

President's report 2006
Friends of Black Hill and Morialta

This meeting is a significant one, in the year we commemorate 20 years of working in the Parks with the department of Environment and Heritage, the community, schools and service groups.

When Peter Westwood wrote to the local paper in 1986 to invite like minded people to contribute to the maintenance of Morialta Conservation Park, who would have thought that 20 years later, a thriving volunteer organization would have contributed tens of thousands of volunteer hours to three Conservation Parks. Today we have 76 members plus 14 Young Friends, a total of 90. But we are more than the sum of our members, and it would be remiss of us not to acknowledge the contribution that other groups have made to the care and maintenance of the Parks:

- Rostrevor and Athelstone Lions,
- The Athelstone Kiwanis Club;
- Morialta, Campbelltown and Athelstone Rotary Club
- Pembroke School,
- Rostrevor College
- Althelstone, Cambelltown and East Marden, Newton, Paradise, Thorndon Park Primary Schools;
- Morialta Residents Association;
- Pembroke Scouts, and more recently Stradbroke Scouts.

And of course, always there to provide support, advice and guidance, the many rangers and staff we have worked with over the years from the Department of Environment and Heritage.

Thanks also to the Cambelltown Primary School for continuing to assist the group by providing photocopying facilities at a very reasonable cost.

I am privileged to represent to group in its 20th year, and would like to take a moment to reflect on some significant events over the last 20 years.

Dipping into our archives reveals a wealth of achievements, and the list way too long to detail all tonight, so here is a sample. My apologies if something close to your heart is not mentioned, and hope very much you will take the opportunity to talk and reminisce about it over supper later.

- 28 August 1986 was the inaugural meeting for the group, our newsletter commences.
- 1987 - Planting commences in the First Project site at Olive Hill
- 9th November 1989 the group was incorporated.
- The Montacute Valley ARPA project commenced
- 1990 Agreement is made between the department and the Friends group to use the Addison Ave building in return for upkeep of the Wildflower Garden; The Ghost Tree Gully project commences.
- 1991-Black Hill and Morialta Track Map published; Ambers Gully Collaborative Schools Project commences. Horsnell Gully project commences 25 May 1991.
- 1993 - An open day was held in the Wildflower Garden to support the celebration of Campbelltown Council's 125 years; 2037 plants sited in seven project areas in the parks.

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- 1995 - The Collaborative Schools project wins the South Australian Landcare Award.
- 1996 - 4th Creek Walking Trail Project Commences
- 1997 - The Collaborative school Landcare project was a State finalist for the South Australian Landcare Awards; Ann Taylor awarded a service certificate for her contributions to the group at the Annual Friends of Parks Forum; 1,310 plants sited; over 1,600 volunteer hours contributed
- 1998-Collaborative Schools Project is awarded the Water Care award for Catchment Care and restoration;
- The Friends of Black Hill and Morialta Inc chosen as the Friends Group of the year 1999; The Collaborative Schools Landcare Project is awarded the KESAB Metropolitan Environment Award 1999; 1,970 plants sited; Membership 67, plus 13 Young Friends, a total of 80.
- 2000 - A new track map for Horsnell Gully produced. Black Hill and Morialta track maps revised and reprinted; Sited 1,470 plants, and contributed \$50,000 worth of work in volunteer hours; General membership of 77 plus 10 Young Friends, a total of 87.
- 2001 - The group lobbies for the removal of Horses from the Coffin Bay Conservation Park; 1,500 plants sited, and \$50,000 worth of Volunteer hours contributed; General membership 79 plus 12 Young Friends, a total of 91 members.
- 2002 - The group continues to lobby for the removal of Horses from the Coffin Bay Conservation Park; The Group of the Decade award is given to the Friend of Black Hill and Morialta Inc; The Friends group raised the issue of chemical use, outside the prescribed applications and rates listed on the labels. – Such practice is widespread in environmental weed management, but actually unlawful; The Friends of Black Hill and Morialta Inc. website is launched; 2,450 plants sited, with over \$50,000 worth of volunteer hours contributed.
- 2003 - The horses are finally removed from the Coffin Bay Conservation Park; The Collaborative Schools project was awarded the Nature Foundation S.A.s Highly Commended Biodiversity Award; 2,450 plants were sited by volunteers.
- 2004 - We support a proposal for the rehabilitation of the Ambers Gully Quarry, and are continuing to lobby for this work to be done.
- 2005 - Joy and Bruce Stewart are recognized for the work done in Horsnell Gully with the Friends Landcare award; Our website gets it own domain name: fobhm.org (up to 11:20am today 28 November 2006, we have had 14,842 hits on our website); Sited 2051 plants, and contributed \$44,260 in volunteer hours.
- 2006 - Finally success with the lawful use of particular herbicides for environmental projects, with environmental weeds listed, rates of application and application methods identified and approved, not just for our group, but for all groups and individuals working on protecting and restoring our native habitat; Interpretive sign at Ambers Gully ruin completed and ready for installation; The number of local native plants raised and planted in the Wildflower garden project site alone reached nearly 9,000 this year.

My report on our contribution to the parks this year is very conservative as there are a number of work reports outstanding. But we have contributed more than \$30,000 in volunteer labour and sited more than 2134 plants.

Also in 2006 we celebrated 20 years of membership for:

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- Warren Bonython
- Bunty Bonython
- Graham Churchett
- Raelene Churchett
- Penny Mc Gee
- Bruce Smith
- Joy Stewart
- Lee Stewart
- Bruce Stewart
- Ann Taylor
- Athelstone Kiwanis

And exceeding 10 year membership:

- Lola Both
- Richard Brinkman
- Andrew Chalklen
- Russell Dahms
- John Fleming
- Ross Dawson
- Audrey Dawson
- Philip Graetz
- Bruce Graham
- Kate Graham
- Garry Howat
- Trent Hughes
- Lions Club of Athelstone
- Carmel McNamara
- Phil McNamara
- Don Packer
- Maureen Redfern
- Richard Rowland
- Derek Saunders
- Helen Stephens
- Kingsley Stephens
- Margaret Thorn
- Beryl Turner

We have also welcomed 8 new members this year.

You will have heard me speak of the many awards that the Collaborative Schools Project has attracted over its life. Not to mention the impact it has had on many young people. Graham, I am sure would be very happy to speak to you about this after the meeting. Despite these achievements, funding for this project is an ongoing challenge. A source of uncertainty and great frustration for all those involved. Our special thanks to Mitre 10 and Richard Fassbender for his generous contributions to this project.

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Also in 2005 and 2006, we continue to find plants of rated conservation significance growing in locations they were not previously identified, and found plants not previously listed as growing in Morialta Conservation Park. These are really exiting finds. With Joy and Bruce attending a grass identification workshop this year, we might be in a position to identify even more special plants.

We have made many Friends over the last 20 years, and along the way, some have been lost to us. Their memory however remains with us, and we think of them too, as we remember their contributions to the last 20 years.

Looking forward into the next 20 years, well, who can truly tell us what the future holds? We know that climate change is bearing down upon the natural world, and the pockets of our environmental heritage left are under greater pressure than ever. We have the unstoppable *Phytophthora* in the Parks, the ever present weed species, especially Olives. And just when we thought Bridal Creeper had a chance of being put under control, a new form that is resistant to the Bridal Creeper rust.

Yet somehow I do have hope, more now than for a long time, and the reason for that, is going through our archives that span just 20 years, I have read the accounts, and seen the photographic evidence of the positive changes this one group has made to these three parks. It is truly remarkable. The challenge is to keep the focus, maintain and recruit new members, and promote the importance of our natural heritage, the very stuff that makes the planet function, to the rest of the community.

Before I close, I would like to thank the strong committee that provides a sound foundation for the group.

While it would be impossible to list every achievement made, I can make mention of a few special contributions our members and committee make:

Graham Churchett, not only contributing 15 years as president from 1990 to 2005, but building an excellent reputation for our group in the community, and providing the basis of many solid relationships with schools and service clubs.

Graham, while serving as Deputy President, continues to compile, edit, illustrate and indeed write most of the articles in our newsletter. He coordinates the Young Friends group; runs the Collaborative Schools Landcare Project, and is project coordinator for the Main Valley, Ambers Gully and Olive Hill Project sites.

Thank you also to Raelene Churchett, for your support of Graham, involvement in Young Friends, working bees, and the committee, and keeping our membership records accurate and up to date.

Joy and Bruce Stewart, along with Caroline and Dennis Slade for the remarkable changes you have brought about to the entrance of the Horsnell Gully Conservation Park.

Lola Both for your tireless work in the Wildflower Garden, the project reports of this project site are a testament to your incredible dedication to this project.

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Colin Sparrow, not only for serving in the most demanding position of group Secretary, but also for your support of the Wildflower Garden Project.

Special thanks also need to go to our project coordinators. We have 9 project sites in the Parks, and these projects are effectively coordinated by Lola Both, Graham Churchett, Maureen Redfern, Paul Farmer, Ann Taylor, Don Packer, Bruce and Joy Stewart, Caroline and Dennis Slade, Phillip Graetz, Brian Forbes and Cath Deane.

And to Russell Dahms, for your support of me, during my first year as President of the Group, and serving the group as Treasurer for the first time this year.

The Committee and I hope you can stay with us to enjoy a chat over a cup of coffee and supper.

I leave you tonight, with wishes from myself and on behalf of the committee for a wonderful Christmas, and a joyful and productive New Year.

For those traveling, have a safe journey and return.

While we are enjoying supper, we will display extracts from our DVD commemorating 20 years.