



"Nature Conservation Saves for Tomorrow"

Lively AGM bodes well for Society's future

The Society held a very successful AGM and general meeting on 30 March 2017, with the Conservation Hut filled to capacity.

Outgoing President Don Morison spoke, praising the roles of Conservation Society activists in maintaining the Blue Mountains local environment plan, campaigning against the proposed Western Sydney Airport, broadening awareness of the vulnerability of the Coxs and Wollangambe Rivers and helping Council make good progress in court proceedings to protect Radiata (Elphinstone) Plateau.

Treasurer Bart Beech presented the Society's financial report for the year to 28 February 2017. Members can be assured that the Society's finances are in good hands with excellent income from investments and the continuing work of our nursery volunteers. This income enabled us to spend \$26,830 on our core business of conservation, including the Gardens of Stone campaign, No Western Sydney Airport and the Vote for the Environment campaign for the BMCC council election.

We welcome new and returning members of Management Committee whose contact details are on page 2 of this newsletter. Three important positions are unfilled—Events Coordinator, Publicity Officer and Threatened Species Officer. Please contact Don Morison 8230 2116 donmorison@bluemountains.org.au if you are interested in any of these positions or would like to join a subcommittee.

Thank you to Heather Coster, Heather Hull and Jeanette Robertson who organised supper. After supper, members and visitors were treated to a thought-provoking talk by Dr Alan Lane.



"Mysteries of Kimberley Rock Art"

Alan Lane treated a "sell-out crowd" to some wonderful images and informative commentary about intriguing recently discovered paintings of the extinct marsupial lion, *Thylacoleo carnifex*. He outlined the features of this fearsome animal and discussed the painting's significance in the scientific dispute concerning the role of humans in the extinction of Australian megafauna.

He then shared insights into the belief system of the Kimberley Aboriginal community as depicted in rock images of the "wandjina" and stick-figure "gyion" beings. He showed that the bizarre gyion adornments may be illustrative of ceremonial costumes formerly worn by Aboriginal people of the region.



Going Batty: another Bat Night success

The sixth Blue Mountains Bat Night was held on 10th March at the National Parks Heritage Centre in Blackheath. A resounding success, the night was attended by over 500 enthusiastic bat lovers!

The Society contributed to the event by funding Discovery Rangers to help everyone see and learn about bats. These walks were well supported and a great part of the night.

The hard work of Margaret Turton and support of the Australasian Bat Society, NPWS and Blue Mountains Council also helped to make the event happen.

A highlight was the wonderful talks about flying foxes from the Australia Walkabout Wildlife Park. The Bat Cave and other activities were also a hit.



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Forest Therapy by Jim Smith

I was very pleased to read the article 'Forest Therapy in the Blue Mountains' by Louise Bennett in the March *Hut News*. I have been trying to promote the benefits of walking very slowly in the bush for decades. When I was teaching the Outdoor Guides course at Katoomba TAFE (from 1984 to 1993) one of the biggest challenges was to get the eager young students to slow down enough so that they would start seeing what was in the bush.

In 2003 I wrote an article in *Outdoor Australia* entitled 'Slow Down!' I concluded: "We need more dawdlers and idlers in the bush": these are the people who can learn how to live in "bush time" rather than the hyped-up timetables of our civilisation. Those who take it slowly have the best chance of developing a sense of wonder." I took the phrase "take it slowly" from the title of a book by former Blue Mountains Conservation Society member Grace Bayley. *Take it Slowly. A Blue Mountains Diary*, published in 1993, is probably the most delightful book ever written about the Blue Mountains. It is a pity that only a small number of copies were printed and that it has been unavailable for over 20 years. Perhaps the society could consider republishing it.

I guarantee that if you do some very slow 20 minute walks, as described by Louise Bennett, you will be amazed at what you see and feel.

Kiss of the spider woman!

Thursday Interpretive Bushwalkers, during a visit to Coolah Tops, came across this female Golden Orb Weaving Spider, *Nephila* sp, with its smaller male suitor close behind.

Life expectancy can be short for a male spider when the female of the species is nearly 10 times his size. In a majority of cases she will kill and eat him before, during or after copulation. Some species have developed strategies, not always successful, to avoid being eaten before mating is complete.

While it can be an unpleasant experience for humans to walk into the huge web of a Golden Orb Weaver, bites are rare and symptoms negligible or mild.

Christine Davies.

(The photo was taken by Corinne Gaston)



"Alive and Deadly" at the Australian Museum

Visit the Australian Museum exhibition "Alive and Deadly". Get closer to over 400 real spider specimens including live tarantulas, giant water spiders and deadly funnel-webs.

Visit the Venom Lab to see talks and feeding demonstrations (Monday - Friday at 10.30am) and live invertebrate venom milking (10.30am on Saturday and Sunday and 1.30pm on Monday - Sunday), enter a cave crawling with spiders, test your strength against spider silk and dare yourself to try other creepy crawly immersive experiences.

<https://australianmuseum.net.au/landing/spiders-alive-and-deadly/>

BLUE MOUNTAINS CONSERVATION SOCIETY

www.bluemountains.org.au

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Those who will not see!

Dr Brian Marshall

Many appreciate the implications of the saying: *'In the land of the blind, the one-eyed man is king'*, but 'being one-eyed' has a different connotation. It suggests that the person lacks breadth of vision. Such a person might be described as having tunnel vision or being blinkered.

Any observer of the current political scene at State or Federal level will surely recognise that a politician's utterances are suppressed within what is euphemistically termed the 'party line or "party policy'. I term such blinkered restriction as one-eyed cohesion. The outcome is that, if the Prime Minister or Premier of the day says 'clean coal is viable', 'coal-seam gas is good', and 'solar and wind-power renewables are unreliable', the pertinent ministers must board the one-eyed train and prosecute these views within their portfolios. Thought-bubbles rule, reality is stretched to accommodate the 'bubbles', and science and logic are supplanted by environmental vandalism!

The foregoing suggests why ridiculous decisions are made and perpetuated by supposedly intelligent people. I will provide an example.

The federal and state listed Temperate Highland Peat Swamps on Sandstone (THPSS), which include the magnificently developed Newnes Plateau Shrub Swamps and Hanging Swamps, have been extensively damaged and destroyed by longwall (LW) mining. An Independent Monitoring Panel (IMP) has been charged with evaluating the causes of swamp-damage. The IMP's investigation and Springvale's re-assessment of past damage have shown that LWs intersecting NNE-trending lineament-defined fault zones can impact lineament-related swamps at least up to 700 m and even up to 1600 m along the lineament from the intersection-point.

The obvious answer is that the LWs must not cross fault zones because there is a clearly-defined empirical relationship. Yet Springvale argues that the relationship, defined by the IMP as a 'far-field' impact, is a hypothesis which needs to be proved. So, guess what! The DPE and the State's Minister for Planning have approved the next LW panel with 'additional monitoring to prove/disprove' the empirical relationship based on many years of detailed observation. Absolutely brilliant: let's destroy the remaining endangered swamps in order to prove the blatantly obvious!

But wait, there is more. An appeal to Federal Minister Frydenberg (Minister for Environment and Energy – a strange juxtaposition of responsibilities) achieved nothing. He believes that any such impacts can be adequately offset by appropriate compensatory measures. He may be naïve, because how can one sensibly offset an endangered ecosystem? Oh, I forgot, it can be done by paying 'appropriate sums' into the biobank. All aboard for the one-eyed express!

Environmental vandalism will have murdered the swamps, but coal-money buys expiation.

What can I do? Contact NSW Ministers Roberts and Upton. Ask them to arrest this insanity. Using an endangered ecosystem in an 'academic' experiment aimed at investigating a 'hypothesis', despite overwhelming empirical evidence, is unconscionable.

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NSW Government's Mid-term Report Card: the results are in ...

Before the 2015 NSW Government elections, environment groups compiled a report listing the top 25 actions required to conserve nature and protect the environment during the 2015-2019 term of government. The report *Our Environment, Our Future - Policies for the 2015 NSW Election and Beyond* urged all parties and candidates to incorporate those actions in their environmental policy platforms. This Report Card assesses the performance of the Coalition government halfway through its term against those 25 key indicators.

Thanks to some abysmal actions, including weakening our land-clearing laws, giving the green light to coal mining and subsidising native forest logging, the current NSW Government has scored a big fail.

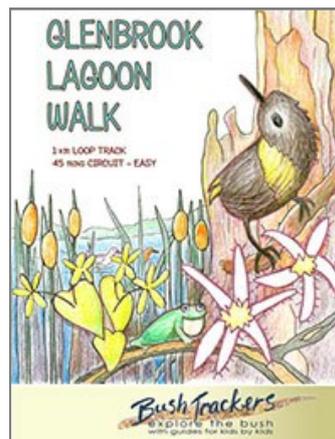
With a new premier and environment minister on board, we have a chance to convince them to forge a different path for nature, before it's too late. The first step is to spread the word to as many people as possible.

Read the story in SMH. <http://www.smh.com.au/environment/taking-us-backwards-nsw-governments-environment-policies-under-fire-from-green-groups-20170323-gv4k3i.html>

Go to the report card at <http://www.nature.org.au/media/284122/170321-final-mid-term-report-card.pdf> This report card and the full analysis are available at: www.nature.org.au/reportcard

Founded in 1955, the Nature Conservation Council of NSW is the peak environment organisation for NSW, representing more than 150 community environment groups across the state: www.nature.org.au

Bush Trackers Guides



The Blue Mountains Conservation Society sponsors *Bush Trackers*.

Bush Trackers is a Blue Mountains environmental education initiative designed to connect children and their families with 'the bush' and to promote the natural spaces within our local communities as 'child-friendly' places.

Bush Trackers Guides create an opportunity for children and their families to seek and build an evolving relationship with nature simply by spending time in it and experiencing it on their own terms, through their own eyes.

Visit <http://www.bushtrackers.com.au/> for more information and to download *Bush Trackers* Guides. Or you can purchase copies of the guides for \$2 each at the NPWS Heritage Centre at Blackheath, Blue Mountains Visitor Information Centres at Echo Point and Glenbrook, and the Blue Mountains Cultural Centre at Katoomba.

Hut News, No. 346, April 2017— Page 3.

Springvale – an evolving story! Dr Brian Marshall

In the March Hut News (No 345, p3), Madi Maclean referred to Springvale's proposed weakening of certain conditions contained in the consent to mine¹. If the Department of Planning and Environment (DPE) approves Springvale's proposal, the highly polluting mine water discharges to the Upper Coxs River and ultimately Sydney's water supply will continue for **another** two years to June-end 2019.

Why another? The consent was signed in 2015, so a successful approval would result in Springvale's untreated discharges continuing with impunity for **at least** four years.

Why at least? Because the design, development consent, construction and commissioning of the now-favoured system for transferring and treating the discharges at Mt Piper Power Station (MPPS) could take more than two years. Were that to eventuate, Springvale would need **yet another** modification of the seemingly malleable consent conditions! And the DPE would inevitably approve it.

What is the story? Before the consent to mine was finalised, envirogroups strongly advocated transferring the toxic discharges of mine-water to the MPPS for treatment and 're-use'. Springvale resisted this approach, but the requirement to examine the transfer to MPPS became part of the consent conditions. After some delay, the Company presented a transfer-proposal² in which treated water, excess to MPPS's needs, would be sent to an Upper Coxs River tributary to dilute high-salinity discharges from a different discharge point. This misuse of treated water was rejected by envirogroups. They suggested that it be stored in a nearby reservoir to be used by MPPS when running at 75-100% capacity. BMCS understands that such a modification to the transfer-proposal will now be made, but uncertainty will exist until the formal documents become available.

Despite the need to investigate a transfer-proposal being emphasised in the consent conditions, Springvale believes that the above changes have caused undue delays, and the changes obviate the need to retain two parts of Condition 12 (see Hut News No 345, p3). BMCS has rejected these beliefs³ because: Springvale stated (May 2015) that it accepted and was able to comply with the condition which it now wishes to change; Springvale could meet the condition by installing a temporary reverse osmosis plant at the principal discharge point; and, polluting the river system from the principal discharge point for another two years is unacceptable.

The remaining elephant in the room comprises the toxic discharges from the Springvale-related Western Coal Services site. BMCS believes that the discharges should also be linked to the transfer-proposal, but this has seemingly been rejected by Springvale and the DPE, despite the discharges being targeted within the context of the Upper Coxs River Action & Monitoring Plan⁴. The issue is apparently to be handled by the Environmental Protection Authority⁵, but this will involve lengthy negotiations and could well reach a less than satisfactory compromise in terms of the environmental health of the Upper Coxs River catchment.

Why be concerned? Neither Springvale nor MPPS has any incentive to hurry! Springvale's mining operations are not impeded because (as at present) it can continue discharging polluted mine-water into the Upper Coxs River; MPPS's operations will continue unaffected because it can continue using its existing water supplies. In fact, it is arguably in Springvale's interests to slow the process down; the coal-price is up, production is ongoing, and complying with the required changes would be an expensive 'distraction'; and, although not necessarily linked, the Company applied in August 2016 to increase the rate of production from 4.5 to 5.5 Mtpa⁶.

What can I do? Send a letter/email or phone Ministers Roberts (Planning), Upton (Environment) and Marcus Ray (DPE) expressing the views that removing coal-mining pollution from the Upper Coxs River is long overdue, and Springvale should be required to keep to its commitments.

¹ https://majorprojects.affinitylive.com/public/67c3569693d73b5ccec72b2854df7ff/Springvale%20MEP_Development%20Consent.pdf; Schedule 4 Conditions 12 and 13.

² http://majorprojects.planning.nsw.gov.au/index.pl?action=view_job&job_id=7592; Springvale Water Transfer and Treatment Project SSD 16_7592

³ Brian Marshall, *Submission opposing Springvale Mine SSD_5594 Mod 2*, February 22, 2017; available from the author or Admin Officer.

⁴ See endnote 1; Schedule 4 Condition 13(c)

⁵ Marcus Ray, Deputy Secretary Planning Services, Letter to Brian Marshall, BMCS, reference 1703325, 13 March 2017.

⁶ The current status of this Modification on the DPE's website is '**more information required**'.

Two Radiata Plateau DAs refused

The NSW Land and Environment Court has refused two of the three dwellings applications for the Radiata (Elphinstone) Plateau, lodged by Transcendental Meditation Organisation. The dwelling on Lot 41 (behind the houses) was approved, while the dwellings on Lot 207 and 208 located along the current access track were refused. Full details of the decision can be found at <https://www.caselaw.nsw.gov.au/decision/58c738a6e4b058596cba4ee6>

The Society's submission, along with residents' concerns, featured strongly in the Court's judgement. It appears the Commissioner rejected the dwellings on Lot 207 and 208 on the basis of the Society's argument around the need to consider the provisions of LEP 2015, even though the applications were lodged when the old LEP 1991 was still operative. To quote the judgement:

"Construction of dwellings on lots 207 and 208, even though permissible with consent under LEP 1991 would 'in a substantial way undermine' the objectives of LEP 2015 for those lots. Considerable weight should be given to the provisions of LEP 2015. Construction of dwellings ... (in a) Zone E2 would undermine the objectives of the zone, such that I give determinative weight to the provision of LEP 2015 and must reject the development applications for Lots 207 and 208."

Continued on page 9.

At last! Some good news for the Wollangambe ... and some questions Madi Maclean

For the past five years, a team from Western Sydney University, led by Dr Ian Wright, has been studying the effect of mine waste discharge from Clarence Colliery on the Wollangambe River. The team has concluded that mine pollution levels are among the worst in the world with pollution up to 22 kilometres downstream from the waste outflow having a major impact on invertebrate species. The Wollangambe is a designated wild river which runs through the Greater Blue Mountains Heritage Area.

The good news is that the Environment Protection Authority (EPA) has now strengthened the pollution licence for Clarence Colliery. There will be stronger limits on the 13 toxic metals being discharged and nickel has been added. The discharge limits have been set using the ANZECC/ ARMCANZ (2000) water quality guidelines as a benchmark. The Office of Environment and Heritage recommended this in their recent report for the EPA on the condition of the Wollangambe. The new limits on metals will apply from June 2017.

It is also an important improvement that the pollution licence now explicitly recognises the environmental significance of the Wollangambe River and how inappropriate a discharge of this nature into the river is. In particular, the licence recognises

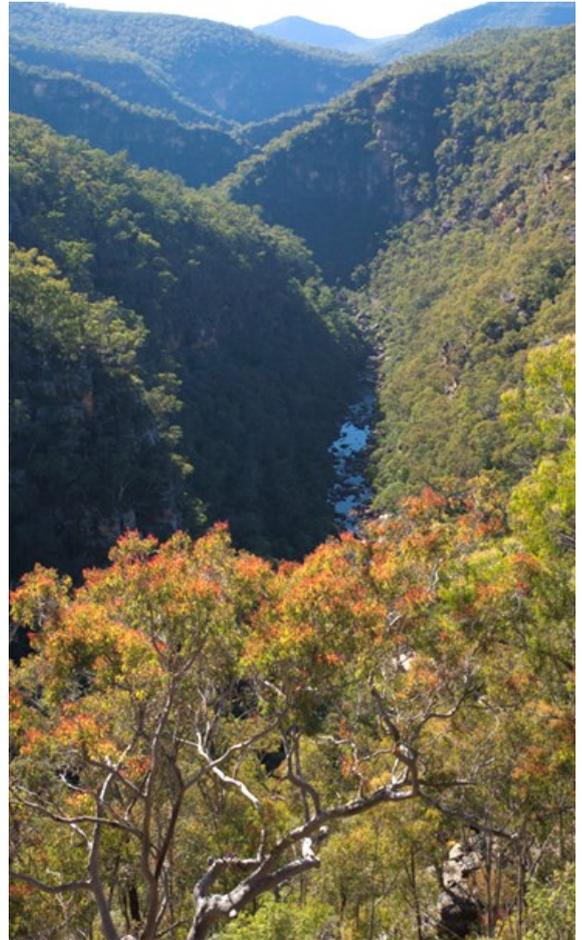
- the high level of toxic metals in the discharge compared with the 'natural levels' ;
- the downstream impacts of those metals on aquatic species;
- the status of the river as a 'high conservation river' equivalent to a Condition 1 ecosystem defined in ANZECC (2000) water quality guidelines.

Other pollutants still to be addressed

The licence changes did not address significant other pollutants in the mine discharge. Salinity levels need to be set at the natural background level of this near pristine river. This would require desalination plant using reverse osmosis. While this is not addressed, the licence holder continues to enjoy its longstanding financial benefit of discharging without having to reduce salinity to the appropriate level.

We have written to the EPA asking them to ensure this reduction in salinity is achieved as quickly as possible.

The licence also takes no action on thermal pollution either to limit or even to monitor its occurrence. Recent research by Dr Wright and others found that the mine waste discharges increased surface water temperature by 3.9 degrees which would not meet ANZECC (2000) guidelines if they were applied. This needs to be added to Clarence's EPL.



Wild River Gorge. Photo by Ian Brown.

Prosecution for mine waste collapse

The EPA's prosecution of Clarence Colliery's owners, Centennial Coal, for the mine waste collapse of July 2015 is set down for a hearing starting on the 8 May. Centennial Coal has pleaded guilty. The Society has also written to the EPA urging them to call for a penalty which will act as a deterrent to the company and improve their operations.

NURSERY NEWS Sue Nicol

The autumn downpour in March did not deter our nursery volunteers. On a day when Blackheath experienced its heaviest downpour in years (about 80mm in one hour) five volunteers turned up at the nursery having walked through the deluge. We worked in the shed for three hours producing hundreds of cuttings but barely able to hear each other over the thundering of the rain on the roof and everyone remained cheerful. During March we have welcomed four new volunteers who are all keen to contribute to our work.

The March Magpie markets were cancelled due to the weather, but at the next markets at Lawson and Blackheath we will have plenty of well grown plants on offer. All the species mentioned last month plus many specials going for \$1 or \$2, including *Hardenbergia violacea* with the delightful name of "Happy Wanderer", excellent for covering a fence or spilling over a wall, and



many species of *Acacia* from small shrubs to tall trees. We have plenty of ferns for those shady areas and *Dianellas* and *Lomandras* for filling in between shrubs. Now is a great time to plant while the ground is moist but still warm enough to get some growth in before the winter.

I have come to the end of my three year term as nursery manager and welcome Hugh Brougham who is taking over as Nursery Coordinator. I have loved working with the plants, enjoyed the company of the volunteers and meeting the customers at the markets. I will be still working as a volunteer at the nursery and hope my experience will be useful to others. Sue Nicol

Photo: *Hardenbergia violacea*, source ABC "Gardening Australia" Fact Sheet, <http://www.abc.net.au/gardening/stories/s1460240.htm>

The Sustainable Home, by Gary McCue and Alex Bergmann

Solar Hot Water Considerations - Part 2

Three important considerations when choosing and installing a solar hot water system are the location of the rooftop hot water collectors; how to boost your hot water temperature during periods of low solar gain; and sizing the system to meet the needs of your household.

The location of your rooftop hot water collector should ideally be as close to your storage tank as possible and situated on a north or northwest-facing roof that's free from shading, particularly during the winter months. If your home has east/west facing roofs, the western aspect is best but this means more hot water is produced in summer and less in winter, the opposite of most family's needs. Also important is the mounting angle of your collectors. Most homes have roof angles between 10-25 degrees, though for our latitude (34°S) the ideal angle for year round hot water production is 56°. Collectors pitched from 40° to 56° are fine with only minimal loss of efficiency, but unless you have a very low-angled skillion roof (<10°) the extra expense to raise your collectors above the existing roof angle may not be cost effective. Note that installing a collector frame on tiled roofs is more expensive than on metal or Colorbond roofs.

Unless you're living in a tropical location such as Darwin, solar hot water systems usually require boosting during extended periods of cloudy weather, or when the hot water supply is exhausted after sundown. The most common way to boost hot water is either with electricity or gas, with night time off-peak electricity being the cheapest means of boosting. If you don't have an existing off peak meter, a new meter can be installed by

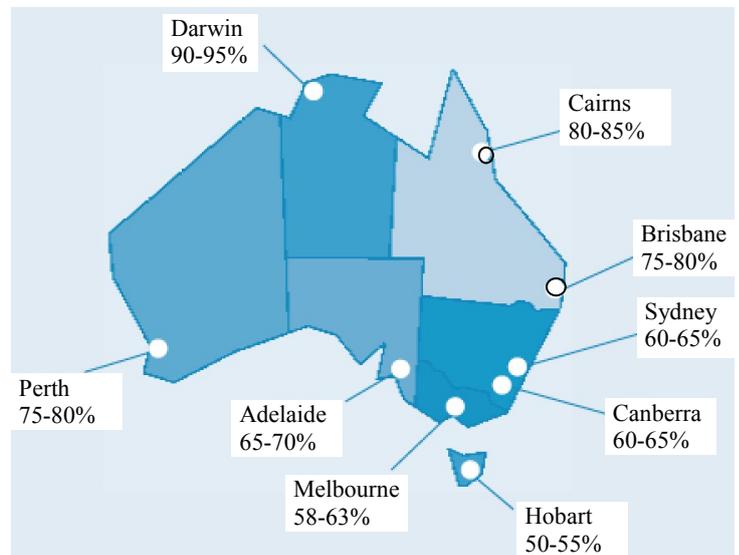
a Level 2 electrician but plan on paying on wards of \$500. Individuals, small families or low electricity consuming households may find it more cost effective to continue paying normal electricity rates rather than purchase a new meter. If you have a "smart" meter you can request Time of Use billing from your energy supplier, which offers low night time and shoulder weekend electricity rates, but very high peak period rates. To boost solar hot water using gas, an existing instantaneous gas water heater will probably need to be replaced with a solar-rated heater, plus a new storage tank must also be installed. These additional costs plus rising gas prices have many households choosing an electric storage tank for boosting.

For households with larger PV panels systems (>4kW), low cost solar diverters are an exciting innovation that heats domestic hot water by sending excess generated solar electricity to the hot water tank element rather than to the grid for low feed-in tariffs. A sensor measures the current flowing into and out of the house, and when current flows out into the grid, a controller feeds the appropriate level of power to the storage tank element to heat your water (see www.marlec.co.uk/product/solar-iboost)

This column is by local solar experts Gary McCue, with the Sustainability Guys in Blackheath, and Alex Bergmann with Energywise Living in Katoomba. Future columns will address photovoltaic (PV) solar systems, battery storage, off-grid solar, solar hot water and other sustainable home topics.

Graphic: The percentage of an average household's hot water consumption typically available from solar around Australia.

Source: "Efficient Hot Water" booklet published by Alternative Technology Association, 2014.



Blue Mountains Destination Management Plan (DMP)

was recently released for public comment by Blue Mountains City Council. Council states that the DMP is a "strategic document developed to build and manage the visitor economy for the Blue Mountains". What it actually is a big wish list of aspirational future tourism opportunities, some of which are unsustainable and totally inappropriate for a World Heritage Area and some of which have merit.

While the local tourism and visitation industry were consulted during the development of the Plan, community groups including local environment and heritage groups were not. There is a lot of emphasis in the Plan on new big "game changing" tourism developments, and not a lot about upgrading existing tourism infrastructure such as the extensive walking trail and lookout network. Increasing small-scale tourism operations, the current backbone of the Blue Mountains tourism economy, also gets short shrift in the Plan as "small scale initiatives are likely to have limited impact".

<http://bluemountainshaveyoursay.com.au/DMP>.

Comments close on 21 April 2017.

BMCS NURSERY PLANT SALES

We offer the home gardener, landscaper or contractor a big variety of quality local native plants at economical prices.

Plants can be purchased at:

Blackheath Community Market, 1st Sunday of the month at Blackheath Public School, 9am to 1pm

Magpie Market, 3rd Sunday of month at Lawson Public School, 9am to 2pm

Tube stock \$3. Discounts for bulk orders.

Enquiries Hugh Brougham 04079 55028

nursery@bluemountains.org.au

The story of Roberts Pass, Wentworth Falls. Jim Smith.

Many members of the Blue Mountains Conservation Society have walked along the track called Roberts Pass, between the Valley of the Waters and Leura golf course. This track was heavily overgrown and virtually forgotten when I rediscovered it in about 1976. It became one of my favourite walks. I particularly loved the beautiful *Angophora costata* trees along the track but was often attacked by very aggressive leeches. Over the years, I gradually pruned back vegetation regrowth along the track. In 1985 I re-cleared the connection through to Leura golf course, replaced the missing ladder in the gully between Moya and Inspiration Points and held a reopening ceremony. During this time the area was controlled by Blue Mountains City Council.

The story of the rediscovery and reopening of Lindeman Pass and Roberts Pass is told in my book *The Blue Mountains Mystery Track*, published in 1990. In this book, I speculated that Roberts Pass had been named after Sir Alfred Roberts, who was a member of the Royal College of Surgeons and associated with Prince Alfred Hospital. He had a holiday home in Wentworth Falls, where he died in 1898. However, a recently discovered article about an 1893 bushwalk in the Jamison Valley, in the *Evening News*, refers to "Roberts Mine on the Lillian's Glen Creek"¹. Sir Alfred Roberts, is not known to have had any interests in mining ventures. However, there are references to a Mr P.H. Roberts being associated with another coal mine in Wentworth Falls in this decade. This mine was described in 1890 as being located adjacent to "Mr R.M. Pitt's estate, between the Bathurst Road and the railway."² This article goes on to say: "A deal of credit is also due to Mr P.H. Roberts, a very clever expert in shale mining, and who was the first to discover the coal and spent a small fortune in prospecting and getting a company to start the mine."³

The location of 'Roberts Mine' is shown on the Lands Department tourist map of Wentworth Falls published in 1908, where it is shown as the "second coal seam". The short adit tunnelled into this seam can still be seen beside the track to Vera Falls. It was never a 'mine', just the result of Roberts' investigation of the coal outcrop.

It should be noted that this area was not accessible via the Valley of the Waters, i.e. by going down Lillian's Glen Creek, until 1894-5, when the tourist track was made. The adventurous bushwalkers of October 1893 came in via the Gladstone Pass track, built for miners to access the Gladstone coal mine in 1884. They then followed "the **track** to Roberts Mine on the Lillian's Glen Creek."

This is the first reference to a made track connecting the base of Gladstone Pass with the Valley of the Waters. In 1893 this was probably just a rough path cut by Roberts to access the coal seam. It was later upgraded for tourist use by Wentworth Falls ranger Peter Mulheran and called Roberts Pass after its discoverer.

Unfortunately, Roberts Pass is in poor condition today due to landslides and lack of maintenance. That is a pity. The early trustees of the Jamison Valley reserves created a continuous series of tracks that linked the bottom of Wentworth Falls to the Ruined Castle via Wentworth Pass, Roberts Pass, Lindeman Pass and the Federal Pass. What a great adventure walk that would be today, with minimal signage and maintenance.

Peter Henry Roberts is listed on the electoral rolls of 1890-91 and 1892-93, residing in Wentworth Falls. I have pieced together parts of his life story for the interest of walkers who might like to know about the first non-Aboriginal person to see this part of the Jamison Valley. Roberts was born in Flintshire, North Wales in 1838. He married Esther Winifred McCulloch in South Wales in 1872 and migrated to New Zealand in the following year. After five years there he migrated to New South Wales and worked at various coal mining centres, from Newcastle to Lithgow, between 1878 and 1889. He lived in Wentworth Falls between 1890 and 1893, during which time he prospected in the Valley of the Waters. He had left the Blue Mountains by 1894. Peter and Esther Roberts had nine children between 1873 and 1889. Peter died in Kiama, aged 76, in 1914.

But what was Roberts doing mining in an area which had been part of a reserve since 1870? Legislation at the time allowed mining underneath recreation reserves. The trustees of the Wentworth Falls reserve spent considerable time, between 1882 and 1892, making representations to the Lands and Mines Departments objecting to applications to mine below the beauty spots of Wentworth Falls. On 29 June 1885, the minute book of the trustees recorded this resolution:

"It was considered that the Department had acted in a high handed manner by entertaining these applications [to open mines] without giving consideration to any objections or restrictions that the trustees might see fit, in the public interest, to propose, were an opportunity given them; and the honorary Secretary was asked to draw attention to the representations made in March last, and to ask that, before final action be taken upon any application of the like character, opportunity be given them to suggest restrictions as to occupation of the surface or to show the advisability or otherwise, from a picturesque point of view, of allowing the proposed mining to be carried on."

It is regrettable that, 130 years later, the Blue Mountains Conservation Society, and other conservation organisations, still have to argue against "high handed" decisions by the government to allow mining underneath protected areas, or areas that should be protected, as well as trying to take action against mining operations which pollute adjacent national parks.

Acknowledgement. The newspaper references cited in this article were located by John Penlington.

¹ Anonymous, 'Wentworth Falls', *Evening News*, 11 October 1893, p.6.

² Anonymous, 'Wentworth Falls', *Nepean Times*, 23 August 1890, p.4. This area is near the Blue Mountains Grammar School grounds.

³ This statement was refuted in an article published the following week which stated that "Roberts was not the original discover [sic] of this mine, neither has he spent any money on it... Roberts was only recently employed to open out the seam." "One Who Knows", 'The Coal Mine at Wentworth Falls', *Nepean Times*, 30 August 1890, p.7.

Reset the Stress Button through Forest Bathing Louise Bennett

(Following on from last month's article introducing Forest Therapy)

The human being is hard-wired to live in a natural environment. After so many thousands of years of living within nature's realm, it's hardly surprising that we feel stress in an urban area. In just two hundred years, the vast majority of people have disconnected from spending time in nature. The results often lead to physical and mental problems, but the good news is that when we are exposed to nature for periods of time, our systems can return to their 'default settings' of health and well-being.

According to studies in Japan¹ forests can lower stress and make people feel at ease. Findings in other physiological experiments, including fluctuations in heartbeats and blood pressure, support this conclusion. Forest walking can also strengthen the immune system (according to Li Qing, a senior assistant professor of forest medicine at Nippon Medical School in Tokyo). In a 2007 study, people taking two-hour walks in the forest over a two-day period exhibited a 50% increase in levels of natural killer cells – the body's disease fighting agents.

Resetting the STRESS button

Forest bathing has been shown to significantly reduce stress,² which is widely held to be the root cause of a multitude of ailments. In fact, we underestimate the impact of stress. It can cause headaches, migraines, high blood pressure, heart problems, diabetes, skin conditions, asthma, and arthritis – and that's just for starters. There are many other ailments triggered by stress. According to Japanese research studies³ "forest bathing catalyzes increased parasympathetic nervous system activity which prompts rest, conserves energy, and slows down the heart rate while increasing intestinal and gland activity."

How to bathe in the forest

Forest bathing is the simple practice of walking slowly through forest, with senses extended. Using our senses seems to be a lost art for most of us. And compared to most species on this planet, our senses are pathetically weak. So how do we start extending them?

Walk slowly and mindfully (note: you're not aiming to cover much distance).

Look (shapes, texture, layers, colours, hues; for example: how many shades of green can you see?)

Feel (the crunch of leaves underfoot, the breeze, the sunlight, temperature, the breath in your nostrils).

Listen (the sound of water, babbling brooks, wind in the trees, birds singing, rustlings).

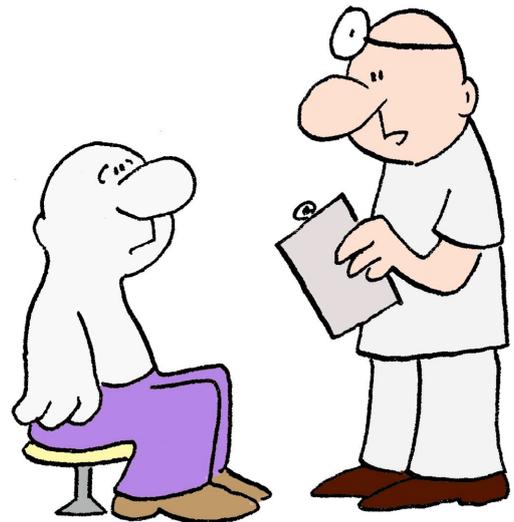
Smell scents (subtle, strong, mossy, aromatic, strange, familiar, etc).

You never know, one fine day doctors might even prescribe forest bathing for their patients!

¹ <http://www.natureandforesttherapy.org/the-science.html>

² <https://qz.com/804022/health-benefits-japanese-forest-bathing/>

³ <http://www.natureandforesttherapy.org/the-science.html>



I prescribe taking a 20 minute walk in the forest 3 times per week for 6 weeks, then come back and see me.

Poets' Corner

Rain music

All night long
rain music
erases dreams

Dawn birds visit
my sitting place

On a banksia branch
chick demands food
from mum's empty beak

Tiny spinebill
slick with rain
hovers from flower to flower
without regrets

Five rosellas look down at me
from the guttering
as if to say
Are you alright?
make reassuring sounds and
ignoring the seven AM
bad news bulletin
fly off to other duties

Brendan Doyle

Readers of Hut News are invited to send a poem inspired by the Blue Mountains, maximum of 20 lines. Poems can be emailed to Brendan Doyle brendan049@gmail.com or posted to Poets' Corner at 5 Lurline Street, Wentworth Falls 2782.

VALLEY OF THE WATERS BUSHCARE GROUP

The Valley of the Waters Bushcare Group meets on the **second Saturday of each month, 9am - noon.**

Tools and gloves are available. Bring a drink, a snack and a sunhat.

NEW MEMBERS ARE WELCOME.

Phone Karen 4757 1929.

High end tourism for Blackheath?

A Blue Mountains City Council Planning Proposal, on public exhibition until 12 April 2017 (<http://bluemountainshaveyoursay.com.au/sp3tourist>), aims to introduce a new Standard Instrument zone (SP3-Tourist zone) into LEP 2015. The zone, according to Council's proposal, will be applied to locations "where tourism is the focus" and where the intention "is to further develop those tourism uses". Four sites are proposed to be rezoned:

Blackheath Caravan Park and Lakeview Holiday Cabins
Hydro Majestic Hotel
Scenic World
Fairmont Resort

If the Blackheath Caravan Park is zoned SP3, this could allow intensive re-development of the site into a high end resort style tourism venture. Given its location next to the natural bushland area of Popes Glen and the potential impact on the high conservation values of the area, the Society believes the site is totally unsuitable for intensive tourism development as this would lead to major environmental impacts.

Council specifically recognises in the planning proposal that the Blackheath Caravan Park offers a low cost accommodation alternative to the high-end resorts, and is a low key and small scale tourism venture. It is next to the Blackheath Memorial Park and swimming pool, in a very family-orientated area which is popular with residents and tourists alike.

Three of the sites proposed to be zoned SP3 are located in highly sensitive scenic escarpment areas, and directly benefit from their location in terms of attracting tourists and visitation. Environmental protection objectives do not include protecting the values of the Blue Mountains World Heritage Area.

The planning proposal also includes rezoning a number of other tourism sites to R1 General Residential, including the Parklands site in Blackheath. The Society believes the current zoning of E4 Environmental Living better reflects the values of the site, including its important landscape features and heritage values. The application of a R1 General Residential zoning would allow for more intensive development proposals to be lodged in the future

The Society will be making a submission to Council on the SP3 – Tourist Planning Proposal. We encourage community members to make submissions. Because time is short for submissions, an E-blast has been sent to members who are on our email list.

Two Radiata Plateau DAs refused

(continued from page 4)

The Commissioner also took on board the Society's concerns in terms of the adequacy of the Fauna and Flora assessments for the developments.

This is great news for the campaign for long term protection of Radiata Plateau but the DA on Lot 41 was approved in arguably one of the most sensitive areas of the Plateau (and where development has the biggest impact on residents). The Society is currently reviewing the court's decision in terms of Lot 41.

The case highlights the importance of LEP 2015 and that submissions from residents and community groups, such as Blue Mountains Conservation Society, can make a difference in terms of development applications.

landuse@bluemountains.org.au

You can become a member of Blue Mountains Conservation Society

- Post this Application Form with your cheque or money order to: Blue Mountains Conservation Society, PO Box 29, Wentworth Falls, NSW 2782, OR
- Join online at: www.bluemountains.org.au

(Use capitals please—even for email address)

Name(s) 1.
2.
3.

Address:
.....PC

Phone(s)

Email

I/We agree to support the aims and objectives of the Society as set out on reverse side of this membership application:

Please sign if named above.

Signature(s) 1.
2.
3.

MEMBERSHIP FEES (please circle one item)

Single \$35 Concession (Senior/Student) \$25

Household \$40 Household Concession \$30

Corporate (negotiable)

Membership (circled above) \$

Donation (tax deductible) \$

Bushwalkers: please add

\$20 per walker per annum. \$

TOTAL AMOUNT \$

Send my copy of Hut News by

Please tick box mail internet only

Would you like to be involved in any of the following activities or working groups? (Please underline):

Land use/development issues; Environmental Education; Threatened species issues; Website and social media; Plant nursery assistance; Bushcare; Publicity/photography; Water quality/sourcing studies; Administration;

ENQUIRIES: Phone 02 4757 1872

Email: membership@bluemountains.org.au

A BEQUEST: Please remember us in your Will.

The Law Society of NSW recommends the following wording: "I bequeath the sum of \$... to the Blue Mountains Conservation Society Inc. for its general purposes and declare that the receipt of the treasurer for the time being of the Blue Mountains Conservation Society shall be complete discharge to my executors in respect of any sum paid to the Blue Mountains Conservation Society".

BLUE MOUNTAINS CONSERVATION SOCIETY

Blue Mountains Conservation Society is a community organisation working to achieve the preservation and regeneration of the natural environment of the Greater Blue Mountains.

The Society believes that World Heritage status provides an opportunity for local community members to become custodians of the unique biodiversity and scenery of the Blue Mountains.

The Mission of the Society is to help conserve the natural environment of the Blue Mountains.

The Aims and Objectives of the Society are to:

- Disseminate and foster an understanding of the ideals of Conservation.
- Promote the need for ecological sustainability.
- Protect the natural environment—flora, fauna, habitat, water, land and air.
- Actively oppose those human activities which degrade or destroy the natural environment.
- Repair the adverse effects of human activities upon the environment.
- Encourage the love of the natural environment by conducting a regular program of bushwalks.
- Increase the pool of expert knowledge about the natural environment, through meetings, excursions, research and other activities.
- Provide information to the public on matters of Conservation, especially through the Conservation Hut at the Valley of the Waters, Wentworth Falls.
- Maintain close and friendly relations with like-minded groups.

SOCIETY EVENTS

The Society holds a number of general meetings and special events during the year. These are usually initiated by Management Committee and by various subcommittees within the Society. We also participate in events with other organisations.

We need volunteers to work on a subcommittee and a person to coordinate that subcommittee to run the events or organise Society participation.

If you are interested in finding out more, please contact Don Morison
8230 2116

donmorison@bluemountains.org.au

Recycled wall unit to nest boxes



I enjoyed the article in the March issue of Hut News, *The Recycled Bird Bath*, and I have a follow up to that:

As a resident of Wallerawang, which has an 'open' rubbish tip, I often have an eye out for useful pieces of timber discarded there. Recently I found a home-made pine wall unit.

Apart from a plywood back board, I could see the possibility of crafting some nest boxes from the solid pine.

The results may look a bit like WW2 pill boxes but I don't think that will deter prospective residents. These boxes joined one other (chain-sawed from a round of firewood) at the Barton Park Giant Tree Arboretum.

As far as birds are concerned, of four other nest boxes on our own property I have only seen one parrot exiting a box. However, we have housed a sugar glider in one box and some bees in another! It's obvious that, even far from Sydney, there is plenty of interest in the housing market.

I hadn't been able to see the glider again since our initial meeting, so I climbed a ladder and lifted the hinged lid of the box. There was no possum, but it had added some eucalypt leaves over the straw I had put there and - even though the box is over three metres from the ground - there were two frogs clinging into a corner join near the top of the box! (and some spider web).

With the recent wet weather another climbing feat has amazed us. A block of birdseed out on the limb of an almond tree about 2.5 metres from the ground has been attacked by several snails and slugs that, when the sun shines, retreat to the underside of the block. How do they get themselves out on a limb like that?

Besides all that our eucalypts have been invaded by a second wave of Christmas beetles and there have been unprecedented trails of hairy grubs up to seven metres long. Nature is so very full of surprises.

Peter Drinkall

Henry Lawson in the Blue Mountains

Celebrating the sesquicentennial of Henry Lawson's birth

When house painting on Mount Victoria early in '88 (8s. a day – trade was good then) I got my first cheque £1.7s, from the Bulletin. It was totally unexpected, for, being in constant work and getting what I thought such a grand outlet for my thoughts and feelings, I hadn't dreamed of receiving payment for literary work ... (Henry Lawson, "Pursuing Literature" in Australia 1898-9)

'Tis a wonderful time when these hours begin,
These long "small hours" of night,
When grass is crisp, and the air is thin,
And the stars come close and bright.
The moon hangs caught in a silvery veil,
From clouds of a steely grey,
And the hard, cold blue of the sky grows pale
In the wonderful Milky Way.

(Henry Lawson. An extract from "A May Night in the Mountains", May 1888)

35. AUSTRALIA'S "MOTHER" ROADS, Cullerin

Author John Steinbeck once said that America's mother road was Route 66 from Chicago to the suburbs of Los Angeles. Australia's mother roads must be the links from Sydney to Perth and Sydney to Melbourne, also known in part as the Great Western Highway and the Hume Highway.

The Great Western Highway has been modernised along much of its original route, largely obliterating memories of the personality of these roads in the earlier years of the lifetimes of some of us. But, at Cullerin in the Southern Tablelands, the modern motorway is well out of earshot to the south and the relationships of transport corridors we would now regard as primitive with the natural landforms and native vegetation are highly apparent.

In 1975, this writer trundled a laden pushbike from Goulburn to Yass, in the company of other self-styled environmentalists, along a two lane section of the Hume Highway which is now virtually deserted. One could hear the gear-boxes of the old lorries frustrating the truck drivers' efforts to control them as they struggled, resistant because of the steepness of the hills and not merely because we cyclists were delaying them. One could smell hot brake shoes, vaporising fuel and the leaves of the Eucalypts which grew virtually up to the edge of the bitumen.

The old service station was located right beside the highway, not in a remote service centre as are those on today's motorways. The petrol pumper was standing in a bush hat beside his bowser, offering us words of advice and a cheery wave.

The ways in which modern long-distance transport systems relate to the environment and the endless expansion of consumerism will be subject to long term debate. Even so, it is cause for reflection and sentimentality to see the natural landscape of Australia gradually reclaiming what served briefly as transport corridors during our country's so far relatively short time as a European-influenced nation.

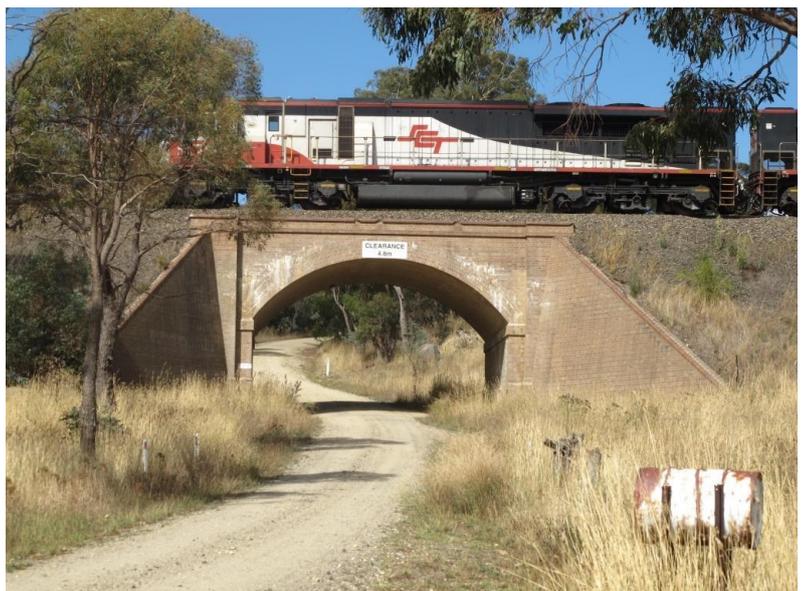
Images:

No more trimming for these tree branches overhanging what was once the Hume Highway - the tall trucks have gone elsewhere.

The motel, 10 km away at Gunning, is still open, but few of its prospective customers will be attracted by this once handsome advertisement.

A modern container train whisks across a handsome archway above an old section of road.

Photos by Christine Davies



HUT NEWS PHOTOS: the best of both worlds!

Members receive a hard copy of Hut News by post, unless requested otherwise. Some members say that they prefer reading the newsletter at leisure in B&W and then view the photos in colour on our website www.bluemountains.org.au

This "Blue Trail" is a collective description for sites in the western Blue Mountains that arouse natural or cultural interest or both. Most are only a short walk from roads or vehicular tracks. One day, a high quality walking path may link them.

BLUE MOUNTAINS CONSERVATION SOCIETY Inc: BUSHWALKING ACTIVITIES

Membership of the bushwalking group is open to Society members. The BMCS Bushwalking Guide which explains the numbered grades can be found on the Society's website www.bluemountains.org.au or can be posted on request. For more information call Maurice Kerkham 4739 4942, mobile 04024 02783, email mauricekerkham@hotmail.com or write to PO Box 29, Wentworth Falls 2782. **Late changes to the program will be published on the website.**

SATURDAY WALKS: Usually a full day longer walk at a faster pace. Bring morning tea, lunch and adequate water. If you are a new walker to Saturday walks, before attending contact the designated contact person or the Group Co-ordinator Harold Thompson harold.thompson@bigpond.com 6355 1762 or mobile 0409 010 737

Saturday Walks driver reimbursement: *In an effort to ensure that car drivers are adequately compensated for the use of their vehicles a driver reimbursement policy applies* (Check www.bluemountains.org.au Saturday Walks page for details)

- Apr 15 **Burra Korain.** Leader Harold 0409010737. Meet Blackheath Stn Car Park 8.30am. 13km. Grade 3-4. Map Mt Wilson
Apr 22 **Victoria Falls to Pierces Pass.** 10km. Grade 3. Mt Wilson map. Mike 4757 3660. Mount Victoria Stn car park, 8 am.
Apr 29 **Gardens of Stone.** A new adventure of discovery – off track, part exploratory, wilderness area so party size limited. Dependent on 4WD availability. Book early. Hugh 04233 09854 after 8pm. Hue.s@optusnet.com.au
May 6 **Fire Trail No 7. Sunnyside Ridge Road.** 8km. Grade 3. Cullen Bullen map. Bob 04089 47325. Wentworth Falls car park, 8 am.
May 13 **Gardens of Stone.** A new adventure of discovery – off track, part exploratory, wilderness area so party size limited. Dependent on 4WD availability. Book early. Hugh 04233 09854 after 8pm. Hue.s@optusnet.com.au

MONDAY LEISURE WALKS: Short Day walks of 3-5 hours, suitable for walkers of an average fitness. Bring morning tea and lunch and adequate water. The Group Co-ordinator is Keith Dorrian, 4736 1010, 04111 62345, keithdor53@hotmail.com

- Apr 10 **Burrumatta Falls, Kurrajong Heights.** Meet Springwood Station car park 8.15 am. Car pool fare \$7. Maurice 4739 4942 or 0402 402 783. Grade 2.
Apr 17 **Easter Monday, no walk.**
Apr 24 **Pierces Pass to Grose Valley,** Bells Line of Road. Descend into Grose Valley and return. Mount Victoria Station 8.50 am, car pool fare \$5. Chris Smith 4787 6979. Grade 3.
May 1 **Darwins Walk, Wentworth Falls, then on to Rocket Point, Mulherans track to Lincoln Rock and return.** Wentworth Falls Station 8.45 am. Kate Litchfield 4759 1943. Grade 3.
May 8 **Victoria Falls,** Mount Victoria. Pleasant walk down to Falls and return. Mount Victoria Station 9.50 am. Car pool. Tracy 04343 62611. Grade 3.
May 15 **Mount Solitary** (long day). Car pool to Golden Stairs then down stairs onto Solitary and return. Katoomba Station car park 8.50 am. Car pool \$5. Wayne and Mary Read 4784 1060. Grade 3.
May 22 **BUS TRIP: Dambusters.** We will visit Avon, Cordeaux and Warragamba Dams. Fare \$12, book and pay Maurice 4739 4942. Springwood Westpac car park 7.55am. Tracy 04343 62611. Grade 2.

THURSDAY PLEASURE WALKS: Walks 2-3 hours conducted at a leisurely pace to suit walkers on the day. Bring morning tea, adequate water and lunch if noted. Group Co-ordinator is Beverley Thompson, 4757 2076, denfenella12@bigpond.com

- Apr 13 **Dam Buster Bus Trip—3 dams, Cordeaux, Nepean, Warragamba.** Short walks, lovely views, interesting sites. Book and pay Tracy 0434 362 611 Meet Springwood Car Park, behind Westpac Bank. 8.00am. Leader Tracy 0434 362 611. Take lunch. Grade 1
Apr 20 **Mystery Walk at Mount Wilson.** Meet Mount Victoria Station 9.50 am. Car pool \$5. Take lunch. Tracy 0434 362 611. Grade 2.
Apr 27 **Parramatta History Walk.** St Johns Cathedral and cemetery, Medical and Nurses Museum, riverside walk and Female Factory. Meet indicator board Parramatta Station 9.30 am. Dinia 0412 879 295. Grade 1.
May 4 **Horseshoe Falls, Hazelbrook.** Meet Hazelbrook shopping centre car park 8.45 am. Car pool. Take lunch. Beverley 4757 2076. Grade 2.
May 11 Botanical Gardens and Mrs Macquarie's Chair, Sydney. Meet top of escalators, Central Station 9.30 am. Take lunch. Maurice 4739 4942. Grade 1.

Visit <https://www.facebook.com/bmcslongerbushwalks/>

Welcome to new members

Tracy Allen
Heidi Allen
Jon Allen
Jessica Allen
Bronte Allen
Graeme Perrett
Paul Irwin
Gisela Schumacher
Merilynne Gee
Damien Lynch

Blue Mountains Orchids

Ben Jasiak and Sabine Hanisch were able to get a copy of Isobel Kendall Bowden's orchid list which she recorded and painted over 60 years ago and have been lucky to find most of the orchids that Isobel found, except for some spider orchids which they haven't been able to locate. They have also been able to add some more orchids to Isobel's list. Ben and Sabine will soon be publishing a book with over 100 orchids they have found growing from Lapstone to Mount Victoria.

For some beautiful orchid photography, go to the facebook page "Blue Mountains Orchids by Sabine Hanisch" <https://www.facebook.com/Blue-Mountains-Orchids-by-Sabine-Hanisch-951422824899640/>

Calochilus campestris

