



Newsletter of Menai Wildflower Group

March 2019

Contents

Summarising our Year _____	1
Results of AGM _____	2
Study Group Information _____	2
Coming Events _____	3
Reports from Meetings _____	3
Magnificent Mangroves.....	3
Christmas Social.....	4
Other Activities _____	4
APS in the Snowy.....	4
An Artistic Response to the Snowy.....	4
Remembering Bundeena	5
Special Interest _____	7
Nursery News _____	7
Get Together Ku-ring-gai _____	7
Gathering and AGM _____	8

Summarising our Year

Pam Pitkeathly prepared an annual report to inform you of the club's operations over 2018. This was emailed to members but is reprinted here. Sharon used similar information to produce the required annual report for APS NSW. Thanks to both.

Despite being a relatively small group in APS NSW, I believe we have met the objectives of our parent body very well this year, despite having several members with health and family problems.

We have been visible partners in conservation efforts, supplying plants to the Big Island project near Port Kembla (re-establishing suitable habitat for native sea birds, including Little Penguins) and planting out 3000 Lomandra seedlings under quite difficult access, plus growing some 6000 tubes of She-oaks for OEH's Save Our Species project, Glossies in the Mist, which is establishing a safe corridor for the birds

to move from the coast to the Blue Mountains, in the Southern Highlands region.

All this has been possible because of our volunteers at the Suez (Tip) Nursery and at the Illawong Compound. They raise the seedlings and cuttings we need to keep MWG in the public eye and new plants for our own interests. Our stalwarts have been joined by new members who have arrived via our monthly community propagation workshops, which are progressing well.

It is the sale of plants we propagate that provides the funds we need to develop the services and facilities we are able to offer. For instance, we have provided a \$2000 grant to UNSW to research the dormancy/germination of the pink flannel flower, which will help us to understand what it takes to bring this intriguing plant to more enthusiasts, whilst keeping us in contact with the science behind Nature. We are indebted to Lloyd and his offsidiers who deliver and collect plants to and from points of sale, like Illawarra Grevillea Gardens at Bulli. Once more "the Ute" has earned a gold star for reliability.

For our meetings, we rely on our regulars who perform mundane but necessary tasks that ensure we have chairs to sit on, screen/computer/extension cords for presentations, supper goodies to sustain our conversations, staffing the plant table and even shifting the fire engines outside so we can fit in our visitors. Your efforts are definitely appreciated.

Though operating without the leadership of an elected president, your MWG committee has delivered a year of excellent speakers, covering a wide range of topics, and given excellent support despite having upheavals to manage in their own lives. I want to thank every one of them for their support and the time they give so willingly. I thank Sharon Pearson, in particular, for her many years as Treasurer, leaving the Group in a comfortable financial position, as well as being a good sounding board for many tricky decisions we have faced over the years.

Our decision to share tasks such as chairing a meeting, leading a plant chat, writing a report,

conducting a plant raffle or selling tube stock has been a great success. Lloyd has excelled in his new career as publicity chief, even while he attempted to retire to the joyful but demanding role of grandfather to the Canberra tribe. Now we need a few recruits willing to share the administration tasks and to come to meetings to hear our fabulous speakers. We hope that our proposed move to more daytime meetings will make this an attractive proposition. I know that our use of a microphone has been welcomed by members who are finding it harder to hear these days.

I believe we have maintained a great group of friendly people who are happy to share their knowledge, love of native plants and their pride in showcasing these at the Illawong RFS. I thank you all for your friendship during 2018 and hope you are inspired to keep our local group a vital part of the community.

*Pam Pitkeathly, Vice President
(for MWG committee)*

Results of AGM

Our November meeting started with the AGM with the lack of candidates allowing Greg to run a very snappy election. Most positions were uncontested with little change to last year's office holders. The exception was Sharon's retirement from the position of Treasurer. Sharon has served, with distinction, in this capacity for a number of years and we thank her for her time, talent and diligence. We are very grateful that Jan has stepped into the vacancy.

The 2019 management team is as follows –

President	Still vacant!
Vice President	Pam Pitkeathly
Secretary	Annette Tuckfield
Treasurer	Jan Riley
Publicity Officer	Marian Payne
Committee members	Mary Hedges (overseeing talks program) Marg Olde Sharon Pearson
Editor	Pam Forbes
Unsung heroes at the nurseries	Lloyd Hedges and his propagating team.

Thanks to all these hard working members whose time and effort supports the operation of our club. And remember that they appreciate any help you

feel willing to offer. We always need people to introduce speakers, write up presentations, contribute to the newsletter or help out setting up for meetings. As the saying goes, "many hands make light work", so please contribute whatever you can to make their jobs easier. You may like to come along to the regular working bees or propagation days, report on one of the presentations or chair a meeting, write something for the newsletter or help with setting up and dismantling for meetings. We have a wonderful talent pool in our members so please don't be afraid to step forward to contribute in whatever way you can.



Isopogon P Forbes.

Members also had the opportunity to vote on the suggestion that we increase the number of Saturday meetings. Although Saturday afternoon doesn't suit everyone, the numbers attending the 2018 daytime meetings have indicated that this format attracts more visitors and it gives us the opportunity to enjoy, and showcase, the garden before or after the meeting. To avoid the summer heat, meetings will still be held at night from November to March (no meeting in January) at 7pm on the 2nd Wednesday of the month. Our meetings from April to October will be 1pm on the 2nd Saturday of the month. If you have a question about plant and/or need it identified please bring a cutting to the meeting. Propagation days will be held on the 3rd Saturday of the month at 1pm at the Illawong Fire Station. You can bring your own cuttings or take some cuttings from our native garden.

Working Bee in our native garden at the Illawong Fire Station, 3rd Thursday of the month at 9am.

Editor

Study Group Information

MWG subscribes to the following Study Groups: Acacia, Brachychiton, Fern, Correa, Dryandra, Eremophila, Eucalyptus, Garden Design, Grevillea and Hakea. If you wish to receive the information from a Study Group, please put your name on the

form which is usually near the sign in book and I will email you the information when it comes in.

Annette Tuckfield

Coming Events

- 13 Mar Meeting 7pm IRFS
Dr Rickard on the amazing creatures
in our soil**
- 14 Mar Working Bee IRFS 9am**
- 16 Mar Propagation workshop 1pm IRFS**
- 10 Apr Committee meeting 6:30pm**
- 13 Apr Meeting from 1pm IRFS
T Wales tells River Keeper Tales**
- 18 Apr Working Bee IRFS 9am**
- 20 Apr Propagation workshop 1pm IRFS**
- 11 May Meeting 1pm IRFS
R Morris on the Five Island's Project**
- 16 May Working Bee IRFS 9am**
- 18 May Propagation workshop 1pm IRFS**
- 23 May Walk Lucas Heights Conservation
Area focusing on management of
mountain bike activities on the
vegetation communities.**

Reports from Meetings

Magnificent Mangroves

At November's meeting we heard from Emeritus Professor Robert King from UNSW. Professor King discussed mangroves, a varied group of trees that live in the intertidal zone.



Mangroves on Woronora River. P Forbes.

The word "mangrove" is used in at least three senses: (1) most broadly to refer to the habitat and entire plant assemblage, (2) to refer to all trees and large shrubs in the mangrove swamp, and (3) to narrowly refer to specific trees in the mangrove family of plants. Commonly, a mangrove is a shrub or small tree that grows in coastal saline or brackish water. Mangroves occur worldwide in the tropics and subtropics, and Australia is in the top five mangrove holding nations.

Mangroves are salt-tolerant trees, adapted to life in harsh coastal conditions. They contain a complex salt filtration system and root system to cope with salt water immersion and wave action. They are adapted to the low oxygen conditions of waterlogged mud. Many forms use germination on the adult plant to give good prospects for propagation of the seedlings.



The intertidal zones in Australia are mainly dominated by 10 forms of mangroves from within 40 species. These species are in the [Mangrove Library](#) on the webpage of Dr Norman Duke at James Cook University:

In NSW, *Avicenna* has tree stems anchored in the mud base with radial roots that turn up above the mud base into aerated feeders (pneumatophores). *Rhizophora* has stilted roots that set the tree stems well above the mud base.

The Shire has two species; the Grey Mangrove, *Avicennia Marina*, which has grey bark and pneumatophores, and the less common River Mangroves, *Aegiceras corniculatum*, without pneumatophores. They have been impacted by past intrusions for airport, container docks and rubbish infill under football fields. Fortunately, people are now aware of the importance of mangroves to fish breeding, water clarification and foreshore

protection, so they are given protection and studied along with their supporting micro-organisms. More information at [Mangrove Watch](#) or take a walk along the boardwalk at Woolaware Bay.

Doug Patterson

Christmas Social

Everyone enjoyed our festive December social, with beautiful weather for a barbeque, an array of delicious food, carols by the local sea scouts, one of whom was awarded her Gardener's Badge, and some Christmas trivia. Thanks for the many and varied contributions.



Christmas Bell (Blandifordia) P Forbes.

Pam Forbes

Other Activities

APS in the Snowy

Once again Sutherland APS invited us along to a wonderful week walking in the Snowy Mountains. Our accommodation was the comfortable Pygmy Possum Lodge, an appropriate name as we saw from Lloyd's fantastic IR camera trap footage. Peanut butter, honey, vegemite and muesli (???) proved an irresistible lure for these endearing marsupials. The lodge provided a relaxed base for members and John Arney planned his usual terrific program of walks. John's experience means that he leads us on a wide variety of walks suited to the weather, and our fitness, all bursting with views, plants and animals.



We were all challenged to find a specific plant, and with plenty of enthusiastic help everyone successfully tracked them down. Thanks go to John and Lloyd as well as our professional botanists, Barbara Briggs and Gwen Harding, who happily shared their expertise to identify the many interesting plants we came across.

Meal times were a little competitive but I think Menai can hold its head high on the basis of our gourmet selection. With retired physics professors, engineers, chemists and doctors, among others, there was lots of sparkling conversations and some competitive games of Rummykins. For the more energetic, Dora and Ian led the table tennis tournaments.

Sutherland APS newsletter had a run down of the program and if you haven't yet looked, check out the fantastic photographic record on our [Facebook](#) page.

Pam Forbes

An Artistic Response to the Snowy

Joan enjoyed the week in the mountains so much she was inspired to produce three wonderful haiku. Her poetic skills are admired as much as the determination with which she tackled so many tough walks.

“Rock with Lichen”



*Strong firm eternal
How happy you are sprinkled green
You look so pretty.*

“Billy Button”



*Yellow smiling face
In a vast emerald sea
You brighten my day*

“The Path”



*Where are you leading?
Winding through the alpine heights,
Beauty awaits me.*

Joan Sutton

Remembering Bundeena

Our recent visit to Neil and Gloria’s garden at Bundeena sparked memories for Heather Wood -

When Neil and his wife Gloria invited us to visit their lovely garden in Bundeena, I was very disappointed at not being able to go because it was my daughter’s birthday. Hearing about the cabins on their property brought back many memories that I would like to share with you.

In 1939 I had just turned thirteen years of age when my mother and father bought a huge block of land in Bundeena Drive (originally an old dirt road next to the Catholic Church) within walking distance of where Neil lives now. Our land finished near the creek and, to a child, it seemed to go on forever, back to the bush and beyond. We were only one street away from the beach. The first task was to clear the property. At my age then, I did not understand the huge physical effort this would entail for him. Dad’s family all lived in Queanbeyan and Mum was an only child, so there were no cousins around to help.

The second thing Dad had to do was to build a high wire fence around the property to keep the deer, the rabbits and other wildlife away. The first cabin built was the kitchen, then a bedroom and the storeroom, which I used as my bedroom. I shared this with the spiders, and anything else that walked or crawled, but thankfully no snakes! The storeroom was hardly ever opened, so it became a lovely safe haven for any “visitor” who wanted to set up residence. You just took all of this in your stride in those days.

The third project: Dad made a huge vegetable garden; this was his domain. It was heavily enclosed, to keep the foxes and rabbits out, otherwise the vegetables would disappear overnight. Dad had many ex-service friends, some too frail and sick to do much around their homes. Even after his first heart attack, Dad still found time to dig the bores for water and to supply friends with fresh vegetables.

In my innocence, I asked Mum why we did not build a brick house like we had at home. She replied “Because you have to buy the bricks, then pay three pence a brick for the ferry to bring them across, THAT’S WHY!”



Brighton St Bundeena, 1950s. Picture Sutherland Shire.

My father owned an old Chandler car, so presumably he carried the materials in it, bit by bit, because to my knowledge there were no timber yards in Bundeena. There was one shop up on the hill, owned by two ladies.

Dad invented a watering system to water all of Mum’s huge gardens. He also used another method with overhead sprinklers, again using bore water. Back at home, long before the Hills Hoist clothesline was invented, all Mum had to do was to turn on a tap and a rotary clothesline would go up. Everyone else in our street had the long clotheslines going across the yard.

Although Dad had very little formal education, he was a very clever man. In World War 1, he left Australia with the Light Horse Brigade. In the latter part of the war he was sent to England to join the Air Force. He arrived back in France as a mechanic servicing their planes ... another string to his bow! I knew nothing of this until the day of his funeral. I am sure, like me, you would have loved to have sat down and really talked to your parents, but in those days it was never done.

In our family the love of plants and art goes back for generations, so naturally Mum had beautiful gardens, that

is, until Dad wanted to spend his three weeks' holiday at Queanbeyan. Weeds would again take over and poor Mum would be back to square one! This love of plants was handed down to both of her children. In midlife, I became a horticulturist and my brother John made a name for himself as an inventor in New Zealand. The age-old proverb: the apple does not fall far from the tree!

For the first few years Mum would get the bus, train and ferry over to Bundeena on Friday morning with my brother John. Dad would pick me up after work, at the railway station about 9PM and we would drive to Bundeena, in the blackout, because it was war time. Dad was working long hours and I was now fourteen years old and working long hours as well. (Age meant little in those days. I was working for a copying company run by an elderly brother and sister. I delivered blueprints by day to ammunition factories and when I proved that I could be trusted, coloured in the dye lines at night. These were never delivered; they were always collected. Two nights a week I went to Tech to study Mechanical Engineering and Tracing, in a room full of boys and five girls!) By the time we arrived at the old dirt track leading to Bundeena it would be pitch black, lonely and eerie. In all that time I don't think we ever passed another car. From memory, I recall that car owners had to contend with petrol rationing, no mechanics available to service their cars, etc, so they had no choice but to put their cars up on blocks for the duration of the war.

Looking back, I know we were lucky as we always had a car. Dad was a well-known racing driver in the 1920s. He was the first man to do 100 miles an hour on Gerringong Beach and held this record for seven years. He even built his own car in later years.

One very wet night, we were driving through the bush on the dirt track when Dad had to stop suddenly because a tree had fallen across the track. Dad, who was a big man, got out of the car and started to drag the tree away. Just as he got it moving, I saw in the headlights a huge snake slithering towards our car. It went under, but did not come out the other side. I was terrified, but Dad just said, "Don't worry, it's most likely up in the car trying to get out of the rain; I'll deal with it when we get to Bundeena." Needless to say, I was the first one out! Spiders have never worried me, but snakes are another story.

I was now fifteen years of age, working in the drawing office of the Ministry of Munitions, working six days a week, which meant that I could only visit Bundeena on Sundays, via the ferry. The ferries these days are a far cry from those in the old times. In very bad weather it was normal for the ferry to be covered entirely in thick, black tarpaulins to keep passengers dry. You could not see a thing and had no idea where you were until you arrived at your destination.

One particular night, it was starting to get dark, teeming with rain, thunder and lightning as I boarded the ferry. Down came the tarpaulins, leaving us in total darkness and all we could hear were the waves crashing against the sides of the boat. I would have loved to have spent the night at Bundeena with my family, but it was wartime and you were expected to be at work on Monday morning, no matter what. Besides, my grandfather who

lived with us would be worried, as that time we had no phone to contact him. On the ferry it seemed as though we were somewhere out on the ocean for hours. Finally, to our great relief, we heard the scraping of the ferry against the wharf. Off came the tarpaulins, and what did we see? Not Cronulla, but Bundeena again!



Bundeena ferry 1950s. Picture Sutherland Shire.

After the war, building materials were in short supply, so it was normal to move into a newly built house with only the basics. After a year we finally had a lovely rubber floor laid, with all the trimmings. Two days later, the door bell rang. Standing there, all smiles, was my brother John, now thirteen and back from spending the week-end in Queanbeyan with Dad's brother Joe. In came John, still smiling and with a great flourish, put his hands inside his shirt and hey presto, out popped this tiny kangaroo, claws out, on to that lovely new floor. He told us that Uncle Joe had found the mother kangaroo dead beside the road, with her baby still in the pouch.

John brought Joey home on the train inside his shirt. Joey slept in a hessian bag hanging off the door handle until he got too big. Much to Mum's disgust he then slept on a mat beside John's bed. I am sure he thought that John was his mother. When John came home from school on Friday afternoons, everyone would be off to Bundeena by car, Mum and Dad in the front, John, Joey and Dad's little dog in the back. At Bundeena, Joey never attempted to go into the bush alone; with John, that was a different matter.

As the years went by, Joey grew to be a big kangaroo and did so much damage to the lawns and garden that Mum declared that he could not come inside the house, but Joey always wanted to be where John was. This all changed when John, now seventeen, decided to go to New Zealand. I went to the boat to say goodbye, and when I got home, I saw the wild life van going up the street, with poor Joey inside. Mum was now all smiles, hoping to have her lawn and gardens back.

I was 32 when Mum told me that, on the way home from Bundeena Dad had stopped the car at the top of the hill, got out and had stood staring back to our place. When Mum asked him what he was doing, he said "I am just having one last look." Dad passed away from another heart attack the following night.

That was in 1960. Mum did not drive, my family could not spend time at Bundeena because my husband's work often took him overseas, and John had his own business and family in New Zealand. Things were getting out of hand at Bundeena, so with heavy hearts, we sold the

property. Mum and Dad had spent 21 years in a place that they loved. I remember that Dad was always there to give a hand to anyone in need. I still miss Bundeena, but no one can take the lovely memories away. This has been a hard story to write, as so much has changed over the eighty years: the experiences, the war years and the impact that a little kangaroo had on our lives.

In closing, I would like to congratulate the new committee. I have held the position of President, Secretary and Treasurer many times over the last 25 years and have loved every position. Please don't stand back if asked because there is always someone to give you a helping hand. I am so proud to be the first Life Member of Menai Wildflower Group. I value your friendship so much. Thank you.

Heather Wood

Special Interest

Deadline for contributions to the winter newsletter is Sunday 5 May.

Any items suitable for inclusion in the newsletter may be sent to the Editor (Post to Secretary or email mwfeditor@gmail.com) before the deadline. Preferred format is **unformatted** text in a **Word** file and photographs as .jpg.

Working Bees are held on the **second Thursday** of month at IRFB starting at 9am and include weeding, mulching and munching.

Propagation days at Illawong Rural Fire Station on each **Tuesdays 9am** for members and the **3rd Saturday 1pm** and are a great opportunity to be involved in interesting projects and learn new skills. Members can assist in MWG ventures or propagate species for themselves. Please contact Lloyd (95431216) for more details on these opportunities. Keep up to date with our [Facebook](#) page or [website](#). **Meetings** are held at the Illawong Rural Fire Brigade Headquarters each month except January. These are on the second Wednesday at 7pm in summer and the second Saturday of the month at 1pm over winter. New members and friends are welcome.

Visit the APS NSW website www.austplant.com.au/ to check out what other districts are doing, particularly our neighbours East Hills and Sutherland:

<http://easthills.austplants.com.au/>

<http://sutherland.austplants.com.au/> .

Lloyd Hedges

Nursery News

The Tip and Compound Nurseries and IRFS garden, have ticked on over the summer. Thanks to John,

Greg, Mary and Pam who helped Lloyd pot on some more Allocasuarinas. New helpers always welcome.



Highlight of the day was the cute frogs that share the moist propagating environment.



Get Together Ku-ring-gai

The next APS NSW Quarterly Gathering is on Saturday, 23 March at Caley's Pavilion, Ku-ring-gai Wildflower Garden, 420 Mona Vale Rd, St Ives. North Shore Group have invited guest speaker Mark Paul, horticulturist and founder of The Greenwall Company, to share his expertise on the design, construction and choice of plants suitable for greenwalls (see <https://greenwall.com.au> for more information).



The program starts at 10:30 with a choice of two walks, then lunch (bring your own) from 12-1pm when plants will also be on sale. The presentation on Greenwalls will start at 1pm, followed by afternoon tea.

Gathering and AGM

Blue Mountains will be hosting the second APS NSW gathering, which includes the AGM, on Saturday, 18 May, at Blaxland. The venue is the Community Hall, 33 Hope St, Blaxland and the presentation by Greg Bourke will be on 'Plants with a bite!'

Greg is co-author of the authoritative book, *Australian Carnivorous Plants* and is currently Curator-Manager, Blue Mountains Botanic Garden, Mt Tomah and Vice President for Botanic Gardens Australia and New Zealand.

The day will start at 9:45 at Blaxland Library carpark (also at 33 Hope St), with a walk to Pippa's Pass. There will be a guided walk around Glenbrook Native Plants Reserve and Nursery, 41 Great Western Highway, Glenbrook (Opposite Tourist Information Centre), and an opportunity to buy plants. Bring your own lunch (12-12:30pm). The AGM will start at 12:30, followed by the presentation from 1-3pm, including afternoon tea.



More information on either event is available in APS email or on the website.

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