



**eNewsletter
No. 44
June 2026**

Northern NSW Branch

**Newsletters are sent out monthly
except for December and January**

Larger images are available from the editor on request

Banksia ericifolia

The Heath Banksia grows naturally in the Central and Northern coastal areas of NSW. *B. ericifolia* ssp. *ericifolia* is the most commonly cultivated form occurring naturally from around the Sydney and Blue Mountains regions. It was collected by Sir Joseph Banks at Botany Bay in 1770 and introduced into cultivation in England in 1788.

B. ericifolia ssp. *macrantha* is a larger flowered form which occurs north of Crowdy Bay in coastal heath.

B. ericifolia was adopted in 1992 as the floral symbol of Sydney. It's Eora name is *wadangari*.

B. ericifolia is a popular garden plant with its orange-gold candles growing vertically out of the branches which are covered with crowded small narrow leaves. It prefers acidic well-drained soils and some shelter in cold frosty zones. Although it flowers best in full sun it will thrive in a semi-shaded position. It is a wonderful bird attractor as it produces copious amounts of nectar during flowering which occurs in autumn through to winter with the flowers remaining on the plant for many months when they develop woody seed follicles. There are several cultivars such as 'Red Rover', 'Little Eric' and 'Limelight'.

Ref: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Banksia_ericifolia



Banksia ericifolia Image: Brian Walters

Join AGHS Northern NSW Branch

<https://www.gardenhistorysociety.org.au/membership/>

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From the Chair:

Greetings from a slightly greener landscape since my last report. I'm sure that gardens are smiling again after some lovely steady rain.

Our trip to the Hunter Valley was a very convivial and informative one and great to catch up with Sydney and Hunter members and friends. Newcastle Art Gallery looks spacious and smart and the exhibitions were both colourful and diverse. Many thanks to Francesca Beddie and Catherine Hickson for their expert guiding and local knowledge. We loved the Margaret Olley section given our connection to her through our local gallery, NERAM. Our coach driver gave us an historical commentary on our return trip to Maitland which was an added bonus. Monte Pio's numbers swelled that evening as we gathered for drinks and dinner and lots of lively conversation.

Sunday morning saw us gathered at "Cintra" where the vivacious and energetic Catherine Blanch (dressed splendidly to match the era of the grand house) treated us to an in depth history of the fabulous house, outbuildings and extensive and interesting garden in all of its original splendour. Many thanks to Catherine and Kevin for their generosity and hospitality. Morning tea was delicious as were the mandarins.

We continued our tour to the Maitland Art Gallery, another building with a long history with the expert guidance of Jenny. The heritage listed Federation Gothic former Maitland Technical College is another spacious building with wonderful exhibitions, shop and café. We were lucky to catch a fabulous installation "Sea of Legs" by local Armidale artist, Judy Anne Moule before we returned home.

Many thanks to Helen Oates for putting so much time into organising this wonderful weekend and for all of you who participated so enthusiastically.

Watch this space as our Events Co-ordinator, Lynne Walker, has further activities and outings in the pipeline.

I am sure you will all join me in congratulating Bill Oates on his OAM award in the King's Birthday Honours. How thrilled I was to hear this wonderful news. It is fitting that Bill is recognised for his tireless work collecting and conserving history across the state but particularly in our region. Thanks Bill for all the work you do giving historical talks, helping so many people with slide presentations, keeping vigilant as our advocacy eagle and just being a nice guy. Hearty congratulations from all of us and enjoy the big day with your family when you finally receive the award.

Cheers
Helen Wilson

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Hunter Valley Trip Report

by Lynne Walker

At the end of May Sydney and Northern NSW members met for another combined trip to the Hunter Valley. It was great to be back at the Monte Pio as the last time we stayed there on a combined excursion weekend was 2012. It is a beautiful historic building which is currently being restored by new owners who took over just a few months ago.

Our members boarded the coach outside the Monte Pio and travelled across to Newcastle where we met up with 14 Sydney members at the Newcastle Art Gallery. This is a stunning building. The final stage of the gallery's \$48 million expansion was unveiled in February, making it the largest regional art institution in NSW. The restoration project increased the original 1977 building by two and a half times to offer thirteen galleries which are full of vibrant exhibitions.

We divided into two groups one led by our very own journal Editor Francesca and the other by local artist Catherine Hickson who showed us some of the exhibitions which were all so diverse and interesting, many with landscape and botanical artworks. Thanks to Francesca and Catherine for their enthusiastic and knowledgeable commentaries.

We then returned to Monte Pio and met up again for pre-dinner drinks where we were joined by Sydney branch members along with Clare James, Heritage Officer from Maitland City Council, Geoff Hicks, President - Maitland and District Garden Club, and his wife, along with Catherine Blanch, our AGHS member and custodian of *Cintra* house and garden in Maitland which we visited the next day. We all enjoyed a great evening with an excellent dinner.

The following morning we went across to *Cintra* and had a great tour of the garden led by Catherine who is so enthusiastic about the amazing restoration project she has undertaken of both house and garden. Catherine proudly introduced Jacob (JB) head gardener at *Cintra* and Di Brown who organised the morning tea.

Cintra is a large two-storey villa built in 1879 in the Italianate boom style of architecture and is a heritage-listed residence and one-time private hospital. It was designed by John Wiltshire Pender with a garden by Sydney landscape architect R. Culbert. (Pender of course designed *Saumarez*). Built from 1879 on in several stages, it is situated on its original block with driveways, paths, gardens, lawns, stables etc. in their original layout and Catherine is intent on restoring the whole property.

If you want to read more (and it's a fascinating history) visit

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cintra_House,_Maitland.

Dr Ann Hardy, Co-ordinator, Digitisation and Engagement, Hunter (Living) History Initiative and Erica Wright from the School of Humanities, Creative Industries and Social Sciences, at the University of Newcastle also joined us. Erica is the author of *Digging up wisteria in the archives*, her fascinating article in the April 2026 AGH journal and many of us told Erica how much we enjoyed reading it. She showed some of us the very small tendrils of the wisteria which have somehow survived the immense clutches of the jasmine vine.

After a delicious morning tea we moved across to the Maitland Art Gallery to be met by our guide Jenny who showed us the highlights of this great community asset. While we were there we saw Judy-Ann Moule's striking sculpture *Sea of Legs*. Judy-Ann is an Armidale local and a very talented artist whom several of us know.

Helen Oates thanked everyone for coming and after lunch at the gallery café we all headed for home. Many thanks to Helen Oates and Helen Wilson for organising such a great trip. Here's to the next one!

Newcastle Art Gallery



Entry to the gallery
Image: HBlib Newcastle Art Gallery

This gallery is in the cultural heart of the city. The Gallery sits on the corner of Laman Street and Darby Street, near leafy Civic Park and the city’s popular dining and boutique shopping precinct. Formerly known as the Newcastle City Art Gallery and Newcastle Region Art Gallery, both galleries combined collections to be showcased in this recently opened newly renovated building. The plan was for a \$48m extension to the current gallery, with the aim of expanding the overall exhibition space by 250% and allowing for more of the 7000 items in the collection to be more accessible to the public. This expansion required the building to be closed for two years. It was partially re-opened in September 2025 and fully re-opened in February 2026.

The collection represents an overview of Australian art from colonial times to the present day and includes various media, including paintings, works on paper, photography, and sculpture. The collection scope includes several important Indigenous barks and memorial pole and a substantial collection of contemporary Indigenous art. Newcastle Art Gallery also holds the largest collection of modern Japanese ceramics in the southern hemisphere.

Our thanks to Francesca Beddie for arranging this tour of the new gallery.

Ref: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Newcastle_Art_Gallery



Guide Catherine Hickson explains some items to Robyn Jackson and Lynda Skipper with Bill Oates in the background.
Image: Helen Wilson

Our guide Catherine Hickson
Image: Helen Wilson





Lexia Nielsen, Lynne Walker, Lynda Skipper, Mary Wright in the gallery.
Image: Helen Wilson



Outdoor sculpture at the gallery
Image: Helen Wilson



Lynne Walker, Robyn Jackson, Bill Oates, Caroline FitzRoy, Graham Wilson, Catherine Hickson, Helen Wilson, Liz Chappell, Lexia Nielsen, Helen Oates, Mary Wright, Lynda Skipper in the gallery.
Image: Lynne Walker



Libby Salkeld, Lexia Nielsen, Mary Wright, Caroline FitzRoy, Robyn Jackson, Elton Squires, Liz Chappell, Lynda Skipper at Monte Pio.
Image: Lynne Walker

Cintra House

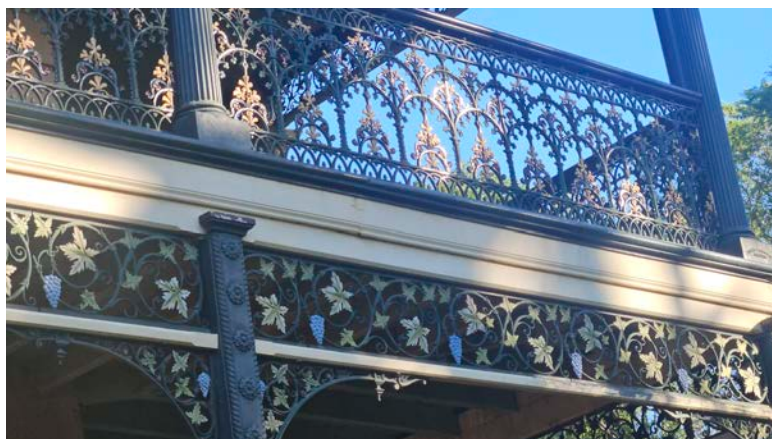
Cintra House is a sprawling, 30-room Victorian Italianate mansion located at 34 Regent Street in Maitland, NSW. Built in 1878, this heritage-listed property is a major local landmark, famous for its distinct tower, decorative ironwork, and a signature heart-shaped driveway. It was designed by John Wiltshire Pender with a garden by Sydney landscape architect R. Culbert. It was built from 1879 by Robert James with an 1887 extension by H. Noad. It was added to the New South Wales State Heritage Register on 31 August 2012.

Originally the house had 23 rooms, and the extensions added a second wing on the northern side, making it 31 rooms including the attic and cellar. It was sold to the Long family in 1917. Cintra was left in the charge of five sisters and was run as a private hospital from World War One until the late 1930s when it again became a private residence. The Long family undertook maintenance and restoration works to the interior and exterior, including painting, garden works and fencing.

Ref: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cintra_House,_Maitland

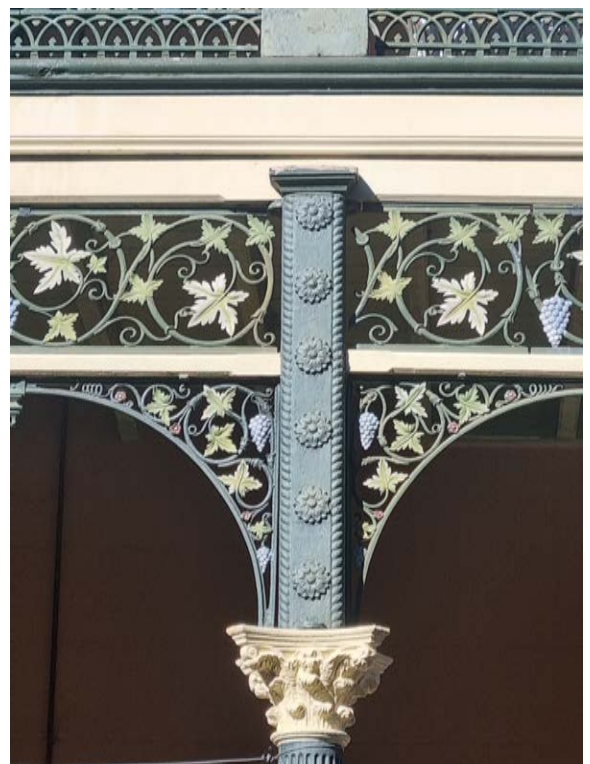


Cintra House
Image: Helen Oates



The balconies have iron roofs supported at the corners by curved solid timber beams and finely fluted cast iron Corinthian columns over 4.3 metres tall, produced by Taylor and Wearing of Redfern. There is extensive and intricate cast-iron lace balustrading and trellis on the balconies. The cast iron verandah friezes feature a design of grape vine and leaf with pendant fruit painted and highlighted.

Ref: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cintra_House,_Maitland



Above image: Francesca Beddie

Right image: Helen Oates



The tour group in front of Cintra House
Image: Francesca Beddie



Catherine Blanch, chatelaine of Cintra House, dressed in period costume for our tour. Here she describes the gardens to our tour group. The property is an intact and representative example of boom period house and garden in rural towns of the late nineteenth century. The property's curved carriage loop, ornamental specimen plants, decorative urns, elaborate gates, intricate cast iron verandah friezes, prominent tower, bracketed eaves, low pitched hipped verandah roof are all characteristics that epitomise the Victorian period Italianate design.

Ref: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cintra_House,_Maitland

Image: Francesca Beddie



Catherine Blanch and NMC Chair Helen Oates
Image: Francesca Beddie



Catherine Blanch reveals the workings of the water pump. Image: Helen Oates



Maitland City Council and the current homeowner Catherine Blanch have embarked on a digitisation project of original letters, photographs and books that have a significance to the history of the house dating from the WW1 era.

The funding will support a student (the 2025 Vera Deacon intern) to digitize these collections under the guidance of the University Library's Special Collections team. These documents would be made publicly available on the Living Histories repository.

The intern will write a blog post about the significance of the items in the context of the house's history.

Image: Helen Oates

TENTERFIELD PIN OAK TREE UPDATE

Tenterfield's iconic Pin Oaks are an important part of our town's identity, contributing to the character, beauty and seasonal appeal of our streets for generations.

Following growing concerns regarding the condition, maintenance and safety of these mature heritage trees, Council engaged an independent arboricultural assessment of 203 Pin Oaks across the township. Every tree was individually inspected by a qualified Level 5 arborist to assess its health, structural condition and suitability for ongoing retention.

The report provides the evidence Council needs to responsibly manage these trees, ensuring we protect our community and the environment while preserving Tenterfield's distinct character. The majority of trees are recommended to be retained, treated, and monitored over the next five years. However, several trees have significant hollows or fungal infections that compromise their structural integrity, and have been recommended by the arborist for immediate removal.

Residents are strongly encouraged to learn more by reading the [detailed arborist reports](#) and information provided below.

Overview: Tree Assessment Outcomes

- **203 trees** across Tenterfield were assessed by a qualified Level 5 arborist
- **193 trees** are currently manageable. Council's goal is to extend their safe lifespan as long as possible
- **10 trees were identified with critical defects** (such as fungal decay and trunk cavities), posing an **unacceptable safety risk**
- For these 10 trees, **removal is the only safe option**, as structural integrity is compromised and cannot be restored or managed
- Council is committed to **retaining and replanting trees** wherever it is safe and appropriate to do so and has **already purchased 54 advanced Pin Oaks to for planting along Casino Road and Logan Street.**

WHAT'S NEXT?

Council is acting immediately to protect the community from identified risks.

Council will:

1. Proceed with the removal of the 10 high-risk trees identified by the independent arborist
2. Continue maintenance and monitoring of the remaining 193 assessed trees
3. Begin replacement planting (for suitable sites)
4. Undertake ongoing reassessments to guide future management decisions
5. Continue sharing information and updates with the community

LOOKING AHEAD: PROTECTING THE FUTURE OF TENTERFIELD'S PIN OAKS

Council is committed to preserving Tenterfield's distinctive streetscapes and famous autumn colours for future generations.

As part of this commitment:

- 54 advanced Pin Oaks have already been purchased
- Replacement planting will commence along Casino Road and Logan Street
- Further planting opportunities are being considered to establish avenues of Pin Oaks or other suitable species
- Any proposed future tree avenues will be planned to ensure adequate growing space and long-term health

Many of our beautiful Pin Oaks were planted in the 1930's and are 90+ years old. Since then, surrounding development and infrastructure have changed significantly. Future planting programs will ensure trees have the space and conditions required to thrive for decades to come. This work represents an important investment in the next generation of Tenterfield's distinctive tree-lined streets.

National Management Committee Report Zoom Meeting 7th April 2026

Marketing: Marketing the Society was much discussed. It was felt that we need a clear direction and have to differentiate ourselves from garden clubs. We are a knowledge based society with a mission to advocate for the preservation of significant gardens and landscapes. Flyers are in the planning stages for each branch. We are also tasked with increasing our memberships and encouraging friends to become members. This is often done through one-on-one conversations.

Finance: The Society is quite dependent on making a sufficient profit from the conferences to allow full functioning of the group. Memberships have been declining and this needs to be addressed. We have raised fees slightly to cover inflationary rises in costs but we need to find ways of increasing revenue otherwise we are using saving to cover any shortfalls.

Membership: The Society confirmed our move to a common renewal date at this meeting. The month of March will be renewal month and 31st March the closing date. There will be several adjustments required leading up to March 2027. Our Treasurer Stephen Hathway has developed a plan of action. Look out for any communications to this effect. Currently every member has an individual renewal date which makes processing of renewals cumbersome and branches have difficulty knowing who is a member at any given time. Members are not always aware of their personal renewal date and can easily let their membership lapse. The new system should simplify everything. It is the standard practice for most organisations in Australia.

Governance: The roles and responsibilities of sub-committees and paid employees have been examined and delineated. Francesca Beddie has signed a contract to continue as Editor for another 12 months. Several policies are being written and approved by the NMC.

Honorary Memberships: The constitution will be amended in stages over the next 12 months. Apart from the membership renewal date we will be putting forward an amendment to clarify the awarding of Life and Honorary Memberships at the AGM. Further amendments on a Branch quorum and extension of office to a maximum of 10 years has been approved.

Next NMC Meeting: This will be a Zoom meeting on the 4th August.

Bookings are now open for the
2026 AGHS Annual Conference
Orange NSW

Register here:

<https://www.gardenhistorysociety.org.au/events/2026-annual-national-conference/>

Calendar of Events

Date 2026	Event	Notes
July Sunday 26th	AGM	U3A Details to come
August Sunday 23rd	'A Day with Camellias'	Winter Speaker Program Visit to Nan and Roy Robertson's magnificent garden 'Wanderriby' at Wollomombi. Lecture by world renowned Camellia expert Dr Steven Utick
September Friday 25th to Sunday 28th	AGHS Annual Conference	Civic Theatre, Orange NSW Registrations opened 13th April See link for registrations on previous page.
October Sunday 18th	On the Road to Walcha	We will be visiting four Walcha gardens. Details to come.
December Saturday 5th	Annual Celebration Lunch	Peterson's Winery

Note: The June excursion to UNE has been postponed to the summer of 2027.

Moira Lloyd has suggested that members might be interested in this event on Sunday 28th June.

Requiem for the Living

The Armidale Symphony Orchestra will be joined by the Armidale Choral Society and Fiori Musicali, together with vocal soloists Samantha Cobcroft, Jiya Aila, and Kent McIntosh, in a concert of glorious and uplifting choral music.

The centrepiece of the program is Requiem for the Living by American composer Dan Forrest. This will be a rare presentation of this powerful and profoundly human work outside Australia's capital cities. Traditionally, a Requiem is a mass for the dead. However, Forrest's Requiem for the Living (2013) offers a different perspective. Across its five movements, the work forms a narrative not only of remembrance, but of solace—speaking to the living and their own experiences of grief, pain, and hope. Conductor: Bruce Menzies.

June 28th - 3 - 5pm

Saints Mary and Joseph Catholic Cathedral

Cost: \$15.50 - \$35.50

<https://www.trybooking.com/events/landing/1576328>