

Friends of Merri Creek



NEWSLETTER

May-July
2004

Friends have funding successes

The Friends have had our most successful year yet with funding applications. Now it's up to us to ensure that we fulfil our obligations. Please put the upcoming dates below in your diaries and come along to as many as possible of these activities.

Firstly, we have received \$2,500 from SPI PowerNet, through Landcare Australia, for planting shrubs and understorey to help replace the removal of trees that had been planted too close to the high transmission power lines. This grant will fund our first afternoon planting at Merri Park at Winifred Street Northcote on Sunday 2 May.

Secondly, along with the Friends of Craigieburn Grasslands, we have received \$5,300 from Parks Victoria for restoration works at Craigieburn Grasslands. This grant will fund restoration of a lovely stony knoll that has been degraded by cattle, sheep, rabbits and weeds. The area will be fenced off and the Friends planting morning will be held on Sunday 20 June, 10am-1pm, followed by a barbecue. Enter off O'Herns Rd Somerton and follow the flags or car pool outside the MCMC office, 2 Lee St East Brunswick at 9.15am.

Thirdly, we have been informed that we will receive \$13,620 funding from the Port Phillip and Westernport Catchment Management Authority's Second Generation Landcare Program. This grant will fund restoration works and plantings at three grassland sites: Central Creek Grasslands, Reservoir, on Sunday 4 July; Cooper Street Grasslands, Campbellfield, on Sunday 29 August; and Jukes Road Grasslands, Fawkner, on Sunday 26 September. All of the grassland plantings are from 10am-1pm and all will be followed by a barbecue.

The two grassland grants will enable FoMC to continue our restoration of endangered native grasslands, a few examples of which we are extremely lucky to have along Merri Creek. This is great for the grasslands and great for FoMC members as we get to see more of these precious ecosystems and to play a vital role in saving them for future generations.

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And we haven't stopped there. We have submitted applications for funding for Volunteer Small Equipment Grants, from the Department of Family and Community Services; and Robin Merrick has applied for another round of community funds from her employer, Lend Lease Corporation. We are also applying for another Melbourne Water Community Grant to do some planting near Blyth St Brunswick with MCMC and CERES.

Thanks to Judy Bush and Barb Miles at Merri Creek Management Committee for their indispensable assistance with all of these submissions.

Ray Radford (Secretary)



Rod Hill (Craigieburn Grasslands Ranger), Ray Radford (FoMC Secretary) and Wendy Moore (Friends of Craigieburn Grasslands), deciding on this lovely, but degraded, stony knoll for the planting at Craigieburn Grasslands on Sunday 20 June. The planting will be funded by a grant from Parks Victoria.

Keeping the Creek alive!

Way to go: Melbourne Rivers and Creeks 2004 rates 47 per cent of the waterways, including the lower Merri and Darebin, as being in poor to very poor condition, based on indicators such as water quality and flow, aquatic life and vegetation.

Yep, that last one sure can be a problem: deciduous foliage is beautiful and features in many a sentimental ballad:

*... With the changing of the seasons
you were suddenly aware*

*That the autumn leaves were turning
to the colour of her hair...*

(The Windmills of your Mind)

However, its heavy seasonal fall is not as good for aquatic creatures as the steady year-long leaf drop from evergreens. This is one reason for replacing exotic trees, including the very invasive basket willow, with indigenous ones which in turn bring back the birds, and maybe frogs and invertebrates too. Great to see an ecosystem being re-established.

Industrial pollution, especially on Edgar's Creek, is another concern that is being addressed: at the March litter collection a lady told me that her northern suburban company's alkaline material must be heavily diluted before discharge, the EPA keeping a close eye (and nose) on the process. Meanwhile the MCMC has been helping the motor industry to clean up its act.

Did someone say litter collection?? So much more interesting, simple and flexible than planting, watering, weeding, mulching, seed collecting, herbicide spraying, water testing or (yawwwn)

attending meetings, but actually not nearly as important to the physical environment. More to the social one, perhaps: treating people to a tidy section of the creek, showing them somebody else cares, inviting them to participate in activities or become members. And let's not forget recycling: more than mere cosmetic sweeping of rubbish under the carpet, it saves energy, raw materials and landfill space, so it must improve air quality.

Water quality is another story. More buildings that interfere with rainwater runoff, more roads and freeways, more toxic stuff from vehicles and factories; inadequate efforts to promote cycling and expand public transport (Craigieburn, yes; Doncaster, South Morang, Rowville, no); Victoria's drought, eight years already, associated with global warming and the Feds' snubbing of Kyoto. The Councils and Shires that support such organisations as the MCMC and provide recycling services to the (eagerly cooperating) ratepayers would appear to be easily the greenest tier of government.

So the streams are not as clean as they seem, and the sparkling refilled Edwardes Lake can no longer be used for yachting because the water's a health hazard. Is there still time to turn around climate change and environmental destruction? Will today's students live to see their grandchildren safely and happily splashing about in our creeks?

Paul Prentice (Litter Group Coordinator)

Friends' News

New Treasurer

Our call for a new Treasurer has thankfully been answered by Colin Abbott, who has decided to again become active in FoMC, after being one of our founding members.

Welcome back Colin!

Friends' site extended

Darebin Bush Crew has asked us to extend the site, managed by FoMC, near Strettle wetland, Thornbury. The previously triangular site will now include the area between the wetland's

western fence and the shared path. As usual, Darebin will provide resources and expertise to help us manage the site. Come along to help plant out the extended site on Sunday 1st August, 10am-1pm.

Friends of Darebin Creek mutual invitations

First, we invited the Friends of Darebin Creek to come along to the Merri Park wetland on Sunday 30th May for a planting, barbecue and informative tour of the wetland. Their invitation to us is likely to be in September and will be advertised in the next newsletter.

FoMC has already supported our Darebin Creek counterparts in opposing two inappropriate developments along their creek. Soon, we hope to go together with them to discuss our mutual concerns over developments

along waterways with the Minister for Planning, Mary Delahunty.

Melbourne Water follows up its Willow works

Melbourne Water is finally following up its program of Willow removal along the creek bank south of Normanby Avenue Thornbury. Works have recently commenced near the path south of Blyth Street that, together with Moreland City Council, will include relocation of the path.

The new Project Manager, Terry Mullane, is consulting regularly with representatives of FoMC, Merri Creek Management Committee, Moreland Council and Darebin Council. We very much welcome Terry's approach, which has already helped establish a better relationship between FoMC and Melbourne Water. 🌿

Friends of Merri Creek Inc.

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Protect it or Lose it

Planning for the new Merri Creek park

As reported in previous Friends' newsletters, Parks Victoria is planning for a major new park in the Merri Creek corridor near Craigieburn. This is the best opportunity to protect the amazing assemblage of natural and cultural heritage in the middle reaches of the Merri—and we need your help to achieve this aim.

The draft Concept Plan for the park is likely to be released for public comment in June. The Plan will include proposed boundaries and management zones, and outline how the park will be established.

When released, the draft Concept Plan will be available to read in council libraries. To download from the Parks Victoria website (www.parkweb.vic.gov.au), or call Parks Victoria on 13 1963 to request a copy.

It is important for Friends members to make a submission that urges Parks Victoria to protect all the sites with significant conservation values. It is not enough to simply link the existing public reserves and unwanted land left over from the freeway project. This area deserves a visionary park plan that encompasses remaining areas of endangered ecological communities that are virtually unprotected anywhere else, as well as sites of Aboriginal and European cultural heritage, and space for recreation and sporting activities for the residents of the growing northern suburbs.

You might like to consider the following points in writing your submission:

1. Sites of very high conservation significance that should become part of the new park include
 - Craigieburn East grassland, which is of National botanical significance, of State faunal significance and a strategic habitat link between Craigieburn Grassland Reserve and areas to the north
 - all of the Cooper Street grassland listed on the Register of the National Estate
 - the Merri Creek corridor including at least 30m beyond the top of the embankment/escarpment on both sides of the Creek from the Ring Road north to Bald Hill
 - Bald Hill grassland and River Red Gum woodland, rated as nationally significant for fauna, and state significant for flora.
2. The ancient River Red Gum woodlands east of Craigieburn Grassland Reserve should be acquired and included in the park, as stated by the then Minister for Planning (John Thwaites) in his Assessment of the Craigieburn Bypass in 2001. The Red Gum woodlands north of Summerhill Road to Woody Hill should also be protected either in the park, or using permanent mechanisms to ensure long-term management that

protects the old trees and nearby grasslands, and promotes Red Gum regeneration.

3. Restoration of part of Hernes Swamp grassy wetland, near Wallan, should be investigated as part of the park.
4. Existing and potential habitat areas for endangered species such as Growling Grass Frogs on the former Lalor Golf Course should be protected in the park.
5. A conservation management zone should cover all escarpments and areas of recognised conservation significance along the Merri Creek from Bald Hill upstream to Wallan.
6. The resources to acquire and establish parkland may not be available immediately, but a long-term vision and approach to park planning is essential in order to protect these unique and irreplaceable sites before they are degraded or destroyed by urban and industrial development and other threatening processes.

For more information: See the 'Proposal for a Merri Creek State Park', prepared by FoMC and Victorian National Parks Association. It is available on the FoMC website, or from the Friends office. Or come to the workshop on Wed 28 July.

Ann McGregor (Vice President)

NEWS FLASH

Max Sargent wins 'Best Friend' Award

The Victorian National Parks Association Friends Network has awarded the 2004 "Best Friend" Award to Max Sargent, the ex-President of FoMC. Max was presented with the award at the Friends Network Conference on Saturday 17 April 2004.

David Redfearn, the current FoMC President, was on hand to read the citation, which lists Max's extensive involvement with the campaign against the Merri Creek freeway. It says in part: "Max's thoughtful, effective and persuasive ways consistently and unswervingly brought to the fore the interests of Merri Creek and the communities, both ecological and human, which depend on the Creek."

Congratulations to Max on a well-deserved award.

(Max's history appeared in the previous Newsletter.)



Find out about the new Merri Creek Regional Park
 7.30pm Wednesday 28 July
 Jika Jika Community Centre,
 1A Plant St Northcote,
 What are the important sites that must be protected along the Merri on the northern edge of Melbourne? Find out more about these areas and their values, and compare them with the proposals in the draft Concept Plan. Discuss what to write in your submission to Parks Victoria.

Friends' Life Members: Linda Parlane

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

Linda Parlane grew up in a small country town in New Zealand and spent lots of time out of doors, which started her love for the natural environment. Her family came to Australia when she was twelve and later she majored in Botany and Physical Geography at Monash University.

While studying at Monash, she attended a public meeting on wood chipping, addressed by Peter Rawlinson. He was an excellent scientist, engaged in public debate and he had a significant influence on her life. The meeting prompted her to work voluntarily for the Native Forests Action Council, where she was later employed when she left University.

In 1982-83, Linda went to the Wilderness Society, where she worked on the successful campaign to save the Franklin River. She says: "this campaign was a great influence; it was incredible working with a terrific team and to be part of a national campaign that stopped the dam." The campaign taught her the necessity for organisation and the massive resources of people, energy and money that was needed to stop even something so obviously wrong-headed. It also led to her meeting her partner John.

Her experience on the Franklin campaign was then used to great effect as Volunteers Coordinator at the Conservation Council of Victoria (CCV). There she established the first formal volunteers' program in an environment group in Victoria, if not Australia. Two years later, she built on this further as Coordinator with the East Gippsland Coalition, mounting a public campaign in favour of new national parks to protect the main high conservation forests in East Gippsland. This work helped to achieve the formation of the Errinundra and the Cooperambra National Parks and the extension of the Snowy River National Park to protect the Rodger River Wilderness.

Linda then returned to the CCV, to work on the greenhouse campaign in 1989. Later on, she became the Director and the organisation changed its name to Environment Victoria. There she helped establish a national coalition of forest conservation groups and successfully opposed the plan to establish a massive

oil import facility in the fragile Westernport Bay. She also set up campaigns to tackle Melbourne's air pollution, reduce car use and improve public transport. All this provided a good grounding after she left Environment

Victoria in 1997 and joined the Friends' campaign against the Merri Creek Freeway.

Without Linda's outstanding coordinating of the freeway campaign, it would not have been anywhere near such a high profile campaign. Her efforts led to her becoming easily the most recent member of the Friends to be awarded an honorary Life Membership. The freeway campaign encapsulated many of her passionate interests, like the natural environment, the greenhouse effect and urban form. It also raised the question, "what sort of city do we want and how do we want to relate with nature?"

During the freeway campaign, Linda enjoyed working with the local community and being a volunteer with lots of other volunteers. She admires the groundbreaking work of the founding members of FoMC and Merri Creek Management Committee. Indeed, she believes that the community-driven alliance they established is unique and underpins the long-term effort needed to restore the Creek and to effectively tackle the many threats.

Linda lives in Coburg with her partner John and she continues to have a number of local involvements, such as with CERES. She is the current coordinator of the Jika Jika Community Centre and she enjoys music, bike riding, bushwalking and camping.

Ray Radford (Secretary)



Friends set national example

Voluntary work by the Friends of Merri Creek was mentioned as an example of a "parallel economic form" in the spring 2003 edition of *Chain Reaction*, the national magazine of Friends of the Earth Australia. The article, "More than just a Market," by Emma Rush, looks at how to make it economic to protect, rather than destroy, the environment.

The article discusses the standard economic approach of factoring in eco-

taxes into the overall costs of economic activity. This approach entails setting a monetary price on ecological or social values, which the article argues "often distorts or destroys the value in question." Instead, the author quotes Barbara Brandt in *Whole Life Economics: Revaluing Daily Life*, who recognised that different economic forms are used in parallel with the market economy.

These parallel economic forms are currently partially or wholly

economically invisible. However, many of them allow those without money to access the goods and services they need locally and they are often more personally fulfilling and empowering than activities in the market economy. Examples of parallel economic forms include: doing it for yourself; giving; restoration (where the Friends are mentioned); barter and exchange networks; the sociable market (where CERES is given as an example); and

Freeway campaign evaluated

Masters student Nicole Drever summarises the results of an evaluation session on the campaign to stop the Merri Creek Freeway. The session was held late last year as part of the course work for the Masters of Public Advocacy and Action program at Victoria University.

Campaign achievements include:

- Significant developments were made during the campaign, regarding awareness of the environmental impacts of freeways in several arenas. Government, green groups and the community became more aware of the associations between roads and environmental degradation. The campaign team was successful in communicating the message that freeways equal dirty water. The campaign team was also able to influence the outlook of other green groups such as the Green Wedge Coalition to more thoroughly consider the impacts of freeways. For those involved in the campaign, further research improved understanding of the ecology of the northern Merri Valley and more generally ecology of urban ecosystems.
- While the campaign did not stop the construction of the freeway, it did 'bend' the freeway on three occasions with regard to its location and cost of construction. Due to the successful lobbying regarding the issues of dirty water and critical habitat for endangered species, the State Government was forced to develop and implement improved measures to manage water run-off from the freeway. The campaign team was also able to alter the proposed freeway route reducing the immediate damage to the Creek environment. These significant changes to the freeway development have effectively doubled the overall cost of construction.
- During the campaign in 1997 the Craigieburn and Cooper St. Grassland Reserves were included on the Interim Register of the National Estate. A number of other 'wins' regarding the reservation of land in the northern Merri Creek Valley are expected to come into effect in the near future and plans for a regional park are underway.
- The campaign to "Save Merri Creek from the freeway" will undoubtedly assist efforts in the ongoing battle against freeway construction in Melbourne. Through this campaign and the work of others, VicRoads' future plans have become clearer. Also, the campaign has prepared the community for further action in the event that VicRoads proposes to extend the freeway, south of the Western Ring Road through the Merri Valley.
- The campaign successfully raised awareness within the community of the impact of freeways on the environment, and of the importance of the Merri Creek and native grasslands. Subsequently, there has been increased community support for FoMC and for the protection of the Merri. There has also been an increase in the number of people attending FoMC activities on the Merri Creek.
- The campaign successfully involved, mobilised and empowered the community to take action regarding the protection of the local environment.
- The campaign instigated further research and drew on current powerful research developments regarding the conservation of urban ecosystems, such as the 'road zone effect' work by ARCUE. Through the campaign greater discoveries regarding the natural and cultural heritage significance of the northern Merri Valley were found, including identification of endangered/rare species of flora and fauna along the freeway route such as the Growling Grass Frog.
- The campaign was to a certain extent successful in putting environmental issues on the political agenda. Consequently government is more sensitive about appearing to take action on environmental issues.
- The campaign also assisted in putting integrated transport planning on the political agenda. The alternative plan clearly displayed the feasibility and sensibility of investing in integrated transport plans rather than freeways.

investing for the future with no anticipated financial return (where planting on public property is given as an example).

So, active Friends members are engaged in activities that are not only more personally fulfilling and empowering, but they also challenge the current economic view of evaluating things in monetary terms. All while enjoying ourselves too! 🌱

Important lessons from the campaign

While the campaign goal wasn't achieved, the inspiring efforts of FoMC and others has set the scene for future campaign work against freeway developments. As Linda Parlane commented it is very difficult to fight freeway campaigns at the local level and as yet, we do not have an effective strategy for tackling VicRoads.

Undoubtedly this issue needs to be seriously addressed by state-wide green groups and through the formation of a Melbourne wide coalition of green and anti-freeway groups. It is important that the wealth of experience and knowledge gained through this campaign, particularly regarding community mobilisation, be shared with other anti-freeway groups.

Nicole Drever

The author thanks the following FOMC members for sharing their invaluable insights at the evaluation session: Anne Elvey, Tony Faithfull, Colin Hocking, Bill Jennings, Ann McGregor, Linda Parlane, Max Sargent and Ruth Shiel.

I spy and wonder why

On a splendid Sunday (14/3/04), we played 'I spy' at Jukes Road Grassland, locating & counting surviving plants of two significant species, as part of MCMC's Reintroduction of Significant Species Program. The program is aimed at ensuring the continued survival of species, where their populations either remain in very small numbers or are located in areas that are at risk of being destroyed.

Programs such as this enable field staff as well as indigenous nursery staff the opportunity to trial different methods of propagation and establishment to learn more about the species.

The first species, Tough Scurf-pea (*Cullen tenax*), was planted by MCMC for the first time in 2002 and then again in 2003 at Jukes Rd Grassland. The parent population of this species (which is endangered in Victoria) grows over a few square metres in an extremely precarious site in nearby Glenroy. Locating the *Cullen tenax*, despite their small and sprawling habit, was made easy by the fact that plants had been planted into a weed suppressant jumat. Most of the plants showed signs of being grazed (presumably by rabbits) and drought-stressed. Open seedpods on some plants indicated that some had been able to shed seed this year, a promising sign for possible new plants in the future.

The second species was Smooth Rice-flower (*Pimela glauca*), a regionally significant plant. This species was first planted at the Jukes Rd Grassland in 2001 and again in 2002.

Many of the *Pimelea glauca* planted in 2003 still had their treeguards, making locating this species easy. Surviving plants from the 2000 planting were all more than a metre tall and quite bushy. Some of the plants, especially those close to basalt surface rocks, appeared to be less drought-stressed than those plants not near rocks and we wondered if the rocks were channelling water to the plants and/or preventing weed competition.

We didn't encounter any snakes, despite crawling around on our hands and knees in prime Brown Snake habitat. However,

we were rewarded by seeing more than half a dozen male Radar Beetles hovering vertically above a Hawthorn bush, possibly attracted by scent of the females that they sensed with their feathery antennae. A female Radar Beetle was seen laying eggs and spacing them on the bark of on a dead branch two metres above the ground.

Native Grasslands provide habitat for such a wide variety of plants and animals. They are fantastic places for humans to observe and ponder the relationship that plants have with animals and *vice versa*. They stimulate plenty of questions and wonderment! We paused to think that it was likely that even a small indigenous kid of 200 years ago would have known so much more about nature and would merrily laugh at us.

So if you want to contribute to grassland knowledge while having a great time in the wonder of nature,

join us at Jukes Rd Grassland on the next planned monitoring day, Sunday 10 October 2004. No botanical or scientific skills required, just open your eyes! Contact Brian at MCMC—phone 9380 8199 for more info.

Pascale Pitot

*Active Planting Group member
and Friends' Frogwatch Coordinator*



The aptly-named Radar Beetle.
Photo courtesy of MCMC.

At the heart of the community: the Merlynston Creek

Around a sweeping rock-lined bend comes the Merlynston to join the Merri near the Coburg Lake; but what a chequered career it has had in its short life!

The worst part is its imprisonment underground: two kilometres as the crow flies or the mole rat tunnels, with only the easement to track its course before it emerges blinking into the light of day.

Above Boundary Rd, by contrast, it has the privilege of soothing the aching emptiness of the bereaved as it wanders through the vast Fawkner Cemetery (twice the size of its older

counterpart in Carlton) and its northern extension. Along with the lawns and the flowers and the graceful trees, the little brook must surely help to create an atmosphere of timeless beauty and peace.

Further upstream, it widens out into water features with wetlands and wildfowl on either side of the ring road, whose 35km. bicycle path links the Kororoit Creek in the south-west with the Plenty River in the north-east; however with the breaks in access, including a retarding basin, one can't follow the Merlynston by bike as one can with the Merri, Moonee

Grand Central

Mirroring the Merri's myriad perils is the Central Creek Grassland in Reservoir: first it was fated to be fractured by a freeway, then to be annihilated for housing.

Eventually some energetic enthusiasts ensured the preservation of its least weed-contaminated part, 9 out of the 13 hectares: it will complement Darebin's multi-faceted Bundoora Park with the 137 m. high Mt Cooper, the rich, dense Gresswell and LaTrobe wildlife reserves and the magnificent hollow in Alphington, the Darebin Creek's counterpart to Galada Tamboore.

The new streets in the remaining area will be named Honeyeater, Kestrel and Wattlebird, Bluebell, Lily, Orchid and Sedge; some use of roadways as borders will make the conservation zone look like a park, and provide a splendid panorama from front windows and balconies. Meanwhile the creek has become about the fortieth waterway around Melbourne to acquire a shared footway beside it: only a handful of rebels remain to be tracked down!

Over the years, controlled burns have proved to be a good way to knock out some weed species (herbicides are needed for others), and to rejuvenate the native plants, such as Themeda which grows into tufts so thick that they virtually choke themselves. The effect has to be seen to be believed: fires, floods, frosts, it's remarkable how beneficial they can be to the environment. But how do tiny creatures escape the flames? By hiding in the cracks in the soil. All part of nature's plan...

So what are the characteristic plants and animals of the Central Creek Grassland? A Fact Sheet issued by the MCMC identifies three ecological communities: the threatened and therefore diligently protected Plains Grassland; Stony Knoll Grassland, offering well-drained soil for Spear Grasses and other plants that prefer it, and containing a few Blackwoods, a type of wattle; and Grassy Wetland, located on the upstream side of the Davidson St and Bartrop St bridges, and populated by plants that don't mind getting their feet wet.

Some species are considered to be of National (N), State (S) or Regional (R) significance: among fauna there's the Grassland Copper Butterfly (S), and under (R), the Brown Songlark, the Little Whip Snake, the Little Grassbird, the Echidna and the



The area to be planted at Central Creek Grassland on Sunday 4 July, funded by a grant from the Port Phillip and Westernport Catchment Management Authority.

Large Striped Skink. Fortunately the reserve through which the creek flows to join the Merri near Radford Rd supplies a modest wildlife corridor.

Notable flora include the Short Water-starwort and the Matted Flax-lily (N), the rare Rye Beetle-grass (S), and more than fifty with an (R) including Vanilla and Chocolate Lilies (yum), Milkmaids and Milky Beauty Heads, Rushes, and the siblings Blue Devil and Prickfoot (ouch). And that's not even counting the very common species such as Danthonia (Wallaby Grass) and Themeda (Kangaroo Grass). I don't know what's more amazing, the enormous variety of plants or the patience and dedication of the ecologists trying to keep up with them.

Yes, we love the three-dimensional look of towering mountains and rock formations, of plunging cataracts and deep mysterious valleys, and the wonderful diversity of trees with their different shapes, sizes, colours and textures; yet the prairies and the Nullarbor Plain, the deserts and the tundra, the marshes and the lagoons all have their own fascinating ecosystems, their own particular contributions to make to the almost infinite number of forms and ways in which life flourishes on our planet.

Paul Prentice (Committee member)

Come to the Friends' planting & BBQ at Central Creek Grasslands, Davidson St Reservoir, on Sunday 4 July, 10am-1pm.

Ponds, Maribyrnong, Darebin, Diamond or Dandenong.

Not surprisingly, this focus of civic life is bordered by a number of sporting, educational and social facilities; it even has its own bit of history in the Will Will Rook Pioneer Cemetery. The Camil mosque, the Maygar army barracks, the Coolaroo hotel-motel and a Greek community centre all contribute to the diversity; on the other hand there is the remarkable unifying theme, unparalleled in Melbourne and probably in Australia, of about a hundred streets in Broadmeadows and Dallas named after country towns – a generous salute to the bush.

And like the Diamond, Gardiner's, Kananook and Moonee Ponds Creeks, the Merlynston has its own railway – that gutsy little survivor, the Upfield line. (The Merri has brief flirtations with four of 'em!) In fact eighteen waterways and four lakes around Melbourne share their names with train stations; that's as it should be, both networks are part of the image of our city and our quality of life and care for the environment.

Paul Prentice

Friends of Merri Creek events calendar

MAY

Sunday 2 — Planting Afternoon

Merri Park, Winifred St Northcote, 1pm-4pm with MCMC (FoMC PowerNet Grant). Melway map 30 C8. Phone Leslie 9481 7365. *Please note: this is an afternoon planting and the venue has changed from the previous calendar.*

Sunday 2 — Litter Clean-Up

Normanby Ave Thornbury, 10am-12 noon. Melway map 30 A5. 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 Chris 0439 884 030.

Wednesday 12 — Friends' Committee Meeting

MCMC Office, 2 Lee St East Brunswick, 7.30-9.30pm. All members welcome. See how your Committee operates.

Sunday 16 — Planting & BBQ

Robinson Reserve, Kendall St Preston, 10am-1pm, with MCMC. Melway map 30 B2. Phone Nicole 9354 5045.

Saturday 22 — Friends of Organ Pipes Woody Weeding

Get together with the Friends of Organ Pipes in this woody weeding at Craigieburn Grasslands. Enter off O'Herns Rd Somerton. Melway map 180 F6. Phone Ray 0422 989 166.

Sunday 30 — Planting & BBQ

Merri Park Wetland Northcote, 10am-1pm, with MCMC (MCMC Landcare Grant). We have especially invited the Friends of Darebin Creek to join us for this planting and an informative tour of the wetland by MCMC staff. Melway map 30 C8. Phone Pascale 9484 5752.

JUNE

Sunday 6 — Planting, rubbish clean-up & BBQ

Imaroo St Fawkner, 10am-1pm, with nearby residents and MCMC. *This event has been added to the calendar to make up for one cancelled on 18 April.* Melway map 17 K6. Phone Barb at MCMC 9380 8199 (w).

Sunday 6 — Litter Clean-Up

Walker St East, Northcote. 10am-12 noon. Melway map 30 F12. Phone Paul 9489 5062.

Sunday 6 — 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 Chris 0439 884 030.

Wednesday 9 — Friends' Committee Meeting

MCMC Office, 2 Lee St East Brunswick, 7.30-9.30pm. All members welcome. See how your Committee operates.

Sunday 20 — Planting & BBQ

Craigieburn Grasslands, 10am-1pm, with MCMC and Friends of Craigieburn Grasslands (FoMC Parks Victoria Grant). Enter off O'Herns Rd Somerton and follow the flags to the site (about 15 minutes walk) or car pool leaving outside the MCMC office at Lee St East Brunswick at 9.15am. Melway map 180 F6. Phone Ray 0422 989 166.

Friday 25 — Deadline for articles for the next newsletter.

Sunday 27 — Planting, rubbish clean-up & BBQ

Imaroo St Fawkner, 10am-1pm, join nearby residents and MCMC for the second round of Creek improvements at Imaroo St. Melway map 17 K6. Phone Barb at MCMC 9380 8199 (w).

JULY

Sunday 4 — Planting and BBQ

Central Creek grasslands, Davidson St Reservoir, 10am-1pm with MCMC. (CMA grant). Melway map 8 B12. Phone Barb at MCMC 9380 8199 (w).

Sunday 4 — Litter Clean-Up

Arthurton Rd Northcote, 10am-12 noon. Melway map 30 B7. 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 Chris 0439 884 030.

Sunday 11 — Twin Lakes Walk

It's on again! Walk from Edwardes Lake to Coburg Lake along the Merri Creek and return along Edgars Creek. Meet at the Edwardes Lake dam wall at 1.00pm. Melway map 18D5. Phone Paul 9489 5062.

Wednesday 14 — Friends' Committee Meeting

MCMC Office, 2 Lee St East Brunswick, 7.30-9.30pm. All members welcome. See how your Committee operates.

Sunday 18 — Planting & BBQ

Moomba Park Fawkner, 10am-1pm, with MCMC. Melway map 8 A12. Phone Barb at MCMC 9380 8199 (w).

Friday 23 — Newsletter Mail out

Friends' office, Brunswick Town Hall, Cnr Sydney Rd & Glenlyon Rd Brunswick. From 11am onwards. Phone Ray 0422 989 166.

Sunday 25 — Planting & BBQ

Merri Park Wetland Northcote, 10am-1pm, with MCMC (MCMC Envirofund Grant). Melway map 30 C8. Phone Leslie 9481 7365.

Wednesday 28 — Workshop on the new Merri Ck Regional Park

Jika Jika Community Centre, 1A Plant St Northcote, 7.30pm. Come along and find out about the new park proposed along the Merri Creek north of the ring road, and see what you can do to improve the proposal.

AUGUST

Sunday 1 — Planting & BBQ

St Georges Rd & Bundara St, Fitzroy North, 10am-1pm, with MCMC. Melway map 30 C10. Phone Dick 9853 3162.

Sunday 1 — Planting

Friends' site, near Strettle wetlands Thornbury, 10am-1pm, with Darebin Bush Crew. Melway map 30 B3. Phone Ray 0422 989 166.

Sunday 1 — Litter Clean-Up

St Georges Rd Fitzroy North, 10am-12 noon. Melway map 30 C10. Phone Paul 9489 5062.

Sunday 1 — 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 Chris 0439 884 030.

Sunday 8 — Planting & BBQ

Central Ck Grassland Reservoir, 10am-1pm, with MCMC (Envirofund Grant). Phone Paul 9489 5062.

Wednesday 11 — Friends' Committee Meeting

MCMC Office, 2 Lee St East Brunswick, 7.30-9.30pm. All members welcome. See how your Committee operates.

Sunday 22 — Planting & BBQ

Jukes Rd Grassland Fawkner, 10am-1pm, with MCMC (Envirofund Grant). Phone Gail 9484 1703. Melway map 18 B1.

Sunday 29 — Woody Weed Removal

Cooper St Grassland Campbellfield, 10am-1pm, with MCMC (CMA grant). Phone Barb at MCMC 9380 8199 (w). Melway map 180 K11.

WANTED

Stalls coordinator

We need a member to voluntarily organise the staffing of the few information stalls that FoMC usually holds during the year. If you are interested and/or you want more information, please ring Ray Radford at MCMC on 9380 8199 (Mon – Thurs) or on 0422 989 166.

Office volunteer

Our office coordinator, Jack Svendsen, needs other volunteers to share the staffing of the FoMC office at the Brunswick Town Hall in Sydney Rd. For more information, please ring Jack at the office on Wednesdays on 9389 8633 or at home on 9354 5304.