

BRANCH REPORTS

JUNE 2010

ACT/ Monaro/Riverina Branch

Report by Tony Byrne

- **Winter Lecture Series** - The first of our winter lectures was on 12 May, when Shirley Pipitone talked about her research project on the social value of Lake Burley Griffin. Through a survey she was able to see which were the most visited places around the lake, which were the least visited and what people thought about them. Not unexpectedly garden locations featured highly in the list of preferences. For Canberrans who live with the lake every day it was interesting to see just how many places there are around the lake and what a tremendous recreational resource it is.

Forthcoming Events

- On 2 June Trisha Dixon will give a talk on literary landscapes. She will explore the links between writers and their landscapes and discuss the question 'does landscape shape people or are people drawn to a landscape that reflects their personality?' Trisha will talk on writers as diverse as Sardinia's Nobel laureate for literature, Grazia Deledda; Charmian Cliff and George Johnston who lived on the island of Hydra in the Greek Islands; Iris Origo at La Foce in the Val D'Orcia in southern Tuscany; Prince Giuseppe Tomasi di Lampedusa in Sicily, author of "The Leopard"; our own Nobel laureate Patrick White; and a handful of local writers.
- On Wednesday 14 July Dr Rosemary Purdie will give a talk on two botanic gardens in China. These are the Turpan Botanic Garden, in the Xinjiang Province of western China, and the Pamir Botanical Garden, in the Gorno-badakshan Province of eastern Tajikistan: the lowest and second highest botanic gardens in the world. The challenges for a botanic garden are greatly magnified when it is located 80 metres below sea level (Turpan) or 2300–3000 metres above sea level (Pamir). The talk will look at the general environments and landscapes in the regions where the Turpan and Pamir botanic gardens are located, discuss some of the challenges these locations bring and types of plants grown, and outline examples of research at each garden relevant to their locations.

Yarralumla Nursery Records – ACT Heritage Grant Application - The Branch has submitted an application to the 2010-11 round of the ACT Heritage Grants Program to have the Yarralumla Nursery records described, scanned and indexed so that they can be accessed in digitised form on a DVD or website.

The Nursery has a long history back to the time of Charles Weston and its records illuminate a crucial part of Canberra's history. They consist of:

The Original Card index system: This covers the period from 1913 to the 1960s, providing records of seed acquisitions, cutting material and planting dates, along with various comments.

The Ledgers: Three large folios are used for the seed inventory and cover from 1948 to the present. They record accessions and use of the seed bank and are actively used.

The New Plant Files: these are largely paper based documents, inherited from the Technical Section of the former Department of the Capital Territory. They are traditional government files associated with herbarium boxes and herbarium sheets. These are documentary records of accessions and in some cases species performance.

This material constitutes an important record of the initial planting plans and plant experimentation that was carried out to develop and establish the Garden City concept for the then new capital city of Canberra from Charles Weston's time onwards. It is a significant complement to Walter Burley Griffin's early drawings for buildings and the layout of the city. Currently the records are not easily accessible and are vulnerable to damage from fire. In addition to these concerns we have also argued in the application that the proposal could be linked to Canberra's forthcoming centenary celebrations in 2013.

Our application is confined to the card index system and the ledgers and is seeking an ACT Government grant of \$8,950. The Branch is offering cash contribution of \$2,000 and in kind support as well. The outcome of the application will be known in September.

Queensland Branch

Report by John Taylor

- Major activity is planning the Maryborough conference.
- Good level of interest in events, and good feedback from members. The May event was part of the National Trust's Heritage Week.
- As a result of putting in a submission we have been asked to consult with staff of the Parliamentary Draftsman on the *Neighbourhood Disputes Resolution Bill*. The bill includes provisions for magistrates to make orders concerning disputes over trees and the issue the staff have raised with us is the identification of heritage and amenity trees – there is no list!

South Australian Branch

Report by Ray Choate

- Adelaide Himeji Gardens (South Terrace, Adelaide) - On Sunday, 11th April 2010, over 40 members attended the visit and tour of the Adelaide Himeji Gardens, as a commemoration of the 25th Anniversary of the opening in 1985 of these gardens. The ancient city of Himeji became a 'Sister City' to Adelaide in 1982. Several speakers talked about aspects of Japan and the gardens:- Trevor Nottle (who spoke about the Bagot steam yacht expedition to Japan to collect plants); Jennifer Harris, curator of Asian Art at the Art Gallery of South Australia (on Japanese landscape and art); Newell Platten, architect and author of "The Lure of the Japanese Garden"; and Fumio Ueda, a Japanese gardener who has been associated with the gardens for many years. The Garden is said to blend two classic styles:- the 'senzui' (lake and mountain garden, where the imagination endows the small pond with vastness and grandeur) and the "kare senzui" (dry garden, where rocks and sand evoke the presence of water and even the sea itself). The tour and talks were followed by tea in the gardens.
- Urrbrae House Gardens; Waite Arboretum - On Sunday the 9th of May, members visited the Urrbrae House Gardens and the Waite Arboretum on the Waite Campus of the University of Adelaide. Urrbrae House was built in 1891 and has an attractive garden and rose garden, both redeveloped over the past few years. A sculpture garden in the 'Mallee Garden' was also part of the tour. The thirty-hectare Arboretum has more than 2000 labelled trees and shrubs from all over the world. It was an excellent opportunity for Adelaide and South Australian members to get some ideas for trees and shrubs for their own gardens; many of the trees have been in the arboretum since 1928 when the first plantings occurred. Jennifer Gardner, Director of the Waite Arboretum, conducted the tour and answered questions, followed by tea in the Dining Room of Urrbrae House. It was a pleasant autumn day and the gardens, after recent rains, were looking fresh. Jennifer escorted the group, looking at several important trees, including an Australian Teak (*Flindersia australis*) and a California Buckeye (*aesculus californica*) with its beautiful silver/grey branches leafless in late summer (several members retrieved seeds for planting!). The Arboretum suffered a fire a few years ago, and a project is being developed to replant the approximately 100 trees which were killed or seriously damaged. This would be a worthy project for involvement of the Branch. A follow-up visit in Spring is envisaged, when several of the flowering trees attract massive number of butterflies.
- **Reade Park Croquet Club** - Many members joined the Club, and as a result of the increase in membership, the survival of the Club is ensured for the next few years. Demonstrations and talks are planned for the membership regarding this lawn sport.
- **Mini-Conference** - The Mini-Conference is scheduled to take place on Sunday the 22nd August, probably at Kathleen Lumley College in North Adelaide (the post-graduate College of the University of Adelaide). At this time, there are six papers which will be presented on the day – the theme of the Mini-Conference is "The Australian Backyard". It is planned to hold the Branch AGM on the same day.
- **Essay Prize** - The 2010 Essay Prize will be advertised soon. It was decided to encourage essays on the topic of "Lost Gardens of Adelaide"; this will fit nicely with an exhibition planned on the same topic, and may also provide additional information about gardens which have been lost due to urban and suburban redevelopment.

Other Planned Activities

- Dr Janet Waymark will be speaking to the membership in September, and in October the Branch will be involved with the Rhododendron Society for a talk by Kenneth Cox, from Scotland, who is an international expert on rhododendrons.

Southern Highlands Report

Eleanor Dartnall

- **Rowse Hill Cemetery** - Our stone retaining wall at Rowse Hill Cemetery is finished at last, this is built on the right elevation of the cemetery. The local Council is very appreciative of our financial commitment and have now proposed that the Council pays for a like wall on the left elevation of the cemetery. Our willingness to commit to this project has ensured the Council completes the task.
- **Claude Crowe Papers** - Benoit Trudeau continues to visit the Caroline Simpson Library to go through the fresh papers gifted by the family.
- **Membership** - We have some new Committee members nominated, the task for one of these members will to (i) understand where our boundaries lie and (ii) lift our membership numbers.
- **Recipe Book** - We have over 50 members committed to providing both recipes and brief stories. The next tasks are to, receive the recipes, take photos of their gardens and work on layout.
- **Significant Tree Register** - Laurel Cheatham continues her work with this register and has added the fight to save significant trees the Council is planning to remove from our towns' major streets.
- A Heritage Working Group has been convened; this includes members from the AGHS, the Highland Garden Society and members of Council.

Events

- The visit to the Canberra Arboretum was overbooked, everyone who went on this well planned day came back enthused and a bit overawed by the size of the task and the vision that began what will be one of the most amazing arboretums in the world. The Camden Park visit was well attended and enjoyed.

- Coming events are our Winter Talk where Merryleigh Brindley will talk about her Irish Garden Tour, followed by the AGM where we are planning a Michael Parkinson style interview. A garden is yet to be finalised.

Sydney and Northern NSW Branch

Report by Stuart Read

- Welcome to all our new members and specially to new branch committee members Gina Plate, Angela Low and Peter Kaleski– it's great to see our branch growing with now some 330 members. We wish a few more would join in on our events; please do, and make yourself known!
 - In May we had a most interesting wander around the hidden horticultural highlights of Botany Bay's *Sir Joseph Banks Park and Pleasure Gardens*, reminders of a 19th century 'fun park' and foreshore reclamation of the 1980s, under Bruce McKenzie.
 - In June we'll ramble around the eastern suburb of Vaucluse, getting familiar with harbourside mansions *Greycliffe House's* reinstated interwar era garden within *Neilsen Park*, the grounds of *Strickland House* (formerly *Carrara*) and a couple of nearby private gardens thanks to a generous AGHS member and friend. Giant bamboo, angophoras and figs will be a theme of the day.
 - July, August and September bring a range of interesting talks to tickle the eyes and mind. These will be held in History House on Macquarie Street, please note the change of venue.
 - **Recent advocacy** has included a submission to Woollahra Council about loss of trees and open space in a street in Rose Bay, formerly part of the large Rose Bay Cottage garden's setting.
 - Two recent listings on the NSW State Heritage Register are important designed landscapes: Wollongong Harbour, the colony's first southern industrial outpost from the 1830s includes an eye-pleasing foreshore reclamation and landscaping scheme of Norfolk Island pines and bathing pavilions in Brighton Lawn and Osborne Park; and in Sydney, Hyde Park's ANZAC War Memorial, an Art Deco icon relying for its impact on its landscape setting, on axis with the Archibald Fountain, with memorial pond and avenue of poplars, and plantings sourced from Gallipoli and the Mediterranean.
- Northern NSW
- The Northern NSW sub-branch spent a glorious March Autumn day at *Saumerez Homestead*, Armidale. This National Trust house and garden always manages to reveal something new, and members were delighted to view plants in their autumnal garb with old varieties of *Eleagnus* and *Cotoneaster* fruiting madly. "Mary's garden" was resplendant with a profusion of old-fashioned perennials including *Saponaria*, *Scabiosa*, *Achillea*, *Anemone hupehensis* and *Ceratostigma*.
 - Our June meeting takes us to the home and garden of Richard Bird and Lynne Walker at *Black Mountain*. Richard will regale us with his wonderful history on the old tools in his collection of "Old Mole Tools" but also with some new finds, and Lynne will take us on a Sculpture tour in their well-planted winter garden. This to be followed with a shared curry dinner by the open brazier!
 - August 21st will find us exploring three historic Glen Innes gardens including *Stonehenge*, to culminate in the attendance at the opening evening of our photographic exhibition "*Historic gardens of New England*" that will hang at the Glen Innes Gallery until 17th September.

Tasmanian Branch

Report by Ivan Saltmarsh

- On 11th April a day event attended by about 65 people was held at "Redlands" at Plenty in the Derwent Valley. George Frederick Read a merchant and ship-owner was granted 800 acres in 1822. It is believed the named was inspired by the rich red soil of the area. Elizabeth and Peter Hope who are AGHS members have acquired the property two years ago. The visit began in the morning when the owners provided a tour around the house and complex of outbuildings and garden. Extensive outbuildings include a two-story row of terrace houses once used for workers and their families as well as kilns. The latter were mainly used for hops which were extensively grown, but at one period in the 1800s a kiln was used for curing tobacco. The first salmon and trout hatchery (known as the Salmon Ponds) in the southern hemisphere was developed on part of the property in 1864 which was later donated to the Inland Fisheries Commission. Over the last two years the owners have worked hard to clear blackberries from many of the fields lined by poplar trees where hops once grew. On the advice in 1841 of Count Strylecki the Polish scientist, that irrigation improved the growth of hops, an immense sum of money was spent on irrigating 300 acres. Around the house a collection of mature trees have survived and appear very healthy: poplars, copper beech, maples and sycamores. A *Magnolia grandiflora* and giant wisteria grow near the house. After a lot of work the garden presents as being very well maintained. We were left in no doubt that the wood-fired oven in the old bake house still works as it cooked the delicious pizzas included in the lunch. Desert consisted of pears cooked in wine from one of the old trees. After lunch we toured another part of the property and heard about the plans for the future development. Willows are being cleared from along a stream and ponds will be created for trout and platypus. The owners believe that old buildings have the best of chance of surviving if a use is found for them and they intend to restore the workers accommodation and turn the kilns into boutique accommodation for guests who wish to fish for trout.

- AGM will be held on 25 July 2010 at Ross. Robyn Hawkins will give an illustrated talk on :” The Painters Eye and Three Historic Gardens” -*Tarella*, Sydney NSW - *Whitley*, Southern Highlands -*Bentley*, Tasmania.

Victorian Branch

Report by Bronwen Merrett

- Sunday 18 April 2010 - Mount Eagle Estate, Eaglemont. Pamela Jellie led a fully subscribed walk around the Mount Eagle (now Eaglemont) Estate, planned by Walter Burley Griffin in 1914. The Estate was designed to maximize the potential of the sloping site. The irregular curving streets and the enclosed parklands to which each allotment had access were innovative at the time. Within the estate is a Burley Griffin house, just beyond its bounds on The Eyrie are three splendid houses designed by Desbrowe Annear. John Hawker of Heritage Victoria spoke to the group about the significant trees in the area. Given the number of people who could not be accommodated on the walk it is to be repeated in the spring.

Coming up

- Winter Lectures, June, July, August - The winter lectures program is finalized and has been widely advertised. The focus this year is on women. Robin Marks will talk about the naturalist and horticulturalist Winifred Waddell, Meredith Fletcher will discuss the work of the botanist, naturalist writer and gardener Jean Galbraith, while Anne Vale will speak of the work of a number of influential women in garden design.

West Australian Branch

Report by Sue Monger

- On Sunday 16 May 15 members and friends met at The Cloisters where Marion Blackwell, landscape architect and botanist, introduced us to the site at 200 St Georges Terrace and outlined her research. The Cloisters, with the Perth Town Hall, is one of the city's few remaining mid 19th century convict-built buildings. Designed by Richard Roach Jewell and built in 1858 as a secondary school for boys, the tudor and gothic architectural influences of mother England are very apparent. The bricks were hand made in the Queens Gardens quarries. Having been a school for boys, and later girls, The Cloisters had many uses including a private home. In the late 1960's the church owners made plans to redevelop the site. A public outcry resulted in a business deal to retain the building and the Port Jackson fig *Ficus rubiginosa*, planted in the early 1890's, which led to Marion being instrumental in successfully securing the tree's future. Her account of countering the dewatering program demanded by the high rise building project, climbing the tree in barefeet to apply by hand a stress guard substance to both sides of the leaves and preventing haphazard pruning was amusingly recounted. Letters written at the turn of the 19th century enabled us to appreciate a personal insight to the days when the Cloisters was a family home. Phil Palmer, landscape architect for the National Trust (WA) and author of the conservation plan for the Florence Hummerston Reserve, led us westwards up the Terrace to view this small pocket of land (FHR), whilst explaining that it is the only area of public open space between Elder St and Barrack St. Known as St Georges Terrace Reserve when it became a public garden in 1898, the park was granted to the City of Perth in 1970 and later named for Florence Hummerston, the city's first female councillor (1951-68). Whilst traffic demands have truncated one corner of the reserve, the original plantings of camphor laurels *Cinnamomum camphora*, Washingtonia palms *Washingtonia filifer*, later plantings of *jacaranda mimosaeifolia* and lawn offer city workers a shady lunchtime picnic spot. A statue of Alexander Forrest (1849-1901), explorer and city father, graced the reserve from 1903 to 1916 when it was moved to Stirling Gardens, and a water feature memorial to philanthropist Sir Charles McNeill (1852-1938) located in those gardens, was moved by the City of Perth to FHR in 1995.
- Annual General Meeting - This will be conducted on Sunday 18 July at Muresk Agricultural College (Curtin University). It is hoped the recent rain afford us lovely green day in the Northam agricultural area.
- Photographic Exhibition of Early Perth Gardens - The exhibition, originally planned for August this year, is to be deferred to mid 2011. Uncertainty about funding assistance from City of Perth did not allow sufficient time to mount the exhibition for the proposed dates. The funding application is to be resubmitted at a later date.
- **Advocacy** - A letter has been drafted to the Heritage Council (WA), emphasising the need to add a specific category of heritage horticulture and landscape maintenance to the list of consultants. Well meaning but misinformed treatment of historic precincts and landscapes has led to long term, if not irrevocable, damage to significant sites.
- **Presentation** - John Viska spoke on the Historical Use of Western Australian Plants to the WA Wildflower Society in April.
- **Storm Damage** - Mention was made in the April report to NMC of the extensive damage to property, private and public, caused by the hail storm on 22nd March. It was encouraging to note an item in the local press in which a spokesman for the Karrakatta Cemetery Board expressed optimism that the trees will recover with cooler days and autumn rains.
- **National Trust (WA) John Curtin Family Home** - A Federal government grant of \$5890,000 has enabled NT(WA) to carry out extensive conservation work to the buildings and gardens. Renee Gardiner, a landscape archaeologist and WA AGHS member was engaged in digging to locate some of the layers in the garden. Several of the elements have been reinstated. The property will be known as the Curtin Family Home to

recognise not only John Curtin, but to acknowledge his wife, Elsie, and their family. The interpretation plan will cover the family's occupancy of the home between 1923–1998.