



**eNewsletter
No. 15
July 2023**

Northern NSW Branch

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



Above: *Acacia baileyana*
Cootamundra Wattle
Image: M. Hitchcock

*'Hey it's July and the Winter sun
is shining,
And the Cootamundra Wattle is
my friend,
And all at once my childhood
never left me,
'Cause Wattle blossom brings it
back again'.
John Williamson song lyrics*



Acacia baileyana was the most popular garden species around the time of the 1st World War. Sprigs were sold in Martin Place to aid the war effort. Sprigs were also sent to wounded soldiers in hospitals overseas. Old newspaper photo c.1921 held by ANBG.

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

Send articles & photos to: Reports/Newsletter Editor Maria Hitchcock
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From the Chair

Hello everyone. I hope you're enjoying our wonderful Winter weather, with sunny blue-sky days. I won't mention the big frosts and the lack of rain. I must say, it was a shock to return to an Armidale winter after enjoying a very warm English summer. I visited many and varied gardens during our holiday, and have shared some memories of Wisley Garden with you in this edition of the newsletter.

You will have seen from my email earlier this week that our Northern NSW Branch **AGM** will be held on **Sunday 6 August at 4.00pm at the Armidale and District Historical Society** in Faulkner Street, Armidale. We have a couple of vacant committee positions to fill, those of Secretary and a Fundraising sub-committee member. There is also a new position to fill, that of Oral History Coordinator, in line with the national AGHS priorities. I urge you to think about nominating yourself or another member to fill these important positions. The nomination form was attached to my email and should be returned to me by Sunday 30 July. We will follow the AGM with a general Branch meeting and enjoy each other's company at dinner afterwards. The Armidale City Bowling Club will be our venue for dinner this time around. It would be great to see as many people as possible at the AGM, general meeting and dinner afterwards. Please let me know if you need assistance with transport to or from.

I would like to take this opportunity to sincerely thank Robyn Jackson (Secretary) and Fran Webb (Fundraising) for their time and efforts over the last year. Their contribution to our Branch activities has been wonderful and very much appreciated. They will be hard acts to follow, but let's show our appreciation by filling the vacant committee positions without delay.

I'm sure you have all enjoyed reading Liz Chappell's entertaining article on Paronella Park in north Queensland in the latest edition of the Garden History Journal. The article followed on from the very enjoyable presentation Liz gave to our members earlier this year after a Branch meeting. I loved reading the Paronella family story, and we can all appreciate the monumental restoration project that has taken place at the property. Congratulations Liz.

The Carrick Hill Foundation in South Australia has opened their 2023 appeal for funds to support ongoing projects at the property. The project currently being supported is the establishment of the Australian Museum of Gardening. Richard Bird's generous donation of the historic gardening equipment and paraphernalia of 'The Old Mole' is responsible for this major attraction to the property being developed. Won't it be great to see this project coming to fruition? If you feel you would like to contribute, the appeal donation form is attached with this newsletter. Donations over \$2 are tax deductible. Further details are available at <https://www.carrickhill.sa.gov.au/>.

I hope you have been keeping your pruning fingers (and backs) in shape for our upcoming work in the Heritage Rose Garden. We'll start on the first weekend in August with our regular working bee, but will no doubt need several extra sessions before the task is completed. Although the task is large, the willingness of our wonderful workers makes the end achievable, so visitors to the garden in Spring can appreciate the magnificent display.

Looking forward to seeing you soon. If you know someone who would be interested in joining our group, please access the membership form on the AGHS national website, or just give me a call.

Helen

Natures Garden - Quinkan Country

Text and images: Maria Hitchcock OAM

Recently Don and I travelled to the far north to see what has been claimed to be the oldest rock art in the world. This tour is not for the faint hearted as the galleries are in secluded and fairly rugged sandstone gorge country only attainable after a long and fairly wild four wheel drive journey and then a serious bushwalk down steep rocky wallaby trails. This is the country around Laura - gateway to the Gulf - and 50kms as the crow flies inland from Cooktown.

There is limited transport from Cairns - we hired a car and drove for four hours along a well maintained sealed road to get to Laura. The small basic motel fills quickly so one needs to book well in advance. At the moment the roadhouse is closed as the owner became dinner for a couple of rather large crocodiles at one of the coastal streams a month ago. It's that sort of country. A replacement food cart sits by the side of the road.

All visitors to the Quinkan rock art galleries must be guided by a traditional owner and so we found ourselves being hosted by Johnny Murison of Jarramali Tours. Johnny picked us up from the motel (along with six other people) and drove us to his secluded bush camp. After an early lunch we set off to visit the Big Wallaroo gallery - a spiritual site which took quite an effort to reach. This and other sites had been excavated and thoroughly investigated by archaeologist Dr Mike Morwood of UNE Hobbit fame some time ago. Quinkan rock art refers to a large body of locally, nationally and internationally significant Aboriginal rock art in Australia of a style characterised by their unique representations of "Quinkans" (an Aboriginal mythological being).

Although the exact age of these galleries is yet to be determined, they are believed to be between 15,000 and 40,000 years old. They are included on the Australian Heritage Estate, are inscribed on the National Heritage List and are listed by UNESCO as being among the top 10 rock art sites in the world. The paintings are generally done in a figurative style, with people, animals and their tracks and mythical beings depicted, usually in one or two colours. Red ochre (which can be picked up near the galleries) dominates although white, yellow, black and a rare blue pigment also exist.

Local tribes inhabited the area, which is rich in food resources and plentiful water, for thousands of years with successive occupations painting over previous art with overlapping figures and depictions of animals. The galleries are well sheltered from the elements allowing for little deterioration of these prehistoric paintings. There have been occasional rockfalls taking painted sites away but the amount of Quinkan art is so extensive, the occasional collapse is not so significant. Termite trails are a problem as well as wasp nests over the paintings.

The biggest disturbance came from goldminers passing through in the 1870s and subsequent colonial controls over our First Nations peoples. Despite this, a highly significant connection to country and culture by Aboriginal people remains. The First Nations people of the Laura area are known as the Ang-Gnarra, Kuku-Thypan, Gugu-Yalanji, Gugu-Yimithirr, Gugu-Warra, Gugu-Ballanji, Gugu-Minni, or Olkola, as well as other names.



A major feature of the Quinkan Country rock art is the Quinkan or spirit being figures. There are many types of Quinkan images, although these galleries are best known for their depictions of the tall slender Timara's and fat bodied Imjim (or Anurra). Animal totems are another dominant characteristic of these rock art galleries.



The complexity of this rock art was amazing. Basically there are spiritual sites with Quinkan figures and increase sites with animal and plant depictions. Both of these sites had an overlap of spiritual and increase. Johnny Murison above was our Traditional owner guide.

Aboriginal Medicine Chest in Quinkan Country



Grevillea pteridifolia

Image: Beasley J. Plants of Cape York
northqueenslandplants.com

Grevillea pteridifolia Golden Parrot Tree

Collected by Banks and Solander on Endeavour River, this widespread species grows across the north of Australia from the Kimberley to Cape York. It is a large open shrub. Local Aboriginal people used the flowers by soaking them in water to make a sweet drink full of vitamins. In Groote Eylandt the leaves were used to flavour Emu meat and it has been recorded that like many species of Australian plants, the leaves actually have anti-bacterial properties.

Colonists also found the silky haired leaves made good pillow stuffing.

Persoonia falcata (Geebung - Wild Pear)

Collected on the Endeavour River by Banks and Solander. 'falcata' means sickle-shaped - referring to the shape of the leaves. We were invited to break a leaf in half and chew on the exposed fibres and were told that chewed leaves were used to treat chest colds and diarrhoea. Bark was soaked in water to produce an eye wash.

This species has fleshy 'drupes' which were eaten raw. Persoonia species are notoriously impossible to propagate with the seed inside the drupe requiring special treatment. it is very variable in size - here it appeared to be around 2-3m in height.



Persoonia falcata

Image: Image: Beasley J. Plants of Cape York
northqueenslandplants.com



Cymbopogon ambiguus Native Lemon Grass

Tussock forming grass with bluish leaves and a lemon scent growing to 1-2m. Used to make a herbal tea - has a hint of ginger. Popular garden species, heat and drought tolerant, withstands light frosts, flooding. Does best with good drainage.

We found this growing along the pathway on a sandstone platform leading to the descent. Sold commercially by Tucker Bush Plants. Aboriginal people used the tea to treat chest infections, flu symptoms, headaches. Modern cooks use it in a dried form as a mild lemon flavouring.

We tried a sample brewed up. It's an acquired taste.

Image: Russell Dahms [flickr.com](https://www.flickr.com/photos/russell_dahms/)

Refs:

<https://www.anggnarra.org.au/pages/rock-art/>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Quinkan_rock_art

<https://www.dcceew.gov.au/parks-heritage/heritage/places/national/quinkan-country>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Persoonia_falcata

Why these Sydney Gardens are renaming their plants.

SBS News June 3, 2023 Jennifer Scherer

The Botanic Gardens of Sydney is embarking on a special project to reflect the First Nations names of its plants. At the Botanic Gardens of Sydney, a decolonisation initiative is underway. In consultation with traditional custodians, Elders, and local language knowledge holders, horticultural displays will be updated as part of a 'multi-naming project' to reflect the First Nations, scientific and English names of plants.

Jake Ferguson is a Bidjigal-Dharawal, Wailwan, Biripi and Bundjalung man who runs bush tucker tours through the Royal Botanic Garden. He says the initiative is a step in the right direction.

"Our language is a part of us," he said. "Our language words also bring massive insight ... it's not just a place name but also spiritual knowledge, understanding of the geography of the area. "Being able to walk through the Botanic Gardens and see the multi-naming on the plants allows for a greater understanding and connection."



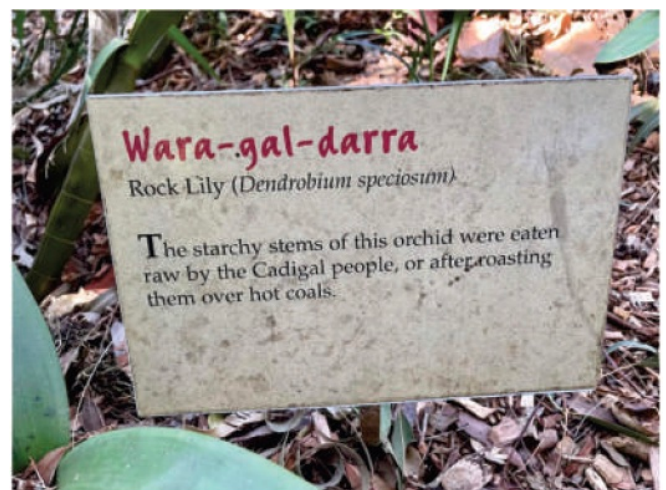
Jake Ferguson leading a bush tucker tour. SBS News / Jennifer Scherer

On Mr Ferguson's tour, he stops by the Davidson's Plum, named after John Ewen Davidson, the 'owner' of the land at Rockingham Bay in Far North Queensland where the tree was 'first found' in the 1860s. But it has another name. "Ooray" is one of the First Nations names given to the plant,

Mr Ferguson tells the group, before inviting everyone to take a bite of its sour fruit.

While the Botanical Gardens of Sydney are still in the early consultation stages of the project, some signs can be found in the gardens already. It's hoped it will become a meaningful reconciliation initiative. Across Australia, there are more than 250 First Nations languages, including around 800 dialects, which has led to many plants being given multiple First Nations names.

As a result, the Botanical Gardens of Sydney — made up of The Royal Botanic Garden, the Australian Botanic Garden Mt Annan and the Blue Mountains Botanic Garden — says it plans to undergo a vigorous verification process as the collection holds many native plants sourced locally as well as from across Australia. "It can be a complex process to find, verify and use the correct scientific, colloquial and First Nations names for trees and other plants," Royal Botanical Garden curator manager Jarryd Kelly said. "First Nations plant names are embedded in rich cultural knowledge that reflects diverse plant uses, ecological relationships, seasonal changes, and other significance." And it needs to be done in the right way, he says.



A sign at the RBG Sydney showing the First Nations name, common and scientific names.

Image: SBS News Jennifer Scherer

Ed: Last month Stuart Read stated he was collecting a list of First Nations names for our flora. I sent him a couple of reference books to assist his project. NZ uses Maori names for their plants as a matter of norm.

"The process of the gardens working with the community to find out the names ... it's actually going deep into the understanding," he said. "It's not just having it at face value, it's actually having legitimate insight into language, which are the oldest languages on planet Earth. "The Botanic Gardens is on Farm Cove, one of the first points that first contact was made, so the decolonisation of this area is important."

Sydney's Royal Botanic Garden was established in 1816 on Gadigal land along the shores of Sydney Harbour. Now the three Botanic Gardens of Sydney contain one of the country's largest collections of native and overseas plants, but the institution is reckoning with its own role in colonisation. "The Botanic Gardens is where our flora has been captured," said Ray Ingre, a Dharawal person from the La Perouse Aboriginal community and chairperson of the Gujaga Foundation. "It's happened since day one with the Endeavour voyage; Sir Joseph Banks and the crew of the Endeavour were collecting plant species during their eight days of their stay at Kamay at Botany Bay."

The name Botany Bay was coined during this period as the collection of plants there was deemed bountiful. For the Dharawal people, the flora at Kamay is of great significance. Plants are markers of seasonal change, hold deep connections to ancestors, are prominent in creation stories and provided food as well as medicine. "Because there was no

engagement with Aboriginal people during that time ... there was a lot of information that could have been gathered there which was a missed opportunity, but that practice then continued."

Most Australian plants are named by European botanists who studied specimens sent back from early colonial expeditions and titled them through Western scientific conventions. In the case of Joseph Banks, a British naturalist, botanist, and patron of the natural sciences, the banksia was named after him.

"Back in the 19th century, many taxonomists were funded by rich people, which meant many plants and animals were named after the rich patrons," said Dr Kevin Thiele, a taxonomist and adjunct associate professor at the University of Western Australia. "But some of those rich patrons were rich because of egregious activities." Dr Thiele gives the example of the plant genus *Hibbertia*, commonly known as guinea flowers.

"George Hibbert was a slave trader, he ran ships across on the trans-Atlantic slave trade and he made a motza out of slavery," he said. "He was a rich and wealthy person who could become a patron of the arts and sciences, he had a garden and employed gardeners and was the first person to grow many Australian plants in London.

"Because of his wealth, he was honoured with the genus name *Hibbertia*, but his wealth was very ill-got."

WISLEY GARDEN, WOKING, SURREY UK

Text and images: Bill and Helen Oates

<https://www.rhs.org.uk/gardens/wisley>

Wisley Garden near Woking in Surrey is run by the Royal Horticultural Society (RHS) and is a delightful place for a day trip. From the Wisteria Walk to the Water Lily Pavilion, the Walled Garden and Rose Garden, the site provides many areas of sensory pleasure. Our visit took place on a beautiful English Summer day, and we shared the garden with many others who were similarly enjoying its treasures.

Wisley was founded in 1878 when George Ferguson Wilson, a former treasurer of the RHS, purchased a 60-acre site. He established the 'Oakwood Experimental Garden' and attempted to successfully grow plants which were difficult to establish. He began a laboratory for scientific research and horticultural training, with a much-expanded operation now housed in a Grade II listed building. The extensive and diverse garden now covers more than 240 acres, and houses a variety of formal and decorative gardens, a wildlife garden, woodlands, a vineyard and orchard, as well as plant trial sites and a community allotment project. Please enjoy our photos, which are a small illustration of our wonderful day at Wisley.



A picture of serenity



'Dancing Hares' by Sophie Ryder near the house and lake



Grade II listed home of the old laboratory.



Pavilion and herons



Looking over the Bowes-Lyon Rose Garden



A beautiful day for a walk



The Wisteria Walk



Inspiring mowing

AGHS Port Macquarie Visit, June 2023

Helen and Graham Wilson

An approach from National Parks at Roto House in Port Macquarie led to a group of twelve members visiting on the weekend of 23 to 25 June 2023. Established in 1890 as a family home, Roto House is a fine example of Victorian architecture and craftsmanship. National Parks have restored the building as a museum dedicated to the members and life of the Flynn Family. Following a request for assistance members of the branch are now preparing ideas for the possible restoration of the garden and surrounds. The weather gods were smiling so wandering the house and garden was a pleasure as was the informative visit to the Port Macquarie Koala Hospital established in 1973 as a licensed wildlife rehabilitation centre. It is now also a scientific research, training and education centre. We returned to Roto House where Jess had prepared a delicious lunch in one of the beautifully restored rooms.

A visit to the Sea Acres Rainforest Boardwalk followed lunch. This involved a walk through the rainforest canopy along an elevated boardwalk, a 1.3 kilometre loop. Here we experienced a diversity of majestic trees on display. This National Park is a unique living heritage stretching back to the period of the dinosaurs and lush with plants and songbirds. It is a self-guided tour and as one walks along the boards, the brochure explains the vegetation and the various birds and animals that live in the forest.

The Port Macquarie Museum, an early Australian Folk and Pioneer Museum, was also visited. There we viewed a film dedicated to Annabella Boswell who was a member of the Innes Family. In her visits to Port Macquarie she recorded, sketched and painted the diverse early vegetation in the district. The hi-tech film demonstrated the colour and creation of the flowers and shrubs using an X Ray approach.

Part of the museum was dedicated to Dr Lionel Gilbert, a teacher in the coastal district who was also involved in the establishment of the Armidale Folk Museum. Within the museum there was a section devoted to the Women's Agricultural Scientific Production (WASPS). These ladies were involved in significant agricultural activities during World War Two. In the main street of Port Macquarie there is a large memorial clock tower dedicated to the WASPS of Port Macquarie and district. It is interesting to note that the WASPS movement was created in Armidale by a local entrepreneur, Don Shand, who established East West Airlines.

On Sunday we visited Mrs York's Garden, a beautiful Headland Garden overlooking the river mouth, recreated since 2015 by the Friends of Mrs York's Garden. Two of the volunteers, Anne Kimber and Libby Mackintosh, generously gave their time to lead us around the garden and provide us with the background story. The area has been transformed into a place of natural beauty enhanced by stunning boat themed picnic shelters and seats. Before returning to Armidale, we visited Port Macquarie Historic Cemetery, a peaceful park dating back to 1821 with stately old trees and gardens and the graves of 1500 convicts, soldiers and settlers.

The visit was a remarkable weekend with fine weather, cheerful company and great food. It was also a time to reconnect with one of our long time members from the North Coast, Kimberley Buckingham, who joined us on Sunday.

See photos next page.

Port Macquarie Trip 23-25 June 2023

Images: Lynne Walker



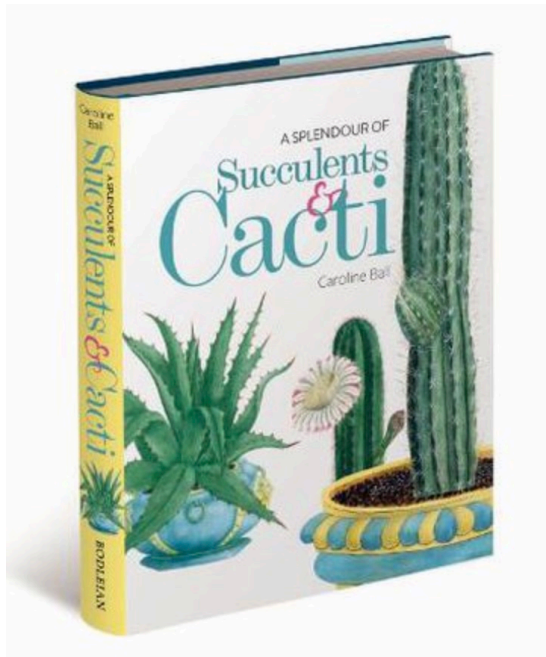
Helen Wilson, Moira Lloyd, Christine Fry, Helen Oates, Lexia Neilson, Richard Bird, Helen Nancarrow, Bill Oates, Graham Wilson, Fran Webb



With Stephen King sculptures



Koala Hospital



Caroline Ball, *A Splendour of Succulents & Cacti: Illustrations from an Eighteenth-Century Botanical Treasury* (Oxford, 2023) reviewed by **Clive Probyn, OAM**

In Henry Handel Richardson's now classic Australian autobiographical novel, *The Getting of Wisdom* (1910), the novelist looks back at her childhood spent at the post office in Victorian Maldon ('Warrenega' in the novel) and describes her mother's garden, populated by 'the tall fir-tree, with the rung-like branches . . . the wilderness of bamboo and cane. . . the ancient broad-leaved cactus. . . the high aloe that had such a mysterious charm . . . because you never knew when the hundred years might expire, and the aloe burst into flower.' Richardson (as Laura Rambotham) never witnessed the so-called Century Plant in flower. Now recognised as *Agave americana*, eight-volume *Phytanthoza Iconographia* (1737-1745), which depicts over 3,500 different plants on 1,025 engraved copper plates – the work of Georg Dionysius Ehret, Bartholomew Seuter, Johann Ridinger and Johann Haid – the whole compiled by a barber's

son, Johann Wilhelm Weinmann and narrated in German and Latin. In translation, Weinmann's encyclopaedic plant glossary is *Iconography of Plants and Flowers to the Life*. This is Caroline Ball's second successful trawl through Weinmann's mighty florilegium. The previous volume, *A Cornucopia of Fruit & Vegetables*, was reviewed in [here](#) in 2021. Both volumes share an identical format in full colour. There is an entertaining introductory essay on the definition and history of succulents and cacti (the latter being 'just a family of succulents'), and on their 'collectibility'. Ball's word for the latter is *Succulentomania*. This mania goes back to Christopher Columbus and forward to the Chelsea Flower Show, where a succulent was Plant of the Year in 2022. There are plant horrors, none more so than the prickly pear, which had taken over 60 million acres of Queensland and New South Wales by the 1920s. The Australian boab (*A. gregorii*) is also a succulent, as are euphorbia and senecio, pelargoniums, samphire, glassworts, and pineapple (a bromeliad to a botanist). The name depends on who is looking.

The human narratives in this botanical catalogue assert themselves throughout: the British Redcoats acquired their scarlet colours (as did painters, dyers and ink makers) from the cochineal parasite on prickly pears. Other cacti produced dye; peyotl was the source of mesacaline, the psychedelic drug that Aldous Huxley favoured in 1954 (*The Doors of Perception*). Australia offers the *Succulentomaniac* plants 'in captivity' in the botanical gardens of Sydney and Melbourne, Perth and Kimberley, the native habitat of Australia's own caudiciform, the boab. Cactus country, with its extensive collection, is a popular destination in Victoria' (p. 129). A final chapter is devoted to places the *succulentomaniac* might visit, and thereby illustrates the global fascination and range of succulents and cacti: Arizona, California, Chicago, Milwaukee, Toronto, Argentina and Mexico, the last being the native home of an estimated 60 per cent of cactus species. There is also the Arid House in Oxford, and of course the collections at Kew, Wisley, several in France, Monaco, Puglia, Lanzarote, Marrakesh and Spain. This second volume is (again) handsomely produced and (again) makes its subject both attractive and intelligible. It also bring us (again) to recognise that extraordinary moment in eighteenth-century European history when vast encyclopaedias were being compiled in the arts and sciences as a way of understanding human beings in the universe.