

President's Annual Report, 2016 AGM

Once again your committee has been very busy both with the ongoing volunteer activities at the Gardens and the huge work load to establish and open the 2015-2016 "Sculpture in the Gardens Exhibition". We are very grateful to all the members and volunteers who step up and make all of this possible.

At the 2015 Annual meeting last year Neville Haydon was elected as Treasurer, and by agreement he passed the responsibility to our new Treasurer, Judy Williams early in the year. To their credit this has been a very smooth transition, along with the move to an independent financial IT system. We are very grateful to Neville who resigned from the committee after almost 10 years service and we have every confidence in Judy Williams, who has taken over and is standing for the position of Treasurer this year. On the 17th of January the committee along with Neville's family celebrated his 90th birthday in the covered courtyard.

This year Annette Toon has contributed a huge amount of time establishing on our behalf a website to inform members and visitors of events in the Gardens. You can find it on-line at friendsabg.co.nz. In addition this month we have circulated to those members who have provided us with their email addresses an update of current events in the Gardens. We would appreciate your feedback and if you have not already given us your email address you are very welcome to supply it and join the new news page. You will still receive your printed quarterly Newsletter, "The Auckland Garden".

In the January meeting we appointed Diane Glenn as our privacy officer to help us comply with the Privacy Act limiting the use of our data base of information about members only to the purposes of the Friends of the Auckland Botanic Gardens. We are very aware of our responsibilities to members and wish to always enjoy your confidence.

Last year we awarded travel assistance to Owen Newson to support a working exchange visit to the Singapore 'Gardens on the Bay'. We are looking forward to his address this evening about the experience.

A year ago Linda Tyler joined Richard Mathieson and Rachel de Lambert as the Curators of this year's 'Sculpture in the Gardens Exhibition'. They started the process early in 2015 by selecting and inviting 20 exhibitors for the current Exhibition. We met them all in April when the proposed works were all assessed by our engineer for installation stability and safety for exhibition in a public place. Once we had chosen where they were to be located in the Gardens and determined how their work would be installed, the artists received from the Friends a stipend to pay some of the costs of materials. In October the process of installation began. Marcus of the Gardens staff led a team supervised by our engineer to install the necessary foundations, involving large holes and truck-loads of concrete.

Meanwhile the sponsorship and patronage team of Rachel de Lambert, Richard Mathieson and Ainsley Walker, with Byrdie Ayres and Liz Powell, have been working hard to raise the capital necessary to operate the show. Once again the Manurewa Local Board has provided \$30,000 for advertising and publicity. The ASB Community Trust has provided major support for the whole event. There are many others, not least the Arts Section of Auckland Council who funded \$50,000 for the purpose of enabling the purchase of two works for the permanent collection. The first is 'Ratiti Mya' by James Wright which stands perfectly in the Gondwana collection of trees. The second work by Marte Szirmai is a magnificent bronze in the Rose Garden. The Friends fund their share of these purchases from commission on other sales of works in the exhibition.

These purchases were announced at the opening of the Show along with the McConnell prize of \$10,000 awarded to Jamie Pickernell by the Curatorial Panel for his sculpture 'Keep', which I have observed is enormously popular with children who constantly climb and swing on it.

The most important resolutions today, later in the Agenda, are the necessary amendments to our Constitution to move our balance date to June 30 with a consequent new date for the Annual General Meeting. This is going to mean this year's subscription which most of you have paid will be current from 1-12-15 until 1-7-17, 19 months for the price of 12. The reason for the change is the biennial Sculpture show, which is the busiest period in our two year cycle. At present most of the establishment costs fall in one financial year and the revenue in the next year. We recommend the change to put it all into one financial year to improve clarity of reporting and accountability.

I am stepping down as President this Year. I have really enjoyed my three years and have every confidence in nominating Dianne Glenn ONZM JP as your new President. I am very proud of the achievements of the Friends and the wonderful partnership with the staff of the Auckland Botanic Gardens, with particular thanks to Jack Hobbs who serves on your Executive and manages the staff team in the Gardens. Finally, I want to offer my sincere thanks to everyone who takes part in operating these magnificent Gardens.

Bill Burrill QSM, President