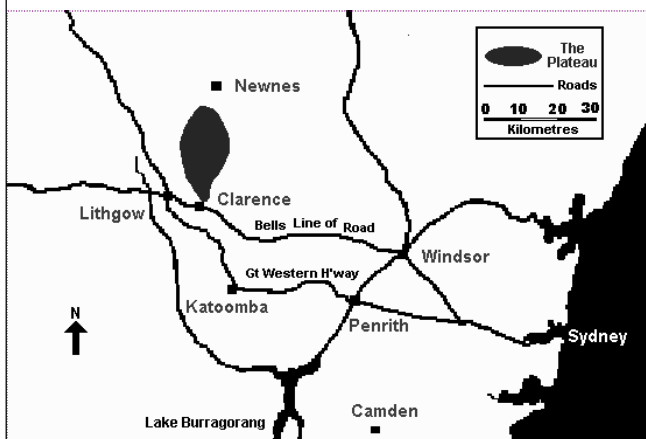


HUT NEWS

"Nature Conservation Saves for Tomorrow"



Newnes Plateau: environmental heritage or Sydney's sand pit?



At our monthly meeting at the Conservation Hut, Wentworth Falls, on Friday 29 July you will have the opportunity to see for yourself some of Newnes Plateau's special features and scenic beauty, with a series of slides shown by Karen McLaughlin. Karen is a resident of nearby Dargan and has been visiting the Newnes Plateau regularly for 20 years.

Keith Muir of the Colong Foundation will talk about the National Park proposal. Keith will tell us about Gooch's Crater and bushfires, windblown sand dunes, pagodas, ancient river beds and more.

The meeting starts at 7.30 pm. Visitors are very welcome.

The map is from an article by Ian Cox, newsletter of the Australian Plants Society (NSW), April 1996, which describes many of the plants on Newnes Plateau with photographs of some. The article can be found on the web at farrer.riv.csu.edu.au/ASGAP/APOL18/jun00-6.html

Newnes Plateau lies between Clarence and the Gardens of Stone National Park boundary. It is a high plateau (~1100m) with unique vegetation (eucalyptus forest with a grass understorey), managed by State Forests.

The Newnes Plateau swamps are listed as an *endangered* ecological community under the Federal Government's *Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*. The listing particularly emphasises the impact on such communities that may arise from hydrological changes. Down cutting by outward-draining tributaries of the Cox's, Capertee, Wolgan, and Wollangambe rivers has created scenic cliffs, pagodas and slot canyons.

The scenic, floral and faunal values resulted in Myles Dunphy including Newnes Plateau in his 1934 Greater Blue Mountains National Park proposal. It was regrettably unsuccessful. In 1993, a Stage 1 proposal for a Gardens of Stone National Park was successfully submitted. Newnes Plateau is included in Stage 2 of the Gardens of Stone proposal that will shortly be advanced by several environmental groups, including BMCS.

But Sydney needs sand. Kurnell and Penrith Lakes will become exhausted over the next 5-10 years. The Dept of Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources is using its Sydney Construction Materials Strategy (SCMS) to investigate the replacement potential of resources at Maroota, Shellharbour, Somersby Plateau, the Southern Highlands, Stockton Bight and Newnes Plateau. DIPNR has spotlighted Newnes Plateau as having a large resource of low-cost construction sand and being 'well located' with respect to western Sydney's anticipated expansion. This is unacceptable; our world heritage environment must be protected.

Despite underground coal mining, timber extraction and three sand-extraction sites impacting on the values of limited parts of Newnes Plateau, the essential fabric of this magnificent region remains intact. Three sand mines are more than enough. Additional exploitation of Newnes Plateau by open-pit sand extraction will seriously compromise this fabric and adversely affect the World Heritage Area.

Changes to NSW planning laws 'an open door to corruption'

Recent changes to NSW Planning laws have given the NSW Minister for Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources absolute powers to approve major developments and to decide on the criteria on which to base an approval.

These decisions can be contrary to other laws of this state and contrary to Local Environment Plans. The right of the community to challenge any such approval has been removed.

The *Environmental Planning and Assessment Amendment (Infrastructure and Other Planning Reform) Bill 2005* was rushed through parliament in less than two weeks. Only the development industry was consulted.

Projects which are personally approved by current and future Ministers will be able to cause pollution and harm protected fauna without fear of prosecution.

The normal assessments to ensure

waterways are not damaged, to reduce land clearing or to protect indigenous cultural heritage will not be needed.

In short, the laws remove long-standing checks and balances (accountability, transparency, technical overview and community input) for major infrastructure development and ANY development considered critical for economic, environmental or social reasons. There is scope for a wide range of developments to be included in these categories - major roads, sand and coal mines, dams, groundwater extraction, desalination plants, alpine and other major tourist resorts, coal-fired and nuclear power plants, and who knows what may come up in the future.

It is extremely disappointing that a NSW Labor government which introduced the EP&A Act in 1979 should now be winding it back so drastically. This is a serious attack on democracy

and openness in government. It is also a serious attack on the environment.

The Opposition spoke forcefully against the potential in it for abuse of power, and the lack of consultation. Chris Hartcher MP (Shadow Minister for Planning Administration) expressed concern that ICAC had not been consulted on the Bill 'which potentially provides an open door to corruption'. **However in spite of the recognition of the grave attack on democracy that this Bill represents, the Liberal party supported the Bill.** Opposition to it came from all six Independents in the Lower House, and the three Greens and one Democrat in the Upper House.

The implementation of these changes will depend on an amendment to the new State Environment Planning Policy (SEPP). Minister Craig Knowles has promised enhanced community consultation and environmental assessment. It is hard to imagine how this can be possible.

**"Hut News", the newsletter of
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Nursery news

The beautiful Sunshine Wattle (*Acacia terminalis*) is brightening the winter bushland with its golden blossoms. You can add a little sunshine to your garden. At our Lawson nursery we have in stock around 50 Sunshine Wattle plants ready for planting now, as well as a good selection of other frost-hardy plants.

The Lawson nursery (in Cataract Street, off Livingstone Street and behind Mount Hay Technology) is open Wednesday mornings from 9 am to 12 noon.

If you can't make it at that time, we will be at the Lawson Magpie Markets, Lawson School grounds on Sunday, 17th July from 9 am with a selection of quality tube stock at just \$2.50 each. Enquiries to Kevin Bell (Ph. 4787 6436, khsbell@pnc.com.au).

"Community consultation on the city strategy has confirmed that the natural environment, distinctive villages and towns, strong connected communities and local employment are things that are most important to the people of the Blue Mountains. The surrounding bushland, clean creeks and waterways, clean air and the diverse flora and fauna are aspects specifically identified as being of significance to residents."

Blue Mountains City Council, Annual Report 2003-2004

URBAN SPRAWL is on the move again

Those who regularly read the council notices in the Gazette will have noticed another rush of development applications for large subdivisions and cluster housing. Could it be to avoid the need to pass new tests for developments to be water and energy efficient? (BASIX is to be introduced on July 1.) Could it be to get in before environmental standards are lifted in Local Environment Plan 91 or before the gazettal of LEP 2005?

Four developments currently being assessed by Council will create more urban sprawl if allowed to go ahead as proposed:

The Mall, Warrimoo (lots 400/401 DP 591224)

This proposed subdivision will spread housing down into a valley towards a creek-line. Because of the need to create a clearing around housing as Asset Protection Zones, there will be a huge amount of clearing, leaving very little bushland around the sensitive creek-line.

The site contains some beautiful rock formations. It looks like the roads will be going right through some of these and others may be fenced in behind colorbond fences.

Eurama, Falconbridge

Eurama estate is a large area of undeveloped bushland comprising two ridges plus adjoining areas stretching south between Falconbridge and Linden. One of the big problems with the proposed development is that it is not being considered as a whole site. There are approximately 25 large lots in the area but only two development applications have been lodged with Council. One application is for a house and adjoining road at the end of one ridge, while the second is for another road connecting to the next ridge. Bulldozing has begun, although it is unclear if Council approval has been given.

This is sprawling, ribbon-like development in an 'Extreme to High' Bushfire zone between the villages. All houses will be unsewered which, in combination with measures to protect new houses from bushfires, will have a big impact on the surrounding bushland and National Park.

A public meeting to call for more information will be held soon in Falconbridge so keep your eye on the Gazette or contact Tara for more information 4751 1130.

Parklands, Blackheath

This proposal is for 84 dwellings on land that is right next to, and upslope from, Pope's Glen Creek which flows into the Grose River and the National Park. As reported in the last edition of Hut News, this Development Application by CHASE is back before Council. A previous DA was rejected by Council because the site is not serviced by the local sewage system. Now the applicant is proposing to use an on-site sewage treatment system. This system is a concern because it hasn't been tried on such a scale and there are many questions about its ability to adequately cope with the sewage from so many dwellings in the Blackheath climate and near such a sensitive area.

A public meeting was held in Blackheath on 15 June but although many residents turned up, CHASE's "technical expert" failed to appear. Neither CHASE's representative nor the owner of the property (Colin Jacobson) was able to answer residents' many questions about the sewage treatment system's ability to cope with heavy rain, potential impacts on Pope's Glen Creek and the climatic modelling used.

Winnicoopa: the saga continues ...

The first DA for 73 lots was lodged during 1996 was rejected by the Land and Environment Court in 1997 on the grounds of "likely adverse environmental impact on sensitive vegetation and water courses". The second DA for 62 lots was lodged in November 1998 and after going to the Land and Environment Court the developer withdrew and subsequently sold the site. New owners Blaxland Park P/L sought approval for 40 lots in October 2000 and went directly to Court on deemed refusal.

After the gazettal of Amendment 25 in March 2001 the Council rejected another DA for 37 lots and this was again lost in Court by the developer. In February 2004 Blaxland Park P/L lodged a new DA for 47 integrated dwellings and community facility as a "cluster development". In June 2004 the Court instructed Blaxland Park P/L and BMCC to mediate on colonies of Schedule 3 Endangered Species *Lomandra brevis*. This DA is still being held over by the Court.

A new DA for 20 lots and a community facility is now on exhibition. Many of

Membership Survey

A membership survey form is enclosed with this newsletter. Please take the time to fill it in and return. We need your input!

South Coast extravaganza

Friday 7 October – Weds. 26 October
(after the school holidays)

A small group will be visiting five National Parks: Morton, Booderee, Murrumbidgee, Mimosa Rocks and Ben Boyd. Easy bush and coastal walks, two whale watching boat trips and some garden visits. Basic car camping + some cabin/van accommodation.

Come for all or part. Phone Jenny Rich 4787 6243 for a detailed itinerary.

Collapse of civilisations

‘Collapse: how societies choose to fail or survive’ by Jared Diamond,
Allen Lane 608pp, \$32.95,
reviewed by Robin Mosman

Jared Diamond is one of America’s most remarkable scholars – a professor of physiology equally celebrated for his contributions to ecology and evolutionary biology. In ‘Collapse’, his most recent book, he urgently brings the full range of his impressive intellect to the non-sustainable course of our world society. He states that “Because we are rapidly advancing along this non-sustainable course, the world’s environmental problems will get resolved, in one way or another, within the lifetimes of the children and young adults alive today. The only question is whether they will be resolved in pleasant ways of our own choice, or in unpleasant ways not of our choice, such as warfare, genocides, starvation, disease epidemics and collapses of societies”.

He examines the collapses of a number of past societies, as seemingly divergent as Norse Greenland, Easter Island, the Maya in South America and the Anasazi Indians of North America; and of present societies, Rwanda and Haiti.

At the heart of each of his stories are cultures that destroyed the ground on which they stood; sometimes literally. Case by case, Diamond shows how population growth, the desire for affluence, deforestation, habitat destruction and over-exploitation of natural resources, together led to erosion and the loss of critical resources for food, shelter and defence, which led to increased hardship, and ultimately catastrophic decline. Or how a failure to learn and adjust to changing circumstances led to unnecessary tragedy, with communities driven to extinction by their inability to adapt.

He then tests these factors against our contemporary, globalised cultures and economy.

Importantly for us, there is a whole chapter on Australia, which he describes as the First World society occupying the most fragile environment and experiencing the most severe

environmental problems. This could lead to a situation where Australians in the future will be experiencing a declining standard of living in a steadily deteriorating environment.

Diamond describes himself as a cautious optimist. He says ‘We are not beset by insoluble problems. The most serious risks are not beyond our control. They are ones we are generating ourselves. Because we are the cause of our environmental problems, we can choose or not choose to stop causing them and start solving them’. He offers ideas on how to be part of the solutions.

Perhaps for all of us, his most important advice is: “We don’t need new technologies to solve our problems ... for the most part we ‘just’ need the political will to apply solutions already available”.

If you would like to discuss how we can start creating a climate of change on the sustainability of Australia for our children and grandchildren, contact Robin Mosman mosman@hermes.net.au

A naturalist’s life

“Rica Erickson: A Naturalist’s Life”,
published by Western Australia Press
for the Charles and Joy Staples South
West Region Publications Fund,
reviewed by Christine Davies

Jim Smith sent me a copy of this fascinating book to read. I quote from the back cover which describes the contents of the book far better than I can.

“Western Australia is rightly famous for its unique plants and animals. Among the most notable to have studied them is Rica Erickson. Born in Boulder on the Eastern Goldfields in 1908, Rica has spent most of her life studying and writing about orchids, trigger plants, carnivorous plants, birds and insects. An accomplished botanical artist, she has also produced a wealth of detailed drawings and beautiful watercolour paintings.

“In Rica Erickson: A Naturalist’s Life we have Rica’s own account of how she became interested in natural history, who were her guides, mentors and associates, and how she did her research. The book is interspersed with reproductions of some of her writings, drawings and paintings from the 1940s, 50s and 60s. Many of Rica’s works remain standard references. This volume is their complement, and our insight into a remarkable and inspirational life.”

Many of the plants and animals that Rica describes are identical or similar to those we find in the Blue Mountains. There are fascinating accounts of the secret life of native bees and wasps, carnivorous plants, the sexual relationship between some orchids and their pollinating insects, bird observations, and more.

There is always much excitement during our Thursday bushwalks when somebody (usually Bernadette!) spots a Greenhood Orchid, but besides its unusual appearance we never thought

how special it is. Rica explains:

“The Greenhood Orchid, which likes August for blooming, ranks among the plant wonders of the world. From the smallest Green Devil to the tallest Jug Orchid, the Greenhood is a box trap with a spring hinged door. It is most efficient in trapping certain insects. The astonishing fact is that, having trapped an insect, the Greenhood offers an escape through a narrow passage to the top of the flower. Also, should the insect fail to find this way out, the trapdoor will open after 20 minutes or so and the insect may depart by the way it came. Why has the Greenhood evolved such an excellent trap if its purpose is to let the captive go? ...”

What does a Greenhood do with the insects?

“First, it offers them a drink—a sublime drink that, having been tasted once, must be sought after again. This potent liquor is hidden in the base of the spring door. While a gnat is probing there for the secret store it sets off the spring and finds itself shot into the hooded flower with the door closed tightly behind it. A seasoned old toper is unconcerned. It has been initiated before and performed its duties. It may even continue to imbibe the heavenly nectar and, by the time the trapdoor reopens, may become quite drunk. Gnats can be found lying helpless inside some Greenhoods.

“However, an inexperienced insect is shocked by this imprisonment and flutters desperately endeavouring to escape. The flower planned for this and offers hairy footholds to lead the insect through the exit out to the top. But it offers escape at a certain price. The insect must carry a parcel to another Greenhood! As the gnat squeezes past the narrow opening, a spot of glue there fixes a packet of pollen to its back. A marvellous thirst soon impels the messenger to the right destination. It alights on another trapdoor, drinks and again is hurled into a trap. The pollen on its back is broken off onto a broad plate on the wall where the yellow grains adhere. That is the whole purpose the Greenhood’s marvellous spring trap. Cross-pollination!”

Welcome to new members

Hilary D Finn, Wentworth Falls
Gabriele Rummel, Lawson
Lorraine Stacey, Lawson
Ken Campbell, Wentworth Falls
Ginette Carrard, Redfern
Timothy O’Driscoll, Redfern
Sally Gaunt, Gladesville
Gillian Coyle, Dulwich Hill
John Small, Wentworth Falls
Don and Helen Webster, Kurrajong Hts.
Richard Layne, Glenbrook
David Hall, Hazelbrook
Maria Kevin, Springwood

MEMBERSHIP ENQUIRIES

Elizabeth van Reyswoud

Phone 4757.2694

Email: mcreysw@bigpond.net.au

Post: PO Box 29, Wentworth Falls 2782



A walk to Gooch's Crater

by Lucy Mark

About five years ago I walked with Springwood Bushwalking Club from Woodford to Springwood. The group was led by a man called Nick Gooch. When I asked him if he had any relationship with Gooch's Crater, he told me that he had found it some twenty years earlier with a group of other walkers. He described it in detail but as time went by I had only vague memories of the story.

I was really pleased to find that the walk to Gooch's Crater was planned by the Conservation Society Bushwalking Club for Saturday 14 May 2005. We met at Mount Victoria at 8.30 and travelled out from near the Zig Zag railway through a maze of tracks until we arrived at the fire trail where we began the walk. The amazing thing for me is that anyone can find their way!

The walk was along a ridge, until we dropped down to the creek that led to the crater opening. My first view was through this opening into the high straight walls, and a sloping wall on the north side. The floor of the crater was covered with tall swamp-like grasses. We passed around this entrance until we came to the huge cave and the hole in the roof of another cave-like formation. Some of these rocks will eventually collapse, but we felt that we had a million or two years to wait for that. Our plan to have lunch on the rocks above the hole in the roof resulted in a challenge for some of us. The rock slide leading to the top was quite steep and slippery. Luckily one of the men had brought a sturdy rope that helped us to climb or scramble up the grade.

After lunch on the pagoda formation we followed around the tracks until we had our first view of the crater from the top. It certainly is a most impressive place and those with cameras had a field day. We then walked down the steep slope on the side opposite the opening that we had passed earlier. Again, the view changed as we walked, so that the rocky sides appeared even higher and straighter than they had from above the walls. On the way back to the cars by another track we talked about plants and trees and rocks, as well as more mundane things. It had been a really lovely walk.

Some of the people on the walk did

BLUE MOUNTAINS CONSERVATION SOCIETY BUSHWALKING GROUP

Our bushwalking group provides a range of activities. Membership of the bushwalking group is available to members of the Society. For further information contact the Activity Coordinator (listed) or Bushwalks Conveyor Bob van Reyswoud. **Cost of insurance and affiliation fees for bushwalkers is \$15 per member.**

Monday Leisure Walks: Usually 'Short Day' walks of 3-5 hours suitable for walkers of average fitness. Graded Medium, i.e. can include some short rock scrambles or some short section off track. Bring morning tea and lunch, plus carry at least 1 litre of WATER, 2 litres on warmer days.

Jul 11 Victory Track, Faulconbridge. Classic mountain gullies and forests. Meet 9am Faulconbridge Station commuter car park, ☎ Mary 4758 7882.

Jul 18 Sun Valley. Walk through an extinct volcano crater. Meet 9.15 am Valley Heights Station commuter car park. ☎ Ron 4757 6346.

Jul 25 Evans Crown, Tarana. High granite outcrop views over Liverpool Plains. Lunch at Tarana Hotel. Meet 9.15 am Mt Victoria Station. ☎ Jock 4758 6346.

Aug 1 Paradise Pool. Walk to large bush pool, then to King's Cave. Finish at Linden—use train. Meet 9am Woodford Station, north side. ☎ Jock 4758 6346.

Thursday Pleasure Walks: These easy to medium grade walks are conducted to suit the walkers on the day. Times given are approximate. Slower walkers are catered for and on longer walks there is an option of a slower group to complete a section of the walk. Phone the contact for any enquiries about the program.

Jul 7 Riverside Walk in Hartley area. Drive to Cox's River crossing for easy walk along river bank. Meet 10am Mt Victoria Station ☎ Marie 4787 1257.

Jul 14 Undercliff walk, Wentworth Falls. Short descent to track through heath and swamps with many lookouts. Meet 10am, Wentworth Falls car park, near the clock. ☎ Phil 4787 5560.

Jul 21 Witch's Leap to Katoomba Falls. Descent from cliff top with possible extension to Leura forest. Return via Scenic railway or Scenicender. Take lunch. Meet 10am Gearins Hotel, Katoomba. ☎ Joan 4782 2218.

Jul 28 Baltzer Lookout, Blackheath. Easy walk on fire trail with views of Grose Valley. Possible extension to Hanging Rock. Meet 10 am Blackheath Neighbourhood Centre. ☎ Bob 4757 2694.

Aug 4 Picnic area to Den Fenella, Wentworth Falls. Descent through varied vegetation habitats to lookout over Jamison Valley. Meet 10am Wentworth Falls carpark (near the clock) ☎ John 4757 1558

Aug 25 Bus Trip: Visit Cattai National Park near Windsor. Historic farm on Hawkesbury River, bushwalks through native vegetation. Cost for bus \$10. Depart Katoomba depot 8.30am, with pickups along the highway to Springwood. ☎ Simone 4757 3416. **Bus drivers wanted—see bottom of this page.**

Weekend Bushwalks: Always discuss with the contact if the walk you would like to do is medium/hard or hard, before attending. If this is your first walk, or you are in any doubt, discuss with the contact or Bushwalks Convener Bob van Reyswoud, 4757 2694, email mcreysw@bigpond.net.au

Jul 9 (Sat) Yulefest feast and walk in Lithgow. Bookings Annemarie 4759 2172. Cost 28 per person. Meet Mt Victoria station 10am.

Jul 16 (Sat) Mt Twiss and beyond. Meet 9.30 am Linden station on north side. Medium. ☎ Liz 4754 4966.

Jul 23 (Sat) Devil's Hole. Meet 9.30 am, Gearings Hotel, Katoomba. Medium. ☎ Mary 4787 6918.

Jul 30 (Sat) Terrace Falls. Medium. Meet War Memorial, Honour Avenue, Lawson, 9.30 am. ☎ Bob 4757 2694.

Aug 6 (Sat) Boorong Crags. Mt Hay car park to Mt Hay to Boorong Crags and return 8km with 5km off-track. Steep descent and ascent of 120m with lots of scrambling. Maps Katoomba and Mt Wilson. Meet Leura School at 8.30am. ☎ Jim 4758 6009. Medium/hard. The Mt Hay road is now so rough that 4WD would be appreciated although 2WD will still get through as long as they have decent clearance.

Wednesday Walks. Contact Bob mcreysw@bigpond.net.au 4757 2694 for program.

not know about the naming of the crater. I was aware that, sadly, Nick Gooch had died in an accident on the way to work about two years ago, but I contacted his wife Rae. She told me how they had been doing a three day pack walk at New Year in 1978 with the Kameruka Bushwalking Club. Nick had done a bit of exploring while the others were having lunch and was amazed to find what was later described as a crater. As time went on, other walkers referred to the area as Nick Gooch's Crater although Nick had felt the most appropriate name for the place was Cave Swamp Creek. It seemed that bushwalkers had not visited the area before that time. Aboriginal people had used the cave area.

As a tribute to Nick Gooch, Springwood Bushwalking Club applied for the name "Gooch's Crater" to be officially gazetted by the Geographical Names Board. This was granted late in 2004.

Wanted: more bus drivers from the BMCS bushwalking groups

If you have a LR or Heavy Vehicle Licence please consider getting a permit from BMCC to drive the Community Access Bus. We need more drivers to share the load or the number and/or extent of trips will have to be reduced.

For more information contact David Bowskill (Admin officer and bus driver) on 4757 3416 or email davidbow@tpg.com.au.