

Working Bee 22nd March 2014

by Terry Lane

A pleasant day after a night of rain, the plan for the day was to go up to Millbrook ruin to assess the Aloe Vera that has been spreading around the area for the past few years.

I arrived to find Claude, Neil, Maelor and Hien waiting at the Friends shed and later Robert Irvine drove up.

We opened up the works compound to check our newly acquired water tanker for any leaks, earlier that week I organized a mechanic to come out and do a safety check and I took the wheels to get new tyres fitted.



Claude and Maelor checking the 20 metres of hose.

In one of the sheds we found tins of Seed and a large wool bag of Kangaroo grass, we left the bag there for another day but decided we would

spread the seed in the tins around Millbrook although Neil was pretty confident that being old they would not germinate.

Putting up our sign to attract the hundreds of visitors that would seek us out, we headed off across the creek that was surprisingly low after last night's rain



On the way Neil and I diverted to check the tree frames surrounding Black Wattle that the Sugar Glider team had planted last July.



The kangaroos seem to be more prevalent on this side of the creek as there are fewer visitors and they either push over or lay on the wire frames, we will have to get some 6ft wooden stakes to try and keep them up.



Meanwhile Hien and I went up to the ruin,



Built in the mid-1850s, the homestead was part of the property known as "Millbrook". It was probably built by William Bedford who purchased the block in 1855. The Bedford family lived on the property until 1890 when it was bought by Henry Ernest Hall, a Melbourne tea broker. Over the next fifteen years, Hall also acquired adjoining allotments.

Although the homestead became known as "Hall's" at this time, it is believed that he did not reside on the property. Jim Lyons, who lived in the district between 1896 and 1902,



We then set about spreading the seed around Black Wattle Flat.

recalls the homestead being empty during this period.

By the early 1920s, the Hayes family were living in the homestead. The family, comprising a widow and her eight daughters, ran dairy cattle and stud stallions on the property. There was also a large orchard of apricot, almond, walnut, lemon and cherry trees.

One of the daughters of the widow Hayes recalls that the homestead was demolished after they left the property. This is consistent with other oral sources that claim that the homestead was a ruin during the 1920s. Isabelle Timmiss, whose father bought land in the area in 1923 when Isabelle was fifteen years old, remembers a ruin on the site. David Clarke also remembers the homestead ruins when he fished in the area during the 1920s.

(Source Victoria's Heritage by Daniel Catrice 1996)

It was time to do some work.



Five years ago we covered some Aloe Vera with black plastic sheeting and held down with rocks in an experiment to see if it would break down.

However the experiment was doomed to failure due to the harsh winds and rain the plastic soon blew off and the plants spread out all the way down to the creek giving us an even job to remove them.



The results five years later.



Hien gets stuck in.

We had a few plastic bags with us but it was a waste of time and effort.



So the best thing to do when faced with a dilemma.....have a cuppa tea.

To get a contractor in with a bobcat and tipper would be costly and neither parks nor we have the funds to do so we figured if we could borrow the rangers 4wd for the day we could make a number of trips back across the creek to the waste bin up at the Friends Shed and then get Greening Australia to do planting as part of the government's 2 million trees Revegetation plan.

I contacted Tamara later on in the week but there was an issue with the friends group using one of Parks Vic vehicles but we could use the Kubota 4wd that is out at Woodlands.



A Kubota Utility Vehicle

Being smaller than the Ute it would mean a few more trips but it would seem that this will be the most cost effective way of solving this problem at Millbrook once and for all.



Next Working Bee Saturday April 26th

Hopefully remove the Aloe Vera at Millbrook