

# BRANCH CUTTINGS



Issue 61 – June 2020

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

## AGHS FORTHCOMING EVENTS

### OCTOBER

#### 2020 Annual National Conference

**Date: Friday 23 October – Sunday 25 October**



**Venue:** Luna Park, Milsons Point, Sydney.

Bookings for this year's conference are now open. Optional Day on Monday 26 October will explore the rural area of Camden.

See AGHS website for details.

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

#### **Event: Green Necklace Harbour Cruise on the tall ship "James Craig"**

**Date: Thursday 22 October, 2020, 10:00am for 10:30 departure from the Maritime Museum, Darling Harbour.**

The Sydney Branch conference committee invite you to join us on the Green Necklace Harbour cruise to celebrate Sydney and its Harbour, as part of part of the 40th Anniversary celebrations of the Society, an important theme of the 2020 conference.

The cruise will raise awareness about the landscape heritage of the harbour centred on the findings of the 2018 study commissioned by AILA. Its vision is to conserve the 'green necklace' of Sydney Harbour - a series of parks, government institutions and Crown land, fragments of open space and remnant bushland around the Harbour foreshore, and to recognise these, not as separate places, but as one cultural landscape. The tour will showcase the harbour's natural, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal landscape values and the aspirations of contemporary communities. This will be a 2 ½ hour cruise, on the "James Craig", under motor not sail, as part of the events on the optional Thursday before the conference.

**Cruise Cost: \$95.00 per person.** See AGHS website for details.

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

### NEW MEMBERS

The Branch would like to extend a warm welcome to the following new local members: Prunella Booth, Robert Chivers, Liane Colwell, David Cunningham, Robin Darling, Christine Hallahan, Louise McDaid, Jean Turner, Charlotte Violanti.



## MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

### Sydney & Northern NSW Branch

#### Branch News – June 2020

Hello to all our members. I had hoped 2020 would be a remarkable year for us all. Well this is surely our *annus horribilus*. The committee had so many great events planned, which I'd like to let you know about - some will be postponed, others may be rescheduled for next year or beyond or be re-formatted. Before the COVID-19 pandemic shut down our gatherings, and the National Trust offices at Observatory Hill were closed until the end of June, we enjoyed an evening with Emma Dortins who shared with us her recent publication 'Lives of Stories', in which she illustrated concepts from her book, particularly, the *telling and re-telling of stories across landscapes*. With an interest in heritage and the conservation of significant landscapes it is clear to me that stories are at the heart of understanding the values we share and raising awareness that is the first principle of advocacy and at the core of our mission.

We planned to mark Anzac Day with a talk by Stuart Read on the 'Avenues of Honour'. Unfortunately this did not take place. Anzac Day was so different to any other for me; Rob and I sat on our front verandah and welcomed the dawn with a candle and felt deeply connected with others in our inner city Newtown. Nothing new here! Amazingly the streets and houses are much the same as they were in 1915 thanks to thoughtful legislation that envelopes the area as a heritage conservation area. More ugly cars and well-meaning trees that clog the two foot six wide pavements. Stuart's superior IT skills meant he was able to take his presentation to the web and he presented a webinar version to others. Something we may all need to look to as a method of managing how we connect at this time, maintaining a physical distance while holding our social connection. The committee is working on various strategies to enable us to bring to our members stimulating presentations. This situation will be reassessed as we gradually reopen to allow more people to commune within the lecture rooms – social distancing is likely to be with us for some time. Hard to say - more outdoor events are likely.

This year marks the celebration of the fortieth year since the establishment of the AGHS. We planned a sumptuous tea party in the gardens of Eryldene. Although cancelled, we hope to postpone this event and combine it with our Christmas celebration so that it will take place in 2020.

In May we planned a tour of an exhibition at Lion Gate Lodge within the Royal Botanic Gardens, titled *Botanic Endeavour*. The exhibition by the Florilegium Society was to celebrate the Banks and Solander collection. Although the exhibition has not proceeded as hoped, there is a handsome publication to support it, written by our eminent member Colleen Morris. The publication is limited to 600 copies and we will send out a flyer to advise how you could purchase a copy. It is a fine companion to the Florilegium Society's previous publication *Florilegium*. I am proud to advise that the Sydney branch contributed to the publication.

In July we were set to tour the garden at Garden Island Hill with Colin Randall. I am pleased to say that this event will occur some time in the future when it is considered safe for all. Our AGM in August is still viable within the current constraints and health advice and we have a distinguished landscape architect who will share his story.

We are definitely emerging from the miasma of COVID-19. One spectacular event that is still on schedule and gaining momentum is the Sydney conference - *Many Dreams One Landscape*. Bookings are strong. The conference coincides with our fortieth anniversary and there will be many opportunities to reconnect with members from around Australia as we glide through the special gardens of Sydney and share our stories.

James Quoye.

Tel: (02) 95195250 or email: james@qanda.com.au

## BEGINNINGS of AGHS

In this 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary year it's perhaps time to reflect back on the beginnings of the AGHS and ask ourselves - how did it begin?

In 1977 the Victorian government, in acknowledgement that there was significant knowledge and lists of historic buildings and sites but almost nothing known of the state's historic gardens, and having announced itself as *The Garden State*, agreed to fund the National Trust (Victoria) to undertake a study of Victoria's historic gardens. I was the lucky person given the task of undertaking a two-year survey as I was already at Trust dealing managing its landscape assessment work.

Subsequently the Australian Heritage Commission (AHC) funded similar studies in each other state.

The AHC was keen to encourage consistency between the various studies and funded a number of meetings of those undertaking the work in their respective states. At one of those meetings, in Launceston on 4-6 April 1979, the idea of an Australian Garden History Society was first raised by Phyl Simons who was doing the Tasmanian study. The AHC encouraged the idea as it hoped to establish special interest organisations that would carry on the work if the AHC should be discontinued. As it turned out that showed great prescience!

At the Launceston meeting I was asked to develop the idea further and in a Newsletter of September 1979, circulated to those undertaking the studies, I outlined a proposal for the formation of a Society which summarised and expanded on the Launceston discussions. The article outlined the aims, membership arrangements, proposed structure and funding of a society. Most importantly it suggested a 'National Conference on Garden History in Australia' be held in 1980 at which a society 'could presumably' be formed.

Around the same time Howard Tanner was developing the exhibition *Converting the Wilderness: The Art of Gardening in Colonial Australia* which was subsequently shown in major galleries in Brisbane, Ballarat, Sydney, Melbourne, Launceston, Hobart and Adelaide between October 1979 and June 1980. At the last minute we managed to include an Afterword in the catalogue. It was written in anticipation of the formation of an AGHS and did much to promote the, as yet, unformed AGHS! The great success of the exhibition, and the opportunity it presented us, gave cause for optimism.

A small subcommittee was formed to arrange what was called the 'First Garden History Conference' at the National Trust property, Illawarra, in Melbourne on 28-29 March 1980. The AHC, facilitated by its staff member, Warren Nichols, provided financial and other assistance for the conference. This seemed the perfect opportunity to launch a society and over a number of meetings I had with David Yencken, Chair, Australian Heritage Commission, in the months leading up to the conference we stitched together a plan to launch the AGHS. I wrote a constitution, with advice from David 'to keep it no more than a few pages or someone will challenge it' and he agreed to approach Dame Elisabeth Murdoch to become the first Chair if I would agree to be the first Secretary. And so it happened on the day. A motion was put at the end of the conference to form a society. David, who was in the Chair, produced the constitution from his back pocket. Dame Elisabeth was elected Interim Chair and I was elected Interim Secretary. Then a small Interim Committee was elected – only some of whom had been solicited beforehand!

The papers for that conference were edited by Sue Ebury and published by the National Trust (Vic).

Over the next few months the Interim Committee met on a number of occasions and by the end of June it comprised 15 people deliberately drawn from around the country. They included Alethea Russell as Membership Secretary and Miranda Morris-Nunn as Newsletter Editor.

By October the National Trust (Vic) had agreed to an affiliation with it so as to facilitate tax deductible donations. Dame Elisabeth's generous donations kept us afloat in those early months for which we were very grateful. By the end of October we had 152 Members and \$1,480 in bank and the following month we produced our first Journal. We wondered if we would be viable.

At our first AGM, held at the second conference at the Victoria and Albert Guest House, Mount Victoria, NSW on 2 May 1981, the members accepted a revised Constitution and it was reported there were 295 members of whom comprised 164 in Vic, 80 NSW, 15 Tas, 11 SA, 10 Qld, 9 ACT, 5 WA and 1 overseas. Dame Elisabeth stood down as Chair and became President. The first committee elected by the members comprised:

Howard Tanner, Chairman (NSW)  
Peter Watts, Secretary (Vic)  
Peter Lumley, Treasurer (Vic)  
Alethea Russell, Membership Secretary (Vic)  
Sue Ebury (Vic)  
Ken Digby (NSW)  
Pat Cameron (Tas)  
Beth Wilson (Qld)  
Chris Betteridge (NSW)  
Oline Richards (WA)  
Warren Nicholls (ACT)  
Anne Latreille (Vic)  
Phyl Simons (TAS)  
Tony Whitehill (SA)

Looking back today on the strength of the AGHS, and its many achievements, I cannot help but think it was the care taken by many people in laying firm foundations of governance, financial management, clear objectives, a chapter structure and diverse and continually changing committee members that has given the AGHS its great strength. This together with the early and very generous financial support given by three wonderful women gardeners – Dame Elisabeth Murdoch, Joan Law-Smith and Margaret Darling, set us up for success – but that’s another story. Long may it continue.

*Peter Watts AM*  
*Secretary AGHS 1980 – 1982*  
*Chair AGHS 1998 – 2003*

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### LISGAR GARDENS, HORNSBY

Earlier in the year the Directors of the International Camellia Society approved Lisgar Gardens in Hornsby as an International Camellia Garden of Excellence. The application was approved by a global email ballot according to Dr Stephen Utick the ICS Director for Australia. It is the fifth Camellia Garden of Excellence in Australia and only the second in NSW.

Lisgar Gardens which features many old camellia cultivars was developed in



the 1940s by Max Cotton. Hornsby Shire Council bought the gardens in 1967 to be a public garden.

AGHS members might remember that Stephen Utick presented a talk to the Sydney branch in 2019 about the significance of Camellias in garden history.



*Images Anne Smith*

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## Journey to the Landscapes of Great Britain: Part 4

It is now nearly 2 years since we set out on our odyssey to the Landscapes of Great Britain and I'm still writing it up for Branch Cuttings, bit by bit. 2020 conference planning has rather taken over our lives of late, and of course Covid-19 has altered everything we do, as well as cancelling all hopes of overseas travel for the foreseeable future. Many of our readers have told me they enjoy these articles, so I will plough on and hope you all can experience vicariously the treasures we saw, and maybe plan voyages of your own when life gets back to normal.



**Mottistone Manor** is a National Trust property in the village of Mottistone on the Isle of Wight. It has popular gardens and is a listed building. It was first mentioned in documents related to the Domesday Book of 1086. The Mottistone Estate runs from the top of Mottistone Down to the sea. The name means 'meeting place' and the stone refers to the mysterious Long Stone thought to be the remains of a neolithic long barrow or burial place. There are also Bronze Age Burials and an Iron Age enclosure... a site with a long history indeed. The manor house dates from 15th or early 16th century but has been added to over the centuries. It is now a National Trust property, grey stone with very tall chimneys.



The garden is lovely and was being actively worked on by volunteers when we visited. The Isle of Wight enjoys a mild climate so many plants were familiar, flax etc. In the grounds is a free standing wooden shed called The Shack, used by the Seely family, owners since 1861, as a well-appointed study and office. A Seely descendant, Sophie, married Benedict Cumberbatch on the estate in 2015. Out the other side is a rather lovely grass maze. We tried to walk up to the Long Stone but it was muddy and rather overgrown, one of the few wet days we had, and we had to catch the afternoon ferry back to Southampton.



**Iford Manor** This was the very first place we visited after leaving London, on a perfect sunny day. I did not think it could get much better than this. The property is in Wiltshire, approached down the Frome Valley where the house looks across the river and a lovely old stone bridge to a quiet rural land-scape. We were the only people there. The house is backed by hanging woodlands planted by previous owners, probably in the Georgian period. There has been a dwelling recorded here since the late 15th century, and mentioned in the Domesday Book. The house was rebuilt with its classical facade about 1730. Harold Peto bought it in 1899 and lived here until 1933, establishing the magical terraced gardens that climb up the hill behind. The wisterias were just finishing but the gardens were full of flowers, and Peto's statues and architectural structures placed



perfectly. He loved Italian gardens and the style here is punctuated by tall Cyprus, ponds and loggia. The long colonnaded middle terrace has very large terracotta pots. There was no gift shop, just a few lovely postcards for sale and a modest tearoom serving scones and tea to be enjoyed in the peaceful garden.

**Garinish Island** The other Harold Peto garden we visited was not strictly part of the UK. For our last week away we went across to Ireland and had a week of near perfect weather.

We found Garinish Island, also known as Innacullin, in Bantry Bay in the southwest, in County Cork. We lucked in to catch the last ferry of the day and had one hour to gallop all over this gorgeous site. The island of Innacullin extends to 15 hectares and is renowned for its gardens which flourish in the mild humid micro-climate of Glengarriff harbour assisted by a mainly pine shelter belt. Harold Peto designed the garden in the early 1900's for John Annan Bryce, a Scottish business man from Belfast. It has multiple different terrains, walled gardens, woodlands, and a Martello tower with views out over the Bay. There are plants from all over the world, including Australia, a Huon Pine for instance, and red bottlebrush; also a Kauri pine from New Zealand and big tree ferns. In the centre is a beautiful pavilion or Italian casita, looking over an Italian water garden, in one corner of which was a huge dark pink ti-tree in full flower.



A mansion was also designed by Harold Peto but never built. Bryce died in 1923 and then his wife in 1939. Their son

Roland bequeathed the island to the Irish nation in 1953.

We caught the little ferry back to the mainland but did not see any of the seals which were said to visit the bay.

Angela Low

Angela is a member of the Sydney AGHS committee member. 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.

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## AGHS NORTHERN NSW Sub-branch

May 2020

### Heritage Rose Garden at Saumarez Homestead – COVID – 19 update

With the onset of COVID – 19 and the closure of National Trust properties in NSW, our AGHS volunteers have been unable to tend our heritage rose garden during autumn. We are aware that weeding is ever needed and that Winter pruning is just around the corner.

Now that NSW Government restrictions are beginning to be lifted, and historic and cultural precincts reopening in modified ways, we are hopeful that we will soon be granted access to the garden by the National Trust. A recent calculation of both spending on and time donated to the garden produced amazement when we realised that we have created an asset of approximately \$250, 000, which consequently brings great benefit to our local and regional communities.

At this time, though, we have still not been granted access, and the National Trust has engaged an external contractor to work towards maintaining the garden, having rejected the AGHS bid to tender for the maintenance of our rose garden. AGHS volunteers know the plantings and their care needs in a way not necessarily known by others without specific knowledge. AGHS local members are keen to return to the maintenance of the garden,



having dedicated much time and effort to its establishment, and reaping much enjoyment from our work. We hope that our past fruitful partnership with the national Trust will be enjoyed into the future.

### Saumarez Restoration Work – Cold Frame

Members of the branch, along with receiving permission from the National Trust for the restoration of the tool collection at Saumarez Homestead, have also received permission to restore the Cold Frame alongside the tool shed. Work has begun.... Watch this space!



### Vale Mareah Rhodes White



It is with great sadness that we advise that Mareah Rhodes White died peacefully in her sleep at Lynne Walker and Richard Bird's property, Heatherbrae, on the morning of Saturday 23<sup>rd</sup> May. Those of you who knew her will remember her zest for life, warmth, generosity and interest in everyone and everything. She loved being part of AGHS, attended many conferences and had been a member for over 20 years. She loved the NNSW Sub branch activities coming up from Wootton (near Kempsey) for many of our weekend excursions and events as well. She taught many of us how to party. Who could forget that train trip across the Nullarbor to the WA conference? So please raise a glass to her if you wish – whiskey was her preferred tippie but she approved of all forms of alcohol!

Helen Wilson  
Secretary NNSW Sub Branch

*Images: Lynne Walker*

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### FERNHILL ESTATE



As reported by The Penrith Press recently, a walking track on the heritage-listed property of Fernhill Estate at Mulgoa has now been opened to the public, the start of some trial



weekend openings. The community will be able to make suggestions on the kinds of activities they would like to see at the estate in the future.

The new 2.6km loop track on the estate is part of a plan to create on the site "the Centennial Park of the west" according to Planning and Public Spaces Minister Rob Stokes. The track allows visitors to see the grounds and the outside of the historic Greek Revival homestead. The 412 hectare site was acquired by the NSW government in 2018 for the use and enjoyment of the community.

The house at Fernhill was completed in 1845 for Edward Cox and comprises a large area of modified and natural



landscape. On both the local and state heritage registers, the landscape is significant, being a rare example in Australia of the technique of the English landscape school, where the original landscape is modified to create a romanticised natural appearance. The landscape includes vistas, water, bridges and clumps of trees. Three of the historic buildings in the Mulgoa Valley, The Cottage, St Thomas' Church and Fernhill, have retained their original visual relationship to each other largely unaltered since 1850.

*Images: Penrith Press*

## OTHER EVENTS OF INTEREST

### Sustainable House Day

Date: Sunday, 20<sup>th</sup> September, 2020

Inspect firsthand houses that have been designed, built or renovated with sustainability in mind and talk to the owners. One garden in Denistone as reported by Robin Powell in the smh will showcase production of 300 different types of fruit and vegetables, flowering plants to attract pollinators as well as a food forest.

<https://sustainablehouseday.com/>

### The Australian Botanic Garden, Mount Annan

#### Pop-up-Plant Sale

**Friday, 26 June – Saturday 27 June, 2020** from 10:00-14:00

In accordance with NSW's social distancing guidelines, a plant sale at Australian Botanic Garden's, Mount Annan Nursery will sell a wide selection of plants, propagated by volunteers from the Australian Botanic Garden's living collection.

[australianbotanicgarden.com.au/Pop-Up-Plant-Sale](http://australianbotanicgarden.com.au/Pop-Up-Plant-Sale)

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