

Fetherston Gardens Friends

2014 AGM

11 September 2014

The AGM was attended by 12 people. Reports were presented by the convener, Trevor Wilson and by the Working Bee Coordinator, Lesley Pattinson.

The committee for 2014-15 will be:

Convener – Trevor Wilson; Working Bee Coordinator – Lesley Pattinson; Secretary – Mal Ferguson; Newsletter Editor – Ryl Parker; Members: Gina Howlett; Paulene Cornish; Rosemary Drabsch.

FETHERSTON GARDENS FRIENDS FGF AGM 11 SEPTEMBER 2014 REPORT ON ACTIVITIES FOR 2013-14 BY TREVOR WILSON, CONVENOR, FETHERSTON GARDENS FRIENDS

- The gardens were opened to the public for the first time on 12 October 2013, with TAMS Minister Shane Rattenbury officiating. Local MP Gai Brodtmann was present. Members of the Fetherston family had come from the US, from Western Australia, Queensland and Victoria. Minister Rattenbury and the Fetherston family planted commemorative trees to mark the occasion. About 70 people were present. It was a beautiful clear, cool day. Catering for morning tea for all was accomplished by a great collective effort among FGF. The event was covered by *The Chronicle*.
- Although still not widely known among the public, the gardens are gradually becoming more of a feature of community life in Canberra, albeit it a modest feature. Local community groups are starting to notice the gardens and to take an interest in how they are developing. The concept of having these gardens as a community facility that is open to the public “24/7” and available for walks, private picnics, etc. seems to be soundly based. We have had almost no human-originating problems or incidents at the gardens to date.
- FGF have played a major role in ensuring the continuing wellbeing of the gardens. During the heat wave in December 2013-January 2014, when the maximum temperatures reached 40 degrees C, FGF members organised watering rosters to water the whole gardens manually over a period of several weeks. This made all the difference to the condition of plants in the gardens, which mostly survived the heat wave.
- We have sought to monitor conditions in the gardens closely throughout the year, informing TAMS/PCS staff of any important matters affecting the gardens. This included three serious water run-off incidents

in September and November 2013, which led to some damage to the Native Garden and the pathway to the rear gate. FGF Committee members drop into the gardens from time to time to check out conditions and to keep the precinct clean and tidy for any members of the public visiting. We monitor rainfall and inform TAMS/PCS as necessary.

- The TAMS/PCS upgrade of the watering system to extend it to whole garden was completed in June 2014. This was done as part of an irrigation improvement program for public gardens and park across the ACT. The budget for this ACT-wide program was \$500,000. However, we are awaiting confirmation whether or not the watering system has been turned on.
- We have also continued to urge TAMS/PCS to improve the signage on Heysen Street and around the gardens. Better street signage is needed to ensure Canberra residents can easily find their way to and around the gardens. Better signage inside the gardens is for information purposes but also to ensure a high standard of health and safety for visitors and volunteers coming to the gardens.
 - We have printed more information brochures, and will be exploring ways to have these available for visitors to the gardens.
- Our regular Working Bees continue to be well attended, with an average attendance of 10 for mid-week (second Wednesday every month) and 20 for weekends (last Sunday every month). We only had to cancel one working bee because of poor weather. Our Working Bee Coordinator Lesley Pattinson does a fantastic job of sustaining enthusiasm among our volunteers.
- Relations with our key stakeholders and neighbours – TAMS/PCS, the Islamic School of Canberra, and Defence Housing Australia (DHA) continue to be friendly. Our Committee has regular communications/meetings with all of these. We also maintain contact as necessary with Orana School and with the ANU.
 - We have also approached some local companies with a view to encouraging them to make corporate donations to the gardens.
- We have started some outreach activities with some Canberra garden groups, emphasising the education role the gardens can play (pruning workshop – Graham Williams, ABC). We have organised tours of Fetherston Gardens by other garden groups such as the Friends of the ACT Botanical Gardens. Canberra media organisations continue to be interested in the gardens.
- Community Events at the gardens in the future?
 - We remain prepared to hold a free community event – such as a community picnic – at the gardens to show the gardens off to the community. (We had to postpone the event we initially planned for May 2014, because of infrastructure work under way in the gardens.)
 - We have had our first registration of interest in having a wedding on the gardens in October 2015.
 - We have investigated some of the options for services in support of events in the gardens, but would normally leave these arrangements to event sponsors.

- We still hope we can find the means to fund the construction inside the gardens of a small information building and public toilets (of the composting variety?) in the gardens. A building would provide a place to store our tools safely.
 - We are grateful for the continued support and backing from the Weston Creek Community Council. Our standing with the ACT Government is certainly helped by this strong WCCC support. WCCC assistance has helped us financially, with networking and relationships with other community groups, in hosting garden information on their website, and posting our public notices.
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Fetherston Gardens Friends

Annual General Meeting 11th September 2014

Volunteers Working bee report – Lesley Pattinson

The last 12 months have seen another busy and productive time for the Fetherston Gardens Friends (FGF) volunteers. The public opening of the gardens last October launched Fetherston Gardens (FG) and propelled us into the public space after 2 ½ years of weeding behind the fence.

My priorities are firstly and always to the volunteers and how we can best thank them, encourage, nurture and support their amazing efforts for the gardens. We have consistent numbers at the working bees, averaging 12- 25 people on Sundays and 6-12 people for the Wednesday group. Morning tea continues to lure us together. We have 121 people registered on our email contact list.

My role as working bee coordinator has moved a little sideways this year, as the distraction of new DHA development had begun with new, soon to be occupied homes, and a new community in our backyard. New earth moving construction work brings changes, and we have taken an active role in protecting the garden assets, our established trees and staying informed of development changes. There have been some issues around water retention on Fetherston Ridge/DHA land and its water runoff from the site, into Fetherston gardens. This had caused much damage to our network of ponds and garden areas after rain. The Secret and Native garden was damaged with landslip material and Woden contractors cleaned up the area, along with the damage caused to the ponds and paths. Currently remedial work is being done to address the environmental water issues on site with new swales and water diversion strategies.

Finding ways to resolve this runoff water issue cohesively and cooperatively between TAMS and DHA and FGF has been challenging and time consuming. It was an issue that ultimately needed to be resolved by the garden land owners, being the ACT Government TAMS and DHA. Our FGF relationship had been well established with TAMS. It was appropriate for us to leave these complex issues to be resolved at the appropriate level.

Focus moved to building a new relationship with our neighbour DHA up on Fetherston Ridge. We have established contacts with the Marketing team and currently discussing ways we can add value and build networks between DHA residences and FGF to enhance the garden and build community ideals for the residents.

TAMS have very generously implemented the Stage 2 Irrigation project for the gardens, earlier than we expected. This project was enhanced as summer saw 40 degree days, with our generous volunteer's hand watering attempts to save garden areas. The project was completed in July and will be connected to the below ground water tank collecting DHA water. The irrigation is expected to be in use this summer after electrical connections are made. We are very thankful to TAMS, as this will enabled us in replanting and maintaining the gardens, knowing we have water security for the future.

There are always many people and organisations to thank for their contribution over the past 12 months. Weston Creek Community Council WCCC is our mainstay, supporting us with a webpage, donation of funds to produce a brochure, information, advice and the encouragement to keep moving forward. With the support of the WCCC, we applied for an ANZAC Commemorative Grant to build a Gallipoli garden for 2015. We await the outcome of this and for its potential to connect us with DHA residents.

TAMS have been generous and supportive of the FG Friends and our partnership together is integral in maintaining the gardens. We are in regular contact and discuss ways we can best use our resources together for the benefit of the gardens. Parkcare PCL, have been very supportive also. Jasmine Foxlee of ACT Parkcare/ Landcare is available and collates our volunteer statistics. FG is connected to Parkcare. We have been the recipient of new tools and training for our volunteers. We thank her for sharing information that has assisted FGF with volunteer policies and useful advice.

Currently we are working on assisting the development of a new gardening group within the Islamic school. We have found our volunteer groups accomplish much together, building new friendships and taking pride in those achievements. The Islamic school is keen to start their own and together we can work on some garden areas that need some restoration.

Orana School has continued contact with us and next month sees a joint working bee in FG with parents and friends from the Orana School sharing their time and volunteer hours with us. Thank you to Gina, who organised this opportunity and sharing of resources.

FG hosted a pruning workshop organised by the ACT/NSW region Open Gardens Australia committee. This workshop hosted Graham Williams from ABC 666 Saturday Gardening radio program and provided the opportunity to share FG with the wider community and continue the teaching/learning aspect with participant's hands on, pruning the old espalier and fruit trees.

We have had the opportunity to present our FG project to many established ACT Gardening clubs and groups and recently an ANBG lunchtime lecture. These opportunities have spread the FG message and raised more volunteers. We are keen to continue sharing our restoration project to the wider community.

In preparing for 2015, perhaps it's time to consider and plan for our future in FG. We are very successful at our weeding and maintenance program and FG has been built on these very tasks with generous support and time given by our volunteers. We need to grow our volunteer numbers and learn of their skills and talents. We have many areas of the gardens and arboretum yet to be restored. There are many tasks yet to be accomplished. FG needs a LOGO, plant labels need collating and replanting. The list is long and we have opportunities to grow and develop the gardens, but we need people, shared skills, and enthusiasm to participate and take on responsibility for these tasks.

We are indeed indebted to all our volunteers and I personally feel very connected and proud to be part of the FGF volunteering team. As a community volunteer group we are doing well and thankful in this time-poor society, that people are willing to give and share themselves and their time so generously to FG. We are very fortunate to have such a wonderful group of people who give consistently to our working bees. Thankyou often doesn't convey this message well. Evidence of these efforts will always remain in the gardens, as every volunteer hour contributes significantly to the project. My thanks also, to everyone on the committee, but particularly to Paulene Cornish for her time and common-sense advice, support, encouragement and practical application in the gardens.

Our goals of Restoration, Regeneration and Renewal are the key drivers and will continue to propel us into next year with enthusiasm and hopefully courage, to try new ideas, to take on new directions and opportunities as they arise.

Gardening is an exercise in optimism. Sometimes, it is a triumph of hope over experience. – M Schinz