



# O.F.F. NEWS



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## **CONGRATULATIONS JAN**

At the Annual General Meeting of 2nd February, Jan Douglas was elected the new President of OFF. The outgoing president, Cliff Crane, did not seek re-election to this position but was elected to the Committee as Membership Officer.

## **OTHER COMMITTEE CHANGES**

Alan Fairley indicated some time ago that he wished to retire as OFF News editor after 2003 because of his future travelling plans. Alan had held the position for 20 years and, as a result of his efforts, the quality and content of the News are widely known and very highly regarded. At the AGM Fred Bell was elected the new editor and acknowledges the difficult task he faces in trying to match the standards set by Alan.

Other Committee changes after the AGM included the election of Sharyn Cullis who had been a Committee member from 1995 to 2000. Julian Sheen has been appointed to replace John Winters who regretfully decided to resign from the Committee after reviewing his other commitments for the year. A complete list of the current Committee members will be on the back of the 2004 Programme (see below).

## **NEW SECRETARY FOR 2005 ?**

Robin Dickson, our dedicated and highly competent Secretary for the past 10 years, was re-elected to this position for 2004. However, she announced that she would not seek re-election in 2005 and that we should start looking for a replacement. This must be the most demanding and important office of the Society and the Committee will be delighted to hear from any members willing to tackle it.

## **O.F.F. PROGRAMME FOR 2004**

The complete programme of speakers, field days and other activities for 2004 should be distributed to all members with the next issue of OFF News.

## **CONGRATULATIONS HARRY AND OLIVE**

Two of the best known and most respected members of OFF, Harry and Olive Waite, have recently celebrated their 60th Wedding Anniversary. Both have been members of OFF for most of its 49-year existence. Harry, now in his nineties, was a Committee member for about 28 years up to 2000. His extraordinary knowledge of plants and places, and his bushwalking prowess are quite legendary. Olive was also a Committee member for many years, holding various offices that included Vice President and News Editor.

## **CLEAN UP AUSTRALIA DAY**

This year, Clean Up Australia Day will be Sunday, 7th March. As in previous years, OFF members who would like to participate should go to Poulton Park near the boardwalk (near intersection of Morshead Drive and Kyle Pde) for registration about 8.30 am. Bring sturdy shoes, heavy duty garden gloves and insect repellent.

## **LIVING DINOSAURS**

The discovery of the Wollemi Pine (*Wollemia nobilis*) has been described as 'the most significant botanical find of the 20th Century' and 'like finding a population of living dinosaurs in the Australian bush'. It is quite incredible that an evolutionary line of large trees, regarded as extinct 40 million years ago, could occur in healthy stands only 150 km from Sydney without being discovered until 1994. This has happened with the Wollemi Pine. The species is regarded as so rare and scientifically valuable that its actual locations in the wild are a closely guarded secret, known only to about 20 to 30 people.

Patricia Meagher, a Technical Officer of the Botanic Gardens, is one of the select few working on the propagation and culture of the plant. She will speak about her fascinating work at the next OFF meeting on February 23, and this promises to be one of the highlights of our programme for 2004.

Meetings are held at the **Uniting Church Hall, Frederick Street, Oatley.**

(near the corner of Letitia Street)

Please make yourself known as you come in.

It is intended that meetings commence promptly at 7.45 pm.

Visitors and children are welcome to attend all meetings and field days.

## Coming Events

**February 23 (Monday).** Regular monthly meeting at 7.45pm. **Trish Meagher**, Mt Annan Botanic Gardens, will talk to us about the **Wollemi Pine**.

**February 28 (Saturday).** **FIELD DAY, Ku-ring-gai Chase National Park.** Visit the **Aboriginal sites of West Head.** Short walks to rock engravings along the Elvina, Basin and Resolute tracks. Hand stencils and echidna site. Views from West Head Lookout. Lunch at Resolute (Garigal) Picnic Area near car park. After lunch, walk to America Bay (2km return, 1 hour) with beautiful views over Cowan Creek. If desired, this could be mainly a car-based trip with America Bay walk optional. **Meet** 9.30 am at McCarrs Creek on the corner of McCarrs Creek Road and West Head Road where we will rationalise cars (about 1.5 hours drive from Oatley via Terrey Hills). Car entry fee into National Park, unless you have an Annual Pass. Leader: **Alan Fairley**, tel 9570 8332.

**March 22 (Monday).** Regular monthly meeting. Bob Crombie, **Ecosystem gardens.**

### MORE BOTANY BAY WOES

As reported in the August/September 2003 issue of OFF News, the latest major threat to Botany Bay and Georges River is a proposal to greatly extend the container facilities at Port Botany. This will possibly complete the destruction of the few remaining good habitat areas of the Bay such as Penrhyn Inlet and Towra Point.

The environmental impact statement (EIS) for the proposal is now on display at Kogarah Council for written public comments up to 29th March. Our Committee will make a submission on behalf of the Society but concerned members are urged to examine the EIS themselves and make their own submissions.

This EIS is typical of what is now expected. It uses the refined, developer-friendly strategies promoted in the infamous Third Runway EIS of 1992. Far from being concise and scientifically objective (as originally intended for impact statements) it consists of 10 volumes, each with 350 to 400 thick, glossy pages, replete with impressive tables, graphs and other technical data, much of which has questionable relevance. The emphasis throughout is clearly on alleged positive

aspects of the proposal while the actual environmental impacts are obscured by verbiage and technical detail.

Nevertheless, this large mass of high quality paper may be purchased quite cheaply from the Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources - all 10 volumes in two very nice cardboard boxes for just \$27.50, or on a CD for \$10. You may also view the executive summary at [www.dipnr.nsw.gov.au](http://www.dipnr.nsw.gov.au).

### NOTABLE FLORA AND FAUNA

A small stand of the shrub, *Babingtonia virgata* (formerly *Baeckea virgata*), was recently found by Alan Fairley on the edge of Oatley Park along Lime Kiln Bay. This is an uncommon species of Heath-myrtle not previously recorded for Oatley.

Two Buff-banded rails (*Rallus philippensis*) were recorded for the first time by David Waterhouse in the Lime Kiln wetlands in January 2004.

### DID YOU KNOW ?

OFF now has more than 300 individual members and may be regarded as one of the largest organisations of its type in Australia.