



President's Report to the Annual General Meeting Sunday 4 October 2026

I am pleased to provide a report on the activities of the Friends of the Dunedin Botanic Garden for the year ended 30 June 2026.

This year is our 40th anniversary and I would like to acknowledge all those who have contributed to the Friends over the last 40 years, whether as volunteers, staff or benefactors. To mark this anniversary we are commissioning a new sculpture/fountain in the herb garden and we will have a fitting celebration when this is completed.

Activities

Our October and May plant sales were again very successful and well attended with increased takings. The move from the upper garden car park to the Propagation facility for the Rhododendron day sale was a great success with more space available for stall holders and increased parking for customers. These sales involve a huge amount of work over the year by Alice and the propagation volunteers for whom we are very grateful, and by Dylan and the other Garden staff on the days leading up to the sales.

There was a noticeable decrease in activity and visitors around the Information Centre with the café space remaining vacant for most of the year, although there was still a steady flow of children getting duck food and our temporary introduction of ice creams for sale proved very popular. The opening of the new cafe in May created a great buzz and saw more people visiting and browsing in the Information Centre and shop.

While we have not hosted any Hort Talks this year we hope to resume these next year. However, we were thrilled to host a talk by Catherine Lee, the model for the Wendy statue, as part of several Peter Pan themed events centred around her visit. Alice Lloyd-Fitt also contributed interesting background about Peter Pan statues around the world.

Funding contributions

We have had a busy year with funding requests. We had an increased number of applications for Tannock Scholarships and were pleased to be able to support six individual staff members plus a group of apprentices to undertake visits and attend conferences in NZ and Australia, awarding them a total of \$10,000. This money is allocated from the profits of the two annual Plant sales.

We were also able to contribute approximately \$4000 towards beds and bedding for the refurbishment of Tannock House so it could accommodate students coming to work in the Garden.

Keep Dunedin Beautiful were responsible for organising a Mural to be painted on the rear wall of the Alpine House, and we agreed we contribute \$1000 towards this. This has definitely improved the appearance of this area.

The committee had agreed that the Friends would purchase grain for the ducks rather than it come from the Garden budget and we had begun looking at cheaper options. However, the arrival in NZ of Avian flu has put a stop to duck feeding which, while unfortunate for the birds and the children, is a cost saving for us.

During the year we were very fortunate to receive a generous bequest of \$101,000 from the estate of Ann Wylie (\$101,000), a retired botanist from the University of Otago. These funds have not been allocated as yet, but discussion is underway for an appropriate project to put them towards.

Much discussion has taken place over the year about the commissioning of a suitable sculptural feature/fountain for the centre of the herb garden. Pip and Catherine undertook initial investigations then it was passed over to the DCC team to write an artist's brief which has been circulated with the hope of finding a suitable local artist. We are looking forward to seeing the proposals submitted.

Committee

In my first full year as President I have learnt much about the functioning of the Friends and the Information Centre and am now in a better position to help progress work on documenting and updating our guidelines and processes and making them available electronically. This includes guidelines for the plant sales and administration of the Tannock Scholarship fund as well as work on the procedures manual for volunteers. I am indebted to Sue Lambie who has been the source of all knowledge on the many functions of the committee and the Information Centre, and we hope this work will allow us to relieve her of some of the many hats she has been wearing.

Fay, our treasurer has also spent many hours negotiating her way around Xero, Ideal Pos and the Incorporated Societies Act and documenting the many tasks of the Treasurer. We thank her for this and for her excellent monthly financial and sales reports.

We welcomed two new committee members last year, Sally and Pip, and they have become valuable members of our team, Sally giving a boost to our facebook page and Pip providing input into several projects. I would like to thank all of the committee for their input into meetings and other activities.

I also acknowledge the enthusiasm and contribution of Catherine Bradley, the Garden Manager, who has provided much help and guidance over the year, particularly in liaising with the DCC and other outside parties.

Membership

In acknowledgement of his many years of service to the Friends, we were pleased to award Alan Matchett a well-deserved honorary Life Membership this year, which he accepted.

In addition to quarterly newsletters, two special events were organised for members. The first was a Christmas shopping evening at the Information Centre shop with a 15% discount and drinks and nibbles. This was most enjoyable with plenty of sales and socialising, and we hope to repeat it this year. The second event was a tour of Dylan Norfield's Waitati garden in November. We were very grateful to Dylan for hosting us and those visiting were amazed by the extent of the garden and variety of plants he has growing there.

Further work was carried out to update the membership list and newsletter database after the change of membership period to a calendar year at the last AGM. A small number of new members have joined but more have dropped off despite several reminders. The committee has discussed how to increase membership numbers, and this is something we will need to work on in the coming year,

We thank you all for your support and would welcome your ideas for events for members and how we can attract new members.

Jocelyn Livesey

President