



Society organises successful oral history workshop

Collecting people's stories

By JUDI ROSSI

Sixteen history buffs attended a full-day oral history workshop at Herb Greedy Hall, Marrickville, on Saturday, 19 August, facilitated by Rosemary Block, curator of oral history at the NSW State Library, and organised by the Society. It was a very worthwhile and enjoyable day.

I went along thinking I knew all about oral history: a record of someone's life story, either in written or aural form. I was almost right! It's some of this – and a good deal more as well.

Rosemary defined oral history as a spoken record that involves a minimum of two persons – an interviewer and an interviewee – and oral and aural components. In other words, it is recollections of events and feelings recorded through an interview with the dynamics of the trip down memory lane building a bond between the person asking the questions and the person answering. The shared interest and sometimes, shared emotion, that results, when captured on audio or videotape, has colour, movement, drama and irony that can be missing from written records. It is the oral and aural components that make this social history rich.

After a potted history of oral history (from the oral tradition that involved the handing down of family rituals, myths and lore to the younger generation, to the situation with an interviewer and interviewee), Rosemary spoke about memories, interviewing techniques and some of the resources available to assist those interested in collecting people's stories. We also heard grabs from some oral histories in the State archives, and after lunch, in groups of three, practised interviewing, being interviewed or observing.

Here are some other bits I found interesting:

- The first oral history interviews on the ABC were with people who'd known famous folk who were dead. Direct interviews with people about their own lives came later.
- People remember feelings about events, and facts can be checked after an interview.



The King family on their farm near Bexley North, about 1906, from the recently republished *The Wolli Creek Valley – A History of Survival*.

- Everyone has a 'point of passion' and it's the interviewer's task to find it!
- Rosemary has identified a phenomenon she calls, 'the spouse protest' (the rattling of tea cups in the kitchen when the partner being interviewed is getting all the attention).
- Audiotapes should always be stored ver-

atically so the spindles stay aligned and don't stretch the tape!

My thanks to Wolli Creek Preservation Society for organising the day.

• *WCPS would like to thank Canterbury City Council for assistance for the oral history project through its community grants program.*

WOLLI CREEK PRESERVATION SOCIETY Inc.

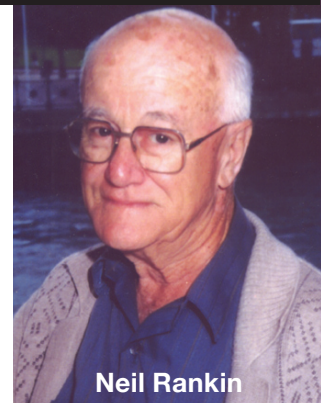
Join us for the launch
by John Dengate of

Rankin's
Birds of Wolli Valley

11am Sunday 15 October 2006

Turrella Reserve

Earlwood. (End of Finlay's Avenue)



Neil Rankin

Rankin's Birds of Woli Valley is a revised edition of Neil Rankin's popular publication Birds of Wolli Creek.

There will be also be a planting of native plants to commemorate Neil Rankin (The Birdman of Wolli Creek)

Prior to the launch there will be three birdwatching walks starting at 9am from Girrahween Park (Earlwood), Wentworth Park (Tempe) and Coolabah Reserve (Arncliffe).

AGM to vote on new Statement of Purpose and revised rules

Your Society's committee has undertaken a lengthy review of the Purpose and Rules of the Society, the first major review since its incorporation in 1987. As a result, the committee recommends the brand-new statement of purpose as set out below and a revised set of rules, which is a modification of the current model rules put out by the Department of Fair Trading. For a copy of the revised Constitution contact info@wollicreek.org.au or ring 9554 3176. These are significant changes and require a special resolution at the Annual General Meeting this year.

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The Wollie Creek Preservation Society aims to ensure the preservation of the natural and cultural heritage of the Wollie Creek Valley, its tributaries, associated corridors and their ecological communities, and the ecologically sensitive restoration, expansion and maintenance of these areas.

The Wollie Creek Preservation Society acknowledges that Wollie Creek flows through the cultural landscape of the Gadigal people.

To achieve its aim the Wollie Creek Preservation Society will seek to:

- Involve the community through the provision of information, education and other activities related to the valley and environmental issues;
- Carry out conservation and restoration programs and related activities;
- Develop programs to increase community awareness of the importance of sustainable, whole-of-catchment practices that have a positive impact on bushland, water quality and ecological communities;
- Promote and support passive recreation, education and research, both scientific and social, within the Wollie Creek catchment;
- Advocate for policy, development and resource allocation decisions that are complementary to the aim of the Wollie Creek Preservation Society;
- Liaise with all levels of government and relevant agencies regarding matters relating to the Wollie Creek catchment;
- Enhance and expand of natural ecosystems and passive open space along the Wollie Creek corridor and its tributaries;
- Undertake any other activities which further the aim of the Wollie Creek Preservation Society.

Annual General Meeting

7.30pm Wednesday 25 October 2006

Community Development Organisation
11-13 Hartill Law Avenue
Bardwell Park

Agenda

- Minutes of previous meeting
- Reports
- Election of Committee and Office Bearers.

Special resolution

'That the new Statement of Purpose and revised Constitution as recommended by the Committee be accepted.'

The historic ABC news item about the Battle of Nanny Goat Hill (1967) will be shown at the meeting. (Now available on DVD, along with four other historic film pieces.)

The AGM will be followed by an ordinary meeting of the new committee. We welcome and encourage members to nominate for the committee. If you'd like to discuss, please ring Peter on 9554 3176.



bush restoration work

- Our regular groups continue to do great work each month working 9-12.30 – a good social occasion too. See events calendar for dates to the end of the year.
- We are always interested in additional volunteers, particularly for our Wednesday and Saturday groups. Tools and training provided.
- There are other weekday opportunities, too. You could come and work alongside teams of Conservation Volunteers Australia, and even with corporate groups – local involvement is good on these occasions.
- There have been two significant plantings undertaken to boost

biodiversity and provide seed orchards – all from local seed of course – at Johnston Street and at Bray Avenue.

- Just as late winter is a peak time for planting, so spring is a peak time for strategic weeding to remove things that will cause problems – the old slogan is “one year's seeding means seven years weeding”. We'll be doing lots.
- We've also seen stormwater developments – stormwater from streets is a leading cause of problems in our bushland. We've held a public consultation session on the design for a restructured stormwater channel at the Bray Avenue wetland, and

put in some temporary channelling at Johnston St while we work on a longer-term solution.

- We have also applied for further grants – one to the Cooks River Foreshore Improvement Program for 2007 and 2008 funding for Bray Avenue (covering bush regeneration work, shaping the new channel and building a boardwalk underpass under Hartill-Law Avenue, so that we can walk from Bexley North to Tempe without crossing a road). And the other to the Department of Lands for funds in 2006/7 to support bush regeneration work east of Girraheen Park.

2006 has been a great WCPS year. Celebrate it at the Annual Dinner and make this year's the best yet!

It's Annual Dinner time again... so get October 20 locked into your diary... we had such excellent feedback from last year that the dinner will again be held at St George Rowing Club, 6.30 pm for 7.00pm. And the cost will remain the same too, at \$35 per person for a two course buffet dinner with coffee etc. Other drinks will be available from a cash bar.

We had a great evening last year and this is a really valuable time to meet and socialize with other members. Already the registration rate has been good but we need your money ahead of time to confirm numbers with the venue and to ensure that this is a fund-raising event, not a fund-reducing one! So, please use the enclosed form to book early, spread the word to your friends and family and come along for a fun night.

Unfortunately, our previously advertised speaker, Canterbury MP Linda Burney, was subsequently asked by the State Government to attend the launch of a lecture series in

Hear John Kaye ...



“Global warming: three facts, two distractions, one downright lie and the vision splendid ...”

The political process is throwing up barriers to a jobs-rich clean energy future.

John Kaye is a Greens Upper House candidate at the 2007 state election

honour of her late husband, Rick Farley. The launch is on the same date as our dinner, but in Armidale. Happily, Linda has offered to speak at next year's dinner instead. In her

place we've obtained John Kaye, an expert on climate change and sustainability. John is a Greens candidate for the Legislative Council in the forthcoming NSW elections.

wildlife notes

Death from above

During August and into early September a pair of peregrine falcons (*Falco peregrinus*) were often seen along the valley. They killed many feral pigeons, sometimes bringing their prey to ground on Turrella reserve where they snipped off the dead birds' flight and tail feathers before carrying them up onto the ledge near the top of the MSE stack to be consumed. Peregrine falcons holds the record as the fastest living creature. I'd dearly love to know if our local peregrines have found a suitable nesting spot. They usually nest on cliff ledges, but sometimes use old nests of crows or other raptors.

Striated heron

A striated heron (*Ardeola striatus*, pictured right) can occasionally be seen, at low tide, skulking along the muddy banks of the creek below the Henderson Street Weir.

Return of the chestnut-breasted mannikins

These very striking native reed finches have recently established a small presence near Turrella reserve. On 14 September I saw two adult birds among about 30 nutmeg mannikins (*Lonchura punctulata*), an introduced species, feeding on grass seeds near where the drainage ditch flows into Wollie Creek. Arnold McGill recorded seven chestnut-breasted mannikins in 1952 and there are two other records from the early 1970s.



I first saw a single adult chestnut-breasted mannikin (*Lonchura castaneothorax*) in August 2005, feeding with the same flock of nutmeg mannikins. On both occasions there may have been more of them because immature chestnut-breasted mannikins look very similar to nutmeg mannikins.

The phenomena of these species flocking together is an interesting one. The chestnut-breasted and the introduced nutmeg mannikin prefer a similar range of creek-bank habitats as well as nesting, feeding and social habits. It seems as though the native species, until now rarer in the Sydney region, is finding a companionable association with the feral species useful in reestablishing itself. According to the *Readers Digest Complete Book of Australian Birds*, the chestnut-breasted favours "... rank grasses and reeds on the margins of swamps, mangroves and rivers" – habitats well represented along Wollie Creek. It will be interesting to see if they establish a breeding population. • GAVIN GATENBY

Upcoming events

30 September Members' Walk Bexley North to Undercliffe, historical and environmental commentary, with a special focus on bush restoration work 8.45 am 4 hours Register via info@wollicreek.org.au or 9554 3176.

8 October Birdwatching Walk. Bardwell Park to Turrella and return.

15 October Launch of Neil Rankin's Birds of Wollie Valley, Turrella Reserve see details page 4. Note new date for this event.

20 October Annual Dinner – don't miss out! Book now on the enclosed form.

29 October Ewen Park Picnic (see page 4).

1 November Annual General Meeting (see page 2).

15 November Wollie from Creek to Crest, kayak trip (see page 4).

And of course bush regeneration mornings (ring 9554 3176):

Wednesdays: 11 October, 8 November, 13 December

Saturdays: 7 October, 4 November, 2 December

Sundays: 8 October, 12 November, 10 December.

A question of mobility...

Fishway

Planning is underway for building the fishway over the Henderson St weir at Turrella – so many approvals and licences are needed that this will take the rest of 2006, with construction taking place in the first half of 2007. And of course we need to arrange fish surveys before and after to see what changes result. Email members have been circulated with a 'job vacant' description for someone with fishing experience and some fish identification skills to help carry out the sampling needed. If that job might suit you, please call Peter on 9554 3176 and more details can be provided.

Cycleway

\$1m was allocated in the last State budget to develop two local cycleways, one along the line of the Wolli Valley and the other crossing the ridge from Kingsgrove to the existing cycleway along Cup and Saucer Creek (Cooks River). We have yet to be contacted by the RTA about what is proposed, but we believe that this sum of money will not allow the building of the creekside route in the Wolli Valley that we have strenuously opposed.

Two Valley Trail

The Society is developing a trail from Bexley North to Campsie via Tempe – about 12 km through Wolli bushland and the parklands and playing fields along the Cooks River. The

ambition is to:

- Ensure that the route is fully and safely negotiable on foot and maintained that way, without detracting from natural bushland settings (Wolli) and resolving multiple-use issues (Cooks River).
- Have the trail way-marked for the guidance of walkers.
- Emphasise access by public transport, particularly rail and to promote it, in conjunction with CityRail, at access stations and other stations along the East Hills and Bankstown lines.
- Produce a basic leaflet with guide map and basic directions re access and use, available in hard copy and via the internet.
- Publish a booklet at low cost providing historical and environmental commentary on matters of interest along the Trail, including bushland, historical remnants such as quarries and market gardens, the SWOOS, Tempe House, the Sugar Mill etc. (much of this material is already at least part-developed by local community members).
- Maintain an up-to-date on-line guide to picnic areas and nearby commercial outlets for food and refreshments.
- Work with the RiverLife program to increase shorter guided walks within and adjacent to the Trail.
- Run a photo exhibition/competition (later

to go to the web) showing positive aspects and emphasising the beauty of the two valleys.

We hope to work with groups in the Cooks River Valley and the Councils of Marrickville and Canterbury to have this ready to launch in time for next year's Great Australian Bushwalk (this year's was on September 10). We'd love to have more interested members involved as there's a fair bit to do. Email info@wollicreek.org.au or ring 9554 3176 to find out more.

SPRING COMMUNITY PICNIC AT EWEN PARK ON THE COOKS RIVER

As a celebration of spring by the river, **Friends of Ewen Park** are hosting a community picnic.

Where: EWEN PARK PICNIC AREA, Tennent Pde, Hurlstone Park.

When: Sunday 29 October,
Starts 12.00 to 12.30.

The picnic will be officially opened at 1.00 pm by

the **Hon Dr Meredith Burgmann**, President of the Legislative Council of NSW, longterm community activist and co-author of *Green Bans, Red Union*.

Guests of Honour are award-winning children's authors and illustrators:

Allan Baillie (*Drac and the Gremlin*);

Jeannie Baker (*Where the Forest Meets the Sea*);

Duncan Ball (the Selby books);

Ursula Dubosarsky (*Rex*);

Libby Gleeson (*The Great Bear*);

Catherine Jinks (the Pagan series);

Ken Searle (*Walking with the Seasons in Kakadu*);

Julie Vivas (*Possum Magic*);

Nadia Wheatley (*My Place*).

Children are welcome to come and meet the authors and illustrators under the Story Tree, and get their books or autograph books signed.

There will also be a kite-making workshop for children, run by the Wolli Creek Preservation Society.

EWEN PARK – A PLACE FOR EVERYONE

From Creek to Crest

Each year our joint event with the River Canoe Club has been oversubscribed and no wonder! An initial training session, a leisurely paddle from Tempe (Unwin's Bridge) down Cooks River and up Wolli Creek – with views you just can't get any other way – to Turrella Reserve, a trip to the top of Nannygoat Hill for the stunning 360 degree view before returning to the clubhouse for hot soup and rolls. And yes, this year's event from mid-morning to mid-afternoon on November 25 already has a long list of registrants, so put in your bid now. Cost is \$25 (mainly insurance) and you register by emailing info@wollicreek.org.au or ringing 9554 3176. We may try to run another in the autumn, but there are no promises!

Birdwatching Walk

• **Sunday 8 October 9am – 12 noon.**

The Wolli Valley has recorded over 25 per cent of the bird species known for NSW – phenomenal for its size and location and largely due to its role as one of only a few remnants in the heavily urbanised SW of Sydney. They won't all be seen in this walk, which will be focussed on introducing beginner birdwatchers, and those who wish they were, to the habitats and birds of Wolli. To celebrate Bird Week Experienced birdwatcher and bander, Alan Leishman, will lead a free morning bird walk from Bardwell Park to Turrella for members of the Society. A variety of bird habitats will be encountered along the way and Alan will give tips on bird identification and what to watch for, where and when. To register for the walk contact Peter on 9554 3176 or via info@wollicreek.org.au as soon as possible.

Rejoin now for 2007

Our membership is for the calendar year, but to aid your committee with financial calculations etc and to enable it to focus on recruiting new members, it really helps if you renew at this time of year. So, please, act now – an application form is enclosed with this hard copy version of the Update and you will be financial to the end of 2007. (Email members will also receive their usual copy, in glorious colour, electronically.)

For more on Wolli Creek, visit us online at www.wollicreek.org.au