



June 2000

Welcome to this, the third edition of the Styx Newsletter.

Many exciting things are taking place within the area. This edition seeks to highlight some of them. The Styx Newsletter is published two or three times a year. It is distributed as widely as possible through libraries, Service Centres and other such outlets. If you would like to receive a copy personally it can be mailed directly to you. Contact The Editor and this can easily be arranged. (Contact details are on the back page.)

Enjoy your reading!

"Something old and something new"

The Two Styx Rivers

Have you ever had a great idea only to find that someone, somewhere, has already thought of it first?

This appears to be true even when it comes to the naming of rivers.

The Styx River on the northern outskirts of Christchurch is one of the three major spring-fed rivers of Christchurch. It is 23.8 kilometres long and runs from Nunweek Park in Bishopdale, through both residential and rural industrial areas before emptying into the coastal Brooklands Lagoon.

Recently however, it was discovered that there is also a Styx River in Baldwin County, Alabama, USA. This river stretches south from the city of Bay Minette (population

8,200) to where it joins the Perdido River, which forms a natural boundary between the states of Alabama and Florida. Although more than twice the length of its Christchurch name sake it too flows through a mainly rural environment.

Mr Warwick McFadden, a member of the Guardians of the Styx Group, recently made contact with the local community river watch group in Baldwin County and from this initiative the concept of developing a Sister River relationship was born.

Members of the Guardians of the Styx, Community Boards, the Water Services Unit and The Christchurch City Council were quick to grasp the opportunities such a relationship would offer. These include exchange of information, education and

management practices, and the sharing of environmental and consultation ideas, not to mention the development of international friendships.

As Mr McFadden was due to leave for a private visit to the United States, approval was given for him to meet with officials of Baldwin County and to work with them towards the formalising of a "Sister River" relationship.

Many cities, including Christchurch, have developed Sister City links with other cities around the world.

It may be true that "there is nothing new under the sun", as it seems likely that there may be even more Styx Rivers in the world.

However, the establishment of a formal "sister river relationship" between The Styx Rivers in Baldwin Country and Christchurch will form a unique bond; a bond that will mark a first for any New Zealand city.



Mr McFadden presented an enlarged framed copy of this view of the Styx River, Christchurch, to officials of Baldwin County, USA.

The talent of people within the Guardians and History Groups is considerable. One example is this recent painting by Dennis Hills.



The Styx River from Kainga Road Bridge

Guardians of the Styx

Below the waterline of the Styx was revealed in depth recently when our guest speaker, Mark Taylor of NIWA, provided us with a fascinating presentation about freshwater fish life in the river.

Of the 26 freshwater fish species found in New Zealand the Styx River has 10 plus freshwater crayfish. Some of the more unusual species include Lamprey, Upland Bullies, and Cucumber fish. During his presentation Mark asked if it would be possible for the Guardians of the Styx, along with community members, to assist NIWA with water quality monitoring using special testing kits.

From the USA we had a visit from a board member of the Farmington River Conservation Group, Connecticut. The Farrington River is close in size to the Styx and has experienced similar environmental concerns. Mr Ken Appell was given an overview of progress to date and, from his considerable experience with the Board

was able to offer some good ideas and advice. He said it was paramount to establish a Strategic Management Plan for the River as soon as possible.

From across the Tasman came Dr Peter Mitchell who is one of NSW's leading catchment and waterways ecologists. Peter has provided the Guardians with some of Australia's best catchment management plans, public awareness brochures, newsletters, and of particular importance, the 1999 Strategic Management Plan for Cooks Creek in Botany Bay. This information is invaluable as a guideline to help the Guards with restoring and protection the Styx. It also helps to build strong partnership links with other conservation groups, councils and communities both in New Zealand and overseas.

Two field trips were arranged to the Styx River. One at the lower reaches to look at possible flooding effects on private and public land.

The other was to Warwick McFadden's property by the railway line. Here we were shown several large springs that flow into the Styx River, plus areas of land adjacent to the Styx River to be retained by council when subdivision occurs.

Presentations to both the Fendalton/Waimairi and Papanui/Shirley Community Boards regarding the Guardians of the Styx have been made. The response was extremely positive and the concept of the Guardians having a base in an office council owned building was offered. Serious consideration is also being given to obtaining funding needed to ensure that the Guardians have the resources to enable them be proactive in pursuing their visions, goals and strategies for the long-term sustainable future of the Styx River and its environs.

John Knox
Chairperson

A million did you say?

For those who read the local newspapers it will be no surprise to learn that the Christchurch City Council is proposing to purchase land around the Styx River. What has been surprising is the extent of dollar figures quoted and the wide variety of locations touted.

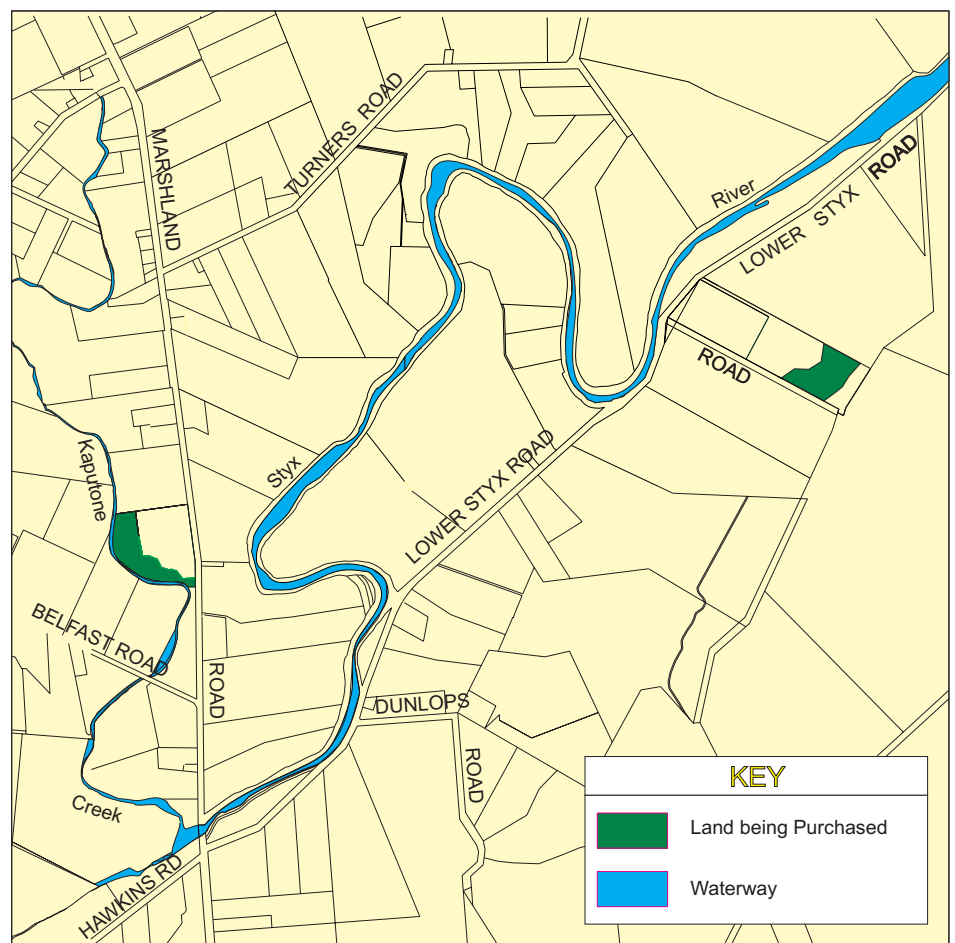
Perhaps this is not surprising as any purchase of land by the Council has to go through a lengthy process and while this is happening rumours are bound to abound.

As can be seen from the attached map, currently the Council is proposing to purchase parts of properties at 206 Lower Styx Road, and 587 Marshlands Road.

Before Council can purchase land any proposal must pass through and be approved by three separate bodies.

Firstly it is presented to the Community Board who is responsible for the area in which the land is situated. If the proposal to purchase is approved it will then proceed to the Parks & Recreation Committee made up of Christchurch City Councillors. If the proposal makes it through these two committees, it will then be referred to a full meeting of the Christchurch City Council where it will either be accepted or declined.

This is a lengthy process and one that gives time for plenty of speculation to occur.



Locality of possible land purchases

COMMUNITY WORKSHOP Brooklands Community Hall
Anfield Street, Brooklands - Monday July 3, 2000, 7.30 – 10.00pm
Developing a plan for the future of the Styx River bank at Brooklands

If you think this looks bad... you should have smelt it!

Early one summer morning I received a phone call. Would I go out to Janet Stewart Reserve and photograph some rubbish someone had dumped there?

Sounded like quite an easy assignment to me.

Marshlands Road at 7am is a place of peaceful rural tranquility. Perhaps it was this that lured me into a mood of serenity, for I was certainly unprepared for the sight that greeted me on arrival at the Reserve.

The rays of the early morning sun lit up the biggest pile of rubbish I had seen outside of an official rubbish tip.

It was obvious that somebody had backed a truck or trailer up to the fence in the car park, then dumped their rubbish straight on to the garden and plantings. Dumped their rubbish directly on the sedges, scrubs and grasses that members of the community had so recently planted and tended in this spot.

My first reaction was one of anger. How dare someone desecrate such a beautiful site.

How dare someone so easily destroyed what others had worked so hard to build up and achieve.

Grabbing my camera I jumped out of the car and it hit me – the SMELL. This was no assignment for someone who has a problem even cleaning up after the cat has been sick.

The air was thick. Turning away I gasp for a breath of something fresher.

When my stomach finally stopped trying to rendezvous with my mouth, I tentatively advanced, camera in hand. I took photos as quickly as I could and retreated.

My curiosity wanted to discover exactly what was making the awful smell. It was about this time



All contributions NOT welcome

it occurred to me there could be something dead buried in that heap. The coward in me ran.

Making it to the car I headed back towards the city – the smell followed. I hadn't even reached Marshlands Road again before realising that somehow the smell had attached itself to my shoes. Wiping this off on the moist morning grass I resumed my journey. All the way back this phrase pounded through my mind, "we want community involvement but this is ridiculous."

I was to learn later in the day that a Park Ranger had scored the job of cleaning up the mess. My heart went out to him. I hope he enjoyed his lunch.

What message would I have for the person who dumped their trash in such a beautiful spot?

I'd like to say, "Please come to our next community planting day in August - we'd welcome your involvement. Some of us have come to love this place - we'd love for you to learn to appreciate it too."

Stephanie K Humphries

The Styx river bank at Brooklands – How should it look?

The Christchurch City Council has a policy of stopping unnecessary unformed legal roads. These are commonly referred to as "paper roads". Such a "road" occurs when land originally set aside for road access has not been developed for this purpose. The "road" therefore, exists only on paper.

In Christchurch most of the major waterways have unformed legal roads alongside them. Where these have been "stopped" the land has been developed as a walkway and planted to enhance the environment and make it more enjoyable for users. The walkway on the bank of the Heathcote River upstream from the Ferrymead Bridge is an example.

A number of years ago the Council started the process of stopping the unformed legal road on the east bank of the Styx River upstream from Harbour Road. To date the portion of legal road from Harbour Road to the rear of 997 Lower Styx Road has been legally stopped.

As can be seen from the accompanying map it is now proposed to close the portion between the rear of 995 Lower Styx Road and 955 of the same road.

It is proposed to hold a community workshop in order that anyone who is interested, or has concerns, can have the opportunity to have input into the plan for the future of this area.

Styx History Group

There has been slow but steady progress on the research for the general book, also the one that will comprise reminiscences of long-term residents of the Styx catchment. The list of people to be interviewed for the latter publication grows each week and the process of interviewing has now started. There has been an excellent response from members of the public in providing information or names of likely interviewees.

The History Group is building up its own collection of literature on the Styx, and it is expected that next year this will become available to members of the public.

Some fascinating pieces of information have come to light. We learn that Leonard Cockayne, described in 1937 as 'the Empire's greatest botanist: once lived at Brooklands, on a property called "Dilroosha". Does anyone have any knowledge of the location of this property? We know that Dr Cockayne 'experimented in the reclamation of sand dunes... (and) ... established a kind of plant museum close to the sand coast near Christchurch'. He lived in New Zealand from 1880 until his death in 1934, but we have yet to find just when (and where) he lived in Brooklands. If anyone has any information on this, please contact me. (Contact details on back page.)

Early church records for the Styx area are being provided to the group. Over 100 years ago, the area recognised as "Styx" comprised what is today the northern part of Redwood and the southern part of Belfast, plus the area towards Marshlands Road. The entry for Styx in the "Cyclopedia of New Zealand (Canterbury volume) lists only a few of the residents at that time (1903), but many more are coming to light from the church records. The only four listed in the "Cyclopedia" – in other words the only four that were willing to pay in advance for the publication – were Edward Harris, William John Inch, and Joseph Morris (all farmers), and William Gifkins, woolscourer and fellmonger. It is sad that the dozens of others who made significant contributions to the area get no mention in the section on Styx. However, some other residents, such as Edmond Spencer, William Moir and Phillip Tisch, do have details elsewhere in the "Cyclopedia".

The Group is always pleased to hear from anyone who may be able to contribute information – no matter how small.

*Dennis Hills
Chairperson*

Annual Brookland's Raft Race

The Annual Brookland's Raft Race was held a month earlier this year. Traditionally held in March, having it in February resulted in the event being more enjoyable for both contestants and onlookers as they were rewarded with a warm windless day.

Sharp at 10.30am eleven rafts of all shapes and sizes assembled on the Styx River at Spencerville. A handicapped start enabled the children to get their rafts away ahead of the adults. Leaving first was no protection from a dousing of water, eggs, flour and other environmentally friendly products, courtesy of those gathered above the river at various vantage points. Some rafts came prepared with umbrellas to ward off missiles, while others unexpectedly returned the fire with artillery of their own making.

No one now is quite sure the exact year when the Brookland's Annual Raft Race commenced, but as can be seen from the photograph, it was well established by 1954 when these Brookland sailors competed in their wooden craft.

Sounds of laughter and happy screams confirmed that this year's race was up there with the best.

After crossing the finish line contestants and onlookers headed for a sausage sizzle and prize giving at the local Fire Brigade's headquarters.

Who won? It would seem everyone did.

Contributed by Margaret Bashford



Meeting Dates

Guardians of the Styx

The objective of the group known as The Guardians of the Styx is "to promote the protection, restoration, and raised awareness of the values of the Styx River and its environs – culture, landscape, recreation, drainage, heritage and ecology".

This Group meets the 2nd Thursday of each month.

Dates for balance of year:

13 July	10 August
14 September	12 October
9 November	

Meetings commence at 7.30pm. The venue is usually the Papanui Service Centre but it would be advisable to check before attending. Attendance is free and anyone interested is most welcome at meetings.

Contacts for Guardians of the Styx

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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 enquiries regarding subjects mentioned in this newsletter, please contact

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Email	stephaniek@clear.net.nz

Contestants in the 1954 Brookland's Raft Race Photograph kindly provide by Maureen Marshall (nee Sullivan) who is second from left

Styx History Group

The Styx History Group is dedicated to the task of collecting information about the people, activities, and events that have occurred in and around the Styx area. Already some fascinating stories and facts have been uncovered and eventually it is hoped to publish some of them in book form.

Meet 3rd Wednesday of each month

18 July	15 August
19 September	17 October
21 November	

If you would like to help with this task, or know of anyone that may be able to contribute information, this Group would welcome hearing from you. Please contact either:

Chairperson	Dennis Hills
Tel	352 554
Email	dennis.hills@xtra.co.nz
Secretary	Stephanie Humphries
Tel	342 9513
Email	stephaniek@clear.net.nz

Dates for your diary

If you enjoy good company, fresh air and moderate exercise you may want to be involved in some of these activities:

A Slice of Heritage Walks with Graeme Stanley

July 27	9.30am	Janet Stewart Reserve Styx River Walk
Meet at Janet Stewart Car Park		
August 3	9.30am	Otukaikino Living Memorial Reserve Walk

Planting Days

25 June	10.30am	Ouruhia Domain Extensions
Queries to Rod Whearty		
Tel 351 7109 or 025 895 365		
27 August	1 – 3pm	Styx River – Spencerville Boating Reserve
Queries to Arthur Adcock, Spencer Park,		
Tel 329 8507		

Remember to bring your friends and a spade.

