



**Menai
Wildflower
Group**



Newsletter of Menai Wildflower Group December 2015

President's Report

The crazy call of those Channelled-billed Cuckoos and the morning melodies of the Koel remind us of yet another closing year.

We all must reflect on the year we have had with its joys and sorrows and the many opportunities we have been given to experience each other's company at our group meetings and activities.

It is at this time that I would like to thank the committee for their continued support and efforts to keep our group running so well.

Our year has been capped off with a wonderful calendar for 2016 which has been skilfully produced by some of our members. The winners of the photo competition, who have had their photos included in our calendar, should be gracious as there was strong competition from other participants.

Our 2016 program will follow the same format as this year and the new committee is preparing to create an exciting and interactive year for MWG members.

I wish to extend my best wishes to our members for a merry Xmas and a happy New Year and I hope to see you at our Xmas social evening on 9 December.

Jason Cockayne



Coming Local Events

(See Special Interest for others)

9 Dec Christmas Social Evening
Guest speaker – Yourself
6pm start: BYODrink and meat.
Bring a plate of edibles to share.

19 Dec Working Bee at IRFB 9am start

19 Dec Propagation at IRFS nursery 1pm

20 Feb Working Bee at IRFB 9am start

20 Feb Propagation at IRFS nursery 1pm

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From the Treasurer

APS NSW has decided to raise the membership fees in order to cover extra admin and publishing costs. The fees have increased by \$3 for each category and this was effective from 1Jan 2015. An updated membership renewal form can be found on our website.

Sharon Pearson

If any member knows of someone who would like to do a talk for our group for 2016 please give their details to a committee member.

ATTENTION –MEETING START TIME

The doors will be open from 6.30pm and the meeting will start at 7pm. Why not come along at 6.30pm for a wander around the garden or chat over a cup of tea.

Special Interest

Deadline for contributions to next newsletter will be Wednesday 27 Jan'16.

Any items suitable for inclusion in the newsletter may be sent to the Editor (Post to Secretary or e-mail fergsrus@ihug.com.au) before the deadline.

Working Bees at IRFB start at 9am and include weeding, mulching and lunching.

Propagation days are now a regular part of running the nursery at Illawong Rural Fire Station. The next two will be at 1pm on Saturdays 19 December and 20 February.

Nursery group held at the Tip Nursery, Lucas Heights Waste Management site most Monday mornings from 9.30am to 1pm. Please contact Lloyd Hedges if you wish to start attending.

The Group's Website Home Page can be easily accessed by doing a Google search using the phrase "Menai Wildflower Group" and selecting what should be the first option offered.

Visit a neighbouring group

When you joined the Menai Wildflower Group you became a member of the NSW APS and therefore are welcome at other APS group meetings, bushwalks etc. This gives members a lot more activities to participate in.

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

Easthills <http://easthills.austplants.com.au/> and Sutherland <http://sutherland.austplants.com.au/>.

Lloyd Hedges

Christmas Social Evening

This popular annual event will start at 6pm.

Please bring your own drinks and meat AND a plate of something deliciously edible (savoury, salad, or sweet) to put on the communal table.



As a special raffle treat there will be an Australian Wildflowers dinner set, so get in early and don't miss out on buying your tickets.

MWG Calendar 2016; this beautiful publication can be purchased for \$15. Buy one for yourself and maybe one as a gift.

October Guest Speaker

Ralph Cartwright joined a supported trek along the Larapinta Trail following a journey from Adelaide on the Ghan to Alice Springs. The train was quite comfortable during the day but the sleeping accommodation proved to be a little tight.

The Larapinta Trail is 223kms in length and divided into 12 sections. Some tours cover certain sections leaving from the Alice Springs Telegraph Station to explore spectacular scenery, gain a perspective of the vast flood plains, view the high ridge lines of the West MacDonnell Ranges, see dramatic colour

changes in the rock formations at Simpsons Gap and Standley Chasm, visit creeks and waterholes and finish with the dawn ascent of Mt Sonder (1,380m).

Day one was spent visiting Desert Park, which is situated approx. 3km south west of Alice Springs. There was good signage throughout the park guiding visitors to several aviaries [some walk thru] containing birds and vegetation applicable to particular areas. Guided night walks through fenced areas allowed visitors an insight into wildlife breeding programs.

At least 33 recognised species of mistletoe and many other sub species and varieties are found throughout the park: the mistletoe belongs to the *Loranthaceae* family, this parasitic plant grows on eucalypt, mulga and wattle trees, their berries are called 'snotty gobbles' and contain a large sticky seed which is very palatable. The mistletoebird *Dicaeum hirundinaceum* helps to distribute the seeds as they remain temporarily attached to their feathers after passing through the gullet; the seeds eventually stick to another branch and grow into a new clump of mistletoe.

The Ghost Gum (*Corymbia aparrerinja*) is prominent throughout the park. In Trephina Gorge National Park one is estimated to be over 300 years old and has a height of 33m.

Simpson's Gap is 18kms from Alice Springs and the site of one of the most prominent waterholes in the region. Other features are the towering cliffs and vegetation typical of the MacDonnell Ranges, including large stands of Mulga and over 40 rare species. Some identified were: *Enchylaena tomentosa* – barrier saltbush or ruby saltbush, *Eremophila latrobei* – native fuschia, *E. christophori* and *E. gilesii* – desert turkey bush, *Commersonia magniflora*, *Acacia tetragonophylla* - dead finish [*the last living plant in drought times*].

A further 4kms from Simpson's Gap is Standley Chasm which cuts through the tough quartzite to form a picturesque natural alleyway. As the light shifts across the chasm, visitors are treated to a magnificent display of colours and forms. The rocky terrain had many hidden treasures: *Stemodia viscosa*, *Solanum*

quadriloculatum – wild tomato, *Pterocaulon serrulatum* – rag weed or Pintye-Pintye, the name given by the Traditional Owners and Custodians, the Arrernte people, *Senna artemisioides* – silver cassia, *Prostanthera striatiflora* - striped mintbush and *Petalostylis cassioides* butterfly bush.



Petalostylis cassioides

Next was the walk up to Euro Ridge, approx. 12kms from Alice Springs, *Eremophila freelingii* – rock fuchsia bush, *Chrysocephalum* sp. - billy buttons, *Calocephalus platycephalus*, *Goodenia* sp.

Serpentine Gorge comprises two gorges created by a south flowing creek which has cut through two ridges of Heavitree Quartzite; there is a semi-permanent waterhole guarding the entrance to the gorge. Some of the identified plants from this region were: *Eucalyptus sessilis* - Finke River mallee, *Cullen australasicum* - native scurfpea, *Gastrolobium grandiflorum* - wallflower poison and *Mirbelia viminialis*. A spectacular view of Mt Sonder was from the lookout at Counts Point. Other species identified in the region were: *Leichhardtia australis* (syn. *Marsdenia*) - bush banana, *Gossypium sturtianum* - Sturt's Desert Rose and *Triodia* sp. – spinifex – there are 17 species of spinifex in the region, some hard, others soft – all were found to be quite spikey.

The group left camp at 1.30am to climb to the top of Mount Sonder; head torches assisted with the ascent – we were all treated to the desert tones and air slowly warming as the rising sun gently revealed the shadow of Mt Sonder over the landscape. Quite a number of Hakeas were in the vicinity: *H. lorea* - bootlace oak, *H. divaricata* - corkwood and *H. grammatophylla* – mountain hakea.



Hakea grammatophylla

Ormiston Gorge with its spectacular geology, landforms and rugged scenery is complemented by a near-permanent water hole and an interesting variety of native fauna and flora. The flora: *Ptilotus. exaltatus* - pink mulla mulla, *P. macrocephalus* - green pussytails, *P. schwsartzii* – horse mulla mulla, *P. helipteroides* – hairy mulla mulla and *P. obovatus* - silver mulla mulla, as well as a number of Indigofera species: *I. basedowii* - showy indigo, *I. georgei* - george's indigo and *I. leucotricha*. The fauna: a king brown or mulga snake.



Ptilotus exaltatus

The cooler months from May to September are the best time to walk the Larapinta Trail and the peak wild flower season is September to early October, Ralph's journey took place during the month of August over 6 days/5 nights, 2 nights in one camp, 3 nights in the other and walking 10-15kms each day. Most of the trails were quite narrow and rocky, so good walking shoes were a necessity. Temperatures ranged from low to mid-20's during the day dropping to freezing at night

and there were no insects as it was too dry and cold.

The camps were semi-permanent, almost like glamping, swags were available to anyone interested in enjoying the country night sky, all the meals were supplied and cooked: tea, coffee, soft drinks were also made available. There were showers and toilets, water was trucked in - the guides were well versed on the history of the area and had some plant knowledge, the trail was very well set up and sign posted. Participants carried a day pack containing water, hat, camera and any other personal requirements.

Level of fitness to complete the trek: brochure states 4-5 degrees of difficulty. Ralph felt a number of preparatory regular, medium walks would be advisable and the overall trip was a wonderful insight into the beauties of the outback; a highly recommended experience.

Marion Payne

November Guest Speaker

History, wildflowers and quarantine at Manly

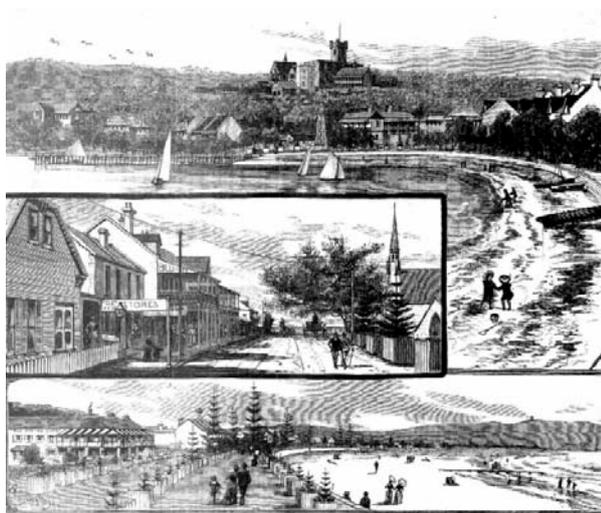
Greg and I were happy to share our knowledge of Manly at this month's meeting. Although we have worked there as archaeologists we tried to fit in as much on wildflowers as we could by looking at how our view of the Australian landscape has evolved since settlement. Many early written descriptions which praised the beauty, fragrance and distinctive characters of Australian plants show how much at least some settlers appreciated their new home. By the mid to late nineteenth century, painters and poets were expressing their admiration of the landscape and as early as the 1850s nursery men listed Australian species for sale, so obviously there was a market. Another indication of how popular our native plants were is the native flower shows which became popular at the end of the nineteenth century, with Manly being one of the first. Starting in 1881, Manly Native Flower Show included a pavilion with stalls selling bouquets and buttonholes, displays, banners and a fountain in a fernery. Contemporary newspapers list the wide variety of species on display including the familiar (to

us!) *epacris*, *grevillea*, *leucopogon*, *banksia*, *pimelea*, *dillwynia*, *telopea*, *actinotis*, *leptospermum* and *boronia*, among many more.



Manly flower show, 1883. Newspaper illustration showing fashionable crowd admiring the fernery. Trove, NLA

However, the damage done by collecting flowers together with other threats to “our beautiful harbour”, led to early environmental laws including one that protected native wildflowers. Manly, marketed as “the Brighton of the south” (referring to the British seaside resort), became a fashionable beach resort although newspaper articles encouraged visitors to also enjoy the wonderful wildflowers.



1884 newspaper illustration from article on the pretty seaside resort of Manly. Trove, NLA

Another aspect of Manly’s history is the Quarantine Station that operated at North Head from 1828 to 1984. Any ship arriving with

infectious disease on board was required to stay here, as isolation of those on board was the only way to control the spread of such deadly diseases as measles, smallpox, plague or flu. At first hulks were used as hospitals but gradually facilities were built on land to accommodate and treat passengers. It is interesting to imagine how immigrants staying here might have perceived the environment that we find so attractive – what did they think of the new land they had come so far to settle? Were passengers and crew longing to rejoin family after long journeys or worrying about sick loved ones? One thing that many did to mark the end of a momentous voyage was to carve an inscription commemorating their arrival. These might be formal plaques listing ship names, crew and passenger details and dates, more personal comments or simply initials. As well as English, there are inscriptions in Dutch, German, Arabic and Chinese from early settlement, gold rushes and both world wars. There are around 2000 inscriptions, mostly in the local sandstone and they are being recorded and analysed to document this important social history before they are lost to erosion and decay.

We have used a photographic technique called Polynomial Texture Mapping to accurately record the worn inscriptions and improve their legibility. This technique requires a number of photographs taken under different lighting conditions that are then combined by software into one interactive image. By changing the angle of lighting and the way the image is interpreted by the software we can bring out the surface details allowing us to read more of the inscription.



Inscription from Smyrna – a normal photograph and a PTM snapshot.

Today the former Quarantine Station is part of the Sydney Harbour National Park and

provides an interesting day out. You can wander round the inscriptions, visit the museum and enjoy the beautiful bush and scenery on one of the many walks. For a more luxurious experience you can stay at the Q Station resort in the renovated quarantine station buildings or perhaps have a meal, watch the bandicoots and penguins or do a ghost tour.



Early starts to work are rewarded by beautiful views. The 3rd Cemetery, North Head Quarantine Station covered in wildflowers.



Looking across the Heads 1824, with Manly and North Head in right background. NSW State Library.

Pam Forbes and Greg Jackson

Nursery News

Lloyd ends up smoking from working so hard at the nursery. If he had more helpers he would merely be dripping with sweat.



Menai W G Propagation Workshop 21 November.

Thanks to Marion's putting an excellent promotional piece in the Leader the Propagation Day was a great success. Many members of the public came to watch and join in.



Graeme Davies' talk on repotting native orchids drew an enthusiastic crowd.





East Hills tubed up the cuttings they laid down last month and laid down some more.



Anigozanthos sp

Macarthur group members bought a number of plants, joined us for a BBQ lunch (cooked by Karlos from East), bought up heaps of plants, watched the workshops and enjoyed the gardens.

It was a most encouraging day.



Brachychiton bidwillii



Anigozanthos sp



Themeda australis "Mingo"



Illawong Rural Fire Station



Compound full of plants

Group Meetings

Monthly meetings (except January) of the Menai Wildflower Group are usually held at 7:00pm on the second Wednesday each month, although we have introduced day-time meetings for some of the months. The venue is the Illawong Rural Fire Brigade Headquarters. New members and friends are welcome.

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