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**Williamstown Botanic Gardens  
Oral History Transcript**

**Helen Page**

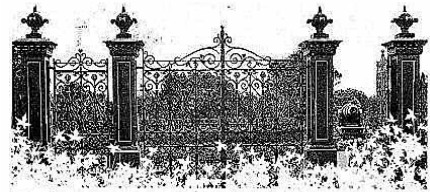
24 February 2014



**Hobsons Bay**  
CITY COUNCIL



**WILLIAMSTOWN  
BOTANIC GARDENS**



**Friends of Williamstown  
Botanic Gardens Inc.**

This is an interview with Helen Page on behalf of the Friends of Williamstown Botanic Gardens. It is one of a planned series to document personal memories and experiences of the Gardens.

Helen was a resident of Williamstown when she contacted local Councillor, Angela Altair, in May 1999 to express her concerns about the destruction of trees in Melbourne Road and the condition of the Williamstown Botanic Gardens.

The result of her communications with Councillor Altair and the Council was the formation of the Landscape Advisory Group and the Williamstown Botanic Gardens Advisory Group.

Still an active member of the Williamstown Botanic Gardens Advisory Group, Helen talks of these experiences, how they led to the formation of the Friends Group and her hopes for the future of the Gardens.

The date of this interview is 24th February 2014 and the interviewer is Lindy Wallace.

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58.8

LW Helen, would you tell me your full name and where and when you were born please.

HP My name is Helen Page and I was born in Camberwell, a suburb of Melbourne, on 14th July 1941.

LW Thanks Helen. Okay Helen let's start on your involvement with the Williamstown Botanic Gardens

HP I moved to Williamstown in 1978 but I was working in the city and didn't get involved at all locally. Occasionally I went down and walked through the Botanic Gardens but I didn't really take a keen interest in it as I had other things going on with my life. In 1999, one Sunday morning, I drove down Melbourne Road and by Newport Junction, which was railway land, along Melbourne Road there were gum trees, mature gum trees, fifty year old ones, and about five or six of the largest ones were all being chopped down - on a Sunday morning. I smelt a rat, I thought this is ridiculous. So after living in Williamstown for twenty odd years and been an apathetic rate payer that whole time, I went into print. I went straight home and sat at the computer wrote a letter to the Council ticking them off and asking why they done it and why did they do it on a Sunday morning and that standard of the street trees in the municipality was terrible. I copied Angela Altair who was the Ward Councillor and only a day or so later Angela rang me and said she agreed with everything I said in the letter and what could we do about it. I had told her that I was a horticulturist and I was president of the Garden History Society so I had a little bit behind me to be making some of these comments. She said 'Oh we need to do something about this, I really think we should set up a landscape advisory group to address some of these issues'. I said 'Yes, there are professional horticulturists living in the municipality and you should be tapping into that expertise'.

That was in May and we had the first meeting of the landscape advisory group in July, so Angela had got cracking straight away. In that first telephone conversation I said to her 'while I'm at it, what are you doing about those botanic gardens' because the Gardens were an absolute disgrace. Since council amalgamation I think they had got rid of the garden staff

as such and they were just sending the works gang in every month or so and just treating the gardens like a park so their quality was deteriorating by the day really. She said 'Oh I know I know, yes, we need to do something about that'. So LAG, the first meeting of the Landscape Advisory Group - Mary Klestadt had been a former councillor and she was the Victorian co-ordinator of the Gardens Scheme, she lived in Williamstown, she came on to LAG. Ian Shears, who currently heads up, I think, Parks for the City of Melbourne, he was working for I think, City of Melbourne then as a tree officer, he came on. Mike Hirst, who was a horticulturist lecturer at NMIT, and Shelley Wood, who was by that stage, I think she might have been still at Rippon Lea before she went out on her own, but she was Head Gardener at Rippon Lea. They were just a handful of people who lived in the municipality who had expertise to offer this committee.

#### 5.43.8

The committee was managed by Andrew Shannon who worked for Hobsons Bay Council, he was more on the environmental side rather than actual gardening, Andrew co-ordinated the committee. I think the first thing we undertook - the state of the elms in Williamstown was appalling and there needed to be a replanting programme - I think the Council were thinking that they would really do away with elms and just stick any old tree in. So we had a master plan done of the elms and that master plan was carried out by John Patrick. The replanting programme of the elms is still continuing. Then we got the Council to get a master plan done for the Botanic Gardens. There were whole lot of other landscaping issues right across the municipality but being a Williamstown person I really concentrated on the Williamstown ones but we did get involved with the rest of the municipality.

So the Botanic Gardens master plan was under way and we set up the Williamstown Botanic Gardens Advisory Group to drive the preparation of the master plan and then drive it when it was completed. So that jogged along. In the very early days of the Botanic Gardens Master Plan Andrew Shannon said to me 'We should set up a Friends of the Botanic Gardens, could you do that'. I don't know how he actually said it but I certainly got the message. I felt it was very much a way of passing the buck, that they thought if a friends group was set up, the Friends would do the gardening. I said 'No, it's not the time to set up a friends group, you get those gardens back to some semblance of normality and then it would be the time to set up a friends group'. I may have been wrong but I believe that I was right.

#### 8.49.4

LW In the very early days, in 1999, they wanted to set up a friends group?

HP Well, 1999 or 2000, within that first year or so but I felt that they were thinking that it would get them off the hook a bit. There's nothing worse for a garden than having a whole lot of do-gooders going around doing their own thing. There had to be a plan for it. So then the master plan was carried out and eventually approved. There were community consultations and the Advisory Group met with John Patrick on several occasions to fine tune it and it was eventually put to Council and accepted by Council. There were a whole raft of major points to be addressed in the master plan. I must admit that the Council - there are regional botanic gardens across Victoria and they all have problems, lack of funding and lack of commitment from their councils. That was certainly the case pre the 2001 master plan. Since that master plan was done, Hobsons Bay Council has just been fantastic. There has not

been any need to get down on bended knees for funding for anything and everything's been done. All the key points in the 2001 master plan have been addressed and were completed.

#### 11.10

Bubbling along as things were happening with the Gardens and the Gardens were coming back to life, in 2009 I thought to mark the one hundred and fifty year celebrations the following year, 2010 that it would be a good time to set up a friends group. We called a public meeting on 6th May 2009 and it was held in the Mechanics Institute. I got a group of people to come to it. It was widely advertised around Williamstown. I invited John Hawker, the horticulturist from Heritage Victoria to come and speak to the meeting; Janet Thomson who was at that stage President of the Friends of the Melbourne Botanic Gardens; and Alex Smart who was President of the Association of Friends of Botanic Gardens. They were three pretty key people relevant to botanic gardens. They were all good friends of mine and they all came willingly and they all spoke.

#### 12.54.8

Councillor Altair and Councillor Hemphill were both there. Councillor Hemphill, was late, he was the Mayor at the time. When he arrived he said to me 'I'm sorry I'm late Helen, I had to park so far away - I'd thought I'd park outside the door. I realised when I saw the cars that there was a lot of support for this'. We had a good turn up. When I spoke I said that every friends group that I'd been aware of had a range of focuses and it was really up to the friend's group when it was formed to work out what their priorities would be because no friends group can do every single thing. But speaking personally I would like to think that the friend's group would ensure that every child in Williamstown got to know and love the gardens. Because I thought in this day and age when everything is so commercialised, I think that kids are losing touch with that side of life. That was about all I said. Then we put a vote to the meeting, did people think a friends group should be formed and it was unanimous, everyone said yes. So then we called for people who would be interested to come on to a committee. Sue Murray said she'd come on, I think she might have said then she would be happy to be president. Kim Sawyer, Kim came and spoke to me and said that he'd be very keen to introduce an art aspect to the Gardens, which he has followed by getting Paint the Gardens a regular event in the Gardens, which has been wonderful. Geoff King said he was a legal person and he'd come on as secretary and get us all legal and incorporated and all that stuff that I don't really understand much about. Diane Robson, who was treasurer at the Williamstown Garden Club, said that she'd come on, she'd be treasurer. The committee was sort of really set up that very night of the first meeting.

#### 15.34.6

Later when we were having a cuppa Anja Lee came up to me and said that she's always wanted to do story time in the Gardens. I said that's wonderful, we should follow that up. I went on to the committee as the representative of the Advisory Group because I think it is very important that there is a direct link between the two groups because I feel very strongly that the Botanic Gardens Friends have to be botanic gardens friends, not just another garden club. Williamstown's got a garden club and that's fine, they can grow their dahlias and tomatoes and things but the Friends of Williamstown Botanic Gardens are more than that. They look into the history and the whole depth of the Botanic Gardens. This children's thing coming through too. At the first meeting of the committee I said to Sue Murray or to

the committee that Anja Lee spoke to me and there is nothing worse than people offering to do things and it's not followed up. So it was followed up and Anja got on to the library. The library already had this story time programme within the library so they agreed that they would relocate one of these story times to the Gardens.

I went down to the first one and I was absolutely amazed when I saw where all the cars were - you couldn't park within cooee of the Gardens. Shelley wasn't there that day and I can remember going into the Gardens and Michael Wilkins was there and I said 'Michael!' and he said "Glad Shelley's not here, she'd be having a fit'. It was absolutely amazing, there was between two and three hundred people there. They were under the Golden Elm and the fellow, I can't remember his name [Russell Barratt] from the library was dressed up in black tights and black skivvy with antlers on his head. He was an ant. He read and Anja read and they didn't have any amplifying equipment and there kids there who couldn't hear a word that was said but they all in awe because they were in this beautiful place. I found the librarian, she was standing there with her eyes popping out of her head. I said to her 'How many do you get when you have it at the library?' and she said 'oh about twelve or fifteen '. She had about twenty little flyers in her hand and said 'I brought these to hand out for the next one' and said 'I won't even bother'. It was a fantastic success. When it all finished so many of the Mums stayed on in the Gardens, they'd brought a picnic lunch.

The children's programme really kicked off from that very day. In this day and age when everything is commercial, to have something where there is no money involved, all the Mums are on a level playing field. They don't have to worry that they can't afford to buy anything for their children that day. Here's hoping it will stay that way, there'll never be anything that will be sold at those days to disadvantage people who can't afford it. I have been to other story times since then but I must admit that I haven't been to any this year, I just haven't had a chance. What's been done with the children's programme since then has increased. I just see the Gardens so much as a community focal point - it's got that opportunity to be a community focal point. When I grew up the community focal point was the church and everyone went to Sunday school and youth group. It was a key focal point regardless of what their religious beliefs were. The social structure hung off the church. Now that we don't have that anymore it's very difficult for children to interact on a local basis and they just spend time with their own class mates and friends. The Gardens provide that opportunity for a focal point. Every opportunity to build on that should be taken. I think that's probably why the Council are being so supportive of the Gardens now - they can see the benefit of the Gardens to the social fabric of Williamstown and indeed all of Hobsons Bay. So many of the children coming to the story times are from further out in the municipality.

22.01.5

That's my main involvement. I didn't say there but in 2006 I moved from Williamstown and now live in Kew but I've stayed on the Advisory Group because it's my one opportunity to remain in contact with Williamstown. I believe that I've still got something to offer the Advisory Group. We're very pleased now that we have completed the 2001 master plan and we're now working on the next one so we can see the vision forward.

LW Do you see the Advisory Group is that link between the Gardens, the Friends Group and the Council?

HP Yes, the link and to tap into that expertise. We've gone from having Andrew Shannon, I don't know if he still is with the Council. He was more in the environmental, the broader public space of Hobsons Bay rather a garden person. Then we had Stephen Thorpe who was terrific and guided us for some years. When Stephen told us he was leaving, he'd got a job at Bayside, I thought that was doom and gloom and the end of things. Then Ian Brown stepped up and Ian Brown's been the best we've had. Ian's just fantastic. I think Ian appreciates the level of expertise that the Advisory Group are able to contribute. Speaking to friends who are involved with other botanic gardens throughout Victoria, like the smaller ones in the country, they are really envious of Williamstown having this advisory group with the expertise they are able to draw upon. One friend with the Camperdown Botanic Gardens, which they are trying to resuscitate, she's hoping to set up a similar group there. But of course in a country town they probably don't have that many people to call upon.

#### 24.47.3

LW - It's unusual to have an advisory group like that?

HP Well, yes, they have advisory particularly when a master plan is being done, they have a sub-committee of the friend's committee who will probably work with the council officer. But I think Williamstown is in the very fortunate position of being just able to tap into a group of professionals.

LW - Yes, it's makes a big difference. I should imagine in other places that the friend's group would be driving the advisory group whereas in Williamstown it kind of started the other way around.

HP Yes. To have John Hawker from Heritage Victoria - he certainly provides support and advice to all the botanic gardens - to have him on the Advisory Group is fantastic and Mark Frisbee, who is a landscape architect, and all that experience coming from the physical structure of the gardens, he's a great support. Ian Brown calls on Mark for advice on various things which is wonderful. Mike Hirst being a horticultural indicator.

#### 26.27.3

LW Maybe we could talk now about the changes you have seen in the Gardens because that stems from the Advisory Group the action that you took way back in 1999. Do you want to talk about the changes that have been made?

HP The key action items from the 2001 master plan - when the master plan was being proposed and the brief was being prepared for it, the gardens were very run down. They didn't have a full time gardener at the time and there was a lot of vandalism and there was a lot of discontent in the community as to their lack of maintenance. There was even thought that the Gardens should be locked because of the extent of the vandalism. The statue for instance, the Clark statue, was constantly vandalised, parts of him broken off and graffiti over him and what have you. I certainly resisted them being locked because if you lock them you're just asking young blokes to get over the fence and cause real havoc then. It's been quite amazing particularly when the gates were restored back to their glory. Those gates which came from Fairlie, the property in South Yarra in 1907, originally they were black with gold trim and some-one, probably in the seventies or eighties, saw fit to paint them white. They were white at the time of the master plan was done. There were paint scrapes done and it was decided to take them back to their original. I went along with it because I thought

oh well if people want to do that but to me it didn't seem a major issue but I've got to say when they were restored they just blew my mind away. I now look at gates and think 'you could benefit by being restored'. It was quite amazing that when they were painted white they were a barrier, you couldn't see through them. Don't ask me how it happens, your eyes play tricks with you, because it's the exactly the same metal and shape but now they're black, they lead you into the Gardens. They took a long while, all these things always take a long while. I take the minutes at the Advisory Group and I just got sick of having to write 'gates still happening' and at this particular meeting, it was in the middle of winter so it was dark when we started and I didn't look at the gates when I arrived, just drove past them. When it got to gates I said 'Oh what about the gates?' - 'they're done' - They're WHAT!' I was working in Laverton at the time so the next morning driving to work I had to come off the bridge and shoot down to have a look at the Gardens and the gates - I was totally blown away, I just thought they looked fantastic. I think the vandals appreciated them because from the time that we really started caring for the Gardens and they had that cared for look the vandalism fell away. So, vandals do have a bit of taste I think.

### 31.02.1

The other real restoration thing was to have the statue repaired and restored. That stature of Clark who was member of the legislative assembly for sixteen or seventeen years representing Williamstown, he must have been really loved because we don't have lots of statues put up now for politicians. That was restored and then early photographs show that it had a fence around it and the fence had been removed so the vandals had ready access to the statue. The fence was reinstated and when they went to put the fence in the base plates or whatever for the uprights were found, so it's back in exactly in the same location it was originally. Planting has taken place and it hasn't really taken off and it needs to be built up. It has provided a sort of barrier but if the planting was a bit more dense it would make the statue a bit safer. Did I say that that statue is the most valuable art work owned by the Hobsons Bay City Council?

LW Do you know why that is?

HP No it just happens to be. When they were restoring it Ian Brown or Steven Thorpe or whoever it was, told us then. They were the two major restorations. Of course the path system was replicated in mirror image in the Pinetum. That was the result of some archaeological work, they found that. The original paths must have been with shell grit because that's in the archaeological digs, they found that.

LW They have actually restored that replication of the pathways?

HP Yes. The Pinetum still needs quite a bit done and will be a key focus in the master plan being drawn up now. The central path planting has been redone. That was a bit of a scrap heap for a long while. The Hobsons Bay Council commissioned the pedestrian gates at the both the Osborne Street entrance and the Gifford Street entrance. That was the Council's special effort for the 150 years. There was a competition they put out to artists. There were three that were funded to come up with more detailed plans and two people got the nod. Prior to those being installed there were just very simple galvanised iron rail and wire, pretty ordinary. So that enhanced those entrances.

35.00

The last thing to be done was the restoration of the pond because the pond had been empty for years because it had a leak. Every contractor who said that they could remedy it, when their method was checked out, it was found that their method probably wouldn't work. That's really why it took so long. During the time, and I can't think of the year off the top of my head, maybe 2005 or 2006, the Gardens went on to the Victorian Heritage Register which was a great confirmation that they are pretty special. Being on the heritage register does give them some level of support in that with any major work on them a permit has to be applied for. Heritage Victoria aren't policemen, they haven't got staff to run around and check on every single thing so it's only when you are proposing a change you have to apply for a permit. The installation of the new gates had to have a permit; I think the planting in the main path, in the central palm path. So there have been various things that have had to go to Heritage Victoria for approval. The pond restoration, all the plans for that had to be approved by Heritage Victoria. It's a good level of control.

Before the pond was eventually done, the Council wanted a whistle stop tour of the Gardens before a Council meeting. It was half an hour with the Councillors and they asked me if I would take them around. It was terrific being able to be nice to the Council because so many people involved with botanic gardens are just snarling at their councils all the time. But I was more than happy to do it. Would you believe that it was the height of the drought and we hadn't had rain for a year and the heavens opened. We were all crouched under umbrellas and under a big tree but we were still getting drowned. I paid tribute to them for the support they had given to the Gardens and I said 'there's only one thing left now' and said about the pond. I said 'We'll be wanting that included in the next budget' and Bill Jaboor, who was the CEO at the time said 'It's there already'. It's just amazing that everything has been funded by them and everything has been able to be done correctly - like the gates, the statue, the pond and everything. They shouldn't need revisiting for a long while. There hasn't been any band aid work done.

38.50.9

LW You mentioned that it is on the Heritage Victorian listing, did that take work from the Advisory Group to get it on the listing? Do you know how that came about?

HP I don't know, I don't know who actually put the nomination in or whether it even came from Heritage Victoria because at that time I was on the Heritage Council Landscape Advisory Group. We didn't do any nominations or anything like that, we were an advisory group to the Heritage Council on specific landscape issues. With the Heritage Council there was a concerted effort to get all the botanic gardens on to the register. So I'm not sure how that came about. It's a stringent assessment, there's a review of all its history and that. It then goes to the Heritage Council who recommends it for inclusion. Then it has to be advertised and people are given two months I think to lodge any objections. Interestingly last week the nomination that was made by the Landscape Architect Institute for Royal Park was advertised in the weekend papers, that's got two months. The Heritage Council has recommended that for inclusion - there's bound to be objections and things. The Government will be jumping up and down because it will limit what they can do with the east west link. That will be a keenly fought hearing.



The other item that came out of the Heritage Council was the Oriental Hotel in Williamstown, which had been nominated for heritage listing, the Heritage Council did not recommend. They don't pick up everything that there's an application for. It's looked at pretty stringently before it is recommended for inclusion. The statement of significance is probably the key document that brings in all the information.

41.58.7

LW I don't know if you want to talk about some of the plants in the Gardens, maybe some of the ones that have been there or a while, or replanting or things like that?

HP Well, I don't suppose I'm the best person to talk about the plants. There's so many really good trees in the Gardens. I suppose the thing I feel strongly about is that there's so many of these landscapes within Melbourne and Victoria, probably Australia, that were planted in the second half of the nineteenth century and really so many of them, little has been done to them since then. People think that they are just trees, they'll keep going. Now of course, all of us involved with management of any of these landscapes are being faced with these years of neglect of that tree coverage. In gardens there should be a whole pallet of trees of all ages. They shouldn't all be old or all be young. I think everyone has learned from what is happening now that we just need to keep on planting trees, particularly in gardens where you looking at things as features. Trees are renewed and refreshed. There has been periods when some of the conservation studies were carried out by conservation architects - conservation architects tend to treat trees like a building, you wire I up and you support it. In some cases you can probably keep trees going a bit longer by doing that but there has to be a time when you bite the bullet and get it out and get another one in. It doesn't take that long before it's making its own presence felt.

It's interesting some years ago when I was on the Garden History Committee, we offered money to students for out of pocket expenses. We felt strongly that if someone was doing a conservation study of a garden but couldn't get another tank of petrol to go and have yet another look at the garden or back in the days of films for cameras, they'd limit the number of photos they took because of the cost of film and processing. It was for all those little extras that they would probably skimp on which detracts on the final result of their work. One student wanted some software. He was doing a study on tree replacement programmes. We gave the money for this particular software and said to him - it was a master's thesis - we'd like a copy of the thesis. So he gave it to me and when I read it - I didn't think he'd been well supervised actually because there were loads of questions I had throughout the whole thing and I think they should all be resolved in that process. Really what he'd done was just review a whole lot of conservation studies, he hadn't really gone out and looked. Being a horticultural graduate, when I did my study at Burnley you were in the garden every second day so you did hands on, you knew how gardens were run and managed. Now they tend to spend it all in lecture theatre and the library and they pontificate from afar. This kid told me - I said 'What'd you want to do?' and he said 'I want to be a manager '. Well, I think you have to start at the bottom. He'd reviewed all these conservation studies and it was clear to me, but it hadn't dawned on him, I don't think he'd looked very deeply into it, was that the ones done by conservation architects were savoured at all expense because it was like a garden shed, and the ones carried out by horticulturists were get it out and get another one in. I think there are enough people around now who are horticulturists who are doing these studies. That's a key thing with Williamstown that in this master plan hopefully will map out a programme for removing some of the trees and

getting some new ones in. That should be an ongoing process. I'm involved with Boorandara cemetery. I was invited on to the trust because of my historic garden background and said to the staff there, to one fellow 'How long have you been here' 'thirty years' and I said 'and how many trees have been planted in that time?' and he said 'none' and I said 'how many have been lost' and he said 'lots'. So that summed it up for me, there was a line drawn in the sand that day there would be no loss of tree numbers from that day on.

#### 48.46.5

It is important that we keep the planting going, particularly the Pinetum, it gives us a fantastic opportunity to grow some really good conifers. Eastern Park which surrounds the Geelong Botanic Gardens has an amazing collection of conifers and they're proven near the water that they will survive in those sorts of conditions. The trees have to be planted properly and protected for several years. The ones that have been planted recently in the Pinetum just haven't had really good protection. You're throwing your money away by planting trees and not looking after, particularly in that environment. When you look at the existing trees, they're straight. The people who planted them must have given them really good protection in their formative years. The trees across the Esplanade on Hatt Reserve, those Macrocarpas, they had fantastic barriers built around them on the sea side. They have just been taken down in the last year or so because the trees are established now and that's what's got to happen in the Pinetum. I've said my piece in my comments in the first run of the master plan about that. It's such an opportunity to really display plants that grow in those conditions, and shrubs and things. It's a lesson for people who live in that area if they're looking to plant something, go and see what's growing well in the Gardens to see what will survive in that area.

I'm very strong on the Friends having a botanical interest. It's important that we start off with having a GPCAA accredited collection. GPCAA is the plant collections association. For years it's been mooted that Williamstown Botanic Gardens should hold the crinum collection because there are several crinums in the Gardens. It's a matter of recording it and listing it. It's a fantastic opportunity for the Friends to do that recording work and monitor it, all be it with Shelley monitoring it over all but not adding a lot of work for Shelley. But having the contact with GPCAA which is now called Plant Trust to try to make it a bit easier. I just nag on about the Crinum collection forever.

#### 52.32.3

LW I know when I first got involved with the Gardens, I wondered how the Gardens evolved. I know there have been different plantings over the years, there were lots of annuals for a long time, they had the big dahlia bed that they don't have any more. Do you see gardens as constantly evolving but still keeping that same feel?

HP Well, a garden does evolve. That's why to have a master plan and to have an advisory group, to have the heritage listing, it all keeps a control over it. Because you get some do-good gardener come in and think 'oh I'm going to do this and that's my favourite tree'. By rights the golden elm shouldn't be there. Somebody popped that in because they thought that would be nice. I think it would far nicer as an open lawn. But its magnificent tree, it's been there long enough now. If every head gardener who came along had a favourite tree and popped it somewhere, you'd end up with a bit of a mish mash. We've still got to move with the times. The central path planting with the succulents and the junipers and things

like that are moving a bit away from the Edwardian style of planting that the Garden was but with the drought and with lower maintenance that was an evolutionary thing but it was one by a lot of people considering it. It wasn't just one gardener who cooked it up one day. The question of dahlias and annuals is just sheer economics. Shelley's trying to maintain a little bit of annual planting and bedding out but - dahlias have to be lifted and stored - they just don't fit the budget these days.

LW So a garden can evolve without the structure changing?

HP Yes. If you've got that basic structure of the trees and paths and hedges - and the style, the style of plants. I can't see the point of making change for changes sake. I think that's what we've got to be very careful about with this new master plan. I certainly don't want a lot more planting. Certainly building up planting and filling in gaps but putting in flavour of the month, you run the risk. To me those gardens are just simple gardens. I think if we try and tart them up and be a bit too clever with them, they'll lose that simple charm. Hopefully that process of the master plan and the Advisory Group can dampen down someone's enthusiasm for making mass changes.

56.59

LW I actually think that summed up very nicely about the importance of an advisory group, starting from when you set it up and now why it's important. Is there anything else you want to say Helen? We've covered a fair bit.

HP Did I tell you - the amazing thing was - this is out of context now - the amazing thing was when we had that initial meeting for the Friends, it was Wednesday 6th May 2009 and knowing I was going to be chairing the meeting, I thought 'Oh what am I going to say' and wondered when I wrote that letter about Williamstown trees and - our meeting was the 6th May 2009 and I had written that first letter to Angela Altair on 8th May 1999. It was the ten year anniversary. I hadn't realised that I had written two letters. On the 8th May there must have been something in the local paper about Angela Altair doing something about the trees and I wrote about that and then on 16th May was when the trees had come down in Melbourne Road.

I've got to say Angela Altair has been fantastic. We are so fortunate that whole time that we have been working on this, from the initial advisory group setting up to what we've been through, all this process, the first master plan, now the second master plan, we have had the same Ward Councillor. That continuity, you just can't put a price on that, the value of that has just been terrific. She hasn't interfered or anything but she's been there to speak up for us when we've needed it. Very supportive of everything that's happened. Hats off to Angela.

LW That was brilliant Helen, thank you very much