

**ANNUAL CONFERENCE OF THE  
AUSTRALIAN GARDEN HISTORY SOCIETY  
REMARKS BY  
HER EXCELLENCY THE HONOURABLE BARBARA AC  
GOVERNOR OF TASMANIA  
BALL ROOM, GOVERNMENT HOUSE, FRIDAY 11 NOVEMBER 2022**

**[VICE-REGAL SALUTE]**

Good evening and I warmly welcome you all to this reception for delegates attending the Australian Garden History Society Conference for 2022 in Hobart.

I pay my respects to the traditional and original owners of this land: the palawa people. I acknowledge the contemporary Tasmanian Aboriginal community and recognise their enduring culture and continued connection to land, sea, and waters.

Post-Covid this is the largest gathering we have held in our Ball Room. It is therefore our largest function for a good few years. And so, I extend to you all a special welcome for that reason, among others.

Those other reasons are that it is always a pleasure to host national and international conference and congress delegates; also, you all have a special historic interest in our Government House gardens, as well as those of our wonderful neighbour, the Royal Tasmanian Botanical Gardens.

I hope that you managed to enjoy your tours of both, earlier today, despite the torrential downpour. Tasmanian weather can be unpredictable.

As our Garden History Society, I hope you may be interested that, in our Government House Library we have a copy of *Australian Garden History* Volume 20 Number 2, 2008. It may have come up for discussion in your Botanical Gardens tour. An article in it is by eminent landscape planner and gardens historian, Gwenda Sheridan, whom you know well, not least through her 2021 interview with Jean Elder for your National Oral History Collection.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> [Gwenda Sheridan - Australian Garden History Society](#), accessed 9 November 2022.

Gwenda's article has the menacing title, "Mystery and Malevolence: the Royal Tasmanian Botanical Gardens Celebrates 190 Years." It then has a lengthy teasing subtitle: "The Royal Tasmanian Botanical Gardens, located in the Queen's Domain, Hobart, this year celebrates its 190<sup>th</sup> birthday – or does it? Here, the Garden's earliest years are examined in search of its elusive beginnings."

Perhaps some light was shed on these elusive beginnings during your tour next door!

May I also mention the grand ball held here in this Ball Room in July 1869, to celebrate the birthday of Queen Victoria, which was lavishly described by our *Mercury* newspaper. As garden historians, you may be interested to know the extent to which floral displays were prominent.

No less than one thousand two hundred invitations were issued, although not that many attended.

The Royal Coat of Arms high in the wall behind me was illuminated by gas, though electricity had come to Hobart in the previous decade.

The *Mercury* recorded, quote: "The Ball Room was brilliantly lighted and tastefully decorated for the occasion, the decorations being from designs by [His Excellency's wife] Mrs Du Cane, artistically carried out by the Curator of the Royal Society's Gardens, assisted by His Excellency's servants. At the head of the room was an array of ferns obtained from the mountain, and a display of flowers and plants, which, with the gorgeous furniture, set off the dais to great advantage."

"Great taste had also been displayed in the arrangement of the reception room, where the couches, ottomans and ornaments were interspersed with ferns, plants, and flowers... Similar remarks might be made respecting the drawing rooms and other apartments. The entrance hall and passages were also profusely ornamented with shrubs and plants, suggestive of an alfresco aspect, and being very inviting to promenaders between the dances.'<sup>2</sup>

End of quote.

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<sup>2</sup> *Mercury*, Wednesday 21 July 1869, page 3.

Dancing began at 9pm, and supper commenced at 11 pm, upstairs in what is now the Library “which was also tastefully ornamented with plants and flowers”. The dancing continued through until first light.

Unfortunately, Don and I no longer serve supper at 11pm, and as enjoyable as this evening is going to be, we have abandoned the midnight to dawn dancing!

On that note, we again welcome you to Tasmania, and to your annual conference.

Thank you.

David...

*[David invites AGHS national co-chair Stuart Read to respond]*