the many large arches which have been placed in various parts of the Gardens for training climbing and creeping plants upon and at the same time effecting breaks in path lines.

By 'breaks in path lines' Guilfoyle presumably means breaks in visual continuity at points of transition; but he may also have meant that the arches tended to cause pedestrians to slow down and perhaps pause briefly to admire the views – especially when the creepers and climbing plants were in flower.

According to Pescott, the iron archway appears to have been introduced into the Gardens during the Mueller era (1857-1873) and it is a tribute to Guilfoyle's special genius.
that he was able to incorporate them so effectively into his comprehensive plan to transform the Melbourne Gardens into one of the world’s greatest nineteenth century botanic gardens.

Unfortunately many of the archways have since been removed, possibly because their significance as key elements in Guilfoyle’s plan to create a carefully controlled visual experience was not always fully understood – although it is clear that Pescott (Director from 1957 until 1970) did so when he wrote that the archways were used for training climbing plants upon and also for marking the entrance of a different section of the Gardens.

Happily however, about ten of the archways still remain. They seem to have developed a sort of impervious crust of rusty corrosion which forms a protective layer preventing further deterioration so that, despite well over a century of exposure, they are still generally in very sound condition with an attractively mellowed and patinated appearance.

The Bougainvillea Rest House

In 1896 the Yarra River was straightened to alleviate flooding, and the former river bend area was added to the Gardens and gradually landscaped over the next decade. In 1906 a new pavilion, known as the Bougainvillea Rest House was constructed where the circuit path and the new Long Island path separated from the ‘A’ Gate entrance path.

There was an obvious need for a pavilion in the new northern section of the Gardens as the nearest existing shelters were the Separation Tree Rest House, the Rose Pavilion and the Temple of the Winds – all located 300-400m away from the site.

The junction of the two pathways was the obvious and best location for the new pavilion, especially as there were pleasant views across the lake. The narrow approaches from both directions, caused by the way the path was hemmed in on both sides – by the ornamental lake on the south and by Alexandra Avenue and the Yarra on the north – could be turned into an advantage by using dense planting to create a sense of anticipation and expectation and then a dramatic sense of arrival, revelation and open space when the rest house and its landscaped setting were reached.

The rest house was almost certainly designed by William Guilfoyle, although none of the original plans appear to have survived. It was easily the largest of the Gardens’ Rest Houses and with its vaguely gothic (or ‘Carpenter’s Gothic’) character it had many stylistic similarities to the William Tell Rest House on the opposite sides of the lake. It had four entries, each connecting directly to the path by means of a sort of projecting gable. Like the William Tell Rest House the shelter was built of timber with a roof of wooden shingles.

An iron archway was erected at the point of arrival from the Anderson Street Bridge entrance (‘A’ Gate). The arch could be seen at the end of the narrow, densely planted pathway and the drama of the scene was enhanced by the visual contrast between the curvilinear iron archway and the ‘spiky’ character of the wooden rest house. The contrast was also heightened by the use of carefully chosen plants – plants with dramatic and colorful flowers and foliage – so as to create a secluded oasis or secret garden.

Guilfoyle’s account of the area in the 1909 Guidebook underscores this. Approaching from ‘A’ Gate he writes:

... A dense mass of vegetation, consisting of Coprosma Baueriana, Corynocarpus laevigatus, Pinus insignis, Arundo Donax, Cordyline australis near the water’s edge, and ornamental trees, shrubs and flowering
plants near the front, skirt the pathway on our left. We now pass under a large archway and come to the largest Rest House in the Gardens, known as the Bougainvillea Rest House. It was first opened to the public on 13th July, 1906. Taking the path between the Rest House and the main lake, we notice among the plants grouped on the left side, a few good specimens with coloured foliage, notably *Prunus cerasifera var. atropurpurea*, the 'Persian Purple-leaved Plum'; *Euonymus japonicus variegatus*, the 'Variegated Japanese Spindle Tree'; *Eleagons argentea* 'Silver-leaved Oleander' North America; *Pittosporum eugenoides variegatum* 'Variegated New Zealand Hedge Laurel'.

It is likely that at least two of these plants would probably no longer create the same type of visual response on the part of viewers today as they did in 1908. The Persian Purple-leaved Plum has been all too widely used for street planting and the variegated Pittosporum has become a ubiquitous plant for screening flats and villa units from adjoining residential properties. However in 1909 both these plants must have appeared eye-catching, fresh and new.

**Which bougainvillea?**

Despite his detailed description of plantings in the vicinity, Guilfoyle makes no mention of the bougainvillea that gave the Rest House its name. Perhaps this was because the guidebook was written only two years after the building was constructed so that the climber would not have reached an impressive size.

I have not been able to discover what species of bougainvillea was planted, however I think that it was most likely to have been one of the following:

- **Bougainvillea glabra** which was planted at the entrance to the Gardens' Plant Classification Pavilion.
- **Bougainvillea grandiflora** which was planted in a bed with a group of magnolias close to the fern gully. This species originally had purple flowers but various cultivars have flowers of scarlet, orange or white.

**Early postcards**

Sadly Guilfoyle’s 1909 Descriptive Guide does not contain a photograph of the Bougainvillea Rest House. Fortunately however it is the subject on several early postcards. One early postcard in my own collection, entitled Melbourne Botanical Gardens shows the Bougainvillea Rest House framed by the iron archway, with a group of very formally and sun-protectively dressed men, women and children – long skirts, hats and an umbrella. It is easy to imagine the group seeking refuge in the Bougainvillea Rest House and filling it to capacity. This card does not have a dated message or post mark, but it probably dates from shortly after the Rest House was constructed as the archway is not yet covered by a climbing plant.

A second postcard in my collection, titled 'Shelter House, Botanic Gardens, Melbourne' has a message dated 15.6.13. It shows that the plant that gave the rest house its name has grown very vigorously indeed and is now clambering over the shingle roof. The card shows the bougainvillea as having red or orange flowers but as the card is 'colourised' rather than in natural colour, this should not be given too much credence. (I have seen postcards with agapanthus shown as bright red flowers!)

**A misnomer**

A new Descriptive Guide to the Botanic Gardens was prepared in 1951 by A.W. Jessup (Director 1941-1957). It does not contain a picture of the Bougainvillea Rest House but Jessup writes:

Continuing under another iron archway over which *Bignonia capreolate* (‘Crossvine’) is growing, we come to the Bougainvillea Resthouse. This is a misnomer, since the
Bougainvillea was found unsuitable, and removed for the benefit of the building.

*Bignonia capreolata* is a particularly vigorous evergreen climbing plant. With bell-shaped flowers which are reddish brown on the outside, and red and yellow on the inside, it is native to the north eastern region of the United States of America.

**Published photographs**

In 1949 the Victorian Railways Commissioners (possibly on behalf of the Victorian Government Tourist Bureau) published an illustrated booklet on *Melbourne's Parks and Gardens* providing 'a little gallery of pictures revealing the created loveliness of the city's open public spaces'. It includes a double-page spread showing the Bougainvillea Rest House viewed through the iron archway and also a picture of a bridge connecting Long Island to the Gardens 'mainland'.

The view of the Rest House is taken from a similar vantage point to that of the c.1909 postcard. The archway is now very densely covered by a vigorous climber (*Bignonia capreolata*) and the adjoining shrubberies are now much higher and denser thus greatly enhancing a sense of anticipation and surprise and creating a pleasing contrast between the shade of the pathway and the sunlight of clearing around the pavilion. The photograph's caption emphasized these points.

About 1961, a new *Guide Book to the Royal Botanic Gardens* was prepared by R.T.M. Pescott (Director 1957-1970). It did not make any written reference to the Bougainvillea Rest House but the frontispiece showing a full-page illustration of the Rest House with a large, and spectacularly flowering, specimen of *Magnolia soulangeana* in the foreground, suggests the rest house was regarded as one of the most attractive and characteristic features of the Gardens' landscape. It appears from the photograph that by that date the iron archway covered with *Bignonia capreolata* had been removed.

**Destruction and replacement**

A large branch from the old elm tree fell on the rest house in 1969 and caused severe damage - repair was possibly beyond the capacity and skills of the two staff carpenters and beyond the resources of the Gardens in that period...

The Bougainvillea Rest House was demolished and a new replacement shelter was planned.

The Clematis Shelter was constructed in 1972 to replace the demolished Bougainvillea Rest House. It is a very simple, functional and blandly designed structure that does not have a unique and individual identity. Nor does it...
make a positive contribution to the landscape of the Gardens. For me it creates a sense of anti-climax and disappointment and is of very little interest.

Concern and growing loss

Concern over the growing loss of historic garden structures emerged in the 1980s and was articulated in the seminal publication Historic Gardens of Victoria. The book describes the many threats to Victoria's historic gardens, noting how:

‘Certain garden features have been lost through nothing other than old age. Nineteenth century garden buildings were generally of fragile construction and quickly became dilapidated without continual maintenance. Of the thousands of lattice summer houses once found in Victorian gardens there can be only a bare handful left.’

On p. 210, the book includes a pair of photos, taken from the same standpoint showing ‘the old bougainvillea rest house and its replacement at the Royal Botanic Gardens Melbourne’. The new rest house is clearly much too small, undistinguished and insignificant for its site.

In recent years several of the rest houses and similar structures at the RBG have been restored to something approaching their original condition – the Rose Pavilion (c.1891) was effectively restored in 1994 as was the William Tell Rest House (c.1901). Indeed The Royal Botanic Gardens, Melbourne Master Plan (1997) recognizes that the Clematis Shelter is ‘plain and lacking the finesse and ornamental interest of the other pavilions’ and recommends that it be replaced with a structure which is more picturesque in character. To date there has been no replacement.

A centennial challenge

In general the re-instatement of heritage structures can only be justified on comparatively rare occasions, however I feel strongly the Bougainvillea Rest House is one such case for several compelling reasons.

• It is part of Guilfoyle’s unified and harmonious design for the Melbourne Botanic Gardens as a whole.

• It is significant as part of a suite of structures throughout the Gardens - each unique in its own right but all almost certainly designed by Guilfoyle with a sort of familial resemblance.

• It has a special relationship with the William Tell Rest House on the opposite side of the Ornamental Lake – what can be described as a ‘stylistic echo’.

• It is a very attractive, functional and welcoming building that clearly demonstrates Guilfoyle’s exceptional skill as a designer of garden structures and their setting.

• As the largest and most imposing Rest House in the RBG it can be considered the culmination of Guilfoyle’s career as a designer of garden structures.

Next year, 2006, will be the centenary of the original Bougainvillea Rest House’s installation, so what about re-instating it?

Ken Duxbury has a keen interest in urban and environmental planning and is a consultant on historic gardens. He has built up a significant collection of early postcards depicting Victorian public gardens.

Endnotes


4 Ibid.


6 Ibid.

7 Ibid.

At once this book is profoundly significant, most important, somewhat frustrating and a little disappointing, which might be thought not too bad in light of the coverage it attempts to achieve as the history of a premier Royal Society.

That it contains much detailed information about the many roles and ventures of an august and long established organisation that links professionals and amateurs in horticulture, and to a lesser extent in botany and design cannot be doubted. The author, Librarian to the Royal Horticultural Society, has had access to a rich trove of documented history and access to an oral record of fact and lore that is carried by the many hundreds of distinguished gardeners who make up its membership.

What Brent Elliott makes of this is a dense, rich and nourishing feast for those interested in garden history and English garden history in particular. The book is important because it makes accessible to a wider readership the history of the world’s premier horticultural society: one that has exerted a long term influence over horticulture in almost every corner of the globe, and one that is still active today through its research laboratories, expeditions, collections and popular activities such as gardens and shows.

Elliott has pulled from the archives a marvellous pictorial record of people, events and plants that have one way and another played their parts in the development and growth of the organisation. Engravings, photographs, letters, posters, tickets and as comprehensive a set of end notes as could be wished for add depth and authority to the text; a supreme achievement to mark the 200th anniversary of the Society. Well, maybe so but there are a few small and niggling matters that in my estimation devalue the book and its contents.

These are to do with the design and publishing of the book. Why is the type set in such a small font? It makes reading very hard going over any period extended beyond 15 minutes or even less. Why are the pictures, mostly, so small and jammed against the margins? This makes the whole thing look cramped and crammed. Why are the columns of text so dense and unrelied? This makes the book seem unfriendly and impenetrable.

Considering the scholarship and wealth of material available, and most capably deployed by the author, this penny-pinching scrimping on the publication has marred its standing and demeaned the generally high standards of the RHS. What should be a pleasure to read and handle is, instead, hard work and tiring.

In a book such as this where the content is all important, format and costs have impinged on the overall-quality and reduced the significance and impact of the editor’s and writer’s work. Even if two volumes had been found necessary to adequately present the contents the cost would have been well worth it.

While appreciative of the valuable and unique resource the book provides I'd have to say that what should be pure reading pleasure is unnecessarily rendered something less.
RONALD CAMPBELL GUNN COMMEMORATED

The AGHS has taken a significant interest in Ronald Campbell Gunn, the 19th century botanist and natural scientist after whom more than 50 plant species are named as well as numerous geographical features in Tasmania – Gunn's Plains, Lake Gunn, Campbell River and Mount Campbell.

In 2004 the Tasmanian Branch held a most interesting seminar on Gunn's life and work and the society has contributed $2000 towards the fund for a life-size bronze statue by sculptor Peter Corlett, to be erected in City Park Launceston on the initiative of the Launceston Horticultural Society which Gunn founded in association with William Archer.

Soon after his arrival in Tasmania in 1829 as superintendent of convicts in Hobart Gunn met Robert W. Lawrence who encouraged Gunn's interest in botany and placed him in touch with Sir William Hooker and Dr Lindley at Kew Gardens. Thereafter Gunn travelled extensively through Tasmania diligently collecting hundreds of specimens of native plants which he described, prepared and despatched to the Hookers in London. He also collected and forwarded specimens of animals, birds, shells, seaweeds and mosses.

Gunn's work was enhanced when he became private secretary to Sir John Franklin who with his wife, Lady Jane, supported scientific endeavour in Tasmania, notably the establishment of the Launceston Horticultural Society and the Royal Society of Tasmania.

On Saturday 23 July there will be a fund-raising dinner and auction in Launceston with Leo Schofield as guest speaker. AGHS members interested in attending should contact Alison Parsons on (03) 6224 9522.

QUITE A PARTY

The 'packers' welcomed three new faces to their ranks in Judy Carrigan, Mary Chapman and Anna Long. AGHS thanks them for their time and also that of 'old hands' – Fran Faul, Phillip Goode, Jane Johnson, Beverley and John Joyce, Laura Lewis, Sandi Pullman, Ann Rayment, Susan Reidy and Georgina Whitehead.

A REMINDER

The Executive Officer, Jackie Courmadias, reminds all members that membership can be paid by Direct Debit – that is, your subscription amount can be debited directly from a nominated bank account at the same time each year. No more renewal notices and no remembering to renew! If you would like to receive more information or a Direct Debit Request Form please call or e-mail the office: (03) 9650 5043 or toll free 1800 678 446 or info@gardenhistorysociety.org.au
J U LY
Sunday 17
Queensland
Walking/Driving Tour: Springfield Lakes, Brookwater & Possum Creek to see landscaping projects in new developments and environment restoration. Contact Wendy Lees on (07) 3289 0280 or tallowood@primus.com.au

Saturday 23
Launceston, Tasmania
AGM at 11am in the Naula O’Flaherty Auditorium at the Queen Victoria Museum (Inveresk Site)

Saturday 30 & Sunday 31
ACT/Monaro/Riverina
Winter Seminar at Orange. Victoria, Castlemaine
Working Bees – Saturday at Tute’s Cottage and Sunday at Buda. Contact: Helen Page (03) 9397 2260.

A U G U S T
2 Tuesday
Sydney & Northern NSW
AGM and lecture by Stuart Read in Annie Wyatt Room, Observatory Hill.

TUESDAY 9
Victoria, Melbourne
7-30pm AGM and 8pm Ron Lycette ‘Our Gardening Ancestors’ 8pm at Mueller Hall, Birdwood Ave, South Yarra. Members $15, non-members $20, students with student card $5. Enquiries: Pam Jellie 9836 1881 pdjellie@hotmail.com

Saturday 13
Queensland, Brisbane
AGM with Nita Lester speaking on ‘Myall Park Botanic Garden’, Seminar Room at Mount Coot-tha Gardens. Contact: Wendy Lees (07) 3289 0280 or tallowood@primus.com.au

14 Sunday
Southern Highlands
9.30am AGM and lecture by Craig Burton ‘Significant Gardens of the Future in Australia’ in Exeter Village Hall.

25 Sunday
ACT/Monaro/Riverina, Canberra
AGM with speaker Ross McKinnon ‘Harry Oakman, first official designer for the ACT’ at Regatta Point Exhibition Centre.

O C T O B E R
Saturday 1
Victoria, Birregurra
Working Bee at Turkeith. Contact: Helen Page 9397 2260.

14-16 October
Perth
‘From Sea to Scarp’ Annual National Conference at Novotel Langley Hotel in Adelaide Terrace.

S E P T E M B E R
Saturday 3 & Sunday 4
Queensland, Glenmorgan
Myall Park Botanic Garden Weekend at wildflower time. Visit the 9oha. heritage listed (established 1940) native plant garden that produced the Gordon grevilleas. Wendy Lees (07) 3289 0280 or tallowood@primus.com.au

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INDICATES AN ACTIVITY ORGANIZED BY AGHS

R E G U L A R W O R K I N G B E E S
Bishopscourt, Melbourne – the 3rd Wednesday of every month. Contact: Helen Page (03) 9397 2260.

COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES
Until 7 August
Sydney, NSW

Until 7 August
Sydney, NSW

Sunday 18 September
Brisbane, Queensland
10am to 3pm ‘Promenade in the Parks: the City Botanic Gardens celebrates 150 years’. A free family fun day – a trip to a bygone era, when promenading, penny farthings and traditional games regularly appeared in the City Botanic Gardens.

20 Saturday – 23 October
Morwell, Victoria
‘Town & Country: Portraits of Colonial Homes and Gardens’ A Travelling Exhibition at La Trobe Regional Gallery, Morwell.

H E R I S C A P E S
Contemporary & Heritage Landscape Assessment

- Vegetation Assessment
- Biodiversity Reports
- Conservation Management Plans
- Landscape Design Solutions

ANNE V. VALE
Mob: 0419 893 523 Fax/Tel: (03) 5427 2150
Heriscapes@hotkey.net.au
AGHS volunteers have joined with the Friends of the Convent Garden to transform the overgrown Contemplative Garden planted by the Sisters of the Good Shepherd. This French religious order came to Australia in 1863 and purchased land originally settled by Edward Curr (St Heliers) and John Orr (Abbotsford) on the Yarra River.

The Contemplative Garden was developed after the construction of the Convent building of 1902. The curved paths and garden beds followed the design style of William Guilfoyle and replaced an earlier garden that had a grid-pattern.

The garden is now open to the public from 9.30am to 4.30pm on Monday through to Friday and a leaflet is available to explain some of the garden’s history and the religious significance of the planting. Visitors can make the circular walk around the Gardens just as the Sisters used to do.

Among points of interest are:

- The heritage-listed Holm Oak (Quercus ilex) representing supernatural power, strength and eternity.
- A privet (Ligustrum sp.) hedge planted to screen the service area where food and linen were brought for storage in the Convent basement.
- A garden bench made from the remnants of a laundry trough from the commercial laundries there were a major income source for the Sisters.
- An old cypress tree (Cupressus sp.): early photographs show this tree was quite large at the time the garden was made. The cypress symbolizes everlasting life.
- The access point from the Rosina building where a Pittosporum sp. hedge once provided a concealed entry into the garden. From here the view of the main Convent building and the vista across the lawn reveal a good example of the ‘containment of vistas’ that Guilfoyle espoused.
- The original herb garden currently in the process of restoration and replanting.
- Recently uncovered, a very old pomegranate (Punica granatum) stands for immortality, resurrection, unity and nourishment of the soul.
- The Puriri tree (Vitex lucens). It is possible this unusual New Zealand tree, not often planted in Australia, resulted from the Abbotsford Convent’s connection with its sister convent in Christchurch, established in 1886.
- The shelter is constructed in the style typical of the late 19th and early 20th century. Originally it had a timber shingle roof. The Coprosma hedge sheltered the Sisters sitting inside from those working in the gardens beyond.
- A very large flat-leaved Dombeya, a rare plant and one of the few in Victoria.
- The large peppercorn tree (Schinus molle) that would have been growing before the Contemplative Garden was laid out. These trees are scattered around the Convent grounds and in the neighbouring Collingwood Children’s Farm. Peppercorns symbolize religious enthusiasm.

Pamela Jellie, vice-chair of the Victorian Branch of AGHS, co-ordinates gardening volunteers at The Convent. Anyone interested in helping with the garden should contact Pamela on (03) 9836 1881.

Working bees are held on the first Wednesday and the third Saturday of each month.