



BRNP's 'Jewel in the Crown'

Friday 20 August 2010 saw a dream realised atop the historic concrete dam on Stony Creek - the formal handover of nearly 1200 hectares of 'Barwon Water lands' to the Brisbane Ranges National Park.

The addition to the BRNP of its 'missing link' or 'jewel in the crown' had been a long held aspiration of the Friends of Brisbane Ranges (FoBR), Parks staff and environmental and other groups in the area.

The celebration was satisfying and well-earned. A large number of Friends [see above] were

delighted to be part of the memorable event.



[see page 2 for rest of this story]

Brisbane Ranges National Park size boost to help owl

[article from the Geelong Advertiser 21 August 2010]



A RARE and endangered owl could find a refuge in the 1200ha parcel added to Brisbane Ranges National Park yesterday.

The tracts of land, largely untouched for 125 years, are made up of native woodland, open forest and wetlands and are home to the threatened powerful owl.

Recent ornithological surveys of the Brisbane Ranges have raised concerns about the future of the powerful owl and of the smaller masked owl with a drop in numbers tracked in both species.

Experts have questioned whether this is due to the extensive bushfires over recent summers damaging the birds' habitat or to some deeper cause such as a reduction in food supply.

The swift parrot, common bent-winged bat and the painted honeyeater also populate the region. The disused Lower Stony Creek reservoir and its catchment also lays within the new land.

South Barwon MP and State Parliamentary Secretary for the Environment Michael Crutchfield said bushwalkers were the big winners as he unveiled the land yesterday.

"The area we are adding to the national park today is relatively untouched, having been closed to the public with minimal disturbance for about 125 years," Mr Crutchfield said.

"The area includes the historically significant Lower Stony Creek dam wall which was built in 1873-74.

"It is the third oldest concrete dam in the world and has been recognised as Australia's first mass-concrete gravity dam".

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In this issue

- BRNP's 'Jewel in the Crown'
- BRNP size boost to help owl
- Removing Sallow Wattle
- For Your Diary
- Park News - Farewell Mark
- Meet a Friend
- Vale Merle Trigg

Upcoming Events

Sunday 12 September

Meet 10 am at Anakie Community depot

This is the first opportunity to visit the **Lower Stony Creek** new park area and do some weed removal (Acacia longifolia)

Bring: lunch, water, gloves, digging and cutting tools (only if you prefer to use your own tools)

More events - see page 3.

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BRNP's 'Jewel in the Crown' *continued*

The land was set aside for provision of Geelong's water supply in the 1860s and this assured the Anakie Water Supply Reserve (AWSR) was not subject to the impact of gold mining, timber cutting and other ravages inflicted on the surrounding lands that later became the BRNP in 1973.



Geelong's first permanent water source, the Lower Stony Creek reservoir, in 1873 [Barwon Water]

The first tangible opportunity to realise 'the dream' had risen in the 1990s when Barwon Water redirected supplies from the Upper Stony Catchment by pipeline to Lovely Banks thus cutting Upper Stony No 1 and Lower Stony Reservoirs from Geelong's supply. FoBR had championed the pipeline's route under Durdidwarrah Road to minimise intrusion into BRNP.

Subsequent works by Barwon Water provided an alternative water supply to Anakie and Staughton Vale and resulted in decommissioning of the AWSR and its pipeline and aqueduct systems.

In August 1999 the Geelong Field Naturalists hosted a meeting of 'interested parties' to raise awareness of these changes and to discuss the option of the reserve being incorporated into BRNP.

A more formal meeting of Barwon Water, Parks Victoria and DNRE (now DSE) in November that year recorded in-principle agreement of this option and commissioned a formal Flora and Fauna study to inform the process. This report was made in February 2001 and was provided to all 'interested parties'. Subsequent public discussions petered out as formal negotiations continued 'behind closed doors'.

In April 2002, FoBR enjoyed an informative day of discussion of decommissioning works and an exploration of Upper Stony Reservoir and its aqueduct with Barwon Water's Area Manager Richard Greenhough.

FoBR and the rangers were very conscious of the need for the possibility of, and information about, the addition to BRNP to be available to a wider audience than just the local community. Then President, Richard Sullivan, had documented the Durdidwarrah Road pipeline route and installation in VNPA's September 1996 Park Watch and the opportunity to host VNPA's 50th Anniversary in the park was eagerly embraced. Richard was encouraged to again contribute to Park Watch and published "The Brisbane Ranges and its forgotten jewel" in the lead-up to the November 2002 celebrations. Informative walks and tours were also conducted over the weekend and subsequent years.



From this period of 'excitement', progress seemingly 'stalled' in spite of 'prodding' by FoBR and others.

Strangely the large fires of January 2006 provided the next opportunity to reinvigorate the negotiations between Barwon Water, Parks Victoria and DSE. The comparative lack of attention to the 'post-fire recovery' of BRNP and its communities compared to the focus paid to the Grampians' recovery allowed the Friends to meet with the Environment Parliamentary Secretary in February 2006 where they presented and

discussed a well researched 'wish list' of options the government could proceed with as part of local recovery.



The opportunities presented were: inclusion of the AWSR, Mount Anakie Scenic Reserve and other smaller land parcels into BRNP; return of Parks Victoria to the Anakie community; institution of ongoing longitudinal and structured surveys of plants, animals and pests in the park and other important changes to benefit the park and its surrounding communities. The Parliamentary Secretary's interest saw the formal negotiations on 'handover' reinvigorated.

Formal gazettal of the transfer passed through last Autumn's session of the Victorian Parliament. Some opportunities such as the Mt Anakie and the smaller wetland areas remain to be realised. The challenge continues for Friends, rangers and the larger community to ensure appropriate access, gazettal of heritage assets and protection of the, now significantly larger, BRNP's natural values.

Bernie Fox

Editor - Thank you Bernie.

The FoBR website will be updated with as much information as possible and will include documents received from Bernie.

Park News - Farewell Mark

Mark Urquhart, our Ranger-in-Charge at Bacchus Marsh has already moved down the road to the You Yangs on 23 August.

The position at Bacchus Marsh is to be advertised and Julien Atherston and Charles Dickie will be covering his role until someone is appointed.

Mark has sent a thank you letter to Friends - see page 4.



Removing Sallow Wattle

Our challenge for the whole day last month was to remove the weedy wattle *Acacia longifolia* or Sallow Wattle along the Ballan road firebreak.



For those not there on Sunday, you will recognise it by its bright green long leaves, its yellow rod shaped flowers and it does appear to be out of place in our park. This plant is not indigenous to the Brisbane ranges instead it originates from parts of eastern Victoria and NSW.

It has the potential to form dense stands and crowd out other shrubs and in particular, small understorey flora. Sallow wattle also will burn at high intensities causing mass germination of seeds after fire as has happened following the 2006 wildfire. Hence our urgency to remove this very weedy plant to prevent it from taking over and replacing the indigenous flora.

Unfortunately, our latest land addition to the park, the Lower Stony Creek area has large stands and since the bushfire, has increased significantly. This means we will be busy for some time yet removing this intruder to our park!

Our day started with first locating the stands of wattle within the firebreak with one group heading one way and the other the opposite way. One group was becoming quite despondent and unbelieving as they could not find any, but this soon changed due to discovery of significant stands of Sallow Wattle.

We soon attacked them - larger trees with handsaws, loppers and roundup and the seedlings - we just pulled out by the roots.

We are fairly confident we were successful in locating all stands within the firebreak and intend to return in future months to attack any which escaped our attention. We tried not to look across the road at the "forests" of Sallow Wattle along the roadside and in the Lower Stony Creek, although it did reinforce our resolve to control this pesky weed wattle sooner rather than later.

With the recent rains the firebreak is about to bloom with masses of *Acacia myrtlefolia* and *Spyridium parvifolium* along with other annual and perennial herbs and shrubs. Some greenhoods were discovered by Wendy, namely Nodding Greenhoods (*Pterostylis nutans*), Tall Greenhoods (*Pterostylis melagramma*) and Emerald-lip Greenhoods (*Pterostylis smaragdina*), along with leaves of *Caladenia* sp and *Thelymitra* sp. It will be well worth a visit in the coming weeks in Spring. Just park in either Furze or Grasstree track carparks and go for a wander, you will be delighted and fascinated by what you will see.

Judy Locke

Meet a Friend

We would like to include a short introduction to one of our FoBR Members in each newsletter. The aim is to get to know each other better - particularly useful for new members and those who may not be able to attend our monthly activities as often as they wish.

This can include a photo if you like and a bit of info about you or one of your family so please email cazbarth@yahoo.com.au.

As this was my idea I should be the first volunteer I know - so

Carole (Caz) Bartholomew

I was an absentee FoBR member for many years, living with husband Allan (Bart) in Mentone but kept involved by looking after the FoBR website. Love of the Brissies and the locals - both people and the animals - was irresistible so we moved to Staughton Vale a couple of years ago where we are still busy building.


I am the current FoBR Secretary, web manager and newsletter editor and really keen to hear from FoBR members about what YOU would like to see included in our newsletter, web and activities so please email with any suggestions to cazbarth@yahoo.com.au and we will do our best.

Next newsletter - can we include YOU please?

For your diary!


Upcoming FoBR events ... and others which may interest you


Now that the Barwon Water/Lower Stony Creek handover has finally happened we hope to provide you with more notice and details of upcoming FoBR events.

 **Sunday 12 September**
FoBR Lower Stony Creek walk through the new park area and weed removal (*Acacia longifolia*)


Saturday 18/Sunday 19 September
Angair Wildflower Weekend & Art Show Memorial Hall, McMillian St, Anglesea.

Guided wildflower walks & bus tours included. Indigenous plants, art and craft for sale. Kids activities – The Connies. Adults \$5 Pensioners / students \$2 Children under 12 yrs free. Enquiries 5263 1085 or 5263 3131.

 **Sunday 3 October**
FoBR WaterWatch monitoring [NOT 5 September as planned]

 **Sunday 10 October**
FoBR event - details to come

Sunday 24 October Back to Steiglitz Festival <http://www.trueblueford.com/steiglitz/>

 **Sunday 14 November**
FoBR event - details to come

 **Saturday 11 December** -(evening)
FoBR end of year BBQ and evening

Vale Merle Trigg



Merle & Clive at book launch Stony Creek 2000

Merle and Clive were great orchid enthusiasts and their knowledge respected by many within this field. Our wonderful book, the Wildflowers of the Brisbane Ranges, was authored by the Triggs with Clive taking the photographs and Merle researching and providing the textual information. Both Merle and Clive have been very supportive of our Friends group and up until a few years ago would be regular members to our park. Merle will be very sadly missed.

16 August 2010

Dear Friends and Volunteers

It is with heart filled thanks that I write to you. I am moving on and leaving Bacchus Marsh, and returning to the You Yangs as the Ranger in Charge for the You Yangs and Serendip Sanctuary.

My time at Bacchus Marsh has been relative short in the scheme of park management, yet some lasting changes have occurred in the past 5 years. As I reflect, the value, influence and participation that members of friends groups, volunteers and park interest groups has made on the parks that I have been responsible for is resounding.

My highlights include:

- The rehabilitation and rebuilding of assets post the 2006 bushfire in the Brisbane Ranges NP, and the community effort to respond to the events that burnt 6000ha of park and private property.
- The establishment of Centenary Track, Werribee Gorge SP, creating lasting links with the Island Reserve.
- The addition of the Lower Stony Creek to the Brisbane Ranges NP, has been a long time coming, and with the persistence of passionate friends members, this sensational bit of land (particularly the reservoir) has been made accessible to the public.
- The development of sites such as Shaw's Lake Picnic Area in the Lerderderg SP, and Fridays Camp Ground in the Brisbane Ranges NP, has provided additional opportunities for park visitors.
- Celebrating events such as, 10yrs of Friends of the Lerderderg, 25yrs of Friends of the Brisbane Ranges, 25yrs of Friends of Werribee Gorge & Long Forest Mallee, the book launch for the Birds of Long Forest and the centenary of Werribee Gorge.
- Participation in the annual Back to Steiglitz Festivals and Brisbane Ranges Wildflower Show. Both of these events highlight the enthusiasm and passion of the locals and members of the groups are responsible for the organisation and smooth running of these events. The level of professionalism and knowledge about the flora of the Brisbane Ranges and history of Steiglitz is something you should be proud of.
- Volunteer use of the Court House, Steiglitz HP, I take my hat off to the volunteers who open the court house on a regular basis, to showcase the history of the town, thankyou.
- Signage and walking track upgrades throughout the Brisbane Ranges NP, Lerderderg and Werribee Gorge SP's, has increased the opportunities for people to get out and experience our parks. As most of you know, I tend not to be a walker and prefer to be either running or riding, but you must know there have been numerous times when I have been running in the Brisbane Ranges, Werribee Gorge and the Lerderderg and just stopped, looked around and been overwhelmed by the beauty and grandness of the locations that I have been surrounded by.
- The enthusiasm of the GDTA to further the network of long distance trails, particularly with the Macedon link and conversion to shared use on the Goldfields Trail. I commend the GDTA for their willingness and patience to conform with process and procedure as they work with multiple agencies.

If I have not thanked you for your contribution to our local park network, Thankyou. You are every bit as important to the future of our parks as the staff I leave behind. I look forward to bumping into you on the tracks.

Yours sincerely

Mark Urquhart
Ranger in Charge – Bacchus Marsh