

AUSTRALIAN GARDEN HISTORY SOCIETY
NATIONAL ORAL HISTORY COLLECTION
WEST AUSTRALIAN BRANCH



Photo: Patsy Vizents

Interviewee:	LINDA GREEN
Interviewer:	PATSY VIZENTS
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Place of Interview:	SOUTH FREMANTLE AND AUGUSTA
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All quotations:	SHOULD BE VERIFIED AGAINST THE ORIGINAL SPOKEN WORD IN THE INTERVIEW

0.00

This is an interview with Linda Green on behalf of the West Australian Branch of the Australian Garden History Society. This will form part of the AGHS National Oral History Collection. Today is Friday 1st October 2021. The interviewer is Patsy Vizents and we are conducting the oral history in the home of Linda Green in South Fremantle, Western Australia.

First of all, I want to thank you for participating in this oral history project because it is incredibly valuable for reference, for noting down and for the establishment of the Branch which started in 1988, I'm probably way off here but we've certainly got that documented, but thank you Linda.

It's a pleasure.

Can we start by you giving your full name, birthday and place of birth?

Linda Mary Green. I was born on 10th August, 1953 at King Edward Hospital in Subiaco.

And just as a background to the family, what were the names of your parents?

My Dad was Christopher Green and my mother was Joan Leighton.

Did they both work?

Well, not really. My Mother passed away when I was four so, working wasn't happening in those days anyway. My Dad worked but he also passed away probably 10 years later.

That's a bit of a traumatic childhood for you then.

Yeah it wasn't the best start but . . .

Who raised you, may I ask?

Well, we went back to my Dad's place in Parkerville on weekends and during the week we stayed with an elderly couple, sort of loose foster-type arrangement, Monday to Friday.

So, you had siblings?

I have a sister.

I'm sorry to hear that. That's an interesting start for the 1950s.

Yes.

So, where did you go to school?

So, my first three years were at Parkerville Primary and then when we started to do this Monday to Friday thing, that was in Bassendean so we went to Bassendean Primary and then the first year or so, was at Cyril Jackson High School and then we were planning to move back to Parkerville, so I went to Eastern Hills High School for a year and a half or so.

I'm familiar with Bassendean so was that West Road [Primary]?

Yes, that's right. I actually planted a rose there. They chose people each year and I had the privilege of planting a rose, I don't know for what reason.

So, you were in primary school and planting a rose. That indicates you had an interest in gardening?

I don't really know how it came about but . . .

But did you have an interest in gardening as a child?

I think so. We used to plant annuals and know the names of lots of plants as kids, and also wildflowers, not just the garden ones.

And Parkerville would have been a wild bush area, it still is.

Yes, we had neighbours who owned bush properties and we would go up there and collect the wood and while Dad was collecting the wood, we would be looking at all the wildflowers and things.

It's almost idyllic, actually.

Yes [laughter] it was good.

Was there anything unusual, apart from the obvious, where and how you were living, was there anything that did lead you towards an interest in gardening?

I think I did have . . . I guess because we didn't have a mother, we did visit all the elderly neighbours in Parkerville. That's a little of what I have written about in my genealogy essay [see appendix]. There was one elderly neighbour and they had quite an orchard and they also had a very "cottagey" garden with Queen Anne's lace and poppies, all the old-fashioned plants. So, we would go there every weekend. Then another neighbour had more of a rustic garden; she was still interested in gardening so we would go there. And then someone else, we'd drop into a service station in Glen Forrest and that had a courtyard garden and the lady there was very enthusiastic. So, we would go and look around her courtyard. So, they were the main . . . I think they generated the interest and also at home we would plant things.

Did you grow your own vegetables?

Yeah, my Dad had a lot of veggies and fruit trees, but we would more or less have our own patch of violets. We would pick the violets to take back down to Bassendean on the Sunday night and we would call into Coles or Woollies in Midland on our way back to Parkerville, and maybe buy seedlings, you know in those little paper bags they used to come in. So, we always did potter around in the garden.

That's very much connected with gardening.

Yes, but then I guess . . . I bought a house with my husband and it was always pretty basic garden-wise. I guess because we were both working and it wasn't until much later that I thought I might study horticulture. Landscape Design is really what I wanted to study but there wasn't any course at UWA for Landscape Architecture. So, I went to TAFE in Bentley.

So, after secondary [schooling] at Cyril Jackson, did you know that you wanted to do that then?

Definitely not. No. I went from Cyril Jackson to Eastern Hills for a year, that's when I finished my Junior. Then I went down to Governor Stirling [High School] for a year and then I decided to go to TAFE instead of doing my Leaving. I studied to be a Lab Technician. So, my first job was at PMH, the Children's Hospital, working in the lab and I really stayed in then for probably 20 years maybe. Not at PMH but more in Pathology. Then in '87 or '88 I thought, I'm sick of this. Oh. that's right, if I wanted to stay in that field, I would have needed to go and get a degree in medical technology which I didn't really want to do. So, I decided to look at something else which was landscape design.

OK, so that's when you went back to Bentley TAFE?

Bentley TAFE, yes.

With the Horticulture Course at TAFE, you were exposed to the prospect of employment, is that how you became involved with the Garden History Society?

Not so much through employment but John Viska was lecturing at Bentley TAFE, although he wasn't my lecturer but he must have come into one of our classes and given a bit of a presentation on the Garden History Society and myself and another friend, Kim Macey, we both joined the Garden History Society and the Cottage Garden Circle just because we had finished; it had been an 18-month full-time course and towards the end of that we both thought we would like to keep an interest in both of those things, so we went to the Garden History Society from there.

Had you thought what kind of work you were going to do with the qualification? What did you want to do with that?

I wanted to set up a landscape design practice which I did virtually straight away, but obviously it wasn't a huge income earner straight away so I worked part-time at the Wild Flower Nursery in Wembley. They were also owned by Waldecks in Subiaco so from helping out and selling and looking after the plants, I ended up helping with landscape design then I became their designer more or less full-time there for a while.

You started your own private business as a consultant?

Yes, as a Landscape Designer.

10:00

Are you still working as a Designer?

No, I sort of retired two years ago but I'm still getting requests, mainly from extended family or previous clients but it's very easy to get rusty; you lose touch with what's available or [indistinct] the drawing, although I did have a drafts lady for a while, a few years actually.

The reason why we are conducting the interviews is of course to do with the Garden History Society; the formation, and the work that was done in the early years so, you were enthused by Mr John Viska to become involved. Have you got any memories of those early days, before you became more involved, but as an entry member, did you go on trips? Was it an enticing experience, is what I'm interested in?

Yes. Well, I must admit, the excursions were the main interest. I enjoyed going out to all the different properties. . . most of them were in country towns, all over the place. So, my friend Kim and her husband and my husband; the four of us would sometimes troop off, sometimes with the dog, if that was allowed. It would be a nice Sunday, the whole day looking at gardens.

Were there talks as well? Were there, excursions are one thing which I totally enjoy, but I also enjoy the more academic sort of approach where speakers with a particular interest, can present, like on fungi or particular topics? Things like that?

Yes, there were presentations. A lot were done by John. I think in the early days, there weren't that many speakers but it may have been that they were on a week night and if I was busy working, I might not have gone but definitely the weekend excursions, we always made sure that we had time to go and do those.

It's usually the way when you are working.

Yes, but we would have functions say, at Bayswater – the historic house there, and people would give a talk. I mean John would nearly always give a presentation if he knew the topic, the people who ran the house or owned the house would usually speak about that as well.

So, how did you get involved with committee work for the branch?

I guess because I had been a member for quite a few years and I thought I should do my bit. So, yep, I didn't have much experience on committees and I don't think I'm a very good committee person [laughs] I'm a bit more of a loner but anyway, I ended up secretary I think.

Secretary is very important. Keeping your documentation.

Yes, so keep the minutes and e-mail out things.

I'm interested because I'm on the committee as well and we plan and develop events. For instance, there's a talk coming up on the 6th I think, of October, Kingsley Dixon is giving a talk on Wyemando Nursery which was to do with the Harper sisters in Guildford. So, it's being set in Guildford. It's quite exciting when you start

planning particular things like that. But it's the volume of work that is involved in designing tours and excursions, so were you involved in those sorts of projects?

Yes. I think I just helped out on quite a few but one I did was a garden tour around Pinjarra and Coolup which was really my suggestion and therefore my responsibility to plan where we stopped for lunch and who would talk to us and which order we did everything in and get some background history. So, I did that and I helped out when we had the Conference down in Fremantle. There was a bit of work, I can't remember whether . . . different people organising the buses and the food and so on, so, I would have helped out on that one. That was in my period of time too.

That was '98, I think. So, with the Pinjarra trip, your idea. Why did that come up? You knew of a particular historic place or garden or something?

I was living in South Yunderup for years which was quite close, between Mandurah and Pinjarra. So, if something came up in the local paper about somebody historic or their garden or their property, I tore those bits of paper out and thought, one day I might do a tour. There was a family called Trickett and I looked them up in the phone book and just rang them up and said, have you got any remnants of your garden or that type of thing. So, I thought because I was in that area, I could follow up.

Was it hard developing something like that for an unknown number of people?

That particular trip, I just had to work out a map and get people to meet at one place.

Oh, self-drive?

That's right, we would go around in our own vehicles and I think we had lunch on the verandah of a house in Coolup which had a lovely garden. It was quite flexible really, everyone was welcome to come as long as they arrived at the start point and got the handout.

I think that's a tried and true method [laughter].

That's right, we did used to have the odd bus trip but quite a lot of them were self-drive.

Did you have anything to do with the National Management Committee?

I did serve, maybe for a year or two after I had been Secretary, then I went on to be the Rep for the National Committee. I did go over to Sydney for one meeting which was interesting; to put faces to all the names.

17:30

The interview stopped at this point and recommenced on 17 February, 2023.

**Today is the 17th February, 2023. I am conducting a second interview with Linda Green in Augusta, Western Australia. Thank you Linda
Pleasure.**

In the first section of this interview, you concluded by mentioning that you performed the role of WA Rep on the NMC. Can you expand on this and how did the branch actually elect representatives?

Yes. I don't think there was much of an election held, it was just anyone who was willing and able. We had some meetings listening to the Eastern States or on-line or on the phone; I think it was more like a party phone type thing. But there must have been the opportunity to go over and represent WA and I was available. I guess the others must have been working full time and they said, would you be able to go and I said yes. My first independent trip over east.

Was that to Melbourne?

No, to Sydney.

Can you remember how long you did this for?

As the Rep, or just the meetings? The Rep; only a year or two.

So, there was no longevity of representation?

No, and I think we had the meetings on two days and then I had to report back to Perth on what the discussions were and I guess put my WA point of view on what was happening. A lot of it was to do with the economics of the thing. The Treasurer had quite a big role as I recall.

Any names that you can recall that were on the NMC then?

I'm sorry, they were quite well known people but . . .

Any year, can you recall?

Well, I was living in South Fremantle, I would probably say it was close to 20 years ago.

OK, so the beginning of the 2000s.

Probably, yes.

Just keeping on the NMC theme, so how different, even when you were listening by phone, how different was the NMC to the WA branch?

It seemed a lot more formal and their goals were more academic I think I would say. I think we had big discussions about maybe setting up a fellowship for writers or using some of the funds to go to, I think it was before Nina, definitely,

That's always been a part of the promotion idea; supporting writers.

Yes, I think they were more into researching and they had some very well known, old gardens that they could put their energy into whereas in WA, none of our, or only a few of our heritage gardens are that well known. There's Government House Gardens, Queens

Gardens and Kings Park but private homes with gardens were not as prominent here as they were in the eastern states.

With the WA branch and those historic West Australian properties, it strikes me that they were instrumental, the Society was instrumental in introducing a lot of the historic houses that you may not have known. So, visiting on an excursion was really quite valuable to expand your knowledge. Did you find that? Was that part of reason for going along?

I was definitely exploring because you would go to private gardens, and they were nearly all, a lot were remnant gardens, shall we say. So, it wasn't like going to a restored garden. I guess it helped document all these private properties that had gardens, they had just gone to ruin. So, without the Society probably, nobody would know about them.

I think you are right that the Society did form a pretty good function of letting people know.

And there were tentacles going out; people knew little pockets of where a garden might be but I guess, by going through the Society it was all collected. I'm sure John and Anne have better records than me and they know of the gardens we went to.

Is that Anne Willox?

Yes.

John is a font of information on [historic gardens] and we rely on him. So, going out, can you recall how many you would have in a year? Excursions?

There were two or three each year for sure. And it depended on who was on the committee and what was happening but usually there was one that John had spent a lot of time on and then if someone else helped out.

I know how difficult it can be, in organising things but was there ever weekend trips away?

Yes, we definitely . . . I can remember staying in Bridgetown. We would look at gardens during the day and then have an evening meal together in a restaurant. We have been to Albany. I think that might have been two or three days because we stopped at Mount Barker and went across to Albany; Strawberry Hill Farm, that type of thing. I can't remember staying in the area.

Distances vary, it is really prohibitive in some cases and without having a bus or organised, I'm presuming it was self-drive?

Yes. [I was] reading some notes yesterday and Tessa Watson, she was a member, she might have had a fair bit to do with that one down to Albany and that was definitely overnight. Then to Denmark, Mt Barker, places like that.

Those excursions fed into what became the Albany conference in 2014. It had to be because the knowledge that you picked up on researching and going to these gardens, you know, you could do something more with it.

Unfortunately, I didn't go to that one, but I was involved with the Fremantle National Conference which was the first one we had I think.

The first one was in '98

Right [laughter]

and the second one was 2005

Break in the recording

Country visit that Tessa wrote up from the Albany trip. So that was 2002, we did a weekend trip to Albany.

Right, that's a good archive [referring to the notes Linda has]

The outings were, well, I'm not that academic so, just to visit the gardens and take my husband and my dog were quite an enjoyable way to spend a Sunday and socialise with other garden history people.

We did a walk around Mt Lawley which I had . . . I think I may have still been living in Mt Lawley when we did the Mt Lawley walk around,

A walk around the streets?

Yeah.

That's interesting.

I don't know if I suggested that one of my neighbours a few doors down had this old garden or whether John knew about it from some other connection, I can't quite remember but we definitely went to a house about two doors down from me [laughter].

That's a nice idea, an intimate set of ideas. I know now we balance out visits to gardens in seasons with talks, so in the winter we tend to do interior talks or visit museums or collections and things. Would you have participated in those sorts of things if you were more interested in the gardens?

If the topic interested me I did go to some. We had like a workshop up at Kalamunda, somebody's specific garden and looked at how you went about restoring it and we measured it up. Rather than just looking at it, we actually had a workshop up in Kalamunda. I think we went to Carol's house [Carol Mansfield].

Fall's Farm.

Probably, yeah. But getting back to the lectures, I can't really remember where we had them. We went to the Bayswater Historic House for some of our end of year events and we went to the Bowling Club in Victoria Park I think, one Christmas event. But where we went to the lectures . . . I know now, I have been to ones more recently down at . . . Peppermint Grove.

That's a favourite, yes. I think the facilities are quite good.

Yes, it's lovely but I can't really remember where we went. We must have just moved around. I seem to recall a workshop, not really a workshop but some sort of presentation on gardens around Anzac House and showing the plans of what the group had done towards that when we renovated the garden there. So, I guess most of the members wouldn't have been aware what had happened, I had the plans so I must have given . . .

Was that like a talk?

It was out-doors though but it wasn't . . .

On-site maybe?

Well, you went on site but we ended up at a park so we must have combined a few things. But it wasn't like an excursion to an old garden, it was more the local, Mt Hawthorn . . .

Yes. Now, you mentioned you were more interested in the gardens. When you were studying at TAFE, was the course exciting for you? It was only 18 months but it must have been a pretty diverse range of topics and subjects that were presented to you.

30.18

Yes it was but I wouldn't call it exciting [laughter]. There were a few lecturers who did their best to try and make it exciting and I did enjoy the plant identification class, the design class obviously but some of the classes like irrigation or pest management or things like that, sometimes you didn't know you were learning anything. But somehow it just infiltrated, eventually it did sink in.

You were drawn to design

That's right, and the actual plants; the physical . . . One day a week we had a class where we would do the actual pruning and the weeding, more physical – looking after a garden. You would go out and collect your own plants for some reason, I think we must have had to write up on them. The lecturer would have a few that she would tell you about. But some of the classes [laughs] weren't that exciting.

It was only at Bentley, you didn't go over to Murdoch?

No, Murdoch still hadn't opened up. It opened up soon after I had left.

Because you went into design, I wanted to know how much landscape design was in the course.

It was really just one subject. I did do something; part of a diploma subject, well a diploma subject on landscape construction which was all about moving earth, building retaining walls but at that time, I think I mentioned when we spoke before, there wasn't a landscape architecture course at UWA and they called it landscaping horticulture or something like that at Curtin, but that was more like if you were a manager in a business doing something horticultural, it wasn't really like a landscape architecture course. The only thing left was Bentley TAFE.

Well, it's a good start. Did they have business subjects to try and help you try to form a business and when you were released on the public?

Not really. I think that might have been more of a diploma subject.

OK, further studies?

Yes, a lot of people in the course weren't really intending, or maybe they were . . . some of them would work for local government or private schools that need a gardener rather than a . . . So, it was a mixed course with a lot of different threads to it really.

Eighteen months is not that long but you said, what, another 18 months for a diploma?

Hardly anyone did the diploma. No, I think you did it part time. I don't think there was a full-time diploma course because you would just pick out your subjects and then some years, quite a long time after I left, you could go through TAFE to get the acknowledgment of the work you had done towards a diploma. So that is what myself and a lot of other designers did. You had to present what we had done, how we had set up the business [indistinct].

I was going to ask about historic gardens and houses and whether you can remember particular favourites or things that stand out?

I will need to refer to my notes, I think it is out near Toodyay, a settler's garden and it had roses all along the front on the street but no, I can't really remember too many names. I liked all the ones up in the hills and past Northam. They weren't like a town name, you'd go to the farm and you wouldn't really remember a place but a lot of them had huge old workshops and machinery, everything . . . My husband and Dave would go looking at those and we would go looking at all the old plants.

We had a recent trip to Lowlands?

Yes, we did go there.

Golly, what a magnificent place.

Yes.

The mulberry tree there is so dense because it wasn't watered . . .

Like, bonsai but big, gnarled.

Yes, but with short branches. It was down by the stables. I think we are off to York this year.

I can't remember York but I do remember Lowlands. The couple who organised that were Bronwyn and Greg Keighery. So, they reorganised it for you guys? They were very knowledgeable and then there was all the arum lilies and some of the newer members said, "oh this is lovely" [laughter]. It was covered with weed. I guess if you went recently, they died down. When we went it was quite wet. The other gardens, Hawthornden [Toodyay] I was thinking of; James Drummond's garden. You asked, this is one I remembered. And that was one that I'm sure had the roses growing wild sort of out on the street, on the road edge.

So, we have Drummond's property. Do they have a collection, a feel to it?

No, in actual fact, it's a private residence and as I recall, we didn't go in. Now that I'm thinking about it, what I do remember was Drummond's hedge on the roadside in front of the property was mainly briar roses, from what I remember. I probably photographed it. Possibly that helped me remember that one.

With photographs and things, did they ever go into newsletters? Did you ever produce . . .

Yes, I'm sure I would have. Anne was the Secretary for a long, long time compared to me; Anne Willox. But no, for some reason none that I can recall, had photos in the newsletters.

I think it's very hard when you are without the computer. Again, everything has changed; we are on email.

That's right, it's so much easier. I mean, this newsletter here, you can see is quite old, I don't know . . .

There is a dated feel about it. The ones . . . [laughter]

So, no, I don't recall.

It has the WA logo, with the patron Lady Law Smith. Was that [used] for over all the AGHS logo?

As I recall, yes.

Before the log of wood comes in.

Yes, I was around when that was being worked out. But that was mainly done in the eastern states. I don't think we were overly impressed with the log [laughs] with its rings of time. And we had our own patron . . .

Oh, in WA?

I think we may have with the log of wood, No, I can't really remember if we did have our own patron.

I'm surprised if you did. You have got a very active Chair, and even when he stepped down, you had Caroline Grant and, did Sue Monger do . . .

I don't recall her doing the Chair, not while I was actively in the Committee, but she could well have. There were long periods if I was busy at work, where I wasn't in the Committee anymore and I would just go to the functions.

I do remember some of the formal gardens like Queens Gardens, John knew a lot about that obviously,

And the Government House Gardens?

Government House Gardens, yes. We went there a couple of times I would say but somehow, I don't really like that one as much, I don't know [laughter] and I have gone independently, not with the Garden History Society, when they've had open days and so on.

What about Hyde Park?

Hyde Park . . . [sighs]. I used to rent a house right across the road from Hyde Park. It was 11 Glendower Street.

Oh, Glendower, I was in Vincent.

So, I sort of spent some time there but I don't really recall having a day there.

OK, we've been having advocacy issues there. They have converted the garden store shed into a café and our Chair is very active in trying to keep the Council accountable and bring the Heritage Council in. It's changed; the demographic that visits, there are a lot more crowds and parking is an issue.

Do you think that is Covid?

No, I think it's a Council initiative, I think! It's a business decision. Instead of having caravans there dispensing coffee at a particular time and then the caravans moving on. This is a permanent and a lease agreement, easier to manage, but management of the trees and the roots; all the things that impact from crowds, including rubbish . . . anyway! Those are the sorts of things that we are looking at now in the Society; advocating where you can see that there is an issue in a cultured landscape, how can we assist in the saving or the conserving or whatever.

Educating.

Educating, participating . . .

Well that's good. I have just anecdotally noticed, I mean since Covid, all parks around us are just full of people all of the time. You used to be able to take your dog there and walk

quietly around. Now there's picnickers and people playing games which is great that the parks are being used but it's definitely changed as well. I was wondering with Hyde Park if more people were using it.

Oh quite likely, it's not a . . . I'm sure that Covid has made parks so much more attractive, plus it's the accessibility to fresh air and nature and things that . . .

45:00

Do you need a café? [laughs]

Exactly, yes.

Now, with the WA branch, I don't know whether we talked about this before but where did the meetings take place?

In the time that I was involved, we would rotate around. I'm not sure if it was just between the Chair and the Secretary but I do remember going to John's, obviously and I remember going to Ann's and I remember people coming to my house. I don't really recall going to too many other houses, so maybe it was the Chair and the Secretary.

There was no specific venue that you all went to?

No, we would just take turns in hosting the meeting.

It's the same now.

OK.

And it does depend on whether you've got space so people who have less maybe contribute more with their . . .

Supper

catering. [laughter]

Oh, you are talking about supper, were they evening meetings?

The majority were evening, yes.

Was that because of working?

I presume so, yes. I was working but I probably could have squeezed in a daytime one but it suited me; the evenings. John was still lecturing, I'm sure Ann was working. There was Edith Young, she worked at Victoria Park Council in horticulture. Another couple from Subiaco John and, I can't remember, anyway . . .

Coralie Searls, was she a member?

Yes, did she live in Darlington?

I'm not sure, it's a long way to come.

Oh Coralie, no I'm pretty sure she lived in the Swan Valley and she worked in the City of Nedlands, from memory [laughs]. Because my husband worked at the City of Nedlands and I think Coralie worked there too. As long as I've got the right person and then she lived out in the Swan Valley. She was making her own olive oil and stuff like that.

And Iris Lebigt? Iris and Carol Mansfield were original members

I knew Carol via Garden History and the Cottage Garden Circle. Iris Lebigt, the name rings a bell but I can't quite picture her. And there was Dianna Scott. She was on the committee when I was. She may not have been on the committee.

The committee comes and goes. In your scrap book, are you collecting still?

No, I haven't.

Because articles are not appearing in the local newspapers?

No, I think I specifically collected things that I may be able to do a trip or something with. That was the newspaper clippings. If something caught my attention, like Gallipoli House.

Anzac?

Anzac [laughs] I should know that, I worked on that. So, Anzac House, I collected cuttings for that because I had been involved with it. Because I'm in Fremantle, I did collect some on Manning House. Again, when I first moved here I must have thought I might organise something and we may have gone down there, to Azalea Lea House. But really, in Fremantle now I don't really see anything that grabs my attention.

I'm thinking about the issues that have been coming out in our Journal that deal with a warming climate and plants adapting to the changes involved. So, I was wondering if anything got into your scrap book to do with changes like that.

No. I'm afraid it was more the historic things that would catch my attention and living in Fremantle, there was Samson House which again, the Garden History Society had a work day there, I think cleaning up the place, helping with the garden there.

That's a National Trust Property now?

It could well be, it probably should be. We just helped; did a big clean up one day and went down into the cellar or something. And also, George Seddon used to live a few doors up so we had a day there once, looking around his garden. So, they were the things I would have been more likely to have kept a cutting about

Well, I really appreciate you coming around and finishing off the interview. We did have a bit of a Covid hiccup [laughter], is there anything else that you that springs to mind that you would like to mention about the WA branch?

Well, obviously I think John deserves a lot of credit for keeping the Society together all these years and he has a band of supporters but without him, I think there were times where it might have lapsed because no one really wanted to take on the Chair. Then they had the rule where you could only be the Chair for a few years so then he would become the Secretary and then Ann or somebody would become the Chair for a year and then John would eventually get the Chair back.

He's coming up for that at the end of the Conference.

OK.

We managed to get permission to extend his term in office to incorporate the Conference because, you know, quite frankly it would be much more difficult if he wasn't there.

Yeah, exactly.

I do hope you come down and . . .

Oh yes, when is it?

It's in October, I think 18 or 19 of October, 2024 but I don't know how you are going to find out.

That's right, the last time I saw Sue Monger, I said yes, I'm going to sign up again, I've retired now, I've got more time but I find, even having that property in Bridgetown we are backwards and forwards. Then . . .

It's a distraction.

Yes.

Well, the website; the AGHS website is improving all the time and your interview will go up on that but also there's information on Conferences and what is going on.

OK. I may get back into it. I mean I often looked forward to it, thinking when I retire, I'm going to go to the interstate conferences. That was my aim always used to be but the . . .

The Hobart Conference; that was in November.

Oh, and you went?

I did not because of health issues but we have got direct link-in, so I could register as a virtual member

OK, that would be good.

It was lovely and local speakers and that's what we are aiming for.

This is very professional; the booklet [the Hobart Conference handbook]

Well, we are a professional body.

Yes, I know. Yes, well I shall certainly . . .

Look, when you are ready. Honestly, people have got their own, it's like Augusta time.

But I did always think, when I retire I will be able to go to these conferences over in the eastern states.

They were the joys for me, I have to say. Before I could actually contribute at the branch level.

Right

Just going along. Adelaide was fantastic and Ipswich [Queensland] this year.

I've missed so many, in September or October.

September. It's later for us because our spring is later.

Especially down south.

Thank you very much for contributing; it's great. It's good to see you again.

Thanks Patsy and thank you for putting the history together, I'm sure it will be appreciated.

Yes, I think so. I think what it is giving us is a really good picture of the WA Branch and the contribution made by people, so thank you.

Thank you.

Interview ends 56 minutes 06 seconds.

Appendix.

Comments by Linda Green, post audio interview:

In August 2021, I wrote about gardens that I knew when I was a child in the early 1960's. The essay gives a much more detailed account of the gardens that influenced me than I was able to express in the interview.

Excerpts from **A journey through the gardens of my childhood.**

I have fond memories of the gardens that I was familiar with in my childhood. The one that I remember in the most detail is the garden of my home in Parkerville... There was no garden when we arrived (in about 1956) but over many years Dad created one. He also built retaining walls, a shed, and a garage, laid concrete paths and put in drainage... On the high side of the frontage a driveway ran parallel to the side boundary and between the driveway and the house there was a large freeform buffalo lawn. It was edged with rocks, about the size of small rockmelons, and each rock had been dabbed with white paint on top. The front tap was located about a metre in from one edge of the lawn. At its base was a tyre rim filled with violets. They grew profusely and Gail and I would often pick posies of the rich purple, highly perfumed flowers that were nestled in amongst the luxuriant leaves...

In a garden bed, edged with formed up concrete (more of Dad's handiwork) there were oyster plants with their majestic spires of oyster like flowers. Their huge dark green leaves were a target for snails, slugs, and woolly bear caterpillars but they were tough plants and survived the onslaught. This was also the bed that we planted with annuals: pansies with their cheery upturned faces, sweetly perfumed sweet peas, petunias with their smelly leaves but fragrant flowers, bright orange and yellow pot and African marigolds, snapdragons that responded to a gentle squeeze by snapping open their 'mouths' and other plants that took our fancy. One year we planted some tulip bulbs after Gail had read about black tulips. Even though ours were red instead of black we were thrilled when they bloomed.

Rock retaining walls on the lower side of the frontage created garden beds in which were planted a cotoneaster with its dull leaves and bright red berries and a pyracantha with its thorny stems and fiery orange berries. In the shade near to the house grew hydrangeas with their mop top flower heads that could be pink or blue depending on the soil type. Dad was never happy with the colour of the hydrangeas but in those days, you couldn't buy blueing powder. He tried different methods, including adding rusty nails to the soil but I don't think it made any difference.

Behind the hydrangeas an open jarrah picket fence ran from the house to the side boundary, dividing the front from the rear garden. A central gate and steps linked the two areas. On the rear side of the fence grew a grape vine which produced red fruit that our dog enjoyed snacking on. They weren't the most flavoursome of grapes, but Dad was able to turn them into a delicious grape and ginger jam. Next to the grape, in the angle where the two fences intersected was a plantain banana.¹ Surprisingly, for a tropical plant growing in a frost prone area it did set fruit, but I don't think we ever ate them.

Next to the side of the back verandah was a jade plant which was supposed to bring good luck. We ritually emptied our teapot onto it a couple of times a day - it didn't seem to mind. At one point in time a formal double white camellia grew next to the jade plant, but it suffered from a problem called balling. After consulting Mrs Bates, a very experienced

¹ The bananas produced by plantains are usually cooked before they are eaten.

gardener who lived across the road, the camellia was transplanted to a bed on the opposite side of the verandah, where it thrived for at least the next 50 years...

Our neighbours, Mr and Mrs Bates lived in an old but well-maintained house on a large corner block. The property was neatly fenced, and the front gate opened onto a path that led to the front door. In typical cottage garden style, the beds on both sides of the path were planted with a profusion of colourful annuals, perennials, and bulbs. Anemones, carnations, Iceland poppies, Queen Anne's lace (which was taller than us), gladioli, stocks, zinnias, daffodils, Shasta daisies, gerberas, ranunculus, chrysanthemums, delphiniums, larkspurs, dahlias, bearded irises, wallflowers, and all the annuals that we grew in our garden, provided a changing kaleidoscope of colour all year round.

The plants from the front garden often spilled over into the side garden which was mainly planted with shrubs, such as camellias, hydrangeas, and fuchsias. Fruit trees filled the rest of the property. We roamed freely in the orchard and could eat whatever we liked. There was so much to choose from: apricots, peaches (clingstone and freestone), plums (varieties such as Satsuma, Santa Rosa, Narrabeen, and Green Gage), nectarines, apples including the Yates variety which produced small apples that we could split in half by twisting the halves in opposite directions, pears, oranges, mandarins, and a grapefruit. There was also a patch of Cape gooseberries, the golden fruit cradled in papery husks.

Further up the hill Mr and Mrs Griffin lived in a one roomed house while they built their home nearby. In front of the tiny house Mrs Griffin had made a small garden with some of her favourite plants. There was a money plant, named for the silvery round seed pods that resembled coins, which I found fascinating; a snowberry with waxy white berries and an English may with spays of pure white blooms. Hanging near the front door (the only door) there was a trailing succulent with the lovely name of chain of hearts... Although Mrs Griffin had only cultivated a small area, she must have had green fingers because she grew a very large brown boronia bush from seed which she was justifiably proud of...

In the 1960's Gail and I boarded during the week with an elderly couple, Gran and Pop Rickman in Bassendean. Their worker's cottage had a small rectangle of lawn in the front, edged with a pink flowered diosma hedge and a bookleaf conifer in one corner. An Apple Blossom hibiscus with simple, large pale pink flowers grew by the front door. The side driveway was paved with bricks which were so old that they were worn smooth and rounded like cobblestones. Screening shrubs, including a striking red flowered hibiscus, a Turk's Cap with hibiscus flowers that never unfurled, and golden privets surrounded a lawn in the back garden.

Mr Rickman also maintained the garden of the Brisbane and Wunderlich product display which was only a few hundred metres away.² An emerald green, perfectly manicured lawn surrounded a magical, miniature brick house with a steeply pitched, tiled roof. Garden tools and fertilisers were stored inside the house. During school holidays we often played there while Mr Rickman gardened. Tall deciduous poplar trees framed the house and massed plantings of canna lilies provided flashes of red and yellow.

...we often stopped at the Mobil service station in Glen Forrest. The owners lived in a modern extension at the rear of the service station. Large windows overlooked a walled

² Brisbane and Wunderlich were leading manufacturers of building products including bricks and terracotta tiles. Several follies were built using their products and there were timber racks displaying various tile colours and designs.

courtyard where one of the owners, Mrs Russell, had created a lush tropical garden. A stepping-stone path meandered through the garden which included a small pond at the base of a tree. Exotic plants created a green oasis but sometimes there were bright splashes of colour from plants like tree begonias and the stunning blooms of tiger lilies. On one occasion Mrs Russell excitedly told us that she had something special to show us. We were amazed to see lime green flowers that looked like little birds attached to stems by their beaks. The plant, known as green bird flower, is a native of northern Australia, so it was quite an achievement for her to get it to flower in her garden.

... Dad taught me a great deal about gardening and from him, our friends, and neighbours I learnt how rewarding time spent in the garden could be.