

Statues' move from great outdoors leaves big void

By ADAM PEARCE

EMPTY pedestals scattered throughout the Botanical Gardens displayed the reality of the damage inflicted on the Stoddart statues by vandals in April.

Following the attacks, the statues were moved to the safety of the Robert Clark Centre on Friday and visitors to the gardens over the weekend told *The Courier* of the noticeable change their removal had created.

A Ballarat Botanical Gardens staff member said their removal had ruined the character of the gardens to some extent and said visitors were asking where the statues had been moved to.

"They need to put something there to replace them," the staff member said.

The statues can be viewed in the

Robert Clark Centre, opposite the conservatory, between 9am and 5pm seven days a week.

Lake Gardens residents Anne and Doug MacDougall recalled a family wedding when an overseas visitor had remarked on the beauty of the statues.

"It's just disappointing that the minority can spoil it for the rest of us," he said.

They walk through the gardens most days and while Mr MacDougall said the removal had made a noticeable difference he didn't believe replacing them with replicas was the answer.

Ballarat resident Joel Murphy said he immediately noticed the empty pedestals when he entered the gardens and was disappointed he couldn't just walk through the gardens to see the statues.