

FEBRUARY 14 MEMBERS' EVENT

*Meet the staff
of the Garden
and hear
about current
projects and
future plans.
All members
are invited to
attend and
are welcome
to bring any
person
interested in
joining the
Friends.*



*Date : Tuesday 14 February 2006
Time : 5pm to 7pm
Place : Begonia House at the Rose Garden
Enjoy: Drinks and nibbles
Cost : \$5 per member or prospective member.*

*RSVP : Please call Pauline at the Treehouse to confirm
attendance - phone 499 1400.*

This will be a great opportunity for Friends to express our appreciation for the work of the staff of the Garden; to allow us to get to know staff members who work on the parts of the Garden in which we have a particular interest; to hear from the Manager and staff about projects and plans.

PRESIDENT'S PIECE

Dear Members

In 2006 we plan to achieve measurable progress in a number of areas of activity being worked on by your Committee. These concern the native bush areas, projects for funding support and signage, as reported on elsewhere in this Newsletter. We will continue to welcome comments and suggestions from members as this work proceeds.

Our first event of the year will be a Members' meeting on Tuesday 14 February. Our guests will be the Manager of the Garden, David Sole, and his staff. The event will give all Friends the opportunity to express our appreciation to the staff for their commitment to their work and to learn from them about current activities and future plans. I hope many of you will be able to attend at the delightful Begonia House venue. Details on the front page.

We are calling for volunteers to assist on Saturday 18 February in conducting an inventory of, and cleaning where necessary, the ground-level path markers installed by the Friends many years ago. This is a way that Members can both enhance the appearance of the markers and help us find out what needs to be done to repair or replace others. Details below.

I am pleased to announce that Mr Frank Wilson has accepted appointment as Secretary of the Friends. As members are aware, the position has been vacant since the Annual General Meeting. I am delighted that Frank has become available to take up the position. He has recently retired as a senior public servant, lives close to the Garden and has a long-standing interest in heritage and conservation issues.

With best wishes for your 2006
Ted Woodfield



PATH MARKERS - VOLUNTEERS REQUIRED

Date : Saturday 18 February

Time : 9am for two hours at most.

Place : Meet at the Treehouse in the Garden

Bring : a bucket (for water); a scrubbing brush;
a notepad; a pen

The Task :

To conduct an inventory of the ground level path markers installed in the Garden by the Friends 15 years ago. Some of the markers have become obliterated over the years. We need to identify these with a view to replacing

them. Other markers are hard to read and need cleaning. Some may have been moved or damaged and we need an inventory of these also.

We plan to divide the Garden into small sectors that could be handled in a reasonably short time by teams of two people – say one recording details and one cleaning. Ten teams (20 people) would be great.

Please call Ted Woodfield on 499 6005 to advise if you and a family member or friend are able to assist with this project.

PROFILE OF A GARDENER Frank Wilson – Friends secretary

From time to time you come across someone who, having walked through the Botanic Garden on their way to work, enjoyed it so much that they return in later years to put something back, as either a volunteer or employee. So it is with the Friends' new secretary, Frank Wilson.



Francis Wilson was born in Palmerston North. His father, Ormond Wilson, was very active in politics, becoming a Labour MP and keen conservationist. Ormond's other great passion was gardening, a love passed onto his son as Frank helped his father with a major home project. They spent many years planting the native bush gully on their farm, Mount Lees, just outside of Bulls, with trees, plants and shubbery, and making it into a walking track.

When the family farm was eventually sold, Ormond gifted the house and the bush gully to the Regional Council, which then opened it to the public. It is now a popular picnic spot, with many visitors taking the walk through the Mt Lees reserve.

Frank himself went on, in 1971, to join Foreign Affairs, enjoying a varied working life

until his recent retirement. His potted CV, of which just the bare bones tells us a significant amount, goes like this:

Posted to Saigon, 1973 till the fall in 1975, as 3rd Secretary
Vienna 1976-1980 - 1st Secretary
Moscow 1982-1984 - Charge d'affaires
Bangkok 1987-1990 - Deputy Head of Mission
Santiago 1992-1996 - NZ Ambassador to Chile, Argentina, Brazil and Uruguay, resident in Chile
Hong Kong 2001-2005 - Consul General.

Whenever the Wilsons – Frank, wife Marina and three sons - were home from a posting, Frank would take his morning stroll to work through the gardens, enjoying every minute of it. "It added to my daily existence," says Frank. "Having lived in concrete jungles like Hong Kong and Bangkok, you realise the value of green spaces," he notes.

The Wilsons now live a mere 50 metres from the top of the Garden and appreciate being direct beneficiaries of its bird life and green space. "Having been out of New Zealand for most of the last 35 years, then retiring to Kelburn" says Frank, "I was keen to be involved with the Botanic Garden." It's the nearest project at hand – literally.

The Wilsons' own garden is huge. It was planted by Frank's father more than 20 years ago. "It's a typical Wellington garden," says Frank, "on the side of a hill; contoured, terraced and with parapets holding up banks. Things grow even in this rocky Wellington landscape." Frank and Marina always had gardeners when they were out of the country but now Frank looks after it himself - and loves it. He's been out in it lately sorting out trees and shrubs, including roses, rhodos, camellias and various natives trees.

Frank was retired for just one week when the Friends wisely snatched him up, before he gets too busy with all the interests one puts off till retirement, which he surely will.

GUIDES' CONFERENCE

Last September the Friends helped Jenny Hickman to attend the Australasian Conference of Voluntary Guides in Botanic Gardens. Held in Melbourne, its theme was "Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow."

114 guides from 16 Australasian Botanic Gardens attended the conference, which was based at the Royal Botanic Garden Melbourne. This amenity covers almost 39 hectares and contains a mix of 10% native to 90% exotic plants. It was established in 1846 and by the 1860s had great avenues of trees such as blue gums, silky oaks and Illawarra flame trees. The avenues were broken up a decade later but some of these trees still remain.

The conference began with a most thought-provoking challenge from Dr Philip Moors, Director of the RBGM. He believes that the number of visitors taking traditional guided walks will decrease. Instead, we shall have "virtual visitors," who will visit our Botanic Gardens using their "blackberries," (a combination of ipod, mobile phone and electronic diary). Guides may take tours that are recorded on webcam, and available around the world, or visitors will go on self-guided tours, using their blackberries to pick up information from nodes around the Garden. Alternatively there could be 30 webcams around the Garden. Dr Moors considers that guides need to change in appropriate ways to changing times, and find new ways to deliver our message and enhance visitor experience.

The first full day of conference included lectures on maintaining urban biodiversity and ecosystem processes and on the comprehensive Children's Garden at the

RBGM, walks to various areas of the Garden and a tree-planting ceremony to commemorate the conference, the tree being *Keteleeria davidiana*, a member of the Pinaceae family, native to China, Indochina and Taiwan.



Other days brought the delight of excursions to several gardens and a lecture on the history, present and future management of the RBGM – touching on aspects and issues faced in our own BG – and further explorations of specific areas, such as the dry Grey Garden, the Woodland Garden and extraordinary trees.

There were a couple of delegate workshops and the cherished opportunities to catch up with old and new Guide friends and discuss ideas, innovations and answers.



The question, "When is New Zealand going to hold a conference?" was asked several times, so it is possible that the NZ BGs will get together to host a conference some time in the future. Meanwhile, the next conference will be held in Adelaide in 2007.

Not in New Zealand now... skyline from the Royal Botanic Garden Melbourne

Man In The Trees - Dinner in the Garden

Phil Tomlinson hosts a neat guided walk that features food and other related plants in the Botanic Garden. Phil and Charmaine have put together a meal for your enjoyment.

Dinner at most restaurants starts with a menu. The linden lime, *Tilia x europaea* provides the paper. The inner bark is peeled off small branches, soaked in lye, pounded and made into 'liber'. Piles of beige liber, written on, became valuable and thus needed to be kept in a locked room...and so emerged the word 'library'. Other sources of paper include various birches. The bark of some, for example – and most obviously - *Betula papifera*, can be peeled off and written on directly (or wait till spring when it sheds bark). It's a high quality medium. Birch bark tends to be resinous and waterproof, so some species can be used to make tankards and other drinking containers. North American native canoes too are made out of birch bark, not that that's got anything to do with dinner, unless you count fishing.

For something to write with, duck feathers make a great pen (that ducks might be useful is probably no consolation to the gardeners who constantly have to repair the damage they do to plants and plots, but we all agree that the Garden's ducklings are as cute as hell) and the pin oak tree provides the ink. Pin oaks naturally have galls, from within which a material, mixed with water, gum and iron sulphate, makes a long-lasting dark brown ink. Holly trees also supply ink. Both types were used in the Irish illuminated The Book of Kells.

Beginning our meal with drinks, Maori made beer from fermented cabbage tree pith and roots. Europeans made wine from the linden lime and kept their alcoholic beverages in barrels made from oak, which is impervious to water. Barrels have a hole which needs to be corked, for which cork oak bark is perfect. Spruce beer was an important mediaeval drink. The bitter aftertaste was masked with the addition of tulip tree, *Liriodendron*, which sweetened and added a lemon flavour to the brew.

Our meal will feature Garden residents duck and eel – cooked in an umu, or earth oven. Paperbark, *Melaleuca* gives us papery bark which is soft, inert and, containing no volatile oils, smoulders but does not burn. It is used for cooking in the bush even today and can also be

pressed into service as plate or serviette. Herbs to flavour will, of course, be gathered from the Herb Garden and there is no shortage of cooking oil. The Garden has olives and copper beech. The latter's seed (known as 'mast') is a major source of food for wildlife in Europe and oil from it can be used as a butter substitute.

Bread rolls will accompany the eel. The inner bark of several trees can be ground up into flour, although historically only as famine food. Spruce, elm, oak and copper beech seeds can be dried and ground into good flour.

The salad will be a leaf salad, but not as we know it. The leaves will come from trees – the young spring leaves and catkins of beech, birch and elm. In the case of beech, these new leaves are only at the right stage of tenderness and taste for a couple of weeks of the year. Other salads could be made from the centre of the nikau palm, known as "Millionaire's Salad" since harvesting the centre kills the tree. Apparently it tastes like nutty cabbage, not that any of us would be reckless enough to try this for ourselves. The heart of the cabbage tree is also edible. Pine nuts are often added to salads; 30 of the 120 *Pinus* species produce edible nuts. The Garden has *Pinus koraiensis* and *Pinus pinea* (the commercial pine nut tree).



Dessert will be fruit salad – dates, coconut and bananas from palm trees, figs, pawpaws, rose

hips, mint, ginger, pineapple, Banksia (soaking the flowers in water extracts sweet nectar) and vanillin (vanilla flavour) from pine pulp.

Confession time: Although there are various palm species in the Garden, there aren't any actual date palms, *Phoenix dactylifera*. The Royal Botanic Garden Melbourne has one, though, and it's 166 years old!

After-dinner drinks are easy:



the Garden has coffee, *Coffea arabica* in the Begonia House and tea shrubs, *Camellia sinensis* in Camellia Valley. And if that's too conventional for you, holly has been used as a tea or coffee substitute, linden lime flowers are dried for tea and, ground up, its flowers and immature fruit make a very good chocolate

substitute, albeit an unstable one that doesn't have much of a shelf-life.

There are several sugar maples in the Garden (yum). Maple sugar is obtained in spring; the first 'run' typically containing around 4.5% sugar, after which the content falls. 35 litres of sap are needed to make 1 litre of sugar. By comparison, NZ's cabbage tree produces 6.5% sugar, although of a different type.

If, after all that, you still have a bit of duck stuck in your teeth, the young twigs of copper beech were once dried and sold as toothpicks. Need a breath freshener? Eat the immature fruit of the elm raw.

We now frown on the after-dinner smoke but in the 1940s smoking was utterly acceptable. During World War 2 tobacco was scarce in Germany, so copper beech leaves were tried as a substitute, an apparently really awful one. Perhaps a good thing to use if you're trying to give up. Or chew gum instead. In the USA the Sitka spruce was the source of the first commercial chewing gum. The sap had to be soaked for three days. There is, of course, no plant material in chewing gum anymore.

COMMITTEE ACTION

Bush Remnants

The Committee, under the chairmanship of Vice President Richard Nanson, has been reviewing the programme of work needed to meet the Friends' concerns about the upkeep and protection of the native bush remnants. A standardized map of the bush areas has been produced; priorities for short and longer-term maintenance work are being established and discussions are proceeding with Garden management on the feasibility and costs of protective fencing for the bush area bordering Serpentine Way and the Dell.

Projects

The Projects Committee, chaired by President Ted Woodfield, is focusing on three main possibilities for funding support. These are: an entrance to the Pinetum at the Mariri Road end; restoration work on the Joy Fountain; options for enhancing the entrance to the Rose Garden. In all cases, close consultation and coordination are required with the Garden's

management and other branches of the Wellington City Council.

Signage

Your Committee has noted with approval the improved signage at the Cable Car entrance to the Garden, giving directions for the main features, but remains of the view that a more comprehensive redesign of that area is needed to enhance visitor appeal and reduce the confusion often observed about routes and sites. We are working with Garden management on a new approach to interpretative signs, based on a pilot design at the Pinetum. Elsewhere in this Newsletter, we seek volunteers to assist in conducting an inventory of the ground-level path markers, including cleaning.

Coming Events

19 February

GW

"Insects, Birds and Plants" A walk that looks at insects and birds, and their relationship to the plants, both endemic and exotic. Moderate walk: one hour.

Friday 3 March 8pm

GLOWWORM WALK (1¼ hours) Come for a night adventure and enjoy these fascinating insects. Learn about their life story and the place of the Wellington Botanic Garden in their formal identification and naming. Walk the paths and see the stars. Bring a torch. Meet: Founders' Entrance, Glenmore Street.. Bookings essential, phone 04 499 1400. The walk will take place dependent on weather conditions and the presence of glowworms.

Monday 6 March 10am

Stepping Out walk

PLAQUES The Friends continue their tour of the Garden's plaques-which are tucked away in various corners. Moderate walk: 1½ hours. Meet: Founders' Entrance, Glenmore Street.

Tuesday 7 March 10am

Stepping Out walk

BOTANIC GARDEN SCULPTURE WALK Join the Friends for a tour of the sculptures in the Garden. Moderate walk: 1¼ hours. Meet: Rose Garden Fountain.

Thursday 9 March 10am

Stepping Out walk

CONE TRAIL AND TREE TALES See trees with interesting cones and history, and discover which ones have pine nuts. For fun, the walk will include a 'cone quiz.' Moderate walk: 1½ hours. Meet: Botanic Garden Duck Pond,

Monday 13 March 10am

Stepping Out walk

BARKING UP THE WRONG TREE-GARDEN TRAILS AND TREE TALES Discover cork oak and other trees with useful, interesting and beautiful bark. For fun, the walk will include a 'bark quiz.' Moderate walk: 1½ hours. Meet: Cable Car Entrance.

Thursday 16 March 10am

Stepping Out walk

DOWNHILL WALK TO THE CITY Join the Friends on a tour through the Garden and Bolton Street Memorial Park, from the Cable Car Entrance down to the City. Moderate walk: 70 minutes. Meet: Cable Car Entrance.

19 March

GW

"The Herb Garden" A guided tour of the Herb Garden, looking at fragrant, medicinal, culinary and

domestic herbs and their uses. Little walking involved: one hour. Meet at the Rose Garden Fountain.

Thursday 23 March 10am

Stepping Out walk

THE HERB GARDEN Herb Awareness Week walk. Join a guided tour of the Herb Garden, looking at fragrant, medicinal, culinary and domestic herbs and their uses. Little walking involved: 1 hour. Meet: Rose Garden Fountain.

19 – 26 March Herbal Awareness week

Monday 20 March 10am

Stepping Out walk

HERBAL USE OF TREES Herb Awareness Week walk. Discover that the leaves, bark, wood and resin of many trees have herbal uses. Light walking involved: 1½ hours. Meet: at the Duck Pond.

26 March

GW

"Herbal Use of Trees" Discover that the leaves, bark, wood and resin of many trees have herbal uses. Light walking involved: 1½ hours. Meet at the Duck Pond.

Friday 31 March

GLOWWORM WALK see March 3 details.

16 April

GW

"Ships, and the trees that made them possible" A fascinating story of man travelling across water, and some of the trees that made this possible. Light walking: 1½ hours. Meet at the Duck Pond

21 May

GW

"The Botanic Garden Native Forest" A walk through the forested areas of the Botanic Garden, looking at their history, structure and profile, and how they still give us a picture of the original lowland forest of the Wellington area. Moderate walk: 1½ hours.

18 June

GW

"History of the Main Garden" A historical walk with interesting stories from the early days of Wellington and the Botanic Garden. Moderate walk: 1½ hours.

GW = Guided walks, held on the third Sunday of the month at 11am. Bookings are not required and unless stated otherwise, the walks begin at the Founders' Entrance, Glenmore Street. If it is wet there will be a talk at the Treehouse Visitor Centre instead. For enquiries please phone the Treehouse Visitors Centre 04 499 1400