



FRIENDS OF WARRNAMBOOL BOTANIC GARDENS

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Maintaining and developing Warrnambool Botanic Gardens as an outstanding Guilfoyle garden

NEWSLETTER

Issue Number 84

March 2018

NOTES FROM THE PRESIDENT

Hello Friends of the Gardens – all 137 of you. We warmly welcome our new members, many of whom responded to our drive to increase our numbers (and our assurance they would not be asked to rake or dig.)

Our forebears were wise in selecting a sheltered site for the Gardens and it is a tribute to them and the recent management of our trees that they have withstood the vagaries of the weather so well. A wet winter with vigorous growth, followed by a long hot summer and the recent equinoxial gales was quite a challenge.

There is a suggestion that when rain is really needed the Friends should organise an event in the Gardens. Our Christmas celebration last November saw a rapid retreat from the lawns to the shelter of the rotunda where we watched a spectacular lightening display as we huddled together out of the pouring rain. The previous November our Fun Day in the Gardens endured a day of wind and water, but still triumphed, as garden lovers are hardy souls.

As yet the full impact of the Saint Patrick Day fires on the trees and gardens of the South West has not been established. Not since the Ash Wednesday fires of 1983 has there been such wide spread destruction. That such terrible events should be known for days in the Christian calendar has a certain irony.

In contrast our Gardens are a peaceful green oasis. This comes at a considerable cost to staff, who although some automatic watering is operating, still

have to drag hoses to many locations. Completion of the automatic watering system has for a long time been the first priority of the Friends. It will save water and labour. We have asked WCC to also make it their high priority.

Work on the well is proceeding and the seating has now been clad in attractive wooden panels designed and constructed by the Triton Woodworkers. Our application for a grant from the ‘Stronger Communities Fund’ administered by Dan Tehan MP was successful and will support the installation of blue stone paving. We remain indebted to the Isobel and David Jones Family Foundation for their continued support.

The maintenance and enhancement of our Guilfoyle Garden is the Friends first priority and we applaud the ‘successive Town Councils (that) have been determined to preserve William Guilfoyle’s original ideal’.

Pat Varley - President



REMEMBERING MARIE JOHNSTONE

Marie was a foundation member of the Friends of Warrnambool Botanic Gardens back in 1989. From that time on she was an innovative, reliable and hard working member of the Committee.

In 1994 she chaired a sub committee for Music in the Gardens. In 1996 she was elected President. This was a very productive year and the Summer Music Program was well attended. In September as President she received an invitation for the Warrnambool Friends to host the 1999 Conference of the Association of Friends of Botanic Gardens Victoria.

On accepting this invitation, Marie set to work with typical determination, persuasiveness and efficiency to form a Conference Committee of community members and Friends. The result was a very successful conference (April 1999) which attracted 125 garden enthusiasts from across Victoria and interstate.

After a year as President, Marie did not seek re-election, but took leave of absence to travel.

Marie's interest in history and her commitment to research led to her becoming the historian and archivist for the Friends. In 2002 she published the first edition of the History of the Friends and in 2009 an updated version was launched at the Friends twentieth anniversary

In researching the urns in the Gardens, she discovered the Gardens were not heritage listed and so initiated the process that led to their registration by Heritage Victoria in 2006. She endured a long and frustrating battle to restore the urns. The Friends will follow it through.

She researched the early curators, Charles Scoborio and William Donald. She traced their families and organised a Curators' Day when a tree was planted by descendants in recognition of their work.

Marie initiated or supported many projects from film nights to garden visits. She was an enthusiastic and hard working member of the friends for almost three decades, and was still planning garden visits last month.

The Friends nominated Marie for the Wannon Volunteer Awards in 2015 for her long time commitment to community service. On presenting her with this award the Federal member for Wannon, Dan Tehan recognised a woman 'committed and passionate in their care for others'

Marie was a gentle, gracious lady, and a loyal friend dedicated to her community.

Marie died in February this year. We will miss her.

Pat Varley - President



Botanic Gardens TEAM REPORT

Despite a very dry summer we have managed to keep most things alive.

The automated irrigation system (1/3rd complete) has made a huge difference to how we manage the garden beds, trees and turf.

It is hoped a budget bid for the automation of the southern lawn will be successful. Fingers crossed as we will find out shortly.

We are all busy cutting things back and doing our normal autumn work tasks.

The Pinetum is growing well evidenced by the removal of a few tree guards due to the increased growth of the pines.

The Pinetum is well worth a visit as some of the pines are very interesting and in time we will hold a very valuable collection.

Our 150th bed has been partially planted out with more plants ordered.

It has been decided to concentrate on foliage rather than flowers to hopefully give a year

round display for this garden bed.

The bridge was recently repaired by a local stonemason after it was senselessly vandalised.

Autumn is a fantastic time of year to visit WBG and we hope to see a few members walking around.

John Sheely

WBG Team



150th Garden bed

Marie Johnstone was a very active contributor to our newsletters, here are two of her articles

CHARLES SCOBORIO

First curator of Warrnambool Botanic Gardens

Charles Scoborio was born in Cornwall, England in 1827 of Italian descent. As a youth he was student of Dr. John Lindley of the English Royal Horticultural Society and was the first to receive a travelling scholarship from the Society and this enabled him to study landscape gardening in Europe. On his return to England he secured a position as head gardener to the country gentleman.

In 1857 Charles Scoborio with his wife Elizabeth and his small son Thomas Henry left England for Australia and came to Warrnambool in that same year. For a short time he was employed by Briggs and Naphine and in the Warrnambool Examiner of 25th June 1858 he advertised that he would lay out gardens.

Three years earlier a site for the gardens had been chosen next to the cemetery on the west bank of the Hopkins River. The site of 10 acres was poorly protected from western gales, the ground was poor

and most of it rocky. By 1859 the site was fenced and a cottage built for the curator. The ground had been grubbed and cleared and roads to its entrance marked and cleared.

The gardens were not a success, plants and trees were severely handicapped by the frequent gales. Nor was the council generous with funds. Public criticism brought forth a defence from the Examiner of 7th August 1860, which said the gardens were now looking “quite fresh”. Many of the walks and beds had been cleared and planted “and when we say that over 600 plants, shrubs and trees have been planted during the last few weeks it will be evident that the one man has not been idle”. Scoborio persisted for about six years, then resigned. In the following few years Charles Scoborio obtained a position as head gardener and planner for J.W.M. Aitken at Ellerslie House, Koroit Street and later took up a similar position with Joseph Ware at Minjah.

During that time the council was granted twenty acres of “howling wilderness” heavily timbered bushland and dense scrubby undergrowth, ferns and tussocky grass. Charles Hortles was its first curator from 1869 - 1872 Scoborio again became curator of the gardens at a salary of £3 per week and when he supplemented this by serving as a waiter at the races and town balls he was brought to task.

Difficulty with the site and problems with funding plagued the early years. Scoborio’s report to the Borough council in March 1875 brings home some of the curator’s problems which do not arise today.

In 1875 Warrnambool had no reticulated water supply and the summer had been abnormally dry and he told the council that he was afraid of losing many newly planted trees as the well water, on which he depended, was hard and it could not be left sufficiently long in casks to soften. [At the time he had 300 young plants in pots and a stack of pine tree seedlings].

Further items from his report are:- Garden paths cleared of grass. Five seats procured, painted and placed at convenient places along paths. If council would allow him a man for a fortnight the cost could be retrieved during the winter. This would also give him more time for planting and improving the gardens.

Finally in 1877 a dissatisfied council commissioned William R. Guilfoyle to design an appropriate layout. Eventually in 1879 council accepted a plan which incorporated wide curving paths, large sweeping lawns dotted with specimen trees, glimpses of water,

dense shrubberies displaying a rich variety of plants and focal points composed of plants of dramatic form and colour such as Yucca, palm, bamboos, and other variegated plants.

During Scoborio's curatorship

Gardens entrance and paths improved

Well and Windmill installed, thus ensuring a continuous water supply

1885 Lake completed

1886 The lake bridge was constructed

1888 Fernery planned but not completed till the early 1900's

1893 Merri River Water scheme opened and reticulated water available to the gardens

Maze constructed

1897 Gardens gazetted

Gas lamps installed in the gardens

Charles Scoborio also constructed all the rockeries in the gardens from limestone rocks from the "20 acres wilderness" asking the council for extra to complete his task. The knobbly limestone rockery and fountain which still remains is a monument to his work and where one can linger and enjoy all the senses of an enclosed area.

As well as maintaining the gardens Charles Scoborio had to look after public recreation grounds and street trees.

Well over the age of seventy years Charles Scoborio would have been feeling the stress of overwork as in 1903 and 1904 extensive tree planting took place in the streets, a double row of Norfolk Island pines in Raglan Parade east, a row of pines on the south of Pertobe Road, pines in Henna Street and olive trees and evergreen oaks in Henna Street.

At the age of seventy nine years Charles Scoborio retired on the 31st March 1906 after forty years as curator. In that same year his wife, Elizabeth died and on the 8th December 1912 Charles Scoborio died. They are both buried in the Warrnambool cemetery.

After toiling long hours at the gardens one wonders how he found time to be a member of the militia for twenty six years. The volunteers were a feature of town festivals and for several years Charles Scoborio 6'5" tall of magnificent build with a long white beard was the drum major.

He was also a committee man for the Horticultural Society which was formed in October 1863. For many years they held annual shows before combining with the Agricultural Society.

Today we remember the curator by the naming in the 1980's of the reserve at the corner of Otway and Hopkins Road, "Scoborio Reserve".

His photograph is on the pioneers' honor board in the Public Library.

Marie Johnstone. 2002

**Further meticulous research by Marie found that Scoborio was not of Italian descent, but came from Cornwall where his grandfather had been head gardener at what is now 'the lost Garden of Heligan', and that was where Charles grew up.*



MEMORIAL GATES AT ENTRANCE TO WARRNAMBOOL BOTANIC GARDENS

After the death of King George V in 1936. The Mayor of Warrnambool Cr. R. B. Philpott opened an appeal for the public to subscribe to a memorial fund.

On the motion of Miss Lake it was decided that the best memorial to the late King George V would be ornamental memorial gates at the Botanic Gardens. The decision was made at a meeting of subscribers to the Warrnambool Memorial Fund.

The Mayor suggested that the present gates at that time be removed to the other entrance in Cockman Street. The Town Clerk, Mr H. J. Worland, mentioned that it was little know that the existing gates were the Queen Victoria Memorial gates and should also have an inscription.

The design of the gates was discussed and it was decided that the Mayor, Shire President, Town Clerk, City and Shire Engineers the Mayoress, Miss Lake and Mesdames Tait and Marfell should obtain suitable designs of wrought iron gates with inscriptions and submit the designs with prices to a future meeting.

At a later meeting of subscribers, three designs were submitted and it was eventually agreed to accept the design submitted by E. Wooles & Sons for gates costing £185. The gates were to be of mild steel finished with the new process, rendering them rust proof. The gate posts were to be in Harcourt grey granite, erected on a concrete foundation.

On the 7th May 1937 an impressive ceremony took place at the Botanic Gardens when His Excellency the Governor Lord Huntingfield officially declared open the gates erected at the Cockman Street entrance to the gardens in memory of His Late Majesty, King George V.

On his arrival, His Excellency was welcomed by the Mayor & Mayoress Cr. & Mrs R. V. Philpott, the Shire President Cr W Beveridge, the Chief Secretary, Hon, H. S. Bailey, M.L.A. and Mrs Bailey and the town

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

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Please include identification to enable receipt to be recorded

Please note: If you would like to have your Newsletter sent by email please send an email friends@wbgardens.com.au and we will put you on the email list

FOR YOUR DIARY

AGM 11th July at 5.30 Hammond Centre in Henna Street.

We are pleased to announce that Jessica Hood, Community Advocate Environmental Heritage, National Trust Australia will be our guest speaker

Note the change of our usual time from lunch time to evening. You will receive an official invitation closer to the date

Clerk, Mr H. J. Worland and Mrs Worland. His excellency was accompanied by Col. And Mrs Helm-Pott. School children, Guides and Brownies formed a line in front of the gates. City and Shire Councillors and a large representation of members of the general public, were also present.

After the welcome by the Mayor His Excellency said he deemed it was a great honor to be asked to declare the gates open and reminded those present that for 1500 years there have been Kings and Queens in Britain and for over three hundred years there had been uninterrupted and single kingship. He congratulated the citizens of Warrnambool and district on subscribing to have the gates erected and said it was characteristic of the British race to have a great love of gardens and natural beauty.

His Excellency pulled the cord of the Union Jack, which was draped over the simple inscription "King George V Memorial Gates 1910-1936".

The Vice-Regal party entered the gates and under the guidance of the Curator. Mr D. Leitch, carried out an inspection of the gardens.

Marie Johnstone 22/11/99



Weekly times Saturday
15 May 1937

Warrnambool Memorial Gates Declared Open

There was a large crowd at the Warrnambool Botanic Gardens when the Governor (Lord Huntingfield) officially declared open the gates erected in memory of the late King George V. by citizens of Warrnambool.

The ornamental wrought iron gates, three in number, are swung from massive pillars of granite 8ft. high, with granite wings. The central pillars bear the inscription: "King George V. 1910-1936."

The Governor asked all those passing through the gates not merely to regard them as beautiful entrances to a beautiful spot, but as a constant reminder of citizenship and loyalty to the son of the late King.

After declaring the gates open the Governor inspected the gardens and made a tour of the beauty spots of the district.

NEW MEMBERSHIP POLICY

In the past we have held onto members for a couple of years while they have been nonfinancial. It was decided at our last meeting by the membership committee, that we will no longer hold members past payment time. This decision was made due to our insurance policy that stipulate that we declare our true number of members

Membership payments for 2018/19 year will fall due at our AGM in July. A membership renewal form will be sent out with the invitation to the AGM.

We thank you all for your on going support and please encourage others to join our membership.

GUIDED TOURS

To organise a tour please contact a committee member or email friends@wbgardens.com.au