

Gorge Gazette

News about Trelissick Park, the Ngaio Gorge and Streams

AUGUST 2007

Hibernation is not something restoration groups do in winter. Activity and change have been afoot. At the moment we could not hope to match the excellent monthly newsletter for "spotees" that our erstwhile Adopt-a-Spot Coordinator Kate Mackenzie used to publish, but these are some words, at least. This is something of a re-birth - the last "Gorge Gazette" was in 1999. Our website www.trelissickpark.org.nz has much more information, including minutes of the Group's recent meetings, the Management Plan, Five Year Plan and Kate's Adopt-a-Spot Project reports to the Ministry for the Environment.

New Secretary

Frances Lee is relinquishing the job as the Secretary of the Group after over 16 years. The change was agreed at the meeting on 7 August. Malcolm McDonald, a resident of Trelissick Crescent, is replacing her.

Frances was involved in the discussions with Wellington City Council (WCC) in 1990 about forming a group to help restore the Park and was appointed secretary at the first meeting in 1991. She was secretary of the Ngaio Progressive Association from the mid-1980s to 1994. It was recognised by the new Group that earlier Park restoration and advocacy had been performed by the two residents' groups of Wadestown and Ngaio, but that it was time for a group whose sole responsibility was the Park.

Many improvements have been achieved since 1991, in conjunction with WCC and Greater Wellington Regional Council (GWRC), with more tracks re-opened or built, bridges constructed, weeds removed, many thousands of native trees planted and streams given increased protection. It is wonderful to see the increased number of visitors enjoying the Park and more working as volunteers. Trelissick Park is becoming restored to a peaceful, native bush wilderness "gem", only minutes from the centre of Wellington. Frances has been the main driving force in all this and we all owe her a debt of gratitude for her dedication, persistence and hard work over the 16 years.

Frances will remain a member of the Group, representing Ngaio Progressive Association. Although not so active physically, she will (for example) continue with her general maintenance/watchdog work. Her historic knowledge of the development of the Park over the 16 years will be invaluable.

Malcolm, the new Secretary, and his wife have 'adopted a spot' in the Park and both have a detailed knowledge of the Park features. Coming from a career in government, ending at the Cabinet Office, Malcolm has a great many skills to bring to the job and the Group is most grateful that he will take it on. He will be a great asset. There are still many wide-ranging issues which need resolving – both within the Park but also regarding such things as Council policies on many relevant subjects, on surrounding subdivisions and in-fill which affect the hillsides and streams, and on pollution problems. The Group works closely with other organisations seeking to protect the environment.

Winter Plantings and Adopt-a-Spot

Nearly 4,000 trees will have been planted in the Park at the end of the planting season this year – massive combined efforts of volunteers at working bees, "spotees", corporate volunteers, GRWC and WCC staff. Some of the funding was from the GWRC "Take Care" scheme and most of the plants came from WCC Berhampore Nursery. Patches bristling with new trees can now be seen all over the Park.

Hard-working volunteers from ANZ-National Bank, the oil company OMV, the Youth Council and the Youth Environment Forum/Ministry for the Environment at plantings throughout the winter have been a great help.

A mid-year Group/"Spottee" function was held to thank Kate Mackenzie for her work on the Adopt-a-Spot Project at the conclusion of her contract with the Ministry for the Environment, also to thank the "spottees" for their work. There are now 30 sites being cared for, 17 of which were not attended before she began. The new Adopt-a-Spot Coordinator is Harry Barton, who will be keeping things going in a voluntary capacity. Aided by Harry, Kate hired a van to distribute to "spottees" about 1,000 trees, most originating from Otari-Wilton's Bush, held temporarily at Group member's houses. "Spottees" were quickly on the job planting these – a great job, well done!

Weed Control

Trelissick Park would provide an excellent resource for anyone interested in the study of weed varieties, habitats and spread. The culprits are mainly backyards escapes and the appalling state of the railway corridor. A losing battle has raged for many years. However, at last a higher level of activity on weed control for the Park is planned for the next few years, using the combined resources of WCC and GWRC. The Group is collaborating in finalising WCC's draft Pest Implementation Plan, covering the next five years. Already most of the willows along the streams have been poisoned.

Map Boards, Interpretative Board and Brochure

Trelissick Park has been sorely in need of these, with more visitors. The Group has been working with WCC on the map boards and interpretative board (for the historic powder magazine site) and was awarded a Grant for the brochure from WCC. In agreeing the content and format, the maxim "nothing is ever straightforward" applied, of course. Group member Barry Durrant, has been organising the brochure, using his photography. The mapping is by John Foden. After many alterations, these will be ready in the next few weeks.

Logo

Many thanks to design student Nicola Cook for devising the logo, our first, which is now in use (see top right of the first page).

Project Kaiwharawhara

WCC and GWRC are reviewing Project Kaiwharawhara. This was set up in 2003 to improve the ecological health of the catchment, which stretches from Khandallah to Karori and down to the harbour, with collaboration from organisations and individuals involved in the area. Some members are participating in this review with the WCC questionnaire and subsequent Project Kaiwharawhara 22 August meeting.

Sanctuary to the Sea Track

In accordance with the WCC Annual plan, it is proposed that a track connect the Karori Sanctuary to the harbour, following the Kaiwharawhara Stream. The missing link is between Otari Wilton's Bush and Trelissick Park. It is challenging terrain and we will be helping with the reconnaissance.

Johnsonville Railway Corridor

With the coming upgrade of the Johnsonville line, there is an opportunity to carry out some weed eradication and restoration planting along the railway corridor bordering the Park. We are involved in discussions with the various parties, to see how best to achieve this.

Submissions

The long-suffering Kaiwharawhara and Korimako Streams are at the mercy of pollution and fast storm water run-off from the large area of the catchment, affecting stream ecology and causing destructive stream bank erosion. The Group has been active with related submissions and comments on infill housing, the Draft Updated Code of Practice for Land Development, New policies for Earthworks, Subdivision Design Guide Review, Huntleigh Park zone change and the proposed Kilmarston housing development above Ngaio.

Our submission on the WCC Draft Annual Plan concerned hydrological/stormwater/sewage/silting issues, weed control, tracks, historic wall restoration and clean-up of the Kaiwharawhara estuary.

Comments on the WCC Draft Biodiversity Action Plan have centred on the need for the plan to have "teeth" in acting as a permissive to implement Council activities. Without this we are concerned that the Plan appears to be generally idealistic, with objectives that may not be achieved in practice. Another concern is about resources that may not be enough to implement the plan.

Ceremonial Tree Planting

Richard Northmore (past Chairman of the Group) and his family have gifted a commemorative tree and seat to the Park in memory of Betty - wife and mother. A short ceremony recently took place, with the family joined by friends, members of the Trelissick Park Group and WCC officers. Richard was a Wadestown resident and it was fitting that the tree and seat have been placed alongside the Kaiwharawhara Stream below the Hanover Street entrance in Wadestown.

The simple seat is made of macracarpa, whilst the tree is a rewarewa. This is one of the most attractive spots in the Park, accessed by the "revegetation" track, branching off the Northern Walkway below Hanover Street.

The Trelissick Park Group is grateful to the Northmore family for this wonderful addition to the Park, which was made possible under WCC's commemorative policy.

Heritage Trees on Private Property

We are upset about the recent cutting down of a 10 m high rimu tree on private property adjoining the Park. This was a beautiful, healthy specimen that must have been about 40 years old. Surely there is a need for some sort of protection of such trees over a certain height? To add insult to injury, the owner dumped it, plus other vegetation from the land clearance over the fence into the Park.

Sewer Line Upgrade

During late summer, a new sewer line will be installed along the route of Waikowhai Street and a sleeve inserted in the existing sewer line upstream of the "2-Elephant" bridge (below Crofton Downs Station). The line from Waikowhai Street will follow the old track/steps in the Park (no longer used) down to join the manhole by the "2-Elephant" bridge. We visited the site with the consulting engineer Duffill Watts and Tse Ltd. The Group's response covered matters unlikely to be contentious, such as revegetation, avoidance of silting and continuity of public use of the Northern Walkway. "Spottees" Mark Collinge and Sylvia Dixon had to move some of their plants by the bridge, to avoid trampling during pipeline installation.

Things Botanical

Group members Marilyn Hester and Carolyn Theiler have been busy in continuing their plant propagations. Marilyn now has a seed collecting permit. They also have permission to collect some nikau seeds from the Kapiti Coast area. They recently found a small patch of miro seedlings in the Park, coming up of their own accord – encouraging! Chairman Peter Reimann is nurturing for next year over 500 of mostly coprosma, mahoe, with other mixed varieties, either rescued "bi-catch" from milk containers while re-potting into PB3s, or Otari's plants too small for planting this year.

We need to watch how far apart we plant things like rimu, totara, miro, matai, kahikatea, tawa and northern rata. Visit Otari-Wilton's Bush to see centuries old versions of these. Some are enormous. We plant the fast-growing normal revegetation species much closer, of course, to shade out and out-compete the weeds. At such close spacing they will also fight each other, which doesn't matter, as they are relatively short-lived, compared with the larger/long-life more valuable heritage trees. So when we inter-plant with the heritage forest species, they are best at something like at least 5 - 10 metres or more apart. We recently spent a morning moving a dozen totara below Hanover Street that were in closely spaced groups only 1 metre apart. Marilyn Hester says we really must also include planting of heritage trees up into the bush away from the path - in the areas difficult to reach and far from the Park entrances. It is too tempting to plant up the easy-to-reach areas, where we can keep an eye on the growth (and rejoice in our achievements and energy).

Contacts

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Wellington City Council (reporting slips and fallen trees across tracks, other problems): (04) 499 4444

Greater Wellington pollution hotline: 0800 496 734

Working Bees (Check with Dorothy before coming – changes may occur)

2 September 1.30 PM Sunday, Hanover Street entrance

11 September 9.30 AM Tuesday, Hanover Street entrance

7 October 1.30 PM Sunday, Waikowhai Street entrance

16 October 9.30 AM Tuesday, Trelissick Crescent entrance

4 November 1.30 PM Sunday, Ngaio Gorge Road entrance

13 November 9.30 AM Tuesday, Ngaio Gorge Road entrance

Come and participate in the transformation of Trelissick Park – all welcome.