



# Friends of Oakley Creek

## Te Auaunga

SUMMER 2024

### SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

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- Official cleanup p8
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## Editorial

What a glorious summer we are having! And what a contrast to the deluges of last summer! Can it be that a whole year has passed since then? The walkways are still officially closed, and we wait patiently for the restoration of our bridges, aware that others have suffered even more devastating losses as a result of the storms. In the meantime, we restore what we can.

This issue celebrates the sterling work of our volunteers. Undaunted by the carnage we continue our kaitiakitanga of our precious awa. Our volunteers continue to remove flood debris, trap pests, take care of the new plantings and battle to control the weeds. Photographs on this page highlight the work of just one group of volunteers, clearing up the debris.

We feature two articles on making a difference. Marin reflects on whakatauki and recalls people who were inspired to protect the awa. We introduce one of our regular volunteers who values his work on Te Auaunga as an antidote to climate change angst. We also focus on another fern newly found on the creek - thread fern - and a special resident - the ruru or morepork.

So, if you're feeling refreshed after the summer holidays and are feeling inspired to make a difference - we are still looking for a secretary and we have a vacancy on our pest patrol team. Your chance to make a difference. Enjoy!

*Gina Hefferan, Editor*



*Photo (above): Storm debris on Te Auaunga walkway*



*Photo (above): Satisfied Southbase crew after clearing the path*

## Mahi outside of the Planting Season

By Wendy John

“Not only “Yes we can”, but also “Yes we do” make a difference.”

Prue, Friends of Oakley Creek volunteer

While planting trees is an exciting part of restoring Te Auaunga, as many of our volunteers well know, that is only the beginning. To give the young plants the support and best conditions they need to grow into healthy trees, much time and effort needs to go into mulching (where appropriate) and keeping the plethora of weeds under control – especially during late-spring – summer – autumn.

We did as much as we could to deal with the weeds prior to Christmas. But, with the summer break, as it always does, coming in the middle of the main growing season, there’s always so much more to be done once we start back after the holidays.

If you walk along the creek, the obvious and most visible of the weeds is bindweed (also, commonly known as convolvulus) which climbs and smothers the natives. We have two varieties which, to the untrained eye, can look the same. They are the greater bindweed (*Calystegia silvatica*) and the field bindweed (*Convolvulus arvensis*). They both have an amazing ability to grow at such a rate I swear one could sit and watch the vines grow.

In more localised areas, you can see the lovely purple-blue flowers of another of our ‘enemy’ vines – blue morning glory (*Ipomoea indica*), which also climbs and smothers the plants.

Then there are a number of other unwanted weeds – some worse than others, including Chinese



Photo (above): Monthly volunteers



Photo (above): Creek Caterers fuel the volunteers



Photo (above): Monthly volunteers tackle the weeds



Photo (above): Blue Morning Glory

privet, tree privet, wattle, hemlock, montbretia, German ivy, black nightshade (often referred to as ‘deadly’ nightshade, which is not, actually, found in Aotearoa), canna and arum lilies, Japanese honeysuckle, climbing dock and *Tradescantia* (more on this below).

And, last but not least, are the enemies of all enemies – moth plant, woolly nightshade and madeira / mignonette vine. A lot of work has been going into dealing with these at various locations across the catchment, over the summer, before they can spread their seed / tubers too much further.

So, we are now back in full swing with our regular working bees – Tuesdays (with Sandra at the Waterview Heritage) and Fridays (with myself - at whichever site calls out the most to be tended each week). Our monthly community working bees also started up again in February, happening on the first Sunday of each month.

And, of course, there is always room for more volunteers. Let us know if you are keen to join the Tuesday and/or Friday working bees; or just turn up at the monthly working bees. You might like to mark your diary for these regular events on the first Sunday of each month.

## Friday Working Bees

**By Wendy John**

In the lead up to the holidays our Friday volunteers worked incredibly hard undertaking a range of activities. These included weeding and trimming the vegetation back from a side track in Harbutt Reserve.

After working in this area, I sent the volunteers some photos of the site back in 2012, to show them the progress that has been made since then - which they have contributed to, along

with many others. One comment was – *“Thanks, Wendy. Sometimes it feels like we dig & slash & plant & pull, but nothing happens. Lovely to see historic progress via actual pictures.”*

And, then there are the unexpected little snippets of joy that come with this work – *“With thanks from Patricia, Ruby & Moa’ - enjoying the Tradescantia that Tejo took home on his cargo bike.”*



Photo (above): Harbutt Reserve track in 2012



Photo (above): (Tejo van Schie) Patricia, Ruby and Moa enjoying Tradescantia



Photo (above): Friday volunteers at work on the same track

# Te Auaunga ‘Community Group’ Activities

By Wendy John

Local and partner groups are an essential part of our Te Auaunga community.

**A Rocha** – The A Rocha volunteers were back with us in the late spring – working hard to clear weeds around the plants they put in earlier in the year, on the Harbutt Reserve ‘kahikatea peninsula’. It’s great to have groups that have a real connection with the creek, and ‘keep coming back’. They are such a diverse group – all ages, cultures, backgrounds, which makes for an interesting and stimulating occasion. And, then Sarah provides a delicious lunch with lemon dahl, which is always appreciated after a hard morning’s work.



Photo (above): A Rocha group

**Oakley Loop Group (Methuen Road)** – The OLG team got off to a great start this year, with an evening working bee, planned to ‘beat the heat’. It’s always a pleasure to work with these lovely folk, and they did a great job of clearing weeds from around the young, and not-so-young plants at their adopted site, opposite Alan Wood Reserve. Thanks, OLG.



Photo (above): Oakley Loop Group

**Powell Street Sustainable Neighbourhood** – This group of ‘locals’ continue to do work on restoring the awa around the end of Powell Street. At their last working bee in 2023 they did a great job of tidying up the willow logs that had come down in the wind and had been cut into manageable-sized (only just) chunks, with the help of a pair of wheels – a ‘sack barrow’ or ‘hand truck’. And, as always, we finished up with a shared meal and some fine wine.

**Conservation Volunteers NZ (CVNZ)** – An energetic team of CVNZ volunteers joined us recently for a full day of, you guessed it, yes, clearing bindweed in the ‘open space’ below the community gardens in the Wairaka Precinct (ex-Unitec land).



Photo (above): Powell St Sustainable Neighbourhood



Photo (above): CVNZ & AC Governance Advisory Team

There are never enough hours to do all of the work that needs to be done on the creek, so we are fortunate to be on the list of reserves that are supported by Auckland Council and CVNZ with bi-monthly visits.

**Western Springs College / Ngā Puna o Waiōrea** – Sandra and I led another team of Year 9 and 10 students from Western Springs College at the end of last year. We had two tasks – mulching young plants that were planted by the Pt Chevalier Girl Guides, and *Tradescantia* control. We divided the students into two groups, and they each got to help with the two different activities. It’s great to be able to work in collaboration with the college each year and it is a ‘win – win’ for both of us. We get some mahi done, and it provides the students with the opportunity to practise their manaakitanga in the community.



Photo (above): Western Springs College

## Corporates and Beyond Volunteers

*By Wendy John*

**Auckland Council Risk & Assurance** – Fortunately, Volunteering Auckland continue to send corporate groups our way, for which we are incredibly grateful. And we also have independent approaches from organisations wanting to help out on the awa. In December we were joined by an energetic group from Council's 'Risk and Assurance' department, who assisted our Friday team with some serious mahi. They worked together on a rather tricky, steep area, up along the shared path, clearing the mass of rampant bindweed that was smothering plants that were planted last winter.



Photo (above): Auckland Council Risk and Assurance team



Photo (above): Friday volunteers with AC Risk & Assessment Team

**Southbase** – Immediately adjacent to the north end of the creek the Waitemata District Health Board are in the throes of expanding the operations of their forensic unit – Mason Clinic. Not long after the work commenced we were approached by the construction company, Southbase, expressing interest in building a relationship with the Friends of Oakley Creek and carrying out regular volunteering activities. Of course we couldn't say no! And to-date we have had two teams join us to help tidy up some of the organic debris from the 2023 Anniversary Weekend storms. They have done an amazing job and made some stunning 'eco-stacks'. And we look forward to having them back again this year.



Photo (above): Southbase volunteers



Photo (above): Southbase volunteers' eco-stack

**WSP** – Staff from the engineering company WSP, joined us again late last year. It's so encouraging to have companies come back year after year. The team of eight worked hard in the hot sun, clearing weeds from around some of the young plants that were planted in 2022 under the, then, Mayor's Million Trees programme.



Photo (above): WSP volunteers



Photo (above): WSP Group

# Outreach Report

By **Sandra MacLean**

Our young native plantings at the Waterview Heritage Area (WHA) are looking rather wonderful after the summer break. Prior to the holidays we mulched hard out with teams from Sustainable Coastlines, KPMG and Unilever as well as our regular Tuesday morning volunteers. So, the place was in great shape at the start of summer. Our first WHA Tuesday session, back in January, was supported by nine young overseas volunteers thanks to Sustainable Coastlines. This meant we could deal to the weeds which had also enjoyed the regular rain that this summer delivered. Helen Edwards, one of our most regular WHA volunteers, pulled some strings at her work so we could give each of these volunteers a ticket for the Sky Tower as 'thanks'. A couple of years control of moth plant within the reserve area and surrounding properties is showing a return now, with reduced numbers of these pesky weeds. There's still lots to do at the WHA though as the madeira vine, whilst massively reduced in quantity, still needs ongoing control.

Cyclone remediation work and privet control carried on upstream, below BP on Great North Road, with great corporate teams from Teletrac Navman and Waka Kotahi. Really good inroads have been made here with the number of teams we've thrown at this task, and it looks like a different place a year down the line from the cyclone that created so much havoc. KPMG also sent us an outstanding team who put in a great morning's work at Harbutt Reserve, bucketing mulch out across a big planting site.



Photo (above): KPMG volunteers at WHA in December

At Odyssey House we scattered a rye grass /clover mix as a cover crop, to help protect our young plants and reduce erosion. The sedges and toetoe we have planted streamside are looking wonderful. With more funding from the Whau Local Board, through Whau Wildlink, we are planning another year of restoration with the help of Odyssey House residents.

We ran another neat little session below the Waterview Apartments, focussing on moth plant seedlings and privet. That's another site which is tracking nicely in the right direction with ongoing attention from our volunteers.

Our roving team of weed warriors worked to tame some of the wilder places adjacent to our restoration sites on Blockhouse Bay Road, Waterview Downs, and along the Southwestern Cycleway. Thanks to Jean, Keith and David for their great mahi controlling moth plant and woolly nightshade. Moth plant rules my world just now, it's a race against time trying to get round these vines to control them before the flowers turn to pods. Have a look along the street you live in and maybe you could help out by informing a neighbour how to tackle moth plant or even give them a hand to get on top of it.



Photo (above): Regular Tuesday volunteers at WHA

## Richardson Road Wetland Weedbusters

By **Wendy John**

Thanks to the encouragement of one of our local volunteers, we have started working in a new area on the creek – one that's been in our sights for many years – the Richardson Road Wetland, opposite Kukuwai Park. Over the summer holidays (while people were sunning themselves at the beach, tramping or relaxing) a group of 'seasoned

weedbusters' have been working incredibly hard, on what is a very challenging site, clearing extensive amounts of moth plant, woolly nightshade, gorse and blackberry. So far, they/we have racked up over 100+ hours and are making huge progress at getting rid of these 'nasties'.



Photo (above): Jean & the finished gorse patch (Jean Barton)

## Water Monitoring on the Awa

**By Wendy John**

The quarterly summer water monitoring has taken place across the catchment. While there are a reasonable number of macroinvertebrates in the awa, we still have work to do with the restoration, to get more shade over the creek to improve the water quality – a work in progress!



Photo (above): Jagjeeta checking the bugs at the Unitec Bridge



Photo (above): Eric & Jill at Wairaka Stream

## Predator Control

**By Wendy John**

Along with our weekly trapping we continue to undertake rodent baiting, to help keep the pest numbers down. During the spring baiting we were joined by a young university student, who is studying environment science, and her dad. Volunteering on the creek is a wonderful way for students to gain practical experience. Thanks, Stacey, and good luck with your studies and career in the future.

And we are still looking for volunteers to join our predator control teams. We need two to help with trapping. This means being on a roster with two other team members and involves checking a trap line once every three weeks (1.5-2 hrs). The other is joining our rodent baiting team, helping with baiting four times a year, on five consecutive Saturday mornings each time (1-1.5 hrs). Plus helping with predator monitoring twice a year - optional. Training and resources are provided.

If you are interested in helping, contact Wendy – [info@oakley-creek.org.nz](mailto:info@oakley-creek.org.nz)



Photo (above): John, Stacey & Neville

## Official Post Storm Clean Up Continues

**By Wendy John**

The next phase of the post storm clean-up was undertaken by contractors, Treetops. This included tidying up some of the large oak trees that, unfortunately, came down earlier in the year. They did a great job of creating large eco-stacks, for the bugs – quite the work of art.

However, there is still lots more work to be done, which will demand great resourcing to remove some of the bigger fallen trees and broken bridges, which may need large machinery, including helicopters .... Patience is the name of the game for many of us, not only on the creek, but across the city.



Photo (above): Oak Logs

## Volunteer Secretary needed

We are still needing a secretary. The role requires an eye for detail and an ability to attend (online or in person) committee meetings once a month, to take notes and circulate them to committee

members. A good knowledge or experience of committee procedures would be helpful but not essential. We have an enthusiastic committee who will support you in every way possible. If

this interests you, please contact David Bowden (Chairperson) on 027 249 1873, Wendy John – 027 232 6454 or email [info@oakleycreek.org.nz](mailto:info@oakleycreek.org.nz) for further information.

## Xmas Picnic

**By Wendy John**

We celebrated another successful year at our end-of-year picnic. These are always enjoyable gatherings, with great food, great surroundings and great company – with not a pair of gloves or spade in sight!



Photo (above): Friends gather for Xmas picnic



# A Christmas Reflection

By Marin Adams

*Celebrating Christmas is associated with gratitude, joyfulness and hope for the future. We give thanks for those who have worked to protect our taonga, Te Auaunga, and we draw inspiration for the future from some whakatauki.*

## Waeuae kai kapua

An adventurous person, a risk-taker, one with fanciful ideas, a dreamer. Literally someone with feet touching the clouds. Although Bev Price was a quiet, shy, unassuming person,<sup>1</sup> she certainly qualifies as a waeuae kai kapua. Her vision was a walking track beside Te Auaunga.

Beverley and her close friend Beverley Williamson were keen trampers, climbers and mountaineers. Beverley P lived with her parents at 184 Mt Albert Road so Oakley Creek was in her neighbourhood. One summer's day, BP, as she was nicknamed, suggested to her friend that they should explore the creek. This was in the late 1950s. The two women literally bashed their way through the weeds and rubbish that lined the banks.<sup>2</sup>

Both women were teachers and each Christmas holidays they travelled to the South Island and tramped through pristine forest and climbed in alpine environments, where the impact of humans was not visible. Te Auaunga was also an unspoiled natural environment in pre-colonial times, where Māori fished, snared birds and gathered resources. European settlement brought industry and weeds and led to a rapid degradation in the riverine environment. Te Auaunga became a drain and a dumping ground for rubbish.

After the initial exploration, Beverley Price returned to the creek on subsequent occasions and began to hack out a rudimentary track so that it was possible to move with more ease. In the 1970s Beverley mounted a campaign for the track to be transformed into a walkway and gradually her dream became a reality. Two plaques along the entry to the walkway commemorate her work.<sup>3</sup>



Photo (above): Commemorative plaque at Te Auaunga



Photo (above): Pohutukawa flowers at our Christmas picnic

## Whāia te iti kahurangi ki te tūohu koe me he maunga teitei<sup>4</sup>

Seek the treasure you value most dearly: if you bow your head, let it be to a lofty mountain. Aim high for what is truly valuable, be persistent and don't let obstacles stop you from reaching your goal.

In 2004 a plan to build a motorway down the Oakley Creek corridor inspired a small group of people to establish Friends of Oakley Creek Inc. Although the motorway plans were abandoned in favour of a tunnel, there were still significant concerns for the fish, insects, reptiles and birds that lived along the creek. Friends of Oakley Creek collaborated successfully with the Well Connected Consortium to ensure that community knowledge and concerns were taken into consideration during the planning and building of the tunnel.

## He iti te mokoroa, nāna i kati te kahikatea<sup>5</sup>

The mokoroa (grub of the Puriri moth) may be small, but it cuts through the Kahikatea. Although the numbers and resources of Friends of Te Auaunga Oakley Creek are small, like the mokoroa, it is still possible for us to touch the clouds with our feet.

All friends and supporters of Oakley Creek/ Te Auaunga look forward to working together, mahi tahi, in the new year.

<sup>1</sup> Sherilyn Coney, Personal communication.

<sup>2</sup> David Chandler, Personal communication.

<sup>3</sup> <https://timespanner.blogspot.com/2009/03/beverley-price-memorial-oakley-creek.html#:~:text=Beverley%20and%20her%20mother%20perished,the%20Oakley%20Creek%20walkway%20bridges.>

<sup>4</sup> <https://inspiringcommunities.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/Inspiring-Communities-%E2%80%93-Whakatauki-information-sheet.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> Ibid

## More on Ferns ....

By Wendy John

Just when you think you've seen all of the different fern species on the creek another wee gem reveals itself. This time it was *Blechnum filiforme* – thread fern / climbing hard fern. A member of the *Blechnaceae* family, this fern is endemic to Aotearoa, and is found in both broadleaf and podocarp forests in coastal and lowland areas, from the North Island down to the north coast of the South Island.

As with a number of other ferns (and native plants), the thread fern has a very distinctive juvenile form. It is a high climbing fern which



Photo (above): Thread fern at Te Auaunga



Photo (above): Close up of Thread fern at Te Auaunga

establishes on the ground, then creeps as a rhizome, along the ground – often on a rock or an exposed tree root, to a nearby tree which it can then climb. As it works its way up the host tree, over time, the fronds change into a beautiful, graceful form. Also, as with other members of the *Blechnaceae* family, *B filiforme* has a unique fertile frond that is long, elegant and thread-like – hence the common name 'thread fern'.

Ref: <https://www.nzplants.auckland.ac.nz/en/about/ferns/native-ferns/blechnaceae-hard-rasp-ferns/blechnum-filiforme.html>



Photo (above): *Blechnum filiforme* adult fronds (Jeremy R. Rolfe, NZPCN)



Photo (above): Fertile Frond

## Meet our beautiful Ruru / Morepork

By Wendy John

Did you know that our beautiful ruru (*Ninox novaeseelandiae*) have several different calls – all of which can be heard on the creek in the evening / night / early morning. Their calls include a soft 'mewing' sound, a 'yelping' sound, a high-pitched 'creeping' sound – which is often made during flight and when hunting at night, a 'croaking' sound, and the one that most people are familiar with, the common 'morepork' sound – or a combination of any of the above. Birds that appear to be calling together in a 'duet' are usually rival males duelling and defending their 'territory'.

They have short, broad wings making them very manoeuvrable and able to fly through dense forest. Like other owls they have serrated

or comb-like edges on their flight feathers that reduce air turbulence over their wings, enabling silent flight.

Their diet consists of insects e.g. huhu beetles, weta, cicadas and large moths, small mammals and birds, which they hunt at night.

They are currently classified as 'not threatened'. Their main threats are the continued loss of habitat – particularly large old trees and patches of dense bush - and predation when nesting, by cats, possum, rats and mustelids.

The ruru is an important species in Māori mythology. It provides a rich source of symbolism. Its haunting cry and watchful nature are linked with tapu (spiritual restriction), guardianship, forewarning, grief and awareness.



Photo (above): Morepork ruru (Hikoi Rakiura)

## Volunteer View

*By Gina Hefferan*

Glenn Smyth describes himself as an Irishman living in Auckland. If you have been along to one of our monthly community planting, mulching and weeding sessions on the creek, you've probably seen him there. He is one of our most regular volunteers. I asked him how he first came to be involved with Friends of Oakley Creek.

Glenn first became aware of Oakley Creek when he lived on Hendon Ave in 2010. It was then a narrow strip of water which wended its way through an open paddock crisscrossed with informal paths. There were few trees. But even though it was an unstructured wasteland he could see the value in preserving the green space. He had heard that Mount Albert had less than the usual amount of green space compared to other suburbs in Auckland city. So, when he heard the plans for piping the creek underground to make way for the motorway connecting state highway 20 with the northwestern motorway, it just felt wrong. He joined the "Tunnel or Nothing" protests. That's when he first met Wendy John and Margi Watson, who were involved in the movement. The group marched, they presented petitions, they lobbied, and they distributed leaflets throughout the neighbourhood. It was, ultimately, successful in persuading the decision makers to preserve the creek and green space and put the motorway underground.

After that, with two young daughters he had limited time to volunteer for conservation work, but Oakley Creek stayed in the back of his mind.



*Photo (above): Glenn takes a break from planting*



*Photo (above): Glenn in mulching mode*

He followed the progress of the restoration work. As his daughters grew older, he responded to the notices on Facebook and the email updates and became a regular monthly volunteer. He has been one of our most faithful volunteers since 2017.

So why does he do it? The environmental problems that the world is facing can seem overwhelming. We owe a massive debt to nature. What can one person do as an individual to redress the imbalance? Glenn sees his volunteering work as an antidote to that feeling of hopelessness. This work is some small credit. This is something within your control, something you have agency over. He looks forward to the community working bees on the first Sunday of each month, especially the planting days. They give huge satisfaction. Weeding is harder but it must be done.

And then there's the social side. You are working alongside like-minded people and that gives you a bit of optimism; it gives you hope. He still has to check on the identification of some of the weeds but there's always someone to ask. As Glenn sees it, this work is not just for us but for our children and our children's children. It is all about legacy. It is all about the journey. This work is part of a bigger picture and there's no end to it. We play our part, and the journey continues. Although he has been volunteering at Oakley Creek for years now, it does not feel like an onerous task, it is something he looks forward to.

## Seasonal gallery

This month we highlight the North Island Copper Butterfly (*Lycaena salustius*). The species is endemic to New Zealand and known to Māori as *Pepe para riki*. Several were seen hanging around the *Muehlenbeckia axillaris* that has been planted in the Kukuwai Park carpark.

Other sightings on the creek include magnificent displays of *pohutukawa* blossom in December; North Island lacebark (*Hoheria populnea*) flowers; the lovely, scented flowers of the cabbage tree (*tī kōuka*); whau seed pods and kānuka (*Kunzea ericoides*) flowers.



Photo (above): North Island copper butterfly

From below left, counter-clockwise: Pohutukawa flowers; hoheria populnea; cabbage tree flowers; whau seed pods; kānuka flowers



## Notices

**Monthly Community Working Bees:** As per normal, our monthly working bees are held on the first Sunday of each month - 10.00am-12.00 noon.

**Tuesday Working Bees:** Tuesday mornings 9.30am to 12.00pm. This exciting project is looking for some more regular volunteers. For more information contact Sandra - 021 166 7647.

**Friday Working Bees:** Friday mornings 9.00am to 12.00pm. We work in different locations on Friday mornings, depending on the need at the time. If you're interested let us know and we'll include you in the Friday email list so that you can join us when you are free or contact Wendy - 027 232 6454.

## Gift a Tree

Yes, Christmas is behind us. But, with the urgent need to restore our native biodiversity and habitat, as the old proverb says - *"The best time to plant a tree is 20 years ago. The second-best time is now."*

### Need an inspiring gift idea?



### Give a tree to plant on Te Auaunga - Oakley Creek ...

Just \$20 gives:

- **a native tree -**  
to be planted at Te Auaunga - Oakley Creek on your behalf (or by your recipient or you)
- **an attractive commemorative card -**  
with the details of your gift
- **Membership -**  
for one year

# Friends of Oakley Creek Te Auaunga

**Chairperson:**

David Bowden

**Treasurer:**

Matthew Hill

**Secretary:**

TBC

**Committee:**

Wendy John, Adrienne Stanton, John Stevenson, Cate Ryan, Chris Brown, Marin Adams

**Newsletter Editor:** Gina Hefferan



**Newsletter Photos:** Unless otherwise credited, all photos are by Wendy John

**Newsletter contributions** and comments are welcome – email [info@oakleycreek.org.nz](mailto:info@oakleycreek.org.nz)

**Membership:** We welcome more members (\$10.00) and/or donations towards the work we are doing to protect and restore our wonderful urban 'taonga' – Oakley Creek Te Auaunga. Donations over \$5.00 are tax deductible.

Contributions can be made directly; our bank account number is 38-9003-0978224-00.

You can also find us at <http://oakleycreek.org.nz/> and <https://www.facebook.com/OakleyCreek>

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