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Friends of Morwell National Park Inc.

Newsletter – August 2004

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

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Welcome to the latest edition of our newsletter. It is an early edition this month to allow for the AGM, so that is where we will start.

Annual General Meeting

This year, our AGM will be held on Sunday, August 1, at the residence of Wendy Steenberg, to commence at 1.30pm. Wendy's address is 118 Manning Drive, Churchill, just around the corner from the western end of Canterbury Way. Please bring along a plate of nibbles for afternoon tea and plenty of ideas for the coming year.

August Activity

Our next activity is our final programmed tree planting session for the year. As we have completed planting on the site above the junction of the Lodge and Clematis Tracks and don't have enough of the species suitable for Peel's Block, Rob will be scouring the Park for suitably accessible sites for the trees we do have available, mainly Blue Gums. Since I don't yet know where this will be, it will be best if we stick to what the calendar says, and meet at the Kerry Road car park at 10am on Sunday, August 15. As usual, you will need to bring your own food and drinks and have suitable clothing and footwear for unknown terrain and prevailing weather conditions.

Items of Interest

In the Mailbox: This month we received;

- An invitation to attend the launch of the Tarra-Bulga National Park Centenary Booklet on July 27.
- Latrobe Valley Visionary Survey; Department of Primary industries. (Reply date was July 12).
- Parks Victoria 2004/2005 Community Grants Program -Volunteer Groups Grants. (We were successful in obtaining funding for the project "Tutsan Control-Billys Creek. The amount allocated to the project is \$3500).
- Under Control magazine; June 2004, Number 27.
- Canopy newsletter; July 2004, Number 23.

Exploring Our Living Heritage: Did everyone see the article in the Latrobe City Link newsletter, included in the LV Express newspaper on Monday, July 12? The article was primarily about the supply of water to Morwell in the early 1900's and contained substantial quotes from our own Hilmar Batza, out of his own article, 'A Brief History of Billys Creek'. Excellent work and a great advertisement for the Park and our group.

Friends of Royal Botanic Gardens, Cranbourne: Later this year we were programmed, in conjunction with the Australian Plant Society Latrobe Valley Group, to participate in a local presentation on Thursday, September 9, followed by an excursion on Sunday, September 19, to the Cranbourne Gardens. Due to the huge workload in establishing the Australian Plant Garden at the Botanic Gardens, the Friends of RBGC are unable to provide a speaker for the presentation on September 9. As a result, APS(LV) will still hold their meeting on Thursday, September 9, at 7.30pm at the Migrant Resource Centre in Buckley St, Morwell, at which Friends of Morwell NP are still more than welcome, but the topic for discussion will be plants of the Little Desert NP in western Victoria. The excursion on Sunday, September 19, will consist of a full day trip to the Royal Botanic Gardens, Cranbourne, where the Friends of RBGC have organised speakers, guided tours and a barbecue lunch for us. Please note that I will need to provide the number of persons attending (for catering purposes), so don't hesitate in letting me know if you are planning to come along. (Email- beamish@vic.australis.com.au, telephone- 51696543 or post- PO Box 112, Boolarra, 3870)

Up on the Hill Tree Planting No. 2 – July Activity Report

Rain, hail and snow down to 500 metres was the weather forecast, and from all reports, that was exactly what they got in areas further east from here. Here it was bright and clear, albeit a bit cool, with ice filling the bird bath and coating the lawns and paddocks. Most had melted by the time we hit the road, but we still cranked the heater in the car up a notch to ward off the chill. The car park at Braniff's Road was almost crowded as the day's participants jostled for the prime parking spots, trying to keep as many wheels on the bitumen as possible. Any excursion on to the muddy, grassy verges would no doubt require assistance in extraction. Rob was there with the four wheel bike, with Ken, Reg, Jane, Kai Ming and Hilmar, waiting patiently, and Wendy arriving shortly after ourselves. The main debate centred on how we were going to get ourselves up to the planting site on the Lodge Track, just above the junction with the Clematis Track. Obviously driving up was out of the question, as the tracks were far too wet and slippery. In the end, Hilmar and Jane decided to walk up the Clematis Track, Rob would ferry the gear up on the bike, and the rest of us would take my Pajero and Reg's Prado, drive up to Moran's Road, see how close we could get to the top of the hill and then walk down to the site.

The trip was uneventful until we got to the rise at the end of Moran's Road as we neared the gate. The combination of the slight grade and the clay base of the road was enough to ensure a little excitement, as the 4WD's struggled for grip. Luckily the camber of the track leaned away from the drop, while a well positioned rut stopped us from rubbing the panels on the bank. Reg reckoned the Prado didn't have as much trouble as the Pajero, taking advantage of the tracks I had firmed for him. As Ken hopped out to open the gate for us, a lyrebird scampered across the track about ten feet in front of us. Parking the cars on the highest point of the Lodge Track, a couple of Swamp Wallabies bolted across the track in front of us as we made our way down to the planting site. Rob, Hilmar and Jane were already there waiting for us, contemplating the imposing hillside that we were supposed to plant.

The first job was to get the tree guards from trackside to hillside. Hilmar, Jane, Reg, Kai Ming and myself grabbed an armload each and began the climb. Cathy and Wendy stayed down below to transfer the guards from the track to the top of the bank, to save us that first slippery scramble. Rob headed off back down the hill on his bike to get more gear. After lugging the first load up, Jane stayed to position the guards while the rest of us headed back down for another load. Reg stayed down to act as a loading station, allowing us to be loaded up with more guards than we could pick up by ourselves. Hilmar, Kai Ming and I continued acting as human conveyor belts, with Hilmar doing about three trips to our one. What it is to be half fit! Gasp, wheeze, sweat, stagger and slide. Every third or so trip up, Kai Ming and I would swap with Jane, just to catch our breath. When Ken arrived from taking a few photos of some interesting mosses, he began to distribute trees to their planting positions. Eventually we had everything in position and could start to plant.

We soon got into our normal rhythm, splitting into two groups, with somebody clearing a spot with the mattock, somebody digging the holes, somebody planting the tree and whoever was left hammering the tree guard into position. Although we were no longer travelling up and down the slope, it was still difficult to maintain footing as we worked. Apparently Rob took the most picturesque dive, sliding downhill for several metres on his belly, but Reg was the only witness (Yes, Rob, he dobbed you in!). Before anyone really noticed, it was well past time for lunch. Perhaps it was the fact that heading downhill for food meant we would have to climb back up afterward. Jane had her best fall for the day, tumbling out of her chair while trying to position it properly on a piece of uneven track. While enjoying our break, Hilmar noticed that he had misplaced his brand new, very expensive glasses, so as soon as he had finished, he was off searching. Jane headed for home as the rest of us gathered our energies for the afternoon toil.

We were so efficient that 320 trees, a mixture of Blue Gums, Blackwood and Prickly Moses, were in the ground by 2.30pm. Hilmar had still not found his specs, so we spent a bit of time searching with him, with no success. We gave up for the day, leaving Rob and Hilmar to have a final look, as we puffed our way up the hill to our cars. No dramas getting back out Moran's Road, downhill all the way.

Footnote: Hilmar and Reg returned on Monday 19/7 and found the glasses after about two hours of searching, just as they were ready to give up.