AUSTRALIAN GARDEN HISTORY SOCIETY

NATIONAL ORAL HISTORY COLLECTION

ACT MONARO RIVERINA BRANCH

Interviewee:	**MAX BOURKE AM**
Interviewer:	ROSLYN BURGE
Date of interview:	20 NOVEMBER 2019
Place of Interview:	CAMPBELL, ACT
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All quotations:	SHOULD BE VERIFIED AGAINST THE ORIGINAL SPOKEN WORD IN THE INTERVIEW

SELECT CHRONOLOGY / AGHS **FOR A MORE DETAILED CHRONOLOGY- SEE RESUME ATTACHED**

1941	Born - 18 December, Chatswood, NSW
1976-83	Australian Heritage Commission (founding CEO)
1981-87	ICOMOS (International Vice President 1984-87)
1990s	Max joined AGHS - is a member of the ACT Monaro Riverina Branch
2000-2002	Branch Chair
2001-2007	National Management Committee
	2005-2007 Vice-Chair (Chair, Colleen Morris)
2002	Announcement about Studies in Australian Garden History - Call for papers
2004	Editorial Advisory Committee
2004	AM Member of the Order of Australia: for service to heritage and arts organisations and to the development of government policy for the preservation of Australia's historic and cultural environment
2007	***Meandering about the Murray,*** national conference held in Albury, hosted by ACT Monaro Riverina Branch
2009	The English Garden, Yarralumla
2013	National Arboretum Canberra opened
2016	***The Scientist in the Garden***, national conference held in Canberra, hosted by ACT Monaro Riverina Branch
When interviewed	Chairman of Friends of Australian National Botanic Gardens

SUMMARY

Max Bourke spoke briefly about his childhood responses to his family's interests in gardens and growing orchids and vegetables, and his own Canberra garden and the impact on gardens of climate change.

His was first aware of the Society before it was formed, when working at the Australian Heritage Commission (AHC - of which Max was Foundation Director) and he, David Yencken and Reg Walker in 1976 first discussed how the Commission could strengthen not-for-profit organisations, including those involved in industrial archaeology and public history. Max recounted how he visited *virtually all of the historical societies … to try and get them more interested in Place.*

David Yencken was very keen that the Heritage Commission should work with gardens and from 1976 began commissioning scholarly work with Howard Tanner and Peter Watts; and encouraging the National Trust to undertake more scientific research.

Max recalled Peter Watts telling him about the first meeting at which the AGHS was formed when David Yencken persuaded Dame Elisabeth Murdoch to become Chair, producing *out of his hip pocket the constitution* for the AGHS. The AHC supported the Launceston meeting and subsequently the Melbourne conference of the AGHS.

At the same time the Burra Charter was being formulated and because of his background in plant sciences Max was fascinated by the dilemmas of garden restoration and the difficulties and joys of

growing plants. While employed at the AHC Max did not belong to organisations where there may have been a conflict of interest.

He reflects on the pace of urban development from the 1960s and community reactions to that which lead to the environmental movement and Jack Mundey and Green Bans. Political leadership lead to the establishment of an inquiry into the National Estate and behind that were social movements in response to *a very widespread feeling that we'd gone too far too fast … a sort of building wave of pressure to look after the national estate. I think that culminated in the creation of the Heritage Commission*.

Max refers to David Yencken's style and influence behind the AHC; general discussion about the impetus for heritage and advocacy on a local level; recalls doing post-graduate study in Bruges 1979 – rationale for the university and the course and describes interview in Australia. The *course was in conservation and urban conservation … because this place had a lot of prestige. It used to be able to drag in the most amazing people to lecture. We had some of the real leaders of Europe came and visit us, political and intellectual leaders.* An essay about the history of garden conservation prompted the King of Belgium to summon Max to a meeting to discuss how to establish a National Trust.

Max has always been interested in trees - *I attribute trees to my being here. Well apart from Stardust as our source of all of life on earth, trees are certainly much more recent reason why humans are on earth and I've just always been interested in trees as plants I suppose. Because I've been interested in botany, trees have grabbed my attention and I just think they are the most wondrous machines.*

He recalls the chance involvement 40 years ago and the development of the arboretum he co-owns on the NSW south coast: *We bought this block of land with the aim of, I suppose, putting back the native flora that had been there. When we bought it, it had three very old Pinus radiatas on 28 hectares and the rest of it was kikuyu and buffalo grass. We set about initially putting back the flora that was there so we spent a lot of time in our backyard here, we had lots of plots, we grew thousands... we sourced local seed …*

He describes how the plants were sourced, grown and particular trees for which he has a great passion: Allocasuarina decaisneana (one of his favourite trees in Australia); and quite rare Eucalyptus conferruminata from southwestern Western Australia. He describes locations where particular trees may be found in the nation.

He describes the changing demographics of Tilba region and community engagement with the project: *… As the years went by, went more from being "let's save the coast" to conserve … to do so we were going to put the vegetation back. Then we thought, why don't we do a bit of imperialism and encourage a corridor back up so that the flora and fauna can work between the coast and the mountains …* 60-100,000 trees have been planted.

Speaking about the AGHS Wellington Conference Max recalled the notion of an offshore conference was part of NMC discussions when he was Deputy Chair, and reinforced during the Armidale conference by the New Zealand-born members of the AGHS. He recalled the speaker, Dr Hamish Campbell. He discussed the Wellington Botanic Gardens and particularly his hero, Leonard Cockayne, who is buried at Otari-Wilton's Bush near Wellington. Max considered writing a PhD and had read much of Leonard Cockayne's writings.

Max recalled the Canberra conference – he and Kay Johnson twisted people's arms to emphasise the elements of soil and water, and recalled Peter Watts and Colleen Morris believed the Society's conferences should be themed.

Returning to discussion about his PhD he referred to his research into extensive plant introduction / importation programs (ornamental plants and even strawberries) by the pre-World War II CSIRO Plant Introduction Unit. Busy with many commitments, his PhD was abandoned, though he loved the research

and *working with Libby Robin, who was my supervisor and John Dargavel, who was a wonderful forest historian. That was a pure joy working with them*

His interest in the PhD was about the way in which Australia was an extraordinary participant in acclimatization movement importing trout, foxes and hoards of plants; and cross-Pacific tree-based trade.

Given the Branch's regional name Max prompted the Branch to hold its conference - *Meandering About the Murray* - outside of Canberra, in Albury in 2007, with logistic difficulties in long distance organisation. He praises the work of the Branch – its range of events – *financially secure and … good leadership.*

That regional focus was important for him when he joined the Branch - *I was particularly interested in trying a bit of imperialism I suppose, in trying to make sure that we linked up with the Monaro and the Riverina. I didn't know of personally of great historic gardens, but I knew of historic horticulture in the Riverina.*

The Branch conferences in Griffith and Narrandera - *They went down very well. We had quite amusing visits to these specialized growers who turned out there were some incredible rose growers and rosarians in places like Griffith where roses really flourish*. Managing the Branch was a necessity and he gives credit to Margie Bourke helping with *at least 50%, probably 70%, of the load*.

He describes the approach by Christina Kennedy at Horse Island to growing Australian native plants: *I've always admired her not only for her skills, but she's done something that to me is really important and she's got people to see that you can manage Australian plants like you can manage exotic plants.* Further discussion of native gardens.

Discussion of Branch publications, involvement of Victor Crittenden, Richard Clough and Richard Ratcliffe; measuring the garden at Fifield House near Yass; proposed association with Jephcott Arboretum with some of - *the best specimen trees in Australia of their type … very interesting historic collection.*

Discussion of "The English Garden" project; Charles Weston; monument: *I didn't have anything to do with that, but I think it's one of the really great things that the Branch has done.* Discussion of Tony Byrne documenting Yarralumla Nursery and significance of the Nursery in developing Canberra's treed landscape.

Response to being on the National Management Committee, involvement on Publications Committee, publication of Studies with Colleen Morris. Engagement of Mariana Rollgejser (designer of the journal) to design Studies. Discussion of Dr Bernadette Hince, Editor of the Journal; and believes: *Bernadette does a fabulous job. I'm an unabashed fan of Bernadette Hince and she does ... I think there's a diversity of subject matter and a lightness of touch with a bit of humour;* perennial debate about public and academic approach; discussion of *Companion to Australian Gardens - a triumph.*

Old Parliament Gardens – controversy in 2004 – internal restoration and garden, supposed reinstatement of Walter Burley Griffin's design when there was no association with Griffin.

Award of AM - *I was very honoured, extremely honoured.*

Asked about involvement with many organisations Max recalled his mother's comment that he is a *bit of a flibbertigibbet … I get tangled up in stuff and all of those organizations, to some extent have some sort of relationship and I often use what I learn out of one about others,* example of Bush Heritage and Australian Wildlife Conservancy. Considerably volunteer work - *every week I would probably work two to three days a week on some form of* volunteer work.

Importance of STEP (Southern Tablelands Ecosystem Park) for the future *So more and more, we find groups of people coming to us and saying, "What can I grow in the area?" And so, that's a really important role for this site.* Engagement with local Aboriginal people.

Tours conducted by Trisha Dixon – most recently Morocco; post-conference tours and comments about New Zealand trip with Stuart Read and Bronwyn Blake; role of Patron of Society; discussion of garden history and the Society: *some gardens that you go to that are contemporary and they will be presumably part of future history. But there are also gardens that tell stories about people and about places and certainly about plants and I like the weaving together of those three things. I think the Society's mixture of what it does at the moment, of trying to pull those three ideas together as is good*.

The Society as a whole is not as activist as Max would like it to be – though the ACT Branch is – against monsterism with Sue Byrne's work in Reid; importance of role of local community in advocacy.

Status of the Society with its 40th anniversary year ahead - *the fact that it's still here after 40 years is impressive;* likened to the endurance of ICOMOS. *the fact that it's survived is important. That's a tribute to a level of commitment and interest that keeps it going.* Downturn in numbers and aging membership a consideration for voluntary organisations; innovation of two Chairs - *I can't see how you can get into leadership positions ... people who are both in the workforce like Stuart and Bronwyn are, without doing something like that, without saying, "Look, split the job," and they can do it. That's the only way if you want people who are still in the workforce.*

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Postscript – about Professor Emeritus David Yencken AO

I really only knew David intensively, if you can know someone intensively, for about six, seven or eight years. He was the person who hired me as the Founding Director of the Australian Heritage Commission … I truly don't think there would have been an Australian Heritage Commission without David Yencken, because he was one of the most persuasive people I have ever seen.

Further examples of his persuasion with Prime Ministers Fraser and Whitlam, Yencken's non-stop lobbying through his Melbourne network; amazing persistence – quiet, unflappable persistence.

Recollections about meeting with Joe Bjekle-Petersen and Malcolm Fraser; David Yencken's affability; and ability *to look at you and listen to you, and I'm sure he was listening to you, but he was pursuing his objective and he knew what he wanted to get and he would get it sooner or later.*

Discussion about his property developing – Merchant Buildings; Cluster Title Act – totally new style of building with communal spaces; *a really good negotiator* with *a vision about Australia*; *he hoped Australians would care about the bush and Australia as much as he did*.

Discussion about collapse of the Australian Heritage Commission; different era, different politicians, different conversations than those with Melbourne residents.

Max describes the best part of his *working life has been some of the extraordinary people I've worked for. I really have been blessed, you know, Nugget Coombs, David Yencken, Paul Keating, Gough Whitlam, even Malcolm Fraser, whom I got on well with.* Yencken's ability to dissect problems into segments: *quite extraordinary man to have as a mentor. I was 30, 31.*

Brief discussion of the Royal Commission on Australian Government Administration with Nugget Coombes Chair, when Max was Assistant Secretary, on secondment from the Department of Urban Regional Development, from Tom Uren's Department.

In recent years Max assisted David Yencken as he wrote his publication on heritage; and Max's frustration as David wrote himself out of the story. Professor Yencken's final publication is important to have and a monument to David Yencken AO.

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This is an interview with Max Bourke AM, who is being interviewed for the Australian Garden History Society's National Oral History Collection, on behalf of the ACT Monaro Riverina Branch. The interview is taking place at his home in Canberra on Wednesday, 20 November 2019. And the interviewer is Roslyn Burge.

Max, thank you for your participation this morning. Just with a couple of biographical details to start out, could you give me your date of birth?

18 December 1941.

You've been interviewed about the ICOMOS project where you've talked about your family at some length, but I don't think your early influences of your parental gardening, which has flowed on to you, was canvased there. Tell me something about that?

Well I suppose I came from a family who were both interested in plants and gardening. My mum more interested in gardening, and my dad was a fanatic orchid grower and we had a large orchid house behind our house in Chatswood. He grew cymbidiums and dendrobiums and he used to exhibit in shows and I can remember - it's surprising that I'm interested in gardens because I can remember at about the age of seven or eight being dragged to an orchid show which is not unlike having your fingernails pulled out if you're seven or eight years old.

But I used to go round these orchid shows and see a lot of orchid nuts at work including my dad. I quite liked fiddling around in his collection. Then my de facto grandfather who was the second partner of my grandmother and was a fanatic and very, very good vegetable grower, so I grew up learning how to grow radishes and tomatoes and all of that from a very, very young age. I was very interested in growing veggies. So I grew up in a house that was interested in various aspects of gardening, I wouldn't say design, no, definitely not design but definitely in growing plants.

And you've got a wonderful garden here in Canberra. You were just saying that Margie's out deadheading this morning. How are things coping in the present climate?

Shocking. We bought this house twenty-something, twenty-five years ago because we liked its garden and that had been created by a lovely lady who's since passed on. But we curate her garden and we've gradually decided to remove, it was when we bought it, what I call a Himalayan garden and it's now gradually becoming an Australian garden. Not because I'm more pro-Australian plants than Asian plants, but just simply because the dry weather … when some of our azaleas or camellias die we replaced them with Australian natives. Gradually over the 20 years there's a slow wave of Australian natives are sweeping through our garden. But it's getting harder to grow, really tough to grow in Canberra because of the drought. This year we've probably had about 90 millimetres of rain I think, instead of probably round 500 in the normal year by this time of the year, 4-500. It's very tough.

Max, coming straight to the Garden History Society, when was your first awareness of the Society?

Before it was formed actually. When I was first interviewed or first discussed with David Yencken and the wonderful late Reg Walker, both of them are deceased now, which would have been 1976 I think - '76, '77, the thing that David and I and Reg sat down and worked out (was) how the Australian Heritage Commission (of which I had just been appointed director by Malcolm Fraser - with David and Reg's selection of me) we were in a room in the old

Commonwealth Bank in Martin Place in Sydney. David, I can absolutely remember said, “Well, one of the things we're going to do is to strengthen the not-for-profits in Australia.” Because he felt, and he was very, very keen on this idea that whatever the Heritage Commission did in the long run, it would be the strength of support that was out in the community that actually gave real support. Didn't matter what legislation you had if you didn't have a willing community supporting aspects of conservation.

So he set out and he didn't expressly at that meeting mentioned the Garden History Society, but he did run through a bunch of things that he thought needed strengthening. One of them was industrial archaeology, public history, he was very keen on that. So John Mulvaney and I, who was one of the first commissioners, John and I did a road show for a number of years around virtually all of the historical societies, at least the main national offices to try and get them more interested in Place.

Graeme Davison's wonderful book had just come out on *Marvellous Melbourne*[1] but historical societies were still very much interested in documents and we were trying to move them more to be interested in Place. And so we did that. That was one aspect where Judy Birmingham helped us create the Industrial Archaeology Society. And David was very keen that we work on gardens and from about 1976 onwards we started commissioning scholarly work with Howard Tanner and the very young architect, landscape architect, Peter Watts, who was working in those days for the National Trust in Melbourne. And gradually around all the states we commissioned someone to do a study on gardens.

That time the National Trust was being very active in building preservation but not really taking, well in fact doing things that were inimical to gardens in some respect. I've got a lot of time for the National Trust, but there was this ideology round that you restore the building but you put native plants around the gardens. That was what was people did in those days.

So we encouraged the National Trust to do a lot more research on (a), their buildings, which they often used to paint in a pretty standard colour because that was what was seen to be colonial. We asked them to start doing some scientific research on what had there and so the idea of doing scrapes and colour matches and all of that thing came into being. But then the work on gardens became important and particularly when Howard Tanner's book and exhibition[2] whose name now escapes me - at the time it was an important book on gardens came out, and this wave of studies of different gardens or different … based in different states swept around Australia, that in turn led to a meeting (I think it was in Launceston) at which they discussed their reports. And then they held a meeting I think in Melbourne, I'm not sure, but I think it was in Melbourne and I remember my good mate, Peter Watts, telling me that they turned up. I didn't go to that meeting, I was doing my postgraduate work on garden history in Bruges at the time, so I wasn't here. But they held this meeting at which David Yencken persuaded Dame Elisabeth Murdoch to step up to the Chair of it and Peter says David produced out of his hip pocket, the constitution of the Garden History Society.

One of my staff, Dr Warren Nichols, was delegated … the Commission was sort of the stalking horse for all of these things. We put money into the research; I suspect we probably put money into convening, that conference[3] I don't know, but I suspect we did.

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1 Graeme Davison, *The Rise and Fall of Marvellous Melbourne*, Melbourne University Press, 1978

2 Converting the Wilderness: the Art of Gardening in Colonial Australia / Australian tour 1979-1980, Guest Curator, Howard Tanner, Photographer, Richard Stringer, presented by the Australian Gallery Directors Council

3 Held at *Illawarra* in Melbourne

10.00 I was away at the time, and certainly Warren Nichols who did all the wash-up from it, I think helped them register the organization and got minutes out - all that stuff that you need to do to make something happen was done by an officer of the Commission. So there was …there certainly were Peter Watts and Oline Richards and people like that were all actively involved.

But I think the sort of dull and boring bureaucratic work was done by staff of the Commission at the time. I came back and there was this Garden History Society had been formed while I was away and I'd written a thesis for the Diplome Superieure, but it's like a master's degree on management of historic gardens, which got published in the then new journal out of Victoria area called *Historic Environment.*

In it I canvased some of the ideas we were also working on buildings and places at the same time on the Burra Charter. I was fascinated or I was interested in the dilemmas that you faced in garden restoration. It's a much more difficult thing to deal with restoring a biological entity like a garden than it is a physical entity like a building. All the issues, I suppose my background in plant sciences, and ex-agricultural scientist, I was fascinated by the difficulties of growing plants as much as I was by the joys of growing plants. I was aware of recreating gardens was a very hard thing to do. In that article I canvased quite a lot of the issues about what you might do to replace garden plants in overgrown or dilapidated or ruined environments and I was always very interested in it. I don't think I actually joined the Society. I had a practice all the time I was at the Australian Heritage Commission of not belonging to organisations which we funded.

I in fact resigned ... I'd been one of the earliest members of the ACF for instance and I resigned from that because we were funding these bodies; I didn't want there to be a conflict of interest and the National Trust, I wasn't a member of that during my time at the Australian Heritage Commission. So it wasn't until probably I left and went after … in the early 80s I left the Australian Heritage Commission and went into the Department of Environment as the Head of the Environment Division. Then a couple of years after to the Australia Council in Sydney to run that, I think it was about that time that I started joining bodies like the Garden History Society and Australian Conservation Foundation. The things that interested me, but I felt conflicted by being a member of them. I think I probably joined the AGHS sometime in the 90s. I can't remember when honestly.

There's an article I found where you wrote in the journal in 97, and that's the first one I've found perhaps then. But just rolling back to, first of all, I want to talk about Bruges, but also I want to talk about that maelstrom that was happening. I'll come back to Bruges. But that maelstrom in society at that time, ICOMOS, Heritage Commission, Garden History, what was happening then?

I think after the war, there'd been a kind of hiatus as Australia got its act back together in a way and recovered from the war but then certainly from the 60s onwards, the pace of development just picked up enormously of urban development. It was, as most cultural shifts and certainly social shifts happen, it was a reaction to the rapidity of building developments that led to the environmental movement, I meant, the Green … the Builders' Federation, the idea of Jack Mundey and all those ladies from the National Trust in Hunters Hill linking arms - which is truly one of the great photographs of my whole life (besides the people invading the pitch of the Springbok tour) was the arm-in-arm of Jack Mundey with his bouffant hairstyle and these *twinnie and pearls*[4] from the National Trust matching arm-in-arm to stop buildings destroying historic sites in Hunters Hill.

It was a very widespread feeling that we'd gone too far too fast. I think that that itself led to pressure on (a) the Whitlam government to set up an inquiry into the National Estate, led by very

[4] "twinnie and pearls" refers to colloquial slang at that time for "twin set and pearls" a particular common dress mode favoured by ladies of the National Trust.

respectable Justice Bob Hope and with David Yencken and others on that inquiry, and that whole process was reflecting … I think the leadership of it were likely to step out in front, but there was a social movement going on to respect and restore, which is somewhat faded now a bit I think and people can't grasp now that we had a situation then where no one ... you could go and tear down a building pretty well. You go to the council put in your money and you could tear down a building tomorrow.

I think a lot of what are called our bureaucratic processes grew out of that period that tried to get people to evaluate historic sites. The product today might well be cumbersome, but at least it's better than it was in late 60s, early 70s I think. I hope - I'm not 100% sure. I'm one of those people still today who's pushing back against various developments because I value the historic heritage of (a) for instance the Lake here in Canberra and the design of the Griffins. They're important to me. I don't know how important they are to the bulk of Australians, but they are important to me; I think we now use every mechanism we can think of, legal, social, public, political, etcetera to try and retain historic sites. And I don't think that was true in the 60s. Certainly I never saw much sign of it when I was in my 20s … in the 1960s, and I was a moderately reasonably aware political person I suppose. It really was that - you say a maelstrom - it was a building I'd call it more a sort of building wave of pressure to look after the national estate. I think that culminated in the creation of the Heritage Commission for one, and having a government that set aside significant funds. They were only in the millions of dollars, but they were in the millions of dollars of a federal government committed to conservation of those sites - now that's all faded away but that was all part of that social wave I think of the 70s and 80s.

Did David Yencken have a particular interest in gardens that he brought to the Commission?

Not that I was ever aware. Other than what I'd call a serious de facto interest. I mean, the fact that he commissioned … when he set up his business, Merchant Builders, not only did he get the very best architects going around in Melbourne like Graeme Gunn and others to do the design of the houses, but he got Ellis Stones to do the garden design. And so some of those gardens are now some of our more important historic gardens. The standard Merchant Builders' house had a pretty impressive package of design, both the building and the garden. So David was aware of it; I doubt if David ever got his fingernails dirty, I never saw him digging in a garden but he was always interested in it.

And influence can be brought to bear in many ways.

Yeah. He had very nice planning. I remember the first time I went to the Black Dolphin Motel, which he got Robin Boyd to design for him down at Merimbula, and it had beautiful gardens around it, and I assume he had other people to create those.

Does it still have gardens? Is it still there?

I haven't had a look at it for a long while now. No, I couldn't answer that. No.

Some of these things you've touched on really Max are about what the Garden History Society does. The advocacy for the Lake, involving the community, when you say other people may not be involved, isn't this sort of advocacy something that almost can only be local? Unless it's something like Lake Pedder, but it's not necessarily, the large bulk of advocacy work is local. Locally driven.

Sure, sure. That goes back. One of the things I wrote, again while I was in Bruges, was a sort of history of the conservation movement in the western democracies. I looked at the origins of it, and in fact nearly all of the advocacy movements going right back to the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings as it was called (SPAB created by William Morris), was because of the way in which an architect called George Gilbert ,later Sir George Gilbert Scott, roamed around the countryside converting what were Gothic revival buildings into Roman (sorry, the other way

around) … what were Norman buildings into Gothic revival buildings and when Morris got sufficiently angry and letters poured into *The Times*, and there's terrific stories about this, he started a movement called SPAB, which was to protect ancient buildings.

He said if they were a Norman building, they should be kept as a Norman building, not converted by George Gilbert Scott into a 19th century Gothic building. Gilbert Scott's famous reply to this when pressed it by *The Times* was, "Well, if the Normans had known how to design Gothic buildings, I'm sure that's what they would have done."

But now that started, if you like, you can actually trace that and other little streams coming together - you've got the countryside commission coming out of about that. That was all started because people, I suppose they weren't nationally angry about the whole of the British coastline or whatever, but they were about that one building or another building or an area. As you say, we've had some national conservation issues, the Great Barrier Reef, Kakadu, Southwest Tasmania, all of those have been a national issues, but for the most part, conservation issues started in neighbourhoods, and they seethe and simmer away there. I think they nearly all do start at the local level.

Just going back again to your time in Bruges, why did you decide to go to Bruges to study?

In 1979, I think it was, the Commonwealth government offered scholarships for senior executives for the first time. I was a young senior executive in my 30s. I thought, this sounds like a good idea, I wouldn't mind upgrading, because I've always had an interest in study. It was advertised and I applied and said I'd like to go to, I looked at either going to York where my good friend and colleague, Jim Kerr, had done his PhD. There were two schools that did major work in conservation studies and environmental conservation studies that I could find around the world: one was York University and the other was the college of Europe in Bruges. It was led by quite a famous, very famous architect turned educator.

So I thought that'd be interesting to work in a non-English speaking environment, so I thought I'd go to Bruges. I applied and I had a funny interview with a panel from the Australian Public Service Commission who were appointing me, they said to me, "Why did you want to go to Bruges?" I'd done an art history degree, which I'd fallen in love with Netherlandish, early medieval Netherlandish painting, early Netherlandish painting, and I said, across the table and stupidly said, "Well, because Jan Van Eyck lived there," and you could actually see this wall of who the fuck's that? Anyway, I managed to persuade them that this was a good school, and it did economics and law and it had all these bright people from … which it did, very bright. It's a postgraduate college that only teachers for the most part about 90% of the students are Europeans, right across Europe. It was set up post-war to really be a part of the project that now seems to be falling apart, the integration of Europe. The same people who set up the European Commission and later the Council of Europe, they set up this college as a place to train what were then called Eurocrats. It put together this fantastic collection of people from around the world, from Europe. But then, by the time I got there, there was a scattering, they decided to leaven the brew by bringing in a few weirdoes like Australians and Asians and South Americans.

You were not alone as an Australian?

I was the only Australian there. I think until some years later, I was the only Australian that ever went there. In my class there was a Colombian and an Indian, but the rest of them were all Greeks and Belgians and English and whatever. Being a postgraduate school it did have lectures, but it mostly worked on doing theses. You mostly worked with tutors, probably like the Europe, the English system you mostly work with tutors on developing papers that you wrote. It was right in the heart of Bruges, which is a very beautiful place. I loved living there.

You took your family?

Well, that was the hard part was that initially Margie and the children were still in school. Margie was working in the school system. I think I had six months before they could get a period - I think they came for just one semester plus the annual holidays. So they were probably there for four or five months.

Out of how long?

Out of a year. It was a long while away from them, and they were young and I missed them a huge amount. But it was an exciting period. I'd gone there being assured that it was English and French teaching and got there and found that it was 90% French teaching. So my language skills went from zero to hero fairly. – well it was a fascinating thing to be able to be immersed in … I went from schoolboy French to reasonably, I say reasonably competent French. I had to deliver my thesis at the end of it in French. I could have a debate with someone about a building in French, so that was all good learning. But it was …

Have you maintained it?

A bit. I wouldn't say totally. But every year I go to see my daughter and she lives in a francophone part of Switzerland. I hear it a lot and I like going to the pub in her village and having an argument with the farmers in French, which I do about their bloody subsidies.

They must be intrigued by you landing in from Australia. Max - you could have done an MBA.

I could have.

Which is a different strand. Why did you pick gardens?

I was more interested in … this course was in conservation and urban conservation course. It covered economics and law and all the things, the strands … and we had some brilliant lecturers from around all over Europe and England, Cambridge and other people who are specialists in urban law and urban economics. We'd go off - Margie and the kids accompanied me on one case. I had a five day workshop in Amsterdam on contemporary urban planning, so we'd go to places and we'd have a bunch of really … because this place had a lot of prestige. It used to be able to drag in the most amazing people to lecture. We had some of the real leaders of Europe came and visit us, political and intellectual leaders.

How exciting that must have been.

It really was, it was good.

You wrote about that you did that in the 80, 81, wasn't it?

Yeah.

You wrote about that already in your thesis in the Journal of Garden History. That was an early garden publishing venture on your part.

Yeah. That was probably the first thing I wrote about gardens. I made sure it did fit in with the work that was emerging in Australia, I mean I was aware that the Commission was grappling with funding work to conserve gardens and the Garden History Society so I thought, well, I'll do something that's relevant to that while I'm doing my masters - or my Diplome superieur. I looked at the history of garden conservation throughout Europe and over a long period and discovered there wasn't much history of it actually, but it was good. It led to me getting … something I wrote, got published in Belgium and the next thing I get a phone call from the palace and the King of Belgium invites me up for morning tea. So I go up to Brussels and I borrowed a suit, I think. Go up to

Brussels and this very earnest, very nice bloke, I'm taken in through back doors through these gilded halls and whatever. He said, “Now I want to start a National Trust in Belgium. We need a National Trust.

Now I've decided I want to start one and you're going to tell me how to do that because you've written about them,” and he had a copy of my paper there. I looked at it and he said, “You've written, how do I start?” I said, you can't. I said, “the National Trust started from people being annoyed at things basically.” That's what drove … I said, “you can't start it from the top down.” Those things … the citizens either want the thing to happen. Once it starts you can help it, but I said really it's got to start from the bottom up. All of the countries that had successful urban conservation movements - in the USA and Canada and Britain, and less so in France - in fact, my view is that the government actually (and this sounds like I'm a raving right winger), but the government puts a heavy foot on things and doesn't allow. You have France where the conservation movement, if you like, started with government.

The mad and wonderful Prosper Merimee running around doing conservation work. He was both the architect and librettist of Carmen, but he was appointed by the government and he went round restoring places like Notre Dame and all of those churches that he restored, and setup the, what's it called? Not the Institute. It's the Monuments Historique de la France, he established that and so because there was a government agency, I suspect that's why France never had a really good conservation movement at the grassroots level because people would say, even when I lived there, ‘the government's looking after that’. I think that happened in large parts of Europe. The Dutch started one in the early 20th century and that was because there was no government action. Mostly I think urban conservation, whether it's gardens or buildings, starts because people are angry about something, or other, it doesn't start because the governments help them. And he accepted that, which was good.

Is there a National Trust in Brussels now?

I think there's a national body, yes. But it's not exactly like our National Trust. I mean I've got friends who work for the equivalent of the Monuments Historique de la France, which exists in Belgium, in both, of course, a Flemish and a French section of it. But I don't know. There certainly wasn't in the 80s. There certainly wasn't a National Trust, I'm not sure now.

You were also interested in trees of course. I saw in the *Landscape Australia* magazine that you wrote in 82 a scorching letter about supporting trees, some had written in and how there was a significant register of trees. Trees have also been something important to you.

I don't know where that came from other than I attribute trees to my being here. Well apart from Stardust as our source of all of life on earth, trees are certainly much more recent reason why humans are on earth and I've just always been interested in trees as plants I suppose. Because I've been interested in botany, trees have grabbed my attention and I just think they are the most wondrous machines, I mean the vast volume looking out there at that machine sitting out there converting carbon dioxide into oxygen is a fantastic thing. There's no specific reason why. I'm not a forester manqué. I just happen to like trees a lot that's all.

What was it that drove you then to start your arboretum on the coast?

36.36 That actually was more about coastal conservation initially. In the 70s and 80s, there was quite a lot of talk in the media and elsewhere about the loss of coastal land and the way in which it was all being converted down the whole east coast into urban developments or seaside developments. There was quite a movement - people talking about how we should protect the coast. And a friend of ours, well Marg and I had been looking with another friend to buy a rural retreat down on the coast then suddenly this other friend came to us and said, “Look, we've got this block of land, but

we can't afford it. It's a dairy farm. Would you come in with us?" So we formed … a group of us formed a company and bought this old dairy farm that had once belonged to Jeff Bate who in his more lucid moments married Zara Holt, and then went back to alcohol and got unmarried from Zara Holt.

We bought this block of land with the aim of, I suppose, putting back the native flora that had been there. When we bought it, it had three very old Pinus radiatas on 28 hectares and the rest of it was kikuyu and buffalo grass. We set about initially putting back the flora that was there so we spent a lot of time in our backyard here, we had lots of plots, we grew thousands of ... we sourced local seed and we grew them. We grew the eucs and the wattles and the banksias from seed. We had friends doing the same - we were producing a heck of a lot of - like thousands of seedlings a year in our various backyards, and friends' backyards and we were planting them out and gradually restoring. Then we started in one area, we thought … some people had an interest in introducing interesting Australian plants.

So we set aside an area that is effectively a little arboretum garden of only a couple of hectares of the 28 hectares, and gradually started putting in species that caught our eyes. There's a collection of quite amazing species there because the group of us are pretty inveterate travellers around Australia and we're forever picking up a few seeds here. All of us were used to growing seedlings in our backyards and things. So we did that. Quite a lot of things failed. I had a great passion for I really, really wanted to grow Allocasuarina decaisneana which is one of my favourite trees in Australia, that's the she oak (desert oak) that occurs in central Australia, in the swales between the desert dunes. It has an amazing growth habit where it grows as a single spear until it gets its feet in the water-table in between the sand dunes in Central Australia when all of a sudden its limbs come out and it grows into a big tree and there's great forests of them west of Alice Springs in the swales between the dunes. Quite big forests of them, which surprised people and it's only because whatever water falls, ends up in the swale. So I brought home and tried growing and grew some lovely seedlings but they didn't succeed down at Tilba Probably too cold and too wet for them I think. There are things like that. We did succeed with some really beautiful and some quite rare Eucalyptus conferruminata from southwestern Western Australia, one island called the Bald Island Marlock is its common name, if that's a common name. It's the most beautiful tree and I don't know why it hasn't gone into horticulture. We've got dozens of them growing down at Tilba and they're the most beautiful horticultural little eucalypt.

Describe their beauty?

They have the most incredible inflorescence. They flower in like a cricket ball sized flower which is made up of many, many capsules. That flower takes probably two years from the time it emerges and it looks like a landmine or a sea mine while it's coming out, these fingers sticking out - great big fingers. Then eventually its beautiful lemony lime green flower comes out, which is extraordinary amongst eucalypt. Oh the tree itself is interesting: it's got little circular leaves and they're hard as leather, they're really hard. They're quite circular the leaves, they're unusual for a eucalypt.

42.00 And then it's a sort of mallee form, but it's not a true mallee. It doesn't have a bole underground. It's got stems that come virtually straight out of the ground, but it's not truly a mallee. And then this flower turns into this extraordinary fruit and lasts and persists on the tree for 10 years. The fruit just dries off and the tree will be covered in these dried fruit and they'll take years before they fall off or naturally fall off. It's an amazing little tree and it only gets to about well at Tilba, only gets to about five or six meters tall, I suppose. It's a beaut garden tree.

Are there any examples of it growing elsewhere in the state?

I've never seen it growing commercially anywhere I don't know why.

Or other Botanic gardens?

Yeah, I've seen it occasionally in one of my favourite what's it called … Pangarinda Botanic Garden wonderful little volunteer-run botanic garden at Wellington East on the Murray River - where the Murray River meets Lake Alexandrina is this group of fanatic retired dairy farmers and they are just extraordinary. They've grown this fantastic collection of Australian eucalypts on a sand-dune, and it's the most beautiful little botanic garden, almost 100% funded by these people who love this place. They had no support from the local council.

43.40 It's a terrific little garden called, I think it's Pangarinda it's called, but it's right at Wellington East in South Australia.[5] They have it and lots of other really weird, unusual eucalypts that are very, very rare and that's because a couple of them just go each year and collect these unusual seeds and grow them. They're not particularly hard to grow. I was saddened that they don't recruit. We've had, well over the 25 years or so we've been growing them at Tilba we've probably tons of seed hit the ground, but none of it's produced any seedlings, we would have to grow them from seedling.

You mentioned when we spoke previously that you were seen as hippie do-gooders when you were involved initially in Tilba, is that still the case today?

No. no, no. Coming up to 40 years next year. It will be 40 years since we went there next year. No, in the last 40 years we've been surrounded by, I think the banking industry calls them "high net worth individuals", some of whom are quite well known and they're very, very rich. The sort of people who come down for the weekend in their helicopter and they have helipads near their houses. They have embraced what we're doing fantastically and so they've started helping us plant corridors of trees up through their properties – they get people to do it for them, they don't do it like we do, but that's all right. They've put in beaut plantations and we're now gradually getting pretty close to having a corridor of trees running all the way back to Mount Gulaga which was what we were aimed at – or what we developed.

As the years went by, went more from being "let's save the coast" to conserve … to do so we were going to put the vegetation back. Then we thought, oh no - why don't we do a bit of imperialism and encourage a corridor back up so that the flora and fauna can work between the coast and the mountains, which isn't all that far away in a straight line, five, six kilometres or so. But we're very close now to having an almost continuous vegetation belt and that's now resulting in all sorts of marsupials as well as birds now – the bird assemblage on our place has totally changed in 40 years, simply because there's now roosting space for hundreds of thousands of birds on our place and it's quite a big forest on our place now.

Did you do the planting? Two questions about the planting? Do you know how many trees you've planted? Did you plant it with a pattern or design in mind?

"Possibly" to both those questions. My guess is we've planted north somewhere between 60 and 100,000 trees. I'm not sure. But just by … in the early years, we were planting five, 10,000 trees or up to 5,000 trees I suppose a year and in those days we used to have … had the ability, I used to rent a tractor and I'd put in rip lines so that it was easier to plant, but we can't do that now because the canopy's up there and we're replacing trees now. So now it's basically digging all the holes … and we still … all of us are in our 70s and 80s, and planting the trees is hard work. So we're probably planting less than a thousand a year now but - we ***are*** planting less than a thousand a year now. That's tapered down from at least 5, 6,000 a year in the early years. That would be the numbers.

5 https://www.coorong.sa.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0012/525000/Pangarinda-Botanic-Garden-Brochure-June-2015.pdf

48.10 Was there a methodology? Yes. We wanted to put a coastal belt, we thought initially we were going to put in a belt of trees that would protect us from the great southerlies and nor'easters that come across.

We started planting in sort of lines but didn't want it to be too formal. But it was in relation to the species that had been there. So we planted the successional species going from the coast inland and we knew from a few relict areas north and south of us what that looked like. So we started planting to mimic that. But then we found very quickly that the wind – Tilba is the Aboriginal word for wind and where we are is Tilba Tilba which means bloody windy, and it is – bit like Wellington in New Zealand. So we planted huge quantities of acacias as a cover crop, more or less. We went back to almost farming techniques … we planted … which resist the wind and then we interplanted all of our trees in amongst those acacias and that really expedited our recovery work.

Now I'm trying to negotiate (and have been for two years with the rural fire service) to introduce a patch burning on ... We've deliberately kept quite open grassland areas, some of which have recovered large areas of kangaroo grass and smaller areas of weeping grass, the other native microlaena, but I want to try and get as much native and get rid of the last of the kikuyu if I can. So we were going to start a burning process, we went to great difficulties to get a burning plan in place that mimicked Aboriginal patch burning. It's been bouncing around for two years between one government agency and another as to whether we're allowed to do it. I don't know why we're not when the council burns headlands for the same purposes as us, trying to reintroduce grassland to where kikuyu has been. We'll get there, we'll get permission to do that and we'll keep these grassland patches I hope as native species. They're getting some native species in them, but I'd like to speed that up before I'd fall off the twig.

It's a wonderful legacy to create something like that.

Hope so. When you're dead you're dead so doesn't really matter. But it'd be nice to do imagine that somehow or other it would survive the holocaust of climate change, which is going to really damage all of our environments including that one down there I guess in the long run.

Max, we've just had a small break, but I'd like to return to the Garden History Society. During our break we were talking about the Wellington Conference, the first venture offshore for the Garden History Society. But you have another part to tell about that early venture.

Well it's something that's been in the mind of the governing body of the AGHS for many years. I can remember when I was - I think Deputy Chair in Peter Watts's time going - or did I become Deputy Chair in Colleen Morris?[6] I've forgotten which. But anyway I was on the Council and we started talking about trying to hold a conference in New Zealand then. We had a few members in New Zealand and some of them are still members but it's very few. We're also interested in expanding to the Northern Territory too which we've never held one up there. I think there's two or three members from there too, and it'd be lovely to see the national body holding its conferences in every state and territory that we're keen to do that. New Zealand seemed like a nice ally to hold it But we couldn't get the momentum going.

So it wasn't really until after I'd stepped down that there were pushes; I remember even when we held the conference in Armidale that the wonderful – there's a little group of activist Kiwis who were involved with the Council – Sue Ebury and Lynne Walker and Stuart Read sang Kia Ora, the Maori farewell song to us in a roadhouse in Guyra when we all left. I meant, that stirred us all up to yet again why hadn't we held a meeting in New Zealand. I think it's partly because - as Stuart says - a huge number of plants of Australian gardens, particularly historic gardens are New Zealand plants. Flax plants and what's it called? The New Zealand Christmas tree, Metrosideros excelsa,

6 Max was Vice-Chair of the Society 2005-2007 when Colleen Morris was Chair

pohutukawa. Those things are very common in old gardens, because in the 19th century, as Jane Lennon and many others have documented, there was this fantastic (and still is) regular traffic of people and objects and things and economy between New Zealand and Australia. And so garden plants became part of that.

Was there any particular aspect to the Wellington Conference that you recall with affection or made an impression?

54.20 I was knocked out by, and I was lucky enough to sit on the dinner table with him, was a fantastic geologist, Hamish Campbell, who not only was an amusing and funny man, but he was also full of information about – he spoke – it was something that Peter Watts and I were very keen that when we had conferences, we set the scene by getting someone who could talk about how the landscape came to be. It just seemed to us that what you would do in a conference was to tell people how the landscape had become like it was.

So since that time, which is probably 10, 12 years ago, we've nearly always had someone who did that gig at the beginning of a conference and did either the landscape or, better still, the geology and pedology, the origin of the soils, so that you got to know how gardeners could operate. They're the big constraints. Hamish Campbell gave this terrific talk about why the shaky isles are shaky I thought and continued to scare us by telling us that the biggest earthquake was 800 years overdue, I think. Which was an interesting moment … thought it could be anytime now.

That very dramatic line of the plates meeting right between Wellington.

As you said, there were some beautiful gardens we saw. I'd been to the Wellington Botanic gardens before but I'd never been to the Otari-Wilton's Bush land before. That was fantastic partly because it buried him under a rock, and I hadn't realized he was there. The remains of one of my great New Zealand ecological heroes, Leonard Cockayne. Leonard Cockayne was the first, I think he was the first forester official New Zealand forester. He wrote a lot of really quite good stuff that I used when I once decided I was going to do a PhD when I retired from working life at the ANU in forest history. I thought, oh I'll do something that I enjoy and I'm interested in.

And Leonard Cockayne's writings were very important because he was a very good early conservationist. He was worried about the loss of the timber species of New Zealand, which good cause to be ... he was right, they were wiped out. But anyway, he is buried in that Otari-Wilton's Bush land under a big rock, he and his wife are there. He helped Mr Wilton set up the Otari-Wilton's Bush land reserve that is run by the Wellington Botanic Gardens and is the analogue I guess, of the Australian National Botanic Gardens, of which I have the honour to be the President of the Friends at the moment. So I was interested in seeing that because it's the analogue of the ANBG in Canberra.

You speak about flax, those extraordinary flaxes that were in the Dean's garden that were almost 10, 12 feet high.

Well imagine when a large part of that whole area, the Taranaki, because until all those English migrants came in and did what they knew about farming, that is draining fenlands and swamp lands and people from Lincolnshire and the fens of England came in and put their talents to use, that was all covered in Phormium flax. Maori used it for all sorts of purposes, everything from housing to clothing. So these vast, vast areas of flax, thousands of hectares of flax which loves growing in swampy land until they drained it, it was all covered in swamp.

Stuart pointed out a couple of places along the way on the post-conference tour where there were still very small swampy areas, where there were flax too. Going back to the Canberra Branch Max, the Canberra Branch organized "The Scientist in the Garden" conference in 2016; again, with that emphasis on what lies beneath as much as above.

58.50 I think I might've been partly responsible. Well, no, I know I was – I twisted … Kay Johnson and I twisted people's arms to pick up that theme. Because I remember particularly Peter Watts and Colleen Morris felt that we should try and theme our conferences, and have a core idea running through them, which I totally agree with. I just thought one of the things that Canberra had done, partly because I had very marginal things to do with it, had been involved in – and still is – very actively involved in plant sciences.

Canberra's got a lot of institutions, some of which are world famous, that have worked in plant sciences, and they range from the great ecologist like Ralph Slatyer and through to the plant breeding work that's going on in, it's not called the Division of Plant Industry – it was when I worked there, but the CSIRO, one of the earliest divisions of CSIRO, two of the earliest divisions were the Division of Plant Industry and the Division of Forest Research, which were both based here. They, along with ANU and other institutions have been very responsible for a lot of both basic and production research into plants. And even introductions; when I did my research for this aborted PhD I found that the Plant Introduction unit of CSIRO, which existed from the pre-World War II through till the early 60s, during World War II had imported all these species of garden plants which are cultivars of everything from tulips to strawberries. I never got at the base of how they did that because their work was supposed to be related to production agriculture, but they did import: I've got their species lists of the things they imported, they imported all sorts of ornamental plants as well as - not marginal, there's a big industry in strawberries - but they weren't doing it for that, they were doing it for the home gardener I think.

Why did you abort your PhD?

I think I got too busy with all of the voluntary things I do and I just ran out of time. I think one day I woke up and thought, what the hell … I'm 70. Why am I doing a PhD? It was more to do with that. I didn't need a PhD. Even though I enjoyed it and I *loved* working with Libby Robin, who was my supervisor and John Dargavel, who was a wonderful forest historian; that was a pure joy working with them, I disappointed them by pulling out. But … why do you need a PhD when you're 70? I mean, pure vanity project and there were too many other things to do.

Just returning to the Canberra conference, you gave a paper there titled "Out of the Woods – Trees on Trial" about arboreta in Australia.

Well that was the core of my … the supposed PhD was about the way in which we had embraced everything from acclimatization very early, Australia was extraordinary if you look at the history – in terms of garden history – Von Mueller and his colleagues in Melbourne at the then very new University of Melbourne were very active participants in the acclimatization movement, which was not just bringing in trout and foxes and rabbits for hunting, it was bringing in hoards of plants. So Von Mueller of course notoriously introduced the blackberry amongst others as a plant, which he then distributed all round Australia and we've got that as a legacy. But the acclimatization movement brought in all sorts of species which most of them have just either disappeared or become part of our landscape and aren't particularly worrying. But some of them have been really, really serious pests. And I was interested in that kind of movement that started in France and then moved to England.

But we had more acclimatization societies by the end of the 19th century than anywhere in Europe. It became a real thing amongst learned scholarly gentlemen to import everything from alpacas, which fed a lot of dingoes but luckily didn't naturalize, but could have naturalized – they were all released in the Victorian Alps. It was an incredible movement. The same was happening in the other direction. I mean, there was this wonderful group of maddies in England who were importing wombats and kangaroos and releasing them, mostly they didn't survive. It was an extraordinary process the acclimatization movement and that led to people studying … it interfaced with the

desire to get softwoods. Australia was seen as a place that didn't produce softwoods, which you need for building and other things. So the search was for good softwoods, so we had arboreta being built all around Australia being started by the then (at the end of the 19th century) either these acclimatization societies or the then - that became Forestry Commissions in each colony. That led to almost everywhere discovering that Pinus radiata was (particularly for southern Australia) was the species to grow. That led to Pinus radiata forests being planted all over southern Australia, which I found an interesting phenomena. It was matched at the same time by this vast quantity of seed coming from California for these Pinus radiata forests. At the same time Von Mueller and many others were sending vast quantities of seed of eucalypts to particularly California and places like that. They were doing the opposite wanted fast-growing hardwoods so they could fuel their railway engines mostly and build sleepers for railways. So there was this fantastic cross-pacific trade that I was fascinated by in the late 19th century. All tree-based.

Max, was there much response? Not much! What was the response to your paper given at the conference?

I don't know … I didn't … *laughter* … polite clap …

You weren't flooded with inquiries? No post-conference communication?

Not really, no. I don't know that I've ever invented the wheel I've mostly said what most people I assume go … *Ho hum, we knew that*. No, no, there wasn't any feedback.

Staying with the conference theme, going back, I think it was 2007, the conference in Albury, "Meandering around the Murray". Again, before we spoke, before we started this interview, you said how you'd endeavoured to continue the Riverina and the Monaro aspect of the branch name. Could you tell me something … ?

1 HR 6 That's why when it came our turn (because Canberra had done one conference way back prior to that) and when it came our turn and we put our hand up, I said, "Well let's not hold it in Canberra." I think I was President at that time I think – I might not have been, but I said, "Let's hold it outside of Canberra." I mean it's our turn to as a Branch to run it, but that doesn't mean we've got to hold it in Canberra. We are the Riverina Monaro ACT Branch. Let's hold it in the Riverina, so we did. That turned out to be bloody hard, Margie and Judy Pearce and others had a terrible trouble finding big enough places.

Albury, which you think has got all of this actually has very few halls that could accommodate more than 200 people. In fact, in the end, I think we had to limit it to 200. But at that stage we were getting 300 people at conferences and regularly in Sydney and Melbourne and Adelaide. I think we had up around that number and we couldn't find anywhere, so we had to limit it and it sold out almost instantly. I think it was 180 was the maximum room we could find in Albury that we could afford, and accommodation, there's plenty of motels and things. But anyway that turned out to be a bit harder to run than we thought in the country town.

There are a lot of those practicalities. Well, there's one aspect to the scholarship and the garden history of the Society, but there's also those practicalities – the beds, the seating, the cups of tea …

Yes, bus companies for the tours. We had a terrible company down there who told us they could do all sorts of good things, then crashed one of their buses. It was a bit shambolic actually, they got lost. *Oh no, no … we all know the area* and bus drivers got lost and we had some funny moments.

Max, did you join the Canberra branch and become immediately the Chair or did you …?

1 hr 9 No. I joined the Branch … and I think it was probably a year or so after I joined Virginia Berger who was the chair, that's right, Virginia Berger tapped me on the shoulder and said she was about to

stand down and would I be interested? And I think I said oh yeah, I'll give it a go for a year or so and I did. Then I think after that I went on the National Management Committee. I think that's the order. I've forgotten which order, whether I was on the National Management Committee or whatever. But anyway, I agreed to take it on as we were struggling a bit with getting any members to put their hand up to run the Branch at that stage, and so I agreed.

Looking back on your time as chair, what do you remember?

I think we built up a solid base that had possibly languished a bit. We had a very good program of activities that people who are in, like my sister and others who are in the Sydney Branch tell me they envy the number of things we do. We do do a lot of things even I think more than the Victorian Branch, the sort of mother branch if you like. I think that's a good thing. They've carried on, I mean there've been some really beaut chairs since my time, but they have a program that fascinates me enough to go to continually involved with the Branch … we've got a thing on later this week I think at Gorman House. They keep finding ways of amusing and entertaining and keeping people interested. The Branch is not huge but it stays pretty steady around a couple of hundred people I think, or something of that order. Maybe it's 100 - I don't know, but it's a good solid Branch I think. It's financially secure and got good leadership.

When you first came on board, you asked the members, "Are we thinking outside the square in managing the branch?" What did you hope might be outside the square?

I was particularly interested in trying a bit of imperialism I suppose, in trying to make sure that we linked up with the Monaro and the Riverina. I didn't know personally of great historic gardens, but I knew of historic horticulture in the Riverina that went back to pre-World War II when the first irrigation settlements were set up by Alfred Deakin. And I was very keen for us to touch on subjects like that, that struck me as part of our garden history. We ran at least one, maybe two branch conferences and meetings in Griffith and Narrandera.

How were they received?

They went down very well. We had quite amusing visits to these specialized growers … turned out there were some incredible rose growers and rosarians in places like Griffith where roses really flourish. So we've managed to dig up and find some really extraordinary gardeners down there and I think people enjoy the trips out west of Canberra.

You talk about managing the Branch. Again, this is something that comes through at branch level and national level: it's managing a big business. Did you enjoy that management part of it?

Not particularly, no. But it has to be done. You've got to try and keep recruiting members and raising money and putting on programs each year. I didn't dislike it, we held - round this table - we held an awful lot of meetings with papers scattered on the floor, trying to think of ways of doing both those things, increasing membership or retaining membership, and putting out newsletters and all of those sort of things. We did it because someone had to do it. Luckily my fabulous wife took up at least 50%, probably 70%, of the load for doing it.

Also thinking about those tours that you did in the Branch, maybe that's something for being a major city surrounded by a lot of country, you went on trips to Orange to Cowra …

South coast.

Yes. At Horse Island where it's 10 years old. That's now a major tourist destination almost.

It is. Christina's gradually opening it up to the world. It's great.

I went there on a tour with a Southern Highlands Branch, and I said to her, it's so beautiful. We'd all like to move in - to which she very tersely said, "Well I'll be moving out."

I quite like Christina. It's been interesting to watch Christina from the time she started on that project, which is about when I first met her, and she and I share the affliction of deafness. Christina I don't think, I'm not sure, but I don't know that she wore hearing aids in those days? She used to be kind of embarrassed about talking to people because she knew she couldn't hear them well. I've never forgotten asking her why she got into what she did, and she told me that she found that when she took an interest in gardens, she was well into her 50s and she thought there are so many plants in the world, I'll just deal with Australian ones because that'll keep the number down. I thought that was the best answer I've ever heard! And so she … I've always admired her not only for her skills, but she's done something that to me is really important and she's got people to see that you can manage Australian plants like you can manage exotic plants.

I mean, I've grown up in a culture and it's driven me insane of watching (not quite insane) of people in the 60s, there was this huge push towards native plants and people just put them in and left them and they grew into bloody big trees or they died or whatever, but they ... most of those native gardens of the 60s resurgence of native gardens in Australia just became messes. And no one manages plants, no-one … the idea of taking pruning shears to a westringia bush or whatever and shaping it into something like Versailles or whatever you like – it just never occurred to people I don't think. And Christina's made people see that you can actually manage and keep beautiful gardens out of native plants. There are species that you can do all of those things with and I think that's really important because I think we won't have many exotics living through the climate change that's upon us. We're going to have more native plants that do and they will need to be managed and pruned into shape, and she's very good at that.

It's a very elegant garden.

… or her four gardeners are ...

You also got the sense though that she was hands on in a sense as well.

Oh no, I'm only joking about the gardeners. Christina puts in a lot of work I think in the nursery as well. She's got that beautiful nursery as well as the garden.

AUDIO 2

Max, again, we've just had a small break and I've lost the thread of where we wound up with that break, but in the meantime, I would like to talk about the Branch, the ACT Branch, which has prepared a number of publications, some perhaps before your time, those St Omer Garden, Mount Erlington and so on. But early Ainslie Gardens was during your time? 2004?

No, it came out just before I became Chairman, I think. That was probably in Virginia Berger's time.

Right.

No, the AGHS Branch here was very active in publications, probably due to people like Victor Crittenden and Richard Clough, for being early members and Victor being of course a *bibliothequere* as we would call in French, but being a librarian and very interested in publishing, had rightly encouraged us to do not only documentation of specific gardens, so that led to a string of nice little publications; but then also work on setting out ways in which you measure gardens and things like that. So yeah …

Dick Radcliffe's recording.

Yeah, so Radcliffe and Clough and Crittenden were all combined to put that very much in the DNA of the local branch and they continued on doing that fairly regularly. I think they haven't done it for a while, but I think circumstances have changed a bit. When, I think I was chair, we did a garden

measuring program, but I don't think we ever wrote it up on a house in Yass, whose name escapes me now, but we did do a measure … we all were out there working away, measuring the garden and documenting it.

Was that the Jephcott Arboretum?

No, no.

Margie: Fifield

Thank you Margie from the kitchen.[7]

Fifield. It's a historic house on the edge of Yass and it had a fabulous garden and there were a couple of people pushing that we should document it and the owners wanted us to, but then I think the owners' interest waned or they sold it or something... something went wrong and it never became a publication, which was a pity.

Yeah, the Jephcott Arboretum was a result of one of our weekend trips, which we used to organize and ... I've forgotten how I heard about the Jephcott Arboretum, but we went on a trip to look at the ... this was quite a long while ago and it's become quite popular now, the arboretum created by the New South Wales Forestry Commission at Pilot Hill, which is still there and it's in a rather decrepit condition, but it's still … it's one of those arboreta that dates from the late 19th, early 20th century, when forestry commissions were looking at softwood trees and they introduced a whole range of species into a trial plots up … it's between Tumbarumba and Batlow. And we had a weekend up there, which was good. We went to a number of gardens and arboreta and then the last of those we visited was the Jephcott Arboretum down on the Murray River, which I think is still a very precious resource and I'm not quite sure what condition it's in now, because the Branch offered the heirs of Jephcott assistance to do something about managing it, but they pushed back and didn't want us to get involved, so we couldn't do anything.

I think they'd had a bad experience with some people from Burnley who'd come up and done some documentation and hadn't ... I don't know what happened, but whatever it was, they didn't like what had been done. Although, a running issue developed ... part of it got burnt in a bushfire and the owners, the Jephcotts, the two brothers used me for years, years and years in their litigation against the electricity company which had caused the fire that caused them to burn. I wrote numerous things for them as a witness, trying to support them in trying to get some compensation from ... which I only ceased a couple of years ago. I mean it went on for probably 10 or 15 years, this legal battle over compensation for the Jephcott Arboretum.

Is this something you did personally or on behalf of the AGHS?

It started off on behalf of the AGHS and at times I got people like Stuart Read involved in it, but they wanted expert witnesses to be able to tell them how unique these tree collection that Sydney Jephcott had created with Ferdinand Von Mueller originally. And it is unique in that some of the best specimen trees in Australia of their type, I think, are down on this Jephcott Arboretum.

And haven't some of the species been exported back to home countries?

They could have been, I don't know, I'm not 100% sure about that. I know that happened here at the Yarralumla Nursery, where the Pinus torreyana were exported back to Arizona, where they …

That might be what I am thinking.

... they came from, and it could well be, probably even the largest Quercus ilex, the Holm Oak, in Australia, perhaps in the world, is down on the Jephcott Arboretum. Certainly some of the English Planes down there are just unbelievable. They're bigger than any trees I've ever seen. They're

[7] Margie Bourke, preparing lunch in the kitchen, offered clarification: Fifield House, Yass.

growing in the Murray River flats with their feet in the water and probably the best Sequoiadendron giganteum, the Californian Redwood, in Australia is growing down there... There's an amazing collection of trees that most of the genetic material for was got from Von Mueller. So it's a very interesting historic collection.

It's a bit of a mess. Jephcott was a farmer and he just planted the stuff all over the place. It's not arranged in any way, but it's a very beautiful place. Yeah.

It must be quite a different garden to The English Garden that you were involved in.

Yeah. Well, "The English Garden" project came about partly because I was a member of the AGHS. The ACT Government decided it was going to do a big project on what it saw as cleaning up the Yarralumla Nursery, and the Yarralumla Nursery was the inheritor of all of the work that Charles Weston had done at the beginning of the 20th century, in terms of creating the treescapes of Canberra, both public and private.

"The English Garden", we never ever got to the root of why it's called "The English Garden", but it's the area outside of the Yarralumla Nursery. What we did establish, Franz Grossbechler and I, who wrote the report for them (Frank's a retired, ex-manager of the Yarralumla Nursery and a really lovely guy, an incredibly good plantsman), Frank and I did the identification of all the trees and a condition report on all the trees in the Yarralumla Nursery, and we recommended they pull down the remaining Torrey Pines that were there, which were all dying and quite a few of them were actually dead. They were very, very big trees, 20 metre trees I suppose and they were in dangerous condition of falling into either the nursery or into the cafe that's behind.

Anyway, there were some surviving trees and we recommended quite a bit of arboricultural work on them, to sort them out a bit, including on the oaks that were there, which had just fallen to bits and they've done that work. The ACT Government then came in and they gave a grant to Garden History Society, Local Branch to do this study and Frank and I did it and it was presented to them and then the ACT Government's come in and made quite a nice garden walk and tour out of it, using our work and report.

And interpretive panels have been installed?

Yes, pretty basic ones, yeah. But it's been much enhanced by a project that I had nothing to do with, that the local Branch developed, which was dipping into some funds from the commemoration of World War I and they commissioned a very good designer to come up with a thing that interpreted the work of Charles Weston, because it was the site … where the nursery was, was (if you like) a site of a classic dilemma that happened in World War I, that was the loss of all those men who worked in the nursery, who went off to the First World War. And it just happens that one of Canberra's, and I think one of Australia's great poets, Geoff Page, had written this fabulous poem about Weston planting trees while men were dying on the Western Front.

So they built all this into an extremely beautiful little monument that's there, I think, a very contemporary design and monument. We had a terrific ceremony that Sue Byrne, I think presided over, the current Chair when it was inaugurated, and I think Geoff read the poem, but anyway, he was there and members of the descendants of several of the families of blokes who went off to the Western Front where there. It's a really nice, respectful little memorial, I think that the Branch did. I didn't have anything to do with that, but I think it's one of the really great things that the Branch has done.

You were just saying, "that's Tony."

Oh, one of the really energetic leaders of the AGHS Regional Branch was the late Tony Byrne and he set up - and I gave him some assistance in - the documenting of the Yarralumla ... one of the projects the Branch did was, which was an interesting project, was the digitizing of all the records

of the Yarralumla Nursery, because the landscape of Canberra is hugely influenced by this nursery's work, both in the public's domain, and also in the private domain. Because for a very large part of Canberra's history there's been a program where any new homeowner could get, I think it varied at times, but it was 60 plants or a hundred plants at times ... free plants from this nursery.

From Weston?

Well from Yarralumla Nursery, yeah, and that, if you know how to read the landscape, you can see what was in fashion or not at the time. You can see the different species that were ... for people who just went and got those free plants, and a lot of people did, and many of them have aged and died. But you can still walk around Canberra and see the freebies that came from Yarralumla Nursery.

And I think that helped develop this terrifically treed landscape that we've got in Canberra. I remember seeing the numbers ... it's the most treed landscape of any city in Australia apparently it's got more trees per capita and more trees, but ... our neighbours on either side of us don't reflect that but Canberra is a very heavily treed landscape when you drive around it, you realize how many trees there are and that was very much product of this free plants scheme, I think, as much as it was of the work of Lindsay Pryor and others, in terms of planting the public domain.

Let's continue on the publications: were you involved in the Montague Garden survey? Montague Island Gardens?

Oh, a little bit ..

Montague Island Gardens.

... at Montague Island, yeah, a little bit. I certainly went out there a number of times and helped plant and weed, but no, that was largely driven by people after I'd left, but I went along as a worker on a couple of occasions, yeah.

Coming back to the beginning of your time in Canberra, in the Society at least, you joined the NMC in 2001 or 2002?

Something like that.

You were elected. What was your first response to being on the NMC?

I thought it needed a fair bit more commitment than it was getting from some of the members, at that stage.

Was that why you were brought on?

I don't know that I was got on for that reason. I think I got on because I didn't step backwards at the right time. Anyway. No, I enjoyed it because I was always a great admirer of Peter Watts' work ... both his work and he's a very nice man and I'd admired the work he'd done and he was Chairman at the time or president, Chairman, whatever. And so I enjoyed working ... I enjoyed the NMC meetings and it seemed to me it was important to keep the organization going, was to have a strong NMC and I took a reasonably active role in it, at that stage. I was on the Publications Committee and various other sub-committees.

Yes. Speaking of publications, with Colleen, you produced the Studies.

Yeah, well that was something that I think Colleen and probably Peter too, had always wanted to do, was to have, running beside the Journal, which was to be our public journal, was to have ... And every time we did a survey of around Australia, academics would lament that there wasn't a refereed journal.

So we said, "Well, let's have a go at one," and the NMC set aside enough money for us to sponsor a journal and Colleen and I took on the role of editing it, which was somewhere between a nightmare and very unpleasant. It just … I've never known how, or I still don't know ... I admire anyone who can run an academic journal, because people who, forever telling you that they didn't have a venue for their publications suddenly became silent when it came - there was a venue for their publication and/or said, "Oh yeah, I'll write for it," and then never produced anything.

So, actually getting the publications and then getting them refereed, it was really hard grind. It took us much, much longer than I'd have liked. I was very proud of, I think the two or three issues we brought out, I thought they are quality, but the pool of Australians … academics working in garden history literature, is pretty small and getting people to referee other people's without knowing, you know, it was supposed to be blind, which it was ... we struck to it, that they were blind referees, but I'm sure people could work out who they were mostly. That was hard. That was really hard getting it, and then getting the things back from them. All of it took so much longer than it should have taken and I don't know how you speed that up.

But I thought it was quite a nice little publication. I'd modelled it on ... before I went on the NMC, years and years ago, I don't know quite how, except I knew the editor, John Dixon Hunt (involved with) the International Journal of Garden History[8], and I was on the board of that. I was the nominal token Antipodean board member of that for about three or four years, five years maybe. And I refereed ... I used to get papers that came in that were anywhere south of the equator basically.

Was this while you're on the NMC you mean, or before?

19.00 Oh no. Before I went on the NMC, it was probably while I was mostly at the Australia Council. I used to get these ... I was on the Board of the *International Journal of Garden History*. I'll get its name there - it's changed its name now, it's run out of ... he became the professor (he wasn't when I started) but he became the professor at that very famous Dumbarton Oaks[9] in northeastern United States, and they produce an extremely prestigious publication in this field. I don't know whether it's still produced, but we wanted something that was of that quality And Mariana Rollgejser did a fabulous job in terms of giving us a publication that looked like that quality, but had a strong Marion Mahony Griffin feel to it, because of the imagery that she used in that, yeah.

There was some discussion that flowed on from that about whether the, the future edition could have a different cover, but that's just pedantry.

Oh yeah. Yeah, well, they could have, we just chose the ones that ... I guess they came out of Canberra and Mariana was a very interesting person. She still is. She's a nice, lovely person. I don't know her very well, but I see her occasionally and she was a designer who had worked at one stage early in her career for the National Capital Authority, so I guess she was quite familiar with Marion Mahony Griffin's pictorial displays and …

And of course Mariana's also involved in designing the Journal and has been for some time.

She is. Well, that was very much my doing, I think. I'd used Mariana, whom I got to know, I think through doing the academic journal. She then did quite a bit of work for my ... by that stage I think I was starting my business, Rural Funds … that I helped start called Rural Funds Management.

And Mariana, we hired her to do prospectuses and things, to design quite a lot of publications for us and she was fabulous to work for, still is. So when replacing the Journal operations came up, I think I might've been on the NMC at that stage. They said, "Who are we going to get to design it?" Because I think Richard Aitken was still editing it, maybe ... I'd need to look at some records, I can't

8 Professor John Dixon Hunt - https://www.doaks.org/research/library-archives/dumbarton-oaks-archives/historical-records/75th-anniversary/blog/john-dixon-hunt

9 Dumbarton Oaks, Washington DC

remember quite, but Mariana said no, she'd love to do it and she took it on and she was happy to work it part-time. She's a person who does lots of different jobs from directing planes at Canberra Airport, through to …

Does she?

She works for QANTAS, she's one of the ground staff at Canberra Airport, yeah.

How different is that from designing garden history?

Yeah, not that I fly much these days, but every now and again I'm going through Canberra Airport and I'll get a, "Hello" from Mariana behind the counter.

22 Anyway, she does ad-hoc design work and still likes ... actually I'm sure she does, she tells me she likes doing it. So she's terrific. She stepped up and then when a vacancy came up and I knew Bernadette was looking for a bit more work, she was working for the Academy of Science, I think at that stage, in a part-time role and she wanted a bit more work. I thought, well, she did her master's degree on Lindsay Pryor and she knows a lot about history and gardens and she was a member of the Society and had a lot of (had a LOT of) editorial experience in journals and dictionaries and other things.

So the two of them came together and they've been ... up until next April I think it is, they're the team. It's going to be hard to... Well, I hope they keep Mariana on. I don't know, whoever they get for editor will determine that, I guess. Yeah.

It'll be a big change.

Yeah.

How do you think the Journal's travelling?

Oh, I think it's terrific at the moment. Yeah - I think Bernadette does a fabulous job: I'm an unabashed fan of Bernadette Hince and she does ... I think there's a diversity of subject matter and a lightness of touch with a bit of humour in. Just, like ... well, Richard was good at that too. He's a witty person as well, and I think you've got to keep a bit of … you know ... occasionally put things in that take the mickey out of garden history. It's easy enough to do.

Sometimes there have been conversations about the Journal it's too academic and people never read it.

Yeah, yeah. I've heard them over and over.

I bet you have.

I remember we used to have the Journal Committee was chaired by the wonderful Nina Crone, originally when I first got engaged, we used to meet in her flat in East Melbourne and yeah, that, debate, "We want more academic papers. We want less academic papers." You know, that was a built in tension and poor old Anne Latreille when she took over as Chair of the ... (not poor old, she's a wonderful person, she's a terrific person, actually, she is a bloody good journalist and a writer herself) but she used to hear this: we'd have these committee meetings of the Publications Committee and there was always that tension over and over, yeah. I don't know that it's soluble myself, but it is what it is and it'll, I guess, drift between academic and non-academic as it sees, yeah.

With you on that Editorial Advisory Committee when you were first on the NMC, were Richard Aitken, who went on to be the editor, Paul Fox, who's written about gardens, David Jones, Megan Martin, Prue Slatyer, if that's the correct way to pronounce her name, and Christopher Vernon. That's quite a heavy hitting ... with Anne Latreille quite a heavy weight on that Committee.

It was good. It was good.

Did you meet in person or always by phone?

Once a year, I think, yeah, and the rest of it we were on the phone. Yeah, we'd try and coincide the once a year meeting in the NMC in Melbourne with that and as say, I remember meeting in Nina Crone's ... I think after she might've stepped down, in her flat and yeah. No, there were some interesting people, Paul Fox, who I haven't heard of for years, but he wrote some fantastic ... himself, was a terrific writer. Yeah.

And at the same time, then Richard Aitken was also working on the *Oxford Companion*, which was published in 2002, so there were the Studies, there was the Companion, there was a lot happening in publications.

27.00 There was, yeah, the dictionary is an absolutely extraordinary piece of work. To think that a little organization like the Australian Garden History Society could even produce something like that is quite fabulous, or I think ... great … probably the biggest tribute to the Society is to have done that. It'd be nice to imagine someone in 20 or 50 years time's going to update it. Don't know whether they will, but it'd be great if they could. It's certainly been a triumph to have that there and it's a resource I use still from time to time. Richard did monumental work on that and he was assisted initially by Michael Looker, I don't think so much assistance later on.

But I was responsible for hiring Michael Looker away from the gardens too ... He became the Second Head of the Nature.... I was on the Board of the Nature Conservancy by that stage .... when was that, in the late 1990s we set up the Nature Conservancy in Australia. We hired Michael, probably about 2000 or something like that, and he came to us from running the Trust for Nature in Melbourne and I think his ability to work with Richard had fallen off by that stage and there was a bit of tension between those two, I think. Anyway, he got credited with being an author. I don't think Richard agreed with that. But anyway.

Max, we've just enjoyed a lovely lunch, thanks to Margie and we're coming back this afternoon to finish up, but one of the things I wanted to ask you about was your article that you wrote in 2004 about, 'Does Conservation Really Matter?' - the question of the gardens at Old Parliament House …

Yeah, I'd been moved by what I thought was a... I suppose as someone who was a standard bearer of ICOMOS's Burra Charter and the thought that similar principles, at least as far as possible, should apply within gardens. And when Old Parliament House was decided to become, or the Government decided to become museums, there was quite significant money invested in the building and later in the gardens, for conservation. I happened to be manager there of the House for, probably less than two years, but it was during the height of the peak of restoration.

29.37 One of the things we tried to do was authenticity to the best extent possible. Certainly with the internal restorations of Kings Hall and the dining rooms and the courtyards, where I was responsible for taking out all of the additions that had been gradually made since 1927, and in the gardens, and removing the big and dying poplars that had been there for then, 70, 80, 70-odd years and replacing them with young poplars, which were in fact clones of the original poplar, which we'd grown up to quite big trees by the time they were planted in there.

So we were across managing gardens I suppose. But after I left, Government decided to do what they called a restoration program of the Old Parliament House, House of Representatives side gardens. And what they did was ... And I think today bears out, a very beautiful garden, but it absolutely had nothing whatsoever to do with history.

And what annoyed me, was they kept quoting people like Walter Burley Griffin as having something to do with this. Now, not only didn't Walter Burley Griffin have anything to do with the gardens of Old Parliament House, neither did the designer of the Old Parliament House, John Smith Murdoch, who was the architect, because the gardens ... I mean we have a very well

documented history of the gardens or we had, still have I suppose, and they were actually designed and put together by a bunch of absolute rosarian fanatics who happened to be Officers of the House of Parliament. Which was great, but it had absolutely nothing to do with Griffin.

So, when these people come along in 2002, or whatever and make this new rose garden on Walter Burley Griffin's design, quote unquote, I got annoyed that ... it was the ahistoricism that was annoying me more than what the result was.

The gardens were also always problematic because, even though I got attacked in the garden by Peter Cox in the Journal, one of the problems I was assured by rosarians, whom I consulted at great length, rosarians I might add who had similar and maybe even longer credentials in the rose-growing field than Peter Cox, was that we would never grow great roses there or we would only with great difficulty, because we had a lot of green lawns around them. And one thing is that lawns need lots of water and roses don't need lots of water. Roses are, as I was told, desert plants and they like arid environment.

In fact, anyone who's grown roses, including myself, knows that when you water roses you get black spot mildew on them and that is caused by watering. So there was this built in dilemma of having this lovely garden with lots of grass and ... were the species roses that were there tired and worn out? Yes. Some of them were. Most of them were dug up and just taken away. Some of them were very old varieties I believe, and instead what is planted there now are mostly new varieties of roses, I'm told.

33.52 My sole complaint was that, when I wrote that article about 'Does Conservation Matter?' was basically about ahistoricism, I suppose you'd call it, and justifying what you do on the basis of something that you actually haven't done and that is, that Griffin had nothing to do with this. Murdoch had nothing to do with this, and yet they were given as the articles of faith. It annoyed me too because when it was open, they got Tammy Fraser to open it. Who was a very nice person, had been, I think President of the AGHS at one stage.[10] Certainly been involved with AGHS, and someone had written a speech for her and put all this stuff in her mouth and I thought, "I'll bet she doesn't know the real story on this."

So that's what led me to write it. Was I for conservation at all costs? Probably not. I couldn't see how they could restore the garden by writing to the Australian Dairy Industry Association, which the original founders had done, and all the people who'd subscribed. I gather they hit up almost every Member of Parliament for two or three shillings each so they could have a rose in their name planted in the garden. That was how it was done originally, and was done by the Speaker of the House of Representatives, who happened to be a serious rosarian and he managed to persuade people to contribute a few bob here and a few bob there, and then he went to a bunch of ... the most extraordinary mixture, I've forgotten who they all were now, but things like the Australian Dairy Industry or whatever, to sponsor one bed or something. And yeah.

Max, you talk about the documentation you've got for Parliament House, at one point the Society was looking at preparing a database of gardens and historic gardens and places. Context were involved in that survey - were you involved in that?[11]

No. No, I was not involved.

Okay. That, just out of your time. In 2004, which was the time of that difficulty with the roses at Parliament House, you were also made a Member of the Order of Australia for services to heritage and arts organizations. What was your feeling about that?

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10 Misspoke - Mrs Tammy Fraser, wife of the Prime Minister, was never President or Chair of the AGHS

11 *A National Review of Inventories of Historic Gardens, Trees & Landscapes*, Context & Heritage Matters P/L, 6July 2012 [prepared for AGHS NMC]

Oh, I was very honoured, extremely honoured. I still am. I regard the Order of Australia system (which many people have shortcomings and laugh about) ... I think it's an important thing. I feel very proud of my AM. No, I felt very proud when I was offered it and still do.

Recognition by your own country?

I suppose so, yeah. Yeah.

Max, your award also acknowledged, not just your work with the Garden History Society, but also you've been involved in so many related organizations. You're part of the Lake Burley Griffin Guardians, The National Arboretum, Friends of the ACT Trees, Bush Heritage, and so on. Why involvement in so many?

Yeah, I think it's because my mother once described me as a bit of a flibbertigibbet, and I think I do dot around from one place to another. I probably don't do anything very well, but I get tangled up in stuff and all of those organizations, to some extent have some sort of relationship and I often use what I learn out of one about others. I mean, for instance, Bush Heritage, I've just been, Marg and I volunteer and look after the garden down at Scottsdale, which is one of Bush Heritage's places a bit south of Canberra.[12] I did a lot of fundraising for Bush Heritage back in the 2000s, and I've for years been worried that those private conservation organizations that work on large scale like Bush Heritage and Australian Wildlife Conservancy and even the Nature Conservancy (on which I sat on the Board for 10 years) all of them are stretching themselves in the way I saw the National Trust overstretch itself in the 1980s and '90s.

By the '90s, a lot of the National Trusts, because they're all separate organizations ... a lot of them were starting to get into serious trouble financially and I guess with volunteers, because, particularly in the '70s, a lot of them had acquired a huge real estate portfolio. It's one thing to acquire them and you can quite often get public money and even some support for doing it, it's another thing entirely to maintain them. They are very expensive to maintain, old buildings, old gardens. And they take a lot of labour, very expensive again. So a number of these organizations were beginning to feel the real pinch and a couple of them went right to the crest … edge of bankruptcy, I'm told, because of being overstretched. I remember saying to the CEO of both AWC (Australian Wildlife Conservancy) and of Bush Heritage, "Do not get overstretched. Don't buy more than you think you can, not only manage now but manage in 10 years time."

So I guess each of the organizations I've worked to, I've tried to use the learnings, that's one of the few joys of growing old, is that you do learn something, well, I hope you do, learn some things as you travel along. I was and still am worried a bit about AWC and Bush Heritage having too much real estate and not being able to look after that which they've got if there's a significant downturn in funds flow, as could happen at any time, and just simply by virtue of the fact that the longer they look after them, the more they've got to spend on them.

So you give a lot of your time every week to voluntary work.

Yeah, every week I would probably work two to three days a week on some form of ... I probably work some part of every day of seven days a week, but it's scattered over ... that might only be answering half a dozen emails or something, but certainly this job as President of the Friends of the Botanic Gardens has turned out to have a lot of work involved. And meantime, Marg and I do want to, as long as our health holds up, work on Bush Heritage and Southern Tablelands Ecosystem Park, and each of those things I've very keen on ... And Garden History thing, when appropriate events come up, I'm very keen to help run bars or do something and make curried egg sandwiches for it, my specialty.

Is it?

[12] Scottsdale Reserve

Yeah, no, I'm a keen maker of trays of curried egg sandwiches on lettuce.

Why is STEP so important to you?

41.40 STEP was, I think, a wonderful concept. Southern Tablelands Ecosystem Park was a thing started by two ACT organizations or branches of organizations, one called the Australian Native Plants Society, the other one called Friends of Grasslands, and they lobbied for some years to get a regional Botanic Garden, that is one that's purely focused on the Southern Tablelands Bioregion, as defined in The Commonwealth Government Bioregions of Australia.[13]

So, eventually John Stanhope, then Chief Minister, gave the STEP, Southern Tablelands Ecosystem Park, one of the sites of the about-to-become National Arboretum in Canberra. So they've got a bit over two, two and a half hectares of land, which includes all of the main tree species of the Southern Tablelands, and I think at last count 180-odd of the 220 understory species of the Southern Tablelands are growing there. And it's been a real joy over the last, bit over a decade, planting and now we spend a lot of time weeding and looking after what is a beautiful, small garden of the native plants of this region.

I think it's important for both science and it's important for education, because sooner or later people are going to realize it's about all it's going to be ... If you're not allowed to water your garden, then the species we're growing up there are going to be about all that you're going to be able to grow. So more and more, we find groups of people coming to us and saying, "What can I grow in the area?" And so, that's a really important role for this site, and we've now expanded it. We've got the indigenous garden up there and I'm hoping we get more regional, Ngunnawal and Ngambri engaged with looking at the plants of their area and managing them. That would be even better.

Are they doing that now in any way?

Sort of beginning to, I suppose we start off with a bit of enthusiasm and it wanes a bit and yeah, we keep trying different ways. I've been negotiating with the Corrective Services people who have, unfortunately a large number of indigenous people in their care, and we've been talking to them about ways in which we might use the STEP indigenous garden site as a training site. There's a bit of enthusiasm for that, but we'll see.

It sounds like a very exciting project.

It is. I think, and exciting at a slow moving pace. We're not talking about a Hokusai breaking wave. We're talking about more like a Balmoral Beach slow ripple, I think you'd call it.

So Max, just as we wind up, there are a couple of other topics that I'd just like to talk about. One is the tours, which the Society runs, particularly through Trisha Dixon. You've just done one most recently through Morocco. Would you like to tell me something about that?

Oh, Trisha runs fabulous tours. We've been privileged to do one to gardens in Greece with her a few years ago. And then we jumped at the chance to do the Morocco one. We had two and a half weeks, I suppose it was, in Morocco with her, a few weeks back. As always, Trish knows people who know people and she's a great networker and we accessed and got to see some truly extraordinary ... some of them I think weird, when you thought about, "Why would they do that?" But nevertheless, some of them were spectacularly beautiful, ranging from the beautiful, formal and slightly strange, Jardin Majorelle created by Yves Saint Laurent, in Marrakesh, through to Gordon Thomas's mad jungle in Tangier.

[13] Southern Tablelands Ecosystem Park - https://www.step.asn.au/

Gordon Thomas is an antiquarian, I think would best describe him, of some note. And he has an extraordinary collection of garden, and an amazing collection of pots in which he grows things, thousands of them in a beautiful part of Tangier. We saw some not only beautiful gardens, formal, informal, a range; carefully designed, absolutely happenstance ones through to wonderful projects, where one Italian designer was using it as a way of training young Moroccan men and girls to get them jobs. All of that sounded interesting, and so the trips are ... I've really loved the... one of the things that Marg and I look forward to every year is Garden History Society's conference because, both before and after it are usually good trips, sometimes run by Trisha, sometimes as this year, run by Stuart Read, who was fantastic. Stuart and Bronwyn Blake did a superb job running a garden conference tour after the conference. It was fantastic.

These are just broad topics I wanted to touch on, but it's a large topic, is the Patrons. They've always been very influential in different ways. How do you see their role?

It's funny you should ask that because I'm trying to get a Patron for the Friends of the Botanic Garden. - our last one who was the former Governor-General's wife has stepped down, and I've been thinking quite hard about that. I put it to my council that you can either have an activist patron or a symbolic patron and I thought we'd had two or three symbolic patrons in a row and it was about time we had an activist one, so one of the people we're fishing for is a quite well known Australian, who I hope by virtue of his prestige will be able to open a few doors and things like that. I don't expect patrons to do very much for you, other than maybe open a conference or something once a year, but also an activist one might well be able to open a door or two for fundraising or membership drive.

48.44 We've been lucky in Garden History, the wonderful Sue Ebury was terrific. She's very well known and she was a terrific Patron, I think. She was activist in every sense of the word: she was amongst the founding members and she was also activist even when she was Patron. She came to our events and things like that and was very thoughtful and a good writer on the subject. So, patrons, I think are important but depends on the mood of the day, whether you want them to be symbolic or activist, I think.

Again, just looking back across your long period in this realm of garden history, has there been a shift in garden history and has that influenced the Society?

Yeah, I think so. Some people at times critique the Society because ... and I've heard this actually said, that in some ways it's like at one of these garden clubs, and there's nothing wrong with garden clubs, where people just like going and perving on other people's gardens and, "What's the point of history of them?"

Well, I suppose for every time we go on a visit, there are some gardens that you go to that are contemporary and they will be presumably part of future history. But there are also gardens that tell stories about people and about places and certainly about plants and I like the weaving together of those three things. I think the Society's mixture of what it does at the moment, of trying to pull those three ideas together as is good. I certainly don't have any critique of what they're currently doing.

I think it's a good mixture of attention to ideas that might have their roots a long way ago. I'm not sure that the Society as a whole is as activist as I would like it to be. The local Branch is very activist in lots of little issues people don't know about, they're forever ... well not forever, but they write letters and complain and demonstrate and take part in other activities, when they've been concerned about The War Memorial developments recently (as they should be). They've been concerned about Lake Burley Griffin (as they should be).

Very.

So the local branch, I think, plays a good role in terms of just, albeit a small community group, but it's got a beaut Chairperson in Sue Byrne, who is quite happy to put her hand up and attend events, and is in her own right, quite an activist in the Reid community. Which is probably our best historic garden suburb in Canberra. And one would hope, although it's gradually being eaten by 'monsterism', where people are being allowed to build bigger and bigger footprint houses and knock down old houses, which is a great shame, because one of the beauties of the suburb of Reid is its terrific relationship of gardens to the buildings, I think. That's gradually being eroded bit by bit.

These things … what worries me is, that these things melt away. They don't disappear overnight, they just melt away. I remember Clive Lucas telling me once, we were in Cairns together and we were looking at one of the great old historic hotels, it's right in the main street of Cairns. We were standing on the other side of the road and looking up at it and he said, "Historic buildings don't always get demolished." He said, "They kind of melt, don't they? Look at that facade." You could see where a few banisters had fallen off and someone had stuck something else in and the few railings had disappeared and someone had put something else in and gradually the spirit of the building gets eaten away and eventually someone says, "Oh, this place looks like shit. We might as well pull it down."

53.35 I think that's where the local community conservation organization can take a really important role, because they hopefully can negotiate with owners or developers to try and retain some of those things.

So, when the Branch in Canberra... the Canberra base speaks out, is its voice heard?

Oh, you'd have to say sometimes. They get polite responses, they get access to Ministers, they get access to senior bureaucrats. Do people take notice of them? Sometimes, I suppose. Certainly not all the time, that's for sure.

And Max, we're heading next year into the 40th anniversary of the Society. How would you gauge its health in that year?

Well, that's a really good question. I think the fact that it's still here after 40 years is impressive. Just as ... I was invited recently to take part in a celebration of the 40th anniversary of the Burra Charter of ICOMOS and I truly could not imagine standing out in front of the Kooringal Hotel in Burra 40 years ago, that the (ICOMOS) Society would still be here. I don't know that I ever thought that the Garden History Society would be here 40 years ago either.

No, I think the fact that it's survived is important. That's a tribute to a level of commitment and interest that keeps it going. Will it stay like that? I hope so. I mean, each of these bodies spends their time lamenting the fact that there are no young people, that they're all old people in there, but I think these voluntary organizations will always be like that, simply because they're calling on people who don't have time when they're young and do have time when they're older. Maybe if people start living shorter lives, as some demographers suggest is about to happen, there might well be a serious downturn in membership.

Downturn in membership age or in membership number?

Well numbers, I think, if the demographers are saying that this is the last generation of people who will live longer than their parents and that the trends will point to there being a decline in age, due to bad public health factors, so maybe people won't have as much disposable time.

That's another interview I think. Lastly, as we head into our 40th anniversary, the Society's Chair has ended his term arrangement, has retired, Richard Heathcote, and there are now two chairs to replace Richard. Do you have views on that?

Yeah, I think it's a really interesting experiment and well worth pursuing. We have the flamboyant Stuart Read who'll provide the fizz on the champagne, I think, and I imagine the wonderful Bronwyn Blake will provide the bottle. She's a competent and clever organizer and I think Stuart, who undeniably knows his plants, as well as, if not better than any other person in Australia, let alone he knows heritage regulations and laws and the conservation heritage administration as well as anyone in Australia I think he'll be terrific - between them, I'm not sure how they're going to ... I don't think they are sure how they're going to play this game. We were talking earlier about getting older or younger people or I might've mentioned that then. I can't see how you can get into leadership positions ... people who are both in the workforce like Stuart and Bronwyn are, without doing something like that, without saying, "Look, split the job," and they can do it. That's the only way if you want people who are still in the workforce, you've got to march to their drummer, I think.

I don't know, experiment well worth taking. I utterly applaud it, so we'll see what happens.

So Max, you've been very generous with your time today and thank you for all of that and your recollections.

My pleasure.

Is there anything in particular that I haven't asked you about that you'd like to record?

Oh no. Other than that the Garden History Society's given me a huge amount of pleasure over a long part of my life and I hope it's in place and I hope my children, if not my grandchildren, join it at some stage.

Thank you.

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PROFESSOR EMERITUS DAVID YENCKEN AO

Just a continuation from the interview with Max Bourke, and Max is just talking about David Yencken, who passed away very recently. You were asked to write an obituary for the Journal?

Yes. Richard Heathcote, the President of the Society asked me to write something and separately Peter Watts was also asked to write, and we both wrote quite ... well now we've exchanged them, we see quite interestingly, different. They're not conflicting, they're just different ... Peter knew David in a different context from me.[14]

I really only knew David intensively, if you can know someone intensively, for about six, seven or eight years. He was the person who hired me as the Founding Director of the Australian Heritage Commission. David had been on the Committee of Inquiry of the National Estate, with Judge Mr Justice Hope, and David went on to become Founding Chairman of the Australian Heritage Commission, and I truly don't think there would have been an Australian Heritage Commission without David Yencken, because he was one of the most persuasive people I have ever seen.

He persuaded Malcolm Fraser, who I think was disinclined after Whitlam ... the Committee of Inquiry Report was presented to Whitlam, Whitlam loses office, Fraser comes in, there's a hiatus and David Yencken is nonstop lobbying through the Melbourne network, of which he was very wired into, he had lots of friends and acquaintances, and he used every one of those to make sure that the Commission came into being

[14] Professor Emeritus David Yencken, *Australian Garden History*, 31 (3) January 2020, pp8-10.

And that was the difference between the Australian Heritage Commission, which had David as Chair and the body, which John Mulvaney was involved, the, what was his name? Peter Pigott. The Committee of Inquiry into Museums, which never got up. It recommended a similar body, but they didn't have a David Yencken there lobbying for it. So, it never happened, sadly for museums in Australia today, in my view.

But Yencken was a truly remarkable man. He had this amazing persistence, this quiet, absolutely unflappable persistence. I've seen people being disgustingly rude to David and he'd just sort of shrug it off and press on.

I've never forgotten. He and I both were invited to speak to the Queensland Chamber of Mines in about circa 1980 and we went with some trepidation to a building in Brisbane and spoke to this room full of suits from various mining companies in Queensland. After the lunch was over and we'd both said our pieces and had our lunch, our awful lunch, we were both standing there and this man came up to David and he, like me ... not like me now, I suppose, I have a short beard, but I had a long beard in those days. He had a short beard, as he mostly did. This guy comes up to him and grabs him by the beard and says to him, "We don't do things like this in

Queensland," and shouts in his face, and David just quietly removed his hand, quite gently, and said, "Excuse me, I'm talking to these other people" and went on with it. Many Australian men would have turned around and punched the other guy in the face … it was … really …

But David persisted with Malcolm Fraser through every technique he could imagine. I imagine using people like … wonderful Premier of Victoria in those days ...

Hamer.

Yeah, Dick Hamer, who was a good friend of his, he would've used Dick, I'm sure. But anyway, he managed to get Fraser to agree to appoint the Heritage Commission and then they advertised for a director and I got the job and had the wonderful, exciting ride of setting up the Commission, which was fantastic.

We had a tiny little staff. I think it grew to a maximum of 12 people while I was there and I've never had such a fantastic group of focused people who just wanted to do their job and would do that seven days a week, and days and nights if asked to do. It was a really great group of people.

David kept plugging on, even when we'd run into what I thought were roadblocks with Queensland Government, Joh Bjelke-Peterson was in power, and of course he didn't much like us putting things on the Register of the National Estate. Charlie Court was in power and he didn't like us putting things on the Register of the National Estate.

So, there was this series of things and David would just go and front them and he'd go and meet them and say what we were doing and they would be rude to him and he'd go away and still be cheery about, "Let's just keep doing it. That's what the law says. Let's keep doing it."

I mean the exemplary part of that was when David and I once went to see Malcolm Fraser in Old Parliament House and we thought it would be a good idea to let him know that we're about to put Fraser Island, no connection, on the Register of the National Estate, and this would bring into power the Government's ability to stop sand mining on the island, which was a major, major issue, which everyone's forgotten about, probably today, but it was a major conservation issue in the 1970s.

1 HR 5 What was the importance of that?

Well, the Country Party, as it was then, before it became the National Party, received a huge part of their funds from a Hawaiian mining company who owned most of the sand rights on there, and

we went in to see Malcolm, and we sat outside his office, waiting and eventually the door opened and out came Manning Clark, who'd been ensconced with Malcolm.

David and I looked at each other and thought, "This is probably not the right person to follow in to see Malcolm." Anyway, both of us said hello to Manning and he walked through, we were summoned into the office and sit down and David says, "Look, I think it proper to tell you that in tomorrow's newspaper is going to be Fraser Island, and it's going to cause a lot of proverbial stuff in the fan when that happens." And Fraser just looked at us and said, "That'll teach that C-U-N-T Anthony right." That is all he said, then said, "Thank you for letting me know." The meeting was over.

Why was David so affable always?

I don't know. He just had this ... there's that idiot Donald Trump, talking about being the great negotiator. I think David was a great negotiator. He knew that you could be calm. He always had this slight smile but steel in him. I've got a photo, I'll show you later, a photo of him grinning on the verandah of his house down at Baronda, that I always think of him, in my study. And he had his ability to look at you and listen to you, and I'm sure he was listening to you, but he was pursuing his objective and he knew what he wanted to get and he would get it sooner or later. I mean, he was, after all, a property developer and that's what he did.[15]

That's what Merchant Builders was, and he made his money out of being a property developer. He was a very good property developer. I mean he persuaded Dick Hamer to bring in what's called the Cluster Title Act, which allowed those beautiful suites of buildings to be developed by Graeme Gunn, the building designer and Ellis Stones did the garden design and it brought about a totally new style of building, with communal spaces. David was an extremely thought ... that's why down the track, he became, not only Secretary of the Department of Planning, later on in his life, but then later on still, Professor of Urban something-or-other at Melbourne University.

He was just a really good negotiator and he had a vision about Australia that he thought, as he exemplified when he became President of the Australian Conservation Foundation, amongst other things ... he hoped Australians would care about the bush and Australia as much as he did, I think.

For all those skills and intellect and charm, how was he not able to save the AHC?

He really tried hard. I suppose I didn't try hard enough. Not that I had any ... I didn't have any standing by the time the AHC was under threat. I'd left government and I was just Max Bourke, a businessman. I wrote letters but I knew they'd carry no weight. David tried mustering all sorts of people to do things. I know he did, very hard.

For my part I suppose, and perhaps I shouldn't have done this, but I just felt society created the AHC, I guess they can un-create it. And to some extent, institutions reflect what we believe in and I got a bit jaundiced, I suppose, and felt that people just didn't believe in it anymore. I don't know if that's true, but certainly there's, I think, a lot less interest in heritage than there was.

Maybe that's because quite a lot of things in some way or another, whether it's National Parks or historic sites have been protected. Are they being protected well enough? Well, that's up to your opinion. I don't think so, but you know, there's a lot more that is protected now than there was in 1970 when this institution was set up.

True.

No doubt about that. But you know, is the level of protection as good today as it was then? Possibly not. I don't know. Anyway, I know for a fact, he did try to save everything, but by that

[15] Baronda House, Tathra - https://architectureau.com/articles/baronda-house/

stage it was John Howard in Government and I don't think he would have had the connections that he had with the Melbourne people.

And then there was the endeavour to write ... the history was written, but the history was never published of the AHC.

Yeah.

That's a whole other story.

Yeah. That was amazing. I did something like this with a woman from UTS, I think, who spent ... I've forgotten her name now, but she came and interviewed me for hours and hours about the AHC. Friends of mine who were associated with the then Heritage Commission told me it had lots of problems and I never found out what the problems were with the text. And so, it was never published. I don't know whether it just disappeared in the …

It floats around ...

Is it? Oh.

It floats around.

Does it? Oh, that's interesting. I'd love to see it sometime. I've never seen it. Yeah.

The best part of my working life has been some of the extraordinary people I've worked for. I really have been blessed, you know, Nugget Coombs, David Yencken, Paul Keating, Gough Whitlam, even Malcolm Fraser, whom I got on well with.

Just some truly amazing people. People you wouldn't know, like my young colleague with the company we started, Rural Funds Management, David Bryant, who's only in his fifties and David is one of the most extraordinary young men I've ever met. And most people have never heard of him, but he's a brilliant young man, or young-ish man.

But those people I worked for, you learn your life skills from things like that. Looking at Yencken, who had this fantastic ability to bust problems up into bits and pieces and say, "Well, we can solve that bit and this bit and let's have an argument about that bit." I learned to what extent I could exploit it, in that, from Yencken and about being tough with certain things, saying, "Well, that's something I'm not going to agree to, so you can drop dead about that part."

Yencken was a quite extraordinary man to have as a mentor. I was 30, 31 maybe when I first went to work for David. Yeah. 30 yeah, 30, 31, so it was a terrific experience, yeah.

He just, along with working for Nugget and some of those other people on that Royal Commission that I worked for were extraordinary people. I saw the other day, that one of them died the other day, Joe Isaac, who was Deputy Commissioner of The Arbitration Commission, former Professor at Monash. He was an extraordinary man, Professor Joe Isaac.[16] Some of the people on that Commission were outstanding people and you couldn't help but learn from them, I think.

What was the Royal Commission?

1 HR 13 Royal Commission was called the RC-AGA, Royal Commission on Australian Government Administration. Nugget was the Chair of it and I was an Assistant Secretary, on secondment from the Department of Urban Regional Development, from Tom Uren's Department. That was terrific.

16 Emeritus Professor Joseph Isaac, AO https://www.monash.edu/vale/home/articles/vale-emeritus-professor-joe-isaac-ao

Joe Isaac and Peter Bailey, who was ex head of Attorney-General's., he was a pretty smart cookie. And what was her name? She was a Professor at Monash also. She was Enid... not Enid Lyons... Campbell, Professor Enid Campbell. She was really good.

Is there something about living in Canberra that these opportunities might afford you, as well as yourself?

Ah, I suppose so. Yeah. Yeah, to some extent. Most of these things sort of fell into my lap in some way or other. I didn't seek most of them, I certainly didn't seek The Australia Council job. I did apply for the Heritage Commission job, I don't know how big a field there was. I never knew that. I know that unfortunately they'd appointed a person who acted in the job for six months or so, before I went there, who I really liked. I got to know her because she stayed on happily for a little while but decided that she hadn't got the job, she didn't want to stay on permanently, but she was a very smart cookie who I really liked. And I was sorry she didn't get the job. I was pleased that I did.

And most recently you worked with David Yencken on his publication that was issued just before he passed away.

Yeah. Well that was actually over the last few years I suppose, he's been writing it, and he sent me drafts every now and again for comment. I found myself, on each draft getting more and more annoyed with him actually. Because he kept writing as he was always ... he kept writing himself out of the story and the story's very much ... he was part of that story, and it annoyed me that he, as always, played down his own role in it.

Did you have that discussion with him?

Yeah. Yeah. I used to write to him. I wrote, I've possibly still got some old emails there that ... I said, "You asked me to comment and I'm telling you that you should be written back into the story a lot more."

What did he say?

Oh, he just ignored that part. Yeah, it was funny because it turned out, after I'd been corresponding with him about that for the best part of, or over a year or more I suppose ... I suddenly found that a woman that I paint with, her daughter was actually helping him ghost-write it - I didn't know that. I've forgotten her name now, but she's Margie Salt's daughter and she is a Melbourne writer and she helped him in some way. I don't quite know which way but helped him write it, apparently.

He was very sick during a large part of writing that, very sick, very sick. In fact, I didn't think he was going to make it actually.

Well, it's terrific to have that publication out there.[17]

Yeah, I think it is. Yeah. I think it is. As I said in this epitaph that I've written for Journal, "That's a monument to him, in some respects." Although it could do with a lot more of him in it, I think.

Well, thank you, Max.

Pleasure.

♦ ♦ ♦ ♦ ♦

[17] David Yencken, *Valuing Australia's national heritage*, Future Leaders, 2019.