



ADFAS Gold Coast Inc.

NEWSLETTER

Winter 2019

Member of the Association of Australian Decorative & Fine Arts Societies Group
& Associate Member of NADFAS



Vignette Artist: William Robinson – Equestrian self-portrait, 1987

From the Chair

Dear Fellow Members,

It is hard to believe it is June. What a busy year it has been with some very interesting lectures, a Special Interest Afternoon Event, a Coach Tour, a Film Evening, and our 30th Anniversary Morning Tea celebration. I do hope you have enjoyed the year to date.



We have had a record number of new members join ADFAS Gold Coast this year. The news about what ADFAS is providing to members and contributing to the Gold Coast community is spreading. A total of 40 new members have been welcomed so far with each receiving a New Members



Package containing some background information about ADFAS Gold Coast and a New Member Survey Form seeking information about their talents and abilities and their willingness to participate in the future as members of the ADFAS Gold Coast Committee. From the returns I have received, we as a Society are indeed fortunate to have such a talented group of New Members who are keen to contribute to our Society in the future.

At our 30th Anniversary Celebration Ann Dean, our National Vice President shared some information with us about Patricia Robertson, our AADFAS Patron. A summary of Anne's talk is included in this Newsletter for your information. To follow on from Ann's talk, I would like to share with you some information about the ADFAS Patricia Robertson Fund.



It is through the Patricia Robertson Fund (PRF), that the Association of ADFAS supports the development of conservation professionals and advances conservation practice. Given that The Association of Australian Decorative and Fine Arts Societies (AADFAS) is committed to developing an appreciation of art history and to fostering an understanding of cultural works as well as the conservation of works of art and cultural materials, the PRF plays an important role.

The PRF has been made possible by generous individual philanthropy and an initial investment by AADFAS. A number of ADFAS societies contribute annually to the fund at the level of approximately \$1 per member per annum. This year, through your generous donations, ADFAS Gold Coast, in addition to contributing \$1 per member to

the PRF, also contributed a further \$151.09. These additional funds are those generously donated this year by you, our members, as indicated on your Membership Renewal Form. Thank you. This means ADFAS Gold Coast contributed \$487.00 in total to the Patricia Robertson Fund this year.

The History of the Patricia Robertson Fund (PRF)

In 2014, the PRF awarded a scholarship to an emerging young graduate to develop conservation skills within an overseas workplace environment.

In 2015 and 2016, the fund was used to further the professional training of conservators within Australia and internationally.

During years 2017-19, AADFAS entered into an agreement to offer three Awards annually in partnership with the Australian Institute for the Conservation of Cultural Materials (AICCM).

These three awards, funded by the Patricia Robertson Fund, are:

ADFAS Scholarship – (Two Awards)

These Awards are awarded to the AICCM Student of the year in the Material Conservation Courses at the University of Melbourne and at Canberra University. The recipients are known as **ADFAS Scholars**. The value of the Award is \$1,000 for each ADFAS Scholar. The Awardees are determined by the Course Convenor.

ADFAS Mid-Career Scholarship

This Award is awarded to a mid-career conservator with a minimum of ten years conservation practice. Each recipient is known as ADFAS Mid-Career Scholar. The value of this award is \$2,000.

The PRF Awardees for 2018/19 are:

ADFAS Mid-Career Scholar: Kelly Leahey, Paper/Photographic Conservator at The State Library of Queensland

Kelly will use her award to attend the American Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works, Photographic Materials Group (AIC-PMG) and International Council of Museums - Committee for Conservation, Photographic Materials Working Group (ICOM-CC PMWG) Conference in New York, February 2019.



To quote Kelly: *'The conservation of photographs is my profession and also my passion. I am dedicated to providing the highest level of care for the State Library of Queensland collection. Attending this professional development conference will allow and inspire me to continue contributing to the preservation of photographs in Australia at best practice standards and in creative ways. All of my learnings will be shared to the best of my abilities with my Australian colleagues, and I will be able to provide a higher level of service to the clients I work with in Australia. In addition, this conference is highly relevant and timely, as State Library starts initial planning for the conservation of a significant collection of Richard Daintree hand painted photographs from the 1870s. In 2019, I will be leading the technical examination component of this project, and we will be looking to build our capabilities at State Library of Queensland in this area.'*

ADFAS Scholars are:



Emma Anderson: AICCM Student of the Year at the University of Canberra

Sadra Zekrgoo: AICCM Student of the Year at the University of Melbourne

As you can see your contributions to the Patricia Robertson Fund do make a difference to the Australian cultural landscape.



In this Newsletter you will read about another venture funded by the PRF as reported by Ann

Dean, our National Vice President.

Thank you for your generosity towards the PRF.

Sandi Fueleop

Chairman ADFAS Gold Coast

ASSOCIATION of ADFAS 30th ANNIVERSARY 1989 – 2019



Pat Robertson OAM (pictured left), is the Founder and current Patron of the Association of ADFAS. In 1984, Pat was visiting her family in the UK when she attended a NADFAS lecture. She thought it would be a wonderful idea to have these lectures in Australia. So on her return to Sydney, she spoke with several friends who readily agreed to form a Committee and build a Society.

In 1985, the first Society of Sydney was launched with a lecture given by Edmund Capon at Glover Cottages in Millers Point, Sydney. Edmund later became the first President of the Association of ADFAS.

Pat's vision, hard work, and leadership were realised when the Association of ADFAS was incorporated in 1989 with 11 Societies. The Association has grown in the last 30 years to include 37 Societies throughout Australia, with 6,500 members. In September this year we will welcome Perth as the 38th Society of our Association.

ADFAS is all about the Arts, and at the heart of everything we do is the belief that the Arts has the potential to enrich people's lives.

Pat wanted to bring the Arts to people in the country and in many communities. The local ADFAS Society has now become a focus of cultural activities, connecting people with the arts, with one another, preserving our cultural heritage and fostering the artistic talents of our young people.

ADFAS is affiliated with The Arts Society, formerly NADFAS in the UK, as well as Societies throughout Europe and New Zealand, a total of 380 Societies with 90,000 plus members. So ADFAS Gold Coast is part of a global organisation, and members are welcome to attend any of The Art Society lectures when they are visiting from Australia.

As reward for the fulfilment of her dream, Pat was honoured with an Order of Australia Medal in the 2000 Queen's Birthday Honours List.

Patricia Robertson OAM "For service to the community through the Association of Australian Decorative and Fine Arts Societies"

Ann Dean (pictured right)

**National Vice Chairman,
Association of ADFAS**



PATRICIA ROBERTSON FUND – ADFAS GIFT to SYDNEY OPERA HOUSE

The Patricia Robertson Fund which is an integral part of the Association of ADFAS, gifted \$5,000.00 to the Sydney Opera House for the conservation of the *Coburn Tapestries*.

The Coburn Tapestries were designed by artist John Coburn and were commissioned for the opening of the Sydney Opera house in 1973 by NSW Public Works Minister, David Hughes. The two tapestries were named *Curtains of the Sun* (pictured right) designed to hang in the now-named Joan Sutherland Opera Theatre, and *Curtains of the Moon* (pictured below left) to hang in the Drama Theatre and the total cost was \$80,000.

The tapestries/curtains are made with Australian wool and cotton with a woollen warp and a cotton weft. In 1974 they were found not to meet the NSW fire regulations and



they were removed and put in storage for treatment with chemical flame retardants to make them compliant with state law. For the best part of the past forty five years – other than a few cameo appearances in the 1990's – they have been hidden from the world in a storage unit in Wetherill Park, Sydney.



Due to the fire proofing there was significant damage to the wool and cotton in the curtains with one, the Curtains of the Moon, also suffering a significant tear due to a jutting out pipe in the Drama Theatre. The decision was taken for Conservation work to be undertaken to restore the curtains and of course this requires money. The Association of ADFAS through the Patricia Robertson Fund was delighted to donate \$5,000 towards the Conservation cost of restoring the curtains to mark our 30th Anniversary year.

The Sydney Opera House decided to showcase the curtains to 1500 members of the public in small groups for one day only, on the 22nd May this year. As the National Vice Chairman of the Association of ADFAS, I was privileged to be invited along with our National Treasurer, Felicity Mauger and our Arts in the Community, Executive member, John Broadley, to attend the VIP Event in the evening of the 22nd May at the Opera House. **Photo right: Felicity Mauger, John Broadley and Ann Dean**



A thrill for Felicity, John and me was when the CEO of the Sydney Opera House, Louise Herron, thanked us personally, as well as the Patricia Robertson Fund through ADFAS for our donation. We were the only organisation mentioned, and I would hazard a guess we were the smallest donors! We felt truly honoured to play a part in the restoration of these magnificent works of art.

Ann Dean

**National Vice Chairman
Association of ADFAS**

VIGNETTE: WILLIAM ROBINSON – A brief view



Born in Brisbane in 1936, William Robinson demonstrated artistic talent early on, being the best in his class at drawing and also taking piano lessons. His accountant father died when he was only seven. Subsequently his paternal grandparents came to live with them, and his mother went to work. Young William did his part using winnings from piano competitions to pay for his ongoing lessons. He gave up musical ambition in 1957 after playing what he called 'Wreckedmaninoff' with the Queensland Symphony Orchestra. Thereafter he turned his artistic focus to visual art but still played piano and listened to classical music as a means of entering that zone where the mind came to the canvas uncluttered.

Primary school teacher training in 1954 was re-directed towards art teaching after he gained a two year scholarship. Study was now focused on technique – geometrical drawing and perspective. During this period he met commercial art student Shirley Rees and they married in 1958; thus to begin the supportive partnership that shaped the steady growth and maturation of William's artistic path in life.

Art lecturing in teachers' colleges between 1963 and 1989 provided financially for his steadily growing family, both human and animal, but despite sometimes long drives from work to home, he still produced a steady output of art.

Seeing a Pierre Bonnard exhibition in 1971 brought on a flirtation with domestic interiors for the next decade. Right: William Robinson, *Interior with Black Dog*, 1970, oil on canvas, QUT Art Collection Purchased through the William Robinson Art Collection Fund, 2013 but after 1979 the family's increasing menagerie of farm animals impinged on his artistic consciousness.

His affection for cows expressed itself first in 1980 with *Family Portrait (formal)*. Below: William Robinson, *Family Portrait (formal)*, 1980, oil on linen, QUT Art Collection Purchased 1980

Indeed, at his 1980 Ray Hughes Gallery exhibition entitled *William Robinson (cows)* people would 'pull up in their cars outside and look in for a laugh'. The cows might have caused amusement, but few people bought those works. He gave most of them away but gained something more important, for his cow pictures marked a definite change of direction.



Robinson developed a way of seeing chaos and painting it into his own way of order. This becomes evident on seeing the farmyard animal paintings, where the junk and the animals each have their relative positions which draw the chaotic parts into a whole.

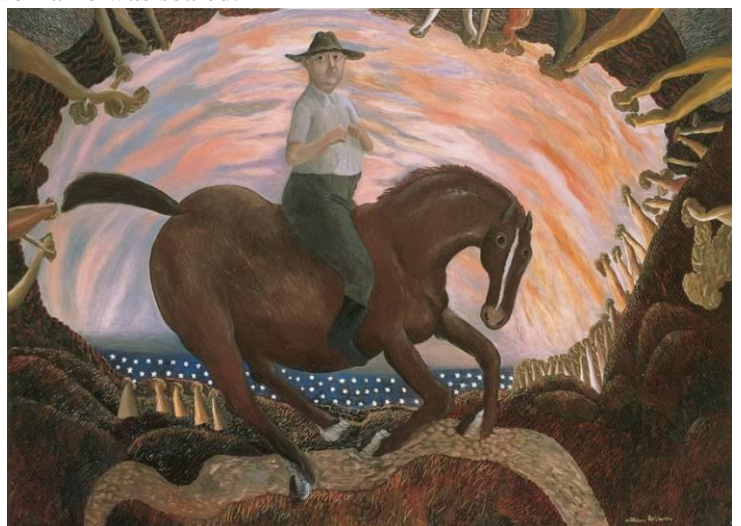
In 1983 he began the quest for the lucrative and popular Archibald Prize. His first win came in 1987 with the parodying *Equestrian self portrait*.

Below right: William Robinson, *Equestrian self portrait*, 1987, oil on linen, QUT Art Collection Donated through the Australian Government's Cultural Gifts Program by William Robinson, 2011

But when the news came by phone at 10.00am, saying he was required to be in Sydney that night, his first confused response was ' – but I've got the goats to milk'. The newspapers had a

field day with this, and Robinson's somewhat divisive fame was sealed.

In 1984 the family moved to a run-down farm in Beechmont. It was here that he would find a lasting spiritual connection to landscape, moving as it did through forest, granite outcrops, soaring cliffs, streams and waterfalls, breath-taking viewpoints of sky to sea and a wonderland of native flora and fauna. Chasing maverick cows through scrub or taking long walks with Shirley in that hinterland created an eye that saw landscape from every angle and moved him to transfigure this holistic vision onto the one plane of his canvas. Robinson took sketches and notes in the field, then carried, not just the vision, but the *emotion* back to his studio. By 1989 he had retired from teaching and become a full-time artist.





Tragedy has a way of hurtling us back into the deep things of the spirit. After the death of two of his children during 1991-2, William Robinson entered what he terms 'his dark period'. The human figures are gone, dark mountains lead the eye on to contemplate infinity.

Left: William Robinson, *Green Mountains*, 1992, oil on linen, QUT Art Collection Donated through the Australian Government's Cultural Gifts Program by William Robinson, 2017.

A devout Catholic, he saw man as eternally trying to reach and define God, although he concedes that aboriginal art, being so closely related to nature, is the nearest thing to religious art in our time.

Robinson is now in his eighties, still painting, living back in Brisbane, much awarded, and recognised as one of the most important of Australia's landscape

artists. In 2009, The William Robinson Gallery opened in Old Government House at the QUT Gardens Point campus.

Though much erudition surrounds the art of William Robinson, he answers questions simply. One might take along his quiet comment when visiting his Gallery:

'My landscapes are not a reflection of the natural world, but a search for what lies beyond. My pictures require quiet contemplation where the observer can bring something of themselves to allow the work to completely resolve.'

Right: William Robinson, *Eagle Landscape*, 1987, oil on linen, QUT Art Collection Purchased through the Vice-Chancellor's Special Initiatives Fund, 1990

Di Morris



ADFAS Day Trip 30/4/19: Old Government House, William Robinson Gallery and The Cube



Showers were predicted for the day but our intrepid group of 28 managed to dodge them at the crucial times without really needing the umbrellas and wet gear we carried. What a beautifully restored old building is Old Government House in such a magnificent location overlooking the Botanic Gardens, and in earlier and less built-up times, the river. A delicious morning tea of lamingtons, slices and fruit was set up for us in the old kitchen courtyard (left). Historian and curator Dr Katie McConnel gave us a lively and often humorous account of the life and times of this most significant heritage building.

When Queensland became an independent colony in 1859, it was built (of local Goodna sandstone) and completed in 1862 for the first governor, Sir George Bowen. It remained a viceregal residence until 1910, later housing the University of Queensland and then the National Trust. After a \$15 million restoration it was reopened to the public in 2009 as a key part of Queensland's 150th anniversary celebrations. As Katie recounted tales of other colonial governors and notable Brisbane-ites, we recognised the connection in the naming of some Queensland towns, suburbs, and landmarks e.g. Colonel Blackall, William Cairns, the Marquis of Normanby, Sir Anthony Musgrave, Sir Arthur Kennedy, Baron Lamington, and Sir Charles Chermiside, to name just a few.





The day-to-day running and hierarchy of the household staff was outlined. We learned that the reason for the low door handles was to enable the heavily corseted and smaller statured ladies of the day to open doors without having to bend. What we thought was just a squeaky floorboard was actually so designed – a ‘Napoleon Step’. With his back to the library door in the chair nearest the fireplace, looking down the long meeting table and out to the garden, the Governor would hear anyone approaching from behind unannounced. Clever!

Photos: Right – Katie talking to us in the library; L above – some of our members taking the glass-sided, waist-high, open lift instead of the narrow servants’ stairs or the main staircase



After a leisurely lunch and chat in the beautiful rainforest setting of the Gardens Club (left), it was back to Old Government House, where the entire first floor is dedicated to the permanent exhibition of the work of William Robinson, “our nation’s greatest living landscape painter” (photo above right). The gallery offers a series of exhibitions drawn from the QUT Art Collection’s extensive holdings as well as works from private collections and public institutions. Curator Sarah

Barron walked and talked us through the current exhibition, *Nature Imagined*. We were led to **The Cube** (acknowledged as one of the world’s largest digital interactive learning and display spaces) housed in the Science and Engineering Centre. Public Programs Officer Kerry Turnbull gave us a brief account of The Cube’s invention and functions. Three of William Robinson’s paintings had been projected onto these 2-storey touch screens and we were encouraged to ‘play’ and view close up the masterful brush strokes of Robinson. *Photo right: Sandi manipulating one of the giant touch screens*



Back in the gracious Drawing Room in Old Government House, we toasted the end of a great day out with bubbles. It was easy to imagine the voices and music of times past with Lady Diamantina Bowen playing the piano and singing as she entertained her guests after dinner.

Wendy Spencer (Coach Trip Co-ordinator)

OUT – THE CUBE

Located at QUT Gardens Point campus, [The Cube](#) is one of the world's largest digital interactive learning and display spaces dedicated to providing inspiring, and participatory visitor experiences.

Housed in the Science and Engineering Centre, The Cube is a hub for scientific and digital exploration. Co-located in SEC is the [Institute for Future Environments](#), which studies how our natural, built and virtual environments interact, change and converge, to find ways to make them more sustainable, secure and resilient.

The Cube’s interactive projects are displayed across 48 touch screens and explore concepts in Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Mathematics. The digital projects facilitate community education and have accompanying outreach programs for schools, QUT students, and the visiting public.

The Cube Studio is responsible for creating the digital programs that are displayed at The Cube. The studio team consists of graphic designers, game developers and technicians, and they often collaborate with QUT researchers, academics, and subject matter experts when developing projects.

The digital projects cover a wide range of subjects, such as learning how to program robots in *Code-A-Bot*, to testing different planets’ gravities in the *Physics Observatory*, or interacting with William Robinson’s paintings in *Nature imagined*.

Photo right: the William Robinson Holiday Program showing a view of William Robinson's *Tallabanna with cloud front 1998*, oil on linen, QUT Art Collection, Gift of the artist under the Cultural Gifts Program, 2005



The project *Nature imagined* is the result of

collaboration between the [William Robinson Gallery](#) and [The Cube](#). It saw Robinson's original paintings displayed at the gallery, and also digitally at The Cube. This unique interaction of art and science encompassed three of William Robinson's captivating landscape paintings of the South East Queensland hinterland.

By digitising several works from the exhibition, audiences can participate in a more immersive experience which allows for closer study of the works. Visitors can zoom in on each of the artworks to see intricate brush detail and gain insights into the artist's techniques. They can also discover fascinating facts about the local environment, watch video clips of flora and fauna, and listen to the ambient sounds of the local area.

To see *Nature imagined* and other Cube projects, visitors can drop in to the venue from 10am to 4pm daily. Information on which projects are screening each day can be found by checking The Cube's website. While you are at QUT Gardens Point campus, you can also visit [Old Government House](#) and [William Robinson Gallery](#) (open Sunday to Monday), and [QUT Art Museum](#) (open Tuesday to Sunday).

Kerry Turnbull, Public Programs Officer, The Cube, QUT Precincts

NEXT COACH TRIP: ART DECO AT TWEED REGIONAL GALLERY – WEDNESDAY 17 JULY 2019

Our next coach trip is to the Tweed Regional Gallery to see the visiting ***Art Deco – A National Gallery of Australia Exhibition***. Comprised entirely of works selected from the NGA collection, this exhibition provides superb examples of the diverse expressions of Art Deco.

The day trip will include a morning tea stop at *Gallery DownTown* Murwillumbah and the *M-Arts Precinct* (which has open studios on Wednesdays), and lunch at Tweed Gallery Cafe. It is also an opportunity to visit/ revisit the



Margaret Olley Art Centre and other exhibitions (Olive Cotton Photographic Award, Robyn Sweaney) on display.

Left: Napier Waller - *Christian Waller with Baldur, Undine and Siren at Fairy Hills 1932*

Date: Wednesday 17th July, 2019

Depart 8.30am sharp from Southport Carrara Netball courts carpark, corner Slatyer Ave & Benowa Rd

Cost: \$80 will include coach transfer, morning tea, lunch, gallery guides.

Register your interest now with Wendy on wspencer@onthenet.com.au or 0414 751831

All proceeds to Young Arts Projects

HARBIN SNOW and ICE FESTIVAL, CHINA



Harbin, home to nearly eleven million people, lies on the banks of the Songhua River in northeastern China. Originally a small fishing village with human habitation dating back to the late Stone Age, its population exploded with immigrants from the Russian Empire during construction of the eastern leg of the Trans-Siberian



Railway at the end of the 19th Century, and after the Russian Revolution of 1917. The name *Harbin* is a Manchu



word meaning 'a place for drying fishing nets' and in earlier times the traditional inhabitants of the area, the *Hezhen*, one of China's smallest



minority tribespeople, were called the Fish Skin Tribe or the Fish Leather People because their traditional clothes, mittens, hats and shoes were made of fish skin (photo below left).



Nowadays the world knows Harbin as the city hosting the biggest and most spectacular Snow and Ice Festival, and I was part of a group on a five-day visit.

With bitterly cold winters, the Songhua River freezes to a depth of 2.5 metres. Long blocks of ice cut from shallower parts of the river are used to create intricate ice carvings and enormous ice buildings solid enough to walk around and through.

Being so close to the Arctic, there is abundant snow which is collected and compressed into huge cubes which are then carved into enormous snow sculptures. Coloured lights embedded in the ice and aimed at sculptures create a large-scale fairyland. Work on the project starts in early December with the cutting of the ice and transportation by trucks and fork lifts to the festival sites, where it is stacked until needed (photo below left).

To see how this is done, Ctrl + Click this link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h6YS6bIMCHc>



Slabs of ice are frozen together with water to the desired height and then cut to size, if needed, with buzz saws (right). With hundreds of skilled workers and artists on the job, all is ready for the opening of the **Harbin Snow and Ice Festival** on January 5. The festival runs until late February-early March when the ice starts melting.



Winds blow straight from the Arctic and polish icy footpaths until they are treacherously smooth. We had been warned about this and had brought strap-on metal spikes for our boots, but still had to be careful to avoid slipping. Wind whistles down the river and between buildings, and layers of thermals and wind-resistant clothing are necessary. Afternoon temperatures hover around minus 16°C. Instead of storing frozen goods in freezers, people in Harbin leave them outside on their balconies!

On the frozen river there are sleigh rides pulled by horses and huskies. Children skim about on bikes with runners or slide down a huge slippery slide made from blocks of ice. A group of men and women dive and swim in a pool carved into the river ice but it has to be constantly de-iced around the edges with a spade.

As Harbin is a main trading centre between China and nearby Russia, furry winter gear and Matryoshka dolls can be bought from souvenir stalls. On sale everywhere are sweet potatoes roasting over tubs of glowing charcoal and skewers of toffee-covered pieces of fruit.

At night the temperature plummets to the minus 30s-40s and Harbin twinkles with fairy lights. Spotlights illuminate parks, buildings, trees, bushes, and icy roadside sculptures.

A cable car connects with Sun Island on the western side of the river. In summer the island is a recreation area with eateries, entertainment, picnic tables and a fairground, and ferries cross the river; but in winter, cars drive on roads across the river ice.



Sun Island Snow Sculptures

spreads over a large park on the island.

Sculptures vary in size from smallish and intricate (1 cubic metre) to massive walls of carvings many metres tall, long and deep. Artists from China and around the globe compete for prizes and international fame.

In daylight everything is white but at night, spotlights create a pastel coloured world.



Below left: Two ice carvers sculpted a block of ice into the head and shoulders of a young woman using long-handled, toothed implements for the initial shaping, and short handled 'razors' for the delicate smoothing. Centre: I am standing beside one of the artists and the finished ice carving.



Left: Three artists produced a catfish sitting on its tail (a salute to Harbin's fishing village origins). Two slender whiskers carved out of discarded ice shards were joined

to the head of the fish after the corresponding surfaces were shaved flat. The whiskers were placed on the head, water trickled over the joint, and snow packed around it until the join froze.



At Zhaolin Park in the centre of town, opaque white statues glinting in frosty sunlight, transform by night into ice sculptures of crystal clarity sparkling under coloured lighting. Transparent horses, warriors and mythical creatures entered in the international ice carving competition line pathways. Snow cottages, ice block pirate ships and bridges fill any spaces. Children slide down straight or spiral slippery slides from ice buildings.

The most amazing display is at **Snow and Ice World** on Sun Island (below right and also on page 7) where full size and scale models of famous buildings have been created out of freeze-joined blocks of ice. Lighting wired into the ice is switched on at night. Temples, pagodas and



a sphinx spread over the landscape along with the Chrysler Building, a Russian cathedral and a Forbidden City temple with ice-carved emperors. Most buildings have slippery slides. As well as ice bikes, chairs on runners and sleds, there's a busy ice bar and an ice disco with a live band.



Near Harbin is the **Siberian Tiger Park**, established in 1986 to breed the endangered Siberian tiger. Numbers have now increased from the original eight to the seventy or so we saw. These magnificent, powerful, big cats (left) roam free in large enclosures protected by high fences and radio-controlled double gates. Reinforcing wire-protected buses transport visitors through their domain. As our bus rolled by, it must have looked like a tasty meal on wheels to the tigers – crunchy on the outside but delicious inside.

On stepping into Harbin Airport for a journey that would whisk me from 31 below zero to 34 above, the last things I removed were my strap-on spikes. It had been a fascinating few days sharing winter with people who live life in the freezer.

Val Shooter

PHOTO GALLERY – from March and April Lectures and our very pearly 30th Anniversary May Lecture



