From Wilderness to Pleasure Ground:
discovering the garden history of the Southern Highlands

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Front cover:
Joseph Lycett (1775–1828), artist
'View on the Wingeecarrabee River, New South Wales' (1824)
J. Lycett, *Views in Australia, or New South Wales and Van Diemen's Land delineated in fifty views with descriptive letter press* (London, 1824–25)

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Introduction to the Southern Highlands

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Synopsis

This paper will introduce the Southern Highlands, with particular reference to soils and climates. Long known to the Gundungarra people, the area was not substantially occupied by Europeans until the second half of the nineteenth century, and its population and agriculture has remained small since then. Essentially it is a deeply dissected and elevated plateau, whose geology and location dominate its soils and climates. Much it lies on sandstones where soils are challenging. The smaller areas of soils developed from other sedimentary rocks and basalts, while fertile, also have limitations for horticulture. Climates, generally cooler in winter and drier than those of the coast, vary greatly from east to west. Temperatures and rainfalls also vary considerably from year to year. However, while the environments of the Southern Highlands might not be ideal for horticulture, they do respond well to applications of money and effort.

Introduction

My purpose here is to introduce you to the Southern Highlands of New South Wales, with particular reference to the climates and soils for its gardens but also with an overview of the wider human development of these environmental conditions.

Firstly, I should define the area about which I am talking, as definitions of 'the Southern Highlands' abound. For practical purposes, I will focus on the area of Wingecarribee Shire, because it has been the subject of various studies from which maps and diagrams can be drawn by way of illustration (Bowie, 2006; see also Edge Land Planning, 2007).

'The Wingecarribee' is essentially a plateau at around 650 metres above sea level, deeply dissected at its margins, which overlooks the Cumberland Basin to the north and the Illawarra Escarpment and coastal plain to the east. It comprises about 2700 square kilometres, larger than the area of urban Sydney. Much of it isn't well known even to its inhabitants.

More than half of the plateau is in the National Parks and Water Reserves that occupy the rugged, often precipitous, margins of the plateau which mostly are still under native vegetation. The remainder, mainly in the centre and east, is mostly the catchment of the (westward flowing) Wingecarribee River and is more subdued in relief and largely cleared.

The whole of the shire is in catchments that supply drinking water to Sydney, which is one of the reasons why landholders, rural and urban, are being subjected by both state and local governments to an increasingly stringent regime of environmental protections and controls on land use and other physical development.

Some Demography

The Wingecarribee has long been known to the Gundungarra people, but mainly for their trade and seasonal movements between the coast and inland. Although the first Europeans to visit the area did so before 1800, sixty years later less than ten per cent of the district had been occupied officially for pastoral pursuits.

During the half century to World War I, the area reported as occupied for agriculture had risen to over sixty percent of the Wingecarribee and it stayed at this level, more or less, until the 1960s. However, much of the shire is marginal for any kind of agriculture and the total area reported under agriculture has now collapsed to be barely a quarter of the shire.

Until the 1960s the Wingecarribee was little more than a rural backwater and its tiny residential populations reflected this. As the M5 freeway crept southward from 1973 the district became more accessible from Sydney for commuters and retirees, and the district's residential population more than doubled in three decades, to over 45,000 in 2008.

During the last two inter-censal periods (1996-2006), population growth has slowed markedly. There has been little growth in working-age population and an actual decline in young-aged population. In that time the residential population aged 55 and over increased by more than fifty percent (to more than a third of that population), largely by net migration.

As a consequence, the residential population is expected to exceed 50,000 soon after 2016, mostly in the larger towns, and it will continue to become older.

With migration, incomes and levels of education have risen, particularly in parts of the north of the shire. The shire remains fairly 'average' on these characteristics but census data on them is incomplete because residents overseas on census nights are not enumerated. (Absentee owners of many second homes in the shire are also not counted as residents).

More than sixty per cent of the residential population lives in Bowral (12,000), Mittagong (nearly 8000) and Moss Vale (7000). Notwithstanding widespread recent seniors' living developments, the two northern towns still have markedly lower dwelling densities than urban Sydney (less than two per hectare, compared with more than eight across Sydney).

More than half of the remainder live in twelve smaller clustered settlements which have town water and waste collection services. The balance in rural areas includes many more living on hobby farms and rural residences than on commercial farms. Agriculture indeed is in a parlous state and has been thus for many decades.

Soils (and some Geology)

Geologically, the Wingecarribee is at the southern end of the Sydney Basin and its surface geology is dominated by massive Hawkesbury 'sandstones'. In the centre and east these are overlain by Wianamatta 'shales'. On top of these geologically old sediments there are remnants of basalt flows near Moss Vale and, more recent ones, around Robertson.

As parent materials, these rock types strongly influence the primary characteristics of today's soils. The 'sandstones' (though not exclusively sandstones, in fact) give rise to soils that tend to be unstructured and coarsely textured – and, hence, free draining and poorly aerated. Derived from mainly non calcareous rocks they have low nutrient statuses.

The soils developed on the shales and the basalts are more finely textured, with greater capacities to hold air and water, but they are often clayey and poorly drained. The 'shales' also are non-calcareous and give rise to soils with low nutrient statuses. The basalts, by contrast, are derived from alkaline parent materials and potentially have a higher chemical fertility.

These primary characteristics have been modified to varying degrees in different places by the processes of weathering, erosion and deposition over time. Many of the soils of the sandstones are residual or skeletal, shallow as a result of erosion, but there are deeper soils in some of the sandstone valleys.

The soils derived from shales and basalts are less obviously influenced by erosion and deposition but they are subject to soil creep, especially in the more undulating east. This downhill transfer of small particles is accentuated by the effects of cyclical shrink-and-swell, which happens with changing moisture regimes in the more reactive clay soils.

Except for soils subject to mass wasting and active erosion, the soils of the Wingecarribee have developed over relatively long periods of historical time. This has allowed leaching of nutrients and eluviation of colloids, particularly in the moister east and centre where pHs in soil reactions and nutrient statuses generally are lower than might be expected from their parent materials. .

The effects of leaching may be modified by the cycling of nutrients between soils and vegetation. In pre-European times, most of the shire was under forest or woodland, including patches of cool temperate rainforests in the extreme east. Then, a lot of the available nutrients were in the vegetation cover as well as in the humic and mineral parts of the soils.

Today, after a couple of centuries of deforestation, burning, grazing, browsing, cultivation and the like, sixty per cent of the natural vegetation cover has been disturbed, leading to loss of nutrients. Many soils have been affected by accelerated soil creep and removal of humic and colloidal matter, especially in finer textured soils.

In consequence, areas of 'good' soils across the shire are small and scattered. Mapping by NSW Agriculture indicates that barely a quarter of the shire's farmland is suitable for any sort of cropping at all. The more detailed mapping by the former NSW Soil Conservation Service offers a more detailed and rather more pessimistic view of the extent of prime agricultural land.

Climates and Weather

Southern Australia is in a zone dominated by dry high pressure air which interacts with periodic incursions of air, from the south and the north, to produce an eastward moving procession of anticyclones and cyclonic wind systems. Locally this gives rise to westerly, rather than easterly winds. The westerlies give us our weather; the easterlies most of our rain.

The Wingecarribee plateau averages an elevation of about 650 masl, which means that temperatures are generally around 4° below those at sea level nearby. In fact, when it is warm and dry, seasonal and diurnal temperatures tend to be closer to those of the coast; when it is cool and wet they tend to be rather lower than the normal lapse rate might suggest.

There is a deal of geographical variation within the shire, with normal temperatures in the west tending towards greater extremes than are experienced in the east. While heavy frosts and extreme heat are unusual, low winter temperatures curtail the growing season especially in the west, and high evaporation leads to soil moisture deficits in summer.

Rainfalls also tend to be lower than on the coast, although a small area in the east has median annual rainfalls over 1600mm. More commonly, median annual rainfalls are in the range of 1000 to 800mm, falling to below 700mm in the west. Normal rainfalls throughout the shire tend to peak in summer and autumn, which is when evaporation is highest.

The implications of normal temperatures and rainfalls for plant growth may be illustrated by modelling of temperate grass growth from the National Agricultural Monitoring System. Grass growth, which on the coast achieves nearly sixty per cent of a theoretical potential maximum, falls to 45 per cent at Robertson, 35 per cent in the three main towns and 30 per cent in the west.

This modelling demonstrates how quite small variations in both temperatures and rainfalls, such as due to aspect, or elevation, or exposure, can lead to significant geographical variations in plant growth in the Wingecarribee. This is a characteristic of cool temperate climates, such as those of northern France in the case of Bowral.

There is considerable variation from year to year also in temperatures and especially rainfalls. Because of departures in wind patterns from the normal it is not uncommon for winter (and summer) semesters to be drier than normal. Generally, dry semesters are followed by wet ones, allowing soil moisture to be recharged.

However, in recent years, there has been a succession of years that have been drier than normal, which has had profound consequences for soil moisture and for runoff and ground water.

As these dry periods have been sustained they have developed into droughts (which technically are periods in which rainfalls are amongst the lowest ten per cent on record).

The concern with this succession of drier-than-normal years is that it may be more 'normal' than has been thought. On current forecasts, climate change will have the effect in the Wingecarribee of turning the hottest year on record to date into a normal one, and of turning what are now drought years into merely dry ones (CSIRO, 2007).

The Garden Challenge

It would be wrong to think of the Wingecarribee as one great garden. What most people see is confined to corridors along the Hume and Illawarra highways, and most of the landscapes they see there are pastoral, lined and dotted with trees, mainly exotics, which shelter smaller areas of garden and hide the houses in both town and country.

In fact, the Wingecarribee is an area of great geographical diversity, with soils and climates that often are challenging, but rather less so in the parts that people generally visit. However, there are other conditions that promote the area as an area for cool temperate gardens, at least in its southern and eastern sectors.

Proximity to Sydney is of especial importance for, while the residential population overall may not be especially well off or well educated, the Hume Highway does enable growing numbers of better heeled Sydneysiders to maintain second homes in both towns and country, often with well developed gardens.

Growing numbers of mature aged residents who are better educated and better heeled, more particularly in the north of the shire, are also important and this is reflected in the growing membership of garden clubs (though the ageing of the population raises interesting questions about the sufficiency of a workforce to provide support services).

These growing numbers are reflected in prices of both urban and rural land which, while generally not being at Sydney levels, are high enough to discourage agriculture and to encourage continuing subdivision into smaller rural holdings and larger urban allotments which are suited to gardens, private ones rather than public ones.

For the most part it is possible for gardeners, with money and effort, to overcome the limitations of soils and climates that make the area marginal for commercial agriculture. This may become difficult as climate change brings warmer and probably drier conditions which will be ever more difficult to predict from year to year.

In an Australian perspective we, residents and visitors alike, share a good fortune in having this somewhat unique and very special place.

References

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The Garden of Ideas: Serpents in the Bush

Richard Aitken

Keynote address

As this conference is planned around the theme 'From wilderness to pleasure ground' I have shaped this keynote address to examine some underlying ideas inherent in the theme. The idea behind the title to this paper comes from aerial observations made on the launch tour of The Oxford Companion to Australian Gardens (2002). I was struck by just how much the Australian landscape demonstrated the serpentine—in its scenery, in its designed landscapes, and more darkly, in its attitudes towards the environment. I was reminded of the role of the serpent in the Fall, and our endless but rather futile quest to reclaim some kind of pre-Lapsarian Eden. I hope to explore some of these ideas in this paper.

In particular I would like to pose two questions to guide our thinking:

- *What is or was 'wilderness' and how might this quality be or have been manifest or perceived in Australia?*
- *How was pleasure manifest in the gardens and designed landscapes which formed the grounds of a residence?*

I plan to concentrate on the period up to the 1830s, when formative attitudes to Australian garden design were being shaped.

The Garden of Ideas

A major project on which I am currently engaged is entitled *The Garden of Ideas*. The project will have as its public focus a travelling exhibition in 2010–11 and an accompanying book, to be published by Melbourne University Publishing in 2010.[1] *The Garden of Ideas* is intended to give background to the major ideas that have shaped garden making in Australia. It is not intended as social history or economic history, nor will it be Marxist or post-modern. Rather, it will be based on sound, perhaps old-fashioned marshalling of data, what one of my university colleagues recently described as the 'new empiricism' (funny, I had never got over the old variety). It is my intention to ask the question of our gardens and their design, 'how?' rather than 'why?' Both of course are equally valid, it is just that I think the 'how?' has not been asked often enough, nor with sufficient comparative analysis.

In this address I want to also take you on a journey, and so I now introduce Dr George Bennett as our interlocutor. Bennett visited the Southern Highlands in October 1832, and was impressed by what he saw:

> On approaching the settlement of 'Bong Bong,' the wild forest had, in most places, given way to a cleared, cultivated, and beautiful country, forming a strong contrast to the gloomy bush we passed not long before. The vivid green of the fields of grain, in ear, but not yet mature, gives promise of a plentiful harvest; and clumps of trees scattered about the pastures, sufficient to

[1] Richard Aitken, *The Garden of Ideas: four centuries of Australian style* (Miegunyah Press in association with the State Library of Victoria, 2010)

> shelter the cattle from the parching heats of summer, added to the pleasing character of the scenery. The neat cottages to which barns, stables, &c. were attached, sprinkled over the landscape; the distant wooded hills; and smiling fields animated by cattle,—could not fail of exciting pleasurable sensations, and a favourable impression of this 'land of promise,' sufficient to banish the disappointment which the dulness [*sic*] of many of the wild parts of the country is too apt to produce.[2]

Here is a string of words—'wild', 'beautiful', 'clumps', 'animated', 'pleasurable', 'sensations'—all of which are familiar, but all of which can be unpacked to enhance our depth of understanding of Bennett's prose, and the contemporary background to garden design, and particularly the different stylistic manifestations which we see as a framework for our early colonial gardens.

Since the conference title invokes wilderness, why not let this be our word of the moment, for in looking at wilderness, attitudes towards it, and how it might be recreated in garden form, we can take a journey through many of the major aesthetic movements of the last three centuries.

Wilderness, Waste, and Wildness

In pre-eighteenth century gardens, a 'wilderness' denoted a kind of labyrinth cut through wood, its pathways generally winding, but sometimes formal. Whether derived from French or Anglo-Dutch traditions, the concept produced a space of ordered wildness. In fact the word 'wilderness' was probably less used in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries than its close etymological congener 'wild-ness'; and 'wild' was often seen as synonymous with 'waste'. The contemporary pre-occupation with 'waste' lands—whether seeking them abroad for colonisation and exploitation, or guarding them domestically for stock and solace—meant that Australia offered promising opportunities for ambitious nations. That the country was perceived as a void or wasteland—one early map labelled Van Diemen's Land's south-west as 'Transylvania—encouraged rapacity and greed.

Maintaining and improving these 'wastes' became a colonial pre-occupation. Settler James Atkinson of *Oldbury* looked in 1826 for improvements:

> The silence and solitude that reign in these wide spreading, untenanted wastes, are indescribable ... From the contemplation of this vacancy and solitude the mind recoils with weariness, and naturally turns with pleasure to anticipate some future and not distant period, when these vast and in many places fertile plains, shall be covered by productive flocks and herds, and enlivened by the presence and industry of civilized man.[3]

Atkinson used the term 'untenanted wastes' and 'civilized man' as two ends of a simple polar spectrum, but fire-stick farming of Aboriginal Australians proves otherwise, that a sophisticated management regime could assist in survival in a harsh environment. And the notion of the land being 'untenanted' was one that gained currency throughout the nineteenth century since it underpinned our system of freehold land tenure.

Ruthless thwarting of opposition marked Australia's pastoral expansion and figures from Australian garden history were not exempt from this push. The notorious Black Line, wherein European settlers attempted during the early 1830s to systematically isolate and if necessary eradicate Van Diemen's Land's Indigenous population was just one of many episodes of infamy. Listen to pioneering seed merchant and newspaper proprietor John Pascoe Fawkner:

> It is hoped, nay, desired, that each leader of a party [against the Aborigines] will take pen, ink, and paper with him, and note down a journal of each day's transactions; and also, in those parts

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2 George Bennett, *Wanderings in New South Wales* (London, 1834), vol.1, pp.199–200.

3 James Atkinson, *Account of the State of Agriculture & Grazing in New South Wales* (London, 1826), pp.1–8.

> not well known, keep a minute account of the nature, quality, and the description of the land they travel over ... [etc][4]

It was as if the whole exercise was some kind of picturesque tour of the Tasmanian Midlands.

Two broad strands of thought characterised this period. The first, a pastoral ecology, emphasised arcadian influence, harmony with nature, Romanticism, and nature theology (wherein beautiful elements represented God's care and benevolence while sublime ones such as mountains and hurricanes represented power and capacity for wrath). Contrasting with this was an imperial ecology characterised by a mastery of nature and the application of Enlightenment ideas and ordering to nature. A bombshell for both strands of thinking came with publication of Charles Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* (1859), which supported gradual rather than catastrophist origins of the earth and its biota (challenging contemporary Biblical views), and George Perkins Marsh's *Man and Nature* (1864), which conclusively demonstrated that far from living in harmony with nature, humans had unleashed a profoundly destabilising influence on the environment.[5]

It struck me, thinking about these contrasting ideas and their moral dimension, that perhaps we, as individuals and as a Society, should be working towards a Bowral Declaration, wherein we could record our acknowledgement that some past attitudes and practices of gardeners and garden-makers in this country have been damaging to parts of society, to the diversity of cultural and spiritual practices, and for its adverse impacts on the environment, and then to seek to reconcile past attitudes and practices as part of a continuum that heeds these lessons from the past and provides us individually and even collectively with ways in which we can go forward.

These thoughts lead me straight back to one of the phases of human culture which we now see embodied the best and worst of such attitudes—the Enlightenment, or the rule of human will over nature.

Enlightenment Thought

The period of the 1760s–70s was a decisive phase in Enlightenment thought, where the belief in reason that its proponents espoused was beginning to dominate botanical endeavour. The naming and classification systems of Linnaeus, rival natural classification systems championed by Jussieu and others, and a rise of scientific agriculture and horticulture all contributed to ferment of activity. Joseph Banks was a key proponent of Enlightenment ideals and he shared a zeal for scientific classification—as more and more specimens accumulated in European botanical coffers, so too did the flow of drawings and words, and the sorting and resorting of individual specimens.

One impulse of Enlightenment thought was the creation of imperial botanic gardens in both established and newly colonised settings. The scientific impress which Banks brought to his custodianship of Kew Gardens was soon linked to the greater British national interest, with economic and even political concerns becoming entwined with the scientific pillars of rationality. In this atmosphere it was not surprising that dried herbarium specimens were soon joined in the gardens of Britain and her rivals by live plants, inured to their unfamiliar surroundings in heated and glazed protection. This appropriation of plants soon turned to a two-way flow—as it had in earlier colonial campaigns in the Americas, Asia, and Africa—and it was especially in the consequent establishment of new colonial botanic gardens that Banks and his peers had the opportunity to give a scientific gloss to this dramatic rearrangement of the world's vegetal biota.

The doctrine of contrast formed a powerful influence on such thinking, fuelled by changing attitudes to gardens during the eighteenth century, in particular those works of philosophy that

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4 *Launceston Advertiser*, 2 (86), 27 September 1830, p.2.

5 See Max Oelschlaeger, *The Idea of Wilderness: from pre-history to the age of ecology* (Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 1991).

had a bearing on design. The libraries of Banks and others amongst an intellectual circle doubtless contained *Elements of Criticism* (Edinburgh, 1762) by Henry Home (Lord Kames), one of the most popular English-language works on human nature. Home was a proponent of philosophical societies and a keen advocate for the linking of arts and sciences. In his day, Edinburgh was seen as a northern Athens, a cradle of Enlightenment thought. In 1766—the year Banks went to Newfoundland—Home inherited property, which became a focus for agricultural improvement. Whether contemplating the Scottish Highlands, American backwoods, or the Australian bush is not stated, but on the question of garden design for such lands, Home's *Criticism* was striking:

> The solitariness ... of a waste country ought to be contrasted in forming a garden; no temples, no obscure walks; but *jets d'eau*, cascades, objects active, gay and splendid. Nay, such a garden should in some measure avoid imitating nature, by taking on an extraordinary appearance of regularity and art, to show the busy hand of man, which in a waste country has a fine effect by contrast.[6]

Home's philosophy in this regard was echoed two and even three generations later by J.C. Loudon, who explicitly linked the doctrine of contrast with his advocacy of geometric gardens for the 'newly peopled, and thinly inhabited, countries' such as the 'back settlements' of America or Australia:

> The suitableness of this style for a country in a wild state must, we think, be obvious to every unprejudiced mind, from the contrast which its clearly defined lines and forms afford to the irregularity of the surrounding scenery, and from the obvious expression of art and refinement which they produce. [7]

Romanticism

The cool rationalism of the Enlightenment—potently seen in the quest to catalogue, classify, and generally subdue the natural world—ran counter to the raw emotional edge of Romanticism, which drew inspiration and power from Nature.

Romanticism soon overtook Enlightenment thought, imparting a distinctive new character to human thought, displacing reason by imagination—in gardens absolutist abstract forms were being superseded by scenic approaches more conducive to individual trains of thought. The confluence of these two philosophies and the coincidence of their overlap with that of Australian colonisation ensured that complex new ideas about taste and garden design would dominate the first decades of European garden-making in the new colonies.

Unlike much Enlightenment scholarship, with its emphasis on a grid of rational thought, Romanticism relied on more fluid trains of thought imbued in the imagination. The second edition of Edmund Burke's work on the Sublime and Beautiful, for instance, contained 'an introductory discourse concerning taste', where the linkage between human thought and culture elevated taste to an overarching aesthetic category—instincts of self-preservation were associated with the sublime, while pleasure was linked to beauty. A common thread of romantic sensibility was—as Constable later recommended—to seek perfection 'at its primitive source, nature'. Australia was thus seen as a fertile field for the romantic imagination.

But mention of Burke, reminds me that we need to keep unpicking Dr Bennett and his influences.

Aesthetic Philosophies and Their Practical Codification

Three main philosophies pervaded mid-eighteenth and early nineteenth century aesthetics—the Beautiful, the Sublime, and the Picturesque. Historian Peter Bicknell whimsically summarised

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6 Henry Home, *Elements of Criticism* (Edinburgh, 1762) vol. 1, p.377.

7 J.C. Loudon, *The Suburban Gardener and Villa Companion* (London, 1838), p.652.

these categories with the charming mnemonic: 'Sheep are beautiful, goats are picturesque, but bulls are sublime'.

The Beautiful and the Sublime were characterised by many writers, but none with more effect than William Hogarth and Edmund Burke. Hogarth's book *The Analysis of Beauty: written with a view of fixing the fluctuating ideas of taste* (1753), was an immediate success and enjoyed many reprinted editions. Using pairs of stays of varying curvature, Hogarth illustrated his 'line of beauty' and its three-dimensional manifestation, the 'line of grace'. Some years later, Burke produced a more austere tome, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origins of our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful* (1757), soon enlarged as we have seen into a second edition 'with an introductory discourse concerning taste' (1759).

Beauty became associated, in gardens as with other artistic expression, with smoothness, while the Sublime was characterised by scenic grandeur invoking feelings of awe and even terror. The transition between abstract theory and its practical codification was taken up by several authors, notably Thomas Whately, whose book *Observations on Modern Gardening* (1770) formed one of the principal handbooks of the age. The Sublime was generally felt to be incapable of imitation in garden form, so lofty were its associations and so expansive its breadth. Only Nature herself was really capable of producing such effects and feelings, although these might in appropriately wild locations be appropriated. The Beautiful found its most popular expression in the landscape gardens of Capability Brown and his followers, while the Sublime took on particular literary landscape associations in the 'rediscovery' of the Scottish bard Ossian and in Gothic novels.

The beginnings of a new garden style began to be felt in the mid-eighteenth century with ornamented farms such as The Leasowes, outside Birmingham, developed by its poet-creator William Shenstone and posthumously described by his publisher in 1764. This edition of Shenstone's *Works* also contained the poet's 'Unconnected thoughts on gardening', which divided gardening into divided into three 'species': kitchen-gardening, parterre-gardening, and 'landskip, or picturesque-gardening'. Shenstone praised variety, but not taken to excess, and put forward the proposition that 'every good painter of landskip appears to me the most proper designer'. This idea, that garden or landscape design might be based on the approach of a painter and his pictures—hence the term 'picturesque'—took hold as the eighteenth century progressed and it found a champion in William Gilpin. The books of travel description published by Gilpin during the latter decades of the eighteenth century contained novel aquatint illustrations depicting impressionistically typical rather than topographically exact scenery. To these books of 'picturesque beauty', Gilpin added popular treatises on *Forest Scenery* (1791) and on *Picturesque Beauty* (1792), which translated his observations into practical landscape design manifestos.

While Gilpin embraced beauty in his concept of the Picturesque and found room to praise the landscape gardening of his contemporary Brown, their aesthetic successor Uvedale Price repudiated both these views. Price's two volumes of *Essays on the Picturesque* (1794–98) sought to codify the Picturesque as an independent aesthetic category much as Hogarth and Burke had done for beauty and sublimity two almost generations earlier. In Price's view, the landscape gardens of Brown, with their belts and clumps, and serpentine drives, mocked nature rather than drew from it—for him roughness, variety, and irregularity were to be preferred.

Colonial Applications

Gilpin's observations and Price's essays were at the height of their popularity and influence at precisely the moment Australia was being explored and colonised by Europeans. Whilst there had been little enthusiasm for Australian scenery with seventeenth-century coastal sightings and fleeting encounters by Dutch and English explorers, the voyages of James Cook heralded a new sensibility in observations of the landscape. Sailing west from New Zealand, Cook came in sight of New Holland near the present-day border between New South Wales and Victoria (Point Hicks) in April 1770 and coasted north. Cook's talented botanical artist, Sydney

Parkinson, wrote approvingly of the scenery bordering Botany Bay: 'The country looked pleasant and fertile; and the trees, quite free from underwood, appeared like plantations in a gentleman's park.' Cook himself noted 'some of the finest meadows in the world' in the locality.

On viewing the 'beautiful and novel appearance' of Port Jackson's scenery in 1788, First Fleet Surgeon Arthur Bowes was overwhelmed: 'Suffice it to say that the finest terras's, lawns, and grottos with distinct plantations of the tallest and most stately trees I ever saw in any nobleman's grounds in England, cannot excell in beauty those which nature now presented to view.'

The differentiation by Bowes of individual components, such as lawns and plantations, introduced a heightened level of appreciation that underscores a vision of the Australian landscape as surrogate parkland. Exceptional trees were occasionally remarked upon and local species—especially those of stately habit—were often ennobled with English names, such as ash, myrtle, or oak.

Another distinctive hallmark of English landscape gardens, the clump, was often invoked. At Western Port (according to Captain Wetherall), the trees were 'dispersed in clumps over an extended plain of rich meadows', while in the country near the Macquarie River in Van Diemen's Land (wrote James Ross), 'little clumps of wattle trees studding the extensive plains, remind the traveller of *Knole*, Wimbledon, and other parks round the gentlemen's seats in the neighbourhood of London'.

The belts of trees typically provided enclosure for landscaped English parks were—by contrast to their clumped siblings—rarely invoked. Perhaps little imagination was required to appreciate the all-pervading enclosure of the Australian bush.

During Macquarie's governorship, the search for new pastures outside the immediate confines of Sydney commenced in earnest, and with it, additional possibilities for the creation of rural parks and pleasure grounds. Of the Southern Highlands, Macquarie commented in 1820:

> The grounds adjoining Mr Throsby's Hut are extremely pretty – gentle Hills and Dales – with an extensive rich Valley in his Front – ; the whole Surrounding Grounds having a very Park-like appearance – being very thinly wooded ... / Mr Throsby not having yet given any particular name or designation to his new Estate in this fine Country, I have, with his own consent, named it 'Throsby-Park' – a designation particularly suitable and appropriate to his beautiful Park like Grounds. / ... The Situation of the New Settlers 4 miles South West of Throsby-Park, is particularly beautiful and rich – resembling a fine extensive Pleasure Grounds in England.[8]

Van Diemen's Land also yielded manifold opportunities for rural demesnes. The Governor's Retreat at New Norfolk, depicted by Joseph Lycett in the early 1820s, showed an elevated and carefully thinned site, imbued with the unusual advantage that the Governor felt no pressure for commerce on his land. Lycett referred to it as the 'Governor's College', almost suggesting that it was an academy for contemplation of and discourse on nature, in the manner of Aristotle's Athenian garden, the Lyceum.

The Sublime was almost never invoked in colonial gardens, and thought by most to be beyond human reach, only revealed in Nature and so manifest in alpine scenery, highlands, the sea, cliffs, cataracts, chasms, and extreme weather conditions. Yet its influence was profoundly felt in descriptive accounts of natural phenomena, as seen in the writings of Dr Bennett en route to New South Wales in the early 1830s:

> Occasionally our attention was excited during the voyage, by the remarkable luminosity assumed by the ocean in every direction, like rolling masses of liquid fire, as the waves broke and exhibited an appearance inconceivably grand and beautiful … As the ship sails with a strong breeze through a luminous sea on a dark night, the effect produced is then seen to the greatest advantage … the foaming surges … are similar to rolling masses of liquid phosphorus … an

8 Macquarie, diary, 18–19 October 1820.

> ocean of fire … a light of an inconceivable beauty and brilliancy: in the combination, the effect produces sensations of wonder and awe'.[9]

The Picturesque also made a great impact on colonial observations and sensibilities, especially when linked with artistic and literary Romanticism. Consider Joseph Lycett's description of 'The River Wingee Carribbee':

> The powers of that great master of his art, whose representations of some of the rudest scenes of nature approach so near to the sublimity of Nature itself, were never exercised upon a subject more worthy of his transcendent genius, than that of which the present View, it is hoped, may convey some slight idea; although, to render justice to its prodigious grandeur, must be the work of some future master, whose pencil shall at lease rival that of SALVATOR ROSA. [10]

Dr Bennett had similar feelings about this vicinity. Writing a decade after Lycett, as he returned from the Yass Plains to Sydney, Bennett observed:

> At a short distance further on, we turned off the more direct road, and arrived at Mr Barber's farm, close to which commences the extraordinary and extensive fissure, called the 'Shoalhaven Gullies,' extending through a large tract of country to the sea coast. This farm possesses natural beauties of a sublime and romantic character; but the soil is principally rocky, and does not seem to possess the valuable requisites to a settler, that of arable land and good sheep pasturage, in any quantity. To a visitor, however, the romantic beauties of the Gullies are objects of attraction; and accompanied by Mr Hume, senior, I was taken, at a very short distance from the house, to as splendid a scene as has been perhaps yet discovered in this interesting and peculiar country. I much regret that time did not permit me to make a closer examination of these gullies, which appear to owe their existence to some sudden convulsion of nature that had violently rent to hills asunder; down the steep sides, a dense vegetation concealed their depth, although the eye could reach, unimpeded, sufficiently deep to enable some idea to be formed of the profoundness of these chasms.[11]

Colonial appreciation of the Picturesque was enhanced and enriched after the rather abstract definitions of the 1790s became linked to the associative powers of the mind, a philosophical refinement propounded by the Scottish writers Archibald Alison and Francis Jeffrey. The clarity of colonial understanding of this associationist refinement was well demonstrated by architect Henry Hellyer's description of 'The Forth's Gateway' (a spectacular gorge on Tasmania's Forth River valley) in the early 1830s: 'This valley lies between Claude and the next mountain to the eastward, which I call "Vandyke" as well from its porphyry vandyked ridge, as from an association of ideas regarding the renowned names.'

Such associational links, manifest through trains of thought at once highly personal and variable, had profound consequences for garden design. 'The deeper impact of the doctrine', observed garden historian Brent Elliott, 'lay in the sudden bewildering freedom it offered the gardener ... all standards were arbitrary, and all tastes equally correct.'

Colonial modernism

In conclusion, I want to offer another complication—that of art history being confused with garden history. Since the Picturesque was as much a way of perceiving scenery as of landscape

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9 George Bennett, *Wanderings in New South Wales* (London, 1834), vol. 1, pp.35–36.

10 Joseph Lycett, *Views in Australia, or New South Wales and Van Diemen's Land delineated in fifty views with descriptive letter press* (London, 1824–25).

11 George Bennett, *Wanderings in New South Wales* (London, 1834), vol.1, pp.196–97.

design, it has long been allied to painting, and therefore to art history. This has in many ways muddied the waters for garden historians, especially when paintings are taken as primary evidence, often to the exclusion of surviving plans, descriptions, and even garden remnants. This is a conundrum I have been contemplating for some time and I now have support on the good authority of James Broadbent, who raised similar concerns when speaking at the opening of the 'Lost Gardens of Sydney' exhibition recently. He used the example of colonial painter Conrad Martens, making the point that Martens could usually make a vegetable garden look picturesque if he so wished. Similar problems can be encountered if using the colonial paintings of Joseph Lycett or John Glover as evidence of garden history. So rather than using the term 'Colonial Picturesque', coined by Glover's biographer David Hansen, I want instead to propose a new term to group gardens of the 1820s–30s—'Colonial Modernism'.

Looking at many rural Australian landscapes, with their casual groupings of trees and grassed park-like expanses, it is tempting to see these as coming straight from the so-called 'landscape' or 'natural' style of mid-late eighteenth century England. Several of our garden historians have made this link, including Beatrice Bligh. I suggest, though, that these scenes are at least likely to have been created primarily from other causes, ones which capture the insatiable lust for material gain in colonial Australia. This would especially include pastoralism, with its need for abundant grassland and adjacent water.

Whilst the individual voices of those such as pioneering pastoralist John Macarthur may have sought a landscape ideal in the Australian bush, the urgent tide of commerce and mercantile pursuits were never far from the surface. Despite the best efforts of a small but influential group of early colonists aided by inexpensive convict labour, efforts to establish Arcadian rural landscapes were doomed by commercial pragmatism and the failure of a so-called 'bunyip aristocracy' to materialise.

It is, I think, equally plausible that trees retained along the serpentine sinuosities of creeks and streams; as individuals or groups for shade or other livestock shelter; on swampy, rocky, or otherwise unworkable land; or along fence-lines and road reserves created the antipodean equivalent of clumps, belts, and specimen trees. Even it the concept of the park in Australia drew on an overall remembered aesthetic of British landscape parks, especially in its balance of trees to open ground, in all but very few cases, it lacked the attendant philosophy that had underpinned eighteenth-century stylistic prototypes. When the 'landscape' or 'natural' style was spoken of in early-nineteenth century Australia, I contend that it was a much more modern ethos being described, almost certainly a hybrid, translocated version of the Picturesque or its later manifestations drawn from the hands of gardenists such as Humphry Repton and J.C. Loudon which enabled a pleasing combination of ornament and utility. Australia's pastoral 'parks' were certainly designed landscapes, yet I believe it was more a case of the farm ornamented than the landscape garden farmed.

Paul Sorensen in the Southern Highlands and the Illawarra

Stuart Read

Abstract

While better known for work in the Blue Mountains, Paul Sorensen did notable early work (10 sites are listed below) in the Southern Highlands and Illawarra (taking the AGHS Southern Highlands Branch area as a region, which incidentally reflects the strong links between Sorensen and the Hoskins brothers of BHP/Australian Iron & Steel Co., who operated in the Mountains, Highlands and the Illawarra) and noting that he lived for a time in Berrima. His involvement is examined in this paper.

A Rapid Biography

Paul Edwin Sorensen was born in 1891 in Copenhagen and trained in horticulture. He worked with leading landscape designers and contractors in Denmark and Switzerland. A pacifist, he immigrated to Australia in 1915 and eventually found work as a gardener at the Carrington Hotel, Katoomba. He met and married Anna Ernestina Hillenberg, a hotel maid of German/Queensland origin and they had three sons, all of whom worked in the family business. He set up two nurseries in the Blue Mountains, in Katoomba, then Leura from 1917. Their two eldest sons were killed in World War II and the youngest, Ib, worked with Paul for decades. The nursery stocked trees, shrubs and perennials for retail and landscaping jobs. Plants were imported from New Zealand, England and Europe at first. In the 1950s it had fourteen staff working in three teams.

Paul Sorensen (Photo by Harold Cazneaux (1878–1953), c1936)

Sorensen's garden design/construction work included around 100 gardens around NSW from Glen Innes in the far north to Cowra and Orange in the west, Wahroonga and Rushcutters' Bay

in the east and Wollongong and Canberra (ACT) in the south. His gardens were essentially outdoor rooms (as were contemporary English gardens *Hidcote* and *Sissinghurst*) defined by large trees and shrubs and cleverly using walls and changes of level. He was less interested in smaller plants, leaving these to the owner. Site materials such as rock were often built around or recycled as walls and paths. Views were often borrowed from the landscape, or hidden if its scale was too grand. Standards of construction, presentation and maintenance were very high.

He never wrote on his work and avoided making plans, preferring to work on site in three dimensions, dealing in person with the owner and workers. His style owes more to European modern landscape architecture (e.g.: Lars Nielsen in Denmark and the Mertens Brothers in Switzerland, particularly their work on public parks) than to 'garden design'. Paul made almost all business decisions until his death in 1983 when Ib ran the nursery. The nursery was sold in 1988 after which it declined.

Southern Highlands and Illawarra Work

1. *Australian Iron & Steel Co. Office grounds,* Port Kembla (c1936–7);
2. *Invergowrie*, Exeter (1937/1960s);
2a. *Cherry Dell,* Exeter (subdivision off *Invergowrie*)
3. *Green Hills & Hillside*, Figtree (1936–8);
4. *Southern Portland Cement Co*., New Berrima (1937–8);
5. *Redlands,* Mittagong (c1937+);
6. *Gleniffer Brae*, Wollongong (1938+);
7. *Mt. Keira Scout Camp, Wollongong* (1939+);
8. *The Old Rectory nursery,* Berrima *(*late 1930s–1940s);
9. *Remembrance Driveway plantations,* south of Berrima (c1945+);
10. *Mereworth,* Berrima (1962–4/4–6).

1. Australian Iron & Steel Office Gardens, Port Kembla (c1936–7)

In 1925 (later Sir) Cecil and brother, Arthur Sidney Hoskins had become joint managing directors of Hoskins Iron & Steel Co. Their father Charles had already begun to plan to move the business from Lithgow and to build integrated steelworks at Port Kembla, where he had acquired land in 1924. This was to cut high freight costs and compete with BHP which had opened works at Newcastle in 1915.

In 1927 the State government agreed to build a railway connecting Port Kembla with the main line at Moss Vale and construction of a blast-furnace and deep-water wharf began. Hoskins went overseas seeking technical information, new plant and rights to manufacture and sell centrifugally spun pipes. To finance operations, in 1928 Hoskins formed a new company, Australian Iron and Steel Ltd with Baldwins Ltd of England, Dorman Long & Co. and Howard Smith Ltd; Cecil became chairman and joint managing director. Hard-hit by the Depression, A.I. & S. was sued by the government for breach of contract in 1932 and in 1935 became a subsidiary of competitor B.H.P. Hoskins remained general manager of A.I. & S. until 1950 and a director until 1959.

In 1935 a prestigious new administration building had been built at Port Kembla. Having problems with local contractors, Cecil was looking for a landscape designer to design and construct the grounds. Through the recommendation of Hoskins' friend Ronald Beale (piano manufacturer at the time working on interior cabinets in the house of Henri Van der Velde at Everglades, Leura), he met Sorensen and was impressed with the quality of his work in its garden. Word of mouth was how Sorensen had become known to Henri Van der Velde also.

Hoskins and Sorensen became firm friends; the relationship continued until Paul's death and carried on with his son Ib. Sorensen specified the plants for A.I. & S., Port Kembla. His work led to a number of commissions with the Hoskins family. The Port Kembla office and grounds is a listed heritage item on Wollongong Local Environmental Plan.

2. *Invergowrie*, Bundanoon Road, Exeter (1937–8; 1960s)

Originally known as *Headlands* and owned by the Yates family, its older trees date from a (Yates' first) 25-acre nursery, seed and bulb farm established here in 1894.

The property was acquired in 1927 by Sir Cecil Hoskins who demolished the house and had a new two-storey Tudor revival style house designed by architect (and brother in law: Cecil and Sidney Hoskins had married two sisters of) Geoffrey Loveridge, built from 1936. Sorensen designed and constructed its grounds from 1937-8. From 1937 the Hoskins family lived here—Cecil could enjoy his recreations of farming and motoring.

Sorensen worked around the large conifers (Himalayan cedars and others) and hedges planted by Yates. He moved the driveway, formerly straight and bisecting the garden, making sweeping curves from a new entry point—greatly increasing its length. It weaves between clumps of dogwoods and oaks giving glimpses of wide lawns. *Cherry Dell* is a natural gully east of the garden. Its cherries and Monterey pines date from the Yates era. Sorensen transplanted rhododendrons and camellias to connect it to the main garden. *Invergowrie* became a famous garden and during World War II, a convalescent home for servicemen and women.

His work at Port Kembla and Invergowrie led to commissions including *Gleniffer Brae*, Wollongong (for Cecil's brother Sidney), *Green Hills* and *Hillside* at Figtree—executive houses for A.I.& S., the grounds of the Hoskins Memorial Church at Lithgow (re-landscaping in 1938 the original grounds installed by the Searle Brothers) and the Southern Portland Cement Co. at Berrima as well as several smaller gardens.

The Hoskins sold *Invergowrie* in 1949 moving to Moss Vale, after a child drowned in the swimming pool. It was advertised as having 15 acres of gardens. After several changes of hands and its use as a nursery for a time, the Fieldhouses (Charlotte Webb's family) in 1967 called Sorensen back to substantially reverse his earlier design's character. He was 88 and worked here for 18 months. At 90 years old he was up a ladder pruning *Wisteria* on the front of the house.

While the Hoskins had preferred an extrovert garden with trees and shrubs (rhododendrons and barberries) around the house leaving the boundaries open so the public could look in, the Fieldhouses wanted privacy with the main plantings on the boundaries, which involved moving a large number of mature trees.

The wide lawns are set with specimen trees including the wonder tree, *Idesia polycarpa* with hanging chains of red berries. The *Cherry Dell* was lost in a subdivision and re-acquired in 1968 (taking it from 23 acres to 210). The property was restored up until the 1990s. *Invergowrie* was acquired in 2000 by John Hewson and recently opened to AGHS members.

2a. *Cherry Dell*, Bundanoon Road, Exeter

This is a woodland garden of c.3ha, subdivided off the former *Invergowrie* estate. This has latterly been open to the public through a local garden opening scheme.

3. *Greenhill* and *Hillside*, Princes Highway, Figtree (1936–8)

These were designed for executives of Australian Iron & Steel—a large guest house and a function centre for important visitors and executives—a prestigious showpiece—on a south easterly facing slope commanding expansive views east to the sea and south to the steel works. Apart from scattered eucalypts the site was bare. Newcastle architects Pitt & Merewether designed the two houses. A.I. &S. engineers designed the winding zigzag driveway up the 19-acre site with *Greenhill* near the top, *Hillside* on the lower slopes. To ensure privacy, Sorensen began to develop dense woodland between them and garden rooms defining spaces yet allowing views out, with dry stone wall terracing (basalt from Bombo nearby). He treated the site as one design exercise, ensuring good shelter from the strong southerly winds, which buffet this coast.

Sorensen used many of his trademark trees here—cedars, Chinese elm and *Liquidambar*. He added a mix more unusual but suited to the coastal site nettle trees, coral trees, plum/brown pines (*Podocarpus elatus*), bunyas, brush box, paperbarks, Christmas bush, Illawarra flames, orchid trees, jacarandas, Norfolk Island hibiscus and tallow trees. The long drive was lined with shrubbery including *Lantana montevidensis*, *Bougainvillea glabra* 'Sanderiana', firethorn, Indian hawthorn, azaleas and magnolias.

All construction and maintenance was by A.I. &S. staff, with Sorensen making 2-3 day visits. At *Gleniffer Brae* and Mt. Keira Scout Camp, Sidney Hoskins employed workmen directly with Sorensen giving them instructions on similar visits. A single skilled workman made all the rockwork and walls at all three sites, employed directly by Sorensen. The quality of workmanship and design at all sites attests to his ability to pass ideas to unskilled men to enable them to work without supervision between visits.

This site is significant as an integrated designed estate strongly associated with BHP/AI&S and the Hoskins family in an era when the company became Australia's largest steel and iron manufacturer and Wollongong an important industrial centre. BHP used it for executive housing up until the early 1990s.

Sorensen and Sidney Hoskins successfully lobbied Wollongong City Council to save the ancient Moreton Bay fig (*Ficus macrophylla*) after which the township was named, which was threatened by roadway widening. Sadly this tree died in 1986 and was removed by Council.

A mid-2005 redevelopment scheme for aged persons' housing (6 additional houses and another 54-place building) meant considerable change to the by then neglected grounds. This scheme has not to date proceeded. In the interim subdivision has narrowed its formerly broad highway frontage and residential development has encircled it, changing its former rural setting. *Greenhill* and *Hillside* are listed on Wollongong Local Environmental Plan.

4. Southern Portland Cement Co., New Berrima (c1937-8)

This site had for years been a saw mill and its soil was hard packed by heavy vehicles. Topsoil 23cm thick was laid over it and trees, chiefly conifers such as Monterey cypresses (*Cupressus macrocarpa*) planted in dense belts to screen it from surrounding properties and roads. Along the road frontage a row of swamp cypress (*Taxodium distichum*) was planted which has matured well.

5. *Redlands,* corner Oxley Drive & Duke Street, Mittagong (c1937+)

This garden was planted from c1936+ for Cedric and Ettie Rouse. Rouse was Cecil Hoskins' friend and employee—an industrial chemist at the South Portland Cement works, whom Sorensen met while working on *Invergowrie*. He was anxious to start a garden on land he owned at Mittagong. Thus the 1936 date could represent Rouse's own plantings—given that Sorensen only met him through Hoskins and his work for Hoskins had started in 1937. Sorensen may have only given specifications. Sydney Architect John Brogan designed its Tudor style house in 1941. The rest was completed in 1946 with major extensions in 1952. A 1942 plan from the Caroline Simpson Library & Research Collection drawn by 'L.H' and checked by 'P.S' for Anderson & Co. shows the grounds' 'visualised beautification scheme'. The unusually formal driveway appears to date from the 1946 work—ground level manipulations to make it meant that nearby plantings must date to around that time.

Its northern aspect on Mount Gibraltar protects it from frosts and cold south-westerlies. A lone golden ash provides a dominant splash of colour amid various greens. Copper beech dominates the approach. Blue Atlas cedars increase its visual depth, planted beyond the bright green of larch. A suite of fine mature trees of contrasting forms and foliage (redwoods, oaks including *Quercus canariensis*, field maples and tulip tree) frame the property, mediated by stone terracing, stepped retaining walls and paths.

Particularly notable is a silver elm, *Ulmus minor* 'Variegata' surrounded by dark firs and spruces. Another is a driveway planting west of the house of purple backed sycamores, *Acer pseudoplatanus* 'Purpureum' framing house views out.

Sold in the 1970s after the Rouses' deaths, it passed through several changes of owners and fell into neglect. The original 2.8ha has been subdivided to its present 1.2 ha. From 1996-9 owner Michelle Scamps renovated the overcrowded garden, removing 19 trees off the front lawn and adding a kitchen garden, fern gully, ponds and gazebo, with the help of landscape designer Nicholas Bray. A space on the west side previously intended as a driveway was transformed into a terraced Mediterranean inspired knot garden. AGHS members may recall visiting *Redlands* as part of the 2000 Bowral conference. This is an important example of Sorensen's early work, which retains its integrity. It is not heritage listed.

6. *Gleniffer Brae*, Murphys Avenue, Keiraville, Wollongong (1938+)

This garden was designed for Arthur Sidney Hoskins, joint managing director of Hoskins Iron and Steel who supervised construction of the Port Kembla steelworks. He remained a director of A.I. & S. and manager at Port Kembla. Sidney had bought the land in 1928, the year the Port Kembla works opened—he had been actively involved with the move of the company. Architect Geoffrey Loveridge designed the single storey Tudor style house high on a site sloping the northeast into a valley, rising on the far side to form a low hill, which screens the suburbs of Wollongong from view. Behind is Mount Keira, a dramatic backdrop. Sorensen was given 75 acres to work on, most being left as grazing land with the garden taking up about 4 acres. Like *Invergowrie* it reflects strong links between clients, architect and landscape architect—with Sorensen and Loveridge working together effectively.

The name comes from a small village in Paisley, Scotland—birthplace of Mrs Hoskins' grandfather. As soon as the house was completed in 1938 Sorensen began tree planting. First he transplanted from surrounding bush several large Illawarra flame trees for shelter and an appearance of maturity. These were wrapped in straw to protect them from water stress until damaged roots could regrow. Some survivors could represent the earliest successful attempt at transplanting mature Australian trees, a process still regarded as almost impossible. Also early-planted were brush box, kaffir plum (*Harpephyllum caffrum*), planes, silky oaks and jacarandas.

An area known as The Spinney, low on the nearside of the valley, was planted with hundreds of azaleas under the shade of a natural grove of turpentines. Sorensen's interest in natives is reflected by their dominance here and the presence in a prominent location of a very large specimen of coastal cypress pine (*Callitris columellaris*). The driveway sweeping up to the house's front was built in a similar low key fashion to that at *Invergowrie*, with drive strips here of sandstone flags. Behind the house, axially placed in an open courtyard, is a more formal garden with a circular fountain sunk into the lawn surrounded by trees and shrubs framing the view to Mt Keira. Across the formal garden a romantic playhouse for children sites within shrubs on axis to the mountain, representing both summerhouse and visual accent. Natural rocks were kept either as features or skilfully built into low stonewalls and edges.

Service areas to the southeast are separated from the formal garden with stonewalls of similar construction and detailing to those at *Everglades*. This quarter was heavily planted for shelter from prevailing winds.

During its period as the Hoskins' home (1939-49), *Gleniffer Brae* hosted many prominent visitors including the Duke and Duchess of Gloucester, Archbishop of York and Lady Baden-Powell. Few capitalists associated with mining and industry chose to live in the Illawarra: this is the only example of a grand house and estate in Wollongong. The Hoskins were very civic-minded and the property's continuing role in public education and as a community centre reflects this desire, as set out in Sidney's will.

Hoskins sold *Gleniffer Brae* in 1954 and for some time it was a branch school for Sydney Church of England Girls' Grammar School. From a visit in 1959 Mr R. H. Anderson, Director

of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Sydney, recommended expert advice be sought to prepare a design for a botanic garden.

In 1978 it was acquired by Wollongong City Council and today is used as a Conservatorium of Music and function centre. The grounds have been subdivided with over half (10.5ha in the east) gifted to the city by and now known as *Hoskins Park*, being developed since the 1960s as the local Botanic Gardens. This was done under the direction of its first curator William Mearnes (1960s-77; official opening 1970), with initial plans by landscape architect Prof Peter Spooner of the University of NSW. Dean Miller was the second curator/Director (1977-88) when the gardens expanded and their arrangement changed from geographic to a habitat-based system using the site's microclimates.

Apart from The Spinney, readily recognisable as part of the original garden, changes making it a public garden/park have masked Sorensen's work.

Gleniffer Brae is listed on the NSW State Heritage Register and on Wollongong Local Environmental Plan. A 2005/6 proposal to extend a recent outbuilding in its rear, formal garden for in/outdoor concerts and receptions resulted in more research on Sorensen's contribution—a formal circular plan with sunken central fountain is echoed by a semi-circular avenue of brush box trees and low stone walling—appearing to be a rear driveway or access west.

7. *Mount Keira Scout Camp*, Mount Keira, Wollongong (1939+)

Both Hoskins brothers were active in scouting movement. From the 1920s, Cecil was foundation president of the South Coast and Tablelands area of the Boy Scouts' Association in 1946-66. Sidney employed workmen directly to construct this low key camp with Sorensen's advice. Begun in 1938 it remains almost pure Sorensen in planting, planning and character. Apart from memorial gates erected to Sidney Hoskins in 1959, it exhibits a unity of concept rare anywhere.

High on the slopes of Mt Keira and now within the Illawarra Escarpment State Recreation Area, small glades were cleared within rainforest, carefully keeping mature Illawarra flame trees (*Brachychiton acerifolium*) and red cedars (*Toona ciliata*). Sorensen marked its entry with paired jacarandas and one *Cedrus atlantica*. A path leads from these through rainforest to the main camping area.

Atlas and Himalayan cedars in a grove divide this glade from the next, which houses the lodge and from which views to the ocean can be had. These glades have been levelled and the cut banks allowed to revegetate. At the foot of the banks are drainage channels made of stone from the site and designed such that they have naturalised and fit their surroundings well. From the lodge a meandering path begins, between enormous fig and other rainforest trees to the chapel. Here a natural rock outcrop has been combined with typical Sorensen stonewalls and steps to form the chapel pulpit. Only a small clearing was made for the congregation and the split log pews rise from a floor of leaf litter and bracken. The site is maintained by volunteer work and testifies to good design and users' respect. It is not heritage listed.

8. *The Old Rectory*, Wingecarribee Street, Berrima (late 1930s–late 1940s)

Formerly known as *The Parsonage*, this Gothic revival cottage on 12 hectares was designed by Edmund Blacket c1856 for the 'galloping parson' and chaplain to Berrima Gaol, Reverend James Hassall. Hassall established the first denominational school for Young Ladies, which then became the first Berrima School. Its sandstone ruin stands in one of the paddocks. The Anglican Church property trust later leased the property to a number of people including Paul Sorensen.

With the onset of World War II, Sorensen's work with Henri Van der Velde at *Everglades*, Leura, slowed. Sorensen had re-designed Anderson & Co.'s new nursery on Parramatta Road at Summer Hill, Sydney in the late 1930s, where he met Claude Crowe, Anderson's garden

planning manager (from 1936) who was running a full garden design & construction business. Anderson & Co. seed house (from 1863+) had two retail establishments in George and Pitt Streets, Sydney. The Advanced Plant Nursery and Headquarter Offices, 80-94 Parramatta Road, Summer Hill (1938) replaced their former 188 Kent Street, Sydney building.

Sorensen decided Andersons needed a cool climate nursery and on his own account leased the Berrima rectory and its land for this purpose. He intended supplying Andersons with cold climate plants and at the same time thought this would provide future work for his sons. Sorensen and Crowe at first worked together on the nursery project. Crowe was commuting from Sydney and renting a cottage in nearby Jellore Street when war was declared.

In 1939 Australia was highly dependent on England and European supplies of much of its vegetable seed. A rush of legislation was brought about to ensure local seed production and food supply. A scheme was set up so that specified growers, provided with an initial quantity of seed, could increase supplies by growing successive crops and collecting their seeds. Berrima was seen as distant from enemy attacks and close to the railhead at Moss Vale.

Between 1942–7 Crowe was a registered vegetable seed grower under contract to the Commonwealth, supplied with seed from the Sydney company—United Seed Growers. Crowe's protected occupation growing (particularly vegetable) seeds to ensure Australia's food supplies were not cut off—exempted him from call up. Crowe decided to work on his own and in 1942 bought the house in Jellore Street on five acres, marrying Isobel Tacon in 1943 and starting a 56-year partnership. The Crowe's *Berrima Bridge Nursery*, (1943–c1999) supplied trees and shrubs as well as design guidance to the district for over 50 years.

Sorensen began restoring the rectory in the 1940s. During his time here, Lady Gowrie, wife of then Governor-General, would often stop on her way between Canberra and Sydney to enjoy a picnic lunch and his company. He had designed a memorial garden to the Gowries' son Patrick, killed in the war, in the garden at Government House, Canberra, before 1948.

With the death of his two eldest sons in World War II in 1943 (Derrick the eldest had been training pre-1939 at the Royal Horticultural Society's Gardens at Wisley before joining the Royal Air Force) and understandably shattered, Paul abandoned the nursery. Resuming work at *Everglades* for a time, his friend and patron Henri Van der Velde died and his wife decided to sell, depriving Sorensen of its long-term maintenance, long a part of his income. To top this, Sir Cecil Hoskins sold *Invergowrie* in 1949 and with it, the opportunity to complete the garden there. Sorensen retreated to the Blue Mountains and designed a series of smaller gardens close to the nursery in Leura.

The Berrima nursery's remains can still be seen in 'the Woodland' part of the site. Long lines of Mediterranean cypresses, Lombardy and aspen poplars (*Populus tremula*), Chinese/silver fir (*Cunninghamia lanceolata*), red horse chestnut, big tree/redwood (*Sequoiadendron giganteum*), coastal redwood (*Sequoia sempervirens*), Japanese cedar (*Cryptomeria japonica*), Douglas fir, Norway maples (*Acer platanoides*), claret ash, Iowa crab apples, black birch, hemlocks stand along with blue Atlas cedars.

Some of the oldest plantings date from Hassall's time, for example, a superb Norway spruce (*Picea abies*), which Ib Sorensen claimed was the finest specimen in Australia. A huge *Camellia japonica 'Red Waratah' (/C.j. 'Anemoniiflora'*) outside the kitchen door dates from 1871 according to Claude Crowe. A beautiful red-barked maritime pine (*Pinus pinaster*), flat-topped stone pines *(P.pinea*) and a rare Californian Bishop's pine (*P.muricata*) with its grey-green needles are notable.

David and Charles Lloyd Jones bought the property in 1957 and added an unsympathetic wing. Marjorie Kuenzli bought it in 1962 and bequeathed it to the National Trust of Australia (NSW) who took possession in 1988 running it as a weekender. Following financial troubles it was sold in 1990 to Maxine Stewart, who restored it, adding a small cut flower and wholesale nursery. A photo shows her getting pruning lessons from Ib Sorensen for the 1885 wisteria on the

verandah. AGHS members may recall a visit to the property in 1997 c/o Ms Stewart. The property changed hands again in late 2007.

The *Old Rectory* is listed on Wingecarribee Local Environmental Plan but only as an architectural item—not for its grounds or garden or Sorensen nursery.

9. *Remembrance Driveway Plantations,* Hume Highway, south of Berrima (c1949+)

Hoskins' public spiritedness involved Sorensen with memorial tree plantings made for servicemen lost in World War II. By this time Sir Cecil had moved to *Cardrona*, Moss Vale where he himself designed the garden. By now he no longer always followed Sorensen's advice and the plantation trees, chosen and paid for by Hoskins and planted by Sorensen, were not always well selected, leading to many failures. With highway upgrading and changes in its route some of these are no longer part of the Hume Highway roadside, but still remain. These are not heritage listed. Some are privately maintained. A truck lay-by near Goulburn has forced relocation of one.

10. *Mereworth*, Hume Highway, Berrima (1962–4: Cavanough/1966 Ratcliffe)

Designed for Mr and Mrs A. Oxley, *Mereworth* was originally an 1823 grant of 2000 acres to John Atkinson, whose brother farmed nearby at *Oldbury*. A planned avenue of elm trees between the two estates was only partly achieved, on the eastern, *Oldbury* side. An older house on *Mereworth* stood on the Hume Highway and later became an inn.

Sorensen came here in 1962, completing the garden over a two-year period, well before the house. The house was designed by John Amoury in 1965 and completed in 1968. Richard Ratcliffe considers this one of Sorensen's finest gardens /Australia's finest designed cultural landscapes. The house is hidden among mature cypresses and pines, which Sorensen retained.

Originally approached by a 2km long drive from the Hume Highway (which swung left running parallel to the highway climbing onto the ridge, swung right running along the ridge arrayed with existing clumps of native trees with views out, then swung right into an avenue leading to the house). Its approach was truncated in 1985 by construction of a highway bypass (and duplication) of the town of Berrima to the east. The final approach is through a double avenue of golden elms and '*Mt. Fuji'* cherries, sheltered by a line of Bhutan cypress to the windy west.

A carriage loop passes through a porte-cochere with a courtyard of complex planting. Four advanced fruiting apples were planted in a group with their positions accurately plotted with a dumpy level—the courtyard was built around them. A path leads between house and garages and weeping cherries to a gazebo. A freeform swimming pool to the house's east contains an island, also planted until c1990 with a Himalayan cedar pruned as a kind of giant bonsai. North of the house a raised lawn terrace gives expansive views to grazing land and a large dam below, separated by double-stepped retaining walls (or ha-has) following the contour, along the top of which is a double row of horizontal-grafted elms, which were intended to be pruned to allow views out under their low branches.

Sorensen's only apprentice Brian Smith, recalls living in shearer's quarters while the garden was constructed and the 100,000 bricks in the ha-ha walls, varying from 4–5 feet high. He recalls all work was done by hand—no chainsaws, tractors, backhoes nor fork lifts. Rocks were moved with levers and trees with a wooden tripod, chains and pulley—sometimes needing four people to move one tree! A number of blue Atlas cedar trees 25^{ft} high were moved from Leura to Exeter.

Mereworth is fortunate that Peter Holmes, responsible for garden upkeep, was employed by Sorensen on the building of the garden, leading to continuity of its concept in its maintenance over a long period. *Mereworth* is not heritage listed.

Conclusions

Paul Sorensen is arguably NSW's (possibly Australia's) finest landscape and garden designer of the 20th century, leaving a legacy of some 100 gardens. His lack of plans and written records means he has been neglected in comparison to 'published' or publicised contemporaries such as Walling or Burley Griffin. Since 1990 no survey has been done of which gardens survive or their condition. They are poorly recognised as the works of art, complex pieces of site-specific design evocative of their eras they are. Their poor representation in heritage studies or statutory heritage listings reflects a low awareness and level of inclusion of gardens and designed landscapes in heritage studies and listings. This, despite 25 years of AGHS's existence and c.30 years of National Trust classifications, which still 'lead the field' and are well ahead of general community awareness.

All Sorensen gardens are under threat of subdivision, road widening, building works, changes in ownership, drought and limited resources. Of the 10 sites listed above, only *Gleniffer Brae* is listed on the State Heritage Register. *Greenhill* and *Hillside* and Port Kembla's Commonwealth Rolling Mills (former A.I. & S. offices & grounds) are listed as local heritage items on Wollongong Local Environmental Plan (LEP), the latter only for its architectural value. *Invergowrie*, Exeter is about to be listed on Wingecarribee Shire's LEP. *The Old Rectory*, Berrima is LEP-listed but only as architecture. Of his other work, only *Mahratta* at Wahroonga and *Everglades* at Leura are listed on the State Heritage Register. *Redlands, Mereworth, the Mount Keira Scout Camp, the Remembrance Driveway* and the *Portland Cement Works* are not heritage-listed.

A challenge for the AGHS branches in NSW is to work with owners, supporters and Council heritage advisers to nominate remaining gardens for heritage listing and encourage appreciation and future conservation of their heritage values. AGHS in Victoria has been successful in seeking State Heritage Register listings of Edna Walling gardens—the same should be sought for remaining Sorensen gardens. I would especially stress the value of archives, of keeping personal or 'company' photographs, site plans, job records, of making oral histories, recordings of owners, clients, workers—these are first hand sources of information that speak volumes about the work. But only if they are kept, examined and people consider where they might find appropriate, long-term homes, such as the Caroline Simpson Library and Research Collection at the NSW Historic Houses Trust at the Mint, or the State Library of NSW. Consider!

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Beautifully Practical: Garden Nurseries of the Southern Highlands

Linda Emery

Synopsis

A growing interest in home gardening in the latter part of the 19th century led to the establishment of several commercial nursery gardens in the Southern Highlands. Prominent plantsmen, Arthur Yates and Frederick Searl, recognising the suitability of the soils and climate, developed experimental seed and bulb raising properties in Exeter which would support their Sydney businesses. Patrick Shepherd, son of Thomas Shepherd, the founder of the Darling Nursery in Sydney, established himself in Bowral along with other smaller-scale nurserymen who satisfied the flourishing local demand for new and fashionable plants and trees.

Introduction

Today, the Southern Highlands is famous for the beauty of both its natural and built environment, including the wonderful trees and gardens that give the area its particular character. The influences that have created this 'look' have been many, but today I am going to speak about several of the early horticulturists and plantsmen who came to the area, and in their own way, made an impact on the development of the landscape.

Patrick Lindesay Crawford Shepherd

The earliest of the nurserymen of influence to come to the area was Patrick Lindesay Crawford Shepherd. Born in Sydney in 1831, he was the youngest son of Thomas Shepherd, the Scottish landscape gardener who established the Darling Nursery, the first commercial nursery in Sydney. Patrick Shepherd had been named for the Earl of Crawford and Lindsay on whose estate in Scotland his father, Thomas, had grown up and where he first became interested in landscape gardening. Thomas Shepherd's father was head gardener on the Crawford estate. Patrick joined the family business, Shepherd & Co, in partnership with three of his brothers and as the inner city of Sydney grew, began to acquire land further afield for their enterprise—Lyndsayville at Rydalmere, and Chatsworth at Rooty Hill—keeping part of the Darling Nursery as the distribution centre for what became the largest of all the nurseries in Sydney.[1] Records for 1886 show that the firm sold more than 60,000 fruit trees, 20,000 camellias and other pot plants too numerous to mention.[2] Robert Henderson, brother-in-law of the Shepherd brothers, who had run the Darling Nursery after Thomas Shepherd died in 1835, later established his own nursery, 'Camellia Grove', in Alexandria.[3]

The subdivision and sale of the original nursery land in the 1850s, now the inner city suburbs of Chippendale and Darlington, provided the financial backing for Patrick Shepherd's later

1 V. Crittenden, *A Shrub in the Landscape of Fame* (Mulini Press, Canberra, 1992) pp.105-109.

2 *Sydney Morning Herald*, 12 April 1938, p.23.

3 Biography Robert Henderson http://www.newtownproject.com.au/local-council-info/biographies/15/

property dealings in Bowral and the surrounding area.[4] He first began buying land in Bowral from the subdivision of the Oxley Estate in the 1860s and by the 1870s held a substantial number of large blocks and farm lots stretching up and over Mt Gibraltar.

Shepherd moved to Bowral in 1879 with his second wife Sarah Una, ten children from his first marriage and the first of seven children that he and Sarah would have over the next eleven years. He had built a large semi-detached house—St Helens—where the family lived for several years. The other half of the house served as the Rectory for St Simon and St Jude Church of England until the Reverend Stanley Howard built the present Rectory in Bendooley Street. St Helens, at 33 Merrigang Street, survives largely intact.

During his time in Bowral Patrick Shepherd subdivided the surrounding land and used street names that reflected his horticultural background and the trees and plants stocked at the Darling Nursery—Daphne, Myrtle, Elm, Holly, Rose, Ivy—and Una for his wife. This same street naming pattern had been used for the subdivision of the Darling Nursery land in Sydney in 1856.

Whilst there is little documentary evidence of Shepherd's personal activity as a nurseryman in Bowral itself, there is an oral tradition that supports it and P L C Shepherd and Son advertised regularly in the local newspapers. Shepherd's Paddock along the Mittagong Rivulet in Bowral was well known.

In 1883 Patrick Shepherd built a large new house at Colo Vale, Lindesay Hall, to accommodate his ever-growing family. The village of Colo Vale was developed as a private township by Shepherd adjacent to his Antipodean version of a landed estate. Lindesay Hall was renowned for its beautiful garden, set in the picturesque surrounding bushland. Land sales of small house lots in the township of Colo Vale began in 1889, followed by larger blocks and small farms on the outskirts of the village from 1891. In planning the village, Patrick Shepherd repeated the naming pattern from the Darling Nursery and Shepherd Estate subdivisions—Elm, Daphne, Myrtle, Jasmine, Ivy, Rose. He was either totally devoted to the trees and shrubs stocked by the Darling Nursery—or completely devoid of imagination. I have no doubt that it was the former. His whole life was spent in and around the horticultural trade, as a practical gardener and seedsman. He served terms as both vice-president and president of the Horticultural Society of NSW, wrote prodigiously and gave lectures. He was for a time MLA for Nepean, and later a member of the Upper House.[5] Through his knowledge of landscaping, plants and gardens and interest in civic affairs in the early years of Bowral and later Colo Vale he had an influence, perhaps subtle, on the way in which those places developed. The influence of the garden nurseries in Exeter, however, is more overt.

The Jensen Family

The village of Exeter is something of a newcomer in terms of Southern Highlands' history. The land was taken up in the 1820s by the Badgery family, but it was not until the late 1880s that the village itself came into being. Henry Badgery's *Vine Lodge* property was by this time in the hands of his sons, Charlie and Frank, who subdivided part of the *Vine Lodge* estate for farm and village lots.[6] The form of the subdivision—small village lots and a number of larger lots, surrounded by more substantial acreages—remains relatively in place to this day. The three horticultural properties in Exeter I am going to speak about are all in the same general area of the village.

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4 *Bowral Free Press*, 9 March 1889 p.3.

5 Parliament of NSW, Biography P L C Shepherd https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/members/formermembers/Pages/former-member-details.aspx?pk=637

6 Linda Emery, *Exploring Exeter* (Exeter 2003) pp. 9-11.

Exeter has the benefit of having some of the finest volcanic soil in the highlands. One of the first people to buy land and move into Exeter to take advantage of this very fertile land was a Dane, Fritz Jensen. Fritz and his wife Annie purchased 17 acres of land in the Vine Lodge estate in 1894 where they built a house, *Krathuset* (or in English, *The Cottage*) and established a small nursery around the turn of the century. Fritz was born in Aarhus in Denmark and worked as a draftsman in the Department of Primary Industry in Sydney. His wife Annie Roberts, from Bangor in Wales, was an accomplished pianist and at one time taught piano to the children of the Governor of NSW, Lord Carrington.[7]

The Jensens set about clearing their land and planted an orchard. Fritz imported bulbs from Holland and many other parts of the world to establish a specialty nursery and for many years they sent their produce by train to outlets all over NSW.

The couple had three sons, Fritz, born in Sydney in 1893, Erik in 1898 and Derek in 1900. After Fritz Snr. died in 1926, Annie, with her sons, Erik and Derek, continued to run the business. The Jensen brothers both attended Hawkesbury Agricultural College during the First World War. Erik completed the Orchard Short Course and the College Ambulance Certificate in 1916. Derek gained his Certificate of Competency in Agriculture in 1917 then studied the Dairy Science Course gaining his Diploma in Dairying in 1919.[8] Their nursery was quite an institution in the Southern Highlands. They would send bunches of daffodils, jonquils, lily of the valley and rhododendrons among other things to Sydney florists—always five shillings (or fifty cents) a bunch no matter what the flower. They had a hand cart that they would wheel down to the station and load the baskets of flowers on to the trains—in the days when we still had trains. The nursery operated for some ninety years before the two elderly bachelors sold the property in 1985. The Jensens' late-Victorian cottage was locked in time. It had remained virtually unaltered for 90 years.

Educated and well read, Annie and Fritz Jensen's most prized possessions, listed in their first insurance policy in 1894, were still in the house when the contents were auctioned in 1985. Among them were Annie's Steinway piano, a canteen of silver and ivory cutlery given to her by Lord Carrington and the couple's collection of rare books, many of which have found their way to the National Library. The house was full of late Victorian and Edwardian furniture, very early Georgian silverware, and Royal Doulton, Wedgewood and Staffordshire porcelain.[9]

The legacy of the Jensens' 90-year tenure of *The Cottage* remains in this 'secret garden'. Graceful old trees and unusual plants line the long driveway to the house, many of the fruit trees remain and the bulbs continue to flower each year, especially in the paddock at the back of the house which is a sea of yellow daffodils in spring. Their legacy also lives on at Bowral Hospital and Harbison Aged Care Homes—two of the institutions that benefited from their bulk of their estate—some $340,000.[10]

The Yates Family

Perhaps the most important purchaser of land in Exeter during the 1890s, in terms of the influence on the landscape, was the well-known seed merchant, Arthur Yates. To cater for the growing interest in home gardening, Yates had launched his own range of packet seeds in 1893, followed by the publication of the first edition of *Yates Gardening Guide* in 1895, a book that has not been out of print for over a century.[11] Arthur Yates came from a long line of seed

7 *Ibid*., pp. 28-29.

8 *Hawkesbury Agricultural College Journals*: February 1918, June 1918, February 1919, July 1919, February 1920, November 1919.

9 *Southern Highland News*, 15 March 1985.

10 *Highlands Post*, 11 April 1990.

11 Emery, *op.cit.* p.16.

merchants. His grandfather, George Yates opened a grocery and seed shop in Manchester in 1826, and three years later put his eldest son Samuel, just 15 years old, in charge of a branch store. Within a few years, this business had outstripped the performance of his father's store, and he moved to larger premises. In 1855, father and son went into partnership and over the years, Samuel's five sons all joined the firm—Harry, William, Ernest, Percy and Arthur. Arthur was the second son, but was asthmatic and suffered from his 'weak chest'. He was sent to New Zealand in 1879 where the family hoped his health would improve. He spent the first two years as a station hand and shepherd on the wild country runs in Otago and Hawkes Bay, but Arthur soon saw an opportunity for the supply of first quality seeds, and in 1883, opened a seed shop in Victoria Street, Auckland. After a slow start, the business prospered, and Arthur began travelling through the Waikato district south of Auckland, seeking orders from farmers.

In 1886, he visited Australia and on his return to New Zealand engaged a commercial traveller to take orders in NSW and Victoria. That enterprise also flourished, to the extent that a branch was set up in Sussex Street, Sydney. After his younger brother Ernest joined him in New Zealand in 1887, Arthur moved to Sydney, as he felt the climate would be better for his health, so Ernest managed New Zealand and Arthur the Australian branch. They later operated as two separate businesses, both retaining strong links with their father's business in Manchester, Samuel Yates Limited.[12]

Much of Yates' success stemmed from his method of distribution. Attractive seed stands displayed the colourful packets in general stores all over the country. His slogan was 'Yates Reliable Seeds' and to prove the point, his travelling salesmen would carefully check seed stands in the retail outlets for packets of out-of-date seeds. These would then be ceremonially torn open and the seeds given away free to bystanders to prove that Yates would never sell an inferior product. The business was so successful that Yates built his own premises at 184 Sussex Street, near Pyrmont Bridge—a five-storey warehouse, said to be one of the finest of its kind in the world.

Arthur Yates travelled frequently to England and Europe, returning with the best new varieties of flower and vegetable seeds he could find. He recognised the suitability of Exeter for horticulture, with its combination of extremely fertile soil, cool climate and accessibility to the Sydney market via the Great Southern Railway. It was an ideal place for a commercial nursery and in the late 1890s his company established a seed and bulb farm on an 88-acre property on the road to Bundanoon.

Over the following decade Yates added to his landholdings in Exeter and by 1906 held 500 acres, 200 of which was given over to agriculture and much of the balance to grazing. In addition to seed and bulb cultivation, his company established a nursery for flower and vegetable trials. In spring, thousands of daffodils were sent to Sydney for the floral trade. Horses, Berkshire pigs, cattle and angora goats were also bred and the diverse activities on the Yates farms provided much needed employment for local people.

Arthur Yates and his wife Caroline built a country house on the property, which they named *The Headlands*, after the Yates family home in Manchester, England. It was initially a modest timber house with a verandah on two sides, but by about 1906 a large extension had been added, two large dormitory bedrooms built in the roof area and the verandah continued around all sides. The house was a favourite holiday destination for the family, and Arthur and Caroline became influential and involved members of the Exeter community. In 1907, their eldest son Harold moved to Exeter to oversee the seed and bulb division, with another son, Arthur McMullen (Max) Yates living on another Yates property at Exeter, *Plas Maur* (now called *Romsey*) on the opposite side of the railway line to *The Headlands*.

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12 Victor Crittenden, *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Supplementary Volume (Melbourne University Press, 2005).

Arthur Yates was a member of the small committee formed in 1894 that set about establishing a church in Exeter and was responsible for the construction of St Aidan's Anglican Church in the following year. Arthur and Caroline contributed both financially and spiritually to St Aidan's, with Arthur being appointed as one of the first churchwardens.

After the death of Arthur Yates in 1926, Yates Bros Ltd continued to run the nursery business for a time, but gradually the various farms were sold off. In 1929, *The Headlands*, on 35 acres, was sold to Sir Cecil Hoskins of Australian Iron and Steel, and the property entered a new stage of development. The house was demolished after the new house, *Invergowrie*, was completed in 1937. The gardens were redesigned by Paul Sorensen and Sir Cecil Hoskins, but the trees of the beautiful property established by the Yates family provided good bones for development of the *Invergowrie* garden.[13] The transformation of the landscape from the days of cleared, open paddocks to the beauty of the environment today is indeed remarkable.

The Searl Family

Like its neighbour *Invergowrie*, *Walhallow* was first developed as a bulb farm and country retreat by another well-known family in the floral and horticultural trade, the Searls. From the early 1850s Frederick Searl Snr was operating a successful flower, plant and seed store in the old city markets which stood on the site of Queen Victoria Building. After his sons Frederick and John joined Fred Snr in the business, the trio branched out into the nursery trade, growing their own flowers and plants. Searl and Sons became trendsetters in floral fashion, and were among the first to develop and promote the use of dahlias, carnations and chrysanthemums in the flower trade. In 1905, Frederick and John Searl purchased 30 acres of land adjacent to the Yates seed and bulb farm and immediately began to develop their own nursery. The water tower on the property, which was to become such an Exeter landmark, fed a sprinkler system that was able to water the whole of the gardens. By the spring of 1906, the daffodil farm had become something of a local attraction and hundreds of blooms packed in large wicker baskets were being sent to Sydney daily.[14]

The Searl brothers built their rambling timber country house and several other cottages for their workers on the property. In summer, the family spent several months at the Exeter house, arriving from Strathfield in Sydney by a private train carriage loaded with everything they could possibly need for their stay—food, toys for the children and bicycles.

In 1918, the property was sold to Rodney Dangar of *Rotherwood*, Sutton Forest, George White of *Mittabah*, Exeter and Eric Lloyd-Jones, who offered the house to the Red Cross for use as a convalescent hospital for World War I soldiers suffering from shell shock. The Governor, Sir Walter Davidson, officially opened the Exeter Southern Home on 14 December 1918. Accommodating up to 30 men, the hospital was initially staffed by volunteers and supervised by two military nurses. Over the next nine years, many chronically ill veterans were sent to Exeter to convalesce in the healthy climate and beautiful surroundings of the former Searl estate. As they regained their health they were encouraged to work the farm, growing their own vegetables. However, by the end of 1927, the need for a convalescent hospital of this type had diminished, and with only four patients remaining, the hospital was considered uneconomic and was closed, for this purpose at least. In 1928, the people of Exeter and the surrounding towns vigorously opposed a move by the NSW Government to use the home as a treatment centre for patients with tuberculosis. Local MLA Mark Morton and Herb Ellsmore, President of the Wingecarribee Council, both took part in a deputation to the Premier to try to block the move, which they saw as a threat to the developing tourist trade. Such was the fear attached to the

13 Emery *op.cit*. pp. 17-21.

14 *Ibid*., p. 22.

disease that no amount of reassurance from the Premier could convince people that they were not in danger.[15]

A.G. Wilson later bought the property, renaming it *Blytheswood*. The original house was demolished and over the years, the landholding has been subdivided but the many grand old trees still standing are a fitting reminder of the plantsmen who first developed this lovely garden.

As a plantsman, Fred Searl was very well known and respected. He was a pillar of the Baptist church at Petersham. The family home, *Blair Athol*, was at Strathfield. Searls Florists in King Street, Sydney was an institution, fondly remembered by Sydneysiders, as the perfume from the shop would waft out onto the pavement. Many a gentleman would pay a high price for the first gardenias of the season to impress his paramour.

A tribute to Fred Searl that appeared in the *Sydney Morning Herald* after his death in 1920, *The Passing of a Gardener,* perhaps best sums up the esteem in which he was held and gives us a very personal glimpse of the horticultural trade of the time.

> Many a flower grower and flower lover is poorer today because of the loss he has suffered in the passing of the late Frederick Henry Searl who, as a gardener, as a citizen, as a father, and a friend, was a man among men.
>
> The State too is poorer, for was not Mr Searl more than intimately associated with Australia's great and rapid development in horticulture? How many of our gardens are the direct result of his foresight, industry and interest—more than he will ever know, more than I can ever say.
>
> Let us take a look over the past forty years and we shall better understand what this man did for his country. I can remember him when he was the foremost figure in his father's little shop in the old city markets. There were three plant and seed stores close together in the main arcade opening into Market Street, and they ran half the length of the buildings. Seeds, plants and flowers were sold. Business methods were different then, and so were the flower fashions. Roses were just coming into favour as a florist's flower. Dahlias were starting, carnations did not appeal to the experts of that day, chrysanthemums were still in swaddling clothes. Pelargoniums were the gem things of the hour. Great rivalry existed between the Parramatta River amateurs and the gardeners of the Eastern Suburbs. Fuchsias were in great favour, in pots or in the open. Camellias were being worn by the well-dressed boys of the city. The girls of the day were just as keen about them. Many a winter's morning Mr Searl would journey to Henderson Road, Waterloo, where Mr Robert Henderson would load him with camellias. In those days, florists had odd notions about bunching their flowers, everything was set solid and finished with a cone centre, a fringe of ferns or leaves, then a frilled bouquet paper—very elaborate, some of them. When dahlias were in bloom, Searl's shop was the centre of attraction. Mr Searl was one of the first to push carnations, chrysanthemums and spring bedders to the forefront. He was a good judge of a utility flower and had the courage of his opinion. From all corners of the earth new goods came, no end of money was spent. The rose boom came and Mr Searl worked harder than ever. I remember one big Town Hall display of Paul Neyron blooms. Mr Searl was deep in the development of the cactus dahlia and marketing of varieties that made a name for the growers of the day. If a flower had any value for the home or garden, it did not hide its light for long.
>
> What he did for flowering plants, he did with shrubs and fruit trees. He was reared in a hard school, where work was constant and worth was taken into account. But he always had time to catch and express the tenderness and the touch that is the soul of the sweet things of garden land.[16]

I suspect we would all wish to be remembered as fondly for our efforts in the garden.

The Shepherds in Bowral and Colo Vale, and the Jensens, the Yates and the Searls of Exeter all made a significant contribution to the garden culture of the Southern Highlands. In Exeter they

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15 Ibid, pp. 23-24.

16 *Sydney Morning Herald*, December 1920.

planted trees around the village, and encouraged others to do so, and to develop their own gardens. Many of the stately trees in Exeter were planted way back in the early days of the 20th century. From these plantsmen, and many others like them, we have inherited a rich tradition. Through their enthusiasm and knowledge, they put a stamp on their surroundings that continues to influence and inform the way we understand the area today.

Wilderness and Development on Mount Gibraltar

Jenny Simons and Jane Lemann

Mount Gibraltar: Part One: Jenny Simons

When Mount Gibraltar was first seen by European invaders, it formed part of the territory cared for by the Gundungurra people. Their land reached from the Blue Mountains to Camden, to the Southern Highlands and the Southern Tablelands.

As Mount Gibraltar (our name for the peak) is the highest point above sea level, at 863 metres, it would have been a useful place for sending and receiving messages. Some Gundunurra names, or versions of them, are still in use: Bowral and Mittagong, (their names for the mountain,) Bargo, Bong Bong, Burradoo, Wanganderry, Wingcarribee, Yanderra, Wombeyan. Artefacts found in the local area include stone tools, carved trees, even a rare wooden shield.

The mountain's beauty has been recorded by artists: Arthur Streeton, Neville Cayley, Harold Cazneaux in a 1933 photograph; and more recently in the pages of the magazine *HighLife* by Tony Sheffield.

Settlement of Europeans in the district was at first forbidden, but in 1816 John Oxley was permitted to drive cattle south and was granted land on the site of the present-day Bowral, which included Mt Gibraltar. European explorers talked with Aboriginal people in the area, but the Gundungurra disappeared soon after European settlement, dispossessed of their land and livelihood and beset by European diseases. The explorers included John Wilson (1798), Francis Barrallier (1802), George Caley (1804), George Evans (1812) and Governor Lachlan Macquarie (1820).

Oxley's children soon subdivided the land and PLC Shepherd (descended from Thomas Shepherd, nurseryman of Sydney), Brand, Powell, Callaghan, Mort, Thompson and Jones acquired land on and off the mountain between 1850 and 1930.

At first the land was cleared for farming. *Whinstone Park* was the name given to one of the early farms, using as its name *whinstone*, the name then given to the valuable building stone found on the mountain.

In 1859 the Great Southern Railway was extended from Picton to Goulburn and facilitated an increase in settlement. The fertile soil, good rainfall and cooler climate encouraged settlers to build grand residences such as *The Rift*, *Earlsbray* and *Mt Hamilton* on the slopes of Mt Gibraltar. The tradition has continued with house such as *Aberley*, *Reed*, *Stanhope* and *Greyladyes Farm*.

It was found that the mountain's plutonic rock, a type of trachyte called microsyenite—marketed as Bowral Trachyte—was a valuable building material. Quarrying for this stone took place between 1886 and 1986. The quarrying caused deforestation of the mountain, as wood was required to feed the steam engines that transported the stone to market. The mountain soon became bare. Some local buildings were built of microsyenite but most of it was transported to Sydney and beyond. One notable example of its use is in Sydney's Queen Victoria Building in the foundations and its grand staircases.

In 1919 a Bowral Municipal Councillor, Joshua Stokes bought 32 hectares of land on the summit. Some of the quarries were closing down and he saw an opportunity to create a nature reserve. He paid $147 and held the land until the state government gave approval to the council to purchase it. He also bought land on the Mittagong side of the mountain to add to the reserve.

His moves were unpopular and he was criticised for wasting public money. He lost his long-held seat on council. Over time, Stokes's initiative was appreciated and in 1950 a plaque was installed on the summit commemorating his work. This plaque is still in place.

The nature reserve was undeveloped until the Depression years in the 1930s, when unemployed men were given work there building roads, retaining walls, staircases, picnic shelters and lookouts. It became a pleasure ground.

Nostalgic exotic gardens continue to be built on Mount Gibraltar's slopes. The area still has something of a hill station feel about it.

Mount Gibraltar: Part Two: Jane Lemann

Even though I know you will be blown away by the fabulous exotic gardens you will see today, I will talk mostly about the Mount Gibraltar Reserve. First of all: this is *Lyrebird Territory*, but now they are only seen around the edges if you are lucky. However, last night I was reading this charming book *The Lore of the Lyrebird* by Ambrose Pratt, written in 1933 and he has this appeal:

> The Lyrebird—the most precious, lovely and wonderful natural product of your wonderful and lovely country—is threatened with extinction . . . You and you alone can save the Lyrebird from the fate that menaces, because the future belongs to you, and soon, very soon, the responsibility will be wholly yours to rule the land you love and to protect its vanishing fauna from obliteration.

Mount Gibraltar is an example, in microcosm, of our Australian story of excessive exploitation and poor understanding of Australian conditions. Restoration of the Reserve demonstrates the amount of work that is required to recover some of our wilderness heritage.

As you have heard from Jenny the wilderness on the back of Mount Gibraltar was very quickly eliminated for farming and then for houses and gardens devoted to northern hemisphere exotics. Not only was its old skin totally transformed but its bones were found to have excellent exploitable properties. For 100 years the quarrying of Bowral Trachyte (microsyenite) devastated the mountain.

Eventually Alderman Joshua Stokes, with great vision, seized an opportunity as quarries closed, to purchase land on the summit of the mountain to be a Nature Reserve. In the 1930s the Reserve was turned into a 'Pleasure Ground' for all, that is, modification for roads, picnic grounds and lookouts and these Stone Stairs . . .

Into this 'Pleasure Ground' moved, not just people but some of the exotic plants from the nearby great gardens: Ivy, Blackberries, Pine trees, Hawthorn, Holly, Honeysuckle, Blue Periwinkle, Cotoneaster, Privet and Barberry overcoming the native plants and burying the stone stairs! Cats, foxes, rabbits, goats and pigs took up residence and no longer could the forest community sustain itself. Native plants and animals began to disappear and no replacements emerged. The site became 'Unpleasant' and neglected.

In summary

Great gardens full of plants + massive disturbance of the soil = overwhelming weed invasion and ecological disintegration.

This is a common Australian story. Most of Australia is sparse dry woodland and shrubby salty desert. The eastern coastal strip was forested. It is only a narrow strip. From the top of Mount Gibraltar to the east one can see Mount Keira at Wollongong by the sea and to the west, Katoomba above the cleared western slopes. We are looking at the entire width of this narrow forest band. People think there is plenty of forest because they drive from Cairns to Melbourne through this band unaware of the logging, land clearing and urban sprawl steadily consuming it—unaware of the stress, depletion and extinction of our wildlife.

Where we disturb the land, feral weeds move in. Weeds are a far greater problem than salinity.

Our Responsibility

We need to treasure and tend all that remains of our Australian Natural Heritage because it is from resilient diversity that will evolve the long-term survivors for our planet, our country and our own place.

Our Remedy

From 'Pleasure Grounds back to Wilderness'—to re-establish our isolated and small (130 hectare) island of native habitat local—landcare volunteers have worked together with the Wingecarribee Shire Council. We have spent 15 years—worth over $1million—painstakingly weeding out those garden escape plants and nurturing the natural regeneration of the range of native plants and dependent wild creatures great, small and microscopic.

The NSW Scientific Committee has assessed and declared the *Mount Gibraltar Forest* an Endangered Ecological Community—that is, this is all there is in the whole world of this particular assemblage of plants and animals, invertebrates, microbes and genes and it is in danger of becoming extinct if we do not look after it well.

The return of the Lyrebird will be our seal of success.

Lessons Learned

- We are arrogant to think we can manipulate the natural environment for our human purposes and must learn moderation from our historic mistakes of over-clearing the land and over-damming the rivers and letting the weeds multiply;
- We should fight for and guard every last bit of our unique Australian Wilderness for its intrinsic value and ability to survive. Re-assess the agreement for the logging of natural forest stands and manage the weeds;
- The Australian Garden History Society should NOT foster exotic invaders in the guise of Heritage but find a sustainable position for stewardship perhaps by listing and exchanging the invaders for the resident locals;
- The volunteers of the Mount Gibraltar Landcare and Bushcare group have shown that it IS worth trying to restore some of our Wilderness. Even though many species are disappearing this Reserve is a 'pleasure ground' and sanctuary for the survivors. What you can do to make a sanctuary is make sure that at least 30% of your property has local native vegetation as refuge and that your exotic plants do not jump the fence whether you have just three flower pots or three thousand hectares.

I remind you of Joni Mitchell's song 'Yellow Taxi' which still haunts our consciences. I have changed the first word—from They to We, because **We** are still doing the damage.

> *We paved paradise and put up a parking lot*..... ***Don't it always seem to go***
>
> ***That you don't know what you've got—Till it's gone.***

It's time to stop yearning for northern climes and celebrate our unique and indescribably beautiful Australian environment.

Reference

The Gib: Mount Gibraltar, Southern Highlands (Mt Gibraltar Landcare and Bushcare, Wingecarribee Shire Council, 2007)—now freely available on the Council's website <wsc.nsw.gov.au>