CHE FERN SOCIETY OF UICTORIA

NEWSLEÇÇER

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Dear Member,

Comments made by members who attended the October general meeting indicate that Guest Speaker, Mr. Phil Sheridan, provided a very unusual and interesting evening. The sincere thanks of the Society are extended to him.

Next month: Mr. Richard Hartland is Guest Speaker at the general meeting on Thursday, November 10, in the Burnley Horticultural College Hall at 8.00 p.m.

Richard is yet another of our younger members who enjoys outstanding success with the cultivation of unusual and difficult fern species. I understand that Richard has been to both Malaya and Borneo recently and has taken photographs of his sightings in those countries. We are to hear Richard speak and to see some of his photographs. The title of his talk is "Ferns of Sabah".

Traditional Christmas Hamper:
Donations of goods suitable to fill a Christmas hamper would be greatly appreciated by Committee Organizers of the December meeting. Jean Trudgeon, Kath Brown and Margaret Radley will gratefully accept your gifts on behalf of the Committee.

Rain Forest and Fern Gullies:

(Continued) There are some completely lovely rain forest areas still surviving in north eastern N.S.W. Most of these are not very far from the main Pacific Highway and all are easily accessible by good roads.

N.S.W. (North Coast)

(a) The Wilson River Primitive Reserve: No more than ten kilometres west of the Pacific Highway near Port Macquarie is the little town of Wauchope. From the centre of Wauchope take a road north west and travel seven kilometres to Beechwood. right before entering the town, follow the road signs which lead high up into the mountains and finally to the glorious Wilson River area (57 kilometres from Wauchope). Picnic facilities and pit toilets are available on the banks of the river in at least two sites.

This reserve is totally rain forest and occupies a vast area of forest land. The water of the Wilson river is crystal clear and the river itself provides scenes of great beauty in every direction.



OUR GUEST SPEAKER AT OUR NOVEMBER MEETING - MR. RICHARD HARTLAND - WILL BE SPEAKING ON "FERNS OF SABAH".

DO COME ALONG, ON THURSDAY 10TH NOVEMBER, AT 8 P.M., AND ENJOY A FRIENDLY, INFORMATIVE EVENING WITH YOUR FERN SOCIETY FRIENDS.

There are three prepared walks: (i) The Palm Grove Walk; (ii) The Strangler Fig Walk; (iii) The Botany Walk. I believe that it is possible to travel by car and on foot some distance further to Mount Banda Banda where the delightful beauty of the place continues undiminished.

On each of the walks a great variety of ferns, palms and other plants can be seen. The rock lily orchid (Dendrobium Speciasum) flowers in September - October and makes a spectacular display high up in the trees. The dominant tree fern is Cyathea Leichardtiana, (Prickly Tree Fern) some specimens of which stood six metres (20 feet) high. Each huge rain forest tree is host to countless epiphytic ferns such as stag, elk horn, bird's nest and hares foot ferns. On the forest floor fingered maidenhair (Adiantum Sylvaticum) and Blechnum species are delightfully colourful with brilliant pink to bronze new growth.

This is indeed a fern enthusiast's paradise.

Victoria (East of Melbourne)

(b) The disused railway tunnel, Healesville: Between Healesville and Yarra Glen, a disused railway line still exists, intact. At a point approximately five kilometres from Healesville, the railway track passes through a tunnel in the

hillside. Excavation of the rail cutting approach to the tunnel has become the base for one of the largest colonies of Annual Fern (Annogramma Leptophylla) that you are ever likely to see in one place.

The deep rail cutting provides protection from winds and direct sunlight and the exposed rock faces are almost constantly moist to wet. It is reached by walking west along the railway track commencing at a point near Donovans Road (Melway Map No. 235 D-5).

Annogramma Leptophylla completes its growing cycle in only eight months of the year. It emerges from spores or dormant rhyzomes in April and by early December, all have disappeared. The prothallus is unusually large and remains a part of the plant throughout its development. It is a very pretty but tiny fern, the longest fronds in a lush season would be just 6.3 centimetres (2½") long.

This is a delightful and interesting wonder of nature.

With kindest regards,

Doug Thomas Hon. President

PLANETARY INFLUENCES ON FERN CULTIVATION

Phil Sheridan, the Society's October speaker, presented a well thought out paper on the effects of planetary influences on fern cultivation and how these can lead to greater success in growing ferns.

As co-proprietor of the Inn Fernery at Monbulk, he has used these influences extensively in his fern growing activities.

Mr. Sheridan's interest in ferns was aroused when he was a student at Hawaii University. He would make sorties into the fern gullies and return to the city with a calming effect. This feeling was heightened when he migrated to Australia and found the same effect through his wanderings in the Sherbrook Forest.

In introducing his subject, he gave an illustration to the audience of the feelings which can be transmitted to us through plants. If we were to push over a tree fern, probably a couple of hundred years old, it would be a relatively easy job as the root structure is very shallow and a feeling of tranquility would most likely be transmitted through us. On the other hand, one could find a giant mountain ash in the same forest - try to push this over and the reverse effect is noticed. One can literally feel the energy come into one's body as the tree resists.

Having observed these things, Mr. Sheridan expanded his research and made a study on how planetary influences affect fern growth. He was not dealing with anything "airy fairy" but clearly demonstrable observations.

One can clearly observe the differences that the sun and moon have on fern growth.

The sun's effect is dramatic. It generates lots of heat, lots of light, lots of growth. However, in relation to the moon Mr. Sheridan stated that its influence, which is not generally known, has a very rich history. For example, the Chinese for centuries sowed their crops according to the phases of the moon. They found that best results were obtained around the time of the full moon resulting in a greater rate of germination.

Europeans also had a healthy respect for the moon's effect on crops as far back as medieval times in the monasteries. Extensive records were kept of crops sowed and the results achieved according to the moon's phases.

Science today has revealed a lot more to us about the moon's effects on plants. The rhythms of the moon are very important, particularly in waxing and waning.

The effect of the <u>full moon</u> is to increase the rate of germination. However, a less attractive feature is that in winter time on a clear night, the full moon will often create a frost as it has the effect of drawing up water or crytalising water vapour. So, at full moon time, fluids are drawn up through the plant bringing the life structure up through the base of the plant.

On the other hand, the new moon is a time when root soil activity is at its best, a time when preserving aspects are at their best to keep the goodness inside the plants.

Mr. Sheridan uses these aspects extensively in his fernery to promote maximum results. He feels that a good time to transplant or divide ferns is around the time of the new moon. He would also recommend potting up after the new moon.

It is important to understand the moon and the zodiac influences and plant the right jobs for the right time each month and year to reap most benefit from the phases.

BEGINNERS PAGE

A Hothouse: In Victoria when endeavouring to grow tropical ferns one is usually required to provide sufficient heating to keep the interior temperature above 10°C to 13°C during winter months.

The most common method is by Fan Heater which consists of an electric heating element built into a casing, housing a propeller fan which blows air over the heating element, recirculating warm air throughout the house. This type of unit gives a good distribution of heat, with the merit of low installation costs. It is usually best located in the centre of the nouse at the door end. The outlet air jet from the heater must be aimed away from the ferns to prevent scorching. This air circulation is beneficial in the prevention of fungus diseases which run rampant in moist still air.

As electricity today has become very expensive you may like to try either of the methods of heating by Harold Olney or Bernard Coleman described in our September '83 Newsletter. Another alternative is to use a time clock and have your heater operating from approximately 11.00 p.m. to 8.00 a.m., the danger period.

Watering is of utmost importance with a hothouse and if neglected the results can be catastrophic. A trickle or misting system is essential if one is not available at all times to tend this need.

If you have any problem with your shade house, green house or hothouse please write and we will do all we can to assist you.

GLOSSARY OF TERMINOLOGY (Continued)

Elegantissima Most elegant or beautiful.

Endemic Native or occurring naturally in a particular

and usually restricted area.

Entire A frond, pinna or segment whose margin is

undivided, not serrate or notched.

Epiphyte A fern which grows on trees or other plants

but receives no nourishment from the host.

Exaltata Very Tall

Exotica Exotic, from another country, not native.

If you are having difficulty in remembering the name of a particular fern, I find it a help by printing the name on a card (car number plate size) and leaving it in a prominent position in your glasshouse or potting shed for two or three weeks.

LUSH NOTHOFAGUS GULLIES OF CEMENT CREEK:

From Warburton, following the main road towards the summit of Mt. Donna Buang takes you to a small roadside carpark (the "6-mile turn-table") at the junction with the Acheron Way, and adjacent to Cement Creek.

This makes a good base for a couple of short ferny walks, or, for the more energetic (or foolish?), a full-day hike to the top of Mt. Donna Buang.

Near the bridge over Cement Creek, a fairly short, signposted track leads downstream through lush, ferny, Nothofagus groves.

An equally delightful track upstream is reached by walking a few hundred metres up the main road to a large fire-place on the right and the start of the track to Mt. Donna Buang.

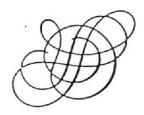
The lower sections of this track are reasonably flat and in fact considerable trouble has been taken to achieve this, with raised sections in places, cuttings in others. That such trouble has been taken may initially seem surprising until it is realised that this track was once part of an extensive tramway system that linked the Mountain Ash forests of Mt. Donna Buang with the timber mills in Warburton. Evidence of sleepers underfoot and the occasional steel rail confirm the history of this track.

For those that continue up the steeper sections of the track, further relics of the logging era, cables, bogey wheels and winches, may be spotted.

After a long and steep climb, the track reaches the top of a saddle and a sign-posted junction. The left fork follows a fairly level ridge for a short distance, turns left along a fire track for a few hundred metres before returning to the foot-track, and then makes a short (but strenuous) ascent to the top of Mt. Donna Buang, emerging directly opposite the lookout tower.

Although snow in winter and the threat of fire in summer may restrict the use of these tracks somewhat, they open up a fascinating area, rich in history as well, of course, as <u>ferns</u>.

Ref: "50 Day Walks Near Melbourne" Sandra Bardwell (Walk No. 20)



FERN SOCIETY OF VICTORIA - SUBSCRIPTION FEES - 1983-84

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The President, Committee and members of the Victorian Fern Society congratulate Bill Taylor, Albert Jenkins and the Show Sub-Committee, and each member who helped stage, lent ferns, and/or supervised the Society's award-winning display at the September Royal Agricultural Show. Well done all!

Doug Thomas President

BLECHNUM NUDUM CULTIVARS

by Chris Goudey

I recently purchased a copy of "Choice Ferns for Amateurs" by George Schneider, printed in London in 1905. The book is a condensed version of "The Book of Choice Ferns" by G. Schneider printed in 1892-94, which describes the majority of the ferns in cultivation in Britain at the turn of the century.

Most of the ferns grown in those times are still cultivated today but many or them are known by different names due to more recent classifications of fern families. Many of the ferns described were of particular interest to me, including the following cultivars of Lomaria.

LOMARIA - discolor

A thoroughly distinct and beautiful greenhouse species, native of Australia, Tasmania and New Zealand, forms a short, thick, tough, woody stem or trunk, bearing a massive crown of gracefully-arching fronds. The barren ones are borne on strong, black stalks 3in. to 6in. long, densely clothed at the base with long, dark scales: they are 1ft. to 3ft. long, 4in. to 6in. broad, and gradually narrowed at the base. The numerous leaflets, 2in. to 3in. long and about in. broad, are cut down nearly to the midrib, suddenly narrowed towards the point, and wavy on their margin; they are of a leathery texture, rich green above, and pale whitish-green beneath. As is usual among Lomarias, the fertile fronds are entirely different from the barren ones, but in this case they are furnished with numerous narrower and shorter leaflets, which, instead of being contracted in their whole length, are like the barren ones at the base of the fertile frond, above which part they are very narrow; they are conspicuously dilated or widened at the base, where they are connected with the midrib, a character which gives the whole plant a unique appearance.

L. d. bipinnatifida

This greenhouse variety, native of South Australia, is certainly one of the most pleasing and attractive of Lomarias in cultivation, not only on account of its light, cheerful colour, equally bright on both sides of the beautifully-cut fronds, which in general appearance resemble those of the Welsh Polypody (Polypodium vulgare cambricum), but also owing to its drooping habit and other characteristics perfectly distinct from those of the species to which it is said to be related. It is a somewhat arborescent Fern. As little artificial heat as possible, so as to keep it free from the attacks of thrips and red spider, should be afforded this variety.

L. d. nuda

Although accepted as only a variety of L. discolor, this handsome, compact-habited, Australian, greenhouse Fern, often met with in cultivation under the name of L. falcata, is apparently very distinct from the type. Its general appearance, the texture of its foliage, its mode of growth, and the disposition of its fructification, are all different. With the exception of L. gibba, which is of more rapid growth, L. d. nuda is undoubtedly the most useful Lomaria in a young state for table and room decoration. This variety, which is readily propagated by means of spores, and is extensively grown for decoration, has produced several sub-varieties, the best of which, and indeed the only one worth cultivating for its own decorative merits, is the one commonly known as L. d. n. pulcherrima, an ornamental plant with a consitution equally as good as that of the typical plant from which it no doubt originated. From L. d. nuda it differs in having the extremity of each leaflet somewhat crested or forked, and the summit of the frond still more distinctly crested. It should be kept as much as possible from artificial heat, the effects of which are most pernicious to the young growth.

Lomaria discolor was the name used at that time for both Blechnum nudum from Australia and B. discolor from New Zealand.

The cultivar Lomaria discolor bipinnatifida becomes Blechnum nudum cv. Bipinnatifida. This fern is still widely cultivated in this country, it is quite sterile and regarded as a collector's item among enthusiasts.

It is interesting to note that this cultivar was originally found in South Australia. This fern still occurs in the wild in Tasmania and is a most attractive form, either in the wild or in cultivation. I assume that Lomaria discolor cv. nuda is Blechnum nudum. If this is correct, the furcate cultivar described on page eight of our August Newsletter (Vol. 5 No. 7) should be known as Blechnum nudum cv. Pulcherrimum.

The form illustrated on Page 112 of "Australian Ferns and Fern Allies" by D.L. Jones and S.C. Clemesha from King Island, is different again. This form is quite common in wet boggy open gullies in Victoria.

Manna Manna

Blechnum nudum cv. Pulcherrimum

Blechnum nudum (King Island form)

SE MANNAM SE STANDER S

Blechnum nudum cv. Bipinnatifida

A BOOK REVIEW

EXOTIC FERNS IN AUSTRALIA

by D.L. Jones and C.J. Goudey
Published by A.H. & A.W. Reed Ltd., Sydney, 72pp. 1981

Once again our Australian friends have done what seems to be impossible nearer home. They have produced yet another fern book including numerous first rate colour photographs (one hundred). This is the sort of book which is a delight to browse through but which is at the same time a valuable source of information. None of the ferns covered are Australian natives, but they are the best of the excite species cultivated in Australia. Many of the species and varieties illustrated are not hardy, but the majority are in cultivation in the UK whether in the greenhouse, garden or simply as houseplants.

The book begins with introductory chapters but the bulk of the book is given over to the alphabetically arranged photographs and accompanying text. I was particularly pleased to see plants of Blechnum spicant 'Cristatum' and Adiantum capillus-veneris 'Fimbriatum' included. These are cultivars extremely rare in England if indeed not extinct. Also of great value are illustrations of some of the forms of adiantum commonly cultivated as pot plants - any contribution towards correct nomenclature in this group is very welcome.

Unfortunately there are quite a large number of errors, mostly typographical, these are outlined below by Jimmy Dyce. However, despite these errors this book makes a very desirable addition to the fern growers' bookshelf.

ERRATA - Most of these errors, if not all of them, have been made by the printers, NOT the authors. A number of the photographs are depicted upside down. Nos. 7 and 8 on page 23 are reversed - for "left" read "right" and for "right" read "left".

Polypodium vulgare cv 'Semilaceratum' on page 18, should be P. vulgare agg. cv 'Semilarcerum'

Osmunda regalis on page 51 looks like O. gracilis

Polypodium vulgare cv 'Pulcherrimum' on page 57 looks like P. vulgare agg. cv 'Cornubiense'

Polystichum setiferum on page 59 is a variety - looks like 'Divisilobum'

In the Index all the Adiantums are, in Chris Goudey's words, "mucked up". The printers blame the computer!

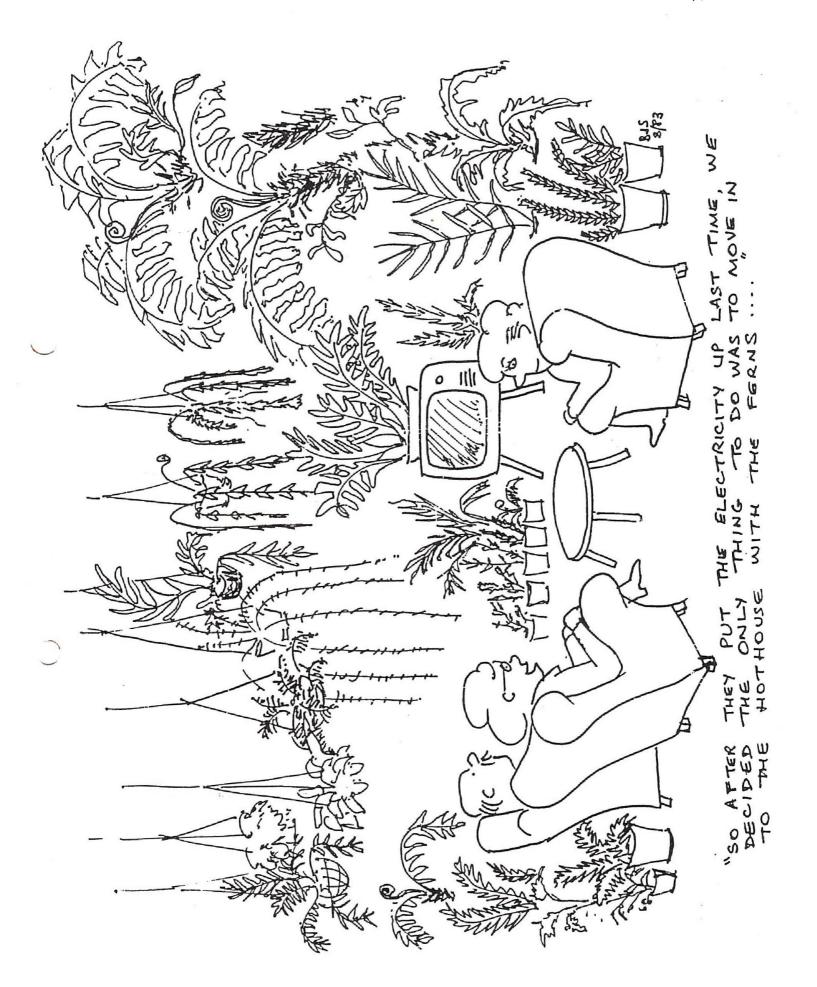
Page 70 - Fern Societies and Study Groups -

The British Pteridological Society, c/- A.R. Busby, NOT Bushy
The Japanese Pteridological Society, c/- Dr. K. Iwatsuki, NOT
Isatsuki

Los Angeles International Fern Society - La Mirada, NOT Lattiranda

Nippon Fernist Club, c/- Department of Forest Botany, etc.

Delete Professor Satoru Kurata, NOT Karata. He has now died.



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MORE ABOUT THE EARTHWORM

It is rather amazing that in the course of twenty four hours, an earthworm can pass through its body its own weight of soil and that populations of anything from one to two million worms exist in one acre of fertile soil, so this would represent a staggering annual deposit of fertilizer apart from the worm's own life cycle.

To keep our soil teeming with the right kind of life we must do all we can to help and by incorporating all animal and vegetable matter in the soil either by way of the compost heap or mulching with as much material as is available. Whatever has lived and died, both vegetable and animal is food for the earthworms. It is rather intriguing to see how quickly the worms will change a box of manure which has been kept moist and covered to keep cool. You will find it completely converted to fine, dark crumbly earth also there will be quite a considerable amount of subsoil mixed with it brought up from under the box.

In experimentation overseas it has been found that the earthworm has a strong distaste for Ammonium Sulphate and when applied worms are either killed or they disappear. Many other chemical fertilizers are slowly killing off the earthworm population and it was found that, if given an opportunity, they preferred soil fertilized with compost, even to soil that was not fertilized at all. Also it has been found that where insect sprays had been used fairly regularly the biological population had been adversely affected and the agriculturalist was working with a dead soil. It has been found in nature that when one item is disturbed others are automatically affected and we find an unbalance as one cannot work without the other.

MEMBERS' SOCIAL OUTING

Sunday, November 20, 1983

We have arranged a Spring B.B.Q. Picnic Day to Ian and Dorothy Fortes' Farm, "Fern Glen" at Garfield North.

The day will take the form of a walk through a natural fern gully with over thirty varieties of native ferns. Those wanting to complete the walk would need to be at the farm at 10.00 a.m. The walk will be followed by a bring-your-own-everything B.B.Q. and after lunch a look at the fernery and fern sales.

For those not keen on hiking far there is a less energetic creek walk.

Come along, bring a friend, and enjoy a beaut day with your fern society.

As we will be visiting a special conservation area, no plants are to be removed, and in addition it is a sheep stud, so no dogs please.

HANDICAPPED HANDICAPPED SANDERS RD.

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GUMBUYA

FRANCES HIGHWAY MAP 246.

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DIARY DATES

THURSDAY,

Mr. Richard Hartland

10TH NOVEMBER:

'Ferns of Sabah'

THURSDAY,

Fern Forum and

8TH DECEMBER:

Christmas Meeting

NOTE: In the event of a power strike on the

evening of any meeting, we regret that the meeting must be cancelled.

VENUE OF MEETINGS: Burnley Horticultural

School Hall, Burnley

TIME OF MEETINGS: 8 p.m.

PREPARED AND PRINTED FOR THE FERN SOCIETY OF VICTORIA



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