

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

DOC Department of Conservation

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).

SEPTEMBER 2013

Winter was punctuated by large movements of water, air and earth. The former induced a thrill-seeking kayaker into our streams (see photos on our Facebook page). For the other two, read on.....

The Southerly Storm

20 June delivered a night of mayhem. WCC were busy over the following weeks clearing fallen trees from roads and tracks. Some parts of the Park had leaves and branches partially stripped from trees. The surprise was the damage wrought by the southerly in the valleys. But as any sailor would know: beware of gusts in the lee of hills in strong winds. The photos by Bill Hester in the Korimako next to Bridge 4 and by Barry Durrant in the gorge of the Kaiwharawhara Stream show the worst of the fallen. Bill, Barry and WCC ranger Matt Robertson did much of the clearing.



Post-earthquake below Waikowhai Street

The passing throng may have wondered about the caravan, container and Port-a-loo at the Waikowhai Street entrance. The old sewer bridge below looked ready to collapse after the earthquakes. We were worried about the effect of the replacement works on our plantings in the area, but the contractor was really careful and WCC ranger Matt Robertson transplanted a couple of nikau for us.

Rabbit Warfare

The rabbits have chewed some plants at one of our recently planted sites. So the rabbit-chewed plants have been up-rooted and replaced with unpalatable(?) species. The removed plants are undergoing hospital treatment at the home nursery. Protection has been put around the koromiko, cabbage tree and wharangi. None of the 1 m tall and spindly wharangi escaped unscathed. Was this a cooperative rabbit effort of one bending, one eating?

Wanted: more killer wire-haired terriers¹.

Planting Thoughts

The score for the year stands at 1,670. Observant visitors might notice once weedy patches within the bush, sprouting natives. The Wadestown Residents Association and other local volunteers started planting in the 1970s. TPG followed from the early 1990s. Surely well over 100,000 plants must have taken up residence in those 43 years.

Next year we are planning to concentrate on planting "heritage" canopy species within the planted areas. Also, some of the existing "heritage" trees are overwhelmed by faster growing species, so there is a need for thinning and pruning.

Ground cover is sorely lacking in some areas - especially ferns. Those we planted a few years ago have proven fickle, many turning up their toes. However, the bush rice grass we were once kindly given by the Otari Wilton's Bush nursery has been a great success. Seeds harvested from these have allowed more to be planted this year. Grasses and sedges planted in open areas are waxing and waning.

Natural Regeneration to the Fore

Some of our weeded or sprayed areas have burst forth with native seedlings unbidden, particularly near forest margins where bird perch. The message is: "weed, then behold the miracle - but keep weeding!" We have also recently tried spreading seed-rich leaf-mulch in cleared areas – too early to assess the results.

Weedy Proliferations

Anyone wishing to do a study on weed species need look no further than the railway corridor adjoining Trelissick Park. The slopes are clothed in fine examples of blackberry, Japanese honeysuckle, buddleia, wandering willie and Australian wattle, with old man's beard thrown in for good measure. All drift into the Park, thanks to birds and wind.

To encourage natural regeneration, we have highlighted to WCC/GW the forested areas for follow-up spraying of wandering willie. Their programme is also going to concentrate on climbing/smothering weeds, such as old man's beard, Japanese honeysuckle and Asiatic knotweed.

Wandering willie is re-invading the stream banks all the way down the Korimako and Kaiwharawhara valleys, mostly mixed up with pasture grass. Funding for spraying is limited so we will have to deal with this manually. Much of this can be raked into piles. Why go to the gym when this free opportunity for healthy exercise awaits? We find that piling and compressing it on the ground in the shade allows eventual decomposition. Covering with black plastic helps, but seems not necessary, given return visits to stomp on re-growth and further compression. Frost kills some wandering willie in open areas.

The Trelissick Crescent Kowhai Tree

We have had a donation of a kowhai tree 150 mm tall. This came in a box via the funeral director officiating at the funeral of the donor's father. The tree was immaculate, as was the box. Now it resides at the northern end of our recently planted Trelissick Crescent verge opposite No 39 - hopefully frost/rabbit-free. 150 mm is normally too small for planting - vigilance required.

At Last the Rocks are Going

In the June GG we outlined the plan to lower/remove the rocks at the debris trap in two stages, to restore fish passage. Capacity has just completed the first stage. The photos were taken before the job was quite finished. The discolouration was from the rain. We were told that while the rocks were being moved some eels swam up through the debris trap from the pool below. As shown, a lot of silt has now moved from what was the pool above the trap.



Anyone for Kahikatea?

Despite giving some away, 250 kahikatea still reside in Peter Reimann's home nursery. These originated from surplus seedlings in trays from WCC's Berhampore nursery. They may be ready next year.

Rob Kennedy, who has been researching tree-ring development and the ecology of kahikatea, is keen that we consider planting some in clusters. His photo below is of a wild cluster of kahikatea from the northern Wairarapa. He says "how can we plant to emulate ecological processes, what can we do to ensure we grow forest giants, is planting in clusters a possible solution to balance the style of re-vegetation to establish species and seed source back into a space and then ecological processes to arrange themselves?" He thinks that "in the natural floodplain setting the trees have a very high density which

thins down over time.... [and] that they really benefit from some rough and tumble with neighbours which can include leaving spiral trunk scars, buttresses and slower growth. Although not all giant trees show such pronounced spiral scars, some evidence of having been in a high density situation is common".



The BNZ Annual Visit



BNZ staff has a “Closed for Good” day every year. On our “to do” list was an unkempt patch across the Korimako Stream down from Wightwick’s Field. No longer does it look unkempt and in three or four years it will look fantastic. They worked like slaves and then we noticed the stream rising quickly after the onset of rain. Not wishing to spend the night trapped, we put in our 75 plants with a gathering sense of urgency.

History of Trelissick Park Group

The Onslow Historical Society has asked us to write a history of the Group for their 2014 edition of “The Onslow Historian”. This will include some historical background prior to the formation of the Group in 1991. Peter Reimann has started, aiming to complete a draft for the end of the year, while Judy Siers is still in Wellington. She will do the review and initiate publication. Frances Lee has a collection of photographs showing work in the 1990s and early 2000s. Some of this work, involving extensive stream bank gabion building, use of heavy machinery in the streams, old factory demolition in the lower valley, helicopters removing old sewer pipes, spraying blackberry from aloft and lifting bundles of plants to remote places, is mildly “jaw-dropping”.

Results of the Rat Study

Tracy Poole and her University of Victoria team have published the findings of their study of rat behaviour². Rats are hoarding the Brodifocoum bait throughout their territory. This means more bait is put out than necessary - a waste, and bad for the environment. As a result, a trial of immovable block bait is proposed. The study also indicated that Norway rats had difficulty accessing some bait stations. They are less agile than ship rats. There are plenty of sloping branches and tree trunks to act as rude ramps for our Norway friends (above free-range dog level).

This year trap catches so far have declined to 5 rats, 1 stoat and 1 hedgehog. We know that rats migrate into the Park and Tracy's study shows a thriving rat population. Is trap-wisdom permeating, or is food plentiful this year? Someone suggested that Darwin-ism could be in action: the dumb ones get caught, leaving the more intelligent to breed.

What Else?

Frances Lee and Peter Reimann have updated our Five-Year Plan, helped by WCC review - see our website.

TPG lodged a submission on WCC's "Our Capital Spaces" advocating for more budget for "Gardens, Beaches and Green Open Spaces" in annual and long-term plans.

Last year we visited the Ngaio School arboretum³. The magnificent old kaikawaka, totara, kauri and cabbage trees were suffering from compaction of playful feet around the root areas. The idea was to obviate this by inserting low-growing plants, sourced from WCC. The big planting day arrived late in August. WCC ranger Matt Robertson and Peter Reimann helped dig the holes beforehand, fortunately without too much root damage.

Water Sensitive Urban Design at Last

We have been advocating for reduction of stormwater run-off and pollution/sedimentation for years^{4,5}. Plaudits to Nicci Wood of WCC for produced a document⁶ that includes provisions such as green roofs/walls, rainwater tanks, permeable paving, rain gardens, soak pits, vegetative cover and detention ponds.

Our submission on Plan Change 77 for the Curtis Street business area advocated incorporation of "green" measures of that sort. We are disappointed that the Officer's Report did not accept mandating these, on the ground that they "would unfairly restrict development on site and would create a level of compliance that is not required in other parts of the city."

References

1. GG, July 2012.
2. GG, June 2013.
3. GG, December 2012.
4. GG August 2007.
5. GG April 2011.
6. http://wellington.govt.nz/have-your-say/public-input/public-inputs/feedback/open/water-sensitive-urban-design-guide?sc_camp=0FE141605EA84049919BA5F6854B5D8E&ec_as=C6E41821E0E74961B57CFD07FC0F7F50%0A

Contacts

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Working bees: Peter Reimann (04) 938 9602
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 web-site for updates.

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