



P.O. Box 28-065,
Kelburn, Wellington 6150

Newsletter

August 2010

*Spring is nigh...
no, really!*

*and we have a
festival to
celebrate it*

with a new look

*and a really
special AGM
event smack bang
in the middle.*



spring
festival

AGM

Saturday 25 September 2010

Midday

The Treehouse

see inside for details



President's Patch

Dear Members,

We have passed the end of the financial year of the Friends – our financial year runs from 1 July to 30 June – and it is therefore time to hold our Annual General Meeting (AGM). The AGM will be held on Saturday 25 September at midday. The AGM's main purpose will be to review our activities over the past year, to present the financial report and to elect office holders. Members will also have the opportunity to put forward suggestions regarding the future direction of the FoWBG.

Following the formal meeting Peter Tijssen, who will be known to many members and who has been working with the Wellington City Council and in the Botanic Garden for 45 years, will give us a talk about his own experiences in the Garden, with special reference to the old Nursery. Linking in with Peter's talk and following on from the AGM, the Mayor Kerry Prendergast will formally open the new Nursery. A new set of glasshouses and a well-functioning Nursery are critical to the ongoing maintenance and development of the Garden and I am pleased to record that, after some delays, the new facility will soon be operational. The Nursery's re-inauguration will be well worth supporting.

I will be presenting a report to the AGM covering our activities during the past financial year and this report is contained in the documentation for the AGM being circulated together with this Newsletter. I will not therefore repeat here what is contained in that report.

Detailed financial accounts of the Friends are also part of the documentation for the AGM. I do not

need to go into detail regarding our financial situation but I would note that, generally speaking, we find ourselves in a healthy state. We have accumulated funds of around \$67,000; our income for the year ending 30/6/2010 was \$7,500 and expenditure amounted to \$12,000. Given the level of our reserves we are in a position to fund worthy projects in the Garden and your Committee is always open to ideas about activities and projects which might be supported by the FOBG. Members' comments and feedback in this respect are always welcome.

Election of office holders is an important outcome of the AGM. Many members of the Committee have been serving for some years and their efforts are greatly appreciated. But we would like to have new blood on the Committee and I would urge you to consider whether you as a member would like to become more closely involved in the Friends and would be willing to consider joining the Committee. Nominations need to be with the Secretary seven days before the AGM, so please put your hand up.

To reiterate my main message: the AGM will take place at 12 midday on Saturday 25 September in the Treehouse. After Peter Tijssen's talk following on from our AGM, light refreshments will be available (at approximately 1pm). The ceremony to open the new Nursery by the Mayor is scheduled for 1.30pm. So mark your diaries accordingly and I look forward to seeing you there.

Frank Wilson

Botanic Bulletin

Firstly, a big thank you to the Friends for organising and hosting the *Trees in the Wellington Botanic Garden: Past, Present and Future* winter seminar on 7 August. As staff we do tend to get bogged down with the day to day administration of the garden and it was refreshing

to have to think and articulate the progress we have made to date. Equally refreshing was Walter Cook's historic and more global view of the role of trees. His reminder about the role trees and gardens in the health of the community was particularly timely with increasing amounts of



literature now quantifying the benefits of gardens and trees to communities, mental and physical health. I enjoyed John Clemens' presentation on the Christchurch Botanic Garden. If anything, the situation with their tree population is more dire than that of Wellington. However they have put in place a substantial body of work around replacement programmes and begun to work through these and Christchurch City Council has put in place city-wide funding over ten years to support their programme.

The nursery is inching its way towards completion. The constant rain has held up completion but we are looking at 31 August for handover. The glass house is being released early and staff will start moving plants in on or about 24 August. This is going to be a superb commercial-grade operating environment which will be durable and cope with any demands for increased capacity for some years. It will be easier to work in, easier to manage and we will have a facility we can safely take people through and possibly extend to hands-on teaching, subject to available resources. The shade-house frame work is almost complete and cladding begins this week.

Our staffing has remained stable over the last few months. This has seen the garden cleaned up and looking especially tidy in time for spring. The Cacti and Succulent garden continues to have additional plants added and is coming together nicely. We have already received a number of very positive comments about the

extension of the garden. As the planting continues, the link with the Kauri rock garden is starting to emerge and a seamless garden from the playground through to the main gates is becoming apparent.

Listening and looking for the Sea, an early and important Paul Dibble sculpture, has been donated to the garden by Sir Frank and Lady Nola Holmes. The work is currently temporarily on display in the Treehouse. This is a fascinating work which we are very grateful to accept. If you are in the Garden please take the time to have a look at it.

Watch out for Spring Festival from 18 September. Charmaine and Council's marketing team have pulled together a fresh new sophisticated brand this year which will be continued through to next year and the Rugby World Cup. We are extending the festival into Lambton Quay this year with a series of lunchtime events and to link with the Cable Car and up to the Botanic Garden. The timing of the RWC next year fits perfectly with Spring Festival so if past events, including the AC/DC concert, are anything to go by, we will see a great number of visitors in town for the game come to the Garden!

I look forward to catching up with you at the AGM and the official opening of the nursery afterwards.

*David Sole
on behalf of the Botanic Garden Team.*

Wellington Regional Council Workshops

The WRC is holding a series of workshops on how the region's natural resources should be managed in the future, and the role of the Regional Council.

One is to be held on 6 September at the Wellington Town Hall (Civic suites) from 7 to

9.30pm. Further information is available on www.gw.govt.nz/valuing-our-environment.

Members interested are invited to participate.

RSVP to regional-plan@gw.govt.nz or contact Shelley Martin on 04 802 0337.





NOTICE OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2010

The Annual General Meeting of the Friends of the Wellington Botanic Garden will be held on Saturday 25 September at 12 noon at the Treehouse, Wellington Botanic Garden. All members and prospective members are welcome.

No Notices of Motion have been received. If any member wishes to present a motion it will be dealt with under General Business if a majority of members present at the meeting agree.

All officers and committee members are elected annually. Nominations should be made in writing to the Secretary at least seven days before the AGM (not later than 18 September 2010) at the Post Office address below. Signatures are required from the Candidate, the Proposer and Seconder, and all three must be financial members of the Friends. Nominations may be accepted from

the floor only if insufficient nominations are received beforehand.

At the conclusion of formal business, Peter Tijsen, Plant Records Officer, will address the meeting, sharing recollections of 45 years service with the Wellington City Council and the Botanic Garden, with a particular focus on his work in the Nursery.

After that address light refreshments will be served.

At 1.30pm Members are invited to attend the formal ceremony at which the Mayor, Her Worship Kerry Prendergast, reopen the Nursery on the site next to the Treehouse, followed by a tour of the Nursery.

Ted Woodfield
Hon. Secretary
P.O.Box 28 065
Kelburn
Wellington 6150

Trees in the Wellington Botanic Garden: Past, Present and Future

*The 2010 winter seminar held on Saturday 7 August was a highly informative and stimulating experience for the more than 40 members who ventured to the Treehouse despite severe winter weather conditions. **Ted Woodfield** reports.*

The Friends have long had a close interest in understanding the scale of the issues which need to be faced up to as a result of the aging of the framework trees in the Garden, especially the conifers, and policies for their eventual replacement. Members shared with management a view that plans needed to be developed with a long-term view rather than just responding in an ad hoc way when specific problems arose. Fundamental to such a plan was an evaluation of trees in the Garden to assess their long-term viability as a basis for decisions about succession

planting. This work had now been undertaken and was sufficiently advanced for the Manager, David Sole, to feel able to talk about the project at a Seminar organized by the Friends.

To provide a context for discussion the Committee invited Walter Cook, the co-author of the history of the Botanic Garden, to present an historical perspective on the tree plantings in the Garden, and John Clemens, Curator of the Christchurch Botanic Garden, to talk about their experience in responding to similar challenges. We plan to publish the texts of some of the presentations in future newsletters.



The expert presentations covered the full range of issues arising from the nature and rationale of the plantings in the Garden; the practical challenges arising from aging, space and topographic considerations; and the experience in managing these challenges in both the Wellington and Christchurch Botanic Gardens.

As Walter Cook put it, the Botanic Garden in the earliest days, excluding the native bush remnants, could be regarded as an “acclimatization agency”. Funded by the central Government, and under the influence of James Hector the Manager from 1868 to 1891, trees such as conifers, limes, oaks, hickory and other exotics were selected and planted in order to test their potential contribution to the New Zealand economy. Some - the conifers - were to prove their potential, although this was little recognised at the time. Others could be regarded as monuments to broken optimistic dreams.

From the end of the 19th century the focus in the Garden, following the trends in British and other colonial gardens, was on its role as a public park - the lungs of the city. Eucalypts and pines were planted to enhance air quality. Following the First World War palms became a popular tree evoking memories of the Middle East. The New Zealand cabbage tree was widely grown and admired for its exotic sub-tropical qualities. Other trees such as magnolias, rhododendra, and pohutukawa were planted for their decorative contribution to the landscape or commemorating an event or person.

The main conclusion to be drawn from Cook’s survey is that the trees in the Garden today are not there in accordance with a carefully designed and structured master plan. They are an eclectic collection representative of a diverse set of influences from all periods of our history. The hilly topography of the Garden has also meant that the conifers planted on the ridges above the native bush remnants make a highly distinctive contribution to the landscape of the city as a whole. In the eyes of many, these historical and heritage features are fundamental to the value of the Garden to the city, its residents and visitors.

David Sole, supported by James Jones, fully recognised these considerations in his excellent presentation on the work on the tree framework assessment and on the parallel 2009 collection review. Of the 1800 identified individual trees, about 1000 have been assessed so far in terms

of their health, maturity, landscape contribution and importance. Many of the trees are in excellent condition. However, many others are not. It has already been necessary to remove a number of aged conifers on public safety grounds. The study is identifying others that will need to be removed in coming years. An important conclusion is that groups of trees are likely to be more of a problem than single trees. The potential outcome – given the timeframe for the growth of replacement trees – is that there are likely to be significant gaps in the tree framework of the Garden for considerable periods, say 20-30 years.

David emphasized that he is committed to the retention of the heritage tree framework centred on the distinctive conifer plantings on the ridges. Steps had already been taken through tissue cultures to replicate the earliest planted specimens, but there were risks and only time will tell if that work will be successful. The current study will lead to an even better understanding of the best ways of perpetuating the conifer framework through improved standards of maintenance and longer-term planning and restoration processes.



John Clemens’ (*pictured*) presentation provided confirmation that Wellington is not alone in the challenges resulting from aging trees and seeking to balance historical and heritage values in the face of potentially conflicting demands. The Other issues also need to be faced. There is a shortage of space for new tree plantings. The potential long-term implications of climate change need consideration. Damage being caused to exotic trees in the Garden from increasing numbers of kaka in the area is a concern. Decisions need to be made about replacement of short-lived trees (such as the Japanese cherries), commemorative trees, and the

treatment of invasive species. The desirability of diversifying species in the Garden deserves consideration.

Christchurch Botanic Garden has also surveyed all its trees and developed a long-term plan for the removal of decaying trees and replanting with better specimens. Its goals are to not only build on existing values but also to bring the Garden into the 21st century; to underline the significance of the plant world in an era of rapid environmental change; and to acknowledge the natural and cultural heritage of New Zealand and the southern hemisphere. The tree replacement policies include the “reinvention and application” of new tree and other plantings to meet the modern challenges of conservation, research and education. John raised the need for new arboreta in the Canterbury area to provide for additional tree plantings.

A panel discussion involving all the presenters, moderated by Richard Nanson, provided the opportunity for members to raise a range of questions about the framework tree survey and

future tree replacement policies and programmes in the Wellington Botanic Garden. David Sole emphasized again that the management team is committed to the retention of the heritage tree framework. It is clear, however, that, in coming years, the landscape will be significantly affected by the need to remove many of the feature trees and the time it will take for replacement trees to take their place.

The Committee of the Friends, reviewing the Seminar, considered it had been a very successful event, meeting our interest in receiving a comprehensive briefing on the surveys being carried out on the tree framework and on the implications for future policies and practices. The Committee intends to have a fuller discussion in due course to consider next steps in pursuing our interest in this significant area of activity, including the desirability of publicity to inform the wider Wellington public of the issues and likely consequences. We would, of course, be interested in hearing from any members who may wish to comment.



This year Spring Festival has a new look!

After five or six years of the same Spring Festival graphics it was thought it timely to retire the ‘brand’ and come up with a look that better reflects the sophisticated, vibrant city that Wellington has become.

The new graphics do not translate well to B&W printing, but check it out in the newsletter on the Friends’ website and look out for the Festival brochure and posters, banners and adshels around town, and even (a lovely surprise to us), a page in the World of WearableArt programme booklet!

Putting on my Botanic Garden VSO’s hat, I would like to acknowledge the tremendous help, enthusiasm and design talent that a couple of Council departments have brought to this ‘re-branding’ exercise. The Comms & Marketing and Publication & Design departments put a lot of effort into giving Spring Festival a fresh, sophisticated look and to making sure it will be noticed.

Spring Festival includes Otari-Wilton’s Bush open day and plant sale on Sat 18 September, Grow Your Own vege and Ikebana workshops Sun 19 Sept, visits from some zoo critters (one in the grown-ups’ week!), walks & talks -see *back page*, events and concerts at the Colonial Cottage and Cable car Museums, TULIP SUNDAY 26 Sept, the regional tree-climbing competition Sat 2 Oct, Capital City orchid show 2-3 Oct and a ukulele workshop and concert on Sun 3 October.

There will be weekday lunchtime performances in Lambton Quay - poetry on the Grey Street corner, music in Kirks and, if the weather is kind, even a band on their verandah. The programme has all the details – download it from www.friendswbg.org.nz or pick up a copy from a library.

The Australasian Conference of Voluntary Guides in Botanic Gardens

*A biennial event, the most recent was held late last year in Hobart, Tasmania, and hosted by the Friends and Volunteer Guides of the Royal Tasmanian Botanical Gardens. In part one of her report, **Jenny Hickman** recounts some of the highlights of the conference.*

The conference was based at the Visitor Services Centre at the Royal Tasmanian Botanical Gardens (RTBG).

Between registration and our introductory tour of the Garden there was time to meet and talk to friends made at the previous conferences, including John Mathews, from the Royal Botanic Garden Sydney. I first met John at the guide conference in Canberra in 2001, and had the pleasure of a three-hour guided tour of the RBGS by John a few days later. John is now 86, and as active as ever both as a guide and a judge of floral art competitions.

My introductory tour was led by Eileen Maskrey, a volunteer guide and the assistant to the Gardens' education officer. Eileen is originally from Yorkshire, but has lived in Hobart for 36 years, and was, for a number of years before this, a teacher at Palmerston North Girls High School, in New Zealand.

The RTBG was founded in 1818, and is the second oldest botanic garden in Australia, after the RBGSydney, which was founded two years earlier. The Gardens are 13.8 ha in size, and have the largest single collection of conifers, especially those from the *Araucaria* genus, in the southern hemisphere. The Gardens were originally used by the local Aboriginals as it provided them with good access to water and to animals for food. Later, both the early settlers and the convicts came to the Gardens to get water. One of the Gardens' main features seen on this walk was the fernery, with its collection of Tasmanian ferns, mosses and liverworts, and a young huon pine, *Lagarostrobus franklinii* growing by the stream with its roots in the water. The fragrant oils and resins in huon pine timber protect it from rotting and the huon pine timber harvested from the west coast of Tasmania led to a large shipbuilding industry at the Port Arthur convict colony. The tree is very slow growing, and this one is only 1m high after 20 years. In the wild a tree may still be only 1m high after 50 years and will live for 1000-2000 years.

Another feature is the Tasmanian plant collection, which includes their celery-top pine, *Phyllocladus aspleniifolius*, (very similar in appearance to New Zealand's mountain celery pine, *P. alpinus*) which has wonderful timber, *Richea dracophylla*, similar in

appearance and belonging to the same family as the New Zealand genus *Dracophyllum*, and the pencil pine, *Athrotaxis cupressoides* which is closely related to the swamp cypress, coast redwood and giant sequoia trees of the Taxodiaceae family.



*Jenny Hickman at the Friends' cottage, Royal Tasmanian Botanical Gardens. The sculpture was modelled from a photo of a gardener working in the Gardens in the late 1800s. It was donated to the Gardens by its creator Bernie Tarr. The figure and his coat is carved from King Billy pine, *Athrotaxis selaginoides* (Taxodiaceae) and his bucket is made from an old blue gum that once stood in the Gardens.*

One of the historic structures of the Gardens is Arthur Wall, named after Governor George Arthur, who arrived in Tasmania in 1824, and became the first superintendent of the Gardens. The wall was a heated wall, hollow, with fireplaces along its length, against which



The Arthur Wall

to grow exotic fruit and flowers. The early settlers thought that, as in England, a heated wall would be needed, however it soon became apparent that it was unnecessary in Hobart's climate. One side of the wall is brick, and the other is local sandstone.

An interesting feature is the Subantarctic House containing plants from Macquarie Island. The plants are displayed in front of a painted diorama of the island. The conditions inside the house are cold (9° C), wet and windy, with the sound of elephant seals and birds.

Two of the most delightful features seen were the Friends' Border, a wide perennial border created three years ago to replace the Rose Garden which was not performing well, and the Conservatory, a beautiful building built of the local sandstone in 1939, with alcoves, behind sandstone arches, containing colourful plant displays. It was also a welcome refuge from the heat of the afternoon.

The second part of the afternoon consisted of a trip to the top of Mt Wellington, which rises above Hobart to a height of 1270m. The 22 km road from the centre of the city winds up through thick temperate *Eucalyptus* forest consisting of *Eucalyptus obliqua* (stringybark, but called messmate in mainland Australia), *E. viminalis*

subsp. *viminalis* (white gum, called ribbon gum in mainland Australia), and *E. pulchella* (white peppermint) at the lower altitudes, up through *E. regnans* (giant ash or swamp gum, called mountain ash on the mainland) and *E. delegatensis* (gum-topped stringybark) to *E. johnsonii* (yellow gum) with its beautiful yellow, green and red bark, to *E. coccifera* (snow gum) at the higher altitudes, and to the rocky landscape at the summit with low-growing alpine vegetation. The view from the top was quite stunning.

This conference was very well organised, and our hosts succeeded wonderfully in showcasing not only their Botanical Gardens, but also Hobart and beyond. The opportunity to spend four and a half days with so many like-minded people, with guiding experience and an amazing knowledge of plants, has been a valuable and rewarding experience.

I wish to thank the Friends of the Wellington Botanic Garden for funding my conference fees. I am most grateful for the opportunity to attend this conference.

We'll feature more highlights from this conference in future newsletters. Ed.

Fence us in

Philip Tomlinson peered over the fence and found an even older one.

In 1869, after the passing of the Crown Grant for the operation of the Garden, the first and immediate need was the construction of paths and a boundary fence. Early settlers were using the reserve to graze stock and removing timber and firewood from it. The construction of a suitable fence to restrict these activities was planned.

The contract for fencing along Upland Road and the Wesleyan Reserve was given to Reed and Morris, the materials being supplied by Robinson of the Hutt. Some fencing existed along the road, and only needed repair. Some 46 acres was enclosed on the Wesleyan reserve by a substantial railed fence at a cost of 120 pounds (\$240), some \$15,000 in today's money. On checking the work, it was found that around 39 chains of fence had been constructed, using 297 black birch posts and 1184 rails of heart timber. By the end of 1876, 270 pounds had been spent

on fencing, partly replacing an early gorse hedge along part of the boundary. This equates to over \$35,000 in current dollars.

Of this early fencing only a small section remains, as shown in the photograph. A close up image of a small section shows the method of construction of a three-rail section. The remaining portion is not in good condition, but does provide a very important link with the past. Some effort has been made to preserve the remnant, and despite over 140 years of Wellington's weather, this historic relic of the past deserves conservation.

A good view of the remaining fence can be clearly seen from the Cable Car lookout.

Information from *The Botanic Garden Wellington A NZ History 1840 - 1987*, by Winsome Shepherd and Walter Cook



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Coming Events

Glow in the dark Glow-worm tours ***Fridays 10 September, 1 and 8 October at 8.30pm***

Meet at the main gates (Founders' entrance) on Glenmore Street for a one-hour journey into the world of this fascinating creature. Bring a torch.

Adults \$5, children under 12 free.

18 September – 3 October

Spring Festival - Botanic Garden and Otari

Includes Otari open day and plant sale Saturday 18 Sept; Grow Your Own veges workshop Sunday 19 Sept, **Tulip Sunday 26 Sept**, tree climbing regional champs Saturday 2 Oct, Orchid Show 2-3 Oct, concerts 2 and 3 Oct plus weekday lunchtime events in Lambton Quay (Kirks if wet) and special Spring festival guided walks. The Festival brochure is available through www.friendswbg.org.nz and www.Wellington.govt.nz or pick up one from the Treehouse or a library.

Monday 20 September, 10.30am **Spring is Sprung**

Check out the thousands of tulips and other spring flowers with guides and a Garden curator. Meet at the Founders' Entrance, Glenmore St. for this moderate 90-minute walk. Cost: \$3

Wednesday 22 Sept 10.30am **Plant Hunters**

A walk looking at man's search for new, interesting and useful plants, and the stories of the men who devoted their lives to this search, braving an often hostile world. Meet on the Treehouse verandah for this easy 60-75 minute walk. Cost: \$3

Friday 24 September, 10.30am **Let's Go Downtown**

Meet at the Cable Car entrance to start this easy stroll along the downhill walk to the city and hear about some of our special plants and their stories on the way. 90 minutes. Cost: \$3

SATURDAY 25 SEPTEMBER, 12 MIDDAY **AGM, WITH GUEST SPEAKER PETER** **TIJSEN, FOLLOWED BY THE OFFICAL**

REOPENING OF THE BOTANIC GARDEN NURSERY

Monday 27 September, 10.30am

Let your senses do the walking - guided walk for kids

Experience a world of smell, touch and sound as you move around the Garden, giving you another 'view' of nature. Meet on the Treehouse verandah for this easy 60-75 minute walk. Cost \$3

Tuesday 28 September, 10.30am-noon **Papyrus, Parchment, Paper and Paper-making – guided walk for kids**

Hear about the emperor's toilet paper, the origin of paper money and more. Meet at the duck pond for this easy guided walk which is followed by a paper-making demonstration. Children must be accompanied by an adult and the walk ends in the Begonia House. Cost:\$3.

Sunday October 17, 11am **Papyrus, Parchment and Paper**

Find out fascinating facts about the evolution of paper. Hear about the emperor's toilet paper, the origin of paper money and more. Meet at the Duck Pond for this easy, 60-minute walk. Cost: \$3.

Monday October 25, 10.30am **Early Flowering Heritage Roses**

Discover the early flowering heritage roses in Bolton Street Memorial Park. Meet at the Seddon Memorial entrance to the park for this easy 60-minute walk. Cost: \$3.

Friday 19 - Sunday 21 November **Botanic Garden Rose Festival**

Lots of rosy happenings, including a special Friends event, and featuring the Wellington Rose Society's annual show and a guided walk on Sunday 21st:

The Lady Norwood Rose Garden

An easy, one-hour walk starting at 11am. Meet at the rose garden fountain. Cost: \$3.

Monday November 29, 10.30am.

The Story of Heritage Roses

Meet at the Seddon Memorial entrance to Bolton Street Memorial Park for this easy 60-minute walk. Cost: \$3.

