

Gorge Gazette

News about Trelissick Park, the Ngaio Gorge and Streams

Abbreviations:

WCC = Wellington City Council

GW = Greater Wellington Regional Council

TPG = Trelissick Park Group

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

MAY 2009

Liberation at last for our hundreds of carefully nurtured plants! The rains have come.

Adopt a Spot News

George Symmes and son Andrew, in ever-expansive mode, have uprooted a dense blackberry thicket next to their spot by the stream between bridges 2 and 3 and already planted trees there – a massive effort. It looks wonderful. Blackberry has also been attacked by the Tararua Tramping Club next door, assisted by Stan Pillar.

Barry Durrant's open grassy spot between bridges 4 and 5 is becoming a sunny haven and the toetoe and flax at the northern end are growing more prominent.

A warm welcome to new "spottees" Judy Paulin, Mark Sheriff and Don Foote.

Judy has already done some clearing and planting up from the streamside memorial seat below Hanover Street, helped by her partner Tony Burge. This is in a side valley, once a blackberry nightmare, but now becoming one of the most attractive areas in the Park.

Mark, helped by his partner Karen, has taken on the little "triangle" at the intersection of tracks downstream from Wightwick's Field. Where once were fallen dead willow logs and weeds, now grow kahikatea, pukatea, 2 nikau palms and faster growing "reveg." species. He is writing an environmental paper on this.

Don recently arrived from Nelson and, as an apartment dweller, was looking for a garden substitute. He settled on the gorse below Trelissick Crescent. Peter Reimann had been cutting tracks through the gorse over the years and planting within. We thought it was time to remove its protective embrace. Don cut a huge swathe with his saw, Peter hard-pressed wielding his machete to spread the gorse over the area. By also spreading mulch, we hope this will shade out re-growth and be ready for infill planting in early spring. Don has also taken a less fierce streamside spot on the railway side next to bridge 5.

A Fishy Visitation

14 bright-eyed members of the Youth Environment Forum, drawn from all over New Zealand, visited the stream by the debris trap in mid-April. They had to study an urban stream and its relationship with the catchment. Peter Reimann talked about the long history of interferences in the area now occupied by the Park, then described the multi-pronged approaches to restoring the ecology, such as weed and animal pest control, planting, fish passage, pollution monitoring, submissions on land development and education.

Then came a fishing demonstration from GW. Using an electric "stunner" they caught a long-finned eel, 2 red-fin bullies and 2 brown trout. The long-finned eel is endangered, because it lives to 40 - 70 years, only mates at the end of its life and is still exploited. Trout are a pest because they eat the young fresh water fish and compete for food. By disturbing the stream bed sediment, some invertebrates were also caught (food for the fish). All were returned, affronted by the experience no doubt.

This shows that the Kaiwharawhara and its tributaries are in reasonable health for an urban stream. But it is a knife edge, given flooding, silting and pollution events. Most of the streams are within forest,

providing food and shade for aquatic life – though there are still plenty of weeds that need to be replaced with riparian planting. GW confirmed that at present the debris trap is a barrier for the migration of some species between the sea and the headwaters.

TPG Goes Nocturnal

Ever anxious about possible erosion of democratic rights, Frances Lee and Peter Reimann appeared before the Select Committee to speak to the TPG submission on changes mooted for the Resource Management Act. Our concerns were the reduction in public notification, increase in appeal costs, bypassing local authority hearings with fast tracking to the Environment Court and possible removal of ability to support appellants. Some of the other submitters had similar themes. Even at 9.30 PM they lent a polite and attentive ear - perhaps parliament operates in a different time zone.

Dog Owners Defy Logic

Can anyone say why dog owners dutifully scoop up and bag their dog poo, carry it to a park exit point or track intersection, then leave it on the ground? Why not carry it the rest of the way to their home rubbish bin? Do they think removal is part of the service? A pile of dog poo bags at park entrances is revolting, even if the colour of choice seems to be blue.

Carpets are not the Answer

The debate has rolled on for a couple of years. Yes, carpet around newly planted trees does initially suppress weed growth. However, we are finding carpet is impervious to the light rain showers that are often the salvation of newly planted trees. The tree develops shallow roots, which become embedded in the material and weeds also establish roots in the carpet and become difficult to release. The non-organic side of the carpet does not disintegrate.

So, on balance, we have decided that mulch is more effective to put around new plantings, as long as it is kept away from the trunk. Fresh mulch takes nitrogen from the soil as it rots, but remnant fertiliser from the soil that was in the pot or bag may help to compensate. Also, if the previous resident was gorse (a legume), the soil should be nitrogen rich anyway. If in doubt, apply fertiliser sparingly.

The War on Pests Continues

The two sprayings of tradescantia (wandering willy) and Japanese honeysuckle, funded by GW and WCC, have now been completed by the contractor, after some initial by-kill angst. So all is ready for winter plantings essential to cover the sprayed areas. Remaining GW "Take Care" funding is being used to spray mostly montbretia, which will need following up next year.

Many thanks to Bill Hester for his marathon balsam removal efforts along the Korimako Stream.

We think rabbits might have a penchant for young karamu (*Coprosma robusta*). They are in the Wightwick's Field area and we have seen their droppings in the gorse cleared area above. Just-planted karamu seedlings are found completely stripped of all leaves – even some planted within the gorse. Apart from possums (virtually eliminated), what other animal would have enough reach to neatly chomp off the upper leaves?

The Johnsonville Line

Completion of the tunnel lowering work by On Track in February was celebrated by a "Walk the Line". A ride in the train affords but fleeting glimpses of the Park through often dirty windows. So this was a unique chance to soak in the wonderful bush views and listen to the rush of the stream and bird song wafting up from the valley below.

The level of interest was cause for astonishment. A couple of thousand did the walk, during the afternoon. The Ngaio Scout's sausage sizzle was a huge fund-raising success. Thanks to those who stoically stationed themselves along the route to act as safety marshals.

The tunnel project brought inevitable devastation to some of the lower parts of the Park. But in the end, there will be a net gain: more trees than before, re-grassed areas by the historic magazine building, Australian wattle gone from a slope and 2 picnic tables. We are hoping the plantain weed (*Plantago lanceolata*) in the hydro-seeded grass slope below the line does not migrate to the Park.

The Estuary

The Kaiwharawhara Stream issues into the harbour just beyond Trelissick Park, at the northern end of the Interislander vehicle marshalling area. The estuary affects the Park because it is part of the ecological corridor from the harbour to the outer green belt. The estuary and the reclamation peninsular to the north, have the potential to become another Wellington "jewel". Currently weeds and rubbish abound. The southern side by the marshalling area, planted by GW in 2002, needs weeding and infill.

Frances Lee has been the motive force behind restoration efforts. But birds, fish and beautification do not rate much against the commercial realities of port and ferry operations. With assistance from GW and WCC, a site meeting was held in March, including people from CentrePort and Interislander, to agree on action (and non-action). "One small step", perhaps.

A week later we re-visited for the annual "Seaweek" beach clean-up. 15 volunteers appeared, to collect 40 bags of rubbish, plus bulk metal and plastic items. Unfortunately, no valuables or collectibles were found. Most of the rubbish comes from the trucks that park in the adjacent area, often overnight, before boarding the ferry. The forecast foul weather did not eventuate, so we enjoyed a sunny morning tea on the beach.

Donations

Many thanks to St Luke's Wadestown for their donation, which we will use for purchase of heritage trees – rimu if possible, as these are fairly sparse. We are also grateful for the donation from Highland Park Progressive Association for the remainder of costs for the brochure.

More Intrusions

Will intrusions into the Park ever stop? The new Waikowhai Street sewer installation to the manhole by bridge 1 has been completed. New trees have just been planted over the excavated route. The next Ngaio Gorge road earthquake strengthening is starting – more excavation. All the work is to prior agreement with the consultants, Duffill Watts and Opus International, respectively.

Track News

David Halliday of WCC has organised a board-walk across a side-stream near the memorial seat below Hanover Street. Grant Preston-Thomas has finished some upgrade work on the forest track below Ngaio Gorge Road. Many thanks to both.

Things Botanical

Marilyn Hester is delighted that the hundreds of nikau she planted off the forest track below Ngaio Gorge Road are all doing well. What a sight the Park will look in a century or two!

Many thanks to Phillipa Lloyd of WCC at Otari Wilton's Bush nursery for the seedlings in old trays surplus to requirements – a delicate uprooting job for Carolyn Theiler, Marilyn Hester and Peter Reimann, with a few hundred plants rescued (including 80 totara). Thanks also to Olaf John for the lancewood and nikau seedlings.

There is often confusion between the native grass toetoe (*Cordarteria toetoe* and *Cordarteria fulvida*) and the interloper from South America, pampas grass. As illustrated below, the toetoe plumes usually droop a little, whereas the pampas plume is more vertical and symmetrical. In an article in the Dominion Post in March 2005, Robyn Smith (then at Otari Wilton's Bush) said: "pampas leaves have only one conspicuous midrib along the leaf blade, while toetoe have secondary veins between the midrib and leaf edge. Toetoe have white wax on their leaf sheaths, but pampas have none. Dead pampas leaves hang down and form spirals at the base of the plant; toetoe leaves droop, but don't form spirals. Pampas leaves snap easily when tugged, whereas toetoe leaves are hard to break." We still have to deal with the odd pampas in the Park – shelter for rats, mice and possums, also a fire hazard.



Toetoe on Slope Upstream of Bridge 5

Contacts

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Secretary: Fiona Glasse (04) 934 0699, glassefb@paradise.net.nz
Working bees: Dorothy Douglass (04) 472 8558
Wellington City Council (reporting slips and fallen trees across tracks, other problems): (04) 499 4444
Greater Wellington pollution hotline: 0800 496 734
Website: www.trelissickpark.org.nz

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

Tuesday 12 May, 9.30 AM Trelissick Crescent
Sunday 7 June, 1.30 PM Hanover Street

The Gorge Gazette

Compiled by Peter Reimann about every 4 months - all contributions and suggestions gratefully received.

Come and participate in the transformation of Trelissick Park or give us your ideas – all welcome. Thanks to all who contributed