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### President's message

The current state of the gardens is a matter of great concern to the Friends' Group (see the other article on p. 4). In my communications with another Friends' President of a heritage garden, it seems we are not alone in having to work at getting the care for the gardens that we consider satisfactory, taking the message to those who manage the gardens, hoping that the history of the gardens is not lost or destroyed in the process.

We advocate on behalf of the residents and hope to make a difference. When you consider the potential of the space, you realise that much more could be done to beautify the area but it takes a change in thinking of those who can execute that change for this to happen. Do you value the gardens as see them as a unique to Sunshine? It seems to be that those who appreciate the gardens and use the space are those who wish to misuse the gardens. Take a walk down the path at any time and see for yourself.



What is the Friends' Group doing? Those who are dedicated to the care of the Gardens, a group of fewer than 10 who are struggling, at times, our voice is weak when there are few members to share the load. There must be Sunshine residents who cherish their heritage space who could join us to form a larger group of people to get the message across. That's why we have Trade Unions. One voice can shout out the message of change; 5 voices makes a louder noise. 500 voices would give a roar! Brimbank Council staff would be overwhelmed if that many people began to voice their opinions. It could be chaotic; it could also be a useful tool. Our founder recently demonstrated her commitment to the McKay

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Gardens by revealing her passion for the work. You have to be persistent and relentless, energetically so, even show your stubborn side.

What can be done to arouse local residents to taking an interest in the H.V. McKay Memorial Gardens? How can the membership expand to take in more people? I believe we could influence our neighbours and friends by positively talking about the Gardens to them in ordinary conversation. "By the way, did you know that the McKay Gardens is . . .?" Taking the message to the media to open eyes about the need is another way. Having events in the Gardens may draw others in. But the best asset of all is a set of gardens in full colour, trees looking healthy, neat and cared for, safe and welcoming; a space for passive recreation, even fitness fanatics, or simply appreciating nature at its best, that draws in the people. What sort of a Friend are you? Can you do it? Let's hear your shout!

Helen Reid, President.



## End of year visit to Williamstown Gardens

A number of the Friends enjoyed a very interesting visit to Williamstown Botanic Gardens on 28 November, hosted by WBG Friends group President Sue Murray and treasurer Helen Tribe. We thank them for the time they took to show us around and discuss shared concerns.

Like the McKay Memorial Gardens, the Williamstown Botanic Gardens are of considerable historical significance. They are “one of Victoria’s earliest and most intact botanic gardens” and have a “strong association with eminent 19th century landscape designer Edward LaTrobe Bateman and... with Ferdinand von Mueller and Daniel Bunce”. LaTrobe also designed some of the very earliest elements of the Carlton Gardens adjacent to the Exhibition Buildings in Melbourne. Von Mueller is of course famous for his association with the Royal Botanic Gardens in Melbourne and “Daniel Bunce, [was the] first curator of the Geelong Botanic Gardens”. The gardens were formally opened in 1860 and have gone through a number of significant changes since. Nonetheless, much of the original design and some of the original plantings remain. Currently, they are looking splendid.

With significant and ongoing Council support Williamstown Botanic Gardens has experienced something of a revival over the last 15 years or so. The Friends’ Group is very active and the Gardens has its own allocation of time for a Gardener with experience dealing with heritage gardens. This has made a huge difference to what has been happening in the Gardens.



An impressive display of Cannas in one bed bordering a path at the Williamstown Botanic Gardens, similar to those originally in the Sunshine McKay Memorial Gardens.

Although the Williamstown Botanic Gardens are older and more elaborate than our own McKay Gardens, many of the issues related to maintenance and public usage are issues that historical gardens have in common. A detailed Conservation Management Plan (2000) commissioned by Hobsons Bay Council guides all management decisions.

It was good to see how other heritage gardens in our area are faring and to meet members of other Friends’ Groups. Some of our photos of the gardens illustrate the difference a full-time gardener can make to the appearance of gardens.



As part of our visit we acquired a DVD of Heritage Victoria’s John Hawker conducting a guided tree tour of the Williamstown Botanic Gardens. This is available for loan to members.

For more information about the Friends of the Williamstown Botanic Gardens their website is:

<http://www.friendsofwilliamstownbotanicgardens.net/>

**Melinda Mockridge**

HV McKay Heritage Gardens  
**PICNIC**  
 120 Anderson Rd, Sunshine  
**SAT 5th MARCH**



**12noon - 4pm**  
 PACK A PICNIC LUNCH & A BLANKET  
 MUSIC, FOOD, CULTURE, GAMES  
[www.mckaygardens.org](http://www.mckaygardens.org)

**Saturday 5 March 2016** Save the date! The Friends' Heritage Picnic is on again- this time bigger and better than before! Treasurer Speroulla Christodolou has been working hard to organise a wonderful day.

"Come and join us for a free family day, the Heritage Garden Picnic on Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> March in the HV McKay Memorial Gardens at 120 Anderson Rd, Sunshine, from 12pm-4pm (can also access from walkbridge opposite the Granary).

Bring a picnic hamper and rug and enjoy the beautiful grounds of this heritage listed garden. There will be entertainment, kids' games, multicultural music, food vans and marquee displays. The Picnic is brought to you by the Friends of the HV McKay Memorial Gardens.

Everyone is welcome, we hope to see you there".



Heritage Picnic 2015

## ICOMOS Talk

Friend of the McKay Gardens, Melinda Mockridge, gave a well-received short talk in November, 2015 at the Australia ICOMOS (International Council on Monuments and Sites) Conference in Adelaide on the Gardens as a heritage site.



The theme of the conference was 'Fabric - threads of conservation: Social fabric, Fabric and Place and conserving fabric' and her talk, entitled 'Does a significant designed landscape in Melbourne's inner West have a future?' outlined the Garden's history, and development until the present time and looked at what might be needed in terms of community support in order that it continue into the future.

A key issue is being able to maintain the longstanding but frayed connections between the community and their Gardens. Events such as the Friends' "heritage" picnic are a continuation of a significant tradition of celebrating important events in the Gardens and community use for rest and recreation.



ICOMOS Field Trip to Harts Mill, Port Adelaide, 7 Nov 2015

## State of our Gardens

At the time of publication the watering system for the gardens, put in late last year has still not been switched on, although we have been assured that this will be done by the end of February. The dry weather this Summer has had a disastrous effect and the gardens have been set back significantly, and much of the Friends' hard work has been lost.

Members of the Friends' Group met Council officers, including CEO Paul Younis, in December to express our dismay. Cathy, Speroulla, Melinda and Russell also attended the last Council meeting of the year at which a question on Council's management of the Gardens was put.

A meeting with Council Officers about the future management of the Gardens (and its current condition) was held on Monday, 1 February. Representatives of Council explained the reasons for the lack of progress on the implementation of the watering system including difficulties with electricity supply. Further discussion highlighted the urgent need for revision of the 1994 Conservation Management Plan including the improvement of gardening and maintenance services. Brimbank proposes extending the staffing to two full days per week. Three further meetings to create a new Management Plan have been scheduled between now and 30 June 2016.

It is extraordinary and unacceptable that eight years after the Friends' Group was established there are still unresolved issues regarding the management and maintenance of the Gardens.

Melinda Mockridge



Gardens Management Plan meeting at the Church Hall, 1 February 2016 - l-r - Catherine, Speroulla, Robyn, Helen, (Neil, Tom & Christopher from Brimbank), Ros, Melinda (& Russell not shown)

## Damage to Heritage Gates to be repaired



Christopher Cook, Public Space Co-ordinator, Urban Design at Brimbank Council has notified the Friends' Group that the damage to the base of the Heritage listed gates which happened in 2013, during Regional Rail Link activities in the Gardens and was later noticed by the Friends, is to be repaired.

## Why not join us?



New members are always welcome!  
The annual subscription is just \$5.00, and you can join by contacting the Secretary, Angela

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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 10.00am.

## Like Us' on Facebook

<https://www.facebook.com/pages/Friends-of-the-McKay-Gardens/808202102530759>