

# 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  
 GW Greater Wellington Regional Council  
 DoC Department of Conservation  
 TPG Trelissick Park Group  
 NPA Ngaio Progressive Association

### DECEMBER 2010

We are on the horns of a dilemma. To water or not to water? The leaf-wetting drizzle of late hardly counts.

Mollycoddle and the roots become sub-surface, expectant of more water. Robyn Smith of GW is inclined towards planting early in the season and then leaving the plants alone. This allows development of a good rooting system so that the roots can seek moisture further down.

Well, there was a lot of early planting this year.....

### Community Partnerships Encore Award

TPG was joint winner with the Rimutaka Forest Park Trust. Many thanks to co-hosts DoC, GW and the Wellington Hawke's Bay Conservation Board. Thanks also to David Grace and Marilyn Hester for their work on the application and escorting the adjudicators, and to all the volunteers, groups and organisations who made the award possible.

### Riches from Heaven

It is unprecedented that \$1,000 from a mystery donor falls from the sky into our lap.

One idea is to use some of it to produce a simple A5 sheet or some cards to aid our quest for more volunteers when we talk to people walking in the park. Also, our supply of park brochures is diminishing.

So, heartfelt thanks to our mystery donor.

### People and Planting

It was a delight to host a group of 4 - 5 year olds and staff from Te Puna Reo O Nga Kakano from Thorndon for planting at their new spot on the ridge just above bridge 4 on the Ngaio side. Afterwards - great excitement about the stream chattering over the rocks on the warm, sunny day! The right hand photo shows organiser Amanda Dobson with child, probably not much older than the miro tree he helped plant.



St Benedict's School "Enviro Group" and parents re-visited, to weed and remove wandering willie in the lower valley. Thanks, Rachel Davis, for your support and best wishes for your new ventures.





The Sathya Sai Organisation resumed work on their spot across the stream below the debris trap for weeding. Their trees continue to flourish, but some earlier planting has fallen victim to erosion of the stream bank (see photo).

David Grace has adopted the ghastly slope of railway land above the powder magazine building ruin. This slope was used to gain access by heavy machinery for the Ontrack tunnel widening two years ago and was then replanted with trees by Ontrack. It's astonishing anything survived in that steep excavated gravel.

Judy Paulin and her partner have been tending their planting above the streamside memorial

seat below Hanover Street. Trevor Mowbray replaced some of his spray damaged plants by bridge 3.

The Tararua Tramping Club group have been working on their spot downstream from bridge 2 - thank you Brenda Neill, Lois Hope, Margaret Foden and Barbara Ogilvie.

Working bees have finished for the year, but there is no shortage of work in the face of bolting weeds.....Marilyn and Bill Hester and Peter Reimann at the "coalface".

### **The Seats of Trelissick Park**

Trelissick Park has seats in abundance - 16 all told (including the 2 bench seats on Ngaio Gorge Road, and picnic table seats). However, with tree growth and stream bank erosion, some are hidden or no longer in the best place.

In the previous Gorge Gazette we spoke of having a seat at the rear of the grassed area between bridges 4 and 5 where it is "warmed by winter sunshine". This has podocarps planted nearby, in memory of Wadestown volunteer, Martin Hunt.

Donations for this seat have been received from local community members, organisations and volunteers. Frances Lee has ordered the seat from WCC. It should be installed early next year. There are thoughts of an unveiling ceremony to thank those who so generously contributed.

### **The Day the Earth Moved in the Gorge**



Last August, Frances Lee advised that the track had been washed out at the sewer tunnel entrance downstream of bridge 6. Very odd. A week later, a local resident told of an enormous slip in the gorge. This was at the tunnel exit of the Kaiwharawhara stream, where it meets the Korimako stream (see photo).

Inspection showed debris from the slip had gone right up the opposite bank. This formed a dam across the Korimako stream. Flowing in spate after a downpour, the entire Korimako must have surged into the sewer tunnel opposite, then down the sewer system to exit at the next tunnel entrance downstream of bridge 6. This



is what caused the track washout. Flattened grass growing just inside the sewer tunnel was further evidence of the power of this "gusher".

The fish are enjoying more straightforward passage at the Kaiwharawhara tunnel exit, compared with the man-made fish ramp, now buried. And there is a long, deep pool upstream of the now-breached slip debris dam.

Capacity Infrastructure Services Ltd inspected the sewer tunnels, but nothing was amiss.

### Trees from Honda and WCC for 2011

We are again grateful to the Honda Treefund for 470 plants, coming via GW. The 25% flax, 25% toetoe and 50% fast growing "reveg." species will replace the cut and sprayed blackberry across the stream between bridges 3 and 4.

The 500 WCC annual plant allocation will be largely used for the gorse-cleared slopes below Trelissick Crescent - again fast growing "reveg." species.

### Swamp Flax (Harakeke)

Over the years we have planted thousands of swamp flax (*Phormium tenax*). One could become very



lyrical about flax - our "wonder" plant, with those magnificent bird-attracting flowers (see photo).

But some flax in the park have what appears to be yellow-leaf disease. According to the Landcare Research website<sup>1</sup>: "Yellow-leaf is the most serious disease of harakeke, and is caused by a phytoplasma, a specialised bacterium, transmitted by the native flax plant hopper, *Oliarus atkinsoni*. It occurs mainly in the North Island, and is unlikely to be found in the north of the South Island.

"Yellow-leaf disease is characterised by abnormal yellowing of the leaves, stunted

growth and premature flowering (see photo by Landcare Research). The rhizome rots, and leaves collapse. In a normal, healthy fan, one or two outer leaves yellow and die off as they age, but with yellow leaf disease the dying back is much more pronounced. The affected leaves are actually more orange than yellow. There is a big accumulation of recently dead leaves about the base of the fan.



"The disease can take a few months or years to progress and yellowing is much worse in the period of active growth. As those leaves fall, younger greener leaves are left, which can give the appearance of recovery.

"In a pā harakeke, a bush that is suffering from yellow-leaf should be dug up and burnt, so that it can no longer act as a source of infection."

The website details other diseases, but the above description seems to fit. Any other thoughts?

## **Pest Control**

Spraying wandering willie is extending to cliff faces, using abseil ropes. More Japanese honeysuckle is going. David Calcinai is under contract to GW (Megan Banks) and WCC (Justin McCarthy). Meanwhile, Mark McAlpine has been spraying small patches of wandering willie and montbretia under GW's "Take Care" funding.

Rats are still eating from the bait stations. Also, in just over two years our traps have caught 53 rats/mustelids and 5 hedgehogs - all serviced by Barry Durrant, Bill Hester and Peter Reimann, supported by Bruce Brewer from GW and Justin McCarthy from WCC.

A night shoot of rabbits could happen at last, around Christmas time, we are told. Robyn Smith of GW says rabbits hate long grass - a case for weeding only around the stem area of plants attractive to them (eg karamu, kowhai, lancewood, cabbage tree and koromiko).

## **Peripherals**

The Kaiwharawhara stream flows into the harbour just north of the Interislander vehicle marshalling area. It forms part of the ecological corridor from the harbour to the hinterland, via Trelissick Park. The study by Boffa Miskell is at last under way to examine issues, opportunities and possible enhancement plans in connection with the estuary area. Frances Lee has spent hours steering adroitly through some rough waters, while keeping the many parties updated and onside.

The other major "peripheral" is the Ngaio Gorge earthquake strengthening work - Scott Kirkland of WCC to the fore. A legacy of weed trees is left in some of the work areas. Discussions are ongoing with WCC about removal and suitable restoration planting through the wire mesh that covers some of the steep slopes (thank you Julia Williams of NPA and Marilyn Hester for ideas).

Road works, railway and sewer upgrades, garden escapes, nearby housing developments affecting stormwater.....how we envy other parks not beset by such interferences!

## **More Jobs**

Thanks to WCC Ranger Joby Mills for the two dog litter bins at the lower entrances, cutting errant trees, arranging rubbish removal.....the list goes on. And Sam Lister of Capacity always shows a turn of speed emptying the Kaiwharawhara stream debris trap, when requested - some of the logs caught are enormous.

## **Reality - A New Form of Recruiting?**

For some years, we have sought new blood to run our group. Most members belong to the "Gold Card" brigade. The reality is that soon, many of us will be "gone" (in one way or another).

So, new people, where are you? Those on the verge of retirement or part-time employed. Talent abounds in Wellington - reliable people with gumption, energy and passion. Working with the group is really rewarding - a fantastic learning experience.

## **References**

1. [www.landcareresearch.co.nz/research/biosystematics/plants/harakeke/pa/pests.asp](http://www.landcareresearch.co.nz/research/biosystematics/plants/harakeke/pa/pests.asp)

## **Contacts**

Chairman & Adopt-a-Spot: Peter Reimann (04) 938 9602, [peter.reimann@paradise.net.nz](mailto:peter.reimann@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](http://www.trelissickpark.org.nz)

**Working Bees** - Check with Dorothy before coming – changes may occur

Sunday 6 February, 1.30 PM Ngaio Gorge Road

Tuesday 15 February, 9.30 AM Ngaio Gorge Road

## **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.***

***Happy Christmas and enjoy a relaxing and stimulating break.***

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