

## BRANCH REPORTS NOVEMBER 2010

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

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

- The ACT Monaro and Riverina Branch Annual General Meeting was held on August 26. The new committee is: Tony Byrne, Helen Elliot, Nancy Clarke, Robyn Henderson, Margie Bourke, Julia Nicholls, Judy Pearce, Rod Holesgrove, Linda Spinaze and Marie Wood. Office Bearers will be confirmed at the next committee meeting (October 27). Following the AGM Jill Matthews entertained us with the history of the Tiger Balm garden in Hong Kong.

Members have enjoyed two spring garden visits:

- On 18 September members were guided round the courtyard gardens of Parliament House, by one of the senior gardeners. This visit provided an opportunity to see some of the inner locations of Parliament House, and to observe the responses made in the gardens to the years of drought.
- On 24 October members visited Rock Valley Homestead (in Tidbinbilla). This pise building was constructed in 1895 and occupied by members of the Green family until the 1970s when it came under the authority of Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve. The homestead and its gardens were devastated by the January 2003 bushfire. Following representation the building was restored and a garden management plan has been developed. Some original plantings have re-shot and some replanting has taken place. Members of the Tidbinbilla Pioneers Association who manage the site provided an insight into the history of the area. AGHS Branch members will be invited to participate in work on restoration of the garden.
- Yarralumla Nursery Records. We are delighted to have received an ACT Heritage Grant for \$8,950 for digitising the wonderful records at Yarralumla Nursery. Work will start in the next few months. Recently the Branch hosted a visiting English artist (Jyll Bradley) for a day. Jyll has been visiting Canberra conducting research towards a proposal for a major art work for the Centenary of Canberra in 1913. Jyll is interested in the relationship between people and plants. She was taken to two important Canberra gardens (Calthorpes House, and Lanyon) and spent some enthusiastic time at Yarralumla Nursery. If her proposal is accepted we hope to spend more time with her over the next couple of years.

### **Queensland Branch**

#### **Report by John Taylor**

- Much effort is going into organising the 2011 conference in Maryborough. A good team is at work and the numerous strands are being knitted together.
- Monthly events continue to be successful, with the exception of September which was cancelled due to rain. The highlight was October, Spring Cottage on Hamilton Hill, and 1860s cottage which has survived among the mansions and million dollar extensions, with its 1910 garden. While undoubtedly significant the cottage and garden are on the Brisbane Council's Heritage Overlay but not on the State Heritage Register. How much longer they can continue is uncertain.
- Branch finances are good in a minor way and will allow us to take on one or two projects in 2011/12, especially when the conference optional day income is banked.

### **South Australian Branch**

#### **Report by Ray Choate**

- Mini-Conference - The Mini-Conference (entitled "Backyard Forum") was held on Sunday the 22nd August, at Kathleen Lumley College in North Adelaide (the post-graduate College of the University of Adelaide). Six papers were presented on the theme of "The Australian Backyard". The papers includes "Backyard Clothes Hoist"; "Children in the Backyard"; "Some Italian Migrant Backyards"; "The Backyard in Australian Literature"; "The Backyard in Australian Art"; and "Ornaments in the Backyard".
- Essay Prize - No prize was offered for the 2010 Essay Prize, which was on the theme of "Lost Gardens of Adelaide and South Australia". The Branch plans to use the same theme again in 2011.
- Survey of Members in SA - A survey was undertaken of the membership in South Australia to attempt to ascertain which activities are most popular with the membership. Attendance has been quite varying at recent activities over the past few years, and we believe the results will help us plan better to meet the interests of members.
- Branch Newsletter - Four issues of the newsletter were prepared for 2010, with a fifth in preparation. The editor has experimented with more use of colour and including photographs, etc. It is pleasing to have had positive feedback from the members.
- Branch AGM - The Branch Annual General Meeting and election of committee was held on the same day as the "Backyard Forum". Six members of the Committee stood for re-election, with the Executive for 2010/2011 being Ray Choate, (Chair/Treasurer/NMC Representative), Helen Livingston (Secretary/Newsletter), and

committee members Richard Heathcote, Jeff Jenkinson, Richard Nolan and Di Wilkins. We are seeking new committee members, with the 2011/2012 succession in mind.

- Rhododendron Society - Kenneth Cox, who is an international expert on rhododendrons from Scotland, gave a talk on the 16<sup>th</sup> October. Our thanks to Jeff Jenkinson for making it possible for our members to attend this most interesting talk.
- “Lost Gardens of Adelaide” Exhibition - There was a large turnout of members to the launch of the Exhibition “Lost Gardens of Adelaide” was held on the 15<sup>th</sup> October at Carrick Hill – this is linked to an exhibition “Garden of Ideas” at the Museum of Economic Botany at Adelaide Botanic Gardens.

#### Coming Events

- The Annual Christmas Drinks Party will be held at Reade Park Croquet Club at Colonel Light Gardens. This will be an opportunity for members to become more familiar with the complexities of this garden ‘sport’. There will be a presentation on the history of croquet, a demonstration, and the opportunity to participate. New members are always welcome.

### Sydney and Northern NSW Branch

#### Report by Stuart Read

- Welcome to architect James Quoye, newly elected onto the committee and welcome all new members. I’ve spent 9 years on the committee and should have stood down under our Constitution’s rules. At the August AGM members voted to vary the rule on maximum tenure to allow me one more term (3 years). The Society’s National Management Committee has since agreed to endorse this. My priority now is to groom successors and hand on more. I’m keen we build a strong committee full of skills working on new events and projects. There’s talk of hosting another national conference in Sydney, quite apart from 2013’s in Armidale.
  - Since 2001 I’ve been proud of our oral history project – Roslyn Burge interviewing people with significant contributions to AGHS and NSW garden history and lodging copies of these in the State Library of NSW.
  - Over 2009 I’m especially delighted about the two garden history exhibitions held at the Orange Regional Gallery (organised by Kylie Winkworth, members Alison Russell and Elizabeth Richards (see [www.orangeblossoms.com.au](http://www.orangeblossoms.com.au) complementing the ground-breaking [www.orangesignificantscapes.com.au](http://www.orangesignificantscapes.com.au). And Armidale’s, organised by Bill Oates, Graham Wilson and others, now in Glen Innes. These widen our outreach to the community: both have and are eliciting positive reactions to the range of local and regional ‘garden-making’. Bravo to all involved. I hope we can persuade New England to ‘tour’ to Sydney in 2011 and that we can arrange for a website-based ‘longer life’ for this exhibition. We’ll see about that!
  - At the AGM long-standing Treasurer Peter Cousens, committees member Jo Hambrett and ex-Chair Malcolm Wilson all stood down. I pay tribute to their service and help - keeping events running smoothly, drafting reports, letters and in behind-the-scenes negotiation – such as Malcolm’s with the Botanic Gardens and Sydney City Council - much done quietly and un-noticed. Peter’s off to create a new garden in Cairns and we wish him and Jace well. Murray Hook has agreed to be treasurer and Rosemary to be Vice-Chair. Jo’s flat out on other commitments such as recently published book *A Passion for Place* about Mt. Wilson, Mt. Irvine & Mt. Tomah Gardens (congratulations Jo – a welcome addition!) but we hope she considers returning to the committee.
  - A welcome initiative is the launch of *Hortus Camdenensis*, an online database of over 3200 plants and historical information, based on an illustrated catalogue of plants grown by Sir William Macarthur in the garden and nursery at *Camden Park* between c.1820 and 1861. This builds on the *Colonial Plants Database* developed by Colleen Morris & Tony Rodd ([http://www.hht.net.au/research/colonial\\_plants](http://www.hht.net.au/research/colonial_plants)). The Camden Park database is easily searchable and can be found at [www.hortuscampden.com](http://www.hortuscampden.com). Camden Park house and garden are open to the public once a year, on the weekend of 18-19/9/2010. Enquires are to [camdenpark@iprimus.com.au](mailto:camdenpark@iprimus.com.au). It’s well worth a visit – volunteers have made strides clearing and replanting the formerly-neglected outer garden and nursery. And propagating plant treasures for sale...
  - In October Joan Lawrence leads a walk around Chippendale and Darlington, looking at the remains of our first plant nursery created by Thomas Shepherd. It’s hard to imagine, but well worth exploring. We hope a Shepherd descendent can join us, to learn more about the family’s involvement in the Hunter Valley wine industry. Also on Chippo’s streets is a community-greening project reclaiming nature strips for food: a challenge to copy...
  - A worthwhile event in October is the Parramatta Park Heritage Rose Festival, in the lovely *Rumsey Rose Garden* on Pitt Street. A range of related organisations like Heritage Roses Australia and AGHS will have stalls, talks, food and music to enjoy, along with the spring flush of roses...make a day of it.
- Recent advocacy includes seeking management of Sydney’s *Moore Park* remain with the Centennial & Moore Park Trust, not be transferred to Sydney Cricket Ground Trust. And asking the NSW Roads & Traffic Authority to reconsider locating a truck rest stop on the Hume highway next to the original land grant of *Varroville* estate. And encouraging Penrith City Council to resist any subdivision pressure and support our nomination of *Werrington House* and its four acres of land for State Heritage Register listing.

## Northern NSW report

August 21st found members exploring 3 historic Glen Innes gardens including *Stonehenge*, culminating in attendance at the opening of our photographic exhibition "*Historic Gardens of New England*" that is hanging at the Glen Innes Gallery until 17th September. Try to plan a visit: it's well worth it.

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## Tasmanian Branch

### Report by Ivan Saltmarsh

- On 26th September the event titled 'A Wealth of Garden History – Gardens of the Goldfields' an illustrated talk by Mandy Stroebel at the National Trust property *Runnymede*, brought together gardens associated with two sources of wealth in colonial Australia – gold and whaling. *Runnymede* - The 19<sup>th</sup> century whaling family's property was named after Captain Charles Bayley's favourite ship and was the home of members of the family for more than 100 years. The house contains a rich collection of material related to the whaling and maritime interests of the family as well as art works and family possessions of the previous owner Bishop Francis Nixon, Tasmania's first Anglican Bishop. Gemma Webberley, an AGHS member and the House Manager of the National Trust gave an illustrated talk about the restoration work of garden beds and paths that has recently taken place based on 19<sup>th</sup> century photos. *Gardens of the Goldfields* - Mandy Stroebel author of the recently published book of the same name, presented an illustrated talk, covering the story of central Victoria through its gardens: the extensive gardens of the early pastoralists, the gardens of survival surrounding miners' cottages, the villa and mansion gardens of wealthy entrepreneurs and mining magnates, and the botanical gardens and school gardens created by the aspirant citizens of the goldfields. It became clear that they all shared the challenge of grappling with a climate of extremes. Mandy's talk was testimony to the value of looking at gardens in the broad context of a region as a way of appreciating them and understanding the factors that shaped them.
- Blue Gum – Warwick Oakman is the new editor of the newsletter
- Fairie Nielsen Memorial Garden - Discussions are underway with Emu Valley Rhododendron Society about making a contribution to the cost of a lead- light window when their plans are finalised, in memory of Fairie.
- Eskleigh Driveway Restoration Project – Stuart Read's Report on the driveway has been passed on to the Eskleigh Foundation for consideration and the Committee has advised in a letter that it would like to consider an application for funding in the context of a conservation management plan that ensures the long term sustainability of the extensive drive-way.
- December Event – A 'Westbury Extravaganza' is planned taking in "Culzean" (garden begun 1840s) and lunch at Fitzpatrick's Inn (1833) with its collection of mature trees.

## Victorian Branch

### Report by Pamela Jellie

- The 17 August AGM was followed by a lecture by Professor Robin Marks. His presentation to a capacity audience in Mueller Hall was on the life and work of teacher and conservationist Winifred Waddell. Her love of the native plants of the Australian Alps in the 1920s led to the formation of the Native Plant Preservation Society in 1952.
- In September we repeated the March guided walk around Eaglemont revealing the layers of history in that area from the evidence of aboriginal occupation, an early arboretum planted in the 1860s, artists of the Heidelberg School in the late 1880s, the architecture of Desbrowe Annear in 1903, and planning of the area by Walter Burley Griffin in 1914. Jane Crone gave the group a tour of their restored Desbrowe Annear house and John Hawker from Heritage Victoria pointed out the distinctive character of much of the early planting of the area.
- Our Spring event was a day tour to the Yarra Valley looking at the recovery of the region after the 2009 bushfires. The historic Gulf Station was opened especially for us by the National Trust (it has been closed for three years) where we could see the conservation work being done on the farm homestead and a new approach to showing off its 150 years of occupation. A highlight was the contemporary landscape of the homestead Lubra Bend. Our visit was hosted by Rosemary Simpson who has converted a traditional exotic garden to a dramatic Australian one that requires no supplementary water. Outstanding contemporary landscapes at TarraWarra and Yering Station gave an excellent overview of the area.
- We were pleased to be invited to attend the launch of the Werribee Park Heritage Orchard restoration in October.
- Committee members have attended meetings in Ballarat of the 2012 National Conference Committee and will continue to assist with the planning of that Conference.
- Ongoing projects are the Suzanne Hunt memorial with SLV. The photographic survey of Dalvui by Simon Griffiths has been partly completed. Also the Nina Crone Award for student writing. The closing date has been extended to November 30.

## **West Australian Branch**

### **Report by Caroline Grant**

- On 25 August Caroline Grant gave a slide show at Challenger Institute at Murdoch on 'Gardens of Rome' using slides from a recent trip to Italy, followed by a light supper. The event was well attended, and events like it are planned for 2011.
- On 24 September Dr Ori Fragman of the Jerusalem Botanical Gardens in Israel gave a talk on Mediterranean Flora at the Kings Park Biodiversity Conservation Centre. A number of AGHS WA members were able to attend and Dr Fragman benefited from information sharing about the propagation of native Australian plants.
- On 24<sup>th</sup> October we had a day out at Yanchep National Park. We began with morning tea at the Volunteers Centre, a small house on the outskirts of the park with an impressive native plant nursery at the rear. Then Gillian Lilleyman presented a paper on the role of Louis Shapcott in the development of Yanchep as a resort in the 1930s. Gillian described how Shapcott was a self-educated man, a boxer in his youth, arriving in Western Australia from Victoria in 1897 where he cleaned railway points and took evening classes in bookkeeping, chemistry and shorthand, working his way through the state public service to become Under Secretary to the Premier. It was said of Shapcott that 'seven premiers served under him'. One of his many roles involved a landscape design collaboration with the Government Gardener Campbell on the Perth foreshore in the 1920s, including the establishment of the Supreme Court Gardens, the avenue of plantings of palms up to and including Victoria Avenue, groups of trees around Mounts Bay and the Crawley foreshore. Shapcott's role in the landscape at Yanchep arose partly from a work creation scheme during the 1930s Depression. Caves had become popular from Victorian times, and it was felt that Yanchep had tourism potential. This was made possible by the generosity of Charles McNess, a scrap metal dealer who had amassed a small fortune and emigrated to Western Australia in 1876. The unemployment sustenance allowance stretched the State budget so the government turned to the McNesses in 1930, and through the McNess Relief Foundation and the McNess Housing Trust (Shapcott was the sole trustee for both) work commenced at Yanchep. By the time the park opened in December 1931, the whole area had been surveyed by Karl Klem, eleven miles of road had been constructed from Wanneroo, buildings had been added and the Crystal Cave was opened up with new stairs and electric lighting, water and power connected. Work continued through the 1930s including the building of an Olympic size Crystal Pool, used by the Australian swimming and diving team en route to the Berlin Olympics for training sessions. In 1934 Prince Henry, Duke of Gloucester visited Yanchep. Shapcott arranged a special function in Cabaret Cave for the Duke, who stayed overnight in the Crystal Pool Guest House, later renamed Gloucester Lodge. John Viska gave an interesting talk on the rock work at Yanchep and elsewhere in Perth, including Kings Park and Queens Gardens. We inspected the fountain outside the cottage complete with bees drinking, and pointed out the rock work between Gloucester Lodge and Boomerang Gorge. The area is now so overgrown with *Eucalyptus rudis* that it can barely be noticed.

### **Future events**

- The Christmas party will be held at the Victoria Park Croquet Club on 12<sup>th</sup> December. The site is subject to redevelopment, unsurprisingly given its views to the city.
- Plans for the exhibition of Early Perth Gardens in May continue. In addition it is planned to hold a landscape forum in conjunction with the National Trust in March, to coincide with the visit from Richard Aitken to promote his latest book *The Garden of Ideas*. It is hoped that the forum may attract new members and raise the profile of the AGHS in its advocacy role.

### **Other**

- Several AGHS WA committee members attended a function at the Royal Western Australian Historical Society on Friday 22<sup>nd</sup> October, the purpose being to combine energies in relation to arranging events, and to hear their plans to develop a site for various heritage organisations to share. This matter has been the subject of ongoing negotiations for a number of years, but the current hope is that the RWAHS Stirling House site in Nedlands may be redeveloped under the next Town Planning Scheme which is due shortly.