



Friends of Ferguson Park



Newsletter No. 130 – March 2021

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

Park Working Bee
Dates 2021

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

Working Bees Update

October 2020

It was noted that NPW staff had recently dug drainage channels in the access track constructed for the purposes of SPCGS building extensions. They also removed the straw bales that the Friends group had placed last year to halt erosion caused by the temporary track. Today, the group spread out the piles of straw.

Weeding, focussing in particular on Perennial Veldt Grass, was undertaken in a small area just to the south of the access track which supports a good cover of native spear grass. Neil weeded Plantain and Sparaxis along the western and southern boundaries of the Park.

Geoffrey reported that he was going to write to the Burnside Council heritage committee seeking a contribution to replacement of the plaque which was stolen off the front Park gate. He also reported that recent sessions with SPCGS Environment Group have been very successful and are continuing.

November 2020

Burnside Council has informed Geoffrey that they are unable to assist with the cost of a new plaque as Ferguson Park is not land under their care and control. The group agreed that SPCGS should be approached.

Activities today included weed patrol in the creekline near the corner of Hallett Road and Marble Terrace, with a focus on Plantain and Ixia, of which there are numerous bulbs in the soil! James grubbed out some large Rice Millet tussocks. Ongoing patrol for Pentaschistis was also undertaken.

December 2020

A major tree branch had recently come down in the vicinity of where the Friends group sit in the Park. Colin was able to cut it into manageable pieces with his chainsaw.

Plantain control continued in the lower creek area near the corner of Hallett Road and Marble Terrace.

The group's Christmas party, which was planned to occur after the December working bee, was cancelled due to Covid restrictions on the number of people allowed at a gathering and also the inclement weather (rain was forecast for the afternoon).

January 2021

The weather today was not too hot, however the Park is very dry. James did some spraying of Kikuyu in the creek area near the corner of Hallett Road and Marble Terrace. Martin, Wendy and Cindy (new member) did a widespread patrol for Pentaschistis.

Sarah undertook hand-pulling and cutting/swabbing of young Ash in Stonyfell Creek. It was observed that the flow of water from the SA Water pipe has increased in recent times and there is now water flowing continually along the whole length of the creek

(within the Park). This is causing a proliferation of weeds, including the Umbrella Sedge, which James and Sarah were able to spray a week or so after the January working bee.

February 2021

Today two memorial plaques were unveiled within the Park. The first plaque is in memory of Ken Preiss who was instrumental in getting the Park proclaimed as a Conservation Park and did much good work in the Park. The other plaque is in memory of Betty and Geoffrey Verco who also lived opposite the Park on Marble Terrace.

Geoffrey reported that the group has been successful in gaining a \$1,100 grant for weed control, to be used in Winter/Spring 2021.

Our ranger, Allira Taylor-Wilkins, was present and reported that there are more informal track closures planned for the Park.

March 2021

The dry weather continues. Several members tackled the Kikuyu which is growing in the north-west corner of the Park where there is sprinkler spray drift from the adjacent SPGS Early Learning Centre. More Ash control undertaken in Stonyfell Creek – the Umbrella Sedge which was sprayed in January is dying off. Bill has recently reinstated the water diverters along tracks throughout the park, since a major downpour in early February caused them to be silted up, causing significant erosion.

The group was taken aback at the amount of fire hazard reduction clearing which was recently undertaken by the DEW fire team around the school boundaries. This included taking away several of the large logs which FFCP use to sit on at working bees. This, and a number of other issues, were discussed later in the day at the AGM.

Sarah Telfer, Editor



The unveiling of Ken Preiss' memorial plaque by 3 of his grandsons – Stefan, Jordan and Simon.



Ken Preiss' memorial plaque – first president of the Friends of Ferguson Conservation Park 1982 – 1988.

Discharge into Stonyfell Creek

The Friends group has been very concerned over many years at the amount and quality of the water flows from a pipe which discharges into Stonyfell Creek. This natural creekline generally flows from east to north-west along the northern boundary of Ferguson Conservation Park, adjacent to Stonyfell Road. It is understood that the pipe, which has been in the creek for at least 15-20 years, is connected to the nearby SA Water Wattle Park Reservoir on Penfold Road. Concerns about this discharge, which flows continuously into the creek all year round, were raised by FFCP with SA Water previously (at least 15 years ago). The response from SA Water at that time was to the effect that the discharge was rainwater that accumulated on the impervious membrane covering the Wattle

Park tank – which puzzled FFCP because at times the pipe could be seen discharging when there was no pooled rainwater on the membrane.

In recent times the water flow appears to have increased and the FFCP believes that it is contributing significantly to the weed load in the creek, as well as to erosion and a general lack of biodiversity (i.e. frogs, invertebrates and small reptiles).

In January 2021, Mr Peter Forward, a former engineer with SA Water (now retired) inspected the pipe and its discharge, at the request of FFCP. Peter was able to test the salinity and chlorine levels of this discharge water and it was found that the salinity was far higher than SA Water mains water and the chlorine level was so high (some 10's of mg/L) that it could not be accurately measured with his pool test kit tablets.

Peter did some detective work and found that the Wattle Park Reservoir operates with an OSEC or On Site Electrolytic Chlorination system which was installed in 2012. OSEC systems generate a 0.8% solution of sodium hypochlorite by electrolysis (passing an electric current through) a low strength brine solution. The OSEC system requires storage of salt in a salt saturator, which provides a brine solution. Water softeners ensure that the feed water to the OSEC system is free from any hardness. Both the brine and the softened water are fed to the OSEC at 3% brine solution and electrolysed in the generator. He surmised that the high chlorine/high saline discharge to the creek violates some sort of Environment Protection Agency (EPA) regulation.

In light of these findings, a letter was drafted to SA Water, as the owners of the Wattle Park Reservoir. This letter included Peter Forward's report (briefly summarised above) and detailed FFCP's concerns which include:

- Stonyfell Creek would naturally be an ephemeral creek which would not run in the drier summer months, except after heavy rain. Currently it is flowing all year round and this has led to a highly degraded waterway which supports little native vegetation and a high level of introduced/weed species. Weeds of concern include Ash (**Fraxinus angustifolius*), Umbrella Sedge (**Cyperus involucratus*), Kikuyu (**Pennisetum clandestinus*), Rice Millet (**Piptharum miliaceum*), Nasturtium (**Tropaeolum majus*) and a range of other garden escapes.
- The dense cover of weed species is contributing to creekline erosion, particularly following storm events.
- The highly saline and highly chlorinated water which is continuously entering the creek has resulted in a lack of native fauna species inhabiting the creek, including reptiles, frogs and a range of invertebrates.

The (draft) letter was emailed to our District Ranger, Janine Krahenbuehl, to let her know what was going on and Janine said that she would contact SA Water as a matter of urgency.

Subsequent to this, a chance encounter between Sarah and an Allwater friend, revealed that Allwater are contracted by SA Water to manage the Wattle Park tank and, within 2-3 days of this meeting the issue of high chlorine and salinity levels was fixed. However, this did not stop the flow of water. Our ranger, Allira, was able to contact SA Water and their explanation is that the pipe in Stonyfell Creek is the discharge point for the underdrains beneath the reservoir. The purpose of the underdrains is to collect any water that may be leaking from the water storage liner. The underdrains also collect ground water that can accumulate below the liner as well. Very recent water quality testing of the continuous water flow to the creek by SA Water (February 2021) indicated that the source of the water is groundwater rather than a leak from the water storage.

An on-site meeting was organised between representatives of SA Water, Allwater, DEW and FFCP to try and resolve the issue and preferably stop the flow all together. This meeting took place on 3rd March 2021 and the outcome was commitments from both SA Water and Allwater to investigate the source of the discharge. Both FFCP and our District Ranger and contact ranger made it clear that they would like the discharge to stop completely as soon as is practically possible. So, we await further developments!

Sarah Telfer, Editor



This photograph (taken on 11 January 2021) shows the amount of high saline/high chlorine water being discharged into Stonyfell Creek from the SA Water pipe.



This photograph (taken on 11 January 2021) shows the 'bleached' algae which is growing approximately 200-300 metres downstream from the discharge pipe – the algae is green on the surface, however it is white where it is submerged in water

Summary of works undertaken by FFCP during 2020

- Fewer working bees were held due to the Covid-19 restrictions but some members continued to do work on individual projects.
- Finish repairs to stairs crossing on Ferguson Creek.
- Continued weeding of The Triangle.
- Targeted weeding of Pentaschistis – 7 sites one of which was new.
- Oiling of timbers of the central bench seat.
- Care of Pittosporum plants in north-west corner on Hallett Road frontage.
- Cut and poison Ash along Stonyfell Creek.
- Spot spray of Umbrella Sedge in Stonyfell Creek.
- Spray Kikuyu and Couch grasses in western end of Ferguson Creek.
- Maintain track drainage channels.
- Trim overgrowing foliage on some tracks.
- Commence sessions with members of SPCGS Environment Group.

Geoffrey Bishop