



Australian Garden History Society  
Tasmanian Branch

Newsletter No. 122

Spring 2021

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**Newsletter:** *Blue Gum* is published periodically. Send contributions by email to Jennifer Stackhouse.

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## From the Co-Chairs

More than 30 people attended the AGM in Hobart in late August despite the wild, wet and windy day. In lieu of our scheduled guest speaker, Helen Page, who was not able to fly from Melbourne because of COVID restrictions, we listened to an excerpt of an interview with nurseryman and plant collector Ken Gillanders. The interview with Sally Dakis is one of the oral history interviews completed this year. We played it with images of the superb Woodbank Garden on the screen. Listen to the full interview online on the AGHS website. The meeting also said good-bye to Chair, Lynne Paul, and Treasurer, Bruce Chetwynd, who both stepped down.

Wyn Manners was elected to the new committee. See the list of new Committee members, left, and more on Lynne's farewell on page 6.

#### What's coming up...

Planning for 2022 is well underway with garden visits up the Derwent Valley on February 5, an early April weekend away on the East Coast plus Oatlands in June and a visit to the d'Entrecasteaux Channel on October 2. The Winter Lecture Series runs in June, July and August. More details of these soon along with the announcement of an advocacy project to assist in the protection of Tasmania's significant trees.

The AGHS 2022 Conference Committee is finalising the speakers and garden visits for AGHS's national conference to be held in Hobart November 11-13 (plus an extra day of garden visits on November 14). As this will be final *Blue Gum* for 2021, we wish you all the best for the festive season and coming new year.

**Jean Elder & Rosie Mackinnon**

## *Vale Kerry van den Berg*

In late September, Tasmania lost a dedicated gardener who was committed to caring for one of Australia's most important gardens, Woodbank at Longley. Kerry van den Berg died, suddenly, on September 21 aged 68. Jennifer Stackhouse pays tribute to Kerry's garden legacy.



*Kerry van den Berg in the Woodbank garden.*

With husband Harry, Kerry had taken ownership of Woodbank at Longley seven years ago, restoring and nurturing it and its important collection of rare plants.

Plantsman and collector Ken Gillanders and his wife Lesley developed the garden over 50 years. Until Kerry and Harry arrived, the garden's fate was tenuous.

Woodbank was not Kerry's first garden. She made a large garden near Launceston after moving to Tasmania 40 years ago. It was here that she and Harry raised children Theo, Lara, Josie, Lucie, Piet and Ciaran. Daughter Lucie says that the permaculture movement partly inspired the move from rat race of Sydney. "They built a tranquil family home called The Willows on top of a hill overlooking

30 hectares with majestic willow trees and an ice-cold river that spilt its banks in winter, turning the paddocks into lakes. Together they transformed the entire hillside of orange clay, blackberry and gorse into a wild and fertile garden filled with natives, edibles and any species that captured their imagination.

"Summers were spent swimming in the river, playing in the orchard among the apricots, plums, apples, olives, nashi and pear trees, and running across the river flats chasing cows or horses.

"Even our large, barn-style home was an extension of the garden covered in vibrant green Virginia creeper that would turn scarlet in the autumn," recalls Lucie.

Lucie says most of Kerry's days were spent tending to the garden: pottering, planting or watering. She was an academic and > bibliophile with a book collection that filled the house to overflowing.

Kerry would be the first to agree with Cicero that if you have a garden and a library you have everything although, notes Lucie, she would probably have added coffee and family. "She said recently that her family – six children and eight grandchildren – was her greatest achievement," she adds.

### Heading south

The Willows was idyllic but as time went on Kerry and Harry wanted to be closer to their children, grandchildren and friends. Kerry said she would only leave if she found a garden that could match, or even surpass, her own. In 2014 she discovered Woodbank, a three-hectare sanctuary filled with a unique collection of flora curated over 50 years by horticultural pioneer Ken Gillanders OAM and his late wife Lesley.

Kerry and Harry saw their role at Woodbank as custodians of the rare plants and the horticultural oasis that Ken and Lesley created. Kerry would walk around the gardens, which she described as a botanical ark, reciting the names of the plants and sharing

horticultural insights that she'd unearthed from her latest reading or from her new-found friendship with Ken, Lesley and Woodbank's community of supporters.

"She'd delight in the changing seasons, the plants that had been brought back from the brink, a new bulb that sprang up unexpectedly, or the successful propagation of a rare species," says Lucie. "She grew increasingly confident to put her own mark on the garden, planting fruit trees and herbaceous perennials and together with Ciaran and Harry made vegetable gardens."

Woodbank's creator, Ken Gillanders, also found a friend in Kerry, fondly recalling how welcoming she was to him when he visited Woodbank, and how they always spent time walking in the garden, naming and identifying plants.

"She was a keen gardener and I know she got a lot of pleasure from the garden," says Ken. Lucie agrees explaining that Kerry had a deep connection to nature and was happiest in her garden when it was filled with her family.

Our sincere condolences to Kerry's husband Harry and their family and friends.

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## *Keep the date: AGHS conference in Hobart in 2022*

**The next Australian Garden History Society conference will go ahead in November 2022 in Hobart.**

The conference theme is 'Landscape on the Edge'. It examines Tasmania's position at the edge of the world, its history of settlement and land use by both indigenous and European populations and its future as we sit at the edge of a changing climate which will alter the way we live.

The conference runs over three days, November 11-13, with a combination of lectures and garden visits. Lectures will be

held at Wrest Point at Sandy Bay and speakers include Prof. Tim Entwisle, AGHS Patron and director of Royal Botanic Gardens Melbourne. Garden visits to include Government House, High Peak at Neika, and Valleyfield at New Norfolk.

An extra day of garden visits is planned to Bruny Island on November 14.

The full conference program and booking information will be released in early 2022.

## *Tasmania's memorial avenues*

Tasmania is well endowed with trees planted to mark the lives of fallen soldiers. Many of these memorial plantings form what are known as Avenues of Honour and were the subject of the winter lecture presented to the AGHS by heritage consultant and historian, John Wadsley.



**Kempton Avenue of Honour. Photo John Wadsley**

**J**ohn, who has an interest in military history and the Great War in particular, became interested in Avenue of Honour plantings as his uncle is one of those soldiers commemorated in the Avenue of Honour in the Domain in Hobart, which is one of the best-known and largest avenues in Tasmania. Originally known as the Soldier's Memorial Avenue it consists of 520 trees that were planted after World War 1.

It was renamed as Soldier's Walk in the 1980s but retains many of those original 520 trees. A further 13 trees were planted when the avenue was extended in the Cenotaph Precinct in 1926. Each tree has a plaque identifying the remembered soldier. One is planted for the Unknown Soldier.

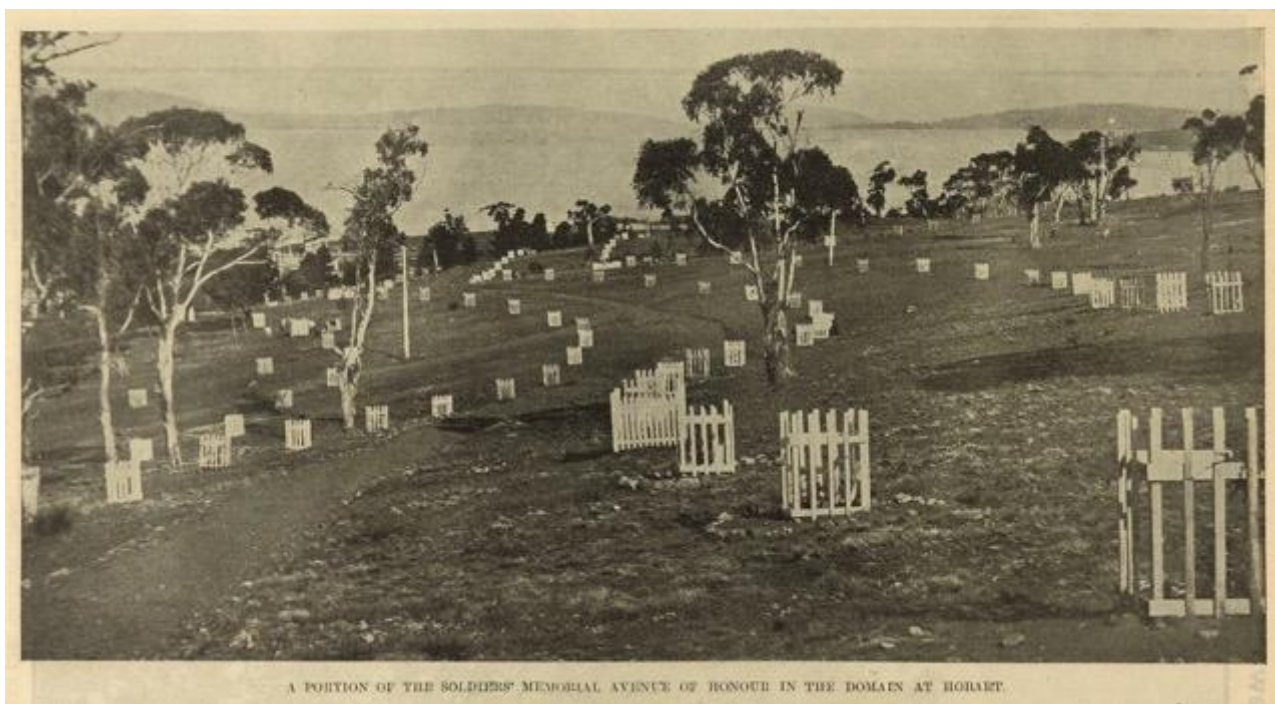
The original plantings were of Himalayan cedars, chosen for their longevity. John says that around 250 of the original plantings survive today. Those trees that have died or have been removed over the years have been

replaced with Lebanese cedars, which are considered more drought tolerant than the original selection. Several trees planted in the 1960s are Italian cypress.

John says that when it is necessary to replace trees in Soldier's Walk and where the families are still known, they are contacted for their approval. Families have also been given some of the timber from fallen trees as a memento.

### **Other avenues**

There are 50 Avenues of Honour around the state including good plantings at Kempton near Hobart and in towns through the Midlands. An Avenue of Honour planted at Port Arthur in 1918 with macrocarpas (*Cupressus macrocarpa*) had to be replanted when many of the trees become dangerous. A decision was made to replant with the same tree species to maintain the historic connections of this site. Further afield, visitors to the northwest may have spotted an avenue >



**Hobart's Soldier's Memorial Avenue (from The Tasmanian Mail, September 25, 1919).**

at Stanley where a row of mature macrocarpas stands beside Stanley Highway, the road into the town.

Other plantings in the northwest are at Irishtown, Montagu, Yolla and Wynyard. The largest Avenue of Honour in Australia is at Ballarat in Central Victoria where 3800 trees have been planted along 23km of roadway. This avenue took volunteers three years to plant after WW1 and is made up of around 25 species of mainly deciduous trees that look spectacular in autumn.

### *Discover more*

To see more of the Avenues of Honour, visit the national Avenues of Honour website ([avenuesofhonour.org](http://avenuesofhonour.org)) that aims to honour with a tree "the memory of every individual who has made the supreme sacrifice...". There is also information on the AGHS website and papers presented at an international symposium 'Tree Avenues - from War to Peace' in France in 2018 are available at [allees-avenues.eu/en/avenues-horizon-2030/colloque-2018/2-uncategorised/31-programme-symposium](http://allees-avenues.eu/en/avenues-horizon-2030/colloque-2018/2-uncategorised/31-programme-symposium)

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## *Oral History Project*

**Interviewing notable Tasmanian gardeners for the Tasmanian Branch's Oral History Project has been an important part of 2021 and is progressing well.**

An interview with garden historian Gwenda Sheridan has been completed. It is now available on the AGHS website ([gardenhistorysociety.org.au](http://gardenhistorysociety.org.au) under 'Projects & Reports') along with the long interview with Ken Gillanders that was previewed at the August AGM. Soon to be added are interviews with Robyn Mayo/Hawkins (a previous AGHS

Tasmanian Branch Chair, artist and gardener) from Bentley at Chudleigh, and Bob Magnus from Woodbridge of apple cultivar fame.

Thanks to Project Officer Rhonda Hamilton for her commitment and great skill in managing the organisation and detailed documentation of each interview.

***Jean Elder, Co-Chair***

## News & updates

### ***New committee to steer the Tasmanian Branch***

**The Tasmanian Branch's AGM was held in Hobart on August 15. At the well-attended meeting, we said farewell and thank you to long-term Chair, Lynne Paul, and welcomed a new committee.**

**L**ynne Paul has stepped down from her role as Chair of the Tasmanian Branch of the Australian Garden History Society. Lynne had served on the Committee as Secretary and later as Chair for nine years and continues to serve the AGHS as the Chair of the Editorial Advisory Committee.

To thank Lynne for her years of advocacy and service for AGHS, she was presented with framed embroidery of the AGHS's emblem. The late Joan Law-Smith, who was an artist, gardener and writer designed the floral garland. Lady Law-Smith was AGHS Patron from 1989 until her death in 1998. The garland was embroidered by the late Joan Tiller and presented to AGHS by her husband.

Also stepping down after serving the maximum number of years possible on the committee was Treasurer, Bruce Chetwynd.

#### **New committee**

Heading the new committee are Co Chairs, Jean Elder and Rosie Mackinnon. Jane Long is the new Treasurer. Prue Slatyer remains Deputy-Chair and also heads the 2022 Hobart Conference Committee while Antonia Dunne has taken on the role of Secretary.

Also serving on the committee are members Wyn Manners (who is new to the Tasmanian Branch committee this year), Mary Ramsay and Jennifer Stackhouse.



***A delighted AGHS Chair, Lynne Paul, who stood down at the recent AGM receiving the framed embroidery of the AGHS's floral garland emblem.***

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### ***Longford Blooms book sale success***

**In late November the Tasmanian Branch sold secondhand gardening books over two days in the historic garden of Kilgour House at Longford as part of Longford Blooms.**

The setting was superb with perennials in full bloom. Our bookstall was nestled under a golden flame Japanese elm (*Zelkova serrata*). The two-day event yielded just over \$1000. Thanks must go to all the members who donated such beautiful books. Those who made a purchase were offered a bookmark featuring the AGHS website address in the hope that it will lead to

increased membership. Many had little knowledge of AGHS and asked how the proceeds would be spent. The open garden weekend was an excellent opportunity to showcase what AGHS does and our goals for the coming year. Now our supplies of books are somewhat depleted we will be seeking more donations to help fill our coffers again! ***Rosie Mackinnon & Jean Elder***

## *Spring garden visits in the South*

**On Sunday October 10, 50 members had a thoroughly enjoyable time visiting three very different gardens in the state's south. Jane Long reports on the visit to High Peak, Tassie-T and Sojourn.**

### **High Peak**

The first garden visited was historic 'High Peak' in Neika on the lower slopes of kunanyi/Mt Wellington. In 1892 Charles Grant built 'High Peak' as a mountain retreat and the extensive gardens were started soon after. Charles Grant's great grandson, Jim Grant and his wife Annabelle, now own 'High Peak' and have nurtured and expanded the wonderful gardens.



***Jim and Annabelle Grant welcoming AGHS to High Peak.***

Some rare species include monkey-puzzle trees (*Araucaria araucana*), native to the Chilean Andes, other araucarias, sequoias, spruce, cedar, cypress and yew. Charles Grant bought many of the conifers from the Royal Tasmanian Botanical Gardens about 130 years ago.

The current owners are expanding the gardens with plantings that focus on Tasmanian natives including a collection of Tasmanian conifers. Members enjoyed exploring the extensive property noting different vistas, planting arrangements and developments.



***Rhododendrons displayed their spring colours among High Peak's tapestry of greens.***



***Formal hedging and ponds delighted visitors. Note the large monkey-puzzle tree (top left).***

### **Tassie-T**

The next visit entailed a short drive to Tassie-T, at Allens Rivulet, Tasmania's only tea plantation. The family business, also known as Dry Ideas and Scientific Horticulture, began as a research project more than 30 years ago led by Dr Gordon Brown for the Department of Agriculture. Tassie-T grows, processes and packages their natural and pesticide-free green and black tea. The tea plant is *Camellia sinensis*, with the original plants sourced from Japan.

A BYO picnic lunch and samples of the Tassie-T tea were enjoyed on the property's lawns, although the weather was not altogether ideal for outdoor eating with a few showers and a smattering of hail!



***Enjoying lunch and the gardens despite rain.***

Following lunch, Gordon related the fascinating history of the site and described the establishment of the tea plants, challenges, expansion and the continually evolving operation of the tea production business. He also described the adaptable methods of harvesting the tea and the different methods of processing.



***Dr Brown amid the rows of tea at Tassie-T describing its cultivation with showing the third version of his tea harvester (shown right).***

## **Sojourn**

The final visit of the day was to 'Sojourn' in Kingston, the delightful garden of Nicole and Stuart Clutterbuck. The blue sky had returned and members enjoyed wandering along the many paths that meander through the large suburban garden packed with plants and art.



***Strolling in the Sojourn garden at Kingston.***

'Sojourn' covers a one-acre block and has developed during 20 years of love and labour by the owners. Heavy mulching has helped combat the naturally sandy soil. Rocks were brought in to create interest and as sculptural elements. Conifers along with rhododendrons, maples and magnolias of amazing variety fill the English-style garden.



***Sojourn in mid spring.***

Nicole and Stuart generously provided afternoon tea and donated all funds raised by our visit to the charity Foodbank of Tasmania.