

SD This is an interview with Chrissy Sharp on 11th March 2021 at her home in Balingup. My name is Susan Doherty. Thank you for agreeing to be interviewed Chrissy. By way of introduction, Chrissy has had a distinguished career, which has seen her complete a PhD in politics and be an early activist in the Campaign to Save Native Forests. She went on to become the first woman to be appointed to the Environmental Protection Agency. In 1996 she was elected as the Greens Party representative in the WA Parliament Upper House, holding the balance of power, until her decision to stand down in 2005.

With her life partner, Andrew Thamo, Chrissy has lived and worked on their Small Tree Farm in Balingup for 40 years. Here they raised their two children. Since they conceived of the idea in 1980, Chrissy and Andrew have worked on and supported the Golden Valley Tree Park in Balingup, which has become the largest Arboretum in the State.

This interview will focus on the interview of the Tree Park and Chrissy's part in it.

CS Thank you very much for taking this on Sue. Its very kind of you to become yet another Golden Valley Tree Park volunteer, in an unusual capacity. I just want to explain to the listener, that last year, in 2020, 8 months ago, with stage 4 cancer, and it's not long since I completed a very aggressive treatment through chemotherapy, so I do feel in looking at my notes, I am not quite the woman I was a year ago, and I'm not quite as dynamic and as articulate as I might have been if we'd done this a little earlier, but I will do my best. Thank you.

SD Chrissy, can you give us your impression of Balingup in the late 1970s?

CS Yes, well, very different from Balingup in 2021, that's for sure. I had only arrived in Western Australia in 1972. I had travelled the world, I'd lived in Paris, and I was born in London. So, I'm no real expert on the South West, and the demographics, but my understanding is that the land use in this Blackwood Valley country had started to change after the Second World War, because after the Second World War, there was a lot of pressure on primary producers to increase their productivity, by - for example, if they had orchards - by doing irrigation to increase their crop percentages. That pressure led to the construction of large dams for irrigation and so on. And, what that led to was the challenge of the

geology in the Blackwood Valley, with its granite country and its diorite dykes which give it its lovely undulating and steep hills. Also, the parent rock tends to release salt, so quite often those dams were a little bit saline and weren't so suitable for irrigation. So, there was a slow process of decline in intensive horticulture from that Second World War time onwards, whereas, further to the south around Manjimup, and further to the north, around Donnybrook, they didn't have that problem and that is why horticulture tended to thrive there and gradually grow, where in the Blackwood country, there was a decline in agricultural productivity. Then something much more dramatic happened, and that was that in 1973, Britain joined the EU. That completely changed Britain's import policies, and many of the primary produce imports from the South West, no longer took place, so there was there then a quick decline in cheeses, for example, the Balingup Cheese Factory, and of course, in fruit, which would be packed here in the South West, and then shipped to Britain. In fact, this building where I live, [the residence at the Small Tree Farm, Jayes Road, Balingup] and we are sitting to talk this morning, was an apple and pear packing shed. There's lots in Balingup that have been reinvented, like the cafe in town, was a packing shed. Across the road, where the real estate office was, [Chris Reynold's Ray White franchise on the corner of SW Highway and Brockman Street Balingup] and my electorate office was, [Brockman Street Balingup] that was a packing shed, so around here, there are several in Bridgetown; the whole place is littered with what used to be packing sheds. The net effect of that was a decline in population, but then, in - and I'm not quite sure what year that happened - but there was a decision made at federal level to support state governments establishing pine softwood pine plantations to boost our timber production and so with the federal funding assistance, there was a lot of money to buy up some of these small properties which were now struggling for those big picture reasons. So gradually, through the 1960's and 70's a lot of land was transferred back to State Government from private ownership, and pines were established.

Golden Valley Tree Park came into this story of this large-scale land use change rather at the end of the - probably 20 years - of transfer of land and the establishment of pine plantations. By now there was quite a lot of opposition, locally, from the remaining population - I think for a couple of reasons, one is that these were people who had, if not themselves directly, perhaps their parents, had worked very hard to clear land and for them to see it all go back under trees again was quite heartbreaking, remembering the struggle and the hard work that was involved with that. There were issues around fire hazard from bringing plantations near to town. By the time Golden Valley Tree Park had been purchased - the area which is now Golden Valley Tree Park had been purchased - in about, I think, 1977, 76, or something like that, just before Andrew and I arrived in Balingup - that land was very close to the

town of Balingup, and there was already a bit of a movement in opposition to any more land transfers for plantations.

So, meanwhile, the Forests Department had bought two former farming properties, one was Yungerup and the other was Golden Valley - they were their farming names - with the intention of course, of establishing the pines. So, there was a bit of a standoff between the Forests Department, which was still on a mission to establish more timber production, and local opposition to that.

Andrew and I had arrived in Balingup in 1978. I'd got to know Balingup through my first boss in my professional career here in WA, who was the renowned historian Professor Geoffrey Bolton. Through working with Geoffrey, I became personal friends with him and his wife, Carol, and they owned a cottage in Balingup, which they would kindly let friends use when they weren't using it, and that's how I got to know Balingup, fell in love with the place, and so when Andrew and I got together and we decided to shift to the south, out of Perth, and stop being forest campaigners, and do something more positive with our energy, like grow trees, we thought of Balingup, and we arrived in 1978.

Meanwhile, the Shire was having to deal with this opposition to this land transfer, and this particular parcel of land, just to the south of Balingup, and they had - this must have been going on for a while before we got to town - they had instituted changes to the town planning policy, which prevented the establishment of pine plantations within 2 kilometres of a townsite. So, this new regulation was in conflict with the freehold title held by the Forests Department, as they were then called. They had bought this land, and this fell foul of this new regulation, because the land was within 2 kilometres. What to do about all this?

It would have been - let me look at my notes here - I imagine that it was in either in 1980 or perhaps early 81, there was a large public meeting organised by the Shire in the Town Hall in Balingup, and that was when a decision was made for the Shire to devote their energy to transferring the land, sorry, I'm getting the words wrong, it's not transferring the land, the land would still be owned by the State Government, but it would be dedicated as an arboretum.

SD So, how did the idea of a tree park come about?

CS I'm laughing here, because both Andrew and I think 'it was my idea', 'no, it was my idea!' I think it was pretty much a joint effort. When we first came to Balingup, we used to go out to that land, the land that was now the subject of this conflict. It was in limbo, there was no one managing the property, the Government hadn't moved in there to establish anything and it was deserted, but it had a great apple orchard, and we used to go there and pick apples. One day, while we were doing this - and we had noted the other trees that had been established on the property - and with our background, bearing in mind we had just moved from the city a couple of years earlier, and Andrew had established the small beginnings of a tree nursery - was growing trees for sale - and we were very much from that 1980's culture, at the very beginning of it, long before there was Greening Australia, or other institutional supports - we were at that first wave of believing that trees could save the world, and that was the kind of culture, counter culture of the 80's, if you like. Meanwhile, I had, a year earlier, been on a trip back home to England, and during that trip to visit family, I had also visited Weston Birt Arboretum, in the South of England - which is the National Forestry Commission Arboretum in Britain - and was totally inspired by this place, and remembered some amazing tree experiences, like the avenue of old growth Lindens in mid spring, and the *Cercidiphyllum Japonicum*, the Katsura trees; just the tree treasures of that place. So; there we are picking apples, scrounging apples, and looking at the trees that had been established, on both properties, Yungerup and Golden Valley - to us it was pretty obvious that there was potential here. We knew there was good soil for tree growing, that was why the Forests Department wanted it. We knew that there was already on that site, the makings, the beginnings of an arboretum. There were over 20 species already established, and some of them were now very fine trees, so you already had a potential picnic site and so on, to build from, and so that's how the idea grew, one morning in Balingup, in 1980.

SD What about the BPA (Balingup Progress Association)?

CS I was really scratching my head yesterday, trying to remember exactly what happened with the BPA, and I don't have access to their minutes. BPA was just being formed, and I remember going to their first meeting, which was in the kitchen at the Town Hall, and there was quite a large group of people there. I think there had been a Progress Association some 20 odd years earlier, and it had fallen into a demise, and now there was a movement to get it going again. There was a discussion, sitting round there in the kitchen, what would a Progress Association do? I can remember, you know, just the memories - you remember these snippets - and I gaily chirp up and say 'We could plant trees in Balingup', and someone behind me said - an old farming voice, said - 'trees? whadya want to plant trees for? I hate trees'. [laughs]. Indeed, that same lady did pull out some road verge plantings that I did a few years later, true to her word. [laughs]. I understand - you know - I understand for the early settlers, that trees were a problem, and clearing our native trees. Anyway, back to the kitchen, and back to the Progress Association. Andrew and I had come up with this proposal. We had written it out. Andrew had done an audit of the trees that were growing on the properties, and we included that in the proposal, and we'd taken that to the Progress Association, where we had won the support of the Progress Association - although they weren't particularly active, I don't think, until the chair was taken over by a local, whose name was Len Jarvis. Len worked for the Forests Department, and he was very keen on the arboretum idea. This then brought in the role of the Shire - bearing in mind that the Shire had already instituted the changes to the Town Planning Scheme, which had stymied the plans of the Forests Department - and they, the Shire, then organised this large public meeting at the Town Hall, and the Shire were proposing that the land in question should be transferred from the Forests Department, and put onto the property market for new people to arrive. I can understand that concern, because there had been a depopulation in this region generally, and they were keen that that land should be available for real estate development. The local real estate developer was very keen on this idea, and in fact, made his presence known up in Perth, to State Government Officials, that he was there and he could sell this place, and get them out of their difficult situation. So, this was the proposal put to this large vocal meeting at the Town Hall, which was saying, 'no more pines', 'we're sick of pines, it's killing the district', etc. I stood up and spoke up about the potential for an arboretum, what an arboretum was, and how suited this site would be to it, and I won the support of the meeting that evening, against the Shire's proposal and against the real estate proposal. It was then decided that what Balingup

wanted was to see that land dedicated to that purpose. So, that was under Shire President Louie Tuia. Louie was pretty annoyed I think, on the evening, [laughs] his plans had gone astray, but from then on, to be fair, the Shire then took on support of that proposal. So, it was then a bit later - that would have been in 1981 - now the proposal has now gone as far as being put to the Forests Department and the Minister for Forests, the Honorable David Wordsworth, MLC. He decided to convene a meeting, between the Shire and the Forests Department, about how we were going to resolve this problem of this package of land. At that meeting, Councillor Brian Moulton, who was our Balingup Councillor at the time - and after the Town Hall night, had become a strong proponent of the arboretum idea - he spoke to it with the Minister, and to our amazement, the Minister said 'yes', much to our surprise, I guess, that this thought bubble was taking root. So, that was pretty exciting.

SD Why do you think you were able to get Ministerial Approval?

CS There was a constellation of factors. I say this somewhat reluctantly, because it doesn't sound very modest, but I think it was partly because Andrew and I were well known to the State Government because we had been notorious forest campaigners [laughs] who for the last three years, had been giving the Forests Department - the very same Department, with the same people - we had been giving them a very hard time over the inception of wood chipping in Karri/Marri in the southern forests. We had been - one, not successful - because wood chipping still continues - but two, had orchestrated one of the very first and very successful populist environmental campaigns in Australia. There was one other at that time, also around wood chipping, around the construction of the Eden woodchip plant over east. So, we were notorious campaigners, and the Conservator of Forests knew us well. Despite the conflict, we had a very affable relationship with Bruce Beggs, who was the then Conservator. We hadn't met the Minister. In recent years we did visit the Minister, a few years ago, and again thanked him, and we organised his attendance at our 25th Anniversary Picnic, to formally thank him and dedicate a tree to him. On that occasion, he did say that for him to make that decision he felt encouraged by Andrew and my enthusiasm and commitment to the idea. I suspect it was also to keep us out of trouble! [laugh]. Very convenient, lets bog them down in this for the next 40 years! [laughs].

When I look back on it Sue, I think if we had known back in 1980/81 - because we felt very excited, and privileged, that the idea had been agreed to - we felt that, well, we have to keep up our side of the

bargain here, and do our best to pull this off. I don't think, at the time, that we really had a clue that we'd still be doing it 40 years later, and the considerable commitment it's taken from our lives, which have been very busy in other ways too. I think if we'd had more hindsight, I'm not quite sure what we would have done, back in 1980. Anyway, the story is now there in reality.

On that particular meeting, when David Wordsworth came down to Donnybrook, the proposal that that pocket of land become an arboretum was readily agreed to, so there you go.

SD That's wonderful.

Now we're moving onto mobilising the community - or was there something else you wanted to say?

CS I was going to talk about how we and the Progress the Association took on mobilising the community, and meanwhile the Forests Department very much lived up to their side of this agreement. The Minister instructed the Forests Department to help in the establishment of the park. There was a decision not to call it an arboretum, because the Forests Department, back in those days, already had jurisdiction over many small tree planting plots throughout the Wheatbelt and the South West, just testing different eucalyptum pine species for timber potential - there's one, for example, just to the north of Donnybrook - and they called those, arboreta, and they didn't want to confuse it, because this was a different proposal for a landscaped, recreation site, so that was how the name Tree Park came, as opposed to Arboretum. Golden Valley - as you know, the property overlapped two different former farms, Yungerup and Golden Valley - and it was the Forests Department's decision to take the name Golden Valley, so Golden Valley Tree Park it became. We received the assistance of the Manager at Kirup, who at the time was Peter Beattie. The Department also provided the assistance of their landscapers, whose names were Wayne Schmidt, and Eugene Herbert, and they did a landscape design for the Tree Park. There was also some shifting of the boundaries, because the land that is now the Tree Park, was part of the two properties, neither one whole, and a mix of the two, but not the whole of the two, so there were land title changes. The landscape design came up with some interesting designs.

[break in recording for a few minutes]

CS So we had the landscape design by Wayne Schmitt and Eugene Herbert.

One of their brilliant ideas was to put the main carpark down the hill within the World Collection, nestled in the park. We'd been thinking of having it on the edge next to the road, without really thinking about it. I think that's always worked really nicely to bring visitors right down in amongst the trees.

They also had some ideas in that landscape design which we didn't follow. One was that they suggested planting should avoid the creek lines, whereas in establishing - particularly establishing exotic trees - most of them come from non-mediterranean climates and need more water than we normally get in the South West during summer, so we've reversed that, and tended to plant on the creek systems so that we've got more scope for tree establishment.

They also came up with this idea that for plantings in the Australian Collection. A decision had already been made, and I don't remember how that decision came about - but 35 hectares would be for exotics, the World Collection, and 25 hectares for Australian trees, and the property would be divided in that way. I'm very pleased that decision was made. I can't remember how it came about though now, but it was there in the landscape plan, so perhaps that's how that came about. Wayne and Eugene suggested that we should do a background uniform planting across the Australian Collection, of Tingle trees, and that seemed to us to be a rather high risk strategy because Tingles, as you know, grow in the high rainfall area right down on the South Coast around Walpole, and how they were going to thrive here in a dry hill, here in Balingup, which had not that long ago been a hay paddock, was a bit uncertain, so we deferred on that one. However, we did establish some Tingles, and so we've got the Rates Tingle, which is *Eucalyptus brevistylis* is growing up on the top of the hill in the Australian Collection, from a very early planting, and amazingly, they are thriving, and they are the most outstanding trees in the Australian Collection, in my opinion, so maybe Wayne and Eugene were absolutely on the money, and we should have established them throughout, I don't know, but as it is, we've only got one small patch of them, but they are wonderful trees and the cockatoos love them too.

Anyway, so we had ourselves a landscape design to give us some ideas, the Department put the road down to the carpark and built the carpark, and built the original gazebo, and they also helped with some of those early plantings. Meanwhile, our job was to mobilise community support, as well as to collaborate with the Department as ongoing establishment went on of major achievements - like in 1983 when we got a water tap at the picnic site in the World Collection.

We had first of all, a busy bee to do some tree planting, that was in July 1981, so that was not long after the decision had been made, and we did a symbolic planting of planting trays of various mixed



eucalypts, and we planted those in half a dozen rows round the southern edge of the Tree Park to hold back the pines, because the other side was pine plantations for some distance, and this was the boundary that we had established through this proposal. We had over 50 people turn up that day to help us plant trees. Before that we'd held a community event at the park, which was the first picnic organised there, organised by ourselves and the Progress Association. Over 250 people attended that picnic, which was more than half of the population of Balingup. So, as you can see, people really liked the idea and warmed to the idea, and I think it was also very helpful that the Ayres family - who had owned the Yungerup property - were still living in Balingup and they - Mrs. Wendy Ayres in particular - liaised with a lot of the earlier settlers, so we had that link to some of the pioneers of Balingup, and to some of the existing farming community and had their support. Wendy played an important role in that regard, with that kind of networking. So, that was a wonderful event, back in May 1981. The official opening didn't happen until April 1982, also a picnic, about 200 people there on that day. We planted 2 Sweet Chestnut trees. One was planted by the Conservator of Forests, who was officiating on the day - that's Bruce Beggs - and the other tree was planted by the President of the Progress Association, Len Jarvis. They are still there, still growing. They are down past the Cleveland Oaks, going towards the duck pond. Not far from the walk track. They are now producing chestnuts.

So, we planted that screen of eucalypts.

The next planting that happened at the park was by the Department. They planted some rare West Australian eucalypt species in the Australian Collection. That was in 1982. In 1983, we had our first planting in the World Collection which Andrew and I organised through a busy bee, as we had accessed all the trees. Meanwhile, the Department organised the trees for a large planting of Australian trees in 1983, a month apart, in the Australian Collection. Unfortunately, that second planting, well, third planting - because of the screen - was a bit of a write off because there were a lot of ----- we hadn't--- well, we were learning, and I guess the Department were learning. The Department supplied the trees, but we'd organised the planting. They got wiped out by rabbits, we hadn't good preparations in terms of excluding rabbits, so a lot of those were then replanted the following year.

I just consulted my notes and I see that actually I was a bit wrong there, the first World Collection planting which we organised was in 1982. Then in 1983, we had plantings in both the Australian Collection, and the World Collection as I just described. Again, lots of volunteer help and so on.

You asked me about partnerships and how other organisations have helped in the establishment. In thinking about that, I have to say that really the outstanding partnership was with the Department. The Department, which was then the Forests Department, which then became CALM, which then transferred to Environment and Conservation, then to the Department of Parks and Wildlife, and currently is DBCA, Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions. Five different names we've worked with, many of the same people, still in place, and they have been wonderful in their ongoing commitment. There has been no legal agreement to date about the Tree Park - although that's now coming, and I will talk about that in a minute - but to the best of their ability, at a regional level through Bunbury and Kirup, they have regularly helped with making sure that we don't make too many mistakes - and we've made a few, like the rabbits! To honour their side of the commitment, they've built both toilet blocks, they've provided safety advice for visitors, they've done the boundary fencing and they maintain the walk tracks - they didn't establish them, but they maintain them - and they're there all the time when we need advice about something, and now we are very much part of their volunteer system under DBCA's volunteer programme, so we can offer volunteers insurance against any accidents and so on. So, we're kind of very much under their wing.

The Shire - although the Shire were very critical at the beginning with their support, they pretty much backed off after that. I understand that this is not their land and it's not their prime objective - that's not to say they haven't been helpful - for example, they constructed the new carpark in the Australian Collection a couple of years ago, and they've given us, almost yearly, a small-scale community grant of a thousand here, three thousand there, which has helped with various events and plantings. We also have an official partnership with the National Trust since 2008, although the site was already registered under the National Trust of WA, as well as already being listed under the Heritage Act of WA - and that's been a pretty passive thing. But since 2008, we've had an agreement with the National Trust, where via the National Trust we can offer tax deductibility for donations, and we have used that in a pretty modest way, but that's been --- it all helps, it all helps. But outstanding has been the Department. This is during a time when the Department itself, since those early days, back in the Forests Department, then in CALM, when there was quite a lot of resources - in the last 20 years, there has been a noticeable reduction in the resourcing of that Department, and spare capacity to help at the Tree Park. I have some figures here, that, under the Barnett government in 2014, the Department lost 59 full time officers, and in 2015, they lost 90 full time officers. In those 2 years, 53 were biodiversity experts in WA that we've lost. In those 2 years the Department suffered a 10% budget cut each year. So, for example, I know that the Kirup and Nannup offices together, through people taking voluntary redundancies and so

on, that we've lost 250 years of firefighting experience. I'm going into detail here because I get very upset about it. I feel that West Australians are not properly supporting land management in this place, in this country, and that this should be a big issue for people, but most people in the city don't know, they don't notice, and unfortunately, there has been nothing to redress this lack of capacity more recently, so I am still hoping that we will see that happening. It's meant for us, at the Tree Park, as I said, we don't ask a lot of the Department, we're modest in what we request.

We started with a mammoth thistle problem - particularly in the World Collection - because, as I explained earlier, the property had been in limbo for about 5 years, while this argument was going on, and during that time, no one had been controlling agricultural weeds, and we inherited a hill of wall-to-wall thistles, which we have greatly reduced, just by perseverance. We've now got the odd clump here and there. We still - every spring, we're on thistle duty, and we have just about beaten it back, except in the hidden valley, which is a new area that we've just opened up and in opening it up, we haven't been controlling weeds in there before, so we've got a new area to keep us busy.

SD      So, have you been pulling out those thistles?

CS      Hoeing them by hand, yep, yep. Occasionally the Department has done a spray job for us. Mainly, year after year, it's been us that have done it because we make sure it's done at the right time. You put in a request to the Department and it might not happen for 3 months, meanwhile they've all set seed, that sort of thing. That's just an example of how we try to be as independent as possible with the management. Meanwhile, as you know, there is always a Departmental representative on our Committee, who has to be party to decisions that we'd be making about the management, and if there's any concern that maybe this doesn't fit with Departmental policy, it's referred up, and comes back, so we always make sure that we are holding to our side of the partnership, and respecting their expertise, and their policy framework.

You asked me about milestones, for the development of the Park. That's sort of an interesting question. A lot of that is around community events, because one of the astounding things has been the community support that we have found for this project. So many people have helped in different ways. It might be from just coming to one tree planting to maybe a decade of volunteering and being on Committee and amazing community support. When I think back to events like in 1981 and 1982, those very first picnics, they were just magic. People stayed under the oak trees there until midnight. People

just loved it, we had a bit of a fire going, people were playing music. Then of course, there were the tree planting busy bees, and nothing is more satisfying than planting some trees and seeing all of a sudden, the amazing way it transforms the landscape, even when they're small. Somehow it changes the landscape when they are there, and it's such a lovely thing to do, so satisfying. Another milestone was in 1990, Peter Hicks established the design and planting of the Bambooseries and Chinampa area next to the homestead which is managed without grazing, so it's a bit of a separate section of the World Collection. Pete was very much behind the collection of bamboos that was found there, in conjunction with the trees that we provided, and that whole design of the creek, which has been to mimic a chinampa design, which increases the interface between the creek and the dry land to increase the productivity of the area.

2004 was a big year. 2004 we got our one and only federal funding which was for almost \$150,000, which was HUGE for us. That was about developing better infrastructure for visitors, and so that led to the clear development of the 6 walk tracks, laid out and mapped and available to the visitor on the brochure; to the information shelters, the 3 information shelters, and to various other assistances, like with developing the logo and so on, and renaming, yes, renaming what we had been calling the Overseas Collection, the World Collection, which we thought was a much better name for it.

Then the following year, we had an amazing spring picnic. That was to celebrate 25 years of the project. Huge. I don't know, perhaps there were 400, 500 people there. I just have to describe to you--- If you can just picture the main picnic site in the World Collection, and in the centre is a maypole set up with beautiful coloured ribbons and around the ribbons, a series of baskets, quite large baskets, about half the size of this table, as a set, and then in the distance, a parade comes along led by horses that have been decorated with ribbons in their manes and a whole lot of community girls wearing white costumes, coming down in the parade. They enter and they approach the maypole via an avenue of sprigs of fresh boronia coming down to the maypole and then half the girls go and take up and stand next to a ribbon each. Then the music changes, and goes to a quiet flute music, and out of each pod, these woven baskets that are also by the ribbons, alternately with the new girls in their white, more little girls come out doing this beautiful dance like they are peas coming out of a pod. They do that for a few minutes and then they take up the other ribbons, and then all the girls together did a maypole dance, and of course, after that, everyone joined in on the maypole, and of course there was food and music that went on for hours. It was EXQUISITE, thank you Cassandra Menard. It was her genius that really made that so special, and her ongoing support in many ways through her local business at the Tinder Box, but

for young girls - because Cassandra is a trained ballerina, and each year she would have a new cohort of girls that she would teach to dance in different ways around the maypole, and they'll never forget it. Meanwhile, the regional manager was there that day, and he was absolutely gob-smacked, he was saying 'this is like something from mediaeval times, I can't believe it!' and it was, it was so, so, exquisitely beautiful with the surroundings of all the trees in their spring flush, so, yeah, that was pretty special.

SD Are there photographs? There must be!

CS Yes, there are a few, within the community there must be lots. We've never been---we've got a few ourselves, and really someone needs to pull them all together whilst they are still there. Sandy Mitchell would have photos, and I think quite a few people, Nula Scott, yes, there would be photos of that very, very, beautiful setting.

What else. Milestones, you asked for--- We had our first funeral at the park, under the Cleveland Oaks, I think that was 2017, bless him, for Mark Cumans, who had volunteered at the park over many years, and who had requested that his funeral service, with him there in the coffin would be conducted at the Cleveland Oaks. That felt pretty special too, that sense that people's commitment went that deep.

In 2018, and example of the Department and their assistance and commitment, I had met with the Regional Manager, Bob Hagan, and said 'look, we are now designing a picnic site, finally, for some rudimentary facilities in the Australian Collection. We want toilets there, and some picnic tables and a carpark and so on, and I can do most of it, but really, we need the Department's help with the toilets'. He said, 'oh, well, you've got Buckley's, you know, there is just no money but I tell you what, Chrissy, you get the design, and you keep it in your top drawer, and if I've ever got a little bit of money at the end of the financial year to do something, I'll let you know, and we'll know we've got the design already up and running', so I said 'fair enough, Bob, that's how we'll do it'. So, we got organised with a standard Departmental design and it was ready and we were putting it in the drawer, for we didn't know how many years, but within months, I got a message, 'ok, I've got the money, let's do it'. In fact, Bob had actually looked around and worked out over the regional budget how he had a little bit of money spare,

I think it was \$85,000 it cost for a toilet block, and so we now have reasonable visitor facilities there. That was a milestone too. The Australian Collection has been a bit of a poor cousin. The World Collection already had those plantings, those initial plantings, and it's unusual for people to go to an exotic landscape in Western Australia, so it's had a lot more retention in terms of visitor interest than the Australian Collection. But the Australian Collection is really coming on from its early days when it was completely cleared, and there's some very interesting trees there, and it's a great place now for a walk and we really needed those visitor facilities as more and more people are discovering it.

Another thing that you asked me about Sue, was the renovation of the homestead. I really can't say anything about that because that happened during the 1990's and I didn't have anything to do with it. In fact, I stood down from the Tree Park, I found in my notes yesterday, from September 1990 until November 1993. That was some of the time. In 1989, the year earlier, I had been appointed to the Environmental Protection Authority, and my workload was considerable, and I just didn't have the gumption to keep up. I was having some huge work challenges on the EPA, particularly around the new forest management plan, so for 3 years, I actually stopped going to committee meetings. I'd still help at busy bees, and still support Andrew and so on, but, at that time, that was when a decision was made to renovate the homestead, which was in very poor repair and desperately needing attention. So, that was done by a sub-committee, which included Dave Lathwell, from the Department of what was then CALM, and Mrs. Wendy Ayres was involved, Lila Reynolds and a few other people from Balingup, and they managed to get a lot of donation of materials, so the main renovation work was done then, but it didn't involve me.

Meanwhile, by 1993, sittings are getting very wobbly on the committee, and I come back in again.

One of your questions was also 'had our vision changed over the years?'

SD Yes

CS It is a long time, but I don't think it has really, at all. Let me say, our vision has deepened, and become more educated, but it hasn't essentially changed from that notion of an arboretum where one, it has high landscape value, so it's a lovely place, and which provides accurate information about trees for people to learn more about trees and discover different species that they didn't know of. That is our core business and that remains so. I guess over the years, we have put increasing effort into improving visitor facilities, and that's a very important part of our workload now, but that doesn't change the overall vision, it's about facilitating that vision, and of course, the park is getting more and more popular and in the autumn the World Collection, at the weekends, can be packed with people, so it needs more, it needs the resources for that. In the World Collection now, at the moment, we are working on two new aspects, which are about that theme, one is a precinct for children in the oak woods, so our Magic Oakwoods' project will be finished in the next couple of months and it's very simple and basic. It includes renovating the old well that was part of the farm, and making it a wishing well, with a map, which directs children off the walk tracks to discover some trees that are fun for children, trees that you can climb, or you can eat their seed, or you can hide under or whatever. So that's almost finished, that's five years. It takes ages to do these things, they always sound so simple, and you think you can knock them off in a year or two, but the reality is always very slow, and I don't mind that, I don't mind slow progress, as long as we don't go backwards, I'm happy, so slow progress is ok.

The other thing that we did last year which was a huge thing to do was to do a second thinning of the pines in the hidden valley section of the World Collection. I spoke earlier about how there was a change in the land title boundaries, someone, while that was happening, got it wrong and put some pines in, across the boundary into what then became the tree park. So, we inherited 8 hectares of pines. It hasn't really bothered us as they've grown, then we had a bit of an argument about who owned the pines, but we won the argument, so that's been a source, back in - when did we do the first thinning? --- it must have been around 2010, something like that, when the pines were 30 years old, and then last year, in 2020, we did a further thinning. We broke all the rules in doing that, because, the rules, there's no rules, but the standard practice in pine plantations, is that you don't grow on beyond 40 years because the trees get too big to be dealt with by our only industrial pine saw mill in WA. We've taken a bit of a commercial risk and we've decided to let the best of the trees grow on, so that people can actually enjoy that landscape. We've made a bit of space in better bits of it, in the hidden valley, to add further conifers to our collection and there are already a few really interesting ones in the creek line. At the very back, on the eastern boundary of the park, we did a clear fell, and we've established a new species of pine which has got some potential in the plantation industry, which is *Pinus canariensis*. *Pinus*

*canariensis* is unusual amongst the pine species because you can do controlled burn under them, so there is possibly some interest in switching species from *Radiata*, which is very vulnerable to fire, to *canariensis*, and that might reduce the amount of fire damage in our plantation estate. So, we thought we would try a couple of hectares of *canariensis*, so in they go. We are only half way through that project. It's looking a bit of a mess at the moment, there's some thistles to be dealt with in the spring and more trees to embellish it and a walk track to be put in, but that new walk track, when it's done, will take visitors from the duck pond, along the hidden valley, then up a steep slope to the top of the World Collection, so a bit of an extra area for people to visit and to spread people out a bit. So, that's great.

Back to my notes now. Just to finish, I'd like to say three more things. One is that in terms of milestones, it looks like in 2021 we are on the cusp of some new milestones, exciting milestones. One is that, we believe, this coming Saturday [March 13 2021], there is a State Election, and presuming that the McGowan Government wins, and presuming that the Minister for Environment remains in that portfolio, we are expecting him to come down in April and announce that this freehold title land, without any legal agreement, that has been developed over these many years now, will be given security of tenure by becoming an A Class reserve. That means legislation through Parliament and then that means that it's purpose is secure, it can't be sold by the Department and that means that the support for the project will continue into the future, with security, and that's so important because anything to do with trees takes a long time, it's more than a human lifetime and it needs that kind of perseverance and security because many of our trees at the moment, are still babies, and you can imagine in 50 years how beautiful they will be, all being well with climate change, which of course, is a huge challenge, which we actively manage by thinning out our trees and doing a lot of arboriculture, and being very conservative in our plantings about what we try and establish, and where. Yes, so security of tenure is happening.

The other milestone, and this is hot off the press, is that we are now, thanks to our new Chairman, Gary Hodge, who has written to King's Park, the King's Park Board, with a little bit of help from me, but his initiative, and they've come back saying that they are interested in collaborating with Golden Valley Tree Park as a sister project, a sister botanic garden. So we've got our first meeting next week, and if that comes to pass, and with the new structure, which is called DBCA which we mentioned earlier, King's Park, which has its own Act of Parliament, is actually now managed under the same portfolio as the Tree Park and has the same Minister. So, there is a lot of serendipity there, around that, and I know that it's



very hard for the nursery at King's Park, which is growing a lot of very rare West Australian species - some of which we planted 2 years ago in the Australian Collection, *Eucalyptus willicta* that grows on only one hill on the Whicher Range, east of Busselton - and we've planted a couple of dozen of them in the Australian Collection, and they are thriving there. The Department was testing to see if it was a viable species, and they asked King's Park to germinate them. The germination was successful, so there were a couple of trays of them, but nowhere to put them, and so we can offer, within the space that we have, the opportunity to plant more of those really special species that are so limited in their distribution in Western Australia. So, that will greatly add to the whole project, and again, will give us a resource of more expertise, and hopefully, maybe some more resources in collaboration around those plantings, we'll see. Perhaps we shouldn't even be talking about this, because it's very early days, but to my mind, it's very exciting. I feel that those two things, the security of tenure, which is very important from King's Park's perspective too, and the idea of having that collaboration - because there's very few botanic gardens in Western Australia, and we have had that recognition since 2018, we've become part of the register of National Botanic Gardens - so all the ingredients are in place for some more interesting and exciting collaboration for people in ongoing years. One of the things that worried me, particularly in the last five years, as Andrew and I are getting older, and we're not going to be here forever, is that although we've had tremendous community support, locally in Balingup and further afield, really the project does need a fairly deep understanding of tree botany and tree establishment and that is why I think having that departmental backing from both DBCA and possibly from King's Park, just ensures that. You know, in some ways, the whole project has rested on Andrew Thamo, my partner, his expertise, because he's good at botany and he's devoted his life to growing and understanding trees. We've made a great partnership, and continue to do that, but really, at the end of the day, it's what he has brought to the project has made it work, in his tree expertise, and I've just tagged along and learnt from him - and been more organized [laughs]. So, I'm thinking who's going to take over that role? That's critical, so that's why I'm very pleased to know that there will be some scientists hovering around there that will make sure that the trees themselves remain the focus, on a very interesting and healthy collection, although it's already the largest collection in WA. So, that was one thing I wanted to say.

Two more things.

One was our approach, I think this is important to put on the record; we've never actually documented our, I mean, Andrew and my landscape plan. I talked about the original Department's process, which we

have only partly followed. We've had in our head over the 40 years and all the many plantings that we have organised during that time - we've had a very clear landscape design in our head and we need to document that so that it's clear what we're doing, but that's been based on two principles. In the World Collection, we have followed the principles as we best understand them, of the English landscape style, which is of well-spaced trees, that are spaced enough that they can develop their potential, of their canopies, and carefully placed gaps between trees to enhance landscape vistas, that sort of thing. This is a landscape design that has been around now since the 1700's or the late 1600's, and its well-practiced, and there's many beautiful botanic gardens throughout the world that are based on that kind of scheme, so, we've just followed that. Australian Collection - much more challenging. When we started in 1981, we knew of no collection of Australian trees anywhere in Australia that we could use as a model. Perhaps there were, but we just didn't know about them, and here we are in little Balingup, and being pretty parochial, so what to do? Do we do it English landscape style? That doesn't seem quite right. So, we invented a scheme for that which has more or less worked, and that is to present the Australian Collection as a series of typical treescapes across the continent. That is to say, treescapes in the sense of familiar tree associations. Those tree associations as we have mimicked them at the Australian Collection are false of course. They're false because we've brought a Mallee from NSW and mixed it with a Mallee from the South West, so they don't occur as natural associations with those particular species, but the way the association interacts, the setting of the trees, is familiar across the continent. So, we go, in the Australian Collection, as you leave the carpark on the first walk track, through tall eucalypts, which obviously mimic our tall forests, then to one of our hardest planting areas which has been so challenging - but we are still on the case - which is for a group of planting in a small patch which mimic rainforest. Then as you come out and go up the hill, we go into the more open woodlands of the Australian Tree associations including plantings of Mallets and Gimlets and so on, and then we come into even more open landscapes, which you occur in the Eastern States where you get a lot of Brachykytons, the Kurrajongs, the Bottle trees and so on, which grow in very open woodlands, around grasslands, so what we are doing is we are mimicking different types of Australian landscapes there, and that's been our scheme, and continues to be our scheme, and we need to get that down in our new management plan that we've just started working on.

Just to finish, I also wanted to add in thanking you for taking the time to do this with me Sue, also my gratitude, that we, Andrew and I and many friends, to have had the opportunity to create and to be

involved with Golden Valley Tree Park. It's been tremendous privilege for us and sure we've worked hard, but we've loved it, and we feel that we have been very blessed with the confidence that has been shown in us, and the opportunity to be involved with something for most of our lives and to see it change and develop is such a privilege, and we are so blessed, and I just wanted to note my gratitude at the end. These days, because I've been sick, I haven't been out much, but until six months ago, I was out there all the time, and what a nice work place. So, it's been very special, and we're very lucky. A labour of love, but a privilege.

SD      Congratulations.

CS      Thanks.