

BRANCH CUTTINGS



Issue 79 – March 2026

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 Sydney UPCOMING EVENTS

March

Chinese Garden of Friendship – guided tour by Oi Choong and Julian Siu

Date: Saturday 14 March 2026, 10:30am start
Venue: Chinese Garden of Friendship, Pier Street, cnr Harbour Street, Darling Harbour.
Cost: AGHS members \$25, non-members \$35, students \$15

A guided tour of the Chinese Garden of Friendship led by Oi Choong and Julian Siu, who prepared the recent conservation management plan for the Garden. Oi Choong is a distinguished Sydney based landscape architect with extensive local and international experience in public domain and heritage landscapes. Julian Siu is a well-regarded heritage specialist, a member of the Heritage Council of NSW and is a member of the Chinese Garden of Friendship Advisory Committee.



Image: Stuart Read

In Memory of Gilbert Robertson Teague

31 May 1943 – 12 February 2026

We are saddened to hear the news of the passing of member Gil Teague, who many will remember as the proprietor of the Florilegium bookshop in Glebe. Gil's family warmly invite Sydney AGHA members to join them in an event to honour and celebrate his life.

Date: Friday, 27 March 2026, 4:00pm
Location: Petersham Bowling Club

RSVP by Monday, 16 March 2026
mmjteague@gmail.com

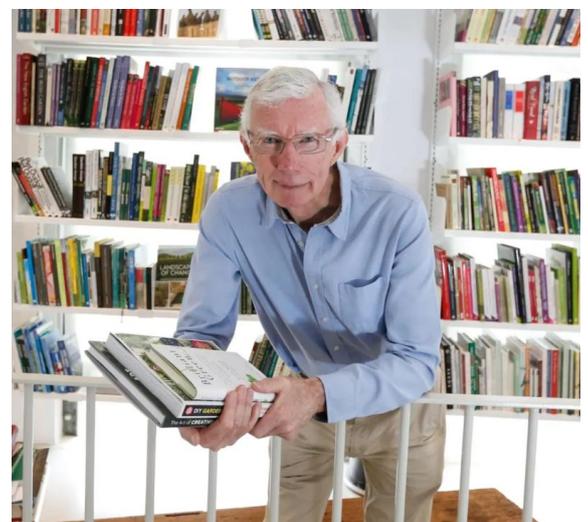


Image: Peter Rae

April

Gardening Notes from the Archive at Eryldene

Date: Wednesday 22 April 2026, 6pm refreshments;
7:30pm talk

Venue: National Trust Centre, Observatory Hill, Sydney

Cost: AGHS members \$20, non-members \$30, students \$5

Penelope Holden OAM gives an illustrated talk on riches from the archive at Eryldene, not least the gardening notes of 'The Prof.' (E.G. Waterhouse).



Image: Christina Kanellaki Lowe

May/June/July

Following the interest in Bruce MacKenzie after our recent harbourside excursions to the Green Necklace reserves, plans are being hatched to collaborate with a major state cultural institution to allow members to peek into archival material on some of the pioneers of the Sydney "Bush School" of landscape architecture. There's also talk of rolling this momentum into a series of themed excursions later in the year exploring significant coastal parklands - both north and south – not previously visited by the Society.

Details to follow, watch this space.

Other Events of Interest

Botanic Gardens of Sydney

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

Guided walks led by volunteer guides 10:30am-12:00pm daily.

Growing Friends plant sales: Sydney: Monday to Friday 11:00am-2:00pm, weekends 10:00am-2:00pm

Mount Tomah: 9:00am-5:30pm, Mount Annan: 9:30am-4:00pm

National Trust of Australia (NSW)

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

Experiment Farm Cottage is part of a historical precinct of Parramatta which includes **Hambleton Cottage** (1824), **Elizabeth Farm** (1793) and the **Queen's Wharf**. All three properties are 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

A Beautiful Walled Garden: Greys Court, England *Anne Smith*

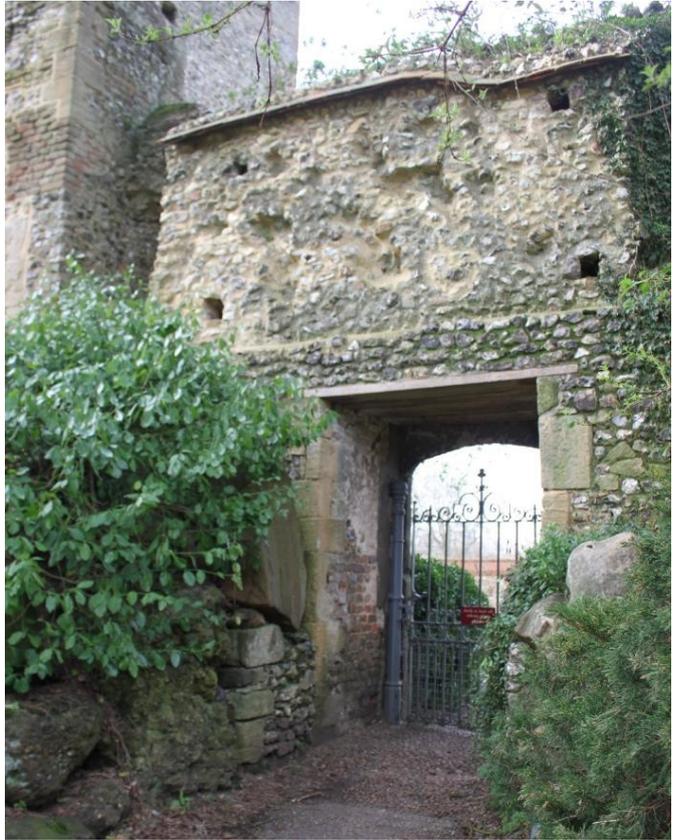
Over the years, Graham and I have had the privilege of wandering around many of Britain's historic properties, where walled gardens are a recurring and impressive feature. These gardens, designed for both practicality and beauty, provide warmth and shelter in a cold climate, while also creating a sense of seclusion and mystery. Originally an important area for food production, many now combine edible plants with ornamental flower borders, rose gardens, and even glasshouses.



Greys Court, nestled in the Chiltern Hills of Oxfordshire near Henley, is a delightful example of an estate with multiple walled gardens. Despite its proximity to London and Heathrow, this National Trust property is a peaceful retreat, hidden in rolling countryside and accessible only by narrow, winding lanes—a journey that adds to its charm. The 16th-century Tudor manor house, built by Sir Francis Knollys during the reign of Queen Elizabeth I, has a layered history. The Stapleton family, who benefited from slavery, owned the estate in the 18th and 19th centuries but made few changes. Briefly, in the 1930s, it belonged to Ian Fleming's mother, Evelyn. In 1937, Sir Felix and Lady Brunner acquired the property, restoring the house and developing the gardens.

A 14th-century stone tower, a remnant from Lord de Grey's era, overlooks the gardens. Passing through a gateway in the ancient curtain wall, visitors enter a series of interconnected walled gardens, each offering tranquility and a distinct atmosphere. In summer, lush borders overflow with greenery and vibrant flowers, while fountains, ponds, and lawns add to the sense of serenity. Seasonal highlights include swathes of snowdrops and daffodils in late winter and early spring.

Each walled space has a unique theme, of a dominant colour or planting style. What a surprise it is to walk through the gateway from one walled garden room to another and discover a totally different space! The White Garden surrounds a small pond and features both white-flowering and grey-leaved plants. The Pink Garden was glowing with hydrangeas and roses when we visited in summer. The Wisteria Garden is particularly striking, with a canopy of twisting, gnarled wisteria trunks—over 130 years old—under which hellebores and ferns thrive.



Greys Court images by Anne Smith

A central octagonal stone fountain, designed by architect Francis Pollen (brother-in-law to owner Hugo Brunner), is a focal point at the junction of a number of garden paths. Other highlights include an arbour, a diverse collection of dahlias, a cherry and pear orchard known as The Queen's Green Canopy (planted for the Queen's Platinum Jubilee), a cobblestoned courtyard, and a productive potager of edibles such as crab apples. The gardens are enclosed by beautiful old walls of flintstone, tile, and brick, each reflecting aspects of the estate's historic character.

Beyond the walled gardens lies the Archbishop's Maze, with brick pathways leading through lawn. The Maze was designed by Adrian Fisher and incorporates Christian symbolism, inspired by an address from the Archbishop of Canterbury in 1980. On the opposite side of the manor house, a striking red Chinese-style moon bridge—also by Francis Pollen—crosses a ha-ha. The ha-ha is a clever design feature seen in many historic English gardens, comprising a sunken fence that keeps livestock off the lawns without obstructing the view.



A short walk across the ha-ha and field, leads to a 19th-century thatched icehouse, once used to store winter ice for year-round use. Beyond that, fields and woodland beckon. Here the rangers practice the old crafts of coppicing and hedge laying.

Greys Court is a property well worth visiting, full of historical and horticultural interest and perfect for a peaceful wander.

ADVOCACY

Callan Park sports fields

The Sydney Branch has objected to two development proposals for Callan Park, a State Heritage-listed site in Rozelle, being concerned that the proposed synthetic turf sports fields would degrade the site's physical fabric, pollute waterways, limit community access, and adversely affect heritage values.

The branch is particularly concerned about the omission of genuine community participation, which is required under the Inner West Community Engagement Strategy 2025-29, and has raised multiple environmental concerns, including microplastic pollution and biodiversity loss. Additionally, the AGHS Sydney branch has also highlighted the lack of adherence to NSW Government's synthetic turf guidelines in the assessment process, noting incomplete information on the types of plastic grass to be used, as well as inadequate consideration of alternative sites options. The AGHS urged Inner West Council to reconsider the proposal and instead seek genuine community participation through a meaningful consultation process to ensure that all voices are heard.

Since the above submission, AGHS has formally adopted a national policy on plastic grass. The AGHS is opposed to the installation of plastic grass as it contravenes our mission to conserve significant gardens and cultural landscapes. Plastic grass is not an economic or sustainable solution, and it has considerable environmental and Climate Change impact.

The Sydney Plan

Our Branch has also lodged a submission on the draft *Sydney Plan*, a 20-year strategic land-use framework exhibited by the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure. The submission welcomed several elements, including the focus on economic opportunities for Aboriginal landowners, the emphasis on the missing middle housing, the shift toward a blue-green grid, and the proposal to establish urban growth boundaries to limit urban sprawl.

We raised concerns that heritage is not directly addressed in the draft priorities. Both cultural and natural heritage receive insufficient recognition, despite the plan covering areas with UNESCO natural heritage status. A particular risk identified is that any future easing of construction bans on flood-affected land could renew pressure to raise dam walls, conflicting with UNESCO conservation commitments.

The submission recommended allowing Local Councils to offer additional incentives for developments that protect heritage values within Heritage Conservation Areas affected by Transport-Oriented Development, noting that such projects currently bypass Council decision-making. It also highlighted the ongoing failure to preserve and expand tree canopy across Local Government Areas and proposed developing a standardised methodology for assessing tree-retention viability.

Finally, the submission stressed the need for planning decisions to prioritise community safety, heritage protection, local character, and environmental sustainability.

Advocacy update prepared by Rado Zezulak

Advocacy requests to the Sydney Branch should be accompanied by an outline of the matter, succinct points about the issues involved and the required support. See also, the advocacy pages on the AGHS website.

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