

# Inflorescence

July 2023

The Newsletter of the Southern Highlands Branch of the AGHS



## Events for 2023

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

**27 August AGM and Winter Seminar at East Bowral Community Centre**

**25 October self-drive to Camden Park and St Johns Church Camden**

**23 November one day coach tour to Braidwood**

**1 December Christmas Party at Berrima Museum**

Many AGHS-SHB members attended the official opening of the Station Street Projects. However, many were unable to attend so we have included addresses by both John Barrett (Friends of Bowral) and Meg Probyn (former Chair of the AGHS-SHB) to inform all of our membership of the activities needed to preserve our Station Street heritage.

Our Winter Solstice Seminar was very well attended and enjoyed by all. See an article by Lynda Cowley and a follow up article on being a “ratbag” by Clive Probyn which is sometimes needed to accomplish challenging tasks.

The Isobel and Claude Crowe book review has been written by Merryleigh Brindley, such a joy for all!

Looking forward to seeing you all on 27 August at the Winter Seminar and AGM.

Best wishes

Ruth

## Report from the Chair

This is the last issue of Inflorescence for the 2022/2023 year which closes at the end of June. Our AGM/Winter Seminar on 27 August will provide an overview of our many activities (events and advocacy) these past 12 months. We have a busy schedule of events in 2023/2024 which we'll reveal at the AGM. This will enable you to put place holders in your calendar for those events of interest to you. Please come along to the AGM and celebrate an amazing year of accomplishments. We will have two very interesting speakers in our symposium as well as a CWA prepared lunch which is always delicious!

We are seeking additional general members to join the committee to help with events especially as some of our committee members have multiple responsibilities with other committees in the Southern Highlands and scheduling conflicts for events are difficult to avoid. Please see the attached documents for the AGM. This will include the nomination forms for committee membership so please contact me if you would like to discuss this fun opportunity further.

In this issue of *Inflorescence*, we have some very important information for all to read.

Laurel Cheetham and Bud Townsing, as members of the Wingecarribee Heritage Advisory Group, have made strong contributions to the Wingecarribee Community Heritage Study (WCHS) by the WSC. So please read our article on the WCHS.

### AGHS-SHB Committee

Chair and Secretary	Ruth Bailey
Events Coordinator	Eleanor Dartnall
Treasurer	Lynda Cowley
IT Coordinator/Research	Jenny Woodwell
Editor/Research	Bud Townsing
General Member	Chris O'Brien

### Associate Members

Tours	Ray Bradley
NMC Representative	Lyn Barrett
WSC Heritage Representative	Laurel Cheetham

## Station Street Opens 18 July 2023

### Photographs by John Swainston

After 6 years of intense activity by the *Friends of Bowral*, the National Trust, and the AGHS-SHB, the WSC officially opened the Station St Project on Tuesday 18 July. It was attended by about 80 members of the community. This was also a celebration of the renovation of the heritage camellias, the rebuilding of the trachyte terraces as well as new camellia plantings and the preservation of eight Pin Oaks. After a welcome and the official opening by WSC Administrator Mr Viv May, John Barrett (President of the *Friends of Bowral*), Dr. Meg Probyn (former Chair of the AGHS-SHB at the time of the initial efforts to preserve the heritage camellias) and Dr. Steven Utick gave very interesting addresses summarising the activities that were needed to preserve this vital aspect of our Southern Highlands history.



Viv May on the left, John Barrett addressing the attendees.

John Barrett spoke as President of the *Friends of Bowral*:

“Ladies and Gentlemen, what we see here today is a great example of what can be achieved when you have an engaged community concerned about an issue and a Council, or in our situation an Administrator, that is willing to listen to the community’s concerns and work collaboratively to find solutions.

*Friends of Bowral* became involved in the Station Street matter just after the former Council’s community meeting at the St Jude’s Church Hall in September 2017.

A large number of you will remember that meeting when Council Officers gave a briefing on the project, 11 community members spoke against the proposal. Issues raised by the community at that meeting included the impacts the proposal would have on the iconic Pin Oak entrance to Bowral, loss of car parking, loss of the historically important camellia grove at Bowral station and the questionable benefits the proposed road was supposed to deliver in improving traffic movement in Bowral.

It was clear that the briefing session raised more questions than answers and so a group of concerned residents formed *Friends of Bowral Inc* to investigate the project and seek answers to a growing list of issues.

We were fortunate to have in our group a range of skills which included an Architect, Town Planner, Project Manager, Finance Officer and we could also call on engineering, legal and heritage advice when required.

I think it is common knowledge that it was extremely difficult for *Friends of Bowral* to gain answers from the former Council to many of the issues we raised partly because they didn’t know, or they didn’t want to know.

The lack of information from the former Council prompted *Friends of Bowral* to seek answers from various state government Departments that were involved in the project such as Infrastructure NSW, Dept of Transport, Sydney Trains, ARTC, NSW Treasury, Dept of Planning and the Premiers Office. Over 98 letters were written with countless e-mails, texts and telephone conversations made to try to obtain information or discuss responses received.

The process was laborious and at times frustrating, but it became clear to our group that what was being proposed by the former Council did not represent value for money and would have a devastating impact on the entrance to Bowral and the amenity of our town.

As *Friends of Bowral* continued to investigate the project it was apparent that the previous Council was becoming irritated with our activities and claimed that we represented only a small proportion of the Shire population and the bulk of the Shire wanted the project!

In one of the 55 planning meetings of our group, it was decided that *Friends of Bowral* should test the feeling of the community by circulating a petition to request a review of the project and save the Pin Oak entrance to Bowral.

Our group had stalls at Mittagong Markets and Bowral Markets, a number of retailers had our petition in their shops and we also stood at Bowral station in the mornings and afternoon for a week in mid-winter to further inform people about the project. I would like to thank the 3,300 members of the community as well as visitors who signed the petition and who offered their support for our efforts.

I would also like to thank the National Trust who listed the Pin Oaks and the camellia grove at that time.

Another challenge that we encountered was to get more information about the project into social media. To this end it was decided that *Friends of Bowral* would produce a video highlighting the community concerns with the project. I would like to thank Matt Murfitt for helping to produce the video and the over 8,000 people that viewed it on YouTube, also the many people who responded offering encouragement and support to have a flawed project stopped.

I do think that the video helped as not long after it was produced the former State Government took a much closer look at the project and also took a very close look at the former Council.

In closing I would like to thank Viv May and Lisa Miscamble for listening to the concerns of the community and for their thorough review and abandonment of a flawed scheme proposed by the former Council. I would also congratulate Viv and Lisa for proceeding with this road upgrade that not only preserves the iconic entrance to Bowral, has made Station Street a safe and functional access road, and provided much needed additional parking all of which has been achieved in a financially responsible manner.

I think that the words of Tom Vilsack neatly summarises the Station Street saga when he said-

“People working together in a strong community with a shared goal and a common purpose can make the impossible possible.”

I would now like to introduce Dr Meg Probyn who was Chair of the AGHS-SHB at the time when this started. Meg will give you some details about the historical significance of the Pin Oaks and the Camellia grove that have been preserved for future generations.





**Meg Probyn making her speech.**

Meg Probyn gave a moving speech; this is a slightly edited version of her speech.

“First of all, a big thank you to Viv May, Lisa Miscamble and the Council staff for saving this historic landscape and enhancing it so brilliantly. We’ve almost forgotten how awful life was with the old Council — and the battles that were fought and finally won. What a relief it is to have all that behind us!

Before *The Friends of Bowral* came into existence, a number of us belonged to a group called *Highlands Matters* (and a thank you to Alan Olsen) — and it was that group and the Australian Garden History Society-Southern Highlands Branch (AGHS-SHB) and various garden clubs of Wingecarribee which campaigned to save the Station Street Pin Oaks and camellias. We organised a rally on 22 May 2018 and put a label on each of the remaining pin oaks with the name of the child who had planted the tree to commemorate the coronation of King George VI and Queen Elizabeth in 1937.

As Chair of the AGHS-SHB, I spoke at the rally and was interviewed by Win News. That evening’s news program gave more time to the opposition — one of the old bully Councillors from Wingecarribee Council who happened to be a developer — do you remember he was hopping about attracting attention on the opposite side of the road wearing Bermuda shorts in the freezing cold?

I want to acknowledge the important role played by Laurel Cheetham in the campaign as someone who not only understands planning and heritage issues but is also a keen gardener and lover of camellias. And thanks to Jan Wilson, our very special communicator and agitator-extraordinaire!

All the garden groups and concerned members of the community have been watching the progress over the last couple of years — from a dry slope with some stone embankments and a mixture of camellia trees and weeds. We have to thank, in particular, Margaret and Peter Chadwick who watered the old camellias during the drought. Without their work we wouldn’t be looking at the splendid group of historic camellias —including those planted in 1936 by the Berrima District Horticultural Society.

The terraces, which Wingecarribee Council has now restored, were originally constructed by Bowral Council using local trachyte stone sourced from Mt Gibraltar, with labour provided through the ‘relief worker’ scheme funded by the Commonwealth Government in the mid-1930s. The project was undertaken to create an attractive landscape for those alighting from trains at Bowral station and to hide the ugly shops and paling fences on the opposite side of Station Street.

Since the 1930s, there have been at least three other plantings of camellias on the top terrace. We know this because some of the surviving camellias are varieties that were not available in Australia until much later.

Trees planted on the top terrace last century are all camellia japonicas and have been identified by Dr Stephen Utick, from Camellia Ark: they include ‘Aspasia Macarthur’, ‘Odoratissima’, the rare ‘Jouvan’ and ‘Prince Eugene Napoleon’.

Some were introduced to Australia by William Macarthur of Camden Park in the early 1800s, others were developed by early Sydney nurseries, or were imported from Europe, and Japan. These camellias are both significant individually, and as a group growing along the footpath.

The trachyte stone terraces and camellia plantings were listed on the National Trust Register in 2020 as part of the ‘avenue of Pin Oak trees and camellia plantings in Station Street’. Thank you to the members of the National Trust.

The railway terraces and heritage camellias would have been destroyed if Station Street had been realigned as proposed by the previous council. Instead, thanks to our Administrator, the trachyte terraces have been restored, the heritage camellias saved, and, with the addition of the camellias recently planted by Bill Parker and his team from Camellias R Us, we now have a wonderful camellia collection in good health as part of the entrance landscape to Bowral.



**Viv May, Judy Hannon, John Barrett, Lisa Miscamble, Stephen Utick and Meg Probyn.**

A heart-felt thank you to our Administrator, Viv May, and to our General Manager, Lisa Miscamble, and all the Council staff involved in this project. It is very important that the significance of the camellias be explained on site and AGHS-SHB is working with Council to produce relevant signage.”



**Margaret Chadwick, Meg Probyn and Peter Chadwick**





John Barrett



Listening intently



Dr. Stephen Utick of Camellia Ark Australia



Ruth Bailey, Leonie Furber, Susan Hand, Ralph Suters and James Furber

## Who wants to be a ratbag?

By Clive Probyn of *Friends of Bowral* June 2023



*'When the garbage man says Merry Christmas and holds out his hand, a ratbag shakes it.'* Barry Humphries - photo Getty Images

Dictionaries always lag behind usage, so definition of the Australian term 'ratbaggery' is disappointingly negative: the ratbag is thus a persistent nuisance whose behaviour is bizarre or objectionable. Any single individual who has tried to speak truth to power and been dismissed or ignored will know the feeling. A true ratbag, however, does not give up easily and will not take No for an answer. The concern addressed by ratbaggery is the relationship between the individual and the power of a group.

When one monkey screams in the jungle, the other monkeys take no notice; but when a hundred monkeys scream, all of the others join in (thanks for the example, Patti Mouhtouris!). The point, of course, is that while a single ratbag may be quickly labelled a misfit and therefore quickly ignored, collective action by a group of ratbags may be politically more powerful and is much harder to ignore. When ratbaggery turns into communal action, lives may be changed and they are hard to ignore.

A certain Council proposes that in the interest of improving traffic flow, although at a very large financial cost, eleven venerable Pin Oaks lining the northern entrance of their town are to be cut down. Initially, only the ratbag minority objects to the cost, the 'planning', the environmental damage, and initially maybe only one or two wise monkeys begin to scream in the jungle. Over time, however, and after many hours of public meetings, petitions, letters to the minister in state parliament, and conversations with an increasing majority of individuals, a large and representative body emerges to defeat the Council's plan.

The screaming in the jungle becomes almost deafening, and eventually the original Council is obliged to abandon the jungle, defeated by swelling numbers in various tribal groups (including the AGHS-SHB, Highlands Garden Society, Bowral Garden Club, *Friends of Bowral*, and of course the good folk of the Southern Highlands). Their reward for collective and persistent activity over five or six years is included in Council's agenda for 28 June 2023.

Here, in the words of Peter Edwards, is *Friends of Bowral's* response: 'What a difference! We still have all the Pin Oaks, camellias in a much-improved planting setup, all the original parking spaces at the railway station, a new smooth roadway and the cost was only a quarter of what (the previous Council) had finally proposed.'

Well done to all the friends of Bowral! There are urgent problems to be confronted now and in the future (housing density being perhaps the most urgent). New voices must be heard, but they can only be heard if they speak up.

# The Wingecarribee Community Heritage Study

By Bud Townsing

On 19 July 2023 the Wingecarribee Shire Council (WSC) Administrator formally supported the Wingecarribee Community Heritage Study 2021-23 (WCHS). Over 2,209 pages of worksheets were prepared for the WCHS and over 5,500 images collected and indexed. The WCHS recommends the heritage listing of 465 properties, the creation of seven new conservation areas and the extension of six existing heritage conservation areas.

The WCHS is the most important step towards heritage conservation in Wingecarribee since the Wingecarribee Heritage Review of 1993 – that was thirty years ago!

The WCHS has been a remarkable co-operative effort between the WSC and local groups such as the AGHS-SHB, Berrima District Historical & Family History Society, and the National Trust Southern Highlands Branch. Sarah Farnese of WSC has played a key role in preparing the WHCS. We also need to thank Michael Park, Lisa Miscamble and Viv May of WSC.

Members of the WSC Heritage Advisory Committee, (later called the Heritage Advisory Group), were invaluable in assisting with the investigation and assessment of items. Linda Emery provided historical advice on numerous sites in the Shire. Laurel Cheetham and Charlotte Webb reviewed scores of items that were identified as being of possible garden interest. Heritage architect, the late Ian Stapleton, provided advice on significance, particularly with regard to interiors. Ralph Suters greatly assisted in developing spreadsheets and methodology and Bud Townsing took numerous photographs. Dennis McManus has contributed countless hours of research and has been instrumental in getting the cooperation of these local heritage experts who have volunteered their time, at no cost to WSC, to help produce the WHCS. An amazing effort all round and a special thanks to Dennis for the extraordinary effort he has put into this project over the last three years.

The WCHS has benefitted from work by local volunteer researchers across the Shire. Tim McCartney in Mittagong, Welby and Braemar, David Baxter in Moss Vale. David Brennan, Caroline Cosgrove, and Andrew Pardoe provided information on all matters related to Bundanoon, Helen Tranter and Andrew Kennard on Robertson, and Bernadette Mahoney on Kangaloon.

The great value of this locally based research is its depth and quality, which is far more than any heritage consultant firm could provide in a heritage study of this kind.

The WCHS is important as it provides a much expanded detailed and accurate inventory of Wingecarribee Shire heritage sites. The NSW Department of Planning and Environment (Heritage NSW) has just come under criticism from the Audit Office of NSW for not having adequate oversight of state heritage assets with data quality and completeness issues in the State Heritage Register. The WCHS is well ahead of the State Heritage Register in terms of quality and accuracy for descriptions of heritage properties.

Of increasing concern in relation to the impact on the character of neighbourhoods, our villages and towns has been the continual and broadening amendments to the State Government's State Environmental Planning Policy. These SEPPs allow for a range of development types (including demolition, dual occupancies and medium density style housing in certain areas) without the need for a development

application and with minimal community notification on sites that do not have heritage protection. Having heritage listing is about the only effective way to avoid these state-wide policies.

The WCHS also strengthens WSC's case to defend Land and Environment Court appeals by developers against WSC planning decisions.

The WCHS, and the heritage listing that will hopefully come from it, is about the only tool we have to maintain the style and character of the Southern Highlands that we enjoy today so we must work with the WSC on its implementation.

## As we were going to press WSC put out the following media statement on the WCHS:

"We share our community's passion for preserving local heritage and our Community Heritage Study will soon be entering its next stage comprising owner consultation and public exhibition. The study was endorsed by the Wingecarribee Local Planning Panel on June 29, 2023 and a motion to progress it was passed at the Council Meeting of July 19, 2023.

This marks a significant step in the progress of the study which aims to recognise and protect our Shire's heritage.

During the consultation process, Wingecarribee Shire Council will actively engage stakeholders and the wider community. The study gathered evidence for more than 450 proposed items, including 250 that were deferred by the Council in 2012, combined with other identified places of potential heritage significance.

"Through engaging the community in consultation, we will present the Study's discoveries and recommendations and offer property owners the opportunity to ask questions and present relevant information about their property," said Michael Park, Executive Manager, Strategic Outcomes.

"Council officers will listen to owners' concerns and furnish them with accurate information that addresses those specific issues," said Michael. Moreover, the Council will be seeking written feedback on the Study's findings and welcomes any additional information about any property of potential or actual heritage significance within the Shire. In addition, the consultations will provide information about the implications of being heritage listed or included within a heritage conservation area.

"It is important to identify a clear way forward through this process and ensure that the issues which arose following the 2009 survey are not repeated," Michael says. "This is a very large study that includes 607 potential heritage places. Of these, the study recommends around 80% be listed as heritage items".

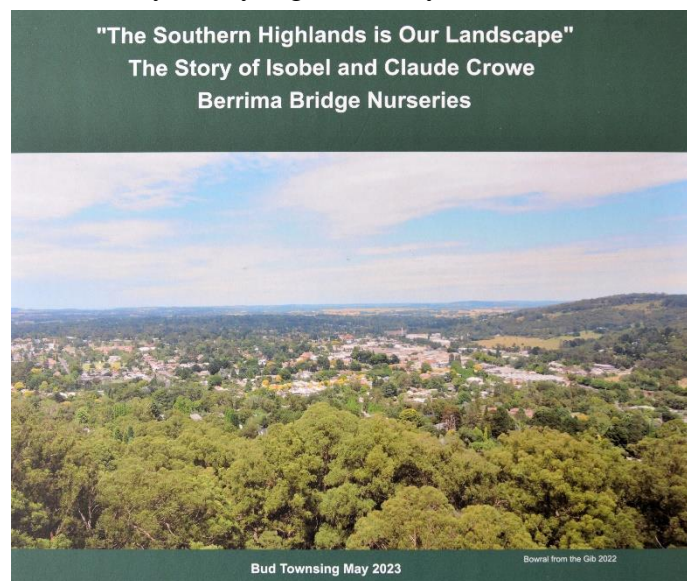
Individual letters will be sent to property owners, summarising the Study's recommendation for their property and providing links to access the full report online, including heritage evidence sheets, and other supporting information. Owners will be able to book one-on-one sessions with Council's Strategic Outcomes Team at various locations across the Shire. These owner notifications and consultations will commence before the online release of information to the wider community.

For non-owner residents and the wider community, the Council will send letters to community and history groups and make information available for download on the Your Say Wingecarribee website. It is noted that an independent peer review will be undertaken prior to finalisation of the study."



## ***The Southern Highlands is our Landscape - The Story of Isobel and Claude Crowe Berrima Bridge Nurseries***

A review by Merryleigh Brindley



In the courtyard of my infant garden at Annesley, in pride of place on two iron French baker's racks, are several miniature terracotta pots - ones that once held tiny cuttings given to me by Mr Crowe 'to try'. They are practically antique as I was just twenty-four years old when my new husband, John, introduced me to Mr Crowe whom he knew from buying trees for our farm at Berry. I was full of plans for my first 'homestead' garden, my enthusiasm matched only by my ignorance. My mother, a knowledgeable gardener, had given me Russell Page's seminal work "The Education of a Gardener" but it was Mr Crowe who became my real educator.

The first section of the book is a brief history of Isobel and Claude Crowe and the Berrima Bridge Nursery, so interesting - and touching - to see these early photographs. I remember him as a slight, quiet man with such an innate dignity that, to us, he was always Mr Crowe. I had a lump in my throat when I saw again that small, sturdy figure in his home-made greenhouse, his crumpled white hat always on his head. Similarly, his wife, Isobel, much more briskly business-like and always concerned that if he spent too much time with the customers, which he certainly did, he would miss his meals. It was a red-letter day when she actually invited us in for a cup of tea. Soon we had four children and although they loved the swing at the gate, a plant nursery is not the most riveting experience for young children. But she let them feed the chooks and very carefully water the plants and always there were biscuits as a reward.

I knew Mr Crowe was a renowned garden designer and it seems strange that it did not occur to me to ask for his design help but I wanted to do it myself. Arrogant as well as ignorant! But he continued my education by taking me to meet two Bowral women who became both friends and mentors - Joan Arnold of Busker's End and Mrs Crago of Highdown - now owned by Jeanne Villani, OAM, a long time AGHS member and supporter. And always, when we loaded up our booty after each visit, there was included 'something to try'. When for health reasons, we moved from Berry to a large property, Bute Park at Cootamundra, the first tree we planted was his gift, a Weeping Silver Pear. Years later, on retiring to Bowral and our new garden, Carisbrooke, he gave us a tiny Japanese

maple, 'Berrima Bridge' which he had developed. (I hope they are thriving - I have never returned to that beloved garden.)

The story of Isobel and Claude Crowe and the Berrima Bridge Nursery is one segment of a joint project at the Berrima District Museum between the Southern Highlands branch of the Australian Garden History Society, (the AGHS-SHB) and the Berrima District Historical and Family History Society (the BDHS). It is called *The Gardens and Landscapes in the Southern Highlands - Then and Now*. When preparing for this segment, the author, Bud Townsing and Ruth Bailey, the chair of the AGHS-SHB were shown by AGHS member, Laurel Cheetham, copies of over 200 garden plans Claude Crowe had sketched for his customers some thirty to forty years ago. Although Mr Crowe had designed gardens all over NSW the majority were in the Southern Highlands and its surroundings. Intrigued, they decided to see how many of the local plans they could locate. The fascinating story of this search and the 56 local garden plans they have identified, form the second part of the book. This is particularly valuable as the original plans are in the Caroline Simpson Library in Sydney and valuable too as so many properties have changed hands over the years. How exciting for an owner to find they really have a Claude Crowe designed garden! I am sure I will not be the only one, who book in hand, will go on a Crowe exploration, surreptitiously of course, so as not to alarm the natives.

The third part of the book is a 1987 list of ornamental trees and shrubs at Berrima Bridge Nurseries, most of which I can almost guarantee we loved, bought and later enjoyed, with Mr Crowe's advice, of course. This book is a treasure, to learn from, particularly if you are a local, and to appreciate how one couple can change and beautify their surroundings, both near and far and inspire others to do the same.



Merryleigh Brindley at the AGHS-SHB Winter Solstice Seminar at Burrawang on 25 June 2023 courtesy Annabel Murray.

Copies of *The Southern Highlands is Our Landscape* can be bought from Bud Townsing, 0429 030 195, for \$160 each.



## Winter Solstice Burrawang 25 June 2023

By Lynda Cowley

Forty-Four members and friends gathered in front of a wonderful fire in the small hall at the historic Burrawang School of Arts to hear presentations by Dr Stephen Utick Vice President of the International Camellia Society, inaugural Chair of its Committee for Historic Camellia Conservation and Nick Corbett General Manager of Properties, National Trust of Australia (NSW). A delicious lunch prepared by the ladies of the Moss Vale Evening CWA was thoroughly enjoyed by everyone.



Burrawang School of Arts, Bud Townsing photograph.

Stephen Utick's topic was *The Bicentennial of Camellia Collections in NSW: Reflective Lessons for Garden History, both Local and Global – wider reflections on the significance of Camellias to garden history.*

The first camellias were planted in the Sydney Botanic Gardens in 1823. Camellias would then become a significant feature of numerous properties across NSW, Victoria, South Australia, Tasmania & Southern Queensland. These Australian raised cultivars would become the first nursery products of colonial NSW.



Botanical Gardens Sydney circa 1908, Townsing Collection.

Currently it is estimated that there are between 250-350 species of Camellias. Camellias have two main features which contribute to their being a considered a living antique, their longevity with some specimens being thousands of years old and the continuity of the cloned Camellia.

Locally the oldest camellia in Australia, at Camden Park (*Camellia japonica* 'Anemoniflora' 1824), was used by Sir William Macarthur for breeding garden camellias in NSW between the 1830s-1840's. *Camellia japonica* 'Planipetala' from Borzone, Italy in 1851 was discovered at Oldbury Farm, Sutton Forest.

Most of Australia's camellias came after the Second World War as Japan, Vietnam and China opened up when hybridization and cross breeding led to camellias having significant landscape impact.

The camellia was considered a sacred flower throughout Asia, being worshipped for over 600 years as the 'god of the garden' in Yunan and used as a meditation flower in China and Japan. Camellias have been identified in Britain and Europe since 1792 and one is over 220 years old.

In 1893 New Zealand was the first country to give women the vote and the Suffragist Movement's symbol of 'womanly excellence' was the white *Camellia japonica* 'Alba Plena'.



Close to home *Camellia japonica* 'Rosa Mundi Rosea' 1947 was the key marker cultivar for dating the later plantings at Station St Bowral and is shown below.



To celebrate the Bicentenary of NSW Camellias, a new hybrid Australian camellia has been released by Camellias R Us, 'Winter Celebration' - shown below.







Lynda Cowley thanking Stephen for his talk, John Swainston photograph.

Nick Corbett's presentation was on *Threats and Opportunities of The Gardens of the Southern Highlands*. Nick resides in Bowral and has played key roles in important local Bowral Conservation Area issues such as the saving of the Alf Stephens houses in Aitken Road, Edward Street from a medium density development (and heritage listing the early cricket pitch used by Don Bradman on the site) and helping save the Pin Oaks on Station Street.

Nick discussed the origin and pattern of development of the gardens of the Southern Highlands. He used a definition of gardens going beyond private gardens to include broader streetscapes and landscapes. Gardens are a significant part of our heritage and environment, yet there are very few protections for the urban environment and the threat of loss is higher than ever.

He discussed the initial confluence between the Australian and European Landscapes.

- "English Pleasure Garden".
- 1865 – wealthy people came to the area and created magnificent, expensive gardens.
- Federation – Accessible Gardens with smaller houses
- Parklike serenity.
- Prominence of 'the garden'.
- Picturesque views of the countryside.
- Small houses on large land.

Compared to 2023 where the trend is to big houses on small blocks = impact on neighbors.

THREATS – loss of green space and Urban Sprawl.

1981 Council Amalgamation, led to a loss of historical information, the loss of regional diversity and the area is increasingly tied to Western Sydney.

Nick posed important questions to the audience as to what can we do as individuals to preserve these important places? How do we ensure the legacy of careful stewardship is not lost on our watch?



Nick Corbett giving his presentation, John Swainston photograph.



Merryleigh Brindley and Clive Probyn, winners of the lucky door prizes at the Burrawang School of Arts. John Swainston photograph.

## AGM and Winter Seminar

Australian Garden History Society – Southern Highlands Branch

*East Bowral Community Centre*

71 Boardman Road East Bowral

(behind the Scottish Arms Hotel)

Sunday 27 August 2023

11:00am to 4:00pm.

Lunch will be provided.

Speakers:

- Ben Heyman Great Dixter House & Gardens, Northiam, Rye, East Sussex
- Geoff Duggan Master Craftsman of the Drystone Wall Association of Great Britain

**Members: \$50.00 and Non-Members: \$55.00**

**Please contact Ruth Bailey at**

**[ruthbailey1428@gmail.com](mailto:ruthbailey1428@gmail.com)**

**if you would like to attend.**