



# FRIENDS OF Old Parliament House ROSE GARDENS

Issue 13 – Winter 2017

## Winter in the Gardens

It's been another busy season for the Friends who are involved with advocacy and awareness raising for the rose gardens at Old Parliament House. For some time now we have been battling to retain the roses planted immediately in front of the building, which are not part of the gardens at either side but would be most familiar to anyone seeing the building on television and in many images over the years.

The Friends learned some time ago that there were plans afoot to remove the roses, and that one vision for the building would be to return it to its original state at its opening in 1927.

There are differing views on how to regard the history of the building, but the Friends believe that this is a living space, deeply connected with our history over time and with all the people who have worked in it. Therefore we feel that a building frozen in one particular period of time, or returned to represent only that period is historically inaccurate.

The roses are certainly a much later addition to the space, but do fit within the time-frame in which the building operated as the home of the Commonwealth Parliament. We now have abundant anecdotal evidence from politicians and staff about their use during the latter period of the building's history, and many of those recollections are a fond part of that living history.

The Gardens are subject to the Old Parliament House and Curtilage, Heritage Management Plan, which was originally created with advice from long-time Canberra horticulturalist Mr Peter Sutton, Ruth Schmedding, who was the daughter of Robert Broinowski, former Clerk of the House of Representatives and Mr Robin Johnson, gardener at Old Parliament House for nine years. Mr Johnson's memories of the rose planting at the front of the building also form part of our own documentation of the site's history.

Under the directions of the plan, plantings made before 1988 are protected, but other specimens require consultation and approval before being removed or replaced. The Friends have continued to advocate vigorously in this regard. Replacement specimens cultivated from the original plantings were being held at Yarralumla Nursery and have been re-planted although a small number of holes still need to be filled. The Friends are currently negotiating for to take place.

Our latest informal update on the situation indicates that no more roses will be removed for the foreseeable future. This news is very pleasing although neither final nor formally confirmed at this point. We welcome continuing consultation on the matter and due respect for the history of the building and all those who have worked there and cared for it. If you have further information about the history of the roses and their significance for the

building, please contact the Friends using the contact details on this newsletter.

At our Annual General Meeting held in early May, the committee were returned to their positions. President Elnor Grassby thanked all those who are involved in helping the Friends function so smoothly for their service and graciously accepted re-nomination for her own post.

On other matters, the Friends held a wonderful St Valentine's Day event in the Gardens in February. See the photos and read the report on p.2. We're also planning a rose pruning demonstration on July 15, of which more later in this newsletter. You are always very welcome to join us as a Friend or Volunteer and to undertake any level of involvement with our beautiful Gardens. The Friends are planning another Melbourne Cup Day lunch in the Gardens this year and we'd be delighted to welcome you there as well.

## An English Rose

*In a garden's range there's a wealth of change  
And flowers of every hue,  
From the purple stocks to the brilliant phlox,  
Hydrangeas pink and blue.  
There are daisies white and petunias bright  
That the seasons will disclose  
But those blossoms fair just can't compare  
With a genuine English rose.*

*Look at Nature's arts in distant parts,  
Each strange and rare device  
From the jungle gloom to an alpine bloom  
Hibiscus, edelweiss.  
You can sail away into far Cathay  
Or the land where the Bong Tree grows  
But the blooms you'll find won't please your mind  
Like a genuine English rose.*

Michael Thwaites AO

Printed from *There's Something About A Rose*, Compiled and Edited by Malcolm Beazley and Judith Pugh (2010), Friends of Old Parliament House Rose Gardens, Canberra.



An individual bloom from *R. Tuscan Superb*, one of the historic old rose cultivars in the Gardens, illustrating the history of the species.  
Photo: Margaret Weir

# Story-telling on St Valentine's Day

The Friends held their now traditional St Valentine's Day gathering on the day itself in February in near perfect weather. More than 50 guests enjoyed canapés and champagne from Lerida Estate, who have been generous with their support for us over the years. In something of a departure from our more usual speakers, we were delighted to welcome Canberra lawyer and storyteller Sean Costello as our featured guest for the event. Sean has been telling "Capital Yarns" for several years now and uses an interactive method of storytelling where audience members are asked to nominate several objects that will be incorporated into a yarn. Our story prompts were a pet turtle, cryptography and a punnet of blueberries (with a side of fries). The resulting yarn included visits to the local markets, a wild romance and many other Canberra landmarks, to the delight of our crowd. You can hear the story at Sean's website, [capitalyarns.com.au](http://capitalyarns.com.au), where it's available as a live recording. Ours is podcast number 17. We also enjoyed some wonderfully stirring music from Los Amigos del Tango: Juan and Brendan's music was perfect for the event, while committee member Mimma Memmola's very engaging performance had everyone singing "Love is In the Air" with gusto on this perfect evening.



Sean Costello entertains the large crowd at our St Valentine's Day drinks



Guests (and dogs) mingle in the evening sunshine after Sean's storytelling session



Anne Knowler and guests at the evening cocktails



Rose lover Dennis Dempsey enjoys some bubbles among the roses

*Photos: Amanda Hynson*

# OPH Rose Gardens Volunteers in the news

The Volunteers who work so hard to keep the Gardens healthy and beautiful were celebrated in a Canberra Times article on June 11 this year. Kimberley le Lievre quoted longstanding volunteer and passionate rosarians Victoria Jones and Ros Donohoe, and Friends committee member Amanda Hynson who also co-ordinates the Volunteer programme for the NCA. "The delicate task of tending to the plants and pruning the branches is left to a team of about 70 Volunteers, who work year-round to ensure the roses, when in bloom, are at their best", the article says, describing the task of caring for more than 8000 rose bushes across the four gardens at Old Parliament House.

"Volunteer co-ordinator Ros Donohoe said the best thing about volunteering in the garden was being out in the open, connecting with new people. "I enjoy making new friends, and I enjoy learning about the roses," she said. "I'm not a horticultural extraordinaire, but I like learning and I particularly like the Rex Hazlewood garden



Victoria Jones and Ros Donohoe amidst the beds at the Old Parliament House Rose Gardens.

*Photo: Jamila Toderas*

because it's got the history of the wild rose, it's got the European and Asiatic roses, and it's got the very old varieties."

The article also discussed the Volunteer training programme in May, and quoted Amanda Hynson on the impact that trained and enthusiastic volunteers have made: "We have seen such improvements in the gardens in the quality of the flush each year, because of the techniques implemented in the gardens," Ms Hynson said. "There's lots of things to consider, it's not as simple as coming in and cutting. You can't just go along with a hedge trimmer. When you look at how delicate some of these roses are, you can imagine how hard it is to get in there and get the exact right angle," she said.

The team gave three top tips for pruning roses.

1. Hygiene - use a spray bottle with an equal mix of methylated spirits and water and spray the secateurs each time you move to a new area of the plant or a new plant.

"When you're using a secateurs on a plant, you've got to consider it's like an instrument in surgery so you're not contaminating [with disease] different sections of each different type of rose."

2. Prune carefully, with best practice. The key is to prune 5mm north of the bud, and cut at a very slight angle.

"It's unlike the old days when there was a deeper angle. It's just an ever so slight angle so you're not interfering with the growing and healing part of the stem," Ms Donohoe said.

3. Ensure the plant has sufficient welling to allow for a breeze to pass through.

"The welling is important, otherwise you get disease in the root and the branches and they die. Pruning is an opportunity to well your roses," said Ms Jones.

## Practical pruning: a demonstration at Bruce

The Friends have organised a rose pruning demonstration in connection with the Horticultural Society of Canberra. It takes place at the Horticultural Society's Trial Garden at Bruce, located at the CIT Bruce campus on Saturday July 15 from 1:00pm until 3:00pm. This event is free for members and guests and an excellent opportunity to try out your pruning skills, learn about new research and changing techniques to make the most of your own blooms. We recommend attendance - it will be a fun, practical event with plenty of expert advice on how to do the best job possible during this winter pruning season. The workshop will cover timing, the angle of the cut, how much wood can be removed from differing rose species and how to maximise flowering. Friends have been emailed an invitation with directions to the campus.

*For further enquiries, please email [friendsophrosegardens@gmail.com](mailto:friendsophrosegardens@gmail.com)*

# Membership renewal

A reminder that membership renewals are due in March. Four categories are available: join as a single member for \$35 per annum; as a family for \$40; and at a concession rate for \$30, available to pension card holders or full time students. Active Rose Gardens volunteers are eligible for a special rate.

Friends membership brings you inclusion in our events, lectures and workshops, and helps us to raise awareness of the Gardens, to advocate for their care and wellbeing and to enhance our own knowledge of rose cultivation.

To renew, or to become a member the Friends, please visit the membership section of our website at [www.fophrg.org.au](http://www.fophrg.org.au). Alternatively, complete this form and post to:

Friends of the Old Parliament House Rose Gardens  
PO Box 213  
CURTIN ACT 2605

### Membership category (please tick)

- Single (\$35)
- Family (\$40)
- Concession (\$30)\*
- Active NCA
- Garden Volunteer (\$15)

*\*Pension card holders or full time students*

### Concession Card Number

\_\_\_\_\_

### Contact details

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Post code \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

Payment (Please tick) \_\_\_\_\_

Cheque  Direct deposit

For payment by direct deposit:

BSB: 082 902

Account number: 16770 7016

Account name: Friends of Old Parliament House Rose Gardens

# With thanks to our Sponsors

Many thanks to our supporters, who contribute a great deal to our work in promoting and supporting the Gardens.



The Heritage Nursery at Yarralumla offers a 10% discount to the Friends and have been most generous in their support of our rose events.



We are also delighted to welcome aboard the Mercure Hotel, who kindly provide assistance to the Friends through their use of its facilities for our events.

# Greeting Cards



We have a range of beautifully photographed cards made by gifted photographer Margaret Weir. Includes close detail and landscape shots of the Gardens.

They are available either as individual cards at \$4 each or at \$15 for five plus \$3 for postage and packaging.

We also have available "There's Something About a Rose," a book of Australian poems and artwork that celebrate the rose compiled by Malcolm Beazley and Judith Pugh, and "Sunshine and Roses". This CD of 24 favourite old tunes also plays upon the rose theme. Both are priced at \$15. Please email the Friends for further details.

For details please email [friendsophrosegardens@gmail.com](mailto:friendsophrosegardens@gmail.com)