

**THE SYDNEY BUSHWALKER** is a monthly bulletin of matters of interest to The Sydney Bush Walkers Inc, PO Box 431 Milsons Point 1565. To advertise in this magazine, please contact the Business Manager.

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**THE SYDNEY BUSH WALKERS INCORPORATED** was founded in 1927. Club meetings are held every Wednesday evening at 8 pm at Kirribilli Neighbourhood Centre, 16 Fitzroy Street, Kirribilli (near Milsons Point Railway Station). Visitors and prospective members are welcome any Wednesday.

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## APRIL 1999

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## Editorial

Somehow I have ended up as editor of this prestigious journal. I don't know whether it was Patrick's persuasive talents or his offer of a complimentary set of steak knives that persuaded me, but I am sure that I will find it difficult to continue the excellent standard that Patrick has maintained in the three years that he filled the position of editor. Thank you Patrick.

A large part of the March annual general meeting was taken up with the two motions regarding the future of the club's Kangaroo Valley property Coolana, and it was obvious from the lively discussion that many SBW members are not fully aware of the history of our land and of how and why it was acquired.

As that meeting decided to form a committee to investigate the future of Coolana and as the committee's recommendations are to form the basis of a ballot of all members, it is important that all members be fully informed. At the meeting Bill Holland circulated a Coolana fact sheet which succinctly answers most of the questions asked by members and that document is reprinted here.

A short article by Alex Colley explains the origin of the Era fund which formed the basis of the Coolana acquisition fund, and also outlines early SBW conservation policy. Three letters re Coolana, received from members, are also printed. These are in favor of the status quo but letters expressing contrary views will be published as received. The whole should assist to facilitate an informed debate on Coolana.

## COOLANA SUBCOMMITTEE FORMED.

Further to the resolution carried at the February general meeting and ratified at the AGM in March, the Coolana subcommittee has been established.

The first committee meeting was held on April 15<sup>th</sup> prior to the general meeting and a

full report, which includes a list of committee members, is to be found on page 13.

## NEW CLUB PO BOX NUMBER

Please note that the SBW PO Box number is now:

**PO Box 431 Milsons Point NSW 1565.**

The old city box will be retained for 2 months.

The telephone number is also to be changed to a transferable number to permit it to be shared between club committee members when the normal club telephone contact is not available.

Full details will be published later.

## Vale Tine Matthews

It is with deep regret that we advise members of the death, on Sunday April 18, of SBW member Tine Matthews, after a short illness.

Tine was born of Dutch parents in Badung, Sumatra and came to Australia in 1944. She was a member of the Melbourne Bushwalking Club during her university days, joining the SBW in 1953. She was a very active walker and skier and met her husband, Don, on a Christmas walk in the Snowy Mountains.

She was a keen club member and was a regular worker at the monthly magazine collating evenings. Tine will be greatly missed by all of her friends and our sincere sympathy is extended to her family.

## Letters to the Editor.

### **FIRE SALE OF COOLANA** by Gretel Woodward

Since the late 1920's SBW has been a club whose main objective has been to provide top quality bush walking for its members and because of this the club has attracted (in the main) like minded people with high ideals and principles. Wherever possible they have endeavoured to protect the bush that gives us all so much pleasure, by accepting and adhering to the rules of the bushwalking code i.e. leave nothing but footprint, and to protect where possible a small portion of this precious bushland for the future - Blue Gum, Myuna Creek, Garrawarra, North Era and the clubs present icon, Coolana.

The money raised by the club for all these projects was for conservation and conservation only and the sale of each one was because it could be added to a National Park. If Coolana is to be sold, the only purchaser that would be acceptable to the people who raised the money and who have given their time and effort is NPWS and the block added to Morton NP. Sale to anyone else means development. The proceeds would need to be used for the purchase of another key block adjoining a National Park or reserve, otherwise everything the club has stood for over its proud 72 years history will be negated.

The Quakers' property next door which was purchased at the same time and for the same purpose has also to be taken into account, as the wildlife corridor that is so important runs from the wall of Tallowa Dam, Morton NP and crown reserves, through Coolana to the Quakers property and Chakola Adventure Camp and any break in this chain will have a devastating effect on the conservation corridor.

The other consideration and a very important one is that most of the original contributors are still alive and if the club chooses to go down the "sale to a developer" path in complete contradiction to its past aims, principles and integrity, then undoubtedly these funds could morally be withdrawn by the contributors at their current market value to use as **only they** see appropriate.

One young prospective, only a month ago while listening to a discussion on the future of Coolana stated: "I cannot believe that a club that is so fortunate as to own a property so close to Sydney with natural bush, river frontage and an area large enough for lots of camp sites and lots of walks, where a piece of protected bushland is a rare treasure indeed and should be preserved and cherished for the next generation and that a few members with different ideals have no right to even think about selling."

Those members who consider another property or a country house more appropriate can get one the same way that the money was raised for conservation purposes. Raise your own funds from interested members who are willing to put their money where their mouths are and willing to do all of the maintenance required by the investment, whatever that may be. Why would a bushwalking club want a country house? A retirement cottage for when they are older?

The members who have never been to Coolana during the club's 30 year ownership and enjoyed the beauty and tranquillity of this place have missed out on a special experience that they could have on their own property, at anytime, with their family, just on their own or with a group of friends.

## Dear Editor

As a non-active Bushwalker who was mainly active between 1965 and 1977, I attended the AGM because of my belief in the relevance of Coolana to all members, active and non active, past and present.

I visited Coolana with Dot Butler to inspect and made subsequent private trips with Roger Gowing, Neville Page, and others, on dates which are lost in the mists of time, on investigations up and down the property. It is hard to realize that it was more than 30 years ago. I even met the original owner driving his truck along the road on the first step up from the river, who said he would never sell to Bushwalkers with all of their guns.

The little weatherboard building, which burnt down, was not much larger than 12 red telephone boxes. On one trip I met a Water Board surveyor who pointed out the highest water level that we would ever encounter. He waved majestically to the river flats and said that we had a bargain.

There was a friendly resident nudist that Dot and I encountered in the large overhang on our property beneath the a gravel pit which is now overgrown by trees. He was there for years and then he vanished. Dot and I cleared his junk away.

At the AGM I was amazed to learn that many of the present membership have never been to Coolana. We are Bushwalkers not Bushweedeers I was told by someone.

The land is used by many members who never get to the club, particularly the Canberra flock and us older non-active crowd, who go midweek. The walk down is really not difficult, even with the track in disrepair.

Coolana is not costing us anything, it was bought with donations and trust funds especially designated for conservation, and the expenses are covered, with the interest from investments purposely put aside. The property is being kept neat and tidy with

little expense and who cares what the land value is we didn't buy it to make a profit!

When it was bought, there was little money around, yet nowadays with cars everywhere, longer breaks in the working week there is even more need to keep it available to all our members forever. Those heavenly Bushweedeers should be canonised.

Maybe there should also be a Mountain House, fire and vandal proofed of course, with large land attached where we could all camp sometimes and possibly hold a reunion. That would be a good idea. Special donations could be collected for this and I would gladly contribute towards a fund if started. And also money put aside similar to the Coolana Fund for the painting, insurance, gardening, general maintenance and running costs and with someone on the committee to make reservations and to organize working bees. Sound like a good idea as nothing unites a club more, than fundraising for a worthwhile cause.

I remember during the Coolana fund raising, a young slip of a girl sold \$20 lightweight sleeping bags and managed to raise \$1000, a huge sum in those days but I must confess that I had quite forgotten that Marie Byles, Dot and Ira Butler among others, had donated large amounts of money. Memories do fade as we age.

It was a long and hot AGM, but it was nice to see old friends again but, unfortunately as usual, there was no time to meet new members.

Cheers

Owen Marks.

## WEEKEND PACK FOR SALE

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Contact: Peter Dalton. Phone 9957 4907 (H)

## A Prospective's view of Coolana

By Pam Irving.

Just a few thoughts on the Coolana situation. I am new to SBW (four months as a prospective) and perhaps that puts me in a position to be dispassionate relative to long standing members. I have been to Coolana twice so am familiar with the subject. I also know a bit of its history from talking to SBW members.

My feelings on any piece of relatively unspoilt land (like Coolana) are that if the land is under responsible guardianship (as Coolana now is), it should stay with the current guardians if feasible. It's all very well to say that if Coolana is sold, it must be run according to set guidelines, but who will police these guidelines and how well?

If members feel the club should be remedy degraded land, use Coolana as security to buy another property. If members feel the property is under-utilised, on what evidence? And how is under-utilised defined.

## THE ANNUAL CELEBRATION. 30TH SBW REUNION AT COOLANA

by Bill Holland


About a dozen or so campers had arrived by Friday evening. As expected, the river flats were a picture. We gathered around the table under the trees for an evening of star gazing and discussion and then having solved the problems of the world we went to bed. The 30th Annual Reunion of Sydney Bush Walkers had begun.

A relaxing day on Saturday as more campers arrived, including the Canberra contingent. About 3-30 pm the clouds gathered and the storm came in all its fury. Rain, hail, thunder and lightning, we had it all. Sheltering under the large tarpaulin with water gushing over the side created a great feeling of togetherness. The massive pile of logs, ready for the bonfire was saturated. After an hour or so the rain had passed and it was time for a prolonged happy hour.

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its own. Each section combines a bushwalk of four to six days with drives and daywalks along the newly completed Bibbulmun Track, along the coast and in the Stirling Range. The trip will be led by Arthur Weston, a professional botanist and expert in the local flora. Under the name Nangar Expeditions, he has been running guided bushwalks since 1977. We don't know if or when we'll be able to offer a trip like this again. If you want to see one of the world's best displays of wildflowers, this trip is for you. Ask for the trip notes.



### Willis's Walkabouts

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The numbers had grown to about forty by time we gathered for the big fire lighting ceremony, about 8 pm. Wet wood does not deter Sydney Bushies! With aid from Dr Diesel and the Saturday edition of Herald the huge bonfire was underway. The usual singing of "Fire's Burning" primed by ample happy hour lubrication and the concert began. First of all the inauguration of Eddie in his second presidential year followed by songs, skits and individual presentations.

Many items later, about 10 pm, Spiro served the traditional supper feast of spinach pie, fruit cake, carrot cake, milo and coffee. Some of us staggered off to bed. Others continued on around the great fire which was still burning. Hearing Bob Hodgson's mouth organ gently playing in the distance brought back many memories of past reunions.

Next morning, a fine day. The hot coals of the bonfire were ideal for damper making. Spiro had his Turkish coffee ready and loads and loads of damper ingredients. Mid-morning, was time for a short dedication ceremony. Wilf Hilder gave a moving oration in memory of Marie Byles. Dot Butler added her thoughts and the remainder of Marie Byles' ashes were scattered around the magnificent white gum that now bears her name. *See the article about Marie which follows.*

Now the damper judging commenced. As usual the children proved to be excellent damper makers and were rewarded with prizes as we all tucked in to buttered damper laced with golden syrup. Then swimming, canoeing and generally enjoying the fine sunny day.

Although most of us departed late Sunday afternoon, others stayed on until Monday. What was different about this reunion? Not much really, it was the usual pleasant occasion. Numbers were up but there were fewer children. We had a great weekend and look forward to next year. What will it be?

The Millennium Reunion or perhaps the Year 2000 Celebration. We might even feature the Bushies Olympics. Whatever we call it, Coolana will be just as beautiful and the weekend something to look forward to.

## SALUTE TO MARIE BYLES.

At this year's reunion a tree at Coolana was dedicated to Marie Byles, a SBW member of 50 years standing. Marie was born on 5th April 1900 and died on 21st November 1979. She packed a lot of living into those 79½ years. Marie studies law at Sydney University and in 1924, at the age of 24 *this pocket edition, seven stone, 5'2" girl* entered the law profession and became the first female solicitor in New South Wales. In 1929 Marie joined the Sydney Bush Walkers Club then just two years old. Marie alone and with S.B.W. friends went mountain climbing in Australia, Canada, China, Ireland, New Zealand, Norway and Scotland. She wrote books on travel, mountain climbing, eastern religion and physical fitness. In 1941 Marie together with Paddy Pallin started the Bush Club, still an active Sydney bushwalking club. Marie espoused many conservation issues, one of which was having Bouddi National park declared. Marie acted as the Club's legal adviser in the purchase of Coolana, and donated significantly to the Coolana fund. A giant tree at a place she loved is a fitting tribute to this small, giant of a lady.

Extracted from *Salute and Farewell to Marie Byles* by Dot Butlers, *The Sydney Bushwalker* Jan 1980.

*A full length article compiled by Beverley Hammond from Marie's own writings will be published at a later date.*

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## COOLANA

### Answers to frequently asked questions

*Compiled by W. Holland*

*Originally circulated at the March AGM*

#### 1. Where did the money to buy Coolana come from?

Purchase cost of \$4,060 was funded by

North Era Trust \$1,557

SBW Special Fund \$1,000

Donations from club members \$693

Dungalla Club \$120, others \$854.

Dot Butler advanced \$3,000 of her own money to secure the property pending the club arranging finance. The original North Era Trust was formed from members' and the public's donations for the purpose of preserving bushland in its natural state. (See Alex Colley's article on page 11 of this issue.)

#### 2. How is the ownership identified?

On purchase, the land titles for Coolana were vested in a Trust with three Club members as trustees. The ownership was transferred to the SBW when the club became incorporated.

#### 3. What does Coolana cost to keep?

A "Coolana Fund" was established by Dot Butler and assistance sought from others to provide funds for the upkeep of Coolana including rates and maintenance costs. By 1982, the fund had grown to \$10,500, including donations from:

I & D Butler Fund for Conservation \$5,012

Marie Byles Fund for Conservation \$1,305 (set up with money left to Dot Butler in Marie Byle's will)

G & M Davidson Fund for Conservation \$2,937

Natural Areas Ltd \$450

The fund has grown since then by additional donations, fund raising and re-investment of the surplus of

income over expenditure. At the end of last year (1998) the "Coolana Fund" investments totalled \$23,877.

Coolana does not impose a burden on the Club finances. In the last ten years the fund income was \$21,633 and expenditure \$17,256 ie a surplus of \$4,377. This is after the purchase of lawnmowers and other equipment.

#### 4. Does Coolana have conservation value?

The land has very high conservation value. It forms part of a natural cliff-line link from the upper part of Kangaroo Valley down to Tallowa Dam and the Morton National Park. This cliff-line is home to threatened species including one of the remnant colonies of brush-tailed rock wallabies, presently located in the vicinity of our property. Kangaroo Valley has been allocated \$135,000 (over three years) for protection of this species. The National Parks and Wildlife Service are assisting us, and our neighbours, in identifying threatened species of flora and fauna in the Kangaroo Valley.

A study entitled "Survey Of Vertebrates Fauna of Tallowa Dam Road" conducted by Michael J. Murphy (Zoologist/Ecologist) in 1995 "revealed a total of 127 vertebrate species: 28 mammals, 76 birds, 12 reptiles, 8 amphibians and 3 fish. Seven species listed on Schedule 12 of the NSW NPWS Wildlife Act (1974) were recorded in the area. Suitable habitat exists for another eleven species listed on Schedule 12. Six species which were recorded in the area are considered regionally significant because they are scarce, are ecological specialists, or are declining in abundance. Seven species of fauna are listed as presumed extinct within the study area. 340 fauna



records obtained during this survey have been given to the NSW NPWS for inclusion in the Service's Database." (A copy of this study with list of identified species is in the Club Archives)

#### 5. Who uses Coolana?

All club members, including prospective members, and their families may use Coolana. In fine weather, each week will see people casually camping with more on the holiday weekends. For instance, last Christmas 35 people enjoyed the facilities, at Easter six families. Up to 100 people have attended the Club's annual reunion although numbers have been lower in recent years. The prospectives' training weekends are held every three months, attracting between 15 and 30 members each time.

#### 6. Is camping and access to the river flats secure?

There has been no indication from Sydney Water that our use of the river flats will be discontinued. Our license to use these river flats has been renewed. There are alternative camping sites available on our land adjacent to the river flats, close to the shelter shed. There is no suggestion from the Sydney Water or NPWS (future managers of Sydney Water land) that access to the river will be denied.

#### 7. Are there alternative camping sites for large groups?

It is becoming more difficult to find such camping sites. NPWS have imposed site limits in national parks and permits (with fees) may be introduced.

#### 8. Does weed control place an intolerable burden on our members?

The river flats were cleared of weeds (with assistance from Sydney Water). The challenge now is to prevent re-seeding for a further two to three

years. Natural grass is being encouraged and indigenous trees planted (re-growth is occurring). This will return the area to its natural state and continuous mowing will not be required. Weeding is carried out by volunteers who willingly give their time for the benefit of Coolana.

#### 9. What is a Voluntary

##### Conservation Agreement and how will it affect Coolana

A Voluntary Conservation Agreement is a contractual agreement, legally binding on the landholder, all future landholders, and the NPWS as the agent of the Minister. It may be varied or terminated if both the owner and the Minister consent. The conservation agreement is intended to protect the natural conservation values of land. Amongst other things it encourages the study, preservation, protection, care and/or propagation of native fauna and flora. It may well reflect the intentions of those earlier members who raised or donated funds for the purchase of Coolana.

The advantage to the club will be the advice, guidance and assistance from the NPWS in preserving and perpetuating the conservation values of our property. Our existing use of the land and possible extension of these uses can be safeguarded in the management agreement. Assistance from the NPWS may include funding for equipment/materials and staffing for flora and fauna surveys, weed control and elimination of feral animals such as foxes, pigs and goats. Rate and land tax relief are also possible -see Item 11.

#### 10. What are the financial advantages of a voluntary Conservation Agreement?

Shoalhaven Council have indicated that new legislation now permits them to grant rate exemption for properties or sections of properties covered by a

VCA. The council has also indicated that some rate relief, may be granted a Wild Life Refuge if the management plan for the sanctuary excludes the erection of buildings etc. Coolana rates last year were \$1,300.

NPWS have indicated that funding is available and, depending on the management plan obligations, they could assist us financially with weed eradication, basic road maintenance (for fire and management access), fencing and feral animal control. Funds for Voluntary Conservation are specifically granted under State legislation and are held separately from other NPWS funding. Exemption or relief from Land Tax is also available.

#### 11 Has the Club committed itself to a Voluntary Conservation Agreement ?

A sub-committee (Bill Holland, Rosemary McDougall, John Poleson and Patrick James) was appointed in April 1998 to investigate the possibility of entering into a VCA. Progress has been reported in the Cub magazine and at general meetings. Current negotiation with NPWS has been deferred due to NPWS commitment to other properties and to our hesitation into entering into such an agreement.

However, the NPWS have advised that they are willing to assist us in preparing a Management Plan for Coolana as a Wild life Sanctuary. This is a requirement under the relevant Act and will form the basis of a VCA should club members decide to proceed.

### WANTED WEB PAGE EXPERTISE.

SBW has the opportunity to have a web page on the Internet. We need someone who has had experience in constructing a web page.

Web pages have nothing to do with spiders or funny footed birds, but have everything to do with html, www, dot this and dot that and best of all, with a web master. We are looking for your help now. This work will look terrific on your CV. Call Eddy Giacomel on 9144 5095(H), or 8977 2211 (W)

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**WE NEED COOLANA**

By Alex Colley

*This article by Alex fills in the background as to how the conservation fund that formed the basis of the Coolana fund originated.*

Over the years the SBW have several times acted to preserve some of their favourite camping sites. First it was Bluegum Forest, threatened with clearing. Next it was Garrawarra, which was being degraded by timber getters, hunters, wildflower gatherers and cattle. Garrawarra was later added to the Royal National Park, which adopted a policy, not carried out, of removing the cabins when no longer required by their then owners. Because of the occupation of Burning Palms and Era by cabins, the SBW camped at North Era. In 1937 we responded to Myles Dunphy's appeal to take up areas in the Heathcote Creek catchment with a view to having the area made a primitive reserve. We leased 100 acres, which we called Morella Karong, on a branch of Heathcote Creek and enjoyed many camps and reunions there. The Heathcote Primitive Reserve was gazetted in 1943. In the same year we learned that the North Era land was to be sold, probably to the Era Development Company, which planned to erect a large boarding house there. To prevent this we negotiated with the owner to buy the key block 7 - the flat where we camped and the site for a boarding house. The negotiations were successful, but at a price above that allowed by wartime land value regulations. However Marie Byles lobbied the Treasurer and the block was ours. Not long after it was added to the Royal National Park and we received £458 compensation. The Club decided to buy another piece of land with the money. There was a holding on the Kowmung which we considered. It was not suitable for reunions, but perhaps worth conserving. This was acquired soon after by the NPWS. Then we sent Bill Burke down to an auction of the

Bendethera property, placing a limit of £2000 on the bid. It wasn't enough and the place is now a 4WD playground. Brian Harvey and I looked at land on the Grose, just below Woods Creek.

It would have been suitable, but cost \$6000. Reunions were held at various sites, the most favoured being Woods Creek, which was also used by other groups until firewood became scarce. Other favoured campsites, such as Merry Beach and Sawpit Creek succumbed to development. The Club had succeeded in saving some lovely camp sites but, perhaps due to the publicity our efforts attracted, all except Morella Karong became over used and closed to camping.

It was not until 1969 that Dot Butler found Coolana and funded its acquisition in advance of the Club's decision to buy it. In her book "The Barefoot Bushwalker" she writes: "Our President (Don Finch) was urging everyone to look for a new venue for a reunion site, so I went down to Warwick Deacock's newly established camp Chakola to see what might be offering there. I wandered a few miles further downstream and came across what looked ideal for our purposes - lovely grassy flats among casuarinas flanking the clean flowing Kangaroo River, and bush covered hillsides surmounted by a fantastic rock escarpment... Shortly afterwards my neighbours, Hanna and Rudi Lemberg (ex - Sydney Bush Walkers) asked me to go with them to look at some land for sale on the Kangaroo River which the Quakers hoped to purchase. Imagine my surprise to find it was the identical spot I had visited earlier." The Quakers could not afford the full price of the land, but were willing to acquire part of it if we bought the rest. By this time our land fund had grown to \$2,500 and another \$2,500 was donated. Marie Byles did the legal work, Dot's brother, Harold, did the real estate work and George Davidson did the surveying necessary to make it ours.

Since then much work has been done by caring Club members to provide camping facilities and restore the once grazed and later weed infested river flats.

If we had not acquired Coolana it is almost certain that it would now be the hobby farm of a wealthy owner able to afford 90 acres of river frontage land. If it were sold we would be most unlikely to find an almost pristine water frontage block as good as ours within 150 km. of Sydney for whatever money we received. Looking to the future, there will be no bush camp sites available for large parties except by renting from private owners. The NPWS has already closed over used sites to camping in many areas (e.g. the Budawangs) and will continue to do so as more sites become denuded. Party numbers will be limited and probably a permit system introduced. There will be nowhere freely available to large parties where they can camp in uncrowded pristine bushland.

#### **The February 1999 General Meeting.**

There were some 29 or so members present when Tony Holgate as chairman, standing in for the President, absent on business interstate, declared the meeting open at 2017 hours. There was an apology for Eddy, and new member Sara Ashley-Wilson was welcomed to the club.

The minutes of the January meeting were read and received, with no matters arising.

Correspondence included a letter to our new member, a letter from NPWS thanking us for our comments on problems with the Ramshead to Charlottes Pass track under wet conditions, from the leader of the state opposition, Kerry Chikarovski, acknowledging our letter regarding the John Wamsley Earth Sanctuary proposal. We also received a letter of approval for our annual financial statements from the honorary auditor.

The treasurer's report indicated that we began with \$9,636 and closed with a balance of \$9,986.

The walks reports began with the weekend of 15, 16, 17 January. There was no report for Jim Rivers' Morton National Park walk over the weekend or for Maureen Carter's Saturday walk in the Royal. Jim Calloway led a party of 4 on his Bundeena to Otford Sunday walk on what Jim described as a good casual day. Kenn Clacher's canyon trips in the Bungleboori, moved forward from the weekend of 22 to 24 January; did not go due to storm activity that could have rendered the trips hazardous.

Paul McCann's extended walk, from 23 to 26 January, in the Welshpool National Park, attracted a party of 3. Ken Cheng reported preceding showers but dry and sunny conditions for the party of 2 on his Waterfall to Otford walk on the Saturday. Geoff Dowsett had 8 walkers with some rain on his Sunday trip in Munmorah S.R.A and George Mawer had a party of 12 in fine conditions on his Blue Mountains walk out from Mount Banks the same day.

David Trinder's extended walk in Tasmania from 29<sup>th</sup> January to 7<sup>th</sup> February saw a party of 12 doing the Overland Track, with all reported to have gone well.

Phil Newman reported a party of 1 for his somewhat convoluted tour of the six-foot track and Carlon's Farm over the weekend of 30, 31 January. There was no report for Oliver Crawford's walk on the Colo River that weekend, and Maurice Smith's two canyon trips out from Mount Wilson were cancelled due to the leader being grounded for ankle surgery. There was no report for Wilf Hilder's Saturday walk in the Georges River Nature Reserve but Eddy Giacomel had 16 on his Sunday walk from Mountain Lagoon to the Colo River and return. Nigel Weaver led some 9 intrepid souls through misty conditions with light rain on his trip down the Wollangambe Canyon. John Poleson had a party 13 on the other Sunday

walk that weekend, out from Otford, in overcast conditions with higher than usual seas making things interesting around the rock ledges.

Wayne Steele led a party of 7 down Morong Deep over the weekend of 4, 5, 6 February. Conditions started out damp but fined up to provide dry conditions on the rock plates. The Blue Mountains Canyons trip that weekend, under the combined leadership of Allan Donnelley and Jan Pieters, attracted 8 starters. Ian Rannard's night walk out from Otford had 3 starters. Morrie Ward postponed his Birrabang Gorge trip to the following weekend but Anne Maguire had a party of 24 on her Kanuka Brook trip on the Sunday. It was described as a great day with swimming and frolicking in the pools. If you can think of a better close to the walks report for the month let me know.

No conservation report was presented to the meeting, and as there had been no Confederation meeting since our last General Meeting there was nothing to report for Confederation.

General business brought forth three motions relating to Coolana. The first of these called for a sub committee to be established to prepare a report to the membership providing detailed information about Coolana and recommending possible future options for the property. After some at times passionate debate this was resolved in the affirmative.

The second motion required that no decisions be made on significant matters relating to Coolana without wide publication of the pros and cons and a postal ballot of the membership. It was eventually determined that this motion lies on the table for the A.G.M

On closer inspection the third motion turned out to be a melange of the first two which would in effect have pre determined the outcome of the sub committee's deliberations. It was discarded by mutual agreement.

Announcements followed and the meeting closed at 2153

### COOLANA SUB-COMMITTEE

The resolution regarding Coolana which was carried at the General Meeting in February 1999 and in respect of which the rescission motion moved at the Annual General Meeting in March 1999 was lost, is as follows:

That a full report be prepared for the Special Committee to consider future options for the Sydney Bushwalking Club property, known as Coolana located in Kangaroo Valley including advice on:

1. Cost of maintenance;
2. Legal title;
3. Restrictions on use and sale;
4. Consequences of voluntary conversation agreement status;
5. Market value;
6. Current issues re Water Board and National Parks and Wildlife Service;
7. Advantages and disadvantages of the identified options.

Any such report is made available to the Club through inclusion in the Club's magazine.

At the February 1999 General Meeting a further motion was discussed but allowed to lie on the table and is in the following terms.

1. That no decision be made on these options or any other significant matters relating to Coolana until
  - (a) The Committee presents the report to the

Club for general discussion at a General or Special Meeting; The options and information and arguments for and against are adequately publicised in the Club magazine;

- (b) A postal ballot is conducted to determine the wishes of all members.

The President has appointed the Sub-Committee and its members are:

Bill Holland, Patrick James, John Poleson, Rosemary MacDougal, Geoff Dowsett and Don Finch.

The President will chair each meeting but will have no vote. Meetings will take place at 7pm prior to the Monthly General Meeting and will conclude at 7.45pm.

The Committee had its first meeting on 14 April 1999 and the tasks referred to in the resolution have been allocated to its members.

**The Committee welcomes the attendances of Club Members whose assistance in completing the various tasks will be very much appreciated.** So that the Committee can complete its business within the limited time allocated, it would be preferable that members notify the Committee of any specific issues which they wish to discuss or have clarified prior to the meeting so that relevant research can be done or answers provided without lengthy debate.

## Competency Training

by Brad X

"Is this what you're looking for" said my flatmate and thrust an official looking letter into my hands. One quick glimpse at the return address and I knew it was. I dropped the letter a couple of times in my fumbles to open it. Damn! I passed the theory but I failed the practical test. Now what was I to

do. My fiancée would be upset and all our wedding plans and preparations probably would be totally disrupted.

Since the passing of the Marriage Licence (Competency Skills Testing) Amendment Act, all prospective couples have to pass a marriage competency test. And guess who failed, and for the second time. The Act, although quite new, has started a whole new industry in competency training and assessment. Each couple who plan to marry now have to have their provisional marriage licence endorsed with the results of the theory and practical test of the marriage act. Only then can a couple go to the next stage of a full marriage licence.

The theory is easy enough. The practical test can be very difficult and depends very much on your examiner. For the women it is easier as they get almost immediate feedback on progress, if they are doing things right and demonstrating competency. For blokes it's a bit tricky. What is wrong at one moment, the next moment is just right. And the examiners don't make it any easy. They just lie back, don't say much and leave it all up to the examinee to demonstrate competency.

When I failed the first time my fiancée said that I failed because either I wasn't thinking of her or I was thinking too much about the examiner. Well there's a bit of truth in what she said. It is a bit difficult to maintain a level headed attitude to what under normal circumstances is a heart thumping, heavy breathing, running, jumping, standing still activity. All this and the need to go through the recommended procedures something akin to review mirror, hand brake, signal indicator, clutch, gear and accelerator when doing a driving test. I guess the Marriage Competency Skills test is very much like a driving test but in private and without the crash of tortured metal if you make a

mistake. That's a driving test mistake by the way.

What was I to do. I had read all the text; Kinsey, Masters & Someone, the Kama whatsit, all 12,500 pages of the Clinton Internet report and even watched *Gone with the Wind* about a dozen times. I did inquire about TAFE courses. They have them but they're not running this semester. This is the semester they're running courses for parent fitness under the Parenthood Approval (Parenting Competency) Amendment Act and the Marriage Licence (Further Approvals) Amendment Act. No endorsement on the provisional marriage licence then no marriage. There must be a way to improve my practical competence skills.

*What will Brad do? Will the wedding go ahead? Stay tuned next month for the next instalment.*

### ARTICLES WANTED

A new editor but the same old refrain! Walk reports or articles on any subject related to Bushwalking are welcome.

Articles can be submitted on a floppy disk or by email on [rgraymond@ozemail.com.au](mailto:rgraymond@ozemail.com.au) or if you do not have a computer I will accept typed documents.

I would prefer that they be done with "Word" using Times New Roman 12 pt font.

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**BUSH LOVERS BEWARE!**

by Henry Gold

I was disturbed to notice that two long-standing members of the Sydney Bushwalkers stood as Lower House candidates for the Outdoor Recreation Party (ORP) in the recent State Elections.

Despite the party's poor showing at the ballot box, 3487 votes State-wide, it should not be dismissed and forgotten together with the large number of micro-parties who appeared on the ballot papers. Anybody with a concern for nature conservation in NSW should pause and examine their aims.

The ORP is the political front of the Public Land Users Alliance (PLUA), a conglomerate of interest groups, formed in 1993. I am not clear how many groups the PLUA represents, however I am certain of the following: Horse riders, Fishermen, 4WD Clubs and Individuals, Commercial Tour Operators and Landholders.

Their aim is to extend their activities into national parks and wilderness areas in particular. They are vehemently anti-wilderness and pro-development in national parks, including mining and logging.

Noel Plumb, Executive Officer of the National Parks Association of NSW writes: "The ORP's real agenda is 'Go anywhere, anytime and anyhow we like'. They represent the extreme elements of the 4WD lobby and others who want to destroy NSW's national parks system and its world heritage nominations".

The PLUA newsletters attack conservation organisations, the National Parks and Wildlife Service and individuals who don't share their views. The PLUA's aggressive and confrontational approach somewhat diminishes their credibility as a lobby group,

however they are a serious threat to the natural areas in NSW. At the time this article is being written, the counting of votes for the Upper House is still in progress. The ORP may well get some voice there.

The visionary Myles Dunphy, whom all of us, including the PLUA, have to thank for the preservation of many of our wild places, wrote the following words to the Minister for Lands and Forests in 1935: "It is now generally conceded that the road is the greatest avenue of damage to forests and to the destruction of wildlife habitat by fire, illicit hunting, dust of traffic, noise, acts of irresponsible persons, picnic refuse and traveller's filth, water pollution, plant theft, broken glass, rubbish dumping, dilapidation caused by sheer numbers. It is generally conceded also, that selected scenic wilderness should be roadless in order to preserve the nobility of natural grandeur and the existence of indigenous wildlife. Haphazard and unnecessary roads stand as monuments to the ineptitude of non-aesthetic minds, but worse than that, they damage scenic wilderness".\*

The above was written in 1935, when many of our natural areas were free of roads, when the Kosciuszko snowfields were not yet concreted, when fewer people owned cars, and 4WD's did not exist.

What of 1999?

\* Myles Dunphy Selected Writings; Ballagrin 1986.