

Why do we care?



*A brief history of 13 years of Bushcare
in
Lane Cove National Park*

Genesis

On the tenth anniversary of the establishment of the Friends of Lane Cove National Park and the official Volunteer Bush Regeneration Program it seems appropriate to take a look at the origins and development of this association as a heartwarming example of how a small group of determined, dedicated and multitalented people can capture the imagination of the wider community and start to bring about a change in the thinking and methodology of an entire government department. When Terry Wilson became subdistrict manager in 1996 he immediately recognised the valuable impact of the volunteers as “a fantastic example of community and government working together and a model that should be adopted in other areas of the state”.



Sequence of events

Paddy's Wake

Strange as it may seem, the concept of bushcare in Lane Cove National Park is a comparatively recent phenomenon. As usual in all things related to the Australian bush, the ubiquitous Paddy Pallin has a lot to answer for. According to his daughter-in-law Nancy it was at Paddy's wake in early 1991 that a disparate group of bushwalkers, rogainers, SGAP (Society for Growing Australian Plants) members and various friends decided they couldn't pass up this wonderful opportunity to instigate something really positive. In Nancy's own words, "It was about bloody time". So she planned a community working breakfast at Carters Creek.

Community working breakfast

Colourful descriptions of that first meeting on 10th March 1991 can be found elsewhere. Suffice to say it saw a big rollup, much work was done and several large working bees followed over the next three years for the wider community. At the same time a group of interested locals and people from the Tourist Park, calling themselves the Turrumburra team, decided to meet monthly. Eventually an even more dedicated group led by Nan Goodsell started working every Thursday (and the group has been working ever since).

In order to obtain government support for all this wonderful community work it was decided to form some sort of working committee. The formation of the Friends of Lane Cove National Park was a direct result of the initiative and drive of that dynamic duo Nancy Pallin and Nan Goodsell. By timely coincidence the first meeting for this group was convoked by Lyn Hulme on 28th December 1993 for the following month.

The January 1994 Fire

Just over a week later, dramatic fires swept through Sydney affecting over 80% of the park and the meeting was not held until the following month. It consisted of most of the Thursday group plus Nancy Pallin and Dave Costello, (the Head Ranger). Nan Goodsell was elected Chairperson, Lyn Hulme Secretary and Margaret Reidy Treasurer. These three rapidly became the backbone of the group. Without all those untold hours of extra input and their sterling leadership the Friends' association would not have survived.

Public response to the fire prompted the Friends and Lane Cove National Park Management to arrange a meeting at Jenkins Hall on 15th April. 150 people turned up. Nine worksites were chosen and 119 volunteers signed up on the night. The volunteer Bush Regeneration Program was born. The role of the Friends became critical in coordinating the vast cornucopia of goodwill directed towards the park from corporations, government bodies and the general public.

With the help of Alison Evans, Director of the Foundation for National Parks & Wildlife, the group had become an 'Adopt-a-park' committee under the umbrella of the Foundation. They were able to put to good use all the skills they had developed over the previous three years, working with the park staff recruiting members, making posters and flyers and having a go at grant submissions. In all this they received generous advice and support from such respected bodies as AABR (Australian Association of Bush Regenerators) and the National Trust, as well as the Foundation.

The roots had been well laid down. By the Spring of 1994, money donated by Westpac, the Lord Mayor's Bushfire Appeal Fund and various community bodies, made it possible to employ two permanent coordinators. First Kevin Wale, skilfully but very briefly, helped to map areas of most need. His main claim to fame however was the naming of "Regenavitis" set up by his successor Lynn Rees as a seasonal newsletter.

Lynn Rees lost no time in focusing and consolidating work done by Kevin, Dave Costello and the Friends. Lynn had wonderful organisational skills, arranging comprehensive lists of both weeds and natives and allocating numbers to all the groups while mapping their locations for easy reference. She put in an immense effort to give the work being done a sound footing. When Trevor Prowse joined her later in the year he complemented Lynn's skills with his hands-on understanding of the native environment, his gentle but astute sense of humour and his endless patience with all of us.



The following is a brief synopsis of salient Bushcare events from 1994 – 2004

1994

- 8th January - Fire in the Park
- 10th February - First meeting to set up the Friends
- 12th February - Successful recruitment drive at Lady Game and Delhi road entrances to the Park
- 15th April - Inaugural meeting of volunteer bush regenerators
- Funds of \$330,000 organised by the Foundation to employ 2 bushcare coordinators for 3 years
- Bushcare coordinator Kevin Wale came and went, replaced by Lynn Rees
- Lynn Rees started Regenavitis
- Trevor Prowse new bushcare technical officer arrived
- Lynn and Trevor set up shop in historic kitchen behind Jenkins Hall
- 19 bushcare groups with 170 volunteers
- Seven JobSkill people employed (among other things helped upgrade the Park nursery)
- Training workshops instigated
- Another big fire 13-14th November in Fox Valley area (97% of Park suffered fire damage in one year)
- A policy of retaining remnant vegetation, even heavily weed infested areas, was put in place to protect habitat for surviving fauna

1995

- Australia Day Award from Sydney Morning Herald for Friends accepted by Nan Goodsell
- Grant from EPA to restore Fiddens' Wharf area
- Big First Anniversary Bash
- Macquarie Uni students did storm water study and built experimental drains to assist bush restoration
- Nursery well underway with help from bushfire donation from Jewish Community and the ingenuity of Jack Hafey, Bill Jones and Trevor Prowse
- The mobile educational trailer acquired through a Rivers Reborn grant awarded to the Friends
- The drive by National Parks to eliminate feral animals underway
- Goodbye to Dave Costello who as Head Ranger had been so supportive from the outset
- Friends AGM – Margaret Reidy President, John James Treasurer, Lyn Hulme remained Secretary

1996

- Terry Wilson became sub-district Manager
- Fiddens Wharf project completed and Friends sponsored volunteers to undertake the National Trust Training Course
- Draft District Management Plan 1996 – 2001 produced
- Comprehensive coverage of the value of volunteers in the bush by Lynn Rees and Martin Smith published in "A Good Weed". (N.B. Lynn and Martin worked so well together they eventually made it a permanent thing in the Spring of the following year)
- In Autumn 1996 there were 26 groups and 240 active volunteers
- LEAP (Landcare Environment Action Program) team put to work on various construction jobs
- Two engineering students from University of Sydney continued working with the storm water project set up by Macquarie Uni and funded by a grant from Lane Cove River Catchment Management Committee (LCRMC)
- Visit from the Foundation's Projects Committee to see bush regeneration work first hand – "best experience they'd had so far"



1997

- Samantha Olson took on position of Pest Species Eradication Officer in the Park
- Volunteer/Friend Janet Fairlie-Cunningham was employed part-time to eliminate vines along the river bank upstream from the weir
- \$80,000 from Sydney Water to regenerate Dalrymple-Hay Nature Reserve
- Name change - Lane Cove National Park Community Bush Regeneration Program officially became Lane Cove National Park Bushcare Program
- Third Anniversary celebration in Jenkins Hall and belated farewell to Lynn Rees
- Lynn Rees went to Port Macquarie. Trevor married and was able to stay on a little longer as coordinator
- 4 grants approved:
 1. Volunteer/Friend Peter Bernard's Fairyland Historical Signage (from LCRCMC)
 2. Funding for Trainers (LCRCMC)
 3. Construction of drainage at Carramar Road site (LCRCMC)
 4. Rehabilitation program for Little Blue Gum Creek (Department of Land and Water Conservation Rivercare)
- Friends received Conservation Award from AGL (through Foundation for National Parks & Wildlife) in recognition of successful regeneration program
- Fern Valley chosen as a project to be funded from Conservation Award money
- Friends' internet site established by Jacqui Hickson, now Secretary of Friends and producer of 6 monthly Regenavitis
- Fund raiser –National Parks' Festival of Friends – organised through the Foundation and held at Lane Cove National Park with food stalls, weed displays and mobile trailer
- Blue Gum High Forest listed as ecologically endangered, only 1% remaining of original community
- Draft Plan of Management for the Park released to the public for comment

1998

- Ryde TAFE bush regeneration students started working in park for practical experience and as support for grant funding
- Friends' web site received award as one of best new sites from SOFCOM search engine
- Two EPA grants for 6 Gross Pollutant and sediment traps to be installed at pipe outlets at Blue Gum Creek in conjunction with Willoughby Council
- In the nursery, Jack Hafey and Lorna Bradwell produced industrial quantities of tube stock under Trevor's watchful eye
- Riverbank management - Janet Fairlie-Cunningham and contractors funded by park made much admired progress along the river bank
- Friends newsletter joined with Regenavitis to form combined 6 monthly newsletter
- August - Trevor left and Evan Michaels became Bushcare Coordinator
- First of Corporate input - Body Shop Chatswood Chase staff helped with bushcare
- Awards from Foundation (AGL sponsored)
 1. Excellence in Public Education to Jacqui Hickson for web site
 2. Friend of the Year to Rymill Abell (long time stalwart of the volunteer bushcare movement) for organising Lord Howe Island Bushcare working holidays
 3. National Park Friend of the Year to Trevor Prowse
- Friends organised a visit to four bushcare sites: Quarry Creek, Wallalong Weeders, Fiddens Wharf and Little Blue Gum Creek



- Community Planting Day at Little Blue Gum Creek coordinated by John James (Friends' trusty Treasurer)
- Melissa Lane and Andrew Duffy joined Park staff
- Lend Lease staff helped with bushcare
- Grant for Stage 2 rehabilitation on Little Blue Gum Creek (Lady Game Drive side)
- Education: Weed Busters Week display at Chatswood Mall, trailer visit to local schools and within Park
- Award money went to supporting follow up contract bush regeneration at Fern Valley

1999

- January – the catchment was consolidated and Park size increased with the addition of 226 ha in Thornleigh, Pennant Hills area. Four more bushcare groups, Sugarloaf Point and the Tourist Park also came under National Parks management
- Four professional bush regeneration contract teams working in the Park
- Manager Terry Wilson left. Jamie Shaw acting Sub District Manager
- Donation from disbanded KUBES made it possible for Friend and volunteer Margaret Hafey to create a Herbarium for the Park
- The Chatswood-Parramatta Rail Link became a concern as well as proposed developments on Delhi Road. Rallies were held in Park
- Federal Government funding obtained by Friends with expert assistance from Park staff Evan Michaels and Samantha Olsen
 1. to create a “Heritage Walk” between the Park office and Fiddens Wharf, including regeneration and signage
 2. “Ridge to River” project (Natural Heritage Trust grant): contract work in Fern Valley and Carters creek and Hanging Swamp
- LCRCMC grant for removal of pineapple plant at Fairyland bushcare site
- Arthur Willis took up position of Manager of the Park
- 35 groups working in park
- Shop display set up by volunteers highlighting the Volunteer Bushcare Program, Herbarium, Park history and Ku-ring-gai Bat Conservation Society Inc
- Foundation for National Parks & Wildlife / AGL joint Friend of the Year award to John James

2000

- Work began on the Ridge to River grant site and the Heritage Walk. Plant Day Little Blue Gum Creek
- Fox baiting in conjunction with six local councils began
- Andrew Duffy assumed the role of Bushcare Coordinator.
- Fish ladder installed providing natural water flow to and from the upper reaches of the river
- A follow up Ridge to River grant received
- Establishment of the Plassey Road frog habitat, the construction of the sediment trap at the top of Carters Creek (part of the Ridge to River grant)
- Volunteer tree planting days at Plassey Road and Little Blue Gum Creek
- The last half of 2000 was a difficult time for everyone, trying to come to terms with a tremendous sense of loss with the deaths of Claire Deane and Eric Furlan, and continuing concern for the recovery of Jamie Shaw and Natalie Saville. At the same time, there was a very affirmative and supportive atmosphere which was palpable at the memorial service at St Andrews Cathedral and at the individual services for Claire and Eric where the Friends were asked to join the official guard of honour with the Park staff.

2001

- Contract for bush regeneration at Sugarloaf

- Friends / volunteers received awards for community work: Bill and Noela Jones for Quarry Creek site; Geoff and Margaret Morgan for Wallalong Weeders site; Joan Viner for work for Willoughby Council bushcare
- Nancy Pallin received Premier's Award for her dedicated work in the preservation of wildlife
- Lane Cove National Park Heritage Walk officially opened by Dr Brendan Nelson
- Friends became an incorporated body following severance from Foundation for National Parks & Wildlife
- Planet Ark Plant-a-tree day - forty volunteers transformed the Tourist Park's old waste dump with 400 tube stock
- Biodiversity Month (September) – Friends manned the mobile trailer with displays emphasizing 'bush-friendly' gardens
- Volunteers helped staff weed and plant at Dalrymple-Hay Nature Reserve and at Plassey Road Frog Pond
- Training courses – Advanced Fauna workshop and the continuing Introduction to Bushcare workshop
- Received International Year of the Volunteer Small Equipment Grant for hats and tools for volunteer groups

2002

- In January fire in upper Lane Cove Valley swept down to Wallalong Ave near Pymble. New groups were formed as the result of public interest
- Planet Ark Plant-a-tree day at the corner of River Ave and Delhi Road
- Westpac and Lend Lease staff did their yearly volunteer days in Spring
- Conservation Volunteers Australia worked at Fiddens Wharf
- The Friends, on behalf of the Park (Michele Cooper instigator), obtained an Environmental Trust Grant for bush regeneration and education in Dalrymple-Hay Nature Reserve over a 2 year period
- Andrew introduced 'Lend a hand' days where volunteers help other groups or weed along tracks
- A section of the Park was excised by the Transit Authorities for the construction of the rail link, effectively closing the Delhi Road entrance
- Rymill Abell received a well-earned Community Service Award from the State government for outstanding service to the community, in particular Lord Howe Island
- Volunteers from Chase Alive, John and Nikki, Glenda and Don, started "Meet and greet" Program in Park twice a month, talking to general public about points of interest in the Park and bushcare program
- October weekend – Oktoberfest stall at St Ives Showground manned by Friends – bushcare issues and weed display.
- Post-fire walk led by Friend / volunteer Bill Jones along STEP Track at Turramurra

2003

- STEP republished an excellent map of walking tracks in the Lane Cove Valley
- Conservation Volunteers Australia worked with Park staff at Tunks Hill
- Margaret Reidy and Nancy Pallin received Centenary of Federation Awards for services to the community
- Herbarium given new home in display centre, display cabinet made by staff member Brendon Grant
- Ridge to River stage III – NHT grant received to carry on work in Carters Creek and Hanging Swamp
- In November of 2003 there were ten different bushcare contract groups working on various projects throughout the Park
- Planet Ark Plant-a-tree day 170 volunteers planting trees at three different sites



What was it all about?

Thanks to valiant work of volunteers and staff, there is now a very healthy, active bushcare presence in Lane Cove National Park. The long term project for the ecological restoration of the Lane Cove River Valley has started.

Hands on

According to Andrew Duffy, Bushcare Coordinator, we now in 2004 have 27 active groups and approximately 200 volunteers working throughout the catchment. These days, one staff member is automatically allocated to bushcare coordination, regularly visiting groups, supplying equipment and giving advice. Staff also run pest eradication projects, maintain the wildlife shelter and help volunteers with the well-stocked indigenous nursery. They have been invaluable over the years in helping with grant applications. The current program's success can be attributed to the supervision and ongoing care of Andrew Duffy, Melissa Lane (Acting coordinator) and Kathryn Wem (NHT grants supervisor).

Research

Since the 1994 fires, the volunteers and staff have encouraged and worked with students from Western Sydney and Macquarie universities doing water management projects, from Ryde Horticultural College doing plant surveys and weeding and with various post graduate research students such as Tien McDonald doing her Masters on Post-fire Bush Regeneration. Their feedback has been useful in grant applications. There has been an ongoing association with the Bush Regeneration students from Ryde Horticultural College who do their practical component in the Park. Robin Buchanan (Head Teacher) and her colleague Janet Fairlie-Cunningham have been vital Bushcare supporters.

Education

From the start Nan and Graham Goodsell were very active in producing excellent flyers and posters to educate and inform the general public and when the Friends were formed Nan and Lyn Hulme started a regular newsletter which kept everyone up to date. This was eventually amalgamated with the Park's Regenavitis which contains regular plant profiles and up-to-date site management techniques (as well as gossip).

The Mobile Trailer, the result of our first successful grant application, from the Rivers Reborn Program, was set up and ready for action in the Spring of '95. It has been one of our major tools for educating the general public (shoppers, park visitors, wildflower enthusiasts) along with the weed displays, banners, posters, pamphlets and general food catering which represent hundreds of hours of volunteer participation. In October 2002, to keep the visitors informed about what is happening in the Park, Chase Alive started Meet and Greet afternoons twice a month, using the trailer.

At the same time, there have been regular training sessions for new recruits and these have become extremely popular.

In 1997 we went worldwide when Jacqui Hickson put us onto the Web. This site regularly attracts enquiries about bushcare, conservation and volunteering from locals and overseas searchers.

Meanwhile, Margaret Hafey, almost single-handedly, collected, pressed and mounted approximately 400 plants for an impressive herbarium of local flora, which is on permanent public display.

History

The Friends, in conjunction with the Ku-ring-gai Bat Conservation Society Inc, created an attractive display and information centre in the old Jenkins Hall shop.

An excellent photographic history of bushcare in the Park has been kept by Nan Goodsell, Margaret Reidy and Jacqui Hickson, as well as park staff. This has been very effective from the outset for educational purposes.

In 1999 we received a grant from the Natural Heritage Trust "To regenerate, restore and signpost the Heritage Track from the Park Office to Fiddens Wharf along the Great North Walk", work which consolidated the first grant from

the EPA to restore the Fiddens Wharf area, begun in 1995. The finished trail was opened in 2001 by Dr Brendan Nelson.

Community projects

Even before the Bush Regeneration Program was formed, early volunteer work was being complemented by government projects such as JobSkills and the LEAP team. Currently, volunteers from local corporations such as Body Shop and Lend Lease, send their staff down on a regular basis.

There are also annual Planet Ark tree planting days, when members of the local community plant native trees on prepared sites.

Grants

The Friends as a community group can apply for Federal Government funding for conservation projects. In most cases this funding has to be matched "in kind", on a one for one basis, by volunteers, Park staff and TAFE students.

To date, the Friends have helped to raise almost \$400,000 in grant money for various projects. The value of volunteer hours since that inaugural breakfast meeting is over \$2 million. Another promising development has been the ability to help fund professional regeneration teams to complement the work of volunteers.

This has been made possible with funds received from Friends membership and donations from Friends, corporations and the general public.

Public Relations

One of the pivotal roles of the Friends committee, from its instigation, was that of maintaining public awareness of the good work that was already being done in the park and how in the devastation after the January fires, the community could best contribute to the restoration process. This was done relentlessly and extremely effectively by a very small team of people under the guidance of our then President Nan Goodsell who kept up a constant stream of letters, press coverage, radio opportunities, pamphleteering and political liasing which created just the impetus everyone needed.

These days most public relations is covered by the web site, Regenavitis, the display centre and the Friends' manning of the trailer at community events. Any important bushcare information is usually channelled through the local media.

Community Based Conservation In Action

As Toby Jones (Foundation for National Parks & Wildlife) so accurately predicted in 1994, the Bushcare project has been a very good example of "community based conservation in action".

Cooperation between volunteers and Park staff has been excellent. From those early days, when Nan Goodsell and Lyn Hulme first worked with Dave Costello and Alison Evans to set up an official Bushcare Association, to our current President Margaret Reidy's convivial working relationship with the Bushcare management, everyone has worked extremely hard. It has been well worth it. The results speak for themselves.

We have seen it all: fires, drought and flooding: a field of flannel flowers on the dry exposed ridge tops; the rainbow flash of wrens and pardalotes in weed-free foliage along Fern Valley Creek; wood ducks and water dragons in the new green bracken on the river bank.

The Australian bush is remarkably resilient with a little help from its Friends



Flannel flowers near Scribbly Gums picnic area

Produced by the Friends of Lane Cove National Park Inc. 2004

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