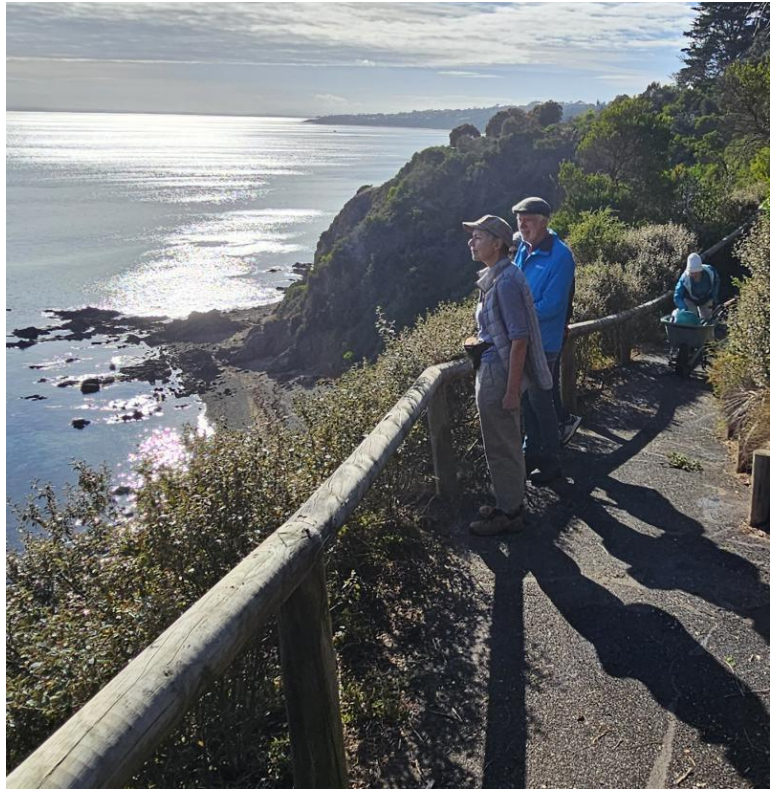


June working bee of Friends of the Beleura Cliff Path 2024

When we started work, a pod of dolphins appeared, hunting down a school of fish, as were a flock of gannets. (I used my mobile to photograph them, with very low-quality results. They show a dolphin surfacing on the left and a gannet diving on the right. See photo below left).

Dolphins are very active off the Beleura Cliff, to the delight of onlookers. The path is a nature walk. What a shame it's closed. For some years the Lookout near the top of the path was used to study dolphins for a scientific research project. (See photo below right).

The Shire is not doing enough to re-open the path, which is a widely-used public asset.



After this distraction we got back to the job in hand, planting seedlings along the shoulders of the path. The large numbers of Sheokes we have planted on the path, the foreshore and the Caraar Creek Lane extension are doing well. We are now concentrating on plants of the middle and lower layers of vegetation, such as shrubs like Correa, Sea Box with its red berries, Eutaxia (Egg and Bacon), and Leucopogons. Also grasses such as Kangaroo Grass, Long-hair plume grass, Feather Speargrass, and wallaby grasses. These are all indigenous to the Mornington coast.



These seedlings were all grown in our own greenhouse and plant houses from seeds and cuttings of coastal plants collected from the cliff. (Photos: previous working bees in our greenhouse area).



In this June working bee we are following our usual practice. We fill the plant-hole with water and let it soak in before planting. Despite the recent rains, the soil on the cliff is often dry. It is a hostile environment for seedlings, and they will often need watering to get them through their first summer.



After that, they are on their own. These species have survived on the cliff for thousands of years.

We have now been planting the path shoulders for a decade. In earlier times, other friends groups have done similar work. We now have hoses and water connections so we can water anywhere up and down the path, thanks to water from sympathetic house owners. (Hoses connected only during working bees).



Whereabouts on the Cliff Path was this working bee?

This interactive drone view (photo right) was produced by the brilliant Liam Nicholls. It gives a moving helicopter view. Our work area is from the Blue Gate to the 360 degree sign, just short of the upper landslip. This interactive view is on our Facebook Group page, pinned at the top. <https://www.facebook.com/groups/beleuracliffpath>



The photo at right shows the working area from water level. The path is just above the red dotted line. The work area is from the Blue Gate to the Barrier. The cliff has become more verdant since the drone view (above) was taken about a year ago. This is the long-term effect of the La Nina rains.



The map (at right below) shows the work area by a dotted yellow line. The Orange areas show all the areas where our Friends Group is allowed to work.



Please note: The entire length of the path is not open to the public. It's blocked by barricades and there are surveillance cameras at the top and near the bottom.

We have permission to work on the orange areas, granted by a unanimous vote of the Shire Councillors. We work under strict safety rules.

It is a misconception that the whole path was weakened and damaged by landslips. There are landslips near each end of the path, so the Shire has blocked the entire path to prevent people from walking through the two dangerous sections. Most of the path is in safer condition than it has ever been since its construction 102 years ago.

What other work was done on the Working Bee?

WE did trimming back of the intensive growth of plants on both sides of the path. It is pleasing that the deep roots of these native plants are helping secure the cliff against erosion and slippage. There have been no landslips except where there were man-made drainage faults. The path is a treat to walk on, and we look forward to it being re-opened.



Workers at the bee (not all shown here) were: Cath Warters, Margrit Abbey, Rob Pashen, Peter Nicholson, Jean Mahone, Kate Phillip, Sonia Minzenmay, Sally Madsen, Harry Braidahl, and Chris Ansell. We planted 83 seedlings, trimmed sides of path, pulled weeds and did watering.



This report on the June 6th Working Bee was written and designed by Peter Nicholson who manages the working bees with the help of others.

We thank these organizations from whom we have won grants in the last decade and hopefully in years to come. Many groups apply for these grants and they are hard to win. The granting organizations require high levels of ecological understanding and management. We thank these organizations for their consistent and coherent assessment criteria. **State Government grants via Department of the Environment, now called DEECA:** 2017 Port Philip Bay Fund \$2641, 2018-19 Coastcare \$3385, 2021 Port Phillip Bay Fund \$12,984, 2021 Port Phillip and Westernport CMA \$28955.29, 2022-3 Coastcare \$10,000, 2022-23 Port Phillip Bay Fund \$46,500 grant still in execution. **Shire of Mornington grants:** 2019 Placemaker grant \$4620, 2022 Biolinks project \$10,000. Unspecified amounts for assistance with insurance, grant applications, safety and management, and funding for Naturelinks workers for each Working Bee. We thank Hannah Brown, Gerard Cook and other Shire employees who work closely with us and give us help. **Naturelinks:** a contractor paid for by either the Shire or by our grants from the Department of the Environment. We work with the Naturelinks employees and enjoy a friendly relationship. We also wish to thank families from houses who provide water from their garden taps for us to use: the Tilbrooks, Nicholsons, Libermans and Mangan Estate.