

Wolli's missing link closer to reality

The possibility of walking through bushland from Bexley North to Tempe is a step closer. While full establishment must await the handover to NPWS of the lands east of Bexley Road and north of the creek, the "missing link" between Bexley North and Bardwell Park is starting to take shape.

In March an intrepid group of members established (not without some difficulty) that a feasible track could be formed, away from the damp and overgrown route that existed until some years ago. Since then further exploration has revealed:

- A truly remarkable range of landscapes in a distance of only 1.2 kilometres.
- A healthy ecosystem of surviving native species among some heavy infestations of exotics.
- A good canopy of eucalypts including turpentine, blackbutt and Sydney peppermints.
- Some disgraceful patches of dumped rubbish.
- Rock walls and formations that have lain hidden for decades.
- The location of two archeological sites surveyed in 1992 by Graham Wilson, King's Farm (1930s) and an earlier complex of unknown purpose dating back to the late 19th century.

Although considerable work will be needed on clearing, revegetation and track stabilisation, by the end of the year it is hoped that members could be taken along the (partially completed) path, with a view to opening it up more generally, in consultation with NPWS, in 2006. If you are interested in lending a hand in this work please contact Peter Stevens on 9554 3176 (or via info@wollicreek.org.au) or Geoff Whale on 9556 1015.

The once-fantastic vision of interconnecting routes along the Cooks, Wolli and Bardwell valleys is now a goal within reasonable reach.

And here's another great Wolli vantage point worth visiting ...



There's a striking view over the Wolli Valley, the city (and the M5E stack) from the rarely-visited public reserve atop Wilcox Hill at the junction of Wolli and Bardwell valleys. Access is via a public right-of-way between 36 and 38 John Street Arncliffe. Look for the stairs next to the banana tree.

Two important events for your diary

Freshwater Creek Wetlands site visit

- *Saturday 11 June AM, at Chullora*

An exciting opportunity to take a close-up look at an important environmental turnaround in our area. This 5.8 hectare site on the upper reaches of the Cooks River at Chullora is a constructed freshwater ecosystem surrounded by native plantings, providing habitat for numerous species of native birds (80), frogs (6), amphibians and native fish. It turns stormwater input from adjacent industrial areas into water that improves the Cooks River. Local environment groups have had a major role in what the Streamwatch website describes as 'a massive four year effort' with a 'spectacular' result. It has indeed come a long way from a vacant industrial site with two very large holes dug in

the ground to store stormwater overflow. For details and registration to join the Society in a guided tour please call Peter on 9554 3176. Additional information about the site can be found on our website at www.wollicreek.org.au.

Catchment Management Authority Chair gives talk for Society

- *Sunday 19 June at Marrickville*

The newly-formed Sydney Metropolitan Catchment Management Authority has responsibility for the Parramatta and Georges Rivers as well as our own catchment. We have been able to arrange for its Chair, Bob Junor, to give a talk on the whole Wolli/Cooks catchment. We are pleased to have ensured this early focus on our catchment, perhaps in danger of being overlooked in favour of the bigger ones to our north and south.

The talk will be held at the Debbie and Abbey Borgia Centre 531 Illawarra Road Marrickville Please arrive at 1.45 pm for a prompt 2.00 start. Finish about 4.00.

The centre's café will be open.

There will be time for questions and discussion after the talk and some networking on the side – we have been working to gather support from other environment and related groups in the catchment for this event. Please help to promote the event wherever you can, as a big turnout is desirable. Members on the email list will be sent an A4 poster they can use. A hard copy can be mailed to you on request to Peter on 9554 3176.

Download 'Roads of Doom' – a comic event in our history



The 1994 Nick Possum comic book 'Roads of Doom' was an important part of the struggle to stop the M5 East motorway going through Wolli Valley. The complete comic is now available in PDF format from the Nick Possum Home Page: <http://www.brushtail.com.au/downloads.html>

May Day Wolli walk

May 1st saw 15 walkers plus guides Peter and Deb head off on another trek through the natural and cultural landscape of the Wolli Valley. Starting at Bardwell Park, the group walked down the valley, finishing at Tempe station – tired but happy. En route, there were various stops, and commentary about the natural, cultural and political history of the valley, and the native flora and fauna still to be found there. Highlights were the climb up to the summit of Nannygoat Hill – always an eye opener for those doing it for the first time – as well as the Jackson Place morning tea stop. Here, WCPS President Judy Finlason's talk about the history of the six stone Jackson Place cottages, and the open air showing of the ABC's 1967 current affairs story, "The Battle for Nannygoat Hill", held the walkers captivated. A repeat of this walk will take place in 2006.

Bush regeneration and National Tree Day

Our work at Bray Avenue, Bardwell Park, is going well, with many members involved at various times. Planning is well in hand for action on **National Tree Day, Sunday 31 July**, when we plan to plant several hundred plants to create a new native plant barrier to enable us to eventually remove an existing one consisting of weeds. If you are interested in participating, register with Peter on 9554 3176.

We are very frustrated with delays in announcing outcomes of Round 2 grants under the Cooks River Foreshore Improvement Program. In August last year, we applied, with Canterbury Council, for a grant to support and extend our work at Bray Avenue and to finance the major planting on National Tree Day. We have had to make commitments in order to have local seed collected and propagated (thanks Marrickville Community Nursery) without knowing whether we will be supported. We have written to the Minister, Craig Knowles about our concern.

In particular, we are unable to undertake other important work or to apply for further funding when our financial capacity to do so remains unclear. We would really like to be gearing up for work at Bexley North now that we are finally about to receive RTA permission to access the high priority bush areas there.

Clean Up Wolli

On March 6, WCPS joined in the Clean Up Australia Day Campaign with sights set on cleaning up Wolli Creek at the Bexley Road crossing. Thirteen volunteers descended on the area with energy and determination and after three hours of determined cleaning, the results were incredibly pleasing. Wolli Creek was looking resplendent, minus 19 bags of rubbish consisting of plastic, confectionery bags, drink bottles, cigarette boxes, plus some interesting items such as a car door, computer mouse, and a pair of boots.

Challenges included digging out a shopping trolley embedded in the creek bank and dragging iron fencing from the creek bed. A major disappointment was the amount of half-buried industrial material. RailCorp has now assisted by building a new fence to prevent illegal access.

Rockdale Council environmental team led by Geoff Raymond, was exceptionally helpful, lending tools and equipment and collecting all the rubbish. Canterbury Council also assisted with rubbish bags and gloves. Canterbury MP Linda Burney – with her usual enthusiasm – also pitched in on the day.

Overall the day was a success, although we have only touched the tip of the cleaning problem. We may organise another day later this year to follow up.

Creek Issues Roundup

Members have been sent a report on the Future of Wolli Creek public meeting held last November. Below are some notes on follow-up action on issues raised plus other information. If you have a particular interest in an issue and/or can offer some time to work on it, please let Peter know on 9554 3176. All agencies have been notably slow in responding to our requests.

Wolli Creek Regional Park No change, although we believe that a Ranger with the park as part of their responsibilities has now been appointed and work is well under way to determine the ownership of the large number and variety of land lots involved.

Southern creek bank RailCorp has now provided a map of the rail corridor just south of the creek, which shows the land owned by RailCorp along the East Hills line from Bexley North to Tempe. It doesn't show where the actual operational boundaries of the corridor lie, but, with the help of their officers, we have been able to work out which areas are outside the operational zone (therefore probably those 'surplus to operational requirements' as described in their earlier letter) and could be managed for native revegetation. The investigations have also revealed a number of surprising anomalies that will need further follow-up. The promised Regional Environment Plan covering the area has not yet been provided. We have recently written to RailCorp drawing attention to the extensive presence of the noxious weed pampas grass in the area east of the SWOOS where the mangrove and saltmarsh communities lie.

Cycleway Despite numerous follow-ups, the RTA has still not advised us about its latest proposals for a cycleway through the valley, although we understand that there has been some consultation with councils.

Henderson Street weir Fisheries and the two councils (Rockdale and Canterbury) have been meeting to discuss the options (leave, remove or replace with fish ladder). Fisheries have apparently put an implausibly high \$400,000 estimate on the fish ladder option. A letter to your council if you are a resident of either of these council areas putting your point of view would be valuable.

Sewers Sydney Water has provided a map of sewers in the local area, and a very positive estimate of the planned reduction of designed overflow events under its licence arrangements with the Department of Environment and Conservation. However, key information was lacking and further information has been sought. Two sewer vents-to-air in the Girraheen to Nannygoat Hill section have been renewed after we brought the rusted and holed state of one of them to attention.

MSE stack discharge to creek The Department of Environment and Conservation has apparently had major difficulties getting information out of the RTA on the discharges from the Stack (surprise, surprise!), but we are led to expect advice shortly.

Water Quality The Society has contributed \$500 to RiverScience, a program coordinated by Marrickville Council on behalf of several Cooks River catchment councils. Its aim is to establish a baseline for the ecological health of the waterways by way of an examination of key indicator species of streamside vegetation and various macro-invertebrates present in the estuarine areas of the Cooks catchment. Our contribution is aimed at ensuring that the tidal stretch of Wolli Creek is fully covered by the study. We have also begun the process of working with StreamWatch to be trained to undertake annual sampling of macro-invertebrates in the freshwater sections of Wolli and Bardwell Creeks as an indication of overall stream health.

Back issues of Wolli Creek update can be downloaded from the WCPS website, www.wollicreek.org.au, where you can also take our virtual Wolli walk.