

# Gorge Gazette - October 2023

## News about Trelissick Park, the Ngaio Gorge and streams



### Abbreviations:

|        |                                   |     |                                     |
|--------|-----------------------------------|-----|-------------------------------------|
| WCC    | Wellington City Council           | GW  | Greater Wellington Regional Council |
| VUW    | Victoria University of Wellington | GG  | Gorge Gazette                       |
| TPG    | Trelissick Park Group             | WW  | Wellington Water                    |
| S to S | Sanctuary to Sea (Zealandia)      | F&B | Forest and Bird                     |
| BotSoc | Wellington Botanical Society      |     |                                     |

### The final flourish

The ugly containers below the big slip face half-way up Ngaio Gorge Road have gone. Behold the replacement rock artwork by slip stabilisation contractor Fulton Hogan!

All told, the contractor did a magnificent job and the new car parks next to the two park entrances are much used by visitors and us.

Fulton Hogan also enhanced the lower entrance with planting.

We await the next slip disasters, spawned by climate change.

### Changing the guard

Welcome to:

**Martin McCrudden**, our new WCC Ranger. Previous Ranger, Adam Groenewegen, has accepted a temporary role as Senior Park Ranger.

**Nate Rigler** (S to S), replacing Catherine Ayres, who has moved to UK.

**Dr Bradley Schroder**, WCC Open Space and Parks manager. He replaces Myfanwy Emeny, who over two decades has seen community restoration groups expand from 12 to over 150 and established the Park Rangers and the Urban Ecology team.



### Dot Catchpole

Sadly, Dot died on 3 August, aged 86. Until recently Dot and husband Dave were 'regulars' at our bi-monthly working bees, driving all the way from Miramar.

Bill and Marilyn Hester said in 'Tributes online':  
'Always cheerful and always helpful and hard working - in planting or weeding sessions. Dot's love of nature and the outdoors will be remembered - especially for her contributions to Trelissick Park. Thank you, Dot.'

The photo was taken in 1964.

In conjunction with her daughter Anita Benbrook (WCC Biodiversity Specialist-Plants), we hope to plant a tree for Dot at our memorial grove down from bridge 5 next year.

### The scores

TPG has planted nearly 990 this year, sourced from WCC, F&B and home nurseries. Many of these were grasses for Marilyn Hester's Trelissick Crescent verge - infill elsewhere. This does not include the more than 400 grasses planted at the Ngaio Gorge Road layby (see July GG).

## Anne Tuffin to the fore

Anne was recently interviewed by Jenni Guzman for an article in WCC's Tō Tātou Pōneke (Our Wellington) about the 'spot' she has been restoring below Hanover Street for the last five years with Joan Waldvogel. See [finding-friendship-among-the-weeds](#).

## Doggone it!

As some might say...

Dogs love the off-leash areas of Trelissick Park, especially the streams. Walk along the valleys beside the streams on a fine weekend to be entertained by the legions of dogs – or to grumble about the access tracks they are eroding along the banks.

A few years ago, when the WCC dog policy came up for review, TPG decided not to become involved, because of the range of views (for/against) within TPG. For the new dog policy, the same applies, but some may wish to lodge a submission. The deadline is 5 p.m. on Wednesday 18 October. see [Dog Policy and Animal Bylaw Review](#).

The new policy extends the off-leash area up to the Oban Street entrance (consistent with other entrances).

Concerning kererū deaths, Jonathan Anderson recently cut the lower branches of tree lucerne to

## North Wellington Voluntary Service awards

Bill and Marilyn Hester are among the award winners, for their 20 years of dedication to Trelissick Park – nominated by TPG. Bill for the informative website, Facebook posts, animal and pest weed control, rubbish removal, reporting on pollution and storm problems, advocacy and support. Marilyn for her home nursery and adoption of 'spots' throughout the park for restoration. She planted nearly 2,000 grasses and shrubs along the entire 0.5 km length of Trelissick Crescent, greatly adding attractiveness and presenting a barrier to those throwing rubbish into the park.

Richard Grasse also won this award for his restoration, track and animal pest control work

## Wanted: more bellbird/korimako

[New Zealand Birds Online](#) says:

'In feeding on nectar they play an important ecological role in pollinating the flowers of many native trees and shrubs. Subsequently, when feeding on the fruits that result from this pollination they have a role in dispersing the seeds, and so they assist in the regeneration of the forest in at least two ways.'



Anne and Joan

above dog-leaping height. Let's hope that kākā have the wisdom to nest on remote slopes. Fledglings spend a few days on the ground before they learn to fly.



throughout the district (including Trelissick Park), as well as volunteering in the F & B nursery – nominated by Korimako Track Builders.



Photo: Simon Woolf

## Down in the park

In the last three months we have:

Planted the subsidized mulch heap next to the magazine building (TPG).

Planted and mulched the Ngaio Gorge Road layby and entrance 6 (TPG, aided by WCC Ranger Adam).

Weeded and planted at/near Finn's streamside spot down from bridge 7 (Centreport); between bridges 4 & 5 (VUW and SPCA); upstream of bridge 1, at the Waikowhai Street verge and upstream of the debris trap (TPG).

Hosts for corporates: Angus Napier and Peter Reimann.

The park is still a rat-haven as evidenced by empty bait stations and trap catches. Bait taken this winter has increased. A weasel also succumbed. Bill Hester says, 'The DOC200s are first line of defence against hedgehogs and mustelids - any rats are a bonus.'



## The car worshippers

Why are we so obsessed with cleaning our cars with detergent? The rain and an occasional wipe-over are pretty effective. Yet we have firms who will come to your home to clean your car, sending the cleaning product down the roadside drain and so into Kaiwharawhara Stream. A walk through the suburbs on a weekend will reveal car worshippers with their cars lathered on driveways or on the

verge. How can the native fish and invertebrates in the streams possibly survive?

For an informative GW spiel on this and other pollutants, see [save the drain for the rain](#). If you discover discolouration in the streams, contact the GW pollution hotline (p.6). They will investigate and follow up with the offender.

## What's with the hay bales?

WW cleared the debris trap at last and the rails are now more upright. Some hay bales are piled above the bank mysteriously. They are starting to sprout.

## BotSoc's visit to the park

Read all about their visit on 6 May on p.10 and 11 of [wellingtonbotsoc.org.nz/newsletters](http://wellingtonbotsoc.org.nz/newsletters). There are related links on p.5 of the July GG.

## Update on the 'reasonably large donation' (mentioned on p.3 of April GG)

As a result of a recent meeting, the following emerged as possible uses:

- Interpretive information using QR codes.
- Track upgrades.
- A tracks master plan (similar to the recent Ōtari-Wilton's Bush plan), including track retirement/restoration and mataī tree root protection.
- Extra weed control, possibly including Churchill Reserve (between the park and Ōtari-Wilton's Bush).

## Kōwhai for Wightwick's Field

Bob and Colleen McClymont wanted to plant five kōwhai (*Sophora microphylla*) gifted by some old friends. The downstream side of Wightwick's Field was suggested, as it gets the sun. After some effort to find locally sourced ones, they were planted on 1 August by the McClymonts and friends – see photo. Currently the kōwhai are not enjoying themselves. Fingers crossed. At least they are tall enough to be above the rabbit-eating zone.

## Bi-monthly catchment working bees

Nate Rigler (S to S) is in the throes of organising.

## Groundcover plants needed

Angus Napier, immersed in clearing swathes of tradescantia, says we need more groundcover to discourage reinfestation. Species that suit part-shade are listed below.

Rengarenga, *Poa anceps*, *Carex dissita*, gossamer grass, bush rice grass, *Astelia fragrans*, *Dianella nigra*. What else?

## Renovated luxury hotel opens in park

It has returned to its host tōtara tree below entrance 4 from Trelissick Crescent. We hope the new roof will keep the moisture out and the wētā don't mind the colour scheme.



- An inanga spawning area in the lower Kaiwharawhara Stream.
- Repair, replacement and maintenance of seats/benches.

It is expected that the development of a podocarp grove upstream of bridge 7 on the true right bank, including blackberry removal, could be met from existing WCC budgets.

The wheels are in motion. Some of the funding will be left in the bank to grow before use.



Most ferns would be ideal, but our planting attempts in the past (except for tree ferns) have been abysmal.



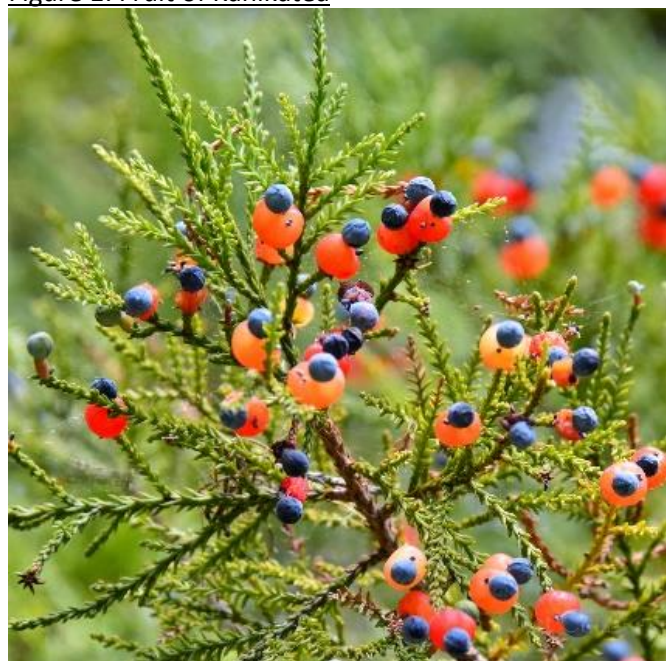
## Podocarps and Trelissick Park - Jonathan Anderson

Podocarps are native conifer trees with fleshy fruit that are attractive to birds. They are a defining element of local forests that are described by experts as Conifer-Broadleaf or Podocarp-Broadleaf Forests.

All are relatively slow growing trees that can live for several hundred years and grow to a large size. Fully grown they occur as single trees or in small groups that emerge above a more or less continuous canopy of shorter broadleaf trees, such as tawa, tītoki, hīnau and kohekohe. As emergent trees they add vertical layering to the structure of forests and habitat for specialised species of perching plants (epiphytes). Prominent perching plants are flax-like clumps, or 'nests', of *Astelia*. They are the growing places of the shiny leaved puka, and northern rātā, which in its own turn become a large emergent tree.

Podocarp trees are unusual as, like animals and people (and some other plants), they are either male or female. Male trees produce pollen, which is spread by the wind, and female trees produce fruit, which is eaten by birds who disperse them to new growing places.

Figure 1: Fruit of Kahikatea



We have five podocarp species that occur naturally in the Wellington City area. They are kahikatea, mataī, miro, rimu and tōtara. Not many of them survive as adult trees in the wild. To find out how many, I have searched them out in the remnant forests in the urban/suburban part of the city – all the areas on the eastern side of the Outer Green Belt.

Figure 2: Surviving Wild Podocarp Trees in Wellington City east of the Outer Green Belt

| 200       | 150   | 180  | 100  | 125    |
|-----------|-------|------|------|--------|
| kahikatea | mataī | miro | rimu | tōtara |

Further trees have been planted in gardens and parks, particularly tōtara. Tōtara is found as single trees and groups of many trees in Ōtari-Wilton's Bush, Wright's Hill, Zealandia.

### Trelissick Park

You will be pleased to learn that Trelissick Park and its immediate environs are the home to a number of wild podocarp trees:

Figure 3: Wild Podocarp Trees in Trelissick Park and Ngaio Gorge

|                    | kahikatea | mataī | miro | rimu | totara |
|--------------------|-----------|-------|------|------|--------|
| In Trelissick Park | 8         | 4     | 2    | 0    | 9      |
| Outside the Park   | 9         | 1     | 0    | 0    | 4      |

The trees in the park are mainly concentrated along a broad ridge as you walk down the track from Trelissick Crescent to the Hanover Street bridge. Most visible are tōtara and kahikatea trees on the left-hand side growing on the edge of mature forest remnant. Lower down are the large mataī and tōtara that are prominent features of the 'crossroads' where several track meet.

The broad ridge is also home to natural regeneration of podocarps. Here a combination of favourable conditions has come together to allow the establishment of numerous young kahikatea and tōtara with the occasional mataī. Like most conifers, podocarps need good light, or no more than light shade, to grow successfully (think pine seedlings for a parallel). These conditions are provided in the previously cleared ground, now lightly wooded, on the right-hand side of the track. Another, less immediately obvious, factor is the presence of fruiting adult trees. Individuals of both male and female trees are present for successful wind pollination and seed dispersal by birds. Most seedlings/saplings are found within 100m of female trees.

### Planting podocarps

Given the importance of podocarp trees to the ecology and long-term maturity of local forest, and how few now survive in the wild, I believe it is important that we make podocarps an important component of Trelissick Park.

Many podocarps have in fact been planted at different places in the park at different times over the last 25 or so years. The location and mix of species seem to have been in most cases somewhat arbitrary, based on the availability of nursery stock and a suitable planting site. I would like to see groupings of the five species, kahikatea, mataī, miro, rimu and tōtara, that are more representative of what we know of their past and present distribution and ecology.

Another concern is the care and maintenance of the podocarp trees once that have been planted. Many have been planted with fast growing species such as lemonwood and kohuhu and have overtopped and heavily shaded. To survive and grow they need to be periodically released. The competing trees need to be pruned or completely removed. It is something I have been doing for a number of years throughout the park.

With all these factors in mind, I decided it was time to undertake a survey of the location, size and health of all the podocarps that have been planted in Trelissick Park (and a small number of trees planted in its immediate vicinity). Over several weeks I have worked my way through the park to find and record all its planted podocarps. I have measured the height of each tree (to the nearest 5cm) and the diameter at breast height (dbh) of the larger individuals.

**Initial conclusions**

A surprising large number of podocarps have been planted (and survived and grown). The species with the largest number of individuals is tōtara, followed by kahikatea and mataī. The number of miro and rimu planted is much smaller.

Figure 4: Planted Podocarp Trees in Trelissick Park by Number

|           |       |      |      |        |
|-----------|-------|------|------|--------|
| 281       | 150   | 65   | 46   | 389    |
| kahikatea | mataī | miro | rimu | tōtara |

**Total number of podocarps = 931**

**For more...**

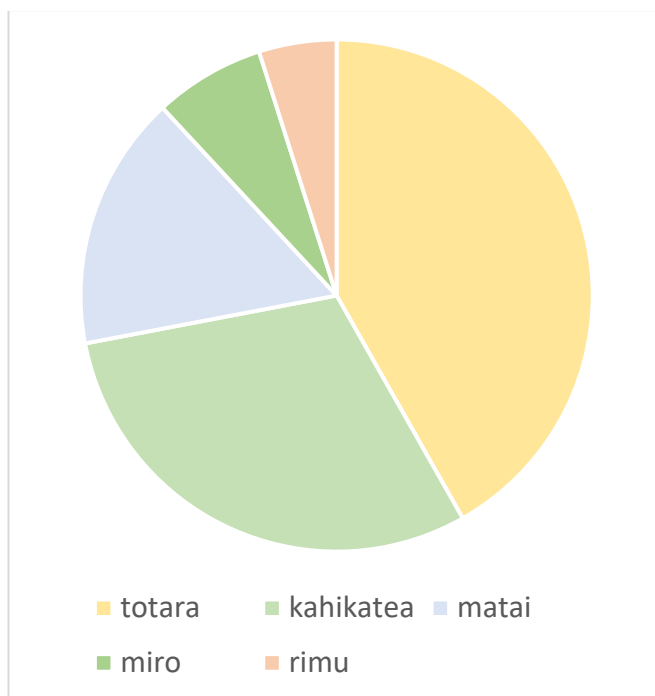
Scroll down our Facebook page, or read a wealth of information on our website, updated by Bill Hester.

**Contacts**

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[Trelissick Park Group website](#)  
[Trelissick Park Group | Facebook](#)

Tōtara makes up 42% of the total number of podocarps and kahikatea 30%. Mataī 16%, miro 7%, and rimu just 5%.

Figure 5: Planted Podocarp Trees in Trelissick Park by Percentage



The numbers and percentages are not too surprising. Tōtara and kahikatea are the easiest podocarp species to propagate in nurseries. Seed is available in most seasons and it is not too difficult to germinate. The other three species are more challenging. Mataī and rimu only produce seed every few years, while the fruit of miro can take several years to germinate.

The availability of nursery stock goes a long way to explain the present balance of planted podocarps.

**Further conclusions**

I have measured the location, height and health of each podocarp tree, and recorded the information in an Excel spreadsheet. I am now analysing this information. I will describe the results and discuss my conclusions in a subsequent story.

***Thanks to all our volunteers, supporters, WCC staff and weed control contractor Kaitiaki o Ngahere.***

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.