

Australian Garden History Society

West Australian Branch

Autumn Newsletter 2021

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



Chairman's Welcome

This is the first newsletter for 2021. We survived the upheavals of 2020 and although the committee has planned a full year of events some may not eventuate due to another COVID-19 lockdown or restrictions. Of the planned functions, three involve gardens and three with guest speakers but being mindful of the pandemic, some of the planned program may not come to fruition so refer regularly to WA Branch function notifications.

John Viska, AGHS WA Branch Chair

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

Australian Garden History Society Inc.
ABN 97 291 212 843

Welcome to the West Australian Branch. Our Branch has approximately 75 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

Committee Matters John Viska

At the end of last year Max and Ros Stewart formally resigned from the committee. We thank them very much for their time for being stalwart committee members. Max has been invaluable as treasurer, leaving the books in perfect order and Ros a reliable and dependant committee member. Through her long association with the Woodbridge Volunteers, she facilitated the holding of WA Branch talks and functions at the house. She was also on the 2014 Albany Conference committee, organised the successful 2018 bus tour of Middle Swan and planned last year's excursion to Waroona. We will miss her wonderful morning teas!

Sue Davis has agreed to take on the position of Treasurer.

Conservation John Viska

A development from the Christmas function at Azelia Ley Homestead was the City of Cockburn's Landscape Architect, Andy Jarman, inviting the WA Branch to provide some input into the interpretation of the site. Consequently Greg Keighery and myself met the officer and identified plants, providing approximate age and date of plantings as well as the style of garden relevant to the period of the house. An aged stand of conifers that had been designated as fir trees were correctly identified as adult junipers, a conifer not commonly seen in Perth. Productive plants that had survived included a citrus, possibly grown from seed, an aged quince, a pomegranate with unusually long calyx lobes, fig trees, carobs and asparagus. To maintain genetic continuity, Andy is keen to have the significant plants propagated and the prospect of involving horticultural students from Challenger TAFE is being investigated. Azelia Ley's sketchbook of watercolours of garden flowers and wildflowers had been located in the Battye Library by the museum's researcher and Greg Keighery has identified all the plants. The majority of the specimens were orchids growing in the bushland and one, the blue flowered Babe in the Cradle *Epiblema grandiflora*, which preferred wetter sites, is rare.

Update 40th Anniversary Project John Viska

Due to the disruptions of last year the projected completion of the Historic Gardens of Perth publication was not met. Consequently, the revised date is now April 2021. Lisa Williams and I will meet with Paul Morgan of Morgan Design to proof-read and further edit in March. The first progressive payment from the NMC grant has been paid with the rest on completion. Printing costs are being reviewed due to the delay but we are still planning to have the book ready by July for an exhibition on gardening to be held at the Museum of Perth.

Landscapes at Risk – AGHS Advocacy Issue

Kings Park Cable Car

An opinion piece given prominence in the West Australian newspaper on 1st June 2020 by John McGrath, Liberal MP for South Perth, promotes the building of the cable car to Kings Park. The image chosen was one that does not fully show the impact that the large pylons would have as they extend to the western side of the park.

Last year AGHS WA Branch wrote to the National Trust, the Heritage Council and the Minister for Lands and to date no response has been received.

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

The issue of Kings Park being a Landscape at Risk is not going away and AGHS WA Branch is formulating some support strategies for opposing it.

Hyde Park Café

A proposal for a permanent café in the heritage listed Hyde Park will be an item in the City of Vincent's forthcoming agenda in March. AGHS WA Branch are looking forward to community consultation. Historically there has not been a permanent commercial venture in the park.

Vale

Vale Ray Forma *John Viska*

Condolences from the WA Branch to Ann and family on the recent death of her husband Ray who often attended our functions and National Conferences.

Vale Peta Townsing *John Viska*

The WA Branch notes the passing of Peta Townsing who joined the AGHS WA Branch in its early years and maintained her membership. Although residing in Bridgetown and latterly Balingup, she took every opportunity to promote the WA Branch, designing and formatting the 2014 Albany Conference brochure, as well as for a period a committee member.

Through her untiring efforts, the Mount Lawley Society was established and the number of Federation houses in the area saved from demolition is her legacy. The Festival of Country Gardens based in the Blackwood area was another of her initiatives and in recent years Peta had become an advocate for the greater use of fire-retardant plants (exotics) around dwellings in fire prone areas.

What's in a name? John Viska

Dorothy Erickson's article on Henry Passmore, in the August 2020 issue of History West, the Royal WA Historical Society's magazine, referred to a plant growing in his North Fremantle garden by the name of idollychus. Being interested in the garden history of the state and especially when plants are mentioned, I consulted my 1868 Paxton's Dictionary of Plants, formerly owned



by Daniel Feakes the director of the Public Gardens (1896 -1919) now Stirling Gardens, and could not find it. Neither was it recorded in Plants Listed in Nursery Catalogues in Victoria 1855-1889 published by the Ornamental Plant Collections Association in 1992.

The description closely resembled a climber that was commonly grown in Perth gardens named Dolichos. This is a member of the pea family and has either pink or white flowers and is a very hardy plant, now renamed *Dipogon lignosus*. Being a garden escape it has been classified as an environmental weed in the north and southwest of the state, in many instances the sole reminder of a former garden. The plant has other common names including seven year bean, hyacinth bean and dunny creeper and in all probability idollychus was another, being the corruption of its former botanical name. Two species were listed in C. F. Newman and Son's 1905-6 catalogue, the purple flowered *Dolichos lablab* and rosy pink *D. lignosus*, each with a white form being described thus:



“Rapid growing, free flowering climbers. The pods of hyacinth beans are edible, like French beans.”

Enamel Sign John Viska

This century old sign is a rare surviving piece of WA's horticultural history. Discovered in a second-hand shop in Guildford in 2010, it is typical of advertising signs of the past which were enamel fused on iron sheeting. Being of durable materials, they were affixed to external walls of the business, but being exposed to the elements they eventually rusted, especially if the enamel cracked. As more modern forms of advertising developed they were eventually discarded.



Sutton's Seeds enamel sign, John Viska Collection. Image L Tang.

Suttons and Carters were both world renowned for quality seeds and were available throughout Australia. In colonial times Barratt's Wellington Nursery (1860 to 1905) were Sutton's official Perth agent from 1882 while Thurston and Howell, located on the corner of William and Newcastle Street Perth, now Northbridge, were Carter's.

In 1883 Sandovers also became Sutton's agent, with seeds available from their hardware store in Fremantle. From 1905, when the Wellington Nursery ceased trading, seeds were available from Sandovers Hay Street premises. They advertised frequently, informing the public of the impending arrival of seeds from England, encouraging their customers to place early orders. Models of plants featured in their window displays were also noted in the press. The locally established nurseries, Dawson and Harrison, Wilson and Johns, Symons and Charles Newman and Sons supplied seed that was locally raised

while eastern states companies, such as Yates and Andersons also entered the local scene. Each offered a catalogue, sometimes profusely illustrated with line engravings, and in the days before hermetically sealed foil packets the percentage of germination rate would have been low.

The Sandover family bought Knutsford in Claremont and developed an extensive garden which was featured in the WA Branch's 2018 exhibition Historic Gardens of Perth, Western Suburbs. Today Christchurch Grammar School occupies the site.

Christmas Function Sue Monger

The final function for 2020 took place on Sunday 6th December in the grounds of the Azelia Ley Homestead Museum, in Hamilton Hill. Nineteen members and three guests gathered on the shaded lawns where we were joined by Andy Jarman, City of Cockburn Landscape Architect. Andy produced several photographic enlargements of the original gardens from which various plants were identified. This has had very beneficial spin off as you'll read in John Viska's Conservation paragraph.

In 1860 Charles Manning, a successful Fremantle merchant, acquired 900 acres (364.22 hectares) of land on which he ran a small farm, Davilak. He built a substantial home at the south end of what is now known as Manning Lake. His granddaughter Azelia, 1872 -1954, married John (Jack) Ley and the Manningtree House was built for her in 1920s. She farmed the Manning Estate after Jack's death in 1927.

Fire destroyed the Davilak homestead buildings in the 1960s, the same time as Azelia's home fell into disrepair. The City of Cockburn took over the administration of the Manning Estate and in the mid-1980s the Historical Society of Cockburn rolled up their collective sleeves and set about establishing the Azelia Ley Homestead Museum in Manningtree House. The result is a comprehensive collection of well conserved and presented artefacts, many of which relate directly to Azelia and her forebears and to the cultural and material history of the people of Cockburn.

In keeping with AGHS 'share a plate' functions there was an excellent spread of tasty delights to fuel us for a walk to the Davilak ruins, or the interesting collection of machinery in the Wagon House or just to pass the time in the shade. No Christmas function would be complete without the Chairman's Quiz, which was won in a tie breaker by Robin Faulkner and Rachel Roe – well done to them!

National Management Committee Patsy Vizents

The NMC planning weekend held on 13 and 14 February was a marathon Zoom meeting. We covered many items, including the survey results gathered from the completed member survey. Thank you for participating in the survey. It will benefit future planning of the Society. Of interest was the way members supported the suggestion of placing an additional cost of \$20 onto the single membership fee to assist with the cost of our Journal. It is pleasing to see that almost 100% of members agreed with the suggestion. Remember, if you would like a digital copy only, please indicate this when next your membership is due.

Attention was paid to the increase in presenting events on-line due to the impact of COVID-19, called webinars or a webcast. These are on-line talks or presentations that are available to those who join through Trybooking and they are proving a popular way of keeping updated and informed on all manner of topics. Colleen Morris is presenting a talk on March 17, on two directors of the Sydney Botanic Gardens. This is a good opportunity to test out your computer skills but more so, it is a great way to attend talks presented in Sydney or Melbourne from the comfort of your home. Please go to the WA Branch page of the AGHS website to find extra information on the talk and how to book yourself in. It would be great to have webinars on WA topics so if members are interested in undertaking a webinar, we may run a workshop on how to produce our own. This is a great way to showcase gardens and topics that are WA focussed. We will let members know about future developments in webinar development.

The Sydney Conference is still going ahead and thanks should be provided to the Conference Committee of the Sydney Branch for managing to reschedule the whole conference from 2020 to 10th to 12th September 2021. Tasmania (Hobart) is still planning to host the 2022 national conference, although their planning has been hampered by COVID-19 restrictions. So even in the midst of uncertainty, branches throughout the country are enthusiastically planning these conferences.

Perth's Historic Muscat Grapevines *Lyn Oliver*

The WA Museum Boola Bardip recently opened after an almost \$400 million building program. The new state of the art museum houses 6000sqm of gallery space and houses thousands of objects from the State's collection.

Visitors will be happy to learn that the two circa 160-year-old muscat grapevines are still in situ having survived two major structural changes since being planted in the 1850s.

Ian Cameron OAM is a volunteer who has cared for the vines for more than 50 years after being asked for pruning advice for the 1960s build. During the latest construction phase, the vines had to be protected from demolition materials and were subjected to minimal sunlight. Lights installed over the vines now give them adequate light and they have again started to produce fruit. The vines are easily viewed near the museum entrance and entry tickets are not required.



Muscat Grapevine, WA Museum Boola Bardip 2021. Image. L Oliver



The vine is estimated to be about 50 years old in this photograph of the old gaol circa 1890s. Image retrieved from WA Museum Website.



Ian Cameron OAM was called upon for advice regarding pruning the vines in the 1960s and has been an unofficial volunteer for over 50 years caring for the vines. Image retrieved from WA Museum Website.

More information about the grapevines can be found at:
<http://museum.wa.gov.au/explore/articles/australias-oldest-grapevine>

The Blade - Australia's love affair with lawn

The Blade is a traveling exhibition curated by Richard Heathcote in conjunction with the Australian Garden History Society. It explores the history of lawn, from Indigenous land management practices through to modern gardening and lawn innovations. The article by Richard Heathcote in Australian Garden History vol. 32, no 1, July 2020 gives a more comprehensive view of the exhibition. If you would like to hear listen to an interview about Australia's love affair with lawn, follow this link to a 15 minute ABC Radio National broadcast.

[The Blade - Australia's love affair with lawn - Blueprint - ABC Radio National](#)

Trybooking – A New Way of Buying Tickets to WA Branch Events

Lyn Oliver

This year the WA Branch has introduced an online ticket purchasing system called Trybooking. Trybooking has proved to be one of the quickest, easiest and cheapest systems around and has been used very successfully by the AGHS national body and other branches during the last few years.



While we recognise that this is a big change to how we have done things previously, we feel that purchasing tickets online is going to be advantageous not only for the committee and those of us organising events but also for the members. The software is safe, secure and easy to use. All a purchaser needs is access to the internet, an email address and a credit card. Trybooking has been around for about 10 years and has improved with experience.

One major advantage is that it greatly reduces the administrative burden in the organising of events. We can easily print reports of attendees, change data, and eliminate the possibilities of errors in Electronic Funds Transfers (EFT). One branch advised that during COVID-19 and the postponement of events Trybooking was an organisational boon. For example, attendees could be directly emailed from the system about postponements, restrictions, etc. Members will also be able to participate in online national webinars.

We are also aware that not everyone has online facilities so if you need any help whatsoever, with the system or to acquire tickets, please do not hesitate to contact Lyn Oliver on laoliver@iinet.net.au or 0426 211 382.

WA Branch Event Diary

AGHS WA Branch is working toward delivering the events listed below for 2021. However, as you are aware we are still subject to COVID-19 government regulations so we will keep members updated on any changes.

WA Branch: Government House Garden Walk

Wednesday, 3rd March 2021

<https://www.trybooking.com/BOUUU>

WA Branch: Day in the Country

Thursday, 22nd April 2021

More information will be provided soon.

WA Branch: Handle with Care: Collectible Glass for the Garden

Being held as part of the Australian Heritage Festival *Our Heritage for the Future*

Sunday, 2nd May 2021

<https://www.trybooking.com/BOJAS>

WA Branch: AGM

Sunday, 8th August 2021

More information will be provided closer to the date.

WA Branch: Christmas Function

Sunday, 5th December 2021

More information will be provided closer to the date.

Other WA Events

Endersley Farm in association with Theatre 180 present

The Blackwood River Gliding By

A play about colonial botanist Georgiana Molloy. Includes a CWA farm fare afternoon tea.

Held in the c1860 barn in the Chittering Valley. Performances 10th to 12 September 2021.

[The Blackwood River Gliding By | TryBooking Australia](#)

Or phone Diane Pope at 0448 441 899

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