

# Three York Beauties

BY NINA CRONE

York, established in 1851 as the first town beyond the Darling Scarp in Western Australia, is notable for early colonial buildings and challenging climatic conditions for gardeners which made the three gardens visited on the conference optional day particularly memorable.

**Lowe House**, named for the Wesleyan minister who built the two-storey house in 1880, stands in front of the original 1831 cottage known as Fonthill for the spring on the property.

Among the plants that survived the front yard grazing activities of the previous owner are some fruit trees – *Morus alba*, (black mulberry), *Ficus carica* (fig) and *Prunus armeniaca* (apricot), while bougainvillea and ivy cover the remains of the windmill stand. The age of two hybrid roses is estimated to be 80 years and four old damask roses still survive.

The present owner has created a bountiful, rose-filled garden where informal planting has created many bowers brimming with exuberant, scented blooms and enhanced by old gates, pots, grilles and other *objets trouvés* to evoke the Edwardian romanticism

**Tipperary**, 11km out of York on the road to Northam, is situated in the Avon Valley where the garden surrounding the former St Paul's church offers wonderful vistas of rolling sheep pastures and croplands.

Originally designed by artists Teddye and Bryant McDiven the garden consists of walled enclosures to protect tender plants from the elements and has retained many of the natural tree cover – *Eucalyptus wandoo*.

During the McDiven stewardship Tipperary gained an Australia wide reputation for excellent design blending plants, landscape and artworks. It contains a memorial walk to English cineaste Sydney Box who directed the award-winning film *The Seventh Veil*.

Following the departure of the McDivens the garden suffered neglect and weed infestation but the present owners are re-establishing it with generous planting of succulents (*Cotyledon orbiculata*, *Agave attenuata*, *Crassula argentea* and *Aloe arborescens*). *Arctotis* species add a colourful ground cover.

At **Wynobbing House** artist Joan Loring has designed and planted an inspiring garden with strong axial elements, a muted colour palette, impressive terraces, aromatic hardy perennials and peaceful reflective pools. This hillside garden is alive with birdsong, inhabited by whimsical ceramic figures and affords commanding views of the town from the verandah of the Federation house.

The central axial path descends the hill between two ancient jacarandas, remnants of the original garden, as are also the *Cedrus deodara*, *Melia azederach*, *Erythrina x sykesii*. Joan is increasing the number of proven species in the new lower garden adding olives to further the pleasing unity of the garden.

With lateritic gravel paths, hardy plants and imaginative design these three gardens in York are excellent examples of 'no lawn' gardens. They all deserve to be better known.



**Top:**  
A 'found' gate in the garden at Lowe House.

**Centre:**  
*Eucalyptus wandoo* surrounds the former St Paul's church at Tipperary.

**Bottom:**  
*Agave americana* at Wynobbing.

**Right:**  
A reflective pool at Wynobbing.

Photos: Nina Crone



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