

Editorial : Walking in the Rain

During a recent downpour I decided to take a walk through the reserve. Summer rain can be a pleasant experience with none of the misery which attends being both cold and wet. Besides, a good jacket keeps me dry, at least above the knees. The air smells clean and the sound of running water combined with birdsong refreshes the spirit.

Damper Creek comes alive in the rain. It doesn't take much and the inflow drains start to run, each creating a small waterfall, courtesy of the excellent landscaping which was part of the creek's rehabilitation. In certain circumstances it is even possible to catch each of these inlets as they start to flow, each with its own little wave front moving down the creek. In a short time those wave fronts build to a veritable torrent with water filling the ponds and tumbling over the rocks.

In pre settlement days it was never like this. Rain soaked into the landscape and moved slowly into the creek. The cascades which make the creek spectacular in the wet were a rarity. With a more gentle release of water, plants had a much better chance to colonise the stream bed and erosion was negligible (at least on a human time scale). With development came hard surfaces; roofs, roads, footpaths, driveways. Rain quickly moved as directed by gravity, into the gullies which had slumbered for millenia. Soil was washed away, trees collapsed and the authorities planned to barrel drain the creek to eliminate the eroded eyesore. Many suburban creeks were barrel drained, in some cases a pleasant linear park obscures the fact that a large subterranean pipe carries the water further downstream at a fearsome pace, only

to cause flooding when it encounters another flooded watercourse further downstream.

Thankfully, the majority of Damper Creek escaped this fate. (Damper Creek runs underground from Huntingdale road until it runs into Gardiner's Creek.) The hard rock which now lines the creek bed resists erosion far better than the soft siltstone and clay which is native to the area. The rocks create habitat for small water creatures and refuges to ensure they are not washed away during rain. The cascades aerate the water, improving its habitat value and the ponds allow the growth of small wetlands which also serve to contain material washed off the roads.

Damper Creek, as we see it today, is a man made solution to a man made problem. However beautiful that solution is, the high flow rates will continue to cause erosion and some sections of the rock work have moved and will need to be repaired. On a more positive note, the landscaping at the Stephensons road end of the reserve will go a long way to reducing erosion on the paths while the pebble lined watercourse enhances the ambience of this part of the reserve.

Guest Speaker Programme 2012

Our first guest speaker for 2012 is MarJo Anjelico of the Waverley Historical Society who will address the group at the May 23rd meeting. The title of MarJo's talk will be "*Early Days Around Mount Waverley*"

MarJo moved to Mount Waverley to attend the newly opened Monash University. She never moved out. She joined the Waverley Historical Society in 1998 hoping to find out why the houses in her street faced away from the main road, an unusual arrangement for a 1950's

development. She quickly became hooked on historical research and is now a research officer for the society. MarJo teaches and tutors at a coaching college and runs training sessions for parents who wish to help their children educationally.

Extract from The first April Files of the Waverley Historical Society.

Did you know that Damper Creek was once the centre of rice cultivation in the greater Melbourne district. In the late 1880s the section of Damper Creek between Bayview Rd (now known as Huntingdale Rd) and Gardiners Creek was marshy wetlands. High Street Rd was originally surveyed as passing through the area, however because Damper Creek actually flowed along the route, the roadway deviated slightly south of its surveyed alignment. Joshua Jordan was a major landowner in this part of Mulgrave Shire (and also a Shire Councillor). His property *Summerhill* occupied the area north of High Street Rd at what is now the Ashwood High School and the associated playing fields. The land was unsuitable for common grain crops or vegetables known in England and was too wet for cattle or sheep grazing. Indeed, for much of the year the ground was underwater. From his wide overseas travels Joshua Jordan noted that rice was grown in similar conditions in China and Japan. With the assistance of a Dr Hoxe he obtained some rice plants from the newly founded Burnley Horticultural Gardens and planted a trial crop. This proved to be most successful and so the following year an extensive planting programme was undertaken.

The second year's crop was outstanding and the yields were acclaimed by agricultural experts with farmers from far and wide visiting the property hoping to learn the secrets of this wonder crop. There were plans to try for two crops per year but during the following summer months the area dried out precluding a second crop. A third crop of some 20 acres was planted the following year but when due for harvest Joshua Jordan was unable to find sufficient people willing to work in the muddy wet conditions and the project was abandoned.

Myrtle Rust; An Environmental Threat

The destructive plant disease Myrtle Rust, has been found for the first time in Victoria at a retail nursery on the Mornington Peninsula. The disease poses a threat to the nursery industry, forestry, public parks and gardens and native forests. It was first detected in NSW in early 2010 and is now widespread throughout NSW and Queensland. It affects all members of the Myrtaceae family which includes Eucalypts and many other Australian plants as well as many imported plants.

The disease can be recognised by the formation of brown to grey spots on the leaves often with a red to purple haloes. Up to 14 days after infection the spots produce masses of distinctive yellow/orange spores. If you think you see an infection contact the exotic pest hotline on 1800 084 881 or email a photo to plant.protection@dpi.vic.gov.au/myrtlerust Do not touch the plant or collect samples.

April meeting falls on Anzac day

Members are asked to consider whether the April meeting will be held on the nominated date, re scheduled or cancelled. If you cannot

come to the March meeting you can relay your opinion through any member of the committee.

Important dates to remember:

	March	Notes
Meeting:	Wed 28th - 7:30 pm	Alvie Hall
Working Bee	Sun April 1st 10-00am to 12-30pm	Alice St Bridge
	April	
Meeting:	Wed 25th- 7:30 pm (to be decided)	Alvie Hall
W-Bee	Sun April 29th 10-00am to 12-30 pm	To be advised

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Damper Creek Bushland Reserve: part of the Yarra Catchment.

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FRIENDS OF DAMPER CREEK RESERVE INC.

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DAMPER CREEK DOINGS

March 2012

