

NEWSLETTER – NOVEMBER 2009

WEST AUSTRALIAN BRANCH



CHRISTMAS FUNCTION

Sunday 13 December 4.00pm

Venue: Sue and Adrian Monger's home, 9 Rosser St, Cottesloe. Please observe No Parking signs on south side of street. Parking available in oval precinct Broome St

Cost: \$20 includes refreshments, tickets in the hamper draw and the right to answer the curly questions in the Viska quiz! **RSVP** by 10 Dec to Joy Hill 9386 7438 or joyhill@bigpond.net.au

RECENT EVENT

A Day in the Chittering Valley- Sunday 6 September

Members rendezvoused at the Bindoon Arts & Crafts Centre where we were treated to a lovely morning tea prior to a little retail therapy amongst the jams and handicrafts. At the Chittering Museum we inspected an interesting collection, mostly donated by the Dickerson family who farmed in the district. We were transported back to the days of Mrs Pott's irons, bakelite radios and old household gadgets. The Museum volunteers look forward to displaying the collection in a more spacious setting when they move to the Brockman Centre.

The valley was a picture in the spring sunshine as we made our way to Enderslea, the historic property owned by member Diane Pope who greeted us with mulled wine! The house, a single storey Georgian structure, was built in the early 1850's and overlooks Blue Plains Creek. The impressive stone barn, c.1859, the scene of much district social activity in days gone by, has undergone extensive conservation works aided by a grant from the Heritage Council (WA).

An early pencil sketch indicated that grape vines and citrus were once cultivated. During World War I hay was grown and sent to feed the remounts in India. The remnant olive trees and later plantings of figs, mulberries and pears frame the vista from the verandah where we enjoyed a convivial picnic lunch. Thank you to Diane and Bruce for their hospitality and for sharing their treasure at Chittering with us.

WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS

We extend a warm welcome to Ruth Morgan.

NATIONAL MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE NEWS

NMC met in Geelong on 15 October prior to the national conference:

Garden of Ideas: R.Aitken exhibition to open Adelaide Botanical Garden Oct 2010, and run for 3-4 weeks. Geelong & Woollongong Galleries not viable, therefore considering smaller galleries and other venues.

New assistant to Executive Officer, Janet Armstrong, was welcomed.

Gardens of Memory: outline & format suggestions for contributors available.

Assistance to Heritage Gardens: Victorian branch's submission for \$3000 for assistance with tree works at Purrumbete approved. Proposal prepared with assistance from John Hawker.

2009 Conference fully booked prior to early bird date. Agreed that a priority booking system for members to be introduced. Early bird rate to be removed.

Treasurer: audited annual financial report presented. AGHS in sound position.

Membership: total at end of August 1513. Discussion about attracting new members.

Journal: review of content by state; AGH now listed on Aust Government's Aust Research Council website as having "scholarly status".

Conference 2010 Tasmania: 5-7 November *The Vision Splendid*. outlined by Robyn Hawkins.

Autumn Tour 2010 to be led by Trisha Dixon 26-30 April, with Edna Walling focus.

Editorial Advisory Panel: restructure agreed to, with smaller panel. Christine Reid to remain as Convenor. Colleen Morris thanked NMC members, in particular Treasurer M. Faul & J.Courmadias for their support and assistance during her term.

AGHS 29th Annual General Meeting held 17th October

Outgoing Patrons John & Lynne Landy were thanked. Welcome to new Patron Sue Ebury, Lady Wilton.

Treasurer reported on sound financial position. Auditors appointed.
Proposed amendments to Constitution were voted on & accepted.
Dr Janet Schapper and Stuart Read elected to NMC. Nancy Clarke ACT branch rep.
Vote of thanks to outgoing Chair, Colleen Morris, endorsed by meeting.
Presentations were made to the Landys and to Colleen during the conference dinner.

Colleen Morris, NMC Chair, stood down at the AGM, having served two three year terms. The Society is fortunate to have benefitted from the knowledge, foresight and commitment she brought to the position. WA Branch extends its gratitude to Colleen for her great contribution. We welcome Dr John Dwyer to the position of NMC Chair. John is a retired Queen's Counsel, with interests in gardening, books and old buildings and has contributed articles to the Journal, most recently to Vol 21 No 2.

VALE RICA ERICKSON

Frederica (Rica) Erickson AM, D Lit., Cit WA

Rica, a noted historian, botanist, botanical artist and naturalist, died on 8 September, aged 101. Some may recall the talk she gave to members early in 2002 and her delicate illustrations of Western Australian orchids and trigger plants. It is fitting that the cover of the recently published Historical Encyclopaedia of Western Australia (UWA Press 2009) features an image from her painting of a yellow kangaroo paw *Anigozanthos preissii*. Branch members express their sympathy to Rica's family.

AUSTRALIAN GARDEN HISTORY

The latest Journal, Vol 21 No 2 October/November/December focuses on archaeology and its place in garden history. There is an article by Cas Middlemis, a WA member before moving to Adelaide, airing her research into the rotary clothes hoist. The 2008/2009 AGHS Annual Report gives a comprehensive summary of the Society's achievements and activities at both NMC and branch level.

NATIONAL TRUST (WA) - JOHN CURTIN HOUSE, COTTESLOE

The Federal Government has made \$585,400 available for conservation work on the property's buildings and garden. Renee Gardiner, a landscape archaeologist and one of our committee members, has been engaged in some detective digging work to locate "missing" elements in the garden, and investigate early ground levels as part of a garden archaeology project for the National Trust.

OTHER DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

28 & 29 November 10.00am – 4.30pm Lenori Lodge, 63 Lenori Rd, Gooseberry Hill will be open as part of Australia's Open Garden Scheme. The property was owned by gold mining magnate Claude de Bernales in the late 1930's and features stonework and terraces, a handsome variegated elm, iron bark and bay tree.

2010 AGHS Annual Conference 5-7 November: *The Vision Splendid*, hosted by the Tasmanian Branch in Launceston.

2011 AGHS Annual Conference, Queensland Branch 26-28 August, Maryborough.

NEXT YEAR'S PROGRAMME

Earlier this month the AGHS WA committee had a dinner to propose events for the 2010 calendar year. Suggestions included:

- a visit to Yanchep National Park with a presentation from John Viska and Gillian Lilleyman
- an illustrated presentation on the gardens of mainland China from Sue Davis
- a visit to the Cloisters fig tree and Florence Hummerston Reserve in the city
- a day trip to York
- a celebration of camellias
- late spring - re-visiting the McLarty properties in Pinjarrah, Blythewood and Edenvale with members of Heritage Roses, to identify old shrubs

GEE LONG CONFERENCE 16-22 October 2009

The title of the conference was *Cultivating Australia Felix*, focussing on the pastoral legacy of the Western Districts of Victoria, settled after the journeys of Major Thomas Mitchell in 1836. We enjoyed the usual AGHS format of a series of speakers introducing the sites we would visit during the conference. First was Terence Lane, former Senior Curator of Australian Art at the National Gallery of Victoria, who showed a number of Eugene Von Guerard's paintings of Western District homesteads, painted in the tradition of the Englishman and his country house. He pointed out the great amount of detail in Von Guerard's paintings.

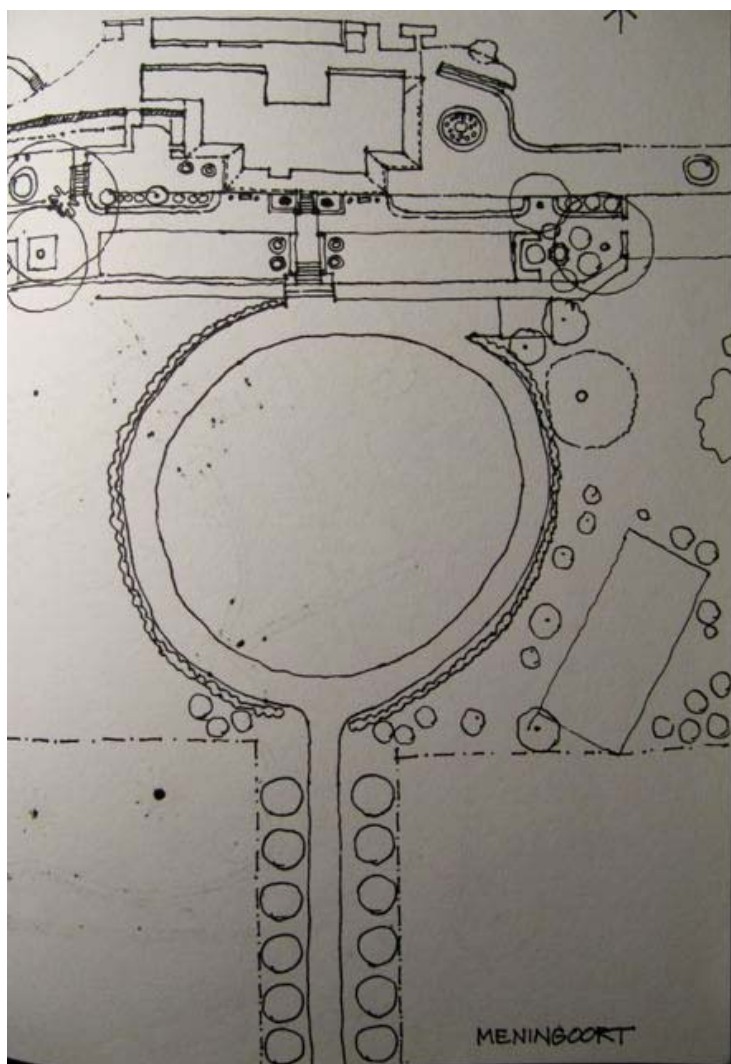
A very informative presentation on volcanoes was given by Dr Bill Birch, senior curator of geology at Museum Victoria. Volcanoes are responsible for the rich soil and lush pastures of the Western District. Many of the district's volcanoes are not extinct, and have erupted relatively recently.

Dr Timothy Hubbard's talk *Cultivating the maidenhair and the maiden fair – the social role of the late nineteenth-century conservatory* entertained us with descriptions of young people seeking privacy amongst the ferns, or in the case of a young woman, an escape from arranged marriage via the conservatory door!

Donna Ellis, horticulturist and sustainable garden consultant, spoke about the importance of historic gardens in the sustainability debate. Historic gardens have survived droughts and continue to delight people. In order to ensure the future of gardens, we need to promote gardening activity and training. The importance of protecting our landscapes and gardens was emphasised during the architect Daryl Jackson's speech at Friday evening's book launch in the Geelong Art Gallery.

During the garden visits, the importance of wool as a commodity in the nineteenth century was demonstrated by the grand size of shearing sheds, many of which are substantial structures of bluestone and timber, still in use today. Having been raised in rural Western Australia in an era when wool was not so profitable, and seeing these properties with their magnificent landscapes, a whole new meaning to the expression 'playing for sheep stations' was revealed. It was evident that many landscapes were in a transition phase, with senescence evident in the conifer shelter belts, and other losses due to the recent prolonged drought. There were good examples of combining new planting with old, established gardens and landscapes.

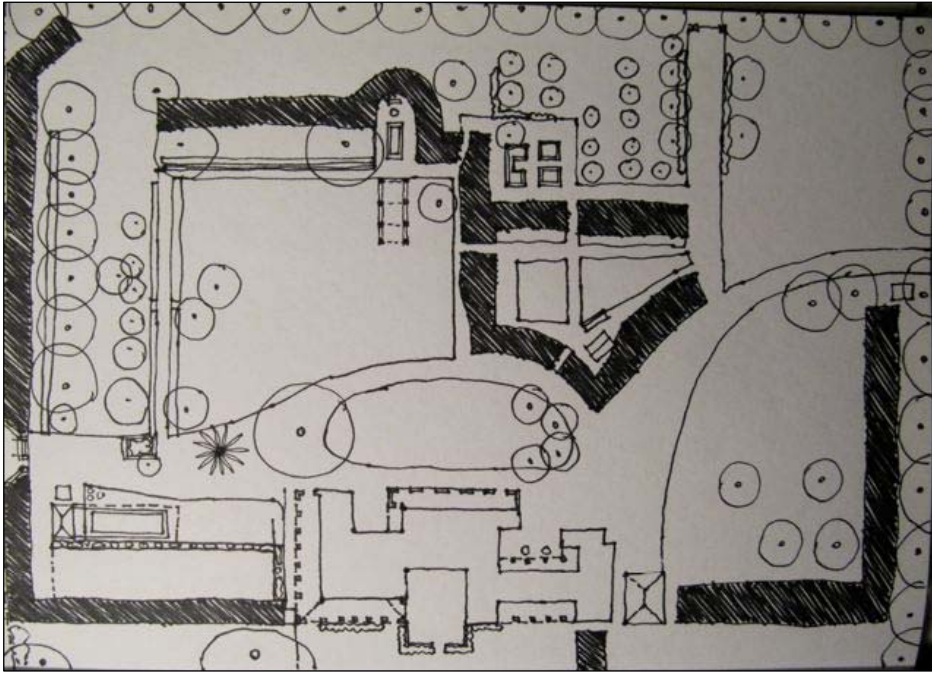
Meningoort, showing avenues of Wellingtonia and circular carriage drive. Drawn by Craig Burton.



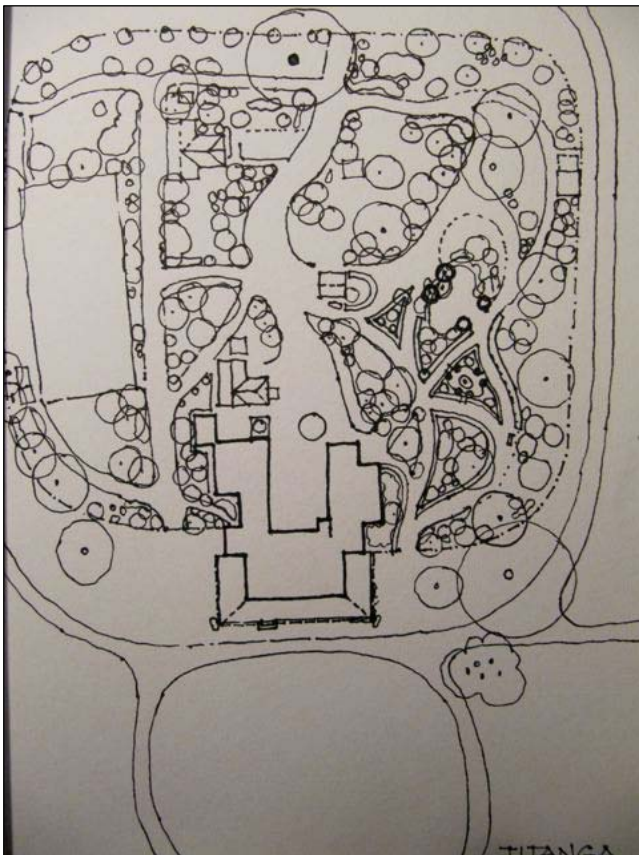
The homestead at Meningoort near Camperdown is single-storey bluestone Italianate with a decorative cast-iron verandah across the front and sides, and a corrugated iron roof. The building is set into Mt Meningoort. Having seen Von Guerard's painting, there was a sense of déjà vu upon arrival, notwithstanding the fact that much work has been done to the garden in recent times, including replanting of Wellingtonia avenues, *Sequoiadendron giganteum*. From the verandah of Mt Meningoort we were able to take in the view of Mt Leura, another volcano we visited, and were fortunate in being able to see quite a distance from the summit.

On the optional day, Monday, we visited Banongill in the Skipton district, hosted by Stewart and Sue Gull. It is thought that William Guilfoyle was involved in the design of the garden. Banongill was looking lush and well kept but we were surprised to learn that it is not well documented. This led to a discussion about how to encourage the recording of old gardens for posterity, and whether instead of awarding essay prizes, we should do more to train students and members of AGHS to record old gardens. Feedback on this matter from AGHS WA members is encouraged.

As usual Trisha Dixon did a brilliant job organising the post-conference tour, with highlights including a visit to the artist Richard Weatherly's studio in the Grampians where we learned Richard's views about fire management and admired his wonderful paintings. Other highlights included the freshly homemade cakes at Mount William Station with its magnificent hedged garden, and the wonderful Titanga, with its old collection of West Australian eucalypts including jarrah, *E. martginata*, marri, *Corimbya calophylla*, a range of Mallee (Mort) and some very old red flowering gums, *Corymbia ficifolia*, – see images overleaf.



Mount William Station, with conifer hedges shaded dark. Drawn by Craig Burton.



Titanga, containing remarkably old West Australian eucalypts. (C. Burton)

Congratulations and thanks to Pamela Jellie and the conference committee for arranging a full and stimulating program of lectures and garden visits. We were able to gain a greater appreciation of the Western District and the wealth generated by the pioneers, many of whom have left enduring legacies in the form of solid homesteads and extensive gardens. The settings of the Geelong Art Gallery and Deakin University's Waterfront Campus, a converted woolstore, for the cocktail party and dinner respectively, further reflected the Conference theme *Cultivating Australia Felix: The Pastoral Legacy*.

The committee extends Christmas greetings to all our members – may the holiday period be a happy, restful and safe time for everyone and we look forward to welcoming you at a function soon.

WA COMMITTEE

Chair: Caroline Grant, Secretary and NMC Branch Rep: Sue Monger, Treasurer: Gillian Lilleyman, Renee Gardiner, Joy Hill, Ruth Morgan, Theresa Putland, John Viska, Lisa Williams.

We're delighted to welcome Ruth to the committee. She is a Ph.D environmental history student and gave a most interesting presentation at our AGM on the factors that led to the rise of native gardens in Perth in the 1970's.

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