

December 2012



# ***Biddip***

Newsletter of the Toodyay Friends of the River

Volume 6, Issue 3



*Photo by Bethan Lloyd Photo taken in May 2012 of a Red Fox eyeing off our birdlife near Duidgee Park*

Inside this issue:

<i>President's Report</i>	2 - 3
<i>Public Access to Millard's Pool</i>	3
<i>TFW (Sandy) Harris</i>	4 - 5
<i>TFOR Website and its history</i>	6
<i>Members Gallery</i>	7
<i>Adopt-a-Spot</i>	8 - 9
<i>The River - a special poem</i>	10
<i>The Back Page</i>	12

*The Toodyay Friends of the River  
are indebted to the Wheatbelt NRM  
for their support in producing the  
Biddip newsletter*



**wheatbelt**  
natural resource  
management

# Presidents Report by Greg Warburton



It was a perfect Toodyay evening at Bethan's place for the combined Friends of the River and Naturalists' Club End of Year function. It was made extra special by a swim in Bethan's pool (a novel experience for Toodyay people), a live Cello recital thanks to Rebecca, and the presence of honoured invited guests and of course abundant and delicious catering. It was an occasion that was a worthy way of capping off another positive year for these two progressive environmental groups.

Since my last report for "Biddip" we have seen a number of highlights. These have included the appointment by the Shire of an Environment Officer. Many thanks to Karla for coming along on the night and I'm sure she felt the very warm welcome from members. Karla will be working on the Lloyd Reserve vesting transfer and management arrangements and is anxious to familiarize herself with TFOR's projects and other activities.

We have recently had an on site meeting with designer, Sharon Ponsford for the Redbanks Pool Bird Hide and look forward to seeking approvals very soon.

The "Environment Matters" display at the Show in October drew record crowds due to the live exhibits and eye-catching displays. Thanks to all that manned their posts and of course those members that came along on the Sunday to do the rubbish pick up.

Ordering is underway of the infrastructure items for the River Walk Track with work expected to commence very early in the New Year.

Thanks largely to Wayne the new web sites for both groups are now up and running and look great. The ability to record wild life sightings on- line now promises to add valuable information to an already impressive data base.

The formation of the Toodyay Tidy Towns Committee has been very satisfying after a number of failed attempts. Community reaction and support has so far been enthusiastic with both the Shire and our Community Bank getting right behind this important initiative.

The Stockland "Team Away" 2012 project saw major improvements in place at Pelham Reserve after years of neglect and is a shining example of what community volunteers can achieve even those that don't live here.

Congratulations to Wayne Clarke for being named a finalist in the prestigious Rinehart Volunteer Awards at a gala event in the city recently. Congratulations also to Butterly Cottages and the Moondyne Festival Committee.

Wayne and I recently assessed a degraded waterway in the Folewood Rd fire scar area with the land holder and we anticipate seeking funding to provide fencing, revegetation and erosion control for the site next year.

The Wheatbelt NRM Project to control Tamarisk and Bridal Creeper in the Avon River continues to make progress with the river section from Newcastle Bridge to West Toodyay Bridge (8 kms/100 hectares) designated for priority treatment. I recently had the honour to present about this project at an Environmental Weeds Action Network Forum at the Ecological Centre, Bold Park. Also on the bill was Professor Stephen Hopper arguably this country's most eminent Botanist and the only non-British person to ever be appointed head of Kew Gardens in London. Stephen is back in his beloved WA engaging in further research into our unique flora.

I would like to extend a heartfelt thanks to Vernice Pty Ltd who have continued their generous sponsorship and support for TFOR by providing the funding to the purchase of a "wheeled line trimmer". This machine will make our maintenance schedule of firebreaks and various river sites so much more achievable.

*Cont. Page 3*

## *President's Report ... continued from Page 2*

Member, Adrian couldn't wipe the smile of his face when I delivered the machine to him. He has been single-handedly attending to these management tasks using a conventional whipper snipper and has been active almost daily from Millard's Pool, Lloyd Reserve, West Toodyay Bridge, Weatherall Reserve Cobbler Pool and the Walk Tracks.

Something fascinating has been happening lately on the Northam Town Pool – a vegetated floating island is forming and progressively growing in size. The project is funded by the Northam Shire and supported by Avon Valley Environment Society. The fiber glass modules are being manufactured by Avon Valley Fibretech. It is hoped that the floating island will demonstrate the effectiveness of this method for improving water quality and providing aquatic habitat as is the case in other parts of the world. AVES are also carrying out stringent water testing of the pool over summer.

I had the opportunity to attend a special occasion on the banks of the Harvey River on November 21st organized by the Southwest Catchment Council. It was a memorial event for Pru Dufty who passed away earlier this year. The day included sedge planting, a tour of river restoration work and the unveiling of a commemorative plaque. Pru worked tirelessly in the Avon then later in the SW on many re-vegetation projects. She was highly regarded by her colleagues and landholders.

That same week I attended a community information session in York regarding a proposed land fill site for the Shire. The Town Hall was packed with people expressing their opposition to it. A similar proposal by another company for Toodyay is drawing similar opposition from our community. Because of the potential environmental impacts, especially hydrologically TFOR will be closely monitoring developments. In conclusion, thank you to the committee, members and other individuals that have supported TFOR's work over the past year. Very best wishes to Beth for a speedy recovery from her accident. We need her back on deck asp.

## *Public Access to Millard's Pool      A Few Observations*

While it can't be said that any one part of the river is more important than another, Millard's Pool is significant for a couple of reasons. Firstly, it is a large, permanent body of water, thanks to the Extracts Weir. And secondly, it has such good public access. As such, it provides a great place for people to "experience" the river and in doing so, appreciate it and hopefully care for it as a whole, not just the Millard's Pool itself. As I have lived on the Pool, for about three years now and I see who is coming and going and notice the degree of use the area gets. Some have commented that the area does not get much use. Well I disagree. And the level of activity is increasing.

The picnic shelter is a focus to draw people to the Pool. Family lunches, young blokes with late afternoon beers or just somewhere to start your walk or paddle. The information provided is useful and, so far, no vandalism or graffiti.

There are regular walkers, some would walk the path almost daily, plus a lot of regulars once or twice a week. It is a great spot for exercising the dog though the caltrop on the Cemetery side of the Shelter is a bit of a nuisance. (I am working on that). Some will take the walk into town or use the track to town for a run late in the day.

Families come down with the kids on scooters and bikes, taking the walk up to the Weir and the occasional mountain bike will go through on the track to town. Birdwatchers frequent the area, and not only from our group.

On a number of occasions a caravan or campervan pulls up at the shelter, dinner by the water and stay the night. Many of these modern units are self-contained for ablutions, so probably are not a great concern while numbers are low.

*Continued Page 10*

## *TFW Harris (August 1916—June 2012) by Susan Harris*

Known to all as "Sandy", and as "Prof" at Leigh Marine Laboratory for his title of Visiting Professor at Auckland University, Thomas Frank Wyndham Harris was behind much science we now take for granted, especially in the field of physical oceanography. He was treasured by students for his guidance, and admired by academics for unique analytical skills.

During Sandy's funeral, Dr Bill Ballantine (former head of the University's Leigh Marine Laboratory) covered these points and Sandy's time at Rhodes & Cambridge Universities, saying Sandy was an environmentalist before the term was even known.

Among achievements in several countries, Sandy attained a PhD in South Africa through the University of Natal for his work uncovering the dynamics of rip currents. While a lecturer in the Dept of Oceanography at the University of Cape Town (UCT), he wrote papers on the strong and important Agulhas Current, including his findings in relation to its source, meanders and its return current.

It is not surprising that, with a great interest in photographs of the earth from space, Sandy was the first to organize satellite imagery for sea surface temperatures off the African coastline. This arose from contacts he made when visiting NASA, and marked the start of infrared satellite monitoring of South African surface ocean temperatures. After about a decade at UCT, he was awarded the title of Associate Professor.

A former UCT student of Sandy's, the Director of the Nansen-Tutu Centre (at UCT's Dept of Oceanography) visited him in Leigh this past February (2012), and writes the following:

"[Sandy] was not given to boasting about his achievements: sporting\* or scientific. He was a very modest man, a complete gentleman who never spoke ill of anyone. I, for one, owe him a huge debt of gratitude for getting me into Oceanography, bringing me to Cape Town, and kick-starting my career at UCT! It was always a pleasure chatting to him, and I think it is amazing how sharp he was when we saw him last. I will continue to think highly of him."

\*[Sandy often represented his places of learning on squash and first eleven teams - being awarded colours for Michaelhouse & Cambridge cricket]."

Sandy's public sharing of science followed the rigorous route of publishing new findings in science papers and joint featuring in review papers, and culminated in substantial publications notably in his "retired years" eg "*Greater Cook Strait - Form and Flow*", "*The South Indian Ocean - Aspects of its Exploration, Form and Flow*", and in Western Australia "*The Avon, an Introduction*". Like the Cook Strait production, the Avon book was well regarded and stocks went quickly. His publications continue to be admired, set for students, and sought after by river/ocean users.

Avon River conservationists remember excursions with Sandy during the 1990s. With biology experts from UWA and Sir Bill Heseltine, Cicely Howell and friends had many Huckleberry months on the Avon helping Sandy.

Cicely writes: "We would set off with makeshift equipment, eg grapefruit halves and stop watches borrowed from the school swimming club, to measure the velocity of flow in the river and laugh till we cried! ... We would also sit around the kerosene heater in the cottage and warm our hands on mugs of hot chocolate while he related to us the fascinating tale of the great advances in oceanography. ... For all of us it was an opportunity to be children again!"

He left the lightest of old-fashioned footprints on the planet, and always gave more than he expected to receive. Even though battling unending skin cancer and its repercussions during his 90s, he contributed years of helpful insight, intellect, humour, and encouragement to my research for a heritage trail along the south bank of the Canning River estuary.

...continued Page 5

## *TFW (Sandy) Harris ...cont*

He goes down in history as a remarkable unassuming achiever, a popular but private man, and a resolute carer of his family. To quote a UK relative that knew him well, especially during World War II when he was one of that country's particularly trusted young and able minds defending Britain's coastline: "there is simply no replacement".

*Reprinted with kind permission from Prof. Harris' daughter, Susan*



*Above: Professor 'Sandy' Harris chatting to a friend on the bank of the Avon River, Walyunga National Park*

### *'The Avon - An Introduction'*

As quoted by Susan, Professor Harris's daughter, "My Father studied the Avon because everyone was studying the Lower Swan". "Go just over the hill" he said, "and one had the place more or less to oneself. Nobody minded him pottering away there".

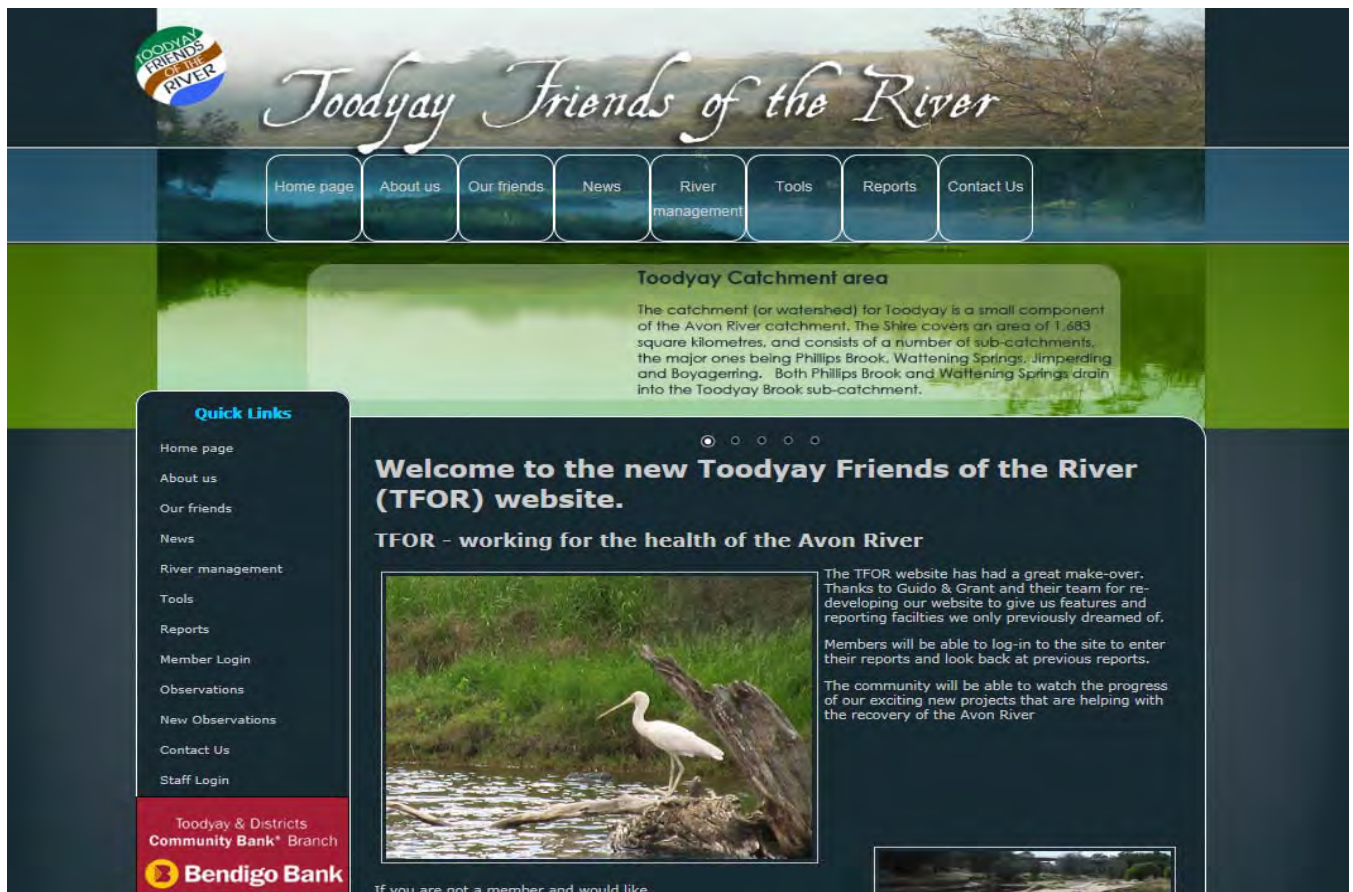
The outcome of Professor Harris's time spent studying the Avon was the publication of 'The Avon - An Introduction' 1996. The printing of it was sponsored by the Avon River Management Authority (ARMA) and Alcoa of Australia Ltd. It is an extremely comprehensive book on all aspects of our Avon with numerous maps, statistics and photographs. However, it is not too scientific to not be enjoyed by 'everyman'.

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Many of those acknowledged in the publication, such as Viv Read (TFOR Patron), Jim Masters, Roger Underwood, Fred Bremner, John Ruprecht, Martin Revell and Cicely Howell, are known to members of the TFOR.

The WA Local Government Association has an on-line petition to introduce a (drink) **container deposit scheme** into WA (with a 10 cent deposit on cans and bottles, similar to South Australia). The petition can be signed by visiting <http://cash4containers.org.au/action/support-wa-cash-containers-scheme>



In April 2009 I designed and built the first Toodyay Friends of the River Inc. (TFOR) website. I admit I had no experience whatsoever with web design - nor with the technical aspects of operating a website. I had limited computing expertise, and when it came to working with the codes that underpin a webpage - I had none! But I like a challenge! And the 'HELP' button has great resources attached to it.

The challenge to get it right was even more significant, as I was also tasked to manage and update the existing Toodyay Land Conservation District Committee (LCDC) website. The LCDC purchased a suitable programme for this purpose, and we were allowed to use that programme to develop our website.

Our first website was a real adventure, and it did for some time achieve the goals we set for it. However, as time went on I realised that it was becoming a little beyond my technical skills. I was proficient at managing the existing website and updating the data within it, but making it more 'user friendly' was too big a challenge for my skills - and time. I owned up to the fact that I was still only an amateur in a professional field, and recommended the TFOR obtain the services of a competent web designer.

There are many professionals around in this field, and I was aware that a number of local organisations had used 'Web's Creative Studios' (WCS) for their sites. When I approached WCS for a quotation, they advised that - as we were a local community group that they knew well, they would give us a special deal.

The resultant website is attractive, and will provide the resources for us to enter our 'River Reports' on line. We can also add any 'observations' of unusual fauna or flora, or weed locations, and other data that will help us manage our river.

The snapshot of our new webpage appears at the top of this page.

# Members Gallery



Above: Toodyay Naturalists Club 'Bird Hide' site meeting with the Design Architect Sharon Ponsford. (l to r): Alisha Ashworth, Rachel Major, Greg Warburton and Brendan Imms -all from Wheatbelt NRM, Sharon Ponsford (with black umbrella) - hidden behind Desraé Clarke. Redbank Pool in the background. (Photo: Wayne Clarke)



Above: Swans on Millards Pool in May 2012. It is not unusual to have swans on the pool, but always a delight.

Photo: Desraé Clarke

Right: Boyagerring Brook crossing. There will have to be another solution to what we have here. Last winter heavy rains in the catchment resulted in the initial undermining of the crossing which was never repaired. The orange tape was strung across as a warning, but now part of that has gone downstream. Apart from walkers and bicycles, the crossing is meant to support fire-trucks in case of an emergency.

Photo: Robyn Taylor, 25 November 2012



Above: Alisha Ashworth stands before a forest of the 'Weed of National Significance', the Smallflower tamarisk (*Tamarix parviflora*).



Above: Our new 'wheeled' line trimmer, purchased with funding from one of our oldest sponsors, Vernice Pty Ltd. This will support members on those bigger brush cutting tasks. Thankyou Vernice.



## Join us in making a difference ...

This year, change your thinking from 'someone else will do it' to 'I can do that'! Like us, you can take action on litter **today** and leave your road or the reserve you have just walked in a better place than you found it.

We're local residents that can't stand litter. We made the decision that rather than let it get us down we would pick it up.

We have joined the **Keep Australia Beautiful (KAB) Adopt-a-Spot program** and have pledged to keep Toodyay litter free.

We can't do it all on our own; but together we can make the area free of litter and restore the natural beauty of Toodyay. We can all remove the litter that ends up on our road verges; clean up after our dogs and pick up litter we see whilst out walking.

It's a fact that litter attracts more litter - rather than complaining about the thoughtless actions of others, if we want a litter free Toodyay we have to become part of the solution.

If you want to join us in looking after our Shire, or have a favourite spot you would like to look after, contact KAB and they will supply you with some free bags, gloves and tools to help you. If that's not your thing but you're sick of litter, just make an effort to pick it up when you see it.

Thanks for helping.

p.s. If you think one person's actions won't make a difference, take a look at the photos opposite.



Just **one** piece of litter removed from the environment  
can make a big difference.



Take a step and get involved, contact us:  
[adoptaspot@dec.wa.gov.au](mailto:adoptaspot@dec.wa.gov.au) or 6467 5122

# TOODYAY TIDY TOWNS, RIVER CARE AND RUBBISH

*by Beth Frayne Toodyay Tidy Towns Committee and TFOR member*

Regularly, we are reminded about the terrible impact rubbish has on our waterways. Just take a look at the images of coastal and river plastic pollution in this article on the Coastal Care website (<http://coastalcare.org/2009/11/plastic-pollution/>) or Page 9. Seeing just how much plastic is in the guts of dead water birds is eye-opening. And just imagine the islands of plastic waste floating around the world on the sea currents! At what point in the future will we actually be able to 'walk on water'?

Closer to home, I read a news item on ABC.net about the 11 tonnes of rubbish that had been removed from the Swan and Canning Rivers by the Swan River Trust, last year, with the most damaging items to wildlife being discarded fishing lines. Tyres were the most common large item retrieved, but there had been a drop in shopping trolleys (from 48 to 9)!

We don't have this sort of stuff in our bit of the Avon River, surely? Well, it might not be so obvious, but a closer look might be revealing. One discarded piece of fishing line, fence wire or piece of rope could become tangled around a turtle, duck or visiting pelican. Our bridges are a favourite place from which to chuck stuff into the river.

Thanks heavens we have our local River Guardian in TFOR! As we assess, monitor or just enjoy walk along, the river banks, we see this rubbish and make arrangements to remove it. One of our on-going tasks is the removal of an endless parade of 'hard to uproot' green plastic tree guards before they end up in the river and floating down to Perth or, even worse, drowning some poor unsuspecting river denizen.

Category 4 of the Tidy Town Competition is Natural Heritage Conservation. The TT Tips Book says, under 'Local lakes, creeks or rivers': "The challenge lies in being able to make use of the wetlands without compromising their ability to support wildlife and maintain a high level of water quality. Wetlands are under threat from a number of factors including grazing cattle, introduced fish, dumping of rubbish, over-fishing, dumping of effluent and erosion of banks. Ask the shire if there is a local environment group who protects your local wetlands." Well, we don't have to ask, we know!

## *Public Access to Millard's Pool* *cont from Page 3*

On the water we get plenty of paddlers. There are the kids having a go with Dad watching and teaching and the Avon Descent participants in training or launching here to run down to town or beyond. At times I have seen family groups of up to five canoes. The school Rangers have a program over a number of weeks each year where they come down to learn some paddling skills with their teachers (see photo).

The number of canoes on the river is greatest around Avon Descent time. Not only those training but and all the publicity generated by the race seems to remind people to get the water craft out of the shed. Our own Paddling President can be seen in weeks leading up to the big event paddling at a furious pace up and down the Pool.

The canoe trip from the Extracts Weir to town is a wonderful journey with a few small rapids and bumps, some exiting tight bends and glorious, peaceful scenery all the way. I know that a number of you do this regularly in the winter spring. My Catherine, at ten, is now able to take this trip solo on a ski.

The Avon Descent is of course a time of peak exposure of the area to the public. Extracts Weir is a popular viewing spot for the race and attracts a crowd of many hundreds. That public interest is great in supporting our case for the importance of the river in general. The motorboats are a bit of a problem over that weekend and the previous practice weekend for bird life and possibly river bank erosion but they do attract the spectators. The paddlers have negligible impact but also help make for an exciting event. All in all, one of my highlights of the year.

The future? One day I expect to see a barbecue and rubbish bin at the shelter. And maybe more shelters as usage increases.

*Continued Page 11*

# The River

By Catherine Fletcher

*Rushing, crashing waves of water  
Rocks, rushing over to slaughter  
Waves like giant walls of brick  
To get out the way you must be quick  
Down at the weir  
There is much fear  
Branches covered all with foam  
Swept away from their tree-top home  
Down goes the river  
Hither and thither  
All the way to town  
Where the waves come crashing down  
Paddling in to town-  
The waters all brown  
Lots and lots of fun,  
Now winters done*

*Then in summer it runs out to sea  
And it's the big blue ocean just for me  
But we all want the rain to come  
And bring us all some watery fun  
Winter comes and rain it brings  
Water off the rocks it pings  
Lots and lots and lots of rain  
To release the river from its strain  
And once again the river roars  
Rocks that rip and tear like claws  
This giant, wondrous, heaving beast  
That out of me could make a feast  
Then the boats are used once more  
Water and algae on the floor  
Tipping, rocking little boats  
Using tiny, yellow floats*



## Public Access to Millard's Pool

*cont from Page 10*

Kids don't get enough opportunities for outdoor activities and getting them on the water provides useful skills and water awareness. Here we have the ideal opportunity to do that. Imagine canoes that are available on site (access to them via the visitors centre and a bond) and maybe a couple of dragon boats available for corporate sport activities. I don't think sailing would be practical as the wind blows up or down the pool making a challenging tack to windward on such a narrow course.

The further development of the walk/cycle trail to town will increase public activity here, and maybe the poorly located Industrial area will go somewhere more appropriate. A walk trail to the top of Knockdominie (I think that is the name of the hill north of Millard's Pool), quite a spectacular view.

And one day the pool will be dredged increasing the recreational and ecological value of the waterway.

Any members who want to go for a paddle, give Kerry or I a call (9574 5126) or email (fletch@ctemail.net.au). Our ski and Canadian sit at the water's edge. We don't leave the paddles there but we can arrange for you to grab them. It is a pretty nice thing to do.

**Newsletter of the  
Toodyay Fiends of the River Inc.**

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*"Make Friends with  
our Avon River"*

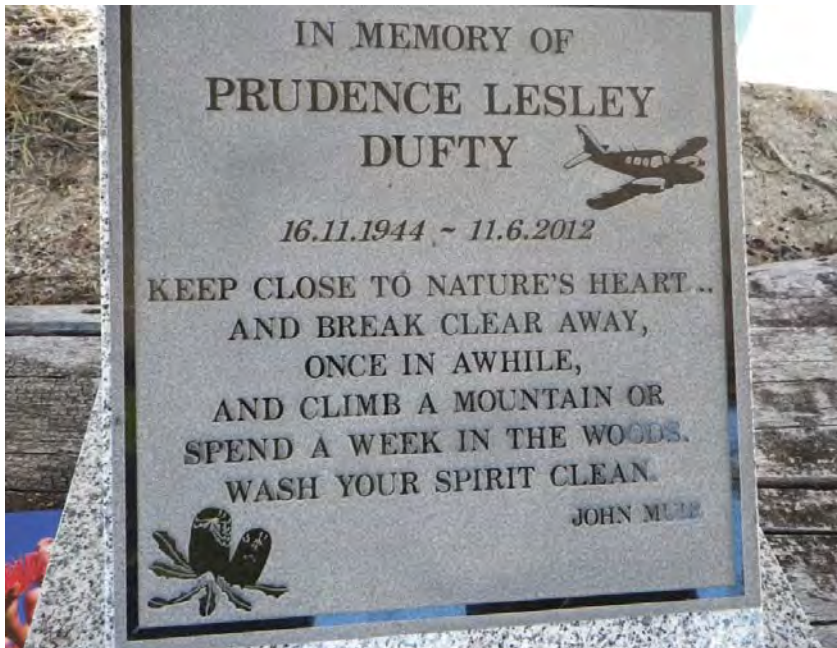


The objects of the *Toodyay Friends of the River* are to *work towards the conservation and rehabilitation of the Avon River and its environs. In the bigger picture of natural resource management, we are committed to implementing the Avon River Management Program and its associated River Recovery Plans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

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**Visit our website at  
[www.toodyayfor.org.au](http://www.toodyayfor.org.au)**

## The Back Page



*Above: A memorial plaque to Pru Dufty that was unveiled in November 2012. Pru was well known in the Avon - and among members of the TFOR - for her dedication to waterways conservation. She will be sadly missed by all who were privileged to have known her.*

### OUR SPONSORS

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

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