



Friends of Ferguson Park



Newsletter No. 120 October 2017

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Park Working Bees
First Sunday of
month 10am, Main
Gate, Hallett Road
Stonyfell

Park Working Bee
Dates 2017

1 January
5 February
5 March
2 April
7 May
4 June
2 July
6 August
3 September
1 October
5 November
3 December

Working Bees Update

During the winter months weeding continued in various parts of the Park, including the 'Triangle' and around recent revegetation areas near the main Park entrance on Hallett Road and on Stoneyfell Creek. Target weeds included Plantain (*Plantago lanceolata*), Pusshytail Grass (*Pentameris pallida*) and Rice Millett (*Piptathrum miliaceum*).

In September and October a concerted effort was made to control the bulbs, notably One-leaf Cape Tulip (*Moraea flaccida*) and Sparaxis (*Sparaxis bulbifera*). Margaret continued her Monadenia (*Disa bracteata*) patrol efforts and was able to report that very few individuals were found. It was heartening, however to observed patches of the native Spider Orchids (*Caladenia* sp.).

In October Doug established some small plots to trial the control of Sparaxis. Control methods to be trialled include wiping with Glyphosate, hand-digging and cutting off the flower/seed heads. Colin and Elaine undertook weeding and spraying around the 'grove' of Pittosporums which have germinated (or suckered) in the north-west corner of the Park adjacent to St Peters Girls'.

We also held a planting session with 28 students from St Peters Girls School during August 2016. Having so many students involved enabled a large number of plants to be put in at three sites in just 1.5 hours.

I've worked out our time input for the year July 16 to June 17 which you could put in the newsletter.

Geoffrey has calculated our volunteer hours for the year July 2016 to June 2017. We had 12 working bees (although two were truncated due to inclement weather). A total of 144 volunteers took part in the monthly meetings contributing 238 hours of work. In addition to the monthly meetings other input of time amounted to an additional 82 hours giving a total for the year of 330 hours or 13.75 days. The main other contributors were time relating to the Stonyfell Creek work and the St Peters Girls School planting event.

Update on the 'rubble track'

The rubble track which was laid in July/August to allow access for machinery for building works being undertaken by St Peters Girls' will hopefully be removed shortly when the weather warms up and dries out. The track was laid to limit the damage/mess made from accessing the park during the wet weather. Our Ranger, Brent Lores, has been told by the school that no stones will be left behind!

The planned planting along this boundary (between the school and the Park) won't go ahead until the building site is vacated. FFCP has been promised some compensation funds which will be used to engage weed control contractors and undertake other site preparation.

Soursob spray trial

A program was started last year (August 2016), to kill Soursob in a few trial plots to judge the natural revegetation that might follow. It has been continued at the same time this year, with an adjustment. The temporary school builders roadway demolished one of the sites, but I sprayed the remainder with the same Glyphosate (Roundup) brew as last year. It was heartening to see that last year's initial knock-down achieved a very satisfying, estimated 90+% control. If we achieve the same again this year, one more in a year, might give us a very real potential improvement in native species regeneration, where soursob has choked the understory for decades.

Bill Bainger, Stonyfell

Erosion control

The opportunity exists for some nicely synchronised track reinforcing/ paving/ armouring (as Parks manuals say). Hundreds of cubic metres of rocks, all screened to about 75mm diameter, are temporarily paving tracks for builders access to St Peters Girls School. The opportunity might exist for some of these small rocks, when no longer required, to be laid on eroded tracks in Ferguson Conservation Park, to halt the erosion immediately. A thin layer of cheap, smaller 'road base' over the top, would make for a strong, but 'rustic', blending-in finish. The appropriate narrow width equipment would need to be used to transport, lay, and 'dress' it, with minimal impact, after a suitable government grant has been sought and won. While the initial, visual impact might appear dramatic, within a short time, regrowth and new growth will repair the scene, creating a sustainable track system that really is the only responsible alternative we have, as 'managers' of a Conservation Park, heavily used by the track-walking public.

Bill Bainger, Stonyfell



The temporary rubble track

A Foothills Gem

The following article was written by Ken Preiss and published in the April 2002 issue of The Chain newsletter (Dept Environment & Heritage)

Ferguson Conservation Park lies on the eastern foothills at Stonyfell some 6 kilometres from Adelaide. The Park supports an interesting plant association, transitional between that of the plains and of the ranges. From 1982 a Friends group has cared for the Park.

Miss Alice Effie Ferguson, a niece of Alexander Melrose, gave the land to the state in 1949. Since the 1880's the land had been managed by previous owners to maintain the plant and bird life. It is believed never to have been extensively grazed, except perhaps for intermittent cattle grazing in the early 1900s.

Originally managed by the SA Tourist Bureau as a National Pleasure Resort it came under the control of the National Parks & Wildlife Service in 1972 and was scheduled as a Recreation Park. Because of the unique flora and associated bird life it was re-dedicated as a Conservation Park in 1977.

The Park lies mainly on the lowest recorded occurrence of a yellow podzolic soil, some 80ha in extent, of which about 10% is represented in the Park. At the western end there is a small area of red-brown earth. The different vegetation associated with these two soils is quite noticeable.

The predominant plant association is a South Australian Blue Gum Open forest/woodland with scattered River Red Gums along Stonyfell Creek. The eastern limit of the Grey Box occurs in the Park with only three trees present.

Other trees include the Golden Wattle, Drooping Sheoak and Native Pine, the last two forming groves in places. *Goodenia amplexans*, *Hibbertia stricta*, *Bursaria spinosa* and *Dodonaea viscosa* are common in the understorey. In all some 280 species have been recorded of which about 60% are indigenous. Seventeen species of native grasses and twenty three species of orchids have been recorded.

Around forty species of birds have been recorded of which the most apparent are Noisy Miners, Magpies, Lorikeets, Rosellas, Wattlebirds, Magpie-larks and Kookaburras. The calls of the Boobook Owl and Tawny Frogmouth are frequently heard at night. Bearded Dragons, Shinglebacks and small geckos and skinks are common. The Brushtail Possum occurs and Koalas are becoming more frequent visitors as they move around the foothills.

In 1982 a Friends Group was formed, the first such group officially formed, preceded only by the Friends of Fort Glanville and the National Parks Foundation which had both been formed earlier in their own right. The group was founded with sixteen members and today the number of dedicated workers remains about the same.

Early activities included the removal of Olive and Ash trees and the collection of seed from the Park to raise seedlings for revegetation. Control of path erosion, construction of a footbridge, the marking out of a walking trail and preparation of a brochure were other achievements in the 1980s.

The group has worked closely with St Peter's Girls' School, assisting with the preparation of a teaching kit in 1986 and sponsoring a successful competition within the school for a Friends logo. Planting on World Environment Day is an annual event and since 1986 some 4,000 seedlings have been planted with over 1,200 students participating.

The above activities, as well as the ubiquitous weeding and litter collection, continue to occupy much of the Friends' time. A major project at present is the rehabilitation of a badly degraded area along the Stonyfell Road boundary. With assistance from the Natural Heritage Trust this has been sprayed several times for Kikuyu and Soursobs and about half planted with native grasses, trees and shrubs.