



# FRIENDS OF WARRNAMBOOL BOTANIC GARDENS Inc.

A0032902E



Issue No. 22

NEWS LETTER

WINTER 2000

## REPORT FROM THE PRESIDENT

Firstly, congratulations to the committee, members and friends on our successful "Day in the Gardens" held on a beautiful sunny Sunday in March. The combination of band music provided by the Warrnambool Pipe Band and the Warrnambool City Band together with the various stalls and afternoon teas was a good recipe for success with the grand amount of \$1200 being raised on the day. Special thanks must go to those who supported the plant and produce stalls which were extremely popular and raised a considerable amount towards this sum.

Representatives of the Friends met with the new CEO of the Warrnambool City Council, Mr. Lindsay Merritt, in March to brief him on our concerns regarding the future management of the Gardens and followed this with a guided tour of the gardens. Areas discussed included the lack of a curator, loss of botanic integrity, tree management, signage, labelling and recording of plants on a database.

The Annual Conference of the Association of Friends of Botanic Gardens (Vic) Inc. was held in Albury in April and four of our committee attended. The long trip was well worthwhile as much was achieved over the weekend with interesting speakers and workshops. A full report of the conference will be given at the AGM in July. The Friends of the Albury Botanic Gardens compiled a very interesting program and the Albury Botanic Gardens were a delight – I highly recommend them should you be in the area.

The Friends Awareness Morning Tea held in early May was unfortunately held in drizzly rain but those who attended enjoyed an informative guided tour and morning tea in the Growing Friends area where much work has been done.

The Committee have recently spent nine hours "brainstorming" with the help of Mr. Neville Smith of Business Thinking Systems, who kindly donated his time to us, to plan the future direction of the Friends and to make the best use of the Committee with the development of sub-committees for special tasks. We all benefitted greatly from these sessions and have a clear view of where we are headed and what we hope to achieve in the short and long term.

Our Annual General Meeting will be held on Wednesday, 19 July 2000 at a luncheon at the Warrnambool Club. All members are welcome and it is a great opportunity to meet the Committee and Councillors and review the year's achievements. Our guest speaker will be Lynne Strahan author of several books of local and cultural history including "The history of Malvern and Williamstown," "The Art of Brian Dunlop" and a collection of poems. Lynne is also a keen gardener and lives at Eumeralla near Port Fairy.

I look forward to sharing with you our plans to celebrate Federation in the Gardens in November 2001 and welcome any suggestions from members.

Marie Ziebell

## ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Warrnambool Club Kepler Street  
19th July 2000 - 11.30 pm

After a successful AGM last year we will once again hold our meeting in the comfort of the Warrnambool Club.

We will be serving lunch, tea and coffee

**Our guest speaker this year is Lynne Strahan, the title of her talk is "Experiences of a tree loving garden columnist", Lynne is passionate about trees and has promised to share with us some bizarre and amusing experiences. [This should not be missed]**

To help with catering numbers, could you please contact Ann Kelly by Thursday 13th July to let her know that you are attending. 55624982 or 0417330889

**Enclosed** is a renewal of membership form [please note that we have added a family membership category with the hope that we may get some men on board].  
Committee nomination form, which will need to be returned to the secretary by 12th July and a notice of the AGM

## GUIDING FRIENDS

Even though the weather is a bit wild at the moment, the guiding friends will be at the main gate every Wednesday at 10.30am and the last Sunday of the month at 2.30pm unless it is just too unbearable. Remember if you are looking for something to do with your guests on the weekend or would just like a greater botanical or historical knowledge on the gardens this is the place to go, the girls have studied hard and have a very extended knowledge – the gardens have a different beauty in the winter.

## GROWING FRIENDS

We are still working hard and will be putting a regular roster together in the near future. Please contact Lorraine if you are interested in helping in this area. With spring not that far away



**FRIENDS OF WARRNAMBOOL  
BOTANIC GARDENS Inc.**

**CHARLES SCOBORIO**

First curator of Warrnambool Botanic Gardens

**Patron**

Hon. Richard McGarvie

**President**

Ms Marie Ziebell (03) 55611137

**Secretary**

Mrs Mandy King (03) 55620343

**Treasurer**

Mrs Kathy Wicherson (03) 55621436

**General Committee**

Marigold Curtis (03) 5567 6316

Ellen Dwyer (03) 5562 7539

Jean Fitzpatrick (03) 5562 3447

Marie Johnstone (03) 5562 3238

Isobel Jones (03) 5568 1076

Anne Kelly (03) 5562 4982

Judy Phillips (03) 5562 3320

Lorraine Richardson (03) 5565 1217

Billie Rowley (03) 5561 1583

Dawn Smith (03) 5562 8388

**Growing Friends** Lorraine Richardson

**Newsletter Editor** Marigold Curtis

**Newsletter Publisher** Mandy King

**Historian** Marie Johnstone

**Catering** Anne Kelly

**Guided Tours** Isobel Jones

**Public Officer** Billie Rowley

**Correspondence:**

Friends of Warrnambool Botanic Gardens  
Inc.

P.O. Box 1190  
Warrnambool 3280

Email: [fwbg@hotmail.com](mailto:fwbg@hotmail.com)

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.

Marigold Curtis Mandy King  
1st June 2000

Charles Scoborio was born in Cornwall, England in 1827 of Italian descent. As a youth he was student of Dr. John Lindley of the English Royal Horticultural Society and was the first to receive a travelling scholarship from the Society and this enabled him to study landscape gardening in Europe. On his return to England he secured a position as head gardener to the country gentleman.

In 1857 Charles Scoborio with his wife Elizabeth and his small son Thomas Henry left England for Australia and came to Warrnambool in that same year. For a short time he was employed by Briggs and Naphine and in the Warrnambool Examiner of 25<sup>th</sup> June 1858 he advertised that he would lay out gardens.

Three years earlier a site for the gardens had been chosen next to the cemetery on the west bank of the Hopkins River. The site of 10 acres was poorly protected from western gales, the ground was poor and most of it rocky. By 1859 the site was fenced and a cottage built for the curator. The ground had been grubbed and cleared and roads to its entrance marked and cleared.

The gardens were not a success, plants and trees were severely handicapped by the frequent gales. Nor was the council generous with funds. Public criticism brought forth a defense from the Examiner of 7<sup>th</sup> August 1860, which said the gardens were now looking "quite fresh". Many of the walks and beds had been cleared and planted "and when we say that over 600 plants, shrubs and trees have been planted during the last few weeks, it will be evident that the one man has not been idle". Scoborio persisted for about six years, then resigned. In the following few years Charles Scoborio obtained a position as head gardener and planner for J.W.M. Atken at Ellerslie House, Korit Street and later took up a similar position with Joseph Ware at Minjah.

During that time the council was granted twenty acres of "howling wilderness" heavily timbered bushland and dense scrubby undergrowth, ferns and tussocky grass. Charles Hortles was its first curator from 1869 - 1872. Scoborio again became curator of the gardens at a salary of £3 per week and when he supplemented this by serving as a waiter at the races and town balls he was brought to task.

Difficulty with the site and problems with funding plagued the early years. Scoborio's report to the Borough council in March 1875 brings home some of the curator's problems which do not arise today.

In 1875 Warrnambool had no reticulated water supply and the summer had been abnormally dry and he told the council that he was afraid of losing many newly planted trees as the well water, on which he depended, was hard and it could not be left sufficiently long in casks to soften. (At the time he had 300 young plants in pots and a stack of pine tree seedlings).

Further items from his report are:- Garden paths cleared of grass. Five seats procured, painted and placed at convenient places along paths. If council would allow him a man for a fortnight the cost could be retrieved during the winter. This would also give him more time for planting and improving the gardens.

Finally in 1877 a dissatisfied council commissioned William R. Guilfoyle to design an appropriate layout. Eventually in 1879 council accepted a plan which incorporated wide curving paths, large sweeping lawns dotted with specimen trees, glimpses of water, dense shrubberies displaying a rich variety of plants and focal points composed of plants of dramatic form and colour such as Yucca, palm, bamboos, and other variegated plants.

During Scoborio's curatorship

- 1879 Gardens entrance and paths improved
- 1883 Well and windmill installed, thus ensuring a continuous water supply
- 1885 Lake completed
- 1886 The lake bridge was constructed
- 1888 Fernery planned but not completed till the early 1900's
- 1893 Merri River Water scheme opened and reticulated water available to the gardens
- 1896 Maze constructed
- 1897 Gardens gazetted
- 1904 Gas lamps installed in the gardens

Charles Scoborio also constructed all the rockeries in the gardens from limestone rocks from the "20 acres wilderness" asking the council for extra to complete his task. The knobbly limestone rockery and fountain which still remains is a monument to his work and where one can linger and enjoy all the senses of an enclosed area. As well as maintaining the gardens Charles Scoborio had to look after public recreation grounds and street trees.

Well over the age of seventy years Charles Scoborio would have been feeling the stress of overwork as in 1903 and 1904 extensive tree planting took place in the streets, a double row of Norfolk Island pines in Raglan Parade, a row of pines on the south of Pertobe Road, pines in Henna Street and olive trees and evergreen oaks in Henna Street.

At the age of seventy nine years Charles Scoborio retired on the 31<sup>st</sup> March 1906 after forty years as curator. In that same year his wife, Elizabeth died and on the 8<sup>th</sup> December 1912 Charles Scoborio died. They are both buried in the Warrnambool cemetery.

After toiling long hours at the gardens one wonders how he found time to be a member of the militia for twenty six years. The volunteers were a feature of town festivals and for several years Charles Scoborio 6'5" tall of magnificent build with a long white beard was the drum major.

He was also a committee man for the Horticultural Society which was formed in October 1863. For many years they held annual shows before combining with the Agricultural Society.

Today we remember the curator by the naming in the 1980's of the reserve at the corner of Otway and Hopkins Road, "Scoborio Reserve".

His photograph is on the pioneers' honor board in the Public Library.

Marie Johnstone



## HEMP

The large evergreen shrub with the clusters of white flowers and soft, heart shaped leaves, that grows just east of the fernery is *Sparmannia africana*, commonly known as African Hemp. Its botanical name derives from Dr Andes Sparrmann a naturalist who was part of Captain Cook's second voyage, but its common name raises questions about hemp, its uses and abuses.

Hemp is the name given to fibre derived from several different plants, including cannabis, abaca and sisal. What connection it could have with the *Sparmannia* is a mystery to me. Fibre may be obtained from either the leaves or the stems of suitable plants but it seems unlikely that either would be suitable for processing from the *Sparmannia*. It is a vigorous plant, that requires hard pruning to keep it in check, so maybe the stems are a potential source of fibre. Can any one tell me?

Hemp is most commonly used to describe *Cannabis sativa*. This tall annual plant is a native of Asia, but widely grown as a commercial crop throughout the hot lands, and lovingly tended in many odd places in the temperate zone. It is grown for its fibre and seed oil, and the drugs marijuana and hashhish. Marijuana is the dried flowers and leaves, while hashhish comes from the resin of the flowers.

The hemp fibre is obtained from the stems in much the same way as flax and jute fibre is processed; that is by soaking in water until the connecting cells breakdown. The fibres can be as long as two and a half metres, but they are stiff, and are used for harsh fabrics such as sacking, burlap and canvas. The name canvas may have its derivation in cannabis. In the past it was used for rope, as it was resistant to water, but it was replaced by abaca and sisal and more recently by synthetic fibres.

Manila hemp is a product of the abaca plant, *Musa textilis* a banana plant from the Philippines. Unlike Cannabis, this fibre is obtained from the leaf rather than the stem. Its main use is in cordage (rope). Sisal, is another source of hemp. Sisal is an agave, *sisalana*, grown in hot lands, notably Brazil. The fibre comes from the fleshy leaf. It is stiff, strong and tough. Sunn hemp comes from an East Indian shrub, *Croatalaria juncea* the bark of which yields fibre.

To the best of my knowledge the only hemp we have in our gardens is *Sparmannia*, our African hemp. Von Mueller was fond of this plant and our plantings may date back to him. *Sparmannia* blooms throughout the year and in spring it is spectacular with a mass of flowers that truly rival cherry blossoms in their display. It should be cut back severely to keep it in check. In the Geelong Botanic Gardens I saw a bush that had been pruned, with the aid of a chain saw, to the height of about a metre, and within the year was again over two metres high. Seems like a great garden plant, but why stop there? If it really can produce fibre we may have a plant to challenge the Blue gums and the Paulownia, that of recent times, have become so popular. Then again, if the common name of African hemp derives from attributes other than its fibre, we can only dream of the possibilities! Today our gardens, tomorrow the world!

*Pat & Roy Varley*

## PLANTS IN OUR BOTANIC GARDENS

### *Araucaria Rulei* - Rule's Araucaria

The young, strong, *Araucaria rulei* can be seen growing in the gardens close to the fence of the curator's cottage garden. Unlike the araucarias described in our previous newsletters, it does not come from northern Australia, but rather from tropical New Caledonia where some thirteen species can be found.

We were fortunate to be given the specimen tree by the Royal Botanic Gardens Melbourne. According to Roger Spencer (Horticultural Botanist, RBGM) several expeditions have been carried out in recent years to New Caledonia where they have collected seeds from different species of araucarias, and trees raised have been passed on to various parks and gardens in Vic., N.S.W and Qld. He says a fine example of *A. rulei* can be seen today in the RBGM west of the tearooms.

It is fascinating to learn that this tree was first listed as "The New Caledonian *Araucaria rulei*. F. Muell." in 19<sup>th</sup> century nursery catalogues. The species was discovered by W. Duncan, a botanical collector for John Rule of Rule's Nursery in Richmond. Von Mueller, who as you know was responsible for introducing 1000s of trees to the colony in his time as Government Botanist, actually commemorated the nursery's proprietor by naming the tree after him.

There is a further interesting link for us in that William Guilfoyle, before becoming director of the RBGM, went on a five month voyage to the South Seas, visiting Fiji, Tonga, Samoa and New Caledonia. He recorded and collected many plants and trees, bringing them back to the nursery in Double Bay Sydney which he ran with his father. One wonders at the time whether the great man came across araucarias in his travels.

On his return to Sydney, Guilfoyle wrote a botanical account of the voyage for the "Sydney Mail", forwarding copies of the series to his friend Von Mueller who was most impressed. He particularly remarked on the variety and richness of plants from New Caledonia. Although they rarely stayed longer than three days at any port of call, which naturally reduced his collecting time at each stop, he was able to say, "I have been successful enough to bring with me in good condition .... the largest collection of choice and beautiful plants ever yet collected in the islands of the South Pacific."

One hopes that Rule's Araucaria was amongst them.

*Marigold Curtis*

**ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP DUE AND**  
**PAYABLE BY 31ST JULY**

**Friends of Warrnambool  
Botanic Gardens Inc.**

**RENEWAL OF MEMBERSHIP**

Given Name: .....

Mr. Mrs. Ms. Dr.

Surname: .....

Address: .....

.....

.....pc.....

Phone: .....

**Family Membership**    \$15 .....

(Ordinary member & other  
person living at same address)

Name of other person .....

**Ordinary Member**    \$10 .....

**Donation** .....

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Please make cheque payable to:

**Friends of Warrnambool Botanic Gardens Inc.**

and post with this form to:

**The Membership Secretary,**

**Friends of Warrnambool Botanic Gardens,**

**P.O. Box 1190, Warrnambool 3280**

**PLEASE FILL OUT AND PAY YOUR  
MEMBERSHIP AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.  
THIS WILL HELPS US KEEP OUR RECORDS  
UP TO DATE AND EFFICIENT**

**Thank you,  
Mandy King**