

The Burkes Pass Heritage Trust Newsletter

April 2014



Work Day – Saturday 19th April – Meet 9am at the Church.

Tasks include tussock planting/weeding, sign painting, completing stock fencing at the ice rink and in the afternoon for those keen to try their hand, a spot of cobbing at Annis Cottage to complete the front wall repair. Bring gardening gloves, and gardening implements etc. Morning tea will be provided.

Vanishing Point – an amazing exhibition and its accompanying fine art book inspired by the Mackenzie Basin at the Saffron Gallery of Art in Timaru open until April 17th.

Three artists, Bing Dawe, Keith Walter and John Emery (all with a long association with Burkes Pass) have come together to produce, through their respective media of sculpture, photography and painting, an exquisite but powerful collection of their work curated by Sarah Anderson. This exhibition draws together a profound love of the landscape and its fauna with a thought provoking concern for the stresses and fragility facing this environment. I thoroughly recommend a visit. For further information see www.saffrongallery.co.nz or phone (03) 6863616.



Highfield Cottage Transformation Continues

The front aspect of this long low cob building snuggled into the hillside above the Mt Dobson Ski road is delightful and evocative of a past era, however the rear view has definitely not been its finest asset. The makeover of the back porch area was given a significant boost recently when Graham and friend Morris from Dunedin (you have to be a very good friend to volunteer for a task such as this) spent several days carefully deconstructing a rotting and very ugly non-original addition and rebuilding the original profile of the back veranda and roof in sound timber and iron.



News In Brief

- Congratulations to Kim Perkins from Burkes Pass township who has recently been accepted as a marriage celebrant
www.burkespasscelebrant.co.nz
- Stamps old and new - Thank you to Liz Angelo-Roxborough for donation of an old stamp with a clear Burkes Pass postmark dated 27 January 1933. Mrs. Myrtle Leishman at the hotel was the post-mistress at this time.
- Julie Greig has designed and produced a modern day Burkes Pass postage stamp using one of her beautiful art works.



- Gary Kerr has discovered some paper treasures in the estate of a relative – more about these in the next newsletter.
- A new bed and breakfast opens at ‘Taryn’, Burkes Pass. Barbara and John Corcoran have opened their beautiful new home to guests recently. Stunning views up and down the Burkes Pass valley are a special treat.
- The young Jubilee oak tree transplanted in November last year has survived through summer. Interesting how our wonderful old tree sadly struck by lightning has still got bunches of healthy looking leaves on two of the branch stumps.
- The new church windows continue to attract many favourable comments from visitors. – thanks again Graham Stewart.

Moa returns to Burkes Pass Bush

The Batchelor’s native bush behind Alma Cottage now has a guardian moa. This spectacular bird (of the driftwood sculpture variety) is a reminder of the several species that roamed our country for 60 million years. While the moa is now extinct, the influence of these extraordinary birds lives on when we look at many native plants today. In the tangled zigzag branches of many native divaricating shrubs we see a protective mechanism against strong beaks that would snap off small branches of fresh leaf growth and potentially decimate a small plant. New Zealand is unique in having some trees with that have a juvenile and an adult form that look quite different. Lancewoods are one example. Did the long pointed leaves of the young lancewood stick in the throat of these birds and discourage excessive browsing? The height at which the young lancewood leaves change from the long pointy sharp ones to the smaller more rounded shape just happens to be at a height that would have been just out of reach of the taller species of moa.



Fascinating Local Wildlife

NZ has two main families of lizard; the gecko and the skink, some localised to a small geographical area. Often when I am planting or weeding I see a flash of a small smooth shiny body wriggling away as I unintentionally disturb a skink basking in the sun, however I have never come across a gecko in all the years we have spent at the Pass. Geckos have a velvety skin and the pattern and colour varies from brown to bright green according to their species. Many are threatened and declining in number.

When Barbara posted a photograph on facebook recently of a delightfully patterned gecko found on some rocks outside her home, I was reminded of a small visitor to Alma Cottage last winter. Late one cold frosty evening I walked through our empty sitting room to go to bed. On the floor directly beneath the glowing light was this small gecko looking extremely pale as it attempted to blend in with the white floor cover. I was astonished to see it inside my house and also at its ability to turn so white that I almost did not see it and could so easily have trodden on it.

Apparently if you want to encourage geckos and skinks in your garden you just need to provide them with a suitable home and they will come. This could be a pile of rocks or even a small stack of roofing tiles in a sunny place so they can warm up in the sun or creep into the shady crevices to cool off or avoid predators such as mice.

Best wishes
Jane Batchelor

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