

# ACT Monaro Riverina Branch

## Newsletter September 2025 No 4

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



Branch contact: [actmrchair@gardenhistorysociety.org.au](mailto:actmrchair@gardenhistorysociety.org.au)

### BRANCH DIARY

#### 8 NOVEMBER

Griffith – house and garden  
city landscaping

#### 24 NOVEMBER

Visit to the Walcott Garden  
(end of year event)

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45<sup>TH</sup> AGHS ANNUAL  
CONFERENCE  
MT GAMBIER, SA  
30 OCTOBER – 2  
NOVEMBER 2025

THEME: BEYOND THE  
GARDEN FENCE

Theme: Beyond the Garden  
Fence

## FORTHCOMING EVENTS

### GRIFFITH – HOUSE AND GARDEN CITY LANDSCAPING

**SATURDAY 8 NOVEMBER**  
**3 - 5.30PM**

#### A joint Australian Garden History Society/ National Trust (ACT) event

View several very different styles of historic house in the suburb of Griffith  
united by garden city landscaping

This walk around the leafy streets of suburban Griffith will showcase  
different styles of house including the heritage listed Evans Crescent  
Housing (built 1940) and offer a comparison with a Ken Oliphant designed  
house, a Canberra red brick government cottage and early public two  
storey duplexes located near the Griffith Shops. All are settled into a  
delightful garden city setting with ample tree plantings and open-space  
public parks.

We'll finish with a visit to a 1942 almost original house for refreshments!.

Meet                      At M16 Artspace, 21 Blaxland Crescent Griffith (where  
there is good parking.)

Cost                      \$25 AGHS & NT members, \$30 others (including light  
refreshments)

Bookings                Bookings open 8 October at  
<https://www.trybooking.com/DFLJK>

### BRANCH COMMITTEE

**Robyn Oates**, Chair &  
NMC Representative

**Helen Stevens**, Secretary

**Sue Cassidy**, Treasurer

**Louise Gaudry**  
**Rosanna Horn**  
**Mary Johnston**



## SAVE THE DATE

### VISIT TO THE WALCOTT GARDEN MONDAY 24 NOVEMBER, 5PM – 7PM

Join us for our end of year event in the garden of Rosalind and Benjamin Walcott.

The property, in Red Hill, was first developed in 1926. The property was purchased by the French government and used as their Chancery office for many years. Rosalind and Ben purchased the property in 2001 and the planting of this garden began in July 2003.



The garden is planted almost entirely with Australian natives, with a very few New Zealand natives added. The original design of the garden was done by Helen Cohen, who was also part of the firm creating the architectural design of the house.

This is a wonderful garden which features regularly in exclusive national garden tours. A late afternoon guided tour by the owners will be a real treat, followed by refreshments.

Bookings will open in late October – members will be notified once the bookings open.

## BRANCH NEWS

### 2025 AGM – 14 AUGUST

Was held prior to the Branch Annual Lecture. For those who were unable to attend a copy of the Chair's Report is attached at the end of this Newsletter.

**Committee Election:** continuing committee members Sue Cassidy, Rosanna Horn and Mary Johnston were confirmed and the two nominated members, Louise Gaudry and Robyn Oates were elected.

The election of officer bearers took place at the committee meeting on 25 August with the result that Robyn Oates will continue as Branch chair and Sue Cassidy as Treasurer.

Since the AGM Helen Stevens has accepted the position of Secretary – see the next page for more details.

## WELCOME TO A NEW MEMBER

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

Marie-Anne Robinson, Canberra

## A WARM WELCOME TO OUR NEW BRANCH COMMITTEE MEMBER HELEN STEVENS



As she moved home over the years with her Army-officer husband and three children, Helen has created many new gardens.

Helen was on the regional committee of Open Gardens Australia (OGA) and Committee Chair from 2011-15. As the Chair of NSW and ACT, she was a member of OGA's National Board, and oversaw many very successful garden openings, and events with the support of an excellent committee. When OGA was wound down, she facilitated the residual funds from the closure going to the creation of a

*Celebration* garden, the first in the *Gallery of Gardens* at the National Arboretum in Canberra. She is Secretary on the Board of Garden Clubs of Australia.

Helen is a life member of the First Canberra Garden Club, having acted as Treasurer, Vice-President and President, and newsletter editor since 2011. She now adds Secretary AGHS Monaro Riverina Branch to her retirement CV!

## RECENT EVENTS

### LECTURE: 14 AUGUST *RECLAIMING THE COMMONS:* *LANDSCAPE OF PLAY, PARTICIPATION* SPEAKER: DR GWENETH LEIGH



In her exciting talk Gweneth used her lived experience and scholarship to demonstrate ways in which our public landscapes can be reimagined as "active terrains" for social and ecological transformation. She spoke of the importance of healthy environments in which people can live and prosper.

It isn't just a matter of creating these healthy environments however. Despite good intentions, there is a long history of environments intended to improve public health and safety being degraded. In Mexico City, for instance, the huge Grand Canal, built in the 17C to help drain the valley and mitigate floods, had

become a public sewer. A recently completed revitalisation project has created a large new public park, including green areas, sporting facilities, and playgrounds. The park promotes human activity and provides a space for recreation and social gathering for people of all ages.

Drawing on her own experience Gweneth gave examples of places she considers healthy – including Berlin, Wellington and Canberra. Canberra is in fact a fine example, built on idealistic principles, not always realised but on the whole successful. It has abundant green spaces, but Federation Mall, generously grassed and treed, located in the heart of Canberra between Old and New Parliament House is special, providing spaces for social gatherings, official events - and public protests.

Central to her ideas is the importance of public spaces as “common ground” for everyone, not just a privileged few. This concept was at least partly demonstrated in antiquity, in the Agora in Athens. By the 4<sup>th</sup> century BCE this space was paved. It was the heart of government and the judiciary, a public place of debate, a place of worship and a marketplace. It was very busy. But it didn’t have a lot of trees.

In modern times, as cities grew, treed and recreational landscaped spaces were created but access was usually restricted to the wealthy, and it wasn’t till the mid 19C that a public landscaped space on a grand scale was envisaged. Central Park in New York, designed by Frederick Law Olmsted, provided very generous natural and recreational spaces open to everyone, with Olmsted describing it as “a democratic development of the highest significance”.

Other cities followed and inclusion of public parks in city design became the norm, and as cities grew ever larger, green spaces became their lungs, providing both health and recreational benefits.

For Gweneth, vital though these natural and recreational public spaces are, including in them places of public debate (taking us back to the Athenian Agora) is also important for a truly democratic urban life, and Australia has a wonderful history of places of this kind. Typically, these were in public parks, and the noisy Speakers’ Corners in Australian cities which were modelled on that in London’s Hyde Park, became a vital part of urban life, particularly at weekends. Speakers’ Corner in the Domain in Sydney has a continuing active life – those in other cities have largely faded or disappeared, partly because of increasing security concerns, partly because people are using digital platforms to communicate and protest.

Democracy however, stressed Gweneth, needs a physical space to work properly, and the egalitarian function of our parks is essential. When loss of these is threatened, people will protest, as millions did in 2013 against the planned redevelopment of one of Istanbul’s rare green spaces. We can be grateful that Federation Mall in Canberra continues to provide a valuable space for expressions of public sentiment.

**Nancy Clarke**

**Photo: Rosanna Horn**

## SOUTHERN HIGHLANDS BRANCH

Members of our Branch are always welcome to attend events in the Southern Highland and you may have met some of their members who travel down regularly to our events. Their next event is:

### **Friday November 7: Visit to The Shrubbery, Exeter**

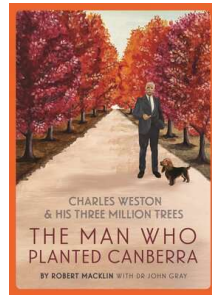
This is an extraordinary garden and nursery. The event includes a visit with the owners, afternoon tea and an opportunity to check out the plants for sale

For further information contact [aghs.sh.info@gmail.com](mailto:aghs.sh.info@gmail.com) or check the AGHS website.

## NATIONAL NEWS

### BOOK REVIEW

**Charles Weston Book Reviews AGHS ACT Riverina Monaro**  
**The Man Who Planted Canberra- Charles Weston and his three million trees- Robert Macklin with Dr John Gray, National Library of Australia, 2025.**



#### Review by Max Bourke AM

The background story of Charles Weston and indeed his commemoration deserves to be known by all AGHS Members as he was truly a major contributor to Australian urban design and gardening. Sadly, he is not well known or memorialised (no, the suburb of Weston, and most other such names are not for him but for a minor official who managed Hyde Park Barracks!).

Robert Macklin's new book "The Man Who Planted Canberra – Charles Weston and his three million trees", published by the National Library of Australia is a wonderful book which reaches well beyond the work of this great arboriculturalist in Canberra. Robert began with the doctoral thesis of distinguished landscape designer Dr John Gray who wrote a PhD on Weston in the late 1990s. Sadly John (a good friend of AGHS ACT) passed away aged 93 last year but he did read the virtual final text before he passed.

But this book is much more than a book about planting trees in Canberra. It is a story of a 'reluctantly' self-educated man who studied in some of the best gardens and under one of the greatest gardeners of the UK in the 19<sup>th</sup> century prior to coming to Canberra. It then weaves the wonderful tale of Weston's assiduous and unrelenting work into the political and turbulent background of Federation, the First World War and the beginnings of the Depression. Weston's life as a strongly committed family man to a wife and three daughters and his intent on giving them a great education at personal hardship is a heart-warming tale as well.

While I certainly do not in the least decry the work of the talented Griffins in Canberra's design we have to pause to think today, especially after reading this book, how special was the role of Weston both before and during as well as after the Griffins in achieving what we know as the Canberra landscape today. It is easy to mount an argument, especially during Floriade, while I write, that the visual landscape we know of Canberra owes more to Weston than the 'attenuated' legacy of the Griffins.

Sadly, that legacy is under serious and immediate danger if the tram line project down Commonwealth Avenue demolishes the fine avenue of cypresses (with at least another one to two hundred years left in them) planted by Weston, proceeds.

So the book is the tale of both the development of a great arboriculturalist, including his training in several of the major gardens and forests of England, Scotland and Australia, as well as the difficulties of introducing new species of trees besides adapting indigenous species for urban forests in Canberra. It is also the exploration of the life of a "plant breeder" (described by Joseph Maiden of the Royal Botanic Gardens in Sydney as the "best Mendelian he had met").



AGHS members might consider giving this book as gifts as Judy Pearce has done, it is a good read, and available at a discount from the National Library or the National Arboretum if you are a Friend!

**Full disclosure:** The author has had a lot to do with the realisation of this book in a variety of ways over a long period, and Margie Bourke and I contributed, along with the Kindred Spirits Fund of the AGHS, thanks to Ms Colleen Morris, to support the travel research required especially for the life and work of Weston in England and Scotland.

## 2025 NATIONAL CONFERENCE

This year we will meet in Mt Gambier, South Australia, home to limestone caves, volcanic craters – and top- rated vineyards.

*Beyond the Garden Fence:  
Looking at gardens and the wider cultural landscape*

45th AGHS Conference, 31 October - 2 November 2025  
Optional Day: 3 November  
Pre Conference tour: 28 and 29 October

Further details <https://www.gardenhistorysociety.org.au>  
and go to Events

## MEMBERS' CONTACT DETAILS

Please note that you can update your address on the AGHS Website but if you are wanting to change Branches you need to contact Sarah at the AGHS National Office ([info@gardenhistorysociety.org.au](mailto:info@gardenhistorysociety.org.au), 0417 977 703).

This is not something that occurs very often and it seems that some members who are changing location prefer to stay with their original branch.

## OF INTEREST

NATUREART LAB  
[info@natureartlab.com.au](mailto:info@natureartlab.com.au)  
<https://natureartlab.com.au/collections/field-trips>

NatureArt Lab offers classes located in Canberra at M16 Artspace and online. NatureArt Lab's programs offer classes and experiences with a combination of scientific expertise, nature photography, mentoring, art workshops, hands-on activities, nature walks, nature journaling, a focus on environmental sustainability.

AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL BOTANIC GARDENS  
[www.anbg.gov.au](http://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>. This calendar also provides information on other talks, walks and activities in the Garden.

**Friday 21 November – Sunday 14 December** - Friends Photographic Group Exhibition at the Visitor Centre.

## OPEN GARDENS CANBERRA SPRING PROGRAM

**27-28 September:** *The Burrow* in Latham  
**4-5 October:** - Two contrasting gardens in O'Connor  
**11-12 October:** A celebration of small gardens  
**25-26 October:** G and J's Garden in Lyons  
**1-2 November:** Always popular, our country gardens weekend  
**8-9 November:** *The Healing Garden* in Waramanga  
**22-23 November:** The Naturalistic Garden in Turner

For further information go to <https://opengardenscanberra.org.au/>

## NATIONAL TRUST: ACT BRANCH

**Sunday 28 September, 9.30 – 11.30am**

Walk: Yarralumla - explore Lennox Gardens

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. It is also home to the Canberra Rotary Peace Bell.

Cost: \$15. Further information and bookings:  
<https://www.trybooking.com/events/landing/1450382>

**Sunday 12 October, 9.30 – 11.30am**

Walk: Hall Heritage

Join volunteers from the Hall Heritage Centre for a guided walk around the Hall, located at the edge of the national capital. The village is surrounded by an endangered Yellow Box/Red Gum grassy woodland ecological community, which supports vulnerable plant and animal species.

Archaeological sites within the woodland and along Halls Creek remind us of generations of Aboriginal people who have lived here in Ngunnawal Country for more than 25,000 years.

Cost: \$15, Further information and bookings:  
<https://www.trybooking.com/events/landing/1450518>

## GARDEN CLUBS OF AUSTRALIA

**Albury 13-18 October 2025: 30<sup>th</sup> Biennial Convention**

A five-day Garden Clubs of Australia Convention is held every two years. GCA welcomes both members and non-members to attend the garden visits and other events. While some aspects of the convention may be exclusive to affiliated members, many events, including garden visits, are open to the general public. You can pick and choose which days, or activities, to attend. However, you do have to book.

**General information:** <https://gardenclubs.org.au/convention/>

## GOULBURN SPRING GARDENS

**Saturday 18 & Sunday 19 October**

Goulburn will be hosting its first dedicated spring open gardens event with eight beautiful gardens displaying the best of spring in Goulburn.

Tickets are \$25 for all gardens or \$5 per garden.

For further information on all the gardens and to buy your tickets in advance go to <https://stoga.org.au/goulburn-spring-gardens>

## BUNDANOON GARDEN RAMBLE

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

**Saturday 25 & Sunday 26 October**

Enjoy the beauty of spring and cool climate gardens in the Southern Highlands. Tickets \$25 for all gardens.

## TUMBARUMBA SPRING FLOWER FESTIVAL

<https://tumbarumbagardenclub.com/>

**Saturday 25 & Sunday 26 October**

Wander through up to ten unique open gardens, meet passionate growers, and enjoy views stretching to the Snowy Mountains. Discover creative installations, pick up a plant or two, or just relax in the fresh mountain air.

Adults: \$30 for entry to all gardens and stadium or \$5 single entry to individual gardens and/or stadium.

## NATIONAL ARBORETUM CANBERRA

[www.nationalarboretum.act.gov.au](http://www.nationalarboretum.act.gov.au)

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

## HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY OF CANBERRA

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

## CANBERRA MUSEUM AND GALLERY

[HTTPS://WWW.CMAG.COM.AU/](https://www.cmag.com.au/)





## **ACT MONARO RIVERINA BRANCH AGM CHAIR'S ANNUAL REPORT**

It is my privilege to share with you the achievements of our branch during 2024-5. We welcomed new members throughout the year and we welcomed Mary Johnston to the committee at the last AGM.

The Branch held many successful events. Highlights included lectures by our own members: *Gardening with Ancestors* by Dr Greg Johnson and *A Pepper Tree Grows in the Old School Yard* by Dr Anna Howe. We also enjoyed a *Cootamundra Garden Tour* and a *Tour of the National Gallery of Australia Sculpture Garden and Fiona Hall Fern Garden*.

You may recall the national inquiry into a name change for the organization last year. The conclusion was to maintain the status quo – but a re-examination is a worthwhile thing to do.

The Branch has continued its productive relationship with key bodies in Canberra, particularly with the Friends of the National Library and The National Trust, ACT Branch.

A response was submitted to NCA Commonwealth Park Concept Vision 2025. Our response to the National Rose Gardens Heritage Management Plan and the National Capital Authority (NCA) was quoted at length in the NCA report published on their website. We also participated in discussions about proposed landscape plantings at the Albert Hall

Our Oral History projects have included Juliet Ramsay's story; interviews with Diane Firth and Paul Jansens will occur within the coming year. The AGHS National Oral History Group is compiling a booklet of Oral History summaries for the Mt Gambier conference, including that of Max Bourke, Branch member. Our ACTMR Branch oral histories will be lodged with the ACT Heritage Library.

I wish to acknowledge and thank the dedication and commitment given by each of our committee members. They are a small and splendid team who work together with unflagging good humour and collegial co-operation.

Sue Cassidy has been our treasurer. Mary Johnston has taken over as Try Booking manager and has organised joint events with ACT National Trust. Louise Gaudry is our go-to 'do everything person' and Rosanna Horn is our publications and photography expert.

There are some non-committee members who have enabled this Branch to operate this year. Judy Pearce continued as our Newsletter Editor, Communications Officer and Membership Manager for yet another year. Her attention to keen professional eye and her desktop publishing are essential to our existence. Nancy Clarke is here tonight assisting as Minutes secretary. She has also been essential in events organization. Anne Claoué-Long is our historian and heritage specialist and works behind the scenes for our Branch and on national level sub-committees. Gini Hole has contributed to catering and onsite organisation at all events.

We have begun our planning for the 2027 National Conference which will be held in Canberra and run by this Branch. I commend the Conference sub-committees who are already well advanced in planning and contracts.

As I mentioned our committee is small and this has required some adjustments to event planning. It also means that we are operating outside the requirements of the AGHS Constitution (Item 5.3) which states that a *Branch Committee must consist of a chairperson, a secretary, a treasurer and at least 3*

*other members. (i.e. a minimum of 6 committee members). Some roles may be shared or combined, provided that the Branch maintains a minimum of 6 committee members.*

You can see that this Branch has been operating out of order. We have no secretary and only 2 *other members* (see above). The Chair has done much of the secretary's role as well as being the NMC representative and convenor of the 2027 Conference and the gatherer of articles for the newsletter editor. This accretion of roles cannot be sustained. Please be aware that if we are unable to attract additional committee members, (who are computer literate), we will be unable to function satisfactorily into the future.

On that sombre note, I invite you all to book for The Friends of the National Library and our branch Joint Lecture at the NLA on 18<sup>th</sup> September. The title is *The Archaeology of Water*. It will be presented by Dr Chris Carter, an archaeologist and well-known speaker and international tour leader. Booking is through the NLA website.

I thank all our members for your support through event attendance and donations during the past year.

**Robyn Oates**, Chair ACTMR Branch