

Gorge Gazette – March 2026



News about Trelissick Park, the Ngaio Gorge and streams

Abbreviations:

WCC	Wellington City Council	GW	Greater Wellington Regional Council
F&B	Forest and Bird Protection Society	GG	Gorge Gazette
TPG	Trelissick Park Group	OWBT	Ōtari-Wilton's Bush Trust
S to S	Kia Mouriora te Kaiwharawhara Sanctuary to Sea	OHS	Onslow Historical Society

Our core community members are Highland Park Progressive Association Inc., Ngaio Crofton Downs Residents' Association Inc., Onslow Historical Society Inc., Ōtari-Wilton's Bush Trust, Royal Forest and Bird Protection Society Inc. (Wellington Branch), Wellington Botanical Society Inc., Wadestown Residents' Association. We support Kia Mouriora te Kaiwharawhara | Sanctuary to Sea.

TPG history Part Three for 'Onslow Historian' - update and launch

OHS editor of the *Onslow Historian* John Martin reformatted our final draft of Part Three covering 2014-2025. He also added other photos for greater diversity from the GGs of the period. His transformation, and reviewer Catherine Van Hale, kept Peter Reimann 'off the streets' for a little longer.

We are very happy with the finalised version that went to the printer. A smooth operation from start to finish!

The publication will be launched with a celebration at Tāne Whakapiripiri | Ōtari-Wilton's Bush Visitor Centre at 4pm, on Wednesday 25 March. Copies available for \$10 (as well as \$10 each for the two earlier Parts).

All are welcome to attend – RSVP to trelissickgroup@gmail.com by 20 March.

Earlier history was covered in Parts One and Two – all three Parts will be available for a browse or purchase at the OHS building at 86 Khandallah Road on Sunday afternoons between 1 – 4pm.

A busy neighbour

TPG Chair Anne Tuffin took this photo of arborists from Treescape working with a Skyworks helicopter removing pine trees from below Wadestown Road during the Johnsonville line closure on the last weekend of 2025. The trees were above the Northern Walkway below Hanover Street. She says, 'They worked all day Saturday and Sunday, filling the valley with the loud throb of helicopter blades, chainsaws and a huge chipper. The chipper was stationed above the fish ladder and the helicopter was based just below the [Woolworths] carpark. There are now several tall, limbless trunks remaining (that won't fall on the tracks in the next gales).'



Six stars for our upstream neighbour

From an 18 December Facebook post:

'Ōtari-Wilton's Bush has retained its status as a Six Star Garden of International Significance. Kaiwhakahaere Ōtari – Manager, Tim Park, announced the news this week at a Christmas function for Ōtari's many volunteers. He said the NZ Gardens Trust assessors, who assessed Ōtari in November, were amazed that a handful of garden staff were able to maintain Ōtari's garden

collections to such a high standard. Tim said while the dedicated staff were key, it was also the contribution of volunteers that helped make a difference. Ōtari volunteers engage in roles such as gardens maintenance, forest restoration, weeding, tour guiding and weekend hosting.'

And a centenary...

[Ōtari-Wilton's Bush is celebrating its centenary – and you're all invited - News and information - Wellington City Council](#)

An inspiration: Frances Lee [extracts from Federated Mountain Club's December 2025 newsletter]

Our Exec. member, Louise Hammersley, had the pleasure of visiting one of FMC's most significant and inspiring members, Frances Lee. At 98, Frances is as sharp, witty, and inspiring as ever. Before arriving in NZ from the UK on a £10 ticket, Frances studied economics.

Professionally, [working for the Department of Trade and Industry] Frances often found herself the only woman in the room, meaning confidence was key to holding her own in male-dominated spaces.

Frances [who founded TPG in 1991] has named as her dying wish the protection of the Kaiwharawhara Stream, which flows through Zealandia, Wilton's Bush, and Trelissick Park into the harbour and out to the ocean.

The stream is facing poor water quality from contaminated stormwater runoff, sewage leaks, and invasive species. If you'd like to support the sole restoration initiative for the Kaiwharawhara Stream, we encourage you to visit Zealandia's website and learn more about the Kia Mouriora te Kaiwharawhara – Sanctuary to Sea initiative, which aims for the stream to become a healthy



freshwater and forested ecosystem within 100 years.

Thank you, Frances. Without the support of generous people like you, FMC couldn't continue its important work to protect Aotearoa's wild places.

Correction

In the last edition we said 'In **2007** our group started its adopt-a-spot scheme.' However, Bill Hester, previous custodian of our website says, 'The group history on the website indicates **1991-1994** as the start' – see https://www.trelissickpark.org.nz/tpg_history.html.

Seeking volunteers to tackle climbing asparagus and old man's beard

Are you keen to help rid two of our worst weeds from the park and surroundings?

Climbing asparagus (*Asparagus scandens*)

A nasty creeper which produces small white flowers in early summer, followed by orange berries which are spread by birds. It can smother native vegetation and disrupt local ecosystems. Therefore, it is crucial to manage its spread effectively to protect native plant species and maintain biodiversity in affected areas.

Small infestations: Hand pulling can be effective. Ensure that you remove the entire crown and tubers to prevent regrowth. This method is best done when the soil is moist to make it easier to extract the roots.

Remove and bag the tubers for landfill disposal. You can leave the above ground plant material on site to rot.

Large infestations: Advise WCC of locations for chemical control, using the gridded map on the 'Maps, tracks' page of the TPG website.

Follow-up: Check the area for new growth or seedlings. Climbing asparagus can resprout from tubers or seeds, so ongoing monitoring and treatment may be necessary to fully eradicate it. Persistence is key to controlling this invasive weed.



Photo: Weedbusters

Old man's beard

From the 'Weeds' page of the TPG website:

This is becoming a serious problem in the park and adjoining areas. The flowers are easily spread by wind, so it is important to tackle this as soon as flowers appear, and before seeds are set early in the year. It is useful to have another person to act as a 'spotter', because while the flowers are easy to spot, the vine is sometimes hard to find in the thick bush.

Cut the vines at ground level and apply a thin coat of Picloram gel (brands: Vigilant, Triumph, Cut'N'Paste) or Glimax (double strength glyphosate gel) to the stump. Note that WCC only allows gels to be used on their land and require you to be trained and certified before using. Wind the vines around nearby branches so they can't touch the ground. Make sure all the vines are cut - often hard to see in the surrounding scrub. Also look for tendrils at ground level that will take root at nodes.



Photo: P. Reimann

The Old Man's Beard Free Wellington website has [step-by-step guidance on control](#) and help on how to [map locations of Old Man's Beard](#).

If keen to help, please send an email for attention of Angus Napier via trelistickgroup@gmail.com.

From Debbie Hawker (Biosecurity Specialist - Pest Animals | Parks, Sport & Recreation WCC)

A huge thank you to all our incredible trapping volunteers. Your mahi is making a real difference for Wellington's wildlife – every trap check counts! Thanks to your efforts, native bird numbers keep climbing. **Since 2011, tūi have increased by 93%, kererū by 243%, and kākā by 170% across Wellington's forests.**



Tūi Photo: Sid Mosdell

A donation in memory of Eleanor Jolly

Matthew Ineson has sent a generous donation to TPG in memory of Eleanor Jolly.

Matthew says:

Her son (Tom) and I grew up in Ngaio in the 1980s and had many adventures and happy times at the park. Eleanor and Jim Jolly lived on the corner of Crofton Rd and Orari St.

Please use the donation at your discretion. Of course, it would be nice to see some new trees planted or the like, but I am sure you and the committee will put it to good use.

Jim and Eleanor were ardent environmentalists, somewhat before their time, including early pioneers of organic agriculture, when they moved to Geraldine after living in Ngaio for many years. So not only does the park hold cherished childhood memories, your work and that of the committee and community align nicely with Eleanor's values.

Many thanks for keeping a Ngaio treasure alive, safe and well.

Anita Benbrook - an amazing legacy

WCC's Anita Benbrook, Biodiversity Specialist – Plants, retired at the end of 2025 after nearly four decades of dedicated work greening the city. For more, read the S to S newsletter at [Anita Benbrook](#). TPG owes Anita a huge debt of gratitude for her observations during park walkthroughs and advice on plant selection and planting. [Photo: WCC]



Out of control dogs

How confident are you that your dog will come immediately to you when you call it?

Two members of our group were recently clearing weeds beside the track below Hanover Street when a huge dog bounded down the track and nearly bowled them over, jumping on both volunteers. The owners soon appeared. 'It was only being friendly', they said, without apology. This is one of many such instances, for volunteers and for other park users. Most of us love dogs, but 'out of control' dogs can turn a pleasant walk or working-bee into a nightmare for some park users.

The park is currently an off-leash dog exercise area, governed by a WCC bylaw. Here's what it says:

"When exercising your dog off-leash, you must maintain control over your dog at all times. Be alert and make sure that your dog isn't behaving

The plants are coming

Angus Napier says that over 600 plants are soon arriving, most from WCC, some from F&B, others from home nurseries. They include:

- Groundcover: hounds tongue fern, gossamer grass, *Carex flagellifera*, *Dianella nigra*, *Astelia fragrans*, *Poa cita* and *Carex dissita*.
- Mid-story plants: putaputaweta, thin-leaved coprosma, māhoe, wharangi, kanono, shining karamū, karamū, tree fuchsia, patē, koromiko, cabbage tree, wharangi, five-finger, wineberry, kōhūhū, kōwhai, lemonwood, flax, kawakawa, red matipo.
- A few to add diversity: nīkau, kāmahī, large leaved milk tree, pigeonwood.
- Large canopy species: pukatea, northern rātā, kahikatea, tōtara, titoki, kohekohe, tawa.

Proposed locations:

- Andrew Cutler's spot below 144 Oban Street.
- Northern side of Wightwick's Field that has just been adopted by the Wood family.
- Top of the Northern Walkway below Hanover Street.
- Road-side open areas between entrances 5 and 6.
- Road-side area uphill of entrance 5, beside the top of the layby. We are clearing blackberry, old man's beard, Japanese honeysuckle and montbretia from this site.
- Between entrance 6 and the powder magazine buildings.

Jonathan Anderson has also placed an order for podocarp and other heritage species such as nīkau and tawa, which he will plant in selected locations.

Everyone loves planting, but 95% of the time is spent in preparation and a few years of essential aftercare. Micro- environments in the park abound, so read p.5 of the October 2022 GG 'PLANTS TO SUIT VARIOUS ENVIRONMENTS'.

More recommended reading:

- [Restoration planting guides - Environment - Wellington City Council](#) has links to the two WCC booklets, *Restoration planting techniques* and *Restoration planting sites*.
- The 'Plants' page of the TPG website and the 'Projects' page under the Adopt-a-Spot scheme 'Spottee guidelines'.

aggressively towards other dogs or people." Be aware that some park users are afraid of dogs. Some may think your dog is being aggressive when you know it's just being friendly. When you're out in the park with your dog, we ask that you err on the side of caution, be respectful, and keep your dog on-leash when there are other people around, especially on the narrow tracks.

So, how confident are you that your dog will come immediately to you when you call it?

WCC Animal Services want to build an accurate picture of dog behaviour in the park. *If you experience uncontrolled dog behaviour, please report these incidents to Animal Services via the WCC contact centre at 04 499 4444 or <https://services.wellington.govt.nz/report/>*



At the first working bee 1 February. New life for a young rimu.

New WCC Biodiversity Plants Specialist Joakim Liman

Welcome to Joakim Liman, who has taken over from Anita Benbrook.

For more, see [Joakim Liman](#). [Photo: WCC]



Wonderful Wandering Willie Weeders (WWWW)

Five women met for the annual Wellington Anniversary Day working bee on the Hanover Track. Last year they completed clearing tradescantia from the sides of the track, and this year they meticulously cleared a patch just off-track. Very satisfying!

Anne Tuffin

WWWWs Beth, Maggie, Sue and Joan.

Photo by Anne



The valley was not spared

Pilots and sailors are well-acquainted with strong winds blowing across hills and mountains vortexing into huge gusts on the lee side.

After our monumental storm on 15 February Andrew Cutler went for a walk into the valley and said that a large tawa had come down near the second sewer tunnel downstream from Hanover St bridge 6. Other smaller trees were also across the path.

He called it in to WCC and suggested they close the track immediately.

Kiwibank, FMG, and EPA 'at large' in the lower Kaiwharawhara valley

Nate Rigler (S to S) says, 'We just finished the last of three working bees this week [at the end of February]. A lot of weeds have been removed from the path near entrances 5 and 6'

The visits were hosted by Nate and TPG's Ian Duncan. Thanks to the willing workers!

[FMG = Farmers' Mutual Group

EPA = Environment Protection Authority]

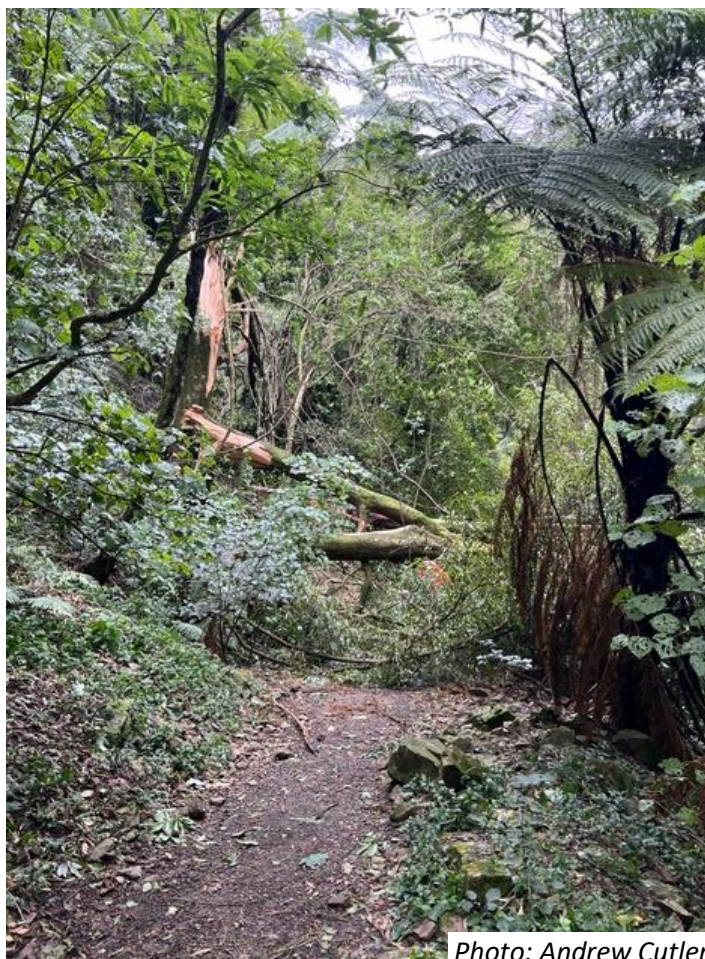


Photo: Andrew Cutler

Sacred teachings of the tītoki tree

Ti – Balance – begin – start, To – Constant flowing – rhythm, Ki – Energy – full, Toki - Adze
Hau, hau te toki - Sacred adze forms my haven of learning

A line from an ancient takutaku (karakia) through which endows the learner or experienter to take heed the teacher within oneself.

Everyone is born with gifts. When those gifts are nurtured and allowed to flourish in a safe environment, natural balance and timing forms the fulfilment of great purpose.

Whano! Whano! Haramai te toki! Haumi ē! Hui ē! Tāiki ē!

Used in speeches to signal that the group is united and ready to progress with the purpose that gathers them together.

The tītoki tree symbolizes creating new pathways, asks us to advocate for what is right and teaches us the strength in unity that gives voice purposively.

Rongoā: Medicinal uses – health and safety – ecology

Tītoki is quite astringent and contains the toxic chemical cyanide where it is most potent inside the seed. When cracked open the gas is released and is then safe to use for making products such as soap. Traditionally tītoki oil extracted from the seed is used to aid in softening the skin and hair, healing wounds, rheumatoid arthritis, aches and pains.

Tītoki has a very strong, pliable structure which enables it to be resilient to the elements, providing stability and protection for the ngāhere.

*Nga mihinui,
Mererangi Kaa and Hoana Kaa*

[You can view mature tītoki trees from just below Crofton Downs station and in the forest next to upper Ngaio Gorge Road.

It grows to 10 metres in height and provides habitat for native birds, including kererū.

Flowering is in spring, with the capsules developing over the following year.

Preferring well-drained soil, the tītoki tree thrives in both coastal and lowland areas. It is moderately frost-tolerant and can adapt to a variety of sunlight conditions, from full sun to partial shade.]



Alectryon excelsus – tītoki.

Photo: Alamy.com



The red arils and black seeds.

Photo: The Plant Company

Contacts

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[Trelissick Park Group website](#)

WCC: (04) 499 4444 or [WCC Fix-It](#)

GW pollution hotline: 0800 496 734