

THE FRIENDS OF THE WAITE ARBORETUM



NEWSLETTER

No. 2
SUMMER 1995

Secretary
Mrs Anna Cox
332 1482

Editor
Mrs Barbara Crompton
379 6405

GENERAL MEETING November 14, 1994.

The President, Tony Whitehill, opened the meeting, describing the role of the Friends. In these days of economic rationalism we have to be alert to possible peril to our treasures and it is for good reason that a proliferation of "Friends" has arisen all over the world. Apart from a protective role and a fostering of knowledge and interest in trees, the Friends will take opportunities to support the work of the Arboretum, to provide funds for plants and perhaps seats.

It was a great pleasure to see David Symon accept the first Honorary Life Membership to be awarded by the Friends. His period of office as Curator of the Arboretum, between 1956 and 1985, was a period which firmly established the excellence of this collection.

The speaker for the evening was Beryl Martin, whose exhibition surrounded her as she spoke, illustrating what she told us of her life and her philosophy as a painter. For Beryl, life took a new turn at 40 when war service, marriage and children allowed her to paint again and take classes with Ruth Tuck and Jackie Hick. She has explored several media and diverse subjects and her work in batik, culminating in a popular book, gave her a freedom with colour which was to be transferred to watercolour later.

In 1980, while her husband, Prof. Peter Martin, was researching at Kew Gardens, Beryl was to return to watercolour and painting flowers directly from nature. Her paintings have been very popular and after more than 20 exhibitions in Australia and the United States, there must be a great number of them adding to people's happiness.

Since 1980 Beryl has painted in watercolour alone, landscapes as personal records of happy travels and flowers, in the search for beauty. She says that is not a fashionable approach these days but she has followed her own idiosyncratic path, ever learning more. Her flowers live and die while she paints and she incorporates their movement into a living experience which reminds us of the transience of all life and the optimism of renewal, the joy of rebirth and the artist's attempt to capture the beauty.

To listen to this artist describing the process of her painting was to deepen the experience of viewing them. She told of the aesthetic principles underpinning her painting - the structure of the composition, vitality and rhythm and how she strives to achieve the integrity of her work.

The meeting ended with supper in the Dining Room and the evening was enhanced by the collection of paintings which were hanging for us to enjoy.

FROM THE COMMITTEE - Meetings on 8 November 1994 & 16 January 1995

- * The Committee will meet before each General Meeting for the purpose of planning the meeting, disposing of any money which has been collected and dealing with any general business. The Newsletter will report the highlights of these meetings.
- * The Newsletter will produce a summary of talks given to the FWA, when possible, statistics of attendance on walks and at meetings, names of new members and the disposal of money raised.
- * The planting of some hakeas is proceeding. Wild collected seed is being sought.
- * Plants for the watercourse are to be obtained to the value of \$500.
- * It was noted with pleasure that Beryl Martin had donated a painting '*Brachychiton discolor*' to The Waite Arboretum. About 200 people attended the opening of her exhibition which was opened by David Symon.
- * 20 November was Open Day at Urrbrae House and the Committee rallied to sell plants and cards of Beryl Martin's paintings and to guide walks each hour.
- * The Constitution was judged satisfactory subject to the inclusion of mention of the society's financial year and of the period before an AGM when notice of amendment must be given by members. The Secretary will organise incorporation as soon as we have finalised the Constitution. Members are invited to inspect the Constitution before the next general meeting.
- * Dates were confirmed for general meetings in 1995:
13 February, 10 April, 10 July, 9 October
- * The Newsletter will be published 3 weeks before the general meeting and a committee meeting will be held 1 week before each Newsletter deadline. Your articles, comments and suggestions are welcomed.
- * A sizeable part of the committee meeting on 16 January was devoted to discussion of the need for fundraising. If any members of the Friends would like to contribute their ideas, please get in touch with the Secretary.
- * The committee was delighted to receive confirmation that funds raised in 1994 will be matched by the Director.

SOME STATISTICS

Attendance on walks: 244 people have taken guided walks since June. Booked walks have included groups such as Probus, Queen Adelaide Club, Botanic Garden Guides Conference, Fringe Festival, Palm and Cycad Society and Resthaven Grounds staff. Regular walks take place on the 1st Sunday of each month at 11 am.

Finance: \$4,638 has been raised in the same period from membership fees, donations and the sale of plants, cards, etc.

Members: A list of Foundation Members is appended. Please tell your friends that they can still become Foundation members if they join before the end of 1995.

VOLUNTEERS

The volunteers are made up of a regular core of eight people. Tasks include maintaining Arboretum records, care of the collection and plant propagation.

The lead up to Open Day saw busy assembling of surplus plant material and donations for the plant stall.

1995 begins with propagation and building up of the eucalypt collection. Those trees sufficiently advanced will be planted in winter / spring.

We are always eager to welcome new volunteers. Please contact Jennifer Gardner on 303.7405 if you are interested.

Cate Paul

'FLOWERS AT MY FEET'

An exhibition of watercolours by Beryl Martin and our first function.

On the afternoon of Sunday, November 6, we joined with the Friends of Urrbrae House to open an exhibition of paintings by Beryl Martin, who is very well known to this community. After a long and successful career as an artist in watercolour, drawing and batik, this was Beryl's first exhibition in Urrbrae House, a setting which could hardly be surpassed for her collection of South Australian landscapes and flowers. Many of the flowers came from her garden or the gardens and Arboretum of the Waite Institute.

A large gathering heard David Symon open the Exhibition with a charming and scholarly address in which he linked flower painting through the centuries from the Egyptians, classical Greeks and Romans and never out of fashion since.

Painting and drawing flowers take many forms from botanical drawing with emphasis on accurate depiction of floral parts rather than composition, to the pictures from which the viewer gains aesthetic pleasure from what the artist has depicted, beyond botanical description. There has been a predominance of women among flower painters and that was obvious in David Symon's roll-call of some of the great flower painters.

The collection is wonderfully sensual with strong colour and bold drawing. It was a very happy experience to see it, before the opening, in empty rooms when each painting joined with its neighbours in a joyous love affair with plants. Later, reading the catalogue, I could recall the strength and vividness of each flower and most memorably the *Stenocarpus sinuatus*, the berries of *Dianella*, Banksias and blue sky, *Eucalyptus tetragona* and *Brachychiton discolor*, beloved in the Arboretum and in the Botanic Gardens. I could quote at least 30 others which I should have loved to take home and live with.

These paintings are far from the delicate pale watercolours of earlier days. Their vigorous strength draws attention to the botanical characteristics of each plant as well as making a bold artistic statement.

Beryl Martin is an artist of distinction and she has had a long friendship with the gardens of Urrbrae and the Arboretum. She has honoured the Friends of Urrbrae House and the Friends of the Waite Arboretum in this their first joint function - 'Flowers at my Feet'.

Barbara Crompton

ARBORETUM NEWS

Redevelopment of the watercourse commenced in August and the earthworks and stonework of Stage 1 were completed in October. Nine members of the Palm and Cycad Society held a working bee in December and planted 32 specimens at the northern end, all of which they donated. Two more plantings are planned for 1995. A palm and cycad walk will be created when the plantings are complete. The watercourse itself, which collects and recycles the stormwater run-off from the western part of the campus, will be planted with native sedges and waterplants this autumn / winter and Friends who have indicated their willingness to assist in planting will be notified when a date for the working bee is set. The waterplants will be purchased with a grant from the Friends.

Stage 2 of the watercourse will be the redevelopment of the perimeter of the dam to create a habitat for native flora and fauna, stabilise and beautify the banks and allow public access to the area. As a wildlife habitat, this will complement the Waite Conservation Reserve in the hills lands and the wetlands proposed for the Urrbrae High School campus. A grant of \$20,000 has been received from the University of Adelaide Community Services Initiatives Scheme towards the project.

Jennifer Gardner

TREE OF THE MONTH *Brachychiton discolor*

The many people who enjoyed Beryl Martin's exceptional watercolour exhibition, 'Flowers at my Feet', in Urrbrae House must have admired particularly her painting of *Brachychiton discolor*. Beryl has donated this painting to the Arboretum - a gift in memory of her husband, Peter Gordon Martin, 1923-1994, student at the Waite, lover of the Arboretum and Professor of Botany at the University of Adelaide, 1967-1984.

There are 31 species of *Brachychiton* in Australia and all but two are endemic. *B. discolor* is certainly one of the most beautiful and is well named, commonly, the Lace bark tree. It grows naturally on the east coast between northern N.S.W. and Mackay in Queensland, in the rainforests of summer rain / winter dry communities.

A spreading, deciduous tree, it can grow to 30 m high. Between November and January when the leaves are absent it is covered with bell-shaped flowers about 5 mm in diameter. These flowers are unisexual with both male and female the same size. There are no petals but the perianth lobes or tepals are bright pink and look like coloured petals. The leaves are five-lobed, around 30 cm long and silvery on the underside. The trunk is stout and the bark lace-like and usually straw- coloured.

The name, *Brachychiton*, comes from the Greek '*brachys*' meaning short and '*chiton*' a tunic or undergarment. This refers to the loose outer covering of the boat-shaped seed cases. These seeds were roasted and eaten by aborigines.

Brachychitons belong to the Sterculiaceae family - a family of tropical and sub-tropical shrubs and trees which includes *Cola acuminata* (kola) and *Theobroma cacao* (cocoa).

There are two *Brachychiton discolor* in the Arboretum, both over 60 years old, but as they have to cope with a climate quite different from their native region neither have grown to their full potential. Their flowering cycle too is strange. While some years the tree may be covered with blooms, generally only some branches of the tree flower - nature's way of coping with the unnatural.

Mary Tester

DIARY DATES

General meetings in 1995:

13 February, 10 April, 10 July, 9 October

The next general meeting will be on Monday, **13 February at 8 pm** in the Drawing Room at Urrbrae House. The Committee hopes that you will come to hear our member, **Dean Nicolle** speaking on '**Eucalypt seed collecting in the outback**'. A flier is enclosed with this Newsletter. Friends are urged to post it up in their neighbourhood or pass it on to friends.