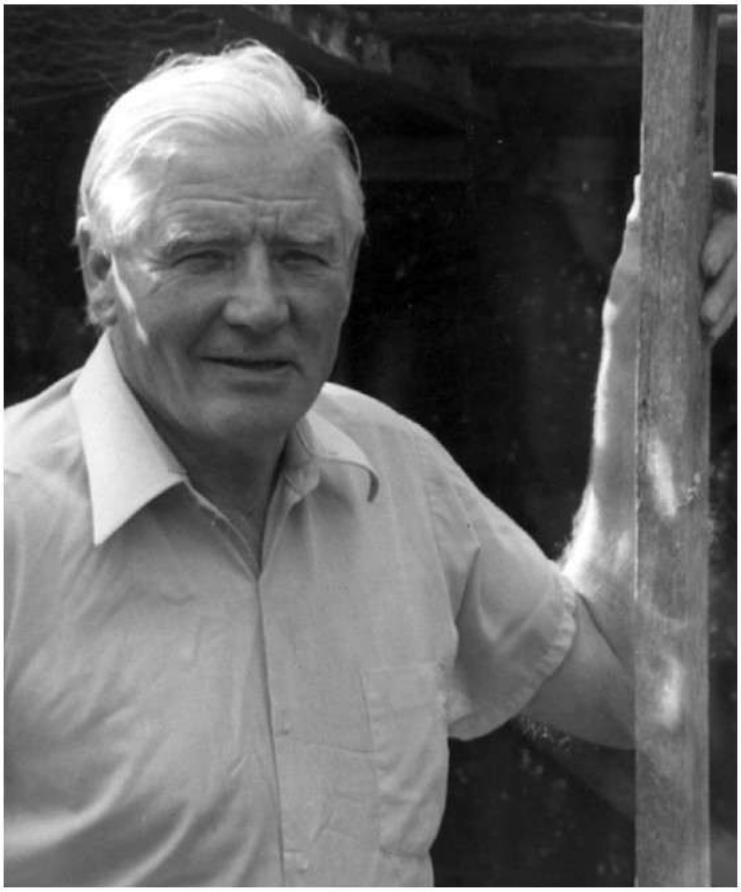
AUSTRALIAN GARDEN HISTORY SOCIETY

NATIONAL ORAL HISTORY COLLECTION

VICTORIAN BRANCH



Thomas Ronald Garnett MA (CANTAB), OAM 1915-2006 in CSIRO Publishing, Obituary, *Emu*, 2006, **106,** 341-342.

Interviewee:	**Tom Garnett MA, OAM**
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This interview is one of a series of interviews being conducted throughout Australia with early members of the Australian Garden History Society. The AGHS was formed in 1980 and these interviews will play a crucial part in recording the formation and early days of the Society. The AGHS is funding these interviews. The AGHS acknowledges the support of the State Library Victoria for use of interview equipment.

This interview of Tom Garnett was carried out by Jane Holth on 7 November, 2002 at his home in Castlemaine, Victoria.

Tommy, can you tell me how you first became interested in gardening?

No, I don't think I can. I've always been interested in gardening. I made, before coming out here in 1961—in 60, 61— I made about four or five gardens in England, and I've always been interested in the history of gardens. We were, where we lived, you know, we were not far from Montague House and the garden— there were famous gardens all round us and so that one of the things that I tried to do once was to get the Garden History Society to drop the H from its name, the History, because I didn't think there was enough history.

This was the English Garden History Society was it—You're talking about the English Society?

No, no, I'm talking about the one out here.

Oh, yes, right.

I remember the beginning of this society when George Seddon presided over a meeting when the then head of the National Trust Gardens in Britain came out and told us of what the controversy at that time going on was about— two green gardens, one at Studley Royal, which is now on the world heritage list, and Stourhead, which is not far away from us in Wiltshire, and the controversy was whether to remove all the rhododendrons from the site, which were a feature of the garden, but of course much later than the green garden of the 18th century. And fortunately, they didn't do that and the only blot on the landscape at Studley Royal was a single copper beech that they've taken out. It is now wholly a green garden. Do you know it?

No. In England, you became very interested in gardening, did you, before you came to Australia?

Yes. I'd been making gardens but I hadn't—I was a headmaster in England, you see, and I didn't have time— but I remember being interviewed before I retired from Geelong Grammar School, and saying—I was asked what I was going to do—and I said, 'I'm going to make a garden'. And that's what I did at St Erth but my first love was birds—I was secretary of the, what was then the Royal Australasian Ornithologists Union, when I retired, at the end of 1973, and so for six years I was that, and it was only then that I, I became interested in gardens. I can't remember which was which, I think the Garden History Society started first, but later on in 150th anniversary of Victoria, I was on the Garden, I think it was called the Environmental Committee, and top of our list was the rehabilitation of the Botanic Gardens in country Victoria. And I got that job and it was most successful I think, and so I learnt a good deal about, you know, gardening.

Is that when you first started to become interested in historic gardens?

4.41

Certainly, I'd known Peter Watts' study of the historic gardens of Victoria—well, he cheated by putting in Cruden Farm and Bolobek which weren't really historic gardens at all, but never mind. I always regard this as the, the start of the interest in gardening..... The Art of Colonial Gardening.....The Art of Gardening in Colonial Australia. Howard Tanner. [author] And in 1980, the then English editor of the Age thought that most writing about gardening wasn't very interesting and asked round his office whether there was anyone who could do some writing, and a friend of my daughter's was a journalist there and she suggested me, and so I wrote, and my first article was a review of that, and I've always considered that the start of the whole rejuvenation of garden interest in Victoria. Right. 1980 was the year the society was formed ..... Yes.

Why do think that was a good year? Do you think it was?

Ah, I can't remember why I thought it. I'd met George Seddon. George Seddon had come up to our garden and walked in and said, 'I'm George Seddon'. And so I went to the foundation meeting and took part in the arguments there. And I was a member of the Garden History Society for something like ten years, but I, we resigned from it because it seemed to me at that time to be becoming an up-market garden visiting society and we calculated it would've cost us $1000 to go to all the meetings and dinner in Sydney and so I then resigned. In the meantime I'd been asked to write the story of Alister Clark and Glenara by Lady ..... I can't remember her married name [Johnston], his great aunt, no his great niece, she was then over 90, and I thought I was going to be writing simply a book about a breeder of daffodils and roses, but when I came—they'd kept every single bit of paper from right in the last century—I found that I wrote something quite, quite separate. It was the breeding of roses and daffodils, true, but Alister Clark was the second son, and the elder son was to have inherited but he got financially embarrassed at the time of 1890 and couldn't take the property over and Alister had married a New Zealand girl from a family that has a lot of money and Alister's sister married an even more versatile person than Alister Clark— a man called Sir Heaton Rhodes, or became Sir Heaton Rhodes, who lived till he was well over 90 and had every position possible in New Zealand. And so I was involved in history then .....

In the early days when you first joined with George Seddon, did you go to early meetings?

Yes, I went to meetings—I've got a list of them. I went, I think, to Ballarat which is where I suggested, put forward a motion that the H should be dropped, because I hoped that the number of people who were involved in the gardening world could take under their wing all the gardening societies like the OPCA, do you know that, the Ornamental Plants Conservation Association of which I'm now patron? I was rather surprised when it was so comprehensively rolled. I was comprehensively rolled at that meeting, and I still think that there's need for something to act as a lobby group for gardening as you've got the National Farmers Federation acting for the farmers.

10.38

What do think the purpose was intended to be at the beginning?

There was great controversy about conservation analyses. I was made guide to a group of English gardeners, including Christopher Lloyd and ah, who's the woman gardener, famous

woman gardener? [Beth Chatto] And I took them to the Western District and they were much more interested in the Australian wildflowers than they were in the gardens that they saw. And one of the visitors was an American lady who was on the committee of the international something or other that had laid down that in conservation matters there should be conservation analysis, which was alright for, for hard structures like buildings and everything like that, but I maintained that, that you couldn't have a conservation analysis of gardens because as soon as you planted something it changed the whole ecology of the area as it grew. I remember writing an article saying what would you do if you were preserving St Patrick's cathedral in Melbourne, if the spire started to grow, and I know that the oak lawn at the Royal Botanic Gardens used to be herbaceous borders ..... but there were a number of garden designers at that time who were insistent upon conservation analyses.

And were they members of the society?

They were influential people in the Garden History Society. And so I went to Ballarat, Canberra, Adelaide, Tasmania, Albury—all meetings with them, and I met a great number of gardeners, but as I say, it seemed to me to deteriorate. And I'm very glad that here now there's been a whole party working on a cottage, Kerr's [Tute's] cottage in Castlemaine, old one, it belongs..... [to the National Trust]. I was critical of the National Trust, I was on the garden committee of the National Trust, and I once had two gardeners from one of the Trust properties coming up to St Erth and she went up and broke down and wept on my shoulder.....and I was given a anonymous pencilled list of all the gardens that the National Trust had that they weren't doing anything about, and so I thought that the connection between the garden committee of the National Trust and the Garden History Society was rather close. And ah, there was a lady called, no, what's her name, Penny Woodward, who'd been a National Trust adviser and who'd been sacked—but she was, has been, very discreet about the reasons for it— but I know two English people who've gone back to England, because they didn't believe in the insistence on conservation analyses.

Did you enjoy those trips to Ballarat and....?

Oh yes, we were gardening, we saw a lot of gardens that way, and, and my wife now continues to go to gardens. One of the things that I've noticed in the— I've only glanced at the Garden History's history book, the Oxford Companion to Garden History— is that it doesn't give credit enough to the man at the ABC and the first president of the garden opening scheme. When we first started opening gardens people used to say, 'Oh we couldn't do that, people would come and look in the windows and then come back and burgle the house', and so there was quite a lot of opposition and we were one of the first gardens that, that opened, at St Erth, and now of course it's spread and the present executive officer is a former pupil of mine.

Were you active on the committee in the early days?

No. In the early days there was a close symbiosis with the magazine and a man called Tim Cox— not Tim Cox, Tim North— who lived in NSW, and for some reason, I've never known why, that broke down, there was a conflict of interests between those two and it came to an end and so they had to start their own magazine and, what's the lady up at Cooma? [Tricia Dixon] She asked me to write for that magazine once or twice. But I, I've seen a great number of gardens. You mentioned . . . I haven't been down to Melbourne for ten years now. . .

You mentioned George Seddon—how important was he to the society?

Oh, I think he was a considerable influence on it. I mean of course he started the School of Environmental Sciences at Melbourne University, and he himself had started reading English at Melbourne University and had then turned to science and his successor was an American, whom I met too. And George Seddon, his marriage broke up and he married the administrator at, at Melbourne University and then went over to the west. I've seen a lot of him.

Another, another factor in, in the early days was that Hamer, Dick Hamer, he started a scheme called Gardens of the Year, municipal gardens and private gardens, and he used to have a presentation and gave a picture by an artist over in Monbulk, somewhere there, I can't remember his name, and that's how I first met George Seddon who, who walked in one day and told me that our garden had received, I think, an Order of the Pink Heath, and would I come down to the presentation? Well, I couldn't go and I employed a girl at that time, aged about 22, who went down on her boyfriend's pillion on a bicycle and was, was clad in jeans and found herself in the middle of all these Lord Mayors.

And I knew Pat Fieldman who was chairman of the Garden, what was it called? The Garden State Committee, and Carrick Chambers has, had been in it, and of course the Garden State Committee was not concerned so much with gardens as with improving the whole environment and particularly the routes between Melbourne and Sydney and trying to make sure that there was nothing but indigenous Australian plants to be seen from the highway. And so I got involved with that.

And then I never allowed the use of the word 'restoration' of a garden when I did that, botanic gardens, I used the word 'rejuvenation' all the time. And on one occasion I remember I saw the Shire Secretary of a place, who asked where it was, the garden, and he said, 'Well, I haven't been there for four years'. And it had been very much neglected— and that's how I got involved in it, and a lot of the history of the garden came out and there was a persistent view that any, any botanic garden must have been designed either by Guilfoyle or, or what's the name of the Professor? The Royal Botanic Garden man . . . Mueller.

Ferdinand.

Quite untrue in most cases. And the gardens weren't as they were originally.

22.07

Well, when the society started, calling itself the Garden History Society, what did they regard as a historical garden?

I think it had to be . . . they used Peter Watts' definition, you know his book? Well I think he uses a definition, it had to be 20 years old or something like that. And then of course I've now written, I've written the article in the Oxford book on gardens and have said that gardens are a product of evolution like everything else, and traced the history of them.

By 1980 what were you doing in the gardening world?

I was making a garden at St Erth. I've never had any training but I subsequently became the only non-public servant on what was called the [Government] Gardens Committee, because I had seen the people in the, what was then the Lands Department, about the Botanic Gardens and other gardens in the neighbourhood and they set up a committee to look into the future of gardens in Victoria, and most, all the other members of the committee were

public servants and I was the only one who was non public servant. That was in the 1980s and later on.

With the society can you remember who else was an early member?

Oh yes, Warwick, what's his name? [Forge] Richard, co-author of ah the Companion.....

Aitkin? Richard Aitkin?

Yes, he was a little bit later. The influential people in the beginning were mostly from Sydney. And ah, there was a bit of the Melbourne-Sydney tension between them.

Who were the Sydney ones?

Turn off for a moment, I'll go and get the journal ...

Ericson, Beatrice Bligh, Lional Gilbert, James Broadbent, he was Sydney, Howard Tanner, another Sydney, Peter Watts, who was in the National Trust in Britain, in Victoria, and then went to NSW, John Foster, Anne Latreille, who was my editor and took over from me, Paul Fox, Trevor Nottle in SA and Tricia Dixon, she's the one at Cooma.

Did you have much to do with Elisabeth Murdoch?

Oh, I've known her for a long time. She used to say that her son Rupert could never resist a challenge. And I was always opposed to the idea that Edna Walling was the only Australian garden designer . . . there are still about five books about her and she, of course, was English, and she was dependant upon , what's her name?

Gertrude? Jekyll? Gertrude Jekyll?

Yes. I knew her garden and ah, Hascombe. I knew the garden again. On the hill, quite close to it called.... Beginning with A, um I've forgotten its name now. [Alton]

How important was Elisabeth Murdoch for the society?

Oh, well, I think she was really important probably, because I don't know how much money she provided but, but that was where a lot of it ....she was the person whom they turned to. Joan Law-Smith was another person I knew well and I've got all her books. And Jean Galbraith was another person whom I know. But she wasn't a member of the society herself, wasn't active in the society.

And why was Joan Law-Smith important?

She wrote a number of books and her garden, Bolobek, which she made, remade, it had belonged to one of the Age people.

Was she very influential in the society? Was she busy in the society?

I think she was. When I came into the National Trust rather than the society I was so incensed about the conservation analyses that I persuaded the most influential gardeners I could think of including Joan Law-Smith, Elisabeth Murdoch, Mimi Ramsay, two or three others, to come and put the case to the chairman of the National Trust. Joan Law-Smith corresponded with Jean Galbraith a lot—do you know that? And so Bolobek was the garden

Peter Watts thought was the best in all. But I think that she was influential that way.

Is Bolobek an important historic garden?

Well, it was remade by her. Like all gardens, it had been there before and she modified. One of the things, points, that I've made in this History of the Gardens, is that the first settlers to Australia were homesick so that they made gardens that they were familiar with at home. And, because there was a strong Indian connection, and India was hot and everybody went up to the hills in the hot weather, well they did the same thing in Australia, and they went up to the Blue Mountains and up to Macedon and up to the Adelaide Hills to make their gardens.

29.35

On the conservation analysis issue, were you the only one within the society who didn't approve of that?

Oh no, there was plenty of other people who . . . [agreed with me]. That, I think, was why I was put on this committee for the Botanic Gardens. I constantly went to the Botanic Gardens. I've got a distinctive voice, and I remember my wife coming in and somebody saying I must be there because they'd heard me. Oh no, there were lots of people who agreed about the impossibility of restoring gardens.

Did the society resolve that issue in its philosophy?

I don't know. I don't know. I'd left it by then. I remember I was sent a history of the gardens, notable gardens in Adelaide, and asked my opinion of it. I thought it had no connecting theme to it and I told the person who had written to me about it and I think they never published it. I was also involved with starting up the collection of Alister Clarke roses because Susan Irvine, who lived not far away, she came over and sold roses, and then she found more than fifty sorts and so I think that's another bit that I came across.

Do you think the society has been successful in the sense that it's made people aware of historic gardens?

I think it did, but my point was that when we found that it was $1000 to go to Sydney, I was at that time involved with the Guild of Gardeners, which is the ordinary jobbing gardeners around Melbourne, who couldn't possibly afford to go to anything like that, so I thought it was a rather elitist group. But I think that the photograph, the picture that's reproduced in here, of the arrival of the primrose in Victoria, a disaster really because it has turned people towards the exotic plants. I have said that there was a time in the 70s when the growing of native plants became a political issue really.

Did the society become interested in restoring or researching historic plants?

I think that gradually it did. To begin with it was always for box hedges and things like that, and Victorian gardens was the great thing. And I think that the first native gardens weren't much good because we didn't know how to grow them.

Did the society have an interest in gardens other than large English gardens, like cottage gardens, or vegetable gardens, or just gardens that belonged to people who were not so wealthy?

Oh yes, they looked at some modern gardens, oh yes, I remember around Albury we went to several that had only recently been created.

They would call them significant gardens, now, I think.

They would be now, yes.

I was just wondering whether there was a broad range of members with different types of gardens, or whether it just was a group of people who were interested in large, English, historic gardens.

I think it was much more that. I think the number of people who've been interested in gardens has always been very small. See Anne Latreille, Edna Walling and the block man whom she employed [Ellis Stones], I think the interesting gardens went round by word of mouth among this group of gardeners, most of whom were wealthy. Whereas in England I remember one of the most memorable gardens was made by a railway man in a little triangle between a road and a railway where he made, or well both of them, had an amazing garden. It was quite small.

Is anything like that in the Victorian . . . ?

I don't know but I think there are now. They're coming out of the wood now as gardens are open to the public. There was a time after the war— everything had shut down during the war, and there was very little knowledge of gardens— and it was quite late, in the 1960s, that people started to become interested in gardens. But even now, we had a group of people from Bendigo Tech and our instructor was saying that the trouble with the nurseries in Bendigo is that they have such a narrow range of plants. I was involved with a nurseryman at one stage and I wrote an article about the naming of plants, which was hopeless, and I was told that some of the nurserymen on Dandenong area could have hung me because I said that names they gave were all, mostly, wrong.

36.38

Do you also remember a woman called Ellis (sic) Jeffery?

Oh, yes, yes, I do remember her. She was one of the people who . . . she was at the early meetings, and she had a very good garden herself.

Any, any others whom you can think . . .? Well, she would not have been a wealthy garden owner, would she?

Oh, no, no, hers wasn't considered an historic garden. But she was knowledgeable, like, like the German lady.

Sophie Ducker?

Yes. Most of the time I used to connect with Sophie and we'd go round the garden together. Well she would agree with you that it was very elitist. Mm.

But she enjoyed her tours very much.

Oh yes, I'm sure she did.

Grace Fraser?

Well I only met her at the [Royal Melbourne] golf club. I didn't know at that time that she had designed the gardens at Melbourne Airport. I didn't know her well.

And Joan Anderson? Do you remember her?

Joan?

Anderson.?

No, I don't remember her.

No, no....And David Yencken?

Oh David Yencken I knew because he was an old Geelong Grammarian and I admired what he'd done as far as architecture was concerned. And another person here, was in Castlemaine, is Trevor Nottle, of course I knew and he, I remember him, he wrote to me here because he heard of me from what he called a local grande dame—oh, what is her name? [Helen Vellacott]—she's, she's got a garden, very old plants in it, she's 92 I think, contemporary of Elisabeth Murdoch.

In what way was David Yencken important for the society?

I don't think he was, at the beginning. I don't remember him at the early meetings. He must've come in later.

And what about Professor Turner? Was he?

Oh he was, yes, he came to Castlemaine because when he retired he came to live here. So we came, and I've known his family, his daughter was married ……[to Tim Cox]. They started the conservation volunteers in Ballarat, and they're now divorced but Sue Turner is still here and she's very active and she was really responsible for my latest book being published.

Was Professor Turner interested in the society?

I think he was probably interested in the society. He was retired by then, I think. He was always interested in gardens and he did a new edition of Lords – do you know Lords book?—*Trees and Shrubs for Australian Gardens*—it's a very good book indeed. And he and the man who was assistant botanist at Botanic Gardens, I should remember his name . . .

Why did you enjoy going around gardens with Sophie Ducker?

Because she always had strong opinions. She sent me her book, because she wrote a book about the man who came out here who was interested in algae. I've got it.

Do you remember someone called Kitty Ghan? Kitty Ghan?

No.

She was a good friend of Alice Jeffery.

Oh was she. I met some people I didn't know by name. I'm trying to think of the name of this

person here—I think I might, my memory gets worse as I go along. Now ask me any more questions.

Just, if you had any particular memories about those trips you went on to Ballarat or Tasmania?

Yes, I remember the one to Adelaide particularly. And Tasmania, going, going to the gardens, the early gardens there.

And why do you remember the Tasmanian ones?

I think they were the oldest. I remember one hut [farm] place down in the south which still had all the defences against aboriginals in place and I brought back seeds of a blue pea from there, I remember. But we used to get a lot of, a number of boys from Tasmania who came to Geelong Grammar School.

And what about the Adelaide trip, why was that interesting?

Because one of the gardens we saw was in the hills, was now a school, was then a school, and Trevor Nottle had his garden up there. There was a nurseryman who died later, Thompson, who . . . there were a number of good gardens in the Adelaide hills, and I used to get roses from Ross Roses who were down on the coast.

Do you remember Professor Stearn?

Oh, who wrote the book on botanical Latin?

Yes, I think—he went to Adelaide didn't he, on that tour?

Did he? I don't know. I know his book and I know of him, more because of his contribution in England than anything out here.

Did you go to any gardens in the Western District with the society?

Oh yes, well I don't know whether.... I've been to Dalvui and other places in the Western District and Tammie Fraser I knew, I knew her, who's now president, isn't she? the Open Gardens Scheme.

And did you go to the Blue Mountains?

Yes.

With the society?

Yes, yes. I remember that particularly.

What was special about that trip?

Oh, I think again the age of the gardens— there was, who's the man who's written on plants in China? [Peter Valder] Well, well-known broadcaster too. His family garden was up there and you often see the photographs of his summer house and rhododendrons all round it. He was a lecturer at Sydney University, I think, and his garden was a notable one. John Patrick, do you know John Patrick? He came out soon after we came and his wife wanted to go

home, I know, go back to England, but John had a great—he's much better at speaking than he was at writing. I remember sending him back a copy of something he'd written for *the Age*— I was the garden editor. He's now got onto the garden TV program—I'm not surprised.

45.24

And there was a trip to Canberra that some people enjoyed very much, did you go on that one?

Yes, we went up to Michalgo, or something like that—isn't that what it's called? I remember that and I'd been going to the Botanic Gardens and I knew the man who designed, who planted most of the trees round Canberra, I forget what his name is, he's still alive— no, anymore?

Ballarat? Did you go to Ballarat with the society?

Yes, I went to Ballarat, and the garden, the original Boningyong garden, I remember her, I remember the wife died of a heart attack, in Adelaide, when she was on the Garden History tour. And the girl who did the illustrations for my first book, she came from Kyneton. [Jenny Phillips]

Do you think the society has been successful in what it intended to do?

I can't really tell. I think that the interest in gardens has grown enormously and Digger Seeds, Clive Blazey, he's not much of a gardener but he's a very good publicist, he's done a lot for encouraging people to garden.

But he wouldn't be involved with the society would he?

Um. Well, he, I think he probably gave money. Since I left, as I say, it's ten years since I've been down to Melbourne and I've lost touch with what has happened— the politics particularly. For a long time I advocated that the Dandenongs gardens should be with the Hillside gardens and the Botanic Gardens and the rhododendron gardens, and the old lady who has a garden up there, and a number of gardens up there.

So you really disagreed with the original purpose and philosophy, is that right?

No, I didn't, I agreed with it, that it was a pity that the Botanic Gardens, that they'd been allowed to degenerate so much, and I was all in favour of the rejuvenation of the gardens but, as I say, I didn't think, don't think, that there'd been really a great deal of history in the gardens in Australia, compared with Europe and England.

You don't think the society has helped promote history?

Oh, I think it has. I think all the societies have encouraged gardening but I think on the whole Australians are better at going to conferences and watching things than they are at doing things. And that's why I was glad that the group has come up and working on Kerr [Tute] cottage. The present secretary [president] of the society is connected with the man who started, or one of the first people to grow native plants in Geelong, what was his name?

I don't know. The current president is a woman called Helen Page.

Yes, well she, Helen Page, I thought she was the sister of the man, younger man, who collected a great number of native plants in Western Australia. I used to get my plants from him. They were all then grown in beer cans and they were difficult to get out— but she's done a great deal for the Garden History Society I think, hasn't she? She activated it.

Well, in Australia's perspective, we wouldn't have gardens which are older than 200 years, would we, at the most?

No, well, that's what I've said. And in this article I said, what's 200 years compared with 5000 years for the Chinese gardens?

But it's all relative, isn't it? To Australia, a 200-year-old garden is old?

But they're nearly all reminiscent of 'home', as they called it then.

Of what?

Of England which they called 'home'.

Oh, 'home', yes. The homesickness business. Yes. How do you think . . .?

There's been a lot of talk about trying to get an Australian style of gardening. I think it's nonsense because the climate and soil and it's such a big area that you can't ever have an 'Australian style'. And I think in the early days the society didn't realise that. I was given an OAM, not anything to do with education but because I produced a book on the various climates of the different parts of Australia. And people forget that on the New England tableland they get their rain in the winter, sorry, they get their rain in the summer and they get hard frosts. And you see the books that are written about Sydney gardening are useless in Victoria and vice versa, because of the different climatic conditions.

Well, do you think there is a place for the Garden History Society now, in Victoria?

But I'd still like to see it drop 'History'. And I think there's very much a place for an overall garden society like the Royal Horticultural Society in Britain which has a million members and all sorts of small gardens to big gardens.

And what would such a society do? What would its main purpose be?

It has shows, it introduces new plants . . .

What would its purpose be?

It's purpose is to publicise gardening. And to bring together the number of people who are interested in gardens, for various reasons.

Did you every give lectures to the History Society?

I wrote for them, a number of articles for them. I don't think, I can't remember lecturing at the society. I've been more concerned with the OPCCA, the Ornamental Plants Conservation Committee. I'd love to see a garden which, or somebody working on the date of introduction of all the new plants that came to Australia—there's one at Cambridge University, you've got a border with the date of introduction of the plants showing. A lot of our plants, like Jacarandas, came from Brazil because the sailing ships went over to pick them up and came

over, and lots of South African because they called into Capetown. That side of history I'd like to see more developed.

That's something that George Seddon is interested in, isn't it?

Yes. George Seddon, I remember last time he came here he said, 'You and I have got much more in common than just gardens'. He launched my latest book which was a selection of articles that I wrote for the Age.

Going back to the start of the society, why do you think it started off in that, with that purpose as, and why . . .?

It was because of Peter Watts' work at the National Trust and his survey of the historic gardens of Victoria.

And why do you think it became the kind of society that was regarded as rather elitist?

Well, it met at a large house in Toorak, initially it began there, and a lot of the people who had big gardens came and so it spread.

Do you think it has a healthy future?

I think it has a future if it.....I see it claims to cover everything but it doesn't. I mean it has the money but I think it could take more responsibility for the ordinary gardeners. I managed to persuade a man who wrote a book who'd been a jobbing gardener in one of the north-eastern suburbs and he'd been to five different employers in the 1920s, there's very little about that in gardens. He was a jobbing gardener who described the various owners of the gardens very well. But he couldn't get it published, and then I persuaded somebody to publish it and it was published just before he died, so he did know it. But I think that the Garden History Society, the wider its influence can be and the more money it can give to other societies, or take them under their wing, the better.

Thank you

Did you get enough?

Interview ends 57minutes 30 seconds