

Inflorescence

April 2025

The Newsletter of the Southern Highlands Branch of the AGHS



Events for 2025

<p>Berrima District Museum 1 (A) Market Place Berrima</p> <p>Now open Friday, Saturday and Sundays</p>	<p>Come and see <i>Gardens and Landscapes in the Southern Highlands Then and Now</i></p>
--	---

Upcoming Events 2025

1 May Self drive Brownlow Hill, and Denbigh Cobbity.

22 June Winter Solstice Talks – Annesley Bowral, Stuart Reid “The history of garden design using native plants” and Ruth Bailey “Thrushwood - The evolution of a plant collectors garden”.

8 July Self Drive to the Berrima Museum to see two new presentations, “An 1891 Tour of NSW and Queensland” and “Amazing 3D Stereo Photography”.

Report from the Chair

Autumn is upon us signaling the change of colour in our cool season landscape as many of the exotic trees transition into their colourful autumn dress. I hope you have many opportunities to enjoy the contrasting red, yellow, copper and orange colours with the deep green of the conifers and the blue-grey of the eucalyptus.

Our recent one day tour to Bundanon and the three day tour to the Blue Mountains and Mayfield Gardens capture these colours beautifully and we all enjoyed these contrasts. The Boyd homestead in Illaroo as well as the Boyd Gallery nearby featured two very old Bunya Bunya trees amongst other old trees probably planted in the 1840s. Eleanor Dartnall has written an excellent account of the Bundanon day out which was enjoyed immensely by all who came along. Merryleigh Brindley has penned another informative account of our trip to the Blue Mountains and Mayfield where notable gardens were featured over the three day trip. We saw magnificent old trees on all properties visited, many gorgeous colourful maples (young and old) but also oaks and many other

species. I do appreciate Eleanor and Merryleigh writing these reports as they share the excitement of not only our committee members but other members of the society who have been travelling extensively on AGHS-SHB tours.

The AGHS-SHB Committee are encouraging everyone to preserve our old trees and plant new ones where possible. Seeing the old trees on these recent trips reminds us all that we won't see the likes of them again in our lifetime as it takes well over 100 years to grow a significant tree. We need to protect these old trees wherever possible except where they pose a safety hazard. In addition, where there is space available more trees need to be planted for future generations to enjoy. We encourage you to plant one or more trees in your garden or community space where it has room to grow, so lovely shaded areas will exist in the future especially if projections of hotter climates become a reality in these cool climate areas.

As you can see above we have some interesting events schedule in May, June and July and more can be seen in the 2025 Event Calendar at the end of this Inflorescence. At upcoming events we will continue to learn not only about some of the oldest continuous operating farms in Cobbity but also the history of garden design using natives and exotic plants.

I promised several years ago to share with you our experience of documenting a plant collectors garden here in Bowral. Well, finally the two books on the Thrushwood Garden have been completed! The story of the creation of these books and the evolution of the garden over 45+ years will be shared at the Winter Solstice Seminar.

We hope to see many of you at one or all of these events! Enjoy the colour of autumn whenever you can as it can be fleeting if the weather pattern changes!

Best wishes,
Ruth Bailey

AGHS-SHB Trip to Bundanon by Eleanor Dartnall



Photo Courtesy Chris Thompson.

Two enormous bunya-bunya pines *Araucaria bidwillii* set the scene; your first sight on alighting from the bus is the building called 'The Bridge'. The architect Kerstin Thompson won the Sulman Medal for Public Architecture in 2022 for this amazing (black) structure spanning a deep valley.



Ruth Bailey photograph.

This building offers accommodation for 64 guests who arrive on weekends for the various planned events (from Yoga retreats to music). I found out that the reason building across this valley is to allow for the flood waters to pass unimpeded while causing no damage. Clever.

The second building here is the modern Art Museum, and we started out here. The main exhibition space is taken up by one installation, curated by visiting artists Robert Andrew, Alfredo and Isabel Aquilizan and Keg de Souza. This staggering edifice of cardboard is made up from pieces glued or pieced together by visitors both young and old, the artists then place each piece in the structure. The best explanation is the following photo. I could have spent all day in this room.



Eleanor Dartnall photograph.

The next space was filled with Boyd paintings.

After a wander through the Museum, we walked across to the library to view the video which tells the story of this amazing place.

“A review of the ethnographic and ethnohistoric literature demonstrates a substantial Indigenous presence in the area at white contact. On the Shoalhaven River where one of the largest deltaic-estuarine ecosystems in South East NSW supports a wide range of edible birds, fish and mammal species as well as plants for food, fibre and medicine. There are no formal records of Aboriginal sites on any of the properties, although several are recorded nearby.

In fulfilling the vision of Arthur Boyd and his family, the Bundanon Trust has created a space that emphasises the integration and connectedness of nature, culture and art in the landscape. This space also reflects Indigenous perspective of country, with everything connected.”

The traditional owners of this land are the Wodi Wodi who speak the Dharawal language. European contact was first made in 1805 when Government surveyors explored the area. The first land grant of 600 acres was made to Richard Henry Browne on the condition that 55 acres be fenced and cultivated within five years. Browne failed to do this work so the ownership of the land reverted back to the Government, it was then sold to Dr Kenneth Mackenzie in 1838. The Mackenzies sold the property to Arthur Boyd in 1979.

The Boyds gifted the property including the homestead contents to the Keating Government in 1993, the Commonwealth owned Bundanon Trust was then established.

The Mackenzies began the construction of the homestead in 1850, and notes show that a disastrous flood in 1860 impacted on the landscape and hastened the completion of the homestead. Completed in 1866 the family moved in.



The homestead courtesy Museums and Galleries of NSW by John Janson-Moore.

Bundanoon is important in the region, demonstrating characteristics of 19th century pastoral landscapes, their social working structure and the distinctive way of life experienced in the Shoalhaven River valley.

After viewing the videos and glancing through some of the books in the Museum, we then gathered in the café for lunch, enjoyed excellent food and had a chance to chat to one another.

We then boarded the bus to travel along bush tracks to the homestead. It seemed a very long way, but apparently you can walk from the studio to the Museum etc. if you can manage the walk through the bush and probably very muddy tracks.

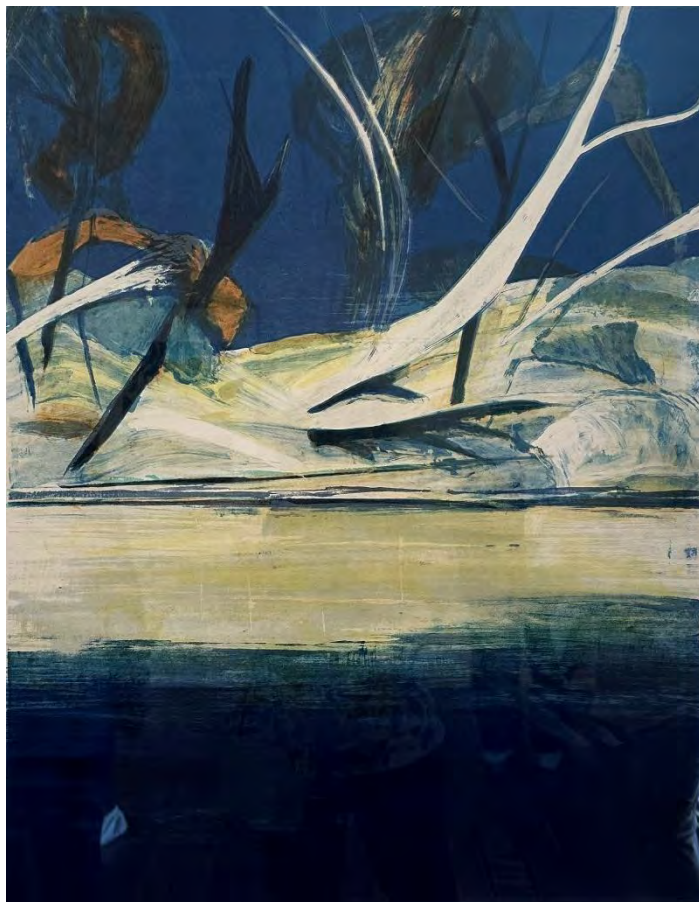
Off the bus, we then gathered to listen to a guide who took us through some of the history, noted above. Breaking into two groups we were guided through the home and then the studio.



Ruth Bailey photograph.



Ruth Bailey photograph.



Ruth Bailey photograph.

The contents of the homestead included not only the artworks but the furnishings of Arthur and Yvonne's home. While many of Arthur Boyd's paintings hang on these walls, surprising to me were the works by his family members; his

wife Yvonne, his siblings, his grandfather Arthur Merric Boyd, grandmother Emma Minnie and father Merric Boyd; all considerable artists in their own right. In particular, in the homestead, we saw a huge collection of Merric Boyd's pottery. Merric was a very talented artist and potter whose work I have never come across before, varied in style and method it was an amazing collection of hundreds of pieces. I cannot find a book on his work and there should be one, but I do note that if a piece by Merric comes up for auction today it fetches a very high price.



Ruth Bailey photograph.

Next, the Studio. You can almost see Arthur standing in front of a huge easel here and can palpably feel his love of country. For me, this photo of Arthur hanging on the studio wall, says it all.



Ruth Bailey photographs.



Arthur's last painting remains unfinished in the studio.

Ruth Bailey photograph.

Tables piled high with nearly empty paint tubes, clean canvases waiting for his brush, a huge supply of new paints, finished and unfinished works. This was wonderful. It is here that you begin to understand Arthur's love of country and his constant work to capture it for posterity.

AGHS-SHB Blue Mountains Tour 8 to 10 April 2025.

By Merryleigh Brindley

This was always going to be a really special tour, not only as the last three day tour our intrepid Ray Bradley has organised for us but it may be his last for the branch. Retirement beckons. So it was with feelings of nostalgia as well as anticipation that 34 people boarded the coach for our latest AGHS adventure – feelings increased when we saw our driver, Ron, who has toured with Ray since 2014 '–lots of tours, lots of mileage'. So with Ray's directive, 'sit back, relax and enjoy' we headed out on this sunny morning to our first stop, The Secret Garden, at Richmond.



Ruth Bailey photograph.

This proved to be a remarkable not-for-profit Community Hub managed by the North West Disability Services which caters for everyone in the community from children to the aged, with a special focus on those with a disability. It does so in the most welcoming atmosphere in extensive surroundings with a flourishing plant nursery – I saw the first of many plant purchases being tucked away in the bus. Over the fence were baby goats, Nigerian dwarfs, I was told, bee 'hotels' were a feature and chooks and ducks wandered around. More settled were models of gaily painted cows and after seeing the frequent notices about snakes, I hoped they were also having a nap. I noticed a 'teapot garden', a first for me, but most areas were a mixture of natives and exotics with the odd tree beginning to colour. A lovely, cheerful positive place, the perfect way to begin our tour.

On to the Blue Mountains and Mt Wilson and our first mountain garden, **Windyridge**. That name doesn't sound especially welcome or hospitable, but the reverse was definitely true. Roger and Wai Davidson bought the 5 acre property in 1995, believing it to be the perfect place to expand their collection of cold climate plants and trees. How right they were.



Ruth Bailey photograph.

Paved walkways of old brick or weathered stone lead past collections of maples, oaks, camellias, azaleas, hydrangeas and many more cold climate beauties. But the garden is much more than a collection of plants – it is beautifully designed to showcase them.



Ruth Bailey photographs.

The walkways lead you on, past an immaculate parterre, followed by a sculpture garden, then through a series of small paved areas each with its special planting, next, a rain forest shaded by tree ferns. Finally, down below, a broad expanses of lawn punctuated only by a Chinese Red circular slatted seat around an immense eucalyptus, the culmination - the lake and waterfall.



Ruth Bailey photograph.

Along the way are private places to sit on lichen covered seats, a sheltered barbecue area and everywhere, wonderful weathered pots of maples, camellias, and sedums. These contrast with brightly coloured Chinese pots and occasional sculptures tucked away, like the two graceful swans on a low brick wall surrounded by pink nerines. In the largest courtyard we enjoyed our picnic lunch, tantalisingly close to the sales area and nursery. How could we resist it! But even more amazing than all the attractions in this very large, exceptional garden is the fact that the owners look after it all themselves. They have no staff!

I, for one, was feeling rather daunted when we moved on to our next garden. 'Nooroo', an Aboriginal word meaning shady place, was an apt choice of name by William Hay, who in 1880 built the long white home of pit-sawn timbers with its twisted chimney pots and established the first garden. But the garden became well known when the Valder family, during their tenure from 1917 to 1992, doubled the size to two hectares and it has since been extended far into the paddocks by the present owners, the Barrett family.



Ruth Bailey photograph.

The summer house, designed in a similar style to the house, was featured on a 1989 postage stamp and was widely copied – not least by the writer and her family for our garden on our property, 'Bute Park', Cootamundra. It

was so loved by us that when we retired to 'Carisbrooke' in Bowral we bought the copper roof with us, building an identical timber structure underneath to fit. (Mean I know, but we did put an appropriate new timber roof on the one at Coota.)



Ruth Bailey photograph.

For Dr Peter Valder growing up in the garden at Nooroo and the surrounding bushland led to his career as a plant pathologist and mycologist but he was also a fantastic communicator on a wider scale, particularly on television, and as a writer and university lecturer. I studied Science at Sydney University, and Peter's Botany lectures were legendary, gales of laughter issuing from the lecture room. When the 29th AGHS Annual Conference was held in Bowral in 2008, my job on the Committee was to organise the speakers, with Peter to be our Conference Dinner speaker. Believe me, the letter inviting him to do so took me some time to write. But he wrote a charming, witty note in response, only equalled by his later talk. He and my husband, John, who some of you will remember, bonded over the red wine and remained in touch until John's death in 2016. Wisterias are a prominent feature at Nooroo and Peter wrote three books on them and on the garden plants of China, a country he admired and frequently visited. His ashes were scattered in the garden he so loved.



We were so privileged to be taken around by the new owner of Nooroo who obviously shares this love. The garden has been much extended, almost to the road, with the last garden bed marked by a round ball of teucrium as a full stop. Along the way was an amazing collection of conifers, all colours, shapes and sizes and further down the smoky purple tones of berberis, smoke bush and viburnums contrasted with the gold of elm varieties and the mounds of grey santolina. Nearby were more formal structures for contrast, like the clematis covered pergola leading to the rose garden. But close to the house under a mighty elm was my favourite garden picture, a carpet of pink and white cyclamen with mauve and white autumn crocus peeping through, backed by graceful swathes of tall white anemones.



Ruth Bailey photograph.

Finally on to our destination, the comfortable and surprisingly quiet Bushman's Motor Inn on the Great Western Highway at Marrangaroo, our home for the next two nights. Then, always one of the best parts of the day, we gathered to relax with a drink and relish a dinner one hasn't had to cook, talk over the day and its highlights and finally bed in a comfortable room.

Day 2 – Wednesday, 9 April, 2025

Our first stop this morning was at **Gory'u Japanese Gardens and Maple Springs Nursery**. I was keenly anticipating this visit as four days after returning home from this tour, my daughters and I were going on a three week cruise around Japan, so it would be a wonderful prelude and introduce me to 'the major elements of a true Japanese garden'. Now I know they include water, bridges, stone lanterns and pagodas, borrowed scenery and plants carefully selected to imitate nature.



Ruth Bailey photograph.

Alan and Margaret Jackson have had a nursery in this spot for 35 years but the garden is comparatively new and is still a work in progress. Alan has been a Japanese fan since a teenager, hooked in by TV programs like the 'Samurai' and has lost count of the number of his trips to Japan, well over thirty!



Ruth Bailey photograph.

He and his friend, Bob, the (Bobcat) have created the garden with almost no outside help, using granite from three local quarries for the paths and stone structures, sourcing seeds and cuttings from old gardens and building all the wooden gates, seats, pagodas and structures like the Tori Gate.



Ruth Bailey photographs

It alone took 7 weeks to design and build. As well, the lake has been extended from a small dam and an underground spring harnessed for a water supply. Incidentally there are no fish, a feature of some Japanese gardens – the pelicans ate the lot. Not surprisingly, after these marathon efforts, the garden is designed to be as maintenance free as possible. It is described as a 'stroll' garden, a directional garden with directional stone steps set closely together to accommodate kimono wearers, with seats strategically placed for contemplation, perhaps while viewing one of the 32 different stone lanterns or one of the 400 varieties of Japanese maples from the adjoining nursery or the magnificent tree peonies or the many camellias.



Ruth Bailey photograph.

I was so exhausted thinking of the amazing and herculean efforts of Alan and Margaret that our morning tea was very, very welcome. Gory'u is the Japanese name for confluence for example, as here, a lake of water meets a dry landscape lake and they converge to form one landscape. I am very glad indeed that our visit here and my coming trip to Japan are an example of confluence that should prove of great benefit!

On to **Everglades** – how lucky to visit it in the autumn with the wonderful colour – I have fond memories of my

coastal born children scuffling knee deep in glowing autumn leaves - I think the garden was less manicured then. I find it intriguing that a Belgian business man, Henri Van de Velde, a follower of the new Modernism, who made his money in a more prosaic way from Feltex carpets, with his Danish garden designer, Paul Sorensen, designed and created this stunning Art Deco house in its complementary garden in this most Australian setting – 13 acres of steep, sloping land looking across the spectacular Jamison Valley to Mt Solitary.



Ruth Bailey photographs.

Their unique collaboration created an Australian icon and one of the National Trust's most visited properties. It helped that the location was easily accessible by rail from Sydney and that in the 1930's affluent city dwellers wanted to escape the city's crowds and humidity. It became like India's hill stations. Paul Sorensen left Europe due to the outbreak of the First World War and died in Leura in 1983 aged 91. Everglades made his name, so with most of his later work in the Blue Mountains, he set up two nurseries and a growing stable of design and garden work. I remember Stuart Read did a Video Presentation on Paul Sorensen for the AGHS in June 2023.



Ruth Bailey photograph.

We had time for a leisurely exploration of the house with its Art Deco styling and magnificent views and the immaculate gardens, both formal and informal – stunning views, wonderful trees, terraced lawns bounded by stone walls as they stepped down the hillside, early autumn colour and gardens full of Japanese anemones and early crocus.



Ruth Bailey photograph.

We sat basking in the sun in the courtyard to enjoy our picnic lunch before a coach tour of Lithgow.

Lithgow

I had not been to Lithgow for many years so I was surprised that having been amalgamated with the Blaxland shire it has now become the city of Greater Lithgow. I remember the 'Lithgow Flash', Marjorie Jackson but I had no idea that the grandchildren's favourite, Nutella, is a Lithgow product. There seem to be a particularly large number of lovely old houses in the streets, some with exuberant gardens.

On to the **Hoskins Memorial Church** set in large grounds under a mighty golden elm. The church is dedicated to Guilford Hoskins, the eldest son of Emily and Charles Hoskins who died at the age of 29 in an acetylene gas

explosion while trying to repair a generator. His father was a wealthy and powerful man who revolutionised the steel industry. But he was also a doting father and grandfather and suffered great personal tragedy, losing two daughters as well as his son while in Lithgow and later two grandchildren in tragic circumstances. So sad. The gardens were designed by Paul Sorensen and there is a memorial to him behind the church. I picked up some camellia leaves and noticed how heavy was the furry undercoat on them, the indumentum, perhaps because the garden was so shady and sheltered. It was rather nice to head back to the coach, knowing that we were going to have dinner with our friends and reminiscence about our day, with another special day to look forward to tomorrow.

Day 3 – Thursday, 10 April, 2025

Mayfield is a prime example - and perhaps a warning – to anyone who decides to buy a country property to maybe run sheep or cattle, have a pleasant garden, then, being a good neighbour agree to open it for a one day charity event in 2008 with absolutely no plans to establish a tourist attraction. Then whoosh! Fast forward, very fast forward, in a few years from acquisition in 1984 for a sheep property to 2025 to one of the largest privately owned cool climate gardens in the world.



Ruth Bailey photograph.

Its scale and scope are so stupendous that it has become a major tourist attraction that benefits the local district as well as visitors like us.

From the moment we arrived, catching a glimpse of the latest attraction, the glamping tents, as we drove in and were given the very comprehensive map and blurb, we knew we were in for a major experience. We were especially fortunate that our guide was Keith Hunter who was known to many of us from Retford Park. Our walking tour started at the highest point with the beautiful bluestone Chapel, built for the daughter's wedding, and then onwards and downwards through every conceivable type of garden – rose garden, water garden, woodland garden etc etc all beautifully maintained.



Ruth Bailey photograph.

Then we just wandered, stopping for a delicious lunch in the cafe and investigating the 'unique retail plant offering' where many of us bought a plant 'to replicate at least a small part of the Mayfield experience in our own garden'. All of us will have our own special memories of Mayfield – it was certainly an experience in its size and scope but it was a wonderful garden too.



Ruth Bailey photograph.

Finally we headed home, relaxed and happy after our memorable trip. Thank you, Ron, for your patience and skilful driving that brought us safely home. And a special thank you, dear Ray, not only for giving us these wonderful three days to enjoy, learn from and remember with pleasure, but for all the past trips, both local and interstate – remember Tasmania, Victoria and Queensland.

Join us as a care-free passenger on our next adventure with the AGHS-SHB, the baton safely passed to Eleanor and Sue. **Until the next trip!**

Vale Peter Chadwick

Many members of the AGHS-SHB have fond memories of Peter Chadwick and he will be sadly missed by all. He will always be remembered for his love of heritage trees and his willingness with Margie to share their wonderful property Southdown with many AGHS-SHB members. Helping to preserve the eighteen Station Street heritage camellias during the drought allowed further efforts to proceed with the preservation of these significant plantings and the renovation of the trachyte terraces at the Bowral Station.



Margie Chadwick, Meg Probyn (former AGHS-SHB Chair) and Peter Chadwick at the opening of the Bowral Station Street project in July 2023. Photograph John Swainston.



AGHS-SHB Committee

Chair	Ruth Bailey
Secretary	Olga Birrell
Events Coordinator	Eleanor Dartnall
Treasurer	Lynda Cowley
IT Coordinator/Research	Vacant
Editor/Research	Bud Townsing
General Members	Chris O'Brien
	Sue Trudeau
	Pamela Jane

Associate Members

Tours	Ray Bradley
NMC Representative	Eleanor Dartnall
WSC Heritage Representative	Laurel Cheetham
Oral History	Heather McIntyre



AGHS Southern Highlands Branch

Event Schedule 2025

SAVE THE DATES

SUMMER	January	Left free
	February Wednesday 19th	Film at Empire Theatre – <i>A Little Chaos</i>
	March Thursday 27th	BUS TRIP Bundanon- Gallery, Exhibition, Riverside Boyd Homestead and Café lunch
AUTUMN	April Tue 8 - Thurs 10th	BUS TRIP Blue Mountains area
	May Thursday 1st	SELF DRIVE Brownlow Hill, Camden and Denbigh, Cobbitty BYO Picnic lunch at Denbigh
	June Sunday 22nd	Winter Solstice Talks – Annesley Ballroom, Annesley, Bowral Stuart Read <i>'The History of garden design using native plants'</i> Ruth Bailey <i>'The Evolution of a Plant Collectors' Garden'</i>
WINTER	July Tuesday 8th	SELF DRIVE Berrima Museum - A Tour of NSW and Queensland Slides were created in 1891 on glass plates and are amazing!
	Wednesday 16th	Webinar (Zoom) John Blay will present "What can a wild country mosaic of Australian native plants suggest for our landscaping and gardening?" The proceeds from this webinar will support the 'Nina Crone Writing Fund'.
	August Sunday 3rd	Annual General Meeting - East Bowral Community Centre Patricia Dixon <i>'The Ongoing Influence of Edna Walling'</i> Flavia Scardamaglia <i>'A re-introduction to Leslie Wilkinson, a discussion about his ideas and role as a garden maker and designer'</i>
SPRING	September Thursday 18th	SELF DRIVE Canberra: Tulip Tops – Morning tea National Arboretum Canberra – Lunch Café or BYO Picnic
	October Thursday 2nd	SELF DRIVE Australian Botanic Garden Mount Annan and the Seed Bank
	November Saturday 8th	SELF DRIVE Exeter Ramble with Linda Emery (event to be confirmed closer to the date) Morning tea at Exeter Hall
SUMMER	December Friday 5th	SELF DRIVE Christmas Party at Deirdre Hill's Garden <i>Quindalup</i>

NOTE:

There may be unexpected changes to a planned event, if so, you will be given plenty of notice.