



Friends of Morwell National Park Inc.

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NEWSLETTER SEPTEMBER 1995

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Annual General Meeting was held on 6 August 1995. Reports were presented by the outgoing President, outgoing treasurer and the Ranger.

The following is the President's Report for 1994-95.

The last year has been a very eventful one for the Friends of Morwell National Park.

The year began with a big effort on the construction of our plant propagation centre in the Park. Most of the work was completed during July and August, with Paul Lambert and our ranger Rob Howell, providing both the expertise and most of the labour. The centre was completed in time to sow the first batch of seeds during the September working day. The outcome was approximately 1500 seedlings for planting in the Park and the bulk of these have now been planted. The whole project has been an enormous success. The construction was completed under budget and we obtained permission to spend the surplus grant money on a heated seed tray and that has already been used successfully to germinate some of the more difficult types of seed. Our thanks are due particularly to Anton Wray who prepared the design and grant application and to Paul and Judy Lambert and Rob Howell for their hard work in the construction.

The second major event of the year is reported with rather less enthusiasm. After a year of rumours, we learned early in June, that the department had decided to require the ranger to vacate the house at the Park, and that the house was to be sold for removal from the site. We were horrified by this news and an emergency committee meeting initiated action to try and reverse the decision. Our campaign was quite vigorously carried through. A press release was distributed through the Honourable Keith Hamilton's office and resulted in excellent coverage on the front page of the Express and in my being interviewed on WINTV. We also wrote to the premier, with copies to the Minister, the Department, the Latrobe Valley Council and our local MP's. Rob Howell's neighbour Barry Richardson then initiated a petition to parliament and the Friends assisted Barry and Ellen Anders in obtaining signatures to the petition. The result was staggering. In just 5 days, some 2800 signatures were obtained and the petition was presented to the Honourable Peter Hall who promised to present it to the Minister.

All this effort appears to have been in vain. We have received very little response to our efforts and the decision to move the ranger out is going ahead. Rob has purchased a house in Yinnar and the house will definitely be vacated. There still seems to be some doubt as to the future of the house, as it is going to cost the department a lot of money to have it removed. We are also concerned at the long term future of the propagation centre under the new arrangements.

The one positive aspect of this has been an appreciation of the feelings of the citizens of the valley regarding the Park. Almost everyone shown the petition signed without hesitation and it is encouraging to know that there is so much support in the Valley for Morwell National Park.

We are happy that while Rob Howell remains the park ranger, there will be no serious deterioration in the management of the Park, but we remain greatly concerned that when we eventually see a change in ranger, a new ranger, based in and therefore probably living in Traralgon, will never develop the same commitment and feeling for the Park that our current and previous ranger have shown.

A further hardship for the Friends is a major loss of key members. We have lost or will be losing shortly, several members who have contributed greatly to the work of the Friends over the years. All have moved away from the valley and all will be sorely missed.

First to go were Wendy and Dave Nickson. Wendy has served on the committee for some years including the roles of Secretary and News Letter Editor. She and Dave have also been regular toilers at our working bees.

More recently Yvonne and Brian Aplin have moved out of the Valley. Yvonne is our only remaining member from the very first meeting and has served on the committee in almost every role at some time or other. She has done as much as anyone to create a successful Friends group and to keep it working effectively. Brian has also put in a lot of work on our behalf over the years.

Judy and Paul Lambert have not gone yet, but will be moving away from the Valley very shortly. They will also be sorely missed. Judy has been another regular committee member especially as Treasurer for the last few years. Paul has been one of our hardest workers both at working bees and on other activities such as the construction of the propagation centre.

Finally Joanna Aziz has also told us that she and Hassan are planning to leave the Valley in the near future. Joanna has also served regularly on the Committee, including both the roles of Secretary and News Letter Editor.

All those I have mentioned have made major contributions to the Friends over several years. We will miss them all and we wish them all the very best in their new ventures.

We are now left with a big gap in our resources. We trust that new members will come forward to replace them on the committee and we shall be trying hard to recruit new members to insure that the Friends continue to thrive and to support the management of the Park.

Between these events, the work of the Friends progressed normally. The 1994 plantings were successfully completed and were duly celebrated with our usual casserole evening at the Aziz home.

We have already completed three plantings this winter, planting for the first time the trees we have propagated ourselves. The plants were in excellent condition and progress with planting has also been excellent, so that we only have plants left for one more planting session.

The koala survey on 18th September sighted 6 koalas and again one youngster was seen. On the same day some of us sowed the first seed in the propagation centre.

In October, we visited the Friends of the Sale Wetlands (postponed last year because of the flooding). We had a pleasant barbecue with the Sale group and were then shown over the wetlands and the new board walk by Charles McCubbin. A very informative afternoon culminating with a sighting of an owl-nightjar.

The annual butterfly orchid survey revealed a less successful flowering than last year. There is still no sign of any new plants developing on the plots.

November saw us working at potting up nearly 1500 seedlings. Most had done well, but the germination of blue gums, was poor and extra seed were sown to try and make up the difference.

Our December outing was the highlight of the year for me. We had invited Lindy Lumsden, the Department's expert on bats, to give us a demonstration of bat trapping and in the process try and extend our knowledge of the bat fauna of the Park. Lindy set 8 traps, four each in Foster's Gully and Billys Creek. The results were amazing. 87 bats of 8 different species were trapped, considerably expanding the previous list of known species in the Park. Some of us stayed up until 2.00 am to see the last traps checked in Billys Creek and were back again at 7.00 am for a final check and to help dismantle the traps. Lindy was superb in her enthusiasm and her vast knowledge of her subject and we thank her greatly for sharing her love of bats with us.

1995 began with an attack on willows along Billys Creek. In January the common sallow or pussy-willow was attacked with plants being pulled and poisoned in the forested part of the Park. In February a first attempt was made to attack the bigger willows along the river flats. Holes were drilled and willows poisoned in a stretch where the revegetation is ready to replace them. We shall look with interest in the spring to see how successful this was.

March saw the Friends helping with the Yinnar Country Fair and also pulling solanum along Fosters Gully assisted by a visiting group from the Friends of Tara Bulga. In addition, I attended the biannual Friends Conference as representative of our Group.

Removal of tree guards in April in the rain, led on to the tree planting, when the weather was rather kinder to us. An extra tree guard removal session on the higher slopes preceded our July tree-planting.

There seems little prospect of the government spending money to complete the access into Billys Creek in the foreseeable future, but it has been pleasing to learn that some money is available. Money collected by the original

appeal for funds to open up Billys Creek has been held for some time and the Department has directed that it should be spent.

It has been decided to use the money for building foot bridges over Billys Creek and there should be enough for at least two and possibly all four foot bridges.

The long awaited management plan has surfaced yet again, with a new draft version in Rob's possession. We won't get too optimistic, but maybe this time the plan will at least get presented for public discussion.

My final task is to thank Rob Howell, who has as always done an excellent job as Park Ranger and has continued to support and assist the Friends in everything we do. We commiserate with Rob at his forced removal from the house in the Park and we wish him and his family happiness in their new home. We are pleased that Rob is remaining with us as Ranger and look forward to working with him again in the year ahead.

Ken Harris, President

2nd August 1995

The following is the Treasurer's Report for 1994- 95

Statement of Receipts and Payments for period ending 30 June 1995

Opening Balance		\$1,871.06
<u>Receipts</u>		
Membership Fees	230.00	
Interest Received	27.77	
Yinnar South Country Fair	200.00	
		<u>457.77</u>
		\$2,328.83
<u>Expenditure</u>		
Propagation Unit	1,015.39	
Incorporation Fees	32.00	
Govt. Debit Tax	13.40	
Bat Visitor Expenses	25.00	
News Letter	90.00	
Conference	125.00	
Gifts	40.00	
		<u>1,340.79</u>
		\$988.04

BANK RECONCILIATION STATEMENT

Bank Statement		1,113.04
less Unpresented Cheque (Conference)	125.00	
		<u>\$988.04</u>

TERM DEPOSIT \$1,111.34
and is invested until 11/8/95.

Both the President's Report and the Treasurer's Report were accepted at the Annual General Meeting.

Resulting from the AGM the 1995-96 Friends Committee is as follows:

OFFICE BEARERS

KEN HARRIS	PRESIDENT
GEOFF MORLEY	VICE PRESIDENT AND ACTIVITIES CO-ORDINATOR
JOHN PULIS	SECRETARY (AND PUBLIC OFFICER)
WENDY STEENBERGEN	TREASURER

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

ROB de SOUZA-DAW	NEWSLETTER EDITOR
ANTON WRAY	

In addition, it was resolved Joan Sikkema would represent the Friends on the Yinnar South Country Fair Committee.

SPECIAL GENERAL MEETING

This meeting was held immediately after the AGM on 6 August 1995. At this meeting the following issues were discussed:

- * Security of Friends equipment arising from changes to the management of the Park.
- * Padlocks for access to the Propagation Shed.
- * Need for a roster for the Propagation Shed.

COMMITTEE MEETING 18/8/95

At this meeting the following copies were discussed:

- * Responsibilities of the new committee members
- * Changes to the management of the Park
- * Key availability for access to the Propagation Shed
- * Volunteer roster to check the Propagation Shed

The meeting resolved to forward a letter of appreciation to Barry Richardson and Ellen Anders for their efforts in urging the Department to retain the Ranger's residence.

TREE PLANTING DINNER

On 26 August 1995 an enjoyable evening was held for the 1995 tree planters. At the dinner President Ken Harris on behalf of the Friends thanked and farewelled Wendy and Dave Nickson for their contributions to the Friends.

NEW MEMBERS

The following people have recently joined the Friends:

Martin & Sharon Gwynne
Geoff Morley
Megan Vains

Welcome to the Friends.

SUBSCRIPTIONS

Subscriptions are now due and payable to the Treasurer. The subscriptions for the Friends year are:

Family	\$15.00
Individual	\$10.00

The subscriptions have not changed since the Friends became incorporated.

RANGER'S RESIDENCE

On 21 August 1995 Park Ranger Rob Howell vacated the Ranger's residence and is now living in Yinnar. He will now work from the Traralgon DCNR office and his depot will be in Eastern Road, Traralgon.

PROPAGATION SHED

Seedlings are being propagated in the shed for the re-vegetation of Billys Creek. An automatic watering system is installed. In the warmer months the shed will need to be checked every second day to ensure the watering system is functioning correctly.

Anton Wray will be able to check the Propagation Shed on some occasions. Volunteers are required to assist. If you are able to assist, please inform John Pulis. the intention is to prepare a roster to ensure the propagation facilities are secure and functioning correctly.

The existing locked gate across the track (in Fosters Gully) will be relocated northwards in the near future to limit vehicle access to the vacant house, depot and Propagation Shed. Volunteers checking the Propagation Shed will need to obtain the key for the shed (and gate) from Anton Wray, Ken Harris or John Pulis.

TREE PLANTING 20 AUGUST 1995

The weather was favourable for the mountain-goat tree planters. The planting site was on a slope approximately two hundred metres north of the weir on Billys Creek. It took the tree planting crew about 2½. hours to plant:

Eucalyptus globulos bicostata	(Blue Gum)	76
Eucalyptus viminalis	(Manna Gum)	1
Acacia verniciflua	(Varnish Wattle)	38
Acacia dealbata	(Silver Wattle)	4
Acacia melanoxylon	(Blackwood)	1
	TOTAL	<u>120</u>

SEPTEMBER ACTIVITY 1.30 PM 17 SEPTEMBER 1995

The annual koala survey has been part of the Friends activity calendar for several years. Koala watchers meet at the Fosters Gully carpark. People will then be allocated into groups to walk pre-determined tracks in the Park to find koalas. Please invite others to participate in the koala count. Past koala surveys suggest the more people participating in this activity the more koalas will be located.

FRIENDS NEWSLETTER

Members with information for the Friends monthly Newsletter should contact Rob de Souza-Daw on (051) 22 1946 or leave the relevant details in his letterbox at 23 Manuka St, Churchill 3842. The intention is to prepare the Newsletter ten days prior to the monthly activity.
