



“Nature does not hurry, yet everything is accomplished.”

Loa Tzu

In the fast paced world of today it is refreshing to stop periodically and focus on what is around us: to consider how it impacts our lives and what impacts we are imposing. Articles in this edition of the Styx Newsletter feature examples of both recent and past activities and we trust you will find these enjoyable reading.

Pancakes and Creeks

There is an old saying, “that no matter how flat you make a pancake, it still has two sides. The on-going saga of the drying up of the Kaputone Creek is one of those stories.

On the one side of the pancake we have people who purchased properties adjacent to the upper reaches of the Kaputone Creek which, even in the last decade, formed part of a flowing tributary of the Styx River. The other side of the pancake is made up of downstream residents whose properties are already prone to flooding.

What is beyond dispute is that the upper reaches of Kaputone Creek no longer flow as they use to, and it would appear that nobody can say exactly why this has happened.

Christchurch City Council studies and research undertaken in 2004 suggested that no one factor was responsible for the increased number of days with little, or no, flow in the upper reaches of the stream. However, several factors were cited as probable causes. These included; low ground water levels, low water levels in the Waimakariri River, low total yearly rainfall, variation in intra annual rainfall distribution, high evaporation rate and development of the land in the upper reaches adjacent to the Creek.

Anecdotally, some residents blame it on the service trenches associated with Northwood development, while others suggest that the ponds constructed at Clearwater may have also contributed.

Whatever the cause there are many, including the City Council who would like to see the upper reaches of this tributary of the Styx River return to a healthy and flowing stream again.

But how?

In late 2005 the City Council addressed the issue by drawing up a plan of options that could be worked though in order to rectify the problem.

The first option, which was the cheapest and simplest, was to remove the silt that had accumulated in the bed of the Creek and this was done and completed in December 2006. It was hoped that this remedial action would facilitate the flow of water again.

Unfortunately this did not happen, so other remedies had to be considered. The most feasible option was to install a pump to draw water from an aquifer metres underground discharging it into the upper reaches of the Kaputone Creek at a rate of 20 litres per second.

Some members of the community, particularly those in the Brookland's area, were opposed to this idea because their properties already had the potential to flood. They believed that any increase in water flowing from a tributary into the Styx River must not only increase the risk of flooding, but must also increase the size of any future flood.

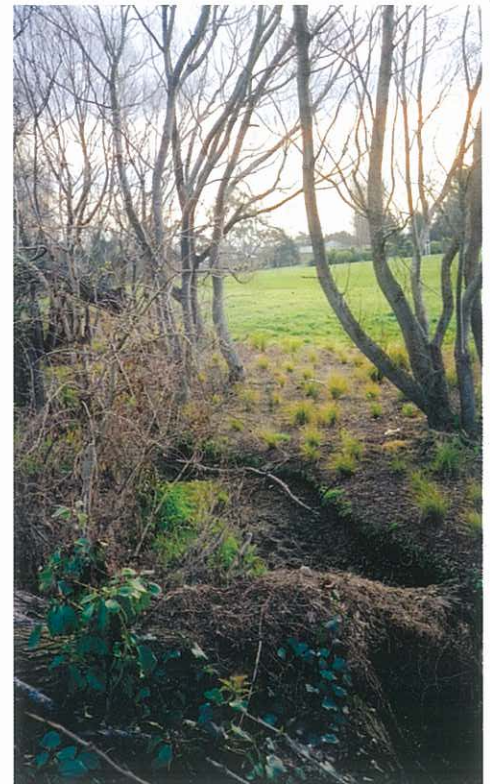
These scenarios were recently placed before a Resource Consent hearing and two Commissioners were required to rule on whether or not an application to pump water into the upper reaches of the Kaputone should be granted.

If you were the deciding Commissioners, how would you have ruled?

I guess the answer to that question would depend on where you live.

The Commissioners, who incidentally do not live anywhere in the Styx catchment, decided the matter in the following way:

1. “Water may be taken only from bore M35/11631, 200 millimetres diameter and 60 to 100 metres deep, at map reference NZMS 260 M35:7854-5033.
2. Water may be taken at a rate not exceeding 20 litres per second, with a volume not exceeding 1728 cubic metres per day, and 630,720 cubic metres between 1st July and the following 30th June.”



Loss of flow in Kaputone Creek

Numerous other conditions were also attached to this consent. These included details regarding monitoring of water flow to ensure that only the designated amount of water is extracted from the bore. Restoration plantings and time frames also formed part of the three pages of the Commissioners' ruling.

Whether or not this remedial action will succeed in restoring the Kaputone Creek to a healthy ecological environment, only time will tell.

Whether or not everyone is satisfied with the Commissioners' ruling will of course, depend on which side of the pancake is preferred. One thing is certain, no matter which side we put the syrup on, we still have to eat both sides.

What is in a Name?

Ask any person that has had a newborn baby named after them and they can tell you – there is a sense of pride, of connection and sometimes, particularly in olden days, of character. Those qualities might apply to the naming of people, but do they still apply when it comes to the naming of places?

Christchurch contains a wide diversity of names, many influenced by the Englishness of those who arrived and set up the City, for example Harewood Road, presumably named after the 1st Earl of Harewood, Edward Lascelles, who received this title in 1812. Before their arrival however, the importance of Maori cultural values and their whakapapa (genealogy) were reflected in the names given to natural features and specific locations. For instance, wai means river, and makariri means cold, hence the name Waimakariri: a river that is fed from Southern Alpine snow.

Other names reflect the character of the locality, for example Marshland Road, an area of wet, swampy marsh land, or Avonhead, the head of the Avon River. Once you get started it is hard not to notice these connections when you travel around the City. As Kevin Lynch puts it so well in

his book entitled 'The Image of a City', "a distinctive and legible environment has the potential to heighten a person's experience and understanding of a place." There are also some unusual names, not the least being the name given to the waterway that is unknowingly crossed daily by thousands of people: Purakaunui, or as it is better known, the Styx River.

There are several versions of how the Styx River received its name. The first is that early European settlers crossed the river on flax-stick rafts; hence the name 'Sticks'. A second version is similar to the first except that in order to make crossing easier, the bundles of flax sticks were laid in the bed of the river. Another version proposes that the name was derived from the use of flax sticks stuck in the ground to guide travellers through the marshes to where the river was bridged by logs. Yet another suggestion however, is that this area, which in the mid 1800's would seem a long way from the centre of the growing township of Christchurch, was sometimes referred to as being "out in the sticks."

Whichever version you choose to believe, each requires at some stage a change in the spelling of 'sticks' to 'Styx' and for that spelling we need to look at Greek mythology.

According to Homer's Iliad (BC 9-8), Greek mythology records the Styx River as the principal river of the lower world, which had to be crossed in passing to the regions of the dead. It would appear that an early settler, observing Maori washing the bodies of their dead in the Styx River as part of their funeral rites, made an association between the Styx River of Greek mythology and the Styx River of Christchurch. It is interesting to note that Greek mythology was taught in New Zealand schools at least until the first quarter of the 1900's. What is more certain is that the first instance of the name Styx being used in Electoral Rolls was in the 1865-66 register.

Currently there is consideration being given to adopting a naming policy for both natural and constructed features within the Styx catchment. Some consultation has already taken place with special interest groups and shortly the public will be asked to give their views and opinions on the matter. If you would like to contribute to this process, please contact the Editor whose contact details are on the back of this newsletter.



Janet Stewart Reserve



Styx River adjacent to Lower Styx Road

Meanwhile there are many puzzles to solve: for example, how did Wooldridge Road near the source of the Styx River get its name; or which particular Patricia was Patricia Place named after; or how come there is a Dunedin Street in the middle of Redwood; or the list goes on.

In 1594 in his play Romeo and Juliet, William Shakespeare's Juliet asks, "...would that which we call a rose, by any other name smell as sweet?" Whilst it would be a brave person to argue with Shakespeare, when it comes to the naming of some of the landmarks in Christchurch, there is certainly a lot to be learned about our history and culture by seeking out an answer to the question, "What is represented in that name?"



"Sticks in the Styx" Crofton Road bridges, designed by Perry Royal, reflect their locality

"Do you really think the stream is named after our family?"

This particular question was asked of Sheppards Stream, one of the minor tributaries of the Styx River. But it also raised the interesting matter of how we go about choosing the names of particular features in our landscape, and what, if anything, this stream was called before John and Helen Sheppard moved into their Lower Styx Road farm in 1949?

As John Sheppard was to discover about 30 acres at the back of his 60 acre farm was in swamp and could not be used by stock for grazing. Therefore, unless this area could be drained and developed it would be almost impossible to run it as an economic dairy unit. Conventional drainage was not the answer for two reasons, namely the closeness of the land to the Styx River, and secondly, because there was little fall between the land and the river.

John and Helen went on to have four children, Alison, Michael, Paul and Marion. The eldest son, Michael remembers the time when, "the farm went right under water. The water was up to the tops of the fence posts. That was before Dad put that drain in."

The drain referred to was a dragline cut through the centre of the farm, made on the recommendation of Department of Agriculture Farm Manager Officer, H Tocker and Drainage Officer J. Scott. A diesel motor ran the 6 inch lift pump, which sucked the water up from the drain into a pipe running under Lower Styx Road, before discharging it into the river. With the drain being lower than the river, in the wet season the pump would be going 24 hours a day, causing John many a problem. Helen Sheppard recalls times when John would be out at midnight dealing with "problems with the pump." That was until the pump was converted to electric and the system became automatic.

Possibly in those days, Sheppards Stream it did not warrant a better name than "the ditch". It did, however, serve many purposes as it drained water from several surrounding properties including the Windsor Golf Links. When completed in 1957, although John paid the full cost of 800 pound, he firmly believed that the cost should be have been shared because other properties also benefited from the work.



The Sheppard Family taken in 1998 at the celebration of John and Helen's 50th Wedding Anniversary. Michael, Alison, Marion, Paul, John (deceased) and Helen Sheppard

Recent plantings and restoration work have now transformed what was once considered 'only a drain' into a more natural and healthy asset that can be passed on to future generations as part of a 'living legacy'.

If John was still alive maybe he would find it a small consolation that what he once called "a drain", now proudly bears his family name, and today we call it Sheppards Stream.



Sheppards Stream after restoration



Flooding at 224 Lower Styx Road prior to the construction of Sheppards Drain (early 1950's)

Report from Styx Living Laboratory Trust

Every year holds a smile and a tear and that has certainly been true for the Styx Living Laboratory Trust.

We were greatly saddened in September 2007 with the death of Trust Chairman Graham Condon who met with a tragic accident while out training in the Styx catchment. His interest and support of the Trust and the Styx Project extended over many years and his input and enthusiasm have been sadly missed.

The greatest tribute we can give to Graham, and all the people who have worked towards turning the Styx catchment into a place of learning and research, is to continue to grow the work. This is exactly what we intend to do.

Recently we have welcomed three new Trustees who have willingly taken up this voluntary role. Margaret Austin, Martin Clements and Rex Williams are all supportive of the work of the Trust and are prepared to convert this interest into positive action.

Over the holiday break Katie Collins, winner of a Styx Living Laboratory Summer Scholarship studied the spatial distribution of aquatic invertebrates. The awarding of two Royal Society Fellowships has enabled Graeme Worner of Christ's College and Sue Pearce of Unlimited Paenga Tawhiti Secondary School to spend the year researching specific topics within the Styx catchment. Add to this the continuation, and growth, of community monitoring programmes plus a total revamp of the Styx website and we can see that 2008 is shaping up to become yet another year marked with significant achievements.

**Trustees and Board of Management Members
Styx Living Laboratory Trust**



Ranger's Report

STYX MILL CONSERVATION RESERVE

Grey willow *salix cinerea* is a major weed species around the Styx Mill Conservation Reserve and considerable resources are being used to control it.

The process used to control the willows is to first identify the female willow which produces all the seed.

This takes place in spring during the months of September and October when flowering occurs. Once the tree has been identified, a series of holes 5 cm apart are drilled down to a depth of 2 cm at a 45 degree angle to ensure that the chemical applied usually (concentrated glyphosate/roundup) does not escape. It may take some time for the chemical to kill the tree and care must be taken that the dead

tree does not fall in an area that may endanger people. The dead tree now provides a valuable source of food for insects and great organic mulch for growing natives so it's great turning a negative environmental problem into a positive for the environment.

If your property has grey willow trees on it but you wish to keep some, please remove the female trees as they produce vast amounts of seeds that can be blown throughout the Styx catchment area.

The following website will assist in helping identify grey willow trees:

www.ccc.govt.nz/Parks/TheEnvironment/WeedGuide/PDF/Oct2003.pdf

John Parry, Ranger



Female catkins - photo K.McCombs

Guardians of the Styx Report

We are now in our ninth year. This past year seems to have been one of variable water levels in the Styx River. A former Guardians of the Styx member told me in October that attempts to establish white pine adjacent to the river in Lower Styx Road had been thwarted by high water levels. The same thing happened a few months ago off Turners Road where Guardians of the Styx members were investigating a possible planting project. At one visit, the site was damp, yet a few weeks later it was under water (at a time when there had been no rain for weeks). Shortly after, weed-clearing operations took place further downstream, and the water level dropped dramatically. A call from an angler in September reported that the river was "as low as he had seen it in 20 years". This all goes to show just how sensitive rivers like the Styx, with little fall on its journey to the sea, can be to things that may impede normal flow (for example, fallen trees, weeds, sediment).

We hear that there are a number of new proposals for residential developments near parts of the Styx River, and we will be keeping a close eye on these to ensure that stormwater flows have minimal effect on both the quantity and the quality of the water entering the river. Both the City Council and Environment Canterbury have taken a strong line on these matters in recent years, and they have our support.

Sales of "Settling Near The Styx River" published last year have been steady. It is still available at \$40 post-paid from Styx History Group, P O Box 20-311, Christchurch 8543. "The Styx Story", published in 2002, is now available for \$20 post-paid. The latest book on the area is "The Old Schoolmaster's House, Belfast" which is the history of the Kapuatohe Historic Reserve near Kaputone Stream in Belfast (\$6 post-paid). The research materials for all three books will eventually be deposited at the Belfast District Museum.

We recently lost one of our founding members, with the death of Margaret Bashford. She was an enthusiastic supporter of recording the history of the Styx area, and her poem was featured in "The Styx Story".

**Dennis Hills, Acting Chairman,
Guardians of the Styx**



Male catkins - photo K.McCombs

EDITORIAL CONTACT

The Christchurch City Council publishes the Styx Newsletter as a service to the community.

The newsletter is distributed as widely as possible through libraries, Service Centres and other such outlets. If you would like to receive a personal copy and you live in Christchurch, it can be mailed directly to you. Back copies can also be viewed on the Styx website at www.thestyx.org.nz.

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