

Wildflower Press

Summer Edition

December 2004



Newsletter of the WA Herbarium Volunteers- Department of Conservation and Land Management

End of an Era

Retirement is a major milestone in many peoples' lives. Frequently it opens up new vistas of adventures and activities that have been put on hold for several years. Often we also become distracted in those final days and spend a lot of time scratching our heads, wondering how on earth to start with the long lists of "must do's" after the all important "R" Day arrives? For Chang Sha his "R" Day held another kind of a challenge.

After thirteen years of service at the State Herbarium, during which Chang Sha organised countless lectures, volunteer inductions and excursions, social events and so on, a social event was being held which did not have his approach and input. On this day the gathering and accolades were for him.



Karina Knight making the presentation to Chang Sha

Among the many staff members, visiting Regional Herbaria visitors, volunteers and ex-colleagues from the Agriculture Department that gathered in the Herbarium's tea area to farewell Chang Sha were Mrs Barbara Fang, Dr Neil Burrows - Director of Science Division, his PA Ms Glenda Lindsey, Kevin Kenneally - Co-Coordinator Landscape Expeditions and Ms Elaine Davison.

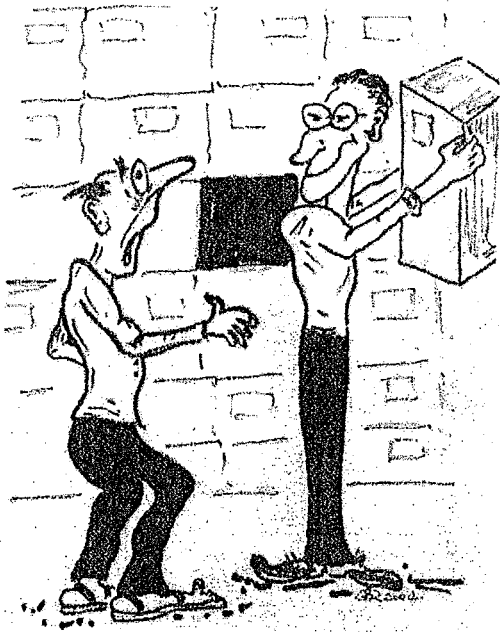
Dr Neville Marchant, director of our State Herbarium spoke of Chang Sha's early connections with him during their years at UWA, along with Ms Jan Gathe, who was for many years, working with the Regional Herbaria and their volunteers. Neville talked about how Chang Sha had to weld together curatorial and IT staff, also develop and manage the volunteer programme (now has several specialist groups and numbers about 70) among his many duties as Collections Manager.

At the start of Chang Sha's career here the database collection numbered 119 582 and over the 13 years had expanded to "600 000 very well curated and data based specimens."

These were achievements of which he could be very proud.

Neville commented further: "Your colleagues recognise that apart from leading a team of curators, one of your greatest contributions has been the development of our fantastic herbarium volunteer program. It is due to your incredibly friendly nature and supportive disposition that the volunteer movement in the Herbarium now makes an outstanding contribution to the plant and fungal knowledge made available by the Department of Conservation and Land Management."

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"Don't worry! I'll always find space for you"

It was further observed this had been done over the years, while dealing with unexpected, on-going problems (eg diminishing space) and a wide range of personalities, maintaining all the while a placid nature and cheerful demeanour. Neville smiled broadly as he observed that only once or twice over the 13 years could he recall Chang Sha being mildly irritated to the extent he exclaimed "Bloody hell!!"

In conclusion Dr Marchant, on behalf of colleagues in CALM, staff and volunteers sincerely thanked Chang Sha and wished him a very, very happy and fulfilling retirement.

On behalf of all the volunteers Fran Kininmonth, a Tuesday "vollie", thanked Chang Sha for always making us feel welcome and valued. She added that he was always there, not only for a chat about our interests and families, but also often gave gentle guidance to develop and use our many skills by exploring and working in other areas of the Herbarium, (after we had completed some time in the Mounting Room.) Fran also remarked on Chang Sha's unfailing good humour.

Gillian Smith, a Friday "vollie" spoke of the remarkable ease and ability that Chang Sha had, in being able to find space for even groups of volunteers to work satisfactorily. An area crowded with boxes, files and other important paraphernalia was quickly cleared, with ease and care, so a group Gillian was working with could get on with their mounting, recording etc without too much delay or being made feel a nuisance. She also thanked Chang Sha for his work and time assisting the volunteers.

A presentation of two colourful and beautifully executed botanical prints of *Banksia* specimens, drawn by Margaret Peironi, were presented to Chang Sha, as a memento from all who wished him well, by Karina Knight, curatorial staff.

Neville's Notes

It is great that our herbarium volunteers' newsletter is to reappear. Many thanks to Fran Kininmonth for coordinating and editing its resurrection and long may it serve the valuable volunteer programme of the CALM Herbarium.



It is now very easy for all the herbarium staff with computers to receive instant communications through e-mail; we can all hear about the latest car break-in (unfortunately), alarm testing or receive a lunchtime gathering reminder. The problem is how do we contact our vast range of "vollies" who come in at various set times and days through the week? The best we can do is place printed notices on the sign-in bench and ask our reception staff to let volunteers know about things of interest.

A volunteers' newsletter cannot help with the news or notices we need to send out urgently, but it will serve to keep you all in touch with planned events and other items of interest. Thanks for your efforts Fran, Gaynor and the Herbarium reception staff and Cheryl Parker from the curatorial team.

My first contribution for the newsletter is to tell you that we have new a reception staff member. Welcome to Gaynor Stanicic, who will be with us for a few months and join Genny Kidd, Melanie Baister and Richard Tan. All of our reception staff are ably managed by Beryl Crane.

In the Beginning

Barbara & Bob Backhouse



Barbara and I became very interested in naming wildflowers after purchasing a new house in Nedlands. The previous house was bulldozed, and apart from a few mature trees the block was cleared. We were running a business at that time and engaged a Landscape Architect, with a brief to plant Western Australian wildflowers. He did a marvellous job but left suddenly without leaving us (as promised) a plan with the plant names. So, this started us on a very interesting journey, to identify them all. Consequently, I spent a lot of time at the Herbarium, in the small Reference Herbarium, which existed at that time, getting to know some of the staff and eliciting their help.

Following this, we bought a bush block at Gingin. We collected hundreds of species from there and the surrounding areas. Soon this led us into starting our own Herbarium, which involved making frequent trips to the Herbarium to gain assistance in identifying our plant collections. So, our next projects were (in addition to building a small house) studying the local flora, as well as traveling widely in our newly acquired 4 wheel-drive campervan.

One day while we were at the Herbarium, Neville Marchant said he had a job for us. (Meanwhile, the north and south wings of the building had been enclosed.) The job was to move the specimens into this new space, now known as "the undercroft". He asked us if we would consider becoming Herbarium volunteers and perhaps co-ordinate a volunteer group. We agreed to give this a go.

Following this, Jim Armstrong, Director at the time, gave a talk to the Wildflower Society, with a view to interest other members to become volunteers. We were given names, phone numbers and organized a roster with two teams. I think that the Herbarium wondered what had hit it!! When I think back, I feel that maybe it was probably a bit TOO enthusiastic!



Group of volunteers attending an information talk in the old Reference Herbarium room— now Cryptogram Wing (near Chang Sha's old office)

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(Back) Gwen and late husband Jack Abbott, Barbara and Bob Backhouse
(Front) Nora and late husband Brian Best

Soon the Collection was relocated, with the specimens being spread out to fill the vacant spots in the wings. The Reference Herbarium, which was located at that time in the basement where the types are now placed, was moved to the ground floor, near the entrance. The next job for the volunteers was listing all the folders then held on the Herbarium shelves. This took many, many weeks.

Another of those first "jobs" was mounting a huge backlog of specimens. The room, which had housed the Reference Herbarium, became the Mounting Room. Gwen Abbott took on the supervision of the mounting. (There are figures available today about the number of specimens which have been mounted over the years. They are VERY impressive.) Gwen along with her late husband Jack, was one of the three married couples among the volunteers. Jack, who was always bright and enjoyed the volunteering, worked along with Harry Bennett, as the Incorporation Team. They worked happily together, for many years, doing that difficult task. Everyone who worked at the Herbarium in those first years fondly remembers Jack. Harry was also involved in stenciling the names in folders and became quite proficient in it

The other couples were Nora and the late Brian Best and our selves. Friday was our big day and we have happy memories of those morning teas and lunch times together.

Over the years the Reference Herbarium has grown as we have endeavoured to acquire a duplicate of everything in the main collection, from all of Western Australia, both of native and introduced plants. Where it wasn't possible, photocopies have been used. It has expanded and outgrown its allocated space. We have helped move it twice over time. Now it has reached a stage when it should be enlarged, as the folders have filled all available space and some have passed their use-by dates. This facility has become more and more popular. It is used by members of staff, other CALM personnel, botanists, consultants, wildflower interest groups, members of the public, along with interstate and even overseas visitors. . . .

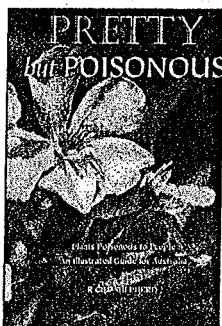
We have enjoyed immensely, being volunteers at the State Herbarium. Taking part in some of the events, contributing to its growth and forming friendships...all part of that "interesting journey" which still continues.

@your library

Beng Siew Mahon



Highlights from Recent Acquisitions



Shepherd, Rosamond C.H.

Pretty but Poisonous : Plants Poisonous to People : An Illustrated Guide for Australia, Melbourne: R.G. and F.J. Richardson, 2004

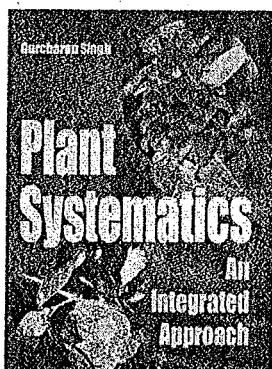
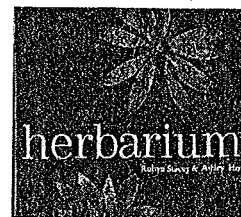
Ros Shepherd has put together a very readable book on how to identify plants (natives and exotics) that can cause poisoning and skin allergies. It is aimed at home gardeners and provides information on the plant parts that are poisonous, symptoms of poisoning and the toxins responsible. Each species is well illustrated with colour photographs.

You will recognise most of these plants. It is not necessary to remove them from your garden, we just need to be aware that many plants can be potentially poisonous.

Stacey, Robyn & Hay, Ashley

Herbarium, Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 2004

A look behind the doors of the National Herbarium of New South Wales at the Royal Botanic Gardens Sydney. Robyn Stacey has skilfully compiled a historical collection of photographs of botanical specimens not normally accessible to the public. Co-author Ashley Hayes provides the scientific background to the specimens. Botanical notes provide a link between the specimens and their collectors.



Singh, Gurcharan

Plant Systematics : An Integrated Approach, Enfield, N.H. :Science Publishers, 2004

This is an introductory text integrating classical concepts of taxonomy with recent developments in plant systematics, particularly in the fields of cladistics, molecular systematics and computer identification. Chapter 3 focuses on the history of plant classification and the basics of botanical nomenclature so if you are still confused as to what is a holotype, a syntype, isotype, paratype, epitype, etc then this is the chapter for you.

Volunteers will also find the chapter on *Descriptive Terminology* and the *Process of Identification* useful.

A discussion of the merits and demerits of the major systems of classification follows, from Bentham & Hooker's *Genera Plantarum* (available in the library) to the recent Angiosperm Phylogeny Group's classification system based on cladistics principles.

The final section deals with the major families of angiosperms and attempts to place them according to the major systems of classification discussed.



Happy volunteer's enjoying a laugh at Chang Sha's farewell. His wife Barbara, is choking herself because she didn't know her husband was so popular!

About the Wildflower Press...

It is planned to publish four issues of the Newsletter each year. We see this as a good way to keep in touch with all the volunteers past and present. Also, for them to have some knowledge of what's happening on other days, with other persons or groups, events etc, within the Volunteer Programme. It is also intended that activities and other information that could be of interest will be included.

If you have any thoughts about what you would like to see in future issues, please let us know as soon as possible. Contributions- a story about you, your group, an enjoyable, rewarding excursion (with photos-if possible) ANYTHING that maybe of interest, will be more than WELCOME.

Your contributions can be either (a) left with Cheryl Parker (b) addressed to her e-mail- cherylp@calm.wa.gov.au (c) addressed to Fran Kininmonth's e-mail frankininmonth2004@yahoo.com.au

Many heartfelt thanks to all those who responded so quickly to meet the summer edition deadline, Beng Siew, Barbara and Bob, Bruce for his very clever cartoons and Neville.

Fran Kininmonth

*Wishing all WA Herbarium Volunteers
a Merry Christmas and a Happy New
Year*