



## President's Report

It's been quite a long time since we put out a newsletter for Friends, but here we are for 2014, almost at the end of it, thanking you for your support and wishing you well in 2015. We are grateful to those Council officers who have maintained the Gardens over the year and for their support of us. Our main contact, Roslyn Savio, who was contracted to design and oversee the updating of the gardens back in 2006, came to the end of her contract and left Council in June, but we are grateful to her for her support of Friends even now, as a member. She has the welfare of the gardens at heart. Her position was taken over by Mr Luciano Barro who is now our Council contact. All the officers of Friends were kept busy during the Year.

The Regional Rail Link's building and opening of the new footbridge over the railway line at the start of Devonshire Road has signaled change. Friends are keen to retain remnants of Sunshine's history in its landmarks and the bridge carries small oval plaques along the canopy, with the name H.V. McKay Sunshine etched into the metal. On opening day, a couple of residents brought along a horn and blew it as a token factory whistle, a very thoughtful reminder of past years. If you go along that way you will see that a strong fence now separates the railway property from the Gardens. A new wooden seat is placed at the entrance to the gardens close to the bridge. Residents pushing prams, or riding mobility aides can now use the bridge to access the business area (or the gardens) with the employment of the lifts at each end that are maintained by Council.

New trees that survived planting in the gardens are doing well at the moment, although three of the magnolia trees were destroyed by vandals last summer. Because of its prickly foliage, the Bunya-Bunya Pine planted by the great grand-daughter of HV McKay, Mrs Jessie Parks, is growing well without obstruction. Initially it showed some damage to the trunk, but this was rectified by council staff and the tree is flourishing. The tall *Grevillea robusta* near the Manse is flowering at the moment and golden, whilst the smaller ones planted more recently are going to be colourful in future.

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**Bunya-Bunya Pine, November 2014**

We lost a few trees on the northern end due to the railway bridge construction and the installation of an electricity main across the garden. All the trees are valued. We have a vision of what could be achieved in future. Do come along and take a look at all that has been done. We are keen to meet you in the gardens at any time and listen to your ideas and thoughts. See other items in the newsletter for meetings in 2015, and the last one for 2014, the visit to Heronswood, at Dromana and we invite you to come along and meet us there on 6 December, at 11am meeting at the entrance to the shop.

**Helen Reid, President.**

## Invitation to join us at Heronswood

For our final meeting of the year on 6 December we will be taking a trip down to **Héronswood** at Dromana on the Mornington Peninsula. This fabulous, and practical, garden is a must see for everyone interested in heritage gardens and how they can be made workable for the challenges of gardening in a climate challenged world. A former friend of the HV McKay Gardens, Bill Bampton, is now Head Gardener there. He will show us around on the day. Please come along. Make your own way there, and meet at 11.00am, at the entrance to the Shop.

**Address: 105 Latrobe Parade, Dromana.  
Melways Ref. 159 C9.**



## Weed & Care Group

The Friends of the McKay Gardens weeding group got off the ground this year, thanks in large part to the impetus of Ros Savio. The group has been meeting on the third Friday of each month to help out with the maintenance of the Gardens. Our activities are various, consisting in everything from rubbish collection and weeding to pruning and planting. For anyone who is keen on gardening, physical activity or a greater sense of engagement, this is the activity for you. In addition, a significant element of our activities is walking through the gardens noting what needs attention, whether this be watering or nominating a new seat. Our presence in the gardens, in our hi-visibility vests, not only helps maintain the public profile of the Friends but also reinforces the Gardens sense of security. It is surprising just how many members of the public like to pause and chat. There is no fixed membership for this group. Anyone who is interested is welcome to come along. Bring your gardening gloves and sturdy boots. Special thanks this year go to Angela, Robin, the guys from Brimbank Council, Ros and our tireless President Helen Reid. The final weeding day for this year is Friday December 12 from 10am to 12 noon. Escape from the bustle, come and join us for an hour or two.

Catherine McDonald

## AGM Report

A successful Friends' Annual General Meeting was held on 6 September, at 1.00 in the Church Hall. After reports were given and office bearers re-elected for the following year, we were treated to a fascinating talk by Helen Page of the Friends of Williamstown Botanic Gardens. She spoke about how their Friends group began, and the challenges and pleasures of being involved with the Gardens. She also had some good ideas about how to increase community use of the McKay Gardens which will be explored in 2015. We welcome Ros Savio and Angela Ganley to the Committee of Management for 2015. Due to work commitments Michelle Edwards has stepped down as our Media Officer, but will still be available to offer advice to the Friends on these matters and will be doing oral history interviews. *Thanks Michelle for all the work you have done over the past 4 years getting the website going, helping with grant applications, doing the Newsletter, taking great photos and keeping us up to date on the developments in the Gardens, particularly to do with RRL.*





## We have a new sign!

Thanks to faithful Friend Leanne Callaghan, of **Independent Signs**, we now have some great new signs advertising the Friends Group and Brimbank Council's monthly weed and care group which some of the Friends help out with (3<sup>rd</sup> Friday of each month, 10.00 - 12.00). The signs are bright and eye catching, and show that there are people around who care about the garden's maintenance and future.



## Meetings

Members, and others who are interested, are welcome to attend our meetings to plan and to discuss the gardens.

We meet in the Presbyterian Church Hall, Anderson Road, on 1st Saturday of the month, from 1.00pm to 2.00pm.

### SATURDAYS 2015

7 February, 7 March, 4 April, 2 May, 6 June,  
4 July, 1 August, 5 September, 3 October,  
7 November, 5 December.

## McKay Gardens Oral History Project

The Friends have been fortunate to receive \$4,960 funding from the Public Record Office, Victoria (PROV) under their Local History Grants Program to undertake interviews with people associated with the Gardens over the last 70 years. This is a two year project to train for interviewing, interview, transcribe and put online the history, knowledge and memories of the Gardens over this time. A number of the Friends have just completed training by a professional historian, Emma Russell, so that we can do a proper job of this important task. Interviewing has begun, and will continue throughout next year. In the future these interviews may form the basis of a publication about the Gardens.

Melinda Mockridge

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## Why not join us?

New members are always welcome!

The annual subscription is just \$5.00, and you can join by contacting the Secretary, Melinda, on

0498 708 326 or emailing - [contact@mckaygardens.org](mailto:contact@mckaygardens.org)

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## Irrigation System Upgrade

The drought over the last 10 years or so has taken its toll on the trees and other planting in the Gardens and the ageing existing irrigation system has not been able to cope. Past water restrictions have also not helped. As a result, Brimbank City Council has undertaken to upgrade the irrigation system as part of its 2014 - 2015 Capital Works Program.

Plans have been prepared which the Friends have reviewed, and the project has been put out to tender. It is anticipated the contract will be rewarded by 2<sup>nd</sup> December this year and be completed by 3<sup>rd</sup> March next year.

During the project it will be inevitable there will be disturbances to varying degrees throughout the Gardens, depending on the works required. To assist in the installation and after consultation with the Friends, Council staff will be temporarily relocating some plants, and it is hoped that overall damage can be kept to a minimum. Once the new irrigation system has been commissioned the Gardens will soon be reinvigorated and, particularly after we do some more planting, should look better than ever.

Ros Savio



## Early Images of the Gardens



Photo of Stone Lions in the Gardens - now missing (Gardens' Friend Mr Gilbert Bell remembers climbing on them as a boy, and being frightened by the spiders!)

