

# ACT Monaro Riverina Branch

Newsletter May 2021 No 3



Australian Garden History Society  
[www.gardenhistorysociety.org.au](http://www.gardenhistorysociety.org.au)

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## BRANCH DIARY

20 MAY

Gundaroo Film & Book  
Sale Visit

9 JUNE (LUNCHTIME)

Winter Series Lecture 1  
*Spirit of the Garden*  
Speaker: Trisha Dixon

7 JULY

Winter Series Lecture 2  
Webinar: *The Blooming  
Simpson – A Botanist's  
Paradise*:  
Speaker: Rosemary Purdie

4 AUGUST

Winter Series Lecture 3  
On Marion Mahony Griffin  
Speaker: Glenda Korporaal

4 AUGUST

Branch AGM

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## AGHS NATIONAL CONFERENCES

10-12 SEPTEMBER  
2021

AGHS National  
Conference – Sydney  
*Many Dreams One  
Landscape*

11-13 NOVEMBER  
2022

AGHS National  
Conference – Hobart

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## FORTHCOMING EVENTS

### *An Autumn Day in Gundaroo – with a Film and Book sale* 20 May

Join other garden history friends for a day in Gundaroo, featuring the superb Canadian documentary film *The Gardener* along with a sale of generously donated garden books.

*The Gardener* (2016, directed by Sebastien Chabot), deals with Frank Cabot's **Les Quatre Vents**, aka **Cabot Garden**, a magnificent private garden in the Charlevoix region near Quebec City in Canada. The garden, created over 75 years and three generations, is considered a contemporary horticultural masterpiece. The film includes narration by Frank Cabot himself, along with commentary from other garden experts.

The film screening will be at the historic Gundaroo Soldiers' Memorial Hall, where we will also be holding a **book stall**, full of garden and gardening books, generously donated for this event. Proceeds of the book sale will be used to further fund our digitisation project of historic gardening material held by the National Library of Australia.

Come in the morning, look at the bookstall (and buy), take a walk in the village, enjoy a byo lunch and then see the film in the lovely hall, followed by afternoon tea. The day's timing will be:

**Morning (Optional): From 11.30:** Meet at the Gundaroo Hall to browse and purchase from the excellent selection of garden and gardening books, and/or take a self-guided walk round the historic village of Gundaroo (we will provide copies of a self-guided walk round the village).

**Lunch (optional):** BYO picnic lunch to enjoy at the Hall (tea and coffee provided) OR enjoy a lunch purchased from a nearby café. The book stall will be open throughout.

**Afternoon:** Assemble in the hall for a **1.30 pm start** - a short talk on the history of the hall, and screening of *The Gardener*, to be followed by afternoon tea and more browsing and buying of books from the book stall.

**Cost** AGHS members: \$15; others \$20. **Book** through Trybooking at <https://www.trybooking.com/BQLKM>

**Location** Gundaroo Memorial Hall, 52 Cork St Gundaroo (on your left coming from Canberra).

**Book sale** The books are very reasonably priced - maximum \$20, most much less. Please bring lots of change as we will be accepting **cash payments only**.

If you would like to come just to the book sale, you are most welcome – no charge of course and no bookings needed. From 11.30 am to 4 pm in the Gundaroo Hall.

**Enquiries** Bronwyn Blake, [blakesos@hotmail.com](mailto:blakesos@hotmail.com), or ring 0439 718 580

## WINTER LECTURE SERIES

### BRANCH COMMITTEE

Margie Bourke, Chair  
Sue Cassidy, Treasurer  
Anne Claoue-Long, State  
NMC Representative  
Nancy Clarke, Secretary

Bronwyn Blake (and Co-  
chair of the NMC)  
Lynne Curran  
Fleur Flanery  
Greg Johnson

This year's Winter Lecture Series will comprise three lectures, two of which will be joint events with the Friends of the National Library, continuing a wonderful collaboration we have enjoyed for many years. As an overarching theme we borrowed the ***Know My Name*** approach the National Gallery has chosen to highlight the achievements of women artists. In our case the intention was to draw attention women writing, photographing, designing gardens and landscapes, or scientifically working with plants.

### LECTURE 1: TRISHA DIXON

**WEDNESDAY 9 JUNE, 12.30 – 1.30PM**  
**NATIONAL LIBRARY OF AUSTRALIA**

Trisha will talk on her latest book ***Spirit of the Garden***, **Wednesday 9 June 12.30 pm at the National Library.**

Trisha is well known to AGHS members and in her talk will explore the relationship that exists between ourselves, our gardens and the natural landscape. Her message is the need to understand and respect the environment in our garden making. Trisha is a very entertaining speaker and her reflections on seeking meaning in garden making as well as creating places of beauty and peace are sure to be interesting and well delivered.

**Venue** Theatre, NLA

**Cost** \$20 (AGHS members & Friends of the NLA), \$25 (Non-members) Light refreshments included.

**Bookings** Essential and are now open through the NLA website at <https://www.nla.gov.au/event/trisha-dixon-meaning-and-beauty-in-gardens> This is likely to be a popular talk, so best book early to avoid disappointment.

### LECTURE 2: ROSEMARY PURDIE

**WEDNESDAY 7 JULY, 5.30 – 6.30PM** **WEBINAR (BY ZOOM)**

Rosemary will recount one of her plant collecting expeditions: ***The Blooming Simpson – a Botanist's Paradise***.

Rosemary trained as a plant ecologist, and in a variety of positions, has been involved in helping to describe Australia's biodiversity. She has contributed to many publications, including the recently published *Black Mountain, A Natural History of a Canberra Icon*. Rosemary was the second ACT Commissioner for the Environment, and has also worked for the Queensland Herbarium, the Bureau of Flora and Fauna, the Australian Heritage Commission, and the Murray Darling Basin Commission.

In this talk she will describe the excitement of plant collecting in the remote red sand country of the Simpson Desert, using camels as a means of transportation.

**Cost** \$10 (Members and non-members)

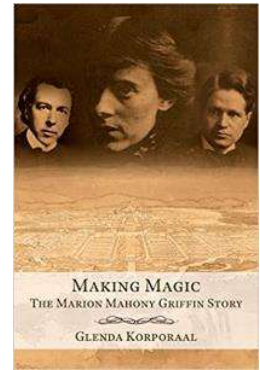
**Bookings** Essential through Trybooking <https://www.trybooking.com/BRFOI>

### LECTURE 3: GLENDA KORPORAAL

**WEDNESDAY 4 AUGUST, 6PM**  
**NATIONAL LIBRARY OF AUSTRALIA**

Glenda, author of ***Making Magic, the Marion Mahony Griffin Story***, will talk about Marion's interest in gardening, and Australian plants – both in collecting and in her art illustrations.

**Bookings**      Details will be given closer to the time.



### PAST EVENTS

#### *GREEN HILLS VISIT AND TALK* **WEDNESDAY 31 MARCH**

As a tribute to Canberra's 108th birthday the Committee decided that our March event should acknowledge an aspect of Griffin's plan for Canberra which is not widely known. The Three Green Hills formed the Western boundary of Griffin's plan. Two of them are now located in the National Arboretum Canberra in the Himalayan Cedar Forest and on Dairy Farmers Hill. The third, Roman Cypress Hill, closer to the lake, was diminished in size when the Tuggeranong Parkway was constructed but is still clearly visible from the Arboretum, or while driving on the Parkway, by the plantation of Roman Cypress situated on the top.

Our speaker, Trevor Lipscombe, had done detailed research on the Green Hills and gave a very interesting history of the sites, and provided a handout containing fascinating maps of the area from 1913, including Griffin's 1918 map, and another map showing Griffin's proposed Arboretum which he planned to be planted by continents e.g. Europe, Africa, North and South America, and Australia, around the edge of the lake, not far below the site of the present Arboretum. The devastating Canberra bushfire in 2003 which burnt the Radiata plantation on the site which is now the Arboretum, was extinguished at the southern end of the Himalayan Cedars, and the trees lost at that time were re-planted during the early planting of the 100 Forests which make up the Arboretum.



**Members listening to Trevor Lipscombe**

Originally the event was scheduled for 24 March, but severe weather resulted in the event being postponed until 31 March, which fortunately was a pleasant late afternoon. We were delighted that some Friends of the National Arboretum took up the invitation to join us for the talk.



Thanks to the National Trust we were able to offer participants the use of their individual audio systems, which were used successfully as the group moved from the car park, down the Himalayan Cedars Forest path, with a view to the two other Green Hills and down to the picnic area where the talk took place.

If you missed attending, you can catch up on information about Griffin's Green Hills by going to the AGHS website and viewing the short film starring Trevor Lipscombe , and made by our talented Committee members Bronwyn Blake and Anne Claoue-Long  
**Margie Bourke**

### ***A GARDEN FOR A MODERNIST HOUSE*** **SATURDAY 10 APRIL**

This event, a part of the 2021 Canberra and Region Heritage Festival, was titled with care.

Bronwyn Blue's delightful Campbell house, to which she so generously invited us, is indeed Modernist. Designed by architect Theo Bischoff in 1961 in the fashionable mid-century modern style, the house is also sited to the rear of a large block facing the northern sun and is surrounded by a garden that is viewed from inside the house through many floor-to-ceiling windows.

The garden however is not the same age as the house, having evolved through different stages to suit family circumstances. In fact a very typical Canberra garden story. The Cleland family moved into the house in 1962 - at that point there was no garden as it was a newly developed block. Robyn Cleland who was a toddler at the time grew up at the address and provided a history and many photographs detailing the development of the garden. This included the building of dry stone walls using rocks from the bed of the lake before it was inundated, and the laying of a wide patio and many winding paths from homemade cement. The garden planting was redesigned in about 2000 to become a native bush garden using plants indigenous to the Canberra area. Plant lists and original wooden planting markers corresponding to the lists are still at the property.

In many respects the garden, even if not Modernist itself, was a very suitable garden for a Modernist house. It is also a very modern garden having no water guzzling lawn; incorporating water harvesting from the patio; making use of recycled materials and having a functional layout allowing for different uses at different times by different family members. Its surrounding greenery with the use of so many native plants local to the area provides a great and health giving connection with nature. Altogether a beautiful lesson in sustainability.



***Edwina Jans and Bronwyn Blue on the garden patio outside the Modernist house surrounded by Australian native plants.***

Local group Canberra Modern co-hosted this heritage event and Edwina Jans gave a talk about the house and Modernist architecture. Anne Claoue-Long outlined the key elements of Modernist gardens, the reasons why so few are found in Australia and the growth of the Bush Garden movement from the 1950s, which developed in tandem with the Modernist garden style. Plant lists from 1960s from the Yarralumla Nursery's free plant issue scheme to new lessees were on view as were the many photographs of the garden development. Finally David Shorthouse from the National Arboretum's Southern Tablelands Ecosystems Park led people round the garden for a talk about the native plants. Despite the cold wind a good time was had by all.

**Anne Claoue-Long**

**BESIDE THE QUEANBEYAN RIVER: AN AFTERNOON WALK  
WITH STORIES  
SATURDAY 24 APRIL**

**A Joint AGHS/National Trust (ACT) event for the Canberra and Region Heritage Festival**

On a glorious autumn afternoon, Queanbeyan local historian Gillian Kelly led a walking tour (more or less Q shaped) along both sides of the Queanbeyan River. The event was part of the Canberra and Region Heritage Festival and had originally been planned for 2020, but, re-imagined for 2021, attracted not only members of the host organisations (AGHS ACT Monaro Riverina Branch and the National Trust ACT) but many community participants. We were most disappointed that we had to exclude a number of would-be attendees.

Our expert guide set a cracking pace pausing on the way to regale 40+ enthusiastic walkers with stories of how the river has shaped the history of the now City of Queanbeyan. For the original inhabitants, the Ngambri people, the river was critical as a source of food. For the first European settlers, it acted as a valued water supply but was also a barrier. Though the Queanbeyan River (which joins the Molonglo just across the ACT border at Oaks Estate) is normally a series of ponds, it has a well recorded history of floods up to the most recent major flooding of 2016. We noted the very recent impact of heavy rain that had filled the waterway bringing down some mature casuarinas that will have to be removed. The first permanent bridge (the graceful timber Queen's Bridge) opened in 1858, making across-river movement easier and safer. Appropriately, we started our walk underneath the current (2016) Queen's Bridge.

But the floods have been benefactors to Queanbeyan, carrying rich alluvial soil to the river banks, making the river flats enticing to market gardeners who developed produce gardens to provide not just for the locals but for their neighbours as Canberra grew rapidly in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Chinese market gardeners were active in the nineteenth century and later gardeners came from further afield. One notable figure was George Nano, who arrived in Australia from Macedonia in 1926, took up employment at Lanyon for T. A. Fields, established what became a flourishing market garden on the river flats at Queanbeyan, and later opened a long-operating successful milkbar/supermarket. The Macedonian community to which he belonged remains an important group in highly multicultural Queanbeyan.

Queanbeyan was a small service village for many years, supporting the local pastoral stations and other European settlers as well as travellers between these points. The city retains markers of its 19<sup>th</sup> century history close to the river. On the east side where we started our walk, the Kent Hotel (now Ye Olde Kent) dates from 1849 and just up the hill is St Gregory's church (dedicated in 1850). We crossed to the west side by the much-loved Suspension Bridge. The first footbridge at this point was opened in 1901, replacing a series of large stepping stones that had been placed there in 1861 by the Rev Alberto Dias Soares of Christ Church, to "bring the residents of Dodsworth and Irishtown... to the post office, Christchurch, day school and the places of worship on the western side of the river". We were pleased to be able to go inside Christ Church, thanks to Wendy Smith, Church Warden who gave us a brief history of this lovely 1865

building (which replaces the earlier rubble building). Other major historic buildings on this side are the Christchurch School house, St Benedict's convent and further along, close by the now Leagues Club, Byrne's Mill and the Mill House.

Across the Queen's Bridge by foot and past O'Neill's cottage (now home to the Queanbeyan Art Society) we assembled at the Sensory Gardens, where Mark Kmiecik and Rod McMillan from Queanbeyan-Palerang Regional Council's Urban Landscapes team gave us insiders' perspectives on this wonderfully planned and maintained feature of the Queanbeyan Parks' operations.

The Sensory Gardens were opened in 2013 after years of planning. They contain plants and activities to engage all five senses and were designed to make this part of the park inviting and accessible to everyone.

The beds are raised and permit wheelchair access. Plants (mostly small shrubs and perennials) are carefully selected to appeal particularly to sight and smell, and include many herbs that can be plucked to savour the taste. Hands on locally made 'musical instruments' invite participation, and the varied surfaces of both plants and fittings are inviting to the touch. We really appreciated Mark and Rod's enthusiasm, knowledge and generosity – they had given up a Saturday afternoon to accompany us.



***Mark Kmiecik and Rod McMillan talking about the Sensory Gardens***

As usual, participants enjoyed socialising over afternoon tea. We are most grateful to Gillian for her knowledge, organisational skill and enthusiasm.

***Nancy Clarke***

## BRANCH NEWS

### *VALE TOM BELLAS*

It is with great sadness that we record the recent death of Dr Tom Bellas. In his working life in Canberra Tom was a Research Scientist in the Entomology Division of CSIRO. In retirement Tom transferred his well honed research skills to family history, while continuing his deep interest in the history of Science, and in gardening. For over twenty years Tom and Gillian have been active members of AGHS and regular attendees at our events. We will miss him.

Our thoughts are with Gillian and their family at this time.

### *WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS*

The committee would like to welcome the following new members who have joined since the last Newsletter.

- Kay Blue, Canberra
- Kim Cameron, Canberra
- Susan Hall, Canberra.
- Joanne Maples, Canberra

## MESSAGE FROM THE BRANCH CHAIR

One of the activities of our local Committee, which may not be apparent to members, is to comment on proposals, generally being planned by the ACT or Federal Governments, which relate to cultural landscapes, or historic gardens. In the last year there have been several submissions we have contributed to enquiries concerning trees in Canberra. The most recent was to the National Capital Authority expressing our dismay at the intention of the Australian War Memorial to remove over 100 mature trees in preparation for the proposed redevelopment of the Memorial, which has not yet been approved by the NCA. I thank Anne Claoue-Long for composing a wonderful emotive plea to save the trees. Our submission was one of 599 received by the NCA, and we have given permission for it to be included on their website. AGHS National Management Committee also submitted a separate response, along with other concerned groups from Canberra and other States.

**Margie Bourke**

## BRANCH 2021 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING AND COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

The Annual General Meeting of the ACT Monaro Riverina Branch of the Australian Garden History Society will be held on Wednesday 4 August, at the National Library of Australia. Full details and the agenda will be circulated to members before that.

Nominations for the Committee close on **Wednesday 23 June**.

We would very much welcome new Committee members, so if you are interested in a more active role in the Branch's activities, please contact Nancy Clarke, Branch secretary, who can also provide a copy of the Nomination Form ([clarkenancy324@gmail.com](mailto:clarkenancy324@gmail.com) or 0423 690626).

Committee members are elected for a three-year term, with the option of two renewals. The Committee meets every month, and all members take an active role in planning and delivering our Branch program as well as working with other Branches and the Society's national office.

## AGHS SOUTHERN HIGHLANDS BRANCH

Branch members are welcome to attend events organised by the Southern Highland Branch. The next two events are:

### **Saturday June 19, 1.30 – 4.30pm First Winter Seminar**

Speakers: John Weatherstone AM and Bud Townsing - with two fascinating and very different topics.

John will speak about *Sustainable Farming Practices* and Bud about *Alf Stephens & Sons* Bowral's best known builders and contractors 1886 to 1965

Cost AGHS Members \$25, non-members \$35 (refreshments included)

### **Tuesday 20 July Coach Trip to E G Waterhouse Camellia Gardens and Bare Island**

Departing Mittagong RSL 7.30 am/returning approx. 5.30 pm  
Cost: \$80, includes coach travel, morning tea, lunch and Bare Island Tour

For full details including booking forms go to  
<https://www.gardenhistorysociety.org.au/branches/southern-highlands/>



## AGHS NATIONAL NEWS

### AGHS Photo Competition

**Deadline for entries extended to 17 July 2021**

As part of the celebrations of the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its establishment, the Australian Garden History Society invites entries in their inaugural Garden History Photo Competition.

Entries should reflect the aims of the Australian Garden History Society (AGHS) and could range from a 'historical property or landscape' to garden history in the making:

*to promote awareness and conservation of significant gardens  
and cultural landscapes*

We encourage all members to enter – for full details go to

<https://www.gardenhistorysociety.org.au/publications/aghs-2020-photo-competition/>

### AGHS 2021 Conference: Sydney

Come to Sydney! New date but same exciting conference program. See parts of Sydney you have never seen before. Yes, the 2021 committee is cranking up, we are finessing our conference plans and looking forward to welcoming you in September.



While we have learnt to appreciate meeting online, won't it be wonderful to see everyone again.

For the Friday and Saturday morning of the conference, our erudite speakers will illuminate the core conference themes. Friday's sunset drinks will be held at The Coal Loader Platform overlooking the western waterways of Sydney Harbour. Other Friday highlights

include a guided visit to Wendy's Secret Garden, a scenic walk through a remnant Sydney sandstone bushland reserve and a visit to a new park on an old industrial site.

For the registration link go to <https://www.gardenhistorysociety.org.au/register/>

## OF INTEREST

### NATIONAL ARCHIVES OF AUSTRALIA

**Exhibition: showing until 6 June**

The biennial *Waterhouse Natural Science Art Prize*.

The prize provides an opportunity for artists to investigate the world around them and present their perspectives on natural science.

<https://www.naa.gov.au/visit-us/events-and-exhibitions/waterhouse-natural-science-art-prize>



## AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL BOTANIC GARDENS

[www.anbg.gov.au](http://www.anbg.gov.au)

Friends Thursday Talks recommenced in February, with new arrangements in line with ACT COVID-19 restrictions. For program details go to [https://www.friendsanbg.org.au/calendar\\_talks](https://www.friendsanbg.org.au/calendar_talks)

**Exhibition: showing until 30 May**

Tracey Benson's exhibition *Talking with Trees* showing how the Gardens have evolved. Part of Canberra Tree Week activities.

<https://parksaustralia.gov.au/botanic-gardens/do/whats-on/exhibitions/talking-with-trees/>

## CANBERRA MUSEUM AND GALLERY

**Exhibition: *Seeing Canberra*, showing until 24 July**

Depicts four main periods of Canberra's development through artworks primarily from CMAG's collection. Showing until 24 July. <http://www.cmag.com.au/exhibitions/seeing-canberra>

## HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY OF CANBERRA

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

## LAKE BURLEY GRIFFIN GUARDIANS (LBGG)

<http://lakeburleygriffinguardians.org.au/>