

## From the Chair July 2019

In the last Link I really enjoyed reading Rodgers story and transition from building a replica WWII German fighter plane to building a French style mansion and growing Lavender. That is quite a transformation so the pull of lavender is obviously very strong. I guess for many of us Lavender does become a passion and hard to let go, as if we would want to anyway.

It has been a very busy time for Margaret and I with the renovation of our Auckland home and the rebuilding of our Great Barrier Island home where our Lavender patch is. This unfortunately has meant that my original visions mentioned in the previous Link for the Quality standard and Quality Mark has not been completed. Work on this will continue with the incoming executive but I also intend to table the project at the AGM for members input, if this is something the members see will add value to their businesses. The other projects mentioned are work in progress with Pauline adding pictures to the Plant data base and the Oil Bank has been incorporated into the Website redevelopment program.

A new development has been to look at ways we can further the research of lavender oil which was the original founding goals of our association. We also want to make it more affordable for members to carry out GC testing of their oils. It is practically important for the exporting of oils and for the local market to know the exact composition of your oil to enable certification as being true to the variety type and also give the purchaser information about the oil components which they may be looking for.

Some of the research projects we could be looking at are the storage of oils and how they change over time. Aligning GC analysis to the award winning oils to see if a relationship of the analysis can be made to the Judges evaluations and to look at the Oil components that define an oil type and their value. These projects and others would be designed to enhance the value of NZ produced oils from our members.

To achieve this the executive has been looking to purchase our own Gas Chromatography instrument (GC). To this end we have identified a second-hand GC and auto-sampler about 5 to 6 years old but still the current model. The purchase, installation and setting up we estimate will cost about \$10,000 of which \$7,000 will come from our funds marked for research. We have also identified a laboratory in Otaki that appears to be a very good fit to meet our research objective. The executive are unanimous in their support for this subject to satisfactory agreement details with the lab but will also put it to the members for their input and sign off at our upcoming AGM.

Websites need to continually evolve to maintain relevance to their target audience and for our members. A subcommittee has been established and is currently in the final stages of recommending a solution to the executive. Some of the objectives are to include online payments via credit card for conferences, oil awards and subscriptions etc. in addition to the current internet banking option. To enhance communication to our members directly from our members list for notices and subscription renewals etc. and if any new information is posted on the website. Also we are looking to enhance our member database to enable members to directly update their Lavender trail profiles and to post Lavender oil for sale directly to the Oil bank. We are also looking at ways for our supplier members to advertise their services.

It was very pleasing to see nine of our members attend the Talga conference at Port Arthur, Tasmania last March. It was a very enjoyable and informative conference. After the usual opening by the local mayor and dignitaries Prof Hamish Stewart-Maxwell gave a talk on the early days of Port Arthur through the convicts that were transported from England in the early 1800's and how they moved through a prison system that rewarded good behaviour and punished bad behaviour. Many convicts oscillated between the two extremes but with many exiting from their time with useful skills and settled in Tasmania making it to what you see today. This was followed by the History of Lavender in Australia from first plantings to present day by the Fiona Glover. I think this perhaps provoked a bit of inter Tasman rivalry on which country actually planted the first lavender but there is no disputing the work of CK Denny who in the 1920's established Bridestowe which today is the largest privately own lavender farm in the world.

We had a very informative presentation presented by Clive Larkman on plant nutrition and the importance of calcium which is very relevant to NZ. Clive also filled in for Angus Stewart who could not make it with Angus's current research in plant propagation with particular emphasis on essential oils in Australia. Clive being an expert in propagation was well qualified to give Angus's presentation and I know we all found it very informative. This was followed by a new grower's story by Thomas Mahar of Hahndorf Lavender and how he made innovative machinery to help form and plant the Lavender rows. I always find stories from new growers and how they go about the challenges of setting up their lavender farms very informative and interesting. After lunch we had various workshops one of them being oil distillation presented by our very own Keith Brown.

The gala dinner was at Port Arthur Lavender owned by Clare and Brendan Dean. Their story in how they setup the Café and shop was very inspiring. The food was a credit to Calare's high standards and quality. The evening was very entertaining with a short film documentary as seen on Australian Story "Doing it Scared" presented by Catherine Pettman. This was a story about Paul Pritchard who re-climbed the Totem Pole many years after he had suffered a terrible head injury from a rock fall during his first attempt to climb it. This story was very close to my heart from my early days of rock climbing and was made even more poignant with Jan Abernethy buying Paul's book on his recovery from the Totem pole incident and giving it to me at the dinner. It is an amazing story of courage and determination. Thankyou Jan.

On Friday we had a coach tour visiting Clare and Brendan Dean's lavender farm followed by a demonstration and talk on lavender cleaning practices at Wattle Hill farm where they use machinery originally setup to extract seeds. From here we visited a gin distillery for lunch and then onto Lufra where renowned author Sally Wise gave a talk on her journey to become a bestselling author and the use of herbs including lavender in food. We returned to Clare and Brendan's Port Arthur Café for a scrumptious afternoon tea and farewells.

On the Sunday most of us drove to Bridestowe Lavender for Lunch and a tour of their farm and distillery. Many thanks to Talga, Clare and Brendan Dean in hosting a very enjoyable conference.

#### **Important Upcoming dates**

- 26<sup>th</sup> July AGM Remits to secretary
- 27<sup>th</sup> July Close off dates for the Oil Awards entry
- 2<sup>nd</sup> – 4<sup>th</sup> August Oil Awards judging
- 31<sup>st</sup> August AGM 9am to 3pm, Brentworth Hotel, Wellington
- 28<sup>th</sup> – 30<sup>th</sup> August 2020 NZLGA Conference and AGM to be held in Nelson

All the best  
Peter Jemmett  
NZLGA Chairperson