

LattéPets



Retford Park is buzzing

Retford Park, the 200 acre property, with its sprawling Italianate home, was established in 1887 by Samuel Hordern, owner of one-time department store, Hordern & Sons: Great Palace Emporium. Since the 1960s it has been home to Mr. James Fairfax, AO, philanthropist, patron of the arts and former chairman of Fairfax media publishing empire. More recently, 30,000 newer residents also call it home.

Apis Mellifera Ligustica, or Italian Bee, a subspecies of the European honey bee.

The bees, who live together in one hive, came to reside in Retford Park's orchard thanks to the efforts of Rick Shephard, head gardener and his green-thumbed colleague, Jordan Fusi. Concerned about sustainability and global chatter about colony collapse, they procured a queen bee from Sydney.

"We introduced the bees to improve pollination, and orchard production," Jordan says as he stands amongst olive, fig, citrus, quince, persimmons, cherry, and European heritage apple and pear trees.

"We have had the bees here since last September and will

harvest the honey in the spring when we expect 50-60 kilos of honey. In the past two years, we have cut the use of pesticides and insecticides by 95% and I think having a well-functioning bee hive is a sign of getting the natural ecosystem back in balance again."

For more information contact Southern Highlands Apiarist Association southernhighlandsbees.org

Retford Park will open its garden doors to the public on October 3, 4 & 5, 10-4pm. Entry is \$10 per person, and all funds raised will be donated to the BDCU Children's Foundation and Open Gardens Australia.



Dos and Don'ts when keeping backyard bees:

- To keep bees you need to live in semi-rural area or have a large lot holding - ask council about your property's zoning regulations.
- Provide a constant source of water nearby with a landing station in it - bees can't swim.
- Tell your neighbours out of courtesy and build community relations; give them a jar of honey.
- Re-queen the hive every two years to stop bees swarming.
- Bees love pollinating blue plants like lavender and any flowering medicinal plant such as borage, thyme, sage, and rosemary.
- The normal reaction to a honey bee sting is localised pain and swelling - if the sting causes any difficulty in breathing, this is an anaphylactic reaction. Seek medical attention immediately.



Pet therapy shares some puppy love

Growing older brings many life changes. Some are wonderful and unexpected. Others are confronting and at times, upsetting.



Some of the increasing number of older citizens leaving their homes to become residents in aged care facilities across our community. Sadly, find themselves bereft at having to leave a much loved pet behind.

Enter PAWS Pet Therapy. Based in Thirane on the fringes of the Southern Highlands, PAWS has been operating locally since 2012, when its first volunteers began visiting aged care facilities.

Founded by aged care nurse, Sharon Stewart, the not-for-profit organisation has 21 two-legged volunteers, and 25 fully trained dogs. Together they visit more than 20 aged, palliative and cancer treatment cen-

tres, hospitals, special needs schools, mental health units and rehabilitation centres across the Wingcarribee, Wollondilly, Shodhaven, Marathur and Illawarra shires. Locally, these include Tangara School, Arthena Care (Berrard), Abbey House (Mittagong), Warrigal aged care facility (Bundanoon), and the Southern Highlands Cancer Centre at Bowral Private Hospital.

"Pet therapy provides comfort, warmth and a friendly face, both human and canine, to people who may feel isolated and lonely, stressed or anxious, ill or disconnected," Sharon says.

The heal powers of pets are well-documented medically. The benefits include decreased loneliness and depression, increased physical activity and health, increased self-esteem and social engagement, in autistic children, and decreased fear and anxiety and lower blood pressure in chemotherapy patients.

PAWS volunteer John Evens is a former government vet. He and daughter Becky, 24, have been visiting aged care facilities for nearly two years with eight

year old kelpie/border cross Harry. Today we shadow the pet pooch on his day at aged care facility, Warrigal Bundanoon.

Harry's first visit of the day is to the room of Mrs Eugenie Neubrandt. A diminutive

woman of 90 years, Eugenie is Chinese, and grew up in the former UNSW. She sits still in an armchair, in her sun-kissed room, seemingly lost in her thoughts. But as soon as Harry enters the room and gently approaches with Becky and John, her beautiful eyes light up.

"Pet therapy provides comfort, warmth and a friendly face, both human and canine, to people who may feel isolated and lonely, stressed or anxious, ill or disconnected."

"Ah," she says in greeting. "Here you are. Good boy." Harry sits down beside her, and revels in her soft strokes, as she feeds him the treats Becky passes her. It soon transpires Eugenie had dogs all her life.

Before he began his weekly visits to Warrigal Bundanoon, Harry was put through a rig-

orous testing and training regime with PAWS Pet therapy.

"We used to have a small farm near Yass where Harry was born, and trained as sheepdog so he was able to take basic commands. But the PAWS trainer

look it up a notch. She used techniques of role play, such as having someone sitting in a wheelchair, to ensure that Harry learnt how to behave around elderly people. One errand class could seriously scratch or cut the fragile skin of an older person. The trainer also tested his temperament carefully, and found in situations such as these Harry understands he needs to be placid but also obedient," John explains.

Harry's next visit is to a particular favourite, a wonderfully spirited 83-year-old former nurse Marjorie Hughes. Harry is on fine form for Marjorie today.

He sits, lies down on command, shakes hands, and speaks up.

"It is always wonderful to see them again. A dog is a very important part of the family and Harry is always well-behaved."

Warrigal Bundanoon has been part of the PAWS Pet therapy program for several months, and although Harry is the only PAWS trained dog, the centre's physio, hairdresser and other staff also often bring along their pets.

"For the residents who had to leave pets behind when they moved in here, the chance to reconnect with a dog each week is a joy," says Anne Bates, a physiotherapy aid who takes us around.

"It is all about better health, happiness and wellbeing really. If someone is having an off day, it is amazing how spending some time with one of the dogs can help."

PAWS Pet Therapy is currently looking for more volunteers of the two and four-legged variety to visit those in need locally.

pawspettherapy.com