

Yarra News

Summer 2020 Vol. 31 No. 1

From the Chair

Summer 2020

At the start of a new year we have much to look forward to in a wonderful programme of great lectures, special interest afternoons, and excursions. The first excursion Buninyong Gardens and Begonias opens for booking on Friday 7 February 2020 at 10.00am and should provide an interesting insight into garden design. The first lecture of the year is available for members only however, for all other lectures, special interest afternoons and excursions guests are most welcome.

Please be sure to contact Norma Sullivan on 0419 120 939 at least two days prior to the lecture in order to book a place for guests. The special interest afternoons and excursions are booked through Trybooking. There are now 38 ADFAS societies Australia-wide as we welcomed Perth in September last year. Each of the societies are assigned to a circuit, Cook, Flinders or Hume, around which our overseas lecturers travel over the month of their stay in Australia. As we are the first port of call on the Cook circuit members of the ADFAS Yarra Committee meet the lecturer prior to the lecture day in order to make them feel welcome and address any questions they may have regarding their stay in Australia. We have three Australian lecturers a year at ADFAS Yarra who provide us with an Australian perspective on international and local arts related topics. You are welcome to attend any of the lectures offered by other societies for a small fee, but you will need to contact them first to check availability. All lectures are listed on the ADFAS website www.adfas.org.au under the societies tab.

Please be sure to wear your colour coded badge to all lectures this year, green for morning members and yellow for afternoon members. If you have any queries about your membership, please contact Berres Thom, 0421 160 918.

I look forward to working with the energetic ADFAS Yarra committee in 2020 and to seeing you all during the year.

Carol Johnston
Chair

Carol Johnston, Marilyn Elms &
Norma Sullivan



SAVE THESE DATES

Thursday 19 March 2020

Wednesday 1 July 2020

Wednesday 2 September 2020

Thursday 15 October 2020

EXCURSION Buninyong Gardens and Begonias

(information and booking details in this newsletter)

SPECIAL INTEREST AFTERNOON Summer Palaces of the Tsars

(Dr Alexey Makrov)

SPECIAL INTEREST AFTERNOON Are You Sitting Comfortably?

(Janusz K Slovoski)

EXCURSION Noorilim Estate: A Grand Mansion at Murchison

Forthcoming Lectures

Lecture 1

Thursday 20 February 2020

10.00 am & 1.30 pm

Paul Atterbury

Desert Island Antiques

We are delighted to commence our year with the ever-popular ADFAS favourite, Paul Atterbury. During his long and varied career in the world of art and antiques, he has been a collector, writer, lecturer, exhibition curator and broadcaster. Paul most frequently curates for the Victoria and Albert Museum in London. He has been a familiar face on BBC Television's Antiques Roadshow where he has been a member of the team of experts for over 29 years. Paul specializes in the art, architecture and design of the 19th and 20th centuries, but has many interests and enthusiasms outside this area of expertise. He has written or edited over 30 books including ones on travel in general and others more specifically looking at the history and function of canals and railways. ADFAS Yarra members may remember his fascinating lecture on The Canal Age. Paul is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts. Immensely personable, it is no surprise that Paul has lectured to every ADFAS society in Australia and New Zealand and it is a pleasure to welcome him back to Yarra again.

During his career, Paul has owned, handled, written and talked about tens of thousands of objects. If he were suddenly to be cast away alone on a desert island, which eight objects would he take with him? Which eight would you take? Paul reveals much of his life, his experiences, his memories, his passions, his opinions, his Antiques Roadshow adventures and much else besides, while offering a special insight into the worlds of art, antiques and collecting.

Lecture 2

Thursday 26 March 2020

10.00 am & 1.30 pm

Kathleen Olive

Norman Magnificence in Sicily

Dr Kathleen Olive is a literary and cultural historian with close to 15 years' experience leading tours to Italy, Spain, France, Turkey, Japan and the United States for Academy Travel. ADFAS members who have been fortunate to travel with Kathleen have returned with glowing stories of her extensive breadth and depth of knowledge and her charming and engaging personality. She has a strong personal interest in the visual arts, interior design, fashion history and contemporary fiction. Kathleen holds a BA with first class Honours and a PhD in Italian Renaissance literature and is an Honorary Research Fellow with the Department of Italian Studies, University of Sydney. For several years, she worked as a lecturer at the University of Sydney and the University of Technology, Sydney, teaching Italian language, literature and history. Kathleen continues to teach, as a national lecturer for ADFAS, and in adult education courses in Sydney. In 2015, Kathleen's edition of the Codex Rustici (a 15th-century commonplace book that she worked on with Nerida Newbigin, for her doctoral studies and for publication) was presented to Pope Francis on his first official visit to Florence.

The Normans in Sicily and southern Italy produced some of Italy's greatest treasures. The mosaics of Monreale and Palermo, for example, are a fusion of styles and a testament to the extraordinarily cosmopolitan society fostered by the Normans in the region. Their rule was not unproblematic however, and their presence in the south had repercussions far beyond their realms. Kathleen's lecture is sure to provide us with a much deeper understanding of the complex society of this Mediterranean island and will no doubt whet our appetites for travel to see for ourselves.

Lecture 3

Thursday 7 May 2020

10.00 am & 1.30 pm

Nirvana Romell

African Art: Art, Craft or Curio? An Introduction to Sub-Saharan Tribal Art

Nirvana Romell holds a BA in History of Art and an MA in English Language & Literature. She has over 17 years of lecturing experience on three continents. Born in Croatia, Nirvana moved to the UK in 2003, and has been working as a freelance lecturer, public programs consultant and tour director. Her specialties include the history of western art, including Balkan art and culture. She has presented art history courses and lectures, and has trained staff and volunteers, at the Manchester Art Gallery, the Walker Gallery in Liverpool, University of Manchester and many other arts and learning institutions. Nirvana organises and presents tours of permanent and temporary exhibitions across the UK and conducts study tours to the Balkans, Italy, Sweden and South Africa, many with Academy Travel.

In Africa, art has been used to replace a postal service, help with marriage problems and deal with unruly teenagers. Yet its seemingly exotic aesthetic is in many ways much closer to Western art than one may assume. This introduction to African art focuses on basic facts, general misconceptions and the influences of Africa on Europe and vice versa. It also promises to provide guidance for us as to how to look at African art and how to interpret and appreciate it.

EXCURSION: Buninyong Gardens and Begonias

Thursday March 19, 2020

8.00am for 8.15am prompt departure – 4.00pm approximate time

Cost: \$100 (includes coach travel, admissions, morning tea and lunch)

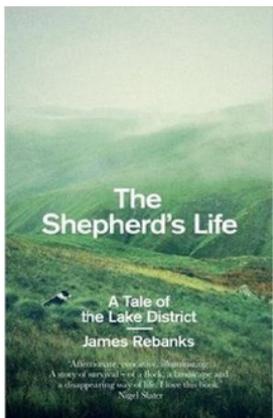
Spend an autumn day exploring this beautiful part of country Victoria, nestled beside Mount Buninyong, near Ballarat. Our first stop will be for a welcome morning tea break at the historic Piper's Pavilion, on the shore of Lake Wendouree and directly opposite the Ballarat Botanical Gardens, where members will have time to wander under the magnificent old trees and admire the splendours of the famous Ballarat Begonia Festival.

The first of our private gardens to be visited today is believed to be one of the oldest surviving domestic gardens in the state, 'Mount Boninyong'. Our hostess and guide, Celia Burnham is a direct descendent of the original Scottish settlers who arrived in the area in 1838 and began their garden in the 1840s. A gardening notebook from 1845 lists the plants selected for this garden and many remain today. A background picture of the domestic and social life of early Victorian pastoralists emerges as you stroll around this property. The garden is dotted with National Trust registered significant trees. The magnificent mansion was built in 1884 and in which the family continue to live today.

Our next visit provides a stunning and surprising contrast. Members will be invited to amble down a driveway bordered by impeccably maintained drystone walls and will be welcomed by architect owners, Anne and Berry King, to their stunning contemporary home, 'Back Lake'. This rammed earth home is a mere 10 years old and the garden was planned even before the house construction began. From the start it was considered a 'landscape' rather than a 'garden' and both house and garden blend as one and reflect their time and place in the Australian environment. Sources of inspiration and ideas include the Royal Botanic Gardens at Cranbourne and some early discussions with sculptor/landscaper Mel Ogden. Members will enjoy a delicious boxed-lunch, sitting in this wonderful garden - and perhaps enjoy taking a stroll to admire the over 90 species of birds recorded on this property. This day provides a unique opportunity to visit two very beautiful private gardens; both magnificent in their own ways and yet so totally different from each other.

Our coach will leave from Central Park, Malvern East (opposite 9 Kingston Street) at 8.15am sharp. There is ample all-day parking in the surrounding streets.

Please book using Trybooking – bookings open Friday 7 February 2020 at 10.00am or call Joanna on 0438 370 461.



THE SUNDAY TIMES NUMBER ONE BESTSELLER – and my personal favourite for 2019

'Affectionate, evocative, illuminating. A story of survival - of a flock, a landscape and a disappearing way of life. I love this book' **Nigel Slater**

'Triumphant, a pastoral for the 21st century' **Helen Davies, Sunday Times, Books of the Year**

'The nature publishing sensation of the year, unsentimental yet luminous' **Melissa Harrison,**

Some people's lives are entirely their own creations. James Rebanks' isn't. The first son of a shepherd, who was the first son of a shepherd himself, he and his family have lived and worked in and around the Lake District for generations. Their way of life is ordered by the seasons and the work they demand; and has been there for hundreds of years. A Viking would understand the work they do: sending the sheep to the fells in the summer and making the hay; the autumn fairs where the flocks are replenished;

the grueling toil of winter when the sheep must be kept alive, and the light-headedness that comes with spring, as the lambs are born and the sheep get ready to return to the fells. James Rebanks is a remarkable man – as he says, "I am the luckiest man alive because I get to live and work in the most beautiful place on earth". His simple life and his appreciation of what really matters is an inspiration and a message we can all revisit. He left school early but then taught himself cursive writing, studied in night school and went onto Cambridge University, graduating with a double first in history. He campaigned in the bid for the Lake District to receive World Heritage status. The book's themes of cultural connection, travel and romanticism blend smoothly with the earthy and heartwarming stories of the locals. It is reassuring to know that this world survives despite the influx of mass tourism. I know nothing about farming; nothing about sheep but I became an absolute fan – loved this book and listened to it as an audio as well. James Rebanks writes from the heart and with such empathy for his landscape and way of life. It is a gem of a book and not to be missed

“It is always an adventure to enter a new room for the lives and characters of its owners have distilled their atmosphere into it, and directly we enter it we breast some new wave of emotion ...”

Virginia Woolf

The Bloomsbury set was a group of witty, lively, articulate, like-minded, highly talented writers and artists, who came together during the first half of the twentieth century, the cutting-edge of the new modernist movement. They were for the most part men and women from privileged backgrounds so domestic matters rarely impinged on their creative endeavours. They were unconventional even by today’s standards but dramatically so by their own. The name “Bloomsbury” came from the area in London where they had their townhouses, in Gordon, Fitzroy, Bedford, Brunswick, Tavistock and Mecklenburgh Squares.



In October 1916, on the recommendation of her sister and writer Virginia Woolf who had already set up her weekend retreat at nearby Monk’s House, the painter Vanessa Bell moved out of London to Charleston, a modest farmhouse in East Sussex. Accompanying her and her husband Clive Bell were painter Duncan Grant, his “friend” David ‘Bunny’ Garnett, plus the Bell children, Julian and Quentin. Despite being homosexual, Duncan became Vanessa’s lover and the father of her daughter, Angelica – who eventually married her father’s “friend” David Garnett!! And that is just the tip of the sexual intrigues. Charleston was to be occupied by members of this extended family and their friends for the next 64 years. Charleston is perhaps the most famous surviving ‘Bloomsbury’ address, a delightful rambling farmhouse of captivating charm set deep in the English countryside.

During the First World War the isolated house was an ideal location for this unconventional household. Duncan and David were both conscientious objectors and Clive and Vanessa lived an “open and free” marriage. Charleston was conceived from the start as “a spiritual refuge from the tougher aspects of the outside world.” This was a time when homosexuality was a criminal offence and conscientious objectors needed to find appropriate practical work. Regular guests to Charleston included Roger Fry, eminent art critic, organiser of the pioneering Post-Impressionist exhibitions of 1910 and 1912 and founder of the Omega Workshops in 1913. The group was feminist, pacifist, free-thinking, sexually adventurous and deeply committed to art – rejecting bourgeois ideals and aiming for aesthetic experiences. Art took precedence over everything.

John Maynard Keynes came so frequently and contributed so much financially that he was allocated his own room after returning disillusioned from the post-war Peace Conference at Versailles. It was here he wrote *The Economic Consequences of the Peace*, possibly foretelling the rise of a Hitler-figure and the inevitability of another war. Other visitors over the years were to include T S Eliot, E M Forster, Lytton Strachey, Desmond and Molly MacCarthy and Benjamin Britten. They transformed the house into a safe country meeting place for important writers, intellectuals, philosophers and artists and where Vanessa said, “We did not hesitate to talk of anything ... you could say what you liked about art, sex and religion... it will be an odd life, but it ought to be a good one for painting”. From the moment they moved in, the artists began to transform this simple traditional farmhouse into a living work of art which has left the nation with a treasure trove of post-Impressionist domestic decorative arts. It ranges from fanciful ceramic light shades created by Vanessa’s son, Quentin, in the shape of upside-down kitchen sieves, fabulously decorated furniture, both antique and “junk”, painted, hand stenciled and wallpapered walls and superbly designed fabrics. They painted almost every paintable surface, including window frames, mantelpieces, doors and furniture. The rooms display works by Renoir, Picasso, Derain and Sickert. The glorious cottage and walled gardens were designed, restored and supervised by Roger Fry. The wealth of visual art to be seen at Charleston certainly contradicts the presumption that the Bloomsbury set was predominantly ‘literary’.

Charleston is a traditional 3 level farmhouse. The top floor or attic was used for Vanessa’s study and for staff bedrooms. Grace Higgins, who worked and cooked for the family for over 50 years, humorously referred to it as High Holborn, an area above Bloomsbury. This area is not open to the public.





Open to the public on the ground floor however is the dining room where meals were enjoyed, at a large, fabulously decorated hand-painted circular table, by some of the most creative minds of the day. Food could be scarce, and rationing was common during their time at Charleston but, like the group at Heide, guests arrived with gifts of food and wine (and on occasion, original French impressionist paintings, including a Cezanne!). Vegetable gardens and orchards were cultivated, and the wonderful Grace could work wonders. Conversation was the main course anyhow. The red lacquer and cane chairs are from the Omega Workshops and were designed by Roger Fry in 1913. Other rooms on this ground level include the study/school room where the Bell children were educated – the first room to be “decorated”. The gorgeous garden room/sitting room with French doors out to the walled garden is the spot where T S Eliot’s modernist poem *The Waste Land* was first read and explained by Desmond MacCarthy and where Lytton Strachey read aloud from his manuscript of

Eminent Victorians. This is also where, one summer’s afternoon in 1937, Vanessa told her daughter Angelica that Duncan Grant was her father, and not Clive Bell. I would love to have been a fly on the wall for the literary events but perhaps not for the family revelations! Duncan Grant’s large highly decorated studio is filled with treasures and atmosphere. One can almost sense his presence at the easel. This room leads conveniently into Vanessa’s downstairs bedroom and poignantly this is the room in which she breathed her last in 1961. Vanessa’s bold circle motifs are evident on her wardrobe and this distinctive style can be seen throughout the house, especially on the fireplace surrounds.



No wonder American wit Dorothy Parker commented that the Bloomsbury group “painted in circles, lived in squares and loved in triangles”.

On the upper level, visitors can wander through Vanessa’s bedroom/library, sympathetically but boldly painted by her lover Duncan Grant in a combination of most unusual colours, all of which seem perfectly stylish and chic today. On display next door is the bed Vanessa painted for her husband - this is found in the second bedroom. Every room is filled with books - in many languages, works of art, gorgeous ceramics, painted screens, cushions, lampshades, and curtains sewn in strips of different coloured and patterned chintz fabrics by Vanessa herself.

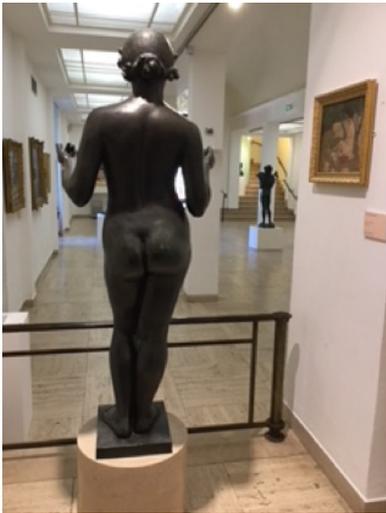
Artistic style simply oozes from every corner of every room.

Charleston is a fabulous house – with an exquisite garden, wonderfully decorated rooms and filled to overflowing with

the fascinating history of such an influential and creative group of artists, writers and thinkers of the modern age. The environments they created at Charleston and nearby Monk’s House are truly some of the most creative and beautiful spaces providing great insight to the thinking of these artists - my images give a small glimpse into, but do very little justice to, and fail to capture, the hive of creative energy, skill and talent in this house.

“Places explain people” David Garnett





A visit to this light filled 16th century seaside chapel underlines the fact that the delightful resort of St Tropez in southern France was an active centre of the pictorial Avant-garde at the start of the 20th century. Paul Signac tied up at the harbour in 1892 aboard his yacht L'Olympia and later made the town his home, encouraging other artists to join his St Tropez atelier. The beautiful vaulted interior of the Annonciade was converted into an art museum in 1955 when it was simply fitted with stairs leading to a second display level. The only other embellishments are superbly wrought iron grille doors and screens. When you add the early 20th century paintings and sculptures by such masters as Braque, Van Dongen, Vuillard, Matisse, Vlaminck, Seurat and Bonnard, you are assured of an unforgettable treat.

There are glowing portraits, interiors, seascapes and views of St Tropez itself or the hills inland as seen through the eyes of the pointillists, fauves and expressionists. This permanent collection is thrilling enough, but to add to our joy the temporary



George Braque Vase of Narcissus



Henri Matisse Interior at Nice

exhibition area displayed of some of Picasso's most arresting plates and jugs from the 1950s; marvels of economy, shape and line. When we visited on a sunny Saturday last May, the path alongside the little harbour with its array of overblown cruisers and yachts was bristling with overdressed socialites clutching their status handbags and small designer doggies. A few metres away inside the chapel-turned-museum there is a reverent silence as the very few visitors move silently past the beautifully spaced works, often pausing to look at the pictures intently from comfortable leather armchairs. As if that were not enough, the ivy edged windows reveal a succession of views of soft pastel coloured houses with terra cotta tiled roofs. On the other side the chapel's windows frame glittering scenes of the azure sky, rippling sea, and sleek yachts bobbing in the charming port. Who would not be inspired to paint or visit here?

Stories in Clay: Arthur Merric Boyd Pottery - Glen Eira City Council Gallery

Ruth Caple, Berres Thom and I enjoyed a wonderful floor talk given by Kendrah Morgan, Curator of Heide Museum of Modern Art in conjunction with the exhibition of the Boyd potteries. Kendrah's extensive research into, and her intimate knowledge of the remarkably talented Boyd family greatly added to our enjoyment of this fabulous exhibition. This exhibition celebrated the creative achievements of Arthur Merric Boyd (AMB)



pottery one of Australia's most innovative, significant and vibrant post-war potteries. Established in 1944 by artists Arthur Boyd and John Perceval together with philosopher and artist Peter Herbst, the pottery was located in Neerim Road, Murrumbena until it closed in the early 1960s. Commencing with the manufacture of functional domestic ware to meet post-war demands, the focus of the studio changed by the late 1940s with the production of more colourful, experimental and vibrant pieces. Works by major Australian artists Arthur Boyd, John Perceval, Neil Douglas, Yvonne Boyd and associated potters were on loan from the NGV, Shepparton Art Gallery and many private collections, including collections belonging to our own ADFAS members. The exhibition is beautifully curated with extensive and detailed background information available for each work and for the individual artists. Both audio and visual components added to the exhibition. Glen Eira City Council Gallery Curator, Diane Soumilas is always delighted to welcome ADFAS members to the exhibitions and to participate in the extensive program of public events. This gallery plays an important role in contributing to a rich cultural life for local residents, ADFAS members and the wider community.



YOUNG ARTS REPORT 2019



All members of ADFAS Yarra support young and emerging artists through their annual membership, and many through their additional and most generous donations each year. Even the smallest donation makes a difference. The ADFAS Yarra Committee works hard to maintain an excellent standard at all our events but at the same time we try to minimize expenses so that every extra dollar can be donated to worthy young and emerging artists. We would like to thank our members for their thoughtful and continued support.

RMIT Master of Fine Art Program: \$500 (2018) ADFAS drawing and painting award was presented to Serena Lumley in December 2018, too late to be included in our annual newsletter report to members last year. I thought members might like to read Serena's gracious acknowledgement of this prize – and see her delightful painting.

Dear Berres,

I was honoured to receive the ADFAS drawing and painting award this year. Thank you for your generous support of the RMIT Master of Fine Art Program. I am excited to have finished my studies and to be embarking on the next phase of my painting practice. The prize money will enable me to invest in some high quality painting supplies, and perhaps splash out on some of the pricier paint colours. Thank you again, Kind regards Serena Lumley

In 2019, ADFAS Yarra gave \$6,500 to a variety of young artists and to programs that actively encourage the connection between the arts and young people.

Australian National Academy of Music (ANAM) \$2,000 (includes 2018 & 2019)

This grant is awarded to a musician for an outstanding solo recital. ANAM is dedicated to the artistic and professional development of the most exceptional young musicians from Australia and New Zealand.

2018 Dale Vail (trombone) 2019 Jennifer Yu (piano) Molly Collier-O'Boyle (viola).

Craft Victoria \$500 Encouragement Award

In October I was delighted to attend the Victorian Craft Awards 2019 and to present our award to Lisa Waup, a young Gunditjmara and Torres Strait Islander artist and curator based in Melbourne. Members may have read the multi-page article on Lisa in the NGV Magazine last year. Committee members were also invited to tour the facilities at Craft Victoria where we admired some of the exquisite and stylish works created by the award-winning artists. The Victorian Craft Awards celebrate excellence in contemporary craft practice by artisans across Victoria. Presenting cutting-edge vision of craft in the 21st century, the Awards are an important survey of contemporary artistic approaches to ceramics, jewellery, metal, glass, fibre, textiles and furniture.



Berres Thom & Lisa Waup



Heide Museum – Mirka Mora Fund \$500

This cheque was presented when Senior Curator Kendrah Morgan addressed the membership at the June 2019 lecture. The funds are used to conserve and display Mirka Mora's artwork and memorabilia at Heide Museum of Modern Art.

Musical Society of Victoria (MSV) \$500

The ADFAS donation was granted to Jackie Hu to be used towards her overseas study. Jackie will attend a flute pedagogy course at the Trevor Wye Studio in England; only one of six places offered worldwide. Regular concerts are held in the Ewing Memorial East Malvern Uniting Church and ADFAS members are always welcome. The MSV has had a proud history since 1861 when it was established to protect the rights of musicians, to present concerts and to further

music education and the "general advancement of musical art". Today its focus is more on supporting young musicians while providing listening opportunities to members and the general public.

National Gallery of Victoria \$2,000 Awarded to NGV Kids and NGV Kids on Tour

Tony Ellwood wrote, "Your contribution will enrich the experience of visitors who otherwise may not have the opportunity to come to the NGV. Providing access for disadvantaged students, young people and communities to the NGV is a crucial aspect of the Gallery's programs. We are delighted that your contribution will go towards supporting our Relaxed sessions for neurodiverse visitors and our Community Connect program that welcomes new arrivals to the NGV. We greatly appreciate this wonderful support."

Patricia Robertson Fund \$1,000

A per capita donation is given each year to support this fund, named in honour of a long-serving Chair of AADFAS and the money raised helps to assist young conservators in their training. As a gesture of appreciation, The National Gallery of Victoria hosted an excellent lecture in July last year, Behind the Scenes, and all ADFAS members were invited to attend this fascinating lecture. Dr Carl Villers and his team presented short informative reports on the work they are doing in the Conservation department. They have undertaken a massive survey of every work held by the NGV noting the condition and restoration requirements of the individual works; digitized records for each work within the gallery; spent time carefully examining new technologies for the protection of the treasures held at our gallery and have worked collaboratively with CSIRO to develop a new varnish known as MS3.

Each year ADFAS Yarra offers two excursions, often providing an opportunity for participants to escape the confines of the city to discover the serenity of country Victoria. Our excursion in October last year was no exception. Despite a very chilly morning and inclement weather, an enthusiastic group of members and friends journeyed to Kent Farm, Red Hill, in the comfort of a warm coach.

On arrival we were drawn to a broad vista of well-established old gardens sloping down to the vineyard below. Three attractive yellow and white weatherboard buildings nestled in the tranquil surrounds – first the main house, festooned with purple wisteria in full bloom and fragrance, then the charming rental cottage standing at the start of a silver birch avenue. Finally, we arrived at a large barn backed by three towering noble oaks. A sumptuous morning tea was enjoyed in the barn, where recipes were exchanged, and bottles of wine were purchased, all before the welcoming wood-burning stove. Our hosts, Dr. Jill and Mr. Stephen Spargo, OAM, have been residents for only five years, inheriting this superbly designed haven along with a gardener who has cared for this garden for many years. There were many roses, sadly not yet in all in bloom, several mature fruit trees including an enticing cherry tree walk between the vines and a spectacular collection of shrubs. I just adored the huge variety of unusual trees displayed to maximum effect wherever I ventured; this creating a vision of verdure.

The next destination was the renowned Point Leo Sculpture Park. Thanks to the foresight and mammoth generosity of the Gandel family, a truly wonderful outdoor gallery has manifested itself on undulating land overlooking Western Port Bay. Each installation is displayed with the best possible backdrop the natural landscape could provide. There is a first-class collection of local and international sculpture to enjoy. This visit provided many opportunities for our group to mingle and discuss the merits of the works.

We continued to Flinders to visit La Battaglia, an amazing garden created by our artist hosts, Dr. Peter and Mrs. Barbara Labattaglia (Barb Labb). Our delicious boxed lunch was enjoyed sitting in a semi-rustic (‘new-build’) studio/barn. We approached this garden down an avenue of mature-looking gnarled olive trees - but were very surprised to learn that these specimens were only 15 years old, as was most of this garden. This property was created with artistic passion and enormous energy. There was a profusion of plantings in many areas, including a long arbor covered in scented roses, a healthy vegetable patch, and an abundance of striking water irises on the edge of the picturesque lake – from which a ‘symphony’ of frog sounds emanated. Yellow blooms predominated, creating a brilliant ambience on a rather gloomy day. We are extremely grateful to Denise Sarah for her expert organisation and planning, and to our hosts who provided such warm welcomes to their private oases.

