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Friends of Morwell National Park Inc.

Newsletter – August 2003

Website: <http://morwellnp.pangaeon.net>

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Welcome to the latest edition of our newsletter.

Ins and Outs

Not much in the mailbox this month, just two items:

- A letter from Friends of Tarra Bulga National Park to draw our attention to their Centenary celebrations programmed to commence in March 2004. More details will be provided closer to the actual dates.
- A note from Margaret Hillier informing us of her interest in our group and requesting some detailed information be sent to her. I have replied, sending a brochure, an Activity Calendar and a recent newsletter.

Ranger Rob Howell tells me that the new information board at Kerry Road has been installed, giving us scope for rotating our posters on a more regular basis.

How to Fall Off Hillsides And other Tree Planting Tales

Just as the 10 o'clock news began blaring out of the radio, we pulled off Junction Road into the carpark area. Our first impression was that some other group must have decided to start from here as well, because there were cars and people everywhere, but closer inspection revealed mainly familiar faces. What a great turnout for a cold, damp, winter's morning! It was good to see Dorothy looking fit and well, with Ken, Wendy, Danny, Hilmar and Kai Ming all ready to get going and into it. One unfamiliar face was soon introduced as Mark Waller, a member for several months, but attending his first activity with the group. Rangers Rob and Craig both had their vehicles there, ready to transport the masses to the worksite for the day.

Initially Rob explained that eucalypt seed collection was not an option at this time, as a 200 metre walk only located a handful of viable capsules. We may have more luck after a windstorm has knocked a few more branches out of the tall trees. So we divided ourselves into the three 4WD vehicles for the drive up the Lodge Track to the planting site, about a kilometre below the Moran's Road entrance. Rob led the way with a full crew, while I followed with Wendy as the only extra, and Craig brought up the rear with a full complement of passengers. All went well for the most part, with all the vehicles comfortably negotiating the creek crossings and getting around the hairpin at the bottom of the Lodge Track with no difficulty. The climb up the ridge had the more nervous passengers hanging on grimly, but all was well until the very last rise before reaching the planting site. Rob had made it up, but had slicked up the grassy rise a bit, so that when I followed, all of a sudden all four wheels were spinning and the car started sliding back down the track. Craig noticed the lack of control and decided a quick reversing manoeuvre was appropriate to get out of the way. Luckily, we only slid a few metres before coming to a stop. I'm not sure why, but everybody in the car had an overwhelming urge to hop out as quickly as possible and walk the 50 metres to the top. In the few seconds that we were sliding, I tried

several different things to stop us (eg. Staying on the throttle, then going for the brake, then trying for reverse) but in the end I just stalled it, and that was as good as any. Rob suggested we deflate the tyres a little to increase traction, which we should have done at the bottom of the hill, then we turned the car around and parked next to Craig.

Meanwhile, the rest of the crew had started work hauling the gear from the track up to the hillside planting zone. Hilmar had already done three trips up and back before I got there, so I grabbed a load of tree guards and away I went. Puff, pant, slip, slide, fall over, pick yourself up, pick your load up, keep going, gasp, wheeze, made it at last, have a rest, go back down, get another load, repeat the process until you have enough to work with, or in my case, until you have no breath left to do it any more. Thank the powers that be that we had some fit and able fellows, namely Hilmar, Mark and Craig, who could do the bulk of the cartage without experiencing heart and lung detonation. The rest of us watched in awe and did our best to do our best, whatever we could do. We perhaps weren't as efficient as we normally are, with the difficulties in maintaining our footing on the slope, but we managed to plant the bulk of the trees before lunch, with the remainder taking an hour or so afterwards. 240 trees went into the ground, a mixture of Blue Gum, Blackwood, Prickly Moses and Varnish Wattle.

The trip back down was relatively uneventful, a couple of slippery patches negotiated with minimum drama. The passengers were understandably toey, with Hilmar deciding to jog back to the carpark (I may be doing him a mis-service here, he might have just wanted the exercise). He almost got there before the vehicles, even if he did cut a few corners! Everyone was keen to head home for a hot shower and some R & R, so we didn't delay, said our goodbyes and called it a day.

August Activities

Next on the agenda is the AGM, to be held at the residence of Ken Harris, RMB 4318 Haverbrack Crescent, Hazelwood South via Churchill, on Sunday, August 3, at 1.30pm. All are welcome, the more the merrier and the greater the input for future planning. Please bring a plate of nibblies for afternoon tea. See the mud map below for directions.

After the AGM, our next scheduled activity is another bout of tree planting, penned in for Sunday, August 17, at 10am. Those attending should meet at the Braniff's Road entrance, ready for a car shuttle to the planting site up on the Lodge Track, depending on track and weather conditions. As usual, be prepared for any and all kinds of weather, and have sufficient food and drink to sustain you.

