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GARDEN DESIGN STUDY GROUP
 NEWSLETTER No.49
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Treasurer/Membership: Bryan Loft

ABN 82 428 110 028

Dear Members,

A much wetter [Sydney] summer than the last three years has ushered in 2005. I hope it is a similar story in your corner of Australia. Bruce and I spent Christmas in Germany and the New Year in London - neither white, both wet and cold! I caught up with London based member Nicky Rose and we had a delightful day wandering around Kew Gardens in an icy wind, vying with each other for the most outlandish beanie prize. I have to report Nicky won hands, or rather heads down. Resplendent in a creation that would have done the Queen of the Cornish pixie folk proud, she was devastated when we found her favourite eucalypt in the Gardens was fenced off. This particular tree successfully wards off homesickness when hugged! At that moment I realized why I think GDSG members are the nicest people in the whole world - as well as being fabulous fashion icons!

Brian Walters has worked very hard and our website is coming along nicely. Have a look at it on <http://farrer.csu.edu.au/ASGAP/design.html> We welcome any ideas and suggestions you may have - email me and I'll pass your thoughts on to Brian .I'm very excited about this, it will make Bryan [magnificent membership man and terrific treasurer] Loft's life a little easier, may well boost our already very healthy membership numbers and puts the Study Group firmly in the 21st century, spreading our ideas and experiences of Australian flora and its use in garden design to the world.

In this issue articles on "change" in the gardened landscape and sculptured landscapes of geometric formality are presented and discussed. Different ends of the spectrum? Your comments and thoughts please.

Meetings Sydney 19th Feb. Melbourne 27th Feb.

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CORRESPONDENCE

Jo, as each newsletter arrives I am tempted to write and then get so distracted. This time I hope to make amends and at least get an initial email sent off.

The first item I noticed was your comment: wishing you a rain full and joyous Christmas. Please could you keep the rain in Australia? The days are so short and so often terribly grey.

The benefit though, and this surprised me till I saw it, is that the contrast between deciduous trees set against a grey sky means that the outlines of the branches stand out. This is particularly so with silver birches. Near us is an avenue of birches, and it was the grey background that drew this to my attention. So, as the season progresses you can see the different phases the trees go through. An amazing insight, and this does lift the general impression of doom and gloom - you see, there are silver linings even in the grey sombre.

I have been very lucky this year in having access to several gardens. More about this when I get a chance to see my diary - the memory is really shattered. However, on my way to work this morning I passed a recently done front garden with its paved driveway. I wish I could send a picture, but suffice to say it was ghastly. Zig zag along the front of the house, the part of the driveway facing the street to form progressively inset parallel parking spaces with its zig zagging. At least the fenceline was straight I could not figure out where the planner was coming from, and wondering whether the architect had any idea of how his work of art had been finished. Not sure why I was so offended by the zig zags, but there you are.

What I did want to write to you about was also how much I enjoyed 'A Short History of Australian Garden Design'. Particularly so that so many of the names were known to me. It did give me a sense of belonging especially whilst I am questioning why I am in this foreign country. We are so fortunate that we are living at this period in Australia's gardening history.

Nicky Rose, London

Dear Jo,

Having one of *my* sleepless nights so got up to do something useful, i.e. pass on this quote from The Garden, Journal of the RHS, Nov 04.

Charles Dickens had no illusions about gardens. In his Pickwick Papers he wrote 'There was a bower at the further end, with honeysuckle, jessamine and creeping plants—one of those sweet retreats which human men erect for the accommodation of spiders'.

Enjoy OS, not the best time for gardens.

Cheers

Barbara Buchanan Vic.

Dear Jo,

Just a quick note to wish you a happy New Year and give you the details of the book I mentioned and you were interested in. "A Garden of My Own" Louise Earwacker and Neill Robertson.

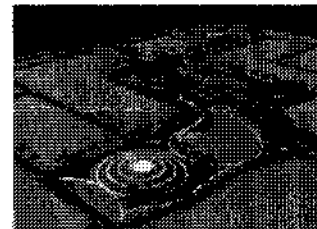
Having recently read it for the second time I can recommend it.

Regards and best wishes,

Carol Bentley NSW

MOUNDED PERSPECTIVE

WHAT ELEVATES A PROJECT FROM A DESIGN TO A PIECE OF ART? AREN'T ALL PROJECTS AN ARTISTIC EXPRESSION? MARK FRISBY REPORTS ON A MASTER PLAN THAT EXPLORES THE ROLE OF THE LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT IN DESIGNING AN ARTISTIC LANDSCAPE.



Client: Roadcon
Developments Pty Ltd
Landscape architect: Collie
Landscape and Design Pty Ltd
Catchment engineers:
Ecological Engineering

Biestone Green is a new residential estate located near Werribee on the western plains of Melbourne. The site is approximately 108 hectares and will comprise more than 125c new dwellings.

Landscape architect Collie Landscape and Design's themes for Biestone Green have been designed to create a distinctive identity for the estate. Strict geometry has been used to generate sculptural forms that contrast the flatness of the site and the local area.

During preparation of the landscape master plan, the entry park was used to explore the design intent. Computer-generated models were prepared to articulate the underlying design philosophy aimed at creating a sculptural, artistic landscape.

A circular retarding basin with a boardwalk, observation deck and ephemeral wetland in the east rises to a spiral mound with lookout in the west. Strong, clean lines are created using paths, garden beds, grassed areas, feature stone walls and earth mounding.

The landscape components are elements of a traditional park, but they are assembled in a crafted and contemporary fashion. Earth mounding and other elements are used to create a landscape with spatial interest as well as highlight views into and out of the park. The forms in the landscape are designed to be read from a distance but have been proportioned for the enjoyment of the park user. They are to be viewed as objects and experienced by walking between, around and over them.

Water bodies need not be represented in a natural, organic shape. Formal, structured interpretations of these elements are equally valid expressions of natural systems. This design demonstrates that functions such as stormwater detention and water treatment can be delivered in a structured, formal way while retaining their ecological value.

Culturally significant dry-stone walls weave into the design of drainage infrastructure to highlight shapes and forms. The walls form part of the sedimentation ponds to create an aesthetically interesting yet highly functional landscape feature.

Care has been taken to ensure the design meets and exceeds the maintenance and design requirements of the local council. For example, lawn areas have been graded to match the mechanical limitations of mowing machinery and meet the established occupational health and safety requirements.

Planting within the park supports both the ecological and aesthetic objectives. Local indigenous species are assembled in large, sweeping garden beds that shape and define the sculptural landscape. Trees line paths to accentuate landforms and design lines while also creating a landscape that is familiar to park users.

This project challenges perceptions of the role and perhaps limitations of the landscape architect. The solution responds to the objectives of the client while also being a design that delivers high ecological and aesthetic outcomes. Documentation of the works is under way, with construction expected to be complete in spring/summer 2004.

THE TRAGEDY OF THE BALI BOMBINGS IS NOW ELEGANTLY WRITTEN INTO THE TEXT OF PERTH'S KINGS PARK. BY ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR RICHARD J WELLER

The civilising mission of most parks and gardens works by pushing wilderness to the edges. In Kings Park it's the other way around. The main body of the park is a thicket of scrappy bushland and its periphery is manicured parkland. Apart from some science done in the park's bush, this useless pre-colonial fragment is now purely poetic; that is, it is central to this culture's memory.

From this mnemonic site run two counter narratives, one framing the park as a *memento mori* of civilisation's triumph over wilderness and the other reads the park's bushland as a sign of all that is lost and that which should be recovered. That this massive swathe of bushland exists instead of what would otherwise be prime real estate says something unexpected and profound about a culture frequently dismissed as economic rationalist. It also periodically goes up in flames.

In European cities, people enter parks to escape history; in Perth, again, it's the other way around. Narrated in no less than 32 monuments distributed through Kings Park, the history told is predominantly one of war. In that sense, Kings Park is Perth's "Elysian field", the legendary Greek home of the heroic dead, a place famously referenced at Stowe in Buckinghamshire.

In what is a textbook case of gender associations in landscape, the monuments to men's wars are mostly vertical objects set on high ground, whereas a watercourse through a vale is dedicated to pioneering women. In the 1980s, some feminists argued that the park and its monuments naturalise and romanticise war, and to make their point they vandalised various obelisks. One memorial recently removed from the park was an enormous karri log, once a sign of progress and now a sign of ecological ignorance. As this mighty log was removed, a finely tuned arboreal walk designed by Donaldson and Warn Architects—the architects of the Bali memorial to which we will shortly come—was opened as the park's latest attraction. The treetop walk suggests a model of engineering more finely tuned to sites than has otherwise been the case in a city and state renowned for its infrastructural bravado.

The main Anzac memorial — replete with an eternal flame — dominates the park's manicured landscape and commands a panorama over the CBD and the broadest reaches of the Swan River. In the midst of that panorama is

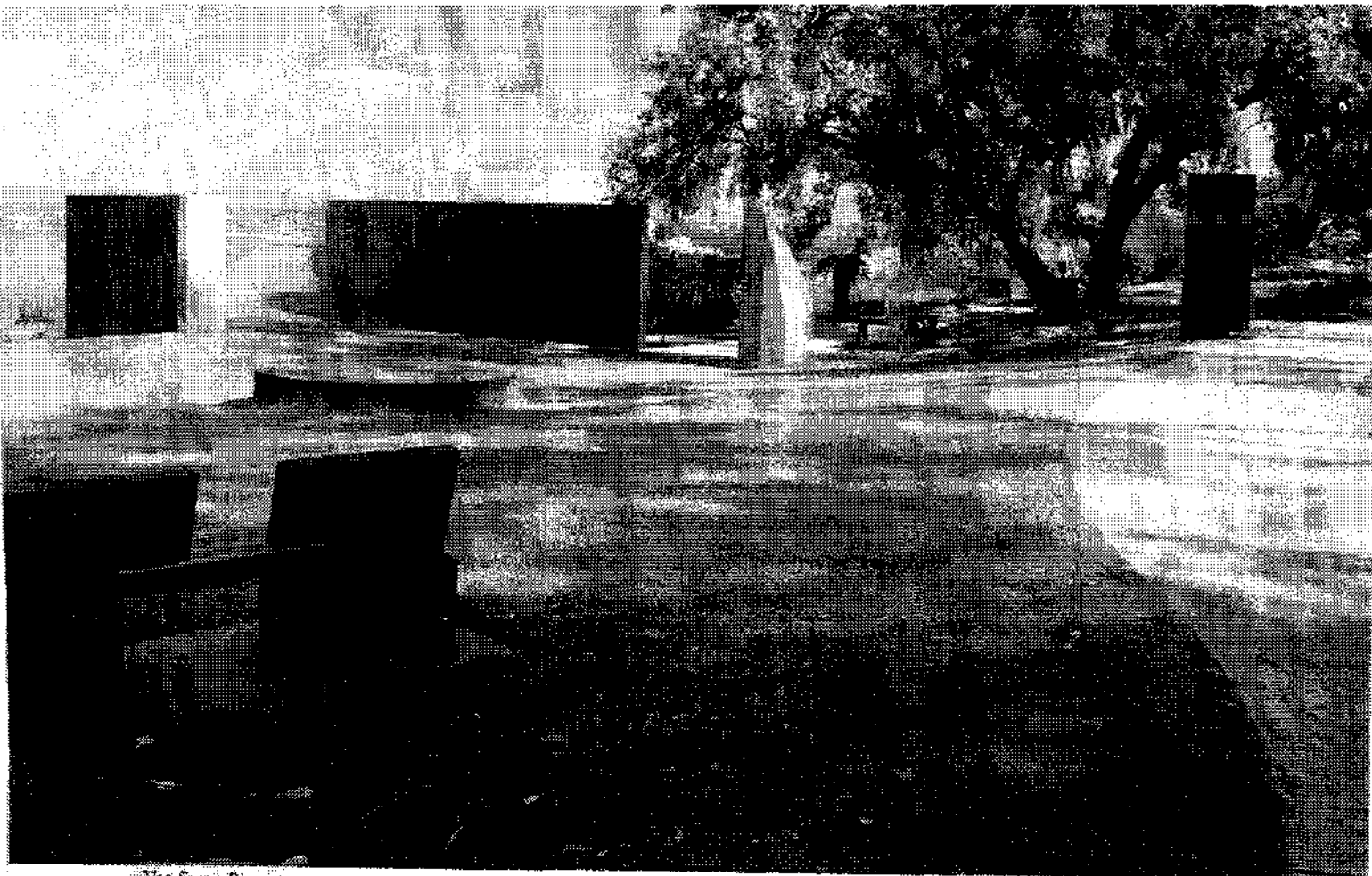
Heirisson Island, upon which a life-sized bronze statue of the Aboriginal warrior, Yagan, was installed. Living in the early part of the 19th century, Yagan resisted colonisation. Because he was conducting a guerrilla war, Yagan was imprisoned on Camac Island, a limestone island crawling with tiger snakes, eight kilometres off the coast from Fremantle. He escaped and made it back to the mainland only to be eventually shot and beheaded. The "trophy" was sent to England and, at the behest of local Aboriginal people, has now been returned. The sculpture of Yagan was recently beheaded by vandals with power tools — not once, but twice. Both Heirisson Island and the Anzac memorial are visible from the most recent addition to Kings Park's extensive collection of war memorials, the Bali memorial.

Won in limited competition by local architects Donaldson and Warn, the Bali memorial design, like most work produced since Maya Lin's Vietnam veterans memorial, tries to open out and become more than just another object in the park. It does so in two ways: first, paths and walls choreograph and absorb the viewer; and second, meaning is not so much projected out *onto* but pulled *infromtix*e surrounding landscape. In short, the Bali memorial tries to make a place where the norm is to simply site an object.

Written into the existing path system of the park, the memorial crosses its designated site on the ridge of the famous Mt Eliza with two axes. Although each axis is manifested in the memorial's domain by only a few metres of beautifully crafted paths and walls, each extends visually out beyond the park, towards the infinite. One axis aligns with the sunrise on 12 October and the other towards the Swan River; references to heaven and earth, fire and water. Death, it seems, always requires the elemental and the cosmological.

Deftly, the memorial subdivides its audience. It will be successful as an annual ritual for the relatives of the dead, and on the other 364 days of the year, those not directly related are helped to think of those who are. Even though for most of the year the sun is not in the frame, the vista is still significantly directed towards the city, the Darling scarp and the sky beyond. This is Perth's postcard prospect and generously, back from the memorial itself, the designers have provided a picnic shelter and seating.

While I don't think we need frames to tell us the landscape is a picture, this framing device resonates with the public in this location because locals, tourists and scholars all come to this point to "see" Perth. Most notably, it is from here



The Swan River
forms part of the
memorial's symbolism.

Architects:
Donaldson + Warn
Project Team:
Geoff Warn, Simon
Pendal, Tom Griffiths,
David Jones.
Landscape Architect:
David Smith, Plan E
Client:
The Department of
Premier and Cabinet, and
The Botanic Gardens and
Parks Authority.

Photography by Martin
Farquharson

that George Seddon, in his book, *A City and its Setting*, constructed an entire history of Perth, a significant landscape architectural history that interwove natural and cultural history.

Seddon's intellectual vantage point reminds us of Petrarch's, who, as legend has it, climbed Mt Ventoux in France, not to get closer to God but to get a better view of humanity, and in so doing marked the watershed between the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, it would be perhaps too much to expect the design of the Bali memorial to ruminate on the earthly complexity that gives rise to events such as the Bali bombing, and so the memorial looks to God in Nature. With one eye to the sun and a hand in the healing waters of the river, the Bali memorial effectively also extends the picturesque Elysium of Kings Park to the entire Swan River catchment. The Bali memorial resorts to the sublime, which is always an easy way out.

Perhaps, in its obsession with framing, the Bali memorial is self-conscious of its own appropriation and construction of Nature as a picturesque Elysium. If not, then it's just a superstitious alignment, a footnote to so much environmental art that conjured cosmic significance where there was none. Death, however, allows and to an extent requires alignments that would otherwise be clichés, in fact, when the sun shines down through the cavern of the memorial's structure, there is, if not hope, beauty.

Reminiscent of Dani Karavan's brilliant combination of corten steel, glass and text honouring Walter Benjamin at his place of suicide in Port Bou (France), the Bali memorial is detailed and constructed with the genuine care and finesse one would expect from one of Perth's best architectural practices. Since memorial design is a very public and political art, the designers have been successfully uncontroversial in their choice of symbolism. Also, they have done well to orchestrate a process typically fraught with too much input from too many sources. Designed and constructed in five months to the sum of \$570,000, the project involved more than 160 different people.

As if the memorial's architectural structure wasn't enough, the public art industry has added its obligatory marks, so the walls — in glib deference to the context — are embossed with floral emblems by David Jones. In addition, the famous local author Sally Morgan has written, "Let the River wash away your sorrow" across the glass pane that concludes the axis to the river. This text, and additional snippets on the walls, seems to me to confuse that which should be said privately and that which should be said publicly. Suddenly, what was a subdued and well-crafted site-specific register of the cosmos and the landscape becomes an overly designed experience. This memorial tells you where to move, what to see and how to grieve — three things that traditional monuments in parks, despite their patriarchal objecthood, thankfully don't.

Nonetheless, the tragedy of Bali, although largely beyond signification, is now elegantly written into the text of Kings Park — a place laden with themes of colonisation, sacrifice, gender and nature. That so many important themes, the sum of which is national identity, can be at work in what is otherwise just a park is precisely landscape architecture's representational genius.

DESIGN**Super natural**

Beverley Johansen, SMH Oct. 04

A house of earth and glass blends in with its extraordinary terrain.



The view from this house over the paddocks to the Great Southern Ocean and out to Phillip Island is more than just a pretty vista for architect Stephen Jolson. It is an

Mornington Peninsula and wanted to create a Tuscan style villa. Jolson had a more integrated take on the project. He pushed for a contemporary house that related to the Australian landscape as Tuscan houses relate to the Italian countryside. After discussions, drawings and model making, the clients were convinced.

Jolson's house relates to the environment by colour, texture and material. He worked with the contours of the land and the demanding climate to create a beautiful house that also enhances the landscape.

On this and neighbouring properties paddocks were cleared long ago and trees planted to deflect harsh coastal winds. Jolson borrowed this idea of windbreaks to present the view and to create a traditional tree lined drive, where semi mature poplars peel in to block the view as you approach the house. Then everything- the honey coloured building, the view and the sculptural garden - opens up.

The house itself is a series of modules, angled in a semicircle to follow the view and stepped in several levels to flow with the slope of the land. It is made of earth and glass - rammed earth walls on the hinterland side and glass towards the ocean.

The thick golden walls of Dromana crushed rock are monumental and could belong to an ancient stronghold, planted in front of the walls, in a semicircle are another twenty four poplars that throw shadows on the walls. Antique Buddhist temple gates, set in these walls, are the main entrance and open onto an enclosed courtyard planted with forty year old olive trees. This courtyard separates the guest zone from the main part of the house.

In front of the house, beyond the walls, is a maze, shadowed by sculptured waves of earth, on which long grass billows in the breeze "like an ocean in a paddock", says Jolson.

PLANTS and DESIGN

Change in the garden - good or bad? Diana Snape

A major characteristic of a formal garden style is its lack of change over time. Once set out at the beginning, the pattern is maintained and is there for life. There is much repetition of plants in the design; growth in each individual plant may be allowed until a certain size is reached, then will probably need to be restricted by regular pruning. This work is ongoing but straightforward and repetitive. Such order and certainty does appeal to many people. Of course there are variations each year throughout the seasons but once the garden is established, that's it!

Can this style appeal to a keen gardener? Assuming plants were well selected initially (more of a challenge with less tested Australian plants) a completely formal

small garden would present few challenges. The box hedges, rows of white roses, pencil pines and centrally placed green spheres (or whatever) would always be there. How many times a week would you really look at it - really see it? In a large formal garden, there are more plant varieties to select and a greater range of design possibilities, and pruning could be quite a complex and demanding operation - and I suppose there's always the weeding. Small areas might need redesigning but generally there'd be little temptation to visit a nursery or even another garden for ideas and inspiration. A garden might be 'perfect', always symmetrical and controlled, static over time.

In a naturalistic garden, change over time and the resulting evolution of the garden present continual challenges (and rewards). Plants of the same species may be repeated in the initial design but may be grown under different conditions in the garden, in various microclimates, with different neighbours. So it is difficult to predict the final size and form of every plant. Although of the same species, they may develop different forms at different rates, and therefore ask for individual attention. One specimen may happily reach an appropriate height and shape, another may be pruned to restrict its size, a third to modify its shape. There will probably be a greater number of species in a naturalistic garden, so management obviously presents more challenges and greater interest. The delightful seasonal variations throughout a year increase in proportion to the number of species.

In Australia, a formal garden can be composed of either exotic or Australian plants, or a combination of both. Once the composition formula is decided, the aim is for it to stay. A naturalistic garden based on the Australian landscape and ecology will feature predominantly Australian plants. New species, hybrids and cultivars of these are constantly appearing in nurseries (or other APS members' gardens). Some tempting ones are superior in their form, foliage or flowers and we may want to incorporate them in our own gardens. Our attitude to the benefits of including indigenous plants may change too. So every year our palette of plants is quite likely to change, perhaps only slightly to bring about subtle changes in our design, or perhaps dramatically. The planting design of a naturalistic garden usually tends to be more fluid.

Many of our Australian plants are fast growing, so the pace of change in our gardens may be rapid. When I look back at earlier pictures of our garden, taken over the years, this is very obvious. I still find it difficult to estimate future sizes (and sometimes fail to try hard enough) so we may be faced by a shrub too large for its allocated position. Pruning is one answer, of the shrub or

of its neighbours. If it needs repeated pruning, it may be time for removal and redesigning with one or more smaller plants. Generally the design is flexible. If a particular species fails, we may try the same one again, or decide to replace it with a similar species, or one which is quite different. There is often (usually?) more than one possible solution for any design question.

In just a few cases, such as some wattles, rapid growth can mean a short life. We might then decide to replace the same plant, which will quickly reestablish. (With foresight, we might have taken cuttings.) Or the speedy grower may have been a temporary 'nurse' plant as we waited for a slower growing companion to take over its spot. Otherwise we might choose to replace it with another species. Severe weather such as storms with strong wind or hail, prolonged drought, or frost can also kill or damage plants. The death of any plant is sad but the chance to do a little redesigning is not. Apart from the loss of a tree, I find it rarely leaves a conspicuous hole in the garden (unlike one dead box plant in a formal row). Extra space in a maturing small garden can often be a benefit.

Change in the garden is also initiated by plants self-sowing, sometimes with generous abandon. Correas, croweas, grevilleas, grasses, bulbines, orthrosanthus, etc. - different ones for different gardens. We can leave them, transplant them, give them away or just pull them out. If self-sowing is too prolific (some pandorea forms spring to mind) the plant may be a potential weed and itself need removal. Groundcover plants that spread by suckering can be let loose or pruned to size, or bits transplanted. This sort of choice is possible only in a fluid design.

It is interesting to compare a created, naturalistic garden with a natural garden, self-sustaining with (of course) all indigenous plants. Here the cycles of life, growth, death and decay go on ceaselessly to produce a coherent and very fluid whole. The overall appearance is remarkably constant although the components are ever-changing. The age of each individual plant varies roughly with its mature size - many trees live for hundreds of years, groundflora maybe just a few. In a created garden we mourn or regret (or at least notice) the death of one plant; in a natural garden (apart from a mature tree) it is usually just a small part of the total pattern.

We can choose the degree of change we want in our gardens. If we want to minimise change we can select reliable, proven plants (especially for the framework) and not introduce wildcards - tempting but untested ones. We can make sure we choose plants of appropriate mature sizes and space them accordingly, if we plant daisies etc. for infills, we can even remember to treat them as infills -

cut them back, transplant them or even pull them out as shrubs mature. We can prune plants to the size we want (though preferably not too frequently). We can choose a more formal look. Alternatively we can go for change and spontaneity in the garden, a more natural look though still largely designed. The overall framework of hard landscape and major plants can be designed and retained but the details allowed a degree of randomness - more work for the gardener in some ways but greater interest. As years go by, the detail of the garden can become finer, with the introduction of tiny plants and the appearance of mosses and lichens.

I cannot imagine enjoying a garden fully without some change over time. I think designing a naturalistic garden is far more than the initial plant selection and layout. Designing continues throughout the life of the garden (or gardener) and gets more and more interesting as the years go by. There is always something new to see, something new to learn from natural processes - letting nature take a hand. I believe that there would be much less reward in gardening (or designing) without the challenge and opportunity of change in the garden. What do you think?

Garden visits, Wangaratta

Diana Snape

Brian and I recently attended the Australian Plant Society weekend held at Wangaratta. Highlights of this enjoyable weekend included visits to six very different gardens: three of these belonged to members of the GDSG and another owner has been helped by the NE Vic branch of the Study Group.

I think all members of the NE branch should be congratulated on the help and encouragement they have given to their own members and other APS members in the area in regard to their garden design. This applies particularly to Barbara Buchanan as their leader and also Jan Hall for her professional input. The beneficial results of considering design were clearly evident in the gardens we visited.

One was Barbara's own, the extensive, mature garden of a committed plantswoman. Though drought and frost have tested plants over the years, the garden is looking wonderful with many vistas and effects that Barbara planned now being realised. A large garden with many trees and large shrubs takes time to mature, unlike a small garden with plants such as small shrubs, herbs, groundcovers and grasses. The whole scale of design is grander, incorporating many groves of trees (more distant from the house) and beds of shrubs (closer to the house). In the garden we were able to enjoy individual plants, varied beds, different sections of the garden and the garden as a whole.

Another large garden belonged to Jill and Tony Judd. Here, Jill has transformed a difficult, heavy clay site into a beautiful garden with many lovely plants. She has the zeal of a perfectionist - near enough is not good enough and quite mature shrubs are removed if Jill decides they are not just right for their position. The garden has formal elements and creates an impression of formality but the lawn is slowly shrinking as the garden expands.

Fiona McCallum¹'s garden, also large, is still young but a lot of care has gone into the preparation of raised, sculpted beds and their orientation. The beds are outlined with bricks/tiles, giving (at this stage) an impression of formality which will probably be softened as plants spread more. Plants, including a number of delights from WA, are wonderfully healthy and there is repetition of selected plants. It will be fascinating to see this garden mature.

John and Helen van Riefs small suburban garden is a delight - it has been described in some detail by Barbara in the last NL and I would agree with all she said. It is great that passers-by are being influenced by its beauty.

Overall, I think these gardens illustrate well some of the good, practical work the GDSG is doing. It is also pleasing to see an ever-increasing number of Australian plant gardens in the Open Garden Scheme in Melbourne, able to favourably influence the general public.

Small delights

Diana Snape

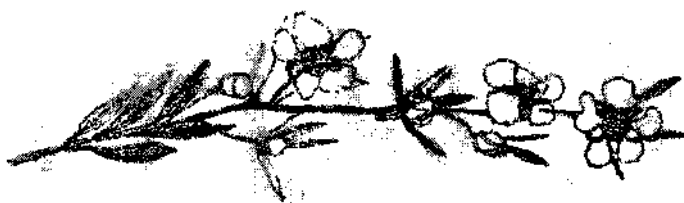
Lovers of Australian plants sometimes feel almost apologetic about the prevalence of Australian shrubs with small leaves and small flowers. We shouldn't! Last week Brian and I went for a walk near Lome and I was fascinated by the textures of steep hillsides of shrubs, with contrasting trunks of occasional trees. Small leaves and small flowers predominated and the effect was most beautiful.

Among the 2 to 4 metre shrubs, numerous scattered prostantheras were conspicuous in lilac. Occasional peaflowers contributed yellows (few acacias were still flowering) and olearias some white. Spyridiums had finished flowering but their bushes now appeared a pale, slightly rusty grey green. The whole hillside looked like a large tapestry of subtle shapes and also subtle shades of green and other colours, the overall impression being one of softness - very calm and soothing. I certainly did not miss the CE in your eye¹ look of large leaves and masses of strong colours. This attractive softness is characteristic of many Australian landscapes - even spiky spinifex foo/cs soft.

Recently we have at last had some steady rain and this has reminded me of another delight of small leaves and fine foliage, as large chametauciums (Geraldton Waxes) gently arch and bow with their burden of raindrops. Their flowers are small too but the bushes as a whole are lovely (not only in the rain) and the delicate flowers (as with many Australian plants) draw you close to look. I also enjoyed the soft beauty of our one casuarina in the rain, its fine needles laced with drops. Many other plants in our garden with size-challenged leaves and flowers looked equally beautiful.

I think another interesting aspect of fine foliage, small leaves and -flowers is their gentle interaction with light. The resulting texture is very different from the more solid look of large leaves and flowers. Smaller units give a greater range of shades and different effects, even semi-transparency.

Large leaves might feature strongly in a rainforest garden and they provide excellent contrast among fine-foliaged plants (as do trunks) but I for one could not do without the delights of fine foliage, small leaved and small flowers.



Chamaecrista nictitans
Diana Snape 1984

An opportunity to explore the relationship of plants and people

Mount Annan's great centrepiece of intensive horticulture, the Terrace Garden, has been described as a temple to taxonomists, and a labyrinth of abstruse concepts, its maintenance the stone of Sisyphus.

The garden's original purpose was to display Australian plants arranged according to their evolutionary relationships. As an enormous piece of hard landscaping occupying 4.5 hectares, it was and is a bold achievement. Horticulturally it has been a nightmare and it is to the great credit of Mount Annan's horticultural staff that a huge collection of plants was established.

Arranging plants according to their botanical classification, family by family like a living herbarium, presents positively-quirxotic challenges. Not only do plants within a family have wildly differing horticultural requirements, but no cultivars were allowed: everything had to be sourced from the wild and so little could be used that had been selected in horticulture for its cultural robustness or special visual appeal.

Of course, many of the individual plants in the Terrace Garden are fascinating and beautiful, capturing the interest of visitors, school groups and our horticulturists, guides and educators, but much of it has been quite underwhelming because of the constraints of the original thematic concept of the garden imposed on what could be achieved horticulturally.

Although faced with increasingly constrained resources, we have now finalised plans to transform the Terrace Garden into something spectacular, contemporary and workable.

A project team, led by Janelle Hatherly, Community Education Manager, was formed to explore how the garden could be developed into something that visitors could connect with and which encouraged community attitudes that value plants, the environment and sustainable living.

With a working title of 'The Connections Garden', the transformation will be in the style of a roofless museum made up of corridors, vistas and open spaces.

Zone One is devoted to that time before people. Plants have been around for a long time, probably for over 500 million years; much longer than humans, but relatively short in the history of the earth. Here we will use some of these surviving examples of primitive plants to recreate past environments and show what the world was like before humans.

Visitors will walk in the footprints of dinosaurs, smell and feel the cool dampness of ancient rainforests and come face to face with a living dinosaur, the Wollemi Pine.

Zone Two explores the idea that home is where the habitat is. Since the advent of humans, we have shaped nature and nature has shaped us. We have dispersed seeds, migrated across the face of the earth, modified environments and had major effects on other species. This section will show a series of natural Australian habitats, highlight the connections within these natural ecosystems and demonstrate the effects of humans on them.

Zone Three looks at the relationship between plants and



Clouston Associates

Work on The Connections Garden will begin later this year.

wildlife. Animals feed off, pollinate and disperse plants; plants poison, sting, attract and provide food for animals. Their relationships can be warlike, sexual, cooperative, discriminating and sometimes manipulative. Like human society, the natural world is interconnected and there are dynamic, precarious balances of interest. Here we aim to display plants that naturally attract insects, birds, bats and other types of wildlife found in the Mount Annan area.

Zone Four is devoted to plants and people. As well as meeting our basic needs for survival, plants can bring us pleasure. They can be arranged into highly aesthetic landscapes that capture and hold our attention, evoke a variety of emotions and stimulate memory. Here we will provide opportunities for our highly skilled horticultural staff to express their creativity.

Landscape Planning Officer Geoff Duggan and the project team have created a design for the garden around these concepts. We anticipate that work on the plants and time section will begin this year.

Alistair Hay
Director Botanic Gardens & Public Programs

PLANTS

Reflections

Chris Larkin

Each year seems to hurtle along at increasing speed; the frenzied pace reaching its climax around Christmas. For the keen gardener there is so much to do. On the home front I always try to plant out as many of my potted plants as possible rationalizing they may have a greater chance of survival in the ground when those punishing hot days strike. Mulching is another big task. It is no good mulching too early in the year, in Vic at least, as mulch absorbs a certain amount of useful rainfall and is a barrier to small amounts reaching the soil. It seems the benefits of mulching far outweigh any of the negatives but if it is possible to remulch garden beds after useful, penetrating rains then so much the better.

Were there more Australian plant gardens in the Vic section of Australia's Open Garden Scheme launched at the start of spring? There were certainly quite a few gardens to visit - old favourites like Elsbeth Jacob's and Bev Hanson's garden and quite a few new ones including friends and near neighbours who live in the seaside town of Ocean Grove. I went down and helped 'man the gate' for one of these gardens and was truly amazed at the level of interest. They had both received good publicity in the local paper and experience says that this is the single best aid to ensuring a good attendance. The weather is the wildcard that no-one can plan for and they were lucky on both days. I thought I was quite familiar with the plants in my friends' seaside garden but after being asked to identify plants realized how little I knew of the specifics: on the whole I knew the plant genera but not the species. I guess this isn't so surprising as there is a big difference between what will grow happily on sand at the seaside compared with what I can grow on clay at the Foothills of the Dandenong Ranges.

Rainfall in Ocean Grove is much lower but then so too are summer temperatures as a generalization because of a cooling Seabreeze. Tolerance of salty winds and, in this case at least, alkalinity are added factors for plant selection. There are a lot of grey foliated plants that grow happily near the beach and they look right in the context: *eremophila* and *adenanthos* species also do much better than here and look good. I guess this is what plant designing for different sites and locations is all about - responding to the human requirements for shade and shelter but doing it in a way that takes into consideration the context; selecting plants that are at home in environment; using some of the indigenous species if possible.

Around Melbourne we had very good rainfall in the 2nd half of the year and a relatively cool spring and start to summer. I recorded the highest rainfall in the 5 years I've been doing it and a friend, who lives a bit south of here, said it was the highest for 8 years for her. More importantly it was useful, penetrating rain. Gardens are looking lush with new growth and large remnant Eucs around me that have been increasingly stressed over many years of drought, have also picked up. With few hot days spring flowers lasted

longer and the overlap in flowering times produced even more colour and interest than in the recent past. Now in early January summer has not produced its blowtorch for more than the odd day.

Long term forecasts, for what they're worth, are for below average temperatures throughout this season. But much hotter weather is inevitable; it generally waits until the children are back at school. In the meanwhile I garden in the early morning or late afternoon, or somewhere where it's shady. I'm doing a lot of pruning to shape and invigorate plants and all the time I'm plotting and planning those sections of the garden needing some reworking when the season breaks - hopefully sometime in Autumn.

I'm also planning to screen off more of the garden from neighbouring properties as one development beside us has the go-ahead and there is a proposal in process for subdividing the property in our view line. Now instead of framing the dam in front, which they propose to drain and build on, I will be rushing to establish a screen.

Remembering the "Forget me note"

Phil Watson Tas.

The much loved, blue Forget me nots or Mouse Ears [*Myosotis*] are the icons for 2,000 odd species of herbaceous plants comprising the Borage family. Other representatives include the delicate Tasmanian natives *Myosotis australis* and *Cynoglossum suavolens*, the delightfully scented, violet or lilac flowering accent plant *heliotropium arborescent* and the intriguingly named lungwort [*Pulmonaria officinalis*]. As well as culinary and medicinal herbs Borage and Comfrey and vigorous weeds such as Paterson's Curse [*Echium plantagineum*] and Viper's Bugloss' [*Echium vulgare*].

The native Mouse-ears, *Myosotis australis*, can be easily confused with the weedy Wood Forget me not, *Myosotis sylvatica*. This plant is notorious for smothering moist woodland sites in blankets of soft blue.

The small Tassie woodland herb Sweet hound's Tongue, *Cyanoglossum suavolens*, is worth growing in your grassy woodland patch or outdoor display containers, if only for its highly fragrant white flowers and hairy tongue like leaves. The plant's scent is the reason for its mutually beneficial relationship with a few species of inconspicuous nocturnal moths. Although the moths mainly pollinate at night to protect them from being easy bird fodder, its more conspicuous day feeding caterpillars act like liquorice allsorts for honey eaters, thornbills, wrens, robins and pardalotes. Herbalists crushed the fruit and leaves and mixed them with swine grease to make a salve to treat dog bites. The roots and leaves have been used in teas to treat cruihgs, cols and diahorrea. Poultices of leaves have proved useful for relieving insect bite&, burns and even haemorrhoids. Caution is recommended as it contains an alkaloid capable of causing a nasty skin reaction in susceptible people and liver damage to grazing stock!

Old Man's Beard

"Old Man's Beard" is the Victorian children's name for the Clematis, one of the most beautiful creepers of the bush. In spring and summer it swathes the bushes in the gullies and the mountainside scrubs in a gleaming garment of pure white or creamy-white stars, and as autumn approaches the flowers give place to feathery achenes of plumed seeds, softer to the eye even than the flowers from which they arose. According to one visitor from abroad who was entranced with it "earth has not anything to show more delicate than the filtered summer sun streaming on a tree fern swathed in its wedding garment of Clematis in the Australian bush."

But its beauty is not for the eye alone; most of the species of Clematis contribute to "the fragrance rare that the bushman knows" - the indescribable mingling of scents which the Australian abroad tries in vain to recapture; that rare perfume, the lack of which does more than anything else to make the Australian wanderer homesick, whether he be aware of the cause or not.

In New South Wales they call it "Travellers' Joy", next to which the official Victorian vernaculars for the three native species - Clematis, Erect Clematis, and Small Clematis - become stilted and entirely inadequate. Four species are native to Australia, the most

widely distributed and most beautiful being the large-flowered *Clematis aristata* of which there is a variety, *C. aristata* Dennisae, with a brownish-red zone in the centre of each flower.

Strange though it may seem to the superficial observer, the Clematis is closely related to the humble buttercup, and so to the more gaudy Ranunculus of our gardens. The flower is similar, with its soft tuft of feathery anthers in the centre, and the seed head, a little bunch or achene, puts the relationship beyond doubt. Each individual seed has its own feathery plume, and when the winds of autumn come the "old man's beards" take wings and fly away to spread joy for future travellers in other parts of the bush.

In a spot in the garden matching in shade and moisture the place where the original plant was found, the seeds may be planted, and will thrive. They are well worth gathering for the purpose at this time of the year.

Reprinted from SGAP Qld. Region Bulletin, March 2004.

Originally from "Wildlife", February 1939

(The 'Old Man's Beard' seen in Western Australia is *Clematis microphylla*, flowering in July to September. Editor.)

I firmly believe that in order to go forward one must occasionally look back. The past informs the future. The following article by Anne Latreille, although written 14 years ago is still relevant to the GDSG, for its historical overview in the use of Australian plants and the incidental reinforcement of the group's aims by the speakers. As members we must ensure our study group maintains its impetus by providing quality resource material and stimulating meetings for members as well as creating and maintaining links with other like minded societies and individuals. I would very much like to thank Stuart Read, Landscape Specialist NSW Heritage Office, for his kindness in chasing up these hard to track down articles and passing them on to me. He has given me copies of other, very interesting Australian plant articles which I shall include in future Newsletters. JH

Australian Plants in the Designed Landscape

Anne Latreille

The versatility of Australian plants in gardens - and the way Australian gardeners have ignored them - was demonstrated at the 10th Annual Conference [1990] of the AGHS. Delegates were dazzled by the array of plants shown by speakers like Dr. Jim Willis and Roger Elliot. Colour, form, detail and seasonal variety were illustrated, from the noisy brilliance of Shirt's desert pea to the quiet elegance of tiny snow daisies and flannel flowers. "There's an Australian plant for any purpose in your garden" said Roger Elliot. Slides of chocolate, tinsel and vanilla lilies, boronia, crowea, and thomasia were greeted with appreciative - and sometimes rather surprised - applause.

Our native plants were seen as 'garden-worthy' in other parts of the world, several speakers pointed out. Designer John Patrick quoted the noted English expert, Christopher Lloyd, who in his garden, Great Dixter, espaliers eucalypts against brick walls, treats *Grevillea robusta* (the silky oak) as an annual, and uses Tasmanian blue gums as biennials for bedding displays, regularly cutting them to the ground to produce great crops of blue-grey juvenile leaves.

'Gardeners in England have investigated the potential of our flora more extensively than we have', John Patrick said. 'The range of Australian plants available to them is rather limited but they apply a range of horticultural techniques to gain maximum effect. We seem to spend our time trying to cultivate a wider range of plants without looking at their potential under different maintenance regimes.'

The conference put Australian plants in their historic context and showed that we have always under-estimated them. Tony Cavanagh, of Deakin University, explained how Australian plants were being propagated and sold in England even before first settlement in 1788, and that by 1800 they had been sent also to Germany, France (at the *Jardin des Plantes* and in the Empress Josephine's garden at Malmaison) and in Russia. (In 1810 at Malmaison, Josephine engaged the artist, Redouté, to paint her specimens of *Banksia repens*, *Eucalyptus globulus* and *E. cornuta*, and a kangaroo paw).

The discovery of our flora coincided with a period of rising enthusiasm for collecting among the English upper classes, Mr Cavanagh said. English nurserymen and wealthy collectors vied with each other; ships returned from Australia laden with plants and seed, in wine-casks on the quarterdeck and even in the captain's cabin. Selection was random—plants sent back ranged from the fire-wheel tree to the Gympie stinging nettle. Many of those which survived the journey outgrew their glass-houses in England so that extended roofs had to be built. The use of Australian plants in Europe extended as far south as Sicily, where monstrous Moreton bay figs, silky oaks and eucalypts remain a dominant landscape feature today.

While in Europe their rarity was a compelling factor, back home they were first used out of expediency, according to historian Dr John Foster. Early texts tell gardeners in Victoria how to take plants from the bush and how to substitute them for exotics not readily available (pittosporum for Portuguese laurel, native myrtle for box hedging). Nationalistic fervor and interest in nature study came into play early in the 20th century; but at the height of the Victorian era, Dr Foster said, native plants were used as an element of mixed borders, chosen for the way they fitted into an overall picture.

This is the type of use advocated today by John Patrick, who suggested a three-zone approach to the domestic garden. Treasured plants or those needing plentiful irrigation would be planted close to the house, while a second zone, further out, would receive no supplementary water except for water which could be diverted there (roof run-off, for instance.) Here could be grown coppiced

Christopher Lloyd but in Melbourne in 1856, by James Sinclair—and a combination of native plants and hardy exotics, like the stunning silver-leafed *Calocephalus brownii* with various lavenders. On the perimeter the third zone would comprise only plants indigenous to the area, which would have to survive on their own.

The conference heard from Susan Campbell, former landscape architect with the Albury-Wodonga Development Corporation, that the 1.7 million trees and shrubs planted in Albury-Wodonga since 1977 were almost totally native species, with 98 per cent of these indigenous. 'Generally the indigenous species have been found to be the most vigorous growers', she said.

Rodger Elliot stressed that anyone trying to garden with Australian plants must acquire 'at least an inkling' of the conditions in which they occur naturally. He illustrated the beautiful small shrub, *Bauera sessiliflora*, thriving in drifts in a sheltered pocket of the Grampians, then commented how he often saw Melbourne gardeners trying to make it grow as an individual specimen in full sun.

For almost all species, good drainage was important, he said. Soil conditions were not over-important since harsh soils were so common in Australia, nor was too much water or fertiliser. 'Sometimes we try to look after them too well.' The glamorous and dramatic Western Australian plants could be a problem in Victoria. 'There are lots we try here that we simply shouldn't try.' Regular clipping and pruning was important, and this should be started early on.

John Patrick echoed this suggestion. Australian plants offered great opportunities for formal gardening, he said. It was surprising that while all gardeners accepted the need to prune roses to achieve the best blooms, they looked askance at the idea of pruning natives. The 1970s fashion, when the objective was to create 'a sort of maintenance-free backyard bush with plants chosen on the advice of an often poorly-informed nurseryman' was long past. The aim now was to design landscapes in today's idiom but using Australian plants.

Rodger Elliot agreed. He suggested that Australia - designers might use our plants to develop a national style in the same way as Thomas Church promoted an American landscape 'look' in the 1940s and 50s.

Anne Latreille



Leucochrysum graminifolium
Pagoda Rock Daisy from Newnes
-rare and endangered

Australia Speaks

"Although it is open to all, it is probably true that the experience of being oneself in the landscape will remain the privilege of a comparative minority. It takes belief and a readiness to embrace simple living, even if it doesn't go as far as Ivan Illich's voluntary poverty. It makes men complete instead of cutting them into sections the way materialistic society does. Our twelve month climate and elemental landscapes have a better opportunity to express this belief for life than anywhere else in the world. It is not a lotus land .It requires a self imposed discipline and an inner reliance to restore and justify our existence.

The Australian scene is monotonous to some casual observers because they have not experienced how subtle these eternal cycles are. The landscapes are not spectacular, they are profound. It is the heart of creation reduced to its simple elements. Each shape, each colour is interdependent on each other shape and colour to create a totality of the visual world around us.

In essence the Australian landscape should use the indigenous plants only and allow the whole breadth of the scene to be felt .Tinder dry bark, fallen leaves and the scent of the bush in the vertical rhythm of the eucalypts is written into the heart and inner being of every genuine Australian. The original landscape is both survival conscious and fragile. Man's interference easily destroys this context by regarding its primitive shapes as mere scrub and missing its sense of genesis. Australian landscape architecture is first and foremost the recapturing of a reverence for the visible hand of God through the whole picture. It has nothing to do with the international methods and man's fashions. Its spirit is grounded in the eternal.

Developing an Australian landscape is more a matter of leaving what is there than digging and planting new things. The prime requisite is observation of the surrounding countryside modified to accept the intrusion of a house. It is a matter of what the landscape says to us than what we are saying to the landscape that counts. The basic rule of never using two things where one will do also applies to the landscape. Its sense of eternity transcends the best aspirations of man. Those who most understand it leave it most alone. Those who are inspired by it not by those who try to transcend it.

All man made interpolations on a landscape reduce its scale. For this reason the art of environmental landscaping must consider how best to recapture the illusion of the limitless within the limited. The 18th century English school of informal landscape design is unquestionably the model to follow. Kent, Brown and Repton all employed, in one way or another, the sculptured landscape in three dimensional masses and two dimensional voids. The artistic relationship of these masses and voids, structured landscape of mystery and wonder, has been enhanced by the succeeding centuries."

"Living in the Environment" AlastairKnox 1975

Thanks to member Deidre Morton NSW for a copy of the above extract.

REPORT ON MELB MEETING - NOV 14th. 2004

Only a very few members were able to come on our final outing for 2004 to visit the Geelong Botanic Garden (GBG) and the Hoffman Walk at Lara. Due to car sharing arrangements we started the day with a tour of Diana and Brian Snape's garden. They had just installed a new outdoor 'room' at the back of their home. This new and spacious deck, connected to the house at the same level for ease of access, replaces the old outdoor courtyard which was a few steps below house level. With a louvered roof this is an all weather option, which given the fickleness of our climate, is very sensible and practical. The deck juts out into the garden allowing Diana and Brian a great vantage point from which to 'survey their domain'. Despite being away on holidays for lengthy periods in 2004 their garden was looking its usual lovely, restful self.

We pulled up at Geelong Botanic Garden in time for lunch - an important part of any right-minded persons day! - so we picnicked on lawns in the shade of some old trees that provide shelter to the carpark.

Geelong Botanic Garden was founded in 1851 making it the 4th oldest botanic garden in Australia. With work commencing in mid 2000 they have created a new entry leading to the gardens and a new entry to the gardens themselves. They have called it a 21^A Century Garden as it showcases plants capable of coping with the increasingly dry climatic conditions. The landscape design by Chris Dance Landscape Design takes elements of boat design as its inspiration and as a way of making a meaningful connection with Cario Bay. The 'prow of a ship', outside the rather lovely ornamental gates, lets you stand and look back at the drive entry and beyond: immediately inside there is a deck providing views of water below — a shallow rocky pond - adjoining a large, expansive, graveled 'deck of a boat' bordered by strongly sloping garden beds representing the sides of the boat.

The design idea is interesting although the way to interpret it is not immediately obvious. Did the designer intend for the graveled 'deck' and connecting pond to also represent the sea and beach! There seems no reason why these design elements couldn't have multiple meanings. What appears as good design on paper can however have some real practical shortcomings. The very large graveled center of the design is dominant and not human friendly: there are a couple of massive oblong rocks for sitting on by why would you? On a sunny day, let alone a hot sunny day, the glare and heat is too much while in cooler weather you are completely exposed to wind and rain. And yet the sunken gravel area is the best vantage point for looking at the garden beds that slope down to it: in a real sense

being on the central graveled deck is the only way of being 'in' the garden even if in truth you are surrounded by gardens that are too far away to see and enjoy. I am led to believe that management are aware of the problems although how they will address them remains to be seen.

At least half of the sloping gardens bordering this central gravel area are devoted to Australian plants; the other half are given over to succulents and other exotic plants adapted to arid environments, and plants of ancient origin. I don't know who has been responsible for the planting design, or even if there has been any plant design, but the impression I formed was the gardens are first and foremost a collection of plants placed out in beds for viewing and educating a public. Admittedly this is a key role for any botanic garden but aesthetics are very important too. It is undoubtedly hard for large, almost rectangular, planter boxes to look good unless they are mass planted or plants are arranged geometrically. So many of the little Australian plants, particularly the local ones, are lost in this situation, dwarfed by the architecture and looking odd in such an unnatural setting. I have been to the gardens a few times now and remain concerned by the apparent lack of trees and shrubs that will grow to some dimension making this area more visually interesting, creating microclimates, softening the hard architectural lines and enticing people to spend more time in this section of the gardens rather than rushing through to the more established part of the garden that provide protection from the weather.

The garden beds and foot pathways along the road leading to the gardens share some of the same problems as the fenced garden. Granitic sand has been used extensively and it has washed and rutted. The low narrow plantings, which are spaced and fan out along each side of the footpath like the ribs of a boat, have been massed planted with species such as *Lomandra longifolia*; no consideration has been given to eventually providing shade for pedestrians.

On the way home we made our second stop for the day at the Hoffman Walk at Lara. This is a public garden bordering a creek and marshland: started 14 years ago or more it is a testament to one man's vision - Kevin Hoffman's. Kevin has used large rocks and old, large, curved, gnarled logs to great effect. In places they blend, providing planting pockets for special little plants, to create a seamless wondrous naturalistic landscape. In other areas, where the slope of the land dictates, he has used sleeper retaining walls. A great many mature trees and shrubs frame vistas and provide dappled shade and interesting patterns of light. Kevin has pruned some plants into round shapes that complement the naturally rounded shapes of other plants and the neat habit of clumping plants like *Lomandra confertifolia* species. In fact, blending naturalistic and formal elements is one of the great strengths of the garden.

Obviously not content with what he has already achieved, in the last couple of years Kevin has continued to expand his vision down to the creek level. Only time will tell how successful his ideas are for this quite different part of the garden. Unfortunately weed management always appears to be something of a problem but it is a small criticism considering the scale of the enterprise. In contrast to the 21st Century Garden this is a

garden that you can stroll through and sit in. It is the kind of garden to refresh the soul and excite the imagination. If you are a Vic member going to the Geelong autumn plant sale then take the time to stop here on the way there or on the way home to check it out for yourself. You may see me there because as with all good gardens I like to return to them over and over.

NEXT MELB MEETING - FEB 27TH

For our first meeting for 2005 we are lucky to be able to revisit the Australian Plant Garden at the Royal Botanic Garden at Cranbourne. It is now 2 years since we had the privilege of touring the site with Paul Thompson. That was before any major work had been undertaken, when we were encouraged to use our imaginations, as Paul marched us up and down scrub covered hillsides describing what changes would occur. Now the landscape construction is largely complete: the contractors are due to finish at the end of February. Diane Clark and John Armstrong will be our guides on the day. Diane is a nursery technician employed at the gardens. John is a long-term member of our group who needs little introduction: he is also one of the Friends of Gardens. Diane says that the changes to the site are quite amazing, but in addition to the changes to the hard landscape, planting commenced last June in the sections of the garden called The Eucalypts Walk, the Northern Sand Garden and part of The Dry River Walk.

I do hope that members are free to join us on the day. Weather permitting you may also like to have a picnic lunch in the gardens beforehand. The entry cost for this activity is \$8.80 and we will meet at the Park Office for a 2pm start.

NOTE: If there is a total fire ban called on the day then the activity may have to be abandoned. If one is called then please ring Chris _____ or Diane Clark
_____ to see if we can go ahead or not.

MELB MEETING DATES FOR 2005 (Provisional)

May 29th - visit to the garden of Faye Candy in Berwick

Aug 28th

Nov 13th

SYDNEY MEETING

Saturday 19th Feb 05: meet at **Mt Penang Gardens** at 10 o'clock [just off the F3 Gosford turnoff] followed by GDSG members **Tom and Ann Raines'** garden at Wamberal and a visit to **Nola Parry's Wildflower nursery**. Nola is the co author of "Cottage Gardening with Australian Wildflowers". Many of you have already emailed me, most wanting to make a weekend of it; would you be kind enough to reconfirm either by email or phone. I can give you directions and discuss Sunday's arrangements too.

BYO lunch to have at the Raines'.

Next meeting date: **Sunday 29th May 05** - details in May NL

The Brisbane group is still to start, group leader Lawrie Smith is in Singapore designing an addition to their Botanic Gardens.