

ACT Monaro Riverina Branch

Newsletter March 2026 No 1

Australian Garden History Society
www.gardenhistorysociety.org.au



Branch contact: actmrchair@gardenhistorysociety.org.au

BRANCH DIARY

28 MARCH

Lennox Gardens Walk

HERITAGE FESTIVAL

11 APRIL

National Trust Open Day

15 APRIL

Mid Century Modern Suburb
Walk, Hackett

46TH AGHS
CONFERENCE
ORANGE, NSW
25 – 27 SEPTEMBER
2026

OPTIONAL DAY 28
SEPTEMBER

THEME: FRUITS OF
ORANGE: EXPLORING
CENTRAL WESTERN
NSW

47TH AGHS
CONFERENCE
CANBERRA, ACT
15-17 OCTOBER 2027

OPTIONAL DAY 18
OCTOBER

BRANCH COMMITTEE

Robyn Oates, Chair &
NMC Representative

Helen Stevens, Secretary

Sue Cassidy, Treasurer

Louise Gaudry,
Rosanna Horn
Mary Johnston

HELLO FROM THE CHAIR



Welcome back for another year of wonderful AGHS events

Your committee has planned morning walks in shaded places for February and March. This is to avoid those hot late afternoons in Canberra where a cool drink inside or in our own garden is perhaps more inviting. In April we will join our friends at the National Trust ACT for Heritage Week events. This is a terrific opportunity and we value our cordial

friendship with the National Trust. Our two Branches benefit greatly from our shared interests.

The AGHS' national theme for 2026 is **Trees**. You will have already noticed the attention to trees in our quarterly journal and book reviews. <https://www.gardenhistorysociety.org.au/category/aghs-tree-theme/>. This will be a focus for us throughout the year. We would love to hear your stories about significant trees, wherever they may be. Send me your story: maximum 500 words to actmrchair@gardenhistorysociety.org.au

Do consider joining the contingent from this Branch going to this year's AGHS National Conference in Orange NSW. (Details in the opposite column). Registrations open online on 13 April 2026.

Pre- and post-conference tours to the Blue Mountains will be led by Stuart Read.

This will also be a busy year organizing for the 2027 Conference which will be run by us! And plans are well underway.

You will notice that subscription fees will increase in 2027. Unfortunately, this is necessary to keep the national society ticking over.

I look forward to seeing you at our Branch events, at the conference and, as often happens, a delightful and unplanned meeting in the supermarket aisle or at a Canberra event.

Warm wishes

Robyn Oates

actmrchair@gardenhistorysociety.org.au

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

LENNOX GARDENS WALK WITH ROTARY GUIDES

**SATURDAY 28 MARCH
9.30 – 11.30AM**

Lennox Gardens has strong historic links to the early days of the national capital. The formal and exotic style is intended to be consistent with the gardens of Hotel Canberra and Albert Hall



It is set on the shores of Lake Burley Griffin, offers beautiful views of Black Mountain, the Brindabella Ranges and the city centre and is home to two landscaped gifts from Japan and China - celebrating the sister city links between Canberra and Beijing and Japan's ancient capital, Nara.

Lennox Gardens is also home to the Canberra Rotary Peace Bell. The first World Peace Bell was unveiled in 1954 and is located at the United Nations compound in New York. The Canberra peace bell was unveiled in Lennox Gardens in 2018.

Refreshments will be served at the end of the walk

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| Meet | At the main entrance to Lennox Gardens. There is parking on Flynn Drive or across the road at the rear of the Hyatt Hotel Canberra. |
| Cost | \$20 AGHS & NT members, \$25 others (including refreshments) |
| Bookings | https://www.trybooking.com/DILVH |
| Inquiries | Mary Johnston, actmrinfo@gardenhistorysociety.org.au
0427 381 380 |



Dates 11 April - 10 May

The theme for this year's Festival is 'Mid-century – innovation, change and optimism'. The Festival was on 5 March so check out the website for lots of interesting events at

<https://www.environment.act.gov.au/heritage/heritage-festival>

Anna Howe has kindly volunteered to repeat her walk around Hackett as the joint National Trust (ACT) and Australian Garden History Society event this year. Hackett is definitely a mid-century modern suburb!

HACKETT – MID-CENTURY MODERN SUBURB WALK WEDNESDAY 15 APRIL, 2-4PM

An event organised by the Australian Garden History Society and the National Trust (ACT).

Hackett's rapid growth in the mid 20th century saw innovations in architecture, including pioneering townhouses, change in the emergence of native gardens, and optimism in the community facilities planned by the National Capital Development Commission. How can this distinctive character be renewed as an element in our urban heritage?

Meet at the bus shelter on Madigan St

Cost \$15, accompanying children free

Bookings <https://www.trybooking.com/DHPPE>



NATIONAL TRUST OPEN DAY AT GUNGALIN HOMESTEAD SATURDAY 11 APRIL, 10AM – 2.30PM

Visit Gungahlin Homestead - a former pastoral property dating from the 19th century. The Homestead was built in two major stages - a rendered brick Georgian house built in 1862-65 and the grand sandstone Victorian addition of 1883 by Edward Crace. More recently it was a CSIRO wildlife research station and now a new future awaits it!



There will be tours of the buildings, stalls, entertainment and refreshments so bring the family! Entry is free and no bookings required. Wheelchair access is available.

Our AGHS Branch will have a stall at the Open Day.

Address: Gungahlin Homestead 80 Bellenden Street, Crace

RECENT EVENTS

A VISIT TO THE AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL BOTANIC GARDENS 25 FEBRUARY

On a warm, sunny February morning, 31 members and friends visited the Australian National Botanic Gardens (the Gardens) for our first event of 2026.

Our tour began with a presentation by Glenys, one of three experienced guides who volunteered their time to share their insights into the history of the Gardens.

We heard about the chronological development of the Gardens from the early 1930s to the present day. Support for the establishment of a botanic garden close to the University was followed by a feasibility study undertaken by Dr BT Dickson, Chief of Plant Industry, later to become the CSIRO. The findings recommended the current site of the Gardens, funding and staffing requirements.

No action was taken until after the war when Lindsay Pryor was appointed Superintendent of Parks and Gardens. He planted over 300 eucalypts with a budget of just £1,000.

In 1949, Prime Minister Ben Chifley and Edward Salisbury, Director of Kew Gardens, planted an oak tree and a eucalypt respectively.

Following her appointment as Botanist in 1960, Dr Betty Phillips set about establishing the link between the living collection and specimens in the Herbarium and rapidly increased the Herbarium collection to \$24,000. During the 1960s, Dr Phillips undertook field collecting trips as far afield as Western Australia, ensuring a 'national' approach.

Dr John Wrigley was appointed the first Curator of the Gardens in 1967. This coincided with its opening to the public. The official opening of the Gardens took place on 20 October 1970. The Prince and Princess of Wales opened the Visitors Centre in 1985 during their Australian tour.

Friends of ANBG commenced in 1990, followed by the establishment of the Guides Program in 1992.

The Gardens has been through some challenges, especially during the millennium drought. Following the appointment of Judy West as Executive Director and Peter Byron as General Manager around 2010, the decision to pump water from Lake Burley Griffin to irrigate the Gardens has made a significant difference to the plants, especially in the Rain Forest gully.

Other significant achievements include the establishment of the Red Centre Garden in 2013 and the commencement of the National Seedbank with over 4,000 different plant species represented. The latest project is the construction of the Ian Potter Conservatory which will showcase the collection of native



tropical flora from the far north and islands, including rare and threatened species.

Following Glenys's well-researched and informative presentation, some boarded Flora, the open-air bus expertly driven by Robyn and others joined Glenys or Joanne to further discover the history of the Gardens on foot.



The guides shared stories and highlighted significant plants and places in the Gardens, including the bottle tree and the bunya pine that were moved to the main entrance. We saw the plaque commemorating the official opening of the Gardens and four sculptural bollards which collectively list over one thousand endangered, vulnerable and extinct native plant species. We visited the Rainforest Gully, the Rock Garden and the Red Centre Garden and heard about the collaboration between Gardens and Indigenous groups to help with propagation of Sturt's Desert Pea. A highlight of the tour was the eucalypt planted by Lindsay Pryor in 1945. The future is looking bright with an active Friends Program, daily guided tours, and a strong focus on research, education and conservation 'to inspire, inform and connect people to the Australian flora'

We appreciated the time and research our guides, Glenys, Robyn and Joanne (who is also an AGHS member), contributed to develop this unique program for AGHS on the history of the Gardens.

Sue Cassidy

Photos: Robyn Oates and Sue Cassidy

BRANCH NEWS

WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS

The committee would like to welcome the following new members.

Alexia Bannikoff, Canberra
 Joy Cook, Tura Beach
 Carole Grey, Canberra
 Daniel Heys, Canberra
 Jennifer Johnson, Canberra
 Alex Jose, Canberra

AGHS NATIONAL CONFERENCE 2027

The Conference Committee is busy planning for next year's Conference in Canberra! One of our tasks is to develop optional pre and post conference tours for participants. The plan is for tours to Griffith and Leeton which are, of course, part of the ACT Monaro and Riverina Branch. The timing should coincide with Griffith's Spring Fest with its focus on the citrus industry.

If you or anyone you know, has ideas about the area, or along the route, particularly gardens to visit, these would be very welcome. Please send a message to actmrinfo@gardenhistorysociety.org.au and someone will contact you to discuss.

NATIONAL CONFERENCE SPONSORSHIP

*THE MANY ARE SMARTER THAN THE FEW**

Can you help us?

Our National Conference in Canberra in 2027 needs sponsors.

Do you have suggestions for possible sponsors?

Do you have some expertise in this area and would you be able to assist the Conference Committee in approaching possible sponsors?

Please contact Robyn Oates actmrchair@gardenhistorysociety.org.au

*James Surowiecki

PLANTING MEMORIES

Throughout 2026 our AGHS theme is “Trees” with a focus on the significance of old trees and the planting of new trees. With this in mind our Branch plans to update the ANZAC Centenary plaques in Weston Park, which have become badly weathered. These panels were erected by the Australian Garden History Society, ACT, Monaro and Riverina Branch, with support from a Commonwealth ANZAC Centenary Local Grant. They were unveiled on 13 October 2016. They commemorate the service of all the men from the Canberra region who served in World War 1.

Located where Charles Weston himself might have once stood, these panels look out to Shale Ridge where the young men working at the nursery planted the saplings that we now see as full-grown trees in Westbourne Woods. One panel shows nursery men working at Yarralumla Nursery in mid-winter 1926 [NLA Collection NAA A3560, 2021]. The photograph carries an eerie resemblance to photographs of troops in the desolate landscapes of WW1.

A second panel bears the poem “*The Forester* “for TCG Weston (1866-1935) by Canberra poet Geoff Page. The layout was designed by Marian Rollgejser. Weston planted nearly 1.2 million trees to help transform a dusty plain into a landscaped city. The poet links Weston’s plantings in Yarralumla to young soldiers trudging across the battlefields of France. The poem concludes with the thought that “everything you plant outlives you”. It connects those who did not return with “the plantings at Shale Ridge” which grow into saplings and “the foliage of a future”. It is a solemn subject, but one in which trees are a wonderful symbol.

NATIONAL NEWS

ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION UPDATE

The National Management Committee has reluctantly decided to increase annual subscriptions and to change our payment dates. This is a just a “heads up”, as they say.

This is something we are all very much aware of – inflation is outpacing wage increases, not to mention retirement incomes!

Annual fees will have an initial modest increase which will then be linked to CPI. The increase will begin in 2027. We will also switch to an annual payment season which will commence in the first quarter of 2027. Any

individual gaps will be rectified by a one-off payment for that appropriate number of months. All members will be notified in due course. At the moment do be aware that the online membership renewal system defaults to automatic renewal. You can opt out of auto renew by logging into your account through TidyHQ on the website and following the instructions.

If you have any problems please contact Head Office, 0419 977 703
info@gardenhistorysociety.org.au

OF INTEREST

AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL BOTANIC GARDENS
www.anbg.gov.au

Friends Thursday Talks – held at 12.30 pm every Thursday from February to November. Bookings can be made 30 days in advance. For program details and for bookings go to <https://www.friendsanbg.org.au/calendar>. Information is already up for talks from February 2026. The calendar also provides some information on other talks, walks and activities in the Garden.

Visitors' Centre Exhibition Wednesday 11 March – Monday 6 April

Dhulwa/Banksia re leaf - Inspiring, informing and connecting people to Australian flora is at the heart of this project, a solo exhibition of ceramic works by Amanda Andlee Poland. The artist will be carving in the Gallery at various times throughout the exhibition.

LANYON HOMESTEAD

Saturday 21 March, 10am - 3pm - Harvest Day Out 2026

Bring the whole family for hands-on workshops, engaging demonstrations, insightful talks, and immersive tours.
<https://www.historicplaces.com.au/events/harvest-day-out-2026>

OPEN GARDENS CANBERRA AUTUMN PROGRAM

The Autumn program commences on **21 & 22 March**.

21 & 22 March *New Hope, Yass*
 28 & 29 March *The Living Block, Calwell*
 11 & 12 April *Christine's Garden, Gowrie*

More details can be found at <https://opengardenscanberra.org.au/>

OPEN GARDENS, BRAIDWOOD

Saturday 28 and Sunday 29 March
<https://www.braidwoodpreschool.nsw.edu.au/braidwood-open-gardens>

An annual fundraiser for the Braidwood Preschool taking place in Autumn rather than the usual spring event which includes visits to 6 local gardens.

15TH SOUTHERN HIGHLANDS AUTUMN GARDENS
WEEKEND + PLANT FAIR

Saturday 18 and Sunday 19 April, 9am to 4pm

Southern Highlands Botanic Gardens, 1 Old South Road, Bowral

<https://shbg.com.au/>

This premier event features five exclusive private estate gardens, specialized nursery stalls from across NSW/VIC, live jazz, and "Highlands Harvest" local produce.

Highlights

- Open Gardens: Access to five private gardens, including *Ben Huon Manor* (*Editor note - I think these are also open 17 April*).
- Plant Fair: A wide selection of plants and gardening products.
- Activities: Sunday jazz, celebrity guests, and local food stalls

HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY OF CANBERRA

<http://www.hsoc.org.au>

NATIONAL TRUST: ACT BRANCH

<https://www.nationaltrust.org.au/act/>

NATIONAL ARBORETUM CANBERRA

www.nationalarboretum.act.gov.au

For details on walks, workshops and other events visit the Arboretum website.