

J.D. SOMERVILLE ORAL HISTORY COLLECTION, STATE
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Interview with Anna Cox conducted by Susan Mann and assisted by Meg Butler at the Biodiversity Centre at the Adelaide Botanic Gardens on the 28th January 2009 for The Friends of the Botanic Gardens Oral History Project of the State Library of South Australia.

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Thank you Anna. Just to start could you just give me your full name please?

Anna Stirling Cox.

And when were you born?

1941.

And whereabouts?

Here in Adelaide. My parents, my mother was born in Adelaide, my father came from interstate.

What were their names Anna?

Anna Dorothea Morrison and Robert Hay Morrison.

And can you remember the years they were born?

My mother would have been born in 19....., hmm I should know this. Well she is going to be 92 at the end of this week so I should be able to work that out. My father was a couple of years older, he is dead and my mother is still alive.

Alright thank you. What did they do?

My mother was a Physio and my father was a Journalist with the ABC.

Where did you live growing up?

We grew up in Glenunga on a double block with magnificent trees and that was the start of my great love of gardens, particularly trees, very formative place. In those days Glenunga was semi-rural, when walking to kindergarten we had to wait for a flock of sheep to be driven down Glenunga Avenue, you wouldn't believe it now.

No.

But that's how it was then.

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My goodness, yes. Did you have siblings?

I have a brother who is very keen on science communication, Rob Morrison.

Thank you and what about your grandparents do you remember them at all, were they also Adelaidians?

One was, my grandmother had been but she died before I was born. My grandfather lived in the hills here, that's my mother's father. My father's parents were separated, one was a Dentist in Melbourne and the other one was a very fascinating woman who lived in Sydney.

OK thank you. Well that sort of finishes those demographic style questions so many thanks. I would like to really put our focus now onto your experience with the Gardens and as I was talking with you earlier I would love to focus on some of those earlier experiences because you have a great history with the Friends which would be wonderful to get down. At the time of the establishment of the Friends do you recall what the Adelaide Botanic Garden actually looked like at that time?

Yes I do and it was very different actually. There were more staff, many more outdoor staff and they were horticultural, because Noel Lothian was the Director at the time, extremely interesting. You would see, as you walked around the Garden, you would see people with notebooks writing down the names of plants, now I don't think I have seen that for many years. There was much greater diversity of planting, much less use of woodchips and generally for a home gardener it was a more interesting place.

Right, so the people, I am interested when you sort of said that the Gardeners were writing notes was this...

No, not the Gardeners, sorry, visitors to the Garden.

Oh really.

Would be writing down, I mean for example the Rose Garden. Brian Morley changed it so that there was only one variety per bed but Noel Lothian had it so that there were rows and rows of three of each kind so the number of varieties of rose was absolutely huge. I could see what Brian Morley was hoping to achieve and he did it with a sort of bolder look but for the home gardener who wanted to write down varieties of roses, it wasn't quite so attractive to them.

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OK that is very interesting. So what did they use for mulch back then, you know as you say they didn't use woodchips?

Well they had a wonderful compost heap in that corner near the hundred-foot shed, very spectacular in winter when it steamed. I know a fellow who had been, not an apprentice but I have forgotten what they called them, a trainee I think, and he said they used to boil the billy there at morning teatime (laugh) which occupational health and safety wouldn't have you doing now (laughter). But you could see the steam coming off it - it was quite dramatic. They also used to get the Zoo sweepings and I can remember a Gardener once finding a shedded snake skin in the mulch that was being spread (laugh), which was interesting.

Yes my word, thank you. So what place do you think that the Adelaide Garden plays in the Adelaide community?

Oh, I think people have a deep emotional attachment to it. It's the place they come when they're in love, when they have little children, all this sort of thing, I think people are deeply attached to it. Now of course they can get married there so that's a whole new collection.

Yes, yes and the fact that there is no cost to come into the Garden would you see that as an important part for the community?

I would indeed and I think it is also you can see the place in hot weather; it's used as a refuge by people who can't afford air conditioning. I used to notice that very markedly, especially at weekends, you would see people who obviously didn't have much. Now I am pleased to see you're more likely to see people from other ethnic backgrounds which used to not be so obvious but it is much more now.

Yes, yes it's excellent. So when did you join the Friends?

I was at the first meeting. I was actually asked to go on the steering committee because I had written a letter to the Gardens objecting to some of their developments. Especially I really disliked what was then, or became, the Italianate Garden but it was created with *RED Scheme* money that flowed very freely under Mr Whitlam, but it is now the Mediterranean Water Wise Garden. Noel Lothian got carried away with the free labour and the, you know, lots of money and put in all those bricks that it used to have and it was an Annual Display Garden. Of course that fell out of fashion when money got a bit tighter but I wrote a letter complaining about that in particular. Enid Robertson, I think, had remembered and so when Collin Robjohns really talked

seriously about setting up the Friends, Enid suggested me. I can still remember what I said when Collin rang up to ask if I would go on a steering committee. I said, "*Me, I'm just an ordinary housewife*" (laugh) so times have changed, women wouldn't say that now I don't think. Then we had this wonderful inaugural meeting to form a steering committee, where there were more people than chairs, it was a very exciting night. I was at that and so I was on the steering committee.

OK, that is excellent. Did you hold one of the Offices or were you a general committee member?

There were only five of us I think, President which was Collin, Secretary which, he had a cousin, a rather difficult woman, I can't remember her name now and I think he got her as the original Secretary and then Shirley Simpson. He got the descendants of Schomburgk and a Simpson to move the original motion that a steering committee should be formed and Shirley Simpson was one of them and somebody else. Then we had the Assistant Director at the meetings because they were held in daytime and that was Brian Morley¹ in the days when he was an Assistant Director and great fun actually. They were interesting times.

Absolutely, absolutely. So your main motivation for joining the Friends was because you had an innate love of this Garden?

Yes. When we were first married when we lived in North Adelaide and so the Adelaide Botanic Garden was our garden, we came here often.

Yes wonderful. So can you paint me a picture of what was involved in being a Friend in that very initial stage?

Oh, I think obedience to Collin's wishes, he was a tremendous dictator and he had such excellent judgement. I mean the way he set up the Friends so that all the volunteers had to be Friends apart from the volunteers in the Herbarium. For example in Melbourne the Guides, as you doubtlessly know are not Friends, [they are] separate. Collin believed that everybody should be Friends, that it should all come under the one umbrella and communication was made easier. He set up all kinds of very good things like, well the Guides didn't come for quite a while, but for example, sending out the Gazette. You got it exactly a fortnight before each meeting. Now that really promoted

¹Dr Brian Morley migrated to Australia in 1975 to take up the new position of horticultural botanist for the Botanic Gardens of Adelaide. Within three years he was appointed to the position of Assistant Director of the BGA. In 1981, he was appointed as Director of the Botanic Gardens of Adelaide, a position he held until 2000. Cited in Aitken R 2006 *Seeds of Change: An illustrated history of Adelaide Botanic Garden* Botanic Gardens of Adelaide pp181-193.

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attendance at meetings, it was all quite straightforward. We used to get huge numbers at the first meeting when people would come and pay their subscription and that was excellent. He also had a finger on a lot of pulses and got excellent speakers, exciting speakers. He would find out when someone interesting was coming through Adelaide; he kept in touch with the staff enough so that they would be asked to speak to the Friends. I always thought the timing of the Gazette was excellent.

So it always came out monthly then?

No, no there were only...there are six meetings a year.

OK, so bi-monthly.

Except for the AGM it came out or you got it in your hand a fortnight before each meeting.

Yes, it's excellent.

Then we realised that attendance at the AGM wasn't too good because there wasn't a Gazette immediately before it so we then started sending out an extra notice to ginger people up a bit. His idea was that the AGM should be an enjoyable meeting, that was their relaxing meeting, the other meetings would be more informative. He was very keen on keeping the aims of the Friends in mind, it wasn't a horticultural society. I don't know that it is now but we didn't very often have a speaker on how to grow x, y or z, it was broader than that.

Yes, it was broader then. So can you give me a bit of an example of who those speakers were?

No, I would have to look at the Gazette for that.

That's OK.

One I do remember the fellow who was Director of Wakehurst Place, Schilling, Tony Schilling he was. He had been a plant explorer in Bhutan and he introduced quite a few things to horticulture and I remember that was absolutely fascinating, it was first rate.

Yes, it sounds wonderful. So the greatest influences on the development of the Friends then would obviously be Collin?

Oh absolutely, and I mean when we started running The Shop and it started in the Museum of Economic Botany, Collin did the buying. He would sometimes take some

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of us with him and he did take a little group of us once but anything you suggested, we went to this wholesaler, anything you suggested he would simply veto (laughter). He would choose what was going to be sold, you just had to do what Collin said but he was such an intelligent man and so experienced that I didn't find it a hardship.

Yes, that's interesting. So what did you most enjoy about being a Friend?

Well (pause) I think the stimulation and the wonderful treatment by the staff so we learnt an enormous amount. I met a lot of terrific people some of whom are still my friends which has been lovely. Getting to know what went on behind the scenes that was very fascinating. I think those were the things and then being a Guide, that was the best thing of all because I suppose it had all of that plus the sort of adult education kind of angle. When people said, "*But Guides aren't teachers*", that is not a view I take. I think we were there to inform people, pass on a lot of information. You didn't do it if they were a social club which was only going to the Gardens because the Secretary said they had to do something, you know. You often got people who really wanted to know things and that was a very nice position to be in.

Yes I'm sure. So you were the first Guide Leader, is that correct?

Yes. It was Collin really who set the Guides up, whatever anyone tells you it wasn't me, it was Collin.

OK.

He asked me if I would be the first Guide Leader so it was a very, very exciting thing to be doing.

Yes, I'm sure. So how did he set it up?

Oh, he organised the first series of lectures from the staff and then we had to practise. We were thrown in at the deep end because Brian Morley refused to examine volunteers, he said there was no way that he could throw anybody out. I felt that had us at a disadvantage later because we were the only lot that had never been assessed, so I started this practice that after so many years you had to give a trial walk with some other Guides (laugh) coming and hearing what you were saying. I think that filled in that slight uncomfortable feeling that, you know, you were a Guide but you've never been assessed, why were you swanning around imposing conditions on other people.

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Yes, Brian was quite soft hearted about the Friends but he used to come to Friends' committee meetings, his attitude was excellent. He was always very welcoming, he was most appreciative of what the Friends did, he was good at getting his staff to have time for us and he was fun to have at committee meetings in the early days. He used to do this thing, when we had a bit of money to give the Gardens, he would prepare a 'wish list', you know it would just be a list of things and the Committee could choose the things that they wanted to support and sometimes they would choose nearly the whole lot so it was a good way of doing it.

So the relationship between you, and because he was Director by then, or no, he was still Assistant?

He would have still been Assistant probably.

Right, OK.

I think he would have handed over when he became Director, I can't actually remember the timing.

That's OK.

But he handed over to Ed McAlister actually and Ed was a good committee member.

Yes, for sure.

And nice fellow and entertaining.

Yes (laugh).

I always felt pretty sorry for them having to come back to our committee meetings which were sometimes rather tortuous but they were always very generous.

Can you paint me a picture of what generous and fun means?

Oh well, Brian was a very intellectual fellow and he had a very good sense of humour. Yes, he was a happy man when he was Assistant Director, it wore off a bit after a while as Director. I think it was hard for him because he was, we mentioned before the change from the Director of the Botanic Gardens as being seen as rather God-like in society and the Department never interfered as far as I know. Then as time went on and in the time of Brian the Department was applying heavier controls and a lot of things changed. The Director was in a difficult position really because he had to report to the

Minister, he had to be a good Public Servant but he was also seen by some people to be this very special person and he wasn't really given the freedom to be so, and I think people's expectations weren't met. But when you have a performance agreement which you have to sign and your job's on the line, well you have got to be a very fearless person like Noel Lothian to prevail and in the end I think Brian just wore out, very hard for him. Ed McAlister is just a nice, entertaining person, lots of friends, gregarious, you know, turned up at meetings, very kindly.

So it's seems that Noel Lothian in the first instance and then Brian in the second instance when they were Directors were obviously supportive of their Assistant coming to the committee meetings and supported the Assistant in their decision making around the Friends?

Yes, yes there was a happy relationship.

Yes it's very good. So why did you decide to take up the position of Guide Leader then, tell me about that?

Oh well, the idea of it interested me. I liked the idea of passing on what I had learnt to other people; that would have been the main thing and also the chance to learn more about the Gardens.

How many Guides were there in the first instance?

There were twenty.

Twenty and how did you get that twenty, tell me about that process?

Collin put a bit in the Gazette asking for people to ring and he unfortunately put my telephone number and I had forgotten to tell him that we were going to be away (laugh) when the Gazette came out.

Oh dear.

So they ended up ringing him, it was really good actually. I'm not sure that I ever apologized either (laugh). Anyway the first twenty were accepted and off we went.

Yes, wonderful.

It was.

And so Collin had devised the programme that you would...

I think probably in conjunction with Brian Morley.

OK.

I would think that.

And how long did that take you?

It was eight lectures for eight weeks.

OK and then at the end of it.....sorry

I think, yes I'm a bit hazy on when we started. I think we just went around the Gardens to learn them on our own, I don't remember that we had any help with that.

Goodness.

I think (pause) but I am actually a bit hazy on that.

That's ok and so then you just developed your walk learning it as you went?

Yes.

And after eight weeks did you start giving self guided, I mean guided walks at the end of the eight weeks or did you have to put out any sort of promotional material to promote them at all?

Yes we did, yes. I can remember some very amateurish posters (laugh) that my children produced actually. I can remember I got the Guides to colour in the illustrations (laugh) and then distribute them in likely places. Actually we used to do quite a lot of promotion, you know getting people to take bundles of leaflets and go around to libraries, you know an awful lot of stuff like that. I think we must have started off with regular weekly walks, I think, and then we would have advertised that we were ready to take groups. The first group I ever took, it was absolutely terrifying, and it was in the Australian Garden History Society Conference, the first one they held in Adelaide and we were on. I can still remember some of the people who were in my walk and they knew a lot more than I did about quite a lot of things. I had at that stage learnt that if they know more than you do you ask them to tell people what they know (laugh). So yes, interesting experience.

Excellent. So how long were you in the position as Guide Leader?

I think we had a rule that the Guide Leader was Guide Leader for three years and the Secretary and Booking Officer did two. My maths was such that I thought that would mean they'd never all go off at the same time but of course that doesn't work. I am

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ashamed that I hadn't seen that but anyway that was the reason for doing it; so I would have done it [been Guide Leader] for three years. Then I think I handed over to Audrey Abbie, I think.

OK, so tell me what it was like being a Guide Leader, that first Guide Leader?

I used to get a bit bothered about our standards, I would have to say. That was a difficulty and I thought of various things to do which are probably still in the archives somewhere. Like you know people were doing, different Guides were doing a lot of research into various trees. So I suggested that we each do a detailed study of a tree or I think I actually said a semi-permanent fixture in the Gardens so that if someone wanted to do some architectural or something they could do that, but it was so that we could build up a back-bone that would be always there, these are the things that you could always count on. Some of the work done on that was really excellent and it should be around somewhere, in fact I know I have still got some of it. But Vern Whittenbury on the River Red Gum was outstanding and Marian Wells on 'Adelaide Gold', you know that material is all there somewhere and it's still as relevant today as it was then.

I'm sure.

That was quite a good thing to do and there was something else. They got a bit grumpy at one meeting. It was a February meeting, first meeting for the year and I landed that on them as well as something else they had to do, I can't remember what it was now. They were all a bit taken aback; I think they thought they were not going to be brought up to scratch in the way that they were having to be, but anyway they calmed down after a while, yes.

That's good so what did you most enjoy about that position?

Learning, passing on what I had learnt and being a member of a very close group, lots of good people.

Yes, that's lovely.

And I don't believe in sentimental nonsense that people who like plants are nice people because I know there are plenty of people who like plants because they don't like people, so I don't hold with that. It is the shared interest, isn't it, having common interests?

Yes indeed. So you mentioned one of the challenges for you was that you used to worry about that you weren't up to scratch, were there any other challenges that you had to face as Guide Leader?

Seeing Guides who were plainly inadequate was very difficult and a very difficult thing to handle and I'm not sure I did very well at that. I booted out one of the trainees from one of the courses and I think a friend of hers died without my being forgiven and I think that wasn't very good. We unfortunately never had a mechanism for getting rid of somebody, not an overt one; you know not a stated one. So that was a challenge, it wasn't good, that.

What I should have said somewhere along the line was I always found the Botanic Gardens fascinating not just because they're a place where there are plants but it was Brian Morley always saying that "*A Botanic Garden is where science meets art*". I think that is absolutely true and I think it explains the fascination of the Botanic Gardens. You have got, apart from architecture, statuary, sculpture etc, you have got landscaping and landscape architecture is very fascinating. One of the three-dimensional arts which is, you know, like sculpture. I always find both of those very interesting, not having a three-dimensional imagination myself, I admire it in others.

Yes definitely, definitely. It's a wonderful vision isn't it of a Botanic Gardens?

Well, Brian was very good on things like that, very strong aesthetic sense, yes. I mean you might not like everything he did but he always did it with aesthetics in mind.

Yes, that's wonderful. While you were Guide Leader did you stay on the committee as well?

Yes. I was on the committee for twenty years.

Oh OK.

And I was there also as, I had been the Secretary at one stage and then I was the Gazette representative because I edited the Gazette for ten years with Eric Sims.

Yes I would actually like to talk about that if you wouldn't mind because Meg and I have spoken to Eric and ...

Have you?

Yes.

Yes.

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And he was as you would imagine incredibly generous.

He would have loved it.

Yes.

He loves visitors, intelligent visitors.

Yes that's terrific. So can you tell me a little bit about, so you were joint editor with Eric for ten years, that's correct?

Yes, Collin did it for ten years and then Eric and I did it for ten years and he would have gone on, but I said no, we would stop.

Fair enough (laugh). So can you tell me what that role involved?

It was quite a lot really. Eric had a good eye for the Botany and if you read his articles you see there is some pretty special knowledge there. He used to go out on expeditions with Professor Cleland and after Professor Cleland went, he was a great expert on mushrooms, I mean sorry fungi, and after he went blind, Eric would take him out on these weekly excursions. Professor Cleland could identify fungi by their smell, amazing. Eric had a lot of knowledge about plants. I was the one who did the liaising with the Garden and reported on what was going on. I always thought that was very important that you should actually know what changes were going on in the Gardens because it was nobody's role to tell you. I mean as a Guide that was something that was a bit lacking. You could turn up and find a, you know, tree that you particularly loved and it was lying in a heap of firewood on the ground (laugh), not good. It was the Chinese Elm that was very bad for me. There would be quite big changes that would be, they would start to implement them and they had not thought to tell the Guides that that was going on.

Right.

So I made it my business to find out that kind of thing.

So you made it your business as Guide Leader to do that or in your job role?

I really felt that the Friends should know, it was a general...

OK, so this was, you would report this in the Gazette?

Yes, yes very much so.

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Yes, that's excellent. It seems to me that, well just by the smile on your face when we mentioned Eric that there was a nice working relationship between the two of you?

Yes, we managed pretty well mostly.

Yes, and what did that relationship look like, can you tell me about that?

Oh well, he had excellent memory, still has. He would remember things better than I did and still does. I learnt a lot from him and I still visit him.

That's good.

He's a very interesting man.

Yes he certainly is and he was incredibly generous to Meg and I.

He would have loved it.

(Laugh) Yes I think it was an enjoyable experience, I hope so. So what did you most enjoy about that role?

Well I quite like writing; I used to write the odd thing for the Gazette. I also used to write some verse, anything anonymous will be me. I actually drove the Director mad on one occasion, he didn't know it was me and it was actually when I was on the Board. I wrote something which he took great exception to. He was furious and he went to the Minister with a copy of this saying, "*Look at what I have to put up with*". The Minister couldn't have cared two straws, Ministers don't like that kind of thing; they don't want negative problems brought to them. I liked the idea that people were being educated about the Gardens and the Guides were good, they used to write things. I think that is it.

Excellent, and while you and Eric were co-editors it continued to be produced bi-monthly is that correct?

Well it was more complicated than that.

Oh OK.

It was a fortnight before each meeting except for the AGM so it was five times a year.

Five times a year OK, alright.

Yes, and Brian Morley was generous with staff time for that. We were able to get Gilbert Dashorst² to do some of the covers and I mean that was lovely, lovely. We liked the look of it, I know it didn't have photographs in it but it was also on recycled paper, which they have abandoned. I felt it was very important that the Gazette should not look professional because we weren't professional, we were amateurs and we liked the style of our Gazette. In fact Eric and I are still disgustingly self-congratulatory (laugh) when we get together. We say "*Tut, tut, its not what it used to be, Eric*" (laughter). Dreadful of us, [we are] really awful.

No, that's good. So did you have a bit of, how did you edit, did you have more contributions than you could use or was it mainly you and Eric who wrote for the Gazette?

Well no, we had some very good contributors sort of pop up. There was a very nice man at Taperoo who took a fancy to something Eric wrote and he wrote a lovely thing about growing cotton in his own garden. Eric and he used to talk on the phone and he gave Eric permission to alter his pieces. Eric had retired not all that long before and he got his Secretary to type up what he wrote in long hand and, David Searle the man was and he just disappeared. We think he must have died, he was quite old when he started doing this. There were really interesting people that you never met, never heard of but these contributions popped up, it was nice, it was very nice.

Yes indeed, it's a lovely example isn't it of how people, you know Friends, the Friends can contribute in all sorts of different ways according to their ability and time and circumstance isn't it?

Yes and I think the development of the Friends into the Growing Group and to the Botanical Art Group, I think they have been wonderful developments. I think the loss, as I said before the loss of Yarrabee and the loss of North Lodge were really pretty devastating for the Friends. One day, who knows, they might get The Shop back, can't believe it's making money.

The commercial (laugh), yes and who knows what the future will bring I guess?

Indeed but I think the loss of a place for exhibitions which the loss of Yarrabee represented, it was a very great shame.

² Gilbert Dashorst is the Botanical Illustrator for the Botanic Gardens of Adelaide and State Herbarium.

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Am I correct in my recollection that Yarrabee was lost during the Wine Centre debate? Yes? (laugh).

Well put.

Yes and it was a great loss but I guess that was well beyond the hands of the Friends wasn't it?

Oh yes, it was beyond the hands of The Board too.

Yes, yes.

There was a public announcement at something that I was present at at the Gardens that the Wine Centre was going to be built there and that people would be moved out of a purpose-built building which the Herbarium was, they were going to be moved out into this building which is not appropriate.

Incredible, it's such a feeling of powerlessness when that sort of decree happens isn't it?

Yeah.

Yes. So Meg and I have heard about the public outcry and particularly the Friends were very vocal in some of that, so how did the Friends as a group, from your perspective, how did they try and get on with that, you know like move on from it. I mean if the decision was made, the public debate was lost if you like, and it was all going to happen, how did the Friends move on from that time?

Well I guess there was no choice. (Pause) I think the loss of Yarrabee they probably haven't moved on from that, you know Friends still deplore the loss of it. Yes, I don't think I could really add to that.

OK, so Yarrabee was not just, it became this wonderful exhibition place and I know before I became a Friend I went to some of those exhibitions and they were wonderful and it was also the home for the craft, became home for the craft group didn't it?

Yes.

Yes, yes so were you involved in either of those activities or just in a general sense?

I didn't have so much to do with exhibitions. I had been a member of the Craft Group when it met in our houses, mostly Shirley Simpson's because she had a poolroom in her garden and she ran it. It was very messy dealing with all this stuff from Wittunga, it

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was really dirty and it made a mess so that was a very good place to go. We actually had to call the fire brigade after one of our meetings there because (laugh) we were cleaning up afterwards and it was a hot day and a strong north wind was blowing and Shirley had dumped all the left-over stuff which is absolutely timber dry in her incinerator and she had lit it and then we'd not looked after it. The fire got away and there was this frantic call to the fire brigade who came. Unfortunately Shirley's neighbour had been a refugee from those dreadful fires in the South East; his house had been burnt out down there so Shirley didn't think it was going to be a good move if she burnt out his tool shed (laugh), very alarming actually.

Absolutely.

Not one of our finer moments.

(Laugh) Oh dear. You mentioned that you then became a member of The Board [of the BGA], when did you become a member of The Board?

I should have looked that up because I simply don't remember. It was probably something like twenty years ago, I was on it for sixteen years.

OK.

And I was on in my own right, not as a Friend but it was the knowledge that I had gained from being a Friend was very helpful. Sometimes not helpful when you heard things being said that you knew didn't bear any relationship to the actual fact so had to tread carefully sometimes.

So when you say you were on in your own right you were sort of the public member on The Board?

Well they didn't really have one.

OK.

There were just eight people.

OK.

And in those days they liked to get people who had some feeling for the Gardens, which I think while I was on the Board that changed and there was much more of an effort to get people from what they used to refer to as the 'high end of town'. It was a bit noticeable sometimes that a Board Member might have absolutely no understanding of

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how the Gardens worked or what they were about, no idea at all which I thought was a bit of a mistake.

So you were on The Board while Brian [Morley] was Director, is that right?

Yes, yes.

I was really interested you mentioned earlier on about how important you believed the liaison was between the Friends and the Botanic Gardens of Adelaide Administration, for want of a better word, and that you had developed a very good relationship with the Administration. Can you tell me a little bit more about that, I mean why you think that is a very important thing to do and why you saw that as part of your role, that sort of thing?

I think just dissemination of information really.

Right.

The Board would make decisions that would affect parts of the Gardens like decisions about the Herbarium and some Board Members had not the faintest idea what was going on there so, you know it was very important for people to understand how this institution worked. It's not as complex now because, as I understand it, the Plant Biodiversity Centre is hived off really, under a different administration, but it was all under the one Director to start with. In fact when I first got on the Board Noel was the Director at the time and he was very much boss of the Herbarium as well as the Gardens, and it made the institution an extremely complex one because the Herbarium was strictly scientific and the Botanic Gardens was a mixture. In those days, I don't know if it still happens but there was great emphasis on getting wild-collected seed and the Index Seminum was sent out, you know all around the world, it was a worldwide body, all the Botanic Gardens sharing seed for nothing. I don't know if that still happens, I rather suspect not. There was very great emphasis on having seed collected in the wild for everything grown in any of the Botanic Gardens, there was no wish to plant cultivars at all and that was maintained under Brian Morley, in fact probably strengthened under Brian, I think, because Noel [Lothian] was primarily a horticulturist.

Yes, yes I've heard that before that he was a great plants man and

He was and so is Brian actually.

Yes, yes.

They both were.

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Yes, it's a wonderful asset in a Director isn't it?

Yes.

To have that hands on practical knowledge?

Yes, yes.

That's excellent thank you. If I could just return briefly to Collin Robjohns because I think out of the people that we have spoken to to date, you were the one that actually had a very strong working relationship with him and so have some inside knowledge I guess...

So would, I think Marjorie Andrew would have too and probably Shirley Simpson.

Yes, Marjorie has been very kind we haven't been able to interview Shirley as yet because she is in Victoria, as you know so we will have to see how that one works. Can you just tell me a little bit about him, I mean you've said that he was a very intelligent and very capable man and that he was quite adamant about wanting things his way, yeah?

He thought things out very carefully and he started a terrific number of things, not exhibitions, not the Growing Group and not the Art Group, but he started everything else, I think. He thought it all out from the ground up that, you know what the basis of the activity would be and so on and he had a lot of friends that he could call on. He himself was a plantsman, he had a singularly beautiful garden on the creek up at Marryatville, beautiful garden, which he would open for us. He was a fantastic photographer, he was not a thrilling speaker but his slides were thrilling and very good photographer. Yes he was an interesting man, he wrote his autobiography.

Yes, I have read that, *My Several Lives*, yes.

It's not a, the writing is not terrific but it was an interesting life.

My word.

And we actually went on the trip we'd never, my husband and I had never been on a guided tour before but we went on the Friends' tour to China and that was lead by Collin and it was fantastic. He'd thought that out, he knew where he wanted us to go. It was an emphasis on plants, landscapes and gardens. He had set his heart on taking us to Suzhou and he just pestered and pestered until they agreed that we could go there for a day, that was a great experience.

My word.

Noel Lothian was actually on that tour and there was another chap John Womersley, Womersley, yes Womersley it was who had been a Director of Lae Botanic Garden so we had Botanists around us to help.

They sound like very heady days?

Yes they were, they were.

Yes. So just as we are sort of winding up a little bit so how did your role in the Friends change over time?

Oh I had to be pretty careful when I was on The Board. I had to keep things separate, which wasn't always easy but on the whole people were pretty good at not trying to get information out of me, which was nice of them. That would be the biggest change I think but I was still a Guide while I was on The Board.

OK.

I just spent a terrible lot of my life here for a long time (laugh) but I always felt, my husband worked very hard and I knew that if I got a job he wouldn't be able to do any more things at home, he just didn't have the time, so coming to the Botanic Gardens filled a real need.

Yes, I think that seems to be quite a common thing that we hear that the Gardens did fill a need and particularly perhaps for more women than men maybe.

I've been thrilled really to see some people, one woman was actually told by her Doctor to go and join the Friends of the Botanic Gardens (laugh). I think she had just been widowed and you know he could see that she needed something in her life and there she was, turned up because the Doctor told her (laugh). Also I have seen some people really gain in confidence, I think, they have found a body of people with whom they had a lot in common and they've taken on roles that they have not realised that they could do and it has been a really lovely thing to watch.

My word. So what do you most appreciate about the Adelaide Botanic Gardens?

All of them hey, oh the trees, the trees. Well they are very special places aren't they? They're not just there for beauty but for instruction, I love the mix. I think Brian Morley was absolutely right: "*Where science meets art*".

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Yes it's a wonderful definition.

Yes, yes he trotted it out quite often but rightly so.

We're just about coming to the end of the tape is there anything that you would like to add Anna, that you would particularly like to have on tape?

No I can't think of anything off hand but I probably will as soon as I go home.

(Laugh) It's often the way.

Yes.

Well if you're happy I would like to finish it here with very grateful thanks.

It's been a pleasure.

Yes it has been a wonderful interview and certainly all of these interviews Meg and I learn so much and this has not been an exception so thank you.

END OF DISK