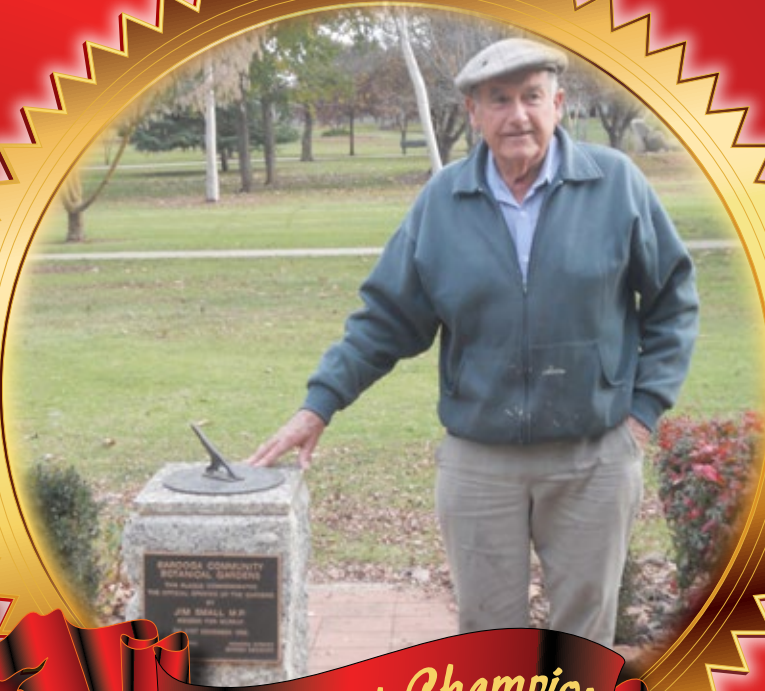


# Geoff Brentnall and the Barooga Botanical Gardens



*Catchment Champion*

Isobella Stillard, Cassidy Nolan, Alex  
Woodhead and Indi Fraser

Barooga Public School



## *Creative Catchment Kids*

Creative Catchment Kids is an initiative of the Murray Darling Association and Wirraminna Environmental Education Centre. It aims to improve engagement between the Murray Catchment Management Authority and school students by providing opportunities for positive and authentic ventures that encourage students to develop creative solutions to natural resource management issues. [www.murray.cma.nsw.gov.au/creative-catchment-kids.html](http://www.murray.cma.nsw.gov.au/creative-catchment-kids.html)

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## *Wirraminna Environmental Education Centre*

The Wirraminna Environmental Education Centre is located in Burrumbuttock, north of Albury in southern NSW. Since 1995, the centre, which is adjacent to Burrumbuttock Public School, has provided opportunities for discovery and learning about the natural environment, the ecology of the local woodlands and the beauty of native plants. [www.wirraminna.org](http://www.wirraminna.org)

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## *Murray Darling Association*

The Murray Darling Association has membership of over 100 Local Government councils in the Murray-Darling Basin, as well as community groups, businesses and individuals with an interest in ensuring that the Basin continues as a valuable asset for all Australians. Since 1950, the Association has initiated various school and community education programs on managing the Basin's land and water resources. [www.mda.asn.au](http://www.mda.asn.au)

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Enviro-Stories is an innovative literacy education program that inspires learning about natural resource and catchment management issues. Developed by PeeKdesigns, this program provides students with an opportunity to publish their own stories that have been written for other kids to support learning about their local area. [www.envirostories.com.au](http://www.envirostories.com.au)

# Geoff Brentnall and the Barooga Botanical Gardens

Authors: Isobella Stillard, Cassidy Nolan, Alex Woodhead and Indi Fraser

Teachers: Katie Heard and Rebecca Kennedy

School: Barooga Public School

## *Catchment Champions*

In 2013, students involved in the Creative Catchment Kids program researched and wrote stories about 'Catchment Champions', people who have made important contributions to managing natural resources in their local community. The program was generously funded by the Murray and Murrumbidgee catchment management authorities.

The Catchment Champions books are part of the Enviro-Stories Education Program.



**Catchment Management Authority**  
Murray



CARING FOR OUR COUNTRY



**Catchment Management Authority**  
Murrumbidgee

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## *A local with a passion for trees*

Geoffrey Charles Brentnall was born in 1929 on the 29th of December at Cobram. He has always lived around the Cobram district and spent his early years on a citrus farm named 'Murray Park'. These early experiences meant that Geoffrey has always admired trees and nature.





The site Geoff wanted to turn into a beautiful place for all the community.

Inspired by the Albury Botanical Gardens, in 1992 Geoff put forward a detailed proposal to the Berrigan Shire Council to redevelop the old Barooga cricket grounds. The cricket grounds were an approximately 6 acre site which also acted as a retarding basin for the town's stormwater runoff. Geoff proposed turning these grounds into a Botanical Garden site that all the townspeople and visitors could use and enjoy.





The storm water inflow pipe to the gardens

The land was originally managed by the Department of Lands and then the Berrigan Shire Council. Geoff, along with members of the Rotary Club of Cobram Barooga and interested townspeople formed a committee. They asked permission to redevelop it as a more ‘people-friendly’ space whilst still maintaining its function as a catchment.

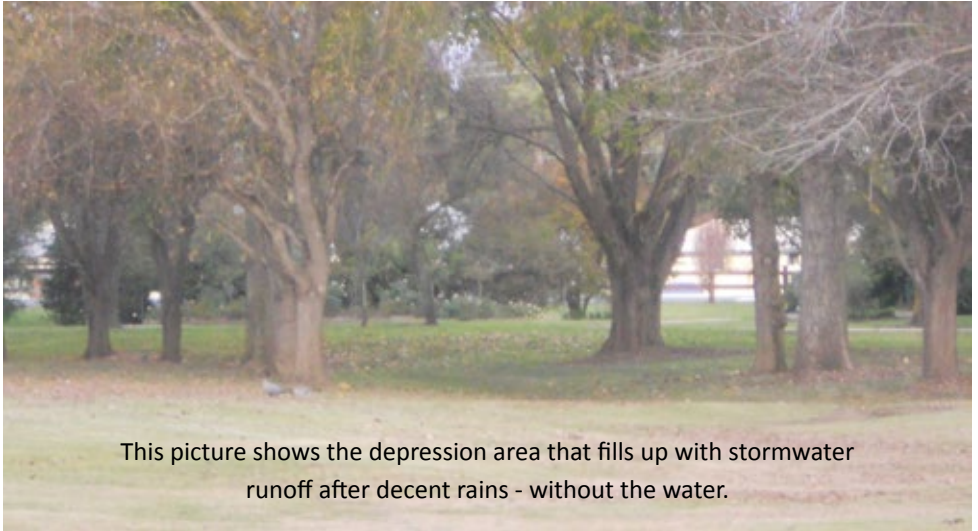


The gardens today after rain



### *The beginning of development*

Once approval to redevelop the site was granted, teams of volunteer workers began. One of the challenges during this time Geoff recalls, was the laying of hundreds of metres of pipe to pump the overflow runoff water caught in the gardens' redesigned lake/retarding basin, all the way back to The Murray River.



This picture shows the depression area that fills up with stormwater runoff after decent rains - without the water.

### *The gardens as a catchment area*

The area that is now the Barooga Botanical Gardens, has always been used to collect storm water runoff and it still needs to do this job for the town today.



Whereas this one shows just how much water can fill up this area.  
Which is why all the pipework was needed says Geoff.





Geoff's wife Roma, their two daughters, Dionne and Ruth, and son-in-law Murray, have grown to know and be involved with the site. From volunteer work maintaining and developing the gardens to assisting with development of the website. Geoff says interested community, friends and family have been vital to keeping the gardens growing.





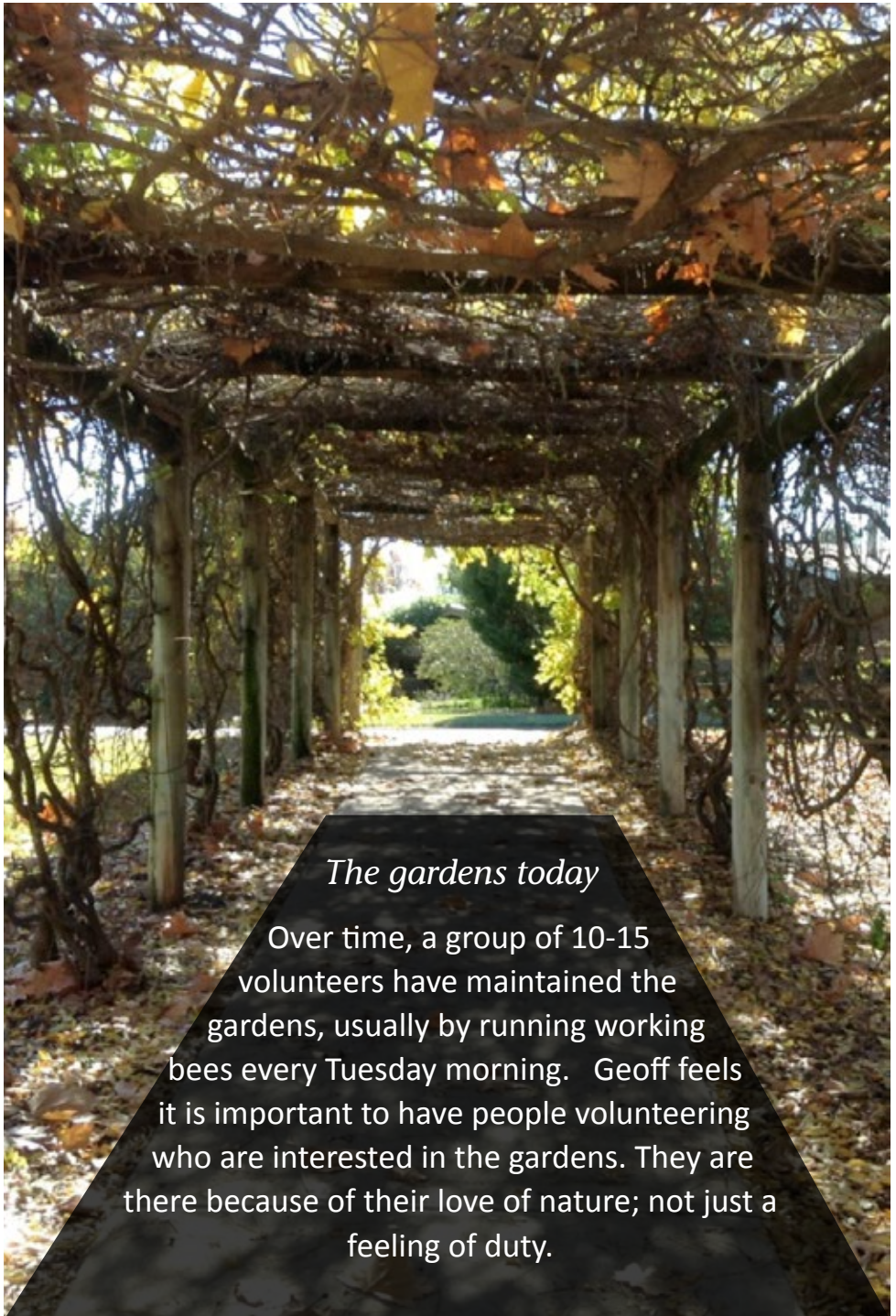
The layout of the gardens has not changed a lot from that early design in 1992, with only some new things being included. These changes include the expansion of the playground and barbeque facilities. Grant money from sources like the Department of Sport and Recreation and the Berrigan Shire Council has made this all possible.



The most recent addition to the gardens has been the rotunda. Geoff and the committee have worked towards providing a setting for performances and weddings that are held in the gardens each year.

“There is always great discussion about new additions to the garden,” says Geoff.





### *The gardens today*

Over time, a group of 10-15 volunteers have maintained the gardens, usually by running working bees every Tuesday morning. Geoff feels it is important to have people volunteering who are interested in the gardens. They are there because of their love of nature; not just a feeling of duty.

## *Use by the community*

Other community events held at the gardens include cultural festivals and the Carols By Candlelight. The Carols have been held in the gardens every year since 1996 and they attract people from all over the district. Walking, jogging, picnics and skating are all things you can find people doing in the gardens.





Geoff Brentnall's love of the beauty of nature and admiration of trees has, over the last 21 years and with a lot of help from the community, seen an old sports field and stormwater runoff area turn into a beautiful outdoor space for families, locals and visitors to enjoy. That is why we chose him as our local catchment champion.





Cassidy Nolan, Alex Woodhead, Geoff Brentnall,  
Isobella Stillard and Indi Fraser

2013 Year 6, Barooga Public School

The 2012 and 2013 Creative  
Catchment Kids writing  
program was showcased  
at the Seventh World  
Environmental Education  
Congress, held in Morocco  
during June 2013.



Catchment Management  
Authority  
Murray



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