

BRANCH CUTTINGS

Issue 32 - June 2010

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

GARDENS OF THE HESPERIDES* by Stuart Read

Some of the plants I first remember, statice (*Limonium*) in my mother's vases and in her garden, hail from the Canary Islands: daisy bushes (*Argyranthemum*), cinerarias (*Pericallis/Senecio*), tree lucerne on nearby sand hills, *Lotus berthelotti's* scarlet-on-silver, succulent *Aeonium* and *Euphorbia*. The islands' palm (*Phoenix*), oak (*Quercus*) and pine (*Pinus*), all sharing the species 'canariensis' are ubiquitous in New Zealand and Australian gardens.

Growing interest in their importance for ships to and from the new world since the 16th century led to discovery of more 'canariensis': *Salvia*; *Ilex* (holly); *Euphorbia*

(spurge); *Isoplexis* (Canary foxglove); *Convolvulus* (moon flower); *Hypericum* (St. John's wort); *Salix* (willow); *Arbutus* (strawberry tree): with luscious salmon pink/orange bark – its fruit known to the Greeks as the golden apples of the Hesperides (western islands)*. Not to mention tree heathers (*Erica arborescens*); pride of Madeira (*Echium candicans*) and dragon's blood trees (*Dracaena draco*).

A growing curiosity about sweet wines (Madeira from those nearby islands), Malmsey/Malvasia and Sherry/Sack from the Canaries, Portugal and Jerez, Spain) and realisation of their economic importance from the 16-1800s with colonisation and development of the Americas piqued interest.

I recently visited what the Romans called 'The Fortunate Isles'. They form part of what is called 'Mac(a)ronesia', a 19th century term of English botanist and philosopher (first author of a natural history of the islands) Philip Baker Webb from the Greek 'Makaro' (happy) and 'nesias' (islands). This area includes the Madeira and Azores groups, the Canaries, Cabo Verde and Ilhas Sevagens, all north of the Tropic of Cancer and south-west of Portugal, Spain off North-West Africa. Five days allowed me to visit Tenerife and Gran Canaria, two of the largest and most populated. Not only is their flora exotic, much is endangered.

Rampant late 20th century resort development has taken a toll. Despite having less than 1.5% of Spain's surface area, the islands have over 50% of its endemic (exclusively native) plants (over 575 species of 'vascular' plants in Macronesia, 514 restricted to the Canaries and 57% are

limited to one island). Tellingly none has rivers - adaptation to water scarcity is a theme and reason why many do so well in the Antipodes.

A huge range of altitude (sea level to 4718m in as few as 4km); aspect and humidity (trade winds bring warm air, causing cloud and mist on north/west coasts; south and east coasts are arid, or deserts); topography/geology and soils (19m to 1m year old volcanic islands; some active); and location at the meeting of 3 continents, tropical winds off Africa and cool waters from the Canary Current mean a benign climate – land of 'eternal spring'. Desertification

from deforestation and overpopulation in the broader region (Iberian peninsula, Mediterranean Basin and Africa) have meant they retain flora now lost from this pre and post-Ice Age region; and share characteristics with 'Rand Flora' – arid/semi-arid Africa and the Middle East. First was Puerto de la Cruz's Botanic Garden



Icod de los Vinos' giant dragon tree in its botanic park

(*Jardin de Aclimatacion de*

la Orotava). Established in 1788 and chosen for its climate, to acclimatise tender New World plants coming to Spain (and Europe). The diversity is remarkable: African, American, Polynesian; Mediterranean flora jostle for space. Pride of place goes to a huge Lord Howe Island fig (*Ficus macrophylla ssp. columnaris*) propped by 'Banyan' roots; tall Norfolk Island and Bunya pines; a central circular pond filled with the giant Venezuelan water lily (*Victoria amazonica*), blithely blooming in open air: this crazed European nobles to build glasshouses to coax a flower (e.g. Chatsworth's Devonshires).

Second was *Sitio Litre* (orchid) garden nearby – claimed to be Tenerife's oldest, continually kept since 1774 when English merchant Archibald Little bought it (the 1730 mansion was previously a convent with likely a garden). German explorer / botanist Alexander von Humboldt was feted here at a party in 1799. From 1856 Charles Smith bought it and his family kept it until 1996. English botanical artist Marianne North stayed 2 months in 1875 on one of many trips. Her 832 paintings spanning the globe were donated to Kew Botanic Gardens in a specially built

CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE

Dear Members and Friends

Welcome to all our new members and especially to new branch committee members Gina Plate, Angela Low and Peter Kaleski – it's great to see our branch growing with now some 330 members. We wish a few more would join in on our events; please do, and make yourself known!

In May we had a most interesting wander around the hidden horticultural highlights of Botany Bay's Sir Joseph Banks Park and Pleasure Gardens, reminders of a 19th century 'fun park' and foreshore reclamation of the 1980s, under landscape architect Bruce McKenzie.

In June we'll ramble around the eastern suburb of Vacluse, getting familiar with harbourside mansions Greycliffe House's reinstated interwar era garden within Nielsen Park, the grounds of Strickland House (formerly Carrara) and a couple of nearby private gardens thanks to a generous AGHS member and friend. Giant bamboo, angophoras and figs will be a theme of the day.

In July, August and September we feature illustrated talks on a range of subjects we trust you'll find of interest. Features in this issue give an idea of the July and August talks. August will also have a short branch Annual General Meeting. Please consider if you have some time to offer our committee and get in touch if you'd like to be more involved: helping organise events, writing letters or articles, food or drink...a future Sydney national conference? We'd love to hear from you.

Details on September's two events are elsewhere in this issue.

In October member, well-known historian and educator Joan Lawrence has kindly agreed to lead a walk around the suburb of Chippendale, looking at the remains of our first plant nursery, created by English emigrant Thomas Shepherd. It's hard to imagine in today's dense, gritty Chippendale, but this little-known lost horticultural heart of Sydney is well worth exploring. We hope a Shepherd family descendent can also join us on this gentle walk, allowing us to learn more about this family's involvement in the Hunter Valley wine industry. Also occurring on Chippo's streets is an interesting community-greening project, reclaiming nature strips for food production: a welcome challenge for other suburbs to emulate.

A worthwhile event in October is the Parramatta Park Heritage Rose Festival, in the lovely Rumsey Rose Garden on Pitt Street. A range of related organisations like Heritage Roses Australia and AGHS will have stalls, talks, food and music to enjoy, along with the spring flush of roses...A great time to visit.

When Jill Matthews gave her talk on Hong Kong's Tiger Balm Gardens in February, several members mentioned on the night that they had photographs of the gardens. She said the huge value of these would be that they would be dated exactly which was not the case with many she found in the archives in Hong Kong. She would be very happy to copy these and return them. Jill can be contacted on 9569 5310. Please get in touch if you have those photos.

Northern NSW report

The Northern NSW sub-branch spent a glorious March Autumn day at Saumarez Homestead, Armidale. This National Trust house and garden always manages to reveal something new, and members were delighted to view plants in their autumnal garb with old varieties of *Eleagnus* and *Cotoneaster* fruiting madly. "Mary's garden" was resplendent with a profusion of old-fashioned perennials including pink *Saponaria*, *Scabiosa*, *Achillea*, *Anemone hupehensis* and the sapphire blue of *Ceratostigma*.

Our June meeting takes us to the home and garden of Richard Bird and Lynne Walker at Black Mountain. Richard will regale us with his wonderful history on the old tools in his collection of "Old Mole Tools" but also with some new finds and Lynne will take us on a sculpture tour in their well-planted winter garden. This to be followed with a shared curry dinner by the open brazier!

August 21st will find us exploring three historic Glen Innes gardens including Stonehenge, to culminate in the attendance at the opening evening of our photographic exhibition "Historic Gardens of New England" that will hang at the Glen Innes Gallery until 17th September. Try to plan a visit: it's well worth it.

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:
Olga Blacha, Robin Butler, Meg Campbell, Lynn Codington, Joan Collins, Janice Crawford,
Jenny Finlay, Helen Proudfoot and Lynette Ward

AGHS FORTHCOMING EVENTS

JUNE 2010

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 gardens of *Greycliffe House*, *Neilsen Park*, the extensive grounds of *Strickland House* 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.** See page 6 for more notes on the surprises.

JULY

Date: Wednesday 21st July 6.30 for 7pm

Event: Talk by Chris & Margaret Betteridge - *Four Gardens & a Cemetery - lesser known gardens of Europe*

Venue: Auditorium, History House, 133 Macquarie Street, Sydney.

Cost: AGHS & RAHS Members \$20 Guests \$30 includes light refreshments. Joint event AGHS & RAHS **Bookings essential**
See page 7 for more notes on this talk

AUGUST

Date: Wednesday 11th August 6pm Talk 7pm

Event: Short AGM first. Followed by a talk by Geoffrey Britton - Snapshot of a career in landscapes - two lesser known landscape designers.

Venue: Auditorium, History House, 133 Macquarie Street, Sydney

Cost: AGHS & RAHS Members \$20 Guests \$30 includes light refreshments. -joint event AGHS & RAHS **Bookings essential**

See page 7 for more notes on this talk

SEPTEMBER

Date: Sunday 12th September 5pm - 7.30pm

Event: A lecture by highly regarded UK garden historian Dr Janet Waymark, *There's no such thing as a 'Natural' garden...is there?'*

Venue: Auditorium, History House, 133 Macquarie Street, Sydney. Joint event AGHS & RAHS

Cost: AGHS & RAHS Members \$20 Guests \$30 includes light refreshments. **Bookings essential**

See page 6 for more notes on this talk.

SEPTEMBER

Date: Saturday/Sunday 25/26th September commencing 11am Saturday 25th

Event: A trip to Grenfell to visit 4 private gardens and *Iandra Castle Pastoral Estate*

Venue: Meet at 11am Taylor Park, adjacent to the museum, Grenfell

Cost: Members \$110 Guests \$125 includes talks, all garden entries, 2 picnic lunches, Saturday afternoon tea, Saturday bus and notes

Bookings essential. See page 4 & 5 for more notes on this weekend

OCTOBER

Date: Sunday 17th October 2pm - 4.30pm

Event: Talk and walk with Joan Lawrence - Reminders of Thomas Shepherd's nursery, Chippendale

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

Refunds for cancellations will not be made if less than 48 hours notice is given.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS FOR THE NORTHERN NSW BRANCH

21st August Visit to three historic Glen Innes gardens and opening of Photographic Exhibition at Glen Innes Gallery.

26th September Meeting at "Invergowrie Homestead", Invergowrie.

28th November Christmas party at Graham and Helen Wilson's home, 14 Todd Close, Bona Vista.

17th October 2013 Conference meeting- Heritage Centre, Armidale

For more information contact

President Bill Oates on woates@une.edu.au or Secretary Angela Sole on asole@auzzie.net or 0267711661. All meetings subject to weather.

OTHER EVENTS OF INTEREST

July 28th, Garden Seminar, Lindesay, Darling Point: 4 speakers on aspects of the orient: India, Sri Lanka, Japan. National Trust (NSW), \$75/65, p: 9363 2401.

31st July/August 1st 10am-4pm *Paradise Gardens* open weekend 147 Greta Road, Kulnura. Take a free guided tour of the garden. Explore the many sculptures - the cheeky monkey colony and amazing water fountain wall and picnic near the lakes. Learn how to grow drought hardy camellias from members of the NSW Camellia Research Society. Enquiries: AGHS member, Derelie Cherry on 02 4376 1330

24th October Parramatta Park Heritage Rose festival - 10am-5pm. www.parrapark.com.au

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.

***IANDRA CASTLE* - one of Australia's great historical sites**



A weekend trip to the central west is planned for September to visit *Iandra Homestead Pastoral Estate* and four private gardens based in the pretty township of Grenfell which is nestled in surrounding hills and defined by its crooked main street.

Grenfell is a quiet rural town with plenty of historic buildings and a past summed up by being a former gold-mining town, home of Ben Hall, bushranger, and birthplace of writer Henry Lawson. Situated on the western plains near the Weddin Mountains National Park,

surrounded by canola fields, cattle and sheep farms, it is 364 km west of Sydney with a population 2,200. A highlight will be a visit to *Mt Oriel homestead*, colloquially known as *Iandra Castle*, originally established on 32,000 acres owned by George Henry Greene from 1878-1911. It is of outstanding significance as arguably the largest and most progressive wheat property and wheat farming enterprise of its time in Australia.

The estate has reduced in size to approximately 3,000 acres (1215 ha) and comprises the magnificent homestead (or “castle”), park-like gardens, original workers’ cottages, manager’s residence, blacksmith, chapel and cemetery, wool and hay sheds, silo, other outbuildings, associated structures and surrounding farmland.

Iandra is listed on the NSW State Heritage Register. The homestead is built on the core of an earlier one, rebuilt in early concrete in the High Victorian style. It is also technically significant for features such as early water reticulation, telephone and electrical systems in the house. There are the remnants of its former garden and a number of mature trees. The house is well sited and is a landmark visible for quite some distance.

It was here that its owner, George Henry Greene pioneered share-farming in 1893, revolutionising Australian wheat growing. Share farming allowed an opportunity to maximise production. He was so successful that construction of a railway was necessary to cart away the grain. Greene arranged for clearing and stump removal and provided between 100 acre and 300 acres blocks of land rent free to farmers who did the ploughing, sowing, harrowing and harvesting.

A total of 2,300 acres was farmed in this manner. The grain was divided between the owner of the land and the farmer. In poor years the first 5 bushels an acre were given to the farmer with any remainder split between farmer and owner. To ensure farmers maintained enthusiasm, Greene offered cash prizes for the best cultivated land.

Iandra was also at the forefront of technology with wheat variety trials. The results led to farmers throughout Australia turning to the rust proof variety ‘Federation’. The enterprise produced the largest yield at the time from a single property soon after the turn of the century (100,000 bags). To harvest this required 500-600 men; a scale not previously witnessed in rural NSW. Greene was a prominent and leading figure in rural affairs in Australia and NSW during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. He served terms as the MP for Grenfell, then as a Member of the Legislative Council. He also obtained the rail link for Grenfell. Greene died in 1911 and was buried at *Iandra*.



Manager's residence and stables

Iandra represents a rare example of a complete feudal-like estate established in Australia, modelled on the English Manor system, which had no equal in NSW or anywhere else in Australia.

Greenethorpe village grew beside *Iandra* railway station. It was a model township laid down in 1909 by Crawford Greene, son of George Henry.

Iandra homestead is a distinctive and idiosyncratic example of the Federation Romanesque architectural style with Tudor influences reflecting its dramatic design and situation and its feudal-like role in the history of the area. The residence was designed by an unknown English architect, and is an exceptional example of reinforced concrete. Built between 1908-1910, it has a front wing with external walls being hollow and internal walls solid. There are fifty-seven rooms over two storeys (plus attics) and it cost an estimated 63,000 pounds. The concrete on the exterior has been rendered to resemble sandstone.

DETAILS & COSTS OF TRIP.

This trip has been organised for September 25-26th. Participants will meet at 11am Saturday 25th at Taylor Park, adjacent to the museum, to see panoramic photographs from 1918 and hear Catriona Glanville, an AGHS member, talk about progress in her old garden.

Enjoy a picnic lunch in the park then board the bus to three country homestead gardens – *Bogolong*, *Pinnacle* and *Myee* with afternoon tea in one of the gardens.

An optional dinner at the pub on Saturday night: country baked dinner and dessert for \$15. On Sunday self-drive to view *Clare Park* garden on the way to *Iandra Castle* and garden.

Total cost for

Talks, all garden entries, 2 picnic lunches, Saturday afternoon tea, Saturday bus and notes **only \$110** plus \$15 for optional Saturday dinner. Bookings are essential to confirm numbers for both the bus and for catering. **Early bookings advised as this trip will book out very quickly.** We thank Jenny Heatherington of the Grenfell Garden Club for organising this visit.

N.B. Grenfell is about a five hour drive from Sydney and so it would be advisable to drive up on Friday. Accommodation in the immediate area is very limited with more being available some 30 minutes away in Cowra and Young, both larger towns.



Rear view of *Iandra* from manager's residence'



Grave of one of George Henry Greene's sons



Chapel and cemetery



An Open Day at *Iandra*

VAUCLUSE WALK - PRIVATE GARDEN SURPRISES

Our walk in June will focus on some of Vaucluse's delights, including the publicly-owned harbour-side mansion gardens of *Strickland House/Carrara*; adjoining *Greycliffe House* in *Neilsen Park*; then, thanks to the generosity of an AGHS member Ashley Dawson-Damer and a friend, two private gardens nearby. Notes on the publicly-owned gardens will be given out on the day, but below is a taster about the two private gardens.

Greenway is an excellent example of the design principles which architect Professor Wilkinson used to site his buildings. He undertook a detailed assessment of the site carefully noting the landscape features, particularly the framework of existing trees and rock outcrops. Aspect was also an important consideration and he sited his houses to make use of northern sunlight reducing artificial light and heating requirements. *Greenway* followed these principles by placing the house on the site's southern boundary. It also lengthened and enhanced the view through the existing Sydney red gums, *Angophora costata*. Other site views were also enhanced with architectural devices as in the arches in the entrance court and originally with pergolas around the front boundary, that have now been replaced with columns and wisteria.

The design of the garden was kept "natural" allowing minimal maintenance.

He was quoted as saying that "*My daughter and I, we just like the garden natural – sometimes we come out and cut the grass and just dust over it*".

The terrace in the back garden was created by the present owners, where magnificent views across the harbour are framed with angophoras.

Five years ago a vegetable garden was created in the side courtyard. Existing sandstone outcrops were maintained and dictated the placement of the raised brick and sandstone beds. A small garden bed was also created outside the kitchen area which is densely planted with Meyer lemon trees.

Recently a raised sandstone bed has been built in the front garden and is planted with six *Seville* orange trees.

A short walk down the road will lead us into another private garden. It is entered down a driveway from Fisher Avenue. On the right side is a rocky outcrop extending to the boundary with *Greenway*. The latter is planted with sasanqua camellias and with native shrubs. On the pathway above and parallel with the drive extending towards the house is a bank of *Agapanthus*, a yellow *Hibiscus* and *Spiraea cantonensis*. On the left is a red *Hibiscus* and a *Camellia 'Fuksime'*.

Under the rocky overhang is a small cave. The path drops down towards the end of the house and is flanked by native shrubs and trees, bananas and azaleas. North of the garage are steps to another small garden. At the foot of these is a mandarin, large white *Hydrangea*, a passion flower vine on the garage and pots of *Bougainvillea*. A bed of roses, a climbing '*Peace*' rose and *Bougainvillea* line the north wall of the house. Various pots and a *Stephanotis* climber are towards the front entrance. At the north side are two camellias, one pink the other red, separated by grevilleas. There is a large bed on the east planted with bulbs and dahlias and a few varieties of *Erica*. The south end is planted with herbs. A variety of jasmine covers the fence. The lower eastern terrace is planted with *Magnolia*, day lilies, *Strelitzia* and an orange tree. On the next level are an *Azalea*, Japanese maple, japonica apple, *Abutilon* and *Viburnum tinus*. The driveway is bordered by *Clivia*.



THERE'S NO SUCH THING AS A NATURAL GARDEN...IS THERE?

A talk by a very special visitor from the UK - Janet Waymark

Can a garden be 'natural'? Isn't it an artificial creation anyway? Even though many of its ingredients are from Nature. We may think informality and native plants are something Australians have dreamt up but they're not. This tradition has deep roots in our migrant origins, such as from England, Europe and America with each one having its own history of garden evolution. *Natural Styles* in *The Oxford Companion to Australian Gardens* discusses the changing use of the term. A common theme has been taking inspiration from nature, although this has not always been indigenous nature.



An example of an Australian 'Natural' garden. Paul Thompson 'designed' garden at the Royal Mail Hotel, Dunkeld, Victoria
Photograph by Colleen Morris

Dr Janet Waymark is a highly regarded garden historian. She lectured in garden history at Birkbeck College (University of London) and is now a Senior Research Fellow at the Institute of Historical Research (London). Her book *modern garden design: innovation since 1900*, one of the most comprehensive overviews of landscape design in the 20th century was published in 2003. Her recent biography *Thomas Mawson: Life, Gardens and Landscapes* was published in 2009 (see AGH Vol.21 No1, p28).

Dr Waymark's current area of research is on the 'Natural' garden and she will give an illustrated talk on the growth of the 'natural garden' movement. She has travelled to the USA in her quest to understand the modern day 'natural' garden and is looking forward to hearing our Australian perspectives both in comments and questions.

This topic promises to be our most philosophically challenging and interesting for 2010. Come and be part of this lively talk and discussion!

EDMUND BLACKET & CHARLES WESTON - TWO LESSER KNOWN LANDSCAPE DESIGNERS

After the short AGM, landscape architect and heritage consultant Geoffrey Britton has been coaxed to give a rare talk on two of his heritage projects in NSW and the ACT. Perhaps an unsung hero who deserves more attention, he has been intimately involved with many major identification, assessment and conservation projects including the '*Colonial Landscapes of the Cumberland Plain & Camden*' (with Colleen Morris), the *Castlereagh Valley* (with Colleen & Siobhan Lavelle) and *North Parramatta Government Sites* (with Colleen). Always with an eye on the wider landscape layout, earlier layers less-seen or understood by today's owners and users, Geoffrey brings a trained eye and a mind alive to the sophistication of a lot of 19th and 20th century landscape design. Not one to brag, this is a rare opportunity to learn more.

The Blacket project is really part of an analysis of *Victoria Park*, Camperdown (done for the City of Sydney in 2009) as a partly extant Victorian era landscape design (possibly from James Jones) that was put next to, and eventually absorbed, an earlier grand triple avenue with its two former gatehouses designed by Edmund Blacket. Although Charles Moore was likely involved with the plantings of the avenues Geoffrey attributes the actual avenue concept to Blacket as the whole original entry axis framed by the gatehouses centres on the main portal of the original *University* building tower. The two outer axes also line up with the two subsidiary entries to the main *Quadrangle*. This all sounds like Blacket planned the entire entry ensemble in which case this rather impressive landscape design has gone largely undocumented as part of his work. Geoffrey has a lot of interesting things to say about *Victoria Park* besides this.

The other topic will be Charles Weston's design for *The Lodge* in Canberra and a companion piece – and interesting comparison – for *Government House* at Yarralumla. Former Director of the National Botanic Gardens, Bob Boden had remarked that the design at *The Lodge* was rather domestic and left it at that. Geoffrey's recent analysis suggests quite otherwise and there are some interesting photographic images to demonstrate why. So here again is a design where it's proper understanding has lagged behind and should be better promoted for the impressive landscape design that it was.



The first image above is from the City of Sydney's website archival images – a very seductive view of *Victoria Park* framing the *University* and, Geoffrey suspects, not unlike how Blacket would have liked it to be seen. The second is of *The Lodge* (rather than *Government House*) which is the main emphasis of the other part of the talk.

'FOUR GARDENS AND A CEMETERY' (with apologies to Hugh Grant)

Heritage & museum consultants Chris & Margaret Betteridge are giving an illustrated talk on some of the fascinating designed landscapes they encountered while on a recent trip to England and Europe.

They are teasingly coy about which landscapes but the talk will focus on four gardens in England, France and Sweden. One is being carefully restored, one is a horticultural masterpiece and temporary showcase for work of contemporary monumental masons. Another is venue for an annual festival of landscape design and innovation. The last is a botanic garden of great historic significance. Their final site is a World Heritage-listed 20th century cemetery literally to die for! Chris is a former environmental specialist with the Heritage Branch of the NSW Department of Planning and former Assistant Director (Community Relations) at the Royal Botanic Gardens Sydney. In private practice since 1991, he specialises in conservation of gardens and cemeteries and preparing conservation management plans. Chris is a foundation member of the AGHS. Margaret is a former Curator of the Mint and Barracks Museums in Macquarie Street and former Advisor Fine Arts and Gifts with the Department of The Prime Minister and Cabinet. She helps Chris run their consultancy MUSEcape Pty Ltd and has wide experience in managing buildings and their collections, particularly those still in use in their original settings. Her work with the City of Sydney's collection was celebrated in a recent exhibition and lavish book *Sydney Town Hall and its Collection*. Come and enjoy some places you may have heard of but would like to know more about - or perhaps they'll be new to you. Photographs by Chris Betteridge.





Mount Teide's cone and red Echium wildpretii

gallery. She said of Sitio Litre: 'I have never smelt roses as sweet as in Mr Smith's garden'. A key feature was a towering Norfolk Island pine tree, another, that city's oldest and largest dragon tree.

Third was the lovely old hill town of La Orotava's green, calm heart: *La Hijuela del Botanico* – small satellite 'little daughter' (*hija*) of Puerto de la Cruz's botanic garden (& younger). It's charming and (tour groups willing) a peaceful respite from the town's handsome, built-up streets.

Once I realised that near-daily grey clouds only cloak the hills to a certain height and above is bright sun– I wove through chestnut groves and pines into montane herbs and *Teide National Park*. This centres on Spain's & the islands' highest (4718m) peak, caldera, lava and sand fields – it's stunning with a rich raft of plants and animals. Spring brings 'rocket' flowers on brick/ scoria-red Teide (viper's) bugloss (*Echium wildpretii*). Seeing it in Australian gardens is nothing like seeing drifts across scoria 'fields'. The park has 14 plants found nowhere else and over 80% of the world's volcanic formations in clear view. Volcanoes are copping bad press but are primal forces of creation and fertility as well as destruction, as a glance around the fertile soils of New Zealand's Waikato, Hawaii or Tenerife's Orotava Valley shows: fields covered here with bananas, tomatoes, corn and vines...

A yearning to see the largest dragon tree led me to Icod de los Vinos. It's said to be over 1000 years old - (hard to prove given it produces no annual growth rings). This giant (20m high and 10m in girth) is surrounded by an interesting park showing 4 of the 5 main vegetation association/zones of the islands: (1) *Xerophytic Scrub/Coastal zone* (0-700m) with euphorbias, succulents, daisies; (2) *Thermophile Woodland* (2-600m) with thickets or woodland of junipers, wild olives, *Pistacia atlantica* (a pistachio), *P. lentiscus* (mastic) and palms; (3) *Evergreen Forest* (4-1500m) dominated by 4 species of laurel (bay) including an avocado relative (*Persea*), tree heather and *Myrica faya* in drier areas. The Spanish/Portuguese term is '*laurisilva*' (laurel forest) and they're now so rare that

several world heritage sites here and on Portugal's Azores and Madeira conserve them. These covered pre Ice-Age Southern Europe and North Africa, 15-40 million years ago. The 'sea of clouds' here produces 'horizontal rain' i.e. mist, generating up to five times the water that rain does; (4) Pine Forest (1200-2000m) drier with understorey of laburnums, heaths, *Cistus* and herbs; and (5) *Montane* (1900m+) scrub dominated by brooms, *Silene* and *Viola*.

Last was a day trip to Gran Canaria island to visit *Jardin Botanico Canario 'Viera i Clavijo'* – Established from 1952 by Swedish botanist Eric Sventenius, it is Spain's largest (27ha) and features a range of flora from all 7 main islands. It also celebrates their history of welcoming introduced plants. Impressive was the large cactus garden, a lush area of *laurisilva* (within which Sventenius is quietly buried), palm and Canary gardens. A collection of prickly pears (*Opuntia spp.*) reminds of the importance of cochineal, once a major industry. Secretions of an insect living on these were used for red dyes before synthetic dyes. Arthur Phillip brought opuntias to NSW in 1788 to set up an industry here, partly for the 'red coat' NSW Corps. The Sydney Botanic Gardens once boasted a large collection. Sadly it has gone as wild on the Canaries as it did in NSW and Queensland.



French style Victoria Gardens in La Orotava

Australian plants abound to cure homesickness and it is instructive to see the gusto with which they are used – in streets (kurrajongs, Illawarra flames and Qld. Lacebarks); parks and squares (Hill's, Moreton Bay and Port Jackson figs; casuarinas; silky oaks; bottlebrushes (as standards and bushes)). Less pervasive but popular are New Zealand plants: cabbage tree (*Cordyline australis*); flax/harakeke (*Phormium tenax*) and mirror bush/taupata (*Coprosma repens*). So a few 'golden apples'* found, yet many still on the tree to enjoy – another visit is needed!

*One of the 12 labours of Hercules in Greek myth was to obtain the golden apples guarded by the Hesperides, daughters of Hesperis and Atlas (of Morocco's mountain range and Atlantic Ocean fame), on the isles west of the Pillars of Hercules (straits of Gibraltar). Plato's Dialogues (428-348BC) spoke of Atlantis, the sunken continent in the same location – possibly the Canaries and Macronesia – thought even today to be the tops of a large range of volcanoes under the sea.