

# BOTANY HISTORICAL TRUST

NEWSLETTER



DECEMBER 2019



# BOTANY HISTORICAL TRUST (BHT) PRESIDENT'S REPORT



*Jacqueline Milledge, Mayor Joe Awada, BHT President, Anne Slattery, Councillor Scott Morrissey, Councillor Dorothy Rapisardi and Councillor Liz Barlow*

2019 has been an unusual year for the BHT, with some significant 'good' stories and a few rather disappointing ones. For personal reasons, I took leave as President from May until November 4 but in those six months I kept in touch and was kept updated with BHT activities and issues

Our 2019 program did not go according to plan though the few events we did hold were very successful and rewarding. For various reasons, we only managed to carry out two of the six planned activities this year. Our first planned excursion had to be cancelled. This was, I thought a particularly good activity with tours and talks at Government House Sydney, the Sydney Police and Justice Museum and the NSW Parliament. The two reasons for the cancellation were the late unavailability of transport and responses from BHT Members. I hope we can go ahead with this excursion next year.

Fortunately, our second event, a talk on the 1918 - 1919 Pneumonic Influenza Epidemic was extremely successful, thanks to the brilliant research and presentation by our former Community History Librarian, Jenny MacRitchie. Other planned events including a Port Hacking History Cruise were also postponed, basically because of my personal leave. The last excursion, the Kokoda Memorial Walkway guided by WW2 veteran, 96 year-old Reg Chard did go ahead and I thank Chris Hanna our Vice President for leading the group.

The program for 2020 follows in the Newsletter and includes a suggestion from BHT Executive Member, Richard Smolenski for a proposed a talk and later in the year a tour of the Snowy Mountains Hydro Scheme. Richard has a special interest in and great knowledge of the Snowy Scheme as his father worked and tragically was killed working on this worldwide significant project.

Two wonderful achievements of the Trust this year were the installation of plaques at the Botany and Mascot War Memorials, honouring our WW2 local servicemen and women and their families and also the restoration and rededication of the memorial plinth and a new plaque at Arthur Park Botany. The WW2 plaques were dedicated on Anzac Day this year and sponsored by the BHT and Council.

Strangely, there were not specific plaques recognising WW2 participants at either location. On 15 August, the very damaged and neglected Memorial at Arthur Park was both restored and rededicated on 15 August, the 74th Anniversary marking Victory in the Pacific, 15 August 1945. All occasions were magnificent successes and supported strongly by members of the present Australia armed forces. I was privileged to attend both occasions.

There are some thanks and farewells that must be made. Our outstanding Community History, Jenny MacRitchie left us in September for an exciting new role at Strathfield Council. It is said often but never more truly that our loss is Strathfield's gain. Jenny is not only a brilliant Community History Librarian but she is also the most professional, ethical and industrious person with whom one can hope to work. I treasure the personal and working relationship we had and also shared with our other colleague, Paula Grunseit.

I look forward to working in the year ahead with Kirsten Broderick, another wonderful Librarian and a person I already know and respect through collaborating on the Ron Rathbone History Award. On the administrative side, Angela Hume and her assistant Heather Kaulima succeeded the much-valued Hayla Doris in 2018. Bobbi Mayne and Leonie Maher took up the same roles in 2019.

I cannot speak highly enough of the dedication, ability and work ethic of all five women.

Our excursions, events, plaques and just about everything would not be possible without them.

I'd also like to welcome back Councillors Dorothy Rapisardi and Scott Morrissey as Council's representatives on the BHT Executive and Auntie Barb Simms-Keeley representing our Indigenous Community. Our new Mayor, Joe Awada has already shown a real interest in the Trust, which is much appreciated. I express my gratitude to the BHT Executive and Members for their ongoing friendship and support. Finally, a genuine thank you to General Manager, Meredith Wallace for her strong support. No request seems to be a problem for Meredith and believe me at times there have been many controversial requests if not demands.

2020 and the years ahead are going to present some real challenges to the BHT. Since our last AGM, we have been trying to prevent the destruction of our local heritage against the agendas of developers, especially in the Botany Local Heritage precinct. We are very concerned about the future of the historic Botany Police Station, a State Government responsibility but a significant historical property and asset that seems, like several other nearby buildings, being allowed by the current owners to deteriorate deliberately, to the point where they cannot be saved. 1445-1447 Botany Road would appear to be one such property! Heritage is the core interest of the Trust and Members should be prepared to actively save what remains.

I wish everyone a wonderful Christmas Season and a healthy and safe 2020.

**Anne-Maria Slattery | BHT President**

## EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Anne Slattery – President  
Alice McCann – Senior Vice-President  
Christopher Hanna – Vice President  
Robert Hanna – Secretary  
Richard Smolenski – Treasurer

## COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Jacqueline Milledge  
Peter Orlovich  
Barbara Keeley  
Councillor Dorothy Rapisardi  
Councillor Scott Morrissey

THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING WAS HELD ON MONDAY 2 DECEMBER 2019 AND THE NEXT MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE WILL TAKE PLACE ON MONDAY 3 FEBRUARY 2020



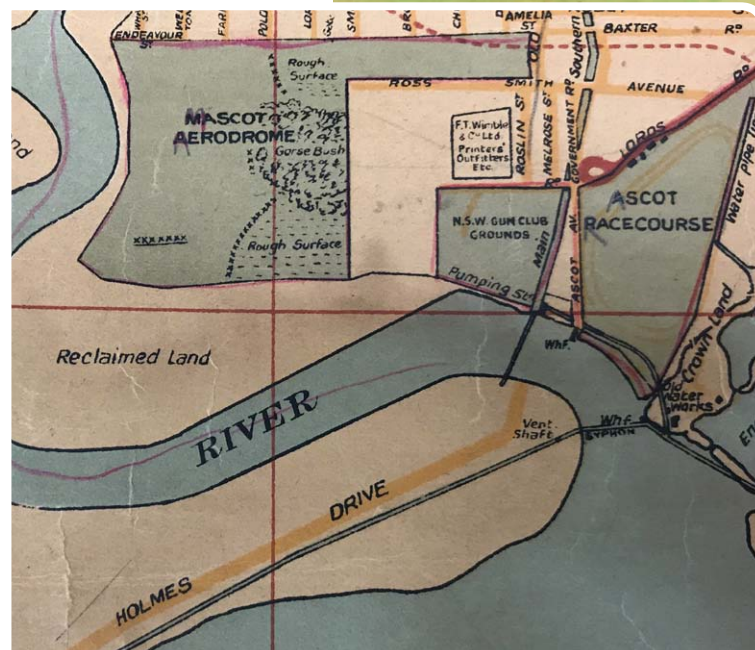
# COMMUNITY HISTORY COLLECTIONS REASSESSED

The amalgamation of 2016 provided an opportunity for the Library's Community History team to look with fresh eyes at its collections to see what new light they could shed on the many early connections across the Bayside area. This ongoing process has received fresh impetus due to a recent map digitisation grant from the State Library of NSW.



Early maps are always a wealth of historical information, but especially so in an area such as Bayside that has undergone major geographical changes. To give just one example, the diversion of the Cooks River between 1948 and 1952 to allow for the expansion of Sydney Airport obliterated a whole stretch of land and permanently changed the landscape of the surrounding suburbs. The visual story told by maps created before and after these years prove the old adage that a picture is worth a thousand words.

The State Library grant will enable the digitisation of some of the early maps held at Rockdale Library. Understandably, most of these maps are of the former Rockdale Council area. However, the library does hold some maps that show the wider area, including the former City of Botany Bay area. One such map – undated but from the 1920s – shows the Mascot Council area and provides clear details of the Mascot Aerodrome, even to the point of indicating the “Gorse Bush” on the site. It also shows the NSW Gun Club Grounds and, above them, the site of F. T. Wimble & Co Ltd Printers.



*A section of an undated, badly damaged map held by Rockdale Library showing the site of F. T. Wimble & Co to the east of Mascot Aerodrome, above the NSW Gun Club Grounds*





*This picture of "Scarboro' House" – the Wimble family home – was sent by Mr & Mrs Wimble to friends and family as a Christmas card in 1907*

F. T. Wimble & Co was an early printers and ink manufacturing company owned and run by Frederick Wimble. While Frederick Wimble was building his business at Mascot in the 1890s, he was also leasing himself a family home at Dolls Point.

Mr Wimble's family home was one of the grandest and most well-known buildings in the Sans Souci area. In fact, it had originally been built as a hotel and would, well over a century later, become the Scots College Brighton Preparatory School. The building is still most often referred to by the name it went by when it was owned and run by St George Hospital: Primrose House. However, when it was opened in 1891 it was called the Scarborough Hotel and it was large enough to provide rooms for forty couples.

By 1891, the Sans Souci peninsula had developed into a highly fashionable Sydney holiday spot frequented by rich businessmen and prominent politicians. The growing popularity of Sans Souci had been inextricably linked with the growing success and popularity of two hotels that existed before the Scarborough Hotel was built.

The first hotel in the area – the Sans Souci Hotel – had been established as early as 1863. It was not an immediate success. In fact, one early licensee, Louis Dettman, failing miserably to attract visitors to his hotel, resigned with the parting declaration that the establishment should have been called the "Sans Cent Hotel". The Sans Souci Hotel did not turn a profit until its licence was taken up by William Edward Rust.

William Rust was a most innovative licensee. He created pleasure grounds around the hotel and introduced boat racing and other sporting competitions so visitors would have a reason to come and activities to amuse themselves. He built a boatshed and wharf to make travel easier for visitors coming from Sydney. Rust also planted many of the Norfolk Island Pines that would become an identifying feature of the area.

William Rust later took the same approach with the Prince of Wales Hotel - a hotel he built from scratch on land he purchased at Sandringham. As well as creating a fine hotel building, Rust also spent a great deal of effort on improving his new hotel's surroundings: landscaping the grounds, planting trees and creating private bowers and grottoes. Rust also extensively advertised Sans Souci in Sydney newspapers, stressing its accessibility and privacy (ideal for honeymooners), beautiful beaches, picnic spots, sailing and fishing locations - all provided at reasonable prices.

What is interesting about William Rust is that, after his marriage in 1854, he had moved to Botany and started his career in the hotel trade by working at the Sir Joseph Banks Hotel. He would eventually rise to the position of manager there and even, in 1870, briefly take over its licence from John McMahon. It is tempting to speculate that Rust's inspiration for the successful transformation of the Sans Souci Hotel from "a disreputable 'grog shop' patronised by timber cutters, fishermen and shooting enthusiasts into a popular family picnic venue" had its genesis in his years at the Sir Joseph Banks Hotel at Botany.

Regardless of the source of William Rust's ideas, their implementation was a complete success, and his Prince of Wales Hotel became one of Sans Souci's most popular venues. In the 1950s, the hotel was taken over by Mick and Mavis Moylan and was referred to as "Mick Moylan's" until it was demolished in the 1990s. The building may be gone, but stories about it still abound and it is appropriate now to reflect that its creation and early success were due to a one-time licensee of one of the most iconic hotels in Botany.



*William Edward Rust. Rust lived in both Botany and Sans Souci and, over the length of a forty-year-career, worked at the Sir Joseph Banks Hotel, the Sans Souci Hotel and the Prince of Wales Hotel*

It is the uncovering of connections such as this that is making the process of reassessing our Community History collections so worthwhile. The lives and careers of men such as Frederick Wimble and William Rust spanned an area once governed by separate municipal authorities. They provide just one example of the myriad of personal and professional links that criss-crossed our area long before it became Bayside.

**Kirsten Broderick | Community History Librarian**

## References

Conroy, Elizabeth (2017). *City of Botany Bay: A Thematic History*. Bayside Council, NSW.

Rathbone, R. W. (Ronald William) (2002). *The Sans Souci Peninsula: a history of the suburbs of Dolls Point, Monterey, Ramsgate, Sans Souci and Sandringham*. Book House, Glebe, NSW

Photographs are from the Bayside Library Service photograph collection and can be viewed online at [www.library.bayside.nsw.gov.au](http://www.library.bayside.nsw.gov.au)

For more information about the Bayside Library Service map collection please contact Kirsten Broderick: [kirsten.broderick@bayside.nsw.gov.au](mailto:kirsten.broderick@bayside.nsw.gov.au)





# THE KOKODA MEMORIAL WALKWAY TOUR

The Kokoda Memorial Walkway Tour took place on 5 September 2019 and twelve members attended the tour. Our very capable and affable Vice President, Chris Hanna led the group as President Anne Slattery was on six months' leave.

The Tour was a memorable and emotional affair, largely due to our amazing guide, 96 years' young veteran, Mr Reg Chard who was on the Track and told it like it was, warts and all! His memory is outstanding and his story telling brilliant. Even grown men (and women) were reduced to tears.

For those Members unable to attend the excursion, it is recommended that they make the effort to go to the Memorial Walkway. Public transport is relatively easy for those who don't drive and the actual walk is a comfortable one, with many seats along the way. Most days there will be a WW2 veteran there to assist, though possibly not Reg Chard and there are also recorded devices to inform visitors about the Walkway.

View of the walkway



View of the Kokoda Memorial



Kokoda Tour Guide Reg Chard



# ASCOT LODGE BY MAEVE BYRNE

One of the joys of our Mascot 100 project has been the community stories residents, past and present, have shared with us. They offer a unique perspective you won't find in any history books.

Maeve Byrne grew up literally on the edge of the airport, in a house that was built for the caretaker of Ascot Racecourse. When she called it home, it was owned by the Department of Civil Aviation who had resumed it in mid-1940s for the airport's expansion.

Maeve has many fond memories including seeing "many famous people pass our house" as it was located close to Gate 12, a special gate that is still in operation today. "The Queen & Prince Phillip, Prince Charles, The Pope (a few of them), The PM's, the Bay City Rollers," were just some of the people she saw.

"Another big day was when Concorde first flew into Australia. There were people everywhere. My brother and I set up a lemonade stall for 10c a glass. People use to come on weekends and plane watch as a pastime. They'd park for hours down the end of the driveway that ran up to the house."



*James  
Byrne (Jim)  
outside  
Ascot  
Lodge with  
his sons.*

*Courtesy  
of Maeve  
Byrne*

Maeve has kindly allowed us to share her story:

"My family first moved into the house known as Ascot Lodge some time in 1963. The address we always used was - Ascot Lodge, General Holmes Drive, Mascot NSW 2020. There was no house number back then and after my parents left in 1992 after my dad's retirement, it became 1 General Holmes Drive.

My parents had immigrated to Australia from Dublin, Ireland, in April 1958, arriving in Sydney in May 1958. My dad was a qualified Electrician in Ireland and had been working in England to save money before immigrating to Australia with my mum on their wedding day, as work in Ireland was very scarce during that time. My dad did a variety of jobs and had to do some extended training before his electrical trade card was accepted in Australia. He then got a job based at Mascot Airport in late 1959 not long after my eldest brother Mark Byrne was born in September 1959.

So, my father James Byrne (Jim) was employed as an Electrician by the Department of Civil Aviation (DCA) at Mascot airport when a job opportunity then came up for my dad to transfer to Norfolk Island for a 4yr secondment and become one of the Electricians on the runway on the island. My mum, dad and eldest brother Mark left for Norfolk Island and settled into their new way of life. They loved it there and in April 1961 my brother Brendan Byrne was born and in November 1962 my brother Ronan Byrne was born. The secondment finished in 1963 and my parents and brothers all returned to Sydney.





Ascot Lodge,  
1938.

*Viewed from  
intersection of  
Botany Road  
and Lords Road.  
This section of  
road was later  
renamed General  
Holmes Drive in  
the late 1940s/  
early 1950s.*

*Image courtesy  
of State Records  
of NSW*

The DCA then offered my Dad Ascot Lodge at very low rent as part of his job package. It was in a terrible state, having been let to become neglected and overgrown - there was an old caretaker living there before them and the house needed a lot of repair and TLC to become liveable for a family. It took weeks for cleaners, painters, carpenters and gardeners to bring it up to scratch.

It was a federation style house originally built as the Caretaker's Cottage for the Ascot Racecourse that used to stand on the site that is now part of the airport. It was a 3-bedroom double brick house, with 9-foot ceilings and every room had plaster cornice work, picture railings and skirting Boards. It had 1 bathroom with W/C claw foot bath and shower, an internal laundry with old concrete tubs, a rather small kitchen, lounge room with a fireplace and a half wrap veranda.

My mum found horse shoes and race books (one book from 1932) in the old garages, which we think may have originally been stables from the Racecourse that was located near this site. There were 2 Norfolk Pines at front that had been planted before my family moved in and a row of blue hydrangeas.

My Dad then planted many plants - A fruit salad Frangipani that became massive, Magnolia trees, Rose bushes, Camellias, Hibiscus, other shrubs and - 2 Rubber plants (which grew to be enormous and nearly turned the place into a jungle by the time it was demolished last year). Later on, the fireplace was bricked in and clad in fake sandstone and one half of the veranda was closed in to become another bedroom for my 2 middle brothers to share. I was born in 1966 and had my own bedroom and my eldest brother had his own bedroom.



We have many fond memories from living at Ascot Lodge. As we didn't have neighbours, we felt like it was our own adventure playground and with three older brothers, I would go adventuring with them. There is a storm water drain/tunnel down the back near where the house was. We used to spend a lot of time down there, exploring, walking the tunnel that used to come up on one of the runways, as well as down to the Mill Pond and along the train tracks. One day we found an amazing raft – Straight out of Huckleberry Finn on the Mill Pond. Wooden with 44-gallon drums for ballast! It was really an amazing place to grow up.

We used to often walk the train tracks to Botany Pool, sneaking into the pool via a hole in the fence! There was a section of the train tracks that went over a bridge that was over part of the Mill Pond – It was very much like the scene in Stand By Me where the kids are walking the train tracks and a train comes. We only ever had to run twice but there were big gaps in the sleepers on the track and my brothers used to say there were electric eels in the pond!

We used to have amazing cracker night parties there before fireworks were banned from households and cracker night became a thing of the past. My parents used to have New Year's Eve parties there in the 70's and my eldest brother used to have great parties when he and my brothers were mid to late teens and into their early 20's. As the house was on its own we never had any noise complaints either.

We used to have brilliant games of hide 'n' seek and I still think my eldest brother invented the first ever Slip 'n' Slide. He got a huge plastic ground sheet that my dad had, and tent pegged it into the ground. Our garden had a small hill as well, so he pegged down the garden hose and got our mum's Palmolive dishwashing liquid and we used to spend hours of fun on that, making a mud pool at the bottom!

As the house was situated near what was Gate 12 of the airport, we got to see many famous people pass our house as that was the private gate that was used for famous people. Such people were: The Queen & Prince Phillip, Prince Charles, The Pope (a few of them), The PMs, the Bay City Rollers. Also, another big day was when Concorde first flew into Australia. There were people everywhere. My brother and I set up a lemonade stall for 5c a glass. People used to come on weekends and plane watch as a pastime. They'd park for hours down the end of the driveway that ran up to the house.

There were planes, trains and automobiles. There was a level crossing with boom gates added in the 1980s when the goods trains ran down to Port Botany.

There was an old homeless guy that we called "Wolfie" who lived down in some bushes in the wasteland behind our house. He worked for State Rail but lived in the bushes. He kept himself to himself and he lived down there for years.

And all this was not even a 5-minute walk to Botany Road, where we met civilisation. My mum owned a ladies clothing boutique at 1157 Botany Road at Mascot – it was called Toni Barclay Fashions and she had a great little thriving business there, serving all the ladies in Mascot from 1978 to 1992. We knew most of the shop owners along the strip during that time. It had a real community feel about it. We went to St Therese's Primary School. It was a great place to grow up."

Ascot Lodge was demolished in 2018.

In 2019 the opening of the new Wentworth Avenue underpass led to the closure of this section of General Holmes Drive.

**Samantha Sinnayah | Curator**





# Arthur Park Memorial



*Representatives from the Military, Councillor Dorothy Rapisardi, Ron Hoenig, Member for Heffron, Dorothy Arthur, Daughter in Law of George Arthur, Councillor Bill Saravinovski, Former Mayor and BHT President, Anne Slattery*



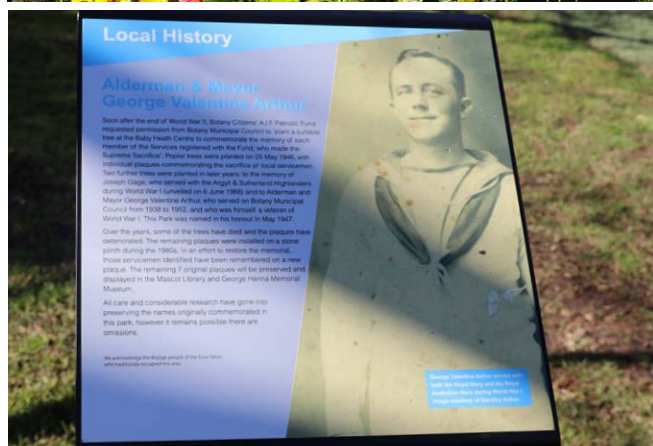
A new memorial plaque and interpretative sign was unveiled at a ceremony on 15 August 2019 to coincide with the 74th Anniversary of Victory in the Pacific and the end of World War 2 for Australia.

Councillor Bill Saravinovski, Former Mayor, Ron Hoenig Member for Heffron, Hon Matt Thistlethwaite Member for Kingsford Smith and BHT President, Anne Slattery, all spoke and highlighted the local and national significance of the occasion and of the sacrifices of the three branches of the armed forces and of their families.

The small plaques that were removed from the old memorial plinth will be remounted in a suitable format and displayed in the George Hanna Memorial Museum at Mascot Library.

The work was funded by an Armistice Grant from the Department of Veteran Affairs and Bayside Council provided assistance in kind.

Arthur Park will be upgraded in 2020 and the memorial and interpretative sign will be relocated to align with the new design.





# EVENTS AND PROGRAM 2020

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**NOTE: NOTHING IS PLANNED POST SEPTEMBER 2020 UNTIL AFTER THE 2020 NSW LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTIONS IN SEPTEMBER 2020**

The following activities are proposed for Members in 2020. Confirmation of events and costings will be presented at the first Executive Meeting on 3 February 2020. Details will be forwarded to all Members as soon as possible after the meeting.

## BHT EXCURSIONS

- \* **An All Day Excursion**  
including guided tours of Government House Sydney, the NSW Justice & Police Museum and the NSW Parliament House followed by lunch at the NSW Parliament House in March or April 2020. This excursion was postponed from 2019
- \* **Snowy Mountains Tour**  
A two to three day trip in late August or early September 2020
- \* **Port Hacking History Tour**  
Three hour cruise on the Tom Thumb III followed by lunch at the Cronulla RSL in June or July 2020

## BHT TALKS

- \* Speaker from Wollongong University on the Snowy Mountains Scheme in April or May 2020
- \* Two further talks will be confirmed at a later date for May and August 2020

## BAYSIDE EVENTS

- \* **Lunar New Year**  
Saturday 1 February 2020  
3:00 pm to 8:00 pm  
Central Park  
Church Avenue, Mascot
- \* **Multicultural Fair**  
Saturday 7 March 2020  
11:00 am to 3:00 pm  
Eastlakes Reserve
- \* **Anzac Day March**  
Sunday 19 April 2020  
2:15 pm to 4:00 pm  
Mascot Library to Mascot Memorial Park

## BAYSIDE PROGRAMS

- \* **Tech Savvy Seniors**  
Free computer and Technology Training Programs for Seniors  
5 February to 4 March 2020 at Eastgardens Library

**Online bookings are required! Visit:**  
[baysidelibrary.eventbrite.com](https://baysidelibrary.eventbrite.com)

**For more information contact:**  
Eastgardens Library  
on 9366 3888 or email  
[enquiry@bayside.nsw.gov.au](mailto:enquiry@bayside.nsw.gov.au)





**blaze**  
working women public leaders

## BLAZE A TRAVELLING EXHIBITION

10 February and possibly 20 March 2020  
at Mascot Library & George Hanna Memorial Museum

Blaze: Working Women, Public Leaders is an exhibition produced by NSW State Archives. View exhibition content via our e-catalogue. Blaze engages with the finding that a significant leadership gap continues to exist between women and men in public life. Through its thoughtfully curated study of a selection of women working in different policy fields from the 1860s to the present.

For more information please call Samantha Sannayh on 1300 581 299  
or email: [enquiry@bayside.nsw.gov.au](mailto:enquiry@bayside.nsw.gov.au)

A  
Good  
Death



A compassionate and  
practical guide to prepare  
for the end of life  
MARGARET RICE

### Death Café

An Evening with Author Margaret Rice

12 March 6.00 pm to 7.30 pm at Eastgardens Library

For more information please call Carol Arrowsmith on  
1300 581 299 or email: [enquiry@bayside.nsw.gov.au](mailto:enquiry@bayside.nsw.gov.au).



**BOTANY HISTORICAL TRUST**

# Christmas Celebration









We wish you a  
Safe and Merry  
Christmas

