



Styx Mill Conservation Reserve

Community Planning for the Future

January 2003



CHRISTCHURCH
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The Styx Mill Conservation Reserve is a special place. This is due to its location, unique landscape, and sense of nature within a city environment.

The “40 year Vision for the Styx” resulted from extensive community involvement and consultation. Planning and development of the Styx Mill Conservation Reserve forms part of that greater Vision.

Again there is an opportunity for you to be involved in the planning process. The purpose of this brochure is to outline a vision for the Styx Mill Conservation Reserve and provide you with an opportunity to comment.



Classification of Reserves

Styx Mill Conservation Reserve is classified as a Metropolitan Regional Park. These parks exist to fill the gap between smaller urban parks and large national parks.

Local Parks

Cater for a wide range of recreational and community needs within an urban setting. For example, Sheldon Park with its sports fields, toilets, children's playground, etc.

National Parks

Contain outstanding landscape and outdoor recreational experiences. Usually managed with a conservation emphasis on habitat protection first, and public enjoyment second. Generally these are located more than a days travelling distance from urban areas. Arthur's Pass National Park is one example.

Metropolitan Regional Parks

Focus on engaging people with nature, of encouraging people to enjoy outdoor recreation in natural settings, and on learning about their environment. Primarily Regional Parks provide for urban based people to escape to 'accessible countryside' such as the Styx Mill Conservation Reserve.

Tracing the Development of Styx Mill Conservation Reserve

The land that today forms the Styx Mill Conservation Reserve was purchased in the early 1970's by the Waimairi County Council for use as a reserve. Although this Council approved a Development Plan for the nearly 60 hectares of Reserve in 1986 the Council itself did not survive long enough to oversee the implementation of the Plan. With amalgamation of Councils in 1989 ownership of the land passed to the Christchurch City Council.

The 1986 Plan was updated and modified in 1993 and after that the first obvious development was the construction of the ponds in 1994/95. This was followed by the toilet block in 1996/97 and the Styx Mill Road car park and bus stop in 2002. The dog park was added to the concept and constructed during the late 1990's.

The management of land adjacent to the reserve has also undergone significant change as the large apple orchards to both the north and south of the reserve have been replaced by the residential developments known as Northwoods and Regent's Park subdivisions.

Use of Styx Mill Conservation Reserve as a place for recreation continues to grow. The reasons for this are:

1. increase in the local population
2. growing awareness of the presence of the reserve
3. growing awareness of the need to exercise e.g. walking
4. increasing appreciation by the members of the community of its natural values

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Wildlife Significance

It is not by accident that the word 'conservation' is included in the name given to the Reserve at Styx Mill, the reason being that it has a high ecological values due to the particular plants, in-stream habitat and wildlife contained within its boundaries. In an ecological survey of some 487 natural areas in Christchurch this site rated amongst the highest.

It contains several locally uncommon species of plants including *Sphagnum cristatum* or sphagnum moss. This species was recorded by Dr Leonard Cockayne in 1927 but is now essentially unknown on the east coast of the South Island.

The Styx River contains 10 species of freshwater fish of which only the brown trout has been introduced. Eight of the nine native fish species require sea access so clear passage through the Reserve is essential for their survival. Styx Mill Conservation Reserve also forms the principal spawning ground for several species.

Results of a survey undertaken in December 2002 established that 46 bird species occur within the Styx Mill Conservation Reserve. Half of these are wetland birds - their populations increasing in recent years as urban encroachment has made this area more attractive to them.

Predators such as rats, hedgehogs, mice, rabbits, feral cats, hares and possums have all been recorded within the Reserve. As a result of urbanisation, domestic cats and dogs also impact on wildlife values of the Reserve.

It is important therefore, that the wildlife values currently associated with this area are protected, maximised and wisely managed.

Vision for the Future

The vision for Styx Mill Conservation Reserve will be achieved through the implementation of the following five objectives. If implemented they will achieve sustainable management of this important natural resource for the enjoyment and betterment of both our community and our environment.

1. To provide opportunities for people to experience, appreciate and understand the natural values associated with this Reserve.

- To provide educational facilities and innovative interpretation about the local environment and its relationship to the larger Styx River ecosystem.
- To provide opportunities for learning more about nature and wildlife behaviours in specified areas of the Reserve. The installation of strategically placed viewing platforms will allow people to 'observe but not disturb'.

2. To provide opportunities for passive recreation that complements the natural values associated with this Reserve.

- To upgrade recreational facilities for people with the development of new walkways extending around the perimeter of the "basin".
- Some current picnic areas in low-lying wet areas will need to be relocated to higher drier areas of the Reserve. This will mean a relocation of the current dog park area. This relocation would not proceed without further consultation with users or before an alternative, equivalent site is established.
- To provide a new car park access from Husseys Road in order to reduce conflict between cars and people, particularly children.

3. To enhance the wildlife values of the Reserve by the development of a wildlife sanctuary.

- To enclose an area of the Reserve with a predator proof fence.
In order to mitigate the effects of residential development the developer is currently required to install a predator proof fence between Northwood and the Reserve. It is proposed that this fence be extended to encompass and clearly define the area where nature has pre-eminence. Entry into the Wildlife Sanctuary will be controlled.
- To develop the Reserve to provide a core breeding and wintering site for both wetland and bush birds by a process of predator eradication and habitat restoration.
- Discussions with management of Willowbank Wildlife Reserve indicates there is potential to release some of the offspring resulting from their bird breeding programmes into the 'safe environment' of the Styx Mill Conservation Reserve's Wildlife Sanctuary.

4. To highlight and interpret the cultural values associated with the locality through the establishment of significant areas and structures within the Reserve to "tell the stories of the land".

These include:

- (I) Dilcoosha Garden _____
- (II) Godley Kowhai Grove _____
- (III) Styx Mill _____
- (IV) Artwork _____

5. To develop learning and research opportunities in partnership with other organisations and learning institutes.

Opportunities for people to learn about the natural environment will be provided through the development of hands-on experiences. This will include the development of:

- facilities for large groups of people e.g. larger tables and spaces for group activities
- wetland play areas
- play structures representing traditional Maori methods for snaring birds and catching fish etc
- safe access to the river for observation and water related learning activities



4 (I) Dilcoosha Garden

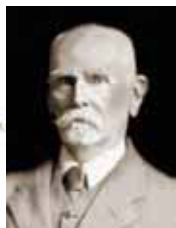
Dr Leonard Cockayne (1855 - 1934)

Botanist, teacher and conservationist Leonard Cockayne was the dominant scientist in NZ from 1900 to 1934 providing the original inspiration for the creation of Arthur's Pass National Park. A legacy from his father enabled him to purchase 15 acres "at Styx near Christchurch". This he did in 1885 and named his property Dilcoosha, a Hindustani word meaning "The Heart's Delight". It was here he assembled a collection of over 1,200 plants, including many alpine grasses. His research and experiments on this property lead him to promote knowledge of, and respect for, New Zealand plants in all their many natural habitats.

To highlight the importance of Leonard Cockayne's association with this area and that he was him who had the vision to first use this area as a "Living Laboratory", it is proposed to establish a garden named after his original property - Dilcoosha.

This garden will:

- be located adjacent to Styx Mill Road
- contain plants grown in his original garden as listed in his personal notebook
- include innovative interpretation about his work
- contain parts of his original house originally located at 275 Highsted Road



Dr Leonard Cockayne

4 (II) Godley Kowhai Grove

Dr Eric Godley (1919 - present) has made a sustained and distinguished contribution to New Zealand botany. As head of the former Department of Scientific and Industrial Research's Botany Division for 22 years, under his leadership the division greatly expanded its research and extension programmes, to become New Zealand's principal centre for research on native and naturalised plants.

Dr Godley has published extensively on such topics as the reproductive biology of native flora, and botanical history. Additionally he has used his broad knowledge to encourage public interest in plants by his regular contributions to gardening magazines.

In 2001 Dr Godley's special interest in the kowhai lead scientists from the Department of Conservation and Landcare Research to name a previously unknown species of kowhai, *Sophora godleyi*, as a mark of respect for his work.

It is proposed to:

- extend the grove of kowhai trees already planted
- officially name this area in honour of Dr Eric Godley
- incorporate educational information about kowhai trees and Dr Godley's work

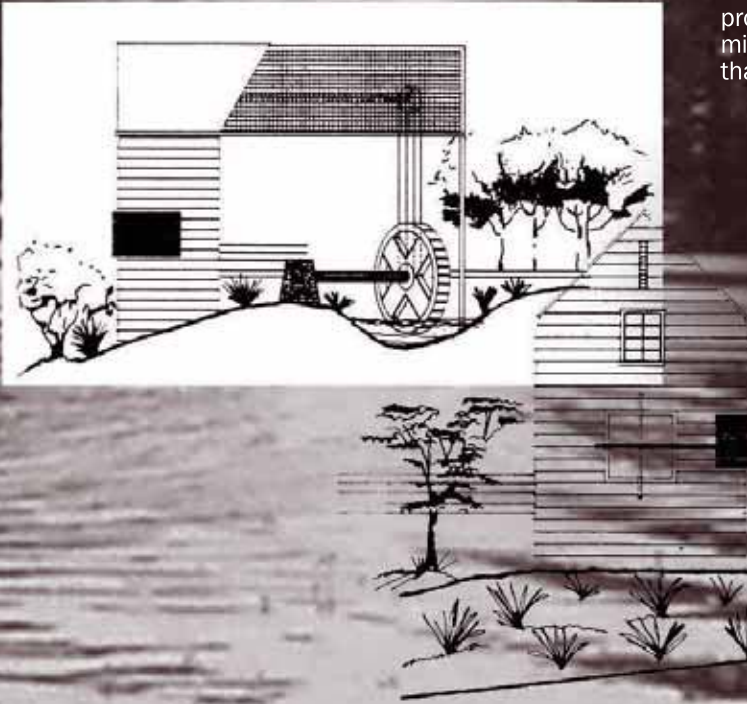


Dr Eric Godley OBE plants the first kowhai tree 2002

4 (III) Styx Mill

Styx Mill Road and Styx Mill Conservation Reserve both owe their names to a number of mills located in this area during the mid 1800's. Flax, timber and flourmills used the abundance of water in the area in their production processes. To highlight the historical importance of mills in this locality through the development of a structure that will:

- be indicative of the facade and workings of a mill
- overlook the site of the last mill and be located in close proximity to an original mill house
- use the water from the retention basins along Main North Road to rotate the wheel
- provide information about the historical significance of mills in this area
- provide a place to pause and reflect on the perimeter walkway around the reserve



4 (IV) Art work

Prior to European settlement, the large wetlands and associated open waterways in the vicinity of Styx Mill Conservation Reserve provided an important source of food and material for the Maori people. Native plants and animals from this area were used for food, clothing and to provide protection. A major walking route between Riccarton and Kaiapoi crossed the Styx River east of the reserve. It is not hard to imagine that the eels and birds found in and near the Styx River and surrounding wetlands provided a rich source of mahinga kai (food) for weary travellers. Abundant supplies of flax and raupo also attracted Maori to this area. Various families were entrusted with the responsibility of managing and harvesting the different plant and animal species and many of these family associations still continue to this day.

In recognition of the importance to Maori of the Styx area both as a meeting place, and as a source of provisions, it is proposed to locate a Maori artwork near the central lakes within the Reserve. This will be done in consultation with local Tangata Whenua.

Invitation to become a Partner in the Process

The level of involvement by the community in the development of the overall Vision for the Styx 2000 - 2040 was significant. As the Styx Mill Conservation Reserve forms part of the overall planning for the Catchment, in the spirit of true 'partnership' (Vision 5) you are again being invited to share in the development and implementation of this plan.

Enclosed with this brochure is a Response Form. If you would like to contribute, your written comments and suggestions are welcomed. More response forms can be obtained by telephoning the Parks and Waterways Unit (phone 941 8872) and they will be posted to you. Further brochures can also be obtained from:

Parks & Waterways Unit
Christchurch City Council
Civic Offices
163 - 173 Tuam Street
Christchurch

Papanui Service Centre
Corner Restall Street and
Langdons Road
Christchurch

Fendalton Service Centre
Corner Clyde and Jeffreys Roads
Christchurch

Shirley Service Centre
Marshlands Road
Christchurch

For more information

If you would like more information about these Visions for the Styx Mill Conservation Reserve please contact either:

Christine Heremaia
Styx Project Area Leader
Parks & Waterways Unit
Christchurch City Council
Tel (03) 941 8270
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Yvonne Palmer
Chairperson
Shirley/Papanui Community Board
Tel (03) 352 8851
yvonne.palmer@ccc.govt.nz

Closing date for submissions is 7 March 2003

send submissions to

Parks & Waterways Unit Christchurch City Council
163 - 173 Tuam Street PO Box 237 CHRISTCHURCH

It is important to appreciate that Styx Mill Conservation Reserve is almost 60 hectares in size and that the implementation of any plan will need to be staged over a number of years. Such a plan must also comply with the 40 Year Vision the community has already established for the Styx Catchment.

Increasing awareness of the possibility that many species native to our region may disappear make islands of sanctuary seem a common sense method of protection. Additionally the opportunity to experience wilderness areas within an urban setting will become more and more important as the city of Christchurch expands.

This project recognises the many values associated with this land and takes account of the variety of uses and users of the Styx Mill Conservation Reserve.

VISION



for Styx Mill Conservation Reserve



KEY TO LARGE MAP

- 1 Dilcoosha Garden
- 2 Godley Kowhai Grove
- 3 car park
- 4 bus stop
- 5 proposed cell phone site
- 6 Styx Mill
- 7 art work
- 8 children's play structures
- 9 existing toilet block
- 10 outdoor classroom
- 11 picnic area
- 12 viewing platform
- predator proof fence

The Reserve will contain distinct areas

- people**
These areas provide places for people. It includes picnic areas, education facilities and interpretation. Maintenance is greater in these localities, providing a transition zone between the wilderness areas and the adjacent urban landscapes.
- nature**
Nature and natural processes provide the dominant focus for this area. People experience this area from the outside looking in. The area is characterised by large open views and a sense of wilderness. Terraces associated with the basin frame these views. It is therefore important that the sense of nature is continued along the terrace edge and that residential housing is screened by tall planting.
- people and nature**
Although nature and natural processes again provide the dominant focus, people experience it from within this zone.

