



AGHS Queensland Branch Newsletter

May 2018

Visit to Bowen Park and Old Museum Gardens

Several AGHS members and guests met at the Old Museum in Bowen Hills on Friday 20 April and enjoyed a walk around the gardens surrounding the building, before another stroll through Bowen Park, one of Brisbane's oldest

parcs and today a remnant of what was known as the Acclimatisation Gardens in the 19th century, and which encompassed about 40 acres of the current RNA (Ekka) grounds.

As we approached the northern end of the Bowen Park at O'Connell Terrace, a loud thunderclap warned us of what turned out to be a torrential storm, and we just made it to the cafe booked for lunch before the heavens opened.

Our guides

We were very fortunate that AGHS member and landscape architect Catherine Brouwer, who has worked on conservation management plans at both sites, was available to accompany us and outline the difficulties of maintaining the integrity of these gardens, as well as the evident pride and appreciation she has of those features that have been maintained and/or restored.

At the Old Museum Gardens, contract gardener Kevin Crossley from Green Concepts has managed the gardens and lawns for some years, but with the admission he wishes he could do much more. In recent years, the RNA has used the building and gardens to host events, and in the months leading up to the Ekka assists in plantings of annuals and displays sculptures on the site.

At Bowen Park, the Brisbane City Council employs a team of the gardeners headed by Jayson Lister, as well as contract mowers and arborists, to maintain the park. Jayson was able to provide insights into how the park is managed, as well as anecdotes about the humans who visit, including one homeless person who escaped detection for some time, with his swag hidden in the depths of the masses of ginger plants in the central garden area.



AGHS QUEENSLAND BRANCH COMMITTEE CONTACTS

COMMITTEE

The committee's next meeting to be advised.

Chair: Ann Wegener
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Members

John Taylor and Helen Mackay

The Old Museum Gardens

Catherine was very pleased to see that the scaffolding on the Old Museum building had been removed, showing off the newly cleaned brickwork. Unfortunately, over time some of the original gardens on the Gregory Terrace side have been taken over with car parks, and bollards placed along the front of the building. The replacement of gravel paths throughout the gardens with bitumen and concrete was one development Catherine was unable to prevent, because of the need to provide the best disabled access.



The garden section on the corner of Gregory Terrace and Bowen Bridge Road is something of a hotch-potch containing three very old frangipanis, palms, roses, and a few natives that were added in the 1970s. An important memorial stone is placed here to commemorate the public meeting held at this site on 10 January 1916 to establish the Anzac Day Commemoration Committee. Further around the building on the Bowen Bridge side a huge bottle tree (see above) stands beside the driveway. The site slopes down at the back of the building to what was once a shady fern gully and stream before the Ekka trainline was built. More carparking is located here.

A surprise awaited as we turned to the back of the building where two curlews calmly rested in a garden bed as we passed. A demountable sits in the centre of a lawn area here, an incongruous sight, but apparently it has a purpose. A large Bribie Island pine is a feature tree in this lawn.

The back corner of the site adjacent to the Ekka Grounds is closed off because of the fragile state of the old shed within, as is another gardeners' area nearby with what was once a large potting shed and compost bays. Dense bougainvillea has created a hedge and arch over a gate here. Then, along the eastern side of the building a terraced garden walkway wends up the slope, the drystone walls recently reinforced in places with mortar, which has been applied fairly discreetly.



AGHS member John Slaughter, who visited the museum frequently when he was a child, remembered a large pond on what is now a path in the terraced walkway. The galvanised water pipes that fed the pond are still visible in the stone wall. John has contributed to the Old Museum Stories mentioned below.

Approaching the top corner of the garden on Gregory Terrace, a sizeable concrete block has been kept to remind visitors of the dinosaurs that once stood there (since moved to Gray Street in front of the new Queensland Museum). A large archway constructed of chainwire is densely covered with orange trumpet vine (*Pyrostegia venusta*), not in flower for our visit, but a fabulous sight when it is.

The three-tiered fountain shown opposite sits in the centre of a large circular garden bed, and although this was donated in recent years, Catherine (pictured) said that it is similar to the original majolica fountain.

Anyone with memories of their visits to the Old Museum are encouraged to visit the website Old Museum Stories at <https://oldmuseumstories.info/archives/category/parts/gardens> and perhaps contribute their own story – there are some fascinating tales within.



Bowen Park

We entered Bowen Park from the southern corner where Herston Road joins Bowen Bridge Road. It is a tribute to Catherine's skills and persuasive abilities that she was able to negotiate a compromise about a path used in Bowen Park to link cyclists from O'Connell Terrace to Herston Road. The original pedestrian path has been retained (though it could have been widened to eight metres), and wider, separate entrances to this path installed at each end, with plantings that soften their impact.



The beds of canna lilies shown above are in this southern section, and they are impressively tall. Jayson said they are experimenting with a couple of lower growing varieties. Catherine attributes the layout of the canna beds to the third phase of the park's development, from 1950 to 1959, when Harry Oakman, then Director of the Brisbane City Council Parks Department, presided over its management and design. A complete history of Bowen Park and description of its plantings is available on Wikipedia at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bowen_Park,_Brisbane and is well worth investigating.

Passing the Cook pines (also shown), we speculated about how many more of these could be found in Brisbane (apparently more than we first thought). The Cook pines, hoop pine, and massive fig trees in the central garden are all believed to be planted for the Queensland Acclimatisation Society (QAS) Gardens.

The central garden area with its rockery and towering figs that form a massive canopy shades a range of subtropical plants, though Jayson said the gardeners are working at replacing the

rampant ginger. Photos of this area are shown below.

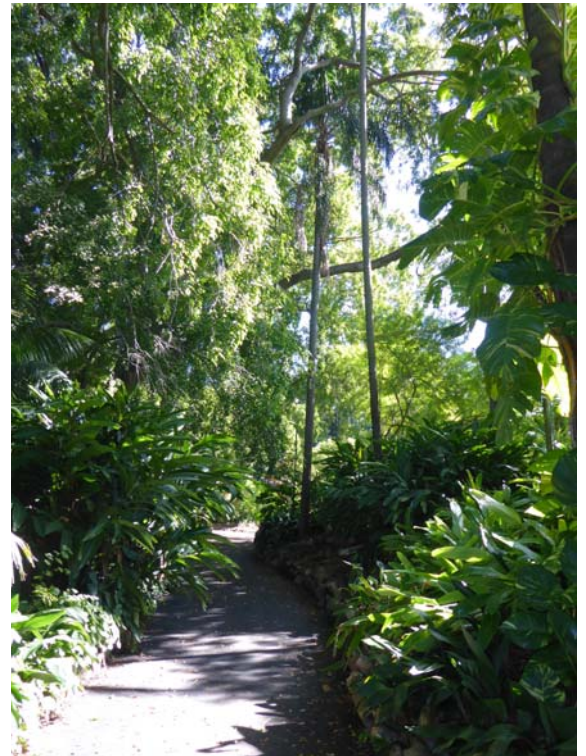
We didn't have enough time to fully enjoy this park, but Catherine insisted on showing us the large massed beds of acalyphas in the O'Connell Terrace corner, adjacent to the Ekka grounds (see opposite). These, too, were the work of Harry Oakman and are an unusual feature.

Then the first spits of rain began to fall as we arrived at O'Connell Terrace.

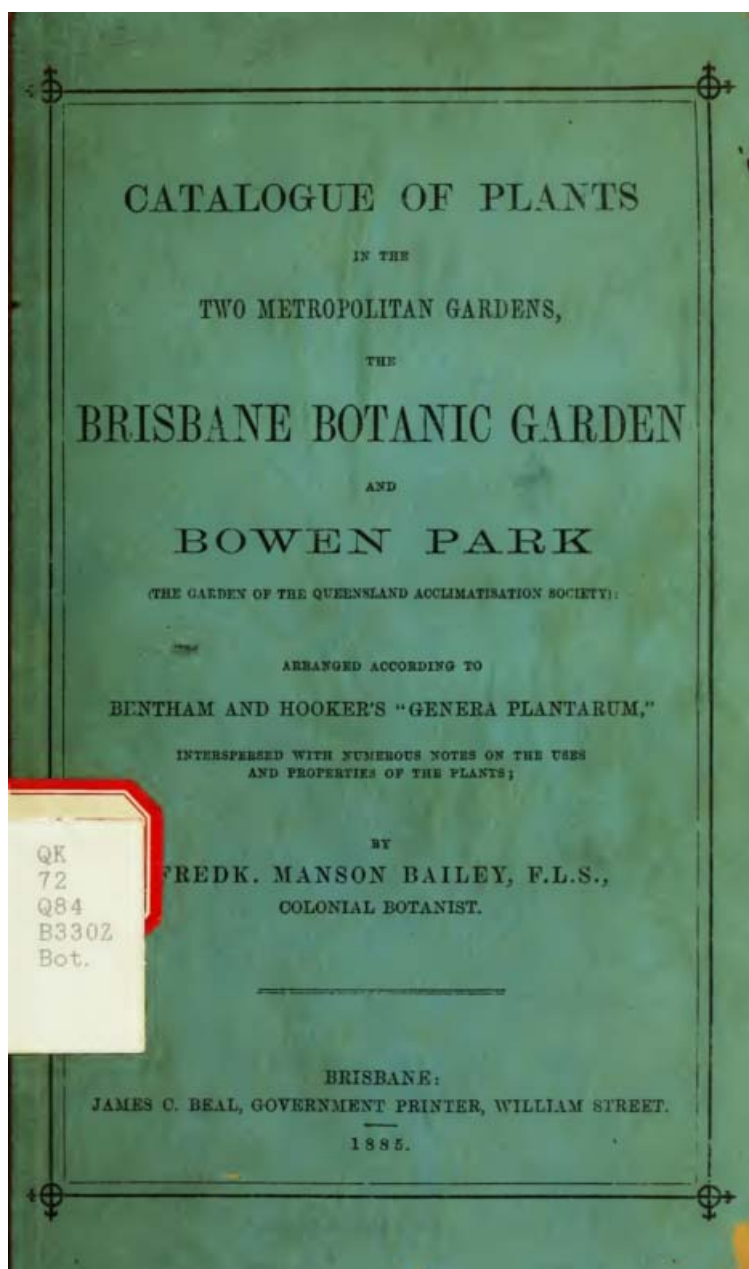
Our thanks to Catherine and Kevin and Jayson for their valuable assistance on the day.



Roberta Blake



AGHS members might be interested in downloading the PDF of the Catalogue of Plants of the Brisbane Botanic Gardens and Bowen Park, published in 1885. You can find it at <http://brisbanebotanic treasures.info/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/catalogueofplant00bail.pdf>



From the chair

Here's another good read that Roberta, our Editor has put together.

Those AGHS members who attended the visit to the Old Museum Gardens and Bowen Park were treated to an informative tour led by member Catherine Brouwer. We explored parts normally ignored or off limits.

In the first week of June, the 2018 conference registration forms are planned to be circulated. This year the conference is being held in the Southern Highlands. Conference organisers are seeking to highlight a landscape or garden under threat in each state as part of their displays. A suggestion for Queensland? Let the Committee know if you have a recommendation.

The NMC is currently working through the process of appointing a new Patron. To replicate someone with former patron Sue Ebury's qualities sets a high bar.

For Qld branch members the committee have planned a mid July trip to Northern NSW. The details will be advertised by email to members shortly.

In August we are combining with Friends of Brisbane Botanic Gardens with a Speaker session. Our AGM is planned be held before the speaker event.

The committee looks forward to your participation in one or other of the events we've planned.

Kind regards,

Ann Wegener

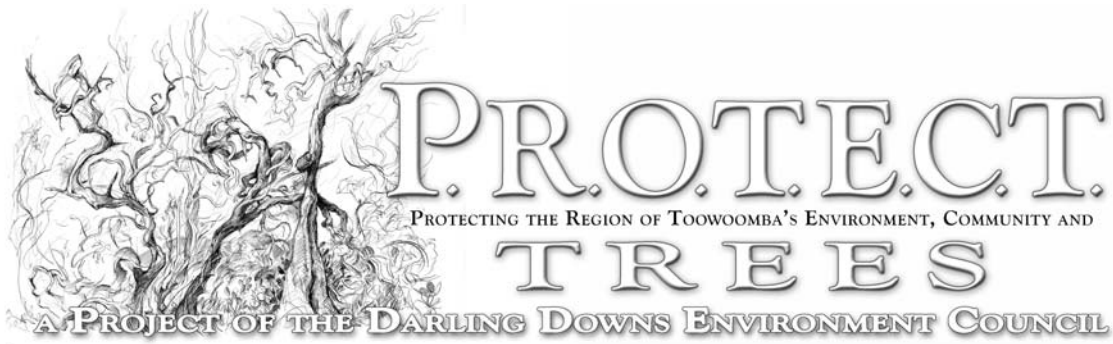
DATE CLAIMERS

13–15 July 2018: Weekend self-drive trip to Northern Rivers including Murwillumbah and Casino.

7 August 2018: AGM at 5.15 pm followed by a joint speaker session with Dr Anne Vale and Stewart Read at Mt Coot-tha Auditorium.



Pierre de Ronsard rose



To all Tree Protectors of Toowoomba

One of the initial objectives of PROTECT is to create a public record of significant trees in the Toowoomba Region.

The National Trust has a registration process for anyone to register a significant tree for listing. This process is quite extensive and managed by volunteers so takes time for submitted trees to be lodged on the official web site. Although this provides significant recognition of particular trees, it provides no protection under current council laws.

To allow all the residents of the region to submit significant trees to a public record we encourage you to photograph your favourite tree and post to Instagram with the tag **#protecttoowoombatrees**.

Please follow this tag to see what spectacular trees we have in the region that others post, and encourage others to do the same.

PROTECT is also currently actively engaged in drafting a Tree Protection Policy for the region. More information on this will be shared as it progresses.

Together for the trees

PROTECT

#protecttoowoombatrees

Australian trees in India

John Taylor travelled recently to India and observed the Australian trees growing there.

The Conoor district of India, in the Nilgiri Hills in the south west of the subcontinent, has many tea plantations.

Most have widely spaced trees planted in them to reduce wind speeds, and we were told that the species is 'Silver Oak'.

But close inspection showed that the trees are *Grevillea robusta*, silky oak, doing a good job for the Indian tea growers, another valuable Australian export.

Management involves pruning to limit shading of the tea, and the timber is valued.

The tea plantations on the rolling hills with the scattered silky oaks made a very attractive landscape – and we enjoyed the tea, too.



Members might be interested in a new common name for *Araucaria bidwillii*, as in the photo opposite, taken in Sims Park in Conoor, Tamil Nadu, India. Sims Park has an interesting collection of Australian trees, including some very large eucalypts.

Conoor is not far from Ooty or Ootacamund (now Udagamandalam), high in the Nilgiri Hills. Both were popular as hill station retreats from the hot plains during the British Raj.

The hills around Ooty are covered with mature *Eucalyptus globulus*, the result of mass planting that began in 1843. The blue gums have grown well and regenerated, and I cannot report what the original forests

contained. On the little train from Ooty to Conoor you go through wet gullies with tall blue gums and are enveloped in the characteristic blue gum smell – very strange for Australians thousands of kilometres from home!

Summers in Tasmania

In the late 1980s, some friends said to us, 'You'd like that place.'

A three-week holiday in 1988 included a circumnavigation around Tasmania and 10 days attending an 'Historic Houses' course run by TAFE. The course had been running for 22 years when we heard about it ... some attendees had made it their annual holiday for years. We stayed at a lovely old residence, 'The Grange' (see opposite), in the midlands town of Campbelltown. Each day we travelled by bus, visiting up to five historic properties a day. We thoroughly enjoyed the tour, and our stomachs were filled with regional food. We sure did like it!



We viewed furniture and houses and gardens previously only seen in publications, met gracious owners whose forebears had often acquired land by early grants, and retained their properties for generations. One property, 'Bona Vista' near Avoca, was granted to ex-convict Simeon Lord who became one of the wealthiest men in Tasmania at the time and whose son eventually settled in Queensland. With the assistance of free labour in the form of convict stonemasons and builders, Lord built a wonderful house, though by the time of our visit it was dilapidated and uninhabited. It has now been refurbished and recently sold.

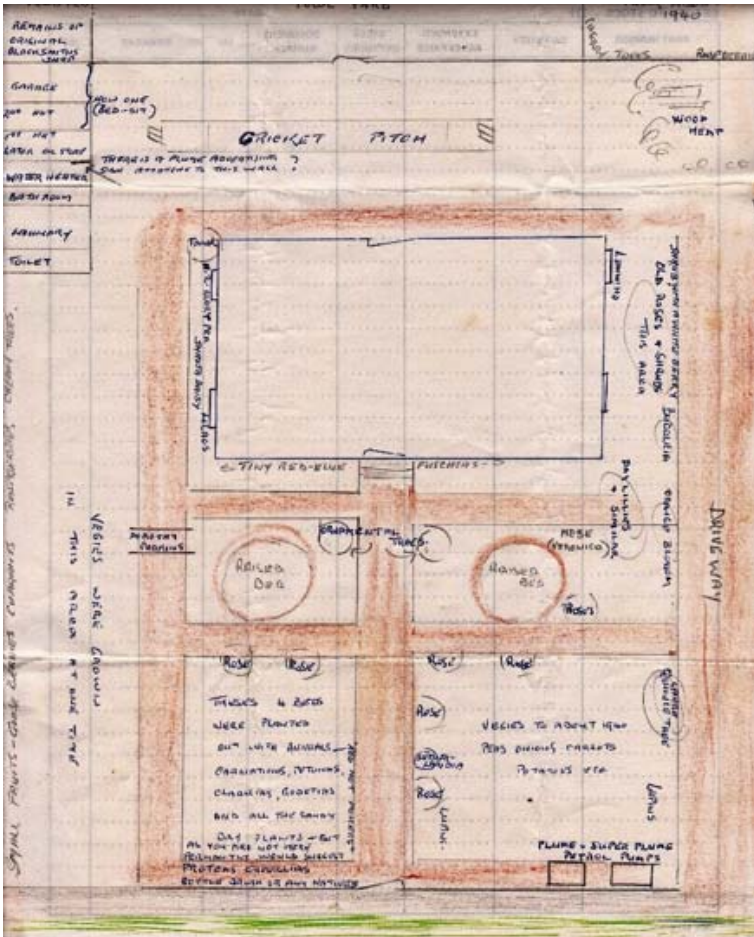
A light-hearted comment by a friend wanting to buy a property in Tasmania led to the eventual purchase in the early 1990s of two inexpensive cottages in Avoca, located in the Fingal valley, quite close to 'Bona Vista' and Campbelltown. The second one (pictured right) we still own. The cottage was in rundown condition, but came partly furnished with a remnant garden and orchard. Parts of the lawn were covered with what the seller referred to as 'Malahide' grass. Owner Roseanne kept this grass watered during the summer from the time of her mother's passing several years earlier until our purchase. It still remains. 'Malahide' is a substantial property located beyond Avoca near Fingal. The South Esk river runs through the Valley, and Ben Lomond mountain overlooks.



A few weeks during most summers since, myself and family have enjoyed the fruits and blooms of summer from the Avoca garden. Early arrivals harvest raspberries from an original patch and pick bunches of roses to fill the vases.



Abundant fruiting on plum trees at Avoca garden.



Roger Viney's memories of visiting the cottage in 1940.

Then the plums begin to ripen. Small cherry plums are first, followed by Greengage, Victoria's, Sariposa or similar, sometimes d'A-gen, depending on the timing of the last frost, and what's commonly known as 'Sauce Plums'. Jam making, updated to a less sweet paste to enjoy with cheese, begins, and later solar drying yields a tasty organic prune. Cooked sauce plums are added to 'Johnny's sauce concentrate', a mixture of acetic acid and seasonings to make a savoury Plum Sauce.

Many relatives of the original owners have visited, one supplied a drawing of the garden showing the front garden as a productive vegetable garden (see below left). The remainder was planted with roses and hedges. Folklore is the 'Cloth of Gold' rose still growing (just), from a cutting brought from England by the original owners.

Originally, the backyard and associated buildings were devoted to the workings of the blacksmith whose home it was.

Remnants of old iron from the blacksmith turn up regularly, and two huge pieces of sandstone and another lump of cast iron were found half buried. These we understand were used in placing hubs on sulky and cart wheels by the blacksmith.

The soils are sandy loam laying over what appears to be basalt. Potatoes will not stop growing and renew themselves vigorously every season. We are rewarded with cloves of 'Russian' garlic, some we harvest, but leave some to supply us with garlic bulbs next year. How long has it been growing in that garden?

Avoca is surrounded by large rural properties where farming consists mainly of sheep, beef, grain and contract potato growing. More recently, poppies are being grown for the distillation of alkaloids used in production of morphine, the dry atmosphere of the Fingal valley being suitable. Another innovative crop is fennel – the distilled oil reputedly ends up in Pernod. Farmers are currently enjoying good prices for super-fine wool, for which the Midlands region of Tasmania is famous.



On a visit by an AGHS 'Trisha tour', former patron Sue Ebury went into raptures about a hebe growing in the garden, a variety she remembered from New Zealand.

The bounty of summer continues, with friends' productive vegetable gardens producing more than they can eat. Broad beans, zucchini, spinach, lettuce, cucumbers, red beans, rhubarb all grow abundantly. Later in the season everyone awaits the arrival of vine-ripened tomatoes, and when supply outweighs demand tomato relish making and bottling commences.

In other parts of the state, the 100-day season of cherry production is in full swing. Tasmanians have long enjoyed locally grown cherries, but in recent times cherry planting has increased dramatically, predominantly for the Asian export market. Entire orchards are netted to keep out pesky predators.

While all the bounty of fruit and vegetables is going on, farmers are watching the weather, hoping for some drying heat to ready their grain for harvest, and grape farmers are watching their bunches swell. Come early autumn, medlars, quinces, apples and pears commence ripening and harvesting the grapes begins.

Visiting many gardens is high on my agenda wherever possible. One of those we visited this year was 'Prospect Villa' in Hamilton. Under new ownership, many parts of this garden have been reinvigorated. We also visited 'Blenheim', owned by artist and curator Jenny Chapman, who displays installations and garden pieces, many of which are for sale.

Nowadays we spend the majority of the summer in Hobart, but we always enjoy a visit to Avoca.

Ann Wegener



Looking towards the rear garden.



Hidcote Lavender hedge at the back door.

