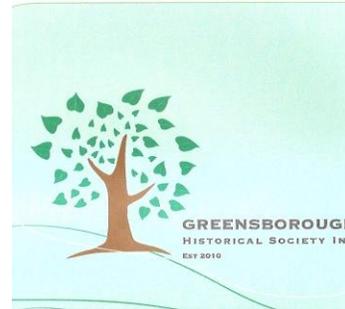


Greensborough Historical Society Inc.

Newsletter

Edition 51, September 2023

Incorporation No. **A0054430X**
ABN **64 318 435 402**



President's Report

Welcome to the September 2023 newsletter.

The Society's life is steadily returning to normal with regular Thursday gatherings at the HRC and only a few items of fine tuning to be completed from the renovations. My thanks go to Sue Ballantyne and Noel Withers for keeping the builders focussed.

Regrettably, we heard that GHS member Peter Reichenbach passed away in early July. Our condolences are extended to Helen and her family.

At our July meeting Noel Withers gave a presentation called "Seeking a Home Among the Gum Trees". This examined the motivation of our early settlers to leave their home countries and travel to Victoria. At our August meeting Phil Taig, a relatively new member, gave us a presentation about the history and politics surrounding the first gold discoveries in Victoria.

1923 was a year when the Greensborough district saw a great deal of progress, as well as the electrification of the railway line; a number of organisations and clubs we consider as a normal part of life were founded in Greensborough. So celebrating their centenaries this year are the Greensborough Scouts and also the Greensborough Tennis club. I am sure many of our members have belonged to either or both and now is the time to look for any photographs you may have from your time at these clubs. Both the centenary organisers and GHS are interested in them.

Likewise Montmorency received a Post Office, railway station and state school in 1923; so centenary celebrations are popular at the moment. And don't forget The Plenty Valley Cricket Club, which includes members of the former Greensborough Districts CC, and is based at Yarrambat is celebrating its 75th Anniversary on 28 September 2023.

Back on 31 May we received the marvellous news that Noel Withers has received an Award of Merit from RHSV. Congratulations our extended to Noel for a well earned recognition of his commitment to GHS and the preservation of our local history. At the meeting following our AGM on 29 September, Noel will receive his award from Elisabeth Jackson, who is an RHSV Councillor and chair of the RHSV Collections Committee.

Thinking about Committee, why not consider joining the GHS Committee? From the start of 2024 your Committee will meet only in odd months on the 3rd Tuesday at 1.30pm. Committee members not only get a say in how we tackle the running of the Society, but help formulate new projects.

Norm Colvin

Greensborough Historical Society acknowledges the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people as traditional custodians of the land and we pay respect to all Elders, past, present and emerging, who have resided in the area and been an integral part of the region's history.

Feature Article – with thanks to Anne Paul

The Friends of Plenty River - Decades of Dedication

The Plenty River – ‘a beautiful stream’

The Plenty River rises under Mount Disappointment and is formed by the confluence of several springs and creeks. At Whittlesea it is joined by Bruce's Creek which is its main tributary. From there it runs almost due south through the Plenty Gorge near South Morang and on through Greensborough, before joining the Yarra in Lower Plenty. It is Melbourne's third river.

For over forty thousand years the Wurundjeri people had lived out their lives in harmony with this fertile valley. But in less than 200 years European settlement has managed to destroy much of its beauty. The environmental flow in the lower sections of the River is very poor, environmental weeds abound and rubbish continues to be a problem.

This is our challenge: to rehabilitate the waterway and its adjacent land, so that indigenous flora and fauna can once again thrive in, on, under and around our third river. From Friends of Plenty River brochure June 2004, edited Anne Paul

The 1990s was a time of significant political change in Victoria. This included a realignment of the existing local government boundaries in 1994. For the lower reaches of the Plenty River this resulted in it being contained within one local government area, Banyule City Council. The 1990s also marked a time of increasing environment awareness, including the state of our waterways and concern about species and habitat loss.

With the establishment of Banyule Council in 1994, Lincoln Kern was appointed Environment Coordinator. He had a particular interest in volunteer engagement and was an advocate of the importance of waterway wildlife corridors. Council's Bushland Management Team was also established with a specific responsibility for bushland and riverside reserves in the municipality.

The Friends of Plenty River

Lincoln Kern organised a small meeting in 1995 at the Meruka Park Childcare Cooperative, which was attended by Alice and Kevin Ley. Their Lower Plenty home backed onto the Plenty River and Kevin had worked informally to manage weeds and care for the streamside area at the rear of their property.

“Back in the nineties I had long become fed up with the weedy state of the steep escarpment which constituted the section of the river bank outside our back fence. I decided to take matters into my own hands, and began cutting out woody weeds and ivy vine, and piling these up on the mown section of land between the top of the escarpment and the back fences of the houses in Havelock Court.

Someone alerted Banyule Council that a dodgy character in Havelock Court was doing this, and the Council decided to take him in hand and shepherd him towards a saner and more organised way of operating.”

Kevin Ley 2023

There was a general feeling at the meeting that a Friends group was the way to go. This was followed by a larger meeting at Montmorency Tennis Club, calling for people interested in being part of a Plenty River friends group, with approximately 40 people attending.



Kevin Ley near the Plenty River 2019, Image: Chris McCormack, from Remember the Wild

From this, informal meetings were held at the home of Alice and Kevin Ley, with Lincoln Kern’s guidance, to establish a committee. All agreed the Group’s name should be the Friends of Plenty River. The objectives of the group were and remain primarily to help to restore and maintain the indigenous vegetation at several sites along the lower reaches of the Plenty River, so that the river and its environs may continue to serve as an effective wildlife corridor. Moreover the volunteer activities of the Friends of Plenty River are intended to be a sure sign of building community by inspiring a greater general appreciation of the river’s natural beauty.

Our group was formed at the end of 1995 to help restore the indigenous trees, shrubs, grasses etc to the banks of the Plenty River. We are an informal group with no membership fees. You do not need any environmental knowledge, just come along; you will be made welcome and shown how to help.

Being in a Friends group is a good way to contribute to the local environment while making new friends with similar interests. From Friends of Plenty River brochure June 2004, edited Anne Paul

The Friends logo is the Buff-banded Rail. It is a secretive, medium-sized bird with black-and-white barrings on its body and a rich chestnut buff band across the upper breast. It is largely terrestrial and is found in wetlands of all kinds, including along the Plenty River.



Buff-banded Rail – Lithograph by John Gould

The first working bee was held in early 1996, on the river bank just outside the Leys’ back gate. After leading the group over a series of working bees Lincoln announced that he was taking up an appointment in Gippsland. He recommended to Alice Ley that she take over the leadership of the Group and she remained in this role until early 2009, retiring due to ill health. Kevin Ley then took on the role, just after the Black Saturday fires and continues the family tradition to this day.

“We do lay and always have laid great stress on welcoming newcomers to our working bees. And I frequently declare that I regard the community-building aspect of this work as being even more important than the wonderful environmental work we do. I call myself the Convener of the group because I wish to convey the essential theme of bringing people together in welcome.”

Kevin Ley 2023

Friends of Plenty River Working Bees and other Activities: The working bees are usually held on the second Sunday of the month, except January and have continued to this day, with the only interruption being the Covid years. They run from 10.00 am to 12 noon. Usually the sun shines brightly on working bee days, no matter the season. Several early members continue to be involved, and while the Friends have seen volunteers come and go with the years, the core group continues to evolve and care for our beautiful stream.

The Friends have several regular work sites in the Yallambie - Lower Plenty area, but occasionally move to new sites nearby. The work is very hands on. Plantings are done in the middle wetter months of the year. Weed removal occupies the other months and compliments Council work to remove woody weeds and stabilise the riverbank.

A typical working bee involves meeting at the agreed site, donning gloves and hats and getting to work, be it pulling weeds, digging holes and planting seedlings, installing tree guards, watering or checking and reinforcing earlier sites. The session is concluded with a relaxed cuppa, and Alice's Plenty River Rock Cakes and other shared snacks. Friendships have been forged, with the interests and activities of members shared and appreciated.

The Friends work in close cooperation with Banyule Council Bushland Management Team to identify work areas, prepare sites and conduct the working bees. A Ranger from the Team usually attends working bees, with a truck and tools and also provides plants to put in and wire guards and stakes if necessary.



*Friends of Plenty River Planting Day at Yallambie, June 2023
Image: Anne Paul*

These Rangers are dedicated people whom the Friends value and hold special. They work to protect and enhance biodiversity along three natural wildlife corridors in Banyule: the Yarra River, Plenty River and Darebin Creek, as well as conserving significant bushland reserves in Banyule.

They also organise special Friends activity sessions, such as assembling and installing nesting boxes for birds and possums in large eucalypt trees in some of the planting sites. The boxes are inspected later on for occupants, using nest box-cam, along with occasional walks to check on resident ground dwelling mammals.

Kevin produces a monthly Friends newsletter. He has acquired a good knowledge about plant species and habitat and wisely shares this alongside information about site work and future activities. One highlight is Kev's Cunning Clues. Now up to 162 in the series, Kev provides canny, practical ideas to help folk with their garden and associated activities.

The pre-Christmas lunch at the Leys' home has always been a delightful gathering and a great opportunity to reflect on the year's work. Where possible Council also organise a day trip or community gathering, in appreciation of the volunteers work and over the year.

In addition to local activities, Friends have attended external events over the years, including with other Friends groups and Council activities, as well as representing the group at various consultations and community engagement sessions. Three parallel activities of the Friends of Plenty River are worth noting.

Clean Up Australia Days: For several years in the late 1990s - early 2000s the local MP Sherryl Garbutt organised Clean Up Australia days at Yallambie Park near the soccer ground. In the early Clean Ups a huge amount of accumulated rubbish was removed from the river, its banks and parklands. At the outset of one session, Alice

and Kevin were pictured standing in an empty oversized skip bin. By the end of the day the skip was overflowing with rubbish and surrounded by hessian bags full of more rubbish.

Over the years accumulated rubbish from across the decades was removed, with the help of scout and guides groups, as well as local residents. This included all sorts of dumped household and builders waste - carpet, tiles, cement rubble, bricks, bags of undelivered junk mail, needles and syringes, food wrappers and drink bottles, tyres, scrap metal, broken furniture, a kitchen cooker, car parts and even a car engine. With time the old rubbish was diminished and newer items, especially drink bottles and junk food packaging became the norm.

Individual Dedication: Several dedicated members have worked beyond the set working bees to contribute many more hours of work along the River, in collaboration with the larger group and Council. This has enabled further successful planting and weeding to be done. Others have been involved in Melbourne Water's Waterwatch, Platypus Watch and Frog Watch programs.

Plenty River Forum and Town Planning Issues: The Plenty River Forum was formed around 1999, by Banyule Council's Plenty - Yarra River Coordinator Ann Cremean, as an opportunity for community input into activities affecting the Plenty River, particularly as an avenue for direct dialogue between council and residents. This was especially important for work in the early 2000s to develop Councils Wildlife Corridor program, with the Plenty River a major corridor and central to the strategy.

Several members of the Friends were actively involved in the Forum, which had an ongoing role into the 2020s. These included further honing of revegetation work, identifying and addressing problems and responding to town planning issues, as parts of the Plenty River Wildlife Corridor are in privately owned land. Members of the Friends and Forum were active in submitting objections to Council regarding some applications, as well as supporting Councils refusal to grant permits via objecting to applicant appeals at VCAT.

Knowledge of the River and giving it a community voice was an important activity and while not always successful, it has helped mitigate excessive development proposals.

Achievements and Reflections: Much has been achieved by the Friends since that first meeting and working bee. As custodians, we share pride in our work and contribution to our community, to the health of our beautiful stream and the flora and fauna that live along the Plenty River Wildlife corridor.

The pathways along the River are well used for walking and cycling and especially during Covid many more people came to appreciate the parkland for its recreational and environmental amenity.

We have continued a strong working relationship with Councils Bushland Management Team, having worked with a number of coordinators and rangers, whose guidance and support has been greatly appreciated and enjoyed. We thank all our volunteers for their work and dedication over the years and in particular pay tribute to Alice and Kevin Ley for their inspiring leadership and devotion to that *"river bank outside our back fence."*

During the Millennial drought the water flow was so low that you could step across parts of the River. It is now flowing strongly and the many plantings are healthy and thriving. Many areas have been transformed, with the change evident, while others have merged into the landscape.



Hands on planting 2019, Image: Chris McCormack, from Remember the Wild

There are frustrations in seeing some of the old mature eucalypts being undermined along parts of the river bank, as well as the never ending weeds and rubbish. However at the June planting day in Yallambie we admired a strong, tall eucalypt and happily realised it had only been planted about 20 years ago.

So spread the word and if you have a spare few hours on a second Sunday, come along and join in. It's a great feeling, personally rewarding and fun.

For working bee site information contact Bushland Management Team via Banyule Council on 9490 4222.

By Anne Paul, Greensborough Historical Society and Friends of Plenty River, in collaboration with Kevin Ley, Convener of Friends of Plenty River

The Plenty River, Greensborough



Near Partington's Reserve

by Ron Reynolds

Plenty River sketch by Ron Reynolds 1974



Plenty River in flood, August 2020: photo by M. Smith



*Plenty River near Plenty Lane, October 2022:
photo by P. Simmenauer*



*Plenty River near Plenty Lane, October 2022:
photo by P. Simmenauer*

Upcoming events – All members and friends are invited to the following events

September meeting 29/09/2023 – begins with our AGM, with all Committee positions declared vacant. Please contact Norm or Peter if you are interested in joining the Committee (contact details on page 8).

Following the AGM, local MP for Bundoora and Minister for Housing Colin Brooks will officially present GHS with a sign from the old Greensborough Station, a great addition to our collection. Noel will be presented with his Award of Merit by RHSV Councillor Elisabeth Jackson, who will also speak about the work of the Royal Historical Society of Victoria. Peter Van Eeken will present information about the people who lived along the old Greensborough Road to the river ford, prior to 1860. This talk is a precursor to the October Heritage walk on Saturday 28 October.

October will be a busy month and we hope you will join us for as many activities as possible.

Thursday 5 October, 10:30am to 12:30pm at Diamond Valley Library: **Book Launch** - *Walking the Kurrum Yallock (Plenty River)* by Anne Paul. Books available for launch price of \$20 cash only. NOTE that this needs to be booked online via [Local History Month: "Walking the Plenty River" Book Launch | Yarra Plenty Regional Library \(spydus.com\)](https://www.spydus.com) no charge but bookings are essential.

Saturday 14 October, 1.00pm to 3.30pm at GHS History Resource Centre, 34A Glenauburn Road, Lower Plenty. **Open Day and Official Opening** of the refurbished Resource Centre. Afternoon tea provided.

Thursday 26 October, 10:30am to 12:30pm at Old Lower Plenty Bridge: **Guided walk:** Walking the Plenty River in Yallambie, led by Anne Paul. Guide books available for launch price of \$20 cash only. NOTE that this needs to be booked online via [Local History Month: Plenty River Walk | Yarra Plenty Regional Library \(spydus.com\)](https://www.spydus.com), no charge but bookings are essential.

Saturday 28 October, 1.15 pm start at Poulter Reserve Greensborough: **Heritage walk:** The Poulter Precinct, led by Peter Van Eeken (note this walk was cancelled in 2022 due to heavy rain and flooding of the Plenty River). Meet at the footbridge. Following the walk, afternoon tea will be held at Greenhills Neighbourhood House at about 2.30pm.

Friday 24 November, 1.15pm at Greenhills Neighbourhood House. Join us for our final meeting for the year, a 'walk down memory lane' with Norm Colvin presenting his annual photograph compilation.

The History Resource Centre at 34A Glenauburn Road Lower Plenty is now open **each Thursday** from 10.00am to 3.00pm. Join us for a cuppa, or to research your family or local history. All welcome.

Note that the Resource Centre will be closed over the Christmas period from Thursday 14 December 2023 to Thursday 18 January 2024.

Committee 2022-2023

President Norm Colvin 0409 815 246 **Vice President** Sue Ballantyne 0402 289 982
Secretary Peter Van Eeken **Treasurer** John Gibson 94350097
pve101@yahoo.com.au

Committee Members: Sue Brenkovich, Dianne Fox, Noel Withers

Newsletter Editor: Sue Ballantyne

Contact the Greensborough Historical Society

Web Site: www.greensboroughhistorical.org.au
Email: info@greensboroughhistorical.org.au

By Post: Greensborough Historical Society Inc.
4 Jenna Close, Greensborough 3088.

In Person: **Resource Centre**
34 Glenauburn Road (off Para Road), Lower Plenty
Open Thursdays from 10.00am to 3.00pm

Meeting dates and times for 2023

New members and visitors are most welcome to join us at our meetings.

Committee meetings are generally held at 1.30pm on the third Tuesday of each month.
The Resource Centre will be open on selected weekends for research into your family or the local area.

Date	Date	Time	Event
29-09-23	Friday	1:15pm	AGM/SGM GHNH
10-10-23	Tuesday	10am	Morning Tea
14-10-23	Saturday	1pm	Open Day HRC
17-10-23	Tuesday	1.30pm	Committee Meeting
28-10-23	Saturday	1:15pm	Forum GHNH
14-11-23	Tuesday	10am	Morning tea
21-11-23	Tuesday	1.30pm	Committee Meeting
24-11-23	Friday	1.15pm	Christmas Meeting GHNH
12-12-23	Tuesday	1.30pm	Morning Tea

Dates for 2024 will be published in the December edition of this Newsletter and on the GHS webpage www.greensboroughhistorical.org.au

Printing of this Newsletter supplied courtesy of Colin Brooks MP.