

Greening the Rubble Project

September-October 2011 News

Monthly progress report from Christchurch Project Worker to Living Streets Aotearoa Executive (managers) and to 'Make Shift' Steering Group (advisors, including CCC.)

These mid-month reports coincide with financial reporting to LSA, and aim to brief the participants in Make-Shift Steering Group and Strategy meetings, set for Tuesday 25 October.

Wet weather has curtailed a few outdoor sessions for volunteers, but overall this has been a productive period. We have new volunteers coming forward most weeks, additional sponsors secured and more sites being offered than we can work on at once, so a wait list is emerging.

Headlines are: de-construction of Victoria Green has begun, with relocation of gabions under way to three sites; landscape designs are prepared for these three sites and commissioned for a new roadside trio near the Lichfield Temporary Bus Exchange; outdoor furniture has been built for us by Hagley Community College students; and we are planning contributions of materials to two sites being organised by others: trees and path surfacing for the landscape at 'Restart' container shops in Cashel Mall (Tony Milne for Lincoln Uni.) and turf for a summer artwork installation site in Sydenham (Peter Majendie, with CCC). Over \$1,300 more has arrived in donations in September through the 'Silty' block sales by Urban Paving Ltd. An additional site in Ferry Road has been informally surveyed and feasibility assessment started.

Rhys worked 84.5 paid hours in September and also volunteered 12.5 hours that month. October activity is at a similar level, so far. A large team of volunteers is active.

Progress on sites:

A. Victoria Green, mini park de-construction.

Thanks to display by site owner Andy MacFarlane of his new building drawing at Victoria/Salisbury corner, in addition to our site sign, there is local awareness of the temporary nature of the park and we have had no complaints about its removal, but complements from passers-by on how much it has been enjoyed and how the volunteers' efforts are appreciated. Latest news from Andy is that his building work is delayed by several weeks and thus clearance of gabions, trees and some paths by end November is OK. He's happy to have wildflowers and some of the turf left on his site until he builds, in preference to bare soil. The Austral bricks wall is coming down in the second half of October, then we'd move the turf off, starting at Carl Watkins' end of the site so that fill material and retaining gabions can follow from there: ReadyLawn can cut and roll turf onto pallets and transport for a modest fee, affordable from donated funds.



In Sept - our daffodils on Victoria Street and at right - Kowhai flower buds look healthy although the transplanted trees have lost many leaves after their move to planters. Kowhai subsequently in flower.



Poppies bloomed in October, Phacelia continues with its purple and the wildflower beds at Victoria Green generally continue to be colourful and chaotic. A strong impact for very modest input.



We have had five half-day sessions there with a loaned truck (thanks Andrew D), volunteer labour (including Alex and his two brothers) and loan of several cars with trailers (e.g. Ian C and Meg C) to move gabions and their brick fill material to the three sites described below. Tree planter removal has been booked with City Care (via CCC) for Oct-Nov and a trial lifting of Aggrok path surfacing is arranged for 22 Oct using free loan excavator or Dingo from HireQuip and volunteer driver Erik, and lift bags for this from 360deg Urban.



Young volunteers helping to empty and relocate gabions from Victoria Green.

Andrew Drummond loaned his truck to Rhys to help with gabion transport - we also use cars and trailers.

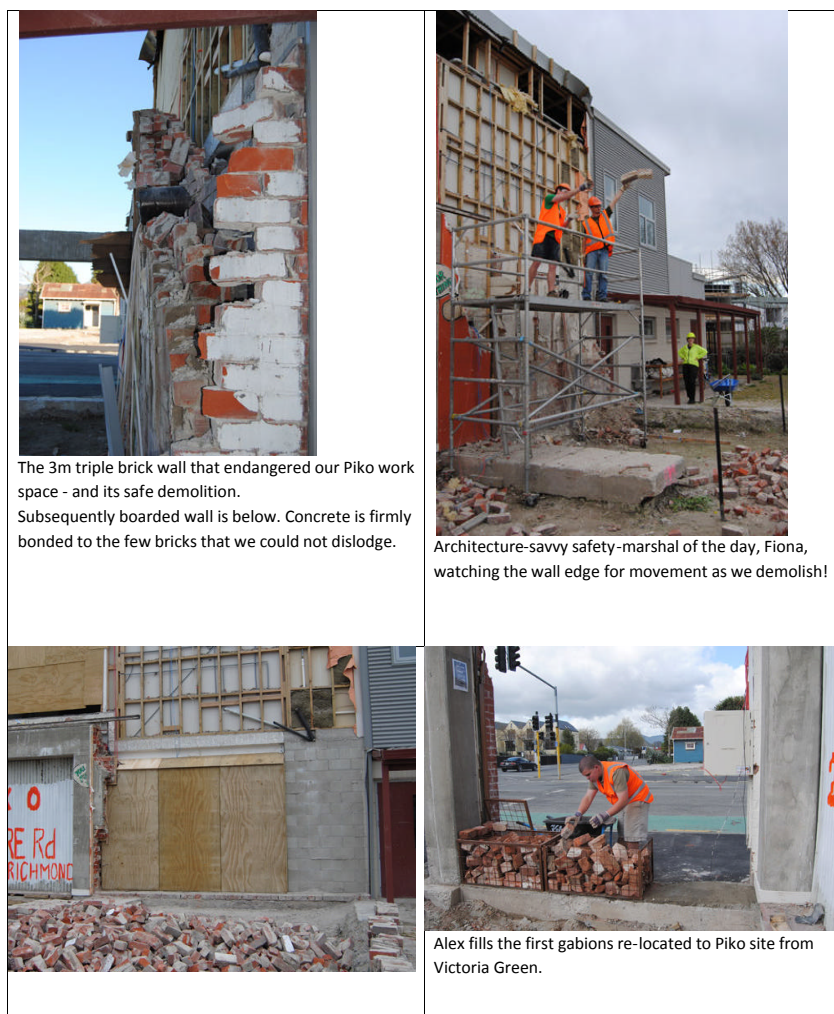
Meanwhile volunteers continue to mow the grass, water planters and weed the site. Frogmore's shop team also help with watering when they have time. Some of the tree planters will have additional small plants such as hebes and mondo grass added to their soil and then be mulched, before they are re-located.

B. Piko site, Barbadoes Street.

The major task here for September was removal of an unstable triple brick wall at rear of the site that potentially endangered our volunteer activity. We obtained sponsored scaffolding from HireQuip and Piko organised a skip, then Rhys and three volunteers carefully removed it brick by brick, after which Piko's builder came in to board-up the exposed wall. Some of the bricks have been placed as foundation in an area which we will later fill and pave with Aggrok from Victoria Green, but meanwhile Piko's builder will do repair work on the two storey wall at the rear of the site, which will require scaffolding access space, before we can bring in soil and plants to that area.

Three gabions have been relocated and filled on the Kilmore Street perimeter, beneath a concrete archway. Site levels for garden layout being set out on 21st Oct by designer Wayne Rimmer, Rhys, and Piko Partners' rep Geoff Walker.

Theo has continued making planter walls from pallets, with help from Alex, Helen and other volunteers.



The 3m triple brick wall that endangered our Piko work space - and its safe demolition. Subsequently boarded wall is below. Concrete is firmly bonded to the few bricks that we could not dislodge.

Architecture-savvy safety-marshal of the day, Fiona, watching the wall edge for movement as we demolish!

Alex fills the first gabions re-located to Piko site from Victoria Green.

Wayne and Sharyn's design sketch-up for Piko site is below, although colours only approximate (e.g. brick gabions are rust & terracotta colour, not grey; recycled Aggrok path surface mix is brick-containing so looks pinkish; cycle parking shelter is brown timber not grey):



C. Garden south of Dairy, Colombo Street, Sydenham.

Wendy Hoddinott and Jonathan Hall have developed their design and identified the plants and construction materials sought. Gabions brought to site from Victoria Green have been positioned on ground-treated timber rails ready to be filled later in October with painted bricks (painting session on site 22 Oct) using paint donated by Dulux, collected 20 Oct.



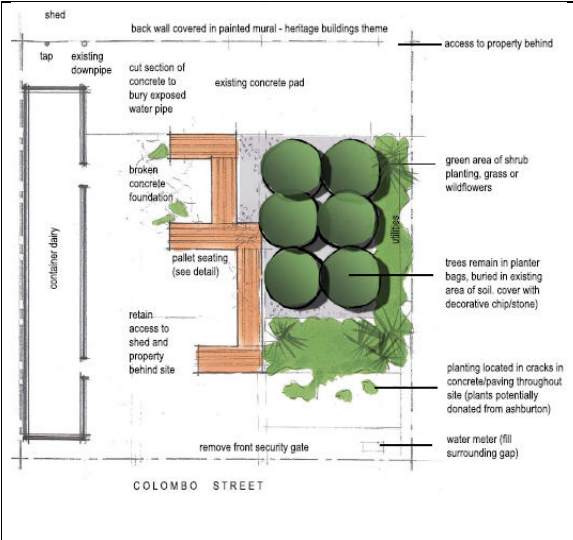
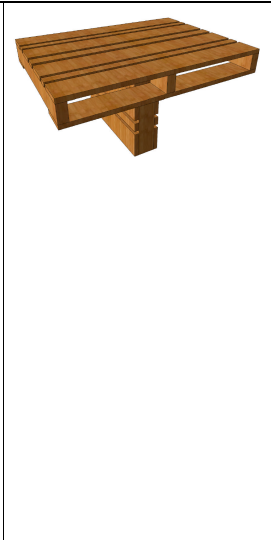
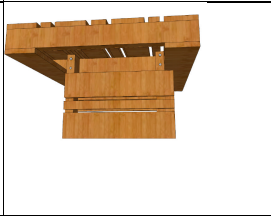
UC student volunteers help prepare dairy garden site, including removing rotted floor timbers and burying (and marking) a temporary water supply pipe, before soil added.

Meg Christie helping Rhys with gabion transport onto site (right) and Jonathan and Andrew helping to install them on the following weekend (below).



Firth have offered pallets for outdoor seat-making here (and Holcim some more, for pathways at Piko site): Jonathan will prototype his design from the first 5 pallets and then Hagley Community College students, supervised by Mary Latimer, may make more from 15 pallets. These students have already built some freestanding benches for use on this and the adjacent

site D below. The dairy's owners (Hitesh Ravji and family) have been very hospitable and helped us with water supply and storage.

 <p>Diagram labels include: shed, back wall covered in painted mural - heritage buildings theme, access to property behind, tap, existing downpipe, cut section of concrete to bury exposed water pipe, existing concrete pad, green area of shrub planting, grass or wildflowers, broken concrete foundation, pallet seating (see detail), retain access to shed and property behind site, remove front security gate, COLOMBO STREET, water meter (fill surrounding gap), and trees remain in planter bags, buried in existing area of soil, cover with decorative chip/stone.</p>	
<p>Sketch designs for pallet-conversion to seating, and for layout of garden south of the container dairy. Seat design will be tested by Jonathan making a prototype.</p>	

D. Coffee Kiosk and garden strip sites North of containers, Colombo Street, Sydenham.

This site is in two parts, both owned By Graeme Patching. The section closest to the cream-coloured container dairy, to be available for public use for a year or more, runs deeper away from the road. Here our volunteers have recently removed demolition debris, mostly decaying flooring, into a skip, in order to provide land into which City Care can deposit soil for us. We have planted a 2m wide added-soil strip North of the dairy container and added stepping stones of concrete pieces from on-site (photo below right). The northern half of this section has been surfaced with rolled fill from City Care, onto which Graeme's blue shipping container has been shifted a few metres sideways, clearing sufficient space at its North by this move for the coffee kiosk garden site. Much of the other available surface is concrete, so our garden has to be above-ground, using planters and gabion-supported wooden seats.

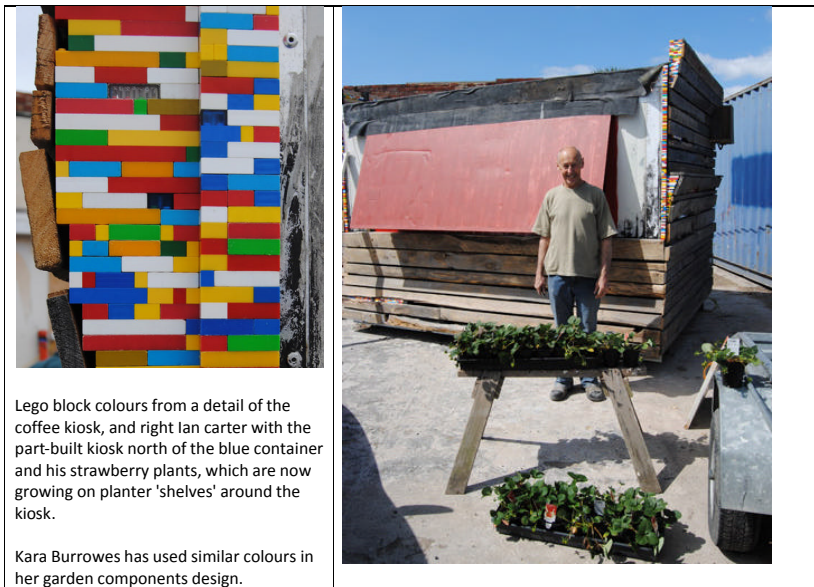
 <p>Old floor removed. We will add soil here in order to plant flaxes and sweet peas. No sites are being excavated deeply, to protect any historic remains.</p>	 <p>City Care deliver fill to part of the 5m wide section so that the blue container can be relocated, creating a space to the sunny north side of it for another garden and a coffee kiosk.</p>
 <p>A second rotting floor was removed by volunteers.</p>	 <p>Soil and step-stones added, plants going in, at North side of dairy container.</p>

The concrete pad is to have a timber-constructed re-locatable garden, designed by Kara, centre piece of which is a coffee kiosk owned, built and operated by Ian Carter. The bright colours of *Lego* are a unifying design feature. Dulux will help with paints for the woodwork.

The first gabions for re-use here under timber seats have been delivered to site, also some soil for a space at the rear where the concrete has a gap – flaxes will be heeled in here, perhaps some left in their pots to aid relocation. Garden City Trust have loaned black planter troughs for use on the Northern edge, and these will be stocked with plants Judith and Kara purchase at sale prices plus some of our donated plant stock from Oderings and City Care. We will be making some timber purchases, as these planters and seats are re-locatable and we shall need durability.

The central space, further back from Colombo street towards an existing cabbage tree, awaits discussions between designer Kara and owner Graeme in mid October, but we think it offers

scope for an additional sheltered garden, or small performance area, much less affected by traffic noise?



E. 92 Riccarton Road - not viable.

Soek C has been unable to obtain resource consent from CCC for his proposed billboard structures, and – as previously agreed with him - the site is thus not viable for his family to offer as a public garden without that source of income. They will seek to lease it out. This is disappointing for Hilary and Jody as their garden design is not realised, but work there is now suspended. We have done some tidying and graffiti removal, for public benefit, but incurred no significant site-related expenditures. The UC based volunteer team who helped there have been relocated to help on Sydenham sites.

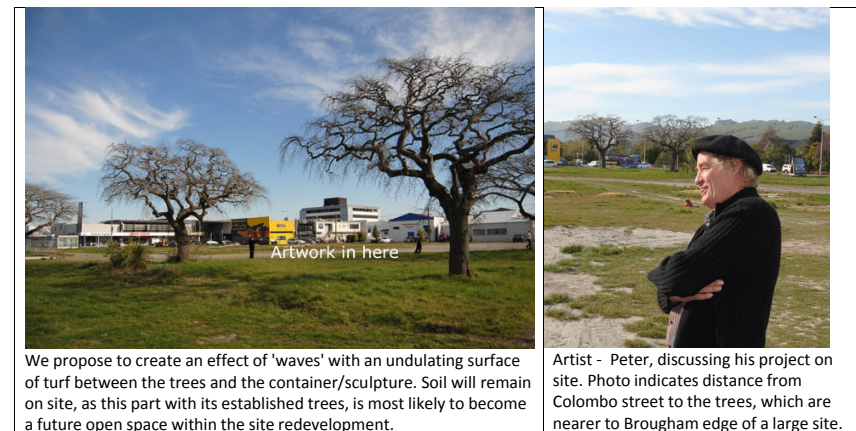
F. Ferry Road - former community library site

This site has been visited, measured-up, discussed informally with our contact in the City Library Service, with neighbouring car workshop and with a rep of the team which is considering urban renewal in that suburban centre. The Community Library group and local MP are interested in a public garden with a books/learning/communication theme as setting for a proposed but as yet unfunded temporary building. This project has potential, but design work should probably await progress on our already commenced sites. *Designer interest is sought.* (Site photos in the last report)

G. Current assistance to others' projects - to extend GtR impact/example, whilst we are busy constructing our own sites.

(Collaboration 1) Tony Milne has a design for garden structures at the **Restart site in Cashel Mall**, working with Lincoln University landscape students. He has requested loan of two CCC kowhai tree planters, complete with under-planting of small natives, and some recycled Aggrok path surface in the limestone colour, which we will ask City Care to transport to the site for us. Watering of this site will be assisted by Sunrise Rotary Club and/or Horticultural Society members, we understand.

(Collaboration 2) Peter Majendie has designed a shipping-container-based boat-like 'wrapped' structure for the CCC owned **former Sydenham school site** at corner Brougham and Colombo Streets, which would go up in November ready for Christmas. It has support from CCC Events team and should have a 'go ahead' by end October. We have been invited to supply recycled turf and soil from Victoria Green to create a surface waves illusion next to the sculpture, as viewed from Brougham Street. If appealed as we needed to find a reuse of some turf from Victoria Green to avoid wasting it, but in a summer of water restrictions wished to avoid re-creating a sunny lawn that would require and not get daily watering – this site will have only alternate day watering at most, and will be mowed less frequently, but gain shade from the container to help resist its drying. It will also be viewed mostly from a distance rather than close up, which permits more weeds and bare patches! *Volunteers sought for the turf relocation day.*



(Collaboration 3) We have accepted an invitation from Dennis Preston at CCC to contribute three small GtR gardens on **edges of the new Bus Exchange and its associated car park**, on Colombo and Lichfield Streets. Landscape-architecture trained Sarah Peddie is designing these

garden areas with us and will make use of long-term loaned materials (including galvanised gabion seats with sand-etched 'kia kaha' concrete paver tops) from our sponsor Urban Paving Ltd.



(Collaboration 4) Greening Spaces project for primary school children, teachers and parents, led by sculptor and former school teacher Andrew Drummond, has been wildflower seeding on two sites. We have assisted by obtaining sponsor gifts of tools (such as hoses, rakes, trowels) and loaning these, on the understanding that the tools would return to GtR in 2012; and taking photographs, also helping with some labour at events. Andrew organised the sites, school-links, seeds and compost, and has generously reciprocated our help by loan of his truck and sharing some site contacts. We got started on 21 September in Lyttelton with children and staff from Lyttelton Main School and guests from Enviroschools, at a stony site on the corner of Oxford Street (photos on website & facebook page); and continued on 6 October at the former Superheat factory site on Ferry Road with children from Woolston School (see photos below).



We may have identified a small site suitable for school-linked planting in November, by children in **Heathcote village**, using sunflowers grown in Ashburton by Walter and Leen. This has been suggested by our contact in the Heathcote Community Association and we are in contact with site owners, who are not expecting to redevelop the site quickly. It could be a GtR and Greening Spaces joint effort? *Volunteers living near Heathcote Valley please contact Rhys.*

(Collaboration 5) Wild flower seeding of Stanmore Road shop sites.

Walter from Ashburton 'Colour me Christchurch' was invited to sow wildflowers on soil areas at the corner of Worcester and Stanmore Roads where large numbers of shops have been demolished. He has done this, but asks if we and/or Gap Filler can assist with further input, especially on the concrete pads (install artworks, painted surfaces, chalk art, seats?) and perhaps occasionally water, scatter soil or compost if available, to aid germination and establishment of the wildflowers. Time and materials to do this are limited at present, but this is one of the areas that we expressed interest in a few months ago via Susan Lilley (CCC suburban centres planner for this area) and discussed with community contacts including Jenny Smith, before embarking on the Sydenham sites. *Helpers sought with an interest in on-site involvement and designs for here.*

(Collaboration 6) Avon River Residential Red Zone - Medway Bridge area

Three reps of GtR (Rhys, Suzanne and Roy) met with Avonside Residents Association contacts and other volunteers, near the twisted and closed Medway Street river footbridge, to discuss first ideas for a riverside 'demonstration garden' showing varied approaches to that landscape - perhaps including NZ natives and a continuity of food production from Maori first settlers to present day organics. We also hatched an idea for a 'two aligned sound-shells' virtual bridge to encourage and enable creative conversations across the river. Pursuing this would require conversations with CERA, and to connect with other interested parties such as Diana Madgin's proposed Heritage Garden ideas (nearby River Road 'gardens worth saving'); Ngai Tahu; the Avon-Otakaro Network www.avonotakaronetwork.co.nz; the Community Gardens Association; landcare research and Banks Avenue School. *Who from our team would like to explore these connections further?*

H. Media interest, Website and events

A National Radio *Spectrum* documentary recording has been made by Deborah Nation about GtR and its varied participants, focused on the pair of Colombo street sites. It is scheduled for 27 November 2011 (12.15pm) first broadcast, and repeated Thurs 1st December at 7.30 - We

continue to publish photos of progress at www.facebook.com/greeningtherubble once or twice a week. A search on Google NZ for our project name shows the website www.greeningtherubble.org.nz at the top of page one, with a growing numbers of links from other sites listed on subsequent pages.

Despite making a request we have not succeeded in removing the out of date Dec 2010 GtR biodiversity page hosted by Ecan, which has not being updated since Dec 2010 when Wayne left.

Greening Spaces at Woolston was covered by the Press and associated Stuff website.

If you spot media coverage that we've not mentioned do let Rhys know, please.

Next progress report due in mid-November.

Steering group meets on last Tuesday of each month, but it may well take a Christmas break!

Published by Rhys Taylor, Project Worker with Living Streets Aotearoa Inc, advised by the Make Shift Steering Group. Phone: 03 9602656 or 021 462 260 Email: anneandrhys@clear.net.nz or rhys.taylor@livingstreets.org.nz Postal: 5/83 Huxley Street, Sydenham, Christchurch 8023.