

Merricks Matters

SPRING 2021

A very long and grey winter has passed but it brought quite a lot of rain this year and as a result our village is looking vibrant and lush with flowers blooming and we are enjoying some lovely days of sunshine. Yet again, we have come through another difficult lockdown and may still be catching up with friends and family, re-engaging at our clubs and parks. Soon we will be celebrating Christmas and January holidays together - hopefully, without any further Covid related interruptions.

This Spring edition is full of articles from our committee members who have been meeting and making progress on the issues that affect our community. We hope you enjoy the updates!

Sharon Muhleisen, Editor

Foreshore Reserve Update

The Merricks Beach Foreshore Reserve Committee of Management has completed works on the foreshore which was made possible by two recent grants and the wonderful assistance of community volunteers.

The Victorian Government Coastal Public Access and Risk Grants program enabled works on a number of paths around the foreshore and included re-grading sections of path damaged by high use, rainfall and erosion. Additional works included new and improved handrails and steps in a number of locations. An area of focus was the Coles Creek pedestrian only access track which joins the beach. We ask that residents and visitors please follow the new rails and steps to help minimise erosion on our sensitive foreshore.



The second grant enabled weed control and revegetation on the seaward side of the pines opposite Cliff Road. Planting was recently completed by a community working bee between COVID lockdowns and predominantly comprised of native species to regenerate the ground story. Trees and shrubs were added to improve habitat for wallabies, koalas, echidnas and other wildlife. We ask residents and visitors to assist by staying out of this area which is temporarily fenced off to enable the plants to establish. The grant was provided by the Communities Environment Program, administered by the Commonwealth Government.

We are hopeful that a further grant application will be successful as additional funding will assist in providing a continuation of path improvements in other priority areas.

As COVID restrictions continue to be lifted, the Foreshore Committee will schedule working bees focussing on planting and weed control. It is a terrific time of community

involvement so we encourage you to come along and participate in these rewarding events.



James Wilson – Merricks Beach Foreshore Committee

Bill Carroll Reserve

The Reserve is flourishing, thanks to plenty of spring rain and sun. Terrific care has been supplied by our committee, particularly Alec and Glythn Campbell and Dave Stewart, in the months during lockdown. When you wander through, you'll see that plenty of mulch that was provided by the Shire has been spread out. You may also notice that a couple of ancient boobiallas had died and have since been replaced. Boobiallas, or native juniper or blueberry tree have white flowers with purple spots, are salt tolerant and therefore often found on dunes and coastal cliffs. Something you may see - if you look hard enough - are Tawny Frogmouths. Tawny Frogmouths can be difficult to see as their plumage of spots, streaks and specks of grey, brown and black makes them blend into the branches. They keep very still, often with their tail in line with the branch, and narrow their



eyes down to slits to remain camouflaged. Again, we'd like to give many thanks to Bendigo Bank for their super support which provided us the means to pay our insurance.

So, we may see

you wandering through the Reserve and remember that our Picnic in the Park will be back on in January. We're planning a very social wine tasting to celebrate getting together again!

Lainie Larsson, Friends of Bill Carroll Reserve

Tennis Courts – Fundraising Appeal

As all Merricks Beach residents would likely be aware, the MBRA has been embarked upon a project to renovate our village tennis courts to make them safe so we can ensure they continue to be a valued community asset for the future. The next and final stage of this project is to extend the concrete apron to the fence and to resurface the courts with Modgrass. As advised in the Autumn 2021 edition of Merricks Matters, Modgrass has been chosen because it will not be adversely affected by further cracking of the very old concrete beneath. It is also a far more player-friendly surface, especially for those of us whose best volleys are now a distant memory.

The cost to complete these works will be around \$75,000. The MBRA is therefore commencing a fundraising drive, a major element of which will include requests for tax-deductible donations from Merricks Beach residents.

Details of the project will be sent to all residents with details of how you can make a donation toward this important community asset. We hope that you will consider contributing to this project to deliver an improved community asset for current and future generations of Merricks Beach residents.

Peter Cash - MBRA President

Lead on

Dogs have always been a big part of the fabric of Merricks Beach. As more dog owners head to our beach, it is important to lead by example by remembering the rules that apply year 'round:

Only leashed dogs are allowed on the beach. During daylight savings, leashed dogs may only be exercised before 9am and after 7pm. (Dogs are not permitted on the beach at all between these hours.)



For off-leash exercise, there is a leash-free area at Hanns Creek Reserve, on Frankston-Flinders Road.

We are grateful that most residents are responsible dog owners who clean up after their pets, are mindful of others' enjoyment at Merricks Beach and manage their dogs in line with the rules.

Brad Vann – MBRA Committee

Roads and Drains – What We Do

For many years up until 2008, the MBRA was responsible for all aspects of roads and drains maintenance in Merricks Beach. This involved engaging a contractor to grade the roads twice a year. The Association would also run regular working bees to fill potholes. A few willing souls wielding shovels would fill a trailer from the stockpile of gravel, then distribute it around the village. Good exercise, but unfortunately it turned out to be the same half dozen people who fronted up each time. We had total control over the maintenance activities and erection of signage, and a large part of the Association's annual expenditure (approx. \$10,000 p.a.) was dedicated to the roads. The downside of this arrangement was that the Association didn't have the financial resources to undertake regular drain work or re-surface the roads as the gravel eroded.

From 2008 onwards, the Road Management Act required the Mornington Peninsula Shire Council to take over our road maintenance. The MBRA's role then became one of liaising with the Council and its contractors to achieve the best outcomes for the village. The major roads in the village are now graded on a 15-week cycle with the lesser roads on a 26-week cycle. We have a close working relationship with the contractor (Downer) and hold regular on-site meetings to highlight areas of concern with both the roads and drains. We also maintain close contact with the responsible Council officers.

While road expenditure has fallen significantly, we still spend around \$5,000 per year (which is matched by the Council) on re-sheeting the roads. This is in addition to anything the

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Council might do off its own bat, and involves putting material back onto the road surface and grading it smooth. This is generally done before the summer grade in November. I would ideally like to return to having a stockpile of gravel for ad-hoc pothole filling, but have been unable to find a suitable location. We therefore have to rely on the Snap. Send. Solve. Council app to get things done.

I can't speak about prior years, but believe the roads and drains are in better shape than they have ever been in my 25 years of coming to Merricks Beach.

Unfortunately, with these improvements has come the combined effects of CFA access requirements, power company pruning and large contractor machinery which has seen the narrow, winding roads widened and straightened and potentially contributing to increased speeds ...but that is a topic for another day.

Bernard Barrett – MBRA Roads and Drains

Diary Dates

Davies Cup Tournament – December 30th

AGM at the Merricks Yacht Club – January 2nd

Sandmodelling Competition – January 7th (with a reserve date of January 9th should weather be unsuitable on the 7th)

Power and Pumps

On the 21st October, a supply utility United Energy (UE) transformer failed in the area which resulted in power failing throughout Merricks Beach and Balnarring Beach and affecting 860 users. After power supply was re-instated, UE sent out an SMS advising:

If your power is still out and you've checked your switchboard, let us know on 132 099.

Upon checking our switchboard, I found that one of the outgoing circuit breakers had tripped open, so I reset it. However, three days later, we found that our South East Water (SEW) sewerage system was not working and water was discharging from the main tank into the garden. SEW immediately sent technicians to rectify the situation. They found that the discharge pump controller was not functioning as the internal fuses were blown, potentially due to the earlier transformer fault producing an over voltage. A change over controller was installed and the system began operating.

- 1) In view of the fault, house owners in the area should immediately check that their sewerage pump is running.
- 2) The SEW technicians advised that power must not be removed from the pump for long periods. In particular, many owners of holiday houses with this type of sewerage installed, may isolate supply when departing to return their residential homes. This, in turn, results the sewerage pump not being in service and thus the sewer can/will overflow.

Grattan Fitzgerald - MBRA Committee

It's a Sign

Please be mindful that by putting up signs around the village, it takes away from the natural surrounds that makes Merricks Beach a coastal retreat from the city. We ask that rather than hammering into trees and/or posts around the village and on the foreshore, that everyone use the noticeboards, or gain a wider audience by writing in to newspapers and newsletters to support the causes that are important to you.

Kathy McGrath – MBRA Secretary