

'From Sea to Scarp'

In presenting an overview of the lecture component of the conference, Christopher Vernon of the University of Western Australia highlighted the key points made by the speakers. Commenting on Greg Keighery's reminder that Dutch exploration had preceded British, he believed more attention should be given to this fact and he invited delegates to imagine the possible course of our history if a Dutch colony had been established, suggesting the country would have become a very different place.

Barry Maguire spoke of indigenous people's knowledge of Australia's native plants as food and medicine and their skills in nurturing wild colonies of plants over the seasons. This prompted Vernon's observation that within this indigenous cultural context, all Australia is a garden. This garden, however, intrigued and confounded the early settlers so that scientific study, the collection of natural flora and the acclimatisation of exotic plants were important tasks for pioneer gardeners and nurserymen. Neville Marchant and Carol Hooper effectively covered this theme.

Diana Frylinck stirred everyone with her passion and humour as she introduced the Golden Pipeline. Vernon emphasised that the pipeline was a feat comparable to the Snowy Mountains Scheme but once again, like so many other Western Australian achievements, it has not enjoyed such national and international recognition.

Kingsley Dixon spoke of the growth of the international trade in Australian native plants discussing the way Chinese horticulturists are

cloning species and developing new colour strains in Australian plants for export and use in garden design. This led Vernon to remind us that, for instance, Brazilian Roberto Burle Marx's passion for native flora was prompted by his encounters of it in overseas displays. Too often appreciation of plants species was more apparent in places other than their homeland.

With presentations by Phil Palmer, Tony Blackburn and Gillian Lilleyman the focus turned to landscape design and designers responsible for the changing the face of Perth – the work of John Oldham on the Narrows Interchange, the development of distinctive Joondalup streetscapes and internal reserves later visited in the course of the Conference. And naturally Vernon alluded to the way the Griffins had contributed to Australian urban design generally and internal reserves in particular.

Barbara Dundas brought the spotlight back to the individual interested in preserving a historic site, in her case a house in the significant settlement at Guildford, now under the flight path for planes operating out of Perth. Her paper added much to the visit delegates made to Guildford on the final day of the Conference.

Under the skilful hand of John Viska and his committee the conference was a brilliant success. Who will forget the cocktail party in the revolving 33rd floor of St Martin's tower where we saw the landscape from sea to scarp in the golden glow of a magnificent Perth sunset?

Nina Crone

Below left:

Executive Officer, Jackie Courmadias with Gail Douglass from the Southern Highlands Branch.

Below right:

John Killip from Melbourne with John Sedgley from Metung, Victoria.

Photos:
Nina Crone

