



Berg
Mt Martha

Caring for the Balcombe Estuary Reserves

THE CREEK

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VALE KEITH WILSON

By Angela Kirsner

With Keith Wilson's death on 21st January after a long illness, BERG Mt Martha has lost not only a much loved Honorary Life Member, but one of the people who has been central to our success.

Keith and his wife Bobbi moved to Mt Martha in 1995 and two years later, he was at the inaugural meeting of the Balcombe Estuary Rehabilitation Group – BERG (now, of course, BERG Mt Martha), where he was elected Vice President. Two years later, when Richard Hawkins stepped down, Keith took over and served as BERG's President for the next ten years, from 1999 until 2009.

His contribution to BERG was immense, and he did much to secure the group's identity in Mt Martha. Strongly community minded, he reached out, negotiated, found answers to problems, and was always willing to do whatever was needed – give a talk on BERG to Probus or another local group, chase up a wide range of issues with the Shire, wield a mattock or barrow, paint brush or barbeque tongs. On his early-morning walks with his labrador, Polly, he cleaned up rubbish. Graffiti on the Rotunda vanished under green paint from the can he had at the ready. He was a regular at Sunday working bees, weeding, planting and mulching.

One of his great delights was to work with children and young people, and his rapport with them was special. He loved to tell school groups about the magic of our reserves, and they loved to listen to him and his stories.

An excellent listener and communicator, he always drew consensus from his committee. Indeed, in one of his AGM reports,

IT'S ON AGAIN – BERG MT MARTHA'S FAMILY DAY AT THE ESTUARY

WHEN? – SUNDAY 28TH FEBRUARY, 10AM TO 2PM

WHERE? – BY THE BALCOMBE ESTUARY ROTUNDA (END OF MIRANG AVENUE)

All welcome! All activities Free!
Bring your family, friends & neighbours –especially young families with kids

- Create a cartoon with famous children's book illustrator Terry Denton
 - Sculpt a clay animal with the Dromana Potters
 - Make a mini-book with Mt Martha artist Anni Dowd
 - Paint your world with Judi Singleton
 - Pour water through Lego Smart City with Melbourne Water
 - Look for creek critters with BERG Mt Martha
 - Burrow into the bush with Gidja
 - Spot the bird with Birdlife Australia
 - Get close and personal with ravishing reptiles from Moonlit Sanctuary
 - Swap cards and yarns with 'The Connies' – the tramways guys!
 - What Plant is That? with BERG Mt Martha
 - Magical story telling
 - Face painting
 - Tai Chi
 - Sausage sizzle...

and more!

he said that he saw maintaining harmony as the most important aspect of his role as President. And in a later report to the committee: 'My experience in scores of community groups [is that] tolerance and harmony are key factors in the success of such groups. Enjoying the work is a key element as well'.

These were skills he brought from his working life, as Victorian manager and Deputy Director of a prominent shipping and stevedoring company, as well as chairman of the Overseas Shipping Association and a member of the committee of management of the Association of Employers of Waterside Labour. On retirement, he took on the role of port conciliator – the person responsible for liaising between the Waterside Workers Federation and

the ship owners. Tellingly, it was the waterside workers who nominated him. It was not just his negotiating skills, one of them observed, but his honesty with union officials that helped to resolve conflict.



Keith talks to Mt Martha Primary School children outside the old camp laundry (date and photographer unknown)



Keith was involved in everything – left, barbecuing sausages at the 2009 sausage sizzle outside Bunnings; right, delivering the President's report at the 2008 AGM Photos Richard Kirsner

Keith's community involvement and service spanned his life, although one had to ask someone other than him to learn about it. He and his family lived for many years in Warrandyte where, for fifteen years, he was president of the local Welfare Service, providing meals on wheels. He was president of the tennis club for twenty-five years, and served as a Doncaster and Templestowe Councillor from 1958 to 1961. After the 1962 fires he became president of the Warrandyte Rural Fire Brigade over a time when the brigade and the service as a whole were restructured. As president and treasurer of the Warrandyte branch of the Liberal Party, he won the respect of many of his political opponents. He was on the advisory council for the Ringwood and Norwood high schools, president of the Warrandyte Scouts, on the committee of the Warrandyte Badminton Club, a trustee of the Anderson's Creek Cemetery, and he played a leading part in the Warrandyte Uniting Church.

When Keith and Bobbi moved to Nambucca Heads in 1988, he chaired, among other things, the Nambucca Heads Community Consultative Committee, formed to build bridges between indigenous and non-indigenous residents.

After moving to Mt Martha in 1995, for many years he devoted a great deal of quiet energy to supporting the widows and families of ex-service personnel through

We shall miss this warm, generous and giving man. Our thoughts are with Bobbi and family.

PROGRESS ON SEDIMENT

Graham Hubbard reports

BERG Mt Martha's Sedimentation Action Group, set up in 2013 to tackle the long-standing problem of sediment deposition in the estuary, had several major meetings with Melbourne Water and the Mornington Peninsula Shire during 2015. These achieved some significant results.

Melbourne Water provided us with a wealth of research and historical information on the health of the estuary, and improved coordination of the Waterwatch program, and they developed an aligned management program for their bed and banks works, with better communication to us.

BERGers Tom le Cerf and Graeme McMillan sampled the shallow estuary sediment, which MPS analysed. This indicated limited chemical pollutants and suggested the main issues are gravel and sand sediment run-off from local roads.

A number of proposals for reducing drain flows into the creek and estuary were funded by the Shire, but unfortunately the evidence shows these are not significant flows. The Shire has begun monthly monitoring and analysis of some of the main drains, using their recently

Legacy. He became President of the Probuss Club and, with two or three friends from the Dromana Tennis Club, he coached disadvantaged youngsters at what they dubbed the 'Blue Light Tennis Club', run with Dromana Police.

purchased monitoring equipment and with sampling assistance from BERGers Peter and Deb McMahon and John Inchley.

We finished 2015 with an agreed action plan with Melbourne Water and the Shire for analysing the effectiveness of the existing Gross Pollutant Traps (Melbourne Water) and analysing the core sediment already in the estuary (Shire). I am hopeful that, by the end of 2016, we will have all the evidence needed for a comprehensive and lasting solution to estuary sedimentation.

Meanwhile, some swans have recently returned to the estuary (see below) – a hopeful start to the year.



Tom le Cerf sampling the estuary sediment
Photo Graeme McMillan

SEVEN SWANS A-SWIMMING

Story & photo Angela Kirsner

Swans, so long absent from the Estuary, have been frequent visitors over this summer. Four kept a distant eye on the mural launch at the start of December (see article next page), and there have been anything from two to five on various occasions through January.

But on 27th December, there were seven – and it was only the third day of Christmas!



FIELD NEWS

Field Officer Liz Barraclough reports

Welcome back to all! We are off to a great start for 2016.

Working-bees

Our year kicked off in style at the January Sunday working bee with a great turn-out. We cleaned, tidied and reorganized our tool room at the old campground and drew up an inventory of all equipment, including that in our trailer.

We also pruned judiciously and removed weeds to make it easier and less damaging for canoes to access to the estuary and creek. We feel it is better to encourage use of one track where the least damage is likely to the bank than to have numerous tracks hacked through the vegetation and into the banks.

Some of us also met with a representative from the Rotary Club of Mt Martha to discuss the best sites, the work involved, and BERG MM's input, for two or three new picnic tables and bench sets in the old campground area and a simple seat on the jetty. Rotary has recently been given access to funds for this purpose.

Our great morning-teas are still a feature and very much appreciated by the workers, especially the tiny ones – the grandchildren! Many thanks to Shirley Kerr for the year's first delicious contributions – brimming plates of scones and cake.

The Friday Morning Group is yet to start for the year, as January is unpredictable with its holiday activity and (at times!) hot weather.

Grants/Projects

We're delighted with a couple of significant grant successes in this tightening fiscal climate. We will receive a total of over \$37,000 under a Melbourne Water 2016 Community Grant, comprising:

- \$16,421 for riparian restoration below the Maude St burn site and along to Victoria Cres
- \$20,818.75 for two sites on Hopetoun Creek: follow-up work upstream of the Bay Rd crossing and below Balcombe Preschool; and work upstream of Ferrero Recreation Reserve, beside and below Balcombe Cres.

- a Support Grant of \$550 for insurance and a workshop and materials.

We thank Melbourne Water, particularly Paul Hodgson, Community Grants Coordinator, River Health Team, for their ongoing and generous support. Their grants are very important in making possible the extent and high standard of restoration we do.

We have also been successful in gaining a new grant, from the Port Phillip Westernport Catchment Management Authority, to the tune of \$13,625. This is for restoration of the Grassy Woodland vegetation above and adjoining the Swamp Scrub on the lower reaches of Hopetoun Creek, at the southern upper end of the Rabbit Paddock (ie at the end of Village Close). It will complement our work under the

Melbourne Water grant in the adjoining area. The PPWCMA grant also includes funding for two editions of *The Creek* and a place for one BERG MM member in the Peninsula Habitat Conservation Management course.

The application for this grant was a joint effort, but its success is substantially due to Angela Kirsner and Di Lewis, who picked up the pieces and finished it off when I left it in their laps and took off for a holiday in Myanmar.

Green Army

Unfortunately funding for the Green Army was severely cut in the recent budget, so we do not know if we will benefit from more Green Army projects this year. We were generously supported by the program in 2015, and it enabled us to achieve a great deal of extra work.

ROTUNDA TRANSFORMED

The four wonderful panels inspired by the Balcombe Estuary Reserves that now hang in the Rotunda in the old campground were launched by Cr Bev Columb on December 14th.

Students from four local primary schools – Mt Martha Primary, Osborne Primary, Balcombe Grammar and Bentons Junior College – worked with Red Hill artist Michael Leeworthy to produce the panels. The project was commissioned by BERG Mt Martha and funded by a Placemaking Grant from the Shire. Particular thanks to BERG MM's Schools Liaison officer Jenny Selby, who coordinated the project.



Clockwise from top left: Mt Martha Primary School children in front of their panel on local fauna, with Michael Leeworthy and Cr Bev Columb; Michael Leeworthy with students from Osborne Primary and their mural, 'Under the Water'; The Balcombe Grammar 'Indigenous Flora' panel with (L-R) art teachers Pamela Moore & Sue Wilson, Michael Leeworthy, two grade 5 students, & teacher Natalie Kurelja; L-R Jenny Spiridis from Mt Martha Primary, BERG Jenny Selby, and Pam Anderson, Osborne Primary Principal Photos Angela Kirsner

BANDICOOT SIGHTING

Angela Kirsner reports

It was Friday 8th January. We were driving along the Nepean Highway just beyond Mt Martha, between the Mornington Peninsula Freeway and the Old Moorooduc Rd, and there, scrabbling on the edge of the grass on the side of the road, was a Bandicoot! – quite unmistakable with its long, pointed nose. Sadly, I had no camera with me.

Bandicoots were, of course, once very common on the Peninsula, but I've not seen one in the wild in the six decades I've been coming to Mt Martha.

THANKS! TO ANOTHER LOCAL TRADER DONOR

Warlimont & Nutt

BERG Mt Martha welcomes new members


Liz Egan & David Andrew;
Trenna Whitford;
Karen & Ian Flavell

BE FIRE-READY

The Shire is holding a Bushfire 'walk-and-talk' in Mt Martha to talk about residents' bushfire plans and property preparations, and the Shire's fire management plan for the reserve. All welcome.

When? Wed 3rd February, 6pm

Where? Meet in the grassed area between Kotor Close and Hilton Crt

BERG Mt M Working Bees	Other BERG Mt M Activities	Other Groups
<p>❖ Sunday working bee: monthly, 3rd Sunday, between 9am & 12noon. Next are 21st February and 20th March. Details emailed a few days ahead, or call Liz Barraclough, 0408 388 430.</p> <p>❖ Tuesday working bee: monthly, 2nd Tuesday, between 9.00 & 12 noon, meet at the end of Latrobe Dve. Call Jenny Selby 0432 719 288.</p> <p>❖ Friday working bee: weekly between 9.30 and 12 noon. 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 13th February and 19th March (NB 3rd Saturday in March to avoid holiday weekend). All members welcome.</p>	<p>❖ Fairbairn Bushland Reserve Friends Group 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 JOHN TREVILLIAN COMMUNITY AWARENESS BARBARA THRIVES • SCHOOLS LIAISON JENNY SELBY • BRONWYN STREET</p>		
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THE CREEK

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