AUSTRALIAN GARDEN HISTORY SOCIETY

NATIONAL ORAL HISTORY COLLECTION

VICTORIAN BRANCH

photograph taken by Tim Entwisle

INTERVIEWEE:	**DR JOHN DWYER KC**
INTERVIEWER:	TIM ENTWISLE
DATE OF INTERVIEW:	FRIDAY, 1 MARCH 2024
LENGTH OF INTERVIEW:	1HR 33MIN 41SEC
PLACE OF INTERVIEW:	FITZROY NORTH, VICTORIA
RESTRICTIONS ON USE:	NIL
QUOTATIONS/EXTRACTS:	VERIFY ANY NAMES OF PLACES AND PEOPLE AGAINST ORIGINAL AUDIO (NOTING ONE PLACE AT END WHERE AT LEAST ONE NAME – PETER WATTS – IS CITED INCORRECTLY, THEN CORRECTED LATER)

Summary of Interview

John Dwyer tells us about his family, his background and his contributions to gardens and landscape heritage. Born and raised in Melbourne, John studies history and law at university before becoming a barrister for 40 years. He has a Master in Arts (Philosophy) and a PhD on 'weeds'. John talks about the houses and gardens he can cared for with his wife Joan, and his contributions to the National Trust (in the UK, then Australia), the Heritage Council and finally Australian Garden History Society. He also explains why he has written and spoken at length about the place of weeds in gardens and public perceptions. Along the way we hear about his travels, his connection to philosopher (and brother-in-law) Peter Singer, as well as some background on his siblings and two daughters.

Some dates mentioned in interview

1939 Born 19 March 1938; wife Joan; children Tessa and Brigette.

1950s Law degree, Master of Arts in Philosophy (thesis on 'Describing acts' (intent and different perspectives in the way people act – consequences v. intent?).

1950s Began a 40-year career in law, as a barrister (QC – Queen's Counsel/KC)

1970 Joined National Trust in UK when there on a temporary lectureship at Durham University.

1971 On return to Australia joined National Trust of Victoria: 1982–1997 on Council of National Trust (including periods as President and Vice President).

1990s: Joined Australian Garden History Society – on Victoria Branch Committee, then on National Management Committee from 2007 (serving as Chair from 2010 to 2012). Attended conferences from 2006. Appeared at hearings about gardens and other developments in Victoria.

1998 [to 2003] Member of Victorian Heritage Council Australia

1999 Began part-time Certificate Course in Horticulture at Burnley College.

2003 [to 2011] Member of Heritage Victoria Landscape Advisory Committee

2007 Completed PhD on weeds, with Greg Moore and Janet Schapper as supervisors.

2016 *Weeds, Plants and People* published.

2023 *Weeding Between the Lines: An Anthology of Essays about our Relationship with Nature* published.

TRANSCRIPT OF INTERVIEW

Audio File #1 of 1

This is an interview with John Dwyer, recorded on Friday, 1 March 2024 and the interviewer is Tim Entwisle.

00:06 **Good, we're starting the recording now. This is Tim Entwisle. It's an interview with John Dwyer for the Australian Garden History Society's national oral history collection. John's being interviewed about his association with the society and particularly his interest in weedy plants, I'd like to talk to him about today. The interview's taking place on the 1st of March 2024. It's at John's home, which is at 47 Miller Street, Fitzroy North. And as I said, I'm the interviewer, Tim Entwisle. And John, as I said, please feel free to elaborate on things and I'll bring you back to gardens if we need to but could I ask you just as a starting point though, to give me –we always do this – could you give us your full name and where and when you were born?**

John Leonard Dwyer. I was born on the 19th of March 1938. For the first ten years of my life, I lived at – we lived at – 110A Balwyn Road, Balwyn, on the corner of Jurang Street, and outside our front door in the nature strip in Jurang Street, there was a magnificent plane tree.

And do you remember that?

I remember that plane tree very well, yes. There was a pretty a pretty small house site because by the time we left in 1948, there were five children in the family.

Right. Now, actually that's a good point to get to go back a step. Can you tell me a little bit about your family? So, your parents and your siblings, just to provide context.

Yeah. Right, well, my father was a scientist. He had a degree in physics and mathematics. He became a meteorologist and eventually was head of the Bureau of Meteorology. My mother had worked before marriage, as a colourist for the photographer, Stuart Tompkins. That is, in those days there was not colour photography, there was sort of beige, beige, photography, which would then be coloured by hand for the client. So, she used to do that, colouring – quite skilled work really.

She was also a very capable needle woman. She made our clothes and she later on taught needlework or dressmaking and design at the Stanley College of Dressmaking and Design in the city. [That we had.] I'm the oldest of five children. After me, Peter, became an engineer starting on a PMG cadetship, an electrical engineer, although he later did mechanical engineering as well, and became a hospital engineer. His career was hospital engineer. Number three was Tony, Anthony. He became a spinal surgeon, and since 1981 he's lived in America. Most of that time at Colorado, where he still lives; he lives at Colorado

Springs. And his son lives in Denver with children, and his daughter I think now lives in Texas. So, they're a very American family. My sister Gay, who died last year, was before marriage a radiographer. But she gave that up when she got married, I think because of the concerns about exposure to radiation if she were to have children. Her husband was a fireman, interestingly you know; he died before she died last September. And my youngest brother, Christopher, was always a bit of a rebel, partly because he had a difficult childhood. He fell over in the playground at school and the doctor, local doctor, didn't set his leg correctly. Broke his leg. Leg wasn't set correctly. He had to wear a calliper for most of his boyhood to gradually straighten the leg, which meant that he couldn't take part in most boyhood occupations. Although he did like gardening. He was he was keen on gardening. He now lives… He became an academic teaching political science. Actually, that started in his last year at school. He decided he wanted to do political science. They didn't teach it at the school – that was Saint Kevins. They didn't teach it. They were pretty opposed to him doing it as they weren't teaching it. He did it in any way and got first-class honours.

Now, with all those, and also your parents, there's no clear picture there of gardening or plants, and I'm just wondering…

Oh, my father was a keen gardener.

Was he?

Yes. When we moved at the end of 1948, we moved to the first house we owned at Box Hill – 52 Watts Street, Box Hill – which had a prize garden. In the front, in particular, it had a sunken lawn, with a sort of elaborate stone edging round the edge of the sunken lawn. It had a variegated hedge with one block of red and one block green. *Berberis* was the red plant. It had a weeping elm near the front door. It was quite … and it had a camellia over the other side of the garden.

John, did he build that garden himself or inherit it?

No, no, it was like that when we bought it. In the back, there was an enormous walnut tree and there was a bed under the walnut tree where he planted annuals. So, he'd always be, you know, digging up last year's and putting in this year's. I used to get paid from threepence an hour to weed the garden, so that was my introduction to gardening. Oh, and mowing the lawns and trimming those hedges. I hated trimming the *Berberis* because of the thorns, but we used to do weeding. It was quite an extensive garden to weed, in the back in particular. Threepence an hour, so an eight-hour day you'd get two shillings.

That's an introduction to gardening as a way of earning money I suppose. Do you remember it fondly in terms of the garden itself?

Not really, no. My real interest in gardening came much later.

[Let's hold that]. We'll come to that [too. Tell me]. Continue on if you like about that garden.

Well … it had some fruit trees at the back, including a quince tree that I was very fond of. I used to like climbing up the quince tree with a book and sitting there eating a quince while reading the book.

The practical aspects of the garden. Now I'm going to come back to your interest in gardens, but I'd like to first start with your early life, particularly at university and moving into law. Just as a background before we get to gardens.

[Well, my secondary education…] My primary education was with the Saint Joseph nuns, first of all in Balwyn, a little school that was a church on Sundays and had a partition to divide it in half. There were Prep 1, 2, 3 on one side, and perhaps it was 3,4,5 on the other side. I got promoted there from the class that I was in, I got pushed up a grade. That had the result that throughout my schooling I was always the youngest in the class. I then… They only went up to grade 5. I then did grades 6 and 7, also with the nuns of Surrey Hills. Tram up from Balwyn in 1948, bussed down from Box Hill in 1949. Then I got a scholarship to a school called St Colman's in Young Street Fitzroy, where that was run by a very fierce Christian brother called Brother Bowler, who was a very liberal user of the strap. The day would commence with lessons, and say you'd start with Latin. You'd have Latin lesson and then it would be one mistake, one cut, two mistakes, two cuts, three mistakes, three cuts. Four or more mistakes, four cuts. You would have to line up against the wall of the classroom in the appropriate spot for the number of cuts you are going to get. Then you would come along and give everybody their cuts.

11:03 **This this begs the question, John, were you good at Latin and did that process help you one way or other?**

No, no. [both laugh]. No, indeed. It somehow never made me think it would be a good idea to prepare the lessons the night before. I always did them on the tram on the way to school.

It didn't really affect you, the punishment?

It was not effective, but it was there, and it was not uncommon for me to have had 20 cuts by the morning break. But anyway, I got a scholarship. Most of the people in the class did. The curriculum even included intelligence tests, because that was one of the things that you had to do for what was called a junior government scholarship. So, we had a lot of practise in doing intelligence tests. Thereby, of course, rather avoiding the point of the intelligence test.

Anyway, I got a junior government scholarship and I went to Saint Kevin's with that, and I finished up doing two years in year 12 because I was so young. I was only 16 in my first year 12, so my father thought I should do a second year 12. And he was also very keen for me to do well scholastically. I'd done quite well in the public exams at the end of my first year 12 – I'd got a couple of firsts – but he wanted me to do better than that.

But then made me school captain. And I remember when the headmaster took me to his study to tell me that I was going to be school captain. I said, oh, I don't know that my father will like that. He wants me to do very well academically. So, we ring my father at work to get his approval for the school to make me school captain. I've always thought it's a wonder they didn't say 'well, perhaps we'll get somebody else'.

Yes, you're too hesitant [we laugh]

Anyway, I was school captain and I did get the Latin prize. But that was the best of a bad lot, and I was dux of the school. … Australian history, which I did in in the first year, was one of my strengths. I sat [for] and got a prize for that in both of those years, although it wasn't on the curriculum in the second year. Then it was British history. Anyway, then I started law.

And just if I can ask, when you moved into law was that because you were doing so successful and dux, and it was expected, or did you have an interest in it?

No, it was because my father thought it was a natural thing to do.

I can see a trend here.

[laughs] Well, I was good at humanity subjects, although he said I should do calculus and applied maths in my first year matric. And I would have done pure maths in my second, except that it was on at the same time as Latin. So we thought Latin was more important if I was going to do law. So, I did general maths instead of pure maths. General Maths was a bit of a wonk really. Statistics and that sort of thing. But people said, oh, you'll never pass calculus and applied maths, doing it by itself with all these other subjects. But I did quite a solid pass. I didn't get an honour, but I got a solid pass. Even though comparing notes with my classmates after the exam, I hadn't got one question right.

I might talk to you about that afterwards, John, because they do that in maths.

Yeah, I got it for method. So, a good pass for method.

Now I better keep you moving so we get to gardens …

Right, well … I work hard at British history and law in first year. British history–Law it was. I got a first in that. And I got a second or, no, I got a third in Introduction to Legal Method. [I got] In my second year, I did another history subject, Modern History, where my tutor was Inga Clendenin. She was a very good tutor, but I only got a third in that and just passes in the other subject. And then I was in a thing called the Newman Society and the chaplain was a Jesuit called Father Golden. And he decided at the end of second year that I should go into residence at Newman. I'd won a non-resident scholarship but he said he thought I should go into resident. And I said I can't afford it, I haven't got the money. And he said I'll get some money for you. So, he got a large contribution towards the fees and they converted my non-resident scholarship into a resident scholarship. So, I was then in Newman for two years.

That's the first time you moved out of home?

Yes.

And did you enjoy that?

Not especially, no. Newman was a fair experience, I think. I mean I edited, I coedited, the college magazine in my second year but my study habits such as they were, were to work late into the night and get up late in the morning, so I rarely made it to breakfast. My mother used to make me a fruit cake each weekend, and for breakfast I'd have a slice of her fruit cake and a coffee in my room. I did room in first year with just some boy from the Bush who I had nothing in common with. The only thing was when it when it came to final study for exams, I would be going to bed just before dawn. You had to go to bed before dawn because of all the birds in the garden at Neman. And he would getting up, being a country boy. That was about all we had in common. [laughs]

I'm also pleased the garden started starting to make its way into your life.

Yes. Anyway, I had only modest results and I was a subject or too short of a degree at the end of my final year. But I had to see a solicitor called T.W. Brennan, who was the first Dux at St Kevins actually, [and] who had been a Labour politician but with the split had gone with the DLP. So, he was no longer … an MLC. He was no longer in Parliament. He said he'd take me as an Articled Clerk, and he was prepared to do that, even though I still had in the first year to do a couple of subjects to finish my degree. So, I then stayed with him for two years …

The thing that I've left out chronologically is that I joined the Melbourne University Regiment. I did that in 1957. So just before my second year and I did that because I failed national service because of my eyesight.

I didn't pass the Medical and I took that as an affront to my manhood [we laugh] … and my father had been in the University Regiment so I joined the Melbourne University Regiment as a volunteer. … I was in the Melbourne University Regiment and then another unit until 1969. So, I had a good solid burst with the army and that's where I started going on hikes and camping and things like that. So … the army was really my introduction to the Australian Bush.

20:07 **Oh, good. OK.**

Then, anyway, we're at the stage where … I got admitted [to the Bar] in 1962. There was a man called David Bullard in the same building, just next door to where our office was in the city. He was then … doing the Managing Clerks course, which was where you did all your subjects parttime, and as a Managing Clerk, you then got a [indistinct]. He was two subjects short when his Principal died so I moved into his office as the solicitor while he finished his two subjects and got qualified. He then employed me as a solicitor after [that], because it was really his practice. So, then I signed the Bar Roll in December 1963. Joannie [Joan] was overseas at this stage. She did a year's trip.

You'd not met her, or you had met Joan by then.

Oh yes, we were quite an item before she went overseas.

Let's maybe just pause on the education for a moment, to put Joan into the story.

Well, I met her at the university. She was also doing law. She was introduced to me by a lady called Judy Hogg, who was a very old family friend who was also doing Law in the same year as Joan. And we became very close before she went on this trip. I think she went on the trip to test how serious we were [we laugh]. I've got a box full of our correspondence.

You passed?

Yes, I passed the test and we got engaged in 1964, when she came back from the trip.

Was this the trip – just to recall something you said before we started taping – … where you sent flowers or was that later.

Yes, that was it.

It's worth recalling that.

Yes. The other thing that's worth recording is that she had worked as a research assistant for Zelman Cowen [Governor General of Australia, 1977–1982] for a year after she finished her degree. She had a letter introduction from Zelman Cowen to a Jewish solicitor in London. She went and saw him and asked whether he'd give her a job. He said oh

no, I think my clients wouldn't be able to understand your Australian accent. [we laugh] She then remembered that there was a man called Kevin Kennedy, an Irishman who was a partner in a firm called Farrers, that her parents had met in Paris I think, and became quite friendly with. So, she said, well, I'll go and try him. She went and tried him and he said yes, we'll give you a job as a Law Clerk. Farrers are, or were, solicitors to the Queen. So, …

She started at the top?

Yes, she was doing quite well.

Well, I should have added just when you mentioned flowers that the story there was that you sent flowers to every port … before she would arrive.

Yes, they'd be waiting for her.

Do you know what flowers you sent or at that time … ?

Whatever the florist could … They were local of course. So whatever the florist could tell me would be there. And there were so many that she had to share them around the dining room. [laughs]

I like that. Let me return back to … getting into law. A very short sort of description of your time in law, so we can get onto the more gardening side, but perhaps also your time with Joan and your family as well.

Well, in those days it wasn't so hard to get into Law. Indeed, it wasn't so hard to get a Commonwealth Scholarship, which everyone relied on. I know there was there was one person I knew who had – whose matriculation result had – been 3 subjects and a compensatory pass, and still got a Commonwealth Scholarship. So I had a Commonwealth Scholarship for that. … There may have been fees to pay while I was doing the Article subjects because you had after your law degree, you had to do Article subjects. Accounts was one of them. I forget … Professional Conduct was the other one and you may have had to pay fees for those, and perhaps I had to pay fees for the Philosophy subjects that I was doing. I started doing philosophy subjects because I was friendly with a number of philosophers at the university, and I really got interested in talks with them.

This is after you finished your law degree?

No, during it. Through the Newman Society and then I had had a go at Latin 1 and failed it earlier on. And that was the … one subject left to get my arts degree. And I thought, why do I waste my time doing that Latin 1 – I could do an MA qualifying year. So, I didn't an MA qualifying year using my law degree. You could do an MA qualifying year if you did a number of subjects. And I encountered some very good teaching, but that that was part time while I was working in the solicitor's offices.

And then I started on a PhD. And I had a few supervisors, but in the end the supervisor was a man I knew, Tony Cody, who was a philosopher who had come down from Sydney and finished his MA at Melbourne [University]. Melbourne had a very high standing in philosophy in those days. … So, he was my supervisor. When it came to submit it, I told him that I wouldn't submit it and that he thought I'd get a first. But I duly got a First. I had to do a *viva* before I got the First, but I succeeded in the *viva*.

Can I ask the topic and the description of what the PhD was?

It was on describing acts. … Lots of people said that there could be many different descriptions of the same act from different points of view. I modelled it all on a High Court case where a young man had shot a girl who was trespassing on the family property. And look, his argument was that it was a mistake, he hadn't meant to kill her. So, there was a question of what was his act? And … I looked at what a lot of philosophers had said about acts. And I argued that what was really the act was what a person was intending to do, what they were about. …The other things may have just been incidentals, but they couldn't stand as a description of the act. So …

This is the distinction between consequences and intent – would that be the difference?

Yes, or the physical acts and intent. … People were suggesting things like he held the gun, he pulled the trigger on the gun. He shot the girl. … Could all stand as descriptions of his act, I argued no, unless that was what he was about.

Well, I'm going to take you on a quick diversion here. I shouldn't do this but this I understand is also a key point for where someone who became a quite a famous philosopher, and is related to you by marriage, Peter Singer. It was around a discussion about that issue perhaps. I think I understand he would have a slightly different perspective on it.

Well, yes, he is a consequentialist. … Before I did my *viva* I had a meeting with him in the cafe and we talked philosophy just to get my mind tuned up before I went and did the *viva*. But although he's a consequentialist, he's pretty broad-minded, so he didn't …

29:58 **I should probably note at that point he was already studying philosophy, but I understand you had a role in him becoming interested in philosophy?**

Well, that was back when he was still at school. So, he then did a combined History and Philosophy for his Arts subjects. He did a couple of Law subjects and then let that go. He actually wanted to do his MA in history, but he wanted to do it on the Holocaust and the department

wouldn't let him do that. I think because they wanted students for an MA in History to work from original sources, and he couldn't do that in Melbourne. So, he then said, alright, I'll do it in philosophy. So, his MA thesis was 'why should I be moral?'. In which he looked at a large number of moral philosophers, and some he gave a pass to, some he gave a cross to, and so on.

You played a role first in him becoming interested in the philosophy?

Yes. He only became a vegetarian at Oxford. That was due to a fellow student while he was doing his thesis at Oxford. There was a fellow student who was a very keen vegetarian on the grounds that it was wrong to kill animals. Peter was converted, and the first book he wrote was on civil disobedience, but the [next one], the book that made him famous, was on animal liberation. … I've got a shelf full of the books that he's written since then. He keeps on writing books, you know, things like, I think he wrote a book about George Bush as the President of good and evil. … He wrote a book 'Why should I be moral?'. He, you know, should the baby live is another controversial book that he …

… **It's my fault. We'll have a whole interview about Peter Singer, which is not appropriate. Perhaps if I drop back to your influences on him, and you would have different – as you already mentioned – slightly different views. So, do you still discuss things with him, or would you – I suppose more interesting to this interview – has he tested or questioned your own approach to life at times or have you done the same to him?**

Not really, no. He's become quite a keen gardener, I should say.

Oh, so you have had an influence that's positive.

[laughs] But I think that's because their father was a keen gardener – John and Peter's father. Joan was a keen gardener. When we married…

Sorry, we probably should point out that John's sister married Peter [hesitates], is that right?

No, Peter is Joan's brother.

Peter is Joan's brother. Sorry, of course.

They had two children

Let's get back…

I should say Peter has written a book about his Viennese grandparents. His father, his grandfather on his mother's side, David Oppenheim, was a colleague of Freud's in the Wednesday Circle. His grandmother, the wife of his grandfather was a PhD in mathematics from the University of Vienna. Now this a 19th century PhD in Vienna, so pretty amazing forebears.

Now I'm going to have to get you back to John Dwyer. Now we might move quickly through and we can sort of come back to it too, but you ended up working through law, becoming a barrister eventually, and I don't know if you can kind of sum that trajectory.

Yes. Then when Joan thought I shouldn't go to Oxford, Peter [Singer], who was at Oxford, started cutting out classified ads from The Times and posting them to me for legal jobs in England and eventually I got a job at Durham for a year. And we all went to Durham, where … [clears throat]

Durham being a very beautiful city with a lovely cathedral.

Oh, beautiful. We found a house, sort of on the outskirts of Durham, or a flat I should say. In an old house that later became the Vice Chancellor's residence. Beautiful grounds. … But what was I going to say about Durham? Yes, well, the first thing is that Joannie was pregnant with Tessa when we already had Bridgette.

Probably one thing we didn't point out is that you got married.

Yes.

And that was? Just the year for that?

1965, January 1965. Honeymoon in Tasmania, where we explored things like Lake St Clair and other scenic spots. We hired a car and did a bit of touring around Tasmania. Bridgette was born in 1968. That was why I stopped going to camp with the army because I went to camp for a couple of weeks in January 1969 and then I saw that Joannie had to struggle a bit while I was gone. So, I thought that wasn't fair and the family was much higher priority than the army, which I was only moderately interested in anyway.

I was a captain by then. … [takes a drink] And she (Joan) was pregnant with Tess when we arrived in Durham. So, Tess was born in Durham. … The professor did find a little tutoring for her. … Tesse was born in December and in the following year he found in I think the third term a little tutoring for Joan in family law, to keep her hand in, she said. But I taught a wide range of subjects at Durham. I enjoyed it, and then at the end of my year, they invited me to apply for a position there. But I decided against that for two reasons actually. One, I thought it unfair to Joan's parents as refugees to prolong our stay in England. And second, because I missed the cut and thrust of the Bar. I found academic work was quite good, but the Bar was much more exciting really.

At the end of at the time in Durham, Louis Waller, who was then Dean of Monash [University] came up and visited us. We knew Louis from Melbourne – Joan did, in particular, she'd worked with him at in

Melbourne. He came up and visited us and invited me to apply as a fractional lecturer at Monash. They were looking to have people with practical experience as well as legal knowledge, and I think my first-class honours Philosophy Degree was useful there. So, they paid half our fare back to Australia when we came, but we … toured a bit on our way back, we didn't come directly back at the end of the English academic year. We came through Europe and I know we stopped over at Hong Kong as one of the places on the way back. We stopped at Venice on the way back.

So, then I was combining Monash and the Bar. I had a run in with the Professor – Louis Waller had stopped being Dean of the department and a man called David Allen became Dean. He wanted me to do some job, which I asked whether I could do it during the [indistinct] vacation. He took exception to this. He thought I should be more available at Monash. And so, at very short notice – a couple of hours' notice – he required that I attend at Monash for a meeting to sort out how often I was going to be there. And I said, well, can I bring somebody to support me? And he said yes. And he said I'll have Professor Dura Nash there then as well. And I got a solicitor as he then was, Peter Balmford, who had done some work for Joan's father – that's really how we knew him – and he came out with me to Monash. He handled David Allen superbly. He had him eating out of his hand.

40:38 [Clock chiming] **We'll stop while your clock [**chimes].

Yes, Mr Dean. Of course, Mr Dean. Absolutely, Mr Dean. And a compromise was arrived at. … In addition to the lectures I was giving three mornings a week, I was giving a lecture at 9:00, so that I could be in court at 10:30, I would be in attendance at Monash for two afternoons a week. So, without specifying what the afternoons would be, that would depend on whether I was in court or not. That was a pretty good solution.

… One of my early cases was a case about consumer credit. And I got invited then to go on – although I lost the case, the judge said nice things about me – a Law Society, sorry Law Institute committee that was looking into reform of the law of Consumer Credit. And through that I met an English lawyer called Patrick Atier, who was then at ANU. Very soon after I'd met him, he went back to England and had a job at Warwick. And so, when I had a six-month sabbatical that I could take in 1975, we went to Warwick, so that I could work with him. The girls went to the local school – we were at the edge of Warwick Court; Coten End, which was sort of on the Leamington side of Warwick – … where they had grass, but you weren't allowed to walk on it.

They coped quite well. Indeed, they had previously been doing their primary schooling at Presshill [?], the modern school where Tesse did well but … it didn't suit Bridget. She learned a lot more at the school in

England that she had at Presshill [?]. Anyway, the six months at Warwick went very well. What I've left out of the chronology is that we had joined the National Trust in that [19]70–71 year, and we had started visiting National Trust properties and gardens. And then we took out when we came back to Melbourne ….

You joined the National Trust in …

In England. Then when we came back to Melbourne, we joined the National Trust here in [19]73. So, in [19]75, as a member of the Victorian National Trust you got access to trust properties. … We had a good six months in [19]75, then for the academic year [1976], we came back and I resumed life as it had been. Then for the academic year of [19]76/77, Patrick Atier was writing a book, and he got a special grant that said that his teaching had to be replaced. So, they appointed me a visiting reader at Warwick for that year, [19]76/77. That was, I mean, it was very interesting. I certainly helped him with his book.

Sorry, so you returned to Warwick? …

Yes, we returned to Warwick, to the same house that we lived in in Warwick the first time. Luckily, it fell vacant, so we had a year back in that House. [clears throat] I certainly helped Patrick with his book because, as he wrote a chapter he'd give it to me and I'd read the chapter and we then discuss it. And he then turned into a final draft.

We started to explore England a lot more in that year, because we bought a camper van. We would go to places like the Lake District in the campervan. We went even as far as the Isle of Skye in the campervan. [We] had to get a ferry across, of course. … To Wales … and we really started exploring England and its landscape and became very fond of it.

At the head of the stairs here [in his house] we've got a poster which is English landscape with just the word England written at the bottom of it, and it's a country scene.

And that landscape for you is that the built landscape, the natural landscape? Or what is commonly called the natural landscape.

Well, the cultivated landscape.

Cultivated, yes. Which is something we'll get, which I better get to …

OK. Now. So that's got us to there, when we came back through Europe with the campervan. Oh, I've left out one little adventure in in 1975. We bought a car there, an old second-hand car, a Vauxhall Victor, that had been done up by our landlord. It served us pretty well… At the end of our time, we had some friends from Durham. He was a mathematician. They'd been poor as church mice in Durham, so much so that their family car was a van, a little Morris minivan with no

windows in the back. Their daughter, who was in play school with Bridget, had to ride in in that. So, we wrote to them – by this time in [19]75 he got a job at CERN – and we wrote to them [when] they were living in France, just over the border, from CERN, and said we'd like to come and see them. And we'd like to give them this car. We tell them what it was, and they wrote back said oh great, we're looking forward to seeing you, do come. But when we got there we found that they'd gone up in the world rather. The position at CERN was well paid. They didn't want our car, so we then drove it across Europe 'til we got to Venice and here we are with this second-hand car in Venice, we've already booked a ferry ride down the Adriatic to Greece. So, we thought, well, I'd better do something to get rid of this car in Venice. So, what I did in the end – after we unloaded all our stuff and put it in the accommodation we had – I went to the railway station in Venice looking for someone to give it to. And I approached an English couple. And said, you know, would you like – I've got a car in the car park – would you like me to give it to you, and the other lady turned up and said no thank you. But there was an American coloured soldier there with his girlfriend, so I approached him and he said no, I'll come and have a look at it. So, I gave it to him with … the papers I had in it, so I signed it over to them.

As I said, I better move through to …

Yes, we're a bit off gardening aren't we.

We are. We've got to get that to gardening. Maybe if we take this through – you worked in law for 50 years? Is that right, you continued to sort of travel …

40 years.

Forty years and you travelled during that time quite a lot?

Virtually every year. Partly because Joan's mother was a doctor, a graduate of the University of Vienna in the 1980s when I developed rheumatoid arthritis. A doctor friend visited from Austria, and he said to her at some stage, Cora, I can't understand why you don't send John to Abano Terme. So, we investigated and I started going to Abano Terme, which is near Padua in the Euganean hills. You fly into Venice. You, of course, spend a bit of time in Venice, then you could get a taxi, even down to Abano Terme. I did at least 12 or 13 annual visits to Abano Terme, [to] which we would always add something else onto. Even the treatment itself was all done before breakfast, so you had the whole [day] – I had to recover a bit during the day, but we had we had the afternoons to visit local places and things.

Apart from that we used to go to Australian Bar conferences overseas, Greek-Australian medical legal conferences in Greece, and just general sightseeing. I mean in 2002, for example, we did a trek in

Nepal. We did half the – gosh, you flew up to the top, and at the high point you stayed overnight and then you walked back. That was half the track. It took about five or six days. … Jan persuaded me to do that because we timed it so that the rhododendrons would be in flower.

51:41 **Well, this is a good point then to … This is a few years after I think you began a part-time certificate course in horticulture at Burnley, which was that 1999, I think?**

No. Oh, yes, sorry, that is 1999. What had happened [is that] we had acquired the property at Kallista in 1993, which is on two acres with a magnificent garden design. A lot of it an old garden – old trees, old camellias. But on the view side, it looks out over the Yarra Valley and on the view side, Jeremy Francis had put in two terraces with camellias, sorry, with rhododendrons in them and similar plants. So we bought that in 1993 and we worked hard in the garden with some help. But I decided I'd better learn to be a better gardener. Until then, with the gardens we'd had in our houses where we lived, Joannie had been the gardener and I had worked under her supervision. She'd, you know, she'd get me to do the jobs that were too hard for her and things. And I suppose she taught me a bit too about it all, but I decided I'd better learn how to be a good gardener. So, at the beginning of [19]99, I enrolled in the Certificate of Horticulture at Burnley part-time. And then I compared my enjoyment of life at Burnley with my enjoyment of life at the Bar.

Just before you make that decision, can I just ask, it does seem like a bit of a career shift, probably not unusual these days. It's very typical. People often go to horticulture later in life. I'm wondering for you, even though you were enthusiastic, you enjoyed the garden, to actually learn about it, what would you say precipitated that? Maybe it needs that next question...

Well, I had done … a night course over several nights earlier on, which was just introduction to horticulture. So, I'd done that. And that sort of made me think I wanted to learn.

A spark?

Yes, that really just was a spark. Yes.

Actually, one thing we didn't mention right back at the start – this is terrible time to raise it – but I think I saw you mentioned somewhere in in your recent book that your grandfather used to get the wildlife magazine and you read Crosby Morrison. I'm just wondering if this was a latent interest?

Sort of. Well, it was a latent interest. I mean, I liked the magazine but I didn't form a passion at that stage.

That was probably a young person, being just curious.

Yes, that's right.

… Sorry to interrupt you. To come back, you're doing this course, you're looking at your life in law and you're making a decision…

Yes, we've been looking round a bit for a weekender and we found it because we we'd gone up to the Dandenongs to look at an Edna Walling garden that was actually for a house and garden for sale, by auction. We looked at it, it didn't suit us at all. Then we went to buy some plants and we went to Cloudehill and when Joan was paying for the plants, they had a pile of brochures on the on the desk at Cloudehill. And she pulled one out to me and said, look, this might be interesting. And it was it was a brochure for their house. So we said to them can we go and have a look at it and they said yes, there's nobody there. You can go and have a look. And just going down the drive towards the house it has naturalised Japanese windflowers down the drive and they were all in bloom. They were just looking magnificent. So I was sold at once.

That's the house at Kallista?

Yes.

You buy the Kallista house, you start to do your Certificate of Horticulture, you start to find law less appealing…

Yes [laughs], less appealing than horticulture. Yes. I've left out that we had bought on one of our trips back to England … a cottage in a little village called Asho, which was had been on the Stoneleigh Estate. It had been a worker's cottage on the Stoneleigh Estate – that's sort of between Leamington Spa and Warwick University. And it's on the River Avon. A pretty lovely setting, but it didn't have anything much of a garden. It had a quite a nice garden... But I won't tell you about the sort of difficult ending of it.

We better keep moving on.

We're back… with Burnley

Back with Burnley.

Yeah. I thoroughly enjoyed Burnley. I had good teachers, inspirational teachers. But the subject that puzzled me intellectually was weeds because of all the uncertainty about it. The fact that you know any plant could be a weed, and so I thought it would be worthwhile doing some work on that.

When you say doing some work, you do a PhD…

Eventually, yes, I did a PhD. I asked them could I do a PhD and Greg Moore, who was the Principal, said yes, again because of my [experience in] philosophy. And Jan Schapper, who I had known

through the National Trust and Heritage Victoria, was … the other of my supervisors. I took my time, I didn't rush it.

Are you still working at the time?

No. I was retired, but I was working. I started writing about weeds … and I started giving papers at weeds conferences.

I gave one on sleeper weeds at a weed conference in Cairns that that Joannie and I went. In which I poo–pooed the idea of calling things sleeper weeds. Again, because there was no way of telling whether a plant was a sleeper weed or not. But I quite enjoyed writing that paper.

58:50 **How were these talks and papers received?**

Well, some people would love that sleeper weed one, because one of the leading one of the leading weed people had suggested the title and suggested that it might be useful and the people have started using it. And my paper debunked that, and said, look, there are no criteria for what to sleeper weed, there's no way of telling whether a plant is a sleeper or is a weed or not. So, you should we should apply Ockham's Razer and just not use the title. One of the chaps in that audience then asked me to give a paper about weeds to a later weeds conference and ask that it be a keynote paper. And that that's the one where I started saying it's time to end the war on weeds. That was a keynote address to the Weeds Conference.

And again, how did that go down at that conference?

Some liked it, some didn't.

When people don't like it, how did they respond?

There's never much vigorous debate of these weed conferences. … There's a big program, lots of papers.

For you, working in law, this would probably be less… You would be used to [something] more rigorous to that?

Yes. And I only went to one more. I only gave one more weeds paper. That was in 2016, in Perth. That's where I gave the paper on *Cyperus rotundus*, and that was … pretty routine in a way. But I haven't gone to any weeds conferences since then, partly because COVID intervened and I've lost track of what weed societies are doing.

That year you mentioned, 2016, I think that's also when you put out your first book 'Weeds, Plants and People' came out. So although you're not talking about it, you're continuing to write and publish, and you still are.

Yes, that's right.

That enthusiasm for sort of setting the record straight with weeds, or giving them … you're taking them from being an evil, if you like,

intrinsically, to something more nuanced. [Would] that be a fair [summary]?

Yes.

And did that become a mission for you? Or what? Why such a strong passion about that?

Well, I do like taking a garden plant which some people call weeds, and saying, well, look, does it really deserve to be called a weed? It may have weedy tendencies. Is it worth living with those weedy tendencies for the benefits that we get from it? I mean, morning glories are a good example of that, I think – another one in the book.

I should just say the book we're talking about now is your latest one, which is 'Weeding between the lines', an anthology of essays about our relationship with nature, which has just been published this year, or 2023, just a few months ago.

Now there's a paper in that about the Marvel of Peru, the 4-o'clock plant, as it's called in England. And I wrote that because my friend Robin Marks asked me to write a paper for the Garden Journal of the Melbourne Club. He was on the committee, and he wanted me to write something about weeds and my feelings about how a plant may or may not be a weed. And I chose that one because it appeared in the garden here. In the Flora, it says that it has appeared in Richmond.

This is the 'Flora of Victoria'*?*

Yes, 'Flora of Victoria'. But it's obviously moved up here because if you walk along Miller St, every other garden has got it at the front.

You can't trust the distributions, as one of the authors of the 'Flora of Victoria'…

[laughs] But I rather liked it and when it appeared in the garden and I pointed it out to my son-in-law, he said yes I've got that weed too. So I thought that was a good one to show the possible differences, and I noticed when I've got a man who every year, or once or twice a year, does a heavy clean out of the garden, he removed all the 4-o'clock plant that he found. So he obviously thinks it's a weed. But it's a very interesting topic to find a plant and then say when does it deserve to be a weed or is it is it worth living with?

I think when I read your work, it has parallels with – maybe I'm making too much of it – but parallels with the way we deal with different people in different countries and immigration and things like that. I'm not trying to … equate the two, but it's the thing about, you know, a weed itself and its history and its story. Separate to where you to where you find it.

Yes. I should get just go back a little bit… We've left out landscape…

I do want to cover that and I want to come back to it. Just finishing off on weeds, I think certainly you've written a lot about this so we probably don't need to go into detail, but do you feel at this point with those two books out and the talks you've given, do you think there is more … that you would follow up on given another lifetime on weeds?

Well, actually…

You are going to do it?

I'm struggling a bit with the with the paper on plane trees at the moment. Because that's not a weed...

No, but it's disliked by some people.

It's a bit like a weed in Auckland though, as you in that paper you sent me pointed out. Indeed, it's typical weedy behaviour growing in cracks in the pavement and growing in walls and things. … But I'm finding it quite an interesting topic. I start with the eastern plane, and I start with a quote in Shakespeare. Savage, the man who writes about plants in Shakespeare, who I really like, goes to the trouble of saying that it had been recorded in Northumberland in 1598 or something. As if that might be the plant Shakespeare had seen. But I think his knowledge about planes was taken from Pliny. I mean, you know, people say that he probably read Pliny in the Latin, but if he didn't the English translation was out in 1601, and Pliny says a lot about planes. And Pliny the Younger talks about planes in one of his letters too. So, I thought that could well be the source for Shakespeare.

… I'm thinking here too…Your early interest in history has obviously come back through into this. Do you think that – again talking about latent interests perhaps – have you found that a way to sort of bring back your history interest as well?

Yes, I have. I love working with Pliny. [laughs] I really do. I'm not so keen on searching for things in Cicero, although we did do … one of Cicero's books in school. We did Pliny's letters at school, and that's where I met Pliny.

And he writes about gardens, doesn't he? The older…

Yes, his gardens.

Yes, his own gardens, right outside Rome.

So, in my paper on *Acanthus*, I'm able to talk about Pliny having it in his garden. But I'm struggling with plane trees because I think people would find it hard to tell the difference between the eastern plane that that was brought across Europe, … and then hybridised to become the London plane. If they saw two growing side by side, eastern plane and London plane, I doubt if they could tell the difference. I've not been able

to find any specifications on what the difference would be and I'm struggling with that.

I think the leaves look…. [But] let's not have a taxonomic discussion. Again, that's interesting too. I think taxonomy, I think, is always very close to legal thinking at times too. So, I can see an interest in that.

Yes, I do like getting the taxonomy of a plant, right? This one, the planes, are difficult because it's not in the Floras.

Yes, true.

Yes.

With that, let's go back – if you like in parallel, so we might have to return historically slightly – but your interest in weeds has certainly been strong in recent years. But if you if we go back, you talked about joining the National Trust when you're in the UK and then … in Australia, you've been a member of the Victorian Heritage Council, so I'm interested in that side of your life.

I gave a paper on the 40th anniversary of the [Australian] Garden History Society on the history of the Victorian branch, and that's full of National Trust figures who started it. And I had just joined the National Trust Council a couple of years after the Australian Garden History Society was established. So, I knew they were doing it, but I didn't get involved at that stage. I'll tell you how I got to stand for the National Trust Council. Joannie found this Trust registered house in Richmond, in the Vaucluse in Richmond, which had then been divided into five. And she thought that this had possibilities. She was a bit hesitant. I thought it had possibilities too, so we bought it at auction. We got a Greek builder to remove all the excrescences from the five flats and turn them back to a house. And turned it into a lovely house, actually. A magnificent house. And it had quite a good garden.

01:11:01 **What was the address of that house just for the record.**

14 Vaucluse.

14 Vaucluse, Richmond?

Yes, Richmond. And we were there for 31 years now. Our girls went to school at St Catherines. They'd go down Church Street and get the train at East Richmond to go to St Catherines – that's when they couldn't prevail upon me to drive them there. It had a very sloping block on the south side, but I did establish quite a nice garden there. I established a little rose garden there, a sort of quadrant of four roses. … I just forget the other plants in the garden. … It has brick dividing walls on both sides. And we put a pool in eventually, … in [19]87. That was to manage my arthritis. I used to swim in the pool every morning.

The front garden was more difficult because it had a very large oak tree near the front boundary. So much so that one gardener that we had doing some work there said, I think I'll describe this as a woodland garden. [laughs] Because it was pretty hard to grow things under the oak tree. Although, I did have a lot of success with that lemon salvia that I had growing just near the letterbox. I put that in at the front. I took a cutting from Kallista, and brought it down, put it in. And we had a parking space, at parking apron, with an urn at the it, and I started there the routine of having petunias in summer and primulas in winter. So, I started doing that. It had a climbing rose on the wrought iron at the front. … It had lots of nice things as a garden. It also had a couple of trees. Oh, the other thing that that worked very well, it had clivias, orange clivias, down the side. Fitting in the period for the house and they did very well in the shady spots down the side path.

With that description – which is actually good to get in, and I'm glad you brought that up – that got you connected with the Heritage Council. Is that right?

No, with the National Trust.

The National Trust, because of the house...

Not long after we were there, there was a developer who bought a Victorian house further down the Vaucluse who was applying to demolish it and put up a block of flats. So, we all opposed that. And one night, there was a knock on the door, and it was Warwick Forge, from the National Trust, saying that the National Trust was interested in opposing that too. But then it seemed to me that the National Trust could perhaps do with a bit of help when I saw what happened with that project. We worked it out all right….

You mean legal help or other?

Conservation help. Because that problem got solved. We blocked the development at VCAT the first time. Then the developer put in an amended development. But I knew a friend who was looking to buy a house in Richmond, a solicitor, and I said to him, look, that developer might be getting a bit sick of all this. Why don't you approach him and make an offer to buy the house? And he did that, so that saved that Victorian house, which is still there. He did a bit of work to improve it, but it’s still there.

Anyway, so that's when I decided to join [the National] Trust Council. So, I stood for Trust Council in 1982 and I was on Trust Council until 1997. … At some stages I was President, at some stages, I was Vice President. … There was a campaign against me in 1997 when I was due for re–election because at a public meeting about the museum being built next to the Exhibition Building, I had said that I thought it would be good for the Exhibition Building to have the museum there.

People who were opposed to the museum then mounted the campaign to get me off Trust Council. They succeeded.

I find this interesting because this, to me, is a pattern where you're willing to make your own independent decision about something, and I'm thinking of weeds as well, rather than perhaps go with what is…

What's the accepted?

Yes.

Yes, I mean, some people on the Trust – Nick Sandstrom, was one – said he didn't know after I'd done that whether he should resign his membership of the trust or not. He was so much opposed to the idea. But I could see that the museum would be salvation of the Exhibition Building. Instead of just standing there in the garden and being used for exams and things like that, it could have a life.

I don't bring this to a contemporary issue, which is in today's papers, but very briefly… the interesting thing about having a garden show there means people go inside the building and love to see that building.

Yes.

Being used. I'm not making any call here today on that issue.

And the garden display inside is always magnificent.

It is interesting about old buildings, being so precious you can't do anything in them.

Yes. Anyway, so then they nominated me to the Heritage Council to make up for that, so I was on the Heritage Council for a couple of years. … In particular, I was on the Heritage Council's Landscape Advisory Committee. And there I had a lot to do with Jan Schapper, who was on [National] Trust Council, and who was on the Heritage Council, and who was on the Landscape Advisory Committee, and she and I did a couple of projects together. We started having conferences – landscape conferences – around Victoria where people would give papers about the landscape and the issues. And then we brought out a a collection of the best of the papers. She and I edited it and that's published. That's here. [John leaves microphone to look for publications and makes a few comments about them, not recorded here …]

1:19:20 [John returns to microphone]

… We [Jan Schapper and John] jointly edited a book about landscapes and heritage landscapes which got published by the Heritage Council. Jan and I also edited the last number of Heritage Studies that the society published. I had previously published a paper in it. I was sorry to see it go, but it went.

Things do change. I'm aware we get we get getting a lengthy interview, which is good, but I want to perhaps take us to the Australian Garden History Society … but you want to mention something first?

Well I I'm not certain what year I joined that, but it was while I was doing my course at Burnley. I got on to the committee – the Victorian Committee – because when Burnley was being put on the Victorian Heritage Register … they wanted to put it on with only half of the main drive. As you come in, they wanted to put the left hand side on the register and the right hand side to be free for commercial development. So, the [Australian] Garden History Society was very upset about that, and you had these respectable ladies waving placards at the tram stop near the Burnley Gardens, saying 'Bracks Buggers Burnley'.

Which side did you take on this issue, John?

I thought it's crazy to put half a driveway on the heritage register. So I appeared at the hearing of the Heritage Committee – and I appeared at that. Oh, there were two hearings, actually. There was a meeting in the Richmond Town Hall – a full meeting about it and I spoke at that. There was a meeting of the Heritage Council, and I appeared at that, and I spoke at that. After that, Pamela Jelly, I think, invited me to join the Victorian committee … of the Garden History Society. And I then sort of slowly moved up, as it were, until I became Chair. You know the six-year rule? Well I was just an ordinary elected Member for one year then I was Vice [Chair] to Colleen Morris for one or two years, and then I was chair for three years, I think.

Colleen is in Sydney. You were chair of the Victorian branch?

No, this is the National Management Committee.

The National Management Committee, right.

While I was chair, we had the conference in Hobart – no in Launceston. We had a conference in Geelong, and we had a conference in Ballarat. The one that I was most involved with was a conference in in Ballarat. I've got a note somewhere of the year, but it mightn't matter. It's in the records. You can find it easily.

Can I ask, what observations you would make about your time in that role and the society in general?

One of the things I liked about it was that, unlike the Heritage Council, where there are a lot of politics going on and unlike the National Trust, where there is a bit of politics going on, the [Australian] Garden History Society didn't behave like that. I came to understand that gardeners are basically nice people. Coups and that sort of thing are the last thing that would happen in the Garden History Society.

Has it [the Australian Garden History Society] changed during your time there or have you seen it changed since then? Is there any … general things you'd note?

No. Well, it has started to change. You know at the Hobart Conference they certainly started to introduce Aboriginal landscapes, which hadn't, I think before then, been considered by the Society. And so that that was an interesting trend I thought, and also your trend about coping with climate warming. Yeah, that's why they want to cut down all the plane trees.

Oh. Because they're not going to survive?

Yeah, they say. Why they say it? I don't know. They come from Greece and Turkey and places.

Yes, as you know, I find them a little bit dull as a tree, but I think they're a very tough tree. I would be very surprised if they didn't tolerate change.

Anyway, I've not closely followed sort of what the National Management Committee has been doing. Because I've been busy writing for the journal, and particularly since Francesca became editor. She started out not wanting to publish a paper of mine in every number of the journal. She said she had to share the love. But then she found it very useful to have this storehouse of papers that I've written so that she was never at a loss. So that meant that for some years, each issue of the journal would have a paper by me in it.

And you enjoy that writing?

I enjoyed that very much.

We haven't actually mentioned it in this discussion but we talked about writing before we started but you've written, you've studied at the university, you've written two books and written many articles and given talks. Is that something that's always been an interest to you, writing?

Yes, it has. But since Joan died, it's been my salvation, I would say.

We should just note, for the record Joan died?

1999. Sorry 2019. September the 11th, 2019, of cancer. She had cancer from 2014 on so was for those five years having treatment for cancer, but then it beat her in the end.

She was also very passionate lover of plants and gardens and particularly roses.

Yes. 2018 was the last conference that that we went to. [pause]

… So, you've enjoyed the writing since then?

She used to always check my writing with a critical eye and improve it. Say things like, what's the point of this? Or you know, why have you included that that sort of thing? As well as checking it for spelling.

01:27:28 **Do you have any flaws that you keep making that she found?**

Oh, yes. [we laugh] We can all make mistakes.

Yes of course. It's always interesting sometimes to know whether…

Yes, yes. But she liked it that I was writing the articles, I think. I really do think they've kept me sane since she died.

Well, they've also been wonderful for the journal … if you look at what the society is about, which is gardens and history. Your articles have a bit of history, and they have nomenclature and taxonomy which many people in society like. Then they have that philosophical theme – where it's a weed or what its origins are. And that's good. It's a knowledge society I think. Did you find that people enjoy learning in that society?

Ah, yes. The practical gardeners, I think, still like reading about these things.

Now let me we're coming towards the end so I just want to check if there's anything [else]. I've covered most of the points that I had written down for myself. We've talked about the places you stayed in and around. Weeds and landscape? Do you think there's anything we've left out of that story or any topic you want to make sure we mention here?

No, I don't think so. It's not quite in point but they asked me to talk about the history of the Victorian branch for the 40th anniversary [as mentioned earlier] and I really like doing that. … What I was able to bring out was the close connection between the beginnings of the [Australian] Garden History Society and the National Trust. That transition has been very good for me. I mean, I'm still a member of the National Trust. I'm a life member and an honorary member.

I loved just setting out all the people like Margaret Darling, Peter Timms [Peter Watts], all the people who were involved in setting the Garden History Society up. I can remember Margaret Darling when they were organising a conference in Melbourne, rushing around, sort of getting things in shape and things because she was then I think Vice president of … the National Trust. So, I saw her on Trust Council and things.

That's interesting. At that point, there was obviously an interest in setting up this new society. Was it felt … there was a need for this [society] that didn't exist or that the National Trust wasn't doing enough in gardens? Is there a bit of subtlety in that? What was driving that?

I think. Peter Timm's [Peter Watts'] book had a lot to do with it. I think the feeling was that buildings were getting more attention than gardens and the gardens needed the attention.

Is that Peter Watts or Peter Timms?

Sorry. [John check's name on a publication]. Peter Watts…

I think his book was very influential in in terms of highlighting the importance of gardens. That corresponded with what Joannie and I had found. Because we had found looking at historic buildings in England that we became less interested in the house and more in the gardens. And so that even back then … in the 90s, we'd done garden tours in England. I wrote one up in Trust News in 1997. I wrote up an article on the gardens of South Somerset. We had lovely garden tour going to all these. I think six or so gardens in South Somerset. We stayed at a nice bed and breakfast and we'd moved out of houses and we were less interested in buildings.

Do you think that that same feeling had moved, as a community sense, in Australia …?

I think there was a growing recognition that that not enough attention was being paid to gardens, yes.

Do you think that that is now solved or resolved if you like?

[pause] Probably yes, I think so, yes. Certainly the properties of the National Trust has got in Victoria that have got a good garden, like Como and Ripon Lea, certainly the gardens there are very much appreciated and valued; not just seen as a sort of maintenance problem.

I think that's the perfect place to stop. If you'd be happy with that. 'Not to be seen as the maintenance problem'. Thank you. I'll just we'll finish up the interview with John Dwyer. So, Tim Entwisle here and very much appreciate your time.

Interview concludes: *1 hour 33 minutes 41 seconds*