

2013 President's Report

Elizabeth Gilfillan

Welcome all, Mayor John Burt, Councillor Samantha McIntosh, our guest speaker Peter Donaldson and invited guests, members and new members.

It is a great privilege to present the 30th Annual report for the FBBG. 30 years has been a momentous occasion for the FBBG and celebrated with appropriate enthusiasm, it has been a most memorable year, a year of celebration of achievements and changes in changing times.

We have decided not to give individual reports. You can read these in the Wellingtonia newsletter.

The appointment of Genevieve Lowe as Administrative Assistant for one day per week has been a great success. Thank you Genevieve for your eager attention to detail you have organised the office, always helpful in spite of all who come and go placing different demands upon you.

The membership is nearing 300, Raoul Dixon keeps the labour intensive database in immaculate order. With increasing demands we have decided to have a professional database producer create a programme for our needs in the future years. Thank you Raoul for your continued diligence.

Julie Bradbury and her willing team took part in the Begonia Festival, replacing a private Melbourne Event company. It was a great success with 3000 taking part in activities over the 3 days, I cannot believe I am saying this as I look back. Congratulations Julie, BotaniKids is going from strength to strength with the school community now looking forward to The Annual Great Big Gardens Play Day, in which invited schools enjoy a variety of activities to stimulate and educate children in a fun atmosphere. A community grant was awarded to support this event. Lorraine's maverick effort in recreating the amazing Maze and the partnership with 18 community groups, saw 1500 children take part. The Christmas picnic with 200 children from "special schools" enjoyed activities and cupcakes. Combined

with monthly morning tea sessions for pre-schoolers and young mums the programme is innovative and exciting. Goals for 2013 include, greater involvement of Playgroups, Kinders, and schools in partnership with City of Ballarat and The Royal Melbourne Botanic Gardens Education officer are working together to develop programmes. More helpers desperately needed.

In August, 8 delegates from Ballarat attended the bi-annual conference of The Association of Friends, the umbrella organisation of Friends. This was held at the Australian Arid Lands Botanical Gardens in Port Augusta, with a wide range of stimulating speakers. FBBG is represented on the ass. committee, who are continually working together with other friends groups to exchange experience and common issues.

The Book "An Eden of Loveliness, Ballarat Botanical" Gardens: in November we celebrated our gardens with the launch of this beautiful assembly of information gathered by the FBBG over a period of 30 years. Congratulations to Lorraine Powell and the History Group. More eloquently expressed in a letter to History group member Zelda Martin, quote,

"over the past week we have read and currently re reading An Eden of Loveliness, Ballarat Botanical Gardens, what a truly inspired publication ! beautifully produced, with informative written passages and enhanced by a wonderfully diverse collection of photographs from different periods. Must say we are completely bowled over by the amount of hard work that has clearly gone into it. All elements, and in particular the early history aspects, have been painstakingly researched, and well selected items studiously compiled and strategically placed. Quite obviously, an extraordinary number of working hours and hard slog has gone into the collective effort - and with superb results. Indeed, the finished article is rigorously professional, and we have found the reading experience enthralling. All concerned should rightly feel very proud, and are deserving of sincere congratulations. We shall treasure our copy and take pleasure in showing it to others."

Our grateful thanks Lorraine and your group, for your dedication to this wonderful project, which will be enjoyed for many years

to come. This year the group will be archiving collected material and commencing work on a series of information booklets.

There has been a steady increase in requests for guided tours of the gardens. Led by Terry Obrien the group has grown and enjoy the learning experience of belonging to this group, who pass the knowledge to many visitors. It was a pleasure to host 300 guests from the Australian GHS conference with a beautiful Twilight Walk in our gardens. A series of information brochures are being produced, the 1st is Significant Trees in the gardens, to be followed by The Statues and The Prime Ministers. Terry has planned an exciting new project for the coming year. This will involve a tuition course of 5 weeks with Ballarat Uni of 3rd Age. Thank you, Terry, for your fresh enthusiasm.

Yvonne Curbach leads the Growing Friends and is continually adding to the wide range of plants available in the Friends Nursery which are selling well, new benches have been installed to store stock, in time for the Begonia Festival, which is always a busy time, more helpers needed. With the changes in Gardens Nursery procedure we have been recipient of hundreds of unwanted pots, so no empty pots at the moment please. New bulbs will be in flowering pots in Spring.

This year it is hoped that we will be able to produce more plant labels for other Botanical Gardens as well as our own, Joy O'Brien has been learning this skill from Adele Thomas who developed this programme from inception, sincere thanks to Adele for her years of dedication to this very important area of friends activity.

This year The Gardens in Spring programme was a wonderful success, due to in part to perfect weather for the first time in 4 years. The entertaining Luncheon was held at BAG and the event was in conjunction with the magnificent exhibition "Capturing Flora". This year's event is in the planning process.

FBBG is hosting the GCA Convention in September, when approximately 350 delegates will enjoy Ballarat's garden heritage over a 5 day period. Mike Sorrell is chairing this committee and will be very grateful of assistance during this big event, you will hear more about this as the year progresses.

Workshops in Botanical Illustration will continue this year, the group have been encouraged by a successful exhibition at the book launch.

You will be kept up to date during the year with Wellingtonia, our sincere thanks to Helen Vincent for her many years of producing this important work. Michael Bird is the new editor, it will continue to be posted in hard copy as well as online.

Keep a future eye on our website, exciting plans for changes in the coming year, with more information and important links to other websites. We are enlisting professional assistance with the project and will be of great benefit to the FBBG.

The FBBG will continue to work closely with COB on the Fernery project, this will be much more than just a fernery, and a new descriptive name will be sought.

It has been a busy year! A combined effort of so many has made it both happy and rewarding, my sincere thanks to Peter Marquand and the staff who have cheerfully assisted us at all times. The garden beds are looking wonderful. The Cycads which the FBBG contributed are looking well settled in the central bed.

One person I must thank individually Julie Bradbury, who is retiring from Secretary after 4 years, my sincere appreciation Julie for your professional and dedicated support, our common passion for these gardens and the role they play in the community has been a bond of fun and friendship.

We look forward to a year of consolidation and continued pleasure in working for the gardens, my sincere thanks for your endorsement and support.