

President's annual report for the period November 2020 – November 2021

The difference your support made in 2021

- Whakapuputia mai o manuka, kia kore ai e whati — (*Cluster the branches of the manuka so they will not break -there is strength in unity*)



Welcome to our new and existing members.

It has been a busy year despite Covid-19 being in our lives. However, we have learnt to adapt and overcome challenges. The slower pace has given a breathing space for the Hamilton Gardens and its staff, with the accessible areas remaining an important place of respite for everyone. I'm sure many of you have rediscovered the joy and delights of your gardens during the lockdown and heeded the calls to stay safe, be patient and be kind to others during these challenging times.

Looking back over our 31st year there have been significant developments

- **FOHG Submission to Hamilton City Council (HCC).**

On behalf of the Friends of Hamilton Gardens (FOHG) and with the support of Virginia Graham and Marilyn Yeoman at a HCC hearing, I presented both a written and verbal submission objecting to a HCC proposal to charge for parking at the Gardens from January 2022. We were part of an overwhelming 64 per cent (3171 submissions) of submitters who were successful in having the proposal quashed.

- **New Director of Hamilton Gardens.**

It is a pleasure to get to know our new director Lucy Ryan who started work at the Gardens in August. We welcome her joining our committee meetings and appreciate the help she and her team have given with investigating the new membership database and planning for future membership growth.

- **Plant sales**

These have been very successful thanks to the efforts of Eileen Wilcox, Susan Coubrough and the members of their dedicated propagating team including those who run the sales on the first weekend of each month, it is often said 'What you plant, you will harvest,' and we are appreciative of the many hours of volunteer work; we are reaping the result with record sales.

Events

- **Scarecrow Festival**

Thanks to the efforts of organiser Pamela Hide and her team the 2020 Scarecrow Festival was a success. Sadly, due to uncertainty arising from the covid pandemic, the 2021 Scarecrow Festival was cancelled.

- **Medieval Festival 2020**

In March this year Colin Sheppard and Ralph Evans, supported by many committee members and other volunteers organised a very successful inaugural Medieval Festival on the Governors Green between the Rose Garden and Cobham Drive. Planning has already begun for the 2022 festival.

Many thanks to the organisers and all those within the community who have pledged ongoing support.

- **Matariki Breakfast -June 11**

Once again, the Friends and Te Ohu Whakaita hosted a very successful Te Karanga O Te Tau Hou (Matariki Breakfast) to celebrate the Maaori New Year. This event launched an inspiring series of Matariki Ki Waikato community events, workshops, exhibitions, and celebrations to develop, promote and increase the public's appreciation and awareness of Maaori culture. Next year Friday, 24 June 2022, New Zealand will celebrate Matariki, the inaugural Matariki public holiday.

- **Matariki Kite-day**

The Friends are thrilled to sponsor this free family fun event that encourages families (Whanau) to share a day with kite making and flying (Manu tukutuku and Peter Lyn paper kites).

Both Matariki events have become expected and respected as part of the Matariki calendar, and their success is due to invaluable support from FOHG, Te Ohu Whakaita and the community.

- **Hamilton Gardens Arts Festival**

The FOHG are proud sponsors of the show 'Mansfield - in Her Own Words' at the Hamilton Gardens Arts Festival in February 2022. The play is a curated selection of letters by Katherine Mansfield narrated by Miranda Harcourt and set to contemporary music.

Honouring two of our Life Members

- **Megan Godfrey – Co-sculptor of the Pavilion wood carving.**

On your behalf, birthday wishes were sent to Megan, who turned 99 on the 10th of October. Megan says she gets her inspiration from her natural surroundings, and when she is not carving, she's fixing treasured items for friends and family.

- **Rena Williams.**

We are delighted that our nomination for a Volunteering Waikato Long Service Award for Rena Williams was successful. Rena has been an inspirational stalwart of the Friends of Hamilton Gardens since its inception in 1988, organizing the rosters for the Visitor Information Centre volunteers since 1994.

- **Hamilton Gardens Information Centre and volunteers.**

Recently a small group from the committee met with Edwards White Architects to share our ideas for the proposed new extensions and upgrade to the Visitor Information Centre which is scheduled to be completed by February 2023. Changes will enable paid entry in the future, the control of numbers entering the enclosed area during our busiest days and to prevent vandalism and potential security threats in the enclosed area. We look forward to seeing the concept plans. Several new volunteers have been welcomed this year. I warmly thank all Visitor Information Centre volunteers for their support especially when having to adapt to changing covid-19 alert level restrictions.

- **Funding**

As your president I represent the FOHG on the funding group of the Project Governance Group. This group, comprised of representatives from the wider community with experience in fundraising, has responsibility for raising \$3.3 million over the next ten years. While the challenge seems daunting, we know a combined effort from across the community including from the FOHG, will result in the completion of the remaining gardens in the enclosed area.

Sponsors

Despite covid19 and the predicted gloomy outlook because of a lack of visitors, it has been another successful financial year for the Friends allowing us to fully meet our commitment of \$420, 000 to the council for the continuing development of the Gardens. Along with income from plant sales and other events plus contributions from HCC which acknowledges our staffing of the Visitors Information Centre and tour guiding. I wish to acknowledge and thank EB Firth Charitable Trust, Chartwell Garden Club, Ian Patton, the Braithwaite family (in memory of David), Tamahere Country Club, the late Gillian Gorick, the estate of the late Jill Christiansen and the DV Bryant Trust for their significant donations.

Volunteers

I believe we cannot achieve our vision without the support and dedication of our many volunteers. The information Centre volunteers, propagating and events teams and tour guides, have given many hours freely throughout the year. Your committee also needs special mention.

Bruce Sinkinson, our treasurer worked tirelessly throughout the year to ensure our finances are up to date. Marilyn Yeoman has been a tower of strength in the interim vice-president role and as our representative on the Garden History Research Foundation.

Virginia Graham has worked tirelessly behind the scenes helping me build and maintain relationships with the community and sponsors. She also represents the FOHG on the Hamilton Gardens' Development Trust and gives presentation on the Gardens to many community groups. Thank you to Roslyn Gardiner for her contribution as secretary and to Virginia who stepped in as interim secretary when Roslyn resigned to have time for further study. A warm welcome to new secretary Judy Calder who brings many skills to our organisation. Other committee members have contributed in their various roles and I thank you all for your support.

Jane Stewart - publicity and funding applications, newsletter editor.

Colin Sheppard, Philip Hart and Ralph Evans - Medieval Festival and events support.

Sue Primrose, Social club and events support

Jenny Newby-Fraser- Propagating group and social club.

Judy Holdsworth- our second representative on the Garden History Research Foundation, garden group, presentations, and events support.

Pamela Hide -Scarecrow Festival coordinator, social club and events support.

Denis Gibbs- Property maintenance

Ex-officio are Sally Sleigh- membership officer, Janet Sceats – FOHG representative on the HGAF board, Rena Williams- volunteer roster co-ordinator. Gay Main- Viligrad sales liaison person and editor of our annual journal.

I also appreciate the support the FOHG receive from the office staff, Gus Flower and the gardeners, Craig and Jenny Fraser and their staff at the Hamilton Gardens Cafe.

Finally, I would like to pay tribute to Dr Peter Sergel, who retired as Director of Hamilton Gardens last December. His vision started as a concept plan and developed into this unique garden which seeks to tell the story of civilization through the context, meaning and history of gardens. At his farewell in the Mansfield Garden HCC General Manager – Community, Lance Vervoot said, "Peter's outstanding vision and talent for design are simply irreplaceable. His passion, creativity and ability to inspire others with his vision have made the Gardens the magnificent city and regional asset it is today." No

number of medals or recognition will show the depth of respect we, the Friends, and the city, have for Peter and his lifetime commitment to Hamilton Gardens.

Once again, thank you to all who have helped support the development of the Hamilton Gardens. I am confident the Friends, with your help, will go from strength to strength and will continue to be a respected, compelling voice on behalf of the Hamilton Gardens.

Naaku naa noa

Marleina Ruka

President Friends of Hamilton Gardens Inc.