

THE FRIENDS OF THE WAITE ARBORETUM INC.



NEWSLETTER

No 20
Winter 1999

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ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Monday, April 12, 1999 at 8 pm

Tony Whitehill addressed the Friends. His illustrated talk was entitled, '**Travelling through Gardens of Europe and England**'.

We travelled this evening through gardens in Europe and England and what a beautiful journey we made with Tony Whitehill. Tony was our first President and is now retired from his valuable service to the Botanic Gardens as their Tree Adviser. He made a European journey in the recent summer and returned with an excellent set of slides which we thoroughly enjoyed. I shall try to give some of the flavour of this enchanting experience for those who could not be there. There were forty of us nevertheless and it is our strength that these meetings are always well supported.

The first visit was to the Villa Medici Castellano, the garden of Cosimo de Medici, Duke of Tuscany. This garden is a good example for Australian gardeners because it relates plantings to the wiles of the climate, using plants which tolerate hot conditions and without dependence on flowering plants for interest. The surrounding greenery is provided by evergreen oaks *Quercus ilex*, great planes with box and yew hedging and 500 large pots of citrus trees, hand watered and occupying the centre of the garden. The garden is very old and the photographs strike a modern viewer as unusually plain and formal but there are many European gardens of similar style which remain as fascinating old relics of gardens in history.

Another botanical garden, the oldest in Europe, is that supporting the University of Padua Medical School, dating from 1545. The layout is strictly geometrical, each section of beds, planted in families, being divided with brown iron fencing and gravel walks. There has been some renewal as trees have outgrown their places but the garden is, in essence, unchanged.

The Villa Lante, near Rome, is small and was laid out during the Renaissance by Cardinal Gambara in the mid 1500s. It is of complex design using the common features of gravel, water, shade, box hedges and stone walls. Flowers are not in evidence, yet there is interest in the water features of central fountain and a water sculpture in the form of a stone chain running downhill. Thence we were transported to Austria and the famous Schönbrunn Palace. This garden was first planted in the mid-sixteenth century by the Hapsburg family, vying to a degree with Versailles and the Sun King. For me this garden has much warmth of character and accessibility because of its size. It has a simple parterre from which one views a folly upon the hill and the Palm House, the largest in Europe when built in 1882. This building has sliding slats shading the glass and green painted ironwork. Chairs, flowering plants and exhibitions to view make it very welcoming to visitors. Another novel feature is a wooden pruning machine which can be rolled along avenues of trees, its curved wooden top shaped as a template for pruning the trees to their arched shape.

Tony's next choice for us was Het Loo in Amsterdam, a garden planted for William of Orange and Mary Stuart, reminiscent of their garden in Hampton Court. Parts of the original garden were destroyed by Napoleon in 1807 and the garden has been faithfully restored. The vista is very formal and beds are intricately planted to resemble a rich geometric carpet with fountains and statuary, clipped hornbeam, huge pots of citrus and great curved hedges. To the south, Villandry in the Loire Valley, 31 km from Versailles is a very different matter. It is a vegetable garden, privately owned, open to the public and dating from the sixteenth century. It was once owned by a brother of Napoleon. In 1906 it was sold for restoration after declining into a ruinous state and now is a thriving organic garden, selling its produce to the market in the village in which it stands. There are few flowers but the geometric shapes which form the garden are mostly devoted to the hues of white cauliflowers, orange pumpkins, purple broccoli and all shades of green. A frame is provided by the topiary of yews and other shaped trees.

Finally, Tony took us across the Channel and first to Hatfield House, home of the Salisbury family, where John Tradescant was the plantsman most influential in the evolution of the garden. The original fountain from the early 16th century is still playing among herbaceous borders in similar style to the original plantings. The Tudor Great Hall predates the old house itself and stands surrounded by typical garden features of Tudor times: perennials, annuals, roses, topiary, statuary, clipped box hedges and sunken gardens.

A Victorian garden, Biddulph Grange at Stoke on Trent, was our last garden viewing. This is a high-Victorian garden. Bateman, the owner wanted the latest plants and ideas from travellers to Italy, Egypt and China, sources of much exciting new material for English gardens. We see now the restoration of a property which had become a hospital with grounds maintained with a greatly reduced budget. Under the care of the National Trust the garden has been brought to a high standard of horticulture and abounds with colour from huge borders of roses and rhododendrons.

This was an outstanding slide evening. I can recall slipping into slumber, hidden by the darkness, on similar occasions but not for a moment was this even a possibility. Not only was the photography excellent but to hear an expert such as Tony, was a great treat and we owe him gratitude for sharing his pleasure with us.

Barbara Crompton

FROM THE COMMITTEE

A meeting was held on Wednesday, 14 April 1999, at 9.30 am.

The following office bearers were all nominated, seconded and elected:

President: Roger Bungey
 Vice-President: Cicely Bungey
 Secretary: Diana Mayfield
 Treasurer: Norma Lee

1. Rally: The cost was \$1334 which paid for hire of the public address system, advertising, photocopying, postage, and hire of the venue (necessitated by the rain). The rally proved successful and new members joined because of it; community awareness of the Arboretum has greatly increased and donations are still coming in. A steering committee, a subcommittee of the FWA, was formed to continue action on repealing the Act.
2. We now have 93 individual members and 48 family members.
3. The Committee urges all Friends to continue to lobby politicians to have the Netherby Kindergarten Act repealed.
4. Future trip to Currency Creek – please keep Sunday October 31 free for a trip to see Dean Nicolle's eucalypt arboretum. We shall meet at the canoe tree at 11.00 am. It is hoped that car-pooling will be arranged. We shall have a picnic; more details will appear later.
5. A suggestion box provided at the AGM elicited no suggestions. Does this mean you are all happy with what we are doing?
6. We have recently spent money as follows: \$650 to remove aloes and tidy the site, about \$10,300 on Arboretum paths, \$10,000 on the permanent Arboretum Exhibition in Urrbrae House and have put aside \$120 for new oaks.

'TIMELESS FLOWERS'

An Exhibition of Paintings by BERYL MARTIN

Beryl Martin's watercolours are always most popular and so on May 2, at Urrbrae House, 150 of her friends and admirers were delighted to celebrate with her the opening of her third exhibition which she called 'Timeless Flowers'.

Prof. Margaret Sedgley who officially opened the event, was both entertaining and instructive when she spoke of the Lancashire childhood which they both shared and of the soft beauty of English flowers. What a culture shock to migrate to Australia and meet flowers which are adapted to a harsh climate; these strange inflorescences which have tiny or even no petals but brilliant with myriad sepals or stiff stamens. How under-rated or even despised Australian flowers were then. That this attitude is now not so negative is due to many reasons one of which has to be the work of artists like Beryl who have drawn our attention to the dramatic beauty of our exceptional flora.

The vibrant colours of this delightful exhibition called to visitors from every room. Gentle European flowers beckoned from the 'Iris Garden', vivid Australian flowers in the 'Banksia Garden' and various species of eucalypts showed glimpses of Australian landscape beyond.

As always, Beryl's watercolours bring pleasure to all with their suggestion of joy of life even as the blooms fade. She showed once again talent, flair and attention to detail. This was a most successful exhibition.

Mary Tester

NEWS FROM THE CURATOR

Black Forest flora

Volunteers have planted understorey species in the North Arboretum in areas where weed infestations had been sprayed. *Hardenbergia violacea*, *Acacia acinacea* and *Dodonea viscosa* were raised from seed by volunteers; the *Pittosporum phillyraeoides* and *Bursaria spinosa* were grown from seed collected in remnant vegetation and donated by Andrew Crompton. These plantings have been recorded, staked out and mapped. Help is needed to hand weed around these understorey plants.

New Planting

About 50 specimens will be added to the Arboretum collection this year. These will include three new *Banksia* cultivars developed by the Department of Horticulture at the Waite campus, *Pyrus* species from Iran, 16 species of oak purchased from Mereweather Arboretum and hakeas donated by Max Ewer.

The Mallee

Local provenance native grasses have been purchased for planting in patches. Two statements of entrance have been planned. The series of sculptures by Greg Johns, Silvio Apponyi and Douglas Bell entitled 'Towards the Land' will be officially opened in October. These sculptures were funded by the Australia Council and funds for paths were provided by the Friends.

Vandalism

There has been another incidence of vandalism in the Arboretum. The bronze owl by Will Kuiper was broken off its pole. It will be repaired, but as the loan period will expire soon, the sculpture may not be replaced unless a donor can be found to purchase the work for the Arboretum. The sculpture has attracted a lot of interest and positive comment from visitors.

Dogs

Friends visiting the Arboretum are requested to refrain from bringing their dogs, as they frighten the birds, pollute the grounds and intimidate visitors.

Kindergarten

I am delighted with Minister Buckby's decision not to build the new Netherby Kindergarten in the Arboretum. I am grateful to all the Friends and community groups who demonstrated their support for the restoration of the integrity of the Arboretum and showed how much they valued the Arboretum and Peter Waite's gift of open space. I hope that the Netherby Kindergarten (Variation of Waite Trust) Act 1997 will soon be repealed, thus ensuring the long-term protection of the Arboretum from future threats of building development. The demolition of the old iron hut should begin soon and the site cleared to enable the expansion of the oak collection.

Tours

Included with this newsletter is the new Tours pamphlet for the Urrbrae House Historic Precinct. I encourage you to join the informative and enjoyable Arboretum tours each month, as well as visit Urrbrae House and gardens, the Coach House Museum, the Plant Science Centre and the Wine Research Centre on Campus. It is a great way to entertain overseas and interstate visitors with an interest in trees, historic houses or science.

Jennifer Gardner

TREENET IN BROMPTON

Norma Lee and Mary Tester

You may remember an article in the Newsletter for Spring 1997 reporting the first testing of different species of trees for street planting – the TREENET project. One of these trials was in Coglin St, Brompton where 23 *Celtis tournefortii* were planted. These are neat small trees that should well suit this rather narrow street.

We volunteered to log their progress. So twice a year, in March and September, we set out with diameter tape, measuring pole and record sheet to chart each plant's height, the diameter of the trunk and breadth of the canopy. We also check the general health and growth pattern of each plant.

The southern half of Coglin St, where these trees are planted, is a mix of old and renewed cottages together with some warehouses and businesses. The street is well kerbed and sealed and many of the homes are well tended – an excellent example of the beginnings of urban renewal.

We have been delighted with the response of the local people. Folk walking by almost always stop to talk and often others come out to ask us questions. One man, living on a corner, asked Norma if he could please have a tree too and he promised to look after it. One was planted within a very few weeks. Christi and Brian had so many questions that Mary had to do some homework before replying by letter. They promised to pass on the information to the other residents too. Most people are watering 'their' tree and the council also is watering and mulching.

It is a joy to share their interest and to see the pride in this neighbourhood. We both look forward to our visits, to see the trees growing strong and healthily with only one sign of vandalism.

IN THE ARBORETUM

Acacia peuce F. Muell.

It is always surprising to realise that this tree is a wattle. At first sight it looks so like a conifer – hence the specific epithet *peuce* which is the Greek word 'pine'. The specimen in the Arboretum (grid H9) has done well since it was planted in 1983, and eventually (in late 1998) produced its solitary pale globular flowers on short peduncles somewhat inconspicuously, but set no pods. When they do form, the pods are oblong and flat, 9 to 15 cm long, 3 to 5 cm broad, with a papery texture ('chartaceous'), becoming twisted when dry. The long narrow phyllodes are rigid and have sharp points.

The local name for the tree, 'waddy wood', suggests that its very hard wood lent itself to the production in the past of a useful weapon for the early dwellers in the very localised areas of the outback where it occurs. A well-known stand is in the Birdsville region in SW Queensland. The species is quite uncommon, so it is to be hoped that our Arboretum specimen will continue to thrive for our observation the future.

Eric Sims

Phytolacca dioica

I was pleased to see that Cate Paull had selected this tree for the regular article about an Arboretum specimen in the Autumn Newsletter. It has always intrigued me that this massive tree is in the same genus as a soft herb, the Pokeberry or Ink Weed, *P. octandra*, which has become a nuisance weed in the Eastern States, producing succulent small fruits with red, ink-like fruits that explain the generic name, given to it by Linnaeus, from the Persian, *laka*, a dye (according to the 'Flora of S.A.').

As I can testify from the young Ombu in my garden, it is a fast grower that soon produces a large trunk base with superficial roots spreading from it. These roots will eventually thicken to become impressive knobs that would provide good seats for the weary traveller over the Argentine Pampas seeking shade. This rapid growth is understandable when the structure of the wood is examined in a shed bough that may be found on the ground underneath the tree. Instead of a solid core of heartwood there is a series of concentric rings of thin wood because the cambium, instead of laying down wood on the inside in a continuous process of secondary thickening as usual, is replaced each season by a new cambium outside the old one. This new cambium then produces another thin ring of wood, separated from the previous one by a soft sappy tissue, thus explaining the tree's reputation for resistance to fire (and the lightness of the occasional fallen bough which reveals this curious liane-like structure when viewed end-on).

Eric Sims

***Aesculus californica* Californian Buckeye – A 'silvered skeleton'.**

One of the most exciting new trees in the Arboretum in recent years has been *Aesculus californica* (Spach) Nuttall. The tree is native to the western coastal ranges of the United States of America, from San Francisco to Los Angeles. It is described as a stout tree, more often a shrub, forming broad, dense thickets in the valleys and up to the open foothill woodlands.

In the Arboretum, it has grown to an almost globular, large shrub, now about 3 m x 0.3 m. It has never been pruned, and no doubt, removing the lower limbs early would have produced a more tree-like shape. It comes into leaf early in the spring, rapidly producing the whole season's extension before hot weather and drought can stunt its development. It has attractive, bright-green chestnut-like leaves (not as large as those of the European chestnut), and almost every shoot terminates in an erect candle of pink-white flowers, making quite a show. When the flowers fall, many spikes produce a single fruit, about the size of a hen's egg, with one, rarely two, seeds inside.

As soon as summer conditions get tough, the plant sheds its leaves and by mid-summer is almost leafless. This leaf fall leaves an amazing skeleton of chalk-white stems, which persist until the next leaf burst. Meanwhile the bare stems are hung with the numerous, large fruits. The effect of the white stems is striking, and has attracted much attention. The early leafing and flowering make it attractive and its avoidance of summer stress is unique for any deciduous tree I know in Adelaide.

Be amongst the first to grow this attractive and amazing shrub or small tree in Adelaide. In buying your plant from Jennifer you will be supporting the Arboretum and show initiative in trying a new species.

David Symon

FORTHCOMING EVENTS AND DIARY DATES

- 8 pm Monday 9 August** General Meeting: "**Daggers, pincushions and cockatoo fodder: the diversity of *Hakea***" illustrated talk by **Dr Bill Barker**.
- 6 pm Friday 27 August** '**Waite Arboretum Wood Art**': Exhibition and sales of items representing Arboretum timbers by Woodgroup SA, to be opened by Noris Ioannou, Craft Critic for *The Advertiser* and official opening of the **Waite Arboretum Exhibition Room**. If anybody would like to help on the exhibition roster, please ring Leonie Warmington, ph 8278 5835. The wood exhibition closes September 4.
- 2 pm 28 & 29 August** **Special guided walks** of the Arboretum relating to the exhibition.
- 5.30 pm Friday 22 Oct.** Opening by The Hon. Diana Laidlaw of '**Towards the Land**' - a suite of sculptures by Greg Johns, Silvio Apponyi and Doug Bell in The Mallee section of the Arboretum.
- 11 am Sunday 24 Oct.** '**Flora and Fauna through the Lens**' - a group photographic exhibition to be opened by Tim Flannery, Director of the South Australian Museum. The exhibition will close 14 November. .
- Sunday 31 October** Visit to **Dean Nicolle's Arboretum** at Currency Creek
- Sunday 7 November** '**Back to the Waite**' Day & **Urrbrae House Open Day**

Jennifer Gardner

ARBORETUM PLANTS FOR SALE:

Aesculus californica — Californian buckeye — available ONLY from Waite Arboretum. Very uncommon species in Australia, there is a very fine specimen in the Waite Arboretum. Price is \$15 (this includes a \$3 refundable deposit on the Springring™).

Ficus microcarpa — (grows from 8 to 18 m x 5 to 15 m)
Price is \$8 (this includes a \$3 refundable deposit on the Springring™).

Acer obtusifolium (Native of Cyprus) — raised from Arboretum specimens.
Price is \$4.

Enquires: Jennifer 8303 7405

NEW MEMBERS

Welcome to:

Dr Jenny Barker, Pasadena
Rev. Andrew Cheeseman, Mitcham
Mrs Joy and Mr Geoff Clinch, Flagstaff Hill
Mr James Crompton, Beaumont
Miss Mary Dowding, North Adelaide
Pat Ellis, Panorama
Dr Christopher Findlay, Netherby
Mr Richards Fishlock, Happy Valley
Dr Mary Gabb, Gilberton
Mr Ted Higgs, Lynton
Mrs Teresa Jack, North Brighton
Mrs Mary & Mr Noel Johnson, Unley
Mr Peter Kerin, Netherby
Mr Doug Lane, Clapham
Mr Randy Larcombe, Daw Park
Mrs Eve Lever, Urrbrae
Ms Lucy MacDonald, North Adelaide
Ms Rosemary McKay, University of SA
Dr Tim Marshall, Eltham, Victoria
Dr Peter & Mrs Margaret Nicholls, Mitcham
Mr Piers Plumridge, Norwood
Mrs Carol Pulford, Flagstaff Hill
Ms Penny Ramsay, Adelaide
Mrs Buntly Rundell, Rosslyn Park
PJ & JR Schaeffer, Ramco
Dr Roger & Mrs Robbie Seymour, Montacute Heights
Mrs Thirza Thomas, Norwood
Mr Roger Vincent, Fitzroy

NOTICES

From The Editor

I am eagerly awaiting articles of interest concerning the Arboretum, as mentioned in the last newsletter!

Friends are also invited to make suggestions re our programme, items of expenditure etc. as reported in the Newsletters.

These letters or items can either be posted to: Barbara Possingham, 10 River Street, Marden 5070 or alternatively Emailed to: miposs@ace.net.au.

It would also be of interest to receive information, that could be recorded, regarding various sightings of birds, insects, reptiles and beasts seen in the Arboretum. As an example "A koala was sighted in the Waite Arboretum on Sunday, May 16, 1999." The Curator would be interested to hear of any other such sightings. Also, about 25 years ago, a family of apostle birds set up home in the Arboretum. They stayed for a couple of years and left.