

# FRIENDS OF THE MARIBYRNONG VALLEY

## NEWSLETTER WINTER 2006

### CELEBRATING THE 20<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF FMV

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This Newsletter is timed to go with the celebration of the FMV 20<sup>th</sup> year anniversary so it takes a different format from usual. In looking at the sort of activities that FMV is involved with, it notes that this diversity has contributed to the longevity and success of the group. There were times when we put heads together in special projects like the preparation of the *Birds of the Maribyrnong* book and the educational video, *The Other River* and created a series of heritage signs placed at sites of historical note along the river and collaborated to create a re-enactment of the historic exploration of the Maribyrnong by Charles Grimes. In addition, the business of friends' groups is interaction - both at personal and community levels - to achieve the desired outcomes. Friends of the Maribyrnong has succeeded for twenty years in a variety of endeavours and we now embark on the next twenty.

The event to celebrate our first twenty years is to be held at the bluestone building at Pipemakers Park (Melway 28 B9) on Sunday 25 June 2006 between 2.00 and 4.30pm. We will be displaying photographic archives of the group. Maribyrnong Council will be showing their amazing interactive 3D video of the river and there will be afternoon tea while you mix with members past and present. I hope you can make it.

One thing about Friends' groups is that they are always busy. If they were not then either they are doing something wrong or the area does not need them. With Friends of the Maribyrnong Valley, our issues are somewhat different from the

usual friends group. In stead of having the usual well defined area of maybe a few hundred hectares or down to a single hectare or less, FMV has its defined limits from the confluence of Deep Creek and Jacksons Creek to the Bay. In practical terms though, whatever happens in the catchment affects the lower reaches so our mandated field of interest extends upstream to the slopes of Mount Macedon.

This enormous area of significance for FMV means that our attention has to be dedicated in different ways from the traditional friends' group. With the larger area come larger and more diverse problems. It is a tribute to the members of FMV that we have continued to make a significant contribution to the wellbeing of our river and have secured a place in the thinking of all of the administrations that impinge on the river. We know them all and cooperate and collaborate with them. Such bodies as the municipalities that share the river, especially Hume, Brimbank, Moonee Valley and Maribyrnong and the other administrations including Port Phillip and Westernport Catchment Management Authority, Melbourne Water and Parks Victoria. These bodies regularly call on FMV for input to reports, reviews and proposals which involve the future of the river and particularly its health, viability, biodiversity, revegetation, and public awareness. We are currently in a phase of frenetic activity on the Maribyrnong. The city of Maribyrnong for example is processing projects on an open space strategy, a strategic policy on a Sustainable Maribyrnong and the Highpoint Area Strategy Plan, and Melbourne Water, with its newly found responsibilities here is pursuing a Management Activity Plan as well as having produced the draft of its Sustainable Water Strategy. The PP&WCMA has reached a definitive stage of its Regional Catchment Strategy 2004-09. FMV has had input to all of these, with attendance at meetings and workshops and perusal of drafts.

This sort of activity is on top of the nuts and bolts of what friends' groups do. In chosen areas, attention is given to weed eradication and control, revegetation, litter removal and the ongoing assessment of the wellbeing of the river environment to keep a check on any occurrences that threaten or endanger our chosen arena.

Specifically, the FMV volunteers, who go out every week to tend their plots to beautify the river landscape and make it a better place in the future, have chosen to toil in two special areas. Both happen to be in Avondale Heights/City of Moonee Valley, where their efforts contribute to both the appearance of the valley and to its biodiversity. They are at Grimes' Flat, south of Canning Street and the section of escarpment between the Canning Street oval and the former Teagardens. In addition to extensive weed removal and revegetation projects there is a tranquil enclosure that long past was a little quarry site, that is being developed as a special educational native garden. For those who are curious, these sites are worth a visit. They can be accessed by

the public at any time but you might like to have a personally guided tour with some of the team that has been working there.

Another part of being a friends' group these days is to have a website. This serves to publicise in timely manner, everything about the group and what it is doing. The FMV website is at <http://www.fmvonline.com>. Two recent features that are being started and developed are the plant and animal checklists and a "Sites of Special Interest" column. The checklist has started with recent sightings of birds. It was initiated by Simon Purves and the Afton Street group and has been expanded with recent additions in the valley. We are collecting authentic observations and are hoping to start the plants list soon, hopefully with collaboration of specialist and other groups in the area.

FMV has become aware from time to time of planning applications that threaten the wellbeing of the river valley and commercial and other urban activities that impinge adversely on the river environment. In the past we have taken these matters up with the appropriate authorities and pressed to get satisfactory resolutions. Now with the website we have a means to bring such matters to a wider public so that we can create a better degree of community awareness of issues. To start the Sites of Special Interest column, we are presenting resumes on two development situations that have the potential to create disastrous environmental consequences and one site where for a long period there has been dumping in the flood zone of the river.

To close, we of the Friends of the Maribyrnong Valley invite everyone to contribute in any they are able to make Victoria an even better place to live, in the future. If that endeavour happens to be on the Maribyrnong, we welcome you.

John Upsher.