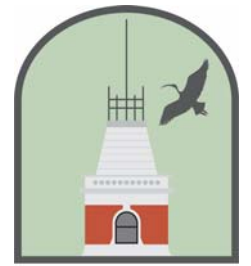


Friends of Coolart News

Autumn 2020



FRIENDS OF
COOLART

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Less than three months ago we were wrapping up our Annual General Meeting, the Committee was starting to plan for 2020 and we were looking forward to the completion of the plasterworks in the homestead. My that seems so long ago now! Shortly after our February 23rd AGM all volunteer activities were halted and we commenced our ongoing social distancing and self isolation.



Thankfully, Coolart is still open to the public to enjoy and with Autumn upon us, the walks and grounds are glorious, with plenty of space to ensure adequate distancing is achievable.

All buildings and facilities are closed until further notice and picnics and barbecues are not permitted however beyond that there are many things to see and discover.

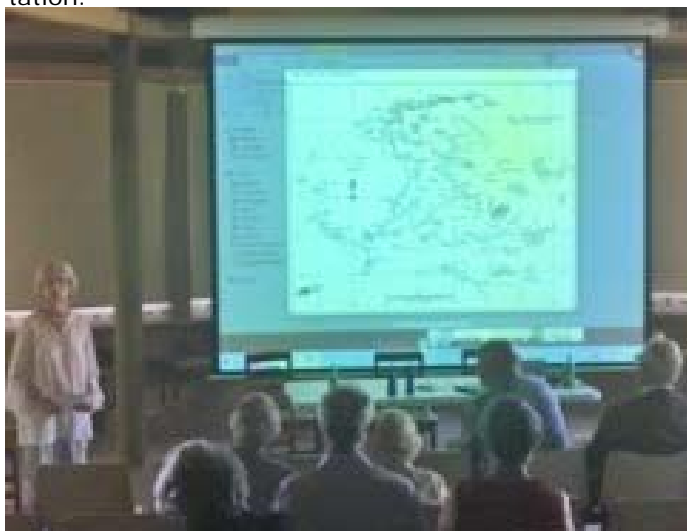


We would love to share your photos of Coolart during this time and encourage you to either email us at info@coolart.org.au or facebook us / friendsofcoolart. Plus—do you have photos and anecdotes pre 1977 of Coolart—we would love to hear from you!

Julie Ebbott
FOC President

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING REPORT

Friends of Coolart Annual General Meeting was held on Sunday 23rd February. Our very special guest speaker was Ilma Hackett from the Balnarring & District Historical Society giving a presentation on the history of settlement at Coolart beginning with First Nations People through to the purchase of the property by the state government in the late 1970s. Ilma's research and knowledge of Coolart and the surrounding districts is extensive and all attendees were riveted by her presentation.



Ilma Hackett giving her presentation at the AGM in February.

This year marks 125 years since the Grimwade family commenced building works on the now historic Coolart Homestead. It was intended as their seaside home.



A jacket from 1800's on display at The AGM courtesy Jill Tansley set the historical tone of the day.

Coming into 2020 we were hoping to celebrate this milestone with a series of heritage events and activities; Ilma's talk was to be the lead in. Alas, alack no-one foresaw a pandemic!

This year's AGM saw the retirement of three of our committee members—Vernon Tansley, Simon McCall and Janine Pickersgill. All three brought something extra to the committee; they will be sorely missed.

Local Somers resident Marnee Fraser nominated and was welcomed to the new committee and Peter Cole, Cris Topfner-Rigby, Maria Robbins, Andrew Giles, Sally Holdsworth, Denise Kempster and Julie Ebbott all re-nominated and were duly accepted.

The Friends of Coolart Committee was formed in February 1982 and over that time there have been many individuals actively volunteering, participating on committees and generally supporting FOC and Coolart. Some of those original members are passing on or have

become lost to us so we are always glad to hear from you and welcome your stories. We were delighted that foundation chairman of the first committee of management, Sid Cowling and his wife Gina were able to attend the AGM and with encouragement, I hope that Sid will contribute some stories for future newsletters.

Last year delivered early fundraising success for the committee. We launched a tax deductible fund through Australian Communities Foundation with the explicit aim of raising an enduring source of money that can be used for projects at Coolart. The fund has attracted \$6,650 in donations to date.

Also, as a result of a very generous donation of furniture from Graeme and Shirley Davies, we held an antique auction in September that raised around \$10,000 in the homestead. The event was a great success and the homestead looked fabulous fully furnished.

We held our second community picnic in November that, despite the rain, attracted a lot of visitors and raised \$5000 towards restoration works.

Finally, the AGM provides the opportunity to publicly



thank all those who have volunteered throughout the year including: on committees, in the FOC shop, arranging flowers in the homestead and in the gardens, during events—you are all amazing, your contributions are invaluable and you make what can sometimes be hard work, fun, so thank you. I also extend our thanks to the Parks Victoria team; Brian, Michelle, Jenny, Teagan, Julia, Sue, Casey, and Duncan. And of course to you, our members—thankyou for continuing to support Coolart through your donations, visits, emails and good wishes; it is always truly appreciated.

Julie Ebbott



Kullurk, Colourt, Coolert, Callert, Coolart

The Friends of Coolart Committee is committed to acknowledging the Bonurong Nation at Coolart, and over the next twelve months we will be working on a significant project with the Bonurong Land Council and Parks Victoria to ensure their story and culture are recognised and celebrated at Coolart.

As part of our research, Ilma Hackett from the Balnarring & District Historical Society has introduced us to a published Aboriginal History Monograph titled: "*I Succeeded Once: The Aboriginal Protectorate on the Mornington Peninsula, 1839-1840*" by Marie Hansen Fels. This document will inform the development of our project going forward. Following is a small excerpt:

'...Kullurk...was the Bonurong's own choice in 1840 for a reserve of land for their imagined future. Coolart, owned by Parks Victoria is a part of that land which the Bonurong selected: it possesses the historical significance appropriate for a future interpretive centre.

The named place Kullurk, this general area around Sandy Point, was the Bonurong choice for a reserve, and it was the place to which they looked back to [William] Thomas, accusingly, when they did not get it. Many Europeans walked across it and described the land as fine open country, which means that it was burned regularly as a kangaroo run by the Bonurong. Some described huts and signs of habitation.

Callert Merricks Cattle Station is located virtually on the coast of Western Port quite some distance from and south of Sandy Point:....what is now Somers and

Balnarring. Callert would be almost exactly where Coolart is located now.

May 1840. Henry Howard Meyrick's letter home to 'dear Mama' in which he gives the detail of his selection of Colourt is dated 16 June 1840, but the events occurred in the second week in May:

I left the ship for good on the first of MayMaurice, Alfred and myself walked (ten miles) to Boniong, where we shot kangaroos and minded the sheep for a week, and then started on our first expedition into the bush to explore a run about 36 miles from Boniong called Colourt. We found an excellent run, but we shall have to clear away a marsh to get water; there is a splendid river running thro' the middle of it but unfortunately it is salt, it is however full of fish and covered with ducks. We slept there under a miah-miah which the guides knocked up...

11 April 1846. Alfred has sold Colourt for 90 pounds. Henry Meyrick's summary for his mother of his life so far in Port Phillip says that he went to Colourt, commenced to form a station, and after spending 60 pounds was obliged to leave it. The cattle did not do much better at Colourt, so after some years hard work at the diary he and cousin Alfred found themselves in the hard times of the general financial collapse in Port Phillip. They tried sheep but sheep did not do any better, and because they were scabby the only place they could travel them to was Gippsland. Byrne, the man to whom they sold Colourt, did no better with the land.

http://epress.anu.au/succeeded_once_citation.html

Coolart—The House That Grimwade Built

The Coolart homestead was built 125 years ago. In this article published in Peninsula Essence in February 2020, Ilma Hackett writes about the Grimwades and their house in the country.

'When Grimwade bought Coolart he was fifty-five years of age, a short, sturdy man whose receding dark hair and beard had silvered. His youngest daughter was eleven and his three eldest children had married. The house was invariably filled with family and friends arriving from Melbourne, usually by train. They alighted at Bittern station where they were met by horse and buggy to cover the final few miles.

The new mansion rose on the site of an earlier homestead which was on a rise of land above the creek that separated it from the shore. All that remained of the older building was one separate wing. A low structure, built some forty years before, it was of buff coloured bricks, hand-made on the property. This wing, later named 'The Barracks' as farm workers were housed there, had three rooms and an external bread oven. Each room opened onto a bricked pathway under a roofed veranda.

There was much to do at 'Coolart'. The beach was a short walk along a bush track between the trees, across the creek and through the dunes. There were picnics at the beach and boating on the creek. The estate was extensive enough to allow riding and hunting, while outdoor sports such as archery and croquet were practised on the lawns. There was a formal garden in front of the house and this was a pleasant spot to stroll or to sit and read. In the evening card games, especially whist, were popular, as were charades. Guests and family alike enjoyed a game of billiards, musical evenings and board games.

In 1907, twelve years after having bought Coolart, Grimwade put the property on the market. His health had declined and he had been advised by his doctor to slow down. The livestock, even his beloved Bobadil, were sent to Newmarket for auction. The property passed to Gippsland grazier, Thomas Armstrong, for the price of 7 pound, 10 shilling per acre. Frederick S. Grimwade died in 1910.

Ilma Hackett

Excerpt from "Coolart –The House That Grimwade Built", Peninsula Essence Feb. 2020
<https://issuu.com/peninsulaessence/docs/>

REFLECTION ON A STILL LIFE



Here we are, in the middle of a pandemic that some experts had predicted, but which blind-sided many of us.

One day we were expressing sympathy for those stuck on far-flung cruises (there but for the grace...) and the next, it was on our doorstep: emergency powers invoked, Australian and state borders closing, businesses shutting, and long lines at Centrelink – the likes of which we could not have imagined in these sophisticated days. But a pandemic is a real leveller isn't it? While some are safe in isolated bubbles, others are doing it tough in unimaginable and devastating ways.

And yet – this slowdown has brought silver linings. A chance for the planet to heal. Waters are clearer, skies are fresh and softer, busy cities are still, traffic is reduced, people are walking – at a distance, of course.

For some, the quieter pace is reminiscent of past decades and a more simple, less frenetic life; for others, this quiet time is a revelation, a glimpse of other possibilities, of a less stressful existence, diaries less crammed, expectations not so onerous, and life a little gentler. A once in a lifetime chance for a global and local reset. A chance to rediscover lost arts. A chance to pare back. Am I dreaming?

Here in Australia we are fortunate. Yes, we've been locked down. But we can still move around, carefully. Many of us have gardens, courtyards and balconies; we have community and city parks, dedicated bushland and green space in our suburbs, our sacred bush, rivers and beaches, and we have glorious public gardens.

Walking recently (it's the new coffee!) in Fitzroy Gardens—with its stunning trees, blooming flower beds, glorious statues and sculptures – I was struck by the forethought of past city elders and designers. The carving out of a beautiful space for the public, the filling of it with magnificent tree specimens and rich art, was such a generous gift to us. And in these times, it offers a place of peace and healing that is open to all.

Here at Coolart, we are blessed with a unique blend of formal gardens, natural bush, and life-giving wetlands. The custodians of Coolart, both ancient and recent, have cared deeply for this magical place.

On a normal day, at any time of year, to enter the environs of Coolart is to experience your heart rate slow, breathing deepen, time extend. And in these fraught times, it offers respite and beauty, a sense that the cycle of life continues, that nature is strong, that we will be okay. As it prepares for winter hibernation, there is vivid red and gold in the changing leaves, sculptural elegance in the early bare boughs, and the knowledge that a surge of spring energy is building up to burst out on the other side of winter.

As we wait to emerge on the other side of these current unique times, now is a perfect time to visit Coolart. Walk the trails, sit in the tranquil gardens, explore the bird hides, recharge and prepare to burst forth into the new – hopefully reset – world.

Sally Holdsworth

FRIENDS OF COOLART INC

Friends of Coolart is a volunteer organisation that was formed to assist Parks Victoria in the preservation and enhancement of the environmental, cultural and educational values of Coolart Wetlands and Homestead.

The work carried out by the Friends of Coolart compliments Parks Victoria's management of the reserve and adds value to both the essential qualities of the property and the visitor experience.

For more information or enquiries:

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