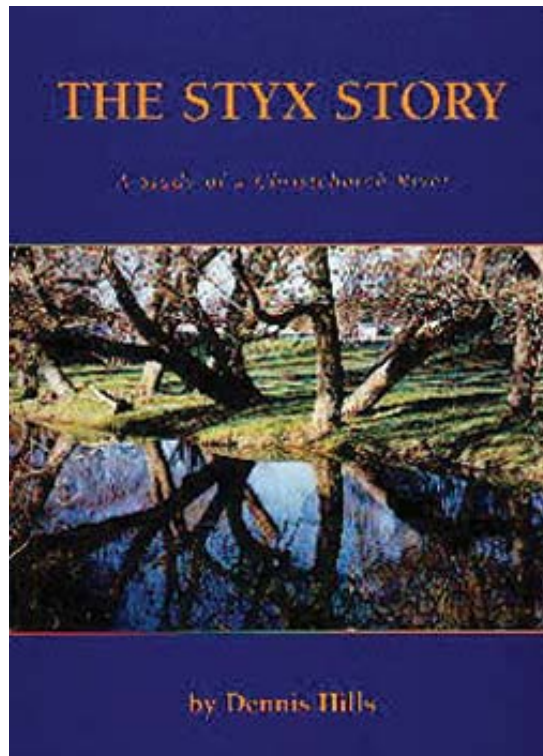




The Styx Story

"The Styx Story" by Dennis Hills is the first information/history book on the Styx River. Its recommended retail price is \$29.95, and it is available at Paper Plus (Merivale and Palms), Whitcoulls (Bush Inn & Northlands), Books & More (Northlands), Willowbank, Pataka, Dymocks, Arts Centre Bookshop and Brooklands Dairy, and it is on special at Fruit Barn for \$24.95. Alternatively, it is available direct from the publisher, Styx History Group, P O Box 20-311, Christchurch, for \$28 (\$25 plus postage and packaging).

The book was reviewed in "The Press" by Mike Crean, who said 'The Styx seems such an ordinary stream, as it meanders its short way, in northern Christchurch, from Harewood to Brooklands Lagoon. However, its story is full of interest at several levels. This well-presented book outlines the geographical, natural, and social history of the catchment areas along the banks of the Styx. Few people are as well versed in these matters as local community board member and engineer Dennis Hills.



With the support of fellow enthusiasts, he has produced a lively and entertaining text and picture gallery, to make this book a collector's item'.

The Guardians of the Styx Report

The Guardians have been busy since the last Styx Newsletter, mounting promotional displays for several days at Northlands in October, "Celebration of the Styx" (January), and Conservation Day at Motukarara (April), and for a week in the window of the Civic Offices (March). In addition, members have been involved in "Clean Up The World Day" (September) and planting days at Redwood Springs (April) and Lower Styx Road (May). Input has been made towards the Belfast Area Development Plan (Styx Mill Road forms part of the southern boundary of the area). The Guardians were also represented at discussions re possible Lottery Grants funding towards the development of the Styx Mill Conservation Reserve, and in advising Lincoln University students who are preparing plans for the development of the Styx Living Laboratory Field Centre site in Lower Styx Road. We have been busy!

Our regular monthly meetings have been well attended, with speakers on a variety of topics relating to the Styx, or of general interest to members. We are still seeking ideas for potential speakers, but are looking also for suggestions of possible events, visits or activities to add variety to our programme.

*Dennis Hills
Chairperson*

Editorial content

This newsletter is compiled, printed and distributed as a service to the community by the Parks and Waterways Unit of the Christchurch City Council.

If you have any suggestions, comments, or enquiries regarding subjects mentioned in the newsletter, please contact:

Stephanie K Humphries
tel/fax 342 9513
email stephaniek@clear.net.nz



The Styx

Pūrākauūi

Welcome to this edition of the Styx Newsletter.

The Styx Newsletter is published two or three times a year. It is distributed as widely as possible through libraries, Service Centres and such outlets. If you do not receive a personal copy and would like to, please contact the Editor and this can easily be arranged. (Contact details are on the back page).

Stories in this newsletter focus on some examples of the strong community involvement in the Styx Project, while the lead story is a tribute to the many individuals who continue to contribute to its success.

Styx Project wins award



Celebrating together

Christine Heremaia (holding trophy) and Stephanie Humphries (with competition entry) are flanked by Yvonne Palmer and Dennis Hills, (Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson respectively of the Shirley Papanui Community Board)

It would be easy to overlook the latest addition to the trophy cabinet in the Shirley Papanui Community Board room. Sitting beside its companion, a flax woven basket, it looks like a 20 centimetres grey stone. It is not until you notice that this stone has been hand carved that you begin to realise that this is actually a trophy.

It seems appropriate that this is not one of those massive gold-plated trophies, nor is it even some pretentious engraved crystal platter. Drawn from nature, this award seems to share many of the characteristics of its subject, The Styx River. Modest, unassuming, easily overlooked.

Yet it was the Styx Project that stood out amongst 88 entries and went on to win the highest accolade in the category of Significant Project at the recent New Zealand Community Boards' Best Practice Awards.

From a state of non-existence in 1998, the Styx Project has developed to clearly outline 5 inter-related visions that the community wishes to see happen in the Styx Catchment within the next 40 years. These visions, now beginning to be implemented, are:

- to achieve a viable springfed river ecosystem
- to create a source to sea experience
- to develop the catchment as a Living Laboratory
- to establish the Styx as a 'place to be'
- to foster partnerships

"Some individuals have difficulty comprehending the enormity of a total catchment project", said Yvonne Palmer (Chairperson of the Shirley Papanui Community Board).

"To receive this award is recognition that our 'big picture thinking' is endorsed by our colleagues through New Zealand."

When the trophy was presented recently to Yvonne at the New Zealand Community Boards' Conference in New Plymouth it came with the warning, "Careful - it's heavy."

Tipping the scales at 5.5 kilograms this is a weighty little trophy. However, as Yvonne was quick to point out, its weight is indicative not only of the extent of the Styx Project but also the large number of people who have become involved with the Styx Project during the past five years.

If this 40 year project is winning weighty national awards after only 5 years, one is left to wonder if future trophies in the Board Room cabinet will look quite as modest.

Styx Living Laboratory Driving Community Involvement in The Styx

Report from The Styx Living Laboratory Trust

The Styx Living Laboratory Trust has been operating for nearly a year and I have been asked to write some notes about what I see as some of the highlights of the trust to date.

One of the 5 visions formulated by the community is the desire to set up and maintain the total Styx catchment as a "Living Laboratory" where research and various studies can be carried out, and where results are made readily available to all.

The Styx Living Laboratory Trust, through its Trustees and Board of Management, has been assigned this task. Representatives from the community, tertiary institutions, local and national politicians, Ecan, NIWA, ecologists, and many others, are hard at work planning how to make it happen.

Currently research and learning programmes are being developed in order to gather base line data. At the same time a number of monitoring programmes are being implemented in order that information collected may be correctly analysed and interpreted, enabling a clear picture of what is happening in the catchment to be gained.

Dr Colin Knight launched the Research programme on 18th May 2003 when a planting day was held at what is to become the Field Centre for the Styx Living Laboratory.

Setting up the Styx Living Laboratory headquarters in Lower Styx Road is a challenge the Trust is grappling with. Cost is obviously a factor and currently a sponsorship partner, who shares the visions held by the community for the Styx area, is being sought.

It is a learning curve for us all but each step takes us that much closer towards our goal of turning the Styx into a positive 'source to sea' experience.

With the added bonus of winning the recent national award it is clear that we are very much on the right track to obtain our goals.

I understand that this column is to become a regular feature of future Styx Newsletters so watch for updates. In the meantime thank you for your support in helping us get this far.

Lesley Keast
Trustee and Chairperson

“Why bother to monitor?”

“We used to play in the river here when we were young, but how many times do you see water flowing through Nunweek Park these days?”

It is comments like this that indicate that over a period of time, the character and course of the Styx River has changed.

During the past 100 years much of the low lying wetland area of Christchurch has been drained and used for urban settlement. This drainage, combined with changes in land use, has had a considerable effect on all the rivers of the city, including the Styx.

Often change takes place gradually over a considerable period of time. It is therefore essential that accurate information is collected on a regular basis, and it is here that individual members of the community can play an important role.

Styx River Nunweek Park

Water Quality Monitoring

During 2002 members of the Guardians of the Styx became involved in a pilot programme to monitor the quality of water at various points along the Styx River. The purpose of the pilot programme, run in conjunction with Waterwatch (from the Isaac Centre for Nature Conservation at Lincoln University), was to help identify the processes and methods necessary to implement an effective, large scale, community water quality monitoring programme.

Abi Wightman has been contracted by the Styx Living Laboratory Trust to co-ordinate the development of this programme.

For people who become involved the time commitment involved is not great, approximately 1 hour per month. Collecting information is also not a difficult task and full training and equipment will be provided. Sites selected for monitoring purposes are all readily accessible.

If you would like to become part of the volunteer team to help in the collection of information Abi would be pleased to hear from you. She can be contacted by phoning 388 0460 or email to: nicabs@xtra.co.nz

Data collected by the community will enable better informed decisions to be made about the future management of waterways and wetlands associated with the Styx River system.

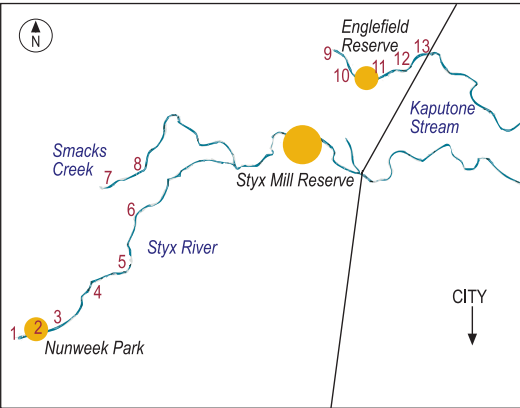


Benefits that volunteers can expect to gain from becoming involved with the water quality monitoring programme, include the opportunity to gain increased knowledge about environmental issues and the management of waterways and wetlands. Additionally they have the satisfaction of knowing that by collecting essential data on a regular basis they are making a significant contribution to a better understanding of the unique ecological and recreational values of the Styx River system.

Styx Living Laboratory Field Co-ordinator
Abi Wightman at work



Water Flow Monitoring



Water Flow Monitoring sites - Styx Catchment

In 1899 the first domestic well was sunk and that action marked the start of the abstraction of water from the Styx River catchment. Today there are over 900 wells and over 150 ground and surface water abstractions within the catchment. This water use has had an impact on the flow of the river, particularly in the upper reaches. Resulting in a noticeable eastward shift in the springs feeding into the river.

Any decrease in volume of the spring flow and wetlands in the upper catchment affects the ecology and landscape values of the river downstream. This makes the collection of information regarding flow in the upper reaches of the Styx River and its two main tributaries, Smacks Creek and the Kapatone Stream, critically important.

Stu McHugh, a member of the local community, acts as team leader for this group and he states: "The experience of working together in flow monitoring is just great. The energy and dedication provided by the team to ensure the future health of the Styx and its tributaries is marvellous."

One of the 5 visions established by the community (as outlined in the 40 year plan for the catchment), is that the Styx is to be a viable spring fed river system. It is therefore appropriate that community members are active in monitoring water flow in the river and thereby contributing to the successful implementation of that vision.

Do we have an answer?

What do you want to see happen at the Styx Living Laboratory Field Centre Precinct?

That question first appeared on a brochure inviting members of the community to a planting event held on site in May 2003.

Over 100 people turned up to that event. Amazingly, less than two hours later 9 trial plots, each containing 200 seedlings, had been planted out.

These trial plots have been set up to demonstrate how different maintenance regimes affect plant performance and ecological outcomes.

But was the question "What do you want to see happen at 75 Lower Styx Road?" answered as a result of that day. Probably not.

Enter a group of 12 students from Lincoln University.

As part of their studies these young people have been set the task of working with various groups within the community to develop an overall concept plan for the Styx Living Laboratory Field Centre Precinct, including alternative uses for land and buildings. Additionally they are exploring how various concepts can be implemented and managed long term.

These students waste no time. Since their first chilly meeting on site, held in the hay-barn because of the hint of snow outside, this group have embarked on this project with enthusiasm.

During the first month they met with members of the local community, park rangers and members of the Guardians of the Styx group. After tramping over the property, and discussing various issues relating to the river, ideas were collated over muffins and a hot cup of coffee.

A field trip by Ouruhai School pupils to the site enabled Lincoln students to meet with their younger counterparts. A fun day of learning resulted with lots of lateral thinking ideas, coming from the children, being added into the mix.

Currently the Lincoln students are working to incorporate the various ideas into an overall plan for the development of the site.

"What do you want to see happen at 75 Lower Styx Road?"

A dedicated group of Lincoln University students hope to have the answer when they present the results of their work to members of the public at a function to be held from 5 - 7pm, Papanui Service Centre Board Room on Friday 12 September.

Photo left: Launching of research project, May 2003
Right: Lincoln students consulting with members of the community

