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Photograph: Lynne Walker

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INTERVIEW WITH TIM HUGHES AND SAL MOLESWORTH AT 'LILBURN',
GLEN INNES ON SUNDAY 12TH MAY 2024

This is an oral interview with Tim Hughes and Sal Molesworth at 'Lilburn', Glen Innes. Tim and Sal will be speaking with Liz Chappell for the Australian Garden History Society (AGHS) of the Northern NSW Branch. Lynne Walker: sound recorder.

00.00

Thank you very much for having us here and participating in the oral history project. 'Lilburn' has an outstanding colonial history. Could you give us a recap of that please Tim?

TH: Yes, so 'Lilburn' isn't a big property but it has links to the earliest European settlement of the Glen Innes region. So my three times great grandfather, Oswald Bloxsome Senior arrived in Australia in 1838 and was in the first group of Europeans to take up land in this area. He settled a large station called Rangers Valley, north of Glen Innes, [incorporating] what's now Dundee and I guess that pastoral empire expanded for the next 60 years really. They expanded into western Queensland and western New South Wales. He also became the second land owner in Mosman, [a Sydney suburb] building a house there called The Rangers and all of that was named after their property called The Rangers in England. Bloxsome and his wife Henrietta spent some of their time between Rangers Valley and Sydney and returning back overseas. Management really then ultimately then fell to his grandson, Cecil Bloxsome, and it was about in the 1880s/1890s when I guess there were various elements that came into play including bank closures and drought that really the family lost most of its holdings and withdrew to a 2000 acre portion of what was the Whitmore run which had been purchased by Oswald Bloxsome in the 1840s from Archibald Boyd who also had a representative in that first group of Europeans. So Cecil Bloxsome and his wife Eva who was a Fenwicke from Europambela at Walcha and their children moved here and it was originally known as Rangers Valley East. We can still see that from some title deeds that we have and I guess it was probably used as a fattening and holding block with I guess highly fertile basalt plains compared to I think probably some of the Rangers Valley country which was more granite and trap and it was renamed Lilburn because of Eva Fenwicke's family association with the Collingwoods, Lord Collingwood being 2IC to Nelson at the Battle of Trafalgar and a lot of the Fenwickes clinging on as anyone did in those days to any sort of English military heroism. So yes Lilburn became the home of the family in 1892.

SM: Lilburn Tower.

TH: Yes, Lilburn was named after Lilburn Tower, that was the Collingwood's house in Northumberland.

Now is part of the house as it stands now built on that original foundation?

TH: Yes, so the family story had always been that four of the original rooms of what is the Lilburn homestead actually came from Rangers Valley. They're lined with sawn ironbark slabs and of course there was none of that timber here and the design of those rooms also pre-dates the 1890s architecturally, with a vaulted ceiling. Three of those rooms are still in their format and the house is extensively added onto. And I guess too from that period when the family settled here there are still a few remaining examples of the original plantings.

Now, the garden of course is our principal reason for being here but before we delve into that, Henrietta Bloxsome also was a great water colourist.

TH: Yes she was and the Bloxsoles had quite a close relationship with Conrad Martens the artist who stayed with them at Rangers Valley and indeed a studio was built for him at The Rangers at Mosman as well. Yes, she had a number of works that are I think still in national collections.

And one thing that impressed me with her paintings is the very natural relationship she seemed to have the local Indigenous people. Her paintings around Rangers Valley and Dundee, she was obviously sitting there with her easel and they are going about their business with their fires and so forth.

TH: Yes, that's right. I actually don't know a lot about her painting relationship but it is evident that it is quite naturalistic and I think certainly conveys that there was at least quite a cordial relationship between the Indigenous people of Rangers Valley and Henrietta anyway.

Of course we've had the opportunity to talk about the history of the Rangers Valley garden with Bob and Kerrie Crothers whose family were there for some time. But do you see traces of that garden at Rangers Valley here in Lilburn in some of the older plant material?

TH: I think not strongly, I think in many ways the gardens that were planted around certainly the homestead extended, my understanding is that they date from more the 1900s, of the time of the Campbell brothers ownership rather than prior to that with the Bloxsoles. And of course the Rangers Valley homestead was very close to a water supply which would I think have helped establish a garden there whereas where the Lilburn homestead is situated is quite a way from Beardy Waters, set high on a hill overlooking Beardy Plains on the eastern ridge.

SM: And I think when they moved here wasn't there a howling drought then at the turn of that century so I can't imagine them being able to establish anything really expansive with no water and three generations and maids all living in the house here.

TH: Yes I think certainly some of those plantings that have existed are hardy specimens, so there are still two pinus radiatus that date from that time which we believe there were probably 10 or so which formed a windbreak from the prevailing winds from the south west. And some elm trees that we also believe were planted in the 1890s and are of course a classic, very hardy, European decorative tree. And then the other thing from probably that time that survived until very recently was running bamboo which was a very decorative species.

09.15

So you grew up here at Lilburn Tim. Could you describe the garden as you first remember it?

Well I actually grew up in a cottage about 200 metres away so we really I guess came down to the house to see my grandmother, Athol Emmeline Hughes, known as Chuppie, nee Bloxsome and it was quite expansive and wild. I guess the things that as a young child you remember most, the bamboo was obviously quite exciting and provided a jungle to play in and perhaps my grandmother's proudest part of the garden was a wisteria that covered the whole northerly verandah. Which was wonderful for about 2 or 3 weeks of the year and she would often entertain and have afternoon tea parties to show it off to people and that wisteria had also I think dated from the house's earliest days. So I guess there was a sense of foreboding too - there were three very big privet trees, only one of which remains now, so it was quite an enclosed garden but by the time my grandmother died and my parents moved in here I was 16 and away at boarding school and then subsequently went straight to university in Sydney and then worked in Sydney so in a way I was often really a visitor, I never really felt that I was here in the homestead for much of my childhood.

And when did you and Sal return here to live at Lilburn?

TH: Sal and I were married in 1993 and were living in the cottage until 2000, so my parents moved into town then.

SM: March 2000.

TH: Yes, March 2000. So we moved in then and Sal was pregnant with our third child Henry so I think my mother was determined that she didn't want a similar history to be repeated whereby the matriarch or the oldest person was rambling around in the big house while the young family were in a small house.

SM: Bulging at the seams.

Story of rural Australia.

TH: Yes indeed.

SM: It was generous of her.

And did you come here with a gardening background Sal?

SM: Yes I had always loved gardening. Even as a child I would, Mum was in the garden a lot and the way to find her was to follow the hose.

Now this was at Hernani?

SM: At Hernani, at 'Wilmot', Hernani. That's where I grew up. Great gardening, beautiful red basalt soil and she and Dad loved growing fruit and vegetables but the flower gardens were abundant with dahlias of course because it was so wet and Japanese maple and rhododendron, they were the things that did really well there. So yes that was in my childhood and then at school we were given a little bit of garden space if we wanted it at school and a couple of friends and I scratched around in there a bit, not very successfully but you know there was always that and then after school living in Sydney and at college, I lived in a terrace house in Paddington and we fixed up the garden but we were lucky too because we had a flatmate for a period there, a fellow who was doing landscape architecture, named Mike Blighⁱ and Mike really sorted out that little garden there. It was fantastic. So after he moved out we kept it going. So and then I've done lots of things over the years but I've actually worked as a gardener for people. So when I met Tim I was working in interior design but before I got into that I was working as a gardener in Brisbane.

TH: Including having a Saturday morning radio spot.

SM: Oh my God with Jan Power. So that was funny. I was housesitting for some people who owned a fantastic house in Brisbane called Nyrambra and Jan Power lived in part of Nyrambra and we used to say "good morning" or "good afternoon", usually "good afternoon" or "good evening" actually because she did that very early morning radio on 4QR at Toowong and she'd say you have a good voice for radio and anyway I think you should come and talk to, whatever his name was, I can't remember his name, and me about gardening on the radio and I did so much research and would go in there but it wasn't for me, I was too nervous. I was like a block of wood. Total stage fright. But it was a good experience, but my friends were very complimentary, yes we heard you, they didn't say you were fantastic so I knew I was bad anyway. So then when Tim and I met we were sort of fuddy duddies before our time. Remember when we went on that tour, that National Trust bus tour to Saumarez.

TH: No, Kings Plains.

SM: Oh we did Saumarez as well?

TH: Well Saumarez was an open garden scheme one.

SM: Anyway well here we are on this bus with all these old ancient people, you can imagine we thought they were ancient, and we were engaged. So we were young. And we loved it. They were good days, we loved doing that. And then we've brought the children up with gardens as well, being in the garden but we knew that we'd sort of almost gone a bit too far when the children would say "are we going to an open garden this weekend?" [all laugh] And we've seen some great gardens with the kids haven't we?

TH: So certainly when we were engaged and knew we had a shared interest in gardening or in gardens. And I as a child had always had a little garden up at the cottage and grown annuals, pansies, sweet peas or whatever so yes it was a common interest.

SM: But a different sort of a common interest though because Tim looks at the wider landscape or you know the siting of plantings and things whereas I'm much more detail oriented. But we talk about things and I'm always impressed by his ability to site a tree you know and that's a great talent, whereas I just dabble along and then we have some strong discussions but we also, we like to consult each other about things.

Could you describe the garden at Lilburn when you came here to live, bearing in mind of course gardens' intergenerational change and we realise that they ebb and flow?

TH: I think it was a garden that in some ways reflected the interest of the time of my parents. Dad had always liked the idea of a nice garden but actually wasn't a gardener himself and his interest off farm, were off farm rather than gardening.

SM: But he had a very sentimental approach to the garden.

TH: Yes that's right and I think that was perhaps challenging for my mother who was the one who had inherited a garden, that after the death of my grandmother who had had a gardener in her later years but he sort of aged with her so I think the garden had sort of got a bit beyond them and I felt, Mum put a lot energy into the garden at first so the big thing where the garden impacted on the house so one of the first things to go was the wisteria which some people they didn't talk to Mum for a little while after doing that but it was, you know, the runners were 40 feet running under the house and destabilising the foundations and the house was very dark with it.

SM: But when we moved in Tig and Bill [Tim's parents] were only just managing the garden and it was getting too much for them, for example down that side of the house, the eastern side, the periwinkle narrowed the path to this but it was sort of charming in a way and Tim and I have been looking at some old photographs from that time and since that time as well as a few from before and I said to him last night, I sort of almost feel as though it's lost something because we've brought it more up to speed, it doesn't have that enchantment that it had then and it was enchanting, that crab apple area and the fact that it was a bit, things were sort of falling down a bit.

TH: I think there were lots of annuals rather than shrubs and I guess in the last 20 years we've seen the return of herbaceous borders in design so certainly the front of the verandah and what's now the rose garden were really full of lots of annuals, both planted out and those that just arrived, you know there were the stocks and the pansies and poppies that would be planted.

SM: And the perennials.

TH: Yes, that's right but also the annuals that came up like the larkspurs and the poppies and what have you. Yes, that's right the *Amaranthus caudatus* (Love Lies Bleeding) that were sort of more, that came up randomly so I guess yes that added to the enchantment of it. But the structure had gone a little bit from the garden.

21.15

Could you describe that main front border now which is beautifully structural and talk about the plant material in it? For people who can't see it as I can from here.

TH: Well I guess if we start, well before I guess we got to that, philosophically when Sal and I inherited it we wanted to, we were talking about it this morning really, three R's really, there was repair, there was restore and there was reinterpret. And it was really after visiting, not long after we'd moved in but before we'd really done anything, we went to the Australian Open Garden Scheme garden of Doug Moffatt and Ian Telford in Invergowrie and a house of a very similar style and age to this and we were just struck by how beautiful it was and inspiring and the plant choice, particularly with Ian's background as a botanist, plants that were appropriate to the period so we felt that whatever we were wanting to do needed to be broadly speaking in keeping with the house. So between that I guess period, 1880s through to 1920s which is when the core architecture of the house reflects.

SM: So the border, we tried to keep it in that Victorian sort of ilk and with what we took, it was almost in a way more about what we took out than what we put in and then we tried to keep, we've been reasonably strict with the palette so we've taken all the yellow out and all the yellow has gone down into the long border and in spring the garden starts off in whites and purples really and then as the season goes on it goes more into your warmer dark purples and reds and oranges and a lot of those plantings are the most common varieties of old plants, nothing sort of modern.

TH: So I think in terms of visually yes it's a mix of textures, starting I guess we really wanted to make a bold statement so the first thing really you see when you come in from the west is an *Agave americana* variegata which we resurrected from down the gully. Like a lot of things, the garden refuse bed, and there were a few things we brought back from the garden, a yucca, japonica, agave, because they were out of fashion and they were prickly and they weren't pretty I guess.

SM: Tim's mother loved soft colours in the garden which was beautiful but we went for a more brutal sort of approach really by bringing back the succulents and the spiky things and the flax and we introduced the grasses.

TH: Well the flax actually, so another person who was sort of inspirational around this time was the way Michael McCoy had done Leo Schofield's garden at Bronte House which is obviously a much grander house, an older house, but again it was the way that he mixed shrubs, succulents, palette so I guess as you sort of move along [the border] we've reintroduced old roses along the pillars, we've got grasses, cannas, New Zealand flax, the red flaxes as we've mentioned and yes some of the old things that have always been around such as the amaranthus and then there are all the other perennials such as delphiniums and lavender.

SM: The artichoke.

TH: Yes, that's right, so architectural elements like the globe artichoke which have introduced it again that grey palette so it has a mix of palettes.

SM: The other thing, you know, its influences too isn't it. Talking about Doug and Ian and the great influence and you Liz with your garden has been a great inspiration to us as well and our mutual love of gardens but then on a wider sort of scope Michael McCoy with his wonderful vibrant sort of approach and his influences being well, 'Great Dixter' [in Sussex England, designed by] Christopher Lloyd, and we quite admire that style of garden that they've sort of brought through with colour and not so fashionable white gardens and topiary and things but we do like a bit of buxus ball.

I'm looking here now at the rose garden which is directly in front of the house. Now that has a history as well?

TH: Yes, it does and in a way that's sort of I guess the central heart of the garden. Now it had evolved over time, originally it was a round bed with four neat quadrants and spade edges that by the look of some of the earliest photos had chrysanthemums and other things in them. I can't remember the fourth garden, I can't remember it being a full circle from my childhood so in my grandmother's time it had I guess, the northern most half of it, it had become a hemisphere rather than a full circle, if that's the best way to describe it.

SM: Half circle?

TH: A half circle, yes, and then over time the actual edges of that had then blown out so it really became two rough shaped halves with a path to it and some little...

SM: Two rough shaped quarters?

TH: Two rough shaped quarters, thank you, with some floribunda roses and things in it and yes some of that defined edging had gone.

SM: And then your mother...

TM: Oh yes that's right, and then Mum in the 1990s planted, tried to I guess define those a bit with buxus hedging, which gave it some structure. It was sort of done by sight rather than measurement but it still didn't feel complete. So particularly after seeing Invergowrie really we felt, "right", we really wanted to bring back the full circular bed so actually Doug and Ian came to visit and we weren't going to waste the buxus which had never been there in the 1890s or the 1920s but we marked out the four quadrants and were fortunate enough to be given from a friend in town some edging tiles, bricks and established a gravel path inside the buxus.

SM: I think that was their suggestion, to have the four entrances, the buxus and then the circular path on the inside and then the criss-cross as well because it reduced the amount of maintenance by having more path.

TH: Yes, that's right and I was given a rose Quatre Saisons by my aunt who had grown up here, I think it was for my 40th birthday, and it did so well and, of course, Quatre Saisons means four seasons, there were four quadrants so we put three in each so you've got 12.

SM: Yeah, he's good at that stuff.

TH: Yeah, the calendar maths thing. But it also unified, it's a beautiful [old damask] rose, it has a lovely perfume and it flowers twice a year, it has an autumn flush as well but just by having a block of colour I think is a nice compliment to the ever changing I think colour structure of this top border.

SM: It formalises everything but it also relaxes your eye, when it's really tidy I find that a stress relief as well because I think oh well there's one part of our garden that's actually in control [everyone laughs].

00.31.03

Now the perimeter hedges are they part of an earlier design?

TM: Yes, so the garden, this probably dates from between 1900 and 1920, privet hedges were put in on three sides and when we inherited it, well on two sides of what was originally a croquet lawn and then became a tennis court and broad-leafed privet on the north and a small leafed privet on the east. But they had been allowed to become mature trees and had suckered and seeded everywhere so one of the first big jobs we actually did we was we basically cut everything off at ground level which identified where those original plants were, or the trunks of those original hedge plants, and then basically we poisoned everything else so volunteer, blackberry, cotoneaster, hawthorn and there is a hawthorn hedge that extends into a paddock to the east which we also think is an original planting, on both sides of a little paddock, so we retained a couple of anchor hawthorn plants but basically cut that to ground level to re-establish those hedges which are now maintained as hedges. On

the western side a wonderful clump of running bamboo had extended to be a hedge of about 80 metres long but had consumed the western privet hedge the other I guess, the third big structural thing that we probably did was having to then remove that because it was just out of control.

SM: The may hedges.

TH: Yes, that's right, the may hedges which were sort of domestic and on the southern side so we extended the garden and it had been quite open to the elements so we just repeated and we just took off little suckers.

SM: I remember we planted 170, we dug up and replanted 170 and everyone lived.

TH: And they are wonderful, the may, the Spiraea although Sal, it keeps Sal and others busy with the hedging but they are a lovely internal hedge rather than a more robust broad leaf external hedge.

SM: And they flower and they do all sorts of things.

And they colour in autumn.

TH: Yes they colour in autumn and they still keep part of their leaves, they are not fully deciduous. So we redefined that so yes, there had been a version of a hedge with some May on the west but because really the west overlooks the valley we sort of really wanted to keep that as minimal as possible, that borrowed landscape really, so the view is the garden on that side. So we have a low hedge there to provide some shelter and there's may and agapanthus which had been used quite extensively for a while.

SM: Did your mother do the agapanthus with the white on the outside and the blue on the inside or was that always there?

TH: No that was Mum.

SM: So that was the thing wasn't it, to do that sort of thing, but very successfully actually because the blue on the inside and the white outside is quite flash.

TH: But yes it is generally minimal.

And the roses over there, these are roses?

TH: Yes over that pergola and there was originally a timber one there so there's a wisteria, there are two climbing roses that are a pink and a white

SM: They're just those little single whatever they are. They are gorgeous, they are beautiful sprays and one comes out and it finishes and the other one does its thing.

I know exactly what you are talking about but I cannot remember its name. Cath Gordon grew it very well.

SM: It's not Bloomfield Courage because we've got Bloomfield Courage over there.

TH: No, it's much older.

LW: So it's not Cecile Brunner?

SM: No, we have a Cecile, that's more modern too than this.

TH: It rambles next to the pergola, there is a pink oleander and then a Euonymus so they intermingle there which creates a wonderful windbreak for part of the garden but also, in a sense, a type of hedge in itself.

SM: But the thing is, like all country gardens, when you come in you're meant to follow the gravel all the way along and park here and walk in this way. So for us this is the front but everyone comes in the back. So what do we do?

TH: So yes we did move the drive, little things we did try and do we built a driveway, we rebuilt the front entrance in 2008 prior to open garden scheme to try and bring people to the front.

00.37.05

Just for the record, you did open for Australia's Open Garden Scheme in 2008? Was that the first time?

TH: Yes it was and we all sort of almost felt that we weren't quite ready for it but I guess all gardens evolve and there's always new bits and old bits.

SM: But Kerrie Crothers gave us some really good advice because she came and saw us the year before and she said "an hour a day for a year and your garden will be ready" so between us, working together for 3 ½ hours on the weekend we nailed it really. I mean yes, we took on a few projects that were a bit bigger than we should have, as one does, like we built the glasshouse, but that was the best advice that kept us on track.

TH: Yes that's right and I think by committing to that, as if you were having a wedding or something, you've then got a deadline so I guess the most recent extension had been the kitchen garden area, including the, as Sal said, a glasshouse, which we'd inherited. We had friends who had a house in Glen Innes, well first of all we were able to be given two mature Chinese windmill palms, *Trachycarpus fortunei*, which we were able to bring those in as larger trees. The garden edging tiles also came from them. And then they had a house in Armidale after that, with a glasshouse in the back that hadn't been finished and they didn't want it. So I cut that in two with an angle grinder and hired a car trailer and we brought it up.

SM: And sat it there for four years and then built it.

TH: Yes, and then built it. And so it was a like front entrance and things, right ok, Open Gardens here. So the photos of that time it's very much a new area, now of course it's filled out. So I guess that was the first open garden and subsequently we've had two tours with Garden History Society, Glen Innes Garden Club.

SM: And then ASA.

LW: ASA, but that was also in association with the Garden History Society. They organised it and the finance went two ways.

And you mentioned re-establishing the veggie garden. There would have been a large vegetable garden here in the early days?

TH: Yes well there was on the eastern side and I guess veggie gardens moved as other trees then shaded them out. When Dad was young he could remember an area where a pink crab apple is and it was quite a large vegetable garden area. And then in my mother's time it was sort of immediately adjacent to the north of that but we sort of felt it needed to be to the south of the house.

SM: But also it was getting too much shade by the time we came along and really the only thing that we could really grow successfully in there were your leafy greens and asparagus. And the asparagus is still there which is fine.

TH: Yes, that's right, so with the glasshouse we then established a kitchen garden at the back which included was the ability to put in some grapes and figs, an old variety 'Isabella' and veggie garden beds there that were in keeping in close to the house.

Do you focus on growing heritage vegetable varieties or what you need as a productive garden?

SM: I'm not very good at growing vegetables actually. I sort of, it's not as successful out there as it could be because of the competition from a tree whose roots are still under there, that Chinese poplar, but I try to grow things that are not so much heritage, but that we can't buy here. Such as chicory or those sort of things, red sorrel.

We should mention that you are a very talented cook as well.

SM: Well it was a very late dinner last night but it was beautiful [all laugh]

So we've had a virtual walk around the front here, have I missed anything?

TH: I guess one of the things that ties in with structures, one of the things that we wanted to do was also reinstate gates where they had once been. We

brought a couple back from down in the paddock, gate posts that are made in the style of the original with a chamfered edge, a pergola that had a white banksia rose that had collapsed, that I can remember sitting under as a child, but had completely collapsed under the weight of everything so we completely rebuilt that. So there were structural elements and that's really in the south.

SM: And all the gates.

TH: Yes, rehangng gates. And it's interesting, some of those now, we've been here 20 years, some of those posts were made out of stringy [stringbark sp.] so that I could shape them but of course they're due for the next one so we are actually in that interesting [stage], at the start we were a bit more...

SM: We need to renovate again.

TH: Well that's right, we were a bit more puritanical perhaps at the time, "oh no they needed to be timber and hand shaped" and I am contemplating well because it's harder to get hardwood timber...

SM: ...And then it might only last for 25 years and then have to be replaced again...

TH: ..Yes, do I get a moulded concrete of the same style.

SM: But it wouldn't look the same so we haven't done it, have we, outside?

TH: That's right and also I'm working off farm now where we had wonderful years when we were here when I was on the farm and working locally through the week so had more time to do some of those things on the weekends, **than** in the last 10-15 years. I've only been on the farm at weekends where I've been doing farm work.

SM: And not in the garden.

00.44.16

And of course there are changes that nature imposes on a garden too. Have there been significant trees or plants that you've lost over time?

TH: Yes there have. Obviously the drought of 2018/2019 was the most significant. We had planted some London plane trees and silver birch and lost a number of those and we know a number of other people in the district [who did also].

SM: And the red oaks down there.

TH: So during that time we were focussing on keeping some trees alive, let a lot of the garden sort of go if we had to, and again it shows the benefit of old species because those things did survive without watering, you know the euonymus, the wisteria, the climbing roses, the oleander, those sort of things

battled through but it was trees that suffered and then when the drought broke in 2020, as Sal mentioned, we then had some, particularly in an area with quite heavy black, where we had red oaks and oaks have generally been absolutely fantastic for us, died from I think too much wet so we lost a few there. We also lost sort of a statement Chinese poplar at the back, which opened up space.

SM: But also we removed the Linden. There was the most incredible Linden but it had been coppiced over the years and then it had been let go and it was right against the office there and it had multi trunks like this and it completely dwarfed the house because it towered over and it had all these little spindly things and flowers and leaves. It filled the gutters the whole time and we very sadly had to remove it. And then we planted another one. So that's another thing we have tried to do, if we've removed something we've tried to recreate it somewhere but we actually lost that in the wet too, that Linden.

TH: Yes we did. I think the other big one that was a result of nature was the bamboo which was really a hallmark part of the garden and over time I guess it had been kept "in control" by being mown-over where it came up in the front lawn. During the drought it appeared to be very dead and we actually felt it was quite a fire hazard so we even set up a portable fire pump because with it full of oxygen, each of those little segments, it would have been quite an explosion. But when the drought broke all through the front lawn and the rose garden, it had obviously been surviving through the drought by spreading itself more rigorously than it had ever previously done underground and we just had to make the big decision to get rid of it completely. We did look at putting a barrier in for some of it but even keeping it in a smaller section a bit of research we'd found there was never really a 100% guarantee that even concrete would stop it from spreading. So over three days we removed that. Again, as Sal said when something's taken out we replace it with something so, in its place where we think the original clump was, we've now got a clumping variety, a black stemmed bamboo which came from Salisbury Court which we know is obviously a very old specimen there and also will survive the New England weather so we hope that grows and clumps. And what that has done, it has changed the microclimate of the garden a little bit but again it has opened up some wonderful views down to the Beardy Valley, including the Beardy Waters which we otherwise didn't have.

SM: Actually that day that we went to Salisbury we also had a little bonus because we helped Trish and Pete weed an area that they were working on whilst we were there and dug up that beautiful Viburnum [rhytidophyllum], you know that one with the long, rather funereal sort of looking, it's so Victorian. And that is just booming down here, another little bonus.

TH: So that's in a new sort of garden bed where we had a wonderful Euonymus with a bromeliad and a few other things and it died. Underneath there was a cycad and some azaleas prior to that. But it had died also due to the drought and borer really so it was a blank canvas there. But I think we

also, we've always liked ever since as I mentioned the Invergowrie garden unusual plants so from that time.

SM: But I think that was the whole approach with gardens then as well anyway in that time to grow different things and have a specimen collection so we sort of, we've embraced that because we love that sort of thing as well, so when you said that and then I said "cycad" I thought "gee wizz we really need to recreate a microclimate again where the bamboo used to make it" and when we were in Blarney [Cork, Ireland], the gardens at Blarney are amazing and there's this particular garden there, Tim was up lining up kissing the Blarney Stone and I wasn't going to do that so I was lost in the gardens which were just incredible and there's this one garden there that's very jungle like and there it is in that climate and I must look back on the photos for some of the things because I remember thinking that would grow at home, that would grow at home so when we do the next phase which is getting rid of the last of the original privet, when that Ligustrum goes that garden bed will I hope be developed into a specimen garden but with jungle like textures which is the antithesis of this climate really isn't it. But anyway that's a dream for the future.

You've articulated your philosophy very thoroughly in living and creating in a heritage garden. Is there anything more you'd like to add to that?

TH: I think gardens really they do reflect the personality of obviously the gardeners at the time but I think they also, what comes with that is the friends of the custodians of the time so things that we've had introduced from our garden including *Melianthus major* which came from your garden Liz that we first saw at Invergowrie that's been very successful here and yes from other old gardens and I think that's always a lovely thing too when people contribute to it.

SM: It's so powerful isn't it when it evokes thoughts of people that you know or knew. There's a part of our garden that I think of somebody who hasn't been with us for 15 years or whatever. It's not a memorial but to me that's more powerful than a memorial or a cemetery or whatever. I love all that.

And that's the very positive part we're finding of recording these garden reminisces as well because some of them now, because we've been doing this for a number of years, some of those people like Bob Crothers have since passed on. Now I haven't really touched on the rich history of Lilburn which I do hope you are recording for posterity because it's a little bit outside our sphere.

¹ Landscape architect Michael Bligh is son of Beatrice Bligh, author of *Down to Earth* (1968) and *Cherish The Earth* (1973) seminal works on gardening in rural Australia.