

Australian Garden History Society ACT Monaro Riverina Branch

Newsletter August 2011 No 4



Australian Garden History Society
www.gardenhistorysociety.org.au

ACT Monaro Riverina Branch, PO Box 5008, LYNEHAM ACT 2602
For an e-copy of the newsletter email expertco@ozemail.com.au

BRANCH DIARY

LECTURE

5 OCTOBER

*Cabbages and Roses:
The Canberra Garden
Di Firth*

For your diaries

5 & 6 NOVEMBER
Weekend Trip to Berry

9-11 NOVEMBER
2012

AGHS National
Conference, Ballarat,
*Gardens of a Golden
Era*

TONY BYRNE (1943 – 2011)

Many members of the AGHS Branch recently attended the Memorial for our late Chairman on 22 June. So did around 200 others which eloquently bespoke the respect and fondness in which he was held.

Born and educated in Sydney he lived the majority of his life in Canberra, apart from several overseas postings. Settling with his wife, Sue, in Reid he became closely involved in the core of the garden city he loved in a variety of ways. His active membership of The Reid Residents Action Group and the AGHS local Branch were Tony's expression of his concern for this beautiful city. Unlike many economists it can be said he *did* know the value of place and put personal passion into its protection.

Tony led this Branch over the last 3 years and had been an active attendee at recent Annual Conferences for longer. His leadership led to successful events locally including lectures, projects and field visits. His ability to lead by quietly resolving conflicting views was legendary.

Most recently he was involved closely in the Branch project to digitise the important records of the Yarralumla Nursery, dating back to Charles Weston's days. This project nears completion and will be an important achievement for the Branch.

We will all miss him.
Max Bourke

Your Branch Committee members are thrilled that Sue has agreed to join our committee for the forthcoming year.



FORTHCOMING EVENTS

BRANCH COMMITTEE

Helen Elliot, Chair
Margaret Bourke
Sue Byrne,
Nancy Clarke,
Secretary & NMC
Representative
Robbie Henderson,
Treasurer
Rod Holesgrove
Louise Moran
Julia Nicholls
Judy Pearce,
Newsletter Editor
Linda Spinaze
Marie Wood

LECTURE: WEDNESDAY 5 OCTOBER, 6PM **RESCHEDULED**

CABBAGES AND ROSES: THE CANBERRA GARDEN

PRESENTER: DR DIANNE FIRTH

Canberra's residential blocks were originally designed to be large enough to sustain a family in fruit and vegetables. Parallel with this utilitarian function was an aesthetic delight in flowers. The popularity of garden exhibitions and competitions was such that workers and low level public servants could compete with senior officers and departmental heads for the best roses, dahlias and cabbages. This talk will look at the changing nature of Canberra's gardens from 1926 to the present and consider the implications of urban consolidation on Canberra's 'Garden City' image.

Dianne Firth is a member of our branch of the AGHS. Her research interest is in the theory and practice of Landscape Architecture as expressed through the design, implementation and management of designed landscapes. She teaches Design Studio and Landscape History in the Faculty of Arts & Design at the University of Canberra. Commonwealth and Territory authorities, councils, boards and committees draw on her research and seek her advice.



Venue: Menzies Room, National Archives of Australia, Queen Victoria Terrace, Parkes

Cost: Members \$10, others \$15 (incl. refreshments)

Booking recommended: You can book by contacting Nancy Clarke, nclarke@grapevine.com.au, 6248 6549, or use the Booking form Page 8.

BERRY WEEKEND: 5 & 6 NOVEMBER: ACT & SYDNEY JOINT BRANCHES EVENT

Join us in beautiful Berry to visit gardens, old & new, large & small

Numbers are limited therefore early bookings including payment is essential if you don't want to miss out! (Some members of the Sydney Branch have already heard about this event and have made booking enquiries!)

Costs for both days are Members \$100, Non members \$130. Boxed lunches and teas for both days are included but delegates need to make their own arrangements for accommodation, breakfast & evening meals. Two of the properties we visit have B & B facilities and information can be sent to you after bookings have been confirmed if desired. We can also let you have a list of restaurants in the area should you wish to book in advance.

On the Saturday at 11am we will be welcomed to Berry in the fabulous garden of well known horticulturist and AGHS member Hazel King where we will enjoy a cuppa before setting off on our tour for the day. Full instructions where to meet and the complete program for the weekend will be forwarded on completion of registration. On Sunday morning we will meet at 10am in the grounds of the very grand Berry Courthouse where we will inspect the new garden which the 'Friends' have restored and recreated under the supervision of Hazel. The later start will enable those of you who wish to attend the local town markets or just enjoy a leisurely start to the day.

There are 4 other gardens to enjoy over the weekend before lunching on the Sunday in the grounds of the Department of Recreation & Sport's property where we will be able to look at the internationally award winning gymnasium, enjoy the ambience of the old buildings & gardens and take a look at the new landscaping recently installed.

Enquires & bookings to be made through local branch contacts.

- ACT: Judy Pearce ACT,
- Sydney: Jeanne Villani

Murray Hook, Sydney Branch

Note: I will prepare a registration form in the next week or so just email or phone me to register your interest in this weekend.

Judy Pearce, expertco@ozemail.com.au, 62576970 (day with answer machine).



Lovely property in Berry belonging to Libby & Urwin Hannan



Berry Courthouse

NEWS FROM THE BRANCH

REID SUSTAINABLE HERITAGE COTTAGE GARDENS DESIGN COMPETITION

The Reid Residents Association with support from ACTEW Corporation and our branch of the Australian Garden History Society have invited students enrolled in the second year of the Bachelor of Arts in Landscape at the University of Canberra to present a design proposal for a sustainable heritage garden. The designs, for which prizes will be offered, are to demonstrate sustainable ways of conserving the intrinsic features of residential gardens within the Reid Housing Precinct which is listed on the ACT Heritage Register. The students' designs will be assessed for their ability to articulate an understanding of heritage principles and knowledge of architectural and landscape design from the early period of Canberra urban development.

Dr Dianne Firth, currently Associate Professor and Head of Landscape Architecture, Faculty of Arts and Design at the University of Canberra and an AGHS member will be overseeing the project. Dianne will be giving a talk on early Canberra gardens to our branch in October, details above.

BRANCH COMMITTEE FOR 2011-2012

Branch Committee members are elected for a three year term, and are eligible for re-election for two further terms. No current Committee members have completed their three year term of office and all have indicated that they wish to continue as members of the Committee. Continuing Committee members are: Margaret Bourke, Sue Byrne, Nancy Clarke, Helen Elliot, Robyn Henderson, Rod Holesgrove, Julia Nicholls, Linda Spinaze and Marie Wood. At the AGM, nominations from the floor were invited and Louise Moran was elected to join the committee for the forthcoming year.

RECENT EVENTS

MAY LECTURE: JOINT EVENT WITH THE FRIENDS OF THE NATIONAL LIBRARY

THE GARDEN OF IDEAS: FOUR CENTURIES OF AUSTRALIAN STYLE

PRESENTER: RICHARD AITKEN

On 12 May Richard Aitken introduced *The Garden of Ideas* (the title of his recently published book and the travelling exhibition it accompanies) to a very large and appreciative audience at the National Library of Australia. Richard is an independent scholar – an architect, founding member of the Australian Garden History Society and indefatigable researcher of the Australian garden and landscape. For many years he has been working on the evolution of the Australian garden, focussing on its position within broader cultural and aesthetic contexts – tracing a continuum of style from before white settlement of Australia through to the 21st century.

The Garden of Ideas is the outcome of this research. The book and exhibition are both lavish and thought provoking, and for his Canberra talk Richard concentrated on several threads from them, using his outstanding illustrations to both enrich the talk and to entice those attending to visit the exhibition in Melbourne (at the Johnston Collection) or later in the year in Sydney. The depth of Richard's knowledge and lively presentation made this a memorable talk which was enjoyed by AGHS members, Friends of the National Library of Australia and others with an interest in the stylistic evolution of the Australian garden.

The Garden of Ideas – currently exhibiting at The Johnston Collection, Melbourne with an extensive program of lectures (4 July to 21 October 2011). See

<http://www.gardenhistorysociety.org.au> or

http://www.johnstoncollection.org/gallery_program for more information. Later in the year it will be on display at The Red Box Gallery, Royal Botanic Gardens Sydney.

Nancy Clarke

JUNE LECTURE: HERITAGE CHINESE SCHOLAR GARDENS OF SUZHOU

PRESENTER: KAY JOHNSTON

In July the AGHS lecture was on the many concepts that developed the Chinese Garden of today. The power-point presentation used examples from the UN listed heritage Scholar Gardens, mostly from Suzhou, which range up to 1100 years old. Suzhou has, for centuries, been considered as having the best gardens. The Scholar families were the educated, wealthy powerful upper class elite who ran the Chinese Bureaucracy, and, by the 14th century, the concepts of the private garden was so complex it was considered that only a scholar was capable of developing one.

Gardens were to reflect the whole world, with rocks representing mountains and land, and water the oceans. Plants were chosen for their symbolic meaning, and use. Gardens large enough to have a small grove of trees used these to represent the forests, but in a small garden the concept of a forest could be represented by just one tree.

As well as the physical design, the garden also needed to contain references to poetry and literature, as gardens became an outward show of a scholar's ability and knowledge. So the name of a pavilion ie the Washing Ribbon Pavilion in the Master of the Nets Garden, showed the owner was familiar with a verse from early literature:-

*If the Canglang River is dirty, I wash my muddy feet
If the Canglang River is clean, I wash my Ribbon*

More than that, this verse is also used to show political probity in attitudes to "dirty politics" and "clean politics".

The gardens were influenced by the religions of Confucianism (tranquillity and scholarship)

and Daoism (spontaneity, imagination and disorder). The Feng Shui branch of Daoism is obvious in such constructions as the zig-zag bridge.

By the 15th century, books on design, and “good taste” were written to help scholars with their designs.

And, finally, the garden had to accommodate the needs of the family living there. From family festivals, to the daily activities of children playing, scholars meditating or entertaining colleagues, and lover’s trysts

While meant to enable man to contemplate the world and his place in it, it should also delight and enable games and joy and laughter

Editor: This lecture proved very popular with members and their friends and Kay has kindly prepared this précis of the lecture for the newsletter.



AUGUST LECTURE

FORTY SHRUBS AND TEN TREES – TEN EDITIONS OF THE CANBERRA GARDENER

PRESENTERS: MERILYN CONDON AND JOHN LE MESURIER

Following the Branch AGM (2 August) Merylyn Condon and John Le Mesurier from the Canberra Horticultural Society spoke on the development of every Canberra gardener’s bible: *The Canberra Gardener*.

After some scene setting the speakers spoke about the establishment of the Canberra Horticultural Society, founded in 1929 with Alexander Bruce as President. At this stage Bruce was Director, Parks and Gardens for Canberra, so was well positioned to set this new Society on its feet. The Society was immediately successful – in its first Spring Show in that same year there were 263 entries and it continued to flourish throughout the difficult years of the Depression and the Second World War (in the course of which flower gardens were transformed into productive gardens), remaining active today.

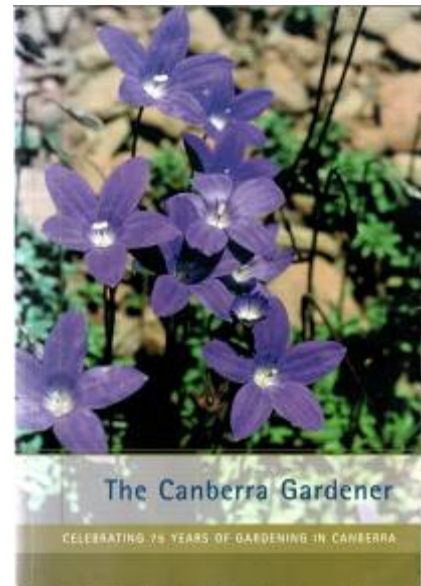
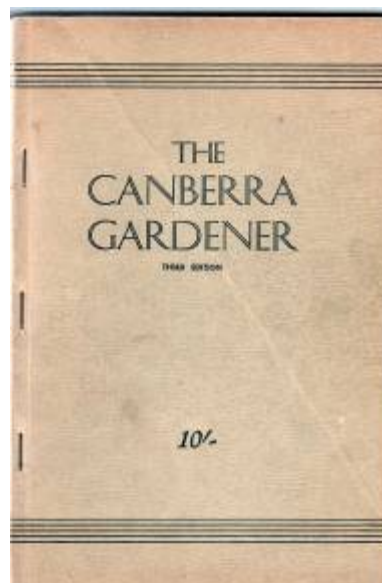
It was not until 1948 though that the Society published the first edition of *The Canberra Gardener*, with E M Hutton and C J Shakespeare as editors. Strangely enough there was no mention of trees in this first edition – an omission rectified in the second edition of 1951. In both of these early editions there was a strong emphasis on the difficulties associated with gardening in an alien environment, as well as confidence that science would overcome all problems – chemical sprays figure at great length in both text and advertisements (there is an advertisement for DDT Garden Dust available in 56 lb bags). The emphasis on chemical controls of pests and diseases continued through many editions, though the

current edition reflects contemporary attitudes to a healthy garden environment. The detailed “when and what to spray” chart has finally disappeared.

The third edition (1959) edited by Edgar Riek represents a new approach. Instead of concentrating on the Canberra gardener’s continuous battle with the environment, Riek says in his preface that “Canberra is most ideally situated for the keen gardener”, adding that “the summers are dry, but there is an abundant supply of water”. Even the eighth edition (1991) speaks of Canberra’s “ample urban supply of water”. The current (tenth) edition – 2010 – is substantial and elegantly produced, with a whole section devoted to the water conscious garden. A chart near the back lists “Weeds in the Australian Capital Territory”. Many of these plants (English ivy, cotoneaster, privet, box elder, Cootamundra wattle) are enthusiastically described in early editions of the book as suitable for Canberra gardeners.

The Canberra Gardener is not only an invaluable practical guide to new and experienced gardeners, it is also a magnificent source book for social historians and those interested in the evolution of gardens and gardening in Canberra. The ACT Monaro and Riverina Branch of AGHS is grateful to Merylyn and John for a most enlightening and evocative talk, drawn from historical research and from their experience as members of the Editorial Committee of the Horticultural Society that produced the current edition of *The Canberra Gardener*.

Nancy Clarke



FRIENDS OF THE NATIONAL ARBORETUM

VISIT TO *NALYAPPA*, YAOUK: SATURDAY 19 NOVEMBER

Earlier in the year members were given the opportunity to join the Friends of the National Arboretum Canberra on a visit to an important private arboretum in spring. Mr and Mrs Maurie Henderson of *Nalyappa* at Yaouk in the Monaro have generously opened their arboretum for this visit. We gather there are still a few places available on this trip.

A coach has been booked to depart from the front of the Defence complex at Russell Hill (where you can park for the day). The coach will depart at 8.30am via Cooma to Yaouk. A packed lunch will be included in the price. The aim is to return at around 4.30pm via Adaminaby where there will be a brief visit to the newly opened Museum of the Snowy Mountains Collection. For further details contact Max Bourke on 6247 4630 or email max@mebourke.com.

The cost is \$50 per person (coach plus lunch).

VOICES IN THE FOREST – INAUGURAL COMMUNITY CONCERT

SATURDAY 12 NOVEMBER

Prepare to be enthralled as you listen to the exquisite voice of highly acclaimed Swedish opera singer Anne Sofie von Otter. Anne Sofie von Otter will sing arias from Carmen and other well-known operas, and pay tribute to fellow countrymen Bjorn Ulvaeus and Benny Andersson (Abba) as she puts her soulful, dusky sound to some of their well-known ballads.

The afternoon's program includes local opera singers performing a selection of operatic arias, jazz and Broadway songs: Henry Choo - Tenor, Louise Page - Soprano, Christina Wilson - Mezzo-soprano, and special performance by Robyn Archer accompanied by PJ Casey.

It is an exciting program with something for everyone, in a new and important location - the National Arboretum Canberra. For information about the event, the program and site access, please visit www.voicesintheforest.com.au

OF INTEREST

2011 FLORIADE

Saturday 17 September – Sunday 16 October

One of the features of this year's Floriade is the history of war time kitchens and gardens at the Australian War Memorial's Victory Garden, featuring the plants and vegetables grown by wartime Australian families during the Second World War.

This should be of interest as according to a recent newspaper article, Oasis has seen a 70% growth in sales of edible plants in the past decade, with a 15% increase in the last 18 months.

AUSTRALIAN OPEN GARDEN SCHEME

The program and guidebook are now available for 2011-2012. For more information go to <http://www.opengarden.org.au/>

Sunday 18 September, 10am-4.30pm

Walcott Open Garden, 10 Wickham Crescent, Red Hill, \$6 per adult with proceeds to the Friends of the ANBG

FRIENDS OF THE AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL BOTANIC GARDENS

Lectures on a variety of topics are offered at 12.30pm on most Thursdays. Details on all the lectures can be found at <http://www.anbg.gov.au/friends/calendar.html>.

WESTBOURNE WOODS ARBORETUM WALKS

Free guided two hour walks through the grounds of the Royal Canberra Golf Club are held every second Sunday of the month, starting at 9.30am at the entrance to Royal Canberra Golf Club, Bentham Street, Yarralumla. For further information on the program of Friends of ACT Arboreta, phone 6288 7656 or 6281 1587

Sunday 11 September, theme – *Trees for our needs*, guide – Ross Lapworth

Sunday 9 October, theme – *History of Australian arboreta*, guide – Max Bourke

SAVE THE LAKE SHORE

For an update go to www.lakewarmemorialsforum.org

AGHS BOOKING SLIP

Booking slips need to be returned no later than one week prior to the event to assist committee with planning. It is easier for your voluntary committee to get payment in advance but if you have difficulties paying by cheque please send the booking slip or email nclarke@grapevine.com.au and pay on the day.

Names

Contact phone: (Evening/W/E) _____

Email: _____

Tick	Event	Cost	Numbers attending	Amount Incl \$
<input type="checkbox"/>	Cabbages & Roses Lecture (5 October)	Members of AGHS \$10 Non-members \$15		

Return with payment to: AGHS, P O Box 5008, Lyneham ACT 2602

Make cheques out to **Australian Garden History Society**