

Inflorescence

September 2021

The Newsletter of the Southern Highlands Branch of the AGHS



Events for 2021

Friday 3 December	Christmas Party - depends on Covid-19 constraints still working on a venue.
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Tours

Due to the continuing uncertainty of Covid-19 and potential health restrictions, the Committee have made the difficult decision to cancel the tour to Adelaide which was scheduled for April 2022. The Committee is reviewing and discussing tours and events for 2022 but with the uncertainty of Covid-19 we will probably only be able to set a program early in 2022.

Report from the Chair

As the new Chair of the Australian Garden History Society (AGHS) Southern Highlands Branch I look forward to leading our Committee as we manage our way through the Covid 19 pandemic and beyond. I feel it will complicate many opportunities for us to meet in person in the near term, but we will endeavour to stay in touch with as many of our members as possible.

We need to get creative in how we communicate with our members as we move forward into the next decade of the AGHS history. All ideas and suggestions are welcome! Our Southern Highlands Branch incorporates a wide geographical area ranging from Port Kembla to Nowra/Bomaderry on the coast, our eastern boundary is Campbelltown, and our western boundary is Goulburn and Crookwell. Although many of us live in the Southern Highlands I'm sure there are many interesting locations for us to enjoy and learn about in our branch geography.

Having recently attended the virtual National Conference, which I thoroughly enjoyed, I was reminded of the wide scope of the AGHS. We all share a common desire to learn about our heritage gardens, significant landscapes, and research into their history. This was presented in an engaging way by all of the speakers. We plan to explore heritage gardens and landscapes in their widest social, historic, literary, artistic and scientific as stated in our AGHS mission potentially through different communication means. We have started to create an amazing oral history with owners of heritage gardens and head gardeners who manage some of them here in the Highlands and we want to expand this further in the coming months and years.

I personally look forward to getting to know our 170 members (and growing). Please don't hesitate to contact me if you have an issue of heritage to discuss or have an idea of visits we could make in the future or even if you would just like to chat about our Branch and how we can continue to grow and have a strong influence on our environment through appropriate advocacy.

Regards, Ruth Bailey

Annual General Meeting (AGM)

On Sunday 23 August we held a very successful Southern Highlands Branch AGM. It was held via Zoom due to current government restrictions surrounding the Covid-19 pandemic. We had 32 attendees (23 members, 5 guests and 4 members from other branches) and 13 apologies so thank you to all who were able to attend.

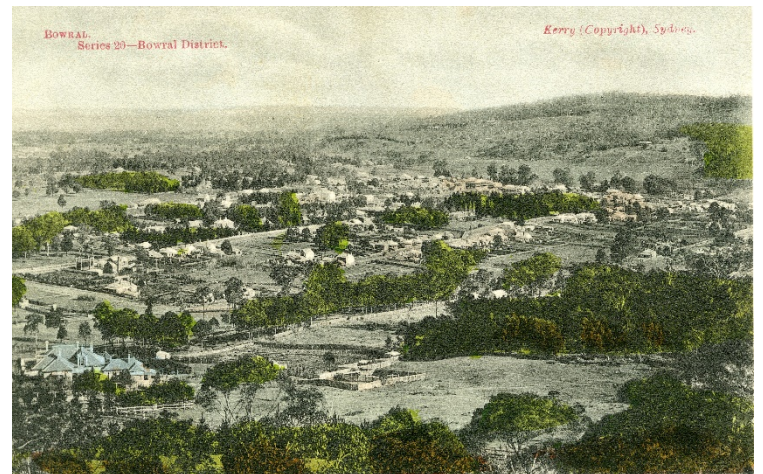
One of our branch members Stuart Macpherson gave a very engaging presentation about his 5-year role in the maintenance of the three Frensham properties as well as his prior 9 years maintaining the Sydney Living Museum properties. Such an interesting career to be involved in the management of heritage properties for 14 years, a challenging task considering the need to maintain and evolve these properties as places of continued use.

We farewelled retiring Committee members Lyn Barrett (Chair), John Biffin (Treasurer) and Meg Probyn (Editor of *Inflorescence* and Minutes Secretary) from the Committee and thanked them for their many years of service to the Southern Highlands Branch.

Ruth Bailey and Jenny Woodwell continue on the Committee. Three nominations were received from Ray Bradley (Tours), Bud Townsing (Editor of *Inflorescence*/Research) and Lynda Cowley (Treasurer) who were declared duly elected. Sue Whitehouse has joined the Committee as Minutes Secretary post the AGM.

Ruth Bailey was elected as Chair of the Committee at its first meeting on 30 August 2021.

See our new members and the skills they bring to their respective roles on the Committee on Page 8. Thank you to Bud Townsing, Lynda Cowley, and Sue Whitehouse for joining the Committee.



View of Bowral circa 1905, courtesy BDHS.

Community Activity

As our communities grow the character of the Southern Highlands towns and villages will be under major threat. The Southern Highlands Branch will continue to advocate for retention of our heritage and character that makes the Southern Highlands such an attractive place to work and live. Advocacy is a common theme across Australia in the AGHS and all branches will be working cross functionally with many other organizations to protect our heritage.

Despite the Station Street changes being blocked by the Interim Administrator of the Wingecarribee Shire Council (WSC), Mr. Viv May, there is ongoing vigilance and cooperation with the WSC needed to ensure appropriate management of the landscape along Station Street. Laurel Cheetham will be our branch representative as the WSC moves forward with preserving the Pin Oak trees, heritage camellias and environment along Station Street.

Similarly, the gardens near the Bowral Library will be renovated soon and Leonie and James Furber, with Lyn Barrett will continue to represent the Southern Highlands Branch.

AGHS National Management Committee (NMC)

Lyn Barrett will remain on the NMC as the NSW representative for the next 3 years. We will update our membership on NMC activities in each issue of *Inflorescence* so you can see the AGHS at work at a national level.

Advocacy



The proposed Hume Coal mine has finally been blocked after an eleven-year battle.

On 31 August 2021 the NSW State Independent Planning Commission (IPC) rejected plans for the proposed Hume Coal mine at Berrima. The IPC issued a strong refusal finding that the impact of the proposed mine could not be reasonably and satisfactorily avoided or mitigated.

The IPC found the project posed:

- An unacceptable risk to ground water,
- An unacceptable risk to Sydney's water catchment, and
- Would result in adverse social impacts for the residents' way of life.

The IPC decision is a great result for the many people in the Southern Highlands community whose resolve to fight this mine has been strong and unwavering for eleven years. An historic and highly scenic rural landscape with a high concentration of historic sites has been saved.

Projects



Chris Betteridge on 3 September 2021 presented to the Southern Highlands Branch, via Zoom, a presentation entitled ***Landscape Character Study Bowral Public Spaces***. This meeting was attended, online, by AGHS members as well as Greg Bray and Michael Park of Wingecarribee Shire Council. The presentation will be followed up by a written report by Chris. The report has been funded by a \$10,000 grant from the AGHS as part of the 40th Anniversary of the AGHS.

The study of the landscape character of Bowral's public spaces is important as the NSW Government is encouraging Character Studies for specific places to elevate local character in the NSW planning process. This is to ensure that government maintains, enhances and cultivates the unique character and identity of places.

Wingecarribee Shire Council has asked stakeholder groups including AGHS Southern Highlands Branch to submit information about what they like about an area to help Council in preparing Local Character Studies for the Council.

Chris considers:

- It is essential that we retain and enhance those special elements that give Bowral its "sense of place" and make it so attractive as a place to live and work, and
- Increasing pressures from climate change, urban development and infrastructure projects threaten to change the landscape character of Bowral.

The report will provide:

- A detailed analysis of the cultural landscape character of Bowral which should reinforce to Government the special qualities of the place, and
- Help inform Government and the Community of the importance of protecting the public spaces and plantings in Bowral.



Above is a view of Bendooley Street from a 1907 postcard, looking south to Wingecarribee Street.



A 2016 view of Church Street looking down to the Bradman Oval, still with its 1921 narrow road, wide verges, and tree canopy. Bud Townsing photograph.

At the Zoom meeting with Chris Betteridge the emerging issue of the NSW Low Rise Housing Diversity Code (the Code) was discussed.

The new statewide Code became operational in all local government areas of NSW on 1 July 2020.

In a nutshell the Code:

1. Allows dual occupancies, manor houses and terraces (up to two storeys) to be fast tracked where a Council's LEP permits these types in R1, R2, R3 and RU5 zones,
2. For Wingecarribee the practical effect appears to be that dual occupancies (two separate two-storey houses on one lot with ability to sub-divide or strata title) will now be permitted and fast tracked on any lot over 1,000m² in R2 Low Density Residential,
3. In the Wingecarribee R3 medium density zones manor houses (two-storey blocks of flats), and terraces will now be permitted and fast tracked,
4. Council will **not be the consent authority**, and will have **no say** in these developments, as they will be **fast-tracked by private certifiers** with no basis for affected neighbours to object,
5. Minimum requirement for back yards is 16 square metres,
6. Requires only one parking space per dwelling,
7. **Does not apply to State or locally listed heritage items or heritage conservation areas, and**
8. A Local Character Statement **is not** a mechanism to exclude a local area from the application of the Code.

Dual occupancies built under the Code are likely to result in a density of about **25 dwellings per hectare**.

The current density of dwellings (excluding the area of roads, verges, parks etc.) in most areas of Bowral is about **5 to 10 dwellings per hectare**.

Council and its Heritage Advisory Committee with Dennis McManus are currently undertaking a comprehensive review of heritage conservation areas, and heritage houses in Wingecarribee.

This is a timely and important review given the likely potential impact of the new Code on local character in Wingecarribee's towns and villages. **New State-wide planning instruments such as the Code elevates the importance of heritage conservation areas, individual heritage house and gardens listing, and Local Character Statements as the keys to maintain local character.**



An example of low-rise housing under the Code at a density of about 25 dwellings per hectare.

Online Book Auction

You will be pleased to know that we raised \$1,245 in our online book auction to support the Balmoral Village Association (BVA). This is a wonderful effort, and the \$1,245 is to be donated as Wariapendi Native Nursery vouchers.

In December 2019, Balmoral village was affected by the 2019–20 Australian bushfire season when it was struck twice by fires. Eighteen houses were destroyed in the fires.

The village does not have a Post Office or shops. It has a well-maintained Village Hall, including a children's play area, and a tennis court. The village needs to replace plants around these common meeting places. The plants purchased with the vouchers will be used to replant around the tennis court and meeting places.

Many thanks to all of you who placed bids on the books in our Online book Auction.

AGHS Southern Highlands AGM

We were delighted that Stuart Macpherson accepted an invitation to be the guest speaker at the AGM. Stuart is currently the Head Gardener at Frensham in Mittagong and has responsibility for gardens, grounds and sporting fields at Frensham, Gib Gate and Sturt.



Stuart previously worked for the Sydney Living Museums (SLM) as a horticulturalist providing support to the conservation and maintenance across all the SLM properties including Vacluse House, Elizabeth Farm and the Rose Seidler House. Stuart was also involved with the Historic Houses Fund for at risk properties.

Stuart began by asking us to consider the original creators of these historic SLM gardens, indeed any garden, and imagine “what would the garden creators think if they saw their gardens today?”.

What would W.C. Wentworth think if he saw Vacluse House today? What would John Macarthur think if he saw Elizabeth Farm today? What would Winifred West think if she saw Frensham today?

While locked down at home, but with the use of a slideshow through Zoom, we were taken on a walk through some of these historic gardens.

We were reminded of the range of historic properties and gardens in the SLM portfolio.

Sydney Living Museums

- Elizabeth Bay House 1835
- Elizabeth Farm 1793
- Hyde Park Barracks 1819
- Rose Seidler House 1948
- Rouse Hill Estate 1813
- Susannah Place Museum 1844
- The Mint 1816
- Vacluse House 1805

Each of these properties has a unique character and special connection to Australian history. But these properties also provide evidence of the changes in the world that are happening around them.

One stark example is Elizabeth Bay House that was a grand harbourside mansion, but today sits somewhat

awkwardly amidst the high-rise residential apartments of Kings Cross.



Stuart discussed the history of, his association with, and the SLM role with Hyde Park Barracks, the Rose Seidler House, Rouse Hill Estate (which was in the one family for six generations, where the aim is to keep things as they were and to “manage the decline”), Susannah Place Terraces at the rocks (with over 150 years of residential housing history and where now even “weeds are maintained as if there were heritage plants”) and the Mint.

We also saw Vacluse House and Stuart reminded us that the W.C. Wentworth property was in such a good condition, and with such extensive curtilage, because it had effectively been a museum for over 100 years since taken over by the NSW State Government in 1911 and the Historic Houses Trust in 1980. A more recent change at the property was the recreation of the kitchen garden.

Stuart touched on the **Historic Houses Fund** which identifies and purchases properties at risk, conserves and protects them, offers them back to the market and recycles the proceeds into other endangered properties. One example quoted was Throsby Park at Moss Vale.

We were then given an overview of **Frensham** and the associated properties. The founder of the school, Winifred West, was born in Frensham in Surrey. (Her mother’s maiden name was Sturt.) After establishing herself as a teacher in England, Winifred West migrated to Australia in 1907. By 1913 she had persuaded brewer Arthur Tooth to use his Mittagong property to establish a school. He agreed to a 3-year term – but the school is still there! Winifred West died almost exactly 50 years ago in Bowral in 1971.

The brick garden at Frensham remains very much as laid out by Winifred West, but some of the original plants have been replaced. Sturt, now essentially a school for adult learning, is located on the site of the Marchmont Guest House. Gib Gate, before being purchased in 1954, was the site of the Gib Farm dairy. Some of the original formal garden remains.

But, asked Stuart, how do we maintain these historic gardens using **modern ideas and techniques**? We were shown examples of the use of modern machinery including tractors, mowers, cranes and elevated work platforms. There was also the application of modern fertilisers to ensure chemical balance and soil health. But even with these tools and techniques, Stuart noted a common practice of leaving grass a little longer than otherwise usual in order to reflect the historic practice of maintaining lawns with scythes or cattle.

Another modern tool was **tree management** using the software program ArborSafe. This enables the identification, mapping, scientific assessment and recording of works for any specific tree. This documentation, along with other procedures, ensures better management and longevity for any, but especially historic, trees.

Stuart discussed the *Eucalyptus quadrangulata* or White-topped Box, at Frensham. This tree is probably older than the school and has a significant cultural value to the school and the school community. It featured (see below) in a series of B&W photos taken around the school in 1934 by noted photographer Harold Cazneaux.



Around 2 years ago a large limb fell from the tree. Fortunately, no one was under the tree at the time, but there was the inevitable question of safety and whether the tree should be removed.

After further assessment, it was considered that the tree should be retained but that steps would be taken to reduce the risk to students who would otherwise regularly walk beneath it.

The stone flagging under the tree was removed and used to create a curved wall while the tree was under-planted with native vegetation.

This has changed the way the tree is used, and improved safety, but has maintained the historic links to the past and to the school community.



Stuart then moved to discuss the impact of **weather** on the maintenance and development of historic gardens. Perhaps it was Freudian, but there was a malfunction in the slide show at this point! Stuart did note that changes in weather affects all of us but particularly impacts on gardens. Locally we can recall the recent drought and the disastrous fires in the summer of 2019/20. (Some will also remember the visit earlier this year to the Grant garden at Mittagong and Simon Grant's comment that temperature and seasonal changes mean that he cannot grow some trees or plants today that he could grow even 5 or 10 years ago.)

Stuart commended the resources available via the SLM website and access to the Colonial Plants database and the picture catalogues kept by SLM. He also noted the value of the Frensham book especially the 1934 edition with the many Cazneaux photos.

To wrap up, Stuart returned to his opening question of the garden creators returning to see the garden today.

"Everything we do with modern techniques is done to aid the presentation of the property in a way that is sympathetic to the past but relevant to the future", he said.

We may never know what Wentworth, or Macarthur or West might think, but we might have some insight from the annual 70-year reunions of Frensham students. They comment on their amazing time at Frensham as it was then but invariably say that they would "prefer to be here now". That is a compliment that Stuart, on behalf of all the past and present gardeners, will happily accept.

We thank Stuart for his interesting and insightful talk.

Author Ralph Suters

Bundanoon's Tulip-Time

In 1938 Charles Alexander Stewart Boag (Stewart Boag) acquired 14.5 acres of land, set back from a proposed road that became Panorama Avenue. Stewart Boag built his two-storey house in 1939 and the property was called Emerson Grove. Later names for this property are Marylands and Ash Grove.



Emerson Grove taken in 2008 by Bud Townsing

When Stewart Boag had finished building the house, he set about creating a "proper garden". Stewart was a successful building contractor of NSW Public Works Department buildings such as schools and hospitals. Gardening was his weekend hobby, recreation, and pleasure. Stewart designed the garden himself and did his own gardening work. He planted about 20,000 tulips importing varieties from Holland, Victoria, and New Zealand.



An article and the above photograph of Emerson Grove was in the *Australian Women's Weekly* of 24 September 1949. The title of the article was "TULIP-TIME AMONG THE GUMS".

In addition to tulips and hyacinths Stewart Boag had about 200 well established ornamental trees including lilacs, many silver birches, crab apples, oaks, retinisporas, and other cold climate deciduous trees over an area of six acres of which 1.5 acres were planted with shrubs and garden plants.

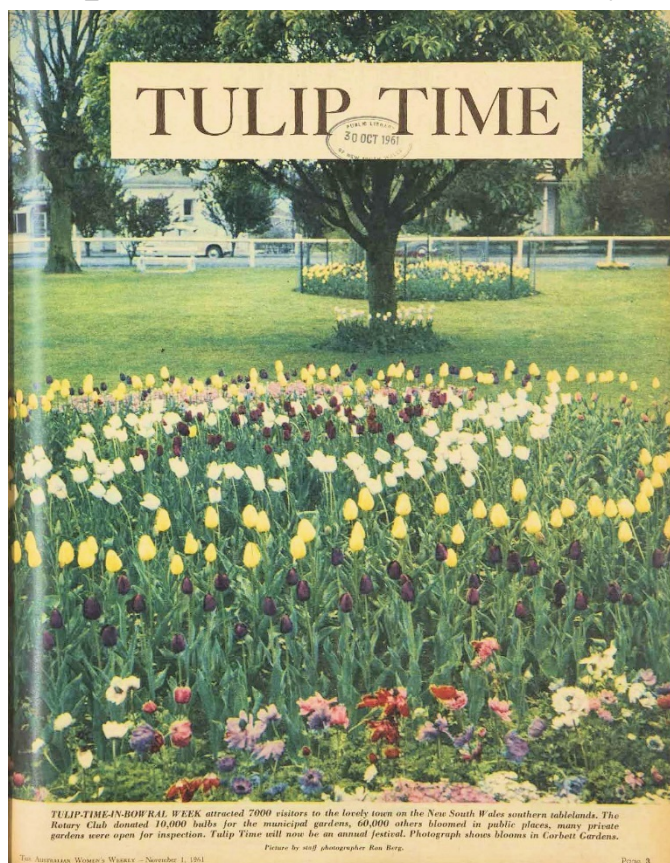
In 1949 the gardens were open from 1 October to 15 October and in the previous year "thousands of visitors from Sydney and other cities and marveled at the display". There was a small charge for visiting the garden with the proceeds going to the Homes for Incurables.

This article is based on discussions between Robert Boag and Maureen Townsing in 2008.



The above photographs of Emerson Grove were taken by the *Australian Women's Weekly* in 1949 and are courtesy Robert Boag.

Tulip Time 60-Year Anniversary



Tulip Time in Bowral began in 1961 at Corbett Gardens and was featured on page three (see above) in the *Australian Women's Weekly* on 1 November 1961.

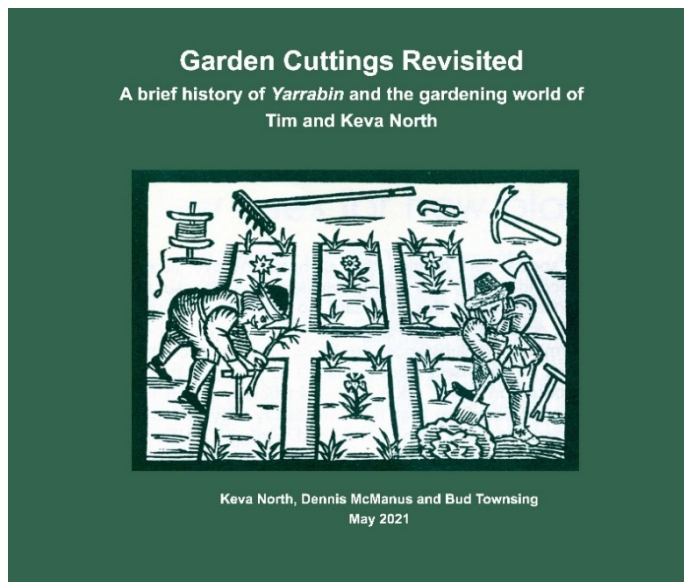


Tulip Time celebrating sixty years in 2021 under Covid-19 restrictions. We hope it will return in full swing next year.



This year is the Diamond Anniversary of Tulip Time, a 60-year tradition! Diamonds are featured in Corbett Gardens to signify this time so drop by the Gardens and celebrate this significant milestone. This year's Tulip Time Charity Partner is Can Assist an amazing charity which provides direct financial assistance to people in country NSW affected by cancer.

Garden Cuttings Revisited



In May 2021 Keva North, Dennis McManus and Bud Townsing completed the book *Garden Cuttings Revisited - A brief history of Yarrabin and the gardening world of Tim and Keva North*. Writing the book began in September 2020 with the aim of supporting the case for the individual heritage listing of Yarrabin and extending the Bowral Conservation Area to include Yarrabin.







The importance of Yarrabin for the AGHS, apart from its intrinsic value as a heritage building and garden, is that it was the home of Tim and Keva North from 1983 to 1994. Tim was a horticultural journalist, and with Keva they began producing a small eight-page magazine called *Garden Cuttings* in 1981 for what Tim called "discerning gardeners". By 1983 the magazine had grown to the *Australian Garden Journal* and was the official journal of the AGHS. Tim was the Secretary of the AGHS from 1983 to 1988. The book provides a valuable insight in the development of the AGHS in the 1980's, a period which established the importance of the AGHS along with a rapid growth in AGHS membership.

Garden Cuttings Revisited is a high-quality, hard-back large format book of 210 pages, containing many original photographs taken by Keva North. It shows the superb garden of Tim and Keva North at Yarrabin, 32 Kangaloon Road Bowral from 1983 to 1994.

It was planned to do a book launch of *Garden Cuttings Revisited* at Yarrabin on 25 September 2021 however due to Covid 19 restrictions this was cancelled.

Copies are now available for \$140 each from Bud Townsing. If you want a copy or would like to look at a copy, please contact Bud at metow@bigpond.com or 0429 030 195.

Meet your new Committee

	Ruth Bailey. After living in the US for 30+ years Ruth returned to Australia in late 2017 to build a retirement home and garden. She trained as a pharmacist and achieved a PhD in pharmacology at Sydney University. Her career was focused on the pharmaceutical industry holding a variety of management positions in marketing, strategic planning, medical education, sales and finally clinical research.
	Sue Whitehouse B.A., Grad. Dip.Ed., M.Ed (T.L.). Upon retirement we moved from Sydney to Beaumont on Berry Mountain, then in 2014 to the Southern Highlands, initially to Burradoo, then 14 months ago downsized to a townhouse at the foot of The Gib. I am interested in all things historical and after a career in secondary education, the last decade as a teacher librarian, I am now (voluntarily) teaching Ethics at Mittagong Primary - I miss the kids!
	Bud Townsing. Maureen and I moved from Tasmania to Bundanoon in 2005. Our main task was restoring the house and garden at 1 Dorothy Friend Place. Maureen became involved in research with the Bundanoon History Group and I started to help her with photography for displays. We also ran an online business selling windsurfing equipment. We “retired” to Bowral in 2015 and immediately became involved in heritage issues in the Bowral Conservation Area, resulting in the writing of several books.
	Jenny Woodwell. Gardening has always been a pleasurable pastime for me. The lady next door to our dairy farm at Brundee, near Nowra, won the Sydney Morning Herald Garden Competition a few times in the 60's. My Nanna had a prize garden in Nowra. Mum and I would travel far and wide to visit Open Gardens, notably Milton Park which, in those days, was open for charity every year. Luckily my husband Mark shares my love for gardening and history, and we visit gardens and historical houses wherever we travel. We have come to Mittagong from St Ives, which was a beautiful garden suburb, but retiring from hectic Sydney was an easy choice. Mark is still working remotely and can't wait to retire in the next year or so. My IT background has made it possible to be useful to the Committee and I have thoroughly enjoyed coordinating events such as the Online Book Auction and undertaking research on various wonderful local subjects.
	Lynda Cowley BSc (Hons) Bristol, FCPA, GAICD. Lynda recently retired and moved to Bowral, after 30 years of living in Australia, at last she has a garden to create and to finally put her ‘armchair’ passion for gardens and gardening into practice. Lynda is a Fellow of the Australian Certified Practicing Accountants and a Graduate of the Australian Institute of Company Directors. With over 30 years of accounting expertise gained in a wide variety of industries, including a large garden centre and landscaping chain.
	Ray Bradley. After retiring in 2005, Ray retired to Bowral and commenced creating a garden with a particular interest in Roses. His interest in gardening stems from a very young age encouraged by his grandmother who had a large garden in rural NSW. He also has an interest in floral art successfully exhibiting at a number of shows and venues throughout the year. Since coming to the Highlands Ray has been active with a number of community groups and each year has conducted very successful tours throughout New South Wales, Victoria and Queensland.

AGHS Southern Highlands Branch Committee

Chair, Secretary and Events Co-ordinator	Ruth Bailey
NMC Representative	Lyn Barrett
IT Co-ordinator	Jenny Woodwell
Minutes Secretary	Sue Whitehouse
Treasurer	Lynda Cowley
Tours	Ray Bradley
WSC Heritage Rep	Laurel Cheetham
Editor/Research	Bud Townsing

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