

AUSTRALIAN GARDEN HISTORY SOCIETY

Oral History Project

Transcript

Interviewee:	MRS JAN GLUSKIE
Interviewer:	Roslyn Burge
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Tape 1: Side A

This interview is being conducted as part of the Australian Garden History Society's Oral History Project. It's an interview with Mrs Jan Gluskie, Committee Member of the Sydney Branch of the Australian Garden History Society, at her home in Lane Cove on Thursday, 4 December, 2003. The interviewer is Roslyn Burge.

Jan, thank you for participating in the project. Could you for the tape give me your full name and your date and place of birth?

Janice Vera Gluskie. My date of birth 16/10/38 and I was born at Toowoomba in Queensland.

When did you come to Sydney?

I came to Sydney in 1960 to do obstetrics because I was a general trained nurse in Toowoomba and I came down here to do obstetrics and have been here ever since.

But a Queensland girl at heart.

Yes. Well I had a cousin here in Sydney, well she was my mother's cousin, and she was working at King George V and she said, 'Oh, you must come to Sydney.' And that was a really fairly regular thing that girls did, once they did one certificate they went somewhere else to do the second one, just as people do to travel. And so that was how ... I mean I didn't really choose it, just that Maureen was here and I decided to come. And then of course I married one of the doctors on staff and I've been here ever since.

Did you continue to work as a nurse?

Yes I did. Well not at King George, I didn't stay after I'd finished because then I was about to be married and I went ... my husband was just starting in general practice so I worked as the practice nurse for about nine years. Well on and off for nine years, we had other staff as well and I also had some children in that time. But I then became the practice manager and I worked then as a practice manager after he did psychiatry and all those kinds of things, right up until about six years ago, something like that, can't remember now. I've always been involved, not as a nurse particularly, but involved in the medical sort of field.

So if you were doing that until six years go that also overlapped with your horticultural interests.

Yes, it did. Being the practice manager doesn't mean I worked actually in the practice, I actually did all the books and the accounts and paid the wages and did all those things from home. So that only involved me going to the practice sort of once a week or something to do that. I did horticulture from about 1988/1989 when my younger son went to school. He went to boarding school in Bathurst and he was very unhappy there because he was terribly homesick and he always wanted me to go up there so I really felt I must do something that involved me not being so available and it actually worked out really well because he was doing agriculture and I was doing horticulture and then we'd spend our weekends when I went up there doing our homework together, both doing soils and weeds and all those things, so it was actually quite nice. So that was where it started and I did three years and finally graduated in 1990.

Did you enjoy the course?

Oh loved it. I'd be a perpetual student given the opportunity - it is just so nice. Because, well I'd grown up in the country and I had a lot of my education by correspondence. That being so, in Queensland you do .. it is a bit different from New South Wales we didn't do a leaving certificate, it is different now, you did a junior certificate. You did a scholarship at age twelve – no, age fourteen, which is a bit like the end of primary school, and then at sixteen you did what was called the junior level and at eighteen you did senior.

So I went through to fourteen and did my scholarship but I didn't actually spend much time going to school because I had correspondence. I started school the minute I turned five, which was in October, and then that following ... I think it was only those few months I had and the next Christmas holidays the school teacher was killed. She was very young and she was on her Christmas holidays and she went riding and fell off the horse and got a stake in her leg or something and died of septicaemia, which you did in those days.

We were then five miles from the nearest school which was the reason why you didn't have to go to the nearest school so we had correspondence until I was about nine or ten. And then I was able to ride to the local school, I got a new pony for the occasion and all those things because you had to be able to do that. Then I went to the local school for a few years and my mother considered we weren't doing very well, my brother and I, so she took us home again and Roy did scholarship at home and so did I. I just loved being at school, I loved the company and the competition and all of that, so when it came to go to high school the choice was to board with my grandmother and maiden aunt, which didn't appeal to me, so begged my mother not to send me to high school, so I didn't. I worked at home for a while and then I went to work for the local doctor when I was about sixteen. I worked for a year with him because I told him when I was seventeen I was going nursing and that meant I had to do an entrance exam because I didn't have a junior, which was a requirement in those days.

So I did the entrance exam and became a nurse. That was interesting because all the other girls who came in my year had all been to high school and I kind of felt a bit out of it. But then I'm the only one who has gone on to run my own business, which is interesting, the others haven't. But when I did get back to do horticulture I just loved it and I thought I was silly not to go to high school, it was just a stupid thing. When you are fourteen or fifteen, or whatever, you just sort of think living with your grandmother is more than you can bear.

63 So you didn't go to school at all? Or is that when you did the correspondence work?

I had from when I was five. For a few months I went to actual school. Then from when I was nine until about eleven or twelve I actually rode to the local primary school, a one-teacher school that we had in our district. Then the rest was all done by correspondence, yes.

What was that district you grew up in?

It was just out of Toowoomba in Queensland. The first district was called Burton which I think these days is not recognisable, but then the other one was Bidestone which is quite a big area. Went back recently and had a look at all of that. My brother still lives within 20 kilometres of that school because he has got the family property now.

71 Jan you mentioned running your own business, what is your own business?

I work as a garden designer and horticultural consultant which I started after I'd finished at college. That wasn't particularly easy because my elder son that year was sick with a malignancy and everything had to be sort of curtailed while he was sick. But that actually ... I was still at college while he was sick ... sorry I had just finished college when he got sick. It was number two son fell out of a tree and broke his spine in the middle of my horticulture course. That meant ... I mean he was ten weeks in hospital and then came home to be in a wheelchair and I was doing second year at that stage and it worked out really well because he was at home but he was doing rehab and they sent a Com car to pick him up and take him to rehab. And I'd said to my colleagues, 'Look I think I'm going to have to give up,' and they said, 'No don't just wait and see what happens'. And that was Wednesdays and I was going to college on Wednesdays so it worked out really well. So we got through all of that.

And then the year that I actually did finish – and that was the year Richard was sick with his malignancy my husband decided he would be district governor for Rotary, which took up all of your time because it is an enormous task and the wives are expected to be there, and so my horticulture course was sort of really stomped on at that stage, I just felt I'd never get back to it.

And then shortly after that we moved to Longueville and one of my husband's relatives rang me up and said she wanted me to design her garden. I must admit that was ... I was terrified because I'd never really done anything; I don't know why she asked me, I have no idea how she knew or anything; and so I did.

And from then on I have worked continuously, I haven't had any real breaks and I've never advertised or anything so it has been quite nice. And it is a nice job because you can do it with the family, you can do your drawings on the dining room table as I said before and you know, you don't have to work if you don't want to because you are really your own boss, but I love it. I love particularly sorting out the problems, getting things going in the right direction.

94 That must have helped you then sorting out the problems with the Society.

Well maybe. I don't know.

Were there any particular early influences that promoted your interest in gardens and horticulture?

Well I think the main catalyst in this case was when we bought this property at Mittagong, which we knew had had a history, it had belonged to Parke-Davis I think, the pharmaceutical company, and I understand that the whole property was used when they first started developing contraceptive pills. And of course all the little sheds and buildings, not on the particular piece of property we bought, but part of the original hundred acres had all these little rabbit sheds and the whole place was set up and we knew about this. And then somebody told me down there that the people who had owned our place had been the original little cottage. I actually saw this lady and she said what was our laundry was then the dairy and they had planted this tree and that tree and I got a little bit interested in this. Then I think I said to my husband, 'I'd really like a subscription to the Garden History Society,' I'd bought a few of their magazines somewhere and I thought this might help. At that stage it was actually functioning out of Bowral, properties in Bowral, so I might find something. I didn't actually, but I was really interested in the talks because they talked about property gates and entrances and all of this which concerned me at the time. And I even went to see the historical society in Mittagong to see if they knew anything about it, but they didn't know particularly much about the property but through that I did find this other lady.

114 What is the name of the property Jan?

It is called *Hawthorn Park* and I think it always was, I think it was the original property. It is now four properties.

What address?

It is on the old Hume Highway just about opposite the Wombeyan Caves Road. It doesn't have a number of anything and it's now I think classified as Welby, not Mittagong, because we're the other side of the new freeway which went through. And I think that was the original little cottage on the whole hundred acres, but now they carved it up into three even though they still insist that it is a hundred acre sub-division, so something has happened along the way. Our neighbouring in Palm Cottage has got three acres, the one behind us in Springfield has got thirty-seven, we've got seven and the other is the rest of the hundred acres, sixty acres or something, I don't know that he has got a name for his property, but that's the whole piece. So yes, that's where I started getting interested in the history.

Then when this letter came about the Garden History Society of course I did live in Sydney, there was no question I did live in Sydney that was our weekender, and the children in those days it was lovely because we used to have all the school holidays down there it was easier when they were all at school.

Richard had probably left, or just about, but the other two - and we could go down there and stay. But then when they started to get jobs and things it got more difficult so I was actually living in Sydney. When this little letter came round I thought we had better do something about that and went along to the meeting and from then on became really involved.

130 The letter you are talking about is the letter that came in 1993 to have the AGM of the branch at *Lyndhurst*. But before you joined and went along ... participated and went along to activities?

I don't know that I went to any activities except lectures, the occasional lecture that they did in Bowral if I was down there, which is what you can do in the Garden History Society. If you are interstate and there is something you want to see you can go because you are a member. If there were talks advertised and I was in Bowral ... I didn't ever go to anything in Sydney before this actual meeting. I don't know why I didn't get notices about things in Sydney. But if I was in Bowral I'd sometimes make a point of being there when they had lectures that I was interested in. I went to a few at Oxley College and I listened to Margaret Bligh and a few others that came to talk. I mean I didn't go to a lot.

This was in the late 1980s?

Yes. We bought the property in 1985 so it was between 1986, 1987, 1988, 1989 when I was interested in that. Then of course this was a little later. I went to a conference, I went to one of their conferences, which was held in Goulburn and that was the national conference - visited all those wonderful properties out the back like *Markdale* - learned about planting schemes and all these things that I knew nothing about much and generally was interested in this lovely trip we did. I went with a friend from Sydney. I didn't actually have a lot to do with the Society until this.

And then I remember that meeting distinctly, I can almost remember who was around the table. I was talking about it the other day. When we were forming up this ... they were saying, 'Now we've got to form a branch' and I think about six or eight people put their hand up that they'd be happy to be on a committee. I'm looking around thinking who we could have as secretary, because I always think that is the most important job on a committee, the rest is easy.

158 Had you volunteered for the committee then?

No. Well I did, I volunteered to be part of the committee. I was looking around and there was Tempe Bevan who was a younger person and she didn't have any children at that stage.

Tempe was there and I thought now she's young and hasn't got any children and she would be a good secretary. We had about nine, six, or eight, or nine of us on the committee. We then decided we'd meet subsequently and then out of that group we'd form a committee.

John Challis put his hand up to be treasurer and I was really keen to get Tempe to be the secretary, then all the jobs had been filled and there was only one left to fill and I was the only person that didn't have a job and so they said would you take it. And I thought – Oh, I don't know, I've never done anything like this but seeing they didn't have anybody we'd have a go at it and between the group that was there we set about having a committee and doing what committees do, thinking about activities.

We didn't have any money or anything much so we had a few activities. I don't even remember much what we did that first year, we probably puddled along. Came the end of that year and they told us we had to have the conference the next year because Sydney had never had one and that was a bit of a shock. So I thought, 'Oh well, let's see what we can do.' I'm really amazed now, having read some of that stuff, I can't believe I wrote it even.

177 But at this time you were still working in your husband's practice and doing your horticulture and you had the children and you were managing two houses!

Yes. *Laughter* I was younger!

But that's still quite a contribution of voluntary time to an organisation.

Well I think at that stage I would only have had Edward at school. I am trying to think, 1993, Alex was at uni, because that was after his accident, and Edward was still at school. Yes

You said you can remember who was there at the meeting, do you remember what the atmosphere was like?

Yes, I think everyone was keen to see it continue, I think that was what we were told that we had to form a committee and Sydney had never really been .. and Sydney is a difficult town for committees, I just think there are so many things for people to go to. And Robin and Beth had done really quite a good job in organising things, just between ... they had just put their heads together and decided to do things and I don't know why I never knew about these, or if I did probably like other Sydney-siders I just didn't go.

Did you know any of the other people who were there?

No.

So your paths hadn't crossed with Beth or Robin?

No. No. No I didn't. Some of the people that put their hands up for the committee fell by the wayside during the next year, especially when we had the conference committee. But there were just only ... really only six or eight who continued to be part of it. Some of them who'd gone to that original meeting didn't want to be on a committee, so it was just the few people who put their hands up to decide we wouldn't let the ship sink as it were. Robin and Beth were both on the committee, so that was ... we really had the people we needed to tell us what to do, but they'd been doing it for years so they didn't really want to take on the job of organising things, but

they were very happy to be back-up and that is very comforting as a person who didn't have much experience of this.

203 And important to any committee.

And I suppose when I think about it I had been chairman of the Children's Medical Research Foundation years before we ... when we young mums with children couldn't do much - the Strathfield Committee was actually a very active committee and we run lots of functions and art shows and all those sorts of things which you could do when you had small children. And I'd been chairman of that at some stage. The secretary got sick and I was chairman and secretary for twelve months because there was nobody else, but they were things you did when you had small children because you wanted a bit of company and it was something you could do. So I'd sort of run a committee and I guess the same sort of thing, because you are fund-raising, organising functions, it was a very active committee, it had been really good. And I suppose I just kind of went back to do what we did there.

217 Were you involved in any way in the production of the journal?

No. Only when ... when you're chairman, oh in those days the journal editor wasn't paid there were various people who took it on for a year or more and you'd be in touch with them just for branch news and things like that, I didn't have any input into what went in the journal, they were very much sole editors and everything. They just got the material together that people sent them. There was a guy, I can't remember his name, but two or three, they did it besides their work, they didn't have any help. Then we .. later on we got a journal editor, that is when Tricia Dixson took over, and then she got paid and .. so things have improved a whole lot in the management area since then. But no, I didn't have anything to do with the journal. You'd send in your activities to in and be advertised.

231 That first year that you were involved formally you had student awards that you ran.

Yes we tried a few things that were different. That was my idea, I thought it would bump up the student membership or the young membership and we instigated these students awards and sent them off to all the TAFE colleges and universities who were doing horticulture. I think most of them probably ended up in the garbage bin, I'm not sure where they went but we didn't get many applicants. It was a bit sad in the end, I mean a number of the committee were against it.

239 Why so?

Well, they thought it was just a waste of money and I think probably they were right. Although Richard Clough was particularly against it then in the end he wrote the proposal for me. So, you know, Richard was a bit like that, he didn't like new things but after a while he digested it and he'd come really good and he wrote the proposal which was good. And that was the one we sent out and offered \$500 and we got three or four submissions. It was to be an article on garden history and they were to submit their paper and they also were to submit an article for the journal from that paper, a journal length article, which we thought would be good for the journal. So we got most of the people that sent things in were the three I'm sure it was something they'd prepared for something else. The girl that finally won it, I don't even remember what it was about, we decided she was the winner and gave her the \$500 and I rang her up and sort of told her and thought she'd be excited and I said, 'Do you plan to do something with this \$500,' and she said, 'Yes, I'm going to pay off my credit card.'

So I really felt the whole thing had been somewhat of a disaster. And she didn't ever submit her article for the journal after that so it was a bit of a waste. The idea was

good, I think, it's just that we probably needed to promote it a little differently and be a little more stringent in our policing .. or whatever you call it – our picking of the candidates. But we had to award it, there was no choice.

265 Has it continued, that student award?

No it hasn't, but it is back on the agenda again in a different form I think. That's been quite a thing. Students sometimes think of garden history as being sort of old-fashioned and musty but a few now — the whole climate about history has changed and I really think that ... like 1988 in some ways Australia became aware, ... they grew up a bit ... and they became aware of things what we had that really needed to be preserved and that history was important. I don't know why I felt that, but I just felt that people looked at Australia differently after that. And that history people now are doing much more research about history and it's been quite exciting and I think more courses are being offered in the institutions and I know that even Ryde College a couple of years ago one of the teachers said, 'There's a little course coming up and you should apply for it.' I'd love to be a teacher but I didn't really want it at that stage and it was to do with garden history as such and to ... it was an elective I would have thought and it was only a six month course. So at least I think it has probably gone now because TAFE's just been ... TAFE college courses have been cut so much, I think it is probably gone. But the fact that they thought about it is something that I think is a change.

286 Do you think that the Australian Garden History Society in any way has helped shape that change and view?

Well I doubt it because almost always still at functions when we hang up our banner people come along and say, 'I didn't know you existed.' And it's been ... you know, it is hard because we don't sell our journal in the newsagent, it is now on sale at the Botanic Gardens but for years I tried to get that to happen but the girl that was in charge of the – well actually the Friends were against it because they felt it would compete with their journal (Friends of the Botanic Gardens) and they wouldn't allow it to be sold in the Garden shop and ... but they did allow one journal, which was about the gardens, we were allowed to continue to put that in and they sold that one. That's all changed now and it is sold in the Garden shop. And I think probably there was one guy in Balmain, can't remember his name, they used to sell it too.

302 In a book stall, Phillip Bray perhaps?

Yes it was Brays, that's right. But that's all. After it left the *Garden Journal* that Bowral paid for, Tim and Keva North's journal which was a subscription journal, it just faded into non-existence because ours wasn't sold in the same way. Because their journal was our journal and then when it got separated that's where — almost without fail when we hang up our banner, be it at Vacluse House or anywhere, people come and say, 'We didn't know there was such a thing.' So I don't think that anything the Garden History has done has actually influenced any other — that's my personal feeling, I mean it might have. And we have a lot of members who just subscribe to the journal, we never see them at functions or get any feedback from them, they just subscribe because they like to read the journal. Maybe they broadcast it around, but I don't think so.

The move is afoot now to have a new branch in northern New South Wales. That was another thing I tried, I actually did try to form branches; well not branches so much as sub-committees on the Central Coast and in and around Armidale. Unfortunately the year that I tried that they were in the grip of a terrible drought and they said they didn't think that they would get people to be interested in doing anything except looking after themselves that year and I had offered to go up and talk to them and just generally suggest they have a few functions and we would

manage their money and they'd just be sub-branches. So I tried to form one on the Central Coast under the same conditions but we didn't get enough interest at that stage.

334 Was that a case of the Sydney branch reaching out to those people or responding to a request from those areas?

No we didn't have a request but I was always conscious of the fact that our branch is the Sydney and Northern New South Wales and I just felt we really were not giving those members in the rest of New South Wales very much attention. I mean you're based in Sydney and it is just not fair to those members that you never offered them any functions or things to go to, or any of that, in their areas and I really felt we should. And it is very hard to run something from Sydney but if we had a little group up there who would do it that would lighten up the whole of our territory and I just felt that was not really quite fair to those members unless they were in Sydney they didn't get to go to any functions.

No. And what about the Blue Mountains and west?

Well we tried that too and that was to be based in Orange. But they often came to things in Sydney because a few people from the Blue Mountains come down to Sydney from time to time.

The people in Orange have got the Orange Ag College and they often do a number of things themselves around out there, they used to have some functions. They didn't seem to be terribly interested in making a new branch out there either - I still think it could happen. I mean you look at Bowral and it's a country town and they are just so active and have the most wonderful, exciting and interesting things for their members and you can't imagine why it couldn't happen in a place like Armidale or Tamworth or Orange or Bathurst or you know, perhaps the Central Coast is a bit different but they've got the same kind of infrastructure and country people always support country people and ... why?

368 Has the Society explored that further?

No.

What chance do you think the new efforts will have to create a branch up at New England?

Well I'm hopeful that it will. Malcolm seems excited and he's done the hard yards: he's been up there and talked to them and stirred up some interest and he has got some people up there who have been active in Sydney. Richard Bird, who runs the Old Mole an old tool ... antique tools, of course he comes to Sydney for all the garden shows so we have had quite a lot to do with him and his wife apparently is quite interested in being the catalyst up there to get things going, so it might really take off.

What is her name?

I don't know her name.

382 Jan there have been a number of people who have been important as the Society's grown, Peter Watts, Howard Tanner, Richard Clough, Beth Bond, do you have any reminiscences about those people?

Well I didn't know Peter at all very well until, I mean I knew what he did and he'd been instrumental and written ... well instrumental in getting the Garden History Society going ...

End Side A, Tape 1

Tape 1: Side B

Jan there have been a number of people who have been important as the Society's grown, Peter Watts, Howard Tanner, Richard Clough, Beth Bond, do you have any reminiscences about those people?

Well I didn't know Peter at all very well until, I mean I knew what he did and that he'd been instrumental and of course had written ... well he'd been instrumental in getting the Garden History Society going – they had ... I don't know quite where, but they suddenly had a thought that all these old gardens were there and there was no history about them so they set about doing that. I knew of Peter but I didn't know him as a person until he became part of the Management Committee and we worked there.

And Howard Tanner – I had a little to do with Howard when we had our last conference because he was our first speaker and when we were going to have the conference I mean I didn't know really where to start but somebody said 'oh well let's see if Howard'd come along' and Beth was there and Robin Lewarne and I think Peter Watts was there and there were about four or five of us and we had a little meeting and threw around some ideas about what we might have as a theme. And Howard was – I mean he'd been part of it and he understands all those old gardens and he's really a fountain of knowledge so that's what ... and that's what I know about him. And Beth of course has been a really good first lieutenant to Robin – or vice versa, but together they have – and she had her own beautiful garden and very active in the Camellia Society and the garden ... community garden club – Garden Club of Australia I think, and she and Lindsay both were very active in that – so they were really influential in keeping the whole thing going and finding things ... thinking about activities and things like that.

And Richard Clough – I didn't know him until we met the night of the meeting in 1993 but I had been to some – either before or after that, I'm not sure, but Continuing Education with Sydney University when he'd given some talks and he was then part of our original first Committee for New South Wales. And of course he, once again, was an incredible fountain of knowledge because of all the work he'd done as a Landscape Architect and with the University of New South Wales.

All of those were very important and just great to have on board – people that you could go to when you want some information and help in one way or another. I rang Peter the other day because I have to write to the Governor now and I said to him, 'How does one do this?' – I want to use Government House – please tell me.

31 But even in that first committee you've got a nice representation of the people who are closely involved academically in garden history and others who are involved practically. Has that been part of the Society's mix?

Yes. It's very much a part of its strength. We've got just ordinary gardeners and academics and designers and architects and I think that that's what makes the Garden History Society sort of interesting in that it's also a challenge because if you're having a conference you've got to keep in mind that you can't have it too much one way – you've got to appeal to the ordinary gardener and you try not to beam it so low that the academics think this is all a bit garden-clubbish and that's tricky in a Society with such a broad membership. And I mean I know, because at the last conference we went to Government House and there's a garden there that's very structured – it's got a central pathway and a fountain at the end of it and beds either side and they were planted different, you know, they were sort of ... cottage

garden this and that on either side and nothing matched and in a structured garden like that it's usually fairly formal. And somebody walked in, one of the members walked in and said "Oh, my delphiniums aren't flowering yet" and you realise then that the whole formal structured design thing doesn't matter anything to them – you know, all they saw was the plants and that sort of makes you realise that there's a whole range of things you have to keep in mind that you must not cut one out and make it so it's not comfortable for all of the members. But on the other hand it's good because it covers a very wide range of topics.

48 You use the word "that last conference" – do you mean the last Sydney conference?

Last Sydney conference in 1995.

You formed the Society formally in Sydney in August 1993 and then just two years and a bit later you present this conference. Tell me something about the lead up to that?

To the conference? Ah ... well ... the story was that Sydney had never had a conference and what we tried to do ... well what the Society was trying to do is to move it around so that each state has a conference. I don't know that all the other states have actually had one – Brisbane hadn't – they didn't have much of a committee either but because it had sort of been Melbourne-centric and well Bowral had a conference and they'd done one in the country out of Melbourne because that was the one Margaret Darling decided after that one that she was going to inspect every venue thereafter because they got there and the motel they were to stay at had gone into receivership and there was no food or something – they had a few disasters (well that one in particular). But then they said you know, Sydney had never had a conference and I think probably that's partly why it was really so successful in that people hadn't been to Sydney and I know the people who live in South Australian and Western Australia think Sydney's the, you know, all the star of Australia – they've got all the life and the sparkle and everything and they just lust after coming to Sydney and an opportunity like that was not to be missed. But ... and I think that's why it was so popular more than anything that Sydney hadn't done it – and here was an opportunity – they could go but apart from that in the lead up.

As I said, I knew nothing much about running conferences and we learnt as we went along and started to think about what you had to have and we had other conferences to build on – we knew what we had experienced at other conferences but it's quite different when you come to do it yourself. And ... I had a *really* good committee because I picked my committee. I used people I knew, I ...for the conference committee they don't have to be actual members, you can second people ...

68 So who was your Committee?

Well I had – I was the chairman and I got my daughter-in-law to be my secretary because I knew she had really good skills

And her name is?

Jennifer Gluskie. And she at that stage didn't have any children but she was secretary to the General Manager at Sutherland Hospital and she used to run all their functions anyway and she had really good secretarial skills and I wanted someone who could do the minutes and get them out and do our conference booklet and our registration form and, you know, format it all and do all of that and she had arrangements with her boss that she could go in early and do it at work. And then Robin White, who I was at college with, she and her husband, they were sort of developers but they also had a property in the Southern Highlands and they also had

an interest in a restaurant and Robin knew a lot about catering and doing things nicely so she was part of my team to do the gardens and organise the catering.

And Peggy Munce – who had ... Peggy had done trips for the National Trust and I'd known Peggy for years and I knew she could write things up so she was going to be my girl who wrote up the gardens and then ... who was the other girl .. forgotten her name – Joy – and I knew that too, so I put those two together. Because we had a conference booklet that has a description of the gardens and a little drawing of the garden and special features in it so you need to have a team who can do that so those three were sent up to do all the reconnaissance mission on the gardens – to find them, write them up, to draw the pictures to organise the catering and do all of that – they were my team there.

Colleen Morris and Allan Correy and probably Richard Clough, I don't know whether Richard was part of the conference team, he probably ... might have been one of the ones who said he didn't want to have anything to do with it – because there were a couple of those on the Branch committee.

92 Why were they opposed to it?

Well they thought we couldn't do it. They thought it was more than we ... we were only a new committee and it was more than we could ... and I had said to them in the beginning that no-one had to be on the committee if they didn't feel they wanted to – that was fine, I was happy about that. And I had John Challis – he didn't want to be, and I remember that but in the end when we talked about the next one he said 'well I was one of the detractors last time but I thought it was marvellous' so, you know, he realised we could do it. And then apart ... we had Alison Parsons who was looking after venues. Now Alison she knew ... she was well connected with the Liberal Party and knew a lot of people so, and she'd been to a lot of things socially so she was really good for venues and Robin Lewarne, was the Treasurer – couldn't do without Robin but she knew about budgeting and she'd done ... well because she'd organised functions before – she knew about buses and how to run them and the sort of things they wanted. And that's about the whole committee.

But it was certainly chosen and we worked really well together. They would have to come back at each meeting from their own little special group – I didn't interfere with any of them – put their case and tell us what they were up to and then we'd discuss it and people would say well, you know, you must do this, this and this and Robin was particularly – she used to say 'Don't ever have any meals where people serve themselves'. But the lady out at Camden Park decided she'd have a buffet and of course the first busload got most of it and the second busload got none and the third busload... well it was worse than that because they invited them back for second helpings and then the subsequent buses came and I think about the fourth bus they were in the kitchen making soup to try and feed them and it was cold and wet and ... anyway. We did learn our lesson and so did others that it doesn't ... you know, it's much better to have individual serves and we made a lot of mistakes but we got there.

112 Well it's not your core business catering.

No ... I'd be better now. So yes, so that was that committee and I must admit I put a lot of time into it – I wasn't working as such and I did a lot of it just, you know, in a corner of my lounge room. I had it set up and I wrote a lot of letters, I spoke to a lot of people and I still had even two days before the conference people still wanting to register and come and it wasn't quite as good as it should have been because we had it at the Marriott and some of the hotels don't have ... well they have big rooms but when you get a lot of people their ceilings aren't high enough to put the screens up and the people at the back were having a great deal of difficulty seeing the

screen so it was a bit of a mistake to have all of those people. And then of course it rained and we had a harbour cruise in the pouring rain and instead of people being able to have their lunch out on the deck and whatever. We had people saying it's 2 o'clock and we haven't had lunch yet and it was just awful. We couldn't see the houses that the people were describing ... but people still talk about the conference as being good. I remember the bad bits of course because you're the organiser and you thinking ... Ohh. But there's no way you can do things like that and not have the rain interfere – you can't have people under cover all the time if they're going to look at gardens and then when we did our tour out to Camden Park and all of those, of course, it was wet again. I remember *Brownlow Hill* in particular because my grandfather was actually brought out by Alexander Macleay to be the groom at *Brownlow Hill* and they lived above the stables.

132 What was his name?

John Grundy. And I said to Jen, my daughter-in-law and my son were with us that day and said to them – well now you're going to have a look at your ancestral home on these lovely properties we're visiting that are famous and have been in history for some time and this was our little humble dwelling and it was pouring rain and the gutters were running ... it was just awful. Anyway, people seemed to enjoy themselves. They got around between the showers but that's one of the things about Garden History Conferences – you can not organise the weather.

138 But what about the lectures and the seminar side of it, was that a success as well?

I think so. I didn't hear many of them because I was the organiser and you spend a lot of time outside the room making sure the next speaker's ready, that the person who's going to introduce them is there, that the notes are right, that someone's looking after the time and you're not going over and the lunch is ready – so that I didn't hear a lot of them. I think most of them were really good – I did remember seeing James Broadbent with his little bottle of Roundup in his pocket and he was delightful.

At the conference?

At the conference – he was talking about iceberg roses. And one of the ... I remember one speaker who had numerous bells and continued on ...

Do you remember who that was?

No I don't .. I remember it was a woman but I don't remember her name and some people thought it was incredibly boring but other people said that was so interesting so once again you have this difference of opinion.

My sister-in-law, who's ... you know, she's more of an academic – she did agriculture and things like that – she thought it was wonderful but other people just thought the whole thing ... it was all about rocks and which Seg (CHECK) and that sort of geographical – geological things that she was talking about but otherwise I didn't hear many of the speakers because you're so busy keeping the show on the road and we had our dinner on the Friday night which was after the first day and we'd arranged everything so the tables were all set and people were all allocated tables so that they had a Sydney person at every table to be the sort of host and then we found that, you know, this one and that one wasn't going and we were going to have gaps at the table so after Friday session my daughter-in-law and I sat down, Jen and I sat down and rearranged all the tables again before the dinner in the evening. I had installed my son and Jen in the hotel next door to the conference centre so they could be on hand and she could run things and I had to come home and get dressed for the dinner. So I whizzed home and got back – I was the last person at the dinner

but she had been there to seat everybody and get them all – this was at Parliament House, which was a lovely venue. Absolutely lovely venue.

And I sat down at the table and they'd obviously made the tables longer and put an extra board in or something and Lester Tropman was sitting next to me and I sat down and had a drink and he had a glass of red wine and it just caught the edge of this board and went right down the front of my dress which was pale blue ... and went straight down the front of my dress. And I thought – on what on earth are people going to think –she's drunk already because I had to introduce the guest, the speaker for the evening. Anyway I sort of held the coat together and got up and stood behind the lectern and hoped nobody noticed. I mean I felt sorry for Lester because he was so upset and

As you would be ...

Yes ... as you would be ... and Carrick Chambers was our guest speaker that evening.

175 Do you remember his talk?

No I don't.

As chairman you're so preoccupied with other things.

Yes, you are. You just have to decide you're not going to be part of it and then after the conference was over of course you've got all these thank you letters to write – it's an enormous task and the Society was really good to me – they gave me the three day post conference tour which went out west of ... we were based up at Mount Victoria at the Victoria and Albert and we did all these lovely gardens out west and Mount Wilson but I remember thinking I'd just really love to be at home in bed – I was so tired. And, you know, you sort of dragged around because you were seeing so many lovely gardens anyway but it was lovely but if they'd left me at the Victoria and Albert I would have been really happy I think and just curled up in bed. Because you are – you're just exhausted.

But it was nice to see those gardens because there were some Sorensen gardens that I'd never seen and probably never will again because they were run by quite elderly ladies and doing a fantastic job. So that was the conference. And you set about with the wind up – getting all your money together and having meetings and post-mortems and how can we do it better.

And it was very shortly after that that Margaret Darling asked me to ... would I put together a sort of program because Queensland were going to have the next conference. They thought they ought to have it and they had a committee of about three at that stage and this was now February and the conference was to be in October and we'd had a whole year and Margaret said could I put something on paper that would be a sort of time line so I whipped up something – I haven't seen it since then – it was fairly basic. But every year since then that format has been added to by every conference – the things that they think could be improved on or they found worked better or whatever so it's actually quite a good set of guidelines now and it makes it much easier for people because if you have the guidelines you've got a framework for a conference. So that's been good.

201 Was that a fillip for NSW – for Sydney Branch rather?

Yes, yes indeed. I mean we got a huge number of new members after that because they had to ... you have to be a member to come to the conference, so it's built into the conference fee that if you come ... I think students perhaps don't have to – I'm not sure just how that's done now but the idea is that if you come you have to be a members so that members pay x and non members pay that amount plus a

membership fee and so you're a member for a year. Some of them, of course, fall off after a year too because people get their friends to come with them and say – Oh, I'm going to this conference, how about you come. But they join up and they get the journal for a year and I guess if it's not their taste or cup of tea they just drop off. But there's always a surge like that because of the conference but I think that that ... we then became a really proper branch after that – you know, people ... they knew we existed and Sydney was a branch.

And through that whole conference year, of course, we did keep the branch running as well.

216 Yes, you make a comment in the report somewhere that you don't know how you did it that year – because in the March of that same year you had a seminar at Dubbo.

Yes, with the National Trust

Has there been much involvement with other agencies and organisations in that way?

No, that would be one of the few and I think probably that was probably set up and managed mostly by the National Trust. It was done in conjunction with the Garden History Society and we – our members contributed – well we certainly went along but it was built around a seminar for people in local government looking after old cemeteries and parks and things and street trees and that sort of things. So the first day was a wet day and the local councillor, mayor or somebody then would have a cocktail party in the evening. I didn't go to the Local Government ones neither did the Garden History people, it was purely for local government employees. And then the Saturday we did gardens and parks for members and we had a little seminar in the woolshed or somewhere and then luncheon and go out and look at some of the gardens and then the Sunday was visiting some more gardens and it actually worked out really well – the Dubbo one was particularly good.

And then we did one in the Blue Mountains about a year or so later I think. And that one was combined with a Garden History function because one of the gardens at Mount Wilson, *Wynstay*, which is an old garden and when I was up there looking at conference gardens I noticed they had this old urn that had just fallen off its plinth and was just lying in the garden in pieces and I said to the owner would he pick it up and put it in a box and keep all the pieces and I'd ask the committee if they would consider sponsor .. you know, paying for it to be reassembled as something we could do from the Branch – which we did. A girl in one of those little art and craft places down right at the end of Glebe Point Road, down in all those old

That wonderful studio that is no more ...

Yes, and a girl down there did it for us and as part of that next year when we were at the Blue Mountains doing that seminar with the National Trust - on the Sunday we went over to *Wynstay* and reinstated the pot. Well he had it planted up and he planted it up and of course people then from the National Trust also got to come too to *Wynstay* that day and we had afternoon tea there I think - but it was a huge crowd and we had quite a lot of people. And we'd advertised it as such and it was a very nice weekend.

254 Those weekends – did the Sydney Branch organise those – or say Dubbo – did someone out in Dubbo organise those?

No the Sydney Branch organised the Garden History end of it and the National Trust – of course they've got properties there which is what was centered around – like *Dundullimal* – which was nice because it was a very nice kind of country weekend

and even the tours we did around the parks and looking at the historic trees, this made the local people realise that they had something important – as well as people who were visiting. You can go to a park and you can sit there and have a picnic but you don't realise the history behind it and that I think is nice and it was really good for the local government people because they don't get a lot of opportunities to have lectures and the things (*indistinct*) about what's important in – old species, old trees and why they were planted and the plan behind it and all of that was really good. They did a lot of lovely work – I think Warwick Mayne-Wilson – I remember some of his – he'd have the old drawings and superimposed over them he'd done some transparencies to show the changes and that was really great work.

272 He did that this week even at the Research Forum which was so interesting about Robertson Park at Watsons Bay

Yes, well it's obviously his method and it's just really great.

275 That's one of the things I wanted to ask you Jan – and we talked about it a little bit earlier – but how has the Society contributed to the greater appreciation of cultural landscapes – those visits must help in that way?

Yes I think so. Cultural landscapes ... and that's more like Colleen Morris's field, because that's what she works in, and she does a lot of those plans and research and environmental studies which is not really my scene and I'm not sure that the Garden History can pin its name to a lot of those. I think some of the branches have done some really good work – some of the Southern Highlands have documented old gardens and put out little booklets and .. that they sell and the properties are open and I think that's really good work. We haven't done anything like that in Sydney and whilst our members probably get some information about that a lot of those I guess are probably too big a paper to put in the journal, you'd really do a truncated version that would make journal reading.

We did do those refereed papers which some of our members said 'Oh they're very boring' because, once again that was to satisfy the academic side of our membership and to have refereed papers, of course, is important for the people who are writing them which articles in our journal don't look so impressive on their cvs as a refereed paper and that's something the National Management Committee will continue to do but it's not something you do at branch level because it's very costly publishing those kinds of things. But I don't know that the actual local branch – or this local branch I wouldn't say has made a big contribution to cultural landscapes. We endeavour to get people to come to come to old gardens that we think are threatened if we hear – we like to whip in there and, you know, have a day or open day but pretty often it's because it's the last opportunity not meaning you're going to save it in any way.

307 You did some work early on in the 90s at Tempe House

Yes, we had a look at that but we didn't save that either did we. It's now being surrounded by units. I didn't actually ever go and see it. John Challis did and I think Richard Clough went out and had a look and they spoke to the people who - because it was a Catholic order I think that had it at this stage as a seminary but I think some people were still there and I now know where it is and I see it disappearing under this wall of home units or whatever's going on out there – and a pity. But you can only do what you can do – we brought it – we played some advocacy roles but it doesn't really resulted in anything much.

I remember Richard Clough wrote an article on Baptists Fountain in Hyde Park or somewhere and how it was rusting away but I'm not sure that we saved that either –

from rusting I mean. But once again that's up to the City Council, you can only bring it to people's notice.

It would be nice if we had a huge amount of money and offer to do these things but I don't think we ever will.

And time will inevitably remain an issue

327 That advocacy was one of the early aims of the Society of course?

And it still is an aim but it ... I think it's getting harder actually. You know, you can raise these issues but the government really has the final say.

End Tape 1, side B

Tape 2, Side A ONLY

Jan, just going back to the conference that your organised in 1995, the title was *From Wilderness to Garden: Early Colonial Gardens, Their Future*, was that difficult to decide on a title and an overall subject for the conference?

No. We used to meet at the Masonic Club in those days, Beth Bond was a member there and she organised for me to become a member also just so we could have a meeting because we don't ever want to pay for venues, and we sat downstairs in the little lounge area and I remember Howard Tanner was there and it was Howard who really gave us the title, because he felt that was important being Sydney's first conference that really we should start right back at the beginning with those gardens. I am not sure just how it all got cobbled together but that was how it started, *From Wilderness to Garden*, I remember him saying that, and then the next line came. We didn't wrangle over it for very long at all, it just seemed to fall in place because that was literally what we were looking at, the future of early colonial gardens and where they were at and the likelihood that they'd be saved and, of course, it was *From Wilderness to Garden* because that was from early settlement. So I guess that ... in part that made it easy because we hadn't had a conference and when you have the second one you then have to try and think up something that'll be just as inspiring.

16 You are having discussions now for the title for the conference next year.

You see, I didn't really get involved in a lot of this because if it is not something that I feel I know anything about I just leave it to the people who do, and that was how our committee was organised too, and I will do the same again. The title this time I don't really feel I've got much to offer so I've left it to others and I've thrown a few things in but I don't mind if they throw it in the bin, if they don't consider it that is fine with me because I'm not really very poetic and can think up these things so ... I know what I want, I know what I want it to sound like, I want it to be inspiring and different and sort of spiritual and all those things that make people think oh, that sounds really interesting and not just mundane, like the title of what might be a seminar for a working group or something. I want something else, but I cannot tell you what it is to be.

25 Are you happy to talk about what one potential conference title is?

Well it's to do with water, basically it is to be built around water. And as of last week I am not sure what it is going to be but because of the problems with drought 'Browned Off' was used as one of the key things. People don't really mind that but we need to have something fairly inspiring to follow that and that's where the problem has been so far. And I'm not sure what they are going to come up with but we don't want it to be a 'water wise' or sustainability or any of those, which I said are

more like seminar topics that you are hearing about all the time - we want to talk about how people managed water in the early gardens and how they managed to make these gardens without you know, I don't want it to sort of sound dull and boring well (A) because we want people to come and it is our second conference, some people have been but there are new members who haven't and it's been a bit of a controversy all along because it was originally scheduled to be at Olympic Park and when Malcolm announced that in Brisbane none of us were too happy about it but he thought it would be a really good venue because it's easy for buses and there are things to see and I think Malcolm doesn't realise that we are not all as fit as he is, that we don't all want to whiz over to Bicentennial Park and walk around because it is quite a walk from the venue. I was very sceptical about how the transport would run because I'm not sure that it's really reliable when there is not a big function on there. And the people out of town in the other states thought it was a bit too far out of the city because once again, if you're in Sydney, if you are coming to Sydney, they want to be in town.

44 Is there always a good mix of interstate people and local people attending?

Yes. It is like old home week, a lot of people catch up with all their friends. You know, some people just wait for that conference to come and meet up with people. I know I enjoy it, I think there are the so and so's and here they are again. You get to know their family even and you ask about their children and whatever. So it is, there is a core group that just go to every conference and there'd be other new people who haven't been. But the story is in Sydney if you go to Sydney you want to be in town where the bright lights are, or the shops, or something that we Sydneysiders perhaps don't feel quite the same about.

So there was a bit of disquiet about this and we felt that we got off onto, ... well on the wrong foot you might say to start with, because we didn't want people to not come because of the venue and there was some disquiet about changing it. They felt that, in the Sydney committee, they felt that perhaps that was a bit of a cheek people saying they wouldn't come because of where it was. We felt it was a national; and I emphasise that all the time; it is the national management committee's conference it is not our conference and we run it for them and I think you have to take note of what the national management committee says and the members nationally. It is not just what you feel you would like to run for them. So there's quite a lot to think of when you are running a conference.

So we eventually decided then to get into the city and I think they are all very happy because it is going to be in the Art Gallery, which is a beautiful venue. It's also good in terms of transport because a lot of people stay with friends or relatives, or at the Queen's Club, or wherever and there is a wide range of accommodation that you can still access and not be too expensive and still get to the Art Gallery for the conference. So I am really pleased that we managed to secure that as a venue and I think it will be lovely. We've got the whole of the ground floor as our reception area because it is before the gallery opens. So that the whole of the Gallery downstairs before you go down to the theatrette is available to us virtually, it will be just beautiful.

67 You've timed it well with the renovations completed.

The renovations are finished and there are quite nice ... breakout spaces aren't marvellous, they are not huge, but if it is fine — perhaps I shouldn't be on this committee after the last one.

70 What is your role on this committee, Jan?

I am calling myself the Convenor this time because I don't really want to be the chairman, in fact I don't really want to be the Convenor, but it has got to the stage where Malcolm is really busy and he has got extra work and we all got a bit worried because it is now the end of the year and we don't really have all our infrastructure in place, which we did last time. I've read the minutes - we had all our venues and the big push is to get everything ready, everything's got to be ready because we've got to have a registration brochure in the journal by May so it has all got to be ready and printed by the middle of April and with the holidays in between it is not a lot of time.

78 Your expertise from the previous conference must be a boon.

Hopefully. Hopefully. Since then I've run a conference for the Botanic Gardens Guides and I think I got that because I had done this other one before. And that was a different sort of conference. It is still a lot of people and we ran that one out of Campbelltown and all the walks and things, which we're going to do that this time too, we're going to add some walks because Friday afternoon is often ... people travel ... some people travel to the conference on the morning of the first day and you find by three o'clock in the afternoon they are looking drowsy. So we have decided we will finish earlier on Friday and then we will have some optional walks, like Macquarie Street, The Rocks perhaps, certainly the Gardens, the Art Gallery if they want to do that and they'll be an optional extra, they can just put their name down and buy those as an extra or go shopping if they want to. It's not then part of the conference and you have to waste it if you don't go. So we think that will be different from other conferences and hopefully it will go down well, providing it is not wet.

89 You mentioned about the Botanic Gardens' conference, we didn't mention that in the beginning, talking about your skills and career. Could you just tell briefly about that too?

I can't think of the date, but it was probably like 1997, 1998 perhaps, that they now have Botanic Gardens Guides conferences in various states. It is a really nice get together because a lot of the gardens don't have a programme like the Sydney gardens has, we have a very big volunteer guides programme. Originally to be a guide there you had to have a hort. certificate or a science degree or something like that because they didn't have an education programme. You went along and were interviewed and told you had to do an assignment, which takes you about a year because you have to learn the layout of the gardens. You were given – well you were offered a title, you could say what you wanted, then when I became a guide, which is a long way back about ... ten years ago last year ... so whatever that was – 1991.

At the same time you were completing your horticultural course?

Well just after I'd finished somebody put my name forward and I didn't really know about it. I got this phone call and Ed Wilson said, 'What do you want to do?' and I said, 'Well nobody told me about doing anything.' I came out and rang this friend of mine and said, 'What's this "doing" business, this assignment?' So I did conifers at that stage because it hadn't been done. But of course a lot of those things now have been done and people do much more creative things like herbs and medicinal herbs and all sorts of other walks. But we didn't have an education programme at that stage, we only had about probably ten or twelve guides. So then that programme got updated quite a lot and we took people in who had all sorts of other interests and qualifications and they ran an education programme. And it must be really hard for some of those because they had to start and learn plant names and generally put their walks together. That went well for a while too, but that's where the Gardens conferences came in because Sydney had all this expertise and other gardens, small regional gardens, they don't have money to do a guiding programme but they could

come and learn and we could offer them walks we had written up - not that it would apply to their garden, but things like Shakespeare's Walk, or Bible Walk, or something like that it applies to our gardens because it follows a route around the Botanic Gardens in Sydney, but they could look at their plant collection and decide they had x number of plants and then with all the history that we had researched they could apply to their gardens and do walks, things like that. Then it gives them an idea of how to put a book together and what they might do. So those conferences are very valuable. I had been to one in Brisbane because, well our guides used to also have; it is differently run now; we had a sort of a head guide who used to run the guides' meetings for all the time that we were there. We have changed it, the guides are still running it but we have an education department behind us now that does a lot of the work. So it was when I was the guide for Sydney that we had this conference in Brisbane and I really felt that Sydney had to offer to have the next conference because it just seemed to be the obvious thing, we hadn't had one.

And we based it out at Campbelltown and used Mount Annan as our conference centre so we spent a whole year having meetings out at Mount Annan and getting it ready. But each garden, and Sydney has got three gardens of course (Mount Annan, Mount Tomah and the Sydney Gardens) and each Garden had a day when the delegates went to their particular garden and the guides did walks around the gardens. So it is virtually the same method we are using for this conference here in that people put down which walks they'd like to do - it is a bit logistically a nightmare because they have forgotten by the time they get here what they have ticked, so you have to say, 'You are doing,' whatever and give them a coloured swatch or something. But we managed it in Sydney and we fed them .. we organised the box lunches we had under the trees. But when you get a whole room full of people and you are trying to segment them up into about six or eight walks it was really a bit nightmarish but we did it and it worked well.

The same happened at other gardens so it was quite nice. It is a big education uplifting thing for guides from other gardens. Once again there's a lot of our guides who have been to all the conferences and they've just come back from Perth this year and they met everybody they know and it is good like that.

So yes I guess I've done a few conferences actually if you think about it, but I don't consider I've done any much when I come to doing this new one.

142 Just going back again Jan, you mentioned that you had your meetings at the Masonic Club. I did read somewhere too that you had meetings at the National Trust.

Yes, we do now.

But I think your first AGM was at the National Trust in 1994. How long did you continue to meet at the Masonic Club?

Probably a couple of years. Certainly over our conference. The only reason it got changed was they then had a refurbishment there. We used to meet in the ladies' bridge room upstairs and then we were excommunicated from that for some reason and then we used to just meet in the lounge downstairs. They didn't mind us using these rooms.

152 This is not the big Masonic building on the corner of Goulburn Street, it is the small one?

No. It is the Masonic Club in Pitt Street I think. Just opposite Tattersalls or somewhere there. It is a really nice little club. It was a very nice place to go for dinner. It all started because Beth was a member there, she used to play bridge there, that was how it started. We used to have a room for a while but then I think

they also have accommodation and that was when they decided to increase their accommodation facilities upstairs that some of these rooms were recommissioned and then we just used to meet in this little lounge downstairs. They weren't too happy about it but then eventually we felt we should leave there and go somewhere else. I think we pretty much met at the National Trust since then – can't think where else we might have been. We did a few at *Lyndhurst* and places like that but it's difficult for people to get to.

Lyndhurst is more difficult than the National Trust?

Well it is for some people because of public transport. If you knew someone who was going well and good. I think we had a few there, I can't remember.

So the National Trust has been the meeting place really since the late 1990s.

Yes it has and they've been very good to us of course because they don't charge. It is a very central place no matter where you come from in Sydney – and you can park there, which is the other thing. It has been good.

168 Indeed – talking about the membership.

Every month or so we get ... the chairman of a branch gets the list of new members who've joined and I made a policy when I was Chairman of the Sydney Branch that I would ring these people up - do two or three on a Sunday afternoon or something. I'd just say to them, 'Welcome, it is nice to have you as a new member. What do you hope the Society is going to do for you? Why did you join?' and just generally have a chat to them and tell them about the activities that were coming up and say well – you know, I'd love to see you there and please come and say hello. Because I think often that is a big step, you join up, you come to a function and you don't know anybody but if someone has said they will be there — quite often we did get people to turn up. That has changed a little now ... they send them a little letter which I don't think is quite the same.

I know it is a personal thing of mine that I think if someone just says hello to you it is much nicer and I know that not everybody has that sort of time because you can just get a letter and put 'Dear whoever' on the top and sign your name – and it's nice and says something but it is not quite the same as inviting them to come along and mention a personality of a branch. I think that happens, I think whoever is running it and the time they are prepared to put in and contact the members and just keep in contact with them, that was a really big plus for me at the last conference because I had done that for a whole year. Then you can speak to people - they know who you are and that goes on for years afterwards ... they know who you are and if they see your name on something that you are promoting that is really good for the Branch – because they think she said such and such and we got to know them and there are still people that I talk to from time to time. I think that helps the branch. But once again I don't expect everyone is going to be able to do it because everyone's a volunteer, they don't always have that sort of time.

196 What about the membership base, has the personality of that in a sense changed over the time you've been involved?

I guess that's hard to know. I would like it to ... it's probably a little more academic and that ebbs and flows too because of who's on the management committee. That's another one of the things that I like to be sure when I'm nominating people that I look at the balance of who's on the committee because if you've got all landscape architects well clearly that programme is going to go in that direction. But I always try to make sure we've got some just ordinary folk and some horticulturalists, or people who are involved in other aspect of garden history, or would be interested so you keep the balance. I think that's important whatever way

the Society goes if they just keep that in mind and make sure their branches are accordingly represented. You don't ... just because people have got qualifications doesn't mean they are any better at being part of garden history.

Has that balance been achieved? Is it there now?

I think for the most part it seems to be maintained because branch executives are largely made up of people who stick their hand up and volunteer to do it. It's not a matter of ... sometimes you can ... and I've tried that too because I still will do it, in that I ring people up and say, 'You don't have to stay for six years, if you could just come for a year we'd be very happy to see you and if you find you can't stay on that's fine. If you just give us a year of your time, it is only so many meetings and you meet people.'

And from that point of view I think it is important too because then people ... once they've functioned at an executive level you see how the Society is working more and that it is important to get more people, not to have the same old people.

I really shouldn't be back on the branch committee because I've done all of that. Malcolm spent a lot of time asking me to come back on the committee and I personally call it incestuous, you really should be able to do better than that to get people who haven't been on the committee to serve.

224 Are there new members coming on?

Not many at the moment, it has been fairly static in our Branch for quite a while.

Perhaps the conference will be a fillip for that next year?

I hope so, encourage people that they might come on and give a hand. I think it's good for them and it is interesting, you become interested at a different level. And then I also like to see them to see people from branches be nominated for the management committee, because that one once again even broadens your horizons a lot more to see the difficulties of managing the institution.

231 Did you enjoy that year when you were Chairman of the National Management Committee?

Well yes ... we had some rough times because the Southern Highlands was to have a conference and they didn't want to and I was the person who was the worst in the world because I went down and explained to them that I really didn't feel I could ask another branch to do it when it was their turn. Actually it was someone else had already done their year and they were really quite hostile for a while but they run such good functions and really I knew they could do it, it's just a matter .. and their committee has been a bit stagnant in that people haven't stuck by them. They had had the same chairman and secretary and we stirred all that up and got it changed and the whole thing took off and they had a wonderful conference.

That was a bit tricky because I don't like to upset people and ... but I really felt strongly about it and when you feel strongly about something it is a bit easier to go and do it. I went to their AGM and a lot of other people were there that weren't actual members and I explained to them how it all worked, what the organisation was about and how we ran these conferences. Then I went to one of their meetings and took all the flack that they had to offer and still said, 'Look I really do feel that you can do it,' and reorganised the committee. And it was well done in that people on the committee that had overstayed their nine years we were able to put on the conference committee then, because they had all the knowledge, so it worked out really well.

254 Did you have an opportunity to visit other branches around the country at that time?

No, that was the only one I went to. Of course I went to a few things in Melbourne. I went to the launch of Lady Law-Smith's ... the one she wrote ... *Kindred Spirits* and that was launched while I was in that year so I flew down to Melbourne for that launch. And, but otherwise it was only really ten months so I just kept the management committee going round the meetings until we got to South Australia and could have a new Chairman.

264 In 1996 you also had that mission statement, looking afresh at the mission statement of the Society?

That was done at national management level because I am not sure if they are terribly popular now, I think they have gone out vogue a bit, but it was really the thing then that everybody had to have a mission statement and I suppose it gives everyone a thumbnail sketch of what you are about. We tossed that around for quite a while because it was ... I think Melbourne in particular were keen to have various things said about it and wanted to have all sorts of aspects covered ... I must admit I don't think I contributed anything to it but I remember (except being part of the committee) and ... but I think in the end it was a really good mission statement, it does cover what the Society is about but I'm not sure that anybody these days would mind if we didn't have one at all. Mission statements were a bit of a fad, I haven't seen one for a long time.

280 Well the Society began with those two aims, the advocacy and the promoting garden history, which almost in a sense sums up what the Society does to a large extent.

It does and it was promoting garden history in a scientific, cultural and I don't know ... something else, and scholarly fashion so it covered – it wasn't just promoting garden history but it was to encompass all those levels. I think that is what it has done: I think it has done what it set out to do. It was probably more based on garden visits and those kinds of things, which still are very popular, but that's how most of the branches got going asking someone to open their garden - there are lots of lovely gardens around that nobody has ever seen. That is a strength of this society that you do get an entrée to gardens that aren't open to the public because you can guarantee that it's not the public wandering in over several days, you come as a group, go as a group, understand what it is about, and therefore they don't have any problems with us.

296 A big question to ask, but where do you see the Society going?

I am not sure that I know, but I think probably; it will, hopefully as it gets to be more known, and the advocacy I think is really a very important part of it too; to be able to influence decisions about what happens to old ... to the areas around old homes instead of them being chopped up until there is only a postage stamp left around which doesn't suit the house. It has lost all of its sort of curtilage issues, which I really feel sad about. I would hope that the Garden History Society could get to be, not that the National Trust actually wins everything either, but to have the same status as the National Trust in terms of what we save. You know, that if the Garden History Society says this is important well then it is important, we should ... that it makes an impact on how people think about things. That's what I would like to see happen.

Jan, you have been very generous with your time this morning. Is there anything else that I haven't asked you about that you'd like to talk about?

No. I don't think I know any more!

Perhaps that is a fitting time to conclude, so thank you very much for your participation.