

Gorge Gazette - September 2024

News about Trelissick Park, the Ngaio Gorge and streams



Abbreviations:

WCC	Wellington City Council	GW	Greater Wellington Regional Council
DoC	Department of Conservation	GG	Gorge Gazette
TPG	Trelissick Park Group	WW	Wellington Water
S to S	Kia Mouriora te Kaiwharawhara Sanctuary to Sea	F&B	Forest and Bird
OMBFW	Old Man's Beard Free Wellington	OWB	Ōtari Wilton's Bush

Membership drawn from Highland Park Progressive Association Inc., Ngaio Crofton Downs Residents' Association Inc., Onslow Historical Society Inc., Royal Forest and Bird Protection Society Inc. (Wellington Branch), Wellington Botanical Society Inc., Wadestown Residents' Association.

Contacts

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WCC: (04) 499 4444 or [WCC Fix-It](#)
GW pollution hotline: 0800 496 734

Our #1 headache

How could we not love dogs?

But in the July edition, we referred to the advent of **kiwi** in the park endangered by off-leash dogs, **kererū attacks** and **stream bank damage**.

Something must be done.

Ideas/comments are needed from park users and WCC – send to trelissickgroup@gmail.com.

We broached the subject at the OWB Open Day. Most dog owners want the park to remain off-leash but would understand it could change if kiwi arrived. More need for education now!

One compromise is to mandate on-leash for the park, except at Wightwick's Field, a large semi-enclosed open area down from the Waikowhai Street entrance. Here, dogs can frolic freely on the flat or bound into the stream (bank protected by huge old tyres installed last century by ex-Spitfire pilot Mr Wightwick).



A working bee array



Most of our 'regulars' just below the lower Ngaio Gorge Road entrance on 4 August. L-R: Keith, Peter, Catherine, Angus, Richard, Svend, Katie, Stella, Bill.
Photo: Anne Tuffin

Speaking for the trees

Recently TPG spoke to its submission on District Plan Stream 11 'Ecosystems and Indigenous Biodiversity' – see [District Plan Stream 11](#).

We worry about the insidious removal of trees due to infill housing and multi-unit subdivision, because:

Stormwater hydraulic neutrality – This is

usually a requirement of the resource consent, but full compliance is unlikely when houses/units are jammed up against each other without trees. The leaves of trees and the mulch below slow stormwater runoff.

Stormwater from the huge 20 km² catchment all runs through Trelissick Park. In heavy rain, the streams become raging torrents causing flooding and carrying away stream banks.

Sacrificing the environment – Wellington suburbs are unique in having houses nestling amongst

Depave

Still in the tree vein, WCC's Kena Duignan says, 'Depave, based in Portland, Oregon work with communities to rip up unnecessary paved surfaces and replace them with greenspace. Their focus is

'That's one small step...'

In our July edition we referred to TPG's submission to the Select Committee on the Fast Track Approvals Bill, asking for more environmental protections, checks and balances. The Bill attracted 27,000 submissions. As a result, the authority to approve or reject projects will no longer rest with three ministers. Projects will be referred to an expert panel by the Minister for Infrastructure, who will be required to consult the

Inanga enhancement - Nate Rigler (S to S)

TPG provided funding for inanga enhancement upstream of the Kaiwharawhara estuary. Update:

- Invasive wattle trees removed, freeing up lightwells for natives.
- Victor traps installed to be monitored by Woods Waste, trained by Predator Free Khandallah.
- 150 native plants provided by WCC and Morphum Environmental planted with help from DoC, WCC, Taranaki Whānui, and Mountains to Sea Wellington.
- Next step: to install fastened planter boxes to channelised wall below Spotlight.



Part of our bushy catchment: Wadestown/Wilton. Trees in jeopardy.

native bush. Birdlife is flourishing due to the halo effect of Zealandia. Trees harbour other life and are a balm for the soul.

We have the choice of environment vs development (money). If infill continues, yet another sterile city crammed with houses and no trees. It has happened elsewhere.

We spoke also about replacement of any trees removed as an infill resource consent requirement, also green walls and offset planting.

on reducing the impact of heatwaves they are having more of in that part of the world, but they also reduce the urban water runoff, increase green space and this has got us thinking.'

Minister for the Environment and other relevant ministers. Final decisions would sit with the expert panel. The panel members and their terms of reference will be key determinants.

There are still concerns about environmental protections and we need to see the revised Bill. But at least 'That's one small step ...'*. See: [nz herald](#).

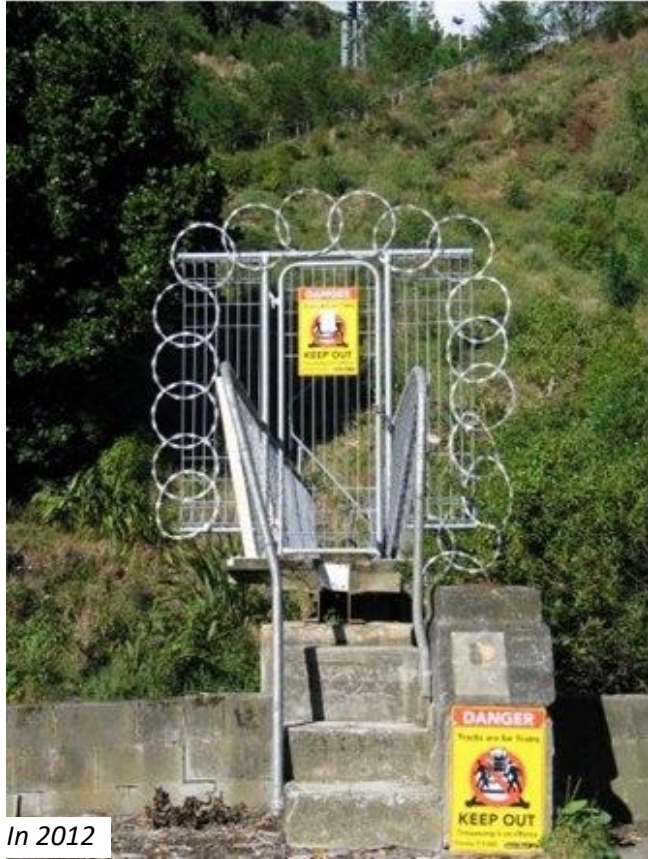
*Neil Armstrong from the moon.



Beyond the 'Alcatraz gate'

The Johnsonville line has an emergency access track from between two tunnels, going down the slope and across a footbridge to the park, opposite the magazine building. After the line in the tunnels was lowered in 2009 Ontrack (now KiwiRail) installed a gate. We called it the 'Alcatraz gate', saying 'it must

In 2007



In 2012

surely rank in merit alongside the other new artistic edifices gracing our city.'

Previously, the bridge across the stream was open to the public, allowing working bees on the slope to eliminate the wattles and to plant natives and eliminate blackberry and Himalayan balsam on the waterfall on the side-stream up-valley.

Since then, the wattles have taken over in all directions. Until that bridge closure GW were welcome to enter as was our team for regular predator control. That predator control stopped when access was denied.

It is very odd that this access is closed off, whereas previously it wasn't. KiwiRail say it's a safety issue, but there are countless places all along the Johnsonville line with easy public access to the line.

This story has not ended...

Stream health matters

Pollutants - All the stormwater in the catchment ends up in our streams. Pollutants: cleaning your car with soap on the street or driveway, leaking oil from cars, litter, paint and cement washings, cigarette butts, animal droppings, detergent, chemical cleaners and car tyre rubber from roads.



Not on the street or driveway please!



A tree for Mike Lear

On 7 September, members of Mike Lear's family planted a large kahikatea tree in the 'memorial grove' down from Bridge 5.

As mentioned in the April *Gorge Gazette*, Mike came to most working bees - always willing to help and cheerful.

Blame the suburban gardens, birds and wind

Jonathan Anderson says he has been quite active in the last few months with lots of fun scrambling around slopes with his pruning saw, a thermos and plenty of biscuits. Trees removed were reported on p.4 of the July GG. There are many to still be removed, as summarised in marked up maps of his email of 19 August, showing cherry, sycamore, willow, alder and pōhutukawa.

Later...

Anne Tuffin spent a couple of hours with WCC's Illona Keenan, KiwiRail and Treescape, spotting cherries in bloom in the park and on the rail corridor. There were good vistas from Old Porirua Road, Crofton Downs Station and Hanover Street.

Treescape is contracted by KiwiRail to remove trees and weeds from the rail corridor. They talked about a plan to remove them during line closure days over the next 12-24 months. Treescape has staff that can abseil down to those hard-to-reach trees - a bonus.

Illona's resulting email of 20 September included photomaps marked up to show myriads of cherries and sycamore, also where evergreen buckthorn, old man's beard and Japanese honeysuckle lurk.

Illona plans to use the \$10k from Frances Lee's donation that we have set aside to remove cherries and sycamores. KiwiRail is committed to paying for the removal of trees on rail corridor land.

Jonathan says the worst concentrations of cherry/sycamore were in the middle valley, around the scout hall and on the slopes above the flat downstream of bridge 5. There is still some cherry on the slope below the railway.

Flowering cherries are everywhere in the suburbs. Seedlings proliferate and should be pulled out. Thoughts could turn to replacing suburban cherry with e.g. kōwhai.

Cherry is a wonderful resource for furniture or firewood.



Looking south up the Kaiwharawhara valley from Old Porirua Road.

Conservation Volunteers in the park

Thank you CVNZ for your recent visits, hosted by Angus Napier.



Below Oban Street, planting and weeding



Beyond entrance 6, planting and weeding

Safe passage and anti-dog measures

TPG has listed track repair priorities for WCC to consider (see Appendix). Given WCC budget limitations. Here is an update:

Completed (mostly WCC and TPG collaboration):

Installed some track edge-boarding at dog-worn channels into streams.

Netting fences secured with waratahs on Oban Track lower zigzags to stymie short-cutting dogs.

The 'lake' blocking the track outside the magazine buildings filled in (photo at right).

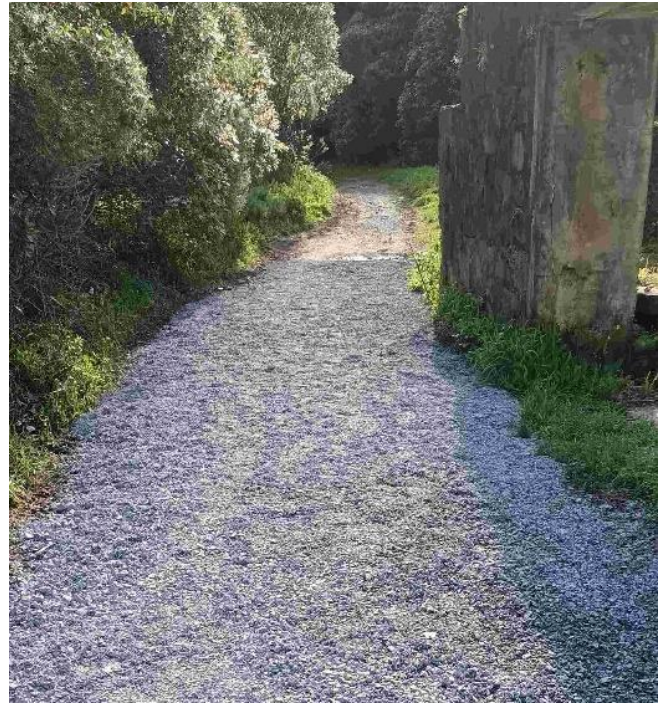
Size of pool reduced on vehicle track upstream of bridge 7 (better drainage, bund and pedestrian bypass).

To come (by WCC):

A boardwalk on the Forest Remnant Track.

Handrail on new steep Northern Walkway steps below Hanover Street.

Laying more gravel on the stream-side track alongside Kaiwharawhara Stream.



Good news from upstream

WCC has purchased 44 Silverstream Road from Girl Guiding New Zealand (GGNZ). The seven hectares include the stream, stream terraces and forested slopes above. It will be classified as Scenic Reserve

More good news

Park signage upgrade - We are delighted that our grant application to the Transpower Community Fund for \$15K was successful. Now we can proceed with signs covering the history, forest regeneration work, flora and fauna of the park.

This would not have been possible without Frances Lee's \$50K donation enabling us to request dollar for dollar funding so that the \$15K

Watch out old man's beard!

Nigel Charman says that OMB Free Wellington has just formed an incorporated society to attract

and managed as part of the Outer Green Belt adjoining Huntleigh Park and Silverstream Play Area.

set aside for new interpretative signage in the park could double to \$30K.

New seat in clearing upstream of bridge 7 – Peter Reimann is very grateful for the many generous TPG members and WCC for funding this seat, recognising his 18 years as TPG Chairman – see Facebook photo.

Dot Catchpole's tree

On 21 September a large kahikatea tree was added to the flat area down from Bridge 5, in memory of Dot. Along with husband Dave, they regularly came to working bees, despite living in remote Miramar. More on Dot is in the October 2023 edition.

Daughter Anita Benbrook (second from left in photo) says Dave now resides in Kilbirnie's Malvina Major and would love a visit.



funding for items like herbicide and tools. Join via [OMB Free](#)

Tackling the nether regions

From *Nate Rigler (S to S)*:

On Sunday 15 September, S to S held a working bee in collaboration with OMBFW, Victoria University of Wellington Tramping Club (VUWTC), and GHD Young Professionals.

Though the site was fairly small—roughly 1200m², bisected by Kaiwharawhara Stream—it encompassed WCC Road Reserve, the southern boundary of the park and private land leased by Seen Safety. Overall, this is a difficult site to access which is probably why it had been so badly taken over by invasive weeds.

The bulk of participants got hard at work clearing out blackberry and tradescantia that carpeted the true right bank of the Kaiwharawhara. The whole area was cleared within only a few hours and we were able to plant natives including harakeke, patē, tī kōuka, māpou, and makomako. Another rag-tag team went with OMBFW to climb into the hardest-to-reach places alongside the true left bank to identify and eliminate old man's beard vines strangling the native canopy.

Thank you everyone who attended!

And more...

Ngaio Union Church - Thanks for weeding and planting around Wightwick's Field on 2 July.

Centreport returns – Angus Napier hosted a group from Centreport to restore streamside areas downstream of bridge 6, assisted by Nate Rigler (S to S).

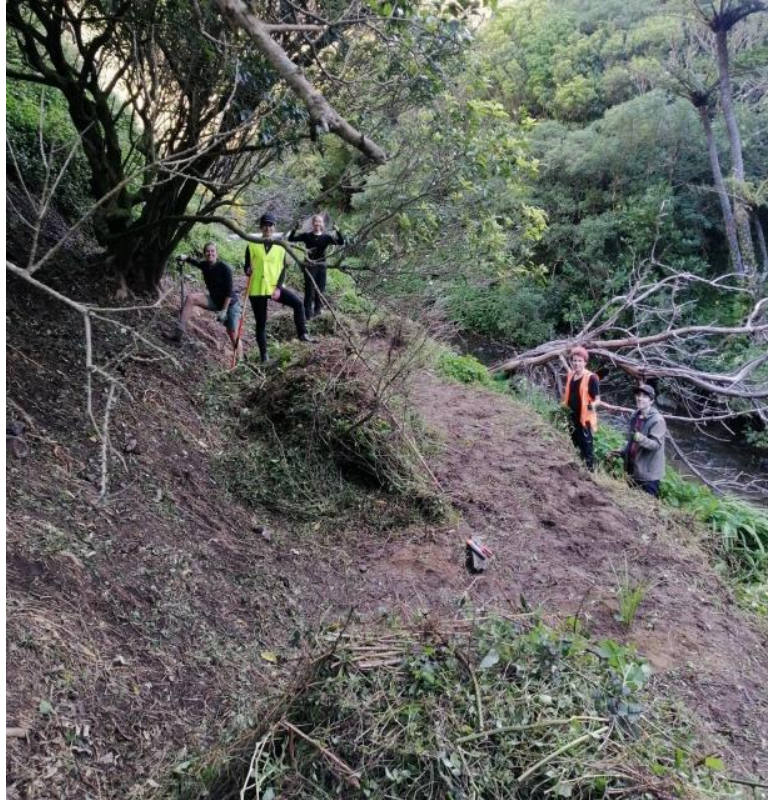
128 Trelissick Crescent – TPG has registered with WCC as an 'Interested neighbour' following removal of trees on or over the boundary with the park. TPG is also concerned about removal of trees at #128 (see also p.2 under 'Speaking for the trees').

Appendix

TPG track work priorities (abridged) – From Angus Napier

- 1 Fix or re-route eroded walking tracks beside streams.
- 2 Re-bench the Oban Track. Install new steps to hairpin bends.
- 3 Fill large puddle between the magazine buildings and entrance 6.
- 4 Re-surfacing where erosion has exposed tree roots and/or rocks. Fence rocky area between Bridges 3 and 4.
- 5 Protect large mataī tree roots at the 'Crossroads', e.g with wooden fence.
- 6 Rebuild steps on Te Araroa Trail on the lower section between Bridge 6 and the pylon.
- 7 Fill wet area upstream of Bridge 7 – needs channelling water away from track.
- 8 Forest Remnant and Frances Lee tracks: The outer edges are eroded and, tree roots are exposed in places. Channel stormwater off Ngaio Gorge Rd (*Forest Remnant Track*).
Install platform across stream crossing Forest Remnant Track below Ngaio Gorge Rd.

As per p. 5: 1 is partially done, 3 and 7 are complete.



What a massive difference we can make in a relatively short period of time.

[Nate has rounded up more plants to add to the mix].

OWB Open Day – Our display, manned by a roster of four from TPG, harvested four interested people now added to the GG email list. For photos, see our Facebook page.

A new A24 custodian – Andrew Cutler is taking over from Finn Illsley-Kemp servicing the traps on the slopes below the end of Oban Street.

Facebook - Scroll for photos of other work.

Website – Awash with information, updated by Bill Hester, including **upcoming working bees** ('Projects' page) and **the committee** ('Contacts' page).