

FRIENDS OF THE



WARRNAMBOOL
BOTANIC GARDENS

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NEWSLETTER. SPRING, 1995

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From the President

1995-1996 should prove a busy and, we hope, fruitful year for the Friends. Last year there were 105 financial members. This year there are only 52 so may I remind you that subs are now due and we would welcome your support throughout the coming year.

The most important undertaking for our group at present is that of becoming 'incorporated'. For all sorts of reasons - including legal and financial - our Friends' organisation must become incorporated and so the committee has put in train the long, slow, complicated process necessary to achieve this.

Our finances are quite sound at present with \$6,076 in our funds. By the time you are reading this our Spring Luncheon with ABC's Jane Edmanson as our honoured guest will be over and, we hope, our coffers will be further filled.

As you know the Council of the City of Warrnambool has accepted the Conservation and Development Plan prepared by S.F. Landscape Consultants in which there are many recommendations for the preservation and improvement of our gardens. Some of these tasks we feel the Friends can undertake as our part in caring for the gardens. We are planning to request supportive funding from local service groups like Rotary, Apex, R.S.L. etc. in order to achieve these ends. Some of these projects include more gas lights, preservation of the cannon and new seats at specific viewpoints as recommended in Guilfoyle's original plan.

Next year the Royal Botanic Gardens Melbourne are sending us a gift of some 70 trees (which we selected) as part of their 150th birthday celebrations. The labelling of the trees is another project which we are looking at. Terry O'Sullivan, the curator of the gardens, is currently costing this project for us.

In November it is planned that the authors of the Conservation Plan together with John Hawker (Horticulturist from the Dept. of Planning & Development) meet in Warrnambool with local council staff and Friends to discuss the further implementation of the plan. It is to be hoped that some of the larger, more expensive recommendations may then be undertaken.

If you would like to see this plan it is available from the Council and I have a copy which you may borrow. It makes interesting reading indeed as it was well researched and compiled with care.

Recently we applied for two grants from the Department of Conservation & Natural Resources. One was for large, on site projects and was up to the value of \$6,000. The other was a smaller grant of \$500 which is to help groups like ours become incorporated (an expensive business). There are hundreds of applicants for these grants so we are certainly not assured of getting either.

Would you please note that the Friends now have a post office box for our correspondence. It is P.O. Box 1190, Warrnambool, 3280.

The committee is negotiating with the Council for a suitable room in which to hold meetings each month. I will let you know place, date and time when this is finalised. Hope to see you there.

Talk on the University of Oxford Botanic Garden by Timothy Walker

The 70 people who attended the slide showing and talk by Tim Walker Horti Praefectus of the Oxford University Botanic Garden, thoroughly enjoyed a lively, entertaining and informative evening.

Mr. Walker took his audience through the 375 years of this historic garden which was established in 1621 with a gift of \$10,000 (\$6m today). It was then known as a Physic Garden and was established "for the furtherance of knowledge and the glorification of God". Hitherto gardens had been purely ornamental but from then on the medicinal properties of plants were studied at the university.

It wasn't all easy going. The first Horti Praefectus wasn't paid for eight years. Others used their funding for private purposes. But many stayed on for 30 - 50 years and passed the position on to their sons.

We all make mistakes. The first greenhouse had a complete roof and was not, therefore, a great success. Later, when glass greenhouses were built they were heated by a trolley full of burning coals which was pushed around by a junior gardener.

Many famous botanists have been associated with the gardens including Joseph Banks, Ferdinand Bauer and Linnaeus who devised the binomial system of plant nomenclature that forms the basis of all the systems in use today.

The primary role of the garden now is to provide plant material for the teaching of Botany and Biology and for research at the university. Other activities include the International Seed Exchange (which was established here), experiments in companion planting, children's education programmes, medicinal studies (still) and they have even provided background for films set in the tropics.

Mr. Walker and his wife, Jill, have moved on to a botanic conference in Perth. He says he will return - all of his Warrnambool audience sincerely hope that he will.

Judith Loch

"Langulac", Saturday & Sunday, 28 & 29th October

This beautiful country garden will be open as part of the Victorian Garden Scheme by Suzi and Richard Mann. "Langulac" is situated on the Warrnambool to Penshurst road, 9 km south of Penshurst. Marigold Curtis (67 - 6316) and Judy Loch (62 - 2260) will be taking their cars up on Saturday and Sunday respectively. Please telephone them if you would like a lift. There will be a lunch available organised by the Hamilton College auxiliary. "Green Hills" and "Spring Creek" gardens will also be open over this weekend, these are within 10 km of "Langulac".

Port Fairy Gardens Open Day, Sunday, 5th November

The Friends of the Port Fairy Botanic Gardens have invited us on this day to see over the Gardens and visit five local gardens as part of Heritage Week. They will be open from 1 - 5pm. Please watch the newspapers for details.

Judy Loch Garden open, Wednesday, 8th November

As part of the plan to visit Friends' gardens, you are invited to come on the 8th November from 10:30am to see Judy and Bob's garden at 34 Manuka Drive. *(Friends please remember to bring biscuits or slices for morning coffee!) Mrs. Joan Askew, who has recently returned from a garden tour in Europe, has some photos to show us of the many places she visited. This should be a really enjoyable morning.

* Committee members

"Hopkins Hill", Allansford, open Sunday, 26th November

Lorraine and John Richardson are opening their lovely country garden on this day for the Spastic Society. There will be a plant stall organised by the Friends, so please phone Lorraine on 65 - 1217 (a.h.) if you can help with potted plants to sell.

Christmas Drinks in the Botanic Gardens, Friday, 15th December

This will be held as last year in the gardens near the rotunda, starting at 5:30 pm. We hope that as many of you as possible can join us in this end-of-year celebration.

Annual Subscriptions - just a reminder for those who have not yet paid, these were due in July and we would appreciate your sending \$7:00 to Kathy Wicherson, 22 Dooley Street, Warrnambool 3280 at your earliest convenience. Thank you.

Marigold Curtis
editor
10.10.95

The Private Life of Plants

by David Attenborough
London, BBC Books, 1995

Plants can survive where no animal can exist for any length of time. They grow bigger and live longer. In fact, all animals depend on plants if only at a second or third level.

We eat plants, warm ourselves with them, cloth ourselves with them and build houses from them in gardens full of them.

Having had such international successes with his wildlife television documentaries the former BBC administrator, David Attenborough, set out to record on film the peculiarities of the plant world as a background to all that had gone before. He said that he wanted to make a series in which "plants were the heroes and not the victims of the action".

'The Private Life of Plants' was written at the same time as the television series was being filmed. It, too, visits every continent on earth and divers places in between from Sabah to the Sargossa Sea. A compressive list of the 71 members of the television team is included in the back of the book.

The text is divide into six sections: Travelling, Feeding and Growing, Flowering, the Social Struggle, Living Together and Surviving. It is crammed with all sorts of fascinating information and examples of plant behaviour and is written in an easily readable, relaxed style. Acknowledgment is given to the many (though unnamed) scientists who helped with advice and information: "botanists, as a genus, are not only kind and gentle but preternaturally tolerant."

The book, in spite of this scientific input, is written at a popular level and requires no previous specific knowledge. Only common names of plants are used in the text which, itself, is simple and clear. It is published in a large, easily readable print on very white paper that is not too glossy.

There are coloured photographs on almost every page. They are clear and aesthetically pleasing whether set at a distance, in close or taken through a microscope. A huge number of photographers contributed to the book - from David Attenborough himself to large organisations like the Carolina Biological Supply Co. They are acknowledged and listed in the back of the book - not with the individual photographs.

There is an excellent index giving entrance to the text through the common names of plants with the botanical names in brackets. The index, therefore, also acts as a glossary.

The book is sturdily bound in red buckram with a gold lettered spine and has an attractive dust cover. It was published in 1995 by BBC Books, London and is selling for \$45 at Collins Booksellers, Liebig Street, Warrnambool.

'The Private Life of Plants' would make a satisfying addition to any library and its quarto size makes it manageable to post as a gift.

Judith Loch