

## President's Report *continued....*

And on this subject, many of you would be interested to know that the Committee is investigating the possibility in 2021 of rescreening *'Five Seasons'*, the ravishing film on the work of Piet Oudolf.

The recent Zoom presentation by respected plant scientist Dr. David Beardsell proved to be quite a gem! So much fascinating information, all presented with good humour, and possibly enlivened by that occasionally-glimpsed glass of red! The Zoom-audience numbers were very pleasing – if you missed it, there should be a link soon on the website to the recording which was made of his talk.

It had been hoped that David would be able to follow up soon with a Grafting Workshop. At present, given the Covid situation, this workshop, as well as the proposed Summer Fruit Tree Pruning Workshop, and another on Techniques of Garden Photography, have been postponed until next year. We'll keep you advised.

As always, my sincere thanks go to the Committee for all that they do behind the scenes to ensure that FOBG remains viable and relevant in these times. Looking forward to lots of 'real' events in the near future! Stay well and enjoy our lengthening days and all that they herald in our Gardens!

*Sandra McMahon*

## Propagation Group Report *by Glenys Rose - coordinator*

In early February it became apparent that this virus thing was something to take seriously. Margi Petzke and I both live in the country and were perfect vectors for conveying COVID 19 to and from our communities and Melbourne so we decided to stop travelling. Shortly afterward the University and Melbourne were closed and only a skeleton staff has had access to the Nursery since then. We are very fortunate that our plants have been cared for during this time.

When we are able we will compile a list of plants that we can sell. This will be published on the FOBG website with an invitation to place an order. We will then arrange for electronic payment and a member of the Propagation Group will ensure a contact-free transfer outside the Nursery.



Propagation Group stalwarts Fran Mason (rear, now retired) and Glenys Rose (front)

We look forward to hearing from you all and in the New Year actually seeing you at COVID-safe sales.

In the meantime I hope that you are all able to get to some green space or work in your own gardens. Stay safe and strong and the whole State will be able to meet once again.

## My garden, and what it means to me by *Sandra McMahon*

When in 2008 my husband Warwick and I, after a long search, purchased a rather poorly built 1950's weatherboard house on a large block (1850m<sup>2</sup>, approx half an acre) in the east of Croydon, we had found precisely what we wanted: the size of land for a gardener was a no-brainer, and for an architect, a timber house was a far easier proposition to modify and extend.

The block itself is a large elongated diamond shape, with a small curved 'bite' out of one corner. This is the street frontage. The block widens out gradually and the house lies across the widest part of the diamond, 30m from the street. The soil is clay.

Warwick and I shared a passion for the *Arts & Crafts* movement, which was born in nineteenth-century England, but went on to spread across the Continent, and then on to the United States. We especially admired the diverse work of William Morris -as the doctor stated when certifying Morris's death: "he achieved more in his life than any other three men". Warwick was also inspired by various Arts & Crafts architects, chiefly H. M. Baillie Scott.



*Warwick's homage to the Arts and Crafts movement*

And so we embarked upon our dream. From the start, garden and house were treated as an indivisible entity. Every aspect of each was the subject of innumerable conversations over the dining table.

Only the footprint of the original house would remain. The *Arts & Crafts Movement* was a celebration of the craftsman, a reaction to the Industrial Revolution and mass production. The craftsman and the artist were to be one. So '*Woodcote*', as it came to be christened, took its inspiration from this style, and also from Edna Walling's *Bickleigh Vale* which lies very nearby, and from the dominant older style of architecture on Mt. Dandenong.

The use of recycled materials was a key feature of the rebuilt house: hundred-year old beams and other timber, old doors and windows: Warwick searched them all out and designed them to the millimetre into the new structure.



At the same time I set about designing an informal 'garden of rooms', which would flow around all sides of the house. Morris promoted the concept of bringing gardens closer to the house. He believed that a garden should be a floral extension of the house, linking it to the surrounding countryside. Whilst this latter is a luxury rarely afforded by 21st century suburban Melbourne, I have strived to create the illusion that Nature is barely being restrained here from swallowing up the house. This is particularly true of the native garden areas in front of the house. We were fortunate that there were quite a lot of large trees in the 'borrowed landscape'.



View through the Snow Gums in the front garden,



An inviting view into the native garden.

I made a decision early on to remove all non-native plants from the front garden, retaining just five trees in fact. The rear garden is dominated by a truly gigantic Dutch Elm. I also retained an Oak, a Golden Elm and two Japanese maples. Little else was worth retaining. This set the scene for exotic plantings in the rear areas.



## My garden, and what it means to me *continued*



*Allocasuarina torulosa*, cork-like trunks

The idea of a 'garden of rooms' was really appealing to me - it would provide the opportunity to grow a wide range of plants in sympathetic settings. These 'rooms' are not enclosed spaces. The greatest challenge has been to create *seamless interfaces* between the different areas. An example: where the native front garden narrows to meet the Japanese-inspired area which flows along the side and rear of the house, the transition is achieved by means of native plants that could be said to resemble Japanese plants in *form*. A couple of examples: the foliage of a small copse of *Allocasuarina torulosa* evokes that of Japanese Black Pine (*Pinus thunbergii*), whilst the weeping form of Acacia 'Mini Cog' suggests that of a small weeping Japanese Maple.

The enormous Elm provided an axis, around which other 'rooms' in the rear garden could unfold: a Japanese-inspired stream garden descending to a billabong, which can in turn be crossed by means of large flat rocks, leading to a lawn fringed with perennials and ornamental grasses. Beyond this, and not glimpsed until entered, is a rose garden, small orchard and vegetable garden. The intention is that the garden should flow seamlessly in such a way that the visitor might wonder how she or he has arrived at any given point.



A truly enormous elm.



A glimpse into another garden "room"





The other theme is that of water, either real or suggested. Initially we had a lot of drainage issues, with some areas being boggy for long periods. Warwick designed numerous ingenious devices for getting water away from some areas in the front, and bringing it to the rear. The pebble 'stream' which passes under the driveway resembles a dry creek bed, but in fact it conceals slotted agi pipes, which draw water (from the neighbour's poorly plumbed site) away from the front and eventually to the rear.

Expanses of pebble in the rear suggest water, and finally that theme is taken up by a real stream and the billabong at the lowest point on the block.

So what does my garden mean to me? It is of course my 'playground' where I can experiment with plants of many origins - old-fashioned and new introductions. All this is useful in my line of work as a landscape designer.

Rose Garden to the rear of the house.





## My garden, and what it means to me *continued*

William Morris sought to find renewal in industrial England by using traditional materials and local plants. Fast forward a hundred and forty years or so, and we seem to be coming full circle: as our urban areas succumb ever more to the 'heat island' effect, there seems to be an urge to create 'wilder, more nature-like gardens'. The current taste for meadow-like plantings, for letting perennials and grasses die off naturally, so that their seed-heads and wintry structure may be appreciated, is all part of this trend to create gardens that are more in tune with Nature. Karl Foerster described grasses as the hair of the earth. I can only imagine what William Morris's reaction would be to the current worldwide revival of interest in meadow-like plantings!



When Warwick died suddenly and tragically at the end of 2018, I found myself losing interest in many things, even the garden. Many plants were not pruned as they should have been, and weeds flourished....

Now, finally, as part of my urgent quest to create 'continuing bonds' I am finding renewed energy to tackle the garden and to complete areas of the house that were not finished at the time of his death. It always helps to have a deadline, and there are a few open garden days lined up for next year. So now I'm busy shaping, dividing, replacing, relocating, feeding, mulching - and standing back and thinking.

Somehow in the time since Warwick's death, the garden has matured silently and structurally. To add texture and colour to the transient fabric which clothes this structure is now my greatest therapy. And how often have I heard others say that gardening is the greatest therapy!

## The Twenty Year Club: an occasional series honouring our long serving members.



**Jean Corbett – Honorary Life Member** *by Michèle Adler (former Lecturer in Horticulture and immediate past president of FOBG)*



This image of Jean was taken in Semester 1, 2000 as part of a class photo. She was enrolled in the Plant ID 2 class. Apologies for the quality of the image – it was a Kodak instamatic

FOBG member Jean Corbett has had a long history with Burnley (as a student in the early 2000's and graduate of the TAFE Certificate) and as a member of FOBG. She became an Honorary Life member of FOBG in 2016. Unfortunately she is no longer able to come to functions, and computers were never 'her thing'. As a Burnley student, I remember Jean clearly. She was a wonderfully dedicated mature-age student, having spent her working life as an anaesthetist. At the time she was in her 70's. She attended the night classes. One evening we were out in the Gardens with a large spotlight and a battery on a trolley to view the plant list of the week (Plant ID class). It started to rain, so, furniture trolley and spotlight in hand we all made for the classroom lickety-split to avoid getting too wet. Sometime later Jean turned up (it seemed that she may have got lost) and without the aid of the torch she had gingerly picked her way back to base. Apologising to Jean for unintentionally 'losing' her she replied: " Oh, it wasn't your fault, I've just had a hip replacement and wanted to take it easy!" (in the heavy rain and without illumination).

Jean joined FOBG in 2000 (Membership #98). After graduating in Certificate IV in Horticulture (Gardening) in 2004, Jean became a very active member of FOBG, participating for many years with the group and also with the Friendly guides, helping to develop and lead tours of the Gardens. She joined the Friendly guides in 2002 (until present). She served on the FOBG Committee from 2005 – 2007, and in 2014 ran training sessions for new guides. Outside Burnley Jean bought a 2½ acre apple orchard in Red Hill in 1990, where she grew heritage apple cultivars, managed the orchard by herself, and sold apples in season to restaurants and at markets. She developed a lovely garden with many plants propagated from her time as a student at Burnley. She sold the property after 20 years in 2010 .

Jean gave a very erudite presentation for the Friends group in 2007 titled "She'll be Apples" where she gave a history of apples and brought samples of different sorts of apples, encouraging us to taste the differences between them, fresh, in pies, jellies and chutneys made with different cultivars of apple. Yumm.



Friendly Guides taking some time out in 2005. L to R, Jane Wilson, Ellie Bastow and Jean Corbett lunching at RBGM.



## Jean Corbett – Honorary Life Member *continued*

As special research projects, Jean developed history tours of the Burnley Rose Garden and the Rob Boyle ponds in the Native Garden, both of which have been a great help to the guides in general. Herself a guide she was always willing to show people around our beautiful heritage space. One of her trademarks was that she liked to call the Weeping Chinese Cypress (*Cupressus funebris*) the Coffin Tree. On an personal note, I was in my garden recently enjoying the flush of spring blossom and in particular noticed that some Gladiolus 'The Bride' had just come into flower. A clump of it had been given to me some years earlier by Jean when she was clearing a garden at the church she attended. It was flowering for the first time and I remembered Jean, how kind she was and what a good friend to FOBG (and me) she has been.



2015 Jean Corbett (second on the right) enjoying Xmas lunch at Como House with the Burnley Friendly Guides.

For those of you who were not around in 2008, here is a lovely recipe for apple cake that came from Jean's talk "She'll be Apples". It can be also found in Papyrus #43 Spring 2008 Newsletter.

### Sour Cream Apple Slice

#### Base

1½ cups self-raising flour  
¾ cup sugar  
1 cup desiccated coconut  
125g melted butter

#### Topping:

300g sour cream  
3 medium Granny Smith apples, coarsely grated  
2 tbsps brown sugar

Mix the flour, sugar and coconut in a bowl. Add the melted butter and mix until combined. Press firmly into a greased and lined lamington tin. Bake until golden (about 20 minutes) at 180°C.

Combine sour cream and apple. Spread over the base, sprinkle with brown sugar. Bake until topping colours slightly (about 25 minutes). When cool cut into slices.



## Burnley's Native Grasslands Garden by John Delpratt, Sue Murphy and Andrew Smith



John Delpratt

In the south-west corner of The Burnley Gardens, between the Science Block, the Native Shrub (Kath Deery) Garden and the rear car-park, is a tranquil area known as the Native Grasslands Garden. It is dominated by mature river red gums (*Eucalyptus camaldulensis*), remnants from a time when this was a bank sloping down to the Yarra River. The area underwent a dramatic re-imagining in the early 1990s when Melbourne landscape designer Robert Boyle was commissioned to install extensive and beautiful rock works, creating a network of wide gravel paths, rock steps and a

re-circulating creek. The creek alone is a work of genius, incorporating broad pools at either end, fast and slow flowing stretches, and a rill passing between beautifully-positioned stepping stones. The extensive plantings reflected a growing interest in the use of native grasses and grass-like plants for ground layer, understorey and creek-side vegetation.

Native Tussock (*Poa labillardierei*) – Poa lab to its friends – was the dominant grass species, with Tassel Cord-rush (*Baloskion tetraphyllum*) beside the creek. Separate areas were defined by low shrubs such as correas, Native Tree Violet (*Melicytus dentatus*) and wattles.



October, 2020. A stepping-stone creek crossing with creek-side plantings and Poa lab. The Poa tussocks are rejuvenated annually with a low cut-down in late autumn.



## Burnley's Native Grasslands Garden *continued*



October, 2020. Sticky Everlasting (*Xerochrysum viscosum*) rises above the native grasses. Its persistent, bright yellow 'everlasting' bracts provide colour throughout summer. Clustered Everlasting (*Chrysocephalum semipapposum*) serves a similar function elsewhere in the garden.

This was all happening late in James Hitchmough's tenure at the college. During the 1980s and early 90s, James was an influential advocate for the extensive use of native grasses and colourful herbaceous wildflowers (forbs – a word he introduced to some of his less well-informed colonial colleagues). His influence is apparent in the site design and species selection, and in the increasing use of diverse and colourful native forbs in later plantings. One of James' bolder decisions was to plant River Sheoak (*Casuarina cunninghamiana*) along the fence line. This species has a more northerly natural range and is not native to Victoria. It grows to a very large, suckering tree and it was always James' intention that they be coppiced to develop a dense screen. It is to be hoped successive Gardens managers are aware of this requirement lest they eventually resemble the massive stands of Cypress that surround some old homesteads, originally intended to be tightly pruned

September, 2019. The view from the northern entrance to the garden in early spring. The yellow-flowered Bulbine Lily (*Bulbine bulbosa*) is one of the species that has persisted and spread following its introduction as tube stock.







November, 2019. By late spring, Plume Grass (*Dichelachne crinita*) is in full flower, soon to be joined by various Wallaby Grass species (*Rytidosperma* spp.). The yellow daisy in the mid-ground is the nationally-significant Button Wrinklewort (*Rutidosia leptorhynchoidea*), which has naturalised in this section of the garden.

The relatively simple Poa lab plantings have stood the test of time and are still largely intact to the south of the creek. Because the gaps between the tussocks are susceptible to invasion by exotic perennial grasses such as Panic Veldt Grass (*Ehrharta erecta*), regular but undemanding attention is needed to remove exotic grass seedlings and wind-dispersed weeds, before they seed. Otherwise, the key scheduled maintenance is an annual low cut-down of the Poa lab tussocks with a hedge trimmer in late autumn, to refresh the foliage.

Nearer the Campus buildings there are various areas where enhancement plantings have introduced greater diversity to the ground-layer vegetation. The most seasonally-colourful areas are on either side of the pathway that passes under the tall Spotted Gum (*Corymbia maculata*) at the top of the garden. Here, the dominant native grasses are Wallaby Grass (*Rytidosperma* spp.), Plume Grass (*Dichelachne crinita*) and Weeping Grass (*Microlaena stipoides*). Interspersed within the grasses is a suite of colourful (and not-so-obvious) perennial native forbs derived from Victorian grasslands and grassy woodlands. The peak flowering display is from mid-September to late November by which time the grasses have over-topped most of the forbs.





January, 2018. By mid-summer, Wallaby Grass dominates the northern section of the garden. However, a number of forb species continue to contribute diversity and colour. A sward of delicate Bronze Bluebell (*Wahlenbergia luteola*) greets visitors, both human and insectivorous, throughout summer and autumn. The wide pathways allow for easy viewing and aid management by forming an effective barrier to weed incursions.

However, the attentive observer will still find much colour and movement (pollinators), with some forbs flowering throughout the summer. And not all forb colour is from flowers. The stems, foliage and inflorescences of the beautiful but prickly Blue Devil (*Eryngium ovinum*) gradually turn from green to a range of brilliant metallic blues over the hot summer months, and persist into autumn.

Similarly, the bright yellow bracts of the tall Sticky Everlasting (*Xerochrysum viscosum*) shine out above the seeding grasses throughout the summer and early autumn. Meanwhile, our small but important community of the superbly-named Button Wrinklewort (*Rutidosia leptorhynchoides*), a local, critically endangered daisy of national significance, continues flowering and producing seed from mid-spring to late autumn.

Once the flowering and seeding is finished and the grasses have browned in late autumn, the areas are cut back to a neat, walkable grassy sward for the winter.

Because of the diversity of species in these communities, it is critical that exotic grasses and other weeds do not become established to the point of seeding. This requires careful preparation and constant vigilance. These requirements are best achieved by starting with a weed-free site, regular monitoring, and physical weed removal by sharp-eyed and knowledgeable curators. The history, construction and planting of these areas will be the subject of a later article.





May, 2018. In late autumn or early winter, the area is cut down to a neat, walkable surface in readiness for fresh re-growth from late August. The trimmings are removed, opening up the inter-tussock spaces. This provides opportunities for seedlings of the autumn-germinating native grasses and forbs.

## New in this edition

This newsletter sees the launch of two new features, which we hope will prove as popular as POTW, if less frequent. The first is *Burnley Graduate of the Month*, which will appear on our website, and on Social Media, and which will showcase the huge contribution that Burnley Campus has made to our City, indeed to our State. We hope to feature Graduates from all our courses, from Advanced Certificate (no longer running at Burnley) to Graduate Diplomas and PhDs, who run our Parks departments, design and maintain our gardens, work in our nurseries, or go on to other careers, even in the Horticultural Media. Our first Graduate of the month is appropriately our Gardens Manager Andrew Smith.

The second will be an occasional feature, *The Twenty Year Club*, to honour our longest serving members, who have contributed so much to the group, and to the Gardens. The first of these is Jean Corbett, on page 15.

## The Burnley Book progress by Michèle Adler



*The Burnley Book* (working title) manuscript is nearing completion. It's been a long gestation but now on the home stretch, with the manuscript handed over to the publisher Peter Lothian. I've had some wonderful helpers along the way including for this last section, historian Ann Synan, the RBG Library staff, Philip Bertling and Sally Stewart, Kirsten Binns Smith (FOBG Treasurer and Guide) who contributed research on John Dallachy, Sandra Pullman (FOBG Founding member and Garden Historian) for her work on Ina Higgins and of course Jane Wilson, Andrew Smith - and many others.

It's been quite a saga but I've learnt so much along the way and met or contacted so many interesting people who have given their personal documents and images and freely shared their time and who also became excited about the project. For example, at the outset I never dreamed that I would have the opportunity to speak with Hilda Kirkhope's daughter, Millie Gibson's niece, J P McLennan's grandson and great granddaughter, Hank Swaan's daughter, re-establish contact with Steve Mullaney now in California or receive an email from the Marquess of Aberdeen in Scotland.

I've learnt how important it is to keep a record of who is who in images. Equally important is to record dates of correspondence and write down summaries of conversations because memories fade and details merge over time. Fortunately these days emails are dated.

It's been a wonderful journey, a whirlwind of information and such a challenge to distil everything into what I hope will be an interesting and engaging 'read'. Right at the moment it's too hard to predict a date - with access to archives and images still restricted due to Covid. We'll keep you informed on publication progress.

## Roundup talk also by Michèle Adler



Recently I used some Roundup herbicide to kill Panic Veldt Grass (*Erhardta erecta*). It was in flower and seeding. It's an annual grass and very invasive, often referred to as the 'blackberry of grasses'. I wondered if the Roundup application would be lethal to seed, so I contacted Bayer who now distributes the product.

A very helpful technician, Greg Skinner, told me that the Roundup application would stop further seed from setting. However the already-produced seed would probably still be viable. One may see a reduction of the grass seed's ability to germinate but a future application would be necessary.

Images of Panic Veldt Grass by John Delpratt





## Burnley Graduate Profile No. 1 Andrew Smith



**Years at Burnley:** 32

**Course studied:** Diploma in Applied Science

**Favourite subject:** Plant Materials/Ornamental Plants

**Favourite plant:** That's like asking, who is your favourite child! Favourite Genus would be *Grevillea*, favourite plant if pushed would be *Wahlenbergia capillaris*, as it flowers for 9 months of the year and just needs an annual cut down to the ground, cant get better value than that!

**I decided to go to Burnley because:** It was one of the two (the other being Ryde in Sydney) best horticultural institutions in Australia and since my fiancé got a job in Melbourne, Burnley was the logical choice.

**Since I graduated from Burnley I have:** never left!

I completed 3 courses at Burnley, the Horticultural certificate, closely followed by the Advanced Certificate (completed in 1989) and then it took me a further 9 years to complete the Associate Diploma (graduating in 2000), as I was doing it part time while working as a Gardener (under Gardens Manager, Phil Tulk) at Burnley. When Phil left in January 2001, the other full time Gardener (Tricia Mooney) and I job shared the Acting Garden Manager role, until Tricia left at the end of 2001, when I took on the responsibility.

The early part of the 2000s at Burnley were quite challenging, due to the combination of drought water restrictions and a stale-mate on the funding and staffing responsibility of the Gardens between the School/Campus and the University Property and Campus Services department, which resulted in the Gardens looking their worst in living memory. The annual \$16,000 operational budget of the Gardens in the early 2000s and restriction of less than two FTE gardener positions by the School/Campus forced me to rely on the Friends of Burnley Gardens for volunteer labour and funding of capital replacement for the Gardens. Basic items like upgrading of irrigation controllers and replacing of fallen down pergolas were denied funding by the School/Campus, thankfully the Friends stepped up and agreed to fund them.

*"Favourite plant: That's like asking, who is your favourite child!"*



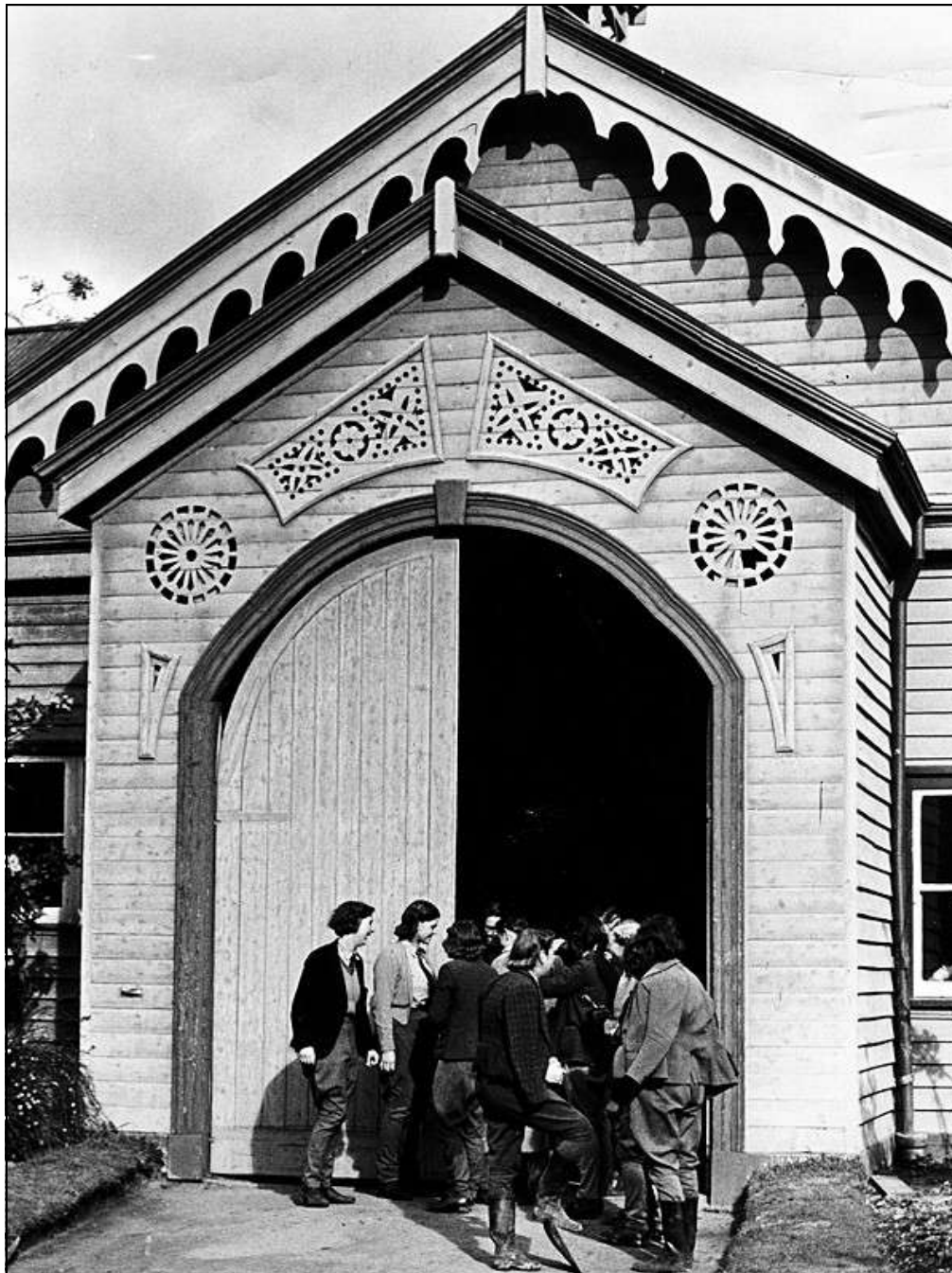
## **Burnley Graduate Profile No. 1 Andrew Smith –*continued***

This FOBG funding has gone from strength to strength over the last 15 years and has been an enormous contributor to improving the infrastructure and aesthetics of the Gardens, with funding projects such as re-building the Luffmann ponds, re-furbishing the Native Garden Mud Hut, renovating the Sunken Gardens Ponds and paving and the installation of the Ornamental Gates, Sugar Gum table and Wisteria Walkway, dwarfing the previous funding of possum guards, pergolas, irrigation controllers and garden benches.

I was sceptical of the success of using contractor gardeners for maintaining the Burnley Gardens but the labour force change over the last decade has seen the overall presentation of the Gardens greatly improve. The fact that the best gardeners the Contractor employed were Burnley trained re-enforced my high regard of Burnley Graduates, something I'm very proud to be part of. The calibre and talent of the lecturers and mentors Burnley has provided to graduates is impressive and long. From all fields; nursery, arboriculture, engineering, landscape construction, ornamental horticulture, ecology, research and plant use and identification; the over-arching educational take-home message is to ask questions and make decisions based on sound, scientific assumptions.

***Andrew's profile*** is the first in our new series of graduate profiles that will be published on our website and on our Facebook page each month. We hope to highlight graduates from the many courses that have produced graduates over the years, from our Advanced Certificates to our Graduate Diplomas and PhDs. Keep a look out in November for the next one!





The Pavilion (nick-named "The Elephant House") - Burnley before the Main Building was built. Thanks to Jane Wilson for this image from the archives.

***NEWSLETTER  
OF THE  
FRIENDS OF  
BURNLEY  
GARDENS***

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