Gorge Gazette – September 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
VUW	Te Herenga Waka, Victoria University of Wellington	CVNZ	Conservation Volunteers NZ

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.

Beetle habitat - a plug for more mess and decay

From Veronika Meduna *Listener* 15 November 2025 'Beetles bear brunt of forest slump', based on work by entomologist Carl Wardhaugh of the Bioeconomy Science Institute:

> … One in four species on Earth is a beetle and they make up a large proportion of biodiversity, in New Zealand and elsewhere. Everything else, from spiders to geckos and all our native birds, feeds on insects and 'beetles comprise a big chunk of that diet'. They are an indicator of the health of an ecosystem.

A 'thank-you' lunch for Ian

Ian Shearer is standing down from his TPG committee commitments. Committee members kindly provided a light lunch after our meeting on 2 July.

Ian was initially involved with TPG in 2006-7 as President of TPG's member group HPPA to act as the conduit for funding and correspondence for the Ministry for Environment Sustainable Management Fund Trelissick Park Adopt-a-Spot project. (TPG is not a trust or incorporated society).

The project was to recruit and support employing a part-time co-ordinator to help develop, facilitate and promote the Adopt-a-Spot programme, in partnership with WCC, then train volunteers, select areas, and report.

Ian was again heavily involved, attending most TPG meetings from 2017 onwards:

- As the HPPA representative.
- On behalf of HPPA concerning funding arrangements, also residents' consultation and donations for the new park access from Oban Street and bridge over Kaiwharawhara stream.
- As TPG secretary from 2024 and treasurer from 2025.

We hope he still retains an interest in TPG.

(As per the Linkedin photo, Ian has also been active in promoting and supporting sustainable energy developments in New Zealand throughout his professional career).

How to investigate underground pipes

Go to: https://gis.wcc.govt.nz/LocalMapsViewer/?map=95a0685dff724fc19035abd59c630b14

Driving hints:

Legend: Advises how pipes, boundaries etc are defined.

Layers: Make sure 'Wellington City Water and Drainage' are ticked.

On the map: Click on the pipe/area in question. Details then come up on the RHS, e.g. '1 of 7'. Find 'Wastewater' and all is revealed (often when the pipe was installed).

There is an old map on p.3 of the March 2019 GG under 'Unravelling the Sewer System'. (Note that the GIS link given no longer works - updated by the one above).

Past TPG Chairman Richard Northmore

Richard died on 7 July, after a fulfilling life of 96.9 years. A celebration of his life was held at St Lukes Church, Wadestown on 11 July.

He emigrated to New Zealand from England in the 1950s, worked at the Department of Education, served on the committee of the Wadestown-Wilton Horticultural Society, and as a volunteer for Zealandia Te Māra a Tāne, Wellington. He represented WRA in 1995 and was Chairman of TPG from 1998 – 2006.

Interview with Richard Northmore | Items | National Library of New Zealand | National Library of New Zealand includes 'his volunteer work at Zealandia, personal and family history; becoming a volunteer, loaning his Landrover for use at the sanctuary, working on replica fence to test if pests could kept out using a hut at the landfill, work on pest eradication, his possum and rat trapping work with Trelissick Park Working Group and Zealandia, his friends amongst the volunteers. Describes the old sheds, making nestboxes and bird feeders, and awards.'

On 15 August the Northmore family and friends planted a rimu tree provided by Abigail Smith of WCC's nursery at the 'memorial grove', downstream of bridge 5, organized by Angus Napier.

The tree is in front of son Chris and daughter Jane. Chris dug the hole with a spade with a handle which Richard recycled from part of a children's climbing frame that he welded onto the spade. Richard loved to repair and to make things and loathed waste. Photos: Angus Napier.

A walk in the park

A damp and wintry Saturday morning in early August. My first visit this year. I set off from the Waikowhai Street entrance to walk down the valley, aiming for the 'memorial grove' beyond bridge 5.

The benefits of 1 km/h maximum speed: plenty of time to greet the passing multitudes. The bird chorus was astonishing. A voyage recalling the last 25 years.

How lucky we are to live in such a readily accessible bushy catchment.

The *coup de grâce*: On the return journey, a large shaggy dog, full of the joys of life, bounded out from his swim in the deep pool below the north end of Wightwick's Field. Called by his owner, he was at first keen to investigate this old codger moving in slow-motion with a crooked stick. 'He is going to shake himself over me', thought I. Sure enough … (Peter Reimann)

[For Bill Hester's video of a similar walk down the Korimako valley about 15 years ago, scroll down to the last item on Trelissick Park Group photos.

Essential *Lepidoptera*

Lynda Emery writes:

The Moths and Butterflies of New Zealand Trust, (MBNZT) is a charitable organisation that has been working for the past 20 years to protect and promote New Zealand's moths and butterflies (our *Lepidoptera*).

Last year we embarked on a new initiative, the **Public Spaces Project**, to support councils, parks staff, landscape managers, biodiversity staff i.e. those working in or closely with councils in our 'open spaces'. Recently, we have also started to contact restoration groups such as TPG.

The project encourages:

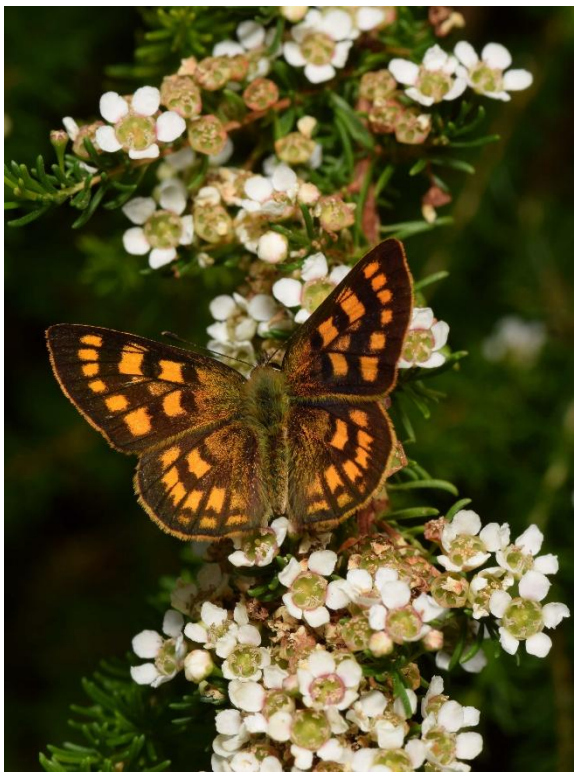
- Planting more nectar plants and host plants.
- Creating no-mow and low-mow areas.
- Reducing pest pressure, particularly from introduced wasps.
- Minimising pesticides where possible.

The Public Spaces Project provides:

Information on pollinator-friendly planting and management.

Community liaison and advocacy support.

Opportunities for shared learning between councils, experts and residents.



One of the copper butterfly species (Lycaene feredayi) which require Muehlenbeckia as part of its lifecycle. Photo: Dianne Clarke.

The Public Spaces Project has a dedicated page on the MBNZT website https://www.nzbutterflies.org.nz/project/public-spaces/. Content will be added over time, but currently includes:

- Pollinator-friendly planting and land management ideas.
- Earlier in the year we canvassed opinion of those in council; here are the results of our survey.
- *How to Create a Habitat* by Brian Patrick
- *Small Wings – Big Impact* (featuring Muehlenbeckia)

The entire website https://www.nzbutterflies.org.nz/ is a rich resource, as regards our *Lepidoptera*.

If those working for TPG would like to receive the occasional email from us with updates, ideas and practical resources, please reply to me at **emerys@xtra.co.nz** in the first instance. These emails will be concise, informative and useful.

If your organisation is already undertaking work that benefits our moths and butterflies, we would love to hear about it. Sharing ideas and experiences will help us all achieve better outcomes for our native biodiversity.

Lynda Emery has now added TPG to her email list. The Appendix for this GG shows the second instalment of the *Meet the Butterfly* series and an item, with photo, of the New Zealand Red Admiral.

17 June tree pruning by Ventia for the Transpower tower (Jonathan Anderson)

Reg and the guys did a great job. They did it brilliantly. In tidying up I doubt many people will notice that vegetation has been cut.

I really appreciate being involved and being able to contribute to a successful outcome. Working together has been a success, and we (both WCC and the Trelissick Park Group) look forward to working with them again in the future.

[See also June 2026 GG p.2]

A new bridge 6 is coming

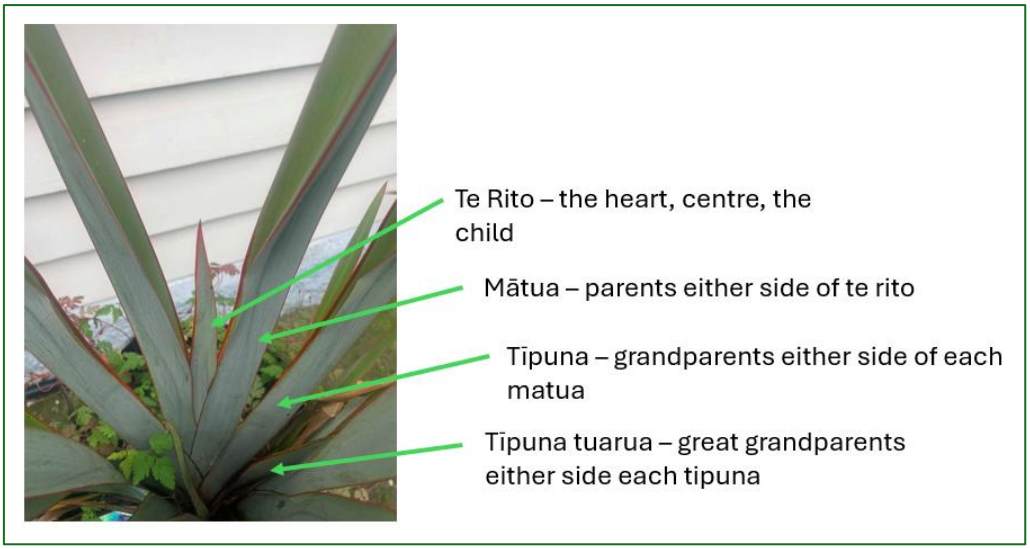
WCC's Tim Harkness envisages the replacement bridge on the Northern Walkway down from Hanover Street will be installed at the end of October.

Harakeke

"Hutia te rito o te harakeke, kei hea te kōmako e kō?" If you pluck out the heart of the flax bush, where will the bellbird sing? (Hutia Te Rito whakatauākī composed by Meri Ngāroto)

The elder leaves support and protect the inner leaves beside it to create a strong heart/centre system for the rito (centre shoot) to grow strength from. Te rito is also where the kōrari (the flower stem of the harakeke) grows from.

Harakeke Symbolises Whānau



Planting Harakeke

To honour the whānau value of harakeke we often plant harakeke in whānau (the rito and mātua) of twos and threes, so one whānau is supported by another whānau. Harakeke likes fertile and moist soils (we give our plants seaweed juice and biochar). From a whānau harakeke of just a rito and its parents it can take time to establish itself. With maintenance they can thrive and help to restore ecosystems.

Harvesting Harakeke

As children our Nan taught us how to harvest harakeke to ensure we supported its wellbeing and did not cause it harm. We encourage harvesting with an expert to pass on appropriate tikanga. There are a few exceptions of which an expert can give more guidance.

- Ensure a sunny day
- Karakia to ask permission
- Do not cut the rito or mātua
- Have a sharp and clean cutting tool
- Cut the elder leaves first
- Cut on a downward slant at the leaf's lowest possible point, starting at the centre and cutting downwards
- Clean up the harakeke if there are dying or damaged leaves
- Gift a koha (water, sea water, seaweed juice)
- Close with a karakia, giving thanks
- Compost the leaves you do not need.

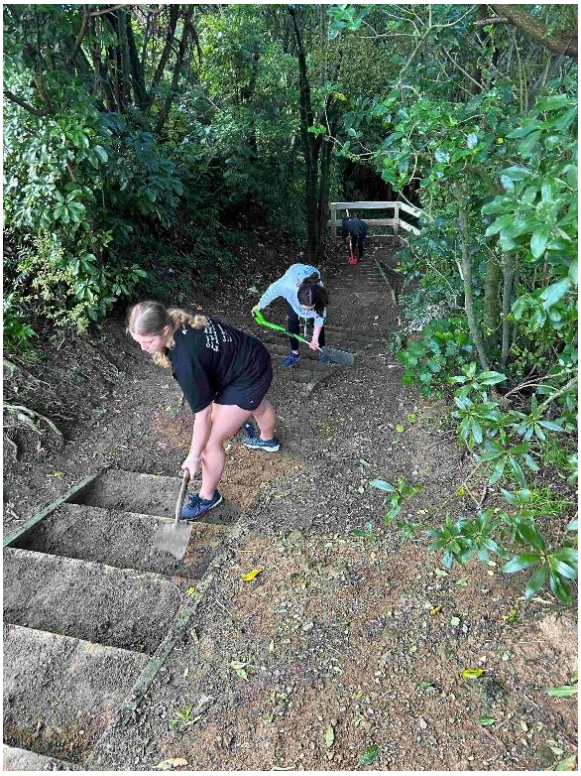
(We do recommend caution handling harakeke if pregnant. Harakeke is highly astringent.)

"Kī mai ki ahau. He aha te mea nui te mea nui o tēnei ao? Māku e kī atu kia koe. He tangata, he tangata". If you ask me what is the greatest thing in the world? I will tell you. It is people, it is people. (The last part of the whakatauākī 'Hutia Te Rito' composed by Meri Ngaroto).

Ngā mihi maioha,
Ronga Taiao Ltd – Ko Bella-Marie Kaa, ko Mererangi Kaa, ko Hoana Kaa. [Photos taken by Hoana Kaa]

For hungry rabbits, exuberant dogs and straying human feet

At left: the Marg and Nick McLachlan/Wood spot on Wightwick's Field, early June.



Ngaio Scout Group Huntleigh Scouts

On 14 June they spent a couple of hours clearing a wheelie bin full of rubbish from the gully below Waikowhai Street and benched most of the steps below the park entrance – photo at right.

CVNZ's visit on 13 June

Three of the group of volunteers from CVNZ who planted 90 plants at entrance 6 and upstream of the magazine buildings. Organiser Angus Napier is in blue overalls is at rear.

When the weather allows

Restoration work was mostly from entrances 5 and 6, some cancelled/postponed by foul weather. Work included:

- Clearing and planting the uphill half of the open areas alongside the new road wall between the two laybys upstream of the debris trap and upstream of the magazine building.
- Old man's beard removal at several sites in the lower gorge.
- Many climbing asparagus seedlings removed along the canopy line alongside Ngaio Gorge Road, some hard to access on very steep slopes. Established plants are still to be removed between entrance 6 and the debris trap and around entrance 5.
- A new windthrow gap following the late January gales was filled at the top of Ngaio Gorge Road beside the forest remnant track. Jonathan Anderson has planted one of the two windthrow gaps streamside downstream of bridge 6, plants sourced independently from WCC.

630 plants were delivered by WCC, 180 from F&B and 80 from home nurseries, a total of 890. There are still 200 to plant, hopefully at the two working bees from entrance 5 on Sunday 6 and Wednesday 16 September. See our Facebook page https://www.facebook.com/TrelissickParkGroup or the 'Projects' page of our website for more details.

The Richard Grasse 'spot'

I adopted my spot - the hillock between the car park and railway line at the Waikowhai Street entrance - after a couple of working bees there about thirteen years ago and I have continued the work of grubbing out blackberry, cutting down old gorse trees and general weeding. An array of common species was planted including some tōtara. Over the years some of the plants have died off but the canopy has now closed over and very little weeding is required. Two of the tōtara are growing well and kohekohe, rewarewa and hīnau are naturally regenerating. Two of the original large trees in this spot have died but the light-well created has encouraged some kāmahi to come away.

Richard at a working bee at the upper end of the park behind Waikowhai Street in 2023.

I also look after the area beyond the car park bollards which used to be a roadway. I remember a long working bee spent with a pick breaking up the surface prior to planting. Some mānuka has regenerated along here and further along on a ridge above the streams four miro were planted and are doing well. Also on the ridge are some tall rewarewa and surprisingly an 8 m tall kauri tree. Was this someone's commemorative planting?

Richard's 'hillock' to the left of the bridge in 1999. Photo: Frances Lee.

From TPG Chair Anne Tuffin

From a Ngaio garden - I've just potted up 51 native seedings from Sue Doris' garden - including several varieties of coprosma, kohekohe, pittosporums, cabbage trees, kōwhai and tōtara. I'll grow them on for planting in 2028 or 2029. Thank you, Sue, for thinking of Trelissick Park.

A visit to the future Crofton Downs Primary School 'spot' - On 21 August tamariki from the school came into the park to see the area they will be caring for. Tom Mayo, the WCC Ranger, and I showed them the trees that grow in the park, told the children about how the community is regenerating the native forest and how the mouri of the whaitua is returning. The children are keen to start preparing the patch between bridge 2 and bridge 3 ready for planting in 2027.

Te Rā o Te Kaiwharawhara - a family event in Trelissick Park - Save the date - **Saturday 17 October 10:00am to 2:00pm** for a fun whānau event at the Magazine ruins in Trelissick Park, organised by a group of community organisations. There will be a range of activities aimed at creating a connection with Te Kaiwharawhara. One of the activities will be led by TPG volunteers who will take people through the park showing the forest regeneration work that has been done over the last 35 years. There will be a sausage sizzle and refreshments, and yes, there will be portaloos! A draft of the flyer is at the right.

New environmental data collected - We recently heard from Andrew Rees, a Senior Lecturer at Te Herenga Waka–Victoria University of Wellington. He is involved in modern freshwater science, particularly water quality monitoring and using data to inform ecosystem management and restoration. Students from his GEOG222 undergraduate environmental science class conducted fieldwork in the Kaiwharawhara catchment. They collected a range of environmental data as part of their undergraduate studies. If you are interested to see the data, please contact trelissickgroup@gmail.com.

Telling our story through interpretative signage - Shortly you will notice the appearance of three new interpretative signs in the park which tell some of the stories of the Ngaio Gorge area. The signs are the result of funding from the TransPower Community Fund and a generous community benefactor. A small project team has been working with a designer, Mana Whenua and WCC to create beautiful and informative signage for all to enjoy. One sign tells the story of the forest/ngahere, another looks at the fragile environment of the Ngaio Gorge and its urban history, and the third one provides pre-European history and local iwi stories of Te Kaiwharawhara. They will be erected on the Northern Walkway, along the Kaiwharawhara Stream Track, and at the Magazine ruins.

Duke of Edinburgh Bronze Award - Through the winter months, 14-year-old Ngaio lad, Max Clayton, looked after the area between Trelissick Crescent and the Northern Walkway, between entrances 3 and 4 as part of his Duke of Edinburgh Bronze Award. For 13 weeks he learned about some or our weeds and diligently removed rubbish and as many weeds as he could from the area, supervised by a TPG volunteer. Thank you, Max!

Max on the Northern Walkway holding a selection of weeds. *Photo: Anne Tuffin*

TPG is grateful for the generous donors and all the wonderful volunteers, organisations, corporate, school and scout groups who make such an enormous contribution.

Contacts

trelissickgroup@gmail.com
Trelissick Park Group website
WCC: (04) 499 4444 or WCC Fix-It
GW pollution hotline: 0800 496 734

APPENDIX

New Zealand Red Admiral

Vanessa gonerilla gonerilla

Moths and Butterflies of New Zealand Trust

Meet Kahukura, our endemic New Zealand Red Admiral. Considered the most beautiful of the admirals, it used to be common, but numbers are in decline. MBNZT and volunteers are working hard to bring it back with our Red Admiral Project.

Found across the country but no longer common. In Auckland, it all but vanished after an aerial insecticide campaign to eradicate the painted apple moth. At home in native forest, but also seen in shrubland, parks and gardens.

Eggs are small and laid singly. The caterpillar is dark, small and spiky, often hiding in curled leaves of its host plant. The pupa is brown and unremarkable. The butterfly's bright wing colours mimic unpalatable species, but all stages are an important food source for our native birds.

Preferred host plant is *Urtica ferox* or Ongaonga, the native stinging nettle, and other nettles. These species have been cleared in many areas, as they are seen as hazardous to people. MBNZT recommends planting in hard to reach places.

Larvae find hidden places under tree leaves to form the chrysalis. The underside of the wings is much more subdued than the top, a camouflage mechanism. Adult wingspan 50-60mm.

Known in Te Reo Māori as 'Kahukura', meaning red cloak.

For more information on the Red Admiral Project visit here

Photo Credit Zac Warren