

# THE FRIENDS OF THE WAITE ARBORETUM INC.



## NEWSLETTER

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WINTER 1997

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**GENERAL MEETING** on Monday 14 April 1997 at 8 pm.

It was delectable indeed to have Des Freeman and Ross Pitman from the Rare Fruit Society to tell us about some rare and interesting fruit and to taste several examples at supper later. It was a revelation as well because most of the fruit described was new to many of the listeners. Their society is 21 years old, known earlier as the Avocado Society, then the Adelaide Avocado and Rare Fruit Society and now simply the Rare Fruit Society. It is a group of growers and users along with botanical experts, who gather to share information, cuttings and pleasure too.

The requirements of backyard growers are different from those of commercial growers. Extended harvests mean that they can use all the fruit as they want it and they need not be concerned about shelf life, perfect appearance and the effects of travel on the fruit. Their backyards are their orchards and budwood the usual mode of raising cultivars. Ethnic communities have provided a wealth of new fruit to try. Do you know Champion peach, Sunquat seedless kumquat, Crystal apple, translucent when fully ripe, Irish Peach early season apple, the small Carella, old Pound pears and the Nashi from China and Japan? Among grapes there are Champanya with red juice, Delaware, Concorde, and other American Labruska species and many new Canadian varieties.

They told of Peruvian potatoes and small, hairless kiwi fruit, red and yellow kiwi fruits, brambles including Marionberry and Kerryberry, black sapote, an evergreen, black persimmon which, with vanilla and cream, substitute perfectly for chocolate mousse! I had to suspend belief in regard to the last item but certainly the speakers' kind contributions of white sapote (a totally different species) were very acceptable at supper time.

Cold tolerant papayas when steamed, taste of melted butter and jelly from hawthorn berries sound interesting as do Chinese jujubes, white guavas, and cold tolerant bananas described as having a superior taste and texture. I'm not so confident about eating the fruit of the palm, *Butea capitata*, known as the jelly palm. 'Marika' marmalade on our supper table was made from fruit provided by Tolley's Nursery in Renmark where our second speaker, Ross, grew up. Ian Tolley has a veritable museum, if that is the term for a living collection of uncommon citrus species. We saw slides of citrons, ice-cream fruit, pecan, tamarind, medlar for jelly, carob as a substitute for chocolate and macadamia. Most fruit trees, given water, will do well in Adelaide as our recent Asian migrants have found as have earlier settlers from colder Britain and Europe.

Obtaining material for propagation can be difficult but quarantine authorities assist honest importers. We can observe that fruits from our childhood backyards, like quince, poor man orange, persimmon and pomegranate are becoming more available commercially these days. The research stations have been innovative in researching previously little known varieties such as Blood Oranges and the new red grapefruit. Recent generations of growers have provided us with the results of their experiments with diverse species from a wide climate range such as blueberries and bananas, cherries and cherimoyas. The white sapote does particularly well here and while litchi and mango are borderline, they will fruit in Adelaide given care. Locally grown durian and mangosteen can only be dreamed about at this stage.

Friends of the Arboretum can rely on a programme of great diversity at our meetings. I did not expect to be transported to the Garden of Eden as I listened to the wondrous vision of exotic and luscious fruit which used to flourish on this earth. I thought sadly too of the tremendous loss of species for which man has been responsible throughout the world and rejoiced that the Society represented so ably by our speakers, Des and Ross, is attempting to redress the balance, as are others of our speakers who work for our own native species.

If you wish to know more about the availability of plants telephone the Secretary of the Society, Des Freeman, at 8332 5646.

Barbara Crompton

### **WOODCRAFT EXHIBITION A GREAT SUCCESS**

'Devil's Own Wood' an exhibition of fine woodcraft by members of Woodgroup SA features some of the 26 species of timbers saved from the new tunnel approach at Leawood Gardens [see article below] at the notorious Devil's Elbow, as well as timbers from the Arboretum.

The exhibition was officially opened on 15 June 1997 in Urrbrae House by the Hon. Diana Laidlaw who was wearing two hats as both Minister for Transport and Minister for the Arts. About 200 people attended the opening. The Vice-Chancellor of the University of Adelaide, Professor Mary O'Kane welcomed the Minister and she was thanked by Douglas Bell, President of Woodgroup SA.

All items are for sale with prices ranging from a modest \$7 for the Devil's Eggs, and a commission from the sales will go the Friends. Attendance has been good with 150 visitors attending on the second weekend and a steady flow of people during the week.

A sincere thank you is extended to all the members of Woodgroup SA and Friends who volunteered their time to staff this exhibition.

## **DEVIL'S OWN WOOD**

**DON'T MISS OUT ON THIS SPECIAL FUNDRAISING FRIENDS' EVENT.**

**The exhibition is open 10 am to 4 pm daily until Sunday 29 June.**

## **FROM THE COMMITTEE - Meetings on 14 May and 11 June, 1997**

Tommie Siekmann has resigned from the Committee after faithful service since the start of the Friends of the Arboretum. Her contribution is so much appreciated as is her company among us. She has an outstanding ability for faultless organisation and therefore is much in demand. We are sad to lose her on the Committee but pleased that she will resume her role as an Arboretum guide. Her place on the Committee has been filled by Cicely Bungey whom we welcome most warmly and look forward to another talent among us.

Topics discussed at committee meetings have included the following:

- The University has agreed to match our fund-raising for 1996 up to the sum of \$10,000. Last year's matching grant was \$6,247 for which we are grateful. The Friends now have a very healthy bank balance and the Committee discussed how some of the funds may be spent. Suggestions included more detailed signage on selected trees eg those being trialed by TREENET and the development of a 'statement of entrance' into the Arboretum from the Historic Precinct. The Committee invites you to put forward your ideas so that they can be considered at future meetings. Contact the Secretary Anna Cox on 8332.1482 (after 4 July) or the Curator on 8303.7405
- Planning and organising forthcoming Friends events occupies much of the Committee's time and the success of these activities is greatly dependent on your help. The Committee would like to hear from anyone with good organisational skills who would like to volunteer to assist with our next exhibition in November 'A Remarkable Flora', watercolours by Beryl Martin.
- Following a letter to the Director of the Waite Institute from the Friends and strong and persistent urging by the Curator, discreet barriers have now been erected to prevent vehicular traffic and parking at the eastern end of the Elm Avenue. This measure will give the elms at least a temporary reprieve from the damaging soil compaction being caused by cars.

## **NEW MEMBERS**

A very warm welcome is extended to: Mrs Cicely & Mr Colin Bungey, Torrens Park; Ms Margaret Dwyer, Fullarton; Mrs Ruth Gregor, Hallet Cove; Mrs Joan Kelleher, Magill; Mrs Flo Moseley, Edwardstown; Mr Richard Oertel, Whyalla; Mrs Anne Pye, Norwood; Mr John Rance, North Brighton; Ms Deidre Skinner, Highbury; and Mrs Fiona Woolard, Para Hills West.

## **ARBORETUM NEWS FROM THE CURATOR**

- Friends who have visited the Arboretum over the last month or so will have been pleased to see the improved standard of maintenance and care. This is in part due to the increased ranks of regular garden and Arboretum volunteers who have spread mulch along the watercourse and pruned and tidied in the mallee block. In addition, Friends' funds have been used to engage arborist Marcus Lodge to undertake tree pruning and maintenance of selected trees. Marcus lectures at the Brookway Park School of Horticulture at the Torrens Valley Institute of TAFE and a fruitful partnership has been established with the School, with the Arboretum providing a venue for training. Marcus has already brought two classes of Tree Maintenance students who removed large dead trees and pruned, and another group of students in the Horticultural Practices course who spend several days spraying weeds and working in the mallee block. Recently links have also been formed with Maxima, a company which provides accredited training in the horticultural field. Together with lecturer Andrew Harvey a number of projects have been identified in the Arboretum and Urrbrae House garden where trainees can gain practical experience and benefit the Arboretum and Historic Precinct at the same time.

- In another positive link with the industry, arborist Steve Slaughter will be giving his spare mulching material to the Arboretum and he is thanked for his generosity.
- Each year more than half the total Arboretum budget goes towards watering the new plantings with a water truck. A quarter of the budget is spent on mowing and a quarter on tree and fallen branch removal. This leaves no funds for development, labelling etc. This year a new system called DRiWATER will be trialed with our 1997 plantings in an effort to save some of the annual cost of watering. DRiWATER is a gel containing water which is released by the action of microorganisms in the soil. The South Australian company which manufactures DRiWATER has agreed to donate some of this innovative product to the Arboretum for trialing. The Friends' Committee has suggested that Friends' funds could be used to supplement watering when necessary.
- I am delighted to announce that the Greg Johns sculpture 'Floating Figure 1' will remain in the Arboretum. The loan period expired on 20 June and the University has agreed to underwrite its purchase while sponsorship and grant funding is sought. A new site for changing sculpture will be established nearby. Sculpture adds another dimension to the Arboretum and attracts new visitors.
- A segment on TREENET was featured by Rob Morrison on the Channel Ten evening news on 13 June. The next Friends' Newsletter will include an update on TREENET's proposed projects. If anyone would like to receive an information sheet please contact me on 8303.7405 and leave your name and address.

Jennifer Gardner

## LEAWOOD GARDENS

These Gardens were started in 1842 as a plant nursery for his mother-in-law by the remarkable George Stevenson, one-time Secretary to Governor Hindmarsh and newspaper editor. They were situated on an extensive property at the bend of the Great Eastern Road still known as the Devil's Elbow. In addition to his other skills Stevenson was a noted horticulturist and within a few years the nursery was able to offer for sale grape vines, fig trees, almond trees, and many varieties of stone fruit and nut trees; hop vines were also available. Flowers were not forgotten either, and the Leawood camellias, in particular, became famous. Indeed, a drive to the Gardens was a popular outing for many Adelaide people in the latter half of the nineteenth century, not only to admire the beauty of the surroundings but also to enjoy Devonshire teas at tables under a huge mulberry tree.

Part of the Gardens could be hired for private picnic parties and when their jollifications continued into the evening the scene was illuminated by Chinese lanterns amongst the trees. Elizabeth Warburton, in her admirable history of Burnside, 'The Paddocks Beneath' (1981), quotes two descriptions of such parties in 1897, taken from the *Critic* - a weekly journal in Adelaide that once had C. J. Dennis on its staff - from which it is obvious that some of the best-known families in this town were happy to picnic there. Even less affluent folk could organise transport for a party in a large horse-drawn drag from the city, and of course the advent of the bicycle put the venue well within reach for many dashing lads and lasses in the last decades of that century.

The property changed owners several times over the years but continued to prosper. When advertised for sale for £350 in 1914 it was 80 acres in extent (35 being under fruit) and was still offering refreshment for travellers. Even as late as 1981 the owners at that time were still selling camellias, nuts and fruit from the old garden, but bushfires after that took their toll and it gradually became derelict. The whole valley was then invaded by blackberries, olive trees and other aliens.

In due course the property was acquired by the Department of Transport and massive road works are now going on at the Devil's Elbow as part of the planned South East Highway and traffic tunnel. This ambitious project has inevitably destroyed the old Garden site but in 1995, before it was too late, most of the historic camellias were rescued for planting

elsewhere. Moreover, timber from 126 old trees that had to be removed was salvaged, and it is some of this wood, from 26 different species, that Woodgroup SA has used for their exciting exhibition 'Devil's own Wood', which opened in Urrbrae House on 15 June.

Eric Sims

## IN THE ARBORETUM

### **CEDRUS LIBANI** A. Rich. Cedar of Lebanon.....(Pinaceae)

So often American or Australasian conifers with aromatic wood are called 'cedars'. None of these is related to the four true cedars. These species differ only in minor details and are undoubtedly survivors of a common ancestor. They occur now only in isolated groups in the mountains of north-western Africa in Morocco and Algeria (*Cedrus atlantica*), in the mountains of Lebanon and the Taurus Mountains of south-west Turkey (*C. libani*) and 3,000 km eastward to the great forests of *C. deodara* in the eastern Himalayas. A subspecies, *C. libani ssp. brevifolia* grows on the island of Cyprus.

No tree is as majestic as the true cedar, not even the great pines, and the most famous is the Cedar of Lebanon *Cedrus libani*. These enormous trees grow in high rainfall areas between 1,000 and 2,500 m altitude. Growth is quite rapid and in good conditions they reach 40 m in 20 years, eventually at maturity in 100 years reaching 40 m with a diameter of up to 15 m and great horizontal branches spread wide. They are however susceptible to drought so the three in the Arboretum, although nicely shaped are much smaller. They are found at #667 (E7), #721 (D6) and #729 (D6).

Leaves are needle-like, 2 - 3 cm long in dark green rosettes. The male flowers are 1 cm long and shed pollen profusely in spring when the female flowers develop surrounded by clusters of protecting needles. These grow into purplish-green, barrel shaped cones which break up on the trees after two years, shedding winged seeds.

The original forests were extensive but could not survive the exploitations of the centuries when they were a source of Canaanite and Phoenician wealth. A 700 BC Assyrian relief shows how timber was shipped - logs stacked high on deck and towed astern. Only one grove remains on the upper slopes of Mt Lebanon at about 2100 m. This has been a place of pilgrimage for centuries and from written accounts the trees have always remained the same. There are about 400 trees left, the biggest and oldest estimated to be 2,500 years old.

These are the trees most often mentioned in the Bible. King Solomon is said to have built his temple from the Cedars of Lebanon, although the famous botanist, Joseph Hooker, thought that the wood the builders called cedar is probably a juniper. Cedar is not a strong wood and is weak for building. It dries readily but is brittle and inclined to distort. The wood is pale brown with well defined growth rings, works well, is resistant to fungi and termites and is characterised by a fragrant smell. It is prized for its durability and there are articles of furniture and sarcophagi in the Middle East which are many centuries old. Today wood is rarely available and all felling in Lebanon is forbidden as they value their treasure greatly. A cedar is even featured on the Lebanese flag.

Despite such antiquity the first Cedar of Lebanon was not planted in Britain until 1646. It is still alive in the Rectory at Childrey in the Thames Valley. It was the only exotic tree used by Capability Brown in his landscaping and it was not until the first half of the 19th Century that *Cedrus libani* was described - by Achille Richards [1794-1852] a Parisian physician and botanist.

Mary Tester

## HELP!

There are always tasks and few to undertake them. If you can spare a few hours for clerical work like enveloping the Newsletter and preparing invitations to events, serving on exhibition rosters or at a morning tea for volunteers please telephone the office at 8303 7405. To serve in Urrbrae House among such pleasant people is enjoyable and also quite a learning experience. I recommend it.

We have had successful sales of lavender bags, quince jelly, and rose petals at our meetings and events. We would welcome any such items for sale from members. It has been suggested that next year we make crabapple jelly from the fruit from the Arboretum trees. Please save little jars for this purpose.

## FORTHCOMING EVENTS AND DIARY DATES

On **14 July at 8 pm** there will be a General Meeting in Urrbrae House. The speaker will be **Darrell Kraehenbuehl** whose book, '**Pre-European Vegetation of Adelaide**' was one of the great ecological publishing events of 1996. A flier is enclosed. Please put it up on the noticeboard of your local library, community centre or workplace.

**Ann Oliver and Fiona Pawelski** of the former Mistress Augustine's Restaurant will join with **David Symon**, Botanist to present a unique dinner '**From the Orient**'. Ingredients of ancient China will be presented in contemporary dishes while David presents a botanical commentary on the culinary journey through the centuries of the fruits, roots and spices. Two evenings are available **18th and 19th July**. Dinner will be served in the elegant dining room of historic Urrbrae House so places are limited. This will be a major fundraising event for the Friends.

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**Members of the Friends of the Arboretum  
are offered a special price of \$60 per person including wine.  
BOOK EARLY TO AVOID DISAPPOINTMENT.**

See enclosed flier & booking form.

Following her very successful and popular exhibition in Urrbrae House in 1995, there will be another exhibition of Beryl Martin's watercolours entitled '**A Remarkable Flora**'. The exhibition will open on **2 November** and will include sculptures in wood by Chris Wells.

The remaining General Meeting for this year will take place on **10 November** at 8 pm in Urrbrae House. This meeting will take the form of a **special walk led by Dr David Symon**.

**Guided walks are held on the first Sunday of every month.** Meet at Urrbrae House at 11 am.