



# The Friends of Belair Park

Volunteers working for Conservation  
Established 1985



DECEMBER 1996

## PRESIDENTS REPORT.

Dear Friends,

Such a lot has happened since our last newsletter - there are reports from Beth on the Cleland Walk held on 31st August, and the Friends Forum at Noarlunga in September elsewhere in this newsletter. In October, we were invited to participate in a heritage conference at Mitcham, namely "Towards 2001 - a Heritage Odyssey" organised by Maggie Ragless, local history officer at Mitcham. I would like to thank members of our group who helped prepare our display stand and who "manned" it during Saturday 19th October. We used Ray Nash's orchid photos as well as some others promoting our Friends Group.

Our monthly meetings have been fairly well attended, and in September, October and November Stuart Paul, our Liaison Ranger, kept us up-to-date on Park activities. Malcolm Lane also gave us a short talk on Fauna Management in Belair National Park, this was in September.

Sunday morning weeding, on the third Sunday each month, still attracts a faithful few, and the Mayor of Mitcham has publicly invited people to attend on Sunday 17th November, so we shall see what sort of response we get!

Our Thursday afternoon weeding stints have been changed, because of the hot weather, to Friday mornings between 8 am - 10 am. The area which is least attractive yet most visible to visitors is the denuded land adjoining the Belair Railway Station - the weed infestation since massive tree removal some years ago is depressing, but we must persevere. More workers are always most welcome.

I shall close with heartfelt thanks to everyone for their continued support and interest in our group, and look forward to seeing you all at our end-of-year tea on December 19th - which is actually the "birthday" of Belair National Park.

With kind regards,

Lynda Knight.



**ODDS AND ENDS OF NEWS.**

Volunteer Centre:- We expect to hold our December 7th meeting in our new quarters. We are grateful for the help and co-operation which we have received from the Belair Park staff and from our members. I trust we shall be happy and comfortable there.

Tim Fuhlbuhrm is back from his West Australian sojourn, but unfortunately is not on our team.

Blackwood Christmas Pageant, on 6th December, the Blackwood Apex Club, who run the pageant, have invited us to participate. We invite members to join us in the parade and "show the flag"



**NOTES FOR YOUR 1997 DIARY.**

- January No meeting.
- February 1st Annual General Meeting.  
Election of 1997 Committee and Executive.
- February 17th Deadline for the next Newsletter.
- April 8th Tuesday walks re-commence on 2nd and 4th Tuesdays.
- October 12th Friends Forum on Kangaroo Island.
- October Cleland Walk to be finalised.

**END OF YEAR PARTY.**

On 19th December, at 5.30 pm, we shall be holding our annual tea at Pines Oval, No 2 shelter. As this is the official "birthday" of Belair National Park, we have invited a few visitors and we hope everyone will come along, with their partners. Will you please bring some party food, as well as a chair and drinks.



## ANOTHER INVITATION

### CENTRAL REGION CHRISTMAS FUNCTION.

On behalf of the Parks staff, The Manager, Central Region, cordially invites the Friends of Belair National Park and their families to attend a Christmas B,B,Q. To be held at The Main Oval Belair National Park on Friday 13th December from 6.30 pm.

In acknowledgment of the ongoing assistance and support of our Consultative Committees and Friends Groups.

R.S.V.P. 7th December. Gayle Playford. Tel 0882785477.

### PROFESSOR CLELAND WALK 1996

The Annual Professor Sir John Cleland Memorial Walk , which commemorates the lifetime committed to our Parks by the late Sir John Cleland, was held in Belair National Park on Saturday 31st August. It was very ably lead by local historian, Dene Cordes, who is Community Liaison Officer with the Department of Environment and National Resources. He is a member of Friends of Belair National Park and author of the book "The Park at Belair"

It was a beautiful sunny day with a forecasted maximum of 20 degrees C, when we met at the Main Oval Pavilion at 10 am. About sixty people participated in the walk. Dene Cordes explained to the group who Professor John Cleland was and why we held the walk each year.

The Main Oval Pavilion was built before 1900 and has been in continuous use for 100 years. It was almost demolished some years ago because it was in a bad state of repair, it was saved by a Heritage Committee and upgraded for the Centenary of Belair National Park in 1991. Nearby we saw the Old Wells and the site of the Old Jail

We then walked along Sanders Way to the Western Lodge, a fine home built in 1893 and occupied for more than 40 years by Andrew Wright and his wife, Mary, family and staff. Andrew Wright was one of the longest serving staff members in the Park system and is thought to have been an employee at Belair National Park for about 49 years. When he was about 70 years old, and his old horse had broken down, he was asked to give up work in the Park and move out of Western Lodge. His reply was, "If I had known the job wouldn't be permanent, I wouldn't have taken it on"!

Walking around the Playford Lake, which was full of water, it looked very beautiful. We saw the Houlahan, Lyon and Rio Memorials, we then moved on to the Gooch Monument and Gooch Road, in memory of Walter Gooch who did so much in establishing the National Park at Belair by saving the Government Farm from sale.



After that we walked up the Sir Edwin Smith Avenue, through a fine avenue of sugar gums and saw the Old Maze of hawthorns on the left. We cut across to Scout Glen where there is a memorial to William Burchnall, a scout, who lost his life in an accident at a Scout Corroboree held in the park during the summer on 1936-1937.

Just after midday we arrived at Old Government House, a former summer residence for the Governor. In the beautiful garden, under the shady trees and comfortably seated we relaxed and had our picnic lunch. After lunch we were shown over Old Government House by the Friends of Old Government House and saw the Dining Room which was set up for a formal dinner to be held that night in honour of a previous curator of the house. From there we moved on to the Gold Escort Ground where horses used to be rested after their journey from the goldfields in Victoria with gold for the Treasury in Adelaide. We also saw the site where Footswell House had stood and the trees which surrounded it.

The Commissioner's Shack, which has been restored, is in the Works Enclosure. At Long Gully we heard about the Spurr family and saw the Grocery Tree where goods used to be left for farmers, workers and residents in the park. Coming back past the Railway Dam, we heard that a former curator had been drowned there.



Refreshments were served, by some of the member of Friends of Belair National Park, back at the Volunteer Centre. Dene Cordes was thanked by our President Lynda Knight for a most successful and interesting day. About 12 kms was covered during the walk.



Beth Pitman.

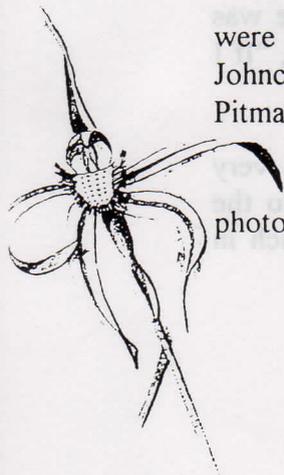
### FORUM REPORT.

The 12th Annual Friends of Parks Inc. Forum, hosted this year by Friends of Onkaparinga Park, was held at the South Adelaide Football Clubrooms at Noarlunga Downs from Friday 20th September to Sunday 22nd September.

The theme was "Human Impact on National Parks - Positive and Negative"

About 250 Friends registered for the Forum. Those from our group who attended were Lynda Knight, Joyce Underdown, Judith O'Hara, Doug and Ruth Riley, Daphne Johncock, Amber Kell, Ann and Gill Ross, Betty and Paul Franche and Beth and Ron Pitman. Betty and Paul are also members of Friends of Onkaparinga Park.

Our display was on "Native Orchids in Belair National Park" with beautiful photographs kindly lent by Ray Nash. This was well organised and set up by Lynda and



Joyce. It was not entered in the competition as the displays had to be on the theme of the Forum.

The Friday night was informal with slides, video, light entertainment and socialising. The more formal part began on Saturday with a "Welcome to the City of Noarlunga", by the Mayor Mr Ray Gilbert. The Forum was opened by the Minister of Environment and Natural Resources, Mr David Wotton, who has been attending these Forums for years even when in Opposition. Also present was Mr Alan Holmes C.E.O. of National Parks.

After a roll call by Dene Cordes a soapbox session was held. This was followed by two most interesting speakers. Dr Sandra Taylor of the Mawson Graduate Centre for Environmental Studies, University of Adelaide, spoke about 'Revegetation Strategy' and Alan Holmes, Director of National Parks talked about Strategic Directions.

After lunch buses came to take us on tours of various places in the Onkaparinga Conservation Park. The tours were graded for varied walking difficulties. On our tour we saw the man made Wetlands, viewed a direct seeding and soil erosion project site, everyone planted a tree here. Viewed the river and gorge from the lookout, saw wildflower areas and visited the Centenary Bridge at Old Noarlunga.

A dinner was held at the Clubrooms in the evening. On Sunday the soapbox session continued and then people were directed into two groups. One group stayed inside to listen to speakers about Community Offenders program and its use in our Parks, and Fire Control. The other group meanwhile visited displays and took part in activities outside. Later the groups changed over.

At the end of the Forum awards were presented. We were fortunate to receive two awards - one in recognition of Weed Control over a number of years and the second for Best Newsletter for 1996. The Forum was held to be most successful. The next Forum is to be held on Kangaroo Island from 10th to 12th October 1997

Beth Pitman.



**RE-BEST NEWSLETTER AWARD.**

I would like to thank all members who contributed in any way to the Newsletter, those who wrote reports on events, weeding, Tuesday Walks etc and those who sent interesting articles to be included in the Newsletter. It is largely through your efforts that we achieved this award. Please keep up the good work, who knows we may win it again next year.

Many thanks,

Ann Ross.

## TOWARDS 2001 - A HERITAGE ODYSSEY

On the 19th and 20th October Friends of Belair National Park were represented at a Seminar, held at the Mitcham Council Chambers and organised by the Cities of Mitcham, Unley and Happy Valley. Beth Pitman attended on the Saturday and Lynda Knight on the Sunday. The emphasis was on Community History and how we might celebrate the Centenary of Federation in 2001. Our group arranged a display, which was set up in the Old Mitcham Primary School and tended by Brian Du Bois and Ron Pitman.

The Mayor of Mitcham, Joy O'Hazy welcomed us all on the Saturday. The first speaker was a young student, Michael Hicks, who is doing Law - Economics at University of Adelaide. It was great to hear someone young speak confidently about what he hoped for in the future. The next speaker was Graham Hancock from the National Trust of South Australia. Other speakers were from the State Library, City of Unley Museum and a heritage consultant.

During a two hour break at lunch time we split into 3 groups to go on historic walks along Brownhill Creek, around Torrens Park and through Nellie's Garden and the Railway Station.

At the end of the afternoon there was a Brain Storm session during which ideas were gathered on sheets of paper and displayed.

The lunch, morning and afternoon teas were delicious. Many thanks to Maggie Ragless who arrange the occasion.

Beth Pitman.

## ADDENDUM TO BETH'S REPORT ON MITCHAM HERITAGE.

On Sunday 20th October, I joined a group for the second day of the "Mitcham Heritage Weekend", which took the form of a day visiting, by bus, points of interest in the Mitcham, Unley and Happy Valley council areas. We visited many historic places, including the Unley Museum in Edmund Street - very interesting. Of particular interest was the house which was once Kyre College, where Howard Florey attended school. We were shown through Old Government House and then picnicked for lunch nearby. Aberfoyle Park, Clarendon and Mt Bold Reservoir were all additional historic places visited - the historians were very knowledgeable and informative.

Lynda Knight.



## TUESDAY WALKS.

The twice monthly walks in the Park, held at 2 pm on the second and fourth Tuesdays each month, have been well attended. A few new members have joined us, and we welcome them, we are happy to share some of the pleasant surprises. One foggy day in September we were amazed at the number of "Mayfly" orchids between the Upper and Lower waterfalls

We had a record attendance of 25 walkers early in October, when we were joined by Beverly and Dan Jaeger and Malcolm Liddle at the Upper Sturt end of the Park, to dig out Monodenia orchids. Some hundreds of bulbs were dug - both immature and fully grown. Quite a few of our group enjoyed having our afternoon tea at the Jaeger's home with the added pleasure of admiring their tame bandicoots!

We shall not be walking during the hottest months of January, February and March, but will resume in April.

Lynda Knight.

## WEEDING IN THE UPPER STURT ROAD AREA OF THE PARK

### THIS REPORT WAS HELD OVER FROM THE LAST NEWSLETTER.



Up in the higher altitudes of the National Park two willing workers have been making a concerted effort to eradicate ? hopefully a range of those exotic plants that have taken a strong hold on this area. Work is being carried out in the area bounded by the House Track, Upper Sturt Road and Cherry Plantation Road forming a triangle section in the most south easterly corner of the park. Within the confines of this area there are many good sections of natural bushland, while other locations are infested with high concentrations of Blackberry, Broome and Erica. In the areas of natural bush intensive effort has been made to remove all the small pockets of pest plants to minimise the risk of spreading. The major problem left in those locations is Blackberry. This will require some major strategic planning to control or hopefully eradicate these large significant infestations.

Over the last few months a substantial effort has been made to clear large areas of Erica by hand pulling and within the next month or so most of these should be removed. Unfortunately this is only one of many exotic plants but if we can eradicate most of the Erica we can start on the Broome next winter. I guess in the near future it will be time to start on the removal of the Monodenia orchids.

There has been a blessing in disguise, as two areas of Erica are smothered with Dodda and very few plants have gathered the strength to flower this season.



Unfortunately the Dodda is also parasitising the native plants that are trying to establish themselves. Although Dodda is a native species, unless it is removed, it will severely restrict the revegetation of these locations. Plant revegetation is slowly taking place in areas that were severely degraded when the bull dozers were used in the removal of the Pinus radiata. Hopefully, with the removal of the Erica and other exotics it should allow them to get a better grip on life and slowly return to the natural bush we all like to see.

Many native orchids are also establishing themselves which provides a bright light for the future.

Danny Jaeger and Malcolm Liddle.

### REPORT ON WEEDING ETC. 2/10/96

Since the last monthly meeting 68.5 person hours have been spent on pulling weeds and Watsonia, propping up fallen native shrubs and Blackberry spraying in the Belair Railway Station area, the Maze and the Jubilee Drive areas.

Seven people have been involved in these operations. This does not include Joyce Underdown's mammoth part in Watsonia eradication, the last Sunday working bee and other members efforts in other areas of the Park.

We started the Blackberry spraying program on Tuesday 29th October, a team of four carrying out this very necessary work, we are not only spraying Blackberry but also a lot of other infestations, ie Blowfly Bush or Buckthorn [Rhamnus Alaternus]

I would like to thank the Belair Park management for providing the chemicals and equipment for this operation. Stuart has been particularly helpful in all aspects of weeding and spraying. We like the two new "state of the art" knapsacks, although I did hear one helper comment how heavy the knapsack was when full.

The Watsonia "dig" is almost completed, only a few stray plants left.

The Thursday working bee has now been changed for the summer months to Friday mornings 8 am to 10 am, contact me for the area to be worked on.

Doug Riley.



## **RABBITS?**

As they say never give up hope. The Australian bush given a chance has tremendous powers of recovery, provided the invasion of exotic plants and animals can be eradicated or controlled. The rabbit must be considered as our major problem to ecological recovery of the native bush lands.

From research we know that warrens contain approximately 10 rabbits, each eating approximately 100 grams of dry vegetation per day. When you consider the large numbers of rabbits in some locations, many tons of dry matter is consumed per day. So it's easy to see our native vegetation has little or no chance of recovery until this pest is substantially reduced.

The rabbit Calicivirus arrived on a 600 sq. km pastoral lease late in 1995. After sufficient rains and time the effect of the mass destruction of rabbits is beginning to become evident. Banks of native perennial plants, such as blue bush, bladder salt bush, pearl bush and butter bush are furiously re-establishing across the property now that the swarms of rabbits have been significantly reduced by the virus. Some of the old native trees of the region are starting to successfully re-shoot for the first time in more than 40 years.

These can be considered exciting times and over the next few years given half a chance all manner of native vegetation may regenerate. The re-establishment of the trees and understorey plants will provide the appropriate habitat for the return of native bird life and other native fauna.

The announcement by the Government that the Calicivirus is to be released nationally to reduce our massive rabbit problem will provide a much needed respite to allow natural regeneration of the denuded and degraded vegetation.

Malcolm Liddle.

## **OUR CHRISTMAS BUSH**

Thankfully, *Bursaria spinosa*, which was once common on the Adelaide Plains is well conserved in the Belair National Park. This much branched shrub grows to head high with clusters of small honey-scented cream flowers which appear in the early summer - hence the common name South Australian Christmas Bush.

The name *Bursaria* is derived from the Latin *Bursa* - a bag or purse, referring to the small purse-like fruits which have 2 divisions, each containing 1 to 3 seeds. They form in brown pyramidal clusters. Despite the name *spinosa* [L. *Spinosum* - prickly or spiny] the only spines on the local form are at the end of the branchlets.

If the leaves are soaked in water a blue florescence develops. This is due to the formation of the compound Aesculin which has several medicinal uses. It absorbs ultra-violet light, thus being used in sunburn creams, light filters and laboratories for identifying bacteria. Production from Bursaria has now ceased in favour of the European Horsechestnut tree.

The wood is and was used for turnery, but the most endearing feature today is the great butterfly attracting power of its fragrant flowers.

Vern Whittenbury.



*Season's Greetings and best wishes  
throughout the New Year*