

Merricks Matters

Spring/Summer 2020-2021

What a year it has been since our last edition! The MBRA committee has worked through the pandemic meeting via Zoom and are pleased to share the good news that some events can now go ahead in the new year, though there may be some changes to format. We hope that our local community groups will soon be able to resume their normal activities - so as the months progress, please keep checking the MBRA website for updates on the *Calendar* and *Upcoming Events* tabs. If you are a member of a group, be sure to let me know if there is anything you would like to share on your group's behalf. Remember that you can also find information and articles on the *Merricks Matters* tab throughout the year.

Sharon Muhleisen, Editor

The Merricks Beach Foreshore Reserve Committee of Management have recently received two grants to enable important works on the foreshore.

The first grant from the Communities Environment Program was administered by the Commonwealth Government. This grant is for work on a revegetation project on the seaward side of the pines in the foreshore reserve opposite Cliff Road, which commenced recently. We ask residents and visitors to assist by staying out of the temporarily fenced off areas where the revegetation works are being undertaken. The works will involve weed control and planting of native species, predominantly ground storey but include some trees and shrubs to improve habitat for wallabies, koalas, echidnas and other wildlife. The weed control and planting is being undertaken by contractors on behalf of the Committee and, once the COVID-19 restrictions allow, we will organise community working bees to assist with planting.

The second grant is from the Coastal Public Access and Risk Grants program funded by the Victorian Government. This grant will be applied to a number of paths and trails in the Merricks Beach Foreshore Reserve. The funds will be used to construct steps and handrails where the Coles Creek access path joins the beach and includes a new gate at the entrance to the path to control bike access. There will also be works to resurface selected paths and trails and improve run-off from paths in the Reserve to better manage erosion. If you have any queries, please direct them to the Secretary, Merricks Beach Foreshore Reserve Committee of Management Inc. at merricksbeachfc@gmail.com

James Wilson - Merricks Beach Foreshore Reserve Committee of Management Inc.

VALE Tom Davies Sadly, long-time Merricks Beach resident and yacht club and tennis stalwart, Tom Davies passed away 15 July 2020. Players in our annual tennis tournament contend for the Davies Cup, named in Tom's honour. Tom was an inspiration to all of us, a wonderful presence in Merricks Beach and an integral part of the fabric of our village. On behalf of the Merricks Beach community, the MBRA extends its condolences to Anne and their children, Ross, Trevor, Greg, Philip and Helen.

VALE Peter Carroll - 21 Sept 1951 to 25 Sept 2020.

It is with great sadness that we inform Merricks Beach Yacht Club members of the passing of Peter Carroll. Peter was a founding member, was the club's second Rear Commodore and the first club champion. His love of sailing saw him become a sailmaker and regularly compete in yachting events, including Melbourne to Launceston races. Peter was also a stalwart of the Bill Carroll Reserve. We extend our sympathy to his family.

VALE Shirley Ann Griffin. Shirley enjoyed many summers in Merricks Beach with her husband Mervyn and their daughters, Joellen and Liza and their families. She was stylish, friendly, kind and inclusive. Her Girl's Nights were legendary. Shirley passed away 10 Oct, 2020.

Executive Director of the Dolphin Research Institute, Jeff Weir shares his thoughts on a new project that he wants Merricks Beach locals to share in - but he wants us to keep it to ourselves.

There's a secret in the waters of Western Port that we want to understand but keep quiet at the same time. It's about some unusual dolphins and a bay that is very different to Port Phillip Bay which has both resident bottlenose and common dolphins. The Dolphin Research Institute (DRI) has records of Western Port dolphins spanning three decades, with regular sightings of bottlenose dolphins in the southern half, especially along the western and eastern shores.

Will Webster from Merricks Beach has spent much of the COVID-19 lockdown as a Monash Uni intern with DRI, developing a new project that aims to uncover some of the mysteries of the bottlenose dolphins that frequent local waters from Somers to Flinders. He is asking questions like: How many are there? What are their patterns of movement? What happens to the calves when they mature? Why does Port Phillip have about 160-180 resident dolphins and Western Port only a couple of dozen? What are the human impacts?

Will has also helped in the creation of a new web-tool called 'PodSurveyor' to record dolphin sightings. We are now also encouraging locals to report "ad-hoc" sightings through our PodWatch app. (You can save a shortcut to PodWatch on your phone.) Have a look at the tutorial for PodWatch at this link:

<https://youtu.be/fJKOxk60aZM>

and the direct link to PodWatch is here:

<https://www.dolphinresearch.org.au/report-sightings-page/>

It's important to reinforce that DRI are keen to record cases of harassment so that we can help to build a case with wildlife managers to support the protection of these unique dolphins. Important for the same reason, are the dolphin watching rules: Swimmers should not deliberately approach dolphins closer than 30 metres. Sailboats, (including paddleboards etc.) 100 metres, and jet skis should stay 300 metres away. If they approach you then stay calm, enjoy the experience and let them swim off.

These remarkable dolphins are a joy to locals and the Institute's goal is to protect them through understanding their needs and threats. At the beginning of this article I said "understand and keep quiet at the same time". We go out of our way to speak in general terms about Western Port dolphins unless we are talking to locals or managers. It would certainly not be in the dolphins' best interest if their precise location was outed on one of the lifestyle programs - so "mum's the word".

Jeff Weir

2020 Plant Giveaway a Success

Despite not being able to gather to pick up our annual goodies, 2020's plant giveaway was still a great success. This year, we were sent a list of plants that would be available and were asked to select six plants (in any combination). The orders were then bundled together into a neat pack and delivered by a few wonderful volunteers. Richard Anderson from Merricks Nursery (pictured below) is our mid-year Santa who grows these little beauties and he is a wealth of knowledge on all things green. If you like changing up your garden and trying out new plants, remember he is just around the corner at 3361 Frankston Flinders Rd - on the left before the General Store. Richard stocks a good range of indigenous and coastal hardy plants, plus he can answer your questions about how to best care for them.



Traffic volume and speed in Merricks Beach: is partial closure of Bayview Road an answer?

Without doubt, the issue most frequently raised by MBRA members is the speed of vehicles in the village. And, more often than not, the concern relates to Palmers Hill Road and the stretch of Bayview Road east of its intersection with that road. Moreover, there is anecdotal evidence that a substantial proportion of the vehicles using these roads – whether or not speeding – is through traffic, which uses our village as a shortcut from Balnarring Beach to Frankston Flinders Road.

A possible solution might be to persuade the Shire Council to make the start of the gravel section of Bayview Road one way, so that vehicles could not (legally) enter Merricks Beach from Balnarring Beach. This may cause some modest inconvenience to Merricks Beach residents but would seem likely to have an appreciable effect on traffic volume and, (assuming residents are more respectful than others of our speed limit), on traffic speeds as well.

The MBRA committee does not underestimate the degree of difficulty in persuading the Shire Council to do this. Nonetheless, if residents want this change, we would be willing to give it a try. To that end, we invite residents (especially those in that part of the village) to provide their views (max 250 words) at mbra.com.au/contact. Depending on this initial feedback, we may then conduct a formal survey.

Peter Cash - President MBRA

Pine Tree Removal in Foam Street

A very large pine tree has been expertly removed by the Shire Council recently. The ninety-two foot pine, estimated to be well over 100 years old, was leaning toward houses in Foam Street. There were worries that strong winds could cause it to blow over which would have resulted in severe damage to property and possibly endangered lives. It took two days for the enormous tree to be taken down and a good length of the stump has been left as habitat for wildlife. Thanks to Grattan Fitzgerald for photos and reporting the progress of its removal.



There's a buzz in the Bill Carroll Reserve

It's summer and the Reserve is abuzz with birds, buds, frogs, flourishing plants, and some rowdy weeds. We have seen some lone rangers in amongst the growth, weeding and caring for the area and David Stewart is doing his normal "mighty mowing" and maintenance. We're looking forward to community celebrations in January, if it is possible - or later on! We will keep you updated.

Kirsty Richards, Friends of Bill Carroll Reserve

MBRA SUMMER EVENTS

Following the announcement of the COVID rules for the Summer, the MBRA committee has been working to determine which events may be held, and what procedures will be required to ensure that all safety protocols will be met. This is something of a moving target as it is possible that the restrictions may be relaxed further by January or, on the other hand, tougher rules may be reimposed if there is another outbreak. We will keep residents informed by email if there are changes. As matters stand, however, the position is as follows:

The Sand Modelling Competition It is expected that the 88th year of this event will proceed – with some modifications – on Sunday 3 January (with the reserve date of Wednesday 6 January in case of cancellation in accordance with the new Extreme Heat protocol, which can be viewed on [the MBRA website](http://mbra.com.au)).

The Sausage Sizzle Unfortunately, there is no way we can hold the sausage sizzle, so we have had to cancel it. We will provide an alternative - on the beach - during the sand modelling.

The Davies Cup Tournament will take place, more or less as normal, on Thursday 7 January. Players will need to pre-register by text to Ian Bassar (0417 118 869) or Peter Cash (0416 067 377). If you would like to play, please let us know sooner rather than later as places may need to be limited this year.

The MBRA AGM will take place on Sunday 10 January. We will have to impose a limit of one attendee from each household, and they will be required to pre-register. There will also be a limit on the total number of registrations, but this is unlikely to be exceeded. The meeting will be broadcast on Zoom for those who cannot attend in person. The papers for the AGM will be despatched shortly.

If you have any queries, please let us know at mbra.com.au/contact

And finally, I am sure everyone in our village will join in a big cheer for one of our local legends, Ian (Storm) Johnson who has been awarded a 'Lifetime Achievement Award' by Sailing Australia in the Victorian Sailing Awards 2020. This is for his contribution to sailing and in particular, the A Class Catamaran Association. Included below is the link with the presentation and his acceptance speech.

<https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=458721885023340&extid=nLmhiOpGVklk4S5V>

Congratulations Storm!