

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

GG Gorge Gazette

DOC Department of Conservation

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

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

JUNE 2013

Drama in the Valley

Monday 6 May will long be etched in our memory. Rain came with a vengeance. The tranquil Korimako Stream was a raging torrent – see Bill Hester's <http://youtu.be/zHGvL4GFF3c>, The stream gouged part of the track downstream of Wightwick's Field. WCC closed the track, pending repairs. Proceed at your own risk. Impeccable timing for the lower Kaiwharawhara - Capacity had just restored the debris trap to allow passage of native fish. The water rose by 2 metres, overtopping the vertical iron rails - with an aftermath mayhem of tree trunks, branches and strewn boulders.

The Planting Scene



The planting score is approaching 1,000. Many were from home nurseries of Peter Reimann and Dot and Dave Catchpole, and grasses propagated by Marilyn Hester. Over 1m³ of potting mix from WCC landfill was gratefully received. Late in May, 500 plants came from WCC's Berhampore nursery.

The area bordering the Waikowhai Street entrance is vastly improved, thanks to many volunteer visits and Community Action Wellington. WCC provided a huge pile of mulch. Infill planting is finished on the slope across the stream opposite the magazine building, and is ongoing on the ex-gorse slopes below Trelissick Crescent.



A team of six from Web development company Springload helped us weed, plant and mulch a 50 m² spot opposite No.39 Trelissick Crescent, all in a couple of hours - see photo. Alan Doak from Springload also took some photos - see our Facebook page.

St Benedict's School came to plant by bridge 6 and in the forested slopes below Hanover St. In the photo, by teacher Fiona Barnett, a kanono (*Coprosma grandifolia*) is being identified. Six working bee stalwarts later added 76 trees, in drenching rain, water cascading down the slopes.

Marilyn Hester's planting of grasses downstream of Wightwick's Field will look a sight in a couple of years.

Animal Behaviour Monitoring Finished

Tracy Poole and her Victoria University team have just finished their night-vision motion-sensitive video and tracking tunnel monitoring of 10 bait stations for their study. Results are to follow, but we do know there were a lot of rats, some mice and one cat. Some thrushes and blackbirds were taking Brodifocoum bait from one of the stations.

Woe Turned to Advantage

Bill Hester, Jim Gifkins and his son rescued a useful new scaffold plank and railway sleeper, ensnared in the flooded Korimako. Floaters from Khandallah?

Backyard weed escapes and birds obsessed by berries on exotics - the joys of an urban park. Several people identified the mystery tree in the last GG as hawthorn (*Crataegus sp.*) - probably *C. monogyna*, commonly used here as hedgerow. There are many other species and cultivars. After felling this tree, Peter Reimann fashioned a branch to replace a broken grubber handle, raising user-comfort to a new level.

A scourge of this park is Australian wattle, by courtesy of our railway friends. The 2002-vintage spatula in the photo, used and abused in the kitchen almost every evening since, is from such a tree. The railway corridor is abundant in wattle. Here assuredly lies an opportunity for a niche export industry, supplying spatulas to the world.

The last "woe" is onion weed. Trials show that purchase of spring onion, to add culinary zest, is no longer necessary. Onion weed is fine, and can be prepared as for spring onion.

More, in the 'Useful' Vein

In the last GG we said rabbits love koromiko (*Veronica stricta*) - "so do we (but not to eat)". However, Steve Mackle advises that it "can be used as a general tonic or for 'upset' stomach. It's a bit peppery, but not bad". He also adds: "kawakawa (*Macropiper excelsum*) can be used as a tea or poultice. My kids love the tea - mainly the fact that they just pick it from the section and make it, I think." However, please do not forage on the natives of our Park.

The Younger Generation to the Fore

Crofton Downs School teacher Louise Gusterson has taken a large group of 8 - 10 year-olds in stages down the Kaiwharawhara catchment from Zealandia, through Otari-Wilton's Bush and finally through Trelissick Park to the lower entrance. This was to study the effects of an urban environment on the landscape, bush and streams. Trelissick Park, of course, is long-suffering with interferences from farming, sawmilling, road/railway/sewer construction/upgrades, slips, rubbish, weeds, stormwater damage, flooding, pollution, sedimentation.....all outlined on a preparatory Saturday visit. Geography lessons were not so interesting nearly 70 years ago!

Coincidentally, more on stormwater was traversed at a "Design Camp" of 16-18 year-olds during Queen's Birthday weekend at Massey University. The aim was to increase the public's understanding of stormwater management, and the ways in which which the public can minimise the contamination of stormwater. Another chance for a grim litany on Trelissick Park stream problems (see more on this in the Appendix).

Support for the Morgan Foundation

The Trelissick Park Group is now supporting the Morgan Foundation in a campaign to 'Enhance the Halo' and make Wellington "NZ's Natural Capital" – restoring the dawn chorus and wings over all of Wellington. We now feature on their website and are providing periodic text for their blog – see <http://halo.org.nz>.

Kaiwharawhara Stream Debris Trap Upgrade

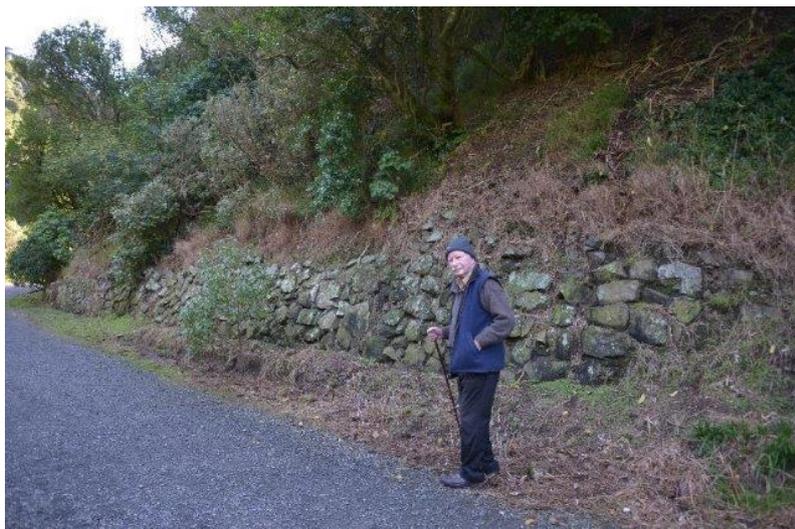
At a site meeting on 11 June between WCC, GW, Capacity, DOC and ourselves, it was decided to lower the rocks at the debris trap in 2 stages over the next few months to allow fish passage. Much of the gravel deposited in the pools upstream will be washed down towards the harbour, hence the cautious two-stage approach, with checking for any effects from any gravel build-up in the tunnel areas and estuary.

Permanent Repair for Korimako Stream Track Gouge below Wightwick's Field

WCC is waiting for a scope of work from engineers for repair. This may include a rock gabion. It will be about 3 months before this work is completed.



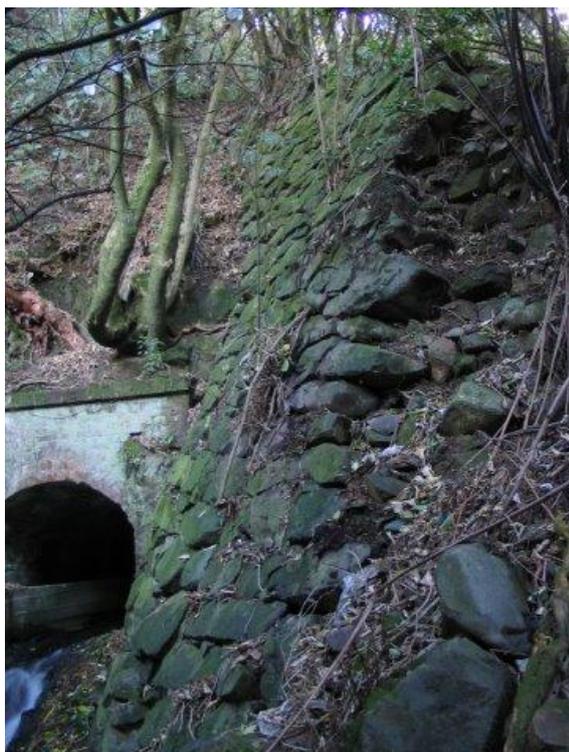
Historic Walls



As part of her advocacy for preservation of old dry rock walls, Frances Lee advises that the three sections of the historic wall at the lower entrance to the Park (from Kaiwharawhara Road) are being restored by a 'dry rock waller'. The work done so far provides a good idea of the skills required, as well as allowing a greater public awareness of this historic item. The work is being funded by WCC. It is assumed that the wall was built at the same time as the two magazine buildings in the 1880s as part of the roadway from the wharf at Kaiwharawhara, where the gunpowder was initially delivered by boat for safekeeping in the valley. The two photos were taken by Chris Moore - Olaf John in the foreground.



Over the years, stones have dislodged and fallen. Sometimes trees and other vegetation grew within and above the wall, causing damage. The trees were removed a while ago and recently the vegetation was sprayed to assist in the restoration work. The work is expected to be finished later in the year when further funds are available.



Another historic wall – a revetment wall – is on railway land immediately adjacent to the Park. It is situated on the NE side of the culvert which contains the stream from Crofton Downs at its junction with the Korimako Stream. The wall and culvert would have been built when the railway line was being developed near Crofton Downs railway station. Work on the line began in 1879 and was finally opened in 1886 as part of the main trunk line until the 1930s. This high wall is a masterpiece of dry rock wall construction, but also needs remedial work where stones have slumped to the ground – possibly affecting its structural integrity.

Greater Budget Sought for WCC Parks and Reserves

See our Group's submission on the WCC 2013/14 Annual Plan on our website "Current Issues" page.

Ted Williams

We were saddened to hear that Ted Williams passed away recently. He represented Wellington Botanical Society on our Group until July 1997. Our condolences to the Williams family and friends.

Kohekohe (*Dysoxylum spectabile*)

The characteristic sprouting of flowers from the trunk of kohekohe is a sight to behold at the moment - see photo. This tree "grows to 15 m tall with a trunk to 1 m in diameter. The alternate leaves are large, up to about 40 cm long x 25 cm wide, and generally have 4 opposite leaflets and a terminal one. The leaflets are 7-15 cm long x 3-4 cm wide, bright green, shiny, hairless at maturity, mostly rounded at the tips and with smooth but often undulate margins.....The genus *Dysoxylum* is widespread in tropical and subtropical forests, some species providing the wood known as mahogany."¹

The Park is somewhat bereft of kohekohe, so we have been pleased to plant some provided by WCC over the last couple of years in forested areas, such as the slopes below Hanover Street. The photo is of a tree in Heke Reserve (with a ngaio tree trunk hiding some of the display). It is next to the track descending from Heke Street. There are a lot in Huntleigh Park and Khandallah Park.

The seedling below is one of many that have emerged unbidden, bordering Heke Reserve - a reward after 4 rounds of manual wandering willie removal over 20 years. The flower diameter is 5 mm.



Bird Treasures

A gem to finish with: Te Papa, The Ornithological Society of New Zealand and DOC have a fantastic website to help you identify New Zealand birds, including audio of bird song, photos and information. It is on <http://www.nzbirdsonline.org.nz> - a must-visit site.

References

1. John Dawson, Rob Lucas. Nature Guide to the New Zealand Forest. Random House, 2007.

Contacts

Chairman & Adopt-a-Spot: Peter Reimann (04) 938 9602, peter.reimann@paradise.net.nz
Working bees: David Grace (04) 476 7563

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.

APPENDIX

Summary of Treliwick Park Stream Problems and Solutions

Stormwater from roads, driveways and car parks is collected in gutters and enters the stormwater system via roadside gratings. In our catchment, this all ends up in the local streams. Roof water usually goes into the stormwater system, also. Waste water from the bathroom, kitchen and laundry goes into the sewer system, where it is treated before discharge into the sea.

Fast Run-off from Hard Surfaces

Problem - The long-suffering Kaiwharawhara Stream takes all the stormwater from about 22 km² of catchment area stretching from Karori to Khandallah. Stormwater very quickly runs off hard surfaces such as roads, footpaths, parking areas, roofs and paved areas. It all goes into the streams, which become brown, raging torrents. We watch in despair as stream banks get torn away, along with riparian plantings. The stream beds get covered in sediment/gravel, destroying invertebrate life - food source for the native fish, which migrate up and down the streams.

Solutions - Our Group has long been advocating for mandatory stormwater slowing provisions in new building developments in the catchment so that the effect is neutral. What we would like to see are things like permeable pavers, detention provisions in stormwater piping, soak pits, planted wetland areas for filtering/absorption, roof rainwater tanks and 'green' roofs/walls. More planting in public and private spaces and on roadside verges also helps.

Sediment and Driveway/Path/Yard Sweepings

Problems/Solutions

- Earthworks from new building developments, roads or motorways can cause sediment run-off. The stream beds get covered, affecting invertebrate and fish life. Sediment traps for earthworks obviate this.
- Driveway, path and yard sweepings - dispose of in compost or rubbish bin. Do not hose from your property into the street or down the drain.

Pollution

Pollution problems/solutions are:

- Leftover paint and paint brush wash water - recycle or solidify paint, wash brushes over garden or into laundry sink or sewer gully trap.
- Used engine oil and radiator water - take to garage or hazardous waste area of landfill.
- Oil spills or leaks - mop up with rags or sand.
- Car wash water - minimise detergent use, wash on lawn or at a car wash, not on the driveway/road.
- Waste cement or concrete - pour wet cement/concrete onto lawn to solidify, then bury or take to rubbish bin or landfill.
- Sewer leaks - upgrade/improve the sewer and stormwater systems to obviate leaks and cross-connections or overflows.
- Leachate from rubbish - rubbish should go to landfill.
- Chemicals and pesticides - take to hazardous waste area of landfill.
- Oil/rubber from roads, accumulated during dry weather - no solution.

These pollutants in streams and the harbour can be toxic to aquatic life. Paint and cement washings cause discoloration. Detergents also cause foaming and nutrient enrichment. Oil causes surface slicks and in large quantities can suffocate aquatic life.

As a last resort, wetland areas planted in grasses, rushes and sedges can absorb some pollutants. An example of a wetland area in the city is the one next to Chaffers Park.

In summary, quoting the GW brochure "Save the Drain for the Rain":

"Remember, the only thing that should get into the stormwater drain is rainwater. You can be fined for putting anything else down the drain."

If you see discoloration in a stream (apart from mud during heavy rain) or someone putting wastes into the stormwater drain, call the GW pollution hotline 0800 496 734.

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.