

BRANCH CUTTINGS



Issue 73 – Feb 2024

This branch is affiliated with the Royal Australian Historical Society & National Trust of Australia (NSW)
We acknowledge and pay respects to the traditional owners and custodians on whose land we walk, work & live.

AGHS FORTHCOMING EVENTS

FEBRUARY

Date: Saturday, 10th February, 2024. 10:30am - 3:45pm.

Event: Self-drive tour of Hawkesbury Richmond including Durham Bowes homestead and St Peter's Anglican Church.

Cost: AGHS Members \$20, Non-members \$30, Students \$5 includes light afternoon tea. BYO lunch. Bookings essential.

Venue: Meet at 22 Inalls Lane, Richmond (off Castlereagh Rd), parking in Drift Road or Victoria Place.

Bookings: www.trybooking.com/COMHD



Image: Wikipedia

MARCH

Date: Sunday, 10th March, 2024 at 10:30am.

Event: Walking Tour of Oatley Park led by members of the Oatley Flora and Fauna Conservation Society following a talk by a local historian.

Venue: Oatley Park, starting and finishing at The Castle.

Cost: AGHS Members \$20, Non-members \$30, Students \$5 includes light refreshments. Bookings essential.

Bookings: www.trybooking.com/CPCII



Further Details:

Following the walk we will provide light refreshments.

An area of 47 hectares was dedicated for Public Recreation in the NSW Government Gazette on 25th March 1887. Oatley Park protects important examples of the natural environment which occurred throughout the area before the spread of suburbs. During the Great Depression (1929-1933) significant changes were made to the park. Roads were constructed by men on the Unemployment Relief Scheme. Paths and lookouts were constructed as well as the castellated kiosk known as The Castle.

NEW MEMBERS

The Branch would like to extend a warm welcome to the following new local members: Margaret and Darrel Causbrook, Friends of Callan Park, Warwick and Jan Davis, John and Chay Kaleski, Kay Anoni and Todd Trenerry

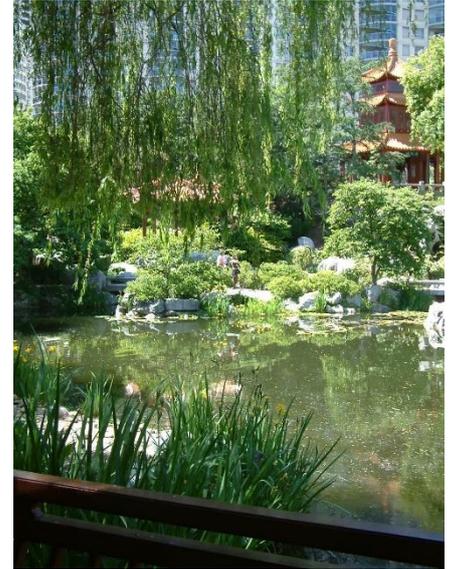
The Chinese Gardens of Friendship, Darling Harbour

Stuart Read

The Sydney Branch of AGHS is organising a visit to these gardens this July. And I'll be giving AGHS a talk on Chinese garden- and landscape-making in June. So as a 'warm up'...

Perhaps taken for granted and not as celebrated as it ought to be, **this** place is listed on the NSW state heritage register as an outstanding exemplar of a community-based overseas Chinese garden – the kind found in Australasia, North America, and Europe, from the late 20th and early 21st centuries. It was the first Southern or Cantonese style garden in New South Wales. The first such garden in the Southern hemisphere. And the second in an English-language settler society, after Vancouver.

Its creation was cooperatively managed between Sydney's Chinese communities and public authorities in NSW and in Guangdong, SE China. It symbolizes the welcoming of Australian-Chinese communities into NSW and Australian society. It does so showing successful collaboration of Cantonese and Sydney designers, technicians and tradespeople and the transfer of traditional skills and techniques. Cross-cultural exchange, intended to be enjoyed by the whole community.



Closer examination reveals much: the garden shows living traditions of over 1000 years of formal garden design and making in China. And long continuities – particularly of Southern, formal garden design and horticultural practices. Its penjing ('landscapes in a tray', bonsai, in Japan) collection of miniature landscapes, grown in Sydney, use Australian as well as Chinese plant species.

The overall philosophy is to recreate (Chinese) nature within the limits of an urban environment, albeit by applying artifice and every skill humans can contribute in building, arranging, planting...

Concepts and spiritual metaphors apply here: such as 'qi / chi' (life force/energy flow), 'fengshui' (winds & waters / currents of the cosmic breath) and 'yin-yang' (the idea that qi has a passive and an active side). They influence arrangements of elements, orientation, and layout.



Its architectural elements of pavilions, walled 'rooms' and covered walkways is cross-cultural – geometric timber tracery screens and open sided pavilions are copied from historic Sydney models as conscious expression of 'Chinoiserie'.

Choices of plants are inspired by traditional Chinese gardens and symbolism associated with them, e.g.: from the Song / Yuan dynasties, 'three friends of the cold season' (pine, bamboo, and flowering plum) or the Yuan's 'four gentlemen of flowers': plum, orchid, chrysanthemum, and bamboo.



Henry Tsang OAM, a leading figure in Sydney's Chinese community, Councilor on Sydney City Council 1991-99, and MLC 1999-2009, was important, advocating for this since the 1970s. At that time, overseas Chinese gardens were established in Hong Kong and Singapore. In the early 1980s, the grounds of Sydney's two oldest Chinese temples (*Tze Yup*, in Glebe) and *You Ming*, in Alexandria) were embellished with new boundary walls and pailou (formal gates). British Columbia, Canada's Chinese community succeeded in having a Chinese garden established in Vancouver, opened 1982.

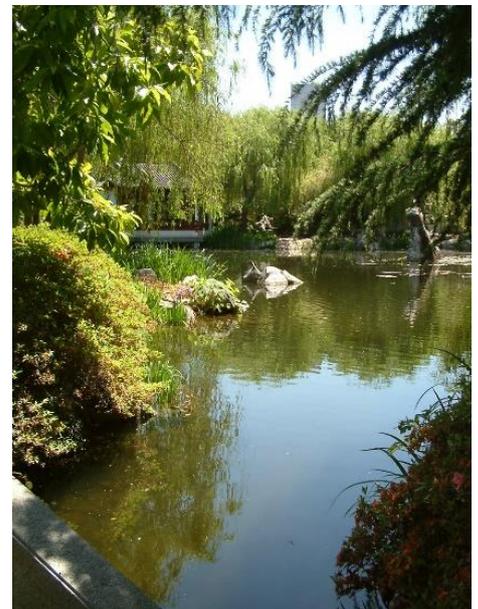
At least sixteen Chinese gardens have been built around the world outside China after this one. It is a comparatively rare, and early example of its type, and the earliest south of the Equator.

With the announcement in 1984 that Darling Harbour would be redeveloped for Australia's Bicentenary, the Chinese community lobbied the government for a garden here. Tsang approached Premier Neville Wran to allocate land for this, to celebrate the role of these communities in developing Australia's commercial and social structures since the early 19th century.

Tsang and the Chinese community helped facilitate an intergovernmental relationship between Guangdong Province and NSW, to co-fund, design and construct the garden. The agreement stipulated Guangdong would provide the design and key materials, furniture, and artworks intrinsic to the classic garden type, and NSW would manage and fund construction via the Darling Harbour Authority. The relationship between Sydney and Guangzhou (fmr. Canton, capital of Guangdong Province) has long been strong due to trade and migration since NSW's earliest colonial days.

Constructed and planted from 1986 to 1988 during Australia's Bicentennial celebrations, the garden was in fact the culmination of years of lobbying by Sydney's Chinese communities. Its design and construction were done jointly by Guangzhou Garden Planning & Design Institute and the Darling Harbour Authority (latterly Place Management NSW).

Its design is an expression of a private stroll garden, sometimes described as a scholar's or classical garden. Garden typologies created over the last 1000 years from the Qin (Chin) to the Song dynasties (221BC – 1269) demonstrate many historical, regional, and philosophical variations. Cold northern gardens favour deciduous plant species and an urban character, while warmer temperate southern gardens are marked by lush sub-tropical plantings. Generally, private gardens are places of retreat and reflection, poetry, art, calligraphy, and horticulture. Urban oases if you like. Principles of auspicious positioning and orientation to channel positive qi (energy) through the garden, provide a preferred large, central water body to capture positive energy, otherwise expressed as wealth and prosperity. Placement of landforms to block unfavourable weather while opening the garden to the sun's positive movement. 17 pavilions are placed around the water body to allow reflection and disseminate its positive qi and establish key visual links between the host and guest pavilions and landscape. A 2004 fengshui assessment of the garden considered it as a reflection of these design principles and embodiment of the five elemental relationships between water, air, earth, wood, and steel.



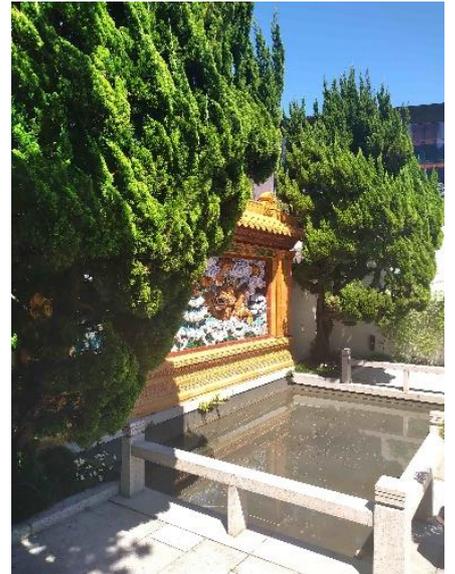
It wasn't easy to build – converting the initial Cantonese concept drawings into Australian-style construction plans; sourcing local tradespeople with skills to build very unusual construction methodologies, sourcing suitable local materials, importing special materials (artworks, furniture, tiles, feature rocks) and politics of the Chinese working on site within strict union rules of the era. Water bodies including lake, pond and brooks are built with concrete base liner. Waterfall rockwork is sprayed concrete over a wire formwork, like those in artificial grottoes in animal enclosures in Taronga Zoo. Water is recycled, filtered and U-V treated, similarly to a public fountain system.

All general landscape rock is water-weathered fossiliferous limestone, from an ancient river bed, excavated from Cumnock Station, Cabonne Shire, NSW. In China, similarly water-worn rock was very highly prized in gardens, often coming from Lake Tai. This represents a local variant of material on a traditional pattern of use. Ying rocks in the Courtyard of Welcoming Fragrance, the sculptured mountain and stairs to the Tea House are from

Yinde, China. Taihui rock in the garden of the Hall of Longevity is a rare, weathered limestone from Lake Tai, China, and Wax rock in the hall's courtyard is a rare river-moulded rock – both being gifts from Guangdong. Stone bridges are from Guangdong.

The Dragon Wall is a double-sided, free-standing screen of glazed terracotta from China, commissioned specifically and a gift of Guangdong. It depicts a blue dragon for NSW and a brown for China, both in search of the pearl of wisdom. Its design is based on the 'nine dragon walls' in Datong, Shangxi. It was made by Shiran Glazed Pottery in 943 pieces and built on site by potters from China.

Pavilion roof tiles and grey bricks are from Guangdong. Grey floor tiles and ceramic door, window reveals and grills are from Shanghai. Granite column bases, margins, cladding, handrails, paving, and door frames are from Fujian. Geometric timber tracery and other structural elements are from NSW.



All paving including pebble mosaics are supplied and laid by NSW contractors in patterns both decorative and suggestive of a natural stone screen found along edges of lakes and rivers.

The plantings have evolved much since 1988's opening. Over-planted initially, anticipating losses, it has seen plants removed and others introduced, responding to climatic and social changes, and to plants' varied life cycles. All plants were sourced in NSW, including native and exotic species. Some outgrew their spot or intended dimension, blocking qi, or obscuring core principles or visual connections or spatial balance. A 'form and function' role applies to all plants in the garden.

Two lychee trees (*Litchi chinensis*) were planted by visitor governors of Guangdong in 2009 and 2015. This is one of the 'four great fruits of Lingnam' (south of the mountains: Guangdong Province's location, south of the Yangtze

River Valley's five ranges). I well recall a large, transplanted Japanese maple (*Acer palmatum*) 'wrapped' in shadecloth atop one hill for some 2-3 years, acclimatizing here.

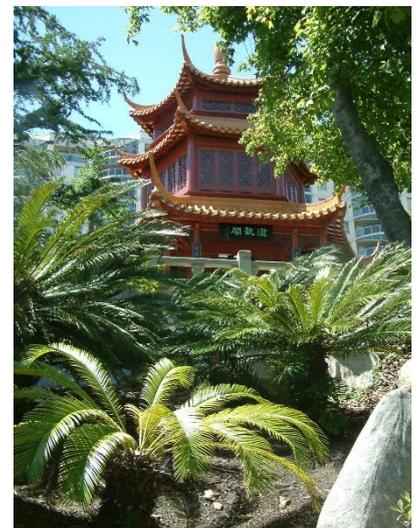
The Chinese Garden of Friendship (CGOF) was listed on the NSW state heritage register in 2018. A property specific CGOF Advisory Committee was established in 2017 to give independent, expert advice to Place Management NSW on long-term planning and management of the garden.

Helping manage its diverse character areas are a 2012-15 Horticulture Major Maintenance Plan and 2012 Interpretation Strategy are most useful. These were developed by landscape Peter Nowland (Sydney Harbour Foreshore Authority), informed by a 2019 conservation management plan by GML Heritage, with Julian Siu and team and Context Landscape P/L, with Oi Choong and Christof Kaufman.

It is welcome to find 'garden-design' and 'character-specific' guidance to current and future managers and gardeners. With a strong focus on garden philosophy, design principles, intended character areas, qi flow, visual and view-related advice as well as the more horticultural.

And hard today to imagine the 1850s more 'natural' shoreline, buildings such as slaughter houses, saw mills, or later timber stores, boiler and engine houses, goods sheds railway tracks on the site...

AGHS Sydney Branch will host a talk of mine on Chinese garden- and landscape-making in Australia, in June and we'll visit the Chinese Gardens of Friendship in July. We hope you will join us for both.



Stuart was co-chair of AGHS and is a landscape architect, heritage bureaucrat and educator.

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

Sydney Branch

Hello Everyone,
I hope that the New Year has been treating you well.

The humid weather here has certainly made gardening uncomfortable over the last couple of months but at the moment we are particularly enjoying our ivory curl tree which is delighting the bees and lighting up our backyard with its spectacular blossom.

It was great to catch up with a lot of members at our Christmas party in Warrawee at the beautiful garden of John and Chay Kaleski. An added bonus at the party was a brief address and garden tour by well-known landscaper Myles Baldwin. Myles renovated the garden not so long ago.

Our next AGHS event in Richmond including historic Durham Bowes and St Peter's Church should be very interesting and will better inform us about the planned road and bridge proposals beside Durham Bowes and across the Richmond Lowlands. I look forward to seeing some of you there and then in March at Oatley Park in that significant bushland site.

Many AGHS members are concerned about the impact of the Government's new housing policy on significant historic places including those which one would have thought would be protected by State Heritage listings. Eryldene at Gordon is one such property. Our Committee is working on a submission about this.

Sadly Jeanne Villani died last week. A stalwart of Garden History, Jeanne was, for many years, on the Sydney Committee and edited the newsletter, Branch Cuttings. I first met Jeanne when I was the Regional Co-ordinator for the Australian Open Gardens Scheme and she was generously opening her magical garden, Waterfall Cottage, at Bayview four times a year. She was one of the first Sydney gardens to open with AOGS. During the openings she also invited visitors into her gorgeous sandstone gothic-style house. Her mornings teas were almost as legendary as her garden. She also served on the Sydney Committee of Open Gardens Australia (previously AOGS). When Jeanne downsized to the Southern Highlands to another beautiful gothic style house she managed the renovation of the lovely garden there, and once again invited visitors to share the space inside the house when the garden was open in aid of the SH Botanic Gardens. There will be a memorial service at the Southern Highlands Botanic Gardens on 3rd March.

I will be away overseas in May and June with Graham looking forward to enjoying some historic gardens, villages and woodland/country walks in England and France as well as catching up with friends. Steve Halliday and the rest of our very capable committee will keep the Sydney AGHS program going.

Anne Smith

Chair (Ph: 0418 961 943 or email: smith777@bigpond.net.au)



RECENT EVENTS

CHRISTMAS PARTY

Members and friends enjoyed the AGHS Sydney Branch Christmas party in the beautiful garden of John and Chay Kaleski at Warrawee. Myles Baldwin, who renovated the garden several years ago gave a brief talk and led a tour of the garden. The chooks, released from their palace beside the vegetable garden, entertained the guests. Angela Low once again excelled with the ham and the rest of the committee plus other generous members, Prue Anthony, Sarah Lucas and Christine Hay, brought delicious salads and nibbles.

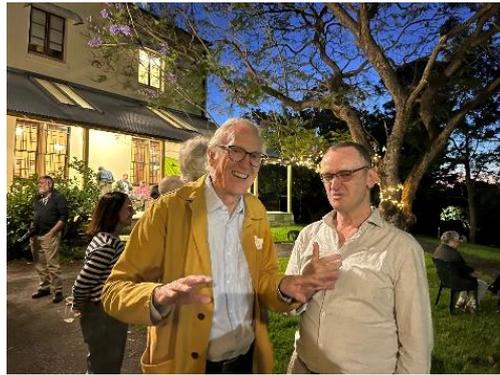




(Images: Anne Smith)

OF INTEREST CALLAN PARK

In December Callan Park celebrated 25 years of the Friends of Callan Park with a celebration at the Writers' Centre after their AGM. Anne Smith represented AGHS. However, other members were also present in different capacities. The Friends appreciate the support AGHS has given over the years.



(Images: Anne and Graham Smith)

BADANGI

In December the listing of Badangi on the State Heritage register was celebrated. There were speeches by politicians and by James Quoye, Collen Morris and Christine Hay who did the Australian Institute of Landscape Architects Landscape Heritage Report. The proceedings finished with a guided walk around the beautiful natural landscape of Berry Island. The listing covers the foreshore parklands and reserves around Greenwich and Wollstonecraft. Several other AGHS members also attended the celebration.



VALE

Bruce Mackenzie AM. Bruce Mackenzie who was instrumental in establishing the Australian Institute of Landscape Architects is noted for his work on significant landscape projects including Sydney Harbour parks Illoura Reserve (Peacock Point), Balmain and Yurulbin Reserve (Long Nose Point), Birchgrove, Sir Joseph Banks Reserve, Botany Bay and Ku-ring-gai and Glebe Bicentennial Parks. He was known for using natural materials and native plants. See the link for some reflections on Bruce Mackenzie.

<https://landscapeaustralia.com/articles/reflecting-on-bruce-mackenzies-contributions-to-the-built-environment-community/>

Jeanne Villani OAM

Farewell, Jeanne Lilian Villani (1934 – 2024)

AGHS members may be saddened to learn that Jeanne Villani died on 2 February 2024. Aged 90, it was a fine run (if challenging last years) for a Hastings girl that might have been bombed to death in the London Blitz, but for being 'shipped to the country'. Daughter of a nurseryman and florist, her background was modest, but perhaps spawned a love of nature and gardens. Working for Australian dentists in Kensington in 1955, she accepted an offhand offer of moving to Australia. To, as it transpired, Goulburn. Far from Kensington! She soon moved to Sydney, seeking brighter lights, fun and action. With forays into 1950s Surfers' Paradise as a 'nanny'... Shared digs in Kings Cross' *Yellow House* and others meant being part of its night life, and contacts through work led her to meet Matt Villani, commercial artist. 'He had a car' and she needed to move ... They moved in together,

in 1958. While there was no 1960 honeymoon, Jeanne and Matt would ship their Holden station wagon to Africa in 1961 and toured South and East Africa, en route to Italy and England. Matt's paintings of giraffes, elephants and African landscapes became loved mementos.

Together in life and business, they moved into advertising, as an artwork design company. Along with other commercial exploits: ever-conscious of (a past lack of) and good with money, organisation and books, Jeanne's focus ensured they prospered... Sydney's first 24-hour restaurant, *Pancakes at The Rocks*, later at Taylor Square and others like *City Extra* (Parramatta, 1984 – 2016 and at Circular Quay, 1987- 2016) and *Rossini at the Quay* – 2013) 'made pots of money'.

Much of which Jeanne sank into gardening once she found *Waterfall Cottage* at Bayview. Sounding 'too good to be true' or 'excellent advertising copy', she found the site amazing, and with a friend, bought it in 1982. A modest fibro cottage and a jungle with little garden, its dramatic sandstone canyon site, with, when it rains, thundering waterfall, was hard to resist. Working bees with friends peeled away reams of lantana and discovered traces of an older garden. Other chums and helpers built bridges, paths, steps, making the site easier to navigate.

Joining *Katandra Bush Sanctuary* at Ingleside, Jeanne helped fundraise for it, by opening her less jungly, still shaggy garden. She would do the same with the nascent *Australian Open Garden Scheme*, being the first garden to open in Sydney, and on its organising committee (active 1987 – 2015) and Jeanne recalled, with rancour, 'sacked by fax' from Melbourne. Opening *Waterfall Cottage* helped fund its development, despite the slog, and challenges. Ever generous, Jeanne opened her house, too, saying 'it's not worth having something, if you don't share it'. And 'I like to show off'.

Discovering AGHS and joining it in 2002, Jeanne would be on its Sydney Branch committee and edited its newsletter, *Branch Cuttings*, from 2003 – '17. She often organised catering for its events and was generous with visits by the branch (& others), including many a Christmas party. This included AGHS's 25th national conference in Sydney's tour visit. Jeanne (& I) collated and edited the conference booklet, *Browned Off: Old Gardens in a New World*.

At her request, I prepared a local heritage listing of *Waterfall Cottage* and garden, which despite dragging out for 8 years, Pittwater Council heritage-listed in 2014. That year too, she commissioned an oral history, by historian Roslyn Burge *Jeanne Villani – Waterfall Cottage – an oral history of a garden*, based on 2013 and 2014 interviews Roslyn did, one, with my 'help'.

Long fond of Opera and food, Jeanne was a very involved member of Opera Australia, helping with fundraising events and catering, in particular. She was a member of the Wine & Food Society, which sounded like an enormously enjoyable bunch of people and string of 'endless lunch' type events. She relished guest chef cooking class evenings, at *Accoutrement*, in Mosman, among other such.

Jeanne sold *Waterfall Cottage* in 2017 (to her gastroenterologist: a gardener), buying *Highdown* on Notts Hill, west of Bowral. A prize-winning garden under (re-)creator May Crago with help from friend Claude Crowe from the 1950s-90s, it was neglected, but has a Gothic Revival style cottage with later extensions and modern kitchen. Jeanne set about reviving the garden, 'to something May would be pleased with', with design and plant input from Chris and Charlotte Webb, gifts, and ideas from friends, including photos and records from the Crago family, who kept calling... AGHS Southern Highlands branch enjoyed its 2019 Christmas party there. Again, she was generous in opening the garden to interested groups and people, enjoying the company and like-minded souls.

Never one to sit idle, Jeanne busied herself with editing the newsletter of the *Southern Highlands Botanic Garden*, *Operculum* (2018-19), (with Jenny Simon) sorting and selling seeds to fundraise for it, and with Jenny, indexing *High Life* magazine (2018-20) to note every garden mentioned or profiled in it, and relevant people. This will be a useful research and advice tool into the future. A complete set of *High Life* magazines was amassed, to be donated to a suitable archive.



Friends nominated Jeanne for an OAM which she received in its 2018 list, for service to the preservation of heritage gardens, via AOGS, AGHS and the *Katandra Bush Sanctuary*.

As at Bayview, Jeanne asked me to prepare a local heritage listing nomination of *Highdown*, which went to Wingecarribee Shire Council, who, although being in administration, had listed it by 2021.

Much as she hated talking about health, doctors, hospitals, Jeanne might have died in 1981, when she was diagnosed with melanoma and had an eye removed. Various searching for cures included faith healers in the Philippines. A determination to survive, even thrive, meant she lived a long, rich life – well beyond various specialists' forecasts of doom. Perhaps to spite them all?

A woman of fierce determination, perhaps due to running businesses in many male domains for so long, Jeanne had strong views and high standards, often ruffling feathers. But she grabbed life and lived it vividly – sharing much, generously. Many would feel grateful to have known her.

Stuart Read

Image: Adam Yip, Daily Telegraph

A memorial service will be held around 3rd March at Southern Highlands Botanic Gardens. To be confirmed.

For more information contact admin@shbg.com.au

ADVOCACY

See the advocacy pages on the AGHS Website.

https://www.gardenhistorysociety.org.au/garden-history-now/#filter=.iso_4

As a reminder, any advocacy requests to the Sydney Branch should be accompanied by an outline of succinct points about the required support.

Eryldene

A submission is being prepared by the Sydney AGHS committee on the impact of the new State Government housing policy changes, the Transport Oriented Development (TOD), on Eryldene at Gordon and other significant historic places. Submissions close on 23rd February.

OTHER EVENTS OF INTEREST

Royal Botanic Gardens

<https://www.rbgsyd.nsw.gov.au/what-s-on>

Guided walks led by volunteer guides -daily 10:00 AM daily

Growing Friends Plant Sales: Monday - Friday 11am-2pm, Saturday 10am-2pm.

National Trust

See National Trust website for details of properties including the ones below:

<https://www.nationaltrust.org.au/whats-on-nsw/>

Experiment Farm Cottage 9 Ruse Street, Harris Park -open first and third Friday and Saturday of each month, 10.30am – 3.30pm. Entry Fees: National Trust members - FREE, Adults - \$12, Concession/child >5yrs- \$10, Family- \$34

It is part of an historical Parramatta precinct which includes Hambleton Cottage (1824), Elizabeth Farm (1793) and the Queen's Wharf, all within easy walking distance of each other.

Everglades House & Garden, 37 Everglades Avenue, Leura –open Wednesday to Monday, 10am – 4pm.

Entry Fees: National Trust members – FREE, Adults - \$17, Concession - \$15, Family- \$49

Eryldene Historic House & Garden

17 McIntosh Street, Gordon

TWILIGHT JAZZ on the lawn court

Date: Sunday, 17 March 2024 from 3:00 pm to 7:00 pm

<https://www.eryldene.org.au/>
