

Club restores flood-hit reserve

BY ALISON MARTIN

Rotarians have spent a combined 500 hours to restore Colac's Joseph Paatsch Reserve to its former glory after floodwater left a trail of destruction almost two years ago.

Paths washed away and the clean-up of the four-hectare recreational area in Forest Street took months after heavy rain in September 2016 caused the Barongarook Creek to flood.

But Colac West Rotarian Bill Chivers says the restoration is almost complete, thanks to community funding, support from local businesses and hundreds of volunteer hours.

"The paths were either completely washed away or the edges were still remaining in some parts," Mr Chivers said.

"There was one place where the flood had lifted all the rushes and a section of the bank and put it to the side.

"But we'd had school children plant trees with milk cartons about two weeks before the flood and they were still there."

Mr Chivers said the clean-up was labour intensive, taking Rotarians about 350 hours just to clear the area before work could start on building new paths.

But he said the new raised paths were concrete instead of gravel and were likely to withstand future flooding.

"The other reason it took so long to do was that we had to get the funding to do it," Mr Chivers said.

"We need to recognise the Colac sub-branch of the South-West Community Foundation and Colac Oway Shire Council which both provided us with grants which allowed us to replace the stone



NEW PATH: Colac West Rotarian Bill Chivers is pleased that work to build a new path and restore Joseph Paatsch Reserve back to its pre-flood state is nearing completion.

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pathway with a concrete path; we think the money's been spent wisely," he said.

"And we had a lot of businesses that gave us discounts on labour or materials, and we received extra support from other community members."

The Paatsch family and Bulla Dairy Foods donated the land for the reserve and the Rotary club has developed the area, including building a 600-metre path and picnic tables, since planning started in 2005.

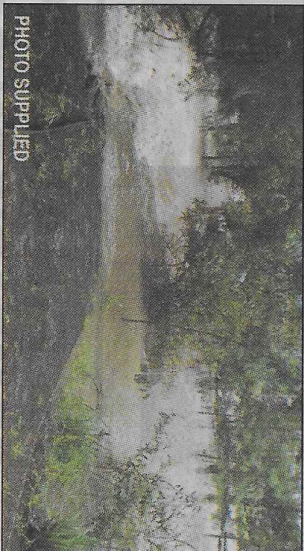


PHOTO SUPPLIED

FLOOD: Heavy rain caused the Barongarook Creek to flood in Colac in September 2016.



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WASHED AWAY: Gravel paths were destroyed by floodwater more than 18 months ago at Colac's Joseph Paatsch Reserve, a parkland off Forest Street.