

FRIENDS OF THE MARIBYRNONG VALLEY NEWSLETTER SPRING 2007

CHRISTMAS - LET US THINK ABOUT GOODWILL...

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

As we approach the festive season, with thoughts of that welcome break across New Year and the hottest Melbourne months still to come, it may be a good opportunity to consider the circumstances in which groups such as FMV work.

In general terms a Friends Group has an area of focus in which to ply its endeavours. It may enhance its chosen area so that it more closely resembles the original condition or is more pleasant to the eye or favours the abundance of a particular group of plants or animals. Friends of the Maribyrnong is somewhat different in that by dint of its name and its constitution, it has a massive field of interest along the river from the tranquil depths of the valleys around the confluence of Deep Creek and Jacksons Creek through thirty-odd kilometers of suburbia to the dockland that characterises its entrance to Port Phillip Bay. Consequently FMV has to interact with a number of different agencies including Melbourne Water, Parks Victoria, Port Phillip and Westernport Catchment Authority, 5 or 6 different municipalities and the Port of Melbourne too. When you also consider staff turnover at these agencies, it becomes arduous to maintain working relations with everyone.

FMV maintains an intense focus on reaches of the Maribyrnong in the western part of the City of Moonee Valley. Over a number of years our industrious team, the Wednesday people, has laboured with weed control and revegetation, at Grimes Flat (Mel. 26 E9) and the Canning Street escarpment (Mel.26 G6), downstream from there and other areas too. The results are there to be seen. Through having such constant and close attention to this section of the river, FMV becomes aware of problems and situations often before the custodian authority. So an extension of the Friends Group role is to bring matters to the attention of the relevant body and then to press to make sure that remediation is done.

A current issue with FMV is the erosion of riverbanks mainly on the outer side of bends particularly downstream from Canning Street. Erosion by water flow is only one factor in the collapse of river banks on the Maribyrnong. The fishing people who fossick under rocks and dig around the reeds for anything alive to use for bait are first in the sequence of the destruction. In order that we could bring the state of the banks to the attention of all relevant parties and hopefully a stimulate a programme of remediation, Ian Wheeler took a big initiative and invited reps of a number of the municipalities, MW and PV and politicians for a cruise on the stalwart MV Blackbird to view the banks from mid-river. Prospective Member for Maribyrnong Bill Shorten was also taken on a land-based tour to see the same area too. Needless to say all who experienced Ian's guided tours were well informed not only of the river problems but of the prospects for the Maribyrnong Defence Site on the right bank. They also became more familiar with the interests and activities of FMV. Great effort, Ian and thanks too to Peter for the Blackbird.

If FMV is to be pro-active in the stabilization of the presently delicate river banks, there would need to be a project coordinator. The job would involve putting together the approvals and funding and efforts of municipalities, MW and contractors - a daunting task for a Friends Group and would almost certainly exceed the available resources and expertise of the group. Now hope is in sight. Melbourne Water has become aware of this sort of problem facing Friends Groups and to assist in a paternal way is its plan to put officers in the catchments to provide that sort of support. Jacquie White who is Community Programs Manager with MW is coming to our February meeting to tell us and other Friends Group members how this "more feet on the ground" initiative will affect groups like ours. (Highpoint Library, 7.30pm Wed 6 February).

SEASONAL GOODWILL 1.....

The end-of-year social get-together for 2007 is to be held at Horseshoe Bend Farm starting at 6.30 on Wednesday 5 December. The arrangement is to BYO goodies for the barbeque and a plate/dish of something to go with it and a dessert to share too. Important also, to make sure the body does not get dehydrated so drinks would be mandatory. All FMV invited and we will be welcoming members of FO Steeles Creek to join us that night.

SEASONAL GOODWILL 2.....

At this season of generosity of spirit I will acknowledge that about 65% of the members of FMV are paid-up for the year. The more astute-minded will realize that this means that 35% have not paid up yet. Our membership fees go a long way to keeping the group going so please if you are in that 35%, please forward your sub soon.

SEASONAL GOODWILL 3.....

Being Newsletter Editor allows me to distribute greetings and acknowledgements like tinsel in the wind. Special thanks and greetings to all the members of FMV who have made big efforts in 2007 - you know who you are; also to Melbourne Water and the municipalities especially the cities of Moonee Valley and Maribyrnong who, through grants and other assistance, make it possible for FMV to keep achieving; and the several guest speakers who have so generously given up their time to come to talk to us on Wednesday nights.

Make 2008 a good one!

John.