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Friends of Morwell National Park Inc.

Newsletter – April 2004

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

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Welcome to the latest edition of our newsletter. 'Tis just a short one this month, as I'm a bit late getting myself organised, with Easter getting in the road and me concentrating on eating chocolate and spending my weekends travelling around the local countryside, smelling the wildflowers. Nobody has handed me any mail to report this month, so let's get straight into it.

April Activity

A simpler and more relaxed activity is planned this month, I'm sure it is one of Rob's favourite jobs, removing tree guards from our previous year's plantings along Billy Creek. Wendy has been keeping her eyes peeled over the last couple of months, taking notes on where we need to be looking for those dreaded pink tubes or white mesh numbers that refuse to disintegrate. We will meet at the Junction Road carpark on Sunday, April 18, at 10am. As usual, it is BYO lunch, refreshments, suitable clothing and footwear.

Planting Clay

Last month, we arrived at Junction Road just as the ten o'clock news bulletin began on the radio, to find nothing but an empty car in the carpark. I was sure this was where we were supposed to be and a quick check of the newsletter confirmed it. We waited impatiently and after five minutes or so, Wendy and Hilmar arrived from the direction of Kerry Road. They informed us that they had left Junction Road at 10am on the suspicion that we would meet at Kerry Road! By 10.15am, nobody else had arrived, so we left Wendy's car parked beside our brand spanking new picnic table and drove around to Braniff's Road to see if anybody was waiting there. Lo and behold, Ken and Reg were there, beginning to think that they would be working on their own. Ken said that he had stopped by Junction Road at 10am, but found the place empty! We must have all missed each other by seconds! Anyway, I'm not going to bother with the newsletter from now on, because it is obvious nobody reads it. (We'll see if that gets a reaction!!)

Once we had established what was going on and that Rob was not going to be in attendance for the day, having left all the equipment waiting for us on Blue Gum Hill, we quickly organised ourselves and were on our way. We drove up the Billy Creek track almost to the weir before taking a left into the Side Creek valley for a kilometre or so until we reached the base of the Blue Gum Hill track where it begins to zigzag up the side of the hill. From there on it was walkers only, so we donned our daypacks

and commenced our ascent, puffing and panting our way up the slope, all except Hilmar, who is sickeningly fit and didn't even raise a sweat as he easily trotted along at twice our pace. We found the gear waiting as promised, and once we had caught our breath, we formulated our plan of attack. The idea was to form a line up the slope, then work along the contour removing a small divot of grass every couple of feet, then placing a clayball into the scrape so that it was in contact with the soil. We each had a hoe or mattock and a bag of balls, but it was slow progress as we battled to maintain our footing on the steep hillside. In places, the grass didn't help, as it formed layered mats that were virtually impossible to stand on without slipping.

We worked westward around the slope for an hour or so before climbing up to next patch above us, then turning around and working eastward along the contour until we were in line with our starting point. By then, it was past time for lunch, so we found a patch of shade and settled down for a rest. We had used about three-quarters of our clayball stocks and most of our energy, so once we had recovered sufficiently we decided a bit of random dispersal of the remaining balls was called for. We tidied up our gear and pegged out the main plot, then as we made our way back down the hill to the cars, we threw the remaining balls into the bare areas on the bottom side of the track. Hopefully, some will do their job and provide some revegetation in these areas in future.

As we approached the cars and entered the tree line at the bottom of the gully, a Black Wallaby cautiously watched us from his cover in the blackberries. Eventually, our presence got the better of him and he decided a bit of distance between us was in order as he hopped away around the slope. We dallied a while around the cars, enjoying the cool and shade of the gully, looking at the trees and shrubs, most of which were meant to be there, but dismayed at the numbers of wasps flying around the area. They seem to be a problem everywhere at the moment. On the way out we detoured up to the weir and, sure enough, another new picnic table had been installed there. We wondered if the new additions extended to the other table in need of replacement on Potato Flat, but a short drive revealed the sorry state of the old table slowly disappearing into the undergrowth. Oh well, perhaps next time.

G'day again, everyone,

Rob has added a postscript to the newsletter mailouts, so I thought I had better pass on his plans to the emalees. Rather than his favourite job of tree guard removal, Rob would prefer his second favourite job and finish off the willow removal on the lower section of Billy Creek, weather permitting. Same start times and locations, perhaps just bring a pair of gumboots as well. We'll get to the tree guards if we have time!!

Cheers,
Mike