

AUSTRALIAN GARDEN HISTORY SOCIETY

NATIONAL ORAL HISTORY COLLECTION

Sydney Branch

Interviewee:	MR LINDSAY BOND
Interviewer:	Roslyn Burge
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Beth Bond was one of the people originally involved with the Australian Garden History Society in NSW – initially with the Bowral and Southern Highlands Branch. Beth helped establish the Sydney Branch.

Beth continued to be a member of the Society until her untimely death in China in March 2003.

This interview is being conducted as part of the Australian Garden History Society's Oral History Project. It's an interview with Mr Lindsay Bond at his home in Pennant Hills on Tuesday, 2 December 2003. The interviewer is Roslyn Burge.

Lindsay, thank you for participating in this project. If you could give me your full name please.

Lindsay Dangar Bond.

Lindsay is "s-a-y"

And your date and place of birth?

I was born in Greenwich, New South Wales, on 24 November 1923.

And of course, Lindsay the Australian Garden History Society wanted to place on record the significant involvement of your wife Beth in the establishment of the Society in New South Wales and sadly she passed away in March this year so that is why I am talking to you. Could you tell me something about Beth?

Beth was born as far as I know in Croydon, New South Wales, on 15 January 1924. Her name, she was christened for her grandmother, Florence Elizabeth Madsen but she was always known as Beth.

She died at Suzhou City in China on her way to a conference of the International Camellia Society which was going to be held at Jinhua and she died a few days after arriving in China. That was on 3 March 2003.

I'd like to come back and talk to you about your travels and involvement with the Camellia Society but how did your interest and Beth's interest in gardens and landscapes begin?

Well her mother who lived to be a vigorous and active old lady lived on her own at Mangrove Mountain, about 60 or 70 kilometres north of where we are today, she went up and had to go up there during the Depression. The property actually belonged to her father, it was an orchard - he retired up there in about 1914. She married fairly late in life to Sidney Bush Madsen, who was a surveyor, who fell on hard times in the Depression. They went up there, I think from memory about ... I wasn't involved of course at that stage, but it would have been about 1930 and he continued to do a bit of surveying but more or less semi-retired. They were a good deal older than would be usual for parents, I think the mother was about thirty-six when Beth was born and she was the eldest of four children. She was actually born I think at Croydon, as I said before.

Beth came down to Sydney in 1941 and she was working in the Perpetual Trustee Company at that stage and my father happened to be an officer of that company and I met her when I was in Sydney about the early half of 1943. About twelve months after that I went off to New Guinea and more or less disappeared until about the middle of 1946 when I came back and at the end of 1946 we married. I had been in touch with her naturally though I was a very sporadic letter writer up until that point. Everybody else's boyfriends wrote a letter every week, I didn't. Then when I got back I found they had written no more than I had.

Well how did we get into the garden. Well Rita, Beth's mother, was a great gardener, she gardened — well she was more than a hundred when she left Mangrove Mountain and came down, she decided it was time she packed it all in and came down to the Chesalon Nursing Home at Beecroft. She had had a garden up there which in spite of having no running water or anything like that she managed to keep going. It was a very fine garden, had a few camellias and things in it. Actually the garden is still there. Her son brought the property after the old lady died and he

developed it and it is quite a well-known garden now and the old house and the old garden are still up there.

Does the garden have a particular name?

Yes *Garraman*.

So you and Beth married and got involved with the Garden History Society.

Oh eventually. We fiddled about. We had a wretched piece of land at Beecroft, it had been part of a cow yard. The front of it had absolutely no soil at all, it was the night holding paddock for the cows, and the manure had been dug off that and when they dug the manure off they took the topsoil as well and it was just a patch of about 60-odd feet square of solid clay that you couldn't do a damn thing with. Out the back it was quite extensive. From the back of the house we built to the back fence is about 150 feet so it really was about one and three-quarter normal suburban blocks. Beth always used to say it was such a fine garden because it had been a cow yard. That might have been true for about the first twelve or eighteen months but after that we had depleted anything that was in it. We couldn't grow much because it was so exposed, it had no trees. We planted some trees and rather foolishly we planted gum trees, however, I have left there now so they are not my problem anymore.

They were your problem for a long time weren't they.

You wouldn't believe it! We went there in 1952, onto the site, just after the birth of our second daughter and we couldn't really garden for about eight or nine years because it was such an exposed site. Actually, if you went down and looked at it now you'd be amazed. We could actually see Mount Gibraltar at Bowral on a good day, right across the Pennant Hills ridge.

What was the address of this?

27 Cardinal Avenue, (Beecroft).

It says how much Sydney has greened up in that time.

Well the golf course, Pennant Hills Golf Course, we had to remove many, many trees there after the big blow of 1991 that came through. The golf club was fined by the council for cutting trees back without permission but it was done because they would have killed somebody there were in such a weakened state. There have actually been two or three, to my knowledge, aircraft land on that golf course. You couldn't put one down on it now but when I first remember it back in the 1950s there was very little timber there at all. The fact Beecroft is known as the leafy suburb but when I was building the house walking down from the station from the ridge where you come off Beecroft Road I could actually see the house. Well you'd no more see that house now than fly to the moon because it is just a mass of trees. In fact I had to have one tree removed about a year or so ago, got a Bracket fungus in it, and it was dangerous. The tree was a 100 feet high, I was abused by some of my neighbours for destroying old growth forest, actually I had planted that tree, a big blue gum. We planted about six or eight gums on the block.

You were telling me you planted a number of camellias.

Oh yes we got into camellias mainly through Beth's mum. She was one of the old school and she knew Hazelwood's Nursery down at Epping and she and Beth went down there and they bought various misnamed camellias, we discovered that they were misnamed later on, the nurserymen are still misnaming things. They bought things up but of course they didn't do too well because they were sitting out in broad sunlight which doesn't improve a camellia. Sasanquas weren't as popular then or as well-known as they are now. Some of our friends were involved with the Camellia

Society. There are two camellia societies, there is local one, The Australian Camellia Research Society, which was started by Waterhouse and there is also the International Camellia Society and Waterhouse was also the genius behind that. We were involved with the International Society because they used to organise very good tours occasionally to international conferences.

The first one we went on we went on it because it was through Spain and Portugal. As I had always been historically interested in the Peninsula Wars between Napoleon and Wellington and all that gang and I realised that this tour was going to go through that country I had no objection to going on it. Camellias didn't come into it as far as I was concerned at that stage.

But then I found that I did get an interest in camellias and I had about 140 growing in the garden altogether. Some good, some bad, some quite indifferent, a few rare ones. I have brought a few up here where I am at the present time, a lot of cuttings were taken off them. I exhibited them and I've got a box somewhere that has got about 200 cards in it for various prizes, firsts, seconds, thirds, what have you, that I've won over the years but I don't exhibit any more.

Was Beth as involved in the Camellia Society?

Yes she was but not as much as I was. I was on the Camellia Society Committee for thirteen or fourteen years. I didn't join the local camellia society until I had left work in 1985. I retired when I was sixty-two and I just didn't have the time to go pottering off at regular intervals to meetings and be involved at all. But the International Camellia Society it really didn't require any involvement much, personal involvement. We went to Spain and Portugal. We had one conference out here. The Japanese were so impressed with the way they were treated at that conference that they invited those of us who had worked on the committee to go with our wives to Japan as their guests. I mean we had to pay our fares and board and lodging naturally but they passed us from one branch of the Japanese Camellia Society to another over a period of three weeks. Thank God it was only for three weeks, I don't think I could have stood another week I'd have died.

What was so taxing about it?

Well you know my friend, Goro Imure [Vice President of the Japanese Camellia Society] who is a gentleman about the same age as myself we found on several occasions we would have been on the opposite sides of the fence during the late 1940s and not that far apart, he was in the Japanese navy. Goro and I used to sit up at night putting the world to rights and drinking saki and over-eating. He is a good mate. So that was that. We went to America with our Camellia Society out here. As I say we had involvement with the people from the International Camellia Society with other countries coming to Australia, we were involved with them.

Was that before your involvement with the Australian Garden History Society?

Yes it would have been. Now I retired in 1985 and we went to Spain and Portugal and the Channel Islands for a conference. I can't remember exactly when it was but it would have been probably around about 1980.

It began in 1980 so that is very early on.

How that came to pass, getting involved with the Garden History Society, was that there was a gentleman down the Southern Highlands, Tim North, who ran a little magazine thing. Now he and his wife, Keva, were well-known to a number of people who were involved with the Beecroft Garden Club. Now we had been involved with the Beecroft Garden Club since its inception in the 1950s. It started off as the Beecroft Progress Association. I got involved in it mainly because some person

wanted to build a milk depot on the block of land next door to me. The place was unsewered and I mean it was ridiculous. We knocked that on the head and once we disposed of that what were we going to do with this group that we had formed. Somebody got the bright idea to form the Beecroft and District Garden Club which is still going and at one stage actually Beth was the president of it. We were members of that and I am still a member of it, in fact on Friday night this week is the Christmas party just down the road here. Beth was always involved in it and she at one stage of the game took herself down to adult education classes, tech, I am not to sure what it was. She and another very dear friend of her's used to go down there every week or so for a year or two doing a horticultural course.

Which tech was that?

I don't know. I was away a lot, the job I had involved me being away, so in that regard we had two separate lives and she did a lot of things that I wasn't involved in.

Just to digress for a moment, just briefly about your own career, you worked for CSR for a long time.

I did, in the Building Materials Group.

You started there as a cadet?

Yes, that was back in 1941. I was only there for a year, they were very lucky they got rid of me after twelve months and sent me off to the war for four and a half years. I think they hoped I wouldn't come back, but I did.

A very different cadetship.

I learnt a lot of things but none of them had much application in civil life.

Beth and her friend went to horticulture at tech.

I am not quite sure of the extent of that, all I know is that she was a person with quite an incredible memory. She had trouble with Latin names but that didn't matter much because I could easily sort that out for her. Once she saw a plant and had it identified she would remember it. She might not see a plant for years and, 'Oh that looks like—' and sure enough if you went and looked the book up and hunt it down you would probably find it and nine times out of ten she was right. The late Allan Seale, he lived in Beecroft and we knew him very well, in fact he was the uncle of a very good friend of ours, and Allan reckoned that she was one of the best taxonomists as far as he could work out for an amateur. I mean she was only an amateur but she could remember these plants and identify them and she was quite good at that, that was one of her great strengths actually as far as the garden was concerned.

Did she enjoy the committee work with the Beecroft group?

I think she enjoyed it. She was very good on committees. I served on committees with her and in fact we were a nice balance. I am somewhat impulsive and brutal and she was not and she used to keep me under control more or less. She used to make me chuckle. You know the way with committees, sometimes you have a committee meeting going; this would be when she was just on the committee and not president or anything; and the argument would go round and round in circles. She'd put up with this as long as she could and then she'd just sort of look at whoever was in charge, the chairman, and challenge him, 'Now just exactly what is it we are trying to do? Is it so and so and so, or as I think it should be so and so and so and so?' and she'd leave it at that. You can bet your sweet life it would all come back together, she was very good at that sort of thing. I'd be just as likely to tell them to shut up and stop carrying on, but that was the environment I was brought up in. When you are running a business you haven't got time for niceties.

You had a nice balance in that sort of thing.

Oh yes. She was good. One of the reasons so many people knew her because I never heard her openly criticise anybody, even privately she'd never criticise anybody. It might be obvious she didn't care much for them, but they would not have been aware of that mostly. A much better person than I, much better. So that gives you a bit of a background on her.

Anyhow this group from the Beecroft Garden Club they had some connection with the Norths and the Australian Garden History Society started in the Southern Highlands you see and then Robin Lewarne and one or two others got an idea that it would be good to have a Sydney branch working. It didn't work well for a start because they didn't have many people who were really what I'd call hands-on type gardeners. There were a few, Robin Lewarne and one or two others but it wasn't until they started getting some of the professionals in, I can't think of their names now, they were people who were well-known I think. One that does come to mind though was Valerie Swane. See Valerie Swane only lived up the road from us and through the Camellia Society we knew Valerie Swane; well she wasn't quite a neighbour but she was nearly a neighbour; once we got those sort of people into it then we started to get the members coming in.

Professional nursery plant people?

Landscapers. In fact the Garden History Society's great strength I think, I don't know because I only know what I see in the magazines, to me it is really perpetuating the landscape work done in gardens and that sort of thing.

There has been a change in the style of landscaping in gardens.

In gardens? Oh Lord yes, yes, yes. Don't start me on that. It's like this business of 'Have an Australian native garden that doesn't need watering', I've never heard such a load of rubbish in my life. Australian natives will die just as quickly with no water as anything else will. Also most of them are pretty ... in my book, are pretty damned unattractive unless you've got a 40 acre paddock.

Shall we go back to the Norths?

Oh yes, well the Norths had this down in the Southern Highlands and Sydney was a sort of a stepchild that poddled along not doing too well. Anyway after the Norths ... they went down to the Southern Highlands and *interruption*

227 The Norths were running this down in the Southern Highlands and there were requests that we have a Branch in Sydney and people were interested. Anyhow Beth and .. she got involved in it with Robin Lewarne and they were fiddling around and I think ... who was the other one ... there was somebody else.

Would it be Jan Gluskie?

Yes Jan Gluskie came into the act too. I don't know whether Jan was ... I think Jan might have been the president at that stage, or chairperson, or something or other ... but you know they worked very hard to get things going. They had a few meetings, I can't quite tell you much about those because Beth was involved with those. I went on outings with them and things but there was a bit of a conference here in Sydney at one stage in the piece, I remember that because in those days I was sailing every Saturday and I came back into town on this Saturday and we stayed in town because we were going off to do something or other on the Sunday with them as a group. Robin Lewarne's probably got all that stuff anyhow, because we didn't keep any records much at all.

What was your memory of that conference?

Not much because I wasn't really involved in it, I was out sailing around the harbour in the boat. I came back for the food and drink in the evening, I was always good on food and drink and still am actually. Then I think we probably did something on the Sunday, I can't remember what it was. That might have been the Sunday we all went out to Rookwood which is a magnificent piece of garden history. I can't remember what it was but Robin Lewarne has probably got all that stuff. But the two of them worked terribly hard cajoling people to go on conferences and things. One we had about a half a bus full that we managed to cart up to Mudgee for a weekend, that was rather fun. I can't remember the people whose place we saw but it was one of the grazing families. I think it might have been some of the Horderns.

It is a nice area Mudgee.

It is magnificent ... yes ... yes. They have mink sinks ...

Mink sinks!

Yes ... fur-lined. No well it's a very rich area. But it was an interesting weekend. I used to go on these things, okay I am interested in horticulture ... I know a little about gardening and one thing and another, but must I must confess I used to have great fun with the people that we'd go to visit ... you know, talking to them and not necessarily about gardens.

Do you remember any particular people you met along the way?

Yes I can't remember their names though, you see it's a good while ago and a lot of things have happened since, but Robin Lewarne could tell you.

At Mudgee the Morts, still Morts up there, I don't think they are called Morts but they're the Mort family of Morts Dock and all that sort of thing and Goldsbrough-Mort and so forth and they have a property at Mudgee. Actually the house is a farm building, like a barn, and they've put another level inside the thing, a sort of mezzanine floor. Well we went out there for dinner this night and it was great what they have done with this thing, just a concrete floor and a bit of an annexe on the side where the ablutions were. They were the Mort family, which I had some knowledge of the Morts because there were Morts down at Hunters Hill naturally and I knew some of them ... I think actually one of the Morts was at school about the same time as I was.

Was Howard Tanner involved at that time?

Well Howard yeah ... Howard came into the act through ... who was it ... the Minters. Howard .. you know what's her name who died just recently, she was one of the Horderns I think it was ... and a woman of considerable influence around the town, her daughter .. I think it's her daughter – that's the connection – her daughter is married to Howard Tanner.

See it is no good being a landscape architect and a good architect unless you have got good social connections, it is a waste of time completely. You work ...

We got to know Howard quite well. Howard tolerates me because he went to the same school that I went to first. In fact he has done a magnificent job on Sydney Grammar, I don't know if you've seen the new portico they've put on there.

I haven't but I believe it is a success.

Well the building was never finished ... and they put that up ... I think it cost them the best part of a million, I don't know, but we had a couple of fellows died and left a heap of money. One friend of mine died eighteen months or so ago and as far as I know he left them about \$750,000. He was a bachelor.

So Howard was involved at that time.

Howard was involved. There were other people, I'm just trying to think. Bagots was another name that comes to mind and I think that was to do with Bagots Timber Mill up in the north ... Murwillumbah area, but I wouldn't be sure about that. But there were a lot of people sort of hanging around the fringes of the thing anxious for it to go, nobody was involved with committees and things ... yes they'd come along to things, yes, if they got notice but nobody got involved.

And these two they worked for a few years like galley slaves. They used to have bits of paper all over the place, because I used to help them addressing envelopes and doing that sort of thing. Then all of a sudden when the landscapers ... I think it was, myself, that when the landscapers and the professionals came into the act it started to go. And if you look at it now, see Colleen Morris is ... what – she's a horticultural historian isn't she, sort of ... almost?

She is President, the National President now and has done a great deal for the Society.

She was president of New South Wales for quite a while too. Jan Gluskie did a wonderful job of organising weekends and things. But the funny part about it is that most of the people that I know that got *us* involved with it aren't with it any more. They dropped out once it started to go properly.

So they were there for the establishment you mean?

They were there at the beginning when it was down at Bowral but when the whole thing moved down to Sydney and it looked like they'd be getting caught up in a bit of hard work they retired hurt. (*laughter*)

Well there is the Southern Highlands branch.

I know that, but they were quite comfortable down here in Sydney with the Southern Highlands running the branch and doing all the hard work and they were doing all the social functions. But when it came to being down here the darlings disappeared, some of them did, like breath on a mirror. That happens all the time anyway. We don't know who those people were anyway.

But the Society has continued to flourish in your mind?

Oh I think it's going better now than ever. In fact I think the publication they put out now; I got the other day ... yesterday it came; it's one of the best things there is. The other one that is a much more hands-on gardening thing is the *New Zealand Gardener* which I've never stopped getting, I bought it for Beth for a number of years. They are the two best gardening publications I know.

So there is a role for the history and analysis of gardening?

I think there is and I think it is important, you see ... I don't know that they did it, but somebody muttered something about our garden before it got totally destroyed, that they'd go up and have a look at that. I mean I don't really think it was a good garden because it was like Topsy, it just grewed, it didn't have any rhyme ... I mean I did the original layout of it and Beth put the plant material in and it still more or less conformed to the original thing we had in mind. Two axes, one coming down from the back of the house that way and the one from down the garden going that way down the other side and there are all sort of little gardens off it, little rooms off it ... they were just a classic bit of landscaping, about page six of the book I think.

You have just gestured with your hands, did your garden axis go across as noughts and crosses rather than a religious cross?

When I say they crossed, you came out of the carport on the side of the house looking from the carport you could look down the garden and there was a workshop down there. When you got into that one there was another one went off the garden that way. Now off that there were a couple of niches around the place and other paths that you could sort of go round a corner, even though it was only a 1,500 metre block, you could find little rooms. I mean it was nothing special, as I say it was about page six of the landscaping book.

It obviously gave you a lot of pleasure.

I put it together because actually I was better at that sort of thing than Beth was. She was great on the plant material and all that stuff but I did the original planning. It has got overgrown over the twenty of thirty years since I did that; thirty years at least since I did that; but you can still see the lines of those two main axes in the thing down the back. The front garden was nothing terribly spectacular but as I always say the front garden is for the public the back garden is mine.

Do you have any thoughts about the direction, in the early days, the Society was taking?

Yes mainly looking for members and support. They did some good things. Howard Tanner was of course a tower of strength because he could always dredge up something to look at. He did one, I can't remember whether it was the National Trust or the Garden History Society, about nearly two years ago now out in the Eastern Suburbs. We went to Bushells' place, you know that one down on the harbour. It is like a Scottish-Georgian house covered with ivy admired by yachtsmen as they sail past. I only ever once went there. We had a calamity with a boat I was sailing in, we rolled it over, and we got it ashore there and they had a bit of a beach. Somebody came down from the house and said would we as soon as possible get the boat away from there because it was private property. The fact that we were damned near drowned had nothing to do with it. It is a lovely place and all my life I'd wanted to go ashore there and have a look at the place and I finally did about two years ago.

It was not the style you wanted to enter it though.

We didn't go into the house naturally but the grounds were interesting. Howard did that. Then he had another place round in Rose Bay. Howard is very good at finding those sorts of things to look at and they are very interesting. He is a great bloke. I mean he is a very intense sort of joker. He has done a lot of good for it.

Robin Lewarne?

Robin Lewarne looked after the finances and things and she had a few contacts around the place the same as we did. But gradually, as I say, we got more of the professionals in like the son of Clifford Smith and a few of those others that work in the trade. Once they got in and got their mates interested in it, it has gone from strength to strength. I don't know if you have looked at any of the publications they have done, have you been through those?

For a small organisation that hasn't been established very long, essentially, they've got a great record.

I think they are terrific. This last book I got the other day, I haven't really had a look at it yet just looked through the index, I look forward to getting them they are interesting reading.

Did you and Beth have much to do with the genesis of the *Oxford Companion*?

No not really. The main thing I had to do with that was shell out about \$100 to buy it for her for last Christmas twelve months. I've got a copy of it down here somewhere.

What about the conservation side of the Society? Do you remember any particular conservation issues that the Society was involved in?

No I don't. As far as I'm aware they did some work mainly in Victoria. They did a bit out in the Eastern Suburbs area and Coogee. The church at Randwick they did a survey of that. I've never done any of that sort of thing because over the last seventeen or eighteen years since I retired I've been more or less plagued with this infernal back and what have you of mine and I haven't got the mobility that I need to do any of those things.

Was Beth involved in that side of it?

No not really. She was too busy making sure I didn't fall over. Also, we worked on our own garden. I mean we opened our garden for the Garden History Society once at least that I know of, and probably twice, and people from the Garden History Society used to come and see it. I mean they would give us a ring and say, 'We are out, can we pop in?' We'd say, 'It is in chaos, you can help us rake up the lawn,' or something. Oh no, we opened it ... in fact as far as I recollect we opened it twice at least for the Garden History Society ... that's over a period of about twenty years or more.

There is role in the Society for a great diversity of experience and expertise.

Oh yes, that's right ... there is.

Lindsay, just talking about some of the people you remember from those days, Dick Clough was one name you mentioned.

Professor Clough, well I knew him by repute because I had a lot to do with providing Canberra with building materials, they were one of my great outlets down there. Anybody who was involved in the building of Canberra over a period of about thirty years knew that Dick Clough was the landscaping expert. He has got an amazing collection of associations. He goes back to Professor Waterhouse, you know the camellia man. I think it was he, if I remember rightly, Dick told me that he met him in England where he was doing architecture and he recommended he get into landscape architecture and that is how Dick got into that. Dick was actually the first professor of Landscape Architecture at the University of New South Wales, I'm pretty sure that's right.

You are right.

He's a good bloke too, Dick. Dreadful, dreadful at giving lectures but he is good value. I had him over at the Camellia Society this year, a few months ago. Beth and I had geared him up to do a talk there and his idea was that now Beth had gone we didn't want him to do that and I said, 'No, no, mate, lecturers are too hard to get.' Dick is good value.

Peter Valder is another name you mentioned.

Peter Valder. Some of the work that Peter's done with wisterias, his knowledge of wisterias is incredible. I don't know if you ever recollect going up there to his family place up there, all the wisterias growing on the tennis court.

It is a beautiful house at Mount Wilson.

I don't know about the house, the house wasn't much, but the gardens were fabulous. He is a very good bloke as a speaker because you suddenly realise he is pulling your leg and being quite irreverent.

He has a terrific sense of humour.

Frightful sense of humour, dreadful. A nice fellow. They gave a great fillip to the people coming into the Society. Then all of a sudden, to my amazement when I saw the list of members I was quite amazed at how many members they had got. Initially most of the members came from the Eastern Suburbs with a few over this side. Well now it's gone all-embracing and I understand; I'm not sure you'd have to check on this; I think they've got sub-branches scattered around the countryside.

I think they are looking to do something.

I think they've got ... we've got the same sort of thing in the Camellia Society. While we haven't got branches we've got people who belong to the Australian Camellia Research Society which is based here in New South Wales Branch ... based here at Gordon ... but we've got sort of sub-cells up on the north coast and various places around the place.

Is there much overlap with the Garden History Society and some of these other horticultural associations?

No not really. Probably the Camellia Society more than most in a way. Because ... I don't know if you're familiar with this as far as the Camellia Society is concerned ... (finds book on shelf) that's the *International Camellia Society*, Volume I.

Noise as book hits the desk. –

Clunk as it hits the desk!

Camellias, millions of them. 30,000-odd names I think. Took them years to put that together.

It must be a great reference.

Oh it is a fantastic reference document. There is another one like that and a supplement. They are a bible actually. \$160 the three.

It is the size of a major dictionary.

89 Well it is. I have just sold one of these sets to the gardener here. He was talking to me the other day and saw these, I showed him these. They are good. That's up to about 1995 I think. It took them fifty years to put it together internationally working on that. So, in a way it is the only way I know. The Rose Society might do something similar, I don't know.

The gestation time I know for the Garden History *Oxford Companion* was some years.

Oh, that would have taken twenty years I think.

And a considerable philanthropic gesture as well to fund that.

It is a wonderful publication. There is one down there somewhere, I think, unless one of the girls nicked it when I moved my books. I mean that's just the remnants of what was left of those of our books I had at Beecroft. The girls cleaned it out and took a lot of it. Then I went through it and kept what I wanted to keep. Dear old Vinnies-de-Paul – St Paul - got a whole heap of stuff. No, that bottom shelf is practically all garden. We had quite a collection.

Lindsay I'm just thinking are there any other aspects of the Australian Garden History Society's history and Beth's involvement with it that we haven't touched upon?

No, I don't think so. She knew all ... a lot of the people in it, you know, that are running it now. We went to all their things ... I mean we gave it support ... after the initial stages and it started to go and Colleen Morris came out and Jan Gluskie dropped out and, you know, well the guard changed there about five or six years ago.

It needs to I think in a society.

It's got to. It's got to. I mean I think they did remarkably well to hang on to it as long as they did and to keep it going. I mean, quite frankly, Beth and Robin ... I mean any lesser mortals would have chucked their hand in.

What was such a struggle for them?

Just to get people interested in it.

So people weren't so interested in garden history or gardens?

No ... I don't think they knew what it was all about.

Well Beth seems certainly very warmly regarded.

Oh yes. Well she was with anything she did. She did, you know ... I mean it is the same with our book binding. The professionals reckon she was one of the best amateur binders in the business. She wasn't artistic, didn't do anything much in the way of artistic bindings really, but her craft work is, you know, first class.

You have these beautiful flower embroideries.

Oh yea, all that stuff, yea – well she did that thing on the wall behind you there. Whatever she did ... she did well at it. Bit hard to live with at times. (*Laughter*) No it wasn't really ... actually we were probably good foils for one another, she was as meticulous as I am slapdash. Oh no, it was good too

Lindsay, I wanted to thank you very much for participating in this project and giving of your time to the Garden History Society, thank you.

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