

August 2009



# Biddip

Newsletter of the Toodyay Friends of the River

Volume 4, Issue 2

## DRYEST AVON DESCENT ON RECORD TESTS COMPETITORS

The 2010 Avon Descent finished much later than was expected due to the lowest water levels experienced in it's 38 year history with only four power boats completing the course: many craft pulled out of the race shortly after beginning the challenge. The first kayaks were expected to reach Bayswater around 11am but did not arrive until approximately 2pm!

The River level appeared to continually drop as the day progressed with our Toodyay Friends of the River entrant, Greg Warburton, (one of the final group to leave the starting point in Northam) leaving the River at the 'ti-trees' checkpoint. Greg did well in the 2009 challenge despite an injured shoulder and a snapped paddle (the latter problem caused him to walk back to a check-point to BUY another paddle!) *BEST WISHES FOR THE 2011 CHALLENGE, GREG!!!*

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Avon Descent walk.....

The Friends of the River wish to acknowledge the Department of Water for on-going support in printing our newsletter

Photographs:

Top, and bottom left: Wayne Clarke

Bottom right: Vicki Warburton - TOP SHOT!

Hello, Everyone,

The climate of 2009/2010 has been strange and hard to follow—a long, hot summer and late rains to start our winter. This has not interfered with our work program. The Toodyay Friends of the River (TFOR) has had outstanding success for its involvement in river care over 16 years, 1994 to 2010. All members have been rewarded for their support and hard work in river care by winning the Western Australian Department of Water River Rats Living Streams Award 2009-2010.

Throughout the year the Friends have been busy with their monthly projects working along the river from Katrine to the Great Northern Highway with assessments of river health plus roadside rubbish pick-ups along Railway Road, Racecourse Road and Toodyay Road. They have also travelled to the towns of Geraldton, Wongan Hills, Merredin, Northam and Perth to attend environmental seminars. The members have met with groups such as the Toodyay Scouts, the Millennium Kids, The Australian Weeds Committee (AWC) and the National Athel Pine (Tamarisk) Management Committee (NAPMC). The AWC and the NAPMC groups flew to Western Australia from Alice Springs and the Eastern States and immediately boarded a coach to travel to Toodyay to learn how we control the weed Tamarisk in the Avon River; the TFOR is a leader in its control.

Over the years we have had some of our dedicated and valuable members move on as with Val and Neville Tanner to their Nannup home, and Theone Pyle who has shifted to Warwick. Fortunately, new people have become members and taken up their sections of the river to continue with assessment.

I would like to thank Viv and Dave Street, Maxine and Robin Walker and Bob and Beth Frayne for making their homes available for our meetings. It was wonderful to see Wayne Clarke acknowledged in him receiving an Honorary Life Membership for his dedicated work.

It's good to see the 'Shade House' is back and running as normal again and 'thank you' to Bethan Lloyd and her team of helpers for all the good work. 'Thank you', also, to our members who helped out, in any way, with the Wood Raffle—it was a great success!

A great day was had at the Toodyay Show. Toodyay Landcare, Toodyay Naturalists' Club and Toodyay Friends of the River joining forces in the marquee and, with their individual displays, it was a great success. TFOR members did a great job of the cleaning up of the showgrounds on the Sunday.

The TFOR Annual General Meeting is held in August each year. In 2007 I was voted in as President for a three year term; the time has come for me to step aside on August 15th 2010. Over the past three years the TFOR members have given me outstanding support with my job made easier by your co-operation, commitment and dedication in the care of the Avon River. This support has also been with help from the Department of Water, Northam, the Shire of Toodyay, Bendigo Bank, Vernice, Patrick and Sharon Ferguson, Makit Hardware, The Garden Centre and community support.

I would like to thank my Vice-President, Desrae Clarke, my Secretary, Robyn Taylor, and my Treasurer, Wayne Clarke, for your help and co-operation during the three years I have been President.

I am looking forward to seeing you all at Duidgee Park for breakfast.

R: Gaven being presented with Honorary Life Membership by Patron, Viv Read.

Photo by Wayne Clarke



# Opening of Burlong Park

by Desraé Clarke

Burlong Pool, situated 5kms upstream of Northam township, has recently seen the completion of the beautification of the surrounding area known as Burlong Park. This site has been used for recreation, since the settlement of Northam, as well as the fresh water of the Pool used as a watering point for the steam trains that travelled to the Goldfields during the gold rush period.

A small group of volunteers have been lobbying for the clearing of the Park area since the mid 1970's. The site has been developed through a partnership with the local Aboriginal Ballardong community, the Avon Valley Environmental Society, the Department of Water, Wheatbelt Natural Resource Management and the Shire of Northam; funding has been provided through the Australian Federal and State Governments National Heritage Trust program. July 19th saw members of the Toodyay Friends of the River join the local Aboriginal Ballardong Community and those from neighbouring river care groups to the opening of this beautiful Park.

A series of twelve interpretive signs depict the flora and fauna of the area and the Dream Time Story of the *Wargal*. Burlong Pool is a 'sacred site' under the Aboriginal Heritage Act (WA) 1972.

*'This site is protected under the Western Australian Aboriginal Heritage Act 1972. This allows for the preservation on behalf of the community, places and objects of traditional value to the original inhabitants of Australia and their descendants. A registered site is a place of importance connected with the traditional or cultural life of the Aboriginal people. Fines apply for the desecration of sites such as Burlong Pool including excavation, destruction, damage or removal of artefacts.'*

The Toodyay Friends of the River congratulate those who continued their perseverance in the preservation of Burlong Pool and its surrounds of Burlong Park resulting in the beautiful area that you now have.



Top Left: Interpretive sign of welcome to Burlong Pool.

Bottom Left: Use of Burlong Pool water by the steam trains.

Top Right: One of several birdlife interpretive signs along the trail.

Bottom Right: Smoking Burlong Park by Ballardong Elders.

# Landcare Projects undertaken by Robin and Maxine Walker

## Chauncy Spring, Lovers Lane, Toodyay

Our work on Landcare began about 1980. We began planting trees on the banks of the Jimperding Brook which runs through our property to the Jimperding Bridge and then feeds into the Avon River.

(L) - Image 1990—trees planted 1980



(R) - Image 2010— identical position—note tree on (R) side.



When we became involved with the Jimperding, and then with the forming of the Deepdale Catchment Group, we applied for funding assistance to undertake a project of fencing the Brook. We decided not to continue with the application of funding as the Department had placed unreal conditions and restrictions on the areas of fencing and the use of the Brook all of which we were not happy to comply with. The Brook was then, as is now, a source of water during the summer by means of several much needed natural springs which supply fresh stock water.

In 1991 the Main Roads Department undertook the construction of the new Jimperding Bridge on Cobbler Pool road, and on completion of the bridge the Department stone 70 metres of the banks on the southern side. This area was soon showing a good regrowth of vegetation and also allowed a clear flow of water along the Brook, in that section, without eroding the banks. We promptly fenced this section to allow growth of this vegetation.,

(L) - Section of 70 metre rock area to support Brook banks



(R) - Tree growth from the new Jimperding Brook bridge



## The Deepdale Catchment Group

In 1995/96 a group of interested landowners in the Deepdale area formed the Deepdale Catchment Group.. An application for a Community Conservation Grant (1996) was sought to clean up and revegetate an area of public land in the vicinity of the Avon River supported by the Shire of Toodyay, Avon River Management Authority and Westrail. The successful grant facilitated the clearing of weeds, revegetation and the erection of explanatory signage resulting in a pleasant picnic spot (see photo top of page 5). The Group incorporated June 23 1997 and ceased functioning on August 1 2008.

## Landcare Projects undertaken by Robin and Maxine Walker (cont)

In 1997 the Deepdale Catchment Group, with the help of a grant, undertook to have the adjacent Jimperding Reserve ripped, seeded and sign posted. This area now shows quite

(R) - In 1997 The Deepdale Catchment Group, with the help of a grant, undertook to have the adjacent Jimperding Reserve ripped, seeded and sign posted. This area, that was previously a bare piece of ground, now shows quite thick vegetation growth and a pleasant area for people to park and picnic.



thick vegetation growth and a more pleasant area for people to park.

In 1998 following this project, the Deepdale Catchment Group received a grant to have an excavator correct several areas of severe erosion on the next section of the banks of the Brook running through our property along with funding to supply us with 800 metres of fencing to complete this section. This 800 metres completed our project of fencing the two kilometres (both sides of the Brook) from the southern boundary to the Jimperding Bridge; we had, by then, supplied over 1.2 kilometres of fencing and over 300 trees without assistance. Now, in 2010, the Jimperding Brook is well treed, but we still have the ability to allow our stock to graze when needed; this has never caused any problems caused by cattle eroding the bank or damaging the trees. We allow our stock in during the late winter to keep the grass down, thus eliminating a fire hazard in our area.

We have since undertaken to fence one hectare of our land along the Cobbler Pool Road which overlooks the Jimperding Cemetery. We have planted this to Jam and White Gums, and will continue to monitor and plant this area which has, in the past, caused some erosion from the hills above it.

We have also been planting, in two short strips, to provide windbreaks and shade to the Homestead block opposite the Jimperding Brook. We aim to continue with fencing and planting of trees as the opportunity arises.

The bird life along the Brook is increasing along with the kangaroos that come down from the neighbouring hills. These kangaroos have managed to keep most of the understory at low levels. For us, this Landcare has been an expensive exercise as only excavating and one section of fencing has been funded - all the trees and shrubs were at our expense.

(L) - Image taken 1970's—note the erosion along the Brook (R) - Image from the same position 2010 showing regrowth



# THE MILLENNIUM KIDS

([www.millenniumkids.com.au](http://www.millenniumkids.com.au))

On Sunday February 28th two members of the Toodyay Friends of the River spent a most inspiring and fruitful get-together with a group of young people, aged between 12 and 18, accompanied by their co-ordinator, Catrina-Luz Aniere; they wished to learn of the history, culture and issues facing the Avon River - who better to speak to them than our President of the Friends, Gaven Donegan! These young folk came from Calingiri and a number of suburban areas of Perth; they are members of the MILLENNIUM KIDS.

## History

The Millennium Kids began on December 14th 1999 when the World Conference of Ministers Responsible for Youth recommended that August 12th be officially declared as International Youth Day. It is meant as an opportunity for governments, and others, to draw attention to youth issues worldwide.

Since that time, Millennium Kids has developed as a non-profit, non-government organisation. It is run by young people, aged 10 to 25 years, and was established in response to their demand for a greater say about *their* environment and *their* world - and they are committed to improving our environment through constructive action. There are established groups in South Africa, Canada, Indonesia and Singapore.

The programs are directed by a Millennium Kids Youth Board and supported by the United Nations Environment Program Agenda 21 Declaration which states:

‘National governments should pay more attention to the opinions and concerns of children regarding the environment’.

With this in mind, young people work together to learn about sustainability and environmental leadership, risk management, team work, communication and problem solving. Projects have been developed that raise awareness about *air, trees, waste, native animals, energy, peace/lifestyle and leadership*.

There are many schools around the Perth metropolitan and country areas that have taken the initiative to become involved in the program. Sunday’s group was a combination of young people from Calingiri and various areas around Perth including Como, South Perth and Claremont. Examples of projects that have taken place are:

- Looking after bushland adjacent to a school.
- Assist with river care.
- Walking, riding a bike or bussing to school to reduce vehicular traffic on the roads.

Assisted with discouragement of graffiti.

One group assisted the Department of Environment (and other wildlife groups) to remove 12 cygnets from a low water area that was a haven for foxes. The foxes were killing the cygnets so the young birds were caught in hessian traps and transported to the Perth Zoo till they were mature enough to fly.

In August 2009 Millennium Kids sent four youth representatives to Sonderburg, Denmark, to represent Australia at the Youth Climate Change Conference in the lead up to the United Nations Conference in Copenhagen in December 2009. Alex, from Wesley College, one of the young people to visit Toodyay, was one of the four to attend. He said it was an incredible experience but there was minimal media coverage of the youth representation which was extremely disappointing.

The Avon River has been a significant aspect of Gaven Donegan’s life. Gaven has lived practically his whole life in the vicinity of the river. It was extremely important for social interaction of the families that lived and farmed along its shores. Support was given to neighbours during times of flooding with Gaven telling stories of the trials and tribulations of getting supplies across the flooded river by swimming alongside ones horse and, of course, missing school for up to six weeks!

He spoke of the changes in the meandering of the river that took place in the 1950’s 1970’s, the loss of cobbler and mullet, the scarcity of the Long-necked turtle and the increased salinity of the river. The young folk took a sample of the water for testing and also were asked to smell and taste it (there were a few faces pulled at the latter!).

The listeners thoroughly enjoyed Gaven’s talk of the culture and history of the Avon River and its connection to the Swan River. They watched birds through binoculars, learnt about the wildlife and vegetation around the waterway, thumbed through a reptile book and searched for tadpoles. One young fellow stood on the edge of an eroding bank and fell into the water. There was no cross word from the co-ordinator who whispered ‘we used to fall in the creeks, didn’t we’ - it was great to remember those times of freedom!!!

Editor

## WEED EXPERTS VISIT TOODYAY

On March 17th a group of 23 participants, comprising of members of the National Athel Pine (*Tamarix aphylla*) Management Committee (NAPMC) and the Australian Weeds Committee (AWC), converged on Toodyay to meet with members of the TFOR. The meeting was organised by the National Coordinator, Kaye Bailey, (from Alice Springs), along with Jim Forwood, Chairman (from Darwin) and aimed to visit Toodyay, Northam and York areas to investigate the infestations of this ‘Weed of National Significance’ that has found its way into our landscape.

The infestations of Athel Pine along the Avon River are thought to be garden escapees of many years duration. It is a hardy plant with grey/green foliage and a dainty, pendulous, grouping of tiny pink flowers. The plant absorbs salt from the earth and stores it in its leaves that resemble pine or she-oak needles and, as the salt-filled needles age and drop to the ground, the salt returns to the soil.

The TFOR members have been working steadily on the removal of this pest weed over the past one and a half decades; the work has mainly centred at the back of the township plus a little further upstream and downstream of the town. The removal has been assisted by the Shire, a Department of Corrective Services Prisoner Work Team, the Department of Water and the Green Corps Program.

As has been said Athel Pine is a resilient plant and small remnants readily reshoot – this necessitates constant vigilance by the TFOR members in the removal of any new growth.

The visitors were extremely complimentary to the Friends for their knowledge and perseverance in the removal of this pest weed. We do not want the growth of the Athel Pine to resemble the choking of the Gascoyne River, in the north of our state, or the Fink River in the Northern Territory!!!

Editor

# River Gum Walk, Boyagerring Brook and Frayne's Park

by Robyn Taylor

This article is an update on my report in the February 2010 issue of *Biddip* on developments around Boyagerring Brook and includes areas adjacent to the river. Lucy, our energetic kelpie cross, has to have her morning walk and this gives me the opportunity to look around the area on an almost daily basis.

On 9 July we had our first decent winter rains. The brook finally flowed after water levels had built up sufficiently in the earth dam to flow through those massive pipes. The water created a large shallow pond before moving downstream and through the concrete culvert under the path that leads to the school. Initially a large plume of sediment could be seen flowing from the brook into the Avon, but this ceased after a day or so and the water ran clear.

However I have been disappointed to see that the sedges, which had quickly appeared and thrived in the brook once the riffle had been established, have so far not recovered from our hot dry summer and relatively dry winter. Downstream from the crossing they are still brown and lifeless looking, while upstream none are visible. Hopefully long awaited rains will bring these back to life.

When walking in this vicinity I always wander down the track to the river to look for any water birds and do a general check of the river and brook exit. This is no longer possible as the Shire has now fenced off the river with a sturdy mesh fence and locked gates. Apparently this is to stop 4 wheel drive vehicles and quad bikes. Apart from the odd vehicle driving down the track to the river I have never seen or heard anyone driving through the areas along the banks. While protection is very important, I wonder if the fencing was really necessary. There is a shady bush track between the fence and the river that a number of us, but mostly school children, would use in summer. This can no longer be accessed. It was one of my favourite walks.

Below: Millennium Kids in Duidgee Park. Photo courtesy Millennium Kids Inc.

Right top: The first kayaks. Photo: Wayne Clarke

Right Bottom: Spectators enjoying the Avon Descent in the newly established 'Frayne Park' (work of the Friends) at the bottom of Bob and Beth's property that drops down to the Avon River. Bob has planted, and nurtured, many trees over a great period of time to establish this beautiful area. Photo: Beth Frayne.

The fencing continues along the 'new' River Gum Walk until it meets Drummond Street. Fortunately it is low enough for kangaroos and euros to jump over. Their established tracks can be followed down Mount Anderson to the river.

Along Drummond Street and on the left members Bob and Beth Frayne have their property 'Bideford'. This looks over the Avon, and between their back fence line and the river Bob has planted a large number of native trees and shrubs to help stabilise the river banks. He also has a stake by the river that records the highest water levels. At our 20 June meeting the Friends had a working bee in this area, spraying weeds, whipper-snipping the grass, and removing the lower branches of the casuarinas. These had formed thick mats of dried debris that could prove a fire hazard. Other ground level hazards became evident when Vice-President Desrae Clarke managed to topple over and measure her length down the embankment, but in a slow and rather dignified manner. Sorry about the shoulder Desrae! Not to be outdone Wayne contrived to do the same, but he wasn't as elegant. Sorry about the bruised ribs Wayne! The first-aid kit was somewhere up in the trailer, but wasn't needed –TFOR members are made of stern stuff.

The result of all this hard work was a fine piece of landscaping which we dubbed Frayne's Park. Bob (he's a Brit) was most pleased with this added pastoral attraction to his property. This new asset was put to good use during the Avon Descent (7-8 August). Members could sit in comfort while watching the considerable discomfort of the competitors as they struggled with the lowest water levels recorded in the 38 year history of the event. TFOR member and competitor Greg Warburton was one of those dragging and/or walking his kayak down the river. We truly felt for you Greg and wish you better luck next year!



Newsletter of the  
*Toodyay Friends of the River*

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*"Make Friends with  
our Avon River"*



Toodyay Friends of the River

The objects of the *Toodyay Friends of the River* are to *work towards the conservation and rehabilitation of the Avon River and its environs. In the bigger picture of natural resource management, we are committed to implementing the Avon River Management Program and its associated River Recovery Plans for each of the four sections of river that pass through Toodyay.*

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## The Back Page

THE PROTECTION OF WILD-LIFE OF THE AVON RIVER

OUR SPONSORS

Low rainfall recorded over the recent winter months renders refuges for disturbed wildlife, that form in the vicinity of the Avon River, minimal. Research has shown extensive breeding of water birds is established in September reaching a peak over October and November.

In 1992 a policy statement was formulated by the late Mr Jim Masters, for the Toodyay Naturalists' Club, for *'The Protection of Wild-life of the Avon River within the Shires of Toodyay, Northam, York, Beverley and Town of Northam'*. A brief summary of that policy is:

1. **Extensive use** of the river pools and waterways **by boats** of any

type, limited to 1 June to 31 August each year.

2. **Access for Public** should be confined to well defined foreshore picnic and viewing points.....

3. Private landholders encouraged to fence their portion of the river foreshore and remnant vegetation.

4. When private landholders need access to a river pool for stock watering, these points should be under control, when needed, by temporary fencing allowed into the river bed.

5. **Creation of total Refuge Areas**

Members of the Toodyay Friends of the River would like to acknowledge the continuous support of our sponsors:

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