

## VISIT TO MOLE CREEK

On Friday 22 April 2017, some 22 members of the Tasmanian Branch of the AGHS had the pleasure of visiting two beautiful gardens, Old Wesleydale and Wychwood, at Mole Creek in northern Tasmania. Mole Creek is situated on the plains beneath the Great Western Tiers. The whole area is underlain by the Ordovician-aged Gordon Limestone which gives rise to some spectacular karst landforms and caves, two of which (Marakoopa and King Solomon's) are open to the public.

*Old Wesleydale* is on land granted to Lieutenant Travers Hartley Vaughan in 1829. He was a retired Irish army officer who built a stone cottage and was probably also responsible for the enclosed courtyard with stone walls three metres high surrounding a two-storey stone barn, complete with gun slits, protection for his precious livestock from bushrangers and Aborigines. He sold the property to Henry Reed (1806–1880) who was a devout Wesleyan. He named the acreage *Wesleydale*, extended the house and built a church. Many years later, Reed built a large holiday house and another church on the property which he named *Mountain Villa*; his first residence then became known as *Old Wesleydale*.

The current garden, which has been developed since 2001, is in the style of a peaceful English garden, with formality in the design and exuberant plantings. Topiary, stone walls and hedges are featured throughout the garden, which is divided into numerous garden “rooms.” A walled garden is full of beds lined with neatly clipped box hedges, the beds full of colour is one of many delightful surprises, as is a row of topiary elephants behind a stone walled ha-ha. An ornamental brick aviary houses two macaws, while the resident chooks have not been forgotten, having the run of “Chookingham Palace.”

The garden at *Wychwood* was started in 1991. The plantings are now quite mature, with swathes of autumn colour in abundance. The signature medieval grass labyrinth has been restored since it was damaged in the winter of 2016, when the creek (Mole Creek) at the bottom of the garden flooded, the waters engulfing one third of the property. In the orchard, trees were laden with a bumper crop of heritage apple varieties, while the wide, curved borders were a beautiful sight with ornamental grasses, perennials and roses. The garden is renowned for the use of unusual plants, particularly those that can withstand heat and frost.

It was a great privilege to be able to experience two lovely gardens in the idyllic setting of Mole Creek, with everyone enjoying the day enormously.