

THE FRIENDS OF THE WAITE ARBORETUM INC.



WAITE
ARBORETUM

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“I dream of trees ...”

A presentation by Prof. David Christophel

4 August 2004, Urrbrae House

Prof. David Christophel, who is Professor of Botany and Director of the Chester M Alter Arboretum at the University of Denver and is well known to Friends of the Waite Arboretum, gave a most entertaining presentation whilst he was briefly here in Adelaide in August. The occasion was special both in having David talk to us, but also in that it was the tenth birthday of Friends of the Waite Arboretum.

Before telling us something of the “joys of setting up an arboretum” in Denver, we were given a little background on the alternative origin of trees, with a contrast made between the Garden of Eden and the Darwinian versions. It is interesting when viewing classical art as to whether the “apple” tree in the Garden of Eden may in fact have really been a fig! At the least a fig tree would yield both a fruit and suitable leaves.

The Denver Arboretum is very different from Waite Arboretum in that it comprises the whole university campus of 36 ha. This has led at times to some conflicts between the arboretum and the architect as the campus has been growing actively of recent years. Denver has an unusual climate, albeit similar in some ways to Adelaide e.g. 700 mm annual rainfall, and mainly clay soils. However at 1,700 metres elevation and a much higher latitude, and surrounded by mountains over 4,000 metres, it has quite a few snowfalls even though the snow does not persist on the ground. Also occasional Chinook winds, which can give a 20° temperature rise within a few hours, make it a difficult climate for trees. Recent years have been below average rainfall so irrigation is an important aspect. Some of the more notable mature trees in the arboretum include Colorado blue spruce, hornbeam and horse-chestnuts.

Major projects which David has underway in the arboretum include:

- Humanities Fossil Garden, which includes trees such as *Taxodium* and *Metasequoia* which are close to trees found as fossils in the Rocky Mountains.
- Cherrington Walnut Grove
- Humanities Water Feature, which is currently dry owing to drought conditions but is appreciated by the skateboarders
- Arboretum calendar, which will come out for the first time next year
- Map of the arboretum.

David Barwick

Caper tree, Native Orange *Capparis mitchellii*

Like *Citrus* and *Owenia*, *Capparis* is probably a relic of moister times in S. Australia. It belongs to the family Capparaceae. The family is best developed in the drier tropics, particularly Africa. Two members will be well known, the garden annual *Cleome*, Spider Flower, of which there are Australian species and *Capparis spinosa*, a shrub from the Mediterranean and the source of caper buds to make caper sauce. In Australia the genus *Capparis* has about 17 species, but only *C. mitchellii* occurs in S. Australia. This was named after Sir T. Mitchell, surveyor and explorer.

At this stage let me protest at the ridiculous common name. The species is in no way related to citrus and the fruit in no way resembles an orange. The name Native Pomegranate has also been used and is equally inappropriate. Can we change a common name? Let us try Caper Tree. In S. Australia it occurs in the northern Flinders Ranges and is frequently seen about Arkaroola where it forms dense, dark green, stocky trees with rough, dark, furrowed bark. The specimen in the Arboretum is a good example. The juvenile phase consists of intricate branches with small leaves and vicious, hooked, stipular prickles making the young plant something not to be tangled with. These prickles do not protect the plant against the voracious Caper White Butterfly larvae.

One of the glories of the tree is its ephemeral flowers. The buds are dark green, somewhat stout, and burst open to four ivory petals below a burst of numerous long stamens over-topped by a green ovary on a long stalk. It lasts a matter of hours. The petals and stamens fall before lunch leaving the long-stalked, sad looking, unfertilised ovary. Such short-lived exuberance gives me pleasure every time I see it. Our tree did not fruit until 2001 after hand pollination (see D. Symon- FWA Newsletter #31, Autumn 2002).

The other remarkable feature is that the Caper Tree is host to the Caper White Butterfly. The adults descend on the tree in sulphur white clouds and their wretched, colourful caterpillars can almost defoliate the tree. How do the butterflies find one tree in the thousand in the Arboretum or for that matter the few trees among the millions of others on the Adelaide Plains?

Our tree is one of two originally growing in triangular shrubberies in front of the main building. Both were transplanted to the Arboretum when well grown but only one survived.

David E. Symon



"I never before knew the full value of trees. Under them I breakfast, dine, write, read and receive my company."

– Thomas Jefferson

Profile – Bryan Milligan

We would like to feature a brief profile on each of our volunteers and Friends who might be so kind as to write a paragraph for us about herself or himself. In this issue, Bryan Milligan, FWA Committee member, writes about his career in farming and agriculture.

Although Melbourne born, my first interest in agriculture came from visiting an uncle's dairy farm in northern Victoria at a young age. When starting my secondary education, my parents decided to sell up their city business and move to the Goulburn Valley. Winning a scholarship to Dookie Agricultural College (these days part of the University of Melbourne) enabled me to focus on the scientific and practical aspects of agriculture. However I developed an early interest in management skills and did not take up a Commonwealth scholarship to University, but obtained employment on a mixed property adjacent to the Loddon River north of Bendigo.

After marrying in 1959, Sue and I moved to northeast Victoria where I managed a property owned by a Melbourne company until the end of 1961. The following two decades were spent raising two boys and running the 800-hectare property settled by Sue's grandfather in 1898.

Lake Meran is on the border of the eastern mallee and the westerly limits of the Goulburn Murray irrigation system. It was a mixed farming operation and involved a wide range of cropping enterprises, sheep and cattle, supported by extensive irrigation. During that time I became heavily involved with the community-owned Kerang Agricultural Research Farm, serving as president and on the Technical Advisory Committee. Other roles included Advisory Board Member of Boort Irrigation District and a founding member of the Leaghur Forest Preservation Committee. Because of my strong interest in meteorology, I also set up a privately funded meteorological station.

With two sons showing no interest in farming, we made the decision in the late '70s to move to Adelaide where I was fortunate enough to gain employment with the University, working with the then Waite Farm Manager, Ray Norton. We went on to develop Rural Services, initially managing grounds, orchards, glasshouses and field-work. Eventually a number of off-campus properties came under our control, which provided a wide range of resources for research and teaching in the Agricultural Science Faculty.

Restructuring of the University, Roseworthy and the Waite campus under Professor Woolhouse meant the re-allocation of our 21 staff, and I accepted a separation package from the University. It had been, nevertheless, a great privilege to work with so many talented teachers, researchers and post-graduate students.

From 1995 for a number of years I enjoyed part-time work with a tourist bus company and met a fascinating range of travelers from overseas and interstate. In April 2002, I entered full retirement, and started as a volunteer with Burnside City and the Cancer Council as a driver. I am also involved with Burnside's biodiversity team and their Environment Advisory Committee. Last year Sue and I adopted a Bush for Life site in the Adelaide Hills.

Bryan Milligan

Diary Dates

Sunday 17th October, 5 - 7pm: Roses & Bubbles with Sophie Thomson at Urrbrae House. Sophie will talk on "Companions for Roses".

Thursday 4 November, 5.45 - 8.30pm: Cultural Celebrations- twilight sculpture walk in the Arboretum with the artists. BYO picnic or gourmet picnic baskets available. Invitation to follow.

Sunday 14th November: Visit to Andrew Crompton's property. Meet at 10am for a 2 hour guided walk. BYO picnic lunch. Tea and coffee provided. See directions & map below.

Sunday 28th November, 10am - 3pm: Salvia Show in Urrbrae House Rose Garden.

Monday 6th December, 6 - 8pm: Joint Friends and Volunteers Christmas Party.



Visit to Andrew Crompton's property, Possum Park

Possum Park (see map following page)

UBD map 184

Go about 5km along Flaxley Road from Mt Barker.

Turn left onto Native Avenue.

Look for A-frame sign and gate on left, about 200m up Native Avenue.

Property name "Possum Park" on fence beside the gate.

Possum Park is a 14-acre property where local native flora is being returned onto what was previously a dairy farm paddock.

You will see various kinds of restoration area: woodland, dam, open grassy areas. You will also see restoration areas in various stages of development.

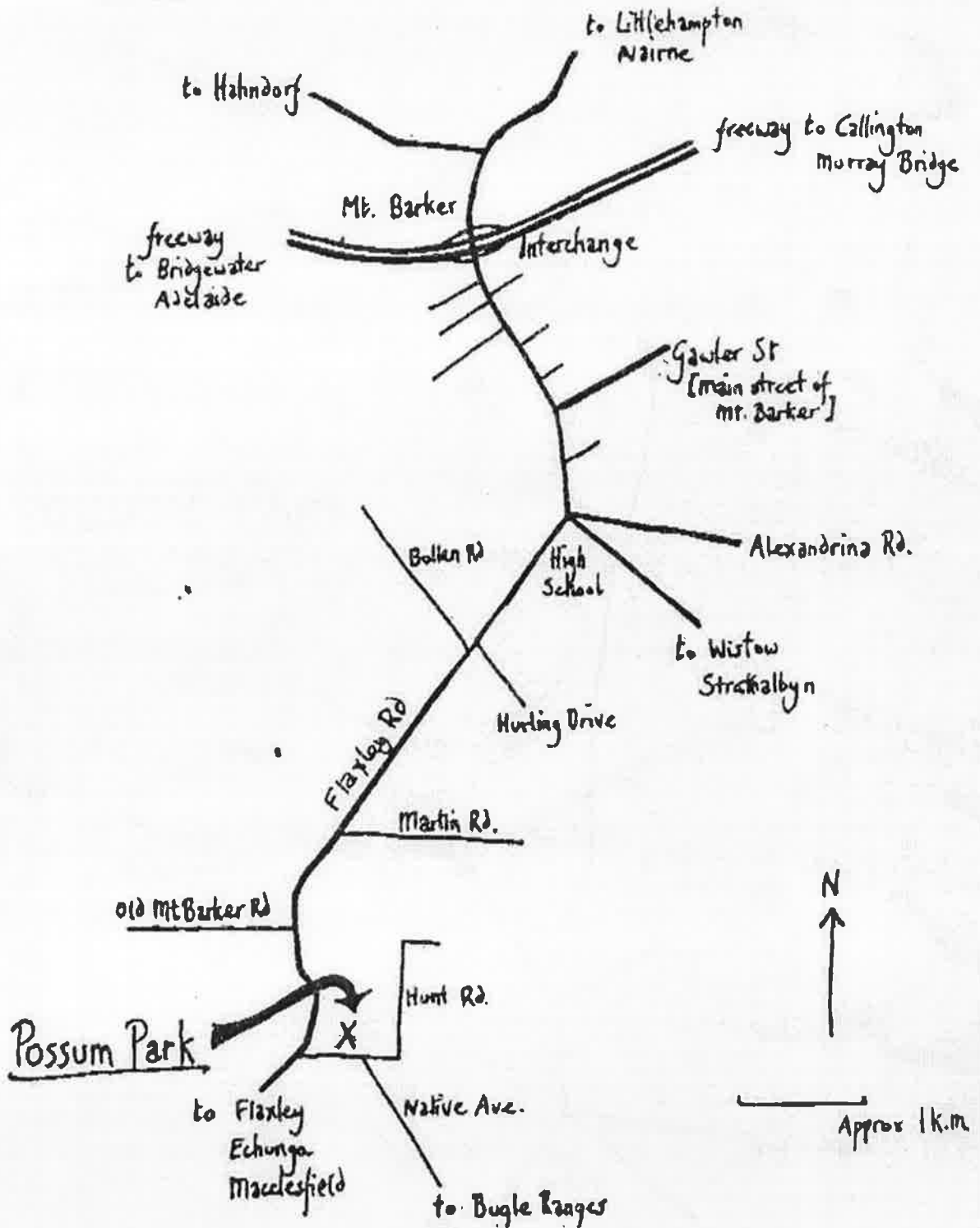
The main aim is to eliminate weeds, to have indigenous flora over the majority of the property, and maintain only exotic plants that have a low ability to spread.

24/09/04 10:10 FAX 08+83910596

ANDREW-CROMPTON

POSSUM PARK

LOCATION MAP



Stunning Arboretum T-shirts

Good quality, 100% cotton, dark green with Waite Arboretum logo in white.

\$16 Available from the Arboretum office.

Great small gift to post interstate or overseas.

New books available at Friends' meetings or from the Arboretum Office

Melaleucas: A Field and Garden Guide

2nd edition (2004)

by Ivan Holliday

\$32 each (RRP \$36.95)

Kangaroo Island's Native Plants

(Revised 2003)

by Ivan Holliday, Bev Overton, Dean Overton

\$16 each (RRP \$19.95)

The Art of Botanical Illustration 2004

Seventh Biennial Exhibition

Presented by the Friends of the Royal Botanic Gardens Melbourne Inc.

Over 70 of Australia's leading botanical artists' original, exquisite artwork, which have been selected for display.

All work is for sale.

6th November – 21st November 2004

Open: 10am to 5pm daily

New Venue: DOMAIN HOUSE GALLERY

(Opposite the National Herbarium of Victoria) Dallas Brooks Drive, SOUTH YARRA 3141