

HUT NEWS

"Nature Conservation Saves for Tomorrow's People"

September Guest Speaker

Guest speaker at our general meeting on Friday 25 September will be Haydn Washington who will talk about and show some fabulous slides of Mount Genowlan and Airly — "The 300 Sisters".

Haydn is very active and well respected in the environmental movement. Among other things, he is head of the Colo Committee, and an Australian Conservation Foundation Councillor.

The meeting at the Conservation Hut starts at 7.30 pm. Visitors are welcome.

Next Kids' Club Activity

Saturday 12 September — All about reptiles! See close up a carpet python, lizards and a feeding snake. Find out how a snake can swallow prey which is bigger than its head. See for yourself that snakes are not slimy. (See page 4.)

Massive Overdevelopment

A development proposal by the Catholic Church Authority could see at least four hundred new home sites on subdivisions within the St. Columba's site. As well as a dramatic increase in traffic movements on Hawkesbury Road and nearby streets, a development on this scale would have a drastic affect on the immediate environment and the catchment for the Hawkesbury Nepean River.

There will be a public meeting on Friday 18 September at 7.30 at Ellison Public School hall, Hawkesbury Road, Springwood. Members are encouraged to attend. Enq. 4751.6046.

Farewell to Graham Alcorn

Graham Alcorn's farewell was a joyous occasion, with the chapel filled to capacity.

There were many tributes, by his brother Wilson, from National Parks, local poets, the writers of Veroona, B.M. Conservation Society, Bird Observers, and the Mountains jazz fraternity.. All felt a bond of friendship through Graham.

A wake was held at the Conservation Hut, with catering superbly provided by The Hut staff. To quote some words from one of Graham's poems, "There was gormandizing along the line, and now was the time for dancing and singing."

Wilson showed some of the dancing ability of the Alcorn brothers. There was jazz, songs and poetry. Graham would have approved of the day.— a Bird Man.

STPs Rehabilitation

Sydney Water is proposing to rehabilitate three sites previously used as Sewage Treatment Plants — Wentworth Falls, North Katoomba and South Katoomba.

All three sites are located in or adjacent to the National Park and have

Digger Cooper Reserve

Digger Cooper Reserve, a lovely piece of bushland between the highway and the railway on the Leura side of the Sorenson Bridge, has been on our project list for some time. Here is a short progress report.

In April the name was approved by the Geographical Names Board.

In August Frances Howley started working on the project. Frances is preparing a Plan of Management.

At the August management committee meeting funds were approved to hire a contractor to complete a plan of management for a rest stop at the western end of the reserve. After this is done, we will be applying for grant money to rehabilitate the site and hopefully build a rest stop if it is approved by Council.

In the meantime we are having monthly bushcare days, on the Sunday after general meetings. **The next work day is on Sunday 27 September.** Meet 9 am at Digger Cooper Reserve. Bring morning tea and gloves. (Ross Coster 4759.1247).

contributed to degradation of waterways and weed infestation. It is important that Consoc's concerns for adequately rehabilitating these sites are heard.

A public meeting will be held on Thursday, September 3, at 7 pm at Wentworth Falls School of Arts. **This meeting may not be widely publicised, so please spread the word.** If is advisable to ring Yuva Upadhyaya of Sydney Water on 1800 995 670 to indicate your intention of attending.

Open Days at Local STPs

Since the end of 1997, Sydney Water Corporation was involved in a successful community consultation process to choose a preferred option for the upgrade of sewerage systems at Medlow Bath, Blackheath and Mt Victoria.

There was strong support for a sewerage system which maintains environmental flows within the catchment. A connection to the tunnel at Katoomba was seen as making waste water a problem for another community (Winmalee) rather than managing it locally. New technologies would be used to treat effluent to highest standards, opening possibilities for re-use within the catchment.

Following the resignation of SWC's



managing director the process seems to be put on hold. An inquiry into causes of the recent Sydney drinking water contamination is likely to include a re-assessment of safety issues. SWC will inform the community with a third community newsletter distributed at the end of August.

Independent of the outcome, SWC invites residents to two open days at

local STPs: Blackheath on 5 September and Mount Victoria on 12 September, both days 10 am to 2 pm. Residents are encouraged to come along.

Letter to the Prime Minister

Dear Mr Howard, (Aug 12, 1998)

I'm not really sure if you're the person I should be writing to. Nor am I sure that you've got any say in this particular matter. But, all the same, I feel that my opinion needs to be heard.

I am an active member of the Blue Mountains Conservation Society. I attend Korowal School, and continuously push school environmental matters, and lecture people whenever they litter (and, believe me, I do a lot of that).

I wish to extend to you my thoughts on the Jabiluka uranium mine matter.

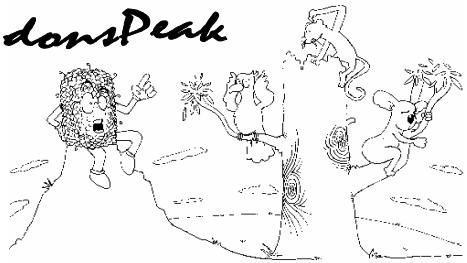
Frankly, I hate the idea. I've seen countless photos of the site, and it strikes me as an extremely beautiful location for a national park, a camping ground, a bushwalking track, maybe even a luxury hotel. But not a hole in the ground with men in white chemical suits pulling fluorescent rocks out of it.

If you could please make every effort in your power to stop the mine, I would be greatly obliged.

—Belinda Coster (age 13)
(Good on you, Belinda! Keep up the good work.)

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Why Aren't They Listened To?

The thought-provoking letter by Gordon Hocking in August *Hut News* focuses on an ever relevant question: Should lifestyle or population numbers be our main target in preventing ecological deterioration?

In our advocacy on Draft LEP97, BMCS argues that the maximum future population being considered for the Blue Mountains is quite unsustainable ecologically. True as that is, I believe that much of our work should be aimed at changing lifestyles.

Ted Trainer, a Social Politics lecturer at Uni of NSW, has shown that you can live as well as most of us do, for only a fraction of the ecological impact and expenditure. Ted's property at East Hills in Sydney is not connected to mains water, sewage or electricity — he has made it self-contained in an eco-friendly way as well as growing some of his own food; second hand and recycled items abound.

He says he supports the 'Conserver Society' — he and his partner live on the property for a combined cost of \$180 a week.

In Katoomba, Christopher, Jody and their house-mates are using some of Ted's ideas to develop a group household under the name, 'The Caretakers'. In their house, 'grey water', after it has been used for washing or cooking, goes on to flush the toilet, water the garden, etc. Even in the Katoomba winter, they can grow enough food to keep their meal bill down to \$25 a week per person.

We certainly need to pay more attention to those who can demonstrate ecologically friendly lifestyle alternatives.

Credit Where We'd Like It to be Due

In this column last month, I wrote that more money to upgrade the Highway outside the National Park should help curtail inappropriate discussion about new highway routes. The day after the newsletter was posted, the Carr Government announced \$360 million over the next 12 years for just that purpose. We still await the details of the Carr Government's rail plans.

Still, this chain of events could be said to demonstrate the telepathic powers of BMCS members. — *Don Morison*.

Membership Enquiries: The Society is keen to have new members who are concerned about the welfare of the Blue Mountains natural environment. Contact membership secretary, Ross Coster: Work (02)4759.1247, Home 4759.1837, Fax 4759.1095, Email haytech@pnc.com.au, or write to PO Box 29, Wentworth Falls 2782.

Cr. Carol Gaul, who spoke at Blue Mountains First launch, is not a member of that group.

Badgerys Creek: State of Play

The Badgerys Creek airport proposal is on life-support at the moment. The patient is laying there, terminally ill (we hope!) and increasingly bereft of friends. Unfortunately neither Federal political leader seems to have the guts or the nous to pull the plug.

Every western Sydney council except Liverpool has dropped its support for the proposal. Both State Government and Opposition have rejected it and are in a position to deny the necessary road, rail and water infrastructure, making it prohibitive for any Federal Government to cover on-site and off-site costs.

Finance Minister John Fahey has come out against the proposal and Environment Minister Hill's enthusiasm seems to be cooling. The Prime Minister himself has been mute on the issue. Only Transport Minister Vaile still seems to be going through the motions, mouthing his usual cliches about Badgerys Creek being the Government's preferred option and the EIS process being "rigorous and transparent" and chanting the '63,000 jobs' mantra.

The Opposition Leader Mr Beazley seems, if anything, more supportive of the proposal than Mr Vaile: "Sydney is going to have a second airport (*whether we like it or not?*) ... it cannot be avoided", he told Graham Richardson on 2GB recently. He is also content to ride with the Government's EIS despite having no qualms about pulling the plug on the EIS for the replacement nuclear reactor at Lucas Heights.

The Government has decided to put off its decision until after the coming federal election, maybe well into next year, taking comfort no doubt from Federal Labor's preparedness to tail the Liberals on this issue.

Both parties seem more comfortable clinging to this outdated and untenable proposal and pandering to their respective inner city representatives than listening to more enlightened opinion across Sydney's geographical divide which calls for a second, maybe even replacement, airport outside an already overpolluted and overcrowded Sydney basin.

For the Howard Government, the Liberal backbenchers of western Sydney, it would seem, are expendable. For the Beazley Opposition, their Labor counterparts have a lesser value than the Labor power brokers and number crunchers further east.

Failing a pre-election turnaround by either, voters who take this issue as seriously as it deserves will have little choice but to consider voting for one of the minor parties. — *Colin Anderson, Mountains Against Badgerys Creek*.

Wollemia nobilis

On Tuesday 18 August a *Wollemia nobilis* (Wollemi Pine) was planted by Olive Noble (in the absence of son David who discovered the pine in a remote part of Wollemi N.P.) at Mount Tomah Botanic Gardens, with due pomp and ceremony, and with the backing of

members of the "Woody Pears" bushwalking group.

Welcome to New Members

Rebekah Somerville and Connie Ramseye, Katoomba

Brian Dean, Blaxland

Lisa Adcock, Wentworth Falls

Emmanuel Sakellis, Woodford

Anne Pemberton, Faulconbridge

Ms Jo Ridley, Leura

Vera Costello and Michael De-Campo, Katoomba

Jill Rattray, Leura

Anne Bonett, Hazelbrook

Stephen, Elena, Daniel and David Fortescue, Glenbrook

Rudi Christen, Glenbrook

Robyn Collier, Springwood

Alternative Tax Solutions

(from Adele Doust, Australian Greens candidate for Macquarie, member of BMCS)

The Greens are promoting the introduction of eco-taxes, which aim to address the problem of resources being consumed at an unsustainable rate, disadvantaging future generations and often polluting the environment. These have been introduced in a number of European countries. They are a positive solution since, unlike a GST, they tax those who can afford to pay; they tax areas previously untaxed; they provide polluting industries with an incentive to clean up their act; and they help reduce environmentally harmful practices.

Taxing the use of primary resources and incorporating the costs of resource use and disposal into prices would encourage efficient resource use and reduce the "throw-away mentality" with its resultant pollution. The Greens promote the introduction of incentives and penalties for industry to encourage the adoption of waste minimising practices and the production of recyclable goods. There could also be tax incentives to businesses for the transition to non-polluting processes and technologies.

Governments at all levels need to start looking "outside the square". The proposed reduction of the diesel fuel tax, for example, encourages dependence upon diesel for power production and transport instead of assisting people in adopting sustainable technologies such as solar or wind power and getting our freight back onto the rails.

There are many solutions available to government which would address problems with the current tax system and the environmental issues which are currently disregarded or ignored. It just takes a commitment to the long term good of our country as a whole rather than short term political gain.

Greens' Campaign Launch:

On Friday 18 September, at Gearin's Hotel, Katoomba, at 8 pm. — Introducing Adele Doust, The Greens candidate for Macquarie.

Entry by donation. Entertainment to be announced. This will be a smoke-free function.

AUTUMN QUEEN VICTORIA NURSING HOME

for Cheryl Kirton

It's not a real mist.
You can see quite a way through it.
It's more a soft grey light,
and a stillness.
The autumn leaves drift down.
The call of a Currawong comes clearly
from a long way off.

It's not a real rain.
Occasionally a leaf moves
when a raindrop falls upon it.
Looking out the windows
of the Queen Victoria Nursing Home,
that's the only indication
that you may get damp
if you venture outside.

These Old World trees,
planted years ago,
are big, adult, and now at their best ...
leaves turning red, yellow, gold,
a canopy of colour, then falling, drifting down like butterflies,
carpeting the lawn.
I hope they don't sweep them up.

Oh, to step out of this wheelchair
and walk among the leaves.

Graham Alcorn, May 1998.

In the Bush

Last issue I wrote about the Wollongambe Crater and its general location and appearance. About 5 km NE of it is Gooch Crater. This is about a kilometre up a short unnamed creek which runs south to the river. Unlike Wollongambe Crater this depression fits the crater concept. A circular wall of pagoda topped cliffs holds a swamp about 100 metres in diameter.

A few moments reflection would make the observer realise a celestial missile would not sculpture vertical cliffs and an inspection of the 'crater' floor or swamp would show that its origin was due to a cliff collapse damming the small creek. Over time silt and debris levelled the area until the creek resumed its flow over the artificial spillway.

Nevertheless the deeply eroded pagoda-topped outcrops offer dramatic shapes and profiles for the photographer and artist. Gargoyles carved to wafer thinness and windblown to shapes no sculptor could create are visible. Why didn't Aboriginal "yobbos" and children snap off or interfere with these natural creations. Was it respect or indifference? In our culture some people, adult and child, can't resist snapping off the unusual.

Down at floor level, away from the howling westerlies which reduce

the vegetation to heathland, grow trees and ferns of relatively massive proportions. The Lithgow Christmas fire also failed to penetrate and many shrubs are creeping back along moisture

lines radiating out from this oasis.

Some maps don't show the name. The grid reference for it is 458947 on the Wollongambe sheet. A Lithgow sheet is also a necessity to find the ridge road leading out to the area.

On the way back a short detour to Bald Hill Trig will give you a 360 degrees view over the Newnes Plateau and embraces the vast sand mining scar to be seen to the south.

As this was July the only vegetation which I readily recall were the numerous waratahs budding vigorously in the burnt

out surrounds and a rather eye-catching Olearia with an oak like leaf (*quercifolia* is its species name). Fairley and Moore describe it thus, "This small plant is regarded as a species 'at risk' because of its limited range of distribution. Its name is derived from the similarity of its leaves to the Oak (*Qercus*) ... **Habitat:** sheltered forest, on hillsides, often in drainage lines. **Distribution:**

History of Our Walking Tracks

Part 7. (Extracts from Jim Smith's Draft Historical Report for the Walking Track Heritage Study.)

Walking tracks constructed for environmental education

The Blackheath Rotary Club, during the period 1965 to 1968, constructed the first new walking track in the upper Blue Mountains since 1941. The Coachwood Glen Nature Trail was a 'first' in another way also. It was designed as an environmental education walk, with plaques giving the names and information about trees and shrubs. These have unfortunately disappeared and have not been renewed.

Volunteer work, centred on the area around the Valley of the Waters, was carried out by the Katoomba and District Wildlife Conservation Society (KDWCS) with some assistance from other groups. (KDWCS later became Blue Mountains Conservation Society.) It involved the restoration of old tracks that had fallen into disrepair.

The KDWCS began in 1961 and by 1963 had started the renovation of the old Valley of the Waters tea room as an environmental education centre and meeting place. This work and the landscaping of the area around 'The Hut' consumed considerable time of the society's volunteer workers.

The society's biggest track project was begun in 1969. This was the reclearing of the track, originally constructed over the period 1898 to 1910, connecting the National Pass track to West Street. It had probably not been maintained since the late 1930s. As it had never been given an official name the society christened it "The Nature Trail". This work took some five years to complete. Apart from a contract between the 530A committee and Kevin Browne for \$170 worth of work, the entire project was completed by volunteer labour. A feature of the project was the set of notes interpreting the environment along the track prepared by Isobel Bowden. The Nature Trail project was entered into the 1972 Daily Telegraph—Bank of New South Wales Operation Earth Day competition. This was described as "Australia's largest Conservation Contest". It won the regional prize of \$65 and another \$200 for third prize in the state.

(An illustrated edition of the Blue Mountains Heritage Track Study will be launched at the Conservation Hut during September.)

Endemic in central Blue Mountains between Wentworth Falls and Clarence.

— The Bunyip.

ERSKINE CREEK

John Hill.

Quiet stream leafy green.
Wave lets quicken and march around the polished rocks.
They meet ... then fade to stillness.
Rain falls ... Frogs call.
Tiny domes form on the river, and drift, until they are stuck,
whereby they cease to exist.
Some domes collect under ledges just to live a bit longer.
Here populations gather, coalesce and mill.
Factions form, fight, associate and mingle, while the frogs
provide the rhythm.
Some leaves raft and sail on the surface.
Others rest a while on the sand.
Still others dance on their toes, and sway ... and hiss to the
swirling breeze.
Each one alive and connected, finally leading to a silver
column standing proudly in time.
Demanding and getting respects from all life forms except

Saving the Bush from Us

Part 10:

Health in Bushland— Damage Control

Background: Over the last nine months we have looked at our own actions on our place whether it is big or small, and, how we can reduce the damage to bushland. What happens within the boundaries of our fenceline will impact on the whole. Being us, and being meddlers (most of us anyway) it is inevitable that we do not know how to put back the pieces. However we can minimise our impact and thus practice damage control.

Review: Our Design: We think of ourselves and our home within a circle of vegetation. Immediately around the house, disturbance is inevitable with footpaths, cars, vegetable garden, clothesline, flower garden and so on. Our immediate yard is our recycling zone for water, organic refuse, paper and other junk. We are transforming organic matter to humus and filtering our greywater on the first stage of its cleansing. Quite a lot of the vegetation here will be low because we want the sun to warm the house and not use too high levels of fossil fuels.

Our next ring, just beyond this, will be orchard and extensive vegetables if our land is large and smaller exotics and indigenous, if it is small. This should provide us with some sticks for fires or stakes for plants, and leaf litter and mulch. The plants can be taller and again our objective is to clean the water and hold soil and let it develop.

Our third ring around us, will be our indigenous vegetation. We need to walk through this occasionally to smell, encourage a small plant, see who has come to live there, and pull out any weeds. Through it all we can have ponds, logs, grassed paths, shady places, meditation rocks — in fact where ever a lizard loves to be, so do we.

Careful and protracted observation of natural ecosystems gives us the clues to design and function on our land. This is the creative bit. There is no landscape architect or gardener who knows your land as well as you do. They don't see it under the full moon, nor where the mists come from, or the cooling breeze at the end of a hot summer's day. You can adapt your plants and paths to make it part of your creative self. This rough design adapted to the orientation, slope and shape of our land will give soil water and species protection and not too much work once it is well established. Our outer circles will merge with neighbours and provide corridors of and for wildlife.

Review: Our Actions: We accept responsibility for soil erosion and soil care; also for the amount of water we use and where it goes after it leaves us. The soil and water we process together are the basis of supplying some of our food and other needs and take the stress off roads, chemicals and land somewhere else. We plant what does not encroach, or shed seed to invade because we want to enjoy

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

SEPTEMBER

- 19 (Sat) **Committee Meeting** 9 am. (Venue to be confirmed)
25 (Fri) **General Meeting at The Hut.** 7.30 pm. Guest speaker Haydn Washington (see page 1).

OCTOBER

- 22 (Thu) **Committee Meeting** 7 pm, Mid Mountains Community Centre.
30 (Fri) **General Meeting at The Hut.** (Guest speaker Shelley Burgin)

CHILDREN'S ACTIVITIES (Parents are welcome to come along.)

SEPTEMBER

- 12 (Sat) **Kids' Club — All about Reptiles!** Meet 2 pm, 14 Gates Avenue, Katoomba. Contact Jessica 4757.2783. (See Page 1).

OCTOBER (in the school holidays)

- 07 (Wed) **Kids' Club — Visit to the Tip.** (What happens to our rubbish? See a car being crushed! How does the weighbridge work?) Meet 10 am, Katoomba Tip entrance. ☎ Jessica 4757.2783 (wear strong footwear).

BUSHCARE (Tools provided — bring morning tea and gloves. Contact Blue Mountains City Council to find out about other bushcare groups in your area.)

SEPTEMBER

- 15 (Tue) **Valley of the Waters Bushcare Group.** Meet 9 am at the Conservation Hut, Wentworth Falls. Contact Jessica 4757.2783. **IF WET, COME ON THE FOLLOWING TUESDAY.**

- 27 (Sun) **Digger Cooper Reserve Bushcare Group.** Meet 9 am at the Reserve. Contact Ross Coster 4759.1247. See editorial on page 1.

OCTOBER

- 20 (Tue) **Valley of the Waters Bushcare Group.** (Details as for September)

NOVEMBER

- 01 (Sun) **Digger Cooper Reserve Bushcare Group.** (Details as for September).

BUSHWALKS (Usually day walks — bring lunch and minimum 1 litre water)

Bushwalks have been graded: 1-3 easy; 4-7 medium; 8-10 hard. People coming by train or in need of transport should contact the leader.

SEPTEMBER

- 06 (Sun) **Undercliff/Overcliff Walk.** Meet at Wentworth Falls Station at 9.30. Grade M4. Contact Terry Flynn 4787.6918.

- 12 (Sat) **Roberts Pass.** Meet lowest carpark, Fairmont Resort at 9.30 am. Grade M7. Contact Les Coyne 4757.3327.

- 20 (Sun) **Temples of Doom.** Meet Mount Victoria Station at 9.30 am. Grade M5. Contact Judy Dervin 4787.1191. (**Note changed from Saturday 19th**)

- 26 (Sat) **Mounts Airly and Genowlan.** (Visit the 300 sisters!). Meet at Mount Victoria Station at 9 am (cars to Capertee). Contact Marion Hawley 4787.1933. Fairly easy, but be prepared for a long day.

OCTOBER

- 03 (Sat) **Old Linden Sawmill.** Meet Linden Fruit Market 9.30 am. Grade M5. Contact Barbie Wylie 4784.1954. (If fine bring BBQ food.)

- 10 (Sat) **Walls Cave.** Meet Blackheath Station commuter carpark 9.30 am. Contact Philippa Finner 4787.6436. Grade M4.

(To be advised next month)

- 25 (Sun) **Radiata (Elphinstone) Plateau.** Meet at the Explorers' Tree at 9.30 am. Contact Jim Wallace 4784.3305. Grade M7.

LEISURE WALKS (Usually morning walks — bring a drink and morning tea.)

SEPTEMBER

- 07 (Mon) **Mount Victoria Mystery Walk.** Meet Mount Victoria Station at 9.30. Contact Rosemary Butler 02.6355.2292

- 14 (Mon) **Explorers Tree to Old Ford Reserve (Part of Six Foot Track).** Meet 8.45 am, Explorers Tree. Contact Mervyn Bird 4787.7959 (Long steep descent, cars being organised to ride up)

- 21 (Mon) **Lockley's Pylon.** Meet 9.30 outside Leura School (cnr. GWH and Mount Hay Road). Contact Kees Putting 4759.1958. BRING LUNCH.

- 28 (Mon) **Grand Canyon.** Meet 9.30 Blackheath Neighbourhood Centre. Contact Lee Tredennick 4757.4030. HARDER WALK: steep descent and ascent.

OCTOBER

- 12 (Mon) **Mount Tomah Botanic Gardens.** Meet 9.30 Blackheath Neighbourhood Centre. Contact Lee Tredennick 4757.4030. BBQ lunch at the gardens. (BYO).

- 26 (Mon) **Gladstone, Moya Lookouts, Cathedral Rock.** Meet 8.30 Lower Carpark, Fairmont. Contact Jan Cutler 4784.3079. (BBQ lunch).

our gardens and not be a slave to them.

The End: I want the children who follow me to enjoy everything I have enjoyed in our wonderful Blue Mountains. With the losses that have occurred in my lifetime, I feel it is my work to constantly replace and repair. It is fun and a

privilege to have land to care for. It is a constant excitement and challenge to push the boundaries of sustainability.

Thank you for reading this and I hope you enjoy caring for your piece of earth.

— Ro Morrow