



Inflorescence

*Newsletter of the Southern Highlands Branch
Australian Garden History Society*

From The Chair

Dear Members,

2011 is galloping away fast and our AGM day has been and gone. Once again we had informative and challenging presentations from our guest speakers, Charlotte Webb and Trevor Nottle, (whose presentations are reported later in this issue), and we capped off the day with a garden visit to the immaculate 5th Chapter Estate at Avoca followed by a wine tasting.

We were sorry to farewell from our committee 4 longstanding members who have given loyal service and made significant contributions to the activities of our branch. These were Sue and Benoit Trudeau, Helen Gates and Meg Hemming. We thank them all for their enthusiastic support and hard work. Helen is going to continue to assist us with the Cook Book project.

Meanwhile Jennifer Carroll and Fran Turland have joined the committee. We do appreciate their assistance. But we still have a large hole in our committee and we urgently need some new starters. Please do think about nominating yourself or one of your friends. No special skills are required - just bucket loads of enthusiasm, and a willingness to be a part of our hard working team. Won't you join us? I do look forward to hearing from you.

Kind regards,

Eleanor Dartnall, Chair

*Spring Issue
September 2011*

Contents

From The Chair	1
Your Committee	1
What's On	2
"Farnborough" Spring Fair	2
Old Gardens in a Changing Climate	3
Crowe Collection & Berrima Nursery Update	10
A Visit to "Retford Park"	12

Attachments

"Bolwarra" Foxground Visit
"Retford Park " Visit

Your Southern Highlands Branch Committee

Eleanor Dartnall	Chair	4869 1825
Laurel Cheetham	Vice-Chair	4861 7132
Jane Clifford	Treasurer	4862 5505
Lyn Esdaile	Secretary/Editor	4887 7122
Jennifer Carroll		4862 4847
Clive Probyn		4871 3134
Fran Turland		4887 7694

Great Christmas Presents

We have a number of AGHS satchels for sale, with a strong strap, suitable for carrying files or papers. These were produced for the AGHS Conference held some years ago in the Southern Highlands. They are light fawn and marked with the AGHS insignia and are very smart.

Cost \$20 each.

Please contact Clive Probyn if you would like one - ph 4871 3134

Email: probyn44@bigpond.com

What's On - 2011/12

Dates for your Diary

- ❖ **Sunday September 11**
Self Drive day to the sculptural native bush garden of the Longs - 'Bolwarra' at Foxground
- ❖ **Sunday October 23**
Morning Tea at Retford Park courtesy of Mr. James Fairfax AO
Tour of the garden and house
- ❖ **Friday November 25**
Christmas Party at Quindalup, home of Deidre Hill
4.30 - 7.30 pm
- ❖ **Saturday February 25, 2012**
Summer Evening picnic in the garden of 'Farnborough' Moss Vale

Information Lyn Esdaile 4887 7122



'Farnborough' - Open in Spring 2011

Rose Figtree, the enthusiastic garden owner of the recently renovated large garden of the historic homestead 'Farnborough' will open this spring over a number of days. All funds raised will go to support Rose's charity 'Echo Stars' which supports the school she is building in Dhaka, Bangladesh for children who are poverty stricken.

www.echostars.org

Do take this chance to view Rose's hard work resulting in a magnificent spring display and then come back again to see the garden in its summer dress when we celebrate the AGHS late summer evening picnic.

Where: Spring Open Garden at 'Farnborough' 6530 Illawarra Highway, Moss Vale

When: Open 24/25 Sept, 1/2 & 8/9 Oct 10am-3pm

Admission: \$5. **Refreshments** (Tea and Cake) available in the garden gazebo and **on sale**, an exciting range of plants kindly donated by Mt Murray Nursery, **all hugely discounted**.

All proceeds to **Brightstars School, Dhaka**.

Old Gardens in a Changing Climate

Presentation at the 2011 AGM by garden historian, landscape architect, author and designer, Trevor Nottle.

Notes and photographs per his kind favour are reproduced below.

Trevor stated at the outset that climate change was a reality and that the evidence to date from the meteorologists and the scientists including the CSIRO indicates that:



For Australia: **Warming and drying conditions in general are the pattern for the future.**

In far North Queensland, Arnhem Land, and the Kimberley region it is and will continue to be warmer and wetter. In the far south, it will be and is warmer and wetter – Tasmania and Gippsland. In WA and SA warmer and drier. In Central and Western Victoria warmer and drier, in Western and Central NSW warmer and drier, in coastal NSW warmer and drier, and in the Great Divide region of NSW, the Snowy Mountains and Australian Alps - warmer and drier.

THIS IS ALL RELATIVE TO THE WEATHER PATTERNS WE HAVE BEEN ACCUSTOMED TO IN THE PAST.

Trevor cited the following references for more information re climate change

www.climatechangeinaustralia.com.au

Go to: Understanding Climate Change

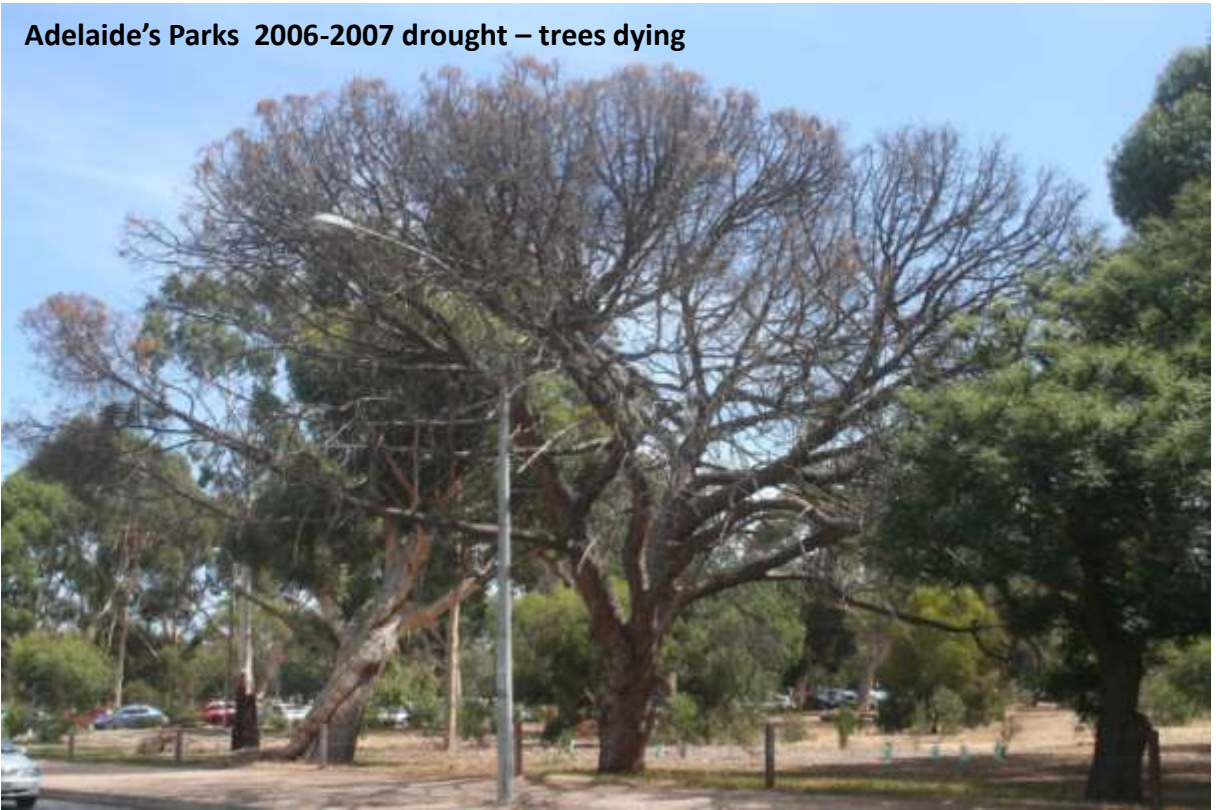
Go to : Climate variability, climate change and drought in eastern Australia.

“...The projections for the coming decades indicate an increasing risk of below average rainfall for southern and eastern mainland Australia, higher temperatures and evaporation, and below average runoff... significant projected increase in frequency of extremely hot years and extremely dry years.”
(CSIRO website accessed 01/08/2011)



Old Gardens in a Changing Climate – cont'd

Adelaide's Parks 2006-2007 drought – trees dying



Nettle's ancestor's homestead, Burra SA

Adelaide streetscape in 2006-2007 drought –
no grass and stressed trees



Old Gardens in a Changing Climate – cont'd

What does this mean for old gardens and landscapes?

In our region Trevor indicated we can expect less rainfall, less reliable cold periods, higher temperatures, higher evaporation-transpiration rates, lower humidity levels, less runoff to storage, more extreme heatwaves, more extreme droughts, more extreme events – bushfires, floods, black frosts, gales, cyclones and electrical storms.

Possible results of climate change and more extreme events may include:

High risk areas declared unsuitable for urban settlements and development, damaged and destroyed areas not recovered and lost heritage.

Further long term issues resulting from climate change are:

Less water retained in soils, less certain sub-surface recharge of aquifers, lowered water tables, drier air, more reflected heat, aquifers subject to salt incursions and toxic plumes from old industrial sites e.g. crash repair shops, fuel tanks, chemical and oil sumps, paint and solvent sumps.

More subtle changes over time may include:

Soil degradation, water repellent soils, erosion, deforestation, desertification, loss of flora and fauna, 'weedy' plant invasions.

After all the negatives above, Trevor indicated, "It isn't the end of the road....just yet! "

Trevor suggests:

- Step 1. Find a quiet place for a sit down.**
- Step 2. Have a drink to steady the nerves.**
- Step 3. Consider how others manage and work with what they have.**
- Step 4. Think about familiar things in fresh ways.**
- Step 5. Don't overlook the quirky, rustic or naive.**
- Step 6. Be discerning always.**
- Step 7. Never say 'Never!'**
- Step 8. Think of our ancestors who made homes and gardens in really tough circumstances.**
- Step 9. Celebrate what a garden can be - creative, individual, sensitive, responsive & beautiful.**

Old Gardens in a Changing Climate – cont'd

In the specific case of Old Gardens check and know heritage conservation and management controls.

Know when professional help is necessary. Get it.

Write a plan In what order must things be done? What must be done and money matters. Consider water supply, dams, pumps, bores and tanks, storage & treatment, electrical cables, permits, roads and paths, circulation systems, built features, access for builders & equipment, storage for materials and plants, management of 'waste' and recycling. Are architects and engineers needed? Fire safety and prevention. Who will project manage? Timing and end goals and flexibility in the process.-adaptation ,staffing, sustainability.

(The Fun part) Planning the Plantings – Of trees, of orchards, of shrub banks, hedges and screens, flower gardens and veggie gardens.



Overgrown and miss-managed hedge, Stirling, Adelaide Hills.

NEVER BE INTIMIDATED by past traditions and old glories, **especially what Granny did, or what is fashionable.**

Half dead plants ... Nothing will make them grow younger.

Old hedges outgrow their usefulness.....

Poorly maintained hedges lose their shape.....

Old trees begin to fall apart.

Changes in the climate will exacerbate events such as these, hastening senescence and creating safety issues for owners and visitors.

However removal of ageing trees and hedges provide opportunities for new visions, new plantations and new plants.

PLANT for the FUTURE. If it works do more of it. Strive for maximum seasonal impact. Summer will be the new down time. Use objects to furnish a garden.



Garden decoration in a dry climate

Old Gardens in a Changing Climate – cont'd



Bulbs for dry climates



Colourful shapes - Rose hips



Tough climber with colour

Old Gardens in a Changing Climate – cont'd



Lavender at Grignan, Chateau de Sevigne, near Avignon.

Garden sculpture at Il Giardino dei Tarocchi, Pescia Fiorentina, Italy



Old fashioned roses, at 'Marble Hills' in the Adelaide Hills, South Australia.

Old Gardens in a Changing Climate – cont'd

'Niwaki' trained recycled olive trees, Vietnamese garden, Virginia, SA.



Pleached olive hedge in the Mediterranean style

Change is always with us – the moving hand moves on, and so must we (and our gardens).

There are many sources of inspiration out there that are climate wise and well adapted to warmer & drier climates.

Look at the 'problem' from all directions.....it may just turn out to be more of a 'challenge' instead!

Some useful reference sites:

www.englishheritage.org.uk www.nationaltrust.org.uk www.rhs.org.uk

NB. These are UK based information sources so data and contents must be interpreted with caution.

Update on the Claude Crowe Collection and Berrima Bridge Nursery Project

by Lyn Esdaile with photographs courtesy of Charlotte and Chris Webb

At our recent AGM Charlotte Webb gave an interesting presentation on the progress of our Berrima Bridge Nursery project and the Claude Crowe collection.

She reported and showed us that the large glass houses in the nursery are in excellent condition, even though they are festooned with cob webs and decorated with ferns and creepers. Charlotte explained that each time Noel Crowe visits Megan Martin at the Historic Houses Trust, he arrives with more boxes containing Claude Crowe's plans for landscapes of various gardens and many diaries. These are all being added to the Crowe Collection retained at the Historic Houses Trust site at The Old Mint Building and are able to be viewed by members in the Carolyn Simpson Library. When the boxes are first delivered to the Historic Houses Trust they are immediately frozen as this treatment kills the bugs and facilitates long term preservation.



Large glass houses in the nursery are in excellent condition.

Charlotte reiterated some of the history for members. Claude Crowe began his career at Anderson and Co Pty Ltd and worked there with Paul Sorenson. It was at Anderson's that he met his future wife Isobel, one of the first female graduates in Horticulture from Sydney Technical College. Claude was very interested in seeds and was the manger of Anderson's garden planning.

During the war years 1942-47 Claude was directly involved in the 'mother seed' project where seed for food crops was collected and grown on in areas away from parts of NSW that were perceived as potential for attack from the enemy. He also created landscapes on roof tops to deter the potential enemy away from houses and factories.

Update on the Claude Crowe Collection and Berrima Bridge Nursery Project – cont'd

At the end of the war Claude Crowe became involved in ornamental nursery production and at that time he developed a strong working relationship with Margaret Davis, the founding President of Garden Clubs of Australia.

A number of plants that have evolved from the Crowe nurseries and survive to this day include *Acer palmatum dissectum* 'Berrima Bridge', and *Calocedrus decurrens* 'Berrima Gold'. Both of these cultivars received international recognition. Claude put many stock plants in the garden and many of these still remain. Claude was also involved with the breeding project with the Yarralumla Nursery to develop rust resistant poplars. There are large collections of *buxus*, *taxus*, *cephalotaxus*, *camellias*, *viburnums*, and *Ruscus aculeatus* on site with still many plants requiring identification.

Charlotte noted that there is a possibility/probability of some of the *camellias* having been brought from Camden Park where *Camellias* were first introduced into Australia. Camden Park is now reviewing the Crowe collection of *Camellias* to see if any will help them re-establish the original Macarthur collection.



Camellias to be identified, as possibly from the original Macarthur collection at Camden Park.

Once all the plants are identified policies will be developed for future preservation, conservation and propagation. In future a list of Claude Crowe plants in Southern Highland gardens will be documented and maintained in the Historic Houses Trust, Crowe Collection.

The Berrima Bridge nursery is a little run down today but the 4 glass houses on site are in fantastic condition. Recording the existing glass nurseries and the underbed heating system is very important. Interestingly flood markings were noted in the glass houses during the nursery's hey - day and are still evident today.

Charlotte said that when Noel Crowe took over the nursery he turned to modern light weight potting mix and plastic pots rather than the traditional terracotta pots with a heavy potting mix which Claude had used. When the first flood came under Noel's management all the plastic pots and their contents ended up down river, so the Crowe son learnt a valuable lesson regarding the benefits of terracotta over plastic on this site.

Update on the Claude Crowe Collection and Berrima Bridge Nursery Project – cont'd

The garden is under threat as it is currently rented and the property is for sale although it is on a flood plain development. An application for an extension to the house was submitted to council in 2010, but was refused. Chris and Charlotte are visiting the garden each Friday to monitor and check on the property and identify the plant collection.

Claude Crowe received the AM in June 1999 and died in October 1999 a month after being presented with his AM.

Charlotte noted the late Dorothy Seers' garden 'Lantern Hill' is next door to our Chair, Eleanor Dartnall's property. Lantern Hill is another intact Crowe garden which retains many of the original plants and design by Claude Crowe. The AGHS should ensure it is preserved along with the many others in the area. Part of the Crowe project's aim is to identify and record, and where appropriate conserve the Claude Crowe gardens in our area. Charlotte indicated the Branch should alert the current trustees of Lantern Hill to the significance of this garden.

A Visit to Retford Park in the Spring

Mr James Fairfax AO has very kindly consented to open his garden and house for us in mid spring for morning tea, a stroll through the large garden, and an inspection of the house. At that time the garden will be at its best with the many flowering shrubs at their peak and the magnificent giant trees in their new spring leaf.



Over the last 40 years the garden in its surrounding 483 acres has been extended and improved with walks, formal areas, exotic trees and specialist areas of cold climate planting.

When Mr Fairfax took over Retford Park he inherited a park of over grown trees. One of the first tasks was to remove several large conifers to give the garden more light and space, and to prune and reshape deciduous trees. With the assistance of the late English garden designer John Codrington, new areas were created including the front fountain path with its distinctive mounds of *teucrium fruticans*, *artemisia* and *agapanthus*- all hardy plants which cope with both the heat and cold of the Southern Highlands.

In 1968 Guilford Bell designed and built the striking pool pavilion and adjoining pools. Sculptures by Clement Meadmore and David Wilson add extra elements to the blue swimming pool while another sculpture by Donald Friend complements the gentler surrounding of the smaller pool.

(Information from Southern Highlands Homes, Canongate Partners, 2003, pp 76-83)

Directions to Retford Park

Please enter the driveway to Retford Park in Old South Road Bowral almost opposite the junction of Bowral Street and Old South Road. Please follow the AGHS signage and directions of the parking attendants.