

Blue Mountains Rhododendron Society of New South Wales Inc.

Inaugurated 2nd April 1969

CELEBRATING 50 YEARS

May/June 2019

NEWSLETTER

Vol. 45 No. 3

PO Box 238 Blackheath 2785

GENERAL MEETING Saturday 15th June 2019 at The Lodge, 2:00pm start

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

What's coming up:

SPEAKER for June meeting is **Mary Moody**.

Mary Moody trained as a journalist and has specialised in the field of Gardening. She spent ten years as a presenter on Gardening Australia.

She spent much time living in France and has written or edited over 40 books on subjects as diverse as living in France, cooking, gardening topics, and gardening for children.

Mary has lived in Leura / Yetholm / Blackheath and has developed large, sustainable gardens in all three places. She enjoys gardening with her grand children, handing on her extensive skills.

Her passions are family, food, gardening and travel. She leads tours in France and the Himalayas.

Mary will compare her time as a journalist with the profession now & let us peek behind the scenes when filming for TV.

Speaker for AGM in August is Peter Meadows who will speak to us about his adventures as a pest exterminator especially after Cyclone Tracey in Darwin.

What's been going on within the Society and the Rhododendron Gardens.

I write this piece as Editor due to both Alan and Deb taking a break for awhile. We wish them speedy recoveries and look forward to welcoming them back to helping us on The Management Committee as soon as possible.

We had a very successful Bee Mania Seminar in April. participants are eagerly awaiting the arrival of native bees in the Bee Hotels they assembled on the day. We met all our goals of raising our profile to a wider audience, (people came from Bathurst and Penrith) to attract new members, (2) to encourage more volunteers especially men, and to be cost neutral (we almost made this!!)

On the following Saturday we had a lively gathering to toast the 50th birthday of the Blue Mountains Rhododendron Society of NSW Inc. A cake was cut & shared, glasses of champagne were filled and toasts



were made. Ivan Menzies was inducted onto the Life Membership Board... He has been involved with the Society for almost all its 50 years of existence and is still a Trustee. David Cook's Pictorial History book was launched. It is already proving very popular. A great gift and only \$10.00!!

Trish Doyle sent us a letter of "Congratulations and Best Wishes to BMRS on celebrating its milestone of reaching it's 50th year of service to the community cultivating rhododendrons and other exotics in the Blue Mountains, and to those appreciating their beauty. This is a truly inspiring achievement". Alan sent her a thank you letter.

The prose history is taking longer to write as Wayne and I are finding many "holes" in our archives. **If anyone has any paperwork / records etc that pertain to the**

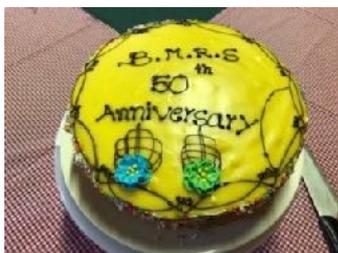


Gardens please may we have them as soon as possible. We really want to have this project completed. At present it looks as though it may be launched for the Gardens 50th birthday celebration next year!

As you will see from the Garden and Project report much time has been spent on solving the problem of the water supply into the Lake. This is becoming an urgent issue as spring will be here before we know it.

I hope to see you at the June meeting. Mary will give a highly entertaining talk.

Good wishes to you all from Julia



Garden Report: May 2019 There is not a lot to report Garden wise and most of what has been done or needs to be done will be in the project report. The plastic bottles have been prepared for watering the new plantings and some have been put in. We have lost a few plants up in the Protea area and the two waterers have told me they think it is too wet up there from recent rain.

I have taken some dead wood out of Banksias on the zigzag path that posed a danger as they had been pruned some years ago with dead branches sticking out onto the path. The Bob Baker walk has had some work done clearing up the edges so people walk more easily and trip hazards are reduced.

I have continued with weed spraying in various areas & lots of Dodder has been removed from Azaleas beside the zigzag track and Rhodos along the Centenary Walk. The latter had to be pruned heavily to remove the Dodder. It has also been removed from Maples along the Maple Walk and Volunteers Way.

I think we should make an effort before we get too close to our Lodge Open Days to put out as many native plant labels as possible particularly in the areas most frequented by our visitors.

Hopefully, under Geoff's supervision, we will see more water flowing into the Lake. Then we can spread more sealant to make sure all leaks are sealed.

I also want to plant a weeping Cherry tree in front of the tree stump near the Lookout and will start preparing for this shortly.

We have, of course, kept the paths etc around the Lodge, in & out drive, parking areas etc as tidy as possible.

There is quite a good flower bud set again and we can look forward to a great spring.

Dick Harris Garden Supervisor.

Project Report: May 2019

Water Course.

I met with our friendly Engineer, Mark and the Council Waterways person, Geoff Smith on 7th May and looked at the water course from Wentworth St. to the silt trap.

Geoff's view was that we use coir logs and "bidim" matting (a geo textile) where necessary to contain the stream, and plant blechnum ferns along the banks. (Council would supply the logs, matting, ferns and stakes.)

The holes and the narrow sections with steep sides would need to be filled in, the banks widened and any steep sections sloped back. Geoff will recommend a back hoe operator who does a lot of work for Council and is good and quick at this type of work. This would be at our expense but take only a day and cost around \$500.

This was considered to be a more attractive solution than rock lining as the evenly-dished channel would soon be concealed by the ferns which would colonise into the coir logs and consolidate the banks.

Council would also install a sandstone "box" to trap any rubble and rubbish in the run off from Wentworth St. This to be cleaned out by us when necessary. Geoff said that Council would handle the application for permission from Crown Lands.

Geoff said he would like Trish Kidd (Council – Natural Areas Mgt.) and Shane Grundy (Consultant – Creek Line Restoration & Storm Water) to give their approval as well, and would arrange this, hopefully before the end of the month.

As well as the materials, Council would provide a training in their installation for our volunteers.

It was mentioned that Sydney Water and Bendigo Bank both provide small grants for community projects.

Silt Trap Lining.

Mark said our preparation for the liner was good as long as the inlet from the channel was higher than the overflow on the down stream side. This has been done using a line level and so the site is ready for installation of the liner next Monday.

Geoff Cannings



Proposed new website:

Why we need a new website: our current website is 10 years old, has been adapted several times, has more than a 100 pages, most of which Google can't readily locate.
The modern world: There have been huge advances in the technology. People all over the world use smart phones and tablets to access the internet these days, below is a photo of slum children using a smart phone.



I know some of our members do not use smart technology but the world is changing and BMRS needs to remain visible to our world wide rhododendron enthusiasts.

What we have done: We have completed a great deal of research about Website Programmers. Yes, we have to pay more than we do now but as you know, "you get what you pay for!" The cost is comparable to other services we may buy e.g plumbers & electricians. We are confident that we can obtain an ideal website which will be well supported.

Outcome: this is an exciting, new opportunity to share our unique gardens with an even wider and hopefully younger audience.

written by Julia

Membership report: Time for membership renewal!

Please renew your membership by the end of June either by cash / cheque or preferably by direct deposit into Bank Account details as follows.

Account name: BM Rhodo Soc

BSB: 062-507

Account no: 10012075

Please make sure you note your name & subs in the description area. People who have joined since April do not need to renew as they gain a couple of extra months membership!!

BMRS would like to welcome two new members, Sandra Davidson & Christine Wheeler. We hope you enjoy your association with The Rhododendron Society.

Current members 189.

Life members: 11

Marketing Report:

Blackheath Day information table. Many thanks to Di Twose, Val Moorhead and Veronica Dallas for being available to answer questions about the Society and The Gardens. It was a freezing cold day, lots of people attended but there were no enquires! The entertainment made it well worth sitting at the table for several hours.

Vale: Dr W P (Bill) Nelson

Dr Bill Nelson became involved in the Society after moving to Wentworth Falls from Sydney in the early 1990s. He had retired from his medical practice as an occupational physician. Bill was very much the gentleman, of mild manner and a delightful conversationalist. Sally, his wife, was also a delight and she had a very wide knowledge of plants, gardening, species etc., especially of cold climate plants. It is to be regretted that the Gardens did not use the Nelsons' combined knowledge and skills to the full extent.

He stepped in to the Presidential role of the Blue Mountains Rhododendron Society with no other experience on the Management Committee. He held this position for three years from 1997 to 1999 and was a Vice President in 2001. He was a new driving force at the Society's helm which it badly required as it had become set in its ways. The Management Committee members were ageing and found it difficult to take on new ideas to refresh the path ahead for the Gardens. There were very few able-bodied Voluntary Workers and the financial resources were very low.

Bill wanted the Society to join the Australian Rhododendron Society and be associated with other similar gardens. However, this was not to be, both because of the lack of funds for membership of the larger group and also Committee reluctance to be involved with any outside body.

In 2015 he moved from Wentworth Falls to Morven Gardens Baptist Care centre in Leura from where he enjoyed occasional visits to the Campbell Rhododendron Gardens. Bill died on 23rd of March 2019. Vale Bill, thanks for leading the Blue Mountains Rhododendron Society towards a brighter future.

written by editor

approved by Bill's daughter

EVERYTHING OLD IS NEW AGAIN

From time to time, if you are walking in the valley of the Rhododendron Gardens, down below the Lodge, you may chance upon Dick Harris, our Gardens Supervisor, pacing up and down, furrowed of brow, muttering under his breath and staring forlornly at what used to be the lake. The cause of his angst is the water in our lake or, more particularly, the lack of it. A year or so ago the lake was full, almost to its brim, a resplendent sight reflecting the glorious spring colouring of the surrounding landscape which it so ably mirrored. The lake was once a joy to behold and a prominent attraction for visitors and especially for photographers.

Today the lake falls far short of its once splendid appearance. Thanks to the prolonged drought and long, hot seasons with consistently high evaporation rates, the lake is now little more than a largish mud puddle. The problem has been amplified by other geo-technical forces. The water source which fed the lake in the past, doing what water does best (going to the sea and carrying bits of the landscape with it as it goes), has modified

its path of travel and has found another alternative route. Now, at any time other than peak flow in heavy rain, it manages to follow another subterranean course, for the most part by-passing the lake altogether. Quite apart from pacing and muttering, our Supervisor has devoted a good deal of mental and physical effort in recent years to carrying out repairs to leaks in the lake structure, but this more recent passage of events has left him sorely tried indeed. Every avenue is being explored in the search for an answer. Consultation with specialist engineers is now under way and we are all confident of a satisfactory outcome in due course. In the meantime, allow me to give Dick some reassurance that his dilemma is by no means a new one. While trolling an old newspaper recently (as one does) I discovered a humorous editorial column which provided the description of a matter which was bewildering the good burghers of Blackheath no less than a century ago. A Katoomba weekly newspaper, "The Mountaineer" wrote on Friday April 26, 1895 about a considerable effort which had been made by some of the notable townspeople of Blackheath in digging a large circular excavation in what is today the 'Gardens' area opposite the railway station and the place in which our Community Hall now stands. It was their intention to fill this depression with water and thus form what was described as a 'lagoon'. It was to include a section of land in its centre which would do duty as an island in this new man-made contrivance. Applauding the initiative, the newspaper column noted that following heavy rain the excavation duly filled with water and the public hopes for the affair were accordingly exultant, but when the rain stopped the 'lagoon' quickly dried out. Even though a small stream was diverted into the depression in the hope of a permanent supply, hopes faded and the whole concern remained largely arid.

Take heart from this report Dick, for even though your dilemma closely approximates that faced by our city fathers in 1895, at least your problem has not become the subject of jocular public discourse as we found it to be all those years ago, well not yet at any rate! Rather than complaining about the problem, Blackheathens took to their printed media with relish, resorted to humour to enliven the burden facing their town, and it is a delight to relate here verbatim the commentary that transpired, so let us go back to 1895

"This unfortunate state of affairs has given rise to several difficult problems : as for instance 'can an excavation without any water in it be called a lagoon?'. 'Can a portion of the ground in the centre of such excavation be called an island under similar conditions?' etc. The other day we had a villainous conundrum propounded to us upon this topic. It ran as follows: 'Why is the Blackheath lagoon like an illogical argument?' After several unsuccessful attempts at a solution we gave it up, when we were told that the correct answer was 'Because it won't hold water.' Probably this was the reason why we were unable to find the solution. This species of conundrum may be soluble only in water. Be this as it

may, we sincerely trust that means may soon be discovered of making this excavation watertight; as undoubtedly the lagoon was a bright idea, and should success be achieved it will lend a particular charm to the reserve in which it is situated".

Our own 'lagoon' is still 'missing in action' and until Dick and his team are able to orchestrate the resurrection of our lake should we perhaps also be asking ourselves the same old questions. Can we truly call our lake a 'lake' and can we truthfully continue to refer to the island as 'an island'? These questions, just as they were 124 years ago, appear again as issues at the vanguard of civic debate and we feel sure that our erstwhile management committee will not rest until, once again, the supervisory brow becomes unfurrowed. Till then Dick, maintain the battle confident of a successful outcome given the knowledge that "everything old is new again".

Wayne Hanley BMRS Archives



Members news:

CONGRATULATIONS

Emily Darley on reaching 100 years of age in May. Emily is a long time member and lives in Morven Gardens in Leura. We hope you had a great celebration with family & friends and wish you well for the years ahead.

Pam Smith, another long time member of our Society, is now well on the path to recovery after a recent fall requiring hip surgery. Now in her 90th year, Pam retains her interest in the Rhodo Society's activities as well as her other great interest, The Australian Red Cross.

In the nineties Pam held the position of Secretary and then Treasurer, continuing on The Management Committee for many years afterwards. We'll look forward to seeing her back at our meetings in the near future. Good Luck Pam!

contributed by Judy Johnston

Another in our History Series:

Olive Campbell:

Secretary for 25 years and a dynamic force within the Society.

Born in Marrickville, May 1918 & moved to the Blue Mountains with her family in 1931. She married Norm in 1944. Lived in Blackheath, died December 1994. They were not blessed with children but “adopted” others who affectionately refer to her as Aunty Ol.



The BMRS is indebted to both her and Norm for their dedication to the Society, its development and management of the Rhododendron Gardens at Blackheath.

The following are quotes from various items written about Olive & Norm.

“By the time The Blue Mountains Rhododendron Society was formed, Olive's knowledge and experience made her the obvious choice for Secretary. This position she held until her death, a remarkable feat, but her work went far beyond Secretarial duties. Together with Norman, Olive planned all the development of the gardens. She had tremendous energy, a cheery, charming manner and a great enthusiasm of purpose. All this ensured she achieved her aims and saw the “Bacchante Gardens” grow in a short space of time to the world renowned beauty of today. For both Olive and Norman this has meant a singular devotion and long hours of untiring work.”

Olive was meticulous in her secretarial duties and other clerical matters. The bi-monthly newsletter was again a combined effort with Norman. They were reporters, editors and printers. The same may be said of the History Booklet, the brochures etc and during their time they kept a register of all the plants, the locations and the names of their donors which has been continued to this day.

I have heard that at meetings she would greet each member and participant warmly and make all feel very comfortable and included.

On reading the newsletters this same generosity of spirit continues to be evident. She mentions various members and is concerned for their welfare. It seems that the newsletters are not just about the gardens, plants, plans, finances, speakers, events etc but also a way of keeping a check on the welfare of the various members. An example from the February 1987 newsletter, “Our Monday work-days are very happy days and to those members who assist we owe a great deal of gratitude for their valued work, for without these sincere people there just would not be a garden.”

In the October 1978 newsletter Olive writes “ Before concluding I must say thanks to everyone for the lovely words of encouragement and kindness you have given and, believe me, it all helps us to strive for greater achievements all the time. However, I could not cope without Norm for we work together so strongly with this task which has become a daily job these days.”

August 1990 Newsletter: A special plaque was unveiled at the Rhodo Gardens on “Blackheath Day”.

It commemorates the 20th anniversary of the inauguration of the Garden Project and recognised the work of Olive and Norman Campbell. Olive for her 20 years of service as Honorary Secretary and co-planner of the project and Norman for his long term as Supervisor of the Project and for the planning and layout of the area.

From an obituary by Laurie Caulder. “Olive had many friends, was held in high esteem, put other people first and was loved by all who knew her. She had a very cheerful disposition and positive outlook, & even in those last weeks managed a bright comment and a happy smile. Olive Campbell was unique. She made an exceptionally high contribution to her cherished town of Blackheath and to her beloved Blue Mountains, giving completely of herself in all she did.”

Dec 1995: Presidents Annual report: Highlights Olive's death which “brought such sorrow and was a devastating blow to the Society”.

“Olive was a remarkable woman, greatly admired in her lifetime. She leaves a wonderful memorial and we have inherited an enduring legacy – The Campbell's Bacchante Gardens” Dr. Joan Storey

Compiled by Editor

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Any articles or news for the Newsletter, please send to Julia. email: julia@hanley.ws
Thank you



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