

Wolli Creek Update

From the Wolli Creek Preservation Society Inc.

No.4 Sept 1988

WOLLI BUSHLAND SAVED!

HISTORIC VICTORY FOR URBAN BUSHLAND

At long last! The Preservation Society's fight has been crowned with success. The F5 Freeway reservation has been lifted from the bushland area of the Wolli Creek Valley and the area is to be protected by an Open Space zoning.

Announcing the decision on August 5th, Environment Minister Tim Moore said, "By freeing up the major bushland areas, virtually all the designated country road corridor is now revoked, east of Bexley Road."

"There is a jumble of land in public ownership and the National Parks and Wildlife Service will be working with various other Government instrumentalities, to identify what the broad conservation strategy for the bushland areas of the Valley should be. No matter what future planning options for traffic dispersal will be undertaken, the bushland areas of the Wolli Creek Valley are now guaranteed permanent preservation for community enjoyment."

We applaud Environment Minister Tim Moore's move which honours a pre-election promise.

After many years of struggle by residents and conservationists we can now be confident that the Valley will be preserved and improved as one of Sydney's most beautiful and accessible bush parks. This is a truly historic victory for Sydney's urban environment. It is a clear defeat for those who advocated sacrificing the last remaining bushland in inner southwest Sydney to a destructive and temporary solution to traffic congestion.

WHAT OF THE FUTURE?

The Preservation Society calls for the creation of a **Wolli Creek Bush Park** which will preserve and enhance the Valley's environment for passive recreation. We will be making submissions to the government on the future management of this area. Our Society will continue to monitor developments in the Valley (eg. the Very Fast Train proposal), to oppose any future proposals for inappropriate development and to inform and educate residents and supporters of the Valley.

A major problem with the preservation of the Valley lies in the complicated patchwork of land ownership along its length. This is perhaps the major reason why the new government delayed an announcement on the F5 corridor. Large parcels of open space and bushland are under freehold title and were protected from urban sprawl by the road reservation. This protection will now be replaced by the protection offered by the Open Space zoning. The DMR will be permitted to continue consultations on design options for road construction adjacent to the East Hills railway line. This option may be one of 13 freeway route options explored in the coming months.

The Society would like to warmly thank all members, local residents and the broad conservation movement for their activism and support over many years. We commend Earlwood member Phil White for his support of the Valley and also the previous Earlwood member, Ken Gabb, who maintained opposition to the Wolli Creek F5 route within the previous Labor ministry.



Ecologists Mark Conlon (left) and Rickky Krasso sorting invertebrate specimens on the banks of Wolli Creek during a recent mangrove ecology survey. The survey is part of a continuing study of the regenerating Wolli Creek mangrove forests organised by Rickky who is a tutor at the University of Technology.

Get your tickets to Wolli Creek Victory Dinner: Friday 23 September, Earlwood-Bardwell Park RSL Club. Speaker: **David Kirby** BA, LLB, QC. **Ring** Rhonda 78 1598 or Sue 59

Possum Stirrings



A bulldozer revving at dawn shattered the calm of Jackson Place Earlwood one Sunday last December. Could this be the beginning of the destruction of the Valley? 'No! I'm only clearing the weeds!' the new owner at No3 Jackson Place assured the startled residents

Frantic efforts were made to stop the unauthorised work - why do these things always happen on a Sunday? Eventually, as the bulldozer was about to flatten the reed beds along Wolli Creek, resident protest was successful to stop the work.

Next day council phones rang hot and a total ban was placed on any development until the plans were prepared.

Since then rumour has been rife - what is planned for this crucial site - Is it to be a truck depot, a tip for builders' rubble, tennis courts? Who knows. All that is known for fact is that the owner has engaged a firm of consultant engineers to prepare an environmental impact statement for land use at the wetlands - and on good authority it is intended that the wetlands be filled.

So why all the fuss? No3 Jackson Place occupies a key position on the Canterbury side of the Valley, with 4.5 hectares of land extending from high above Wolli Creek to the reedbeds, wetlands and mangrove stands opposite Turrella. This land is totally affected by the DMR road reservation and remained under the ownership of the same family for many years until it changed hands last year. Loss of these reedlands

would be tragic as this is the single most unaffected and species rich wetlands in the valley. It is a vital species resource for the regeneration of wetlands in other parts of the Valley.

Any development at this property could have disastrous effects on bird, plant and animal life, it could also have a serious effect on the visual beauty of the area.

PossumStirrings has been assured by council that all development plans will be available for comment. In spite of these assurances Possum has an ear firmly to the ground and would like to know any rumours or whispers that our readers might hear. Just drop a note to Box 270 P.O. Earlwood 2206.

Vincent Serventy Talk a success

Vincent Serventy's talk for the Society on June 21 was a most successful event. Some 60 people attended and the society recruited 5 new members.

Vince ranged over many aspects of urban wildlife corridor management and emphasised the essential role of local groups like ours had played in conserving wildlife habitat and greenspace.

He was introduced by Botany Bay activist Bernie Clark who placed the environmental problems of Wolli Creek in the broader Botany Bay context.

Rare birds in the Valley

Some exciting new sightings have occurred over the recent few months. A pair of **Grey Goshawks** in April and during July two more sightings of this species were made. An **Azure Kingfisher**, **Restless Flycatcher** and **Noisy Friar Birds** have also been seen. The **Sacred Ibis** created a record when a flock of 97 was recorded feeding on the flat near Turrella station.

Nesting has already commenced with **Yellow Rumped Thornbills** well advanced in home building. **Ravens** have been seen carrying nesting materials and **Honeyeater** chases are a daily occurrence.

The birds are enjoying the Valley with 41 species being recorded in a walk along the creek today. It was a thrill to hear the plaintive call of the **Little Grassbird**.

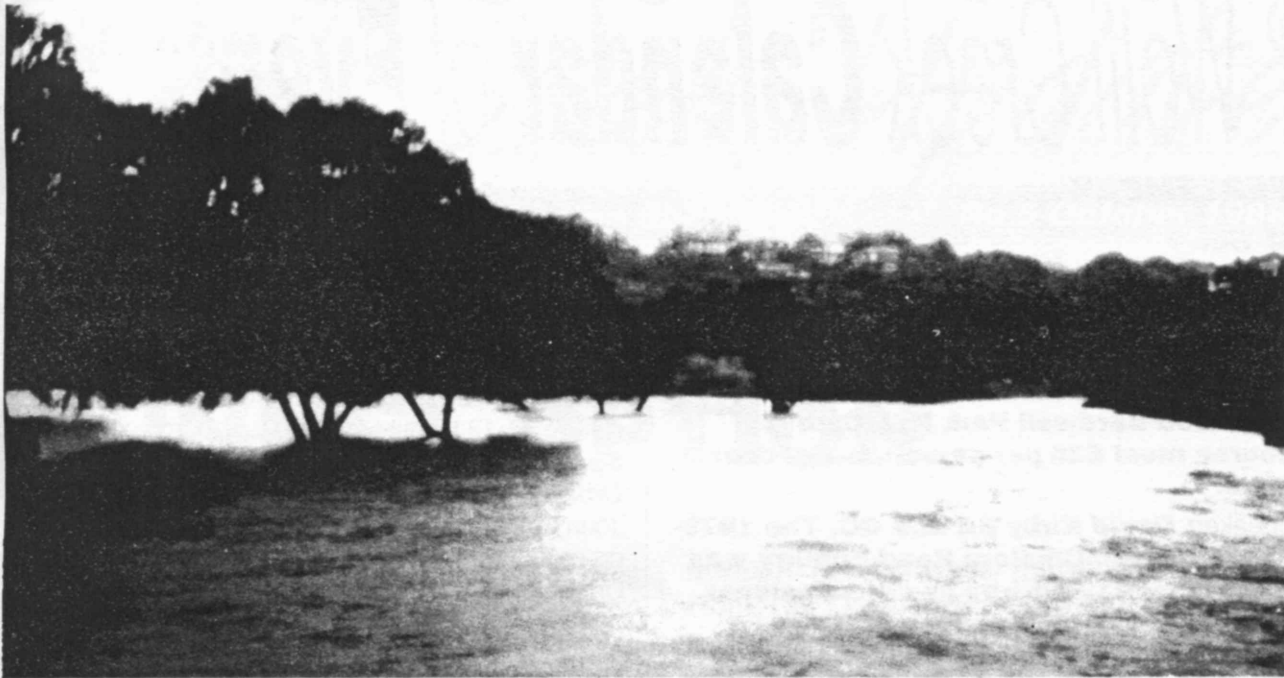
The Birdman, 21.7.88

VFT Latest

The proposed Very Fast Train (VFT) line through the Valley would (after passing down the valley from the west) diverge from the East Hills Line near Turrella Station and then cross the Illawarra line, the Princes Highway and Cooks River by viaduct. This new information on the planned route of the controversial project has emerged from a letter from the VFT Project Manager to the Cooks River "521 Committee" recently.

The 521 Committee is the multi-council body charged with the management of the Cooks River system. Local environmental and interest groups including the Preservation Society are represented on the committee.

The Committee has written to the VFT Project group asking for detailed maps and concept drawings of the planned route through the region.



This dramatic photograph gives some idea of the extent of flooding in the Valley following the heavy rains in late April. The photo was taken from the Henderson St. footbridge, looking east, a nervous business because the water was starting to splash around my feet!

It was taken at about 8.40 am on Saturday 30th and although I could walk onto the bridge itself from the Turrella side it would have been impossible or very dangerous to try to ford the 100 metres or so of swiftly flowing water covering the footpath running to Finlays Avenue on the Earlwood side.

This particular flood was preceded by several

days of very heavy rain, so it could be called a natural event - but such events now tend to happen every four years or so, a frequency which is probably due to the massive run-off effect of suburban rooves and street paving and guttering.

In any case the flooding is important to many of the plants and animals in the Valley. The Phragmites reedlands which are some of the last left in the Cook's River system and the home of several uncommon bird species have benefited from a good drenching. Breeding opportunities were provided for frogs and their tadpoles provided a food windfall for many bird species.

Gavin Gatenby

PLANTS OF WOLLI CREEK

Smilax glycyphylla Sm. Native Sarsaparilla

This was one of the famous bush teas of early colonial times. The leaves were boiled to produce a bitter-sweet tea that was reputedly a good tonic and also effective in the prevention of scurvy though this may be doubted nowadays. In the first settlement it was called 'sweet tea'. Captain Tench described it as "a vegetable creeper found growing on the rocks, which yields, on infusion in hot water, a sweet astringent taste, whence it deserves its name: to its virtues the healthy state of the soldiery and convicts may be greatly attributed. It was drank universally" (1793).

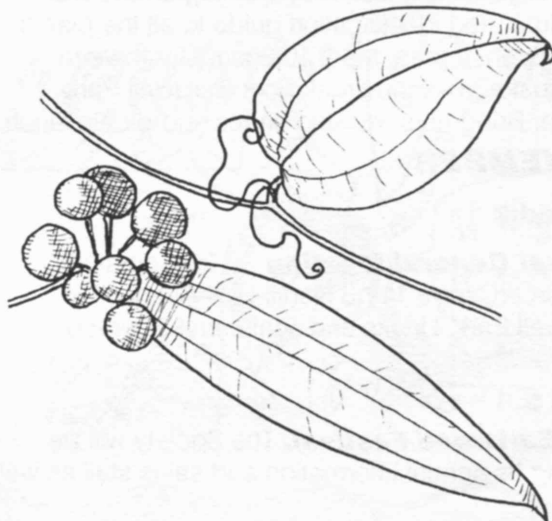
The Rev. Woolls later wrote "Excellent sarsaparilla may be obtained from it, and a few years since it was an article of export from this colony. Why it has ceased to be exported, I [am] not aware, nor can I say why so much foreign sarsaparilla is imported into the colony, when *smilax* exists in great abundance amongst us. Competent judges in England have pronounced the colonial sarsaparilla "excellent," and I have been informed that Dr. Greenup, one of the most eminent medical men in the colony, regards it as a most useful medicine" (1857).

Aborigines at Jervis Bay sucked the leaves, whether medicinally is not known. They yield a refreshing bitter flavour which is a pleasant distraction along the track. Don't bite them suddenly, just gently bruise them with the teeth to bring out the taste in palatable amounts.

Description: Small scrambling climber with tendrils. A universal plant in sclerophyll forests and heath in the area.

Leaves are tough and stiff, with *three parallel veins* and a pair of short tendrils at the base of each.

Flowers are tiny, unisexual with each sex on different plants (ie. 'dioecious'), in terminal clusters. **Flowering time:** Spring-summer. **Fruits** are black glossy berries in winter. **Family** Smilacaceae.





Wolli Creek Calendar of Events



SEPTEMBER

☆ Wed 7

Executive meeting.

☆ Fri 23

Victory Dinner. 7.30pm.

Earlwood-Bardwell Park RSL Club 3 course meal \$25 per person, lucky door prize.

Speaker: **David Kirby BA LLB QC. The 1979-81 Kyeemagh-Chullora Road Enquiry was headed by David Kirby as commissioner. The Enquiry recommended that the F5 Freeway reservation through the Valley should be lifted and the Valley's open space returned to the public. To this day the Enquiry remain perhaps the most authoritative planning investigation in the history of NSW.**

Proceeds from the night will go towards the publication of "Birds of Wolli Creek", a book by Neil Rankin. For tickets ring Rhonda on 78 1598 or Sue 59 1546 ☐.



OCTOBER

☆ Wed 5

General Meeting - 7.30 Community Resource Centre 11-13 Hartill-Law Avenue, Bardwell Park.

☆ Sun 16

Excursion: Wolli Creek Wildflower Walk with the society's tame botanist **Les Robinson.**

September is the best month to observe the native flowers of the Valley and Les will tell something about the history and culture of the plants you'll see. Les is a professional cartoonist and illustrator whose "Trees of Wolli Creek" will be familiar to many of you. He is currently working on the first fully illustrated identification guide to all the plants of the Sydney area. Meet 10.30am Girrahween Park, just across the creek from Bardwell Park Station. Bring hats, walking shoes and picnic lunch.



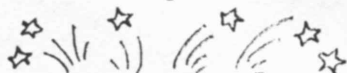
NOVEMBER

☆ Wed 2

Annual General Meeting 7.30 Community Resource Centre 11-13 Hartill-Law Avenue, Bardwell Park. Drinks and light snacks served afterwards.

• Sat 5

The Earlwood Festival. The Society will be running its annual information and sales stall as well



as bushwalks and other special activities yet to be decided. If you can spare the day to help please ring Sue on 59 1546 ☐.

DECEMBER

☆ Wed 7

General Meeting 7.30 Community Resource Centre 11-13 Hartill-Law Avenue, Bardwell Park.

Speaker: John Pastorelli: "The Bicentennial Urban Wildlife Survey - Results and Prospects". John Pastorelli is a former NSW Parks ranger who co-ordinated the recent and highly successful Urban Wildlife Survey.

JANUARY

☆ Wed 4

Executive Meeting

☆ Sat 21

Excursion: "Rogues and Scientists" - a history walk in the Australian Museum. Tales of sex, horror, violence and politics behind the making of Australia's largest and oldest Natural History museum. You'll go behind the scenes to see where it all took place and get a special look at some of the prized "rare and curious specimens". \$5.00 a head for members and \$7.00 for others. Meet at 2.00pm in the College St. Foyer of the Museum. Bookings are necessary, phone Gavin on 59 8502 (home) ☐.



FEBRUARY

☆ Wed 1

General Meeting 7.30 Community Resource Centre 11-13 Hartill-Law Avenue, Bardwell Park.

Speaker: Judith Webster, Interpretations Officer, Bicentennial Park. "Wildlife in the Suburbs - the Bicentennial Park experience". Judith is a former NPWS officer with experience in Sydney Harbour National Park, Royal NP and the Griffith district.



☆ Sat 4

Excursion to Bicentennial Park, Homebush. Bring some binoculars and a picnic lunch. A park ranger will be taking us on a 1/2 hour guided walk which takes in the wetlands and the celebrated mangrove boardwalk. Meet at the visitor information centre at 11.00am. The park is a short walk from Concord West Railway Station but the society may be able to arrange a lift by car. In any case please ring Sue on 59 1546 to book for the walk ☐.

