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## Meet the new committee

The Friends of the McKay Memorial Gardens held their Annual General Meeting on 21 July 2012.

After five years tireless service, President Catherine McDonald has stepped down from that role but has fortunately agreed to stay on the committee as Vice President. Catherine must be commended for her efforts and commitment to spear-head the return of the Gardens from a neglected, severely drought-affected shambles to the partially restored and regularly maintained Gardens we enjoy today. There is still a lot of work to do but Catherine was instrumental in lobbying council to ensure their ongoing commitment to the gardens and has applied her varied skills in historical recording, heritage requirements, urban planning and advocacy and will be remaining an active member of the Friends.

Fortunately, another founding member, Helen Reid, has taken over as President. Learn some more about Helen on Page 4.

Media officer Michelle Edwards was re-appointed unopposed and the committee welcomes two other general members to the table.

Melinda Mockridge, a local secondary teacher studying Cultural Heritage at Deakin University was elected as Secretary.

Speroulla Christodoulou, a lifelong Sunshine resident and advocate was elected as Treasurer.

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## Visiting St Bernadette's



Helen, Catherine and Melinda accepted an invitation in October to visit St. Bernadette's Primary School in North Sunshine. Grades 3 and 4 are currently studying the environment so the Friends spoke to them about the Gardens and the children participated in several activities, learning about the plants in the Gardens and the effects of the drought. Every child (over 100) received a packet of seeds to plant at home (kindly donated by Bunnings Warehouse at Sunshine). We will post some of the activity sheets on the website.

## Fix the Links

Residents in the rail corridor between Sunshine and Deer Park have a number of concerns about the new Regional Rail Link that will be built through their neighbourhood. The **Fix the Links - Resident Rail Action Group** are currently campaigning over four main concerns: noise, access, pollution and liveability.

Read more about their campaign and how you can help here:

<http://www.fixregionallrailink.blogspot.com.au/>

## Planting Day 2012

Another mid-Winter planting day has come and gone but this one provided cool but sunny weather to make for a pleasant day.

Staff from the Urban Design and Conservation branches of Brimbank Council provided plants, tools, effort and advice. Local residents, Friends of the Gardens and members of the Garden Society were so efficient that more than 200 plants were planted and watered in well ahead of schedule.

A range of plants now fill out the garden bed behind the Presbyterian Church:

Buxus sempervirens	English Box	Shrub
Limonium perezii	Perennial Statice	Perennial
Valeriana officinalis	Valerian	Perennial
Abelia x grandiflora	Glossy Abelia	Shrub
Daphne odora	Daphne	Shrub
Nandina domestica	Japanese	Shrub
Camellia japonica (red)	Camellia	Shrub
Correa 'Dusky Bells'	Correa cultivar	Shrub
Bergenia cordifolia	Elephant Ears	Perennial
Nepeta x faassenii	Catmint	Perennial
Valeriana officinalis	Valerian	Perennial
Dietes irioides	Fortnight Lily	Perennial
Liriope 'Evergreen Giant'	Turf Lily cultivar	Perennial
Hemerocallis (evergreen)	Daylily	Perennial
Felicia amelloides	Blue Daisy	Perennial
Brachyscome multifida	Cut-leaf Daisy	Perennial
Arthropodium cirratum	NZ Rock Lily	Perennial

*"..more than 200 plants were planted and watered in well ahead of schedule"*



We are now planning to seek Council interest in a bulb planting day in March 2013. Historically, the Gardens have been known for bulb plantings and they could create a great Spring splash of colour along the Anderson Road frontage to draw more people into the Gardens.



## Electricity under the Gardens

On Saturday, 26 August 2012 Regional Rail Link representatives met with members of the Friends of the McKay Gardens and the Sunshine & District Historical Society to discuss the works to place electricity wires underground through the Gardens.

Regional Rail Link (the Footscray to Deer Park Alliance), are required to submit a tree protection plan to Heritage Victoria and negotiate a construction management plan with Brimbank City Council and both these plans are currently being developed.

The RRL team explained that they had considered using underground boring to tunnel underneath the gardens and compared that approach with using an open trench method. Using an open trench has many advantages over boring, most importantly having the least impact on the Gardens. It would not be possible to bore a straight tunnel as it would pass under some significant trees, risking their damage should maintenance be required in the future. Alternately, boring a tunnel with direction changes requires a large access hole at each point of change. Boring also creates a lot of slurry and has a higher risk of oil spill from the hydraulic machinery.

With the open trench approach, the trench will be 5 metres wide and the total working area will need to



*First stage of safety fencing*

be 11 metres wide to manoeuvre the required machinery. The work is about to commence and safety fencing has been erected.



*The affected Rose Garden bed bottom left*

There will be a major impact to one of the McKay Memorial Rose Garden beds planted during the 80's. It will need to be fully removed and will be replaced once the works are done. Council and The Friends will be involved in this process and may consider incorporating changes that better reflect the original placement of garden beds. Of interest, an original pathway used to be located there and may still exist underneath the garden bed. You can view the original gravel paths in this short film on the Museum Victoria website.

<http://museumvictoria.com.au/sunshine/displayimage.asp?iid=704>

If anything of historical significance is discovered during these works, the heritage permit requires work to stop immediately while further investigations are carried out.

Where the open trench needs to pass near one of the historic Algerian Oak trees, RRL will stop using excavators and employ a 'vacuuming' method, which is much slower but will lessen the chance of damage to tree roots and limbs. They will also surround trees with specialist mats that prevent the ground compacting and affecting root systems.

The Friends are communicating regularly with Council and RRL to protect the Gardens from impacts.

## Maintenance Day

An informal event in the Gardens to weed, collect rubbish and eat cake.

**15 December 2012** 10am - 12pm

120 Anderson Road Sunshine

All welcome!

## General Meeting

The next general meeting of the Friends will be:

**2 February 2013** 10am - 11.30am

Presbyterian Church Meeting Rooms

120 Anderson Road Sunshine

## Helen Reid – President

When it was first suggested to me that I take over the Friends presidency, my response was no! But then I remembered that in the Bible we are reminded that the Lord gives us work to do and prepares us for it in advance, whether we know that's what is happening or not. And so my thoughts turned to how I'd been prepared for the role.

This woman called Helen came to live in Sunshine in 1960 from up in Murray River country. In recent times home is in Sunbury, a sea change to country living, to be closer to my daughter and sister, who keep an eye on me. I am a mother of two daughters, grandmother of six. My husband died in 2009. I went to Victoria Uni as a mature-aged student when 48 years old and attained a degree in Arts, graduating in 1993.

My working life began as a Technical Officer at Albion Explosives Factory, now Cairnlea. This was followed by 19 years as a mum at home, then resuming in the health industry. My last position was as an Allied Health secretary at the Western Hospital. Retirement in 2004 meant that I could pursue the things that need to be done for personal, intrinsic reward rather than the quest for the almighty Oz dollar and keeping ahead.



I'm in Sunshine most days for one thing or another. With gardening as my passion, you can see what was achieved over thirteen years of gardening in the space around the church: not all my doing but tending the garden beds, planting them up, watering them, removing the rubbish and palm fronds, seeing that the lawns are mowed on a roster basis, maintaining them - this is my chosen work.

When requested, I speak about iris, daylilies or bulb growing to garden clubs and also write articles. I am an iris judge, needing to travel a fair bit and filling most of my weekends each October. Researching, socialising, trying new things to find out what I can or can't do: this is what drives me. It doesn't stop there of course, but these are the most relevant things in the context.

My love of gardening led me to a number of gardening groups to learn more:

Sunshine Golden Age Garden Club	Committee member and newsletter producer
Victorian Iris Society	Most office bearer positions over 34 years - Registrar for 18 years
American Iris Society	Member
International Bulb Society	Member
Friends of McKay Gardens	Founding member; Secretary, treasurer and now President.

The Gardens have always been there around me for my fifty-two years of membership at Sunshine Presbyterian Church to observe and partake every week.

As a member of the Friends of McKay Gardens, there was opportunity over five years to observe how Catherine had managed to found the group and act as its president and how things were achieved, such as the Centenary of the Gardens in 2008. The Brimbank Council officers that maintain the gardens are known to me; some better than others. The Friends have advanced now and there is support and efficient people ready to work with me. My main hobby is gardening and it is my great joy to grow things and take pleasure in all kinds of plants and flowers. Finally, as you grow older, you begin to think about history, about life experiences, what once was and now is. Have I been prepared enough? What more could I want?

I stand in awe of Catherine for her work as President of the Friends for 5 years and tremble at my own inadequacies. The gift of the land and gardens to the people of Sunshine is not something that should be ignored or neglected for it was a generous gift. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to serve as a Friend.

**Helen Reid**  
President