

Friends of Waiwhetu's Hayward Scenic Reserve

A network of volunteers prepared to help maintain and enhance the historic and indigenous natural features of the reserve and adjoining slopes

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Inaugural Newsletter

Yes, things are happening in relation to our local reserve. Before long I hope to actively seek more volunteers prepared to help. This newsletter is to brief those I have recruited so far about what has been or is soon to be done to increase visitor enjoyment of the reserve.

Track Maintenance: For the first time in many years Council contractors have recently undertaken surface maintenance and vegetation clearance on the main track linking Mawson Street with Whites Line East. In addition, official Hutt City orange track markers have been affixed to trees to guide people unfamiliar with the route.

Of concern to regular users of the reserve has been the devastation in the Tyndall Street creek bed resulting from last year's severe rain storms. Floodwaters scoured out part of the main track, leaving on the southern side a 2 metre vertical drop and a small waterfall where a gentle crossing of the creek used to be easily made. As an interim solution, Council contractors have created a bypass to this obstacle by opening up an old trail which leads people further up the true left bank of the creek, then crosses to a secondary sidle track leading to the Tyndall Ridge Track, joining it just a short distance above its junction with the main track. People who are unsure of their footing may find the southern start (or end) of this bypass a little scary. However, I'm glad to say that Kelly Crandle of HCC's Leisure Services Division has recently approved the installation of steps down to and markers across the rubble strewn creek bed to more or less reinstate the previous route of the historic main track.

Mawson St Firebreak: The very steep, lower section of this firebreak is no longer being maintained. OSH regulations no longer permit the type of bulldozing operations previously used here to scrape a vegetation free surface. While I expect there will be opportunities for volunteers to undertake native tree planting in parts that can be readily and safely accessed, natural revegetation will gradually take place.

Pest Plants: Council contractors are active in killing off any banana passionfruit infestations they are made aware of. Most of the control work is done between November and April. Visitors to the reserve are urged to report to HCC the whereabouts of any infestation they may come across.

Neither HCC nor Greater Wellington have current control programmes for the deeply concerning, ever increasing infestations of snakefeather (climbing asparagus – *Asparagus scandens*) in the reserve. This is one pest plant that volunteer help will be needed with. Many young plants can be readily pulled out from soft ground – regrowth will not occur provided the crown is removed by this process. The tubers can be left behind, as these only store water and do not grow again. Chemical control of dense infestations could be planned for next spring.

Japanese honeysuckle (*Lonicera japonica*) is another pest occurring in large infestations which totally prevent native bush regeneration. Hopefully effective means of dealing with this will be sorted out in due course.

Mark McAlpine, Greater Wellington's pest plant expert, has recently visited the reserve. He expressed concern about the prevalence of certain wattle species in parts of the reserve and the number of mature hawthorn trees growing above Mawson Street. I await news on official policy about these unwanted exotics in native bush reserves.

Website: For a period, comprehensive information about the reserve could be readily accessed via the Internet from a website operated by John McKenzie while he was in business as a Land Agent with Harcourts. John has since moved on into another field and his website is now closed. He has kindly passed to me his website files pertaining to the reserve. I have been discussing with Hutt City Council officials how best to have this data up-dated and made readily accessible from the Council's website for hosting voluntary organisations.

Track & Trail Map: Appended for your information (and exploration?) is the track and trail map which John McKenzie published on his website. Note that this map is NOT to scale. Note also that the link between the Mawson Ridge Track and the Whites Gully Track is currently impassable near the headwaters of the Tyndall Creek.

How to become a Friend of the Reserve: I would like regular visitors to the reserve to become a "Friend". I do not envisage the "Friends" organisation being a body with formal monthly meetings and an annual subscription. I see it more as a loose network of "hands-on" volunteers prepared to give a little time and effort now and again to care for a conservation area they love to visit. Communication will be mainly by phone or e-mail. Periodic get-togethers to informally discuss matters will also be very much a social gathering, say sharing some nice wine. I would like individual "Friends" to take responsibility for monitoring all or part of a particular historic track or trail (see map) by walking it say once a month and letting me know whenever work needs doing, e.g. cutting back encroaching vegetation, clearing windfalls, etc. As a preventive measure, I would also like to see "Friends" adopt the habit of carrying a pair of secateurs with them when visiting the reserve – frequent use of these helps to keep in trim vegetation most likely to become a significant encroachment problem if left unchecked for long. However, whenever a group of volunteers is needed to deal with a problem, I will phone around to get the numbers needed and arrange a suitable date, time and meeting place.

Encourage neighbours and others you know to become a "Friend". Anyone willing to do so simply needs to phone me or let me know by e-mail.

Project Crimson: Bridget Abernethy, Executive Director of Project Crimson, recently visited the reserve and agrees that the rata trees there are a huge feature and should be publicised. See how many you can spot in the flowering season next December.

Looking forward working with you for the betterment of our reserve
Russ McStay