



# Friends of Ferguson Park



Newsletter No. 138 – September 2023

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

Park Working Bee  
Dates 2023

8 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

June 2023 – September 2023

**June** – Geoffrey reported that the Nasturtiums have been sprayed by a contractor from Stonyfell Creek to the Park boundary on Stonyfell Road (\$275).

James raised the issue of the last sections of walking track which were not finished because of insufficient funds (Walking Track Project 2023). Even if Boral supply the materials, the Friends Group doesn't have the money or manpower to complete the work at this stage. It may be that these sections will have to wait until next year when we will hopefully get another grant for walking track upgrade works.

Activities today:

- Sparaxis control in The Triangle (thanks to our temporary ranger Shirley for helping out!)
- clearing out of water diverters on track edges
- installation of signs informing the public of the recently completed trails project

**July** – Due to recent heavy rains much sediment is accumulating in Stonyfell Creek which may or may not be a bad thing. The log drop weirs which were installed some 10 years ago are functioning to some degree. The SA Water pipe appears to be clogged up with sediment and/or vegetation, however water continues to discharge into the creek.

Bill reported that he has been working on fixing track erosion at the steps across Ferguson Creek. He has placed 6 barrow loads of rubble there. He has also worked on the entrance to the Park on Stonyfell Road which is currently a mess (track maintenance works did not extend all the way to the entrance).

Jane pointed out that the locations of orchids should be documented/mapped so that future track maintenance works do not impact on them. She also raised concerns about patches of *Ixia* sp. which are spreading into patches of the Park which have good native understorey. The group agreed that control of this highly invasive environmental weed is a high priority.

Today 's jobs included ongoing Sparaxis control in The Triangle.

**August** – Ranger Flynn told the group that the gazetting of Dogs on Leash rules is in progress. He also reported that the steps across Ferguson Creek will be replaced in the near future.

Geoffrey reported that, with the assistance of the St Peters Girls' Environment Group, he has planted the native grasses that Martin had germinated in a patch not far from the main Park entrance on Hallett Road.

Today's activities:

- the 3 rangers present undertook spot-spraying of Nasturtiums adjacent Stonyfell Road – a good effort to knock them down before they flower and set seed.
- clearing away of gravel piles left over after track upgrade works earlier this year.
- weeds targeted included Rice Millet, Sparaxis and Thread Iris, the latter two particularly in areas of the Park with good quality native understorey.

**September** – a small gathering. The weather was warm and the ground was very dry after quite low rainfall over the last two months.

Geoffrey reported that the revised Communications Agreement with DEW was signed in August, along with a volunteers' work safety document.

Jobs for today included hand-pulling of Sparaxis and One-leaved Cape Tulip and grubbing of Rice Millet and other grassy weeds.

### Volunteer hours -reminder

It's that time again! Each year we are required to submit our annual volunteer hours to Friends of Parks. The year in question is 1 July 2022 to 30 June 2023. So, could all members please email their total hours to Geoffrey (actual or best estimate) spent working in the park or doing other matters relating to the park (you can specify in a general manner what you were doing, e.g. weeding, project management, etc. however this is not essential for the reporting). Please exclude attendance at monthly Sunday morning sessions as this can be tallied from our attendance book.

If you have not already submitted your extra hours in the park please do so as soon as possible. Thanks to all members who have sent in their hours!

### Dual naming

At last some progress is being made on the process of dual naming Ferguson Conservation Park. I contacted Shane Smith, Senior Statutory Research Officer – Geographical Names, and he has outlined the process we need to put in place for a dual naming. This is an official process involving Crown Land and will become legal once all parties have agreed on the name and it is published in the Government Gazette. I will resume the process (which no-one else seemed to understand) and formally put the proposed name – Narnu Wirra, as suggested by Rob Amery and Zoey Bonney - to the Kaurua Corporation, apply to DEW who will liaise with traditional owners and DEW will then submit it to the Surveyor General who approves the gazetting.

*Geoffrey Bishop*

### Surprise contribution from Burnside Biodiversity Nursery

It was lovely to be notified that the City of Burnside Biodiversity Nursery group has decided to contribute the donations received at its recent Local Plant Giveaway from Burnside residents to aid the work of our Friends group.

Dr Mark Ellis, Technical Officer Conservation and Land Management, made contact in mid-July advising us of the donation. He reported that this year's giveaway was the biggest and best to date with over 5000 indigenous plants given to residents. The donations amount to \$5,144 and it was left up to our group to decide how best to use the funds. I responded to Mark thanking the Biodiversity Nursery very much for its generous donation and saying we would let him know what project the funds might be used for.

The members and DEW rangers who were present at our August gathering decided that it should be used for a plant-related project. Two of our members, Jane and Sally, are volunteers at the Nursery and Jane was present to contribute to our discussion and we thank her for her input. Mark indicated that he uses some highly skilled bushcare contractors to undertake sensitive bushcare works on Burnside sites, including Heatherbank Reserve, just south of Ferguson Conservation Park. We came up with two projects which have now been conveyed to Mark. These are:

- Control work on the large patch of *Ixia* in the centre east section of the park and some other small areas of the same bulb weed. The main occurrence is in an open area with very few trees (ideal conditions for *Ixia*) but it has a good cover of groundcover species, herbs and low shrubs. Weeding the area will require a sensitive approach.

- Control of Three-cornered Garlic at the Hallett Road end of Ferguson Creek. We have made some progress here in recent years but a concerted effort would be invaluable.

In mid-August, Mark made an inspection of the areas with the contractor Robert Lawrence (contractor) who has done work with Mark for some time, including at Heatherbank Reserve, and Jane Wilson. Mark will handle organising the work and DEW work permits for this season and a follow-up next autumn.

A detailed work plan has since been developed including Robert having discussions with DEW's Anthony Abley regarding his trials on controlling South African Iridaceae species in high quality vegetation. Robert and his team have also identified some other key areas for control work, either sites of emerging weeds (i.e. small populations at this stage) or significant species needing protection before they are adversely affected by weeds. Thanks Mark and Robert!

*Geoffrey Bishop*

### Park activity by SPGS Environment Group

Activities in the Park during Term 2 were put on hold on three occasions due to wet, cold weather. Week 1 of Term 3 saw a bright, sunny afternoon on 3<sup>rd</sup> August with 12 members plus two teachers busy doing some planting.



*Area of native grasses planted by the girls.*

Last year our member Martin Percy successfully raised some native grasses in trays and this is what the students planted. The grasses comprised two species of Wallaby Grass, one of which has developed during winter whilst the other is quite dormant. A site on the main track leading away from the Hallett Road gates was prepared, that is, cleared of weeds, mainly Soursobs and some introduced grasses, before the planting was done. The rain this winter has resulted in abundant growth of weeds, especially luxurious swathes of Soursob.

The girls compared the native grasses with some introduced ones I gave them and quickly identified that the stems and leaves were distinctly hairy whereas the weedy grasses were quite smooth. This is a useful identification characteristic though as I warned them, there are a few exceptions.

*Geoffrey Bishop*

### A view from the past

In 1978, Helen Findlayson (née Helen Foster Barham Black) was interviewed by Elizabeth Warburton and some of her memories related to the area around Ferguson Park. Her father was the architect Alfred Barham Black and the family lived at *Bell Yett*, part of which is now a Burnside Council native flora reserve on Stonyfell Road. Alfred's mother built *Bell Yett*, designed by her son, in 1880. Alfred's brother John McConnell Black was the author of South Australia's first published flora, commonly called Black's Flora of South Australia, first published in 1922.

In her childhood the 10-acre property was a world unto itself. She commented:

'It was a wonderful place for children, with a creek running from one end to the other through the paddocks and garden; there were two ponds where we used to play a good deal. The long side of the property borders Stonyfell Road, at the end of which my mother's aunt Mary and uncle Joe Crompton lived [at *Ilfracombe*]. One of our favourite walks was up this road with lovely wildflowers in the paddocks on each side. They were not really paddocks but the original bush. Behind the house [to the east] was the 'Wattle Paddock' and then, just below *Ilfracombe*, came the 'Buttercup Paddock', the best of all, where one day my sister Mildred and the nursemaid jumped over a log almost on to a snake lying on the other side. In this paddock grew many kinds of wildflowers as well as buttercups: blue and spider orchids, billygoat buttons, pink ones, scarlet runner, creeping grevillea, vanilla plant [lily], fly-catchers, native primroses and many others, which we like to pick and bring home. The other side of the road was a wilder place, with rising ground and more trees [Ferguson's property]'.

Mrs Findlayson mentioned their neighbours. They included the Reids and then the Scarfes at *Wattle Park* (they played with the Scarfe children); their Crompton relatives at *Ilfracombe*; the Pitmans on Penfold's Road (Mr Pitman and his brother worked for the Cromptons, the Blacks and the Fergusons, at various times); and 'on the other side of Stonyfell Road at *Chiverton* were the Fergusons, just Mrs Ferguson, her daughter, grownup, Effie and a son, George'.

She also made mention of the origin of the name *Bell Yett*. 'It was named after a field in Wigtown, Scotland, where her father was born. This field, where he and his brother and sisters used to play, had a gate with a bell on it. 'Yett' is Scottish Gaelic for gate.

Note: there is a memorial to *Bell Yett* in the carpark opposite St Peter's Girls' School comprising a roofed entrance gate (or lych-gate) with a bell. Lych-gates were mostly associated with churches as it was where the bier rested during the first part of the burial service. The original word is from Middle English, *lycheyate* from *lich* body or corpse and *yate* gate.

Geoffrey Bishop



*Sign in the park which acknowledges those who provided either financial or in-kind support for the Ferguson Tracks Project 2023*