

BRANCH CUTTINGS

Issue 31 - February 2010

This branch is affiliated with the Royal Australian Historical Society & National Trust of Australia (NSW)

Edwardian Gardens: The Autumn of Extravagance by Colleen Morris



Ashridge House and the Orangery to the right viewed from the Italian Garden, a mid-nineteenth century addition to the grounds.
Photo by Colleen Morris

A flyer for the five day Ashridge Garden History Summer School fell from my *UK Garden History* journal in early 2009. The theme, examining Edwardian gardens, seemed of particular relevance for Australian gardens and there was the opportunity to meet program director Richard Wheeler, National Trust Curator of Parks and Gardens in southern England and hear Mavis Batey lecture on 'the Birth of the Conservation Movement'. Scholars Richard Bisgrove, Dr Janet Waymark and Robin Whalley who respectively produced admirable biographies of William Robinson, Thomas Mawson and Harold Peto were among the lecturers.

Repton enthusiastically wrote of *Ashridge* in his *Fragments on the Theory and Practice of Landscape Gardening* (1816). His design for The Rosary is a well-known example and the garden features in *A Book of English Gardens*, a charming survey from 1906. Constructed on a site occupied for over 700 years, *Ashridge*, a gothic revival pile commenced in 1808, has housed a business school for 50 years and the National Trust manages the surrounding estate. The gardens are under the expert care of Gardens Manager Mick Thompson and Foreman Chris Beddall, who also organise the annual Summer School.

Before going to *Ashridge* we visited *Myddelton House Gardens*, the former garden of passionate plantsman E A Bowles (1865-1954), in Enfield on the edge of Greater London. Neglected for 30 years, since 1984 four acres of garden have slowly been refurbished by Lee Valley Regional Park with the EA Bowles of Myddelton House Society. It was of interest

both to see the garden - in particular Bowles's 'Lunatic Asylum' filled with what he referred to as 'demented plants' - and to reflect on the management challenges the property presents. Fortunately Lee Valley Regional Park Authority has been awarded a Heritage Lottery Fund Grant of £487,500 for *Myddelton House Gardens* to complete elements of a Conservation Management Plan. If only we had a Heritage Lottery Fund here!

Ashridge Summer School students gathered in a grand oak-panelled room before visiting *Cliveden*, Buckinghamshire. The garden and walks were originally designed by Charles Bridgeman in the 1720s and in 1855 head gardener John Fleming created the great parterre to the south of a new house designed by architect Charles Barry. However the period from 1893 after *Cliveden* became the home of William Waldorf Astor, heir to a vast American fortune, commanded our attention. The Astors added Italianate features designed to house their collection of Italian sculptures and the Borghese Balustrade to the southern terrace. Amongst the many improvements Norah Lindsay guided the development of the Long Garden. The cultivated opulence that marked this and the Astor's garden at *Hever Castle*, which we also visited, typified the richness of Edwardian England, 'the age of carnival and champagne', as our first lecturer Dr William Whyte described it. It does explain Lord Carrington's penchant for parties and champagne, and his happy boast whilst Governor in NSW (1885 - 1890) that 'we've opened enough champagne since I've been here to float a Man O' War'. The general format was a morning lecture, day garden visit and evening lecture. Mavis Batey discussed the way in which poet Wordsworth gave John Ruskin and William Morris a new perception of collective landscape and a sense of public involvement without ownership, the concept behind the formation of the National Trust in 1895.

Batey argued that Gertrude Jekyll brought gardens into the Arts and Crafts Movement. Jekyll coloured the background of our course - there was jocular reference to 'Gertrude Jekyll's boots' and she was included in Kate Harwood's overview lecture, 'Arts and Crafts Garden Design' but she was not a star in this program.

CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE

Dear members & friends

Welcome to new committee member & stand-in secretary Prue Anthony.

Good news is our application to the National Management Committee for \$:\$ funding was approved, allowing production of permanent labels on all the *Camellia* cultivars in the garden of *Eryldene*, Gordon. This is a project of committee members Rosemary Potts and Helen Bryant working with volunteers to catalogue and label this unique collection.

The Branch was recently donated a complete set of *Australian Garden History* journals by a member and are deciding which library might best benefit: we're keen they're used and so public and research access is key. Member Sheila Simpson-Lee also recently asked advice on where to donate her collections of books on garden history and natural sciences.

Two Branch nominations received 2009 NSW Heritage Volunteer Awards in November – Colleen Morris (recently-retired national chair) and Professor Richard Clough (indefatigable researcher, writer and book donator). We congratulate both for ongoing commitment to research, documentation, education (e.g. *Lost Gardens of Sydney*) and celebration of garden history.

The awards raise AGHS's profile: Colleen gave an illustrated talk to the gathering, including Heritage Minister Keneally. Due to renovations, the National Trust Centre is unavailable for much of 2010. We'll advise members of venues on an event-by-event basis. Our first is a talk by member Jill Matthews on 17th February on Hong Kong's *Tiger Balm Gardens*. Jill lived there for 18 months and did volunteer work rescuing these and *Dragon* garden from demolition. This will be in the Baroda Room in the Rex Centre, Fitzroy Gardens (off Baroda Place), Kings Cross. A parking station is across Ward Avenue, buses go down Macleay Street and it's a five minute walk from the railway station.

In March we'll take a walk in North Sydney, Waverton & Berrys Bay with historian Ian Hoskins and landscape architect David Banbury. *Former BP Park* is an innovative park with stunning views.

In April we'll have a talk and walk around renovated house and garden at *Brush Farm*, Eastwood. Ryde Council's conservation is our focus and its once-renowned vineyards. In May we'll have a day exploring Botany suburb's rich horticultural and industrial past and recreational present.

November events were our *Rookwood Necropolis* walk with Dr Siobhan Lavelle OAM and the Heritage Rose Festival in *Parramatta Park's* Rumsey Rose Garden. The roses were out in both places.

November was the 200th anniversary festival of the Mulgoa Valley, south of Penrith. Settled from 1810, it's long been renowned for colonial farms with significant gardens including *Fernhill*, *Fairlight*, *Glenleigh* and *Winbourne* and James Broadbent's *The Cottage*. The valley is under pressure with proposals for residential development which may impact *Glenmore* and *Fernhill*.

On 29th November we peeked behind the scenes in Sydney's Royal Botanic Gardens central depot's refurbished historic glasshouses. Heritage architects Sean Johnson & Ian Stapleton and Director, Brad Horan showed us an area not open to the public. Our donation for restoration of RBG's Cunningham Obelisk and pond has recently been supplemented meaning works start soon.

A capacity crowd enjoyed a relaxed Christmas party in the cool oasis of Jeanne Villani's *Waterfall Cottage*, Bayview. Many thanks to Jeanne and all for a delightful event.

A current nomination for the NSW State Heritage Register is *Richmond Park*, formerly its market square laid out by Governor Macquarie. Another reflecting the 'Macquarie' theme is Sydney's *Macquarie Place*, Australia's first gazetted urban square, with obelisk marking 'point zero' measuring distances in the colony, memorials and plantings reflecting involvement by Mrs. Macquarie, Francis Greenway and City Council administrations.

Recently advertised was 'downsizing' State Heritage Register-listed *Bungarribee Estate* at Doonside. A key colonial farm with a well-known garden it was long a centre of horse breeding. Its size is being slashed by 'owners' Landcom (for housing) and Western Sydney Parklands Trust, who otherwise manage open space. Highly questionably, the 'reduction' area advertised was smaller than the area now proposed. The public was not aware of this and thus we did not make a submission. What remains will be a tiny local park, of a once 2000 acre farm, ringed with 2 storey housing. More information is at:

http://www.heritage.nsw.gov.au/07_subnav_06_1.cfm?sort_by=name

Recent advocacy included submissions to a NSW inquiry into rural wind farms, seeking careful siting in relation to historic landscapes and to the Victorian Government about the impact a wind farm would have on *Mawallok* historic garden. Others were sent to: Woollahra Council about Hills fig trees v local views in *Yarranabbe Park*; the Federal Government developing a draft National Cultural Policy; the Heritage Council seeking updated garden information on recently NSW State Heritage Register-listed *Simpson-Lee 1 House*, Wahroonga to note its 1950s+ garden and bush garden; seeking reactivation of the State Heritage Register nomination of the *Lewers Bequest* garden at Emu Plains. The branch also had input into a to-be-updated website and brochure outlining the range of Manly's heritage (to be updated soon, at www.manly.nsw.gov.au).

Stuart Read. Tel: 9326 9468 or email: stuart1962@bigpond.com

NEW MEMBERS

The Branch would like to extend a warm welcome to the following new local members:
Richard Braithwaite, Janice Crawford, David Cunningham, Cherry Franklin, Kate Jagle,
Monica Leach, Georgina McCarthy, Fiona & Andrew McIntosh, Helen Nancarrow, Betsy Norton,
Vera Olbrycht & Stefan Gawronski, Jan Roberts, William Todd, Robine Wilson.

AGHS FORTHCOMING EVENTS

FEBRUARY 2010

Date: Wednesday 17th February 6.30pm for 7pm - 8.30pm

Event: *Tiger Balm & Dragon Gardens*, Hong Kong - talk by Jill Matthews

PLEASE NOTE NEW VENUE - National Trust building not available due to lengthy renovations being undertaken

Venue: Baroda Room at Rex Centre, 58A Macleay Street, (facing Fitzroy Gardens, entrance near Baroda Street) Kings Cross.

Cost: Members \$15 Guests \$25 includes light refreshments. **Bookings essential**

MARCH

Date: Sunday 14 March 1:45pm for 2pm (walk till 4.30pm)

Event: Post-industrial Parklands in North Sydney, Waverton & Berrys Bay walk

Meet at: To be advised when booking

Walk ending: Former BP site parkland - 15 minute walk from Waverton Station in Bay Road, Waverton.

Cost: Members \$15 Guests \$25 includes light refreshments. **Bookings essential**

APRIL

Date: Sunday 18th April 2pm - 4pm

Event: Blaxland's Back - *Brush Farm* Revival - walk and talk

Meet at: To be advised when booking

Cost: Members \$15 Guests \$25 includes light refreshments. **Bookings essential**

MAY

Date: Sunday 23rd May 2pm - 4pm

Event: Botany Bay Park Surprises walk

Meet at: To be advised when booking

Cost: Members \$15 Guests \$25 includes light refreshments. **Bookings essential**

JUNE

Date: Sunday 20th June 2pm - 4pm

Event: Vaucluse Garden Ramble: there's much more to this suburb than Vaucluse House estate - enjoy discovering the reinstated interwar garden of Greycliffe House, Neilsen Park, Strickland House's extensive grounds and a couple of private garden surprises nearby

Meet at: To be advised when booking

Cost: Members \$15 Guests \$25 includes light refreshments. **Bookings essential**

Bookings & enquiries for all events above: Telephone: Jeanne Villani: 9997 5995 or Email: Jeanne@Villani.com

PLEASE NOTE: Payment confirms Booking. Payments for all events must be made prior to the event by cheque to Australian Garden History Society and mailed to: Peter Cousens, 93 Lennox Street, Newtown, NSW, 2042 or by **Internet** bank transfer to: Australian Garden History Society Sydney & Northern NSW Branch, ANZ Bank, Centrepoint Branch. BSB 012 040 Account 1017 62565 Payment must include your name and the function you are booking for.

An Individual Membership entitles only that member to the Members Rate.

Members with Household Membership are entitled to Members Rate for anyone living within that household

OTHER EVENTS OF INTEREST

February 5th Illustrated talk on the rich, evolving history of *Spanish gardens* (previewing a guided HHT tour 22/4-15/5/2010) led by Stuart Read, Museum of Sydney, 6-7.30pm free, RSVP bookings/info: www.hht.net.au or 8239 2266

March 6-14th Goulburn's *Festival of Heritage & Roses* - a week long celebration in various parks including *Belmore Park* in the town's heart. More info will be at : <http://www.goulburn.nsw.gov.au/events/pages/14164.html> or phone: 4823 4444.

March 12th Filmmaker Dr Peter Donaldson is making a TV documentary on Sir Joseph Hooker, one of the greatest 19th century botanists. Joseph and his father William virtually established the Royal Botanic Gardens Kew and Joseph had a great influence on the theory of evolution. This illustrated talk retraces his explorations collecting in the Himalayas, 5.30 pm-7 pm, Maiden Theatre, Royal Botanic Gardens, \$18/ RBG Friends \$12, bookings: 9231 8182

April 9th - 24th 2010 *National Trust (NSW) Heritage Festival* whose theme this year is *Macquarie "The Making of Our Nation"* - www.nationaltrust.com.au/events/festival/default.asp

1st-2nd May *Paradise Gardens* open weekend 147 Greta Road, Kulnura. Enquiries: AGHS member, Derelie Cherry on 02 43761330

When Colleen Morris was at the *Ashridge Summer School* she met Bella D'Arcy who has recently started the website

www.gardensandpeople.co.uk

which she thought members may be interested in reading and maybe contributing to. It is about garden design, garden history, garden art, plants, people, garden book reviews, news and opinion - do have a look.

Bella generously provided a copy of *Gardens of Divine Imitation, A garden design timeline from the Renaissance to the Edwardian era via Ancient Rome*, for our AGHS 'library'. It has been deposited in the HHT Caroline Simpson Library and Research Collection at The Mint.

Don't forget to have a look at our website -
www.gardenhistorysociety.org.au It can now be used to check for updated details of events,
membership renewals, gift purchases and routine enquiries.

Post-industrial parklands in North Sydney, Waverton & Berrys Bay walk. From this ... to this



Aerial oblique/photo montage showing the former oil tanks c.1996
Source: BP Australia. PSN Surveying.
Photo montage by Arterra Design for North Sydney Council.



Aerial oblique/photo montage showing 3D digital model of parkland design. Source: BP Australia. PSN Surveying.
Photo montage/3D modelling by Arterra Design for North Sydney Council

Funky new harbour-side parks made from former reclaimed and rehabilitated industrial sites are becoming a feature of Sydney harbour as the 'working harbour' of old gives way to a post-industrial waterway dominated by services, residential and leisure developments. The northern shore west of the Harbour Bridge has been the site of 'new' parks since at least the 1980s – with McMahon's Point's *Sawmiller Reserve* designed by the influential landscape architect firm Harry Howard & Associates. So successful was that piece of 'bush restoration' that many today would believe it predates 1788 – not so! However ideas for replacing industry with parkland go back to 1958 when Harry Seidler and others proposed a Corbusian-style redevelopment of McMahon's Point. Indeed Harry Howard was part of Seidler's team in that unrealised scheme - instigated by concerns over the possible establishment of a cement factory at the Point.

Berrys Bay, upon which *Sawmiller Reserve* looks, has a long commercial and industrial history. It was part of the 524 acre Wollstonecraft land grant of 1825 to the business partnership of Berry and Edward Wollstonecraft. These partners built a bund wall faced with stone from the demolished warehouse to store produce from Berry's land at Coolangatta in the Shoalhaven: beef, bran, butter, hay, maize, potatoes, tallow, timber, wheat and wool. Ships unloaded and took on goods at the wharf in the bay. The town of Berry in Shoalhaven also commemorates this family. Berry had a whaling station in Berry's Bay in the early 19th century, later leasing the site to P & O and the General Screw Steam Ship Co. as a coaling depot, ship repairs and NSW Torpedo Corps depot and Woodley's Engineering Works (which survives today). The Bay was a popular place with artists including Conrad Martens, Lloyd Rees and Roland Wakelin.

The tidal mudflats at the head of the bay were reclaimed in the 1940s to form *Waverton Park* - a typical mid-century public park with its playing fields and bowling greens and an interesting counterpoint to the modernist *Sawmiller Reserve*. But beyond this again, to the west, is North Sydney's latest post-industrial park - the multi-award-winning '*Former BP Site*'. This project was managed by North Sydney Council, with many individuals, groups and organisations contributing to the park's design and delivery over a number of years. Landscape architects Clouston prepared the master plan and detailed design to development application stage. McGregor Partners (now McGregor Coxall) was engaged to prepare construction documentation and oversee the building of the park, following completion of remediation by BP Australia. Interpretive signage throughout the park is by Deuce Design. This is a 'raw' 2.4 hectare park, opened in 2005 with lots of traces of its 19th and 20th century industrial uses, stunning city & harbour views. 'Ghost' spaces where huge BP oil tanks were cut into sandstone escarpments are juxtaposed with steel mesh walkways, stairs and lookouts, constructed wetlands and regenerating bush.

Council's landscape architect David Banbury will explain the park's history, design and management challenges in bringing it about. On the western side of Berrys Bay is Waverton Coal Loader, another huge industrial site with a long history, currently undergoing redevelopment to become yet more publicly accessible parkland and walkways. The walk will be lead by North Sydney Council's historian Ian Hoskins and will begin at *Don Bank House* museum, the area's oldest surviving house - a link to the original Wollstonecraft/Berry Estate and a reminder of the modest beginnings of today's mini-city.

Ian Hoskins.
Nth Sydney Council Historian



New steps from *Waverton Park* entry to top terrace level.
Source: Simon Wood photography



New elevated lookout structure, with grassed performance space & cliff-base frog habitat areas located in former tank footprint, northern end of site
Source: Simon Wood photography

Some good news in Ryde: *Brush Farm* revived and open again

Its very name is evocative of the area's dense shale based and wet sclerophyll rainforest 'brush' and early colonial farms, particularly that of explorer and settler Gregory Blaxland and his family. Subject of a 10 year saga and campaign by the Brush Farm & District Historical Society and others to see the house and grounds conserved and opened to the public, this came to pass progressively since 2007. The house has been adaptively reused and is open for exhibitions, talks, meetings and office use, encouraging local start-up businesses. The grounds have partly been reinstated as a former rural homestead garden with formal drive and carriage loop, shrubberies and suggestions of its rear yard, well and outbuildings. Further works are planned to include a temporary marquee and separate facilities block to allow weddings, events and seminars. *Brush Farm Park* and *Lambert Park* to its south retain something of its 'brush' and the sense of the scale of a once 1000 acre farm.

Ryde City Council's community liaison officer and AGHS member, Robbie Cunningham, is organising a series of local walks in the area and we're part of her programme, focusing on the gardens and grounds. Blaxland was a founding member of what is now the Royal Agricultural Society, on its first board and was striving to grow new crops and improve methods. His estate had early vineyards in two locations south and east from which his colonial wines won prizes from London's Royal Society for the Arts. People tend to forget that Sydney and its Cumberland Plain were the first wine growing and export district in Australia – hopefully further landscaping and story-telling here will help redress that story. Sydney Botanic Gardens - original source of many vine cuttings - have a small 'old vines' display with plants donated from the *Wyndham Estate* in *Dalwood* in the Hunter Valley – making this same point. One day we hope *Brush Farm* will do the same.

Later *Brush Farm* was 'Victorianised' by relatives and other owners, including John Bennett, who developed Rose Hill Racecourse and saw the value of land up the northern railway line, like this. Later again it had an era as the Carpentarian Boys Reformatory, training up wayward boys for lives on farms and in trades. Many worked in its orchards, yards and paddocks before creation of the Mount Penang Home for Boys at Gosford in 1911, when its use changed to reforming wayward girls.

Stuart Read



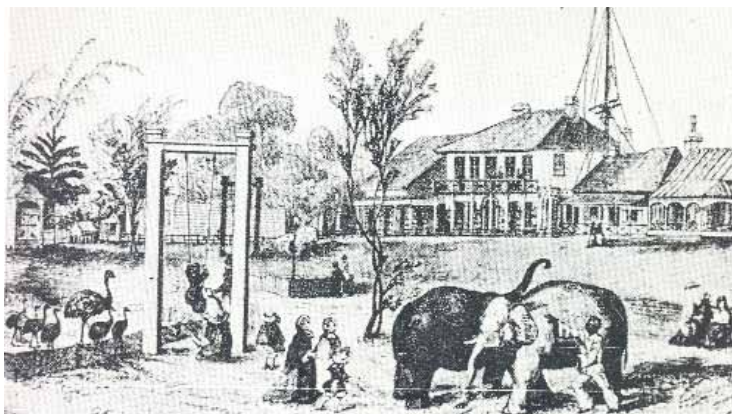
Brush Farm's iron lace-framed view down the drive to the Parramatta River



Brush Farm homestead framed by pepper(corn) and lily pilly trees and shrubberies

Botany Bay day: water, gardens, pleasure grounds & industry

In May we'll have a day getting to know the suburb of Botany better, with its rich horticultural and industrial past and growing recreational present. '*Valuable swampy ground*' was the topic of a relatively recent exhibition held in the library of the City of Botany Bay. This suburb retains some of Sydney's oldest continually operated market gardens, tended today by Chinese-Australian workers. Its swamps held Sydney's third water supply as the Tank Stream and Lachlan Swamps/Busby's Bore failed to cope with supply. Proximity to the colony and later the city have meant that the area Sir Joseph Banks named in 1770 for its botanical richness and recommended for the site of a penal colony while not ending up as that penal colony has retained 'botany' in its uses: agri- and horti-culture are key land uses alongside burgeoning industry, air port and bustling sea ports! Even its industry has not been immune to the charms and utility of horticulture: the significant 1921+ *Davis Gelatine Factory garden*, while altered, remains a reminder of how enlightened employers made their working environments more pleasant and productive for workers. *Sir Joseph Banks Park* and its namesake *Pleasure Reserve* are most intriguing places: representing large scale sand movement and foreshore reclamation, conversion of early *Banksmeadow Park* into a golf course and retention and interpretation of a former Victorian Pleasure Ground – where a private zoo with elephants, peacocks, fun fair rides, music and the like were quite 'the go'. The Sir Joseph Banks Hotel facing this Reserve (and once on the shoreline) retains some of its 1840s-50s grandeur as modern apartments. Landscape architect Bruce McKenzie was involved in the massive reclamation and park creation works, from c.1981. The park and neighbouring suburb, Banksmeadow, commemorate Banks, the great English enlightenment gentleman scientist, political adviser and influencer – without whom we might not be here - someone modern Australia could well do to honour a bit more...



Sir Joseph Banks Hotel and Pleasure Ground in full swing...
(courtesy of 'The History of Botany 1788-1963' by F.A.Larcombe)

Stuart Read

Burnham Thorpe, Gordon, NSW 1936 - 1940



Northern façade, garden and swimming pool

is located at 10 Edward Street Gordon, NSW. Two adjoining properties in Gordon, *Cheshunt* and *Pittmedden*, were purchased to build the property. Their original houses were demolished, however most of their established gardens were retained. The house was designed by Joseland and Gilling for Mr and Mrs John Woolcott Forbes in 1936. The style of the house is Georgian with Mediterranean embellishments. Sixteen staff were employed in the property, including 7 gardeners, to maintain its immaculate four acre garden.

Burnham Thorpe is a palatial house built on sandstone foundations with cream stuccoed walls, green shutters and a roof of green Roman tiles (since replaced with concrete ones by the Red Cross). The house had beautiful interior spaces; double height main (stair) hall with arcaded gallery, black and silver bathroom, billiard room and a loggia. The garden felt like Hollywood with a large swimming pool, desert garden and a variety of palms. The pool functioned like the 'sky mirrors' of seventeenth century French gardens. There were manicured lawns, large garden beds filled with annuals, specimen trees and a large glasshouse. The mature trees and palms were from *Cheshunt's* garden (garden of Charles Smith - an avid gardener). The northern garden slopes down to bushland on the edge of Stoney Creek and its three acres were skilfully terraced to look natural.

The tale of this house and garden is very much one of Sydney town in the thirties and forties and of a man who was one of its most colourful characters. John Woolcott Forbes was a larger than life self-made man. He followed both a flamboyant and notorious lifestyle. As an inveterate gambler he won and lost enormous sums on the races (he won two hundred and twenty thousand pounds in one weekend!) Born in 1903, as Louis Benevento Brondi he left school at nine and worked in many different jobs, including managing a sheep station. In the early thirties he borrowed money from an aunt to set up the first of his companies and changed his name to Woolcott Forbes as a condition of the loan. At the height of his fame he was seen as a financier largely involved in buying and selling shares with a 'Midas Touch'. Forbes' downfall began in 1938, with his income falling and debts rising. He

conspired to forge company share certificates, was made bankrupt and his property, including *Burnham Thorpe* was sequestered. It was sold to the Red Cross and in 1978 to the present owners, the Anglican Retirement Villages (ARV).

Both the Red Cross and Anglican Retirement Villages have added and subtracted to the original building and gardens in what seems a most unsympathetic way.

The ARV is rumoured to be planning to restore the remains of the garden to its former glory – it can't happen soon enough!

Rosemary Potts

The full copies of John's reports can be seen at the Caroline Simpson Library at *The Mint*



Stairs on the eastern side of the property leading to the wild garden

Spurred on by the *Lost gardens of Sydney* Exhibition, John Pearman has been actively researching and writing on gardens of his experience. First came his fascinating talk to AGHS on *Cairnsfoot* in Arncliffe (July 09). Now he has published a 'ripping yarn' on *Burnham Thorpe*, Gordon. This concise booklet with wonderful black and white illustrations and plans, can be found in the *Caroline Simpson Library* (Historic Houses Trust of NSW at *The Mint*). John is a retired academic and environmentalist. He is better known to many of us as the Chairman of Eryldene's Garden Council. *Burnham Thorpe* (now known as *Gowrie Village*)



Cartoon of Woolcott Forbes
Alex Gurney 1937.

2009 NSW HERITAGE VOLUNTEER AWARDS

Very happily, after the SNNSW Branch nominated them, both Colleen Morris & Prof. Richard Clough were recipients of 2009 NSW Heritage Volunteer Awards at a ceremony in Sydney. Rosemary Potts, Helen Bryant & Stuart Read from the Branch attended in support.

Colleen's award was for her long commitment to raising awareness, protection and conservation of garden history through work with the NSW National Trust, AGHS and the NSW Historic Houses Trust, publications, interviews and the wonderful *Lost Gardens of Sydney* exhibition and book of 2008/9.

Richard's was for his long commitment to landscape and garden history education and awareness through research, systematic collection and donation of major collections to institutions such as the NSW State Library and Caroline Simpson Memorial Library & Research Collection at the Historic Houses Trust.

Colleen was asked to give the collective 'thanks' speech on behalf of all 26 award recipients, allowing a further opportunity to give AGHS and garden history a plug and lift awareness in the minds of all present, including NSW Planning & Heritage Minister, Kristina Keneally MP; The Hon Rob Stokes, MP for Pittwater and Heritage Ccl. Chair, Gabrielle Kibble. Their abbreviated citations (as read out at the awards ceremony) are below:

CITATION - Colleen Morris

Through prolific research, writing and community education projects, Colleen Morris has made an outstanding contribution to garden history.

Recent Chair of the Australian Garden History Society and champion of its *Gardens of Memory* project, Colleen served on the National Trust (NSW) Parks and Gardens Classification Committee for 16 years.

Colleen has also prepared conservation plans for Trust properties, contributed significantly to *The Oxford Companion to Australian Gardens*, curated 2008's *Lost Gardens of Sydney* exhibition and catalogue for the NSW Historic Houses Trust. Colleen has also provided a range of public lectures, media interviews and seminars around NSW and co-generated the Trust's online *Colonial Plant Database*.

CITATION - Professor Richard Clough

After a distinguished career as a landscape architect, educator and academic, Professor Richard Clough retired in 1986, but has not slowed down.

Not only has he donated several extensive book and photo collections and writings for public access and use, he continues to research, publish and speak to advance our knowledge of Australian landscapes.

Hidden in the basement of the Mitchell Library, Professor Clough is cataloguing its collection of garden-related material, with particular focus on the nursery trade during the colonial, Victorian and Federation eras. Professor Clough remains an inspiration, teacher and mentor in the field of landscape and heritage design.

The winners of the **HMAA 2009 Laurel Awards** were announced at the Awards Dinner in October 2009. These 'Laurels' recognise the best performers of Australian Television, Radio, Print and Information Technology in the Horticultural Media over the past 2 years.

Congratulations to member Meredith Kirton who was awarded a *Book Laurel* (jointly with Sophie Thomson for *From the Ground Up*) in the General section for her book *Harvest*. The award is made for the best book written for general garden appeal that is interesting and entertaining with good presentation, accurate, informative and easy to read.

Members of the history community will be saddened to learn of the recent death of Dr Bruce Arthur Mitchell (1935-2009). Bruce Mitchell was appointed as a Lecturer (later Senior Lecturer) in the University of New England, Department of History in 1970 and retired in 1994. He was Dean of Arts from 1976-78 and always a vigorous advocate of the university and its unique merits - not the least of which in those days was its manner of external teaching. He was a productive researcher who published extensively, an inspiring teacher and committed supervisor. An expert in labour history and the history of education, in 1975 Bruce published a major study of *Teachers, Education and Politics: A History of Organizations of Public School Teachers in New South Wales*. He plunged into the 'Botany Bay Debate' with *Why Botany Bay: the founding of a colony* but from around 1980 he was increasingly absorbed by aspects of local history and, especially the built environment of *Boooloombah* and *Saumarez House*. He wrote a number of guides to *Boooloombah* and that work was capped by his splendid book *House on the Hill: Boooloombah Home and University*. His enthusiasm for buildings as a means of exploring local history was continued in a series of publications for the National Trust on *Saumarez* as a grand residence and also a place of work and business. A happy collaborator who brought out the best in others, Bruce wrote *Working Saumarez: People and places on a sheep and cattle station* with Barry McDonald and *Saumarez: a history of the property and its people* with his partner and long-time collaborator Jillian Oppenheimer. The Mitchell/Oppenheimer team also produced two excellent examples of family history in the works focussed on Jillian's Nivison ancestors who settled near Walcha. *An Australian Clan: the Nivisons of New England* and *Abraham's Tribe: the descendants of Abraham and Mary Nivison* are models of what family history can be. Bruce's published work extended beyond those items listed here but they indicate the scope of his interests and productive historical research.

He will be remembered with affection by those who knew him and missed greatly by all those who understand the value of local and regional history.

Written by David Kent, Adjunct Professor in the School of Humanities

First printed in the Bulletin of the History Council of NSW, Spring 2009



The view from the edge of the garden across the Topiary, Troughery planted with alpine plants to the Winter Garden immediately adjacent to the *Rodmarton* house and visible from the windows. Photo by Richard Morris

In soft rain we visited *Rodmarton*, an Arts and Crafts country house and garden designed by architect Ernest Barnsley and built between 1909 and 1929. Barnsley's initial garden plan was modified and developed by owner Margaret Biddulph and her gardener, William Scrubey, who had tutored Margaret at Studley Horticultural College for Women. The garden has evolved to a comfortably idiosyncratic melange of plants within an original framework clearly influenced by J. D. Sedding (*Garden-craft: Old and New*, 1891) and Reginald Blomfield (*The Formal Garden in England*, 1901). Described by Richard Wheeler as 'an overblown, blowsey, cottagery garden', it has a mellow pleasure, which fits perfectly with its house and outbuildings and a sense of the layers of history that only continuous ownership by a family brings.

The National Trust's *Standen*, an exceptional Arts and Crafts house designed by Phillip Webb provided a satisfying foil to *Rodmarton*. A conservation management plan was written in 2006 which will guide the long-term 'restoration' of the garden and wider landscape, which was essentially a family garden in a farmed context, the main entrance leading directly into a farmyard - 'very Tess of the d'Urbervilles', commented Richard Wheeler.

Richard Bisgrove gave a frank assessment of William Robinson, who remains an enigmatic figure, as 'a populariser rather than a pioneer'. He highlighted the importance of Alfred Parsons as Robinson's illustrator and Parson's role in inventing the picturesque English cottage garden. In contrast to Leigh Stone-Herbert's generously shared memories with AGHS in Sydney, we skirted *Gravetye Manor* as a group of students might upset the guests. At nearby *Emmetts Gardens*, the serious plant collector Frederic Lubbock was influenced by his friend

William Robinson. He planted numerous, wonderful trees, many acquired in the sell off from Veitch's Nursery, to create a fine arboretum in a natural setting. Dr Jane Bradney lectured on the importance of Pompeii in shaping a taste for pergolas. She discussed the eclecticism of Edwardian gardens and how the dichotomy of ideas - the garden as a symbol of English nationalism and the appropriation of Italianate motifs - were united. This lecture dovetailed with Robin Whalley's presentation on Harold Peto's designs, in particular Peto's own *Iford Manor*. Of the gardens we visited during the remainder of the course *Iford Manor*, which we first visited in 2004, excited me again and Robin's knowledge gave depth to our appreciation of the garden. I love the series of terraces, the influence of Italy and of Japan that is explored in a number of elements throughout the garden and the way the garden relates to its river setting - it's absolutely magical.

Dr Janet Waymark spoke on Thomas Mawson (1861-1933) and his extraordinary career, which increasingly embraced 'Civic Art' or town planning. He was one of the most sought after landscape designers in his time. Mawson travelled to North America on a regular basis, undertook work in Canada and made arrangements for a lecture tour of Australia for 1913. However, in 1913, Constantine, the new King of Greece offered him the opportunity to design palace gardens and a park system and a new city plan. In Waymark's words, 'he left the Australians hanging'.

Our final garden visit was to Lawrence Johnston's *Hidcote Manor*, one of England's best-known gardens.



In *Gardens of Divine Imitation* Bella D'Arcy writes of *Iford Manor*: 'It is a garden which exemplifies a myth of the Italian garden, Peto's fantasy the Romantic Italian garden of masonry and plants'.

Photo by Colleen Morris

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