



December 1999

Welcome to this the second edition of the Styx Newsletter.

Feedback regarding the first edition published in July was positive and encouraging. It is anticipated that a newsletter will be published approximately three times a year and your input is always welcome. Contact details are on the back page. Happy reading.

Guardians Of The Styx

To look at the Styx River you would think nothing dramatic, scarcely anything human happened there.

Upstream willows and other trees have been planted to hide its nakedness. A few parks, farms and houses fringe the banks. Inevitably, and soon, the full force of Christchurch's urban sprawl will overwhelm what land is left beside 'The Styx'.

A community group, the "Guardians of the Styx", has been formed with support initially coming from the Christchurch City Council. The aims of the group are to protect, conserve, and restore the river and its environs, and to turn the tide on the decline of its natural bio-diversity.

Following several meetings progress has been made on establishing a committee, constitution, member's list, and short, medium and long term goals. Some of these goals include water quality monitoring, lobbying for land purchase, input into a strategic management plan, restoring and replanting. The most important goal is to create a permanent natural buffer in order for all life to enjoy the 'Spirit of Place'.

The formation of this group has been enthusiastically received by a wide range of people. It will provide a forum for shared enjoyment, education, and friendship. It is anticipated that in 2000 some of the short and medium term goals will be initiated.

A warm invitation is extended to any interested person to attend our meetings or to become involved. Contact details are included in the schedule of meeting dates on the back page.

In the new year monthly meetings will be held with interesting guest speakers addressing the group on a wide range of topics. A newsletter and website are also planned. Special field days will focus on the river and our enjoyment of its special features. See you there.

Regards

John Knox, Chairperson
Guardians of the Styx



Bottle Lake

Many people may not realise that Bottle Lake is not located in Forest Park. Rather it is situated in private property belonging to the Windsor Golf Club, off Waitikiri Drive. Although the lake has a rich history, it has largely been overlooked by both City and Regional Councils in terms of its current status and management.

In 1856 Bottle Lake was shown on what were termed "Black Maps" as being a large expanse of water equivalent in size to Horseshoe Lake. It contained a plentiful supply of wildlife, particularly eels, and was an important source of mahinga kai for Maori.

With the arrival of the first European settlers, the area was so heavily grazed that the sand hills became denuded and began to migrate inland towards Marshland Road. Plantings were used to stabilise the sand dunes and continued around the edge of the lake also. In the early 1900's ongoing drainage for agriculture and reclamation occurred and willows began to encroach into parts of the lake bed.

During World War II army engineers cut a deep tank trap, (also known as a long drain), across the Lake. In subsequent years the Lake has been lowered through pumping, in parts filled in, and weeds have taken hold. Now the area is a thicket of swampy woodland. The site is dominated by grey willow and alder, with a substantial understorey of blackberry, elderberry, cabbage trees and both native and exotic ferns and mosses.

Bottle Lake painted by John Gibb (1871). This painting is held in the McDougall Art Gallery.



Despite its chequered history Bottle Lake now covering approximately 9.3ha, has some remaining natural values. These are highlighted in the recently released Preliminary Wildlife Habitat Assessment. Although water quality is poor, a variety of birds continue to use the area and the short-fin eel can be found throughout. Botanist Kate McCombs states "That in terms of current botanical status and potential, this site provides a valuable part of the overall complex of reserves and wildlife habitat of the eastern city."

Recently a number of people have formed a Bottle Lake Working Party. Public meetings are held in the Shirley Service Centre and any one interested is invited to attend. Currently the Working Party are seeking funding from the City and Regional Councils in order that a comprehensive Concept and Management Plan may be developed for the Lake. Such a plan is long overdue. Although there are many complex issues to be addressed it is hoped that the Plan will be completed by the end of 2000.

For more information regarding meeting dates/times, general enquires, or to obtain a copy of the Preliminary Wildlife Habitat Assessment Report, please contact either Rachel Barker or Bob Hopkins at the Water Services Unit, telephone 371 1748. Copies of the Report cost \$10.00. Loan copies are also held at the Papanui and Shirley Libraries.



Styx History Group

A "Styx River History Group" has recently been formed. An off shoot of the Guardians of the Styx (Incorporated), which is itself at the stage of being formalised. The "History" Group is chaired by Dennis Hills, who is also Deputy Chairperson of the Shirley-Papanui Community Board. That Board has made available \$3,000 towards the cost of research for one or more books. It is hoped that late in 2000, to coincide with the 150th Anniversary of Canterbury, a history/information book about the Styx River, its tributaries and adjacent areas, will be published

Another publication will comprise reminiscences of long-term residents, and histories of families associated with the Styx over the past 150 years.

The research will almost certainly turn up a lot of information that will not be able to be included in either of the two main books. If this is the case, several smaller booklets or information leaflets will probably result. The City Council's Water Services Unit is highly supportive of the project being undertaken.

Did you know that the Styx River was originally referred to as "The Sticks", but there are at least three versions of the background as to why it was so called?

If anyone has information they may wish to contribute please feel free to contact me - contact details are shown on the back page.

Regards
Dennis Hills
Chairperson, Styx History Group



Community Planting Day

Another successful planting day was held in late August at Janet Stewart Reserve. About 100 enthusiasts turned up with spades for the 4th year in a row. Scouts, local residents and community group members were so keen to start that quite a few plants were in the ground before the advertised starting time.

The official welcome was followed by an enjoyable hour that resulted in 2,000 natives being planted. A tasty BBQ organised by the Parks Rangers from Spencer Park, completed the afternoon.

Janet Stewart Reserve, with its beautiful little waterfall and a wooden jetty, is proving to be popular with visitors. Currently it is possible to see a range of native birds feeding and nesting in the reserve.

The Styx Community Planting Day has now become an annual event and will be held each year on the last Sunday in August.

Contributed by
Mike Peters

Bus Tours Of The Styx

Who could have anticipated that bus tours of the Styx River would prove to be so popular?

It was in response to requests from the community that these tours commenced on 15 August 1999. On that occasion 46 people enjoyed an afternoon tracing the river from its source in Bishopdale to the place where it enters the sea at Brooklands Lagoon.

Stops along the way allowed for explanation and information sharing. Although the

weather was cool, hot drinks at Janet Stewart Reserve and the warmth of friendship more than compensated.

Reading through the completed evaluation sheets was an encouragement to those involved in the organisation of the trip. It was obvious that everyone enjoyed themselves and had come to appreciate more fully the values of the Styx River and its environs.

Since that initial tour Burnside Probus members and a school party of 40 students from Wharenui School have both also enjoyed a similar experience.

Additionally a waiting list of those interested in future tours has been established. If you City Council's Water Services Unit or Papanui, Shirley and Fendalton Service Centres and cost \$25.00. Library copies are held at the Canterbury Public, Papanui, Fendalton and Shirley libraries.

Styx River Boat Trip

The popularity of the bus tours has meant that much time has had to be devoted to organising them. The possibility of a boat trip along the river however, has not been forgotten.

Currently ways of achieving this are being explored and further details will be available early in the new year.

Smacks Creek Publication

A restoration and protection plan has recently been completed for Smacks Creek. One of Christchurch's more pristine creeks it starts near Johns Road, flows through private property and Willowbank, before joining the Styx River above Styx Mill Reserve.

The plan has been developed in partnership with residents adjacent to the creek. It gives background information, outlines a vision for the waterway, and provides examples of stream protection and restoration.

Copies of "Restoring and Protecting Smacks Creek" are available from the Christchurch City Council's Water Services Unit or Papanui, Shirley and Fendalton Service Centres and cost \$25.00. Library copies are held at the Canterbury Public, Papanui, Fendalton and Shirley libraries.



Proof that even the young enjoy a Styx bus tour - nice smile Alexander!

Naming A Street Competition

Thank you to all those who responded to the opportunity of suggesting names for streets and suburbs to be developed in the Belfast area.

The developer has advised that over 600 names have been received. No decisions have yet been made as all proposals are currently being considered.

The process of street naming is an interesting one. Firstly the developers liaise with the Environments Services of the Christchurch City Council over any proposed name. The Council has the job of checking each name to ensure that it is not already in use, neither will it be similar in pronunciation or in written form to an existing name.

The Council also has a policy on the selection of road names. This policy includes assisting our map makers by ensuring that the length of name is in proportion to the length of the street, and that personal names will only be used if they relate to people who are long standing owners, or prominent Cantabrians or New Zealanders.

The final decision rests with the Shirley Papanui Community Board who has the delegated power to approve street names within its wards.

Those who have submitted a street or suburb name that is accepted will be notified.

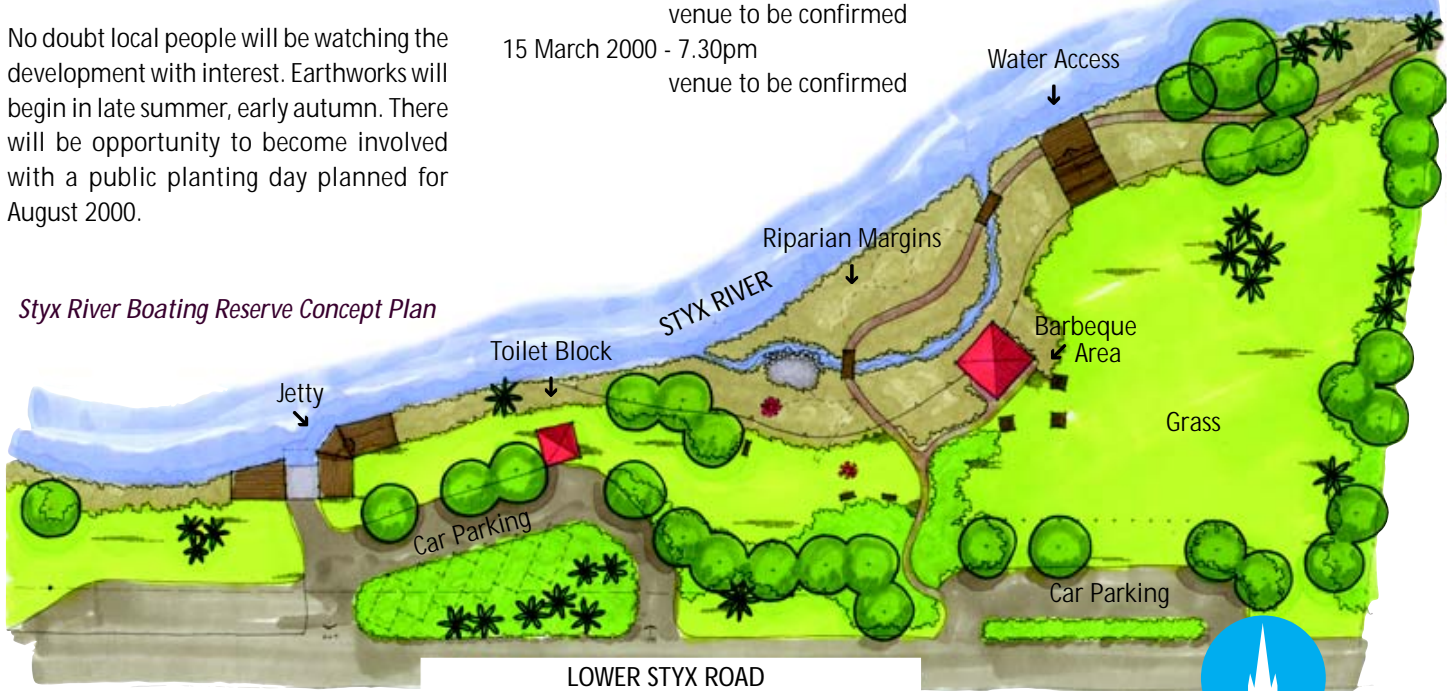
Styx Boating Reserve

The Styx River Boating Reserve, situated adjacent to the river near Earlham Road, Brooklands currently contains a concrete boat ramp, some seating and a small area for car parking. The Christchurch City Council, who have acquired the adjacent paddock, are looking to extend the reserve and improve the amenities in this area. The Concept Plan shown has received local community support, and includes the following features:

- regrading the river bank to create a floodplain and a shallow permanent waterway
- establishing a childrens' play area focusing on the natural environment
- erecting a BBQ shelter and picnic tables
- creating pathways
- constructing decking at the existing boatramp (and downstream) for improved access to the water
- improving parking areas for cars and boat trailers

No doubt local people will be watching the development with interest. Earthworks will begin in late summer, early autumn. There will be opportunity to become involved with a public planting day planned for August 2000.

Styx River Boating Reserve Concept Plan



Meeting Dates

Guardians of the Styx General Meetings

Meet 3rd Thursday of each month
No meetings in December or January
Meeting 17 February 2000 - 7.30pm
Papanui Service Centre

Guardians of the Styx Committee Meetings

Meet 2nd Thursday of each month
No meeting scheduled for December
1999 or January 2000
Meeting 10 February 2000 - 7.30pm
Papanui Service Centre

Contacts for Guardians of the Styx
Chairperson John Knox Tel 379 9904
Secretary Zita Oldham Tel 329 8824

Styx History Group

Meet 3rd Wednesday of each month
19 January 2000 - 7.30pm
Camellia Room,
Christchurch City Council
16 February 2000 - 7.30pm
venue to be confirmed
15 March 2000 - 7.30pm
venue to be confirmed

19 April 2000 - 7.30pm
venue to be confirmed

Contact for Styx History Group
Chairperson Dennis Hills Tel 352 554

Editorial Contact

This newsletter is compiled, printed and distributed as a service to the community by the Water Services Unit of The Christchurch City Council. If you have any suggestions, comments or enquires regarding subjects mentioned in this newsletter please contact:

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Forthcoming Publication

REPORT ON COMMUNITY CONSULTATION
STYX RIVER CATCHMENT

This report has been drafted and is currently being checked. It is anticipated that it will be available in January 2000.