

Friends of Eastwoodhill newsletter

Let's celebrate

The signs have gone up and planning is in full swing for Eastwoodhill Arboretum's 100th birthday celebrations next year.

The highlight of the centenary year will undoubtedly be Easter weekend on April 2 - 4, when a diverse range of entertaining activities are on offer in the arboretum.

These include Good Friday's Picnic in the Park featuring internationally acclaimed singer Tim Beveridge, a sculpture series, the centennial gala dinner hosted by entertainer Jim Hopkins, and Sunday's speaker series featuring curator manager for the Auckland Botanical Gardens Jack Hobbs, international bug man Ruud Kleinpaste, and avid conservationist and former Mayor of Palm Desert Professor Buford Crites.

The Easter holiday will also be jam-packed with children's activities including a Teddy Bears' Picnic, Easter egg hunt, storytelling, and a tour around the park led by speaker and consummate entertainer Ruud Kleinpaste.

The beauty of Easter's centennial celebrations is that you can register for just one or any number of events, and buses will be available in Gisborne to deliver visitors to and from the arboretum each day.

We've enclosed a registration form so you can get registered for your pick of events - tickets are limited to some events so make sure you register early to avoid disappointment.

We're also compiling a list of email addresses so we can keep you up-to-date with what's happening at Eastwoodhill as we approach our 100-year celebrations. If you would like to be included please email enquiries@eastwoodhill.org.nz.

Eastwoodhill Half Marathon

November 15, 2009

The fourth annual Eastwoodhill half marathon and fun run is just around the corner and promises to be another memorable event on the Eastwoodhill calendar.

The half marathon gives runners and walkers from across the country a unique opportunity to traverse the expanse of New Zealand's national arboretum, taking in all the park's spectacular sights and sounds along the way.

If you're a keen runner or walker, this event is not to be missed. Register with Sport Gisborne on 06 868 9943.

If you would like to volunteer as a marshal on the day, please contact John Sherratt on 06 863 9852.



Curator's report

Although winter came early this year with a cold May and June, August and early September have been close to summer temperatures and those memories of cold winter nights are already fading fast.

Coming off our third drought in a row, the 247mm of rain in June was a welcome sight and with a wet July our rainfall has already surpassed the annual rainfall for 2007 and 2008.

internally and capped to prevent this happening again.

Autumn visitors

April was super busy with over 1000 more visitors for the month than last year and it was great to see a number of schools visit once they had come back from the Easter break in May.

The autumn activities and trails set out for children were well received with lots of positive feedback. All this helps in raising our profile, especially with locals which is evident by a 10 percent increase in visitor numbers from the district.

A big thank you must go to the trust board, staff, catering team, visitor centre volunteers, chariot drivers and garden ladies for the tremendous effort and input over autumn (and the rest of the year as well) to showcase Eastwoodhill.

Fresh faces

I would like to welcome on board Brett Mead as our new education officer. Brett will be continuing the excellent work Sally Willis and Maree Cave have implemented over the past few years. I'd like to thank Maree for all the work she did over the past 12 months to raise our education profile and wish her the best for the future.

It is also great to have Sandra Matthews back working with us as our office/human resources manager. Sandra has been employed to take on some of the office work I seem to have found myself encumbered with and allow me to get back to working in the arboretum.

Paul Wynen
CURATOR

Spring school holidays September 26 – October 11

Eastwoodhill is the place to be these school holidays with a spring holiday programme packed with activities for both young and old.

These include orienteering courses of varying levels of difficulty, activity sheets for kids, and an art and craft table. Visitors will also have the opportunity to plant seeds which they can take home with them.

The Tasty Leaf Café will be open on the weekends. Children enter the park for free with a paying adult.

Flora the Fantail

We're looking for someone to design the mascot for the Eastwoodhill education programme - a cartoon-like Fantail called Flora. If you think you can help, please contact Eastwoodhill Arboretum on 06 863 9003.

HB memorial project

The HB memorial project is progressing well with the pump, tank and shed built, and outer dry stone wall complete. The granite ball was put into place in June, the electrics connected and everything has been tested. The stone work is being constructed by local stonemason Aaron Boyle and it has been a treat to watch a craftsman like Aaron work over the last few months.

New kitchen

The redesign of the kitchen in the Douglas Cook Centre (DCC) was completed in time for the Soeur Design Fashion Show in early April. The team of Matt Brown (builder), Alistair Jennings (electrician), Justin Trinder (plumber) and Ron Young (Peerless Kitchens) did an exceptional job and I am pleased to say that the Tasty Leaf Catering team is delighted with the new kitchen, especially the new walls which now seem to double as a huge white board!

However, while doing the upgrade we discovered rats had eaten most of the electrical wiring in the ceiling of the DCC over the past few years. As a result the whole centre has had to be rewired, though everything has now been wired



Centennial memento

Take a piece of Eastwoodhill home with you when you purchase one of Jasper Murphy's beautiful spatulas handcrafted using wood from the arboretum. Spatulas are \$20 each and are available from the Eastwoodhill Arboretum visitor centre.

Photo Credits

Front page: Paul Wynen
Page two: Brett Mead
Page three: Rodney Faulkner
Back page: Brett Mead



A tasty new leaf

The Friends of Eastwoodhill catering has been rebranded into Tasty Leaf Catering and is making a significant fundraising contribution through a string of successful events.

For instance, last month Tasty Leaf volunteers prepared and served an outstanding selection of canapé platters for 310 people at the Lion Foundation Eastland Rescue Helicopter's fourth

annual charity auction held at Wharf Shed 3.

The Tasty Leaf Café will be open at weekends during the spring school holidays and at other specified times during the year.

New volunteers are always welcome. If you'd like to tie on a Tasty Leaf apron please contact Sarah Faulkner on 06 867 8131.

Looking back

Murray Gow recalls his time with Douglas Cook

In the autumn of 1952 I was landscaping our Waikato garden and ordered plants advertised in the New Zealand Gardener. Having limited practical knowledge, I asked that any plants unsuitable for Waikato conditions should not be included. To my surprise I received a long letter from a Mr Cook who was an authority on every aspect of gardening. He ended his letter by inviting me to visit Eastwoodhill. And so we met.

I returned on several occasions. At that time he said his health was deteriorating and he wanted me to buy Eastwoodhill once the farm was surveyed and sold separately. But it would have been impossible.

Although Mr Cook thought myself and any future bride could live with him, the more I got to know him the more I realised it would never work. He was an amazing man, accomplishing so much in his lifetime, but he was set in his ways and could not tolerate different points of view.

In 1954 I drove Mr Cook to Auckland to start his last trip abroad. I was persuaded to stay for an evening meal at the hotel and Mr Cook asked the waitress for champagne. She looked alarmed and returned with a waiter who apologized and said champagne had to be ordered ahead in order to be chilled. Mr Cook replied, "When I want champagne, I WANT champagne. Go and get it!" The result was predictable. About half a glass of warm champagne remained in the bottle - the rest was splashed over us and the table.

Mr Cook did not drive, perhaps because he lost an eye through shrapnel at Gallipoli. I took him to see the coloured movie of Toulouse Lautrec's life in Paris. He hated it and I loved it! I liked classical music and he didn't. His favourite music was "Speak to me of love" played on a gramophone. I was interested in abstract art and he wouldn't even look at it. So our interest in plants was the only common meeting ground.

After a day at Eastwoodhill, we would return to the study and Mr Cook would pour two large glasses of neat gin and vermouth. Having a good Presbyterian upbringing, this was a new and potent experience for me. I was also introduced to Vat 69 whisky!

The house had been built with a hall running the full length so that "any germs can be blown away with both doors open". There was no shower, only a bath that Mr Cook filled with no more than two inches of water - understandable when tank water was limited.

We had sparse meals, billy tea from a pot on the stove that was reheated with the occasional addition of more tea leaves. The evening treat was a large baked egg and custard pudding that was cooked to perfection. Sugar was chiseled from a large sugar sack, one of many that had been bought at the start of World War II. Bill Crook's wife kindly supplied some meals for Mr Cook but eating was not high on his list of priorities. Most evenings he would be at his desk writing to friends and nurserymen worldwide.

The house was full of silver, beautiful Persian rugs and several afternoon tea and dinner services.

Mr Cook was upset when the offer of his best dinner service for the visit of the Queen and Prince Philip was refused. The Mayor and Mayoress provided their service instead, to which Mr Cook said, "Quite inferior to mine!"

I returned to the Waikato with fond memories of magical Eastwoodhill and remained in touch, visiting occasionally and by correspondence until Mr Cook's death. He answered my letters by return mail and I was always guilty of owing him a reply, which he usually spelt out in his next letter.

And although I could never call Gisborne home, I was so lucky to marry a beautiful Gisborne girl who sang like an angel. Her name was Beverley South.



Grevillea Robusta (silky oak)

One of the more distinctive trees when in full flower during early summer is *Grevillea robusta* or silky oak, which grows very well in the Gisborne district. There are several specimens at Eastwoodhill, one of which is growing beside the purple walk near the top of Douglas Park. It put on a particularly stunning display last spring.

Despite its common name, silky oak, *Grevillea robusta* is not a member of the oak family but rather the Protea family. The name probably refers to the oak-like flecks in the timber which also has a "silky" feel when dressed. It is also sometimes called the silver oak because of the silvery look on the underside of the leaves.

It is a native of the coastal valleys of northern New South Wales and southern Queensland but is now grown throughout the temperate regions of the world. It prefers fertile alluvial soils but will grow on harder, drier hill slopes. However, on exposed sites it is prone to wind damage and tends to become very deformed, so is best planted in a sheltered place.

When in full flower in October/November it is at its most spectacular with bright orange-yellow clusters of flowers at the ends of branches over the crown of the tree. Seeing it from above, as one does from the hills overlooking Gisborne, the orange crowns are stunning, especially when flowering coincides with that of the Jacaranda.

A particular interest of mine is furniture making. Over the past 30 years I have milled several *G. robusta* logs and used the timber for various projects. It mills well and seasons with very little distortion. It is easy to machine and takes a good finish. One note of warning - some people can be affected by a substance within the tree and can suffer discomfort by merely touching the leaves or inhaling the sawdust produced by working the timber.

On a recent trip to the tea growing area in the south of India we were intrigued to see the tea estates using *G. robusta* to provide shade throughout the plantations. They were planted about 50 metres apart and trimmed to produce a "mop top" effect which provided the shady conditions required for tea growing.

They were also used to support pepper vines which were grown up strings attached to the lower branches. I understand they are used for the same purpose on the tea estates in Southern Africa.



Daffodil delight

Fifteen years ago the Gisborne East Coast Cancer Society and Eastwoodhill Arboretum signed a memorandum of understanding to come together for the vision of hope being born with the advent of spring.

We were given a spot to plant daffodil bulbs in memory of our loved ones and for those going through treatment to give hope and healing. Very soon the ground was covered in gold giving us a place we could call our own during Daffodil Week each year.

Sitting in the patch reflecting on the beauty of Eastwoodhill, the love of God, the joy of family, the love of our community, and the sadness and bounty that comes with cancer, is one of the most amazing experiences many of us have shared.

Our heartfelt thanks must go to the very special people of Eastwoodhill who, over the years, have given us this gift. It has made such a difference to so many families who have come with sadness and left with hope.

Arohanui to you all from the Gisborne East Coast Cancer Society.

Nona Aston - Chairperson
Gisborne East Coast Centre Trust

The master plan

Eastwoodhill has evolved into what it is today thanks to the drive and passion of Douglas Cook, who started planting the moment he arrived in 1910, and the preservation and continuation of the arboretum's development by HB Williams, who bought the property in the mid 1960s and passed it onto the trust board in 1975.

Taking stock

Over the past four years a comprehensive inventory of the plant collection was undertaken. During that process we discovered many of the plants were reaching maturity and over the next 20 years we need to undertake a cycle of repropagation and removal.

Therefore, we have a window of opportunity to review the collection and the way it is currently displayed, and look at ways to further enhance both the collection and landscape it inhabits.

The need for a master plan

The collection, as it stands today, has been established without the benefit of a master plan and, in most cases, bereft of any planning at all.

This has resulted in the collection maturing in a haphazard way often with maturing trees competing with one another and creating overgrown areas which suppress and disfigure other plants. Poor tree placement has blocked out view lines and failed to use the wonderful topography we have available to enhance the plantings.

For the visitor this type of landscape can also create a feeling of elitism. Although they get a sense of the beauty and wonder of the place, the connection between one plant and the next has little meaning.

The purpose of the master plan

The overarching purpose of the master plan is to establish a cohesive landscape framework which will guide new initiatives and future development of the arboretum throughout this century.

In particular it will:

- Provide the board, staff, and curator with a vision that guides the growth, modification, and preservation of the arboretum and gardens for the next century.
- Explore and propose designed gardens, landscape spaces, collection gardens, revised circulation and a building programme for the current landholdings of the garden.
- Bring local, regional, and international visibility to Eastwoodhill through a visionary design that will interpret and preserve the important existing collections, while expanding the mission to appeal to international visitors.

Getting started

The trust board approached Thomas Woltz, who has been working on a local project here in Gisborne at Nicks Head Station for the past few years, to develop a long-term master plan for Eastwoodhill.

The master plan is divided into four stages. The first stage was presented to the trust board a few weeks ago with some broad outlines and ideas presented.

There is a lot of work to get through yet, but it is hoped that we will be able to display components of the master plan at the centennial celebrations next Easter.

Paul Wynen - Curator

Warm welcome

Welcome to Julie Moore, who was elected to the Friends of Eastwoodhill committee at the recent AGM.

Julie replaces Sarah Olsen who stood down because of work commitments. However, we are delighted Sarah can carry on with her important work on our friends' membership database. Thank you Sarah!

Contacts

Phone: 06 863 9003

Email: enquiries@eastwoodhill.org.nz
www.eastwoodhill.org.nz

Friends committee chair:

Pru Roberts P: 06 867 0831

Secretary:

Alison Ross P: 06 868 7280

E: alioross@extra.co.nz

Public relations:

Express PR - Dana Kirkpatrick

E: publicrelations@eastwoodhill.org.nz

Visitor centre:

Open Daily 9.30 – 4.30pm. P: 06 863 9003

Staff are available during weekday office hours. Volunteers staff the visitor centre during weekends and public holidays.