



eNewsletter No. 11 March 2023

Northern NSW Branch

Meetings are held on the **last Sunday of the month** followed by a presentation. Rose Garden working bees are usually held on the **first weekend of each month** - alternating Saturday or Sunday. Newsletters are published **mid month**.

Events

Sunday 26th March

General Meeting 4.00pm
Speaker: Liz Chappell -
*Paronella Park in Queensland
Report from National
Management Committee
(Oates)*
Historical Society Centre
Faulkner St (next to old
Library) followed by dinner at
Grand Hotel.
All welcome
RSVP Helen Oates
helen_oates10@hotmail.com

Friday 21st April

Autumn Soiree at the
Heritage Rose Garden
Seat dedications to
Mareah Rhodes-White and
Jillian Oppenheimer
4 - 6pm

AGHS Conference

29th September - 1st October
Ipswich
Bookings Open 1st May

Send articles & photos to:
Reports/Newsletter Editor
Maria Hitchcock
maria.hitchcock@gmail.com



At the Welcome to 2023 dinner.
Graham Wilson, Helen Oates, Moira and Peter Lloyd.
Photo: Maria Hitchcock

Join AGHS Northern NSW Branch

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

From the Chair

Welcome to Autumn, everyone. Our dinner at Armidale City Bowling Club at the end of February was a happy start to our 2023 events, where we enjoyed good company and good food. Our thanks to Helen Wilson for her organisational skills and persistence in bringing the dinner to fruition.

We also enjoyed the company of Guyra Garden Club members on Monday 27 February at the Heritage Rose Garden, and later at three 'downsized' gardens of our AGHS members. The generosity of this group in donating just over \$550 towards the upkeep of the rose garden is very much appreciated. Our groups share a large number of members, and the visit was an opportunity for AGHS members to enjoy the garden without the need to don gardening gloves or wield secateurs. You will find a full report on the visit later in the newsletter.

A major event on 21 April will be the dedication of seats in the Heritage Rose Garden for Mareah Rhodes-White and Jillian Oppenheimer who were both staunch supporters of our AGHS branch activities and of the rose garden itself. We also hope to plant trees in their honour, and to replace a tree in honour of Sally Croft, in the garden near the Saumarez Centre. Please look out for an email invitation you will receive shortly with all the details of a late afternoon soiree. This event will also be an opportunity for invited community members to join us and to appreciate the significance of the rose garden to local and regional tourism.

As noted elsewhere in the newsletter, our next NNSW branch meeting will be held on the afternoon of Sunday 26 March, to be followed by a presentation by Liz Chappell, who will bring the fascinating history of Paronella Park in Queensland to life for us. I will also provide a report to the meeting on National Management Committee undertakings. As usual, we will adjourn for dinner afterwards, on this occasion to the Grand Hotel. Please let me know if you will be able to join us. I look forward to your company.

The first installment of gravel mulch over some of the rose garden beds will soon be completed. Our expectation is that the gravel mulch will inhibit weed growth and significantly improve water retention in the soil, leading to decreased usage. We are using accumulated funding from donations and our very successful Open Garden weekend last year to begin this project, but I also hope to attract some grant funding to continue or complete the purchase and spreading of the gravel mulch. Thanks to Richard Bird for his prowess in calculating required amounts of gravel, and for organising the various contractors for the task.

Bookings for the AGHS 2023 National Conference in Ipswich will open on 1 May, with places expected to fill quickly. It promises to be an interesting and enjoyable conference, entitled *Digging into the past: Above and below the limestone hills*. As our closest neighbouring branch, support for this conference will be far less arduous in terms of travel. As always, I'm sure our NNSW branch will be well represented, continuing our well-earned accolades as the 'party branch'.

Finally, the revised Development Application for the Sustainable Saumarez Homestead Tourism Project has recently been lodged with Armidale Regional Council (ARC) by the National Trust (NSW). DA-38-2023 is available to be viewed under the 'Development' tab on the ARC website home page. Accessing the plans from the 'Applications on Notification' on the right hand side of the page will also provide you with opportunity to respond to the DA. I urge you to take the time to review the application and to submit your comments to the ARC. This is such an important piece of advocacy for our AGHS branch, in responding to significant heritage impacts.

Best wishes to all
Helen Oates (Chair - AGHS NNSW Branch)

Photos from the Welcome to 2023 Dinner



AGHS NSW Committee at the Welcome to 2023 dinner

Tom O'Connor, Maria Hitchcock, Helen Oates, Lexia Neilsen, Helen Wilson, Graham Wilson, Lynne Walker, Fran Webb, Moira Lloyd, Bill Oates Apology: Robyn Jackson

Photo: Dar Brookes



The dinner was held upstairs at the Armidale Bowling Club. It was like a medieval banquet with members seated at a long table.

Guyra Garden Club Visit 27/2/23



Cath's Tour



Helen's Tour

Downsized gardens on show in Armidale

Text by Lynne Walker, Helen Nancarrow and Liz Chappell

In late February, around forty members of Guyra Garden Club, many of whom also belong to Australian Garden History Society, visited the gardens of three long term club members who had 'downsized' from their rural properties to town blocks. They were amazed at the imagination all three gardeners had shown in their plant selection and landscaping on a much-reduced scale.

The day began with morning tea and a guided tour of the Heritage Rose Garden, Saumarez Homestead, conducted by Helen Oates and Cath Gordon. The rose garden which opened in 2015 had been established by members of the local branch of the Australian Garden History Society. Those volunteers have worked tirelessly maintaining the garden and extending it to make it one of the most extensive rose gardens in Australia with a unique collection of heritage roses (Pre 1930). A second stage featuring international rose breeders was opened in 2018. Visitors enjoyed the opportunity to see which roses were repeat flowering and immerse themselves in the scents. The resplendent hips of many of the *Rugosa* species captured their attention. Owing to the great attendance at three working bees this year, the Heritage Rose Garden was enticingly well-groomed.

Visitors then divided into three groups to visit members' downsized gardens. Helen Nancarrow was the first of the three to move from an expansive rural garden into Armidale, seventeen years ago. She explained how she adjusted to limited garden space and equally limited town water supply. 'Living as I do on my own, I have three criteria for my garden. First is privacy. I have high fences, softened by hedges and climbers like jasmine and clematis. I am conscious of security, so I've installed sensor lights to illuminate the garden at night and I have lockable gates and Crimsafe screen doors. Looking to the future, I have tried to make the garden easy-care.'



Old door

Image: Lynne Walker

In 2012, Lynne Walker, whose new town garden was one of those visited, led a tour of *Glorious Gardens and Historic Homes* in the UK. Both Helen and Liz, whose garden was also open for the club, were part of the group. Helen says 'This wonderful tour revolutionised my concept of gardening, further developed my love of it and I learnt so much. I became more aware of the various different shapes and colours of shrubs, trees and plants that complement each other in the garden. I love clipped hedges – single, double, and clipped spheres – large and small and of course, topiary. 'When I arrived home from the UK, I immediately pleached an existing Port Wine Magnolia hedge. Underneath I planted a plethora of white hydrangeas, white canna lilies and white Japanese anemones. A new garden bed was built for roses and a sasanqua camellia hedge outside my bedroom.

'To make my small garden look larger, I added height (where I could) to raise the eye up. I put in an expensive tall bird house – which unfortunately no self-respecting live bird will enter; planted Pittosporum hedges around the perimeter of the garden for privacy; and put in an arbour to host cascading clematis. Tall potted plants within garden beds added another height dimension. Garden mirrors were placed to make spaces look larger. I've tried to make the garden corners interesting by creating focal points with paths, an old chair, a crab apple tree, maple, bird baths and the arbour. 'Part of my western boundary includes the back of next door's old meat house. I placed an old door against the building and formed a path to the door. With a bit of imagination, it might appear that my garden extends into next door! I enjoy Wintertime with my two *Corylus Avellana Contorta* or Contorted Filbert (Hazelnut), when their bare squiggly branches are on show. 'Not many plants or trees remain from 17 years ago, when I bought the property, although the camellias, which I love, particularly on the western side of the house, were here when I came.

'I am grateful to a previous owner who cleverly designed garden edges to incorporate curves and a "peninsula" of sorts, instead of the usual, unimaginative straight-lined edges around a rectangular shaped garden. Mind you, in my time, these edges, in places, have crept out to make the garden wider so I had more garden to play with. 'My garden is also home to my two Miniature Schnauzers, Alfie, and Benjie. The small pathways throughout the garden are to encourage them not to belt through the garden and knock over plants. That's the plan anyway, which sometimes hasn't worked! I compost lawn clippings and Autumn leaves to put back on the garden beds each year, to improve the soil.

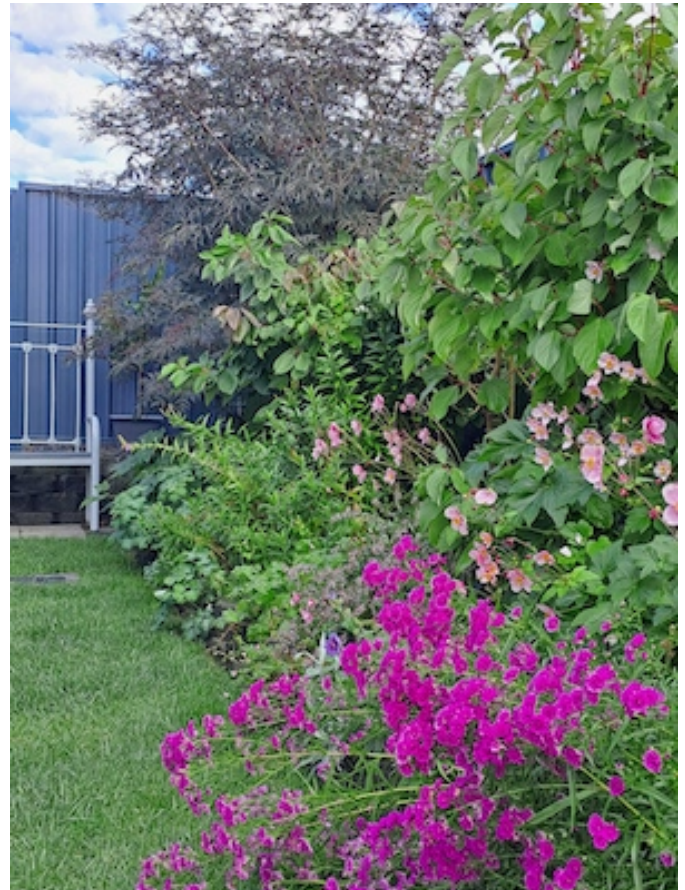
'I enjoy the birds that come into the garden. Eastern Spinebills, blue wrens, fantails, finches, silver eyes etc., as well as bower birds. The bird life has improved immensely after the Council conducted a feral cat eradication programme and set traps a couple of years ago,' Helen said.

Many of the garden club members had previously visited **Liz Chappell and Elton Squires'** two-acre garden near Glen Innes which opened regularly for charity. They were surprised that four years ago Liz and Elton chose a townhouse with only a courtyard for their retirement. 'I loved developing our large garden with wide perennial borders and over 200 roses, but I wasn't so keen on maintaining it. Besides it came with a large house, a farm and a lot of hungry cows. We thought it was time for different challenges in our lives. This is like moving a full

The main challenge Liz found in her small garden was scale of plantings. 'Instead of buying ten of one plant, I now only have three. Anything with large leaves is too dominant – so my *Melianthus major* that came with me had to be re-homed after the first year. Trees (I only have room for two) must be small and, most importantly shallow rooted so they don't search out the neighbour's plumbing.

The soil here is heavy clay, much richer and more water retentive than the light granite we had at the farm. So in the first wet spell all the grey leaved plants died. The exception was *Artemesia ludoviciana*, a great little herbaceous ground cover which thrives.

'Our garden is in full view of the living area, so everything needs to be interesting year-round to earn its place. The two maples were chosen for their bark, one bright red and the other green and white flecked ('snake barked').



Chappell Courtyard Garden Image: Liz Chappell

Red stemmed dogwoods, *Cornus alba Sibirica*, are a star shrub for cold climates and enjoy Armidale's heavy soil. At last I have a place for a tassel bush, *Garrya elliptica*, which like the nearby *Mahonia bealii* and *Magnolia grandiflora* 'Little Gem', is evergreen.

'Underplanting is kept to a restricted colour palette- blue, pink and purples- to give unity to a small space with repeat plantings of cranesbill geraniums and Michaelmas daisies in different colours. Any impulse buys have to be prepared to live in pots' Liz explained.

Liz and Elton's small front garden is south facing, an excellent site for *Hydrangea arborescens Annabelle*, *Hydrangea quercifolia* (Oak leaf) and *Loropetalum*. Ground covering Veronica and Geranium 'Pink Spice' disguise the fading foliage of spring bulbs: Scilla, snowdrops and *Narcissus* 'Mount Hood'.



Walker Ginkgo Border *Image: Lynne Walker*

Lynne Walker and Richard Bird are relatively new residents to Armidale, moving into town just fourteen months ago from Black Mountain, after having lived there for thirty years. Downsizing from a 600 acre property, including several acres of garden, to a 600 square metre block meant some difficult decisions had to be made.

Lynne said 'We had known the cottage for some years as it was previously owned by a friend who had lived here for fifty years and who had established a lovely little cottage garden under a wonderful framework of trees. However given the age of the cottage a lot of earthworks were required, using the tiniest dingo I have ever seen, to upgrade the facilities so a lot of the underplantings had to go but the marvellous trees remained including very large specimens of a Tulip tree, a ginkgo, a Heritage listed holly, a dogwood, several camellias, a persimmon, a crabapple and a tree - sized rhododendron.

We are fortunate that although the house is very visible on a busy intersection, the living area faces into the garden so we concentrated on establishing a leafy courtyard and outdoor living area and on one of the street sides we built a high brick wall and within this has become our rose garden. Trying to decide which were my favourite roses of the dozens of roses growing at 'Heatherbrae' was very difficult but we succeeded in transplanting about thirty of them and they are all thriving.

With underplantings I have focused on old fashioned plants which are appropriate to the age of the cottage (c.1885) adding magnolias, camellias, ceanothus, hellebores, hydrangeas, bearded iris, lavender and masses of violets.

Richard says one of the other challenges was relocating his sculpture collection which had numbered over 90 pieces at 'Heatherbrae'. While many of the smallest sculptures could be relocated to the cottage, friends and family benefited from gifts of the larger sculptures, and, in some cases, works were given back to the original sculptors to on- sell.

Downsizing the vegetable garden is a challenge Richard has also taken on, now restricting the growing area to one raised garden bed.

Australian Garden History Society
Northern NSW Branch
EVENTS CALENDAR 2023

		<p style="text-align: center;">MARCH</p> <p>Saturday 4th - Heritage Rose Garden working bee Sunday 26th – General Meeting and dinner 4pm Speaker: Liz Chappell on Paronella Park in Queensland Dinner at Grand Hotel</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">APRIL</p> <p>Sunday 2nd - Heritage Rose Garden working bee Friday 21st – Autumn Soiree in Heritage Rose Garden - seat dedications. 4 - 6pm Sunday 30th - General Meeting and dinner</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">MAY</p> <p>Saturday 6th - Heritage Rose Garden working bee Saturday 27th – visit to Longford followed by lunch at Bendemeer Hotel</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">JUNE</p> <p>Sunday 4th - Heritage Rose Garden working bee End of June – weekend visit to Coffs Harbour gardens</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">JULY</p> <p>Saturday 1st - Heritage Rose Garden working bee Sunday 30th - General Meeting and dinner</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">AUGUST</p> <p>Sunday 6th - Heritage Rose Garden working bee Sunday 27th - General Meeting and dinner</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">SEPTEMBER</p> <p>Saturday 2nd - Heritage Rose Garden working bee Friday 29th – Sunday 1st Oct AGHS Annual Conference – Ipswich Qld</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">OCTOBER</p> <p>Sunday 1st - Heritage Rose Garden working bee End of October – visit to Peony farm and Uralla gardens</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">NOVEMBER</p> <p>Saturday 4th - Heritage Rose Garden working bee Saturday 18th & Sunday 19th – New England Garden Festival End of November – Christmas event</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">DECEMBER</p> <p>Sunday 3rd - Heritage Rose Garden working bee No meeting or event at end of December</p>