

**AUSTRALIAN GARDEN HISTORY SOCIETY**  
**NATIONAL ORAL HISTORY COLLECTION**  
**VICTORIAN BRANCH**



2019

<b>Interviewee:</b>	<b>JOCELYN MITCHELL</b>
<b>Interviewer:</b>	<b>JANE HOLTH</b>
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<b>All quotations:</b>	<b>SHOULD BE VERIFIED AGAINST THE ORIGINAL SPOKEN WORD IN THE INTERVIEW</b>

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This interview is one of a series of interviews being conducted throughout Australia with early members of the Australian Garden History Society. The AGHS was formed in 1980 and these interviews will play a crucial part in recording the formation and early days of the Society. The AGHS is funding these interviews. The AGHS acknowledges the support of the State Library Victoria for use of interview equipment.

**This interview of Jocelyn Mitchell was carried out by Jane Holth on 26 May 2003 at Mawalok near Beaufort, Victoria**

**This interview is with Jocelyn Mitchell at Mawalok on the 26<sup>th</sup> of May 2003. Now Jocelyn, can you tell me how you first became interested in gardening?**

I didn't have much interest in garden, gardening until my husband bought this property which had this um Guilfoyle historic garden, and it was a bit of a shock to me, but I didn't have much option but to roll up my sleeves and try and get to work and learn about it. So we engaged John Patrick to help, to help me um start to deal with the garden, and he's the one that introduced me to the Garden History Society and told me about it and said I should join, and I would learn things from being part of that society.

**And when did you buy this place?**

1980. Yes, so we've been here 23 years now.

**Mm**

And I joined the Garden History Society, I would think, either in 1980 or 81, very soon after we came here in any case. And I very quickly was asked to go on the national committee, which I did, and I remained on that committee for nine years, and six of which I was the chairman.

**Now when you first joined, what was the purpose of the society?**

Well, it ...I believe it had, it was to help people, partially to help people with, like me, to manage large gardens, to foster an interest among, in the community, foster an interest in historic gardens with an eye, obviously, to making sure that we, they were kept if possible. One of the aims also, early on, was to try and get some kind of tax relief for people like me who have to spend a very large amount of our income on the upkeep of this garden. But sadly, that is one thing that has never really, really come to be.

**Was there a collective philosophy about the History Society? Did everyone have the same sort of aims and ...?**

I don't think so. I think we got a lot of people who were just interested in gardens and, and it was a lovely way to go, with our trips and so on, was a lovely way to go around and see beautiful gardens. So, I think it was pretty mixed, um mixed lot of people, mixed um reasons why they belonged to the society. But there was a very ded..., earlier, very dedicated band of people like Howard Tanner, that began the society, and they stayed involved for a very long time and were at the core of the running of the society for a long time.

**Can you think of some other issues, like the tax one, which were a problem in the early days, which were maybe resolved or not resolved?**

Not really. To be honest I don't think we did an awful lot in the early days. Ah I think recently the publications, the Journal, are, are just wonderful, ah but I don't recall an awful lot happening early days, but perhaps I should tell you ah about the early days of the Journal. When we began we had a, the secretary was Tim North, who was, did a terrific lot of work for the society, and he had a small publication, just more or less like a pamphlet, called Garden Cuttings, and he did, he allowed the society to devote the middle pages to news of the society. At some stage, he decided he wanted to, he became more ambitious and wanted to produce a larger publication, and of course it was very handy for him to have the society as a um, as subscribers. But he then um asked the society for three quarters of their subscription money for his publication, and there was a very unpleasant year when the society obviously couldn't run their affairs on what was remaining of the subscription, and I was unlucky enough to be the chairman at the time, was the recipient of some most unpleasant correspondence, and had to deal with a very, with a very nasty situation, to be honest. Ah fortunately the committee were right behind me and in the end we broke away and were forced to produce our own journal. And, with hindsight, that was, that was a really good thing, because the journal, we managed to get a journal out very quickly and it ah, it's just gone from strength to strength, and now I think it's a really, a really good publication.

**Now when you first became involved with the, this is the national committee is it?**

Yes. That's right.

**Who else was on that committee in your first years?**

Howard Tanner and Peter Watts, from Sydney. Fairy Neilson from Tasmania, and later Anne Cripps. Um... um. I'm having some struggle .... Um .... to think of the South Australian members. There were members from..... I'm sorry I just can't remember their names at the moment. Tony Whitehill, he was one from South Australia, and there, there was a Western Australian representative, whom I'm struggling to remember too. We're talking back about mid 80s now so that's sort of almost twenty years ago. Um.....

**Where did you have your meetings?**

We had them in Sydney or Melbourne, mostly. We always had our annual meeting wherever the conference was held and that could be anywhere – Bowral, Tasmania. So we always had a meeting there and we had three other meetings during the year – Sydney and Melbourne mostly.

**Were the conferences something which were started straight away?**

Yes.

**And they had them every year?**

Yes. Yes. They were because soon after I joined, which, we went to Hobart for the conference and that's, my husband and I both went to this particular one, we didn't know anybody in the society at that time and that's where we met, met lots of society members who were very kind to us and many of them we, still to this day, are in contact with and I'm still a member of the society.

**Do you remember any tours in particular, apart from that one?**

They all tend to blend in a bit. Um. I can remember going to Bowral which was very nice. I organised one myself, I think it was 84, so it was quite soon after I'd been involved – I organised one centred in Ballarat. Um ... That was quite a job because there weren't many members around to help, but I think it was quite successful. Um Bowral, Tasmania, Adelaide, Brisbane, I didn't go to Toowoomba. I don't remember anything particularly outstanding. Some, some of them had fabulous speakers, some of them were just average. Do you remember any gardens in particular, in, in, in Tasmania for instance? Tasmania was the first conference, wasn't it? That's right. The garden that I remember most there was really the Botanic Gardens, where a lot of the conference was centred around, but I couldn't remember the names of the gardens. I have a picture of some of them in my mind but I couldn't, I'm sorry, I couldn't remember the names of them now. Did you find that you were developing a love for historic gardens, in general? Oh, I certainly did. I learnt a lot from John Patrick, I learnt the botanical names of things. Even today I don't know the common names of things because he had someone map the garden, my garden, for me and name every plant, so I used to go around with the list and name the plants and .....I've forgotten what you asked me. Did you develop a love for historic gardens? Oh yes, yes, sorry. Well, I think in those early years I visited lots and lots of gardens. As I got to know people I was able to say, well, I'd love to come and see your garden, and I was really in a high learning mode, and I did, I learnt to love gardens and I .... Today it doesn't matter if they're historical gardens or modern gardens, I'm interested.

**You said your husband thrust you into this interest by buying this place. Did he have an interest in historic gardens?**

Absolutely not. He only saw the farm and he hasn't. I don't allow him in the garden because we have very different philosophies. He's an engineer by training, and he likes things very neat and sharp and gets very busy, like a lot

of men, with the chain saw. I like things much more informal so he, I keep him out of the garden.

**And when you started on this garden, did you feel you had a commitment to try to keep it as it was or have you changed its style or its plans?**

Very early on it, it was, it became obvious it was still very much in the Guilfoyle style and very much like it was when he first designed it. A number of changes had been made in the garden and I decided that I would try to keep it very much in the Guilfoyle style – not slavishly, I was quite prepared to add new plants and different plants, but one example is, previous owners had straightened his beautiful curved paths around the garden and we took those up and put back the curved paths. And on one side of the garden we actually found the old path underneath as we went, went along, which was quite exciting. So very much, tried to keep it in the Guilfoyle tradition.... ah, I'm just always aware of that when I'm planning.

11.42

**Now you mentioned some of these early committee members ... have you maintained any particular friendships or interests through meeting them?**

Yes, I have. Particularly Howard Tanner, in Sydney, even though we don't see each other very often.

**And why him particularly?**

Well, I think he was the previous chairman. He was very supportive of me and we just became friends and he's still interested in the Garden History Society, takes an interest in it even recently we were on one of their tours up to Lake Mungo. He was on, we were both on that same tour. I guess we just liked each other and became friends. We don't contact each other a lot but he was the main one. Fairy Neilson. I feel I can call them any time, if I went to Tasmania, though I don't stay in touch with them. Everybody gets on with their lives. I think we became quite close over the tr, what I call the troubles, we had um. The committee became quite, quite close.

**And who was on the committee at that time? Was it that same group you've mentioned before? And, were there any other troubles apart from the journal?**

No, no, no, not at all It's always been the most friendly, friendly society and easy, I always think gardening people are really, generally speaking, nice people.

**And why do you think that? Why are they?**

I don't know. A friend once, who didn't know about gardening, said 'Why do

you like doing all this?’ And I said, ‘Well one of the reasons is all the people are so nice.’

**Do you think the society has fulfilled its aims?**

I think it’s doing a lot of good work. I think it is fulfilling its aims. It’s, I think they’ve always been a bit disappointed that they can’t, they don’t appeal to a larger membership. That was one of the things we were trying to do – we always had great hopes, we couldn’t believe that lots and lots of people would [not] be really interested in this. But I think the membership has stayed stable for twenty something years, which is ...

**What sort of efforts have you made, or did you make to try and broaden the membership?**

Well, in the early days it was just the simple things like having membership pamphlets, printed, encouraging, trying to encourage members to get, have their friends, get their friends interested, very simple things. But I think over the years people have done more but I don’t know the details.

**In those early days were most of the members people like you who had large historic gardens that they were concerned about?**

Not at all. No, not at all. A few, there were a few of us. There are not all that many people that have these kind of gardens, or are mad enough to. Um.... This garden is actually on the nation’s heritage list but it really doesn’t mean much. There is nothing to stop me putting a fence up and letting the sheep in. And sometimes I feel like doing it, because of the cost!

**Does being on that list give you any help?**

No, none. No, all it is, is that I think the Commonwealth can’t take over it for some other purpose. It’s something quite ridiculous.

**Ah. Can you describe what sort of people the early members were? Were they, were they mostly female or male, for instance? Or more elderly, or young? City or country?**

I think they were a very mixed lot. Of course, Dame Elisabeth, being one of the founders, and Howard Tanner was one of the founders, I think there was a good mix of, of sexes. It definitely was not dominated by either sex. Perhaps the conferences had more females, but often because they ran on weekday, or at least started on a weekday. But there’s always been a lot males involved, and I think the National Committee’s always been pretty much evenly divided between males and females.

**You would have taken over from Dame Elisabeth, is that right?**

Howard Tanner. Howard, yes.

**Now why was she a suitable person to be the first chairwoman?**

Why was she?

**A suitable sort of person to be the first chairwoman?**

Well, Dame Elisabeth is a very enthusiastic gardener and has supported so many wonderful things, I guess she thought it was just a fantastic idea. She was such, she was a very well- known and respected person and liked person, in the community, so that's a pretty good start, I think, for publicising, or getting them, getting the society going.

**David Yencken was another very early member. Did you know him at all?**

He was not on the committee but I, I actually do know him because his family property is not very far from here.

**Was he important to the society?**

Oh, I think he was in the early days and I remember reading he gave a paper at the very first conference, um, which I remember reading. Um he wasn't, I think he was a professor at the time, he was a very busy person, and he wasn't active in the society once I came, when I came into it.

**Phyll Simons was an early committee member.**

She was also gone. She couldn't have stayed very long, I don't think, because I think the society started in 1980 and I think I was on the committee '82, '83, but Phyll I only knew a little bit from those early days. And did you know

**Sophie Ducker? Was she ...?**

Yes, well Sophie used to come on every conference so um I knew her quite well.

**Did she make a contribution to the society herself, apart from going on the tours?**

Oh, very much so. She's a very academic person and a botanist, I think, by ... she was very keen on the society. One of the things that was really good about the conferences was that you met people like her and you could learn from them. She gave papers at some conferences. She attended meetings – always had something to say, um, so she was active and did contribute.

**And what about Tommy Garnett? Did you know him?**

Yes, yes, very well.

**In what way was he important to the society?**

Well, I think once again, a bit like Dame Elisabeth, he was a very well-known and respected gardener and while he wasn't particularly active in, in the way of being on committees and things, that wasn't his way at all, ah, he would come to, to conferences. I once went on a garden history tour of New Zealand which was organised by the Australian Garden History Society, which he led, so he did things like that. And that was, I mean it was wonderful to go on a trip with him, with his knowledge.

**Was he on the committee at all?**

I don't believe so, no, no. Don't think he was a committee person. He was good at writing, wasn't he? Yes, and he had his own place at Blackwood, which, a garden which is open to the public, and a bit of a nursery, and he had his writing and he just worked, just liked working out in the garden himself.

20.34

**Some of these early members thought that the society was rather elitist because it was quite expensive. Did you find that?**

I don't think so. I'm trying to think what the first ah, the first subscription was. I think the time we had the split with the, with the journal, it was about 30 dollars, which I expect in the 80s probably was quite high. But if we were going to produce a publication you had, it's not as if we made any profit. Um, the money, most of the money went to publishing a journal because all the people of course, worked ... it was only in recent years we've paid somebody to, to conduct some of the affairs of the society and we've paid somebody probably one day a week, or two days she might do now, I'm not sure. Now these tours and the journal are the Victorian interests, aren't they? Well, Victoria's always been the strongest branch by a long way, and I mean it just reflects the fact that most Victorians, well Victorians are more interested in gardening certainly than NSW people. Tasmanians are interested, South Australians, but Victorians always, Victoria's always been by far the strongest branch. Um, and that's why they organise more than the other places, I guess, but all branches organise events – lectures in winter, trips – they all do.

**And did you go interstate much as being part of the national committee?**

No, only to national conferences. It was I guess a bad time. I had started a nursery here so I had a business to run and it was, became more and more difficult to get away as the business grew and that's one of the reasons I finally um gave up, I resigned from the committee.

**Now in your view what is an historic garden? Is it more the style and the plan, or the contents of the garden, or both?**

I think it has to be a combination of every, of, of age and um possibly the designer. It might be important because of the designer. It must, it certainly



must have a large number of features, of its original features, or to be able to be restored to some extent. Um. It's, I guess, when does a garden become historic? How old does it have to be? I don't know. It would have to be a minimum of fifty years, in my opinion.

**You mentioned you had started your own nursery – What sort of plants did you grow in that?**

We were growing unusual perennials and shrubs. A lot of them, to begin with a lot were propagated from this garden and then I started importing seed and, um, and as we grew we went into shrubs and we, we really found a niche market in western Victoria where the big nurseries didn't bother to come, particularly over the winter months, and we were able to service them much better. And then we took a stand down at the big wholesale plant market, market, but what finished us in the end was the business got to the stage where it either had to get bigger or stop. You know, I needed a much bigger truck because the business was growing but the economics didn't work out because of distribution. We're just too isolated here, we're too far. The wholesale market's a three-hour drive.

**And were those sort of plants, did you choose to do, to follow that line ah so that you could regenerate gardens like your own? Historic ones?**

Oh, certainly I felt that nurseries, the offerings in nurseries were very limiting, and, and they were all pretty much offering the same things. And you have to remember this is before gardening became such a big thing in the state because it really only started in the 80s, this huge interest in gardening, and the Open Garden Scheme started, which I was involved with that as well. Um. And it was definitely an attempt to introduce new plants and better plants that people didn't, weren't able to obtain anywhere else. The nursery was open here as well and people, and so we had some retail sales and we used, we got people coming from, a lot, from interstate. So, the word got around but in the end I was ah, you know, in my sixties, and I thought I don't know that I want to get bigger anymore and I couldn't see that it was going to be worthwhile enough because of the distribution, so I ended up just closing down.

**Were they mostly exotic plants that you...?**

Yes, didn't do natives at all. In fact, I know very little about natives because all my knowledge is from, about gardening, has come from here. But I'm just starting to get quite interested in them, but I don't have much opportunity to plant them here – they don't look right.

**No, that would be part ... could you do that within Guilfoyle's style of a garden or not?**

Not really, I don't believe so. He used a lot of New Zealand plants but um no, almost no, Australian natives. I've looked at lists of his plantings – very, very few.

There is, there is a garden plan – his original plan – in existence, of this garden which is owned by the previous owners, but I have a copy of it. But sadly the planting list had been lost over the years but you can guess pretty well what he, what he'd put in, and there are a few old photographs that I've used as guidance.

**Can you think of any other early members of the society who have made an important contribution? Ah, the Brooks family I think were quite important weren't they, at Macedon?**

Yes, well they were, they were extraordinarily good gardeners and there's a lot of knowledge and, just like a lot of people, they were very generous with their knowledge and just, they came just to conferences and I think that's the way everybody got value from them, rather than being involved in committees and so on.

**Have you been to their garden?**

Yes. Their garden at Woodend is owned by somebody else now...

**Yes, the Carnegies.**

Yes, Yes, yes, I've been there, yes, a few times, and I've seen their garden in Malvern as well, some years ago. I mean she's a really, Marion's a really top plantswoman, and I've said that gardeners are nice people, they all just love sharing their knowledge and ah she's one of those.

**And what about Mimi Ramsay? Do you know her?**

Oh yes, I did, yes, Mimi, Mimi just fell into the same category. She just loved gardening, she used to come to lots of things, conferences, lectures, and so on. Delightful person, um opened her garden generously.

**Where was her garden?**

At Mt Macedon.

**In what way, was that particularly interesting in any way?**

Well, of course, very different to here. It's a mountain garden and interesting to me because a plant she could grow, there's no way I could grow them here. I can't grow rhododendrons or anything that needs acid soil. In fact, quite the reverse. Plants that do well here seem to like alkaline soil. But her garden was on a slope, it was up at Mt Macedon which has so many beautiful gardens. She had a very good gardener and it was, it was a beautiful garden.

30.14

**Was she on committees at all?**

Don't think so, not that I can recall.

**And what about Alethea?**

Russell? Yes, well of course, the Russells, we bought this place from the Russells and ah we met Alethea and Phillip at the first conference. We hadn't met them before because when we bought this place they had actually gone from here, and we became friendly with them and they've always been very helpful and they've given us some old photographs and told us what they remember of the history of the garden, which was all very helpful. And Alethea, of course, I forgot, was very much on the national committee too. When I first went on she was membership secretary for years, so she did a lot of work.

**Do they have an historic garden now?**

No, no. They've pretty much retired. Well they're in their 80s and they um live at Barwon Heads and have got a, they've just built a retirement house and have a new garden.

**In the early days of the journal when Mr North was involved, was anyone else involved in preparing that or writing for it?**

In the very early days I think he did most of it, to be honest, he did a lot of work I have to say he did a lot of work for the society as a secretary and more than any other committee member probably. And it really wasn't till we broke away that we solicited articles from, articles from other members or other members of the community.

**And was someone put in charge of the Journal then?**

I'm just trying to think who that was, before you came. I think it was Richard Aitkin um and I even, I was going to have a look. I've got just about all of them here. Um, but I haven't had time to look up. I think it was Richard. He certainly did it for some time, early, in the early days. And he's been responsible since of putting, editing that Oxford Companion to Australian Gardens. He's always been very involved and done a lot of work for the society.

**Yes. And ah, oh the name escapes... I was just going to ask about someone else ...um, while it's coming back to me.... Do you think the society is going well now?**

I don't know very much about it, I have only just sort of started being a little bit more active and going to some things. But for many years I haven't. I find it very difficult to get to Melbourne sometimes and um then, living on a property like this, there's always too much, too much work. Um. I think, I think it's probably mixed. I think Victoria's going very well but they have trouble getting people to come on to committees. That's not an unusual thing. Um. Some of the, some of the branches are going really well and some not so well. But

that's always thus. And they all have their ups and downs, depending, if there's somebody, like in Victoria we have Helen Page now who's just, puts in so much time and effort. If, if a branch has somebody like her it's going to obviously, do quite well.

**Do you think the Victorian branch is, is one of the stronger ones at the moment?**

Yes, definitely. That still is probably the strongest branch.

**And for what reasons, apart from Helen?**

Well I think I've said before, I think Victorians love gardens. They have much more interest in gardens, just as a very general statement, much more interest than other, than other states or areas.

**When you were having those meetings in Melbourne in the early days, did you have a headquarters in Melbourne? Where would you have had the meetings?**

Well, we did not have an office at all. In fact, I at one, when I was chairman we did get an office towards the end, we went to the Botanic Gardens and they gave us an office in the old astronomer's residence. They gave us a very, like it was about six feet by four, but it did at least give us a base to store things and um that was, I thought that was great. And it was a start and now they've gone on and they still have an office at the Botanic Gardens.

**And how many meetings would you have had each year?**

Only four national ones, yes. And I don't know how often they, the branches, meet. Probably once a month but I'm not sure. Yes.

**Would you have any suggestions for the society now?**

Yes, try and get tax relief for people with historic gardens. In this district, for example, the Western District, there were so many enormous old gardens, they're nearly all gone because, as everybody knows, the living on the land has, has become leaner and leaner and people can't afford a gardener. Apparently, there was 17 gardeners in this garden when it first started. And um it's, today with modern equipment, it's a two-gardener garden but I can't afford two gardeners, but you know, I'm nearly one. So, we have one. And with occasional, occasional casual help we manage to keep it up and I don't get enough, I don't believe I do enough development, I'd like to do more but it's just too expensive.

**For that reason, do you think the society might have trouble in maintaining its membership in the future, because there aren't so many historic gardens around?**

No, I don't think that. I think that people are more aware of the importance o,

of keeping up historic gardens and I think the Garden History Society actually encourages people with historic gardens, because they, I think they're amazing how they come out and, to some gardens, and do, have working bees. They all come for a whole weekend and that stimulates the owner and encourages the owner to keep going. And they, I'm sure they're helpful also with information and how to find plants and how, what to do about this and that. So, I think they, they certainly encourage the preservation of historic gardens.

**Do you think they could do more of that sort of thing?**

Actually, have working bees? I don't think it, I don't think it would work. I'm not sure how many gardens in Victoria, I can think of three, that they're doing currently. That would probably be as much as they could manage, and they'd go twice a year to each place for a weekend, so that's six weekends, it's a lot of time for people to give up just to go and work in someone else's garden. They may have others, but I think it's three. One is in this area.

**And we're talking about private gardens, aren't we?**

Yes, except Bishops court. I suppose you call that a private garden. Bishops court in Melbourne is their latest project and that, that garden would've really, um, I think, would've gone if it hadn't been for the Garden History Society lobbying, lobbying the church, not to sell it, that it was important, and then they now go and work there and they had a big sort of fair I suppose you call it, there last, huge thing with hundreds of people. I potted up hundreds of plants and so did everyone else, and now they've created this huge interest in Bishops court, in the preservation, and they're helping restore it, which I think is marvellous, that's the sort of thing that the society's all about.

**Yes. Do you know of any other gardeners, gardens, that could need that help?**

I'm sure there are some, they just don't come to mind.

**What about public gardens. Ah. Provincial botanic gardens? Is the society interested in those sort of places?**

Yes, they are. I mean I don't think they'd go and work in them but sometimes they, they keep their finger on the pulse of what is happening in those gardens and if, if there's something happening that they think is inappropriate they will certainly lobby, write letters, approach the councils, whatever, um, they're very good at that now and ah try to steer them in the right direction.

40.31

**Do you think the society has changed along the way?**

Not a lot. Not really. No.

### **Do you think that's a good thing? Or do you think it needs to change?**

It could probably do with a boost, a change often will bring in new people, new ideas, that can't be a bad thing, probably would help, but I'm not quite sure. It's a very limiting thing, their aims and objectives, so I'm sure they could try some different directions but I don't have any suggestions.

### **Does it have links with overseas societies like the one in England?**

I don't know. I mean when I was chairman I certainly did have links with the Garden History Society in, in England, um. It was, oh, no I'm not sure, was it the Garden History Society, the woman [Rosemary Nicholson] I was in touch with? There's a site at Lambeth, do you know what I mean, there's a lovely church with a garden there, and there's a museum, a garden history museum in London, it was the Garden History Museum, that we had some contacts with and we were trying, trying to do something together, it didn't eventuate in the end because the whole journal problem came up and I left soon after that. Um – I still had contact with the woman, who's still in charge of that museum, but I don't know if the society does.

### **When you were inviting speakers to conferences did you invite anyone particularly memorable, in your opinion?**

Not that I can think of. That's not something, I haven't thought about that for years.

### **Did you ever ask anyone from overseas?**

Yes, we did. You've reminded me. Professor Stearn. Very, very well-known botanist, wonderful, quite an elderly man when he came, but he was an outstanding speaker, and I do believe there was somebody else. He, we invited him at the time I was chairman, he came out.

### **In what way was he so outstanding?**

Well he was, he just came from another country with a different point of view and he was a very, an excellent speaker, and just presented things differently, I guess, to somebody from here would, the way they would.

### **Was George Seddon someone who was influential in the society?**

Yes, he was very active, and everybody knew George and he was very respected.

### **How was he influential?**

Well George had an architect's view of gardening, and everybody just had a, came at it from a different i... from a different angle. He was also very, very interested in the environment as a whole, and the way gardens fitted into an environment, so that was a point of view that was, that made a contribution.

**And what about Carrick Chambers?**

I didn't ever know him. I think I may have met him once or twice but I don't remember.

**And John Turner?**

No, don't even know the name.

**He, they were both professors of botany.**

I don't even know John Turner's name.

**And another early person, I think, is Grace Fraser. Did you remember her?**

Don't know that name either. No. Don't know anything about Grace. She must have been very, very early.

**She might not have been an important society member. I think she was an early landscape designer, but maybe not involved in the society, if you, if you don't remember her.**

No. No, I don't.

**Sophie used to talk about a very good friend of hers called Kitty Ghan. Do you remember her?**

Yes, I do. Well actually I'm surprised she didn't mention, somebody would have mentioned Alice Jeffery, have they?

**Yes.**

Yes. So, I always think of those three together for some reason, they used to come, I think they were friends and they were all quite a bit older than my generation anyway, and they were all lovely people, all very knowledgeable. Alice I remember better than Kitty. Alice had incredible plant knowledge and when she came and visited here I just remember walking round with her and she'd be very direct, and say, 'I hope you didn't put that in! Take it out.' But I actually like that. I like people to be direct and I'm very, I'll listen to their advice. I might not always take it but I'll listen to it. So, they were kind of, um, they were real stalwarts of the society because they came to everything and everybody loved them and everybody learnt from them.

**For Sophie it was a very important social function as well as being an informative sort of society, would you have found that too?**

To some extent, but I wouldn't say it was terribly important, but it was, for me it was a wonderful experience. I'd, I'd, all my life I'd worked so I hadn't been involved in voluntary things because I'd always had, almost always had a job,

you know, a few years having children, but um so it was one of the first things I was involved in. I've been involved in lots of things since, and so it was a great experience, whether you'd call it a social experience, I spose you could .

**Who took over from you when you stepped down from chairman?**

Margaret Darling. And she remained for a long time, I believe. Only, only gave up a short while ago.

**And to your knowledge, did the committee's plans or aims change at all under her?**

No, I don't think so, not much. I wasn't, when I left I really left. I didn't resign from the, from the society, but I was so busy with my business I didn't attend any meetings or any lectures or anything for years. So I don't have anything to say about her years as chairman.

**And do you go to many functions now?**

No, but I'm, I'm trying to cut back on my work here so that I can do. I mean, as I said before, I recently went on a trip um, a Garden History trip, to ah with Gwen and Roger Elliot, to Neds Corner in Lake Mungo, and I just loved it and it, I enjoyed very much meeting a lot of the people that are still going to those things they were going [to] years and years ago.

**Are there historic gardens up there or was that ... ?**

No, it wasn't a gardening, a garden, trip. It was a really more an environmental kind of trip. We didn't go to any gardens. Was that a path they might be following, do you think, to look at the environment more? Well, certainly a lot of the members are interested in, in, in that sort of thing, and I think Gwen and Roger Elliot have led a lot of trips but they're, they're not sort of gardening people, they might be Australian gardening but they, their interests are much broader, and I think their trips are very popular. If you don't book to go the minute you get the notice you don't get in, so that shows that people are interested in, in a slightly wider, wider area than just historic gardens.

**And what is their connection with the society? Are they on the committee or are they just members...?**

No, no, no, they're very busy people, no. They lead these trips, um, and they must enjoy it because they've done so many, and presumably they're paid.

**And do you have any other sorts of trips you'd like to go on. Would you like to see the society organise anything else that you'd be interested in**

I'm a bit over garden trips. I loved that trip up to Lake Mungo, Ned's Corner, because it was different, and I'll just, I can't think of anything in particular I would like to do. There are some things I haven't done, like go to Western



Australia in wildflower time. I'll do that. If the Garden History organise a tour I'd go on it, otherwise I'll organise my own self to do it some time.

**Have they done that in the past?**

Yes. They've done some trips with a woman called Marion Blackman from the west, who was a speaker at a, a couple of our conferences, and she's led trips, but they're not garden trips, they're like the Elliots, they're trips to the outback and looking at the amazing and native flowers in the outback.

**They must be finding that that's what people want, mustn't they?**

Well it looks like it, yes.

**Sort of following George Seddon's interests.**

It is actually, yes. I hadn't thought of it that way but it looks like it.

**Looking at it, looking at it as a whole more than just a niche in Australian gardening.**

Mm.

**Well thank you very much for that.**

That's a pleasure.

*Interview ends 51mins and 38 second*

