

MERRI GROWLER

The Friends of Merri Creek Newsletter

August – October 2015

FRIENDS OF MERRI CREEK IS THE PROUD WINNER OF THE 2011 VICTORIAN URBAN LANDSCAPE AWARD

Leaping Lizards! Families enjoy a day in nature

Victoria Parks Ranger Tristan wandered in with a smile on his face: he'd never seen the grassland reserve so full of people! He was greeted by a small group of colourful marquees and a gaggle of people young and old marvelling at a man pulling one reptile after another from bags, boxes and terrariums, for children to handle.

This was the Family Nature Day run jointly by the Friends of Merri Creek and the Indigenous Flora and Fauna Association (IFFA) and funded by Parks Victoria in celebration of FoMC's 25th anniversary. The venue, Bababi Marning, a grassland on the Merri in Campbellfield, enclosed by a tall mesh fence, had thrown open its gates to the community who had come along to enjoy some time in nature.

The day which featured *The Snakehandler* and a butterfly tent as well as Lizzie the Lizard, face-painting, tote-bag



Parks Victoria Ranger, Tristan Factor, with Jodi Jackson from Hume EcoChamps, FoMC Secretary, Ray Radford, and Caroline Overbeek from Hume City Council.

estate with many caravan manufacturers and has a surrounding high fence to limit vehicle entry and rubbish dumping (which is still quite extensive). However, the fence means there is only limited access into the reserve for the public and the nearby workers.

The Friends however are fairly active within the reserve, undertaking regular woody weed control work and conducting bird surveys every quarter.

One of the aims of the day was to start connecting more with the community in the northern part of the Merri Catchment. As development occurs at the urban fringe, with even more to come, it is increasingly important that we grow our membership base in the north and engage these communities with their local environments, so that they can help protect them.

We received some good exposure with a radio interview on North-West FM and a front page article in the Hume and Whittlesea *Northern Star Weekly*; we also met some great people in the north who are interested to see similar activities in the future, including members of Hume City Council's *EcoChamps* program.

All in all it was a great day and if you may be interested to be involved in organising something similar in the future, please email FoMC: merricreek@bigpond.com

Yasmin Kelsall FoMC Committee member



The Snakehandler has an appreciative audience at the Family Nature Day (including Lizzie the Lizard).

decoration, nature walks, water bugs and a free barbecue was well attended, with almost 100 adults and children.

This was quite a different scene from a normal day within this important grassland reserve which was fought for by the Friends and its predecessors back in the late 1980s to early 90s. It contributes to the Merri Regional Park system and usually only plays host to a very large mob of kangaroos. It is bordered to the west by an industrial

Linda Bradburn, from Indigenous Flora and Fauna Association (and also a FoMC member) helps kids paint bags, while most people enjoy The Snakehandler in the background.



Inside

Merri Musings • Backyard pardalotes	2
Birds along the Merri in early winter	3
Third Merri Birdwatch survey for 2015	3
Pioneers of the Merri Creek	4
Water music quartet	5
Holy sites tour of the Merri Catchment	6
Friends of Edgars Creek focus	7
Events calendar	8

Merri Musings

Merri Creek sewer rehabilitation: After a century of use, the Merri Creek main sewer is being rehabilitated from north of Bell St in Coburg to near St Georges Rd in North Fitzroy. Melbourne Water wants to ensure that the old sewer doesn't collapse and also to improve the sewer system. The aim is to reduce the likelihood of sewage spills during heavy rain into Merri Creek, and to reduce maintenance issues such as blockages. The first step is to investigate underground services and ground conditions at about 20 locations along the existing sewer alignment. Works will occur from 7am- 5.30pm Monday to Friday. Afterwards, the sites will be reinstated. See: www.melbournewater.com.au/merricreeksewer

Merri Creek Catchment still going under bitumen and roofs: The Metropolitan Planning Authority is continuing to churn out Precinct Structure Plans for Melbourne's growth areas, including the northern half of the Merri catchment. Since March, Friends of Merri Creek (and Merri Creek Management Committee) have made submissions on two more Precinct Structure Plans, the Wallan Structure Plan (to guide growth around the Wallan township) and a report on the Northern Quarries Investigation Area (north of Craigieburn Rd). We are still waiting for the Department of Environment, Land, Water & Planning (DELWP) to release special planning controls for Conservation Areas in the growth corridors. Meanwhile, Planning Scheme Amendments are proceeding for precincts which include these Conservation Areas.

DELWP has released a *Guidance note: Implementing the Biodiversity Conservation Strategy for Melbourne's Growth Corridors*. This document is supposed to explain how the Conservation Areas are to be managed. However it is rather vague and doesn't reveal how DELWP will be making decisions for allowable uses and/or adjustments

Our Facebook page now has over 500 friends

If you haven't already done so, check out our wonderful Facebook page, we're sure you'll 'like' it.

Just point your web browser toward www.facebook.com/FriendsofMerriCreek and click on 'Like' to get automatic updates to group activities and news.

Post & win: We love your Merri Creek stories, so we are now offering a free bird book for the best post to our Facebook page each month.

And we're on Instagram too

Smartphone users with the Instagram app can now share photos with #merricreek #merricreektrail hashtags at Instagram @friendsofmerricreek

to the hard-won Conservation Areas in Melbourne's growth corridors.

In all of the Growth Area precincts we are only seeing the bare minimum areas provided for nature (just the Conservation Areas designated in the Biodiversity Conservation Strategy). This is hugely disappointing as we have huge opportunities within these greenfield developments to do things over and above basic regulatory requirements.

Don't miss this important exhibition: *Merri Creek – Celebrating and caring for our natural heritage* will be launched on Tuesday 6 October, 10.30am at Brunswick Library, Dawson St Brunswick. This exhibition documents the history of community action to transform Merri Creek. The exhibition will be on display in Brunswick for October, then it will move to Coburg Library in November. After that it will move around the Merri catchment at venues to be announced.

There will also be a presentation by Ann and Bruce in conjunction with the exhibition on Thursday 15 October at 7:45pm. Please put these dates in your diary now, but all newsletter recipients will receive an invitation beforehand.

Backyard Pardalotes

Brendan Casey currently has a pair of Spotted Pardalotes nesting in his backyard in Northcote. Last year, he did some building work and ended up with a dirt mound, but before the mound could be cleared away, the pair of Spotted Pardalotes dug a couple of burrows into the side and lined it with plant scraps. They then successfully fledged three young and have since returned in May.

Although he thought he had heard the Pardalotes calling in past years, Brendan hadn't seen them in the backyard before. He believes they are attracted to a gum tree with lots of lerps in the yard next door. This year, Brendan has recreated the dirt mound, but he hasn't yet been able to confirm that a nest burrow has been established. He suspects that the birds might be trying to make burrows in a trench that was excavated for some sewerage work.

The male spends all day prancing in front of a window while the female flies about gathering things to line the burrow. Last year the male bird very cutely landed on his daughter's finger.



Birds along the Merri in early winter

The calm, sunny weather was very pleasant for birding at nine sites on 17 May, and likewise at Bababi Marning on 24 May.

A highlight for the day was a flock of eight Swift Parrots, flying north above the Merri during the East Brunswick-Northcote survey. These fast-flying, smallish green and red parrots breed in Tasmania's mature eucalypt forests, and cross Bass Strait in late autumn to forage in flowering eucalypts in Victoria, NSW and even Queensland. There are only an estimated 1,000 pairs left and, according to *Australian Birdlife* (vol. 4, no. 2, June 2015) the Swift Parrot "is on track to extinction at a faster rate than almost any other Australian bird." Logging in Tasmania is the main threat, and is continuing in the Parrot's breeding habitat.

It is the season for Flame Robins to move from the mountains into open grasslands. Six were seen at Galada Tamboore, and five at Bababi Djinanang. A Red-capped Robin was a notable sighting at Bababi Marning and unusually, a male Scarlet Robin was hanging around with three female Flame Robins at Galgi Ngarrk.

The birds were very active at Galgi Ngarrk, possibly in response to good weather after a sustained period of adverse weather. The Skylarks were doing a lot of displaying. Also seen were an estimated 400 Eastern Grey Kangaroos, a few butterflies (notably Meadow Argus), two cocoons of praying mantis and a native bee in a Yam Daisy. Curly Sedge Creek had no water but about 20 Common Froglets were in the vicinity of the creek. A Mistletoebird was seen twice in different locations so may have been two birds. Of note also were two huge flocks of Red Wattlebirds, and a generally larger population of many species than would be expected at this time of year. Euan had another possible sighting of a Horsfield's Bushlark, but again couldn't be certain. This species was first added to our survey list in February at Bababi Marning.

There were large numbers of Silvereyes at Bababi Djinanang, attracted to the Tree Violets which have retained a large crop of berries this year. Also noteworthy

Swift Parrot
at Gilpin Park,
Brunswick.
Photo: Nicole
Spillane.



were a female Scarlet Robin and male Golden Whistler. Both species have stayed around the area in recent months.

At Hall Reserve, Clifton Hill, leaders Ruth and Des Shiel commented on the continuing absence of small birds – probably due to the increasing numbers of aggressive Noisy Miners. There were plenty of Rainbow and Musk Lorikeets in the profusely flowering Eucalypts, but only one Red Wattlebird and no smaller honeyeaters. Edwardes Lake Reserve is another site where Noisy Miners appear to be dominating and evicting smaller birds.

A total of 79 bird species was seen across the ten sites surveyed in May. The Magpie was the only species recorded at every site. Red Wattlebird was by far the most numerous species with 345 individuals recorded. The sites with the most diversity were Galgi Ngarrk (39 species), East Brunswick-Northcote (32), and Edwardes Lake (30). Galgi Ngarrk had the most individual birds, an estimate of 466.

A domestic cat was spotted in the gully at Galada Tamboore, well away from houses, and the two feral goats there have had a kid.

There were Southern Brown Tree-frogs calling from Merri Park wetland, about 20 Common Froglets in the vicinity of the dry Curly Sedge Creek and more at Edwardes Lake, and Spotted Marsh Frogs calling at Bababi Marning.

Third Merri Birdwatch survey for 2015

Bird surveys will be held from 8.45–10.30am at ten sites along Merri Creek as listed below. Beginners welcome, BYO binoculars if possible, but no dogs please, as they reduce the number and variety of birds to be seen. The contact for all Birdwatch events is Ann McGregor 0429 386 102.

Free leaflets on Merri Birds (normally \$2) are available for all participants

Surveys at the following nine sites are on 6 September and 8 November

- | | |
|--|---|
| Bababi Djinanang (Jukes Rd Grasslands), | CERES – Moreland Road: Meet at the seats on the Merri |
| Fawkner: Meet on the Merri Path at the end of | Path at rear of CERES, East Brunswick (Melway 30 B7). |
| Jukes Road, Fawkner (Melway 18 A2). | |
| Egan Reserve – Harding Street – Strettle Reserve – | Merri Park and Phillips Reserve: Meet at the end of Victoria |
| Normanby Avenue: Meet at the bluestone steps at the | Street, East Brunswick, at the BBQ shelter (Melway 30 B8). |
| end of The Grove, East Coburg (Melway 30 A3). | |
| Coburg Lake Reserve: Meet near the car park, | Hall Reserve – Yarra Bend Park: Meet at the Rotunda, |
| Lake Grove, Coburg (Melway 17 H10). | Hall Reserve, Clifton Hill (Melway 2D D1). |
| Edwardes Lake: Meet at the playground adjacent | Galgi Ngarrk (Craigieburn Grasslands): Meet at O'Herns |
| to Griffiths Street, Reservoir (Melway 18 E5). | Road gate off Hume Highway, Somerton (Melway 180 E6). |
| | Galada Tamboore: Meet at the end of Hatty |
| | Court, Campbellfield (Melway 7 K6). |

Surveys at Bababi Marning (Cooper St Grasslands) are on 13 September and 15 November

Meet near the Istrian Club, Cooper Street, Campbellfield (Melway 180 K10).

Pioneers of the Merri Creek (part 1)

Oakover Hall, the oldest building in Preston, is the great survivor of early settlement along the Merri Creek. When Thomas Goodwin took up residence there in 1857 on a hill above the Merri Creek, his views stretched unimpeded over the bucolic valley of the Creek all the way to Melbourne, then in the throes of gold fever. In a grand sweep of hyperbole, the Melbourne Herald described that landscape as “primeval.”

Today, Oakover Hall stands on a suburban block in Stafford Street Preston. The gracious surrounds of the nineteenth century are long gone. The twentieth century saw its grandeur diminished by the inexorable creep of suburban development, but in recent years it has been restored to its early glory.

By 1839 Robert Hoddle, senior surveyor of the Port Phillip district, had completed his survey of the Jika Jika Parish, in which Preston was located. Melbourne's third great land sale took place during 1838 and 1839, and this was to herald the land boom of the 1840's when fortunes were won and lost. The auctions were held in Sydney, then the centre of government, for twelve “suburban” allotments north of Miller Street on either the Merri or Darebin Creeks.

The buyers were mainly land speculators; many had never seen the allotments, London speculators employed agents to bid, and eminent local citizens moved in for a killing. Within a few months most owners had sold their land. The Superintendent of Port Phillip District, William Lonsdale, paid £556-10-0 for his 550 acres that fronted the Darebin Creek which he sold for £2915 a few months later.

The most southern of these allotments was 385 acres between Miller Street in the south and Bell Street in the north, its eastern boundary was High Street and the western boundary was the Merri Creek. This land, purchased by John Carey for £808-10-0, was the highest priced allotment because it was the closest to Melbourne. Carey, like other speculators, did nothing with the land, but unlike the others he held on to it until 1849 when he sold it to Thomas Webb Goodwin for £1800.

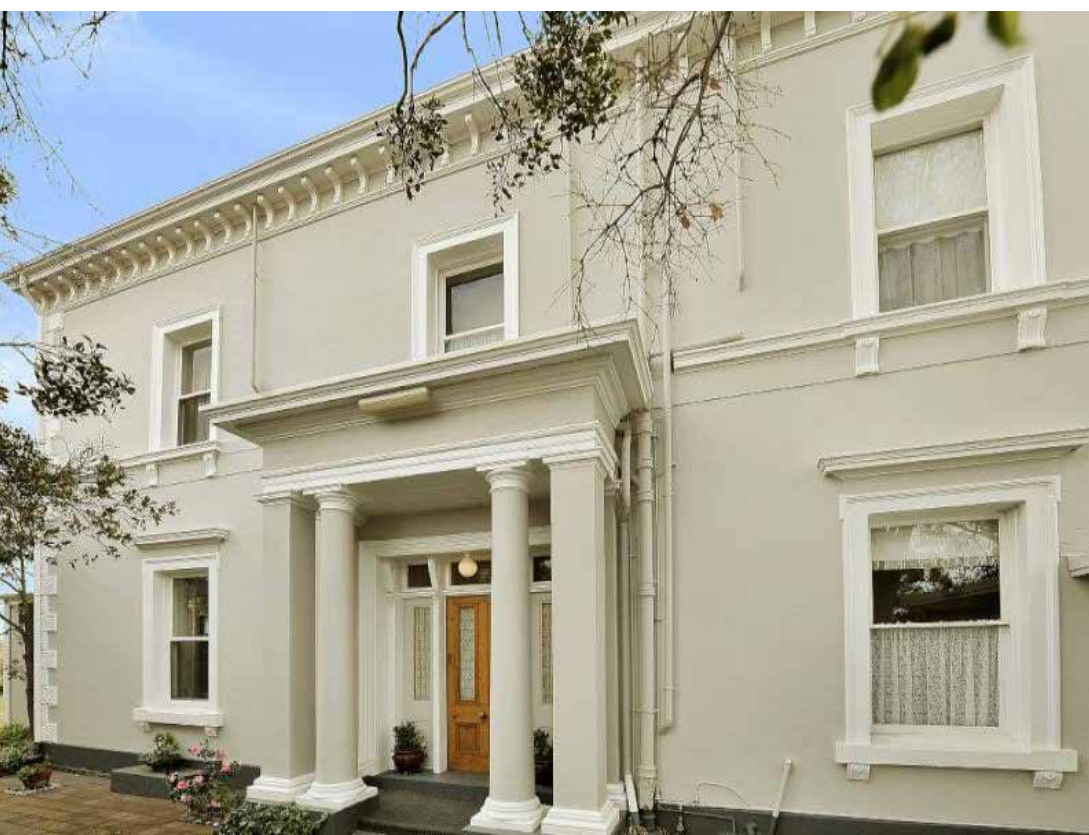
Goodwin seems an exemplar of those sons with well-to-do English backgrounds who were sent to the colonies to seek their fortunes. He came from Ashbourne in Derbyshire where his father, Richard, was a qualified medical doctor who had not practised. Thomas, it was said, also had medical qualifications, but had not pursued the profession. It is interesting to note, in the light of Goodwin calling his home Oakover Hall on the Merri, that the Okeover Arms Hotel is close to Ashbourne, whilst across the River Dove in neighbouring Staffordshire is Okeover Hall, a grand mansion built in the eighteenth century with a family heritage going back centuries.

Goodwin seems to have landed in Port Phillip in the late 1830s. His social status was demonstrated in 1847 when he returned to England to marry Julia Jemima Martin, the daughter of Anthony Crosby Martin, Esquire, of Daugan House in the county of Galway, Ireland. The Martin family had a long heritage in Galway, and whether Julia was from the actual mansion that is Daugan House or from the nearby village of the same name is not clear. But she seems to have been very well connected. Someone later remarked, somewhat snippily, that Julia was said “*never to have boiled an egg or made her own bed.*” The marriage took place on 31 January, 1848 at Matlock Bath in Derbyshire.

Though Goodwin is mentioned in Pastoral Pioneers of Port Phillip in 1841 as a storekeeper, land was always to be his avenue to wealth. In 1847, he was a settler at Chain of Ponds near Geelong. Soon after their marriage the couple were back in Melbourne and living on a property on the Darebin Creek, possibly on one of the original blocks of the 1839 land sales. In July 1849, a daughter was born here.

Goodwin's acquisition of land continued. In 1849, he bought John Carey's property of 385 acres on the Merri Creek for £1800. He established a dwelling on the property and soon began to subdivide it. With the discovery of gold in 1851, Goodwin's land had become very valuable. In December 1853 he sold five acre farmlets along Bell Street for prices up to £60 per acre, allowing him to realise £7280 in the first two years of subdivision. And he still had much land left. He set aside 30 acres for himself. His land was one of the first subdivided, and by 1860 the area south of Bell Street was covered with small farms, as well as a few shops and businesses.

Continued on next page



Oakover Hall, 12
Stafford St Preston

Water music quartet

That unique inland sea Port Phillip is fed by a wide arc of waterways, from the Brisbane Ranges' Little River, the sinister Skeleton Creek and the elegant Elwood Canal to Carrum's Patterson River with its water sports and labyrinth of harbours.

Rising in the Great Dividing Range, the Werribee River meets the Lerderderg below their spectacular gorges, then the Pyrites and Djerriwarh Creeks which front the extensive Long Forest. Beyond the Melton Reservoir it's flanked by expanses of Grey Box forest in Eynesbury and Mount Cottrell.

Werribee at last got electric trains through the Altona to Laverton link, which runs past the Truganina Swamp and the Mount St Joseph Wetlands. The mansion in the Park with its outdoor artworks is used as a luxury hotel; there are golf and equestrian facilities and the Open Range Zoo. The mouth of the river on Port Phillip has boat ramps and jetties, while the Cheetham Wetlands, Point Cook and the sewage farm have plenty of habitat for birds.

The west and east branches of the Kororoit Creek join forces in Diggers Rest – another beaut Aussie place-name, like Rum Jungle, Horse Camp, Durham Ox, Tailem Bend, Bacchus Marsh, Iron Knob; Useless Loop, Stokers Siding, Barn Bluff, Dinner Plain, Marble Bar, Lightning Ridge! Then it winds past Mount Kororoit (237 metres) on its way to Caroline Springs, which may get a much needed station between Deer Park and Rockbank if the Melton line is electrified like Sunbury's.

It visits the new suburb of Cairnlea, which has numerous water features including Jones Creek, and the 35-hectare Iramoo wildflower reserve; the Ring Road links its footway to seven other ones, from Federation Trail and the Maribyrnong's gorge to the Plenty River at Greensborough. It reaches the sea by Altona's mangroves, between Cherry Lake and the Jawbone Reserve's lagoon.

The Hume Range east of Wallan, topped by the 794-metre Mount Disappointment, is the source of the Merri's twin the Plenty River. Its branches unite near Whittlesea, whose trains were part of the nineteenth century's love-affair with the steam-engine – now it's even been hard to restore them to South Morang.

But the pioneering Yan Yean Reservoir is still there today, as is the Plenty Gorge Park with its wetlands and picnic and camping sites, the Blue Lake, the historic farmhouse;

the final stretch of the river has a friendly country atmosphere, and the Banyule Homestead and billabongs.

The iconic Kinglake National Park sends the Diamond and Arthurs Creeks to their encounter at Hurstbridge, which managed to keep its trains and their wonderfully scenic track. From Diamond Creek township bikepaths lead to the Yarra, and along an obsolete aqueduct to Research – an excellent bit of recycling, like the North Fitzroy nursing-home that used to be a sub-station; the Old Treasury, the Kensington stock bridge, rail trails, and the Abbotsford Convent.

Then famously green and artistic Eltham has Edendale and Lenister Farms, Barak Bushland and Sweeneys Flats, the Copper Butterfly, and a pony club; Melbourne's last suburban-line trestle bridge, and the Diamond Valley Railway, with a seven-and-a-quarter-inch gauge; a monthly craft market, and beautiful Montsalvat.

So many respectful interactions with the environment; so many waterways flowing across the land, through meanders and reaches and riffles and rapids to confluences and estuaries, in the grand eternal cycle of clouds and rain and rivers and oceans. We have to fight to stop it from being disrupted by global warming.



A train crosses the wooden trestle bridge at Eltham. Photo: Wikimedia Commons

Pioneers of the Merri Creek (part 1)

(Continued)

In 1857, as his fortunes burgeoned, he engaged John Gill, one of Melbourne's leading architects, to build Oakover Hall on his 30 acres above the Merri Creek. Gill designed some of Melbourne's earliest churches and other buildings. The Royal Terrace in Nicholson Street Fitzroy (1854) and Grace Park House in Chrystobel Crescent Hawthorn (1857) are two Gill buildings still standing.

Gill's two-storied Italianate design was typical of that built for Melbourne's prosperous elite in those years. It was built from bluestone quarried from the Merri Creek, it had ten rooms as well as servants' quarters and cellars, and displayed all the finery of that era with its grand arches,

soaring ceilings and deep cornices. Its imposing pillared entrance faced the Merri Creek.

Goodwin's land ventures had brought him great wealth. When the family visited England in 1854, they had a nanny to look after their two children, Lilian and Robert. Another child was born in England. They lived at Oakover Hall until 1863 when they sold the property to Abraham Booth. Julia was to die at Tallangatta in 1884, and Thomas returned to England in 1888 where he later died.

Part two of the Oakover Hall story will concern itself with the Booth family who resided there for over forty years.

Des Shiel

Holy sites tour of the Merri Catchment (2)

Like the slow food movement, our second Holy Sites of the Merri Catchment tour was conducted at a leisurely pace. Following many requests, this tour was mid-week and visited the Preston Mosque and the 1856 Lutheran Church in Thomastown on a fine and sunny 26 March.



Mrs Irma Hatty welcomed us to the old Lutheran Church, which is part of the historic precinct of Westgarthtown. The Ziebell Homestead is about 200 m away and an historic cemetery lies to the west. Westgarth was a politician who lived in Victoria between 1848 and 1888: his name is associated with the Westgarth area near the Merri Creek north of Fitzroy. He also donated an amazing fountain, with an emu and kangaroo, which now stands in front of the Exhibition Buildings (Nicholson St). Part of this fountain was dumped into the Merri Creek at the end of Albion St East Brunswick sometime in the early 1970s, and was found by Brunswick residents in 1975.

Westgarth was impressed by the industry and sobriety of Lutheran immigrants from Germany to South Australia: he recommended to the Victorian Parliament that migrants from similar areas be attracted to Victoria. Thus, Ziebell and others selected this part of what is now Thomastown, in part as the land was rocky. This choice of land puzzled some people, but the Germans preferred the rocky basalt land as it provided, at no direct cost, the materials to construct solid houses. The stone was quarried on the site and basalt was used to construct the solid Lutheran Church with walls over 40 cm thick. The rest of the area used to be cropped with corn, and there were also grazing horses and dairy cows.

Irma said that when she was growing up, the Church was central to the lives of their family and that of the

Lutheran community. The family travelled to the Church using their horses: numerous carriages used to be drawn up along the nearby road on Sundays. She related many stories about the activities of their Pastors and the need for a good Lutheran education. Their Sunday School operated until recent years in an adjacent wooden building (now removed). These buildings overlooked the Edgars Creek. The rocky outcrops nearby have been replanted with Lightwoods and She-oaks. Lacking any organists in our party, we were unable to appreciate the sounds of the pedal operated pipe organ.

The Friends then visited the Omar Bin El-Khattab Mosque in Preston, which was built by the Islamic Society of Victoria from 1975. Previously, Muslims would gather at a house that used to be on the property. We were warmly welcomed by Mr Abdullah Khodr. After we removed our shoes before entering, Abdullah explained the importance of bathing before worship. About 800 people pass through the Mosque per day over the course of the five daily prayers, with more on special days, such as Friday. During our visit there was a steady stream of worshippers coming to say their prayers or visit the bookshop.

Notable features of all mosques are the minaret and dome: the Preston Mosque is quite modern with its glass dome, which makes it very well lit. We learnt about some of the values, teachings and practices of Muslim philosophy. The interior of the mosque is quite plain so that worshippers are not distracted from their devotions. One of the main prayer rooms had a carpet with prayer mats woven into the design. We visited the special room used to wash deceased people prior to burial, a traditional practice for which the facilities are not available at other nearby mosques. The Preston Mosque provides a range of important social networks and support for both recent immigrants and long-standing Australians. FoMC was welcomed to again visit the Mosque "anytime."

We thank both Irma and Abdullah for their time and knowledge on a most stimulating afternoon.

Bruce McGregor
Tour Leader



The beautiful world of moths

Presentation by Peter Marriott

Wednesday 16 September, 7.30pm
CERES EcoHouse, 8 Lee St East Brunswick

Moths – well most of them – are creatures of the night. Come along and learn about their fascinating world and get a close look at some of them. Peter Marriott heads up a team searching the state for them and there are at least a thousand species around Melbourne.

Please book with Ray: merricreek@bigpond.com or 0422 989 166.



Friends of Edgars Creek Focus

Hello from Friends of Edgars Creek (FoEC). We continue with our usual work on the Edgars Creek corridor in the planting season. Rather than provide an update on the calendar of events, one of our regular friends has penned her thoughts on what community groups like FoMC, FoEC and others offer to their members and the wider community. It touches on the impact each and every one of us has on our environment; also those whom we interact with and ultimately either survive or leave behind. My non-FoEC work life has taught me a lot about the importance of an individual's sense of identity and their connection to others. Take care of yourself and those you love! And please spend some of your spare time helping out our beloved creek environment.

"See ya on the creek."

David Pavone President, Friends of Edgars Creek

Impressions in the Mud

Tracks meander beside Edgars Creek, embossed into the dirt by repeated journeys, day in day out.

Especially after rain, footprints of walkers, the paw prints of dogs, and the grooves of bike tyres remain pressed into the wet mud.

The Parkland surrounding Edgars Creek, public land managed by the council, in essence, belongs to the community. But rather than being one cohesive unit, the umbrella notion of community actually comprises a diversity of individuals. Everyone who visits the creek interacts with others and the environment in their own particular way, bringing to the creek varying and at times conflicting values. With each visit, an imprint from every individual's presence adds to the mix.

By far, the most extensive and transforming impact upon the environment comes from the Friends of Edgars Creek. The group encourages all contributions toward cultivating and nurturing a sustainable bush land for the benefit of people and wildlife. Fringing the creek banks and creeping up the valley slopes, young indigenous plants wear protective green bags while established plants continue to thrive.

Contributions of a much more personal nature can also be found throughout the parkland. Perched upon a steep escarpment, in amongst outcrops of volcanic rock, resides a tribute to a local who had lived in the area for many years. Another tribute, dedicated to a cherished pet dog, nestles under a bush.

Then there are all the little remnants left behind, interactive markings and personal artefacts: a lost glove or woollen hat, chalk drawings on a rock slab, cigarette butts scattered around a flat rock used as a bench, fragments of rusted metal and car tyres exposed when water levels are low, piles of pulled weeds and collected rubbish, colourful graffiti and printed artwork. Warm embers hint at a fireplace gathering the night before. A burnt out car indicates a deliberate act of vandalism. An abandoned tent once provided shelter for a homeless person. Grass gouged by motorbike tyres and spray paint tags on a cliff face reveal the aftermath of adolescents entertaining themselves. Creative efforts appear then disappear: precariously balanced rock towers that eventually toppled, and sculptured from mud, figurines of a man and his dog that gazed over the edge of the little waterfall, at least until the next rains came.

Whatever the intended direction for the future development of Edgars Creek, people will continue to make their own mark on the landscape, some transient, others reinforced by repeated use. These contributions will be received with a variety of responses across the community, from approval to annoyance, delight to outrage.

But what of the marks that cannot be seen, the choice recently made, to take one's own life near the creek: it inflicts a deep emotional wound that will resonate through the landscape for countless years to come. How can the Edgars Creek community assist in healing? Perhaps by small steps taken, one individual to another? By belonging to a community people are brought together, and from growing relationships we may provide support for each other.

Angie Pötsch FoEC member



A peaceful, captivating image of the waterfall/dog pond area at the Ronald St footbridge area.

Let the reflection provoke you to reflect on your values and all the things that are important in your life. If you can then spend the rest of your days living in ways that support those values you may just find contentment - that's why we do our work on the creek with smiles on our faces! If we want to change the world, we must start with ourselves.

Dick's Witticisms

Some more witty one-liners from FoMC Life Member, Dick Harcourt:

Beware the fury of a patient man.

To err is human. To forgive is not this library's policy.

The light at the end of the tunnel is the headlamp of an oncoming train.

AUGUST

Saturday 1: MECCARG* Planting indigenous species

Meet at Connolly Ave Coburg, south of Murray Rd bridge, 1-3pm. Melway 18 A11. Wear sturdy footwear and gloves. Phone Melissa 0417 255 873.

Sunday 2: Planting & Litter Clean Up at Strettle Wetland

Friends of Merri Creek site near Strettle Wetland Thornbury, 10am-1 pm. Melway 30 B3. Help look after the site managed by the Friends with the support of the Darebin Bush Crew. Light refreshments afterwards. Phone Martin 0403 942 965.

Sunday 2: Streamteam Water Quality Testing

Upstream of St Georges Rd bridge, enter from Miller St, Nth Fitzroy, 2-3.30pm. Melway 30 C10. Phone 9354 9885.

Sunday 9: Planting & BBQ at WH Robinson Reserve

Parking available at Halwyn Crescent (Follow the flags to event), Preston 10am-12:30pm. Melway Map 30 B2. Planting will further efforts of community, council and MCMC to protect and restore native vegetation since the 1990s. Dogs (on leads!) welcome. Funded by Melbourne Water and Darebin City Council.

Sunday 9: Friends of Coburg Lake & Surrounds Planting

Carr St Bridge on Merri Creek Coburg, 10am-12noon. Phone Emma 9355 7982. Supported and sponsored by Moreland Council.

Sunday 16: Koonda-Lat is where it's at Planting & BBQ

Limited parking available at Holden Street, Fitzroy North and South Park Street, Northcote (follow flags to event) meet at Koonda Lat Bridge 10am - 12:30pm. Melway Map 30 D11. Help bring the bush back to the Merri Creek in Northcote. Funded by Melbourne Water and Darebin City Council.

Sunday 16: Friends of Edgars Creek Gooseneck Meander Planting

Meet at the Gooseneck Meander, access via Ronald St North Coburg, 1-3pm. Melway 18 A9. Help revegetate the west bank escarpment area. Funded by Satterley. Phone David 0428 130 268.

Sunday 23: Planting, Walks & BBQ - Fawkner

Habitat Heroes & Need for Seed Planting: Come to the eastern end of Jukes Rd in Fawkner and follow the flags, 10-12:30. Melway 18 A2. Featuring: Wurundjeri Elder *Caring for Country* presentation, planting, guided bird watch, self-guided walks to learn about 10 top plants for providing habitat followed by a BBQ. Funded by the Helen Macpherson Smith Trust and Communities for Nature.

SEPTEMBER

Saturday 5: MECCARG* Site Maintenance

Meet at Connolly Ave Coburg, south of Murray Rd bridge, 1-3pm. Melway 18 A11. Wear sturdy footwear and gloves. Phone Melissa 0417 255 873.

Sunday 6: Third Bird Survey for 2015

9 sites along the Merri. Details on page 3.

Sunday 6: Litter Clean Up - Craigieburn

Rushwood Drive Craigieburn, 10am-12noon. Melway 180 E1. Phone Paul 9489 5062.

EVENTS

Sunday 6: Streamteam Water Quality Testing

Upstream of St Georges Rd bridge, enter from Miller St, Nth Fitzroy, 2-3.30pm. Melway 30 C10. Phone 9354 9885.

Sunday 13: Third Bird Survey for 2015 at Bababi Marning

See Page 3 for details.

Sunday 13: 4th of 5 Woody Weed Whacking Block B Bababi Marning

Help to rid these native grasslands of woody weeds. Light refreshments provided. Meet at gate opposite 111 Metrolink Circuit Campbellfield, 10am-12.30pm. Melway 180 J12. Phone Ray 0422 989 166.

Wednesday 16: The beautiful world of moths with Peter Marriott

CERES EcoHouse, 8 Lee St East Brunswick, 7.30pm. Come along and learn about the fascinating world of moths and get a close look at some of them. Peter Marriott heads up a team searching the state for moths and there are at least a thousand species around Melbourne. Please book with Ray: merriecreek@bigpond.com or 0422 989 166.

Sunday 20: Friends of Edgars Creek Planting & "Christmas Party"

Meet at the Gooseneck Meander near Kodak bridge, access via Ronald St North Coburg, 1-3pm. Melway 18 A9. Shrub and grassland revegetation on the Kodak bridge batter. Funded by Satterley, Christmas celebrations funded by FoEC. Phone David 0428 130 268.

OCTOBER

Saturday 3: MECCARG* Site Maintenance

Meet at Connolly Ave Coburg, south of Murray Rd bridge, 1-3pm. Melway 18 A11. Wear sturdy footwear and gloves. Phone Melissa 0417 255 873.

Sunday 4: Litter Clean Up - Reservoir

Edgars Creek Wetlands, near Leamington St Reservoir, 10am-12noon. Melway 18 E4. Phone Paul 9489 5062.

Sunday 4: Streamteam Water Quality Testing

Upstream of St Georges Rd bridge, enter from Miller St, Nth Fitzroy, 2-3.30pm. Melway 30 C10. Phone 9354 9885.

Tuesday 6: Launch of Exhibition:

Merri Creek - Celebrating and caring for our natural heritage

Brunswick Library, Dawson St Brunswick, 10.30am. This exhibition documents the history of community action to transform Merri Creek. It will be on display in Brunswick for October, then move to Coburg Library in November. After that it will move around the Merri catchment at venues to be announced.

Saturday 10: Sumner Loving Weed Workshop

Merri Park Wetland, Northcote, Sumner Ave near Traill St, 1.30-3.30pm. Melway 30 C8, follow the flags. Help restore this fantastic almost natural wetland area in the heart of the suburbs, while you learn about local weeds. Funded by Communities for Nature and supported by the City of Darebin.

Thursday 15: Presentation: Merri Creek - Celebrating and caring for our natural heritage

Brunswick Library, Dawson St Brunswick, 7:45pm. Friends of Merri Creek Life members, Ann and Bruce McGregor, will give a presentation in conjunction with the exhibition that opens on 6 October.

Sunday 18: Weeding at Strettle Wetland

Friends of Merri Creek site near Strettle Wetland Thornbury, 10am-1 pm. Melway 30 B3. Help look after the site managed by the Friends with the support of the Darebin Bush Crew. Light refreshments afterwards. Phone Suzi 0403 595 466.

Sunday 18: Friends of Edgars Creek Site Maintenance

Meet behind the Big 4 caravan park (at the end of Elizabeth St), North Coburg, 1-3pm. Melway 18 B-C7. Mulching, weeding and general site maintenance activities. Phone David 0428 130 268.

Sunday 25: Wild Discoveries Walk

Bababi Marning, Cooper St Campbellfield, near the Istrian Club, 10.30am-12noon. Led by experienced members of MCMC's Parkland Management Team. Light refreshments will be provided. Funded by Communities for Nature.

NOVEMBER

Sunday 1: Litter Clean Up- North Coburg

Merlynston Creek confluence North Coburg, 10am-12noon. Melway 17 H9. Phone Paul 9489 5062.

Sunday 1: Streamteam Water Quality Testing

Upstream of St Georges Rd bridge, enter from Miller St, Nth Fitzroy, 2-3.30pm. Melway 30 C10. Phone 9354 9885.

Saturday 7: Sumner Loving Weed Workshop

Merri Park Wetland, Northcote, Sumner Ave near Traill St, 1.30-3.30pm. Melway 30 C8, follow the flags. Help restore this fantastic almost natural wetland area in the heart of the suburbs, while you learn about local weeds. Funded by Communities for Nature and supported by the City of Darebin.

Saturday 7: MECCARG* Preparation for Murnong Gathering

Meet at Connolly Ave Coburg, south of Murray Rd bridge, 1-3pm. Melway 18 A11. Wear sturdy footwear and gloves. Phone Melissa 0417 255 873.

Sunday 8: Fourth Bird Survey for 2015

9 sites along the Merri. Details on page 3.

*MECCARG = Merri & Edgars Creek Confluence Area Restoration Group

If no contact details given above, phone Ray or Monica at MCMC on 9380 8199.



Friends of Merri Creek Inc.

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Members' contributions are most welcome; please send to admin@mcmc.org.au by Friday 18 September, 2015