

Gorge Gazette

News about Trelissick Park, the Ngaio Gorge and Streams

(Footbridges over the stream are numbered from 1 – 6 going downstream, excluding the old bridge off the side of Wightwick's Field).

Abbreviations:

WCC Wellington City Council

GG Gorge Gazette

GW Greater Wellington Regional Council

F & B Royal Forest and Bird Protection Society

Website www.trelissickpark.org.nz (includes past Gorge Gazettes)

Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/TrelissickParkGroup> (you do not need to be a member to look).

JULY 2014

Life in the Gorge is never dull. Garden seats appear unbidden. A settee is discovered down the slope. Chain-saw massacres occur. Repairs. Trees fall. Weeds flourish.

The bad news first, then graduation to the "sunlit uplands"¹.

The Rubbish Saga

A recent working bee at the Ngaio Gorge lay-by induced rare treasures from down-slope forays - see photo. The settee, TV set and an oil drum remain.



The Chain-saw Massacres

Perhaps it's power that intoxicates. Now we have a new name: "the swath". The regenerating bush planted four years ago over the sewer trench leading down from Waikowhai Street to bridge 1 was looking so good. There was more destruction on railway land downstream, the site of one of our early adopted spots. Isolated trees and grasses on the Park side of the stream also fell to the rampant enthusiasm.

Reparations

The railway clearance contractor was embarrassed and apologetic. The two employees are no longer

working for them. More than 200 reparation trees were quickly obtained by the contractor and from a WCC cancelled order, which the contractor carted down to designated places. We were delighted to see that these included two rimu - sorely lacking in the Park.

Much of the "swath" was replanted at a recent working bee.

Weed Clearance along the Railway Corridor

Commuters on the Johnsonville line may have noticed the transformation between Crofton Downs and the city. Make sure you have a window seat for the rail trip, to enjoy the new vistas over the wonderful bush in the Park. KiwiRail intend to plant some natives, low-growing near the track.

Unfortunately, some of the corridor is too steep for weed control, so some of the Japanese honeysuckle, blackberry and buddleia will have to remain.

Contact Energy to the Rescue

A team from Contact Energy came one June afternoon to rake out *Tradescantia fluminensis* (wandering willie) from the lower Kaiwharawhara at the end of the vehicle track and then plant some trees there. WCC Ranger Tim Harkness carted the rakings out to the Ngaio Gorge Road lay-by.



A Park Walk-through

Anita Benbrook is WCC's Restoration Technical Advisor and accompanied Peter Reimann on a Park walk-through a few weeks ago. With superb acuity, she quickly spotted old man's beard on far-off ridges missed by us and equally distant ancient kowhai. Other notable finds:



- *Melicope simplex* (poataniwha) - Anita says there are only a few of these around Wellington, eg at Otari Wilton's Bush and Makara Peak. It only seems to be in old patches of bush and can grow to 5 metres. It hybridises with the much larger-leaved *Melicope ternata* (wharangī). Ours was at Ref. 018028 on the gridded map available via our website home page. The photo at left is by John Smith-Dodsworth from the NZ Plant Conservation Network website.
- Two enormous *Weinmannia racemosa* (kamahi). They are on either side of the track at Ref. 030020. How many times had we walked past these without noticing? Anita thought that they were the two biggest kamahi she had seen in Wellington. The Hutt Valley has many bigger ones, along with the biggest in the Kamahi Street Reserve in Stokes Valley.
- *Streblus banksii* (large-leaved milk tree) This is at Ref. 034021 and can grow to 12 metres. Gary James of F & B says "I am in the planning stages for the collection of *Streblus banksii* (large leaved milk tree) seed ... the seed is predated by rats and native birds. The bulk of milk trees in Wellington are in Trelissick Park/ Ngaio Gorge/Old Porirua Road. I am looking at an intensive rat baiting programme around groups of trees. We can protect the seed from birds by enclosing the ripening seed in a bag, but rats can still get it." We are hoping to cooperate with F & B. The photo at left is from the NZ Plant Conservation Network.

Water Sensitive Urban Design (WSUD) Implementation

In the September 2013 GG we reported on measures by WCC to address the quality and quantity of stormwater run-off in Wellington. This is a big problem for the streams in our Park, which take all the stormwater from Karori to Khandallah.

Nicci Wood of WCC says that in June the *Introduction Water Sensitive Urban Design Stormwater Management in Wellington Guide²* was approved. Following feedback from consultation, the guide is being split into two separate but related documents - the one above and a more technical detail, which is being drafted to form a new chapter of the Council's Code of Practice for Land Development. WCC is working on implementation. Nicci expects it will be a consideration in the land use consent, but not in the District Plan.

WCC Branch Out

For the winter edition and for subscribing, see: <http://wellington.govt.nz/e-mail%20campaign/enewsletters/branch%20out/sent/2014/06/branch%20out%20winter%202014>.

Lemonwood Monoculture



Early last decade a blackberry-clothed slope at Ref. 016043 was sprayed by helicopter, then planted by WCC in 2004 with *pittosporum eugenioides* (lemonwood). These grew lustily, to become a tall and spindly monoculture - see photo. It appears that lemonwood are shallow-rooted. Near the top of the slope, several were bowled in last year's June wind storm (the funnelling effect of the saddle). Now we are cutting out the thinnest ones and infilling with other species to increase diversity. A few larger ones are also being cut above a bud to encourage bushing out. WCC have provided *Macropiper excelsum* (kawakawa) and *Carex dissita* this year, which should do well as understory plants.

Other News

Wandering willie has succumbed in various places along the Korimako valley - the last combined WCC/GW spraying operation. From now on WCC are taking over. Working bees dealt with smaller outbreaks, including a follow-up of the work by Contact Energy (as previously mentioned). We are intent on preventing it spreading into the forested areas, where it will stifle natural seedling emergence.

St Benedict's School planted in the forest below Hanover Street. Plants in the ground so far this year = 540. A new one for us this year from our WCC allocation is some *Lophomyrtus bullata* (ramarama).

We clambered on steep and stony slopes chasing old man's beard, including on railway land. The property owners above Ngaio Gorge Road dealt with theirs, Joseph Nicholls to the fore. He also helped with a large infestation in the Park below.

Our Facebook page has more of our activities and photos.

Thanks to Amber Bill of WCC for organising new Park brochures to go in holders at Park entrances.

Pest Animal Statistics

Are stoats becoming trap-wise or diminishing? In the last quarter of 2008 we caught 4 stoats and 5 in 2009, then 1 per year since, making a total of 14. The rat supply is rather more constant - 106 to date. Removing hedgehogs is always a messy and prickly business, but there were only 10.

The Bellbirds are Coming

To finish on a note of optimism, see Barry Durrant's bellbird photo on the next page, taken in his garden, bordering the Park.

References

1. Winston Churchill.
2. <http://wellington.govt.nz/services/environment-and-waste/stormwater/water-sensitive-urban-design-guide>

Contacts

Chairman & working bees: Peter Reimann 938 9602, peter.reimann@paradise.net.nz
Wellington City Council (reporting slips and fallen trees across tracks, other problems): 499 4444
Greater Wellington pollution hotline: 0800 496 734

Working Bees

Usually 1st Sunday of the month at 1.30 PM and 2nd Tuesday at 9.30 AM. See web-site for updates.



Membership drawn from Highland Park Progressive Association Inc., Ngaio Crofton Downs Residents' Association Inc., Onslow Historical Society Inc., Private Landowners Group, Royal Forest and Bird Protection Society Inc. (Wellington Branch), Wellington Botanical Society Inc., Wadestown Residents' Association.