

FRIENDS OF WARRNAMBOOL BOTANIC GARDENS

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Maintaining and developing Warrnambool Botanic Gardens as an outstanding Guilfoyle garden



NEWSLETTER

Issue Number 82

April 2017

150 YEARS – a growing legacy

President's Report on 2016

Well we did it!

We celebrated right royally throughout the year honouring the Gardens and all who have made them what they are today.



The planning started back in 2014 when Curator, John Sheely drew our attention to the looming 150th anniversary. Because the Gardens are owned by the community and administered by the Council, *The Friends* felt it essential to work with the WCC in planning for the year.

We met with CEO, Bruce Anson and sought Council support in organising the event. We wanted to establish a 150th committee and Bruce proposed Councillor Kyle Gaston as council representative. Kyle was a great contributor, and found time to work with us even after she assumed the role of Mayor. We were delighted when John Sherwood, Neil McLeod and Geraldine Moloney accepted our invitation to join with interested members of *The Friends* to form Committee 150.

The Committee first met in March 2015. It was a very spirited meeting and lots of ideas were put forward. Meetings were held monthly. It was agreed that we should have a whole year of celebration. As time

passed we settled on one high profile event early in the year, a photographic competition running throughout the year and a community fair toward the end of the year. We designed a logo and briefed the media.



Our gala event 'A night in the Gardens' on March 19th, was a magnificent celebration of 150 years on the present site. The weather was kind, the Gardens

immaculate and an elegant attendance in excess of 300 party goers was fantastic. A lot of people worked hard and long to ensure the success of the evening. Fiona Rule our treasurer was a driving force while the support of Deakin University, the media and local benefactors was heart warming.

Meantime, the photographic competition inspired and choreographed by John Sherwood was under way.

Entitled, **A Guilfoyle Garden: Guests and Greenery**, it challenged entrants to capture an aspect of the Gardens which they saw as special. It attracted more than 160 entries. At a well attended launch of

the exhibition at the Artery Gallery, judge Ron Quick, congratulated the winners. Janet Macdonald worked hard and long to publicise and organise the exhibition while the Camera Club assisted with the display, which was sponsored by Sinclair Wilson.

Planning for our third major event was well advanced. The date set was Sunday 13th November. In anticipation of a lovely late Spring day we planned a **Family Fun Day**.

This would be great community event where local organisations took the initiative.

There would be games, competitions, a scavenger hunt and a mud kitchen for the kids, with music, fine food and fellowship for the rest. There would be food stalls,

plant and produce stalls together with activities and demonstrations by community groups. Families could picnic on the lawns while enjoying performances from the Rotunda.

Well that Sunday was the wettest windiest Sunday in the wettest Spring in one of Warrnambool's wettest years – or at least that is how it seemed to us. But garden lovers are hardy folk and in spite of the weather we had a great group who shivered and lingered to the very end – unlike the pigeons we had envisaged circling the site as we sang Happy Birthday. On release



they headed for home like little rockets.

Our most successful raffle, offering a fully catered dinner for eight in the rotunda, was run and won; thanks again Fiona.

The most eye-catching activity, the brain child of Janet Macdonald, was the yarn bombing of some of our taller palm trees to recreate the Truffula trees of *The Lorax*, one of the children's stories by Dr Seuss. Enthusiastic knitters produced many metres of fabric to wrap the trunks of these trees.

None of this could have happened without the enthusiasm and hard work of *The Friends*, the support of the City Council and the generous assistance of so many other people and organisations. Our Curator and his team are amazing, as is our secretary, Mandy King. It was a pleasure to be part of our growing legacy of 150 years.

Pat Varley

STREET TREES IN WARRNAMBOOL

Street trees have come and gone over the years in Warrnambool. Their establishment and their removal can guarantee a heated debate. Trees – we love 'em or hate 'em.

Back in 1871 trees were being planted along the south side of Timor Street from Liebig to Kepler Street.

These trees, numbering twenty-one, were planted by leading citizens, as a gesture of civic pride. They were Aleppo pines which were selected by Baron von Mueller of Melbourne Botanical Gardens, and were the fore runner of the extensive tree planting throughout the municipality which has made Warrnambool such an attractive community. [C.E.Sayers, By these we Flourish 1969 p.96]

None of these trees remain today.

Charles Scoborio, Curator of the Warrnambool Botanic Gardens, was also responsible for street trees. In 1898 after two very dry years, he reported to Council;

The established trees in the streets are doing fairly well, with a few failures. The newly planted trees, through keeping them well mulched and watered are doing better than I expected. There are about a dozen failures, principally Norfolk Island pines...

He also spoke of horses and cows being allowed to wander in the streets and '*...persons attending the Saleyards (now Swan Reserve) tying their horses to the trees...In Raglan Parade 14 of the trees had the leading shoots broken off by some mischievous persons.*'

In the years 1903 and 1904 there was a flurry of tree planting including the double row of Norfolk Island Pines in Raglan Parade and along the north side of Pertobe Road and in Henna Street between Timor and Koroit Street. Olives and evergreen oaks were also planted in Henna Street, while Tree Lucerne was chosen for the sandy area south of Pertobe Road. The cost of these plantings was most likely covered by the fees charged to run stock on the Western Reserve or common.

Remember the six Moreton Bay Figs in Koroit Street? They managed to survive for the best part of a century despite being savagely pruned to accommodate powerlines and having their roots amputated to smooth the footpath. They were

taken out in 2013 as part of the reconstruction of Koroit Street. So from another perspective;

The decision to remove the figs comes after continuing damage by their root system to roads, footpaths and kerbing.... They will be replaced by plane trees between Henna and Fairy streets. [Warrnambool Standard 3/4/2013}

Less than four years later 19 Plane Trees were felled in the CBD to allow reconstruction of Liebig Street. They are to be replaced with Chanticleer ornamental pear trees – a popular tree in the present decade.

One of the enduring survivors among street trees must be the Canary Island Date Palm. It doesn't drop leaves or shed branches – just the occasional frond after big winds. Its root structure appears to be little threat to paths and roadways and the canopy, compatible with power lines. Indeed some countries disguise their communication towers as palm trees. It is considered to be drought tolerant and grows in a range of climatic zones. The grass grows well below it and it is low maintenance. Should it need to be removed there will be a good market for a transplant – as much as \$20,000 in the USA.

Palms gained popularity as a feature plant in Victoria towards the end of the 1800s when Guilfoyle made extensive use of them in Melbourne Botanic Gardens. It was 1930 when William Donald recommended them as a street tree in Warrnambool.

William Donald succeeded Scoborio as Curator of WBG in 1906. He was born in Scotland, but left for Canada as a teenager. He came to Australia via California and worked at Melbourne Botanic Gardens and Macedon before coming to Warrnambool. In his report to Council (12 July 1930) he suggested palms in the south side of Timor Street West from Ryot Street to the showgrounds;

This embankment is most suitable in every way for this kind of street decoration. From Ryot Street to showgrounds will require 18 palms. I have these in stock. Cost of this work approx 23 pounds.

There are 18 palms on the south side of Timor Street today. While this may sound like a remarkable record of survival, there is evidence that more than 18 palms were planted originally. The spacing suggests one tree has been removed in the block from the showgrounds to Hart Street and probably five between Hart Street and Ryot Street. Three triangular islands each with its fenced in palm and watering system were also planted. Two were at the intersection of Hart Street (then Hopetoun St) with Merri Cres and with Timor Street

and the third at Timor and either Redford or Hyland Street. These were removed about 1968 to facilitate road works.

Donald also initiated centre planting from Merri to Koroit Street. Palms survive from Merri to Timor today as central planting.

Our family lived in Timor Street in the 1960s in a house I later learnt had been home to William Donald in his retirement. The children kicked the football on the nature strip and on one occasion it stuck in the crown of the palm. Our helpful neighbour brought out a ladder and retrieved it. When I look at the trees now, they must be about 25 metres, and I wonder if it was possible. However the kids assure me that then they could jump up and touch the fronds. They also waited for the school bus at the enclosure at the Hart Street – Timor Street intersection. The palms were planted 86 years ago so must be more than 90 years old. Long may they prosper. They have nurtured the birds, who in turn have spread their seed far and wide. In Warrnambool and the world at large, Phoenix Canariensis is quite ubiquitous.

Pat Varlev



Palm shaped communication towers Marrakech



Early Liebig Street



WBG Team Update April 2017

Personally speaking autumn is my favourite time of year.

I do enjoy the crisp and dewy starts to the morning but in all reality this is a very busy time of the year for the WBG team.

We are in cutting back mode within most of the shrub and display beds.

Fertilising of the shrub beds and lawns is also being undertaken to replenish them after a spring/summer.

Unfortunately, a large Dutch Elm located north of the rotunda was removed due to extensive branch failure over a 2-month period. Retention of the tree was not possible given the extent of the branch failure, which left the tree very asymmetrical and exposed.

An independent arborist was engaged to ensure all possible options were explored before removal was finalised.

It is planned to install some additional irrigation in this area whilst it is disturbed. Post irrigation, 3 new trees will be planted to replace the Dutch Elm.

Autumn is a great time of the year for a wander through WBG. Come in and see how the

landscape changes with different views being slowly exposed leading up to winter.

Don't forget when you visit grab a team member for a chat.

John Sheely
Curator
15 April 2017



Costa & Murtle

Bamstone supplied Australian Bluestone to yet another Gold Medal and Best in Show winning garden at the 2017 Melbourne International Flower and Garden Show

WBG MASTER PLAN 2017

This very important document should be available soon

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

19TH JULY 12PM

Our guest speaker, Justin Buckley is manager of horticulture for the National Trust and over many years has acquired specialised knowledge of gardens in the Victorian era, especially plants commonly used. He will share some of this knowledge with us in his presentation.

With Justin being our special guest this will be a major event for us and we hope that you will come along.

DON'T MISS OUT

Invitation with full details will be sent out in our next newsletter. Please take this as a reminder to put into your diary

FRIENDS OF WARRNAMBOOL

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

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Please include identification to enable receipt to be recorded

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 on the email list

AUSTRALIAN ASSOCIATION OF FRIENDS OF BOTANIC GARDENS

Our Friends conducted an Association conference in 1999 and held positions on the Association committee for 10 years. Visit their re-vamped website which holds information on many Australian Friends groups & botanic gardens, with information for not-for-profit groups.

[Australian Association of Friends of Botanic Gardens](http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/other/dfat/special/aafg/)

GUIDED TOURS

Regular Sunday guided tours were discontinued last year as demand was unpredictable. That doesn't mean we are not taking tours. We have met the requests for a guided walk from numerous groups on bus trips to Warrnambool. These visits are increasing. Our guides will do the same for local groups and individuals at a mutually convenient time. Contact a committee member or email friendswbg@gmail.com

MOVING AHEAD

It is great to report that work is in progress on the well. Visit the Gardens and see how our old well is being made accessible to the public, and wonder at the skill and craftsmanship of days of long ago.



**MEMBERSHIP PAYMENT
2017-18
[CLICK HERE](#)**

Remember the 'olden days' when we had to send membership reminders by post, in an envelope, with a stamp. Then you wrote a cheque, filled out your membership form, put them both in an envelope attached a stamp & went to post office.
Time & \$'s

The Friends are moving with the rapid changes and making life as easy as possible for our members and members to be.

Our membership can now be handled all on line. We have a link on our web page where you can fill in your details and send us your most valued payments.

We would be happy for you to forward this newsletter to your friends and ask them if they would like to become a Friend of the Gardens.

Membership support is crucial to the longevity of our Friends group