

# TheBeak

news from the Friends of Coolart



## PROGRESS PROGRESS

*"Coming together is a beginning; keeping together is progress; working together is success."* Henry Ford

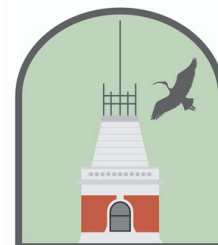
Anyone who has had any dealings with Parks Victoria understands the glacial pace that decisions are made and actions are seen on the ground. So goes our story. One needs patience and a strong belief in what we are here for to persevere but persevere we do and bit by bit we progress.

This year we have made inroads into strengthening our relationships with the local Parks Vic team and we have clarified the Friends of Coolart Committee's relationships with all the volunteers working on site. What is now shaping up is the establishment of a Coolart Village where one and all are working for a better Coolart experience for visitors, volunteers and workers alike. From this model, we are now starting to identify future opportunities for volunteering and participation. If gardening is not your thing, you may want to get involved in event planning or environmental works or Artist-in-Resident's programs to name but a few examples. Imagine a hive of activity on any one day at Coolart; artists working on their craft; community gardeners working their plot, volunteer baristas making the perfect latte, new and exciting events for Coolart being plotted and planned - this is all within reach and the direction we are working towards.

And we are making progress. A local group has taken on the old herb garden to create a heritage vegetable community garden. Starting up as a sub-group of the Friends of Coolart - enthusiasm is high and working parties have been productive. The FOC committee will support them through grants and mentoring and all their members will become part of the Friends of Coolart Community. Like all good partnerships, Parks Victoria staff, particularly horticulturalist Eileen Rowe, are also heavily involved to make this work. The Community Garden is a work in progress but the signs of success are favourable.

A GLIMPSE OF  
WHAT'S INSIDE:

**Property News**  
**Coolart Community**  
**Garden**



FRIENDS OF  
COOLART

Coolart - where history meets nature

# PROPERTY NEWS

## homestead

When will the homestead reopen? Short answer - October 2022

**FOC Treasurer Andrew Giles and President Julie Ebbott met with Parks Victoria representatives to discuss the homestead re-opening.**

It has been revealed that the homestead is still not watertight and further investigations by a heritage architect are underway to develop a brief for a building contractor. The worst affected areas are on the second storey. Parks Vic are quietly confident that the ground floor is dry and pending another visit in one month's time, have agreed to re-open the ground floor to the public in October. Some electrical work still needs to be completed prior to opening, so the target date to open will coincide with the Annual Community Picnic scheduled for Sunday 30th October. In celebration of this the Committee are considering a 'Love Letter to Coolart' art exhibition in the house during this period. Once the re-opening is confirmed, information about the exhibition will be circulated.

Further, Parks Victoria have agreed to leave the downstairs of the homestead a 'blank canvas' until another meeting can be arranged early 2023 to discuss further. In doing so, there is now greater scope to consider a range of ideas of how the house can be used and to move away from the notion of a static museum. We will also take the opportunity to discuss a variety of projects around the site that we believe will add to the ongoing value and enjoyment of the estate for all visitors.

## the observatory

The FOC Committee has signed a contract with Parks Vic and Flooring Xtra to finally have new carpet laid in the Observatory after a 2019 flood event. The new carpet should be installed in time for the next environmental presentation on 14th July.

FRIENDS OF COOLART NEWS WINTER 2022

## environmental

Mornington Peninsula Koala Landcare together with 60 primary school students from Woodleigh and 10 secondary students from Balcombe Grammar recently planted 260 plants into the re-veg paddocks at Coolart which were planted out initially around 2010. The plants installed were middle storey shrubs and grasses to build on the original planting. Participating students were extremely keen and did a great job. This is the second year MP Koala Landcare have worked with PV at Coolart.

## coolart walk & talk

Ranger Casey Lee is inviting Friends of Coolart members on a Coolart Environment Walk &Talk on **Thursday 14th July**. Commencing at the Coolart Visitor Centre at 10am, you will meander through Coolart, taking in the lagoon, multiple re-vegetation areas, the banksia woodlands, swamp scrub, saltmarshes and Merricks Creek. Hear about the environmental work underway at Coolart including re-vegetation, weeding, fox control, bird surveys and turtle protection. Come prepared for a roughly 2 hour walk, with sturdy shoes, weather appropriate attire, water and snacks. To join in; just turn up or email [casey.lee@parks.vic.gov.au](mailto:casey.lee@parks.vic.gov.au)



The FOC acknowledges the traditional owners of Coolart with a new sign located in the Coolart Shop while we wait for Parks Vic to do the same.

# COOLART - AN EMERGING VILLAGE

## Activities from around Coolart

As the FOC Committee continues to debate and define its role into the future, it is the relationships with all volunteer groups operating on site that we want to strengthen and support. To this end we are striving to create a Coolart community or village. Hence, commencing from this edition of The Beak, we aim to bring you news of all the various activities and groups operating at Coolart. If you wish to join any of these groups or form your own, please drop us a line [info@coolart.org.au](mailto:info@coolart.org.au)

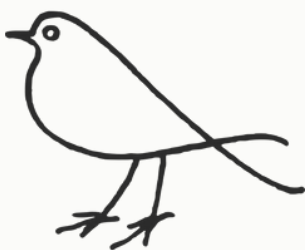
## homestead gardeners

Under the leadership of volunteer Loie Sharp, gardening volunteers have been clearing and weeding the water feature located just inside the entrance to the homestead gardens. This area has looked very neglected for some time but with effort this space, that features a sculpture by Heather Ellis, is starting to be reclaimed. It has been a habitat for frogs, birds, and native bush rats and the dream would be to see this area reinstated to its 1991 glory when opened by Dr Davis McCaughey.



## the bird group

Michael Mann, a passionate member of the bird survey group approached the FOC Committee recently to request funding assistance to rebuild and replace several nesting boxes located around Coolart. Michael is now busy building and will work with Parks Vic ranger Casey Lee to install them. He has further plans to purchase a camera on a telescopic pole to peer into boxes during nature walks and ideally locate cameras around the visitor centre to transmit live feeds to the Coolart website and visitor centre for viewing.



**Volunteer Baristas Wanted. We have just purchased a coffee cart for Coolart and are planning to train 5 people annually to become baristas in return for 30 volunteer hours over 12 months. All ages encouraged to apply. Send us an email [info@coolart.org.au](mailto:info@coolart.org.au)**

## coolart shop

Wintering at Coolart shop is quite challenging. The west facing veranda cops brutal winds and little sunshine. Many thanks to volunteers who have maintained attendances in this period. While there are fewer visitors around, the shop needs daily checking and some TLC in maintenance. Intrepid visitors love to take shelter and chat and as shop volunteer Laraine Proctor has observed, at times shop duty is more like an ambassadorial role than making sales! And finally, the shop has joined the modern world and now has EFTPOS thanks to Andrew Giles & Howard McTier. Sales continue to be steady, particularly thanks to plant donations and quality goods donated.

Coolart - where history meets nature



# COOLART COMMUNITY GARDEN

## Something new this way comes

Initiated by a group of dedicated locals, the Coolart Community Garden is now up and running, taking on the old herb garden and making it new again.

The herb garden is the site of the Luxton's vegetable garden that was overhauled in the mid 1980's. Brick paving was laid defining a series of small garden plots. Fast forward to 2022 and these same plots will form the initial beds for the community garden. As well as weeding and clearing, the soil requires improvement and already some thought has been given to building up the beds to make them easier to work. Working bees have already commenced, a committee has been created and planting and rotation schemes are in place.

The desire to create a community based, non-sporting activity that would bring people together was the driving force behind the establishment of the community garden group. Unlike other community gardens, the Coolart Community Garden is unique for several reasons; it is located in a heritage precinct on crown land managed by Parks Victoria; all group members are considered volunteers by Parks Victoria and therefore must register on Parkconnect and provide a Working With Children Card; and the garden must remain open to the public. Initial discussions with Parks Victoria left doubt as to ownership of the produce being crown land but fortunately this issue has been resolved and growers can keep their goods or donate them to the Coolart Shop for sale to raise money for Coolart. Also to remain true to the original 1950's garden of Gertrude Luxton, emphasis is on heritage vegetables and to this end the Coolart Community Garden Group have reached out to the Diggers Club for assistance and the educational opportunities that this may provide into the future. Parks Vic horticulturalist Eileen Rowe has been working with the group to prepare the site and navigate Coolart's specific requirements. The FOC

committee has provided initial start-up funds and applied for a \$5,000 grant for further development. As the group will operate as a sub-group of the Friends of Coolart, all members of the Garden Group will automatically become Friends of Coolart members and existing FOC members can apply to join the Community Garden Group at no extra charge. Annual costs to join are \$20 per individual or \$30 for 2 members of the same household.

**To join the Coolart Community Garden or find out more please contact [helen@evolvinggardens.com.au](mailto:helen@evolvinggardens.com.au)**



Coolart - where history meets nature

Friends of Coolart is a volunteer organisation that works to preserve and enhance the environmental, cultural and educational values of Coolart Wetlands and Homestead for the public benefit..

The work carried out by the Friends of Coolart compliments Parks Victoria's management of the reserve and adds value to both the essential qualities of the property and the visitor experience.

For more information or enquiries:

Mail: PO Box 183, Somers VIC 3927

Email: [info@coolart.org.au](mailto:info@coolart.org.au)

Web: [www.coolart.org.au](http://www.coolart.org.au)

Facebook: /friendsofcoolart

Friends of Coolart Inc.

No. A0026916K

ABN 41 639 957 023

