President’s message

If it seems a long time since you last received a FOMS newsletter you are quite right. In fact it is over twelve months since Number 11 appeared, in June 2010. This could be interpreted as your office bearers being dilatory and wayward, but our defence is that FOMS has been so demanding of our time that with the best will in the world we just haven’t been able to break clear for long enough to put together another newsletter.

Undoubtedly the principal demand has been the self-guided walking trails at Strangways and the Peake. In our last newsletter we announced that FOMS had been successful in securing a $9600 community NRM grant for the construction and interpretation of these trails and very shortly after that Simon Lewis and I journeyed north to meet with walking trail experts Rob Marshall and Dr Sue Barker on site. That inspection confirmed in general terms the choice of routes previously selected by FOMS and detailed planning of the quite complex logistics commenced.

FOMS is fortunate indeed that Rob and Sue took on (in a voluntary capacity) the detailed trail design and quantity survey work for the materials needed, as well as playing a major role in determining the content and design of the brochures to accompany the walks. Elsewhere in this newsletter Simon Lewis has provided an account of the very successful two week work trip undertaken in May 2011 to put in the trails and I can only reiterate his thanks to our FOMS members who put so much effort into the work. It really was quite outstanding and – importantly – I think I can safely say that we all had an enjoyable time with it. I must thank also Rob and Sue for their untiring efforts and the expertise that they so willingly brought to the task. What we now have is a most impressive and professionally presented set of trails and if no small way this can be attributed to their efforts – well done Sue and Rob and all our hard-working FOMS members!
President’s message cont.
Another major piece of work for us throughout 2010 was organisation for the State-wide Friends Forum held at Woomera over the period 20-23 August. FOMS played a significant role in the planning and running of this event and one of its highlights was to be a post-Forum coach tour to mound springs on the Oodnadatta Track. Two coaches were fully booked with 100 delegates to take part in the tour, but – unhappily for FOMS and the delegates – steady rain closed all the unsealed roads and in place of the mound springs a day trip to Coober Pedy had to be substituted.

With those major commitments behind us we can now look forward to thinking a little more about our future directions. As Simon has noted, we will need to continue to keep a close eye on the walking trails – they will need maintenance and an ongoing supply of brochures – but this should become routine after a while. One possibility which has been discussed around campfires on several recent trips is a change in emphasis from the physical protection and interpretation work of the past few years to work aimed more at management of the springs themselves. In this context we are fortunate that Friends of the Simpson Desert (FOS) have recently resolved to transfer to us a quite sophisticated water quality monitoring kit – our thanks to FOS for this generous gesture.

We have also had some informal discussions with FOS about the possibility of closer contact between our groups, given that FOS has been carrying out works at Dalhousie Springs in Witjira National Park for many years. There is also some commonality of membership between the groups and we will continue these discussions.

Finally, and on that theme of work-sharing, we will be calling our AGM soon and there is a need to think again about succession in our key positions. There are many good reasons for getting new people involved and if you have any ideas, or are prepared to put up your hand to help, get in touch with Simon or me soon – we really do need your help!

Colin Harris,
President, Friends of Mound Springs

FOMS volunteers construct trails at Strangways and the Peake

FOMS members had a busy time in May 2011 establishing a series of walking trails at Strangways Springs and the Peake. Both sites are of national importance because of their combination of mound springs and ruins of Overland Telegraph repeater stations.

FOMS has been involved in protective works at the two locations for the last three years. FOMS has worked with S Kidman & Co and the Department of Environment and Natural Resources in the installation of protective fencing and informative signage. Much of the recent protective work has focussed on the Peake, where fencing was constructed in 2010 to prevent indiscriminate vehicle access to the nearby gidgee creek-line. This complemented earlier work by FOMS volunteers (in 2008) to establish bollards around the main car-park.
FOMS volunteers construct trails at Strangways and the Peake cont.

In 2010 FOMS was fortunate to secure a State Government community NRM grant of $9,600 to complete this work by establishing self-guided walks through the springs and other cultural features at both Strangways and the Peake, an initiative which had been previously suggested to FOMS by S Kidman & Co Managing Director Greg Campbell. During 2010 there were two trips by FOMS personnel to determine the routes for the walking trails.

The project came to a climax in May this year when 26 FOMS volunteers gathered on site with mattocks, rakes and scrapers to develop, as well as blisters and sore backs, a total of about 6 km of walking trails. The group was guided by trail construction experts Rob Marshall and Dr Sue Barker, with trail markers established at points of interest and brochures prepared to guide walkers around the trail loops.

Many thanks go to the following helpers who made it all possible:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strangways volunteers</th>
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<td>Rob Marshall</td>
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<td>Bernice Cohen</td>
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<td>Hadyn and Chris Hanna</td>
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<td>Bill Giles</td>
<td>Bruce and Sherrie Gotch</td>
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<td>Anne and Bjarne Jensen</td>
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<td>Michael Jarvis</td>
<td>Alan and Marlene Swinstead</td>
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<td>John Balkwill</td>
<td>Dean and Marian Harris</td>
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<td>Brendan and Elizabeth Lay</td>
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Some of the FOMS volunteers at Strangways. From left: John Childs, Bill Giles, Hadyn Hanna, Colin Harris, Bernice Cohen, Chris Hanna, Leigh Childs, Anne Jensen
During the Strangways work the group had a brief visit from DENR’s Regional Manager Geoff Axford, along with Janet Walton from the SA Arid Lands NRM Board. On the same day a convoy comprising Roger Wickes, Peter Allen and Andrew McTaggart and partners also dropped in. The camp-fire was quite crowded that night! The visitors had a quick guided tour over the walking trails and provided some positive feedback.
FOMS volunteers construct trails at Strangways and the Peake cont.

There are now three walks at each location. At Strangways, the *Mound Springs Walk* takes visitors on a 1.8km walk around several active springs and the cemetery; the *Woolwash Walk* (2.2km) ventures down to the ruins of the wool-scouring plant and back along the springs plateau; and the *Settlement Walk* is guided by signs identifying each of the buildings. At the Peake, the *Coppertop Smelter and Mine Walk* (1.5km) explores the old mine and smelter and provides sweeping vistas of the springs and ruins on the return loop; the *Creek and Cemetery Walk* provides a short 0.6km loop along the watercourse; and the *Settlement Walk* showcases the old buildings.

The completion of the physical works in May paved the way for finalisation of three FOMS brochures – one each for the Strangways and Peake walks and a third with general information on mound springs. The brochures are of a high quality and the input and assistance of a number of FOMS members was very much appreciated.

Twelve thousand brochures have been printed and 4000 were transported to the on-site dispensers by Colin Harris and Simon Lewis 7-10 August 2011.

Pictured (below) are the first visitors to use the brochures at Strangways Springs on 8 August, Heather and Tracey Mahon from Sydney.

This work effectively completes a major and very successful project for FOMS at Strangways and the Peake, although ongoing maintenance of the trails will be needed and the brochures will need to be topped up from time to time.

Many thanks again to all who have contributed, especially the FOMS members who worked tirelessly on the construction of the trails. Special thanks are extended to Rob Marshall and Dr Sue Barker, walking trails experts who generously contributed a great deal of time and effort before, during and after the construction work. The high standard of the completed work is in no small measure due to their commitment and expertise.

More photos from the May trip are included towards the back of this newsletter.
FOMS planning trip to Queensland springs

FOMS members may recall that there was some planning for a FOMS trip to the Queensland mound springs country in 2009, but for various reasons the trip was postponed. There is some enthusiasm for that trip to be resurrected and held in 2012, probably in the period May/June, but we will need to advise further on that. We would be most grateful if any FOMS member(s) keen to do that trip would be prepared to help with the organisation. It will involve quite some work, including liaison with Queensland contacts, determining an itinerary and resolving logistics with those FOMS members who are participating.

Would any potential helpers please contact Colin Harris or Simon Lewis – they would be very pleased to hear from you!

FOMS to receive water quality logger

As noted by the President earlier in this newsletter, FOMS will shortly take delivery of a TPS 90FL field laboratory for water quality analysis. The 90FL series measures pH, conductivity, TDS, dissolved oxygen and temperature. A notepad feature records up to 8100 sets of readings which can be stored for later downloading to a printer or computer. Designed for field application in wet environments, the case, keypad and connectors are waterproof.

The unit was purchased originally by the Friends of Simpson Desert (FOS) for around $5000 and used for monitoring water quality at Dalhousie Springs in Witjira National Park. Specifically, it was used to demonstrate water quality changes once introduced palms had been removed, but with the removal of almost all palms in 2010 that project has ended. FOS has now very generously transferred ownership of the unit (at no charge) to FOMS, which is very timely given FOMS’ desire to get more actively involved in springs management over the next few years.

Our thanks to FOS and especially to Alan Hancox, President of FOS, for facilitating this transfer. FOMS has no doubt that the unit will be put to good use.

DENR plans new infrastructure at Wabma Kadarbu Mound Springs Conservation Park

The SA Department of Environment and Natural Resources is developing plans to upgrade infrastructure for access to Blanche Cup and the Bubbler in Wabma Kadarbu Mound Springs Conservation Park.

Those who have visited these two springs in recent times may appreciate that there are some significant visitor impacts that need to be addressed.

At the Bubbler, the old timber walk-way, constructed from cross-arm timbers on Overland Telegraph poles (an apt piece of recycling), is showing signs of wear and tear. In addition, visitors are often moving off the viewing platform to gain other perspectives for photographs and this is impacting on the vegetation. DENR proposes to replace the walkway and platform with raised decking that will take people around to the preferred viewing area.
DENR plans new infrastructure at Wabma Kadarbu Mound Springs Conservation Park cont.

At Blanche Cup the visitor management problems are probably more difficult. Foot traffic around the top of the mound has progressively encroached into the bore drain sedge that surrounds the open pool. As a result, the pool and its fringing vegetation have decreased substantially in size and condition and the "halo" of compressed bare ground around the spring has correspondingly increased. DENR is looking at options to encourage more limited foot traffic around the top of the mound.

DENR’s District Ranger, Desert Parks, Tony Magor, has kept FOMS informed of progress on this and FOMS has responded with comments. Among other things, FOMS has suggested that the proposed walkway and decking at the Bubbler would have less visual impact if it was constructed to a lower height than proposed, and that ground level timber decking with a kick board would be more appropriate for the rim of Blanche Cup than the stone/masonry surface proposed.

Tony has also been busy consulting other groups, such as the local Arabunna community, about this work.

Questions raised at the Little Bubbler

The Little Bubbler is a relatively modest spring near Blanche Cup and the Bubbler in Wabma Kadarbu Mound Springs Conservation Park. The spring’s vegetation has been monitored by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources since the mid 1980s. For most of this time, the vegetation at the spring vent and along much of the tail has comprised an almost pure stand of bore-drain sedge, *Cyperus laevigatus*. 
Questions raised at the Little Bubbler cont.

However, during the last two or three years, the common reed, *Phragmites*, has become established at the spring vent. *Phragmites* is indigenous to many mound springs, but often has a tendency to grow vigorously to the exclusion of other spring vegetation. This has been noted at several springs fenced by the Department in the 1980s (e.g. Big Perry, the Fountain, Twelve Mile) and at Finniss Springs following destocking.

![Reeds (Phragmites) in the vent of the Little Bubbler. Sparse at this stage but.....?](image)

It is possible that *Phragmites* was introduced to the Little Bubbler on the shoes of researchers or monitoring personnel and therefore may not be a truly natural introduction. Although *Phragmites* is not yet proliferating at this spring, it may have the potential to do so.

The question therefore arises: should FOMS be suggesting to DENR that active steps be taken to remove *Phragmites* from the Little Bubbler? Some of us think the answer to this question is “yes” but any comments from FOMS members on this would be welcome.

Another point of interest about the Little Bubbler is the propensity for its tail to change direction from time to time. The left-hand fork in the tail in the above photograph is a recent “break-out”. The new tails tend to be colonised by species such as *Cyperus* quite rapidly.

FOMS website under development

Friends of Mound Springs have taken an important step forward in its communications program by initiating a FOMS website. Website developer Heath Vogt has been engaged to help set up the site.

The website will be able to be accessed at [friendsofmoundsprings.org.au](http://friendsofmoundsprings.org.au), so please keep a look out for this one. It should be operational by the end of October 2011. Once it is up and running, your contributions will be very welcome.
Photo gallery: FOMS in action at Strangways and the Peake

The first post is in! Colin Harris, Bernice Cohen, Rob Marshall, Sue Barker at Strangways

Hard digging! Bjarne Jensen and Michael Jarvis

John Childs and Tiana Forrest attach a map plate at Strangways

Job done! Some of the Strangways crew: John Childs, Bill Giles, Hadyn Hanna, Colin Harris, Bernice Cohen, Chris Hanna, Leigh Childs, Anne Jensen

John Childs takes charge of the access track from the car-park at the Peake

Elizabeth and Brendan Lay take a breather after some early morning work at the Peake
Photo gallery: FOMS in action at Strangways and the Peake

Sue Black tests out the Creek Walk at the Peake

Another day over

Friends of Mound Springs

If you wish to become a member, please send $10 together with your name, phone number, postal and email addresses to Tony Latz, Treasurer of FOMS, 10 Waratah Way, Stonyfell SA 5066. Membership runs with the financial year.

OFFICE-BEARERS and RELEVANT CONTACT DETAILS

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<tr>
<th>OFFICE BEARER</th>
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<td>AUDITOR</td>
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