



O.F.F. NEWS



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MYLES DUNPHY AND BOWLING CLUB SITE

From early in the 1940s there were requests from local community organisations for Hurstville Council to declare the bushland northeast from Gungah Bay as a reserve. Council finally agreed to do so up to the Waratah street line. While part of the area had been subdivided years before, it was largely inaccessible for housing, and parkland was the best choice. However, the blocks from Waratah Rd to the railway were still considered viable housing blocks, and some were allocated for war service housing. It was later realised that swampy conditions made a through road impossible. As noted in a 1973 report, Council bought up more than two acres of the isolated blocks for "park purposes", probably before the end of WW2. Myles Dunphy suggested this, and a government parklands grant of £500 covered half of the bill. Council then declared the purchased area part the Gungah Bay Bushland Reserve. When some of the community protested at Council taking over "war service" blocks, it responded with an assurance that the land was "parkland" and would remain permanently in public hands. The site is shown on the Council's own LEP map with the words Myles Dunphy Reserve written right over the site of the club, so it is difficult to see how Council can now argue that it is not part of the Reserve and must be excluded from the plan of management being prepared.

Council's development application to demolish the Oatley Bowling Club is on exhibition for public comment until **Sept 23rd**. Details can be found at <http://www.hurstville.nsw.gov.au/>.

COAL SEAM GAS AND WATER CONSERVATION

Gas is clearly a valuable asset, but the methods used and the places chosen for extracting it are being fiercely debated. The coal seam gas industry concedes that extraction will 'inevitably' affect aquifers. Surely, this requires urgent action by the NSW government to ensure the protection of the state's drinking water supplies, rivers, and aquifers. The Nature Conservation Council of NSW is calling for an immediate moratorium on coal seam gas extraction until a comprehensive extraction strategy can be developed. It points to the importance of input from the community, farmers, and independent scientists. www.nccnsw.org.au/. The Blue Mountains Conservation Society is also concerned about rampant exploration and exploitation of gas and the threat to water sources. It notes continuing Coal Seam Methane exploration in the mountains, and drilling near Warragamba Dam.

GARDENS OF STONE

In 1994, a Gardens of Stone National Park was created covering 15,000 hectares and joining Wollemi National Park on the northern part of Newnes Plateau. Other large landscape features include the outstanding mesas of Donkey Mountain in the Wolgan Valley and Pantoneys Crown in the Capertee Valley. Pantoneys Crown is the centrepiece of the commanding view of the valley from Pearsons Lookout on the Castlereagh Highway. However, Gardens of Stone is an unfinished park. The state conservation area classification allows underground coal

mining to continue. Environment groups, including the Blue Mountains Conservation Society, have advanced a plan to protect much more of this unique landscape, by extending the park and creating a new state conservation area over adjacent plateaus and escarpments. These are presently state forest and Crown land. The overall proposal is known as Gardens of Stone Stage 2. www.habitatadvocate.com.au/

MARINE PARKS

The NSW Government has announced its Independent Scientific Audit Panel for Marine Parks. The Government's aim is to ensure "the right balance between the sustainable use of the marine environment and the conservation of marine biodiversity." Written submissions are invited by **Friday 30th Sept.** www.marineparksaudit.nsw.gov.au/

HISTORY AND SCIENCE OF AMBER

Amber has fascinated people from time immemorial, and long traded from sources along the Baltic Sea coast. Admired and used in jewellery and works of art, it is also an object of great scientific interest, as it provides a clear window to past life. Amber is the hardened and fossilized resin of ancient trees. It frequently contains inclusions of trapped plants and animals, and providing some finest fossils known, where tiny insects look as if they were just alive. Amber provides a snapshot in time, and is a great source of information about past environments. Now Australia has a major amber find, recently discovered in Cape York, washed up on remote beaches north of Iron Range. My talk will review the history, occurrence, and study of amber. [Note by our September speaker, Daniel J. Bickel]

LIME KILN WETLAND SAVED

The Leader's *Georges River Magazine* of Aug 25th recalled the long drawn out community battle of nearly thirty years, and the eventually successful action in conserving wetlands in their natural condition. It is to be hoped that the community will be again successful with the entire Myles Dunphy Reserve.

GEORGES RIVER NATIONAL PARK

A new Plan of Management is being prepared for the Park. The river and surrounding country has been important to Aboriginal people for thousands of years, and the park conserves important cultural places and some of Sydney's best river habitat for native plants and animals. Periodic review is required to ensure that its management is responsive to any emerging issues. Since the last plan of 1994, there have been many changes around the Georges River with a bearing on the future of the Park. Individuals and organisations are invited to contribute information and ideas relevant to the Plan of Management. www.environment.nsw.gov.au NPWS Metro South West Region, PO Box 44, Sutherland 1499

ENVIRONMENTAL LAWS

"In my view, the number of convictions suggests either a pattern of continuing disobedience in respect of environmental laws generally or, at least, a cavalier attitude to compliance with such laws." Justice R A Pepper, NSW Land and Environment Court, 8 June 2011. www.nccnsw.org.au/

Meetings of the Society are held at the Uniting Church Hall Fredrick St [cnr Letitia St] Oatley starting at 7.45pm, usually on the fourth Monday of the month.
Visitors and accompanied children are welcome to all meetings and excursions.

COMING EVENTS

September 17th (Saturday) The final free **Birds in Backyards Workshop** will be at Illawong Rural Fire Service Brigade Station from 10 am to 12 noon. Bookings are essential. Please contact **Liz Cameron** (ph. 9580 6621, liz@pacific.net.au) or **Jason Cockayne** (m: 0411 744 715, jay.shaz@hotmail.com).

September 26th (Monday) 7.45pm Regular monthly meeting with **Dan Bickel** of the Australian Museum talking on "Tears of the Gods," the history and science of Amber [See note above]

October 9th (Sunday), Field Day: Royal National Park, Karloo Pool about 7km, difficult descents. Meet at Heathcote Station car park at 9 am, then via bottle Forrest management track. Initially a very steep rocky decent with large uneven drops into Kangaroo Creek. Track work so no trains*. **Leaders: Jan Douglas, Dave Crawford 0431 712 111.**

October 24th (Monday) 7.45pm Regular monthly meeting with **Philip Moore** speaking on a **Trip to the Great Victoria Desert (WA).**

October 29-30th (Field Weekend): Gardens of Stone National Park - Lithgow. Allow 2½ hours from Oatley to Lithgow, if going up on Saturday, and note the need for an E tag on the M7. Meet at 9.30 am at the car park of the Lithgow Valley Plaza, Bent St, near the large pine trees. Cars can be left there for the day when transferring to 4WD vehicles. [More below] **Leaders: Keith Muir and John Watters** [mob 0419 471 038].

November 18th (Friday) OFF Annual Dinner [Details below]. * Oct 9 RNP field day - more detail at next meeting.

GARDENS OF STONE WEEKEND OCT 29-30th

Participants will be travelling to the area in 4WD vehicles, and will arrange their own accommodation for the Saturday night. Some may like to book in on Friday night. There is a range of cabins at the Lithgow Tourist and Van Park, [58 Coerwull Road, Lithgow, ph.6351 4350] and Lithgow has five motels... It is important to book early to avoid missing out. Maps and further information will be available at the October meeting. www.tourism.lithgow.com/

BURNING PALMS WALK

It was a great day; cool with a bit of cloud when we all met at the Garawarra farmhouse for our walk down to Burning Palms beach in the Royal National Park. Nineteen set off along the fire trail, one of the prettiest in the park. The pace was measured for there were many flowers to identify, admire, and photograph. First to spot an orchid (ten metres from the start) won applause. I will not mention his name but his initials were AF. From the fire trail, we walked onto the bush path descent to the sea stopping at Werrong Lookout for brilliant views down the coast. Palm Jungle was, as always, a place of mystery as we picked our way carefully though the fallen palm fronds. Lunch was in a clearing overlooking the sea. Then out onto the grassland. Unfortunately, the track has become a muddy trench in places.

From down near the seashore we looked up at the towering cliffs where we had been a couple of hours before. On Burning Palms beach we stopped to enjoy the waves, a paddle and, for one intrepid, a swim. Two of the party made the detour to Figure of Eight Pools. Then began the climb up Burgh Ridge, pausing for more great views, and a rest. We all made it back to the top in good time to agree that it was a very pleasant day. [Report by walk leader Julian Sheen]

SYDNEY'S NATIVE ORCHIDS – MONTH BY MONTH

Margaret Bradhurst, Sutherland Shire photographer, bush regenerator, and native plant enthusiast spoke on local native orchids at the August meeting. Renowned for her knowledge and admiration of orchids, her beautiful slides displayed many orchids of the southern Sydney area in calendar order, beginning with those flowering from August. A summary of her talk here could not do it justice. This *Caleana major* (Flying Duck Orchid) was one of special note, if not the most beautiful.



The 2011 Annual Dinner is on Friday 18th November, 7 pm at South Hurstville R.S.L., 72 Connells Point Rd, South Hurstville in the South Lounge. Cost is \$35 per person.

There will be platters of finger food for appetizers followed by a buffet with hot and cold food, dessert served with ice cream, and coffee and tea to finish.

Please indicate if there is a requirement for gluten free. Drinks can be purchased at the bar. Singers are expected.

Prior booking is essential. **Alison Gilroy and Sue Howard** will be taking bookings and payment at the September and October meetings. Alison can be contacted on 9580 5557. Each guest is asked to wear a (loud or zany/frivolous) shirt.

The donation of suitable raffle items would be warmly welcomed.

LIONS FESTIVAL - OATLEY - 15TH OCTOBER

Each year, on the 3rd Saturday in October the streets and parks of Oatley are transformed into a sea of stalls, entertainment, rides, and music.

OFF runs a stall each year, and is looking for volunteers for the day, or any part thereof. Please contact Alan Fairley closer to the time on ph. 95708332. For more information go to www.oatleylions.org.au/oatley-festival.html



Briefly

Sustainable House Michael Mobbs will talk on the revised edition of his book on planning to build or renovate a sustainable home on Thurs, 22nd Sept at Hurstville City Library, 7.00pm, Cost: Free. RSVP: Bookings essential. Phone 9330 6142 <http://sustainablehouse.com.au/>

The Green Corridors of Southern Sydney is a 30 min DVD by NPA (Sthn Syd) on the Royal National Park and related conservation areas in a bid to rally us to do more to defend vulnerable bushland. This is available on monthly loan at OFF meetings. <http://www.youtube.com/>

