

BRANCH CUTTINGS



Issue 63/64 – February 2021

This branch is affiliated with the Royal Australian Historical Society & National Trust of Australia (NSW)

AGHS FORTHCOMING EVENTS

FEBRUARY

Date: Wednesday, 24th February 2021, 7pm (You may join the call from 6:45pm onwards for 7pm start)

Event: Graham Quint will speak on The National Trust's 75 years of landscape and heritage conservation

Venue: Digital Webinar via Zoom

Cost: AGHS members \$10, non-members \$15, students \$5

Bookings: [Trybooking](#)



Image © Graham Quint.

MARCH

Date: Sunday, 28th March, 2021, 2:00 – 4:30pm.

Event: Landscape -A guided walk led by James Quoye around the Badangi Natural and Cultural Landscape which includes Berry Island and Wollstonecraft Reserves (AILA AHR nomination)

Venue: Berry Island, Wollstonecraft Reserves and nearby

Cost: AGHS Members \$20, Non-members \$30, Students \$5.

Bookings: details TBA

APRIL

Date: Wednesday, 14th April, 2021

Event: Colin Randall, Archivist of the Naval Historical Society will talk on the gardens of Garden Island including the Naval Garden on the Hill, The Ships Garden and the Lost Gardens, Clarens and Wyldefel.

Venue: Digital Webinar via Zoom

Cost: AGHS members \$10, non-members \$15, students \$5. **Booking** details TBA

SEPTEMBER 2021

2021 Annual National Conference

Date: amended core conference dates **Friday 10, Saturday 11 and Sunday 12 September 2021**

Venue: Luna Park, Milsons Point, Sydney.
Conference dinner on Saturday evening.

Thursday 9 September: optional afternoon walks through the Royal Botanic Gardens. **Pre-registration:** the RBG Rose Garden afterwards.

Monday 13 September: Optional Day will explore the rural area of Camden.

Monday 6 – Wednesday 8 September; and Tuesday 14 -Thursday 16 September: Optional Blue Mountains tours: See AGHS website for details.

<https://www.gardenhistorysociety.org.au/events-conference/2020-annual-national-conference/>

Green Necklace Harbour Cruise on the tall ship "James Craig" under motor not sail.

Date: Thursday 9 September, 10:00am: optional cruise from the Maritime Museum, Darling Harbour.

The Green Necklace Harbour cruise will raise awareness about the landscape heritage of the Sydney Harbour foreshore based on the findings of the 2018 study commissioned by AILA. Its vision is conservation of the series of parks, government institutions and Crown land, open space fragments and remnant bushland around the Harbour.



Journey to the Landscapes of Great Britain: Part 6 – Angela Low

This is the final selection of gardens on our journey through Great Britain in 2018.



Hidcote This garden in the North Cotswolds of Gloucestershire is well known. It features in all the books of great English gardens and was much admired by people such as Vita Sackville-West, Edith Wharton and Russell Page. It was developed by a rich American anglophile, Lawrence Johnston, after he and his mother, Gertrude, bought the property in 1907. It reached its heyday in the 20's and 30's when it was often featured in publications such as *Country Life*. I had long wanted to visit and was familiar with the Arts and Crafts style of the garden arranged as a series of 'garden rooms' each with its own style and rich planting. What came as a surprise was that some of these 'rooms', for instance

the Long Walk seen through one of the paired summerhouses, are peaceful plain areas of just green lawns and hedges, perfectly contrasting with the colours and flowers elsewhere. Roses, peonies, *Astrantia* and Candelabra primroses in the bog garden were all splendid when we were there. Vast beds of flowers are offset against hedges and topiary. The garden is now beautifully maintained by The National Trust.



Osbourne House on the Isle of Wight was the much loved holiday home of Queen Victoria, Prince Albert and all their children. Prince Albert designed the house himself. We visited inside and saw the bedroom where Queen Victoria died in January 1901. From the front long gentle lawns slope down to a private beach where one finds The Queen's bathing machine. We walked back up through the side woods which were full of flowering rhododendron. At the back of the big house is the Swiss cottage Albert had constructed for his children to play 'houses', with its own extensive vegetable garden. The property was presented to the state by King Edward VII on his coronation day and is now managed by English Heritage.





Westonbirt Arboretum, The National Arboretum, is in Gloucestershire near Tetbury. It is an area of 2.4 square kilometres and now has some 18,000 trees and shrubs. It was established in 1829 and first planted during the mid-century heyday of Victorian plant hunting, with specimens from all over the world. There are 27 kilometres of paths and elevated walkways with terrific signage and interpretive posters. I particularly liked the display of timber trees and their uses. One tree, now rare, with wood called Lignum vitae said to be the heaviest and hardest of all, was particularly used for policemen's truncheons. I was photographed in front of an enormous Copper Beech. One of the newest plantings is a Wollemi Pine

This is the last of my 2018 UK Landscapes. Of course there is MUCH more to see, I am already keeping a folder of ideas against the day we may be able to go there again. Any suggestions?

Angela was a member of the Sydney AGHS committee member until recently. She is a biologist who works part time on a voluntary basis at The Australian Museum working behind the scenes on curatorial work with marine Invertebrates.



MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR
Sydney & Northern NSW Branch

Hello and welcome to our first Branch Cuttings newsletter for 2021.

After having recharged our batteries over the holidays, I trust members are ready for an exciting AGHS year. Our branch and conference committees (of which many members overlap!) are busy working on delivering a stimulating talks program and the Sydney AGHS National Conference. As a lead up to the conference, our program of branch events aims to focus on aspects relating to cultural landscapes. While we have some walks planned, due to COVID restrictions, webinars, which have proved so popular and convenient for members will continue as our main branch activity.

Yes webinars are here to stay, but we miss the face to face contact and side chats that only an AGHS convivial branch event (with refreshments!) can offer. We hope one day soon, COVID restrictions permitting, to offer a return to the NTC Annie Wyatt Room at Observatory Hill.

Our 6 December Christmas Party therefore was made special when 60 of us gathered at Eryldene in Gordon to celebrate the Society's 40th Anniversary and farewell retiring members (Tempe Beavan, James Quoye, Angela Low and Gina Plate). This edition of Branch Cuttings features the first of the speeches from the event. A big thank you to Peter Watts, Tempe Beavan, Colleen Morris and Stuart Read for each presenting, on the day, about a decade of the Society's history. It was enthralling to learn about the complexities of the society during these time spans, its challenges and triumphs, through firsthand accounts. For our members who missed the event, and for the archives, our presenters have kindly provided their speeches for Branch Cuttings.

Advocacy remains an important role of the branch. The newsletter contains a section with some updates. If any interested members would like to volunteer for a letter writing sub-committee.

We hope to see you soon for one of our walks or for an online webinar and look forward to continuing conversations about all things AGHS!

Christine Hay

ADVOCACY

We have had a couple of positive outcomes with our advocacy lately.

- **Sorensen's Glasshouse Café** approval by Blue Mountains Council: This will ensure that the glasshouse is retained and maintained.
- A request from Gina Plate that we approach Heritage NSW asking to have digitised the **Camden Park CMP** and other important documents held by Heritage NSW: we received a response that they were recently digitised by the NSW Heritage Library. The library can be viewed at:
<http://heritagensw.intersearch.com.au/>

OF INTEREST

FORUM held 17th February, 2021:

The Greater Sydney Parklands Super Agency: Is Taking the TRUST out of Sydney's Great Public Parklands a Good Idea?

Below are some summary comments and links from a few AGHS members who attended the online event, *The Greater Sydney Parklands Super Agency: Is Taking the TRUST out of Sydney's Great Public Parklands a Good Idea?*, which was co-hosted by Labor Member for Coogee, Marjorie O'Neill MP; with Save Sydney Coalition, Better Planning Network, Keep Sydney Beautiful, Saving Sydney's Trees, Total Environment Centre, Better Planning Network, and Save Sydney's Koalas.

From Roslyn Burge

AGHS Member and Friends of Callan Park:

BACKGROUND TO THE GREATER SYDNEY PARKLANDS

GREATER SYDNEY PARKLANDS is a new superagency announced by Mr Rob Stokes, Minister for Planning and Public Spaces, at Callan Park on 16 July 2020.

GREATER SYDNEY PARKLANDS (**GSP**) is made up gathering together of six great parks and open spaces across the metropolis; Centennial Park, Moore Park, Parramatta Park, Western Sydney Parklands, Fernhill at Mulgoa, and a portion of Callan Park. The Discussion Paper contained no information about governance or board structure across these parklands and the only site which was undefined was the portion of Callan Park's 61 hectares which would be managed by the GSP. Nevertheless public submissions on a GSP Discussion paper (*50 Year Open Space and Parklands Vision*) were invited by 30 September 2020.

<https://www.dpie.nsw.gov.au/premiers-priorities/great-public-spaces/open-space/greater-sydney-parklands>

<https://www.planning.nsw.gov.au/-/media/Files/DPE/Strategy-documents/50-Year-Open-Space-and-Parklands-Vision-2020-08-14.pdf?la=en>

AND FOR CALLAN PARK – THE ADDITION OF THE LANDSCAPE STRUCTURE PLAN

At the same time as announcing the **GSP**, Rob Stokes announced the Landscape Structure Plan (relating solely to Callan Park). In January 2021 the government announced its review of submissions of the Landscape Structure Plan - https://s3-ap-southeast-2.amazonaws.com/mysocialpinpoint.com.au/uploads/redactor_assets/documents/7132/Callan_Park_LSP_FINAL_REPORT_210118_1.pdf

THE FORUM

Unknowns in the **GSP** have raised deep concerns and generated spirited conversations among community groups associated with these individual sites. This led to the public forum held at Parliament House last Wednesday, 17 February – *Is Taking the TRUST out of Sydney's Public Parklands a Good Idea?*

Approximately 300 people registered for the event and despite difficulties with the Parliament House audio system there was a sense of urgency and keenness to hear about the experiences of the different parklands.

Repeated themes for all nine speakers (elected Members of Parliament, a journalist, and individuals representing some of the parks within the GSP, as well as the Sydney Harbour Federation Trust - which is not part of the GSP) were:

- Concerns about the government's lack of communication, transparency and engagement;
- Trusts and what will happen to them: three these great parklands have trusts, some have none (and whilst Callan Park's legislation allows for a trust no government has initiated one in nearly two decades);
- The community is also concerned about the absence of Indigenous, environmental, skilled and local representation on the (now announced) board. The communities of each of these parklands know the sites, know they each have different histories and uses and they remain deeply concerned.

None of this would have been lost on Mr Stokes, who attended the evening and the Q&A afterwards. Mr Stokes deftly recalibrated the Suzette Meade's (North Parramatta Action Group & Willow Grove) comment, "I wish we didn't have to be here this evening" to "I'm glad we are all here tonight", and he hoped that everyone would work together.

That is exactly what the forum achieved - galvanising the strength of these various groups and their intimate knowledge of each site to indeed work together for the best outcomes of each place; to share resources, voices and expertise.

From Susan Stratton

Sydney Committee member:

Generally the speakers were seriously concerned by the proposal as it appears to be set up on the premise that the 'Greater Sydney Parklands', a super agency that combines all the parks [listed above] into one Trust would be 'sustainable' or 'self-sustaining'.

Sustainability is based on the new structure paying for itself by cannibalising the park it is meant to protect. The basis of this argument, put by Wayne Olling, came about due to the current model being applied at Western Sydney Parklands Trust whereby 2% of the land is set aside for 'development' to fund the Trust. This has been a cause for concern as the Parkland gets taken up by the development of land under commercial leases and closed to the general public for use as open space. Several leases mentioned by Wendy Bacon however included a motel, the Sydney Zoo and a BMX track.

Linda Voltz mentioned that Wistaria Gardens which were meant to be transferred to Parramatta Park as part of the deal for Parramatta Stadium rebuild has yet to occur. It raises questions as to the long term care of this heritage item and is there another agenda afoot?

Another point that seemed to resonate with all concerned was the fact that the Trusts that worked in the interest of the Parks rather than 'sustainability' were those with Board members with a background in Parkland and/or Environmental Management. Wendy Bacon highlighted that many of the Trusts which fail the Parks, usually allowing overdevelopment and/or loss of parklands to private interests had backgrounds in business, real estate or economics with the tendency for them to apply commercial business principles to park management. Unfortunately it would seem, principles that rarely consider the environment (endangered species) and health and wellbeing of the people who need the parklands to lead healthy productive lives.

A majority of the following speakers raised concerns regarding their own Parks which many of them have had long running battles to preserve:

SPEAKERS INCLUDED:

Keynote Speaker: **Linda Bergin OAM**, Long-time advocate for Sydney Harbour's heritage parklands. Founding President of the Headland Preservation Group

H.G Nelson from the Even Greater Sydney Planning Committee

Hall Greenland, President, Friends of Callan Park, former Councillor on Leichhardt Council, and writer

Jane Grusovin, Centennial Parklands with statement from Professor Neil Runcie who worked with Jack Munday on the green ban for Centennial Park in the 1970s.

Lisa Harrold, Public Officer, The Friends of Fernhill & the Mulgoa Valley

Suzette Meade, North Parramatta Residents Action Group

Wayne Olling, Blacktown & District Environment Group Inc on Western Sydney Parklands Trust

Wendy Bacon, investigative journalist, researcher and activist

Jamie Parker MP, Greens Member for Balmain

Lynda Voltz MP, Labor Member for Auburn.

From another AGHS member who attended the talk:

'Lots of people, like myself, didn't get proper access, it's understood a recorded version will be available.' 'There was a passionate anti-speech by HG (from Roy + HG).' 'General message was, and Minister Stokes agreed, what's needed is consultation and collaboration to get this right'.

Please find the link to the Video of the Forum on YouTube:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ferqxTl1m1k&feature=youtu.be>

NEW MEMBERS

The Branch would like to extend a warm welcome to the following new Sydney and NSW members:
Mark Asquith, Rosemary Baker, Christopher Bennett, Ros Bennett, Tania, Einberg, Helder Esteves,
Pam Judd, Keith Kerridge, Stephanie Licciardo, Darryl Nagel, Ian Rufus.

AGHS NORTHERN NSW Sub-branch



Like most organisations in 2020, the NNSW branch was sadly lacking in social activities due to the dreaded virus. We managed to enjoy a Christmas party in the rose garden on Saturday 21st November, keeping our distance of course. It was a happy occasion catching up with good friends after such a long time.

Image at left: Lynne Walker

We kicked off this year's activities with a very well attended working bee in the Saumarez Heritage Rose Garden on Saturday 7th February. Both roses and weeds have thrived so it was a busy morning of weeding, dead heading and pruning overhanging branches. We are now fortunate to have the Farmers' Markets at

Saumarez Homestead every second Sunday morning for the next several months. This will mean many visitors to the garden and members will be available to answer questions, offer AGHS membership forms and share some journals. We are hoping for ongoing, positive publicity.

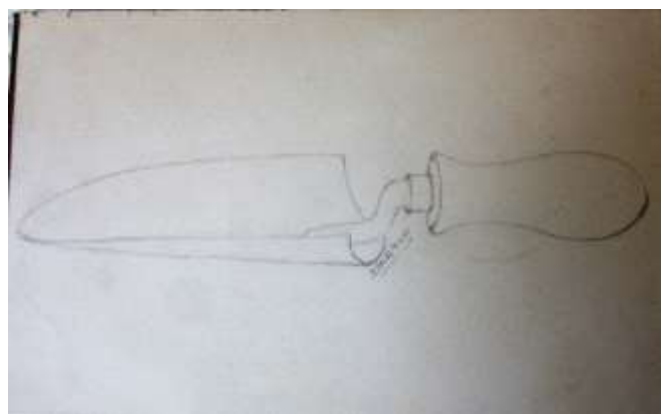
There is a major Arts and Literacy Tour coming through Armidale in the week beginning February 15th based on Judith Wright and Patrick White. Two of our members, Bill Oates and Graham Wilson, have been involved in the organising and will accompany the tourists to major sites including Saumarez Homestead and the rose garden. In April another ASA tour, focussing on gardens and lead by Lynne Walker, will visit the garden. This tour will start in the Hunter Valley visiting significant gardens along the way as far as Tenterfield.



The travelling exhibition, "Blades", will open in Armidale on June 11th at the New England Regional Art Museum. Bill Oates has sourced some excellent local historical images about mowing and presenting lawn but even more wonderful images of a range of garden tools. Our branch is planning an exhibition at Saumarez Homestead next to the old tool shed to complement the travelling exhibition. One example of the images is a trowel sketched by Mary White on 4 August 1899 and found in a Children's drawing book which is part of the National Trust Saumarez Collection. It is an indication that the White children developed an interest in gardening from a young age. This exhibition is being offered as a digital presentation to AGHS Sydney branch.

Helen Wilson

Secretary NNSW Sub Branch



Mary White's sketch 1899

Images: Bill Oates

40th ANNIVERSARY AND CHRISTMAS PARTY AT ERYLDENE



Image: Christine Hay

At the 40th Anniversary celebration at Eryldene on 6th December AGHS members were treated to entertaining, interesting and amusing anecdotes of AGHS history by some of the Sydney Branch's past chairs, Peter Watts, Tempe Beaven, Colleen Morris, and Stuart Read. Our speakers have generously shared the text of their talks. The text of the first of the talks is included in this issue of Branch Cuttings. The other talks will be included in future issues.

Four members, James Quoye, Tempe Beaven, Gina Plate and Angela Low, retired from the Sydney committee after many years of much appreciated hard work for the branch. A delicious high tea was enjoyed on the old tennis court while still complying with COVID-safe regulations. The event was superbly organised by Angela Low with much appreciated assistance with food, flowers, set-up, and loans of pretty china from not only the committee and families but a big team of other members. The *Smokin' Hombres* generously provided a delightful accompaniment.

Peter Watts

Good afternoon everyone and thank you for the opportunity to reflect on the first 10 years of the Society.

Steve's Welcome to Country reminds me just how far we have come as a Society. It is inconceivable that such a Welcome would have happened 40 years ago and it's wonderful to see.



In that spirit I share the Acknowledgement of Country.

I wrote about the early history of the AGHS in Branch Cuttings earlier this year – so I will not repeat that.

Rather, I will give you a few personal connections and thoughts about those early years.

The AGHS came about from a small group of people who were conducting surveys of historic gardens in each state in the mid to late 1970s. The primary task of those studies was to identify gardens of historic significance. I was responsible for the study in Victoria. In NSW it was

undertaken by James Broadbent with support from Chris Betteridge – and included Eryldene as one of the 40 most important historic gardens in NSW.

We need to remember that 40 years ago there was almost no interest in, or knowledge about, Australia's historic gardens and there were certainly no lists of these special places.

The National Trust's lists were largely interested in buildings though there was the beginnings of the identification and listing of important cultural landscapes, mostly by the National Trusts, but also by the emerging statutory authorities such as the State Heritage Councils and the Australian Heritage Commission.

It's fair to say that those undertaking these garden surveys were astonished by what we found. It's embarrassing to think how amateurish we were in those days. However our lack of knowledge was more than made up for by our enthusiasm to find out more and to work for the recognition and conservation of what we had found.

So one of the primary tasks of the AGHS following its formation in 1980 was to get the members out and look – and share what we had found – to be inspired to work towards their conservation and to act as their advocates. Hence tours and conferences were really important in those early years.

I like to think we established the AGHS with some really good principles – enshrined in the Constitution and also in the management practices we developed in those early years. Amongst these were:

- We did not want to be a garden club. We had a broader agenda and wanted to see gardens in a wide cultural context – through the lens of history, design, philosophy, landscape, art, science, research and scholarship – and also practical gardening. There was a push in those early days to change the name and the direction to include the words ‘horticulture’ and I am very pleased we resisted it.
- We wanted to be truly national – so we had a State chapter structure with representatives on our National Management Committee from each state. By the end of our first decade there was a chapter in each state and 2,500 members.
- Our National Management Committee had limited tenure ensuring regular turnover of new voices. This kept the organisation fresh and brought new expertise and new perspectives.
- We were committed to good financial management and good administrative practices – and though we were financially precarious in those early years we had the great benefit that our first Chair, Dame Elisabeth Murdoch was ferocious about good governance and good financial management - and very generous - though she demanded outcomes. Howard Tanner and Jocelyn Mitchell who followed as second and third Chair respectively were equally keen that we have solid foundations.
- We saw the benefits of an annual conference and insisted this rotate around the states – so we could get out and about and see as many historic gardens as we could – and also provided opportunities for learning, discussion and debate. In that first decade conferences were held in Melbourne, Hobart, Adelaide, Albury, Ballarat, Mount Victoria, Bowral and Toowoomba.
- We wanted to let owners know that their gardens were important and appreciated and there was a group of people who understood and respected their efforts to manage these special places. This happened during visits and, I think, was one of the most important aspects of the early AGHS. At the same time our members learned what amazing treasures were to be found behind the hedges and the gates and down long country driveways. And owners were able to connect with other owners and share experiences and also meet members with particular expertise which was of benefit to them – in practical advice, design, funding, navigating the bureaucracy, botany etc.
- And we were convinced we needed a journal of some sort so we could publish and disseminate information and encourage research and scholarship. It had a very modest beginning and went through a few iterations in the first 9 years before it became Australian Garden History in 1989 – albeit just black and white in its first year.

One of the things I learned in those early days is that gardeners – and I include arm-chair gardeners – are the very best of people. This is exemplified by five exceptional women who did so much for the AGHS in those early years: The first four are no longer with us but – on an occasion like this – it’s important to acknowledge them.

- Dame Elisabeth Murdoch, our first Chair, would lean over to me at a meeting (I was the Society’s Secretary) after we had discussed some program or another and whisper “Just tell me how much it will cost”. A few days later a cheque would arrive with a request that there be no acknowledgement of the gift. It was both very generous and very strategic. She knew exactly what program needed supporting to get the AGHS established on a firm footing.
- Margaret Darling – who was equally and extraordinarily generous with her time, knowledge and financial contributions in those developing years and who became Chair for much of the next decade.
- Joan Law Smith – who took an early interest in the Society – and later bequeathed the Society her recent book – *Kindred Spirits* - which led to the creation of the Kindred Spirits Fund.
- Alethea Russell – who was on the National Management Committee for the first nine years of the society and was also our Membership Secretary. It was in the days before computers and she juggled that massive growth in membership with a card index system she brought to every meeting that was as mind boggling in its size as it was in the efficiency with which she managed it.
- Jocelyn Mitchell who – in a sense – and largely behind closed doors – saved the AGHS. In that first decade – and Jocelyn was Chair for 5 years of it, the society became entangled with a private company managing its newsletter. Jocelyn extracted us from that arrangements in very difficult circumstances and we owe her a huge debt of gratitude for that.

All five were brilliant gardeners – owning between them such iconic places as Cruden Farm, Woomargama, Bolobek and Mawallok. They were also the most wonderful people – warm but business-like, generous, knowledgeable, exceptionally hard workers, great people skills and all outstanding leaders.

I have a special affection for the AGHS for many reasons – not least of which is because:

- It was conceived on my honeymoon! Let me explain. I was married on 31 March 1979 and three days later, at the beginning of our honeymoon in Tasmania, I abandoned my new wife in Tasmania to attend a two day meeting in Hobart of those undertaking the garden studies around the country. It was at this meeting that the idea of an AGHS was suggested by the late Phyl Symonds who was doing the Tasmanian study. Afterwards I resumed my honeymoon!
- Precisely one year later, in the ballroom of the very grand National Trust mansion, Illawarra, in Melbourne – where our wedding reception had been held – and on the very spot where Jo and I had performed an awkward bridal waltz – the First Garden History conference took place at the conclusion of which the AGHS was formally born!

It gives me enormous pleasure, and pride, to see the extraordinary growth in the programs of the AGHS – and the many contributions it makes – and interests it has – in advocacy, financial support for a whole variety of projects, scholarly research and publication, working bees, exhibitions, grants, First Nations cultures and their deep connection to landscape, contemporary gardens, environmental concerns, water conservation, place making and much, much more. I think it's beyond what we could ever have dreamt of in those early years when we struggled to stay afloat.

But in all of this the Society has remained true to its original objectives – most especially in combining the intellectual with the practical. In many ways it is an exemplary organisation. In this new world order we seem to live in – where personal vanity and gain, ideology, and instant gratification seem to dominate – it's always wonderful to come back to the AGHS which remains so committed to its cause, interested in, and fostering values of community, support, history, learning, beauty and nature.

As the Paul Kelly and Kev Carmody song goes – From Little Things Big Things Grow.

Thank you and happy 40th to the AGHS.



Images: Anne Smith



OTHER EVENTS OF INTEREST

Sydney Living Museums –Museum of Sydney

Until 18 April 2021: *Paradise on Earth* - a celebration of the career and legacy of Marion Mahony Griffin
<https://sydneylivingmuseums.com.au/exhibitions/paradise-earth>

National Trust

<https://www.nationaltrust.org.au/75years/>

See National Trust website for details: <https://www.nationaltrust.org.au/whats-on-nsw/>

Retford Park, 1325 Old South Road, Bowral

Next open day is **Saturday 6 and Sunday 7 March, 10am - 4pm** with timed entry tickets, due to COVID-19 regulations. Visitors are advised to pre-book tickets in advance.

Kew

Botany, Trade and Empire conference –exploring Kew's Miscellaneous Reports Collection

2-4 March, 3 days online worldwide

FREE

Kew's Miscellaneous Reports Collection is a major resource relating to colonial and global networks of economic botany and scientific activity between 1850-1928.



Bookings: <https://www.kew.org/science/engage/get-involved/conferences/botany-trade-empire>

Newsletter collated and edited by Anne Smith. Contact Anne on smith777@bigpond.net.au