

THE KILN



Issue 13
DECEMBER 2005

NEWSLETTER for the
Friends of Kurth Kiln



www.vicnet.net.au/~fofkk

The Friends of Kurth Kiln wish all our readers a
Joyous Christmas and all the very best for 2006

PRESIDENT'S PRATTLE A Message from our President

Your re elected old/new -president is once more greeting you, but this time however from self imposed exile.

As busy as one always is, I had not checked out my own label, stating 'best before August 2005' and now must bear the consequences of this oversight. I am in fact nursing a fractured spine which is slow to heal since Multiple Melanoma is found to be the underlying problem. Do not despair, my spirit is not broken and that is the best healing elixir.

At this time of the year there are a few more of our Friends licking their wounds. I wish every one comfort and a speedy return to better health. During winter, Bill & Lorna brought along oranges and grapefruit from their garden while Alf & Ursula shared Kiwi fruit with the friends. Returning from the Ian Gawler Retreat Bill-&Lorna paid-me a home visit to make sure I won't run out of grape fruit. Hank & Riet joint in as well. Thank you Alf & Ursula for your nice card and Riet and all the Friends for all your individual good wishes as well. The local gremlins Harry &, Ronda in the meantime converted our stropo grass around the house into a beautiful lawn. A Big Hug.

I am definitely not used to so much attention, but I humbly accept your assistance with heart felt thanks.

My next visit to the Kiln will be as guest of Tammy Lobato M.P. where she will thank her local supporters by hosting a Christmas Barbeque in their honour. Since I am a vegetarian now, I may as well take this opportunity to welcome every one to our special place.

Our Annual General Meeting went very well. A new Secretary, Kerri Bonica, plus an assistant, Denise Brain, were accepted into our team. Rosemary Beth took on the Vice Presidency from Ronda and a new portfolio of Social Co-ordinator was established. This duty will be taken up by Carmel Hails. Ranger Ralph was good. enough to supply us with a trailer load of mulch, which was spread out over Parker's Patch of native shrubs. A few extra plants available were added as well. It all looks so much more inviting. The large open shed underwent foot and hip replacement surgery and is now a very safe shelter, where beneath it, we can conduct our meetings and social gatherings. A job very well done. A lot of maintenance work was also put into some of the forest huts. Naturally this is very much appreciated, and from my exile I can only say Thank You. Hope to be with you soon.

I would like to wish all our Friends and Readers a safe and wonderful Christmas Season and a Healthy and Happy New Year.

COMING EVENTS

Due to a number of circumstances the Annual General Meeting in October decided to dispense with the two-monthly committee meetings and handle all matters arising at the customary General Meetings preceding the monthly Working Bees. Special Meetings can be called by any committee member at any time should the need arise. Our Calendar schedule for 2006 is as follows:

General Meetings / Working Bees on the second Saturday each month starting at 10am:					
January	14	May	13	September	9
February	11	June	10	October	14 AGM
March	11	July	8	November	11
April	8	August	12	December	9

Our Annual Heritage Festival this year will take place on Sunday 2 April

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This Newsletter is published by the Friends of Kurth Kiln. A group of people concerned with the preservation of the heritage in the Kurth Kiln Site.

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RANGER'S REPORT ANOTHER YEAR OF GOOD RESULTS

Hello to everyone and congratulations to the new committee of the Kurth Kiln Friends that were elected at the Annual General meeting on the 8th October 2005. Thank you to Wendy Rackham and Rhoda and Harry Stevens for their involvement last year on the committee. Great to see Meinhard Holtz being re elected as president of the group again and I wish you all the best for the coming year.

The work to the main shed is completed and it was money well spent. I feel more comfortable now that we can sit underneath the roof structure and feel safe.

Thank you again Dick Cleary for your involvement with your truck and crane. Putting the beam on the posts took a lot of skill in very tight and difficult section of the shed.

The re-stumping and guttering on the building have been replaced. Ken Stewart the maintenance contractor doing the work has finished like the money has from the budget.

The weather has been fantastic for the plants around the Kurth Kiln, plenty of heat and rain. The two projects to re-vegetate the areas and the survival of the plants have been quite successful.

Great to see the increase of visitors to the park is growing each year with more people camping, horse riding, day trippers and people using the walking tracks. Parks Victoria looks at Kurth Kiln as a mid level park, but I can see in the future the Kurth Kiln Park could be up graded to a higher level. This would mean the introduction of gas barbecues and better toilets and more of them!

RECREATION FRAMEWORK NEWS

The draft framework was released for public comment in April 2005 and consultation period closed at the end of June 2005. Several options have been presented to the state government and Parks Victoria is waiting for the Ministers' response.

The Kurth Kiln areas affected by the changes are:

Adams Fireline	from Soldiers to Channel Track	1 access gate for Management Vehicles & Horses, Walkers and Bikes (pedal power only!)
Jims Track	from Beenak Rd to Beenak Rd	1 access gate for MV & HWB
Shepherds Ck Rd	from Beenak Rd to Ure Rd	2 access gates for MV & HWB
Ure Road	from Ure Rd to Shepherds Ck Rd	2 access gates for MV & HWB
Water Channel Tk	from Scout Camp Tk to Launching Place –Gembrook Rd	2 access gates MV & HWB
Water Channel Tk	from Launching Place Rd- Gembrook Rd to Spencer Tk	2 access gates MV & HWB
Watermill Track	from Beenak Rd to McCrae Ck	1 access gate for MV & HWB

Any concerns with the Recreational Framework please get in touch with Greg Young, Ranger In Charge Gembrook

Good news from the crew at Gembrook is that Judy Groeneveld has a full time job with Melbourne Water and will be involved with environment work and fire duties.

Leigh Hender is also starting at Albert Park for Parks Victoria. They are both deserve their appointments'

I and Parks Victoria would like to thank the Kurth Kiln Friends for their wonderful efforts throughout the year and wish the Kurth Kiln Friends a very Happy Christmas and New Year and good health I am very lucky to be involved with you all, as part of my Parks Victoria work!

Ralph Angelico

EDITORIAL

The year 2005 comes to a close, and as our friendly Parks Victoria Ranger reports above, it was 'another year of good results'. The big shed at Kurth Kiln received some much needed attention, thanks to Parks Victoria, to Ken Stewart the plumber (thanks for fixing the guttering), and Dick Cleary, our resourceful Maintenance Manager. As already reported in the June issue, re-vegetation projects done with grants for Parks Victoria and the National Heritage Trust EnviroFund (and completed with the help of the Gembrook and the Hoddles Creek Primary Schools) are progressing well; the picnic ground fences and parking access were improved; we have received funding for the purchase of a Gas Patio Heater through the Department of Family and Community Services and from our friendly Bendigo Bank in Wandin; an application for a portable display set-up is still pending, and we have just applied for directional road signs on the approaches to Kurth Kiln Park, to Vic Roads and Cardinia Shire.

Our annual Heritage Festival was again a great success. A big thank-you to all the organisers, the contributors, the participants and the many visitors. You are the real recipients of the "Cardinia Festival of the Year Award" we received at the Australia Day Celebration this year. I could mention here that the next Heritage Festival will be on 2 April 2006 and we hope to see you there again. A Kurth Kiln promotional stand at the Gembrook Market recently seemed to be well received, so we will be there again for the next one on 17 December (see page 8).

Feature articles in this issue, on Gas Producers, The Mt Beenak School and the continuation of Our Ancient Survivors make for interesting reading, as do the contributions for the section Amongst Friends.

A big welcome to our new members: Warren & Chen Lu Williams and family, Walter Berger, Des & Leanne Kirk and family, Tom Marrow, Beth Parker and Marcus White. We sincerely hope you will enjoy being part of the friends group and value your participation in whatever form it may take. To all our readers and friends we express our sincere appreciation for your support, especially so to the Rangers and staff at Parks Victoria Gembrook.

We extend the Compliments of the Season to you all, with health and happiness in 2006 Alfred and Ursula Klink

GAS PRODUCERS

We thank Dick Straw who kindly wrote this article telling us about his youthful experience with the Nasco Gas Producers and thanks to Marcus White for his technical article of how Gas Producers work.

NASCO GAS PRODUCER

In 1938 Prior to the 39-45 war II my parents bought a 58 acre block of land at Red Hill. The aim was to give my father an outlet, he was considered by his parents to be too clever to be a full time farmer.

The idea was to spend every second weekend at Red Hill improving the property and growing vegetables for our own use.

The outbreak of war in 1939 soon brought in petrol rationing. My father made a special application for an increased ration, but that was rejected on the grounds that we were not primary producers. Our petrol ration was four gallons (20 litres) per month, only enough to get us to Red Hill once a month. The decision was made to fit a gas producer to the car, a 1937 Chevrolet. The Nasco Gas Producer was a well known model in those days. I must have seen hundreds, fitted to all types of vehicles.

My father was an industrial chemist, engaged in munitions work during the war, he had the right sort of knowledge about producer gas to help him manage the new method of fuelling the car.

It was mounted on a special frame on the back of the car so that the whole unit could be swung to one side to give access to the boot, and to give access to the lower openings for cleaning.

The carburettor had to be modified to enable the carbon monoxide gas to be mixed with the right amount of air.

The attachment was further complicated by the addition of an extended drawbar because we needed to tow a trailer to transport firewood. Most of our home heating was done with open fires and we had plenty of firewood at Red Hill.

This unit enabled us to continue our fortnightly trips. But it was not as simple as pulling into a garage and filling up the petrol tank. The Gas Producer burned charcoal, purchased from the local wood merchant. My memories are that every time I handled charcoal, I finished the job with charcoal dust all over me.

Going to Red Hill was quite an exercise. We had to pack the car with food and clothing as we generally stayed overnight. Before leaving, the hopper of the producer had to be filled with charcoal and an extra bag of charcoal loaded into the trailer for the return trip. The

lid on the top had to be shut with a clamp to make sure that all the air was drawn through the fire. The fire was lit by starting the car on petrol and drawing flame and air through the bottom of the hopper, the flame was a lighted kerosene soaked rag.

The journey started with the engine running on petrol for approximately the first five kilometres. The fire would then be burning brightly and a gradual change over to gas could be made. Approaching Red Hill a long climb had to be negotiated. Dad would change down to second gear before the hill, the Chevrolet had only three forward gears, to increase the draft through the fire and enable the gas producer to give the car enough power to climb the hill. My cousin remembers having to walk up the hill if we had a heavy load. At the end of the journey everything was very hot and had to be left to cool down before we could open the boot. Dad would sometimes open the lid of the hopper and throw in a lighted match to bum off the excess carbon monoxide.

There were quite a few drawbacks to this method of fuelling a motor car. It was my job to clean out the producer after each trip. Hopefully there would not be much fuel in the hopper because I had to dig through the charcoal and remove the clinker that built up where the fire was hottest. The clinker was a hard lump caused when the fire melted the impurities in the charcoal. There were also the filters to clean. They were cylindrical, made of felt and installed under the bonnet. They kept the fine charcoal dust out of the engine. It was a dirty job. The lengthy start up time was the reason that the car was only used for long trips.

During the later part of the war we would sometimes pick up US marines, who were on rest and recreation leave at Balcome, an army camp west of Mt. Martha. We would take them down to the Red Hill farm, they seemed to need to get away from camp life. I can't remember whether they had any opinions about gas producers.

My father had a few attempts at producing his own charcoal, but I don't think they were very successful. We seemed to buy most of our charcoal. After the hopper was taken off the car, I remember it being used in the back yard as an incinerator for burning rubbish. □

Dick Straw

ABOUT "GAS PRODUCERS"

A four-stroke combustion engine in its operation draws fresh air into its cylinders with each second stroke of the pistons. A controlled amount of fuel is mixed with the incoming air and compressed in the following stroke for combustion. Petrol or Diesel or LPG are the most commonly used fuel these days, but basically any combustible liquid or gas, even vegetable oil, ethanol or alcohol could be used, provided it can be thoroughly mixed with the air. It has been known for a long time that solid carbonous material, when heated in an oxygen depleted air, gives off a gas called Carbon Monoxide. With the addition of more oxygen this can be used as a fuel in a controlled way to burn to the stable carbon dioxide. Carbon monoxide is a very dangerous and deadly gas.

Apart from its explosive nature it is tasteless, odourless and colourless and can, by entering the lungs via the normal breathing mechanism, displace the oxygen in the bloodstream and interrupt the normal supply of oxygen to the heart, brain and other vital functions of the body. The so-called 'Gas Producer' is a furnace specifically designed and constructed to utilise this natural process and produce carbon monoxide from charcoal for use as a gaseous fuel in an internal combustion engine.

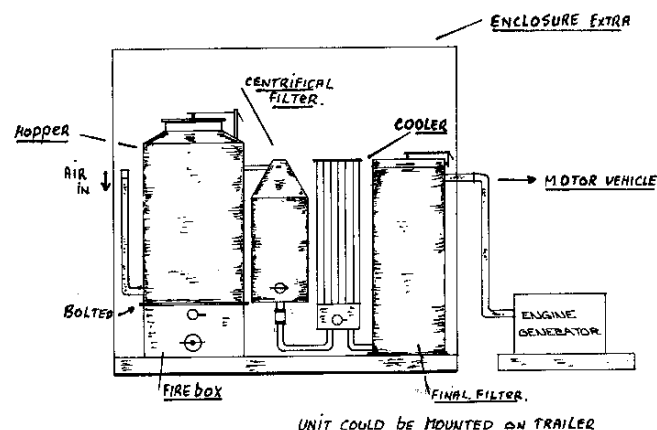
A Gas Producer usually consists of a sealed furnace and a hopper to hold the charcoal, a radiator to cool the gas and an elaborate filter system to remove any abrasive impurities from the gas. Various designs for attaching or

incorporation the gas producer in the vehicle have evolved; on cars the most common was a separate, self-contained structure mounted at the rear of the vehicle. A long hose-pipe attaches it to the motor through which a controlled amount of gas is drawn from the hot furnace and mixed with more air to provide the explosive mixture needed in the engine.

The suction created by a running engine makes the whole sequence of events in the attached gas producer happen: Outside air is drawn first through a complex path for preheating before it enters the sealed and insulated firebox below the grate-bars supporting the charcoal fire. Sometimes it is mixed with a small volume of steam made by water slowly dripping onto a very hot part of the chamber. Forced to travel through the hot coal fire and the coal above it, the air mixture is split into Hydrogen, Carbon Monoxide and a small amount of Carbon Dioxide. Nitrogen, the largest component of air by volume, remains inert and just "goes along for the ride". The fuel gas mixture is called "Producer Gas", or sometimes "Suction Gas". This gas leaves the furnace extremely hot and still dirty with dust, ash, grit and particles of charcoal by way of the heat-exchanger section, where it warms the incoming fresh air. In a pre-filter the gas then winds upwards around a metal spiral in a metal tube to drop the larger impurities and grit out, which could damage the engine. A bank of thin-wall metal tubes cools the gas sufficiently to protect the following dry filter pads from catching fire. In some deluxe options the gas is passed up through a container full of lightweight rocks, through which recirculating water is constantly trickling, or forced to bubble through a small container of water which, as well as providing a final chance to remove impurities, at the same time offers protection against "blow back" from the engine. The impurities caught in the water settle as sludge at the bottom of the container. It was frequently said that in theory you can never have too much filtering of the

producer gas, but in practice, with the above stages implemented and with reasonable maintenance, it did not seem to adversely affect engine life. As the gas is sucked into the engine inlet a throttle butterfly valve balances the correct amount of gas with that of fresh air drawn from outside to produce the right mixture for combustion.

The above process will stop when either the engine is switched off, the charcoal is all consumed by the fire, or the fire goes out, as can happen on long downhill runs, when insufficient suction is provided by the idling engine.



Schematic diagram of a Charcoal Gas Producer

This is the end, except to add that apart from the dusty and time-consuming process of topping up with charcoal and getting the furnace going, it was an environmentally clean way to travel. Only air and water and carbon dioxide came out of the exhaust pipe. □

Markus White
arranged A. Klink

THE BEENAK SCHOOL AND THE HULLS

Recently Riet Bouck read the booklet "The Beenak Story" by Madge Hull (nee Huttly) describing her years as a young teacher in the pioneer timber-milling settlement of Beenak. This is Riet's summary of Marge's story.

THE MT. BEENAK SCHOOL STORY: The Beenak story, is told by a 20 year old teacher, whose first appointment in 1925 was as a teacher at Mt. Beenak.

She had no idea where Beenak was, only that it was near Yarra Junction, where her friend had been and had said it was a beautiful area. She arrived from Stawell via Melbourne. Arriving at Yarra Junction at Three Bridges, she was told there she had to walk up THE BUMP, because there was no truck going up. So she walked up – 4 miles to the settlement on the tram track, a hard slog. It seemed on arrival there was no accommodation arranged for her and she ended up in a boardinghouse for men to sleep with 2 children in a bed for the 1st night.

The school building was a hall, rented from Northern Timber Co and was pretty rough with hardly any equipment for the children, 9 in total. Determined to improve she changed all that over time and even established a library for men at the settlement, especially used on a regular base by an admirer, the secretary of the school committee Charlie Harris.

To make promotion you depended on a good report from the Inspector and at Mt. Beenak school there had never been one. So she wrote to the Department. When

the inspector arrived they were not prepared for his visit and he was not pleased to be called out to "such a place". But after the formalities he wanted to hear them sing. All went fine until he said: now without the help of the teacher and harmonium" That ended so hilariously, that everybody collapsed with laughter, except the inspector, whose mark was singing 0.

She boarded first with Mrs. R. but for some reason it was not a good time. After a few months she became the starboarder at Mrs. Brann for 1 pound per week, for a room so small, that she could reach all walls and ceiling when she stretched out her arms. She decorated the walls with newspapers as wallpaper. The school improved with better equipment and she also started Sunday school. All the children attended.

February 1926 – Black Sunday – was a fiercely hot day with strong winds. There were already small fires around in the area. In the afternoon all women and children were ordered to pack just a few valuables and go the only clear space near the school. By that time the fire raged all around then. The men and boys put every effort into

saving the mills and homes and Mt. Beenak was lucky to escape being burnt out, but the mill sites around them were not, like Worrleys mill site with 17 deaths and Russell's who lost all the buildings, but luckily enough no lives.

By 3 a.m. it was safe to go home.

The lady welfare officer came to visit and bad luck for her it was raining that day. She said whatever place is

this!! After a long talk she offered to take her away from there, but if she could sit it out for the rest of the year she promised she would get the place she would apply for. And so she did when she applied for a job at her home town, Stawell.

She met Jack Hull during her last couple of months at Beenak and he became her husband. He wrote the book " Yarns of Cowra Jack ". □

Lorna Parker remembers passing the Mt. Beenak school on a bike-riding holiday in the early 1930's - little knowing that Madge Huttley (Hull) would later become one of her close friends.

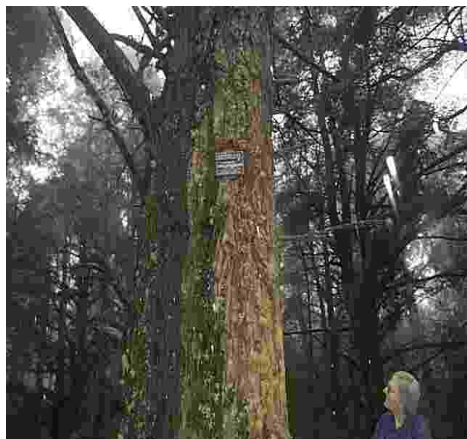
Bills article pays tribute to Jack and Madge Hull.

INTERESTING LOCAL COUPLES , INCLUDING THE HULLS OF BEENAK

Madge Huttly, as far as I can ascertain, was the only female school teacher to have taught at the Beenak Primary School. Although born in the country, she had had to go to Melbourne for her secondary school education before going into teaching. She said that it was a shock for her to be appointed to Beenak, even though she had requested it.

Beenak at that stage was just a crude saw milling area lacking the essential facilities one would expect to find. The only public building was the little school where she was to teach, with no recognized accommodation but the mill huts where the mill workers lived. She obtained board with a married couple. The husband worked on one of the mills. Their hut consisted of three rooms - kitchen and lounge room combined, the couple's bedroom and a little room 'you could hardly swing a cat in' that Marge occupied. In fact, it was so small that when she had a bath in a tub of water on the floor next to her bed, she had to stand on the floor next to her bed to wash, then up on top of the bed to get dressed. Toilet facilities were a little wooden dunny in full view of all the people who lived in the surrounding huts.

However, Madge was a resourceful person and managed to cope with the situation. When the bushfires of 1926 swept through Beenak, wiping out most of the mills and huts, Madge and the children and some others stayed in the school ground and saved the school, while the fire roared all around them. Seven men who tried to get from



Lorna Parker looking at the plaque someone erected on a tree at the Beenak School site.

one mill to another were caught in the inferno and lost their lives. After the fires, Jack hull who was working a mill in the Otways, was sent to Beenak by his boss to salvage a steam winch that was used by one of the mills. As the mill had been

burnt, the winch was no longer required.

Jack Hull had come out from England at the age of sixteen and had worked on farms and on the mills, but had

got into the wrong company and became a heavy drinker and ne'er do well though he had obtained his ticket for a boiler maker. Still a young man, he got to know Madge when he was dismantling the mill and used to seek her company. Madge was a very religious person and Jack tried to ridicule her beliefs but Madge stuck to what she believed and gradually persuaded Jack to give up his drinking habits. He started to study theology. They eventually married and Madge kept teaching to support him while he completed his studies and finished up with a master's degree from Melbourne University. He became a Methodist minister for the Cockatoo area where Lorn and I got to know them.

Another interesting couple who retired locally, to Emerald were Frank and Edna Nurse. Edna had been a lecturer in Economics at Melbourne University, but in earlier days had been a teacher at Melbourne High School when Lorn was a student there. She had also done her teacher training with Lorn's sister Hilda. This couple became good friends with the Hulls, and through membership of various committees, Lorn and I got to know them all well.

They started a discussion evening, and invited Lorn and me to be part of it, with Bill Mann and his wife Barbara from Upper Pakenham as well. We would meet at Nurse's home in Emerald for tea then afterwards have a discussion on various topics.

Later, when I had the big six seater Nissan sedan, I would take the six of us out to Beenak and Madge and Jack (particularly Madge) would reminisce about life at Beenak. As all of us were country bred we greatly enjoyed these excursions to the bush.

When the Bush Nursing Centre Committee was formed in Cockatoo in 1959, and I joined the committee at little later, our job was to raise a certain amount of money before the Government would build the Centre. The Centre was finally opened in 1964 by the then Governor, Sir Rohan Delacombe. The first president of the committee was Mrs Quick who was a nurse and had served with the United Nations in Europe after World War II.

After a few years, I became president, a position I held for three of the 12 years I was on the committee. I had three good secretaries to serve me. The first was Mrs O'Leary, a retired school teacher, the second was Frank Nurse, a retired accountant, and the third, Mr Hull. At one stage we had four councilors on the Committee - three from the Shire of Berwick and one from the Shire of Fern Tree Gully. It was a great experience for learning about good committees and how successful organisations are run.

OUR ANCIENT SURVIVOR

THE ECHIDNA : Part 2

Lee O'Mahoney; from the Sanctuary Friends Newsletter

Source: *the Echidna – Australia's Enigma*, by Dr Peggy Rismiller, Hugh Lauter Levin Associates, 1999

Echidnas eat a whole range of invertebrates, including ants, termites, worms, beetles, nematodes, insect eggs and larvae. They use their good sense of hearing to detect critters moving beneath the soil. They then use their incredibly powerful feet, and beak, to dig them up. It's also thought they may have sensitive electro receptors in their beak, like Platypus, that help them locate food.

Being ever crafty, Currawongs often loiter around foraging Echidnas, knowing that some exposed insects will inevitably escape the Echidna's tongue.

The Echidna 'beak' is different to that of a bird, in that it only opens about 5mm wide, just enough for the 17cm (6.8") long, narrow, worm-like tongue to fling out and grab food. Like Platypus, it's covered in a tough skin. The beak is extremely strong and can pull bark from trees and turn rocks over. However, if damaged, Echidnas can't breathe or eat. A whopping 85% of Echidnas hit by vehicles die because of beak damage, not from other injuries.

Echidnas are as toothless as a canary and can't open their beak wide to hold onto food. So how do they manage? Rows of barb-like structures on the tongue and a lot of saliva are the key - these make the tongue sticky. Once on the tongue, the Echidna grinds the food between a horny pad and the top of its mouth.

Blowing Bubbles. Dirt up the nose is not a nice thing - Just ask anyone who's been pushed face first in the ground by an older sibling. Echidnas face the problem whenever they forage. Given the well-known lack of hankies in bushland Australia, they've come up with their own novel solution. They produce a lot of mucous and blow bubbles of it through their nostrils to flush out any dirt. They have not swallowed detergent nor do they have a cold. The mucous means that the tip of their beak often looks wet.



Sketch Courtesy of Ronda Stevens

As dexterous as an octopus, Echidnas use their spines as extra fingers to help them climb trees, walk on slippery rocks or right themselves if they've fallen onto their back. Not only that, they have enough muscle control to move each spine individually. And humans think they're clever if they can wiggle their ears. The spines are simply modified hairs and are made of keratin. Like human hairs, spines are shed individually, not in a single moult. Some 'tagged' spines have stayed put for more than 10 years.

Radar ears Eyesight is not the Echidna's greatest sense, but they do detect movement, shapes, sizes and orientation. They see only in black and white and eyelashes help keep their eyes clean during digging.

To make up for their eyesight, they have excellent hearing. The spines around their ears are quite fine and they move them individually to direct sound into their ear funnel, making it easier to pinpoint the sound.

Echidnas fitted with a transmitter quickly learn to tell the difference between their signal and another's. When they hear their signal, they seem to realise that they're about to be manhandled by a human, again, and dig into the ground. If they hear another Echidna's signal, they just stay still.

The gentle pincushion. Echidnas show no aggression towards other animals. This pacifist approach to life makes sense because, other than their protective spines, they have no weapons. Any dog who's ever run up to an Echidna and poked it with its nose will be very grateful for this lack of aggression. It's generally something dogs do only once.

Before white man arrived in Australia, life was comparatively peaceful for Echidnas. Other than goannas who could kill spineless youngsters if they found the nursery burrow, the dingo was their only predator. Nowadays, a number of introduced predators cause them grief, including cats, dogs, foxes, pigs and, the big killer, cars.

Given that Echidnas live a solitary life, how do the males find the female? It's thought that she emits pheromones, which the males detect. They then travel well outside their normal home range to pursue her. Three to four suitors are common but there can be up to 10. Echidnas may only breed once every three years, so it makes sense for them to make the most of each opportunity.

The entire courtship period may take between one and six weeks, with males coming and going throughout. During this time, they'll try to be the first in line behind the female, pushing others out of the way. Other than this, there's little aggression, very different to most breeding animals. The last male standing gets to pass his genes onto the next generation.

The parents-to-be share two days of post mating companionship then return to their solitary lives. The male either returns to his home range or searches for another female. The female begins the important task of preparing for the pitter-patter of four little feet. □

contributed by Ronda Stevens

AMONGST FRIENDS

GEMBROOK FAUNA AND FLORA GROUP

The Gembrook Fauna and Flora Group had a great year. We thank all our members and Parks Victoria for all their input and support during 2005 and especially thank Carmel and Jasper Hails for welcoming us at their property each month, while hair-tubing in the Weatherhead Range.

Unfortunately we have not, as yet, found the Brush-tail Phascogale Phascogale tapoatafa, however there is still a high possibility that they are resident there, as hair-tubing only picks up approximately 35% of mammal species in the area.

During the year we were happy to welcome the International Volunteers and several Landcare groups to our hair-tubing project.

Thank you to all the individual groups and other organisations for their support during the past year.

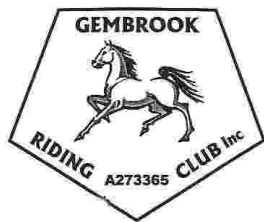
The Fauna and Flora group meets on the 4th Sunday of each month. The first meeting will be on 23 January. Meet at Parks Gembrook office 10:00am

Have a Merry Christmas and a peaceful New Year and hoping to see you all in the New Year.

Jim and Pam McNabb ☐

GEMBROOK RIDING CLUB & COCKATOO PONY CLUB TIME TRIAL

On Saturday, 5th November Gembrook Riding Club & Cockatoo Pony Club held a Horse Time Trial at Kurth Kiln, as has been the case for the past 15 years. The mapping of the two rides were well prepared over the preceding weeks by Caroline Epskamp and Fiona Witherspoon.



In November the trails are of 10km and 20km duration. The shorter ride remained on the tracks in a close circuit of the Kiln, taking in some beautiful scenes of wild flowers while the longer trail meandered along the tracks adjacent to and on Beenak Road to the top end of Ure Road then in through the bush tracks to Shepherds Creek Road and beyond.

The setting of the trails took place on the preceding Friday, this takes quite a few hours to do as most of the tracks have to be walked. On the day of the event the sun shone brightly as we set up for the day. The first of the 126 riders were eager to ride out at about 8:30am.

These rides are not a race but a gentle stroll through the forest so people can enjoy the scenery, the average time ridden wins. All those who competed enjoyed their day, some remarking on the beautiful area and hoping to come back next time.

After the event the sashes were presented for prizes. We then requested that participants take all rubbish and manure home and to leave the area clean & tidy. At the end of the day after packing up we wandered through the area to check all was in order, there was nothing to clean up, not only had riders taken rubbish as requested but also cans, etc. that had been there before the event.

A Gembrook Parks Vie. Ranger had a look at the area on the following Sunday and remarked that the way it was left was a credit to the Clubs involved.

The following Wednesday I rode the tracks to check for damage caused by the horses, you would not have known 126 horses had ridden through that area a few days earlier.

Gembrook Riding Club & Cockatoo Pony Club Members are well aware of the beauty of the Kurth Kiln area and of the importance of keeping it that way and sincerely hope that we can keep conducting our traditional Time Trials there for years to come.

Robyn Burke, Time Trial Committee. ☐

FRIENDS OF COAL CREEK

We were delighted to read in the Friends of Coal Creek July 2005 Newsletter the following article. We have written to the editor of the newsletter and invited the group or some of their members to visit Kurth Kiln. Our invitation was printed in their August newsletter and we look forward to showing them around Kurth Kiln site.

For a couple of years we have been sending our newsletter to Friends of Kurth Kiln. An organization that is based in the Gembrook area of the Shire of Cardinia. Some years ago our printer, David Tattersall, spoke to the Friends of Kurth Kiln about the way our Friends Group operate and the similarities of our organizations. Both are heritage based and both are operated on DSE lands. They closely liaise with rangers from Parks Victoria who advise and assist the Friends Group.

I believe that the kiln originally burnt timber from the local forest area to provide charcoal that was used in the gas production, gas producers for vehicles during the war and probably the blacksmith's forges before that. During the second world war Italian POW's were used to supply the timber from the forestry camp to keep the kiln operating. This camp also provided people to man the fire look-out tower during the summer months. The first fire tower was a tree with spikes in it, and when the old tree became too dangerous to climb a wooden construction was built to replace that tower.

The Friends of Kurth Kiln not only provide labour to re-vegetate the area but also run a very successful Heritage Festival each April. During this time they display the old skills of the time including, blacksmithing, the craft of wheel turning, working horses, various axes demonstrations, damper making, whip cracking plus other machines and machinery pertaining to older times.

We wish the Friends of Kurth Kiln well and remind you that this is another feature in our area that is well worth putting on our "to visit" list. ☐

SHIP ROCK IS SHIP SHAPE

Good news for all Bushwalkers, sightseers and picnickers. It is safe to visit Ship Rock Falls again. Thanks to Ian Bennet who approached Tammy Lobato MP for her assistance and thank you, Tammy, for getting the impressive Ship Rock Falls made accessible again.

It is good to report that, coinciding with the completion of the sealing of the Gembrook-Launching Place Road, the walking path at Ship Rock has been made safe.

Ship Rock is a large granite boulder just off the road some 12 km. north of Gembrook. Just beside Ship Rock is a waterfall in which water emerges from the nearby rocks and becomes part of Tomahawk Creek.

It has been a popular spot for visitors to stop and admire these local features. Unfortunately the path down to the falls has been quite slippery and a number of people have stumbled and fallen.

Following an approach, local Gembrook MP, Tammy Lobato took the issue up with Parks Victoria which provided a grant to Yarra Ranges Shire which did the restorative works.

Now the visitor is guided to a gravel path, past Ship Rock and down to a new wooden viewing platform overlooking the falls. The path is steep in places but can be handled by almost anyone.

The area above the falls is being revegetated and has been fenced off.

Not only do the locals have Tammy to thank for the long awaited sealing of the Gembrook Launching Place Road, but for the restoration of this popular roadside stop. Thanks Tammy. □

Ian Bennett

RECENT NEWS FROM GEMBROOK BUSHLAND PARK. (Redwood Rd)

The 'Friends' were excited recently to see some Cinnamon Bells - *Gastrodia procera* along side one of the tracks within the park. In doing a little research I read that 'the roots of the 'potatoe orchid' are very nourishing being rich in starch. They were prized by both Victorian and Tasmanian Aborigines.' (from book *Koorie Plants/Koorie People* by Nelly Zola and Beth Gott)

Also felt very 'close to nature' recently while weeding in the park with a friend. We were quietly going about our business of 'weeding' when birds high in the canopy some distance away started calling out in alarm. Looking up we saw a wedge tailed eagle circling the area.

Lastly, as you drive through Gembrook have you noticed that some roadside Holly trees have been removed and some have been poisoned and are now dying back.

Well done to the local residents who are tackling the 'big issues' of roadside weeds. Alongside Blackberry, and *Tradescantia*, Holly would be one of the main problem weeds in the Gembrook Park.

Gembrook Park has regular working bees (mainly weeding) on the 2nd and 4th Monday of each month.

All are welcome. Enquiries: 59681011 □

Merle Mathisen, Friend of Gembrook Park

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GEMBROOK'S BIG DAY OUT

Saturday December 17 promises to be a big day on the Gembrook Christmas calendar. **Gembrook Market** has a special twilight market between 3pm and 7pm (as the usual 4th Sunday of the month market would have been Christmas Day). Community groups including the Friends of Kurth Kiln and Bunyip State Park will be attending the market talking about their activities and educating the community on sustainability issues.

Market-goers will be able to buy last minute gifts from the wide selection of stalls and there will be plenty of entertainment with musicians, children activities and a short performance by a local circus troupe.

Following the market **Christmas Carols for the Community** will be held in JAC Russell Park. □

Yvonne Bennett

If undelivered, return to

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To

