

History of the Friends of the Warrnambool Botanic Gardens 1989 – 2009

1989

The Friends of the Botanic Gardens was formed in 1989, an initiative of the Premier Town Promotion Board. The Board considered that the Gardens were an undervalued community resource. As an activity of the Promotion Board, it was suggested that a group be formed to follow up on the work that had been done by the Gardens Superintendent, Terry O'Sullivan. He identified a number of the trees and major shrubs in the Gardens and had botanical and common name tags prepared for attachment.

Ellen Dwyer was contacted by Bob Barham, Chairman of the Promotion Board, to consider forming a group. A meeting of interested community members was convened by Ellen Dwyer, and Isobel Jones and attended by Russell Marriott and Barrie Baker from the Premier Town Promotion Board. Because of the enthusiasm for the concept of a Gardens Support Group, a committee was quickly formed with Ellen Dwyer as President and Isobel Jones as Secretary. The committee members were Nan Dodds, Lesley Skewes, Thelma Lynch, Judith Loch, Marie Johnstone, Barbara O'Brien, Jean Fitzpatrick, Judi Phillips and Lorraine Richardson.

Meetings in the beginning were quite informal and held at Ellen Dwyer's home. In fact they continued at Ellen's home during her time as President, then the meetings had become more formal.

On Wednesday 6th December 1989 John Hawker attended a *Friends* meeting and gave the members helpful advice on fundraising and promotion. He also took members on a tour of the Gardens and identified many of the trees. He recognised the Gardens as one of the best examples of William Guilfoyle design. Guilfoyle, a Director of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Melbourne (1873 – 1909), played an important part in the design of many Western District gardens including the botanic gardens at Koroit, Hamilton and Camperdown and those on private properties such as "Dalvui" and "Turkeith". Many Guilfoyle designs had been drastically altered but those at Warrnambool still resembled the original plan. John Hawker was invited to return to Warrnambool in February to speak about gardens and officially launch the *Friends* organisation.

1990

During 1990 Judy Clarke, a member of the Premier Town Promotion Board, Dawn Smith, Marigold Curtis, Mary Mahoney, Rosemary Fish and Ann Hunt joined the group. Dawn Smith took on the role of treasurer.

In February members of *The Friends Committee* took a tour of the Royal Botanic Gardens organised by the Melbourne Friends. This visit was considered important in broadening the group's appreciation of Guilfoyle's garden designs.

During the Warrnambool Wunta Festival *The Friends* organised a weekend of activities. On Saturday 17th February John Hawker officially launched *The Friends of the Botanic Gardens* at a function at the Art Gallery. He addressed a group of ninety people on the topic "An Overview of Botanic Gardens" and launched the information brochure. Photographs from the Warrnambool Library archives were mounted and displayed. Many of the guests enrolled as members of *The Friends*.

Saturday 18 February was a family picnic day in the Gardens. Three hundred people enjoyed listening to local bands – The Warrnambool Senior Citizen's Band and Warrnambool Brass Band – and to the Warrnambool Symphony Orchestra. John Hawker conducted two walks through the Gardens which attracted 140 people. These activities created great interest and *The Friends* were encouraged by the response. Following John's visit they were fired with enthusiasm and looked around for a project. They did not have to look far. Hidden behind a large clump of Pampas Grass was a late nineteenth century fountain. It was carved from sandstone and set in a rustic sandstone grotto. The foundation had been filled in and used as a planter for marigolds and other annuals. The outer rim had been removed by chainsaw. *The Friends* launched an appeal in February 1990 to fund restoration of the fountain. The estimated cost of the restoration project ranged from \$8,000 to \$10,000. The appeal received widespread community support. The Warrnambool Standard supported the appeal by providing publicity and a place to lodge appeal donations. In addition, the Rotary Club of Warrnambool offered to become the major sponsors of the appeal. *The Friends* were also grateful to three local plumbers – Tony Van Rooy, Lyle Kelson and Bryan Hutchinson – who provided free plumbing services to the project. It was their contribution as part of the Master Plumbers Association centenary celebrations. This helped to contain costs on the project. The work was undertaken by the Warrnambool City Council in consultation with the National Trust of Victoria.

In order to learn more about the Gardens a walk was organised for every Monday afternoon on which information about the trees and shrubs was shared. The knowledge gained from these walks encouraged some of *The Friends* to act as volunteer guides to groups of visitors and conducted tours were advertised in the "Standard" and through the Visitor Information Centre.

In April two trees in the Gardens were classified by the National Trust. The trees, a Calabrian Pine (Lone Pine) and a Soledad Pine, are significant historically and botanically. According to Trust Administrator Douglas Hill, each tree should be preserved as an outstanding example of its specie and a major contributor to the landscape of the Gardens. Name plates for the trees were provided by the National Trust and attached by *The Friends*.

On the 19th May members visited the Hamilton Gardens for lunch and a tour of the Gardens. During a walk through the local Gardens on 28th May Warrnambool City Councillors and *Friends* were given advice on redevelopment by John Hawker, the then Conservation and Development Officer. He explained a tree management program he had prepared. Many of the pine and cypress trees around the perimeter were in a bad condition and needed trimming or removal. The plan allowed for the removal of dangerous and unhealthy trees and replacement with semi-mature trees.

In June Pat Learmonth gave a talk on her experiences in establishing the garden at Pear Tree Cottage, Dunkeld. Money raised at this function contributed to the fountain restoration appeal.

A history of Warrnambool's Botanic Gardens from the original gardens established near the Hopkins River in 1859 and relocated to the present site in 1866 was being prepared by the group's historian, Judy Clarke.

On 26th October members of *The Friends* of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Melbourne visited Warrnambool. The *Warrnambool Friends* shared a meal with them, took them on a tour of the Gardens and Judy Clarke gave a talk on our local Garden's history. The *Warrnambool Friends* appreciated the informative comments made by Dr. Jim Willis, renowned botanist and a past director of the Royal Botanic Gardens in Melbourne, who was part of the Melbourne group.

A bus tour was planned to Mr and Mrs Lachlan Gordon's home "Turkeith" on 11th November. "Turkeith", a Guilfoyle garden, was of great interest to *The Friends*.

In conjunction with the Anti Cancer Council, *The Friends* arranged for two local gardens, Mr and Mrs John Richardson's country garden and Mr and Mrs Neville Smith's city garden, to open for the public on the weekend of 23rd and 24th November. Over 1,400 people visited these gardens. Mrs Jean Fitzpatrick donated a framed embroidery of a cottage garden for a raffle. *The Friends* made about \$3,000 from gate takings, garden stalls and raffle tickets.

In December 1990 Warrnambool Botanic Gardens was registered by the National Trust. On 10th December Ellen Dwyer received a letter from John McGrath, then MLA for Warrnambool, stating that he believed the recognition of the Warrnambool Botanic Gardens was due to the active involvement of *The Friends* in promoting the development and use of the Gardens. He congratulated the Committee on their outstanding achievement. At that time *The Friends* had fifty-one members and membership was set at \$5.00. Jenny Chittick joined *The Friends'* Committee.

1991

During 1991 several activities were arranged to try to attract people to the Gardens. In February a "Dance until Dark" tea dance was held to coincide with the Wunta Festival. The Council erected a temporary dance floor and a local dance band played a variety of music from Foxtrot for serious dancers to the Birdie Dance for the children. About 300 people attended the dance in the Gardens.

Isobel Jones, Secretary of *The Friends*, organised recitals by various local musical groups every Sunday throughout February and March. The choice of music varied from Irish folk music on St Patrick's Day to the Senior Citizen's Band to the Warrnambool Symphony Orchestra. Attendances ranged from 75 – 300 people.

Isobel also arranged for the Holiday Actors to perform. This group of young actors gave four performances of "The Adventures of Mr Toad" on the 23rd and 24th March and seven hundred children and adults attended. Profits from the performances went to the restoration of an old Victorian gas light in the Gardens. *The Friends* acknowledged the contribution of the Holiday Actors with a plaque on the lamp.

Richard Barley, a noted adviser on trees, came to Warrnambool and gave advice on the deteriorating perimeter pines. Richard recommended that a qualified arborist be

employed. The Council acted on Richard's recommendations and some trees were felled and others trimmed to ensure safety.

In May, Friends groups from throughout Victoria attended a weekend seminar in Melbourne. Representatives of eight provincial gardens presented reports and commented on the support they were getting from their local communities. Ellen Dwyer and Judy Clarke represented Warrnambool. The concept of an association to assist in co-ordinating ideas and projects of common interest was discussed and it was agreed to form some type of umbrella association. It was decided to hold a second seminar in 1992. The Melbourne Friends made a gift to Warrnambool of a rare species of pine (*Pinus strobus* –a white pine) to mark the occasion.

In July the reconstruction of the fountain and the restoration of a damaged sundial that had been discovered in the Gardens' works area was celebrated with a formal opening by the Mayor, Cr. Atkinson, and attended by various community groups. The Rotary Club provided \$3,000 towards the restoration while Jamieson Street State School children, on their own initiative, raised \$120. The Master Plumbers Association donated its services. Judy Clarke compiled the history of the fountain and sundial. Guests were entertained by the Warrnambool City Band during the afternoon.

In August Dr Jim Willis gave a public lecture on famous botanic gardens of the world. He further shared his knowledge with *The Friends* on a walk through the gardens.

During Local Government Week in October Thelma Lynch conducted two guided tours through the Gardens for Councillors and visitors and received a letter of thanks from the Council. Thelma suggested *The Friends* should give more publicity to the tree the Warrnambool Girl Guides had planted to commemorate Baden Powell's visit and to the Royal Oak in the Gardens.

In November *The Friends* were invited to set up a plant stall in "Wingfield", the garden of Mr and Mrs Neville Smith, which was opened as part of the Victorian Garden Scheme. The plant stall made \$850 and this, with the generous donation of another \$500 from the gate takings, provided money for the next project.

In December the Premier Town Committee recognised *The Friends* as the most successful branch of the Premier Town Promotion Board and presented Ellen Dwyer with a certificate recognising their contribution at the Citizenship Awards evening.

Judy Clarke resigned from the Committee and returned to Melbourne.

1992

Kathy Wicherson joined *The Friends* Committee.

At the Wunta Festival in February *The Friends* presented a Tea Dance in the Gardens as they had in the previous year. More than 500 people attended.

One of the aims of *The Friends* was to encourage people to come and use the Gardens. To this end a series of concerts was organised for Sunday afternoons during February and March. These concerts proved to be very popular with The

Warrnambool Citizen's Band, the Warrnambool Symphony Orchestra, Shearwater (an Irish group) and the Warrnambool and District Highland Band each providing an afternoon of free entertainment.

During March the Holiday Actors Theatre Group created four delightful and amusing plays inspired by Roald Dahl's poems. These plays were a great success.

In May Melbourne Friends hosted the second weekend seminar which attracted representatives of fourteen botanic gardens. Ellen Dwyer and Jean Fitzpatrick attended from Warrnambool. At this seminar a draft constitution for the proposed association was accepted in principle. During the Heritage Festival in April *The Friends* organised a family day in the Gardens with entertainment by the Warrnambool City Band and the Flagstaff Hill Singers. Thelma Lynch and Isobel Jones conducted guided walks. *The Friends* also mounted a display of old photographs of the Gardens in the Art Gallery.

A fund raising evening was held on 17th September when Kim Pretlove spoke of his tour of European gardens.

Dawn Smith resigned as Treasurer in October as she was taking leave of absence and Kathy Wicherson accepted the position.

The Friends held an Open Day at Grant and Beryl Warnock's historic home, "Rosemount", at Southern Cross. This was a great success with music, entertainment, stalls and afternoon teas. \$2,077 was raised. President Ellen Dwyer presented the Warnocks with an embroidery worked by Jean Fitzpatrick in appreciation of their contribution.

The Constitution of *The Friends of the Warrnambool Botanic Gardens* was adopted in 1992.

Glenys Phillpot joined the Committee.

1993

At the February meeting Ellen Dwyer reported on a visit that she, Isobel Jones and Jean Fitzpatrick had made to the site of the proposed Japanese garden in Albert Park. The Music in the Gardens program was poorly attended due to unpleasant weather.

During March, Friends of the Melbourne Botanic Gardens toured the Western District visiting gardens. They visited Warrnambool on the 25th March. Members took the visitors on a tour of the gardens and also assisted in providing lunch at "Minjah".

The next project was the restoration of the old gas lamp in the gardens. There was a fine base but the top was missing. The Gas and Fuel Corporation put in the fuel line free of charge and donated another beautiful gas lamp.

John Hawker wrote approving of the restoration of the fountain, sundial and gas lamp and the tree restoration program.

At the April meeting the possibility of families donating memorial seats was discussed and a trip to Ballarat to look at garden seats was proposed.

At the AGM in June, Dawn Smith was appointed Secretary when Isobel Jones retired from the position. Guest speaker, Peter Reeve, spoke about the past, present and future interest of the City Council in the Gardens. The Council had earlier received a grant to be used for conservation analysis and development of a policies and management plan. Ellen Dwyer and Isobel Jones were invited to be members of the Steering Committee for the project. S.F. Landscape Consultants Pty Ltd were appointed to prepare the plan for Council by April 1994.

As a first step, historical material and photographs were studied and people interviewed for their recollections. Original pathways predating Guilfoyle's plans were discovered near the fountain. The position of the long gone maze was accurately established. Early aerial photographs showed denser planting around the perimeter, but areas planned as open space have been encroached upon over the years.

The second stage of the Management Plan looks to the future, and provides for significant features within the Gardens to be retained and further development to be in sympathy with the historical character of the Gardens as designed by Guilfoyle.

Garden walks were again planned during the Women's Festival in September.

At the October meeting Marie Johnstone gave a short report on the proposed Japanese Gardens.

Rosemary Fish and Lesley Skewes resigned from the Committee during the year.

1994

Nan Dodds and Jenny Chittick resigned from *The Friends* Committee and Marjorie Candy and Sandra Williams joined in 1994.

In March, thanks to Marjorie Candy's flair for organisation, the Committee members were able to visit three country gardens – "Wooriwyrite" near Camperdown, "Nerrin Nerrin" and "Kornong" near Streatham.

In April members of the Group attended the annual Gardens Seminar of Western District Gardens Clubs in Caramut. The speaker was Sarah Guest, a leading garden authority and writer.

Marigold Curtis attended the fourth Annual Conference of the Association of Friends in Geelong. She was impressed with the speech given by Dr Brian Morley, Director of Adelaide Botanic Gardens. The Conference focussed on the future role of botanic gardens.

Most of the members attended the launch of the new Master Plan for the Warrnambool Botanic Gardens which was held after the Annual General Meeting on 24th May at the Council offices. It was a very successful and interesting evening with Ross Ingram, Patrick Mallon and Jill Orr Young from S.F. Landscape giving a thorough presentation to the audience. It was exciting to be able to see, at last, a

plan in print and know what the future plans were. The plan was open for public comment until the end of June. The Consultants gratefully acknowledged the research and co-operation of Judy Clarke for sections of the chronology.

To spread the workload and to encourage initiatives the President formed the following Sub-Committees:-

- The Growers' Group (Lorraine Richardson)
- Music in the Gardens (Marie Johnstone)
- Fund Raising (Ellen Dwyer)
- Social Activities (Kathy Wicherson)
- Newsletter (Marigold Curtis)

During the year the *Friends* visited the gardens of some other members. The first garden visited was that of Sandra Williams – “Riverview Farm”.

A bus tour to “Purrumbete” for a tour of the extensive gardens and homestead was enjoyed by sixty members and friends. An unplanned highlight was the alpacas and also a rescue on the Lake. “Purrumbete’s” owner, Roger Haldane, rushed to his boat and rowed to the centre of the lake to retrieve a distressed visitor whose motorboat had broken down.

A fund-raising lunch was held at the Mahogany Ship Restaurant in October with guest speaker Lisa Stafford speaking on landscape design and construction.

The Open Garden Days had been a great success as had the Concerts in the Gardens. The concert management worked well that year with two or three people managing each event.

The Newsletter Committee became the channel for communication, advertising and promotion. There was a Newsletter for all seasons.

The Friends Group celebrated the end of the year with Christmas Drinks in the Gardens.

1995

In March official guides, Isobel Jones, Thelma Lynch and Marigold Curtis conducted Friends of the Geelong Gardens on a guided walk through the Warrnambool Gardens.

Members were sorry to see Peter Reeve, formerly a Warrnambool City Council Technical Services Director, who had taken such an interest in the Master Plan, leave the City Council to join the Shire of Moyne. His work on the Steering Committee and his support and interest in the *Friends* Group was much appreciated. Bill Gill from Mildura City Council was appointed to the position.

The *Friends* again participated in Heritage Week in April with a Photographic Exhibition held at the Regal Shoppe. Sandra Williams created an artistic display in the adjoining rooms. David Jones, the then City of Warrnambool Commissioner, officially opened the Exhibition.

After five years at the helm, Ellen Dwyer did not seek re-election as President and Judith Loch was elected to the position. Isobel Jones thanked Ellen for her untiring commitment to her five years as President and presented her with a gift.

The success of the Warrnambool Botanic Gardens during the past five years was attributed to Ellen's leadership and Isobel's enthusiasm and dedication.

Friends who attended the slide showing and talk by Tim Walker, head gardener of the Botanic Gardens at Oxford University, thoroughly enjoyed the lively, entertaining and informative evening. Tim took his audience through 375 years of this historic gardens. He was a guest of Deakin University, Warrnambool.

Friends enjoyed visits to members' gardens and having coffee together. During the year Jean Fitzpatrick, Rosemary Archer, Judith Loch and Kathy Wicherson opened their gardens and the Warnock family invited the Group to their lovely garden at "Rosemount".

Jane Edmanson of the ABC Gardening Australia was guest speaker at *The Friends'* successful Spring luncheon. She showed slides of her recent trip to Europe. The event attracted 150 guests and was also memorable for the unexpected chickpea saga.

During September, thanks to Neville Smith, the *Friends* were able to hold their future meetings in the boardroom at Mackay Taylor. These meetings were held on a more professional basis. It was decided to hold a mail box at the Post Office.

The proposed five sub-committees worked particularly well.

Lorraine Richardson invited the *Friends* to have a plant stall when she and her husband opened their lovely garden at "Hopkins Hill" in November.

Five aged pine trees were removed from the Gardens as part of an on-going removal and replacement program.

At the December meeting Marigold Curtis was nominated as the *Friends'* representative on the Parks and Gardens Advisory Committee of the Warrnambool City Council.

1996

Wendy McWhinney and Marie Ziebell joined the *Friends* Committee.

During February, East Warrnambool Rotary Club enjoyed an evening meal in the Gardens. Isobel Jones, Marigold Curtis and Sandra Williams conducted guided walks.

The Gas and Fuel Co. generously donated a "goose neck" gaslight which dates back to 1870.

Carole Reid, the then Warrnambool City Chief Commissioner, officially recognised the light which was erected at the main entrance to the Gardens.

The visit to the Gardens by the Australian Garden History Society (Victorian Branch) on their "Guilfoyle in the Western District" tour in March was a great success. The visitors enjoyed guided walks through the Gardens. A Norfolk Island pine was planted by Jim Guilfoyle (a grandson of William Guilfoyle) who had flown from London to join the tour. The group then moved to the Reception Room at the Municipal Offices where they were joined by local people to hear a series of interesting lectures from Eve Almond, Richard Aitken and John Hawker. An exhibition of archival maps, plans and photos of Warrnambool Botanic Gardens and Koroit Botanic Gardens was opened by Jim Guilfoyle.

In April the Royal Botanic Gardens, Melbourne, presented 121 young trees to the Warrnambool Botanic Gardens as part of "Flora for Victoria". This was one of the highlights of the 150th Year celebrations of the establishment of Melbourne's Botanic Gardens. The trees were accepted by Warrnambool's then Mayor, Cr. David Atkinson, who undertook a commemorative planting of an *Agathis robusta* (Queensland Kauri). A plaque was also presented to the Gardens to mark the occasion.

In May 1996 the Warrnambool Botanic Gardens was incorporated.

At the Annual General Meeting in July, Judith Loch did not seek re-election as President and Marie Johnstone was elected to the position. Marie thanked Judith for her hard work, commitment and efficiency. Guest speaker, Mary Griffith, gave an informative talk on the theme "Birds in the Garden".

In October a bus trip was arranged for members and others to visit "Wanawong", a garden for all seasons set in the Otway Ranges. During the afternoon visits were made to gardens at "Turkeith" and nearby "Mooleric", both of which were designed by William Guilfoyle.

In December Ellen Dwyer and Isobel Jones attended a meeting in Camperdown to assist with the formation of a similar Friends Group in that area.

Also in December Ellen Dwyer and Isobel Jones and Marie Johnstone, together with Heritage Advisor Michael Taylor inspected the rotunda to assess what restoration was required and to improve the amenity of the lower section of the building. It was estimated that the total cost of the works would be \$46,000. After consultation with Colin Hunt, Warrnambool City Council Building Services Manager, some improvements were made to the lower area. Such works included opening of the shutters and servery, connection of water supply and installation of a new bench and table. The improvements enabled the *Friends* to make use of the facility.

The final function for the year was held in December when *Friends* enjoyed drinks in the Gardens.

1997

During the year Anne Kelly joined the *Friends* Committee.

The new letterhead obtained in January provided a more professional image for the Group.

To mark the 150th Anniversary of Warrnambool the *Friends* organised a fund-raising project to assist restoration of the rotunda. Applications for funding were lodged with the Alan Lane Trust and Ern Hartley Foundation. It was disappointing that both applications were unsuccessful.

It was gratifying to receive an allocation of \$3,000 from the family of the late Sir Fletcher Jones and Rena Jones. This donation was exciting after rejection of earlier applications for funding.

Guided tours through the Gardens were arranged as required by Isobel Jones, Marigold Curtis and Ellen Dwyer. Requests from bus tours and local Groups increased the demand.

1997 was an exciting period for the *Friends* with their participation in the celebrations of the 150th Anniversary of the establishment of Warrnambool. A series of functions was arranged by the 150th Anniversary Committee. Mrs Lesley McGarvie planted a Manna Gum chosen by the *Friends* to commemorate the occasion and a commemorative plaque was unveiled by the then Governor, Mr Richard McGarvie. The Gardens looked magnificent thanks to the Parks and Gardens Superintendent, Terry O'Sullivan, and his staff.

The Summer Music Program, held during February and March, was well attended. On 16th March the *Friends* staged a 150th Anniversary Celebrations Concert featuring local bands, choirs and soloists. This was the first time in about 60 years that afternoon teas had been served from the rotunda. This service generated many favourable comments. The Rotary Club of East Warrnambool volunteered "hands on" work in the Gardens. Painting of the fernery was suggested as a suitable project.

Marie Ziebell, who was the *Friends* representative at the Association of Friends Annual Conference, gave an excellent report of events she attended over the three days.

Michael Taylor, Heritage Consultant, spoke at the Annual General Meeting in July on the conservation of old buildings. Judith Loch, Barbara O'Brien and Wendy McWhinney did not seek re-election to the Committee due to the pressure of other commitments. They were thanked for their contribution to the *Friends*.

With Compulsory Competitive Tendering, the Parks and Gardens service attracted three applications and the *Friends* were pleased to hear that the "in-house" team, Warrnambool Parks Service, was accepted.

During the year a Growers' Group was officially formed with Lorraine Richardson as Convenor. Terry O'Sullivan gave the group the use of the small hot house within the Gardens from which to work.

The Warrnambool *Growing Friends* had a successful trip to meet the Growing Friends of Geelong. They were able to gain useful ideas for potting, labelling and selling.

During the year there was an update of membership which totalled 125 members from Warrnambool and District. Thanks to Melissa at Desmond Dunne and Dwyer for her voluntary assistance.

Isobel Jones arranged for Heather Tuck, Education Officer at the Art Gallery, to give a talk to the *Friends* on training of guides to conduct tours.

The *Friends* Spring Luncheon at the Warrnambool Bowls Club was successful in terms of fund-raising realising a profit of \$1,816. Suzie Price was very knowledgeable on her favourite subject of bulbs. Her colour slides were superb. Thanks to Lorraine Richardson for arranging the beautiful floral centrepieces on the tables and Ellen Dwyer and Marigold Curtis for other lovely floral arrangements.

In September the President received an invitation for the Warrnambool *Friends* to host the 1999 Conference of the Association of Friends of Botanic Gardens Victoria. The *Friends* decided to commit themselves to hosting of the Conference.

In December Marie Johnstone announced that she was not seeking re-election as President and requested leave of absence from May until the end of October 1998. Ellen Dwyer was nominated President elect for 1998-99.

A joint Committee of representatives of the *Friends* and the public was constituted to arrange the Annual Conference of Friends of Botanic Gardens Victoria in April 1999. The President invited Pat Varley, John Sherwood, Neville Smith, Bill Quinlan, Peter Reeve and Cr. John Kenneally to join with the *Friends* Ellen Dwyer, Isobel Jones, Kathy Wicherson, Marie Ziebell, Mandy King and Marigold Curtis to form a Conference Committee. The first meeting was to be held in February 1998.

1998

In January the *Friends* were pleased to receive a grant of \$5,500 from Parks Victoria Conservation Program to assist with the cost of restoration of the rotunda.

During February Dawn Smith tendered her resignation as Secretary, effective from the April meeting. Dawn also sought leave of absence from the Committee until July 1998. The President thanked Dawn for being such an efficient Secretary and Mandy King agreed to take over as Secretary until the Annual General Meeting in July.

Ellen Dwyer and Marie Johnstone attended the meeting of the Association of Botanic Gardens in March. Ellen was congratulated on being elected incoming President of the Association. The meeting dates of the Annual Conference to be held in Warrnambool were confirmed for 17th – 18th April 1999. The theme for the Conference would be “The Blooming Western District”.

During April ten members of the Camperdown Friends joined the Warrnambool *Friends* for a tour of the Gardens and lunch under the ginkgo tree. This was an informal, happy occasion. Thanks were due to Marigold Curtis for her informative guided walk.

Marie Ziebell and Marigold Curtis were the *Friends* representatives at the Association of Friends of Botanic Gardens Victoria Annual Conference in Mildura in April. Marie and Marigold were impressed with the events at the Conference.

Kathy Wicherson was granted leave of absence from the Committee. The President thanked Kathy for her excellent work as Treasurer. Judi Phillips took over as Treasurer.

Responsibility for the entrance bed near the main gates was taken up by the *Growing Friends* who took over this project for the Conference. The group selected Guilfoyle plants for this bed with the advice of John Hawker of Heritage Victoria.

Jeremy Smith, an archaeologist from Heritage Victoria, with funding from the *Friends*, undertook excavation of this area and found pathways, verified beds and the all-important other entrance bed to the right of the main entrance gates. This was a very large bed which the *Friends* hoped would be reinstalled in the future.

Unfortunately, President-elect, Ellen Dwyer was unable to take up the position due to illness and Marie Ziebell was elected President.

After the general meeting in May Marie Johnstone received a present in thanks for her term as President and for organising the Conference Committees.

The *Growing Friends* were restoring the Curator's Cottage back garden and the hothouses in the depot yard. The seedbeds, paths and old espaliered fruit trees made a very interesting area. Codrington nursery kindly donated three heritage apple trees for this area to continue the row of espaliered trees.

At the Annual General Meeting held at Flagstaff Hill Theatrette in July, subscriptions were raised from \$7 to \$10 and life membership was set at \$100.

Marie Ziebell gave an informative report on the Mildura Conference and Marigold Curtis gave a run down on reports presented there by other Friends' groups.

A very successful luncheon was held in September at the Warrnambool Racing Club as part of the Garden Lecture Series. Andrew Lawson from the UK was the guest speaker on "Colour in the Garden" and his beautiful photographs were very much enjoyed by the 120 guests. The function was catered for by the *Friends* under the guidance of Anne Kelly. A profit of \$1,119 was made.

Since Anne Kelly joined the *Friends* Committee the group has benefited from her expertise in catering and organising functions also from her flair for finding interesting guest speakers.

During the year the President and Committee members attended the Association's meetings in Ballarat in August and at Gisborne in November.

Marigold Curtis attended the City Council Parks and Gardens Committee meetings during the year. Her excellent presentation of the *Friends* quarterly newsletter and contributions to "Campsis", the newsletter of the Association of Friends of Botanic Gardens Victoria, was much appreciated.

As the result of the Conference many works in the Gardens were brought forward; in particular, the fernery, the entrance bed, the labelling of trees and the training of guides.

Under the care of Marigold Curtis, the fernery boasts a new selection of labelled ferns from the Otway forest, with carpentry, plant mulching and restored sprinkler system attended to by Council. The East Warrnambool Rotary Club carried out the repainting. Warrnambool can be proud of having one of only three ferneries left in botanic gardens in Victoria – one at Ripponlea and the other at Bendigo.

1999

Billie Rowley and Trish Houghton joined the Committee and Mary Mahoney resigned.

The Jarrah picket fence was extended in January from the main gate to Queens Road at a cost of \$7,150. The remaining 170 metres should be completed to fully enclose the gardens.

Four new memorial seats, one donated by the *Friends* were placed in the Gardens.

During February, 150 Probus Club members took part in a guided tour of the Gardens. Ten trainee guides under the direction of Isobel Jones reported a very successful day.

A photographic record of the Gardens was completed to assist with research and documentation.

The pinetum has undergone many changes with the removal of ancient trees and replanting.

The Annual Association Conference held in Warrnambool in April was a great success, even the weather performed well. The Mayor, Cr. David Atkinson, welcomed the Conference delegates at a Civic Reception. Mr Richard McGarvie, patron of the Warrnambool Botanic Gardens, officially opened the Conference.

Over dinner, guest speaker John Sherwood told the story of the Mahogany Ship.

Japanese garden principles, Koori plant use and botany enterprises were some of the many topics discussed.

The Conference attracted 125 garden enthusiasts from across Victoria and interstate.

The diverse program highlighted the Western District and included tours not only of Warrnambool Botanic Gardens but Koroit and Port Fairy Botanic Gardens. Delegates were delighted with the speakers, the venues, the hospitality and the tour of Tower Hill State Game Reserve and the Great Ocean Road.

The Conference President, Marie Ziebell was thanked for her dedication in leading the organisation of the Conference, which was twelve months in the planning. Mandy King was congratulated for her exceptional secretarial duties associated with the *Friends* Committee and the Conference Committee.

The ten guides, trained by Isobel Jones, conducted tours during the Conference and continued to offer free guided tours each Wednesday and the last Sunday of the month. Isobel Jones did a lot of research to assist the guides with notes and the labelling of plants. She also donated a book on Bamboo to the *Friends* to assist with identification.

Pat Varley joined the *Friends* as a guide, and consultant.

Special thanks was given to the community members Pat Varley, John Sherwood, Neville Smith and Bill Quinlan for their knowledge and expertise leading up to and during the Conference.

A film luncheon was held in August to raise funds for a watering system for the *Growing Friends* area.

In October a well-earned treat for the *Friends* was a visit to Bickleigh Vale where on a perfect Spring day 45 Edna Walling fans enjoyed lunch and a visit to four beautiful gardens in the Village. The *Friends* were all very impressed.

The final function was Christmas Drinks in the Rotunda.

2000

The *Friends* were delighted to see the return of Peter Reeve to the Council.

During the Wunta Festival a large crowd of approximately 300 enjoyed listening to Smiley Trio and the McDonald's Youth Band. *Friends* served Devonshire teas from the rotunda.

Guided tours were popular during the afternoon.

The *Friends* arranged for the rebinding of the original Curator's Report Book (1898-1958) - a valuable resource of the City of Warrnambool and available at the Public Library. A copy was also donated to the Warrnambool Library.

Friends continued to research the origin of the urns and gas lamps and seek out the experts in their fields with a view to restoration as the urns in particular the smaller ones, were deteriorating.

The Committee had the opportunity of "brainstorming" its function through the services of Business Thinking Systems. Neville Smith volunteered his time and expertise and the *Friends* looked forward to being more efficient as the result of this exercise.

Barbara Garrett from the Bird Observers Club conducted two very interesting walks through the gardens for Committee members.

Friends enjoyed a tour of three interesting gardens, Griffin's Hill, Toora West and Narrapumelap in the Dunkeld area in October.

Ellen Dwyer was presented with a Life Membership at the Annual General Meeting.

Again Christmas Drinks were enjoyed at the rotunda in the Gardens.

2001

The Warrnambool City Council and the *Friends* were successful in obtaining a grant of \$25,000 from the Victorian Government for restoration works in the Gardens. This was matched by a contribution of \$23,000 from the Warrnambool City Council and \$2,000 from the *Friends*. The money was used to complete the fencing of the Gardens, install entrance signs defining the Gardens, restoration of gardens beds and replant with new trees and the final completion of the rotunda. The Committee members of the *Friends* were invited by the Council to meet with the Hon. Steve Bracks, MP, Premier of Victoria in the Gardens in February for the announcement of the Grant.

A stimulating weekend program was enjoyed by three members of the *Friends* at the Association of Friends of Botanic Gardens Conference at Geelong in June.

With a Federation Grant of \$14,000 under the Victorian Federation Grants Scheme, a Federation Fair will be hosted by the *Friends* at the Warrnambool Botanic Gardens on 18 November 2001. The aim for this day is to bring together diverse community groups that may otherwise not have the opportunity to showcase their activities and meet each other.

This will be an opportunity to provide public exposure, create networking, foster greater understanding and improve relations between community groups. People will have the opportunity to view exhibits, enjoy productions such as musical recitals. Community groups including Field Naturalists, Musical Groups, Schools, Indigenous Groups, Wool and Craft Guild, Pigeon Club, Camera Club and many more will take part. Billie Rowley and Mandy King together with representatives of the Council will co-ordinate the Fair.

In May the *Friends* participated in a volunteer Expo and Ecumenical Church Service to celebrate the International Year of Volunteers.

Pat Varley was working on an educational program for guided tours through the Gardens for school children.

President Marie Ziebell did not seek re-election at the Annual General Meeting in July. Members thanked her for her knowledgeable and enthusiastic leadership.

Billie Rowley was elected President. Mandy King agreed to continue as Secretary and Judi Phillips as Treasurer.

William Martin from "Wigandia" Noorat was guest speaker. His interesting and provocative presentation opened new and challenging ideas.

The Group is very appreciative of the support it receives from the Physical Services Director, Peter Reeve who keeps the *Friends* informed of proposals which affect the Gardens.

The *Friends* are grateful to Terry O'Sullivan and his staff for their co-operation and support.

Today, thanks to the efforts of many people, the Gardens are in excellent condition and a great pleasure to residents and tourist alike. Unfortunately, there was occasionally damage from vandals but it was not unduly targeted.

The Gardens will continue to be a gem in the City and a source of great satisfaction to the *Friends*.

A film luncheon with the film "*Chocolate*" was held in August making a profit of \$1,057.

Marigold Curtis arranged the replanting of the fernery, with the help of Lorraine Deppler of Bush House Nursery, obtaining ferns from the Otway Ranges.

The Friends obtained two grants, the first from Federation Victoria for \$14,000 and the second from Parks Victoria for \$3500. Using the Federation grant combined with monetary support from Council and the Friends, the Federation Fair was held in the Gardens in November. The Gardens proved to be a perfect venue and despite terrible weather the day proved to be an outstanding success, with approximately 6000 people attending.

The Friends Devonshire teas, and plant and produce stalls were popular and there were over seventy groups participating.

The Parks Victoria Grant went towards funding the plant database and to the labelling of trees. John Hawker, of Heritage Victoria met with Friends and garden staff to discuss the ongoing development of the Gardens. Kim Pretlove donated a Federation Red Wattle and John Hawker advised as to where to plant it. A Hollyoak was also planted.

Members of the Friends enjoyed Christmas drinks in the Gardens.

2002

Pat Varley was welcomed to the Friends Committee.

James Colquhoun was thanked for his work in designing and producing an interpretation board for display near the entrances.

Terry O'Sullivan suggested the Friends recommend to Council, that in view of the increasing requests for memorial and commemorative trees, only trees related to the Botanic history of the gardens be accepted. This should be included in the revised master plan.

Members of the Friends Committee participated in a City Council Survey at Lake Pertobe and raised \$300.

In February the Friends again participated in the Wunta Festival, "Jazz in the Gardens" by providing Devonshire Teas. This annual event attracts a great number of young people.

Isobel Jones, guide Co-ordinator arranged the Y.M.C.A program, where 60 children were taken on an educational walk by Pat Varley. Another day was organised for April when 52 children had guided walks, and the highlight of the day was a game of the Billy Goats Gruff played on the bridge. These days are becoming popular.

In March Terry O'Sullivan and three gardeners attended the first day of the Ballarat Symposium and four of the Friends attended the second day. This provided an invaluable insight into what other gardens and curators are achieving.

In conjunction with 3YB, a Teddy Bears' Picnic was held in April. Approximately 3000 people attended and 800 teddy bears were registered. The Friends resources were strained to the limit.

A major achievement for 2002 was the completion of a data-base for all trees in the gardens with a grid referenced map, expertly drawn up by Mandy King.

At the conclusion of the Friends March meeting a photo of the gardens was presented to Marie Ziebell who was leaving Warrnambool to take up residence in Geelong.

Anne Kelly arranged a Film Luncheon in May with the film "Gosford Park" .

The history of the three urns in the Gardens had been a mystery for years until Marie Johnstone came across a Council report in the "Standard" dated October 1895 stating that ex Mayor John Ward presented the three urns to the gardens, Marie suggested that repairs and further restoration of the urns be included in the updated master plan.

Terry O'Sullivan reported on the planting of pines and cypresses to replace the boundary planting. Flowering gums were purchased for the pool boundary.

Ian Rossitor, Curator of the Ballarat Botanic Gardens was guest speaker at the AGM in July and gave a most thought-provoking talk. He urged groups such as the Friends to demonstrate that botanic gardens were serving the needs of the community.

Inaugural members Isobel Jones and Marie Johnstone were presented with Life Membership.

Billie Rowley proposed as our next project, a Children's Garden using native plants with Wooden sculptures of May Gibbs characters. Billie organised a meeting to take the first steps towards the project.

During September the Warrnambool Garden Club appreciated a talk given by Marigold Curtis.

Pat Varley presented a report on the benefits of having a conifer collection that the gardens could claim attention through the presence of a unique collection, a connection to the western district and their shelter belts.

Billie Rowley, Marie Ziebell, Marigold Curtis and Mandy King attended the Association Conference at Ballarat and found it informative and well worth attending.

The Friends enjoyed a very pleasant outing to Lyn Strachan's garden and Brian Dunlop's gallery at Yambuck in November.

At the Friends Christmas drinks in the gardens the Mayor Cr. James Nicol launched "The history of the Friends" - the first twelve years by Marie Johnstone.

Again in February the Wunta, "Jazz in the Gardens" was most successful.

A second Teddy Bears picnic held in conjunction with 3YB and McDonalds with Ronald McDonald as the guest star was held in March and again was fabulous.

As the Federation Fair was such a success it was decided to hold a repeat fair using the same format. This was done in conjunction with the City Council. The Friends obtained sponsorship and grants from Midfield Meats, The Community Grants Program, The Rural Events Grants Program, 3YB, Bakers Delight and the Warrnambool Standard. The fair took the form of an expo with 72 organisations participating. All local artists were used and we had positive feed back. Devonshire teas, plant and produce stalls all ensured a financially successful day for the Friends. The Gardens were at their colourful best and everyone enjoyed the music food and entertainment.

At a special meeting with the Council, Billie Rowley requested that the status of the Friends Committee be raised to advisory, and a member of the Friends be included on the Heritage Committee.

The City Library agreed to purchase a book on Ferns, Conifers and their Allies.

Cobden Garden Club enjoyed a guided tour around the Gardens led by Marigold Curtis.

Pat Varley entertained 20 young children for Fiona Robertson's daughter's birthday. The children had a great day.

In May 70 Flying Foxes had taken up residence in the Canary Island Palm near the cannon. Terry O'Sullivan invited Paul Gray and Mandy Watson from D.S.E. to talk about their existence and behaviour patterns.

In June Pat Varley took 30 students from South West TAFE on a guided tour of the Gardens

2003

Marie Johnstone contacted Heritage Victoria about the availability of funding to restore the Urns. The Friends were surprised to hear that the Gardens were not Heritage listed. Billie Rowley arranged for Peter Reeve to apply for listing, so that the Friends could request funding for specific projects, starting with the Urns.

Film Luncheon "Green Fingers" was a popular choice.

Richard Barley, Divisional Director of Melbourne Botanic Gardens gave an inspiring talk at the Friends AGM in July. Life memberships were presented to inaugural members Judi Phillips, Lorraine Richardson and Jean Fitzpatrick.

Anne Kelly generously offered to donate a Manifold lamp. Marie Johnstone began researching the history of the curators.

In September the tender for the update of the Warrnambool Botanic Gardens Management plan was awarded to Australian Landscape Management, The selection committee consisted of Terry O'Sullivan, Billie Rowley and Mandy King.

The Flying foxes (fruit bats) increased in number and concern was expressed about possible damage to the trees.

In November the Friends organised a "Curators Day" when descendants of two of the earliest curators Charles Scoborio and William Donald visited with their families. A Hoop Pine was planted to commemorate the early curators. Guests enjoyed guided walks and afternoon tea was served on the lawns beside the Rotunda. The scones and cakes served, were made from recipes, which had originally belonged to Mrs Donald, wife of William.

During November Friends enjoyed a visit to Glenormiston Homestead and gardens. The history of the homestead was related by Neil Black a descendant of the original owner.

Also in November Friends enjoyed a day at the Hamilton Gardens with lunch and a guided walk. Again Christmas drinks were enjoyed in the Gardens.

Anne Lynch joined the Friends Committee.

It was noted that the number of bats in the Gardens had decreased.

2004

The Friends again participated in Wunta with "Jazz in the Gardens". Unfortunately the day was very hot and Devonshire teas were not generally appealing.

In conjunction with 3YB and Golly Gosh the third Teddy Bear's Picnic was held in March. The Friends obtained a \$3000 grant from the Warrnambool City Council's Community Grants Program and with the sponsorship and voluntary assistance from entertainers and business firms, the Friends were able to achieve their objectives of providing a cost free day for families. Lorraine Richardson cooked 300 sausages.

Pat Varley arranged a play morning for pre school children. This was organised through Dip of Childrens Services students from SWTAFE who provided and supervised activities.

The bats have disappeared.

Marigold Curtis sold bulbs from her garden and raised \$120 which she donated to the Friends.

In April Isobel Jones and Pat Varley gave a talk to forty View Club members and led a guided walk around the gardens.

Friends organised a guided walk and morning tea for 60 Melbourne Rotarians, who were on a caravan holiday as a group.

At the Friends AGM in July John Sherwood from the Warrnambool and District Society of Growing Australian Plants Committee spoke on Australian native plants.

Billie Rowley completed her three year term as President and thanked everyone who supported her. Marigold Curtis presented Billie with a potted rose in thanks for her three years of service and dedication as President.

Pat Varley was elected the Friends new President. Marigold Curtis was presented with a Life Membership at the Annual General Meeting

Pat Varley presented a paper for discussion on the purpose, strategies and targets of the Friends for the following year. The Friends endorsed it and resolved to review it half yearly.

A letter of thanks was sent to Peter Reeves for his support while Director of Physical Services with WCC. Neil Allen was appointed to the position vacated by Peter. A letter of appreciation and thanks was also sent to long serving gardener Stan Crow on his retirement.

In September Andrew Thorn from Melbourne was appointed to restore the urns. He reported that they needed immediate attention, especially the one near the front gate. Billie Rowley together with WCC requested a grant from Heritage Victoria to cover costs.

In September the Friends held a most successful film night in conjunction with Central Rotary, the film was "Touching the Void", and with donations the Friends raised \$922.00.

Under the guidance of our new President Pat Varley, many children, their teachers and preschool carers have been introduced to the gardens. The Friends have been fortunate in forming an association with South West TAFE and many childcare teachers and carers with young children visited the gardens to learn about plants and trees.

Marigold Curtis was given two Mexican Hand Plants from RMBG to be planted in our gardens and a further eight for other gardens.

Judy Loch and Marie Johnstone gave 12 Ministry of Housing representatives a guided walk around the Gardens.

In December the Victorian association of TAFE Child Care Studies teachers held part of their annual conference in the gardens. Pat Varley and Marigold Curtis acted as guides.

Pat had a delightful group of 50 grade one children from Jamison Street Primary school spend a happy two hours in the Gardens.

The Committee enjoyed lunch at SWTAFE Endeavours restaurant. The traditional Christmas function in the Rotunda was once again well attended by members.

2005

The summer attracted hundreds of visitors to the Gardens. The usual festivities such as Wunta, the Australia Day celebrations and numerous family picnics showed how much the public appreciate time there.

The Friends worked to make the Teddy Bears Picnic day a success adding fairies to the delight of the little girls. Over 500 registered, paraded and were judged, winners being given prizes donated by the local business community. It was a colourful day with warm sunny weather.

Judy Loch and Marie Johnstone guided 28 people from Twin Rivers Probus Club around the Gardens and had lunch with them.

In April Andrew Thorn reported that he had lined the bowl of the large urn and undertaken general cleaning of small urns. He has made a cast of a lion's head and further work was to be completed later. Heritage Victoria approved funding of \$2500 towards this work.

Terry O'Sullivan reported on an increase in the use of the Gardens for various functions.

The Gardens are a great teaching resource and TAFE students in Childrens' services and aged care have enjoyed being shown their educational potential.

Pat Varley learned from one of the "Seniors' Walking Group" of a Lone Pine seedling planted some 30 years ago by a Mr Alan Strain. He had been successful in growing a tree which he planted on his property in Ballangeich, not far from Grasmere where the original Lone Pine was raised by Mrs Emma Gray.

In March Prof. Rob Wallis, a member of the Friends gave a fascinating talk on Baron Ferdinand von Mueller. The Wood turners were able to preserve some of the ancient and historic limbs from the Pines that Mueller supplied to the Gardens in the 1870s. Jean Fitzpatrick presented eight pens and two bowls made by the "Wood Turners" to the Friends. These will be kept for special presentation gifts.

The Friends were fortunate to have John Arnott, Curator of the Geelong Botanic Gardens, talk at their AGM. The Friends were inspired to learn of the planning and execution of their 21st Century Garden. The meeting was well attended and enjoyed by all.

The Guiding Friends continued to show people through the Gardens. The Growing Friends held their annual plant stall. Because of poor weather it was held in a covered arcade in Warrnambool and this proved a great success.

Jean Fitzpatrick, Lorraine Richardson and Marigold Curtis chose a design for David O'Keefe from Dennington to build new gates for the fernery. The Fernery was replanted with Otway region ferns. The Friends committee was delighted with the recently installed Fernery Gates.

In October Warrnambool was chosen by Legacy for their national conference and to celebrate the 90th anniversary of Legacy in Australia. At a memorial service held in the Gardens a "Gallipoli Oak" was planted near the Lone Pine.

The Society for Growing Australian Plants has planted up a new bed under the old Manna Gum east of the lake. These plants are all native to the Warrnambool region. Mandy King has arranged for suitable labels for the plants.

A new brochure has been printed, thanks to Mandy King's excellent designing and photography. The printing was paid for by a Community Grant.

The Friends were not successful in the Tidy Towns Regional Award but it was felt worthwhile entering.

Pat Varley and Judy Loch took thirty five people from Biiirregurra Garden Club on a guided tour of the Gardens and Anne Kelly and Lorraine Richardson served tea. A donation of \$60 was made to the Friends.

In December a guided walk and drinks was much appreciated by the Port Fairy Community House garden group. A donation of \$30 was received.

The Warrnambool Botanic Gardens Management Plan, (2004) was endorsed by the Warrnambool City Council on the 12th December 2005, bringing to fruition a process that began with the establishment of a reference group in June 2003. The Council also adopted a recommendation that within the budget process provision be made for a staff position for curatorial duties. This together with the generosity of Gwen and Edna Jones Foundation, which offered financial assistance of \$8000 per annum for three years, and support from SWTAFE has made possible the appointment of a curator. The Friends have long seen this as their top priority.

John Hawker attended the Friends Christmas drinks in the Gardens and gave a detailed report on the process of having the Gardens registered on the Victorian Heritage register.

Isobel Jones guide co-ordinator welcomed Laurel Myers a new guide for the next year.

Trish Houghton resigned from the committee.

2006

The Gardens again hosted celebrations, including Australia Day. Wunta's "Jazz in the Gardens" was relocated this year as a split in the old elm made the usual space unsafe. Fortunately, rapid response by Terry O'Sullivan and garden staff saw the tree braced and secured, while the new location south of the lake provided a great venue for the hundreds of people who enjoyed a great day of jazz in the Gardens.

The new brochure, designed and compiled by Mandy King has been widely distributed.

During an evening in February Pat Varley, Marigold Curtis and Marie Johnstone joined the Warrnambool Rotary Club for a meal in the Gardens and gave conducted walks. A \$20 donation was made and Eric Williams presented to the Friends photos of the Gardens.

President Pat Varley welcomed Lou Hollis to the Growing Friends.

Pat Varley met with Tim Hubbard, Regional Heritage Adviser to discuss the future of the Cannon. The conclusion was that as the cannon had been in the Gardens for around a hundred years, it should remain there. Scoborio is believed to have been influential in the cannon being placed in the Gardens. It is hoped funding will be available to restore the wooden carriage.

In March Anne Kelly and Judy Loch hosted the junior Hospital Auxiliary for a guided walk and morning tea.

Pat Varley guided a garden group from Mortlake, who enjoyed their visit.

A successful Longest Lunch was held in the Gardens in March. The Friends were invited to speak to the diners.

Warrnambool Botanic Gardens was added to the Victorian Heritage Register in April 2006. This provides further protection for the Guilfoyle - designed gardens, which was registered by the National Trust in 1990 and added to the Register of the National Estate in 1992. The Gardens were recognised as of "historical, scientific, aesthetic and social significance to the State of Victoria" and "one of the earliest provincial botanic gardens since 1866". This marks the 140th anniversary of the gardens at the present location.

During the year the Friends historian Marie Johnstone had been researching the ancestry of Charles Scoborio, curator on the present site from 1872-1906. While the Friends were aware of the Cornish origins, it is only recently that they learnt that he grew up at Heligon Mill where his father had worked and his grandfather had been the gardener in what is now famous as the Lost Gardens of Heligan. This year marks the centenary of his retirement.

At a Committee meeting in March Marigold Curtis spoke about her trip to the Ballarat Gardens and the National War Memorial.

The Friends were grateful for the donation of a Wollomai Pine which was planted during a small ceremony in May.

A \$250 bequest by the late Agnes Robinson, was greatly appreciated. It will be spent on an appropriate tree.

In May Pat Varley and Marie Johnstone visited Charles Scoborio's grave at the Warrnambool cemetery. They reported that the headstone was to Elizabeth Scoborio. Charles who died later is buried in the same plot as his wife but there was no headstone. The Friends will address this by ordering a further plaque noting Charles' burial.

Peter Austin at SWTAFE has shown great enthusiasm in being involved in the future of the Gardens and involving his students in the Gardens as part of their horticultural studies.

The Growing Friends continued to propagate plants and work in the Gardens.

The Guiding Friends have been active in conducting regular escorted walks. School groups have been a significant and growing part of these tours and the response of the children is wonderful

Annabel Neylon, heritage consultant and tree enthusiast was guest speaker at the AGM in July. Annabel spoke on the significance of trees and the process of heritage listing. All officers of the Friends and all Committee members were returned for a further year. President Pat Varley thanked every one for their work, especially Secretary Mandy King and Treasurer Judi Phillips.

2006 is a big year for Warrnambool Botanic Gardens.

It is 140 years since the Gardens were established on the present site.

It is 100 years since Charles Scoborio retired after serving 34 years as Curator of the Gardens.

And it is the year in which the Gardens were added to the register of Heritage Victoria.

The Friends of Warrnambool Botanic Gardens plan several functions to celebrate these events.

The Friends of Warrnambool Botanic Gardens together with The Warrnambool Art Gallery will hold an exhibition illustrating the life of the Gardens throughout its long history. The exhibition Our Gardens: 140 years will be opened by Cr. Glenys Phillpot, Mayor, in October

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The afternoon will offer music and entertainment in the form of "Walks and Talks".

The position of Curator was advertised in October and an appointment is eagerly anticipated by the Friends as this history concludes.

With a strong membership of 167 individuals the friends look forward to the continuing development of the Gardens.

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2007

President, Pat Varley, welcomed the Friends Committee back after the Christmas break and noted the exceptional condition of the gardens.

Anne Kelly suggested that the committee attract members to their meetings by inviting two or three members each month.

Billie Rowley's suggestion for a shelter was accepted in principle, but would have to be referred to the heritage consultant before further action was taken.

Terry O'Sullivan introduced John Sheely, the gardens newly appointed curator. John said he was looking forward to working with the Friends. Terry and John reported that they were formulating a budget document for capital works as part of WCC budget review. The use of bore water for the gardens and Warrnambool as a whole was being addressed.

The cannon had become dangerous and would be temporarily fenced until a study was completed and recommended work done.

Weddings in the gardens were growing in popularity.

Isobel Jones reported that many people were using the gardens and guided walks had been reasonably well supported over the Christmas break.

Lorraine Richardson, a foundation member of the Friends resigned from the committee. On behalf of the Friends Marie Johnstone thanked Lorraine for her support and initiative in the growing friends area and her skill in catering at their many functions. The Committee presented Lorraine with flowers in gratitude for her input and enthusiasm.

National Heritage Initiative Investment funding for a conservation plan for the curators cottage was denied.

In March the President and Secretary walked around the gardens with the curator, John Sheely and were impressed with the progress he had made.

Rotary Partners day was enjoyed by 30 partners who had lunch and a guided walk, led by Pat, Laurel and Marigold. A donation of \$60 was received.

Diploma of Children's Services students from South West TAFE, organised activities for 40 preschool children and 60 primary school children from Jamieson Street Primary School.

Pat and Mandy met with Neil Allen, Director of Physical Services WCC, to discuss the Cottage, seating and shelter.

During April Terry O'Sullivan reported that much had been achieved in the gardens since John Sheely's appointment as curator. Terry reported that he had applied for WCC funding to fence the cannon, repair the sundial, repair the roof of the fernery and supply new rubbish bins. The ducks on the lake were an ongoing problem and needed to be culled.

Marie Johnstone reported difficulty in contacting Andrew Thorn in reference to restoration of the urns, but she would keep trying.

It was noted that the Friends interest in the Curator's Cottage had been mooted in 1996. The priority had been for a conservation and management plan for the cottage and grounds including the well. This was seen as a long term project.

Pat Varley reported on the Cultural Landscapes Forum she attended at Glenormiston and Marie Johnstone informed the meeting that Jack Wilkins had offered to talk on his father's historic films of Warrnambool. A sub committee was formed to plan for this presentation.

The David Jones Foundation offered to donate seating and tables for the Gardens, and suggested suitable designs.

In May the proposal for funding for the Conservation and Development Plan for the cottage, as submitted to the Australian Investment Initiative Fund, was again unsuccessful.

The old fridge in the rotunda was replaced by a new one purchased by Council. The Friends sold the old one for \$50.

Terry O'Sullivan submitted a concept plan for a shelter as designed by Merri Constructions. The Committee was in favour of the general concept. The shelter would be submitted to Council in the hope of gaining funding in the next budget.

The Friends approved expenditure of \$744.70 for the printing of 3000 brochures on the Gardens, as designed by Mandy King.

Marie Johnstone finally tracked down Andrew Thorn, who said he would be in the Gardens before August, to restore the urns.

Lou Hollis reported her success in raising seedlings from the Lone Pine and Pat Varley encouraged her to record all the details of her success.

The Annual General Meeting held on the 18th July was well attended by more than 50 members and guests. Curator John Sheely gave an illustrated talk on the heritage property,

Swifts, at Darling Point, Sydney. John worked there for more than three years, restoring the three acres of garden. Both house and garden, established in the 1880s are now a manicured showpiece.

The outgoing president Pat Varley, reported on the achievements of the past year. The Mayor Cr. David Atkinson, installed the office bearers; Anne Lynch, President, Pat Varley Vice President, Mandy King, Secretary, Kathy Wicherson, Treasurer.

Anne Kelly did not renominate, and all other members of the Committee were returned. The valuable contribution Anne Kelly had made in organising hospitality and events was warmly recognised. Mandy King's role as secretary for the past ten years, made her the longest surviving office bearer in the life of the Committee and she was made a life member of the Friends in recognition of her outstanding service.

In August the generous donation of \$7000 towards garden seats and tables, from Isobel and David Jones on behalf of the FJ Foundation, was acknowledged. These will be located near the north boundary fence.

An application to the Gwen and Edna Jones Foundation for support for a Conservation study of the cottage, was not successful.

On the first Wednesday in September the Growing Friends met with the Curator to plant some significant trees. A tree was planted in recognition of the contribution member Agnes Robinson made to the Gardens. Agnes left a bequest of \$250 to the Friends. The tree, a Bur Oak was propagated from a tree she loved, that grew in her garden. Two pines, grown and donated by Marigold Curtis – a Canary Island Pine and a Stone Pine were planted in the pinetum, together with a Mexican Pine *Pinus patula*, a gift from the RMBG.

South of the lake where once a Cootamundra Wattle and more recently a Mexican Hand Plant had failed to thrive, a Fig *Ficus* sp was planted.

The Friends were involved in the planting mulching and weeding, and (while the hard work was done by John), they are now more knowledgeable. The morning ended with coffee and cake in the rotunda. This was the first of a series of activities planned for the first Wednesday of the month, from 10.30 to 12.00.

Billie Rowley and Victor Caulfield tabled a letter they had written to WCC pointing out the Friends desire to incorporate the Curators Cottage into the Gardens. The fence could be removed, the well restored and the building renovated in order to provide meeting rooms as well as staff facilities. Cr Jacinta Emacora had been involved in discussions about the cottage and agreed to assist in bringing the matter to the Council's attention.

Plans for the gazebo/shelter were tabled and discussed. It was suggested the plans be referred to heritage adviser Tim Hubbard.

Funds for the repair of the fernery roof have been sought from Heritage Victoria.

During October the Friends were made aware of a proposal to close Cockman Street. They were opposed to the closure of the street as it would restrict access to the Gardens. It would also require a turning circle that would impact on the triangle of pines, require the removal of the gas lamp and bring traffic dangerously close to the main gates.-

In November Diploma of Child Care students from South West TAFE again organised and supervised an activity day for pre school children in the gardens. Dozens of tiny tots were

joined by eighty prep grade children from Warrnambool Primary School for stories, creative activities and games.

A letter was written to Andrew Thorn regarding the restoration of the urns. He was asked if he wanted further involvement, and John Hawker was informed of the delay.

The Friends enjoyed the opportunity of showing a group of garden lovers from the Casterton Garden Club around the Gardens. Thirty three members joined the Friends for morning tea, a talk and a tour. Judy Loch and Pat Varley acted as guides while Anne Lynch and Mandy King served tea, coffee and traditional fruit cake.

There was a lot of activity in November and the Friends were delighted that the two picnic settings were in place to the north of the lake. They were being well used.

The bats that returned to the Gardens six months earlier were still 'hanging around'. They camped in the Canary Island palms near the fernery and were a point of interest for visitors.

As a safety measure the fernery was closed to the public when the roof began to fall in. A keenly anticipated grant from Heritage Victoria was welcomed with enthusiasm. This enabled work to be scheduled and would provide shelter for the special collection of Otway Forest ferns selected by Marigold Curtis and Lorraine Deppler.

In December, at the friends annual Christmas drinks at the Rotunda, Terry O'Sullivan's twenty years of service to the Gardens was acknowledged.

2008

The Gardens continued to be a focus for many different groups and activities. Many people enjoyed Australia Day activities and also Jazz in the Gardens as part of the Wunta carnival. A long term goal of the Friends, from the time of the 1995 Master Plan, has been the restoration of the Curator's Cottage as a display area, meeting place and repository for books records and specimens. A letter was sent to Warrnambool City Council requesting that the cottage again be incorporated in the Gardens. In reply WCC agreed that in the long term it would be desirable to integrate the Cottage into the Gardens but in the short term there was no need to change the current operational arrangement.

Peter Robertson, from the WCC infrastructure department attended a meeting in February to outline proposals for changes to Cockman Street.

Warrnambool is fortunate in having a collection of historic films dating from the 1940s. The Gardens feature prominently in the films and the changing landscape is fascinating. Local artist John Wilkins, son of the original photographer, Alec Wilkins, has copied some of the films onto DVD. John made these available to the Friends, who in conjunction with the Friends of Warrnambool Art Gallery, arranged an evening of film, followed by refreshments. The event was a sell out.

Curator John Sheely, together with his team and the Friends, hosted staff from Horsham, Colac, Hamilton, Koroit and Geelong botanic gardens on a visit to Warrnambool in February. The aim of the day was to network with other botanic gardens in the South West and to lift the profile of Warrnambool Botanic Gardens.

A reprint of the brochure on Warrnambool Botanic Gardens was authorised. Mandy King reported that the total cost to set up a web site was \$930. It was agreed that the Friends create their own web site.

In May, Marie Johnstone reported that she and John Hawker had tried unsuccessfully to contact Andrew Thorn to restore the urns. He was considered the best restorer as seen in his work at the Geelong and Melbourne Botanic gardens. It was resolved that he should be asked either to complete the work in good time or the friends would seek alternative restorers. In June, as there had been no further word from Andrew, the committee decided to inform him that they no longer wanted him to undertake work on the urns. They noted that three years had passed since he was first contacted by the Friends. In October the Secretary contacted Andrew Patience to see if he could undertake the restoration.

A plant sale was scheduled for Sunday 21st September. The day would focus on water wise gardening, and there would be some entertainment and a sausage sizzle.

Pat Varley reported that she had been asked to speak to the Warrnambool and District Historical Society at their June meeting.

The Growing Friends have been enjoying time in the Gardens under the guidance of Curator John Sheely. John has organised a monthly event in the Gardens where the staff and the Friends combine to work on a specific project.

A group from Camperdown Gardening club toured the Gardens with guides Laurel and Pat.

WCC informed the Friends of a report commissioned by Warrnambool, Moyne and Glenelg Councils on Guns and Cannon in South West Victoria. Of the 23 guns studied 16 are historically very significant. The gun in the Gardens is particularly significant as it is on its original carriage and slide. These are deteriorating and need to be restored or conserved. Pat Varley undertook to summarise relevant sections of the report for publication in the next newsletter.

During June Mandy King reported that the website was up and running and would be added to as time permitted. The meeting congratulated Mandy on organising the website. Later in the year, the Friends website was linked to WCC website.

Donna Ellis, lecturer in horticulture and garden design was guest speaker at the Annual General Meeting in July. Her illustrated address on Hamilton Botanic Gardens was of great interest. Tim Hubbard, provided an update on the historic guns and cannon of south west Victoria. The cannon which has been in the Gardens for almost 100 years is one of the most significant.

Billie Rowley tabled the minutes from WCC Land and Environment Committee meeting at which it was recommended to Council that the Conservation and Management Plan be adopted.

Mandy King and Pat Varley met with Neil Allen to discuss action to be taken on the cannon in the Gardens.

Terry O'Sullivan met with the committee and said that the fernery required a rebuild, not just a new roof. It would be rebuilt to replicate the existing structure. The cost would be \$12,000 above the grant of \$29,000 from Heritage Victoria. WCC would contribute \$6,000 and the Friends also agreed to contribute \$6,000. The work was to begin in September.

Students from South West TAFE studying in the Department of Children's Services visited the Gardens to discover the learning activities provided there.

The Spring Garden Day and plant sale was successful, attracting visitors to the Gardens and raising revenue for the Friends. It was seen as worthy of becoming an annual event.

The October Newsletter was a testament to the dedication of the Friends. Marigold Curtis started producing and editing the Newsletter in winter 1993, and through the past 49 editions, the Gardens and their progress have been reported in many ways. Marigold was complimented for her literary achievements. One clear message was that the Gardens are a magnificent asset to the City of Warrnambool in their beauty and grandeur. Another message was clear; over recent years the eyes of the City managers have been looking at other things, and the Gardens have been left to survive with minimal supervision since the last official curator departed in 1986.

Under the management of John Sheely the Gardens are flourishing. John and his team have implemented many of their own initiatives as well as many suggestions made by John Hawker our honorary heritage adviser, in the course of many visits. The Friends have renewed energy to work hard toward the future of the Gardens, as they see many projects coming to fruition.

In October the Friends endorsed a report to WCC prepared by Neil Allen, Director of Physical Services. This report, later accepted by Council, approved the Friends to engage suitably qualified craftsmen and seek funding for a replica of the existing gun carriage of the gun in the Gardens. Over the following weeks, representatives of the Friends had a series of meetings with Council and heritage representatives to advance this project.

John Sheely reported that the fernery rebuilding was looking good and he was working on the irrigation system and replacement of the ferns. An official opening was planned to take place when the ferns were established.

A class from Merrivale Primary School enjoyed an educational walk in the gardens led by Pat Varley.

At the October meeting the Friends extended sympathy to Marigold Curtis, our regular contributor to *Campsis*, on the death of her husband Campbell.

During November, Marie Johnstone reported on the urns. Andrew Patience had, in response to an approach from the Secretary, agreed to assess the work to be done.

The Friends welcomed the donation of \$2000 from the Alan Lane Foundation toward the \$6000 the friends had agreed to raise for the completion of the fernery.

The Warrnambool Garden Club were taken on a tour of the Gardens and there was another visit from students and staff involved with Children's Services at TAFE.

The Gardens were chosen as the site for lunch when Heritage Victoria visited Warrnambool. They were impressed with the beauty of the Gardens and the enthusiasm of the Friends.

Terry O'Sullivan showed the amended plans for a shelter to the Committee for their comment.

At the December meeting Glenn Reddick, acting Manager, Strategic Planning WCC, spoke about the research undertaken on the guns and cannon of the south west coast and distributed

a brochure commissioned jointly by the Warrnambool Moyne and Glenelg Councils. It was agreed that Pat Varley would represent the Friends on the Southwest Victoria Guns and Cannon Steering Committee.

About 40 members and friends enjoyed Christmas drinks in the Gardens. Members provided the food and Peter Lynch was thanked for his work in setting up and supervising the refreshments.

2009

Peter Robertson, acting Director City Infrastructure, outlined plans for the closure of Cockman Street and suggested a meeting on the site. He had consulted with all the stake holders and assured the Friends that nothing would be removed from the garden precinct as a result of the road closure.

Pat Varley reported on a meeting she attended of the Steering Committee for the Guns and Cannon of the south west coast. Heritage Victoria provided \$13,600 for conservation of the gun in the Gardens. This money was available for conservation not restoration.

The future of the curators cottage, which was being vacated, was the subject of discussion between Peter Brown, Director of Corporate Services, and Glendon Dickinson, Manager, Revenue and Property, WCC and Mandy King and Pat Varley.

The Council intends to relet the cottage on a short term basis, making it possible to reinstate it in the gardens in the near future. Peter Robertson approved use of the sand stone shed at the rear of the cottage as a meeting room and storage facility for the Friends. The shed can be accessed from the works area. He undertook to make the building weatherproof and secure.

The Friends congratulated John and Ros on the spectacular vegetable crop in the beds around the urn. This was admired by visitors to the Gardens. Billie Rowley asked that the Friends minute the outstanding progress that John and his team have made in the Gardens over the last few years.

The fernery opening and the 20th anniversary of the Friends was scheduled for mid October. Members were asked to provide names for the guest list. Lorraine Deppler will be asked for advice and signage needs to be updated.

Terry O'Sullivan reported that plans and estimates for a garden shelter had been forwarded to the WCC to be considered in the capital works budget.

John Sheely thanked Marigold Curtis for the donation of jonquils and scillas. These were planted under the oaks on the May growing day. A large number of people had enjoyed Easter celebrations in the Gardens.

An information card for groups holding functions at the rotunda was approved. This provided the opportunity for patrons to donate toward the upkeep of the Gardens.

Donna Ellis attended a committee meeting in May. Donna has a broad background in horticulture and has been a member of the Friends of Hamilton Botanic Gardens.

Progress on the sandstone shed now called Scoborio's Shed , has been pleasing. The interior has been relined and creeper removed from the north wall. The Friends applied to the Community Development fund for \$3000 for office equipment and supplies.

The AGM was held in July at the conference centre at TAFE. – an excellent venue. The Mayor, Cr Michael Neoh, attended and later was able to meet with members and hear their concerns, in particular the closing of Cockman Street which restricts entry by the main gates. Janet O'Hehir gave an illustrated address on botanic gardens in the south west with details on the history of Camperdown Botanic Gardens.

The monthly friends day in the Gardens have seen a wide range of activities. These mornings provide the opportunity for members to mix with the team and share knowledge and skills.

The annual Spring Garden Day and Plant Sale was scheduled for Sunday September 20th from 11.00 to 2.00 pm.

In late October there will be a double celebration with the official opening of the restored fernery and the Friends 20th anniversary. The Friends membership numbers one hundred and fifty two.

The Friends disappointment for the year was the closure of Cockman Street.

The Friends continue to support and foster the development of Warrnambool Botanic Gardens as an outstanding example of a Guilfoyle garden.

Marie Johnstone
September 2009

Main sources:
FOWBG minutes and Newsletters
Warrnambool Standard.