

Borthwick Park Biodiversity Project Update December 2022



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Serving the community since 1977

Borthwick Park Biodiversity Project Update December 2022

As we are nearing the end of 2022, we thought it appropriate to provide you with an update about the progress of our Council volunteer program in Borthwick Park.

The purpose of the project is to:

- **re-establish an example of pre-settlement landscape in an urban setting, in balance with recreational and other community needs.**
- **provide a natural setting for both healthy activities and quiet contemplation in the heart of the Kensington.**
- **provide opportunities for community engagement through volunteering and interaction with a range of natural processes.**
- **educate the community about the many benefits of native Australian plants.**
- **act locally, combatting climate change and maintaining a thriving habitat of flora and fauna in a sustainable open space.**

Local engagement in this mature project remains strong, with our community highly engaged through meetings, working bees, planting days and community events. We promote the project through the Kensington Residents' Association newsletter delivered by volunteers to every household in Kensington, through our website www.kra.org and by weekly emails to residents as well as discussions with volunteers and other stakeholders.

Initiated by the Kensington Residents' Association in 2009 and supported by Council, this project remains one of our most effective forms of community engagement and is a vibrant example of Council and community working together. It is a local 'feel-good' project that helps to address climate change, at the same time augmenting the City's tree canopy at a time when much of Adelaide's tree canopy is in decline.

History 2009- present

Borthwick Park is the largest recreational reserve in Kensington (0.71 hectares). The Kensington Residents' Association was instrumental in its establishment and the local community values it highly as a rare example of a natural public space.

In 2009, as pointed out in the *City of Norwood, Payneham and St Peters Biodiversity Strategy 2006-2016*, the park was "dominated by an open mown grass area with scattered trees".

These trees, in fact, are magnificent remnant Redgums, some of which are up to 450 years old according to Dr Dean Nicolle, consultant arborist, botanist and ecologist.

At that time Second Creek, which runs through the park, was degraded with considerable erosion. The soil at the bases of the ancient Redgums was compacted and feral weeds lined the edges of the creek and the perimeter of the reserve.

In the *City of Norwood Payneham & St Peters State of the Environment Report (2005)* there is a quote by Kraehenbuehl 1996. *As described, the original eastern plains between Adelaide*

and Burnside supported: "...a magnificent gum forest with an undergrowth of Kangaroo Grass so high that people travelling between Adelaide and Kensington lost their way."

Insofar as it is possible to recreate a pre-settlement landscape in a contemporary urban setting in balance with recreational and other needs, we consulted widely with biodiversity experts and with Council during the latter half of 2009.

Submission of a detailed proposal to Council in December 2009 resulted in approval to commence the first planting of native species of local provenance in winter 2010.

Council prepared the first section at the eastern end of Second Creek by poisoning the kikuyu grass, disconnecting irrigation, digging swales and providing mulch which was spread by volunteers.

Our first planting was conducted in the winter of 2010, with plants funded by the Adelaide and Mt Lofty Ranges Natural Resources Management Board, now Green Adelaide. With further Council approvals in place, planting of more areas followed over successive years.

Areas chosen have been based on protecting the remnant Redgums (halo plantings), using pre-existing beds and using sloping ground while retaining lawn areas for play.

The current focus is on replacement planting, increasing biodiversity with additional low plants, grasses and groundcovers to keep the weeds at bay while enhancing soil biota.

At the time of this update, some 6,000 small plants, grasses, groundcovers, small trees and shrubs have been planted and are flourishing in the park. Plant lists include species that would have thrived in the area before settlement; dodonias, sheoaks, bursarias, acacias, olearias, sennas, native apricot, kangaroo grass, wallaby grass, native clematis, sweet billardiera, creeping boobialla and others.

City of Norwood, Payneham and St Peters; Outcomes of NPSP City Plan 2030:

Our project contributes toward a number of Outcomes of NPSP City Plan 2030:

Objective 1.3	An engaged and participating community.
Objective 1.4	A strong, healthy, resilient and inclusive community.
Objective 2.5	Dynamic community life in public spaces and precincts.
Objective 4.2	Sustainable streets and open spaces.
Objective 4.3	Thriving and healthy habitats for native fauna and flora.
Objective 4.4	Mitigating and adapting to the effects of climate change.

Twenty Working bees in 2022

We've held fourteen scheduled working bees in Borthwick Park, including three planting days mid-year together with other smaller, targeted work sessions, mainly for intensive mulching and weed control.

At our 2022 winter planting days funded by (now) *Green Adelaide*, we planted some 600 plants concentrating on grasses, ground covers and low shrubs. Our She-oak Grove features a meadow of wallaby grass below native Casuarinas and diversity has been improved with quandongs and three hakea species.

Council parks staff have been invaluable in the preparation for these events, delivering multiple loads of mulch and removing garden waste at our request.

The social engagement at our working bees and morning teas is an integral part of our project, a chance to meet neighbours and thank those who help look after the park and those who bake and buy for the delicious morning teas and lunches we enjoy.

Second Creek on-ground works.

On ground creek works were completed by mid-2022 by Council contractors with the removal of the weir and re-forming of the banks creating a safer approach to high water flows and preventing standing water.

The newly created nature play area and pump is proving popular with young children and was planted out with low grasses and sedges this year.

Southern bank

The southern bank of the creek is steep and difficult to access. It has long been a troublesome area with a considerable weed load spreading seed into the main areas of the park.

Using our Council budget, we have seen *Back2Bush* contracted to perform weed management and planting through 2022. This work is beginning to yield positive results and we look forward to continued efforts on the bank in 2023.

Central Halo plantings

In 2018, following a large limb failure, Council decided to create a large halo around the central gum for safety reasons.

In consultation with city arborist Matthew Cole, we began to plant out the halo in 2019. This initiative is improving soil health around the sentinel tree which is some 450 years old.

Top dressing of lawn areas

In December 2022, the lawn areas of the park was aerated, top dressed and re-seeded following disruption by creek works earlier in the year and damage by dogs.

Volunteer Shed

Council installed power, security lighting and internal lights in the shed in 2022. The shed has now been fully fitted out by volunteers with racks for hand tools and watering equipment. A defibrillator has also been installed.

The shed plays a vital role as a focus for our activities in Borthwick Park. We are grateful for this electrical upgrade as well as insurance cover under Council arrangements.

Community events

In 2019 the Association won the Australia Day Community Event of the Year for its “Cultures of Kensington Long Lunch” held in Borthwick Park at the end of 2017.

This year (2022) KRA committee members met with Council’s Works team and staff Jared Barnes, Matt Cole and Joel Blackie during Volunteer Week in May to show residents’ appreciation for the ongoing efforts of Council maintaining our local parks and working with us on the Borthwick Park Biodiversity Project.

On Clean Up Australia Day in March, residents covered all of Kensington, picking up rubbish, then joined together for a Covid-safe barbeque in Borthwick Park. This was our 25th Kensington Clean Up.

Volunteer Karloskar Hall and the family dog *Bear* hosted a Dog's Breakfast in Borthwick Park in June. The happy yappy attendees and their owners had a great time.

Following a suggestion by resident Dr Elizabeth Ho, the idea for a local plant swap developed. Our first swap was held in November 2022 with many plants changing hands.

An application submitted by Dr Trish Hansen and KRA won grant funding for a project focussed on recognition of the Kurna people's relationship to Second Creek which runs through the park. Discussions are ongoing and a KRA sub-committee will work with Trish into 2023 to achieve the aims of the project.

Our third annual *Pizza in the Park* was held in October with 100 attendees. An informal ceremony was also conducted to open the wonderful new creek-side nature play area with two local children cutting the ribbon.

Just this week local singing school VoiceStyle held their annual musical celebration in the park with an enthusiastic audience of over fifty.

Forward planning

With much of our fixed signage deteriorating, we are planning to write and design alternative signage based on QR codes to display information about the plants and trees as well as the history of the park.

We will continue to look to Council for assistance to maintain and plant out the Southern bank, using our budget allocation.

The dolomite paths in the reserve require refreshing and will need attention in 2023. Other infrastructure is also aging and our committee is looking to the community for guidance as to how to re-imagine the park into the future.

Our committee is giving consideration to the need for a toilet in the park.

The community is a key driver for further change and improvements in the reserve. We are always looking for opportunities to diversify our project, consulting with residents on an ongoing basis. People are encouraged to get involved with other aspects of Borthwick Park, for example researching settler or aboriginal history, heritage, education, nature play and making homes for birds, bats, butterflies and native bees.

With appropriate permissions in place, we hope to have a more extensive presence on the Council website in 2023 and are starting to prepare content.

Biodiversity Officer

With the increasing impacts of climate change, the need for a cooler, greener city is imperative. We would like to see stronger environmental outcomes implemented across the city in terms of conservation and land management as well as tree protection, tree planting programs, verge plantings and sustainability across all levels of council activity.

We strongly support the need for a full-time Biodiversity Officer to be employed by the City to work at a senior level to help achieve Outcome 4.3. This would include input into planning and strategic decision-making as well as guiding practices in council parks and gardens.

Volunteers

Our volunteers are supplied with hi-vis vests and equipment and are required to sign-in and out when working on site. A wide range of skills training is available through (now) Green Adelaide including first aid.

Since the adoption of the project under council auspices in late 2020, volunteer induction on site is also conducted for registered volunteers.

We have recorded volunteer numbers and hours spent on the project since 2010 and these numbers continue to grow. We had two major planting days in July 2022 with attendances of twenty six on the first day and twenty nine on the second. A total of forty four different volunteers participated over the two days. 447 volunteer hours were contributed to the project during 2021-2022. To date 539 volunteer hours have been contributed during 2022-2023.

Despite this, Council registered volunteer numbers remain low; something that is being addressed by Nigel Jordan working with the KRA. This is due to a number of factors:

- The perception of having to undergo an onerous process; it's 'too hard'.
- Limited computer literacy of some of our volunteers.
- Low awareness about the benefits of registration in some cases.
- Not understanding the need for a police check; feeling offended.

Green Adelaide

Our other partner in the project, Green Adelaide, continues to support us with a Core Needs budget, advice and training. This enables provision of our annual plant order with plants supplied by Trees for Life.

In December 2022, four of our volunteers attended a full day Grass identification workshop.

Grants and awards.

This project has won two Council grants: for signage in 2016 and for our volunteer shed in 2021. Further grants have been won: from Adelaide and Mt Lofty Ranges Natural Resource Management Board in 2012 for signage and our Bird and Bat Citizen Science Project in 2018. In 2022 we won a federal government grant for hand tools and a defibrillator.

In 2011 the project won an award from the Australian Civic Trust and in 2016 won a Commendation in the City of Norwood, Payneham and St Peters Sustainable Garden Awards.

More recently the KRA has won grant funding from Foundation SA for a project to be conducted in 2023 focussed on recognition of the Kurna people's relationship with Second Creek. Working with Kurna leaders the project aims to revitalise and share the deep time culture, language, wisdom and knowledge of the area with the local community.



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2010



Bank of Second Creek, 2010.

**2014 Top, site of existing Sheoak Grove
2022 Below. Sheoak Grove today**



Richmond Street entrance 2014



Richmond Street entrance 2022



Entrance from Thornton St, 2014

Entrance from Thornton St 2022





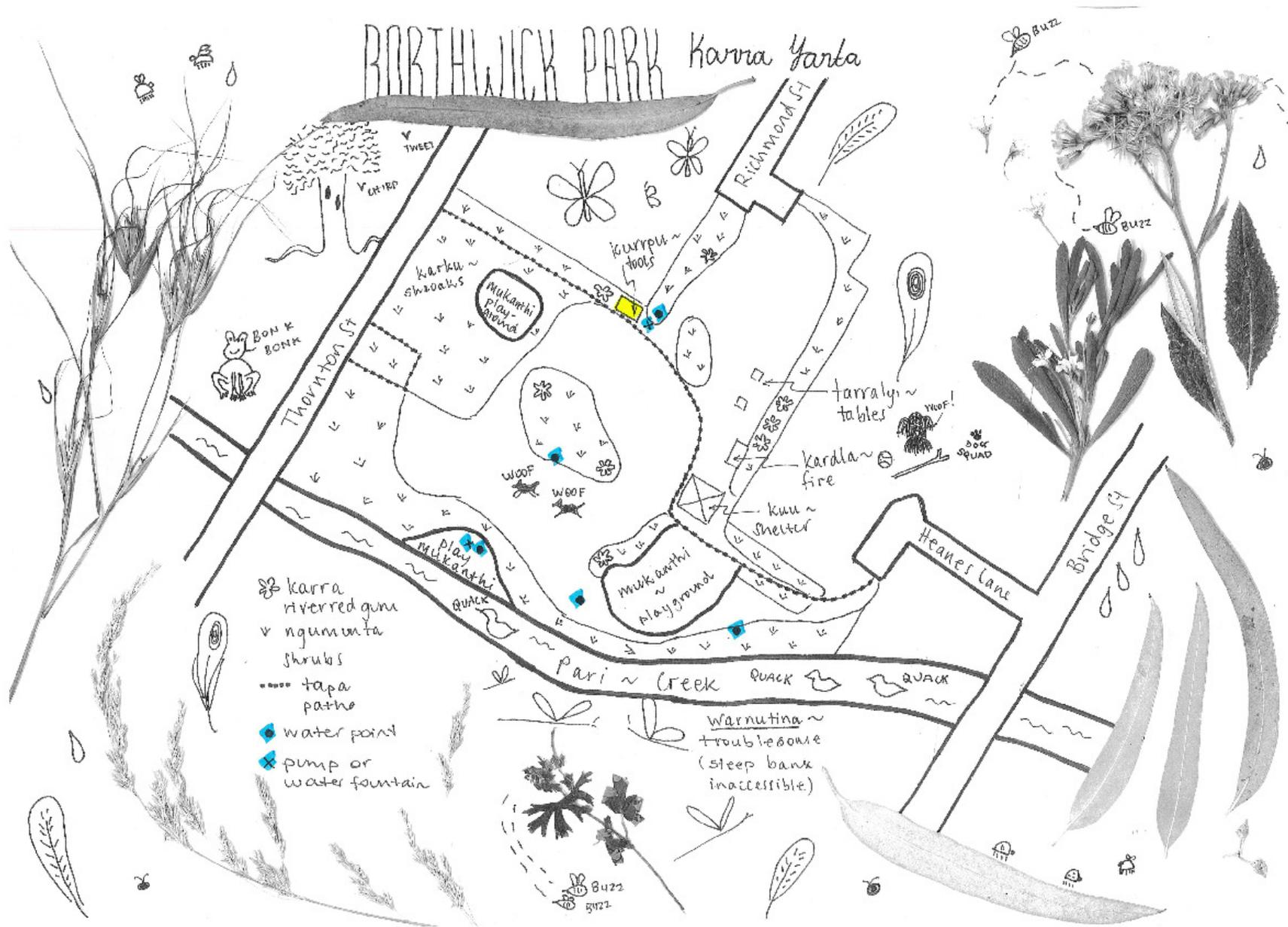
Central Redgum in 2014 and today



Right: New nature play and creek works 2022

Below: Bank of Second Creek, 2022





Many of our plants had considerable utility to Karna people.