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Friends of Morwell National Park Inc.

Newsletter - September 2003

Website: <http://morwellnp.pangaeau.net>

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Welcome to the latest edition of our newsletter. This edition is mainly dedicated to the AGM and the various reports stemming from that meeting, thank you to Jane and Denis, Ken and Rob for putting all these together. Before we get into these, however, there are a few news items and last month's activity report from Wendy to have a look at.

Firstly, congratulations go to Denis and Jane Sultana on the safe arrival of our new member Aaron, just a couple of days after the AGM. Hopefully we will be seeing all three at our activities before too long.

Sadly, we must also send our condolences to the family of our member Rayma Felmingham, who passed away peacefully at home on September 5. Our thoughts are with Reg and Cathy at this time.

Lastly, a reminder that it is once again time to renew your memberships. Please find a renewal form attached at the end of the newsletter. Thank you if you have already renewed, please ignore this form.

Tree Planting No. 3

From Wendy Steenbergen

The last tree planting for the year and for once I was early. I had forgotten where we were supposed to meet, and as there was no one at Junction Rd, I decided to try Braniff's Rd, and again no one, so back to Junction Rd. Rob and Craig turned up, then Ken, so the four of us piled into Rob's vehicle and headed for the hills.

Rob assured me it was OK to drive up the lodge track as he had tried it a few days earlier, so we arrived to see a nice orderly pile of guards and stakes ready for our day's work. We were well organised with Rob and Ken sent up with tools and trees ready to start the planting and Craig and I climbing up and down the hills with the guards & stakes. I found I could only carry 10 guards at a time, so I lost count of the times I was up and down. Anyway, we managed to plant the 180 trees that Rob had planned, but there were a couple of special gums to be planted in a certain spot that I do think will like the place they ended up in a lot better.

We had a great day planting all the trees, having lunch with a view of the valley, finishing early in the afternoon, and still with plenty of room for next year's planting. Hope to see you all next month.

September Activity

Our planned activity for Sunday, September 21, is an Orchid Hunt. Hopefully, the weather will be kind and the spring orchids will be in abundance. We will meet at the Kerry Road picnic ground at 10am for a quick discussion on the agenda for the day. You will need to bring your lunch and refreshments, and wear suitable footwear and clothing for possible off track walking.

Friends of Morwell National Park Annual General Meeting- 3/08/02

Annual General Meeting declared open 1:40pm.

Attendance: Wendy Steenbergen, Rob Howell, Jane Sultana, Denis Sultana, Cathy Beamish, Michael Beamish, Dorothy Reinkowsky, John Pulis, Ken Harris, Hilma Batza, Danny Barclay, Peter McDonald.

Apologies: Tom Lawless, Kai Ming Ting.

Minutes of previous AGM were read and accepted as a true account. (Denis Sultana, Cathy Beamish)

The President's Report (copy included) was read and accepted (Dorothy Reinkowsky, John Pulis).

The Ranger's Report (copy included) was read and accepted. (Jane Sultana, Hilma Batza)

The Treasurer's Report was read and accepted. (Cathy Beamish, Denis Sultana)

Election of office Bearers:

President- Ken Harris.

(Nom- Hilma Batza, Sec- John Pulis)

Vice President- Denis Sultana

(Nom- Jane Sultana, Sec- Hilma Batza)

Secretary- Jane Sultana

(Nom- Cathy Beamish, Sec- John Pulis)

Treasurer- Wendy Steenbergen

(Nom- John Pulis, Sec- Dorothy Reinkowsky)

Newsletter- Michael Beamish

(Nom- Denis Sultana, Sec- Wendy Steenbergen)

Publicity Officers: Hilma Batza
Danny Barclay

(Nom- John Pulis, Sec- Wendy Steenbergen)
(Nom- Wendy Steenbergen, Sec- John Pulis)

General Business:

Motion that the membership fee structure will remain unchanged at \$10 per person or \$15 per family or group. Passed unanimously. (Wendy Steenbergen, Dorothy Reinkowsky)

Motion that recommended payment of the Incorporation Fee forthwith. Passed unanimously. (Wendy Steenbergen, Denis Sultana)

It was decided to share the duties of the Publicity Officer between Hilma Batza And Danny Barclay, with Danny submitting Newspaper Articles.

Annual General Meeting closed 2:15pm

Friends of Morwell National Park Committee Meeting- 3/08/02

Committee Meeting declared open 2:15pm.

Attendance: Wendy Steenberg, Rob Howell, Jane Sultana, Denis Sultana, Cathy Beamish, Michael Beamish, Dorothy Reinkowsky, John Pulis, Ken Harris, Hilma Batza, Danny Barclay, Peter McDonald.

Apologies: Tom Lawless, Kai Ming Ting

Minutes of the previous Committee Meeting on 7th May 2002 were read and accepted as a true account. (Moved: Michael Beamish, Seconded: Denis Sultana)

Business arising from previous meetings minutes: nil

Correspondence:

Inwards:

- Letter from the Friends of Tarra Bulga informing us of their upcoming Centenary Celebrations.
- Letter from Margaret Hillier asking for information about our Friends Group.
- Monash University informing us of the change in the name of the University Bookshop.
- Department of Primary Industry – Victorian Weedbusters week.
- Churchill District News – Churchill Festival May 2004
- Ecovoice Newsletter
- Under Control Magazine.
- Australian Tax Office – “Tax Basics for Non-Profit Organisations”
- Save our Strzelecki’s group – Information re: their upcoming Rally.
- Australian Platypus Conservancy re: Platypus reporting.

Outwards:

Letter to Margaret Hillier sending her information about the Friend’s group and it’s upcoming activities.

General Business:

- Churchill Festival- Cathy Beamish will attend the Meeting on August 28 at Monash University to investigate further and fill out the Expression of Interest form received.
- Ken Harris commented on the continuation of re-vegetation of Blue Gum Hill now that the construction of the fencing has stalled. Rob Howell replied that it would cost approx \$8000 to complete and suggested that once the lease of the other section had ceased a service track could be put in to allow safer access. In the meantime it has been decided to distribute the remainder of the clay balls on the steeper sections of Blue Gum hill.
- It was agreed to plant 300 to 400 Stringybarks and Grey gums to accompany the Varnish Wattle in the South West corner of Billys Creek near Frank Peels property.
- Calender of Activities for 2003 was discussed and is being produced by Michael Beamish. It will be published in the December 2003 newsletter.
- Hilma Batza gave an update of his investigations into the history of the Billys Creek area. He hopes to be able to distribute this information to members in the near future.
- Peter McDonald suggested that name tags be used at activities. Rob Howell will see if Parks Vic can help and the committee will also do further investigations.

Meeting Closed 3:30pm

Friends of Morwell National Park President's Report for 2002 to 2003

Another successful year in the life of the Friends of Morwell National Park has been completed and I summarise what has happened below.

We have been pleased to welcome several new members to our group and most particularly to our working sessions. We heartily welcome them all and hope that will gain interest and pleasure from the group (as well as some hard work).

Our annual Koala count was extremely well attended, with assistance from the CGOARN members and several families drawn in by the advertising. Thanks to all for their help. A total of 10 koalas were found during the survey.

Outings for the year, included two exploratory walks. Late last year we explored the Muttonwood Creek and Silvertop Hill tracks. More recently in April, we explored the route of the eventual Coprosma track (in drizzle). This track will extend the accessible regions of the Park to the far side of Blue Gum Hill, but its completion still awaits the formal addition of this area to the Park. We hope we won't have to wait too long for this to be completed.

One very significant event for the year was the loss of Ed and Helen Steenbergen. Ed was our president for several years and worked hard and well for the Park. He, Helen and their children have moved to New Zealand, and we wish them well in their new home.

In the course of the year, I have completed the task of putting together a complete set of all the past newsletters of the Friends. Thanks to Eulalie Brewster, who has kept her newsletters from the very start, we now have a complete set right back to the very first newsletter in June 1986 and all of these are accessible on the Morwell National Park Website at www.morwellnp.pangaeon.net. I hope to add an index in the near future.

Using a grant that we obtained last year, a new Gas Barbecue has been installed at the Kerry Road picnic area. We christened it at our Christmas feast, which was provided for us by Parks Victoria (thank you very much). The Christmas get together included friends from neighbouring groups, including Tara Bulga, Mt Worth and Mt Baw Baw and the St Gwinear Ski Patrol

Arrangements have been made with Grand Ridge Plantations to remove pines along Jumbuck Rd, but we were unable to obtain a government grant, to assist with the work. Grand Ridge Plantations will be able to go ahead as they will get enough value from the timber to cover the costs of removing the pines and revegetating the area. We will have to wait until it fits into their schedule before the work gets done.

Our experiments last year with clayballing for revegetation of Blue Gum Hill were not a success. The clayball sowing trial resulted in just 2 seedlings and both of these died in the very dry summer. We continue to search for a viable technique for revegetating that steep hillside. We intended to do some trial planting on the hillside this winter, but attempts to get a large hillside area fenced have fallen through. Green Corp were going to put the fence up, but the logistics proved too much for them and we have to seek alternative ways of getting this job done.

During the year members led various visiting groups around the Park and the guidance was greatly appreciated. Groups that I know of are the Cub Scouts, Campaspe Valley Bowling Association and the local Australian Plant Society.

The annual orchid survey was completed in November, while other members pulled weeds! It was not a good year for butterfly orchid flowers and a very poor year for seed set. I only saw one seed pod in the Park this year. I feel that the orchid plants are suffering from the series of dry years we are experiencing and we are losing plants from the drought, with very few new plants appearing to replace them,

Friends once again propagated plants for further revegetation in the Park. Seeds were sown, germinated, potted up and we are now half way through planting the year's crop. Planting started filling in an area along Billys Creek, so that we now reckon the whole creek flat revegetation is complete. Our last planting (intended for Blue Gum Hill), was diverted to the top of the Lodge Track. We successfully planted our quota on a very steep hillside, replacing an earlier planting that was entirely lost to the goats!

Seed was collected for further propagation, particularly Blue Gum seed which is needed in quantity for revegetating Blue Gum Hill. We also collected a lot of Blackwood seed which was prolific this year.

The ongoing spraying of blackberries has continued and it is good to see significant progress being made and the native vegetation beginning to return where the blackberries had thrived.

We attempted to pull willows from the upper sections of Billys Creek, but we have done the job so well in the past that we did not find a single willow. We concentrated on other weeds and removed a lot of Tutsan (*Hypericum androsaemum*) and Teasel (*Dipsacus fullonum*).

A lot of effort was put into removing the old tree guards from large numbers of trees on the Billys Creek flats. The task is pretty well complete now, except for the most recent plantings. Several Brown Tree Frogs (*Litoria ewingii*) were found in the guards and wasps were found defending a pile of old guards.

During the autumn there were some fires in the Park. The first was apparently deliberately lit during the night on Stringybark Ridge, but fortunately it was spotted early and the CFA got in there quickly and put it out with only minimal damage. The other fires were protective burning by the department. Two areas have been burned, but apparently the fires did not burn well as the bush was too damp. I shall nevertheless watch these areas for orchids next spring, especially the areas on Stringybark Ridge.

We have submitted our annual grant application and this year have applied for funds to replace and expand the picnic tables available along the tracks in the Billys Creek area.

That just about covers the year. I will conclude by thanking the committee, particularly the Secretary, Jane, Treasurer, Wendy and newsletter editor, Mike for their sterling efforts during the year and finally thank our ranger Rob Howell for his outstanding support and assistance to the Friends and to Morwell National Park,

Ken Harris
President
2nd August 2003

Ranger's Report – Morwell National Park 2002/2003

The major achievement for the year was the purchase and installation of the gas barbeque at the Kerry Road picnic area; a project funded by a Parks Victoria Volunteer Group Grant made to the Friends of Morwell NP. The Grant also enabled the addition of a new notice board, for Friends' display material, to the visitor information shelter at Kerry Rd.

The project to remove the pine plantation and revegetate the site (up Jumbuk Rd) was held up by Grand Ridge Plantations' inability to log in the area due to safety concerns about logging trucks using Jumbuk Road to access the Valley. The main problem is the bend at Bill Roberts' place where the trucks have to swing onto the wrong side of the road on a sharp, blind bend to get around. The planning process to widen this bend has already commenced so; hopefully the pines removal project will go ahead in the near future.

Some early news on the success or otherwise of the Grant Application for 2003/4 (picnic tables for Billys Creek) indicates that the Grant will be made but at the reduced amount of \$1600. This should still enable the installation of two tables.

Our trial of the clay seed balls on Blue Gum Hill has produced some disappointing results with only two seedlings germinating from the hundreds distributed in the plot and those two seedlings having since died due to the extraordinarily dry conditions over summer. I am hoping for some belated germinations this year with a return to more normal winter and spring rainfall.

Another year of productive weed spraying has been achieved in the Billys Creek area despite so much staff time being lost to fires this summer. More Blackberries have been treated on steep slopes to compliment past year's work and a helicopter was used to spray thistles and ragwort on the open areas around Blue Gum Hill.

A wildfire started mysteriously on Stringybark Ridge early in the morning of a day of Total Fire Ban in March this year. Because of the extremely dry conditions and the wind at the time the fire burned very hotly but was controlled early in the day as the vigilant people of Yinnar South reported it promptly and Fire crews got onto it before the day warmed up. Due to the intensity of the fire the area looks black and devastated at the moment but natural regeneration and direct seeding (which was done on areas of soil disturbance as part of the rehabilitation process) will soon have the burnt area looking green and fresh again.

On more of a District theme, Jack Brooks from the Friends of Mt Worth State Park recently retired from the office of President of that group after over 30 years in the position. In recognition of this monumental service to the cause, the VNPA awarded Jack with it's prestigious Best Friend Award. As Jack was unable to travel to the Friends Conference at Cape Bridgewater (near Portland) for the presentation, a small ceremony was held at Mt Worth where the award was presented to Jack in front of invited dignitaries and Friends of Mt Worth past and present.

Thanks to all Friends and the committee for another great year of activities including the usual works such as weed pulling, tree planting and tree guard removal, as well the more pleasurable ones like leading guided walks and counting koalas. We should try to do more of the latter.

Rob Howell

From the Ranger's Desk

I apologise for earlier information I relayed to the Friends regarding the outcome of the 2003/2004 Grant for the installation of picnic tables etc. in Billys Creek. It seems that the Grants budget needed to be trimmed down more than expected and the smaller Grants were the first to be dropped off, so the Morwell NP one has not been successful. Many other Groups had their larger Grants trimmed back substantially as well.

However, my Ranger-In-Charge has said that we might be able to find some money in our District budget to do at least a small part of the project (maybe one table). We will have to go over the priorities again and ensure we get the best value from the limited dollars available.

See you at the Koala count in October.

Rob Howell.

Editor's Note: Our Secretary, Jane Sultana, has received the official letter from Parks Victoria, informing us of our unsuccessful application for grant money on this occasion.