



AUSTRALIAN
GARDEN
HISTORY
SOCIETY

Victoria Branch News

WINTER 2021

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

Dear Members

Welcome to our winter newsletter. As the weather turns cold and blustery, Victoria is again emerging from various stages of lockdown due to Covid outbreaks. But at least we knew what to do this time – working in the garden and enjoying exercise in local streets and parks were certainly activities I was grateful to be able to do.

There is also lots of time for reading so the Victorian Branch is delighted to include the link below to our latest garden history “Titanga”.

Written by committee member Tim Gatehouse, it’s the third of our 40th Anniversary research projects and is available by logging on to the website as a free pdf download or to order in hard copy for a small fee. See the link below.

Congratulations Tim on producing three fine booklets to add to the AGHS collection.

In the past few months member and friends were able to enjoy an excellent “Wonders of the West” bus trip, a face-to-face lecture by Richard Allen on his new book, “The Garden State – Inside Victoria’s Private Gardens” as well as a productive working bee at Medlow.



Wonders of the West tour group

We have also recently held the first of our very special zoom winter lectures on the Impressionists with renowned Garden Historian Caroline Holmes lived from the UK. This event was very well received with a full house of 100 participants so if you missed it, please sign up for the next one on 7 July when Caroline will speak about “Bory Latour-Marliac – the source of waterlilies before and beyond Monet.”

Below are a number of events and lectures for you to put in your diaries. We look forward to welcoming you at the next event.

WENDY DWYER | CHAIR

DIARY DATES:

Wednesday 7 July – Zoom lecture by renowned UK Garden

Historian Caroline Holmes “Bory Latour-Marliac – the source of waterlilies before and beyond Monet.”

Saturday July 17: Working bee - Turkeith

Saturday August 21: Working bee - Belmont

Sunday 15 August - Free afternoon Walk and Talk at Wattle Park

10-13 September – National Conference Sydney

Thursday 30 September – Zoom AGM and lecture on the “History of the System Garden, University of Melbourne and current challenges” by Tim Uebergang, Curator of Horticulture

Saturday 9 October – Afternoon Symposium of lectures, book launch and garden tours Burnley College

Friday 22 October – Bus trip – Melba/Streton Day in the Yarra Ranges to their gardens and house interiors

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

The committee would like to welcome the following new members who have joined since the last Newsletter: Frances Spain, Helena Arnold, Liz Brown, Paul Browne, Rick Berry, Rosemary Cotter, Robyn Wright and Simone Lourey.

UPCOMING EVENTS

CAROLINE HOLMES LECTURES



Caroline Holmes is a Garden Historian, author of 12 books including 'Monet at Giverny' and 'Impressionists in their Gardens'. She was keynote speaker at the International Water Gardens Conference held at Giverny in 2019. Course Director for University of Cambridge ICE, accredited lecturer for The Arts Society and has spoken on every continent except Antarctica. Her design consultancies range from Human Renaissance gardens surrounding Notre Dame-de-Calais to devising the planting for The Poison Garden within The Alnwick Garden in Northumberland. Academic but not dry, she likes to sift the humour from the humus. www.horti-history.com

Bory Latour-Marliac – the source of water lilies before and beyond Monet

Date: Wednesday July 7th

Time: 6 pm

Venue: Online via ZOOM

Price: \$12 members and Friends RBG, \$15 non-members

<https://www.trybooking.com/BQWPH>



Booking note: If you choose to attend online a Zoom link will be sent to you separately after bookings close.

Caroline Holmes will use this presentation to navigate primary sources and delve the depths in an exploration of the history, science, networking and sheer pleasure of Latour-Marliac. The good news is that like Monet's garden, the Latour-Marliac nursery thrives today. This presentation includes immersion in Monet's monumental water lily panels at Paris's Musée de l'Orangerie painted and donated by him to reflect on and commemorate the appalling loss of life during World War One. Today we can follow in the footsteps of both Monet and Latour-Marliac taking their visitors to their respective ponds in Giverny and Le Temple-sur-Lot to admire and discuss their blooms.

WALK & TALK



Save the date: Sunday August 15
A free Walk & Talk for members in
Wattle Park, Burwood
with Professor Tim Entwisle

Details to be advised or check with Wendy Dwyer

Working bees

Our last working bee was held at MEDLOW. The volunteer team successfully tackled an overgrown bamboo clump, trimmed shrubs and cleared weeds along garden beds.

At left: Five happy, very well-fed volunteers at the end of the day.

Details of next working bees below. Di Ellerton.



Turkieth (pictured left)

Date: Saturday July 17

Time: 10am start

Belmont

Date: Saturday August 21

Time: 10 am

For further details and to register, please contact
Di Ellerton.

diana.ellerton@icloud.com, telephone 9397 2756

WALKING THE WONDERS OF THE WEST TOUR REPORT

POSTCARDS FROM THE WEST

Those who took part in the “Wonders of the West” bus trip of May 7th can hardly have expected more. The weather was benign, the travel to the three sites was not arduous, the catering was abundant, but above all the guides and ‘friends of’ groups who were organised to support the tour were simply excellent. Finally, heritage database reports for two sites were provided as well as notes about the broader history of the places. Praise be!

Beginning with the H V McKay Memorial Gardens in Sunshine, Robin Hunt prepared the touring party during the bus ride from the city with a broad history of the McKay times and heritage, spoken with the extra authority that comes with being the great-grandson of ‘HV.’ There were precious few authentic remnants of the mighty industrial empire that once occupied 80 acres under saw-tooth roofing, plus the ‘garden city’ across the railway line: the goods inwards/outwards building, the relocated entrance gates through which all workers would pass, and the art deco style headquarters building that served the local and international markets. The already modified railway pedestrian bridge was recently replaced with a modern structure that carries references to the landmark labour disputes, and resolutions, that attach to this famous industrial site. Finally, there was a replica of the original blacksmith’s shop, which began the whole story of harvester production at Drummartin near Bendigo in 1884.



Top: Robin Hunt, grandson of H V McKay
Below: Replica of original blacksmith hut



Across the railway in the now-verdant park setting where the original gardens were located, the Friends of the McKay Gardens told the story of the amazing recovery they engineered. The depth of commitment by the volunteer gardeners who started this process less than 15 years ago was in evidence during their presentation over morning tea. It was also clear that this effort was now receiving full support from local council, as irrigation and extensive planting has been undertaken to return the spirit of the original area. Not to mention a council gardener allocated to the space full time.

Newport Lakes has a similar timeline but has seen a rather different journey. After many years as a bluestone quarry, the 'lakes' area of Newport Lakes was eventually converted to a recreational space, but not without some enduring issues and the help of a strong Friends of Newport Lakes group. Tour guide Andrew Webster, Senior Conservation Ranger, pointed out the limitations encountered trying to re-establish some measure of the indigenous grassland. Except for some very localised areas, this has proved near impossible, leaving the ground cover role in the landscape primarily for non-indigenous species and shrubberies to provide some diversity. Deep-rooted trees also cannot thrive because of the very thin topsoil layer left over the basalt. He also explained why the reasonable expectation upon seeing such an expanse of water, abundant fish and frog life, is not met: introduced fish that consume other life forms at their early stage of development interrupt the food chain life cycles, and water from the aquifer that primarily keeps water levels up in the pondage at salinity levels not tolerated by frogs.

For all the difficulties the site presents, there are wonderful long vistas across the water to reed beds and light bush cover. With almost no wind on the day of the visit, the picture presented by the perfectly reflective waterscape was very engaging and calmative. Then there is the rustic rock crossing bisecting the pondages that rather resembles a giant hopscotch course. The balance of the site comprises a north American conifer arboretum and other species that have been established over mainly landfill. Combined with a wide-open grassed area, Newport Lakes provides quite a range of possibilities to engage with nature.



At the Williamstown Botanic Gardens, the exquisite design work of Edward LaTrobe Bateman was on display. A combination of strong axial lines with deftly curving circulation paths provides structure and intrigue. Curator, Shelley Wood, described a spectacular crime against horticulture that occurred along the palm-lined axis many years ago, involving the conversion of all the towering specimens to stumps for creepers to clothe. Fortunately, this 'improvement' was reversed, and the palms now stand tall as though they had been this way forever. Shelley relayed the significant effort that has been applied, and is still to come, towards the renovation of the pondage, and reinstatement of an elm avenue.

The gardens are working to implement a master plan that deals with such issues, to return to the original intent as best they can. The major aspect of the master plan is to complete the half of the gardens facing south, that is presently fenced off from the rest of the established gardens. This is a significant initiative, as it involves planting renewed protection from the southern winds that have to date prevented plantings beneath the pinetum that stands today. At some point the fence will be removed, allowing the fully integrated gardens to be appreciated at last, 160 odd years after conception.

This was a very engaging day across the three sites. Some sort of thread could be detected connecting these vastly different settings: mankind against the environment. The McKay family were dismayed by the dusty plains at Sunshine after living in Ballarat and set about creating a greenery. Transformation of the industrial site at Newport Lakes has reached something of an environmental stalemate making further evolution very difficult. At Williamstown, the southerly winds have held back full development of half of the gardens but are about to be joined in battle.

Photos and text by **Trevor Pitkin**

ADVOCACY NEWS

Wombat Park

In September 2019, the Branch submitted a comprehensively documented nomination to Heritage Victoria for Wombat Park to be included on the Victorian Heritage Register. This iconic property near Daylesford with its unusual tapestry hedge, large collection of significant trees and beautiful Arts and Crafts style house set in the homestead garden, is well known to members as working bees were often held there with the late owner, Isabel Mackenzie.

No further information has emerged regarding the sale of the property, and the site assessment to be conducted by Heritage Victoria as part of the nomination process is scheduled for May 2021.

Approach to Advocacy

Recently, Heritage Victoria has released its report "State of Heritage Review: Local Heritage 2020" which considers how well council-level overlays are working in Victoria. A critique of this report, "Stuck in the past - Why Australian heritage practice falls short of what the public expects", addresses the very shortcomings experienced in the St Kilda Road lighting permit process referenced in previous reports.

Meanwhile another article has emerged in The Conversation, "War on the demolishers? Probably not, and timing of NSW heritage review is curious" touching on another aspect of governance around heritage assets. Of interest to resolving the question, what to advocate for? is the descriptions of the two competing perspectives that attend to conservation of heritage.

"In the traditional view, heritage values are always implicitly of the past. Any change to a designated place can only diminish its established aesthetic, historic and social qualities. Basically, this means legislation must act as the strongest possible barrier to materially changing places, to accrue wins for heritage against the demolishers: a zero-sum game.

In the emerging view, the value of heritage lies in its capacity to enhance places. Although historic sites and areas remain our past inheritance, the objective becomes to promote the sustainability and continuity of places and their evolving values. In this view, the law can direct change and development, as guided by public participation, design interventions and cultural values. In this way heritage policy and process can amplify the significance of places."

Also of note in this article is the experience overseas in built domains much older than our own:

"Scotland, for instance, has spent much of the past decade engaging with the heritage and development sectors and the wider public about its legislation. Its Infrastructure Commission has recommended a "re-use first" principle for its assets. Moving away from the instrument of heritage listings, property owners might instead have to justify demolition against sustainability principles.

Authorities should be developing models of heritage governance that enhance public participation and the inherited environment. Heritage conservation needs to be reimagined to renew its mission as a centrepiece of aspirations towards social, environmental, economic and cultural sustainability."

While the built heritage is the focus of these articles, the analysis and relevance are real for garden conservation as well, if not in fact more relevant given the rate of degradation a neglected garden suffers compared with the built heritage asset.

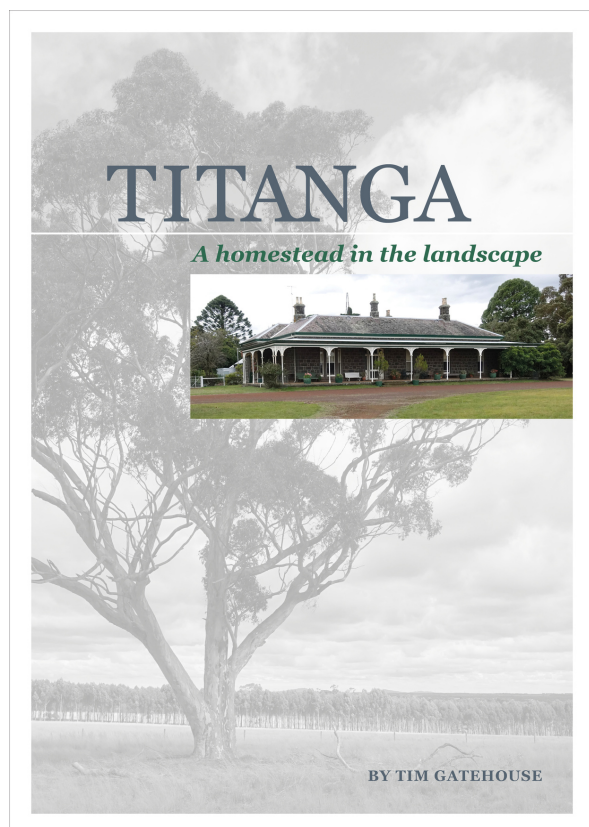
Conservation Management of Emerald Lake Park and Nobelius Heritage Park

In addition to the conservation management plans issues early this year, the Shire has released the following: "Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Management -

Preliminary Investigation of Emerald Lake Precinct, February 2021." This document is intriguing on several levels, with possibly the most accessible aspect being the inclusion of many early maps of the area, and the associated aboriginal pathways. This is an example of Victorian Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Legislation and Aboriginal Heritage Regulations 2018 in application.

Along with the earlier CMPs, and the guiding strategic plan for the Emerald Lake and Nobelius areas, this document will inform the master planning stage of work. Design work flowing from internal (Shire) analysis will be begun sometime in the new financial year

New Garden History released



Copies now available to order or download from AGHS Website in shop section

The third booklet in the series of garden histories celebrating the fortieth anniversary of The Australian Garden History Society has been completed and is now available in hard copy and online from the AGHS. Titled 'Titanga, a homestead in the landscape' it traces the history of the garden, arboretum and shelter plantations at Titanga homestead in the Western District of Victoria and of the families who created them.

Titanga is an example of a homestead in a natural landscape setting in the tradition of English picturesque landscape design rather than in a defined garden separated from the surrounding paddocks which is usual in Australian rural properties.

The formal garden was designed as a dry climate garden and has been maintained as such to this day. The arboretum through which the drive runs is one of the largest in Australia, many of the trees dating from the 1880s. The shelter belts throughout the property were planted as a result of early experiments in the propagation of eucalypts carried out in collaboration with Ferdinand von Mueller. Their long lines on the horizon are still one of the defining characteristics of the Western District landscape. Meticulous records were kept of all planting and are still carefully preserved. The tradition of tree planting is continued with farm forestry being an important component of Titanga's produce, making it well on the way to becoming carbon neutral.

Titanga is owned by the families of Christopher and Andrew Lang, descendants of John Lang Currie who purchased it in 1886, and has the indefinable atmosphere that only properties which have been in the possession of several generations of the same family can have. It continues to be managed on sound environmental principles which preserve the native flora and fauna in conjunction with its operation as a commercial sheep breeding, cropping and integrated forestry property.

VICTORIAN BRANCH COMMITTEE

Chair : Wendy Dwyer

Secretary: Anna Long

Treasurer: Anne Aston

Committee members:

Working Bee Coordinator: Diana Ellerton

Newsletter: Lynda Entwisle

Advocacy: Trevor Pitkin

Garden Histories: Tim Gatehouse

NT Landscape Reference Group: Anthony Menhennitt

NMC Rep: Wendy Dwyer

Catering Coordinator: Annie Woodside

We meet on the 4th Tuesday of the month, 3.30pm - 6pm at Burnley Gardens, except for October when the meeting will be held on 3rd Tuesday of the month. We welcome members to join committee meetings at any time. If you wish to discuss opportunities to get involved please contact Wendy Dwyer aghsvicbranch2@gmail.com, or contact a committee member. Go to our Webpage www.gardenhistorysociety.org.au/branches/victoria/ for more news and updates. Contributions to the newsletter are always welcome and should be addressed to aghsvic19@gmail.com with newsletter in subject line.