

Blue Mountains Rhododendron Society of New South Wales Inc.

Inaugurated April 2nd 1969

November / December 2017 NEWSLETTER

Vol. 43 No. 6

PO Box 238, Blackheath 2785

Christmas Luncheon Saturday 9th December 2017 at The Lodge Time - 12.00 noon

Please bring a plate (e.g. salad, dessert etc) OR a \$15.00 donation. Drinks (Fruit punch, wine, tea or coffee will be provided.

Please RSVP by Wednesday December 6th (see below)

There will be no normal meeting following the luncheon, but a number of items will be brought to your attention beforehand - see following box.

December 'Meeting'

Alan Lush will bring you up to date on the major happenings of the last 3 months, while Val Moorhead and Deb Wells will give details of the final figures on the Open Days. The meeting will be kept very short, so as not to reduce the time spent socialising!

Raffle Results

The winners of the Open Days raffles drawn at The Lodge on Sunday 5th November by Judy Johnston:-

Hand Knitted Beanie, Scarf and gloves
Sharon, of Blackheath,
Ticket Yellow 1800

Hand Knitted Rug
Carole, of Blackheath,
Ticket Blue 2759

*(Beanie etc knitted and donated by Deb Wells
Rug donated by BM Historical Society)*

Goods For Sale

- TOTE BAG with Rhodo logo – a great gift for only \$12
- Rhodo TEA TOWELS – good quality and value at \$10
- 2018 CALENDARS, ever popular at \$8
- CARD selection. Our own printed cards, blank inside with envelope. Single \$2.50, pack of 5 cards \$10

SUPPORT YOUR SOCIETY

Phone Judy now, 4787 7298, or buy at the Lunch.

Lunch RSVP

If you are coming to the Christmas Lunch, please contact Julia by email (julia@hanley.ws) or SMS to say you will be attending and let her know what you will be bringing (food-wise – for catering purposes) or if you will be paying the \$15. If you can't contact her by these methods, ring her on 0438 336 635 to pass on your details.

From the President – Alan's Account

From the mixture of tiredness and relief on the faces of a number of members and other volunteers over the last week or so, it can be assumed that the Open Days have been another outstanding success. This year the Lodge was open for 37 days straight, with a few coaches coming in the week following the official closure for either pre-booked 'Aussie Teas' or a Gardens 'guide' (or both). Once again all visitors were met by smiling volunteers and made to feel most welcome, helping to enhance the Gardens' very enviable reputation as a great place to visit. Elsewhere in this newsletter is a selection of the many favourable comments made by our visitors.

Once again we reached out to the community before the Open Days and were rewarded again with great support from local, and not-so-local, organisations. Our thanks go particularly to Lim and Jennie of the Blackheath Patisserie, to Michael and his staff at the Blackheath Friendly Grocer, to Kerry and Dale of the New Ivanhoe Hotel, to the staffs of the Blackheath Commonwealth Bank and Katoomba Bendigo Bank, to Til and his staff at Weber's Nursery, and to the Blackheath Altitude Delicatessen. Jane Davies and the teachers at the Blackheath Public School deserve a special mention – their pupils all created paintings of rhododendron flowers, with the best entries, as judged by Lindena Robb, being made into posters advertising the Open Days and displayed all over the mountains. Jane was also kind enough to display an ad for the Gardens on the school's electronic notice board for 6 weeks, which brought quite a few visitors to the Gardens. Blackheath Rotary set up their 'bun wagon' in the Gardens on a sunny Saturday in October, dispensing sausages on rolls and good humour to the visitors, as a part of their fund-raising efforts to re-install the Rocket playground equipment in the Blackheath Memorial Park.

The volunteers who gave of their time in the kitchen, on merchandising and selling raffle tickets, on Meet and Greet, and those who were promoted to the very necessary job of keeping the new loos clean and tidy, came from such diverse groups as the Heathens Choir, Probus, the Horticultural Society and the Wentworth Falls Garden Club, plus, of course, from the Society's Monday Workers and other members, and friends of all the above. My

thanks go to all these volunteers for their outstanding efforts. My special thanks go to Deb, Julia, Val, Elaine and Eva for their roles as Kitchen Supervisors and keepers of the rosters; also to Judy Johnston for being the Merchandising guru, Jeannette Adrian for purchasing duties and her rubbish runs, Marion Friedman for her laundry duties, and to Alice and Geoff Reeves for their continuing gate-keeping activities.

A get-together for 35 of the volunteers was held in the Lodge at the end of the Open Days so people could just relax and enjoy each other's company.

An 'Open Days Wrap-up' session will be held on Monday 8th January 2018 to discuss the possible improvements that could be made to the running of next year's Open Days period. Any comments and/or suggestions would be gratefully received by the committee beforehand.

Please note our last meeting of the year will be our big Christmas party on Saturday 9th December – 12:00 noon for 12:30. All our members are invited, but we need to know if you will be coming, for catering purposes. Please contact Julia by email or SMS by Wednesday 6th to confirm your attendance. If you can't contact her this way, ring Julia on 0408 336 635 to pass on your details of your proposed contribution to a fun afternoon. The committee and I are all looking forward to seeing as many of you as possible on the 9th, and our best wishes go to you all for the coming festive season and new year.

Alan Lush – President 2017-18

SECRETARY WANTED!

There is still a vacancy on the Society's management committee – that of the position of Secretary of the Society. The longer this position remains unfilled, the more likely it will be that the Society will begin to have issues with the ACNC (the Australian Charities and Not-for-profit Commission). The Secretary is classed as one of the 'responsible persons' whose name needs to be advised to the ACNC, with administrative penalties possibly applying for the failure to notify them. If any member is willing to join the committee as our new Secretary, please contact Alan or Julia to find out more details.

Obituary

Vale – Joe Harris (25/09/1926-12/09/2017)

We were sorry to hear of the death on 12th September 2017 of Joe Harris, a member of the Society for many years. In the 1950s and 1960s Joe worked as a baker in Blackheath, and was also active in the RSL. Joe passed away at his home in Evans Lookout Road, a few days before his 91st birthday.

Garden Report – November 2017

Since our last committee meeting we have finished the rock edge between the toilets and the car park, and planting has finished except for some Azaleas on the western side and two natives that have died. Most of our work has been keeping everything tidy for the open period, watering when necessary. However we did have good rain in October.

Quite a few Acacia and Hakea were taken out in the area in front of the Lodge and to the west and north of the lookout. Most of them had borer in them and some were starting to die.

We have planted one Waratah, which I dug up to make way for the pipe from the new toilets to the sewerage pumps near the tool shed, and three weeping maples that were given to us have been planted beside the path to the Glade Walk and the Maple Walk.

Our work to fix the leak in the irrigation pipe line near the boundary fence on Bacchante Street has been successful and we don't have any leaks at the time of writing this report. I had turned off the water to the compound where we stored the plants for sale. We did have some Azaleas that were donated to us in there and yesterday I turned it on again as we have not had any rain in the last two days. These will be planted on Monday, weather permitting.

I must say that although this spring has been a long flowering season and is running late because we had only 1 mm of rain in September, and it will go on for a few weeks yet, hopefully we will get some more rain to keep it going. It does prove our fertilising and potash program has been successful.

I have potted up from 14 cm pots to 20 cm pots 36 Rhodos that didn't sell, some large Kalmias that were also left over last year and this year to bigger pots, and 140 tube Azaleas into 10 cm pots with more to go.

Dick Harris – Garden Supervisor

Other Activities

The new Loos – after the new loos were officially opened by Trish Doyle (our local State Member) on the 16th September (and unofficially used for the first time during that opening ceremony by a visitor to the Gardens) it took the Blue Mountains City Council a number of weeks to give us the official 'Certificate of Occupancy'. Luckily the certificate arrived before the Open Days started, as the old loos were not available for use. The old loos will have the fittings removed, with the building made vermin proof and turned into a work and storage area for the Monday workers.

Membership Report

Since the last newsletter, 11 new members have joined the Society, including a number who joined during the Open Days. And so we warmly welcome

Lorraine Cook (rejoined - welcome back), David Bill, Anne Jones, Eva Johnstone, Bill Johnstone, Carol Conway, Anne Peebles, Ian Peebles, Arisman Syafri, Pamela Nash and John Tweedie to the Society, and invite them to become involved in the activities that the Society has to offer.

The membership now stands at 148 members and 9 life members, with 32 members from last year not having renewed at the present time.

Bill Webster also reported that he received in the mail an envelope containing a membership renewal, with the \$1 postage paid for by 19 separate 5 cents stamps which covered most of the envelope. He is now wondering what happened to the 'missing' 5 cent stamp.

2017 Open Days -Visitors to the Gardens

During the Open Days, the Gardens once again played host to visitors from all over the world. While the majority of our visitors come from everywhere in the Blue Mountains and Sydney there were a good number from various towns and cities throughout Australia. In addition, the following countries were well represented:-

Alaska, Canada, Czech Republic, England, France, Germany, Holland, India, Mauritius, Nepal, New Zealand, Northern Ireland, Poland, Russia, South Korea, Sweden, Thailand, United States, and Wales.

On the Meet and Greet we heard a number of favourable comments from the overseas visitors, with a few of them saying they came over to Australia specifically to see our Gardens. Our advertising on numerous websites seems to be bearing fruit, although we were asked at times if we could advertise more overseas. A good few visitors compared us more than favourably with the Butchart Gardens in British Columbia, Canada, and with many English gardens, and at least on a par with some of the best of the New Zealand Rhododendron gardens (but how many of them are managed solely by volunteers?). So, stand up and take a well deserved bow, Society members and volunteers!

Publicity Report

September and October were very busy for us as we planned and prepared for the Open Days. We were thrilled that once again the students of Blackheath Public School painted many delightful paintings of rhododendron flowers. Their art works were displayed in shops, businesses and cultural centers from Mt Victoria to Glenbrook by Julia, Di Twose and myself. Di covered all the shops and businesses in Govett's Leap Road while I was away in August.

Julia managed to visit some of these businesses in between all of her other tasks. Many thanks to Julia and Di who covered other streets and roads until my return.

I met so many welcoming and friendly people when I went around delivering brochures about our Open Days. Not only were the Staff in the the Blue Mountains Neighbourhood Centres showing great interest in our Open Days but they were also amazed at the designs that many of the students composed in their paintings of the rhododendrons.

I found the same warmth and interest in the Rhododendron Gardens when I visited the Motels, guest houses, businesses and other places. I found that the best time to go to the tourist centres was in the early afternoon because by then all the cleaning and preparation in readiness for new guests had been done. The managers and staff were ready to consider all brochures shown to them. The brochures were readily accepted by all tourist sites.

Julia and I spent a couple of hours pinning up the student entries of rhododendron designs as their contributions towards our Open Days and the Rhododendron Festival in early November. These paintings were all displayed within the verandah area of the New Ivanhoe hotel. They made a lovely display.

The Conservation Hut in Wentworth Falls was very interested in our Open Days and accepted a large pile of brochures for visitors to take away for perusal.

The ATDW (Australian Tourism Data Warehouse) has been helpful to us in establishing ourselves in the media outlets. They are now a large operation and have invited us to join in on their platform. They have developed into a large promotional company to assist tourism businesses to develop products, workshops and online webcasts. As we are not a company but an organisation run by volunteers, we may still be able to get some assistance from them on ways of attracting visitors.

Springtime attracts thousands of visitors to many gardens. To find out where these gardens are, contact **Info@myopengarden.com.au**. Some gardens recommended are – Milthorpe Garden Ramble in Milthorpe; Chinoiserie in Mittagong, and Wildwood in Bilpin.

The Rhodosaurus story is becoming more established and should be fully developed for next year's Open Days. See the following item 'The Rhodosauruses of Blackheath' as well.

Sonia Levitt, Publicity Officer

THE RHODOSAURUSES OF BLACKHEATH

Many millions of years ago, dinosaurs roamed the continents of the Earth. Most of them were huge creatures.

A recent discovery has shown that a small number of dinosaurs still live in the upper Blue Mountains. These dinosaurs measure 2 to 54 metres long. They are not fierce creatures and they are not known to harm humans.

This group of dinosaurs love to live amongst trees and flowering shrubs, especially underneath rhododendrons where they can hide when they lie down for a sleep. Hence they are known as Rhodosauruses.

They are quiet creatures that make little grunting sounds, like pigs. They do not roar but may bellow when calling out to their young.

The male Rhodosaurus will carry sticks to the site where the female wants to lay her egg. The female will arrange these sticks into an oval shaped nest. She softens its base with a thick layer of dead leaves. Once an egg is laid in the nest, the female will cover it with some leaves before she lies in another part of the nest keeping an eye on the egg.

About two months later, the baby Rhodosaurus will hatch out of the egg. Mother Rhodosaurus will go out hunting for some small delicious leaves and flowers for her baby to eat. The mother Rhodosaurus will stay nearby watching that nothing harms her young one.

If you find a rhodosaurus nest with an egg in it you will be lucky but be careful that you do not make any loud noises because that frightens the baby rhodosaurus and it will cry for its mother who will come out of the bushes bellowing. But if you do not frighten the baby you should be safe. Currently two nests have been found in these Gardens.

When you come to visit the Campbell Rhododendron Gardens you may be lucky to see a nest with a white egg or a very young rhodosaurus lying in it. Good Luck!

Sonia Levitt, Publicity Officer

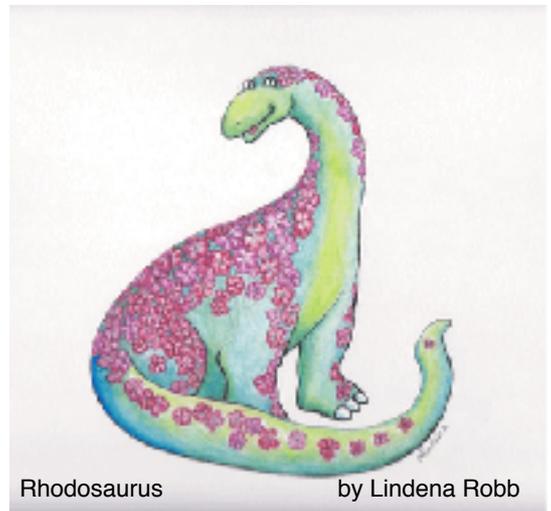
**2017 Open Days -
Some Visitors' Comments**

- “A credit to all the hard work”
- “The beauty here is like no other”
- “Wonderful volunteers”
- “Peaceful and beautiful”
- “Just the best”
- “Congratulations to all your amazing volunteers”
- “Gorgeous even in the rain”
- “The ladies made me feel very special on my birthday. Thank you!”
- “Mystical in the mist”
- “As beautiful as Emu Valley”
- “You care – thank you”
- “Absolutely amazing. A credit to all of the volunteers who continue in keeping such a beautiful place for all to enjoy!!!”
- “Beauty of God's creation. Magnificent testament to man's intervention”
- “Staff are very helpful”
- “Better than anything in Nepal' (from a Buddhist monk)

2017 Open Days - Some Statistics

During the Open Days, the following items were consumed:-

SCONES	1841 (plus a few damaged ones given to the volunteers)
JAM	67 kilos
CREAM	Unknown
TEAS	1065 (plus a few to keep the volunteers hydrated)
COFFEES	537 cups 386 mugs
HOT CHOCOLATES	174
SOFT DRINKS	52
JUICES	46
BANANA BREAD	105 slices
ORANGE CAKE	94 slices
CHOC CHIP COOKIES	153



Rhodosaurus by Lindena Robb

Current Investment Report

Following the setup of our North managed investment platform in late August 2016, the investment climate world-wide was beset by turbulence and uncertainty resulting from a number of geopolitical events, most particularly the campaign and eventual, unexpected outcome of the US Presidential election.

Combined with the setup costs for the platform this resulted in a reduction in our capital over the first few months. From March 2017, however, the markets stabilised and our capital increased.

The movements were generally in line with market movements.

Over the past 3 months, however, uncertainty has increased, particularly as a result of North Korea crises and the capital value of our investment has declined. Again this is very much in line with market movements generally.

Uncertainty continues in global markets with the North Korean matter unresolved and the attitudes of China and Russia uncertain. It is difficult and dangerous to make predictions with any confidence.

Following discussion with our investment advisor, John Richards, we still believe our portfolio is well balanced to limit capital losses during periods of decline and yet leave some prospect to benefit from improvements. Ups and downs can be expected to continue to happen over the near future. With more than 50 % of the portfolio in Australian and International bonds, fixed interest and cash, and the remainder in Australian and International share funds that are mostly inclined to be conservative, it is felt that the portfolio continues to reflect the investment objectives of the Society and change is not warranted at this stage.

Val Moorhead – Treasurer

A TASTE FOR AN OLD RECIPE

It's amazing what you come across when you begin ferreting around in the forgotten files. Last week, nestling happily in an envelope amongst a bunch of garden layout plans, I came across a small pocket-sized notebook entitled "Lodge Catering". It proved to be a very comprehensive day-by-day record of the purchasing of all manner of things to maintain the catering capability of the Lodge and its people more than thirty years ago.

This lovely little piece of our Society's history sets out in considerable detail just exactly what had been bought, how much was paid for each individual purchase, the nature of the goods and from where they had been obtained. Most of you know that I'm an historian at heart, and I was fascinated to see references to retailing organisations in both Katoomba and Leura in the 1980s, businesses such as Morris Brothers, Scoop and Jewells, each now merely a past memory.

It appears that the traditions of times past are being well and truly maintained today. Back then, what was conjured up in the Lodge kitchen on working Mondays, at General Meetings and on other special occasions had its own particular emphasis, but the overall pattern has persisted. Back in the 1980s the members of our Society appeared to have been more than just a trifle partial to a biscuit or two, and we bought them then by the boxful. Mostly they came from "Scoop" in Leura for this was obviously the Aldi equivalent of the period and our purchaser back then clearly had a good eye for a bargain. At that time a large box of assorted biscuits would set the buyer back the terrifying sum of \$27.77 and a loaf of bread lightened the pocket by a further \$1.15. Apple drinks were procured from Morris Bros., also by the box, and Jewells was the favoured supplier for tea and coffee. Each of these stores is now a bygone memory.

This beautifully and carefully ledgered little 1980s record book is now rather "old hat" in our modern era of digital accounting and bookkeeping. Nevertheless, it sits in our archives as a reminder of the efforts of our predecessors to maintain accuracy and honesty in accounting for the day-to-day transactions of the BMRS.

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Wayne H - BMRS Archives

Some projects are already being discussed as probably being required to be completed before the next Open Days. Could members please advise the committee if they would like other items to be discussed.

- Check stoppers on all parking bays (height, etc. and space from front of bay)
- Disabled stopper move back by 0.75 to 1 metre
- Pamphlets to Hydro Majestic next year????
- Next year someone co-ordinating the sale of the calendars if we have them!!!!!! Better publicity with posters and ensuring good supply of brochures in local outlets etc.
- New names for tracks OK on yellow brochure map? Names to be engraved (plus more plant names and other Gardens names)
- Better street directional signage required? RMS? Or Council?
- Better fence from roadway to replace rope "barrier" to stop short cut across gardens to loos.
- Rhodos around flag pole to be trimmed
- New parking spots lane markings
- Diagram at Lookout to show features in area you can see.
- Counter in Info kiosk to be varnished.
- Speed restriction sign at road entrance, plus direction arrows on roadways.

Lali Gurans – Rhododendron From Nepal

The beauty of the flowering rhododendrons draws thousands of trekkers to Nepal every year. The name rhododendron is derived from the Greek words rhodos (meaning rose) and dendron (meaning tree).

There are over 1000 natural species of rhododendron including many bushy species and a number of trees that grow to heights of up to 30 meters. The highest species diversity is found in the Himalayas. Of the over 30 species of rhododendron in Nepal the most renowned is Rhododendron arboreum known as Gurans in Nepali. Starting at elevations of around 1400m the flowers are a vibrant red. However as altitude increases the colour begins shifting to pink, gradually becoming pure white at elevations of 3600m. For Nepalis the most beloved of the tree rhododendrons is the Lali Gurans, meaning Red Rhododendron in Nepali, and is the national flower of Nepal.

Lali Gurans reach a height of up to 15 meters, the tallest in Nepal, and they also have the largest trunk, the biggest flowers and the earliest and longest span of blooming. Every flower has its own time to flourish but only some flowers bloom every time. Lali Gurans also has its own time to flourish. Its blossoming heralds the advent of spring, usually in March or April. During these months, it decorates the forest with its natural beauty.

When it flourishes, no one can resist looking at the combination of red flowers against the green forest. When the red colour of this flower mixes with the greenery of forest, the whole forest looks like a decorated bride.

Lali Gurans finds a place in the Nepali food menu. Villagers can directly eat the flower petals or add salt and chillies to eat with rice and curry dishes. A very sweet drink is also made from the flowers which are also a source of honey. However the honey produced from some species is highly toxic. Essential oils from some species are used in perfumes and incense. The flower is often seen as an offering in hill temples.

Some More Statistics

As noticed by many of the visitors to the tea-rooms in the Lodge during the Open Days, the tables were always immaculately decked out with clean table cloths and small vases of flowers. Our thanks go to Marion Friedman who washed and ironed a total of 99 table cloths (as well as 132 tea towels) over the period, and to the volunteers who kept the vases looking beautiful and refreshed the 'Flower Wall' every day.

Alliance Meeting 15.11.2017 Feedback

Next meeting 7.2.2018

- 1) First Topic was the permanent Chairperson. Tony Jacques (RSL Sec.) took the Chair. Chris Arnold has been doing a great job since the Alliance's inception, I think. He no longer holds an executive office with BANC and so felt he should step down. Those Reps at the meeting felt he should stay on, at least temporarily, as he has been a great Chairperson and maybe having an impartial person is a good thing. To be discussed further at the early meetings of 2018. Chris resumed the Chair.
- 2) The Draft Plan proposals for Blackheath Pool complex. Closure of "D" shaped pool. Closure of toddler pool. Both to be filled in and a sprinkler system to be installed for young children to play in / with. 25 metre pool to be heated and season extended by a month each end. We're told repair of "D" Pool will be \$1,000,000 (BMCC prices) Katoomba outdoor pool to be closed.
- 3) We need to look at Draft "Open Space & Recreation Strategic Plan" "Have Your Say" website BMCC
- 4) BMCC have given until 6th December for people to comment. (85 pages).
- 5) **The recent rate increase was to improve / maintain infrastructure..... in the Mountains.** Instead we are losing amenities.

e.g when play equipment fails it is to be removed and replaced with sandstone blocks for children to use for "imaginative" play!!!

Part of the argument for maintaining the pools is the current State Govt and even Federal push to have people learn to swim. Note the rising number of reported children drowning. Most of the discussion was about asking for an extension of time and extra information. Saying we can't support or make comment as we do not have enough info to make informed decisions.

Actions: 1) Simon Hare from Friends of Blackheath Pool will make a submission to BMCC re pool concerns. To liaise with other pool groups, Katoomba, Lawson.

2) Jo Ridley to write up discussion and Michael Paag will write a letter to BMCC to ask for an extension of time ? To Easter 2018?? Jo to liaise with other neighbourhood Centres.

3) Michael to speak to local Councillors and to liaise with other groups further down the Mountains also State and Fed Govt.

4) Each group represented to send a submission to BMCC through "Have Your Say" website re an extension of time to comment on the Open Space and Recreational Strategic Plan.

Some of the general feedback from groups:

Mt Vic: Great Train weekend reinstated to last weekend in May 2018.

BAG (Michael Paag): *Heavy Vehicle Register is helping to keep defective trucks off the road.

*A Rail Freight Alliance has been formed with Victoria and country NSW Councils working together to increase rail freight.

* RMS is still working on saving the tree at the railway crossing.

written by Julia

* *****



MERRY CHRISTMAS EVERYONE,

WE LOOK FORWARD TO SEEING YOU IN 2018!

Management Committee 2017 – 2018

President

Alan Lush
4787 6983

Vice President

Deb Wells
4787 6724

Garden Supervisor

Dick Harris

Secretary

TBA

Treasurer

Val Moorhead
4787 8267

Membership Secretary

Bill Webster
4787 6082

Committee Members Geoff Cannings, David Cook, Julia Hanley, Mary Lawley, Sonia Levitt, Diane Twose, Brough Warren

Meeting Hostess TBA

Editor Alan Lush

website – www.rhodogarden.org.au

Webmaster Marius Coomans/Alan Lush



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