

# Ponderings

SEASONAL NEWSLETTER OF THE FRIENDS OF MOONEE PONDS CREEK

**SUMMER 2020/21 | ISSUE 69** 

advocate

educate

interpret

participate

rehabilitate

revegetate



















BBQ and AGM: Noon, Sunday January 17th 2021, Riverside Park, Gowanbrae - see p15

### Life in Lockdown by Anna Lanigan



As Melbourne emerges from the long lockdown, there is now plenty of opportunity to reflect. The Moonee Ponds Creek Shared Trail experienced a massive increase in patronage, as did local parks and other open spaces, caused by a combination of closed gyms, suspended competitive sport and the need for escape from the confines of home; perhaps made stronger by the lockdown regulations. Many experienced the trail and 'new' open spaces for the first time and in many media outlets it was noted that connections were being made with nature, some renewed and some for the first time. Without doubt there are many who have developed a greater appreciation of our green spaces, our creeks and parklands and their flora and fauna that we may have always taken for granted.

Responding to this, organisations already with strong nature credentials came on board with opportunities to celebrate nature and share knowledge with the public. Organisations such as Birdlife Australia, Melbourne Water, Creek communities, Friends groups and others provided a regular platform for learning and raising awareness. Everything from building a frog pond to following the flight of migratory birds was brought to us over the internet. Zoom meetings allowed interaction and participation. Many of these gatherings are still available to view and can be found on web sites by googling the organisation name and webinars such as the Birdlife Australia "Birding at Home" series.

Social media also came to the rescue in lockdown, easing the isolation. For the bird watching fraternity one such rescue came in the form of a Facebook Group #BirdTheFeckAtHome. Started by Melbourne resident Ed Williams as a local challenge to get people interested in bird watching and using their lockdown time to explore their home environment, it rapidly grew across Australia and around the world. It now boasts over 7,600 members in 114 countries. A master list keeps track of the species seen from the confines of lockdown, and at last count a stunning 4,596 species had been reported! The site is fun and irreverent with members creating polls and topics for the day. It's been a hoot!!

All through this, the Friends of Moonee Ponds Creek Facebook Group has been the go-to for news on the Creek sightings and discussion of issues making up in part for the lack of face-to-face meetings. It also provided links to the webinars and posted reminders. Friends of Moonee Ponds Creek welcomes new members to the Facebook group and encourages contributions. Membership of the FoMPC is also encouraged to support the resumption of our planting and clean-up activities along the Creek as we emerge from Lockdown and begin to spread our wings again!



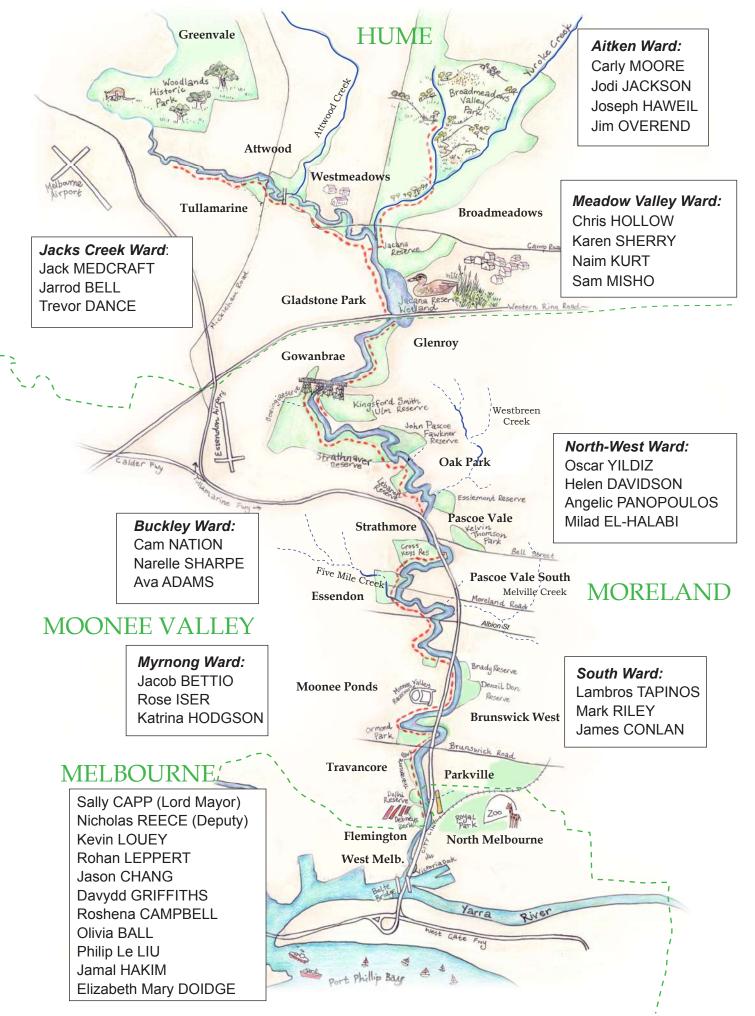
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Thanks to Nina Franceschi, Anna Lanigan, Kaye Oddie, Lori Arthur, Milly Burke, Melissa Doherty and Julia Cirillo for their assistance with this issue.

Cover images by Anna Lanigan, Maurice Austin and Clem de Silva. Editor: David Widdowson.

# **MPC - Councillors elected in Neighbouring Wards**



Green dashed lines indicate municipal boundaries, Blue dashed lines indicate former tributaries. Red dashed line is the MPC Shared Trail. Original Map courtesy of Rachel Earea.



#### **Hopetoun - Vanberg Bridge**

Moreland Council is continuing to work with Moonee Valley Council and Melbourne Water to finalise the design of the Moonee Ponds bridge connection in Brunswick West – Essendon.

Fleetwood Urban are the successful tenderer and are working through the engineering certification on the bridge which is scheduled for installation in early 2021. Connecting path works will be completed on both sides once the bridge is in place.

A pop up-up information session was held on 26<sup>th</sup> November, 2020 at Donald Avenue. Approximately 15 locals and members from the Moonee Valley and Moreland Bicycle Users Groups attended and showed strong anticipation of seeing the project take place.

For more information, see:

#### www.moreland.vic.gov.au/mooneeponds-creekproject



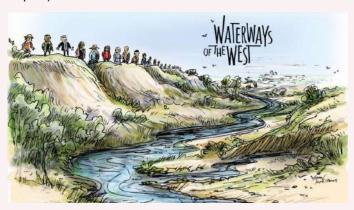
Map	PROPOSED WORKS SCHEDULE	Timing
1.	New pedestrian and cyclist bridge crossing between Donald Avenue and Hopetoun Avenue including handrail lighting.	February-June 2021
Moonee \	/alley side	
2.	New 3m wide shared path link to the bridge between Vanberg Road and Donald Avenue	Mid 2021
3.	Future revegetation works including weed control, mulching and new planting to the existing garden beds in this linear reserve area next to the bridge	July- September 2021
Moreland	side	
4.	New 3m wide shared path link to a new raised crossing point on Hopetoun Avenue	Mid 2021
5.	Upgrade of existing concrete section of trail at the existing retaining wall on the eastern bank to 1.2m wide with handrail	February 2021
6.	Fence removal, path construction and new post and cable barrier along Hopetoun Avenue	March-August 2021
7.	Revegetation works including weed control, mulching, new planting, seating and public art.	May-July 2021

#### **Chain of Ponds Collaboration Meeting**

This meeting took place on October 8th, via Zoom. The meeting was chaired by Rachel Lopes who is new to the lead role, previously working at Melbourne Water and most recently as Engagement Lead for the Healthy Waterways Strategy Refresh.

The meeting featured updates and discussion on:

- \* Waterways of the West Simone Wilkie (DELWP)
- \* Trails, Transport and Connectivity Working Group Julie Francis (MVCC) and Kaye Oddie (FoMPC)
- \* Reimagining the Moonee Ponds Creek, by Neil Featonby (Melbourne Water) including the latest on Brosnan Crescent Naturalisation.
- \* Eco-Art (Catherine van Wilgenburg, Rachel Lopes)



#### Waterways of the West

(Waterways of the West includes the Moonee Ponds Creek, even though it is actually part of the Yarra River catchment - but the MPC was not included in the Yarra project).

A Ministerial Advisory Committee was set up in August 2018 and has been working for 18 months, building on the Healthy Waterways Strategy (Melbourne Water). There has been a strong involvement of Traditional Owners: Wurundjeri Woi wurrung, Bunurong, Boonwurrung and Wadawurrung.

The Report recommendations went to the Minister for Water and other ministers in February 2020 and the Government response and action plan are currently being prepared - early to mid 2021 will see the release of a five-year action plan.

The action plan vision includes thinking of the Waterways as a single interconnected living entity with the Traditional Owners as their 'voice', embedding values and culture in waterway planning and management.

The aim is to strengthen existing state level policy and plans, land-use planning, to protect and enhance water quality and waterway health, and to provide water for environment and 'country' to protect ecology and cultural values.

# HUME News

by Melissa Doherty



#### **Working for Victoria**

Until the end of May 2021, a small team will be dedicated to removing litter from conservation reserves and creek lines across the municipality. It is part of a Working for Victoria initiative, which is providing six months employment for people who have lost their jobs due to the impacts of coronavirus. As part of the program, the Conservation Litter Team will work in accessible areas along the Moonee Ponds Creek, from The Tarnuk to Jacana Wetland. The riparian zone is the focus of the litter removal. The team will report litter issues inside the creek to Melbourne Water. As there are several creek systems in Hume, it is not known as this stage how many runs will occur along the MPC.

With regards to the Working for Victoria program, Council also have teams undertaking land management works on Council owned and managed conservation reserves. There are other teams working on rural private properties, in collaboration with landowners who are part of Council's rural rebate/grant programs. The teams are working on various projects, such as woody weed removal, environmental and noxious weed control, as well as flora and fauna monitoring.

# MORE FROGS! LESS LITTER!

Improving Merri and Moonee Ponds Creek water quality with the community.







This was a webinar recorded at an Australian Conservation Foundation members' meeting. Listen at:

### **Latham's Snipe Sightings**



Latham's Snipe is a threatened migratory bird that spends spring and summer in Australia before heading back to Japan for breeding season. With their long, curved bill, they catch lots of different invertebrates as they wade through freshwater wetlands, to fatten up. Some birds have been tracked on their migration, taking three days to fly straight to Japan. Other birds take a more leisurely return, stopping off at wetlands up the northeast coast of Australia.

Anna Lanigan was quite lucky to spot Latham's Snipe in Roxburgh Park in 2014, with the birds' brown speckled feathers camouflaging them in the dense reeds that they roost in during the day. To count them, they must be flushed from cover. Beverley Van Praagh, a local resident has also occasionally spotted them in Craigieburn, in 2018 and earlier this year. However, this spring Bev decided to really go look for them, flushing 34 birds from a wetland along Aitken Creek. Council is very grateful that Bev informed us about this important species inhabiting these wetlands. A threatened plant, the River Swamp Wallaby-grass, is also found here. Another population of Latham's Snipe utilise wetlands at Melton. Images by Beverley Van Praagh.



### **Platypus Sighting?**

There have been reports of a platypus being spotted in Moonee Ponds Creek, in Westmeadows by the bridge near the football oval and the pedestrian bridge that crosses over to Cambridge Gardens from Koala Crescent. A Platypus has not been spotted in Hume City for quite some time, so that makes it a very significant report, however people can easily mistake Brown Rats for Platypus.

# **MOONEE VALLEY**

by Milly Burke & Nina

# News



#### Strathnaver Reserve - Rare Plant Spotted

Ptilotus macrocephalus (commonly known as featherheads, green mulla mulla or green pussytails) have been spotted at Strathnaver Reserve. Featherheads, a native Australian perennial herb growing up to 50 centimetres high, were once considered distributed throughout most of the Australian mainland, but current research limits its distribution to south-eastern Australia, mostly in SA, Victoria and New South Wales. MV Council's Conservation Officer Michelle Gooding thinks that they may have been planted a few years ago, so probably not remnant – but good to see that they are flowering and seeding to help with the population's recovery.



#### **Bent Street Reserve Refresh**

Bent Street Reserve, Moonee Ponds has had a refresh with some additional planting as part of MVCC *Neighbourhood Greening*, which helps to enhance smaller reserves with beautiful flowers and plants, while also helping to increase biodiversity and understory across the municipality. Increasing the understory and biodiversity of vegetation helps us to safeguard our Urban Forest from pests and disease, as well as increase urban ecology values.



#### **New Councillors Tour the Creek**

On the morning of November 26<sup>th</sup>, 2020, Nina, accompanied by Teresa, David and Sharon, took newly elected Moonee Valley Buckley Ward Councillors Cameron Nation (Mayor), Narelle Sharpe and Ava Adams on a special walking tour of the Moonee Ponds Creek from Brosnan Crescent to Boeing Reserve. Sites visited and discussed included:

- \* The Brosnan Crescent naturalisation project, Strathmore North Primary School carpark and the discontinuance of Brosnan Crescent.
- \* Nursery corner masterplan, carpark and public consultation.
- \* Split Soccer club signage issues.
- \* Strathnaver Grasslands and the bike jumps being built on indigenous grasslands.
- \* Boeing Reserve possible land swap with Strathmore North Primary School.

Nina said the conversation was very constructive and she looks forward to working with the new Council on issues of concern to FoMPC.

#### **Wetland for Montgomery Park**

A feasibility study has been undertaken on a range of Water Sensitive Urban Design options for Montgomery Park, Essendon. This includes a wetland and passive irrigation of street trees that were recommended to be explored by the Montgomery Park master plan. Council will now consider the report recommendations - including cost benefit - to determine next steps.

Montgomery Park Masterplan is available here: mvcc.vic.gov.au/my-council/upgrades-and-plans/

#### **Working for Victoria Crews start**

We are delighted to announce our Waterways and Land Management crews are up and running. The positions are funded by the State Government's Working for Victoria initiative, to help ease the economic impacts of coronavirus, and will be part of the MVCC Conservation Team. We are excited to have them on board. Please make them feel welcome if you meet them working along the creek!



by Lori Arthur



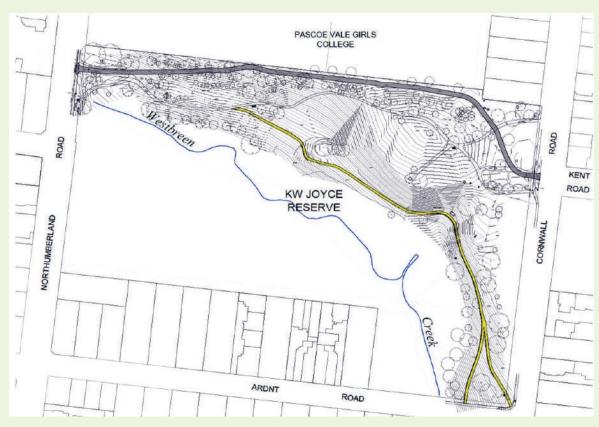
#### **Gavin Park Wetland**

Work is progressing on the delivery of the Gavin Park wetland in Pascoe Vale as identified in the Westbreen Creek Conservation and Development Plan. As well as treating local stormwater, the wetland will add to the wonderful amenity and environmental values along the habitat corridor. Final approvals and procurement processes are currently underway, with construction anticipated to start March 2021. This project is being funded through Council's capital works and Melbourne Water's **Living Rivers** programs.



#### **Work for Victoria**

Our Work for Victoria (WfV) teams were unfortunately sidelined for much of Stage 4 restrictions but returned with gusto in September. The two Natural Resources Management teams have been busy giving revegetation beds a new lease of life, undertaking activities such as black plastic and tree guard removal, mulching and hand weeding. They've also been working alongside our bushland contractors on trickier activities including hand weeding out Chilean Needle Grass from amongst native grasses at JP Fawkner. The WfV program is supported by funding from the Victorian Government and will finish up in February 2021.



#### **KW Joyce Reserve Pathways**

Council is planning to construct new pathways in KW Joyce Reserve, as we continue to implement the *Westbreen Creek Conservation and Development Plan.* 

The works include a shared (concrete) path between Northumberland Rd and Cornwall Rd which is part of the wider Coburg to Glenroy cycling link (shown above in grey).

Works will also include improving and extending the unsealed pedestrian path next to the creek (yellow).

A pop up information session on these works will take place at KW Joyce Reserve (Cornwall Road entrance) on Saturday December 12<sup>th</sup>, 10-11am (COVID safety protocols apply).

### **Tawny Tales** - story and images by Anna Lanigan

In a year of uncertainty caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, life has gone on for our Tawny Frogmouth pairs along the Moonee Ponds Creek Flyway. Some pairs reliably kept to the exact same sites as last year, while others ventured to new sites for a change of scenery, while staying close to the Creek.



The Salmon Reserve pair had three nestlings at the same nest spot as last year. Sadly a wild wind storm blew one nestling out and it perished. Another fell out of the nest and went into care. The third nestling fledged and I'm happy to report it made a safe landing and was last seen with its parents in the Reserve.



The Westbreen Creek nest site at the Austin Crescent playground wasn't occupied this year but an adult with a fledged pair were spotted upstream in Gavin Park.



Another adventurous couple had a nest in a branch extending over Mascoma Street between the school and Nursery Corner. Not the quietest of locations but seemed untroubled by the traffic. At least one fledgling - maybe two.



The Nursery Corner pair adjourned to a tree away from the shared trail this year and were spotted by Poppy (good thing as I would never have seen them). I'm happy to report twins!



The Boeing Reserve pair nested in the same tree but on a different branch and again had twins which looked healthy on my last visit. The adults here often stayed close together in the tree.



Finaly, some late arrivers settled in a nest high above the Strathnaver Oval fence, near the footbridge over the creek - the twins were still on the nest at the time of reporting. There were a few extra sightings reported on Facebook - this is a great credit to the health of our Creek, providing homes for these lovely families.





# Volunteer Litter Clean-ups are supported on the Moonee Ponds Creek!

Thanks to the City of Moreland, MCMC (Merri Creek Management Committee) can provide advice and equipment to people who want to do their own litter clean-ups along the Moonee Ponds Creek within the Moreland Area. Currently we are putting together a list of litter "hot spots" and sites that we consider safe for the community.

If you would be interested in helping to organise a community event in 2021, please contact the Rapid Response to Litter after Rainfall Coordinator Julia Cirillo at: <a href="mailto:juliacirillo@mcmc.org.au">juliacirillo@mcmc.org.au</a>

To be kept up to date and training:

- There's a wealth of "how to" information for individuals and groups to safely remove litter from the Merri & Moonee catchments on this Facebook page.
- A recorded Webinar on how to do a Covid-safe litter clean-ups.
- A brief article on how to use the SnapSendSolve app to report large amounts of litter, rubbish, or pollution etc.

Further litter resources on the MCMC digital resources page (under Litter heading):

https://www.mcmc.org.au/information-publications/digital-resources





Five Mile Creek Water Sampling by Kate Ward

Sediment samples have been collected from Five Mile Creek in Essendon and sent off for testing as part of the **Pesticide Detectives** program. The positive news is that there were no pesticides found present in the sample. The nationwide citizen science project is a collaboration between volunteer citizen scientists and RMIT University's Aquatic Environmental Stress Research Group (AQUEST). The program is investigating the occurrences and concentrations of pesticides in Australian waterways. Pesticides found in our waterways include those used in homes and gardens, as well as the pesticides used in agriculture. Five Mile Creek was tested in the third round of sampling, in a series of four 'sampling blitzes', carried out across Australia. The results from all four rounds can be found at

https://pesticidedetectives.com.au/results-all-rounds/

Sediment samples are used when looking for the presence of pesticides as many pesticide molecules bind to sediment particles. In order to take a sample, volunteers wade into a deposition area of a creek or river where sediment particles accumulate. Using a trowel or shovel, a sample of the top 2cm of silt (fine sediment) is taken. The samples are then sent to for testing. The research group look for the presence of 110 pesticides. Owing to COVID-19 restrictions on volunteer sampling, the sampling was carried out by our Waterwatch Coordinator Julia Cirillo (pictured above).

Whilst there were no pesticides detected in the samples taken from Five Mile Creek, that doesn't necessarily mean that there are no pesticides present in the creek. Asides from the complete lack of pesticides, the negative results could also be owing to several other factors. Pesticides may not have been present at that particular spot of the creek owing to water flows or pesticides might not have been absorbed by sandier/coarser sediment. Furthermore, new pesticides are being created everyday so although the list of 110 pesticides is extensive, it is by no means exhaustive. Previous studies have shown widespread contamination by synthetic pyrethroid in waterways across Melbourne.

# **MPC History**

### **Tullamarine Freeway turns 50**

50 years ago, in February 1970, the Tullamarine Freeway was opened, after a tumultuous time for our poor creek! As can be seen from the following images, moving and concreting the creek was one of the first things to be done.



On the Drawing Board, 1965: "Special Project No 4" takes shape, taking cars to "Tullamarine Jetport".



Pascoe Vale Road looking south, 1968. The creek has been concreted and a huge amount of Earth moved.





Looking west, workers' huts and temporary bridge over the creek. Images by Ruby Brideson, 1968.



From Bell St, courtesy of CAHS Airways Museum



Pylons for Bell St interchange, 1968. Ruby Brideson





Wide Channel pre-concrete, and the final result, 1970



Galah by Anna



**Sightings** 

Rainbow Lorikeet by Anna



Domestic Duck by Anna



Eastern Rosella by Anna



Pied Currawong by Poppy Bell



Echidna by Graham Dawson





Noisy Minor by Clem de Silva



Sulphur-Crested Cockatoo by Anna



Little Pied Cormorant by Anna



Welcome Swallow by Anna

### **Mountain Bike Tracks**



The issue of mountain bike tracks and jumps has continued to create concern along the creek. Of course the obvious question is, will this continue once the COVID pandemic is over? And what can be done to provide long term facilities for riders wanting to create such areas in the future?

Moonee Valley Council have responded as follows:

Over the last few months Council and community have noticed a rise in makeshift dirt jumps and bike tracks in many parks, which has increased since the lockdown in Melbourne. In response to this, Council is exploring opportunities for BMX, Mountain bike tracks (MTB) and other recreational activities for young people in our parks.



We would like to hear from children, young people, parents, and the wider community who use our parks. We have developed some initial ideas that we would like your feedback on, including: Pop-Up Pump Track, Permanent or Semi-permanent BMX/MTB track; and other recreation activities such as bouldering walls.

We would like to hear your thoughts about these activities and suggested locations, as well as your own ideas. Take part in the survey and add to our interactive map, adding your thoughts on the suggested locations, before 16th December:

https://yoursay.mvcc.vic.gov.au/youngpeopleoutdoors/survey\_tools/recreation-oppourtunities







Strathnaver Reserve Jump, sign and discarded sign



#### MPC Reserve Trashed by Kaye Oddie

Wykrook-nguluk Darrang Reserve, a little-known area along the Creek in Moonee Ponds between the Freeway and Union Street, West Brunswick, has been trashed. Revegetated to enhance habitat and biodiversity in a CLTW/Landcare project a few years ago, now more than a dozen mountain bike jumps, up to 1.5m high have been excavated, mountain bike trails have been carved through vegetation and down embankments, destroying stands of what was thriving native grassland and shrubbery.

Youths spent months during lockdown at the site, digging up the site, continuing with impunity and confronting anyone who tried to stop them – whilst Moonee Valley Councillors turned a blind eye – being more concerned about getting themselves re-elected than caring for valued vegetation sites. Members of the Friends of Moonee Ponds Creek and local community who participated in the revegetation project were appalled and angered.

Now, the Council is assessing the risk to the mountain bike riders and proposing that only some of the jumps will be demolished. What kind of message does that send? Come school holidays and the jumps will be rebuilt! So much for their plans to remediate the area.

Council is also seeking input about outdoor activity options for young people, such as 'BMX tracks, bike jumps, ninja warrior course', and where to locate.

But where is their consultation about environmental programs to protect revegetation/habitat/biodiversity areas and to create a linear park along the Creek – in keeping with their own much vaunted Chain of Ponds Plan?



Planting at the site in 2017, all images by Kaye









Photos by Poppy Bell, Clem de Silva, Anna Lanigan, Nina and Maurice Austin













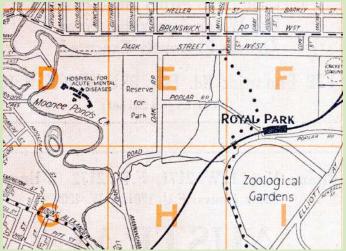




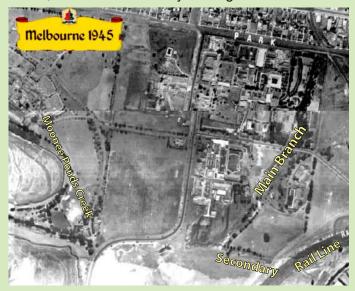
# Down the Drain - Lost Tributaries of the MPC

#### Part 9: Royal Park by David Widdowson

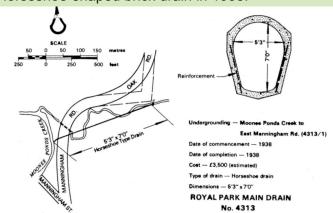
Having covered most of the former tributaries of the Moonee Ponds Creek going from South to North, I'm now going back to fill in a few I missed out on, starting with the creek that ran through the northwest corner of Royal Park.



The creek appears in many early street directories, such as Morgan's from 1936, featuring two branches, the main one originating north of the dip in Brunswick Road, at Millward Street, just east of Grantham Street; the smaller tributary flowing from the Zoo.



The Melbourne 1945 aerial view shows evidence of both branches, but no sign of the lower section, because that had been turned into an underground Horseshoe-shaped brick drain in 1938:



The MMBW 1981 book has a number of references to further undergrounding - in 1970 and 1977 the Drain was extended from Park Street to Poplar Rd, to allow for the construction of various facilities in this area. Just before this time, the Drain had to be extended to reach the new wide channel of the Moonee Ponds Creek, which had been straightened between Flemington Road and Brunswick Road due to the Freeway construction.

There are some references to the original creek being called "Brunswick Creek", but no primary source has been found to back this up.



Fortunately, the creek has continued to flow from Poplar Road to join the Horseshoe Drain for the best part of the last century. The above image shows how the creek looks today, image by Kaye Oddie.



This old tributary of the MPC has today taken on a whole new form, with the creation of the *Trin Warren Tam-boore Wetlands* at the time of the Commonwealth Games in 2006. The modern aerial view shows the Wetlands that have been created to filter water from the lost creek, consisting of an S-shaped treatment pond (at right) and a large storage pond (at left), the stored water being used to irrigate the parklands and sports fields of Royal Park. It is believed that the old Horseshoe Drain remains under the Wetlands to this day!

Next time: Coonan's Creek



# **AGM** and **BBQ**

#### Celebrate! Nominate! Elect! Get-Together!

Advance Notice of long-awaited Gathering

Sunday January 17, 2021, from 12 noon (preceded at 11:30am by the FoMPC AGM)

Picnic/BBQ beside the Creek (gazebo, children's play area, toilet)

Riverside Park, Adelaide Boulevard, Gowanbrae (close to Lanark Way roundabout)

BYO food, drinks, chair to sit on, sunhat, sunscreen, insect repellent, good cheer to start a new year ...

All Welcome - members, friends, families, community

# From the Committee:

We are keen to see new participants nominate for Committee positions at the AGM. We also hope in the new year that the organisation will be refreshed and we can enjoy the meetings, activities and participation that was the pre-Covid norm.

Communications from the FoMPC have been reduced this year but there has been an increased use of Facebook to keep interest in the corridor and Ponderings provided news and updates. In acknowledging members have received less from FoMPC, the Committee have agreed to waive annual membership fees for one year. Our membership year parallels the financial year, so we will advance all existing memberships by one year.

In closing, we hope that everyone is staying healthy and managing as well as possible. Enjoy the Festive Season, now that Covid restrictions have been eased, and see you in January – if not before then – along the Creek corridor.



# Join the Friends of Moonee Ponds Creek for \$20 per year

For information and to join, go to: mooneepondscreek.org.au/join-us/

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