

LIZ BARRACLOUGH OAM

What a thrill it was on Australia Day to hear that Liz Barraclough, our long-serving Field Officer, was awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia (OAM) for service to conservation and the environment, and as a volunteer educator.



Liz on Australia Day photo Angela Kirsner

Over the past eighteen years, since BERG Mt Martha began, Liz has given outstanding voluntary service to the local community and the natural environment – some 15,000 hours since 1997. She has led the large majority of our working bees; and has won, administered and reported on over 50 competitive grants, worth over \$700,000.

Beyond BERG Mt Martha, she has been an important part of a host of other committees and groups working on local environmental issues, such as the foreshore and Devil Bend.

Thanks in no small part to Liz's efforts, BERG Mt Martha has excellent working relationships with Mornington Peninsula Shire Council, Melbourne Water, government departments and other key environmental groups. And along the way, she has taken part in any

relevant courses, field days, workshops or other training that came her way, to hone her expertise in bushland management.

There is no doubt in my mind, and I'm sure in the minds of anyone who has worked with Liz, that she has made an amazing difference to the health of the Balcombe Estuary and Reserves. We all comment on her inspirational volunteer commitment.

But what sets Liz apart is her extraordinary ability to inspire and educate others – adults and children – to take up environmental issues and run with them. Liz's passion, selflessness, expertise, leadership, positivism and generosity truly lead us by example. Meeting Liz and hearing her speak was what inspired me to join this wonderful group.

As President of BERG Mt Martha, I am proud to work with and alongside her – with a spade, at working bees, moving mulch, writing submissions and lobbying!

Congratulations from us all, Liz!

Graham Hubbard

CAN YOU HELP?



MORNING TEA COORDINATOR WANTED

BERG Mt Martha is famous for the luscious home-made cakes at our monthly working bees. We have a team of expert bakers – now we need someone to coordinate a roster of goodies (and maybe bake something once in a while).

If you can help please contact us at 0447 160 288 or info@berg.org.au

FIELD NEWS

Field Officer Liz Barraclough (OAM!) reports

Working-bees

Wow, what a turn-out in January – 21, including a few new faces. Jenny Selby had to rush home for more mugs, coffee, milk and hot water!

A group of mulchers and another of weeders worked below the Balcombe Preschool on Hopetoun Creek. So much was achieved – the area now looks as if it has received some Tender Loving Care.



*'Mulchers' Ian Stirling & Peter McMabon
Photo Liz Barraclough*

The **Friday Morning Group** has not yet restarted for the year. Our group increased in numbers last year and we look forward to continuing this trend in 2015 as we tackle our targeted sites each Friday

Grants

Grants are proving a little elusive at the moment. Our application for a 25th Anniversary Landcare Grant failed; although it rated 'Good' in all categories, it was clearly not good enough! We are waiting to hear on a 2015 Melbourne Water Community & Group Support Grant.

Green Army

After the Green Army's work last October removing the Tradescantia near Uralla Rd bridge, the Shire has assigned us more Green Army hours – a surprise to us! The Shire-sponsored Mt Eliza Linear Reserves Green Army will spend three weeks over February, March and April, removing Pines, Boneseed, Tea Tree, Pittosporum and other woody weeds



Morning tea again – and so many people at the January working bee!

Photo Liz Barracough

on east of Citation Hill, as well as any scrambling Moth Vine (*Aranjia sericifera*) they find. The October crew was to have done this but the Tradescantia took longer than expected. (You can see the results of their work near the Uralla Rd bridge – large sheets of black plastic over rotting Tradescantia.)

We have also been included in the Landcare Network's application for Green Army Round 2, to tackle the Tradescantia on the north side of Balcombe Creek, opposite the last site. We are waiting to hear.

Get involved!

We are looking forward to an interesting and productive (not for weeds!) new year and we are delighted to welcome more hands to help with our work. You might like to get involved in nestbox monitoring, Estuary Watch and Waterwatch, indigenous planting, creating a bush tucker garden, grant writing, developing interpretive signs on frogs and birds, or helping us research sedimentation in the estuary, and maybe echidnas. And last but NOT least, there are always exciting weeding projects!

REMEMBERING MT MARTHA

By Bronwyn Street

BERG's newest Committee Member spent much of her childhood in Mt Martha, as did her husband David. His memories were in *The Creek* last June.

A family holiday in 1950 in a rented house on the Esplanade near Coolangatta Road, owned by people called Jensen, led to a lifelong love affair with the Mt Martha area. A couple of years later my parents, Pattie and Arthur Morgan, bought a block of land at 2 Langrigg Avenue (just behind the present shops) and designed and built a ten square, flat-roofed bungalow of varnished

vertical boards, contemporary style. We kids got the job of staining with sump-oil the bargeboards around the base of the house – not great for either the

environment or fire protection by today's standards. The house still exists but has been painted and extended over the decades.

The site of Mt Martha Village was a swamp and at night frogs provided a lullaby. During World War II, the Army had occupied the land from the present Uralla Drive to Lochiel Avenue, site of the present village shops, and the only remaining vegetation was long grass. The *falling-in* post was on our land.

By 1952 Balcombe Army Camp occupied the top of Bay Road, a much smaller area than the wartime camp. But sound travelled down the hill, and our day was bookended by electronic broadcasts from the camp: we awoke to the *Reveille* bugle-call and as we came in for dinner the *Last Post* sounded.



The Morgan family at 2 Langrigg Ave, about 1952 Photo: Street family archives

Mt Martha had a rural hamlet feel. A man with a horse-drawn cart delivered milk, which he poured from a shiny milk-can into our enamelled billy. There was also a weekly service emptying the cans from the dunny. I recall the embarrassment when a side trapdoor in the dunny opened and the can was removed from beneath my childish rear. The nearest shop was the so-called *kiosk* at the corner of Kilburn Grove, which was by then a general store and post office (see photo next

page). Here we collected the daily paper and any mail.

The present Balcombe Estuary Reserve picnic area formed part of a camping ground, with its own playground. During autumn and spring school holidays, my brother and I often had the playground to ourselves and honed our monkey-bar skills.

However in just a few years the Lochiel Avenue area changed dramatically. The Mt Martha Store opened for business (see photo next page) and a steel fire station was built opposite our house.

My parents fled this march of progress and built a new place, complete with Stegbar windows and a lifebuoy on the front verandah. They decorated the lower panel of the windows with primary colours, earning the house the local nickname of *the kindergarten*. It was a ten-minute walk from the beach, up the hill at 40 Watson Road.

Wildlife shared our world. A bandicoot foraged in the sand outside the window and *Lily the languid lizard*, a blue-tongue, took up residence under the house. Dad put a bird bath in the mauve-flowering native shrub outside the dining room window and we marvelled as New Holland Honeyeaters, Superb Fairy Wrens and Eastern Spinebills turned on a lunchtime show. Mum designed a native garden.

I started a collection of pressed wildflowers, although we knew they were protected. Mum thought it would be OK as long as I only picked one of each. My favourite was a spider orchid that grew in abundance at the corner of Watson Road and Byron Street. I haven't seen spider orchids around here for years. I also loved Pink Heath (*Epacris impressa*) and Nodding Greenhoods.

Moving to the Watson Rd house offered new independence and adventures. We were free to roam the bush with the children next door, as long as we were home for meals. We formed a 'gang', our secret call imitating the grey shrike thrush. Our patch of paradise was the bush reserve across Watson Road and one



Rose Post Card: Post Office and General Store, Mt Martha'
Source: National Library of Australia Trove website



The 'new store', Lochiel Avenue (where the two-storey café now is)
Source: National Library of Australia Trove website

Famous Five-style adventure was walking to the Bream Pool, which in winter required wading through knee-high mud in gum boots. We built cubbies in the melaleuca forest, which we called *Giant Land*, and a bridge of logs across to the island in the estuary, where Clematis was added to my wildflower collection. Then we made a raft of forty-four-gallon drums and boards and set sail, but we didn't get far as the drums leaked. When Balcombe Creek broke through to the sea and the estuary became mudflats, we practised sliding in the mud and had to take a dip in the Bream Pool to clean ourselves up before slowly making our way home, hoping our shorts would dry before Mum spotted us.

Another favourite pastime was raiding the old cars that the army apprentices kept hidden in the bush – the seats made great enhancements to our cubbies. There were still trenches dug by soldiers in the area. Probably some can still be identified today in the Reserves. To the delight of the boys in our gang, one of the local engineering enthusiasts had improvised a car powered by an aircraft propeller.

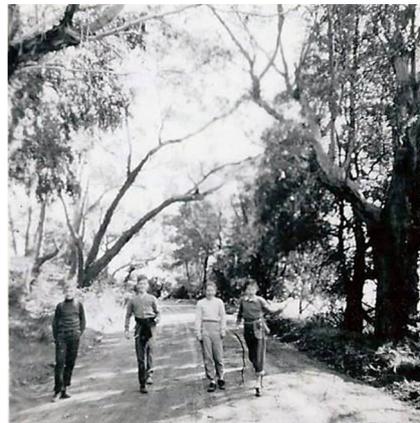
When we got bikes, the trip to the Bream Pool could be reached faster and my girlfriend and I were grateful for the added speed when some army apprentices chased us – they jumped out of Balcombe Creek naked!

One of the boys in our group even bought David Street's 1936 Austin Seven and drove it along the bush tracks. We would also hike up Hopetoun Grove (which we called Snake Gully Road), across the Nepean Highway to a secret spot in

the hay bales in a steel barn on The Briars.

The Street family

David and I married (our families' properties adjoined) and had children, and when Mrs Street decided to move to Mornington, we purchased her house as a holiday house. In the 1980s our children adventured down the track to the Bream Pool (now called Bunyip Walk). During the September term break, they extended their territory to the wilderness on the north side of the creek. Once, they found a wooden boat half buried in the mud – great material for imaginary journeys. As a family, we would launch our canoe and paddle up Balcombe Creek to the Augusta Street footbridge. Like many locals, our son's love of fishing began with dangling a line in Balcombe Creek. He did a study on Estuary water quality for Year 12 Geography.



Hiking up Hopetoun Avenue, 1958.
Photo: Street family archives

Fourth generation

Now we have retired to Maude Street, our five grandchildren are discovering the delights of Balcombe Estuary. We go via the boardwalk to the playgrounds at Ferrero Oval and

near the Rotunda. As a Mt Martha Primary student, one granddaughter participated in the launch of the Yellow Robin Trail. We are grateful that BERG Mt Martha and the Shire are conserving Balcombe Estuary Reserves. Hopefully in time, our grandchildren's grandchildren will also enjoy them.

FROM THE PRESIDENT

Happy New Year to all our members and readers. Thanks for your interest in and support of our work.

As I walked through the reserves early this year, I was so proud of what we achieved in 2014, especially the new Bird Hide, the Family Estuary Awareness Day and the Bird Brochure. And of the eight projects we planned to complete during the year, seven were completed and the eighth is in progress. The Committee is having a planning day in late January to decide on a similar list for 2015. While this newsletter may not reach you until after that meeting, we'd be happy to hear your suggestions.

We have been delighted that the number of our active volunteers increased substantially last year. It was one of our main goals for the year, and we are hoping to continue this trend through 2015. We would welcome your involvement!

Many of our members are not able to be active volunteers, for a variety of reasons – but your support, interest and recognition are enormously valuable to BERG Mt Martha. I look forward to seeing you somewhere with us during the year.

Graham Hubbard

BERG Mt Martha welcomes new members

Narelle Debenham, Hilary Day,
David & Karen Chalmers

'NATURED KIDS'

'Natured Kids' is a weekly program of environmental activities for families and children aged 0-6 years. It is held at Tony O'Connor's fascinating property in Century Drive, Mt Martha (backing onto the reserve along the Creek). The photo shows children tadpoling with Tony.

The aim is to provide opportunities for the children to connect with their natural environment and develop a love for and understanding of it. The sessions are on Wednesdays, 9.30-11am.



Contact Narelle Debenham on 0431791379 or email oaks@bigpond.net.au for a timetable and term 1, 2015 registration details.

The April newsletter will have details on Little BERGers – kids aged 0-6 and their mums who get together weekly at the Estuary

BERG Mt M Working Bees	Other BERG Mt M Activities	Other Groups
<p>❖ Monthly working bee: 3rd Sunday, between 9am & 12noon. Next are 15th February and 15th March. Meet at the Rotunda (Mel: 144 K11) or call Liz Barraclough on 0408 388 430 to find the work site.</p> <p>❖ Friday mornings. Call Sue Betheras on 0408 808 201.</p>	<p>❖ Waterwatch testing: 4th Sunday at Augusta St Bridge. Call John Inchley, 5974 1095.</p> <p>❖ BERG Mt Martha Committee meets monthly at Mt Martha House, 9.00am on the second Saturday. Next are 14th February and 14th March. All members welcome.</p>	<p>❖ Fairbairn Bushland Reserve Friends Group working bees, call Judith Whittaker 5974 8174 or John Stoker 5977 1397.</p> <p>❖ BirdLife Mornington Peninsula bird-watching 2nd Wednesday and 3rd Sunday. Enquiries to Max Burrows 9789 0224, mornington@birdlife.org.au or www.birdlife.org.au/locations/birdlife-mornington-peninsula.</p> <p>❖ SPIFFA 1st Monday, 7.30 pm, at Parks Vic, Hinton St, Rosebud. Enquiries 5988 6529, or www.spiffa.org.</p> <p>❖ Sunshine Reserve working bee 9.30am, last Thursday of month. Call Pia Spreen, 5974 1096</p>
<p>BERG MT MARTHA COMMITTEE</p> <p>PRESIDENT GRAHAM HUBBARD • VICE PRESIDENT JOHN INCHLEY • SECRETARY DI LEWIS • TREASURER RICHARD KIRSNER FIELD OFFICER LIZ BARRACLOUGH • NEWSLETTER ANGELA KIRSNER • ROTARY CLUB LIAISON GEOFF KAYE COMMUNITY AWARENESS BARBARA THRIVES • SCHOOLS LIAISON JENNY SELBY • JOHN TREVILLIAN • BRONWYN STREET</p>		
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