



# Friends of Avatar's Abode

Avatar's Abode Friends Report  
August, 2010

[www.avatarsabode.com.au](http://www.avatarsabode.com.au)

### ***The Board***

In the 26 year history of the Trust there have been 30 new appointments to the Board of Directors. Considering the number of directors has usually numbered 9 (and up to 11) this means that there has been a regular turn-over of directors. This trend has continued, since prior to the November 2009 election, two long-standing Board members, Sim Symons and Jeanette Isaacs-Young, decided to stand down. Sim and Jeanette's contribution as Board members to Avatar's Abode has been invaluable – Sim's since the Board's inception in 1984 and Jeanette's since 1990 – and they continue to serve Baba and His Abode through their participation on various committees and through the regular work they do on the property.

Their decision to stand down, however, has provided an opportunity for new blood and Kaelin Trapanese and Jacob Horsey, two young and enthusiastic Baba lovers, were elected to the Board. Jake is from the Sunshine Coast and has been visiting the Abode since his last years of High School. Kaelin, who was born into a U.S.A. Sufi Baba family, moved to Australia a little over a year ago to marry Greg Rimmelzwaan, another local young Baba lover. It seems only fitting, with so much positive energy amongst the Australian Baba youth, that they now have two of their peers on the Avatar's Abode Board. Welcome Jacob and Kaelin.

The other Board members are Bill Le Page (Chairman), Roy Hayes, Liz Gaskin, Bernard Bruford, Mehera Moroney, Denis Carmody, Charmaine Foley and David Hobson.

### ***The Bookstore***

Many new and exciting developments have taken place at Avatar's Abode since the last *Friends Report*. One of the most obvious is the new Bookstore. The construction of the bookstore began in late 2008 by a group of young Baba lovers led by Greg Rimmelzwaan, an apprentice carpenter, and overseen by his father, Bill, a registered builder. The vision shared by this group of workers was to have a beautiful, fresh, and inviting space that would become a comfortable place for people to learn about Baba and His message. Due to the infestation of termites and mould, the existing structure was not a suitable place to bring new visitors who were interested in purchasing Baba's books, and many of the books were destroyed from being housed in such conditions. By the end of that summer, early in 2009, the new Bookstore was complete. It has since been the location for a very successful Youth Sahavas fund-raiser at the 2009 Anniversary celebration, for various Baba gatherings and meetings, and was also the venue for tea and discussion groups during the 2009 Youth Sahavas. For people bringing friends to Avatar's Abode for the first time, it is a wonderful place to pick up reading material, and to sit and talk about Baba.

### ***Pilgrim Accommodation***

Another part of Avatar's Abode that was in much need of attention was the Pilgrim's Quarters. A beautification project has begun that so far has seen the linoleum in the living area, kitchen, and bathroom replaced with large white tiles. The shower stall has now been screened in, preventing water leakage, and a new vanity has been installed. The

front door was replaced with a large, glass sliding door, flooding the pilgrim's quarters with natural light. In addition, much of the encroaching flora that was causing the building to become damp was cut back to allow in the sunlight.

### ***Baba's House***

Baba's House is also in the midst of maintenance procedures. In 2008 the exterior of the building was repainted. During the Youth Sahavas of 2009, Stuart Rigg lead a project with the youth to build a new bookshelf, replacing the one which had broken. Mehera Moroney has overseen the replacing of the torn curtains in Baba's House with beautiful new pink ones that have been hand decorated during various programs at the Abode. The garland which adorned Baba's chair has been removed for preservation and has been replaced by a beautiful silk rose garland lovingly hand-made during the Work of Our Hands Sahavas.

The toilet block adjoining Baba's House has been greatly improved, new toilets have been installed, the concrete floor has been tiled with non-slip tiles, the shower floor has been resurfaced, the toilet block door has been replaced, and the exterior of the building has been repainted. Ongoing projects for Baba's House include installing insulation above Baba's room, and re-roofing the entire building. As there have been several leaks, this work is of utmost importance for the preservation of Baba's House. This project will commence when sufficient funds are raised.

### ***The Library/Reception Centre***

Over the years, the Francis Brabazon library has seen a number of rare and sometimes irreplaceable books disappear. The sad truth is that people often check out books, and simply forget to return them. In order to ensure that this precious resource remains intact for all Baba lovers, present and future, a roster system of volunteers to man the library during set hours each week is being introduced. There has already been an encouraging response to our request for volunteers and the initial roster is in place.

If you are interested in volunteering, even for just a couple of hours once or twice a month, please contact Roy Hayes or Geoff Gunther.

At the time of the last Friends Report there was an urgent need to tackle the archive preservation issue. The southern end of Baba's House verandah was closed off and insulated, and the south west room in the Reception Centre was converted to archival storage. For the continued preservation of original documents, Baba's possessions ,and other precious archival material, the Board has installed an air-conditioner and dehumidifier in both the archive room in the reception centre, and the archive room of Baba's House.

### ***Francis Brabazon Archival Project***

Boxes of letters, poems, transcripts, and notes are being scanned into a computer, the intention being to preserve and make Francis' work and personal history more accessible to interested scholars. Over the past 25 years Peter Davies, Patricia Saunders, and Sam Saunders have dedicated countless hours to this project. During his stay here, Ward Parks made wonderful contributions, and other members of the Baba family continue to contribute to this endeavour.

We are also pleased to welcome a new addition to our archive collection. Jim Migdoll has donated his extensive and lovingly maintained collection of Baba books and material. Many pieces in the collection are rare and invaluable, and we are happy to take on the task of caring for this treasure.

### ***The Annexe/Cage Room***

This building which once served the purpose of housing pilgrims and workers at Avatar's Abode has now fallen into disrepair and is no longer capable even of serving as a storage facility. It is imperative that this structure be demolished, which raises the issue of what will be done with the tools and supplies that it now houses? A concept has been developed by a subcommittee of the Trust that addresses this issue, as well as several other needs of the Abode. The vision is of a storage area for all kitchen equipment that would then also become the active kitchen during the Anniversary. This would save the Abode thousands of dollars in hired equipment, and many hours of labour in set up and clean up time at Anniversaries. Before this project can proceed substantial funds need to be raised.

### ***Sewerage at Avatar's Abode***

Until four years ago, each toilet on the property has had its own septic system and soakage trenches. Unfortunately the trenches over time become inoperable and need to be replaced. Typically this would cost in excess of \$2,000 each time. The toilets at Baba's House were nearly ready for their third lot of trenches – they were fine apart from during special events such as the June Anniversary and the Spring Sahavas. And it is at such times that there has always been a shortage of toilets. Three years ago, a new toilet block (with disabled facilities) was built on the old caravan site between Baba's House and the large shed used for major functions. Near the Pilgrim Quarters an Ecosafe sewerage plant has been installed. Connected to it is the new toilets, the two at Baba's House, and the Pilgrim Quarters. It is located where eventually the toilets from the Reception Centre and LePage residence can be connected. The new system sprays water above ground away from the buildings. The spending of \$37,000 on these projects has gone a long way towards overcoming these difficulties and eliminated the need for short term toilet hire.

### ***Grounds***

An ongoing problem at Avatar's Abode is obtaining an appropriate level and type of vegetation near to buildings. In retrospect most would agree that some mistakes have been made over the years. The Abode has experienced tree roots affecting building foundations and breaking and blocking drains. There has been damage caused by falling branches and increased maintenance required for cleaning roof gutters. In addition there is each Spring the potential hazard of bush fire coming close to buildings. The last 5 years has seen over \$7,000 spent on tree cutting and paying for the wood to be chipped for garden mulch.

The risk of bush fire leads to a lot of time being spent on keeping grass and vegetation away from the Abode's 15 buildings (not including the 3 garden sheds). This time spent is in addition to the many gardens of flowers and native plants that are maintained. For each of the last few years the Board has spent approximately \$600 on slashing grass away from the buildings. This figure has been significantly reduced over

the last five years by volunteers expanding their maintenance area horizons and by volunteers providing for the property more machinery.

In addition to machinery and vehicles being made available, donated funds of \$15000 have enabled a three bay wide vehicle shed to be built. In an endeavour to reduce the annual insurance premiums of over \$6,000 a year the Board has decided not to insure the vehicle shed, the new toilet block and the Meeting Hall.

Another significant expense totalling \$4,500 incurred in the last five years has been the replacement of four of the private electricity poles between the buildings. In this time another \$4,500 has been spent on road repair.

In order to help with maintenance of the grounds The Board for many years has employed some casual labour which has now been substantially reduced. Last year \$1,490 was spent on wages.

### ***Spring Sahavas and Anniversary Financials***

Each event has had both financial surpluses and deficits, but on average over the years each event is self sufficient financially despite there often being widely different levels of specific donations and expenditures. Quite often there have been some very significant specifically designated donations, for example to enable the travel expenses of special guests.

### ***Volunteering***

A new garden has been planted and is being maintained by Bob and Margie in Baba's square. In addition to this project, they have also been lovingly maintaining the gardens in front of the Reception Centre and at Judith's cottage, as well as expanding and greatly improving gardens around the bookstore and LePage residence.

During the Work of Our Hands Sahavas of this year, Amir Naderi, Greg Rimmelzwaan, and Quentin Oakhill with the assistance of many hands, began the construction of a rock wall outside of the Shed. The work has progressed and now includes wide, curved steps that double as amphitheatre-style seating. A beautiful mosaic completed by a collaboration of efforts during Anniversary time this year is incorporated into the wall, making it overall both artistic and functional.

The Avatar's Abode Management Committee has been working with several young Baba lovers, Quentin Oakhill, Jacob Horsey, Greg Rimmelzwaan, and Jalal Thompson in order to rejuvenate the Adopt-A-Job program. Many people have expressed an interest in lending a hand at the Abode, but are sometimes unsure of who to contact or what to do. This group of youth are passionate about creating a fellowship of workers at Avatar's Abode, with the intention not only to beautify and maintain the property, but to develop and maintain a dedicated community of workers for Baba. There are many jobs that need to be done, such as weeding, cleaning, repairing, and the occasional renovation. Regular work bees will be scheduled, and hopefully a regular group of volunteers can get established. The Lychee Garden, which was begun in 2007, has yet to fulfil its goal of supplying the Anniversary with a large amount of its produce. With the help of anyone interested, hopefully a well maintained fruit and vegetable garden will emerge that can not only cut down on cost of food at Anniversary time, but also create a place for the Baba community to gather and work together. The gardens around the pilgrim's quarters and Francis' cabin also need regular maintenance and loving care.

Please note that in order to operate machines or work with power tools on Avatar's Abode, the Avatar's Abode Board requires that volunteer workers be given basic training in the safe operation of these tools. Volunteers will also be required to sign an indemnity form. If you are interested in lending a hand, whether regularly or spontaneously, please contact Quentin Oakhill or Jacob Horsey. Your help will be greatly appreciated!

We as the Board greatly value your input and we encourage you to actively participate in the development of Avatar's Abode.

Avatar Meher Baba Ki Jai!

The Avatar's Abode Trust