

Wellington Airport Regional Community Awards - Heritage and Environment

Entry for Glenside Progressive Association Incorporated



Glenside – an historic valley beside the streams

Glenside is a semi-rural suburb located between Johnsonville and Tawa on the old Porirua Road. Hills, streams and rural landscape characterise the area. The resident population, as per NZ Statistics, 2013 census, is 345.

The Glenside Progressive Association Inc. (GPA) is the body empowered by the Glenside community to act on its behalf to maintain its core values. These values were identified in a community led workshop in 2001 as:

- Maintaining natural tranquil green spaces
- Retaining wild places to explore
- Listening to the sound of the streams
- Enjoying the moonlight
- Being good neighbours
- Preserving our history and heritage
- Enjoying the birds and wildlife, including eels

The streams and bush clad valleys of Glenside are a significant ecological corridor feeding the Porirua Harbour. Thirty percent of the Porirua Harbour water catchment flows through Glenside. Maintaining and looking after the living streams threatened by urban development helps to prevent erosion, flooding and sedimentation downstream.

The suburb has a rich history along the route of the original road from Wellington to Porirua that has only been impacted by suburban development in the last 30 years. Maori trails originally passed through Glenside's steep hillsides and valleys.

The area was settled from 1840 by colonial migrants and as early as 1841, accommodation was provided for travellers along the route at The Halfway House. The early foot tracks were upgraded to form the Porirua road, the main road north from Wellington.

A new Halfway House was built in 1849 and became an important meeting place, and a Royal Mail coach stop along the road. The third and final building known locally as the Halfway House, was built in about 1885 by a former Halfway House proprietor and today, remains on its original site, in the Glenside Reserve.

The Glenside Progressive Association leads and supports community action to preserve and protect heritage sites and landscape of this significant early settlement surrounded by urban development.



Heritage: The Halfway House

The Halfway House is the name given to successive houses in Glenside, which originally provided food and shelter for travellers on foot, horseback and mail coach halfway along the main road between Wellington and Porirua. The Halfway Houses operated in Glenside from 1841 to about 1891, when railway coaches replaced the horse drawn mail coaches.

In 1951, Wellington City Council purchased an old house, known locally as the c1885 Halfway House, along with a large block of land to form the Glenside Reserve.

By 2001 the house was beginning to deteriorate. The Association researched its history and began ten years of action seeking Council funding for its preservation. The House was fully restored and officially opened in 2017. The image above was taken at the opening.

In 2018 the house was tenanted to leaders of the Challenge 2000 youth outreach mission, who reside in the building. The two front rooms are available to the Association. The Association is furnishing these in a Victorian style typical of the rural era. Furnishing Committee members are Marg Ellis, Claire Bibby, Paul Bicknell and Jan Voss. Wellington City Council are working in partnership with Challenge 2000 and the Association to make these rooms available for hire.

Each year the Association hosts a major community event at the house, attracting up to 400 people. These were the Glenside Show in 2012, 2013, 2014 and 2016; The Great Blackberry Feast in 2017, and 'World War I The Home Front' for Heritage Week 2018. This year we are supporting the Heritage Gardeners 'Walk and Talk' for Heritage Month.



Heritage: The Heritage Gardeners

The purpose of the Heritage Gardener's is to develop a Victorian farm garden in the grounds of the historic Halfway House at Glenside. This is done by sourcing plants and features that would have been typical of an 1840-1900 rural settlement in New Zealand.

The Heritage Gardeners were established in 2015 under the umbrella of the Glenside Progressive Assn. Inc. There are about eight volunteers from Glenside and neighbouring suburbs, led by Association president Claire Bibby. The youngest gardener began at age 6 and the oldest is over 80.

The Association looks after the Heritage Gardeners finances, and provides publicity in newsletters, the website and the face-book page. Last year, a grant facilitated by the Association, enabled the gardeners to build a rose arbour, fell dangerous trees and install two Victorian park benches.

The Association website enables the Heritage Gardeners to publish and make available to the public, content from early New Zealand garden catalogues, which they source from museums and private collections and transcribe. These catalogues are not available elsewhere online.

The website enables the gardeners to publish a register of all the roses, flowers, shrubs, trees and orchard plantings within the garden. This appears to be a world first, the only published website register recording historic plants and their provenance, in a public garden, as they are planted.

The Association is currently working in partnership with Wellington City Council park ranger and the Heritage Gardeners to place an Information Board at the entrance to the house.

This year the Heritage Gardeners are hosting an educational Heritage Garden “Walk and Talk” event in the grounds of the garden for Wellington Region Heritage Month.

Heritage Gardeners website page: <http://www.glenside.org.nz/heritage-gardeners.html>



Heritage – World War I The Home Front

The Association actively promotes the Halfway House for Wellington Region Heritage events. In 2018 the Association hosted a week of activities to celebrate World War I The Home Front.

First World War poetry readings were hosted at lunchtime by Challenge 2000. People brought along their favourite World War I poetry to read aloud or listen to.



Demonstrations of traditional spinning and hand knitting were hosted by women of the Onslow Fibrecraft Guild and Tawa Fibrecrafts in honour of the women and school children who knitted scarves and socks for the troops at war.

A Peace Celebration day was held with stories, song and drama about life on the home front during the War. There were old style children’s games, a First World War sing-along hosted by David Dell of the NZ Sheet Music Archive, and people brought along interesting items of the era to show and tell. The grand finale was a World War I re-enactment period drama produced by Challenge 2000. Approximately 100 people attended. Pictured are Suzanne Hendry and Carrie Lockwood, selling World War I era food and drinks.

Heritage - The Glenside Memorial

The memorial on Westchester Drive commemorates the burial site of a woman who died and was buried nearby in 1841. On 10th October 1842 Bishop Selwyn was travelling on foot through the area with his Maori supporters and colleague. A local settler, Susannah Wall wrote to her sisters in England explaining how she took the deceased woman's husband and the Bishop across to the burial site so that the Bishop could bless the site. Her letters were preserved and have become part of the historical record of Glenside.

In 2008 the Association began a long process of objections to the development of the Westchester Link road, one of the reasons being that earthworks would disturb the burial site. One of the



outcomes was for an archaeological survey to ensure that the burial site was not in the road pathway, and for a memorial to be built to commemorate the early settler.

The memorial was constructed in 2013 and unveiled in the presence of the local MP Peter Dunne, Mayor Celia-Wade Brown, adjacent landowner Sir Tamati Reedy and local residents.

Every year on October 10th, residents remember the early settler and lay flowers at the site. In 2017, Joyce Brown of Waikato and her son visited the Memorial. Joyce believes the woman buried there may be Margaret, the wife of early settler Adam Reid. Joyce has since published a family history and acknowledged the Association's work to protect the burial site and the memory of the woman. In 2018, relatives of the Reid family planted three hazelnut trees in the Halfway House garden to perpetuate the living memory of their pioneer ancestors.



Environment - Glenside Restoration Group

The aim of the Glenside Restoration Group is to stabilise the steep banks of the lower Stebbings stream, protect the stream from sediment runoff, provide shade to the stream, enhance the area for aquatic and bird life and provide an attractive area for walkers.

The restoration site is alongside a highly popular walking route that follows the historic 150-year old farm track that was once Stebbings Road.



There are about eight volunteers, led by local resident Barry Blackett. The volunteers remove weeds, especially blackberry, broom, gorse, convolvulus and periwinkle, and prevent the growth of wilding trees such as sycamore and wild cherry. They then plant native trees and shrubs and care for the plants by watering, mulching, releasing, protecting (stakes, wind protectors and weed mat) and

supporting with soil retainers where planting is on steep slopes.

The volunteers are committed to provide this care for five years after receipt of the plants. The volunteers follow a Best Practice Guide for planting to ensure a visually attractive outcome and a high success rate. In 2017, the group planted 350 trees and shrubs and in 2018, 340.

In 2015, signage outlining the aims of the Restoration Group was installed at the entry to the walking area. This identified about 20 sites for planting and or plant care along an 800m stretch of Stebbings Stream. Four more sites have been added and work progressed on them since the sign was created. This year the group are extending their planting alongside Glenside road.

The Glenside Restoration Group was preceded by the Glenside Streamcare Group, which operated under the umbrella of the Glenside Progressive Association from 2002-2011.



Environment - Old Man's Beard

Old Man's Beard is an invasive vine which has abundant seeds and grows very quickly compared to native plants. It can smother and kill all plants from the highest trees to the little seedlings on the ground. Unfortunately, in Glenside it is becoming widespread and is a threat to its ecology.

Barry Blackett (pictured, with a large vine) is the Association lead for this initiative, which is to detect and treat occurrences of Old Man's Beard on all land throughout the suburb and along Middleton Road.

The Association encourages residents to look for outbreaks of Old Man's Beard, starting in February each year and report these.

Barry treats outbreaks by tracing vines to their roots, cutting them at ground level and dosing the stumps with herbicide paste containing picloram or trichlorpyr.

He maintains a photographic record of the plants before and stems immediately after treatment. He obtains a further record of the treated plants two to three weeks later to confirm that treatment has been successful.

Barry liaises with Greater Wellington who in turn ask KiwiRail and Wellington City to use spray teams in late summer to eradicate outbreaks on their land, where they can, and where stump dosing can't be applied.

Barry commenced this project in 2016. In 2017 he marked sites of outbreaks on a map of the area with an indication as to whether treated or not. To date he has identified about 50 sites and stump dosed about 200 vines. The Association also supports his work with submissions to local authorities on weed control, most recently this May, to the Wellington City Council draft Annual Plan.



Environment - Glenside Predator Free

In 2014 Glenside was officially accepted by the Enhancing the Halo panel (a Morgan Foundation initiative to encourage communities to make their gardens and backyards safe havens for native wildlife) to be a predator free community and provided a \$5000 grant to purchase traps. We have since become part of Predator Free NZ, who provide resources, research and professional support.

The Association provides traps for residents and shows residents how to use them to trap rats and possums. Allan Brown and Barry Blackett provide a cleaning and maintenance service for traps and Suzanne Hendry maintains a register of trappers and their traps, kills and catches.

Since the project was introduced about 26 households have become actively involved. Our current focus is rat trapping along the stream sides.

This year, for Neighbours Day, the Association hosted an event at the historic Halfway House. Among the activities on offer, the Association



invited people to bring their traps to the Halfway House for servicing. Free bait was provided, courtesy of Wellington City Council (Pictured, Azra Ahmad observing Barry's demonstration).

This year, John Bissell of Backblocks Environmental Management Ltd, a pest and predator control specialist, has been invited by the Association as guest speaker at the Annual General Meeting.



Environment - protecting the eels and water quality monitoring

Glenside residents care for the eels in the local streams, many of which have pet names. The Association takes a strong stance to protect streams from the environmental impact of cut and fill development through submissions to Councils and by encouraging residents to report water pollution and sediment to the Wellington Regional Council water pollution hotline. The Hotline number heads every newsletter.

When visitor's to Glenside began killing the eels in 2017, the Association supported local resident Andrea Wilson, to research the laws and regulations to help residents deal with the issues. We peer reviewed her document and circulated it to residents.

The Association flew international eel expert Don Jellyman from Christchurch to Glenside, for our 2017 Annual General Meeting, and we invited Ngati Toa, mana whenua to join us. Dr Jellyman was complimentary of our efforts to protect and plant the streams for migratory fish and we used his guidance to inform our residents how to better look after the stream-sides and feed eels the right food (Dr Jellyman is pictured above, walking the streams with residents on a stormy day).

Wellington City Council installed signage to warn people against killing eels. Due to our steep terrain, the Association was unable to find a suitable public location for a sign in Glenside, however, we supported Council's decisions to put signs in Willowbank Park and at Otari Wilton Bush.

In 2018, Liz Gibson of Mountains to the Sea trained Donna Sherlock, Marg Ellis, Barry Blackett and Claire Bibby of the Association on Water Quality Monitoring. This is now undertaken at five sites. The group are moving towards quarterly monitoring using the SCHMAK test kit.



Restoration of name Kenepuru to the stream

Ngati Toa, at Takapuwahia, Porirua, are the mana whenua for our locality. In 2002 we invited them, in partnership with the Johnsonville Anglican Church, to bless our streams. They have returned to our community on several occasions to participate in our activities, including blessing the Halfway House (left).

The Association recognises, as a result of its combined heritage and environmental work, that the name Kenepuru is the original name of the Porirua stream. This year the Association asked Deputy Mayor Jill Day to champion the official restoration of the name Kenepuru to the stream with the NZ Geographic Board. The Deputy Mayor has begun this conversation, discussing it with Porirua City Council and Ngati Toa.