

THE FRIENDS OF THE WAITE ARBORETUM INC.



NEWSLETTER

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GENERAL MEETING on Monday 10 November, 1997 at 8 pm.

This meeting took the form of a walk through the Arboretum led by David Symon and followed by champagne and Christmas cake. It was a beautiful, balmy evening and everyone enjoyed it. However, the attendance was the smallest we have ever seen which has caused the Committee to reconsider the suitability of such an event for many of our members.

FROM THE COMMITTEE - Meetings on 27 November and 9 December, 1997.

- A report from TREENET tells of good progress in plantings of suburban street trees. The zelkovas which line the more elevated end of Devereux Road, Beaumont have done well despite a very hot, dry start to summer. Labelling the TREENET site and species in the Arboretum is still in process.
- Mitcham Council has produced an excellent brochure which describes a cultural walk through the historic areas, including of course the Arboretum and the Urrbrae House Historic Precinct.
- Did you know that volunteers have provided 5,000 hours of work to this Institution and that can be translated into about \$60,000 in gifts. The Committee lunched with the Volunteers in December, were delighted to meet them and see who was responsible for a large part of this work. Our admiration and thanks go to them.
- For some time the need to provide a distinctive starting place for walks in the Arboretum and an informative introduction to that area has been recognised. The Committee is looking at concept plans.
- Two exhibitions are being planned for 1998.

EXHIBITION OF PAINTINGS BY BERYL MARTIN & WOOD SCULPTURES BY CHRIS WELLS

In 1994 the newly fledged Friends of the Arboretum held their first event: an exhibition by Beryl Martin and it was as if a garden was recreated inside Urrbrae House. Again in 1997 from 3 to 23 November we welcomed her and with another glorious display of quite a different selection of her recent work. She was joined by Chris Wells with a group of sculptures and a small collection of spoons carved from pink gum. They were unusual and beautiful and the large gathering welcomed both artists with warmth.

Professor Mary O'Kane, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Adelaide, opened the exhibition, speaking of the Waite Institute and its contribution to Adelaide through its research and the flora to be seen there. Beryl Martin has a long association with this place through her husband and her own artistic work. Since her work was last gathered together here Beryl has travelled within Australia and the fruits of that journey were to be enjoyed in this showing. She revisited her childhood home by Ku-ring-gai Chase, near Sydney, and painted the bush flowers which she had loved then. She has travelled far and wide and about one quarter of the paintings were landscapes, a mode which she had not tried for a long time but there is no question of their success. In her artist's statement Beryl said, "*I am equally captivated by the beauty of all garden flowers which continue to delight me in their colour and variety.*" As we have appreciated before, Beryl Martin brings a joyous sense of brilliant colour and sensitivity to the natural world in her work. We are very fortunate that she has given another of her works to the Friends to hang in Urrbrae House for the public to enjoy. The gift is 'Ooldea Mallee *Eucalyptus youngiana*' and it was painted from the specimen in the Arboretum.

Barbara Crompton

THE STATE OF OUR FINANCES

Beryl Martin's exhibition of watercolours, "A Remarkable Flora" together with Chris Wells' Wood Sculptures were most successful. Over 1,200 people visited the exhibition in Urrbrae House and a number of new Friends was enrolled. There were present some people new to Urrbrae House who expressed delight in discovering this treasure.

Beryl sold 16 paintings, earning the Friends \$2,726 in commission. Chris sold 4 items and the Friends gained \$56. In addition to these sums we gained \$594 from Beryl's postcards and there were sales of Arboretum postcards, Charles Greig's popular echidnas and other items giving the Friends a total of \$4,235. This was our best fundraising event thus far.

Our bank balance at the end of 1997 was \$17,196. \$1,040 has been spent on pruning and other outgoings have been for printing and preparation for the exhibitions. These expenses will be ongoing but we will report other financial decisions as the Committee deal with them. We will be making some contribution to the Mallee Block.

Many thanks to Mary Tester for her painstaking work as Honorary Treasurer and for providing quarterly notes of expenditure and income for the Members.

THE BLACK FOREST

Darryl Kraehenbuehl's book, *Pre-European Vegetation of Adelaide*, gives an explicit description of the Black Forest which stretched from the city of Burnside along the foothills through Urrbrae, Malvern, Mitcham, Unley and so to the River Sturt at Marion. It was thus named because of the sombre appearance of the grey box trees *Eucalyptus microcarpa*, which was the predominant tree of this area and frequently referred to as Peppermint Gum. It existed with trees such as South Australian blue gum, *Allocasuarina verticillata*, *Acacia*

pycnantha and understorey plants including *Bursaria spinosa*, *Hardenbergia violacea* and a myriad of grasses. Sadly the destruction of these woodlands was almost complete by the 1950s but any remnants are to be cherished. Important remnants of the Black Forest remain in the Common at Beaumont, at Heywood Park, in the South Parklands and as street trees.

The good news is that a number of these native species has been identified by Andrew Crompton, a graduate of the Waite Institute, whilst walking through the northern section of the Arboretum where some very old *E. microcarpa* stand. When he contacted Dr Jennifer Gardner she was enthusiastic to preserve them by limiting mowing in that section to protect the existing plants and to encourage reseeding. This could be regarded as a project for the Friends of the Arboretum who may be interested to observe the plants which are currently marked at various places throughout the section. Andrew has promised to write a report for the University.

Among the plants discovered are: *Einadia nutans* climbing saltbush, *Atriplex semibaccata* grey saltbush, *Convolvulus erubescens* Australian bindweed, *Dichondra repens* Tom Thumb, *Enchylaena tomentosa* ruby saltbush and *Maireana enchylaenoides* blue bush.

Unfortunately a South American unwanted plant has appeared in one small area. It is *Stipa papposa* and requires spraying out. Perhaps there is a Friend who would care to approach Jennifer Gardner with an offer to spend a little time eliminating this weed. Believe me it is rewarding to have any contact with this beautiful and interesting place.

Barbara Crompton

1998 SUBSCRIPTIONS ARE NOW DUE unless you have joined the Friends since 1 September 1997. Renewal notices are included with this Newsletter. Donations to the Friends over \$2 are tax deductible.

NEW MEMBERS

A warm welcome is extended to: Mrs Marisa David, Netherby; Ms Sandy Gray, Wattle Park; Ms Penny Harper, Netherby; A/Prof. W. Roediger, St Georges; Dr Peter & Ms Angela Sharley, Netherby; and Mrs Merle Szathmary, Heathfield.

ARBORETUM NEWS

Several projects will be undertaken this year. A \$50,000 grant has been secured from Australia Council Visual Arts and Craft Board for artworks and associated landscaping in the Mallee Block. The concept plans were developed with the assistance of an earlier Australia Council Community, Environment, Art and Design grant for the gardens of the Urrbrae House Historic Precinct. The sculptures will form statements of entrance and also acknowledge Peter Waite whose generous bequest made possible the establishment of the Arboretum. At present, many visitors to the Historic Precinct do not venture down into the Arboretum as there is no inviting point of entry. The statements of entrance and soft paths will hopefully entice these visitors into the Arboretum where short loops to the watercourse will whet their appetites for further exploration.

A grant of \$8,000 has also been secured from the History Trust of SA towards developing a permanent exhibition in Urrbrae House. Interpretive panels will inform visitors to the house about the purposes, history and layout of the Arboretum, its special collections and the Friends and Volunteers groups. Display cabinets will provide space to exhibit items such as the Floras donated by Mr Eric Chivers, and timber samples, bowls and other items made from Arboretum woods donated by members of Woodgroup SA.

Last year an exciting new project was initiated with Dr Marcus Brownlow and Dr John Conran in the Botany Department of the University of Adelaide. Every year, Botany II students do a species study. To build closer links between the Botany Department and the Arboretum and to ensure that all budding botany students were aware of the Arboretum, they were required to select a species represented in the Arboretum. No two of the 43 species selected could be the same and each study included a confirmation of the identification using floras, a taxonomic history, species description, preparation of an herbarium specimen, research on the ecology and biogeography of the species and notes on its importance. In addition each student had to take a photograph and prepare a 150 - 200 word summary for public communication on the World Wide Web. The draft results of the students' studies are now on the Internet, thanks to the efforts of Dr Brownlow. At the time of writing this, the studies are still in draft form and require careful checking and editing however they can be seen at: <http://www.science.adelaide.edu.au/botany/arboretum/index.htm>. The final version will be cross-referenced to the existing Arboretum Website at <http://www.waite.adelaide.edu.au/Arboretum/>. The project was considered a great success and this year a new cohort of students will prepare studies of ~40 different species, thus developing useful promotional material for the Arboretum while providing a valuable exercise in public communication for the students.

Two more seats have been donated to the Arboretum. One seat, a gift of the Silsbury family, is in memory of Dr Jim Silsbury who was a dedicated scientist and passionate teacher in the Department of Agronomy at the Waite Institute from 1956 to 1991. The second seat is a gift of the descendants of Fred Couzens Snr and Fred Couzens Jnr who between them dedicated 84 years to planting and nurturing the Arboretum and gardens.

During the Adelaide Festival of Arts, the City of Mitcham will operate a free bus to take visitors on a continuous loop to the ten main attractions in the Mitcham Foothills, one of which will of course be the Arboretum. Trained volunteer guides on the bus will highlight the features of each attraction and visitors may alight at any stop to explore further. This should promote the Arboretum to a wide audience. The City of Mitcham also plans to erect permanent signage on main roads pointing to prominent tourist sites including the Arboretum and the Urrbrae House Historic Precinct.

Jennifer Gardner

IN THE ARBORETUM

Vitex lucens A. Cunn. Puriri [Verbenaceae]

All New Zealand's rainforests are of great antiquity and beauty. The podocarp - hardwood rainforests of the North Island are luxuriantly evergreen with a dense undergrowth of shrubs, lianas and ferns. On the forest floor, leaves, mosses and lichens form a soft, thick litter layer. Along creek banks are mosses, lichens, liverworts and ferns and epiphytes cover most trees. Altogether they form a unique character of soft, still dampness. *Vitex lucens*, endemic to New Zealand, forms part of this mild, temperate rainforest. It is restricted to the northern part of the North Island from sea level to 800 m. It is common around North Cape especially in more sheltered coastal areas becoming rare by Poverty Bay on the east coast and the Taranaki district on the west coast.

Vitex lucens is a large attractive tree which, given ideal conditions, may reach 25 m with a trunk to 2 m in diameter. Some of the giant trees of the North Island are hundreds of years old with huge crowns of spreading branches. There are two *Vitex lucens* in the Arboretum at G8 and E 9 - between the Main Drive and Elm Drive about halfway up the drive. Planted in 1928 these are attractive, well-shaped trees about 8 m high.

The leaves are digitately compound on large, stout petioles to 12.5 cm. Each leaf consists of 3 or 5 'hand-shaped' leaflets, the upper three being 5 - 12.5 cm long, the lower two

shorter. They are shining dark green and leathery, paler below with clear venation.

Flowers are produced most of the year, in great abundance in spring. The red tube-shaped flowers grow in clusters of 4 to 15 at the tip of the branchlets and are most distinctive. The fruit is a bright red dupe - a seed enclosed by a hard, woody layer, the endocarp. These are present most of the year and attract many birds.

Vitex is a tropical and warm temperate genus of about 250 species of trees most of which produce excellent wood. *Vitex lucens* is one of New Zealand's most valuable hardwoods. In J. D. Hooker in "Handbook of the N. Z. Flora" wrote in 1867 "...wood much used and extremely hard. It is said to be indestructible under water." However the wood is difficult to work as the grain is irregular and uneven. The wood is used extensively for railway sleepers, bridges, piles and house blocks. Furniture and cabinet work made from *Vitex lucens* is equal to the best Italian or American walnut in both figure and general appearance.

Thomas Kirk published in 1889, "The Forest Flora of New Zealand." He feared then that New Zealand's forests could face ultimate destruction and he suggested extensive plantings because of the value of its timber. He wrote, "... it may be propagated by seeds or cuttings and is of the easiest cultivation. ... It has been cut out in many districts where it was formerly plentiful and will soon become rare and difficult to obtain in quantity."

Many huge trees, some estimated to be 2,000 years old, develop large hollows within their roots. These trees are sacred to the Maori people who sometimes used the hollows to hold the remains of important people.

Allan Cunningham, 1791-1839, described this tree in 1838 naming it *Vitex littoralis*, probably because of its mainly coastal location. I cannot discover when or why it was re-named *Vitex lucens*. In 1826 and again in 1838, Allan Cunningham explored and collected extensively for Kew Gardens in New Zealand. His name is commemorated in the specific names of several plants in both Australia and New Zealand. In 1837 he succeeded his brother, Richard, who was killed by aborigines, as Superintendent of the Sydney Botanical Gardens.

Mary Tester

HELP!

As ever we are grateful to those good people who help the Arboretum in several ways. There is always a welcome to anyone who would like to meet others whilst assisting with folding the Newsletter or serving at meetings or functions, gardening works or writing of your interests for the Newsletter. Please contact the Curator of the Arboretum, Dr. Jennifer Gardner or the Editor.

VOLUNTEERS AT URRBRAE

Following her appointment as Curator of the Waite Arboretum in May 1986, Dr Jennifer Gardner used her charm and enthusiasm to enlist volunteers to help maintain and develop the Arboretum. In 1990, while Prof. Harold Woolhouse was Director of the Waite Institute, the Urrbrae House Historic Precinct was defined and volunteers were recruited to do a variety of tasks in the house, garden and Arboretum.

Early in 1994, Jennifer recruited as Arboretum guides, a small group of people who were enthusiastic supporters of the Arboretum - Tommie Siekmann, Isabella Rawnsley, Anna Cox, Barbara Crompton, Mary Tester and Cate Paull. This group formed a steering committee for the Friends of the Arboretum, which was officially formed on 12 September, 1994. More recently Jean Bird, David Symon and Barbara Radcliffe have become guides. Monthly tours are available to the public with additional tours on special occasions such as Open Day.

There is always something special to be seen in the Arboretum at any time of the year.

Leon Camens was one of the earliest Friends of the Arboretum and continues to this day to be one of the most regular and hardworking of the volunteers, with his special love being the Arboretum. The watercourse and the unwelcome attention it receives from some visitors cause Leon more than a few headaches as he works to repair any damage. Fortunately not all visitors do damage. It was lovely to see one evening, a regular visitor to the Arboretum clear the fallen leaves from between the rocks at the ford, to enable the water to flow freely into the pond above the dam. Chris Lightfoot and her teenage daughter Lisa love the Arboretum and are happy to do their bit to maintain it.

Una Wagner joined the volunteers in July 1994 in response to Jennifer's invitation. Una makes everyone feel valued and keeps us all enthused about the tasks being undertaken. A great deal of chivvying goes on which adds to the fun. Una is the leading light for us all.

One of the first tasks in 1994 was the potting of lavender cuttings. Today the perfume from the lavender bushes can be enjoyed from many spots in the gardens. Una still corresponds with Kit Franklin, the American wife of a visiting scientist, who loved her involvement with the lavender project and propagation of seeds for the Arboretum.

In 1996 and 1997 there was a major influx of volunteers. Ray Reynolds joined the group after moving from his home in the hills to a townhouse. The Sensory Garden has been a special focus for Ray and it is a credit to his interest and hard work, while Ray has also made a major contribution to the rose garden.

Lorraine Nettleton and her husband decided that their home garden was too small for both to be involved once they were retired and Urrbrae House gardens have benefited from Lorraine's love of roses.

Margaret Daly and Flo Mosely have been great stalwarts of the volunteer program. Often early on the scene on our regular Tuesday mornings they exceeded all expectation when we were coping with the distribution of huge bales of pea straw around the gardens. We really valued all the available manpower as well as womenpower on those occasions.

Joan Kellerher was finding her volunteer effort of washing dishes for the Royal Adelaide Hospital Canteen uninspiring when Jennifer Gardner met her at a luncheon and suggested she might find the Urrbrae House gardens more enjoyable. And so we have gained the valuable support of Joan.

A very welcome cup of tea is the gathering point for all the volunteers, regardless of where they are working. Thelma Fuss is our wonderful 'tea lady' who is much appreciated by us all.

While in Urrbrae House for our 'cuppa', we always admire the work of the volunteers who arrange the flowers in the house so creatively. It is a special treat to see the lovely arrangements of Kath Freeman, Lesley Lamb and Jeannie Moffatt. Long may they continue to delight us.

Besides the work outside there is always clerical work to be completed and Deidre Skinner is invaluable in this capacity. Also we are fortunate to have the help of Betty Ashton to assist with indexing the archives at Urrbrae House. Sometimes it is all hands needed to fold and envelope this Newsletter.

Torban Davidson comes on Fridays or Saturdays to give the donated palm and cycad collection his tender loving care. It has been interesting to see these special plants become established since their planting from 1994 to 1997 along the watercourse. You can imagine our horror on hearing that several of the more valuable specimens were missing one morning.

We welcomed Ralph White early in 1997 whilst he was looking for work and we are pleased to learn that he is now doing a horticultural course. We wish him well.

Colin and Cicely Bungey joined the ranks of the volunteers following a suggestion of Isabella, an Arboretum guide. It has given them great pleasure to be involved with the friendly group of volunteers while doing something they love. Colin has undertaken responsibility for the Museum garden and has watched it develop with great interest.

More recent volunteers who joined late in 1997 include Pat Abbott who is a Friend of the Arboretum and Marlene Lloyd whose father and grandfather, the two Fred Couzens, were successively head gardeners for Peter Waite and the Waite Institute. [More of that in our next Newsletter - Ed.]

More volunteers would be warmly welcomed. We heartily recommend it.

Cicely Bungey

FORTHCOMING EVENTS AND DIARY DATES 1998

9 February at 8 pm in Urrbrae House

At this meeting, the first General Meeting for this year, we will hear one of our members, Richard Nolan, who will speak on **Trees from Mediterranean Climates** and make reference to the Arboretum collection. Some of the slides illustrating his talk were taken on his recent trip as a Churchill Fellow in which capacity Richard visited California, Spain, the Middle East and South Africa. It will be most interesting to hear of his horticultural experiences.

22 February, 1 & 8 March - Fringe Festival Coffee Concerts

For the fourth successive Festival we will be holding these popular events which comprise a one hour recital of chamber music (in the Coach House), refreshments, and a guided walk through the Arboretum. For more information phone Peggy in Urrbrae House on 8303.7497.

27 April at 8 pm in Urrbrae House - Annual General Meeting

Another member of the Friends, **David Lawry**, will speak on his recent visit to Shanghai and the tree trials being undertaken there using Australian expertise.

10 August at 8 pm in Urrbrae House - General Meeting

Andrew Crompton will speak on **Greening the Freeway Projects** and **Native Grasses in the Arboretum**.

9 November - General Meeting

Bill Barker, Robyn Barker and Laurie Haegi will give a talk on **Hakeas** and a guided walk through the Arboretum Hakea collection. Time tbc.

29 September - 4 October in Urrbrae House

Woodgroup SA Exhibition "The Devil at Waite" will feature more sculpture and woodcraft made from timbers collected at the Devil's Elbow and the Waite Arboretum.

15 November - 6 December in Urrbrae House

A group Exhibition of scientific artworks and illustrations. Artists will include: Beth Chandler, Jan Woodman, Chris Bigwood, Gilbert Dashorst, Rosemary Ganf and Silvio Apponyi.

Guided walks - first Sunday of every month. Meet at Urrbrae House at 11 am.