



Spring 2007

BOTANIC NEWS

FRIENDS of the ROYAL BOTANIC
GARDENS MELBOURNE INC.

GROWING FRIENDS' PLANT SALE

13 and 14 October

HIGHGROVE LECTURES: David Howard

Head Gardener to HRH The Prince of Wales

12 and 13 November

FROM THE PRESIDENT

The cold winter months are now behind us and it's wonderful to see how well the Gardens have responded to some welcome falls of rain. A Gardens stroll is a very rewarding experience at the moment, with beautiful fresh spring growth giving pleasure on all sides. How lucky we are, as Friends, to be supporting this special place.

Members give their support to the Gardens via the Friends, in many different and greatly valued ways. In a voluntary capacity, they give generously of their time, energy and skills organising and administering, in conjunction with our staff, all the different facets of our organisation, thereby raising considerable amounts of money. We could not survive without this commitment and enthusiasm from so many hardworking people. Through their efforts, the Friends have been able to give grants totalling \$839,386.00 to fund a wide range of projects in the Gardens and Herbarium.

Members also give generous financial support by making tax-deductible donations to our Trust Fund, especially when renewing their membership. The Trust Fund was established in 1986 for the purposes of conserving, protecting and fostering the development of the Royal Botanic Gardens Melbourne. Small donations have been the life-blood of the Fund and have contributed over \$246,000 towards projects in the Gardens.

Occasionally the Friends are delighted to receive more substantial donations which permit funding for major

projects. For example, in 1999 a bequest of \$280,000 from the estate of Helen Johns provided funding for the construction of state-of-the-art propagating facilities in the RBG Nursery and to desilt the Central Lake. Most recently, the Friends have received advice of a further major bequest from the estate of Helen McLellan, a Member of some 20 years standing, which will allow the Friends' Trust Fund to endow the Scholarship Scheme for RBG staff as well as to fund other major projects into the future. Until such time as the transfer of this bequest is finalised I am unable to give you definite information about its value – I look forward to doing this in the Summer edition of *Botanic News* when it will also give me great pleasure to let you know more about our benefactress, Helen McLellan.

Applications for the Friends' Scholarship closed at the end of August and in due course the Selection Panel will recommend to Dr Philip Moors, Director and Chief Executive of the RBG, the name of the applicant to whom they believe the inaugural Scholarship should be awarded. Council Member Peter Kelly is representing the Friends on the Panel and the RBG is being represented by Prof. David Cantrill, Director, Plant Sciences and Biodiversity. The recipient of the Scholarship will be announced at the Friends' Annual General Meeting on 19 November.

Please don't forget that the Growing Friends' Spring Sale will be held on 13 and 14 October. This is a time when many superbly propagated,



Photo: Cathy Tricca

unusual and often hard-to-get plants are available for the discerning customer.

A great deal of interest is already being shown in the talks to be given in Melbourne on 12 and 13 November by David Howard, Head Gardener to His Royal Highness, Prince Charles, as part of a national tour. Mr Howard is one of the world's foremost experts on organic and sustainable horticulture and this rare opportunity to hear him speak should not be missed. See p.8 for further information.

Janet Thomson

New Members Welcome

Thursday 18 October at 10.00am
Mueller Hall, National Herbarium

Invitations will soon be sent to all recently-joined Friends to come to our next 'Getting-to-know-you' gathering. We look forward to meeting you and welcoming you to the Friends.

After morning tea we will present a short information slide show, a welcome by the Director of the Gardens and brief talks by our committee leaders. Following this, Voluntary Guides will take you on a tour of the Gardens.

All those who have joined the Friends since our last Welcome, and those who have already requested an invitation to a morning Welcome, will automatically receive an invitation.

If you have not been able to attend a previous New Members' Welcome and would like to come this time, please call our office (9650 6398) to ensure your name is on the list.

FROM THE GARDENS AND HERBARIUM

Contents

Feature	4
Events	6
Plant Craft Cottage	10
Illustrators	11
Gardens	12
Growing Friends	14
Memories	15

Front cover: As yet unidentified *Grevillea* photographed in the Sydney RBG.

Photo: Jennifer Marshall



Photo: Jennifer Marshall



Photo: Jeremy Prentice

Australian Garden

In the State Budget on 1 May, the Victorian Government confirmed capital funding of \$20.9 million for Stage 2 of the Australian Garden. This is an important step forward in the completion of the Australian Garden Project, though additional fundraising will be required to supplement the Government's funding. Design work is currently under way and construction will begin early in 2008, with Stage 2 of the Australian Garden landscapes due to open in 2011.

Stage 1 of the Australian Garden celebrated its first full year of operations with a 'birthday party' on 28 May. Donors and supporters attended a function in the Gallery at the Visitor Centre to mark the occasion. Mr Andrew Brookes, Executive Officer of The Colonial Foundation, which was a major donor to Stage 1, cut the cake and wished the RBG every success with Stage 2.

City of Casey Mayor, Colin Butler, hosted a reception in the Gallery on 3 June to celebrate the Garden's national award as the Best New Tourism Development for 2006. Casey Councillors, local Members of Parliament, and regional tourism operators attended the function. The Hon. Tim Holding, Minister for Tourism, also attended and publicly praised the significance of the Australian Garden as a major community and tourism asset.

The Australian Garden has also received additional national recognition recently, with the Rockpool Waterway

receiving one of two Commendations in the Precincts category of the national 2007 Public Domain Awards of Cement Concrete and Aggregates Australia.

As part of our continuing promotion of the site, the Australian Garden will be a major sponsor of the biennial Australian Landscape Conference to be held in Melbourne in September. The conference theme of *New Gardens for a Dry Continent* matches very well with messaging and visitor programs we provide at the Australian Garden. The pre-conference tour will include a guided tour of the Garden.

Water Conservation

The RBG has a long-standing commitment to water conservation and, in an effort to reduce water wastage, RBG staff have recently tested the irrigation system for water loss due to leaks, using equipment recently installed on the irrigation mains by South East Water. Extrapolated over a year, the leakage equated to less than 1 per cent of annual irrigation consumption. South East Water advises that this rate is well below industry standards. RBG Melbourne is clearly achieving a high performance, reflecting the expertise and dedicated attention to maintenance provided by RBG staff.

In a project funded by Melbourne Water, the Canna Bed at RBG Melbourne has been remodelled and developed as a demonstration 'rain garden' or bioretention basin,

following water-sensitive urban design principles. The redesigned Canna Bed now receives diverted stormwater from Birdwood Avenue, removes silt and particulates via sand-bed filtering, and returns cleaner water to the channel running through Fern Gully and into the Central and Ornamental Lakes. School children from the local area replanted the cannas as part of World Environment Day activities on 5 June.

Re-opening of the Tropical House

In June, the RBG unveiled the previously closed rear section of the Tropical House. Doubled in size, this building now has a pool, seating and an extended tropical plant collection. The display is home to some spectacular rainforest plants including the *Titan arum*, whose flowers have a rotten smell; carnivorous pitcher plants; and magnificent King Ferns. The renovations were funded by a generous grant from the Plant Craft Cottage and an individual donor. If you haven't already visited this amazing garden, I encourage you to warm up in the tropics over the winter months!

NAIDOC Celebrations

The RBG participated in the 50th National Aborigines' and Islanders' Day Observance Committee (NAIDOC) week celebrations. These honour the achievements, history and culture of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders. On 10 July the RBG held an afternoon of Indigenous

cultural activities for RBG visitors and staff. The activities included music and song, traditional dance, string-making, ochre-painting and sampling of some traditional bush tucker.

Research Grant for P S and B Staff

Staff in the Plant Sciences and Biodiversity Division have been highly successful with recent research grant applications. All four applications to the Australian Biological Resources Study (ABRS) were granted, and staff have become industry partners in two ARC Linkage grants. The Maud Gibson Trust is supporting the RBG's contribution for a major research project entitled: *Molecular phylogeny and biodiversity of the plant family Rutaceae: evidence for Australian-New Caledonian biogeography.*

Philip Moors



A Botanical Pioneer from the Melbourne Observatory

The recent acquisition of a copy of a birth certificate (see below) of a girl, Rose Ethel Janet White – our botanical pioneer, born on 11 March 1877 at the Observatory, South Yarra – and my interest in the Australian Prickly Pear episode, has sent me on a quest to find out more. As the present Observatory House was built in 1889 this girl could not have been born there. Her father was ‘Edward John White, Astronomer’.

Where did the Government Astronomer and his assistant live before the completion of the

present Observatory House?

Photographs of the Observatory pre-1889 do not show any buildings that might have been the astronomers’ residences. A clue came from the 1986 Heritage study of *The Former Melbourne Observatory* for the Board of Works by S Balderstone and H Eckersley who, when giving the *Domain Site Chronology*, report that in 1863 ‘Land was temporarily reserved as site for the residences of the Government Astronomer and his Assistant. This is away from the Observatory’. An 1865 *Plan of the Government House Reserve, Botanic Gardens and its Domain* clinched the issue. This plan, ‘drawn under the direction of Dr F Mueller by E G Heyne’ shows a Reserve Attached to the Observatory which is a block of land to the West of the Observatory on St Kilda Road on which are shown Quarters for the Government Astronomer and his Assistant.

The Heritage Study, referred to above, records: ‘1863. Money voted by Government for Astronomer’s and Assistant’s Quarters (selected site approved by Dr Mueller)’; and ‘1914.

Quarters pulled down and land resumed by Government’. So, from 1863 to 1914, there was this ‘Reserve attached to the Observatory’ abutting St Kilda Road where the two astronomers lived.

One assumes that Robert Ellery (1827-1908) the Government Astronomer (1853 to 1895), moved up to the new Astronomer’s Residence in 1889, and it seems that Edward White, his assistant, stayed in one of the two houses on St Kilda Road. The evidence for this is that when his daughter, now called Jean White, matriculated at Melbourne University in October 1894, she gave her residence as ‘Melbourne Observatory’.

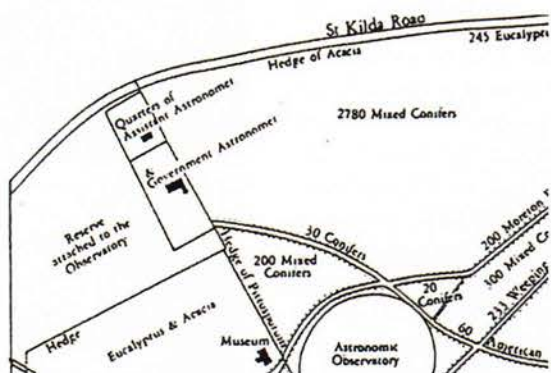
Edward White (1831-1913), after a stint on the goldfields, became Assistant at the Melbourne Observatory in 1860 with Robert Ellery as his boss. It is recorded that Edward White was Acting Gov’t Astronomer 1875-1876, presumably in the absence of Ellery. Jean White studied and did research (after 1906) as a student of Professor Alfred Ewart at Melbourne University from 1899 to 1909. She was obviously academically gifted; after her BSc in 1904 (see photo), she successively gained

11 th March 1877	Rose	Edward	27 th December 1862	Sarah
Observatory	Ethel	John	Landhurst	Susanna
South Yarra	Janet	White	Sarah Ann	Catharine
Albert Ward		Astronomer	Catharine	White
City Melbourne		45	Helena Ann	White
County Bourke	not present	Bristol	Marx	White
		England	Elizabeth	White
			Agnes	White
			Emily	White
			Constance	White
			Edmund	White
			Edmund	White
			Edmund	White



FEATURE

A corner of Mueller's 1865 Plan of the Domain showing the location of the Astronomers' Quarters and the 'Reserve Attached to the Observatory'.



the research degrees of MSc (1906) and DSc (1909) – there was no PhD degree then. She was the second woman to gain a DSc at Melbourne University.

Her botanical research covered a very wide range including: the algae, the formation of 'red wood in conifers' and apple bitter-pip and the *Ferments and Latent Life of Resting Seeds*, the last being the subject of her DSc thesis, the substance of which was published in the *Proceedings of the Royal Society of London*. Presumably to eke out a living as a research student she also taught biology at PLC from 1905 to 1911.

Then in 1912, what appears from this distance and for that time, a remarkable thing happened. Dr Jean White now aged 35, a scientist with a general botanical background, in a male-dominated world, was appointed by the newly established Queensland Board of Advice on Prickly Pear Destruction to be Officer-in-Charge of (an uncompleted) Research Station for the Control of the Prickly Pear (*Opuntia stricta linermis*) at Dulacca 420 km west of Brisbane. Jean lived in a tent

until the laboratory and living quarters were completed.

The background to this appointment was the very serious alarm at the spread of the prickly pear in northern NSW and SW Queensland. In 1913 it was estimated that the total area infested was over 6 million hectares, with 1.5M ha densely infected. By 1925 the total area infested was 24M ha (the area of Victoria is 23.7M ha) and spreading at about 1000 ha per day. The cost of clearing land was greater than its value. Jean White was confronted with a huge problem. The main thrust of the research at Dulacca, in the brief given to Jean White, was to investigate a method of chemical control of prickly pear. With incredible energy and persistence, she undertook over 2000 experiments and field trials and, in the four Annual Reports that she wrote, mainly describes experiments using the most effective poison found – namely a terrifying mixture of arsenic pentoxide and sulphuric acid administered by spraying and stabbing. Because of WWI shortages of labour and arsenic, the Dulacca station closed in 1916. In her last report, Jean,

tacitly admitting that poisoning was not the answer and in referring to her work with the cochineal beetle on another species of *Opuntia* (*O. monacantha*), wrote that: 'It is the possible discovery of some such parasite which urgently needs investigation now'. She also (in 1916) recommended Commonwealth participation in the control of prickly pear. Both of these suggestions were acted upon, culminating in the introduction of *Cactoblastis cactorum* from South America in 1925 and the astounding success of this pioneering use of biological control.

In 1915, in Melbourne, Jean White married William Haney, an American agricultural chemist, also reported to be part owner of one of the huge Kidman cattle stations and for a while lived (now as Dr Jean White-Haney) in western Queensland before returning to Brisbane, living there for ten years. She was a founding member, and President (1924-25) of the Brisbane Lyceum Club. She had two sons, born in 1916 and 1918.

Reading between the lines of her professional correspondence (Australian Archives), Jean White-Haney's marriage was not a happy one. In 1927 she and her sons moved from Brisbane, back to Melbourne to a job in CSIR (later CSIRO). Her husband returned to the USA at this time. After working for six months in a secretarial job, she was appointed field officer in remote NSW (near Glen Innes) living in a hut and working on the Noogoora Burr (*Xanthium*

occidentale) – a noxious weed. Her sons, aged 11 and 13, were left in Melbourne. In 1930 she resigned her job and went to California, where she joined her husband in the USA. In 1937, now 60 years old, she was back on a visit to Melbourne and wrote to the Secretary of the CSIRO inquiring about the prospect of a job. This was unsuccessful, although sympathy was expressed for her plight, and she returned to California where she died in 1953.

In an obituary Jean White-Haney was remembered for her 'genial personality and enthusiasm for everything she undertook...and her regret that the circumstances of her life prevented further active work...' – indeed, she was the 'unsung heroine' of the prickly pear story, born at the Melbourne Observatory site in 1877.

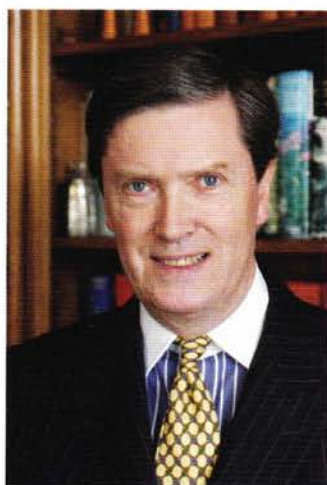
Tom Neales

Acknowledgements:

To The National Library of Australia, for permission to use the image of Dr Jean White. Ref. Flynn, John. Portrait of Dr Jean White. # nla.pic.an 24631259-v. To Helen Cohn and Jill Thurlow, RBG Library, for invaluable assistance in accessing documents

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Meet The Authors

CHARLES QUEST-RITSON(UK) AND RICK DARKE(USA).

In conjunction with the Australian Garden History Society
Wednesday 5 September
at 6.00 for 6.30pm
Mueller Hall, National Herbarium
Cost: \$30 Friends \$20
RSVP by Friday 31 August
on enclosed booking form.
Please join us for a glass of wine and savouries before the talk.

We invite you to meet two prominent international authors – Rick Darke (USA) and Charles Quest-Ritson(UK). Rick Darke is recognised as the world authority on ornamental grasses and recently authored and will discuss his magnificent book *Encyclopedia of Grasses for Livable Landscapes*. For many, Darke was the outstanding speaker at the 2005 Australian Landscape Conference.

Charles Quest-Ritson has just completed a monumental

new book, *The Gardens of Europe: A Traveller's Guide*, featuring over 600 gardens. Following the introduction of the authors, Charles Quest-Ritson will give an illustrated talk: *The Most Beautiful and Romantic Garden in Europe*.

Speakers will then be available for questions and for signing their books which Bloomin' Books will have available for sale together with some other gardening



Spring Insiders Walk

GOVERNMENT HOUSE GARDENS

Thursday 13 September
at 9.45am sharp
Meet at Gate Lodge (opposite the Shrine)
\$20 Donation to the Friends
STRICTLY MEMBERS ONLY
RSVP by Friday 7 September
on enclosed booking form
This walk is restricted to Members only. Numbers are limited, so book early to avoid disappointment.

Government House, because of its commanding position, is a focal point for the CBD looking over the Yarra River. Its tower can be glimpsed from various inner suburbs (such as Richmond, South Yarra and Toorak) and the City of Melbourne. From high-rise buildings in the city the full splendour of its location can be appreciated. Surrounded by beautiful gardens, Government House is adjacent to the Royal Botanic Gardens.

The Governor of Victoria is our Patron so we are delighted that he and Mrs de Kretser have given their consent to a guided tour of the gardens at Government House.

We will meet at Gate Lodge from where we will walk to Government House for morning tea with the Governor and his wife.

John Patrick will then conduct a comprehensive tour of the lovely gardens.



Spring 'Talking Plants' Morning

BULBS

Friday 14 September at 10.00am
Meet at Domain House
on Dallas Brooks Drive
Cost: \$15 Friends \$10
RSVP by Wednesday 12 September
on enclosed booking form

The Spring 'Talking Plants' theme will be Bulbs, which herald in the spring to bring colour and life into the garden. The morning will be held in Domain House and will be an informal gathering of Friends with a common interest in plants and gardening.

Two experts, John Nicholas and Terri Kay, will discuss common and less-common bulbs. All those attending are invited to bring flowers to show and share, and also to ask questions.

Refreshments will be served during the morning. Following the discussion there will be the opportunity to visit the Growing Friends' Nursery for plant purchases.

EVENTS



'Up The (Maribyrnong) Creek': Riverscapes of the West

DAY TRIP UP THE MARIBYRNONG RIVER

Thursday 20 September at 11.00am
Cost: \$40 incl. light lunch, refreshments.
Limited numbers so book early.
RSVP by 13 September on enclosed booking form. Please include s.s.a.e. for mailing of meeting location details.
Parking available next to boat landing at Footscray Community Arts Centre (where there's also a pleasant cafe).

Much has changed since our popular Maribyrnong cruise in 2000. A modern living amenity has grown from the one-time Aboriginal habitat (later an industrial centre). Peter Somerville, skipper of the Blackbird, with his fund of stories on the history – and himself part of that history – will guide us from Footscray to Pipemakers' Park, now a novel Ecomuseum.

At lunch here (included in the cost), we will view a video and extensive displays and

collections. There is a garden trail and several historic bluestone buildings from the meat processing industry, closed in 1886.

On the river, we shall observe vegetation and housing development and learn how the conflicts were resolved. The trip takes approx. three hours.

The Blackbird is simple but adequate, with weather protection. On confirmation of your booking you will receive exact meeting location details.



Spring Fit Friends' Ramble: History, Gardens, Galleries and Architecture at Heide

SELF-DRIVE GUIDED TOUR

Thursday 11 October at 10.15am for morning tea at Café.
Tour commences at 11.00am
Cost: \$30 Friends \$22
RSVP by Thursday 4 October on enclosed booking form. (Please tick the appropriate box if you'd like to stay for lunch at Heide Cafe, and we will make bookings on your behalf)

Heide Museum of Modern Art (Melways Map 32:E5) is a unique place combining both indoors and outdoors.

This excursion will be a gentle morning ramble. The tour, with a Heide Volunteer Guide, will include the history and architecture of Heide II, the 1960s modernist building that was home to John and Sunday Reed from 1967 to 1980. These passionate gardeners and champions of radical

modernist art first came to live on the Heide property, formerly a dairy farm, in 1934 when they purchased and renovated the old Victorian farmhouse now known as Heide I. During the second part of the tour we'll learn the history of the garden they created.

Cost includes morning tea, the tours and entry to the galleries and current exhibitions. We are free to wander through the gardens and Sculpture Park.



Antarctica: History of the Ice Sheet

ILLUSTRATED TALK BY PROF. DAVID CANTRILL

Chief Botanist and Director, National Herbarium of Victoria.

Wednesday 24 October at 6.00 for 6.30pm
Cost: \$20 Friends \$15
RSVP by Friday 19 October on enclosed booking form

Please join us for a glass of wine and savouries before the talk

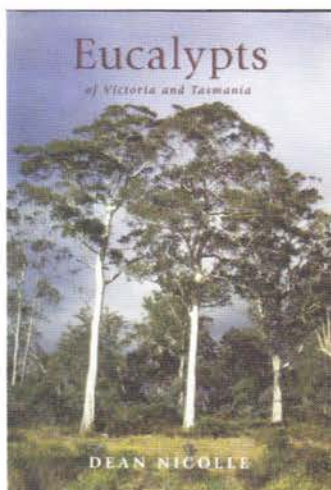
The Earth is continuously changing but recent concern over climate change has become topical to the wider community. Today there are just two species of vascular plants that cling to the edge of Antarctica but this has not always been the case.

With seven expeditions to the Antarctic investigating the history of vegetation in this frozen world, Prof. David Cantrill has accumulated important insights into how the Earth's climate

has fluctuated and how the development of the Antarctic Ice Sheet has influenced not only the plant life in Antarctica today but also many other regions of the world.

David Cantrill, internationally recognised and highly qualified in both Geology and Botany, is now the Chief Botanist and Director of the National Herbarium of Victoria at the RBG Melb. He is committed to the communication of science and its importance to society.

EVENTS



Eucalypts of Victoria and Tasmania

ILLUSTRATED TALK BY DEAN NICOLLE

Tuesday 30 October, 6.00 for 6.30pm
Mueller Hall, National Herbarium
COST: \$20 Friends \$15
RSVP by Friday 26 October
on enclosed booking form
Signed copies of Dean's latest book
"Eucalypts of Victoria and Tasmania"
will be available for sale

Please join us for a glass of wine and
savouries before the talk

Dean Nicolle has travelled extensively throughout Australia studying, collecting and photographing eucalypts. He is the author of *Eucalypts of South Australia*, over 30 publications relating to eucalypts and is owner/curator of Currency Creek Arboretum, a specialist eucalypt research plantation where over 800 eucalypt species are in cultivation – including all species from Victoria and Tasmania. In these States there

are 141 eucalypts, including 56 that occur naturally nowhere else in the world.

Their dominance and sheer diversity have made eucalypts our premier species and their worldwide economic importance is believed to be greater than for any other Australian species.



David Howard Lectures

In conjunction with The Friends of the Gardens, Sydney

Monday 12 November at 10.00am
Monday 12 November at 2.30pm
At the Clemenger Auditorium,
National Gallery of Vic, St Kilda Road

Tuesday 13 November at 6.00 pm
Mueller Hall, National Herbarium
Birdwood Ave, South Yarra

Cost each lecture (incl book fee): \$63
Members of the Friends: \$53

David Howard, Head Gardener to HRH the Prince of Wales at Highgrove House in Gloucestershire, is an expert in organic and sustainable horticulture.

This is a rare opportunity for us to learn about the philosophy of Highgrove and the techniques employed to maintain such an important and fascinating garden.

To attend any of these lectures, please read the brochure enclosed with this newsletter.

Please note: Bookings cannot be made through the Friends' office, but must be made using the booking form on the enclosed brochure; by telephoning 1300 306 776; or registering at www.mca-tix.com



Canadian Gardens

ILLUSTRATED TALK BY TEENA CRAWFORD

Professional Horticulturalist,
Gardening Writer and Broadcaster

Thursday 22 November
at 10.00am for 10.30am
Mueller Hall, National Herbarium
Cost: \$20 Friends \$15
RSVP by Friday 16 November
on enclosed booking form.

Please join us for morning tea
before the talk.

Teena Crawford is well known as a professional horticulturalist, gardening presenter, manager of a successful wholesale plant nursery, contributor to *The Age* and *Your Garden* magazine and *Smart Gardener* host. Her vast horticultural knowledge and easy-going manner make her a huge success as a tour escort.

In August 2006, Teena led a spectacular excursion to Western Canada – for the passionate garden lover, a paradise found.

Join Teena as she shares with us this magical visual garden tour through British Columbia and the Canadian Rockies, visiting private, botanical and cultural gardens.

EVENTS



Christmas Cocktails

ADVANCE NOTICE

Tuesday 27 November
from 6.00pm to 8.00pm
at Gardens House

Please make a note in your diaries that the Friends will be returning to Gardens House for their Christmas celebration this year.

Gardens House is the charming C19 former Directors' private residence tucked away behind the National Herbarium. It provides the handsome architectural backdrop to the perennial border.

We are delighted to be able to offer our members and friends an opportunity to enjoy this hidden corner of the Botanic Gardens, which will be decorated for Christmas with flowers and foliage from the Gardens. Join Members old

and new, friends and committee members in this beautiful setting to celebrate the end of another busy and successful year of Friends' support for the Gardens.

Booking details will be published in the one-page newsletter accompanying the Annual Report.



Spring Guided Visit to the Growing Friends Nursery

Friday 30 November
Meet at Gate Lodge at 10.30am
COST \$5 MEMBERS ONLY
RSVP by Wednesday 28 November
on enclosed booking form
BOOKINGS ESSENTIAL
AS NUMBERS WILL BE LIMITED

Late Spring is the perfect time to put in some new plantings in the garden in time for Christmas. Why not make some Christmas gift purchases as well? Our nursery currently holds a wide selection of material for the home garden.

This morning is especially suitable for new members and others who are not familiar with the whereabouts and workings of our Growing Friends' Nursery. We will meet at Gate Lodge for a brief

morning tea. We'll then be guided down to the Growing Friends' nursery (open Friday mornings to Members only), for a brief overview of the nursery and to make purchases. There will be some Christmas specials available.

If you plan to buy a number of plants think about bringing your shopping jeep or market trolley to help carry your purchases home.



Hidden in Plain View: The Forgotten Flora

GUIDED TOUR WITH TERESA LEBEL, CURATOR

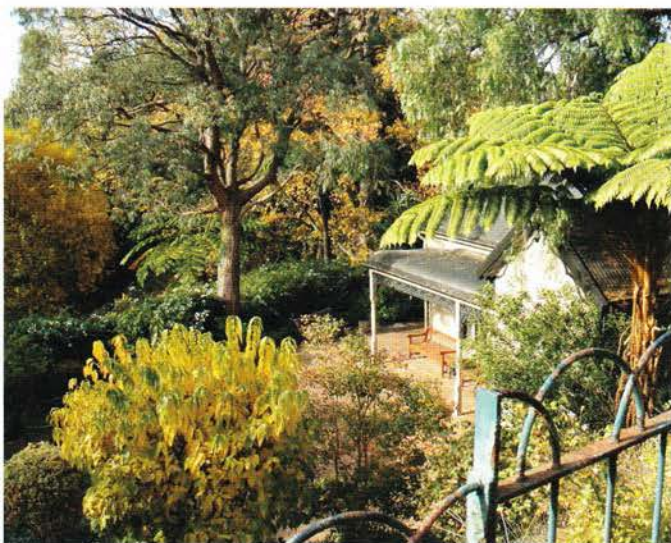
Tuesday 4 December at 10.00am
Gate Lodge (opposite the Shrine)
COST: \$10 MEMBERS ONLY
RSVP by Friday 30 November on enclosed booking form

Join us for morning tea followed by a guided tour of the exhibition with Dr Teresa Lebel.

Which poisonous mushroom kills flies? What do fungi and stonewash jeans have in common? How do fungi feed themselves? What has a moss got to do with the Tyrolean iceman? Why do mosses have teeth? What are those little green umbrellas growing in my plant pot? These questions and many more will be answered by this remarkable exhibition which shows the research and conservation work that takes place at the National Herbarium

of Victoria and the Royal Botanic Gardens, Melbourne through the story of mosses, lichens and fungi. Dr Teresa Lebel, mycologist (fungi expert) and one of the organisers, says the exhibition will include water-colours, drawings and herbarium specimens that have never been shown to the public because of their precious and fragile nature, historical and contemporary writings and specimens from the State Botanical Collection, RBGM.

PLANT CRAFT COTTAGE



The Plant Craft Cottage, along with the Voluntary Guides and Friends of the RBG, has recently celebrated twenty-five years within the Royal Botanic Gardens Melbourne. One of the earliest groups to meet for craft work in the Undergardener's Cottage at "H" gate was the Natural Dye Group. Their first meeting was held on Wednesday 1 April 1981, convened by Joan Bacon and Robin Nunn and attended by 19 interested members. Of these 19, six are still participants in 2007.

The Group continues to meet on the first Wednesday in the month and samples of the dyes obtained are recorded.

In January 1981 the First Australian Fibre Conference was held in Melbourne and Dr. David Churchill presented a paper on *A Botanical Conspectus of Australian Dye and Fabric Plants*, where he acknowledged 'the assistance of Joan Bacon, founder and convenor of the Dye Group of the PCC in the RBG'. Joan Bacon's enthusiasm for the methods of Frederick Gerber,

another speaker at this conference, encouraged others to attend his workshops; we still use his method today.

The Group has held at least one public workshop every year, and regularly gives talks to outside groups. A natural dye workshops for second-year participants in the Advanced Spinning Course conducted by the Hand Weavers and Spinners was organised by the Group.

In the early years the Voluntary Guides and the Natural Dye Group collaborated to produce the Guide Dye Walk Book with samples of forty-six plants and this was part of the Guides' walks for many years.

In June 1985 the Group received an invitation to the National Woolcraft Festival in New Zealand to be held in May 1987. Then followed two very busy years preparing a wonderful selection of eucalypt dyes showing the full spectrum of colours on four contrasting panels which were suspended high above the display table. On the table were clouds of

beautiful light, soft dyed fleece and contrasting with these were big chunky wool ropes and tassels. Sample cards gave full details of how each colour was obtained and sets of these cards were given to Festival members for permanent reference. So much work – but how proud we all were of the Melbourne Plant Craft Cottage's presentation in New Zealand!

Again in 2001 the Dye Group went outside the Cottage and ran a very successful five-day workshop at the Geelong Textile Fibre Forum. This involved dyeing with eucalypts and ancient dyes.

The latest presentation was at the International Natural Dye Symposium in Hyderabad, India in 2006. Pam Borchardt and Glenys Clissold were occupied each day talking about the PCC dye exhibit. This was a poster representing eucalypt dyes, and the colours drew considerable interest from Indian dyers. Dr. Harald Bohmer – author of *Koekboya* – was most interested in the red colour on the poster and has asked for a sample to analyse its chemical make-up.

Following discussions with many of the Australians at the Hyderabad Symposium, Pam Borchardt (Convenor of the Natural Dye Group) decided to initiate an *Australian Natural Dye Newsletter* to provide information on activities in the area of natural dyeing. The preliminary issue in December 2006 has been followed by two more issues and is providing up-to-date information for natural dye enthusiasts in Australia.

For twenty-five years this Group has been experimenting, teaching, exhibiting and

continues to be innovative in the field of Natural Dye; the Plant Craft Cottage is justly proud of its achievements in this field. To the members who began the 'work', to the members who continue it and to all those members who have contributed over the years – Thank You.

Heather Schroeder



At top left: Plant Craft Cottage from the steps in the Grey Garden. Above: Eucalypt dyed wool on display in Craft Room

Below: Naturally dyed silk scarves for sale

Both displays can be found in the Plant Craft Cottage.

Photos: Jennifer Marshall



ILLUSTRATORS

Classes

Term 4 will start in the week beginning Monday 15 October. Classes will be held on Tuesday evenings and in the daytime on Mondays, Wednesdays (two sessions) Fridays and Saturdays.

2.5hr classes: \$255 (incl GST)
Friends \$215 (incl GST)
3hr classes: \$295 incl GST)
Friends \$255 (incl GST)

For further information on classes contact the Friends' office on 9650 6398.



Corymbia calophylla painted by Alwynne Fairweather

Botanical Illustrators Quarterly Meeting

Aboriginal Heritage Walk
Tuesday 11 September
at 10.00am for 10.30am
Meet at the Visitor Centre,
Observatory Gate
Pay on day
Limited numbers; bookings essential
RSVP Friends' office on 9650 6398

Our Aboriginal guide will take us on a journey to help us understand the customs and heritage of the local Boonwurrung and Woiwurrung people. While exploring the ancestral land now occupied by the Royal Botanic Gardens, we will discover the traditional uses of plants for medicine, food, tools and ceremony.

The walk will leave punctually at 10.30am. It will go ahead in any weather, so wear appropriate clothing and walking shoes.

The Eucalypts

In 2005-06, members of the Botanical Illustrators group took on a project to illustrate the Oaks of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Melbourne which culminated in an exhibition at Domain House in 2005. This year the *Quercus* illustrations are the subject of the Friends' calendar for 2008.

The Botanical Illustrators are initiating an ongoing new project to document the Eucalypts of the Royal Botanic Gardens Melbourne. The purpose of this project is to encourage artists to complete a full watercolour taxonomic study.

Interested artists are invited to attend a meeting in the Whirling Room Studio for more information and assistance and to view some of the excellent books on the subject.

Please note the date in your diary: Tuesday 9 October at 10.30am in the Whirling Room.

Talk by John Pastoriza Piñol

John gave a very interesting talk to the Botanical Illustrators on his experiences in London and how to mount an international exhibition.

He said that artists should begin to exhibit widely, achieving sales, become self-motivated and inspired, and travel to other states to see exhibitions. Looking abroad, we should investigate overseas exhibition opportunities, prepare submission material and transparencies of print quality, and subscribe to overseas societies and the Royal Horticultural Society. The RHS Winter shows in London have a space for artists in a very busy, huge hall. The Society looks for paintings with crisp outlines and clear colours needed because of the duller English light (and those that can be easily reproduced) which are unframed and shrink-wrapped. The artist should stay with the paintings over the two days of the exhibition. It's important to go and exhibit, and not to expect a gold medal.

We learned about the importance of making contacts, including printing a business card and building up a mailing list. Answering the question "Why exhibit internationally?" John said the UK leads the market for art in Europe, with over 2500 commercial art galleries, and the USA is considered foremost in fine arts with 10,000 artists' studios and galleries – there are 5000 in New York alone.

John discussed information sources, planning and making a marketing plan with dates and marketing tools, and creating a catalogue. As it's an expensive process, various bodies can be of assistance in funding, including Arts Victoria, the Australian Arts Council and Austrade.

The gathered artists appreciated hearing of John's experiences and his advice gave many food for thought.

Judy Jarman



Lilium primulinum painted by John Pastoriza Piñol

Whirlybirds

Following the cold winter mornings the Whirlybirds are now enjoying our meetings in Spring. From 10.00am on Tuesdays in the Whirling Room Studio we have an informal gathering of Botanical Illustrators, which gives us an opportunity to share ideas and technical information while working on our paintings.

On Tuesday 12 June we enjoyed an illustrated talk by John Pastoriza Piñol about his experiences as a successful international exhibitor.

If you are a member of the Friends and would like to join us, you are most welcome. Please contact Sandra Sanger on 9598 9532 for further information.



I can't resist a bargain, particularly in the form of a well-presented hard-back volume with full colour pictures and a good measure of text thrown into the deal. While I am almost oblivious to the economics of publishing, I am nevertheless often left wondering how on earth a book can be written, illustrated, designed, printed and published, and yet command such comparatively modest sale prices. Yes, I know that the editions which grace the 'Sale' tables at the large book emporia are usually being 'remaindered' (which is, in itself, a delightful verb), but all the same it seems that one often gets an awful lot for one's \$14.99, when it buys us so little elsewhere. Let me tell you about a recent experience in one of the large book stores.

As I passed the 'Sale' table, my eye was caught by an attractive volume called *An Illustrated History of the Pipe*, by Alexis Liebaert and Alain Maya. I glided past it the first time, seeking to avoid its

obvious appeal, but was drawn back inexorably. Before long I had the book open and was thumbing through the pages, engrossed. It was the work of an instant to whisk the book to the sales counter.

I should point out here that we are talking about pipes – the tobacco smoking sort, not pipes, the irrigation, sewerage and general services sort. One shouldn't confuse the two, for practical reasons. Those who are a little bit squeamish regarding any topic relating to tobacco smoking should alight from the carriage at this point, because there is worse to come.

Have you ever wondered about the 'briar' from which most modern pipes are made? I know that I have, often. Yes, I realise that there may be more significant matters about which to wonder, and that spending one's time musing on the nature of tobacco-related equipment is probably illegal by now, but wonder I have, often.

Let me now put your mind at ease on this question. The briar comes from the small tree

Erica arborea (Tree Heath), and is specifically the timber that joins the stem to the root system (a burl, a little akin to the lignotuberous base of mallee-form eucalypts – which does leave one thinking about the pipe-worthiness of these indigenous timbers). The plant occurs naturally around the Mediterranean region, though heavy harvesting for the production of briar has led to its disappearance in some areas. Harvested briar roots are usually 60-100 years old.

The briar is dug up, sawn into small blocks (which are called 'ébauchons'), cured, and then sent to the various places in Europe where pipe-making is still a revered craft. Here we find an answer to another of life's imponderables: why doesn't the pipe itself go up in smoke, given that it is made from wood? Well – it just doesn't. The wood is so dense that it doesn't get to the point of combusting to any great degree. A little carbon is deposited, and that also protects the wood.

I recall hearing stories from the lexicon of local folklore about life in the Gardens some decades ago. The room within which the gardeners had their morning and afternoon breaks was in one of the old sheds of corrugated iron (we now call these Significant Heritage Structures). By all accounts, during the breaks, a view across the room was impossible at head height, for the thick haze of tobacco smoke produced by the throng of pipe-smoking employees. These breaks, so glamorously called 'Rest Pauses' in our current industrial

agreement, were then (and colloquially are still now) known as 'Smoko'.

I don't recall seeing a pipe in action amongst the Gardens' staff in the last 27 or so years, so what was once an apparently essential accoutrement of botanic gardens horticulture has been consigned to the annals of 'curiosities of the past'. Naturally, we don't encourage smoking of any sort for health reasons in these enlightened times.

But what of the plant – the *Erica arborea*? Do we have one in the Gardens? A quick check of our on-line census revealed one specimen, located adjacent to the Californian Garden near Eastern Lodge. After some fossicking around on site with the able assistance of our Curator of the Californian Collection, Tim Wall, we found nothing. With spirits slightly dented, I returned to the office, only to have Tim appear a bit later in the day bearing a twig with some fine foliage, which on closer inspection turned out to be *E. arborea*. It was there, as listed in the census, but was a fairly miserable specimen.

We mused on whether this might be a good species to plant in greater numbers on the very hot and dry slope just north of the Californian area, given its natural preference for climate and habitat of that sort in the Mediterranean area. Coincidentally, a couple of days later John Rayner (a colleague from Burnley College) returned from a conference trip to Madeira, and pronounced that the dominant woody shrub/tree



cover of the island was none other than *Erica arborea*! He was polite enough to endure my detailed account of the significance of this species in the important matter of pipe manufacture in the ensuing half-hour or so, before finding an urgent need to meet someone elsewhere, for an unforeseen appointment.

Sadly the next piece of information that Tim presented regarding *E. arborea* was the warning about its weed potential. An authoritative internet reference advised that this species is recorded as a weed in New Zealand and Corsica, and that 'there are naturalised populations in South Australia, and in Victoria it is a threat to riverside vegetation. It is widespread in Tasmania.'

Our records show that the species was widely available through the nursery industry in Victoria from the 1860s onwards, so one might wonder why it hasn't become a more significant weed in Victoria in the past 150 years if the potential exists. Indeed, that raises an interesting point, in my view. We have very good

information regarding the availability of a diverse range of plant species through publications such as the OPCA's 'Plants listed in nursery catalogues in Victoria 1855-1889'. Assessment of the weed potential of particular plants can be an area where opinions differ widely, so knowing that a plant had been in the country for 150 years would seem to provide a handy background to judge its potential for rampant spread across the countryside. If it hasn't found the opportunity to do so by now, then perhaps it is not inclined to (or perhaps there are factors which are controlling agents and which therefore act to keep the population in check).

Of course the predicted changing climate may mean that some plants, which have not been too prone to wanton weediness up until now, might take it upon themselves to go off the rails and wander the countryside under more favourable conditions. Maybe some that have been weedy will find that things aren't so good for them any more, and they'll hand in their Licence to Infest. It's food for thought, anyway.

With regard to the poor old *E. arborea*, while its weed credentials are well-founded in some parts of the country, it would appear that we haven't quite found the right formula to coax it into vigour at the RBG Melbourne. We find it reluctant in its weediness and are unlikely to have a handy supply of rootstock for any large-scale pipe manufacture in the near future.

We do, however, generate a

quantity of other interesting salvaged timbers from the diverse array of tree species growing in the Gardens, either from routine maintenance (e.g. pruning off dead wood or poorly structured branches) or when an entire tree is removed. We are currently reviewing our approach to timber recycling and hoping to achieve better utilisation of this valuable resource. So while we may not

be cradling the shapely briar of a home-grown wooden pipe in our hands, perhaps we can find some satisfactory alternative timber-related arrangements to occupy our senses.

Richard Barley

Opposite: Unidentified pipe holder exhibiting the classic grip

Left: Tim Wall by the specimen of *Erica arborea* in the RBGM

Pictures supplied by Richard Barley

ORNAMENTAL PLANT CONSERVATION ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA INC

Annual General Meeting

Thursday 6th September 2007
6.00 (Wine & Cheese) for 6.30 pm

Domain House
Dallas Brooks Drive
SOUTH YARRA

Guest Speaker: Dr Greg Moore
"Managing Plants at a Time of
Climate Change"

OPCAA Annual Plant Auction
Auctioneer: Stephen Ryan

Supper

Royal Botanic Gardens Melbourne Bio Retention Basin (Raingarden)

The Royal Botanic Gardens Melbourne, in conjunction with Melbourne Water, GHD (environmental engineers) and EcoDynamics (landscape construction) have installed a Bioretention Basin – or Raingarden – in the Canna Bed.

The Canna Bed is in a naturally low lying area on the Southern Lawn and is the perfect site for a Raingarden.

The intention of the Raingarden in the Canna Bed is to take storm water run off underground from Birdwood Ave and divert it up into the Canna Bed that has had a sand filtration media incorporated to replace the existing soil profile. This storm water run off irrigates the Cannas and strips pollutants out before the filtered water drains to the bottom of the Raingarden, then into agricultural drains from which the water is returned to the existing RBG drainage system, in this case the Fern Gully. This ultimately reduces pollutants entering our lake system, the Yarra River and eventually Port Phillip Bay.

Our Landscape Architect (Andrew Laidlaw) has redesigned the bed layout but has maintained the historic integrity of the bed by using Cannas exclusively. All the varieties of Canna species previously represented in the Canna Bed have been re-used, so the colorful displays of Cannas will continue long into the future; they will just be

watered in a different way whilst improving the quality of water entering the Bay.

We are currently working on interpretive signage to be incorporated into this bed to highlight the attributes of the Cannas and the Raingarden and are hopeful that this signage will be in place in Spring this year.

Michael McNabb
Manager Horticulture



Canna bed before treatment.
Photos: (above) Peter Symes;
(below) Jennifer Marshall



Winter is the quietest time in the Growing Friends' Nursery, and the time when many of us take the opportunity to travel.

Since the Autumn Sale, I have been to Western Australia by car. It was a journey rich in botanical interest, including a visit to the splendid Australian Arid Lands Botanic Garden outside Port Augusta and to a specialist Banksia Nursery at Mount Barker, in the south-west of Western Australia. Arid zone water-efficient irrigation and landscape techniques are employed and displayed in the running of both these gardens.

About one third of the Port Augusta gardens were planted with approximately 155 varieties of *Eremophila* and many of these were in flower in late April, when I visited. The flowers vary in form and colour, depending on whether they are pollinated by birds or insects. Apparently birds pollinate the yellow, pink and red flowers, which are usually long and tubular, and insects pollinate the white, purple and blue flowering species – these are flatter in form and the more common variety. (At present the Growing Friends' Nursery has a small stock of *Eremophila scoparia*, which have blue flowers, and some *Eremophila maculata*, which have red flowers.)

The most interesting part of the trip was, however, a visit to the equivalent of our Growing Friends' nursery at Perth's Kings Park. The Friends of Kings Park have seven Carers Groups. The Growing Carers have been in operation for about six years; their nursery and what they do are quite



MEMORIES

different from the Melbourne Growing Friends. The West Australian group consists of only eight or nine members who meet on Saturday mornings (as you may know, about 25 FRBG Growing Friends meet each Friday for at least 4 hours between 7.00am and about 3.00pm)

The vast majority of their stock is grown in tubes, and all are Western Australian native plants. These plants, as well as being sold at quarterly sales on Sunday mornings throughout the year, are in demand by outside conservation groups and ordered by the thousands. They have quite a profitable production system.

While writing about Western Australia I am reminded of the Growing Friends' impending loss of a most valued member, Wendy Wilson. Wendy is moving to Perth to be closer to her daughter. She will be greatly missed, both for her catering/food organising skills and for her care of the garden in front of Nursery Lodge. Wendy has been in charge of lunches at the March and October plant sales for many years and lunches have been a happy meeting place for often hot and tired sale helpers. The group will miss this most cheerful and positive member. Wendy is pictured here in the Nursery Lodge garden last summer.

Lastly, a date for all Members' diaries: The SPRING PLANT SALE is to be held on Saturday 13 and Sunday 14 October.

Juliana Horsfall



Photo: Robert Anderson

During the 1990s, Telecom produced a series of White Pages covers featuring volunteer groups. In 1994, it was the turn of the Royal Botanic Gardens and the Variety Club of Australia. Part of the legend inside the front cover reads:

"Established in 1846, the Royal Botanic Gardens Melbourne is renowned world-wide for its beautiful C19 land-scape and a diverse collection of more than 10,000 different Australian and exotic plants.

The work of the Gardens is supported by a number of voluntary groups including the Friends of Royal Botanic Gardens Melbourne Inc and the Plant Craft Cottage. The Friends organises lectures, tours and other activities to help raise community interest and financial support for the Gardens.

The Plant Craft Cottage is a quaint C19 cottage near the northern boundary of the RBG.

The Voluntary Guides is a very active group who lead walks around the Gardens on a regular basis."

Featured on the front cover are: Caroline Cornish and Eve Brunner from the FRBG, Roslyn Semler from the RBGM and Lesley Clark, of the Friends and the Voluntary Guides.

The Friday of the Fox's Foot



One Friday, circa 1990-91, on arrival at the Growing Friends' nursery, I first visited my plant section for a quick assessment of any plants needing attention. Over the years this procedure has gone from being an unwritten rule for all Growing Friends to being a written-down rule. It is so important to what needs to follow for the rest of the morning's work.

At this time I was looking after the *Iris* section which was located along one side fence of our old nursery among the pre-fabricated buildings down past the Astronomer's Residence. Come to think of it, I'm pretty sure it was the easiest part of our boundary to penetrate as the area beyond it was open and grassy. The rest of that side boundary consisted of the *Rat House* as our pre-fab office was affectionately known. The opposite side boundary was a well-protected part of the Government House precinct and the two ends consisted of a quite substantial shade house and the aforementioned *Rat House* and another short fence. The whole enclosure was, I think, somewhat smaller than our present nursery.

Anyhow, as I walked the path to the *Iris* section I came

across an object lying on it which really startled me, and it took me a while to realize that it looked like an animal's foot. Almost simultaneously I noticed that an area had been excavated under the boundary fence. After puzzling over this for a while, with no satisfactory explanation presenting itself, I drew it to the attention of other Growing Friends, but no-one seemed to make anything of it.

Later that morning, however, we were visited by Dr David Churchill, the then Director of the RBG. He used to come by from time to time, so I had the idea of drawing the matter to his attention. "Oh", he said, "didn't you know that foxes, if finding themselves trapped, will even bite off one of their own feet to free themselves? This seems to be what has happened here, maybe under the fence." 'What a grisly business', I thought to myself, but we all know how many foxes were then, as now, infesting the whole Yarra river area of our city.

At this stage I found myself thinking 'Whatever was going on in this fox's mind? Did it have a penchant for *Iris* rhizomes?' We had a nice variety at the time called *Kerrie's Kirtle*. Perhaps the fox had a taste for them which spurred it on to excavate a tunnel under our fence so as to indulge itself a little. But then the plants had not been disturbed, so had it done it just for the exercise? To lose a foot in the effort seemed a high price to pay. So to a city-born and bred Melburnian it became, and remains, 'The Mystery of the Friday of the Fox's Foot!'

Dorothy Smith

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- ☐ **Household** \$63
(two adults living at same address)
- ☐ **Individual** \$43
- ☐ **Pensioner, Student, Country, Interstate or Overseas** \$31.50

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- ☐ Under 25 ☐ 25-39 ☐ 40-59 ☐ 60 and over

I would like details of:

- ☐ Gift membership ☐ Life Membership ☐ Bequests and Wills

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ROYAL BOTANIC GARDENS
MELBOURNE INC.

BOTANIC NEWS

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