

Merilyn Evans was the founder of Friends of the Aranda Bushland (FoAB) in 1990. Her daughter, Jodie, recalls what motivated Merilyn to start a local park care group:

"Mum was actually the founder of Friends Aranda Bushland, which came about because she had lymphodemia as the result of an operation and started walking the bushlands. She was horrified by the weeds she found there and rang up ACT Parks and Conservation. They suggested she start a park care group, so she did. She letterboxed Aranda to see if anyone else was interested and the first meeting was held at our house. Anyway, we are all very proud of what she achieved with FoAB, and I am delighted that it is continuing so strong. I hope your 30th went well."

Colin and Pam Macdonald, foundation members of FoAB, clarify the original aim of the organisation by explaining: "Weeds were always of concern to the nascent FoAB, but the chief concern initially was not the then-existing weeds, but the prospect that cattle would degrade the Bushland, both by eating and trampling native vegetation and by spreading and introducing weeds." The western half of Aranda Bushland which was leasehold was ultimately resumed.

Colin and Pam produced an archive of the organisation which they gave to many FoAB people on computer DVDs.

The 30th anniversary of FOAB's founding to which Jodie refers was celebrated with an informal bushland picnic in Aranda Bushland in late 2020.

Merilyn also advertised the group in the Aranda Primary newsletter which attracted members. With her dynamic, hospitable personality, she convened meetings at her house set amongst trees in a cul de sac in Aranda. Merilyn was convenor for about ten years. During that time she instigated the production of *Our Patch, Field Guide to the Flora of the Australian Capital Region, as photographed in the Aranda Bushland*. The popular guide focussed on photographs of the native trees and plants as well as some of the weeds.

Many of the photographers were foundation members of FoAB and include Peter Ormay, Colin Macdonald, and Jean Geue.

The Australian National Botanic Gardens received a set of slides of the plants in the guide and a set of herbarium specimens which were lodged with their collections (*Our Patch* p 8). For their project, Friends of the Aranda Bushland received three grants from the 'Bushcare' fund of Environment Australia between 1993 and 1997.

Estelle Canning, a botanist with the ANBG identified most of the plant specimens.

We have Merilyn to thank for her inspiration, drive, and energy in founding the community - based FoAB which watches over and protects our precious bushland through its activities. The activities are mainly weeding, erosion control in the Frost Hollow and observing how climate change and regular control burns are affecting the vegetation patterns.

Merilyn died on Monday 2 November 2020. Vale Merilyn. Her legacy is significant.