

# FESTIVALS

## INTRODUCTION

With a creek length of 70km and covering a total area of some 260 square kilometres, the Oxley Creek catchment is the largest of the creek catchments feeding into the Brisbane River. Beginning in the Flinders Peak area, Oxley Creek and its tributaries wend their way in a generally northward direction through suburbs including Spring Mountain, Greenbank, Forestdale, Algester, Acacia Ridge, Inala, Coopers Plains, Moorooka, Oxley, Corinda, Sherwood and Graceville before finally reaching the Brisbane River at Tennyson.

The Oxley Creek Environment Group (OCEG) was the first community organisation formed to improve the health of Oxley Creek and its natural areas through hands-on actions. In 1995 it was suggested that a Catchment Association be formed with the aim of caring for Oxley Creek and the lands in the catchment cooperatively with State and local governments, industry and the community. So began the Oxley Creek Catchment Association (OCCA).

In the meantime, OCEG recognised that the community had a low level of awareness of the issues affecting the catchment, its natural areas and fauna and flora. A strategic review identified that awareness could be increased through social activities and it was decided to hold an annual festival and so the Oxley Creek Water Festival was born.

Since 1997, the Oxley Creek Water Festival, and later the Peaks to Points Festival, has been the major environmental involvement and education event on Brisbane's southside, raising awareness about natural areas in a fun and interactive manner. The festivals have evolved over the years but have always had the aim of increasing public awareness of the importance of waterways and natural areas. The Peaks to Points Festival has broadened that focus to raise awareness of existing community and environmental groups in the catchment and promote their efforts to improve the creeks and surrounding land.

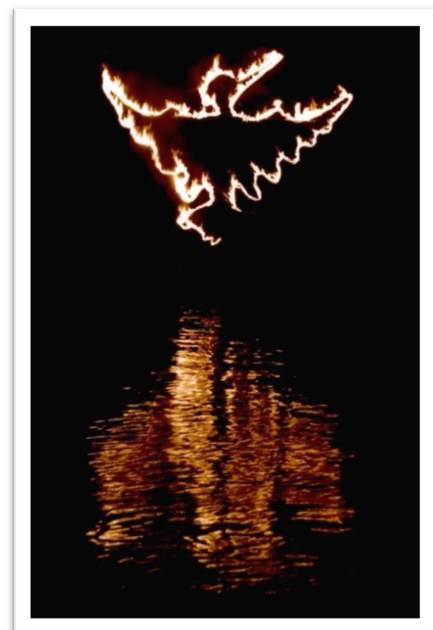
Now, 19 years after the first Festival, the hope is that, in the years to come, this great community event will continue and grow. The following is an overview of the Oxley Creek Water Festivals and the Peaks to Points Festivals that have taken place since 1997.

## Oxley Creek Water Festival

The first Oxley Creek Water Festival was held on 1 June 1997 with the theme of *'Spirit of the Creek'*. It attracted 2500 people. It was organised by a team of representatives from local community and sporting groups led by the Oxley Creek Environment Group.

This initial festival also coincided with the finish of the Bremer to Brisbane Canoe Race at the mouth of Oxley Creek, providing an additional focus on waterways.

Entertainment included indigenous dancers and groups from Samoa, Ireland, and the Highlands to workshops on kite making, working with clay, and making masks and hand-puppets. Educational workshops included musical instruments, traditional Aboriginal art, and how to make laundry liquid, with other activities such as tree planting and canoeing.



The Grand Finale parade included local and indigenous performers in a water and fire theme dance and music performance and over 150 children in a lantern parade. It started at dusk and was headed by a canoe built during the day, followed by a small band of musicians and children from Sherwood State School carrying lanterns, masks, and butterflies. The sounds of the creek were interpreted by a choir, and as the sounds subsided, Aboriginal Elder Vi McDermitt, was spotlighted in a canoe as she was paddled to the shore whilst singing a traditional Aboriginal song about the creek and the spirit of the land. A large lantern firebird with two silhouette-birds were floated down the creek in the canoe.

In June 1998 the festival was extended to a full day with the theme of '*Benarrawa Dreaming – Visions for Oxley*,' (Benarrawa being the Aboriginal name for Oxley Creek). Ten schools developed an arts and crafts display on creek-associated issues. Some 3,000 people attended the 40 community and environmental displays and activities including a Poets' Breakfast beneath the trees at Simpson's Playground, a short-course canoe 'Race to Save Oxley Creek', *Heritage* boat cruises taking passengers along the Brisbane River to Indooroopilly Bridge and back, a Theatrette by the Queensland Movie Makers' Guild featuring historical and environmental films, painting a catchment banner, a 'Name the Glider' competition, a recycling competition, and plays by St Aidan's Drama Group and Oxley State School.

As with the previous year, the day concluded with a lantern parade and a fire and theatre performance at dusk. The performance featured indigenous dancers, stilt walkers, fire sculptures, and local community groups in a story highlighting the cultural significance of the area, and the 'breaking free' of the Spirit of the Water from the devastation of the past.

The 1999 festival was preceded two weeks earlier by a Bullock Team Heritage Walk. An ex-bullock team driver – Mr George Sirret – provided the wagon, whilst the team of ten bullocks belonged to Mr Philip Thompson, of Natural Bridge. The duo travelled the old bullock-trail route that wended its

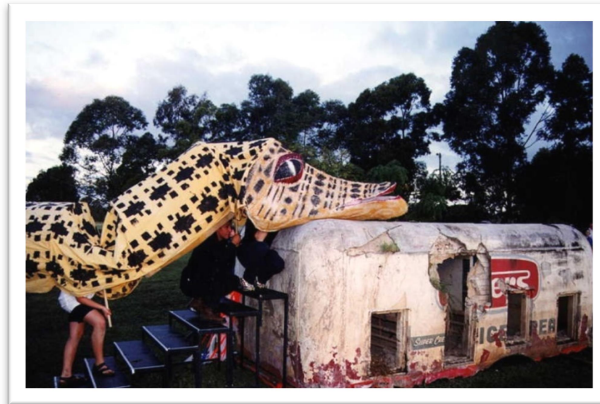


way from Greenbank, through Acacia Ridge, the Greenbank Military Training Area, and along Paradise Road and Watson Street – a route Mr Sirret knew well from his years working with a team in the Oxley Creek area. The team stopped at schools along the route and Mr Thompson, accompanied by local historian and poet Mr Sam Parker, described to the children how bullock-teams were used in the past and their importance to that period of history.

Within a village-like setting of environmental group and community stalls, displays, and activities, visitors to the festival were treated to 72-year old Sam Parker's remembrances of his father's life as a 'bullocky', and a Poet's Breakfast featuring Sam, Wally Finch and Trisha Anderson from the Bush Poets Association, Bev Gates and local high school student Laura Whitting.

A family fun cycle, from Green Bridge, Indooroopilly, wound its way along the bicycle tracks of Graceville, to Pamphlett Bridge, while the *Heritage* again provided cruises on the river to Indooroopilly bridge, permitting passengers to view the flying fox colony and several points of interest along Canoe Reach. The Brisbane Canoe Club organised a Come and Try Canoeing day. There were approximately 20 stalls and displays tended by local community and environmental groups, crafts-persons, and government agencies, as well as a children's sandpit and an abseiling wall.

In among all the fun and educational events, the myth of what was known as the 'Mysterious' (Vanishing) 'Ice Cream Van' was recalled: several people stated they had seen it at different times of the creek's tide, whilst others doubted its existence. Prior to the Festival, Mr George Deen, of Deen Brothers Demolition, located the here-and-gone-again van, lifted it from the creek, and transported it to the festival site at Simpson's Playground, Graceville, where it starred in the performance that closed the Festival.



In 2000, the Oxley Creek Water Festival expanded to include a range of activities over a two-week period, and by 2002 the festival had evolved into an eclectic mix of environmental, cultural, and community events, with the theme being '*Oxley Creek – Connecting Communities*,' in recognition of the creek's being a link between human, faunal, and floral communities. Festival events and activities included a Photographic Competition, talks on aquatic creek life, Waterwise Schools programme, an Energex Riverclean event at Rocklea, a Community Concert – 'Stylin' Up', with rap/hip hop music and dance, tours of the Greenbank Military Training Area, Oxley Wastewater Treatment Plant, Willawong Waste Facility, local historical places and various Bushcare sites, a Twilight Classical Concert by 'Strings Attached', spotlighting, and tree plantings.

A highlight of the Festival was the unveiling of The Mayfly public art piece at the Oxley roundabout. Made of recycled materials encased in concrete it was designed and constructed by local artist Christopher Trotter working with industry and the local community. The Mayfly was chosen as a symbol of OCCA's work to improve the health of local creeks as mayflies require clean water.



The 2004 festival had a theme of "*Past, present and future*". It was launched by (then) Councillor Jane Prentice with a Port of Brisbane Riverclean event at which over a thousand people planted a similar number of trees and shrubs of some 70 different species. Over 50 events and activities were on offer to all age groups over the Festival period including bushcare activities, twilight concerts, canoeing, catchment tours, walks, games, talks, bird watching, open days, craft and workshops, seminars and brass band concerts.

The main event was a Family Fun Day at Oxley Creek Common. Some 7000 people listened to groups DIG, Doch, McMurris, and indigenous group Intrudaz, enjoyed roving performers, heard speakers on a variety of environmental topics, gained information from displays by social, environmental, and industrial groups and sampled a range of food and drink, while children enjoyed their own entertainment area with performers and workshops.

A Business Breakfast provided by the PMM group was hosted by then-Brisbane Lord Mayor, Cr, Campbell Newman, with a panel consisting of local developers, a supplier of water-saving plumbing devices, (then) Environmental Protection Agency, and OCCA President Anne Clarke. Continued



population growth in South-East Queensland and pressures on remnant bushland, Oxley Creek, and its catchment were discussed.



Six 'Brass on the Grass' concerts combined talks and displays from Brisbane City Council officers on selecting and nurturing plants, and how to create a waterwise garden. Twilight concerts were held at Corinda and Mooroka.

The seventh and final Oxley Creek Water Festival was held in the last two weeks of June 2006 and was a resounding success. Some 5000 people enjoyed 40 environmental and community activities and events. A Festival Family Day was held at 36 locations, with the creek's chequered situation and our current water situation providing the theme: *"Oxley Creek – Water for Life."*



Musical entertainment was provided by nationally and internationally-known musicians, including experimental musician Lindsay Pollack and one-man band Juzzie Smith. Cultural dance groups, roving performers, Captain Clean-Up, and the Phoenix Firetribe (stilt-walking trees and fairies) provided additional entertainment.



An X-box van showing environmental and water-themed DVD's on two plasma screens, and a mobile rock-climbing wall were also popular with teenagers. Younger children were entertained by Brisbane Markets Fruit and Vegetable Gang, Native Critters from Brisbane Forest Park, Third Rock Rangers, basket weaving with Auntie Edna, Indigenous arts and games, face painting, kite making, and Wild Writing Workshops.

Events included viewing of sustainable houses, a twilight concert at Benarrawa Park, Movies in the Park, Breakfast in the Wetlands, and the naming of Little Doris Creek. A Lower Oxley Day Community Forum provided information on proposed planning and development changes, and a project with three schools involved the development of nine environmental panels.

## Peaks to Points Festival

The Peaks to Points Festival was born in July 2008 when the Oxley Creek Water Festival was expanded across all the catchments on the south side of the Brisbane River. By this time, the festival was being coordinated by the Oxley Creek Catchment Association with the support of catchment groups from Bulimba, Bayside, and Erapah Creeks with Wolston and Centenary.



The 2008 Festival opened with a Family Fun Day at the Oxley Creek Common. The festival featured local musicians, competitions, and performances by the Brisbane Market Fruit and Vegetable Show, Bazil Grumble, and students from Acacia Ridge and Holland Park State Schools. Dennis Massoud (The Sandman) built his interpretation of the catchment between Flinders Peak and Moreton Bay, and held sand-sculpting workshops.

A train was provided by the Friends of Oxley Creek Common to take families on journeys to the Pelican Wetlands. Children were entertained through basket-weaving with Auntie Edna, a graceful gliders workshop, creation of a festival banner, and sand-sculpting, while the adults could listen to talks on such subjects as reducing your carbon footprint, weed management, coastal and marine wildlife of South East Queensland, and urban wildlife.

The second Peaks to Points Festival in July 2010 saw over 4000 people enjoy a mix of 29 environmental and community activities at 28 locations across the south side of the Brisbane River. The Festival followed the same approach as the inaugural Festival. It showcased environmental groups and their activities south of the Brisbane River focussing on the importance of creeks, biodiversity, the quality of life in the catchment and the issues facing the area such as increased residential and industrial development, loss of vegetation, poor water quality and increases in invasive pest species.

A variety of music and dance performances was provided by schools, local musicians, and dance groups, in addition to Bazil Grumble children's plays *'Where has all the water gone?'* and *'Which bin is which?'* and the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service's Water Wizard Show.

Regional and local government bodies, environmental groups, historical societies, and social groups generated considerable interest with their open days, demonstrations, guided walks and weeding and planting activities, while film screenings, orienteering, walks through natural areas, bird-watching, and a platypus workshop and survey rounded out the festival.



As with previous festivals, various activities were provided for children, including seedball making, basket weaving, kite making and creation of a festival banner. A photographic competition '*Capture Your Catchment*' provided photographs which were later displayed at Sunnybank Hills Library.

In 2012 the Festival was held in September and again highlighted the issues facing the Oxley, Bulimba, Norman, Wolston/Centenary, Bayside, and Norman Creek catchments. In all, 34 events were staged at 31 locations, with some, including such as the native bee workshop, the nature photography workshop, and the historic buildings bus tour, oversubscribed. As with previous festivals, various activities were provided for children, including seedball making, basket weaving, kite making and creation of a festival banner. A photographic competition '*Capture Your Catchment*' provided photographs which were later displayed at Sunnybank Hills Library.

On the Festival Family Day, the Maori Kapa Haka Choir, African Drumming, and Bollywood Dancers encouraged audience participation and local group Slidewinder and roving entertainers Frog and Ricksaw accompanied by Shoop the Sugar Glider entertained all, especially the children. Canoeing on Oxley Creek was another very popular activity.



Talks and films on '*Bag it – your life's too plastic*,' '*The story of stuff*,' '*Catch, store, treat waste*,' and '*Our magnificent mammals – a focus on bats*,' together with Robert Nutrell's workshop on managing native stingless bees and Beryl Roberts' workshop on worm farms and composting provided valuable information for the crowd.

Events and activities across the area included birdwatching walks, a Business Breakfast focussing on planning for floods, workshops on growing native plants, worms and composting, and bush photography, walks through natural and restored bushlands, tree plantings, open days at community gardens, a bush picnic at Karawatha Forest, kite flying, orienteering at night and during the day, and tours of historic landmarks and the Greenbank Military Training Area.

The 2014 Festival involved 37 activities at 32 locations and showcased the creek catchments through activities and events including the launch of the Oxley Creek – Bremer River Twinning Project, opening of the Oxley Community Garden, walking history tours, walks of natural and restored bushland areas, tree plantings, a picnic in the park, workshops on propagating native plants, weeds,



nature photography, and native bees, open days at catchment centres, seed collecting walks, rubbish clean ups, birdwatching walks, a platypus workshop and survey, and a talk on snails.

On Festival Family Day, people were entertained by African drumming and Bollywood dancers, both of which encouraged crowd participation. Basil Grumble kept the children enthralled with their antics, local dance troupe Kidz and Co Talent provided some spectacular dance routines, Bollywood dancers entertained the crowd then had people on their feet for a dance workshop, local group Diddley Squat played well-known blues rock music, and Jocelyn Clarkson from the Oxley Creek Environment Group had the kids running and learning in the Recycling Olympics.

A trackless train provided rides along the creek track towards Pelican Lagoon, and mountain biker and author Gillian Duncan led guided bike rides along the creek track to Pelican Lagoon. A bike swap provided opportunities to buy, sell or donate bikes, while bicycle shops Bikeology and Canrdlytreadies.com.au sold new bikes and offered tips on bike maintenance.

Children's entertainment included face painting, mangrove madness making, birds on sticks and seedball making, water testing, a sound garden, jumping castle, train rides, orienteering, and displays of Queensland Museum artefacts.

The 2016 Peaks to Points Festival will be held from 16 to 31 July with the Festival Family Day again held at the Oxley Creek Common on 31 July.

### **Acknowledgments**

Over the years, OCCA has been grateful for the financial and in-kind support of sponsors, partners and supporters over the years including Brisbane City Council, Logan City Council, Ipswich City Council, Redland City Council, various Queensland government departments, Brisbane Market Place, Metalcorp, CSR Readymix, Deen Bros, Boral, Energex, SITA Environment Solutions, Visy Recycling, Department of Defence, Sims Metal Management, Brisbane Market Place, International River Foundation, SEQ Catchments, EnviroCom Australia, Queensland Urban Utilities, bmag, 4BC, 612 ABC Brisbane, Channel Seven, Cemex, Nanette Lilley Property, Siganto and Stacey, Conics, SEQ Catchments, Healthy Waterways, Stockland, South West News, GBC Project Management, Kingfisher Bay Resort, Lloyd Consulting, Delfin Lend Lease, Quest Community Newspapers, AVEO, Transpacific, Thiess, Australian Green Development Forum, Queensland Rail, 4site, ERM, Tradelink, Energex, PMM Group, and the Port of Brisbane.

The Festival would also not be possible without the support of the groups who host the events and activities including Bulimba Creek Catchment Coordinating Committee, Norman Creek Catchment Coordinating Committee, Bayside Creeks, Wolston and Centenary Catchments, and local environmental, bushcare, history, and community groups too numerous to mention.



## Testimonials

*"I am writing this email to say thank you to the organizers of the Peaks to Points festival. It was great day and so refreshing to see so many families out and about mingling in all things green! It was especially encouraging to observe so many young kids actively participating in the various environmental activities that were on hand...including the canoeing which I quite enjoyed myself. I believe programs and events such as the Peaks to Points festival is a great medium through which to educate and inspire the public on so many environmental issues."*

*"Heartfelt thanks to all the generous people who organized and sponsored the Peaks to Points 'Capture Your Catchment' photo competition. A special vote of admiration to the organizers of the Peaks to Points Festival, coming back to Oxley Creek after 15 years I see strong and active community groups working closely with government and private enterprise. It is a credit to you and all the volunteers over those years."*

*"We need more of these so we can educate our younger ones and introduce them to our native wildlife and what we have in our area to offer. Awesome event. Loved the wildlife display and information offered."*

*"Should be more events of this nature."*





