

Blue Mountains Rhododendron Society of New South Wales Inc.

Inaugurated April 2nd 1969

March / April 2013

NEWSLETTER

Vol. 39 No. 2

PO Box 238, Blackheath, 2785.

We welcome all members, especially those who have recently joined us, to our

General Meeting Saturday 20 April 2013 at The Lodge 2:00 pm start

Guest Speaker

Ken Goodlet

Ken has been a mountain resident for many years, firstly at Springwood and then at Hazelbrook since 1973.

Ken has been a teacher and school administrator in Malaysia and Australia, including as Senior Master at Blue Mountains Grammar School. He was editor for an Australian book publisher for 12 years, and has written four published community histories, the first, published in Malaysia, being his University of Sydney thesis. His two published histories on the mountains community are *Mountain Springtime: a History of Blue Mountains Grammar School* (2002) and the National Trust highly commended *Hazelbrook and Woodford: a story of two Blue Mountains towns* (2006, 2012 & 2013).

In his talk at the General Meeting on 20th April, Ken will give a Powerpoint talk on the subject, 'Writing community histories'. He will cover why he writes on such a subject, the unlikely Malaysian starting point in 1965, the academic route to 1977, the commissioned first book in the mountains in 2002, the accidental second book in Malaysia in 2003, a very deliberate local mountains history in 2006, the 40-year writing & research project in 2010 and what has become a bicentenary book project this year.

This 2013 mountains book, to be published in May, is called *Blue Mountains Journeys*. Journeying has always been part of the mountains story, but is of particular significance in this bicentenary year.

As well as the tale of the wayfinders' traverse of the Blue Mountains barrier two centuries ago, here there are accounts of many earlier and later mountains journeys, coming up to the present time.

Set within a detailed biographical context in many cases, there are journeys by indigenous peoples, colonial explorers and surveyors, fortune-seekers, travellers heading west, wagoners, marauders, rail travellers and workers, holidaymakers, settlers, commuters, trailblazers and rambles, cyclists and motorists. There are more or less detailed accounts of the lives and mountains journeys of people such as Gregory Blaxland, William Govett, Charles Darwin, Edward Hargraves, Chinese prospectors, bushrangers, Paddy Pallin, Mark Foy, the Coee marchers – and many others as well.

Some of these journeys will also find their way into Ken's talk.

This talk by Ken will definitely be of interest in this Blue Mountains crossing Bicentenary year, and is not to be missed!

New Members

We warmly welcome the following people as members of the Society, and invite them to become involved in all the activities the Society has to offer.

Peter & Alison Messer,	Mount Victoria,
Jan Roberts,	Blackheath,
Pam Stewart,	Hazelbrook,
Ray Whaites,	Blackheath.

From the President – Judy's Jottings

There has been interest in the series of Seminars to mark the 200th year since the crossing of the mountains in 1813 which impacted on the development in the west.

For those lucky people who are attending it's an early start at 8:30 am Sunday 14th April, and I recommend members to pool their cars as parking will be tight.

The Monday volunteers' numbers are strong, with some new members joining the workers, adding extra "weight" to this cheerful group.

Committee member **Geoff Cannings** has been our valuable contact with the Blue Mountains Council in preparing and presenting plans for the proposed viewing platform over the valley. This project will enhance our Spring presentation and facilitate viewing for less able garden enthusiasts who can't attempt long walks.

We wish a speedy recovery for **Paul Ketelhohn** after his recent hospitalisation, and also for **Tracey Longden** who was involved in an unfortunate car accident lately. The Monday workers will look forward to your return to work!

Following on the Seminar we have another most interesting speaker, **Ken Goodlet**, for our general meeting on Saturday 20th April.

Good wishes to all.

Judy Johnston – President

So you Want to Identify a Native!

A newly acquired Library book "Field Guide to the Native Plants of Sydney" by Les Robinson will provide the answer.

Information is given on the history, ecology, Aboriginal and European uses of each plant with detailed illustrations.

This book has been added to the Australian Natives section of our lending library.

Why not browse through the Library either before or after any of our general meetings – you will be surprised at what you may find. To borrow a book, just fill out the associated index card with your name and the date borrowed; and don't forget to mark off the date the book is returned.

Garden Report – March 2013

Once again most of the time has been taken up removing sticks & branches, clearing paths & trimming back on the paths. We had a tree come down on the Quota Walk near the Fox Cave which was cut and the larger sections removed. Also a tree came down over the fence near the gate onto Ridgewell Road – this was cut up & the fence will now have to be fixed. We also continue the war on dodder, having to cut back more & more plants to remove it. I have got a quote for various models of Stihl hedge trimmers to trim back azaleas, etc, both for general pruning & for working on dodder.

We have sprayed small blackberries, privet, broom, Himalayan Honeysuckle, etc, in the Glade area, also some large Himalayan Honeysuckle and privet at the bottom end of the swamp. There needs to be more work done in the swamp, but as it is too wet at present we will need an extended dry period before we can carry out the work.

I will be away for the Autumn Working Bee. Bill Webster will be there, and wants to take a group up to the Conifer garden area and remove small Holly, etc. The area around the Lodge must also be tidied up for the Seminar the following weekend.

We received a request from Robert Hatcher, the National President of the Australian Rhododendron Society, for information on the Species Rhododendrons in the Gardens, for a presentation he is giving to the International Conference on Rhododendron conservation in Edinburgh at RBG Edinburgh in April. This information was gathered together and sent to him within a week.

Geoff Cannings is the "project manager" for the proposed new lookout below the Lodge. Further details are elsewhere in this newsletter.

Dick Harris – Garden Supervisor

Advance Notice – 1 Autumn Working Bee

Please keep **Saturday 6th April, 09:00 – 12:30**, free for our annual Autumn working bee in the Gardens.

With the Lodge being the venue for "Gardening in the Blue Mountains" seminar the following weekend, we must have the Gardens looking at their best.

Morning tea will be provided for the volunteers.

VALE

AVERIL HOPE "RILL" GIBSON

(19/05/17 – 7/03/13)

Family and friends farewelled Rill at Blackheath on 11th March. A Blackheath resident for 44 years and a staunch supporter of the Rhododendron Gardens, Rill's life story was one of service to others, with a strong religious conviction, keen observation, a sense of adventure and a dry but compassionate wit.

The eldest of 9 children, brought up in Walcha, sent to Sydney for secondary education, Rill commenced nursing training in 1934. Judged to be too slight in stature for general nursing, Rill trained at the Children's Hospital, Camperdown. During 1942-44, Rill was one of a pair of nurses stationed at the Australian Inland Mission Nursing Home at Innamincka, on Cooper Creek. She came to know the Rev. Doctor John Flynn well, and volunteered for Flying Doctor missions out of Broken Hill and Alice Springs.

Post-war brought extensive travel and further training overseas and interstate. Returning to NSW, Rill spent 14 years "with never a day off sick" at the Far West Children's Health Scheme, based at Cobar. She drove long distances by car, checking on the condition of outback children returned home from city hospitals. She lived and worked in the railway carriage fitted out as the Far West Children's Baby Health Centre, transported at snail's pace at the rear of freight trains. When the nightly shunting in the goods yard at Nyngan became too much, she rebelled and set up the Baby Health Centre at a rented cottage in town.

Moving to the Mountains, Rill worked as the Baby Health Centre nursing sister at Lithgow and Oberon before retiring. Although frustrated by restricted mobility, she continued to take a keen interest in the Rhododendron Gardens, mailing numerous copies of the Calendar to friends overseas and interstate.

A diminutive figure, upright, always impeccably dressed, with hat and gloves, her presence in Blackheath will be missed.

(Graham Gibson & Marion Freidman)

Proposed New Lookout

There has been much activity lately following a decision taken at a Management Committee meeting late last year to erect an extended walkway and viewing platform at the area shown on the map of the Gardens as 'Lookout' below the Lodge. When this area was first designated as a lookout, there were extensive views into the valley and down to the lake. However, nature being nature, these views have now been greatly impeded by the growth of vegetation down the slope from the lookout.

Geoff Cannings has been tasked with liaising with the Blue Mountains City Council in an effort to have this walkway and viewing platform built before the Open Days start this year. After initial site planning was carried out by some of the committee and Monday workers, **Judy Johnston** and Geoff met with a Council representative who was impressed with the plans, thought the site and access was good, and agreed that the lookout would be a great asset for the Gardens. The length of the walkway, together with the width of the lookout at the end and the height above the ground will ensure visitors will obtain a much better (and unimpeded) view of the valley, the lake and the far side.

Although Council currently have a ban on all new constructions on Council land due to skyrocketing maintenance costs, this would not apply to the Society as we would be responsible for our own maintenance. However, Council may wish to formalise a lease arrangement with the Society to insulate Council from any maintenance costs.

Having been informed that Council would not block our application for the erection of the lookout, Geoff is now obtaining quotes from two local engineering firms for the manufacture and erection of the walkway and lookout, with specifications provided from a Design Engineer.

Advance Notice - 2 Speaker for the June Meeting

Sue Perkins from Quincey Cottage at Medlow Bath will be our speaker at our meeting on the 20th June.

More in the next newsletter.

Management Committee 2012 – 2013

President

Judy Johnston
4787 7298

Vice President

Jeannette Adrian
4787 7904

Vice President

and Garden Supervisor
Dick Harris

Secretary

Alan Lush
4787 6983

Treasurer

Joan Hailstone
4787 5859

Membership Secretary

Marion Freidman
4787 8416

Committee Members Beryl Black, Geoff Cannings, David Cook, Julia Hanley,
Sonia Levitt, Val Moorhead, Diane Twose

Meeting Hostess Bette Brown

Editor/Webmaster Alan Lush

website – www.rhodogarden.org.au

**BLUE MOUNTAINS RHODODENDRON SOCIETY OF NSW INC
PO BOX 238, BLACKHEATH NSW 2785**

