

# Blue Mountains Rhododendron Society of New South Wales Inc.

Inaugurated April 2<sup>nd</sup> 1969

March/April 2014

## NEWSLETTER

Vol. 40 No. 2

PO Box 238, Blackheath, 2785.

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

### General Meeting Saturday 19 April 2014 at The Lodge 2:00 pm start

#### And Now For Something Different!

For once we are not having a guest speaker at the next General Meeting.

Instead the committee have decided to try something new, partly because the meeting date falls on Easter Saturday.

Julia has described what will happen at the meeting – just see her column on Page 2 for all the details!

**Definitely not to be missed!**

#### Membership

There have been no new members joining the Society recently, but we can tell you that there are now 163 members, plus 9 Life Members, enjoying the benefits of the Society.

#### Advance Notices

Speakers for the next two general meetings have been confirmed, with Barbara Tyrrell of Dry Ridge Estates to speak in June, and Mary Moody at the August AGM. Julia will contact Barbara to see if she will agree to a tasting of some of the Dry Ridge wines as part of the June meeting.

#### Additions to the Library

For many years, the Library at the Lodge has benefited from books recommended and/or donated by Members and friends. Responding to grumblings that most of the books in the Rhododendron section of the Library were published at around the time of establishment of the Gardens (back in the 1970s), Committee Member **David Cook** researched, and has donated, five books on rhododendrons and azaleas, all of relatively recent publication.

These include the 2012 edition of Kenneth Cox, “Rhododendrons & Azaleas – A Colour Guide” (RHO56) and a slim, but very informative, book by Coyier & Roane, “Compendium of Rhododendron & Azalea Diseases” (RHO55).

If you are puzzled by an obviously sickening rhododendron or azalea in your garden, you will be sure to find the answer in this latter publication – but please don't bring your diseased specimen into the Gardens!

*A very big Thank You goes to David for his time and effort spent in providing these new books!*

Please note – the Library is open to Members before and after General Meetings, and on Mondays when volunteers are working in the Gardens.

*Marion Freidman*

### *From the President – Julia's Say*

Hi to all readers.

The rain came in the nick of time and our Garden Supervisor, **Dick Harris**, thinks the Rhododendron bushes may set more flower buds than we had previously anticipated. Let's hope we'll have a wonderful display come October. The autumn colour is beginning to touch our deciduous trees and we look forward to a brilliant display in the next few weeks.

The Lookout is complete and affords a wonderful view of the Valley and beside the Lodge. We will officially open it in September.

The Management plan will be longer than anticipated so will be placed in a yellow folder and available at each General Meeting for members to view.

I must urge you all to attend our next General Meeting 19th April... Yes – Easter Saturday! If you have friends staying bring them along. There will be hot Cross buns, provided by us! Slides of Chelsea 2013 and a few others of Gardens will be shown. There will also be an Explorers' Triumph (the bicentennial daisy) Photo competition and anecdotes regarding favourite flowers, the meaning of flowers, Flowers as symbols. Please bring your stories with you. We look forward to seeing you all there.

*Julia Hanley – President 2013-2014*

### **The Benefits of Walking (From the "Freemason" magazine)**

*Walking can add minutes to your life - this enables you at 85 years old to spend an additional 5 months in a nursing home at \$5,000 per month.*

*My grandfather started taking long walks when he was 60. Now he's 97 years old - and we have no idea where the heck he is.*

*I like long walks, especially when they are taken by people who annoy me.*

*I know I got a lot of exercise the last few years ... just getting over the hill.*

### *Garden Report – March 2014*

We have finished lining the drain to the Lily Pond near the Pryor Bridge, and have put 3 applications of sealant in and also installed a silt trap. We found the pond was concreted, and while it is hard to decide if the sealant has worked, because of recent rain, I am quietly confident that the pond is sealed to the top of the concrete but leaks above that.

Weather has not permitted us to finish poisoning the Himalayan Honeysuckle in the swamp area, but we will finish it when weather permits.

Only a small amount of Ivy remains in the conifer area, and honeysuckle has started to germinate. I will handle this as required. I have also sprayed any weed germination in the Glade area. The area closer to Hat Hill Road is now fairly good with very little weed germination. However, closer to the swamp there are still some problems – lots of Ivy and heaps of Privet germinating from seed from next door properties.

There is a variegated holly in the area between the In and Out roads that I had not previously seen berries on, but this year there have been heaps of berries which the girls removed.

I obtained a lovely Davidia in Victoria (no charge), but no Halesia is available even though Yamina Nursery still lists them. I have asked a local nursery at Mt Victoria to try to chase 2 down. I am propagating some cuttings of Desfontainia spinosa (Chilean Holly, with holly like leaves). There are a number of new Waratah cultivars available in different colours – white, pink, red, yellow and cream.

The lookout is now finished and a drain pipe put in to take water from the drain across the entrance. The azaleas that were taken out have been put in on either side of the entrance. I intend to use Banksias and some fishbone ferns to plant around the lookout. It has also been suggested that rhododendrons be planted in front of the lookout, with natives down both sides.

I believe we will have a good showing this spring, particularly in the valley area, but the display may not be as good at the top of the Gardens.

*Dick Harris – Garden Supervisor*

*The only reason I would take up walking is so that I could hear heavy breathing again.*

*If you are going to try cross-country skiing, start with a small country.*

### ***Olive Campbell OAM 1918-1994***

Mrs Olive Campbell played a major role in establishing the Rhododendron Gardens here in Blackheath. In 1969 she was a member of the BM Branch in NSW of the Australian Rhododendron Society. She was also a member of the Committee who inspected 7 sites in the Blue Mountains on 9<sup>th</sup> August, 1969 for the purpose of establishing a Rhododendron Garden.

On 16 August, Mrs Campbell and Mr M Finckh (who was also on the Committee inspecting the sites) visited Ald H Coates at Lithgow, on behalf of BM Branch of the Australian Rhododendron Society, to enquire about the possibilities of acquiring Crown Land as an area for a Rhododendron Garden. The Ridgewell Road area was the preferred site. Approval to establish a Rhododendron Garden on this site was given by the Lands Department subject to the Blue Mountains City Council being the Trustees on 17<sup>th</sup> October 1969.

The NSW Government Gazette 38 granted the site for the future Rhododendron Garden within the boundaries of Ridgewell Road, Bacchante Street, Cleopatra Street and Clarence Road.

Olive Campbell was amongst the members who met at the first organized meeting for the Garden on 30<sup>th</sup> May 1970. The Lands Department then showed its support for the Garden by informing the Committee on the 1<sup>st</sup> June 1970, by a letter to Ald A G Coates, that it would survey the area for fencing at no cost to the Society. Further support was received from the Blackheath Horticultural Society and the Blackheath Festival Committee which donated \$300 for fencing the area. Stage 1 of gaining a site for the dream of the original Committee was achieved. Now Stage 2 was to begin.

For the next few years Olive Campbell and fellow Committee members worked very hard at establishing the future Rhododendron Garden that we are enjoying today. It is due to their vision and dedication that we have inherited these beautiful gardens.

On 17<sup>th</sup> July 1970 a General Meeting, at which Olive Campbell was present, decided that the site be named:

**“The Australian Rhododendron Society,  
Blue Mountains Branch,  
Rhododendron Garden,  
Trial and Research Grounds.**

Briefly to be known as-  
**Blue Mountain Rhododendron Garden.”**

A survey of the area of the site was commenced by the Lands Department on 7<sup>th</sup> September, 1970.

Olive Campbell attended a meeting at the Blackheath Community Hall on 27<sup>th</sup> September, 1970 to discuss the future design of the Garden. Mr Odo Strewé was invited to speak with members about its landscape and design.

The first working bee for the Garden was held on 12<sup>th</sup> September 1970 and attended by Olive Campbell. Three more Working Bees were held in October, November and December 1970 which were all attended by Olive Campbell. She helped in clearing and preparing the grounds according to the plans and designs by Mr Odo Strewé. From then on she worked tirelessly in developing the Garden by clearing the grounds, burning off cleared branches etc., planting, watering, weeding, mowing and mulching around plants especially rhododendrons.

Once the Garden was set up, the time that Olive Campbell dedicated to it increased from 59 days during 1972 to over 130 days in 1973 and 1974. She often worked up to six hours per day and did not shy away from hard physical work as the tasks listed in the previous paragraph will testify. All through the years of 1970 to 1976 she was also the Secretary of the Rhododendron Garden. She continued her work as Secretary of the Garden until her death on 10<sup>th</sup> December, 1994.

There is no doubt that Mrs Olive Campbell played a very major and important role in the establishment of the Rhododendron Garden that we enjoy today. Not only was she physically involved through her work during the working bees but she was also heavily involved in its management through her role as its Secretary.

At a Rhododendron Garden's General Meeting on 15<sup>th</sup> November 2001, a decision was made to rename the Garden as the “Campbell Rhododendron Gardens Bacchante Street” in honour and appreciation for the dedication and hard work of Mrs Olive Campbell and her husband Mr Norman Campbell.

*Sources: Diary by Olive Campbell 1969 - 1974  
Minutes of General Meetings*

*Written by: Sonia Levitt*

## *Obituary for Helen Blaxland Lloyd (1922-2014)*

Helen's family came to live at Winstenstow, Woodford Street, Leura after World War 1 during which her father had been affected by "gas".

Helen was born on 7th January 1922 and went to school at Branxton on Railway Parade and later to SCEGGS Sydney. Branxton closed in 1943 but the main homestead still stands today.

During World War II Helen joined the AMWA and worked with the army as a gun predictor underground in Newcastle. After the war she worked as a receptionist in Macquarie Street and then moved to England for the next 6 years where she worked in hospitals and medical administration. When she returned to settle in Sydney she worked as a relief secretary for most of Macquarie Street's doctors, hence her great knowledge of the medical world. She joined the National Trust and until just recently would travel to Sydney monthly for meetings.

After her father died she moved to Leura and continued her involvement with the National Trust and other charities. She worked on the Gate at Everglades and was an active member of the Red Cross. She was renowned for her wonderful home made jams. She loved to read and emerged herself in the Royal family. She was known for her walks around Leura, knowing all the dogs by name. She had a love of animals, cats (Siamese), dogs and horses and enjoyed following the horse racing on Saturdays and watching the cricket test matches.

Helen played the roles of Aunt and Matriarch of the family. Christmas was a magical time at Helen's home. Her niece, Catriona (Treen) Skidmore remembers staying with her Aunt during her teenage years when her Mother was sick. She described her Aunt as regal and private but certainly had a "naughty" side and was not shy in saying what she thought. She described her Aunt as regal and private but certainly had a "naughty" side and was not shy in saying what she thought.

She enjoyed Bordeaux wine and would have probably said "What is all the fuss about?" if she could speak at her funeral.

We were privileged to have had Helen as a member of the Blue Mountains Rhododendron Society for a number of years. She served this organisation as President during the years of 2000, 2001 and 2002. She was President during a time when it was difficult to attract garden volunteers. She installed our first paid gardener. Helen oversaw the Gardens being renamed to honour Norm and Olive Campbell and their outstanding commitment to establish and develop the Gardens. The 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the first planting was celebrated and a major new attraction was developed with a stone wall and raised beds at the entrance to the John Pryor Bridge during her time as President. Helen worked hard for the Society and we are grateful to her for her commitment.

*(Information taken from the eulogy given by her sister and niece at her funeral 20/02/2014 by Beryl Black, an attendee at her funeral. Other notes added from Blue Mountains Rhododendron Society archives. Compiled by Julia Hanley*

## *Congratulations!*

Congratulations are due to three of our Society's members who have just received Seniors Week Recognition Awards for Volunteering from the Blue Mountains City Council.

They are **Jeannette Adrian, Libby Raines and Shirley Stimson.**

There were only 15 awards given in total.

## *Standing Down*

After a number of years of exemplary service, the Society's Secretary, **Alan Lush**, has advised that he wishes to stand down from the position as from the next Annual General Meeting. If any members are interested in becoming the Society's Secretary please contact Julia on 4787-5728.

*I have to walk early in the morning, before my brain figures out what I'm doing.*

*Every time I hear the dirty word 'exercise', I wash my mouth out with chocolate.*

## *February General Meeting*

The following is a brief summary of the last General Meeting, held at the Lodge on Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> February.

President **Julia Hanley** welcomed the 28 members to the day's meeting and also our guest speaker for the day, **Sue Perkins** of Quincey Cottage at Medlow Bath. 12 apologies were received and noted in the Attendance Book.

**Dick Harris**'s Garden Report suggested that the weather hasn't been kind to us, with the dry spell causing a large leaf drop from the eucalypts (more constant clearing of paths required) and aborting of some buds from late flowering rhododendrons. A lot of work has been done on eradicating weeds in the conifer garden – over 20 different weeds including Blackberry, Ivy, Broom, Honeysuckle and many more. The large heap of pine branches that has been in the conifer area for some time is too old to chip. We are therefore currently trying to organise to burn it. The Himalayan Honeysuckle in the swamp area has all been poisoned. The drain to the lily pond near the Pryor Bridge has now been fully lined, and the pond cleaned out.

Those present were given information on the Library, the checkout system for borrowing books, and details of some new acquisitions.

More advertisements for the Gardens are to appear in a number of local publications closer to this year's Open days.

General Business included the unanimous approval of **Pat Kenny** becoming a trustee of the Society, replacing Norm Campbell who passed away last July. It was also noted that **Helen Lloyd**, a past President of the Society, passed away the day before the meeting (see her Obituary on page 4). The Management Committee is discussing the ideas raised in the survey forms sent to all members, with the Society's Goals to be promulgated in a plan produced later this year.

Sue Perkins then spoke about the Garden Tour of England that she led last year and provided a powerpoint presentation with photos from many of the gardens they visited, plus a number of tourist photos of London.

Some of the gardens visited were RHS Wisley, Sissinghurst, Pashley Manor, Marle Place, Hever Castle, RHS Hyde Hall, Bath, Laycock, Malmesbury Abbey Gardens, Hidcote Manor and Shrewsbury. Unfortunately, no photos of the Chelsea Flower Show were included.

## *The Lookout*

Conceived after a suggestion by Monday Volunteer Gardener **Tracey Longdon**; nurtured by Committee member **Geoff Cannings** who had great patience dealing with all the red tape of Council; built to a high standard by **Frank Moon** who manufactured all the steel work himself. This "accessible to all" lookout will be a wonderful asset and allow all visitors to the Gardens to enjoy the spectacular views up and down the Valley and for the first time back towards the Lodge and the hill side to the west. We are grateful to you three for making a dream come true. I'd love members to see it at the next meeting in April.

See you there!

*Julia*

## *The Explorers' Triumph Daisy*

Are you growing one? Some of our members are enjoying growing them and tell me they have wonderful flowers. Please bring photos of your Daisies to the April meeting so we can have a competition to see which is "best". I'll show you some photos of the daisies being grown in the Gardens. They have big flowers which the bees and ants enjoy feeding from. Come and see these flowers which are on the path down from the toilets past the eastern side of the Lodge.

## *Little birds in the Gardens*

A family of **Fairy Wrens** noisily gather small insects from the window sills on the Eastern window in the kitchen and those along the verandah. They keep the Monday workers entertained with their antics.

The **Golden Whistler** sings beautifully in the Camellia Bush outside the Lodge "Old Kitchen". He and his mate add to the ambience of the Gardens with their songs.

**Management Committee 2013 – 2014**

***President***

Julia Hanley  
4787 5728

***Vice Presidents***

Judy Johnston 4787 7298  
Sonia Levitt 4787 5502

***Garden Supervisor***

Dick Harris

***Secretary***

Alan Lush  
4787 6983

***Treasurer***

Val Moorhead  
4787 8267

***Membership Secretary***

Marion Freidman  
4787 8416

***Committee Members*** Jeannette Adrian, Beryl Black, Geoff Cannings,  
David Cook, Joan Hailstone, Diane Twose

***Meeting Hostess*** Bette Brown

***Editor/Webmaster*** Alan Lush

***website*** – [www.rhodogarden.org.au](http://www.rhodogarden.org.au)

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

