



Help get a shared path on the new rail bridge

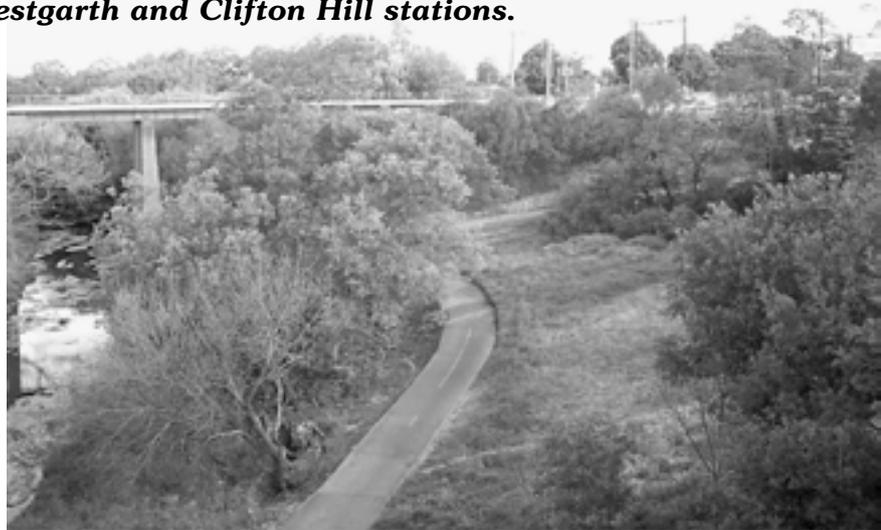
Join the community campaign calling on the Department of Infrastructure (DOI) to add a shared pedestrian and bike path to the proposed new rail bridge between Westgarth and Clifton Hill stations.

Although a shared path seems such an obvious addition to the proposed bridge, DOI currently has no intention of providing it. This attitude flies in the face of growing community concern about climate change and the need for more active and safe car-free transport options. FoMC is part of a community campaign for pedestrian and bike access on the new bridge to help overcome the barriers between Northcote and Clifton Hill created by Merri Creek, the railway lines and the Heidelberg Rd /Hoddle St overpass. It would also open up a major new route to the city for bicycle commuters from the north-eastern suburbs and enable riders to avoid the busy and dangerous squeeze points at the St Georges Rd roundabout and the High St bridge.

Residents at the southern end of Northcote could have their access to public transport effectively doubled by a short walk across the bridge to Clifton Hill Station, enabling them to easily catch Epping as well as Hurstbridge line trains.

A significant sum of taxpayers' money is being invested in upgrading the rail service by duplicating the track to Westgarth station. What a waste to not spend that bit extra to create this crucial community link!

While the bridge is being built there will be considerable loss of amenity. The Merri Creek trail will be closed for



more than six months and an alternative trail will take a very roundabout route including an on-road section, well away from the Creek.

Also some vegetation that was planted by the community will be cut down during construction. Although the area will be replanted afterwards, at least ten years of growth will be lost.

By adding pedestrian and bike access to the bridge, DOI would go some way to making up for the disruption to the Creek and to path-users, and for the loss of amenity during construction. However, DOI actually has a responsibility that goes far beyond good community relations.

DOI's Mission Statement says that they are "committed to carrying out our role in a way that is economically, socially and environmentally sustainable" and they will do this by "promoting efficient and integrated transport services across different modes.... in order to address the needs of the travelling public and industry."

You can help ensure that DOI provides the community with a shared path on the new bridge and that they work with the community and local Councils to improve the alternative trail that people will use during construction. Please write to the Minister for Public Transport, the Hon. Lynne Kosky, Level 26, 80 Collins Street Melbourne 3000: you're most welcome to use any points from this article.

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Friends' News

Friends meet two State MPs

Representatives of FoMC and MCMC were pleased to meet with the new Member for Northcote, Fiona Richardson, on 18th June and then with the Member for Pascoe Vale, Christine Campbell, on 27th June. Each of the MPs came to the MCMC office and talked with us about our various activities and interests. Afterwards we provided them with the list below.

Our top five priorities for assistance by MPs:

- The proposed Merri Creek Park (near Craigieburn) – reserving an adequate area, and extending the study area for the park to the north at least as far as the Urban Growth Boundary.
- State Government transferring the VicRoads land near Golf Road, North Coburg as public open space, without Moreland Council having to buy it.
- Waterway planning controls: the need to expedite revisions to the Merri Creek Environmental Significance Overlay, and extend the model to other Melbourne waterways, to protect waterway corridors as recreational and environmental assets in the face of encroaching urban development.
- The White Paper on *Land and Biodiversity*: the need to establish a more active, better-resourced and effective approach to sustaining Victoria's plants, animals and ecological processes before it is too late.
- A pedestrian/bicycle path on the new rail bridge from Westgarth to Clifton Hill, and provision of an alternative safe path in the creek corridor while a section of the Merri Path is closed for the works.

Friends expand Strettle Wetland site

The FoMC Regeneration Group has formally expanded its area of responsibility at the Strettle Wetland Thornbury from the triangle of land outside the wetland into the wetland itself. The 'triangle' section is now fully planted out and just needs to be maintained; so, at the planting on 3rd June, the group planted 100 plants inside the fence around the wetland and did some hand weeding as well. We also did some mulching on the 'triangle' site and the Litter Group did a clean-up of the whole area.

On that day we learned from the Darebin Bush Crew that the wetland is not designed to take stormwater and it only takes water in overland floods. So it was still dry in July, despite recent heavy rain. It would be better for the health of the creek and for wildlife habitat if Strettle Wetland



THE FOMC 'TRIANGLE' SITE OUTSIDE STRETTLE WETLAND THORNBURY

could collect and treat stormwater like the one at Merri Park Northcote. So we have asked Darebin Council and Melbourne Water to re-design the Strettle site accordingly.

Land and Biodiversity Submission

The Friends of Merri Creek made a submission to the Government White Paper: *Land and biodiversity at a time of climate change*. Our most important point is the need to immediately protect threatened sites of critical importance, such as native grasslands, of which we cite a number of examples in the Merri Creek vicinity.

Our submission requests that the Government address ways to protect biodiversity values in the metropolitan region and beyond; provide more funding; adopt priorities for land management; and initiate public awareness and environmental education. We also made suggestions about monitoring and about using MCMC as a model for employment in environmental restoration.

The submission also disputes statements made in the paper that called for submissions about the "trade-offs" between water supplies and a healthy environment.

See our full submission on our website at: www.vicnet.net.au/~fomc in the 'News' section.

Update on Melbourne Water's Merri Creek works

Melbourne Water (MW) has recently commenced the first stage of its rehabilitation works along Merri Creek between Queens Parade, Fawkner and Carr Street, North Coburg. For safety reasons, MW trimmed trees along the creek and the shared trail between Mathieson Street, Fawkner and Carr Street, North Coburg. The trimming was done on the basis of an arborist's report and it included removal of nine Golden Willows. Local residents were advised of the works by letter box drop in early June and signage on the path. MW has consulted with FoMC in the preparation of the ten year Project Concept Plan for these works and has promised to advise us about future revegetation activities, along with MCMC and Moreland Council. 🌱

Help distribute the DVD about FoMC

Please help us to distribute the DVD about the Friends group as widely as possible. The DVD, entitled: *Restoration and Regeneration*, runs for 20 minutes and documents FoMC's history and ongoing work, our characters and projects, setbacks and victories. It was funded by a Victorian Volunteer Small Grant from the Dept of Victorian Communities with the aim of attracting new volunteers to the group.

If you have a contact with a school, library, or community group etc that would be interested in the DVD, or even if you would like to see it yourself, please contact Ray Radford at work (MCMC) on 9380 8199 or on 0422 989 166.

On the right track

It's been two decades since feisty local MP and PM Bob Hawke declared the embryonic Merri Path open, at Preston in October 1985: it's now effectively complete, but in need of an upgrade, hence the current Merri Creek Trail Review.

It forms part of Melbourne's extensive on- and offroad networks, as shown on Melway Map 592. People are pounding the pavement and pushing pedals, enjoying the beauties of the environment and human additions to it, combating obesity and heart disease, cutting car use, carbon dioxide and the cost of living as they go to learn, work, play, shop or socialise.

It's not just biking and running, but strolling and power-walking, 'blading and scooting and wheelchairs – which leads to the vexed question of gradients, 1 in 20 being the maximum for hand-propelled seats according to Map 1E. That's easy for rail and Bayside routes, difficult for waterways: the Maribyrnong and the Gardiner's are the best for extended gentle stretches, the Plenty requires mountain-bike gears.

Steps, especially steep ones like Gipps St Abbotsford's, reflect bureaucrats' utter contempt for non-car-users: they're a nuisance to all, a real danger to some, and dead against anyone in a wheelchair. However at least the iconic Capital City Trail will soon be rid of them, with a ramp at Gipps St and a bridge over Manningham St Parkville.

They're not a problem that the Review has to worry about – flood danger is the thing here; thus higher-level bridges will be put in at Hamersley Court and Broadhurst Ave in Reservoir for example. The low underpasses and precipitous gradients at Heidelberg and Moreland Rds can't be remedied without massive expense and environmental harm, and we're not talking about a freeway where such considerations don't matter; so there'll be road crossings, with traffic-lights at the one and a centre-road refuge at the other. Better give the latter a solid concrete abutment and flashing lights on the uphill side...

The suspension bridge has been a glorious extravagance, soaring above the widest part of the creek; it feels like a living thing, and sadly it is nearing the end of its lifespan and will eventually be replaced with a shorter, simpler structure on the upstream side.

The proposed wheelchair-accessible footway on the second Clifton Hill to Westgarth rail viaduct linking Urquhart St Northcote to John St Clifton Hill and also to the southern end of the High St bridge, would be 2.5 m. wide: the Trail would be the same, plus half-a-metre of mown grass on either side, to let the frequent two-abreast cyclists pass the occasional three-abreast prams plus dog (any dog). Three metres, or ten feet in the old money, would be ugly and excessive, more like a freeway.

Which reminds me: the Hume Highway to Hoddle Street horror was supposed to come stomping down the valley past the Old Colonists' Homes on its concrete

legs and stride arrogantly over the Epping line. So what are we likely to get instead? The Review recommends a modest footbridge over High St, beside the trains and above the trams and the buses, and well clear of the flood zone.

How perfect, how friendly would that be; and what a hideous blight this charming spot has been saved from, and all the rest of them up to Fawkner. One thinks of Marty McFly and the urban wasteland he encountered in a *Back to the Future* episode, in a world where the evil Biff had been enabled to triumph: it could so easily have happened here. Heartfelt thanks to you resolute activists and decent politicians of yesteryear.

In short, the path and the network it belongs to are invaluable community assets, which we're rapt to see being so well used. Meanwhile marked lanes, bike-logo traffic-lights, helmet legislation and lower speed limits give cyclists protection and legitimacy on the roads, which will only become more important with trends in transport, health, fossil-fuel supply and climate. The chain, the ball-bearing and the pneumatic tyre were about all the wheel needed to completely fulfil its potential!

So do introduce others to the path, the CERES café, the almost-there Capital City Trail, the boathouses; do a bit of freelance or scheduled tidying, come to a planting morning. The whole scene is about as good as it gets.

PAUL PRENTICE (COMMITTEE MEMBER)

(The Merri Creek Trail Review is on the web at:
www.moreland.vic.gov.au/news/consultation-fr.htm)

PAUL PRENTICE STRUGGLES HARD TO RIDE UP THE STEEP SLOPE ON THE MERRI SHARED PATH SOUTH OF HEIDELBERG ROAD BRIDGE



Work and walk at Cooper

Woody weed removal and training

On Sunday 15 April, ten Friends members took part in a very productive Woody Weed Removal activity at Cooper Street Grassland. It was a lovely autumn day, some recent rains had freshened the area up a little.

The escarpment and banks on the west side of Merri Creek, adjacent to the grassland reserve, have only recently become part of the park after a land swap with the private owners. This is a valuable addition to the reserve and the Merri Conservation Corridor Network.

In the gorse it was pleasing to find the webby colonies of the minute mites that have been introduced to help control this awful weed. These were moved to new uncut sites, when possible, to continue their work.

This was an important training activity. MCMC staff trained Friends volunteers in the correct safe handling and application of herbicide using 'dabbers'. We worked in teams and were trained in the 'Cut and Paint' technique, where herbicide is applied immediately to a fresh cut stem so it is taken up by the plant before it can heal the wound. This technique, while labour intensive, is relatively safe and very targeted. This training has enabled Friends to continue this work and another working bee was held with Parks Victoria on 20th May.

We will be progressively removing weeds and replanting these areas with the native shrubs and other plants that have been displaced through weed invasion. It is important that this happen in a staged and patchy way, not by clearing everything all at once, as this shrubland is important habitat for many native animals.

The substantial resident population of Black (swamp) Wallabies relies on this vegetation for food and shelter from predators. Many small birds including Fairy Wrens, Thornbills, Robins, Chats, Cuckoos – some resident, some seasonal visitors, use these shrubs for protected breeding sites, shelter and feeding. There are also good populations of skinks, amphibians and many invertebrates that live and feed in this area. Larger birds use this area too: raptors are a common sight, and I have seen young cormorants in nests in the Woolly Tea-tree. Hollow-nesters such as owls, micro-bats, parrots and cockatoos use the larger Red Gums.

Nature ramble

After everyone else left the activity above, I went for a nature ramble along the escarpment.

The area where we had been working was already being investigated by skinks hunting for disturbed insects and basking in the newly opened areas. Dragonflies were also investigating it. I later saw more of these stunning aerial hunters patrolling the grassland, looking for food, at least 100m from the creek.

We often forget that animals we think of as aquatic – frogs, dragonflies etc – do rely on creeks and wetlands to breed, and that is where their young live, but the adults need other areas to live and feed. Effective conservation corridors need to be more than narrow riparian strips, and the cliff faces that developers can't build on!

Further south I found a female Common Brown Butterfly (*Heteronympha merope*) very busily laying her eggs in grass tussocks. She would sit in the sun with her wings

open, basking, then fly to an attractive grass tussock and climb right down into it, almost out of sight, and spend several minutes in there before emerging to rest, recharge with some sun then fly to another. There were many other insects including grasshoppers, craneflies, blue butterflies and a grassland Praying Mantis out for a stroll; probably in search of a meal. This stunning creature was about 100mm long with straw coloured wings flanked with green stripes, honey coloured legs and striking bright green eyes.

I encountered a group of at least six female Flame



FRIENDS MEMBERS REMOVE WOODY WEEDS AT COOPER ST GRASSLAND ON 15 APRIL

Street Grassland

PRAYING MANTIS AT COOPER ST GRASSLAND



Robins feeding. They would sit on exposed sticks, watching, and then swoop off to catch a tasty insect they had spied. Single sex groups of Flame Robins appear in the Merri Valley annually at around this time of the year. They breed in the ranges but leave there to over-winter in other parts. The maintenance of a strong corridor link down the Merri from the ranges, and all the excellent rehabilitation of the lower creek, mean we are lucky enough to be visited by these cheery little birds.

As I stood watching an aerial duel between a Little Eagle and a smaller raptor a strange call approaching from down the creek heralded the arrival of a newcomer: a Darter or Snakebird – so called because of its long sinuous neck. It landed on a nearby dead tree and surveyed its surroundings. Darters are like cormorants and dive to catch fish. A correspondent to the Birding-Australia chat group (Colin Driscoll, Lake Macquarie, NSW) gave the following interesting account, but sadly I did not see such a performance.

“I watched a Darter waddle out of the lake with a very large Luderick that it had speared. That was the first thing- the fish had been speared through the side by that sharp beak and I had never realised that they would catch fish that way.

The bird deftly flicked the fish off its beak into the air and caught it head first. I could not believe it was going to try and swallow it but that’s what happened. The fish was almost ‘pan sized’ at least 15cm long and 10cm wide. The bird worked on what looked like the impossible for a couple of minutes and just stood there head in the air, mouth so wide that it looked dislocated and then gulp and the fish was down the hatch – amazing.”

Down the creek, where the Darter had come from, I could hear lots of other waterbirds and occasionally caught a fleeting glimpse. They appeared to be moving around the large flooded quarry holes to the east of the creek and across from the reserve. No doubt these largely inaccessible water filled holes form important refuges for water



DARTER AT COOPER ST GRASSLAND

Much flutter for small bird

On Monday 18th June, Friends' member and keen bird observer, Neville Pamment, saw a flock of five to six Weebills, the smallest Australian bird. They were in a planting of muggas and wattle in Yarra Bend Park, just by the Roseneath St footbridge over Merri Creek.

The sighting caused great interest at MCMC, with Technical Officer, Brian Bainbridge, saying: “Weebills are a great sign that revegetation is providing suitable habitat for this species, which is rarely recorded in inner Melbourne.” He added that they, along with Yellow and Brown Thornbills, like shrubby, ‘messy’ vegetation that is often not appreciated by humans.

Prior to this sighting, Neville had only once before seen a Weebill in the Clifton Hill area. In May he had seen a single Weebill on the west side of the creek in a mixed feeding flock which included Yellow and Brown Thornbills.

Weebills are only 8-9cm and the southern variety is olive brown in colour with a whitish eye, blunt bill, pale eyebrow and pale yellow to buff underparts (from *The Slater Field Guide to Australian Birds*).

If you see any interesting birds or other fauna along the creek, please do as Neville did and notify MCMC by email at admin@mcmc.org.au or by phone on 9380 8199.

birds, frogs and other creatures, especially in the long drought periods. Sadly, development plans are underway for these sites and they will probably soon all be lost.

Further along, beneath a patch of Eucalypts I found the spent pupa case of a Hepialidae or Ghost Moth poking from a hole in the ground. These are often called ‘Rain Moths’ because they appear after autumn rains. The caterpillars of these moths live underground in a vertical silk-lined tunnel. They emerge at night to feed on herbaceous plants and leaf litter. They pupate in the tunnel, from which the large brown moth, as long and fat as your thumb, emerges, leaving behind the spent case. The life-cycle can take 2 years. I have seen these moths in my Coburg garden and at various sites along the Merri.

I headed on to visit possibly my favourite Cooper Street Grassland residents, the Cunningham skinks. These are gregarious skinks that live together in colonies from tiny young ones through to large senior lizards. They eat fruits and invertebrates and keep their homes tidy by using a communal toilet. Like many other animals that live in groups, they watch out for each other, signalling to the colony if danger is spied, so they can all escape to safety. Males disperse from the group to avoid inbreeding. This is another species that needs a strong corridor linking suitable habitat if the populations are to remain viable.

Our wonderful, Nationally Significant Merri Creek grasslands must be preserved and cared for to ensure that they and their diverse animal inhabitants survive and flourish.

WENDY MOORE

Our organisation members

Many people may not realise that FoMC offers membership for organisations – for the same price as households (\$24). Currently we have eight members in the ‘Organisation’ category and we hope to see this grow in coming years. Their Membership of FoMC offers these groups the ability to apply for funding (because FoMC is an Incorporated Association) and to hold their own activities under FoMC’s insurance policy (provided that the Committee is notified about the activity). Below is a brief summary of each of our member organisations.

Friends of Merri Grasslands participates in woody weed removals and management of the native grasslands along Merri Creek. This group contributes to the ongoing human management of these grasslands that has occurred over thousands of years and without which they will not survive. The group is convened by Wendy Moore and mainly consists of FoMC members, although there are a few other keen grassland lovers as well. If you would like to be on the group’s email list, please send an email to: wendy@mcmc.org.au

Friends of Edgars Creek was only formed recently and is really zooming along at a great rate. Already the group has its own website, an attractive logo (a Pied Cormorant) and a professional-looking newsletter, plus it has organised a number of activities, including plantings. On top of that, the group has received \$7,989 funding (auspiced by FoMC) from Melbourne Water for streamside plantings. An article about the group featured in the FoMC May Newsletter. For more information, see their website: www.freshwater.net.au/community/foec.htm

Golder Associates Pty Ltd is an employee-owned global business specializing in ground engineering and environmental consulting, with the local office in Hawthorn. They first became members of the FoMC in June 2005 when about 20 of their staff helped out at a planting at Strettle Wetland Thornbury. Since then, Golder has taken on a custodial role below the escarpment at Walker St Clifton Hill and now works together with MCMC. They have also generously provided pro bono geotechnical advice to FoMC about the ugly safety netting that Moreland Council erected to stabilise big basalt rocks below Parker Reserve Coburg and to MCMC on sediment in the ponds at Hall Reserve Wetland.

Merri and Edgars Creek Confluence Area

Restoration Group has now been going just over a year and regularly holds its activities just south of Murray Rd Coburg on the first Saturday of each month from 1pm-3pm. (See the events calendar.) Through FoMC, they recently received \$5,520 funding from Melbourne Water Community Grants Program for recreating riparian escarpment shrubland, addressing fragmentation and fostering a sense of community custodianship. They’ve already made fantastic improvements to the lovely escarpment south of Murray Rd.



MERRI AND EDGARS CREEK CONFLUENCE AREA RESTORATION GROUP PLANTING ACTIVITY

Northcote Uniting Church: Sometimes using the name ‘Chalice,’ this church offers a diverse range of opportunities for people to explore their spirituality, including the programmes: *Music for the Soul*, *Contemplation*, *The Rhythm of Life* and *Labyrinth*. The Church often holds musical events and is regularly involved in the Darebin Music Festival. It supports environmental initiatives and so the outside of the building is lit by solar bud lighting, the same as in the trees along High Street.

Outlook Road Water Monitors: This brand new small group monitors the water quality of Merri Creek near Outlook Road Coburg North, close to the confluence with Edgars Creek, on the third Saturday of odd months from 12-3pm. They welcome new participants to their next activities on 15 September and 17 November.

Princes Hill Secondary College has a commitment to sustainable practices and is looking for new ways to help promote them. As a result, the school is interested in the health of urban waterways and has shown this by involving students in litter clean-ups with FoMC and in weeding and water quality testing with MCMC. We were glad to present it with a copy of the Friends’ DVD.

Victorian Indigenous Nursery Cooperative: Besides propagating and supplying most of the plants for FoMC and MCMC plantings, VINC also supplies indigenous plants to schools, local government and government agencies, other community groups, landscape contractors and members of the public. Plants are grown from locally sourced seed from catchment areas such as the Darebin and Merri Creeks and the Yarra and Plenty Rivers. It is a not for profit cooperative run by a Board of Management, and has both paid staff and volunteers. VINC also runs information days, has planting days in Yarra Bend Park, sponsors Friends of VINC Wetlands, and supports a volunteer group in the nursery. For more information, see their website: www.vinc.net.au

RAY RADFORD (SECRETARY)

The problem with

Melbourne Water (MW) plans for creek banks inevitably include dismantling informal crossings despite the fact that the community always wants to keep them. MW claims that their legal advice recommends removal of the crossings because of the risk that they present. However, while this action protects MW from legal action, it actually leads to an even greater risk for the community!

This is because the community often reinstates the informal crossing points, they are not necessarily in the

Friends' Life Members – Barb Miles

The fifteenth in a series of short histories of the Friends' Life Members

Barb Miles was one of the very first employees of Merri Creek Management Committee (MCMC) in 1989 and for almost 16 years, until her resignation in 2005, she contributed hugely to its establishment, policies, culture, working conditions and growth, as well as to the development of the revegetation industry as a whole.

Barb spent her early childhood growing up in Merbein, a small country town in northern Victoria. *“Escaping the violence and chaos of a family in the midst of an alcoholic meltdown, the nearby river and river flats became my living room”*. Barb recalls spending weekends, after school and sometimes during school mucking around there. A favourite pastime, apart from camping, fishing and swimming, was to go yabbing. A sheep's head (from the butcher) tied to a dip-tin would prove an irresistible wrinkly feast for the local yabbies.

Despite spending a lot of time by herself, she never felt alone. Barb recalls: *“This place felt more like home than the family home ever did and in its company, I was able to experience some of its magic and wonderment and also to find meaning and comfort. The gratitude and importance of this place still resonates today and underpins my basic connection and love for all natural environments”*.

At 15, Barb moved to Ballarat with her mother, completing secondary school and commencing a Diploma of Fine Art. Barb recalls: *“I felt like blindfolds had been removed from my eyes. I started to see and become aware of social and political injustices; I wanted my art to communicate these concerns but struggled to be able to do so. In the end and in my final year, Art School felt too separate from mainstream concerns and I left, taking a job in a textiles factory before travelling overseas”*.

Upon her return in 1983, she attended early protests against uranium mining and the presence of U.S bases in Australia. Travelling to protest in old Holdens, that repeatedly broke down, and reaching consensus, often in incredible heat, led her to be more resilient and demonstrated what could be achieved when individuals united, speaking with one voice. She became involved with Jillposters, a feminist screen printing collective, initially assisting with the printing and paste-ups and later in designing and printing political postcards.

In the mid eighties her interests broadened to include land conservation issues and she commenced a horticultural course

at Burnley College whilst at the same time working on the Darebin Creek as part of the Northern Waterways Project, a Commonwealth Employment Program for the long-term unemployed. For six months Barb recalls:

“I cut and painted more Fennel than I care to remember and planted far too many Black Wattles into the most inhospitable soils imaginable”. Barb stayed for a further 6 months, this time as a training officer/nursery manager.

In 1987, Barb was employed with the Northern Waterways Bicentennial Project. The 18 month project was responsible for planting much of the indigenous vegetation (trees/shrubs) that can be seen today at various sites along the Merri Creek, including Merri and Moomba Parks.

Following a year of converting a 1923 W Class tram to a dwelling at Dereel near Ballarat, she returned to Melbourne in December 1989 to take up a position as Leading Hand with MCMC along with three other team members, two of whom are also Friends Life members: Tony Faithfull and Judy Bush. In her capacity as Parkland Team Coordinator, Barb has fond memories of many of the staff and Friends members with whom she worked but says that by far the most meaningful and personally rewarding experience was meeting and working with Judy Bush over a 15 year period.

Barb recalls that MCMC's very first community planting day, held at BT Connor Reserve, Reservoir, was a flop, with only one person attending the activity. However, in the years that followed, she says that the determination from Friends members made these projects work and the partnership forged between FoMC and MCMC proved to be formidable.

As vegetation matured into dense bush, the Merri Creek parklands provided a place for many of Melbourne's socially isolated and disadvantaged people to sleep, sometimes in tents, but mostly just under a blanket. Barb recalls finding their presence and their plight confronting, so at 44, she left MCMC, joining her partner Chrissie, who was already living and working in Ballarat.

In 2006, she completed a Certificate IV in Youth Work / Alcohol and Drug Works, while working on a casual basis on grassland restoration works with the Ballarat Biodiversity Services. In November that same year, she was employed as a drug and alcohol/youth worker at a residential drug withdrawal unit for young people aged from 12 to 21. More recently, she commenced a graduate diploma in creative arts therapy at the Melbourne Institute for Experiential Art Therapies and is *“loving it”*. ❁



informal creek crossings

best position and they do not involve the placement of stable, large rocks (which MW has removed). Access to the crossings is also often altered by MW, making these crossing points even more unsafe.

A preferable alternative response to the problem of public risk is shown by municipalities which have large rocks on beaches. Instead of removing access, or removing the rocks, these Councils erect signs which indicate that dangers may exist.

Friends of Merri Creek Events Calendar 2007

JULY

Sunday 29—Darebin City Council Planting – National Tree Day

Edwardes Lake Park, Reservoir, 10am-1pm. Melway map 18 E4. Meet near the Scout Hall.

Sunday 29—Yarra City Council Planting – National Tree Day

Gallagher Reserve, Park St Carlton North, 10am-1pm. Melway map 29 H10.

AUGUST

Saturday 4—MECCARG* Planting and handweeding

Just south of Murray Rd bridge, Coburg, 1pm-3pm. Melway map 18 A11. Wear gloves and sturdy footwear, and bring tools and buckets if you can. Funded by Melbourne Water Community Grants Program.

Sunday 5—Planting & BBQ

Kirkdale St, Brunswick, 10am-1pm. Melway 30 B8. Help revegetate this very deserving area around the powerline terminal station. Funded by Landcare Australia/SP Ausnet. Phone Megan at MCMC 9380 8199.

Sunday 5—Litter Clean-Up

Keady St, Nth Coburg, 10am-12 noon. Melway map 17 H8. Phone Paul 9489 5062.

Sunday 5—Streamteam Water Quality Testing

Upstream side of St Georges Rd bridge, enter from Miller Street North Fitzroy, 2-3.30pm. Melway map 30 C10. Phone 9354 9885.

Sunday 12—Planting & BBQ

'Manna Gum escarpment,' Fawkner, enter from Jukes Rd and follow the flags, 10am-1pm. Melway map 18 A1. This is part four of our *Black and Blue* project funded by Melbourne Water Community Grants Program. Phone Paul 9489 5062.

Saturday 18—Planting & BBQ

Imaroo St, Fawkner, 10am-1pm. Melway map 17 K6. Another opportunity to help keen local residents continue the restoration of this previously degraded escarpment. Funded by Landcare Australia/Spicers Paper grant to MCMC. *Note this is a Saturday.* Phone Megan at MCMC 9380 8199.

Sunday 19—Triple Treat

Pedal, perambulate and paddle! Meet at CERES café at 1pm (Melway 30 B7) for a bike ride or at Fairfield Boathouse at 1.45pm (Melway 30 J12) for the walk to Alphington Wetlands, and back to have a serious row. Phone Paul 9489 5062.

Sunday 26—Planting & BBQ

Aitken Creek, Craigieburn, enter from Axminster Dve, 10am-1pm. Melway map 386 J10. Help to improve bank stability, control erosion and improve the diversity of riparian verges. This is part four of our *Sedges for Edges* funded by the Australian Government's Community Water Grants. Phone Ray 0422 989 166.

SEPTEMBER

Saturday 1—Planting & BBQ

Jukes Rd Grassland, Fawkner, 10am-1pm. Melway map 18 A1. Funded by Melbourne Water Community Grants Program to MCMC. *Note this is a Saturday.* Phone Megan at MCMC 9380 8199.

Saturday 1—MECCARG* Planting, handweeding and site maintenance

Just south of Murray Rd bridge, Coburg, 1pm-3pm. Melway map 18 A11. Bring a bucket/bag and digging tool for weeding and a hammer for tree-guard repair if you can. Funded by Melbourne Water Community Grants Program.

Sunday 2—Litter Clean-Up

Downstream from Rushall station, Nth Fitzroy, 10am-12 noon. Melway map 30 D11. Phone Paul 9489 5062.

Sunday 2—Streamteam Water Quality Testing

Upstream side of St Georges Rd bridge, enter from Miller Street, North Fitzroy, 2-3.30pm. Melway map 30 C10. Phone 9354 9885.

Sunday 9—Planting & BBQ

Merri Park Wetlands, near cnr of Sumner Ave & Winifred St, Northcote, 10am-12noon. Melway map 30 C8. After four rounds of weeding, it's now time to plant. Funded by Landcare Australia/Citipower. Phone Megan at MCMC 9380 8199.

Saturday 15—Outlook Road Water Monitors

Close to the confluence of Merri and Edgars creeks, Coburg North, 12-3pm. Melway map 18 A10. Phone Shelley 0425 832 128.

Sunday 16—Guided Tour of Galada Tamboore

Galada Tamboore, Campbellfield, 10:30am. Register for this event with Brendan on 9443 0148. An easy one and a half hour stroll around the spectacular gorge on the Merri Creek with an emphasis on the local wildlife. Bring binoculars, no charge.

Friday 28—Deadline for articles for the next newsletter

Please send to admin@mcmc.org.au

OCTOBER

Saturday 6—MECCARG* Walk and talk tour

Tour of Central Creek Grassland, Davidson St Reservoir 1.30-3pm. Melway map 8 B12. Or car pool at the Merri path just south of Murray Rd Bridge Coburg at 1pm. See beautiful displays of wildflowers surviving in the suburbs.

Sunday 7—Litter Clean-Up

Bell St, Coburg, 10am-12 noon. Melway map 30 A1. Phone Paul 9489 5062.

Sunday 7—Streamteam Water Quality Testing

Upstream side of St Georges Rd bridge, enter from Miller Street, North Fitzroy, 2-3.30pm. Melway map 30 C10. Phone 9354 9885.

Sunday 14—Handweeding

Friends' site near Strettle Wetland Thornbury, 10am-12 noon. Melway map 30 B3. Help keep our little site looking great. Light refreshments afterwards. Phone Ray 0422 989 166

Sunday 28—Wildflower Walk & Talk

Craigieburn Grasslands, 10am-12 noon. Register for this event with Brian or Megan at MCMC on 9380 8199 and say if you want to join a car pool. Light refreshments will be provided.

NOVEMBER

Saturday 3—MECCARG* Weeding

Just south of Murray Rd bridge, Coburg, 1pm-3pm. Melway map 18 A11. Wear sturdy footwear and gloves. Bring a bucket or bag to collect weeds and a digging tool if you can.

Sunday 4—Litter Clean-Up

Harding St, Coburg, 10am-12 noon. Melway map 30 A2. Phone Paul 9489 5062.

Sunday 4—Streamteam Water Quality Testing

Upstream side of St Georges Rd bridge, enter from Miller Street, North Fitzroy, 2-3.30pm. Melway map 30 C10. Phone 9354 9885.

Sunday 11—Wildflower walk and talk

Cooper St grasslands, 10am-12 noon. Register for this event with Brian or Megan at MCMC on 9380 8199 and say if you want to join a car pool. Light refreshments will be provided.

Don't forget to keep an eye on the Friends' website—www.vicnet.net.au/~fomc

* MECCARG = Merri & Edgars Creek Confluence Area Restoration Group