AUSTRALIAN GARDEN HISTORY SOCIETY

NATIONAL ORAL HISTORY COLLECTION

ACT MONARO RIVERINA BRANCH

Photo: Trisha Dixon

Interviewee:	**TRISHA DIXON**
Interviewer:	ROSLYN BURGE
Date of interview:	30 JUNE & 9 JULY 2020
Place of Interview:	*BOBUNDARA*, NEAR COOMA, NSW
Details:	TOTAL 2 HR 30 MIN
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	1 HR 14 @ 9 JULY
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All quotations:	SHOULD BE VERIFIED AGAINST THE ORIGINAL SPOKEN WORD IN THE INTERVIEW

CHRONOLOGY - AGHS

1991-1995	Member, National Management Committee
1992-1993	Member, ACT Monaro & Riverina Branch Committee
1994-1995	President, ACT Monaro & Riverina Branch
1995-2000	Editor, *Australian Garden History*
1996-1999	Member, Branch Committee
2007-2013	Member, National Management Committee

PUBLICATIONS

1988	*Monaro country*, drawings Bill Bresser, text Trisha Dixon, BH Publications, Canberra
1988	*Gardens in time: in the footsteps of Edna Walling*, Trisha Dixon, Jennie Churchill, Angus & Robertson, North Ryde
1989	*"Banjo" Paterson's high country*, Tim Hall, photography Trisha Dixon, Angus & Robertson, Nth Ryde
1991	*Garden design and style : the essence of the garden,* Collins/Angus & Robertson, North Ryde
1992	*The country garden,* Angus Robertson, Pymble
1993	*A Gardener's Companion,* Collins/Angus Robertson, Pymble
1994	*ABC radio gardeners*, ed Trisha Dixon, ABC Magazines and Gore & Osment, Rushcutters Bay
1996	*The fragrant garden,* ACP Publishing, Sydney
1996	*Australia's timeless gardens,* Judith Baskin & Trisha Dixon, National Library of Australia, Canberra
1998	*The Vision of Edna Walling : garden plans 1920-1951*, Trisha Dixon and Jennie Churchill, Bloomings Books, Hawthorn
1999	*Gordon Ford: The Natural Australian Garden*, Gordon Ford with Gwen Ford, photographer Trisha Dixon
2002	*Fifield Garden,* Australian Garden History Society, ACT Monaro & Riverina Branch, Canberra
2005	*Little book of Australian gardens,* National Library of Australia, Canberra
2006	*Bolaro : the story of an Australian sheep and cattle station*, Platanus Pty Ltd, Adaminaby
2007	*Under the spell of the ages : Australian country gardens,* National Library of Australia, Canberra
2012	*Adagio : living and gardening mindfully*, Murdoch Books, Milsons Point
2016	*Horse Island*, Christina Laidley Kennedy, photography Jason Busch, introduction Trisha Dixon
2021	*Spirit of the Garden* - forthcoming

SOME BRANCH EVENTS

1990	Hay, Winter Seminar, Garden History & Landscape Design in Arid Areas, 40 pp
1994	Cooma, Winter seminar and Garden tour - 120 people
1994	Post Conference tour – Edna Walling tour 48 pp
1995	Heritage Week Seminar – significant ACT gardens
	Winter Seminar The landscape as garden - Tilba Tilba
1995	AGH – talk about opening gardens by John Stowar
1995	Country weekend – *Yabtree* & *Burnbank* / *Mt Annan* & *Woomargama*
1997	Conference in Canberra
2006	*A Gardener's City* filmmaker Brian Voce, presenter Trisha Dixon
2007	National Conference in Albury - *Meandering round the Murray*
2016	National Conference in Canberra - *The Scientist in the Garden*

BRANCH PUBLICATIONS Between 1992 – 2004: 6 publications about specific gardens + Recording Gardens

1992	Durham Hall Garden	
1992	Fifield Garden	Trisha Dixon
1994	St Omer Garden	
1996	Mount Erlington Garden	
1998	Coolringdon Garden	Trisha Dixon
1999	Recording the Garden	
2004	Early Ainslie Gardens	

This is an interview with Trisha Dixon, 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 our homes in *Bobundara* and Lilyfield on Tuesday, 30 June 2020, and the interviewer is Roslyn Burge.

So Trisha, thank you very much for giving of your time, way distance from us in these COVID days. It's extraordinary times we're living through. But if I could just start with some biographical details, where and when were you born?

> I was born on 12 November 1953 at Goulburn Base Hospital, in the Southern Highlands of New South Wales. My parents (Margaret and Neville Burkitt) lived on the property Spring Ponds at Bungonia, it was a property that's been in the family for over 100 years, and it's just east of Goulburn. Very old home. Very, very, very old home.

What age is the home?

> Well, it's probably about the age of this, about 1830s.

Hm. And …

> So I went from one old relic to another. And now I'm the old relic living in the old relic.

It's amazing how quickly that phrase leaps upon us all. Trisha, is that still in your family?

> Yes, and so lovely, because my daughter and her husband and family live there, so I experience the joy of watching my grandchildren grow up in exactly the same place I grew up ... tree houses, riding their horses, just playing tennis and mucking around … swimming in the creek and things, and walking down the Shoalhaven Gorge as I did as a child there, so it's just wonderful and so exciting. Even the same old rocking horse.

Gosh.

> It's lovely.

Do they have the same sense of freedom and liberty to wander around the place as you felt in your different era?

> Totally. I used to ride my horse to school, which they don't go to the little Bungonia school, they go into Goulburn, but they have that incredible freedom, even during this COVID time, they're out and about and up a little remnant cone volcano feature in the paddocks and just wandering and enjoying and loving and just free spirits, they're so lucky, as I am here, as anyone living in the country. All us out-of-towners have been kind of really saying how lucky we are during this COVID lockdown time, because we don't have to wash our hands every second, and we just have freedom to go afar, I've been going off for hugely long bicycle rides, 70 kilometres on Saturday, and just off on all these little dirt roads, and the only people I ever see out on these little dirt roads are maybe a botanist or landcare person, or an artist with an easel… always interesting people and it's really just that freedom of no traffic roads and precious time at home during this extraordinary COVID lockdown time.

How long does it take you to ride 70 Ks?

> I went over, because as I as having a chat with you earlier, I was saying everything in life is kind of now centred around garden history people, so another garden history friend over at Nimmitabel was just manning the little Nimmitabel antique shop there, and so I thought "Oh, it's

a nice sunny day out there," because it's very cold winter here, and so I thought, "I'll get on my bicycle," and it probably took an hour and a half, two hours to get there, so 35 Ks there. A beautiful dirt road, no traffic. A few sheep and lots of kangaroos, lots of wallabies, and a few people stopped along the way to say hello, but that was all I saw. It's lovely, beautiful day out.

And were you tempted at the antique store?

Oh, yes, a lovely big wood basket, I thought that'd be nice for the wood that I need to keep my fires going in this old slab house.

How did you manage yesterday with the electricity outage?

So the wood fire in my office – thank heavens. So I just spent most of the day outside, because it was warmer outside in the sun than …in the very cold house. It's a lovely summer house. I must say, this room here, which is the library room, in summer it's just beautiful and it's gorgeous, and I love to play the piano every day. And so in summer I can play, but in winter you need to ride the bicycle and warm up, kind of get the blood moving in your body to actually sit down for an hour and play the piano. So ...

It looks like you've got a lot of books. Do you know how many you've got?

I didn't ever know where this kind of started, but when there were piles in most rooms, then I kind of just realized that it was actually more than just an interest, and it is so extraordinary, because I had this really, really, really wonderful grandfather, and his genes must have been very strong, because I have one brother who got his genes, he was Professor A.N. Burkitt, and so I have a brother who is Professor A.N. Burkitt - he got the brain genes. Another brother who (my grandfather started the Wine Society of New South Wales), this other brother gave up being in the stock market, and he now imports fine French wines, poor thing (not!), and so he got the wine gene, and I got the book gene, because Grandpa just loved books. So every time I would go to the family house, there'd be really interesting little books and he gave his library to the Sydney University and there's a Burkitt Library there and things such as furniture and portraits.

But I just realized, only later in life, that my books would become so much part of my life – although they are nothing nearly as scholarly as his, but he always had a few precious little books too, they were from France or they were from China or somewhere interesting, and they're just all these exquisite little books - it might be one on the speech J.M. Barrie gave to the graduates of Edinburgh University as they were heading off to the Great War, … all these extraordinary books with beautiful little subjects that really can touch you very deeply, so it was really nice. So anyhow, these are my books, and I have a section here, for example, that's all Australian gardening, that's all kind of overseas gardening, that's all travel literature, and then I've got poetry, and then I've got Australian literature, and I now actually have a little section of books that I have yet to read, so I have to lead a very long life, because that section's getting bigger and bigger.

So does that mean you've read all the books behind you, that I can see?

Well, I use them all the time. Every bit of research I do, every bit of writing, interview … any writing project or research I would have, I've got a huge desk, in my office, which I can see through there, I have a lovely open fire in my office and a beautiful window that looks out on the old courtyard, and it's a huge big old desk with such a story. But anyhow, this desk is big enough so I can just have all the books and papers and things that I want to, because I really think that curiosity and wonderment and just finding out about the world is so interesting, and so any research I can do, because I don't live near a big library in the city, I have to have most on tap here. And before the days of Google, you really needed, I needed all these books. Now

they're not nearly as relevant because we have Mr. Google, which tells us everything. But before that, really you needed all those books to actually get your facts from.

And the dictionary. I've just finished reading the *Dictionary of Lost Words*, and you realize that dictionaries were things that we grew up with. If you didn't know a word, even if you didn't know how to spell it you had to find that word in the dictionary, and it's words that define our lives and words that are so important, and so words are my brain's trust here, because I'm by myself, this is my brain's trust.

That's lovely. Do you consult the dictionary very often, the real dictionary?

Oh, well always by my bed, I keep a dictionary by my bed, and especially when I read Patrick Leigh Fermor, who's one of my favourites, and he's not pretentious writer, but he has such a love of language and he has a love of the musicality of language and the sound of language, because he loved even poetry and music and everything, but he would use beautiful words not to be pretentious, but just because he loved that word. And so I, always almost, on so many pages of his books I would have the dictionary there. Then I have friends who tell me words like petrichor, that's that beautiful fragrance of the earth after rain, I don't know whether you've heard that word, but when you go out and there's just been rain, it's that lovely, lovely, lovely, rich, earthy smell. So I do love words and so I do use a dictionary, and I use a thesaurus quite a bit too. In fact, I remember, one of my early books I thought I should dedicate to Theo Saurus, because I consulted the Thesaurus so much in the writing!

So why Patrick Leigh Fermor? He's not quite au courant anymore.

No, so he's not, actually. But so interesting, I think, because of his love of Greece, and I think that early adventuring instinct and exploration. When he was a 20 year old, to actually walk from Rotterdam to Constantinople. I mean, that's a huge adventure, and so I went walking later in Hungary and expected to find what he conjured up in my mind with his writings … he wrote those three books later in life (*A Time of Gifts*, *Between the Woods and the Sea* and posthumously *The Broken Road*) I think 30 or 40 years later about this amazing walk where he just walked with a backpack through so much of Europe, and he recorded what he saw. He didn't really record political events, but it was his love of words, and he'd go into people's libraries and he'd notice so much, and he'd notice even the bowl of peaonies on a piano in a castle in Hungary for instance, and he'd notice the old faded chintz curtains, he just had this kind of love of life and of knowledge and of curiosity, and so then he settled in Kardymili … he really devoted his life to living in Greece and he settled on the Mani in the Peloponnese in Greece, and I've spent quite a bit of time at the house that he was at, and it's just full of books.

10.00 And in fact, it was Betjeman, the Poet Laureate, who said, "This is one of the great rooms of the world," and it is. I've been there before they had restored it. Now they've taken out all his books, but it's just full of all this knowledge, and you can imagine all the people that were there from all over the world, and so I think people that live rich lives I'm drawn to, and so I think for that reason, Patrick Leigh Fermor, for the adventurous, rich life.

So how did you wangle the opportunity to stay in his home?

Well, so because I spend quite a bit of time in Greece and, oh, because of the books. This is kind of getting off the track, I suppose. One of the books I was asked to do was a private commission, a biography of a property (Bolaro), which was a property up in the Snowy Mountains, and it belonged to all sorts of interesting people. It has this fascinating, fascinating history, because Patrick White, our only Nobel laureate for literature, wrote his first novel there, Happy Valley. And it was anything but happy, so he then proceeded to buy every copy he could and burn it, and so that was the end of that. And Banjo Paterson, who's actually … anyhow

…some family connection, Banjo Paterson, he wrote his last poem to the Osborne family that lived there. Barcroft Boake, who was a bush poet who is remembered for his 'Out on the Never Never…that's where the dead men lie'... Brunton Stephens, the Editor of the Literary pages of the Bulletin back in the 1890s said that had he lived, he would've been greater than Adam Lindsay Gordon or any of the great poets.

He actually fell in love with the young girl at this property, and when she jilted him, he hung himself from the hanging tree, which is in North Sydney, and I've seen his grave there. But so many literary people were involved with this property, so I was asked to do a biography of this property. So I actually went over to Greece, because the property's now owned by this Greek shipping man, Grigoris Hadjileftheriadis. I went to Greece probably about 20 years ago, and I was so enamoured of just the landscape … which is very similar to Monaro landscape … it's very arid and dry, but the warmth of the people and the history, that rich, rich, rich history and so I now spend quite a bit of time there, and I take people on literary and landscape/garden tours, I've even taken garden history groups to Hydra and to Patrick Leigh Fermor's house and all sorts of places over there, with an emphasis on Hydra where Charmian Clift and George Johnston, and other Australian writers lived and wrote on Hydra.

So I'm always interested, wherever I travel in the world, whether it's Australia, if for example, I'm at a garden history conference, I'll go and try and find Adam Lindsay Gordon's cottage where he lived at Dingley Dell, when we went to the Mount Gambier conference, or just wherever it is in the world, I love to go to places where writers lived, because I just think writers or musicians or artists are always inspired by where they live, and by their landscapes, mostly - because I'm very much a landscape person - so they're inspired by the landscape, but certainly their surrounds. And so, … I remember going to Thomas Hardy's place, it was this dear little cottage just deep in the south of England, and then where the Brontes lived on the harsh moors up at Yorkshire, and I just think it's very interesting to see where people lived, because that kind of forms their literature, doesn't it?

It does. And I think for someone who has the opportunity to stay in some of those places, I don't know whether Patrick Leigh Fermor's house is open for writers, but like the Varuna Centre, on the Mountains.

Yes. Well, now Patrick's place is now open for writers, but sadly because they had to make it pay, they've kind of really brought it up to such an extent, they've taken out all his personal items and it's really like a five star hotel now because they have to rent it out for a certain amount of time to make it pay, and so it's kind of lost that uniqueness… a little bit. I'd been there quite a few times before that all happened, so I've got photographs and I've got such a rich memory of what it was, but I think it is, it's lovely to have places like that in the world, where people can go and I know even here I've got this lovely old stone Steading on the property, and it's nothing like that, but early this year, when the fires were raging everywhere, there was dust everywhere and you couldn't see the sun for days and it was just dreadful, a very, very wonderful writer, New South Wales writer came here and I just said he could stay in the Steading and do some writing, because he was writing a book about a Monaro family, a fictional book, he wrote, Nigel Featherstone, you might know him, he wrote a book ...

I know the name …

About war, about men in the war. Anyhow, very interesting book. So this was a place where there is such space in the landscape that it is wonderful for creativity. On the property there is also a cottage where someone wrote their first novel, and others have composed lots of music. I think the whole Monaro as a place, it's a very uncluttered landscape, because it's naturally

treeless, and there's so many artists, writers, poets who have and are writing, painting and sculpting on Monaro. Certainly next door to me is my great friend Charlie Massy, who is one of the great writers, and just wrote the book *Call of the Reed Warbler*, and of course a book has just come out on David Campbell[1], the poet of Monaro, Rosalie Gascoigne a bit further away, and Imants Tillers, and all sorts of people, it's just always been a place to inspire individual expression ... Hilda Rix Nicholas, Lucy Culliton, the artist. It's a place of great creativity, because there's just not that clutter in the landscape to distract your mind, it's a really kind of lovely, beautiful atmosphere to be creative.

I wonder, this is a small digression from the Garden History Society, but I think it's important, Trisha, to hear about your sort of philosophy and innate style, but I wonder whether in the city, where ... it's a question I've wondered over the summer with the fires and the apocalyptic times that we've had, whether we're distant from the bush, the bush, that generic term, in the city, and whether we need, we don't need fires to tell us that, but the tragedy of the fires have reminded us that there's nature out there.

Look, very much, I think. Because I always remember reading, even as I was staying with another garden history friend, just before going to sleep, reading this book on Henry Moore, the sculptor, and it said that he had to go out into nature every day. You look at his sculptures, they're so organic and they're not to do with nature, but he had to go into nature every day. Tolstoy had to go and live out on his estate to write, Tchaikovsky had to go and stay with his sister out in the provinces and hear those lovely folk tunes to kind of get even his great symphonies, and so I do think there's a lot to be said about the space of living in the quietude of the country … there was a time, and it's almost probably on the cusp of it now, where the people in the bush were considered very, kind of, it was the flavour of the month to be from the bush, and then we kind of weren't the flavour of the month, and even now we do get denigrated, as in, even people will think Monaro, which is naturally treeless, that we've just come in here and cleared all the land, and so there's still that perception that people on the land just kind of rape the land and they just take what they can, but all the people I know on the land have such custodianship at the centre of their whole being, and they just really care for the land.

I do think it's a pity that not every city person now has that country cousin or that opportunity to stay in the country, because to drive through the country and have your cappuccino at a shop and go to an antique shop is probably not the same as actually just living in the country.

Yeah, exactly. So when you come to the city or you do your overseas tours, are you itching for home?

No, I just love wherever I am. I really love being in the city, I love being in Palermo, I love being in Paris or I love being anywhere, I love being in Sydney, but I just … my heart skips when I actually do come home - my drive from Cooma out along the treeless plains of Monaro, honestly, just my heart sing, sing, sings, and then I literally go around like a child skipping around the place, because it's so beautiful. And I put the music on, I have music, because music I've been brought up with all my life, and I play piano every day, I try to, and I have FM radio going all the time.

So when I get home I quickly turn on the FM radio, because I've got speakers outside, so anywhere I am - in the office or in the garden or in my bath at night or cycling out, whatever, I can hear this beautiful, uplifting music, and when it's music you haven't chosen yourself, you haven't just put on Erik Satie's whatever, when it just is something that comes on and it captures you unawares, it's just so beautiful. And literally, sometimes I'm walking through the

1 *David Campbell: A Life of the Poet,* Jonathan Persse, Australian Scholarly Publishing, 2020

garden and I just stop and I go, "Oh," and I just have to listen because it's so beautiful. It might be a piece I know quite well but it just so takes your breath away - and that's another great thing about living in the country, because you can have the lovely music up quite loud and it's quite lovely.

I think somewhere along, the bits and pieces I've read about you, there's a story of some, a women's group, it might've been the National Trust Women's Group coming to visit, and there you were, displayed on the grass.

20.00 Yes … the National Trust, I mean, why on earth I opened to the National Trust, because really, this is only a garden that I am happy to have friends in – my busy lifestyle doesn't allow it to be up to Open Garden standard. I think I've opened once or twice for the Garden History or local charities and any funds that have gone back to the multiple sclerosis or to the cancer support group in Cooma or whatever, but anytime I have it's really never 'finished' … knowing that it's a shambolic, funny old garden, but somehow I got talked into opening for the National Trust, and yeah, so there I was, I was photographing, lying on the verandah. I'd just picked up some poppy heads, and there were these lovely dried poppy heads, and just the way all the seeds came onto the old weatherboards of the veranda, which are very, very, very old and weathered and these things, and these beautiful old poppy seed heads and the poppy seeds, so there I was lying on the ground with my camera, and you could see their looks as I looked up at the pearls and the twinsets and they were probably shaking their heads, thinking, "There's obviously a lot to do in this garden, why is she down on the floor photographing anyhow?"

I don't believe that a garden has to be perfect to be beautiful, so that's a big thing of my garden, that a garden not maintained to perfection has its own character, atmosphere and charm … I went to a garden last weekend, near Bungendore, and it's one of the very, very, very old beautiful gardens of Australia, and probably one of the great, great, great ones, and it just had this beautiful, relaxed air, and it's much the same as if you go to visit a friend who's relaxed, and they just welcome you in and it's really lovely, compared to someone who's so stitched up and the place is so perfect and I just think, I suppose, really, gardens do relate to how a person is, but it's kind of nice for me to go to a garden that has that lovely relaxed air and tranquility and a sense of place more than anything, because that's something I believe is the most important element in a garden.

So Trisha, just staying with your garden, you moved to the house in '85, wasn't it?

22.50 Yes, in 1985. So this was a property that was 20,000 acres way back in the 1800s, and then it was split up for soldier settlement after the second World War, and so when I got married we bought one of the soldier settlement blocks off the original *Bobundara* Station, and then in '85, the homestead block was offered for sale, and because I'd grown up in a similar, very, very, very old home in an old district, I just do love the feel of an old house, and it had all these huge old trees and this creek that kind of wound around the bottom of the garden. All the garden was kind of fenced off from the creek but you could see there was magic there and so it was so exciting to eventually come down into the valley to live here and realize there were beautiful old elm trees and old mulberry trees and old fruit trees and old orchards and an old house, and other people said to me later, they said, "Trisha, we would've bulldozed that house down," and they would've bulldozed everything.

But really, I think not having any money and having a bit of romance in my soul, I could see the beauty in it, and I'm so pleased now, because honestly, it gives me such total pleasure. The love I've given it, it gives back tenfold. It just really nurtures my soul, it's just so beautiful to live here. And it's not everyone's cup of tea but it's really interesting … I have … through garden

history, I have friends that each year come to stay. Peter and Jo Watts and Howard and Mary Tanner, and they're very early garden history movers and shakers, but they choose to come here every year for a week, just with me here and we just read books and we talk by the fire and we go for long walks, and they enjoy getting away to the country (we call it Bunburying after Oscar Wilde's fictitious character in *The Importance of Being Ernest*) … we just have this beautiful time of kind of its like just … a really long, long weekend of just wonderful friendship and enjoying the beauty of an old house. And we'll often sit in a room and they'll tell me why it's kind of like that, with the raked ceiling or the old French doors, and I'm getting to read the whole history of the place just year after year after year that I've been here, it's wonderful.

When you bought it …

25.00 Of course, I must say before me, of course, were the wonderful original inhabitants – the Aboriginal people … I'm just such a custodian of such a blink of time, and I do often think of those wonderful, wonderful people that were here for thousands of years, maybe 70,000 years before I was, and the generation after generation after generation, but they weren't living here, they actually passed through on their way down to the South Coast.

Because you're not far from the Bundian Way, are you?

Not far, bit further north than the Bundian Way, but certainly people would've come through here, because I do often find relics of that, but they were, I think everyone from the coast was really coming up this way. The Bundian Way was really the Yuin people, who were down at Eden, and that was a big tribe of people that came up, but there are other tribes, the Ngarigo here, but the Bidawal and the Walgalu were other tribes and they would kind of come through, and so whatever area of the coast they would come up through Monaro on their annual pilgrimage to the mountains over summer.

I listened to an Elder at one stage, an Elder who I knew very well, and he was a wonderful man, and I just heard him once interviewed on the radio, and he said such a beautiful thing, because he said that, say they're cutting stones, or if they were walking down to the coast, they would just leave it (ie, their sharpening or cutting stone) there as, after their meal, and then the next person would pick it up. They didn't have that ownership, even of something so precious as that, they would just leave it for the next people and that's why there are these things out on the plains and things, it's just extraordinary.

And when the book *The Bundian Way* was launched, I went to the launch, and the Elder that I was just speaking about was at the launch, and when I asked the question of John Blay, who wrote *Finding the Bundian Way*, I said, "Have you found any Aboriginal art?" And he said, "No," but then this Elder, who has since died, he had to tell me privately because it's not supposed to be known so publicly but there is stone art, rock art in the whole … in that kind of area which they'll have to preserve very carefully, because I think the same as in the area around the Budawangs, there's certainly that kind of art as well, it's not always just on cliff faces or overhangs.

So yeah, certainly you get a feeling … think what I get a feeling of most on Monaro is that it's so ancient, the landscape is so ancient, so it makes you feel very, very, very humble. It makes you feel very small, very insignificant, which is really good because we are just … it doesn't make you feel important at all, because we're just one of so many, so many, millions and millions and millions of people that have lived here before, and so whatever you do, you can only kind of do for your own enjoyment and maybe try and leave it better than it was, but don't think we're that important or that what we do really matters, because it's just, in the scheme of things, we're here for such a blink of time.

Did you have that sense of antiquity when you first came to the house?

Yes, so when I first came … I just loved it, because I grew up at Bungonia, and Bungonia was a township, and it was quite a big township before Goulburn was even settled. It was this big town that … there was something like 30 inns in the area.

Wow.

... but it was just this huge, huge, huge area. And so there's beautiful, beautiful old Georgian homesteads around, and there's these beautiful old buildings. And where my parents are, it's all slab buildings, it's not grand at all, but there's these wonderful old slab buildings there that are some of the earliest, probably, on mainland Australia. So as a young girl I would go with my mother to visit some of the people in the village and they'd be old Miss Styles, and she'd live in this old, old, old Parsonage, with her old roses and the old flowers, and of course I'm talking about the '50s, and of course, at that stage, if you ever went to visit someone, you'd take a little gift and then you'd always, you wouldn't just go into the house, you'd always ask if they would show you their garden first, because that was their pride and joy and you know that it was like looking at someone's baby if they've just got a new baby you kind of have to ask.

And so you would walk around the garden, and it could take one or two hours, and so I kind of grew up with that lovely memory of graciousness, courteousness, acknowledgement of everyone's different type of garden, with that very much in my childhood memory bank ... and then a great aunt that had Edna Walling to stay and had a beautiful garden, and just all the places we went to were like the Secret Garden, were just these places that were just so extraordinary, and my mother was just this amazing gardener.

And then I had nine years at a school in a garden, and so I just did have this incredibly formative time imbuing beauty of plants and design. I'm not a good gardener but I do have a feel for kind of what's been before, as well as, I'm really excited about modern gardens and modern architecture as well - it's always exciting too, isn't it?

But as you speak, Trisha, I'm thinking about Bungonia, which I guess must be a much more treed area than where you are now in the Monaro. So when you first …

Yes, and when I grew up there, I just remember thinking we'd have long, long, long drives through the countryside because my father was a really great adventurer and he was always off canoeing and rafting and walking and everything - he's take us all as young kids and you'd wake up and at breakfast he'd say, "Okay, five minutes we'll be in the car," and we'd be off for a week with the canoe strapped on top.

So it was just these long trips, always, through beautiful gum trees. I used to look out the window always as a child, thinking, "Every tree I see is so beautiful, every tree is so beautiful, every tree is so beautiful." So it was just like this endless television theme, because we never let our parents buy television because we didn't want that because we loved playing music and playing games and so we actually …

Did you say you didn't let them buy the television?

Yes, we wouldn't let them have a television.

Wow. Do you have a …

After we left home, they got one in every room.

And do you have a television now?

I have one but I never watch it. I mean, it took me years to even work out how to turn it on. I do like to watch the news, I do. I don't know why, I'm happier if I don't.

Exactly. So did your mother have a particular kind of garden at Bungonia when you grew up?

Yes, so it was very much in the style of Edna Walling. Because my great aunt had had Edna Walling to stay, and I think my uncle knew her and she'd done some gardens in the district, and so my mother was a great gardener, as in loved gardens, so she just read all the books. So dad … they'd go walking down the Bungonia Gorge, they'd pick up rocks all the time, they'd walk them right back up these beautiful steep gorges of the Shoalhaven River... they'd find a nice slate piece, they'd walk it up all that way carrying each one ... Oh, honestly, I can't imagine how they walked them out of the Bungonia Gorge and then dad made these beautiful stone walls that looked very reminiscent of Edna Walling walls, and so I grew up in this very, very, very unpretentious, simple garden but it's just got a lovely feel about it and my mother and father just loved it, it was really lovely. And now my daughter's there and she and her husband and the children just love it and they do a lot with it, so it's good, it's wonderful.

Tell me, how did your father do the commute back and forward to Sydney Uni?

No, that was my grandfather.

Your grandfather, excuse me.

So my father was supposed to then go to Sydney University and do medicine, but he ran away to war, he fudged his age up a little bit to go away to war and then when he got back, eventually, because he had to stay on in New Guinea and look after the Japanese prisoners of war, because he was in the Middle East and then he was in Borneo and then in New Guinea, but anyhow, he had to stay on while all of his friends went into med school after the war at the beginning of the year, he didn't come home until August.

So then, coming home to the family property at Goulburn, he then thought, "Oh, I think I love it here so much I'll stay here," so he didn't ever do medicine. And in fact, later on in his life, because he had this great energy and he just didn't want to ever slow down … when he retired he had to keep doing things, and so there were all trees around, and so he just did all this woodwork. Every morning he'd jump out of bed and he'd go up to the shearing shed and he'd start the fire and he could burn all the mistakes of his woodwork, and he said, "Isn't it lucky I wasn't a doctor? Because I'd be burying my mistakes, here I just burn them." So it's probably lucky that he wasn't anyhow.

So just digressing backwards, I wonder whether it was a place of refuge for him after the war, and the rigors of being in an area of conflict?

Well, what happened is in fact, he was born a blue baby, and so he wasn't allowed, as a young boy to do any exercise, to do anything, and his brother was in the rowing and was in the football and everything, so he wasn't allowed to do anything. And so when he ran away to war by signing his age as older and he did all these amazing, amazing things, so then when he came back he realized he could, and he was still alive, so he just, for the rest of his life, we walked down that Bungonia Gorge almost every week and we were up and down the gorge, we were off canoeing, just everything.

And my mother was exactly the same, she was amazing, she was like a mountain goat, and they always told the story that when she went up to the Himalayas with Paddy Pallin, when she got to the top of whatever mountain, she probably had a Sherpa under each arm, because she

would've been carrying them, they wouldn't've been carrying her, no, she would've been carrying them not literally – it was a family joke told by her brother. So she was very fit.

So how old was your father when he put his age up?

I think he was, well, he was at school and he just remembers crazily thinking, "I'm sure the war's going to be over before I leave school." And I mean, such flawed thinking as we all know, so …

So he was literally at school?

Yeah, so I think he was at school when they decided to go, and also because his father was, all the medicos that were checking them were taught by his father, who was the Professor of Anatomy at Sydney University, and so when he did, they saw him, "Oh, Burkitt," as in … they all kind of knew who he was and things, and he just wanted to kind of be anonymous and just get away to war, it's what they wanted - the big adventure, and it was so dreadful, it's such flawed thinking that they thought it was going to be the wonderful adventure.

But anyhow, he did say, I know later in life he was interviewed, and what he did say is that Bertrand Russell who said, "War doesn't determine who's right, only it determined who's left." Dreadful thing, so …

Serendipity.

... so every day after the war he just considered was a bonus day, and so that's why he made the most of every day of his life, and I've learned to do that too, I think, a little bit, because it's a good way to live.

And Trisha, just going backwards again, I'm interested, your grandfather's books that you mentioned, back at Sydney University. Have you gone through those or has that been a pursuit of yours or …

Certainly, I think a little, the only thing I would say, the only little sad thing, I think, when I was at school, is that I wasn't taken to Sydney University to kind of see that. I think growing up in the country and then going to a country boarding school, it was absolutely fabulous, there's not a single thing I would change, but if I'd actually gone to Sydney University as a young girl to have a look, and gone to the Med School … seen my grandfather's library … but would I be happy if I was a doctor? No. I mean, so I'm not saying I would change anything, because I love my life so much, I wouldn't change my life for one little speck, but it would've been interesting to see.

So it was only later on in life, I think as a young mother, I was at the family property at Goulburn, and I had my young children there, and we were playing a game of, maybe it was monopoly or something, and my mother said, "Oh look, I'll just go up to the top part of the house and bring down some meat for dinner," or something. So she went up where the freezer was, and when she came back, she had this skeleton in a box with her that was a skeleton from my grandfather's teaching times, and she put it on the table as well as some frozen meat from the freezer. My children became vegetarians after that night, because they just had this thing between this skeleton and this frozen meat.

40.00 But we realized, when we looked at the skeleton, we shouldn't have this skeleton anymore. And we'd heard on the news that in fact there was a black trade on skeletons for teaching med students, that people were actually being killed in some poorer countries for their skeletons. And so we wrote to the Medical School and asked if we could donate the skeleton (we didn't need the skeleton in our cupboard anymore), we wanted to donate it. And so my father and I took it down, and it was the first time I actually went to this Burkitt Library, and to the Anatomy Department where all the amazing specimens were soaking in formaldehyde and just all the things, and it was so beautiful. And then we were asked to a few different functions there.

Then, of course, as computers became more and more and more, they then merged the Burkitt Library with another library, and so now it's kind of moved. It was, the Med School was part of that quadrangle at the university, and it was just a beautiful big building with the library there, and it was wonderful and had it all. But of course, those books aren't relevant anymore, they're really not, but my grandfather did travel all over the world doing research in all different parts of the world, brain research and neurological research, and he did bring back so many books, and that's where they all went, to the library. And he did also donate a lot of furniture and a lot of artifacts. We did try and find them at one stage, but I think they've kind of gone the way of a lot of things in universities, so that's part and parcel.

But the lovely thing is, there are these precious books here, little ones that I'll pick up and think, "What would this book be about?" It's a tiny book, but it has the most beautiful, beautiful story and message about it, so yes, that's good.

So coming forward again to your house now, had anybody been living in it, or was it empty? I'm wondering whether you made dramatic changes when you came.

So it was, it had been a beautiful old house, so built in the 1830s slab, and it had a stone building across a courtyard. I'm looking through now to the stone part, a stone, separate kitchen area, it's still got the covered walkway. So it was very, very, very simple, just kind of two slab rooms, another slab dairy room, and then a stone kitchen and then just a few other slab areas. Then in the 1890s they built on the room I'm in now and a lovely big lounge room next door and they put beautiful French doors and they just made it much more beautiful at that stage.

So it was very grand then and they had a lot of gardeners and help in the house and everything, and certain interesting people owned it. And at that stage, when the National Capital was being decided on, the Governors at that stage would come and say here at *Bobundara*, and they would go from here to Dalgety or wherever and so these wonderful paintings (there's a whole book of ... in fact, I can see the book, I've got it over there in front of me), and it was produced in England with all these paintings by Percy F.S. Spence, and I know my last issue of the Journal, I put on the back cover just …

Oh yes.

... this painting of *Bobundara,* because that is actually, Governor Rawson's daughter, Alice Rawson …

Oh, you found out who she was?

Yeah, I found out because of ... I asked Mary Eagle I asked her for some help, she's the wonderful art historian that was at the National Gallery, and I asked her how to find out and what era, and she said, "Okay, look at the clothes, look at what events were happening then, look at all these things, all the newspaper reports." There's a lovely painting by Percy F.S. Spence of the Governor, who had the first car on Monaro, meeting the men from here and their sulky just off the Bobundara road and it's this beautiful meeting of the old with the new and it's this beautiful painting, and there are a lot of paintings done by Percy F.S. Spence he painted of *Bobundara* and district at that stage.

So at that stage, the garden was beautiful, and I have even some photographs as well, and then it was split up for soldier settlement. Before that it was owned by a big land company that had managers living here, and then the property was resumed by the Government and split up for soldier settlement. So they pulled down lots of the buildings, pulled down the guest wing, the library room and the laundry, and they pulled down two big twenty stand wool sheds, and pulled down lots of things. But still, the old homestead was here.

So then the people that actually came here, lovely people, but they perhaps didn't know the history of it so much. So when I bought it, having grown up in an old place, and my mother was just amazing with history, she wrote a little history book for the National Trust on Bungonia, just a tiny little book, but we just grew up with history.

And my grandmother was, oh my goodness, my grandmother who was married to my grandfather the professor, she was a Hordern, Emily Hordern, of Anthony Hordern family. Oh my goodness, what she didn't know about Sydney history, oh my goodness. So every time we went to visit, she lived to 96 and we'd go there and we'd just get this history, history, history, history, history. So I think coming here I really wanted to know all the history. It was so interesting - so often, you'd go out and there'd be someone parked at the front gate and I'd start talking to them and they'd say, "Oh, look, my great uncle worked here," and I'd say, "Come in, come in," and you'd get letters from people, letters from all over the world, I had, that found their way here. So now in my office I've just got a whole big folder on every family that's ever lived here, every European family that's lived here, because that's all I have reference to, and if there's another COVID outbreak, I will spend that winter or that year kind of putting it all together, because I have letters, just everything, I just have so much information, there's poems written about people that died, there's everything, there's the most extraordinary stories, it's just such a rich history.

So not only Percy F.S. Spence, that wonderful artist who painted Robert Louis Stevenson's portrait that's in the National Portrait Gallery in London, but that he was here for so long, but Charles Kerry, the wonderful photographer, who Kerry Packer was named after, and did all those early photographs, the skiing photos and the early photographs of Aboriginals and of droving times, and everything. He was actually born here, and so been a lot of interesting things that have happened here.

But when you bought it, were people living in it when you bought it?

They were living in it, but in a different kind of way, I suppose. It was just a different way that they lived that … I suppose the fashions at that time, when they'd moved in, perhaps, were different, and maybe different to my parents and so all the carpets were swirly whirly and the walls were yellow and the doors were pink, it was just different to how I really wanted it to be, and so, didn't have any money, but just ripped up the carpets and stained the floors, and they're really beautiful, beautiful, beautiful, big, gorgeous floorboards here, and this lovely big skirting boards and lovely all-cedar doors, so taking the paint off the doors and taking little strips off the Masonite walls which covered the drop slab timber walls and just trying to bring it more back to what it was. And so bit by bit by bit, edit out rather than adding in is what I've kind of done, yes.

And what about the garden, what shape was that in?

So the garden, well, that was so exciting, because you could see there were all these wonderful old elms and this creek that was cut off by fences and things and there were lots of conifers - a lot of conifers which I wasn't very mad on. And at that stage, I mean, dahlias are so, so the big thing now, but it was all kind of hybrid tea roses and dahlias and marigolds and at that stage I was so into old roses and into Edna Walling as well and so a kind of different type of garden. And so I did just try and create a garden of atmosphere rather than specimen plants. There were lots of shrubs dotted about in the lawn and everything like that, so just tried to make big open spaces and have vistas and just tried to make a little bit more romance in the garden, maybe, just make it a little bit more how I thought was interesting. Doesn't mean that it's interesting for everyone, but just changed the style of it quite a lot, yes.

So took out rather than put in.

Yeah, took out a lot, and then took out all the fences and so now the creek is in the garden, it's so beautiful. And then the elms were just wall to wall elms but now I've got these beautiful big areas and glades and walkways through the elms and the big area down the wild garden is just this huge, big area,_ and often just have people down there. I even had a rain dance this summer, because it was so dry and we all did these rain poems and rain dance. And literally this property was the only place that got, just got flooding rain.

Just literally, it was just like absolute flood, only this property. So, but I do have big things down there and it's like this huge, big outdoor space with these beautiful big elms, they're 1830 elms, and they're just beautiful. And so that's all in the garden now and it's a kind of lovely, soft kind of garden now. And in the courtyard, there was a large courtyard, but it just had big japonica kind of taking up most of the courtyard. Well, the japonica would survive on the top of Mount Kosciuszko, they're so hardy, so I took that out and it's just kind of all space there and plants such as a pomegranate, lavender, lemon verbena, larkspurs, old fruiting grape, crinum lilies, hellebores and snow in summer in gravel, so it's more space to live in and I do like vistas.

Being a photographer, I think you kind of, always, your eyes always looking at vistas and, yes, looking for kind of interest, so ...

Yes, yes. We haven't even got to the Garden History Society yet, Trisha. Is it okay if we continue a little longer?

Yes, of course, I've no idea of the time …

Good. So this interview with you and with some others is part of the 40th anniversary of the Society, which is quite an achievement for any organization. But I thought we might just touch on some of those sectors, and perhaps we do some today and some next time, but I'm wondering if you could just … we talked briefly about this before we turned on the recording button, but how did you discover the Society?

I wasn't a founding member at all, it was really moving down here to *Bobundara,* because I think before I moved down here, I just literally married, two young children, and so then the children were very young, moved down here meaning I moved into this valley from where I had lived previously nearby. Old house, old garden, and I didn't want to get it wrong, so I wrote a letter, I think I had a book, I was always interested in books, so I think I had Peter Watts's book on *Historic Gardens of Victoria*, and I wrote to him and I think he'd just started the Historic Houses Trust and I think maybe he was also very instrumental in the start of the Garden History Society, so perhaps it was a letter to the Garden History Society, I think, and I think he was the Chair then, or the president, the Chair.

So I did get a letter back from him to say ... I think being a member of the Garden History Society, well, I have to say, apart from the fact that Peter and Jo Watts are some of my very, very, very dearest, closest friends and spend this time, this week every year here at *Bobundara*, but I have learned almost every tiny little thing I know about gardens through being a member of Garden History Society. They're such an incredibly knowledgeable and unassumingly intelligent society of people, and that's why I'd often get upset if I took people on tours and you'd get somewhere and they'd say, "Ah, you're the garden group, you're the garden club." And I'd think, "No, you've got us so wrong." I wouldn't say anything, because we're just so not a garden club. And that's what I love about it, that we're really gardeners of the mind, it's about the literature, about the music, the art, the landscape, the history, the philosophy, the everything about it, and the gardening's only one part of it. The plants are one small part of it, really, aren't they? They're very much, it's about custodianship, it's about so much more than just the plants.

So that's certainly really, really been why I suppose, I've loved being so much involved with Garden History so much, because they're my type of people, they're kind of kindred spirits. And so you talk the same language, and it doesn't matter who you sit next to, you can have a conversation about literature, you can have a good conversation about music or about theatre or about something and it's not just about, do you put the phosphorus on the petunias?

Because really, I don't care if I don't prune my things at the right time, I don't dig up my things at the right time. It's the feel of the garden and it's the history and it's a whole lot more than just growing plants, and that's what I find I've got from the Garden History Society, way more than I could've from any other society. It's extraordinary, I think it's wonderful.

And also, architecture, because I'm as interested in architecture as I am in the plants, and I think that it's about … the history is also to do with the properties, the buildings, the people that created them, and it's about all of that social history. It's such a rich history, isn't it? And every person literally is from every background - so it's not as though we're just gardeners or we're landscape gardeners or whatever, every type of profession is there, it's just wonderful. So you can have so much richer conversations.

A great tolerance for great diversity.

Yes.

So Trisha, you ..

Absolutely.

... you arrived at *Bobundara* in '85, and were you aware of the Canberra group at that time, or did you ...

I just can't quite recall whether the Canberra group had started at that stage, but certainly when I joined, at that stage, too, I was writing - because I'd been doing work on Edna Walling and the gardens, and so I'd spent quite a bit of time travelling through Victoria doing research on Edna Walling gardens and also on later books for Angus & Robertson, and so I had friends in a lot of these beautiful big gardens in Victoria, and so I think then at that stage too I met Margaret Darling because I went to *Woomargama Station*, and Margaret at that stage was the Chairwoman of the Garden History Society, and I would have it here somewhere, and if COVID goes, if the isolation goes long enough I'll find the letter, but I have the letter that she wrote to me to ask whether I would join the National Management Committee ... I remember she wrote, "My dear Trisha, I would be just so delighted if you would think of joining the National Management Committee of the Garden History Society," and I delightedly thought ... "Oh my goodness."

And honestly, it was oh my goodness, because literally, I was just this young mother kind of floundering in this big old garden, and trying to work full time because literally we had no money at all and my work as a writer was kind of paying for all our living and everything, and so just every which way, being the mother and helping on the property, I helped full time on the property and cooked for every shearing and did all the rousabouting for every shearing, picked up every lamb at every lamb marking, so very involved with all of that as well.

So then the Garden History, it was lovely, because not only the first conference that I went to was down in Hobart (1993?), I think, and I just remember sitting on the bus going around on the optional day, or going on one of the tour visits, sitting down the back of the bus and there was these wonderful people and these wonderful conversations, and it was the best holiday of my life at that stage of my life, I think, because it was just out of this kind of farming thing into people talking about books and talking about everything else, and it was so lovely.

But then going to the first meeting of the National Management Committee I think was in Melbourne, and so I had to find my way down there and pay for my accommodation and pay for my trip down there, and it was quite a big thing. So I think I kind of, perhaps caught a train down there from here and kind of got the bus down to Bairnsdale and then the train, second class of course, and then literally got the cheapest room I could because that's all we could afford at that stage, so I got a $30 room at the very wrong end of Melbourne, and I remember dear Jackie Courmadias who has become one of my very, very, very, very dearest friends in the whole world, she's so beautiful, and she was there and she offered to drive me back to my accommodation, and she lived out at Mount Macedon, had a beautiful car and garden, to think she had to drop me off in this very ... Of course, I got to know her and she's not at all like that, she's the most understated person in the world, but I remember being embarrassed that I had to be dropped off at this almost cockroach-infested place down in the dregs of Melbourne, so it's kind of gone from that to now living a comfortable life, which is lovely.

So what was that first NMC? That's a big leap to go from being a member to being a member of the NMC.

59.00 I know, I don't think I was a member very long before Margaret asked me but I think she could probably see that the little I had to do with her, perhaps visiting at *Woomargama Station* and the books that I'd done, perhaps on Edna Walling with Jennie Churchill, that I was obviously really, really, really keenly interested in garden history and perhaps at that stage, young. I was probably the youngest one. Kind of at that stage … so I was probably about 30, in my early 30s, so I was certainly one of the young ones. So she probably thought, "Look, it's probably good to have some young blood there," I don't know. So for whatever reason, it was … I remember being very, I was very humbled to be asked to be on the National Management Committee, it was a great privilege. Certainly was, it was lovely.

It strikes me that the NMC and the work of the NMC doesn't really get … it's not widely known in the Society. Is that still the case, do you think?

Certainly - not only is it not widely known, there was also - I do remember going to meetings as at our Monaro Branch, the ACT and Riverina and Monaro Branch, but there was that feeling that it was kind of them and us, and just the National Management Committee were kind of them, and they would perhaps, maybe be too much organizing all the funds and everything, and so yes, it was them and us, whereas I think now that's not so much the case, but they're kind of more, I would consider the NMC perhaps, I'm on, say, the company at Frensham, Winifred West Schools, because that's where I went for nine years of my schooling, and I kind of see that as like a godmother role, so a kind of godparent role, and maybe the National Management Committee's kind of steering that path, between a parent and a godparent, maybe, but just someone who has the best interests of it at heart, although the NMC I'm sure do do a lot more than that. But they're not autocratic, that's what I suppose I'm saying.

I think that representation across all states, elected and branch representation ...

Yeah.

Governance is such a big issue in any organization, commercial, scholarly, or the Society.

Mm-hmm (affirmative). And I think people give up so much of their time to be involved in that, and it is a very serious commitment.

Margaret Darling was the Chair at that point when you were first on there, how do you recall her management of the meetings?

> Oh, wonderful. Look, she really was a fantastic woman, and certainly had the absolute, the whole priorities of the Garden History as her main concern and I think it's changed a lot, as everything in life has changed since that time, so certainly our aspirations would be different now, because perhaps we were less worldly back then about what was happening, and the world has changed a lot, and so it was quite different.
>
> I certainly, I was on for two terms then, but then I was re-elected in later years and it was quite a different experience at that time, too. And really, it was not so much to do in who was the Chair, but just how times had changed and really, we had to be just more aware of what was happening and how we were losing a lot of our heritage and it was so important for us to be vocal, which we really weren't vocal when I started with the National Management Committee, it was more a kind of custodianship of older gardens, whereas I think it's quite different now.
>
> It was there, but it certainly, it wasn't … because there weren't so many issues, there weren't so many, I suppose, issues to fight and issues to really ... you think of the things that have been happening since with development, there really wasn't so much. It was almost … it was more in that stage of having good conferences and then they started, really, there weren't so many advocacy issues as now.

Sadly, almost now, you could have nothing but advocacy.

> Exactly, that's why it's so important. And I think it's changed a little bit too, which I'm really pleased that we're going for the greater landscape rather than just gardens, because I think it's so important that … You know … you look how public opinion has changed, the way we treat the landscape and the way we see Indigenous people and everything, it's just changed so much in that time, because we're talking 30 or more – 40 years ago really. It's a long time.

Do you think it's also changed more rapidly even in the last year with all the apocalyptic events that have occurred?

> It will have to, because if we don't, nothing will have been achieved, but absolutely has to. And certainly, as much as I think management of land with fires and there's certainly fires and drought and climate change, definitely, we just … there's so much that we just have to learn from, and that if we don't learn to even respect our original people here, how can we move forward, how can we really … we don't know everything. And so it's only by respecting and learning from them that we can move forward, I think.
>
> I'd love to see a conference in the middle of Australia, up in that wonderful heart of Australia, and just go to the heart of who we are and what we are, and really, I walked the Larapinta last year and there was this wonderful, wonderful Aboriginal woman who just spoke so amazingly and I learned more from her than I've learned all my life. But just if we could all have that experience, this would be wonderful and there's such a ... Anyhow, I just hope, that's my big, big hopes for Garden History, that we'd have a conference up there one time. We could all go up by train or fly in or whatever, there's a big conference centre and there's the Olive Pink Botanic Garden, and it's wonderful … It's just extraordinary up there.

Have you mentioned that, raised that idea?

> Yes. Yes, quite a few times.

And it met with ...

> I don't know … anyhow ... you can only just sow seeds.

Well, I noticed one of the other seeds that you sowed very loudly, I think it was when, in your first ... I've got all these papers here. So one of the benefits of doing it by Zoom is that I've the luxury of space here with papers, but I think you wanted to, I'll find the quote, but at one point you wanted to, you suggested that we have a conference about landscape, and landscape, in fact, should be part of the name of the Society, and you'd like landscape to be the subject of discussion in one of the forums at the conferences. That hasn't happened yet, Trisha?

That's very much … that's totally, I would love to see that happen. Because I do think, again, even, I'm looking at our journals, and 'garden' is the big word, but we're about landscape. Like we're even, I landscape my garden, as in, I don't garden my garden. It's about the landscape, it's much bigger than just what I do there; it's the whole landscape that we should be nurturing and looking after. To think we just look after ourselves and our own little, few little petunias, I just think it's much bigger than that now, we should be thinking bigger than that, and just … I think it limits us as what people think of us, (A) I just know all my dealings with people overseas, any of the conferences or any of the learned people I talk with overseas, and if I mention the Garden History Society, I kind of, I'm a bit naughty, I say, "It's landscape, it's the landscape society," which was really, mind, I don't do it professionally, but if it's to friends, because I think, sadly, the word "garden" still hasn't come of age, like it still hasn't kind of got that recognition for what it should, but landscape has, landscape is something that we revere and it's just so much more. I would be so happy if that ever did happen.

And I think the place that it could happen would either be, you know up in the Snowy Mountains where you kind of walk up into that wonderful ancient landscape, the Bundian Way and some of that, or in the middle of Australia. In the middle of Australia would be brilliant, because it is just the heart of Australia. The landscape up there is just extraordinary, it is just so breathtakingly beautiful.

Was that your first visit there?

1 hr 10 No, no, no - I've visited there so many times. But even to walk over, and to walk the Larapinta, because you're almost in a airplane when you're up on Mount Sonder and things, and you look down and you can see how the … the beautiful Aboriginal art and everything, because everything's just seen as dots from on high and it's red, and the natural landscape is so beautiful and you look at people like Fiona Brockhoff, that landscape in this manner, it was almost was like walking through a Fiona Brockhoff landscape garden, it was so beautiful.

But I just think, always I've thought that the way we learn to go forward is by looking back, and if we can look back to our original people to move forward, it would be such a wonderful way of understanding our country, understanding our landscape, reading that landscape and the whole Aboriginal concept that they don't own it, it is them. And if we can feel like that, that it is us, it's not us just owning a certain area or whatever, so that's why I really would love that name, landscape. But I can understand, too, you don't want to change names of things, but I just think that people … I do think that people look down a little bit on our Society because it's got the word "garden" there, they think we're a garden club.

What about the word 'history', is that important to maintain?

I think it is. I mean, it wouldn't worry me if it wasn't there or not, because I think 'history' is tomorrow and yesterday, it doesn't really matter, really … because we do as much with our Society, and certainly the way I think is as much in the future as in the past, so I don't think that has to be, I don't think that's so important. I think 'Australian' is important, because I do think it is our Society, but anyhow. Or it's not something I would tie myself to a tree for and whatever, but I just think that sowing the seed there, and I do think one day it will happen.

It's one of those discussions that erupts every so often in the Society, I think, about getting rid of 'garden' or 'history' and making it modern or contemporary in some way. So I think it's part of the ongoing conversations in the society.

> The thing is, if it's just a little conversation in the Society, nothing will ever happen. But if we could actually have a whole conference about landscape and have something real and have it ... I think what's happened with (and perhaps I shouldn't be saying this) but with the conferences is that they've almost become bigger than Ben Hur, so if someone has a wedding, it's almost like the next person's got to have a bigger and better wedding, the next person's got to have a bigger and ... And I just see these poor committees having to make just more and more and more work and it's almost beyond these committees to actually kind of get better than the conference before, because it's just been so brilliant, the conference before, and then the next one has to ... And they're all people that are working people and just having to, they've got full to overflowing lives.
>
> And so if you just had one where it was back to basics, everyone stayed in the same place and you didn't have to have all the flowers, because you've got beautiful gum trees around and you didn't have to ... Just have it more back to basics, because really, I do think that's what COVID's done for most of us … we've all been home, we've all kind of enjoyed being back to basics, we all quite enjoy the simple life, really and we don't need all the frills, we don't need all of that, especially if we're educated people. We don't need to put on airs and graces to such an extent, I just think that we could be more real, maybe.

It's a very sensible thought. It also brings me to the idea of money. How is the Society going to make money? Because it's funded to such an extent by that, amongst other things, the conferences. And some of these things, some of these issues are really occupying the Society now, with all the diverse governance issues as well as finance and membership, and as the membership ages, there are many … young people are not so interested and can't afford the conferences.

> That's right, but a conference somewhere different, I think that would be so exciting everyone would go, so everyone would pay to go there. So I don't think … we'd still get the money out of the conference because people would be absolutely so keen to go there, I think that most people would, and I do think it would just make us more relevant, it'd make the younger people more interested. I know younger people haven't got time, but if it's relevant. I joined as a 33 year old or whatever because it was relevant and so if we can make it relevant, we'll get more people and we'll get younger people to join …

Do you see many 30 year olds at events now?

> No, no. No. No. No, not many. But the ones that are are fabulous, I always go and chat to them and ask them what their interests are and why they've joined and everything because it's really important to engage those ones and to have their voice, because it's a different voice, they're a different generation that's really, really, really important.
>
> Even at tennis today, there was a … younger than me (because I told you I play my tennis every week, and I was the youngest one, I was asked to join forty years ago - I'm still the youngest). So honestly, we just were talking, talking, talking, literature, music, and piano, and he played this and this and this, and we just had such a good thing because someone different and younger, and I think it's important to have all ages. I love all ages, it's so good, it's so important.

It sounds like a remarkable community that you live in, Trisha, in this isolated, treeless landscape. It sounds very enriching.

> Unbelievable. So even a week ago I went to this amazing, amazing place for lunch, and there was literally from a three month old to an 83 year old and just the conversation, 18 people, just whoosh, whoosh, whoosh, and then all the places just everything. There's so much, such richness in living in a landscape where people are really uplifted by that landscape, and they're not dragged down by it. So you're meeting with people that really interact and are really proactive in what they do and passionate about what they do, and have such a sense of curiosity in life. It's really wonderful. I think we all surround ourselves with the people we want to, the books we want to, the music we want to, and the landscape we want to, and so I'm perfectly placed here, and other people perfectly placed where they are, so ... But it's certainly not, it's not dull living in the country, that's for sure.

AUDIO FILE 2 – 9 July 2020

This is the second part of the interview with Trisha Dixon. On Thursday, 9 July 2020. Trisha is being interviewed to the Australian Garden History Society's National Oral History Collection on behalf of the ACT Monaro, Riverina Branch, and in these days of the pandemic, Trisha is at her home, *Bobundara* in Monaro and the interviewer is Roslyn Burge is in Lilyfield.

Trisha, your land has other names beyond *Bobundara,* tell me where you're speaking from.

> I'm speaking from the land of the Ngarigo people and in fact they named *Bobundara* - the name of the property took it from the Ngarigo people had – it's "place of thunder", which is very apt because it never rains but when it does, it just it's thunder and lightning. It's very dramatic. Pours down, but I think it's because it's living, because I'm living in this incredible landscape that is so, so ancient, I just always reference and I always think of the people that were here before, but I think of the Ngarigo people that were here before. I'd also think, of course, the people who built this home, the garden and everything, but I kind of go back way further because it's such an ancient landscape and you've got the remnant volcanoes and things.
>
> But when you think that our original inhabitants have been here for 70,000 years walking through this landscape, sometimes just leaving rocks leaving just implements and sharpening stones and things that that's why I think with Australian Garden History Society that we're more than just garden because we shouldn't be just talking about our 200 years because that's a very, very, very, very small part of history of Australia and it's really that we have been here for you know, who knows more than 70,000 years and they did, as Bill Gammage said, you know, they created this – *The Biggest Estate on Earth*. They did do their own farming and their own gardening in their own way. I walked with a with an Aboriginal Elder up through the high country and he was saying this is our orchard and this is our toolbox and it's literally walking through the bush and pointing out all the things so really, our European gardening is just a very small part of garden history isn't it.

That was something that you promoted when you took on … in 95, you referred in your first article in the journal, you referred to cultural landscapes and landscapes of the future. So that's an early preface I think though events have sort of overtaken the country as (we don't want to get lost in the sort of

country's story). But I think too we'll come to the journal and your role in that but the .. journal in January (2020) I'm not sure whether any journal - I haven't looked - but whether any journal was so immediately current in that dramatic period, which has made us rethink a lot of these things that you're heralding there, Trisha.

> Exactly. And another conference we had in Canberra, we actually went to Parliament House, had a look at their gardens but we put in a submission then that could they actually not water their lawns and it's quite interesting because I think water is our hugest issue, you know, bigger than bushfires because bushfires will be calamitous events at times but water - without water we just don't survive. And so water … we just don't manage water … we don't know how to manage it … we've never learned from the Indigenous people … we just wasted it … we just use bore water … we just use underground water willy nilly and it's really … it's really … kind of worries me very much, so water is such a big issue and I really like that - I just love the fact that Garden History people are intelligent, thinking people, and they are people you can talk to about issues like that. And they do understand.

Do you think there's been a shift in the Garden History Society to think about being water-wise and using gardens differently?

> I think there has been all over. I know one time I just did a talk in Melbourne at a very, very smart club there and I said "Look, I don't water my garden. I haven't watered it for 17 … 18 years now". Anyhow, and then quite a few people put their hands up and said they didn't too and I just was so pleased. I do think we are becoming more aware and also, people really have to because we all do love Central Australia, we love Africa, we love Provence, we'd love all of those places, but just our hang-up with green, green, green lawns is … is not so good. So you're better to go with what you can do. And so hopefully - and that's what I really try and do with my tours to really try and educate people to just what fabulous design and fabulous plants available to those living in climatically challenging areas … you know, really important selection of plants and looking at our original gardens.

You just touched on tours then Trisha are those tours is still happening at this particular time.

> No nothing happening at the moment. And so because really we're all in kind of limbo land and we just really don't know what's going to happen and whether we'll be able to and, I just don't know whether they'll be self drive tours or whether they'll be bus tours or whether we'll get overseas again, or whatever. So it's just a little bit limbo land. Yes, I think that there'll be tours next year.

Do you miss that?

> Not at all actually. Really loving just having some time here at *Bobundara* – because I'm always on the go… literally my whole year revolves around leaving on tours …Here in my house I have one room where I have all the books that I'm researching for that tour and all the things I'm doing and then all the things that I have to take and everything. And so it all revolves around which tour I'm going on. So this – as soon as the Covid outbreak I put it all away, put all the tour things, so I put the suitcases that I just put everything like that away out of sight, out of mind. And now I've just been, you know, painting shutters on an old building today and painting things and, and fixing doing bit of gardening and doing things. All the things an old place really needs. So I'm not actually missing touring. No.

Thinking about the journal, you had that phenomenal run of 35 editions of the journal, Trisha starting in 95. And I've got an old version, old, old inverted commas. This style was the last before you took over. So you heralded some changes, one of which was the bibliophile column. What other changes do you remember instituting?

All I wanted was … my love of books – so bibliophilic banter - so I just thought someone in garden history to talk about their love of books and what books have really changed them and what books have really made them the gardener or the person they are today. Colonial plants - I thought that's really interesting because often on our garden history excursions or tools or conferences, you'd come across osage orange or sloe tree or whatever it was, a damson plum - so just to really get someone knowledgeable, because there is such knowledge in the society, someone to really write about that. Then I thought it'd be good to actually then someone who's known in Garden History Society, go to their garden, interview them and just so people could see what they are, what they do, in their part of the world. And so they were different and then often then I would have whole focuses that might be on botanical art or … with Joan Law-Smith's beautiful illustration on the front cover or might … yes just different … different themes. So it was really, really I really enjoyed it. … 35 issues … honestly I looked at them today and that's a huge number!

I had been editor for a few other journals before that. One was an agricultural kind of journal. And before that, started one of the High Country, a photographic journal of the High Country, Snowy River Country. So thank heavens I did kind of know what I was getting myself in for, because it's quite … also with Garden History (Journal) we weren't paying people to submit their articles and so you had to call on favours, which is what I do with my tours a lot, you kind of call on favours. And so people were wonderful and they would really, you know, there's such scholarship there, there's such incredible people when I looked through and also I didn't write the editorials… the first editorial I did myself, but then every other editorial it was a guest editorial. So I wanted people that had something to say of note to really do the editorial and when I look through there, it was a wonderful time that people like Tommy Garnett and Gordon Ford all sorts of people that really could talk about what was close to their heart in view of the landscape. It was it was a wonderful time of yes … of really interacting with some very, very interesting notable people in the gardening and landscape world.

There's no other … I think it's important to record that no other single person has produced 35 additions of the journal. Richard (Aitken), of course, has done so many in conjunction with others. But I think that's a single-handed achievement Trisha, I don't know how you did at the same time writing your books, your involved with the Branch, your own life. How did you juggle it all?

10.30 It was, it was really I just, I think if you love what you do, you really do it. And I think my premise is just do it and just do it and kind of ... yes, I suppose living in the country too, I'm not someone that even drinks coffee or kind of goes out for coffee, cafe lattes, or whatever, I really get up in the morning and I remember my mother saying that my father would lie in bed and he'd kind of be trembling with excitement, jump out of bed, you know, for the day ahead. And so I'm kind of lucky that I have that craziness. I do love life .. I always say "yes" - honestly I'm trying to learn to say no - but I do. Although I do love what I do. I really, really love what I do and I really enjoy my life and career … and if you really love what you do then you do find time for it and what I don't find time for is what I consider irrelevancies ... like I haven't ... I just don't know any television stars or I don't know anything about football… there's lots of things I don't prioritise and I've probably got dust up to here in some parts of the house whatever ... you just do what you can do.

I remember reading a lovely book about Mary Durack, and it was a memoir about Mary Durack, who wrote *Kings in Grass Castles,* and she was writing back in the 50s when it was kind of a little bit you know, women should be there looking after their children and you know, looking after their husbands and children and things and she just said look, you just have to let some things go and so, you let go the unimportant things and you know, you try and keep your house tidy.

But if some very tidy person would say to me, "Oh I'm calling in tomorrow", and I'd go, "Oh no", and my head would spin I'd have to really do a quick blitz because it's not ... but it's just not my priority - as in my priority was living a full rich life and interacting with people on very, all sorts of levels and not just being the domestic goddess and that's how it worked, I suppose.

Just coming back to the journal, again the luxury of the pandemic I've got all these around me but [... I haven't got the original but I've just got this copy of that first botanical drawing you did (of)] that wonderful game and whimsical cover. Such a contrast. Was that one of your plans to change the journal cover?

13.00 No, not really I think it must have been done in conjunction with I always called on the mentors, my mentors in the Garden History Society and Richard Aitken was wonderful. And it was, I think, done in conjunction with him. And then that one was so beautiful because that's a very ... someone I admired greatly, I was lucky enough to go to school with her: Helen Leitch, it's one of her illustrations. And she did illustrations of rare and endangered species of animals and plants and made them into kind of lovely characters and they're ... just she did beautiful, beautiful work and had exhibitions. And then I think the next one featured Joan Law-Smith's beautiful daffodils. So it was a way to just, I suppose put my own mark on it, but it was really at the ... in conjunction with talks through the NMC, I think, about where the journal was going to go. And so I think it was Richard Aitken's idea that we even just changed the, the font and everything on the front. So we did that kind of together, I think in ... in conjunction with his advice and he was such a mentor always.

They're so spare I mean this this journal heralds seriousness, whereas this journal, I mean not … not to say this journal doesn't because it's filled, they're both filled … such a contemporary look to the to the whole journal now. And this one at the beginning of the year was ... sorry Trisha ...

I suppose I just wanted to lighten that up a little bit too because if someone's going to read something ... if something is so busy and crowded, it takes away from the content ... yes I do love spareness. I love spareness in, in architecture and landscape and in everything but in books and design definitely. I think it really just makes such a difference to have a lot of white space and, and also I wanted to lighten the ... not dumb it down at all ... the journal but lighten it up with some humour so I had articles by Christina Hindaugh who was this wonderful woman who has given after-dinner speeches at some of the garden history conferences, Tamie Fraser's sister, with a wonderful sense of humour and just some different things and that's why Bibliophilic Banter - it was kind of just more it ... was to engage people because I found by being on the National Management Committee, and then coming back to New South Wales, a lot of the New South Wales comments from people was they wanted a journal that they would read, and not just full of information, they really wanted articles that would engage them. And so I really wanted to kind of have a foot in both camps: have the academic side to it, but also have enough articles that perhaps were just things that people, all type of people, all type of members could relate to.

And the just the practicalities of the journal production. The design was done in Melbourne at that time?

No it was done in Canberra actually, and it was lucky it was by the designer that I'd had at the National Library for a book I had done there - Andrew Ranken I think to start with it was in Melbourne, but then was Canberra, I think, almost straight away it was Canberra. And that was really, really good because I worked so well with him and yes that was ... that really worked well.

Yes, it was a lot of work, but it was a lot of joy, a lot of great interest, a lovely time of my life I would say - I mean every day of my life's been a nice time of my life but that was particularly … when I look at those journals, that takes me back into the ... to the richness of lovely interaction.

You know, I think at that time there was probably more personal interaction. We certainly had computers and things, but it was a time where you still spoke to people on the phone quite a bit to source material and to source articles, and, and yes, it was quite close contact I had with a lot of people in the gardening world.

And you mentioned Joan Law-Smith, perhaps you'd like to recount ... you told me the lovely story off tape. But perhaps you'd like to tell me again, your visit there and your involvement with the development of *Kindred Spirits*?

Yes, well, that was lovely and in fact, Anne Latreille, just in the book ... I've got the book here - the beautiful book, *Kindred Spirits*, which I think is one of the most beautiful books ever. It's just so delicate and so, so tenderly written and so gentle of two extraordinary women, Joan Law-Smith and Jean Galbraith and, Anne does mention here so I'll just read out what she said, she just said that 'Joan after studying botanical art with Jean Galbraith, she had all this beautiful cache of beautiful botanical illustrations.' I had met Joan Law-Smith a few times, and then one time I was coming to Melbourne for a National Management Committee meeting and it was at the home of Margaret Darling who was in the same building as Joan Law-Smith, a wonderful building in South Yarra that overlooks the Botanic Gardens, and as they said, we have all our gardeners working for us because it looked out into the Botanic Gardens. But Joan asked me in after a meeting one day, and so I went in and had a drink with her and things ... chat chat ... and then I was asking her about her botanical art and she showed me and I said, honestly, wouldn't it be just a beautiful thing to have a book, you know, maybe Garden History produces a book... of your work, and so just what Anne says ... "in a chance conversation (in 1997) Joan happened to tell the gardening writer and photographer Trisha Dixon about it. Trisha, a committee member of the Australian Garden History Society, asked if the Society could publish the lessons and drawings. Joan agreed, and *Kindred Spirits* is the result.

And so it was really lovely that she kind of went ahead with publishing her exquisite botanical art and the story of how she was taught by Jean Galbraith ... it was a huge gesture on her part to do it, for she funded the whole thing. It was absolutely amazing and Anne brought it all together in the most beautiful, beautiful way. But to fund the whole thing with all the funds then to go to Garden History Society - it was the start of the publishing arm of the Garden History Society which brings back quite a bit of money and does also foster other publications of note which is so good. So I was just so delighted that it was just that ... just a kernel of something that grew to a beautiful, beautiful, beautiful book.

You must feel proud of your involvement in initiating that spark - it's not your book Trisha but would it have happened if you hadn't made that chance comment?

I don't … I don't know, but who probably no one else would have been as brash as to say, you know, would you do this? Because that's the thing. I was actually young and I suppose with youth comes a bit of brashness. But when I look, that's another thing - when I look through some of these early, one of the early ... I think it's actually even that one before I became the journal Editor, the Garden History Journal. There's something about an Edna Walling tour that we did - that Jackie Courmardias and I did - and that was the first tour we did together for the Society. But everyone there looks so young, but in fact, they're all the people there now, that are the mainstay of Garden History but we haven't got so many of those ... just the whole ... this huge photo of ... just I think there are about 40 of us on this tour and truly everyone was probably in their 40s at the most. And so that's kind of not happening now. Is it? So it is interesting that we are, you know, we are an aging Society.

I think that's very much a conversation that John Taylor had from time to time about how do we develop membership and build it up? And that must be something each of the chairs have successively considered and worried about, but I think it's … do you have thoughts about that, Trisha?

21.00 Well, just when I saw that, it did make me think that a lot of those people were people ... a lot of my friends that came on those tours and a lot of people that I knew that came on those tours because they were kind of, you know, they were fun, they're looking at it, but looking at, let's say that one that they joined the Garden History Society, because of the tour, because it was looking at the work of Edna Walling which was kind of relevant back then. But now there'd be different relevant things that might be that it would be, you know, something to do with landscape, it might be to do with Aboriginal work or whatever ... it just - I think we've got to do whatever is relevant at the time to try and engage people. Not just do what we've always done. So that was tours at that time, Edna Walling was kind of certainly someone who was, you know, certainly still very much in vogue then but, you know, that's not the case now. It's, you know, there's different things that are happening now. And I think as long as we actually are always at the forefront of what's happening - internet dislocation -

Are we relevant today?

I think we're relevant, but we're relevant perhaps to a certain age group.

So So Trisha, you do your tours singly now don't do not in cahoots or in collaboration with anybody that must have been a novelty for the Society, that trip you did with Jackie.

That was it was really lovely because, yes, we did that together. They just thought that might be a nice thing to do with the Edna Walling tour and then it was so booked out we actually did another one in the autumn, which was so lovely because most people in spring were so taken in by what's in flower and everything and you don't really look at ... the tour we did in autumn was looking at the design because you could really see the plan, you can see the stone walls, you can see the structure of the trees, you could see so much more. So that really made me then think about doing the winter seminars and taking people and I was involved with the local Branch taking people to gardens in the middle of winter to actually really see the bones of a place. But yes, the gardens, the garden tours ... look they're just been wonderful and Jackie and I did a lot of tours together and I've done some you know by myself as well. So it's just when she was Executive Officer of the AGHS it's really, it's just been a wonderful, wonderful experience … Jackie and I are still the greatest friends - I just so so - Jackie's a very, very, very dear friend of mine.

Trisha, we've just had a small pause but one of the things I can't let our meeting pass by, of course, Edna Walling who's so significant in your life, how did you come to Edna Walling?

Well, it was a name that was always mentioned in my childhood and Mum had all her books, my aunt and uncle had had Edna Walling to stay and advise on the garden. And another uncle lived next door to *Markdale* at Binda - out the other side of Goulburn, and so it was always Edna Walling talk. And when Mum and Dad were doing our walls in the gardens and steps they were very much in the Edna Walling style, so that was certainly the way I really heard about her to start with. And then I had nine years of school in the garden, Gib Gate and Frensham and literally that was created ... Winifred West Schools - were created by Winifred West, who could have been Edna Walling's sister, exactly the same ... a really intelligent, just amazing, forward-thinking individual who created a school on very, very, very similar lines to Edna Walling so when I spent weeks in Melbourne and Victoria photographing and documenting the legacy of Edna Walling's remaining gardens, I recall going back to Frensham, and being overwhelmed at the similarity of Winifred West's School in a Garden and Edna Walling's gardens.

I'm curious. You grew up with Edna Walling, as it were, but what prompted you to write about her?

I was editing a journal and I, one of the articles I did for the journal was on the Edna Walling garden, *Kiloren* at Crookwell and my mother had suggested this. Jennie Churchill who lived there could write an article for the journal (because I was always looking for people to write) and my mother being a keen gardener said, perhaps Jennie could write an article. And so then I said to Jennie, oh, look, why don't you and Rob come down - I've organised this garden history winter seminar in Cooma - I hadn't met them, but look, come and stay. So they came to stay and during dinner, I just said to her, 'Look, there hasn't been a book on Edna Wallings' gardens, why don't we do it? And you live in one? You know, "why don't we'' and because at that stage I was in conversation with Angus & Robertson, about a book on the high country that I was doing with the writer, Tim Hall, and so I was just about to go to the publishers, I think that week. And so when I went to the publisher that week, with Tim Hall to Angus & Robertson, I was in the meeting with the publisher and we were just leaving the meeting and I just took up courage and we had actually kind of stood up to go and I said, Would you be interested in a book on Edna Walling?

27.34 She said ... all my friends, you know, talk about Edna Walling and yes, I'm certainly interested, what do you have in mind? And I said, "Look, I'm just interested in the fact that her gardens are so influential, but people don't know about ... they don't know about her gardens and what they look like." And so that week then I did a layout of how I wanted the book to be in cahoots with Jennie.

The layout, and to have the gardens in chronological order from her earliest gardens. When gardens are newly designed there is little resemblance to how they are meant to look in their maturity … they would have looked new and new little plants and lots of stonework, and it doesn't look at how it's meant to be and so I thought, wouldn't it be a lovely testament to her

talent if you actually saw these gardens in their maturity. We sent an outlay and brief to Angus & Robertson to show them what it could be and literally they sent a contract and they sent an advance straightaway. *(Audio lag)*

So Jennie and I got together - we got some nice writing paper – wrote many letters and were fortunate to have many replies back and then we went down to Victoria quite a few times. And in the meantime, we thought we needed to get a really good camera to really document these gardens because that's what it was all about - Australia's greatest landscape designer, her gardens in their maturity, how to document them properly. And so I asked a very good friend of mine, Klaus Hueneke, who documented the high country with his lovely "*Huts of the High Country*" and a lot of books and he was a good friend - is a good friend. And he had used a German twin lens reflex camera, a Rolleiflex, and so I thought ... he said look it's very, very hardy it's absolutely beautiful precision-ground lens, but everything you look down it turns back to front and there's no light meter on the Rolleicord which is what I ended up buying from the Trading Post – a wonderful leather cased pre loved medium format camera with a superb lens.

Some audio lag

... As my Rollei has no light meter, I was using my little 35mm camera at that stage, everything was back to basics – a great lesson in photography. And always using the camera on a tripod so that if you look at the photos, they are often taken from a low viewpoint, making everything look larger – as through the eyes of a child – the low perspective to get slide film, professional slide film.

So I got an old second-hand Rolleicord camera, and it was this lovely old camera in a leather case, and you'd look down into it and everything would be back to front but beautiful precision ground lens, no light meter, so you'd use your 35mm, but the cost of film was enormous and it was slide film, it was professional film, 50 ASA - so use a tripod for everything. And we were going around these gardens in Victoria (because that's where most of the gardens were) at the end of the day we'd rush into Richmond where there was a professional laboratory there and we'd leave our films and then first thing in the next morning we'd go there and have a look and see whether they were okay, because you'd have to take, say three of every shot you took to get exactly the right light.

30.15 So only 12 on a film, so you only got four shots. So it wasn't like digital click, click, click, click, click, click. You really thought about each photo you were going to take, because it was hugely expensive. So did that and they went ahead with the book and that beautiful job Angus & Robertson (did) with the book, but the trouble was at the back of the book, all these beautiful plans that we wanted reproduced but they just put them as tiny little plans at the back of the book and were really upset that they just didn't have reproduced them in larger format. They had some big plans, but not many because there were so many beautiful plans.

And so that's why years later, we tried to get a book published of the plans of Edna Walling, and I tried with Angus & Robertson and they said, "Yes. Yes. Yes. Maybe." But then, "No." And then another publisher said, "Yes. Yes. Yes." And then, "No." And anyhow, in the end, thank heavens John Morris, National Trust put me on to Warwick Forge, who - Warwick Forge hadn't published any books - he'd been involved with the National Trust, but he was thinking of going into publishing books. So we had to just literally ... I remember just talking ourselves up so much. Jennie and myself had to say, "Oh, we're wonderful photographers and yes we can do this, and yes, the book would be wonderful." And honestly, it was just so ghastly. It was so against everything I'd ever grown up with about talking yourself up. But literally I just had to just really convince him that we could do this book because he hadn't published and this was going to be his first book. Well, he did take it on and he put the plan of Boortkoi on the front cover.

So, having a plan as a front cover - that had never been done on a book before. So this beautiful big book, I can see it here with this big plan on the front cover and it sold out almost immediately. I think it came out in November, it sold out before Christmas, and I think it's in its seventh print now, it just went so well. And because it was literally a book of plans of Australia's great, great, great landscape designer and it made us look at all the plans of landscape designers throughout the world. And Gertrude Jekyll she did beautiful gardens, she's very famous, but her plans are nothing of the of Edna Walling's style - Beatrix Farrand in America, she did beautiful gardens and plans. Olive Mellor in Australia, Jocelyn Brown, -who did lovely gardens, but Edna Walling's style of her plans, a beautiful, soft water colour, beautiful paper, the beautiful ink she used, and then she'd get these beautiful, beautiful works of art that are such treasured works of art today. But then she'd write on them when she got to a garden and she'd so totally disregard the art value of them while she pencilled plant names and tweaks to her design and whatever.

And then the trouble is they were these beautiful, big, lovely plans, but they'd be rolled up and given to her clients who would then, although valuing the plan, would invariably put it away 'somewhere safe' which usually meant out of sight, out of mind' and over decades, these would end up in attics and under stairwells and invariably lost as families sold and owners died. So when people finish the garden, they'd kind of think oh maybe we'll frame it, but look just for now, we'll put it in that ... in a thing behind the fireplace or in the attic or whatever. So that's why of the hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of gardens she did, there's only about 35 plans that

remain. So, it's just so beautiful because I would spend then weeks and weeks at La Trobe Library when ... luckily there's a whole lot of copies of the original plans and they're just black and white copies, but so much to learn about and you could just really appreciate that it was all about the architecture of space. *Audio lag*

Well, I think like most things you've done with the Society, Trisha, his is just a new innovation and a new technology and we can't change it *(in reference to zoom meeting)*.

We can't even meet we have to zoom talk ... this is perhaps the new normal ...

I know, I know it's very worrying. So, Trisha, you were saying you spend most of your time in the library, you didn't actually go from garden to garden apart from the photography aspect.

Yes. But then I'd want to document every garden that she had actually designed. So I wanted to look at every single plan that she had done. So I just poured over these plans and it was just, yes, just extraordinary her use of space. She just had such mastery and she did believe it was a God-given gift, her parents were Christian Scientists and she had that belief. But literally when I look at her work compared to anyone else in the world, it was an extraordinary gift that she did have. And I just loved her whole philosophy - and as friends, there were so many letters from friends of hers and things and a friend would be staying and Edna would say, "Let's go out for a walk now." And she'd just grab her hat from a hat stand, and she'd go, bang, bang, "Oh well, that's the dusting done, and let's go off."

And she'd have Brahms playing or Beethoven playing with the music. And she just was a great free spirit of a woman. And when they actually moved, this was a lovely letter that I remember reading from a friend of hers up in New England and they were moving from Bickleigh Vale up to Queensland to live, up at Buderim. So they piled up this old Humber car or whatever it was with everything, and they just piled it all on, piled on more and more and more. Anyhow, then the son of the person she was heading off with came around to wave them goodbye and said, "Oh, mum you can't take all that." So Edna just said, "Take off what you think." Anyhow, they waved goodbye to him and put it all back on again and off they went. So many stories of ... certainly with pompous men, she couldn't bear.

36.42 And so she ... she was very strong, full of character and things. So she was quite ... yes ... very formidable I think she could be, certainly with people putting on the pomp. But I think she had a very, very soft good heart, because certainly at her death, she had no funds at all and really, I think she didn't really, although people thought she charged a lot, she didn't. And she was always giving away plants and doing things as well. So extraordinary woman, very forward thinking ... just a big strong vision for the future and I think that's why she became almost irrelevant at the end of her life - she thought she was, because all the letters she was writing to the editors, they weren't published, and she was really railing against all the development and cutting down ancient eucalypt and all the trees in roadside plantings and up in her beloved Dandenongs and just destruction for progress.

The fact that we're neglecting all this beautiful remnant bushland and roadside vegetation affected her so much and so upset her. Hers was a voice in the wilderness, so much so that at her death, she had gone out of circulation and vogue. So instrumental was Edna in changing the face of gardening in Australia, that in her books, her photographs, her plans, and her gardens of which there's only probably about that many left today that are really intact, her influence is cited as the main one by many leading contemporary designers and gardeners. So I think the fact that she was quite visionary with her use of native plants and with her use of space and with her trying to stop developers from neglecting beautiful, big stands of eucalyptus and things that I think that she's very relevant today.

With all of the books that you've written Trisha, I think that's for a whole other interview, but you must get so engrossed in each of those subjects and those areas. But does she hold a particular spot for you?

Yes, very much because I think it's her whole understatement as well, because if you go into a garden, to me it's all about the feel of a garden and she was very much for creating an atmosphere in a garden rather than creating a show garden. This is why she changed the face of Australian gardening. Before that gardens in 1920s were... "look at me gardens" and they'd have the map of Australia on the front lawn, with petunias all around and gazanias inside or whatever, but her gardens were to be lived in - they were pergolas to sit under, they were outside areas to enjoy ... even thyme lawns to lie in and just lovely big wide, wide pergolas to walk under. But they were gardens just to really ... they weren't show gardens, there were gardens walks and it was right at the edge of her first country garden at Wairere that she had a hazelnut walk – something so enticing and elusive at the same time – the garden had to be fully walked and explored to find. That - and another garden Boortkoi, a beautiful, beautiful, big pergola down in the wild garden that you had to explore, go for a long walk to go and find that beautiful big pergola, and so nothing was obvious. Everything was understated. Her use of plants was so understated: she'd only ever used the most common plants and so that's why I'm just so common myself because I just love common lilac, I love the common iris, I just love the common, common, common wisteria, everything common and I don't like double, double, double this or variegated that – this garden [*audio lag*] is her palette entirely. It means then the focus is more on the design than on the individual plants. But she has been extraordinarily instrumental in my journey as a person and as a gardener.

Just shifting tack a little bit to much smaller, diminutive publications that the Branch has created. I'm not sure whether any other Branch apart from Canberra has created that cornucopia of little publications that really have stood the test of time. And you worked on those as well Trisha.

41.99 *audio lag* They're really, really, really, really beautiful. I wish that they would keep doing them because they're documenting gardens that are really going, going gone. Honestly it is extraordinary: they're beautiful and then the lovely plans in them, Richard Radcliffe was part of our Society, and he just always did these beautiful plans and plant lists and the whole thing. Everyone would go there and would measure the whole garden and everything is then documented .... this one of *Coolringdon* - oh, this is extraordinary, this is one here on the Monaro and see the beautiful plan and this amazing woman.

So we often went there for working bees and for visits and tours and she was a poet and a writer, she had this beautiful garden. And in fact with the Canberra Branch (and also the Southern Highlands Branch), I think we're getting together to have a working bee and hopefully some of the funds from Garden History Society can be used for one of the gardens went to, on a recent garden history tour. And it was Burrangurralong out of Goulburn and they own the old Tiirrana property and it's beautiful, beautiful, it's very, very, very early 1820s, old buildings and old garden, old trees there.

So we wanted to have some tree surgery and working bee there in May, but of course we'd have to put that back, but we want to have a working bee and also just provide enough funds for a tree surgeon just to do a bit of work there, but that would be a perfect place because they've just got so much history for one of these books to be written about. They are just a really good documentation that is there forever. But anyhow ...

I understand Trisha early on in 92, you worked one in Yass, Fifield Garden.

Yes. Fascinating, absolutely wonderful, wonderful garden there and see a lot of those change hands – so often once they change hands they're gone. And that really are, all those ones that they did are of places that are so important and so important to our garden history.

And the woman you mentioned at *Coolringdon*. Tell me about her.

Oh ... Betty Casey Litchfield, just the most extraordinary woman. So almost no one else like her, because she was born at *Coolringdon*`... well, not born on the property, but her parents owned the property. So she grew up there. She never ever left there - of course she travelled overseas and did things - but she never went away to school. When she got married, her husband came to live there (he was a cousin of Lord Casey, who was the Governor-General), so they actually had this – the Caseys - so she was Betty Craig, who became Betty Casey - so they had also a property up in that high country at Snowy Plain.

Well, Lord Casey would come up, trout fishing up there and everything. But Betty, when I first came to the area, she really fostered a friendship with me and she'd say, "Oh, look - she'd ring up one day and say it's a cold day, "it's going to be cold today, let's just light the fire and we'll just go into the den and we'll just talk about all the wild places in the world."

So she'd just bring out photo albums and she'd talk about books and lend me books and things. And she just had this really beautiful, huge, beautiful garden - and there was a big wild garden - so a whole area of it was just a stream going through with beautiful little paths going through. When she was a child she used to write poetry and one of her teachers ... she did have a little time at a finishing school, and Dorothea McKellar was her teacher. So she wrote beautiful poetry, so from a very early age she was submitting to these anthologies of poetry and she was a writer - so another journal that I was involved in, she would write articles for that. And she just was the most extraordinary woman and lived to well into her nineties. She never told anyone her age: I had to write her obituary for the *Sydney Morning Herald* - I had to actually find out her age, but you never did. And people loved her. And when I took people there for garden history … when I took people, yes, for Garden History Society they'd absolutely fall in love with her because she'd say, "Let's give them some sherry." And we go up to the old part of the house and actually have some sherry there.

45.55 And I remember having some lovely times, and then also I asked her to open for the Open Garden Scheme because I was the coordinator for the New South Wales area when it opened. So I asked Betty if she'd opened her garden for the Open Garden Scheme - so as you know

everyone's been to Open Gardens and people would write big screeds on their gardens: "Well, I designed this garden in 1963 and I put the avenue in this and I did that, and I got so-and-so to do this and I did that and I did this and I list all the plants. So Betty just wrote that "I have a very much loved garden and if you listen very carefully or if you watch very carefully you'll see the little star people tumbling around whether where the …"[2] It's just absolutely this kind of fairy-like little thing and it was just so understated and so gorgeous and really lovely and she just was a delightful woman.

[2] Coolringdon is just a much loved unsophisticated old garden which has been my playground since I was a tiny child. My first recollection of life was Coolringdon. I remember clinging to the whitewashed branches of the Eucalyptus, or secretly searching for the cold hearts of the lichen-covered boulders bordering the edge of the untidy stream. There were daffodils, forget-me-nots and violets growing in the grass. Their descendants are still there, whispering with an odd collection of 'flower things' that grow themselves, regardless of colours, perfume or formation, I love them specially…My mother used to tell me I would find most of the tiny flower people at night when a white moon was smiling and careless stars tumbled about in the grass. I found them of course, and so will you if you look carefully for they are still there at the bottom of my garden.

And certainly I was just fortunate to know her and our little garden working bees there were very special. It was fun. It was really lovely because it was a very, very big garden with this big wild area and it did kind of get out of hand as she got much older later in life. So it was lovely that we could go there and she was this tiny slip of a woman and I remember one garden history photo that came out somewhere, and I was like the big friendly giant next to this tiny little Betty and she was just so sweet ... and so fey really.

Do you think there's time (without too much digression - I'm very conscious of embedding our conversation in the Garden History Society), but that kind of gentleness and time for people, do you think that's gone Trisha today?

No. I think it's actually come to the fore during COVID certainly in the country it has. What do you think in the city? I don't know, but in the country, I just found almost every day when COVID started I'd ride my bike down to the mailbox and there'd be a little thing of vegetables there for me or some flowers or something, and just always and then emails from friends, "Oh, look, we're just killing a sheep if you want any meat or if you need any water or if you need this... " Just this whole beautiful friendship and I used to think even ... and this sounds dreadful, but the further you get away into the country where people ... maybe don't have as many, I don't know what ... they're busy people but always ... say, if I did something lovely with garden history and perhaps there had been an article about something or whatever, or there'd been a nice winter seminar or something, I'd get, say a telephone call from someone in Canberra and I might get a card from someone at Cooma, but the people down at Delegate, which is so far away, they'd write me a seven page letter about how much they enjoyed whatever it was ... and they'd talk about every little part of this whole conference or every little thing and I keep all those letters - they're like treasures. And so I do think that somehow it's as though they're not so touched by the whole rush, rush, rush, rush that we all get caught up in. And I think the COVID … that we've had to isolate and we can't rush, rush, rush, rush. We're been thinking it's brought that back a little bit that people are, and now even when we can get out and little bit, we do go to someone's place it is to walk around the garden and to have a nice leisurely talk. It's just somehow given us a little glimpse back in time, but that's probably from a country viewpoint.

That's where you are. Lucky you ...

50.00 That's right - I know ... sometimes I think my goodness, to live in the country people must think you're crazy when it's bush fire time or when it's crippling drought or whatever. But it has got that beautiful side to it where it's just really ... where you do get that incredible sense of caring community and kindness.

Trisha, just changing pace a bit - you've also worked on two films for the Canberra Branch, the ACT Branch, the one, 2006 that's just up now on the screen.

It's actually just the one film that I think has just been put up on the screen. It was the brainchild of Brian Voce from Birchfield at Bungendore and he was a filmmaker and he just thought it would be interesting to really document the whole history of Canberra, as the Garden City. And certainly when I (and it was with great trepidation I watched it again because I don't like ... I was just a little bit nervous about watching it again because it's looking at yourself a little bit), but I just thought he did it so, so well. And anyone with any interest in Canberra or the making of a city, it was beautifully documented, really, really good. He chose some very good people to be interviewed, and I just think it was all hail to Brian Voce for doing that.[3]

[3] A Gardener's City: Canberra's Garden Heritage, 2006 https://www.gardenhistorysociety.org.au/publications/a-gardeners-city-canberras-garden-heritage/

It has a great sense of currency too, it doesn't seem as though it's something that was filmed so long ago.

> That's right. I was actually really pleasantly surprised when I watched it again, because you know, people such as Ken Taylor and Robert Bowden and all sorts of very, very interesting, erudite people were interviewed as part of that. So I did think it was very interesting, beautifully done.

Trisha, you've been on the NMC, then you were a president of the ACT Branch back on the NMC. Do you remember your time as Chair of the ACT and what the sense was in the Garden History Society at that time?

> Yes, I thought it was a wonderful time. And I think I followed on from Victor Crittenden, who I greatly, greatly admired and what I thought is because of the name that our Branch, which is the ACT and Monaro and Riverina, it's a big, big area, so I just ... my whole focus at that time was to try and take it out into the country and try and get engagement in country areas ... and by doing that we'd actually get some more country members. We did have things - we had a wonderful winter seminar down at Tilba Tilba.[4] After dinner ... we had this whole weekend of fabulous visits and walks and talks and things, but we had a lovely dinner in the old School of Arts building there. And I do remember a very, very, very funny limerick competition we had ... `we held it after dinner and I think it was all to do with the lily *ranunculus vulgaris* that we saw somewhere, and of course there were just hilarious limericks being written.
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> But then we had a lovely winter seminar here down at Cooma. We had a wonderful weekend in the country over the other side of the Mountains to see Margaret Darling's *Woomargama*, in the Riverina area and places over in that area. So just trying to get out and about more which is hard if you don't have those members or someone who's really an active part of the committee out in those areas to organize because everything's about contacts and without those contacts you really can't get behind closed doors. And as you know, when you drive into rural Australia, you could be just driving anywhere almost, you don't see the big houses, the gardens, the interesting people - you know - they're always well hidden from the roads. So it's those contacts of getting to those places that really make the tours and those visits so interesting.

You emphasize that interesting part, Trisha and obviously that must be just a byword for them, but there must be a tremendous amount of long distance preparation and running around and coordination to happen, pies for lunch, drinks for dinner.

> Huge amount, there is huge amount in tours, but it is then the kindness of the people that actually let you into their inner sanctum and their private place because they put so much work into it ... so much - I just feel so inadequate when I take people to places because I know the amount of work that has gone into that so that all I can think is that, look, at least the place will be looking good for the next three months and they can enjoy it looking good, literally it's so much work for them. And it's so nice when people are gracious enough to say, "Yes, do come." And that Burrungurralong where we are doing the tree work, why I chose that (apart from being most fascinating place in the whole Goulburn district because it's so early and it's got such interesting history and to do with Hardy Wilson drawing and everything), but when I took a garden history tour there after a recent conference, it was just so lovely because they're such busy people.
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> They run all sorts of enterprises on their property and it's brother with sisters and their children and everything and it's just really, really, really busy, but they all came right to the front gate to meet us all and then when we left they made all of ... they'd put all the history together, they'd

[4] 1995 - the Landscape as Garden

done everything ... and then when we left, they walked out right out through ... right down through the long, long garden and out to the front gate. And they just all stood there, waving us goodbyes as though they had all the time in the world and I thought that's graciousness - that's such good manners, that was just so, so lovely of them. So I just think to give back in a little way, where they're so busy and they just got these beautiful old trees that just need a bit of work. And it's that ... yes ... I think whatever you give in life, you get back 10 times. So that's why the tiny little bit I give it garden history I've had back a million times over because whatever you give you get back a whole lot more.

In terms of that giving as well. You gave time to the NMC - different kind of giving, Trisha and you were there the first time round under the chairmanship of Margaret Darling, another chair has been John Dwyer. Would you like to speak about their role and their style?

57.00 Well, look quite different style but two people just (thank heavens as John is still with us, Margaret is not) but John, I just am so, so full of admiration for and admire and am a very dear friend of as well, his late wife, Joan too, they came on a lot of tours and I just really admire his scholarship, his wisdom, yes he's so erudite, but so understated, so gentle, just a really fine, fine man. And I think it's people like that and Margaret Darling in her way too, and a totally different way that have in their own way made a Society that really make you want to be involved in. And this is as much about gardens and as about the people that are there and the people that also would lead the Society that go to meetings that go to conferences. I know when I go to conferences, there'd be so many people there, it's like another whole family: it's just this beautiful warmth of people, but there's someone like John Dwyer, he led the Society in such a wonderful way I am just so full of admiration for.

I think in his wonderful *Companion*, Richard Aitken talks about the Society as bringing together a disparate group of people and so too the NMC has people representing each state and people with different strengths and talents. So do you sense there's an energy or a pulse to all of that?

There is an energy. It's quite a different energy. Maybe after I'd been on the NMC, then I actually was very much involved with the Open Garden Scheme and it was a very palpably different energy, because of about different things. But I think the lovely thing is that the energy is in its scholarship and in its depth. So, it is about advocacy, it's about cultural landscapes. It's just not about gardens - and that's what I love so much. So it's about a lot, lot, lot more than just having a beautiful garden. And that's why I think the journal is so important because for years of Australia having *Your Garden* or *Gardening Australia*, whatever, and it's really about "how to", and we know how to make compost and when to put your beans in and things, that's not what we're about at all. ***At all***! I know it might be a byproduct that some of us do put our beans in at the right time, but certainly not at all a focus and I think it is that lovely scholarship and an academic side that really draws us all together.

How would you sum up the Open Garden Scheme and your involvement there?

The Open Garden Scheme … that's a difficult one. I think it's about spreading the word of gardening, so really trying to show different guides to almost up the whole creativity of garden making ... What would you say? Just to give more visibility to different gardens that are usually private. So it's good for people who are creating gardens and things, but it's more a surface thing really. And it's lovely, it's very important, it's always very nice to go to a garden because it's a social activity as well, but it's just totally, totally different to Garden History Society.

Just returning, Trisha to the NMC. When you first joined in 95, when you were first on the NMC, there were people like Fairie Nielsen who's no longer with us; Helen Page is very much with us; Sophie Ducker was around then and you were very gleeful about Sophie Ducker when we spoke after the last session. What's your recollection of her?

> I just thought she was absolutely wonderful because I just think that she was such a ... she could be thought to be formidable, but it was just that wonderful scholarship of her mind that she just had so much going on. She wouldn't suffer fools at all. And it was just that ... so some people could be really put off by just that directness of hers, but she just had such a ... she had warmth and she had vitality and she just had this great inner energy there. And I was just fortunate enough that she came on some of the tours and she was always so interesting to talk with ... that's what I loved about the tours - you could just call on this incredible brains trust - everyone that came on the tour had something to offer. So I'd ask her to speak about things and I just remember her at one stage saying, "Oh, well look, if you want to do further studies, we know with Edna Walling I'll help you and things." And I think at that stage I just had young children and I just couldn't do that, but she just ... that was a very generous offer. And I just really liked her spirit.
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> And Fairie Nielsen, oh my goodness, Fairie, there's no one else like Fairie [*audio distortion*]. She just was the most wonderful, wonderful, wonderful person well before I did tours I'm sure she did wonderful tours down in Tasmania, but she just had a fabulous sense of humour, fabulous way that she lived her life, she had a lot of trials and she certainly had incredible resilience but she also … she had this huge, big, incredible garden that people were lucky enough to go there sometimes. It took in a whole big gully and she'd tie herself onto a rope and hook it around a tree at the top of and sort of clamber down to do the weeding. She just was fabulous - just one of those amazing, amazing, amazing country women who could do anything and call on all her friends to muster up good gardens when she took tours around Tassie and just her sense of humour, her sense of fun, her sense of just can-do, was just so infectious and so wonderful.

That's a lovely picture you paint. I'm just going to pause a moment Trisha. Trisha, one of the other elements that the Society has ventured into probably since you're on the NMC more so is social media and is there a role for that for the Garden History Society?

1:04 *Audio lag …* Very much, I think, accessible to younger people as well because I've never been on Facebook at all but Instagram I think is a great way maybe because it's more of a visual engagement through the camera lens mostly ... I just do think that's how the young people do hear about things, that's how they interact and they do that more than emails, more than Facebook or anything, Instagram. So, I think the fact that garden history is on that is really good and certainly against what I would have thought about social media to start with - I love Instagram because I love the fact that you can also have a little bit of scholarly interest with some of the images as well. You don't just say 'a frosty morning' or 'a sunny day' - I like to make something a little bit more of it than that, but you can have wonderful images that if people only just want to look at the images they can, but I do think it's the way that societies like ours can broaden their audience and sphere of influence ... certainly it's a way of making us more engaged with people over a wider network of people.

And you use it also for your tours and recording some of those?

1 hr 6 Yes, I do. But what I really try and do with my own Instagram account is, never try and make it commercial ... I don't try and use it to push what I'm doing. So I don't try and say, "Look, I've got a book launch today, or I've got this tour" or whatever. If I'm on tour - it looks a nice thing I'll certainly take photographs and include it, but I try not to use it as a tool just for saying what's

coming up. It's more life in the country and life as I live, because also at the end of the year, I do a big photo book and it just literally is the Instagram year. And it's really lovely because sometimes if you look through and you think, "Oh my goodness." It's good: I think photographs become our memories and photographs can be very important. And so it's a lovely way and it's also a really, really good way of keeping in touch with people.

And I find that a lot of my friends are garden history people, and we may not all have time to ring each other or to email each other but just by putting a little comment under an Instagram thing is a way of just reaching out and touching you on the arm and say 'thinking of you', and that's really lovely.

The book you produce at the end of every year is that a book-book - a real book?

It's a real book and it's just something that's every photograph of every post in Instagram. So it ends up in a big thick book and it's actually really lovely. I've got about four of them now, the last four years. And it's really lovely because it records life week by week, it's good - instead of doing the old fashioned photo albums where you'd get them all printed and put them in the photo album and then you'd have to write on them - this has actually got the time, the date and a little bit of information under each one. So it's good.

It's a lovely notion. And before we began today, Trisha, you mentioned that your latest project has arrived. Are you able to speak about that?

Yes. Well, this is so exciting … just before we turned on the computer, just as I turned on the computer to talk with you, because I've been outside all day - and there was an email from Diana Hill, who's the project manager of this book I'm doing for the National Library of Australia and it's called *Spirit of the Garden*. And because - even way back to the first books that I ever wrote - to me it was always about spirit of place, about the atmosphere in a garden, and you can go to (*audio distortion*) a garden and it might be full of beautiful flowers, it might be smart and neat but it may not always linger long in your memory. And it's just like when you meet a person, some people really exude that warmth and that character and you want to see them again or they make you feel really good when you've left, that's the same with gardens.

The ones that I really, really, really remember that really went here are ones with this lovely atmosphere. So the National Library are actually doing this book and so just as I opened up the computer I see they'd sent the design just as I turned on the computer there it was, and it was a wonderful designer, Evi O. who's this incredible designer has just done this beautiful, beautiful design for a book that's going to be out in March next year, which is so exciting. So I could never have imagined in a million years that it would look as beautiful as it does. So I'm really excited about that because I think that the first book I did after the Edna Walling books was, *Garden Design and Style* it's called, but I'm looking at it there it's in my bookshelf and it was to be called *The Essence of the Garden* because it's about that atmosphere in the garden, but the publishers Angus & Robertson said, "No, it's got to be *Garden Design and Style*" so at last - who knows if this is my last book - but at last I've got a book about what I do believe gardens are all about, which is the *Essence of the Garden*, which is the spirit of place. And it's, for example, if you go to Bundanon, which is where Arthur Boyd lived, and if you walk up through the bush there's a little natural amphitheatre there where the Indigenous people would have spent a lot of time there.

And it's just got this incredibly strong atmosphere. As in Micalago Station just ... in that garden there ... there's a really beautiful, beautiful sense of place there. There's quite a few places that really have that palpable atmosphere that it's very hard to write about. So that's why it's probably easier to photograph than write about, but the designer has really chosen some beautiful images that I've taken over the years to just try and to really illustrate that genius loci.

Is this based on your photographs, or they had a particular number of places they wanted you to ...

> Well, it was going to be that it was going to be, to use the National Library's images, that's why they commissioned the book, but then about three or four months ago, they said, "No, we're just going to use yours." And I just thought, look, it's really lovely because bringing in the other ones … they would have looked a little bit different. So it's just all my images, which sounds a bit as though I think my images are superlative which is not at all – but nearly always when visiting gardens or in landscapes, I do seek out the spirit of place and so aim for atmospheric images which are quite distinctly different to documenting a place ... thing ... but honestly the way she's designed it, I'm so excited about it. It's really lovely. It's just happened without me knowing and she's been working on it during COVID and it's really lovely.

Oh, it's wonderful, wonderful Trisha. Well, I think we might come to the end of our engagement here, but because it's the 40th anniversary, I just wanted to reflect back and forward whether the Society has ... how do you think it's been in reflecting it's mission from the early days and where it might go to next.

> I think it's certainly from it's infancy, and it's been so interesting reading back through some of those first journals and through some of the first conferences (that was when I'd had my first child almost exactly that time - so I couldn't go to those first conferences) but it was certainly garden-based and about gardens, but it was to really preserve and to make those places relevant too in the future.
>
> So I think it has come up a hugely long way and it's probably expanded exponentially in its whole vision because of the way society has as well … we've become much less blinkered with the way we view the world. So I think it's really done all of that in a very thinking way and the future -- I do think we're going ahead with what is important in each decade, because it changes from time to time; there are different concerns and different things, as you say, bush fires now, water now, landscape, the way we look after perhaps the wider landscape may be just as important as saving trees in a park or cultural landscapes are certainly (*audio distortion*) getting much more important because they are the broader landscape.

Well, thank you, Trisha. I think that's a lovely note on which to end and you've been incredibly generous with your time and your busy, busy life there. So thank you so much for your contribution to the oral history collection.

> Thank you.