

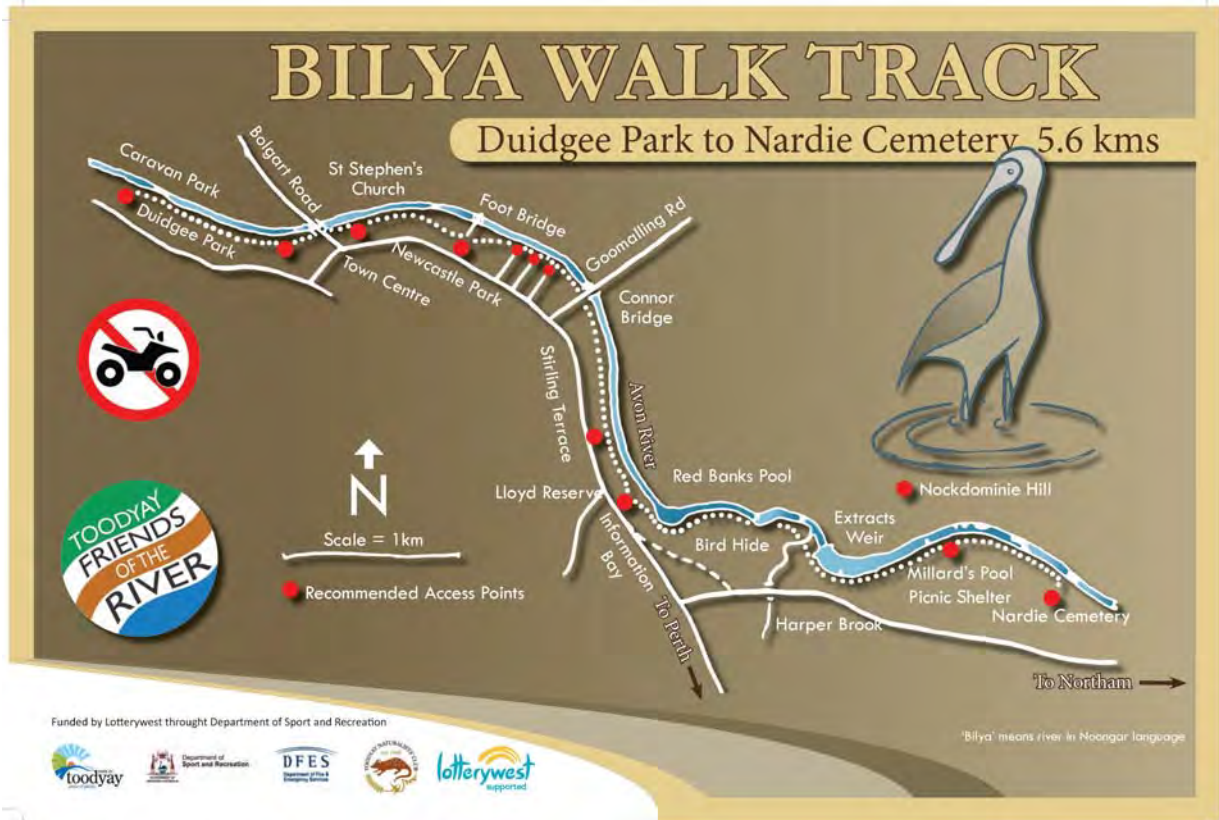
April 2013



Biddip

Newsletter of the Toodyay Friends of the River

Volume 7, Issue 1



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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



So far 2013 has seen Toodyay Friends of the River (TFOR) on somewhat of a roll! Steady progress has been made with project work and we have been busily engaged with a number of other activities and issues. Our collaboration with groups such as Toodyay Tidy Towns and the Toodyay Naturalists' Club continue to be fruitful. I am particularly excited about the Bird Hide project, with thanks mainly to the efforts of Wayne and Des, which has recently made a huge leap forward. A successful funding application for its construction from Wheatbelt Natural Reserve Management (Wheatbelt NRM) and the recruitment of local craftsmen, Michael Shepherd, who has enthusiastically agreed to build the structure, saw a thrilling moment when Michael drove the first peg into the ground to mark out the footings. With no undue delays regarding approvals the current rate of progress will see the Bird Hide and the Walk Track completed at the same time with a grand opening feasible for July. I see the Bird Hide as much more than a place to observe the wonderful birdlife of Red Banks Pool. It will be a focal point along the track, and an opportunity to impart information and interpretation about the River, its wildlife and heritage, or simply a place to enjoy the beauty of the surroundings.

At the time of writing the Walk Track has been equipped with seating/rest stations on the river bank at Lloyd Reserve, Red Banks Pool, Extracts Weir, Millard's Pool (upstream) and a picnic table near the seed orchard and at Nardie Cemetery. Thank you to members Adrian, Andrew and Vicki and Wheatbelt N R M trainees, Judd, Alisha and Renee, who assisted with the furniture installation. The track markers are in place and the signage has been ordered. All that remains is the signs to be installed and the construction of a footbridge across Harper Brook. Final task will be the publication of a guide to the track.

The waterway restoration project on private farmland along Folewood Road is moving forward with an agreement signed that will see over a kilometer of fencing plus re-vegetation and erosion control in place over the next 12 months.

Toodyay Friends of the River has been receiving many enquiries and requests for comment about the landfill proposals for, not only Toodyay, but also York. Concerns have been expressed about the future for the Avon Arc as more pressure is put on our part of the world to accommodate the ever increasing mountains of waste generated in the metro area. Waterway contamination is one of many areas of concern TFOR will be commenting on during the submission process. TFOR encourages not only its members but all the Avon Valley community to make submissions and contact their local members about this issue. It is only *'people power'* that can stop this frightening precedent being set.

On a more positive note thanks to the efforts of our Shire Environment Officer, Karla we can look forward to the re-invigoration of the Land Care District Committee as an umbrella organization for our various Toodyay environmental groups. This model has worked very well in adjoining Chittering Shire and has resulted in attracting substantial 'land care' project funding within that Shire over the years. TFOR has been supporting Karla on the Malkup Brook Reserve work such as the formation of a "Friends" group and revised controlled burning plans.

The next meeting of C.A.R.E (Conserving the Avon River Environment) will be during winter as we continue to see regional strengthening of environmental groups and agencies. Incorporation is progressing.

Congratulations to Wheatbelt N R M for an excellent "Weed Wars" community workshop in York recently. The event highlighted, in an informative and entertaining way, the environmental weed threat in our region especially along the River. ABC's Gardening Australia personality, Josh Byrnes, proved to be a great draw card to impart this crucial message.

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Premier's Australia Day Citizenship Award 2013 Gaven Donegan

Gaven was born in Toodyay, the eldest child of a family seven and lived and worked on the farm as he lost his Dad when he was a teenager. He loved and had great respect for the Avon River that passed by the farm, an appreciation his Dad taught him from a very early age. Gaven can tell so many stories of the great importance of the Avon, his knowledge of droving stock along the tracks to the coastal areas, the names of all the crossings, fords and rapids, which in many cases were indigenous names, or named after very early settlers farming along its banks.

As a young married man, work took Gaven and his little family away from Toodyay for a number of years but he did return! His standing in the Toodyay community is very high as he is 'a man of the people of the community'. This is evident with the forty odd years Gaven has been involved with the bushfire brigades. He has a wonderful technique of teaching people on the fire ground, teaching in 'ordinary' language, giving them confidence which is so important especially to city folk who have decided on a 'tree change' and to settle on small hobby farm properties. Gaven was made the inaugural Honorary Life Member of the Central Volunteer Bush Fire Brigade 2006.

Over many years Gaven has held various administrative positions on the Toodyay Agricultural Society Committee. He has stimulated interest in the historical aspect of the Society with the Society celebrating its 160 year of existence this year. He was a main strength in encouraging an Honour Board of the Society and also the celebration of the Year of the Farmer.

Love and appreciation of the River has been evident in the knowledge he imparts to the members of the Toodyay Friends of the River and, with being one of a group in 1998 at the time of the formation of the group, to encourage the community to care for our river. With Gaven's knowledge of bushfires and the devastation it can cause, his education is even more important along a river bank's natural growth. Gaven has mentored members of the Friends and the general community imparting his knowledge freely. Gaven was made an Honorary Life Member of the Toodyay Friends of the River in 2010.

As a family man with children and grandchildren, Gaven is a much loved father and grandfather who gives time and attention and his worldly knowledge resulting in the great respect the younger members have for him.

It has already been stated that Gaven is a man of the people and the community and the Toodyay Friends of the River are most honoured to have one of their members appreciated for his outstanding contribution and to be awarded the 2013 Toodyay Citizen of the Year Award.

Right: Gaven Donegan at the Australia Day Awards Ceremony in Duidgee Park

Photo: Joe Edgecombe



Above: Gaven receiving his Honorary Life Membership in August 2010 from TFOR Patron, Viv Read

Photo: Wayne Clarke

The Wagyl Nyitting and Bilya Bidi

by Kerry Horan and Anika Dent

The local Nyungar people have identified the development of walk tracks as a priority NRM activity for the region, during workshops conducted by Wheatbelt Natural Resource Management (Wheatbelt NRM). Creating walk tracks, like Toodyay Friends of the River's Bilya track, that follow similar routes to those traditionally used by Nyungar people, can help the wider community learn more about Nyungar culture and relate with the ancestors of the Nyungar people.

In 1831 Dr Alexander Collie, a Scottish surgeon and botanist, explored much of the southwest of WA and drew a map, recording some of the bidi (main walk tracks) used by Nyungar people as they crossed their country. One bidi followed the Gulgulgar Bilya (Avon River) from Perth, through the present towns of Toodyay, Northam, York, Beverley and beyond.

Nyungar peoples' connection to country is interwoven into all aspects of their cultural and spiritual beliefs and practices. Nyungar knowledge and relationship with country is integral to their survival and the survival of the environment in which they live. For example there are six seasons in the Nyungar calendar - Birak, Bunuru, Djeran, Makuru, Djilba & Kambarang. Each season is identified by the resources available and each Nyungar group would have cultural stories telling them how to use or manage these resources during each season. [see page 5].

Nyitting (Dreaming) stories tell how the Wagyl (Rainbow Serpent) gave life to the Wheatbelt through the creation of freshwater and healthy country. The well-being of all life in the region, including Nyungar people, flora and fauna, depends on the health of these waterways, with the health of the country reflected in the health of the river.

The Wagyl created and protects the Wheatbelt landscape, including the bilya (rivers), pinjar (swamps) and ngama (waterholes) along the Gulgulgar Bilya, Swan and Canning Rivers and other waterways throughout the South West of WA.

You can find more information on Aboriginal Natural Resource Management in the Wheatbelt from the Wheatbelt NRM website at:

<http://www.wheatbeltnrm.org.au/reports-publications/sustainable-communities/>



Left: A picnic table that has been installed along the Bilya track, in Lloyd Reserve.

Furniture such as this has been installed along the track, blending neatly in with the surrounds, and providing a far greater incentive to make use of the area.

Photo: Desraé Clarke

The Nyungar calendar



There are six seasons in the Nyungar calendar - Birak, Bunuru, Djeran, Makuru, Djilba & Kambarang. Each season is identified by the resources available and each Nyungar group would have cultural stories telling them how to use or manage these resources during each season.

BILYA WALK TRACK *by Greg Warburton*

The Bilya Walk Track (or Bidi) runs from Duidgee Park through to Nardie Cemetery.

The Avon River (Gulgulga Bilya) is a place of great cultural significance to Ballardong people (refer to the Wagyl Nyitting and Bilya Bidi article Page 4).

The walk begins at **Duidgee Park**, the name we are told comes from the original Ballardong place name for the location. Over the decades the word “Duidgee” has become “Toodyay”. As you proceed beneath the **Newcastle Bridge** you can see the flood levels indicated on one of the pylons. Note the level of the **1983 flood** and imagine the predicted 100 year flood 3 metres above your head. Flooding of the river was regular in times gone by with the record height recorded in 1872. After a series of floods in the 1950’s the Avon River was “trained” by bulldozing a channel and removing vegetation and islands from Beverley to Toodyay to allow flood waters the flow more quickly. This was known as the **River Training Scheme (RTS)** and had catastrophic environmental effects such as the mobilization of silts that filled up most of the deep, permanent pools along the River.

As the track descends onto the river bank you will pass **St. Stephen’s Anglican Church** which was consecrated in 1862. Charles Harper Snr became church’s first Minister arriving in the Colony in 1837 as a settler. The track will now take you past the back yards of a number of Toodyay’s historic buildings including **Stirling House**, once the Toodyay’s Gentleman’s Club and the **Victoria Hotel** built in 1886. This hotel features one of the few remaining Billiard Saloons in the state built in 1899.

A little further on you will pass under the **school footbridge** which was refurbished in 2010 to allow school children to walk to and from school via **Newcastle Park**. Now follow the track along the river bank to the **Connor Bridge**, named after Daniel Connor who originally arrived in Toodyay as a convict from Ireland and became one of the colony’s wealthiest business men. This new bridge is a part of the Toodyay - Goomalling Road.

Once under the bridge the track enters a thick **She Oak and Paperbark** grove. Pay careful attention of the orange track markers as the track winds its way through to emerge on a fire break behind the Baptist Church. **If this section is too wet you can take the higher track.** Now continue on the fire break behind the light industrial area to reach **Lloyd Reserve**.

Lloyd Reserve encompasses 16 hectares of riparian vegetation and is on land donated in 2001 to the Department of Environment and Conservation by local farmer, Oriel Lloyd. It is now under joint management by the Shire of Toodyay and Toodyay Friends of the River (TFOR). The track leaves the fire break and winds its way past botanical interpretation signage. A side track will take you down to the river where seating has been installed. Here is a fine view of the river and a great vantage point during the **Avon Descent**. The **Bilya Walk Track** is one of the few places along the 130 km route of this annual event (first weekend in August) that competitors can be seen from the river bank.

Further on you will come to a picnic area with a table and seating. Here is the **Native Seed Orchard** where a local community group has established native plants from which seeds are harvested and propagated for re-vegetation projects. After taking a break at the picnic area follow the track past the huge **flooded gum *Eucalyptus rudis*** towards the beautiful **Red Banks Pool**. The track follows the high, eroded southern bank to reach a bird hide. The pool provides a permanent refuge for water birds during the long, dry summers. Quiet time spent here will be rewarded with sightings of some of the fifty water bird species recorded along the Avon River

You might glimpse a Long-necked Turtle sunning itself on a log. The **John Masters Bird hide** and the interpretive signage is a project by **Toodyay Naturalists’ Club**.

Now the track hugs the river bank passing another rest station meandering its way through the flooded gums passing a number of smaller river pools. A footbridge is provided to allow the crossing of **Harper Brook** in winter. A short distance from here is the iconic **Extracts Weir**, a popular viewing point for the Avon Descent. The weir was built in the 1950’s to create a water supply for the **Extracts Factory**.

A little further on from the Weir a sealed walk track follows the bank of Millard’s Pool. At over two kilometres in length it is the largest pool on the Avon River and the site of Toodyay’s original and only swimming pool.

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Algal Bloom on the Avon by Desraé Clarke

Over quite a few years there has been much talk about ‘algal blooms’ in the Swan River and further upstream in the Avon River. What is an ‘algal bloom’?

The Avon River water, over the recent summer months, has experienced an algal bloom between Katrine and downstream from Toodyay town. It can have a nasty sewerage-like odour, is cloudy and can be a pale green to a blue-green and looks like curdled green milk on downwind water surfaces; the colour of the water may be dark green to brown. This is caused, in most cases, by excessive nutrients leaching into the water which reduces its dissolved oxygen. This process, in turn, releases dissolved toxins into the water rendering it *extremely dangerous!*

The harmful toxins from an *algal bloom* can kill large numbers of stock quickly with most deaths over late summer and early autumn. Toxicity can increase as the *bloom* ages, or begins to die, and may last up to three months before being degraded by sunlight or microbial activity.

Farm animals can develop the ‘staggers’ within thirty minutes from drinking affected water; they will lie down and die of convulsions within twenty four hours. ***If*** the animals do survive the first twenty four hours they will develop jaundice, from liver damage, and photosensitisation (extreme sensitivity to light) and can die within one or two weeks or become chronically ill from liver damage.

If toxicity is suspected have water samples checked and monitor the water source daily. If proven to be affected the water source can be contaminated for up to three months after the *bloom* appears to have disappeared; regular monitoring must be continued.

Signage needs to be in place along the water source to warn ‘would-be’ waders or swimmers and dogs must be kept away from the affected water as, even if the dog licks its coat, there can be dire results.

The photographs below were taken by Greg Warburton 13th February 2013 when the river water demonstrated the deep green colouring of a significant *algal bloom!*

It occurs quite rapidly Local authorities must be notified and signage erected to warn people of the danger of entering the water and to also keep their stock and dogs from going anywhere near the water. The water should be checked daily for blooms and ensure stock and people are isolated from contaminated water if the blue-green alga is suspected.



Above: The murky pea-green of an algal bloom at Millard's Pool in February 2013.

Photo Greg Warburton

Above: It changed to brown in the following weeks.

Photo Desraé Clarke

Presidents Report (continued from Page 1)

In conclusion, and on behalf of the committee, I would like to pay tribute to Dr Richard Walkey who gave an untold amount to the Toodyay community over nearly 20 years. After helping so many others to recover from illness his passing at such a young age is hard to comprehend. TFOR plans to dedicate a rest station along the Walk Track to Richard as a special place of reflection and contemplation amidst the beauty of nature.

Greg Warburton



Left: Members of the Toodyay Friends of the River relaxing over morning tea after looking over the new walk track, and removing litter. Millards Pool can be seen in the background.

The picnic shelter is mentioned below.

Photo Wayne Clarke

BILYA WALK TRACK (cont from Page 4)

The picnic shelter and table provide a place to rest. Here is a good spot for launching a canoe or kayak for a pleasant paddle on the Pool but please, **no power boats**, as the banks are fragile and water birds nest here. The sealed track will take you upstream along the edge of Millard's Pool passing through the remnants of citrus orchards that once thrived here.

On the far bank at the base of **Knockdominie Hill** you will notice early settler's huts before a turn will take you to **Nardie Cemetery**, final resting place for many of Toodyay's pioneers. Next to the cemetery is part of the original **Extracts factory** so called because of the process of extracting tannin from Wandoo timber. The timber was sourced from a state forest twenty kilometres north west of here and now known as the **Julimar Conservation Park**.

You are now at the end (or beginning) of the **Bilya Walk Track**. A picnic table is provided for you to take well earned break or spend some time wandering around the historic headstones amongst them including that of Thomas Millard himself.

This is a good place to arrange for a pick up, or drop off, or, you may want to return the 5.6 kilometres along the track back to Toodyay.

Greg Warburton

Toodyay Tidy Towns by Beth Frayne

The Toodyay Tidy Towns campaign, led by TFOR President Greg Warburton, has been making quite an impression on the Toodyay community, if having signed up 30 Supporters can be considered a good indication.

Clean Up Australia Day (CUAD), 3 March

TFOR was well represented on Clean Up Australia Day in Toodyay, on 3 March. After a poor response last year, this year we saw 26 people (including two young persons) volunteering their time at the Toodyay Riverside Registered Site (a massive 64 person-hours). A huge quantity of rubbish was not only collected but recycled as well (56 orange bags of general rubbish, 7 large bags of glass and cans, 5 tyres and about 3 trailer loads of big junk!).

Volunteers were busy working along on the approaches to town, in parks and picnic areas, along the river banks, out at Julimar, Sandplain Rd and Wandoo Circle etc. Toodyay District High School students and teachers did a gargantuan job of removing litter from around the school and sections of the River, on Friday, 1 March (one reporter said 5 shopping trolleys were recovered).



TFOR's Rebecca and Ric carrying back their Litter Load on CUAD
Photo: Beth Frayne



Greg Warburton and Andrew Carr with their haul at the Toodyay Waste Transfer Station Photo: Beth Frayne

'Toodyay Bendigo Bank' and its Adopt-a-Spot Sponsorship

A major initiative supporting the Tidy Towns philosophy is the new Adopt-a-Spot Sponsorship Project of the Toodyay & Districts Community Financial Services Ltd. (ie our Bendigo Community Bank Branch). The Bank is offering sponsorship of \$500 per year over 3 years, to at least 20 community groups, if they commit to keeping a specific location litter-free. Eye-catching signage has been designed to acknowledge the commitment of each group. Each group will register with KABC's Adopt-a-Spot Program, and submit regular reports. Great interest has been shown already, with the Project's official launch occurring in late May. TFOR has submitted an Expression of Interest, having already 'Adopted' a KABC Spot.

Creating the Tidy Towns Submission

Currently, the TTT Committee is drafting its Submission (competition entry). TNC's Bethan Lloyd, Desrae Clarke and Wayne Clarke, are drafting the Natural Environment Conservation Category Projects. Greg Warburton and Beth Frayne are working on some of the other Categories. TTT is not judged on its Submission, so no big deal! But it is judged on the physical evidence the Judges will want to see when they come to Toodyay, later this year. So we need to come up with some Punchy Projects!

Beth Frayne, Secretary, Toodyay Tidy Towns Committee and TFOR member

An introduction to the Shire of Toodyay Environmental Officer

Karla Hooper grew up in the Perth hills of Roleystone where she lived on several bush properties. She loved the bush, her playground of many years, where she would take her dog as her companion to explore in the hills.

Leaving school, Karla completed a traineeship in office administration then went into the retail sector. When she was 21 a work colleague asked her along to a presentation on chemicals in the home, and that night was to change her life and set her in a new direction.

Tracking down the presenter, Dr Peter Dingle (www.drDingle.com/about-dr-dingle), from Murdoch University, the question was posed ‘What do I need to do to learn more about this topic?’ He advised he’d be the coordinator of a newly developed course and encouraged her to apply. Within a few weeks she was enrolled as a mature age student at Murdoch University and completed her degree in BSc Health and Environment four years later. On degree completion she undertook honours in Environmental Science; however, it wasn’t completed as a job, too good to refuse, landed in her lap.

Half way through honours, whilst holidaying in Broome, Karla was advised by a friend of a position available in Darwin, as an Industrial Hygiene Specialist, with a major oil and gas company. Having had experience in this field from vacation work during a university break she applied for the position and was relocated to Darwin one week following return from her holiday. The role was based both on and off-shore and involved evaluating workers exposures to a range of chemical and physical stressors.

Karla loved her time in Darwin and, while there, was a Wildlife Carer, mainly looking after joeys. She spent a lot of her spare time developing her permaculture designed garden or camping and visiting many of the natural wonders of the Northern Territory (NT). Her love for the outdoors led her to complete a course in Tour Guiding where she learnt much about NT flora, fauna, bush tucker and medicinal uses of plants.



Introduction to the Shire of Toodyay Environmental Officer (continued)

Working in the mining, oil and gas industry gave Karla an inside perspective of the damaging environmental and social consequences involved and the toll it takes on families and Mother Nature. Being very aware that *'supply and demand'* are the drivers behind industry it was time to try and find a more sustainable way of living. Deciding travel was on the cards she packed up her life and dog and hit the road in search of a sustainable form of transport.



Travelling around Australia, with camels as a focus, led to a very fulfilling time in Karla's life and many adventures were had – from catching her own camels from the wild, working as a tour guide taking tourists on camel rides and living by herself on a remote cattle station in outback Queensland.

In February 2012 Karla returned to Perth deciding to settle down close to family and friends. Fulfilling her dream she built a gypsy wagon with her father and obtained two trained camels which some may have been lucky enough to see living near Lovers Lane on Toodyay Road.

Karla began her position with the Shire of Toodyay as the Environmental Officer in November 2012 and feels this position greatly compliments her interest in sustainability. She is currently writing the Shire's Environmental Strategy and would like to work closely with the community to make the Shire a more environmentally friendly place to live. She has interaction with the environmental groups, Toodyay Friends of the River and Toodyay Naturalists' Club, but would love to hear from other members of the community to *'workshop'* ideas and generally assist with her role. Karla currently works three days a week and can be contacted on 9574 9322 or eo@toodyay.wa.gov.au

Newsletter of the
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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.*

*"Make Friends with
our Avon River"*

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**Visit our website at
www.toodyayfor.org.au**

The Back Page

Below: Some of the Clean Up Australia Day (CUAD) participants loading rubbish collected from around the Toodyay township. See the Toodyay Tidy Towns report on Page 10 for further images taken on this annual event, incorporating a number of Toodyay's community groups.

Photo: Beth Frayne



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