

Newsletter May – 2010

WEST AUSTRALIAN BRANCH



Hello members. Isn't the Autumn weather just wonderful and so much more conducive to enjoying our gardens! We apologise that the details of the forthcoming event disappeared in the editing of the March newsletter.

FORTHCOMING FUNCTION REMINDER

Who gives a fig? The Cloisters fig tree and Florence Hummerston Reserve.

Sunday, 16 May, 2.30pm at the fig tree

RSVP to Caroline Grant 9384 3414, email grantspc@iinet.net.au

Cost: Free. Street parking may be available, or the Cloisters Car Park is open until 6.00pm.

Marion Blackwell, landscape architect and botanist, certainly did, and was instrumental in securing the future of the fig tree (*Ficus rubiginosa*) next to the Cloisters. The fig has graced the Terrace since approximately 1888 and faced an uncertain future in the late 1960s when Mt Newman House was built. The Cloisters was constructed in 1858 with a grant from the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge and with funds from the first bishop of Perth, Bishop Matthew Blagden Hale.¹ It was established as the first secondary school in Western Australia, the forerunner of Hale School.

The Port Jackson fig tree was planted when the eastern part of the Cloisters became a private residence in the 1880s. It is hoped Marion will be present to tell us the fascinating story of her role in preserving the tree.

Florence Hummerston (1889-19830) was Perth City's first woman councillor (1951-68). She founded Wanslea Children's Home (for children whose mothers were sick) and the Meals on Wheels service in WA. Phil Palmer, Landscape Architect for the National Trust (WA), will lead us on a walk of the Reserve, the only area of public open space between Elder St and Barrack St.

Other events in the planning stage are the Annual General Meeting in July at a venue in the Avon Valley and a Spring visit to Yanchep National Park at which John Viska will speak about rockeries, and Gillian Lilleyman will tell us about Louis Shapcott (1877-1941). Shapcott was Secretary to various Premiers between 1914-1941 and placed Yanchep under the control of the State Gardens Board. He oversaw much of the work that formed the gardens of which rockeries are a feature.

RECENT EVENT

Sunday afternoon tea party on 21st March at Warwick House, Fremantle

On a balmy Sunday afternoon, the calm before the storm, twenty five members and friends enjoyed a wonderful visit to Warwick House, Fremantle. Our hosts Lorna di Lollo and Grant Wignall offered a warm welcome to their heritage home and garden and most generously invited us to explore both.

Charles Hudson, a prominent merchant, built the Federation Queen Anne style villa in 1898 during the gold rush. It remained his home until his death in 1949, after which time it had various uses. These included Fremantle Hospital nurses' quarters.

John Viska spoke about his input to the garden for the previous owners, and the selection of plants appropriate to the era. Two mature Norfolk Island pines, *Araucaria heterophylla*, are a significant feature of the west side of the garden, much of which has been planted more recently.

¹ Taken from the Heritage Council of Western Australia assessment, *The Cloisters*. Go to <http://register.heritage.wa.gov.au> to the places database and type 'Cloisters'.

A shady courtyard was the perfect setting for a traditional afternoon tea party. The tea was supplied by tea merchant Hilary White, and served with a splendid repast of sandwiches and cakes. Hilary spoke to us about tea growing and harvesting in Sri Lanka, and tea drinking customs while we sampled the varieties he had brought along. Following queries from a number of members as to where we could obtain Elmstock Tea, we are investigating the possibility of AGHS WA taking orders from Hilary for tea at wholesale prices, for sale to members at retail prices, and allocating profits to the upcoming photographic exhibition.

PHOTOGRAPHIC EXHIBITION

The exhibition of early Perth gardens to mark the 21st anniversary of the founding of the West Australian Branch was proposed for August this year. At the time of booking the exhibition at the Perth Town Hall, it was understood there was the possibility of obtaining a grant from the City of Perth worth several thousand dollars to help with the cost of mounting the exhibition. The exhibition is planned to be a free event, therefore there is no means to recoup any of the cost of mounting the exhibition other than via fundraising, sponsorship or a grant. While the members of the exhibition committee are donating their time freely, it was necessary to allow funds to pay a designer to mount the exhibition.

Unfortunately the time available between notification by the City of Perth that a grant may be available (June), and the scheduled exhibition opening (August), was too short to produce the exhibition. The AGHS WA committee felt that the risk that the City of Perth grant may not be awarded, in combination with the fact that the National Management Committee grant of several thousand dollars was contingent upon the City of Perth grant being awarded, meant that we needed to postpone the exhibition. It is currently scheduled for May/June next year, and an application for the next round of grants will be made, and future events will include efforts to raise funds specifically for the exhibition and a catalogue.

ANNUAL CONFERENCE

The Vision Splendid in Launceston, Tasmania, 5th-7th November

The registration form is in the April/May/June journal, out now. Applications will be processed from 17th May onwards. The article in the journal and the information in the form should be enough to tempt you to register pronto! You may register online or by post. Numbers are limited to 200 and Trisha Dixon will lead identical pre (1-3 Nov) and post (9-11 Nov) conference tours to private gardens not visited on previous AGHS conferences. What better way to explore and enjoy northern Tasmania!

NEWSLETTER BY EMAIL

Many of our members receive the Newsletter electronically. This enables us to keep our stationery, printing and postage costs to a minimum (and makes Newsletter time less of a chore for the Secretary!) If you receive this by post it means we do not have your email address. If you would be happy to receive your Newsletter electronically please email your address to the Secretary susanmonger@yahoo.com.au
The BCC (Blind Carbon Copy) facility is used in an endeavour to conceal the individual's email address.

RAIN, HAIL AND THUNDER

We sympathise with members whose homes and gardens were affected by the horrendous hail storm on 22nd March. The trail of damage through Shenton Park, Karrakatta Cemetery precinct, Nedlands and the University of WA campus was most striking as the Norfolk Island pines, eucalypts and other evergreens were stripped of foliage. It was encouraging to note the item in the local press recently in which arborists are optimistic that many of the trees at Karrakatta will recover with the help of cooler weather and useful autumn rains.

NATIONAL TRUST (WA) – JOHN CURTIN HOUSE, COTTESLOE

NT(WA) is managing the extensive conservation work to the buildings and gardens. The property will be known as the Curtin Family Home to recognise not only John Curtin, but to acknowledge his wife, Elsie, and their family. The interpretation plan will cover the family's occupancy of the home between 1923 – 1998.

To catch up on what other branches are doing, and on National Office information, visit the Australian Garden History Society web site at www.gardenhistorysociety.org.au