



FRIENDS OF WARRNAMBOOL BOTANIC GARDENS



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Maintaining and developing Warrnambool Botanic Gardens as an outstanding Guilfoyle garden

Issue No. 79

Winter 2016

NEWSLETTER

www.wbgardens.com.au

PRESIDENT'S REPORT – WINTER 2016

It has been a busy time since our last newsletter. Our gala Night in the Gardens held on 19th March seems a long time ago now, and the committee is busy planning other events and activities to mark the 150th anniversary. In April the committee met for lunch at Club



Warrnambool to bestow life membership on past President and long serving committee member Billie Rowley. We congratulate Billie on this achievement in recognition of her continuous commitment to the Friends since she joined the committee in the early 1990s.

Our plans for the restoration of the well and landscaping of that area were submitted to Heritage Victoria in December. After a very long wait, we have now received endorsement to proceed. Members of the special sub-committee overseeing the project met with the architect Clinton Krause as soon as the approval documents arrived and he is now working on the technical drawings and contract details. We hope to see work starting on the site in the next few weeks.

Our gala Night in the Gardens was such a hit with those who attended that members of the organising committee are being widely regarded as Warrnambool's modern day equivalent to Jay Gatsby. We are frequently asked by those who were there "when are you organising the next party?" Special thanks to those co-opted onto the organising sub-committee, Geraldine Moloney, Kylie Gaston, John Sherwood and Neil McLeod for all their hard work in the lead up and on the night. A huge thank you also to John Sheely, Ros and Murtle. The beautifully presented surroundings made the evening particularly special for many of the visitors to the



Gardens that night and Jeanne Sheely for her decorating skills for the marquee .

While the committee has no plans to hold another gala night in the foreseeable future, there are plenty of other events coming up, so please mark these dates in your calendar:

[Photo Competition](#) – Entries close at the end of this month, so there is still time for Friends to contribute entries. Details and entry forms are on the [website](#). All entries will be exhibited at The Artery, Timor St. The exhibition opening will be held on Friday 8th July 5.50pm

AGM – The annual general meeting of FWBG will be held on Wednesday July 20th.

Free Public talk – “Guilfoyle and his Botanic Gardens”. Lynsey Poore, voluntary guide with Royal Botanic Gardens Melbourne will explore the landscape created by William Guilfoyle during his 36 years as Director of the RBG (1873-1919). This talk, jointly hosted by the Friends and the Australian Plants Society, will be held at Mozart Hall on Friday August 26th. at 8.00pm

Family Fun Day – *150 ways to have fun in the Gardens* – Sunday 13th November. If you missed the gala Night in the Gardens, here’s another chance to celebrate. If you were at the gala you will no doubt be keen to join us again.

Hope to see all Friends at some or all of these upcoming occasions.

Janet Macdonald

WBG TEAM UPDATE MAY 2016



After a very dry summer it is great to welcome the rain over the past few weeks. Ironically, the rain has come just in time for our irrigation upgrades!!!!!!!

- 7 new automated pop-up lawn sprinklers have been installed.
- 4 of these pop-up sprinklers are located on the rotunda lawn, which will now enable watering during the night rather than during the peak usage times.
- Beds 21 and 22 have had fixed automated sprinklers installed.
- These beds will benefit significantly from consistent watering and allow additional plantings.
- Thanks to the continued generosity of FOWBG we have purchased an IQ Rainbird card that allows remote access to the irrigation controller. This means any one of the team can remotely turn the irrigation on and off from our phones. The cost of this unit was \$2,420
- Selected tree removals continue with the Poplar next to the Lone Pine removed to give the Lone Pine more room.
- Mulching of shrub beds and specimen trees continues.

Although mentioned in a previous update, the \$6000 donated by the FOWBG has enabled the above irrigation works to be realised.

A BIG thanks again to the generosity and foresight of the FOWBG committee.

I’d encourage all that haven’t been in the gardens for a while to come for a stroll and don’t forget to bring your camera, take a photo and enter the photo competition.

See you in the gardens soon.

John Sheely
Curator

The Friends of the Gardens first had discussion with the WCC in 2003 regarding automated water within the Gardens . As you could understand this is a project very close to our hearts. Further report in the following newsletter

This year, 2016, marks the 150th anniversary of the establishment of the Warrnambool Botanic Gardens on their present site. The Newsletter will publish a history of the Gardens in three instalments of which this is the second

THE STORY OF WARRNAMBOOL BOTANIC GARDENS

For a detailed history the reader should refer to WBG Management Plan 1995

Curators Charles Hortle and Charles Scoborio oversaw the establishment of the Warrnambool Botanic Gardens in the second half of the nineteenth century. Its development in the first half of the twentieth century was the responsibility of curators William Donald and Duncan Leitch.

William Donald (1902 – 1931) was a Scottish horticulturalist. He respected the earlier design of the Gardens and was keen to plant more deciduous trees as well as native species from all Australian states. He had links with the Fitzroy Gardens and with Melbourne Botanic Gardens and exchanged plants with them.

He introduced new ideas in the set out and development of the flower-beds. A heated propagation house and a separate glasshouse were constructed to allow expansion of floral displays. He was able to introduce carpet bedding because of the improved water supply. He also extended the limestone walks and developed a rose garden with fifty different varieties. Wm. Donald left Scotland when about 12 years old and went to Canada with his half sister. He later came to Australia and worked at Macedon. It was there that his young daughter, Nellie, while running through autumn leaves was burnt to death when her long hair caught



alight in the burning leaves. The family moved to Warrnambool. *Photo: Alan, William Donald, Margaret, Jean, Ellen Donald nee Hastings. Front Hektor. Eldest son James missing*

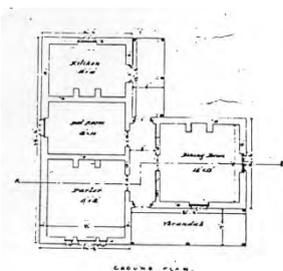
The rose garden it seems resulted from a proposal by The Standard in 1906. It was supported by the Mayor, who also suggested that the Curator be given more assistance, by, say apprentices, thereby providing the opportunity for youths to learn the trade of gardening. The Mayor also said he was sorry to hear of the theft of flowers from the Gardens, chiefly by ladies who appeared to be under the impression they could take as many flowers as they wished.

Gas lighting was introduced in 1909 and replaced in 1924 with electric lights.

Rustic lattice work was added to the bridge over the lake in 1913 and replaced by the stone bridge in 1924

The gardens became a venue for social and community activities. The band rotunda and tea-house was completed in 1913 and band recitals and moving picture shows became popular. A formal farewell to forty volunteers in the AIF was held in 1914, while to mark selection as Victoria's ideal town in 1928, the citizens of Warrnambool held a riotous celebration in the gardens

Donald was in no way a menagerie man, and the bird and animal section gradually disappeared. The last to go was the kangaroo – presented to the Melbourne zoo. The maze was also removed at the direction of Council in 1927.



The Curator's cottage was built in 1870 to a design similar to the Royal Botanic Gardens cottage. It is the oldest structure in the gardens. Over the years there have been hints and stories of ghosts that visited the Cottage. Most tell of friendly unthreatening ghosts. Some describe a lady in old-fashioned dress with a black cape, others a pretty fair haired girl about five or six years old, who wore a pink sash, and others of piano music, lovely melodious sounds that were hard to trace.

In 1906 the Cottage was enlarged by the addition of a bedroom, a wash house and a new kitchen to accommodate the Donald family. There was no bath-room and in 1924 William Donald wrote;

“I wish also to bring up for your consideration the need of a proper bathroom in the cottage at the Gardens. I may mention that I had to buy and install at my own expense the bath that is here, but it is leaking so I cannot use it, beside the place the bath is in at present is not suitable as a bathroom and I would appreciate the convenience of a proper bathroom and wash house. There is a copper built in, but no washing troughs and if these were put in it would add greatly to the comfort of the household”

A feature of this era was the provision of afternoon tea for visitors at the summer house in the cottage garden where William Donald’s daughters served the fruit cake and scones for which their mother was noted. It seems all the family were committed to the gardens.

William Donald could be dogmatic strict and inflexible. He enjoyed music and played a zither and a Jews Harp. He is said to have dried his tobacco leaves on the roof of the fernery. One of a group of children who dallied in the Gardens after dusk recalls being terrified when Donald, under a white sheet appeared in the form of a ghost, and sent them scurrying home.

Donald was a careful manager who respected the heritage of the gardens while fostering the greater civic role they assumed through an era of war and depression.

In 2003, Friends of the WBG arranged a function in memory of the early curators . Jane Furey, great grand daughter of William Donald and William Scoborio, great grand son of Charles Scoborio planted a hoop pine as a tribute.

Duncan Leitch (1932 – 1958)

came from Melbourne and brought with him new ideas. Many of the early plants had by now reached their life span, and in replacing them Guilfoyle’s plan was no longer strictly followed.

Leitch introduced eight new tree families. He emphasised deciduous trees particularly poplars, together with willows, oaks, elms, birch and plane trees.

The tropical theme was not supported and garden spaces were planted with specimen trees.

The George V memorial gates were installed in 1936.

The toilet block was built after the completion of the town sewerage scheme in 1934. About this time, motor mowers replaced horse machines to cut the grass. The fernery collapsed in 1936 and was rebuilt the following year. At this time the fence around the lake was removed and a picnic ground was developed in the pinetum with a shelter shed and a gas copper to heat water. The shelter shed was an octagonal timber structure which was relocated from its earlier site east of the Dutch Elm (Money Tree) by the lake.

Leitch attended the annual tree planters conventions of the municipal parks movement rather than the earlier networks that existed between the curators of botanic gardens. His brother Dugald was curator of the Colac Botanic Gardens.

Memorial tree plantings were another feature of the time. The “Lone Pine” was dedicated on the 21st January, 1934. The *Warrnambool Standard* records that the tree is one of four pines grown from a cone taken from the Lone Pine at Gallipoli. Mrs. Emma Gray of Grassmere, grew the tree from a cone given to her by her nephew, Sergeant Keith McDowell. The three other trees were planted: at the Shrine of Remembrance and Wattle Park (Melbourne) and at the Soldiers Memorial at The Sisters. Today only three survive. The tree at the Shrine died. The Warrnambool tree is the healthiest of those that remain. It is on the register of significant trees.

During this period band recitals, Scouters’ Field Days, church and school picnics, local hospital and ambulance fund raisers and similar events were held in the gardens. In 1947 a



Floral Festival was held to celebrate Warrnambool's centenary and the Gardens were the centre of activities.

Fundraising functions in the Gardens increased. During this post-war period there was a subtle shift from the focus on a botanic garden towards the role of the gardens as a municipal park.

Duncan Leitch retired in 1958.

There are some fascinating parallels in the life of Duncan Leitch and Charles Scoborio. Each was the descendant of a professional gardener and grew up or worked on a country estate with an extensive garden – Leitch at Ellary in Argyll and Scoborio in Heligan in Cornwall. Each of these gardens was neglected for some years and deteriorated as gardens do. Heligan has been restored and promoted as “The Lost Garden of Heligan”. Perhaps Ellary will also be restored.

Each married before migrating to Australia with their young wife and each had only one child – a son.

Pat Varley and Marie Johnstone May 2016.

RECENT VISITORS TO THE GARDENS



The Friends had the pleasure of showing Dr David Churchill and Mrs Sylvia Churchill around the Gardens one sunny afternoon in April. David was Director of Royal Melbourne Botanic Gardens and Government Botanist from 1971 – 1985 when these positions were replaced by managers. He retired in 1991. He is a past president of the Royal Society who describe him as a geobotanist. David established the Friends of Melbourne Botanic Gardens during his time as Director, so both he and Sylvia were able to make insightful comments, which we found both encouraging and comforting. Sylvia remarked that, ‘You can tell these gardens are loved. They are so welcoming as you walk in.

It is good to see our schools using the Gardens as a resource supporting their curriculum.

A group of ten students from Merrivale Primary School was interested in the history of the Gardens. Although they were only grade one and two they came armed with ipads and similar electronic devices which they used with great proficiency. They left with a pictorial record of the past and the present, and a great variety of ducks. It was an educational visit both for them and for us. Well done Merrivale.



Grade 1 and 2 students at St Pius X Primary School are learning about local land marks. An enthusiastic group of 90 children and their teachers assembled at the Rotunda where they met with two of our guides. They were well prepared with questions they wanted answered about the purpose of the Gardens and who looked after them. They took notes and asked how they could help care for the gardens. The Lone Pine and the cannon were great attractions and we can report that the cannon is quite capable of supporting ninety or more six to eight year olds. Thank you St PiusX for a delightful visit.

‘OH WHAT A NIGHT’ THANK YOU ALL.

Our gala event ‘A night in the Gardens’ on March 19th, was a magnificent celebration of 150years on the present site. The weather was kind, the Gardens immaculate and the crowd fantastic. A lot of people worked hard and long to ensure the success of the evening and *The Friends* thank them all for their effort. We gratefully acknowledge the provision of either services or cash from the following donors.

The Ray and Joyce Uebergang Foundation

Sinclair Wilson

Deakin University

The Community Development Fund

Murray Goulburn

Shaw River Cheese

Warrnambool Standard

Jeremy Lee, ABC

Greg Abraham

Stuart Prince

Warrnambool String Quartet

Venturi Flute Ensemble

John and Jeannie Sheely and team, and all the committee members for their input.

VALE

Thelma Lynch

Thelma was a foundation member of the Friends and with Isobel Jones, one of the two original guiding friends. In her record of the history of the Gardens Marie Johnstone writes that back in 1991, ‘During Local Government Week Thelma Lynch conducted two guided tours through the Gardens for Councillors and visitors and received a letter of thanks from the Council.’ Between them, Thelma and Isobel researched the trees and structures of the Gardens and shared their considerable knowledge and skills with the ‘Guiding Friends’. Thelma was a staunch supporter and a great friend.

Ray Slater

Ray was a generous contributor to the restoration of the gun carriage. He gave generously of both time and materials and we gratefully acknowledge his support.



FRIENDS OF WARRNAMBOOL BOTANIC GARDENS Inc.

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Our newsletter is published spring, summer,
autumn and winter.

If you would like to contribute to our publication
please forward material to the above address.

Membership: Payable at/or by the AGM
July 2016

GUIDED WALKS

Guided walks are conducted by our
volunteer guides every Second and
Fourth Sunday of the month
commencing at 2.30pm, weather
permitting.

Walks can be organised on request

Walks proceed from the main entrance
gate in Cockman Street

Please note: If you would like to have
your Newsletter sent by email please
send an email friends@wbgardens.com.au
and we will put you one the email list

MEMBERSHIP PAYMENTS

Membership: Family \$25, Single \$20 Corporate \$100

Our Banking details are below

EFT

BSB: 083 957

Account Number: 048342632

Refer: Your Name (*this is important to enable us to match our
records with your payment*)

*A reminder and membership form will be included in the next newsletter
before the AGM, but you could make payment now if you like*
Go to our [web page](#) where you can give us your details then pay
by direct payment

FOR YOUR DIARY

AGM

Wednesday 20th July. 12 Noon at the TAFE
building (information in following newsletter)

Family day in the Gardens Sunday 13th
December

More details regarding this event will be in our next
newsletter. If you would like to be involved please
contact us.

MORNING IN THE GARDENS

We hold this gathering every first Wednesday of the month
commencing at 11am. Everyone is welcome, come along to
Scoborio's Shed located in the depot yard behind the cottage

GIFT CERTIFICATE

Get in early for Christmas. This was a new introduction
last year and proved to be very popular. A gift of a
certificate is a thoughtful way to introduce your family and
friends to the Gardens.

Please contact a committee member, email
friends@wbgardens.com.au or call Mandy on 043862034

FACEBOOK

The Garden staff love taking photos, if you can't get to the
gardens yourself, follow along with the latest flowering of
plants or daily happenings. Click [here](#) to be taken straight
to our Facebook page

BOOKING AN EVENT IN THE GARDENS

The gardens are proving to be an extremely popular venue
for events and weddings. To avoid disappointment through
not being able to use your chosen spot for your function,
you are now asked to book in your event. Go to our [website](#)
to get information and to download an application form.
You are also able to book by going to the gardens or WCC
during work hours and obtaining a booking form.

To date there is no charge for booked events in the
Gardens. The staff add to their busy day, cleaning the
rotunda and surrounds. While use of the gardens is free
donations to the Friends is welcome, your donation will be
used to improve any and all aspects of the Gardens, for now
and into the future. In advance thank you for your support.