

Australian Garden History Society

West Australian Branch

Winter Newsletter 2021

The Australian Garden History Society promotes awareness and conservation of significant gardens and cultural landscapes through engagement, research, advocacy and activities.



Hyde Park

In this issue we have two stories about Hyde Park. Firstly, the City of Vincent has decided to continue with its intention of setting a precedent by allowing a permanent commercial venture in a State Heritage listed park. Read the full article in the **Landscapes at Risk – AGHS Advocacy Issues** section of this newsletter. On a more fun note there is a review of the Hyde Park Fountain Walk with Rodney O'Brien which was held on 12th June.

Diary Dates

FULL DETAILS PAGE 13

WA Branch: AGM

Sunday, 8th August 2021, 2pm at Halliday House, 114 King William Street, Bayswater.

WA Branch: Christmas Function

Sunday, 5th December 2021

Forgotten Female Farmers

Welcome to our guest writer Anne Chapple, Secretary, Friends of ANZAC Cottage Inc. Anne has contributed an article about the Women's Land Army in WA which highlights the little-known story of our Forgotten Female Farmers. Thanks Anne!

John Viska, Chair, AGHS WA Branch

West Australian Branch

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West Australian Branch Committee

Chair: John Viska (johnviska@gmail.com)

Secretary: Lynette Petersen

Treasurer: Sue Davis

NMC Representative: Patsy Vizents

Membership: Sue Monger

Webpage & Newsletter: Lyn Oliver

General Committee: Boris Roglich, Sue Medalia

Australian Garden History Society Inc.
ABN 97 291 212 843

Welcome to the West Australian Branch. Our Branch has approximately 55 members throughout the state. We conduct numerous events during the year, including lectures and garden visits. Members, guests and visitors are welcome to all events. We communicate with our members by newsletter, email and the AGHS website for all events.

<https://www.gardenhistorysociety.org.au>
info@gardenhistorysociety.org.au

John Viska Honorary Life Membership of AGHS Patsy Vizents

In April of this year, our Chairman John Viska was awarded an Honorary Life Membership of the Australian Garden History Society. This is rarely awarded but the West Australian Branch, prompted by Ros Stewart, nominated John because of his ongoing and generous contribution to the Society in the 30+ years of him having taken up membership. It is fair to say that John's knowledge of botany and horticulture, plus his enthusiasm, generosity and ability to organise events (with help of course), has all contributed to the national organisation honouring him with a Life Membership.

Quite an achievement John, congratulations.



John Viska

Image P Vizents

Landscapes at Risk – AGHS Advocacy Issues

Hyde Park Kiosk *John Viska, Chairman AGHS WA*

Last month, the City of Vincent decided to continue with its intention of setting a precedent by allowing a permanent commercial venture in a State Heritage listed park. A proposal for converting the gardener's storage shed to a permanent commercial space by selling café style food had been announced by the Mayor in 2020.

The same proposal had been put forward in 2014 and due to ratepayer's concerns a public meeting was called by the former Mayor John Carey. At that meeting the decision was made to trial a coffee van instead of converting an existing building and for the last 6 years this has been in operation.

As Hyde Park is on the AGHS Landscapes at Risk members were asked to make submissions. Research showed that the land was set aside for Recreational Purposes solely and the WA branch brought this to the attention of the City of Vincent through written submissions. In an hour long meeting with the Mayor the WA branch Chairman, John Viska put forward that the 2003 Conservation Plan for Hyde Park had graded the area as of Considerable Significance.

As the park was entered onto the State Register for Heritage Places in 1998 submissions were also made to the Heritage Council of Western Australia (HECWA) through the Chairman informing them of the impact this action will have on the fabric of the place, namely increased commercial activity in the immediate vicinity of the 120-year-old Moreton Bay figs and London plane trees.

The local press was also supportive and published an article based upon the branch's stand. At two Council meetings last month the Chairman put forward the case of why the City of Vincent should not go ahead with the project but unfortunately the councillors could not be swayed. They resolved to advertise Expressions of Interest in their next step of making the venture a reality by selecting a tenderer. The issue is now with the Heritage Council who will have the final decision on whether the proposal is allowed to proceed.

Kings Park Cable Car *Lyn Oliver*

As you are aware, AGHS WA Branch supports Kings Park Botanical Gardens and their volunteer agencies in opposing the proposed Kings Park Cable Car.

Recently, the new Kings Park and Botanic Garden Management Plan 2021 - 2026 was launched after approval by the Minister for Environment, Climate Action and Commerce Hon Amber-Jade Sanderson. The plan will guide park management over the next five years.

Section 5 Amenity and Infrastructure of the plan lists as one of their key management initiatives to "Explore options and opportunities to establish new linkages to reconnect Kings Park and the Swan River."

The accompanying plan does not include the cable car proposal location but instead there are three 5.8 indicators near the old Brewery/Kennedy Fountain and then further around at Crawley Steps to give more access to the site.

The WA Branch will continue to monitor the issue.

The full management plan is available at
https://www.dbca.wa.gov.au/sites/default/files/pl_mp_kpbg_2021-26_0.pdf

Wirra Willa Gardens Armadale John Viska

Wirra Willa Gardens, Armadale, has been recently placed on the State Register of Historic Places. This important 3.45 acre garden was established in the 1930's by Barbara Whitehall and Evelyn Broadley. The microclimate, the rich loam soil, protected position and close proximity to Neerigen Brook made it an ideal location to establish a cool climate garden.

Early plantings included a Cape chestnut *Calodendrum capense*, Copper Beech *Fagus sylvatica* 'Purpurea' and Japanese maples *Acer palmatum* and today the garden has matured with many examples of rare tree and shrubs.

The newly formed WA branch of the AGHS viewed the property in 1989 on their first garden visit event. At that time the property was in ownership of the Barrett family, having purchased it in 1977 from Mary and Jim Hargreaves. Mary, a keen plants person and a founding member of the branch, had during her stewardship introduced many cool climate plants such as camellias, magnolias, swamp cypress, blue cedar and heritage roses.

When the upkeep became an issue, the Barretts sold it to the present owners in 2005. Members, who attended the 2017 AGM held at the Narrogin Inn Armadale, may remember viewing the garden from the boundary and being concerned at its state. Consequently, it was resolved to bring it to the attention of the Heritage Council and City of Armadale.

In March this year the branch was contacted by HECWA to endorse the action of having the property placed on the Permanent Register which was announced officially on June 14th by the Minister for Heritage.

This positive action will enable the current owner to apply for heritage grants, offset the cost of maintenance and bring the garden back to a reasonable state by developing a management plan for its future.

For further details see Wirra Willa Gardens Armadale - inHerit on the State Heritage Office Website.

<http://inherit.stateheritage.wa.gov.au/Public/Inventory/Details/3047c423-8487-4ff9-b508-42c29ee71a5d>

Forgotten Female Farmers Anne Chapple, Secretary, Friends of ANZAC Cottage Inc

With Japan's entry in the Second World War as an adversary, the resulting understandable alarm raised in Australia, highlighting the need for more men for the defence forces was imperative, and so many so far 'protected' professions, including farmers and farm workers were called upon to increase the ranks.

This left a gap in the food producers of the country. Given the success in World War I of the British Land Army, Australia moved to enlist the younger female population to take the place of those who had previously worked on the land. And so the Australian Women's Land Army was established in July 1942.

Sadly, the women: wives, daughters, relatives and friends who were already working as farm hands were not eligible to join the Australian Women's Land Army which meant that many of the 18-to-50 year old aged cohort who did join up were previously city workers with a limited knowledge of farming practices. This led to some unfortunate occurrences in the beginning, but after a training regime was instituted at Fairbridge near Pinjarra, the 'land girls' were more familiar with farm chores and tasks.

Most of the 'girls' faced with previously unthought of challenges such as milking cows, pruning trees, burying deceased animals, cleaning out stables and pig sties, handling horses, ploughing and harvesting handled their tasks with aplomb. And there were more challenges in the shape of jealous farmer's wives, disparaging remarks from old farmers who doubted their capability and lack of recognition.

Sadly, the Australian Women's Land Army was never regarded as a military body and even more unfortunately, they were not given any formal recognition until 1995 when the surviving members were awarded the civilian services medal. As a member who served said:

"The Land Army was hard work, but we all felt as though we were doing something worthwhile, contributing to the war effort. We were and are very proud to be land girls and members of the AWLA, and, as many will tell you, they were the best years of our lives."

From a talk given at ANZAC Cottage in March, in recognition of Women's History Month.





Anne Chapple, Secretary, Friends of ANZAC Cottage Inc (centre), presented this very interesting talk in March 2021 in recognition of Women's History Month. Attendees included AGHS WA members Di Pope (left) and Lyn Oliver (right).

ANZAC Cottage is a small cottage in Mount Hawthorn, built in one day in February 1916 as a memorial to the gallant soldiers who fought at Gallipoli and as a home for a returned injured soldier and his family. It is open to the public on the first Sunday of each month (except January, February and May) from 1pm to 4pm. More information can be found at <https://anzaccottage.com.au/>

New Members Sue Monger

We were pleased to welcome Helen Martin-Beck and Caroline Bray at the event on 2nd May. Caroline was a member of the NSW branch and has recently moved to Perth to be near family.

National Management Committee Patsy Vizents

Members should have received notification about the AGHS Constitution in the May E-News communication from Head office. Comments and input have been called for by the end of May. The link to the Constitution was introduced with reasons why it has been necessary to update the Constitution. *The current Australian Garden History Society's Constitution was written in 1980. Since then a great deal has changed in the way the Society functions and the environment in which we operate. The National Management Committee and its sub committees therefore deem it timely our governing document be updated and we invite members' input and comments on the proposed changes.*

The National Management Committee propose to ratify the Society's new Constitution at our 2021 Annual General Meeting, to be held via Zoom on Sunday 14 November 2021.

Please note that the AGHS National AGM is to be held on Sunday 14th November 2021, times to be finalised closer to the date and it will be a Zoom AGM.

The Sydney Conference to be held between 10th and 12th September 2021 is filling fast and the organising committee has opened up an on-line (lectures only) registration for those who are not able to make it over to NSW. This will be our first venture into on-line streaming so hopefully it will be successful. Both the pre and post conference tours are looking either full or close to it and it should be mentioned that a lot of effort has been made by garden owners to prepare their gardens for display after the fires of last year. All information appears to be positive in this regard.

The July NMC meeting will be a two day Zoom meeting where we all connect to discuss issues across the country. If WA members have anything they would like me to raise at the July meeting, please forward your request to me. Email: patsoir@gmail.com and I shall include them in the West Australian branch report.

Horticultural Ephemera: Rare Symonds' Seed Packets Discovered

John Viska

At last month's Card Collectors' Society Ephemera Sale, an album containing seed packets from the 1930s was found. Many were from E. Symonds, a seed and plant specialist, established in 1900 and located initially on the south side of Wellington Street two doors west of Barrack Street. The firm later relocated to 200-202 William Street north of the Horseshoe Bridge. Today, the two storey buildings are still standing on the corner of James and William Streets, Northbridge but the business now operates from 5 Hutton Street, Osborne Park with its ownership having changed over the years.



Symonds purchased their stock of seed, trees and shrubs from various small nursery establishments around Perth. Country orders from their comprehensive catalogue were despatched via the railway to clients outside the metropolitan area. Their extensive seed selection was a major facet of the business and included vegetables, fodder and pasture plants, ornamental trees, climbers, shrubs and annuals. In that era most WA home gardeners purchased seed and propagated them at home. The usual method was in seed boxes or directly sown in the garden taking advantage of the autumn rains.

The packets, bought in bulk from a commercial printer, would have a colourful, lithographic print of the plant or flower on the front. The firm, then stamped on the reverse their business name and a use by date, those for sale had the year 1938! Sometimes firms would purchase, from a local printer, small brown envelopes with their business name on the front and write or type the plant's name.

Symonds free annual catalogues and souvenir calendars were hung in the potting shed and provided the important cultural information for the home gardener to consult.

The examples on display had been opened and presumably the seeds planted in 1938. Two branch members made purchases for their collections.

Recent Events

Hyde Park Fountain Walk with Rodney O'Brien Sue Monger

Saturday 12th June

Known to the Noongars as Boodjamooling, Third Swamp Reserve to the early European settlers, the area was fenced and declared a recreation reserve in 1897.



Rodney wearing the subject dear to his heart! S Monger

Rodney O'Brien, a Highgate resident and former foreign correspondent, became fascinated to learn of a large fountain in Hyde Park near the entrance at Glendower and Lake Streets on the south side of the park. Information was sketchy when Rodney began his research in 2011 and it was not until 2019 when by chance he found a contour chart containing a number which marked the precise location. Diligent trawling of the phone directory found two living relatives in Perth so it was a pleasure to be joined by George Waugh's great niece, Sheryl Waugh, and her son John Nigrone.

Designed and built in 1899 by George Waugh, an architectural modeller, for the princely sum of £50 the three-tiered fountain was 13 ft tall topped with a 3 ft figurine set in a 15ft wide tank, with a special drinking bowl for dogs. Sadly the fountain was vandalised on numerous occasions and it was eventually deemed beyond repair and removed in 1920. There is no record of what happened to the remains but the myth that it was melted down for scrap metal for the war effort is just that – a myth. George Waugh's detailed notes indicated it was cast in cement composite.

George was from Victoria where he and his two brothers had a foundry. Rodney was able to find a record of two sister fountains by the Waugh's; one in Edinburgh Gardens, Fitzroy in Melbourne long since demolished. The other is in Clunes, west of Geelong in Victoria



The newly constructed fountain 1900

Image Western Mail

the site of the state's first registered gold find. Installed in 1887 to mark Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee the Corinthian style fountain has been restored and is a focal point in Queens Gardens.

Following Rodney's talk John Viska led a walk in the park indicating plantings by John Braithwaite, City Gardener between 1896-1937, which comprised *Plantanus X hispanica* (Plane Tree), *Ficus macrophylla* (Moreton Bay Fig), *Phoenix canariensis* (Canary Island Date Palm), *Araucaria heterophylla* and *Cinnamomum* (Camphor Laurel Trees). We inspected the site of the proposed kiosk facility against which AGHS WA is advocating, before making our way across the causeway between the two lakes to finish a most interesting morning in beautiful winter sunshine.



Waugh's sole surviving fountain in Clunes, Victoria. J. Viska



Hyde Park 1904 oil painting by Walter Meston

Handle with Care: Collectible Glass for the Garden Sue Monger

Talk by John Viska on Sunday 2nd May at The Grove Community Centre

It was unfortunate that the COVID-19 lockdown the previous week affected numbers, however the thirteen members and five visitors were in for a treat as John traced the evolution of glass from the Phoenicians, through the Egyptians to the 1740s when glass was taxed and became a luxury item in Britain. The product became cheaper when the tax was removed a century later and mass production ensured a more plentiful supply.

Bellglasses or cloches were used to protect seedlings and help with propagation of cuttings. Wasp and fly traps had a very practical purpose. The latter, particularly in Australia, to combat fruit fly infestations in the home orchard.



Victorian bellglasses or cloches were used to protect seedlings and cuttings.
L Tang

Growing hyacinths hydroponically called for a special container with a flange just below the rim to prevent the bulb falling into the reservoir of water. The hyacinth vases were available in a variety of shapes and colours and the earliest ones were hand blown.

Celery was a luxury item and was often served as a course with cheese in a beautifully elegant celery vase. Now seldom seen in use as celery vases they are sought after for displaying cut flowers. Flower vases became available in a variety of shapes and colours, plain or ornamented with cut glass designs.

Glass frogs, moulded and usually in clear glass, were used in vases to stabilise floral arrangements.

Fairy lights, widely used in the Victorian era, added glamour to a function as well as being a practical way to light a path. Night lights, with a base and dome cover, provided light for a child's bedroom or gave a festive touch to a dining table. The heat of the flame and the fragile nature of glass means very few have survived intact.

John's collection of decorative glass for use in horticulture also included boutonnieres or button-hole bouquet holders which were worn on a gentleman's lapel. A long, thin tube held the bloom or small posy in water. The blown glass was very thin and easily broken so they are a rare find now, as is the glass cucumber straightener after which John hankers!

Many thanks to John for sharing his passion and treasures with an appreciative audience.

A Day in the Hills Lyn Oliver

Autumn colours were in abundance in April when AGHS WA members and friends visited the garden of Leslie and Angus Richardson in Sawyers Valley. After meeting at the Mundaring District Museum attendees drove the short distance to the five-acre former stone fruit orchard which now features 300 ornamental plants and deciduous trees. There was a surprise at every turn when wandering around the lovingly created garden paths and stonework. We enjoyed a delicious afternoon tea while many potted plants were purchased with funds supporting the Royal Flying Doctor Service to which AGHS WA also donated as per the owner's request.



Sisters Ros Stewart, Ann-Marie Boyle and Trish Edwards enjoying the autumn colours at the AGHS WA A Day in the Hills event.
H Reitveld

Government House WA Garden Walk Lyn Oliver



After being cancelled due to a very wet day the Government House WA Garden Walk went ahead two weeks later on a beautiful sunny day on 17th March. Led by John Viska, attendees heard about the history of the gardens. As we walked around, we saw original trees and garden elements including the restored convict-built wall. Later we enjoyed afternoon tea at Post in the beautifully restored COMO The Treasury.

WA Branch Event Diary

We have been so fortunate here in WA to be able deliver our scheduled events so far in 2021 despite a hiccup during the Australian Heritage Festival when Perth went into lockdown. Things are looking positive as we move into the second half of the year too so we look forward to seeing you soon.

WA Branch: AGM

Sunday, 8th August 2021, 2pm at Halliday House, 114 King William Street, Bayswater. Entry fee of \$10 includes afternoon tea, raffle tickets and a donation to the Bayswater Historical Society. A member of the Bayswater Historical Society will be the guest speaker. RSVP by Thursday 5th August Sue Monger susanmonger@yahoo.com.au 0417 187 376
Emergency contact for the AGM is the above mobile number.

WA Branch: Christmas Function

Sunday, 5th December 2021
More information will be provided closer to the date.

National Events

2021 Annual National Conference

10th to 12th September

Venue: Luna Park, Milsons Point, Sydney.

Bookings for this year's conference are now open.

[2021 Annual National Conference - Australian Garden History Society](#)

2022 Annual National Conference

November

Venue: Wrest Point Casino, Hobart