

FBBG Annual General Meeting 20th February 2020

It is with pleasure that I present the Annual Report for 2019 on behalf of the Friends.

Thanks to a very active group of Conveners, 2019 provided many activities and opportunities for the participation of members, beginning with two Twilight Guided Tours, one in January of the Prime Ministers' Avenue, followed by a second in February of the statues. Both tours were well attended and well organised by the Guides under the very capable leadership of Vice President Terry O'Brien.

The annual Begonia Festival in March again drew thousands of visitors with the begonias attracting much attention with long queues all week-end. Takings from plant sales and the plant creche set a new record of **\$7,781**, with many thanks to Yvonne and the Growers for their dedication in achieving an excellent result.

The BotaniKids under the very enthusiastic guidance of Julie Bradby and Lorraine Powell proved to be another major Festival attraction giving kids the opportunity to get their hands dirty and learn "how little things grow."

Also during March a **half day working session was held with all Conveners** who tabled their plans and budgets for the year. This provided a good opportunity for Conveners, who also make up the Committee, to share their ideas and comment on the planned activities for the year.

I think the most significant event for the year was the **launch of the Botanical Gardens Foundation** on March 26th at Pipers by the Lake, attended by close to 100 guests. We were very fortunate to be entertained by Australian tenor, composer and multi operatic award winner, Mr. David Hobson. Also in attendance was the Patron of the Foundation, Mr. John Hawker, who has spent 36 years in Horticulture and 23 years as a heritage officer in horticulture with Heritage Victoria, and is now retired. We are very honoured to have him as our Patron. It was also a pleasure to welcome the Mayor Cr. Samantha McIntosh along with the C.E.O. of the City, Justine Linley.

I congratulate the Chair of the Foundation, Elizabeth Gilfillan for her foresight and dedication in setting up the Foundation. The evening was very capably chaired by Foundation Board member, Peter Wilson.

The Foundation is a vital part of succession planning and is now being recognised as a very significant support base, by providing a means for the Community of Ballarat to contribute to the long term enrichment of our Gardens.

The first excursion for the year was in April with a **bus trip to Anglesea** to visit five gardens designed by Peter Shaw, from Ocean Road Landscaping. Lunch was at Peter's own garden "*Sunnymeade*", featured on *Gardening Australia*. The other highlight of the day was visiting *Melba* designed by Robin Boyd. Special thanks to Events Co-Ordinator Carole Haines for arranging the day, and also to Heather Boyd and the catering team for keeping everybody well nourished.

Our speaker for the **May General Meeting** was Julie Bradby whose topic was "From Little Things Big Things Grow." She drew on some of her travel experiences to present a very engaging talk about the learning opportunities provided by a Botanical Gardens environment, and the similarities of visiting an outdoor Museum.

After the Friends received a letter from **Barry Jones**, former ALP federal politician, making some critical comments about the conflicting material in the Prime Ministers' Avenue brochure, and the captions for the Busts, the opportunity was taken to invite him to address a function. Barry accepted the invitation and Guides Convener Terry O'Brien arranged a function for 1st June, which was open to the public. The Robert Clark Centre was filled to capacity to hear Barry's address "**Observing our Prime Ministers.**" As most of them were known to him, he was able to provide a most enlightening address giving us some personal insight into their background and their period as Prime Minister.

Guest speaker for the **August General Meeting** was Lynsey Poore, Vice President of the Friends of the Royal Botanic Gardens, and President of the South Melbourne Garden Club. After a career in teaching science and demonstrating biology at Monash University, she is now retired and enjoying travelling the gardens of the world. Her topic was "**Centuries Old Botanic Gardens**" during which she spoke about two of her favourites, the Oxford Botanic Gardens, the oldest garden in Britain being a Physic garden for medicinal plants, and the Jardin Botanico Historico La Concepcion in Malaga, rated as one of the best gardens in Europe.

The last excursion for the year was in October to the Dandenong Ranges to visit **Edna Walling's 21 acre site, Bickleigh Vale** at Mooroolbark. This unique Heritage Village consisting of 16 cottages and interconnected gardens has now been declared a "Classified Landscape" by the National Trust, and is recognised as an historical landscape of horticultural and architectural significance to be preserved for future generations. Another special well organised day by Carole Haines and the Catering team.

The Speakers Luncheon in November was a full program with three inspiring speakers: **Sandra McMahon**, President of the Friends of Burnley Gardens and an award-winning student of Burnley College, where she lectures in Planting Design. She spoke about the challenges of designing for small spaces and developing sustainable and therapeutic gardens.

Ben Harris, also studied at Burnley College and worked with Paul Bangay. To develop his passion for the natural elements of rocks and water, he travelled to Kyoto in 2018 to study at the Research Centre for Historical Japanese Garden Art. His topic was Beautiful natural water features and the innovation behind them.

Len Isakov, gave us a most interesting address about installing vertical garden walls for interior and exterior sites, having established his own Company after completing studies in horticulture and landscaping design at Holmesglen.

Thanks again to Carole Haines and the catering team for another most rewarding Speakers Luncheon.

With all the excitement of **the Gate Keepers Cottage** being completed during the year, Julie and her team organised a "Soft Opening" in the middle of the year with a "Christmas in July" theme. The Cottage was beautifully decorated and guests were treated to plenty of mulled wine and Christmas cake, an occasion thoroughly enjoyed by all.

This was followed by the official opening on November 21st, in the presence of the Mayor Samantha McIntosh, The C.E.O. of the City, Justine Linley and Terry Demeo, Director of Infrastructure and the Environment for the City. The opening was a very significant milestone for the year and represented the culmination of many years of hard work and time intensive negotiations, by a dedicated and passionate group of people who were determined to make it happen.

November 21st was also the day when activities for the year came to a close. Immediately after the Cottage opening members moved to the Robert Clark Centre for the traditional end of year drinks and nibbles, which concluded a very fruitful and rewarding year for the Friends.

Apart from the many functions during the year there were four other events which I would like to refer to:

Firstly, I congratulate **Warwick Sellens** for accepting the position of our representative on the Committee of the Australian Association of Friends of Botanic Gardens. It is most important for us to have membership continuity on the National Body. Warwick is a member of the Guides, and replaces Elizabeth Gilfillan who after serving a long period as Secretary of the AAFBG has officially stepped down, but remains as Secretary until a replacement can be found.

Secondly, our **website** has been given a complete makeover and is now a living site being kept up to date with information supplied by Susan Pilbeam. Many thanks to Elizabeth Gilfillan for her assistance in working with WordsWorth Communicating to achieve the new look.

Thirdly, the **donation box** in the Conservatory was reconstructed during the year after being vandalised. With the new box built into the Ambassadors Bench it is now far more secure and has the added benefit of a Point Tap credit card facility, which is currently set at \$8 per tap. Donations from July 2019 - January 2020 were cash \$882, and Point Tap \$392, **total \$1,274**. I think with the passing of time donors will become more accustomed to using the Point Tap system.

Fourthly, in relation to the **Fernery**, no doubt members are waiting anxiously to see the commencement of construction for stage 1. The summary of the current situation as provided by Terry Demeo included in my Report in the Wellingtonia Summer edition concludes with the following:

"The next step in the process is a report to Council in relation to a variation for Resicare Builders who have been contracted to deliver the facility, with this to take place in January and construction to commence thereafter."

It's most unlikely that will mean a start before the Begonia Festival, more than likely it will be soon after.

When I joined the Friends two years ago I thought the Fernery redevelopment was all about reaching a fairly quick destination, however two years down the track I now realise that I've joined the journey that several members have been making over the last 20 years or so.

Although the destination for stage 1 is now in sight, the journey will no doubt continue for some time yet until we see the completion of stage two.

In the words of Terry Demeo, *"It's been a long time coming."*

In the words of Donald Trump *"The best is yet to come."*

The development of a **succession plan** during 2020 will be a major focus for the Committee. Over the last two years I have been most impressed by the enormous amount of knowledge of the Gardens accumulated by the Friends, and the way in which that knowledge is applied. I think therefore we have a commitment to ensure that knowledge is preserved, and progressively transferred to a younger generation. The challenge for us all will be to develop a creative strategy that will encourage the younger generation to become part of the Friends.

In conclusion, I would like to compliment the many Conveners for their dedication during the year:

Vice President and Guides Convener, Terry O'Brien who keeps on coming up with an endless list of creative activities.

Growers Convener, Yvonne Curbach whose Growers Group achieved plant sales to the value of \$36,227 for 2019. Although slightly below the previous year it was still a great result being our main source of income.

Treasurer, Bruce Holland who no doubt counted every cent of the plant takings and produces the Treasurers report on a monthly basis.

Wellingtonia Editor, Michael Bird ably assisted by Susan Pilbeam for their creative skills in producing another four engaging publications.

BotaniKids Convener and Gate Keepers Cottage Superintendent, Julie Bradby ably assisted by Lorraine Powell for a great effort in seeing the Cottage through to completion, and overseeing the continued enthusiastic engagement by the BotaniKids.

Events and Speakers Convener, Carole Haines who continues to pull an array of interesting speakers from all quarters.

Foundation Chair, Elizabeth Gilfillan for her foresight in establishing the Foundation, which will be an invaluable part of succession planning in years to come.

Secretary, Susan Pilbeam who has now settled into her extended role of Minute taker, and seems to be adjusting to coping with demands from all directions.

Immediate Past President and Membership Convener, Raoul Dixon for maintaining the membership list and the collection of fees.

History Convener, Lorraine Powell and her Committee who have accepted the challenge of producing a short term all-encompassing Gardens publication, followed by a longer term equivalent publication to "An Eden of Loveliness."

Ambassadors Convener, Beth Dixon and her team for their continued dedication in engaging with the public in the promotion of the Gardens and Ballarat in general.

Hospitality and Catering Convener, Doff Kemp and her excellent team of helpers who keep delicious surprises coming from their kitchens to provide for our many functions.

An attachment to my Report shows that Conveners contributed a total of 9,261 volunteer hours for 2019. Using a conservative figure of \$30/hour it could be said that we have contributed approximately **\$277,830** to the economic benefit of the City of Ballarat in promoting and supporting out world class Botanical Gardens.

Well done everybody!



Robert Selkirk
20th February 2020

FBBG Volunteer Hours 2019

Conveners	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Ambassadors	0	0	530	700	608
BotaniKids	385	930	1,200	1,173	1,250
Committee	300	300	300	300	300
Catering/Hospitality	50	50	50	120	50
Events/Guest Speakers				170	170
Fernery Redevelopment	100	200	150	0	0
Foundation & AAFBG	0	0	0	300	440
Growers/Plant sales	1,725	3,000	3,000	3,300	3,700
Guides	680	2,060	600	563	491
History	1,200	1,200	1,100	1,150	1,150
Labelling	45	50	50	50	32
Membership	50	50	50	50	50
President	100	400	400	550	620
Secretary	20	30	30	30	0
Treasurer	300	300	300	300	300
Wellingtonia	80	80	90	150	100
Western Beds	0	0	0	24	0
Total	5,035	8,650	7,850	8,930	9,261

Using a conservative figure of \$30/hour it could be said that we have contributed approximately \$277,830 to the economic benefit of the City of Ballarat in promoting and supporting our world class Botanical Gardens.