

Blue Mountains Rhododendron Society of New South Wales Inc.

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NEWSLETTER

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PO Box 238, Blackheath, 2785

GENERAL MEETING **Saturday 16th September 2017** **The Lodge** **2:00 pm start**

Afternoon Tea will be served after the meeting. Please bring a plate to share.
**Because of the Gardens Open Days throughout October, the usual bi-monthly meeting has again
been brought forward to September.**

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

Election of Management Committee for 2017-2018

At the Annual general meeting of the Society, held at The Lodge on Saturday 19th August 2017, the following members of the management committee were elected for the coming twelve months.

President – Alan Lush

Vice President – Deb Wells

Secretary – (No Nomination)

Treasurer – Val Moorhead

Membership Secretary – Bill Webster

Committee Members –

Geoff Cannings

David Cook

Julia Hanley

Dick Harris

Sonia Levitt

Diane Twose

Brough Warren

The Grand Opening!

by Trish Doyle

Trish Doyle, our local State Member for The Blue Mountains, has kindly accepted our invitation to officially open the new toilet block in the Gardens. This will occur on **Saturday 16th September 2017 at 1:30pm**, immediately before the next general meeting, with, hopefully, the last of the red tape being cut.

September Guest Speaker **Trish Doyle**

Trish has also kindly consented to be the guest speaker at the general meeting, so we hope as many members as possible will be present to hear some of what goes on in the corridors of power.

2018 Calendars

Don't forget – our splendid 2018 calendars, produced by **David Cook** and **Jimmy Lim**, are on sale now at a cost of **\$8** each. For those members unable to pick them up at the Lodge, we can post one out to you at a total cost of **\$12** (which includes postage). Just send your details (and a cheque) to:

Blue Mountains Rhododendron Society,
PO Box 238, Blackheath, NSW 2785.

If you want to send one overseas for Christmas, surface mail for packages to England closes on Thursday 28th September.

Subsequent to the AGM, Mary Lawley has been appointed to fill the casual vacancy on the committee. The committee positions of Archivist, Garden Supervisor, Newsletter Editor, Minutes Secretary and Webmaster will be confirmed at the first Management Committee meeting in September.

Our thanks go to **Mina Howard**, for her chairing of the meeting during the election of the new committee.

President's Annual Report 2016/2017

Twelve months have been and gone since I stood before you as the newly elected President of this great Society - a year in which we have all gone forward, building on the foundations laid down during the three years of Julia's very strong presidency, with her management committee. I am honoured to have been able to lead such a group, all dedicated to the running of what has become a major tourist attraction, not only in the Blue Mountains but also in Australia. For those members who are not familiar with what goes on 'behind closed doors' in between general meetings, I will give you a brief description of the committee's areas of responsibility.

Julia Hanley has decided to step down from her position as Secretary due to other commitments in the coming 12 months, including, with Wayne, the writing

of the history of the Society to coincide with the 50th anniversary of its founding, which will take place in April 2019. However, we are fortunate in that she has decided to renominate for the committee, thus ensuring her years of experience are not lost to the Society. She has remained as active as ever, especially in the organisation of the 'Creativity' Seminar in the Lodge last March, attended by over 40 very enthusiastic participants.

Deb Wells has been a tower of strength all year, notably during the Open Days in keeping everything under control, organising rosters, arranging for the new fridge for the kitchen before the old one gave up the ghost completely, and purchasing new tea and coffee pots, cups and saucers and other kitchenalia which has allowed for a well-run kitchen.

Our Treasurer, **Val Moorhead**, has continued to keep a very close eye on the Society's finances – a necessity during this last year with the construction of the new loos and associated works – and we thank her for her efforts involved in keeping everything correct so that the committee and the Society members are kept well informed. Add to this the requirement of having to change the structure of our reporting to Fair Trading, setting up and maintenance of the new Investment Policy with our new investment adviser, and sorting out the insurances for the Gardens infrastructure, and you will see that Val has experienced a very high workload this year. She will provide more details on our finances, which, with her careful management, will provide security for the Gardens for many years to come.

My special thanks go to **Anna Martin** for the work she has done in taking the minutes of all our meetings and distributing them to the committee members within a few days. It will be a great loss to the Society as Anna has decided to stand down from the committee as from today, although remain as one of the Monday workers. I am sure all of the Society's members will join with me in thanking Anna for her time on the committee, and in wishing her all the best for the future.

Bill Webster, as well as keeping track of the Society's membership roll, has also worked assiduously in the Gardens - painting, mowing, and reeding with Geoff (that's removing reeds from the lake). He has also obtained and installed the roller shutter for the kitchen.

Geoff Cannings has spent the past 3 years as the Society's Project Officer. This has basically meant getting to know practically all of the staff at the Council while steering our major projects through the Council red tape. As you may remember it was over 2 ½ years ago that we started negotiations with the Council for approval to build the new loos, even though there had been talk about extending the old loos since about 2010, without an ideal plan being determined. To his great credit Geoff has seen this through to completion, with the grand opening set down for next month. He will bring you up-to-date on this and other infrastructure projects that are helping to make the Gardens such a pleasure to either work in, or just visit.

David Cook has continued in his inimitable way to produce our well received calendars, with the latest, for 2018, hot off the press and available for sale now. He designed and had printed a range of colourful bookmarks which are here for sale as well. He has been involved in the production of an updated version of the Society's yellow pamphlet about the Gardens with its associated map, now with track distances included. This will be ready shortly – in time to be given out to the Open Days visitors this year. David also provided a very comprehensive report on the electrical requirements for the rewiring of part of the Lodge's power and lighting systems, with the work being carried out in June.

Dick Harris continues as Garden Supervisor, keeping an eye on all the Garden activities and continuing to train the Monday workers in how to maintain such a large area as this. On his watch we have finally managed to have the hazard reduction burn, first discussed in 2008, carried out late last month. This has cleaned out over 2 acres (about 1 hectare) of the Gardens, from the fire trail northwards to Ridgewell Road. Hopefully this has also created the right conditions for the regrowth of many of the native plants there, most of which require fire for their regeneration. Earlier in the year we did manage to burn much of the fallen timber near the conifer garden (with the fire brigade calling in at one stage to see what we were doing), with this area now the site of the new Protea Garden which is under construction. Dick was instrumental in the installation of the Gardens' eastern boundary fence, which now shows where most of the weeds in that area originate (and it is not from us!). Dick will shortly report on other garden projects, completed or still under way.

Sonia Levitt has been a very able Publicity Officer, helping to get the Society, and the Gardens, more widely known via numerous tourism websites and many local organisations. She has been aided in this by **Di Twose**, and they are currently determining just where we are being advertised, and how much more needs to be done to spread our name, and where it

should be done. They are also looking at ways they could make a visit to the Gardens a more interesting experience for children. Sonia, after three years as the newsletter editor, has had to give up the position due to other commitments, and we thank her for the time and effort she has put in to the role.

Brough Warren has survived his first year on the committee, and has provided a number of 'newcomer ideas' for discussion, as well as organising new cordless phones for the Lodge. We now have to determine how to get connected to the NBN! Brough is also liaising with the Gardner's Inn for the possible placement of a directional sign in their grounds opposite the railway station, to show the way to the Gardens.

This, again, has been an exceedingly busy year for all of the volunteers working in the Gardens. The Monday workers are the backbone of the Society, ensuring that the Gardens are maintained to the high standard we have come to expect. This has been confirmed by the number of very favourable comments we receive from our many visitors during the Open Days. The Monday workers are always looking for new volunteers to join them - the camaraderie of the members of the group is amazing, with the amount of chatter being generated during the morning tea and lunch breaks having to be heard to be believed!

Our membership numbers remain fairly constant, with 25 new members joining during the year – the majority of them joining during the Open Days period. We now have 92 paid up members and 9 life members. We still have 78 members on our membership list who are currently unfinancial. As was mentioned last year, paid advertising is not as successful in attracting new members as we find that visits to the Gardens, word of mouth and functions such as the Seminar bring in more applications. However, with the Gardens and the Society now featuring on many websites (mainly tourism sites, but increasingly on people's Facebook pages) our name is becoming more and more recognised worldwide. Our thanks go to Anna for her efforts in setting up much of this data, and to Sonia and Di, in their publicity capacity, for keeping track of where we are on which sites, and to Julia for keeping our own website updated, especially with daily weather details. You know how many visitors forget to bring some warm clothing with them when visiting the Gardens on a typical Blackheath spring day and are then surprised at how much cooler it is up here than down in Sydney.

As in previous years we continue to be involved with the local community. Once again the Seminar

catering was handled very professionally by Quota. The Public School students have again participated in a poster painting competition, with the winning entries decided and prizes to be presented next week. The winning posters will be used in our advertising for this year's Open Days. The Blackheath Alliance continues to be a great way to link up with other local organisations, especially at this time with the RMS developing upgrades to the highway which may impact on the access to the Gardens. There are a number of local groups using the Lodge regularly, including the Blackheath and District Horticultural Society, the Garden Clubs of Australia Blue Mountains Zone, and the Red Cross. In addition, the Exercise Group and the Scrabble Group have also used the Lodge, and Rotary are organising another barbeque in the Gardens during the Open Days.

Our general meetings have attracted a pleasing number of members each time, with such different topics from the speakers, including Renaissance Gardens, Rhododendrons of Yunan in China, Surviving in Indonesia during World War II, and England, Yesterday and Today. Our thanks go to Deb for her work in finding and organising the speakers.

Other members have contributed greatly to the running of the Society. **Jeannette Adrian** has continued with her purchasing duties, with **Marion Freidman**, our Librarian, keeping the Library functioning. **Judy Johnston** continues as our very successful Merchandising guru, and was instrumental in finding and working with the designer in developing our new Society Corporate logo. More will be done on this following a 'trial run' using the logo during the coming Open Days. **Joan Hailstone** has been our meeting hostess for the past two years, but will be moving from Blackheath later this year. **Beryl Black**, a member for 30 years, after many years as the Society's archivist has handed over those duties to **Wayne Hanley**. **Alice Reeves** has again been the 'official' gate closer each night, while **Geoff Reeves** quickly came to our rescue when one of the gates was damaged during the year.

As you have heard, the Society is going from strength to strength, and I want to thank all members for their support over the last twelve months. With your continuing support and efforts, the Society will continue to grow. So to recognise your involvement, no matter how much or how little, I would like you all here today to stand up and take a bow. Thank you all.

Alan Lush - President 2016/2017

Open Days

Yes folks, it's almost that time again.

From Saturday 30th September until Sunday 5th November, the Lodge Tea Rooms are open 10:00 – 4:00, 7 days a week serving 'Aussie Teas' and greeting visitors from all over the world.

This is our BIG fundraising event for the year and your Committee is always grateful to those who generously offer to help out. The income from Open Days goes a long way to keeping our iconic Gardens operating for the following year.

Volunteers are needed for:

- the Welcome Booth
- the Souvenirs table
- to assist with the preparation and serving of 'Aussie Teas'.

Please, if you can give us even one half day during the Open Day period we will be grateful.

There will be a Kitchen Orientation Day in The Lodge at 2:00 on Monday 25th September, followed by an Orientation for the Welcome Booth.

Please contact Deb Wells on 4787 6724 for more information and to offer your services.

Library Notes

Last year Ivan Menzies, a Life Member and Trustee of the Society, gave the Library a valuable gift in the form of his collection of Journals of the American and the Australian Rhododendron Societies. It included a complete collection of the Journal of the Australian Rhododendron Society, from Volume 1, No.1, 1959 to Volume 42, 2002.

In the early years of the Blue Mountains Rhododendron Society, regular reports of our Society's progress were published in the Australian Journal, revealing the hopes and intentions of those knowledgeable and determined people who established our Society.

This is the first of those reports, for all new (and not so new) members of the Society.

Library Notes (continued)

From "The Rhododendron", the Official Journal of the Australian Rhododendron Society, Vol. 8, No.3, September, 1969

After some months of investigation and planning by a group of enthusiasts resident in the Blue Mountains district of New South Wales, a Branch of the Australian Rhododendron Society has been formed.

An inaugural meeting in April was followed by a General Meeting on 27th June at which all preliminaries were concluded and the Constitution adopted....An election of Office Bearers resulted in the following:

President, Mr. I. Sorensen; Vice-Presidents, Mr. W. Smart and Mr. P. Harris; Hon. Secretary, Mrs. Dorothy Saunders; Hon. Treasurer, Mr. Alan G. Moffat. In addition, seven members were elected to complete the Management Committee. Such matters as formation of sub-committees, research programme, land acquisition, promotion and membership are currently being discussed and progress reports can be expected.

It has already been decided to obtain an area of land suitable for the creation of a garden and several attractive sites are being investigated. To anyone knowing the scenic splendours of the Blue Mountains the prospect of a large-scale Rhododendron Garden is exciting indeed.

Another decision already made covers the establishment of a library of projector slides. In this regard the Society's official photographer, Mr. A.W. Headlam, has contributed a number of slides, with the promise of more when it is decided which specific subjects will be of greatest interest to the Branch....It is hoped that when the Branch is in a position to contemplate a library of books on rhododendron lore, Members will assist by making donations from their own bookshelves.

At the end of August, membership of the Branch stood at 43, which is a remarkable achievement and greatly encouraging for the future of rhododendrons in New South Wales.

Marion Freidman - Librarian

Garden Report - 2016/2017

Since last July we have been quite busy as usual. General tidying up and dodder removal as well as weed control in the swamp which still needs quite a deal of work. The fence has been completed and this has allowed Council to issue a weed control notice on the worst neighbouring property which has removed the Ivy, Privet and Himalayan Honeysuckle that was in seed, however as of last Monday there was still a lot of small privet there. Council's weed officer has been to see what the weed contractor treated and she has enough in her budget to get them to finish the area. She is quite concerned about the swamp falling in in this area and we have come up with a plan to remedy this.

Once the contractor repairs the parking area in front of the new toilet block will be able to proceed with the landscaping which will be a camellia sasanqua hedge between the car park and the toilet block with some ground cover to hold the soil. The small triangular area will have a planting of various daphnes namely Daphne Rhoula varieties, Daphne Burkwoodii and Daphne Retusa. We'll continue the native theme on eastern side of toilets and back side with shade lover shrubs, natives and ground covers. Some work will be done to stop water damage from toilets as there is no gutter on the roof. There will be Rhodos on the western side of the toilets.

Work has continued in the planned Protea area but planting may have to wait, perhaps until autumn, as the toilet area is taking precedence.

Geoff and I have taken out a huge amount of leaves, bark, sticks etc. from the lily pond at the Pryor Bridge with still more to go and we have replaced a leaking gate valve near the shelter shed in this area. However I still keep the water turned off to the valley area when we are not using it.

The hazard reduction burn has been done between the fire trail and Ridgewell Road and the recent rain will no doubt start some germination of the under story in this area. I would have liked the area between the end of our planting and the fire trail burnt but hope this may happen next year.

Our track repair volunteer Barry has been back and worked on some of the tracks with more to do.

Geoff and Steve have put some posts and rails over near the tool shed where some had rotted and a sign in the shape of an apple and a board with the history of the shed is being prepared.

Webers Nursery have donated 50 Azaleas to continue the Azalea planting on the western side of the lookout.

Just to report on other happenings in the Gardens since the last Annual Meeting as well as this recent report we have:

Sown lawn seed in the area where the lawn was dug up for the sewer pipe and also in the Kovac area between the Shelter Shed and the Lily Pond.

Georgie Jeffries' family planted Rhodos in the area west of the lookout. Quota ladies planted several rhodos in the Quota Walk area.

A lot of pine trees have been taken down and chipped up in the planned Protea Area. For those who don't know this is up in the Dr. North Conifer Garden and will feature an area of Australian Natives and those from South Africa in another area of plants in the Proteacea family.

A lot of work was required to repair areas where the sewer pipe runs.

The Volunteers Way path was put in so people can better access the area between the Valley Road and the Maple Walk.

Our Fertiliser program has shown some great results and along with some favourable weather last January – February we now have to look forward to the best flowering season since I have been Garden Supervisor. Let's hope no weather disasters are yet to come.

We did a trial on Confidor Granules for Graham Ross which was successful for the control of Lacebug and Red Spider.

Dick Harris - Garden Supervisor



(One view of the new toilet block)



Project Report 2016/2017

Disabled Toilet and Car Park.

After finally gaining Council approval in July 2016, for construction of a new toilet block, the plans were given to three builders to quote, and a builder – Monolith Constructions -was selected in January 2017. Building has been ongoing since then and is basically now completed.

A few minor details such as the railings down the ramp and disconnection of the old toilet are required before we can apply for our Final Occupation Certificate.

In the meantime, Dick and volunteers can start with the plantings around the new block.

We have engaged Crawford Earthmoving to tidy up the edge of the car park and install a drain to divert rainwater. We will then need to clean the surface of the car park and repaint the lines. This will be done by the volunteers and all will be in order for the grand opening before Open Days.

Just prior to the commencement of the toilet, a regulation disabled car parking space was constructed by Crawford Earthmoving, with a ramp to the level of the toilet floor.

Tool Shed.

Last September, it became necessary to have some repair work done on the tool shed due mainly to prior attack by termites. This was quoted and done by Bryce Sutcliffe who also later included a new work bench for the price. New floor joists, new floor and some new cladding were required as well as guttering and down pipes and the painting was done by volunteers. A berm (raised barrier) was constructed by volunteers to prevent water from the new down pipes washing

soil out onto the road.

The tool shed was originally a roadside apple stall on the highway in Hartley and was donated to the Gardens by the Baaner family. A large apple is to be mounted on the shed and a plaque has already been placed to give a brief history.

Other.

For many years we had a couple of mulchers taking up space in the shed. Neither of these was working and also were not suitable anyway for use in the Garden. The decision was made to

donate these to the Men's Shed in return for some sign work they were able to do for us.

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During the year, the Committee decided it would be good to have a part of the Bob Baker walk sealed to provide a complete circuit of sealed walk which was fairly level. The quote for this came in higher than expected and it was decided not to go ahead with it at this time.

While the builder was here, our in-gate was broken open by someone who came in to steal some of the builder's scaffolding. The broken hinge was promptly repaired by the closest neighbour, Jeff Reeves, who is an experienced welder. Two rotted panels were then replaced and the gates painted by volunteers.

Volunteers also erected a new post and rail entrance to the Maple Crescent walk using material left over from the building of the Lodge.

Over last summer the reeds at the edge of the dam were cut and/or pulled on numerous occasions, the last being in February, and since then there has been almost no new growth. It will be interesting to see what happens in the spring but hopefully it will not take much more attention to keep them at bay and leave the surface of the lake clear to provide good reflections for photographers. If the reeds were allowed to grow, they would eventually colonise the edge of the

water right around the lake.

When we had the fire up near the Conifer Garden to burn the timber brought down in the wind storm of 2011, a water tanker broke a plank on the bridge at the bottom of the fire trail. As all the planks were were of a similar age, it was

Archival Philosophy on a Short Leash

Last week, whilst down at the Lodge, I sat in the Library in front of the archival filing cabinets and, in a moment of quiet reflection, set my mind to the task that lies ahead. This sort of thinking has inherent dangers as the human brain automatically heaves as it tries to come to grips with reality. Facing some of the truisms of life can be quite disconcerting, especially from an archivist's point of view.

Nevertheless, the more I thought about it the clearer it became that some of the immutable laws of the universe were well and truly at work here in our humble archives. Casting caution to the wind, I decided to let them out of the box and onto the table, in a manner of speaking.

We all know about Parkinson's Law. It decrees that "work expands to fill the time available to us for its completion". I am in no doubt that similar universal laws apply to the stuff that we put into archives. It works like this, and perhaps, with due deference to my predecessor, I shall call this new archival theory "Black's Law". In essence it says that if a new purpose-built space is created to house archival material (in our case a couple of filing cabinets), then immediately, and as if by magic, the amount of material which needs to be contained within that space will grow in volume to be far greater than can possibly fit within it".

If we accept that Black's Law is valid and at work every day, everywhere, it is much easier for us to understand that, almost automatically another condition occurs to go with it. This is called "clutter", and is always present on every archival battleground. As I sat in the Library looking at all the newly acquired bits of

decided to get a contractor to lay two pipes to carry the water through and to rebuild the road over the top. The volunteers did the stabilisation rock work around both the inlet and outlet ends and this has been trouble free since.

Geoff Cannings - Project Officer

information which was all potential archival material to be dealt with, I realised that "clutter" was to be found everywhere, on shelves, in cupboards, on the floor, lurking in corners. Something in the human psyche makes us create clutter. How do we cope with the frailties of human nature as they impact our small space?

If you look in the Library, on top of the archive filing cabinets, there is now a largish cardboard box which says "Please put archive material in here for Filing", or words to that effect. With it comes a plea to all and sundry. If you have stuff for the archives, please put that stuff into the box. Don't be tempted to leave it on the table or try to fool us by hiding it in the corner, quietly and gleefully waiting to see how long it takes for us to discover it.

As part of the recent contemplation, I've also thought about what the priority tasks should be for our archival management. These are, in order of completion

- Get the dodgy lock on one of the filing cabinets repaired so that access to it is no longer a battle of wits and a war of attrition.

Get the stuff that's already in the box, out of the box and into the archives.

- Make sure that any new material which arrives in the box from this time onwards, is not simply filed away, but is also digitally recorded and saved so that we can make the best use of our limited available space.

There's a lot to be done, so in the weeks ahead, ignore the shrieking from the Library as the process continues.

Wayne Hanley - Archival Organiser

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

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