

Gorge Gazette

News about Trelissick Park, the Ngaio Gorge and Streams

(Footbridges over the stream are numbered from 1 – 6 going downstream.)

Abbreviations:

WCC Wellington City Council

GW Greater Wellington Regional Council

F & B Forest and Bird Protection Society

HPPA Highland Park Progressive Assoc.

WRA Wadestown Residents' Association

MfE Ministry for the Environment

TPG Trelissick Park Group

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

Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/TrelissickParkGroup>

JUNE 2020

BREAKING NEWS – OBAN TRACK BRIDGE WASHED AWAY

Some of the detritus washed down by the streams in the huge Kaiwharawhara catchment can be quite useful.

For a while we thought that the plank Barry Durrant found would obviate the expensive Oban track bridge. It was invaluable for his access to traps and bait stations and track upgrade work.

Unfortunately, it is probably now floating out to sea, en-route to some foreign shore.



MORE ON 'DETRITUS'

There is a steep, slimy and shady slope opposite 51 Trelissick Crescent, which needed planting. Thus engaged at a working bee, we were beset by a foul odour. The skeletal and scaly remains of a huge fish emerged!

Anyone wishing to carry out a forensic examination will have to recover it further down-slope. Marilyn Hester, who frequently tends the verge plantings, now calls it the 'fish slope'.

FRESH BLOOD

Welcome to Angus Napier, who has taken over from Karin Wiley as the F & B representative for our Group. Angus knows the Park well from many visits over the years and attending working bees. In 2005-6 he was invaluable in recruiting an adopt-a-spot coordinator under MfE funding.

Welcome also to WCC's new Parks Services Manager, William Melville, who replaces Steven Peters.

ECOSYSTEM HEALTH IN WELLINGTON STREAMS

GW and WCC joined forces to carry out four years of monitoring at 51 sites spread across a range of streams throughout the city area, including sites upstream of urban areas. Many of these have been piped and there has been minimal information on their ecological health.

GW's Senior Environmental Scientist, Dr Evan Harrison, has provided comprehensive results of the monitoring^{1,2}, looking at habitat condition, invertebrate community health and fish populations, summarised below.

- Invertebrate communities were generally in better condition in streams with less urban land use in the upstream catchment.

- Fish communities within urban streams were generally in fair to poor condition. However, there is greater fish diversity in sections of stream with direct connection to the sea - important because many native fish species migrate between rivers and the sea.
- Banded kokopu and eel species were the most abundant fish species, with at-risk and declining species including koaro, inanga, redfin bully, longfin eel and giant kokopu.
- Barriers to fish movement are one of the major pressures influencing fish communities in urban streams. The only fish species found upstream of piped sections of stream were climbing species.
- The monitoring shows a need to include modifying and removing fish barriers, as well as reducing the stormwater contaminants flowing into the streams.

GW says it is working closely with iwi and the community to encourage urban design to improve our marine and freshwater ecosystems.

But what does 'working' mean? We are looking forward to an action plan and timeline.

THE NEW TRACK FROM OBAN STREET

It began in 1981, sparking a saga lasting nearly 40 years. More background is in the Appendix.

WCC's contractor started work on the steps and fencing from Oban Street just before the COVID-19 lockdown, under the stewardship of Tim Harkness. They resumed when restrictions eased. The photo shows the section between the houses.

There are more photos on our Facebook page.

The contractor also upgraded the part of the track traversing to just below the power pylon.

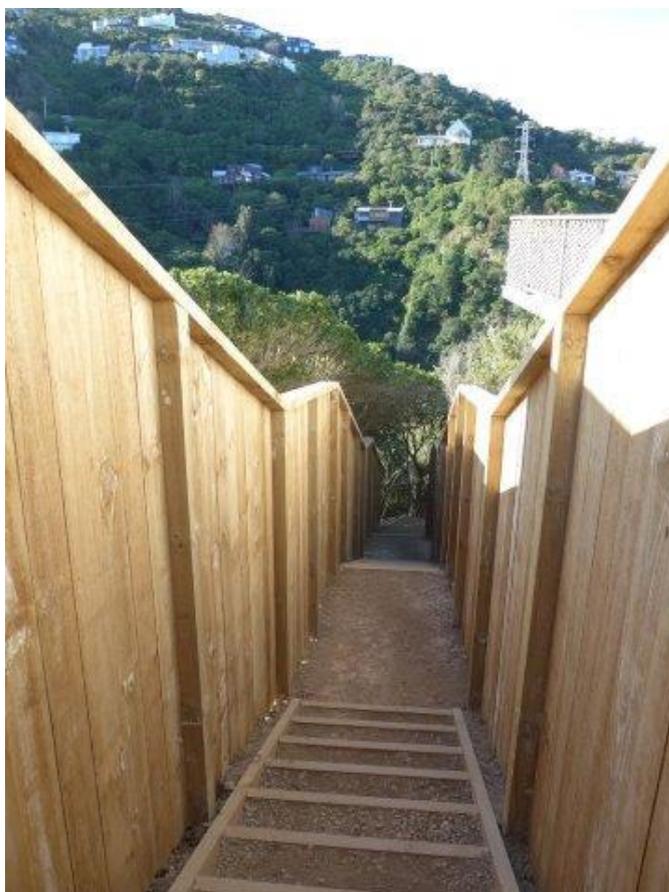
Barry Durrant is working on lower sections of the track. Tim Harkness will employ a contractor to assist at the steeper rocky areas.

There will be no public access until the track and footbridge across Kaiwharawhara stream are completed.

THE START OF OBAN TRACK BRIDGE

The consents for the bridge across Kaiwharawhara Stream have been approved, the construction contract signed and funds raised, thanks to generous donors. By the end of August the bridge should be completed.

Work by Outsiders Ltd started on 17th June, with the delivery of the piles.

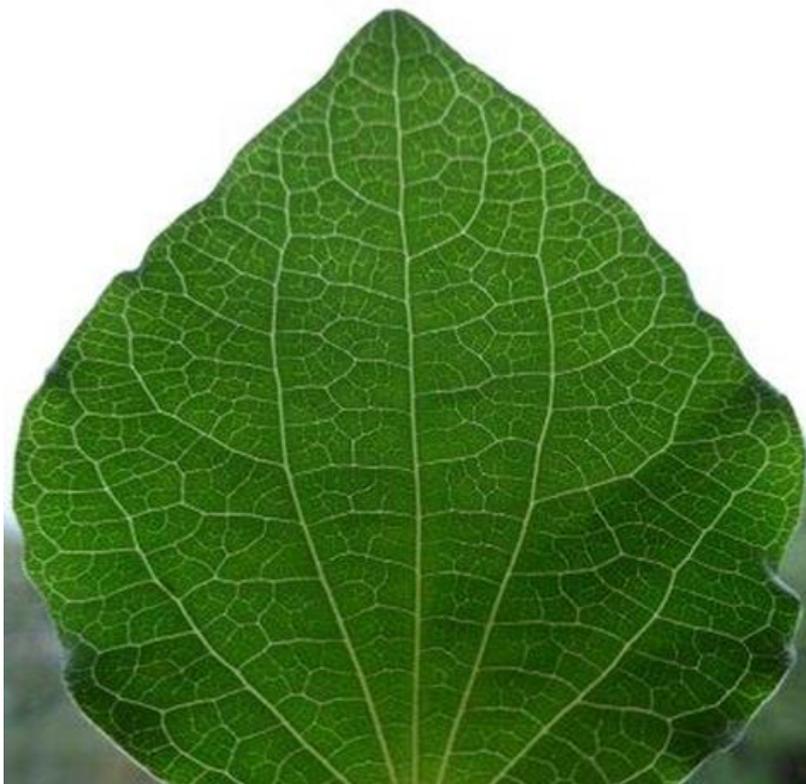


WEEDY CONUNDRUMS

Here is a puzzle for our botanists. The plant samples in the photo were taken from beside the vehicle track just below the Park entrance half-way up Ngaio Gorge Road.

The sample on the left is from a tree growing above the rock wall – is it evergreen buckthorn or cotoneaster?

The sample on the right was growing on the other side of the vehicle track – about the same size as flax. What is it, and does it have sinister intentions?



KAWAKAWA

(*Macropiper excelsum*)

We can't get enough of this wonderful understory plant to fill some of our shady areas. Usually the leaves have holes – fodder for the caterpillar dedicated to this species.

This young leaf was photographed by Peter Reimann, then eaten. (It goes well in salads and as a 'tea').

DOWN IN THE PARK

We are steadily using the 500 plants provided by WCC, supplemented by around 160 from the home nursery.

Working bees resumed on 17th May, using COVID-19 precautions.

Conservation Volunteers visited for weeding and planting in the Korimako valley, braving a June frost.

In May, WCC's contractor Kaitiaki o Ngahere clambered all over the steep

slopes dealing with tradescantia, old man's beard, Japanese honeysuckle, cherry, sycamore, climbing asparagus, banana passionfruit and Asian knotweed.

There is no shortage of rats to keep our animal pest team busy. Will we ever become 'predator-free'? Barry Durrant caught a stoat – a rare event.

For more, including photos, see our Facebook page.

References

1. *Ecosystem health in Wellington City urban streams*
2. *supplementary data report*

Working Bees

See website 'Projects' page for dates, locations and health and safety information.

Contacts

Peter Reimann (04) 938 9602, nz.peterreimann@gmail.com

WCC (reporting problems): (04) 499 4444

GW pollution hotline: 0800 496 734

Thanks to all our volunteers, supporters and staff from WCC and GW.

APPENDIX

Park Access from Oban Street Wadestown - Background

A request for a track from Oban Street into Trelissick Park was first raised in 1981 in WRA's submission on the WCC Draft Trelissick Park Management Plan. Their proposed track was subsequently included in the 1995 WCC Park Management Plan.

Prior to 1996, WCC owned all the land from Oban Street down to Kaiwharawhara Stream, including a house at #112. After community advocacy, supported by Cr Andy Foster, WCC decided to incorporate that land into Trelissick Park, except for a small portion around the house and an adjoining strip between #112 and #114, to access the Park from Oban Street. WCC sold the house. In 1999 this strip became a legal right-of-way.

Formal access to the Park using this legal right-of-way was pursued vigorously at various times by HPPA/WRA/TPG. In 2003 Landscape Architect, Julia Williams, was commissioned by WCC to study various access track options to the Park from Wadestown and Highland Park and recommended the access from Oban Street. Subsequent advocacy did not appear to influence Council staff, who deemed it "low priority". Some local residents were not happy with the idea. WCC insisted on an associated bridge across Kaiwharawhara Stream, funded by the community.

However, the WCC 2015 Suburban Reserves Management Plan and the 2016 Open Space Access Plan required further investigation. In 2016 TPG/HPPA/WRA conducted a residents' and users' survey, which showed 84% support. WCC conducted a further residents' and users' survey in 2018, this time using the WCC's research team – an impartial third party. This showed that 85% of the respondents would use the track and 74% supported it. Accordingly, Council Officers recommended that the project proceed, agreed by Councillors at their meeting in December 2018.

We are grateful for the support of Council Officers during these latter years.

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.