

THE
FERN SOCIETY

OF
VICTORIA
inc.

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NEWSLETTER

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PRESIDENTS REPORT.

A well attended June meeting proved very enjoyable with Chris Goudey presenting an excellent illustrated talk on the ferns of Stewart Island, using our trial P.A. System with excellent results. I am sure all members would confirm our Committees decision to purchase the system and ensure all members can hear all proceedings of our meetings clearly.

At Rita Olney's suggestion we commenced with a Host and Hostess to attend new members, visitors, and guest speakers on arrival at our venue. Many thanks Rita and also to Nancy and Jack Logan who filled the position and Derek Griffiths for obtaining excellent badges.

Society Glasses.

Decorative glasses with our logo will be available in approximately four weeks. these will be on sale at \$3.00 each and also used as gifts for speakers etc. It is hoped to have a different fern on each consignment so that they may become collectors items.

Honorarium.

It gave me great pleasure on behalf of our committee to present an honorarium to Maureen Verhagen for her service to our Society in typing our Newsletter during the past two years. Sincere thanks Maureen.

Fern Sales.

Our Committee have decided that any member may bring up to ten ferns for sale at each meeting. These must be listed on a form available with price etc. and can be left with the member in charge of our fern sales table. Members wishing to bring more than ten ferns must set up their own table and supervise the sales.

Annual General Meeting.

Any member wishing to raise a business item must have notice of motion in the hands of our Secretary not later than 30 days prior to our A.G.M. on August 11th. We would also appreciate nominations for a Secretary and Committee members submitted at our July general meeting.

Services to Members.

Book Sales, Lending Library, Spore Bank, Fern Sales, Maxicrop and allied product sales, Fern identification and Pathology are our main services but our Committee hope to add more services in future. Please watch for these.

THURSDAY

* JULY 16 *

AT THE HERBARIUM

BIRDWOOD AVENUE, SOUTH YARRA.

SPEAKER: BILL FAHEY - TIMBER ADVISORY SERVICE.

SUBJECT: SELECTION OF TIMBER & CONSTRUCTION
METHODS IN BUILDING FERNERIES & SHADE HOUSES.

Special Effort Winners.

- | | |
|--------------------|------------------|
| 1. Garnet Frost | 6. Jenny Balding |
| 2. Jean Boucher | 7. Joe Cannon |
| 3. Rod McConchie | 8. Bob Lee |
| 4. Margaret Radley | 9. Rodney Cooper |
| 5. Chris Pollard | |

Congratulations All.

Our day trip to Pine Haven Nursery, Horsham will possibly be in September. Chris Goudey is arranging this and will have the details available very soon.

Kind Regards,
Keith Hutchinson.

Welcome to the following New Members to our Society.

- Mr. Jack Hamzah - Jakarta, Indonesia.
- Mrs. M. Hergert - Launceston, Tasmania.
- Mrs. Greta Ricardo - Blackburn, Victoria.
- Mr. & Mrs. Kevin Tinker - Kinglake West, Vict.
- Mrs. Barbara Bourke- Ferntree Gully, Victoria.
- Mr. Lindsay Patience - Shoreham, Victoria.
- Mr. Michael Butler - Upwey, Victoria.
- Mr. Owen Ely - Glen Waverley, Victoria.
- D. & J. Manser - Myrtleford, Victoria.
- Leslie Kitson - Mont Albert, Victoria.
- Mr. Ron Jacobsen - Strathmore, Victoria.
- Ms. Zeta Harvey - Ivanhoe, Victoria.
- M. E. Field - P.O. Mail Exchange, Melbourne.
- F.E. & J.E. Chadwick - Leongatha, Victoria.
- Mrs. S. Seehusen - Glen Waverley, Victoria.

SPEAKER REPORT: GENERAL MEETING, 18th JUNE. 1987.

GUEST SPEAKER: CHRIS GOUDEY, TITLE: "FERNS OF STEWART ISLAND".

In company with Mr. Garnet Frost, Chris made the journey to Stewart Island in May of this year. The journey involved a flight from Australia to New Zealand followed by a short flight in a much smaller aircraft from Invercargill to Oban on Stewart Island.

Chris explained that the economy of Stewart Island is based mainly on fishing and tourism and that the climate is very cold; maximum day temperatures reaching just 10° C during their stay. He commented that Stewart Island is geographically located 1,000 miles south of Melbourne laterally. It occupies 670 square miles and is not really far from the Antarctic.

Chris acknowledged the assistance given to him by Patrick Brownsey, curator of Botany, National Museum of New Zealand and added that Stewart Island and Ulver Island had been botanically surveyed by Mr. Brownsey. The sighting and identification of fern species in general and many natural *Asplenium* hybrids in particular is attributed to him. Chris was also appreciative of assistance given by National Parks Rangers.

The format of the talk took two parts: initially a display of most attractive ferns representative of some of the species which a visitor could expect to find growing naturally on Stewart Island. Chris displayed each of them in turn, pointing out their natural environmental preferences.

The second part; a screening of coloured slide photographs taken in the field i.e. Stewart Island, Ulver Island and the South Island of New Zealand.

Some of the display ferns were:

Asplenium Bulbiferum (several forms).

Hybrids:

Asplenium Obtusatum x *A. Bulbiferum* (Produces bulbils)

" " x *A. Flaccidum* (Profusely - coastal cliffs)

" " x *A. Lyallii*

Asplenium Hookerianum x *A. Terrestri*

" " x *A. Bulbiferum* (Produces bulbils)

Asplenium Lyallii

Blechnum Banksii (Profusely over rocks and on the soil)

The Slides - Stewart Island.

Members were shown maps illustrating the proximity of Stewart Island to the south island of New Zealand, then photographs (some aerial) of the Stewart Island coastline. The beauty of the foreshore with it's lovely bays, cliffs, nearby small islands, forested slopes and magnificent blue water was made very clear to Members. Later in the screening Chris included slides of a native wood hen and a flightless parrot to provide variety and additional interest.

Segments on outings into the fern areas came next and for those outings the wearing of warmer clothing became essential. However, despite the cold conditions, the sheltered habitats in fern gullies and rain forests made walking comfortable. Chris said that the cold "bit hardest" at times of inactivity.

The fern communities were all superb and full of interest. Not the least interesting being the tendency of many epiphytic species (as we know them) to prefer to grow on the ground.

Adiantum Cunninghamii was seen as a very cold climate fern, *Pyrrosia serpens* (Felt fern) covering huge boulders and *Asplenium Hookerianum* growing in it's usual habitat on steep embankments under huge tree roots.

A very difficult fern to photograph is *Blechnum Nigrum*. *Nigrum* was shown as a very dark green fern which prefers to grow in dark, gloomy places.

Chris said that specimens of *Blechnum* discolour and *Asplenium bulbiferum* had developed trunks over one metre in height. He felt that some of these plants had probably grown undisturbed for one hundred years.

Two as yet unnamed *Blechnums* were shown whose temporary identity is dependant upon the colour of frond scales - Black Spot - Brown scale.

Generally the forest tracks and strategically placed shelter huts were very well maintained. However a track which links Point William Hut up with Bungaree Hut (second day of a three day hike) has deliberately not been maintained. The purpose here is to deter inexperienced hikers from penetrating too far into the mountain wilderness.

In the main, Chris and Garnet had taken walks either along the foreshore or into the forests. Both environments appeared as being superbly beautiful. In the forests, well made footbridges, stepped climbing platforms and a massive suspension bridge make the fern glades accessible. Magnificent ferns appeared to be everywhere; on the ground, over boulders, up the trees and clinging to life in the most inconceivable situations.

Kangaroo fern (*Microsorium diversifolium*) was shown but because there was no Kangaroos in New Zealand its common name there is "Hound's Tongue". The tree fern purported to be the southern most treefern in the world, *Cyathea smithii*, was also shown.

The most beautiful fern in the world, *Leptopteris superba* was shown growing abundantly in creek bank situations and living well up to its reputation. Even the dainty filmy fern, *Hymenophyllum ferrugianum* creeps over the ground as well as the trees and boulders.

Ulver Island.

A visit to Ulver Island, off shore from Stewart Island, had to be taken by small boat together with guidance from a forestry ranger.

Forest tracks were good here with many fern species being similar to those shown for Stewart Island. However exceptions to this were the Umbrella Moss, a club moss (*Lycopodium*), and a filmy fern (*Hymenophyllum Dilatatum*) with fronds 30 cm's (12") long. All of these species grew on the ground.

A fern of the sub-antarctic islands of New Zealand, *Blechnum durum*, was shown. It appeared as a very attractive fern having shiny dark green fronds. Once again *Asplenium* species hybrids were in evidence. One hybrid not previously shown was *Asplenium flaccidum* x *A. scleroprium*. Only one specimen of this hybrid was seen.

Later a visit was taken to Kidney fern Ridge to see the Kidney fern (*Trichomanes reniforme*). It was there, growing as huge mats on banks, rocks and the forest floor.

The Bluff.

Chris also showed slides of ferns which he had photographed at the Bluff, a fern haven on the south coast of the south island of New Zealand. The most notable of these slides was the *Paesia scaberula* (Ring Fern).

Chris concluded his presentation with some slides of little known New Zealand ferns. *Cyathea colensoi* (the prostrate tree fern), *Dicksonia lanata*, *Blechnum filliforme* (climbing blechnum) and an alpine *Lycopodium* (clubmoss or tassel fern).

Vote of thanks.

Derek Griffiths ably moved a vote of thanks to Chris which members endorsed by their enthusiastic applause.

THE BIRD'S NEST FERNby Ray Best*Asplenium australasicum* (Prev. *Asplenium nidus*)

Relative to a recent name change of *Asplenium nidus* to *Asplenium australasicum*, the writer was surprised to find an early reference which appears to concern this fern. Such statement was made in "Select Ferns and Synchopods", B. S. Williams, 1873 - 106 years ago - under the title *Thamnopteris Thamnopteris* (Presl.)

Quote: "This genus consists of a few species producing entire fronds, remarkable from the peculiar manner of their growth. The fronds rise up from the crown leaving quite a hollow centre, from which habit they have been called Bird's Nest Ferns. They are very long lived and make splendid objects for vases, to stand on each side of the doorway inside the fernery - and indeed *Thamnopteris australasica* will answer well for this purpose out of doors in Summer time, if not exposed to full sun. These plants will require but little soil as they make a mass of fibrous aerial roots on the surface from which, if the atmosphere is in proper condition, they derive much nourishment. Rough fibrous peat sphagnum moss and sandstone suit them best."

"*Thamnopteris australasica* (Presl). This fine evergreen species has been very aptly named the Bird's nest fern. The fronds of which are simple and elliptic - lanceolate in shape and of a bright shining green colour, grow all around the rhizome, so as to leave the crown elevated and exposed and thus form a hollow centre: their length is about four feet, and their breadth from 3 to 6 inches: the midrib below is sharply carinate (keeled) a character to be found in this species from its youngest stage. As it succeeds well in a cool house it becomes an invaluable plant where contrast and noble outline is studied. A native of New South Wales."

He goes on to describe

Thamnopteris nidus: - "This is popularly known as the Eagle's nest fern and is often confounded with the previous species; it is indeed similar in habit, and grows to about the same size the chief differences being that in the present plant the fronds are almost of equal breadth at the base with the midrib obtuse and that they grow out horizontally at first before taking their upright course, thus leaving a much broader centre; it also requires the heat of a stove (in England). A Native of the East Indian Islands."

End of Quote.

A recent reference to "The Fern Dictionary" by Wilbur W. Olson, Research Director of the Los Angeles International Fern Society, 1977, we find -

Thamnopteris: - A genus now called *Asplenium*. In the case of our new *Asplenium australasicum*, the author is persuaded to suspect that its past has at last caught up with it.

ADIANTUMS

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REPORT ON TALK GIVEN BY CHRIS GOUDEY AT FEB. MEETING

The scientific name *Adiantum* is taken from the Greek work 'Adiantos', which means 'unwetted', so called because of the property the leaves have of repelling water.

They repel water even after being completely immersed in water.

Maidenhair ferns do not like their foliage wet; it causes rotting.

From my observations, they seem to be a fern of open forest lands rather than deep rain forest.

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There are approximately 200 species of maidenhair ferns, very few of which are cultivated. In Australia, there would be no more than 25 species (in the U.S.A. 17 species) in cultivation, eight of which are native.

The majority are horticultural cultivars. These cultivars come mostly from three species - *Adiantum radianum*, which is responsible for at least 50 cultivars, *Adiantum tenorum*, which has approximately 15 cultivars and *Adiantum capillus veneris*, which has about 10 cultivars.

Maidenhair ferns mostly come from the tropics to sub-tropics, with the majority coming from South America, i.e. *A. raddianum*, *A. tenerum*, *A. traporiforma*; *A. peruvianum*, *anceps*, etc., etc.

All species are terrestrial. They enjoy light shade or filtered light, ample humidity, and a site free from winds and drying draughts.

They have varied uses. One species, *Adiantum formosum* is used extensively in dried arrangements, a few of the finer cultivars are used in corsages, etc. A point of interest - the fronds of *Adiantum capillus veneris* were collected, dried and used for a special brew of tea that was popular in the U.K. last century. In olden days, it was believed that the dried fronds of *Adiantum capillus veneris* had medicinal properties.

Maidenhair ferns belong to the genus *Adiantaceae*, which was named by the famous botanist Linneaus who was, as I mentioned in my first talk, responsible for the bi-nomial system of naming plants.

Other ferns which belong to this family are *Pteris* (the Brake ferns) *Cheilanthes* (the Rock ferns), *Pityrogramma* (Gold and silver ferns), *Vittana* (Ribbon ferns) and many more. The spores of all maidenhair ferns are situated along the margin of the pinnules under a flap or false indusium. When the spores are ripe the indusium curls back, releasing the spore.

Historically, the greatest interest in ferns occurred in Europe between 1870 and 1900; in those times, there were between 100 and 150 different cultivars of maidenhair ferns. Unfortunately many of them were lost to Horticulture.

Today, almost 100 years later, there is a new interest and as a result of extensive cultivation, many new cultivars have appeared, and some old horticultural cultivars have re-appeared.

It is unlikely that there will ever be as many cultivars as there were last century. Many collectors, particularly in Queensland, claim to have collections of well over 100 different maidenhair ferns. I myself used to boast of having about 120 different species and cultivars, until I started sending pressed specimens to the University of California (to Barbara Jo Hoshizaki).

I found that ferns such as *Adiantum noaksii*, *Adiantum edwinii*, *Adiantum upright noaksii*, and another one locally called "Joan's lacy one" were all in fact *Adiantum concinnum*, which is a species of central America.

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I also found that *Adiantum scintilla* and *Adiantum scintilla rubra* (of trade) and several other skeletonised and tall forms of *A. scintilla* (of trade) were in fact *Adiantum excisum*, a species from Chile & Bolivia.

Many other cultivars are not registered and possibly not even worthy of a cultivar name; these include the ones we know as *A. fantasy*, *A. compactum*, *A. Banksiana*, *A. multiceps*, *A. variegated venus*, *A. charlottae*, *A. cluster gem*, *A. pubescens*, *A. pointonii*, and many more.

Most adiantums prefer a slightly alkaline medium, although there are a few exceptions. The species and all the cultivars of *A. raddianum*, *A. tenerum* and *A. capillus veneris* all need lime in their soil mix. Some ferns such as *A. reniforma* could not survive without it.

Most of our native species do equally as well in an acid medium as they do in an alkaline mix. The potting mix you use is entirely up to you, but be sure to incorporate plenty of humus (such as peat moss, old rotted manure, old rotted leaves or treefern fibre, or better still, a combination of them all, and add a little lime.

Don't use fine sand or any soil that is likely to set hard. An open mix is essential.

Note from Irene Bolster: Chris followed up his talk with slides of various ferns - some in his collection, and some in their natural surroundings.

Members showed their appreciation by a warm round of applause.

AN EXPLANATION OF FERN NOMENCLATURE

by R. MacPHERSON

Ferns have undergone many changes in the history of nomenclature, and what one author may consider to be a species of the one genus may, in fact, be several genera to another author. A brief history of the nomenclature and classification of ferns is needed here.

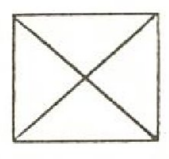
Linnaeus started the ball rolling with his first paper which based ferns on the method of reproduction, e.g. shape, position of sori. There was a lot of opposition to this theory. Two of his major critics, Adonson and de Gessiu, preferred to group ferns by appearance rather than spore characteristics.

Over a period of one hundred years, the Linnaeus idea gained gradual acceptance, until it became an accepted method of classification. It then became a task to group plants according to other characteristics and these ranged from chromosome numbers to shape of pinnules. The problems which face us today are: 1. Taxonomists who group all species into a small number of genera, and 2. Taxonomists who group species into a large number of genera. Why do they do it? Because new discoveries upset the old descriptions.

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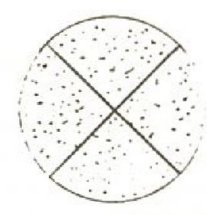
GENUS A
Square with two
diagonal lines



GENUS B
Square with dots



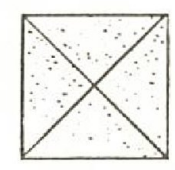
GENUS C
Circle with diagonal
lines and dots



As you can see, the above genera are all quite distinct, but what if one is discovered like the one below?

New discovery:

Square with diagonal lines and dots



This poses great problems, and hopefully you can see that by placing it in any of the first three genera the description would be upset and therefore the whole genus would need revision - and this is where the name changes happen. It doesn't need to be a discovery: someone might think that a genus is very untidy or confusing, and they can go around and re-organise it into a fashion that might suit everyone better than the last classification.

But no-one is compelled to agree. Other botanists and taxonomists do it in their own time, and if they feel the change is better, they will begin to use the new names.

I will leave you with one example of name changing, just to show you how it works.

Between 1938 and 1947, Copeland revised the Hymenophyllums. Originally they were grouped into Hymenophyllum and Trichomanes, and were large groups. Copeland divided them into 34 different genera. Holttum remarked to Stone that he spread them out too far, and he wouldn't agree with its principles. Professor Chambers feels that, although it doesn't work for Victoria, it does work well in the Philippines and similar places. Copeland's classification was accepted, however, by Wakefield, 1955 (Ferns of Victoria and Tasmania) and by Willis 1962 (Victorian Plants) and partly by Tindale (N.S.W. 1963). In order not to confuse, I. G. Stone used Copeland in her articles. Now, even though the Melbourne herbarium still uses Copeland as is written in Willis's book, Dr. Willis himself feels that other taxonomists did not pick up Copeland's theory, and therefore has reversed to the original method. This has now started a trend of reverting to the original idea. Recently another Hymenophyllum revision was done, and I feel that this one might halt the reversal and gain popular acceptance.

So, as you can see, there is no hard and fast rule; you take each name change as it comes and decide for yourself whether you feel the change is justified. If you haven't the time to check out the reasons for the change, trust in someone's judgment and ask them their opinion. Just don't fight a change because you are tired of them. They are for a reason. They will benefit us all in the end.

Hymenophyllaceae in Victoria Prior Copeland =
Hymenophyllum + Trichomanes
Hymenophyllaceae after Copeland =
Hymenophyllum + Mecodium + Polyphlebium + Macroglena

HISTORY IN FERNS - THE NAMING OF VICTORIAN FERNS

by T.W.Turney

Have you ever stopped to consider the origin of that fern name? Many names describe some unique characteristic of the genus or species. Others names are linked to the discovery and early history of Australia. So knowing the origin of plant names can not only help in their identification but reminds us that often a personal (and sometimes tragic) tale lies behind that fern. This is first part of an occasional series, and describes the naming of the Tree Ferns found in Victoria.

CYATHEA - The name for this genus of now about 800 species was first used in 1793 by the great English botanist and plant collector, John Smith, describing a species from the West Indies (*C.arborea*). It derives from the Greek, kuathos, meaning a cup and refers to the shape of the indusium covering the sori.

Cyathea australis - rough tree fern - the species name comes from the Latin meaning southern.

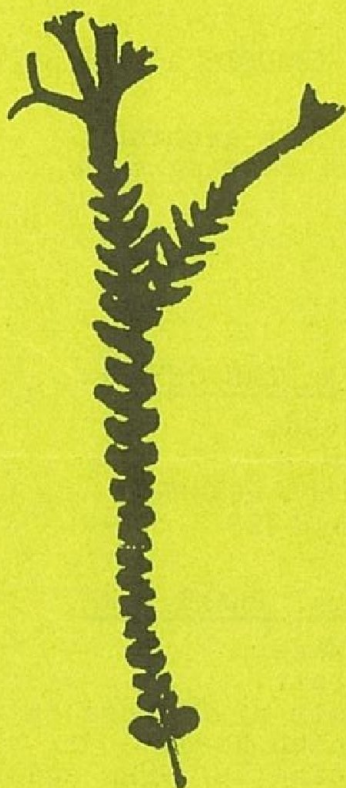
Cyathea cunninghamii - slender tree fern - named by Joseph Hooker, a famous curator of Kew Gardens, after the Australian explorer and botanist, Allen Cunningham. In the 1820's and 30's, Cunningham was involved in a number of expeditions into the inland of Eastern Australia and to the North Island of N.Z., during which he collected many new plants. The discovery of the Darling Downs in Qld is credited to him, with his name commemorated by nearby fern-rich, Cunningham's Gap National Park. He was made Colonial Botanist to NSW in 1835, succeeding his younger brother, Richard, who was killed by aborigines earlier that year whilst exploring. With his health seriously impaired by the rigours of his various excursions, Allen Cunningham died in 1839 in Sydney at the age of 48. His remains are to be found in an obelisk erected to his memory in the Sydney Botanic Gardens.

Cyathea marcescens - skirted tree fern - The species name literally means "withering" in Latin, and refers to the tendency of the old fronds not to fall away on withering. This results in the characteristic skirt. This interesting fern is a sterile hybrid between *C. australis* and *cunninghamii*. Although it was first collected in the Otways in the 1880's, it was not properly described until 1942, by the Victorian naturalist, Norman Wakefield, who collected specimens from far East Gippsland. It has also recently been reported in Tasmania.

Cyathea leichhardtiana - prickly tree fern - This was named after the ill-fated explorer, F.W.Ludwig Leichhardt, by the botanist Baron Ferdinand von Mueller, who was among many other things, the first Government Botanist to the State of Victoria and director of the Melbourne Botanic gardens.

DICKSONIA - this genus of about 25 species was first described by the Frenchman, Charles L'Heritier, in about 1788, to describe a tree fern (*D.arborescens*) found on the island of St.Helena. The name commemorates the an English botanist and nurseryman, James Dickson. *Dicksonia antartica* - soft tree fern - (antarticos - Greek for southern). This species was collected and described by deLabillardiere, who was naturalist aboard the d'Entrecasteau expedition of 1792-3. Records indicate almost the exact date and place of collection (23rd or 24th April, 1792 on the shores of Recherche Bay in southern Tasmania).

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FROM OUR QUEENSLAND MEMBER ROD PATTISON.

This new crested Doodia, of which only a single specimen has so far been found, was discovered by Rod Pattison near Caboolture (S.E. Queensland). It should not be confused with *Doodia caudata crestatata*.

The new plant has not been studied closely yet but it appears that it may be a cultivar of either the recently discovered *Doodia angustifolia* (yet to appear in these pages) or *Doodia heterophylla*. Spore has been sown, and it is hoped that like *Doodia Caudata Crestata*, it will reproduce truly.

In due course a plant will be submitted to The Sydney Herbarium for study.

NEW MEMBERS CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3.

R. & H. Yeomans - Ringwood - Victoria	Mr. Mark McDonnell, Para Hills S
Mr. W. Vella - Fairfield, Victoria	Mrs. R. Sherriff-Hoppers Crossi.
Mrs. Joan Murray - Nulkaba, New South Wales.	Ms. E Caripis-Burwood, Vict.
Mr. Peter Mills - Mentone, Victoria	
Mrs. Pam Welman - Tamworth, New South Wales.	
Mr. Andre Nightingale - Greensborough, Victoria.	

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D I A R Y D A T E S .

VENUE - HERBARIUM - BIRDWOOD AVENUE, STH. YARRA.

JULY MEETING - THURSDAY 16th - 8.00 P.M.

BILL FAHEY- "SELECTION OF TIMBER & CONSTRUCTION METHODS IN BUILDING FERNERIES AND SHADE HOUSES"

NOTE: In the event of a power strike on the evening of any meeting, we regret that the meeting must be cancelled.

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