

Friends of the Royal Botanic Gardens Melbourne

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FROM THE DIRECTOR . . .

As I write, the Gardens are in the middle of the "Save the Lake Trust Appeal" which is sponsored by the Sun-Herald newspaper in conjunction with the Government of Victoria. The Premier, Mr. Cain, launched the Appeal with a cheque for \$50,000; Sir Keith Macpherson, Chairman of the Herald and Weekly Times, presented a cheque for \$20,000 and the Minister of Lands, Mr. Rod Mackenzie, has given full Departmental support for the Appeal.

The Gardens must always be grateful for the response, at short notice, of the Friends' Committee. Stewart Turnbull assisted Mr. Mattingley from the Sun with financial advice. Golda Isaac, Jill Jones and Sue Higgs have worked ceaselessly to find members able to assist with manning the photographic display of the Lake's history, produced by Eve Almond for the Appeal at the Kiosk.

The object of the Appeal Trust is very simply to raise money to remove 45,000 cubic metres of silt from the Lake. This will restore the beauty of the Lake, provide a safe haven and oasis for birdlife and provide the Gardens with a reservoir of clean fresh water that will last for 10 weeks watering in any drought year.



The ravages and recovery of the 1967 and 1972/73 droughts are still obvious and the threat of another drought in 1982/83 makes it imperative that every effort be given to save the largest collection of cultivated plants in any Australian garden.

Saving the Lake is the safest way to ensure the continued existence of these horticultural collections for our benefit and enjoyment and for future generations.

David Churchill
Director and Government Botanist



FROM THE CONVENOR . . .

Our visit to Cranbourne was an outstanding success. A beautiful mid-winter day set the mood, and the well prepared tour by staff members made it a very enjoyable and informative occasion; ask anyone who was there! To Dr. Churchill and his staff our sincere thanks for their willing involvement. To those who unfortunately missed out, we are hoping to repeat it again next year, with perhaps a different tour.

As at the time of writing I am leaving for overseas, I am more than happy to introduce two very capable and experienced volunteers who will prepare this newsletter. Joan Nesbitt and Diana McClellan supported by Eve Almond have my heartfelt thanks. You have, I am sure, often appreciated the quality of the art work on many Botanic Gardens publications and we too are enjoying the benefits of the skill and artistry of Anita Podwyszynski, the botanical artist on the Herbarium staff. We promise you will see more of her delightful work.

Please come along on October 24
and make the "Family Day" a real
"Friends Family" day.

Beth Higgs
Convenor

P.S. Don't forget to "Save the
Lake" for when I return!



Mrs. Anita McKittrick and
L.V. Chidzey were successful in the
raffle drawn at the Cranbourne
Open Day.



Near the Plant Craft Cottage....

MAWALLOK

On Tuesday, November 16, the Friends will be visiting the historic property of "Mawallok" at Beaufort. If you would like to join us, page 7 gives the details. November is thought to be the best time of the year to see "Mawallok", one of Victoria's great private gardens. It was designed by William Guilfoyle and is considered by the Garden State Committee and the National Trust of Australia (Victoria) to be of national significance.

Mawallok's history can be traced back to 1847 when three of the Russell brothers, William, Alexander and George, formed a partnership with a Dr. Lillie and bought the run from Thomas Steele. Alexander, who became the manager, built his first hut alongside an abundant spring "Ma-wallok", so named by the aboriginals of the Warrapinjoe tribe, after the call of the bullfrog.

In 1850 Alexander built a small bluestone house on a rise overlooking the spring, which he extended in 1866 when he married. He dammed the creek from the spring to provide water, and in 1870 founded the merino stud which was to prove very successful for generations of the Russell family.



Alexander's son Philip commissioned John Monash in 1908 to build a new dam wall to extend the lake to its present 25 acres. In so doing, the original hut was flooded and it is said that the stones of its chimney may still be seen under the clear water. The existing 50 room mansion, built of reinforced concrete, was completed in 1910 on the highest point overlooking the lake. Perhaps of more significance to us as garden lovers is the year 1909, for it was in that year that William Guilfoyle designed the garden. As it was to be built on stony rises in volcanic country, Philip Russell ordered 3000 drayloads of red earth to be carted in to improve the soil, and his wife, a garden lover "threw oats round the garden just to make it look covered".

The Mawallok garden remains substantially true to Guilfoyle's original design although it has undergone a continual change and natural maturing. Hilda Marriott gives a detailed description of the garden in 1975. She states that the "centre vista" of the original garden plan remains, which is a view directly north over the lawns to the lake, backed by old pines and poplars, and beyond to the Mt. Cole range on the horizon. However, the other designed vistas providing views to east and west into the paddocks have been blocked out by the growth of trees.

Then again Peter Watts claims that in about 1935 a ha-ha wall was constructed and the "centre vista" opened up to give a view of the mountains. Guilfoyle designed a rather enclosed garden, as was his style, protecting an English oasis from the grey Australian landscape. Watts is probably correct in believing that the "centre vista" was not originally

intended to open to the mountains and that this today can be seen as an aberration of Guilfoyle's vision.

In the newly laid Mawallok garden all the "vistas", whether centre, east or west, would have allowed their admirer to look beyond its boundaries. However, one would suspect that the full splendour of the Guilfoylan vision of this garden could only be experienced and appreciated with the maturity of the original trees and plants chosen for their desired effect.



Common Hawthorn

Since the original construction of the Mawallok garden, the serpentine paths have been straightened and the palm trees, which once dotted the central lawn, have been removed. The stairs from the terrace to the main lawn have been changed and golf course has been constructed adjacent to the garden.

As Marriott provides a detailed picturesque description of the Mawallok garden, the beauty and grandeur of which no doubt moved her on her visit, I have included this for you to enjoy and visualize.

The property is bounded along the road by well kept dry rock walls. Through iron gates the drive curves to the hedged courtyard and entrance on the south of the house. On the north front of the house is a wide terrace of lawn, with stone walls and central steps with a half-way landing. Rose-beds, gay with annuals in season, flank the terrace walks and a gravel path leads off to east and west. Here the magnificent "centre vista" spreads out; gently rolling green lawns sloping to the lake, surrounded by beds of mature trees and shrubs of varying heights, colours and textures. There are many oaks and conifers, bay trees, birches, pittosporum, spindleberry, hawthorns, crab-apples, laurels, strawberry trees, privets, abelias - to name a few.



Rose



Strawberry Tree

On the east of the terrace, steps lead down to a gravel path past a bay surrounded by a cypress hedge for a lawn tennis court. On the other side a slope is furnished with rock walls, a pool and a rock garden behind. The east path is ended by a bird-bath statue in a semi-circle of pencil cypress, then turns at right angles and runs through a hedged garden of trees, shrubs, and perennials to an iron gate with a glimpse of the golf course and lake beyond. From this

gate the 9-hole golf course begins and the garden proper ends, cleverly walled to the lawn level only to appear a continuous slope to the lake.

On the west side of the lawn the path returns through shrubs, trees, and perennials, to a scarlet vine clad pergola of stone, covering the path back to the terrace.

The garden covers about 7 acres, and including the golf course, about 12 acres. The background is thickly planted with old pines, cypress and gums, and the lake surrounded by clumps of paperbarks, weeping willows, and poplars. All the water used to keep it green and flourishing is pumped from the sweet water of the spring.



Silver Birch

The present owners of Mawallok are Mr. and Mrs. David Johnstone. They ended the 133 year reign over the property by the Russell family in June 1980.

MARRIOTT, Hilda. 'Mawallok'. 1975 [Type-script]

SULLIVAN, Jane. 'A dynasty moves out of Mawallok'. *The Age* 26th April, 1980. p.17

WATT, Peter. *Historic Gardens study*. 1980. [2 vol. typed manuscript]
This study was supported by the Garden State Committee of Victoria and the National Trust of Australia (Vic.).

I should like to thank the National Trust of Australia (Victoria) for access to their files, and for assistance in making information available.

Dianna McClellan

LATE SPRING IN THE BOTANIC GARDENS . . .

The rhododendrons, azaleas and camellias continue to enchant visitors in spring and early summer. They are particularly spectacular at A gate and the eastern slope of the Oak Lawn.

The western part of that Lawn has been ploughed up and top soil and fertilizers applied. The area has been a problem for the last 20 years because it had a thick crust which made lawn establishment and water penetration difficult.



Oak

Some of you may have discovered that the medicinal bed at the back of the nursery has been cleared. A Cercis siliquastrum, Judas Tree, with

beautiful vibrant pink flowers is all that remains. The bed is the site of the new sunken Herb Garden. It is hoped that work will start on the area in the not-too-distant future.



Spring and early summer are some of the best times for perfumes. Look out for the highly fragrant Pittosporum undulatum, Sweet Pittosporum, scattered throughout the Gardens. The Viburnum x burkwoodii also has heady perfume. There are several on the western side on the Tennyson Lawn, on the Eastern Lawn and the Princess Lawn. Its pinkish white flowers are clustered in heads.

Many of the old fashioned roses in the Rose Garden near C gate are also highly fragrant and well worth a visit towards the end of the year.

Attractive climbers with perfumes include the Clematis 'Lincoln Star' and the Lonicera hildebrandiana, Giant Burmese Honey-suckle, on the Kiosk pillars. Another spectacular climber is the Solandra maxima, Golden Chalice Vine, near the Fire-wheel tree, opposite the Princes Lawn. It is particularly useful as a cover plant for it can withstand light frosts, salt spray and wind.



GIFT OF OFFICE CABINET

A warm thank you to The Victorian Chamber of Manufactures for their very much appreciated gift of an office cabinet for our Birdwood Avenue H.Q. Essential for our smooth-running, this now houses equipment, stationery and so on, and is already proving invaluable.

Thanks are also due to Miles Schofield for his generous help and support in the production of the Friends badges which will be on sale at the Gum-nut Family Picnic.



GUIDED TOURS

You are reminded that trained Voluntary Guides are available to take either large or small groups on a tour of the Gardens. Should you wish to take part in a tour or to make a group booking please ring Connie Hoffman, 370 5713.



PUBLIC LECTURE

We are delighted that Mr. John Patrick will be our next guest speaker for our Sunday lecture series. His topic will be "The Development of the Eighteenth Century English Landscape." The venue is the National Herbarium Birdwood Avenue, South Yarra on Sunday 14th November, at 2.00 p.m. All most welcome.



VISIT TO MAWALLOK

We are planning to visit "Mawallok" on Tuesday 16th November and will be travelling by coach. We will leave the Herbarium at 9.30 a.m. and will be returning by 5.00 p.m. The cost will be \$12.00 and you will need to bring your own picnic lunch. Day parking at 90c is available in Birdwood Avenue between the Herbarium and Nareeb Gates, early in the morning. RSVP 6th November Jill Jones, 240 1583.



GUMNUT FAMILY PICNIC

We hope you will join us at the 'Gumnut' Family Picnic, to be held in the Botanic Gardens on Sunday,

24th October. Activities will include Nature Walks for children, Collage work, Mural Paintings, etc., with festivities centred on the Western Lawn adjacent to the

Herbarium and Gate F. Please bring your own picnic fare. The day is intended as a fun day, with interest and enjoyment for all, and a warm invitation is issued for you to join us on what we very much hope will be one of Spring's lovelier days.



We intend conducting a Membership Drive in the Gardens on the day of the picnic, and urgently need many more members to man specific points. Please contact Sue Higgs, 261 838, if you can assist or require further details of the day.



PLANT CRAFT COTTAGE NEWS

Oct. 12 - Open Day 10.00 a.m. - 3.00 p.m.

Nov. 18 - Annual General Meeting 10.30 a.m.

Nov. 27 - } Pine-needle hat workshop. please ring 63 3564 for further
Dec. 4 - } information.

Nov. 30 - Paper making workshop, please ring 878 6507 for further information.

KNOW YOUR GARDINERS . . .

It's hard to describe some one who's been around for so long that he seems part of the furniture. Some of you will probably already know of Alan Gardiner through the Saturday morning talk-back gardening panel on 3LO.

But now for the man behind the voice ...

Alan joined the Gardens' staff on 18.3.48 as a temporary gardener on the completion of a Commonwealth Rehabilitation Training Scheme at Burnley (he served with the RAAF during the War). He spent six years on section work before moving to the nursery as a propagator. His nickname at that time was "Blackie", because of his thick thatch of black hair. Alas, the name is no longer relevant.



Alan was appointed as Superintendent in 1969, a position he occupied until very recently. He's now the Garden's senior horticultural adviser and is responsible for the long term maintenance (as opposed to the day-to-day running) of the Gardens. He also advises other Government Departments on horticultural and gardening matters.

In other words, he's a walking encyclopaedia/trouble shooter/fix-it man and will be sorely missed when he finally retires.



'A GARDEN ALPHABET'

We have available a limited number of a remaindered publication for the Garden History Exhibition held at the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, several years ago. Titled *A Garden Alphabet* these are delightful ribbon-tied, boxed sets of garden illustrations, plates, water colours, engravings and line drawings, with an accompanying text on some aspect of gardening, e.g. F - Follies (fake castles etc. so beloved in earlier days), G - Grottos, and so on. Beautifully illustrated with gardening whimsicalities and curios, these sets are now out of print, and difficult to obtain. Our copies are priced at \$10 per set, and would make delightful Christmas presents. Contact Beth Higgs, 850 5908.



TRADING TABLE

Any donations of books and magazines for a trading table will be much appreciated. Please contact Jill Jones, 240 1583 if you have any suitable items.