

## Newsletter

August 2008

### ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Saturday 23 August 2008

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Time: 4.30 pm  
Place: The Treehouse  
in the Botanic Garden

Guest Speaker:  
Ian McKinnon  
Deputy Mayor  
of Wellington

### Spring Festival Event

Saturday 11 October  
9.30 am  
The Treehouse

Refreshments  
to follow

Fascinating talks,  
discussion and light  
refreshments as the  
Friends join the Botanic  
Garden in celebrating  
spring

## President's Patch

Dear Members

With this Newsletter, or separately if you are accessing it through the website, you will receive the papers for the Annual General Meeting of the Friends. It will be held on Saturday 23 August at 4.30pm in the Treehouse. We hope this day and time will encourage more members to attend.

The AGM of a Society such as ours should be the most important event of the year for members - as we chart the course for the future focus and activities and elect the committee to carry out those tasks. We will have as Guest Speaker this year the Deputy Mayor of Wellington, Ian McKinnon, providing the opportunity for members to hear his views on issues affecting the Botanic Garden.

The myriad of decisions made each year by the City Council inevitably include many that have direct or indirect implications for our Garden. Your Committee endeavours to keep abreast of such issues and present our views. This year, for example, we have made representations to the WCC concerning the Biodiversity Action Plan; access by cyclists to walking tracks; and the deferment of funding for the redevelopment of the Nursery. A note on this latter issue is included in this Newsletter.

To be able to adequately represent the views of the Friends we need to know that we have the full backing of members. This can be no better demonstrated than by having a strong turnout at the AGM and to welcome the Deputy Mayor.

*Ted Woodfield*

## Botanic Bulletin

For those of us who are desk bound, and I'm sure its not peculiar to Council, the last couple of months have been dedicated to rounding off year end projects and the flurry of year end reporting. It is with some relief that I am occasionally able to retreat into the Garden or Otari!

Good news recently with curator Jasmine Zimmerman winning the Amenity Sector finals of the Young Horticulturalist of the Year. Jasmine will now go on to represent the Amenity Horticulture sector at the National finals held in Auckland in November. Jasmine is the second person from the Botanic Gardens cluster to make the final in the four years the competition has been in existence. We are proud of that record and of course extremely proud of Jasmine and her achievement.

More good news with the return of 75 grafted pines to the garden. We will be planting some of these directly at cleared sites on the west face of Druid Hill and the remainder we will be bagging

up to grow on before replanting. This has been long awaited and it's great to finally see some progress on this front. We are working through a tree planning and management document, so the arrival of these will be factored into the document.

The jointly Friends/WCC commissioned Blaschke report on the ecology of the forest has also arrived. I now think that we have the tools to move forward with some confidence in managing our remnant and emergent forest areas.

At this stage it appears that there hasn't been any funding reinstated for our Capital Development programme, so next year's works will focus on routine repairs and starting to do some early planning for upgrades to the Treehouse and development of new Treehouse interpretation. The Resource Consent Application has been lodged for the nursery and we await its outcome with interest! My thanks to the Friends for your advocacy on our behalf during the annual plan process.



In June we installed new permanent visitor counters in the garden. This will give us a more accurate picture of our visitors from season to season and year to year. It will also allow us to more effectively target our resources. In September we begin qualitative surveying at both the Botanic Garden and Otari–Wilton’s Bush. This is part of a survey programme across gardens in New Zealand and Australia and will tell us just how well we compare with other gardens.

Spring Festival is rapidly approaching as you read this newsletter. From 28 September to 12 October the programme has been set and it looks on track to be as popular as ever. There is always an underlying air of anticipation as we move from

winter to spring and the emergence in particular of the tulips. Charmaine has worked hard to take on her new role and get to this stage with the festival.

Rose pruning day was again a success this year. Along with members of the Wellington Rose Society and the Heritage Rose Society the team spoke to over 80 people between the two sessions on what was a fairly unpleasant day.

Looking forward to catching up with you at Spring Festival and the Friends event.

*David Sole*

## **Nursery Redevelopment Funding Deferred**

In the August 2007 Newsletter background was provided on the plans for substantial redevelopment of the Nursery in the Garden. The case had been accepted in the WCC 2006 Long-Term Community Plan. Funding was allocated for work to begin in 2007 and be completed in 2008.

It became evident last year that the work involved in designing the new facilities, and in preparing and securing the necessary resource consent, meant that construction would be delayed. The Friends, who had strongly supported the project, agreed that the capital expenditure allocation be deferred for one year. We were consulted on the draft resource consent application, and expected this to proceed in time for work to get under way this year. Your committee was greatly concerned to learn in May that it was proposed to defer the 2008-09 financial allocation of \$1 million for the Nursery “to allow the heritage status of the buildings to be confirmed and for our designs to reflect that”.

In our consideration of the consultation documents on the resource consent application a year ago we gave close attention to heritage issues relating to the present buildings and the site. We endorsed the intended retention of the c1914 Potting Shed - the oldest and most

distinctive building on the site. Given the proximity of the site to the earliest European era cottages in the Garden, we proposed suitable precautions be taken during site works with respect to possible archeological materials. To the best of our knowledge no other significant issues were raised by any of the other external interested parties consulted on the proposal. We expected the resource consent application to be lodged forthwith.

It emerged subsequently that a lengthy delay in lodging the application was due to WCC internal procedures. The urban planning section apparently raised concerns about the possible heritage status of one of the greenhouses proposed for replacement. At no stage during this period were the Friends provided with any details of the concerns raised or given any opportunity to consider whether they were justified and reasonable.

In written and oral submissions to WCC on the financial allocations in the Annual Plan for 2008-09, we expressed serious concern both at the deferment of the project for another year and at the process that had led to this decision. We said that the absence of public disclosure of the

reasons for the delay fell well short of the standards for public policy decision making set by WCC in past statements. We urged that the deferred allocation be reinstated and that officials be instructed to accelerate the resource consent process with a view to settling as a matter of urgency any outstanding issues.

Following our appearance before the WCC Committee considering the Annual Plan, Councillor Celia Wade-Brown, Environment Portfolio Leader, invited us to meet with her on the issues we had raised. She told us that with the resource consent still to be heard the Committee considered that the prospect was slim for work getting under way during the 2008-09 financial year. Accordingly, the deferment would stand. However, in the light of our discussion she expressed to the attending WCC official her view

that the resource consent application should now be lodged, and that the Friends should be provided with all the relevant information. It appeared that the lack of consultation with us was a consequence of internal WCC procedures relating to regulatory as compared to operational responsibilities. This explanation raised more questions than it answered.

I will report further on this issue at the AGM. Assuming the resource consent is granted, it might be possible to make a case to WCC for consideration of funding being made available in the second half of the financial year to enable the site and construction work for this project to get under way at last.

*Ted Woodfield*

## Orchid Magic



*Photo Phil Tomlinson*

The Friends has been the lucky recipient of a fine orchid collection. 16 *Cymbidium* orchids will be offered for sale to Friends and family of Friends.

**Sunday 14 September** 10am to 12 midday on the Treehouse deck, rain or shine.

These beauties are definitely priced to sell and we predict will be gone in a flash. Most should be in flower so if you're quick you'll be able to choose the colour you like best.

## Profile of a Gardener – Jasmine Zimmerman



Photo Craig Simcox, Dominion Post

The Amenity Sector winner of the Young Horticulturalist of the Year contest is the Wellington Botanic Garden's very own Jasmine – better known as Jazz. She recently earned her place in the finals by beating some very stiff opposition at the Amenity Sector “playoff” in Blenheim and it was no stroll in the park either. She had to answer lots of tough questions on the application form, come up with a marketing plan for an “event” of her choosing, get through six half-hour practical tests (explain and demonstrate chainsaw use, identify pests and diseases, identify plants – and spell their names correctly – to name but a few tasks), undergo a searching interview and prepare and give an after-dinner speech (‘What do *real* men do in garden sheds?’).

Nerve-wracking as it all was, there was a lighter side to some of the tests; the contestants had to back a tractor and trailer round a figure-8 course (Jazz was much relieved that she didn't run over any cones), cross a river on a slippery pole while carrying items such as a broom, sledgehammer, bucket, hose, reassemble a pair of secateurs and wine/beer-taste to name varieties.

Jazz started on this path as a very young girl, following her mother round in their large Taranaki garden. She says she was always allowed to help – even encouraged, as she had to earn her pocket-money – and even then really enjoyed being outdoors. She says she didn't even realise

how much she had learnt or how much she liked gardening till she left home.

Jazz says that Taranaki is a cool place to grow up, but, at 17, it's, “I gotta get out of here.” So she did, and once in Wellington worked in “the usual” jobs – waitressing, cleaning – while she tried to figure out what she wanted to study. She did some tidying up in her cleaning client's garden and walked though the Botanic Garden to get there. It wasn't long before the penny dropped and, as she says, “I realised that's where I wanted to be.” Serendipity helped because she rang up the NZHITO to ask about a Botanic Garden apprenticeship just as Parks and Gardens started a new apprentice intake.

So here she is some years later, Collection Curator – Shrubs, and loving it as much as ever. She says the role means managing and maintaining the plants under her care – pruning, weeding, pest and disease control, keeping records, supervising and training staff and volunteers. After six months in this position she says she is still learning and leaning on the experts, but that's fine by her. She has a zest for knowledge and reckons on-the-job learning is the only way to go with plants.

Her favourite tree is rimu, *Dacrydium cupressinum*, “I like how it looks real mysterious”, one of her favourite shrubs is the hydrangea, which she thinks will become trendy soon (you heard it here first!) and she loves rhodos - “I love the mass of colour on the trees” and English lavender, *Lavandula angustifolia*. Then there are swan plants, which she likes because of their cute seed pods, because they are educational, “you can use them to demonstrate how they work and the tie-in with monarch butterflies and the bright orange aphids that feed on *Asclepias* plants too”, ferns...the list goes on. Like any true gardener, “I like lots of things,” she says.

When she's not in the Garden, she listens to music and sews. She loves to buy clothes from second-hand shops then alter them to make something unique, “I've got wardrobes full of clothes,” she says, slightly embarrassed. This has

been another life-long passion, though, as she recalls that in all her photos as a child, she is always dressed up, “sometimes in quite weird clothes.” She thinks it’s important to spend time relaxing - reading, listening to music and spending time with her partner Matt and their dog Dodge. And for the next few months Jazz will be studying

hard and practising, not to mention putting together a major ‘marketing campaign’, for the Young Horticulturalist of the Year finals in Auckland in November. The Friends wish her every success – it won’t hurt to keep our fingers crossed too.

## Cuttings

### *SPRING FESTIVAL WINDFALL*

The mail order nursery that sells the tulip varieties the Garden features in its mass plantings, New Zealand Bulbs, has made a very generous sponsorship offer. The Garden will have mail order forms available to the public during Spring Festival, so that you can order the very same varieties you see before you. They will, hopefully, also have a few hyacinth varieties listed, in honour of this year being the 60th anniversary of mass bulb displays in the Garden (in 1948 there were ten thousand hyacinths, and only about 2,000 tulips, planted).



New Zealand Bulbs will be donating 20% of the value of any consequent orders to the Friends. An unexpected and very welcome offer, which we hope will be a great complement to the Friends’ bulb sale which happens in the new year.

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### *From the “when I win Lotto “ room of dreams:*

Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg and philanthropist Shelby White have announced that Ms. White’s Leon Levy Foundation is awarding \$15 million to the New York Botanical Garden and \$10 million to Prospect Park, the largest private donation in City history for the “greening” of New York.

The \$15 million grant to the New York Botanical Garden will create a new Native Plant Garden for the study and display of indigenous species on 3.5 acres, adjacent to the native Forest and the Rock Garden. It will serve the growing interest in native flora inspired by concerns about invasive species and climate change and provide the

opportunity to educate visitors about the role that native plants and ecosystems play in supporting birds and other wildlife. Taking advantage of the site’s diverse growing conditions, which range from sunny, wet meadow to dry, deep shade, the Native Plant Garden will display a variety of native plants in an integrated and holistic design.

The \$10 million grant to Prospect Park will help enable the Prospect Park Alliance to restore the Park’s historic Music Island, Lakeside Promenade and views from the Concert Grove Terrace to their original design as envisioned by Frederick Law Olmsted and Calvert Vaux.

## Profile of a Gardener's Assistant - Basil



A long-serving Botanic Garden “staff” member celebrates his first decade of service this year. Red-haired and handsome, Basil is arguably the most popular member of staff, most definitely with Garden visitors. Basil is his own man, though, and has, throughout his 11-year life, firmly resisted any attempts to “own” him.

In early 1998 Kelburn vet Vicki Melville found him as a six month old kitten, lost and lonely, on the street, where he had been following people and trying to get into cars. As she is wont to do with strays, she took him home to the clinic, advertising to try to find his people. After he had been neutered and vaccinated, her neighbours adopted the kitten and named him Basil, but he often wandered to Vicki’s flat, despite the fact that the resident Burmese loathed him. Back to the neighbours, the idea was he’d have the perfect home because they had a female kitten around the same age who absolutely adored Basil. But he wasn’t having any of that – and apparently, his girlfriend has never gotten over being jilted.

Basil set out for the life of a hobo, being returned from many parts of Wellington, including once from halfway to Makara. While some of the places he’s allegedly been found are mostly urban legend, Vicki confirms that it is true that Basil has been down and back up on the cable car.

He then started consistently visiting the Garden, and after Vicki had retrieved him several times, she realised he had finally decided on a home base. WWF staff, who have offices in the Treehouse, said, “We think he’s cute and we won’t mind feeding him,” and the deal was struck. Vicki and the Kelburn vet practice take care of him when he’s unwell (not often) and generously provide his food, but otherwise Basil remains a rugged individual. Sometimes he disappears for a few days, but usually can be found sitting on a bench cosying up to Garden visitors anywhere from the duckpond to the rose garden. He is a most convivial chap and usually attends Friends meetings. Now it’s winter and rather chilly he sometimes seems to be missing, but is actually in one of the offices in the cottage behind the Treehouse, hogging the heater and keeping us amused listening to him grumbling in his sleep.

We often have to step over him while he’s stretched out in a patch of doorway sun and he has absolute faith that we will step over not on him – doesn’t budge an inch. It’s very clear who rules the roost.

There is, however, one thing Basil fears and that is the vacuum cleaner. He never used to mind it but one day, while hiding behind the drapes in the seminar room, in the hope that he would be overlooked at the end of the day, his tail got sucked up by the vacuum cleaner. The cleaning man was mortified but quite frankly, Basil had only himself to blame. He doesn’t hang around when the vac starts up these days.

People often worry that he hasn’t got a home and would like to take him home, but clearly, as Vicki says, “Basil doesn’t want to be adopted.” In fact, he’s doing the Botanic Garden a favour, because a resident cat is not only a good way of keeping rodent numbers down, thus protecting birds’ eggs and young, but also discourages wild cats from moving in on the territory.

## Man in the trees – Yew, *Taxus baccata*

*Phil Tomlinson takes a look at the 'atomic weapon' of the 13th century*



There are some six or seven species in the Yew genus scattered over the Northern Hemisphere throughout Britain and Ireland. Native to most of Europe, Asia Minor and North Africa, and considered by some to be just geographical variants of the common yew. A very long-lived tree, one report suggests that a tree in Perthshire UK is 1,500 years old, making it the oldest plant in Britain. Another report says trees can be up to 4,000 years old. It is slow growing and usually takes about 20 years to reach a height of 4.5 metres. There are two good specimens in the Main Garden. One of the important uses of the yew was for the manufacture of the English longbow, a weapon utilising the particular and unique characteristics of its timber.

### The longbow

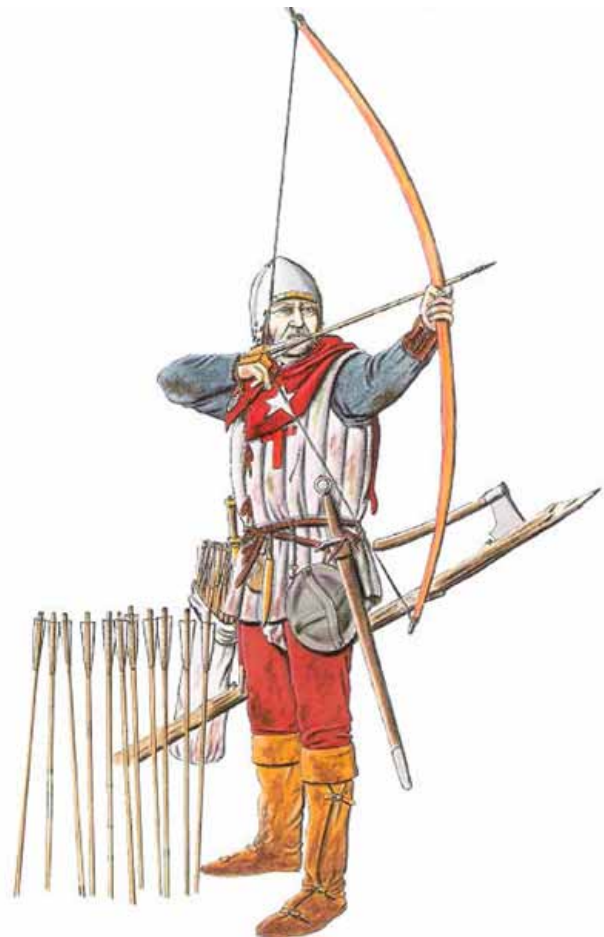
From the thirteenth until the sixteenth century, the national weapon of the English army was the longbow. It was this weapon that conquered Wales and Scotland, gave the English their victories in the Hundred Years War, and permitted England to replace France as the foremost military power in Medieval Europe. The longbow was accurate, deadly, possessed of a long-range and rapid rate of fire. Cheap and simple enough for the yeoman to own and master, it made him superior to a knight on the field of battle.

There are many statistics available on the longbow, but few agree. The term longbow implies a weapon of greater length than the 4 foot bow used on the continent. The bow was made of yew, was around six feet long, firing a three foot arrow.

A bow could project a war arrow for an effective range of around 200 yards. The longbow, because of its rapidity of fire, was a medieval machine gun. It has been calculated that a Bowman of the Hundred Years War period, when

military archery was at its zenith, could shoot 10 to 12 arrows a minute. After firearms were introduced into continental warfare archers are able to discharge four or five arrows apiece before the harquebusiers were ready to discharge one bullet.

An arrow can pierce 9 cm of oak at close range, and 2.5 cm at 200 yards. No armour plate was proof against an arrow at less than 200 yards, and even plate could be penetrated at less than 100 yards.



The making of longbows changed little from the Medieval period until the turn of the twentieth century. They still were wooden self bows utilising the centre and sapwood of the stave. The best bows continued to be made of yew wood, and as all bows were made by hand, each was unique. The best yew came from Spain and Italy.

Staves were cut only in winter, when the sap was down. The yew wood trade was tied to the wine trade. To ensure an adequate supply of bows, at one time all wine imports (from Southern France) had to have longbow staves in the cargo as well.



Why was yew such a superior wood for bow making? The natural properties of yew are much like a modern thermostat, by skilfully cutting and shaping the stave in a 'D'-section, a layer of sapwood was left along the flattened back of the

bow. When a bow is drawn, the inside face of the arc undergoes compression while the outer surface is stretched. The heartwood of yew has its greatest strength in compression and its sapwood, by contrast, has its greatest strength in tension, being elastic by nature, and both tend to return to their original straightness when the bow is loosed. Utilising the characteristics of the different parts of the wood, a formidable and powerful weapon was created.

Bows were not made all at once. Cut down in winter, they were roughed out and left to cure for a year or two. After the bow was "seasoned", it was worked in slow stages into the finished product. Often these steps occurred once a year for three or four years, although the actual time spent on an individual bow was not long, and many could be made in a short time with materials available if necessary.

The Medieval arrow, like its present day descendant, consisted of three parts: the stele (shaft), the arrow head, and the fletching (feathers). The most commonly used feathers were from the grey goose.

The Medieval English longbow was a superb weapon. Incredibly powerful, rapid, and deadly, it was a socially levelling force. With it the yeoman archer superior to the knight, the Kingdom of England was the master of Western Europe.

## *Coming Events*

### **Friday 1 August 7.30pm**

*Glow-worm walk.* Join us on a gentle one hour walk to see the glow-worms in the Wellington Botanic Garden. Wear suitable footwear and bring a torch. Meet at the Founders' Gate; Adults \$5, primary school children free.

### **Sunday 17 August 11am**

*Ships and Trees* A fascinating story of man travelling across water, and some of the trees that made this possible. Meet at the Duck Pond for this easy 90-minute walk.

### **Saturday 23 August 4.30 pm**

***Friends of Wellington Botanic Garden AGM – at the Treehouse. Following the AGM the Guest Speaker will be Ian McKinnon, Deputy Mayor of Wellington.***

### **Monday 25 August 10am**

*Bunya, Birch, Beverages and Bark* For ten intriguing tree tales meet at the Cable Car entrance. Moderate to energetic 90 minute walk.

**Friday 5 September 7.30pm**

*Glow worm walk* – details as for Aug. 1

**Sunday 21 September 2pm**

*Plants of Asia* Take a walk through the Botanic Garden and discover some of the plants from Asia and how their history and cultivation affect our lives today. Meet at the Founders' Entrance, Glenmore Street for this moderate 60-90 minute walk.

**Sunday 28 Sept 11.30am–3pm**

*Tulip Sunday* - Annual celebration featuring 25,000 tulips in bloom, entertainment, food and Dutch culture.

**Sunday 28 September – 12 October**

*Spring Festival* Launched with Tulip Sunday, a full-on fortnight of events in the Garden for young and old, including guided walks, a panel of experts answering your questions, a business house challenge, vouchers for free rides up the cable car and much more. Look out for the full programme of events, to be published early September.

**Fridays 3 and 10 October 8.00pm**

*Glow-worm walk*. Join us on a gentle one hour walk to see the glow-worms in the Wellington Botanic Garden. Wear suitable footwear and bring a torch. Meet at the Founders' Gate. Adults \$5, primary school children free.

**Saturday 11 October 9.30 am**

***Friends Spring Festival Event at the Treehouse in the Botanic Garden, speakers to be confirmed. Light refreshments will follow the talks and discussion.***

**Sunday 19 October 11am**

*Early Flowering Heritage Roses* Discover the early flowering heritage roses in Bolton Street Memorial Park. Meet at the Seddon Memorial for this easy one-hour walk.

**Monday 20 October 10am**

*From North to South* A look at bog plants, maples and rhododendrons from the Northern Hemisphere and strange trees from the Araucaria family of the Southern Hemisphere. Meet at the Founders' Entrance, Glenmore Street for this moderate 60-90 minute walk.

**Sunday 16 November 11am**

*The Lady Norwood Rose Garden* One of the gems of the city and of the Botanic Garden. Here is an opportunity to wander among over 110 different beds with over 3,000 plants. Discover which varieties can be most successfully grown in Wellington. Meet at the Rose Garden fountain for this easy one-hour walk.

**Sunday 23 November 11am**

*Historical Heritage Roses* This is an historical walk looking at the history of the heritage roses. Meet at the entrance to Bolton Street Memorial Park, by the Seddon Memorial for this easy one-hour walk.

**Monday 24 November 10am**

*The Botanic Garden and Water* A moderate 90-minute walk to look at some of the water features in the Botanic Garden. Meet at the Cable Car Entrance.

**Friends of Wellington's Botanic Gardens, P.O. Box 28-065, Kelburn, Wellington**

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