

**GARDEN CLUBS OF AUSTRALIA SOUTHERN TASMANIA ZONE
REMARKS BY
HER EXCELLENCY PROFESSOR THE HONOURABLE KATE WARNER AC
GOVERNOR OF TASMANIA
GOVERNMENT HOUSE TASMANIA, TUESDAY 22 JANUARY 2019**

Good evening and welcome to this reception for members of the Southern Tasmania Zone of the Garden Clubs of Australia.

I begin by paying my respects to the traditional and original owners of this land—the Mouheneener people. I acknowledge the contemporary Tasmanian Aboriginal community, who have survived invasion and dispossession, and continue to maintain their identity, culture and Indigenous rights.

May I acknowledge among you:

- George Hoad, National President, Garden Clubs of Australia;
- Gary Davies, Director Royal Tasmanian Botanical Gardens;
- and Presidents of many of the 17 Southern Garden Clubs.

I've no doubt that some of you have in recent times been on Government House Garden tours which are run each Thursday; likewise interior tours of the State Rooms; Behind the Scenes tours; and Furniture tours.

These self-booking tours are popular and have become an excellent way to enable Tasmanians and tourists to enjoy this wonderful building and Estate, which last year marked its 160th birthday. We hope that the garden tours will provide not only enjoyment but also ideas for gardeners and inspiration to others to start a garden.

The 160th birthday last year means that our gardens have been in place now for a long time and they certainly have a story to tell. In fact David and I are writing the first history of Government House Tasmania and I'm concentrating on the gardens and the research is most rewarding, not least because much of it will be published for the first time.

When the buildings and Estate were planned in the 1850s, by the Government Director of Public Works William Porden Kay – a nephew of Sir John Franklin – the gardens were designed in direct imitation of an English country estate, with the inner third being landscaped and outer two thirds country fields – in which one might imagine the squire hunting pheasant. Although our equivalent native hens are reportedly not that tasty. It is probably unlikely that there was much other game in the paddocks or nearby.

However, as recently as the 1950s the Governor and his family kept horses in the stables and an early morning ride on the domain was a common occurrence.

The quarry was landscaped as an ornamental pond in the mid-1870s and is a major feature of the Estate garden; we plan to do some significant work on it in forthcoming years and this will probably become the first formal design enhancements since its original landscaping.

A lovely watercolour plan dating to the early 1880s clearly marks out areas as having, quote, “Flowers, Ferns, Rockery and Shrubs”; a “Tennis Lawn” alongside the main carriage entrance; an octagonal fowl house with fowl yards; a piggery; cow house; and numerous stables. The large kitchen garden a flower cutting garden are also long-established.

Governor Sir Robert Hamilton and Lady Hamilton, who were here in the late 1880s and early 1890s, especially loved the garden. Lady Hamilton painted a watercolour series of the gardens. And his daughter wrote, and I quote:

“The garden was a great pleasure to my father, who might often be seen trimming a hedge, or forking up the weeds on the new tennis court which he had made soon after our arrival. And he would lie for hours reading in his hammock under a mulberry tree in the fruit garden when the weather was fine, far away from casual callers and the telephone.”ⁱ

There have been many changes in the garden over 160 years although the basic structure of it surrounding terraces has remained the same with the south and east terraces, Lions Court to the north and the driveway to the west basically as in the original plans.

Notable changes have included the grassing over of the geometrically shaped flower beds that were cut into the grass on the south and east terraces in accordance with the fashion of the time; new rose gardens, one at the direction of Lady Cross in the 1950s and the Heritage Rose Garden by Sir Phillip and Lady Bennett in the early 1990s. Sir Phillip Bennett is also responsible for the Plimsoll Native Garden which has recently remodelled. The row of pleached limes on the East Terrace is another recent feature which is maturing nicely.

That is but a sketch of this magnificent Estate.

Please now do enjoy the reception.

Thank you.

ⁱ 'Government House, Hobart: Garden and Grounds Conservation Analysis and Conservation Policies', prepared for the Department of Construction, Tasmania [by] Nigel Lewis Richard Aitken P/L, 1991, page 6.