

# Inflorescence

May 2023

The Newsletter of the Southern Highlands Branch of the AGHS



## Events for 2023

<b>Berrima District Museum</b> <b>1 (A) Market Place</b> <b>Berrima</b>  <b>Now open Friday,</b> <b>Saturday and Sundays</b>	<b>Come and see</b> <i><b>Gardens and</b></i> <i><b>Landscapes in the</b></i> <i><b>Southern Highlands</b></i> <i><b>Then and Now</b></i>
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## Upcoming Tours and Events

**25 June Winter Solstice Seminar see page 8**

**27 August AGM Winter Seminar at Burrawang**

**25 October Camden Park and St Johns Church Camden**

**22-24 November Hunter Valley Garden Tour**

## Report from the Chair

On 1 May bookings opened for the National Conference in Ipswich, Queensland from 29 September to 1 October 2023. The theme of the conference is "Digging into the past - above and below the Limestone Hills". The National Conference usually books out very quickly so if you're considering attending please book soon.

The historic Wingello Homestead and some of the curtilage was approved for listing on the State Heritage Register 4 May 2023. The 'galloping parson,' the Reverend Thomas Hassall, likely dropped in there and a long line of prominent pastoral families lived in its walls. Wingello Park, 10km north of Marulan, was also intrinsically linked with NSW convict history and hosted a working village.

We are now able to offer Australian Institute of Landscape Architects (AILA) members one informal Continuing Professional Development (CPD) point per hour (up to five points per event) at all events without a formal application to the AILA CPD approvals sub-committee. There is a two-tier system of informal and formal CPD points; the formal CPD of two points per hour, requires an application to AILA. Please communicate this approval to any friends or acquaintances who are AILA members as this will help educate these landscape architects about the value of garden history and how to incorporate this sensitively into their garden plans.

I'm sure everyone has observed that the Bowral train station parking lot has been resurfaced and is now open to the public. The view of the heritage camellias lining Station Street and the new plantings on the terraces look wonderful. Please take a walk down to the station and admire the hard work of not only council staff but also Laurel Cheetham our Heritage Representative and Bill Parker the owner of Camellias-R-Us who pruned the heritage camellias and planted the new

camellias on the terraces. The AGHS-SHB has been an integral part of this renovation so we are very happy that this part of the project is now complete. Storyboards will be created in the near future to memorialise this renovation.

Please welcome the following new members to the AGHS-SHB:

Meg Colette, Bowral

Christine Kelly, Burradoo

Richard Marshall, Numbaa

Christine Van Aalst, Bowral

Jenny Harley-Frost, Sutton Forest

Heather McIntyre, Burradoo

Bridget Pedersen, Bowral

Helen Worrall, Bundanoon

Pamela Jane, Bundanoon

Best wishes

Ruth

### AGHS-SHB Committee

Chair and Secretary	Ruth Bailey
Events Coordinator	Eleanor Dartnall
Treasurer	Lynda Cowley
IT Coordinator/Research	Jenny Woodwell
Editor/Research	Bud Townsing
General Member	Chris O'Brien

### Associate Members

Tours	Ray Bradley
NMC Representative	Lyn Barrett
WSC Heritage Representative	Laurel Cheetham



## AGHS Tour to Markdale and Crookwell – 5 April 2023

By Merryleigh Brindley, photographs by Ruth Bailey and Bud Townsing

Weather pundits usually say that after a foggy morning, a sunny day follows, so as 55 AGHS-SHB members and friends boarded the coach on a cold, dark, foggy morning we fervently hoped they were right. The fog lasted until Goulburn and then the welcome sun showed us trees in glowing autumn colour and paddocks lush with feed after the very wet season – an unusual sight for this district. This area all the way from Goulburn and surrounding Markdale is Merino sheep country, renowned for its fine wool – a general rule is that the harsher the country, the finer the wool.



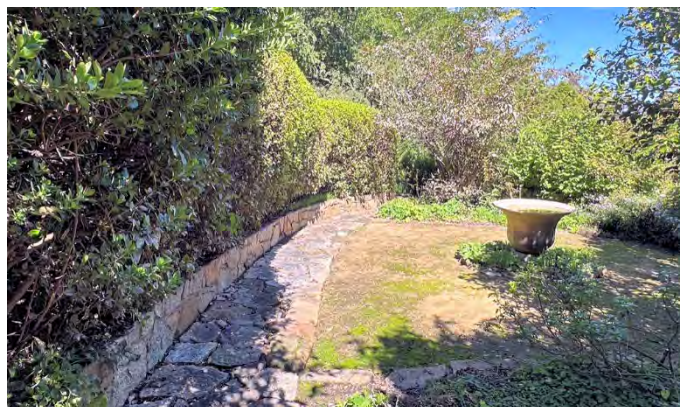
Markdale was settled in the late 1830s but it did not get its name until 1858 when it was bought by a Mr Marks and renamed. After several changes of ownership, James Ashton, a former Parliamentary Member for Goulburn and his wife bought it in 1921 and until 2018, its over 6000 acres remained in the Ashton family. The original Ashtons had four sons: James, Robert, Geoff and Phil. The boys were passionately interested in polo and went on to have international polo careers in England, the United States and India, beginning three generations of pioneering polo history, with Markdale becoming a centre for polo with regular schools and events, both national and international, and beginning at the same time, three generations of house and garden history.



The original stone homestead built in the 1850s we passed on the way in and it is now used for farm stays together with the old shearing shed, a reliable source of income that many farmers now embrace.



The present homestead, built by James Ashton in the 1920s was a simple one-story building of concrete blocks made on site, surrounded by a verandah with a very low roof line. The second generation of Ashtons, Geoffrey and his wife, Janet, lived at Markdale from 1935 until 1984. After the war, around 1949, wool prices started to soar and as a result, they were able to redesign house and garden. They started by engaging Edna Walling, the notable landscape designer from Melbourne. She began by moving the driveway from in front of the house, and by developing a series of semi-circular terraces of planting retained by her signature dry rock walls of local granite.







Other Walling concepts were winding stone paths, the use of deciduous trees grouped to bring the surrounding landscape into the garden, many garden rooms for protection from the wind and a reliance on simple cottage plants and tough shrubs to cope with the very hot summers, heavy frosts and frequent snow in winter.



A very large area of erosion in front of the house was dammed to form a lake, so that this large area of water became the principal focus of the view.

The next year, the eminent architect, Professor Wilkinson remodelled the house, enclosing some verandahs, adding a low second story topped with a cupola - there wasn't enough money for a full two story - and opening the house to the garden. This is the only time that these two leaders of their fields have worked on the same property in Australia.

The third generation, Geoffrey Ashton Jnr. and his wife, Mary, a New York trained interior decorator, took over in 1984 after one of the worst droughts in farming history. With her training in design, the house and garden were renovated, a pool house and tennis court created in the lower garden and a Chinese Chippendale style bridge built over the lake.

I remember the house was decorated in English country house style, elegant but comfortable (until we moved to Bowral, my late husband, John and I and our four children lived on a property at Cootamundra and we visited Markdale several times). Geoffrey Ashton died in 2019. The Ashton era ended when the property was sold in 2018 to a Sydney family, coincidentally with four young sons like the first Ashtons at Markdale.

When we arrived at Markdale we were met by the head gardener as he introduced himself (actually the only gardener). He led us past the now disused polo field to the outskirts of the garden to show us a sketch of the Edna Walling designed garden, looking supposedly like a horse's head. The photograph below is the sketch he showed us.



This is what the garden looks like today viewed by Google Earth. We leave it to your imagination in regard to it looking like a horse's head.



In the garden is a special enclosure with a timber polo training horse with its angled floor to catch the balls.





Then we were left to explore. Two statues I remember were no longer there – a life sized statue of a horse and a wonderful one of a shearer, perhaps sold in the clearing sale.

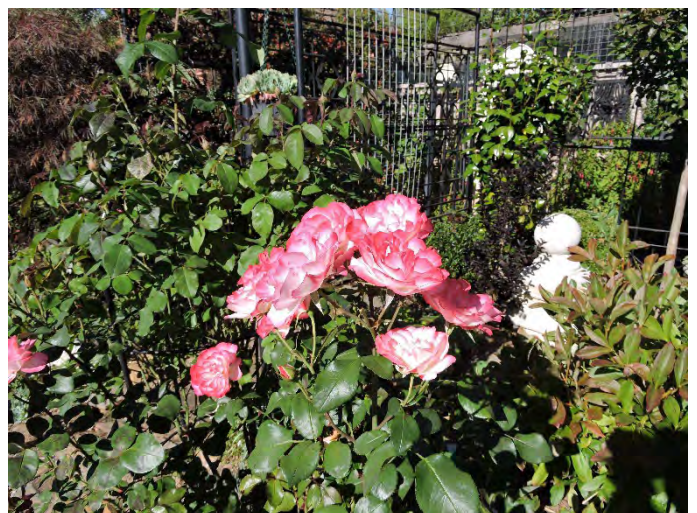
On to Crookwell for lunch, a small inland country town in a valley with wide streets, angle parking and wonderful autumn colouring. As is common in country towns now, diversifying to ensure survival, several old buildings had been converted into interesting shops and eateries. Typical was Arcadia Hall with its variety of enticing goods in alcoves that reminded me of horse stalls and, right at the back, a delightful (and irresistible) nursery. But two more gardens beckoned, in the same street but on opposite sides so, when we were divided into two groups, we had the pleasure of wandering up and down the very wide street, admiring the attractive old homes in their gardens and the long avenues of Golden Ash trees glowing in the sun. The Hudson garden's star turn was an amazing weeping cypress which reminded me of those trees in children's fairy stories with long green wispy branches drooping every which way.



The garden had a lovely peaceful atmosphere with its roses against the verandah, its cottage garden plants, its bulbs popping up and some wonderful hellebores. I heard a member say "I could live here," such was its charm.



The Jackson garden was different again but also had a restful atmosphere – perhaps living in a small country community engenders this. Again, lots of nooks and crannies, roses, many maples beginning to colour, bulbs and perennials. I have to confess I later settled myself on a bench in a shady courtyard where someone had thoughtfully left a copy of the local 'Highlife' magazine and caught up with the local doings. It was so secluded and peaceful.



Then, finally, we headed home, all of us relaxed and happy after our wonderful day. Ray, "thank you, you've done it again and given us a perfect day to enjoy, learn from and remember." And as a bonus, we had our friend Ron Hewitt, coming out of retirement just to drive us and bring us safely home. Until our next trip!



## The Southern Highlands Botanical Gardens Autumn Fair April 22-23



Bud Townsing and Eleanor Dartnall manning our new tent.

Our thanks to the four AGHS-SHB members who helped man the tent over the two days.

We signed up four new members and talked over the two days to many of our gardening friends.

We did a mini presentation of our Claude and Isobel Crowe segment at the Berrima Museum using two Graphoscopes to view the images. Graphoscopes are a 19th-century device used in parlours in order to enhance the viewing of photographs and texts, the iPad of their time. A simple technology of a single magnifying glass in a timber frame that still draws people in.

We were amazed at the number of Claude and Isobel Crowe stories that we were told over the two days. This demonstrates what a remarkable couple they were and still fresh in people's minds.

## Station Street Camelia Garden Restoration Project

This Wingecarribee Shire Council (WSC) project is nearing completion with work now done on the trachyte walls, camellia pruning and renovation, and car park resurfacing. Our thanks to WSC management and staff for having the vision and commitment to see this project through. Our thanks also to all those involved in the battle for Station Street a long campaign to save the entry of Bowral and its trees.



Photograph courtesy Berrima District Historical and Family History Society (BDHS) Bowral Station circa 1936.



Photographs by Bud Townsing 28 May 2023



## Book Review

### *The Southern Highlands is our Landscape - The Story of Isobel and Claude Crowe Berrima Bridge Nurseries*

"The Southern Highlands is Our Landscape"  
The Story of Isobel and Claude Crowe  
Berrima Bridge Nurseries



The slide show at the Berrima Museum on Isobel and Claude Crowe's impact on the landscape of the Southern Highlands has garnered considerable interest from Southern Highlands' residents as well as people from afar.

Bud Townsing has now completed the accompanying book titled *The Southern Highlands is our Landscape - The Story of Isobel and Claude Crowe Berrima Bridge Nurseries*. It not only includes images from the Berrima Museum slide show but also photographs of all 56 garden drawings created by Claude Crowe for the then owners so they could see what would grow well in their garden. These are the only ones that have so far been identified with accuracy of the 200 hand drawn plans available from the Caroline Simpson Library. In addition current day photographs of these identified homes and gardens are also included. Nearmap images taken in August 2022 show aerial views with amazing clarity. Claude Crowe would have been impressed with the results of his recommendations and the homeowners' hard work over the years. The properties are listed by the individual towns and villages for easy location of specific gardens.

The book is 188 pages and is large format, 13 inches by 11 inches. It is produced on a not-for-profit basis and is the first of a planned series of books by AGHS-SHB. The books are of high quality and are printed in small numbers on a print to order basis. The cost of each book is \$160 plus postage. If you wish to purchase a copy or look at a copy, please contact Bud Townsing on 0429 030 195 or [metow@bigpond.com](mailto:metow@bigpond.com).

Some of the views of Bowral that appear in the book are shown on the right and demonstrate part of the legacy that Claude and Isobel Crowe have left us.



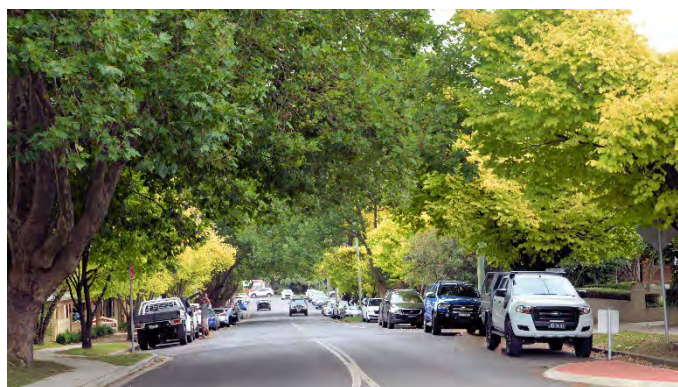
The above (BDHS) 1928 aerial photograph of Bowral shows very few trees in Bowral.



When we look from Oxley's Hill today we see a very different view with established trees now very much in evidence.



Golden Elm trees in Woodbine Street Bowral in March 2023 which can attribute with a high degree of confidence to Berrima Bridge Nurseries. In 1928 there were no trees in Woodbine Street.



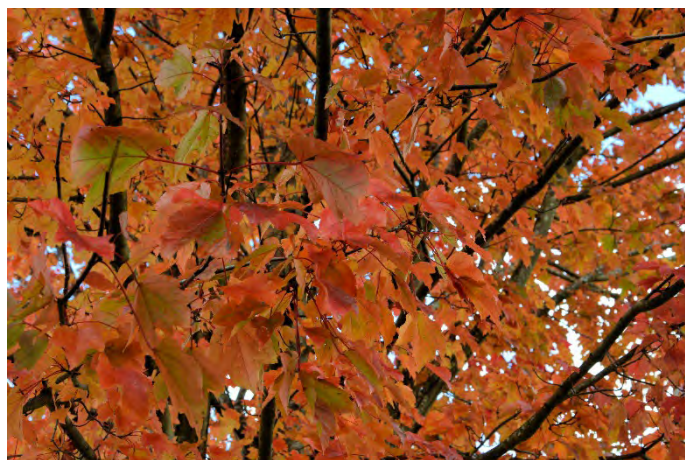
Looking at Golden Elms and London Plane trees in Bundaroo Street in March 2023, a remarkable change from an almost treeless street in 1928.



# Autumn Colour in the Southern Highlands



Acer rubrum Lipstick Maple from Quindalup planted 20 years ago by Annette O'Donnell at Avoca.



Close-up of Avoca Lipstick Maple



Bowral Library



Moss Vale, the Dr. Alcorn Memorial and Leighton Gardens



Burrawang General Store



Harby Avenue Burradoo



Bradman Oval Bowral



## Dr Peter Valder passed away on the 28th February 2023 aged 95



• The Moss Vale property "Whitley" was one of the gardens visited by members of the Australian Garden History Society and seen here during the lunch break were Barbara Trapnell of Mittagong, Keva North of Bowral (whose husband, Tim, is Secretary of the Society), Dr Peter Valder of Sydney and Elizabeth Symonds of Bowral.

The above newspaper clipping is dated 23 November 1987 reporting on the AGHS annual conference in the Southern Highlands. Peter is next to Keva North. Keva on hearing of Peter's passing recalled fond memories of him.

The following synopsis is from Peter's AGHS oral history of 2007 by Roslyn Buge.

"Long-time Australian Garden History Society member and author, Dr Peter Valder grew up in isolation at Nooroo, at Mount Wilson in NSW's Blue Mountains. He went to boarding school, trained in agriculture and plant pathology at Sydney and Cambridge Universities in the 1950s, then worked for the NSW Department of Agriculture. From 1962 he taught plant pathology at Sydney. A University Open Day in 1983 led to broadcasting on TV with Mike Walsh, Dave Allen and a lengthy gig on 'Burke's Back Yard'; his ready wit and double entendres proving a hit. Long interest in plants and plant-hunting saw him travel in Europe and Asia, collecting in South-East and East Asia. Peter helped organise a 1958 first-public opening of a range of Mount Wilson gardens including Nooroo, a continuing tradition. He helped his aging mother with Nooroo, enriching its plant collections and design, with Richard Clough.

Chestnuts from the dozen trees at Nooroo were also sold at market (sewn into sugar bags) and Dr Valder believes it likely his father was the first person in Australia to send chestnuts to a market.

It was a simple yet wonderful life ... because we grew up fully aware of where everything came from. The water came out of the sky, the heat came out of chopping wood and the food came out of the ground one way or another, it couldn't have been a better education in lots of ways ...

On Capability Brown and English influence

... when I came back to Australia from England ... in a way the countryside in a lot of Australia looked much the same in a dry sort of way, but it had been achieved in the opposite way—not by planting clumps of trees but by leaving them and clearing back up into the hillsides a bit and leaving odd gum trees about—in many ways everything was extraordinarily similar. So I had a sort of 'landscapey' feeling about me and I'd been greatly influenced by formulaic landscape painting, Claude and Poussin and people like that that I'd read about, that sort of lurked in my mind as well. So all that had a complex influence on me.

On Mt Wilson gardens

There was a remarkable selection of plants in those gardens because the Sydney nurseries in those days (c.1880) had an amazing array of things in their catalogues, all sorts of rhododendron varieties and conifers, quite amazing, and of course the Botanic Gardens had a big nursery that I think you probably could get plants from and perhaps some of them came from there. So that there were a lot of conifers and there was a lot of interesting deciduous trees, a lot of different kinds of oaks in those gardens and there was a big sugar maple at Bebeah in the middle of Mt Wilson and there were a lot of old rhododendron hybrids.

As well as the English and European influence, Peter developed an interest in the native plants over the garden fence. Most people put a waratah or two in their gardens and that was that, but Miss Helen Gregson, who was the daughter of the original Gregson who settled at Yengo in Mount Wilson, had actually brought into her garden a whole lot of native plants in one section of the garden of her house. I mean she had rhododendrons and maples and everything too but she was very interested in the native flora, as they all were, and so she transplanted pultineaes and prostantheras and things ... she must have dug them up from the bush I suppose, but she was an early native gardener."

A personal note on Peter Valder from Chris Webb:

"Peter was our first year biology lecturer and then our botany lecturer in second year. A fantastic communicator and exquisitely entertaining.

When I was AGHS-SHB chairman we had Peter as both guest speaker at a lecturer day and also as the after dinner speaker at the 2008 Bowral Conference. On every occasion he was amazingly intelligent, eloquent and entertaining. Quite the performer.

He had an incredible memory, at the Bowral Conference Charlotte went to introduce herself and he immediately said oh, Charlotte Fieldhouse, how's your sister Brigid? We weren't even aware he knew her and she hadn't seen him for 30 years.

When Charlotte was writing the Conservation Management Plan for Kennerton Green she had the necessity to speak to him over his father's gifting of plants to Marj Pagan and he could immediately recall the details even though it was in the 1950s 'that common old Kuchi Beni Wisteria!'

Charlotte and I were both in awe of him and very pleased to have known him if only for relatively brief encounters."

## Winter Solstice Seminar

Australian Garden History Society –  
Southern Highlands Branch

*Burrawang School of Arts Hall,*

*Sunday 25 June 2023*

*11:00am to 3:00pm.*

*Lunch will be provided.*

### Speakers:

- Dr. Stephen Utick - *The Bicentennial of Camellia Collections in New South Wales*
- Nick Corbett - *Threats and Opportunities - The Gardens of the Southern Highlands*

**Members: \$50.00 and Non-Members: \$55.00**

**Please contact Ruth Bailey at**  
**[ruthbailey1428@gmail.com](mailto:ruthbailey1428@gmail.com)**  
**if you would like to attend.**