

Fagus

August 2017

The Quarterly Magazine of the Friends of the Royal Tasmanian
Botanical Gardens



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* Tasmanian Native Grasslands * Vale Sally Dabner * Protecting Tasmania's Coral
Pea * Member's Profile * Springtime in Paris * Favourite Garden Icon * Threatened
Species * Friends' News**

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Mike Maskrey; Lorraine Perrins; Jenny Parrott

Our Cover

Winter sunshine filters through the fronds of manferns above the lily pond.

Photo: Mike Maskrey

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From the Editor's Desk

Welcome to the August issue of *Fagus*. I hope that you all find it a lift as we start to emerge from the winter season and look forward to spring. As always, we have a rich assortment of reports and articles on offer. In his Director's Report, Gary Davies provides us with a snapshot of how the Gardens have performed during the 2016-17 financial year and declares them to have been highly successful. He also alludes to the discussions between the Board of the RTBG and the Friends Executive on the ongoing role of Friends, a topic that our President, Joan Booth, takes up and expands on in her President's Report. Both Gary and Joan look forward to the start of the Bicentennial Projects, aided by the donation of \$42,000 from Friends towards the Lily Pad project. Although Joan is away in Queensland at present, she nevertheless assures us that she has the Gardens very much in her thoughts.

So now to the articles: Jenny Parrott's article covers the period in the Garden's history (1834-1840) when Tobin was Superintendent and examines Tobin's relationships with various government officials of the time. We are treated to two excellent articles from horticultural staff from the RTBG. Chris Lang, Curator of Tasmanian Flora, follows up the talk he presented to a General Meeting of Friends in March with an article on Tasmanian Native Grasslands, a subject very close to his heart. Lorraine Perrins, Curator of Conservation Collection and Subantarctic Flora, writes on the highs and lows of protecting Tasmania's Purple Coral Pea (*Harbengia violacea*). I was absent in Europe when the May issue of *Fagus* went to press, so I owe a debt of gratitude to Kay Hayes for taking on extra duties to ensure that it was finished off properly and ended up in your post box or on your computer. However, some of my time away was profitably spent in various gardens, both on the Continent and in the UK. This issue has the first of three articles to come out of that trip. It explores two great gardens of Paris, *Jardin des Tuileries* and *Jardin des Plantes*. Images from the trip may also crop up in *Fagus* from time to time. The Favourite Garden Icon chosen for this issue is the shelter known as the Wombat One pavilion, a popular and truly 'classy' construction.

On the membership front, Aina Dambitis has provided us with a Member's Profile of Helen Cutts, a valued contributor to the efforts of Growing Friends. Last, but by no means least, this issue carries a brief obituary to a past President of Friends and an ever present stalwart of the Gardens, Sally Dabner. News of Sally's untimely death reached us while we were in England and we, like so many who knew her well, were deeply saddened. A tribute to her is offered on page 11.

Mike Maskrey

Director's Report

Once again, thank you for the opportunity of reporting to you as the Friends of the RTBG. Your partnership with the Gardens continues to be vitally important to the overall success. As stated by your President Joan in her report the valuable sessions with her, Damian Bugg (Chairman of the RTBG Board) and myself have resulted in an important "Going Forward Together" discussion paper which identifies key issues and makes key recommendations. Focus will be to progress the recommendations over the next few months.

As we have just completed the financial year, I thought I would briefly summarise key achievements of the year in my report.

Overall it has been a highly successful year as we have achieved a great deal, and at the same time achieved our outcomes within the budget. We in fact achieved a small operating surplus which bodes well for the upcoming year. This surplus has been achieved by having each of the Sections undertaking good fiscal discipline as well as achieving some savings on salaries. On top of this we have achieved more income than predicted from the restaurant which is good news.

In the last couple of months we have also been fortunate enough to secure useful extra funds from various sources. These include:

A Grant from the Hobart City Council of \$33,000
(\$21,000 more than the annual grant).

\$75,000 additional funding received from the Premier for expenditure on the Bicentenary.

In addition to these funds the RTBG is most appreciative of the kind donation of \$42,000 which has been put towards the Lily Pond viewing platform project and the redevelopment of the Sustainable Learning Centre.

Thus overall financially we are in a good position heading into the next financial year.

The budget which has been prepared for this year has set income at a reasonable level and allowed the maximum in expenditure in order to get all that we need

done in preparation and during the first half of our Bicentenary year.

The visits for the financial year have achieved another record with **461,000 visits**. This equates to **18,000 more visits than last year**.

Donations for the same period amounted to about **\$140,000** including gate donations of **\$83,000** for the year which equates to **\$8,000 more than for the same period last year**.

The Business Enterprise area has overall achieved a solid increase in revenue from last year's figures. A marked increase in revenue has been achieved in the restaurant which performed well above the target budget. Room hire also performed above budget and the shop achieved on budget figures, with only venue hire not achieving budget expectations.

The Business Enterprise Unit has had a focus on the establishment of a strategic framework to underpin future planning and activity. This includes creating a 4 year 'map' that outlines the focus areas annually to be able to deliver against the goals and objectives of the RTBG. The first tier aims to build the foundation, with a focus on brand development, research and consumer acquisition strategies as well as an initial increase on revenue and yield per visitor.

The Brand project has commenced and will aim to simplify and consolidate the brand attributes of the RTBG; this is supported by simultaneously developing an 'interim' Visitor Services approach to improve the visitor experience and enable increases in revenue, manage commercial partnerships, and understand research to better understand the visitor profile of the Gardens.

A strategic approach to working in partnership with volunteers and the Friends of the RTBG is also in progress, particularly in regards to the commercial operations of buggy and cruise ship tours to better support the work of the volunteers as well as increase yield and management of revenue streams.

Director's Report cont'd.

The development of these strategic elements will also ensure that the opportunity of increased profile and engagement with the RTBG during the Bicentenary are maximised in regards to being able to acquire consumer details and create opportunities to re-market into the future and become a sustainable, more self-supporting enterprise.

In the Gardens Operations area, a substantial new planting scheme was implemented during March 2017 in the long bed running along the roadway above the Conservatory. This work forms part of numerous new displays that are being developed for the Bicentenary celebrations in 2018.

The annual plant sale with the support of Friends and volunteers was held on Oct 13 & 15, 2016. Excellent crowds and sales again made this a very successful event. Ongoing sales of remaining stock were strong through the Botanical Shop, which added to the final

sales figures reaching approximately **\$50,000**.

The Bicentenary preparations, major projects, the book project, and minor infrastructure projects are all tracking along fairly well. Regular Bicentenary Working Group meetings have been held and things are really starting to take shape for our big year.

The Lily Pad Project continues to be on track for a September 2017 completion. A Lily Pad prospectus is now to be used to make philanthropic approaches.

The Sustainable Learning Centre Project is on track for completion by the end of 2017. An architect has been engaged to undertake design, renovations and additions required.

A big thankyou to all the staff, Friends and all volunteers for all your efforts during our busy season.

Gary Davies

Director

President's Report

I mentioned in my last report that members of the committee met with RTBG staff and Board members to begin the process of the formation of a partnership agreement. As a result of the session Gary (Director of RTBG) and Damien Bugg (Chairman of the RTBG Board) put together a Discussion Paper that was approved by the Board, for our consideration. The discussion paper outlines some background information and the current situation, identifies key issues and makes some recommendations. The recommendations include how to achieve what was set out and that includes the development of a management plan to link to the RTBG Business Operational Plan.

In brief:

The RTBG is reliant on volunteers inclusive of Friends volunteers to perform vitally important activities and functions in the Gardens and the quantum of this sup-

port role is substantial: anecdotally estimated to be approximately \$750,000 to \$1million worth of human resource time annually.

Management of volunteers is undertaken according to State Government policy.

This has led to new processes being established including the requirement for all volunteers to be registered to operate within the RTBG. Induction and other training is undertaken and volunteers are required to sign in when undertaking activities in the Gardens. In addition, the RTBG has an organisational commitment to provide the Friends and Volunteers with the opportunity for professional development and specific training.

The objective of these new processes is to both reduce risk and better align the work of the volunteer groups with the endorsed goals of the RTBG.

Recommendations:

- 1. Establish an Operational Working Group to manage all volunteer programs and ensure effective communication.**
- 2. Fully integrate Friends and Volunteers into the operations of the Gardens.**
- 3. Establish a model where all commercial business operations are driven through the RTBG.**
- 4. Develop and finalise a volunteer management plan inclusive of a budget to support the volunteer program.**
- 5. Formalise an agreement or understanding so that RTBG, FRTBG and volunteers understand the rights and responsibilities of the respective organisations.**

Should you wish to read the discussion paper in full, please contact me and I will email you a copy.

Plans for the Bicentenary celebrations are moving along and we were invited to send a representative to the Bicentenary Stakeholders Engagement Group meeting. Our Treasurer Kay attended this meeting along with representatives from other important organisations such as HCC, Tourism Tasmania, TMAG and DPIPW. Lots of ideas and suggestions were contributed and the meeting was deemed to be highly successful. Our donation of \$42,000 (\$40,000 from FRTBG and \$2,000 from a member who wishes to remain anonymous) has been handed over to RTBG Management to be put towards the Lily Pond viewing platform project and the redevelopment of the Sustainable Learning Centre

Last month those of you who are on our email list will have received an RTBG Brand Project survey from Red Jelly. I hope that many of you responded so that a good analysis can be done, and a clear picture of what the RTBG means to people can be formed.

Eileen has already notified our guides about the 2017 Australasian Botanic Gardens Volunteer Guides Conference between the 15th – 19th October in Canberra. The theme of the Conference is: “Informed Guiding: discover the mystery and magic of our gardens.” An added bonus is the timing of the conference to coincide with Flo-

riade in Canberra. Many of our guides have attended these conferences in the past and declared them to be informative and enjoyable.

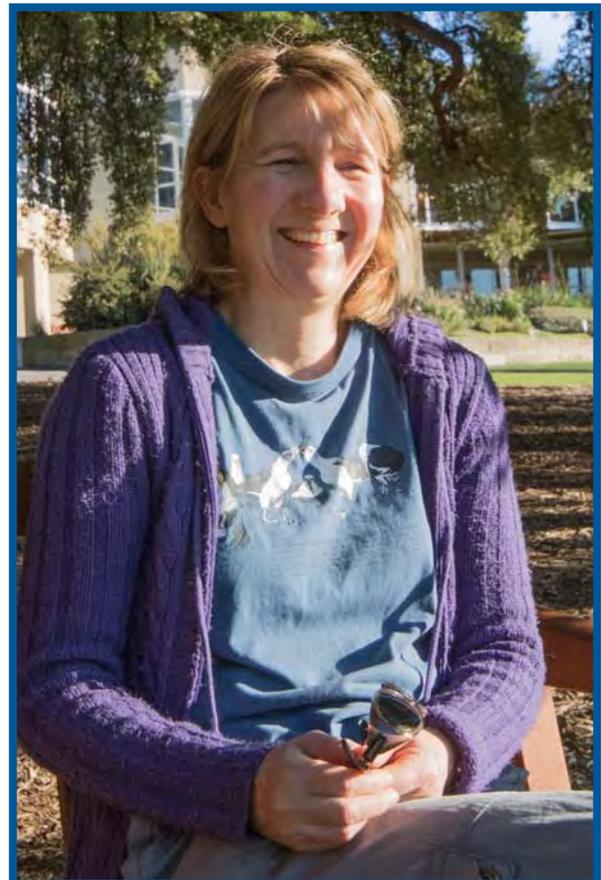
Don't forget our AGM on Saturday 23rd September. All positions will be declared vacant. We are always keen to welcome new members to our committee. If you feel you have something to offer and would like to nominate for a position, please contact our Secretary, Catherine King. Our Guest speakers at the meeting will be Megan and Dave Marrison.

Cheers

Joan



At our General Meeting on 3rd June Lorraine Perrins (*below*) was the guest speaker. Lorraine's presentation “From Garden City to City in a Garden” was about the beautiful Singapore Gardens by the Bay. Lorraine left us all wanting to see more with her stunning photos and engaging commentary. If you didn't make it to this meeting, take a look at the website www.gardensbythebay.com.sg to see why.



"...My humble abilities"

In the decade following the dismissal of Superintendent Davidson it is difficult to find much of a record as to the activities in the Gardens.

When Tobin was appointed Superintendent in November 1834 there were several major works in progress. Davidson had requested an extension to the Greenhouse, renovations were required to the Superintendent's Cottage, there were problems associated with housing the convict workers and a big project to enclose the Government Domain with a Park railing. It was in fact in November 1832 when Lieutenant Governor Arthur had written to the Colonial Secretary. *"...I wish to renew the Instruction which I have so frequently given during the last nine years for enclosing the Government Domain with a Park railing..."*

The enclosure of the Government Domain did not run smoothly.

The order to proceed with the fencing went astray and took a little over two months to reach the Superintendent of Carpenters in the King's Yard, and then there was no suitable timber available at the time. Nearly a year later, September 1833 a large quantity of timber was waiting in the King's Yard, *"..1694 Posts, 1684 Arras rails (?) 19946 Split paling..."* Colonial Secretary Burnett enquired as to *"... why the timber is not applied to the purpose for which it was procured and why the fence round the Domain which was ordered so very long ago, has not yet been commenced."* (11 Sept. 1833) It appears that the delay was caused by the Civil Engineer, Lee Archer having no men he could remove from other work to perform the work, and he recommended that the work be handed over to the Inspector of Roads. The Inspector of Roads recommended that the work should be done by the Carpenters in the Kings Yard who fortunately agreed. In February 1834 Arthur wanted to know why the fence was going on so slowly; the excuse was that there were official problems in releasing the timber from the King's Yard. A few weeks later another excuse was put forward: that either the Survey line was incorrect or that it had not been followed. The Principal

Surveyor had been taken ill. Finally Surveyor General George Frankland took over and said that he would be answerable to the fences being put up in the correct directions to the best of his judgment and that he would *"...take peculiar pleasure in laying out the drives..."* Work was still being done on the fence when Tobin was appointed in November 1834.

Before he moved into the Superintendent's Cottage Tobin requested several minor alterations, painting and repairs and these were quickly agreed to and accomplished in a workmanlike manner. At the same time the room at the Superintendent's Cottage, previously used to accommodate the twelve men who worked in the Gardens, was to be appropriated and used for the Storage of Seeds and Tools so that they could be locked away at night. This meant that alternative accommodation had to be found for the men. The suggestion that huts should be erected for the men was soon rejected by Lee Archer. *" I do not consider it by any means advisable to erect huts for the men employed in the Garden, their number being limited to twelve and there being ample accommodation for that number in the present Barrack, which I strongly beg to recommend they may still be allowed to occupy, as one of the huts in the immediate vicinity of the garden can be readily repaired and rendered sufficiently secure for the reception of both seeds and Tools..."* Tobin agreed. He thought that if the men were distributed in huts it would be *"...productive of great irregularity, and supposing plunder..."*

In October 1834 Tobin was asked to perform an audit on the number of men who were required to manage the Government Garden and Nursery. *"Hitherto the number of Men employed has averaged Seventy, I only require twenty-four and yet I am to be restricted to Twelve..."* Tobin felt it was impossible to be limited to such a small number and, although he had been told that extra men would always be available, that the *"objections to this would be too tedious to detail..."* and he requested that the number be reconsidered as otherwise he would not be *"..able to retain the good opinion*



you have formed of my humble abilities.." Arthur relented and ordered Tobin to have such men as were absolutely necessary.

Further information concerning the Gardens under Tobin is sketchy.

There were problems again in the supply of articles from the gardens, including seeds and Plants, being issued illegally and in October 1836 Tobin charged the Constable and Overseer with stealing a cauliflower to the value of 4 pence. The culprits were sentenced to 14 days on bread and water. An article in the "Courier" in December 1840 on the Horticultural Tent at the Regatta, referred to the "apathy" of Mr Tobin, Government gardener. He apparently showed nothing but ill-temper and refused to provide a watering-pot for the wilting plants which meant "*men were obliged to sprinkle water from their hands*" The article concluded by saying that it was understood that His Excellency, Sir John Franklin had dismissed Tobin on the spot. (December 1840)

Jenny Parrott

History Group Coordinator



2017 Blooming Tasmania Festival

Blooming Tasmania held its inaugural festival in September 2016 in the Albert Hall, Launceston. Although generally considered a success, feedback from visitors to that first event suggested three areas for possible improvement. Firstly, the siting of the talks and the exhibits in the same room lead to annoying distractions. Secondly, insufficient use was made of outside space in the City Park. Thirdly, there were not enough opportunities to purchase plants and garden products, possibly through space restrictions.

For the 2017 Festival, again scheduled for the Albert Hall, all of these concerns have been addressed. As a result, the event promises to be bigger, better and more 'user-friendly'. All talks and demonstrations are to be held upstairs in the Tamar Room, allowing for more stalls and exhibits to fill the downstairs space. Also, more use is to be made of the City Park. In addition, the John Duncan Room at the Albert Hall and The Studio at the Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery are to be pressed into service for various workshops.

There are a number of expert speakers on hand, both from Tasmania and the mainland, sharing their knowledge on a wide range of gardening topics. Representatives from the RTBG include Marcus Ragus and Natalie Tapson. Experts will also be on hand to answer visitors queries in 'Q and A' sessions. Workshops include demonstrations of Ikebana, watercolour painting and drawing, and botanical art. Cost of entry to the Festival is \$6 (free for those under 16) and registration for the workshops is \$60 (places are limited).

Blooming Tasmania Festival is to run over the weekend of 23rd and 24th of September. Unfortunately, the Saturday date clashes with the Friends AGM, which we would urge all members to attend. However, the Sunday programme may have attractions for some members. For full programme details and further information concerning the Festival or other Blooming Tasmania events, contact Jane Teniswood on (03) 62577583 or email windsong@skymesh.com.au

Tasmanian Native Grasslands

During March of this year I was invited to attend the Friends General Meeting as guest speaker to present a talk on a Native Grassland themed topic. I have a long held fascination for our indigenous, species rich grassy landscapes, an interest I attribute to many hours spent botanising in and around the midlands township of Bothwell, a place I once lived and had a strong family connection with for many years; more about Bothwell and its Gardens connection later. Our native grassy flora is broadly divided into Grassland and Grassy Woodland. I chose to focus specifically on Grassland for the presentation, a vegetation type characterized by the dominance of tussock-forming native grasses with very few or no tree and shrub species present. Native Grasslands are among the richest and most diverse vegetation types in Tasmania, particularly those on rich, basalt derived soils where upwards of 85 plant species can be found within an area of just 10 square meters! They are dynamic and changeable, demonstrating dramatic growth response to seasonal variation in temperature and moisture availability. Grasslands can be strikingly beautiful places with few sights more visually impressive than a landscape adorned with the quintessentially Australian red-tinged *Themeda triandra* (Kangaroo grass).

What are the types of Grassland communities?

In Tasmania there are seven distinct Grassland communities occurring in a variety of habitats ranging from lowland locations such as coastal fore-dunes, dry slopes and valley bottoms through to higher altitude sub-alpine flats. The distinction between Lowland and Highland Grassland communities is delineated at the 600m contour with their distribution/occurrence influenced by the geology, geography and prevailing climatic conditions in any given location. Tasmanian Native Grassland communities and some examples of where to see them include:

- ◆ Coastal grass and herbfield:
Where to see: South Arm Neck
- ◆ Highland *Poa* grassland
Where to see: Vale of Belvoir
- ◆ Lowland grassland complex
Where to see: St Lukes Cemetery, Bothwell
- ◆ Lowland grassy sedgeland
Where to see: Kellevie
- ◆ Lowland *Poa labillardierei* grassland
Where to see: Township Lagoon Nature Reserve
- ◆ Lowland *Themeda triandra* grassland
Where to see: Queens Domain, Hobart
- ◆ Rockplate grassland
Where to see: Tom Gibson Nature Reserve



Lowland *Themeda triandra* grassland growing on Queens Domain, Hobart

Tasmanian Lowland Grassland, comprising Lowland *Poa labillardierei* (Silver tussock-grass) and Lowland *Themeda triandra* (kangaroo grass) Grassland, is listed as critically endangered under the Commonwealth *Environment and Protection Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*.

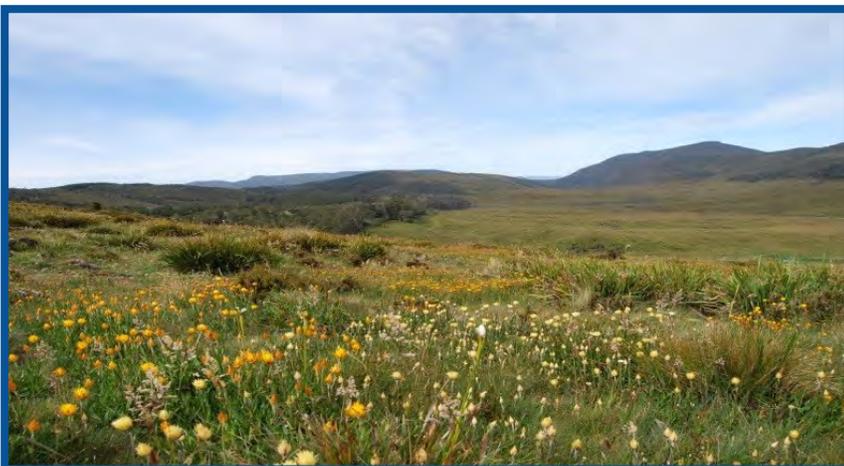
Highland *Poa* grassland is listed as a threatened native vegetation community under the Tasmanian *Nature Conservation Act 2002*.

Grassland species

Grasslands are dominated by members of the Poaceae family with *Poa* (Tussock-grass), *Themeda* (Kangaroo grass), *Austrostipa* (spear grass) and *Rytidosperma* (wallaby grass) the most represented genus. They are also home to an incredibly diverse range of inter-tussock dwelling lily-like plants, daisies, orchids and other wildflowers. Spring is their time to shine, when a combination of warmth and moistness coincide to encourage growth and a profusion of flowering. When in flower, members of the well represented daisy (Asteraceae) family are visually prominent inhabitants of grasslands and depending on seasonal conditions can turn on spectacular displays.

Not just plants!

Grasslands also provide habitat and are a vital support to a diverse range of native animal species including mammals, birds, skinks, snakes and various invertebrates. In fact, the proper functioning of Grassland ecosystems is highly dependent upon the activities of browsing mammals, pollinators and seed dispersal vectors. The Vale of Belvoir, (pictured below) located close to Cradle Mountain, is one of Australia's most important places for nature conservation, its species rich Highland *Poa* grassland providing habitat for one of the densest populations of marsupial carnivores in the world. It is also home to the vulnerable Ptunarra brown butterfly, the larvae of which feed exclusively on *poa* tussock-grass tips.



Conservation significance of Grasslands

Tasmanian Native Grasslands have undergone drastic reduction and degradation since European settlement and as a consequence are home to many rare and threatened species listed under the Tasmanian *Threatened Species Protection Act 1995*. Understandably, the early settlers considered the lightly wooded or treeless grassy landscapes on deep, fertile soils in climatically suitable lowland areas ideally suited to settlement and agricultural production. As a consequence, Lowland Native Grasslands are regarded as the most depleted vegetation formation in Tasmania with more than 95% having disappeared. Extensive clearing, overgrazing, trampling, ploughing, weed introduction and most tellingly fertilizing, has for over two centuries conspired to bring about the demise of native pastures. In terms of relatively intact Grassland, what remains is mostly sub-alpine with only small, highly fragmented



patches of Lowland Grassland found in country cemeteries, rail reserves, golf courses (the rough), roadsides etc. These unlikely places, spared the most damaging of agricultural practices provide the last refuge for Grassland communities and their constituent range of species. Fortunately, a percentage of native Grasslands are afforded protection as part of Tasmania's diverse public and private reserve system with places such as Township Lagoon Nature Reserve near Tunbridge providing critical habitat for Grassland species. The endangered

Tunbridge leek-orchid (*Prasopyllum tunbridgense*) is only known from the reserve and a handful of other midland locations where collectively, less than 140 specimens occur.

Above Top: Endangered Grassland paperdaisy (*Leucochrysum albicans* var. *tricolor*)

Above Below: Tiger Orchid (*Diuris sulphurea*)

How does the RTBG contribute to the conservation of our native Grasslands?

Seedbank

The Tasmanian Seed Conservation Centre provides our frontline ex-situ conservation strategy through the ongoing collection and long term storage of seed harvested from a significant number of Grassland species including those listed as rare and threatened.

St Lukes Cemetery, Bothwell

The effort to enhance the natural values of a remnant patch of midlands Lowland Native Grassland and recover a population of a rare daisy provides an example of successful conservation action, and the RTBG played a key role! Back in 2008 The Central Highlands Council engaged the services of the Gardens as consultant to help recover and increase a population of the endangered daisy, Lanky buttons (*Leptorhynchos elongatus*) (pictured below) and other threatened species in St Luke's Cemetery, Bothwell. Our work included: Species identification; training for council staff; provision of maintenance guidelines; provision of site interpretation; surveying of vegetation; monitoring and long term banking of Lanky buttons seed as part of the Tasmanian Seed Safe Project. A key action, initially recommended to Council by Greening Australia, was to implement a no-mow period from September through to mid-December to enable Lanky buttons and other native species to actively grow, flower and set seed. The results were nothing short of spectacular, our census counts revealing that Lanky button numbers had increased from around 200 specimens in 2005 to a total in excess of 2400 in 2012.



Tasmanian Native Collections

Our in-ground Tasmanian native displays and associated programs provide the opportunity to see and learn about a range of Grassland species growing in cultivation. On-site and online threatened species interpreta-

tion aims to educate and raise awareness about those listed as rare and threatened.

Grassland Remnant

Tucked away at the northernmost extremity of the Gardens is a small but significant Grassland remnant containing a number of typical native 'grassy vegetation' species, four of which are listed as rare and threatened, including three *Austrostipa* grass species (*A nodosa*, *A bigeniculata* and *A scabra*) and the narrowleaf new-holland-daisy (*Vittadinia muelleri*). Our Estate Team maintains the area in accordance with set maintenance guidelines.

Chris Lang,

Curator Tasmanian Flora



A display of Showy Podolepis (*Podolepis jaceoides*) at St Lukes Cemetery , Bothwell

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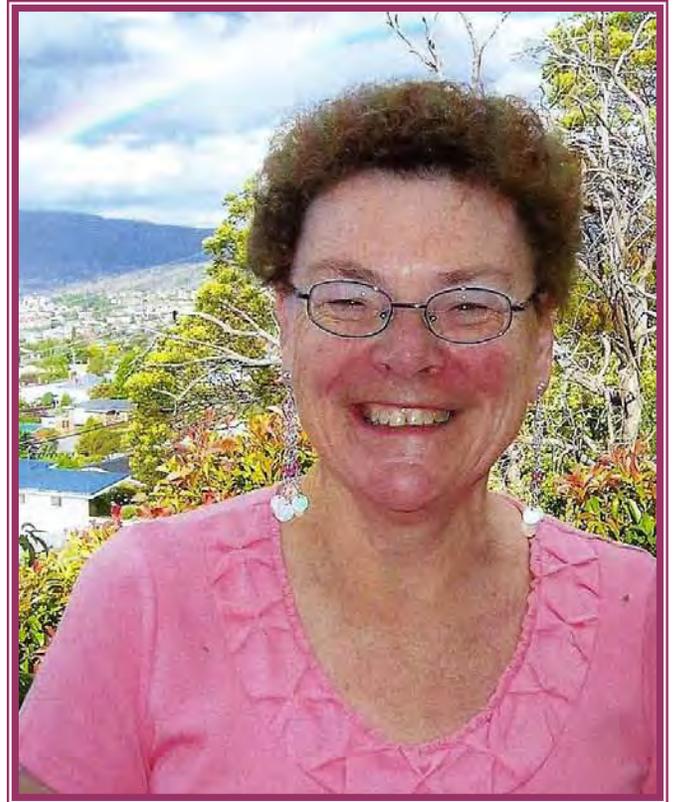
VALE SALLY DABNER

16/10/1949 – 21/5/2017

Sally and her husband Don joined Friends of the RTBG in 2001. It had been Sally's idea to give Don an interest following retirement, but it didn't take long for Sally to become deeply involved in Friends' activities as well. Together they gave many years of devoted service to Friends and to the Gardens.

Sally was elected to serve as both Vice President and President on various committees. Her teaching skills, knowledge of the RTBG and enthusiastic manner made tour guiding a particular skill of Sally's. In November 2009, she and Don organised a hugely successful conference in Hobart for Australian and New Zealand Volunteer Tour Guides in Botanic Gardens. The increasing importance of tour guiding at the RTBG has evolved from Sally and Don's initial hard work.

Sally was a skilled wordsmith and photographer. For 10 years she edited *Fagus*. It is said, by her children, that the family dining table was taken over with *Fagus* material during production time.



In recent years Sally continued to be a member of Friends' committee, serving during various terms as Treasurer and Membership Secretary. Sally was the "Go to person" for information on Friends membership and history.

Sally will be greatly missed by all who knew her, not only within the Friends' membership, but also RTBG staff both past and present.

For those of you who would like to learn more of Sally and her contribution to Friends, you can read her Member's Profile in the August, 2014 edition of *Fagus*.



Greeting visitors at the front gate with Joan Booth at one of the Gardens' festivals; a job Sally always loved.



The Pluses and Pitfalls of Protecting Tasmania's Purple Coral Pea

Hardenbergia violacea flower. Image: J. Wood



Hardenbergia violacea, (Purple Coral Pea), is listed as endangered on the Tasmanian *Threatened Species Protection Act 1995*. Although this species occurs on

the Australian mainland, DNA research has **identified** that the Tasmanian form is genetically distinct from the more common mainland forms (Larcombe 2006). The only known population of this species in Tasmania is restricted to Pontos Hills near Penna, Southern Tasmania. One subpopulation of approximately 44 individuals is being conserved by the Jansz Parish Vineyard and was placed under a conservation covenant by the previous owner Mr Tony Scherer of Frogmore Winery. A second subpopulation 1.7km to the south is now considered to be extinct (Listing Statement *Hardenbergia violacea* 2009). The *Hardenbergia* grow on Triassic sandstone outcrops, at altitudes of 105 to 125 m above sea level. The population has a linear range of less than 400m, which is scattered over an area of approx. 1.8 ha. The main threats to this species are drought and browsing pressures

Since 2007 the Royal Tasmanian Botanical Gardens (RTBG) has been committed to safeguarding this species utilising a 'seed orchard' of potted plants in our Nursery to harvest seed for long term storage in the Tasmanian Seed Conservation Centre (TSCC). We currently hold 3,734 seeds from the northern population and 10,000 seeds from the southern population respectively. Additional harvests of over 19,000 seeds from the mixing of both populations, has generated a total seed collection for this species to be close to 33,000 seeds. These seed collections are currently stored at the

TSCC and at the Millennium Seedbank at the Royal Botanic Gardens Kew, UK.

In 2010 the Penna Landcare Group were awarded a Tasmanian Landcare Grant to 'Develop an *in-situ* subpopulation of *Hardenbergia violacea* at Pontos Hills', and volunteers from Threatened Plants Tasmania (TPT), staff from the Natural Values Dept of DPIPWE and the RTBG translocated 76 RTBG nursery grown plants into 3 rabbit and possum proof fenced areas on the Jansz Parish Vineyard property. Since then these plants have been closely monitored and have resulted in

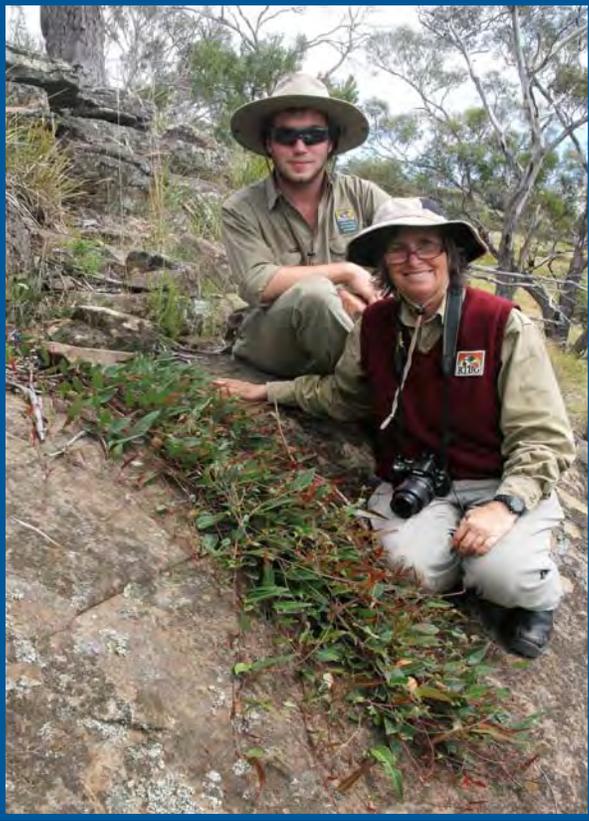
RTBG Trainee Patrick Fletcher demonstrating the growth of one of the translocated plants at the Jansz Parish site in 2014.

Image: L.Perrins



a 43% survival rate over the last 7 years despite no supplementary watering and extreme drought conditions in 2015. Many plants have also been observed producing seed pods.

Following the success of this project, the idea of using the ex-RTBG seed orchard genotypes from the southern subpopulation back onto the property where cuttings of these plants were previously collected, (thereby reintroducing this population back into the wild), had been discussed with the Threatened Species Unit of DPIPWE. The owners of the property Mrs Irene Briant and her son, Mike, have been enthusiastic supporters of this



RTBG Trainee Heath Butler and Horticultural Botanist Natalie Tapson with a plant thriving out of the reach of browsers on the Jansz Parish site in 2015.

idea, having fond memories of the original plants growing on the hills around their farm, and this year plans were put in place for a plant out of 29 plants. We were also keen to trial the planting of some pre-treated seeds, aiming to place them into inaccessible crevices out of reach from browsing marsupials.

A major factor in the success of the 2010 plantings was the spring rains that enabled the plants to settle in well before the warmer summer period impacted. With that in mind we began watching the long-term weather forecasts and were hopeful that there would be sufficient winter rainfall to assist the plants in this settling in pe-

riod, (there had been predications of a 50% chance of below average winter rainfall, so our odds were 50/50, and we were hopeful).

Unfortunately things have not gone to plan with the month of June being one of the driest on record, (our rainfall gauge at the RTBG only recorded 4.5mm for the month). Although we would water our plants at the initial plant out and also add water absorbing granules to each planting hole, an essential criteria for the long term survival of these plants was that there be sufficient moisture build up in the soil over the winter months to buffer the transpiration effects of the drying spring winds, and allow the plants to establish fully prior to the summer.

The current rainfall outlook from the Bureau of Meteorology is not good, with below average rainfall predicted through to September. So despite months of planning we have decided to hold off the plant out this year and tentatively plan it for next autumn/winter. It is disappointing to all concerned however we recognise that we must work with nature in order to provide the new plantings with the best possible chance of survival into the future, and do not want the considerable efforts of our willing staff and volunteers to result in failure. So these beautiful plants will remain in the Nursery whilst we patiently wait for a turnaround of the rainfall patterns and hope to resume our plans in 2018.

Lorraine Perrins,

Curator Conservation Collections and Subantarctic Flora, RTBG

Image of the southern site of *Hardengeria violacea*. Image: N Tapson



Member's Profile

Old Doctors Never Die

Old doctors never die, they just lose their patience.

That old joke doesn't really work for Dr Helen Cutts. As part of the general conversation in the nursery during Growing Friends we tell her about our medical problems and she listens sympathetically and carefully, explains about that particular condition and, when pressed, gives cautious advice.

Born in Peebles, Scotland, Helen studied medicine at Edinburgh University and there began her lifelong interest in obstetrics and gynaecology. Her father was a doctor and so was a grandfather. A trainee assistant of her father's went to Tasmania and kept in touch with the family. When she felt the need for adventure and change, she remembered this man and travelled to Tasmania and eventually settled here and made it her home. She continued to work in obstetrics and later general practice in the north west, part-time for ten years while her two daughters were young. Devonport benefitted from her energy and expertise. She campaigned and worked for women's health, family planning and then dementia care, sometimes against much opposition. She is most proud of her work in establishing the dementia unit in Devonport which opened in 1990. Today, she is very involved in the Dying with Dignity movement and once again strongly arguing her point of view in sometimes hostile situations.

Helen moved to Hobart when she retired from general practice in 1999. She joined the Friends of RTBG at this time and worked with other Friends in the nursery behind the Cottage, growing plants, selling them, raising funds. When the great reorganisation of the Friends plant area happened, she decided to move with the



Helen Cutts by the River Tweed

group into the main nursery area and keep on volunteering. Helen has kept her place in Growing Friends. Margot keeps the finicky sorting jobs for her specially. Ask Helen about Friends and she will argue strongly that all volunteers should be Friends, that the organisation should be autonomous, that it is impossible to imagine our Friends existing into the future without a secure income stream.

Studies about healthy aging recommend keeping active and engaged with the world around you. So, look at Helen. She goes to U3A classes, to Menzies Institute medical lectures. Her French is good. Links are increasingly being made between cognitive health and music. Helen began to sing in a choir at the age of ten and kept on singing regularly until she moved to Hobart. She is a keen concert goer. She keeps active physically with pilates, comes to Growing Friends, travels by herself and with family (there was a cottage in France in the '90s), and gardens enthusiastically.

As a girl, she learned to embroider and remembers sitting with the young maids in the evenings in her parents' house learning from them as they sewed. She kept her skills and interest over the years. When the Scottish Diaspora Tapestry project called for stitchers, Helen and a friend Lindy Newton took on the responsibility of working one panel in 2015. Our Patricia Hopkins also helped by embroidering Muir's coat. This project involved communities around the world in a celebration of Scottish heritage and culture, the people and places which connect Scotland to its global diaspora. Stitchers were provided with the linen, the outline of the panel and the wool. They worked on the panel "Thomas Muir and the Scottish Martyrs" commemorating four political prisoners who were transported to Sydney for sedition. The crewel work is clear if you look it up on the internet. Search for the project "Scottish Diaspora Tapestry" and all panels are visible.

So, strong minded, principled, meticulous; Helen continues to be respected for those qualities.

Aina Dambitis
Membership Officer



Stitchers Patricia Hopkins and Helen Cutts

Dedicated Growing Friends

One cold frosty morning some early arriving Growing Friends (*right*) helped Margot White to assemble the new outside benches for the side shade house (*below*).

These are designed for horticultural green houses, easy to assemble, light weight and at the correct working height. Up till now, staff have improvised with boxes, trays, cartons, bricks and home-made wire shelving. We are all looking forward to working at a comfortable height.



Springtime in Paris

A Tale of Two Gardens

The Maskreys had the good fortune to spend a few days in Paris in the second half of May. The horse chestnuts, which we had encountered in cities and towns throughout Europe, were in full bloom and spring flowers and blossom were very much in evidence. We spent pleasant times in two of the public Parisian gardens, *Jardin des Tuileries* and *Jardin des Plantes*. The *Jardin des Tuileries* is a huge rectangular public space occupying the area between *Place de la Concorde* to the west and the *Louvre* to the east, and the *Rue de Rivoli* to the north and the *Seine* to the south. The

name is thought to derive from the tile factories that previously occupied the site. It was created as a private garden by Catherine de Medici in 1564, but was later re-landscaped and opened as a public garden in 1664, and has performed this role ever since, though with several changes in lay out over the centuries. The gardens

today comprise numerous plantings of trees and flowers among lawns and broad pathways. During our visit gardeners were busy replacing plants in the numerous flower beds and borders, so things were somewhat awry. However, this provided its own entertainment. We were able to view the work going on within sight of the Louvre (*image 1*). An amusing fact we noted was that whereas the gardeners employed motor mowers to cut grass on the level sections, they did not risk men and machinery on the sloping sections, but employed goats to shorten the grass there instead! (*image 2*)

The Jardin des Plantes serves as the foremost botanical garden in France. It is officially a department of the Museum National d'Histoire Naturelle, and the site that it occupies also contains a number of large buildings housing exhibits devoted to geology and mineralogy,

palaeontology, evolution and entomology. The gardens themselves cover an area of 28 hectares (about twice that of the RTBG) and boast 6 greenhouses for public display and 22 greenhouses for the cultivation of some 23,500 species of plants. Over 4,500 plants are arranged by family in a one-hectare plot. In addition to the various garden beds, there is a woodland section, a labyrinth, and a small zoo. The gardens were founded in 1626, and first planted in 1635 by Guy de la Brosse, Louis XIII's physician, as a medicinal garden. It has been

open to the public since 1640. Today, the gardens serve as a school for botanists and horticulturalists and holds an herbarium with over six million reference specimens, a seed bank, and a botanical library. Over the weekend in May that we visited, the gardens were hosting a major festival entitled "Fete de la Nature", held under a series of marquees in the area

Image 1



known as the "Esplanade Milne Edwards" (*see map*). The marquees could be seen on the approach to this area (*image 3*). The festival was concerned with sustainability and biodiversity in nature throughout the whole of France. We were particularly impressed by the rose garden, re-landscaped in 1990 to include, as well as the rose trees, a number of large geological specimens from the neighbouring museum (*image 4*). One additional feature that caught our eye was a series of large posters celebrating the garden staff and their various roles and activities (*image 5*). An idea for our bicentennial perhaps? The Jardin des Plantes is easily reached by the Paris Metro (Austerlitz station) but it is far preferable is to take the 'Batobus' which performs a continual 'hop on, hop off' service along the Seine.

Mike Maskrey



Image 2



Image 3

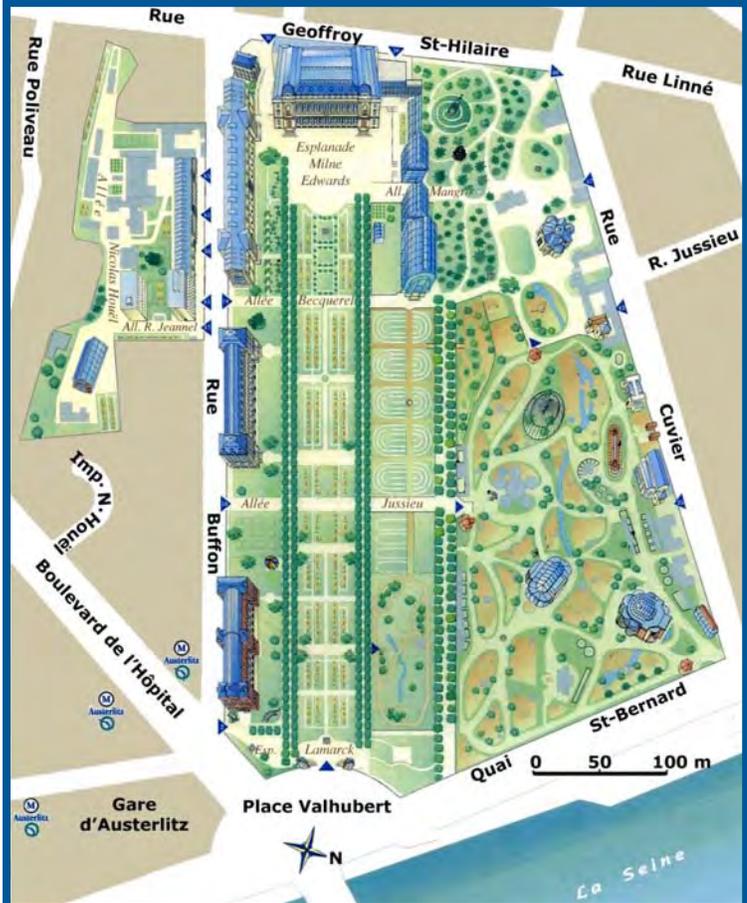


Image 4



Image 5

Favourite Garden Icon

Number 6 - Wombat One Pavilion



Visitors making their way along the pathway through the Oak Woodland towards the Eucalypt Forest in the north eastern corner of the gardens will encounter a structure that was built as a shelter but also as a showcase for Tasmanian design and Tasmanian timbers. Wombat One was developed as a project of the students and staff of the School of Environmental Design at the Tasmania College of Advanced Education. Much of the construction is in kiln dried 'Tas Oak' (a hardwood eucalypt) but the footings or 'stumps' are crafted from Celery Top Pine.

Wombat One was opened to the public in May, 1980 by

the then RTBG Board Chairman, John Howell. Since then it has been used as a popular meeting place, picnic spot, or place of relaxation and reflexion, while taking in the expansive views of the gardens and of the River Derwent. Unlike the Gazebo, featured previously as an icon, Wombat One has lots of information associated with it and its creators, both on site and on the RTBG web site. Its beautiful design features and the air of tranquillity it engenders is not lost on visitors. The only adverse comment I have encountered is from younger visitors when they discover that the structure does not actually house wombats!



Looking out towards the Derwent River

Phebalium daviesii (Davies Wax Flower)

About me: *Phebalium daviesii* is a shrub or small tree growing up to 3 m tall, it is endemic to Tasmania and is restricted to 3 naturally occurring spots along 4.5 kilometers of the George River.

Why I'm rare? *P. daviesii* only occupies about 0.03 hectares in total and has a population of approx. 23 mature wild individuals. This makes it very susceptible to environmental factors and human interference. *P. daviesii* is also susceptible to the root rot fungus *Phytophthora cinnamomi*.

What is the RTBG doing? We have grown plants and collected seed which is now stored in the Tasmanian Seed Conservation Centre at the RTBG to be used for future research and conservation work.

For more information go to www.rtbg.tas.gov.au/conservation

How you can help: Get involved-join your local land care group, Threatened Plants Tasmania volunteer group or join the RTBG seed bank volunteer group.

For more information: <http://www.tpt.org.au> or

James.wood@rtbg.tas.gov.au



Image: RTBG:



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It's Tomato Time again!



The Friends' growing groups have started to sow the first tomato seeds in readiness for the spring tomato sale. Soon the glasshouse will be full to the brim with a huge selection of healthy heirloom varieties.

This year's theme is Sentimental Favourite

Sale Dates: **Thursday October 12** between 11.00am and 4.00pm -Prelude
 Saturday October 14 between 10.00am and 3.00pm

2017 Annual General Meeting

The Friends Annual General Meeting for 2017 will be held in the Banksia Room, RTBG, on **Saturday September 23**, commencing at 10am. All positions will be declared vacant and nominations are invited (see enclosed form). The Guest Speakers for the Meeting will be Megan and David Marrison.

Neutrog Products

Order forms for Neutrog products can be found in this issue. Please return your completed form by the date specified.

Membership

If you know of anyone wishing to join Friends of the RTBG, they can obtain an Application form by going to the RTBG website (gardens.rtbg.tas.gov.au). The link taking them to Friends of RTBG can be made from the drop down menu under 'Community'. Alternatively contact our Membership Officer, Aina Dambitis (6245 1896).

For anyone who has still not renewed their membership, please note that your subscription became due on 30 June 2017

Our Next Issue: November