



November 2024 Newsletter

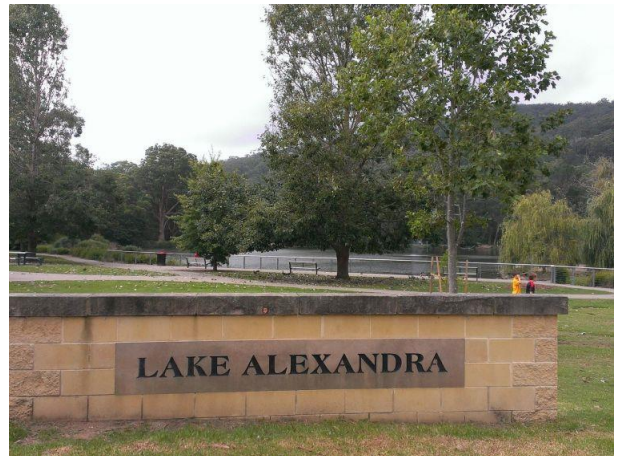
Edition No 202

**TULIP TOP TOUR**



**Morning Tea  
Lake Alexandra, Mittagong**

Lake Alexandra in Mittagong is a man made lake which started life as a dam supplying water for engines hauling coal to the Fitzroy iron mines almost 140 years ago. A park land reserve surrounds the lake and aquatic birdlife lives in profusion on the water and shores.



## Retford Park House, Bowral

Retford Park's European history extends back to grants of land promised to Edward Riley senior by Governor Macquarie in 1821. The property remained in the Riley family until the 1880's when it was acquired by Samuel Hordern who renamed it Retford Park in recognition of family links to Retford in Nottinghamshire, England.

The house, a beautiful Victorian Italianate mansion, designed by Albert Bond, was built by Samuel Hordern (of the well-known retailing family) in 1887 for use as a cattle stud, breeding Jersey and Ayrshire cattle.

James Fairfax purchased it in 1964 for use as a country residence and, over many years, developed the surrounds into an extensive, superb garden and arboretum, where no expense was spared to create the best possible large scale Southern Highlands garden.

James made various other additions to the property that became famous: the swimming pool pavilion designed by Guildford Bell, the Dining Room mural by Donald Friend, an emu-walk, an aviary, various sculpture gardens and more to create a remarkable property that he adored.

In 2016 James bequeathed Retford Park, estimated to be worth \$18 million, to the National Trust believing it should be preserved for the enjoyment and benefit of future generations.



Compulsory footwear for inside the house



One of several reception rooms



Dining Room with mural by Donald Friend

## Southern Highlands Botanic Gardens

The site of the Southern Highlands Botanic Gardens is adjacent to the suburb of East Bowral. The earliest subdivision of East Bowral was part of the 2400 acres of land granted to John Oxley, famous explorer of the early colony of New South Wales, by the Governor in 1823. That land, together with later purchases extended the Oxley holdings to 5000 acres from Old South Road west to Berrima. To the east of Old South Road (on which the site of SHBG is located) was the Riley Estate of 3000 acres granted to Edward Riley, an early Sydney businessman, whose son George Riley settled there in 1831.

From 1858 for the next 50 years the town of Bowral, and early suburbs in East Bowral towards Old South Road, were developed on subdivisions of the original Oxley Estate

The site of the Southern Highlands Botanic Gardens is located on Old South Road, formerly Mitchell's Great Southern Road, constructed in 1819 following early exploration by Hume, Throsby and Wilde. The road is associated with early land grants in the district, which were given in 1829 to veterans of the NSW Corps, some of whom were Waterloo veterans.

The Oxley Estate and surrounding areas was primarily farming land. In the late 1880s a slaughter yard was erected on the site and a skin shed was erected in the early 1900s, where



hides were hung out to dry. Next door was a slaughterhouse, where local butchers killed their meat to sell in Bowral. The slaughter yard and skin shed were an integral aspect of the rural and agricultural economy of the Southern Highlands. The skin shed finally collapsed in 2006.

In the late 1990s easy access from Sydney to the Southern Highlands was gained with the F5 and M5 motorways, spurring residential development into East Bowral, east of Old South Road. The development replaced the rural countryside and its initial 'newness', with large houses, no trees and no immediate shopping was nicknamed 'Legoland'.

Following that residential development of East Bowral there remained a dog-leg shape of 33 acres of land on the corner of Old South Road and Kangaloon Road, extending through the Ponds of Reflections created by council. That remaining 33 acres became the site for the newest botanic garden in Australia, the Southern Highlands Botanic Gardens.



**Our Accommodation**  
**The Briars Country Lodge**  
**Burradoo**



View from motel room



Happy Hour

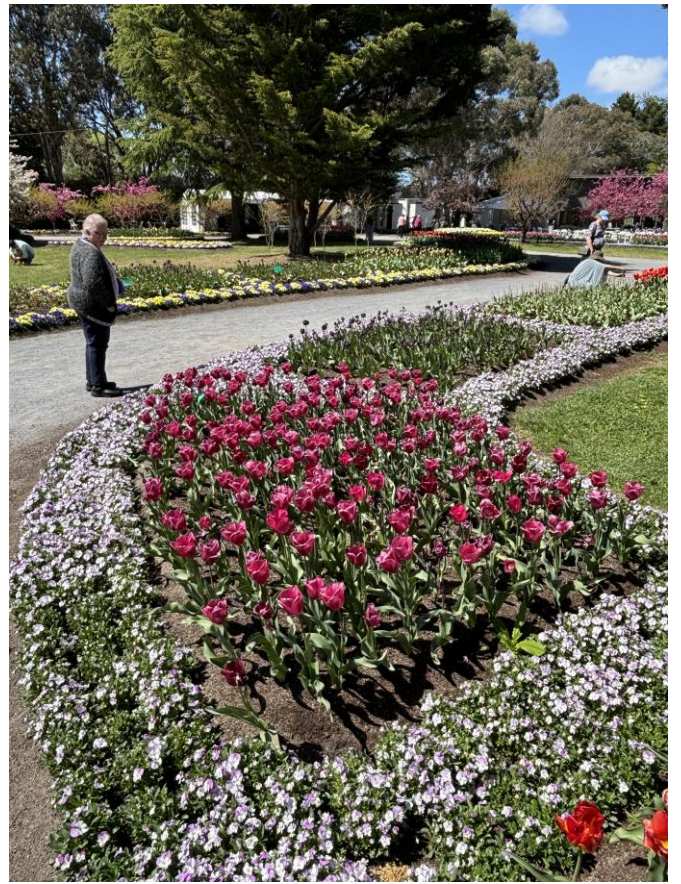


## Breakfast

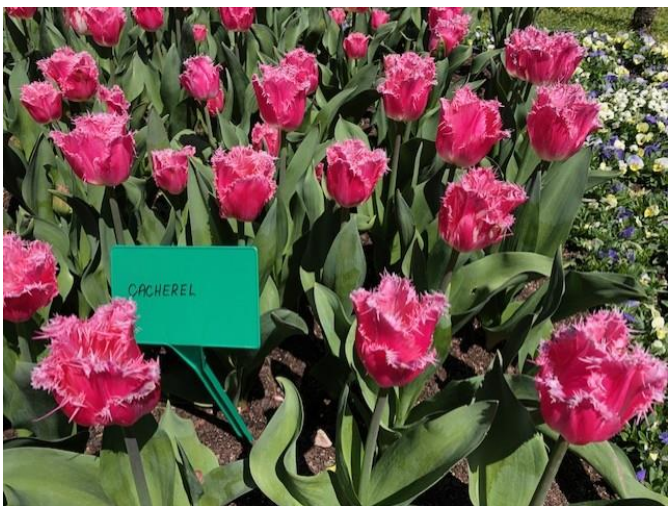


## Tulip Top Gardens











View across the valley from “the lookout”

