

# Wolli Creek Update

From the Wolli Creek Preservation Society Inc.

No.3 February 1988

## DECISION '88

The major contenders in the State elections now have the choice to commit themselves to the establishment of a major urban Park *where one is needed*.

### OUR POLICY

1. Lift the F5 Freeway reservation through the Wolli Creek Valley.
2. Protection of bush, wetlands and open space in the valley equivalent to National Park status.

3. Establishment of a management advisory committee to oversee the development and implementation of a management plan for the valley. The plan would include -

- passive recreation areas
- field studies centre for the community
- walking track system
- protection of environmentally sensitive areas.

## And now your chance to vote for the Valley

With a state election coming we have an important opportunity to force the government to lift the freeway reservation and save the valley for future generations.

Following our 'Hands Off Wolli Creek!' campaign in the local government elections last year all political parties are well aware of the enormous support for the society's aims.

Our discussions with candidates, scrutineers and other well informed sources indicated that around 4000 ballot papers were marked 'Hands Off Wolli Creek!', some 1500 of these in Unsworth's Rockdale electorate.

Our public meeting held as part of the campaign attracted 300 people who voted unanimously to call on the government to lift the Freeway reservation and release all planning documents on the Very Fast Train (VFT) project.

The meeting saw the clearest commitment yet made by the liberal opposition to repealing the F5 route through the valley. Speaking from the floor Shadow Environment Minister Tim Moore told residents and conservationists that he, Nick Greiner and Bruce Baird (Shadow Transport Minister) were in agreement that the Freeway should not be built in the valley.

There are encouraging signs that ALP policy may

be swinging in the same direction. Minister for Mines and Aboriginal Affairs and member for Earlwood Ken Gabb publicly affirmed his opposition to party policy on the F5 and his opposition to the then Public Works Minister Laurie Brereton's plans for the Freeway. Brereton was, of course, sacked some weeks later.

As part of our intervention in the council elections a questionnaire was sent to candidates asking their

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attitudes to the Freeway and VFT proposals. The overwhelming majority of candidates opposed both developments.

We are heartened by these expressions of support for our aims. We hope that Ken Gabb will be able to convince his cabinet colleagues that they should carry out the recommendations of the Kirby enquiry and make an early public commitment to do so.

We hope that if the coalition comes to power it will

honour Tim Moore's promise. We will be mounting a campaign around the State elections. We are asking all parties and candidates to give a clear statement of their policy on the Wolli Creek issue which we will publicise in leaflets, media and a doorknocking campaign. We ask all our members and supporters to again assist us in the vital 'footslogging' work of the campaign!

## 1987 - the year we hit the headlines



1987 was the Wolli Creek Preservation Society's most active year to date. It concluded with our highly successful local election campaign. The political results of this are discussed in the front page story but the campaign had other spin-offs for the Society. Most significantly, the issue moved back into the media spotlight after an absence of many months. The story broke in the Sun Herald of 6 September with a major article entitled "Urban Paradise Threatened". This was followed by mentions in Leo Schofield's well-read SMH column and a timely warning to the government by columnist Jim McClelland. This is what the veteran ALP figure and former judge of the Land and Environment Court said:

It is reasonable to assume that Unsworth has not forgotten that he himself won the seat of Rockdale by only 54 votes. Is he aware that there is an issue at his own back door about which he should not be too casual? The Wolli Creek Valley, a large area of bushland and birdlife, runs south from Cooks River through the suburbs of Turrella, Bardwell Park, Earlwood and Bexley.

These suburbs are close to Rockdale and the valley is extensively used by the citizens of the area for passive recreation. It is their Centennial Park. Unsworth has promised to build a freeway which would effectively destroy the charm of the valley and its recreational use. A very active local preservation society will campaign vigorously against him if he does not abandon the plan. The time is passed when politicians can ignore such "cranks", as the results in the Sutherland municipal poll demonstrated.

The issue was now well and truly off and running and lively debate in the letters page of the SMH followed. The pro-valley correspondents had the last word and, of course, thoroughly exposed the pro-road lobby apologists both of whom tried to ignore the findings of the Kirby Enquiry.

## Paradise threatened



BIRDMAN OF WOLLI CREEK: Neil Rankin said: "If Mr [Unsworth] strolls through part of the valley, we think he's spotted the last bush-bird. I've identified 32 in inner-suburban areas."

## WOLLI VOTERS 'WARNING'

ST GEORGE EXPRESS 13/10/87

AN environmental lobby group's "warning" to the State Government has prompted an assurance from Premier Unsworth.

Wolli Creek Preservation Society vice-president, Les Robinson, said the society's Hands off Wolli Creek campaign was a frightening omen for the State Government.

Voters in wards around Wolli Creek were urged to write Hands off Wolli Creek on their ballot papers in the recent local government elections.

Government in a traditionally Labor area.

"People are now starting to place the quality of their living environment above traditional party allegiances," he said.

A spokeswoman for Mr Unsworth said the State Government was fully conscious of the environmental delicacy of the valley and knows people are concerned.

...the Premier has said that as soon as the section of the freeway, the first step will be an environmental impact study. But Mr Gavin Gatenby, of the Preservation Society, remains sceptical. "If the environment is to be saved, the freeway should not be built at all. It is a disaster waiting to happen."

We also got great stories in the Manly Daily (12.9.87) and the Australasian Post (26.11.87). We even made the Brisbane Courier Mail. There were news reports on our campaign in local papers and on various radio stations. Neil Rankin (the 'Birdman of Wolli Creek') was interviewed on 2BL's 'Drivetime' program.

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Our members and supporters letterboxed 8000 homes in Earlwood, Undercliffe, Tempe, Turrella and Arncliffe. Our main campaign leaflet was translated into Arabic, Macedonian and Greek, a worthwhile exercise which brought us valuable contacts and support in the local ethnic communities.

On Polling day volunteers manned booths at 9 centres in Canterbury, parts of Arncliffe, Bexley North, Turrella and Bardwell Park. A further 8000 leaflets were distributed and hundreds of voters discussed the issues with our members.

### Some other highlights of the year's work.

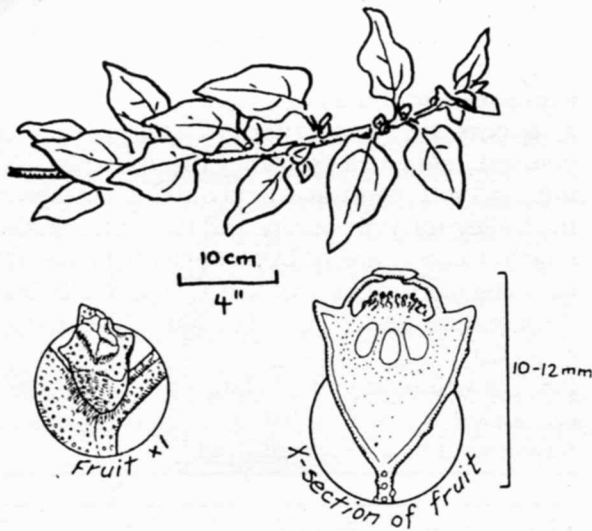
- INCORPORATION of the Society has been finalised under the Associations Incorporation Act. A revised constitution has been accepted. We are now officially the Wolli Creek Preservation Society Incorporated.

- INSURANCE for public liability has been taken out in line with the requirements of the Corporate Affairs Commission and the State Rail Authority.

- OUR LEASE of the wetland regeneration area from the SRA has been formalised and we are organising to have a management plan drawn up by botanical and zoological specialists.

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## PLANTS OF WOLLI



### Warrigal Spinach *Tetragonia tetragonioides*

Sir Joseph Banks in Botany Bay wrote...."We had it [stingray] with a dish of the boiled leaves of *Tetragonia cornuta* [an old name], which eat as well, or very nearly as well, as Spinach." (Journal p270)

Indeed this luxuriant creeping plant is an excellent substitute for spinach and was much in demand in the early colony. The young leaves can be eaten raw and all the leaves can be cooked. It is fairly common in Wolli Valley, scattered in salty wetlands and also popping up as a weed in nearby suburbs.

Leaves are triangular, thick, soft and fleshy, covered with water-filled vesicles. Stems are crisp. Flowers are small and yellow. The plant is common on sea-coasts and estuaries of Australia, South America, New Zealand and Japan. Family Aizoaceae.

## Diary dates

**NOTE** - Any or all of these dates may have to be re-scheduled depending on the announcement of a date for the state election. If in doubt phone Susan on 59 1546 or Gavin on 59 8502.

**14 Feb, Sunday, CUTS walk...** see back page.

**17 Feb, Wed, 7.30pm** General meeting, Community resource Centre, 11-13 Hartill-Law Ave, Bardwell Park

**28 Feb Sunday, Wetland clean-up.** This is your chance to do some practical clean-up and environmental management work on the Society's leased wetland regeneration area. We need equipment such as brush-cutters and scythes. Bring a picnic lunch. Please ring Susan and discuss what you can do on 59 1546.

**13 March, Sunday 11am**

### GIRRAHWEEN GALA

Come along and roast the politicians. Barbecue Barry, Grill Greiner (sorry, the Brereton Burgers are off). The society will be launching its policy for Wolli Creek. Politicians and media will be invited. There will be bush-walks, displays and games for the kids. P.S. This activity is subject to an election date from late March onwards.

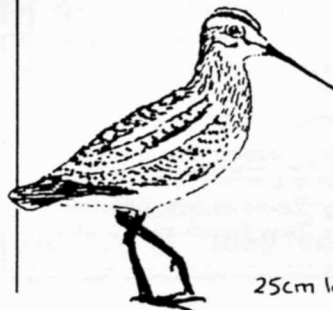
**15 June, Wed, 7.30pm** General meeting, Community resource Centre, 11-13 Hartill-Law Drive, Bardwell Park.

## BIRD NOTES



☼ The Golden-headed Cisticola is breeding well in the dense grasses of the Wetlands Regeneration Area at Turrella.

☼ The Japanese Snipe has been recorded for the first time in many years in the Valley by Neil Rankin on 29.1.88. It is an attractive long-beaked wading bird with a mottled back. It likes boggy wetland with tall clumps of reed or grass. The bird breeds in Japan and spends part of the year in Australia.



25cm long (10")

# Trees of Wollli Creek

by cartoonist Les Robinson

A simple illustrated guide to the identification of 36 species of native and exotic trees found in the Wollli Creek Valley.

Please send me a copy of "The Trees of Wollli Creek". I enclose \$4.00 (\$3.00 purchase price plus \$1.00 postage)

Name.....

Address.....

Phone.....Postcode.....

Cut out and post to Wollli Creek Preservation Society, PO Box 270 Earlwood, 2206



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• 'TREES OF WOLLLI CREEK', Les Robinson's illustrated guidebook, was launched by radio naturalist John Dengate on 21 June, as part of a field activities day for the Association for Environmental Education. The book has proved popular with schools and the general public.

• A NEW CAR STICKER bearing the slogan "Hands off Wollli Creek!" was printed.

• OUR PHOTO AND INFORMATION DISPLAY was taken to the Macquarie Street Heritage Fair and the Cooks River and Earlwood Festivals. A feature of our Earlwood Stall was a sale of handmade pottery contributed by two of our members.

• A 'WALK AND TALK' PROGRAM introduced hundreds of people to the valley and the issue. The biggest single event was a walk for The Australian Museum Society (TAMS) in which 100 people took part. Groups from 10 schools were taken through the valley and in September senior officers of the Department of Environment and Planning were introduced to the valley by Society guides.

• A TEACHERS' IN SERVICE COURSE on "Using Wollli Creek as a teaching Resource" was organised by the Dept of Education Met. East Region. Society members discussed the birds, the botany and the history of the valley with 30 teachers who attended.

• THE SOCIETY'S ANNUAL CONFERENCE on 26 October was attended by 30 members and saw the election of an excellent new committee.

• ANNUAL CONFERENCE of the NATURE CONSERVATION COUNCIL was attended by Society delegates and conference voted unanimously to reaffirm its support for the recommendations of the Kirby Enquiry.

This large workload was made possible by a greatly expanded committee which enabled tasks to be shared amongst more people and better use to be made of the considerable skills and expertise of the Society members\*.

No comment on the year's work would be complete without a heartfelt thanks to all of the Society's members and supporters and particularly to those who gave up so much time (often at short notice) to make our many activities a success.

\*The 1986-7 Committee was: Judy Finlason (President), Les Robinson (Vice President), Martin Smith (Secretary), Neil Rankin (Treasurer, co-opted), Gavin Gatenby (Publicity), John Cheetham (Field Activities) and Merrick Plater, Tony French and Heather Stone.

## 14 Feb, Sunday - A walk by the Coalition For Urban Transport Sanity (CUTS) -

"Sydney's Urban Environment - An investigative field day"  
CUTS invites the public to inspect planned freeway sites in Wollli Creek, inner city Redfern and Pyrmont and the beautiful Lane Cove Valley, all in one informative day!  
Costs \$5 per person, morning and afternoon tea provided. Bring your own lunch and wear sturdy walking shoes and a hat. Purchase a 'Day Rover' Rail Ticket.  
BOOKINGS - Marg Barry 212 6193 (w) or Judy Messer 436 1170 (h). (Max. 50 people)

## WE NEED MONEY!

The Society needs funds to meet printing expenses and the many other costs that go with a successful conservation campaign. Ask yourself how much the Valley means to you. How much do you spend on a night out? Isn't preserving the Valley for your family and future generations worth at least as much? Don't put it off. Please write us a cheque now and post it to The Wollli Creek Preservation Society Inc. PO Box 270 Earlwood, NSW 2206.

P.S. We will send you a "Hands off Wollli Creek!" car sticker for each donation of \$5.00 or more so please send us a return address.

### Membership form

Yes, I would like to join the Wollli Creek Preservation Society Inc.

Name.....

Address.....

Phone ..... Postcode.....

I enclose membership fee of \$.....

Signed .....Date.....

I can help by .....

**NOTE** - Every renewed membership entitles the renewer to a free "Hands Off Wollli Creek!" car sticker.

MEMBERSHIP FEES:

Full fee: \$5 per year Concession: \$2 per year Families: \$7 per year