

Blue Mountains Rhododendron Society

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NEWSLETTER

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PO Box 238 Blackheath 2785

GENERAL MEETING **Saturday 21st April 2018** **at The Lodge** **2.00pm start**

Afternoon tea will be served after the meeting. Please bring a plate with food to share. We welcome all members, especially those who have recently joined us, and visitors.

GUEST SPEAKER: Dick Harris

Our very own Garden Supervisor and specialist Rhododendron Grower. Dick will speak about Rhododendrons in a workshop style presentation.

Dick is a horticulturalist and owned the Mt Boyce Nursery for many years. He bred and grew many varieties of plants many imported from overseas but he has an abiding love of Rhododendrons. He was the major supplier of cold climate plants to wholesale and retail outlets throughout NSW.

From the President – Alan's Account

Welcome to all our members!

Once again March has given us some much needed rain – but whether it was brought about by the 'official' change date to Autumn of the 1st, or the date of the equinox on the 21st / 22nd, or even the proposed finishing of daylight saving on the 1st April, I will leave the reasoning to the many weather theorists among you. At least there again should be a very good flowering season in October because of the rain coming to the Gardens at the right time.

Activities in the Gardens have continued at a steady pace, with no major infrastructure projects on the horizon. We are hoping, however, that we may be eligible for another BMCC Community Grant this year. Discussions are taking place about improving visitor access on the Griffiths Walk from the front entrance to the Gardens down past the Gazebo, with, hopefully, better access around the Gazebo into the Central garden from that path, with the grant money to help with the construction. To improve visitor safety on the road into the Gardens we have purchased a new 'Shared Zone / 10km Speed Limit' road sign, which will be placed inside the entry gate and be easily visible to all vehicles.

Further information on the gift to the Society of many azaleas as tube stock – the street stall held in February was quite a success, not only for the funds generated for the Gardens but for the number of locals who bought plants to help in the 'colouring of the Upper Mountains'. In addition, many plants have been donated to some of the local schools and garden clubs, with the Blackheath Horticultural Society also being given many plants for potting on, to be sold at their annual Flower Show next September.



Once again the Society hosted the latest meeting of the Blue Mountains Zone of the Garden Clubs of Australia, held in the Lodge in early March. Over 20 people from garden clubs from the lower mountains to Lithgow and Oberon were present, with the consensus being that the Lodge was a very pleasant place for a meeting. Note – it is also a great time for networking, finding out what else is happening at other clubs, and giving others the opportunity to see what we are doing as well.

For all who are interested in the activities of some ancients in the Gardens (no – that does not mean any 2-legged ones), it appears that the Rhodosaurus likes the ambience of the area and has settled on the island in the lake, ready to be oohed and aahed over during the next Open Days.

Finally, a reminder to everyone to bring a pad and pen to the meeting on the 21st April, to take copious notes during what will be a very informative talk and workshop by Dick on growing Rhododendrons. See you all there.

Alan Lush – President 2017-18

Garden Report March 2018

I have started building the stone wall in the valley but still have quite a lot to do.

We have started to dig a trench in proteaceae garden in order to lay some irrigation pipe and will continue this in the next 2 Mondays. A few more azaleas have been planted in the Peter Valder area and we have watered all of these. However recent good rain has helped greatly.

Still no 2nd hatching of lace bug and we are starting to get some good flower bud setting. We have done some mowing and whipper snipping and of course a lot more doddering. General tidying up of paths, roads and parking area has had to be done because we have had a lot of gum leaf fall.

We will have to have a look at why the water from the drain is not exiting the lily pond from the silt trap. A lot of reeds have been taken out of the lake.

I will have to get some pipe and fittings for Protea area and also to get some proteas when I go to Sydney. I will also look at Rhodos in bud and hold at my place if I get any. Some of the Rhodos I potted up have buds but some really small ones haven't grown big enough to sell.

Dick Harris, Garden Supervisor

PROJECT REPORT April 2018

Mower. Delwyn has finally finished the repair on the spare ride on mower and now just has to install the new battery before we can bring it back to the gardens.

Chain Saw. This chainsaw proved impossible to start a while ago. Bill put in a new spark plug and it started alright on the day but next time it was required, it would not start at all and so I have taken it to Delwyn for a tune up.

Rhodosaurus. The girls did a fantastic job painting the Rhodosaurus cut-out and it has now been installed on the island in the lake. It should be a good point of interest for our visitors, especially the children.

Hand Rail. The hand rail along the Griffiths path has been started and should be completed next week.

BMCC Grant. It is time again to apply for one of the Community Grants that are offered by the Council each year. We would like the grant to cover the cost of the above hand rail and the construction of a proper track from the Griffiths path, past the gazebo into the central picnic area.

Signs at Entrance. The signs at the entrance to the Gardens are looking tired and are starting to deteriorate. We are looking into the best option to replace these at the best cost. We have received a quote from the Council and will also approach The Mens Shed for their ideas. The Committee feels it best to redo the signs in cream and green colours in keeping with other signs we have around the garden.

Geoff Cannings Project Manager

ANOTHER SNIPPET FROM THE VAULT

A few Mondays ago, when I was in the Lodge ferreting around in the Vault, I began sorting out some of the very many photographs we have in our archives. Some of these go back to the earliest days of our Society and the very beginning of the Gardens. They each have a tale to tell, not only about the subjects they portray, but also about the people who appear and re-appear within them. One image in particular took my fancy and gave me cause for quiet reflection about the ways in which things have changed in the last thirty or forty years.



Nowadays, our volunteer workers come in from the heat of a summer Monday or the cold of a winter one, to the Lodge for morning tea or lunch. A fairly decent array of comestibles always attends such an occasion. Readily available is a sustaining beverage or two, all of this made possible by the gadgetry of the modern era. We now have a spanking new fridge, a coffee machine, a wonderful robot dish-washing thingy, all of which lightens the load of the erstwhile volunteer, and gladdens the hearts of all in consequence.

Compare if you will the facilities available to our pioneer garden builders, as depicted by the image above. Their morning tea facilities, compared with those in our contemporary Rhodo Lodge were nothing if not Spartan, but entirely functional nonetheless. They required a good deal of attendance and no small effort, but they were an effective "on the ground" solution to a perennial requirement. Throughout the history of our Gardens, the need for a cuppa has never abated. What has changed is the way we go about getting it, and in the new millennium we give thanks for the Lodge Kitchen, for the electricity that fires up the electric urn with not a single log to be chopped, and for that most convenient innovation - microwave technology. At least we have our archives to act as a chastening reminder of "the good old days".

Wayne Hanley Archivist



The Committee has been gathering ideas to help engage children in the Campbell Rhododendron Gardens



To this end we asked Lindena Robb, a local artist, to help us with an image of a RHODOSAURUS that we could then convert into objects or use in our promotions.

Geoff Cannings has fashioned this shape from corrugated iron

and some of us have painted it and erected it on the island in the lake. It is over 2 metres tall! The shrubs & reeds will grow over it to help disguise it a little. We have positioned the Rhodosaurus carefully so that photographers can still take advantage of the beautiful reflections. We have taken advantage of the lake water level being low to manoeuvre this large art piece out to the island. We have had a number of comments. Most positive, some negative! We already have two Rhodosaurus nests in the Gardens, complete with eggs, & we encourage children to find them.



During the Lodge Open Days we had line drawings of various Rhododendron flowers and crayons for children to colour in. Parents commented on how helpful this activity was in occupying their children while they enjoyed an Aussie Tea! We also had a handout with a list of objects to find while in the Gardens. This was given to children at Meet and Greet. Not sure we had much feedback about this activity.

If anyone has other ideas please tell a committee member.

There is a reason for our "madness" !! We feel if we can engage children they will remember the Gardens as they grow up..... and of course with children come adults.

We are trying to attract new members and more Monday Workers.

To this end we ask all existing members to speak to their friends to see whether they are interested in supporting the Society and so the Gardens.

We are linking with the Festival Committee to support their Rhododendron Festival activities. We have some flyers which show the activities Garden volunteers may carry out and on the reverse side the benefits of belonging to the Society. These are given out at the Blackheath Welcome Table and will be promoted during Blackheath Day celebrations and the Rhodo Festival weekend.

Two of us are speaking to an Upper Mountains Garden Club & a local Probus Club to try and engender more interest in our Society and the precious Gardens we maintain.

Clearing of Reeds from the lake surface.

The much loved reflections on the surface of our Lake were being lost because the reeds around the Island in the Lake were growing rapidly outwards and disrupting the water surface. While the lake water level was low Geoff and Julia removed many of the reeds. We should now have a chance to control them, in future years, from a boat. Once in the water and pulling out the reeds we discovered their tenacious rhizomes which, if left growing, may well have disturbed the water proof lining Dick had placed in the lake some years ago. We removed several ute loads of reeds and floated them in rafts to the waters edge where "the two Peters" loaded them onto the ute. Heavy work, and the reed cutters were very thankful for the help. Thanks also to George Gerontakis who lent us his fishing waders to ward off snakes. He later donated a pair for future use.



Quick catch up!

1) We have been offered Early Bird prices to attend the BMACHO History Conference. The following message is from Jan Koperberg. I would like to let your members know about the Blue Mountains History Conference that will be held at the Mount Victoria Manor on Saturday 12 May 2018. The theme this conference is "Heritage Landscapes". I will give a link to our programme and to our registration form. To receive the Early Bird discount register by mid April and put Campbell Rhododendron Gardens on your registration.

Programme: http://www.bluemountainsheritage.com.au/imagesDB/wysiwyg/Form2Programme2018reduced_1.pdf
Registration form: http://www.bluemountainsheritage.com.au/imagesDB/wysiwyg/Form1Invitation2018_1.pdf

2) UK student filming in the Gardens in April / May. She has a project to film various birds in eucalypts. This will be a good promotion for the Gardens.

3) We are organising another **Pre Laura Garden Festival Garden tour**. 4 gardens which we visit as a small group and can talk to the owners etc. Has been lovely in past years. **Date Tuesday 25th September, cost \$30.00.** Please let Alan know if you are interested.

Management Committee 2017 – 2018

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If you have any articles or news for the Newsletter, please send to Julia email julia@hanley.ws. Thank you



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