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**JOINT MEETING FRIENDS OF ROYAL PARK, PARKVILLE
& ROYAL PARK PROTECTION GROUP
MARCH 18
WALMSLEY HOUSE, ROYAL PARK
REPORT**

Primrose Lentin, Convenor, FoRP, welcomed members of FoRP and RPPG, visitors and the two guest speakers: Sheila Byard and Isaac Dodd, and made the following Acknowledgement to Country:

We acknowledge the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung as the Traditional Custodians of the land that is Royal Park and pay our respects to their Elders past, present and emerging.

**PRESENTATION 1
ISAAC DODD, Park Ranger City of Melbourne
“City of Melbourne’s Park Rangers and Wildlife Response”**

Introduction (PL): Isaac has recently joined the City of Melbourne Park Rangers team. His initial training was in biological sciences (ecology, microbiology) at La Trobe University and his early work was in forestry management which took him around Australia. He then pursued his passion for wildlife, undertaking training in wildlife and captive animal management, working for the Melbourne Zoo and Healesville Sanctuary. He was a Wildlife Victoria Emergency Response Operator, assessing and co-ordinating rescues, transports and rehabilitations throughout the State. He continues this work as a volunteer.

Isaac began his talk introducing the City of Melbourne’s park ranger team (of 7-8 rangers) and describing some of their roles. These include: informing the public about our open spaces and facilities; providing education and school holiday programs, including the popular Junior Rangers; enforcing park and safety regulations; monitoring illegal activity; rough sleepers engagement and support; community engagement and wildlife rescue and management.



Isaac then outlined his path to becoming a Park Ranger – from initial training in ecology to forest management, then to dedicated training in wildlife and captive animal management and working with Zoos Victoria and Wildlife Victoria. Isaac described reasons for wildlife needing rescue, including sickness, injury, displacement and orphaned. He described many wildlife rescues and rehabilitations – from puggles (baby echidnas), owls, bats to possums, gliders, wombats, ducks. Closer to Royal Park, he described the young Eastern Grey kangaroo, found in Lygon St, Carlton. Many parties were involved in its rescue: CoM park rangers, Vets for Compassion, Wildlife Victoria, Wildlife Rescuers (WRES), Victoria Police, members of the public ... with a successful rescue and happy release at Plenty Gorge. Other city rescues have included ducklings from drains, young fledglings in parks, trapped possums.



Isaac described what can be done to minimise impacts on wildlife: This includes not feeding, providing water during heat, safe fencing/netting, keeping cats indoors and importantly, calling for help when first found. We can also help in other ways by volunteering, donating, restoring habitat.

Isaac ended by listing helpline telephone numbers:

- Wildlife Victoria 8400 7300
- Wildlife Rescuers 0427 301 401
- City of Melbourne 9658 9658 (BH), 9658 9774 (AH)
- Vets for Compassion 0407 084 594

In question time that followed, another recent episode of an escaped kangaroo but with an unhappy ending was referred to – the ‘roo after hopping down Royal Parade, was guided by rescuers into Royal Park, but was then chased by an unleashed uncontrolled dog across the Park, across roads, towards Brunswick, where it was finally tranquilliser darted. Sadly, on examination, the condition of the animal meant it had to be euthanised.

PRESENTATION 2
SHEILA BYARD OAM, Historian

“National Council of Women (Victoria) Affiliates 1988 Bicentennial Planting in Royal Park”

Introduction (PL): Sheila is a long-time resident of Kensington and an historian, particularly in relation to women. Sheila was a member of the Urban Studies Unit at Victoria University from 1987 – 2000. A founding member of the Women’s Planning Network Victoria, her research and project management work in recent years have focussed on local and community history. She was a contributor to the on-line *‘Encyclopedia of Women and Leadership in Twentieth-Century Australia’* on the women’s non-party organisations between the Wars. In 2016, she received the Medal of the Order of Australia (OAM) for her service to the community and to the cause of women, and in 2017 she was added to the Victorian Women’s Honour Roll. Sheila will combine her interests in history and women and a special Royal Park event in her talk to us.

Sheila began by describing the ‘Grove of Honour’ project and how it developed. The ‘Grove of Honour’ was a 1988 Bicentennial Authority project where a large women’s organisation, the National Council of Women (Victoria) Affiliates, undertook a large planting of 2000 native trees and shrubs in Royal Park, along the Flemington Road side of the park, west of the earlier Royal Children’s Hospital building.

The idea for the project echoed the creation of a ‘garden of remembrance’ in the King’s Domain, part of the 1934-35 Melbourne Centenary and supported by the Victorian Women’s Centenary Council. By the 1980s, environmental awareness was rising, along with appreciation of Australian native plants. This led to the statement by the National Council of Women of Victoria Affiliates *“Trees ... used and abused throughout history, are at last regaining their rightful place in our environmentally conscious society, in which National Council of Women of Victoria’s Affiliates, Associates, friends and supporters are active participants.”* Additionally, there was a move away from formal plantings of memorial and civic tree avenues.

Sheila traced the background history and involvement of many women in the project, often through schools, such as University High School, in building a coalition of interest in enhancing and protecting parkland. Notable figures included Sylvia Gelman, Margery Oke, Alice Hoy, Morna Sturrock, Annette Ogden, Ruth Crow. Part of the aim of the project was production of a Grove of Honour Memorial Volume with the names of the participating women’s organisations and the erection of a plaque commemorating the event.

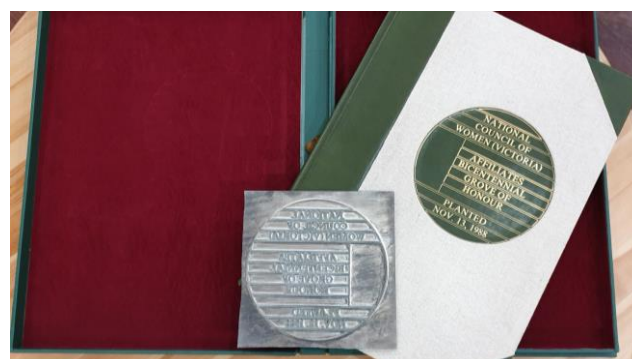
The ‘Grove of Honour’ was based on the Melbourne City Council’s Parks Department 1985 Landscape Development Plan, one of the main aspects of which was landscape character and planting design. Thus, the planting plan below was prepared for the ‘Grove of Honour’ for a site along the Flemington Road side of the park – on rising ground around two sports fields, one each side of the tramline. A planting list of native trees and shrubs was prepared and plants were supplied by the City of Melbourne. On Sunday, 13 November, 1988, *“people came with gardening tools and buckets in their hundreds, from the city, from the country ... in three hot dry windy hours, two thousand native trees and shrubs planted in memory of those who were gone before us, to honour the living and in the hope of a safeguarded future for those who will follow.”*



Photographs of the day showed Lord Mayor Winsome McCaughey (left) with Sylvia Gelman MBE, President of the National Council of Women of Victoria (right) and the memorial plaque fixed on a stone base.



Sheila went on to talk about her search for information about this significant event in Royal Park, identifying the site, any trees from the 1988 Bicentennial planting, searching for the plaque, contacting people involved at the time, tracking down the Memorial Volume. The new Royal Children's Hospital was built on the eastern section of the Grove of Honour ... and the plaque disappeared. Supposedly the plaque was lodged with the RCH, but finding it is proving a protracted task. A presentation copy of the Memorial Volume, an elegant document, is held by the Royal Historical Society of Victoria and proved to be a key source of information.



Photos of trees (2022) – Sheila asked “Could these be trees planted in 1988?”



Sheila finished her talk with lessons to be learnt from the Grove of Honour story: its plantings have all but disappeared from the park record; any records within Council are hard to find ... calling into question Council’s trusteeship of Royal Park. And the plaque taken for safekeeping, with no record of its whereabouts. Fortunately, the Memorial Volume allows the project, its participants and its meaning to be revisited. The 1988 Bicentennial Grove of Honour project demonstrated how wide public engagement could be built – “can this be applied today in the Voice referendum” Sheila asked.

Both speakers were thanked for their interesting talks on two such different topics, and gifts of appreciation were made.

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Kaye Oddie
Secretary
Friends of Royal Park, Parkville