

Gorge Gazette

News about Trelissick Park, the Ngaio Gorge and Streams

APRIL 2008

Autumn in New Zealand after the advent of rain is always a good time: the days are cooler, the air fresher, the more slanting light is beautiful and the land looks in good heart. This is how Trelissick Park is at the moment. But don't look too closely or weeds will come into focus to dash these sylvan musings.

People

Paulo Fuiono of Wellington City Council (WCC) Parks and Gardens has been a "weekend Ranger" while working in Operations, and has become a Ranger full time with Stu Bailey's temporary switch to a role elsewhere in Parks and Gardens. Trelissick Park is in Paulo's ambit and our group is grateful for his assistance along with that of Steven Peters, Senior Parks Ranger.

The team in WCC Parks and Gardens have been doing great work in arranging the map boards at all entrances, cautionary and private land signs for the traverse track below Ngaio Gorge Road, the fish passage sign, a portable whiteboard to direct volunteers to working bee sites, provision of working bee leaflets, mulch supplies, bulk collection of rubbish from the Park and associated supply of 40 litre bags. Stu Bailey has a story to tell about his mutinous heavily laden wheelbarrow for the sign posts.

"Sanctuary to the Sea" Track

Many thanks to Councillor Andy Foster for arranging a long-awaited meeting with Ontrack on 14 April, attended also by Dave Halliday of WCC and Malcolm McDonald. This was to see how to cross the railway below Bowen Hospital on the proposed link track between Otari Wilton's Bush and Trelissick Park. A level crossing would need expensive automatic closing arms, so it looks like a prefabricated tunnel will go under the tracks by excavating a trench and dropping the tunnel in and covering it.

The next step for Dave Halliday is design and costing of the adjacent track, tunnel and any fencing, then a contract for supply and installation to fit in with Ontrack's railway upgrading work. The rest of the track building will follow.

Kaiwharawhara Estuary

As a participant in "Project Kaiwharawhara", which concerns the care of the whole catchment, our Group has long taken an active interest in the Kaiwharawhara Stream estuary, at the northern end of the ferry terminal vehicle marshalling area. This will also be the end-point of the "Sanctuary to the Sea" walk. About four years ago Greater Wellington Regional Council (GWRC) organised planting and beautification of this area.

Early in March, as part of Seaweek celebrations, 9 volunteers collected 45 bags of rubbish, plus miscellaneous loose items from this area. Participants were disgusted. Malcolm McDonald initiated rumblings through Centreport, Toll NZ and GWRC, with the active involvement of WCC Councillor Celia Wade-Brown. The upshot is that Centreport and Toll NZ are to proceed cooperatively with remedial action, but progress has so far been slow.

Pest Weeds

Our bête noire has long been weeds in the rail corridor next to Trelissick Park. Here in profusion lie vast tracts of blackberry, Buddelia, Australian wattle and Japanese honeysuckle, all spreading seed into the Park. During discussion with Ontrack, they said they are happy to extend the license to occupy (covering the two revegetation sites by the Korimako Stream) and to allow clearing/planting, subject to conditions about working near the railway track, land stability and suitable revegetation species planted near the track. So we will be doing a survey of the Ontrack land to establish priority areas for weed control and then revegetation for licensing purposes.

The spraying for Tradescantia (wandering willy) last year from joint Greater GWRC/WCC funding achieved an excellent kill in most treated places. It is wonderful to see this scourge vanishing so effectively. Dogs must also be pleased – Tradescantia is an irritant to some. Follow-up spraying is

happening now, together with some eradication of Japanese honeysuckle on the slopes opposite the Kaiwharawhara Stream tunnel exit.

Possums and Rats

Peter Reimann has surveyed the locations of all possum bait stations in the Park and given a marked up map to GWRC. He will be taking over periodic refilling. It has been suggested that rats might be a greater problem at the moment.

Errant and Strange Occurrences

The mystery of the rock dam across the Korimako has finally been solved! Frustration was mounting as each time we demolished the dam it would quickly reappear. Caught in the act, it emerged that this was to provide a pool of optimum depth for dog bathing. The dog-owners were later observed building another dam in a less visible place and afterward loading the dog onto a 4-wheel drive vehicle with a retractable platform. Full marks to our "super-sleuth"! He achieved another coup by catching on camera someone stealing our mulch supply on Trelissick Crescent. The thief agreed with WCC to replace the mulch.

The war with mountain bikers continues to simmer. Reasoning and reference to the "no biking" signs achieves very little, it seems. We have all got our stories of confronting cyclists and being told to get lost. The trouble is, it is either a more pleasant and safer way of commuting to the city than by road (as explained by one cyclist), or a great way to spend a lunch time out of the city office.

In the area of "the crossroads" (on the Ngaio side of the bridge below Hanover Street) and on the lower part of the traverse track below Ngaio Gorge Road, supplejack and passionflower vines had been cut. The cut vines were left hanging in the trees. These are valuable natives and should not be cut. For example, passionflower provides food for birds. Could this be our mountain biking friends, or just someone thinking they were being helpful?

Tree Planting

This year we have at least 40 areas for planting with about 2,300 trees. These will come from the WCC allocation of 500, home nurseries, GWRC "Take Care" funding, donations from St Luke's Wadestown and from the "Fly and Plant" carbon offsetting scheme. The species have to suit conditions ranging from full shade to full sun, barren/windy to sheltered/streamside, steep/rocky to flat/alluvial, frost free to frost prone. Adding to this complexity are some uncertainties with sourcing and timing. So far we have lodged our requests and enquiries and have about 700 ready at 51 Heke Street. We will now start distributing these to the adopt-a-spot people.

Carolyn Theiler and Marilyn Hester have already started enhancing their streamside spot between the 2nd and 3rd bridges below Wightwick's Field with new plants, as has Peter Reimann within the gorse below Trelissick Crescent.

Volunteer Groups and Visits

Many thanks to the volunteer groups who have worked in the Park recently. Such willing help makes an enormous difference – the younger generation continues to impress!

ANZ National – plant releasing by the old powder magazine building

United World Colleges in NZ and Team Xtreme – streamside plant releasing at railway reveg. site 2

Global Volunteers – plant releasing at railway reveg site 1.

We are grateful for Volunteer Wellington's referral to us of some of these groups.

We also took people from Wadestown Presbyterian Church and Ngaio Union Church for a guided tour of parts of the Park after a picnic lunch in the shelter of the powder magazine site.

Adopt-a-Spot

Peter Reimann has taken over as adopt-a-spot coordinator from Harry Barton, who has a new full-time job, leaving him little spare time. He also no longer has a car.

Marilyn Hester and Carolyn Theiler from our Group are happy to help on the adopt-a-spot front, with any implementation problems.

Welcome to George Symmes and Lize Dela-Ruelle. George, with his son Andrew, have already released and infill planted the stream-side spot just upstream of the 2nd small bridge below Wightwick's Field. They have also taken a streamside spot downstream of Wightwick's Field and cut much of the fallen willow there, prior to planting. Lize has taken the area east and south of Betty Northmore's seat

by the stream below Hanover Street. A group of about 8 from ACC will be adopting a streamside spot bordering the Northern Walkway, on the way up from the bridge below Hanover Street.

Carolyn Theiler's several hundred lemonwood seedlings have been shared with George Symmes, Susan Weekes (Ngaio Scouts) and Peter Reimann for potting and planting next year.

Stormwater

After a site inspection with WCC and Capacity, remedial work is soon to start on the eroded gulch below the Hanover Street entrance.

St Luke's Wadestown

We are very grateful for a further donation from St Luke's Wadestown, this time for \$397. The Park needs more heritage trees which we hope to purchase from this donation (eg Totara, Matai, Miro, Kahikatea, Rimu, Northern rata, Tawa).

Martin Hunt

We were greatly saddened by the sudden death recently of Martin Hunt, aged 46, at home. Martin was a stalwart at Trelissick Park Group working bees and always provided a cheerful and enthusiastic presence, with a quiet sense of humour. He will be sorely missed.

Just before he died, he was organising a group from St Luke's Wadestown to adopt a spot in the Park. It is now proposed that the trees to be purchased from the earlier St Luke's donation for the Hanover Street entrance area be planted there by that group in his memory. In a few years time, it is hoped that attractive plantings at this adopted spot will be a fitting memorial to Martin.

Things Botanical

We have several Miro to plant this year. Long after we have all departed, these will grow to 25 metres, with 1 metre trunks. A fine example of a young miro we planted about 7 years ago is on the left of the track going down from Wightwick's Field. Has anyone seen a mature Miro in the Park? There is



sometimes confusion between Miro and Matai, as both have hammer-marked bark, but the Matai marks are redder and more pronounced (there is a wonderful Matai at the "crossroads" as the Northern Walkway ascends towards Ngaio after crossing the bridge below Hanover Street). The young foliage of the Miro is little different from that of the adult, with sickle-shaped leaves, green underneath. The young Matai is scrawny and has brown/green half-dead looking foliage. Mature Matai leaves are similar to the Miro, but straight and white underneath. Miro fruit,

much prized by wood pigeons, is fleshy bright red. Matai fruit is black.

Miro likes to be planted in semi-shaded areas with good soil.

Tradescantia (wandering willy) forms dense mats that smother native plants. It prefers shady, moist areas. The white flowers do not produce seeds in New Zealand. It spreads rapidly from easily broken stem fragments that form roots from nodes. It is possible to remove Tradescantia in small areas manually, often by rolling it up like a carpet. However it is important to scrape the ground thoroughly to remove all the broken bits of stem, often just below the surface – a painstaking operation. Otherwise, each broken bit will "take" with enthusiasm. Tradescantia can be piled unobtrusively under black plastic, but it is better to bag all this and remove to a landfill (we can arrange for roadside collection). Follow-up removal of minor re-growth is usually necessary every few years. Native seedlings appear quickly, to take over. WCC/GWRC have an effective spray recipe. Frost is the only other killer.

Lastly: a caution about the use of Toetoe in restoration areas. This is a fantastic “bomb-proof” restoration plant for a variety of situations and is very useful to establish a fast-growing, dense vegetation cover to out-compete weeds. When in flower, it looks marvellous. However, both Deidre Burke and Peter Reimann are finding that it soon becomes a struggle for humans to traverse and it swamps other slower growing plantings.



At left is a little sample of Tradescantia.

Contacts

Secretary: Malcolm McDonald (04) 479 5350, msmcdonald@paradise.net.nz
(35A Trelissick Crescent, Ngaio, Wellington 6035)

Working bees: Dorothy Douglass (04) 472 8558

Chairman & Adopt-a-Spot: Peter Reimann (04) 938 9602, sheila.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 (Check with Dorothy before coming – changes may occur)

Sunday 4 May, 1.30 PM Trelissick Crescent

Tuesday 13 May, 9.30 AM Trelissick Crescent

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