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**Williamstown Botanic Gardens
Oral History**

Sue Murray

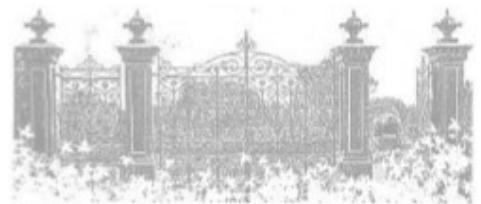
4 July 2013



Hobsons Bay
CITY COUNCIL



**WILLIAMSTOWN
BOTANIC GARDENS**



**Friends of Williamstown
Botanic Gardens Inc.**

Interviewer's notes:

This conversation was in preparation for the Williamstown Botanic Garden Oral History Project to gain an overall picture of the history of the Gardens and of the Friends Group.

This is a conversation with Sue Murray on behalf of the Friends of Williamstown Botanic Gardens.

This is the first interview in a planned series to document personal memories and experiences of the Gardens. Sue is the daughter of Jessie Sims (nee Faichney) who has lived close by the Gardens for 82 of her 88 years. Jessie was born in the front room of her parents' house at 63 Twyford Street in 1915.

Sue, born in 1945, spent the first 10 months of her life at Twyford Street before the family moved to Stawell, returning to visit the family home for summer holidays. They came back to live in the family home in Williamstown in 1952 where Sue stayed until 1968. She visited her family in the area often and returned to live there in Osborne Street in 1980.

In 2009 Sue became the inaugural President of the Friends of the Williamstown Botanic Gardens.

As this was planned to be more a conversation, the interviewer's voice is heard more than would be expected in an oral history interview.

The date of this interview is 4th July 2013 and the interviewer is Lindy Wallace.

LW We are going to just have a chat about your association with the Gardens - how, when where why - ok - let's go.

SM Well, I'm very lucky because my association with the Gardens started with my earliest life. I was born in 1945 and was growing up in our family home in 63 Twyford Street at Williamstown which was where my mother was born in 1915. That house was three quarters of a block from the gates of the Gifford Street Gardens - that's the middle gate facing Twyford Street. From the time I was a baby we were being trundled down to the Gardens for walks, hearing stories about what my mother and her brothers had got up to when they were in the Gardens.

When I was ten months old we went to live in Stawell for six and a half years. My father had returned from service in the Australian Imperial Forces and did not wish to continue living in the city. So we packed up and went to Stawell where I was lucky enough to live near the Grampians. But each summer, or most summers we would come back to Williamstown. First of all on the train, the steam train with that wonderful choof choof going past. Stopping at Ballarat for tea and sandwiches at the railway cafeteria there. Dad would leap out of the train and go and get us cups of tea and sandwiches, or get them for Mum. We would arrive and have a lovely couple of weeks in the old house down at Twyford Street. We'd be taken for walks through the Gardens. We'd walk through the Gardens, cutting across what is now called the Pinetum to go to the beach. Sometimes Mum would organise for us to go down to see the head gardener, Mr Anderson who lived in the old federation house, which is just near the main avenue and opposite the ornamental lake.

That house has now been replaced as people would know by a cream brick veneer house. We would be delighted to be taken by Mum in to see Mr Anderson and Mrs Anderson who were certainly old enough to have grandchildren by that stage. One of the great highlights of visiting them was that they had the most beautiful doll's house that they had made for their grandchildren so we used to play with the doll's house.

When we were older - I was seven when we came back to Williamstown - we used to often play in the Gardens. We would wander down there. We were free to come and go in our childhood, it was a lovely childhood. We'd leave in the morning and head off and Mum would say 'Have a nice morning children, and Susan please try not to fall in the water' and off we'd trundle.

LW This is the water in the Gardens?

SM No no, this is the beach, around the Bunburys, around the Shelly Beach - climbing on rocks, ducking in and out of the piers. One of the things about the Gardens in those days was that they were surrounded entirely by a high wooden fence and there were a series of gates which at night were locked by the head gardener. Near sunset, I can't exactly remember the time, but I know we used to be playing in the Gardens and there'd be this absolutely feeling of delight and fright that Mr Anderson may not notice you when he rode around on his bicycle to check people were there before he locked all the gates. Of course we didn't have the wit to think that we could have gone and knocked on his door to be let out.

When we did go to the beach we used to walk down Twyford Street and walk in through the gates at the bottom of Twyford Street and then we were cutting across through the Pinetum area, quite often in bare feet, trying to avoid the little bits of the Bunya Bunya Pine inside the gate which had fallen to the ground, because that was very prickly. We actually thought it was a Monkey Puzzle tree. It was only when we went for a walk with John Hawker in my time now with Friends of Williamstown Botanic Gardens that I have learned that they are Bunya Bunya Pines. Which goes to show that one's knowledge and memory is quite tricky.

5.59 One of the things, I have probably bored a lot of people with this story, is that we used to be delighted by the signs in the Gardens. The one just inside the gate as you went into the Pinetum and the one on the gate on the diagonally opposite corner near the beach - both had signs saying 'Persons clad in bathing costume only are not permitted in these Gardens'. Of course we were clad in bathing costumes only, with bare feet and our towels, so we would streak across hoping not to get caught. We never did. I don't think anybody ever bothered really with the number of small children in their bathing costumes only going to the beach. It was another exciting thing about the Gardens.

6.43 In our childhood - down the Elm walk - there were two enormous cannons, two of which are now down on the Strand and the other two are back at Fort Gellibrand. When we were children there were two cannons - as I remember - were placed on the Gifford Street side up from the statue - and we used to go down and climb on them and inch our way out along the barrel and have great fun playing on the cannons. Mum tells the story, and I don't know if it's true that when she was little, she was the youngest, her mother used to get her brothers to take her with them - Jessie had to go with them - and she claims whether rightly or wrongly that on one never to be forgotten occasion they put her in the barrel of the cannon and went to the beach and collected her on the way back. I don't know whether it's true but it's a very good story.

7.46

LW Sorry, can I just interrupt? Do you have any idea of when the guns were actually put in the Gardens?

SM No I don't. My memories of the Gardens are from the late forties and the early fifties and they were certainly there in that time. At one stage, and I'm not sure if they were the same guns, there were also two guns set inside, in the walk down from the big iron gates. On the garden beds two of the cannons were placed. No I can no longer remember whether there were four in the gardens or whether two had been moved but certainly the two we knew about were in the area we played.

8.33

SM As time went on there were fairly considerable changes in the Gardens. One of the things that really surprised me was that in our childhood the Gardens were very clearly one whole area. There was the botanic area, the cultivated garden area, and then there was the wonderful area of the Conifers and other botanic trees, with a rotunda. The main path was a lovely open view right from Osborne Street, right down to the Esplanade. That's the thing, it was an open path that part of the whole design of the Gardens. The paths on both sides of the Gardens mimic each other, the pattern is there. I'm not sure whether it was the late fifties or early sixties but at one stage the entire fence was taken out from around the Gardens and a much lower fence was put around. In fact the fence along Osborne Street and Gifford Street towards Twyford Street was turned in to that sort of wire fence and there's a bit of hedge there now - I don't remember when the hedge was put there. Interestingly it opened the Gardens up and lights were put in on the lawns - they were quite elegant lamp posts. They were very clean, very vertical with an oval shaped lamp on top, there was nothing fussy about them. They were quite nice. In a sense they mimicked the trees.

10.17

LW Do you remember them putting those lights in?

SM I remember when the fence came down they put the lights in, I don't remember the process

LW - I was just wondering if they had to dig up part of the Gardens to do that.

SM It must have been quite an event but we were happily unaware of this.

When I was at primary school, we walked to Williamstown Primary School along Gifford Street so we were beside the Gardens. When we were at high school we largely rode our bicycles around the Gardens. In later high school, sometimes we strolled to and from and then we'd cut through the Gardens. I certainly remember I'm pretty sure that in my later years at Williamstown High School that when we walked through the Gardens the fence was down, the Gardens were very open and lamp posts were in. Interestingly in my childhood and adolescence and right through into my young adulthood the Golden Elm lawn didn't have a tree on it. It was wonderful open lawn and that did have one of the lamp posts if I remember correctly and I don't think that the lawn with the Tasmanian Blue Gum had a tree on it. That lawn certainly had a lamp post and light on it. At some stage later a fence went up between the gardens, the cultivated part and the wilder part of the Gardens.

11.48

SM One of the really lovely things for us was that when the fence came down they just put around the southern end of the Gardens a very simple fence. It was really just posts with a rail along the top. It was a metal fence and so when you were in the Gardens you had this wonderful view of the sea. They put in swings and slides and we used to go down, right through into our early twenties - and after school when we were home we would wander down, my sisters and I and we'd sit on the swings and swing and gaze at the sea. We loved the see saws and there was a very small slide in the Gardens, suitable for young children. My nephews who used to come down from Northern New South Wales to stay with Granny in Twyford Street - they were born in 1968 and 1969 - and Peter came down from the time he was three - they called the slide in the Gardens the Peter slide because whenever Peter came down he had a little play on the slide - Granny would take him down to the little slide. When he returned with his children many years later they went and sat on the Peter slide too. But all of the playground equipment has been removed. It was a very pleasant thing to have in that area for kids and for young teenagers and young adults.

13.16

LW Do you remember when the playground equipment was removed?

SM I think it was still there when my girls were little. Sophie was born in 1980 - we returned to Williamstown in 1980 when Sophie was just over three months old. I certainly remember pushing them on the swings and giving them see saws. So it must have been in the eighties to nineties they were removed.

They put an open fence, a wire fence between the cultivated part and the Pinetum, as we now call it, but you could still see through it so you still had that open view through the Gardens. In, I think it was 1988 they got bicentennial money to fence the Gardens and I was very disappointed that in fact they only fenced against the Fearon Reserve and then to my horror ran that wooden fence right up the middle of the Gardens cutting the Pinetum off. For me the Gardens lost their sense of integration at that stage. I've spoken to Shelley about it and she's actually not unhappy that the fence was there because it has provided some protection for the more cultivated part of the Gardens. While there has been vandalism and some of the plants have been taken and some of the annuals have been pinched, I think on the whole the Gardens are pretty well respected and looked after by people.

One of the funny stories when my girls were little was that we were always wandering down the Gardens and there were ducks on the pond, because the ornamental lake had water in it right up to 2000, a couple of beautiful white ducks. We turned up one day and we said to the gardeners 'where are the ducks' and they said 'someone had a very nice Easter dinner'.

Another event I remember from when Sophie and Anna were little was that in the bicentennial year, 1988, Sophie was at primary school, and Anna who was born in 1984 was in kinder. We were asked as parents to turn up at the Gardens after school one day because the Governor, Davis McCaughey, was coming along to plant some new peppercorn trees down near the statue and a group of us duly went down and stood with our kiddies - grandmas and mums and kids. The Governor came strolling along the path with the Mayor and the Governor was beautifully dressed in a sort of beige coloured suit, it was summer, and the Mayor was dressed in his full mayoral robes. My daughter, Sophie, was pulling my skirt and saying 'Mum Mum, is that the Governor?' - pointing at our Mayor who was clearly outshining the Governor. So that was rather funny. It was actually a bit of a commentary on the Mayor's ego I have to say.

16.31

SM When we were in our teenage years we went down to the Gardens often with friends' families who were staying with us and they would take photos. We do have a photograph of a number of us standing by an enormous pine that used to be at the foot of Twyford Street - a beautiful big pine that came down in a storm. There is a photograph of us all standing there. We have watched beautiful trees be lost from the Gardens through storms. Mary, my sister, and I were wandering through the Gardens in winter one time and one of the things we always loved to do which you weren't supposed to do was when you came to the pond there was a very low fence. It was just a bit of iron piping running through a little sphere on legs, a little circle of iron hoop on legs. You could step over it and be standing right near the pond and for some unknown reason I grabbed something of Mary's and threw it into the pond. She was absolutely furious with me and she said 'YOU threw it in, YOU can get it out'. She put her hand in the middle of my back and pushed me fully clothed into the pond. I emerged spluttering and laughing and we walked home and explained to Mum why my tartan skirt my jumper my shoes and socks were completely drenched. Retribution was swift in those days.

18.02

SM One of the things that was lovely when we were kids at primary school was that in the school holidays Mum would say 'We'll have a picnic in the Gardens'. She was a wonderful cook and she'd pack up a lovely picnic lunch and we'd go down and find one of the many secret little spots and have our own picnic all sitting together. It was just very exciting because we usually had lunch at home. We used to go home from school for lunch from both primary and secondary school and it was really a day out to have a picnic in the Gardens three quarters of a block away from your place.

18.40

LW Can I just take you back to the lake? When you were telling the story about the ornamental lake and the ducks - is that about the pond that's there now?

SM Yes. There's been some question that we have been talking about with Shelley and Loraine whether we call it a pond or a lake. They did find some reference to it as an ornamental lake so I am trying to remember to call it the ornamental lake.

One of the lovely things about the pond is that it had goldfish and we used to love watching the goldfish. There are rock structures in the pond with sort of arches through them and you'd see the goldfish disappear under them and come out again. We used to love watching the goldfish. That's one reason why we would step over the railing so we could be closer to see the goldfish. There were certain spots you could see them from. When my sister, Mary, came down from the farm she always went to the Gardens every day. She loved animals and birds and she said 'I've just seen a Nanking Night Heron standing in the bamboo at the pond', which was very exciting.

When my mother's brothers were living at home, they used to go to Williamstown High School, they walked across the Gardens to school. My Uncle Norman, who is the youngest of the three boys, one day was dived bombed by a magpie who grabbed his school cap and took off. It was never to be seen again. But he had a 'please explain' when he got to the high school about turning up without his cap. That was one of the family stories about the Gardens.

There are just so many lovely things that were part of our lives and part of our friends' lives that are associated with the Gardens.

20.34

LW I know this is probably before your time but when I was looking at the archives the other day I saw some photos with horses. They used the horses to pull the mowers

SM I can tell you about that. When I was growing up, the works depot was I think rather bigger and they had draught horses and they used to pull the rollers and do the cutting on the Fearon Reserve. They used to graze on the Fearon Reserve. So when we were kids we'd be wandering around and there'd be draught horses freely wandering around out on the Fearon Reserve. On one never to be forgotten day my sister, Mary, myself, Patsy, Bill and my dear little sister, Diane, who was probably three or four at the time had gone down to the beach

LW Sorry, what was that sister's name

SM Diane, she's the one in Western Australia. We were walking across the Fearon Reserve and one of the draught horses reared up and Mary just pulled Diane, who was tiny, out before the draught horse landed on her. A memorable day out that one.

LW - So Fearon Reserve then would have been fenced otherwise the horses would have?

SM No, only fenced in the way it is now.

LW - So what kept the horses there, were they shackled or something?

SM No, they were just wandering around.

LW Is that right?

SM I just remember them wandering around. They'd been let out to graze I think. All I know is that the draught horses were there, they were very much part of our lives and they were often on the Fearon Reserve. They must have been stabled in the depot. They were very much part of our lives in the fifties because Diane was born in 1954 and that experience was when she could walk and we could take her to the beach. She was still very little. It was probably fifty-seven or fifty-eight so there were still draught horses on the Fearon Reserve then. It was a very rich time for kids.

22.35

LW - Can I ask you about the Fearon Reserve then? Was that ever part of the Gardens?

SM Yes that was what I was saying. In 1870 from what I have read of the history, the Gardens were being so used and were so crowded that there was a request for further acreage. I haven't got the exact details but there was a certain amount of acreage was added as part of the Gardens and then another part so the entire Fearon Reserve was called the Gardens Reserve. I think that was where they would have had games and activities because the Gardens were really being over used by this stage. It was later on that that became - it was basically excised from being the Gardens but it was originally set up as being part of the Gardens.

LW - Was it still fenced off?

SM All my life the Gardens were fenced from the Fearon Reserve back to Gifford Street, so the fence ran right along. You could walk down the elm avenue - we could walk straight down the elm avenue, go out the gate which went into the Fearon Reserve and then cut across the Fearon Reserve to go to the station to go to school. I remember seeing my young brother strolling across the Fearon Reserve on his way to school when he was about fourteen and beginning to grow and he seemed to have nothing but legs up to his shoulders. Because I can't ask Mum, but I know that for my lifetime the Fearon Reserve was never fenced like the Gardens. The Gardens were like the Royal Botanic Gardens but they adjoined the Gardens and was originally set up I suppose as an overflow area.

LW So between the Gardens and Fearon Reserve still had a fence

SM Oh yes that was the original fence for the Gardens because when they set the Gardens up, from my reading, in 1856 the first thing they did was trench out and fence the entire ten acres. Because we used to be taken into the Royal Botanic Gardens I always felt an affinity with them because the fence around the Royal Botanic Gardens reminded me of the fence around the Williamstown Botanic Gardens. So I thought that's what happens with botanic gardens isn't it, they get fences. Because we used to be taken into the Royal Botanic Gardens on a Sunday afternoon and sit on the lawns. They used to have what was called the Pleasant Sunday afternoon and an orchestra would play and you'd take your picnics in. That was before the Myer Music Bowl was built. Mum would pack our picnic and afternoon tea and listen to music in the Royal Botanic Gardens.

25.21

When we were little, well, all my life I guess, we used to go into, speaking of music, we used to go into the Conifer Pine end of the Gardens and there's that area which originally was a rotunda and we used to love running up and down and playing on that and playing hidey but never in my time was there music actually in the Gardens as part of that being a rotunda. I suppose one person to ask about the rotunda would be Gwen Garnsworthy who is in her nineties - our friend. I think it would be lovely if we could go and talk to her and ...(?) has said that Gwennie would love us to do that. That would be a nice thing to ask her about. She may remember more about the Fearon too.

I remember the Fearon very well because that's where I played sport for high school. I always chose my sport according to where I could look at the sea. So it was cricket in summer and hockey in winter - on the Fearon - and then I could walk home through the Gardens.

One of the delights of living so near to the Gardens when we were growing up was the absolutely wonderful skyline that we had when we came out to the front of our house. We lived in a double fronted weatherboard house and we looked down to the Gardens. We could sit on the front verandah in the old rocking chair which had been my Great Grandmothers, if somebody else hadn't claimed it, and you'd see the beautiful enormous pines at the bottom of Twyford Street on the first lawn to the right as you come in from the elm walk. Then along from that there was a silhouette of the Washingtonia Palms along the avenue. I remember sitting one night looking to the Gardens as night was falling, it must have been Christmas because there was a Salvation Army band playing somewhere in the streets and the sun had set and there was this wonderful pink and deep green afterglow of light in the sky with a black silhouette of the palms and the pines down at the Gardens. It was probably one of the most beautiful moments of my life, and I've had many.

I was very sad when they actually cut the palms down - that was somewhere in the sixties and seventies. They were actually lopped and for many years that avenue just had the stumps with the - god help us - ivy growing over them. The palms were replanted - I'm not sure if that was part of the bicentennial but they have now re-established the sort of height I used to know. It's quite funny having a connection with the Gardens because sometimes there's been quite a deal of loss and we've had a lot of renewal and that's been just wonderful to see.

28.20

The Gardens were hideously neglected in the nineteen-nineties unfortunately, when we had amalgamations

LW And this is amalgamations of the?

SM Of the councils under the Kennett Government. Williamstown was subsumed into the greater City of Hobsons Bay. We lost the staff who were attached to the Gardens and they merely employed a couple of contractors who would come in literally slash and burn. We've had family and friends who visit. In fact we have a very dear extended family friend from New Zealand who's been coming to Williamstown since 1966 and he came up to the house after walking through the Gardens as we always did and said 'It is appalling, it is absolutely appalling the state the Gardens are in'.

However, as a result of people like Angela Altair, Mary Klestadt and Helen Page in the late nineties, that was when the effort to establish a master plan came in - a curator was appointed. Shelley was actually invited, I believe, to take the job. She was working over at Ripponlea as curator there and she came back to her beloved Gardens, which is where she had worked in 1980s as an apprentice. When Shelley was there in the eighties, I remember her very well and I also remember that she worked with quite a number of people who were looking after the Gardens. We have just seen an enormous resurgence in the Gardens since the year 2000 with the implementation of the master plan.

LW It's good to have that guide for the future

SM Absolutely. It provides a framework for future care and development of the Gardens. Perhaps that might be a point to start to start to talk about the fact that in the master plan, one of the points to be achieved was that they wanted to set up a friends group. That was one of the latest things that was attempted for the master plan. It wasn't done until 2009 so the master plan had been implemented for nine years when a public meeting was called in the Mechanics Institute.

In May 2009 people who were interested in the formation in a Friends of Williamstown Botanic Gardens were invited to the meeting. Shelley were there of course, Helen Page chaired the meeting. Helen is on the advisory group for the Gardens. She was at that time President of the Garden History Society of Australia. They had some marvellous speakers that night. We had a talk from the Friends of the Cranbourne Botanic Garden; we had a talk from one of the friends of the Royal Botanic Gardens; Stephen Thorpe who was then Manager Parks City of Hobsons Bay gave a talk about his vision for the Gardens. Then the question was asked would we form a friends group or did we want to and at that point I said 'well I thought that was why we were there' and so we moved to form a friends group. Then somebody suggested that we should call for office bearers and it went a little pear shaped at that point and it was suggested that what we really needed to do was to have at least one

more meeting where people got to know each other and out of that we would talk about what committee or how would we move on.

After the meeting I contacted Shelley and Loraine and said to them 'Look I think it would be really useful if we had some sort of activity and also some meeting fairly soon and they said "Well, we are already planning that. We've invited John Hawker, who is the horticulturist for Heritage Victoria, to take a guided walk with interested people through the Gardens'. So that happened pretty well a couple of weeks after the inaugural meeting and we had a wonderful walk through the Gardens with John Hawker talking about the myriad of significant trees. He gave us a list, a written list and stood and spoke about individual trees and we came away with an appreciation of the Gardens as something other than Gardens. From then on we looked upwards.

They had a meeting, I couldn't go, where they had people in little groups and they got them to write down what things they would like the Friends to be involved in and list of things came up - education, art, history, guiding and propagating. There was a sort of consensus about the sort of things friends might work towards. Then a working committee was set up because it was decided if the Friends was to form it should become an incorporated association. In fact a group of people volunteered to do that work. Geoff King, Helen Page, Barbara Sloan, Diane Robinson, myself, Alan Murray and Kim Sawyer, I think Kim was involved with that working group. We worked through the wording of the Articles of Incorporation and we made amendments to suit what we thought.

I think about August we presented - August September - we presented those articles to those people who wanted to come to a meeting and they were accepted so the Friends were then established as an incorporated association and it was decided that the people who were on the working group would be the first committee.

34.28

LW Have you been President ever since?

SM Yes. Everybody on the committee agreed to take roles. Barbara Sloane was general committee but she was interested to set up a web site and to set us up an email; Alan Murray was general committee but he took on doing the newsletter, I agreed to be President, Kim Sawyer agreed to be Vice President, Geoff King to be secretary and Diane Robinson treasurer. Basically it is amazing how many people didn't leap forward and hit us over the ears to demand the positions really. I was a little concerned at the time that it seemed a bit of a fait accompli but people don't seem to be too worried about it.

Helen Page was really good. At one of the early meetings Anja Lee had come up to me (who's been absolutely wonderful) and talked about all sorts of possibilities for the Gardens with children. Anja is a trained kindergarten teacher, she teaches at a bilingual kindergarten, German English kindergarten one day a week. She's a dynamo and she took on, with Carol Challis who has been absolutely marvellous, getting something going for activities for children.

So we had the committee, then Helen Page organised for us to go to Geelong to meet the Friends of Geelong in late 2009. Then in early December we advertised a get together for the Friends and Carol and Anja had put together a treasure hunt for the children which was to take a map and find certain things in the Gardens. Well, it was really quite funny because the only people who turned up were the committee and Anja and Carol and Anja's children.

However Anja is nothing if not creative and she saw a birthday party along the way and many of them were her children so she whizzed over and we ended up with nineteen children doing the treasure hunt. We had a lovely afternoon. Then Anja came up with the idea of doing story time in the Gardens. I'm not sure, we'd have to look at the dates now, but she contacted the Williamstown Library, she suggested a programme. She worked with Russell Barrett who did activities for the Library, great bloke. They established five story times. From the inception, 2010, 2011 and 2012 into 2013 story times have run with Anja driving them and Carol producing activities for the children. That's been absolutely marvellous.

37.49

Then Kim Sawyer went to St Kilda and saw them doing Paint the Gardens and came back with that idea and we instituted that. So that's been done 2011, 2012 and 2013. What it was really decided in a way was that we were starting out so we would start with certain things. People had said they wanted education and art and we had people who were prepared to roll their sleeves up and do it.

Anja, who's always energetic, had children at the local school so she organised an activity for the prep kids down in the Gardens. So Willy Primary preppies went down and I think they did Jack and the Beanstalk and they did a lovely story about Jack and the Beanstalk. They all got a bean and planted it and took it home to see if their beanstalk would grow. Anja told the story of how one little boy said 'he really was very naughty wasn't he, I mean after all he gave away the cow and took beans, then he stole from the giant and then he cut down the beanstalk'. Anja sat there thinking 'Oh dear, how do we accommodate the moralists?' One of the lovely things about story time is that we just get so many people. They love it.

We had the opportunity when we were doing Paint the Gardens, quite a few of the Friends did propagating and we had a plant sale at our first Paint the Gardens. That was all done in people's gardens. Eva Haabjoern and Helen Olsen drove that and it was fantastic. Eva Haabjoern had joined the Friends of Altona Library because Williamstown Library was closed at that stage because it was being rebuilt. They had out the back the book stock for Williamstown Library and they were prepared to let us collect books, so we got a whole lot of children's books and gardening books. We sold them at our first Paint the Gardens.

We've had a really nice connection with the Library in terms of programmes. Rosemary Clarke who is involved with publicity for the Library is very supportive. We set up an arrangement at her suggestion about how we would advertise - what role they would take and what role we would take - about advertising story time. Arts and Culture have been fantastic in terms of our partnership with the Paint the Gardens. We get enormous support from Ian Brown and Andrea Ellis, his PA. Ian came to a meeting after Bev Roberts, one of our members, produced a suggested brochure. Ian had come to the meeting and we agreed that it looked pretty good and I said we will have to look at how we produce it and he said 'Oh we will do that for you'. So City of Hobsons Bay have produced our brochure for us. We were invited in 2010 to participate in the Garden parties. We had our own marquee and we had various things for display. Geoff King had provided something that his grandmother had had, which was one of the original invitations to one of the Mayoral Garden Parties. It was a book and it was taken apart and the Council made a beautiful display of it and we had that for display.

41.46

When we first set up Helen Page went around and photographed at least twelve of the trees and John Hawker wrote explanatory notes. We have built up display material.

We have joined the Royal Horticultural Society of Victoria so that we have liability insurance through them. We joined the Association of Botanic Gardens Australia so we get their magazine. We visited Geelong, Ballarat, now Castlemaine. St Kilda have visited (us), Bendigo are coming to visit so it is a wonderful learning experience.

One of the lovely things about the Friends is that there are people who join just because they love the Gardens, so we have people who are in their eighties and nineties who pay their subscription, whether they can come to anything or not. Because there was a bit of a muddle one time, one elderly chap paid his subscription twice. I popped around to see him and he said 'take the second as a donation'. It is just a sign of how people value the Gardens.

I think one of the things is that people have been worried for a long time that the Gardens were being neglected and there's a real feeling that it's important for the community to value them and to be involved with them.

One of the things that many people joined for was they hoped they would have some hands on, like help with the maintenance. That has been discouraged. But when we were having discussions about the master plan recently when a few of the committee were asked to go to the first day of consultation where they were talking to Council officers and the Councillors, they asked a few of the Friends committee to come to talk to Andrew Laidlaw. I mentioned that we were not hands on and that I understood that apart from anything else we didn't wish to cut across employment, having properly employed people in the Gardens. Ian Brown wonderfully said 'Sue, I would never let that happen'. He's a terrific manager of Parks. He was also open to the possibility that there might be some area that the Friends could work in.

44.08

The other thing that happened was that we had to take into account that if we work in the Gardens there are occupational health and safety issues and it would take staff time to supervise. You have to be doing something that benefits the people who are working in the Gardens I believe, we don't want to be a distraction. I think we have to be doing something meaningful that does contribute to the Gardens. That doesn't mean that we can't do anything but I would want to know what would be most helpful under Shelly and Michael and what they would want done or not done.

The other thing that we've really tried to get going is propagating and we were rather stopped in our tracks by that because when we had our first plant sale, Shelley and Helen Page felt that some of the plants sold were perhaps inappropriate for being sold from a botanic garden. I may say that everybody who bought plants were delighted with them. We made over five hundred dollars on the first plant sale and we had tremendous support from so many of the Friends who actually did the propagating out of their own gardens and brought along terrific magazines to sell.

It was raised at the Williamstown Botanic Garden Advisory Group Committee that in fact there needed to be fairly strict regulation of what was done by friends groups in terms of propagating - pots need to be sterilised, you need sterilised potting material so you don't spread weeds, you have to be careful of the sort of plants you sold or propagated so you

weren't distributing weeds or invasive species. The suggestion was that we really should be propagating plants under supervision from the Gardens. Helen Page suggested that for the next plant sale which was to be in 2012 at the Paint the Gardens that we propagate some *Plectranthus* which grows in the Gardens and is a very nice plant. Helen Olsen was landed with that in her own home, so there was some work done but we still did sell plants that other people had propagated because we still had a lot of them.

However, what did happen then was that it was decided to have propagating at the Gardens but unfortunately at present there isn't an appropriate area set aside. The glass house got pulled down. There was a glass house which was declared unsafe and we were hoping to use that. So we would like to see a polyhouse there, a proper propagating area. At the moment there are relatively few people involved because it's a limited area and Shelley has to close the gates every second Monday so there aren't trucks coming through while people are working a propagating. So at the moment there are limitations on the group but they have worked enormously hard and produced a lot of plants.

We were to have a sale last year and the event got cancelled because of rain I think, it was late in the year. But then Peter Lindstrom and I collected quite a few plants and we went to the Saturday morning team, third Saturday of the month, and we sold quite a few. They were very generous in buying plants. I've actually got photos of plants on the table and wonderful Helen Olsen had produced descriptions of the plants and everything had been priced. So there were descriptions of how they grew and what size and what they were appropriate for. So that's something we are moving towards and obviously the history thing is really important.

48.21

I would love to see us giving picnics for older people and when we do, share stories and just engage people with the Gardens. I'd like to see us at least do some guiding, start to do guiding of our own.

We've had at least two speakers each year so that's been really good. We had Richard Barley the first year and we had the Friends of Geelong Botanic Gardens give us a talk about the history of the Geelong Botanic Gardens which is really good. We've had the Friends of Melbourne Botanic Gardens, we've had Shelley and Loraine talk about the Gardens and planning in the future of the Master Plan. This year we've had Ian Ray talk about significant trees and then Ian Brown talked about the tree plantings for Williamstown. I'd like to see us get someone from the Royal Melbourne Growing Group come over and possibly get something from Ballarat because I think they deal with things differently. What the Geelong Friends said was that we needed to be aware of our limitations, 'don't take on too much, you are a small group and you are beginning'.

I think really what we have achieved from 2009 to 2013 has been tremendous and that's because of the commitment of some pivotal people and some people with tremendous skills who have been prepared to give those to us. So because of the wonderful support we get from Shelley and Loraine and from Ian Brown and we've got real support from Council officers and I'm very impressed by the Council officers I have worked with.

Interview end