

Australian Garden

vol. 34, no. 3, January 2023

HISTORY



Editorial

Prue Slatyer, Hobart conference convenor

I am delighted to be introducing the January 2023 issue of *Australian Garden History* with observations on the recent national conference held in Hobart in November 2022 and its implications for the Australian Garden History Society. As the first in-person national conference for three years, it was wonderful to experience the camaraderie and friendship of AGHS once again and to meet colleagues previously only known via Zoom.

With the theme *Landscape on the Edge: Challenge and Opportunity*, the conference lectures offered a broad perspective on our environmental, landscape and garden history, delving back into the big history of geology and Tasmania's Gondwana connection; Tasmanian Aboriginal land management and use of plants; early French exploration and the creation of the French garden at Recherche Bay; colonial landscapes and gardens; interpretation of landscape history through art; and, the contemporary challenge and opportunity of landscape and heritage conservation in a changing climate. The accompanying garden visits showcased some of the gardens and themes of the lectures.

This issue of the journal features an article by one of the conference speakers, Trish Hodge, whose wonderful photograph is on the front cover. We also meet another speaker, Tara Edmondson, who was interviewed in March 2022 for the National Oral History Collection. It also introduces the AGHS's Climate Change Position Statement launched on the final day by the Society's patron, Professor Tim Entwisle. In his closing remarks, Entwisle stated that AGHS is 'a knowledge society', one that generates, shares and applies knowledge to foster human development.

In support of this worthwhile definition, how can AGHS strengthen its role? The answer that emerged from the conference is the importance of a broader focus on landscape,



which is inclusive of gardens. Outgoing co-chair, Stuart Read, was thrilled the conference title used the word 'landscape', especially as so many landscapes are under threat. Entwisle asked when might he be able to introduce us as 'the Cultural Landscape Society of Australia'. Given the AGHS's mission of 'promoting awareness and conservation of significant gardens and cultural landscapes', is this the time for a name change?

Any broader perspective would need to be cultural as well as spatial. This would give us scope to acknowledge and learn from the long history of contribution by First Nations people to Australia's cultural landscapes. With its emphasis on sustainability, Aboriginal land management may provide an answer to mitigation and adaptation to climate change. The enthusiastic response to palawa woman Trish Hodge's conference presentation included calls for her to write a book – something she would love to do. Could AGHS support that endeavour, thus demonstrating our role as a society that builds bridges between knowledge systems?

An ongoing concern of AGHS is attracting new members, particularly those from a younger demographic. Presenting AGHS as a knowledge society, broadening our perspective, supporting the sharing of knowledge about Aboriginal land management and use of plants, being proactive about climate change and strengthening our advocacy role are directions that would engage younger people.

We began planning this conference three years ago. We've grappled with many pandemic-related uncertainties, a postponement and COVID-stricken committee members. Eventually we did it! Thank you to my hardworking conference committee for staying the course. We were thrilled to host the conference and we appreciate the positive feedback we've received.

Cover photo lutruwita/Tasmania has more than 350 plants, which are used for food, medicine and craft. The cover image shows a small selection of edible and medicinal plants, which have been used for thousands of generations, photo Trish Hodge