Gorge Gazette – December 2025

News about Trelissick Park, the Ngaio Gorge and streams

Abbreviations:

WCC	Wellington City Council	GW	Greater Wellington Regional Council
F&B	Forest and Bird Protection Society	GG	Gorge Gazette
TPG	Trelissick Park Group	OWBT	Ōtari-Wilton's Bush Trust
S to S	Kia Mouriora te Kaiwharawhara|Sanctuary to Sea	OHS	Onslow Historical Society

Our core community members are Highland Park Progressive Association Inc., Ngaio Crofton Downs Residents' Association Inc., Onslow Historical Society Inc., Ōtari-Wilton's Bush Trust, Royal Forest and Bird Protection Society Inc. (Wellington Branch), Wellington Botanical Society Inc., Wadestown Residents' Association. We support Kia Mouriora te Kaiwharawhara|Sanctuary to Sea.

The first Crofton Downs Primary School field trip

On p.6 of the September GG we said that Te Kura o Korimako is planning to visit the park and stream regularly and use it as a natural laboratory for the children to learn about the environment.

On 20 October Year 5 and 6 children, with volunteers from TPG met the children, teachers and parent helpers for the first visit.

One group spotted a tuna (long-fin eel) close to the fish ladder. Further upstream other groups of children tested Korimako Stream for clarity and nitrate levels. The results were reassuringly good.

At the 'fish ladder' where Kaiwhawhara Stream exits the tunnel under the railway and joins Korimako Stream

They also hunted for critters and found another tuna hiding in the shallows.

[Photos: Anne Tuffin]

A cluster of scientists next to a nīkau palm beside Korimako Stream

Our new Minutes Secretary

Welcome to Karen Martyn, who has volunteered to take on this role for our three-times-a-year meetings.

The plant score

1,300 supplied this year, planted at working bees, by volunteers and corporate groups. They were from WCC, F&B and home nurseries.

Our new baker

Thanks, Eva Durrant, for supplying delicious refreshments for our working bees on request.

A name-change for the park?

TPG, mana whenua and WCC are considering how to best recognise mana whenua in the name of the group and the park, replacing or in combination with the current name. TPG conducted two small surveys of park users and found there was overwhelming support for such a move. Over the past year, TPG has been developing a close working relationship with mana whenua around our shared interest in the park and the Kaiwharawhara awa.

The issue was also discussed with WCC and mana whenua in relation to the development of new interpretive signage in the park (see GG September 2025). TPG are wanting any new name to be on the new signs.

WCC say they are working with Mataaho Aronui on a paper to go to mana whenua outlining a series of naming opportunities, including a Te Reo Māori name for the park. Public consultation, then a paper to council committee for approval would follow.

Ōtari Wilton's Bush Open Day – 13 September

TPG's display is in the foreground, manned by Keith Moretta and Ian Duncan (seated).

Previous WCC Ranger Martin McCrudden and his partner (standing).

Sunshine and no wind!

Photo supplied by Ōtari Wilton's Bush

Getting support from the three elected WCC Councillors

Soon after the election in 2025, TPG asked for:

- Dog control policy - help with advocating for changes.
- Support in forming a meaningful partnership with mana whenua and honouring our pre-colonial history.
- Help in resolving any infrastructure effects on the park (rail, road, power, sewers, stormwater).
- Prioritise increased funding for city reserves.

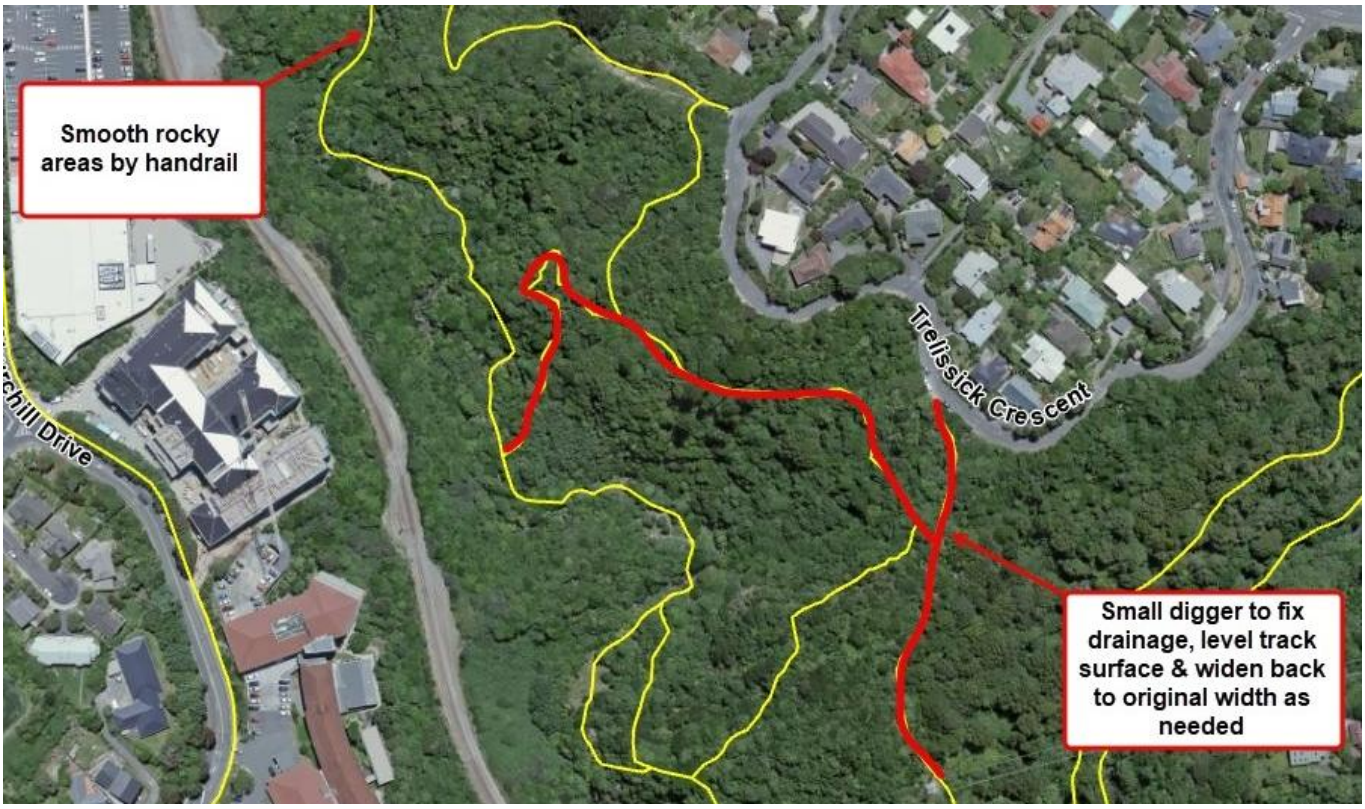
Conducted tours for Councillors Dianne Calvert and Rebecca Matthews with TPG's Anne Tuffin followed.

Concerns allayed

Upper Ngaio Gorge Road retaining wall seismic strengthening is planned for early 2026. TPG was concerned about excavation material from deep boring for the vertical piles and diagonal rock anchors being dropped directly below the steep site, jeopardising the ecology of park. However, engineering consultants WSP and WCC at a site meeting late in October explained that excavation material would be loaded directly onto trucks above the drilling rig.

Track upgrades

WCC's Tim Harkness has revealed his plans for this summer.



The spread of African club moss in the park

The upshots of a study on the streamside distribution and management of *Selaginella kraussiana* by Johanna Ring Larsen:

- Of the 2.14 km surveyed for infestations, 69% of the stream bank length was classified as 'rare', 18% as 'occasional', and 13% as 'frequent'.
- *S. kraussiana* is at the 'spreading' or 'widespread' stage of the invasion curve. Complete eradication is unrealistic, so management should focus on containment and suppression. Manual removal is recommended over herbicide use to minimise environmental harm. Priority should be given to zones with frequent and occasional infestations, followed by replanting cleared areas with dense native groundcover to prevent reinvasion.'

The weeds page of the TPG website says, 'Pull it out and put all parts of the plant directly into a bag to go to landfill. Wear gloves and remove the gloves when you've finished handling it to avoid transferring spores elsewhere.'

History project update

Further to p.4 of the July 2025 GG, OHS editor John Martin has reviewed the first draft of Part Three covering 2013 – 2025 for OHS's *Onslow Historian*, including 50 photos with suggested captions.

To follow: a second draft for John Martin in mid-December for detailed work into the new year.

Adopt a spot – *Angus Napier*

In 2007 our group started its adopt-a-spot scheme. This is for individuals, families, friends or organisations to take care of specific parts of the park. It primarily involves weeding, rubbish removal and, if required, planting. It could also include looking after seats, signs or tracks within a

chosen area. TPG provides guidance and support as required.

One of our long-term spottees is Richard Grasse, who continues to look after the area between the Waikowhai Street entrance and the Crofton Downs railway station car park. Richard has removed the Old man's beard, Japanese honeysuckle, blackberry and karo and keeps an eye out for the ever-invading cherry trees and Darwin's barberry. Adding to the diversity, two tōtara and four miro have been planted, which are doing well.

With increased patronage of the park comes greater wear and tear of the tracks, so your favourite track could be an adopted spot.

As Trelissick Park covers 24 hectares, there is plenty of space to accommodate new 'spottees'.

Would you like to help our Scenic Reserve achieve its purpose of having thriving biodiversity of flora and fauna by adopting a spot?

Please get in touch with our adopt-a-spot co-ordinator, Angus Napier, by sending as an email: trelissickgroup@gmail.com.

[See also Spotee guidelines (January 2023 update).]

Rongoā attributes of the ngaio tree - *Mererangi and Hoana Kaa*.

Ingoa Māori: Ngaio - 'Nga' to join many together, and 'Io' our creator from a Te Ao Māori perspective, most sacred to our way of knowing and being. AIO – Peace and tranquility, acknowledging that everything in creation has a masculine, feminine and child energy.

Ecological role - Ngaio (*Myoporum laetum*) is a highly adaptable and robust tree. As one of the quicker-growing native trees, ngaio is excellent at establishing a foundation for regenerative forests. It is resilient, tolerating reasonable drought and wind, and provides essential shelter for more vulnerable native species. 'Nga' suggests that it is a whānau orientated tree, enjoying growing with many/a diversity of plants. Thriving in coastal areas and well-drained soil, it's valuable for erosion prevention.

Key identifying distinctions and characteristics - Ngaio is identified by its grey corky bark, small white flowers speckled with purple dots, which yield drooping, ripe purple fruit, and its bright green shiny leaves contain hundreds of visible tiny oil glands. Hold a leaf up towards the light to see the little glands filled with oil.

Cultural and medicinal significance - Traditionally, ngaio served multiple purposes, important for both ecological balance (providing food and habitat for insects and birds), and material needs. Its wood was fashioned for tools, such as fishing poles. Medicinally, was used for poulticing (drawing out toxins), taking care of gums and teeth, and treating various skin conditions, including dandruff, cuts, bruises, ulcers, and boils. The leaf oil is also an effective insect repellent.

Note on safety / tapu & noa - The ngaio's unique chemical property is named 'ngaione'. While effective for topical uses, ngaione can be poisonous if too much is ingested. Ingestion should only be done under the consultation of an expert.

Koha / giving back - Being coastal, ngaio would appreciate diluted seaweed fertiliser every now and then. To make seaweed fertiliser wash the salt off the seaweed, half fill a bucket with seaweed and cover with water, then seal it with a lid for at least two weeks. When ready, add around 1/8 of the seaweed fertiliser in a bottle of water and pour at the root area of the plant. Often, we will take a few 1.5ltr bottles and share with many different plants on our walk. We do add water to the fertiliser bucket as we use it but it does become less potent. You can also add more seaweed as you use it or start over when its empty.

Taha-Wairua me pūrākau – spiritual relevance and understanding

Ngaio reminds us there are many who have contributed to the natural world since the beginning of creation. We are also connected to all that has been and will be created within the natural world, which acknowledges a responsibility to care for nature. There are many forms of koha (giving

back). Beginning with acknowledging nature's presence and thanking them for providing air to breathe, detoxifying the atmosphere and whenua, and helping to protect and cool down the planet.

The pūrākau 'Rona and the Moon' contains many messages to help navigate challenging times. When Rona clings to the ngaio tree, ngaio offers a message of creating balance in your life to create some peace.

Maramataka is a tool to support how to best use your time and energy. Often three days before and after the full moon, the more active and strenuous activities can take place. While three days before and after the new moon, reflective and gentle activities can take place. In reflective practice in changes or improvements can be noted to take as lessons for the next month. Also, ngaio acknowledges the child within us all, to make time to play.

Hue (a calabash or gourd) is also present in 'Rona and the Moon' representing letting go of any grief if needed, of which within Te Ao Māori atua Hine-Pu-Te-Hue offers support in carrying our hurts and keeping them in a safe space. While Rona herself symbolises the strength found going within to seek answers, providing guidance to face and overcome challenges.

[Mere and Hoana say 'much of our rongoā teachings have come from Midge Goldsmith (Cultural Practitioner and Kaiako Rongoā).']

References:

Picture of flowers: Mc Stanley - mcstanley's Life List · iNaturalist NZ
Poisonous plants: poisonous-native-plants
Picture of berries: Julio Reis - Myoporum laetum.jpg
New Zealand native Plants/ Ngā tipu taketake o Aotearoa - nativeplants.nz/myoporum-laetum

Hīnau in flower

Marilyn Hester says, 'The hīnau trees on Trelissick Crescent, SE side of the street, are in spectacular bloom. I don't remember seeing them so covered in blossom. There were lots of bees enjoying the nectar'.

Photo: Bill Hester

FMG clearing the tree of love (Aichryson laxum) from the historic wall below entrance 5 on 26 November. At this time of year it has bright yellow flowers. It can form dense coverage preventing native seed germination. It was the dominant plant on the wall.*

The remaining plants overhanging the wall are Japanese honeysuckle, also a cotoneaster to cut and paste – jobs from past and for future TPG working bees. Photo: Angus Napier

**See p. 2 of December 2024 GG for more about 'the tree of love'.*

At the Elim International Church working bee in Kaiwharawhara valley, 15 November *Photo: Angus Napier*

More photos

See Trelissick Park Group | Facebook, for photos of the September ANZ Finance Department visit and TPG working bee below Oban Street supervised by two large, fat kererū. Also, more photos of the November Elim International Church and FMG visits.

Contacts

trelissickgroup@gmail.com
Trelissick Park Group website
WCC: (04) 499 4444 or WCC Fix-It
GW pollution hotline: 0800 496 734