

Friends of Merri Creek



NEWSLETTER

November 2003
– January 2004

Friends of Merri Creek 2003 Annual General Meeting

2.00pm Saturday 15 November, 2003
CERES Training Room
Lee Street, East Brunswick

All members are invited to attend

Have your say in running the Friends and elect our Committee, then join us for light refreshments afterwards. Please note that the venue is the training Room at CERES, not the Education Centre as it has been in the past.

Interested in being on the Committee?

If you are even vaguely interested in a role on the Friends Committee or as a representative to the MCMC, or in volunteering for one of the various Sub-Committees, please ring Ray Radford on 0422 989 166. Also contact Ray for a Nomination Form, which must be received before 14 November. An election will only be held if the number of nominations exceed the vacancies.

Check Your Membership

Please note that only financial members can vote at the AGM or nominate for positions. If you wish to vote but are currently unfinancial, your membership fee and application form will need to be received before Wednesday 5 November. Unfortunately, memberships cannot be approved at the AGM. ❀

IN THIS ISSUE

<i>The Meaning of Life (etc.)</i>	2
<i>Merri People</i>	2
<i>MCMC's 100th meeting</i>	2
<i>Secretary's report: 2003 activities</i>	3
<i>Events calendar</i>	4
<i>Hear the Frogwatch call</i>	4

AGENDA:

1. Introductions and Apologies
2. Acceptance of the Minutes of the 2002 AGM
3. President's Report – Max Sargent
4. Secretary's Report: 2003 Activities - Ray Radford
(See page 3)
5. Financial Report from the Treasurer – Max Sargent
(*in lieu of Treasurer*)
6. Report from the Membership Secretary – Anne Elvey
7. Election of the 2004 Friends Committee
(*and Sub-Committee Reps*)
8. Election of at least 6 Friends Representatives to MCMC
9. Setting the Annual Subscription Fee
(*no change is anticipated*)
10. Election of Friends Public Officer
(*not required for 2004*)
11. Discussion of possible activities for 2004
12. Other Business
13. Date of next AGM
(*Secretary suggests Saturday 13 November 2004*)

Aim to conclude meeting by 3.30pm

Light refreshments available

Congratulations to MCMC for 100th meeting

Our congratulations to Merri Creek Management Committee (MCMC) for their 100th meeting on Thursday 21 August at Whittlesea Civic Centre. To help celebrate this milestone, MCMC invited a number of special guests who were either at the first MCMC meeting or who had made a significant contribution to MCMC.

The Friends were well represented at the meeting with our full contingent of six representatives, including the MCMC President, Trevor Hausler, the MCMC Secretary, Ann McGregor and the MCMC Treasurer, Allie Dawe. Plus, we also had Bruce

McGregor, Peter Mollison, Colin Abott, and David Redfearn attending as special guests.

David Redfearn gave a talk on his experiences as a founding member of MCMC, President for nine years and Treasurer for three years. He said that MCMC has been a great community-building project and that the Friends of Merri Creek have played a crucial role, including holding MCMC together by stepping into the vacuum created on the Executive by Council amalgamations.

Note: Any member can nominate to represent the Friends on the MCMC. If you're even vaguely interested, please ring Ray Radford on 0422 989 166

The Meaning of Life lies in the Grasslands

The Friends of Merri Creek have possibly found the meaning of life!

This discovery developed slowly after a talk to the Friends last year by Dr Colin Hocking, senior lecturer in conservation and sustainability at Victoria University of Technology. Dr Hocking said that Western Plains grasslands, like we have on the Merri Creek, would cease to exist without humans looking after them. If they become extinct, this would then mean the extinction of a whole range of insect, bird and animal life that depend on the grasslands to survive.

When I first heard this, I thought that this situation might be because European settlement resulted in the destruction of 99.9% of the native grasslands. However, Dr Hocking explained that it has always been that way! In the past, the Wurundjeri Aboriginal people looked after the grasslands along the Merri Creek managing them with fire. So humans are and have always been an essential part of the grasslands ecosystem.

Non-Aboriginal people may find this fact hard to grasp at first due to the widely-held impression that nature is somehow separate from humans. However, the fact has been drawn into sharp focus by the plight of our highly endangered grasslands, with only one thousandth of the original grasslands remaining. We are indeed privileged to have quite a chunk of that small percentage of grasslands along the Merri Creek.

Once we accept the fact that humans are an essential part of the native grasslands ecosystem, then we can begin to accept that it must be one of our roles, as the humans who now inhabit the area, to look after the grasslands. So, there you have it. The Friends have not only found the meaning of life, but we are fulfilling this role by helping to protect the grasslands. Most prominently, we've done this through our campaign to stop the Merri Creek freeway. Now, with the freeway being built, it means that the grasslands need us more than ever.

We've also done a number of plantings over the years at grassland sites like Central Creek, Craigieburn and Jukes Road. We've also just recently supported the listing of Western Basalt Plains Grasslands under the Environment Protection & Biodiversity Conservation Act. You can help to fulfil your own life's meaning, by joining the Friends of Craigieburn Grasslands! Membership is free to FoMC members (ring Wendy Moore on 9354 2270). Or just could come along to a grasslands planting. There'll be at least one opportunity next year as Parks Victoria has granted us \$5,300 for a planting at Craigieburn Grasslands.

Ray Radford

(A founding member of Friends of Craigieburn Grasslands)

With thanks to Freya Mathews, philosophy lecturer at LaTrobe University, for patiently explaining why this discovery would not be quite enough to warrant a PhD.

Merri People

*Quietly it begins in the mountains,
grandly at Dight's Falls it ends;
Diverse are the Merri's surroundings,
equally so are its friends.*

*A few hardy souls got things started,
opposing the concrete drain;
Now Councils, Friends, Government departments
and the MCMC share the strain.*

*Month by month people turn up to meetings,
which are not to everyone's taste;
But there's method in all their proceedings,
and the job gets done without haste.*

*The Management Committee's the centre,
as a happy, tight ship it is run;
Prepares leaflets, books, budgets and tenders;
weeds, weed control eagerly done.*

*The Friends help with weed-mat removal
(the old way) and mulching (the new),
And planting with pickaxe and shovel;
and it ends with a barbecue.*

*The Creek gets a monthly cleansing
from a few who think litter's a crime,
While others do water testing,
to see how it's going over time.*

*The Committee keeps things in order,
the newsletter's chic, not bleak;
And thanks to our many supporters,
without whom we'd be up the creek!*

Paul Prentice (Committee member)

Friends of Merri Creek Inc.

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Secretary's Report: Friends Activities 2003

2003 Friends Committee:

President: Max Sargent; Vice President: Ann McGregor; Secretary: Ray Radford; Membership Secretary: Anne Elvey; General Committee Member and Welcomer for new members: Louise Hayward. The position of Treasurer was vacant, however Denise Chevalier and Max Sargent thankfully fulfilled the role. Also on the Committee were these Representatives of Sub Committees: Planting Group: Gail Brammar, Litter Group: Paul Prentice, Streamteam: Chris Sullivan, Walks & Talks: Alan Brennan, Newsletter: Dean Lombard. The Committee met monthly from February to November.

Planting and Hands-on Activities:

This year, the Planting and Hands-on Group had this very hectic schedule that extended right through September:

18 people spread tons of mulch at BT Connor Reserve Reservoir on 23/3. We cancelled our first ever planting on 13/4 as no rain had made the ground too hard! Only two weeks later it was very wet as 21 people planted and tree-guarded 130 plants at Craigieburn Grasslands on 27/4. 26 people planted 349 plants at Central Creek Grasslands Reservoir on 11/5. 23 people planted 660 plants at Jukes Road Grasslands Fawcner on 25/5.

18 people planted 320 plants and did plenty of weeding at the Friends' site near Strettle Wetland Thornbury on 15/6. 50 people planted 600 plants, tree-guarded half of them and spread lots of mulch at Merri Park Wetland on a sunny 13/7. 8 people planted 400 plants at Jukes Rd Grasslands Fawcner on 27/7. 23 people planted 272 plants, tree-guarded 200 of them and spread 50 cubic metres of mulch at Moomba Park Fawcner on 10/8. 39 people planted 1000 plants and did some weeding and rubbish clean-up at the Melbourne Water funded activity at Rushall Reserve on 24/8, with the hard-working Choppers of Rushall Reserve.

22 people planted 200 and tree-guarded 100 plants at Galada Tamboore Campbellfield on 14/9. 58 people planted 1370 plants at Rushall Reserve on 21/9, funded by Lend Lease Corporation, again with the Choppers. (Lend Lease staff also planted there on 25/9 - thanks to employee and Friends member Robin Merrick.) 24 people planted 390 plants at Hall Reserve Clifton Hill on 28/9, with Friends of the Quarries.

19 people helped weed Merri Park wetland Northcote on 12/10/03, plus there were regular weeding mornings at our Friends plot near Strettle Wetlands.

In addition, lots of members attended other activities, mostly organised by MCMC, such as the Moreland Planting Festival at Moomba Park on 31/5.

That's a clear Friends' record of over 5690 plants in the ground, plus lots of staking, mulching and weeding as well! Once again we had the support of the Merri Creek Management Committee Parkland Management Team who helped us with most of the plantings and supplied barbeques later. Thanks also to the Darebin Bush Crew for resourcing the Friends' plot at Strettle Wetlands and to the Rangers at Craigieburn grasslands.

Coordinator: Gail Brammar.

Litter Clean-ups:

This dedicated group continued to hold litter clean-up activities in every month, except January: 5 people at: Keady St Nth Coburg on 2/2; 5 people at St Georges Rd Nth Fitzroy on 9/3; 10 people at Normanby Ave Thornbury on 6/4; 8 people at Murray Rd Coburg on 4/5; 2 people at Rushall Station Nth Fitzroy on 1/6; 6 people at Harding St Coburg on 6/7; 3 people at Walker St East, Northcote on 3/8; 5 people at Keady St Nth Coburg on 7/9; 3 people at St Georges Rd Nth Fitzroy on 5/10. Unknown numbers at Moreland Rd Coburg on 2/11 (5 in '02) and at Walker St East, Northcote on 7/12 (6 in '02)

Coordinator: Paul Prentice.

Streamteam:

This year, the regular water quality tests moved to new site, upstream of St Georges Road Bridge North Fitzroy.

Coordinator: Chris Sullivan.

Merri Creek freeway Campaign:

Last year's report omitted the employment of the joint Freeway Campaign Coordinators Rebecca Smith and Rob Heller in Nov/Dec 2002.

This year our opposition to the freeway hinged on the Friends' legal challenge to the Federal Government, which unfortunately we lost, but our legal team of Brian Walters, Sharon Moore and Rebecca Hoare did a magnificent job.

Walks Talks and Tours:

This year we had a much larger range of tour activities, including two bike rides (16/3 & 29/6), a walk (18/5) and a Frog Watch (28/3) but, unfortunately, very few people turned up to any of them.

Coordinator: Alan Brennan, with Paul Prentice for the bike tours and walk.

Newsletter:

Four Newsletters were distributed in February, May, August and October, the last three with a great new layout. Thanks to the Moreland City Council for funding the newsletter mail-outs.

Coordinator: Dean Lombard.

Friends Representation on MCMC:

The Friends representatives remain the most consistent members at the five meetings of the Merri Creek Management Committee with most of them also attending one or two of the quarterly Sub-Committee meetings. The Friends were represented on the MCMC by: Trevor Hausler as MCMC President, Ann McGregor as Secretary, Allie Dawe as Treasurer, plus Max Sargent, Alan Brennan and Harold Mackrell. The Substitute representatives, Paul Prentice, David Redfearn, Clair Dougherty, Julie Mason and Vera Wong each attended various meetings.

Other Activities and news:

We held information stalls at the Yarra Community Festival, Edinburgh Gardens on 16/2, the Sydney Road Street Party on 2/3, the Merri Creek Primary School fete on 29/3, LaTrobe University's Green Day Out on 21/5 and coming up at the Return of the Sacred Kingfisher Festival on 22/11 and at Darebin Festival on 30/11.

Our website is kept up to date and looking great by Simon D'Alfonso.

Thanks to the volunteers who update the information signs along the Creek. This year, two more signs were removed due to idiotic graffiti, so now only three signs remain of the original seven.

This year, over 400 people attended about 45 Friends events. We were also represented at various activities and had input to a number of policies, plans and strategies, including: Melbourne 2030, the Merri Creek Regional Park Working Group, the PowerNet Revegetation Plan, the Melbourne Water Waterway Activity Plan, stopping a rock wall being built south of Normanby Ave, the revised Merri Creek Development Guidelines, submission to the Community Cabinet, supporting the listing of Western Basalt Plains Grasslands under the EPBC Act.

Ray Radford (Secretary 2003)

Like to help plan our 2004 plantings?

Join us at a Friends' Planting Group Planning Meeting, 6.00pm Wednesday 19 Nov, MCMC Office, 2 Lee St East Brunswick

Participate in the planning of our Planting and Hands-On Activities for 2004. With Barb Miles, MCMC Parkland Management Team Coordinator.

Friends of Merri Creek events calendar

OCTOBER

Thursday 23 — Frogwatch

Strettle Wetlands, Thornbury around dusk. Organised by Darebin Council Bushcrew - phone Luke for details on 0419 750 388.

Sunday 19 — Blue Tongue Lizard Planting Day

Victorian Indigenous Nurseries Cooperative 10am to 12pm Planting 500 plants for lizard habitat. Guest speaker Peter Robertson Yarra Bend Park Rd Fairfield. BBQ provided. RSVP 10 Oct 9482 1710. Free for VINC members \$5 others.

Sunday 26 — Walk, Talk and Gawk

Galada Tamboore, Campbellfield. Organised by the Victorian National Parks Association. Non VNPA members \$5 and bookings are essential, phone Geoff Durham on 9523 5559.

Sunday 26 — Frog and Wetland Day

11am-2.30pm Talk and planting/weeding, Speaker Gerri Marantelli (Amphibian Research Center) at Victorian Indigenous Nurseries Cooperative Yarra Bend Park Rd Fairfield. BBQ provided. RSVP by 17 Oct 9482-1710. Free to VINC members, \$5 others.

NOVEMBER

Sunday 2 — Litter Clean-Up

Moreland Road Coburg, 10am-12 noon. Melway map 30 A5. Phone Paul Prentice 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. Contact Chris Sullivan 0439 884 030.

Wednesday 5 — Friends' Committee meeting

MCMC office 2 Lee St East Brunswick 7.30pm. All members welcome.

Saturday 8 & Sunday 9

Melbourne Zoo Frog Festival, Parkville.

Saturday 15 — Friends' Annual General Meeting

CERES Training Room (note venue change) Lee St East Brunswick, 2.00pm.

Wednesday 19 — Friends' Planting Group Planning Meeting

MCMC Office, 2 Lee St East Brunswick, 6.00pm. Participate in the planning of our Planting and Hands-On Activities for 2004. With Barb Miles, MCMC Parkland Management Team Coordinator.

Saturday 22 — Return of the Sacred Kingfisher Festival

CERES Environment Park Lee St East Brunswick, 2-9pm. Don't miss this fantastic community celebration. Look for the Friends' stall (if you would like to help out ring Ray Radford on 0422 989 166).

Sunday 30 — Darebin Festival at High St Party and Parade

Northcote Town Hall to Westgarth St Northcote, 10am - 4pm. Look for the Friends' stall (if you would like to help out ring Ray Radford on 0422 989 166).

DECEMBER

Sunday 7 — Litter Clean-Up

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

Sunday 7 — Friends' site Weeding

Near Strettle Lagoon Thornbury, 10am-11.30am. Melway map 30 B3. Phone Ray Radford 0422 989 166.

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. Contact Chris Sullivan 0439 884 030.

Thursday 25 — Have a Merri Christmas!

Hear the Frogwatch call!

Frogs are calling and now is the time to record their calls along the Merri for Frogwatch — a Melbourne Water community program..

Recording only takes 15 to 30 minutes per site. It is better done one to three hours after sunset, preferably within 24 hours of a good rain after a dry spell. A blank tape and instructions are provided; a Dictaphone or a tape recorder is needed (one tape recorder is available to borrow). No Frog knowledge required but you're bound to learn a thing or two about them in the process.

Sunset has been kind of predictable but the weather pattern is resisting all negotiation attempts, so we are suggesting an ad hoc approach rather than an orderly insertion in the activity calendar.

We would love to hear from Merri's friends willing to take on recording in one section of the Creek or to be available at short notice on a phone or email list for quick evening expeditions. Accompanied children are welcomed as long as they can keep quiet long enough for a recording, strictly no dogs, cats or pet snakes!

Evenings on the Creek are a fabulous experience that are nice and safe to share in small groups. So please contact Pascale at pascale@darebin.org or on 9484 5752 so that the Merri Frogs are counted this spring.

Pascale Pitot

(More information at www.melbournewater.com.au/frogs or the Amphibian Research Centre www.frogs.org.au)



Striped Marsh Frog