



Brownhill Creek Environment and Heritage Action Day

A Brownhill Creek Environment and Heritage Action Day was held on Friday 21st October, with two hundred students from four schools enjoying a day out at the entrance to Brownhill Creek Recreation Park. Professor Chris Daniels was the keynote speaker and Kaurna Elders Jeffrey Newchurch and Frank Wanganeen shared their cultural heritage. Thank you to the BCA Education and Revegetation Committee for organising the event, especially Ann-Louise Breeding (Urrbrae Wetlands Manager) and Jeremy Gramp (NRM Education Officer).

The Welcome to Country, performed by Frank Wanganeen, may have been the first indigenous ceremony held in the valley since early European settlement. There are two documented sightings of aboriginal ceremonies in the area. In 1837 the South Australia Company established Sheep Station Number 1 in Brownhill Creek Valley, as a source of meat for the early colonists. Drovers brought the sheep from the eastern colonies and Reverend William Finlayson was one of the first company shepherds. He wrote in his memoirs: "The banks of the creek at the place that it issued from the hills was a favourite camping and gathering ground with the natives, as many as one hundred and fifty being there". Ten years later the eldest son of Reverend Thomas Playford observed ..."a corroboree of 40 ochre ornamented male natives go through their capering performances to the accompaniment of a number of lubras who beat time on hollow pieces of bark by some, and others by striking two pieces of wood together".

The Environment and Heritage Action Day comprised six sessions, five covering aspects of environmental science, with one session devoted to Kaurna and European heritage. It is fascinating to discover the heritage at the entrance to the park. The Tom Price Avenue of plane trees honours the first Labor Premier of South Australia (1905-1909) who led a successful and reforming coalition government. Tom Price planted the first tree at a Mitcham Council ceremony in 1907, near the stone monument. In 1954 the South Australian Tourist Bureau built the stone monument and opened the Brownhill Creek Caravan Park. The plaque on the monument marks the creation of a National Pleasure Resort in 1915 by the SA Tourist Bureau. Our aim is to place a plaque on the stone monument to inform visitors about Tom Price, a fitting location as he established the SA Tourist Bureau and was a stonemason by trade.

A Kaurna Shelter Tree and the Yurrebilla Trail draw our attention to Kaurna Heritage, as this was their winter camping, hunting and ceremonial country called Wirraparinga. Yurrebilla is the Kaurna name that identifies Mount Lofty and Mount Bonython as the two ears of Nganno (pronounced Nar-na). Nganno is a Kaurna ancestral being who journeyed across this land, lying down to die following a battle. Nganno's body formed the Mount Lofty Ranges. The Yurrebilla Trail now links Brownhill Creek Recreation Park to the Greater Mount Lofty Parklands and likely follows a traditional route used for tens of thousands of years before European settlement.

The weir, with its cascading water, was built in 1929 by Mitcham Council to form a swimming 'pool', complete with rudimentary changing rooms and a diving board. It fell into disrepair in the 1940's and is now filled in and vegetated. At this site a rough stone wall was used to create a swimming hole in the 1890's. Nearby McElligott's Quarry opened in 1858 and continued until the mid 1930's. Stone from this quarry was used in the building of St Michael's Church (1848), Scotch College (1854), Mundy's Bridge/The White Bridge (c1870) and the Outer Harbour Breakwater (early 1900's). The South Australian Division of the Geological Society of Australia classified this quarry as a Geological Monument due to the uncovering of noteworthy folding and faulting and Precambrian (750 million years old) layers of rock. Remarkable heritage just at the entrance to Brownhill Creek Recreation Park!

Merry Christmas and thank you for supporting our local heritage.

Ron Bellchambers
BCA Community Liaison Officer
brownhillcreek@gmail.com
www.brownhillcreek.org