



*FOLC Volunteers - Dot Leeson, Consie Woods, Maggie Paton and Norma Hay
Photo : Hilary Heptinstall*

From the editor

We missed our usual 'Volunteer Week' celebrations this May due to Corona virus restrictions but we all appreciate the great work done by FOLC volunteers. The members pictured above visit Lake Claremont most Mondays and Fridays to carry out weeding tasks and are representative of our wider membership. Let us hope that we can all celebrate before too long now that restrictions are starting to be lifted.

It is great to see so much water in the lake now, and the return of many of our water birds. The last few weeks of regular morning walks have seen a huge change in the area.

Heidi Hardisty writes about the 2020 planting season, which she has planned from Townsville in Queensland, on page 7. We are very grateful for Heidi's efforts. Hopefully border restrictions will ease before too long and Heidi will be able to join us at some stage.

Mary Yates' final illustrated article about the history of Lake Claremont is on page 9 of this newsletter. Thank you, Mary, for all your work in writing for us. I have very much enjoyed this very interesting series and appreciate all your artistic and writing skills.

FROM THE COORDINATOR'S COUCH

From : Nick Cook

Sadly, we were unable to celebrate National Volunteering Week due to Covid-19 restrictions. FOLC are blessed to have the support of our many members and our dedicated volunteers. As a group we have achieved so much and none of it would be possible without the hard work and passion of our many volunteers.

There are too many to mention but I would offer a special thanks and recognition to Norma Hay and our weeding group (Dot, Maggie and Consie, see front page). These ladies have conducted their own War on Weeds with outstanding results. Normally the weeding teams would take a break over the summer months but this year they have dedicated a great deal of time and effort into tackling weeds on the lakebed across the whole summer. Now they will turn their focus to the winter weeds that are emerging. New team members are very welcome. Thank you Ladies!!

As you will see in Heidi's article, we are about to kick off planting season 2020. We are very sorry that Heidi will be unable to run the planting this year due to border closures. 2020 will be our 1st season without her on the ground. Heidi has still been responsible for all the planning and coordinating behind this year's plantings.

We have plenty of vacancies left for planting volunteers.

We also have a number of other volunteering opportunities. Please consider.....

We are discussing the possibility of doing some fauna monitoring in collaboration with the Town of Claremont. This involves the setting of motion sensitive cameras around the wetland/bushland. We are looking to hear from volunteers to review the camera footage. This is an opportunity to volunteer from the comfort of your home on your computer. Ideally, we would have a number of volunteers to share the load. Please email us if this is of interest.

We are also seeking a volunteer to assist our Treasurer. We are looking for someone with an accounting/bookkeeping background. If you or anyone you know may be interested, please contact us to discuss the role.

For me personally, volunteering with FOLC has been an extremely rewarding experience. I have gained many new friends, learned so much and developed many new skills. It is a privilege to be in a leadership role and to make a contribution to such an amazing project. Thanks to all our members and volunteers. Also, thanks to our Board of Directors and other members of the 'leadership' team whose support, advice and assistance is invaluable to the smooth running of the Friends group.



I should like to thank Nicky Armstrong for sending us her photos of birds at the lake, including the one above of a Carnaby's black cockatoo at Lake Claremont.

MAY BUSY BEES

From : Nick Cook

MAY 3 BUSY BEE

We held an extra session on May 3 this year.

With the loosening of restrictions our volunteers were keen to get back out to the lake bed to tackle the fat hen weeds before the predicted rain.

We had staggered start times and 24 volunteers worked in groups of less than 10 whilst maintaining social distancing.

It was a sensational effort with 237 bags filled! A new record haul!



MAY 10 BUSY BEE

Our May 10 Mothers' Day Busy Bee was a great success!

We split into 2 groups. The first group headed out onto the lake for a spot of weeding and returned with a good haul of filled bags.

The second group worked on mulching along the path edges. It was a great way to warm up on a chilly morning.

A great effort, many thanks to all our volunteers and to Nicky Armstrong for the photos.

Our volunteers have put in a huge effort this summer. Well done!



Nick Cook and Nicky Armstrong



Henry Simmons and Leeuwin Beeck



Mulching along the path edges

REMOVAL OF TAMARISK TREES

Some of you may have noticed this gaping hole emerge in the bush behind Alfred Road in early May.

Town of Claremont contractors removed three large Tamarisk trees from the Alfred Rd/Strickland St woodlands, and another Tamarisk by the FOLC shed.

The Tamarisk is a weed of national significance. The Lake Claremont management plan supports the removal of these trees.

Note that nothing grows under these trees as they inhibit the growth of other plants around them.

These areas will be rehabilitated by FOLC.



MAY BIRD SURVEY AT LAKE CLAREMONT

Text and photo : David Free

In mid-May, before the rain, my wife Pam and I conducted a survey of the birds at Lake Claremont. The morning was cool to mild, partly cloudy with an easterly breeze.

Perth has had only two thirds of the average January to May rainfall. The only water present was a shallow patch at the southern end of the lake.

We recorded 265 individuals of 25 species, not much below our average autumn counts, which have usually taken place when there has been more water in the lake. Probably for the first time in autumn, no waterfowl were seen.

The only breeding activity we noticed was a pair of Black-shouldered Kites mating.

A black-shouldered Kite



OUR BIRDS

Text and Photos : David Free

Willy Wagtail, *Rhipidura leucophrys*

The Willy Wagtail is one of Australia's best known and most loved birds. Bold and mischievous, they are very comfortable close to mankind. Often they will follow closely behind us, catching the insects which are disturbed as we walk. During the breeding season they will aggressively confront predators much larger than themselves. They also seem to do this for fun. I've seen them teasing Wedge-tailed eagles, Osprey and, from behind the safety of a chain-link fence, our cat.

The nest is neat and circular, bound with spider webs and built on a horizontal branch, often over water. Three or four broods may be raised in the winter-spring breeding season.



Fearless Willy Wagtail with Osprey



A Willy Wagtail supervises Pam Free as she does the bird survey!

A CREATIVE PLANTING SEASON – Volunteers Needed

From: Heidi Hardisty

A lot of creativity has gone into planning the winter planting season this year. FOLC is running over a dozen planting sessions in 4 weekends. We are happy to report that with the recent relaxation of Covid-19 restrictions we will be inviting the public to our planting sessions to a maximum of 50 volunteers per session. We will be practising social distancing to help keep everyone healthy and safe.

There are 11 sessions left to be filled over 4 weekends (June 14, June 20-21, July 11-12 and July 18-19). See table below. Our goal is to plant 500 seedlings in each session. We particularly need people for the afternoon sessions. If you can volunteer, you must register prior to the event by email. Please indicate which session(s) you would like to attend:

folc.wa@gmail.com

Lake Claremont Planting Sessions 2020

| Date | 9:00 – 11:30 am | 1:00-3:00 pm |
|---------------------------------|-----------------|--------------|
| Sunday, June 14 th | 1 | 2 |
| Saturday, June 20 th | 3 | 4 |
| Sunday, June 21 st | 5 | XXXXXX |
| Saturday, July 11 th | XXXXXX | 6 |
| Sunday, July 12 th | 7 | 8 |
| Saturday, July 18 th | XXXXXX | 9 |
| Sunday, July 19 th | 10 | 11 |

FOLC were successful in obtaining another grant from the Swan Alcoa Landcare Program (SALP), which enabled us to purchase 8000 native seedlings to beautify the park, create more wildlife habitat and enhance the ecological linkage between Bold Park and the Swan River.

I have been organising the planting season from my current residence in far north Queensland, where currently the weather is beautiful. Although I am hoping to return to WA to run some of the planting sessions, that will be determined when travel is allowed between states.

Stay well and safe!



FROM THE TOWN OF CLAREMONT

COMPOSTING OF ORGANIC WASTE

Did you know organic waste doesn't decompose in dark, low-oxygen conditions such as landfill? It produces methane which is about 56 times more potent than carbon dioxide over a 20 year period. This week is Composting Awareness Week - composting helps tackle global warming and by composting your waste, it will help flatten the climate change curve. Here, our Bushcare Officer, Johanna Riddell, is composting bags of weeds from Lake Claremont at the Brockway Recycle Centre's Green Waste section.



WORLD MIGRATORY BIRD DAY

May 9 was World Migratory Bird Day. The lake has a range of migratory birds including swallows, bee-eaters, kingfishers and Straw-necked Ibis who visit for the breeding season. The lake's ecosystem is such an important natural resource, and one that we are lucky to have in our own backyard.

A Straw-necked Ibis at Lake Claremont
Photo : Nicky Armstrong

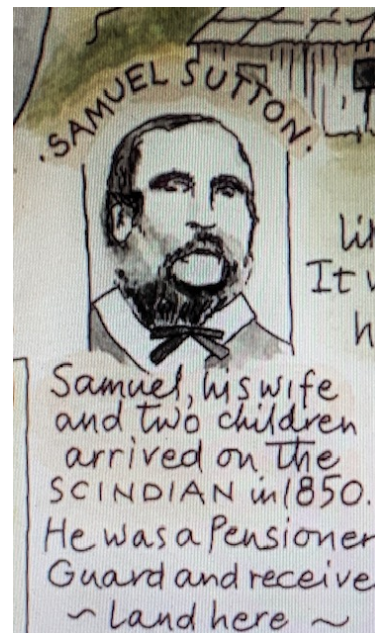


THE PENSIONER GUARDS AND CONVICTS AT LAKE CLAREMONT

From : Mary Yates

The initial contingent of 58 pensioner guards arrived in Western Australia on the first convict ship, SCINDIAN, in June 1850. Their role was to supervise the prisoners and it was envisaged that they would ultimately become settlers, adding to the much needed labour force. These men had all been involved in various wars for the British Empire, many had served for more than fifteen years and been decorated, while others had been retired early due to wounds or illness.

Nineteen of these guards were chosen to be sent to what is now the Claremont area. Within the first two months they were each allocated one site of $\frac{1}{2}$ acre on the Swan River on the Freshwater Bay shoreline, which became known as Pensioners Row (now Victoria Avenue) – and one long narrow strip each of $9\frac{1}{2}$ acres at Butlers Swamp. The area along the river at the time was very heavily timbered and this had to be cleared with only the axe and saw which had been provided. They then had a long and time-consuming trudge over to their $9\frac{1}{2}$ acres at Butlers Swamp to begin the difficult job of clearing and making their land productive and to construct their second living place.



Whilst on their voyage the families were looking forward to their new country and new homes. In June it was already winter with many more cold months ahead, but there were no homes ready and waiting for them. The Colonial Government were unprepared for their arrival and the families found they had to build temporary shelters for themselves from the surrounding Freshwater Bay and Butlers Swamp vegetation. Permanent residences were not built until some time later.

The Swamp had been chosen for its supposed agricultural potential, but the quality of the soil was disappointing. Each family was given ten pounds for tools and seeds to till their lots but found it almost exclusively had to be spent on food.



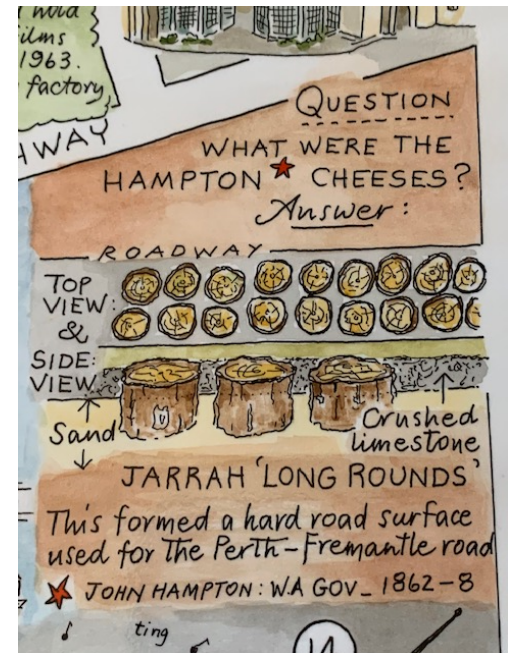
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Despite these monumental hardships, by 1860 it was recorded that they all had a 'modest cottage' in each location. But it was also recorded that they all seriously felt their isolation. The Guards were paid an average sum of one shilling a day. Single men received only sixpence each. Most of the men were classed as labourers. Amongst them were also a tailor, groom, shoemaker, painter and armourer but none had any building expertise. Some of the Guards managed to get down to Fremantle and work at the Prison, also known as The Establishment, to earn extra money. However, whenever they did so, it meant that they were not working on their homes or land at Freshwater Bay. Their wives too were sometimes able to go to Fremantle to do washing, but this meant an overnight stay. If they had lived on these properties for seven years—they finally became owners of the land, but not many achieved this goal.

Twenty percent of the convicts had a ticket-of-leave on arrival at Fremantle, as they had already served most of their sentences in Britain.

The better behaved of the convicts were sent out to build the Perth to Fremantle Road, in the Claremont area which, at that time, was a very deep sandy track.

Some of them quarried stone from the cliff below Christchurch School/Bethesda Hospital. Have a look at the sheer rock face when you are next down there. It must have been a very dangerous job! The road workers were involved in clearing stumps, rocks and trees then metalling the sandy surface with crushed rock.



Governor John Hampton suggested sinking circular jarrah 'long rounds' below the surface which could then tolerate the hard wear of horses and carts along this road. These became known as 'Hampton Cheeses'. (See drawing above)

A Government Ration Boat sailed daily to and from Fremantle, so some of these provisions, as shown below, would be the ingredients for the sparse convict meals.

The Governor approved the following scale of rations.

Breakfast: 10 oz bread, 1 pint of tea (1/5 oz of tea) [a teabag weighs approx. 1/8 oz], sweetened with sugar or 1 oz of treacle if obtainable.

Dinner: 14 oz meat 4 oz bread [1 slice weighs about 1/2 oz] 12 oz potatoes [about two small]

Supper: 8 oz bread 1 pint of tea sweetened

Soup twice a week on Tuesday and Friday – 1 oz rice, barley or oatmeal to thicken the soup and if possible cabbage, turnips, pumpkin in lieu of potatoes.

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On this meagre food the men must have been ravenous all the time, taking into consideration the heavy work they had to do. No wonder that three convicts connived to steal a heifer from a pensioner guard to cook up a feast, later having to bear the consequences. Without doubt they would have talked about this daring theft for years afterwards.

All the original scenery in our neighbourhood was changed forever as it moulded into what these early residents needed.

When you walk around our lovely Lake Claremont today, think about what these people had to do to survive. The pensioners worked hard to make something of their plots and their lives while the convicts toiled to make the first road for us, as they worked towards their future release.

How fortunate we are today!



Waterbirds return to the lake after the May rain Photo : Nicky Armstrong



natural resource
management program



Had a great moment at Lake Claremont?

Why not like us on facebook and post your picture and story?

Friends of Lake Claremont facebook page

<https://www.facebook.com/pages/Friends-of-Lake-Claremont/159586380873009?ref=hl>

The Friends of Lake Claremont Ltd. (FOLC) is a community organisation established and run by local residents all of whom are volunteers.

Website www.friendsoflakeclaremont.org

Newsletter articles and photos from members are most welcome and should be sent to the editor, Hilary Heptinstall - heptins@bigpond.net.au 0411 052 329

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