

# Regional News

National Trust around New South Wales

## Riversdale garden lovingly restored

By Michael Bligh, Chair Friends of Riversdale

After years of crippling drought and neglect, like a precious gem whose beauty has been rediscovered, the charm, character and beauty of the garden of Riversdale, Goulburn, has been lovingly restored.

Created by two generations of gardeners, the property was once a haven for a family of eight where lavish garden parties were held. Today, the house and garden are again loved and cherished and the sweet laughter of garden parties can be heard again amongst the old roses and ancient apple trees.

Said to be the first stone structure built in the township of Goulburn, the Riversdale stables were built by Matthew Healey in 1832. Thirteen years later John Richards constructed a fine single storey Colonial Georgian cottage as a coaching inn. In 1872, Riversdale became the family home of Edward and Emily Twynam. Edward became Surveyor General of NSW and Emily, with her six children, created a substantial garden of trees, shrubs and perennials, some of which were sourced from other Southern Tablelands gardens such as Lanyon and Tuggeranong. An important part of the garden were raised vegetable plots with trellises of beans and asparagus as well as an orchard of stone fruit.

When Edward Twynam died in 1923, his daughter Alice 'Joan' Twynam (1882-1967) took over the house and garden, using it as a genteel boarding house until shortly before her death, when the family sold it to the National Trust. During her time at Riversdale, Joan continued to develop the garden, including the planting of a Medlar and an espaliered apple tree planted by her brother Ned which, although fragile, survive today.

Since the Trust took over the property, the local members and others have tried to maintain the integrity of the garden, but it was ten years of terrible drought that really hurt. Large trees and special plants died and the beauty of the garden faded. However, the toughest plants struggled on, waiting in hope for someone to give them a drink and care for them... and it happened!

The Trust employed Debbie Sibbick as the new Property Manager, and Peggie Muntz of the Women's Committee and the new CEO Will Holmes à Court provided support and encouragement. Rain began to fall and before long Friends of Riversdale was formed as a committee of local volunteers who love and cherish both house and garden.

Volunteers Ros Loftus, Lyn Wittenden and Lois Wood treat the garden as though it were their own and spend countless hours removing periwinkle, spreading



A revitalised garden provides an appropriate setting for the historic Riversdale house



A garden party at Riversdale during the late 1800s. Such fabulous gatherings are now happening again!

mulch and filling gaps with plants to strengthen the historic character of the site and compliment the Georgian architecture of the house. To assist there are other Committee members, 'Work for the Dole' crews, The Men's Shed, the 'We Love Goulburn Group' and the Southern Tablelands Vintage Farm Machinery Club who manage the paddock area.

A tremendous boost was the Autumn Appeal which raised \$25,000. This provided the resources to protect the garden by installing an irrigation system. One hundred olive trees were planted to screen the unsightly neighbouring buildings and a charming pergola was constructed. Soon the reinstatement of the important historic feature of heritage fruit trees and a substantial raised vegetable garden will take place.

The spirit of Emily Twynam and daughter Joan live on at Riversdale. They would be thrilled to see their garden restored to its former glory and to see it cherished by a group of locals who are inspired to care for it.



Built in 1832 by Matthew Healy, the Riversdale stables and barracks is said to be the first stone structure built in the original township of Goulburn



The Friends of Riversdale Committee, (left to right) :Lyn Wittenden, Debbie Sibbick (Property Manager), Ian Maher, Margaret MacDonald, Ross Loftus (Secretary), Tim Geyer (Deputy Chair), Peta MacDonald, Dawn Giles (Curator), Michael Bligh (Chair), Judy Robertson, Lois Wood, Wilma McCubbin. (Absent: David Pengillyay, Jenny Schabel, Susie Grove and Sylvia Brooke).

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## Saving Harper's

Alan Terrell receives prestigious Trust Award

Alan Terrell of Berrima was recently awarded the prestigious National Trust Commendation for his exceptional contribution to the Trust and its Berrima property, Harper's Mansion. The award was presented by Trust Board member Peter Lowry OAM.

A member of the Trust for 47 years, a member of the Executive Committee of the then Berrima District Branch (now Southern Highlands Branch), from 2002 to 2007 and its President from 2004 to 2005, Alan was also a member of the Trust Board of Directors from 2007 to 2009.

In 2006, he led a group of 'Highlanders' who protested against a Trust decision to sell Harper's Mansion. The volunteers who became known as the Friends of Harper's Mansion drew up a management plan and budget, and set out to



From left: National Trust Deputy President Don Godden, Alan Terrell and Trust Board member, Peter Lowry OAM

prove to the Trust that the property was viable as a house museum and venue for events. Within two years, the Trust had rescinded its decision to sell and, since then, over 6,500 people have visited the house and garden. The Trust now refers to Harper's as one of the 'jewels in the crown'.

On stepping down from the committee, Alan said he was confident that Harper's was now in safe hands, led by Eric Savage. He maintains his involvement with the property as a volunteer and guide.

## A heritage park in formation

A much-enjoyed event organised by the National Trust's Hunter Committee to celebrate this year's National Trust Heritage Festival was the Merewether Landcare Beach Walk. Guided by Merewether Landcare members, the Trust tour explored a conservation project which, since 2004, has exchanged weeds for native plants, and is now developing a heritage park on the revegetated headland of Merewether Beach. Dr Griff Foley, Merewether Landcare coordinator said that the local community was soon keen to be involved.

'When four of our members began pulling weeds from the sand dunes in 2004, there was more than a little scepticism among locals. But as they began to see results community support grew and the local conservation group, which has grown to 33, has changed the face of the beach and nearby headland. Bitou bush and other weeds have been removed and replaced with 30 local native species. Now that the health of the area has been restored, the group is turning its attention to creating a heritage park.

'As the site of the Burwood Colliery Railway and an important repository of social history, the headland is a historically significant precinct. We are working with Newcastle City Council to develop a heritage park with interpretive signs, fact sheets and on-line information about the history of the



The heritage park site in November 2010. Group members are constructing terraces, weeding and collecting seeds for plant propagation. Much of this natural amphitheatre is now revegetated with native plants. The group will weed, terrace and plant the rest of the site during 2011-2

site. The results are testimony to what can be achieved by communities who care. Also important is the message that we need to "design with nature" – to take natural processes into account in building and urban design.'

## In Memoriam

Obituary for Annette McLean

By Kim Nelson

Members of the National Trust and the Yass Valley Shire in general, were saddened to hear of the passing of Annette McLean in February. Mrs McLean was an indefatigable volunteer for many charities and causes in Yass and beyond. For many years she headed the Cooma Cottage Garden Committee, inspiring all who worked with her through her good natured drive and vigour.

Annette née Elrington was born in Yass on 5 September 1941. Her family had been part of the district for generations. She was profoundly interested in history and cared deeply for her community. After an impressive school career culminating in a Commonwealth Scholarship, a year spent in her father's legal practice and many years travelling, Annette returned to Yass where she married Ian McLean in 1965. The garden planted and nurtured by Mrs McLean at her home, Miambi, is a testament to her skill and vision. Her knowledge of plants and trees was encyclopaedic and she had a great eye for design. In this and many other ways she was a major asset to the Trust's Cooma Cottage.

As the property's first manager/curator, I knew that Annette was there right



Annette McLean with John Sutton at Cooma Cottage

from the start for me and her knowledge and support were invaluable. Her poise and grace were legendary and I don't think I ever heard her say a bad thing about anybody. Kipling's immortal lines about talking with crowds and keeping your virtue and walking with Kings without losing the common touch, could have been written for Annette McLean.