

Project Background

The idea of the Community Co-operative Walk Project was initiated when local members of the Queensland Dairy Organisation (QDO) suggested that Caloundra City Council dedicate the creekbank land below the Dairy Cooperative Store to the community. Successful revegetation of the Obi Creek at the Maleny Showgrounds during the 1989-91 Maleny Folk Festivals, encouraged Barung to extend along the work downstream. Work commenced in 1996 after much planning.

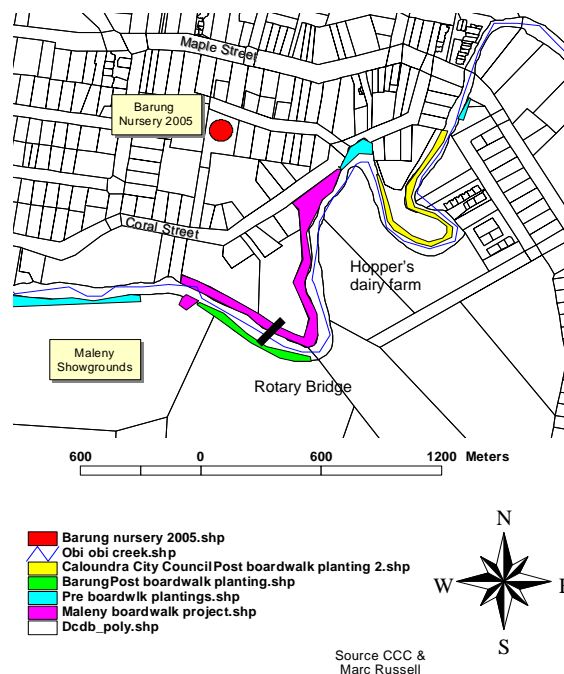
The walk consists of approximately 450m of boardwalk and concrete path, connecting Rotary Bridge (Showgrounds) to Maleny township. Barung's partnerships with the community and Caloundra City Council strengthened when we joined forces to help transform an unused area of weeds and refuse into a valuable community asset.

The project has been ongoing in several stages spanning almost 10 years. While this area wasn't necessarily a strategic ecological priority, it has been and will continue to be, a great source of inspiration and education for the community on many levels:

Hundreds of people use the community walk every week - to get from A to B, or simply to stroll or walk the dog.

- ◆ The dense vegetative buffer helps improve water quality and stabilise the creek banks.
- ◆ A mass of weeds has been replaced with over 100 local species providing a native seed bank for surrounding areas and a source for seed collection.
- ◆ A wide variety of wildlife is attracted to the increasing diversity of native flora.
- ◆ Much of our "Best Practice" methodology for creek bank rehabilitation was formulated from experience gained on this rather difficult site.
- ◆ This highly visible and accessible "model" has enabled us to carry out hundreds of educational / training activities, involving thousands of participants; from local landholders, trainees and students, to visitors from as far as the Philippines, China, Indonesia, Kenya, Bangladesh, India, USA, South Africa, Uganda and Zimbabwe.
- ◆ Hands-on involvement by local landholders has inspired many to protect and revegetate parts of their own properties.
- ◆ The project has been instrumental in inspiring rehabilitation work on public land along the length of Obi Obi Creek. The map on this page shows some of the sites in the immediate vicinity, on which rehabilitation works have been undertaken in recent years.

Co-operative Walk Project



- ◆ Council has constructed a Platypus viewing platform and path at the end of Bicentenary Lane, linking the Obi Boardwalk to the Maleny Library and further revegetation sites. There are plans to continue the walk to Gardners Falls.



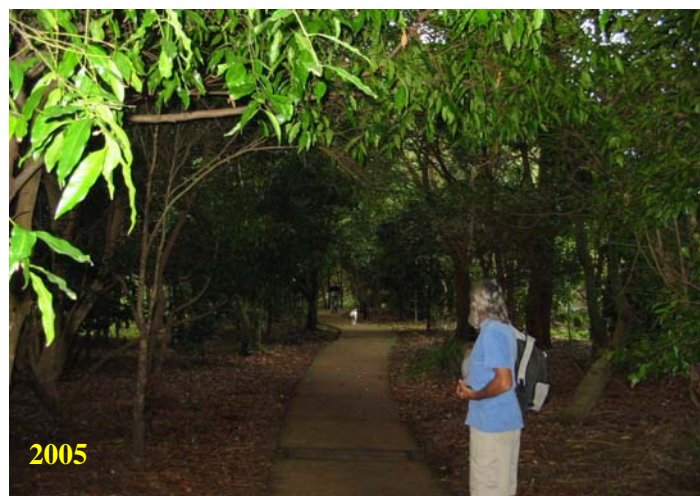
Above: All woody weeds were recycled on Hopper's land. Large Camphor laurel trees were slabbed using a portable mil. The slabs were sold to provide additional project funds. Camphor branches (too small to mill) and Privet trunks were used for woodturning by local woodworkers. Everything else was chipped to provide mulch for the tree planting.

Project Objectives

To:

- ◆ transform a weed infested creekbank into a rainforest corridor and riparian buffer through Maleny.
- ◆ create a functional and beautiful pedestrian link between the Showgrounds and Maleny township via the Rotary pedestrian bridge.
- ◆ involve the community in all stages of the project and provide hands-on educational opportunities.
- ◆ to establish a 'best practice' model for local landholders wanting to rehabilitate their own creek banks.
- ◆ initiate ongoing rehabilitation work along the length of the Obi Obi Creek.

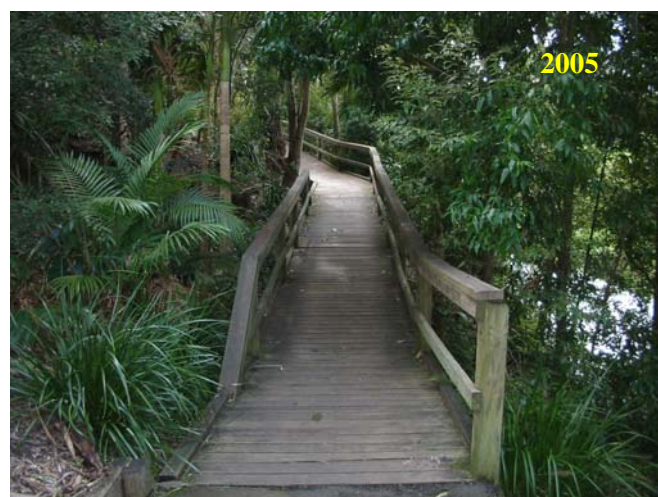
Below: *Our initial tree plant on the Community Walk site in 1996. Holes on level ground were dug with a tree hole auger, making planting easy and initial root development phenomenal. Several eucalypts achieved 150mm of root growth in the first week.*



Above: The same spot in 2005. Hundreds of locals and visitors now enjoy the shady, meandering walk along the Obi Obi Creek every week.

Project methods

- ◆ The site was dominated by exotic species with very few natives present. Main environmental weeds included: Camphor laurel, Small and Large-leaf privet, Pine trees, Morning glory, Madeira vine and White-flowered wandering Jew. Dense weed growth smothered most existing natural regeneration.
- ◆ Most of the woody weeds were cut leaving roots in the ground to minimise disturbance. Stumps were treated with herbicide to prevent coppicing. Any native seedlings found were marked with bright tape to reduce damage.
- ◆ Owners of the dairy property on the opposite bank allowed us access, removed many Camphors assisted with stock exclusion.
- ◆ All of the woody weeds on site were recycled. Large Camphor laurel trees, slabbed using a portable mill, were sold to provide additional project funds. Camphor branches (too small to mill) and Privet trunks were used for woodturning by local woodworkers. Everything else was chipped to provide mulch for the tree planting.
- ◆ A narrow buffer of woody weeds was left along the creek edge for stability, and along the upper bank for protection from afternoon sun and wind. These areas were later rehabilitated when the initial plantings had established.
- ◆ Participants of a New Work Opportunities training program constructed the boardwalk and path with materials and equipment funded by Caloundra City Council.
- ◆ Public involvement has been maximised during all stages of the project including: planning, building, planting and maintenance.
- ◆ Workdays, workshops and other educational activities have involved: students from several schools, TAFE and Sunshine Coast University; Green Corps, Green Reserve, Community Jobs Program, Work for the Dole and Community Service participants; Scouts and Guides; ATCV / CVA overseas volunteers; and many community members.
- ◆ Tree planting was carried out in several stages with a diversity of local plant species. The initial focus was to establish species for frost tolerance and fast growth. Later species were added to build canopy diversity, seal edges and thicken the understorey.
- ◆ Many helped with site maintenance including: Barung's Weedbuster and Dirty Weekender volunteers: labour and training program participants; Maleny Rotary; and Girl Guides. Several dedicated individuals carried out regular maintenance over a long period of time.
- ◆ CCC carried out in-stream works in 2000 to reduce bank erosion problems on site.



Above: *Dedicated community members have transformed a weed and litter infested creek bank into a beautiful community asset and an ecologically functional riparian zone.*



Left: *David Fraser (Barung Management Committee member) and the New Work Opportunities team proudly show off the newly completed Co-operative Walk. The team constructed both the boardwalk and concrete pathway, while gaining important skills to help them find employment.*



Right:
The site during the 1998 floods. Debris on the boardwalk shows that the water was even higher during the early hours of the morning. Most of our revegetation was completely under water.



Below right:
*At first the flood damage seemed devastating, but recovery was quick. Almost all the plants survived. Apart from removing heavy debris from trunks and smaller plants and redistributing mulch, not much could be done. We realised it was best to resist the temptation to stand the trees back up and risk further root damage. Staking would lead to more instability during the next flood. Even the most horizontal of plants regrew from bases and stems to create a framework that was much more resistant to flooding. The area in the photo suffered the most damage, as it became a flow path during peak flooding. Replacements consisted of species more able to withstand floods, including *Lomandra* species, and the site is now well established.*

Project Partnerships

The sign (pictured right) lists the groups, government bodies and local business sponsors of the project. The project would not have been possible without the cooperation of QDO members and the Hopper family.

Additional funding has since been provided by the Natural Heritage Trust Bushcare Program and NRMA Insurance to carry out enhancement work.

What did we learn?

- ◆ That community involvement during every stage was essential to the success of the project.
- ◆ That revegetation, especially in frost and/or flood prone sites, must be carried out in several stages to ensure long-term success.
- ◆ A lot about frost and/or flood tolerance of local species and revegetation establishment and management. These lessons are passed on to the community through our educational activities.
- ◆ That species selection, placement and maintenance, especially during early growth stage, is crucial.
- ◆ That narrow revegetation strips require more maintenance over a longer period of time due to increased edge effects.
- ◆ Not to bother staking trees laid down by flooding as they will always be unstable. It is better to leave them to reshoot from the base and branches if we are going to create a plant that is almost impossible to knock over again.
- ◆ That a case study must be planned from the beginning of the project.

Doing it differently next time

- ◆ During early stages of the project most required species were unavailable, resulting in inappropriate species being planted. Given the species diversity now available, species selection could be improved, including understorey..
- ◆ Highly visible sites on public land offer fantastic educational opportunities for the community, however they also demand higher input from our limited resources. Now that several high profile sites have been established, we need to focus on partnerships with private landholders to maximise ecological outcomes.

Beyond the project

- ◆ Barung Landcare, Caloundra City Council, Lake Baroon Catchment Care Group, the Mary River Catchment Coordinating Committee and the Burnett Mary Regional Group continue to work with landholder education and on-ground rehabilitation along the Obi Obi Creek.
- ◆ Gardening Australia regularly feature a television segment on the project, even after 9 years.
- ◆ Plans are underway to erect interpretive signage to further increase the educational value of the site.



Below: After initial plantings were established, woody weeds that had been left for stabilisation on the absolute creek bank were removed and replaced with appropriate native species.

