



## **President's Report to the Annual General Meeting Sunday 17 September 2023**

I am pleased to provide a report on activities of the Friends of the Dunedin Botanic Garden for the year ended 30 June 2023.

After Covid-19 affecting activities for the last couple of years I am pleased to report that this year has slowly returned to normal for the Friends' committee.

We still await details of the Dunedin Botanic Garden Strategic Plan which has been held up for various reasons. I have to report that there have not been any Botanic Garden projects for the Friends to support during this period. When the Strategic Plan is confirmed, the Friends intend to support the proposed projects in the Garden; in particular, we are still committed to assisting financially with the establishment of the long talked about Demonstration Garden.

### Plant Sales

We were pleased to be able to hold the October Rhododendron Day plant sale in the Upper Garden car park after having to cancel the year before due to Covid-19 crowd restrictions. A last guided tour of the Rhododendron Dell by Doug Thompson prior to his retirement was well supported and we were grateful to Doug for doing this. Numbers attending the October sale were steady, the weather was fine and there was a very friendly vibe from the eager plant lovers. The coffee cart proved to be very popular and a BBQ was well supported.

The annual May sale in the Propagation Facility building was a very successful event – crowds were eagerly waiting the opening of the gates at 9.00 am and it was pretty busy for the first 90 minutes. The current popularity of indoor plants meant that we had a whole area dedicated to these plants which were beautifully displayed and organised by Alisha – they were sold out within an hour! The financial result was a record for this event. We are very grateful for the assistance for both of our plant sales from the Botanic Garden management and staff – we could not do this without their enthusiastic and practical support, all the preparation that goes in before the event and being there on the day. The work of a group of volunteers who assist in the propagation unit on the Friends' behalf is also acknowledged and we thank those of them who helped with the sale on the day.

### Funding

The major Friends' funding activities this year were three Tannock Scholarships that we gave out. The Tannock Scholarship is a fund available to staff from the Dunedin Botanic Garden for further education to attend conferences, seminars, tours etc. As noted in the annual report last year we received applications to the Tannock Scholarship from staff members Tom Myers and Dylan Norfield to assist with expenses to attend the BGCI/BGANZ Conference in Melbourne 25-29 September. They each requested \$1950 and this was approved at the July meeting. This expenditure features in the 2023 financial reporting. Tom and Dylan did a wonderful presentation to staff and members of the Friends society in March 2023 and afternoon tea was provided at the conclusion.

We also in this financial year have supported Kyla Matthewson with a \$3,000 grant from the Tannock Scholarship which enabled her to accept an invitation from the Dendrology Society to travel to South Korea to observe the diverse flora and fauna on that peninsula. We are pleased to have Kyla with us today to provide a report on what was for her a 'trip of a lifetime'.

Separate to the Tannock Funding, we were approached by the 'Soil Sistas' – a group who perform interactive educational shows on soil health – for funding to produce a show for this year's Wild

Dunedin Festival in April. The Friends approved \$500 to this end, and by all accounts it was a very successful show.

### Support of the Garden

The committee made a recommendation early in this financial year to support and provide funds for the installation of a picnic table to be located near the playground and be dedicated to all volunteers who have contributed to the life of the Dunedin Botanic Garden. This had to be put on hold when the DCC Parks & Reserves team advised the whole playground was to be revamped as part of the Council commitment to playground development around the city. In the meantime a plaque acknowledging the work of all volunteers since the establishment of the Botanic Garden was struck and this has been affixed to a bench seat looking up to the sun terrace and the Information Centre.

The Information Centre continues to be a major activity of the Friends, especially during the Summer cruise ship season which has returned in full force after a few years of Covid restrictions. I am grateful to all the dedicated volunteers who staff the centre, the rangers, and to Sue, who has spent a significant amount of a time and energy keeping the centre up and running. The committee made a commitment in June to fund the establishment of a dedicated Shop Co-ordinator for the Information Centre. We envisage the Information Centre becoming a DCC asset on par with Toitu or the Museum and believe that having a funded person is a step in this direction.

### Membership

Discussions have also revolved around offering more exclusive activities and events for financial members of the Friends of the Dunedin Botanic Garden. Dylan and Tom's talk in March was put on exclusively for members, and we have had one or two requests for propagating specific plants. However, we would be keen to hear from members what sort of benefits they would like included as part of their membership.

Membership of the Friends remains fairly static despite the low annual fee of \$15.00 for individual membership. There is still a lot to be done to have an accurate record and a better way of recording memberships as remarkably we still have some names on the database without any contact details at all. Obviously these people cannot be contacted for us to seek renewal of subscriptions and we have had to just hope that we will retain these people and at some stage have their details confirmed. A priority was and still is to rebuild an accurate database and to this end the committee last year appointed Muriel Turner from the committee as Membership Secretary. Muriel has decided not to restand this year, but we appreciate all her hard work in managing our membership.

We circulate quarterly newsletters to members and our Facebook presence has increased to ensure that we are keeping both our members and the public up to date with what we are doing. With the regular increases in postage we prefer to send the newsletter by email – most of our members do have access to this medium but there are a number for whom we still only have a postal address.

We are most grateful for the work of our Treasurer, Guy Frederick, who has put in many hours looking after and reporting on our finances. Sadly for us Guy is relocating with his family to Christchurch at the end of the school year and will not be standing for re-election. On behalf of the whole committee I thank Guy for his perseverance and attention to detail to keep us on track and the finances up to date.

Special thanks to the Botanic Garden staff for their willingness to assist the committee with a wide range of things and particularly to Alan Matchett for his accessibility, wise oversight, historical knowledge of committees past, and ongoing assistance with management of the Information Centre.

### Committee

Last but not least, I must give thanks to the Friends committee this past year. Kathryn Thatcher has decided not to stand again for re-election as she completes a PhD at Canterbury University. Kathryn has

been on the committee since 2013, including five years as Treasurer, so her contribution to the Friends has been much appreciated, and her institutional knowledge will be missed.

This has been my first year as President, and I've appreciated all the support from the committee during this time. We are a small committee with a lot of moving parts to keep up in the air under our direction, and I am thankful for all the work that everyone has done this year. Being a small committee does have its challenges: we are currently without a permanent Vice-President or a Secretary, two roles which Sue has supported me with, so this is an area where we will need to focus on securing in the coming year.

Sam Moncur

President, Friends of the Dunedin Botanic Garden