



# The Friends of Belair Park

Volunteers working for Conservation  
Established 1985  
BEST NEWSLETTER 1996.

MARCH 1997

PRESIDENTS REPORT FOR YEAR ENDING 31st DECEMBER 1996.

I should like to commence this report by expressing my gratitude to those members who last year elected me to be President of this group, and I hope that I have not failed that trust.

I wish to thank all members for their co-operation during 1996, and in particular, the Committee members who have worked so well together, for the benefit of the Park. I would also like to thank all the staff members of the Park, for their co-operation and kindnesses during the year. Stuart Paul, our Liaison Ranger, has been like a breath of fresh air, and we deeply appreciate his help during 1996.



We had 54 financial members in 1996, but the average attendances at monthly meeting was only 17. We had seven new members join our group, and we have warmly welcomed them. Let us hope that our membership will grow, so that more people will be aware of the treasure that this lovely Park is, and help us to look after it.

Some of the highlights of the year included the allocation of the former Long Gully kiosk, as the Volunteer Centre, and the subsequent refurbishment by participants of the "Leap" programme. Members of our group have since given time and energy to make it comfortable, and we particularly thank Darren for his part in organising some of the facilities here. The "Friends of Government House", who are also entitled to share this Centre, very generously gave us \$500 towards a new stove.



The Department of the Environment and Natural Resources have supplied a great deal of valuable equipment for poison spraying our invasive pest plants - back pack sprays, gloves, masks and filters - and these have been used to good effect. A commercial sprayer was also employed by the Department to experiment up near the Lodge Track. I shall not name all the people who have worked so hard, attempting to rid the Park of the many exotic plants which have flourished for so long, but I think we all appreciate their dedicated efforts at eradication.

During last year, interesting guest speakers at our meetings have included John Hanel, an exchange ranger from Western Australia, telling of his work with Conservation and Land Management there. Paul and Betty Franche showed us slides and described their visit to Easter Island and the Galapagos Islands. Dan Jaeger also visited South America last year, with his wife Beverley, and he entertained us with slides and descriptions of life in the places they visited.

One pleasant surprise during 1996, was the gift of \$500 from the Mitcham Traders, derived from the sale of calico shopping bags, in the cause of conservation. This donation was directed to our group by Mitcham Mayor, Joy O'Hazy, who is one member who joins our Sunday morning working bees, when she is able. She also tries to encourage local people to join in!



Our Tuesday Walks during 1996 have been very pleasant - not once cancelled by rain! Some new members have joined in, and one occasion we had over thirty Friends enjoying the beautiful flora in our Parks. A few of us have obliged outside groups of visitors by leading them on a walk during the Spring flowering season, and Ron Pitman has supervised some Senior Scouts who were working towards certain badges.

The Professor Cleland Walk in the Spring was led by historian Dene Cordes, and enjoyed by about fifty people. The weather was perfect, and the topic "History of Belair National Park" of great interest.



The Friends of Parks Annual Forum, held at Noarlunga in September, was hosted by the Friends of Onkaparinga, with approximately 250 Friends of various groups participating. Our group was honoured with two awards - Best Newsletter for 1996, and Pest Plant Control. We sincerely thank Ann Ross for her enthusiasm and imaginative presentation of our quarterly newsletter. We took a display of Ray Nash's photographs of orchids which grow in Belair National Park, and they were much admired. We also used the same display at the Mitcham Heritage weekend in September.

In December the staff of Central District invited our group, as well as others in the region, to a barbecue tea at the Main Oval Pavilion. It was a perfect summer's evening, and was thoroughly enjoyed by all. On December 19th, our Friends group celebrated the 105th "birthday" of Belair Park with a B.Y.O. tea at the Pines Oval. About seventy people attended, including Darren Willis, District Ranger, his wife and children, together with other Rangers and invited Friends.

Also in December, another of our activities was to join in the Blackwood Apex Christmas Pageant. Brian Du Bios and Ron Pitman prepared Brian's vehicle, with our logo flying high along with Sturt's Desert Pea flag. Nine of us joined in this public relations exercise, although we did not expect to be drenched in rain!

Late in December, we were fortunate to receive news of a grant from the Director, for re-vegetation purposes, of \$650, so we will soon have to start planning that exercise.

I must close by sincerely thanking each and every one of you, for being so patient, and I do hope you realise how valuable your attendance and contributions of interest are. I hope we will have a pleasant and productive year in 1997.

Thank you all very much.

Lynda Knight.

### NEW MEMBERS.

Welcome to the following members who have joined since September '96 Valerie and John Edwards, Di and Keith Vickery, Tom Bickerton, Barbara Johnson, Bronwyn Bean, Mrs Margaret McKay, Ruth and Barry Palmer and John Hefford.

TUESDAY WALKS. Refer to calender.

PEST PLANT ERADICATION. 1996. Report prepared by Ranger Stuart Paul.

This comprehensive report is in two parts. FRIENDS OF BELAIR NATIONAL PARK, PROJECTS 1996. And CONTRACT PEST PLANT WORKS.

The second part CONTRACT PEST PLANT WORKS will be reported in the June newsletter.

FRIENDS OF BELAIR NATIONAL PARK. PROJECTS 1996.

### FOLLOW UP PROJECT.

During 1996 the Friends of Belair recorded around **400 hours** voluntary work within the park. On top of this a number of individuals contributed many hours work in different areas which have not been recorded in the Friends Diary.

The strategic focus and therefore success of the Friends Group in 1996 is in part due to the introduction of the **Project System** whereby NPWS Ranger staff provide direction in the area of weed control. This has allowed for a **holistic pest plant program** where all work in the park has been planned and is in accordance with the Strategic Priorities for Pest Plant Management set at the beginning of each year.

This year the Friends concentrated work in areas which can be broadly defined in two groups:

- (a) Project follow up from previous years.
- (b) New work as specified by the project system.

Following is a brief discussion of works ongoing and complete under the above divisions.

## PROJECT FOLLOW UP.



### 1. Chemical Treatment -Railway and Western park boundary. Coordinated by Doug Riley

Throughout the month of November and early December the F.O.B. spot sprayed many weeds in the north western corner of the park and along the western boundary. Target species were blackberry and buckthorn although others including boneseed and hawthorn were sprayed. This area has been worked on in previous years with targets species being blackberry, boneseed and south african daisy. This year very little south african daisy and boneseed was seen thus indicating the success of the program.

Further large scale weed control should be considered prior to revegetation.

### 2. Weeding and Revegetation Railway Area. Coordinated by Lynda Knight.

The rehabilitation of the north western corner of the park has been underway for a number of years with native tubestock species planted now establishing themselves. This year the F.O.B. have hand weeded many species including broom, plalaris and boneseed with blackberry being spot sprayed. Maintenance of native species has taken place with tree guards being installed to protect young plants from grazing/trampling. Being naturally boggy the area supports a large number of sedge/rush species which should spread in future years with continued pest plant removal. This work took place through ongoing weekly working bees.

### 3. Boneseed Removal, Morowie Track. Coordinated by Joyce Underdown.

In recent years the area north of the Morowie Track has been cleared of a great deal of boneseed with results showing substantial native bushland regeneration. South of the Morowie Track this native heath midstorey was also heavily infested, however many hours hand pulling this year has removed the bulk of the species. Given the results on the northern side of the track, this area should regenerate naturally in future years.

### 4. General amenity weeding. Various members.

In many areas of the park native vegetation in good condition encroaches on roadsides or visitor facilities. The Friends have hand weeded these areas extensively pulling/cutting a variety of species. Areas paid most attention include the roadside verges of both Pines Oval Rd and Queens Jubilee Dve. And the block of native vegetation between the roads. The surrounding areas and between the Pines and Government Farm Picnic areas have also been concentrated on with weeding and maintenance of planted tubestock occurring. The Friends are also largely responsible for the maintenance and weeding of the front office area.



## PROJECT SYSTEM WORK

### 1. Vegetation survey - North Pines Oval. Coordinated by Eric Cole.

This block of native vegetation is in excellent condition and displays a high degree of biodiversity. Pest plant species are scattered throughout the area and removal is suitable only by hand. Mapping both exotics and natives at 100 metre intervals gives an overall impression of the extent of invasion in a given area, the pest plant species present and the native species associated. Results of this survey are down-loaded in PAMS and will be used to program pest plant clearance in 1997.



### 2. Pest Plant Removal - Creek North Pines Oval. Coordinated by Eric Cole.

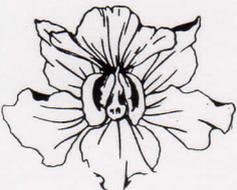
The creek system in the above mentioned vegetation block has been extensively weeded by the F.O.B. with boneseed, olive and sallow wattle being the dominant species removed. Weeding was carried out by hand pulling and cutting out larger trees with plant being placed in heaps. This has resulted in the main creekline being free of weeds which could be seen to be spreading north into the native bushland area. Extensive weeding around the edge of the bushland area has removed a lot of this invading boneseed. Follow up pulling of young seedlings will take place in September 1997.

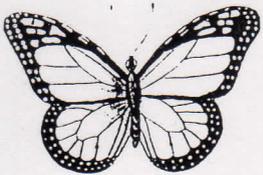
### 3. Pest Plant Removal - North Pines Oval. Coordinated by Ron Pitman.

The area immediately north of the Pines Oval was previously dominated by *Pinus Radiata* with thick boneseed understorey. Evidence of this can be seen in the area north west of the oval where this association still remains. In recent years the pine trees have been cut out immediately north of the oval and hand pulling of boneseed has taken place. Work on this project has been completed this year with the F.O.B. receiving periodic assistance from local scout groups. Follow up work will take place in Sept/Oct '97 as there will be many seedlings arising. Removal of boneseed here with help natural regeneration of the area and aid in the protection of the native vegetation association north of the Carawatha Track. The removal of pines and boneseed in the area north west of the oval will also begin in 1997.

### 4. Removal large Watsonia patch - Queens Jubilee Drive. Coordinated by Doug Riley and Joyce Underdown.

The vegetation between Queens Jubilee Drive and Pines Oval Road is in good condition and relatively weed free. A large patch of watsonia was removed from this area by hand as spraying was not suitable. This approach was labour intensive but worthwhile as individual bulbs were dug out, collected in bags and removed from the site. This method resulted in minimal disturbance to native vegetation whereas spraying would have caused off target damage. Follow up digging of any remaining bulbs will take place in October 1997.





5. Pest Plant Removal - East of Old Government House. Coordinated by Eric Cole.

The area east of Old Government House (bounded by Queens Jubilee Drive and the walk trail south of the tanks) is classified Open Woodland with grass understorey. Boneseed has been removed by hand here with other pest plants including olive and hawthorn planned for removal in 1997. The weeding of this, and of the broader area to the south east is part of a long term project aiming to protect this vegetation association from invasion by exotic species. Although few natives currently exist, this association is poorly preserved in the Mount Lofty Ranges. It also provides suitable habitat for the endangered greenhood orchid *pterostylis cucullata* which occurs in the park.

6. Pest Plant Control - Monadenia orchid / Erica sp. Coordinators Dan Jaeger and Melville Liddle.

The area bounded by the House Track, Upper Stuart Road and Cherry Plantation Road contains native bushland in good condition as well as areas infested with weeds such as Erica sp., Monadenia Orchid, Blackberry and Broom. Erica is not common in comparison with other weeds in the park and in this area many young plants were found germinating. These are obviously the progeny of a smaller number of mature bushes nearby. Many hours hand pulling has resulted in much of this infestation of young plants being removed. Follow up in 1997 and removal of large bushes will further reduce the capacity of this plant to spread. Hundreds of Monadenia Orchids (South African Orchids) were also dug out of this area. Bulbs were dug out and both plants and bulbs were bagged and removed from the site. Follow up digging of this orchid, as well as the initiation of measures to remove blackberry and broom is planned for 1997.

**1996 ESTIMATED VALUE - VOLUNTARY LABOUR.**

BELAIR FRIENDS - 500 hrs at \$13/hr. \$6,500  
(including assistance eg/ scouts.



\* This figure does not include staff hours of the many extra hours the Friends of Belair put in which have not been recorded.

**FRIDAY MORNING WORKING BEES. 8 am to 10 am.**

By Doug Riley.

Since my last report, Blackberry spraying has been completed. The spraying commenced on the 29th October and finished on the 9th December. Over this period of 41 days, 146 person hours was spent on this operation. The results are very encouraging. In some areas the spraying carried out late in November and early December will need follow up spraying this spring, probably due to the very dry conditions during this period.



Our attention was then diverted to the area behind the Volunteer Centre where quite considerable plantings of mainly Blackwoods (Acacia Melanoxylon) as well as other natives. We were concerned the heavy infestation of Phalaris and other nasties crowding out and in some cases completely covering Plantings.

However after 47 person hours our team uncovered, and cleared around the plantings that had survived. Our new Brush Cutter was used to cut down the bulk of the Phalaris improving the overall appearance of the area.

A lot of wire guards and stakes were collected and stored in the storeroom at the Volunteer Centre. These were around trees that had outgrown the need of them.

We are now carrying out maintenance in the area north of the Western entrance, this area is looking very good. Hardenbergia in particular is doing extremely well.

There are not many weeds, as long as we can prevent them seeding we will eventually eliminate them all. It is amazing what can be achieved over a period working only a couple of hours a week.

We are still receiving full cooperation and help from Stuart, I do hope he can stay with us, it is essential that the Friends and the Rangers work together in the endeavour to improve our Park.

THE KOOKABURRA. Observed 28th December 1995.



In December 1995 when I was checking the Parks perimeter fence up in the north east corner of the park, I was entertained by a pair of parent birds teaching a young bird to laugh. Not the raucous laugh we associate with the kookaburra (scientific name *Dacelo gigas*). This was a lesson for the young bird so it was just the basics it was being taught,..goo! arr! goo! Ah! A=h! ah! Goo! Ah ah! Goo! ah! And so on.

I wondered where it got its name KOOKABURRA from. The bird got its 'onomatopoeic' name from the Aborigines. As to why Kookaburra laugh it was until as recently as 1965 that the social habits of Australia's most famous bird remained obscure. A 24 year old American, Veronice Parry, began a scientific study of them for Monash University. She did the study in the Dandenong's around Belgrave. For 2 years the study went on. Assisted by her future husband they recorded the laughs, quarrels and daily activities of 89 birds. Many unexpected facts came to light including why the kookaburra laughs. The ritual dawn and dusk laughing, in which the entire family joins in, is used to mark and reaffirm territorial boundaries.

Using a wing tagging identification system, Parry also discovered that unlike other birds, not all kookaburras depart the nest to set up their own home. One or more offspring stay with their parents and forgo mating to help with the territory defence

as well as with the incubation of one to four small white eggs and to care for their parents young the following year. Since kookaburras live for up to 20 years, have a low death rate and do not all reproduce, this system helps keep their population in check. With Australia's mild winters there is no need to migrate. Mating for a lifetime and sometimes occupying the same nest for 15 years they enjoy a remarkably sophisticated and stable social system.

According to Aboriginal legend the "Sky People" called to the kookaburra to awaken them each day so they could light the great fire that illuminates and warms the earth. Tribal law forbade imitating the call for fear of offending the kookaburra and plunging the world into darkness.

There is a lot more one could write about the kookaburra - its food and its place in white mans history etc, but I'll conclude by recalling that in the Scouts we used to sing "A Kookaburra sits in the old gum tree" etc, and in the 30's a famous Kookaburra used to laugh on stage, radio and opened Australian newsreels.

Ron Pitman..

### **MEMBERSHIP.**

Membership fees for 1997 are now due. If you have not already paid please contact the Treasurer as soon as possible to ensure that you continue to receive your newsletter quarterly. Those who paid near the end of last year are covered for 1997 if they are new members.

Subscription are:- Single Member \$5.00  
Couples. \$7.50.

Treasurer.  
Friends of Belair National Park.  
C/- Belair National Park.  
P.O. Box 2.  
BELAIR. 5052.

**DEADLINE FOR NEXT NEWSLETTER.** 23rd May.

