

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

TPG Trelissick Park Group

F & B Royal Forest and Bird Protection Society

GW Greater Wellington Regional Council

Website: www.trelissickpark.org.nz. (includes past Gorge Gazettes) and link to Facebook

NOVEMBER 2015

"Expect the unexpected" the saying goes. Who would have thought that such an amazing story, starting from the second World War in Europe, would emerge from the weedy wastes of Trelissick Park? As reported in the last Gorge Gazette, BNZ volunteers were removing wandering willie beside the Kaiwharawhara Stream and found an old memorial plaque lying on the ground: "Oser Galler Died 14 February 1978". The full story is in the Appendix.

How the plaque got there is an abiding mystery, despite our investigations with Oser's friends, relatives and neighbours.

The Sewer Disaster



The major sewer foundation collapse that resulted in raw sewage pouring into the Korimako Stream below the Waikowhai Street entrance has been fixed. The foundation was right on the stream bank and was undermined by flood water (photo by Bill Hester). Wellington Water also took pre-emptive action to avoid the same thing happening to the foundation upstream.

The work resulted in a great riparian scar. At a recent working bee we planted 55 trees there, most coming from WCC. The photo below, by Liz Nock, shows us transferring the plants across the stream. The pines above provided a wonderful source of mulch to cover the bare ground afterwards.

Eel Massacres

Eva Durrant, taking the dog for a walk, found two dead eels lying on the grass at the car parking area on Te Ahumairangi Hill. They were about 1 metre long. The nearest stream is the Kaiwharawhara – maybe someone caught them there?

Shortly afterwards, WCC's Myfanwy Emeny, while out looking at fish passage issues in the Kaiwharawhara, came across two more dead eels, this time in the stream, just upstream of the debris trap. Both were of similar size and with the same stab wounds on their head.

Then a park visitor reported another eel found in the stream near the same place - this time only the skin and skeleton remaining.

This is very upsetting. It is illegal to take fish from the stream..





Photos by Eva Durrant and Myfanwy Emeny.

Karaka Quandaries



Karaka (*Corynocarpus laevigatus*) populates the forest slopes below Ngaio Gorge Road and is also scattered elsewhere. Although a native, it is non-endemic. We are worried about it spreading and suppressing endemic native species. Underneath each tree lies a profusion of karaka seedlings. Young trees are coming up everywhere.

Kererū love the bright orange berries. But they are poisonous for dogs when they fall to the ground. WCC put warning signs at park entrances this year, because of heavy fruiting. Māori used to process the kernels to an edible form. There could be scope here for harvesting and processing a nut crop¹?

Recently we have indulged in the strangely satisfying task of pulling out the seedlings, thinking that this might encourage native seedlings to take over. We are also cutting out the small karaka trees with trunks up to 3-4 cm in diameter. However, cutting, ring-barking or poisoning many hundreds of larger mature karaka would be a daunting prospect, leaving disastrous ruins of dying and fallen trees.

Perhaps we are stuck with karaka?

Photo by Kahuroa via Wikipedia.

Trelissick Park History

History covering more than two centuries is usually convoluted. We realised that we needed to write a 'potted' version. See www.trelissickpark.org.nz and click on the link at the top of the home page.

Good-News Stories to Finish

Pests and Plants - So far this year 11 rats, 4 hedgehogs and 1 stoat have succumbed to the DOC200 traps. The planting tally is just over 600.

A New 'Spot' Adopted - Warrick Fowlie has adopted part of the forest slope below the upper end of Ngaio Gorge Road and is impressively banishing wandering willie and young karaka. The rubbish by-product is cause for wonder about our species (*Homo sapiens*).

The Kahikatea are Gone - And so ends the story of the kahikatea (*Dacrycarpus dacrydioides*) nurtured over the last three years from surplus seed trays from WCC's Berhampore nursery. The Central Park Group took 20 and the Chartwell Bush Group took 60. Their area in the valley below the Wilton sub-station is a gem in the making, with native seedlings coming up everywhere.

TPG is now a Zoo Attraction - We must hastily add that this is only on two small signs adjoining a walkway at the Zoo's 'Meet the Locals' installation.

Facebook - Bill Hester's updates with photos and videos are in the 'must see' category - on <https://www.Facebook.com/TrelissickParkGroup>.

Reference

1. D Klinac, RA Benton, S Rentoul. Karaka Nuts: A New NZ Nutcrop. MAF SFF Report, December 2009. See: <http://maxa.maf.govt.nz/sff/about-projects/search/L06-068/L06-068-final-technical-report.pdf>

Contacts

Chairman & working bees: Peter Reimann (04) 938 9602, peter.reimann@paradise.net.nz
Wellington City Council (reporting slips and fallen trees across tracks, other problems): (04) 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 website for details.

The Gorge Gazette

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

APPENDIX

THE PLAQUE MYSTERY



Early in September during the BNZ 'Closed for Good Day' beside the Kaiwharawhara Stream up from the Northern Walkway footbridge, an old memorial plaque was found on the ground amongst the wandering willie. There was some remnant adhesive on the back, so in 1978 it must have been attached to something like an old seat.

Curiosity excited, Bill Hester and Peter Reimann, started with writing to addresses of anyone with the surname 'Galler' in the NZ White Pages and delving through cemetery records, electoral rolls, Evening Post death notices, Archives New Zealand records and Jewish community databases.

With the aid of Wikipedia, a fascinating story emerged. Oser (Ojzer) Galler, from Poland, owed his life to the Japanese Vice-Consul in Lithuania, Chiune Sugihara. His duties included reporting to Japan on Soviet and German intentions in the area. In July, 1940, as the Germans advanced on Lithuania, all diplomats were instructed to leave their embassies. The Jews in the area were desperate for passports to leave the country, but obtaining visas proved almost impossible. Eventually, they sought help from Sugihara. At the

end of July, 1940, against the rules from his commanders in Tokyo, Sugihara and his wife spent four long weeks writing transit visas by hand before they left, allowing around 6,000 Jews to escape, many eastwards to Japan via the Trans-Siberian railway. Their destination was a Jewish community in Kobe. There, the Polish ambassador in Tokyo managed to get transit visas for many to other countries, including New Zealand. Oser Galler is on the Sugihara database so was one of the refugees. He arrived here early in 1942, but it is not clear by which route.

He married Nina Schenker, also from Poland. She came to New Zealand after spending the war years hiding in Hungary.

Following an article in 'The Wellingtonian', we had eight responses from as far away as Sydney. The Gallers had a son Dennis. They lived in Melrose, but around 1969 moved to Burnell Avenue, Thorndon. Oser, believed to be in the fashion clothing business, was 70 when he died of a heart attack in the Freyberg Pool. He loved walking and swimming. Dennis was killed only eight weeks later in a road accident at the bottom of the Pukerua Bay hill when a truck lost part of its load. He was aged 24. Nina died in 1991, aged 70.

By a strange coincidence, at the time of our investigations there was an item on the TV1 'Sunday' programme about Dr David Galler saving the life of rugby coach Andrew Strawbridge during the All Black's visit to Samoa. David is a nephew of Oser and was doing some volunteer work in Samoa. A further coincidence was the visit to Wellington of Nina's best friend Lotte Weiss from Sydney, also during our investigations. She was a survivor of Auschwitz and her life featured in the art exhibition at the National Portrait Gallery by her daughter Thea Weiss. It was fascinating talking with Lotte, who is 91.

Although we now know much about the Galler family from friends, relatives, neighbours and records, how the plaque for Oser ended up ignominiously amongst the weeds of Trelissick Park remains a mystery. Did a friend or relative install it in the park because Oser walked there? Perhaps he swam in 'The 18-Footer' - a popular swimming spot upstream of the junction of the Kaiwharawhara and Korimako Streams and the plaque was washed down from there?

The plaque has been tidied up and installed on a seat beside the Northern Walkway, down from the Hanover Street, Wadestown, entrance, in accordance with the wishes of David Galler.



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.