

## BRANCH REPORTS

### OCTOBER 2011

#### **ACT/ Monaro/Riverina Branch**

##### **Report by Nancy Clarke**

- Many ACT Monaro and Riverina branch members attended the Maryborough conference. There has been general acclaim and praise for the Conference – the program of talks and visits, the venue, the food, and the overall management of the conference were all much appreciated.
- At our September Branch Committee meeting executive officers were elected – Helen Elliot will continue as Chair, Nancy Clarke Secretary and NMC representative, Robyn Henderson Treasurer, and Judy Pearce publicity.
- The talk by Dr Dianne Firth Cabbages and Roses – the development of the Canberra garden which had been postponed took place on 5 October. The talk (at the National Archives) was well attended (40 people), and provoked much discussion over our post-talk refreshments. Dianne followed the history of the garden in Canberra from its earliest days up to the current time – she sees many challenges as Canberra changes – suburban infill and the increased size of the houses relative to the size of the block mean that a new approach should be taken.
- The Yarralumla Nursery digitisation project has made good progress – the very significant amount of checking and organising the material is making demands on the Committee, but the outcome should be excellent. The quality of the digital images is excellent. We are meeting with the Director of the ACT Archives in the next few days to discuss the way in which the material will be mounted on their website.
- Planning for next year's program is the next pressing matter for the Committee.

#### **South Australian Branch**

##### **Report by Richard Nolan**

- Branch AGM - On Sunday 28th August Twenty six members plus guests Lynn Walker and Richard Bird from Armidale attended our AGM Luncheon At Carrick Hill. Ray Choate announced his retirement from committee and Jeanette Walsingham-Meath and Margaret Sando were elected along with four committee members from the previous year. After the meeting Richard Bird from the 'Old Mole' spoke on the collection of gardening tools being presented to Carrick Hill for the foundation of the Australian Gardening Museum. Patricia Michell thanked the speaker for his entertaining presentation and presented the Branch with cheque of \$1000 being proceeds from AGHS(SA) co-sponsored openings in April and May at Mable Hill Ruin.
- September Committee Meeting - The new Branch Committee met on 26th September with four members in attendance plus the retiring Chair Ray Choate. Ray was thanked for his efforts as Branch Chair and Treasurer over the previous term and invited to have input into assisting new committee in his role as National Vice Chair and elected Rep on the National Committee. It was agreed to defer filling of executive positions till November meeting and in meantime co opt an additional committee member. Richard Nolan indicated his willingness to take on the role of Branch Treasurer and to act as Branch Chair in the interim.

##### **Programme for remainder of 2011**

- Sunday October 30th; Visit to Margorie Browns rose garden at Glenunga
- Sunday November 13th; Strathalbyn Picnic and Garden Visits
- Sunday December 4th; Christmas Party at Joiner's Garden at Mannum on R. Murray

#### **Southern Highlands Report**

##### **Report by Laurel Cheetham**

**Committee Changes and Planning Day** The Committee of seven met on 21 September to elect office bearers, establish roles for committee members, draft an events calendar for 2012, and decide on the projects it would undertake.

- Following the resignation of Eleanor Dartnall from the Chair, Laurel Cheetham was elected unanimously. Lynette Esdaile remains as our Secretary, with Jennifer Carroll assisting in events management and with mail. Jane Clifford is again our Treasurer, and Clive Probyn commissariat. Fran Turland is the Minutes Secretary.
- We are very much aware of the need to publicise our Society to increase our membership and communicate what we are about. We have therefore created a new position called marketing and communication, which Eleanor Dartnall is taking on.

- We would like to increase our committee to nine, or even eleven, as we are already finding it difficult to manage the necessary tasks that go with event management. We also plan to prepare a volunteers register, identifying people who are willing to take on specific tasks, but not commit to belonging to a committee. We will identify those tasks which can be done by volunteers, and try to match these with the names we add to the volunteers register.
- We have planned for ten events throughout the year. They include self-drive visits to properties, a summer evening picnic, the annual Christmas party, several speakers, and an event during the National heritage festival.
- The Committee noted that the first stage of the Crowe project was nearing completion. Information on the plantings and structures at the Berrima Bridge Nursery have been documented and mapped. Some rare camellias were found in the process. A dialogue has been established between our consultants, Chris and Charlotte Webb and Camden Park and Camellia Ark. We are still awaiting advice on our application for heritage funding, which will be necessary to complete the project.
- Other projects which we will follow up on this year are the compilation of information on listed heritage gardens in Wingecarribee, the register of significant trees, and a Southern Highlands cookbook (funding to be through sponsorship).
- South Coast Visit - We returned to the South Coast on Sunday September 11, when a group of about thirty members and friends visited the sculptural bush garden of the Longs. "Bolwarra" is located high on the escarpment at Foxground, between Berry and Gerroa. It has magnificent views over bushland, the sea and the lush foothills in between. To the west is the escarpment of Barren Grounds. We admired the fire retardant home the Longs have built in an extremely fire prone area, climbed and scrambled and ambled along bush paths created by the Longs to enjoy the rainforest vegetation and enjoyed a leisurely picnic lunch on the large covered deck overlooking the sea view.

#### **Future activities and Events**

- Morning Tea at Retford Park - A tour of the gardens and house courtesy of James Fairfax on October 23. This has attracted a large number of people from the area as well as Sydney. We will need volunteer help to provide the refreshments and look after the details of the day as a number of our committee members are not able to be present.
- Christmas Party at Quindalup – On Friday 25 November, courtesy of Deidre Hill. We are in the process of hiring a marque for this as there is no shelter should it rain.
- Summer afternoon Garden Picnic – This was to be held at Farnborough, Moss Vale on Saturday 25 February. Since making our arrangements with the owner, the Highlands Garden Society (which many of our members are also members of), has decided to hold its summer evening at Farnborough the Saturday before the 25<sup>th</sup>. We are aware that many members would not wish to visit the same place twice so close together so we have changed the location to "The Harp" formerly "Bindagundra", at Sutton Forest, the home of Jan and Peter Marsh. We are very grateful to the Marshes, and looking forward to an enjoyable afternoon and early evening there.

#### **Sydney and Northern NSW Branch**

##### **Report by Stuart Read**

- It is with great sadness I note the recent death of member Peter Kaleski after a long battle with illness. Peter was a keen committee member and always positive: he is missed. Our thoughts go to Anne and we hope their lovely garden is of some solace.
- We also note the death of Cherry Jackaman (nee Davies), owner (1940s-90) and reviver of colonial Campbelltown farm *Varroville*, long-time member and Chair of the National Trust (NSW) Womens' Committee which did much to raise funds for *Experiment Farm Cottage*, *Lindesay* and *St. Matthews Anglican Church* at Windsor.
- The Branch will have a stall in the Heritage Rose Festival in *Parramatta Park's Rumsey Rose Garden* on Sunday 16<sup>th</sup> October. Ours and stalls by Heritage Roses Australia and the Nursery at Camden Park estate will offer plants and advice. Live music and food are available and the roses will be peaking. Parramatta Park is now on the World Heritage List as one of Australia's eleven serial Convict Heritage sites.
- Northern NSW members are busy planning details of the 2013 conference choosing which district gardens to visit and to feature in a preceding issue of the journal. Early preparations are well under way which is most commendable.
- In November members are encouraged to come to two events: Berry for a self-drive weekend of garden visits in and around this delightful Illawarra village and a talk by UK landscape architect Charlotte McLean about her work there for English Heritage on historic landscapes – this is a rare opportunity for an insider view.
- The Branch remains busy in advocacy, writing to:

- Sydney City Council objecting to a rather drastic swimming pool etc proposal for the terraced harbour-side villa garden of *Tresco* at Elizabeth Bay and seeking support for a nomination for NSW State Heritage Register listing of *Hyde Park*, our oldest public park;
  - Penrith City Council encouraging them to drop opposition to the NSW State Heritage Register listing of the *Lewers Bequest and Penrith Regional Gallery* (with sculpture garden) – this is NSW’s equivalent of *Heide Museum of Modern Art* in Melbourne;
  - Randwick City Council and the Minister for Planning opposing the proposed rezoning of the *Chinese Market Gardens* at Matraville adjoining the *Eastern Suburbs Memorial Park* – i.e. allowing cemetery expansion over 150 year old continuously-cropped gardens;
  - the NSW National Parks & Wildlife Service who manage the *La Perouse Museum and historic site* offering funding to replant four *Araucaria* trees that used to mark the memorial, bringing back its former prominence. This allies with its interpretation plan;
  - Armidale-Dumaresq Shire Council about the proposed subdivision layout of historic *Hopetoun Park* on the outskirts of Armidale;
  - The Heritage Council of NSW supporting expansion of the existing NSW State Heritage Register listing of *Strickland House* at Vacluse to include its whole remnant estate – an overseas university is showing interest in a campus here. This is one of the last great harbour-side villa estates still in reasonably intact form;
  - a NSW Parliamentary Inquiry into Coal Seam Gas exploration and mining, seeking greater separation from sensitive environmental lands, residential areas, productive agricultural and horticultural lands and greater precautions to ensure its careful regulation – experiences in the USA and Queensland do not augur well;
- We were approached by an owner of a Paul Sorensen-designed c.1940 garden *Olympia* at Cliff Drive, Katoomba – concerned about the sale and survival of an adjoining lot, whose garden was also designed by Sorensen. Gardens are ephemeral and often rely on sympathetic owners to survive. Changes of ownership bring risk and opportunity.
  - We are talking to the managers of *Varuna*, formerly writer Eleanor Dark’s house and garden and now a writers’ centre in Wentworth Falls about a conservation plan for its garden, and those of *Mamre*, the Rev.Samuel Marsden’s family farmhouse at St.Marys about possibly establishing a heritage rose garden there. Mamre is run by nuns who provide training in hospitality and horticulture, particularly for migrants and job seekers.
  - We were too late to make a submission objecting the redevelopment of Paddington’s Scottish Hospital, which will have some positive, but more negative impacts on its remnant terraced and park-like gardens. Similarly we were too late to comment on the redevelopment of the former Mungo Scott / Allied Flour Mills site at Summer Hill. This site will have medium density housing blocks mimicking the former industrial buildings but pleasingly will retain the (now rare) factory garden facing Smith Street.
  - The Branch has written welcoming new Executive-Director of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Sydney & Domain, Professor David Mabberley. His appointment is timely and we hope to work closely together, particularly with the gardens’ 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary approaching in 2016. He is a well-respected botanist, author, historian and manager, having more recently managed the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew’s estates and heritage collections. He has a long-standing association with Sydney & Australia.
  - Members Prue Anthony and Lynne Walker have been active, planning a Lower Hunter weekend for autumn 2012 which we hope will attract our far-flung members to meet ‘in the middle’ of NSW. More details of this weekend will be in the next *Branch Cuttings*.
  - We have started planning events from July- November 2012 when ‘*Garden of Ideas*’ travelling exhibition will be on show in Sydney (it’s currently on in Victoria – the exhibition and book are being supported by the Society nationally). Curator and author of the eponymous book, Richard Aitken was recently in Sydney and discussing possible seminar topics, walks and talks the branch may hold to extend the reach and impact of the exhibition. This is another good opportunity like ‘Lost Gardens of Sydney’ in 2008 to reach out to a wider audience. Members who’ve not seen the book are recommended it.
  - Historian and member Roslyn Burge has completed an oral history interview with artist and bush regenerator Ian Walker, who’s also the son of bush garden designer and artist Jean Walker and the late sculptor Ralph Walker. Ian lives in the Byron Bay area and has long been active in bush regeneration work and training in Sydney and northern NSW, looking after the shack community at Dobroyd Head in Middle Harbour and over time painting a number of striking historical murals in NSW towns - in many ways carrying on and extending the work his parents started. Members may be interested in an article by Roslyn in the latest journal discussing the Society’s programme of oral history research.
  - Recent requests for information on historic plant introductions or availability in gardens are intriguing: Canary Island date palms, *Phoenix canariensis* (1860s, cf date palm, *P.dactylifera*, 1828); Canary Island pine, *Pinus*

*canariensis* (1857) identifying a mystery pine in Mosman; camphor laurel (1823) and Illawarra/brown/plum pine, *Podocarpus elatus* (1843) both growing in the gully (now a park) beside 1830s *Bronte House*.

- Another intriguing enquiry about *Ginahgulla*, Bellevue Hill (1856 house and from 1949, a boarding house for nearby Scots College) suggests its garden was designed by nurseryman Michael Guilfoyle – this seems to survive relatively intact despite use by schoolboys. Guilfoyle ran the Exotic Nursery in nearby Double Bay at the time.

## **Victorian Branch**

**by Anne Vale**

### **Completion of successful Winter Lecture Series.**

1. Tuesday June 21st: Use of Australian Plants in Domestic Gardens. Diana Snape, author of *Australian Native Gardens: Putting Visions into Practice* and *The Australian Garden: Designing with Australian Plants*.
  2. Thursday July 7th: Avenues of Honour. This paper is being delivered jointly by professional historian Kate Gray and qualified horticulturalist, heritage landscape consultant and arborist Simon Howe.
  3. Tuesday September 6th History of Organic Gardening (following the AGM) Dr Rebecca Jones, author of *Green Harvest: a history of organic farming and gardening in Australia*.
- We also had a very interesting lecture from British designer and commentator Tim Richardson in September which was well attended by FRMBG and AGHS members and friends.
  - Travellers Tales is a new informal morning talks by friends and by committee members who shared their travellers' tales with topics of garden and landscape interest. Held at Domain House the next occasion is booked for October 20th on gardens of Japan and Morocco.

### **Activities**

- Victorian Branch members are assisting the local working committee with the organisation and planning of the 2012 Annual National Conference to be held in Ballarat.
- Victorian committee members have assisted with the program for the National AGM in particular the Spring Day Trip to Cranbourne Botanical Garden.
- Working Bees: A regular working Bee is held at Bishops court garden on the third Wednesday of the month organised by Helen Page. Fran Faul recently organised a Working Bee at Yallambie and Medlow
- Suzanne Hunt memorial project of a photographic record of the property Dalvui, has been completed by Simon Griffiths and handed over to the State Library of Victoria. Discussions are continuing with the owners and others interested in writing the history of Dalvui for an insert in the journal.
- The following projects have received funding contributions: Tree work at Bishops court, tree replacement at Christchurch, St Kilda. Funding for tree work at Purrumbete has been approved but not executed as we are still awaiting the invoice.
- Funding for the following projects has been approved; Restoration of the hedge at Buda, garden restoration/water tank at Dove Cottage, grant towards publishing for author Gwen Pascoe
- The Victorian Committee wish to pay tribute to Bronwen Merritt who retired from the committee in February due to poor health. Sadly Bronwen died in August. Bronwen was on the committee for four years and among the many tasks she undertook was responsibility for producing the 2009 conference booklet. She was a much valued member of our committee.

## **West Australian Branch**

**Report by Caroline Grant**

- The National Trust and WA Branch have been in discussions about running a tree forum in 2012. At this stage the discussion is very much in the initial stages, with email communication between various members of AGHS nationally concerning content, and enthusiasm amongst the National Trust of WA's Classification Standing Committee. Many on the NT CSC participated in the landscape forum and are keen to engage with heritage issues concerning trees.
- Membership has risen since the beginning of the year, with some new members having attended the landscape forum and *Historic Gardens of Perth* exhibition, which is gratifying as it shows that the events are generating interest from the public.
- The branch has been invited to participate in various events associated with the ongoing review of the Heritage Act and role of the Heritage Council of WA.
- The branch has also been invited to events held by the Royal West Australian Historical Society and the National Trust's celebration of John Curtin's 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Prime Ministership.

- John Viska gave an interesting talk on the horticultural uses of glass at Halliday House in Bayswater on 18 September.
- A larger than usual number of queries has been fielded about garden history from the general public and organisations such as Kings Park Botanic Gardens: this has been attributed to the recent events.
- The *Historic Gardens of Perth* exhibition subcommittee are working on producing a book following the success of the exhibition. Richard Offen has offered to prepare a Lotterywest funding application, and Lisa Williams has been in discussion with colleagues with experience of local publishing. Some recent research will be incorporated in the book to flesh out the stories of the individual gardens displayed.
- The exhibition will have a reprise, which will be held in November as part of the City of Perth's Heritage Days November 12-13 and for the fortnight following in the ground floor of Council House, and during the Museums Australia conference 14-18 November.
- Gillian Lilleyman, former treasurer and exhibition subcommittee member is launching her new book (self-published) on Sunday 16 October about the Pearce sisters' garden at Old Bridge House on the Margaret River. The style of this book may form a useful template for future garden history books in Western Australia.