

Real to Reel

Newsletter of Oral History Tasmania Inc.



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NEWS FROM THE EXECUTIVE – Jill Cassidy

Oral History workshop

The date of the next Oral History workshop is fast approaching. It will be held in Launceston on Saturday 21 May 2022. All the details including the registration form can be found on page 6. Note that Covid requirements have been relaxed, but there will still be social distancing, and hand sanitiser available.

Oral History in Troubling Times: Opportunities and Challenges

The committee is hard at work on the previously-postponed national conference now to be held in Launceston on 14–16 October 2022, with workshops on Thursday 13. Following the new Call for Presentations we received 24 new proposals, which will more than cover for the speakers who had to withdraw because of the postponement.

Excitingly our introductory keynote speaker Mark Cave from the Historic New Orleans Collection is planning to attend the conference in person. As advised earlier, Mark Cave's address on Friday 14 will be entitled, '*Why Did This Happen? Making Meaningful Answers in the Aftermath of Crisis*'. And Zoe Rimmer has agreed to join Dr Julie Gough and Theresa Sainty in the concluding plenary session on Sunday 16 about the significance of memory and oral history for Tasmanian Aboriginal people. We have booked the Boathouse for the conference dinner on Saturday 15.

The conference website is in the process of being updated to provide all the necessary information, including the program when this is finalised in the coming weeks. We have been warned that accommodation is likely to be tight in October so you may wish to book early. To take advantage of the discount on rates at the Grand Chancellor, you can make your booking via this link:

<https://be.synxis.com/?Hotel=77680&Chain=22134&arrive=2022-10-13&depart=2022-10-14&adult=1&child=0&promo=ORALHISTORY>

Oral History Tasmania website

The previously-advised change to the OHT website will now happen later in the year, given that the committee is currently focused on conference planning.

Fostex digital recorder

The cost of hiring the Fostex will increase from July 1 from \$20 a week to \$30. It is still very good value.

ORAL HISTORIES OF GARDENING IN TASMANIA

The Tasmanian 40th anniversary program of the Australian Garden History Society's National Oral History collection

Rhonda Hamilton

The Australian Garden History Society (AGHS) was formed in 1980. It was quick to recognise the importance of oral history, firstly in relation to recording the early development and activities of the Society with a number of interviews conducted by Roslyn Burge, a practising oral historian and Society member. Grant funding for an oral history program in 2020 enabled branches across Australia to celebrate the 40th anniversary of the AGHS. The aim was to record memories and experiences of those who had contributed to the history and conservation of gardens and cultural landscapes in each state. I was appointed Project Officer to research and manage the program in Tasmania, undertake the recording of ten interviews, supervise and check the transcripts and prepare a synopsis to accompany the final audio file.

From a long list of worthy candidates recommended by the Tasmanian committee under the guidance of co-chair Jean Elder, the interviews in Tasmania commenced in November 2020 with Sally Dakis, former ABC Tasmania broadcaster, interviewing Ken Gillanders. Sally had previously conducted interviews on garden history in Tasmania and her experience was pivotal in achieving a good outcome. That standard of quality continues with Jean Elder undertaking the role of interviewer.

Working alongside Jean there were many new tasks for us to coordinate on interview day, in unfamiliar surroundings, where we and the interviewee had not met. Quick decisions needed to be made, such as the ideal seating position, the best placement of the lapel microphone and how to discreetly stop and restart the interview. Central to all of this is the recording device. The AGHS program has made good use of Oral History Tasmania's Fostex F2 Field Memory Recorder which represents excellent value for our society. The most difficult part of the project for me was 'learning to love' the Fostex. It has, in my brief and growing experience, delivered a good outcome.

The AGHS 24-page *National Oral History Project Interviewers' Manual* (2019) provides excellent guidelines for preparing, conducting and processing interviews. Learning on the job exposed both Jean and me very quickly to some of the known but inevitable blunders such as rustling papers, clocks striking, family members chipping in and one enthusiastic interviewee throwing their arms in the air and disconnecting the microphone.

In the five interviews conducted to date we have obtained a diverse overview of people's appreciation and recollections of Tasmania's gardens - large and small, nurseries, orchards and the broad cultural landscapes beyond. So far the program has interviewed Ken Gillanders, Gwenda Sheridan, Robyn Mayo Hawkins, Bob Magnus and Tara Edmondson. The audio and full transcripts of the first three interviews can be found at: https://www.gardenhistorysociety.org.au/publication_category/oral-history/



Ken Gillanders. (Rhonda Hamilton photo)

Now aged in his early 90s, Ken Gillanders has had a long career as nurseryman, specialising in rare and exotic plants. During his life he has travelled widely overseas, collecting seeds and plants, his stories all retold with ease and humour. His Woodbank Nursery in southern Tasmania contained a legacy of rare and Gondwana plants collected and cultivated by Ken and his wife Lesley.

Do you think you had the best collection of Gondwana plants in Australia?

Possibly I did at that stage, yes, because a lot of gardens bought plants from us – the Botanic Gardens, that sort of thing. Yes, we had quite a good collection. There was no Chilean stuff in those days, nothofagus; you couldn't get one in Australia until we brought them in here.

Sydney-born Gwenda Sheridan is well known as a passionate 'cultural landscape crusader' and in her interview expanded on the significant role she has played in advocacy and the preservation of Tasmania's heritage cultural landscapes. Speaking about the early gardens in her life, Gwenda described her parents' World War 2-style garden, a long way removed from the rural estate gardens whose preservation she argues for today. Nevertheless, these minor observations build on a wider understanding of garden design at that time.



Gwenda Sheridan. (Rhonda Hamilton photo)

But then the gardens were modest compared to gardens we see today. We had crazy paving paths, we had lawns, we had roses and we had flowers. Oh mother had a very large nursery; she must have been always keen on ferns, so they built a very large nursery....

We had trees down the back, so the front garden was just flowers and the lawn part and down the back we had vegies.

We had a mulberry tree, lemon tree and we had a nectarine tree. And we still had gum trees on that land. I think every house just about that I've lived in has had gum trees. Eucalypt trees.



Robyn Mayo Hawkins. (Sandra Rhodes photo)

A shared link across the interviews is a love of gardens, the importance of nature and changing climatic conditions. At 'Bentley' in northern Tasmania Robyn Mayo Hawkins has not only developed the Mayo Arboretum, a massive planting of 50,000 Tasmanian eucalyptus trees, but also works as a renowned artist. Using skills of observation and her understanding of the detailed life cycles of plants and animals, her artworks record society's increasing impact on the natural landscape.

And when you started the idea of wanting an arboretum, did you have a plan and planting notes and diaries?

Well, what I initially did was to make paths so you could get through, because there's no point planting it all out so you can't move. And so we did paths, and then at that stage I was still learning about Tasmanian plants and Herbert [Staubmann from Liffey Falls Nursery] would say, 'This would grow there. That would grow there.' And in my mind I kept visualising how it would look when it was mature.

And over the last, well it's been nearly twenty years now, I now know all the species and what they will do. And things like Eucalyptus rubida that Herbert says won't grow in the wet: in the huge eucalyptus book that I have [in my library] they're actually standing beside this little swamp. I knew in my heart that I could really try them then. So I'd try things where perhaps I shouldn't have, but often it's been very successful.

Bob Magnus is a knowledgeable and enthusiastic gardener and a veteran stallholder at Salamanca Market. Above all else Bob is passionate about heirloom fruit varieties. Self-taught and self-employed for his entire life, his workshops on grafting and espaliering have influenced many. He is well known for the Magnus Summer Surprise apple.

When we first got here in 1980 you could turn up at Salamanca any day; it used to finish at Montpelier Retreat. And we decided to grow flowers for the market. Anna Maria is a flower lover and we had little plants in pots. And I put trees in pots - that was a terrible mistake because nobody here buys apple trees in pots.

The dynamics on the day between interviewer and interviewee usually dictate the flow and frequently deliver much more than anticipated. The digressions too, once the microphone is turned, off can be fascinating. One interviewee spoke about 'soup plate gardens' which takes us back perhaps to our first garden experience: a wide soup bowl filled with a mixture of dirt, sand, pebbles, rocks, moss, twigs, discarded pieces of china, some foliage, and perhaps a bottle top to create a fantasy. What an enticing topic, but better left for another day.



Bob Magnus. (Rhonda Hamilton photo)

Institutional member

THE AUSTRALIAN GARDEN HISTORY SOCIETY

Jean Elder

Formed in 1980, the Australian Garden History Society is a not-for-profit membership-based organisation with approximately 1800 members throughout Australia, New Zealand, Asia, Europe and the United States. Membership is open to everyone.

The mission of AGHS is to promote awareness and conservation of significant gardens and cultural landscapes through engagement, research, advocacy and activities.

The AGHS is governed by the National Management Committee which is made up of office bearers, elected members and branch representatives. The AGHS has a national Secretariat based in Melbourne and employs a part-time Executive Officer and a part-time Journal Editor. The state branches all have committees and state based activities are organised by volunteer committee members.

The Australian Garden History Society:

- publishes a Journal, *Australian Garden History*, four times a year;
- publishes books, booklets and conference proceedings;
- holds an annual conference. The 42nd Annual AGHS conference, *Landscape on the Edge - Challenge and Opportunity* is to be held in Hobart 11–13 November 2022;
- provides funding for garden recordings (the National Oral History project) and garden restoration;
- has active branches in all states and the ACT. The Tasmanian branch with nearly 200 members holds regular garden visits at venues across Tasmania (some day trips and once a year, a weekend trip), publishes a newsletter, *Bluegum*, three times a year and holds a winter lecture series in Hobart with three lectures in June, July and August.

As outlined above, the National Oral History project is a key activity of AGHS. Our Tasmanian project has been described by Rhonda Hamilton.

Tasmanian recent advocacy work has focussed on the protection of two significant properties: firstly, finalising a landscape management plan to assist in the restoration of the garden at Home Hill, Devonport, the 1916 home of Tasmania's only Prime Minister, Joseph Lyons and his wife Dame Enid Lyons; and secondly, lodging objections to the proposed massive re-development of Cambria Green at Swansea.

Currently, the Committee is working with National Trust Tasmania to develop a project whereby the Trust's listing of significant trees can be updated and with the help of AGHS members, more trees added to this register. Ultimately it is hoped the project will lead to the greater protection of many trees, as is currently done by the City of Hobart through their Significant Tree Register which affords some protection as part of the Hobart Interim Planning Scheme 2015.

For more information on the activities of AGHS, please visit: www.gardenhistorysociety.org.au

For further information about Tasmanian branch activities, contact co-chairs Jean Elder at jeanldr@gmail.com or Rosie Mackinnon at armackin@intas.net.au

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INTERESTING MATERIAL ONLINE

(with thanks to OH QLD)

History Matters Seminars

The *History Matters* series ran for three years as a collaboration alongside the Professional Historians Association (NSW & ACT), exploring the issues that stimulate and bedevil the work of public historians. Topics include: Digital and Multimedia Histories, Community Histories, Women's History, Queer History and Multilingual History. You can now access the 2020 and 2021 recordings online at: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCYIas9uvZSIixNab3a8yx0Q/videos>

Preservation and Sustainability: Two Sides of the Same Coin?

A reminder that you have an opportunity to present at an online international symposium on the very timely topic: *Preservation and Sustainability: Two Sides of the Same Coin?* The symposium is being held 15-17 November 2022. Get all the information including the Call for Proposals issued by the National Archives of Singapore and the Southeast Asia Regional Branch of the International Council on Archives at: <https://sarbicasymposium2022.nas.gov.sg/callforproposals>

Guidelines – Risk Assessment in Oral History Recordings

NSLA (National and State Libraries Australasia) is the peak body for the national, state and territory libraries of Australia and New Zealand. These newly released guidelines assess risk in providing online access to oral history or sound recordings, where rights and permission agreements are missing, poorly documented or unclear. Read more about the guidelines and download them from: <https://www.nsla.org.au/index.php/resources/procedural-guidelines-risk-assessment-oral-history>

Assessing the Role of Race and Power in Oral History Theory and Practice

Oral historians from around the world will gather virtually for three days of discussion about the role of race and power in oral history theory and practice. June 27-29 online, hosted by Oral History Association (USA). This symposium aims to move beyond that question to interrogate broader structures and dynamics of race, racialized thinking, and institutional power in oral history. Registration is now open at <https://www.oralhistory.org/race-and-power-symposium/>



ORAL HISTORY WORKSHOP – COVID-SAFE

10.00 am – 4.45 pm, Saturday 21 May 2022
The Green Centre, Peace Haven Masonic Care, 177 Penquite Road, Launceston

The workshop will be conducted by Jill Cassidy and will cover all aspects of oral history practice. Topics include: interview technique, possible pitfalls, use of digital recorder, ethics, transcription & publication. Participants will be able to listen to interview excerpts and do practice interviews. Oral History Tasmania’s digital recorder will be demonstrated.

Prior registration is essential; fees will be refunded if a Covid outbreak makes the workshop impossible. PLEASE BRING A MEANS OF RECORDING IF POSSIBLE such as a phone or tablet, and a notepad and pen. You will need to bring your own lunch and morning and afternoon tea, and for Covid reasons you may prefer your own mug. A microwave is available. Safe spacing requirements will be adhered to, and hand sanitiser available.

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ORAL HISTORY TASMANIA Inc. WORKSHOP REGISTRATION ABN 19264 496 176

Registration must be received by **Wednesday 18 May**. If an institution is paying your fee or you are paying electronically, please ensure that Oral History Tasmania receives a copy of this form.

Name:.....

Address:.....Postcode.....

Email:.....Phone:.....Mobile:.....

Payment of \$_____ is for (please tick):

- Registration @ \$25 members Oral History Tasmania
 - \$25 students
 - \$35 non-members \$.....
- Membership of Oral History Tasmania (if desired) \$.....

Payment options

Electronic transfer to: Commonwealth Bank, BSB 067 003; account number 2803 2783
Payment to ‘Oral History Tasmania’.
Please provide your name as a reference. Date transferred: _____

After making electronic payment, email form to president@oralhistorytas.org.au

or

post to The Treasurer, Oral History Tasmania, 40/177 Penquite Rd, Newstead 7250.

Cheque or money order: made payable to: ‘Oral History Tasmania’ and sent with completed form to:
The Treasurer, Oral History Tasmania, 40/177 Penquite Rd, Newstead 7250.

Office use only Cheque/Money Order/Cash/Electronic Receipt No _____ Date _____

Do you have a project to tell us about?

We are always looking for items for the newsletter, anything from a few sentences to a lengthy article. All members are interested in knowing what is going on in the state, and you may make some good contacts through responses to the article. See contact details at the end of the newsletter.

WEBSITES

Oral History Tasmania: www.oralhistorytas.org.au

Oral History Australia: www.oralhistoryaustralia.org.au

IOHA (International Oral History Association): www.ioha.fgv.br

EQUIPMENT HIRE

A **Fostex digital recorder** is available for hire to members. It comes with its own lapel microphones and *User Guidelines*.

Cost of hire: \$20 a week, increasing to \$30 from July 1, plus transport costs if necessary. You will also be required to sign a form agreeing to pay to replace any part that is damaged or lost while you have the recorder, up to a maximum of \$250 for individuals or \$500 for groups or institutions.

To make a booking, contact Jill Cassidy on 0418 178 098 or email president@oralhistorytas.org.au

THE OBJECTIVES OF ORAL HISTORY TASMANIA

promote the practice and methods of oral history
educate in the use of oral history methods
encourage discussion of all problems in oral history
foster the preservation of oral history records
pursue common objectives and maintain links with other Australian oral history
associations through membership of Oral History Australia Inc.

MEMBERSHIP SUBSCRIPTIONS

Individuals	\$40.00	Households	\$55.00
Student/unemployed/pensioner	\$30.00	Institution	\$65.00

ORAL HISTORY TASMANIA EXECUTIVE

President, and delegate to Oral History Australia:

Jill Cassidy 0418 178 098 Email: president@oralhistorytas.org.au

Secretary: Alison Johnston

Treasurer: Lana Wall

Committee members: Jon Addison, Virginia Greenhill, Karin Lê, Leonie Prevost, Cindy Thomas.

All correspondence should be emailed to president@oralhistorytas.org.au or directed to Jill Cassidy, Oral History Tasmania, Queen Victoria Museum, PO Box 403, Launceston Tas 7250.

Real to Reel is edited by Jill Cassidy. The next edition is due in August 2022. Contributions are welcome and should reach the editor no later than 31 July. They can be emailed to president@oralhistorytas.org.au