

Merricks Matters

Autumn 2021

After the terrible time that we had in 2020, it is fantastic that so far this year, Victoria has avoided lockdowns and that we have been able to move around freely. As a result, many planned events have resumed and we have now reconnected on the beaches and in our clubs with new appreciation.

We should remember that many local businesses are still struggling as they recover from the stresses of 2020 and they may be dependent on factories elsewhere which are still being heavily impacted by terrible death tolls and tight restrictions. Remember to keep these countries in your thoughts and prayers.

Here at home, the Friends of Bill Carroll Reserve will soon hold their first working bee of the year. Also, the plant giveaway is now just around the corner. So, if you haven't already responded to the email sent last week, don't forget to click on the link in the article below and place an order to receive your choice of six plants which will be distributed to MBRA members over the Queen's birthday weekend.

The newsletter was delayed due to my return to full-time work which has been a challenge to adjust to over the last six weeks. Also, if you are a contributor on behalf of your group, you will help me greatly if you aim to send submissions by the third week of the season (no winter edition). On the plus side, we are full of Easter reports this edition. Many thanks in advance!

Sharon Muhleisen, Editor

Plant Giveaway

Once again, the MBRA will be giving away indigenous plants to members for planting on and after the Queen's Birthday weekend.

Following the positive feedback we received regarding last year's COVID-enforced pre-order and delivery model, we are doing it the same way again. So, we are asking members to specify the plants they want, and we will deliver them to you on Sunday morning, 13th June.

The full list of available plants, carefully selected by Richard Anderson from Merricks Nursery (on Frankston-Flinders Road) is [at this link](#). Please send an email to president@mbra.com.au with the desired number of your selected plants (up to 6 plants total per household, in any combination), confirmation of the delivery address, and details of any special delivery requests/needs (please include a contact phone number). If you use the link above, the list of plants will appear in your email.

Orders must be received by 4 June 2021 to give us time to purchase and collate the plants.

Bill Carroll Reserve

Easter Sunday was an egg-stravaganza of egg racing, egg fielding and egg finding with loud encouragement from the audience and much laughter from onlookers, competitors and those cheering from the sidelines or roosting in their chairs.



A cracking thanks to Bendigo Bank who support our community spirit. Come and visit the Reserve and enjoy the amazing autumn (soon to be winter) weather.

Kirsty Richards, Friends of Bill Carroll Reserve

Sandmodelling Competition

This year's competition was originally planned for Sunday, January 3rd but the morning's weather was less than inviting with rain and wind whipping up the sand. So, a few days later on Wednesday the 6th, though still a bit breezy, the annual sand-modelling competition was held. Possibly due to the rescheduling of the event, there were only 90 entries than previous years with 150 working on the exhibits.

Poppy Rechner was Best on the Beach with The Rosebowl Trophy being awarded for "Hand from the Earth" which was skillfully and intricately constructed.



Hand from the Earth by Poppy Rechner

Most Original was awarded to Freddie Sandow (age 11) for his "Bull Ant" sculpture.

The Junior Encouragement Award was awarded to Jude Purcell (age 9) for "Fire Fortress" and he was presented with the Rick Daly Trophy for his efforts.

Special thanks to the judges, Carol Milton, Illario Cortez, Joyce Lawrence, Cameron Rutley and Sharon Muhleisen. Due to Covid, we did not collect donations from households this year. Many thanks to the Merricks Beach Residents Association for funding this unique event that has been held on the foreshore for over 80 years. Although a sausage sizzle was also unable to be had due to Covid restrictions, ice-creams were handed out and well received instead.

Sue Rutley

Cultural Walk with Lionel Lauch

On Easter Saturday, a glorious day that felt more like the height of summer than the middle of autumn, I joined a group of individuals that gathered at the tennis courts. We had all signed up for a guided indigenous walking tour of the Merricks foreshore, organised by the MBRA. Our guide was Lionel Lauch, founder and CEO of Living Culture, an organisation dedicated to promoting awareness of Aboriginal culture. The tour, which took two hours but spanned millenia, followed a track that links Surf St to the beach. Along the way our eyes were opened to the rich array of resources contained in this small stretch of bush. Familiar to us all but, as it turns out, quite unknown. For this author, whose knowledge of native flora and fauna is scant, it was a highly edifying experience. We learnt that southern Victoria is second only to the Daintree in terms of the diversity of its plant life. Seen through the eyes of our guide, the Merricks Beach foreshore was revealed as a vast resource, teeming with useful plants. No longer just access to the beach, the track was transformed into an armamentarium of hunting tools, medicine and food.



Lionel Lauch

Our guide encouraged us to use all our senses so we stopped many times to smell, touch, even taste a variety of plants that I had never before noticed, let alone consume.

We stood beneath a sheoak and learnt that the dense wood of the trunk and roots provides the best raw material for boomerangs. We learnt that the small leaf clematis that winds its way unobtrusively through the undergrowth, is a reliable curative for migraine. We saw a fine example of kangaroo grass, its seed can be ground into flour and baked into a high protein, gluten free bread that I have since learnt, is loved by Ben Shewry of Attica. While the knowledge component of the walk was excellent, the more profound impact of the walk was in the opportunity it gave us to experience a deeper connection with the Merricks Beach foreshore. Many thanks to the MBRA for organising and respect and gratitude to Lionel Lauch for his work.

Barbara Hogarth

Tennis Court Update

As MBRA members who attended the AGM in January will be aware, the MBRA committee has been giving further consideration to the choice of the new surface for the tennis courts. Previously, it had been thought that a 'plexipave' coating would be the best option, primarily because it would require the least maintenance. However, this option has a number of disadvantages. These include that: it is a hard and fairly unforgiving surface (and adding a cushioned surface adds considerably to the cost, without substantial benefit); it can become quite hot in summer; and, if the slab to which it is applied cracks, then so will the surface. This final issue, in particular, is a cause for some concern, given that our slabs are at least 50 years old and have previously cracked.

The alternative court surface – mod grass – scores far better against each of these criteria, and is about the same cost to install. In particular, it is not affected by any cracks in the slab beneath. It's one disadvantage is that it requires more maintenance.

Ultimately, the committee has resolved that the risk that further cracking may occur and compromise a plexipave surface is too great and, when combined with its other advantages, that mod grass is the appropriate choice of surface. The committee believes that the modest additional maintenance is justified on this basis.

The committee is now developing plans to raise the funds necessary to undertake this work. Approximately \$70,000 will be required; this includes the cost of extending the concrete apron to the baseline fences in order to eliminate the tripping hazards at the ends of the existing concrete areas. The committee is hopeful that further grants can be procured, however it will in any event be necessary to seek donations from within the community in order that our tennis courts can be kept safe and serviceable for years to come.

Peter Cash – MBRA President

Finally, I am sure that all residents and conscientious businesses surrounding Westernport would have let out an almighty cheer when it was announced that AGL has been given its marching orders and cannot continue with the installation that was to be docked at Crib Point. Well done to everyone who supported the organisers at Save Westernport and added their signatures to petitions, did online posts and raised awareness of AGL's seeming disregard for our beaches and for the mangrove areas that our fish-life is so dependent on in order to survive and thrive. Hopefully, we this negative threat has brought home to us how important Merricks Beach and its surrounding area is to all of us. If you haven't already joined a group, just join in the fun of a working bee and help keep Merricks Beach the hidden beauty that it is.

