



# Australian Garden History Society ACT Monaro Riverina Branch

Newsletter June 2020 No 3

[www.gardenhistorysociety.org.au](http://www.gardenhistorysociety.org.au)

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## BRANCH DIARY

26 AUGUST  
AGM & Annual Lecture

9 SEPTEMBER  
Visit to Reidsdale

13 OCTOBER  
Talk at NLA with Sophie  
Thomson

OCTOBER (DATE TO  
BE CONFIRMED)  
Contour 556 Walk & Talk

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23–25 OCTOBER  
2020  
AGHS National  
Conference – Sydney  
*Many Dreams One  
Landscape*

5–8 NOVEMBER  
2021  
AGHS National  
Conference – Hobart

## FROM OUR NATIONAL NMC CO-CHAIR

Hello everyone,

I hope this newsletter finds you safe and keeping warm.

Despite the ferocious summer, my local landscape is in full autumn colour. Paths are disappearing under leaves and the structure of deciduous trees and plants reappearing. I am sure that as members of a Society that treasures our landscape, it has come as no great surprise to you to see so many finding solace in our landscape while the world rallies against Coronavirus.

A couple of weeks ago, amidst the terrible death tolls, I was delighted to find an [article](#) in The Guardian on 'rebel' botanists drawing the public's attention to the diverse range of flora growing in and around pavements in Europe and the UK, by writing the names in chalk. The movement began in France when the use of pesticides in public spaces was banned in 2017 and gardens in 2019. As a result, an incredible array of flora suddenly flourished and botanists armed with chalk decided to educate the passing public. An unnamed 'chalker' from London, where chalking is illegal, was quoted in the article saying, *"Botanical chalking gives a quick blast of nature connection, as the words encourage you to look up and notice the tree above you, the leaves, the bark, the insects, the sky. And that's all good for mental health. None of us can manage that much – living through a global pandemic is quite enough to be getting on with. But it's brought me a great amount of joy."*

Whilst writing on pavement with chalk, even with botanic wisdom, is considered graffiti and therefore also illegal in Australia, I couldn't help smiling to myself as I tried to mentally note the weeds I pass on my daily walk and have been surprised and sometimes a little horrified at what I found. Maybe such contemplations will be a positive side to my COVID-19 experience?! If you would like to know more about the movement in the UK, I recommend visiting [www.morethanweeds.co.uk](http://www.morethanweeds.co.uk).

I would like to take this opportunity to thank our hard-working Branch committee. It was such a shame our terrific program had to be postponed or cancelled until we can safely gather again. We recognise our events are a highlight in your calendars and that you will all be missing the pleasure of meeting and investigating current conservation issues and projects with equally passionate people. In the meantime, I trust you have been enjoying the articles in our Branch newsletters as much as I have.

Your ongoing support for the Society as a whole is also greatly appreciated. Like so many specialist not-for-profit organisations, membership renewal income is a significant portion of our national budget which pays for our national office manager, membership coordinator, Journal editor and Journal production, members insurance, maintenance of the AGHS website, online resources, grants and publications. The AGHS will most certainly have a very significant role to play in advocating for our historic landscapes and significant gardens in Australia's post COVID-19 new normal. Your ongoing support

BRANCH  
COMMITTEE

Sue Byrne, Chair  
Judy Pearce, Dep. Chair  
& Newsletter Editor  
Helen Elliot, Treasurer  
Anne Claoue-Long, State  
NMC Representative  
Nancy Clarke, Secretary

Bronwyn Blake (and Co-  
chair of the NMC)  
Sue Cassidy  
Greg Johnson  
Erica Ryan

ensures our national organisation and Branches are able to remain vigilant and ready, as states and territories struggle to manage competing financial pressures and priorities.

In the meantime, it has been lovely to bump into some of you at the shops or out walking. I'm happy to report, none had a box of chalk at hand!

Looking forward to seeing you soon.

Cheers  
**Bronwyn Blake**

## NEXT EVENTS

We are still unsure what will be able to go ahead in the next few months but have made some plans in the hope that we can hold the following events:

### AGM and Annual Lecture

WEDNESDAY 26 AUGUST  
AGM AT 5.30PM, LECTURE AT 6.00PM

We hope to focus on the recent Oral Histories conducted by Ros Burge on Branch members. We think there will be a good chance that this can go ahead at the Australian Centre for Christianity and Culture which is booked for the occasion. As soon as restrictions lift to allow this to go ahead we will send out details. See page 4 for details of the Branch elections.

### Visit to Reidsdale, in the Braidwood Vicinity

WEDNESDAY 9 SEPTEMBER

The major activity will be to visit Kate and Peter Marshall's Truffle Farm, *Terra Petra*, and we are exploring some other options in the district. Details will appear in the August newsletter.

### Gardening for health and wellbeing

SPEAKER: SOPHIE THOMSON  
TUESDAY 13 OCTOBER, 6PM

A joint event with the Friends of the National Library

**Sophie Thomson's** enduring love affair with gardening stems from growing up in the family nursery in the Adelaide Hills and has led to her becoming a national figure in the horticultural media.

In more than 14 years on television Sophie has actively promoted gardening and its benefits. Seen on ABC TV's Gardening Australia programme, her infectious enthusiasm inspires people of all ages and was voted Most Popular Lifestyle Programme at the 2019 Logies. In addition she is a popular national public speaker, TEDx presenter, broadcaster, author, weekly newspaper columnist and horticulturalist.



Sophie's first award winning book *From the Ground Up* was a complete guide for South Australian gardeners and her most recent one, *Sophie's Patch*, released in March 2018, is a national best seller.

Known for her strong environmental beliefs and resilience, combined with her infectious enthusiasm, vitality and love of sustainable gardening, Sophie describes herself as an “obsessive-compulsive gardener” who, were it not for her family and career, could spend every day in the garden.

Sophie is an Ambassador for Horticultural Therapy SA and Nature Play SA as well as patron of many environmental organisations. She lives at Sophie’s Patch - a three-acre property in the Adelaide Hills, with her husband and five children, and an assortment of animals. Over the last eight years they have created a remarkable garden around the old stone cottage, on what was once a bare paddock.

The lecture will expand on Sophie’s passion about the role gardens and gardening can play in our physical and mental health and well-being. Gardening gives us the opportunity to do meaningful, low impact exercise which benefits all the major muscle groups and offers us optimal nutrition when we grow at least part of our fruits, vegetables and herbs. Gardening is also great for helping us manage our stress which is vital as more people claim to feel stressed in their daily lives, let alone having to deal with the challenges faced when experiencing natural disasters such as our country’s recent bushfires.

Sophie’s passion for the benefits of gardening expand out to cover its importance for our environment and communities’ health and well being, and she even goes as far as to claim it can save the world and bring about world peace. But, let’s start on what it does for each and every one of us.

For more information about Sophie visit [www.sophiespatch.com.au](http://www.sophiespatch.com.au)

**Venue** Theatre, National Library of Australia

**Booking** Bookings through the NLA (the link for bookings will be provided nearer the time). **NO** bookings to be made through AGHS.

## **Contour 556**

**9 - 31 OCTOBER**

*contour 556* is Canberra’s free public art biennial held around the designed heart of Australia’s capital city: Lake Burley Griffin. Following successful events in 2016 and 2018, *contour 556* returns for three weeks in October 2020. *contour 556* will feature over 60 local, national and international artists, working across sculpture, performance, sound and digital projections. Artists have been selected for their ability to respond to the designed city of Canberra: represented by Australia’s political, cultural and physical history.

Branch members will once again have the opportunity for an evening walk and talk at this popular event. Details on timing and arrangements to follow.

## **BRANCH NEWS**

### **NEW MEMBERS**

The committee would like to welcome the following new member who has joined since the last newsletter.

- Manon Garnock, Nimmitabel

## *CONGRATULATIONS TO TWO BRANCH MEMBERS*

On behalf of members of our branch we extend congratulations to two members, Rosanna Kobliela-Horn and Claudia Hyles both of whom were awarded an Order of Australia Medal in the Queen's Birthday Honours list.

## *BRANCH ELECTIONS*

The AGM of the ACT Monaro Riverina Branch of the AGHS will be held on 26 August, hopefully at the Australian Centre for Christianity and Culture just prior to the 2020 Annual Lecture (see page 2)

Committee nominations close **15 July 2020**. An agenda will be included in the August Newsletter.

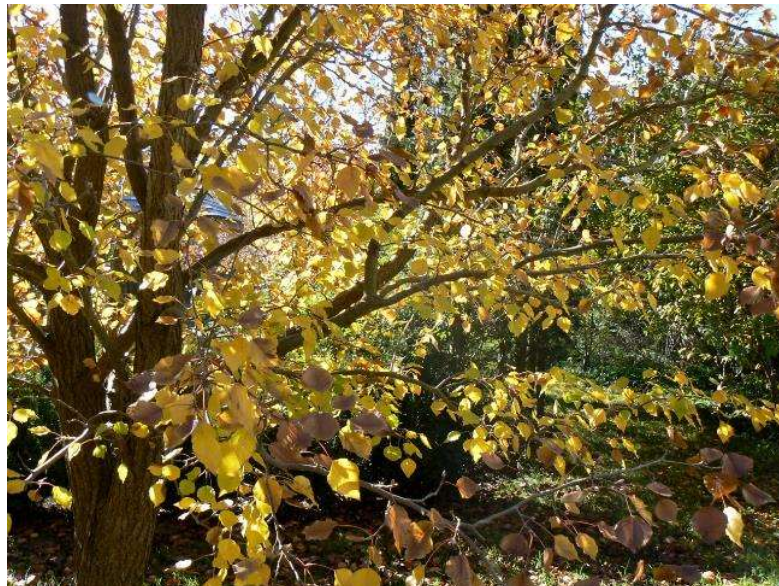
We would welcome new committee members so if you are interested in joining the Committee and would like to talk to someone about it please contact our Secretary Nancy Clarke [clarkenancy624@gmail.com](mailto:clarkenancy624@gmail.com), 0423 690 626. Nancy can also provide a copy of the Nomination form.

Committee members serve a term of three years, with the option of extending for two further terms. We meet once a month and all Committee members take a role in organising Society events and/or the Committee's business activities

## *THREE AUTUMNS AND A FILM A GARDENER'S CITY*

This story covers three Canberra Autumns, many years apart, but they all are part of the story.

Marcia and I arrived in Canberra 53 years ago almost to the day, as I write. I had last passed through the capital when I was still in high school; it was Marce's first visit. We had three primary-school-aged boys.



I had been offered a job which sounded interesting and we thought we would give it a go for a couple of years, then probably drift back to our home town of Adelaide.

The day after we arrived friends took us on a quick tour of the city, ending with a picnic lunch at the Cotter Reserve where

golden plane tree leaves tumbled down upon us on a perfect Autumn day. It was idyllic and we made up our minds to forget the two-year idea. We'd fallen in love with Canberra. As one does.



I jump forward to 2005, when I resurrected a long-held idea for a film on Canberra, the Garden City. I was then on the committee of the ACT, Monaro and Riverina Branch and I presented a proposal that the AGHS should lead the way for such a film. I had experience in film production and was confident about the path forward. The main concern was how the film would be paid for – the AGHS certainly couldn't fund the film I envisaged. I explained that as producer, it was my job to find the money.

In the end, we gained funding from the ACT Government, the Canberra Golf Club, the Dame Elisabeth Murdoch Trust, the local branch of the AGHS as well as the national body and, importantly, a matching amount in-kind from The Production Hub (The Hub) that provided the professional input and without that commitment, the film would never have been made.

Max Bourke was an invaluable supporter, particularly during the development stages, while I researched and wrote the script and oversaw production. Long-time member, the extraordinary Trisha Dixon, was our obvious choice for presenter and was involved from an early stage. I am indebted to the interest, support and input from a wide range of other supporters, especially from Chris Hindes (the Executive Producer), his partner Fausto Pighin (Director-Editor), and Geoff Ellis (Cameraman) – all from The Hub.

As well, I also owe thanks to all the experts who gave me guidance into the background, and development of the Garden City and especially in helping me understand the complexity of issues and history that eventually evolved into what Canberra is today. Among these I would like especially to mention the enthusiasm and generosity of Professor Ken Taylor who provided the most professional of help during the research stage and also directed me to others who could spell out the details on camera. Another tower of strength throughout was former NCDC Director of Landscape Architecture Dr John Gray who provided guidance, resource materials and background on important identities and personalities. Both Ken and John contributed further with incisive commentary on camera.

And, of course, I must give full credit to Canberra itself, a film-maker's delight. The film was shot in Canberra's autumn, an especially beautiful time of the year in the Capital. We were blessed with day after day of perfect sunny and settled weather just as you might expect in Canberra at that time of year.

This autumn in 2020 has been no exception. It takes me back to that autumn in 1967 when we decided to settle here. And the autumn in 2006 when we shot the film.

***A Gardener's City*** has recently been placed on You Tube by the AGHS. Nancy Clarke, a long-time supporter of the film, backed by the committee, deserves extreme thanks for all the work she has put in to make this happen.

The film 'A Gardener's City' can be viewed at:



<https://www.gardenhistorysociety.org.au/branches/act/>

**Brian Voce** (Photos: Brian Voce)

## A STORY OF TWO FORESTS – CANBERRA EAST AND WEST – REDWOOD AND CYPRESS

I hope that you have enjoyed the beautiful autumn weather over the last few weeks with the wonderful colour changes in the falling and flying leaves. I have had beautiful yellows and reds in the garden and rain has left the exotic evergreens and eucalypts glossy and bright.

Bronwyn Blake, AGHS Co-Chair and I had fun making the short video about the Redwood Plantation in Pialligo – we hope you saw it advertised in the latest AGHS e-news. Here is the link if you want to watch it again.

<https://www.gardenhistorysociety.org.au/publications/pialligo-redwood-forest/>

The *Sequoia*, recovering with regenerative growth after the February bushfire, entered into the spirit of the season by displaying both bright green and russet colours. The green regrowth was especially heartening.



*Bronwyn Blake and Trevor Lipscombe preparing for the filming. Are those trees really so tall?*

The Redwood Plantation was one of Charles Weston's experiments in testing suitable trees for the Canberra environment. He was doubtful this particular experimental forest would succeed, but Walter Burley Griffin (perhaps feeling homesick) insisted on the American species despite the local dry climate.

The Yarralumla Records detailing Weston's early seed acquisition and plantings for this ornamental forest is available on line thanks to a project managed by the ACT Monaro and Riverina Branch of AGHS, and funded by the ACT Government's Heritage Grants program in 2011-12. You can find the project results on the Archives ACT website. The records show Weston trialled the *Sequoia* species from 1913-16 with seeds from suppliers in New Zealand and the USA to determine the best early treatment for seedlings. He marked some record cards "Germination complete failure" but persevered with fresh seed from the USA and noted "Germination Excellent" in 1918, proceeding to tend the 120,000 Redwood saplings he then planted at Pialligo.

The video also references the Roman Cypress plantation at Green Hills, Lady Denman Drive. Weston was far more supportive of this species for use in Canberra landscaping and his Yarralumla note cards for 1919 states,

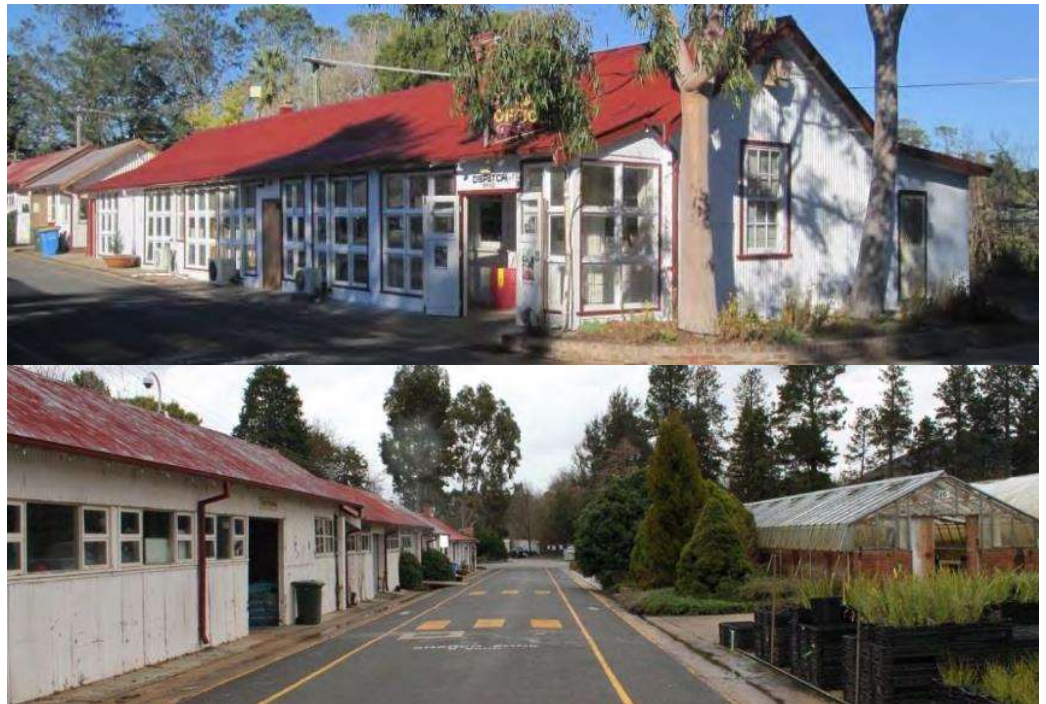
"Amongst *Cupressus*, this, with the possible exception of *Cup. Arizonica*, holds pride of place as a drought resister. Every encouragement must be given to its extended planting in the Federal Capital Territory."



While the Roman Cypress proved more drought resistant than the Redwoods most of the Cypress forest was destroyed by a December 2001 bushfire. Luckily the Yarralumla Nursery had collected seeds in March 1992 and was able to replant the forest after the even greater damage of the 2003 bushfires.

Any guesses to the location of our next video vignette of a Canberra forest?

The stories of these two exotic evergreen forests to the east and west of Canberra City highlight the Yarralumla Nursery's historic role of scientific research in horticultural matters. This has been officially recognised by Australia ICOMOS (International Council on Monuments and Sites) that has recently set up a webpage "Sharing and Showcasing Science Heritage" to highlight some of Australia's significant science heritage sites. The Yarralumla Nursery works, shed of seed store, cutting and potting sheds feature as a tangible link to the important early scientific advances in horticulture pursued at the Nursery which have resulted in Canberra's present generously treed landscape.



**Anne Claoue-Long** May 2020

## 41<sup>ST</sup> ANNUAL NATIONAL CONFERENCE 2020



To be held at Luna Park, Milsons Point. Bookings opened May 1 2020.

The Optional Day on Monday 26 October will explore the rural area of Camden.

Stuart Read will lead Pre and Post Tours to The Blue Mountains - (October 19 - 21 and October 27 - 29).

Check the AGHS website for further information.