

December 2015



Biddip



Newsletter of the Toodyay Friends of the River

Volume 9, Issue 3

BILYA WALK TRACK



Inside this issue:

<i>President's Report</i>	2
<i>Composting Workshop</i>	3
<i>Yenyening Lakes excursion</i>	4 - 5, 11
<i>The Reserves of Toodyay</i>	6 - 7
<i>Bilya Walk Track visitors</i>	7
<i>Member's Gallery</i>	8
<i>Plenty Tidy</i>	9
<i>Northam Road cleanup</i>	10
<i>New Banners</i>	10
<i>Neville & Val Tanner</i>	11
<i>The Back Page</i>	12

The Toodyay Friends of the River are grateful to the Wheatbelt NRM for their support in producing the December 2015 newsletter



wheatbelt
natural resource
management

Presidents message by Robyn Taylor



Welcome to our last issue of *Biddip* for 2015.

Over the past couple of months we have made fantastic progress on the new section of the Bilya Walk Track. The track has been cleared, signage put up and steps installed. We also cleared much of the above ground growth of Bridal Creeper. The thick mats of corms under the ground will need to be dealt with in 2016.

This is such a pretty section of the Avon River with the track running along the river bank towards Lloyd Reserve. Work started on it in August before our Annual General Meeting, and we were pleased the Shire's Environmental Officer, Sabin Acharya, accepted our invitation to join us. Sabin not only helped with clearing the track but also stayed for our meeting which we held after morning tea as we spread ourselves over the grassy bank and soaked up the winter sunshine.

As the last issue of *Biddip* came out before the AGM, I have recorded the members of the management committee for 2015/2016

President: Robyn Taylor

Vice President: Sarah Dudley

Secretary: Desraé Clarke

Treasurer: Wayne Clarke

Committee: Laraine Brindle; Andrew Carr; Rebecca Meegan-Lowe; Vicki Warburton

Greg Warburton (Project Officer)

Publicity: Desraé Clarke Hon. Patron: Viv Read;

Hon. Advisor: Bern Kelly

In September we held a management committee meeting at Laraine's home to discuss our programme for the remainder of the year including planning for the October Agricultural Show. This year more of us were in Toodyay to help with the Environment Matters tent, and certainly the extra planning and the creating of more space for exhibits brought great results. We even had a new business card to hand out with our website details.

Following a successful funding application we are also in the process of acquiring a pull-up banner. This will be set up at fund-raising and other events where we want to promote TFOR. Many thanks to Wayne for organising this, including sourcing the beautiful photos. With Heather Frank's design skills the banner should look stunning.

I would like to record our thanks to our Seed Orchard guru, Bethan Lloyd, for organising the Composting Workshop at the new community depot. This was held in September and sponsored by TFOR. Bruce Atkinson led the workshop and made it look so easy.

By all accounts everyone enjoyed the excursion to Yenyenning Lakes in November – read all about it in this issue!

We decided members deserve at least one month off in the year, so instead of having our traditional planning session on Australia Day, we have decided to hold this on Sunday 6 December following breakfast in Duidgee Park. Details will be in our *Toodyay Herald* column, and an email will go out reminding you to BYO everything including a chair and snags for the gas BBQ.

I would like to wish all our Friends a joyous festive season and a happy, healthy and safe 2016, and by the way....

...are you looking for something different to put under the Christmas tree? How about a very attractive TFOR mug with our logo on one side and our cute froggy mascot on the other. Good value at \$10. I have a box full of 'frogs' in my shed just waiting for new homes to go to!

COMPOSTING WORKSHOP

by Bethan Lloyd

As part of a Waste Management Authority grant of almost \$8000 for the Toodyay Friends of the River (TFOR) to install a composting facility, a 'composting workshop' was held in late September on site at the Community Depot. The workshop was presented by Bruce Atkinson from Men of the Trees and City Farm with advertisements in the Toodyay Herald and at the Farmers Market on the previous weekend.

The work shop attracted 15 participants resulting in positive feedback and thanks on the day. We looked at how to construct a compost heap and to get the right ratios of green waste to dry straw, the process of turning, keeping moisture levels up. The participants were told what not to put in the compost and what to do if things go wrong.

A 'participant prize' of a compost bin was donated by the Shire of Toodyay and a bag of blood and bone was donated by Makit Hardware from Toodyay.

An additional briefing with the Shire garden staff was held after this workshop to ensure they understood the principles of compost making, as they will be bringing in the grass clippings, turning the compost and using the compost in various projects around the Shire. We also hope that compost will be available for other projects and community members in the future.

As of early December two bays has been filled and turned into the next bay and the first bay is filling again. The method used will be to turn the compost and move it down one bay at each turn. When it reaches the last bay it will be then ready to use on the gardens.

It is envisaged that composting will mainly be undertaken from late winter through to early summer when most grass clippings are available. Autumn and winter will be when the compost is used in projects around the town with a good supply when autumn planting time comes along in 2016.

Above: Participants listening to Bruce Atkinson speaking on composting.

Photo by Desraé Clarke



Left: One of the new Seed Orchard Group shade houses in position at the Community Depot.

They have been since fitted out with benches and an irrigation system.

Bethan Lloyd has been managing both the new composting facility and relocation of the shade house operations, and needs to be commended for her dedication to the Shires revegetation efforts.

Photo by Desraé Clarke

AT WHAT COST A BEAUTIFUL SWAN RIVER SWIRLING AROUND ELIZABETH QUAY? *by Sarah Dudley*

On ABC's 'Lateline' on 23th November, there was a breath-taking report on the tonnes of sediment being washed on to the Great Barrier Reef from just one eroded catchment: the Burdekin - via the Bowen River. We were asked to imagine a line of loaded dump trucks lined up, nose to tail, from Sydney to Perth and back again. This is the volume of fine clay sediment washed over the Reef in one year from this catchment alone – due to 120 years of cattle grazing and road construction, both of which fracture the fragile, thin upper crust of the soil - thus exposing the fine clay subsoil beneath. This sub-soil has then been eroded forming gullies with walls 20 metres high in places – and the pelagic coral larvae are consequently unable to gain a foothold on the reef substrate due to this film of sediment with its above-normal nutrient level. The programme went on to focus on the varying remedial actions being carried out at Crocodile Station to prevent further erosion and sediment production – at a current cost of \$30,000 per hectare.

To those of us familiar with the degradation of the Avon/Swan River (yes – they are the same river!) largely due to massive sediment flow following the "Training of the Avon River" (which occurred from 1958-72 in order to try and prevent flooding), amplified by the clearing of well-adapted riparian vegetation from the channel banks to a width of 60 metres, removal of dead trees/obstacles which impaired flow rate, ripping of the river bed (which disturbed sediment present which until then was in equilibrium), the cocktail run-off of chemicals from widespread agricultural practice and increased salinity, the degraded Burdekin situation rang a sad, familiar bell..... The Avon is consequently a highly disturbed river system and city-folks downstream puzzle as to why the Swan is as degraded as it is and wonder if Elizabeth Quay with its lapping, managed water will be as glorious as the investors hope it will be.....

For our end of year excursion in November, a band of intrepid Toodyay Friends of the River volunteers set out to explore the extent of this degradation upstream, far beyond the familiar confines of Toodyay. We also hoped to familiarise ourselves with the conservation work of other volunteer groups who also care passionately about our waterway and who spend many generous hours each year enhancing the biodiversity and water quality of the area.

Our first port of call was to a section of the Avon Ascent trail downstream of the Gwambygine Pool. 'The Avon Ascent' was designed for tourists who would like to explore the Northam, York and Beverley aspects of the Avon and the Dale River. Much money and excellent planning went into the birth of this educational enterprise in the early 1990's. Sadly, the trail, like the Avon, has run (financially) dry and now shows distinct signs of neglect and degradation.



Above: Members listening to Guy Boggs explain about the Avon Ascent downstream from Gwambygine

AT WHAT COST A BEAUTIFUL SWAN RIVER SWIRLING AROUND ELIZABETH QUAY? (cont)



Above: Gwambygine Pool Photo by Desraé Clarke

Under the generous tutelage of Dr Guy Boggs of the River Conservation Society Inc. we were updated with the current York area River Avon conservation projects and introduced to the Avon Ascent boardwalk and viewing tower overhanging the river – which, by a stroke of good fortune at this particular point, was reprieved from the destructive Training Scheme. Just a short drive upstream and we were able to access the Gwambygine Pool – an oasis of green resplendent with Casuarinas and Sea Heath. Whilst this pool is saline, it is one of the few remaining permanent pools on the Avon and as such an important refuge for water birds and Long-necked Turtles (after which the Pool takes its name).

Our third port of call was to the 30 km long Yenyenning Lakes. The Avon River originates at Lake Yealering in the Shire of Wickepin however, long before the Avon's source is reached, the Salt River joins it at Yenyenning Lakes. Despite the mirth of finding a few bits of corrugated iron tacked together and claiming to be the local water ski club, the area is environmentally chilling as the water is hyper-saline, and one couldn't sink in it if one tried.....! The warning about amoebic meningitis was appreciated - but had one wondering about the osmotic resilience of such an organism! According to our eyes, only the most courageously adapted halophyte could survive in such a hostile part of the catchment.....



Left: The Lakes with hypersaline water and dead vegetation

Photo by Desraé Clarke

A small dammed gate system at what is called Qualandary Crossing has been constructed, to raise the water level in the Lakes to facilitate skiing. It also allows some control of hyper-saline water flowing into the Avon River. In January 2000 flood waters from the Salt River overflowed the Lakes dramatically raising the Avon (it was just below the level of the West Toodyay Bridge). The vast expanse of

dead tree trunks indicated this area was once a healthy, well-vegetated eco-system, now a “dead zone” due to ever-increasing salt levels. The Dept of Water maintains a gauging station at the crossing although the Department has a limited presence in the catchment these days.

...continued Page 11

THE RESERVES OF TOODYAY

by Greg Warburton

Numbering 166 and covering some 20,000 hectares, reserve land within the Toodyay Shire makes up 13 % of the entire Shire. These reserves consist of a plethora of vesting, purposes and management orders. In addition to Shire reserves there are Department of Parks and Wildlife (DPaW), Department of Water, crown land, unallocated crown land and Main Roads reserves.

Some of the reserves are no more than re-generated gravel pits and at least one has been incorporated into farm land. They range in size and usage greatly from under one hectare to 100's of hectares, from purely conservation, as in the case of Dawn Atwell Reserve, to a reserve for the Shire works depot and waste transfer station.

The 35 Shire priority reserves were all surveyed in 2015. This has involved the collection of 100's of waypoints, photographs, (and tick bites) and a yet-to-be estimated number of kilometres walked. Information gathered includes;

In addition Shire and Landgate records, with combined aerial photography digital mapping programs, have enabled large amounts of information on Shire reserves to be gleaned. A draft management plan for the now DPaW Nature Reserves of Toodyay was published by the then Department of Fisheries and Wildlife in 1984 and has proved a valuable reference as has the 1986 Toodyay Naturalists' Club publication "The Avon Valley – A Naturalists' View". In the early 2000's Walter Kolb of the Toodyay Naturalists' Club undertook a reserve survey project but as yet the RMO has been unable to locate the data arising from that project.

Community Value of Reserves

There are varying perceptions and values put on the Shire reserves. These views range from negative with views expressed that they are a fire hazard and a haven for feral animals and weeds while others express passionate feelings of ownership, recreation, tourist attractions and conservation.

Examples of the latter are Lloyd Reserve, Millard's Pool, Dawn Atwell and Malkup Brook Reserves. Interestingly, all these reserves have had, in recent years, management improvements and facilities added by community groups. Generally, the public rarely seem to make the distinction between the different tenures and vesting and some see reserve land as simply 'bush' while others recognise the need for management and value efforts to achieve that.

Dawn Atwell Reserve is an excellent example of an impressive conservation outcome for a shire reserve as it was originally vested for 'camping'. The Toodyay Naturalists' Club recognised that the conservation value of this near pristine bushland was under threat from weed infestation, inappropriate activities, such as off-road vehicle use, and dumping of rubbish and sheep carcasses. The Club successfully engaged with the Shire Council to get the vesting changed to 'conservation'.

It also gained external funding for a biological survey and management plan to be completed by World Wildlife Fund (WWF); declared Rare Flora species *Thelymitra stellata* was identified within the reserve. Named in honour of a founding member of the Toodyay Naturalists' Club this reserve now has interpretive signage, rubbish removed, weed control, revegetation sites, a parking area and a picnic table. There are many opportunities to continue the value-adding particularly with interpretive, botanical walk tracks as the reserve has a suite of vegetation types and species with a spectacular wild flower display in spring.

A popular activity conducted in Shire reserves is dog walking but increasingly visitors and locals alike are walking for personal exercise and interest. The popularity of Toodyay Friends of the River Inc (TFOR) Bilya Walk Track with its facilities, including world class Toodyay Naturalists' Club project, the John Masters Bird Hide, is indicated by the demand for information brochures by the following e-mail quote: 'Good afternoon Greg, We are out of your brochures again so are we able to have a substantial amount. It appears every second person wants walk trails. Regards, Stephanie Customer Services Officer/Tourism'

...cont. Page 7

THE RESERVES OF TOODYAY

... continued

... From Page 6

TFOR's environmental development of Millard's Pool Reserve demonstrates outstanding value with superb access, Avon Descent viewing, kayaking/canoeing, walking and picnicking plus further riparian re-vegetation and demonstration sites planned for 2016-17.

The historic Pelham Reserve has an impressive network of sign posted walk tracks that offer scenic views along with interpretation and picnic facilities. There can be no doubt that many other Shire reserves could easily be promoted as visitor and tourism experiences as many of them are accessible with existing fire breaks serving as ideal walk tracks. Reserve 39943, accessed via Sandplain road and at the end of Acacia Close, is comparatively unknown but contains magnificent pristine bushland and wonderful scenery.

There are, however, reserves such as a 3ha crown land reserve on Parkland Drive, Julimar, that are quite incongruous as they have no conservation or recreational value.

Management Plans

Dawn Atwell, Dudley Chitty and Lloyd Reserves already have comprehensive management plans written as a result of community and Shire partnerships and cooperation. It is hoped that management plans will be compiled for all the Shire Reserves. I look forward to bringing the reader further instalments about the reserves of Toodyay as it is an extensive story.



Left: A new picnic table and seating set funded by the Shire of Toodyay, and installed in the Dawn Atwell Reserve. This is similar to the set that's installed in Lloyd Reserve and funded through Lotterywest.

BILYA WALK TRACK RE-ROUTING - FIRST VISITORS by Desraé Clarke

The September busy-bee had members working on the Bilya Track from Connor Bridge (Goomalling Road) to the area at the beginning of Lloyd Reserve. The Track was slightly re-routed to render more safe negotiation so there was work on the erection of signage in the vicinity of the bridge, clearing weeds and cutting back overhanging branches, replacing the orange marked signage and the formation of steps on several steep areas.

Imagine both surprise and delight to have the first visitors from the Australia Llama Association take their beautiful animals along the track and return. Besides the Western Australian members there were visitors from Victoria and Queensland who all thoroughly enjoyed the trek.

(See cover photograph by Desrae Clarke)

Members Gallery

Left: The Yenyening Lakes from County Peak (see story pages 4, 5 and 11).

Below: Bob Frayne HLM, at the top of Bluff Knoll (a few weeks prior to his 80th Birthday)

Congratulations Bob, on both feats!



Left: Pacific Black Duck on the Avon River in Toodyay. Photo by Wayne Clarke

Below: The Bilya Walk Track extension through the tea trees (and the soursob)

Photo by Desraé Clarke



PLENTY TIDY

by Greg Warburton

Nestled in a valley on the banks of a river
In summer we boil and in winter we shiver
A warmer welcome you won't find anywhere
As soon as you arrive you tell that we care
Known to the locals as the place of plenty
It is our slogan and on our statement of entry

We are Community minded all ready to act
Over 50 volunteer groups and that's a fact
Events and Festivals throughout the year
Celebrate our history and things we hold dear
Emergency services to protect life and limb
Volunteers give up their time on the weekend

Our Tidy Towns began with a desire
To see improvements and changes required
There was already a lot happening out there
But we needed a way all the stories to share
Tidy Towns brought it all under one umbrella
Who would have thought it would end up stellar!

From regional winner to the State Award
That flight to Tassie we couldn't wait to board
Mel commented we could be in luck
Looks like the stars are lining up
So many times called to the stage
Overwhelmed with no words left to say
So we came home flushed with pride
The joy on our faces we could not hide

So many people we needed to thank
Like Shelley and our Community Bank
Our Adopt-a-Spot took off like a rocket
Litter in the bag and money in the pocket
Twenty five groups rallied to the task
Even now people continue to ask
How can we become involved?
This litter problem has to be solved

Groups are out there with pick up tongs
With orange bags and safety vests on
And litter legends like Peter Robinson
Out there picking up litter by the ton
Perhaps litterers see us and think again
To keep their rubbish until they see a bin

Environmentally we are a nature hub
Preserved and promoted by the Naturalists' Club
Our heritage and history we don't take lightly
Archived and chronicled by the Historical Society

We are keen on sustainability
Of recycling and renewable energy
Our waste transfer station has a plan
To recycle every substance used by man
Our latest project on which we labour
To harness the hot air in the Council Chamber

Our secretary she endlessly toils
By the gallon she burns the midnight oil
Beth has made it her life's mission
To Tidy Toodyay and to write submissions

We draw much strength from our partnerships
Taking on board advice and tips
Shoulder to shoulder the council and groups
When the call goes out we jump through hoops

In the world now little sense to be found
Roadsides and bush land are dumping grounds
Our consumer desire an obsession to fulfil
But our shiny new goods end up in land fill
We see our precious wildlife suffer and die
Choking on discarded plastic and fishing line

Sending a strong message is our task
We know it's not much too much to ask
Showing respect for the place we live
Not about taking but what we can give

Without certain people this would not be
I'm talking about the team at KAB
Of Mel, Shirley, Gail and Maureen
Working hard to keep our scene clean
They keep up the fight that is the thing
Somehow operating on a shoe string

Tidy Towns brought us all together
It has changed our community forever
Now standing proudly alongside
Other winners from the western side
Of Denmark, Wyalkatchem and Collie
We are indeed in good company

In March we will be the national host
And the new winners we will toast
So come and see our place of plenty
We will polish her up like a new penny
And we will celebrate hail and hearty
Check your calendars and come to the party!!



Above: Greg reading poetry. Photo by Beth Frayne

TOODYAY - NORTHAM ROAD CLEANUP



Left: Wayne & Beth 'doing the paperwork'. The Shire's of Toodyay and Northam combined to clean up this woefully littered section of road, collecting over 413 bags of trash over 20km of road verge!

Sixty five community members gave up a few hours of their Saturday morning to undertake this mammoth task.

The two Shires, together with the Toodyay & Districts Community Bank (Bendigo Bank) sponsored the event. Special thanks to Shelley Kingston from the bank for her tireless work in organising this event.

Photo by Michelle Blackhurst

NEW BANNERS

WITH THE HELP of a **grant from Wheatbelt NRM** the Toodyay Friends of the River (Inc.) have purchased two 'pull-up' banners to promote the work we do in restoration of the Avon River and its environs. One of the four panels promotes the Seed Orchard Group.

The artwork was produced by Heather Frank of Frank Design and cleverly interweaves the theme developed for the Bilya Walk Track brochure and our business card. The 'pull-up' outdoor banners were manufactured by Clockwork Print.



BANNER 1: FRONT & BACK

BANNER 2: FRONT & BACK

AT WHAT COST A BEAUTIFUL SWAN RIVER SWIRLING AROUND ELIZABETH QUAY? (cont)

Members of the Yenyening Lakes Management Committee take an active role and DPAW is responsible for the Nature Reserve that encompasses the Lake system. The nearby County Peak made for a strenuous climb on a hot day but the view from the top afforded the excursionists an expansive view of the Yenyening Lake system and agricultural landscape of the catchment. Welcome refreshments were taken in Beverley before the convoy headed for the familiar territory of their Toodyay homes.

Right: The Crossing Sign – yet another sign of degradation and decay!

Photo by Desraé Clarke

So our excursion turned out to be a sobering experience, as we came to appreciate our ‘drop in the ocean’ contributions to 50,000km of interconnected waterways in the Avon River Basin were being countered by a degree of decay and degradation previously unimagined. Unless more volunteers such as the intrepid but ageing Toodyay Friends of the River,

valiant the River Conservation Society and more affluent investors make river quality restoration an even greater priority than at present - and are prepared to make time to create their ‘drop in the ocean’ contribution to the preservation of the remnant biodiversity, ancient history and deeply spiritual inheritance of this great river - what will future generations, be they tourists at Elizabeth Quay, descendants of those living in the Avon Valley or those battling erosion in the Burdekin, inherit?



Neville and Val Tanner

by Desraé Clarke

Neville and Val Tanner, ex-Toodyayites and enthusiastic environmentalists, emigrated to Nannup in December 2009. They were saddened by the extremely poor state of the town foreshore of the beautiful Blackwood River. The weed mass was astounding with the *Watsonia* the most prolific.

An advertisement was placed in the community paper, the Nannup Telegraph, which gathered a small group of like-minded residents to clear out the weeds and the *Watsonia* corms with the Shire workers taking away heaps of the curse. Ultimately, the area has been revegetated and is lovingly cared for by the small group.

Write-ups by Val and Neville are contributed monthly to the Telegraph of both native plants and birds using photos taken by Neville in their exquisite native garden and from around the Nannup area.

Neville also does extensive research into Nannup history and is currently the Historical Society President. With these contributions to the community, Neville has been nominated as a contender for the 2016 Nannup Citizen of the Year. I am sure the Toodyay Friends send their best wishes to him and to Val.

Newsletter of the Toodyay Fiends of the

Post Office Box 1266
Toodyay 6566
Western Australia

President: Robyn Taylor (08) 9574 2578
Secretary: Desraé Clarke (08) 6364 3609
Treasurer: Wayne Clarke (08) 6364 3609
Editor: Desraé Clarke (08) 6364 3609
Editorial to : editor@toodyayfor.org.au

Contact us at: info@toodyayfor.org.au

"Make Friends with
our Avon River"



WORKING FOR THE HEALTH OF THE AVON RIVER



© Toodyay Friends of the River (Inc) This publication is copyright. Except as permitted under the Australian Copyright Act 1968 (Commonwealth) and subsequent amendments, no part of this publication may be reproduced, stored or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or otherwise, without the specific written permission of the copyright owner. Enquiries and additional copies may be obtained by writing to The Toodyay Friends of the River (Inc.) Post Office Box 1266, Toodyay, 6566 Western Australia, or by visiting our website

Visit our website at
www.toodyayfor.org.au

The Back Page



Above: Some of the mountain of rubbish collected along a twenty kilometre stretch of the Toodyay-Northam Road in November 2015.

Dumping rubbish has enormous implications for our wildlife. It is not a great advertisement for Western Australia either, as many tourists use this route. There are \$200 on-the-spot fines for littering, including dumping household rubbish in litter bins. More significant fines apply in some cases (like breaking glass, lit cigarettes, etc)

OUR SPONSORS

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

Vernice Pty Ltd
Bendigo Bank
Lotterywest
P & S Ferguson
W & P Brennan
Shire of Toodyay
Toodyay Op Shop
Toodyay Garden Centre
Toodyay Hardware & Farm -
Makit Hardware
Wheatbelt NRM

Photo by Wayne Clarke