



Newsletter of the Friends of Kurth Kiln

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Issue 36 - June 2017

The Kiln

Caring for our Cultural Heritage and its Natural Environment



Caring for the Kiln

The Condensed 2017 Kurth Kiln Heritage Festival



The Festival was somewhat abbreviated this year. A vehement thunderstorm in the early morning, which disrupted some of the previous day's preparations, resonated with the Bureau of Meteorology warning of severe weather later in the day. After deliberations with due regard to public safety, Parks Victoria decided we could proceed with a limited program, based around the Big Shed and the Red Cross catering.



The crowd (and the Red Cross) packed into the shelter for the opening ceremony, then we were entertained by the Weathered Heads, and fed by the Red Cross.



The festival was opened with remarks by Jack Dinkgreve (Chief Ranger, Parks Victoria, Gembrook), Cardinia Mayor Brett Owen (better acquainted with the Park, following a walk with Vivien Clarke and others a few weeks earlier—see Page 4), and other friends.



Numerous festival faithfuls decided to brave the conditions and come along anyway. Fritz the blacksmith claimed he had the warmest spot around. The huskies didn't think it was cold at all! The classic British cars came along, gleaming splendidly in the mud—the owners said they were going to wash their treasures anyway. There were heritage tractors, a steam engine chugging away, the CFA put in an appearance, and a lone heritage army vehicle dropped in.





Fritz the blacksmith was a popular attraction between showers of rain. Not only did he provide an interesting spectacle, but also a warm fire, conveniently close to shelter and food. Fritz also had a display of his intriguing and attractive sculptures.

Fritz took on an apprentice for the day—under his direction Christopher (left top) learnt the painstaking and repetitive process of cutting, heating, tempering, hammering and shaping iron to create a single leaf for a tree sculpture.



The homeless iron child. Fritz designed this little man to sit on the bench, but Christopher rearranged it for a touch of pathos!



A rose by any other name... Fritz's copper roses challenged Ursula's garden blooms.



Andy of Parks Victoria had been keeping an eye on local weather predictions, and suggested shortly after lunch that we had better finish up, because there was a "big event" coming. "What" said the band "bigger than us?"

Then of course the sun came out, the Kiln glowed and the bush sparkled. Happily, we were all packed up before the next hailstorm.



A Walk with the Mayor

During the launch of the Friends of Kurth Kiln booklet "Walking for Pleasure", Cardinia Councillor Brett Owen was chatting to Vivien Clarke, who is the owner and Manager of Maryknoll Indigenous Nursery. Brett expressed an interest in seeing more of the Park.

Vivien arranged a morning walk for a group which included Brett (now Mayor of Cardinia), Anthony Hester (who was acting as the Area Chief Ranger at Parks Victoria, Gembrook at the time), Bernice Dowling (Parks Victoria Volunteer Coordinator), Vivien's husband Charlie Clarke, and Friends of Kurth Kiln Alfred and Ursula Klink, Jasper Hails, Laurence Gaffney and Meredith Bryce.

We enjoyed a leisurely stroll up Soldiers Road, through Scout Loop campground, across the Thornton Bridge and down Thornton Track along Tomahawk Creek back to the Kiln, where we shared a generous morning tea and interesting conversation.



Friends of Kurth Kiln have been organising Revegetation days with local Primary Schools for 15 years. The plants are usually provided by Vivien, who does an initial site visit, then selects a range of trees, shrubs and ground covers most appropriate to existing vegetation, soil and aspect. The progress of these plantings was admired at a number of sites along Soldiers Road and Scout Loop Track

The communal fireplaces in the campground, designed and constructed at Parks Victoria, Gembrook, have been provided in an effort to reduce the effects of excessive wood collecting on the Park.



Jasper pointed out a stand of Mountain Ash growing at an unusually low altitude, just upstream of the bridge across Tomahawk Creek.



Brett admired the interpretation boards, specially cleaned by Bev a few days earlier.



Vivien drew our attention to a number of local plant species, encouraging us to pick leaves and appreciate their distinctive scents. In the case of Mountain Pepper, she even persuaded us to taste it!

Over morning tea, we learnt that apart from their Parks Victoria roles, both Anthony and Bernice have long histories as active environmental volunteers.

Anthony is currently Vice-President of Friends of Cardinia Creek Sanctuary, who primarily work in the Beaconsfield Flora and Fauna Reserve.

Bernice spoke about a 30-year campaign to protect the endangered Hooded Plovers on the Mornington Peninsula. At last, it appears that measures to protect the nests and young chicks from trampling and disturbance have increased breeding success, and the adult population is also increasing.



Yarra Ranges Environmental Volunteers Event



Each year Yarra Ranges Council holds an event to celebrate the contribution of Environmental volunteers within the Shire. This year eight Friends of Kurth Kiln joined representatives of dozens of other groups at Karwarra Australian Native Botanic Garden and Nursery in Kalorama.



Karwarra is a lovely setting - tall, old eucalypts interplanted with native species from all over Australia, - from rainforest trees which have attained substantial heights, to carpets of ground covers, herbs, shrubs,

and creepers, many of them in flower. This was an ideal venue for the gathering, as the garden is the product of decades of the inspiration and perspiration of local volunteers.



After a pleasant interlude greeting friends and being entertained by musical group "The Willie Wagtails", attendees were welcomed by David Harper, Manager Parks and Environment for Yarra Ranges Council. Then Mayor Noel Cliff praised the contribution of volunteers in the Shire. As he said "without the environment, we're all euchred".



Curator Lindy Harris gave us a short history of Karwarra, which in 1965 was nothing more than an extensive blackberry patch behind a

council oval. Mount Dandenong Horticultural Society conceived the idea of a native garden to showcase plants from all over Australia, arranged to demonstrate how they could be used in a small home garden. They created this "hidden jewel" which is now operated by Council with support and assistance from the 'Friends of Karwarra' group.

Artist Jeminah Reidy introduced us to the ephemeral sculpture she and her partner Thomas have created in Karwarra. This installation uses natural materials from the landscape to connect art, community, place



and knowledge. All those present were invited to participate by writing thoughts and experiences of their volunteer work on a piece of bark and adding it to the work. Jeminah is also an environmental volunteer, being a board member of the Yarra Riverkeepers.

A sumptuous afternoon tea was served by 'Tast Az', a Lilydale-based catering company which provides workplace training and experience to community members living with disabilities.

Lindy also pointed out one of the treasures of the garden—a Giant Palm (or Spear) Lily, which is in the process of sending up a flower spike. It should be bearing a giant flower in a few months - a compelling reason to pay another visit to Karwarra in Spring.



Friends of Kurth Kiln member Carmel adds her contribution to the art installation (called 'Treegonometry' by its creators). In the background, artist Jeminah (in the pink hat) talks to Maureen Bond of HEWI.

Followers of this newsletter will be interested to learn that several Tall Astelia plants were growing next to the giant lily!



Parks Victoria Volunteer Recognition Day at Melbourne Zoo



This year, Parks Victoria hosted their annual Volunteer Recognition Day at Melbourne Zoo. Ten members of Friends of Kurth Kiln took advantage of the offer to enjoy a visit to the Zoo, and a sausage sizzle provided by Parks Victoria.

Before lunch, we were welcomed by Nick Jansen, Manager Community Engagement and Partnership for Parks Victoria. Then Bryan Welch, Acting Regional Director Metropolitan Parks, spoke about his experience with volunteers, and how greatly we are valued.



Parks Victoria staff and helpers cooked up a storm for the volunteers. The locals lunched according to their preferences.



A rare snap of Carmel and Jasper with animals which are not wallabies!

After lunch, we wandered around saying “It must be ... decades since I’ve been here”, and “I’m sure there used to be monkeys in that cage” or “Where are the giraffes now?”.

A lot has changed - the ‘new look’ zoo is a more congenial place for both residents and visitors. The ‘concrete and cages’ look has been replaced by wandering paths through dense vegetation, with glimpses of the animals in settings reminiscent of their natural environment. This makes it more difficult to spot the resident, but that’s just part of the experience.



Many thanks to Bernice and her team of helpers (both Parks Victoria staff and volunteers) who were busy all day greeting us, setting up, preparing and serving lunch, then packing up while we enjoyed ourselves.



The creature above is the one Ursula wanted to take home - perhaps she needs a new feather duster?

Rare Sherbrooke Amphipod found near the Kiln

The Sherbrooke Amphipod (*Austrogammarus haasei*) is a tiny, shrimp-like water creature which until recently was thought to be restricted to Sherbrooke Creek.

However, new research has identified it in several other local creeks, including Shepherd's Creek, not far from the Kiln.

'Tiny' in the case of the Sherbrooke Amphipod means 1-1.65 cm long. However, they are described as 'macroinvertebrates', where 'macro' means that they can be seen with the naked eye (as distinct from 'microinvertebrates', where you need a microscope). 'Invertebrate' indicates that they have no backbone - these have a shell instead.

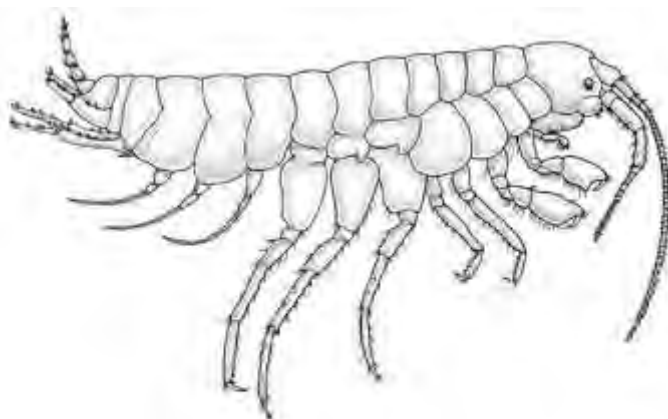
These amphipods and other aquatic macroinvertebrates are found by inspecting samples of water and leaf pack taken from small creeks (as during the activity pictured centre right, at last year's Kurth Kiln Heritage Festival). They are regarded as living indicators of water quality.

The evidence suggests that the Sherbrooke Amphipod requires high water quality. Agriculture and other human-induced disturbance appear to result in unsuitable conditions. This is supported by the fact that they were found in Shepherds Creek within the Park, but not at a site further upstream, bordered by agricultural land.

It may also explain why these little water bugs can no longer be found in the Monbulk area where they were first identified in 1901. The Sherbrooke Amphipod is listed under the Victorian Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act (FFG) as 'Threatened'.

Other conditions which may be favourable include low water flow, a high leaf-pack mass and surrounding native vegetation.

These amphipods would form part of the diet of the platypus, which feeds on a wide variety of invertebrates.



Sherbrooke Amphipod *Austrogammarus haasei*
(illustration by Savina Hopkins) (x8 approx.)

The image above has been copied from the electronic version of the Action Statement for the threatened Sherbrooke Amphipod. The x8 magnification factor is therefore not necessarily accurate; the creature is 1–1.65 cm long.



At the 2016 Festival, there was an opportunity to explore the life in a bucket of water from Tomahawk Creek. With some tuition, these keen young scientists could have identified any Sherbrooke Amphipods in the sample by their 'white-eyes'.



Image: Klaus, Flickr



This giant Sherbrooke Amphipod was featured in the Belgrave Lantern Festival a few years ago. Image from Southern Dandenongs Community Nursery Newsletter, Winter 2013.

Other News

- A new tank has been installed for the caretaker's cottage. The old one was threatening to dissolve into a heap of rust.
- A defibrillator has been purchased. We are hoping to receive basic training in its use, although we are assured that it is very simple - the machine tells you what to do.
- Ursula has continued to lead a range of walking groups in explorations of the Park
- Shiprock Falls Revegetation. We are pursuing funding to revegetate a barren, compacted area adjoining the carpark at Shiprock Falls. Because of the extent of the area, we are planning a revegetation day later this year, and another in 2018.
- We are planning to update and reprint the Friends of Kurth Kiln promotional pamphlet.
- We have again applied to Cardinia Shire Council for Funding for our 2018 Heritage Festival, scheduled on Sunday 8 April.
- Members continue to attend community and environmental events, including
 - Yarra Ranges Council 'Finding Volunteers' session
 - A talk on Invertebrates, presented by Friends of Hoddles Creek
 - Cardinia Council Volunteer Reception
 - VNPA workshop on proposed changes to the FFG Act

Friends of Kurth Kiln welcome new members:

George Russell

Eve Marso

2017 Meeting Dates

The Friends of Kurth Kiln meet at the Kiln on the second Saturday of each month at 10 am.

Dates for the rest of 2017 are:

8 July

12 August

9 September

14 October

11 November

9 December

The Kiln is located on Soldiers Road, close to its intersection with Beenak Road, in Kurth Kiln Regional Park near Gembrook, Victoria

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Postage

To