



AUSTRALIAN
GARDEN
HISTORY
SOCIETY

Victoria Branch News

AUTUMN 2021

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

Dear Victorian Branch Members,

Welcome to our autumn newsletter. As the weather cools off it is a great time to reassess our gardens and work out the tasks and planting opportunities ahead. Our thoughts go out to our NSW members battling horrendous floods after last year's devastating bushfires and with the Covid plague thrown in, as my yoga teacher said, the gods must be angry.

In recent times, many garden owners have been reluctant to have groups on their properties and, with venue restrictions, events have been tricky and we thank members for their patience and understanding. With restrictions finally easing in Victoria we are very pleased to be able to offer a number of events for your diaries. Some mid-year events are still to be finalised

By mid-April fifty members will have enjoyed visiting Bishopscourt over two sold-out sessions and we thank Libby Marsden and her volunteers for their flexibility in making this happen. Also, sixty-two members attended Colleen Morris's zoom lecture on "Joseph Moore and Charles Maiden – Outreach and Impact" and we have had a productive working bee at Longacres.

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

WENDY DWYER | CHAIR

DIARY DATES:

Thursday 15 April – Second visit to Bishopscourt – booked out

Saturday 24 April – Working bee at Medlow, Surrey Hills

Wednesday 5 May – Morning lecture Mueller Hall by Richard Allen on his new book 'The Garden State – Inside Victoria's Private Gardens'

Friday 7 May – Bus trip "Walking the Wonders of the West" – HV McKay Memorial Gardens, Newport Lakes and Williamstown Botanic Gardens

Weds 9 June - Online lecture by respected UK garden historian, Caroline Holmes 'Impressionists in their Gardens -living light and colour'.

Weds 7 July - Online lecture by Caroline Holmes, 'Bory

Latour-Marliac - the source of water lilies before and beyond'.

10-13 September – National Conference Sydney

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

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



UPCOMING EVENTS

THE GARDEN STATE

Date: Wednesday May 5th

Time: 10:30 light refreshments, 11am lecture

Venue: Mueller Hall, Birdwood Ave

Price: \$20 members and Friends RBG, \$25 non-members

Online via Zoom: \$10

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

COPIES OF BOOK AVAILABLE FOR PURCHASE ON DAY - \$60

Cashless payment preferred



This talk will showcase, in words and pictures, a selection of stunning rural Victorian gardens. Victoria's rich soil, mostly cool climate (apart from mid-summer heatwaves) and – in many places – nourishing volcanic soil mean that with passion, patience, imagination and commitment, amazing gardens can be built and maintained. Richard Allen and Kimbal Baker's book, *The Garden State*, includes wonders like the magnificent Macarthur Street Garden at the foot of the Grampians in Dunkeld, rambling hill gardens of Mount Macedon and the Dandenong Ranges, and newer, more intimate gardens on the Mornington and Bellarine Peninsulas. In Mildura an eccentric desert garden appears like an oasis in the flat landscape, while at Sherbrooke, a miniature garden displays a collection of rare alpine flowers painstakingly collected and propagated from around the world. The book's chapters cover a range of garden types, including Grand Rural Estates, Hill Stations, Climate Conscious Gardens, Coastal Retreats and Old Curiosities.

Booking note: If you choose to attend online a Zoom link will be sent to you separately after bookings close on May 4th.

WALKING THE WONDERS OF THE WEST

Date: Friday May 7th

Depart: 8:45 am Russell St Extension Bus Loop (behind Ian Potter Gallery)

Return: Approx. 5:00 pm

Price: \$ 120 members \$ 150 non-members

Includes: Transport, Morning Tea, Lunch & notes

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



NOTE: THERE IS A LOT OF WALKING ON THIS TRIP SO MEMBERS MUST BE CAPABLE AND PREPARED FOR THIS.

Join us for a bus trip and walk around three different historic landscapes in the west of Melbourne.

HV McKay Memorial Gardens, Sunshine – Robin McKay Hunt, great grandson of HV McKay and AGHS member, together with the Friends of McKay Gardens will inform us and lead a walk to unfold the Sunshine Harvester story and how this industrial suburb was designed along garden city principals including the 1909 gardens which were established for the workers.

Newport Lakes – In 1989 work commenced to transform this former bluestone quarry and rubbish tip into a bushland oasis which now supports over 200 plant species and many birds and reptiles. We will have a 'walking lunch' to give you the opportunity to explore the trails and many viewpoints.

Williamstown Botanic Gardens – Permanently reserved in 1856, this is one of Victoria's oldest and most intact botanic gardens retaining Victorian and Edwardian features and significant trees, Curator Shelly Wood will guide us around these gardens and inform us of the significant works that are planned to ensure the future of these gardens.

ADVOCACY NEWS

Outside the bubble

Two pieces of research have recently been made public which may point to an additional approach to advocating for protection of heritage sites and gardens.

The first is a report from the Heritage Council, "State of Heritage Review: Local Heritage 2020" which examines the issues arising in the protection of sites considered to be of local significance, as opposed to State significance. Local heritage issues are dealt with by councils, with several shortcomings noted:

- "local heritage is not always a primary consideration or priority within councils.."
- "There is a need for increased direction from the State Government to better enable councils to both understand and effectively comply with their responsibilities to identify and protect local heritage"
- "A base level of heritage protection is still to be achieved across the State"

Recommendations are also offered to address these issues, including a promotional program for councils showcasing the benefits that appreciation and protection of local heritage can bring to local communities. In overall terms, the report is inward looking, seeking to strengthen the existing construct by which heritage is assessed and progressed through to an overlay.

The second piece is an article published by The Conversation of much broader scope, "Stuck in the past - Why Australian heritage practice falls short of what the public expects". This work, which references the Heritage Council Report above, argues for a reshaping of heritage governance and practice to take account of community interests and priorities. The authors propose that heritage conservation should be "people-centred" rather than rely too heavily on past practices. They argue that:

- Since 1974 there has been "a shift in emphasis from community to expert perspectives" in the field of heritage, leading to the standardised criteria and historic themes we have today
- "the existing system is not responsive enough to the powerful and evolving interactions between cultural heritage, social, cultural and environmental imperatives, and people and place."
- "People-centred conservation is a way to place community at the heart of heritage"

AGHS is following this narrative through these reports and the upcoming parliamentary 'Inquiry on the adequacy of the Planning and Environment Act 1987 and the Victorian planning framework in relation to planning and heritage protection', due to report June 2022. AGHS may make submissions to this Inquiry as it also considers its internal approach to heritage advocacy.

Botanic Gardens Grants



Camperdown Botanic garden, view of Lake Gnotuk

The Growing Victoria's Botanic Gardens grants program is an initiative of the Victorian Government to enhance the botanic gardens across Victoria with grants to eligible gardens and projects. Round One was conducted in 2019, and the successful grants for the Second (and final) Round have just been announced (January 2021). Funding of A\$4M over two years was an initiative of James Merlino, member for Monbulk in the Victorian Legislative Assembly and Deputy Premier. It is the first time since 1984-5 that there has been State money for regional/provincial botanic gardens.

Grants under this program aim to assist botanic garden managers to adapt to climate change, maintain valuable plant collections, improve amenities for the community and support local tourism development. 16 gardens received funding from Round One, 11 of which were also funded under Round Two; an additional 12 gardens benefitted from Round Two alone. Works to be undertaken courtesy of the grants are principally concerned with irrigation, access and interpretation. Details of individual grants can be viewed on the DELWP website.

In the second half of the nineteenth century Victoria created 29 botanic gardens. A detailed review of the times and background of this era of botanic garden establishment can be found in Gwen Pascoe's reference book, 'Long Views and Short Vistas'. While some sites have certainly changed since creation, the benefits for teaching and passive recreation remain, and it could be argued are now more important than ever. They deserve further and on-going support from State resources, and members are encouraged to write to James Merlino with such a message.



Working bees

Our first working bee for this year was held at **Longacres**, on a perfect autumn day. The focus of the day for the six volunteers was the rock garden, hidden away behind the double border. A delicious lunch was served in the studio. The next day there were heavy showers which the garden would have soaked up!
Details of next working bee below. Di Ellerton.

Our former Chair, Helen Page, was a great advocate of working bees and wrote an article in the journal for its 25th anniversary edition. She has also produced a longer version where she detailed many of her thoughts for the archives in 2006.

In this work she notes that the earliest records of working bees are in April 1983 and October 1984 when Victorian members and students of VCAH Burnley visited Belmont, to help with preparation of the garden for a visit during the annual conference in November 1984. She feels that the owners of the gardens we help see their role as custodians of something special to be passed on to future generations. As such, they open them to the public for worthy causes and Helen feels it is a privilege to assist these owners maintain their properties with the high-quality gardening we can offer. Here is an extract of the article in which Helen expresses her thoughts well.

Many hands make light work

"Working bees have been my personal passion and since late 1991 a regular programme has been carried out by Victorian members. It is an enormous responsibility to own a garden of historic significance usually established in times of cheap and plentiful labour and good wool prices. In current economic conditions owners are faced with a daunting task and the fear that they may be the one to let the garden go. Once lost they are extremely difficult and expensive to restore. We have often offered a working bee when we have included a visit to a garden as part of a branch activity and our ongoing relationship with Belmont, Trawalla and Turkeith started off like that. When arranging the first working bee I have always said to the owner to give us the worst job, the job they have been putting off, because when there is a group who chat away while getting on with it, it is amazing what can be achieved. That said there is always a wide range of garden jobs to do depending on the skills and ability of each volunteer. I am sure owners, before our first working bee, sometimes think we are just wanting to visit the garden but our track record has proved that we are there very much to work. For subsequent visits owners usually have special jobs set aside for us. I am proud to say the Victorian Branch is playing a significant role in their survival. For many of us living in the city with small gardens the opportunity these working bees give us to contribute to these large and mostly country gardens is a unique experience. How we would love to help every garden and with more people prepared to give of their time more gardens could be helped".



Medlow Bath, Surrey Hills

Date: Sunday April, 24th

Time: 10am start

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

diana.ellerton@icloud.com OR
telephone 9397 2756

AUTUMN QUIZ

VICTORIA'S PRIVATE GARDENS



The Garden State, Inside Victoria's Private gardens. Richard Allen, Kimbal Baker. Thames & Hudson

This month, as we are preparing for a talk by the author of this gorgeously illustrated book, we continue with questions based on it.

Lubra Bend: Photo: courtesy of Tim Entwisle

1. Situated in an area known for its mild summer weather and rich volcanic soils, this garden has benefited from the care of several prominent owners. The garden, first laid out before World War 1 by the family of a well-known newspaper proprietor, was later purchased by a former patron of the AGHS in 1969. The original three-storey house was replaced with a single level dwelling and the garden structure refined. The next owners have worked to restore the property making changes such as: increasing the size of the parkland, judiciously removing trees past their prime and altering the house to make it more in proportion to the garden which has grown around it.
2. A keen family of gardeners has been managing this property, tucked away in the Dandenong Ranges, for over 80 years. The current nonagenarian owner recalls the property being threatened by fire several times in its history and has now installed a fire-bunker. Some of the rhododendrons are probably 100 years old and her son Rick has planted three dawn redwoods and a Wollemi pine. The gardens features a magnolia lawn with over seventy different species, a laburnum walk and a variety of trees which must be glorious in autumn: Chinese tupelo, sour gum, Persian ironwood and ginkgo.
3. This property was originally named after the Aboriginal women who were said to have camped along the bend in the river. The original 1960s house was built from bluestones sourced from roads in inner Melbourne when the tram tracks were taken up, and the garden was planted by Margaret Stokes. In 2007, Phillip Johnson was commissioned to create a garden with plants that thrived in dry conditions; plants sourced from Chile, Greece and Australia are featured. The result is a water-wise garden which is a mass of colour and contrasts but thanks to the inclusion of a 40,000-litre tank, it also maintains two ponds which flow into a wetland.
4. Although only 15 kilometres from Geelong, this property does not have access to town water and also regularly faces the challenge of south-westerly winds from the nearby Southern Ocean. The owners have responded by planting mainly drought-tolerant plants and establishing a shelter belt of 1500 native trees along the southern and eastern borders. These include: lemon-scented gum, river red gum, coast banksia, red ironbark and flowering gums. Around the house they have chosen many coastal plants. This brings this tree planting total to 4000. An unusual feature of this garden is the Sean Godsell designed shelter which hovers above the house and over part of the garden behind. It has louvres which are opened or closed depending on the conditions.
5. Two former Sydney residents set their heart on creating a cool-climate garden and when they discovered this property in a small town north of Ballarat, they knew they had found the one. They aimed to create a romantic country garden that did not reveal itself all at once and with plants supplied from Frogmore Gardens, Dicksonia Rare Plants and Lambley Nursery they slowly improved the garden. They underplanted the remnant notable trees (a golden elm, an ancient walnut and a silk tassel bush) with trillium, galanthus and fritillaria, created hedges and garden rooms as well as paths which meander between woodland trees. They are great supporters of Wombat Hill Botanic Gardens and have donated the proceeds of two open gardens to them.

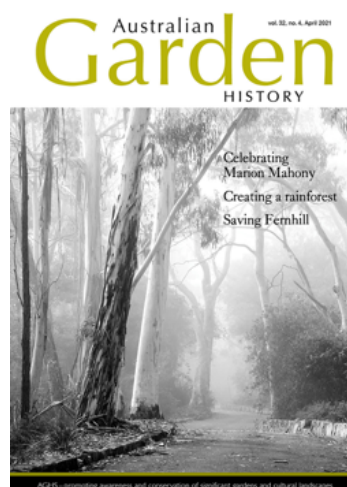
Answers at end of newsletter

QUIZ ANSWERS - VICTORIA'S PRIVATE GARDENS

1. Bolobek, Macedon
2. Mernda heights, Olinda
3. Lubra Bend, Yarra Valley
4. Illangi Farm, Ceres
5. Bank House, Newlyn



AUSTRALIAN GARDEN HISTORY APRIL ISSUE: DARE TO DREAM



VICTORIAN BRANCH COMMITTEE

Committee News

Robyn Robins has resigned from the committee. As the previous Chair and a committee member prior to that, we thank her for her contribution to the branch and wish her well in her academic and consulting work.

We are very pleased to welcome Anna Long back to the committee who, as the previous treasurer, brings a wealth of organisational and research skills.

Interested in joining the committee? We welcome new members and are looking for a broad range of skills to assist in making our Branch run smoothly so please call me on 0408340967 if you'd like to discuss how you can contribute.

Chair & Secretary: Wendy Dwyer
Vice Chair & Newsletter: Lynda Entwisle
Treasurer: Anne Aston

Committee members:
General: Anna Long
Working Bee Coordinator: Diana Ellerton

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.