

Inflorescence

November 2024

The Newsletter of the Southern Highlands Branch of the AGHS



Events for 2024

<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>
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Upcoming Events 2024

6 December Christmas Drinks at Tavistock, Exeter.

Report from the Chair

This is our last *Inflorescence* for 2024. We've had a very active year and I hope you've all had an opportunity to attend at least one or more of our events.

The National AGHS Conference in Bunbury WA during late October was a wonderful experience. I had not previously been to this area of Australia. My total experience with the Margaret River was through delicious wine so I was amazed to learn that surfing and camping are the major activities in this southwestern region of WA! Nonetheless we learned about the extensive history of the SW area of WA and some of the challenges now being faced with an expanding population along the coastal plain to the north and south of Perth.

John Viska and his team put together an excellent and diverse program which was attended by 150 members. Bunbury has an interesting history starting with the French coming by in 1801 (hence Port Leschenault) to the landing of free settlers in 1839 at Australind (named after Australia and India business connections) in the area populated by the Noongar people. It was a challenging and fraught beginning to settlement but it later thrived. The Noongar Land Enterprise group commenced in 2012 to help build a culturally appropriate and commercially sustainable business opportunity for the Noongar people.

The geological history of the southwestern area clearly explained why the area around the Margaret River and Albany was perfect for wine producing grapes. We learned about the evolution of the grape growing areas and how the late 1950s was the beginning of superb wineries. It is now the States most famous wine region with internationally acclaimed wines from Vasse Felix, Moss Wood, Cape Mentelle, Sandalford, and Leeuwin Estate.

Of particular interest was the terrible stress on the tuart (*Eucalyptus gomphocephala*) woodlands and forests of the Swan Coastal Plain. These have now been included on the critically endangered list of threatened species and ecological communities. The native peppermint trees (*Agonis flexuosa*, is a species of flowering plant in the family Myrteaceae and is endemic to the SW of WA) and arum lilies are providing too much competition for much needed water in addition to other challenges such as cattle grazing. Other plants are also invading the woodlands, and these include the ixia from South Africa and the freesia. Notably the arum lilies are now spreading to the Karri and Jarrah forests which is concerning as these lilies are very difficult to remove.

Pre-and post-conference tours were also thoroughly enjoyed by all who participated. I attended the post conference tour through the Margaret River Valley and saw some amazing gardens ranging from almost totally succulents to some that reflected spring/summer gardens out east with a few natives tucked in between.

In this issue of *Inflorescence* you'll find articles about The King's Foundation Australia which has just acquired the Hillview Estate and intends to undertake major conservation works. Bud has provided some historical background on Hillview and the role that the AGHS-SHB has played over many years in the 1990s.

A description of our Sydney Coach Tour on 13 October has been created by Susan Hand. Visits to Elizabeth Bay House, the Paddington Reservoir Gardens and Vacluse House will provide some amazing reading.

Jenny Woodwell has reported on the Hunter Valley Coach Tour. I'm sure you'll enjoy Jenny's description of our three day tour. We visited the Hunter Valley Botanic Gardens, the Kurri Kurri murals, the Wallis Creek Watergarden and the Hunter Valley Gardens during the day and during the night to see the Christmas lights. We visited Grossman House in Maitland as well as the historic town of Morpeth. It was a very diverse and interesting trip organised again by Ray Bradley.

Hume & Hovell 200th anniversary story has been provided by a descendant of one of the members of the expedition Lisa O'Donnell, daughter of Annette O'Donnell.

Looking forward to seeing many of you at our Christmas Celebration on 6 December!

Best wishes,

Ruth

Hillview

By Bud Townsing

On 22 October 2024 King Charles announced that The King's Foundation Australia has acquired the Hillview Estate in Sutton Forest. This will be the first flagship regeneration project for The King's Foundation Australia, as well as the base for developing the charity's activities.

Taking inspiration from the model of sustainable and heritage-led regeneration at Dumfries House, The King's Foundation Australia will restore the property and its wider estate and run education and training programmes for the local community in traditional and heritage crafts.



Nearmap image of Hillview taken in February 2022.

The Hillview Estate is a State Heritage-listed property and was the former vice-regal summer residence of the Governor of New South Wales from 1882-1957. The King's Foundation Australia's vision for the regeneration of Hillview is to restore and conserve the historic property and develop it as a landmark new cultural hub for the region and the nation.

A number of AGHS members were actively involved in trying to save Hillview in the 1980's and 1990's. Tim and Keva North of AGHS were involved in the mid 1980s. The AGHS-SHB were actively involved between 1995 and 1998. Charlotte Webb, Sally Darling, Nicholas Bray and John Stowar were all involved trying to maintain the Hillview gardens. AGHS-SHB held open days with for example on 28 April 1996 650 people attending and a \$2,500 profit was made on the day.

The following is an extract from an article on Hillview Dennis McManus recently wrote for the Highlands Garden Society Bowral.

"The best part of my working life were the 25 years I spent in Heritage with the NSW Government. As a senior officer I got to meet many interesting people across the state including Mr Edwin Klein who owned Hillview at Sutton Forest from 1957. In 1985 he rang me to ask if the NSW Government would be interested in receiving Hillview as a gift to the people of NSW. He told me that he had so

enjoyed his time there that he wanted to give something back. I arranged a full Heritage Council visit and soon after the gift was accepted. Mr Klein's only requirement was that he be allowed to stay there for the rest of his life and he did so dying in 1990. From 1987 we arranged for caretakers Helen and Victor Tait to both look after the property in conjunction with the Department of Planning. The caretaker period ended in 1999 and for the last 25 years Hillview has been leased privately.

Mr Klein told me that his idea in buying the 150 acre NSW Governor's hill station retreat was to establish a retirement home for older folk. The retirement home idea did not work out but he stayed on mainly living in the ADC wing to the house. He took great pride in the garden which was about 7 acres in size and was especially fond of camellias.

The original house on the site was a two storey gothic style house in stone built by Robert Richardson of Richardson and Wrench in about 1868. That house is still there engulfed in later extensions after the government bought it in 1881. The later extensions included 38 habitable rooms including 27 bedrooms. Sixteen governors used Hillview as a summer retreat from 1882-1957.

It has long been acknowledged that the vice regal presence from 1882 positively affected the development of the highlands as a place of great gardens and houses – a legacy we now all get to enjoy – long may that be so.

The remarkable thing about Hillview was that it was a complete estate including the main house, the ADC wing, stables, fruit packing rooms, farm and cricket pitch etc. When I first went there in 1985 it was very much as it would have been in 1957. There were complete rooms of furniture, carpets and wallpaper and even crockery and cutlery in the kitchen and fruit and vegetable baskets in the outbuildings.

This sounds like good news for heritage and people of NSW and I might say a relief to me as it has the promise of fulfilling what Mr Klein would have wanted for Hillview."



This photograph of Hillview was taken by Keva North in about 1987. We think the outline of this garden bed can still be seen in the 2022 Nearmap image in the previous column.



A 1987 view of Hillview by Keva North.

On hearing the news John Stowar emailed me to say; *“My association with Hillview has been a long one and it is so gratifying to learn of this turn of events which is the very best outcome one could ever hope for after chequered years struggling to give the property the attention it demanded.*

Even before the Australian Garden History Society did its best to assist with garden maintenance, over several years horticulture and arboriculture students from TAFE colleges (Ryde, Padstow and Wollongong) enjoyed the opportunity to gain practical experience under the direction of their teachers.

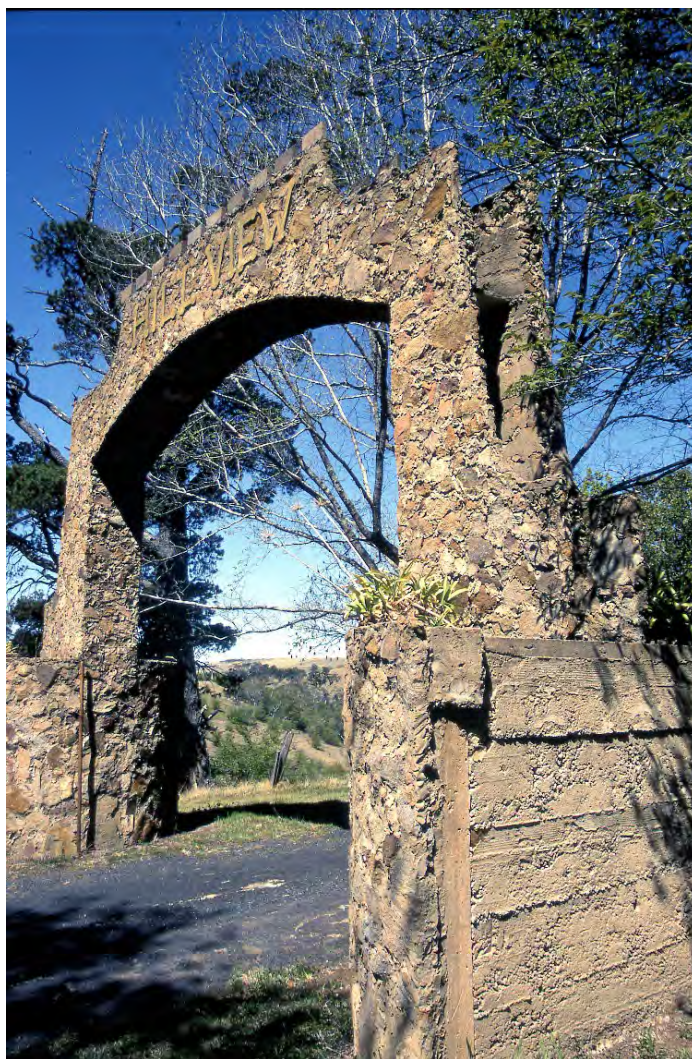
This was a rare opportunity to work on an old established garden that clearly needed help. Students found the place inspirational in so many ways. That the property will now continue in perpetuity to provide a teaching environment of such calibre is the very best outcome and way beyond anything we could have anticipated.

We all should give thanks for the vision of King Charles in establishing his Trust that not only guarantees protection of the property but provides skills to students who sometimes are in desperate need of optimism for their future.”



Photograph taken by Keva North in May 1987 of a working bee at Hillview. Tim North is on the left in the red shirt and Noel Symonds is second from the right.

The Hillview photographs on the right are by Keva North and taken in 1987. Mr Klein's entrance to Hillview was the stone and concrete archway in the centre photograph. It was demolished as being deemed structurally unsafe.



Sydney Coach Trip

By Susan Hand

On Sunday 13th October a near-full busload of AGHS-SHB members and guests enjoyed a day trip to Sydney with visits to Elizabeth Bay House, Paddington Reservoir Gardens and Vaucluse House.

With an early start, and an easy trip up the motorway, our first stop was at **Elizabeth Bay House**.

This grand, heritage-listed Colonial House, in the Regency style is situated high above Elizabeth Bay affording it magnificent views across Sydney Harbour and beyond.



The design of the house is attributed to John Verge and was built between 1835 – 1839 for the Colonial Secretary, Alexander Macleay.



Macleay had been granted 54 acres of land at Elizabeth Bay soon after his arrival in Sydney in 1826. For eight years prior to the construction on his trophy home, he set about improving the site, using assigned convict labour and, with the help of the gardener Robert Henderson, he established a private botanic garden with stone terracing, rustic bridges and winding gravel walks.

Unlike his contemporaries, Macleay did not clear the site of all the native vegetation but embellished his garden with mature stands of native trees in which he planted specimen orchids and ferns to enhance botanical interest. Macleay used large trees, such as native Araucarias (pines) to define the gardens and frame the views.

The gardens were filled with almost every variety of vegetable, a trellised vinery, a flower garden and was rich in botanical curiosities. Macleay's collection of plants was declared in 1841 by Joseph Hookes, Director of the Royal Botanical Gardens, Kew, to be a "botanists' paradise" and considered to be better than the Sydney Botanic Gardens collection.

The nurseryman Thomas Shepherd wished others in the colony would emulate Macleay's approach to landscape design in the colony.

Macleay's garden was also noted for its fruit trees and plants from every climate – flowers and trees from Rio, the West Indies, the East Indies, China and England along with an immense collection from New Zealand. His passion for exploration and collection, his donation of plants to the Sydney Botanic Gardens and his exchange of plants with William Macarthur at Camden House were instrumental in developing the botanic history of NSW.

The huge cost of constructing and planting the garden contributed to the financial woes that would eventually cost the Macleay family the estate. The final land sales in 1926 left the house as an island, surrounded by roads with the only fragment of garden left being that opposite the house. It is now known as the Arthur McElhone Reserve. This area had once been an elliptical lawn within the original carriage loop of the house and had been extensively planted with every Cape of Good Hope bulb known in the colony of 1840. A sea of ixias, sparaxias and freesias to name a few would have been a sight to behold.

Sadly, due to financial and other misfortunes, the gardens were subdivided and sold off so that 20 years after the house was built, the site was reduced to only 6 acres. Three generations of the Macleay family lived in the house until 1903. By 1928 the house had become an artists' squat and in 1941 it was converted into 15 flats. The artist Donald Friend occupied a flat in the morning room in 1942. The house was restored and opened as a house museum in 1977.

Elizabeth Bay House is truly a grand colonial house of beautiful proportions with an elegant sweeping staircase showcasing the woodworking skills of the colonial tradesmen. Thanks to the work of the Sydney Living Museums, a NSW Government agency, we can enjoy its beauty and history, but can only imagine the gardens that surrounded it.



Our next stop was the **Paddington Reservoir Gardens** on Oxford Street.

This stop was of particular interest to this writer as I had been brought up in Paddington. As a young schoolgirl I had attended Woollahra Demonstration School which had held its end-of-year Fancy Dress Ball at the Paddington Town Hall located across the road from the Reservoir. Of course, in the late 50's and early 60's the Reservoir site presented as a service station. I well remember its bleak service station frontage with the Walter Read Reserve (est. 1953) on the Reservoir's flat roof.

It was pleasing to see it today as an award-winning park. Hailed as a blend of the ancient Baths of Caracalla in Rome and the Hanging Gardens of Babylon, it was opened for all to enjoy in 2009 winning the Australian Award for Urban Design. The reuse of the old building provides a cool, green open space retreat in a high-density inner-city location.



From Paddington we travelled to Rushcutters Bay Park where we enjoyed our pre-packed lunches or coffee and food from the kiosk.

Our final stop was **Vaucluse House** in Wentworth Road, Vaucluse. This property was bought by William Charles Wentworth in 1827 from Captain John Piper.

Wentworth dreamt of building a family mansion in the Gothic Revival style of Sydney's Government House on the site.

Wentworth, a lawyer and wealthy gentleman, consolidated the estate through the additional grant of 370 acres to create a grand estate of 515 acres. By the 1830's the gardens and ground covered most of the present-day suburb of Vaucluse, but the main house was still unfinished in 1915.

Despite Wentworth's many achievements – including the first European crossing of the Blue Mountains in 1813, campaigning for civil rights, publishing the colony's first non-government newspaper (*The Australian* in 1874) and the formation of the Australia's first university (University of Sydney in 1852) – he was never welcomed into the “exclusives” club and his wife Sarah (nee Cox) was isolated from social life for having borne two of their children before marriage.

Vaucluse House now comprises of the main house, kitchen wing, stables and outbuildings, and is surrounded by 28 acres of formal gardens.

Thriving in the pleasure garden to this day is a Yulan



magnolia (*Magnolia denudata*) from SE Asia. This plant was part of Alexander Macleay's collection at Elizabeth Bay House and was listed for sale from nurseries in Double Bay from the 1850's.

A botanical link between the two houses we visited!

A special thanks to Sue Trudeau for organising this tour.

The 2024 bicentenary of the Hume and Hovell Expedition from Appin, NSW to Corio Bay Victoria in 1824.

By Lisa O'Donnell, photographs by Bud Townsing.

The expedition comprised Hamilton Hume, Captain William Hovell and six convicts, Thomas Boyd, Henry Angel, William Bollard, Claude Bossawa, Thomas Smith and my great great grandfather James Fitzpatrick. Their epic 1,900 kilometre journey opened southeastern Australia to European agriculture and settlement.

My mother Annette O'Donnell is a member of AGHS-SHB, and my father Hal O'Donnell was the great grandson of James Fitzpatrick and my daughter Victoria Willis is a great great great granddaughter.

James was born about 1800 in Limerick, Ireland. He was convicted in June 1822 (together with his cousin, Hugh O'Donnell, in a large group of 43 Irish protesters), charged with "attacking a dwelling with firearms". This was an offence under the Insurrection Act. Essentially, he was an Irish rebel against the British Crown.

In 1822 he was sentenced to seven years and was transported to NSW on the convict ship *Mangles*. At the time his profession was recorded as a labourer/ploughman and he was described as 5'5" tall with brown hair and grey eyes and described as a large, powerful man.

In 1824 he was assigned to the expedition.

Not a lot is known of James' experiences on the expedition. There is however, one amusing story.

The crossing of the first river provided one of the lighter moments of the journey, and a story that followed James Fitzpatrick for years afterwards.

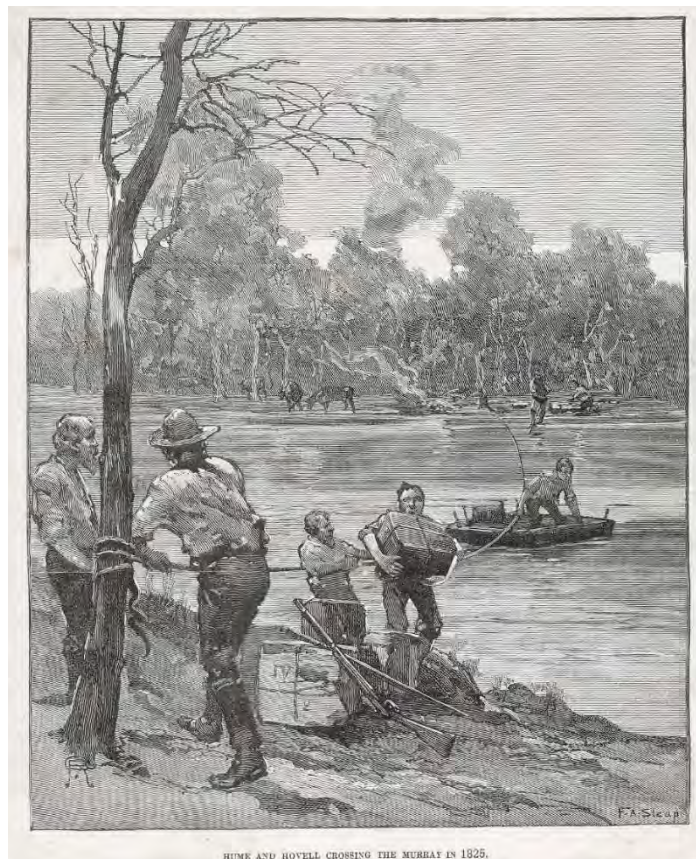
He hadn't learnt to swim, and when crossing Hume told him to hang on to the tail of one of the bullocks.

He followed Hume's orders but was just enjoying the triumph of his arrival on the opposite bank when the beast covered him in excrement. This resulted in raucous laughter from the party.

In 1825 on the recommendation of Hume and Hovell, the Governor granted James a Ticket of Leave (the recommendation included Henry Angell), and his Certificate of Freedom was granted in 1829

He married Mary Ann Atkinson, an Irish convict, in 1832 in Campbelltown, she died after 34 years of marriage. They had no children.

From the 1830s through to the 1870s he acquired large tracts of land, making his fortune including a squatting run in the Cootamundra-Gundagai district called Cucumle Station and also farms south of Campbelltown in Appin and Narellan, and the historic home Glenlee at Menangle.



HUME AND HOVELL CROSSING THE MURRAY IN 1825.

Hume and Hovell crossing the Murray in 1825, a wood engraving by F A Sleaf, published in the 1880s.

During this time, one notable story is that he drove fat wethers from Cucumle to Beechworth, single handedly. After their sale, he returned home with £1,500 cash in his pocket.

In 1868, at nearly 70 years of age, he married his second wife, Elizabeth Cummins, the 18-year-old daughter of one of his tenant farmers. They had two daughters and a son.

His wife Elizabeth died in 1882 at the age of 33 due to a fall from a horse. James died 3 months later at the age of 82.

Their children, as minors (Mary Ann 12, Elizabeth 9 and James 5) were then placed under the guardianship of Patrick J O'Donnell, the owner of Mingay Station at Coolac (James' nephew and my great granduncle).

James Fitzpatrick was a great supporter of Hamilton Hume, especially in later years when conflicting accounts of the expedition were published.

Descendents of James Fitzpatrick held property in the Campbelltown area until the late 1960s/1970s when the NSW Planning Authority compulsorily resumed land for future development.

The Australian Botanic Garden Mount Annan was, for example, a dairy farm owned by Fitzpatrick descendants the Sedgwick family. My Mum and Dad's farm at Eagle Vale, another former James Fitzpatrick property, was also acquired which resulted in them coming to Avoca in 1972.



The above photographs are of bicentennial celebrations on 12 October 2024 at Hamilton Hume's home Cooma Cottage at Yass. The large tree to the right of the house is a Canary Island olive tree (*Picconia excelsa*) and is believed to have been planted in the 1840's or 1850's.

On Sunday, 13 October 60 people gathered at Lansdowne Bridge Goulburn to plant a *Picconia excelsa*, a cultivar of the tree at Cooma Cottage. They were at the spot where the eight members of the Hume and Hovell expedition camped on October 11, 1824. Six days later they left from Hume's property at Gunning to find an overland route to Port Phillip Bay in Victoria.



Stuart Hume of Garroorigang Goulburn (pictured above with Jennifer Lamb of History Goulburn on our left), is a descendant of Hamilton Hume, he described the expedition as:

"A curious group of eight, standing on this very spot 200 years ago, were an unlikely party."

It was led by a tall young bushman (Hume), a ship's captain (Hovell) and six convicts with carts, oxen and all their primitive equipment.

It would be a momentous journey of discovery which would secure the future of the colony and lay the foundations for the eventual separation of Victoria from NSW.

Hume's reputation as a natural bushman who respected Aboriginals led to the commission by the NSW Governor.

Hovell was a former ship's captain, adventurer and successful free settler with good government connections.

By any measure it was an extremely challenging task, fraught with physical difficulty and all the dangers of the unknown.

The expedition was run on a shoestring; Hume and Hovell had to provide most of the supplies themselves.

It was a journey through uncharted country, across dangerously flooded rivers, blocked by the impasse of the snowy mountains and, at times, impenetrable scrub.

Yet they reached the coast after three months. Their return journey took just 31 days but was marked by starvation as supplies ran out, stock died and dogs perished. However, all the men returned. They were given a "meagre reward" and money promised by the NSW government was never paid".



Annette O'Donnell, Lisa O'Donnell and Victoria Willis admiring the just planted *Picconia excelsa* at Goulburn.

Tour to Hunter Valley 19 to 21 November 2024

By Jenny Woodwell, photographs by Ruth Bailey and Bud Townsing.

Last week, on Tuesday morning at 7.30am, 26 AGHS members and friends took a bus trip heading north to the Hunter Valley. Our special thanks to Ray Bradley for organising an interesting 3-day itinerary with a good balance of gardens and history. Our thanks to our driver Dave of Kennedy's Tours for smooth and safe driving and teaching us a little about bridge construction on the way!

Our first stop was the Hunter Region Botanic Gardens, with a guided tour through the grevilleas, the rainforest and the Australian conifers, the cactus garden and the stunning orchid hot house followed by a lovely light lunch.



These gardens are tended by 175 volunteers, and there is no government support. The gardens were a delight to wander around. The photograph below shows Susan Hand, Ralph Suters and Frances Pope being given a special tour by one of the locals!



That night, we stayed at the very comfortable Mercure Hunter Valley and enjoyed a lovely dinner, and each other's company, all included.

On Wednesday we headed off to Kurri Kurri where we were given a guided tour of the many murals, without getting off the bus. One of the murals included all the footballers and athletes from the town who were famous in

their day, such as Johnny Sattler. There was another mural of a lady called Maude Butler who tried to enlist as a man in WW1, so she could get to the front and help as a nurse. Maude made it onboard a troop ship, only to be discovered and sent back to Melbourne. Fascinating story if you have time to google her.



Above is the big Kookaburra created from recycled materials and below is one of the murals. This one is the local blacksmith and somewhere in every mural is a Kookaburra!

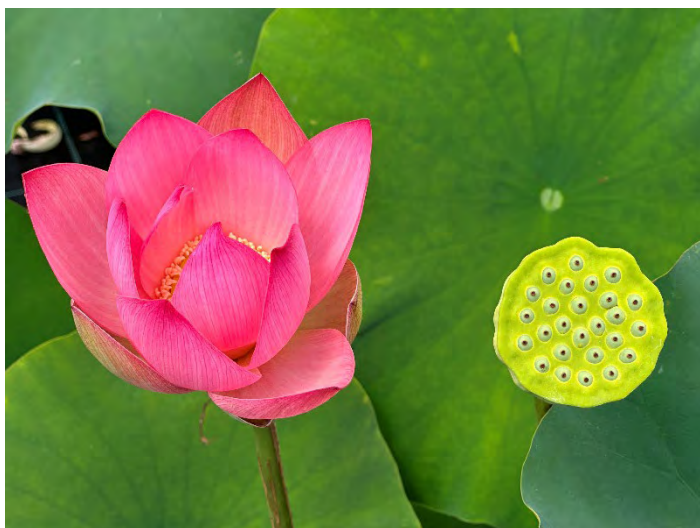
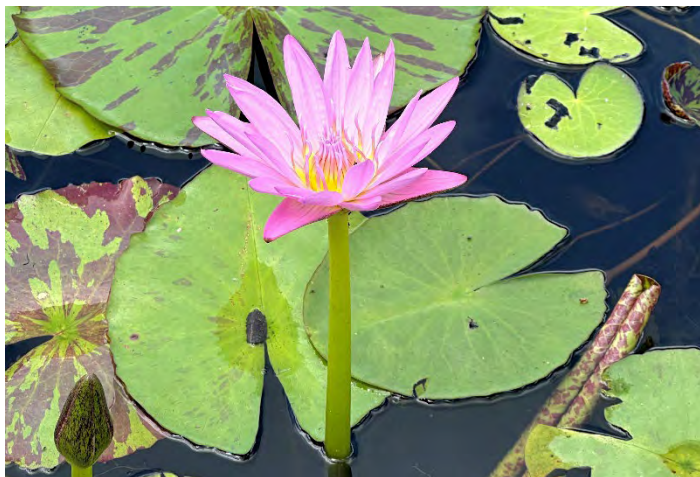


Kurri Kurri owes its existence to the local coal mines. By 1902, mines such as Stanford Merthyr and Pelaw Main had opened and mine workers and their families moved nearby.



The Delegate Board of the Newcastle Miners Union flagged a need for a township, and the Pelaw Main Miners' Lodge led the local residents in applying for the 'New Mining Township'. The name 'Kurri Kurri' is a local Aboriginal term for 'hurry along'. Because of the development of the mines nearby, Kurri Kurri was the 4th largest town in NSW by 1914.

We then visited the Wallis Creek Watergarden which had some beautiful water lilies and lotus flowers. There are over 200 varieties that thrive in and around water and over 100 varieties of water lilies. It was truly fascinating.



After the Watergardens we had a beautiful Ploughman's lunch at Taste of Country at Pokolbin. Highly recommended if you are in the area. It was delicious.

Back to the Hunter Valley Gardens for a walk around the gardens and then another lovely dinner at the Mercure.

After dinner we were bussed over to the Hunter Valley Gardens to enjoy the wonderful display of the Christmas Lights.

These gardens were founded by Bill and Imelda Roche who had a vision:

'A love of gardens enhances lives and brings with it an appreciation of nature's beauty. Gardens also provide a counter to the many pressures of day to day living. The spiritual experience of getting back to nature and into gardens is very rewarding.'



I think we all enjoyed the lights at night – such a Christmassy, festive atmosphere.

Next day we headed off to historic Maitland and visited Grossman House, a rare historic restored Victorian property built 1870-71 by Isaac and Caroline Beckett.



Grossman House

Beckett and his business partner Samuel Owen operated a General Store in Maitland selling guns, frying pans, kettles, sacking, bird cages, candle sticks, irons, dress materials, soap, poultry and alcoholic beverages. The house became the Maitland Girls High School from 1894 to 1963. This beautifully restored National Trust home is filled with Victorian-era décor which told the story of local Maitland life and industry in the 19th century. The guide told a fascinating history of the family who built the house.



The Ladies Withdrawing Room at Grossman House.

After Maitland our last stop on the tour was the beautifully preserved historic town of Morpeth.



This town was instrumental in the development of the Hunter Valley as it was one of the most important ports in NSW from the 1820's. With the opening of the Queen's Wharf in 1833 the trade route to Sydney opened up, and the town soon became a major industrial and agricultural hub.



1820 convict constructed house now a flower shop in Morpeth.

Next April there is another trip being planned by Ray Bradley to the Blue Mountains. I really encourage joining these tours, as they are not too busy, very interesting and quite relaxing. It is an easy way to see things which are not that easy to access as individuals.

AGHS-SHB Committee

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