



Friends of Avatar's Abode

Avatar's Abode Friends Report 2011

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Kitchen Storage Building

This year has seen an exciting and much needed addition to the property. As you may remember from last year's Friends Report, a plan was developed for a new storage facility which could also act as a permanent kitchen during major functions. There was an excellent response from the community and the finished building now stands above where the old Annex building used to be. Refrigerators, gas burners, tables, crockery, cutlery and other kitchen supplies which were previously stored in the Shed now have a permanent home. It has so far been used during the Anniversary and the Youth and Spring Sahavas celebrations with much enthusiasm and positive feedback from those involved. Currently the space beneath the building is being set up as a workshop and storage lock up area for property maintenance supplies.

Baba's House

A beautiful new painted ceramic sink and timber counter top used for the preparation of flowers have been installed in Francis' room, and lovely Persian rugs now protect the timber floor of Baba's House. The six upholstered chairs in Baba's House are now noticeably aging and, just as the community was given the opportunity to contribute to the purchase of the Persian rugs, the Board feels that there may be Baba lovers inspired to donate toward this specific project of purchasing new chairs for Baba's House. If this project appeals to you and you would like to contribute ideas or funds, please do contact us.

Since last year's Friend's Report, new options for the re-roofing of Baba's House have been brought to the Trust. Before commencing the project, and to provide the best long-term solution, these new options are presently being considered. We expect to make a decision soon and work can then start. The combined funding appeal for the kitchen and roof estimated that the cost of re-roofing Baba's House was \$7000.

The Bookstore

In addition to selling books, DVDs, CDs, and various Baba gifts, the Bookstore has this year been home to weekly discussion groups centred around Meher Baba's *Discourses*. The meetings are currently scheduled for Wednesday nights at 7:30. All are welcome. Extra copies of the *Discourses* are available for those who are not able to bring their own copy. For more information, or to gain access to the Bookstore, contact Bill LePage (07) 5442 1248.

Pilgrim Accommodation

Groups of volunteers have come together for spring clean-outs of both Francis' Cabin and Judith's Cottage. Donations have purchased new sheets for all accommodation buildings, as well as fresh new curtains in Francis' cabin. A spring clean-out of the Pilgrim Quarters will soon be taking place – please see the information on volunteering later in this report if you would like to participate!

While it has been the general policy to accommodate men and women separately who are not of the same family, there have been times when single men and women have shared accommodation at the Pilgrim Quarters. In order to encourage an atmosphere of pilgrimage, should two single members of the opposite sex require lodging at the Pilgrim Quarters, one of these parties will be housed in separate accommodation where possible.

Reception

Some old furniture from the Reception building which had become worn and out-dated has been replaced with a lovely donated cane lounge set. Volunteers to keep the Francis Brabazon library open have come and gone and thus open times have been varied. For the most up-to-date list of open times please see the roster posted at Reception and at the Meeting Hall or visit the Avatar's Abode website and click on *Information for Visitors*. Volunteers will also provide access to Baba's House and the Archive Display room. If you would like to volunteer for the library roster, please

contact Roy Hayes.

Water at Avatar's Abode

Over the last 50 years the provision of water has progressed on an “as needed” basis with limited funds. Last year a sub-committee of the Trust was formed to proceed with changes at Baba’s House and the three buildings used for accommodating pilgrims. These changes have led to both the saving of precious rain water and the elimination of the extensive use of filters on the dam water. In summary, these buildings have fresh tank water connected to all taps other than outside ones and toilets. Yet to be completed is increased water storage at Judith’s Cottage.

Currently on the summit are two 10,000 gallon tanks filled from the dam in the gully on the right of the entrance road. Underground pipes connect nearly every building plus several “fire hydrants”. This water is only suitable for drinking if passed through two different filters. The gravity feed gives very good pressure. Sometimes there is a problem of wasted water with toilet cisterns misbehaving, underground slow leakages and breakages and also occasionally a tap being left on. Keeping one of the two tanks on the summit turned off avoids a complete loss of what is in a drought year a very scarce commodity

Back in the 1960s the Abode’s residents negotiated with the local government for the abandonment of its long term planning project to have a very large water storage tank on Avatar’s Abode summit to service the local area of Kiel Mountain. It was likely that this would have proceeded with either land resumptions or permanent easements. The local authority also would not exclude the possibility of it becoming a public scenic viewing platform. The authority agreed to change the plans with the understanding that water would not be provided to Meher Road (480 metres long with Avatar’s Abode at the end) which at the time had no residences. This has all been a mixed blessing for Meher Road homes, with the big advantage being less expensive water charges.

Before the recent changes were made the committee determined what they considered would be the ideal long term water distribution for the Abode. The changes can seamlessly be part of this. The subcommittee is recommending as a long term project for the Trust the building of two more tanks on the summit for gravity distributed rain water with a separate pipe system to the dam water. Catchment tanks would also be needed, perhaps located at “The Shed” (the one with the entertainment stage); and further research would also be needed on renewable energy options for lifting the water. Such a scheme would eliminate the present system of seven different electric pressure pumps at different buildings.

Projects in Progress

A group of volunteers has come together and is collaborating on plans for a new children's playground for the Abode. The old playground was in need of repair and had to be dismantled for the construction of the Kitchen Storage building. A new site is being scouted, and a concept of how to expand upon what was the existing playground is being developed. Ideas and contributions are very welcome; please contact Jethro Hitchens 0407589442 or Mehera Moroney 0402809000.

Volunteering

It is the dedicated love and service of volunteers that keeps Avatar's Abode functioning as a beautiful place for people to come and be in the atmosphere of their Beloved. Clear examples of this service can be seen in the gardens that surround most of the buildings that have been lovingly maintained throughout the year. The area around the Meeting Hall has been cleaned up, with encroaching vegetation cleared away from the building to let in light and increase air circulation, and the accommodation buildings are looking especially neat due to an increase in volunteer cleaners. The Abode has been the beneficiary of two retirements this year; Felix Schmid and David Hobson. Felix has moved from Canberra and is now close to the Abode. The grounds would be very different without their regular contributions.

Baba's room is beautiful as always, lovingly maintained by volunteer cleaners on a regular

basis. The teens at this year's Youth Sahavas were privileged to participate in the cleaning and learn what is involved in taking care of this precious space.

An afternoon tea was held in September to thank all those involved in the Kitchen Storage building project. It was wonderful to see how many people came together in love for Baba and His Abode to make this building happen.

A small, regular group of workers meets on Sunday mornings for general maintenance and special projects. The Meeting Hall is looking especially fresh after these workers treated the beams for rust and repainted them. There is always plenty of room for those who would like to participate; one area that would particularly benefit from regular attention is the gardens around the Pilgrim Quarters. Also, cleaning working bees are a great way to get involved if you would like to help out. Extra hands and hearts are always welcome; please contact Jacob Horsey 0434522660 or Greg Rimmelzwaan 0402676888. They would love to hear from you!

Avatar's Abode Structure and Decision Making

Avatar's Abode Pty Ltd is the *Trustee* for the Avatar's Abode Trust. This company presently has ten *Directors* who make the overall major decisions and policies for Avatar's Abode. The Board Meetings (Trust meetings) are held every two months. Current Directors on the Board- Bill LePage, Liz Gaskin, Jacob Horsey, Denis Carmody, Mehera Moroney, Bernard Bruford, Roy Hayes, David Hobson, Charmaine Foley and Kaelin Rimmelzwaan.

The Management Committee meets monthly. Its role is to expedite Trust decisions and to attend to the basic running and maintenance of Avatar's Abode. This committee consists of Directors with invited members Felix Schmid, Greg Rimmelzwaan, Sim Symons and Tony Oakhill.

The Administration Committee meets weekly. Present members are Bernard Bruford, Roy Hayes and Sim Symons. It helps tasks from the Management Committee to be carried out and handles urgent day to day decision making between monthly Management Committee meetings.

The Baba House Committee is concerned primarily with the preservation and maintenance of Baba's House and Meeting Hall plus the surrounding grounds.

In addition there are committees for three recurring events; the Youth Sahavas, the Spring Sahavas and the Anniversary. As with the Baba's House Committee, these three committees are open to all with new attendees always welcome. Each committee has considerable autonomy but operates within a guiding "Terms of Reference" from the Trust.

The home of each resident at Avatar's Abode legally belongs to the Trust but they have freedom in how they maintain the buildings and close surrounds.

Inquiries, comments, and suggestions for the Trust are always welcome; please see the contact information at the bottom of each page.

Financial Report

- Receipts for the year were \$84,300 which included \$36,400 for the building fund appeal for the Kitchen Storage Shed and Baba's House Roof.
- Expenses for the year were \$88,000 of which \$52,200 was the actual cost of building the Kitchen Storage Shed, not including Baba's House roof.
- Thus there was a shortfall of \$15,800 in donations to build the Kitchen Storage Shed which were paid out of general funds.
- The overall effect for the year to June 30, 2011 was a reduction in our bank balance of nearly \$3,700.
- A detailed financial statement appears below.
- Please see the separate page if you wish to make a donation.

Financial Statement

Avatar's Abode Pty Ltd as Trustee of Avatar's Abode Trust Receipts and Payments for the Year to 30 June 2011

Receipts

| | | |
|---|-------------|----------|
| General Donations | 27309 | |
| Accommodation Donations | 9485 | |
| ATO – GST Refund (from previous year payments) | 4973 | |
| Bank Interest | 3318 | |
| Insurance Claims from Storm Damage | 932 | |
| Building Fund Appeal for Kitchen/Storage and Baba's House Roof | 36403 | |
| Anniversary - Net Receipts | <u>1881</u> | \$84,302 |

Less Payments

Expenses

| | | |
|--|-------------|-------|
| Accountancy | 1745 | |
| Bank Charges and Merchant Summary Fees | 361 | |
| Building & Property Maintenance | 6074 | |
| Insurances | 9717 | |
| Meher Baba Australia Newsletter (Expenses less Donations) | 326 | |
| Company Fees | 218 | |
| Sundry Expenses | 507 | |
| Casual Wages | 1974 | |
| Rates | 4233 | |
| Telephone | 1161 | |
| Gas | 377 | |
| Electricity | 3015 | |
| Fuel and Oil | 764 | |
| Mower and Equipment Maintenance | <u>2810</u> | 33281 |

Purchase of Assets

| | | |
|-----------------------------------|-------------|-----------------------|
| Library Books | 466 | |
| New Kitchen Storage Shed | 52246 | |
| Furniture and Fittings (Shelving) | 586 | |
| Office Equipment | <u>1404</u> | <u>54701</u> \$87,982 |

Reduction in Bank Balances for the year \$3,681

Financial Support

As time passes, the operating expenses for Avatar's Abode grow. This is a natural consequence of rising utility costs and insurance costs, increased maintenance costs as buildings and infrastructure age, rising material, labour and fuel costs.

Fortunately, the basic needs of Avatar's Abode have always been met. However, for this to continue, and especially for new projects and development to take place, there is a constant need for funds. Regular general donations generally approach \$16,000 a year. Gratefully, in many years, there have been very significant one off donations and bequests. The necessary fixed and operating expenses associated with the Abode are approximately \$25,000 a year, and it would be very difficult to reduce this cost. This year, the June Anniversary returned a surplus although some years it is a drain on funds. In contrast, this last year is the first time Meher Baba Australia newsletter donations did not cover the cost of production.

If you are able and willing to assist financially please download the supporters donation form from <http://www.avatarsabode.com.au/SupportersDonationForm.pdf> and note the following details:

- For those with credit cards who would care to become regular donors, an option is to give the Trust authority to debit their card at set intervals for a fixed amount. No amount is too small for these regular donations. This authority can be cancelled or altered at any time by contacting either of the Trust Treasurers Bernard Bruford (07) 5442 1487 or Liz Gaskin (07) 5472 7252.
- Please make any Cheques or Money Orders payable to - Avatar's Abode Pty Ltd Friends Account
- If making a deposit at a bank or via the internet please fill in the Reference section with a name so that the donor can be known and a receipt issued.

With Love in Him,

Kaelin Rimmelzwaan on behalf of the Avatar's Abode Trust
with contributions from directors