

BRANCH REPORTS DECEMBER 2009

ACT/ Monaro/Riverina Branch

Report by Nancy Clarke

- On 28 November 68 members attended the annual Christmas gathering at Manar in the Braidwood district, where the shelter provided by the many mature trees tempered the blustery conditions. Manar was granted to Dr Matthew Anderson in 1825. The present building at Manar is a combination of a cottage built by Dr Anderson some time before 1835 and the house built by Hugh Gordon and his wife Mary (formerly Macarthur) who purchased it in 1841. The house has been in the Gordon family ever since. Hugh Gordon described the cottage built by Anderson as a 'very nice cottage for a visit of a few months, but not for a settled residence', being a simple weatherboard structure, with a verandah at the front and rear and a hipped roof. A stone building at the rear of the building, with a loft above, also dates from Anderson's time and contains the original kitchen. Hugh Gordon was an avid gardener who obtained oak, elm, beech and hawthorn seeds from the family home in Scotland for the garden at Manar. Cuttings were also obtained from the extensive nurseries at Camden Park, the home of Mary Gordon's cousin William Macarthur. From 1844 onwards Manar was a productive garden and full of lilacs, hawthorns and honeysuckle. Well known Australian gardener Beatrice Bligh was a regular visitor to Manar as it was the childhood home of her father Jim Gordon. She acknowledged that the garden at Manar had a major influence on her work. In her book, *Down to Earth*, she wrote that 'this large, romantic, natural place where I spent so many blissful, irresponsible days became my ideal'. The current owners hold a similar view. Despite years of serious drought the garden retains its atmosphere, with numbers of very old trees, including an oak tree depicted in a photograph of a family wedding in 1907 when it was already a mature tree.
- Planning for events for 2010 is the current major activity of the Committee. On 25 November Judy Pearce and Nancy Clarke visited a number of sites in Yass as preliminary exploration for a Branch day visit in 2010. As in recent years we plan to include several joint events with other organisations.

Queensland Branch

Report by John Taylor

- A very successful end of year function was held at Montville at "The Shambles" where the property owners Kyleigh and Michael Simpson launched their new book *Over the Fence and Overlooked: traditional plants in Queensland's gardening heritage*, followed by lunch at nearby Flaxton, 38 members and guests attending.

South Australian Branch

Report by Ray Choate

- Christmas Drinks Function. The annual Christmas Drinks will be held on Sunday, 6 December 2009 at the beautiful and historic Adelaide Hills house and garden (St. Vigeans).
- Mt Lofty Botanic Garden. Several hardy members visited the Mt Lofty Botanic Garden on Sunday afternoon, the 22nd November, arguably the coldest day in November but no members were complaining after the record-breaking heat of the previous week. There had been some rain the previous evening, and the garden was refreshed. Jane Smylie guided the group through the lower sections of the gardens, discussing the history of the area, lake, plantings, and of the gardens in general which were first opened in 1977. There are 97 hectares of gardens, on the slopes of Mount Lofty in the Adelaide Hills. Most of the garden is native trees and plants, but rhododendrons and other cooler climate trees and plants have been introduced into the gullies and valleys. The Garden is one of the three gardens of the Botanic Gardens of Adelaide.
- The Branch Committee has a new Secretary – Alan Betteridge, assisted by his wife Helen Livingston, has undertaken the duties of the Secretary and also will edit the branch newsletter. We welcome them to the Committee. Before moving to Adelaide a few years ago, Alan and Helen operated Garden Street Books in Geelong, a garden specialist bookshop which many of us knew and used.
- Cas Middlemis reports on the launch of her book, *Hung Out to Dry: Gilbert Toyne's classic Australian clothes hoist* (co-authored by Peter Cuffley):-
"About 85 people attended the book launch at Unley Town Hall, held in conjunction with the Unley Library, on Sunday 15 November 2009 3-5pm. Peter Cuffley, and his wife Barb, travelled from Maldon, Victoria to join us. It was a celebration to launch the book but also the coming together of a number of clothes hoist families in recognition of their contribution. Lois Clark flew in from Canberra. Her parents had made Toyne rotary clothes hoists in Adelaide from the 1920s. Lois very generously decided to hand over the few remaining documents from her father's business to the State Library of SA. The State Library's Collection Manager, Tony Leschen, was there to receive them. This was particularly exciting as very few Toyne-related business documents are held in public archives so it is wonderful to have this material return to SA. Professional historian Dr Susan Marsden launched the book in what proved to be an excellent laundry drying day with the temperature topping 40°C!

“Decorative clothes lines were draped from the upper section of the Town Hall and pegged with large clothes hoist images, gathered over the years of research. One guest bought in a giant peg, over 1 metre tall, from the 1996 Festival of Arts celebrations and a number of young children were kept happy colouring-in photocopies of old Toyne clothes hoist advertisements.”

Sydney and Northern NSW Branch

Report by Stuart Read

- We welcome new committee member & stand-in secretary Prue Anthony to our ‘crew’ – great!
- Apart from enjoying the stimuli of the national conference and tour of volcano-rich (and lush, green) Western Victoria, a recent source of excitement was the exhibition ‘*Orange Blossoms*’ - the first such ‘show’ in this city, which closed on 1/11/09, funded by ArtsNSW. Curated by member Elizabeth Richards and hosted by Orange Regional Gallery, it explored gardening, garden art and design: from pioneers in Fredericks Valley; the town’s gazettal after gold’s discovery at Lucknow in the 1850s to today’s ‘colour city’. Four seasons, fertile basalt soils and usually reliable rain bring a legacy of big and small-scale cultivation. I gave a couple of talks on trees and 20th century gardens. Orange City Council has also undertaken a survey of significant landscape features including parks, streetscapes, approach roads and trees. This included community-led nominations and is a useful model for other local Councils to adopt – taking a broad view of what is special about an area, including its landscape setting. See it at <http://www.orange.nsw.gov.au/go/environment-and-development/planning-our-city-s-future/survey-of-significant-landscape-features/survey-of-significance-pages> .
- Pleasingly, two Branch nominations received 2009 NSW Heritage Volunteer Awards in a ceremony held in Sydney on 16 November – Colleen Morris (our recently-retired national chair) and Professor Richard Clough (indefatigable researcher, writer and book collector/donor). Both richly deserve the awards and are congratulated for their ongoing commitment to research, careful documentation, education (e.g. ‘*Lost Gardens of Sydney*’) and celebration of garden history. These awards also help raise the profile of garden history: well done, Colleen & Richard!
- Two Sunday events members enjoyed in November were our *Rookwood Necropolis* ‘roses’ walk on the 8th and the 15th Heritage Rose Festival on the 15th in *Parramatta Park’s Rumsey Rose Garden*. The bushes were out, framing displays by a range of groups including AGHS, Heritage Roses Australia and the Camden Park Nursery Group, talks and music. The park is worth exploring any time but especially winter & spring. More info is at www.ppt.nsw.gov.au.
- Also on the weekend of 7-8 November was the 200th anniversary of the Mulgoa Valley south of Penrith. Settled from 1810 by the pioneering Cox family of mountain-crossing fame, it has long been famed for its colonial & Victorian era farm properties including significant houses, gardens and estates. A bus tour allowed a rare public glimpse of some of these: *Fernhill*, *Fairlight*, *Glenleigh* and *Winbourne*. James Broadbent’s garden at *The Cottage* (c.1810) was also open via Australia’s Open Garden Scheme. The valley survives thanks to progressive planning of the 1980s although infill and ‘rural-residential’ lifestyle blocks are intruding... Still, much to celebrate!
- On 29 November we’ll enjoy a special ‘peek behind the scenes’ in the heart of *Sydney’s Royal Botanic Gardens* – its central depot and recently refurbished historic glasshouses. Heritage architects Sean Johnson & Ian Stapleton and Gardens Director, Brad Horan will show us what works have been done to keep this heart both actively beating and efficient. This is not an area open to the public, so make the most of the opportunity. Our donation for restoration and upgrade work to the Gardens’ Cunningham Obelisk and pond area has recently been supplemented, allowing work to get underway. Allan Cunningham was a key early director of the gardens and important colonial botanist/explorer.
- After a few twists, our Christmas party will now be in the cool oasis of Jeanne Villani’s *Waterfall Cottage*, 90 Cabbage Tree Road, Bayview on 13th December. Come and enjoy this ‘other world’ -hidden from view down a steep drive in a deep gully with densely wooded sides, teeming with bird, insect and reptile life and richly planted.
- The NSW Government has gazetted changes to the *Heritage Act*, including changes to responsibilities of State Government Agencies to identify their heritage assets – sadly these are less comprehensive than previous requirements and open to abuse: cash-strapped agencies are already offloading ‘surplus’ assets without due conservation planning or care for appropriate zoning or future conservation controls.
- A current nomination on public exhibition for the NSW State Heritage Register is *Richmond Park*, formerly its market square laid out by Governor Macquarie and still the green, open heart of town.
- Also recently advertised was ‘downsizing’ the already State Heritage Register-listed *Bungarribee estate* at Doonside. A key colonial farm in the Campbell, Icely and other family ownerships with a once-well-known house and garden it was long a centre of horse breeding and export. Its size is being slashed by current ‘owners’ Landcom (for housing) and (sadder) Western Sydney Parklands Trust, otherwise charged with managing it as open space. Highly questionably, the area publicly advertised for ‘downlisting’ was smaller than the actual area now proposed to be delisted. The public were not made aware of this and thus AGHS did not make a submission, alas. What remains ‘listed’ will be a tiny local park, of what once was a 2000 acre farm. The

proximity of new 2 storey housing and the Trust's attitude don't bode well for future heritage management and interpretation. More info is at http://www.heritage.nsw.gov.au/07_subnav_06_1.cfm?sort_by=name

- Our first event for 2010 will be a talk on 17th February on Hong Kong's *Tiger Balm Gardens* by member Jill Matthews. Jill lived in 'Honkers' for 18 months from 2000 and did volunteer work rescuing this garden from demolition as well as similar involvement with the historic *Dragon garden* – both are under some pressure in mega-dense HK...
- Recent advocacy included two letters to federal Environment Minister Peter Garrett seeking reconsideration of his refusal of a license to allow the Botanic Gardens Sydney to relocate grey headed flying foxes (aka bats). These nationally threatened creatures are causing havoc in the historic palm grove and have killed a number of nationally rare trees since 2002. The license decision will be reconsidered in 2010.
- The New England sub-branch enjoyed a talk in October by Judy Grieves (Armidale & District Historical Society) on the history of *Palmerston* and *Chevy Chase* gardens and their families. Bill Oates led a tour of Palmerston's garden to follow.
- I gave a talk on the landscape heritage of Manly, Warringah & Pittwater to that district's Historical Society, who recently celebrated their 30 year birthday. Members are actively working with the three local Councils to widen their definition and coverage of 'heritage', promote it through websites, brochures etc – the branch has also commented on a draft Manly heritage brochure to focus on some 'garden elements' - so these have been welcome opportunities.
- It is with sadness I report the passing of Colin Slade, well known horticulturist from the Blue Mountains (1944-2009). Twice Vice-President of the BM & District Historical Society, Colin was trained at Sydney Botanic Gardens, gardener at two key mountain gardens, *Lilianfels* (3 years) and *Everglades* (1960-72), head gardener and tree protection officer for BM City Council (1975-81) and long associated in nursery and gardening circles. A sad loss: vale, Colin.

Tasmanian Branch

Report by Ivan Saltmarsh

- With record rainfalls continuing in this state, it was very fortunate that we had a fine sunny day for the visit to Port Arthur early in November. Two of our members, Mike and Dorothy Evans led two groups on a tour of the former penal settlement tracing the initial development of vegetable gardens for survival and to prevent scurvy to the creation of pleasure gardens. Their knowledge and experience equipped them well to carry out the task: Mike (botanist, National Trust researcher, Port Arthur guide and gardens researcher) and Dorothy (botanist, teacher, interpretive manager in the Northern Territory and Port Arthur). The tour commenced at the Commandant's House from where untouched forest can be seen across the bay and in the surrounding hills. It was pointed out that the settlement began as a punishment-orientated timber station. Some old drawings and photos showed the number of buildings that were once there, a fact which is belied today by the view of a few ruins standing amongst sweeping lawns and trees. The recreation of the decorative gardens in front of the Government Cottage is a reminder of the pleasure gardens can provide and they have been described as providing a "gilded cage" especially for the wives of civil and military personnel to escape the harsh realities of the place, which was predominantly a male domain. The tour ended at the Memorial Garden and Pool which is a reminder of the harsh reality of more recent history: the 1996 massacre.
- The Christmas function on 6th December will comprise a visit to Leo Schofield's property at Kempton where he is developing a garden. A guided walk down the main street of the historic village will be followed by lunch outdoors at the Wilmot Arms.
- Several events are being developed for next year with a tour in March of gardens on farm properties in the Oatlands area. In May a visit will be made to an 1825 property in the Derwent Valley. A talk by Robyn Hawkins on the gardens she has made will precede the AGM to be held in Ross in July.

Victorian Branch

Report by Bronwen Merrett

- Nina Crone Award - The closing date for submissions was 30 September. As no submissions were received there will be no award this year.

Coming up

- Wednesday 9 December. Guilfoyle's Volcano, Royal Botanic Gardens, Melbourne. Andrew Laidlaw, Landscape Architect, Royal Botanic Gardens, Melbourne, will lead a tour of the reconstruction of the Guilfoyle-designed water storage basin fashioned as a volcanic crater in the south-east corner of the gardens. Soon the volcano will again play an integral role in the Garden's irrigation system. Construction works are due for completion this spring, when planting will commence ahead of the public opening in the first quarter of 2010.
- Wednesday 10 February 2010, - Maranoa Gardens, Balwyn. Paul Birch, a gardener at the Maranoa Gardens, will introduce the group to this rare example of a public garden dedicated to Australian plants. By judicious use of landscaping and shadecloth, the garden contains different vegetation types that would normally not be found in the same area. There is a temperate woodland/heathland area, an arid rockery, a dry sclerophyll forest

environment and a fernery. Some notable plants include prostrate form of Acacia, Dampiera, Correa, Banksia and Grevillia. There are also examples of aquatic and semi-aquatic plants.

West Australian Branch

Report by Sue Monger

Functions

- Our Christmas function will be held on Sunday, 13 December, in Sue and Adrian Monger's garden. John Viska will quiz members on the year's activities and we'll celebrate our Branch's 21st birthday.

2010

- A planning meeting was held earlier this month. Proposed functions include:
 - a visit to Yanchep National Park with John Viska with presentations from John Viska and Gillian Lilleyman
 - a day trip to York
 - a celebration of camellias
 - joint function with Heritage Roses Australia to the McLarty properties in Pinjarra, to identify the old roses
- 2009 Conference - Six members from the WA Branch participated in the Geelong based event. Congratulations and thanks to Convenor, Pamela Jellie, and the committee - all their arrangements worked well. The garden visits illustrated the interesting lecture program and the venues for the cocktail party and dinner further encompassed the Conference theme Cultivating Australia Felix: The Pastoral Legacy.
- NMC Chair - We welcome John Dwyer to this position and look forward to his leadership of our Society.