BELEURA
HOUSE & GARDEN
MORNINGTON

Edition 61
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Stay Tuned

Autumn in the Garden

FROM ANTHONY

I suspect like us all I am finding life somewhat different, and really I am happy with my own company, and whilst different I am enjoying the slower pace and the time to look and enjoy, usually I am at Castlemaine for a short few days, working on my garden, busy trying to get through the list of things which must be done, and now being here all the time I am enjoying lazily looking at the early winter iris, nerines and spectacular colour, I planted deciduous trees to colour in sequence so all in all the time passes.

And I really do miss Beleura, especially all of you, who make Beleura what it is, and the exciting new building, which is all I planned it to be, and am having a lot of fun putting it together. Allan Gray has built some beautiful shelves for the Library and my choice of a seriously over the top cornice and a frieze to echo the Pavilion has been fun I also have ordered a most elegant fountain to put in the turning circle.

I have been down a few times and it's dusty, noisy and no kitchen, coffee is not easy yet Martin somehow manages to conjure one.

Martin and Ingrid had the challenging task of moving the fire safes to the Vault before the tiles are laid, so if they look a bit wan and pale it was a fraught task.

Hope you are all well, best wishes.

Anthony Knight OAM | Director & Trustee

GENERAL MANAGEMENT

You most likely have a memory of Beleura as being a place of elegance, beauty and tranquillity.

Well in the last two weeks that has changed a little bit.

Imagine loads of mud, brown mud interspersed with gravel and the odd patch of sand with weeds. This ocean of mud is trodden into slush by miniskips and cranes and builders boots which create a trail of dust. This dust extends itself across every surface in the Gatehouse including the walls, tiles, mirrors, gilt frames and the stacked furniture hidden under grey shrouds of plastic wrapping. And then there's rifle shots of nail guns and the dentist drill whirr of electric screwdrivers. But from this mess a new and intriguing structure is beginning to unfold.

We have a new kitchen, workrooms for Archives as well as lots of archive storage space including a safe room and more office space. The new grand hall opens directly into the original gatehouse creating an unfolding space that opens new vistas. And it is still being hammered, plastered and wired. It does mean we will be closed for many more weeks but a new Beleura will emerge in Spring.

In the midst of this we have had one of Beleura's tallest pine tree's fall down atop the Hansel and Gretel garden. Miraculously its giant branches like fingers broke its fall and hovered as if by design over the Hansel and Gretel house and the nearby water tank without causing too much damage.

In some respects the closure of the property to visitors

during the COVID19 lockdown has been a godsend as we complete the building works. We are now extending an invitation to individual professional musicians who have had an association with Beleura to freely use the space as a place for composition and professional development.

We are also seeing how we can make the property open to other volunteer work groups in Archives and the Garden group meeting the lockdown restrictions. And if you look at the Notice Board below we also want to extend use of the gardens as a recreational amenity for limited volunteer groups practising social distancing.

In other changes Paul Thomas, our long serving member of the garden team has moved on and we thank Paul for his years of service and expertise in the garden shaping our pathways and wish Paul well with his next endeavours. Our team are working reduced hours during the lockdown and everyone is pitching in and doing things they do not normally do in their jobs.

I have tried to phone a few of you during the lockdown and I have enjoyed some wonderful conversations with our many resilient and wise volunteers. I am so looking forward to reopening when the new building works in a few months are complete and welcoming you all back.

Martin | General Manager

ADMINISTRATION

So how have we all been faring in this world of social distancing, zoom meetings and hand sanitiser? It is hard to believe we have only been under restrictions for six weeks, give or take. Doesn't it feel so much longer! How have you all been occupying your time? Judging by my emails there are many puzzles being completed!

For all of us here at Beleura…well simply said…our world has been turned upside down! Even without the help of enforced closure due to a worldwide Pandemic, normal operations would not be continuing at Beleura in its current state! After much preparation and packing up of spaces the upstairs offices have now been connected through to the old (through what was the administration office). Downstairs the giftshop, and Melba Room have all been packed up and cleared of furniture (which has all been carefully placed in the Klytie Pate Treasury and sealed for a later time.

The kitchen you were all so familiar with now no longer exists in the same way but is being reinvented as a servery/ thoroughfare into the new space. A great deal of the kitchen fixtures and marble have been repurposed in the kitchenette that will serve George in his new abode.

Our shiny new space is starting to make sense with plaster, paint and ornate cornices all in place. The first suggestion that this space will serve archive purposes is evident with the transferal of the fire safes early this week, I shall let Ingrid expound!

After all of the packing up, Georgie and I temporarily located ourselves downstairs in the Museum room but that barely lasted two weeks before the dust and noise got so bad that we had to relocate to the archives building. The Gatehouse is officially uninhabitable at the present time and working in our normal fashion has been made completely impossible. So, what do we do? For some of our time we go into the garden! Richard has welcomed us heartily a couple of days a week despite the fact that we have little to no experience. Friday week ago, he started up the petrol hedge trimmer, placed it in my hands and let me go crazy on the ivy hedge at the front of the house. (Seriously, so much fun!) It now looks terrible, but he assured me that I had done a good job. "Impossible to kill" he said…we will see!

So today is another garden day for me. The sun is shining, and I am appropriately dressed in gum boots and a flannelette shirt with gloves and hat! Best I get to work!

Monique | Administration

FROM THE GARDEN

I keep hearing on the radio and the like how people have got so much time on their hands they're getting through their backlog of books or thinking of names for their sour dough starters or learning how to darn socks (the one I should probably do) but for me, it's never been busier. I did however make a loaf of bread, but I dropped it in the dog's water bowl getting it out of the oven. At least I tried.

This time of seclusion in the garden has allowed us to be more ruthless with our cutting back so we can rejuvenate shrubs or areas we might be cautious to do if we had customers to keep happy. We have been through the dome garden, unit garden and have taken out the conifer hedge at the entrance to the winter garden to be replaced by hornbeam (like we did at the other end of the courtyard). For those wondering why we would take a healthy hedge out, well the problem with conifer hedges is that because they grow so fast and you can't cut back into old woody growth, they have a relatively short lifespan. Hornbeam however will always be happy to be kept to a manageable size and will hopefully add more interest with its different appearances throughout the year.

A couple of weeks ago, I decided I needed advice from a tree expert I knew from my time at Rippon Lea to have a look at some old trees I have been concerned about. I think I need to brush up on my knowledge of trees, the ones I was concerned about are fine but I missed the massive one which, after about 100 years of growing, fell over the day after Joe, the tree surgeon said "Richard, have you seen this crack?"

When trees have come down since I have been here, they have, without exception fallen in such a way that they look as though they were guided from above and as a result did not do any real damage. This was no exception with this tree's last resting place caressing the Hansel and Gretel hut.

Now, I have just read this last paragraph back to myself and realised Anthony has got into my head with all his talk of John Tallis still looking after the place from beyond. I think I need to go and turn the compost.

Take care, hope to see you soon.

Richard | Head Gardener

FROM ARCHIVES

Things are steadily progressing in Archives toward our big move as I embark on sorting and packing. Photos of the fire safes being relocated are included in this edition, among others showing recent changes.

I am also gaining proficiency in a new online catalogue management system but more of that when I can reveal a curated selection of things from our collection… as they say, watch this space.

With so much packing for relocation ahead and cataloguing the Patsy Kirk Gift, it is a relief announce that Archives volunteers can return late this month – **from Tuesday May 26th** – in a staggered and careful way. I will contact you individually to explain how we can observe the current safety rules.

In the meantime, the Courtyard is vivid with Japanese Maple leaves and below it, the picking garden is in full autumn flower. The Chrysanthemums signalled a Sunday in early May, and their pink and burgundy abundance seemed linked to the mothers of our readership.

Please know that I look forward to the return of not only Archives volunteers but guiding, garden, administration, hospitality and event volunteers. I miss you and your smiles.

Ingrid | Curator

NOTICEBOARD

Enjoy Beleura for your own private recreation by booking with us

We want to make Beleura available to all Beleura volunteers to enjoy the gardens for recreation during the next phase of the lockdown. You need to book and select a time from Wednesday to Friday 9:30-11:30am, 11:30-1:30pm and 1:30-3:30pm.

This is only for volunteers and their immediate household and there are requirements regarding social distancing and pre-requisites concerning your health, travel history and association with people with symptoms.

Please contact Monique Bladen to book in a 2 hour timeslot when you can visit with members of your immediate household only – maximum five people. Email moniquebladen@beleura.org.au with your contact details.

Craft Materials Giveaway

I have 4 needlepoint cushion kits and "accoutrements" that I would love to give away to anyone happy to use them and stitch them.

I don't think I'll be the only one who has uncovered such items during this time of staying at home. I'd be pleased to have a phone call on 9787 3384 if anyone is interested.

- Shirley Sutcliffe