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ASSOCIATION OF SOCIETIES FOR GROWING AUSTRALIAN PLANTS.



GARDEN DESIGN STUDY GROUP

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Dear Members,

Lots of news and events to report, befitting Springtime exuberance both in our gardens and the bush. Yellow bloodwoods, *corymbia eximia*, are flowering magnificently along the ridges here, crowns of great, fluffy blossoms etched creamily against a pale blue sky. They are a delight to see. This week Sydney has had its first *real* rain for well over a year, some even falling in the catchment area, plants are certainly looking more purposeful! Great news for Queensland members - Lawrie Smith has offered to lead a Qld branch of the GDSG. This will provide Qld. members with further opportunities to study garden design using sub tropical and tropical Australian plants with an expert! Thank you Lawrie.

I am hopeful our website will become a reality next year- watch this space - suggestions welcome! Still on technical matters; following the implementation of new laws, all Study Groups need to be professionally audited. Bryan has searched to no avail, is there anyone out there who could help? Bryan is happy to send the books anywhere in Australia.

Has anyone else noticed in these dry times the "bandwagon effect" [easy to get on and off] in parts of the gardening media? Here, some personalities, normally rather shy of promoting and using Australian native plants, extol their virtues often with accompanying misinformation? The opposite also occurs whereby an article, written on the topic of "drought proofing" your garden, mentions plants from every country in the world *except* Australia - all very frustrating indeed! Still I do get the feeling we are gaining on them!

Wishing you a Rain-full and Joyous Christmas and a Peaceful, Healthy New Year.

Melbourne: Nov. 14th 04 Sydney : February 19th 05 N.E. Vic Nov 13th 04

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CORRESPONDENCE

Apologies to **Jeff Howes**, NL 47. The last part of the final paragraph of his article "World Gardens - is there room for an Australian Garden?" was inadvertently deleted. Following "to conclude read on, perhaps nature shall decide for us" Jeff made the point that *phytophthora ramorum* is fast becoming such a worldwide scourge that the above discussion may be purely an academic one. JH

I enjoy discussion of design ideas in the newsletter but most of the small plants mentioned just don't thrive here. It will be good to have a group to talk about *local* plants with. We looked seriously at a piece of native bush in Dural to buy in the 70's. I fell in love with the flowers in bloom and the varied textures - wouldn't need to garden at all, I thought - just be a custodian and keep it tidy. However we stayed in Brisbane so I struggle with shade and winter drought!

JoyStacey QLD.

I read every word of the Newsletter even if we are a little bit out of the way to go to meetings.

Gillian Morris NSW

Gillian wrote a lovely piece on her reasons for joining the GDSG many newsletters ago. I remember very dry or very wet clay and a large goofy dog as contributing factors to her membership!

As a garden designer I find many of my clients are reluctant to use Oz natives in their gardens - they cling to the exotics. I'm mounting a gently subversive campaign to introduce indigenous plants to reluctant clients by simply not saying its an Australian plant! I give Botanic and common names and extol its virtues.

When maintaining indigenous gardens I prune, water, mulch and feed if necessary - just as for exotics. Am having success in this way - using less and less exotics.

I would be very pleased to meet, read or hear of other designers doing similar things.

Shane Doherty NSW

Perhaps client psychology should be on the syllabus at all horticultural and garden design institutions! Keep up the wonderful work

.I thought a regular section of "new plants in the market place" may be of interest. A brief description, ask if anyone is using it and with what success, what other plants they look good with and how to incorporate them into a design. Something like the book reviews but with plants. Thanks again.

Cheree Hall NSW

DESIGN

Travels and design.

Diana Snape VIC

We have just returned from a trip to the Pilbara - an area of W.A. we have been longing to see for 17 years, ever since we ran out of time on our last long trip to the west in 1987. The Pilbara scenery was amazing, with hundreds of acres of ptilotus and other ephemeral plants in flower, the magic of hillsides of side-lit spinifex grass and white trunked eucalypts against chocolate rocks, plus the truly spectacular gorges with their lovely rivers, creeks and pools. There had been good rains earlier in the year, so the "wild" flowers everywhere were particularly fine. Further south, daisies of everyone's favourite colours bloomed in their thousands. Both north and south, patches of fabulous peaflowers added to the rainbow effect, with eye-catching Sturts Desert Pea, swainsonas, gastrolobiums, indigoferas and nemcias among many others.

In the Pilbara there were wonderful colour schemes, for example ptilotus in purple, mauve and white; yellow acacias and cassias (sennas); yellow-green spinifex and rocks ranging from deep red-brown to purple-grey. In our travels acacias were ubiquitous and their variety was impressive - a key Australian genus that deserves to keep its name! In the south, eremophilas became an important genus and we saw several completely prostrate species as well as the more usual shrubs. Many had lilac or purple flowers but there were a range of other colours too. (Sadly for us the verticordias were still in bud.) Even where flowers were few, the wonderful silver-grey, blue-grey and grey-green foliage of many shapes and sizes constantly intrigued the eye.

I thought (quite) often about garden design and the lessons I might learn from this wonderful landscape. There are many illustrations of garden design principles, such as examples of symmetry and asymmetry, form, texture, colour, harmony and repetition, contrast. HO surprise, abound in the landscape, but not always at the same time and not all in equal measure. We can select what appeals to us as individuals and create our own individual garden style. I think no combination of factors is right or wrong and a model for any combination would probably be found somewhere in nature. For example, we might prefer repetition of plants symmetrically arranged,

or else asymmetric; we might concentrate on a colour scheme but either choose harmonious colours or look for vivid contrasts. We do have to make some choices - we can't have it all.

And these decisions come before we even start choosing actual plants! I keep coming back to the desirability of using indigenous plants for the basic framework of a garden. The Desert Park in Alice Springs and the Arid Lands Garden in Port Augusta both illustrate how beautiful completely indigenous gardens can be. There are all the practical reasons in addition to the importance of "spirit of place" and consideration for any surviving and struggling wildlife. In cities and suburbs where the place has really lost its spirit, it seems to me even more important to make a start in the right direction to attempt to regain it. A recent small local victory encouraged me. I live in a suburb with almost no Australian gardens. A proposed plan for replanting a section of a local park showed agapanthus (!) being used for a long bank. I wrote (not very hopefully) to suggest using indigenous Australian plants instead. Apparently a number of other residents did too and so the aggies are out and "natives" are in! It's always worth trying.

After indigenous plants for the framework, some outstanding feature plants might also be indigenous. Trees can come into both of these categories and, as Glen Wilson said 40 years ago, trees (if present) determine the character of the landscape. Plants from a little further afield might be chosen next, then maybe those irresistible plants from distant places (such as W.A. for us in the east). (Can I bring myself to grow one ptilotus after seeing them in their thousands?) Of course there are lots of other considerations in plant selection, like trying to grow plants endangered in the wild, or trying to concentrate on a particular genus (more of a collector's garden, constraining design).

I brought back many images from our travels, especially of those Pilbara landscapes with their untouched purity. Can these lend inspiration for a garden in Melbourne? Possibly a grassland garden, with just a few herbs, lilies and ephemerals? or with just a scattering of trees of one or two species? It is so difficult to select one image or theme and stick to it. It's strange how I can enjoy and admire hundreds of acres of just 2 or 3 plant species in a natural scene, while in our garden we are tempted to condense the whole of our travels and plant hundreds of different species in a quarter of an acre! One answer may be to have a variety of plants but with repetition of form, e.g. low shrubs; or repetition of foliage type, e.g. rainforest plants with relatively large green leaves. I suspect the greater the variety of plants in a small garden, the greater the challenge to coordinate them a satisfying whole, a challenge most of us take up - but do we succeed?

Rise of the Australian Plant Garden a talk to the Friends of the RBG 28-7-04

A Short History of Australian Garden Design.

There have always been people fascinated and inspired by the plants and landscape of Australia; from the earliest times of white discovery, Australia's remarkable flora and fauna have been collected, catalogued and researched.

White settlement in Australia occurred at the time of the English Enlightenment. Tim Flannery writes of the learning, compassion and intellect of the best of the early Australian settlers. People like **Phillip, Watkin Tench** and **Dawes** shared a great humanism and breadth of mind that was typical of the period.

At this time too the **English Landscaping School** of Capability Brown and Humphrey Repton had reached its zenith. Capability Brown changed the face of 18th century England by transforming the formal, Baroque layouts of avenues and parterres of the grand estates to informal arrangements of clumped trees, curving paths, lakes and sweeping pasture land. On Brown's death in 1783 Repton introduced subtle modifications to the way in which the house was linked to the landscape. Whereas Brown had swept the grass right up to the house, Repton designed terraces, often with balustrades of stone piers or urns carrying flowers to link the house to the park. Forested ravines and exposed cliffs were preferred to Brown's regular clumps and rounded landscapes.

The earliest gardens in the colony developed a method of gardening called "squared" - it was based on the simple geometry of straight walks, shrubberies and hedges. Like the architecture of the period the gardens followed a straight forward, ordered formula made impressive by its simplicity.

As the colony prospered the influence of the Landscape movement grew and the squared layout at the front of the more substantial houses was replaced by a freer landscape planning with wide lawns and clumped trees. The small scale of colonial establishments did not allow for the total removal of flower, fruit and vegetable gardens as demanded by the true landscape tradition. They remained a sizeable and, I would imagine, necessary part of the colonial garden.

Whereas in England the existing landscape was improved and idealized, here large scale use of natural features was uncommon, native trees were retained to frame the villas at a distance, they were rarely specimens or features, an exception was the use of *Arcaurias* noble and magnificent they were suited to the Gothick taste.

The Picturesque movement was a transitional phase bridging the Georgian and Victorian taste. It was taken up very quickly by the colony and its increasing popularity weakened the foundations of the Landscape movement. It promoted textures, character and picturesque effects, "Interest" was required at every turn punctuating the soft contours of the landscape style and contrivance replaced pastoral harmony. The Picturesque was admirably suited to the scale of colonial dwellings and their often sublime settings.

Examples are Vaucluse House, Bronte House, Elizabeth Bay House and the Conservatorium.

Although the landscape style became diffused and overlaid by the gardenesque in the middle of the 19th century it did not die out completely. **William Guilfoyle** achieved a spectacular compromise between the two conflicting aesthetics of his day when he redesigned The Melbourne Botanic Gardens.

Sydney's Centennial Park shows an early attempt to use native plants as well as a series of lakes and circular driveways to achieve the grand landscape effect of contemporary English and American city parks such as Olmstead's Central Park New York.

Australia's first landscape gardener and nurseryman, **Thomas Shepherd**, a Scot like so many great gardeners and plantsmen of the 18th and 19th centuries, arrived in the colony in 1830. He was well trained in the English Landscaping School and deplored the wanton destruction of the natural landscape by the early settlers. Whilst setting up the colony's first nursery he wrote, delivered and published a series of lectures on horticulture and wrote a series on landscape gardening which were published following his death after only 8 years in Sydney.

Artists, writers and botanists **Louisa Atkinson**, **Louisa Meredith** and **Georgiana Molloy**, extolled the beauties of Australian flora in the 19th century through their drawings, writing and research though not specifically in the context of garden design.

In the first half of the 20th century, botanists and authors **Thistle Harris** and **Florence Sulman**, and architects **Walter Burley Griffin** and his wife **Marion Mahony** championed the cause of protecting and growing Australian plants.

The Griffins were both students of Frank Lloyd Wright, famous American Modernist architect and a member of the "Chicago Prairie School, which advocated that houses be integrated into the landscape and indigenous species used in landscape design. Their 1921 plan for the suburb of Castlecrag in Sydney - "no fences, no boundaries no red roofs to spoil the Australian landscape - where architecture and landscape are inter related and the inhabitants grouped by common interest" - was sadly never fully realized, however it provided an example for future bushland suburbs.

.In Victoria at the same time, **Edna Walling** was embarking on a similar venture with Bickleigh Vale, envisaging a village of simple cottages and gardens complementing the natural bush landscape. Like Castlecrag it was a Modernist expression - a practical approach to conservation management in a residential environment. To Edna, houses should be simple, comfortable affairs and have an organic affinity with their site. Local materials should be used in the construction and the houses extended into the landscape by the use of walls, terraces, pergolas and the like.

Edna Walling was one of the earliest advocates of native plants in gardens and parks as well as along the highways. In the 1920's she was observing, identifying collecting and then propagating them in the nursery at "Sonning". This interest would grow until by the 1950's she would only use native plants in her designs.

Edna met Ellis Stones in the early 1930's. Walls, steps and paving were integral to her gaffjeft designs and Ellis "Rpcky" Stones was, as she said, a natural! She realized she had a real fnd in Ellis, who in turn absorbed the way she used plants and manipulated space

She wrote in a newspaper column in 1938 "it is a rare thing this gift for placing stones and strange that a man possessing it should bear the name Stones. Lovely as formal gardens can be, it is these informal schemes of which boulders form so important a part, that appeal so tremendously, for the reason perhaps that they give us the atmosphere of the country and the refreshment of mind derived from such."

Ellis did the rockwork in some of the gardens at Bickleigh Vale over several years, and sometimes his children would accompany him. Daughter, Patricia found Edna's house "Sonning" different to any house she had seen and remembers its owner as "wearing jodhpurs and terribly abrupt."

Abrupt she may have been but she set Ellis on his feet and their long and productive partnership was to have a major effect on both emerging post war garden designers and the Australian Garden Style .

After the Second WW an upsurge in nationalism and the continuing influence of Modernism helped fuel an intense involvement in this country's history and landscape .

The conservation movement, which had been gaining strength in the inter war years, took on a higher public profile. Australian Plants were seen as symbols of this modernity.

The Society for Growing Australian Plants or SGAP came into being in Melbourne in 1957, following a response to writer Arthur Swaby's suggestion in "Your Garden" magazine that a society for the growers of Australian plants be formed.

." Preservation by Cultivation" was one of the phrases often used to describe the Society's aims and objectives.

Seeking a spiritual haven and a simple lifestyle in rural Eltham near Melbourne, **Gordon Ford, Alastair** and **Margot Knox**, Clifton Pugh and many others came to build their mud brick houses amongst the bush. The nearby artists colony at Montsalvat contributed to the culture of post war bohemia and creativity.

An eighteen year old art student at the time Margot Knox, known now for her famous mosaic garden in inner Melbourne, worked part time for Ellis Stones. He told her women have an instinctive feeling for working with stone and taught her the rudiments of stonework and paving He explained once to her future husband Alastair that he always liked to employ women, they were easier to hire part time, were uncomplaining, cost less and were often superior to men at the work, in particular, they were more careful with the planting.!!

Gordon Ford was introduced to Ellis by Margot and began to work for him. Ford later said that he knew immediately he had found his Life's Work.

Much later designer **Bev Hanson** would also work with Ellis Stones.

A meeting place of the Who's who of the emerging Australian Garden Style was **Schutert**^ Nujppry Jn Mejbourne, famous in the 50's& 60's for its display garden^ It was here the young **Glen** ^Ifson heard that Walling was keen to, take on paying students as work was short - he had read many of her books, knew the type of work she did and jumped at the chance to learn more - he became the only paying pupil she ever took on

.Learning about the use of voids and space in the landscape was a priceless legacy imparted through her teaching.

A founding member of SGAP Glen Wilson's career in landscape design and construction, as a nurseryman, lecturer and author has spanned nearly 50 years. He pioneered the concept of on site water harvesting and has a keen academic interest in Dryland and Arid Zone planting.

Twenty years ago in an article for "Landscape Australia " he wrote; "this vast dry continent with its unique flora is in sore need of sensitive, understanding landscape designers who love and respect the land. After 200 years our poor efforts in this direction are tragic; now softened in the view of some by the use of a few Australian plants, with little change in our philosophy. That we should be developing a philosophy based largely on dryland planting must now be apparent."

Another young admirer of Schubert's Nursery in the 60's was Melbourne landscape designer and a former student of Wilson's, **Paul Thompson**. He acknowledges the influence of Glen's highly refined views on planting and design upon his own work; some of which includes Monash University, the Forrest Gallery at Melbourne Museum and the Australian Garden at Cranbourne.

Development of an Australian garden Style

Debate about the development of an **Australian garden style** is ongoing.

Paul Thompson believes that gardens with Australian plants are the only gardens we can call Australian but that there is not an apparent *style* that rises above the plants.

He sees the *bush garden* as "having an informal haphazard approach" but concedes that "in its most refined state, whilst informal, it can be intricate, complex and considered as it needs to be if it is to be tranquil."

Whilst Architect Graeme Law states that: "The development of **the natural garden style** in Australia has nothing to do with style or fashion, it has to do with regional appropriateness and proud expression of our heritage. Once we become aware of our role as stewards of this earth then regional appropriateness of garden style is not a choice but a responsibility."

The Natural Garden Style in Australia, according to Gordon Ford, has been influenced by three movements - all based on the principles of asymmetrical design.

- The 18th century English Landscaping School
- The work of Edwardians Gertrude Jekyll and William Robinson.
- Japanese garden culture.

We've looked at the principles of the English Landscaping School at the beginning of the lecture so we'll move on to those great Edwardians, Gertrude Jekyll and William Robinson, from whom Australian designers learnt to plant in free form design --"nature improved by the artifice of man".

Asymmetrical balance is a subtle art, often far more difficult to achieve than symmetrical balance. As the indomitable Gertrude Jekyll said when writing about **line, form** and **group** "if these qualities are secured, the result in after years will be a poem; if they are neglected they will be nothing but a crop!"

The creation of simulated rock outcrops and the arrangement of boulders, either on flat ground or around ponds and waterfalls, can often [but not always] reflect a Japanese influence. Japanese design did have a strong influence on Modernism throughout the 20th century.

However as Thistle Harris advised in her book in the early 50's "rock gardening is an important aspect of Australian landscape architecture as so many of our plants grow naturally in rocky formations." I quite agree, and in my opinion the development of rock gardening in Australian design is largely independent of Japanese influence.

The design concept of *the bush garden* follows that of the natural garden. *The bush garden* is idealized bush, an aromatic and visual artifice evoking a love of the real bush. A well designed bush garden is timeless. It is a garden with a sense of region, and a sense of place.

In the 1960's Gordon Ford, Glen Wilson and others pioneered the concept of *the bush garden* in Victoria and **Betty Maloney** and her sister **Jean Walker** did the same in Sydney, albeit on a smaller scale. Their now seminal works "Designing Australian Bush Gardens." and "More about Bush Gardens." helped stimulate a wider interest both in the preservation of native flora and the use and value of indigenous plants in suburban gardens.

Also in Sydney, from the late sixties on, **Bruce Mackenzie, Harry Howard** and **Allen Correy** used indigenous planting in many large scale Public works and Parks. One of the first examples of the creation of a bushland setting on public land was associated with the redevelopment of Taronga Zoo. Apart from using only Australian plant species throughout the Australian section, the overall policy was predominantly to use species native to the Hawkesbury sandstone geology throughout the zoo.

In Australia in the 80s, conservation and the environment remained relevant and gardening with native plants did not. Possibly plant and garden design choice was affected by the Postmodern influences of nostalgia and retro design. The "native gardens are a jumble of dry sticks" school of thought gained popularity, as the Australian plant gardens of the 70's often failed to thrive and look suitably gardenesque, due in the main to the misguided perception that a native garden meant no maintenance.

A garden is Nature Controlled after all. It is the amount of maintenance that will dictate the look of the garden more than the plant choice.

It was then with a sense of déjà vu that I read two books by North American designers published in the late 80's. "The Natural Garden" by Ken Druse and "Bold Romantic Gardens" by Oehme and Van Sweden. The front flap of the former asks "What is a natural garden? It is a garden planned and designed to work with, rather than against

nature. Natural gardeners take their inspiration from the environment using native plants ... they turn potential problems such as rock outcrops, steep slopes or wild trees into assets".

The front flap of the latter calls Wolfgang Oehme and James Van Sweden "revolutionary leaders of the new American Style .. inspired by a natural untamed spontaneity, their gardens harmonize with the natural environment."

Australian landscape designers had begun the natural garden at least 30 years earlier - deservedly earning high praise from eminent American landscape architect Garrett Eckbo, who wrote in his book "Home Landscape", - "the Australian movement called *bush gardening* has probably captured the spirit of the ecological/environmental movement more completely than any work done in North America or Europe. "

It is my opinion that the **Australian Natural Garden Style**, the *bush garden* if you like, is a modern vernacular garden developed in response to the landscape and the needs of a community, in the tradition of all vernacular styles.

The Bush Garden, no matter how "refined, intricate, complex and considered" it may or may not be, helps to provide a practical solution to many of our current environmental challenges—threatened species, soil and water degradation and preservation, cyclic drought and salinity.

As well, it is a symbolic and aesthetic expression of our wish to live harmoniously and sustainably on this planet.

It is truly a garden for the 21st century and deserves acknowledgment as such.

Jo Hambrett.

As the title says I gave this talk to the Friends at the Sydney Botanic Garden in July as a way of introducing our trip to the Victorian gardens in October. It was meant to be a "potted history" if you like of the Australian Natural Garden. It is by no means definitive. Quite a few GDSG members attended the talk and one of them thought it would be of interest to the Group as a whole-so here it is, I hope you agree.

*The bush garden has cropped up in this NL quite a bit, it always fascinates me how the NLs seem to develop their own themes! I reprinted NL 16 Feb. 1997 for the talk, it was a **bwlt gflr<1efj apwtgl**, p a rfcldy wonderful NL and is as interest^ to fay a\$ tfoft I strongly suggest a reread if you have it -for those haven't a copy, I am having some extras run off- if you would like one let me know.*

A List of recommended books and magazines, tracing the development of the Australian plant garden, appear below. Some of the early ones are out of print and are collector's items. I have used some extensively in the preparation of this talk and am indebted to the authors.

GARDENS IN AUSTRALIA; THEIR DESIGN AND CARE. EDNA WALLING
1943

SHRUBS AND TREES FOR AUSTRALIAN GARDENS. ERNEST LORD 1948

AUSTRALIAN PLANTS FOR THE GARDEN. THISTLE HARRIS 1953

DESIGNING AUSTRALIAN BUSH GARDENS. MALONEY AND WALKER
1966

AUSTRALIAN GARDEN DESIGN. ELLIS STONES 1971

LANDSCAPING WITH AUSTRALIAN PLANTS. GLEN WILSON 1975

THE GREAT GARDENS OF AUSTRALIA HOWARD TANNER 1976

TOWARDS AN AUSTRALIAN GARDEN HOWARD TANNER 1983

THE NATURAL GARDEN ELLIS STONES. ANNE LATREILLE 1990

EDNA WALLING AND HER GARDENS PETER WATTS 1991

AUSTRALIAN NATIVE GARDENS. DIANA SNAPE 1992

THE NEW NATIVE GARDEN. PAULURQUHART 1999

THE NATURAL AUSTRALIAN GARDEN. GORDON FORD 1999

NEW CONVERSATIONS WITH AN OLD LANDSCAPE. CATHERIN BULL
2002

THE AUSTRALIAN GARDEN. DIANA SNAPE 2002

AUSTRALIAN PLANTING DESIGN. PAUL THOMPSON 2002

AUSTRALIAN PARPEN HISTORY Vol 13 No 6 20Q2

PLANTS & DESIGN

Friends Go Native in Victoria

JoHambrett

Nearly a year of planning culminated in a six day trip to Victoria by the Friends of the Botanic Gardens Sydney and members of the GDSG, NSW.

Tim Jackson, immediate past president of the Friends approached me following our very successful Friends Go Native Day in Sydney last year [N.L. 44.] Both of us felt that it would be a marvelous opportunity if keen native gardeners from NSW were able to visit some of the best examples of the Australian Natural Garden Style - the bush garden - in Victoria. Diana was called in for introductions and suggestions and the organization began. The whole process was such a pleasure from beginning to end. They must put something in the water in Victoria or at least with APS Vic. members anyway, such was their warmth, hospitality and generosity.

We saw public gardens such as the Forest Walk in the Melb. Museum where Paul Thompson spoke to us, the new Children's Garden at the Melb. Botanic Gardens and afterwards lunched with the Friends, Maranoa Gardens, so serene and cared for and the delightful Karwarra Gardens in the Dandenongs, curated by the equally delightful GDSG member Marilyn Grey.

The private gardens, with the exception of Bickleigh Vale, all belonged to APS Vic. members; the Blakes, the Jacobs, the Kennedys, the O'Neills, the Hansons, the Adams and Gwen Ford and, of course, our own Chris Larkin and yes, hers is every bit as lovely as you have, by her writings, imagined it to be! For many of us it was a pilgrimage, paying homage to wonderful gardens we had only ever read about.

The trip was capped off by a visit to the new, very stunning Kurunga Native Nursery, where any semblance of self control completely disappeared, as, inspired by the beauty of the plants we had seen in the various gardens, we fell upon their potted relations, bearing them proudly into NSW to recreate the little pieces of heaven we had seen south of the border!

I'm sure I speak for many of us when I say that equally as exciting as seeing the gardens, was meeting their custodians. The people whose knowledge, energy, commitment and passion make it all possible — it was a privilege I'll never forget.

By fostering a relationship between the Friends and APS NSW we hope very much to continue to visit interstate Australian Plant gardens. Such ventures will continue to raise the profile of Australian Plant gardens within the broader community and raise much needed funds for our Botanic Gardens.

Australian Garden History Conference, Sydney. Oct. 04

Jo Hambrett

WighWghft \$F^{me} ftt pi* Y&y interesting conference were the talks gje,n, by; G,D)\$Q member and fellow traveler to Victoria, Gillian Davies, landscape architect Barbara Buchanan and architect and landscape architect Howard Tanner.

Gillian's informative talk was on Charles Frazer, made first Superintendent of the Sydney Botanic Gardens by Gov. Macquarie 1820. Gillian and a colleague have done a

lot of work researching this rather neglected individual about whom previously so little was known.

Barbara Buchanan spoke to us on the "Sydney Bush School of Landscape Architecture" represented by Harry Howard, Bruce Mackenzie and Bruce Rickard. Allan Correy was also involved for a time. She made the point that these three architects and landscapers all grew up in the bush outskirts of Sydney and deplored the fact that city dwellers of the 60's would never have the feel of the bush. Their design philosophy was influenced by modernism [Harry Seidler, David Moore and Ian McKay were among their friends and workmates] They were anti garden and anti history, Modernism had an aversion to past styles and they wanted to focus very much on the long neglected public domain, the parks and public spaces of urban Sydney . They created and popularized an ecological aesthetic - a "civilized bush which was acceptable to city dwellers. It didn't have the inherent remoteness and perceived dangers of the real bush"- it was an abstraction of the bush not an imitation. She mentions the role of the heritage movement in the 80's in the demise of the Sydney Bush School as well as the feeling by then that it was monochromatic, predictable and scruffy. The bushland aesthetic was seen at odds with the new design [postmodernism]. Barbara believes the SBS has given us the foundations to adhere to the new rules and regulations re sustainability. She sees no idea of sustainability or a sense of place in postmodern designs such as Olympic Park and the Garden of Australian Dreams - see Vlad Sitta NL 44 . She seeks a balance between the old and the new, the indigenous and the exotic to develop a new form of ecological design.

Howard Tanner, summing up, called them the unsung heroes of the circumstances we now enjoy. He spoke of the 25 yr. test for all buildings and landscape works - after 25yrs will anyone have the desire to maintain it? He sees the AGHS as having to involve itself in recent history, preserving and protecting recent landscape architects' work .He gave the example of the then new Director of the ANG Canberra, not realizing Harry Howard's work in the Sculpture Garden wasn't natural ordered it to be removed! It was only saved when Barbara Buchanan drew attention to it.

Questions for Gian **Carlo and the Australian Garden** Style

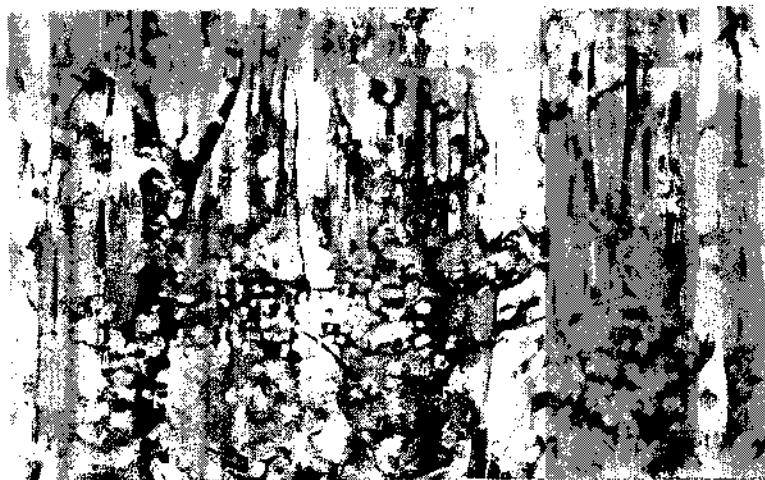
Chris Larkin Vic.

I found the article 'An Italian View of the Australian Garden' very interesting indeed. I would like to know more about Gian Carlo's theory that 'choice of plants is less important than soil preparation' for a plant's 'maintenance free survival without watering'. Is there a universal answer or will the answer be different for the Italian garden as opposed to the Australian? Will the answer depend on soil type rather than where the soil is in the world? Will it depend on what nutrients the plants will need? Is it possible that Carlo's success in the garden he was restoring, as opposed to the plants that died over the summer, was more a result of other soil preparation? I know that in any of my newly created sections of garden (in Melbourne) plants have survived very well during the drought. I assume this is the case because small plants need less water, there is generally little or no root competition

and water penetration has been good because I prepare a bed by digging it over to maximize water penetration and then mulch thoroughly and plant well before the drying heat of summer. Do any members have something to offer on the idea that Carlo put forward? If so I for one would like to hear what you have to say via this newsletter.

Carlo's observes that he can see the beginnings of an Australian style where there is a prevalent use of indigenous (Australian wide?) plants although he notes that the plants are often arranged in an English or Italian design style. Earlier this year Bill and I holidayed in the north island of New Zealand and happened by chance to visit a botanical garden at Hamilton. This proved to be an amazing, entertaining and often surprising garden. One large section of the gardens is devoted to exemplifying different garden styles - English, Japanese, Chinese, Italian and American to date - and not on a small scale. There were several interconnected sections to each garden with large water features and appropriate built structures. The creators of these gardens have done a fabulous job at recreating and maintaining these distinctively different styles so much so that you feel that the pages of a textbook have come alive. They intend to continue with this project and are currently seeking funding for the next venture. Reflecting on the visit I wondered if these gardens would ever attempt to 'reproduce' an Australian garden. (I also wondered what a New Zealand garden would look like.) If there is a signature Australian style it would have to be the 'bush' garden with its informal paths, mulched beds and relaxed feel as there appears to be few examples of Australian plants being used to create formal gardens even though many of the plants are quite suited for the purpose.

I have visited several outstanding Australian plant gardens this season and they have all been variations on the bush garden style. After walking through the textbook English garden at Hamilton, which was a densely planted perennial and annual garden in one section but with formal pathways, and in another section was a border garden to a lush green lawn, I am not so certain that the bush garden has many similarities to the English garden. In the Australian garden lawns may be non-existent or a less important feature, paths generally meander and open space is achieved in a variety of ways and most particularly with groundcovering plants. The effect is an idealized version of the bush, a romantic ideal that is a long way from reality but never the less in the most successful gardens owners can claim to have captured something of the feel of Australia.



A Burst of Wattle

PLANTS

Both these excellent articles on Native Grasses provide important practical information on their management mixed with a wonderful descriptive imagery. Indeed a powerful incentive for us to strive to use a type of grassland in our garden design at every opportunity. They also relate to Diana's article and her thoughts on a Pilbara influenced garden design.

The Native Grass Menagerie

Phil Watson Tas. APS

Native Grasses have emerged as the plants of choice for revegetating degraded habitats and for establishing exciting new landscape styles based on mass plantings. Within the urban landscape native grasses are popular due to their natural beauty, drought tolerance, ease of maintenance and resistance to vandalism. Home gardeners are rewarded for growing their own native grass dominated landscapes with colourful dainty herbs, lilies and bush peas juggling for position amongst tufty native grasses.

More importantly within a growing season, they yield a menagerie of fascinating insects, birds and wildlife. Many butterflies and moths feed voraciously on native grasses, the Ptunarra butterfly relies totally on Poa tussock grasses for larval food, adult habitat and sunning spots. Our small solitary native bees construct a series of pollen and honey filled cells into which they lay their eggs, within the hollow grass flower stalks. Native grasses are ideal sites for web producing spiders and birds and bats scavenge the forest understoreys for plump seeds, insects and of course the spiders, which are picked off like liquorice allsorts! Large and small marsupials feed and shelter amongst the grasses and echidnas gorge on insect, toadlet and froglet treats.

Traditionally, grass dominated habitats were an integral part of the aboriginal hunting and gathering life style. The sweet stem bases of Spear Grass could be eaten like sugar cane and Kangaroo, Spear and Tussock grass seeds could be ground into flour and thread made from their fibrous leaves. To attract kangaroo and harvest bush tucker easily, aborigines patch burnt the grassy swards with hot fire to provide succulent "green pick" enough roos were killed to ensure that the shrub and tree seedlings which germinated after the fires remained heavily grazed, guaranteeing that the forest did not encroach on their valued grasslands.

Native grasses: should we eat them or smoke them? Ann Prescott S A. APS

An extract:

In other countries there are specific names for grasslands, for example, prairie, pampas, meadows and savannah. In Australia they are just grasslands; this lack of a specific name shows how invisible grasslands have become to us. Not only do we have to reclaim the

name but with it, the understanding. We have to adjust our vision to recognize nature's vision - most people don't recognize what we have.

Some people have wanted to use the term "savannah" but animals thundering across the plains is not an image immediately evoked when it comes to Australian grasslands. We do however have thundering animals in our grasslands, it is just that you have to put your ear really close to the ground to hear them because the Australian equivalent to the fauna of the savannah will include a large number of ants. It is ants that do a lot of trucking and eating of material.

There are two types of grassy ecosystems:- grassy woodland and pure grassland. The distinction is all about tree spacing and shading.

In grassy woodland there are scattered trees and shrubs but there are big gaps between them where grasses, daisies and peas abound. Trees are 10-20 m apart giving 25/100 shading at noon. Pure grassland is what white settlers would have seen on disembarking from the boat, tussock grass, separated by inter-tussock space filled with a whole range of small plants - ferns, daisies, lilies, orchids, peas etc. Most plants in the grassland system are perennials. They are active in spring and early summer, growing from a tuber, conn, bulb, rhizome or fibrous root base. Consequently natural grasslands have two quite different looks - in winter they are mostly grass tussocks, but by late spring it is the inter tussock spaces, filled with wildflowers, that are most prominent.

Grasslands provide a different food source for wildlife - everything must live on the ground and the system is dominated by seed and insect eaters. The wildlife that depends on grasslands is different so we need grasslands for this wildlife to survive. If a grassland burns it will remain a grassland and in a grassland the grasses burn readily - it burns because it is a grassland and is a grassland because it burns. Trees and shrubs do not grow fast enough to flower and set seed before the next fire but the perennials are adapted to fire by having their storage systems and growing points underground. The grassland becomes a grassy woodland if it does not burn for 5-6 years and the grassy woodland becomes a woodland if no fire has occurred for 20 - 30 years.

Experimentation is ongoing to investigate ecological burning and fire substitutes such as sheep grazing, slashing or mowing.

SNIPPETS

Do you know that another member of the GDSG has received an honour in the Queen's Birthday Honours?

Lawrie Smith was made a Member (AM) in the General Division. Lawrie is the managing director of Brisbane architectural firm, Landplan Studio. He was honoured for his contribution to the development of major Australian botanic gardens, including many regional botanic gardens; Roma Street Parkland and Gardens; the Australian Gardens at Liverpool International Garden Festival 1984; and Brisbane World Expo 88. He has also been an actively contributing member of SGAP and served on the board of the Australian Flora Foundation.

When is a Mediterranean not a Mediterranean ?

Tony Entwistle

I suspect the term originally arose to differentiate this climate from more northerly continental Europe. It came to be described as "wet warm winters and hot dry summers and extended to similar regions between 30 and 40 degrees latitude, parts of California, central Chile, Cape Province in S.A. and parts of Australia - 1. a large chunk of south west W.A. and 2. some of northwest Victoria and adjacent SA. This is at present of course, what will happen with global warming remains a mystery.

Thanks Tony for clearing it up. I'm continually forced to teeth clenching when I hear Sydney's climate glibly referred to as Mediterranean, so suitable for those Tuscan gardens!

Cranbourne Australian Garden Update

Sharon Willoughby

With completion of hard landscape works in the Eucalyptus fingers, Northern Sand Garden and Dry River Walk the garden is literally coming to life. In early May a wonderful collection of Grass Trees from W.A. and northern NSW were planted, including some magnificent multi stemmed specimens estimated to be 500 - 1000 years old! Other trees either in the ground or about to be planted are the semi advanced Angophoras and Callitris species. Plant production in the RBGC nursery continues at a frantic pace and the propagation schedule is on track. The key strategy being followed is to have continual communication with the plant designer and RBG staff to ensure the display is first class for opening day.

Silver at Chelsea

Landscape Australia

The first ever Australian Show Garden to be displayed at Chelsea Flower Show was awarded a Silver gilt flora Award, which ranks only behind Best Garden and Gold medals. It was one of 25 chosen from over 600 entries. The garden featured a eucalyptstack wall, black stone water feature, recycled jarrah timber, Aussie BBQ, rammed earth walls, Mansfield River pebbles set in concrete pavers, tall fescue lawn and more than 1000 plants, half of them Australian species, all sourced in Britain.



A LITTLE OFF THE SIDE AND IS THAT DANDRUFF I SEE?

It all started when our hedge shears broke. We'd had this pair since Adam was gardening, and they'd been excellent. Finally though, one of the wooden handles had split and, although we'd glued it all back together several times, it wasn't long before the handle loosened again and then one's knuckles would be crushed together in a cymbal-like flourish, which brought tears to the eyes.

We laid the shears to rest and tried to get on with life. Thing is, it was time to wander about the garden giving things a haircut. We like to keep our shrubs bushy, with some of the plants being formally hedged, but how do you prune back the *Leptospermum obovatum* dwarf with secateurs when, in the past, you'd used nice, sharp hedge-shears to prune in just a matter of minutes? Yes, we could have purchased a new pair, but we wanted quality or nothing ... and our budget at the time suggested 'nothing' was the only option. Still, the pruning had to be done.

"I'll start with the smaller *Philotheca myoporoides* 'Flower Girl' ...", and I grabbed the Fiskars secateurs I had recently acquired. This particular pair is the fine pointed pair designed for foliage, rather than thick stems. Now, with a pair of hedge shears in my hand. I'm a bit of a brute, but it was something about the way these secateurs cut so cleanly through the dense tufts of foliage that brought out the artist in me. The difference between these new secateurs and my old ones was akin to the difference between a decent pair of professional hairdressing scissors and the 'Two Pairs of Plastic Scissors for \$1' deal at the local bargain shop. Anyway ... I was hooked.

Now, ladies and gentlemen, have you ever noticed how Follicular Reduction Technicians (hairdressers) cut your hair by using a scissor-like holding method using fore and middle fingers, which thereby creates a mini-Mohawk which is *then* trimmed neatly. That became my method of pruning the *Philotheca* and it worked a treat! Here was an artist at work. My fingers moved dextrously. Grasp the hair ... sorry, foliage ... chop across the top, let go, grasp another section of foliage ... and... on it went. I was on a roll.

Well, pretty soon I found myself chattering away, asking the *Philotheca* 'Flower Girl' what style she would like ... and what

did she do for a living ... did she have a boy friend ... and did she live locally. You know the kind of thing. I pointed out, with the utmost sensitivity, of course, that she had a slight problem with scale and I suggested that a wonderful new treatment to gently 'exfoliate the offending encrustation', known as *Nivea Oleo* (white oil) would clear the problem in a jiffy.

I pondered on whether I should go back to the house to grab some bulldog clips to hold some of the foliage back the way hairdressers do, and I even wondered about the merits of a cape to catch the falling tresses (sorry, foliage), and I wondered whether the leaf blower might help with the styling...

Suddenly I'd finished, and stood back to admire a now neatly-rounded shrub. I quickly moved on (I had a busy schedule) and did the other two *Philotheca* 'Flower Girls' (in a Pageboy style this time) before heading for the line of *Leptospermum obovatum* dwarfs planted under the clothesline. I chattered away blithely as I worked, and the *Leptospermums* just listened, mutely, and pretty soon I'd finished them too.

Suddenly everything made sense. I mean, I'd always worried about my method of extracting the dried bits from the poa grass. Each year I'd get out my bright red, wide-toothed comb and gently comb away the detritus of last year's growth, enjoying the process but worried lest the neighbours think me odd for combing tussock grasses. Now I knew I'd really just missed my vocation!

I ... I ... I realise now that things got a little out of hand. At night I still dream about *Fringe Lily*, *Hairy Grey Spider Flowers* and *Maidenhair Fern*, but I realise now that I was probably overdoing it when I plaited the *Lomandra hystrix* - the style just didn't suit... and shaping the *Lomandra confertifolia* into a bun probably wasn't a good look, and I guess that gelling the *Poa labillardieri* was a mistake. I quite liked the look of the *Baiaskion tetraphyllum* in pigtails, though, and the neighbours have commented on just how good the Mohican style looks on the *Corymbia (Eucalyptus) ficifolia* out the front, and it's no worse a job than those who style the trees under our power lines. (We have a range of secateurs and hedge clippers, but be warned ...)

BOOK REVIEW

"Wildflowering The life and places of Kathleen McArthur" Margaret Somerville UQP

In reviewing this gently told story of a passionate woman with an indomitable spirit I can do no better than to quote from Kathleen herself and her friend Judith Wright "*Because our flowers are not settled into our consciousness they are not seen. People can drive through square miles of massed displays of bloom and simply not see it. It is only when the mind opens that the flowers bloom.*" Kathleen McArthur, painter, conservationist, writer.

"There are times in one's past which remain warm and vivid and can be taken out and looked at with renewed pleasure. Those wildflowering days at Tamborine Mountain, Caloundra, Noosa or Lake Cootharaba, when I was able to wander with her, helped train my own eye a little to Kathleen's ways of seeing and her devotion to the flowers of the coast, the mountain and the wallum plains and swamps." Judith Wright

SYDNEY Meetings & Garden Visits

Report on GDSG visit to Deidre and Ivor Morton's garden Woodford and Glenbrook Native Plant Reserve, 26th Sept 04

Well what a memorable day it was for the goodly number of members who came to our Spring meeting in the Mountains. How to begin to describe Deidre and Ivor's "cave in the Australian bush" house, their garden and its sublime setting ? It is impossible to separate one from the other.

The rooftop garden so artfully designed and planted that one literally does not realize it is there, either walking past it or when the meandering garden path actually leads you onto it! Thankfully it fools one of the resident lyre birds as well and the Mortons have the pleasure of watching her garden scratchings through the skylight! The mudbrick house created from materials all on site, gentle and organic, sitting comfortably on a huge hanging rock which provides in a most magnificent way, the front porch and verandah, and, in its pitted surface, places for plants and frog ponds.

The garden spreads around the house and laps at the surrounding bush, it too is gentle, unobtrusive, peaceful. Deidre points out the hanging hakea forest, just below the garden level, where the bush falls away steeply. A huge crimson waratah bush catches our eye,, glinting in the sunlight, stately and sculptural. They really love the Mountains and flower accordingly.

Veggie gardens and citrus are in wallaby and lyrebird proof chicken wire igloos, they work well and provide the family with a variety of fresh produce. Some of Deidre's beautiful orchid collection sit, slender and gracious, beside a cluster of ponds at the side entrance. The tinier treasures nestle in the shade house, itself almost an organic form enclosed and moulded by more of those fantastic bush rocks. I could write forever about that day as could all of us who were there, we were "in the bush" spiritually all the time, no matter where we were, house or garden.

Onto Glenbrook Reserve for a guided walk and talk through the Reserve, a Nursery wander and a welcoming cuppa provided by the Blue Mountains APS. The bushland was showing the effects of the long dry spell and some recent high winds but we were able to see some indigenous plants still coping remarkably well. The recently constructed ponds and Jush surrounds, a memorial to a much respected APS member, are a credit to the members and staff of the Reserve.

SYDNEY Future Dates 2005:

Tom and Anne Raine's Central Coast garden and the new **Mt Penang Gardens** as well as a visit to Nola Parry's nursery "The Wildflower Place" are scheduled for **1st Feb. 05**. Anne says the Sunday afternoon traffic is awful so she suggest Sat. We could also look at a weekend as we did for Maureen and Norm Webb's visit - suggestions please! Put it in your diary NOW!! R.S. V.P. A.S.A.P. If I don't get any feedback I'll take it that we will do the three things on the Sat. -10 o'clock start

On Mt. Penang, architect Howard Tanner says "visiting Mt. Penang last month I was struck by its distinctive and unusual plantings, its bastions and compartments and its sheer inventiveness. Two years of further plant growth will make a huge difference, coalescing the shrub banks and sheathing the sculptural steel frames. Having spent the past 30 years seeking out Australian gardens worthy of visitation, this one reveals itself as a striking contemporary creation - one of the few that embraces abstraction to rewarding effect.

Next Melbourne Meeting — Nov 14th

The next Melbourne meeting will be an end of year get together with visits to the Geelong Botanic Garden and the Hoffmann walk at Lara. A couple of years ago the entry to the Geelong botanic garden was redesigned and planted with predominantly Australian plants. In contrast the Lara garden is well established although it continues to expand its boundaries. I feel there is so much to learn about landscaping from this wonderful public garden. I do hope that members can find the time to spend the day together while looking at two very different design ideas.

If you would like to carpool then please meet at Diana and Brian's home,

We will leave the Snape's home by 10.45am sharp. If you would like to take a wander in the garden then members are invited to arrive anytime from 10am onwards. Diana tells me there is a new deck out the back and some other works in progress that they are very excited about.

Whether carpooling or not all members should meet at the entry of the Geelong botanic gardens at 12noon for a wander around the gardens before making decisions about lunch and the afternoon program. Please bring lunch, including drinks and a folding chair. If you have any questions then please phone Chris

GARDEN DESIGN STUDY GROUP N.E. BRANCH

Next Meeting Sat. 13th Nov. 04 at 1030 for 11am business start.

Venue: Jenny Davidson's, moving to June and Peter Gotham's Chiltern.. Phone Jenny if you are coming, and get directions if it is your first visit.

Agenda: Ideas on Mile's garden

Thoughts from latest Newsletter

Progress (or lack of) on our booklet
View Ian and Jenny's garden
Look at June and Peter's garden

Report of July 31 meeting at van Riet's, moving to the Miles garden.

On a beautiful sunny morning we enjoyed a tour of John and Helen's town garden, which despite its youth looks surprisingly settled. The spaces between the rails in the post and rail fence are nicely filled in, giving a sense of enclosure while not entirely excluding the wider world. Grasses and daisies are creeping out under the fence and will eventually take the place of the usual mown grass in the nature strip which is currently surfaced with wood chips. The fence is a masterstroke, creating a rustic, cottagey feel, yet giving firm bones behind which the plants can romp and riot. The transformation in the back yard is no less remarkable. Creepers are making headway in screening along the side fence, a raised circular bed is crammed with small delights, replacing the old rotary clothes line. The new drying area sits unobtrusively against the fence and shed. Raised Vegie beds supply salad and seasonal fodder; they are set four square again giving a firm line to offset the exuberance of the plants. The glasshouse was built for a song but looks a million, especially as it is bursting with young plants, as is the growing on patch beside it, all positioned against the back fence where trees on the other side would make gardening tough by starving the soil. The final touch is the pool with a low fountain and surrounded by rounded creek stones, while beside it a venerable cumquat tree provides space and shade to sit and dream. It is a creation of which John and Helen can justly feel proud and which they are prepared to share as a show place for Australian plants.

Glenda brought a friend who spoke about ways and means of getting publicity and funding for the work of the group. I must confess to being so engrossed in the discussion that I did not keep notes and now can recall no details (again). I must also confess that the small group delegated to sort out options has not done so for various reasons and is now fully occupied with the Vic. Quarterly Meeting 23-24 Oct. I do remember that discussion was animated, we'll get there yet.

We then went to the Miles' property ostensibly to offer suggestions for making the garden. What we found there left us overwhelmed and concentrating more on the superb setting and views than practical matters. The house under construction sits V2-3/1A way up the slope of a bowl that opens to the southeast and the snow mountains. Behind the house is bush, probably fairly original because large granite outcrops would make the land unappealing for farming. These same outcrops are natural rock gardens in no need of improvement. In the front part of the block the ground was quarried for gravel and has been re-formed with the smooth curves of the bowl. The boundaries have been planted with shelter belts of indigenous trees and shrubs.

We were asked for ideas about the treatment of the slope below the house in particular. It is one of those times when the setting will steal the show no one does. The fly strip draining granite sand should grow lots of #ie tricky but desirable West Australians. I hope some of you have come up with some exciting ideas for the Miles to consider.

MEMBERSHIP

SUBSCRIPTIONS

Please check the list below to see whether your subscription has arrived at Bryan's. If you have sent it off and are not listed please phone Bryan. If your sub is outstanding please act, we don't want to lose you. If you are unfinancia! you'll find an orange slip in with your last newsletter!

Members Paying since 29 July 2004:

APS Armidale, APS Keilor Plains, APS Maroondah, APS Tasmania, APS Vic, Dale Butler*, Jane Calder, Christine Cullen*, Heather Daly*, Joyce Edgerton, Glenys Eskdale, Marilyn Gray, Caroline Gunter, Charles Hrubos, Barbara & Paul Kennedy, Mollie Lau, Bryan Loft, Geoffrey & Ann Long, Barry Nilsson, Andrew & Janet Russell, Karen & Geoff Russell, Kris Schaffer, Janet Schapper, Stephen Thomas, Margaret Ward, Jillian Walker.

*New Member - and a very warm welcome to the new members, we hope you enjoy your membership .Please let us know what interest you as weii as any ideas you may have for the NL.

I'd like to thank our hardworking Treasurer and Membership man, Bryan Loft. I really don't know what I'd do without him and I'm sure all the members are equally appreciative of his efforts.



D E B O R A H R U S S E L L