

FERN SOCIETY OF VICTORIA  
NEWSLETTER

Volume 35, Number 3

May/June 2013





# Fern Society of Victoria Inc.

ABN 85 086 216 704

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## Objectives of the Fern Society of Victoria

To bring together persons interested in ferns and allied plants

To promote the gathering and dissemination of information about ferns

To stimulate public interest in ferns

To promote the conservation of ferns and their habitats

## Office bearers

<b>President</b>	Barry Stagoll	9844 1558	<a href="mailto:mirra@iimetro.com.au">mirra@iimetro.com.au</a>
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## Subscriptions

<b>Single</b>	\$17.00
<b>Pensioner/student</b>	\$14.00
<b>Family</b>	\$19.00
<b>Pensioner family</b>	\$16.00
<b>Overseas</b>	\$25.00 (overseas subscription payments by international bank cheque in \$Aus, by airmail please)

**Subscriptions fall due on 1 July each year**

## Meeting venues

The Kevin Heinze Garden Centre, 39 Wetherby Road, Doncaster [Melway 47 H1]

Other meetings as advertised in this Newsletter

## Timetable for evening general meetings

**7:30** Pre-meeting activities – sale of ferns, spore, books, merchandise and special effort tickets. Also library loans and lots of conversation.

**8:00** General meeting

**8:15** Workshops and demonstrations

**9:15** Fern identification and pathology, special effort draw

**9:45** Workshops and demonstrations

**10:00** Close

Opinions expressed in this Newsletter are the personal views of the authors and are not necessarily endorsed by the Society, nor does mention of a product constitute endorsement.

## President's Note

It's been a bit of a slow start to 2013 for our FSV activities, with both the garden visit on Sunday 17 March and the excursion to Warburton last Sunday, 21 April, attracting very small numbers of members. I'm moved to invite members to offer suggestions for future activities which the Committee might consider organising, as we would like to be in touch with your preferences. Lately, for times of the year most suitable weather-wise, we've been including more excursions - on the premise that many members would find these of more interest than evening meetings - comments on that aspect would be helpful in planning the activities program.

We had perfect autumn weather for the Sunday 21 April excursion to the Warburton area (inadvertently referred to in some of the relevant mentions in photo pages in the last Newsletter as the "Warrantye area", but I trust that no-one was misled about the destination by these). If you've not visited the sites we included in this excursion, they are highly recommended for a private visit sometime. The track to the La La Falls, and the Rainforest Gallery on the road to Mt. Donna Buang are absolutely replete with huge quantities of Cyatheas, Dicksonias, and other ferns in a wide range of species, growing in very scenic forest settings amongst a diverse range of trees

and shrubs. Of particular note along the La La Falls track are the sections where quite massive numbers of the venerable *Todea barbara* dominate the understory - a quite rare, but very uplifting, sight for fern enthusiasts to savour.

An experience akin to this at the Rainforest Gallery site is the sight along the track of a "field" (of very large extent) of large and showy *Blechnum wattsii* - but there's also a great deal more to see and respect there too in the wide variety of species, including large quantities of epiphytic ferns and other epiphytic plants inhabiting the noble *Nothofagus* (Southern Beech trees), *Athosperma* (Southern Sassafras trees), and other host plants along the banks of Cement Creek.

I look forward to members' feedback on preferred activities within the Society. I or any other Committee member will be happy to take phone calls or receive email contact on the subject.

*Barry Stagoll*

Cover image: *Doodia media*. Photo taken on Tiritiri Matangi Island, near Auckland, New Zealand by an anonymous NZ photographer and released via Wikipedia under the Creative Commons share alike



## Editor's Note

I have just received a letter from Keith Hutchinson, and although I was sad to hear that Keith has had a very long hospital stay (nearly 3 months), I was encouraged that he is out now and recovering. I'm sure that Keith's many friends through the Fern Society will join me in wishing him all the best for his recovery.

While in hospital, Keith managed to write the useful article that you will find in this Newsletter on magnesium and plant health. Keith's letter also included some photographs from fern shows in the early days of the Fern Society of Victoria. I hope I have been able to reproduce them adequately and I hope they please you all and thanks to Keith for taking the effort to send them to me. If others among you have historical photographs or other contributions, please send them in.

I have taken it upon myself to include in this Newsletter an interesting article originally published in the Journal of the Los Angeles International Fern Society. I apologise if this means duplication for a few of you, and for a few LAIFS members who may also receive our Newsletter. However the article (despite not mentioning any NZ ferns by name) is, I think, interesting enough to deserve the attention of our members. By the way the LAIFS does make a point of allowing most of their articles to be reproduced with appropriate acknowledgement, which I will continue to do when interesting content presents itself.

*Robin Wilson*

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## Fern Society of Victoria meetings — 2013

2.00 pm, Saturday 18th May

visit to Judy and Barry White's home at 34 Noble Way, Sunbury

Discussion on growing from spore.

Fern Competition: *Asplenium*

Thursday 27th June at 6:15 to 6:30 pm SHARP

Excursion to tissue culture laboratory, The University of Melbourne,  
Parkville

Location: meet on east side of Royal Parade footpath next to Melbourne University opposite Story Street,  
Tram stop 19, Melways page 2B C6.

Please RSVP by 26 June to Mirini Lang leaving a phone contact number. Contact Mirini on 0428 866  
109 or [mirini@ghostgum.com.au](mailto:mirini@ghostgum.com.au)

We will be introduced to the tissue culture laboratory by Andrea Kodym who has been researching  
propagation of bracken fern (*Pteridium esculentum*) from spore to field.

NB arrival time is 6:15 to 6:30 pm SHARP (after which the group will be led through the campus).

Parking is available in surrounding streets, and the University is very well served by frequent trams along  
Swanston Street.

See Page 14 for details of meetings for July and beyond.

## The importance of magnesium (Epsom salts) Keith Hutchinson

Magnesium is an important part of chlorophyll, which is responsible for the green colour of plants. It is necessary for photosynthesis and plants need it to make use of phosphorus. Sandy, acid soils and high rainfall areas will be light on magnesium, and using potash fertilizers can reduce magnesium in the soil or potting medium.

Dolomite - a mixture of magnesium and calcium carbonate - can help supply magnesium but is very slow to take effect. Quick results can be

obtained by spraying plants with a 1% solution (10 grams per litre) of magnesium sulphate at 2 week intervals for about 6 weeks.

You should soon see a lovely green sheen to your ferns.

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### *Polypodium* "Ekstrand" Barry Stagoll

Horticulture has developed another hybrid fern. The parents of this hybrid are *Polypodium formosanum* from southern China and Japan, and *Goniophlebium subauriculatum*. Mr John Ekstrand a nurseryman of California sowed spores of the parents together about 1975. He reported that of the two hybrid plants obtained in this sowing only one survived. This surviving sterile hybrid has been circulating among growers and exhibited in fern shows as Ekstrand's hybrid. The formal name honouring Mr Ekstrand is *Polypodium* x *Ekstrandii*

Further reading: "A *Goniophlebium* (*Polypodium*) Hybrid" by Barbara Joe Hoshizaki American Fern Journal 81 (3):89-94 (1991)

See photo on opposite page from March FSV competition.

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# Fern competition results

from March 2013 meeting (photos by Barry White)



First place: *Davallia canariensis*.  
Grown by Barry White

Second place: *Drynaria rigidula*. Grown by Don Fuller



Third place: *Polypodium* 'Ekstrand' Brenda Girdlestone  
[see note on opposite page]





# Images from the past

## Keith Hutchinson

The four images on this page are all from earlier years of the Fern Society of Victoria. All images and captions by Keith Hutchinson. Some splendid fern specimens pictured here, I trust they give pleasure to Keith and to all Members to see them reproduced here.

The Editor.



above: From an early FSV show at the Herbarium with Chris Goudy's daughter admiring some *Nephrolepis*, especially the golden one in the corner.



above: *Phyllitis scolopendrium* cultivar, photographed at an early FSV show. Keith notes: in the Aspleniaceae family; it is popular in Europe and America and grows well in a pot or in the garden, semi shade, loves lime. Seen growing out of a brick wall in England.

[Editor's note: I have just read of some new studies using DNA data that suggest *Phyllitis scolopendrium* should be moved into the genus *Asplenium*. I shall aim to summarise those studies in a future Newsletter.]

left: *Drynaria rigidula whitei*. (The table is over a metre wide!)



above: Some of Keith's *Platycerium* specimens. The fern at top left won a blue ribbon.





above: A memorable glade of *Todea barbara*  
on the La La Falls track (see President's Note).  
Photo: Barry Stagoll.



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# Sightseeing and Fern Hunting on New Zealand's South Island

George Long

*The FSV is grateful to the Los Angeles International Fern Society for their published permission to reprint articles from their Journal; this article was originally published in the LAIFS Journal volume 37 number 3 June 2010.*

If you have ever felt the desire to see ferns growing in their natural habitat, New Zealand is the place to go. Once you exit the major cities there is very little traffic. The roadways are clean and tidy and fairly well marked. You feel very safe as long as you keep your vehicle on the proper side of the road. In New Zealand, the steering wheel (as well as the driver) is on the right-hand side of the car, and you will be driving on the left-hand side of the road. This set of rules

must be mastered, or you could be in big trouble very quickly.

Our eleven-hour flight from Los Angeles took us non-stop to Auckland on the North Island. Since we spent three weeks enjoying the North Island about ten years ago, including Hamilton Gardens and the New Plymouth Garden Tours, we decided to spend a week in the Bay of Islands area on the North Island before heading south.



Fern and moss along the path at the White Heron Sanctuary. Photograph: George Long.



## Sightseeing and Fern Hunting on New Zealand's South Island (continued)

We headed to Christchurch, the Garden City, and a three-hour flight to the South Island. It just so happened that the day we arrived in Christchurch the 2009 Ellerslie International Flower Show was being held at the city's Botanical Garden on the Avon River, a short walk from downtown. The show attracted thousands of garden enthusiasts, and there were lots of competitive garden displays, products and wares and, of course, plenty of food. The only set back of the whole affair was that "old man weather" dropped a little liquid sunshine on us that day, and there were a lot of muddy shoes since the event was staged on the turf.

On this trip, our third to New Zealand, we decided to rent a small VW caravan camper and just do sightseeing on our own. We picked up our van near the airport, got a short briefing on how everything worked, a good road atlas, and Marilyn as the navigator, and we started our clockwise road trip of New Zealand. Our first major stop heading south on the east coast was Dunedin a coastal city full of Scottish heritage and Victorian and Edwardian architecture. One of the must-see points of interest in Dunedin is the Larnach Castle. It is located outside of town high up on the Otago Peninsula where there are various beds of beautiful flowering plants around the Castle grounds and many specimen tree ferns to the rear of the dwelling. The view of the coast is spectacular on a clear day from the upper roof deck. The way to see the backside of this city and then escape to the countryside is to buy a ticket on the train to the Taieri Gorge. This train leaves ANZAC Square and heads out of town then makes its way through farmland and into the river gorge itself. Along the way there are vast stands of trees and numerous varieties of ferns growing right down to the train tracks. Our ride ends up on a high fertile plain at the very small town of Middlemarch where the local city club members serve up cold drinks and hot snags for a nominal fee.

Upon leaving Dunedin we made our way south

on highway one and started to leave the coast behind winding our way through mostly grazing farm lands as we headed towards the Milford Sound and the west coast. This portion of our trip contained few ferns except for the occasional roadside gully or stream where growing conditions were favourable.

Arriving at Lake Te Anau, the gateway to the Milford Sound, we located a deluxe RV park and made arrangements for a tour the following morning to the Sound. The next morning we boarded a small Toyota Coaster bus which seats about twenty passengers and headed out for a full day of touring. The road took us across many streams and through some of the prettiest scenery yet with rugged mountains rising up from the valley floor. Our bus driver stopped often so we could take a few short walks off the main roadway and snap a few photos. Mirror Lakes was especially nice with the reflection of the surrounding peaks in its waters. On this day we were lucky to see a few Kea parrots flying near our bus and three mischievous ones at the Homer tunnel parking lot sitting on top of a car chewing on the window gaskets. Homer tunnel is a one-way tunnel with traffic signals to control the flow. Once through the tunnel it is just a short downhill descent to Milford Sound. We were lucky it was not raining the day of our visit and the weather was cool but fine. We began our cruise of the Sound on the big and beautiful red and white *Lady of the Sound* cruise ship. This ship is massive and holds a few hundred passengers with three or four decks to roam around in. This vessel plies the waters of the Sound getting you right under several cascading wall falls that tumble down the vertical rock faces several hundred feet and eventually into the Sound. Various ferns can be seen everywhere with lots of tall tree ferns anchored tightly in some of the deeper gullies. During this tour the crew has prepared a real nice hot lunch buffet with all the trimming for us, and it makes for a great experience. This cruise included a stop at the Milford Underwater Observatory where you

## Sightseeing and Fern Hunting on New Zealand's South Island (continued)

briefly unload and go several meters beneath the water to view live sea life in large glass enclosures. This day on the Sound we saw several waterfalls, but on a rainy day they say there are hundreds to see which normally don't flow unless there is a lot of rain. This concludes our trip for the day as we board our bus for the two hour drive back to Lake Te Anau.

Our next major stop was the resort town of Queenstown nestled beside the large and beautiful Lake Wakatipu with its sparkling clear water. Here one could enjoy the scenery, take a lake cruise on the *TSS Earnslaw*, an old vintage steam boat, bike ride along the lake esplanade or ride the gondola cableway to the Skyline Chalet for a excellent evening meal and a view of the city lights. Queenstown has loads of character, quaint shops and lots of fine dining. A short drive out of Queenstown one will encounter lots of ferns along the roadway on the drive to the very small community of Glenorchy. Just up the highway, about forty where you can catch a jet boat for an exhilarating ride up the Dart River where you skim along cloudy aquamarine waters from the glacier melt up stream. There are a couple of nice eateries here where one can pick up a hot cappuccino with exquisite designs created in the creamy froth along with homemade pastries of all shapes and sizes. While in Glenorchy you may want to check out the fur shop specializing in hand made clothing items fashioned from real possum pelts.

Once again leaving Queenstown we took highway six and made our way to the town of Wanaka situated on Lake Wanaka and drove on past Lake Hawea. These two enormous fresh water lakes run for several miles along the road. Slowly leaving the lakes shoreline, we started gaining elevation as we entered Mount Aspiring National Park. This area is totally forested with high mountain peaks and loads of ferns of all kinds. The scenery is spectacular as the road way winds its way along the Haast river gorge for miles. This is a great place to pull off the road and stroll through some of the park's many trails where ferns abound. Arriving on the west coast at the small town of

Haast there is a great visitor center where you can obtain lots of information about what to do and see in the lush forested surrounding area. The beach is very close by and deserves a brief stop and walk about to stretch your legs and have a look at the Tasman Sea. Driving North from Haast along the west coast of New Zealand is probably the prettiest part of our entire trip and the area where the most

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## Sightseeing and Fern Hunting on New Zealand's South Island (continued)

ferns are to be found. This area receives vast amounts of rain annually and is a perfect environment for ferns to live and thrive. Cruising up the coastal highway on the way to Fox Glacier and Franz Josef, the scenery often makes you feel like you're driving in a tunnel of trees, vegetation and ferns of every description.

Upon arriving in the very small community of Fox Glacier we found a caravan park for the night and made arrangements for a helicopter flight the next morning at eleven o'clock. The next day the sun was shining and blue skies abounded as we headed for our morning flight around the various glaciers in the region. This would be our first flight ever in a helicopter, but I felt safe and comfortable after I saw the two slick red and white aircraft flying in with their earlier loads of passengers. Our craft lifted off and soon we were gaining altitude as we manouvered up through canyons and approached the face of the glacier. Definitely a ride of a life time. Don't miss it.

Just up the highway, about forty miles north, is another attraction we would recommend. That is a visit to White Heron Sanctuary. I would suggest you book this in advance or take your chance and buy your ticket in the town of Whataroa at the office along the main road. A ticket will buy a seat in a jet boat that takes you down river to the coast several miles away. If you are lucky you may see some huge brown trout in the crystal clear water at the dock while loading. This ride is fantastic, and you will be whisked for about one half hour down to the Waitangiroto Nature Preserve, a stones throw away from the ocean. Here you unload from the boat and make your way through mangrove trees on an elevated wood walk- way for about two hundred feet to a large blind with observation decks and pull up doors to view the birds. We were provided with good binoculars so we could get a really good look at the birds in their nests which were about one hundred feet away. The day we were there we saw a few remaining white heron chicks ready to

fledge the nest, cormorants, spoon bill ibis and wild ducks. Surrounding us everywhere were very tall trees and palms covered with thousands of small ferns. Along the catwalk trail to and from our boat we saw numerous varieties of ferns including filmy ferns, kidney ferns and umbrella ferns which we have never seen growing in the wild. We took several pictures of these forest beauties.

Our trip so far has taken us just a little over half way around the South Island since leaving Christchurch, and heading clockwise, about two weeks ago. We are in the heart of fern country and there are new sights to see every day, but we will save the rest of the trip for another time.

With over one hundred and sixty-four known species of ferns to be found growing in New Zealand, it is a truly great destination for seeing these gems growing in habitat. The scenery is outstanding, especially along the West Coast with very little humidity, few biting critters, an exchange rate that is usually favourable with your money going further, little traffic and very friendly people. You can preview all that New Zealand has to offer with a click of your mouse on your computer and even book your entire trip. My suggestions are do not go in the rainy season, do rent a caravan and do your own thing and take a good digital camera with lots of capacity to capture those special sights you will want to remember.

A special note is that all public libraries in New Zealand offer free internet service on their own computers during the week. We often took advantage of this freebie to keep in touch with home. If you love ferns then you will definitely love New Zealand and its gracious people.

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2.00 pm, Saturday 18th May

visit to Judy and Barry White's home at 34 Noble Way, Sunbury

Discussion on growing from spore.

Fern Competition: *Asplenium*

Thursday 27th June at 6:15 to 6:30 pm SHARP

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Parkville

Location: meet on east side of Royal Parade footpath next to Melbourne University opposite Story Street,  
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Please RSVP by 26 June to Mirini Lang leaving a phone contact number. Contact Mirini on 0428 866  
109 or [mirini@ghostgum.com.au](mailto:mirini@ghostgum.com.au)

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NB arrival time is 6:15 to 6:30 pm SHARP (after which the group will be led through the campus).

Parking is available in surrounding streets, and the University is very well served by frequent trams along  
Swanston Street.

1.30 pm, Saturday 20th July

visit to nursery of Chris and Lorraine Goudey

Chris will give a short talk

Details to follow in the next Newsletter

Meetings for August and beyond in 2013 will be notified in forthcoming Newsletters.



## Fern Society of Victoria Spore Bank

Fern spore is free to members of the Fern Society of Victoria who donate spore. Otherwise the cost is members 50 cents per sample, non-members \$1, plus \$1.00 to cover postage and handling. Available at meetings or by mail from Barry White, 34 Noble Way, Sunbury, Vic. 3429 Australia, Ph. (03) 9740 2724. There is no charge for spore for overseas members, however to cover postage two International Reply Coupons would be appreciated; or alternatively spore may be exchanged. International Reply Coupons are being phased out in favour of PayPal via the FSV website. Overseas non-members may purchase spore at three packets for each International Reply Coupon, plus two coupons per order to cover postage and handling. There is a limit of 20 packets per order. Some spores are in short supply please include alternatives. Queries can be emailed to: Barry White [barry\\_white1@msn.com.au](mailto:barry_white1@msn.com.au). The following list is current as of December 2012, but consult the web page at

<http://home.vicnet.net.au/~fernsvic/Sporlist.html> for updates and for details of payment options for spore purchases. Thank you to the spore donors who are listed on the web page.

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Adiantum hispidulum 6/12	Cyathea cooperi 'Cinnamon' 4/11	Pellaea cordata 7/09
Adiantum raddianum 'Le Grand Morgan' 6/12	Cyathea exilis 12/12	Pellaea falcata 1/11
Adiantum raddianum 'Triumph' 6/12	Cyathea leichhardtiana 8/12	Pellaea hastata 5/10
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