



May 2002

**Guardians of the Styx
Chairperson's Report**

Guardians of the Styx

Styx History Group

Welcome

to this edition of the Styx Newsletter

highlighting some interesting matters relating to the whole of the Styx catchment area.

Published two or three times a year, the Styx Newsletter 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 details are shown on the back page under the heading Editorial Contact. Enjoy!



*Photo left to right:
Dennis Hills, Dr Eric Godley and John Knox
discussing plantings at Janet Stewart Reserve.*

A recent visitor to the Styx mill Conservation reserve phoned recently and was most concerned that this area was not shown on his map of Christchurch. He wanted other people also to discover "this wonderful place." It turned out that his map was a few years old, and I assured him that this reserve is clearly marked on all the new editions. Dr Eric Godley OBE was the gentleman who phoned. He is probably one of the most well known New Zealand botanists of our time. By invitation Dennis Hills and I spent a morning with Dr Godley exploring the Styx River margins. He is enthusiastic about the Visions for the Styx catchment. The 'Guardians of the Styx' are privileged to welcome him as a new member.

Already this year the Guardians of the Styx have attended the Department of Conservation's field day at Motukarara. Additionally they have taken up the issue of erecting a proposed cell phone tower adjacent to the Styx Mill Conservation Reserve. In our submission against it we have suggested that it would be preferable to mitigate the visual effect of the tower by incorporating it into a work of art. An impressive design developed by Perry Royal hints at feathers, sticks, and flaxes floating

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 June
- 11 July
- 8 August
- 12 September
- 10 October
- 14 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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Secretary Matthew Turnbull
Tel 332 7290

into the transparency of the Styx landscape. Local media, both television and newspapers, are pursuing this story with interest.

No doubt again in 2002 we will find plenty to do advocating on behalf of the Styx River Catchment. There is always work to be done and we welcome new members to share both the load and the enjoyment of the Styx area.

*John Knox
Chairperson
Guardians of the Styx*

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.

The Styx History Group meets on the 3rd Tuesday of each month.

Dates for balance of the year

- 18 June
- 16 July
- 20 August
- 17 September
- 15 October
- 19 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:

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Secretary Stephanie Humphries
Tel 342 9513
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Editorial Contact

The newsletter is compiled, printed and distributed as a service to the community by the Waterways and Parks 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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Should we feed the ducks?



available for native ducks, and other wetland bird and fish species.

This resulting deterioration in water quality also reduces opportunities for using the water for swimming, fishing, recreation and stockwater extraction. The intrusive activity of people standing on the pond or riverbank, tossing bread and causing a ruckus amongst the mallard flocks, may have the effect of scaring away shyer native birds like shoveler, grey teal, cormorants, herons and kingfishers.

Feeding the ducks is an important recreational activity for many people and something that could be considered part of suburban culture. In order to preserve a sample of ponds and streams in a healthier ecological state we need to be careful to encourage duck feeding at appropriate sites and discourage it at other sites.

Examples of appropriate sites are the Botanic Gardens, Victoria Lake, Mona Vale and urbanised stretches of the Avon and Heathcote rivers. Examples of inappropriate sites include natural ponds and waterways where restoration or enhancement of habitats encourages bird communities dominated by native species. Such sites include Travis Wetland, Styx Mill Basin Conservation Reserve, Wigram East Retention Basin and Janet Stewart Reserve.

At these sites there is a need to try to encourage the emergence of a wildlife community that involves a wide range of species; one that has a high richness of species diversity. Rather than having a waterway dominated by one or two species, we should be supporting a wide variety of bird species, occupying a range of niches and contributing to a healthy and fully functioning waterway ecosystem.

Contributed by Andrew Crossland, Ornithologist

Its always tempting when we visit a pond or waterway, to take along a bag of stale bread and give a free feed to the ducks. It is fun to watch the ducks dive and squabble over the bread and we feel good with ourselves having done our bit to help nature. What many people do not realise however, is that this seemingly innocuous activity, actually results in much more harm than good.

By feeding ducks we are providing an artificial food source that they neither need nor is particularly healthy for them. Processed white bread particularly, can hardly be called a wholesome alternative to a duck's natural omnivorous diet of aquatic weeds, riparian plants, seeds, acorns, insects and aquatic snails. By relying on bread handouts, the natural behaviour of ducks is modified - they become lazy, spending much of their time loafing or sleeping - no longer playing their natural role in the stream or pond food chain.

Populations of the introduced mallard become artificially high, concentrated into rowdy groups near regular bread feeding sites rather than being dispersed at more natural population levels throughout the waterway. Mallards may become more aggressive as the result of the competition that inevitably develops when a large gathering of ducks are vying for a prime bread-catching position. This probably leads to higher competition for nest sites and duckling rearing areas closer to regular bread feeding locations. It may also lead to dominance over, or aggression towards, other waterbird species, particularly the smaller and shyer native ducks.

Sheer numbers of mallards may displace native ducks or prevent their colonisation of new habitats. Water quality is affected by large numbers of mallards churning up silty pond and stream bottoms and defecating into the water. This often causes deterioration in habitat conditions for aquatic invertebrates and leads to a reduction in the range of food

The writing of the first book with the working title of "The Styx Story" has been completed. Currently the process of obtaining further photographs and maps is under way, as is gaining permission to use such materials.

Each time the book is mentioned in the news media new material continues to come to light. A series of aerial photographs of properties north of Harewood Road came from a former resident now living in Tauranga. The well-known photographers Green and Hahn took these in the 1950's. Unfortunately they only show the Styx River in one case and then only in the distance.

In the area that is now known as Redwood, Northcote and Casebrook, very few houses are shown. The difference between the 1950s landscape and that of today is dramatic.

Another item was a newspaper cutting, unfortunately undated, but probably from around 1967, showing the "Plan of 'Retirement Village' Planned for Belfast". This was to have been in what is now the part of the Styx Mill Conservation Reserve. The site chosen was part of the original 400-acre (approximately 160 hectare) Rural Section 243 owned by the Church of England through their "Ecclesiastical Committee, Dean and Chapter". The Church used the land as a source of income, leasing areas to farmers, orchardists and millers. The well-known flourmill on the Main North Road was just one of the many operations carried out. The old mill house (standing until only a few years ago) was one of the few examples where the Church made use of part of the land for their own purposes. In 1919, four Sisters of the Order of St Anne in America arrived in Christchurch and opened St Anne's Home for Girls in the old mill house. One reference notes that 'the venture was not a success, the vision of the girls as land girls was premature, and the Sisters were not at home in the strange conditions. A new property in Papanui was obtained . . .'

The 1967(?) article noted that the proposed retirement village ('designed as a modern version of Selwyn Village in Auckland') would house 351 occupants, but that conditional use of the rural land needed to be obtained from the Waimairi County Council. Further information may come to light giving reasons why the project did not proceed.

Obviously there is still a lot more to be learnt about the area. Members of the History Group always welcome any old plans, maps, and stories about The Styx.

Dennis Hills
Chairperson
History Group

Brooklands Lagoon



Archibald Nicoll - Brooklands - Oil on hardboard
Collection of the Robert McDougall Art Gallery. Purchased 1970.

Discovered on a recent visit to the Robert McDougall Art Gallery was this painting of Brooklands by Archibald Nicoll. Born at Lincoln in 1886 he later worked in a shipping office while attending evening classes at the Canterbury College School of Art from 1905 to 1907.

He then shifted to Auckland where from 1908 to 1910 he held a teaching post at the Elam School of Art. Further study led him to England where he attended both the Westminster Art School in London and the Edinburgh College of Art. 1914 was a momentous year for Archibald Nicoll as he

returned to New Zealand, was married, and began service in the First World War. Initially he served in Egypt before being wounded in the Battle of Somme in 1916 causing the amputation of his right leg and his return to New Zealand. From 1920 to 1928 he was Director of the Canterbury School of Art before leaving to become a full time painter.

In 1932 he was awarded the Bleisloe Medal for landscape painting and in 1948 he received the OBE for services to art. He continued to paint until the time of his death in 1953.

Be Inspired

As part of their studies, Lincoln Landscape Architect Students have been developing design ideas for various sites along the Styx River.

This evening offers an opportunity for you to discuss their landscape concepts that will be on display.

Location	Board Room, Papanui Service Centre, corner of Langdons Road and Restell Road
Date	24 May 2002
Time	5.30 pm to 8.30 pm

drinks provided - all welcome

Is the Styx River polluted?

In many areas community groups such as the Guardians of the Styx are now taking more proactive action to improve the condition of their local waterways. The problems however, are often complicated with many different pollutants from a variety of sources having effects that are not entirely understood or easily recognised.

Pollutants can put aquatic ecosystems under stress by affecting key species, often in subtle ways in the short term. Some of these can have considerable importance to local communities, for example pollutants affecting fish population numbers may influence the recreational fishing values of the river.

Efforts to monitor and improve the health of aquatic environments need to incorporate a range of scientific disciplines, including ecotoxicology, as well as traditional and local knowledge. The Styx River receives a variety of contaminants including runoff from roads and waste effluents from industry. Because of this it is included in a Ministry for the Environment sustainable management fund (SMF) project that is evaluating the effects of pollution on fish in six catchments across New Zealand. The project is evaluating the effects of pollution on fish by caging fish (eg eel) at sites potentially affected by pollution, and by monitoring wild fish. The two techniques are complementary and give an indication of short and long-term effects of environmental stressors, such as chemical contaminants, on the physiology and general fitness of fish.

Another important aspect of the project is integrating traditional Maori knowledge, which is considerable for eel, with conventional western science. Drs James Ataria (Landcare Research) and Mere Roberts (Auckland University), are helping recruit Maori graduate students into the project. Information collected during the project will be disseminated through a series of hui held at the various study sites and available through a website or via e-mail to anyone registering an interest.

Partners collaborating on this Styx River project include Christchurch City Council, Environment Canterbury (ECan), Ngai Tahu, Guardians of the Styx, and ecotoxicology experts from Landcare Research, Forest Research and Auckland University. So far this year, Christine Heremaia (Christchurch City Council), Park Ranger Arthur Adcock and ECan scientist Malcolm Main have helped identify four suitable study sites along the river. The choice of sites is important, as eel have particular requirements with regard to shade and water flow. Two of the sites near the source of the Styx River have little or no pollution so they are the scientific 'controls', that is they are the reference point for what is considered 'normal'. The other two sites are suspected of being polluted. Eels were placed in stainless steel cages in the river for three weeks.

They were inspected about twice a week to ensure that the fish were in good condition and that nothing was obstructing the water flow through the cage. At the end of this period, the eels were taken to the laboratory where various tissues were sampled for analysis. A series of physiological parameters are then measured to identify responses of the fish to specific types of pollutant. The data collected will give an indication of short-term impact of pollutants on the health of the eels.

Next summer, similar measurements will be done in uncaged (wild) fish sampled at the same locations to evaluate the longer-term effects of pollution in the Styx River. The project will continue until 2004, and will add value to the efforts of the Guardians of the Styx to restore the river to acceptable condition.



Routine inspection of an eel cage by Louis Tremblay during the Styx River experiment (March 2002).

Contributed by Louis Tremblay
Environmental toxicologist, Landcare Research, Lincoln

The Styx - its own logo & calendar

Shortly the Styx area will have its own calendar of events. This calendar is special for two reasons.

Firstly it will show events associated with waterways and wetlands within the Styx catchment for the period July 2002 to June 2003. The Styx calendar is about to be printed, and will be available for distribution about the middle of June.

Secondly, the calendar will be the first publication to feature the new "Styx logo". A logo unique to the Styx area is one further step in the fulfillment of the Community's Vision to establish "The Styx as a place to be."

The development of the Styx logo, its significance and conditions for use will feature in a future edition of the Styx Newsletter.

If you receive a personal copy of the Styx Newsletter you will automatically receive a copy of the Styx calendar. Spare copies can be obtained from the Papanui Service Centre/Library or from the Parks & Waterways Unit, Christchurch City Council, telephone 3711872.