

Gorge Gazette

News about Trelissick Park, the Ngaio Gorge and Streams

(Footbridges over the stream are numbered from 1 – 6 going downstream.)

Abbreviations:

WCC Wellington City Council

GW Greater Wellington Regional Council

TPG Trelissick Park Group

F & B Forest and Bird Protection Society

Website www.trelissickpark.org.nz (includes past Gorge Gazettes and Park map)

Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/TrelissickParkGroup>

DECEMBER 2019

It Started with Copper

Ah! The English countryside! Trelissick Garden is near Truro, Cornwall and overlooks the south coast estuary known as Carrick Roads.

The garden is now with the National Trust but was owned and developed by the Daniell family, which made its fortune in the 18th century Cornish copper mining industry.



Captain Daniell and his family sailed to Wellington in 1845 and purchased 100 acres from Wakefield's New Zealand Company. The house was built on what was known as 'the Porirua Road' and he nostalgically named the property 'Trelissick'.

The creation of the 'Ngaio Gorge Reserve' in 1921, as a result of persistent lobbying by the Wellington Tree Planting and Scenery Preservation Society, saved some of the valley from the grim reaper. The reserve became Trelissick Park. Captain Daniell's farm must have included some of the area around Trelissick Crescent.¹

The New Access from Oban Street

Bated breath is occurring. Frame Group Ltd is working on design of the Kaiwharawhara Stream footbridge. WCC's Tim Harkness has three potential building contractors lined up. The consents are to come. We were elated to receive a grant of \$20,000 from Transpower. So now we have enough funds.

WCC have discussed access arrangements with the affected property owners and track investigations are underway.

Completion celebrations in mid-2020?

On a Wave

What could be better than a happy bunch of toiling volunteers, exuding initiative? Aside from our bi-monthly working bees, Conservation Volunteers recently came twice, followed by Ngaio Brownies, MBIE Legal and a large contingent of Scouts/cubs. All is revealed on our Facebook page. Khandallah/Northland Cubs, Raroa Intermediate, Treasury and Victoria University are coming later in December. The adopt a spot people continue (see Appendix of our previous newsletter). 1,230 plants have gone to ground this year.

WCC's contractor, Kaitiaki o Ngahere has re-sprayed surviving tradescantia on the lower slopes below Hanover Street.

Meanwhile, rats are delighted with the bountiful early summer, evidenced by trap catches and voracious appetite for block bait. Bill Hester's team is busy. WCC's Henk Louw has discussed procedures and is updating the map.

Then there are the hedgehogs, stoats, mice and rabbits...

Thirteen Years Later

In 2006, Kate Mackenzie recruited Jack Stanton to adopt a spot by bridge 4. He returned recently and hardly recognised it: "the canopy has grown together, suppressing the grass and weeds. Climbed up the rocky dry ridge south of the bridge and located the tōtara and mataī that I had tucked in under the broom. They are now more than shoulder high and thriving. Interestingly the grassy hillside has become more bare, almost a scree slope under the now continuous canopy. Creeping ferns are colonising the slope. The tawa I grew from seed has got established around by the seat. So nice to see the years progress." However, his rātā was disappointing.

Jack says: "That's our son Guy in the back-pack November 2006 ... almost a year old. Now he is a 6ft college boy! He's grown faster than the rātā and about as fast as a tōtara."



An Untapped Resource

Onion-weed always comes to the fore in spring and the white flowers were putting on a show. The flowers and fronds make a delicious spicy addition to salads and the bulbs rival garlic. Highly recommended.



The Rangiora Splurge

Rangiora (*Brachyglottis repanda*) was full of the joys of life this year.

It has the largest leaves of all the 'tree daisies' - up to 25 cm long and 20 cm wide. It can grow up to 7 m tall and inhabits the forest margins in the Park.

"The underside of the soft leaf is clad in smooth white hairs. The leaves were used as poultices by the Māori and as a toilet paper substitute by early settlers - hence its alternative name of bushman's friend".²

"The waxy upper surface protects the leaf from damage and seals in moisture but still lets in light. Impervious to water, it precludes having stomata on the top of the leaf so they are on the under-surface amongst the hairs. There they can be open to admit air but lose little water in their shady, hairy shelter".³



The Fern Miracle

Julie Coulson kindly gave us two ferns from her garden near Otari Wilton's Bush. One was a large clump, devoid of life. It sat in a pot for a couple of months and did nothing. Then suddenly the fronds unfurled and grew to one metre in two weeks! It now resides between bridges 2 and 3 - see photos. Just right for filling that bereft forest floor?



It appears to be a male fern (*Dryopteris filix-mas*) - an interloper. Well, Trelissick Park is 'good at weeds'. It is listed in our 'Vascular Adventive Plant List' on the website, so is not alone. Andrew Crowe says: "While not native to this country, male fern is included ... because it is so common in the wild that it could easily be thought to be a native fern"⁴. If purists confirm the identity and really want it pulled out, we will. The other fern is nearby.

The Larvae Riders



During the visit to the Park of MBIE Legal we found a team from GW doing a fish survey (see photo of 14th November on our Facebook page). One of the fish was a kōaro - noted for its climbing feats. It has some low-slung fins - 'pseudo legs' (photo by NIWA), so no problems with all the barriers in our catchment.

We are hopeful that our kōaro will aid the spread of fresh-water mussels or kākahi throughout the catchment. Their larvae attach to a host fish (most commonly kōaro) and once carried upstream they drop off into soft, sandy sediments of streams and lakes.

A single mussel can filter around one litre of water per hour, removing fine organic particles and sediment and creating beds



of stable habitat to benefit other freshwater life. "...dense mussel populations can process the whole volume of a shallow lake in a matter of days." They can live up to 50 years or more⁵ (photo by NIWA).

Zealandia is keen on mussels for their reservoirs.

Pining for Healthy Urban Streams

The Ministry for the Environment produced a discussion document 'Action for Healthy Waterways' and the associated 'Draft National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management'. Sorely beset with stream problems, we took the plunge, looking for more action on fast stormwater run-off, sedimentation, pollution, monitoring and fish passage. We are forever harping on about these. However, our submission, on the 'Current Issues' page of our website, is but a mere speck in the firmament. The 17,500 received will be reviewed by an Advisory Panel (our sympathies). Ministers are expected to have the regulations in force by mid-2020.

A Bit of Christmas Colour



This is our large mataī trunk, rain-drenched. It resides at "The Crossroads" next to the Northern Walkway down from Trelissick Crescent towards bridge 6. It shares the area with an enormous tōtara and an unusually large kānuka beyond.

Growing Pains

It is not hard to imagine a future influx of climate change refugees from afflicted countries.

On top of that, WCC's Chief City Planner, in an article in The Dominion Post of 16th November, expressed concern about a shortfall of housing. He said "Do we protect all of our greenfield and natural areas?"

To this end, WCC has embarked on consultation on a 2020 District Plan review. One of the steps is to work with ecologists and landscape specialists identifying important areas of native bush around the city. At the last TPG meeting, WCC's Dr Onur Oktem and Joshua Patterson elaborated and we raised concerns about weeds and downstream effects of developments.

Once more onto the soap-box to protect our precious catchment...

Thanks and season's greetings to all our volunteers, supporters and staff from WCC and GW.

References

1. Onslow Historical Society Inc. *The History of Trelissick Park Group 1991-2013 Part 1*.
2. <https://teara.govt.nz/en/photograph/13866/rangiora-leaves>.
3. Anne Graeme. *The Lives of Leaves*. F & B magazine, November 2003.
4. Andrew Crowe. *Which Native Fern*. Penguin Books.
5. <https://rarespecies.nzfoa.org.nz/species/freshwater-mussel/>
<https://sciblogs.co.nz/waiology/2014/12/05/the-secret-lives-of-freshwater-mussels/>.

Working Bees

See website 'Projects' page for dates, locations and health and safety information.

Contacts

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WCC (reporting problems): (04) 499 4444

GW pollution hotline: 0800 496 734

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.