

COOLART

FRIENDS OF COOLART NEWSLETTER. SEPTEMBER 1983.

It has been quite a while since our last newsletter and there have been many changes at Coolart. One of the most significant for the Friends is that the Minister for Conservation has officially appointed a member of the Friends of Coolart to the Committee of Management. Marion Taylor who has attended management committee meetings as the Friends' representative is now a full member of the committee until April, 1984, when all nine positions are open for re-appointment.

Another important change is that our Warden, Graham Pizzev, and Sue, will no longer be at Coolart each Sunday. Graham needs to give more time during the week to develop and supervise new projects at Coolart - the extension to the bird hide, improvements to the picnic area and the stables, development of a herb garden, establishment of a Coolart plant shop with seedlings propagated from Coolart plants, and in the long term, the building of a specially designed auditorium. He also has ideas for educational programs for children and the establishment of displays in the house and the barracks. However he and Sue will be at Coolart on one Sunday each month, varying from the first to the last Sunday, so that Friends and visitors will still have the opportunity to meet with them several times during the year. They will also be present for any working bees or special meetings of the Friends.

A Vote of Thanks

Much of the progress made at Coolart is due to the voluntary help given so freely by the Friends of Coolart. We couldn't manage without you, and we thank you all for your efforts. Special thanks goes to the ladies who staff Coolart during the week. This is often a very lonely and cold job, particularly during winter, but they have been unfailing in their support.

Admission Fees

If you are a financial member of the Friends of Coolart and are visiting Coolart at any time, please identify yourself to staff on the gate or in the shop. This saves the embarrassment of being asked if you have paid the admission fee. Financial members of the Friends do not pay for admission, but all other visitors are expected to do so.

Mailing List

Do you know of any Friends or former Friends who appear to have been omitted from our mailing list? We would be pleased to have their names and addresses so that we can re-establish contact with them if they are still interested in Coolart.

Working Bee, Sunday, 18th September. Operation Eradicate Smilax

Volunteers are asked to be at Coolart by 10.00 am for a 10.30 am start, to be followed by a B.Y.O. barbecue in the stables at 1.00 pm.

If you have been on the Woodland Walk recently you will have noticed that large areas of the native vegetation are being smothered by Smilax, a rather delicate looking little creeping plant which is not a native and is fast becoming a pest throughout the whole of the Morningson peninsula. It produces bright red berries which are eagerly eaten by birds who then spread the seeds to other areas. Experiments at Coolart have shown that the best and safest way to deal with Smilax is to apply a pesticide directly to the plant with Wick Wipers. This ensures that only the Smilax and not any other plant is affected.

If you would like to help, come along on the 18th, bring some gardening gloves and a Wick Wiper if you have one. Coolart has a number of wipers but extra ones would be useful.

As this job cannot be done in the rain you may like to ring Marion Taylor at Somers, 059 82 1580, before leaving home on the morning if the weather is doubtful.

Art Show - A Spring Evening at Coolart

The Rotary Club of Hastings invites all Friends of Coolart and their friends to a Spring Evening at Coolart on Saturday, 8th October, 1983, from 7.00 pm to 10 pm. to preview an exhibition of paintings inspired by Coolart and its environs. A chicken and champagne supper will be served. Coolart will receive a share of the profits. Tickets, \$12.50 per head, may be obtained by writing to : Coolart Committee of Management, P.O.Box 84, Balnarring, VIC. 3926.

Cheques should be made payable to Coolart Committee of Management.

The Art Show, presented by two Melbourne artists, Diane Donsdöttir and Jean Gray, will officially open on the following day, Sunday, 9th October, and continue until Sunday, 6th November.

The Artists: Diane Donsdöttir, an American trained artist with some outstanding qualifications, will be having her first showing here. She has been in Australia for some years teaching art and it is hoped that she will make her mark in the art world as an Australian citizen. She has a fine clear insight of the typically Australian scene. Jean Gray is a Victorian artist of international standing. Preferring to paint the open spaces and thus help people to keep in touch with nature, she also creates images in other media. Jean has won numerous art awards and has work hanging in Australian and overseas collections. This exhibition will run concurrently with a solo water colour exhibition in Edinburgh, Scotland.

Annual General Meeting

Saturday, 19th November, 1983, at 2.00 pm at Coolart, following a B.Y.O. barbecue lunch. Further details of this meeting, together with nomination forms for the Friends of Coolart Committee will be sent out later.

Christmas Meeting

Following an impromptu but very successful Christmas in the Stables at Coolart last year the Friends' Committee have decided to organise another Christmas get-together for Friends on Saturday, 17th December, 1983, at 5.00 pm.

A B.Y.O. barbecue or picnic tea, drinks provided, will be followed by an opportunity to see the evening bird and animal life at Coolart and to enjoy Carols by Barbecue Light (not Candlelight) in the stables. Song sheets and musical accompaniment will be provided. Supper - coffee, Christmas cake, etc, - will be served in the house at the end of the evening.

Friends of Coolart Evening

A summer evening meeting for Friends of Coolart is planned for early 1984. Details will be given later.

Photographic Competition

Despite relatively few entries, the committee was very pleased with the standard of all the photographs submitted. The winner, in both black and white and colour sections was D. Kennedy of Kew. A special mention went to Dr Montgomery of Warrandyte for an aerial photograph of the original Coolart property. Photographs will be on display at the Annual General Meeting.

Warden's Message

So much has happened at Coolart this year it's hard to know where to start reporting it.

The first big Friends effort of course was the combined tree-planting in April with members of the Bird Observers' Club. The day was beautiful and 960 trees were planted in that mammoth effort, and provided with treeguards. Those who were there will recall a very pleasant barbecue lunch on the rear concrete, with our BOC friends. Coolart luck held through the following week when soaking rain settled the seedlings beautifully and most are growing vigorously.

Then we had an excellent effort by girls from Syndal High School, whose headmaster, Ron Eastman, an active Friend, brought them down on a learning excursion, the first, we hope, of regular visits. They identified, cleared around and treeguarded nearly 80 self-sown coast banksias.

Then, in August school holidays we hosted a group of young people from the Australian Trust for Conservation Volunteers who worked splendidly and installed another 250 treeguards in the beach paddock, digging out a sod of earth in that well-drained

and stored by us.

This is an experiment to develop ways of direct-sowing seed of local native trees. If it does not succeed, we still have time to plant seedlings generated from local native seed in those same guards. (The manna gums, she-oaks, blackwoods and scented paperbarks you planted in April were also from local seed-stock).

The A.T.C.V. group also removed an unsightly old fence that ran from the pine trees above peg 2 on the Woodland Walk all the way past the beach gate to peg 9 - where the stile and roped-wire section were.

The two builders we have been able to employ under the State Employment Initiatives Programme have re-roofed the Old Buttery, demolished the adjacent corrugated iron fence and woodshed, and replaced it with a low treated pine fence, opening a pleasant view of the Wetland.

They also built a handsome addition to the Minsmere Bird Hide, doubling its capacity, and providing a stepless access for wheelchairs, as well as two wheelchair positions in the hide itself, with no seats or shelves to obstruct access. When not in use by wheelchairs, this viewing position can be used by small children, who have difficulty with the height of the usual seats.

Under the E.I. Programme too we now have renovated the two small rooms in the stables and have installed a bench and hot water heater for use by lunch parties.

We have also demolished the old patched-on laundry on the end of the Barracks to expose a splendid outdoor Bread Oven, which dates back to the time the Barracks were built, circa 1860.

Finally, under the E.I. Programme, the old boiler-room at the rear of the house, a high, well-lit room, has been stripped of pipes, troughs, shower-recess etc., has been re-bricked and scraped preparatory to painting. A counter has been installed, and it will become a Plant Shop. We aim, with your help to propagate and sell plant-cuttings from the Coolart garden, together with herbs, as an additional source of revenue.

Still on the subject of improvements, Mick Hughes, a former skilled firebrick-layer, who works part-time, has, with assistance from trainee David Davidson, laid a splendid brick path from the picnic area to the former vegetable garden, which we plan to convert into a herb garden.

Because of increased traffic (over 27,000 visitors last financial year, up 5,000 from the previous year), earth paths were not recovering and were slippery in winter. Our aim is to provide an alternative flow in the direction of the stables, lavatory and lagoon to take pressure off the main lawn.

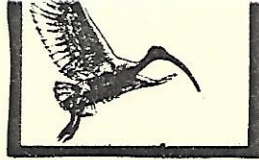
The path will be extended across to the steps by the ginko tree to prevent the lawn being denuded and to enable wheelchairs and the infirm to have easier access. I must report that Ken Roberts, our faithful caretaker, unfortunately had to take time off for an eye-operation in July. Happily this was successful, and Robbie is now back on the job. While he was away, his assistant Frank Busana, with support from trainee David Davidson, has kept the place in very good trim, and has attended every Sunday open day - an excellent effort.

Turning now to wildlife, I can report that the 1983 season is under way with a rush. Heavy rain at the end of June raised the water level in the Lagoon, causing sudden commencement of nesting by sacred ibis, black swans and chestnut teal. The first eggs were laid early in July, and the first hatchings began some three weeks later.

More heavy rain in mid-August sent the Lagoon overflowing, flooding the Wetlands (at last) and attracting even more birds. By Wednesday, 24 August, a careful estimate revealed some 350 occupied nests of sacred ibis, probably as many at one time as we have ever had. With some hundreds of non-breeding birds, and roosting straw-necked ibis, royal spoonbills and cormorant species, well over 1,000 birds are using the Lagoon at present, including a dozen cattle egrets.

But perhaps the most significant bird news is that several young ibis colour-banded on the Lagoon three to four years ago are now nesting at Coolart. Last week five Coolart-banded birds were sighted on the Lagoon, three on occupied nests. So Kim Lowe's five-year old colour-banding programme, undertaken as part of a doctoral thesis on ibis and related birds, is bearing fruit. We are likely to see more banded birds returning to Coolart to breed, and would like to hear of any sightings or recoveries. While mature adult sacred ibis tend to remain near the nesting colony all year, young birds disperse and may go far. Southern Victorian bands have been returned from the northern New South Wales coast. These observations seem to confirm the view that sacred ibis begin to breed in their third or fourth year, and that some at least return to their natal colony to do so.

In the native plant area, our war against rabbits is starting to bear fruit. In part of the woodland we have found a patch of some dozens of Small Helmet Orchids (*Corybas unguiculatus*), associated with several dozen Sun Orchids (*Thelymitra* sp.) which are yet to flower. Perhaps we can re-establish a little of the former floral diversity.



FRIENDS OF COOLART NEWSLETTER - NOVEMBER 1983

How many Friends have noticed the change of logo in recent Coolart advertisements? Instead of the tower, the new design shows an ibis in flight, and has been chosen to promote Coolart's role in the conservation and rehabilitation of an important environment, rather than the more limited concept of a 'stately home'.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

As previously announced, the Annual General Meeting of Friends will be held at Coolart on Saturday, 19th November, 1983, at 2.00 pm, following a BYO barbecue or picnic lunch, (drinks provided), in the stables and the picnic area. Give yourself time before the meeting to inspect all the improvements that have been made in both these areas.

Friends of Coolart Committee. The 1984 Friends' Committee will be elected at this meeting. As some members of the previous committee are not able to continue, we would like to hear from 'new faces' amongst our membership. The Friends' Committee meet approximately every two months at Coolart, usually on a Sunday morning. Their activities include planning special functions and activities, advising the Coolart Committee of Management on matters of concern to the Friends, and production of the newsletter. There will be a short combined meeting of the 1983 and 1984 committees immediately after the Annual General Meeting.

Coolart Committee of Management. All members of this committee, including the recently approved Friends of Coolart representative, are due for re-appointment in April, 1984, and it was felt that the Friends should be given the opportunity to elect their representative. The Committee of Management meets on the first Friday afternoon of each month, alternating between Coolart and Melbourne, and is responsible for the running of Coolart, including planning and policy making, budgeting, security, and employment of staff.

Nomination forms for both committees are attached and can be brought to the Annual General Meeting. If you wish to nominate but cannot attend on Saturday, please telephone the details to Coolart, (059-82-1333), or Mrs Marion Taylor, (03-568-0253).

The film 'Nearer Wilderness', featuring Graham Pizzey, will be screened after the meeting.

WORKING BEE

The last working bee for 1984 will be held on Sunday, 11th December, 1983, starting at 10.30 am. Before the hot weather sets in there are many outdoor jobs to be done, such as weeding, mulching, and tree-planting. Bring all the family, pack a lunch, and enjoy a day in the open with other Friends of Coolart.

CHRISTMAS BREAKUP

The final Friends' function for the year will be Christmas in the Stables on Saturday, 17th December, 1983, at 5.00 pm. Following a BYO picnic or barbecue tea, drinks provided, there will be an opportunity to see Coolart's evening wildlife and to sing carols in the stables, (music and song sheets provided). To finish the evening a Christmas supper will be served in the house.