



FRIENDS OF WARRNAMBOOL BOTANIC GARDENS

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Issue No. 37

NEWSLETTER

Winter 2005

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

In retrospect we have had a very busy quarter. The Teddy Bears' and Fairies' Picnic on March 20th again attracted a big crowd of children and their toys – bears among them. Thank you to all those who contributed to make this a truly community event.

Also in March, Baron Ferdinand von Mueller was the topic of a talk by Professor Rob Wallis, Pro Vice Chancellor of Deakin University. Mueller has special significance to the "Friends" as he represents the earliest era of cooperation between the Melbourne Botanic Gardens, of which he was the first curator, and our own gardens. Mueller supplied many of the conifers planted around the boundary. These trees are now about 130 years old and are being progressively replaced. The stump of one massive old Cypress on the southern boundary has been left standing as a tribute to these early plantings, and to Mueller.

Another link to the old pines has been carved by the "Woodworkers" who have produced rich bowls from the cured wood of one of the old *Pinus radiata* that once grew in the pinetum. They have also used wood from an ancient Blackwood to make very special pens/pencils.

The Friends approached the Society for Growing Australian Plants seeking advice on the establishment of a native garden. We were delighted with their enthusiastic response. Initially a bed devoted to plants of the South West of Victoria is planned below the old Manna Gum to the east of the lake. This will be a very special collection. In the future other Australian plants will be introduced to one or more of the garden beds.

TAFE Diploma students in Child Care arranged activities in the Gardens for pre school children and their carers one windy day, and this was followed by the students in the Diploma of Lifestyle and Leisure who catered for the aged and disabled. So you see a wide spectrum of our community were involved. The Friends served fruit for the littlies, and scones and cream for the seniors - two very enjoyable days.

Partnerships such as those described above are so supportive and we value them very much.

Our signature Urns are being stabilised with the assistance of a grant from Heritage Victoria. Plans are underway to provide secure doors to the fernery, and the replanting of one of the degraded garden beds is in the pipeline. A new chapter in the story of the Lone Pine is unfolding. See details elsewhere in the Newsletter.

Finally, a tribute to member Tricia Houghton who resigned from the Committee earlier this year. Thank you Tricia for your work over the years.

Oh, and a PS. Be sure to mark Wednesday July 20th in your diary and come along to the AGM for conversation, lunch and an address by John Arnott, Director of the Geelong Botanic Gardens.

THE LONE PINE

Friends of the Warrnambool Botanic Gardens are very familiar with the story of the Lone Pine, but now there is an interesting footnote to the story.

The Lone Pine in Warrnambool's Botanic Gardens is one of Australia's most notable trees. It was grown from the seed of a pine cone collected at the battle of Lone Pine at Gallipoli and is a living memorial to that terrible battle.

Lone Pine was planned to create a diversion for a British landing in Suvla Bay. The scene of the battle was a heavily fortified plateau on which stood one solitary pine tree. The battle was fought between August 6th and 10th 1915. Turkish deaths were estimated at between five and six thousand and Australian deaths at 2277. The Lone Pine was also destroyed.

After the battle, Sergeant Keith McDowell, picked up a cone from the Lone Pine and on his arrival home in Warrnambool gave it to his aunt Mrs Emma Gray of Grassmere. It was twelve years later that she planted some of the seeds. Five seedlings were raised from the seeds of that cone. One died, one was planted in Wattle Park, Melbourne, one at the Shrine of Remembrance, one at The Sisters and the fourth tree was planted in the Warrnambool Gardens in January 1934. Today it is a fine specimen to the south of the lake. It is on the register of significant trees, *Pinus Brutia* commonly known as an Aleppo Pine. Mrs Gray attended all the plantings, and kept the cone until her death when her daughter passed it on to the President of the Timboon RSL, who in turn sent it on to Canberra where it was displayed in the Australian War Memorial.

In 1964, President of Warrnambool Legacy, Tom Griffiths, suggested that for the 50th anniversary of Gallipoli, seedlings from the original trees be provided for memorial plantings. Seeds from the Warrnambool tree failed to germinate, but about 150 seedlings were raised from seed from the tree at the Shrine of Remembrance. A similar initiative by Legacy produced more seedlings to commemorate the 75th anniversary of Gallipoli.

In October this year Legacy will hold its National Conference in Warrnambool and meet by the Lone Pine.

Other seeds from the original Lone Pine have been used to grow a pine in the Lone Pine cemetery at Gallipoli, which contains 1,167 burials, and a tree near the Australian War Memorial in Canberra. However there have not been any records of trees grown from "our" tree, that is, not until May 2005.

The Child of Lone Pine.

To be a guide at the Gardens is a pleasure and a privilege. It is a pleasure to teach and a privilege to learn. Last week Marie Johnstone and I were guiding the Seniors' Walking Group around our gardens and we learnt of the existence of a tree raised from the seed of our Lone Pine. Mr Alan Strain told us that he had grown it on his property in Ballangeich. Mr Strain now lives in Warrnambool.

We were excited by this news as to our knowledge there had never been a "child" of our tree. Plants had been grown from seed from the tree at the Shrine of Remembrance, but all attempts to reproduce the Warrnambool tree had failed.

We set out to find the tree. Well we know our way around the Gardens, but our navigational skills were tested as we explored Ballangeich. Thanks to the directions, advice and help of many people we homed in on the Grasmere-Hexham Road and there was a fine specimen of *Pinus Brutia*.

Some time in the early part of Laurie Mc Phees' curatorship of Warrnambool Botanic Gardens, (1959-1986) Alan Strain picked up a cone from the Lone Pine and, following Laurie's advice, took it home and placed it in a warm oven. When it opened he collected about 30 or 40 seeds. Only one grew. This he planted close to a row of *Pinus Radiata* that grew in a plantation to the west of the farmhouse. It is a robust, healthy tree, between 30 and 40 years old.

It seems so fitting that the tree was grown by an ex-service man, on a soldier settlement block, on the Grasmere Road, not so far from the Grasmere store where Mrs Gray raised the first four seedlings from that cone brought back from Gallipoli.

Mr Neil Hammond now owns the property that was Alan Strain's. He is very interested in the tree, its history and its future.

Pat Varley May 2005

FERDINAND von MUELLER

Ferdinand von Mueller was Victoria's first Govt Botanist (1853 – 1896) and the first director the Melbourne Botanic Gardens (1857-73) which, for some time incorporated the zoo. He was an avid collector of plants and named and described about 2000 new plant species. He wrote thousands of letters, published extensively, produced sets of specimens for libraries and Mechanics' Institutes and wrote a textbook for schools.

These were some of the facts Rob Wallis shared with a gathering of "Friends" on the evening of March 17th. Rob, who is Pro Vice Chancellor (regional and rural) Deakin University is an ex president of the Field Naturalists Club of Victoria and has a long standing interest in Mueller. We were delighted, also, to have another ex president of the Field Naturalists, Jack Douglas, with us for the evening. The Field Naturalists Club was formed in 1880 and celebrates its 125th anniversary this year. It continues to be a strong advocate of conservation and for the study of natural history.

Mueller was born in Rostock, Germany, and studied pharmacy prior to emigrating to South Australia in 1847. His family had a history of tuberculosis. Mueller had a continuing concern for his own health, so to avoid the northern winters, he left Europe together with two of his sisters. He chose South Australia, which was the destination of many German migrants at that time. He moved to Melbourne in 1852.

Although he was an outstanding botanist, he was not a landscape gardener. When fashions changed, he was replaced as curator of the gardens by William Guilfoyle.

Mueller was much honoured in Australia and abroad. His tomb in the south west corner of the St Kilda cemetery is inscribed - in memory of, 'Baron Sir Ferdinand von Mueller, K.C.M.G., M.D., F.R.S, etc.'

Ferdinand von Mueller had a key role in establishing Victoria's regional botanic gardens and particularly their coniferous plantings. The old pines on the perimeter of Warrnambool Botanic gardens remain today, as a living link to Mueller and to Scoborio, the curator who collaborated with him in trial planting of conifers around the boundary.

THE GROWING FRIENDS

The apples that we grew were a great success with everyone enjoying the picking and eating. Now we are about to prune them and tuck them in for winter. The figs were lovely and the birds also seem to enjoy them too.

We have ordered new wrought iron doors for the fernery which have been made by David O'Keefe from Dennington. They will be ready to go on in about three weeks and hopefully this will keep vandals from harming the ferns.

Lorraine Richardson

MEMBERSHIP DRIVE

Please find enclosed a form to hand on to your friends to help increase our membership

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY 2005

- AGM 20th July 2005. Warrnambool Club Kepler St. (Invitations attached)

Guided walk dates: July 10 & 24. Aug 14 & 28. Sept 11 & 25. Oct 9 & 23. Nov 13 & 27 Dec 11. Every 2nd & 4th Sunday starting at the Main Gate at 2.30pm

Remember that if you would like to organise a group 'tour of the gardens', for your family or business, please contact Isobel Jones or another committee person. Most times can be accommodated.

**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.

June 2005

Quercus suber

Cork Oak

Thanks to the Moyne Shire, the Warrnambool Botanic Gardens now have a small European Cork Oak planted near the lake.

This attractive tree species has served the needs of mankind since ancient times. Its bark has been harvested to provide cork for stoppers for wine and oil vessels and for floats for the nets of fishermen as long ago as in pre-historic Egypt. It was well known and used by the Greek and Roman civilizations. Still today, the cork tree provides for the same needs as well as filling a vital role in the building industry.

Cork oaks are difficult to propagate usually surviving only if allowed to grow where the acorn has dropped. Gerard Kearney, however, managed to grow some for the Koroit Gardens to replace a 100 year old tree they had lost. He had one to spare and this one has been successfully planted not far from the Oak Walk.

A Cork Oak can live for hundreds of years and can grow to some twenty metres in height. The average life span of a tree which is harvested for cork is around 170 years and the tree is mature and ready for harvesting (stripping) after 40 years. Early settlers to Australia brought hundreds of these trees into this country but they did not prove to be commercially successful. Australia's oldest known example can be found in the Royal Tasmanian Botanical Gardens and was planted in 1857. It is one of their finest cultivated trees, with exceptional form and dense rounded crown.

We can only hope that our small tree will reach a similar height and beauty despite the huge elms towering overhead.

Marigold Curtis