AUSTRALIAN GARDEN HISTORY SOCIETY

SYDNEY AND NORTHERN NEW SOUTH WALES BRANCH

ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

INTERVIEWEE:	**CHRISTOPHER R. BETTERIDGE**
INTERVIEWER:	ROSLYN BURGE
DATE OF INTERVIEW:	20 MARCH 2007
PLACE OF INTERVIEW:	AT HIS OFFICE MUSECAPE PTY LTD 42 BOTANY STREET RANDWICK, 2031
NUMBER OF TAPES:	1 DAT – 90 MINS
RESTRICTIONS ON USE:	NIL
QUOTATIONS / EXTRACTS:	EXTRACTS FROM THE INTERVIEWS SHOULD BE VERIFIED AGAINST THE ORIGINAL SPOKEN WORD.

SUMMARY

In the late 1970s Chris was working at the Heritage Office of New South Wales. At the same time James Broadbent was *engaged by the National Trust in New South Wales to carry out the survey in New South Wales and I was the liaison officer to oversee the funding of that project, so I became involved in that. James was overseas at one time when a group of us went down to Tasmania to look at a group of historic gardens in Northern Tasmania.* Following that visit the idea for the Society was formed and the first conference was held in Melbourne in 1980 and an Interim Committee formed.

Appointed to the Interim Committee that first year (1980-1981) Chris was elected the following year (1981/82) and Treasurer and Membership Secretary the following two years (1982/83 and 1983/84). He resigned from the Committee in 1984.

Chris talks about growing up and his schooling in Parramatta then Eastwood. He studied medicine at the University of New South Wales before transferring to the University of Sydney to study pharmacy.

Chris's father was a pharmacist and the family lived in a generous flat with its own garden. His parents enjoyed gardening and in the early 1950s his parents bought a property at Blackheath, engaging Paul Sorenson to design the garden ~ and Hans Peter Oser to design a house. Chris discusses the plantings ~ visiting Sorensen's Nursery at Leura ~ his great-uncle stayed at Mount Wilson each year and visiting him

His work with the Department of Agriculture at Rydalmere (surveying soil potassium levels) encouraged an interest in botany and his return to university and a Science degree, majoring in plant ecology and Taxonomy.

He then moved to the Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences and research into essential oils, including tea tree. Encouraged to make a career in museums, Chris undertook a Master's degree at the University of Leicester. On return to Sydney he worked at the National Parks and Wildlife Service before becoming the landscape specialist with the original team at the Heritage Council.

Work at the Heritage Office (for ten years) provided him the opportunity to pursue a strong interest in historic gardens and cultural heritage ~ it was a stimulating time ~ *all levels of government have worked to educate the public to appreciate cultural heritage and natural heritage. I mean if you look at what has happened in the last twenty or thirty years there has been a huge amount of information put out on all the media about heritage and the value of things…*

Elizabeth Farm Museum Trust in 1976 engaged Chris and his wife to advise on the property ~ strong interest in the Parramatta district.

Chris talked about the 1970s Survey of Historic Gardens funded by Commonwealth ~ Chris's involvement and attendance at the Survey in Northern Tasmania in 1979 which lead on to the establishment of the Garden History Society. Chris discusses the strong impetus from Victoria and Tasmania.

Chris enjoys gardening and collecting interesting, different plants: *always loved frangipanis and of course recently there have been a lot of cultivars developed, different colours, and while we still love the original creamy-yellow ones I have always wanted to grow the evergreen frangipani, Plumeria obtusa.*

The growing pressure for residential development in Sydney's suburbs near homes such as Hobartville and Glen Alpine has increased the public interest in protecting the setting of such houses.

As a member of the Interim Committee and a foundation member of the Society Chris feels *very strongly that the Society should be a garden history society rather than a horticultural society* ~ with a *stronger academic emphasis on the history of gardens and garden design in Australia* ~ assisting the development of the Society were the establishment of the Australian Heritage Commission, the incorporation of the National Trust, changes under the Whitlam government and a *greater appreciation of Australian gardens and people wanting to know…how they developed.*

Chris talks about some of the people involved in the early days of the Society: Peter Watts, Dame Elisabeth Murdoch, Sue Ebury, Howard Tanner, Ken Digby and Warren Nicholls. He discusses the different directions and strengths people bring to the Society

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This interview is being conducted on behalf of the Sydney and Northern New South Wales Branch of the Australian Garden History Society. It is an interview with Chris Betteridge at his office at Musecape Pty Ltd, 42 Botany Road, Randwick in Sydney on Tuesday 20 March 2007. The interviewer is Roslyn Burge.

TAPE 1: SIDE A

Chris thank you for your time this morning for this interview, we might start with just some biographical details, your date of birth.

14 March 1947.

And where were you born?

In Parramatta in New South Wales in an old private hospital down by the Parramatta River.

Do you remember the name?

Aloha - which is very apt for new born babies.

What were your parents' names?

My father was Albert Robert, he was known as Bob, and my mother was Roberta, so they were Bob and Bobby.

Her maiden name?

Her maiden name was Reynolds, her father was a Congregational Minister and her grandfather was Samuel E Lees the Lord Mayor of Sydney, he was Mayor and Lord Mayor, and Member of Parliament for Nepean for quite some time.

An oversight from the beginning is your full name, if you could give me that?

Christopher Reynolds Betteridge, the middle name being my mother's maiden name.

Of course. What were your parents doing in Parramatta?

My father moved there in about 1938, he was a pharmacist and he took up a position to manage Pye's Pharmacy, which was the oldest pharmacy in Parramatta, and then he brought my mother and brother and sister from Burwood to Parramatta and they set up there in about 1938 or 1939.

Did he ever change the name from Pye's?

No, it was owned by the Pye family, a very old family in the Parramatta district, and he stayed there for his entire working life, he was the manager for forty-two years.

So your education was in the district?

Yes. I started at Parramatta Central School, I forget what they call it now but Arthur Phillip High School has become part of it, it is right in the middle of Parramatta. I was there until the end of fourth class and I was lucky enough to be picked to go to the Opportunity School at Eastwood, Eastwood OC, where I was in a class with the likes of Geoffrey Robertson, who has become quite famous as a lawyer in Britain and as a TV personality.

And after Eastwood I had the opportunity to either go to Kings School, where my brother had been, or to go to Parramatta High, which at that time was a very highly regarded selective high school, and most of my friends from back in primary school had gone there so I opted to go to Parramatta High.

I finished the Leaving Certificate in 1963 and I went straight from there to uni at the University of New South Wales, and started first year Medicine but I didn't succeed very well there. I did very well in Biology, which was the only subject I hadn't done at school. In those days - there were very strict by-laws in Medicine - you couldn't carry subjects, you couldn't

repeat a year, so I transferred to Sydney University to Pharmacy and I did a couple of years there. Then I dropped out and went out to work for three years.

What did you do at that time?

I spent the first year working for Maxwell Photo Optics, who were a big importer of high quality camera equipment, Nikon and Mamiya camera equipment, and I learnt a lot about photography then and was able to buy quite a lot of camera equipment. After a year I found a lot of the people who worked in that retail industry fairly shallow and I decided I didn't want to spent my entire life doing that so I applied for a job with the Department of Agriculture at Rydalmere near Parramatta in the Biological and Chemical Research Institute.

Why did that appeal?

I think … I guess … because of my background in doing some botanical stuff and microbiology and so on at uni when I was doing Pharmacy I had become interested in that, and geology, I always had a strong interest in geology and plants, and so that work was actually working on a survey of soil potassium levels in the south coast and tablelands of New South Wales. The government was worried at the time that potassium was going to become a limiting factor in plant growth the way phosphorous was and so they wanted to get a handle on soil potassium levels. So I had a wonderful two and half years travelling around the south coast and tablelands sampling properties, taking soil samples and then taking them back to the lab and analysing them. And I worked with a young woman who was a botanist and chemist and she, I guess, encouraged my interest in botany.

As part of the work I had to be able to identify pasture species and also agricultural weeds and so I became interested in botany and after a couple of years at the Department I decided to go back to university and I did a Science degree. I got quite a lot of credits for the subjects I'd already done and so I majored in Plant Ecology and Taxonomy at Sydney University and I finished up there at the end of 1972. I did my final year project on the plant ecology of the Myall Lakes area, a sort of swampy area below the high dunes in Myall Lakes.

Then at the end of that time I got a job, as soon as I finished uni, I got a job at the Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences which at that time still had very strong botanical and chemical research functions. They had a long history of research into Australian plant products, particularly essential oils, and so I became the technical officer in charge of the herbarium and the botanical laboratory in the old building in Harris Street, which has now reverted to the TAFE.

A beautiful building.

Yes magnificent building. So I spent the next four years, well three out of the four years, carrying out experiments into essential oils. We had trials around the state, particularly out in the West Wyalong district which had traditionally been one of the major places in New South Wales for essential oil production, but we had field trials at Yanco and Burrendong Dam and even up on the north coast where we were trialling tea-tree and blue mallee eucalypt species to try and improve the quality of the oil production.

While I was at the museum I decided that I wanted to make a career in museums and my wife (Margaret Betteridge) and I applied to do the Museums Studies Course at the University of Leicester in England. At that time there was no museum studies training available in Australia, and we were only the second and third Australians to do the Museums Studies Course. I got a Rotary scholarship to go over there and my wife had assistance from the trustees of the museum and so we went over there in 1975/76 and then I started a Master's Degree in Museum Studies, which took me longer than I expected to complete.

How long did it take?

Well it was supposed to be one year by course work and two years thesis and I actually took four years to complete the thesis because I was doing it all in Australia ~ my supervisors were back in England and Wales which made it difficult. So I finished up in 1981 with a master's degree and I did that on the presentation of plants in museums and botanic gardens because I had found that it was very difficult to display things like plant physiology and anatomy in museums. People had tried it, the famous glass flowers at Harvard and so on, but I thought there were a lot of ways of improving display techniques to get across the sort of things that you can't do out in the field in botanic gardens.

And how was that received?

Well very well, I got the master's degree. Unfortunately though by the time that I, or before I'd actually finished the degree, the museum had decided to pull out of botanical and chemical research and those functions were hived off to Agriculture and Forestry and in the end of 1977 I left the museum. I could see that the writing was on the wall for those sections, and I went to work for National Parks and Wildlife Service. Because of my botanical training I was doing investigations for new areas to be considered as national parks and nature reserves and my patch was mostly the Greater Sydney Metropolitan Region where great areas of bushland were coming under threat, particularly out in the western suburbs with new residential development and up in the north side up around Maroota and places like that from quarrying. And also in the Central West there was increasing pressure on bushland from grazing and clearing in the Central West.

So they were the two areas that I worked on and I had a fantastic year at National Parks and met some wonderful people and I learnt a lot. I would probably still be there if they hadn't established the Heritage Council of New South Wales and I was very lucky to be selected as the landscape specialist in the original team that was set up to service the Heritage Council in 1978.

Did you want to make that move as well?

Well I was reluctant in some ways because I really enjoyed working for National Parks and I felt very strongly about the National Parks and Wildlife ethos so I was very strong on nature conservation. I had had a long interest in bushwalking and nature conservation; I'd been involved in the Myall Lakes Committee back when I was at university and having done work up there I was very keen to see the National Parks network expanded.

But I also had this very strong interest in historic gardens and cultural heritage and I felt that the job at the Heritage Branch offered me the opportunity to do both because I ended up looking after all those sort of things that fell between the natural and the historic cultural environment. The branch make-up was largely dominated by architects and historians and archaeologists and I was the only landscape person and so I tended to look after all the gardens and cemeteries and parks as well as rare and endangered plant and animal habitats. Of course at that time the *National Parks Act* couldn't protect things in the short term, they could only really protect things if they acquired them.

That must have been a very exciting time.

It was. It was very frustrating at times too because it was a time in the late 1970s, early 1980s, of intense development pressures and we were seeing lots of heritage buildings being demolished, so there were wins and there were losses but it was a very stimulating time. All the staff there were highly committed to the cause, we'd all been selected by the same individual.

Who was?

A fellow called Graham Andrews who was the original Director of the Heritage Branch and he chaired all the interview panels and he selected a team of people he thought could work well together and that turned out to be the case and most of those people I worked with have become lifelong friends, I was there for ten years.

How many of you in the team?

Oh I guess there were probably twenty to thirty at various times, including administrative staff, but when you consider that we had to look after the whole of the state in terms of implementation of the *Heritage Act* it wasn't a very big team and we were always fighting bushfires so to speak, it was … as I said it was very frustrating at times, and we all felt there were political motives.

I remember one time ... we always had to say in whose electorate the particular item was located and of course we felt that, being cynical, that perhaps if it wasn't going to be in the interests of the electoral prospects of the incumbent member then perhaps the item wouldn't be protected. I think it was at a time when there was less community understanding of the implications of heritage listing, I mean I think there is still a lack of understanding of that.

I was going to ask you about that further on. Chris you were speaking about the wider public not always understanding the Heritage Act *at that time, do you think there has been a move, or how big a shift if there has been a shift?*

I think there has been a huge shift and I think that all levels of government have worked to educate the public to appreciate cultural heritage and natural heritage. I mean if you look at what has happened in the last twenty or thirty years there has been a huge amount of information put out on all the media about heritage and the value of things, the things we want to keep, the campaign that the Australian Heritage Commission had, and I think we've got a much better knowledge of the extent of cultural heritage now. I think that the government at one point decided that they might lose things in the process but they really needed to carry out heritage studies of all the local government areas in New South Wales, for instance, to know exactly what we did have because when I was working for the Heritage Branch we were operating to some extent in a vacuum. We really didn't know what we had and so it was very difficult to assess the significance of something like an historic garden if you didn't know what other historic gardens were in the same local government area or elsewhere in the state.

I guess that is where things like the Survey of Historic Gardens in the late 1970s was so important because the Commonwealth funded that and it was done by different agencies in each of the states but that was somewhere where I became more involved with historic gardens because James Broadbent was engaged by the National Trust in New South Wales to carry out the survey in New South Wales and I was the liaison officer to oversee the funding of that project, so I became involved in that. James was overseas at one time when a group of us went down to Tasmania to look at a group of historic gardens in Northern Tasmania. Peter Watts and some of the other people who were doing the surveys in the various states, and because James was away overseas I was delegated to take part in that Survey and that was 1979, the year before the first Garden History Conference.

There was quite a fertile atmosphere I get the feeling at that conference.

There was. I think there was a very strong push, particularly from Tasmania and Victoria where I guess there was a longer tradition of interest in historic gardens and also a lot of old money and traditional properties, I don't think there was quite as strong an interest from New South Wales and much less from Queensland and Western Australia, South Australia there was some interest, but I think the initial impetus was largely focused on Melbourne and the western districts of Victoria and the Dandenongs, places like that, and also Tasmania where you had a wealth of historic houses and gardens.

Before we come to that we might just revert back to your childhood and talk about gardens of your childhood and those early influences on you.

Well I grew up in a flat in Parramatta but it was a fairly generous flat, it was actually built by the owners of the property, or built for the owners of the property, and so it had its own little garden and my parents were both keen gardeners. My mother had been the daughter of a

minister, she had moved around various church properties including some very lovely properties so she had very strong memories of the gardens in those places and she often talked about those and we had our little patch at Parramatta to look after.

But in the early 1950s my parents bought a property up at Blackheath in the Blue Mountains and they engaged Paul Sorenson, a Danish landscape designer, to design the garden and my mother worked with Paul. It wasn't one of his major commissions but he designed certainly the back part of the garden and around the house, so he put in a rockery of Blue Mountains' ironstone and he planted a conifer hedge and a row of silver birches and he introduced a lot of Alpine plants ~ Alpine phlox and aubrietia and things like that.

My earliest memories are going with my parents to Sorenson's Nursery at Leura and walking around the nursery and I remember talking to Howard Tanner not so long ago and some of his earliest memories are also going with his parents to Sorenson's. Howard tells a funny story about being there one day with his parents and someone came into look at plants and asked Paul Sorenson how much something cost and Paul turned to Howard's parents and said, 'If they have to ask they can't afford it'. I mean Sorenson wasn't cheap either as a landscape designer or as nurseryman but he provided very high quality material.

I also went with my mother and father to other nurseries in the Blue Mountains, I remember going many time to the Harris's nursery at Mount Boyce and also there was a nursery which is still there but it has changed hands at the top of Boddington Hill at Wentworth Falls, and another one at the bottom of Wentworth Falls, Boddington Hill, called Dillingers, which is still there and my parents bought material from all those. We used to go up to Mount Wilson fairly regularly so I was exposed to the old gardens there. My great-uncle, Colonel Edgar Reynolds, he used to stay at Mount Wilson every year and so we used to go and visit him when he was staying there at a little place called Chimney Cottage.

So I was exposed to historic gardens at a very early age. But also like a lot of people in Sydney I think a major turning point for me in my appreciation of heritage was a visit to Hannibal Macarthur's property, the *Vineyard*, which by then had been renamed *Subiaco* and it was a convent at Ermington. I went there with my parents, this was in the 1960s, before it was demolished by Rheem for a car park and I think that was one of the main factors that sort of galvanised public opinion in favour of conservation of heritage buildings. I think that and the demolition of *St Malo* at Hunters Hill for road widening and a few other key buildings. So all those were influences in my appreciation of heritage and I guess my later career.

Before we leave your childhood could you just paint me a picture of your parents' garden at Parramatta?

190 Well the one at Parramatta it was essentially a square lawn and a garden along the fence, but they had roses ~ my father liked growing roses and they were the ones common at the time I suppose, *Peace* and *Queen Elizabeth* and so on. We had a big poinsettia and a few annuals and perennials. We had a passion fruit vine and lots of aspidistras in the shady corridor along the side of the flats and in the front there was a huge jasmine vine growing over the front of the flats. We had a few indoor plants as well, orchids, cymbidiums in pots and so on.

Did you use the garden for leisure and relaxation?

Yes. We used the back lawn for playing and so on and there was a big side lawn as well with the old clothes lines with the wooden props and so on. I had a great time growing up in Parramatta, at that time it was like a big country town, there was a lot of open space and of course we had Parramatta Park only a few blocks away where I did school sport. But I also used Parramatta Park a great deal for recreation, we used to go down and make rafts in the ponds along the edge of the river and that sort of thing. One of my best friends lived in the Tudor Gate House at Parramatta Park.

His name was?

Ian Hill, his father was one of the rangers in the Park. So I have very happy memories of playing down there.

What about your Blackheath garden?

Well Blackheath ~ my mother had had a very long association with Blackheath, my great-grandfather bought a lot of land at Blackheath in the 1880s and he built a house and several cottages there so my mother had been going to Blackheath since she was about six months old. After the war with the threat of the Cold War and nuclear attack a lot of people were buying properties in the Blue Mountains, particularly Eastern Europeans who had been refugees or migrated to Australia after the war.

My mother fell in love with this block of land which had been owned by Mark Foy and it had a pine forest on it and she loved radiata pines, a lot of people wouldn't these days. They bought this block of land and they … as well as commissioning Sorenson to design the garden … they commissioned an Austrian architect, Hans Peter Oser, to design the house. Two Sydney businessmen had built houses designed by Oser across the road and my mother liked the style of those, they were a sort of combination of ranch style and Tyrolean influences.

Of course it was early days after the war, building materials were fairly scarce and builders were even scarcer on the Blue Mountains, and it took quite a long time to build the house but it was a lovely ~ still is a lovely house.

There must have been a great sense of excitement for you all travelling up there at the weekends.

Well it was. I mean we had an old 1935 Ford car and we used to go up on the weekends, I mean we camped on the land for a couple of years before the house was built and some of my happiest memories were doing that, including helping my parents clear a site for the house and then in developing the garden. I guess I spent most of my teenage and early twenties years a lot of the time on holidays and weekends helping my parents develop the garden, building stone walls and ponds and planting rhododendrons and azaleas and so on.

It sounds like a big block.

It was, it was three building lots combined and my parents built the house across the three lots and then they bought the three lots at the back so that they had access from two streets.

Are the house and gardens still there?

The land at the back has been sold off but the house and gardens are still there and my sister is living there almost full-time now.

What street is it in?

It's in Prince Edward Street and it is called Whispering Pines. It is mentioned in Dick Ratcliffe's book on Sorenson, *The Master Gardener*, only as a fairly minor work of Sorenson, as I said, he didn't design the whole garden but it certainly has his stamp on it.

When you went to the nursery, again just a sort of sound picture or smell picture, what do you remember from the nursery?

Well particularly at Sorenson's Nursery I remember being fascinated by the variety of plants, I mean all the cool climate plants, the deciduous trees, the Japanese maples and all the conifers. I mean he was a great lover of conifers in those days, I mean later on he became more interested in Australian natives, but I think he was best known for his planting of conifers and certainly the major planting at our garden at Blackheath was of mixed conifers, Douglas firs and crypsii and thuyas and things like that and Blue Spruce.

Just being fascinated by the variety of plants but also listening to his tales. We used to sit … he had a wonderful circular seat built around a tree in the garden and we used to sit there and spend hours at a time talking to him about his days back in Denmark and he spent time

in Switzerland, talking about his children ~ because he was very fond of his family, they were great times.

It is hard to imagine that happening at any of the commercial nurseries now in Sydney.

Yes. I mean when you look at the garden centres, *Gardens R'Us* and all those sort of places they are very high pressure retail centres and in a lot of them you are lucky if you can get any sort of advice. We found the same thing at Harris's Nursery at Mount Boyce, I mean it was a family run business and they'd invite us in for tea and biscuits and so on. I guess my parents helped support them in the early days, they bought quite a lot of things from them, but it was a very friendly atmosphere.

Is it important for you to have a garden in adulthood now?

Oh yes I can't imagine being without a garden. If you looked at my garden today you'd see that I don't have a lot of time to spend in it, but in all the houses we've had, and we've lived in Randwick most of our married life apart from a year away living in Canberra, we have had gardens in all our houses. Some of them have been sort of pocket-handkerchief ones but the present place in Botany Street near The University of New South Wales is the biggest garden we've had and we have done quite a lot of work here in it in the last eleven years. But I guess builders have the least tidy houses and people like me have the least tidy gardens, I mean I am away a fair bit of the time or I am busy working. But I enjoy gardening, it is very relaxing, and I try to collect interesting things, we try to have things that are a bit different from other people's gardens.

You just told me this morning before we started about your interstate importation of frangipanis, perhaps you'd just like to tell me that snippet?

Well my wife and I have always loved frangipanis and of course recently there have been a lot of cultivars developed, different colours, and while we still love the original creamy-yellow ones I have always wanted to grow the evergreen frangipani, *Plumeria obtusa*. Of course likes the tropical areas, we were up in Broome and Darwin late last year and they plant them there as street trees and they were all in full bloom and they looked absolutely magnificent. So I brought two of those back from the Sunshine Coast at Christmas time last year and I'm trying to keep those going, they are in a nice warm spot, I have seen them growing in Sydney so I know they will grow here. We've tried to build up a collection of other varieties, everything from deep pinks through to pure white.

You have got them sitting in a number of pots behind me as we sit here are they going to be in the garden?

Well we have planted quite a few out in the garden but I guess with frangipanis you need a bit of space around them to plant them for maximum effect, they don't look good if they are in amongst other plants they really need to be out in the middle of a lawn or against a wall of a house so we are planning to redesign some of the front garden to accommodate some of them.

Coming back to the Heritage Office Chris, some of your work there that influenced your later interests.

Well when my wife and I came back from England in 1976 we were engaged by a body called the Elizabeth Farm Museum Trust, which was essentially a group of Parramatta businessmen who had been given the task of looking after Elizabeth Farm, which at that time was fairly derelict. The Swann sisters had left the property, they had been living in it since the early 1900s, and unfortunately some nasty things had been done to the interior, you know ceilings pulled out and so on, and because we had come back from doing a museums studies course this Trust thought we could give them some advice on the presentation of the house to the public.

How did they know about you?

Well I guess because of my link ~ I had received a Rotary scholarship from the Rotary Club of Parramatta so I was known to some of the members of the group there and because I had grown up in Parramatta I knew quite a few people locally. We provided them with some interim advice but then not long after that the government took over Elizabeth Farm and then fortunately not long after that I joined the Heritage Branch in the Department of Planning and one of my first tasks was to be involved with the research and conservation work on Elizabeth Farm. So I worked with Oi Choong, a landscape architect who subsequently went on to head up Context Landscape Design, but she was working for the Department of Public Works at the time. Oi and I and the historians from the Heritage Branch, Greg Young and Pam Bartlett, did a lot of the early research on the development of Elizabeth Farm, the estate, the Macarthur estate, and so I had an involvement with that for quite a long time.

Also with Rouse Hill House, the state government was negotiating to acquire Rouse Hill House from the Terry and Hamilton families and I spent a lot of time going up there and doing research on the garden and also doing some garden maintenance as well, trying to keep the olive hedges in trim and so on.

Similarly with Bella Vista which had been owned by the Macarthurs at one time at Seven Hills. It was another property that was scheduled for demolition to make way for water tanks for the north-west sector of Sydney but the Heritage Council stepped in and they managed to get an agreement with the Water Board to take over the management of the property, so I also spent a lot of time doing research on the landscape at Bella Vista. Of course Bella Vista is now a suburb full of industrial park, a business park, and skating rinks and residential development and unfortunately the setting of the house is compromised although the wonderful row of bunya pines on the ridge is still very evident.

Some of these wins must give you great encouragement.

They do and it is nice to maintain an involvement in some of these properties over a long period of time. My wife and I both find that places we were involved in back in the 1980s we come back to ~ we might be called on to provide advice on the interpretation of properties, because that is an area that is becoming increasingly important. It is not much point if we conserve the historic houses and gardens if the public doesn't know why they are significant and there are methods in place for communicating the significance to the public by guided tours and displays and publications and so on.

Is there much appetite for that in the public?

I think so yes. I mean the Open Garden Scheme is a good case in point, the public has a huge appetite for visiting these places. I guess they always like to go to places that are perhaps better than their own houses and gardens and a lot of people want to know the history of the places and also they want to talk to the current owners and find out how they manage, how they have restored gardens and just how they get on with dealing with complex gardens and also dealing with having their gardens open to the public.

I remember the talk that you gave at that (AGHS) Conference in 1980 when you spoke about Elizabeth Farm and the parlous state it was in at that time, it must be encouraging to you to know the tremendous difference there is between that condition then and the condition of the house, as just one example, today.

Well I think Elizabeth Farm is a very good example of how a government agency, the Historic House Trust, has done a wonderful job in interpreting that house and presenting it to the public and recreating the garden. I mean they knew something from the Elizabeth Macarthur's writings and the Swann records, they knew quite a lot about the history of the garden, but some of it is recreation. Just as they put reproduction furniture inside and I think it is wonderful that the public can actually sit in the chairs and experience the house the way that the original occupants did rather than it being a completely lifeless presentation that a lot of historic houses used to have. I think we have come a long way in terms of our presentation of house museums and gardens.

You spoke just a moment ago about preserving the house and the garden, has there always been that same impetus to preserve both?

No not all. I think if you look at the early editions of the National Trust Register and if you look at the early work that most of the registers of heritage properties there was a very strong bias towards the buildings and towards *particular* buildings, towards the colonial and Victorian buildings, and I think it has been much more recent that there has been a greater appreciation of the importance of presenting the setting of these houses. I think there were some major examples where the settings, the visual curtilages of these houses were compromised, places like *Hobartville* at Richmond and *Glen Alpine* near Campbelltown, quite a lot of the ones in the south-west part of Sydney where there was intense pressure for residential development that came right up to almost the walls of some of those houses. I think that has led to a much greater interest in protecting a setting for these places but it is a fairly recent thing, I mean it has only been incorporated into the Burra Charter of Australia ICOMOS since 1999 ~ this emphasis on setting. Prior to that there wasn't that same degree of emphasis at all.

It is interesting you having spoken about your work at the Heritage Office going back to the 1970s so there has been a swing backwards and forwards towards an interest in gardens and an understanding of their role.

Yes I think that has varied over time but I think the interest in gardens ~ there has been an incremental increase. As I said the Open Garden Scheme has focused public attention on gardens and all other things like the National Trust Heritage Festival and all the publications on garden history that have come out in recent years.

Yes, that takes us forward before we've even got to the gestation of the Society, but since we are there I was going to ask you about your views on the scholarship aspect of the Society.

Well I feel very strongly that the Society should be a garden history society rather than a horticultural society and I think there was a definite schism in the Society at one time when Tim and Keva North, who had been very involved in the setting up of it, I think wanted to take it in a more horticultural or a general garden direction and others felt that there was a need to have a society that had a much stronger academic emphasis that looked at the history of gardens and garden design in Australia, and I feel that was necessary.

There are lot of garden clubs out there and a lot of horticultural societies and I think there is a need for both but I think that the Garden History Society made the right decision to maintain that strong academic basis and to have very high quality publications and research into garden history.

By the time of its twenty-five anniversary in 2005, it had achieved quite a remarkable record of support if not directly publishing itself. Are you a member of the Society Chris?

Yes I was a foundation member. I was at that first Garden History Conference in 1980 in Melbourne, I went down and stayed with Peter Watts who was living in Victoria at the time, he was Property Officer for the National Trust I think in Victoria. I remember staying with Peter, he was living at the back of Susie Forge's house in Melbourne, and it was a very exciting conference, I mean there were like-minded people from all over Australia attending that and that was the genesis of the Society.

What also intrigues me in the 1970s the Society didn't just simply emerge from under a mushroom, there were surveys, there was an international conference in botany in Sydney in 1981, but what was that wave that came through the 1970s?

Oh I think it was a …. there were a lot of things, I mean there was the establishment of the Australian Heritage Commission. Well before that there was the incorporation of the National Trust in New South Wales in 1970, then there was a much greater focus on natural and cultural heritage under the Whitlam Labor Government and the setting up of the Australian

Heritage Commission and a focus, as I said before, on things we want to keep and the funding of the Survey of Historic Gardens across Australia. There were a number of academics, people like Peter Spooner, who were writing about garden history. Peter Valder gave a talk at that International Botanical Congress in Sydney and he had a very strong interest in garden history having grown up on *Nooroo*, his parent's property, at Mount Wilson. So I think from a number of different directions there was a growing interest.

427 I mean it is hard to know why these things happen, I think it was just all part of a gradual greater appreciation of Australian gardens and people wanting to know about how they had developed and how the Europeans had brought things from back in the UK and the Cape Colony to Australia and more and more people becoming interested in all these things. There were Hardy Wilson's writings and drawings of historic houses and gardens and all those things started to get more public attention.

The Garden History Society today has its head office in Melbourne, and has always been thus, but you spoke about that strong interest from Victorians and Tasmanians. Why should that be apart from just...it has to be more than just the houses; there must have been some very spirited people who were keen to see this happen?

Well I think there were people like Dame Elisabeth Murdoch and Sue Ebury and a number of other people who were influential in the early days of the Garden History Society and a lot of them were the owners of well-established gardens in Victoria and Tasmania, whereas I think in the other states the interest perhaps came more from the practitioners, the landscape architects and the academics.

But in Victoria and Tasmania it seemed to be a very strong emphasis from the owners of gardens who were passionate about their gardens and wanted to see them conserved. At the same time, like all gardeners, they wanted to have a certain amount of freedom to develop the gardens the way they wished and I guess that is one of the difficult things about gardens they are dynamic growing things and you do have to allow each owner some latitude, you can't always freeze something in time. I guess it depends really, like any heritage item, on what is the significance and working with owners to strike a balance between conserving what is significant and allowing fresh expression of new ideas. I think we are going to have to deal with that a lot more in the future with global warming and increasing droughts and perhaps re-think the sort of things that we plant in historic gardens.

Is that happening now, or has that been continuing?

Oh I think it is happening much more now. I think even in the last couple of years this prolonged drought has made people think much more seriously about that, and you only have to look at all the publications that are coming out on water-wise gardening.

Alexander Downer, when he was opening the Garden History conference in Adelaide late last year, said that he hoped that some of the gardens (because in his electorate of Mayo in South Australia he has a fair number of the most significant gardens in South Australia), he was saying that he hoped that some of them could be maintained the way they were originally designed even though that might not be so politically correct these days because they require more water than perhaps they should. But I think increasingly we are going to have to try and retain the character of historic gardens but perhaps using plants that don't have such high water requirements. But also doing all sorts of other things like mulching and having sensible water storage and irrigation systems so that we are a lot more efficient in managing them.

Indeed. Chris you were closely involved with the committee in its first days, from 1980 on the Interim Committee to 1984 when I think you resigned from the committee. During that time you were Treasurer, Membership Secretary twice, at the same time Tim North was Secretary, what were some of your duties at that time?

Well I don't remember the Treasury part of it with any great sort of affection, I am not a great money-manager and I found that fairly difficult, but I did manage and we had quite an increase in membership at that time. I certainly enjoyed being part of the committee but I just found that by 1984 my work commitments were such that I really had to let that go and let other people take over. I guess like any society it is probably healthy if the same people aren't involved all the time and I think that has been one of the pluses of the Society that there has been a good progression of people in the committees, in the state committees as well.

Howard Tanner was the chair at that time. I am sorry Dame Elisabeth was the initial chair and Howard was the chair from 1981 to 1984, do you remember any particular shifts in style with the different chair?

No. I guess there was more an emphasis, Howard being a practitioner, being a heritage architect there was perhaps more of an emphasis on the practical side of gardening, where Dame Elisabeth coming from the Melbourne establishment and having a well-known garden herself I guess was coming at it from the point of view of an owner. But I don't remember any particular change in style.

While we are on that committee perhaps I could give you that list of the members and if you have any memorable thoughts about the people.

Well Ken Digby I think took over from me as Treasurer and he was a much more effective Treasurer than I. Sue Ebury with her connections with publishing and so on, I think with any society is it important to have a very good spread of expertise in the committee and Sue with her publishing expertise I think was able to help a great deal there. Peter Lumley also I remember was very effective in his role. Warren Nicholls, I had quite a lot to do with Warren Nicholls because I guess he was my counterpart at the Australian Heritage Commission for some time when I was working at the Heritage Branch, he I guess was ultimately responsible for the funding of the Survey of Gardens so it was very important to have someone like him who had that connection with federal government on the committee. Oline Richards was a lone voice from the West, she was a practising landscape architect from Western Australia and was flying the flag for things in the West and she did a very important part of the Survey in defining garden styles in Western Australia ~ a lot of which depended on native plants.

Her voice may have been a lone voice but I get the feeling her voice was a strong voice.

570 It was a strong voice, she was very effective I think in getting across her point of view and I guess also being a landscape architect stressing the need to look at the history of design of gardens. Phyl Simons, I guess Phyl was a bit flaky at times and she took a long time to do the Survey in Tasmania but she was absolutely passionate about the colonial gardens in Tasmania and she eventually published that booklet on the Survey of Gardens. I mean each of the states was looked at in different ways and had different budgets too and that has been a problem, I think the methodologies weren't the same across each of the states.

TAPE 1: SIDE B

For instance in South Australia you had the, I am just trying to think of the name of the people who were involved in South Australia, Tony Whitehill and so on, and they I guess had a background in the Botanic Gardens in Adelaide. Other people were practising landscape architects, in New South Wales James Broadbent was an architect and landscape historian. So people were coming at it from different directions. Howard Tanner had had a very strong interest in gardens for a long time and he curated the travelling exhibition on C*onverting the Wilderness* and I think that was also a major influence in bringing public attention to historic gardens across Australia because that was a travelling exhibition I think funded by the Gallery Directors Council and the publication that came out of that, it is as scarce as hen's

teeth now, was also a very important document in ~ I guess ~ one of the things contributing to setting up of the Garden History Society. Peter Watts had done probably the major Survey of Gardens, his hard-cover publication *The Historic Gardens of Victoria*, so he had a very strong knowledge of historic gardens particularly in that state and brought a huge amount of knowledge and expertise to the committee. As I said Tony Whitehill from South Australia had a very strong botanical background at the Botanic Gardens in Adelaide. So across the interim committee they were a very good team of people from all the different states.

What do you remember about the atmosphere of those committee meetings?

Oh very friendly. I mean the meetings that we used to have at Tim and Keva North's place in Woollahra were very friendly, very stimulating, very vigorous discussion about garden history matters.

I was thinking more with that mix of expertise it must have been a very exciting body to be part of.

Oh it was. I mean as I said people coming from all different directions, some people focusing on the design of gardens, others with a very strong interest in the plants and where the plants had originated, that was amongst the committee as well as the membership. I mean there were some people who were absolutely passionate about plants that had come in with the First Fleet to the Colony of New South Wales and I guess others who had a more horticultural interest.

You also refer to the states, there was always a national bent to the Society.

Well I think that everyone realised that it had to have a national focus and even though there might have been a strong bias towards Victoria and Tasmania in the early days that if it was really going to succeed it had to be a national body. Even though it may be still based in Melbourne I think that the state committees have become much stronger in recent years. I mean they have waxed and waned I suppose that this is inevitable with any society depending on the individuals who are able to be involved at any time and as some people have moved on others have stepped in to take their place and the emphasis will understandably change from time-to-time. But I think once the Society was established and it was decided that it should follow that garden history path then I think that stood it in good stead for the future.

You speak about the changes of people and the influence that they have on the emphasis what are some of those waves of emphasis that have changed in the Society's time?

Well I think, as I said, I guess in the early days we were all finding our way and there was probably more interest in what was out there, which gardens were there in Victoria and Tasmania and so on, and getting information in the journal on those, now there is probably more detailed information about particular figures in history, nurserymen and garden owners and so on. So there has perhaps been a shift towards more detailed historical research into the lives of people who have been involved in the history of gardens in Australia and in influences on Australian gardens. Whereas in the early days I guess it was more the survey to understand just what things were available.

Was it also important to involve institutions? You were obviously a government bureaucrat at the time.

Well as I said with having Warren Nicholls working for the Australian Heritage Commission who held the purse strings for funding under the federal government, similarly in New South Wales I guess there was an advantage in having someone like me being involved because we did have the New South Wales heritage funding program and it has been able to support some owners of historic gardens over the years in terms of publications and conservation management plans not only for buildings but also for their gardens. So having people with those links to government is essential in a body like the Garden History Society.

Does it still have that same strength of links?

Possibly not, no, I think it probably doesn't, but I think it is well established now and I think owners are perhaps better aware now of where they can go for assistance both in terms of advice and in terms of funding. There is never enough funding of course and I guess the vast majority of heritage conservation work in Australia was done by private people with their own funds, but they do have access to much more advice than they used to. Most councils in New South Wales, for instance, have heritage advisers, I mean they may not be landscape people but they can probably steer owners in the direction of where they can get appropriate advice.

You've spoken about the owners Chris, what about the general members of the Society, what sort of people were members in those early days?

Well I guess my impression was in going to some of the early conferences that there was a very strong distinction between I guess wealthy owners of gardens particularly in the southern states, in Victoria and Tasmania and parts of South Australia, and some of us who were lowly paid public servants and students from some of the other states, there was a mix. There is probably a greater mix now than there was then but there was a bit of a dichotomy I think between some of the establishment figures from Victoria and Tasmania and others of us who were practitioners.

I guess for that reason some people couldn't afford to go to conferences or couldn't afford to go on the post-conference tours. I think that is still the case and I think that is a problem with a number of societies I think, the increasing cost of mounting conferences and particularly the tours and I think the tours are very useful. I certainly found just the one day one after the Garden History Conference in Adelaide last year it enables you to see places you wouldn't normally get to see and I think that is very important in stimulating interest particularly among younger students. One thing I found very gratifying at the Adelaide conference was that there were quite a lot of people who were fairly new to garden history, they were students or they were practitioners in landscape architecture but they were increasing their knowledge of garden history. I think that is one of the main roles that this society can have in disseminating that knowledge.

That educational role. Education has always been quite an important theme continuing through to the publications as well as the conference material. Peter Watts spoke about again those early years when he said, 'There were all these other things, artistic and cultural values, that were all very important in the beginning but the first half dozen conferences we had were in a way the most exciting and stimulating because no one had ever seen this stuff unless you were from the privileged few.'

That is very true and there was very little available in the way of published material on Australian garden history. I mean there was *Cherish the Earth* by Beatrice Bligh and then there were the survey publications, but they had fairly limited release apart from Peter Watt's book on the gardens of Victoria, the other ones were fairly difficult to come by, so there just wasn't much information out there so the conferences themselves and the proceedings that arose from them became very important documents.

What about your own publication, the name of it escapes me momentarily?[1]

Something general like *Historic Gardens* or *Conservation of Historic Gardens* I think, but it was just a general overview based on my experience to that time in my work with historic gardens in New South Wales. I mean it was fairly early days, 1980, I had only been working for the Heritage Branch for a couple of years at that stage, but as I said before I had been exposed to Elizabeth Farm House and Rouse Hill House and a number of other early properties in New South Wales and I had seen the material that had come out of the various

1 Betteridge, C., Tanner, H et al., 1983, *Historic gardens in Australia: a guide to the preparation of conservation plans.* Sydney, Australian Garden History Society

garden surveys. I'd had some experience in the application of the *Heritage Act* to protect historic gardens and that is always the difficult part because the understanding of curtilage and what is curtilage is one of the most vexed questions in conservation. You know how much land do you protect around a house to maintain its significance including the garden and the landscape setting. I guess there was that sort of experience that I brought to that early paper, but it was a very general account of my experience to that time.

Do you remember the number of publications, the numbers published?

No I can't I must say.

Is it still available?

Well I don't think so. I think you can probably get photocopies of it but we are talking about the days before widespread use of computers so these things would have been done on typewriters. That is one of the difficulties I guess, I am always being approached by people wanting copies of reports that I've done on historic houses and gardens and you often tell them that that was six computers ago. Photographs, for instance, in those days were all colour prints and they were stuck in and then photocopied, we didn't have all these highly-sophisticated word processing software and so on that we do now.

Have you always been able to find the documents they are searching for?

Generally yes. As I've upgraded computers I have tried to maintain things and make copies onto current technology wherever possible.

That must have a sizeable storage space.

It does, it does, I am sort of drowning. We have a large collection of books above us at the moment and my children are always worried that the roof is going to collapse and all the books will come tumbling down.

You talk about enforcing the Act and you have had some experience with the court system, the Land and Environment Court, could you talk a little about that in terms of gardens.

Yes. As I said, curtilage is a very difficult issue and it is the one I am usually called in to provide expert evidence on, usually matters of landscape heritage. I mean I always advise owners to stay away from the courts if they can because I think the only people who really win are usually the lawyers. But it is a very difficult issue and the courts go on legal precedent and often that hasn't been very helpful because often commissioners and judges have taken a fairly narrow view of what is curtilage. I think that there is an increasing appreciation as I said of the need to protect the gardens and the settings of historic houses but it is still a battle and I guess greed often wins out. I mean, developers all want to get the maximum return for their land and maximum lot yield and we have cases in point. I mean there was a Heritage Week only a couple of weeks ago, there was a seminar at the National Trust in New South Wales focussing on historic gardens, *Vanishing Landscapes*[2], it was called, and there are still increasing pressures on historic gardens in places like the North Shore and the south-west of Sydney, unsympathetic development within the gardens of historic houses.

My wife's cousins have recently bought a lovely property in the Adelaide Hills and the garden, unfortunately, had been subdivided and two new houses built in the middle of it. They have managed to retain the original house and the upper part of the garden and they have since bought the lower part of the garden, but to get to the lower part they have to walk out on the road because the middle of the garden has been sold off, which is unfortunate. So I mean that sort of thing is still happening.

Chris just coming back to your work as a committee person, could you tell me a little bit about your ethos there.

2 *Vanishing Landscapes*, National Trust Heritage Festival, Sydney, 6 March 2007

Well I have been a member of a number of committees over the years, I guess unlike some of my colleagues I have made a point of joining committees. I know some people do it because it might look good on their CV but I did it because I hope that I can contribute something to the operation of the Society. I tend to be a bit of a loner though rather than a committee person and because I've always worked both in my work in the Heritage Branch and in private practice I guess I have been dealing with practical solutions to development problems so I haven't had the opportunity to delve deeply into historical research in a lot of cases, I mean unlike somebody like James Broadbent who has been able to apply a curatorial approach and perhaps concentrate more on the historical research. Perhaps some people would criticise me for that, that I make a more superficial approach to things, but often you have to do that given the time-constraints in dealing with things. This is one of the big problems facing heritage practitioners, that often you have to deal with things in a very short time frame and you don't always have the luxury of being able to do really detailed historical research. I mean you still make every effort to ensure that it is accurate research and that what you are putting up as the history of something is true and that you find as much information as you can within the limitations of the time and budget that you have to work with. So I guess that is the sort of background that I took to committee but also I hope that through my work in public service at that time, on the Interim Committee of the Garden History Society, where I was exposed to a whole range of practical garden history conservation issues, that were useful to bring to the committee.

In your role you must have been able to open doors in other directions as well.

Well I hope so. Obviously by being part of the Heritage Branch we had the opportunity for funding of conservations projects, even though, as I said before, there was never enough money available and the criteria changed from year to year. There is always a change in emphasis and one year it might be focusing on works projects, conservations works, the next year it might be on education programs, the next year it might be on publications and I think that is a good thing too to spread the money across a different range of subjects. But yes I hope through my connections I was able to help and I think that was important generally in the Society that some people brought with them connections to the big end of town, connections to old money or to sponsorship opportunities, and I think that has been very useful in the success of the society not only in terms of expanding its role in advocacy for historic garden research and conservation but also in getting it more widely known in the community.

You touch upon that advocacy role, that has been a very strong value for the Society and indeed Peter Watts in his afterword in Howard Tanner's Catalogue *talked about the 'Dual role of the society acting as a scholarly organisation and becoming an activist group in the preservation of historic gardens,' has the Society been successful in that?*

Yes I think it has. I think there are a lot of different conservation organisations, or conservation-focused organisations, out there but I think because the Garden History Society is focused on garden history in Australia it has a particular role to play in advocacy of conservation of gardens and the members are the ones in the best position to be aware of threats to historic gardens because they are out there as either owners or they know of particular gardens that might be coming under development pressures. I think it is very important that those members make the committee aware of such threats and that the society, through its connections, and as it has become more widely known as a professional body and more highly respected I guess in government circles, that it can put pressure on the relevant levels of government to take action to conserve historic gardens or to provide funding for garden research.

You said become more respected in government circles, was there a time when that role was more ambiguous?

Oh no I don't think it was necessarily more ambiguous I think it just wasn't widely known and as societies grow and prosper they become better known. I guess in the early days perhaps

government wasn't as aware of the Society's role, that does come with time, and I think it comes with effective use of the media. I think you only have to look at the recent conferences of the Society to know that they have been a lot more successful in that regard in terms of getting media coverage and promoting the role of the Society in the community generally.

You were involved in the Botanic Gardens, in progressing that, before you came to the Garden History Society, could you just tell me a little about that.

Yes. Well I had wanted to work for the Botanic Gardens in Sydney for years and the right position hadn't come along but when I left the Heritage Branch I went to Tourism for a while, I saw that there were opportunities to promote heritage conservation through Tourism. That was in 1988, the Bicentennial Year, and I was Manager of Policy and Research in the Tourism Commission of New South Wales for a year so it was a very exciting time and I learnt a lot.

Also I learnt there are lot of people in Tourism who perhaps don't have a strong appreciation of heritage, you would show them a beautiful natural area and they'd say, 'But where is the product,' they wanted a five-star hotel stuck in the middle of it. I think there is still that mentality to a great degree in Tourism and that is an area where the Garden History Society perhaps can work to change that sort of mentality.

But after a year at Tourism a job came up as Assistant Director of the Botanic Gardens in Sydney, in charge of Community Relations, so my bailiwick was all the public face of the Botanic Gardens, publications, education, volunteers, exhibitions, and it was again a very exciting time. Mount Tomah Botanic Garden had just opened and Mount Annan opened I think two weeks before I took on the job so I had a big involvement in the early days of Mount Annan with organising the Visitors' Centre there and all of the interpretive signage at Mount Annan. At the Sydney Gardens, because it was the site of the first farm in the colony and also it is the oldest scientific institution in Australia, I hope that I helped to have more emphasis on the history of the Gardens and the significance of the Gardens both as a place of horticultural research but also scientific research into Australian plants.

Do you think that has happened?

Yes I do. I think you only have to look at the range of publications about the Gardens, you know there has been a lot more published about the history of the Gardens and there is more about the history and the presentation of the Gardens in terms of signage and so on these days. I think that the current Director, Tim Entwistle, has done wonders too in lifting the profile of the Gardens through his media appearances and so on.

I was surprised in preparing in your interview to see his name in reports in the Garden History Society journal some years ago. Just as you spoke about your wish to work at the Botanic Gardens and have some input there and although you were coming from a role of bureaucracy when you were involved in the Interim Committee of the Garden History Society, were there any particular ambitions or expectations or hopes that you had for the Society in those early days?

Well I think like all the members of the committee we wished the Society every success and we wished it to expand and prosper and to be successful in its role of encouraging research into Australian garden history. I did a number of publications over the years and one of the things I enjoyed most was being chosen to do the study of designed landscapes in New South Wales, that was part of a nationwide survey of designed landscapes in each state.

But again, like the early survey of historic gardens, the levels of funding and the methodologies differed from state-to-state. In South Australia, for instance, David Jones had the resources of the university behind him whereas I was essentially working as a loner on my part, and also the budget was less in New South Wales. Then in Queensland again a different approach. So bringing all those things together was difficult and Richard Aitken I

think did a wonderful job in bringing all that together and that was of course the genesis of the *Oxford Companion to Australian Gardens* and I contributed a number of items to that as well.

In particular?

I did one on Federation gardens and another one on lychgates and grottos and I think railway gardens.

You have a particular interest in railway gardens.

Yes. Perhaps that is because I grew up on the railway line at Parramatta. Yes I did have an interest in railway gardens, I used to travel up to the Blue Mountains of course because we had a property up there and every station on the Blue Mountains line used to have its own little garden. Those were the days when railway stations were still staffed by people and not just automatic ticket machines. I remember some in particular, the one at Glenbrook it used to have the blue pool and it had little rockeries and ornamental gardens and the staff took great pride in maintaining those.

I mean this harked back to the late nineteenth century when the commissioners of railways in New South Wales initiated a garden competition and every station master could order up a goods wagon of manure from the sales yards at Flemington to fertilise the garden at their station and they had very intense competitions between the regions and between stations. I mean some of the things they did weren't particularly correct environmentally, there are articles about sending people out to strip things out of the rain forest. You know those wonderful gardens at places like Telegraph Point up on the north coast with stag horns and palms and so on in the gardens. I guess the most famous one is Kuranda up in North Queensland. I think most states had some history of railway gardens to beautify what were fairly Spartan environments around railway stations.

A different emphasis. At the 1980 conference you remarked that in none of the states a garden was mentioned specifically in legislation, would you like to tell me whether there have been changes and how the gardens are viewed under legislation today?

Well I am not completely up-to-date on the legislation in all the states, but I still think that gardens are under-represented in legislation. Of course it is very difficult sometimes to define gardens in a statutory sense, but certainly in the early days the New South Wales *Heritage Act* didn't specifically mention gardens and I guess it was partly because of that difficulty in defining curtilages and because the early emphasis was more on buildings and the *Heritage Act* did have a fairly strong architectural bias to it. I think the situation certainly has improved with changes to the legislation and also the changes I mentioned before to the conservation philosophy as represented in things like the *Burra Charter of Australian ICOMOS*, that there is that greater emphasis now on the importance of setting and gardens and conserving those as an important part of heritage.

Flowing on from your comments again at that first conference you talked about, 'At future conferences it is considered worthwhile to develop the conservation expertise available to the Commission,' and you are addressing to the Commission staff who were present at the conference, 'and to broaden planners' appreciation of the extent of our environmental heritage and the conservation requirements of historic gardens and landscapes,' we've talked a little bit about that already this morning.

I think that is still a major problem, the lack of training about historic landscapes, in engineering, in planning, in architecture. This was raised at the recent *Vanishing Landscapes* Conference, or Seminar, at the National Trust that I talked about. There have been attempts over the years to introduce that sort of training, I mean for instance I used to go regularly and talk at various courses in Museum Studies, in Engineering and Architecture and so on to give the students some understanding of the importance of landscape and historic landscapes, but I don't think that it is commonly done across the country. I think you

end up with a lot of graduates who perhaps don't have an adequate appreciation of the whole range of heritage. A lot of people still view heritage as being either natural heritage or historic buildings and there is a lot of other stuff out there that is important, whether it is archaeological sites or gardens or historic walls, hard landscape elements.

You said you used to go Chris, you don't any more?

I don't at the moment. I took over from Alan Correy for a while in dealing with the landscape aspects of the Heritage Conservation Course at the University of Sydney but that was some years ago, I think Colleen Morris still has an involvement in that and of course she has been very active and is the current Chair of the Garden History Society. No I don't do it at the moment. I know that some of my contemporaries do, people like Warwick Mayne-Wilson and Craig Burton and Howard Tanner and others have all at various times tried to improve the level of understanding of historic gardens and landscapes in various training courses. Because I think that is essential, particularly for people like planners and engineers and architects, that they have a broader appreciation of heritage.

Do they always welcome that?

Probably not. Probably a lot of them are focused on their particular interest and see it as perhaps an unnecessary adjunct or even a burden in some cases I suppose. I know some planners see heritage issues as getting in the road of strategic or development planning. I have spent a lot of my time in working as a heritage adviser in mentoring planners, actually going out in the field with them and getting them to look at landscapes with different eyes and see that there is something more than just an historic building or whatever that the landscape around it is important as well, whether it be an old fence line or significant trees in the landscape that may have been subsequently subdivided. They may relate to an earlier estate and they may be a significant part of the landscape that should be considered in future planning.

What has been the reaction?

Oh generally favourable amongst the young planners. I like to think that my work has resulted in some of them maintaining a lifelong interest in heritage. I took on one particular landscape student, David Beaver, when I was at the Heritage Branch and he came to me being mainly interested in Australian native plants and landscape and has subsequently become an expert in heritage landscapes, so I like to think I was instrumental in his change of direction. I used to make a point of taking on work experience students and students in planning or landscape architecture who had to do an attachment in a government agency as part of their training course.

It seems to me there are lots of parallel lines within the industry of people working in separate discrete fields that nevertheless there is still an overlap. Is there some way of melding that in the future?

I'd like to think there is and I think that the Society can probably help in that respect by pulling together people in different areas of expertise and focusing their attention for the common good.

One of the more general things just in winding up Chris, Howard Tanner said some time ago in one the Garden History journals that gardens such as Jocelyn Mitchell's at Mawalak in Victoria will in another century be seen as defining statements in Australia's cultural landscape, any thoughts on that?

No. I think Howard is very true in that and I think for that reason it is important that they be researched and understood and conserved where possible because I think they do demonstrate changing attitudes to landscape design and I think we need to conserve examples right through from the early colonial gardens that are coming under increasing pressure in the outskirts of Sydney, for instance, through to those important gardens in Victoria and Tasmania and examples of recent gardens. I think one of the biggest problems

that the Society and that practitioners in general are facing is the loss of gardens by current landscape designers, gardens and landscapes that have been designed in only the last twenty or thirty years are being swept away in redevelopment.

Any examples of those?

Well I can think of one in particular that is the University of Technology site at Lindfield which is a design from the 1970s, late 1960s and 1970s, yet is threatened by residential development which would see it greatly altered. I think the same applies to a lot of buildings by living architects, their work is modified or even demolished. I think that must be very difficult for them but also it is a real challenge to the industry generally and to the Society in particular I think to focus attention on those, even though they are recent examples they are nonetheless important if they are the works of recognised living designers, some of whom have been very influential in the development of landscape design in Australia.

So is that work for the Society in the future to educate in that more current...

Most definitely. As I said some of the older gardens are better protected because they are better known but I think some of those newer landscapes like Bruce Mackenzie's native landscapes around Sydney are really coming under threat and we are only talking about stuff from the 1960s and 1970s and they are seminal examples of their type, particularly the one at Lindfield where there was a conscious effort made to protect the existing native vegetation and almost drop the building in to an existing landscape.

At UTS?

Yes.

Chris you began to tell me off tape, but I think it is really marvellous to have your thoughts about UTS on tape, if you like to just go back and tell me about that brutalist architecture and so on.

Well I mean it is not to everyone's taste, brutalist architecture. In looking at the site, and I was commissioned as part of a team by Ku-ring-gai Council to do a heritage assessment of the site because UTS wants to sell it off and relocate the facilities there to Broadway.

The building there was designed in the style of an Italian hill village so it follows the spine and it has various functions going off the sides, but everywhere you turn there are wonderful views out into the natural landscape, whether it be into an enclosed courtyard with some remnant eucalypts or whether it is a more distant view across to the skylines of Chatswood or to the Lane Cove National Park which adjoins the site.

But the buildings were actually plonked into the landscape if you like and they went to extraordinary measures to protect rock outcrops, they covered them with deep sand, layers of sand, so that the rock wouldn't be scored and marked by building equipment and so on and then when they had finished the building they removed the top layers by mechanical means and then with brooms and then they hosed off the last vestiges of sand so that the rock was completely protected. And every tree that they could retain was retained so you have the mature trees growing right up to the building. So it was really one of the first examples of that sort of, I guess, respect for the natural environment and to try and put a new development into an existing landscape and unfortunately if the site is sold off for residential development not only will there be new buildings introduced, for instance, onto the playing fields and so on, but also there will have to be a much greater clearing of the vegetation around the site to comply with bushfire requirements and I think that will be a great shame, I think it would be much better if the site was retained for educational use.

It is difficult to find some body that has sufficient funds to take it over but I think it was designed as an educational institution and like most significant properties it is better if they retain their original use, I think it is better if an historic house remains as a residence. I mean

often that isn't possible and you have to adapt them to other uses but I think in this case it would be better if it remained as an educational institution.

That is a sorry tale to conclude on perhaps, but you have been very generous this morning Chris with your expansive memories of the Society, is there anything else that you want to add to this discussion?

Well only to wish the Society all the very best for the future in its role in historical research of Australian gardens and landscape and also its advocacy role in conservation of those landscapes. I have always been a member, I've never let my membership lapse, I enjoy receiving the journal. Even though I am not actively involved in committee work these days I hope that some time in the future I might be able to have a more active role in the Society again.

Thank you.