

The Australian Gardens History Society's journals

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When the Australian Garden History Society (AGHS) was established in 1980, the importance of producing a Society journal was immediately recognised. Miranda Morris-Nunn took on the role of editor, articles were quickly written, and in spring that year the first issue of the *Journal of the Australian Garden History Society (JAGHS)* was published. This was a typescript publication of 32 pages, with a front cover featuring the first logo of the Society, a wreath of flowers, designed by Joan Law-Smith.

In her introductory words Dame Elisabeth Murdoch, the Society's founding chair, wrote:

This journal, which we hope to publish twice a year, is designed to keep us all informed of the Society's activities, progress and intentions. It is important that it should be of real interest to our members who live all over Australia and whose interests, skills and experience will bring validity to our purpose.

The contributors to this first issue quickly became familiar names to the Society's members – Joan Law-Smith, Trevor Nottle, Tom Garnett, Tony Whitehill, Richard Aitken, Oline Richards, and Howard Tanner.

Three further issues of *JAGHS* were published, and a newsletter which would alternate between journal issues was projected, with at least one issue of the *Newsletter of the Australian Garden History Society* coming out in November 1981. Producing a regular, high-quality publication made heavy demands on the still-small society. The fourth, and what proved to be the final, issue of *JAGHS* was published in Spring 1982.

Meantime in 1981 Tim North, one of the Society's founding members, had commenced publication from his home of a monthly newsletter, *Garden Cuttings: a monthly newsletter for the discerning gardener*. In 1982 Tim was elected AGHS Secretary, and by agreement *Garden Cuttings* morphed into *The Australian Garden Journal: the official journal of the Australian Garden History Society (AGJ)*, issued for the first time in June 1983. Edited and published by Tim and Keva North, *AGJ* initially continued the general format and numbering of *Garden Cuttings* but included in each issue several pages dedicated to specific AGHS matters, including announcement of Society events. Many of the articles in *AGJ* were on topics directly relevant to garden history, others were of more horticultural or general garden interest. Though originally modest in presentation – with a two-colour cover and including black and white illustrations – *AGJ* quite rapidly attracted a wider audience. By 1985 *AGJ* was a full-blown magazine of 48 pages (some in colour), received as part of their subscription by AGHS members, but also on sale to the general public.

By 1988 Society membership had grown to 2,750, but the lack of a formal agreement between AGHS and Australian Garden Journal Ltd increasingly exposed the difference in the primary focus of the two bodies, and in 1989 the relationship was severed. *AGJ* continued as a separate garden magazine until 1996, and AGHS embarked again on production of its own journal. *Australian Garden History (AGH)*, often referred to by members as *The Journal*, commenced publication in June/July 1989, under the interim editorship of Peter Watts.

This first issue – eight pages – was extremely simple. In an editorial statement Jocelyn Mitchell, the AGHS chair, observed:

While the AGHS at this stage cannot match the production of a commercial magazine, our new publication will I believe be more relevant to our Society.

The following year Richard Aitken and Georgina Whitehead took on the role of editors, continuing until 1992. Later editors continued to develop the journal, and include David Beaver (1992 to 1994), Trisha Dixon (1995 to 1999), Nina Crone (1999 to 2006), Richard Aitken (in 2007 and from 2008 to 2015 jointly with Christina Dyson), and Bernadette Hince (2015 to 2020). Among these fine editors, Richard Aitken is notable. At different times, with different teams and alone or with co-editors, he edited 48 issues and 1,376 pages. The current editor is Francesca Beddie (2020–). An editorial advisory panel serves as a connection with the Society's National Management Committee and provides guidance and assistance to the editor(s).

Throughout these years *AGH* evolved. Published six times a year till 2002 and five times a year for the next few years, in 2008 it became and has remained a substantial quarterly publication. The balance of the content has varied, but the general mix, articles of garden history interest, reports on significant events, book reviews, and news and information about the Society and its activities, has been retained. Like all heritage-connected bodies, AGHS has an ongoing role in advocacy, and the journal provides an excellent platform for substantial articles on matters to do with preservation or heritage. A major redesign in 1995 changed the somewhat formal appearance of the journal to a more open and contemporary one, and since then many less significant design modifications have taken place. The development of the Society's website and other electronic communication platforms has reduced the journal's role in providing topical news, freeing more pages for articles of substance.

The Journal is very highly regarded by AGHS members, but its wider value has been recognised, including by the Biodiversity Heritage Library (BHL) which has included it in its digital collection. Acting for BHL Australia, Museums Victoria has scanned copies of *AGH* and is in the process of digitising its precursor journals for publication on the BHL website, in this way preserving them for posterity, publicising them widely and making them available across the world. See <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/> and key in 'Australian Garden History Society' or you may retrieve them via the National Library of Australia's gateway, Trove. (The most recent issues are not included on the BHL website but are added progressively as new issues are published.)

Copies of the AGHS journals are also available [on this website](#). Members can download the journal free of charge. Digital versions of issues published in the last two years may be purchased by non-members.