

Inflorescence

September 2022

The Newsletter of the Southern Highlands Branch of the AGHS



Events for 2022

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

Tours:-

- Canberra Coach Tour 13 October
- Millthorpe Garden Ramble Coach Tour 4-7 November
- Adelaide Tour, 27 March - 4 April, 2023

Other Events

- National Conference in Tasmania 11-13 November
- Christmas Drinks at Hopewood 1 December

13,000 dwellings is a 55% increase in our present housing stock. It is the equivalent of building a subdivision larger than Renwick each year every year. We are working closely with other community groups in discussions with the Wingecarribee Shire Council to help maintain the heritage and landscape environment we treasure in the Southern Highlands. Developers are land banking and submitting Development Applications which could significantly impact our environment.

We don't wish to block development per se but there are significant challenges with various over-riding State Government planning policies encouraging bland, increased density developments. This makes it difficult for the Southern Highlands to retain the gardens, trees and landscapes that make this beautiful environment unique in NSW for residents and visitors alike. There is a summary of our submission on the draft South East and Tablelands Regional Plan on page 8 of this newsletter.

A special thanks to Ralph Suters and Jenny Woodwell for writing articles for this *Inflorescence*.

We welcome a new member Uta Le Gall from Ruse.

Looking forward to seeing many of you at upcoming events and hopefully at the Christmas drinks on Thursday 1 December at Hopewood House (watch for an email in the coming weeks for registration).

Regards, Ruth

Report from the Chair

This is our first newsletter for the 2022/2023 financial year and we are off to a great and busy start with two new members on the committee, so thank you Chris O'Brien (General Member) and Eleanor Dartnall (Events Coordinator).

Our first event was a welcome afternoon tea to new AGHS-SHB members in the past 12 months on 9 September and the second event the Southern Highlands Car Trail on 25 September. There are two tours coming, the Canberra Coach Tour and the Millthorpe Garden Ramble Coach Tour, so watch for email reminders of closing dates for these tours.

The unveiling of the Camellia Garden storyboard at the Bowral Library on 9 August was a great success. I've been watching the camellias bloom and we cover this on page 7 for the flowers and some photos of the unveiling.

At our first Committee meeting on 14 September we put together a draft events schedule for the next 12 months and we are in the process of firming these up. Now that many of us are venturing out to events with or without masks (as Covid is still in the community) and Spring is upon us, we are enjoying the opportunity to see one another again and make up for lost time.

On short notice Bud Townsing and I prepared a detailed response to the draft South East and Tablelands Regional Plan which has a set housing target of 13,000 extra dwellings by 2041 in the Wingecarribee Shire.

Committee

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

Associate Members

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

Contact us by email at: aghs.sh.info@gmail.com

Projects

AGHS Winter Seminar.

Author *Ralph Suters*

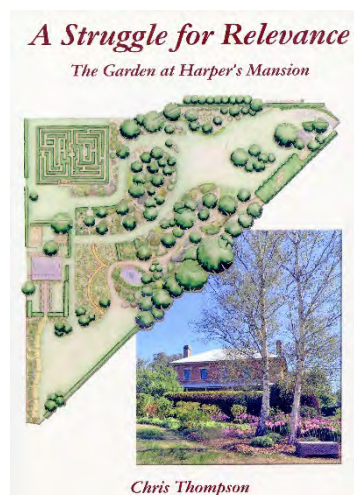
After the formalities of the AGM on 21 August 2022, we enjoyed two presentations focusing on quite different types of gardens, their history and their future.

Chris Thompson, the lead volunteer gardener at the National Trust property Harper's Mansion, referenced her recently published book, *"A Struggle for Relevance: The Garden at Harper's Mansion"*, to discuss this historic property and the development of the garden that we see today.

The second speaker was John Siemon. John is the Director of Horticulture at the Royal Botanic Gardens and Domain Trust with responsibility across the Sydney Royal Botanic Gardens, the adjoining Domain, the Blue Mountains Botanic Garden Mount Tomah and the Australian Botanic Garden Mount Annan. John spoke on the *Past, Present and Future* for these gardens.

The gardens at Harper's Mansion

Chris Thompson started by thanking the members of the Southern Highlands Branch of AGHS for the support in producing the book.



Chris pointed out that Harper's Mansion, built in the late 1830's, is owned by the National Trust but is managed by a local volunteer committee.

When the National Trust purchased the property in 1970, they renovated the house but left the land around it as it was – essentially a paddock with a few fruit trees.

Chris then highlighted the use of "relevance" and "struggle" in the title of her

book. A private garden, she noted, had personal relevance to the owner. The garden at Harper's Mansion needed to have relevance to the heritage and history of the house, relevance to the National Trust and relevance to the local volunteers. There was then an almost inevitable struggle between these potentially divergent drivers.

After a career in the scientific world, and its wranglings with Australia's energy future, Chris shifted her interest to the less contentious study of Australia's colonial history. This led to research on Berrima's earliest residents and her book *"Mitchell's County Town"* was published in 2021.

Before that she had been privileged to visit some of the most inspiring gardens in Europe, the US and South America and an interest in gardening morphed into an appreciation of garden history and why gardens are laid out the way they are.

By 2016 Chris had taken over the management of the garden at Harper's Mansion. By that stage there had been some redevelopment of the garden at Harper's Mansion and, before making any other changes, Chris took a step back to look at the history of the garden.

There was an early plan, dated 1844, of the then far larger

property, there was an 1850 advertisement for the sale of the property, and an 1869 photo of the marketplace on the south side of Berrima looking north with Harper's Mansion clearly visible in that photo.

A Conservation Management Plan had been prepared in 1984 that noting key requirements for the garden including:

- No landscaping should conceal the building
- Appropriate fencing
- Nothing to destroy the archaeological integrity
- Privy to be retained
- Grounds to be suburban in form

One key area of discussion was the "pocket handkerchief" garden of around 11 metres square in front of the house. Plans were proposed by (AGHS founding member) Tim North for a more formal garden but these were rejected in favour of a simple brick path leading from the house.

Another element of discussion was the old well. The proposal to modify the well, in a style some described as a "wishing well" was not approved by the National Trust – but the well survives.

A positive outcome was the recovery of an old set of cast iron entry gates from a previous owner who had taken them to Adelaide.

By 1998 local volunteers decided they could no longer look after the property and the National Trust agreed to it being leased to Michael & Sue Jackman. Part of the contract was that they would establish a new garden covering the whole two-acre site.



A plan prepared by Jackman included the addition of a maze, paths throughout the property and ornamental gardens. These were all designed to attract visitors and to support the Jackman business.

There was also a Heritage Impact Statement prepared by Chris Betteridge, and an appreciation by the National Trust that they needed to attract visitors. This was probably the first time the National Trust recognised there needed to be a move towards providing a "tourist attraction" rather than just conserving an old house. (This route has been vindicated with some 7,000 people visiting Harper's Mansion in 2019.)

Unfortunately, the contract with Michael Jackman was terminated in 2006 and the National Trust decided to sell the property. This was averted by a dedicated group of local members of the National Trust and the Berrima community.

The National Trust agreed to a Business Plan submitted by volunteers to take over management of Harper's Mansion. Under the agreement, the volunteers managed the property at no cost to the National Trust. It was a successful challenge.

The volunteers, including Chris Thompson, set about improving the property and make it more attractive to visitors. This included work on the garden as well as more pragmatic issues like adding paths and making the area safer with a fence around the pond and signs warning of the possible presence of snakes.

In 2013 there was work on the shed at the northern end of the garden which was later further developed into an events space with a small kitchen and outside tables and chairs. The National Trust did not have any issues with this work as it had low impact on the house – and could make money!

The hedges around the house were pruned lower to further enhance the dominance of the house. An added benefit was that the lower hedges made it easier for future maintenance – especially by aging volunteers!



One addition was a heritage rose garden. A focus on old plant varieties that might have been in the gardens before 1900 provides the garden at Harper's Mansion with a link to the origins of the property. It also attracts a range of visitors who might not otherwise visit an "old house".



Another plant focus has been the establishment of the Camelia Walk. This area now includes many heirloom camelias from Camden Park and the Shepherd and Sheather nurseries. The AGHS provided support for this project including the signage.

Chris Thompson was proud to identify a legacy of working with National Trust volunteers and other community groups to develop an interesting and attractive garden at Harpers Mansion. She felt that this work had helped the National Trust to broaden its concept of "historic collect" beyond an historic property to include the curtilage it sits within and the heritage plants in the garden.

Chris ended her talk thanking all the volunteers who have

worked in the garden at Harper's Mansion and inviting more to do so. Chris also invited someone to take a lead role as she considered moving on to other things.

The Sydney Royal Botanic Gardens.

John Siemon is the Director of Horticulture at the Royal Botanic Gardens and Domain Trust where he manages horticulture and science projects at the Australian Botanic Garden Mount Annan, the Royal Botanic Garden Sydney, the Domain and the Blue Mountains Botanic Garden Mount Tomah. John is a Horticultural Scientist with a vast array of knowledge in plant physiology, plant breeding, tissue culture and germplasm conservation. He brings his more than 20 years of expertise and passion to manage an incredible suite of public green spaces which conserve and display more than 17,000 species of plants, from across the globe and are some of the most visited botanic gardens on the planet.

After working for CSIRO and the University of Sydney, John joined the Royal Botanic Gardens and Domain Trust in 2002. First managing laboratories and science infrastructure, he went on to be the Curator Manager for the largest botanic garden in Australia, the Australian Botanic Garden Mount Annan, focussed entirely on native flora.

Chris Thompson told us about the redevelopment of the garden at Harpers Mansion that was constrained by the past but still offered an environment suited to today. John Siemon also discussed the historical framework of the Royal Botanic Gardens in Sydney, but then presented the newer Blue Mountains Botanic Gardens (Mt Tomah) and his passion for the still developing Australian Botanic Gardens (Mt Annan).

The Royal Botanic Gardens in Sydney, set on 30 hectares stretching around Farm Cove from the Sydney Opera House to Mrs. Macquarie's Chair and south towards the Art Gallery, is often thought of as the start of agriculture in Australia. But, as John pointed out, this ignores any far earlier contribution by the indigenous population.

The current relevancy of the Royal Botanic Gardens, and the adjacent Domain, is evidenced by the people visiting and events held in the area. Some 8 million people visit annually (pre-COVID!) and this is probably the most visited botanic gardens in the world.

But it is a *botanic* garden and John and his team have responsibility for over 17,000 plant taxa. He compared this with the only 350 types of animals that Taronga Zoo has responsibility for.

While it does have a heritage and historical foundations, the Royal Botanic Gardens continues to evolve.



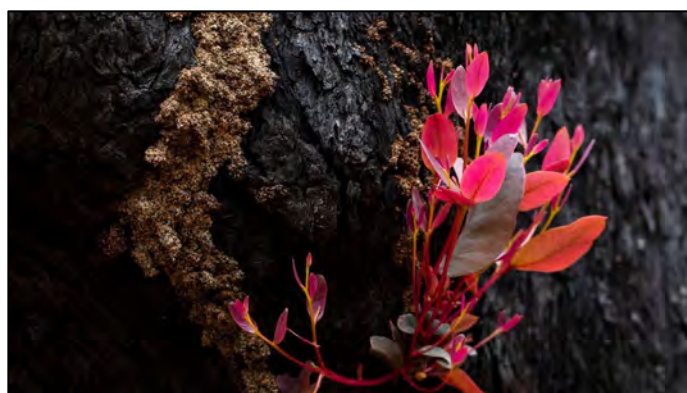
This is also the case with the Blue Mountains Botanic Garden and particularly the Australian Botanic Garden at Mount Annan.

AGHS members may also be interested in the 2015 publication "*The Royal Botanic Garden Sydney: The First 200 Years*" authored by Jennie Churchill and Peter Valder.

The *Blue Mountains Botanic Garden*, set on 28 hectares near Mount Tomah, opened to the public in 1987. The garden has since matured greatly. But perhaps its biggest challenge came in late 2019 when huge bushfires swept through the area. The gardens had to be evacuated and some 500 specimens were lost on the fires. The impact was severe but not disastrous.



Some of the trees showed early recovery.



But destruction caused by the fires has also presented the opportunity to do things differently. Are conifers, for example, adequately represented in other gardens thus allowing a focus on another species at Mount Tomah?

After the fires, came the rain – then the plague! There is a lot of recovery work to be done.

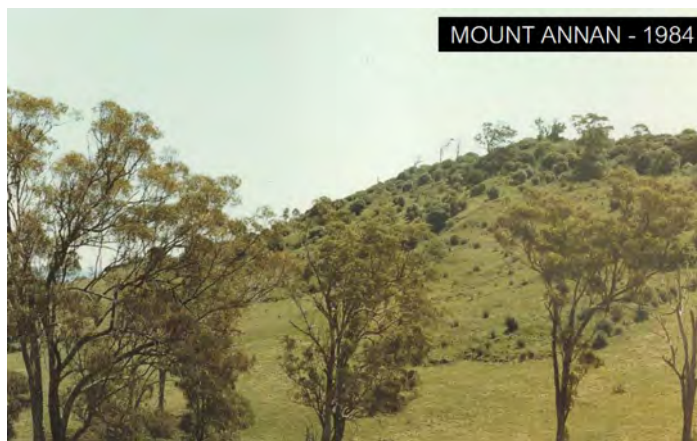
John then went on to discuss the *Australian Botanic Garden* Mount Annan. This garden sits on a 416-hectare site – about seven times the size of each of the Sydney Royal Botanic Gardens and the Blue Mountains Botanic Gardens – and was officially opened in 1988.

The Australian Botanic Garden is adjacent to MacArthur's Camden Park and surrounds part of the historic Upper Canal transferring water to Sydney's Prospect Reservoir from the four Upper Nepean dams (Cataract, Cordeaux, Avon and Nepean).

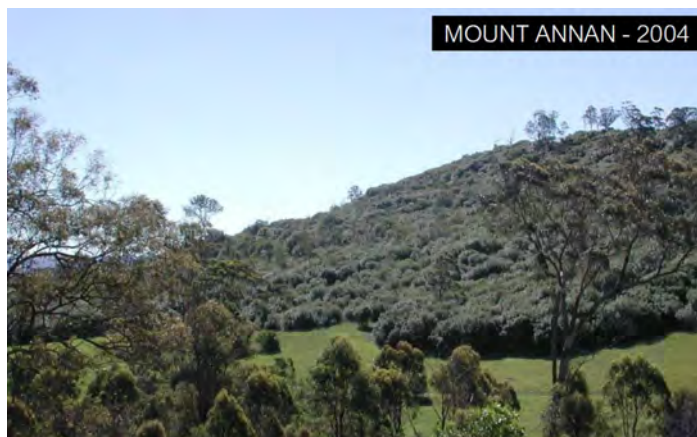
John is rightly proud of the development of the site from its very raw state in the 1980's to the wonderful site it is today. He is also greatly satisfied to see some 750,000 people visiting the site each year and that these numbers only grew as people of south-western Sydney sought open space during COVID.

But the development has not been without challenge. One was the torrential rains that caused damage during the early construction stage. Another is the invasive African Olive.

This plant was probably introduced to Australia though Camden Park and is now causing major problems in South Australia, and the Hunter and Macarthur areas in NSW.



It covered around 20% of the Mount Annan garden and eradicating, or controlling, it has been a major task. This has involved a number of methodologies including mechanical clearing (but the seeds regrow), chemical poisoning, wood-chipping to prevent regrowth, and even a heard of goats. There was consideration of biological control but this had the potential to adversely impact the Australian olive industry and their European olive trees.



But the program is showing success. From an original coverage of around 80 hectares, the African Olive now covers less than 12 hectares of the site.

While still ongoing, the work to control the African Olive must be considered a success. But there have been others.

John's most significant achievement to date has been project managing the Australian PlantBank including securing \$19.8 million dollars in fundraising for architectural design and construction of this national repository for native plant seeds.

He has also been instrumental in establishing the National Herbarium at the Australian Botanic Garden and a massively expanded Plant Nursery.

One disappointment has been the need to curtail the apprentice program due to lack of fund. This is especially concerning in that it not only affects the gardens today, but the potential lack of skilled personnel will affect gardens of the future. (Questions from the floor acknowledged this concern and asked how it could be addressed. John noted that the issue cannot be solved by short-term funding, but requires structured support over the extended multi-year period of the apprenticeship.)

From the presentation, and visits to the garden, those present could see that a tremendous amount of work has as been done since the Australian Botanic Garden opened in 1988 and that there is still excitement about the projects yet to come as John and his team continue to pursue their aim to make the Australian Botanic Garden Mount "one of the world's greatest botanical gardens"



Chris Thompson praising the amazing volunteers at Harpers Mansion who make it all possible - Bud Townsing photograph



John Siemon telling us of the history of the Royal Botanic Gardens with a dramatic background of the Garden Palace Exhibition Centre at the entrance to the Gardens going up in smoke in September 1882. Bud Townsing photograph.

Car Trail 25th September 2022

Author Jenny Woodwell

The AGHS-SHB committee were pleasantly surprised that 45 people took up the challenge of a car trip following directions and answering questions, through the countryside south of Moss Vale. What a gorgeous day it was! Not a cloud in the sky.

We started at Sutton Forest, near the pub, and headed south along the Illawarra Highway, then onto the freeway to Marulan Cemetery. After the cemetery ramble to find Hamilton Hume's grave, we ventured into the small town of Marulan. There is so much history in this beautiful town and it is really worth another visit to do the complete ramble around the town.



Shoalhaven River photograph by Jenny Woodwell

Back in the cars and on to the Long Point Lookout which had staggering views over the Shoalhaven River. Some of us rambled up the track to a viewpoint over the Marulan Mines. We could see the mine owners were carefully regenerating the areas after they had finished mining the limestone (used at the Berrima Cement Works). Along the track were beautiful wildflowers of all colours and varieties, and the bird calls were beautiful.

Tallong was next and the Memorial Park had a wonderful story board display of the history of the area. So many houses and factories have been lost to fires in the last 150 years, and we are lucky there are some photos of these buildings. The park had beautiful sculpture walk in memory of Jim Watling – an original apple orchardist.

Off to Wingello next where a few of us sampled the delights of the Wingello General Store.

Bundanoon was another lovely stop with lots of history. We learned the very successful Bundanoon Garden Club has been running since 1970 and saw the building where the Paragon Dance Studio with Dusty Booth's Jazz Band from Sydney operated in 1930.



Bundanoon Shopping Centre 1936, the Paragon Dance Studio was in the building on the extreme left in 1930. Bundanoon History Group postcard.



A more recent Bundanoon photograph by Bud Townsing.

We covered about 200 kms. and ended at the beautiful, circa 1870, Golden Vale Homestead with Mt Gingenbullen as the dramatic backdrop.



Golden Vale photograph by Bud Townsing

Nick Corbett from the National Trust of Australia (NSW) took us on garden tours through the park-like walled garden, with mature camellias, azaleas, rhododendrons and many trees including cedars, and pines. There is a lovely pond and folly which had once been a swimming pool and pool house.

We toured the house with its numerous paintings, sculptures and figurines collected by Mr. and Mrs. Keighley. The Keighley's gifted the property to the National Trust in 2005.

Afternoon tea was served by the committee in the beautiful sandstone courtyard, as a peacock strutted around the grounds. A lovely day out completed in beautiful surroundings.



Lucy Corbett taking a photo of a Golden Vale peacock - Bud Townsing photograph

The Bowral Library Camellia Garden

The unveiling of the storyboard on 9 August at the Bowral Library Camellia Garden in Bendooley Place was attended by about 30 members of the AGHS-SHB and the Wingecarribee Shire Council (WSC). Mr. Viv May, the Administrator of the WSC, thanked the AGHS-SHB and Helen Cowen (Bowral Library Librarian) who initiated this project and managed the process of creating the storyboard and other signage. He specially thanked the staff of the WSC who created the heritage camellia garden out of a long ignored and ugly patch of dirt along the fence between Bendooley Place and the Bowral Court House.

Dr. Stephen Utick (Secretary of the Camellia Ark in Australia, one of Australia's Directors for the International Camellia Society, and the first Chair of the International Camellia Society's Committee for Historic Camellia Conservation) in his address described the heritage camellias in the Southern Highlands as coming from the Belle Epoque period (1871 – 1914) as wealthy residents were emulating the English gardens of this same period. Stephen's vision for these "living antiques" in the Southern Highlands is to create a camellia trail in significant locations in the towns and National Trust properties in the Southern Highlands and Shoalhaven.

The heritage camellias were planted in December 2021 and are thriving due to the care by the WSC horticulture staff. QR code signs are now placed in front of each camellia so you can obtain information from the International Camellia Register about the history of these plants. The storyboard provides information about the history of the camellias in the Southern Highlands and will be very informative to locals and tourists.

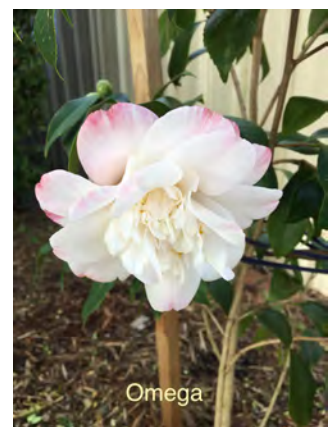
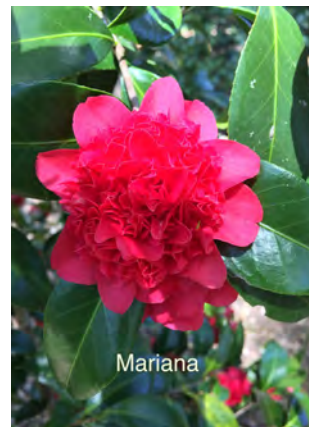
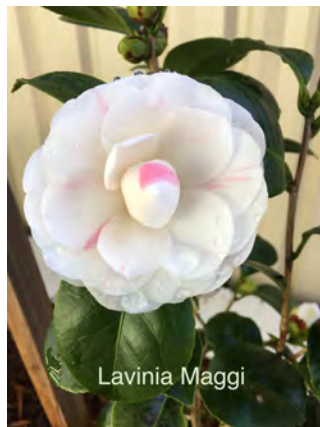
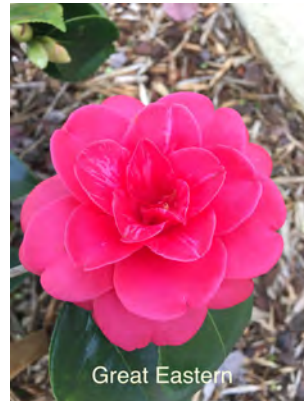


Stephen Utick, Ruth Bailey and Viv May unveiling the storyboard



From left to right are John Barrett, Laurel Cheetham, Dennis McManus, Lisa Miscamble, Brooke Reid, Mick and Greg Bray.

Below are the eight heritage camellias, photographed by Ruth Bailey at the Bowral Library.



Advocacy

On 23 September 2022 the AGHS-SHB submitted a 14 page report to the Department of Planning and Environment on the draft South East and Table Lands Regional Plan 2041. If you want a copy of our report please contact Ruth Bailey.

The text box below is a summary of the 14 page AGHS-SHB report:

There is a significant threat to the character of Wingecarribee's historic landscapes towns and villages due to increasing population, and an ongoing shift to more medium density dwellings with a reduction in gardens and tree cover.

To reduce the impact of this change we need stronger recognition and protection of Wingecarribee's heritage, its landscapes, towns and villages.

We need active steps to protect the character and heritage of the area, rather to simply rely on the broad assurances of the draft South East and Tablelands Plan.

There is an inevitable blandness that results from State-wide policies such as the Housing SEPP and Low Rise Housing Diversity Code.

The Housing SEPP allows Seniors Living medium density dwellings in all Low Density Residential areas in Wingecarribee. Therefore there is no longer any practical distinction between Medium Density and Low Density Residential zones.

The Low Rise Housing Diversity Code allows much higher dwelling densities in our Low Density and Medium Density zones. Approval is by private certifiers not Council and there is no right to object. These higher densities leave little or no space for trees and gardens.

We can complain about the above State-wide policies but if we are realistic we are unlikely to change them.

Therefore if we are to protect the character of our landscapes, towns and villages the only available mechanisms are:

- The heritage listing of particular towns, on the lines of Braidwood which is State Heritage listed,
- The heritage listing of landscapes,
- The heritage listing of individual properties,
- The extension of existing Conservation areas, and
- Creating new conservation areas.

Wingecarribee Shire Council is currently reviewing the possible heritage listing of an additional 464 heritage items and 13 new and extended conservation areas.

Berrima should be listed as a State Heritage item, an application for listing was lodged three years ago but no progress has been made.

The Sutton Forest landscape, an Aboriginal and early colonial/convict period landscape, should be heritage listed.

Coming events that may be of interest.



Claire Baddeley has sent us the following list of spring gardens that are worth a visit

The Goulburn Lilac Festival (1-3 October)

[71st Annual Goulburn Lilac City Festival - Goulburn | VisitNSW.com](#)

This event usually includes open gardens and the festival celebrating lilac.

Riversdale Garden Party , 6 November

[Riversdale Garden Party - Goulburn | VisitNSW.com](#)

This event includes garden tours and tours of the historic Riversdale property, along with stalls and cold-climate plant sales

Crookwell Garden Festival, 5-6 November

[Crookwell Garden Festival - Crookwell | VisitNSW.com](#)

A number of cool climate gardens open to the public, along with The Garden Lovers Market on Saturday at the Crookwell Public School offers an array of garden-related products: plants, trees, tools, garden art, etc .

Spring Garden Festival at Mayfield (Oberon), 24 September - 25 October

[What's On – Mayfield Garden](#)

The Berry Garden Festival (Thursday 13th – Sunday 16th October 2022. Eight gardens in and around Berry on the South Coast of New South Wales, will be open See: <https://berry.org.au/event/berry-gardens-festival-2022>)