

# ACT Monaro Riverina Branch

## Newsletter February 2025 No 1

Australian Garden History Society  
[www.gardenhistorysociety.org.au](http://www.gardenhistorysociety.org.au)



## FORTHCOMING EVENTS

### BRANCH DIARY

27 FEBRUARY  
NGA Sculpture Gardens &  
Fiona Hall Fern Garden  
Bookings closed

15 MARCH  
Duntroon House & Gardens

3 MAY  
NT Heritage Festival Day

7 MAY  
Rock Valley Homestead &  
Garden

## VISIT TO DUNTROON HOUSE AND GARDENS

SATURDAY 15 MARCH, 10AM-12PM

Duntroon House is listed on the Commonwealth Heritage List. Join the knowledgeable Duntroon guides for a tour of Duntroon House and gardens. Hear their stories and look out for historical plantings. The tour will last about 60 minutes plus time for questions.



We will assemble in the small car park in front of Duntroon House by 10 am. Car parking is available at the nearby shops and dotted around the College within reasonable walking distance, including in front of Duntroon House itself for a small number of vehicles. No refreshments will be provided at this venue.

Cost \$30 AGHS Members, \$35 non-members.

Bookings <https://www.trybooking.com/CYHTN>  
Numbers are limited. Final date for bookings is 5 March.

Inquiries Robyn Oates, [robyn.oates1@bigpond.com](mailto:robyn.oates1@bigpond.com)

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45<sup>TH</sup> AGHS ANNUAL  
CONFERENCE  
MT GAMBIER, SA  
30 OCTOBER – 2  
NOVEMBER 2025

THEME: BEYOND THE  
GARDEN FENCE



## NATIONAL TRUST HERITAGE FESTIVAL OPEN DAY

SATURDAY 3 MAY, 10AM - 3PM

### BRANCH COMMITTEE

**Robyn Oates**, Chair &  
NMC Representative  
**Sue Cassidy**, Treasurer

**Louise Gaudry**  
**Rosanna Horn**  
**Mary Johnston**

National Trust Heritage Festival Open Day will take place at **Tuggeranong Homestead**, located on Johnson Drive in Richardson.

AGHS will be there this year, as always. We value the invitation to be part of the National Trust Heritage Festival and we invite you to join us at Tuggeranong Homestead.

Tuggeranong Homestead is an extensive, heritage-listed rural property in the heart of southern Canberra. The Open Day will enable the public to discover the rich history of Tuggeranong Homestead, a landmark that tells captivating stories from Indigenous heritage to convict connections and pastoral life. It has played a pivotal role in establishing the National

Capital and hosted Dr Charles Bean while he wrote the Official History of Australia's involvement in World War One.

MOTH (Mindere of Tuggeranong Homestead), winners of recent ACT Heritage Award, will be conducting walks and talks. There will be garden and homestead tours and other activities in the extensive outdoor area. There is also a covered area if the weather is unkind.

This year's Heritage Festival theme is *Unearthed* and it is sure to unearth a lot of history there at Tuggeranong Homestead! Come along and enjoy it with us. Entry – Gold Coin donation.

## ROCK VALLEY HOMESTEAD & GARDENS TOUR

WEDNESDAY 7 MAY, 10AM – NOON

**This is a joint AGHS/ACT National Trust event.**

AGHS always look forward to our joint event with ACT National Trust during the ACT Heritage Festival. Bring a picnic and explore other sites in Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve after the tour.

Rock Valley Homestead was built in 1895 by George Green for his family. Self-sufficiency was essential to the colonial settlers. The orchard boasted 74 trees in 1897. Paddocks were fenced and crops included the more unusual offerings of walnuts, maize, chestnuts and even sugar cane. There were sheep, chickens, dairy and the Greens kept bees, providing a regular supply of honey. Learn more with the Tidbinbilla Pioneers Association who care for Rock Valley.



.Photo Geoff Puleston

Listen to our knowledgeable tour guides with their insights into the homestead, its garden and the life of this Tidbinbilla pioneer family; see the eucalyptus distillery in action; take a short walk and enjoy morning tea (provided by the AGHS). Bookings will open in mid-March – members will be advised.

## AGHS NATIONAL CONFERENCE 2027 IN CANBERRA

Yes, we are looking forward to 2027!

Every year the AGHS runs a national conference. This brings together people from diverse backgrounds united by an appreciation of and concern for our parks, gardens and cultural landscapes as part of Australia's heritage, and it also funds the existence of our national office, which is housed within the Botanic Gardens, Melbourne.

Last year members travelled to Bunbury WA; this year we will visit Mt Gambier in SA. It is astonishing to see and learn about the wealth of history related to gardens and landscapes in our vast country.

In 2027 it will be our turn. We will be offering our national members the opportunity to consider the national capital from the perspective of *Bush Capital or Garden City?* This picks up on two popular epithets for Canberra. The Bush Capital, while it is a seeming contradiction in terms, echoes the original concept of the Walter and Marion Burley Griffin design, and it also reflects the current urban landscape which features regular pockets of bush land and reserves. Within the national psyche this focuses on the heritage notions of the Australian bush with its harshness as well as its romanticism.

The Garden City tag stems from an early twentieth century global movement that advocated the promotion of satellite communities that surrounded the CBD and was separated by greenbelts. This no doubt meshes with the Burley Griffin plan which won the 1912 international competition to design the new nation's capital.

Many of you have enjoyed these conferences throughout Australia and it is to you that I turn. Do spread both the word and keep alive your enthusiasm for our annual conferences. If you would like to assist our Conference Committee, please contact one of our Branch Committee, or mention it informally at one of our coming events. Many hands make light work, as they say.

I draw your attention to the AGHS website which has an excellent 26-minute video produced by the ACTMR Branch. It explains "The Garden City" by comparing the design of Canberra to a large and splendid public garden with vistas, open space, parks, woods, formal and informal landscapes, lakes, ponds and quiet contemplative spaces.  
<https://www.gardenhistorysociety.org.au/publications/a-gardeners-city-canberras-garden-heritage/>

2027 will be grand year for us all!

**Robyn Oates**

## RECENT EVENTS

### AT THE FOOT OF THE MOUNTAIN – A 60 YEAR LEGACY IN AINSLIE

6 DECEMBER

Our end of year event was held in a private mid-century garden in Ainslie. This garden adjoins Mount Ainslie and it has always been owned by the same family. It retains the original plantings, which speak to what was popular then and also to how a mature suburban garden can attain a cool dignity. I say 'cool' because it was a hot and humid afternoon with a forecast of heavy storm activity in the early evening. This certainly guided our activities and the garden afforded welcome shade from the huge trees and wisteria vine that wrapped around the balcony. It is a dignified garden by virtue of its integrity. It has never been altered and updated to suit the fads of garden fashion.

Our hosts were Suellen Fitzgerald and Tricia Fitzgerald and her partner Shopi. Suellen and Tricia grew up in this garden of original plantings from

1960s. Suellen was the inaugural Chief Executive of Greater Sydney Parklands before becoming the first ever Executive Director of Western Sydney Parklands Trust. Tricia is a writer, editor and radio producer, including work for the ABC and the Australian. Suellen told us about their parents' mid-century purchase of the block and she linked it to that day's front page of the Canberra Times items about the auction of residential blocks in Ainslie and Winston Churchill's broken leg! It's amusing to see what the front page of the Canberra Times can show and her talk provided a wonderful moment of nostalgia for many of our members who recall that period of Canberra's development.

Suellen and Tricia took groups on tours of the garden, generously sharing it all with our members. Thank you, Suellen, Tricia and Shopi. It is not a small thing to open your private garden up to fifty strangers and then give them a splendid, professionally informed insight into it.

**Robyn Oates**

## BRANCH NEWS

### WELCOME TO A NEW MEMBER

The committee would like to welcome the following new member who joined since the last Newsletter.

Leanne Wheaton, Jindera NSW

### VALE ANN SOMERS

Ann Somers, a long-time member of AGHS, ACT Monaro Riverina Branch, passed away in January 2025.

She was on the Branch Committee from 1996 to 2000 and was a member of the Conference Committee for the AGHS 1997 Canberra Conference which included a visit to Corroboree Park at which she spoke.

In 2004 the Society published *Early Ainslie Gardens*, which was largely authored by Ann. The 24 page publication focussed on five early 'artisan' gardens and provides a rich history of the occupants and the development of their gardens from the 1920s, as well as a measured plan of each garden with a comprehensive plant list and photographs.

A more comprehensive tribute to Ann has been prepared by Branch member John Tucker and has been attached to the Newsletter.

### MEMBERS' CONTACT DETAILS

Please note that you can update your address on the AGHS Website but if you are wanting to change Branches you need to contact Sarah at the AGHS National Office ([info@gardenhistorysociety.org.au](mailto:info@gardenhistorysociety.org.au), 0417977 703).

This is not something that occurs very often and it seems that some members who are changing location prefer to stay with their original branch.

## SOUTHERN HIGHLANDS BRANCH

Members of our Branch are always welcome to attend events in the Southern Highland and you may have met some of their members who travel down regularly to our events.

**Thursday 27 March** -- Bus Trip to Bundanon

**Thursday 1 May** – Self Drive visit to Denbigh Cobbitty &  
..... Brownlow Hill, Camden

**Sunday 22 June** – Winter Solstice Talks

Stuart Read *The History of garden design using native plants*

Ruth Bailey *The Evolution of a Plant Collectors' Garden*

For further information check the AGHS website or email the Branch at [aghs.sh.info@gmail.com](mailto:aghs.sh.info@gmail.com)

## SYDNEY BRANCH NEWS

**Wednesday 5 March, 6pm for 7pm**

Talk: *Threading the Jewels: The "Green Necklace" Parklands of Sydney's Harbour.*

An illustrated talk by Christine Hay and James Quoye on the Australian Institute of Landscape Architects (AILA) 2018 Landscape Heritage Study they co-authored with Colleen Morris as project consultants to AILA NSW.

Venue Annie Wyatt Room, National Trust of Australia (NSW) Centre, Observatory Hill

Cost \$20 AGHS members; \$25 non-members (light refreshments included)

Bookings and further information  
<https://www.trybooking.com/events/landing/1349230>

### UPCOMING EVENT DATES

**Sunday 6th April** - *Walama* - Ballast Point Park Walk, 2pm – 4pm

**Saturday 10th May** - *Yurulbin Park* – Wyoming Birchgrove Walk, 2pm – 4pm

**Ongoing** - Free Exhibition: *Hardy Wilson's Old Colonial Architecture 1924-2024* | Sydney University Library level 2

## NATIONAL NEWS

### VALE GLENN COOKE

It was during January that news of Glenn Cookes death filtered through to many of us. Glenn had been a long time member of AGHS Qld Branch and we knew him from attending annual conferences and reading his articles published in the journal.

Conferences will seem palid without him, recalling particularly his flamboyant taste in shirts.

Glenn was a Queenslander. Proud of his hometown origins in Blackall and proud of his academic and professional achievements.

An avid collector, he had a knack of scratching out a cultural crumb from the most unlikely of places. At an early conference in Perth I remember

him acquiring a coffee table (boomerang shape, sporting a mosaic top) that he determinedly somehow juggled via train and plane back to Brisbane.

Below: an ABC feature on Glenn published/broadcast in 2022. He circulated it with glee, announcing 'It seems I'm semi-famous'.

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2022-10-30/glenn-cooke-collector-curator-souvenirs-brisbane/101552594>

**Jill Scheetz**

## ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

### Do you enjoy a good biography?

How about a biography of someone with similar interests in the world of Australian gardens, landscape, botany or the arts inspired by these interests? If the answer is yes, read on.

The AGHS has built a significant National Oral History collection of 80 recordings, with more added every year.

Do take a look at the recordings already available. You will see people you know from our own Branch and those you know of, in the wider world of Australian gardens. Listen to them at home or on a long drive. It's wonderful to hear their stories in their own voices and they are all here:

[https://www.gardenhistorysociety.org.au/publications-projects/#filter=.iso\\_29](https://www.gardenhistorysociety.org.au/publications-projects/#filter=.iso_29)

Documenting these reflections and recollections creates an archive of scholarship and research, a snapshot of changing social and political environments, and underpins the aims of AGHS to promote awareness and conservation of significant gardens and cultural landscapes.

They provide reflections on the influences of childhood or family that engendered an interest in gardens, recollections of their own gardening practices, the impact of changing social and political environments, and the networking and informal mentoring that encouraged scholarship and research in the Society. This is a rich resource for scholars and it is a way for the rest of us to delve into the worlds of fellow garden people.

The AGHS Oral History Working Group would appreciate suggestions for potential interviewees who may have been active with the society or, for example, undertaken activities that are significant in the wider sphere of Australian gardens, landscape, botany or the arts inspired by these interests. Interviewees need not necessarily be AGHS members.

Please contact your Branch committee or Anne Claoué-Long who sits on the AGHS Oral History Working Group: [Robyn.oates1@bigpond.com](mailto:Robyn.oates1@bigpond.com) ; [annecl@icloud.com](mailto:annecl@icloud.com)

## OF INTEREST

OPEN GARDENS CANBERRA  
<https://opengardenscanberra.org.au/>

The Autumn Program will commence on 29/30 March with a Community Gardens Weekend. Gardens will also be open on 12/13 April and 3/4 May.

Details are not up on the website as yet.

**NATIONAL TRUST: ACT BRANCH****UPCOMING EVENTS****MICHELAGO SELF DRIVE VISIT, WEDNESDAY 26 MARCH**

Starting at Michelago Cemetery our guides will include special guest Liam Cotter, whose family has been long associated with the area. We then head to the heritage-listed Michelago Railway Station. A delicious country-style morning tea awaits as we listen to members of the Michelago community share the district's history.

Bookings: <https://www.trybooking.com/CZAXW>

**NATIONAL ARBORETUM CANBERRA**

[www.nationalarboretum.act.gov.au](http://www.nationalarboretum.act.gov.au)

For details on walks, workshops and other events visit the Arboretum website.

**AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL BOTANIC GARDENS**

[www.anbg.gov.au](http://www.anbg.gov.au)

**Friends Thursday Talks** – held at 12.30 pm every Thursday from February to November. Bookings can be made 30 days in advance. For program details and for bookings go to

<https://www.friendsanbg.org.au/calendar>. This calendar also provides information on other talks, walks and activities in the Garden.

**HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY OF CANBERRA**

<http://www.hsoc.org.au>

**CANBERRA MUSEUM AND GALLERY**

[HTTP://WWW.CMAG.COM.AU/](http://www.cmag.com.au/)

**LAKE BURLEY GRIFFIN GUARDIANS (LBGG)**

<http://lakeburleygriffinguardians.org.au>