

# A 'NEW' EDNA WALLING GARDEN?



BY TIM GATEHOUSE

A bare hillside at Elliminyt on the southern edge of Colac, looking north over the town, was the site chosen for their house and garden by Dr. Graham Brown and his wife Joan in 1950. Dr. Brown was the third generation of his family to practise as a doctor in Colac. His grandfather Dr. William Henry Brown commenced practice there in 1891. His son Arthur was born in 1889, studied medicine at Cambridge and served in the Royal Army Medical Corps in the First World War, returning to Colac in 1919 to join his father's practice. Arthur's son Graham also studied at Cambridge. In 1946 he married Joan Frecheville who had been educated in America and England and worked in the film industry before marriage. They arrived in Colac in 1947 and Graham joined his father's practice. With her cosmopolitan background, Joan did not fit comfortably into Colac and with the care of four children and the later onset of a long illness which eventually led to her premature death, her life became difficult.

Their house which was named Narroghid was designed by architects Yuncken, Freeman Brothers, Griffith and Simpson in their characteristic modified

Georgian style. It was built to the highest standards; the walls were constructed of Mt. Gambier limestone which required special training for the builders to handle, and even the tiles in the kitchen were painted by Neil Douglas at the AMB (Arthur Merric Boyd) Pottery. The built-in bookcases in the long corridors reflected the family's love of reading. Narroghid was furnished with antique pieces from Joan's family.

Gardening was another enthusiasm. Except for a few existing fruit trees, photographs taken during the construction of the house in 1950 show it rising in a bare paddock, indicating that the mature garden which exists today was grown from scratch. Joan and Graham were both hardworking, hands-on gardeners for as long as Joan's health permitted. In a letter to a friend in 1966 she wrote, 'My garden I am afraid has had to be let go. With all the expenses of me we cannot afford a gardener ... But the general layout is still pleasant. The two acres of trees we planted are now a fine forest, or to be correct, bush.' Joan died in 1967 and Graham's health declined to the extent that he had to retire in 1971, after which Narroghid was sold. Graham died in 1982.



North side of "Narroghid" house viewed from the bush garden.

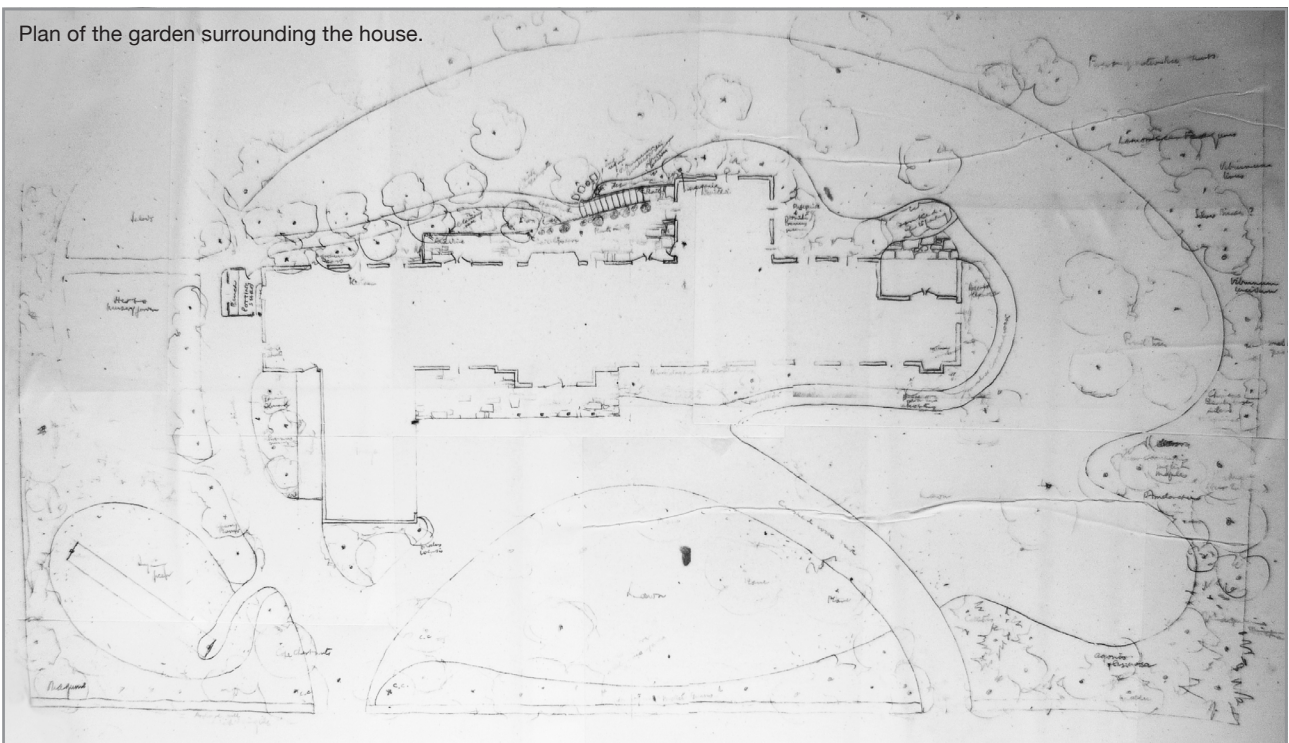




The bush garden in the 1950s.



Commencement of building with Mt Gambier limestone.



Plan of the garden surrounding the house.

Given the care and expense which were lavished on the house, was there also a master hand responsible for the design of the garden? Family memories transmitted to subsequent owners credited Edna Walling with the design. Amongst her papers is a reference to 'Garden Sketch for Dr. Brown', but no other documentary evidence was available until a few years ago a daughter of Joan and Graham Brown called unexpectedly on the present owners and gave them a plant list and garden plans. They did not include water colour plans of the type produced by Edna Walling, but the pen and ink plans are characteristic of her style, as is the plant list.

The plans comprise three sheets. The first is a sketch plan of the area immediately surrounding the house, showing its footprint and other features like the semi-circular driveway, potting shed and clothes drying yard. Although the positions of many plants are indicated, few are named. The locations of the doors and windows of the house are included, which may indicate a wish to maximise the views of the garden.

The second sheet is a sketch plan of the site showing the footprint of the house, the driveway to the south of the house and the terrace and lawn to the north. To the east are existing fruit trees and to the west the





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