Leisure as a topic receives increasing attention today, not only is it a description of the way we choose to spend our free time, it is an industry around which is arising a vast bureaucracy.

It was not always thus. This issue of *Historic Environment* looks at leisure occupations in the earlier days of Australia, and particularly at the architecture erected to cater for them.

Caught up in his private grief, Dr. John William Springthorpe would not have imagined, perhaps, that his lavish memorial to his wife, Annie, would draw crowds to Boroondara (Kew) Cemetery, but it did, so much so that he had to commission a specially-designed case to protect the white marble statuary at the centre of the memorial. The Springthorpe memorial has decayed somewhat, but while no longer a tourist attraction, it remains a focus for architectural pilgrims.

Vast picture palaces were built around Australia in the 1920s and 1930s, the ornament of each outdoing that of the last, and a source of wonder for patrons. Sadly, few of these edifices survive intact, and today’s movie-goers, catered for with four even five sessions a day, have become used to motel-like interiors containing not a whit of fantasy. Frank Van Straten and Les Tod both represent bodies which strive to revive lost picture palace memories (Performing Arts Museum and the Australian Theatre Historical Society) and their articles reflect the approach taken by each.

The Myer Music Bowl is a fine creation of the 1950s which has survived intact, and which accommodates a variety of uses for all ages, from concerts (the purpose for which it was built) to mass rallies and ice-skating. Its surroundings, too, have changed little, which must be some kind of record. Across Australia, large and small sound shells in municipal parks are the bowl’s progeny and continue the tradition of the 19th and early 20th century band rotundas. However many other bowls and the bandstands, have already lost the popularity they once enjoyed.

The popularity of road racing has not changed but its components, environs and infrastructure have. The cars are faster and the crowds larger; no longer do spectators stand beside dirt roads and behind gum trees as competing cars roar past, showering them with dust. Grand Prix races, too, have become the vehicle for an industry in which money-making and tourism play major roles.

In contrast with the roar and razzmatazz of road racing and the silver screen, gardening remains a leisurely pursuit which has changed little over the decades and whose current focus, surprisingly, is as much backward-looking as contemporary. Most of today’s desirable garden furniture and garden detail has period flavour. Would that other recreational pursuits in the 1980s could recapture the same leisurely pace!