



AUSTRALIAN
**GARDEN
HISTORY**
SOCIETY

Queensland Branch

CONTENTS

Conference talks & visits p. 2
Post Conference tour p. 6
Christmas event 2009 p.10
Our role in advocacy p.11

COMMITTEE MEETINGS

Meetings are to be held in the State Library, Floor 2, Room 2D at 11 am on Wednesday 10th February, 10th March and 14th April (note the change from Fridays).

All members are welcome

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Newsletter

February 2010

COMING EVENTS:

Saturday 20th February 2010

**Walk round Moora Park,
Shorncliffe**

Before popular ownership of cars made it possible for Brisbane people to go to the surf at the Gold or Sunshine Coasts, you took the steamer, and later the train, to Shorncliffe and swam in Moreton Bay and picnicked, dined and danced in Moora Park.

The event starts with byo morning tea in the shelter shed near the Swan Street carpark. Then walk around Moora Park looking at its historic features with a local expert. Also look at recent improvements to the foreshore. Conclude with lunch at Café on the Park, Park Parade at 12.30pm.

Cost is \$10 for members and \$15 for visitors (does not include lunch).

For further information or to register for this event please contact John Taylor on jht@hotkey.net.au or on 07 3862 4284.

The committee is working on the events program for the rest of the year. We will let you know what is planned in plenty of time.

NOTES FROM THE CHAIR

The end of the year has been a quiet time and Society activity will start with the first Committee meeting on 10 February and the first event on 20 February.

Quite a few Queensland members made the trip to Geelong to attend the Society's annual conference. By all reports it was very successful, and Glenn Cooke's detailed account is in this newsletter. The 2010 conference will be held in Launceston.

Organising the 2011 conference at Maryborough is at the top of the Queensland committee's agenda, and we have reviewed Geelong and drawn lessons (the good and not so good- mainly the former) from it.

More assistance will be needed to get Maryborough up and running and we will be asking for help with specific roles in organizing and delivering the conference.

Meanwhile the kilometres are being run up as we scour the Maryborough hinterland for gardens and properties worth visiting during the conference. If you have any suggestions we would be most grateful to hear them

Cheers

John Taylor

CULTIVATING AUSTRALIA FELIX:

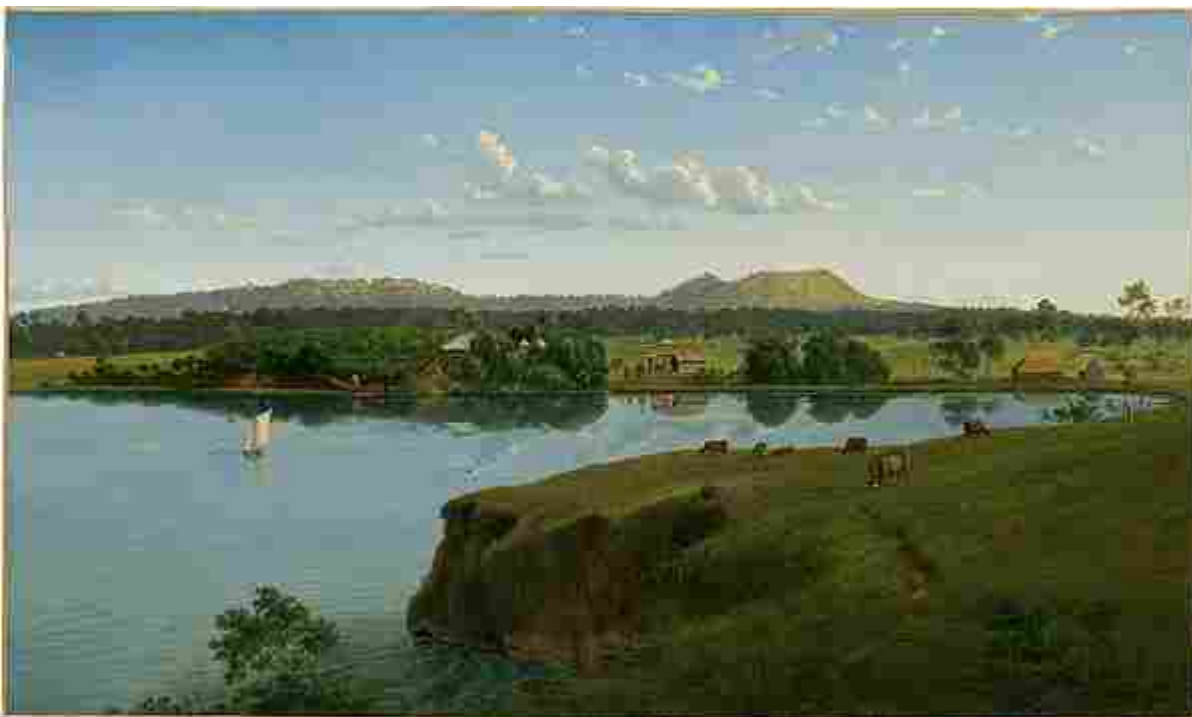
A report on the Geelong conference by Glenn R Cooke

More than 200 delegates gathered at the Geelong Conference Centre for the 30th Annual National Conference entitled 'Cultivating Australia Felix'. The conference explored the theme of pastoral expansion especially in relation to the Western Districts of Victoria which became a rich sheep farming area after it was opened up to European settlement by Major Thomas Mitchell in 1836. (Mitchell later explored western Queensland in 1845.)

The introductory paper on 16 October was by Terence Lane, the former Senior Curator of Australian Art at the National Gallery of Victoria whose talk 'The artist and the country house: the pictorial record of rural gardens in 19th and early 20th century' largely focussed on the work of Eugene von Guerard. Artistic renderings of many properties in the area featured heavily in subsequent presentations.

Bill Birch, Senior Curator of Geology at the Museum of Victoria gave an absolutely fascinating story of the volcanic activity that shapes the Western Districts . . . and it ended only 5000 years ago! He described the area as 'quiescent' and when activity restarts it will probably be in the sea to the south. I was interested to see satellite photos of perfectly circular lakes which are a particular volcanic form.

Harriet Edquist gave the most interesting paper of the day even though she said it was still a work in progress — "The Stony Rises: reading the cultural history of Australia Felix" detailing the record of the stony area in literary and visual history. Timothy Hubbard gave a social history 'Cultivating the maidenhair and the maiden fair — the social role of the late 19th century conservatory'. We learned that conservatories weren't particularly useful in Australia as our climate is relatively mild the humidity leaked into the rest of the house. Timothy would have loved to find a volume on Australian social etiquette . . . Harriet mentioned that a scene in a conservatory features in Fergus Hume's 1886 murder mystery, *The mystery of a hansom cab*.



Eugene Von Guérard *Purrumbete from across the lake*, 1858, 51 x 85.5cm, National Gallery of Australia

After lunch Daniel McOwan (Director, Hamilton Art Gallery) spoke on a c1860 landscape 'Muntham' by Thomas Clark, Ruth Pullin on von Guérard's 'Purrumbete from across the lake', 1858 (She is working on a

exhibition at the NGV in 2011) and Alistair Hope (a descendant of the original owners) on William Tibbits 'Darwill vineyard' c. 1875. Thus ending a heavily 'art' session.

Donna Ellis, who is a horticultural adviser and TAFE lecturer, gave a talk on 'Sustainable management for heritage gardens: fact, fiction or fantasy'. She was most engaging and pointed out that early gardens were just as drought prone as in recent years they had to be hand-watered with buckets.

In the evening the Geelong Art Gallery was then venue for the cocktail party. The **five** Eugene von Guerards, displayed, along one wall of the Gallery reinforced the heavy emphasis on this artist in the morning lectures. At the launch of a small publication Darryl Jackson, an architect as well as being on the Landscape Advisory Panel of the Heritage Council (and 2 I/C of one of the football teams) spoke eloquently about the problem facing Victoria's heritage places. He said of the management of the state's many public (Botanic) gardens: it was not so much a lack of water but a lack of intelligence. That comment deserves enshrining!

At the AGM next morning Colleen Morris stepped down after six years in the chair (and nine on the committee) as required by the constitution and John Dwyer took over the reins.

The first of the speakers on Saturday morning session was Allan Willingham, a conservation architect, who has been researching homesteads of the Western Districts since he was a student. Remarkably, there are more than 600 station properties in the area but it is the 'thickest' part of Victoria after all. He based one section of his talk on the Challicum sketchbook. There was frequent mention of the making and maintenance of dry-stone walls during the conference and he enthused about a stone sheep-dip race at Bessibell. He also mentioned that the peat beds, ignited by the fires in February were still burning in July when the rains came. Just about every property through to the 1880s built new homesteads, some very grand, but I was surprised how many were soon demolished. He went way over time and gave the chair, Malcolm Faul, a hard time when he tried to rein him in but the time was made up after morning tea as Neil Black, who was to talk about Mount Noorat one of the properties we will be visiting, didn't show. Helen Page substituted for Janet Gordon from Turkeith who had a bad accident and spoke of the wonderful times she had as a young girl visiting her grand-parents at that property. Then Catharine Winter-Cooke introduced the property Murndal, Hamilton before John Hawkins outlined the scope of the Launceston conference focussing on a John Gibson who left an estate of 40000 acres including some of the richest land in the country — apparently his present family wasn't aware of his convict origins!

Jane Salmon, the immediate Past President of the Geelong Botanic Gardens (she put in 20 years service) introduced the gardens before we walked the short distance to the Gardens for lunch. A new garden featuring plants native to the area and water-wise plants introduces the gardens. The logo of the garden is the huge *Dracaena Draco* that was moved into place but it doesn't show the steel supports necessary to keep it upright as it is hugely top-heavy. One of the icons of the garden is a Gingko — it is a female and, even though there is a male tree nearby, doesn't fruit extensively. There is a display of geraniums in a separate building which was the result of a bequest and I admired their diversity. There was a striking display of coleus in the hot-house — one black one I last saw when a school student — but I wasn't able to find a gardener to ask for a cutting. Then off to Darriwill where we met the new owners, Douglas and Nellie Ramsay. Again it was good to see owners who did not depend on the property for income as they were making good progress in its restoration. I was speaking to Lynne Walker (Armidale) and telling her about the plans for Maryborough — the Queensland Branch still haven't organised a joint event with the 12 members in Armidale.

We were quite chilled having to wait 20 minutes before the cab collected our group for the dinner which was held in old wool-stores refurbished for use by Deakin University. I was seated next to, Judith Laird, a Geelong/Melbourne girl who also has a house at the Town of 1770 and whose husband, a keen fisherman, is reluctant to depart. I also chatted to Robin and Elizabeth Brown. Elizabeth is a Brisbane girl whose great-grandfather was a doctor on the Gympie gold-fields. During the formap part of the dinner the Landys were thanked for their being joint patrons over the last three years and Richard Aitken made a speech to thank Colleen for her work and presented her with a lovely watercolour of an epiphyllum by Beverly Allen — I said there has to be an inscription to confirm the provenance! (It is reproduced on the cover of the current issue of the Journal.)

When we got on the bus on Sunday we headed west through the gloom but we had to go via the bus depot as the PA systems weren't working (memo to us for 2011). John Murphy pointed out the passing vegetation, especially the plantings of the windbreaks, on the way through the Stony Rises: Monterey Pines (from the 1880s), Sugar Gums (from the 1920s) and now plantations of She-oaks which are native to the area.



Pines in the lawns at **Purrumbete**

The first stop was at the former Manifold property, Purrumbete, (The son, the poet and folklorist John Manifold lived at Wynnum for many years.) where we were let off at the blue-stone shearer's quarters for morning tea. The quarters were embellished with the photographic reproductions of the famous murals by Walther Wither (in the entrance to the homestead) that David Mariner, a local speculator, had made when he tried to sell the originals. The entrance, which was extended by architect Guyon Purchas from 1901 in the Arts and Crafts Style, was quite spectacular with the musicians gallery beautifully carved with honesty pods by Robert Prenzel. In the dining room there are two massive pedestals besides the over-mantle which needs two large Chinese urns but the new wood gilt sconces look cheap. One of the helpers there was literally 'jumping out of his skin' with delight of the recent rain falls which has transformed the area to a lush green— we were very fortunate as we were told it the best the Western District has looked for twenty years.

I walked outside on the terrace to see where von Guerard painted his 1858 views and on the corner is a vintage geranium, Scarlet Pet, which although planted in gravel has formed a striking mound. The establishment is now run as a luxury hotel

On the way to Wuorong, Camperdown we stopped at the outlook which showed many of the features that Bill Birch mentioned yesterday including the perfect cone of Mount Sugar-Loaf with the spiral of a path working its way up. (From the other side, however, the perfection has been marred with a quarry . . . how could they?) John Menzies welcomed the tour into Wuorong with a skirl of the bag-pipes. He described he history of the establishment and described the various components and said that he couldn't think of a sophisticated way to say

‘cook-house’ (so I immediately responded with ‘fowery’!) The property is at the top of a hill with superb views to Bullen Merri crater-lake which was rather noisy today as power-boat races were in action. There is a huge Himalayan tree in the front.

Then off to Meningoort, Brookar which was introduced by Beverly McArthur. Her story of the 19 year old Scotsman, Peter McArthur, taking up the run in 1839 was quite stirring . . . imagine the courage he needed to travel this far across the world to open up virgin territory — of course there wasn’t much option at the time. She has made no attempt to reconstruct the gardens and was quite unrepentant about it. She said was making her contribution within the surviving framework and was quite formal in her ideas: four weeping cherries on the front terrace for instance. There is a large circular lawn in the driveway which is simply mown but which used to be a parterre with paths of raked scoria — that would have looked fantastic in its day but there little hope that it could be restored.

We drove back between two lakes with black sand blowing. It looked like a lunar landscape but despite the huge rainfalls recently the lakes had barely any water. It seems the scientists agree from as study of mud-cores that we are in a period of increasing dryness. I heard one of the speakers say the level of one lake has dropped 50ft in his relatively short lifetime.



Banogill, path to the house



Banogill pond

Next day, beautifully sunny for a change, we went for a drive of two hours through Skipton to Banogill— a stunning garden and easily the best we’ve seen this trip and clear evidence of a (continued) union of money and taste. Surrounding the house are numerous bluish glazed pots of the hardy Indian hawthorn which John Viska thinks might be a compact variety. One of the different features of the garden was the daffodil terraces (which were at their peak six weeks ago) which were established by CO Fairbairn, a notable collector, in the 1930s. According to the memory of a family member who died at 96 years, Guilfoyle, then Director of the Melbourne Botanic Gardens, visited the property and, although there is no documentary evidence, the planting suggests his hand. This is reinforced by the fact that there is the very rare Ombu tree (*Phytalacca diorca*) from the South American pampas of which there is only a handful in Australian botanic gardens. There were also several large

Algerian oaks on the back lawn. The reason why there are no shoots on the wisteria on the vast pergolas when they are in copious bloom elsewhere? Possums!

The next visit was to Warrambeen, Rokewood. This was a garden on a stony rise and was described in an earlier phase by Louisa Meredith who found the flatness dreary. The owner, Trish Taylor, whose grandfather purchased the property in 1902, is turning the garden into a less water-dependent state and has been inspired by the new garden at the Geelong Botanic Gardens. But Southern decorum . . . she apologized for a few orange Californian poppies intruding into the white, blue and pink palette. I was interested to see the everywhere plentiful stones making raised beds for the veggie patch. I was about to dismiss a visit to the woolshed as I have seen quite a few but Clive Lucas went along and I thought I shouldn't be so cursory — when have I seen a blue-stone and slate shingle wool-shed? Despite the substance of the building the smell was as pervasive as the roughest corrugated-iron and timber shed.

The **POST CONFERENCE TOUR** by **Glenn R Cooke**

On Tuesday, 20 October the lucky members returned to the Conference Centre to be collected by Trish Dixon for the Post Conference Tour. It was amazing to watch the pines nearby drop their clouds of pollen and we were grateful we were largely up wind. The bus was an hour late with the pick-up because of traffic. I sat beside Colin Simpson and we compared notes about being raised in the country — myself in Western Queensland and he on a sheep station outside Coonabarabran. He mentioned a visit to the Windsor, Melbourne which was rather decrepit but a wonderful place for kids to explore.

The first stop was at Gnotuk on the edge of a saline lake (seven times saltier than sea-water) of the same name.



Gnotuk, conference participants enjoying morning tea with a view to the lake.

Alan Morris the owner said that the only trees that survived were those that grew by the sea or from islands and New Zealand. The house, which was designed by a local architect, Perry Knight in 1907, incorporated the

original structure in 1907 was very charming — and had a strong smell of fresh paint. One of the features of the garden was a huge buddleia from Madagascar (with scruffy yellow flowers) which I noted were rampant in England when I last visited and Stuart Read confirmed that are banned in NZ. There was a stunning shrub with pendant, bright red flowers called Sacred flower of the Incas (*Canuta buxifolia*) and just across the fence a massive manna gum which was growing in situ pre-settlement. There was a stunning display of purple iris and swathes of crassula with masses of their pale pink flowers (I think I might use in Brisbane as there is plenty of dry shade in my garden). The series of owners have added bits over the years which the present ones have continued though they have had considerable tidying up to do.

The next property was ‘Goodwood’ which had a lot of work done on the blue-stone buildings. The Edwardian additions were removed and the three stone portions linked by a glass walkway along the back of the house which was most effective. Clive Lucas managed to get inside the house (architect that he is!). The garden sweeps down to the creek and has a goodly range of trees including several with yellow foliage including several Honey locusts (*Gleditzia* ‘sunburst’).

I have since discovered that the pretty, yellow daisy-like flower that is thick in the paddocks is Cape Weed — there has been no biological control sorted out as yet. Colleen Morris mentioned that as school girl she made daisy chains out of them. On the tour Stuart Read has been selecting leaves of the feature trees and shrubs, identifying them, and then passing them through the bus with his notes describing their origins etc. Today there have been so many oak species I suggested we call him ‘Lord of the Quercus’.



Pixies in the field of ixia the **The Gums**

The Gums, north of Caramut, seemed to be a singularly inappropriate name for the severe Italianate mansion we saw — the timber work painted a stone colour to match the cement render enhanced the effect of sobriety. The owner, Roderick Agar, has removed much of the overgrown plantings surrounding the circular drive to open the view and planted the axis with clipped spherical box-hedges but I think the formality could be carried so much

further with reflecting pools . . . but for the expense and the fact that it took him 20 years to get up the courage to remove what he did. He lives there by himself, probably in a room adjoining the kitchen as there is a large build up of swallow poop at the main entrance so he can't go by there much. The formal rooms need a major dusting and, dare I say it, a woman's touch.

The only touch of colour in the garden was the swathes of bright pink Ixia lilies (and a few white ones). The Agars (we also were shown the property where his brother lived with an erratic setting of lilac and roses and the first laburnum we had seen and which had been allowed to grow to a tree). The property produces super-fine wool and probably has made good money recently but they probably have other priorities. Hopefully a cashed-up later owner may give it the attention it deserves but at least now it is being preserved.



Strolling through the gates at **Mt William Station**

The first visit on Wednesday was to Mt William Station which is a Charolais stud and has its own sale-ring. The dining room at featured an impressive pair of bowls white azaleas by Melbourne's favourite floral painter, Ernest Buckmaster. There is a superb large photograph of a Victorian gentleman in the drawing room but the owner, Annie Abbott, couldn't say who it was as it was her mother's ancestors. It is a Charolais stud as The huge cream skin on the drawing room floor would suggest. the function of the property. Annie also mentioned that her grandmother executed some fine needlepoint tapestry that featured in screens, panels and on the dining room chairs and which attracted the eye of our Jan Harrington. I wish we could have seen the gardens in the 1930s when there were two gardeners in employment producing large beds of annuals as the place is so uninspired. It looks as if the lavender lads and lassies went through a few years ago and also brought with them the dread box hedges and White Ensign roses. The most interesting thing in the garden is the creeping fig which has mature foliage of a yellow hue and completely covers the arcaded terrace— it looks quite sculptural.

The next visit was in complete contrast. Richard and Jennifer Weatherly purchased Mirranawarra from two teachers who had put 30 years into establishing the house and dam before divorcing. They couldn't bear to see the end of all their work and the Weatherleys eventually purchased the property for half the asking price — they

have a working property nearby. Richard is a bird/environmental artist of note and gave an enthralling talk on the interconnectedness of systems. He mentioned that early sailors dumped a cask of stale water in Hawaii (which was previously mosquito free) the mozzies from there sucked the blood from some missionary's chooks which had some infection which spread to and killed all the local honey-eaters, which because of their shaped bill fertilised a special orchid which then also became extinct. Island populations are especially vulnerable as he reiterated on several occasions in a very well informed speech. We had a walk around the dam to the enthusiastic chorus of frogs.

The last garden of the day was Langulac where Suzi Mann hosted drinks. It was superior by far to Mount William. She said her mother put the Dunraven garden together — it was seen at the Albury Conference— and many of the plants came from there, She said that the only things that get regularly watered is the courtyard lawn. The wet after the drought revived the Green Goddess calla lilies but everything has to be hardy to survive the winds and the drought. But it is amazing the restorative power of several hundredweight of sheep manure. Alan Myers QC the defense attorney for Alan Bond is the local lad who made good. Son of the butcher who now owns the Royal Mail Hotel where the delegates are housed as well as the accommodation at Mt Sturgeon and a 24 acre garden walled in sandstone which was his grandmother's house.

At the Conference dinner I spoke to Keith Jorgensen about agronomy in Queensland. The biggest citrus crops is mandarins which grow better in Mudgeree and Gayndah better than anywhere in Australia as they need a subtropical climate. Surprisingly, despite the importance of mangoes to agriculture, there isn't a collection of heritage varieties. We also spoke about Tim Flannery's 'The feral future' —the niche dwellers will pass and only the tough and adaptive species will survive in the changing climate.

We were all ready to depart at 7.15am from Mt Sturgeon on Thursday morning, our last day. We went to inspect Earl and Countess Stradbroke's property Mount Fyans Station. The Aussie Earl, Keith Rouse, does have quite a colourful history and fourteen children from two marriages. The blue-stone house was impressive and large but there was no garden except for a few trees and masses of belladonna lilies in their season which was now well and truly passed. People forget that there is another Aussie Earl with stronger connections— the 7th Earl of Duse who was born on a cane-farm on Hervey Bay and his predecessor, the fourth earl, was a pastoralist and MLA for Queensland for many years.

The Jamieson family have been installed at Stony Point since 1881 unto the sixth generation. Chris Webb mentioned that the NZ Ringaringa Lily (*Arthropodium*) under one of the trees was also a good subject for dry shade (Note: I managed to obtain some and they are not the healthy looking specimens I planted two months ago). The intense blue *Ajuga* makes a show beneath a pink cherry tree and I was told that it likes plenty of water — which is probably why it failed with me. There are plantings of white and pink species gladioli and of the glossy green *Angelica* (which is the cake decorating plant) which self seeds freely but there was disagreement about whether it would grow in shade. The retaining wall (it isn't really a haha) was completed in 1850 and the asparagus which was planted at the same time, remarkably, is still going. The property is beautifully maintained. On the way out Clive Jamieson pointed to lines of dead grass in the paddock which he had poisoned as fire breaks in case they had fires when the grass dries off.

At Titanga I commented on the Bunya pine which seemed to have sparser foliage than the typical example and the current owner, Chris Lang, said that it was impossible to climb all the way to the top because of the prickly leaves. He also confessed to climbing a weeping cypress when he was six years old and being bounced down the pyramid of the outside branches — until his mother discovered what he was doing and had the tree chopped down. There was a ridge sparsely populated with banksias which is shown in an early photo and which he is replanting with seedlings from elsewhere as not one of the original survive. It is interesting to see the time lapse — the jasmine hasn't begun to flower here yet it was finished weeks ago in Brisbane. John Viska commented on some of the roses growing and said that roses always have five sepals; two 'clean shaven', two 'hairy' and one half and half — I must check.

All through the garden visits Craig Burton is continuing his exercise of drawing up gardens. Paul Thompson designed the new Australian gardens at the Royal Mail (which everyone thinks are most impressive) and Craig will soon be working on a project with him.

The last visit of the day was to a natural garden. Ron and Winsome Vernieux purchased their six acre block because of the stand of some sixty mature river red gums around the sometime creek. They had photos of flooding in 2005 so I asked if the gums were starting to regenerate — yes. The creek drains through a culvert so Ron blocks the outlet with a sheet of steel and the trees remain flooded for two or three weeks as they would do naturally and they have powered ahead. This is the first garden when I could remark on the smell of gum trees. They are assisted in designing the garden by Sam Cox who is a protégée of Gordon Ford — a well regarded writer on natural gardens but who is unknown to me. Thus ended an engaging three days before I headed off to Melbourne for another week.

QUEENSLAND BRANCH CHRISTMAS EVENT for 2009



Our Christmas Event for 2009 was held at Kyleigh and Michael Simpson’s garden “The Shambles”, 85 Western Avenue, Montville. A tour of the garden was followed by an informal launch of Kyleigh and Michael’s new book *Over the Fence and Overlooked, Traditional Plants in Queensland’s Gardening Heritage*. The book is about hardy heritage plants, including roses, that are often found in old gardens and which keep growing and flowering in Queensland conditions. Kyleigh and Michael believe that that these plants are not just part of Queensland’s heritage but offer so much for the future. Many of the plants featured in the book can be seen growing in ‘The Shambles’ The book may be ordered from Kylie and Michael by sending a cheque for \$49.50 to the above address.

Kyleigh has also established a new website at ‘www.montvillegarden.com’ focussing on their garden. You may want to check out their efforts

A FEW THOUGHTS ON ADVOCACY

by John Taylor

Views differ about the usefulness of mission statements, some people seeing them as an unfortunate part of the managerialism which has overtaken government and business, but I find them useful – a good one that is, written to clearly say what the organisation is trying to achieve, rather than mere window dressing. The Society has one, which you may have noticed in the magazine. It is:

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

I think that this is pretty clear, but I wonder if at present we do enough in the “action” department to really be considered “the leader”.

There are quite a few issues here, such as deciding which gardens are significant cultural landscapes and historic gardens, knowing when they are at risk and action by the Society is required, and deciding what action we should take. I will write further on these topics during the year.

However from time to time the Committee does take action by preparing letters or submissions advocating that the heritage values of historic gardens be conserved when developments are being considered or new plans or laws are being prepared. A few of these letters or submissions are attached for your information.

Old Museum Gardens

The strategic plans prepared by the RNA for the Ekka grounds included references to the Old Museum and its gardens (on the corner of Bowen Bridge Road and Gregory Terrace) suggesting that they could be included in the proposed changes to the RNA site. The Old Museum Garden is very significant and so the Society sent the following letter:

Mr Jonathon Tunney
Chief Executive Officer
RNA
Locked Bag 1010
ALBION QLD 4010

11 July 2009

Dear Mr Tunney

THE GARDENS AT THE OLD MUSEUM

The Australian Garden History Society was formed in 1980 to bring together people with interests in the history and evolution of gardens and gardening. The Society’s mission is to be the leader in the conservation of significant cultural landscapes and historic gardens through committed, relevant and sustainable action. The Society has around 2000 members Australia-wide with active branches in all states.

The gardens at the Old Museum are over 100 years old and have survived remarkably well the wear and tear and the changes of use of the building that have occurred over that time. It is one of the most historic gardens in Brisbane and is entered with the Old Museum building on the Queensland Heritage Register. Project Services completed a comprehensive Conservation Study of the gardens in 1998.

We note that a number of proposals made in your Development Scheme Strategy document could have impacts on the gardens, especially new service access to the Industrial Pavilion, new links from the RNA site to the Old Museum and the possible moving of the Exhibition railway station.

The Society does not oppose changes being made to the Old Museum site in connection with the redevelopment of the RNA lands.

We are concerned however that any changes should fully recognise the heritage values of the garden. Sensitive design should work with the existing layout of paths, beds and trees, and could improve the gardens by removing some unsympathetic additions such as the sheds along the railway boundary. There are other opportunities for improving the gardens by reinstating lost horticultural features such as the bush house. Provision for carparking in the gardens should be limited.

The Society asks that we are given opportunities to make meaningful comments on the forthcoming masterplan and are kept informed about any proposals to change significant elements of the garden.

Yours sincerely
John Taylor
Secretary

Unfortunately, despite a follow up letter, we have received no response from the RNA! Apparently this is not uncommon, but we have discussed the management of the garden with the responsible staff in Public Works, which manages the site, and have been assured that the heritage values will be protected. We are following the planning for redevelopment of parts of the showgrounds via the RNA website.

The inability of a public authority to respond to a reasonable letter is very disappointing.

Proposed nuisance tree legislation

The Committee learned that the Queensland Government was considering the introduction of a law to make it easier to deal with disputes over trees – claims that a tree on a neighbour's property is dangerous, causing unreasonable shading and so on. The law is to be based on NSW legislation. We sent the following letter.

The Hon Cameron Dick MP
Attorney General and Minister for Industrial Relations
GPO Box 149
BRISBANE QLD 4001

17 September 2009

Dear Minister

PROPOSED NUISANCE TREE LEGISLATION

The Australian Garden History Society was formed in 1980 to bring together people interested in the history of gardens and gardening. The Society's mission is to be the leader in the conservation of significant cultural landscapes and historic gardens through committed, relevant and sustainable action. The Society has around 2000 members Australia-wide with active branches in all states.

The Society's concern about the proposed new laws is the protection of trees which have heritage values or are in heritage gardens or parks.

We are aware that problems can arise with big old trees in the urban environment. However there is also the community upset which occurs when a tree which has been part of the local environment for many years, and is seen and enjoyed by many people, is suddenly heavily pruned or removed.

The point is that large trees in the urban environment have considerable amenity value to the community, and we are concerned that in a dispute between neighbours over a tree the tree's contribution to amenity of the wider neighbourhood and community may be overlooked.

Clearly the proposed bill must provide a framework in which the court, in considering the making of orders, can balance all the values and threats associated with a particular tree.

We have read the NSW legislation and support the provisions in Section 12 requiring the court to take account of the historic, amenity, social and cultural values of trees which are in dispute. We are less happy with the provisions of Section 6 which removes decision making power over designated trees from the heritage council or local governments.

If Section 6 of the NSW act is incorporated into the Queensland bill then it is essential that the balancing provision in subsection b) of Section 12 is also included. We believe that this provision should be strengthened. In our view, if trees which are on the Queensland Heritage Register or on a property which is on the Register or are subject to a local government vegetation or tree protection order or on a property on a heritage overlay, become the subject of court action, the documented reasons for their having been placed on the Register or given protection under a VPO or other protective designation must be fully considered by the court. This will help ensure that, when dealing with trees with special values, the Court has access to all relevant information.

The Society would be happy to comment further on a draft bill during the consultation stage.
Yours sincerely

John Taylor
Chair

In this case we did receive a considered response from the Minister's office saying that our views will be taken into account in preparing the legislation.

Lutwyche Road Corridor Neighbourhood Plan

This is a draft plan prepared by the Brisbane City Council and proposes increased commercial and retail activity and residential density in the area around the Lutwyche shopping centre. The planning area includes the property *Conon* which has a significant historic garden and is on the state heritage register. *Conon* is owned by Society members John and Susan Slaughter.

We believed that the draft plan did not adequately protect *Conon's* heritage values and so we made the following submission.

LUTWYCHE ROAD CORRIDOR NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN SUBMISSION FROM THE AUSTRALIAN GARDEN HISTORY SOCIETY QUEENSLAND BRANCH

8 December 2009

The Australian Garden History Society was formed in 1980 to bring together people interested in the history of gardens and gardening. The Society's mission is to be the leader in the conservation of significant cultural landscapes and historic gardens through committed, relevant and sustainable action. The Society has around 2000 members Australia-wide with active branches in all states.

This submission argues that the current Neighbourhood Plan does not provide sufficient protection for the property known as *Conon*, in Conon Street, Lutwyche. The house and garden are among the earliest still extant in inner Brisbane. The garden retains some elements of the original garden (which was on a much larger allotment) and has a very pleasant nineteenth century ambience. The garden is significant in its own right and as a setting for the house.

The Society notes that the *Conon* property is entered on the Queensland Heritage Register and the Brisbane City Council's Heritage Register. These listings affirm the heritage significance of the property and require that care be taken in planning and development to protect this heritage significance.

We acknowledge that placing *Conon* in a low density residential precinct will ensure that the property itself will be protected from development, but we submit that this measure is inadequate because it does not protect the setting of the property.

Multi storey development on the land around *Conon* as allowed in the Plan would seriously reduce the heritage significance and amenity of the property. Good heritage management prevents, to the greatest extent possible, insensitive development adjacent to significant properties. This is what we want to see at *Conon* – in our view single storey development only should be permitted on land within 30 m of the current property boundary.

We also acknowledge that the plan includes general objectives to conserve character buildings and the City's heritage, but we submit that these are general intentions only, subject to being interpreted in various ways by different people at different times.

We submit that the significance of *Conon* merits its unequivocal protection by ensuring that the development around it is limited to one storey.

In summary, our view is that the State government and the Council, having acknowledged *Conon's* heritage significance by placing it on the respective heritage registers, should use this Neighbourhood Plan to protect the heritage values of the house and garden and the setting by providing an area around the property designated for development one storey high.

John Taylor
Chair AGHS

The submission has been acknowledged (the submission period closed on 12 December 2009).

I hope that you have found this of interest – if we are to take the Society's mission statement seriously we should be doing more. I would be interested to hear any views members may have on the issues covered above or on historic gardens advocacy in general.