



AGHS Queensland Branch Newsletter

January 2018

On 10 December 2017, twenty-odd AGHS members enjoyed a Christmas party at the home of Lois Closter in Ascot, a perfect venue for the occasion, with plenty to eat and drink and talk about.

Chair of the Queensland Branch, Ann Wegener, spoke briefly about plans for events in 2018, which include a visit to Bowen Park, site of the former Acclimatisation Gardens and the possibility of a visit to Barambah homestead – one of the oldest stations in Queensland – later this year. Any suggestions from members for other places of interest we could visit would be most welcome.

We applauded the long-standing membership of Wendy Lees and Glenn Cooke, shown below, who first joined the AGHS when the Queensland branch was formed in 1994. See more photos from the Christmas party on the next pages.



Queensland Branch

COMMITTEE

The committee next meets on a date to be advised.

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L-R: Dorinda Rogers, host Lois Closter, Elizabeth Teeland and Jenny Freeman



Ann Wegener



NSW member Julie Nimmo



Elizabeth Teed (left) and guest Cheryl Achee



Janice Hiller (left) and Helen Mackay



Floral arrangement by Daphne Wegener; flowers and foliage shown include white agapanthus, white pavetta, red crucifix orchid, red bromeliads, red anthuriums, Xanadu, leather fern, mock orange and i



L-R: Brian Cook, Bob Hainsworth and Jenny Freeman



Elizabeth Teeland and Catherine Brouwer



L-R: Dorinda Rogers, Bruce Rogers and Graham Hesse

AGHS 38th Annual Conference – Marvellous Melbourne:

The challenge of change

My first AGHS Conference in Melbourne was blessed with great weather and a well-organised two-day troop around a fabulous range of gardens following one day of presentations at the State Library of Victoria. The speakers all delivered fascinating lectures across a range of topics. Emeritus Professor Graeme Davison showed slides of illustrations and photographs from 19th-century Melbourne, and described the various impacts on the city over that time, including the 1850s goldrush and land booms, and more importantly, the governance that established and planned the city with railways and sewerage.



Ornamental lake, Carlton Gardens

Malcolm Faul, Head of the Mediterranean Garden Society, Victorian Branch, spoke of the need for the AGHS to pay attention to the history of more modest gardens, rather than the 'large gardens embellishing impressive villas'. Malcolm showed detailed maps of Melbourne from the 1890s that were drawn up for the purpose of laying sewer lines across the city. The maps are incredibly detailed, revealing garden designs of middle-class and worker cottages, and even outhouses and fowl yards. A few of the original garden designs have survived to this day, and some present-day owners have used the maps as a reference to design and create gardens in sympathy with their houses.



Iris at Umina

Manager of Urban Sustainability at the City of Melbourne, Ian Shears, was an inspirational speaker whose 20 years' experience in green infrastructure management provided an insightful overview of the primary challenges facing Melbourne's environment: population growth and intensification, urban heating and climate change. The response to these challenges includes the development of urban forests, green infrastructure, open space and permeability expansion, and urban landscape cooling strategies. The multi-disciplinary approach by the City of Melbourne in dealing with environmental challenges imparted a great sense of optimism about the future of this city.

Professor Andrew Saniga's talk about the South Lawn at the University of Melbourne was an interesting historical journey from the establishment of the university in 1853 when its grounds were expansive and park-like, to the 1960s, when following much haphazard building, a plan for the South

Lawn was devised. The plan included a large central space and a series of outdoor rooms that Ellis Stones and Ron Rayment, landscape architects, created above the underground car park, which was an engineering feat in itself.

It was instructive to hear landscape architect Mary Chapman's lecture about her work at Carlton Gardens, site of the Royal Exhibition Building built for the 1888 Centennial International Exhibition,

and (rather unfortunately) the new Museum of Victoria, built in the 1990s. Mary has implemented many of the projects proposed in the 2005 Carlton Gardens Master Plan, and our visit to this garden on the following day made clear how many of the aims of the master plan had come to fruition, although issues around managing tourists and possums, and the long-term rejuvenation of trees and garden beds continue to pose a challenge.

Dr Peter Sergel, Director of Hamilton Gardens in New Zealand, described a most impressive redevelopment of a former rubbish dump in Hamilton into a collection of 35 different gardens that tell the story of gardens through the ages. With more theme gardens to come, the 1.1 million visitors each year are creating new challenges, but the strong community involvement continues to provide ongoing support.



Euphorbias at Carlton Gardens



Potted succulents at the front door of Garden House

Director of Urban Horticulture in the Faculty of Science at the University of Melbourne, John Raynyer, gave a lecture entitled 'Greening Melbourne, One Roof and Wall at a Time!'. Green roofs and walls have become more common across the globe, and particularly in Melbourne there has been significant planning, research and implementation of green infrastructure. John talked about green roof and wall projects across Victoria, particularly those that have applied local research and technologies. As a new form of gardening, green walls and roofs have had failures due to their specific requirements, including choosing the right plants and substrates. At our visit to Burnley College two days later, we were able to visit the roof garden opened in 2013, a most impressive demonstration garden with five different substrate depths across the roof (10, 15, 20, 25 and 30 cm) and over 3,000 individual plants in total! This roof demonstrates the variety of plants suitable for green roofs. Plants have been selected on low water use and results from research trials.

Mike Hammer, a research engineer, and his wife Inge, a retired nurse, have lived at Sassafras in the Dandenong Ranges for over 30 years on a large acreage. Mike described the ephemeral nature of their garden, accompanied by slides showing various changes and stages in its development, a wondrous forest-like setting with a mix of native and exotic trees and shrubs. Mike is concerned that limiting diversity to just indigenous plants, as advocated by some, will place the future of diverse gardens at risk. His key point, that nature is about change and any one garden is ephemeral, is certainly one that all gardeners will recognise.

Day 2 began with a visit to Carlton Gardens, where we were able to see glorious yellow irises in flower, with some growing in one of the ornamental lakes, and the elaborate fountains, including the Victorian-era Hochgurtel Fountain and circular French Fountain. The bedding plants in the



Cockspur coral tree at Garden House

parterre garden beds have been chosen from original catalogues from the 1880s, many of course still popular and useful water-saving plants, such as the euphorbia, or spurge, and salvias.

A short drive to the Royal Botanic Gardens brought us to Gardens House, where we were served morning tea and wandered around the National Trust-listed house and garden containing a beautiful Queensland Kauri pine (*Agathis robusta*) and a large Cockspur coral tree (*Erythrina cristagalli*), among many other gorgeous plants. The house overlooks the larger Botanic Gardens, a superb vista to observe from the first-floor verandah.



Umina

We next visited a garden in Straun Street, Toorak, designed by Paul Bangay, set out on a steep slope that runs down to a gully and dry bed, a lovely shady area reached by steps and quite hidden from the main garden. The planting inside the entry includes ferns, hellebores, cyclamen and floriferous arthropodiums, and other garden rooms on this property have azaleas, camellias, dogwoods, lavender, rosemary, lillipillies, among many others.

Our next stop was close by at Umina, the premises of the Country Women's Associa-



Lunch at Umina under the huge white oak (*Quercus alba*)



Wisteria-covered pergola at Umina

tion of Victoria, which they purchased in 1948 from the Bayles family. The large house, representative of an Italianite villa, also operates a bed and breakfast. We had lunch in the formal section of the garden, which Trisha Dixon and Jenny Churchill attribute to Edna Walling, based on the understated design, proportions, and use of stonework.

Bokhara at Alphington is 7 km from the CBD, but well worth the trip, as the property is quite large – about 2.5 hectares – running down to the Yarra River, with diverse areas that have been carefully planned over many years by garden designer, author and owner Kate Herd, with others. Closer to the house are native plants and others from California, the Mediterranean and South Africa, which don't need too much attention. The South African cabbage tree or cussonia is one of Kate's favourite plants. There are also several food plants, including strawberry guava, fig, olive, medlar, persimmon and pomegranate trees, with asparagus, raspberries and garlic grown on the river flat.



Garden at Bokhara



Vegie garden at Bokhara

The last gardens we visited on this day, at what is called the Tara Estate Walk at Camberwell, is a Victorian-era estate considered to be the most complete and distinguished architecturally from its time. The gardens that complement the mainly Italianite and Federation style houses use traditional plantings such as azaleas, camellias and magnolias, as well as numerous roses.

As we then had the conference dinner to look forward to, it was a quick trip back to the city. Dinner at The Terrace at the Royal Botanic Gardens was most enjoyable, with great food and wine and conversation.



Clematis at Bokhara



Interesting pond at Liddiard Street

Sunday's first garden was at Liddiard Street in Hawthorn, containing interesting contrasts of large modern sculptures and traditional garden plantings, including a Norfolk Island pine in the centre of the circular garden at the entry, lemon-scented gums (planted in 1882), a fernery, and some delightful orchids in large pots near the front door. At the next stop at Villa Alba in Kew we were guided around the house and garden, which have been undergoing a complete restoration, with the garden as seen today a result of Dr James Broadbent's horticultural knowledge and other sources,

including family photographs belonging to Fripp family descendants. There is only one plant believed to have survived from the original owner, William Greenlaw, a now coppiced fig tree adjacent to a retaining wall in the north west corner of the garden.

Back at Hawthorn, we then visited two gardens in Kinkora Road, both magnificent properties indeed with many interesting plants. I particularly liked Roseburn's secret walkway along the front fence garden bed, a cool shady area with ferns and dense plantings. The huge bunya pine at the driveway entrance is a stand-out feature. Nearby, the owners of Kinkora kindly provided a map of their garden with a separate plant list, a very useful guide as this garden was redesigned about 12 years ago and then refurbished more recently, including many Victorian-era plants

We had lunch at Burnley Gardens in Richmond, a fabulous place to visit and open to the public every day, although the roof garden is only open by prior arrangement. A helpful map with notes described the 32 areas or features to explore, including the Grey Garden, Azalea Lawn, Wild Garden, Native Shrub Garden, Sunken Garden and Wisteria Walk.



Secret path at Roseburn



The magnificent bunya pine at Roseburn



Bottle tree at Kinkora

Our final garden was at a sumptuous property in Camberwell, Astolat, built 1882–1883 and sitting on a couple of acres. There are some very old trees at the front of the property, including a huge Monterey cypress pine with wires strung between large branches and the main trunk – I was told this is a way to test the potential weakness of a branch and the possibility of it falling (if it's tight, that's a bad sign). Other mature trees include a bunya pine and Queensland kauri pine, English oak, pin oak, Illawarra flame tree, Canary Island date palm, cotton palm, wine palm and Chinese palm. The well-kept garden also includes a fern garden, tropical garden, cherry walk, woodland garden, hot perennial border, grey border and a winter border. We had afternoon tea here and celebrated the end of the conference with wine and delicious cheese biscuits. Unfortunately, I could not join the optional trip on the following day, but it was apparently very interesting, and I am sorry I missed this.

Roberta Blake



Ponytail palms at Kinkora

AGHS Tour of New Zealand's South Island

AGHS member Glenn Cooke wrote this report of the tour originally as emails, unfortunately not all the photos could be included.

1 November 2017 – Day 2 (Day 1 was arrival at Christchurch)

We departed Christchurch for Banks Peninsula and the charming early French settlement of Akaroa. Our first visit was to Broadfield Garden, which is distinctively New Zealand as it is (largely) planted with New Zealand natives (it has the ONLY border composed of entirely NZ plants) or cultivars produced here. It is owned by a developer, David Hobbs, who discovered a passion for gardens 20 years ago and it is remarkable as there isn't a house . . . it is purely a 3.5 ha garden divided up into rooms.

When he made the decision to excavate for an extensive canal he used the soil to make a substantial viewing mound much in the style of a 17th-century garden. One of the distinctive plants was a Chinese cedar (*Toona sinensis*) with striking pink and white juvenile foliage. The name Sam McCready is prominent in the Rose Garden with the roses he developed in New Zealand as well as those from his former home Ireland, but I noticed that there weren't many breeders recognised before the 1970s . . . this must be to come. This is our team leader Lynne Walker (or in NZ-speak 'Lunn') Walker. Collier is also developing a selection of gladioli by 'Spud' Brogden of Taranaki; they are totally out of fashion now but that (like the carnation) will change.

Next we visited a spectacular English-style country garden, Frensham (named after a classic red rose), designed by its owner, Margaret Long, one of New Zealand's foremost plants-women who gave us a guided tour. When she came with her husband to a raw site 20 years ago she was intent on completing a degree and then thought that she would do a garden design course . . . the degree has never been completed. The house was a pleasingly pinky-cream brick, which gave a sympathetic background to her plantings.

One of the striking features was a fence woven out of willow stems. They are supposed to have a life span of only 10 years. In one area, Margaret had built her plant selection around the single red dahlia with black foliage, 'Bishop of Llandaff' (although it wasn't in flower), and used it with a columnar berberis (*Berberis*



Chinese cedar (*Toona sinensis*)



Team leader Lynn Walker



Columnar berberis at Frensham



French Farm garden

Farm Garden, located in a sheltered harbour-side valley. The ornamental garden is inserted into the wider landscape with its magnificent backdrop of native bush and surrounding hills. Here the dramatic herbaceous borders in the amphitheatre (largely day lilies as they are tough and retain the soil and the current owners can't maintain all areas to the necessary degree) form a natural colourful amphitheatre above a pretty natural stream that contains two plots of the largest gunnera I've ever seen. (I wondered why the gunnera developed with such a profusion of prickles up its stem and learned that it is called 'Dinosaur food', which explains much.) Around the house, the native Marlborough rock daisy (*Pachystegia insignis*) is striking and I'm sure garden-designer approved!

Later we continued on to the beautiful historic village of Akaroa, to the Akaroa Village Inn located on the harbour front, where I was allocated the 1895 Shipping Office. Luxury for one!

thunbergii, 'Helmond Pillar'), other berberis and Japanese blood grass. That was very impressive, as was her sequencing of blooms through the year in other areas of the garden. But why! Oh why! Do gardeners think every place needs a pretend veggie garden? Potagers need to be extensive to be both productive AND decorative. Potagers look so precious! This too will change. Beyond that is an informal woodland area containing magnificent trees and shrubs.

After a pleasant lunch, we were driven to Banks Peninsula to a large garden, French



Marlborough rock daisy

2 November 2017 – Day 3



Giant's House garden dwellers

Josie Martin was the designer and executor of the Giant's House, today's first garden, which surrounds an historic Akaroa two-storeyed house. In this exuberant and quirky garden, colourful mosaics and stunning plant combinations complement each other. The owner/artist responsible is a trained horticulturist, which is one of the reasons this garden works so well. There is no contrived view, everything is in the detail! The garden could almost qualify as folk, although as the maker is only too aware, her art and the house interiors make a total experience. As we left the house, I told Josie 'It is wonderful to see an interior that isn't a pallid version of *Country Living*!'



Fisherman's Bay



Four Richards and a billy goat

The second garden, Fisherman's Bay Garden is a stunning haven with breathtaking views of the Pacific Ocean on the dramatic coastline of Banks Peninsula. Native plants (including 150 hebes) are combined with a diverse array of non-native plants. From one of the points on the property (the little finger sticking out on the top) the next stop is South America as it is the furthest point west in the South Island. This is truly gardening on the edge.

Richard is an uncommon name now and we have three in our tour: Richard Bird, Richard Heathcote and Richard Nolan. Jill and Richard Simpson are the owners, and on one occasion the Richards were all together. At a galvanised iron sculpture of a billy-goat, I arranged them for a photo opportunity. Richard H suggested that the title of the image should be 'Billy-goat with four Dicks' . . . and so it is.

I asked Richard S how useful the Monterey pine (*Macrocarpa*) was as I had visions of Wal (of Footrot Flats fame) heading out to attack one with a chainsaw. He said that timber was excellent provided it was allowed to grow straight instead of being used for windbreaks as it largely is, and he showed me their dining table, which was made of large slabs of the timber. I learned later that the macrocarpas are being replaced with radiata pine and especially on the Canterbury Plains the shelter belts are being removed.

I asked about gorse (brought by the Scots), which is a notorious plant on both islands, and was told that in the open areas here they are sprayed with a weed killer, but in the gullies it is left as it provides a protective environment for the regeneration of native seedlings. As the trees grow, the gorse is overshadowed and dies. I also discovered that the pollen of the gorse provides the essential protein (pollen) to develop hives quickly so they can be used to fertilise cash crops such as kiwi fruit and avocados.

There have been so many comments about the predictability of the designs of our fashionable garden guru Paul Bangay that I suggested to the AGHS guys that 'Bagging Paul Bangay' could be introduced as an official Garden History sport. Richard H said that they would be many who wanted to join in the activity.

We visited the Akaroa cottage garden of garden guru and watercolourist Nancy Tichbourne, who was the original designer of French Farm and is now determined to play with her plants. They moved there two years ago and are in the process of building a studio and garage adjoining.

We went for dinner at Ma Masion; the food and presentation thereof was excellent but the service excruciating.



A place to imprison recalcitrant visitors

3 November 2017 – Day 4

Today we drove back to the Banks Peninsula through Christchurch to Ohinetahi House and garden on the slopes of Governors Bay. It is owned by a prominent architect Sir Miles Warren, who began the present garden in 1977.

It has stunning views across Lyttleton Harbour and features a number of formal rooms of differing style and character, including a rose garden enclosed in box hedges, traditional herbaceous borders leading to a gazebo, a walled red garden and a walk of pleached hornbeams. It is considered to be a garden of international significance, but I rather question that as it is getting too fussy with excessive sculptural details and box hedges that overwhelm the rose garden.



Ohinetahi House



Tapestry hedge of three different coloured beeches



A friend I found in the garden

Back in Christchurch, known as 'The Garden City', we took a guided tour on the 'Caterpillar' of the world-class Botanic Gardens, taking in the flora, fauna and history of the gardens before lunch in the stylish new cafe. The first oak tree was planted in 1863, and the gardens now boast an extensive collection of exotic and native trees and plants.

After lunch we drove to Terrace Station, one of the South Island's oldest homes and gardens, formerly the home of Sir John Hall (1824–1907), run holder, politician and premier of New Zealand from 1879 to 1882, and one of NZ's significant democratic reformers. He introduced male suffrage into New Zealand and was instrumental in making New Zealand the first place in the world to give women the vote. Kate and Richard Foster's three sons are the fifth generation to live in the house, but they aren't inclined to continue



Terrace Station

there and the property is being set up as a Charitable Trust . . . the New Zealand Historic Places Trust is too strapped to guarantee much protection. I wish them well with their endeavour.

Parts of the homestead date back to the mid-1850s, and the garden likewise has magnificent ancient trees, such as a redwood that is over 150 years old, and the extensive woodland underneath has mass planting of bulbs, perennials and herbaceous plants.

The next stop was at Methven where we checked in to the Ski Time Lodge, which has stunning views of Mt Hutt.

4 November 2017 – Day 5

Our first visit was to Tina and Paul Richards's Quartz Hill Station, which has been in the family for generations, and there is quite a problem with snow in the winter . . . Paul leaves the gates open so that when it snows he doesn't have to first dig them out to get out of the property. Possums are a huge problem, but at least they can be shot here. I heard years ago that possum meat was exported to China, so with millions chomping their way through NZ forests it would be a great benefit. Paul puts strands of wool in trees, as possums hate getting their feet caught (worth a try in Brisbane) and also puts rubber tyres around new plantings as the rabbits don't like the smell of rubber.

Stunning rhododendrons are pretty common here and this garden is no exception. They use rams to keep the grass trimmed, as they avoid eating the poisonous rhodo leaves (not so the ewes). The woodland garden is a delight with a swathe of the Himalayan lily (*Cardiocrinum giganteum*), which is soon to bloom. Tina said that one spike will perfume the whole house. There is an enormous mountain ash (from Victoria), which is the largest in New Zealand, and Richard Nolan informed me was the tallest flowering plant in the world.



The Himalayan lily takes seven years to flower and when it does it dies

I went to check out the French Isa fowls with Frances Nielsen (from Guyra), who suggested that people who are brought up with chooks have a very strong affection for them – certainly true in my case. I hadn't heard of the breed, which lays dark brown eggs, and discovered that ISA stands for Institut de Sélection Animale, the company that developed the breed in 1978 for egg production as a battery hen. They are certainly in a more favourable free-range situation here as they don't have to contend with foxes.

The owner of Middle Rock had a stone retaining wall made in 1989 that wasn't affected by the earthquake. Middle Rock was acquired in the soldier settlement scheme in the early 1950s when stocking was one sheep for four acres, and it is now four to an acre. Alpine plants were sold by mail order to provide additional income, but when the shearers' quarters were burnt down, insurance covered the replacement of a cottage for farm stays.

At Treena and Richard Paul's garden, The Point (our last visit for the day), the tall radiata pines were making a lot of noise in the nor'easter ('Wind in the willows' it was not) and continued bluster for the remainder of the day. The garden is quite linear and flows down to the recently planted arboretum. I saw that new plantings were protected with rubber tyres, so it obviously works.

Lynn had checked with the Terrace Downs International Golf Course about stopping in there for drinks but when we got there it had been so windy that all the golfers were inside and there was 'no room at the bar'! And the river was too high for proposed jet-boat cruises so we had an early

return. Richard had pontificated about igneous rocks (basalt and granite) yesterday after speaking with Richard B and today it was the turn of sedimentary rocks (of which Mt Hutt is composed), so I asked him if he could explain the difference between 'moraine' and 'morass'.

Before dinner, Lynn had us compete in a 'Parsley, Garlic, Ginger and Pepper' test for personal characteristics, which proved great fun if one didn't take it seriously. Richard led our group as he was totally conversant with 'management speak'. Strangely, 14 of the 22 in the group qualified as 'ginger' and there was nary a garlic.

5 November 2017 – Day 6

Today we travelled to the base of the Southern Alps where Surry Hills' beautiful garden featured a tranquil lake, rhododendrons (the passion of Paul Gregg's grandmother, although his wife Sarah is now the gardener), dogwoods, sweeping lawns and an exceptional tree and shrub collection. Interestingly, here rhododendrons mean both rhododendrons and azaleas, as there seems to be no distinction made.

The entrance to the house looked Arts and Crafts and confirmed by the lawn facade with its prominent sloping roof. Inside the house, I saw the original designs by architects Helmere and Cotterill and was amused to note that it contained a maid's pantry and a mistress's pantry (presumably for all the expensive comestibles). The Himalayan lily, which I had never heard of before, appears to be relatively common around here.



The ha-ha in place here is really effective as it provides an extensive view to the foothills

Next we stopped in Ashburton, an agricultural centre with 20,000 residents and with another 13,000 in the district. We stopped to visit the local art gallery and museum. The Gallery showed 'Impressions', an exhibition of local artists replete with typical views of snow-capped mountains and landscapes.

Much more interesting was the delightful display of children's book illustrations by Ashburton (now Port Chalmers) local, David Elliott, 'Pigs, penguins and polecats'. The gallery holds 2,200 of his works. There were also prints from the original glass-plate negatives of Welsh-born William Williams (1852–1949), with such a wonderful range of subjects that I wished he lived in Brisbane. Downstairs in the Museum was a marvellous display of the history of the district and a video recording the responses of migrants who moved into the district, including men from the United States, India and Germany, and women from Kenya, Mauritius and Guatemala . . . the latter was the only one who had difficulty coping. I was moved to comment in the visitor's book! The building is probably 1970s–1980s but the botanic garden adjoining is large for the size of the town, and the huge trees shows it has been there well over 100 years.

Lunch was at Nosh, which had a very diverse menu and which surprisingly pleased everyone. I had to be extracted from the little antique shop to continue to nearby Trott's Garden, which was introduced by an avenue of cut-leaf plane trees that gave a lovely open canopy. Apparently, it is replacing the broad-leaved plane trees that are such a feature of the streetscape in Melbourne. The garden has just been purchased by a council-owned charitable trust, and Alan Trott has brought a



Knot garden

house on an acre nearby to play with. The garden will be staffed with volunteers, and he seems resigned to having nothing more to do with the garden except as an advisor. It is one of the most renowned gardens in New Zealand, planned from the start, unlike most gardens.

He was particularly proud of his knot garden (which he distinguished from a parterre by the variation in height in the box hedges and does not include flowers), which is unique in New Zealand. Some computer whiz provided the design for the view-

ing platform without ever visiting the site. The steps curve up and down in a helix arrangement and are painted blue and white – blue is his preferred colour for garden furniture.

The garden is well designed with all the appropriate plants (including 650 rhododendrons), but lacks a real sense of personality . . . except for the chicken wire pom-poms, which he made himself in the Red Garden. A dovecote with white doves and a curved espalier of hornbeams added a little more.

We had an early night at the Mainstay Hotel, Ashburton, and a plentiful buffet dinner.

6 November 2017 – Day 7

Today was the much longer trip to Dunedin. Travelling south from Ashburton on the coast, we visited two historic stations. The first one, Long Beach, has been in the Grigg family for generations (Bill and Penny Thomas are the present incumbents) and recently celebrated its 150th anniversary.



One of the original farm buildings has been repurposed for receptions, and this interesting, cubist image of a vintage car is an early work (1962) by Penny's father Michael Eaton (he is now quite well known).

The homestead is also an Arts and Crafts design by the Heathcote and Hellmore partnership, and with an old wooden church is complemented by seven hectares of sweeping lawns, old trees, woodland planting, such as this marvellous mauve rhododendron, and boxed borders.

It is very much a working property, as the tractors demonstrate. Penny showed us old buildings,

including a waterwheel and saddler store. In it were a series of old trophies, one of which was engraved with details of its presentation in 1879. I asked Penny why they weren't in the reception area, and she responded, 'Because they have always been there!'



Rhododendron at Long Beach

The other nearby historic house and garden, Akanui, is owned by Di and Ian McKenzie — it is only 100 years old! Our planned stroll in the garden was deferred with a few glasses of wine and a superb lunch that featured a leg of ham produced on the farm and a wild duck salad. I was intrigued to learn that the Canterbury Plains produce half the commercial carrot seed produced every year so, alternating with the northern summer, they produce **all** the seeds for half the year. The entire



Akanui

crop is returned to Holland where it is processed and distributed. According to Ian, the seed is 99% clean, unlike the seed produced in Australia. They are also under contract from Ribena to supply blackcurrant juice, and other farmers thought they would get on the bandwagon. The product in Australia is shipped in but the concentrate exported to Europe.

The garden was originally designed by Alfred Buxton over 100 years ago and sits comfortably around the imposing century-old, double-brick homestead. The garden includes magnificent old trees (both native and exotic) and a series of small lakes surrounded by a wide variety of plants including recently planted native species. This garden also features a lot of colourful lupins, which were the first I've seen here.



Lupins at Akanui

Later we headed south to Oamaru for afternoon tea at the castle recently built by a friend of Lynne's, Dot Menzies, as an expression of her childhood dream. I would have expected to see similar in the United States, but not in New Zealand.

Dot has made six trips to China to commission the furniture and finishes in her 'palace'. When I worked in the decorating trade we used to refer to 'inferior desecration' and this has it in spades. It will never make a design magazine in Australasia but she loves it. There is a substantial kitchen garden, but it isn't sufficient to provide the greens for the restaurant. We then spent 90 minutes on the road to Dunedin, stopping only to see the Omorau buildings in the city and the Steampunk train. Steampunk is a subgenre of science fiction that incorporates technology and aesthetic designs inspired by 19th-century industrial steam-powered machinery.



Steampunk train at Omorua

7 November 2017 – Day 8

We started the day with a guided tour of Olveston, which was built for Jewish businessman David Theomin in the Jacobean style by the London architect Sir Ernest George in 1904–07. The house doesn't appear to have any architectural merit but was fitted with all the latest conveniences: central heating, an internal telephone system, a service lift and so on. Neither of his children had children so the house and its contents were bequeathed to the city in 1966 by his daughter Dorothy (1888–1966) and opened to the public in 1967. The daughter must have bequeathed money as well, as it is possibly the best presented historic house I've seen. There isn't much distinction in the European or Asian art or artefacts on display, but the house is more than the sum of its parts as it presents the lifestyle of a privileged family in Edwardian New Zealand. The architect must have scaled the house to its inhabitants, who were quite small people, as the gallery above the living room felt claustrophobic. The garden doesn't pretend to be authentic and had a new glasshouse that suits the property marvellously. I asked the guide about the pebblecrete finish and found that it had recently been refurbished. The original Moeraki gravel wasn't quite the same colour so the concrete had to be stained and broken oyster shells added,

Later we visited the stunning Dunedin Botanic Gardens, which have just celebrated their 150th anniversary. After lunch at the kiosk restaurant, we took the train ride around the gardens as we didn't have much time. One might grizzle about not being able to grow the plants you see about you and then walk into the glasshouse to see all the stuff that you grow outside in Brisbane. I decided that I could do without a cold-house to satisfy my whims!

There is a very extensive rose garden and expanded labels that describe the various types of heritage roses (Bourbon, gallica, musk, moss, noisette . . . I know tea and floribunda). Brisbane is largely unsuitable for roses so I've never really 'got' into them.

We then went to Abbotsford on the outskirts of Dunedin to view Fran and Mike Rawling's Wylde Willow Gardens, a five-acre country garden where heritage roses are a special feature. Fran has identified over 340 heritage rose for cemeteries around the islands, but those undiscovered are at risk because of the propensity of local authorities to poison weeds.



Glasshouse at Olveston



Glasshouse at Dunedin Botanic Gardens



The simple single rose at Wylde Willow Gardens with the maroon base is *Afghan Girl*, which was lost to cultivation in Europe and rediscovered here

Pathways follow a picturesque creek through a woodland featuring masses of rhododendrons, maples, viburnums, magnolias and dogwoods, underplanted with shade-loving perennials. The 100-year-old willows, which give the garden its name, are at the edge of the large pond that used to be a coal mine.

8 November 2017 – Day 9

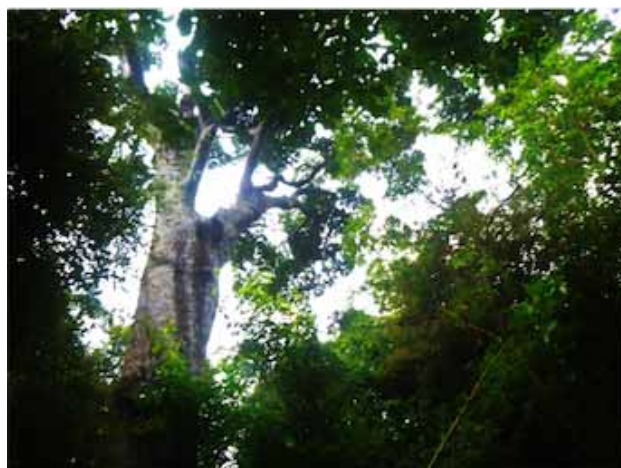
According to Sir David Attenborough, Otago Peninsula and Taiaroa Head is a unique and very special place for the wildlife, so we took the Monarch Harbour Cruise around Taiaroa Head to see the area's wildlife, including various species of albatross, fairy penguins, ocean birds and fur seals. The 'star turn' of the day was to see one of the 35 nesting pairs of the royal albatross take off against the cliff up-drafts . . . it was too far off to photograph unfortunately. Although we were well rugged up with the windbreakers provided, when I got off the Monarch I commented to Lynn 'One trip is instructive, a second would be a punishment!' I now understand what the 'Roaring forties' means (that is, winds about 30–50 kpm).

On the way back we visited the expansive woodland garden of Glenfalloch, which showcases over 140 years of botanical history and gardens. The rhododendrons, azaleas and magnolias are particularly outstanding. But I thought the most impressive part of the garden was the fantastic cafe, which has the most massive Japanese maples I've ever seen. The other impressive item was a 1,000-year-old native Matai.

We then bussed to the top of the Peninsula to renowned Larnach Castle, which I visited 35 years ago. The place is now quite a remarkable experience and has a garden of international significance. Margaret Barker, the owner, has made a concerted effort to trace the original furniture from the Castle, and she also acquires NZ furniture of an appropriate vintage to replicate the interiors. I expressed my appreciation of her efforts. The house was derelict when the Barkers took over, but hardly anyone ever lived there so it had no one to care for it. The ballroom was built by the first owner as a sop for his daughters when he had to call them back from their education in England. When he died, the daughters went to live in Christchurch.



The very pale pink *Rosa indica major* looked stunning over an archway with a white wisteria (framing Richard Bird).



1,000-year-old native Matai tree



Larnach Castle



Cabbage palms

The castle had all the mod-cons of its day, including gas lighting. The methane gas was produced here and used the manure hosed down from the stables. Margaret is a dedicated plants-woman and long-time member of the Dendrology Society. She has created a series of garden types from all over the world, including a spectacular South Seas garden, which must be one of the few in the world. I was intrigued to learn that the silver fern, New Zealand's official signature, is actually a tree-fern with white to the undersides of the leaves.

NZ cabbage palms (*Cordyline indivisa*) are a very rare relative of the lowland *C. australis*). The laburnum walk was impressive and just starting to bloom. I asked Richard Heathcote (who led the tour to English gardens last year) if he had seen the equivalent in the tour he took this year: that at Bodnant was larger but had finished flowering when they got there.

One thing this trip has done was to reduce any desire I might have had for a BIG garden

9 November 2017 – Day 10

We departed Dunedin for Lake Wanaka and on the way passed the airport, which is 30 kms out of Christchurch.

Lynne showed us the blacksmith shop that was started by one of her great-uncles, Sandy Walker, and which contains this wooden-cobble floor. The property is now owned by an architect who has built his house and office around the derelict building.



Wooden-cobble floor



Laburnum walk at Lanarch Castle



Donkeys Toby and Molly at Clachanburn Garden

Our first view of Jane Falconer's Clachanburn Garden (Gaelic for Stoney Creek) in Central Otago was actually of the elks that her son breeds. (He is the third generation and returned from Canada when his father died in 2005 to look after the property.) The garden is set in the rather arid Maniototo Plain and the soil looks to be white clay, but Jane has made it an oasis. She started her garden in 1985 when both of her children were sent off to school. It features a natural creek and an extensive range of plants set among mature trees, the lawns and a boat house. There is nothing different in the plants she uses but her passion for her lovely rambling garden kept expanding: her husband commented that it was more to keep her in than the wildlife out.

Jane looks after the garden by herself with the help of 'Marvellous Margo' one day a week. Because she is a member of the New Zealand Garden Trust she is able to get 700 visitors a year even though it is quite remote.

After lunch in the garden we continued through Central Otago landscape to Lake Wanaka. The winds had been so strong we could feel them buffeting the bus. Passing the towns of Alexandra and Cromwell, I noticed that all the buildings looked new, as did all the buildings in Wanaka, which is such a change from the modest settlement we saw all those years ago . . . it is now truly a tourist town.



Ha-ha walls were originally made to keep sheep out without blocking the view with fences. This is more like a ha-ha-wow! as the massive rock wall was built to keep deer out (at Clachanburn Gardens)



Lake Wanaka

We booked into the Edgewater Hotel early. My room had a stunning view over Lake Wanaka to the mountains. At dinner we met Lynne's brother, Al (he was heading off in a few days to conduct motor-bike tours in Europe), and his partner, Sarah Scott, who helped Dot Menzies design her castle (and insisted that the furnishing are entirely Dot's doing) and completed the building of Stuart Landsborough's attraction 'Puzzling World' by completing a full circuit of the illusion rooms.

10 November 2017 – Day 11

Our first visit was Pat Stuart's garden in Wanaka itself. It is only one acre but so full of nooks and crannies that it seems much larger. It is planted around a creek and has a base of peat so that it now needs frequent watering, and features hellebores, primulas, fritillaries, peonies, rhododendrons and trilliums. The next garden belonged to Kate and John Coe, who were the former owners of the nursery that Pat took over, so the garden is suitably landscaped and has a wide variety of plants, including this species rhubarb, but lacks any major features. He did have a dovecote with white fantails and said that their erect tails made it risky for them as the local hawks could attack from behind!



I hadn't been aware of trilliums before as they come from northern temperate zones, and I consider them curious rather than beautiful.

John's veggie patch is suitable for people with bad backs.

We returned to Wanaka where we were served with lunch at one of Lynne's oldest friend's place, which had a view over the lake, before Richard dropped me back to the shore for a jet-boat ride. I had a private driver, Susie, who took me for a few spins over the (modest) rapids at the outlet to the Clutha River. It is 338 km to the mouth, which makes it the second largest river in New Zealand, and discharges more water into the sea than any river in the Southern Ocean. The water was astonishingly clear, but the banks were quite eroded, and I don't think I saw a native tree in the 20-minute ride downstream . . . all willows, poplars and pines! We were actually 'droned' coming back along the river! This is going to be more prevalent everywhere.



Clutha River

When Richard collected me he took me to an impressive art and craft establishment, Gallery 33, where he had previously purchased a glass sculpture by David Murray.

T11 November 2017 – Day 12

We departed for Queenstown via two stunning high country farm gardens at Glendhu Station on the shores of Lake Wanaka. Alana McCrae (the third generation working on the property) showed us through a typical, rambling, old country garden, which has the largest willow I have ever seen (although others have noted larger), and Alana plans to cut it



Cerinthe major (Honey wort) is a plant that grows freely in NZ gardens and this cultivar is called 'Kiwi Blue'.

back . . . pity! The rhubarb growing here knows no restraint!

Alana's mother-in-law, Vicki McCrae, lives on a new house built on the property nearby, which has stunning views of the lake from the wisteria-fringed verandah.

Our lunch stop was at the rustic Cardrona Pub, one of the oldest hotels in the country on site since the gold-rush days of 1862. Great pub grub: bangers and mash. We booked into Kinross Cottages, which is 20 minutes out of Queenstown itself as it was impossible to get a group of 20 into the town itself. Richard Nolan, Richard Heathcote and



View of Lake Wanaka from Vicki McCrae's house at Glendhu Station

I were allocated the newly built Boathouse (which happened to be nowhere near water) and so 'Country style'. The local trendy store must have been stripped of stock but the one appealing feature was the pebbled base of the shower stall. Queenstown, with its magnificent backdrop of the snow-capped Southern Alps and which was unrecognisable from the place I saw 35 years ago! It is thick with young people. I checked later and was told that there is no real 'off season' as adventure tourism takes over after the skiing season, and on the following week there was going to be a marathon run. I had a look around and came to Tim Wilson's own gallery, where he produces meticulously detailed and evocative renderings of his memories of the mountains at twilight. Alpine scenery has always been popular in the tourist market. Apparently, an Arabian sheik paid NZ \$575,000 for one of his works (the highest price paid for a living NZ artist). Marie-Therese, Frannie, Judy Boydell (Moree, NSW) and I decided shopping wasn't our thing so we had iced coffees in the sun before catching the evening cruise across Lake Wakatipu on the historic steamship TSS Earnslaw (affectionately known as the 'Lady of the Lake').



Pebbled base of shower floor at the Boathouse

The cruise terminated at Walter Peak Station for a barbecue buffet at which naturally I ate too much! It seats 250 for lunch and dinner so it is well organised. Alpine landscape at Queenstown



It is still a working property and has a shearing demonstration to attract the customers away while the staff cleans up to catch the boat back! Apparently the record NZ shearer went through 820 sheep in an eight-hour session – it must have been a production line as he couldn't possibly catch the next sheep in this time. The demonstrator said that he didn't know who the blade-shearing champion was but I told our tour members it was Jackie Howe who shored 320 sheep at Alice Downs outside Blackall in 1892 . . . but I was wrong. When I checked it was 321!!! We also saw a demonstration of the differences between the 'eye' dog (a kelpie) and the huntaway, which used his LOUD bark to drive the sheep.

12 November 2017 – Day 13

The last day of the tour: our first garden had a framework provided by old trees which was a marvellous advantage. The owner, Mike Henry, made his money in South Africa (travel insurance) and had retired to Auckland (his wife is a Kiwi) but came south to be near his daughter 15 years ago. His son Byron, a horticulturist, joined him and helped develop the very impressive gardens.

It also includes formal and English garden areas, a lavender-dominated French-themed garden, Tuscan-



Steps to the lavender garden with spotted petunias – the first I've seen.

inspired plantings around the pool, an Asian garden, a large orchard and a New Zealand native garden with 5,000 plants, water features and sculptures. In all it is an impressive modern garden designed with tourism potential in mind!

We travelled to nearby Arrowtown for lunch. The historic 1860s gold-mining village was much as I remembered it except that there were passages to a whole new series of shops behind these.

The last garden, owned by Janet and John Blair, was just about the favourite with everyone. Janet has been working in her garden for 40 years with the assistance of Mr Mower John. The heavy snowfall a year or two ago forced her to remove thirty trees . . . not that you would ever notice. She remarked, 'Every disaster is an opportunity for development!' But I don't think that I would be quite so philosophical. It was a beautifully 'soft' garden with white and green the dominant colours, with a little blue and pink.

A large colour-themed bed borders the old shed based on the swathes of purple sage (*Salvia officinalis*) blue and mauves. Elsewhere there are large drifts of old roses and typical plantings.



Purple border at the Blair garden



Don't think for a second that this is a vision of naturally burgeoning spring . . . look at the neatly trimmed ivy under the eaves and the spaded edge to the grass Cherry Tree walk.

After we returned to the cottages, we all got dressed up for our Farewell Dinner at the Skyline Restaurant, a short gondola ride away, but still 450 metres above Queenstown. The food selection on the buffet was superb and several said that it was the best they had seen anywhere. I indulged too much!

When we returned to our base, Lynne had a presentation of the AGHS Tour Awards (much more meaningful than the Academy Awards) and to thank us for making her dream a reality. Mine was the Margaret Olley Award for art knowledge and Richard Nolan for plants. Richard Heathcote responded with a catchy little number 'The girl from Pukehiki' (With profound apologies to the lyricists of 'Girl from Ipanema').

When the girl from Puke-hiki goes walking
And sets the tongues of the guys a talking
All they say as she passes is Ahhhhhhhh!

Yes! . . . She gardens so finely
And . . . leads Kiwi tours divinely

But she looks straight ahead not at me
Garden Walker's dedicated don't you see

Tall and smart and trim and slender
She walks straight ahead so full of splendour

But she looks straight ahead not at me
Garden Walkers dedicated don't you see

She just doesn't see
It's gardens not meeee!

13 November 2017 – Day 14

We had our final lunch together at the Post Master's residence. I couldn't manage a thing after the previous night's session. Our bus driver, Bruce, deposited the contingent at the airport and myself to the Copthorne Hotel . . . my room was as far away from the lobby as you could possibly get, but it was quiet (the place was crowded with Japanese tourists) and had a good view across the lake. I had to prepare for my departure on the following day as I was going on a white-water raft down the Lower Shotover Gorge before my flight back to Brisbane.



Final lunch at Post Master's residence at Queenstown