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THE LIBRARY BOARD OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

J. S. BATTYE LIBRARY OF WEST AUSTRALIAN HISTORY

Oral History Programme



an interview with

DR JOHN STANLEY BEARD

conducted in 1986

DEVELOPMENT OF KINGS PARK

conducted by

Alice Smith

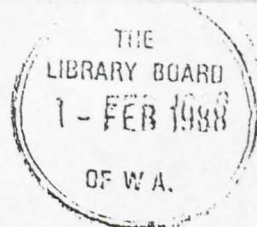
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THIS DEED made the 28th day of January 1988

BETWEEN : John Stanley Beard

The person named in the First Schedule hereto (hereinafter called "The Author")

AND

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- B. The subject matter of the Recording is of historical interest to the Board and to the Australian public at large.

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THE FIRST SCHEDULE

AUTHOR'S FULL NAME : .. DR. John Stanley Beard
AUTHOR'S RESIDENTIAL ADDRESS: .. 6 Fraser Road
..... Applecross, 6153

THE SECOND SCHEDULE

DATE(S) OF RECORDING

IN WITNESS whereof the parties hereto have executed these presents the day and year hereinbefore written.

SIGNED SEALED AND DELIVERED)

by the AUTHOR:)

John Stanley Beard
(author)

IN THE PRESENCE OF:)

Janet H. Dyer
(witness)

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Signed

K. W. Beard

Date

28 Jan. 1988.

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DR. JOHN STANLEY BEARD,
DIRECTOR OF KINGS PARK,
SEPT. 1961 to AUG. 1970.

The following is a transcript of a tape recording made during 1986: -

Talking about my days at Kings Park. It all began in the 1950s with a move in scientific circles in Western Australia for a botanical garden somewhere, particularly a botanic garden for native plants. The Royal Society seems to have taken the lead at the time and there was actually a Government committee appointed about 1956 on the subject which examined a whole range of potential sites in the metropolitan area and recommended Kings Park as the most appropriate, but nothing came of that at the time. In 1959 Dr. Bill Stewart who was director of the Los Angeles State and County Arboretum in California was in Perth on a Fulbright Fellowship and the opportunity was taken to get him to give some lectures, meet people, in particular to meet the Minister and the interest of the Government was aroused this time and because Kings Park had been indicated as the best possible site before, the Kings Park Board was involved and the proposal was made that a botanic garden should be set up in Kings Park. So Dr. Stewart was asked for a report and his report was accepted and the Kings Park Board was then asked to proceed and the first thing they did was to advertise for a Director. They advertised all over the world I believe, I didn't see the advertisement but one day I went to work as usual, I was in South Africa at the time working in the South African wattle industry in Pietermaritzburg and a colleague said to me, "did you see that advert. in last Saturday's paper", he said "I thought it was right up your street." I said "what was it?" he said "they want a Director to found a new botanical garden in Australia." I said "really?" and so I went home and got the ad. out and had a look at it and I decided that was just the thing that I wanted and my family pulled very long faces and said "but look, don't you remember, only three years ago you went to Australia to attend a conference and when you came back

You said that was one country I would never want to go to," and I said "Oh, but this is different, if I was to have the opportunity of creating a new botanical garden, I would go to Timbuktu for that." So I applied for the job and actually I got it, you see and so in due course we found ourselves packing up and I arrived here in September 1961 and my family arrived in January 1962 and at that time the Park was very thinly staffed, it had become so traditional that there was no money to do anything that you get to a state where you make a virtue of necessity and you claim that it's a good thing to do nothing about anything and there was even a strong body of opinion on the Park, a Society for the Preservation of Kings Park, which actually claimed that you should do nothing and that what they rather naively thought of as unspoilt virgin bushland in the middle of the Park and of course wasn't anything of the sort, ought to be kept like that and we had quite a lot of opposition from these people, it was a legacy really of the 'Pool in the Park' controversy of 1956 in connection with the Commonwealth Games to be held in Perth, the City Council wanted to build the Aquatic Centre in the Park and there was a lot of opposition to that and it was eventually built at Beatty Park instead. Anyway of course the main job was to see about the botanical gardens so once we had got some money voted and we could appoint staff, I needed a new Superintendent because the old one was to retire and we advertised very widely stating that high qualifications in horticulture would be required and we got I think about eighty applications, practically all of whom were totally unsuitable. We had for example, a Sea Captain with a Master's certificate; an Army Colonel who was retiring and thought it would be a nice kind of life; a restaurant keeper who thought the same and so on. Eventually I managed to get the very good man that I had known in South Africa to come over and join the staff, Arthur Fairall. He had been Director of Parks in the city

where I lived and I had a very high regard for his capabilities. The first one that I needed was a competent nurseryman and we advertised for that too and again we got a whole range of quite unsuitable applications until I was getting rather desperate and right at the very end I received a letter from South Australia and on reading that I said "ah, this is exactly the man I want." So I went over there and interviewed him and we got Ernst Wittwer to come over with his family and he I think was one of Australia's most highly qualified and competent plantsmen and we depended on him to provide the plants that were required of course to establish the botanical garden. But before plants you have to have propagating material and where were we going to get that? At the time, Fred Lullfitz was running a wildflower nursery at Cannington and he had had a partner named Alf Gray who had come over from South Australia having been a nurseryman for the Forestry Department over there and Alf Gray was very deaf and he'd not found it very easy to get on, so he had left and gone down to Albany and Alf collected seeds and I went to Albany and we managed to buy a large quantity of seed packets from him and we collected some ourselves and we persuaded Fred Lullfitz to give up his private nursery and come and join the staff as the seed collector and he was also extremely competent at that sort of thing. He did the most marvellous job over the years. And that first year, that is 1962, we opened the nursery in the Autumn and we sowed about 600 seed lots and then Ernst Wittwer came to me afterwards and said "I've just sowed all these seed lots, it's going to be necessary for you to tell me how many plants you need of each species," and I realised that I hadn't the slightest idea because I was a newcomer to Western Australia and so were the other senior members of staff, we had botanical names on the packets but these didn't mean anything to us and if the plant was a tree I might need half a dozen plants for the botanical garden and if they were annuals I would need five thousand so we had to do something about that so we rather hurriedly set to and make up a catalogue which was later published as 'Beard's Catalogue of West Australian Plants', in which all the known species were listed and we gave what

kind of plant it was, how tall it grew, what its flower colour was and so on and so forth and that took six months to get that compiled. We had a special employee who obtained about a third of the data from the retired Government Botanist Charles Gardner who had a draft, an unfinished draft of the flora of Western Australia that ^{he} lent us, and the rest was filled in by working at the State Herbarium with their cooperation and so we got this thing and it was a typed catalogue for the use of the staff but later on when the wildflower growers got to hear about it they said "oh, we want that" so it was arranged eventually that it be published by the Society for Growing Australian Plants in Sydney and it appeared in 1965 and had a second edition and I think a third one is now under revision and it's been current ever since. So, the botanical garden therefore started in that way. We established the nursery that first year and then we chose the site. The Board considered a number of different possible sites in the Park and I personally recommended the site that they did choose along the edge of the Bluff looking out over the river because its scenic possibilities would add a great deal to the value of the garden and we having chosen the site, surveyed it, laid out a system of paths and these were gradually levelled and grassed and had edgings put in. They were originally going to be hardened paths of some kind but to begin with we didn't have the money so we said, well we'll grass them and this was so popular that we never did anything else. The water-garden feature suggested itself because there was a valley in the gardens, dry of course, but one could lay on water to it and I forget just how it arose but a committee of women who were descendents of pioneers got together to raise money for a commemorative feature to pioneer women in Western Australia which led to the Pioneer Women's Memorial Fountain at the head of the water-garden which was designed by Geoff Summerhayes the architect and the statue was done by Mrs. Margaret Priest a local sculptress but that was something that was donated to the Park. They raised, I forget how much, it would be in the file, eight thousand pounds or something, for giving us this fountain and that paid for the whole of the upper pool and the statue and the lights;

fountain works and such like, the lower part of the water garden was put in by ourselves, Arthur Fairall designed the little channels and pools and I remember that he personally supervised the placing of every rock in those cascades down there and it was all ready about 1965 I think. We had an official opening in 1965. I said that we'd started the nursery in '62 so that the plants were ready for planting a year later and so when the winter of '63 came, we cleared the first section of the Botanic Garden and planted it up and the Chairman of the Board, Sir Thomas Meagher, planted the first plant and I don't know whether there is still a commemorative plaque on it, there was at one time. He planted a red flowering marri tree. That was of course like turning the first sod, you know, it was a commemorative occasion and two years later I suggested that the garden was far enough advanced for us to have it officially opened so we had a ceremony at the Roe Memorial at which the Premier, David Brand who was very very keen on the whole project, he came and declared it open and we got him to unveil a tablet on a large granite boulder which was later moved to another place where it is, I think, at the present time. We had of course a lot of fun with all this sort of thing. I went and found that granite boulder - am I being too discursive? that granite boulder on an outcrop in the forest on Brookton road and we got permission from the Forest Department to remove it. You wouldn't get that sort of permission out of C.A.L.M. nowadays, would you, and I asked the Geological Survey, what was the weight per cubic foot of granite and worked out what I thought the weight would be and we got Bell Bros. to send a crane up there to load it on a low-loader but there was something wrong with the computation because it just pulled the crane over. Eventually it was found to weigh 13 tons, I remember, instead of the seven & a half which I had estimated, but a bigger crane was sent up and it got stuck and so on and all sorts of adventures but anyway the boulder reached the Park and we had had its tablet fixed to it and at the time the Water Garden was just in being and the lawns were beginning to grow over and people were beginning to come and use it and the Botanical Garden went on

gradually being planted up for a number of years. Then in 1966 I think it was, the Premier did an overseas tour and he saw a number of parks while he was away, being as I mentioned you know, rather interested in this and when he came back he said publicly that parks in Western Australia needed a great deal of upgrading and it was time something was done about it. The Board sat bolt upright and striking while the iron was hot, we presented him with a development programme for the rest of the Park on the turn. I had been rather busy with the Botanic Garden up to then, I think all that I'd done in a major way was to re-design the Queen Victoria Memorial. I designed that crenelated granite wall that surrounds it but the development programme comprised the lake and playground at the University end of the Park, a lookout tower at the highest point at the top end and a broadwalk to connect the two, the whole thing being a sort of coordinated scenic feature. It needed the tower at the top end and you needed the lake at the bottom end and so of course we got the money for that straight away and I was afraid that we might have a lot of opposition to clearing the broadwalk but none was heard and when it was grassed over, people began to use that in a big way as well which rather surprised me because we'd had tracks through the bush part of the Park all along of course, many of them with slabs so that you could walk on them easily but hardly anybody used it whereas as soon as you had this open country with an objective at either end, people began to walk up and down and of course the number of people coming to the Park increased by leaps and bounds. Well I designed the Lookout Tower and the Lake at the bottom and Arthur Fairall later did the Children's Playground. Getting the tower was a little difficult, we got the Public Works Architectural Department to put in some designs which were in concrete - awful, and we got the Forestry people to give us the designs for typical forestry lookout towers built in timber which were nice but not quite what I was wanting and one day when discussing it with my wife and daughter over lunch, I think it was my wife suggested a spiral staircase arrangement based on something we'd seen in France and that was a marvellous idea so I went and did a sketch and I took

that to the Public Works Architectural Division and they said that was impossible, you couldn't design that. Well of course I didn't believe it, you know so I went back to the office and did the first complete set of drawings for it myself and showed it to the Board, who liked it and then we took it to a consulting engineer who of course said it was perfectly feasible and so the thing was designed and built privately by contract. The lake at the bottom was designed with the advice of the Metropolitan Water Board. Bob Hillman was the Chief Engineer at the time and he arranged for me to have some very useful advice on the expansion joints and other technical things, you know because the lake had to have a concrete bottom otherwise it would have just leaked away and that feature down there suggested itself because it was a natural depression with no outlet and at that time at the far end of the Park down there, there was nothing, and if we were going to increase Park developments and Park usage we had to get out down to that far end so the idea seemed to be natural to turn this depression into a lake. So I surveyed it and arrived at a design for a lake and so on. Originally it was intended to be a kind of wild-life refuge that black swans would use but immediately the model boat enthusiasts came and asked if they could use it and we said yes and of course that was completely the end of any wild-life usage. Children were in that pool and the island was originally designed, you see, so that the birds could have a refuge on it but there was never any question of that. Later on Arthur Fairall interested himself in the children's playground and every time we pulled out an old stump or some old tree in the Park he'd have the timber carted down there and we had a handyman on the staff - the handyman under his direction made those various timber constructions just off the cuff, you know. Well the way things are, once you've got something new and popular like that everybody else wants it and it's so difficult to be original, it has to be exactly the same. So we would receive requests for the drawings, of course it never worried me. The same thing happened with the wishing well in the Park. That was put in before my time by Rotary, you know the wishing well in front of the restaurant, I think it was some time in the 1950s and that was a popular idea so everybody else had to have

one and it had to be exactly the same. So there is an identical one in Albany and an identical one in Geraldton and so it goes on and we were still getting pressed for the drawings for that in my time, it was quite absurd. However that's I s'pose human nature. I always considered that the feature of the tower, broadwalk and the lake required a conspicuous building, let's say a pavilion, a park pavilion at the bottom end behind the lake, you know visually from the tower, behind the lake, to close the vista and on one occasion when one of these old hotels in Perth was being demolished I arranged for the Park to be donated the iron work from it, the iron tracery, so that it could be made up into an elegant park pavilion of that kind but unfortunately you know, you needed to take somebody up the tower and let him look down the vista to convince him that this was the case and as Sir Thomas Meagher was not sufficiently mobile I couldn't get him up there and anyway it was getting towards the end of my stay at the Park by that time so the thing lapsed. It was a great pity, I still consider that we ought to have had that. It would have been far better than that awful Bovell kiosk that's been built there since then. The children's paddling pools were put in there rather against the better feelings of the staff because our Chairman was dead set on that and he wanted to have mosaics at the bottom which were mosaics of Western Australian wildflowers and we told him that they would soon be covered with dirt or algae and you'd never be able to see them and it would be an impossible job to keep it clean but anyway he'd set his heart on that so we had to give in and I think they were designed and made in Japan and brought to the Park and installed there and no doubt the children enjoy them very much. Now what else ? the seed collector Fred Lullfitz, yes, he used of course to make long trips in the bush collecting seed and cuttings, propagating material. Well this was an opportunity for me to get to know the flora and vegetation of Western Australia too, so I took to going with him and we used to make a couple of major expeditions a year in that way with me going with Fred, other times he would go on his own or with some other member of the staff and in this way I got around quite a lot of the State. The first year that I went up to the North West in 1963, before they had

started any iron mining, that was a marvellous season that year. It was the best season in the outback in living memory and there were absolutely flowers everywhere such as I have never seen since. The salt flats at Cue, all those salt lakes and salt pans were completely covered with vines of *Swainsona occidentalis*, just an absolute mass of purple colour and we pulled up one plant and made an estimation that it had 5,000 flowers on the one plant and I've never seen it like that again, ever. It was quite an extraordinary year and of course me going up there for the first time I thought it was always like that, so I wrote that booklet "Wildflowers of the North West" and then Parlorcars got the book and thought they would run a wildflower tour on the strength of the book. This was a terrible disaster you see it was far too far between, in those days, between any places where you could stay that it meant that the bus had to travel more or less at top speed all day to the increasing frustration of the passengers who wanted to get out and look at the wildflowers on the spot and then while they were up there it rained and the windows became covered with mud and on the way back it was such a long way from Wittenoom to Mt. Magnet via Meekatharra that they had to travel all night in the bus - a day and a night in the bus, arriving at Mt. Magnet at dawn before the hotel opened and the hotel wouldn't even let them in to go and sit in a warm place until breakfast was ready. Dreadful - several people went to hospital at Morawa or somewhere on the way down including our secretary Nan O'Donnell who went along on it and it was she that told me all about it. So, that was the end of wildflower tours of the North West at that stage, you know.

End side 1 - tape 1

SIDE 2 - tape 1.

It's been suggested that I talk about my personal back-ground. I'm an Englishman and was born in England during World War 1. My father was a London architect and we lived in a dormitory suburb. He always took it for granted that I would become an architect and follow into his office and in fact I did start studying architecture at University College London but I just couldn't stand the pressure of the crowds of people and commuting daily to London and so I thought

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that perhaps life in the wide open spaces would be more attractive so I changed over to Forestry and went to Oxford and took a degree in Forestry and although at that time there was little employment available and the professor did his best to persuade me not to enrol for the course, I did and got a job in the Colonial Service and they sent me out to the West Indies. At the time you were asked to give an order of preference for Colonies that you would like to serve in. Everybody asked for Malaya at that time because the pay and conditions were the best so I applied for Malaya. I didn't get it which I've considered very lucky afterwards because I would doubtless have ended up in a Japanese prison camp whereas I was out in the West Indies all through the war, was told to stay there and so we did. I got married in 1940 and we started raising a family. After the war I thought it a good idea to take the family to a better climate and with the Colonial Empire obviously disintegrating I happened to see a job in South Africa advertised that I applied for and got so I went to the South African wattle industry as a silviculturist and worked on crop improvement in the wattle industry for fourteen years and the end of which time the industry had collapsed and nobody was interested in crop improvement any more the time was quite ripe for me to move on to Kings Park in Australia. You see I had become interested in South African native plants while there, just growing wattle trees was rather boring and just as growing teak trees in Trinidad had been a bit boring and I had taken an interest in other things such as plant ecology and in the West Indies I wrote papers and did a thesis on the vegetation of tropical America and I became interested in the taxonomy and so on of native plants in South Africa and also I took a hand with the local botanical garden which wasn't an official institution but was run by the Botanic Society of Natal just a private institution run by public subscription and I became president of the Society and helped to run the gardens for several years and that fired me with the idea that it would be rather an elegant profession to graduate to so when the time and opportunity offered I snapped up a chance to come to Kings Park and change my profession for the third time and become a botanist. Well reverting to what

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I was saying before about collecting trips and suchlike, we had a number of bits of fun over that from time to time. The retired Government Botanist, Charles Gardner was really rather a character and he used to do field trips still and worked on things that interested him. From reading the literature he became convinced that what we were calling *Kunzea sericea* at the time was not correctly applied and that down on the Recherche Islands at Esperance there must be ^{*Leptospermum*} *a/sericeum* discovered by LaBillardiere in the eighteenth century so he went down there and he found it on the mainland and it was a plant of great horticultural potential, a beautiful shrub, so he took cuttings and brought them back and established them in his own garden and I heard about this and when I was talking to him I said "look, I suppose you brought some material for the botanical garden too." Well he hadn't you see he was like that, and so I said "well, we'll have to go and get some," so I sent Fred Lullfitz and Ernst Wittwer down to Esperance to go and get it for the botanical garden and the naughty old man gave them the wrong directions where to go and look for it. Nonetheless they still found it and he was furious and lost interest in it and a similar thing happened on another occasion too. I went to see him once and he was looking at some *Eremophila* specimens and he said to me "now look at this one, now don't you think that's the most beautiful *Eremophila* you've ever seen?" Well actually I didn't because I considered I had found a better one at Wittenoom in Wittenoom Gorge but anyway I said "it's certainly a very beautiful plant, where did you get it?" Well it came from somewhere in the Cue district so I thought, Oh, we'll arrange to get that one too. Well Arthur Fairall was going up with Pauline for a field trip up that way and so I badgered Charlie Gardner to tell them where he had got this *Eremophila*. Well he wouldn't tell us. Eventually I got on the phone and I refused to take no for an answer and I insisted on knowing where this plant was found, so he gave me a whole lot of detailed directions which turned out to be completely bogus - completely bogus - and Arthur spent a whole day searching for it and of course the land marks just didn't match up in the least, I mean

it was thirty miles from where he said it was - they gave it up. Well next year I was going up that way myself, this time I thought to look in the State Herbarium where there were duplicates of those specimens of Charlie Gardner's and of course the label in the State Herbarium said that it came from Kalli Station in the Cue district so we went to this Station and told the lady of the house when we got there who we were and what we were interested in and it was a particular plant of special interest around here that we were looking for. "Oh," she said, "you mean the Eremophila?" So then the whole story came out as to how Charlie Gardner had come through there on an expedition with some people and camped on the Station and found it in the morning and the next day had come through and shown the specimens to her and she said "Well, the only trouble is, I don't know really where they were camping that night but it doesn't matter, the home paddock is full of it." So we combed the home paddock but it was such a bad season there was nothing. Anyway later on, you see, we asked her to send material to Perth but it wasn't any good anyway because you can't grow that sort of stuff, o utback material, in Perth/^{out of doors} as we discovered it's no good trying really. On one occasion Sir Thomas Meagher took a voyage on the State ship up to Darwin and back, or round Australia, or something, but anyway he called at the northern ports and he had friends and he arranged for some saplings of the boab trees, about half a dozen of them, to be shipped down to Perth so that we could have boabs in Kings Park. Well I didn't really like to tell him so but I didn't think that there was much likelihood that these would be successful anyway they were duly planted out with much flourish and they I think, lasted for a couple of ye ars living on the moisture which they already contained in the plant, made a few leaves occasionally but you know, the tropical things wont survive the winter, in general they wont - there are some naturally that are more tolerant than others. It's a great pity that we cant grow Eucalyptus miniata which is one of our most beautiful flowering eucalypts but I think no hope of growing that down here. There's quite a story attached to the old cannon that are mounted in the Park. The four of them

around the Queen Victoria Memorial were there in 1961 and then there's not very much to say about those except that the gun carriages had to be rebuilt from time to time but when I arrived at the Park I heard that there had been two very much more massive guns that had been buried in front of the War Memorial and they had apparently been brought to Western Australia for coast defence in 1881, never mounted, lay about at Fremantle, in 1905 they were set up in Kings Park as ornamental pieces and in 1929 when it was planned to build The State War Memorial, they were the wrong period, you know, the wrong war, they were in the way and they were not old enough to be of any great antique value so it was apparently decided to junk them and a contract was given to a scrap metal dealer to break them up and remove them and he did with the carriages, they had elaborate steel coast defence gun mountings on railway lines and he took all that away and broke it up but the gun barrels were so massive that he couldn't do much about it and he just dug holes and rolled them into the ground and left them there. So it seemed to me that these were now valuable antiques and we should get them back. It turned out eventually that they were - had the date 1865 on them and they had been British Naval guns of that period and rather interesting because it was an intermediate period, they must have very quickly become obsolete. They were muzzle loading but they were also rifled and fired explosive shells. Well I met an Army Major who was interested in the history of old ordnance in Western Australia and he brought the Army up to the Park with mine detectors and they went over all the area in front of the War Memorial and couldn't locate anything to our surprise, this was odd. This got a bit of publicity in the paper and first of all various curious people turned up who claimed to have the power to divine the presence of metal and one of them, for example, who used a piece of bent wire in his hand rather like a divining rod for water, he showed me how he'd got the exact spot. He walked past the place and when he got there the wire swivelled around in his hand and pointed to it and he put a peg there then he went over there and came back again and when he got to this spot the wire swivelled round suddenly, you see and he'd got the actual shape of the gun pegged out on the ground. Well, we were probing with long thin iron bars to try to

find these guns and we probed this spot and there was absolutely nothing there at all and he was terribly disillusioned, he couldn't understand it you know. He had discovered this mysterious power in himself about six months before, and then there was another one who could also divine the presence of oil and he could tell W.A.P.E.T. exactly where to drill for oil in Western Australia and it was such a tragedy they wouldn't take any notice and millions of barrels of oil were just being wasted like that and he put a pot of oil in the inner office and demonstrated to the girls in the outer office how he could divine its presence but again when it came to the gun I'm afraid he was equally powerless and then as a result of the publicity up popped the original little old Jewish scrap metal dealer who had had the contract to junk those guns in 1929. That is about forty years before, and he said "Yes, I show you, I show you the place" so I said "Fine let's go" and we went along there and we stood in front of the War Memorial and I said "Right, now just where did you bury them ? " "Oh, well it's different now you see." I said "You must have some idea where you put them." "Well, there was one on either side of the Monument " I said "Well, now look, they can't have been because they didn't build the Monument until after you had cleared them away." "Oh, but there was something there, I sure " Suddenly I realised that we had been looking all the time in the wrong place. They weren't on either side of the War Memorial at all but on either side of that rotunda which is a bit further to the right there which had been built of course in the 1890s and was there at the time and the guns must have been put there, that was the Park lookout at the time, they were on either side of the scenic feature. So we got up metal detectors again this time it was the Observatory with metal detectors, and sure enough of course immediately located both of these gun barrels so they were dug up and hoisted out, taken down to the yard, sand blasted to get the rust off and they hadn't really deteriorated a great deal in forty years in the ground and then of course they had to be re-mounted. I got the Army Major again and he produced a little model of a gun on a gun carriage with wheels, you know and we decided that as coast defence mountings it would have had a slide instead of wheels so we actually made the carriages up in our workshop in the Park and we had the gun barrels reconditioned and put on top of the mountings

and then the British Aircraftcarrier "Hermes" came into Fremantle and we borrowed the Royal Marines' Band and they came up to the Park and they played in the Park on a Sunday afternoon and then they marched down to the spot where the guns are with two thousand people looking on and we fired a blank charge. I had four Officers dressed in Naval uniform of the period that we had borrowed from Gilbert and Sullivan, from H.M.S. "Pinafore" and they did a count-down and fired a blank charge from this gun- it was marvellous, particularly as the first time it failed to go off. It turned out that kids had been tampering with it. It all had to be re-fused and then went off the second time. We had a lot of fun with that. What was the other ? The Floral Clock. This had been installed in the Park just before my time on the initiative of Sir Thomas Meagher himself who had been to Edinburgh and seen the floral clock they had and resolved that the Park should have a similar one and so it was installed there and has been an interesting feature ever since. My only part in the matter was to have the hands remade. They had originally, metal troughs as hands that were filled with flowers and this didn't work very well. They were too thick and the flowers, with the circulation of the hands. So it was arranged that we would ^{interfered} have two wooden hands substituted and these were carved by a Polish woodcarver that I had discovered named Adam Szczepanski and he made a lovely job of those, I think they are still there aren't they, yes. Being made of jarrah they will last probably indefinitely. The Botanical services of the Park were something that were a very big problem right from the start. On Dr. Stewart's report which had established the Botanical Garden, the Western Australian Herbarium was to be transferred to the Botanical Garden at the Park. The Government had agreed to this but by the time I arrived in Western Australia, the Department of Agriculture had apparently got a new Director and had decided that this Herbarium was going to leave their Department over their dead body and so we were left with having to go to the Department of Agriculture for identifications. Well they were hopelessly understaffed. I think they had about one and a half botanists in those days and it was quite impossible, I

said "Well, we must have our own taxonomist," and this was refused but of course there are ways of getting round these things, we couldn't have a staff post for a full time taxonomist but we could employ any number of part time taxonomists if we liked because those would only be wages staff and not under the control of the Public Service Board. So this is the way it had to be done. Pauline Fairall the wife of Arthur the Superintendent was in fact a trained taxonomist who had worked at the National Botanic Gardens in South Africa so she was glad to take on a part time job at the Park and we found a volunteer, a Mr. Grosvenor Selk who, while he had only an amateur knowledge of the subject previously, was very keen and very willing to learn and became trained as a taxonomist which I believe he still continues to this day to give advice on the subject. Without the work of these two it would have been impossible for the Botanical Garden to function because obviously a botanic garden for native plants which is bringing in material all the time must have accurate identifications on what it's dealing with. You see we were making major field trips collecting a big range of material and not only the plants that were grown in the Park but of course there was the general knowledge of the Western Australian flora and vegetation which we had to acquire and I think I mentioned earlier I used to make two major field trips a year if possible. Well one of my previous interests had been mapping vegetation; I had done this in the West Indies and as there was practically no information of any sort in Western Australia in the botanical field in those days, no vegetation maps, I mean, how could there be, there weren't even any accurate topographic maps or road maps at the time I first came to W.A. in the early 1960s. I set to work on a project to map the State's vegetation with which I found some assistance at the Department of Geography at the University where Professor Webb was keen and we eventually had the cartography done there under the supervision of his department and it was a project which took me seventeen years eventually and I mapped the plant cover of the whole of Western Australia and in fact I think I can definitely say that this has resulted in mapping a far larger slice of the Earth's

surface than has ever been mapped by any one person at that scale. Two and a half million square kilometres. It took quite a long time of course, I finished it well after I left the Park. I went on working on it in the later years after I retired and I was working on that full time until we completed it.

The Wildflower Exhibition: When we first came to Western Australia, there was an annual wildflower exhibition held in the Spring in the town hall which was run for charitable purposes by one of the churches. I think speaking from memory, it was the Methodist Church and people sent in wildflowers for display from country districts and it was held indoors in the town hall, the old town hall, and consisted really just of, you can't even call it an arrangement, a whole lot flowers in jam jars and we didn't really think very highly of this and early in 1964 Arthur Fairall said to me "Look, I think we really ought to be showing people here what a real wildflower show is like." You see there is a tradition of this at the Cape in South Africa. A lot of towns stage, or used to, an annual wildflower show which was a big tourist attraction. The most famous was at a little place called Caledon which had its own wildflower reserve and special trains would run out to this place in the Spring for the occasion you see. And so Arthur set to work, he did all this, it was planned that we would put up a marquee especially, made of scaffolding poles covered with hessian and the wildflower material that came in would be arranged in a natural looking manner with blackboys and some small trees and this, that and the other; and that year at the time I went away to attend the International Botanical Congress in Edinburgh and Arthur put the whole thing on, I just returned to see the last of the fun at the end, it was marvellous, he made a terrific job of it and of course it was so popular that it was put on year after year after that and gradually the amount of cultivated material increased and special features like a waterfall were introduced and so on and the sore point was that we were not allowed to charge for admission because of this curious tradition that everything in Kings Park should be free. There had been some kind

of public protest action about this in past years and there was one gentleman who claimed that he was entitled to set foot in every hole and corner of Kings Park if he so chose, you know and I said "Well, he'd better not let me catch him inside the ladies toilets." Although of course The Parks and Reserves Act gave the Board specific powers to exclude people from parts of the Park if they wanted to, as a result of the Pool in the Park controversy, Parliament had passed a special Act to forbid the Pool and also forbid an orchestral shell or any kind of setup from which, I think the expression was 'The public are excluded upon payment of a fee', you see the Board felt that we were not allowed to charge for admission and I thought it was absurd because people would very gladly have and this would have paid the cost of the show, anyway there it is, one has these problems.

The Karri Log was placed in the Park in 1958 which is before my time and I'm not really familiar now with the exact details as to how it got there, whose idea it was, of course it would have had the cooperation of Bunning Bros., to bring it up. In my time we merely looked after it, we had to spray it with preservative at one stage because it was felt to be rotting a bit. I was able to get the Californian Redwood log opposite after we had created the Californian section of the Botanical Garden because one year I was reading the annual report of the Santa Ana Botanical Garden in the Los Angeles area . . .

End Side 2, tape 1 - continued tape 2.

Speaking further about the Californian Redwood log, when I read in their annual report that a lumber company had donated a log to a botanic garden in California, I wrote to the lumber company and told them all about our botanic garden here and our Californian section and asked if they wouldn't give us a section of log to put in it and they very kindly responded to this and did and shipped the thing over to us entirely at their expense and we received that log section shipped to Fremantle and brought it up to the Park and the annual rings were counted. I was quite surprised that our Chairman, Sir Thomas Meagher had never heard of trees having annual

rings but then of course eucalyptus doesn't have distinct annual rings and people here are not used to it in the same way that they are in the Northern hemisphere where it's taken for granted. We actually counted the rings I think, back to the year 1167 which was gratifying because we could put Magna Carta on the record and the little tabs with the dates were marked on the thing. The Karri Log by the way had originally had a plantation of karri trees established next to it and they grow quite well in Perth, surprisingly enough if they're planted although they wouldn't reach the size that they do down South but these had obviously been too root bound in tins before they were planted out and they didn't develop proper root systems and they kept falling over and at one stage they were supported by a whole system of guy wires and looked rather peculiar. I'm not sure whether we removed them all in the end or whether there are still some left. Both the Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh planted each a commemorative tree in the Park in 1964 on the occasion of the, no sorry '54, on the occasion of the Royal visit to Australia after the Coronation and the Queen's tree, original one, is still there to the right of the War Memorial behind the Jewish War Memorial but the Duke's tree blew down in 1962 just before we were having Commonwealth Games in Perth that year when the Duke was coming to preside over the Games. It turned out that his tree again had been planted out in a root bound condition and had an unsatisfactory root system so it was arranged that we would invite him to the Park and that he would plant another tree and so on, to replace the other one, so he kindly obliged and we had this little ceremony with the members of the Board and the Duke and so on and he planted his tree. The following day I arrived at the office and there was a reception committee to greet me of members of the staff all looking pale as death and they said "the Duke's tree has disappeared." I said "Well for Christ's sake go and plant another one before anybody notices." Of course they did that but do you know, we had to replant it four times. Somebody or some people or something were trying to wreck that and they came and pulled it up every night and threw it away. Anyway of course we got

a tree, it's not the one the Duke planted but who cares, you know. In the same way the centenary avenue of the lemon scented gums along Fraser Avenue, every tree is marked by a commemorative tablet saying it was planted by Mr. So-and-so in 1929 but that is a lie, they were not, you see. They had had an avenue of red flowering gums there planted in the 1890s which had got to suffer so badly from canker that they decided that it must be scrapped and replanted because they were widening the road at the same time but they replanted it again with the same red flowering gums which were planted in 1929 by the people that it says did, you know and after a few years these were also suffering from canker disease so in 1939 I think it was, or '38 or something like that, eight or nine years later, they were whipped out and replanted with the citriodoras that are there now and have been such a great success - a most magnificent avenue but they're not the trees that were planted.

The Main Roads observation pavilion, now called I believe, the Education Department's pavilion, was built as a piece of political manœuvring which I personally disapproved of as it is the kind of feature that in my opinion ought never to have been built there. it was at the time that the Narrows interchange was under construction and there was quite a lot of public criticism of filling in of the river - were all these freeways and twirliways necessary - and perhaps the Main Roads Department felt sensitive on the score and they wanted to have a display pavilion where they could prominently display a model of the whole interchange when completed so they approached the Board and wanted to be able to be allowed to build this thing. I thought it was a gross waste of Government money and after all, what use is it, it's only an eyesore but the Board thought it politically expedient to agree, so there we are, that's fair enough, you know, political expediency always has to be considered. There's a little story I remember about the Society for the Preservation of Kings Park which is amusing. One year teenagers took to driving wildly round the Park at night and wrapping their cars round trees, a spate of this you see, and of course there was public concern what should be done about it and we got a nice little letter from

the Society for the Preservation of Kings Park suggesting that the remedy surely would be that the Park gates should be closed at night and this is particularly interesting in that the Park gates had been taken away in 1934, approximately thirty years before and they had never noticed which I thought showed how often they actually went to the Park.

It may not still be known today that for a very long time there was great difficulty in getting any money for the Park. I suppose from about World War I onwards, it was just a luxury that you couldn't get money for. In the 1920s the President of the Board was Mr. Lovekin who was, I understand, a wealthy newspaper proprietor and he appears to have been paying out of his own pocket each year to keep the Board solvent. The Board would end up each year with a deficit and then mysteriously they would start the next year all square and it is said, there is no actual record I think, that Lovekin was just putting in a cheque for the difference which was very good of him and it was because of this chronic shortage of money that when the Botanical Garden was mooted, Sir Thomas Meagher grasped the opportunity with both hands as being some worthwhile development and improvement and an addition to the Park that he could actually get Government support for and so they went for that whole-heartedly but unfortunately, I'm afraid nobody really quite knew what a botanical garden was supposed to be you see, as I say, it was really only a vehicle for getting some embellishment to the Park and what they really wanted was a tourist attraction and of course I came here on the understanding that this was to be a botanical garden, which is an institution - is something which contributes to research and education. It's a scientific institution and I had never succeeded in selling that idea properly to the Board at all and the difficulty we had in getting taxonomists appointed you see, is just a symptom of the whole difficulty. We were operating the whole time with just a skeleton horticultural staff and we were just not equipped to go out into anything further into research or anything. Towards the end though if I remember I did manage to make up a special case for the employment of a

Miss Barrow as a Botanist when she came along and said she was looking for a job and for some reason the Public Service Board agreed, so we did have a post after that and she was followed by Lesley Pousfield and so it is true to say that in that way, at the end, we did have a research botanist on the staff but it never came to what it really should have. If it had been built up in conjunction with the State Herbarium as all the other botanical gardens in Australia are, then we could have had something that could have really been a world famous institution. I think a great opportunity was lost in that respect.

I have read this transcript and agree that it is a true rendering of my reminiscences which may be of some interest as a historical record.

Albion - Feb. 12th 1987