

Number 57, February 2015

Chair's annual report – AGM 2014

Well, good evening all, welcome to the first annual general meeting of the Friends of Woorabinda Bushland Reserves.

After a quarter of a century, it is nice to be able to say that.

To get where we are today has taken more than 40,000 hours of volunteer work and almost \$200,000 in grant funding – not to mention all the maintenance work done by council staff over the years.

Welcome in particular to Councillor John Kemp, who is here this evening.

As we all know, this is not , quotes. “our” park, it is a council park. The future of the Woorabinda Bushland Reserves and the fate of all our efforts over the past 25 years rests with the elected members of the Adelaide Hills Council.

The Friends and the wider community in general are fortunate that the previous council was broadly supportive of what was then Stirling Linear Park. We should be particularly grateful for the support and encouragement we received from the three councillors for the Mt Lofty ward in that council: John Kemp, Simon Jones, and Kate Hosking, and the mayor, Bill Spragg.

In particular I would like to thank John and Simon whose efforts on our behalf went well beyond the call of duty.

In the year in which we were celebrating the 25th anniversary of the public protest that saved the area from sub-division, it was great to see the name officially changed to Woorabinda Bushland Reserves.

The new name underscores the unique nature of 34 hectares of land reserved for regeneration and passive recreation. A name change had been under discussion off and on for years, but it would never have happened if Councillor John Kemp had not pushed hard for it, despite the mayor's serious misgivings.

Thanks, John. We'll be sending you the bill for the change of letterhead.

Oh, and for the fee for the new website.

All the signs are that the new council will be equally supportive. The Friends as an organisation do not take political sides, but I personally am delighted to see that Bill Spragg has been returned as mayor, and both Nathan Daniell and Kirrilee Boyd will join John Kemp in representing Mt Lofty ward. I wish them all the best of luck.

It has been an exceptional year. We put more than 1,500 hours of unpaid voluntary work into maintaining the reserves through regular working bees and coordinating work with council staff, contractors, corporate volunteers and Conservation Volunteers Australia.

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Annual Report continued

Most of the volunteer hours are down to the Sunday working bees organised by Bob James, and the Thursday group organised by Jane Schoettgen. More helpers, even occasionally, are always welcome.

AHC found funding to employ Danny Rohrlack, a professional Bushcarer, to undertake two weeks woody weed removal in Stirling Park and in Madurta, as part of bushfire fuel reduction. CVA provided and funded a team for eight days to work in Madurta also removing woody weeds to reduce fuel load. Friends members assisted and supervised, of course.

We pulled in \$1,250 in competitive grant funding.

In February we had the bushfire in the Woorabinda scrub below Keroma Drive, almost certainly started by careless young druggies, who are a continuing problem in these reserves. Since the fire we have been regularly photographing and recording the natural regeneration of the area. Talk to Janet Pedler, Phil Hicks or Bob James if you want know how that is going.

On top of all of this core business, we also organised a number of special events to mark the 25th anniversary.

We joined with Stirling Rotary to run two special categories -- Biodiversity and People in the Park -- in their annual photographic competition.

We followed that by becoming part of the Adelaide Fringe by staging an exhibition of park photographs -- including the best from the Rotary exhibition -- in the Aldgate Café. Due to run for a month, the display proved to be very popular, and was extended for a couple of weeks at the request of the café.

The photos have since been displayed here, in the Stirling Library and the Gumeracha Library. They are now in the Norton Summit community centre, so if you haven't seen them several times already, go over there and have another look.

And if you have not already seen it, have a look at the history of the park that David and Lorri Ragless have condensed into something that fits on the notice board near the Woorabinda entrance.

In August we had the Art of Nature, run over two weekends as part of the SALA Festival. About a dozen artists rugged up and braved the biting breeze to paint and draw in the open air one weekend. The resulting art works -- and some by

softer souls who cheated by working at home from photographs -- were then displayed here in the environment centre.



We had no idea how it would go -- we have never tried to do anything like this before, but it was a success by several measures. There was a reasonable flow of visitors to the exhibition; several artists sold their work; our new patron Professor Chris Daniels launched the exhibition with an inspirational speech; several bottles of happy pink fizz were consumed during the opening, and the home-made soups served over both weekends were fantastic. Chris James co-ordinated the soup cookers and produced a lot of the soup herself. Many thanks.

A big thanks to Robyn McBride, who inspired the event, was responsible for most of the organisation and the hanging of the art works, and who even undertook to pay for any registration fee due to SALA. Many thanks, Robyn.

As part of Art of Nature, Janet Pedler organised a mixed group of Young Field Naturalists and Science Club members who spent an enjoyable and instructive afternoon creating Bush Art from natural materials found in the park. Thanks, Janet.

That event ended with them all building small boats from twigs and bark and launching them on the lake.

Nobody drowned, but that was because nobody was on the boats. Those young people will probably make great scientists and artists, but shipbuilders? I'm not so sure.

Our final special event, and in many ways the most important, was a ceremonial tree planting in Hender Reserve on Sunday, September 21. The date was as near the actual anniversary as we could get – the first public protest meeting about the proposed subdivision was on September 22nd 1989.

Bob James, who was officer in charge of the tree planting, selected the perfect site: the mayor, the councillors, our new patron and the numerous Friends who attended all had to follow a long path through some of the best bush in Hender before scrambling uphill and over bits of fallen trees to arrive at an old rubbish dump.

Bob had spent countless hours – months, probably -- clearing shoulder-high broom and blackberry and other weeds from the area and

shifting most of the rubbish. To now be able to plant a dozen native saplings in that area was the perfect symbol of what can be done and what has been done over the past 25 years. Thanks, Bob, and thanks to Phil and Anne Hicks, who were not able to attend, but who supplied the seedlings.

We haven't counted the extra volunteer hours that went into all this anniversary activity.

But we did it not only to celebrate the quarter centenary, but to raise the profile of the park, and generate the kind of positive publicity that would make many more people aware of the unique asset we all have here.

May the next quarter of a century of the Woorabinda reserves be as successful as the last 25 years eventually turned out to be.

Year ends on a high note

Owl pellets and the natural history they encapsulate were the stars of this year's AGM.

Graham Medlin, Subfossils Honorary Research Associate at the SA Museum and editor of the SA Field Naturalist, gave a fascinating talk on the insights regurgitated pellets can provide, including examples of animals which have become rare or even extinct.

He also brought with him trays of carefully sorted tiny bones for his listeners to examine for themselves.

The meeting was attended by 27 Friends, and was followed by the traditional barbecue. To mark the finale of the 25th anniversary year, Anna Donaghy enlivened the event with her piano accordion, which resulted in some impromptu dancing around the table.

Woorabinda Bushland Reserves

Historical note

In 1995 the District Council of Stirling purchased the Woorabinda property from the State Government Family and Community Services Department. This purchase linked the existing Hender Reserve, Branch Road Reserve (Stirling Park) and Madurta Reserve to form a 34 ha park with the lake as centrepiece.

Given that at the time Council (led by Mayor Anita Aspinall) was suffering financial stress from the Ash Wednesday bushfire debt, this was a courageous and enlightened decision, for which present residents owe a debt of gratitude.

Following the Woorabinda purchase Council asked the existing Stirling Park Landcare Action Group Inc. (SPLAG) to form an expanded Friends group and, in partnership with Council, help manage the new extended park.

On the evening of August 8th 1995 SPLAG

convened a public meeting, chaired by David Ragless, at the Stirling RSL, to consider forming the requested friends group. Over 100 residents attended as well as the Mayor, Council CEO, six Councillors and three Council staff.

Speakers including the Mayor, Council CEO, and Council staff as well as many members of the public, spoke of the need for an active friends group to assist Council with the park management.

A keynote address was given by Rob Tanner of Bridgewater who suggested the following:

Vision for park – (this must include the whole area.)

- 1) Conservation of native vegetation and wildlife.
- 2) Best management of water resources.
- 3) Protection from incompatible use or development.

Name of Park

- 1) Greater Stirling Conservation Corridor
- 2) Stirling Wildlife Parks
- 3) Stirling Nature Corridor
- 4) Stirling Linked Parks Corridor

Management Policy

- 1) Important to keep a focus on biodiversity value and water values of area.
- 2) Only allow passive recreational activities.

Implementation

- 1) Form an active support group dedicated to preserving the area, with members having talents in bushcare, land management, political lobbying, data collection and analyses, P R, advertising, fundraising and record keeping.
- 2) Foster development of data base of park vegetation and wildlife values to help protect the area. This could involve Waterwatch, schools and Universities.
- 3) Keep detailed records of community contributions of time and money.
- 4) Obtain external grant funding.

The meeting supported motions that the keynote suggestions for the park should be adopted and that it be called Stirling Linked Parks.

The meeting also moved that a friends group be

formed and the following committee was nominated:

David Ragless - *Chair*
Milton Trott – *Deputy Chair*
Jenny Gamble – *Secretary*
John Alison - *Treasurer*
Lorri Cambell - *Publicity*
Kath Bowman – *Newsletter and Photography*
Neil Strong
John Swinburne
Ed Kenworthy
Merilyn Kuchel
Robert Hatcher
Andrew McRae
Kate Thompson - *Councillor representative*
Alan Dickens – *Council Landcare Officer and Working Bee Coordinator*

The committee structure had members nominated to represent each of the four reserves.

The first meeting of the new committee was held on August 17 1995 in the Stirling Council chamber.

The new committee's first organised working bee was held in Hender Reserve on September 3rd from 10 am until 2 pm and concentrated on rubbish removal.

The park's name was changed to Stirling Linear Park in 1996 and Woorabinda Bushland Reserves in 2014.

What is hell like?

Come and hear our choir

-- Church notice

Did you know that if you are a paid-up member of the Friends, you are welcome to attend any of the monthly meetings of the FOWBR committee – and stay on for the wine and nibbles that follow?

It's a long way from hell and no one sings. (Well, they haven't yet).

You won't be able to vote on any formal resolutions, but your suggestions and feedback will be welcome, especially after the formal business.

And if you are wondering if you would like to be more involved in helping to keep and improve the park, it is a great way to "try before you buy".

Meetings are held at the Woorabinda Environment Centre, overlooking the lake, at

7.30pm every third Tuesday. The building has to be vacated by 10pm. Parking is available at the back, up the lane beside the buildings.

This year's committee:

Kathy Bowman	8370 9177
Merilyn Browne	8339 6839
Brian Donaghy	8339 2033
Marilyn Forward	8339 3162
Philip Hicks	8339 3156
Bob James	8339 1903
Janet Pedler	
David Ragless	8339 1038
Lorri Ragless	8339 1038

The committee can always be contacted at woorabinda@internode.on.net

Fire in Woorabinda Reserve

Now that it is around a year since the fire in Woorabinda Reserve, I would like to pass on a few observations about vegetation regrowth in the fire area.

To recap: the fire started in an area of bush less than 200 m south of Woorabinda Lake early in the morning of Tuesday, 4 February 2014. Evidence strongly indicates that its source was the embers of a campfire at a location where a campsite had been found a few months earlier. Thankfully, the fire was reported by the driver of a passing train and local CFS units were able to access the fire area using recently defined and mapped fire tracks and bring it under control within the park.

When I unwittingly approached the scene of the fire soon after 6 am while on my morning walk, the fire had been largely contained and the risk to

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adjoining properties had been reduced. Incredibly, I had walked the length of the Stirling Park Track from the north and had almost reached the lake before even being aware of the fire. At this point, I suddenly saw crowning (the term for fire blazing from hollows) stringybarks ahead of me. While skirting around and keeping my distance from the burnt area, I encountered numerous local CFS units and volunteers and saw enough to understand the serious nature of the fire and the amazing job that the CFS had already done

to contain it. How fortunate we are to be able to consider revegetation regrowth in the burnt area rather than the far more serious consequences which could have arisen, given the strong and gusty winds that morning.

The area burnt is estimated to be around three hectares and the northern section of the Linwood Trail (which runs from Keroma Drive towards Woorabinda Lake) passes roughly through the middle of it. The intensity of the burn appeared to vary considerably across the burnt area as indicated by the varying extent of burnt and unburnt leaves in the upper levels of the remaining stringybarks.

The quality of the bush within the burnt area, as mapped just over two years ago for the Stirling Linear Park Vegetation Management Plan, graded from very high in the south-western half through

to a lower rating along the northern margins where a number of invasive weed species were identified. The south-western sector was part of an area of bush rated in a consultant's survey a few years ago as being the highest within any Adelaide Hills Council Reserve.

Ongoing bushcare and weed control work involving removal of plants such as *Acacia longifolia* (Sydney Coastal Wattle), gorse

15 January 2015



and blackberries had contributed to the relatively open understory in the area burnt.

A few days after the fire, I set up a number of photopoints along the Linwood Trail with the aim of providing a baseline for photographing vegetation regrowth. Since then, I have taken periodic photos of vegetation regrowth.

On 16 March, about six weeks after the fire, significant but patchy regrowth was already apparent, although there was not much around the photopoints. At this stage, the most widespread emerging new plants included *Acacia myrtifolia* (Myrtle Wattle, a small relatively short lived wattle), bracken and various grass species. Regrowth of *Eucalyptus cosmophylla* (Cup Gum) and at the bases of *Daviesia leptophylla* (Slender-leaved Bitter-pea) and *Hakea* species was also evident.

On 9 April the fire area was looking greener, mainly due to the emergence of grasses across much of the area and prolific bracken along the northern margins. Regrowth from the bases of *Eucalyptus* and *Leptospermum* species was widespread and one *Exocarpus cupressiformis* (Native Cherry) along the trail was regrowing from the stems.

In October the area became a sea of colour. *Burchardia umbellata* (Milkmaid) were massed throughout with large clumps of *Diuris orientis* (Wallflower Donkey Orchid) not usually seen in such numbers. Other orchids seen were *Arachnorchis tentaculata* (King Spider) and *Glossodia major* (Purple Cockatoo). On the western side of the track was a clump of *Prasophyllum elatum* (Tall Leek Orchid) which flower predominantly after fire. A few beautiful *Thelymitra grandiflora* (Great Sun Orchid) were also on display along with many

spikes of the *Stylidium graminifolium* (Grass Triggerplant). Scattered throughout were *Arthropodium strictum* (Vanilla-lily) and *Goodenia blackiana* (Native Primrose). Also prolific were *Helichrysum scorpioides* (Button Everlasting).

Most of the burnt area now has a reasonably dense vegetation cover but there are still a few areas with little regrowth. Over time the diversity of regrowth species has gradually become more apparent, more so in the area mapped as being the highest quality bush. In some areas, new species are still emerging: *Eucalyptus* sp. (possibly *E.obliqua* - Messmate Stringybark) and *Acacia pycnantha* (Golden Wattle) which has only appeared recently. In other areas, species that were among the first to emerge such as *A.myrtifolia* and bracken are still the dominant species. In many places the ground is being covered with *Kennedia prostrata* (Running Postman). Recent rainfall of around 65 mm in mid-January should help emerging vegetation to survive through the remainder of summer.

Emerging weeds are becoming more evident in the burnt area, mostly in the areas previously mapped as having lower quality vegetation. The main weed species identified to date are *Billardiera heterophylla* (Sollya - an invasive creeper), *A. longifolia*, *A decurrans* (Early Black Wattle), blackberry, broom and gorse. These weeds will need careful monitoring, treatment and subsequent follow-up, while ensuring that new growth is not trampled on and that the soil is not disturbed.

Philip Hicks



Assistance with web site

The Friends are looking for a member or two who would be willing to help Kath Bowman put together and maintain a new web site for the Friends. The existing web site needs to be replaced, although much of the existing content can be reused. If you think you would like to be involved, call Kath on 045 929 1777.

SUNDAY WORKING BEES 2015

Date	Location	Meeting Place
February 15	Woorabinda	Woorabinda Drive
March 15	Woorabinda	Woorabinda Drive
April 19	Woorabinda	Woorabinda Drive
May 17	Madurta	Madurta Avenue
June 21	Stirling Park	Branch Road
July 19	Woorabinda	Woorabinda Drive
August 16	Woorabinda	Woorabinda Drive
September 20	Woorabinda	Woorabinda Drive
October 18	Madurta	Madurta Avenue
November 15	Woorabinda	Woorabinda Drive
December 20	Stirling Park	Branch Road

Time: 9 am – 11 am

THURSDAY WORKING BEES

Date	Location	Meeting Place
Second Thursday in each month	Woorabinda	Woorabinda Drive

Time: 9 am – 11 am

You are invited to join our working bees at any time. Wear sensible protective clothing, boots and gloves. The Park has a variety of terrain, and can be wet underfoot. Gloves are provided for people using herbicide (swabbing the stumps of woody weeds).

To receive reminder notices for the working bees, or to find out more about them, send an email to boobjames@chariot.net.au. If you are interested in the Thursday working bees, call Jane Schoettgen on 8339 7245.

Disclaimer: Contributors' views and opinions expressed in this newsletter are not necessarily the views of the editor, the committee or the general membership of the Friends of Woorabinda Bushland Reserves Inc.

Contributors to this issue include Brian Donaghy, David Ragless, Lorri Ragless, Philip Hicks, Anne Hicks, Kath Bowman and Bob James.

Affiliations

The Friends of Woorabinda Bushland Reserves Inc. is a member of Friends of Parks Inc. We are also a registered Landcare Group and a member of both Greening Australia and Trees for Life.



Friends of Woorabinda Bushland Reserves Membership application/renewal

I/we would like to join/renew membership of the Friends of Woorabinda Bushland Reserves Inc.
(Strike out words not applicable)

Membership fee for both individuals and family: 1 year, \$10.00, 5 years, \$40.00

\$.....membership fee is enclosed.

\$.....donation is included. (Donations of \$2.00 or more are tax-deductible. A separate receipt will be issued.)

Name.....

Address.....

.....**Phone**.....

Email address for sending Newsletter.....

Please return to: Kathy Bowman, Friends of Woorabinda Bushland Reserves Inc., 2 Bogaduck Road, Aldgate 5154