

## **Guest Speaker for March Tim Fletcher**

Tim entertained a packed Alvie hall with his presentation on urban stormwater management and the "Talking Tanks" proposal. Tim is working on a proposal jointly funded by South East Water and the Universities of Melbourne and Monash.

The "Talking Tanks allow for controlled release of water from tanks to maintain water flow and create a buffer for mitigating stormwater flows.

The need for this is illustrated by the infiltration rates before and after urban development. Before development water could take as long as 7 years to enter a stream as it percolated through soil and rock. After urban development water typically enters a stream as soon as 5 minutes after it falls.

The team has been working on the Little Stringybark Creek in Mount Evelyn. Through a combination of controlled domestic water tanks, infiltration systems (raingardens) and stormwater storage, a significant improvement in stream health has been demonstrated.

Funding has been applied for through the "Living Victoria Fund" which would allow a pilot programme to be conducted in the Damper Creek catchment.

Further information can be found through [www.iota.net.au](http://www.iota.net.au) and information on Little Stringybark Creek can be found on [www.urbanstreams.unimelb.edu.au](http://www.urbanstreams.unimelb.edu.au)

## **Guest Speaker for April**

Our guest speaker this month is Sue Nichols cares for injured and abandoned wildlife.

Sue has asked for anyone who can supply washed towels and pillowcases to bring them along so this is a great chance to clean out your linen cupboard as well as listen to an engaging speaker.

Guest speaker for July will be Andrew McKernan on the topic of habitat creation. Andrew creates nesting spaces by carving cavities into dead trees.

## **Playground Opening**

The new playground in Park road is now open and the council put on a great community event. Our Friends group used it as an opportunity to promote our group and hand out our revised brochure. We had many pleasant discussions with the locals and council staff as well as recruiting several new members.

Thanks very much to Jenny Scholes (new to Park Road) who helped with looking after the "table" of information.

## **Working Bees**

The March working bee was once again held at the rear of Yatama court. An enthusiastic group of FODCR members was assisted by other locals to remove a huge pile of weeds and rubbish.

Graham Jenkin, a member whose property abuts the area, extended a huge vote of thanks to those who have assisted in turning a weed infested area of Damper Creek into one of our showpieces.

## **Did you know**

that in the late 1890s on Damper Creek east tributary there was once a large paddock of the Prickly Pear cacti (or *Opuntia paddle cactus*)?

The genus is named for the Ancient Greek city of Opus where, according to Theophrastus, an edible plant grew which could be propagated by rooting its leaves.

The first introduction of Prickly Pear into Australia is due to Governor Phillip and the earliest colonists in 1788. Brought to Sydney from Brazil, it remained in Sydney, where it was rediscovered in a farmer's garden in 1839. The farmer's wife gave cuttings to neighbours and friends, who planted it not only in their gardens but also as hedgerows in their paddocks. Mexican natives have used the food for thousands of years, to make colonche, an alcoholic drink. At least two commercially important distilled spirits are produced from *Opuntia* fruit. In Malta, the pink herbal bajtra liqueur is made from *Opuntia*.

Local landowners Lirpa and Loof learnt of the medicinal and alcoholic properties of the Prickly Pear from recent overseas immigrants. They decided that the paddocks of Prickly Pear nearby could be harvested as stock for a distillery. They constructed a crude crush press and set up a still in a rough building located in the valley on the NE corner of the junction of High Street Rd and Stephenson's Rd. Initial trials of the distillery proved encouraging and they then attempted to get some local men to pick more cactus. Given the prickly nature of the plant and the need to select the ripest mature leaves the workers soon lost their enthusiasm for the

task and Lirpa and Loof were left with only their family members to assist. About this time it was found that in some areas the Prickly Pear was getting out of control and it was then deemed to be an invasive weed.

Notwithstanding their enjoyment of the Opuntia liquor, neighbouring landowners forced Lirpa and Loof to abandon their distillery and remove all traces of the Prickly Pear from the paddocks.

References.

*The first April Files of the Waverley Historical Society.*

### Riversdale Golf Club Boundary

Melbourne Water has inspected the boundary fence which has been the cause of flooding in the past. Works will be conducted to improve the fence design and streambed to allow unrestricted water flow and remove restricting vegetation. The work will begin within the next 6 weeks and before winter sets in.

### New Website address

[www.friendsofdampercreek.org.au](http://www.friendsofdampercreek.org.au)

[Please update your "favourites" as the old website address will cease to operate in the near future.](#)

Don't forget to check us out on Facebook. Your photo submissions, both recent and archival, will be welcomed.

### Important dates to remember:

|             | March              | Notes      |
|-------------|--------------------|------------|
| Meeting:    | Wed 23rd - 7:30 pm | Alvie Hall |
| Working Bee | Sun April 27th     | TBA        |

10-00 am to 12-30pm

### May

Meeting: Wed 28th- 7:30 pm Alvie Hall

W-Bee Sun June 1st TBA

10-00am to 12-30 pm

### ADDRESSES & TELEPHONE NUMBERS

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Please email material for the newsletter to [dougscott3@bigpond.com](mailto:dougscott3@bigpond.com).

Printed by courtesy of the City of Monash as a community service.

Responsibility for editorial content is solely that of the editor.

The Friends of Damper Creek Reserve Inc is supported by the City of Monash and Melbourne Water.

Damper Creek Reserve Inc is a member of 'Landcare' and 'Land for Wildlife' Volunteer Nature Conservation.

***Damper Creek Bushland Reserve:  
part of the Yarra Catchment.***

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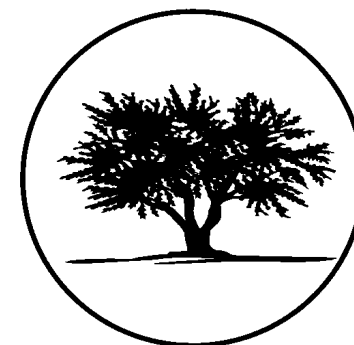
***The Newsletter of  
FRIENDS OF  
DAMPER CREEK RESERVE INC.***

Reg No. A0029531G

<http://www.friendsofdampercreek.org.au>

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# DAMPER CREEK DOINGS



April 2014