

THE FRIENDS OF MANGEMANGEROA SOCIETY INC

Winter/Spring Newsletter 2007



Chairman's Ramblings

Restoration: Our restoration planting programme for 2007 has been completed. With approximately 5000 plants having been planted mostly along the fence line, within the Rotary Loop and in an area near the pumping station. Groups which have assisted with planting in the reserve this year include, Howick College, Somerville Intermediate, Bucklands Beach Intermediate, Star of the Sea Tui Brownies, LDS South Auckland Church Group, Rotary, Forest and Bird and of course members of the Friends. Our only disappointment was with the poor preparation of nominated planting areas. This is being discussed with Manukau Parks.

We are now well underway with our seed raising for next years plants and a valuable working morning was held with a number of members involved in the pricking out of manuka seedlings. The students at Pakuranga College under Warren Kitchen's direction have been undertaking this tedious job as well. Our seed raising areas at Jim Duckworth's and Somerville Intermediate School are now almost at saturation point!

We were fortunate to receive a \$500 grant from both Howick and Somerville Rotary and this has been used to replace the shabby shade cloth on the planting unit at Somerville Intermediate as well as purchase further root trainer baskets.



Rotary Youth Leadership Group about to attack the head high bracken which needed pulling out before the planting could begin!

All in all voluntary contributions (those only associated with work at the reserve) included raising 4600 eco-sourced seed at \$3.00 per plant and labour to set out 5000 plants (conservatively estimated at 630 hours at \$12.00 per hour) totalling \$21,360.00 in 2007.

We are now looking at further planting areas and, with the knowledge now gained, hope to get these areas well prepared so that weeds such as kykuku are well sprayed (and eliminated) before we start planting out.

The next area to be fenced and planted is in the far corner of the flat below Archie's Lookout. Seen in the distance in the photo to the right.

One issue which has been of concern was the rogue cattle beast that jumped the fence and enjoyed a good feed shortly after the planting on the steep slope (see photograph). This is extremely frustrating. In our recent meeting with Council we have asked if this fence, running along the bottom of this steep bank can be upgraded to one which is cattle-proof.



Arrow indicating where fence is to go to divide off the 2008 planting area

Once this "new" area is planted, which we envisage will take two years then it is time to extend the fence from the bush line to provide a 10 metre buffer and to fence and revegetate the gullies.

Chapel/Eco-centre/Interpretative Centre

The Turbott proposal in 1994 sited a chapel within the reserve behind Archie's Lookout. This was part of the agreement for Sale and Purchase of the Reserve. It entitled the Somerville Estate to "buy-back" 4,000 square metres of the land for the erection of a church/chapel in accordance with the wishes of Mr Archie Somerville. Differences have arisen between the Council and the Trustees of the Estate as to the exercise of the "buy-back" provision. By way of compromise a proposal has been put forward which would involve the erection of a chapel and/or eco-centre/Interpretation Centre on the reserve. Although it is now well

beyond the extension period, negotiations between Council and the Somerville Estate have continued in good faith over the intervening years with a view to reaching the solution of mutual benefit to both parties, and one that supersedes the "buy-back" option.



Nikau berries
photographed mid
winter in the reserve.

The Friends and other submitters to the Mangemangeroa Valley Reserves Management Plan hearing committee felt strongly that any future 'structures' arising from discussions with the Somerville Trust would be best sited in the area of the barn. A letter to Sir Barry Curtis supporting this was written and signed by Alan La Roche (Howick Historian), John Spiller (Chairman, Howick Community Board) and myself as Chairman of the Friends Society.

This letter included the following reasons

- ? Outstanding views over the Mangemangeroa reserve and Valley maintained and view shafts protected
- ? Road access at the barn would be cost effective for both the public and emergency services
- ? Focus point for entry and associated car parking
- ? Restoration planting feasible around Archie's Lookout
- ? Remove/Limit the need to provide vehicular access into reserve
- ? Concentrate services/buildings in one area
- ? Vandalism reduction as buildings in visible location
- ? Excellent access for short walk (Rotary Loop) or longer bush walk experiences
- ? Eco/Interpretative centre easily accessible by both public and tourists and could be for the wider area with interpretation of ecological aspects of coast, beach and bush experiences.

The pending discussions present a fresh opportunity to implement current conservation concepts expressed in 2007 terms rather than in the 1994 terms of the Turbott proposal. Sir Barry Curtis has been and is very supportive of the restoration and revegetation program which we run. In this newsletter I would like to record our thanks to Sir Barry for the support he has given the Friends of Mangemangeroa in the development of the Reserve. He has always shown a keen interest in our work and on a number of occasions has attended functions in his official capacity as Mayor.

Allan Riley
Chairman



Sir Barry and Chairman of the Friends Committee, Allan Riley opening the "Rotary Loop"

MOREPORK (*Ninox novaeseelandiae novaeseelandiae*)

By Bruce Keeley

The Morepork, along with its close Australian relative the Southern Boobook, is one of many birds bearing an onomatopoeic name – that is, a name which sounds like the bird itself.

The familiar ‘*more-pork*’ call on a still night epitomizes the experience of camping in the bush. Fortunately though, our native owl is not confined to forest, and has adapted well to urban areas, so long as there are sufficient mature trees to provide its habitat requirements. The Mangemangeroa valley is an ideal environment.

Besides the most familiar call, the Morepork has an interesting repertoire, including a repeated ‘*por – por – por –por*’, a single loud shriek, and an upwardly inflected ‘*kreeeee*’, the latter said to be associated with hunting.

Calling generally commences near dusk, and tends to be more evident within the first few hours of darkness, and prior to dawn.

The presence of a Morepork in its day-time roost, or as it emerges towards dusk, is often indicated by the noisy scolding of smaller birds such as blackbirds and chaffinches as they mob the ‘undesirable intruder’. This reaction is not unreasonable, since small birds such as silvereyes may be included in the Morepork’s diet. More often, however, it takes large insects like moths, cicadas, wetas and huhu beetles, as well as mice.

Breeding occurs through spring and early summer, and the nest is typically in a hollow tree or within a clump of epiphytes. Incubation of the eggs is exclusively the responsibility of the female. The fledglings have a distinctive cicada-like begging call which can draw the attention of a keen observer to these delightful fluffy wide-eyed youngsters hanging out for their next feed.



CLEMATIS (*Clematis paniculata*)

By Sally Barclay

A wonderful display of wax white flowers from the male clematis below Archies Lookout this year was photographed last month.

Clematis is usually seen in the top of the New Zealand bush enjoying full sun. The roots though prefer a shaded site. The dark shiny leaves, shaped like a three fingered hand can clearly be seen in the accompanying photograph. Interestingly the number of petals on the flowers range from five to eight. These are the showy male flowers, the female plant not being nearly so “flamboyant”

The clematis produces touch sensitive tendrils which coil around any object with which they make contact. Once anchored the next tendril is sent out “looking” for a likely anchor point until the plant reaches



considerable height supported by the host tree. In the case of this plant the host is a ponga fern already supporting a white rata vine over which the clematis has climbed.



Planting in the Mangemangeroa

On Monday the 20th of August 2007 the Bucklands Beach Intermediate "Trees for Survival" group travelled by bus to Mangemangeroa Reserve to plant some trees!

When we got there we were all excited and ready for a hike. Our gumboots sloshed around in the mud and our pants got filthy dirty. We carried our plants with us. It was really hard because they kept pricking us.

We started planting the Manuka trees. After we planted lots of Manuka trees we had to plant some other trees. They were really big and had loads of roots. We had to plant them far away from the fence so the cattle beasts would not eat them.

After all the green sticks were filled up we planted next to them on the grass instead. After we had finished planting all the trees it was time for us to go back to school. We walked back through the slushy mud and cow poo and walked up a steep hill which was good exercise for us.

At the end of the day we were all exhausted. Over all we planted approximately five hundred trees, which was over twenty-five each. Everyone had heaps of fun and it was a great experience for us all.

Written by Emily Fitzgerald & Chelsea Olsen
Photography by Josh Humphrey



Rotary Group Study Exchange (GSE) team from Switzerland

The Rotary Club of Howick recently hosted a Rotary Group Study Exchange (GSE) team from Switzerland. These teams led by a Rotarian go on a four to six week tour of another country to learn how their vocations are practised there and also to participate in the life and culture of that particular country. As an example of how much New Zealand Rotary clubs are involved in conservation the GSE team walked the centre and Rotary Loop tracks of the Mangemangeroa Reserve. They were accompanied by Sally Barclay (Friends of Mangemangeroa) and two Rotarians from the Howick Club and expressed considerable interest in the conservation work being done.

The Mangemangeroa Valley

Alan La Roche MBE has lived all his life in Howick except for a few years for university study. A retired dental surgeon he wrote the book "A History of Howick, Pakuranga, Whitford, Bucklands and Eastern Beaches, and Surrounding Districts" in 1991. With a group he developed The Howick Historical Village. He was former Chairman of the Regional Committee NZ Historic Places Trust, former Chairman of Howick Community Board and former deputy chairman of the Auckland Conservation Board. He is a member of the NZ Archaeological Association, Forest and Bird Society, Whitford Estuary Conservation Society and other conservation groups. Alan is chairman of the Manukau City Tomorrow Manukau Heritage and Environmental Committee and an enthusiastic supporter of the Friends of Mangemangeroa.

A walk through the Reserve with Alan emphasized that recent local history is easily dismissed hence the following records some of the stories Alan told concerning events and activities which have occurred in the reserve and adjacent land in the recent past.

Alan recalls the bush from his younger days as a marvelous playground for the local lads. Building huts, catching cockabullies (freshwater crayfish) and kokapu (native fish) in the local creeks and canoeing on the estuary in home made "dugouts" were all enjoyed by local lads.. As well eeling was a favoured pastime, the young eels hiding out in the mud pools were caught (rarely) using a gaff or with the bare hands.

Hut building continued into the teenage years for some, with weekends spent camped in shelters laboriously built over weeks from scrounged iron and other cartable building materials. The reserve at one time provided solace for a lonely soul; the remains of the tent material used for his home still visible toward the Whitford end.



The remains of the "ladder" to the kahikatea lookout

In an earlier time a hermit lived in a rather derelict boat near the board walk. The remains of the hatch of his home can still be seen at low tide.

Today the bush continues to be a haven for the young with a wonderful "hideout" present in one of the larger kahikatea. The climb up needing the use of a rope and "ladder"

Today's active life stylers now use the bush as a storage place for their kayaks with a track down to the waters edge. The kayak is well camouflaged within the bush.

There are remnants of sheds built probably 60 or more years ago by residents of Pohutukawa Avenue who kept dinghies here for fishing. In the 1930's it was common to catch a sugar sack of flounder in one haul. Today there are strict laws concerning the number and size of fish, net size and number of shellfish taken. Remains of an early pumping station are visible on the estuary shore. The iron shed with the large entry pipe still stands in a derelict condition not far from the Pohutakawa Entrance



Iron sheets lying abandoned near an old kowhai are believed to be some of the sheets carried down for one of the shelters.



"Kayak" lying "hidden" in the bush



The old pumping station still standing but covered with litter on the estuary shoreline



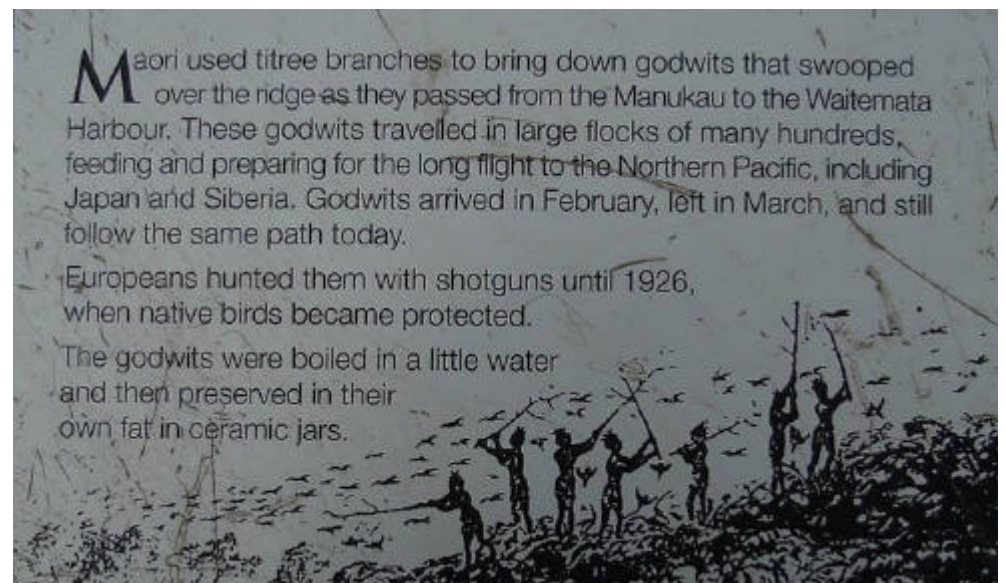
The sunny point to which an early pioneer woman is reputed to have taken her washing to hang on the shrubs to dry



The early homes below Pohutakawa Ave were not the warmest of abodes in winter with little if any sun reaching here for three months of the year. Alan recalls hearing the story of an early pioneer woman who did her washing outside in the copper, loaded up the dingy and rowed the lot over to the point on the opposite side of the estuary. The tale doesn't include whether she remained in the warmth with her clean washing or rowed home again and returned later in the afternoon to collect her load.

Beside the cattle troughs near the car park and barn in Somerville Road is the site of William McAuley's sod cottage built in 1854. The walls of the cottage were visible in the 1970's with a well nearby. Arum lilies and snow drops were part of the garden. Shards of pottery may still be seen near the water troughs. William McAuley [1802-1877] was a British Army pensioner, ex Royal Artillery who after 21 years in the army enrolled in the Royal New Zealand Fencible Corps and came to Howick on the "Minerva" arriving in November 1847. He bought 29 acres here and in 1850 had eight head of cattle.

The wooden trigonometric station, is now of historical importance with few still in existence. This trig marks the highest point around and it was from here that the Maori could see down the estuary, and across the rolling country to where Auckland city is today. It was an ideal vantage point. It was also on the flight path of the godwits (birds) as they moved from the Manukau Harbour to the Waitemata Harbour to feed.



Maori have lived in the valley for centuries especially Ngai Tai iwi and Ngati Paoa iwi. The last family of Maori living in the traditional manner left in 1870 squeezed off their former tribal land by European farmers who bought the farmland from Government.

There are several areas of shell midden, layers of tuanga [cockles or *Chione Stutchburis*], pipi [*Amphiderma australe*] and mudsnail [*Amphioda crenata*], in the banks along the Mangemangeroa walkway. These provide important evidence of Maori occupation. Note the size and types of shell in the middens as these are often different to those found in the estuary today. In the large slip below the Somerville barn which occurred during a very wet winter in 1999 extensive layers of shell midden were exposed. These layers were about 250mm thick indicating Maori occupation many years ago. Due to continued ground movement especially in winter months most of these middens have been covered over and are no longer visible.

Of particular interest is the hangi site (see photo on right) which could be many centuries old. It is beside the track, not far from the large Morton Bay Fig tree and seat at the Sandspit end of the walkway. It is a classical shape for a domestic hangi, about 0.5m deep and 0.5m square with a thick layer of charcoal at the base with pieces of red coloured burned hangi stones. The remains seen in this hangi indicate that the abundant shellfish were of a larger size than seen in this now. The cockles and pipi shells in and around the hangi are larger than those generally seen today in the estuary. The tuatua are no longer seen in this area. (See photo below right) Recent rains and visitors have damaged this structure.



Alan La Roche pointing out the layer of charcoal showing the outline of the fire pit

Hangi pits were filled with short lengths of dry wood and river stones were placed on top. A fire was lit to heat the stones until they were red hot. The embers raked away and the stones spread evenly over the floor of the pit. Green leaves, fern fronds and other vegetation was placed over the hot stones. Kumara, then other vegetables fish [not gutted], birds and shellfish were followed by more vegetation. A little water was sprinkled on to create steam. Flax mats were then placed on top and covered with a layer of earth. In about two hours the food was steam cooked, the hangi opened, and the meal begun. Mangemange was often twisted into a rope and as it only burned very slowly was used to carry fire from one site to another.

A visit by Sally Burgess, a consultant archeologist to ARC, was initiated by ARC to ensure that the restoration work which is being undertaken by the FOM in conjunction with Manukau Parks is not putting in jeopardy sites of archeological importance.

Because the hangi site is considered significant and thus of historic importance it is not possible to fence it off easily. The Historic Places Trust do not allow posts to be inserted near an historic site in case of damage. To try and protect the site it has been suggested that a large log be placed over the hangi and thus prevent people from treading on it and causing further damage. It is hoped that the Council will be able to arrange this.

Trudy's Corner

- ? Outdoor Construction have been through the bush tracks and cleaned out the drains and replaced nova coil drains with new pipes. We hope this will improve the state of the track over the following months
- ? Metal laid on the approach track to the Rotary Loop has improved this access considerably.
- ? PD's have been involved with planting of the low growing vegetation in the gully beside the approach to the Rotary Loop and it is hoped that this source of labour can be further utilised to help with planting in areas around the reserve.
- ? A further supply of bamboo stakes have been sourced and delivered on site to mark the location of the plants planted this season to indicate to the weed control people the location of these plants.
- ? The plants damaged by the cattle getting into the plantings around Archie's Lookout are to be replaced and the level of the fence surrounding this area is to be investigated.
- ? The contract for the grazing of the reserve is up for renewal and the conditions are to be checked regarding type of stock to be grazed, fence maintenance and weed control (in particular blackberry).

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main.html](http://www.aerolink.co.nz/mangemangeroa/main.html)

Link to other conservation groups in
the Auckland Region:
www.manawa.org.nz

See also www.arc.govt.nz for
upcoming events in the Auckland
region