

## **July 2018 Minutes**

### **PAGG President's Notes**

Yes Penny and I did vow nearly 8 years ago that we would not hold meetings in a hall! Now I must eat my words and AGREE that the odd meeting within four walls can be so enthralling, educational and easy. Emeritus Professor Tony Smith spoke so well about his life's work connecting plants with medicine and the questions from our members were very thought provoking.

At our recent Committee meeting we started the paper work for incorporating PAGG. Because insurance directly and indirectly is forever changing and making gatherings and meetings more difficult we have decided to raise our membership fees for the coming year to \$20. We simply feel we need to be very adequately placed in case of a difficult claim. Council regulations are also getting more complicated.

We had a meeting with our Garden ramble sub-committee a couple of weeks ago and I have notified Dungog Council re our forth coming Garden Ramble and they are delighted and keen to support us. To date we have 6 gardens to wander and next week we shall check all gardens re access and parking... and note any other issues that may affect us.

Your Committee also feels that we have reached our maximum numbers of members and will commence a wait list for joining. We would like to see our numbers reduce a little before accepting more members. Guests who wish to join will need to attend two meetings and ON the third visit will be able to join. Members will need to attend four meetings minimum per calendar year to remain a member.

On a brighter note, it's a joy to be outside at the moment so I'm off to start pruning roses. I'll look forward to seeing you at our next meeting...outside!

Janie

### **PAGG GARDEN CLUB MEETING**

10.30am 17.07.2018 at St Ann's Church Hall, Gresford

President Janie welcomed all (approximately 45 members and guests) and especially our guest speaker Emeritus Professor Tony Smith and his wife Janet from Toronto Garden Club. Janie also mentioned that this was our first meeting in a hall!

Apologies were received from vice president Penny Kater.

We were all cautioned by safety officer Robert Smith to "be aware and take care".

It was agreed by the members that the money received for morning tea would be donated to the "Buy a Bale" organisation in recognition of our concern for those in other regions who are suffering disastrous drought.

Janie reported : The Committee of the Club will today be moving to start the process of incorporation with our treasurer Lisa (also a lawyer) to guide us. Planning continues for the Garden Ramble on Sunday 7 April 2019 from 10am – 4pm. Help will be needed from members to "man" the gardens on the day for 2-4 hours each. A form was circulated for people to indicate their availability, with 28 members putting down their names. The number of gardens open will depend on the number of volunteers; hopefully will be 5 or 6 gardens.

Liz Jones reported: The website is progressing well. Liz expressed appreciation for the \$200 voucher to Heritage Gardens, approved by the committee, in recognition of the enormous amount of work put in by Liz and her husband Richard to get the website to this stage.

Treasurer Lisa Connors reported: There is still some confusion about the bus trip to Cobbitty. We have 49 names on the list but only payment from 38 pp! Please get in touch with Lisa if you have not paid via pagardengroup@gmail.com email

Raffle

A miniature bonsai garden was donated by Shirley and it was decided that the proceeds would be added to the "Buy a Bale" donation. Congratulations to Steve Crocket who won the raffle! And many thanks to Shirley.

### **Guest Speaker**

Christine Pike introduced and welcomed our guest speaker, Tony Smith and his wife Janet. Tony is a retired Professor of Clinical Pharmacology and Clinical Toxicology from the University of Newcastle and in 2014 received an AM for services to medicine. After retiring he worked for the World Health Organisation to improve the quality of medicines and policies in developing countries. Tony spoke on the origin of our medicines. He is an excellent and engaging speaker and was absolutely fascinating. Our medicines fall into three categories:

Prescription medicines which must be supervised by a professional.

Complementary medicines which are often derived from plants and are available over the counter.

Indigenous remedies. Because there is no written culture, it is not easy to get information.

### **Prescription medicines**

Communities have turned to plants for treatments for centuries, until last century when medications started to be synthesised chemically. All early monasteries had their own herbariums and knowledge of medicinal herbs evolved over time. Some early examples of these are:

– Heart medication distilled from the leaves of foxglove (*Digitalis purpurea*) found to reduce fluid accumulation due to heart failure and still used in different forms today

– Quinine plant. The bark was found to be used by Peruvians for prevention of Malaria.

– Willow bark (*Salix Alba*) was used to make salicylic acid or aspirin.

50% of prescription medications originate from plants.

### **Complementary medicines**

Use of these has exploded over the last few years for 'non serious conditions'. Knowledge for the use of these is often historical.

All new complementary or herbal products are reviewed by the Therapeutic Goods Administration for safety and quality but efficacy is NOT assessed. These are labelled with AUST-L i.e. listed. All others are labelled AUST-R i.e. registered and have been tested for efficacy.

Some examples of complementary medicines are:

-Valerian – some evidence of help with sleep.

– St John's Wort (*Hypericum*) – can be effective for anxiety or mild depression.

– Echinacea – reputed to help with infection and the immune system BUT Tony is not impressed with the evidence. Some of our most toxic substances come from plants e.g. Oleander and Castor Oil Plant.

### **Indigenous Remedies**

With no documentary record it is difficult for researchers to gather information but some work has been done by people such as Dr Peter O'Mara at the University of Newcastle. Another source of information is Aunty Frances Bodkin of the University of Western Sydney who is a 'holder of knowledge' and an educator at Mt Annan Botanical Gardens.

Historically there have been about 40,000 years of learning about native medicinal plants. In Indigenous communities knowledge was critical for survival and therefore became 'sacred'. Each clan has/had its own cultivation and custodians, meaning limited people had the knowledge, which helped to guard against it becoming corrupted. One text called Traditional Bush Medicine was published in 1988 by Indigenous people from Northern Territory with the Dept. of Health.

Some examples of these plant remedies are:

– *Duboisia hopwoodii* or Pitjun (indig) – It is chewed and absorbed from the inside of the mouth.

After many years study the active ingredient was found to be nicotine! It is still grown and used widely by indigenous people today to prevent motion sickness.

- Eucalyptus and Tea Tree oil have become main stream and there is good evidence for their efficacy.
  - Ipomoea pes-caprae (beach morning glory or goats foot vine) is widely used by indigenous people for pain and swelling, bites, stings and stone fish injuries. It is boiled with water and a compress made, then applied to the affected part
- More research continues into the chemistry and effects of traditional medicines. Tony believes that many more discoveries are likely.

CAUTION – Patients MUST notify their Doctor if they are taking any complementary medicines because they can interact negatively with prescription medicines. Tony willingly answered questions and one that interested everyone was the use of cannabis in medicine. He said researchers were still trying to put together hard evidence for its use in pain relief.

Janie proposed a vote of thanks to Tony and presented him with some “Tar Ten” products.

Our next meeting in August will be at the home and garden of Mal and Judy Henry at Paterson. Mal has planted scores of trees in the last 20 years so there are different types of forests with walkways through them.

Jenny Creal Minutes Secretary      Photos Mark Dedman

