



FRIENDS OF WARRNAMBOOL BOTANIC GARDENS

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Winter 2006

NEWSLETTER

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

It is now official. Warrnambool Botanic Gardens was added to the Victorian Heritage Register in April 2006. This provides further protection for our Guilfoyle designed garden, which was registered by the National Trust in 1990 and added to the Register of the National Estate in 1992.

It was 140 years ago when work first began on the present site. The Friends plan to hold a garden party to mark that anniversary. We have selected Sunday November 12th and want all interested community groups to join us in a birthday celebration.

Some of the early plantings are now feeling their age and recently a number of pines and cypress were removed from the pinetum. One dead cedar at the base of a Moreton Bay Fig has been neatly removed, leaving an excellent record of its age. The rings on the stump are very clear and even an amateur count suggests the tree was well over 100 years old.

In contrast, our youngest garden bed, the indigenous garden under the old Manna Gum, is doing very well. Members of the Society for Growing Australian Plants donated the plants, all of local origin, and planted them out a year ago.

Another newcomer to the gardens, although a plant of great antiquity, is the Wollemai Pine that was planted at a quiet ceremony on a cool Monday morning in May. This special tree adds to our growing collection of Araucaria.

Meantime we want to ensure that our trees are clearly and correctly labelled. The Friends have purchased the labels and are delighted at the involvement of the horticultural classes from South West TAFE, who are identifying and labelling trees and plants. When completed it will enhance the educational role of the Gardens.

I am delighted to report that in this year's budget Warrnambool City Council has made provision for a curator position in the Gardens for three days a week. Final details of the position have yet to be worked out, but it is intended to advertise before the end of July.

In the next few weeks we are looking forward to meeting with as many of our members as possible at our Annual General Meeting (18th July). Annabel Neylon, heritage consultant and tree enthusiast, has agreed to be our guest speaker. Come along and enjoy the companionship, the lunch and the fellowship of the Friends.

Pat Varley

June 2006

TREES IN OUR GARDENS

THE BUNYA BUNYA

The Bunya Bunya, (*Araucaria bidwilli*) periodically produces huge cones, larger than a football. Mandy King our secretary, has collected seed and seedlings from the trees that grow on a family property at Wonboyn.

There are four giant Pines still standing at Wonboyn, south of Eden. Several publications record that these were planted at the request of grieving relatives as a memorial to those who died in the wreck of the *Ly-ee-Moon*. The story goes that they were to be planted at the cemetery at Green Cape. However rough weather prevented the boat carrying the seedlings from landing there, and hence they came into the calmer waters of Wonboyn

The SS *Ly-ee-Moon* was wrecked off Green Cape, south of Eden, 120 ago, in May 1886. She left Melbourne for Sydney on the 29 May with 55 passengers and a crew of 41. The following day about 9pm she ran into rocks off the Green Cape Lighthouse, just north of the Victorian / NSW border. She broke in two.

The bow section was close to shore and with the help of the lighthouse keepers; many in this section were rescued. All those in the stern drowned. In total it has been stated that 71 people died, 40 passengers and 31 crew

Mrs Flora MacKillop, mother of Mary MacKillop was among those who drowned.

She was travelling to Sydney to visit her two daughters, Mother Mary MacKillop, who was living in North Sydney at the time, and Anne, who was also a nun.

On 1 June, on hearing the news of her mother's death, Mary wrote to her sister Annie saying: "Oh Annie, I had so yearned to see her again and all the Sisters were planning to make her visit a bright and happy one. Poor, dear, long-suffering Mamma" Mrs MacKillop's body was among those retrieved. She was buried in Sydney on June 7.

Most of the bodies that were recovered were buried just north of the lighthouse in an area difficult to access by sea. Wonboyn is the nearest port. The giant Bunya Bunya Pine growing in front of Wonboyn House today, is reputedly the result of seedlings destined for Green Cape, but landed at Wonboyn, in rough seas. Harry Collet provides a slightly altered version of the story. The person bringing the seedlings - Billy Glover of Eden - was fond of the "drink" and knew that he would be able to get some at Wonboyn so he chose to come and plant them there! There is no documented evidence of the year this occurred, but given they were organised by "grieving" relatives, it would be close to the time of the shipwreck.

The seedlings Mandy King collected are now healthy plants mature enough for planting. They are a living link with the *Ly-ee-Moon* and Mary Mackillop.

The Bunya Bunya (*Araucaria bidwilli*) is native to subtropical Queensland, but its distinctive and unusual form has made it a popular specimen tree in many far flung and improbable places. The trees at Wonboyn may seem out of place, but a much greater anomaly is seen at Bussaco in Portugal. Here a solitary Bunya Bunya was planted in the C19th in the grounds of a monastery where the Carmelite monks collected and grew exotic trees. Thomas Pakenham in his beautifully illustrated 'Remarkable Trees of the World' (London 2002) describes the tree as growing in "an appropriately bizarre setting: the terrace of a palace designed for the king by one of Richard Wagner's scene painters" and now a luxury hotel.

In Australia the Bunya was planted in botanical gardens, the grounds of fine houses and country properties from the 1820s. Warrnambool Botanic Gardens has an aged Bunya in the pinetum close to its relatives, a corella stripped Norfolk pine (*Araucaria heterophylla*) and a spindly Hoop pine (*Araucaria cunninghamii*).

Recently a self sown offspring of the Bunya has been transplanted into the pinetum not far from our newest acquisition, the Wollemi (*Wollemia nobilis*)

For more information on the Bunya Bunya see Marigold Curtis' article in our Newsletter No 20 Summer 1999.

Growing Friends

We would like friends to start potting up some interesting plants or cuttings to be ready to sell on the 12th November for our plant sale that we will conduct at the 140th celebration. 'Start now - never too soon'.

During the cooler months we have been keeping up with general maintenance in the depot area. The Fernery is due for its final planting. We have agreed to plant nine additional ferns all indigenous to the Otway Ranges. Lorraine Deppeler has raised these successfully and we will plant them in August when the weather is warmer.

Guiding Friends

We have had a very quiet year with mostly only two or three people coming on our walks, when the weather permitted. A nice part of this has been that many more walkers have been locals.

Pat has organised a few very successful mother and pre-school children gatherings at the rotunda and some primary classes have come as well.

We welcomed a new and enthusiastic guide, Laurel. Thanks to her and to Marigold, Marie, Janet, Judy and Pat and to Jean for her publicity work. We are looking forward to our curator to help care for the gardens we love.

All those who have ever been a guide and those who have been guided will enjoy the following extract from an article by Jeremy Clarke in The Spectator 15 April 2006.

Describing a walk on Dartmoor he writes:

I was the first and only walker to turn up.... Normally guided walks on Dartmoor attract up to 30 people. There's always someone slower than you are, and you don't have to talk to any one if you don't want to. You can just march along looking affable. I wasn't sure I wanted to go on a guided walk and be the only person being guided. I tried to talk him out of it. But it was his first walk of the season, he explained and he'd been looking forward to it. So I paid my fiver and we shouldered our packs and struck off down the nearest ravine.

It was like going on a walk with God. Roger knew absolutely everything about everything....

With just the two of us...Roger gave a running commentary, naming for starters, every fern, grass lichen, sedge, flower, bush, tree butterfly, and bird that we saw passed, or trod on.

As guides we are certainly not God like, but we do share Roger's enthusiasm.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY 2006

Friends AGM 11am 18th July 2006. Warrnambool Club 96 Kepler Street

Association of Friends of Botanic Gardens Conference - Cranbourne - Sunday 28th May 'A new Australian botanic garden'

Geelong international pelargonium and geranium conference: 30th October—2nd November

Warrnambool - Celebrating 140 years a 'garden party' - 12th November 2006

Guided walk dates: Every 2nd & 4th Sunday starting at the Main Gate at 2.30pm

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

**FRIENDS OF WARRNAMBOOL
BOTANIC GARDENS Inc.**

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Our newsletter is published spring, summer,
autumn and winter.

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

Membership: Payable at AGM July 2006 or
any time.

June 2006

HISTORY 140 YEARS

As mentioned during this newsletter you will realise that just 140 years ago a dream was in the making. Our gardens were just a dream in the mind of the early citizens of Warrnambool. William Guilfoyle had not yet come up with his magnificent design for which we will always be grateful.

The gardens, an icon in the middle of our city is something we too often take for granted, it should be realised that it is envied by many. Hopefully the appointment of a curator will ensure the future of our gardens.

We will be holding a 'garden party' on Sunday the 12th November to celebrate the gardens. The idea is just a seedling with the committee - when we have formulated details we will inform you in the next newsletter. Until then we would be grateful for any assistance.

Do not hesitate to contact us.

A reminder that we are putting together a brief history to mark this milestone. We are keen to add personal anecdotes. If you have anything please contact or email a committee member

BOTANIC GARDENS

Over the years garden enthusiasts have created management groups to help protect our historic gardens and assist developing new ones. Three of these are the Association of Friends of Botanic Gardens, BGANZ Botanic Gardens of Australia and New Zealand and Voluntary Guides. All these groups are very active individually, and are now in the process of formulating a bonded relationship.

We are represented through the Association of Friends of Botanic Gardens which is a voluntary group with forty gardens across Australia. BGANZ addresses the botanic gardens at large and is headed by the larger botanic gardens and are now addressing the regional gardens. The Guiding Friends are an Australia wide body.

All groups hold annual conferences. The Friends future directions committee are addressing the possibility of amalgamating with the Guiding Friends in the hope of creating a stronger and more productive body. The FBG are now an associated member of BGANZ.